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Consumption in Rural Bangladesh: Households, Lifestyles, and Identities

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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*To my parents, my beloved wife,
and my sweet children*

Abstract

Bangladesh, often better known to the outside world as a country of natural calamities, is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Despite rapid urbanization, more than 75% of the people still live in rural areas. The density of the rural population is also one of the highest in the world. Being a poor and low-income country, its main challenge is to eradicate poverty through increasing equitable income. Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has experienced many ups and downs, but over the past three decades, its gross domestic product (GDP) has grown at an impressive rate. Consequently, the country's economy is developing and the country has outperformed many low-income countries in terms of several social indicators. Bangladesh has achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary school enrollment. A sharp decline in child and infant mortality rates, increased per capita income, and improved food security have placed Bangladesh on the track to achieving in the near future the status of a middle-income country. All these developments have influenced the consumption pattern of the country. This study explores the consumption scenario of rural Bangladesh, its changing consumption patterns, the relationship between technology and consumption in rural Bangladesh, cultural consumption in rural Bangladesh, and the myriad reasons why consumers nevertheless feel compelled to consume chemically treated foods. Data were collected in two phases in the summers of 2006 and 2008. In 2006, the empirical data were collected from the following three sources: interviews with consumers, producers/sellers, and doctors and pharmacists; observations of sellers/producers; and reviews of articles published in the national English and Bengali (the national language of Bangladesh) daily newspapers. A total of 110 consumers, 25 sellers/producers, 7 doctors, and 7 pharmacists were interviewed and observed. In 2008, data were collected through semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews, ethnography, and unstructured conversations substantiated by secondary sources and photographs; the total number of persons interviewed was 22.

Data were also collected on the consumption of food, clothing, housing, education, medical facilities, marriage and dowry, the division of labor, household decision making, different festivals such as *Eid* (for Muslims), the Bengali New Year, and *Durga puja* (for Hindus), and leisure. Qualitative methods were applied to the data analysis and were supported by secondary quantitative data. The findings of this study suggest that the consumption patterns of rural Bangladeshis are changing over time along with economic and social development, and that technology has rendered aspects of daily life more convenient. This study identified the perceptions and experiences of rural people regarding technologies in use and explored how culture is associated with consumption. This study identified the reasons behind the use of hazardous chemicals (e.g. calcium carbide, sodium cyclamate, cyanide and formalin, etc.) in foods as well as the extent to which food producers/sellers used such chemicals. In addition, this study assessed consumer

perceptions of and attitudes toward these contaminated food items and explored how adulterated foods and food stuffs affect consumer health. This study also showed that consumers were aware that various foods and food stuffs contained hazardous chemicals, and that these adulterated foods and food stuffs were harmful to their health.

List of original publications

This thesis is based on the following publications:

- I** **Hossain, Md. Motaher** (2010) Changing consumption patterns in rural Bangladesh, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol. 34 Issue 3, pp. 349- 356.

- II** **Hossain, Md. Motaher** (2010) Role of technology in consumption and everyday life in rural Bangladesh, *Technology in Society*, Vol. 32 Issue 2, pp. 130-136.

- III** **Hossain, Md. Motaher** (2010) The emerging consumer culture in Bangladesh: Everyday life and festivals in rural areas, *Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6 Issue 3, pp. 488-497.

- IV** **Hossain, Md. Motaher**; Heinonen, Visa; and Islam, K.M. Zahidul (2008) Consumption of foods and food stuffs processed with hazardous chemicals: a case study of Bangladesh, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol. 32 Issue 6, pp.588-595.¹

¹ *Md. Motaher Hossain was responsible for preparing the questionnaire, analyzing the data, and drafting and writing the article. Visa Heinonen offered comments and suggestions on the manuscript and wrote two paragraphs. K. M. Zahidul Islam collected the primary data along with Md. Motaher Hossain.*

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Contents

Abstract.....	4
List of original publications.....	6
Acknowledgements.....	6
1. Introduction.....	13
2. Materials and Methods	32
3. Results and Discussion	39
4. Conclusion	65
5. References	68
6. Appendices	80

List of abbreviations

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
B4U	Bollywood for You
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
B. Pharm	Bachelor of Pharmacy
BTRC	Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission
BTV	Bangladesh Television
CIS	Corrugated Iron Sheets
DVD	Digital Video Disc
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDC	Least Developed Country
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
STW	Shallow Tubewells
T&T	Telegraph and Telephone
TV	Television
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VCP	Video Cassette Players
VCR	Video Cassette Recorder
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Bengali Glossary

<i>Adhunik</i>	Modern
<i>Aloo</i>	Potato
<i>Aloo Bhaji</i>	Potato fry with different spices, namely turmeric, chili, onion, garlic, coriander, cumin seed, and so on
<i>Aloo-Bhorta</i>	Potato smash with salt, mustard oil, onion, and chili
<i>Azan</i>	An invitation/call to Muslim men for prayers
<i>Bangabandhu</i>	A Friend of Bengal
<i>Bangla</i>	Bengali, the mother tongue of most of the people in
Bangladesh	and in the West Bengal province of India
<i>Bangali</i>	The people whose mother tongue is <i>Bangla</i>
<i>Bari</i>	Homestead
<i>Bhat</i>	Boiled/cooked rice
<i>Bigha</i>	0.33 acre of land
<i>Bilasita</i>	Indulgence in unnecessary or wasteful pleasure
<i>Chanachur</i>	Fried nuts and other salted and spiced food
<i>Chittobinodon</i>	Recreation/leisure
<i>Dhuti</i>	A long loincloth worn by Hindu men
<i>Durga Puja</i>	Worship of the Hindu goddess <i>Durga</i>
<i>Eid</i>	Muslims' most important festival, two <i>Eid</i> festivals annually.
<i>Ghee</i>	Butter oil
<i>Haat</i>	Bazaar; village buying and selling centers operate two/three times a week
<i>Hemonto</i>	The season occurring between autumn and winter
<i>Joutuk</i>	Dowry
<i>Kalai</i>	Black Gram
<i>Kameez</i>	A long tunic worn by young women, typically with a <i>Saloar</i> ; the two together form a <i>salwar kameez</i>
<i>Lungi</i>	A cotton cloth folded and tied around the waste, similar to a skirt
<i>Mike</i>	A microphone and loudspeaker system
<i>Machh</i>	Fish
<i>Morol–matbor</i>	Village heads
<i>Muri</i>	Puffed rice
<i>Para</i>	Parts of a village (a cluster of households)
<i>Paribar</i>	Family
<i>Pawn/pon</i>	Bride price
Pohela Boisakh	The first day of the Bengali Calendar; the Bengali New Year is celebrated on this day

<i>Rooti</i>	Chapatti, a kind of thin pancake of unleavened, wholemeal bread cooked on a griddle or frying pan
<i>Saloar/Salwar</i>	A pair of light, loose, pleated trousers, generally tapering to a tight fit around the ankles; worn with a <i>kameez</i>
<i>Samaj</i>	Society
<i>Sari</i>	A garment worn by women
<i>Sonar Bangla</i>	Golden Bengal
<i>Taka</i>	Name of the currency of Bangladesh
<i>Upazila</i>	A sub-district
<i>Upobritti</i>	Stipend; a small amount of money per month
<i>Voug- bilas</i>	Enjoyment, luxury

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Bangladesh took on its current shape through a long history of political evolution. Buddhists and Hindus ruled Bangladesh for a long period of time (Shrestha, 2002). This long chain of Buddhist and Hindu rule ended in the 13th century, when Muslims from West Asia came to rule Bangladesh from 1202 to 1757 AD (Ahmed, 2004). Following the Muslim rule, Bangladesh fell under British rule for nearly two centuries from 1757 to 1947. Then called East Pakistan, the region was a part of Pakistan from 1947 to 1971, the year Bangladesh achieved its independence. While under British rule, present-day Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India² were together known as INDIA³. In 1947, after a prolonged independence movement, INDIA won its independence, but was divided into two countries: India and Pakistan. Unfortunately, the Bengal state was also divided along religious lines into two parts: East Bengal and West Bengal. The predominantly Muslim eastern half of Bengal happened to be a part of Pakistan (and was renamed East Pakistan), and the predominantly Hindu western part became the Indian state of West Bengal. So Pakistan had two parts, East Pakistan and West Pakistan, each separated from the other by more than 1,000 miles of Indian territory.

The population of East Pakistan was larger than that of West Pakistan, and at the time of independence in 1947, 65.7% of the total population lived in East Pakistan (Singh, 2003; Islam, 1985). Nevertheless, ruling power remained in the hand of West Pakistanis. Consequently, discrimination was palpable between the two parts in all respects: not only did West Pakistanis dominated the military and civil services, but industrial development, educational development, agricultural reforms, and civil development projects took place mainly in West Pakistan, which also received the largest share of revenue allocation (Asadulla, 2006; Singh, 2003; Bhatnagar, 2003; Islam, 1972; Auspitz et al., 1971). The Pakistani government's subsequent declaration that "Urdu and only Urdu" would be the national language of Pakistan served to deepen the linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences which exacerbated to the estrangement of East from West Pakistan (Islam, 1978). Students and intellectuals of East Pakistan strongly resisted attempts to impose Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan, as only 7% of the total population were native Urdu speakers, and demanded that Bengali (Bangla) be made one of the state languages, as 54% of the population of the whole of Pakistan were native Bengali speakers (Wikipedia, 2010a). Bangla-speaking Bengalis decided it was time to assert their cultural identity and economic freedom and initiated political movement against West

² This form (India) refers to post-independence India.

³ This form (INDIA) refers to pre-independence Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India.

Pakistan. In the election of the Pakistan National Assembly in 1970, the Awami League (a political party from East Pakistan led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Muzibur Rahman) won an overwhelming majority (Ahmed, 2004), but the West Pakistanis refused to hand over power to Bangabandhu Sheikh Muzibur Rahman (who later became popularly known as the father of the Bengali nation). Consequently, after the nine-month-long liberation war, East Pakistan won its independence as Bangladesh in 1971.



Fig. 1 Map⁴ of Bangladesh

⁴ Adapted from <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/banglade.pdf> (accessed 10 June 2009).

Bangladesh is located between 20°34' and 26°38' north latitude and between 88°01' and 92°41' east longitude with an area of 56,977 square miles or 147,570 square kilometers and 12 nautical miles of territorial waters. To its north and west is India, to the south is the Bay of Bengal, and to the east lie India and Myanmar (Burma).

Bangladesh, once known as '*Sonar Bangla*' (Golden Bengal), has a long and glorious cultural heritage. "Its long, turbulent history is replete with the epic saga of invasions and subjugation that resulted in a great deal of cultural fusion and transfusion" (Shrestha, 2002: 267). The indigenous culture of Bangladesh grew richer as "each ruling body added elements of its culture" (Shrestha, 2002). Bangladeshi culture is now a blend or mixture of Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Mongolian, Mogul, Arab, Persian, and West European cultures. The people of Bangladesh are very simple and enjoy festivity. Because a majority (about 88%) of its population is Muslim (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2009), the culture of Bangladesh is characterized by many Muslim rituals and festivals. The main festival in Bangladesh is *Eid*, whose impact on the entire nation is unparalleled. *Eid* helps to uphold family and social bonds, increases consumption, generates employment, enriches social harmony, and helps to foster congenial relationships between rich and poor.

Other major religions in Bangladesh include Hinduism (about 9%), Buddhism (less than 1%), and Christianity (less than 1%). More than 98% of the population speaks *Bangla* (Bengali). Followers of each religion celebrate their own festivals, such as *Durga Puja* among Hindus, *Buddho Purnima* among Buddhists, and Christmas among Christians, and the important festivals of each religion are also celebrated as national holidays. Non-religious festivals, such as *Pohela Baishakh* (the Bengali New Year), Independence Day, National Mourning Day, *Shahid Dibas* and International Mother Language Day, are also widely celebrated in Bangladesh.

Table 1: Administrative Structure

Administrative and other units	Number	Average population (2001 Census)
Division ⁵	6	20,725,900
<i>Zila</i> (District)	64	1,943,000
<i>Thana</i> (Police Station)/ <i>Upazila</i>	508	244,800
<i>Union Council</i> ⁶	4,466	27,800
Household	25,490,822	4.9 persons

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2009.

⁵ Another division has recently been created, so the number of divisions is now seven.

⁶ The Union Council is the smallest administrative unit of local government comprising a few villages. Eligible voters (18+ years old) elect a chairman and twelve members (three of which are reserved for women members) to run the Union Council.

Bangladesh is a small country with six divisional administrative units. Each division is itself divided into *Zila* (Districts), *Upazila* (Sub-districts)/*Thana* (Police Stations), and Union Councils. Table 1 depicts the administrative structures with respect to the average population per administrative unit. The total population of Bangladesh is about 160 million (World Bank, 2009). Each urban area has its own local government under the ministry of Local Government and Cooperatives. Bangladesh has six city corporations in the six divisional cities, and its 277⁷ municipalities are categorized into three groups: A, B, and C depending on their different characteristics.

A subtropical monsoon-type climate with a hot, rainy summer and a dry winter characterize the climate of Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh officially has six seasons (summer, the rainy season, autumn, *hemonto*, winter, and spring), each lasting two months, three seasons are generally recognized: the humid summer from March to June, the rainy monsoon season from June to October, and the mild winter from October to March (GOB, 2010). As there are no significant regional climatic differences in this flat country, the country enjoys warm temperatures throughout the year with relatively little variation from month to month. January tends to be the coldest month, when the average temperature for most parts of the country drops to around 10°C, and April is usually the warmest; maximum summer temperatures normally range between 32°C and 38°C (Rahman et al, 2007). Heavy rainfall in the monsoon (from June to September) is characteristic of the climate of Bangladesh. Annual rainfall⁸, which varies from a maximum of 5,690 mm in the northeast to a minimum of 1,100 mm in the west, averages about 2,356 mm (Kripalani et al., 1996). About 80% of annual rainfalls occur during the monsoon and little in the winter (Morris et al, 1997). Almost every year Bangladesh, especially the coastal belt, is subject to natural calamities, such as floods, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, and tidal bores. These natural disasters, including annual monsoon flooding, take a heavy toll on human life; damage to crops, property, and communication systems causes shortages of food and drinking water, which then lead to the spread of diseases.

Bangladesh is an agrarian economy with a major portion of its population engaged in agriculture despite the high contribution of the service sector to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Since independence, the Bangladeshi economy has grown daily, and in the past few years GDP has grown around 6% annually. Per capita income increased from US dollar (USD) 190 in 1972 to USD 520 in 2008 (World Bank, 2010). Consequently, the total GDP (current USD) of Bangladesh rose to USD 79,554,350,678 in 2008 (World Bank, 2010), which made Bangladesh the 56th largest economy in the world in 2007 (World Bank, 2009).

⁷ A list of municipalities is available at <http://www.dailyneeds.com.bd/poura/municipality.html> .

⁸ Adapted from http://www.discoverybangladesh.com/meetbangladesh/rain_weather.html (accessed 16 June 2009).

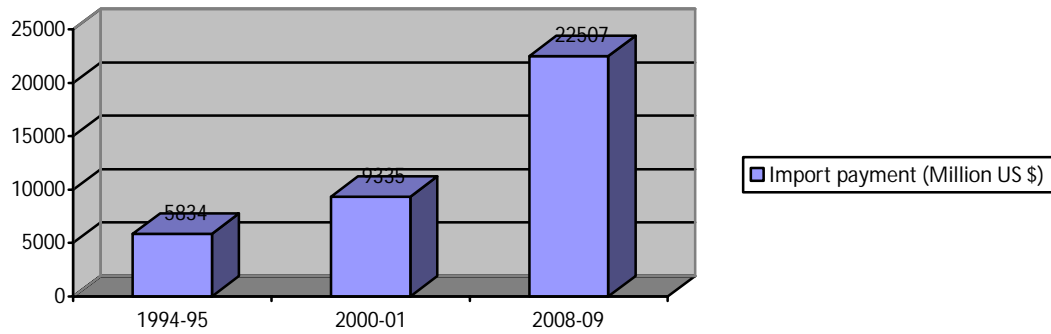


Fig. 2 Import payments

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Bangladesh Bank, 2010a

Household income, expenditure, and consumption have been increasing gradually over the years at a high annual rate. Average household monthly consumption expenditures have risen about 69% (from USD 61 to USD 103.26) in US dollars in only 30 years (Hossain, 2010a). The World Bank predicts that Bangladesh will join the ranks of the middle-income countries in the near future (World Bank, 2007). According to Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of Bangladesh, the total import payments (cost and freight) of Bangladesh increased from USD 5,834 million in 1994-95 to USD 22,507 million in 2008-2009 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Bangladesh Bank, 2010a). Similarly, Bangladesh's total export receipts also increased from USD 709.85 million in 1980-81 to USD 14,170.7 million in 2008-2009 (Bangladesh Bank, 2010b). Exports of garments and textiles as well as remittances from Bangladeshis working overseas are the country's main sources of foreign exchange earnings.

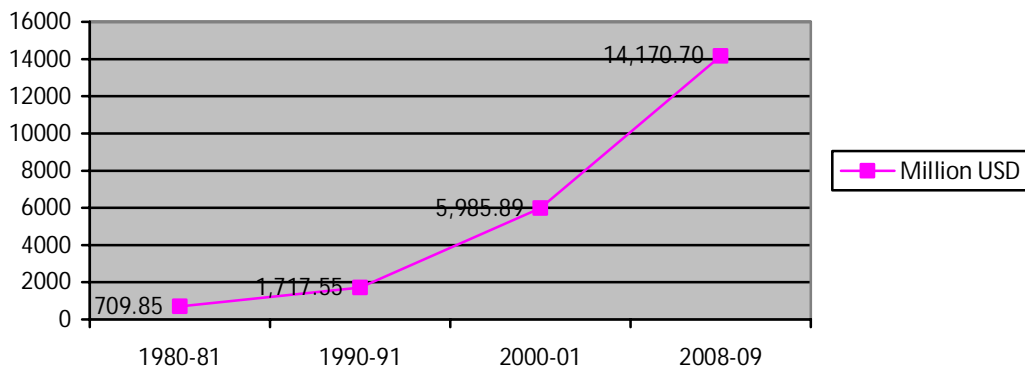


Fig. 3 Export receipts

Source: Bangladesh Bank, 2010b

Bangladesh has made major strides in its human growth index. Bangladesh has already met the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender parity in primary and secondary schooling and achieved rapid gains in a number of key education and health outcomes.

Bangladesh achieved an appreciable drop in under-five death rates from 151 deaths per thousand live births in 1990 to 61 in 2007 (UNICEF, 2009). The infant mortality rate has decreased significantly from 94 in 1990 to 56 in 2001 (World Health Organization, 2007). Life expectancy at birth has also increased from 45 years in 1972 to 66 years in 2008 (World Bank, 2007, 2010). The number of children per couple has decreased over time since the total fertility rate (the average number of children per woman) declined from 6.3 children in 1971-1975 to 2.7 children in 2007 (National Institute of Population Research and Training, Mitra and Associates, and Macro International, 2009). Consequently, average household size has also decreased from 5.83 persons in 1973-74 to 4.85 persons in 2005 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1978, 2007).

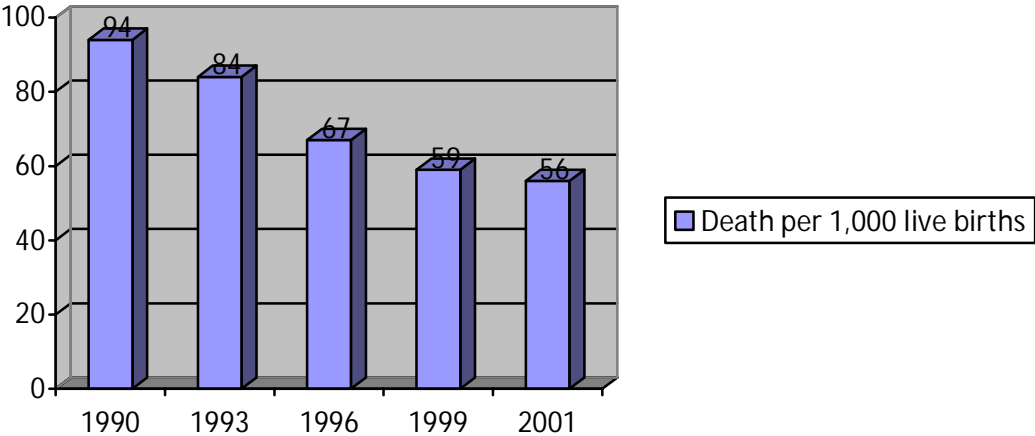


Fig. 4 Infant Mortality Rate
Source: WHO, 2007

Bangladesh is the 7th most populous country and one of the most densely populated country in the world (Wikipedia, 2010b) having a total population of 160 million (World Bank, 2010). As of 2006, 1109 persons are living within a square kilometer (World Bank, 2008a). Bangladesh is also the most densely settled rural nation in the world (Islam, 1982). Although urbanization has been rapid in the past two decades, more than 75% of the total population still lives in rural areas. Despite the decline in poverty incidence from 57 % at the beginning of the 1990s to 40 % in 2005 (World Bank, 2008 b), eradicating poverty remains a great challenge for Bangladesh. The Household Income and Expenditure Surveys⁹ (HIES) of 2000 and 2005 conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) show that the percentage of the population with a per capita consumption

⁹ The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (under the Ministry of Planning, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh) conducted the first round of the Household Expenditure Survey (HES) in 1973-74 in an independent Bangladesh. Since then, the Bureau has conducted 14 rounds of the survey, including the latest survey in 2005. Since 2000, the survey has been known as/called/renamed the household income and expenditure survey (HIES). See <http://www.bbs.gov.bd/>.

below the upper poverty line declined by 18 % during 2000-2005, while that below the lower poverty line (the threshold for extreme poverty) declined by 27 %. Although the rural-urban gap has narrowed, the rural poverty rate in 2005 was still more than one and a half times the urban rate.

Table 2: Poverty Headcount Rates (%)

Year	Upper Poverty Lines		Lower Poverty Lines	
	2000	2005	2000	2005
National	48.9	40.0	34.3	25.1
Urban	35.2	28.4	19.9	14.6
Rural	52.3	43.8	37.9	28.6

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2007.

Still, the majority of its population, especially in rural areas, remains illiterate. In 2004, the national literacy rate (among those age 7 and above) in Bangladesh was 50%, whereas the female literacy rate was only 46.2% (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Compared to the pre-independence period, Bangladesh has achieved a significant success in primary and mass education. The government of Bangladesh has introduced many positive policies and programs to raise the overall literacy rate. The country has a near-adequate number of primary schools, and the enrollment rate has risen sharply. Consequently, the literacy rate (the percentage of people age 15 and above) has risen from 29.2% in 1981 to 55% in 2008 (World Bank, 2010).

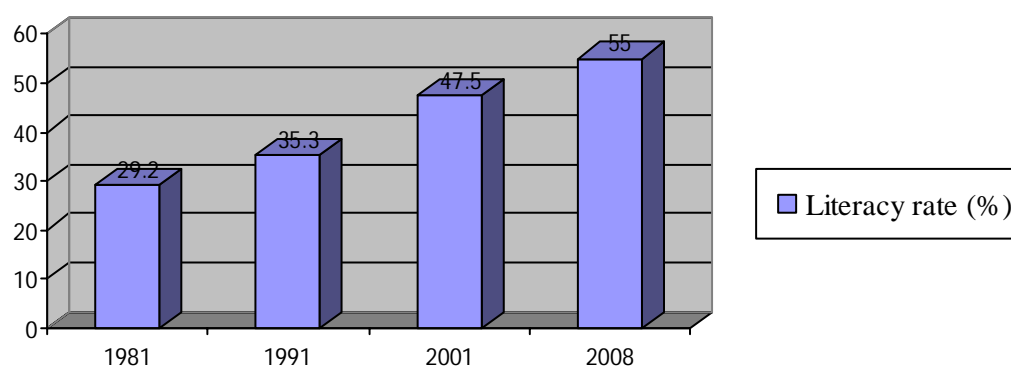


Fig. 5 Literacy Rate (age 15 and above)

Source: World Bank, 2010.

Bangladesh is one of the poor countries in the world, but over the past few years its economy has developed and influenced the consumption patterns and lifestyles of the people. Lifestyle, a word often misused these days, refers to almost anything of interest to

social scientists, journalists, and laymen (Sobel, 1981). Some scholars have argued that "... the word lifestyle will soon include everything and mean nothing, all at the same time" (Sobel, 1981: 1). Chaney (1996: 43) defines lifestyle as a "patterned way of using or understanding or appreciating the artefacts of material culture in order to negotiate the play of criteria of status in anonymous social contexts". Lifestyles help us to define our attitudes and values as well as to show our wealth and social position. Lifestyles are then "patterned ways of investing certain aspects of everyday life with social or symbolic value; but this also means that they are ways of playing with identity" (Chaney, 1996: 44). On the other hand, "everyday life is sustenance, clothing, furnishing, homes, neighbourhoods, environment ... Call it material culture if you like ..." (Lefebvre, 1971: 21). Lefebvre treats everyday life "as the relationships between different registers of social life" (Highmore, 2002: 25). Lifestyle is, therefore, linked to everyday life. People shape their own lifestyles and identities through consumption and everyday life activities. In this study, the term lifestyle refers to the creation of consumption and everyday life activities among the rural people in Bangladesh. These lifestyles have given them a unique identity, which has been greatly influenced by globalization.

In this study, the rural household is an entity, and household information served as the basis for analysis. This study aims to identify the consumption patterns of rural Bangladesh and its changes over time. Moreover, this present study aims to answer many questions related to everyday life: How does consumption shape the lifestyles of rural people? What are their consumption experiences? How is the culture associated with consumption? What is the relationship between consumption and technology? This study also sheds light on the emerging consumer culture characterized by various Bangladeshi practices, discourses, and institutions.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Section 1 is devoted to a brief introduction of Bangladesh as well as the terminologies and concepts of consumption, and presents the aims of the study. Section 2 describes the methodology, while Section 3 summarizes and discusses the findings of the original articles. Section 4 shares the conclusions of the study.

1.2 The many faces of consumption

This section presents a brief and working definition of the words consumer, consumption, and consumerism. Many scholars argue that everyday life is related to modern society (e.g. Chaney, 1996; Highmore, 2002). I shall, therefore, also briefly discuss modern and postmodern consumption.

1.2.1 Defining consumer, consumption, and consumerism

Consumer: The consumer may be defined as the actor of the verb 'to consume'. From the 14th century to the late 19th century, the verb 'to consume' in English has carried a negative connotation meaning 'to destroy, to use up, to waste, to exhaust', whereas the word 'customer' has generally been received in a more positive light (Gabriel and Lang, 2006, 1995; Featherstone, 1991; Williams, 1976). The negative connotation of the verb 'to consume' gradually "shifted from the object which is dissipated to the human need which is fulfilled in the process" (Williams, 1976: 69). Trentmann (2006a : 19) has outlined three approaches to define the word 'consumer': "as a universal economic category, as the natural product of a commodity culture that expanded from the eighteenth century onwards, and as the product of postmodernity or of an advanced type of liberal governmentality associated with neoliberal capitalism and public sector reform". Now, perhaps, consumers are the locus of the modern society. On the one hand, Gabriel and Lang (1995) defined the consumer as a god-like figure before whom markets and politician alike prostrate themselves:

Everywhere, it seems, the consumer is triumphant. Consumers are said to dictate production; to fuel innovation; to be creating new service sectors in advanced economies; to be driving modern politics; to have it in their power to save the environment and protect the future of the planet. Consumers embody a simple modern logic, the right to choose. Choice, the consumer's friend, the inefficient producer's foe, can be applied to things as diverse as soap-powder, holidays, healthcare or politicians.

Gabriel and Lang, 1995: 1

On the other hand, they found the consumer to be a "weak and malleable creature, easily manipulated, dependent, passive and foolish. Immersed in illusions, addicted to joyless pursuits of ever-increasing living standards, the consumer, far from being god, is a pawn in games played in invisible boardrooms" (Gabriel and Lang, 1995: 1). This study views today's consumer as a chooser, communicator, explorer, identity-seeker, hedonist or artist, victim, rebel, and finally as a citizen.

Consumption: As a topic, it is very difficult to usefully define consumption. There are different views regarding the definition of consumption because "we all consume, but we all do it differently, and certainly we think of it differently" (Sassatelli, 2007: 193). Consumption may represent different kinds of activities to different people and in different places in the world (Brewer and Trentmann, 2006; Miller, 1995). Campbell (1995: 102) has defined consumption as "the selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair, and disposal of any product or service". Consumption has been established as a focus and playground for individual freedom, making the future of capitalism more secure (Bauman, 1992). Consumption may be defined as "the reason why anything gets produced" (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997). In the United States during the prosperous years of the 1920s, the meanings of consumption expanded to include pleasure, enjoyment, and

freedom (Lasch, 1991). Consumption, as an act of free choice, is intrinsically linked to capitalism and opposed to sociality, since it is premised on a concern for goods (which replaces a previous concern for people) and materialism as an unreasonable desire for goods, and contrasts with production by being intrinsically more superficial (Miller, 1995). Consumption can be treated as a process “by which artefacts are not simply bought and consumed, but given meaning through their active incorporation into people's lives” (Jackson, 1993: 209). Consumption can also be defined as “simply a process of objectification – that is, a use of goods and services in which the object or activity becomes simultaneously a practice in the world and a form in which we construct our understandings of ourselves in the world” (Miller, 1995: 30). Bourdieu (1984) opines that to understand consumption we need to know about ‘distinction’; a ‘taste’ for ‘cultural goods’, ‘cultural capital’, and ‘economic capital’ (high and low); and ‘habitus’.

Baudrillard (1998: 78) argues that consumption is not a function of enjoyment, but of production. He defines consumption as a communication system which secures the ordering of signs and the integration of the group. Consumption could be treated primarily as the consumption of signs rather than as the consumption of only use-values, a material utility (Featherstone, 1991). Therefore, “consumption is not just a matter of satisfying material greed or filling your stomach. It is a question of manipulating symbols for all sorts of purposes” (Bauman, 1992: 223). Consumption is “not just a means of fulfilling needs, but permeates our social relations, perceptions, and images” (Gabriel and Lang, 1995: 1).

Thus, this study views consumption in its totality and explores it with reference to everyday life. Here, consumption is conceptualized as “the acquisition and use of things, including goods, products and, increasingly, household technology” (Wilhite, 2008: 3). The research questions enquire about how people view consumption changes over time (i.e. views of the past, present, and future). How people conceive of and view consumption is as important as how much money they spend.

Consumerism: The word consumerism also encompasses different intellectual traditions and means different things to different people around the world. In the United States, consumerism refers to the consumer movement, whereas in other places the term consumerism often refers to a life excessively preoccupied with consumption (Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Gabriel and Lang (1995:8) have described consumerism as a moral doctrine in developed countries, the ideology of conspicuous consumption, an economic ideology for global development, a political ideology, and a social movement seeking to promote and protect the rights of consumers. Miles (1998) referred consumption as an ‘act’ and consumerism as a ‘way of life’. Consumerism is “the cultural expression and manifestation of the apparently ubiquitous act of consumption” (Miles, 1998: 4). Similarly, according to Autio and Heinonen (2007), consumerism is not only a simple concern for the purchasing and consuming goods, but a way of life in post-industrial societies. They also view consumerism as a position on the division of labor in society and claim that consumerism has shaped people’s culture. Consumerism is a very central

category that stands for the production, distribution, desire, obtaining, and use of symbolic goods (Bauman, 1992).

1.2.2 Modern and postmodern consumption

My initial intention was to avoid the vocabulary of the modern, postmodern, and traditional. But many scholars have linked everyday life and lifestyles to modern and postmodern society (e.g. Chaney, 1996; Highmore, 2002). “Everyday life might be the name of the desire of totality in postmodern times” (Highmore, 2002: 25). Chaney (1996: 4) assumed that “lifestyles are features of the modern world” and also called it modernity. Moreover, I found these concepts important in the Bengali vocabulary; modern (*adhunik*), modern lifestyle, modern society, modern thinking, and others are all words or concepts that Bangladeshis employ regularly. Therefore, this section discusses only related and important phenomena of the modern and postmodern because any discussion of all their aspects and dimensions is exceedingly difficult. Here, I attempt to construct and develop a concept of modern and postmodern society.

The Compact Oxford Dictionary (2007) defines ‘modern’ as relating to the present or to recent times, characterized by or using the most up-to-date techniques or equipment, and (in art, architecture, etc.) marked in style or content by a significant departure from traditional values. The social sciences discuss the concept ‘modern’ in many dimensions. The modern concept of social life and the emergence of the concept of modern society may be contemporary (Owen, 1997). Burke (2000) argues that modernity or modernism originates in the Enlightenment, is essentially an historic period in Western culture, and manifests itself as the progressive movement of society. He recognizes three major features of modernity: the power of reason over ignorance, the power of order over disorder, and the power of science over superstition, all of which characterize the Enlightenment and the period that it ushered in.

One may argue that modern society is one that is not traditional. This distinction between the traditional and the modern may be drawn by the interaction of the individual with society and institutions, such as differences in societal forms, the use of modern technology, phases of industrialization, a belief of rationality, and material growth (e.g. Räsänen, 2003).

Distinctions between the modern and postmodern eras may prove useful, but such distinctions cannot possibly eliminate the substantial continuity present between the two.¹⁰ Because of these continuities, one can view postmodernism as both the continuation and the end of modernism. Many writers refer to postmodernism as late capitalism or flexible accumulation and the late-modern. Many argue that no distinction exists between the modern and postmodern; rather, the postmodern is a development within a larger and

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism> (accessed 5 January 2007).

ongoing modern framework. Lyotard (1986) considered the postmodern as the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies and advocated regarding the postmodern as a part of the modern. He argued that the status of knowledge changes when societies enter the postindustrial age and cultures enter the postmodern age.

The world of commodities has destroyed significant differences between peoples, but at the same time, the world of consumption has destroyed the basis for significant cultural homogeneities, which is a postmodern condition (Miller, 1995). To understand postmodernism we must consider and contrast the two families of terms derived from the 'postmodern' and the 'modern', which are often used interchangeably, thus leading to confusion (Featherstone, 1991: 2):

modern	postmodern
modernity	postmodernity
<i>modernité</i>	<i>postmodernité</i>
modernization	postmodernization
modernism	postmodernism

Modernity can be linked to the Renaissance and be contrasted with the traditional order, which brought progressive economic rationalization and differentiation to the social world. Postmodernity can be interpreted as a fully developed modernity which represents the social conditions that became apparent throughout the developed countries of Europe in the late 20th century (Bauman, 1992). Bauman argues that:

Post modernity is not a transitory departure from the 'normal state' of modernity; neither is it a diseased state of modernity, an ailment likely to be rectified, and a case of 'modernity in crisis'. It is, instead, a self-reproducing, pragmatically self sustainable and logically self-contained social condition defined by distinctive features of its own.

Bauman, 1992: 188

The French use of *modernité* and *postmodernité* are related to the experience of modernity-postmodernity. Here modernity is viewed as the quality of modern life. Modernization is related to the sociology of development and has served to describe the effects of changes in the social structure and values. On the other hand, postmodernization has yet to develop as a terminology, and not all social science researchers use it (Featherstone, 1991). Modernism can be seen as a culture of modernity. According to Harvey (1989), modernism is a troubled and fluctuating aesthetic response to conditions of modernity stemming from a particular process of modernization. Postmodernism can be understood in terms of:

- (1) the artistic, intellectual and academic fields (changes in modes of theorization, presentation and dissemination of work which cannot be detached from changes in specific competitive struggles in particular fields);
- (2) changes in the broader cultural sphere

involving the modes of production, consumption and circulation of symbolic goods which can be related to broader shifts in the balance of power and interdependencies between groups and class fractions on both inter- and intra-societal levels; (3) changes in the everyday practices and experiences of different groups.

Featherstone, 1991: 11

Many commentators study postmodernism in terms of philosophical and sociological point of views. Philosophically, on the one hand, the most widely considered characteristics of post-modernism are a critical attitude towards science and the notions of progress, an emphasis on difference, and an interest in the particular and the indigenous (Räsänen, 2003). On the other hand, changes in the institutional structure as well as in value and belief systems in Western society may, from a sociological point of view, be considered two fundamental characteristics of post-modernism (Räsänen, 2003; Uusitalo, 1998). The approach in this section aimed to view modern and postmodern society as different from each other, with the postmodern following the modern, despite some overlap and continuity in their characteristics.

In a discussion on the political economy of postmodern culture, Lash (1990) divided the postmodern economy into (a) a demand side, (b) a supply side, and (c) the goods which are the object of demand and supply. He has outlined some characteristics for each of the above three constituents of the postmodern economy. The demand side can be explained in terms of specialized consumption, demand overloads, and consumption and collective identity. On the other hand, the supply side is characterized by problematization of the work ethic, the decline of meaning (being effective via impacts on its audience rather than via meaning), and culture as an economic sector. Here different types of cultural goods are treated as commodities, and commodification is a characteristic of the third constituent of the postmodern economy.

On the basis of the dynamic theory of production, Rostow (1960) described five stages of economic growth that have an inner logic and continuity: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption. Despite the many reactions and severe criticism his theory generated (Itagaki, 1963), I have applied it to the case of Bangladesh in order to describe economic growth in Bangladesh. On the basis of my analysis and observation, the growth stage of the Bangladeshi economy could be described as ‘the preconditions for take-off’ or ‘the take-off’ or both. Many characteristics of both stages mentioned by Rostow (1960) exist concurrently. Still, political power dominates economic power, which is a characteristic of traditional society. Usually, people are rewarded for their ‘connections’, but rarely for their economic abilities, which is why widespread corruption often persist in Bangladeshi society. Although most people (about 50% of the total population) are engaged in agriculture, their contribution to GDP is disproportionate, and the service sector’s contribution to GDP is the highest. National investment in Bangladesh has increased from 19.99% of GDP in the fiscal year 1995-96 to 24.33% of GDP in the fiscal year 2006-07

(GOB, 2008), which is characteristic of the take-off stage. The other two main conditions which characterize take-off include the “development of one or more substantial manufacturing sectors, with a high rate of growth” and “the existence or quick emergence of a political, social, and institutional framework which exploits the impulses to expansion in the modern sector ...” (Rostow, 1960: 39). In brief, an initial ability to mobilize domestic savings productively as well as a structure favorable to a high marginal rate of savings is necessary for the take-off stage. In Bangladesh, the garment industry and manpower export have developed at high rates of growth. Although Bangladesh achieved its independence from the British (as did India) and lastly from Pakistan, which stimulated a political revolution and affected the balance of social power and values, it is unable to provide the desired “structure which subsequently permits a high rate of savings” (Rostow, 1960: 39).

Although the traditional is the opposite of the modern, it carries a somewhat positive connotation in Bangladesh. “The modern, in the form of social reforms and new consumption, should displace the backward, but should not wipe over tradition” (Wilhite, 2008: 9). Both the modern and the traditional are vital to a sound understanding of consumption in Bangladesh.

1.3 Previous studies related to my work

For subjects such as consumption, Wilhite (2008) claimed that “it is no longer possible to speak of coherent theoretical approaches that are neatly delineated from others. Theories are themselves more composite, more practical and more electric” (Moore, 1999: 5). Wilhite (2008: 3) also argued that “there is no single, composite theory that works for all of the types of consumption in the home”. He recommended openness to the relevance of differing explanatory frameworks in order to understand different consumption practices. Several theoretical perspectives, including those of Gabriel and Lang (1995), Miller (1995a, 1995b, 1994), Appadurai (1996, 1990), Giddens (1991), and Heyman (1991), emerged as relevant to my study of consumption in rural Bangladesh. The following sections describe the previous studies relevant to my thesis.

1.3.1 Life and labor on the border

My research work is very much influenced by (or, in other words, I have adapted many ideas from) Josiah M. Heyman’s (1991) book *Life and Labor on the Border: Working People of Northeastern Sonora, Mexico, 1886 – 1986*. He wrote the book based on twenty-one months of fieldwork in Agua Prieta, Sonora, and Douglas, Arizona, from 1984 to 1986. In his book, he provided a regional and historical framework complete with locations and a map of the field, and described his fieldwork, data analysis, and

presentation. He opportunistically chose six grand-families and collected year-by-year residential and work histories for the adult members of the core households in the six grand-families. Their work histories included position, skills, and pay. The criterion he used to select respondents was to obtain the histories of both genders and each adult generation of these families. The respondents were always informed of the purpose and potential use of the interviews, regardless of whether the interviews were tape-recorded or held within an informal conversation. The eldest apical men and women in these families were asked about their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, parents and grandparents, parents' siblings' children, their own siblings, and their siblings' children (nephews and nieces). Information was also collected on the household incomes and budgets of each core household and selected branch household.

Heyman "attempted to treat the family histories (given the limits of chapter-by-chapter presentation) as analytical subjects in themselves, set within the context of a larger historical frame work" that "can be contrasted with using case studies as illustrations of generalizations derived by other means" (Heyman, 1991: 14). In the book, Heyman synthesized and presented the family and individual histories largely in his own words, rather than through the narratives of his informants. He analyzed their individual and family histories using four major methods: key junctures and alternatives, distinguishing between life cycle and historical time, the branching pattern seen in bilateral kindred, and the analysis of gender and productive activities.

One set of questions inquired how the people acquired major material possessions, such as a stove, refrigerator, washing machine, sewing machine, furniture, television or radio, car or truck, and house. To address the labor activities of the household and information about gender-based learning, another set of questions inquired who used the object, how it was used, and who owned it.

Heyman's work has focused on people's consumption patterns and how they have changed over the course of the 20th century. He studied "the relationship between people's pattern or strategies of consumption and their position in the economic order" (Carrier, 2006: 275). These strategies are flow-through and flow-conserving strategies. "The flow-conserving strategy is one in which the consumption of purchased items tends to be discontinuous and the ratio of purchase to self-provision varies markedly over time. On the other hand, the flow-through strategy is characterized by a steadier level of consumption of purchased items and, except in times of extraordinary hardship or prosperity, a more constant ratio of purchase to self-provision" (Carrier, 2006: 276).

1.3.2 Modernity: an ethnographic approach

For ethnographic studies, I have drawn on another important book entitled *Modernity: An Ethnographic Approach – Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad* by Daniel Miller (1994). Miller conducted fieldwork in four communities in Trinidad and surveyed forty

households in each community. The selection of households followed no formal sampling criteria rather than the intention to include some diversity of income and ethnicity. He collected information by making friends; building networks of people he employed; talking to doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, and other professionals as well as people working in shops; reviewing the media daily, clipping articles from newspapers, making audio and video recording from the radio and television, respectively; and identifying “attitudes to consumption from institutions such as the Church, government bodies and educational authorities” (Miller, 1994: 4). As is evident from the direct quotations that appear in the text, he also used direct tape recording of conversations extensively.

The book focused on mass consumption and the way goods and images were used to explain many contradictions in modernity. He has given “an indication as to which aspects of the modern condition may indeed be illuminated by this particular ethnographic enquiry” (Miller, 1994: 12). Miller discussed Christmas, Carnival, gender, class, and ethnicity, and argued that “much of the literature on these social dimensions needs to be recast as an effect rather than a cause of dualism” (Miller, 1994: 15). He also argued that dualism should be understood as manifesting the inherited contradictions of modernity, not the contradictions of modernity manifesting as dualism.

1.3.3 Consumption and the transformation of everyday life

Harold Wilhite (2008) of the University of Oslo wrote *Consumption and the Transformation of Everyday Life: a View from South India* based on a study in Trivandrum, the capital of the southern Indian state of Kerala. Like Miller (1994), he also collected ethnographic data by making friends, developing close relationships, building social networks, and conducting in-depth interviews. His family participated in festivals and social events ranging from the mundane to the special. The book discussed family, the household, caste, gender roles, marriage and dowry, and so on. He studied the question “of why the consumption of household goods and commodities is growing and changing rapidly in India” (Wilhite, 2008: 1) and claimed that the questions he raised are also relevant for other parts of the world. The book shed light on changes in the social customs of everyday life, their causes and effects, and offered an interpretation of changing consumption in developing countries in the South.

1.4 Globalization and local identities

Academic discussions on globalization entered a new phase in the beginning of 1990s (Heinonen, 2009). The tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization is a vital problem of today’s global interactions (Appadurai, 1990). He argued that:

The globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization, but globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, clothing styles and the like) which are absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty, free enterprise, fundamentalism, etc. in which the state plays an increasingly delicate role ...

Appadurai, 1990: 307

Many investigators described globalization with various terms, such as glocalization (Robertson, 1995), which integrate the global and the local, and grobalization (Ritzer, 2004), which involves sub-processes of capitalism, Americanisation, and McDonaldisation. Even Campbell (2007) mentioned the Easternization of the West, showing that “Eastern metaphysical monism has gradually come to dominate Western dualistic materialism as a basic worldview” (Heinonen, 2009: 236).

Trentmann (2009: 208) argued that “globalization involves the encounter between established bundles of practices and creates openings for their transfer, domestication or extermination”. Referring to Massey (1994), Miller (1995), Watson (1997), and Wilk (2006), he argued that “local cultures play an active role in shaping the global” (Trentmann, 2009: 189).

Looking at the history of Bangladesh (discussed earlier in the background section), we find in Bangladesh a long tradition of global contact since ancient times. After independence, mainly in the 1990s, Bangladesh opened itself to global capitalism. The liberalization of international trade affects consumers (Repo, 2000): “The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is constituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options’ (Giddens, 1991: 5). I would argue here that the free flow of labor, goods, services, capital, and information has reorganized the production process and world markets and, thus, has influenced consumption patterns. The process of garment production could be an example of globalization:

The production of a particular garment is no longer located at a site within its local market catchment area, but may be dispersed across different sites around the globe: an American clothing company may buy cotton from Africa, transform it into fabric in Switzerland, design the garment in New York, cut and sew it in one of an increasing number of locations in Asia. The finished garment is re-exported and distributed to its global market locations, including affluent Asian ones.

Chua, 2000: 4

Every year, many people from Bangladesh move to another country for work or other purpose and send foreign currency back to Bangladesh. Moreover, many poor people work in the garment industry, and a major export item of Bangladesh is ready-made garments.

Foreign currencies earned from these two sectors constitute a significant portion of the country's total foreign currency earnings and significantly affect consumption in rural Bangladesh.

One may therefore argue that economic development, the flow of labor, goods, services, capital, and information has influenced the consumption patterns and lifestyles of the rural people of Bangladesh. In view of the above facts and discussion related to consumption and everyday life, I shall present the aims of this study in the following section.

1.5 Aims of the study

Overall aim of this study was to identify the consumption patterns of rural Bangladesh. The objectives of this study include, among others, to identify changes in consumption patterns, to study consumption experiences and lifestyles, to examine the relationship between consumption and technology, to study the cultural aspects of consumption in rural Bangladesh, to examine the reasons behind and extent of use of hazardous chemicals in foods in Bangladesh, and to assess consumer perceptions and attitudes towards contaminated foods. Therefore, the overall aim was divided into several research questions which were treated as specific aims. These specific aims were:

- 1) To study the views of the rural people of Bangladesh regarding consumption (Article I).
- 2) To identify consumption patterns and their change over time (Article I).
- 3) To investigate how consumption shapes the lifestyles of the rural people of Bangladesh (Article I).
- 4) To understand the role of technology in the consumption and everyday life of rural people (Article II).
- 5) To explore the cultural aspects of consumption in rural Bangladesh (Article III).
- 6) To examine the reasons behind and the extent of use of hazardous chemicals in foods in Bangladesh (Article IV).
- 7) To assess consumer perceptions and attitudes towards contaminated foods (Article IV).

The original Article I (Hossain, 2010a) explored the consumption scenario of rural Bangladesh where mostly middle- and lower-class people live. As a qualitative study, its aim was to understand phenomena in terms of the meanings that people assign to them. The information collected from the respondents was their life histories/stories, and more specifically, their consumption histories. The study examined different types of consumption (i.e. food, clothing, housing, education, shelter, medicine, leisure) and their

change over time. This study inquired about possessions and means of acquisition (price, credit arrangements, and gifts) of materials in the household. The study also explored the experiences of consumers: what people do and how they regulate their emotions (e.g. rationality and desire) when budgeting, etc. Article II (Hossain, 2010b) studied the role of technology in consumption: how technology has changed consumption patterns, how new technologies are adapted, and what disturbances result, etc. This study identifies perceptions and experiences regarding technologies in use, as well as the benefits rural people derive from employing those technologies.

Article III (Hossain, 2010c) examined the cultural aspects of consumption by studying social relations and the material construct of life as well as the practices, discourses, and institutions which characterize consumer culture. The study took into consideration marriage, various festivals, information regarding spouses (women's husbands or men's wives), the division of labor and decision making in the household. The study also addressed the leisure and media consumption patterns of the rural people of Bangladesh.

Article IV (Hossain et al, 2008) explored the consumption of adulterated foods and examined the reasons behind the use of hazardous chemicals in foods as well as the extent to which food producers/sellers use chemicals. This study explored the myriad reasons why consumers feel compelled to consume chemically treated food and foodstuffs. This article assessed consumer perceptions and attitudes towards these chemically treated food items and took into consideration the effect of those contaminated foods on consumer health.

2. Materials and methods

I have used various research methods to develop my results. The following sections describe the reasons for choosing the site and the research topic, and methods employed.

2.1 Reason for choosing the site and topic

I lived in a village until my matriculation. After that, I went to a divisional city for college study (pre-university level, classes eleven and twelve). Since my childhood, I have had in mind to work with rural people, a desire that has inspired me to work on rural consumption. This study is an ethnographic work. Bangladesh is one of the poor countries in the world, and I was born and grew up in a rural village in Bangladesh. I routinely visit my parents, who still reside in the same village. I fit in comfortably as I also belong to the same community. I am able to understand the feelings and emotions of the respondents, as I am familiar with the culture. Considering my background, the following quotation could explain the reason behind my choice of site:

Ethnographies are based on observational work in particular settings. The initial thrust in favour of ethnography was anthropological. Anthropologists argue that, if one is really to understand a group of people, one must engage in an extended period of observation. Anthropological fieldwork routinely involves immersion in a culture over a period of years, based on learning the language and participating in social events with the people of that culture.

Silverman, 2000: 37

In ethnography, research takes place in the field and phenomena are studied in an everyday context (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Ethnographers focus on a few cases, a single setting, or a group of people on a fairly small scale to facilitate in-depth study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Ethnography employs a relatively ‘open-ended’ approach in research design, and some researchers argue that:

... ethnography usually involves the researcher participating covertly or overtly in people’s daily life over an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of the enquiry.

Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 3

I am aware of positivism and naturalism and consider myself a part of the social world we study (reflexivity). Thus, I made no attempt to eschew a reliance on common-sense knowledge and methods of investigation (reflexivity).

2.2 Methods used

I employed several scientific methods to carry out this study of consumption in Bangladesh. In most cases, qualitative research methods were applied, but also included some elements of quantitative research. The collection of a variety of empirical data, such as personal experience, interviews, introspection, life story, various cultural products, conversations, and observation, fall within the scope of qualitative research (Autio and Heinonen, 2004). As a qualitative study, this study attempted to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings that people ascribe to them (Autio and Heinonen, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). I am therefore interested to explore the consumption scenario of rural Bangladesh where mostly middle- and lower-class people live. I have studied social life by following the changing role of production and consumption, as well as the cultural beliefs and values that exist in the society (e.g. Räsänen, 2003). In fact, this study employed a triangulation of methods (Islam, 2009): namely, interviews, ethnography, and unstructured conversations substantiated by secondary sources and photographs. “Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 126). Various types of triangulation are evident: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, methodological triangulation, theoretical triangulation (Denzin, 1970, 1978), or analytical triangulation (Kimchi et al., 1991). Data triangulation involves more than one data source, whereas investigator triangulation involves using more than one observer, interviewer, coder, or data analyst. Theoretical triangulation employs multiple theories or hypotheses to examine a phenomenon. Methodological triangulation involves the use of more than one method, such as qualitative and quantitative methods. Analytical triangulation is the combination of two or more methods of analyzing data (Thurmond, 2001).

This study used mainly primary data, but some secondary data also served to support the empirical findings. Data were collected in two phases: in the summers of 2006 and 2008. In 2006, the empirical data were collected from the following three sources: interviews with consumers, producers/sellers, and doctors and pharmacists; observations of sellers/producers; and reviews of articles published in the national English and Bengali daily newspapers. A total of 110 consumers, 25 sellers/producers, and 7 doctors and 7 pharmacists were interviewed and observed. Interviews and observations (primary data) served mainly to answer the questions: ‘Why are chemicals used?’, ‘What are consumer perceptions and attitudes towards these chemically treated food items?’ and ‘How do they

affect consumer health?’ Conducting the laboratory tests was beyond the scope of this study, so newspaper articles served mainly to answer the question ‘To what extent are the chemicals in use?’ To provide international readers with informative background information on the analysis, and due to the lack of scientific journal articles on the extent of chemical use in food preparation in Bangladesh, a short summary of the views expressed in the Bangladeshi press were given and articles published in the daily newspapers of Bangladesh were reviewed. Related articles published between July 2003 and March 2007 in the following newspapers were reviewed: The Daily Ajker Kagoj, The Daily Star, The Daily Amardesh, The Economist, The Prothom Alo, The Daily Ittefaq, The Daily Jugantor, The Daily Manabzamin, The Daily Inqilab, The Daily Janakantha, The Independent (published in Dhaka, Bangladesh), The New Age, The Observer (published in Dhaka, Bangladesh), The Daily Sangbad, and The Daily Bhorer Kagoj. In addition to various quantitative tools and techniques, content analysis was also applied. Content analysis is a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matters) to the context of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004: 18). This study used the phrases ‘use of hazardous chemicals in food-processing’ and ‘chemically treated food’ as key words or phrases in the review. Open-ended questions served mainly in collecting data from doctors and pharmacists, which were analyzed qualitatively. Data from consumers were collected while they were actually buying foods and by interviewing different households.

In 2008, data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews, ethnography, and unstructured conversations substantiated by secondary sources and photographs. I interviewed two generations born and raised in two different periods – before and after 1971, the year Bangladesh achieved its independence – in order to compare the pre-independence and post-independence periods. As with Heyman (1991), this study also used an in-depth analysis of the stories (interview) of a few families rather than a large representative sample. A total of 22 persons were interviewed, and the respondents were chosen as follows.

Every attempt was made to include as many women as possible in the sample to maintain a male-female ratio of one, but this proved impossible: although most households are engaged in agriculture, women are not considered farmers because they do not work in agriculture full-time; they are essentially considered housewives. Random sampling was not applied for many obvious reasons. First, working in such a manner could give the impression to the rural people that this was an official government study and that participants had little choice but to be interviewed if their household was chosen as part of the sample; this impression could undermine the goal of forging close relationships (Finnis, 2007). Second, this study aimed to include participants from as many professions as possible, which proved impossible through random sampling as a majority of the population was engaged with agriculture. Finally, due to their workload, among other reasons, many of the villagers declined to participate in the interviews. The respondents

were therefore chosen opportunistically from various occupations normally available in rural Bangladesh.

Table 3: Sample profile of the respondents

Demographics	Frequency (n = 22)		Percentage (%)
	Born before 1971	Born after 1971	
Gender			
Male	8	7	68.2
Female	4	3	31.8
Age (years)			
20-34	-	3	13.6
35-49	4	7	50.0
Over 50	8	-	36.4
Level of studies			
No previous studies	3	2	22.7
Primary school	4	2	27.3
Secondary school	-	2	09.1
Higher secondary school	2	2	18.2
College/University	3	2	22.7
Occupation			
Primary school teacher	02	-	09.1
High school teacher	01	01	09.1
College teacher	01	01	09.1
Farmer (who owns his own land)	02	02	18.2
Farmer (does not own his own land)	01	02	13.6
Day laborer (who works on wages)	01	01	09.1
Shopkeeper	01	01	09.1
Housewife	02	02	18.2
Chairman of the Union Council	01	-	04.5
Number of children			
None	01	-	04.5
1-2	01	05	27.3
3-4	06	03	40.9
5-6	02	02	18.2
6-8	02	-	09.1

I employed ‘oral history’ in a very flexible or loosely defined manner. In a strict sense, “an interview becomes an oral history only when it has been recorded, processed in some way, made available in an archive, library, or other repository, or produced in relatively verbatim form as a publication” (Ritchie, 1995: 5). The information I collected from the

respondents included their life histories/stories, or more specifically, consumption histories. They had to rely upon their memories of their past and present consumption patterns. I followed Thompson's (2000) schematic outline interviewer's guide for a flexible life story interview in the preparation of a questionnaire and in conducting interviews with the respondents. I began each interview by completing a fact sheet, a page of written notes containing information regarding the date and place of the interview, the characteristics of the interview, the content of the interview, and so on (Römer-Paakkanen, 2002; Newman, 2000). Basic data, such as the date and place of birth, appeared on the fact sheet. As Silverman (2000) suggested, I took some written notes at the time of the interviews to transcribe as much as possible of what was said and done, and in which settings. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder in face to face conversations. Interviews lasted for around 1.5 to 2.5 hours. The purpose of the interview was explained to the informants before the interview began. All the interviews were conducted in *Bangla*, the mother tongue of the respondents.

Different types of consumption (i.e. food, education, shelter, medical, and leisure) were considered for the interview. Festivals, such as *Eid* and the Bengali New Year were taken into consideration. I asked some questions about the interviewees' spouses to obtain information on the women's husbands or the men's wives. I inquired about unpaid labor in the households to shed light on the division of labor in the household. Other questions inquired about the interviewees' material possessions and how the items were acquired (e.g. price, credit arrangements, and gifts). To obtain information about gender-based learning, I asked who used those objects, how those were used, and who owns them (e.g. Heyman, 1991). Other questions also inquired about the role of technology in consumption: Has technology changed consumption patterns? How are the technologies adapted, and what disturbances did it create? I inquired about the experience of the consumers: What do people do? How do they regulate their emotions (i.e., their rationality and desire) when budgeting? I studied the cultural aspects of consumption by studying social relations and material construct of life (i.e. the practices, discourses, and institutions which characterize consumer culture).

A significant part of this study was ethnography that involved "prolonged observation of the group, typically through participant observation in which the research is immersed in the day-to-day lives of people or through one-on-one interviews with members of the group" (Creswell 1998: 58). Data were also collected through observations in meeting places, such as tea stalls and *Haats* (village buying and selling centers that operate two or three times a week), and through conversations with local people. With a digital camera, I took some photos that were relevant to household work, festivals, social gatherings, leisure, and other activities.

I employed narrative analysis techniques to analyze my research data. It is very difficult to present a clear definition of narrative as the term 'narrative' carries many different meanings and is used in a variety of ways (Riessman and Quinney, 2005). 'Narrative' is a "method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequences of events which actually occurred" (Labov and Waletzky,

1967: 20). Thompson (2000: 274) described the narrative mode as “a cluster of perspectives, some much more specific than others, and with important differences in assumptions and methods, ranging from the broad brush of traditional criticism to the tight disciplines of narrative analysis.” Mishler (1995, 1999) argued that narrative research is an umbrella term that covers a wide and varied range of approaches. Thus, we come across the application of narrative at a variety of points along a continuum of various disciplines, from a very restrictive application in social linguistics on one end, to applications in social history and anthropology on the other end, whereas its working definition in research in psychology and sociology rests in the middle of this continuum. The concept of narrative research is therefore not homogenous (Neander and Skott, 2006) and embraces various methods for approximating the text of narrative forms (Neander and Skott, 2006; Riessman, 1993). In general, many kinds of texts, including spoken, written, and visual materials, can be viewed as narrative. Diverse sources of narrative include memoirs, biographies, diaries, archival documents, social service and health records, other organizational documents, scientific theories, folk ballads, photographs, and other works of art (Riessman, 2008).

One can approach the organization of narrative in many ways (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Riessman (2008) argued that narrative analysis as a family of methods for interpreting texts and mentioned four broad approaches to narrative analysis: Thematic Analysis, Structural Analysis, Dialogic/Performance Analysis, and Visual Analysis. Thematic analysis, the most widely used approach, interrogates and focuses primarily on ‘what’ is said (or written), rather than ‘how’ or ‘to whom’ and for ‘what purpose’. Structural analysis focuses on ‘how’ the story was told or written. Dialogic/Performance analysis seeks to answer ‘who’, ‘when’, and for ‘what purpose’. Visual analysis incorporates images and visual technologies in narrative research. The researcher plays a significant role in constituting the narrative by interviewing and transcribing before analyzing the data as “the researcher does not find narratives but instead participates in their creation” (Neander and Skott, 2006: 297). Many scholars consider the structure of a narrative to be important. A complete narrative has the following elements (Smith, 2000; Labov, 1972):

- 1) Abstract – which summarizes the point of the narrative;
- 2) Orientation – which describes the person, place, situation, and time;
- 3) Complicating action – a series of events ending in a result,
- 4) Evaluation – the narrator’s attitude towards the complicating action, point, or significance of the event;
- 5) Resolution – the outcome; and
- 6) Coda – the end of the narrative, which then returns the perspective to the present.

Drawing from Labov (1972), and Cortazzi (1993), Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 58) viewed these elements “as answers to the audience’s implicit questions”. Since the boundaries of these approaches are seldom distinct and often overlap and blur, I have

employed all these types in my analysis, although I could not strictly adhere to all the features of the various approaches to narrative analysis. Interviews were treated to elicit the respondents' perceptions and to provide direct access to their experiences. I also passed through the following stages, as described in Römer-Paakkanen (2002) and Kvale (1996), to provide structure to an open and flexible interview study:

- 1) Conceptualization: I have presented a conceptual clarification and a theoretical analysis of the theme studied (Section 1).
- 2) Design: I have described the formulation of the research questions and my planning and methodological procedures for obtaining the intended knowledge (Section 2).
- 3) Interviews: I have conducted the interviews with a scientific approach to the knowledge sought.
- 4) Transcription: The interview materials were transcribed, translated, and prepared for analysis.
- 5) Analysis: I have analyzed the data according to the purposes and topics of the investigation and on the basis of the nature of the interview material.
- 6) Verification: I have taken care of the reliability and validity of the interview findings. Some pictures were taken and used to support the findings of the study. These findings were verified and compared, wherever possible, to information from different sources, such as government documents, the reports of international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as journal articles and books.
- 7) Reporting: I have communicated the findings of the study and the methods applied in a scientific form (Sections 2 and 3).

Some secondary quantitative data served to support the qualitative findings in order to create some sort of triangulation. Baseline historical data were drawn from the Household Expenditure Survey for 1973-74, conducted by the Bangladesh BBS. Other necessary secondary data were collected from various published data sources, including the BBS, various Household Expenditure Surveys of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Demographic and Health Surveys (BDHS) from various years, the Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies (BIDS), various scientific journals, published books, and websites. Publications of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Children Fund, the World Health Organization, and Bangladesh Bank also served as sources of secondary data.

3. Results and discussion

This section discusses and summarizes the key findings of the four articles comprising this thesis. The articles discuss issues closely related to each other, and Articles I, II, and III are based on the same data set. Although Article IV is based on different data set, it also discusses the same issues of consumption in Bangladesh. Therefore, although the articles seek to answer separate research questions, they are related to consumption and everyday life in Bangladesh.

Section 3.1 presents the findings of Article I, which aims to describe the views of the rural people of Bangladesh regarding consumption, to identify their changing consumption patterns, and to investigate the role of consumption in shaping the lifestyles of rural people. Section 3.2 discusses the role of technology in consumption and everyday life (Article II), Section 3.3 explores the cultural aspects of consumption (Article III), and finally, Section 3.4 discusses and presents the findings of Article IV.

3.1 Changing consumption patterns

Consumption patterns change due to changes at both the micro and macro levels (Karwala, 2005). “Changes in consumer tastes and income at the micro level, and structural shifts in the overall environment at the macro level, affect consumer behavior, lifestyle, values, and needs, which implicate changes in consumption patterns” (Hossain, 2010a: 349). Agricultural productivity growth, achieved through the modernization of agriculture, promoted industrialization and overall economic development (Schmidhuber, 2004). Increased purchasing power, education, the flow of information, and the availability of consumer goods and services all drive changing consumption patterns. Growing international trade and the globalization of tastes (Smil, 2000), technological innovation, demographic transition, socio-political change or socio-cultural transformation, and advertisement may also influence changing consumption patterns. The consequences of modernity (Giddens, 1991) and globalization (Chandra, 2004) also play a significant role in changing consumption patterns.

GDP in many countries in Asia, such as China, India, South Korea, Bangladesh, among others, is growing rapidly. Despite the developed world’s recent slide into a severe and prolonged recession, China and India have registered positive growth and stand alone among major economies (Dougherty and Valli, 2009). Other developing economies of Asia also turned around swiftly (International Monetary Fund, 2009). India will overtake Japan by 2020 and the United States by 2040 if it can maintain a real per capita GDP growth rate of 5.5% over the next four decades (Debroy, 2004). Major parts of the populations of developing countries have experienced a transition from poverty to adequate food and clothing (Hubacek et al., 2007) due to economic growth and

improvements in spending power in these countries. Consequently, many of them are achieving ‘well-to-do lifestyles’ and seek a better life and a more comfortable living through greater consumption.

Table 4: Average monthly household nominal income, expenditure and consumption in Bangladesh Taka (BDT) and US dollars¹¹ (USD)

Survey Year	Residence	Income		Expenditure		Consumption	
		BDT	USD	BDT	USD	BDT	USD
2005	National	7203	124.71	6134	106.20	5964	103.26
	Rural	6095	105.53	5319	92.09	5165	89.43
	Urban	10463	181.16	8533	147.74	8315	143.97
2000	National	5842	133.10	4881	111.20	4537	103.37
	Rural	4816	109.72	4257	96.99	3879	88.38
	Urban	9878	225.05	7337	167.16	7125	162.33
1995-96	National	4336	106.40	4096	100.51	4026	98.80
	Rural	3658	89.77	3473	85.23	3426	80.07
	Urban	7973	195.66	7274	178.50	7084	173.84
1985-86	National	2578	83.16	2345	75.64	2316	74.71
	Rural	2413	77.83	2179	70.29	2157	69.58
	Urban	3766	121.48	3540	114.19	3459	111.58
1973-74	National	474.60	58.73	501.67	62.08	500.58	61.95
	Rural	463.73	57.39	491.49	60.83	490.55	60.71
	Urban	629.29	77.88	647.87	80.18	643.49	79.64

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1978, 1998, 2003, and 2007

During the 20th century, real world consumption expenditures have increased at an unprecedented rate; consequently, living standards have improved, and more people are better fed and housed than ever before (United Nations Development Program, 1998). Although Bangladesh has also achieved much progress, advancement on most human development indicators has been even more impressive (WB, 2007). This development has also led to changes in the lifestyles of rural people over time. Bangladesh has made great stride in the development of its rural infrastructure compared to what it had at the time of its independence:

¹¹ Original data were in BDT; US dollar values were calculated based on exchange rates for different years taken from/listed on http://intl.econ.cuhk.edu.hk/exchange_rate_regime/index.php?cid=29 and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tables_of_historical_exchange_rates_to_the_USD (accessed 24 July 2009).

Powerful external economic forces, including those of globalization and the expansion of physical infrastructure – especially roads and bridges, rural electrification and the growth of marketing outlets – are creating a rural landscape that is increasingly ‘urban’ in character and have radically transformed village life. New livelihood opportunities are emerging – often in the non-farm sector. The numbers of small shops, tailoring and other craft enterprises, rickshaw pullers, petty traders in villages and local bazaar centers have grown substantially.

Toufique and Turton, 2003: 6

Respondents born before 1971 described their present living standards as better than in the pre-independence period, as is evident in the following sections, which show that in the post-independence period, rural people consume more than in the pre-independence period. Household income, expenditure, and consumption have gradually increasing over the years at a high annual rate (see Table 4). In only 30 years, average household monthly consumption expenditures have risen several fold (from Taka 500.58 to Taka 5,964 and from USD 61 to USD 103.26).

The following sections discuss the increase in income and consumption, the distribution of different components of consumption expenditures, and changes in different types of consumption (food and drink, clothing and footwear, housing, education, and medical facilities).

3.1.1 Increase in income and consumption

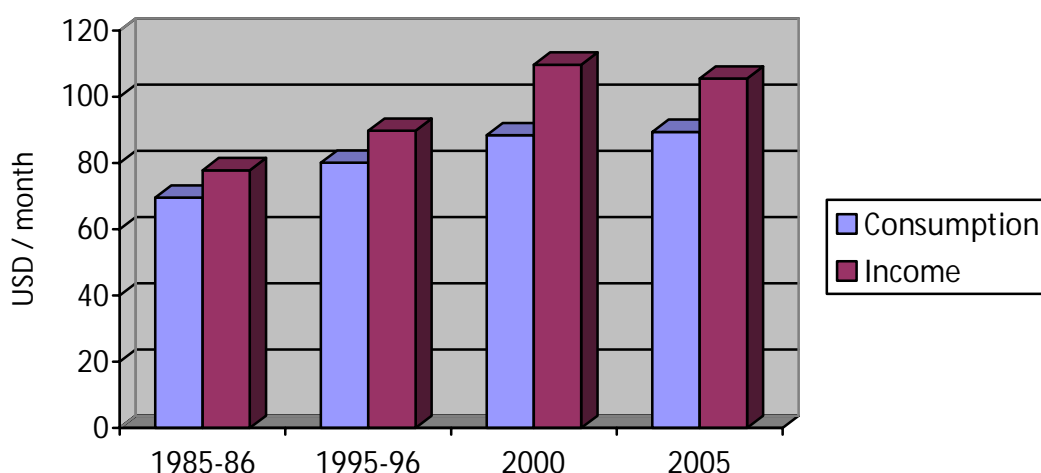


Fig. 6 The income and consumption expenditures of rural households (in USD)

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2003 and 2007

Although consumption represents different things to different people in rural areas, many economic and social issues are related to perceptions of and attitudes towards

consumption. The meaning of consumption varies from the desire to lead a life with dignity to saving money for the future. A desire to spend according to one's income is very common among rural people, who distinguish between necessities and luxuries, which vary and depend on many things, including income. Cereals, edible oil, vegetables, spices, clothing, and fuel are normally considered necessities, whereas eggs, fish, meat, sugar, milk and dairy products, education, and medical care are considered luxuries. Many do not consider education a luxury because primary education is free for all, and some children receive an *upobritti* (a small stipend per month) for attending the school. Only the wealthy people in rural areas can consider pulse, beverages, medical care, and education to be necessities.

The income of rural households in Bangladesh has increased tremendously since independence, and unsurprisingly, consumption expenditures have also increased. Although income decreased slightly in US dollar value between the years 2000 and 2005, it increased in BDT by almost 27% in 2005; consequently, consumption monthly expenditures also rose from USD 88.38 in 2000 to USD 89.43 in 2005.

3.1.2 Spending patterns on different components of consumption

The distribution of different components of consumption expenditures varies across the world. Developing countries spend more on food in relation to per capita consumption than do developed countries.

Table 5: The percentage distribution of consumption expenditure per household on major groups of items in 1973-74 and 2005

Year	Residence	Food and beverage	Clothing & footwear	Housing & rent ¹²	Fuel & lighting	Miscellaneous
2005	National	53.81	5.51	12.25	5.98	22.42
	Urban	45.17	5.48	16.78	5.76	26.78
	Rural	58.54	5.54	9.77	6.10	20.02
1973-74	National	74.15	5.29	5.73	8.01	6.83
	Urban	67.91	5.57	9.86	7.25	9.41
	Rural	74.72	5.26	5.34	8.08	6.59

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1978 and 2007

Americans spend only 7.4% of their personal consumption expenditure on food eaten at home, whereas over 50% of a household's budget in India or the Philippines is spent on

¹² For 1973-74, this figure includes rent, as well as furniture & utensils.

at-home food consumption (Putnam and Allshouse, 1999; Diamond and Moezzi, 2010). The majority of households in rural Bangladesh also spend more than 50% of their budget on food. The consumption basket in rural areas is occupied mostly by rice, the main food item, followed by *Lungi*, *Dhuti*, and *Sari*, the main clothing items (Deb, 1986). Households with members studying in colleges or universities in distant urban areas spend most of their household budget on education-related expenses, since higher education is expensive for the rural poor.

On the one hand, the percentage share of rural households' consumption expenditures on non-food items rose from 25.28% in 1973-74 to 41.46% in 2005. But on the other hand, the percentage share of rural households' consumption expenditures on food dropped sharply from 74.72% in 1973-74 to 58.54% in 2005. Higher incomes, greater awareness of and access to medical facilities, greater accessibility to other consumer goods and services, and a stronger motivation to live a better life, among others, have contributed to this decrease in consumption expenditures on food. Bangladeshis now consume more clothing and footwear, but spend less due to greater efficiency in this sector.

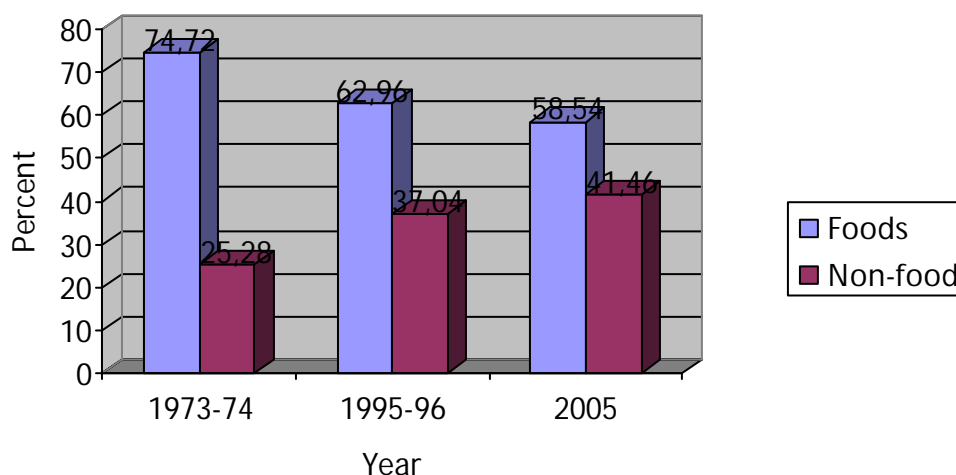


Fig. 7 Change in the percentage share of rural households' consumption expenditures on foods and non-food items

Source: Adapted from Hossain, 2010a

3.1.3 Changes in different types of consumption

Food and drink

Bhaat (boiled rice) is a staple food of Bangladesh, where food grains dominate the diet of rural people. Since independence, the daily per capita food intake has been increasing in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh (see Figure 8). The consumption of rice and wheat, however, has decreased, resulting in an overall decrease in cereal consumption

from 59% to 41.33% as a percentage of monthly expenditure on major food items. The consumption of potatoes is becoming increasingly popular and has grown sharply. In rural areas, the daily per capita potato intake has increased sharply, whereas the daily per capita cereal intake has decreased. Previously, potatoes were only a minor vegetable in the diet of rural Bangladeshis, but nowadays, the potato is almost compulsory for any kind of preparation of vegetables and even occasionally substitutes for rice (Scott and Bouis, 1996). A higher potato production in yield and in area under cultivation, the cultivation of high-yield varieties of potato, no increase in the per capita availability of wheat, rises in real income, a drop in the relative price of potatoes vs. that of wheat and rice, and so on have contributed to changes in potato consumption patterns in Bangladesh (Scott and Bouis 1996). The consumption of vegetables is growing, whereas the consumption of pulses has decreased due to their high price and limited production in the country. The homestead production of livestock (mainly cows and goats) and chicken have decreased for several reasons, resulting in a rise in the price of meat (beef, mutton, and chicken). Meat is moving beyond the reach of rural Bangladeshis, especially the poor.

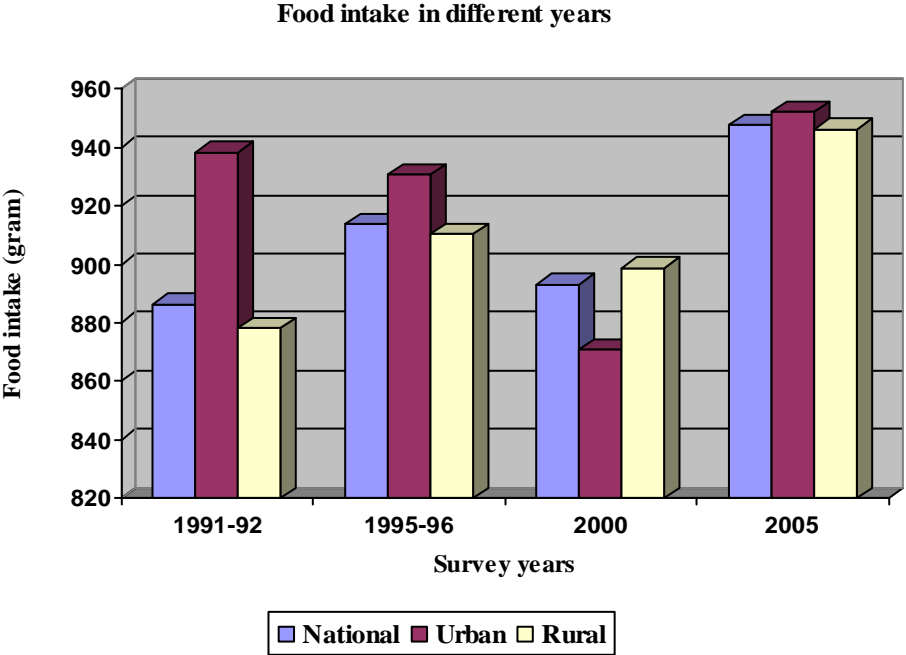


Fig. 8 Average daily food intake per capita
 Source: Adapted from Hossain, 2010a

Nowadays fish from inland waters are seldom available due to climate change and other issues, such as the silting of important rivers, which disrupt sfish reproduction, thus raising the price of fish rapidly in relation to the price of rice. However, “the overall availability of foods has increased, and rural people can buy the basic foods needed to live” (Hossain, 2010a: 353).

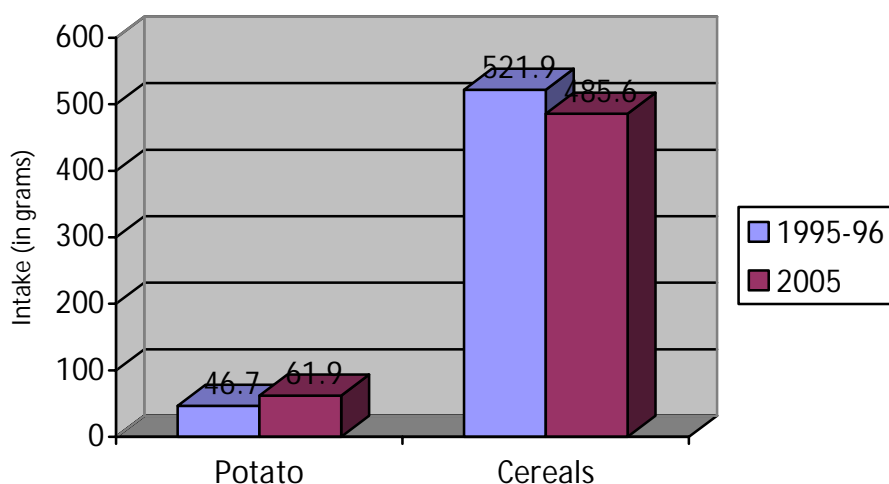


Fig. 9 Average daily potato and cereal intake per capita
Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1998 and 2007

The availability of drinking water has seen remarkable development, as 97% of the rural population currently has access to safe drinking water (Milton et al., 2006); most households in rural areas use tubewell water. Among other drinks, tea has become popular, as is evident from the dramatic increase in the number of tea stalls in rural areas over the past few years. Although food consumption patterns form during one's early years, which are highly cultural and very resistant to change (Mattsson and Helmersson, 2007), the above discussion attests to a change in food consumption patterns in rural Bangladesh.

Clothing and footwear

A *lungi* (a cotton cloth folded and tied around the waste, similar to a skirt), a shirt, a *kurta* for men, short pants, and a shirt for boys (sometimes pant-shirts for male students and others), a *sari* for women, and frocks and a *saloar-kameez* (a daily-wear garment, less formal than a *sari*) for girls and young women are the main clothing items in rural areas. Improved purchasing power, the availability of inexpensive garments and footwear, an awareness and motivation to live a comfortable life, along with a changed mentality towards beauty have resulted in a marked increase in the consumption of clothing and footwear.

Housing

At present, housing conditions in rural Bangladesh are better than during the pre-independence period:

Corrugated iron sheets (CIS) or wood serve as roof materials in 85.84% of rural houses, and bricks and cement are used in 2.07% of houses, whereas only 12.09% of houses use straw, hay, bamboo, or other similar materials for their roofs (BBS, 2007). Materials for

the walls of houses in rural areas used to include mainly hay, bamboo, leaves, and mud. CIS, wood, and brick were very rare. But now, most rural houses have walls made of CIS, wood, or brick. This change in housing materials has been expedited by natural hazards such as floods and cyclones.

Hossain, 2010a: 354

Roofs made of CIS and walls made of CIS or bricks and cement have become a popular type of housing structure in rural areas because walls made of mud are easily damaged by floods, and straw and bamboo are vulnerable to storms or cyclones.



Fig. 10 A rural house; both the walls and roof are made of CIS

Education

Many “changes have taken place in the education sector in post-independence Bangladesh, especially in rural areas” (Hossain, 2010a: 354). A primary school is now close enough to one’s household that a child can go to school alone. The number of schools has increased to nearly meet demand. Children no longer need to learn while sitting on the floor or under the open sky because the government has built facilities and provided furniture for almost all schools. The government of Bangladesh has made education for women tuition-free up to the bachelor-degree level, introduced stipend programs for women from rural areas, provided education programs for the elderly, and made textbooks in primary and secondary schools available free of charge. Consequently, the overall literacy rate among those seven years of age and older has risen from 38.8% in 1995-96 to 51.9% in 2005, and the rural literacy rate has risen from 34.6% in 1995-96 to 46.7% in 2005 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1998, 2007).

Medical facilities

Although rural people's awareness of medical and health facilities is growing daily, the overall picture of health care in rural areas is currently unsatisfactory. The health service delivery system in the public sector is divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (HNPS, 2003).

Table 6: Levels of care and types of health facility

Level of care	Administrative unit	Health facility
Tertiary level	Division national/capital	Teaching hospital/institute (16); 250-1,050 beds each
		District Hospital (59); 50-150 beds each
Secondary level	District	Maternal and Child Welfare Centers (64); 13 beds each
	<i>Upazilla</i>	<i>Upazila</i> Health Complex (397); 31 beds each
Primary level	Union	Union Health and Family Welfare Centers (3,275)

Source: Rahman, 2003.

The rural picture is more frustrating because, as the table above shows, all secondary- and tertiary-level health facility centers are located in urban areas. Although *upazila* headquarters are well connected to the capital and district headquarters by good road networks, roads in rural areas connecting villages to *upazila* headquarters remain underdeveloped. As a result, rural people require several hours to reach the *upazila* health facilities, and in emergency cases and at night, rural residents often feel helpless. Moreover, doctors and nurses too often fail to play their due role in government hospitals and health centers at all levels and neglect their duty stations in order to work in private practice (Chaudhury and Hammer, 2004). On the other hand, people in rural areas are more conscious and aware than before and often visit a doctor, if needed. Since public facilities are seldom available, rural people often go to private doctors; unfortunately, most village doctors have no formal medical education. They emphasize immediate cures and, based on their own experience and some advertisements or booklets from pharmaceutical companies, rely mostly on antibiotics and vitamins (Roy, 1997). In recent years, Bangladesh has achieved considerable success in family planning and birth control, vaccination, and immunization. Currently, most married women in Bangladesh use contraceptive methods (Nasreen et al. 2007), and every rural child receives major vaccines and immunizations free of charge.

3.2 Role of technology in consumption and everyday life

Social scientists have attempted to explain the scope, effects, and conditions of the development of technology (Callon, 1987). Still, there is no unique way of designing (or interpreting) technology (Woolgar, 1987). Technology is a tool for sociological analysis (Callon, 1987), and designs and interpretations of technology vary over time and across different social groups (Woolgar, 1987). Pinch and Bijker (1987) recommend an integrated approach to the study of science and technology in order to provide mutual benefit. The field of study known as ‘Technology and Society’ emerged from a growing concern over whether and how technologies change social life (Fischer, 1992). Fischer (1992) emphasized the underlying link between technology and social action and studied the consequences of technological change and how the use of major technologies affects personal and social life. Schroeder (2002) argued that the consumption of technology is linked to both micro- and macro-level changes in society where users initially shape the use of technology, but once shaped, the consumption of technology becomes a part of social life.

This study argues that a relationship certainly exists between technology and consumption, and that rural people have benefited from the consumption of technology. “Technology has in many ways eased the everyday lives of rural Bangladeshis in the country’s post-independence period” (Hossain, 2010b: 131). The following sections discuss in brief the role of different electronic durable consumer goods (the television, radio, DVD player, and mobile phone) in the everyday lives of rural people and show how technology eases their different activities.

3.2.1 The role of the television, radio, DVD player, and mobile phone in everyday life

The television, radio, and DVD player

Television is a “vehicle for sharing everyday life experiences, it is an object of discussion, and it provides models for living, albeit in different technological and cultural situations” (Kortti and Mähönen, 2009: 58). The era of scarcity continues in rural Bangladesh in relation to Ellis’s (2000) era of scarcity, availability, and plenty. Here, color televisions are treated as status symbols and serve as decorations, and people watch television together with family members or neighbors or both.

Although Bangladesh Television (BTV) was the sole television channel in the country until the end of 1998, 16 satellite television channels are now available in Bangladesh. Still, BTV is the only terrestrial television channel in Bangladesh, reaching 93% of the population with 15 relay stations (Bangladesh Television, 2010). Rural people seldom watched television in the pre-independence period, but since independence, the number of television watchers has grown several-fold due to increased electricity coverage in rural

areas, increased purchasing power, and lower prices of televisions. Not all households possess a television, but many can still watch popular programs at their neighbor's house or in common places such as clubs, tea stalls, and other shops that have televisions. Television serves as a social and cultural medium. Televisions and radios play a vital role by providing weather bulletins in times of natural calamities, airing educational programs, and promoting awareness about various aspects of social life, immunization and family planning.

Now rural people can easily watch different videos such as Bengali movies, Hindi movies, popular dramas, and others at homes or even in small shops in exchange for a small fee due to the availability of DVD players and video cassette players (VCP). Televisions, radios, and DVD players have significantly influenced the consumption patterns of rural people in Bangladesh.

The mobile phone

Government-owned telegraph and telephone (T&T) services enjoyed a monopoly from the beginning until the early 1990s, when private mobile phone service providers entered the market. Competition among mobile phone service providers and T&T ushered in a new era. As in China (Li, 2009), very few people had access to telephones in the beginning, which made the telephone a symbol of privilege, power, and status. Since then, however, the total number of active mobile phone subscribers has steadily increased to 58.36 million as of May 2010 (BTRC, 2010). To explain the impact of mobile phone use by looking only at the number of people who own one (low telephone density) would be unwise, because households with no mobile phone can nevertheless benefit from mobile phones owned by neighbors or friends living nearby. Still, strong social bonds prevail in the rural areas of Bangladesh. People provide the mobile phone numbers of neighbors or friends living nearby to prospective persons who may wish to contact them. "If someone calls asking for that person, the neighbors or friends living nearby then take the mobile phone directly to him/her or simply convey the message afterwards" (Hossain, 2010b: 34). When necessary, people with no mobile phone call from nearby shops or from their neighbor's or friend's mobile phone.

Before this mobile phone boom, when phone services were unavailable in rural areas and public phone service was available only in certain places in urban areas, most people had to write letters to communicate with their family and friends and depended on the post office for mail and telegraph services. Nowadays, however, people seldom write letters for personal communication other than for official purposes.

The mobile phone has brought rural people multiple benefits: they can now talk to loved ones living in distant places or even in other countries; producers, armed with information regarding the current market prices of commodities, can bargain with middlemen to ensure a fair price for a commodity; shopkeepers can also keep in touch with their wholesalers and increase or decrease the prices of items for sale; and government administrative offices located mainly in urban areas can easily contact

different institutions and persons in rural areas in times of need. Many rural people have begun to think that having a mobile phone is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. As in Finland, “no one [in Bangladesh] envisioned the role of ordinary people in shaping the need for a cordless phone. It was not anticipated [...] that the users of cell phones would ‘discover’ their needs and that a lifestyle, even a personality, would evolve, to which the cell phone was integral” (Pantzar, 2003: 87). Thus, the mobile has been a blessing to rural people, who have played a significant role in the economic and social development of rural areas.

3.2.2 Ease in different activities

Agricultural activities



Fig. 11 Planting paddy (rice) seedlings by hand

As mentioned previously, almost everybody is connected either directly or indirectly to agriculture in rural Bangladesh. Any development in this sector is important for the overall development of the country since most people live in rural areas. Agricultural activities are often performed manually. The dramatic expansion of Shallow Tubewells used for low-lift irrigation by private sector operators brought major changes to the farming system in Bangladesh during the 1990s (FAO, 2001). Some recent local innovations have made it possible to use the same machine¹³ to pump water up from underground, to plough the land, to thresh grains, and even to carry the grains and straws to the household, which in turn have made agricultural work much easier and quicker. The traditional manual plough (Fig. 12), though still in use, is both slower and more stressful; one could not plough more

¹³ *The imported pump machine referred to locally as a sallow machine is not so costly, and a sensible rural man can easily operate one without formal training.*

than one *bigha* (0.33 acre) of land in a day. Now, with a plough carried by a small machine (tractor), a farmer can plough all of his land in a day, if wishes, as it are both faster and easier (Fig. 13).



Fig. 12 A traditional (manual) plough



Fig. 13 A machine plough (tractor)

The use of machines in agricultural activities has enabled agricultural laborers and other farmers who used to work from dawn to dusk to have more free time to relax or for

leisure. Normal working hours from 8 am to 4 pm with two breaks has brought a huge change in the everyday lives of rural people.

Domestic activities

Rural women are responsible for cooking food and related work. Two very difficult and time-consuming activities, husking paddies for rice and grinding grain for flour, are now performed by machines, which women used to do manually. Now, housewives can watch TV, chat with others, and visit neighbors or relatives in the free time resulting from the consumption of technologies.



Fig. 14 Husking rice with a manual husk pedal

Source: Adapted from Hossain, 2010b



Fig. 15 Grinding grain with a manual grinder



Fig. 16 Husking rice with a localized machine

Transport

Although boats and bullock carts are the main means of transport in rural Bangladesh, the number of bullock carts is decreasing daily. Rickshaws and other motorized vehicles now ply *pucca* roads. Since Bangladesh is a land of rivers, “there is no alternative to boats in rural areas, especially in the rainy seasons. The previously mentioned machine is widely used in boats to increase their carrying capacity and speed as well as to eliminate manual work” (Hossain, 2010b: 134).



Fig. 17 A boat without a motor (left) and a boat with a localized (machine) motor (right)
Source: Adapted from Hossain, 2010b

Religious activity

Technologies are also used in religious activities. Most mosques invite (*Azan*) Muslim men to pray using a *mike* (a microphone and loud speaker system) to make the call to prayer audible from afar and when people are normally asleep (for the morning prayer). These *mikes* are also used in rural areas to remind people to take part in a funeral when someone dies. Funerals are important to Muslims, as many people feel that the number of people who take part and pray for the departed soul in a funeral is very important.

3.3 Cultural aspects of consumption and everyday life

The concepts of “culture of consumption, consumer culture, and culture as consumption are now moving to the very centre of many social discourses” (Firat and Dholakia, 1998: 2). Appadurai (1996) considered how the images of lifestyle, popular culture, and self-representation circulate internationally and provide fresh ways of looking at popular consumption patterns, and debated these ideas by investigating the present era of globalization. Lury (1996: 1) argued that “consumer culture is a particular form of material culture that has emerged in Euro-American societies during the second half of the twentieth century”; material culture is the name of the study of person-thing relationships by which people relate to each other socially through the mediation of things. Commodities transform “social and economic relations, embodies and circulates material privilege and inequality, and focuses ideals of social change” (Cronin, 2002: 317). Slater (1997) viewed the study of consumer culture as the study of ‘texts and textuality’, ‘individual choice and consciousness’, and ‘wants and desires’ in the context of social relations, structures, institutions, and systems. Bourdieu’s (1984) classic work identified ‘distinction’, a ‘taste for cultural goods’, ‘cultural capital’, and ‘habitus’ as components of cultural consumption. Cultural tastes develop during one’s early years as a consumer and remain essentially stable afterwards (Lizardo and Skiles, 2008; Bennett et al., 1999; Smith, 1995).

The primary social unit in Bangladesh is the *paribar* (family). Several members of a *paribar* live together in a *bari* (homestead), whereas the members of several *baris* form a *samaj* (society) in rural Bangladesh. Marriage is a significant event in Bangladesh. Unlike in India, no formal and rigid cast system exists in Bangladesh. Social class distinctions are mainly based on economic status and social standing (Shrestha, 2002). In rural areas, *paribar* and kinship are the two main bases of social life, and people live in large extended families, till all the land they have, and raise some livestock.

The following sections discuss the practices, discourses, and institutions which characterize consumer culture, as well as the social relations and material constructs of life in rural Bangladesh.

Two *Eids* – *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Azha* –are the main annual festivals in Bangladesh. *Eid-ul-Fitr* comes at the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, and *Eid-ul Azha* falls on the 10th day of the month of *Zul-Hajja* (or *Dhu al-Hijjah*) of the lunar Islamic calendar. Most people pay *zakat* (a certain percentage of their wealth) during Ramadan and *fitra* (a fixed small amount per household member) on or before the day of *Eid-ul-Fitr*, and on *Eid-ul Azha*, one-third of the meat of the sacrificed animal is distributed among the poor. Most rural people wear new clothes, prepare delicious traditional foods, and share the joys of this festival with neighbors and friends. They also organize *Eid-fair* and friendly sports competitions.

Most people who live in urban areas go to the villages to celebrate *Eid* with their kin, but the available transportation systems cannot support such mass movements of people within such a short period of time. Consequently, people must travel on the roofs of trains, buses, and boat launches, ignoring or accepting the risk to life (Fig. 18). As a result, many accidents take place every year before and during the *Eid*.



Fig. 18 People sitting on the roof of the train (obviously no seats were available inside the train) while traveling to celebrate *Eid* with their kin in the villages
Source: Samakal¹⁴, 27 November 2009

Electronic and print media enhance the festivity by broadcasting many attractive programs and releasing new Bangla movies, as well as publishing special issues with novels, stories and poems, Eid fashion, and so on.

¹⁴ Adapted from Samakal, 27 November 2009: p.1. Bolunto Trainti Kothai? (Please tell me, where is the train?) URL <http://www.samakal.com.bd/index.php?view=archieiv&y=2009&m=11&d=27> (accessed 01 June 2010).

Hindus in South Asia celebrate *Durga puja*, an annual festival in which they worship the Hindu goddess *Durga*. *Durga puja*, widely celebrated in the autumn, is the largest Hindu festival of the year. Unlike other festivals, the Bengali New Year is not widely celebrated in rural areas. However, some rural people celebrate the bringing of new crops (mainly rice) into their houses.

Almost all marriages in rural areas follow the marriage system the bride and groom's religion. In addition to religious customs, rural people also follow some regional and local rituals. The mainstream Bangladeshi societies always prefer marital sexuality and prohibit premarital, extramarital, and homosexual relations. As in other patriarchal societies, in rural areas the groom generally lives in his parents' household after marriage, whereas the bride moves into the house of the groom's father and becomes a dependent member of that family. Traditionally, parents or guardians decide when, how, and whom one should marry. Moreover, the community's feelings or consideration of what people of the society will think if they do something is very important.

Early marriage is still a major problem in rural Bangladesh. "People are afraid that marriage proposals for their daughter or sister will not come unless she is married at an early age" (Hossain, 2010c: 491). The current legal age to marry in Bangladesh is 18 for women and 21 for men (Chowdhury, 2004). Enforcing age restrictions is difficult, however, due to Bangladesh's inefficient birth registration system and a general unwillingness and lack of resources to verify the age of the bride. Most rural parents or guardians expect their daughters to maintain virginity until marriage and hope for an early marriage, since men prefer to marry virgins.

Two different but interrelated and overlapping words, *joutuk* (dowry) and *pawn/pon* (bride price), figure prominently in the market of marriage. The English word 'demand' is also widely used as a synonym of *joutuk*. The groom or groom's family receives a dowry from the bride's family, whereas the bride receives the bride price from the groom or the groom's family (Anderson, 2007). The system of *joutuk* in Bangladesh, a relatively novel concept, has become quickly a notable habitual practice among Muslims although neither religious nor state laws support it (Huda, 2006). Amin and Cain (1997) claimed that bride price and dowry payment became a prevalent custom in Bangladesh only after 1964. They also mentioned that Hindu influence, male greed, and rising consumerism had contributed to the practice of dowry among Muslims (Amin and Cain, 1997).

As in Southern India (Wilhite, 2008), *joutuk* has become an inevitable and integral part of marriage that involves a significant exchange of goods, money, and property in rural Bangladesh. *Joutuk* normally constitutes one or more gifts of the following: "cash, a watch, clothing, a gold ring, furnishings (e.g., pots and pans, quilts, an umbrella) a television, a radio, a bicycle, a cassette player, a motorcycle, livestock, jewellery for the bride (one or more items of gold or silver, such as a nose pin, bangles, earrings, or a necklace), agricultural land, or even land for building a house" (Hossain, 2010c: 491). On the other hand, bride price includes "cash or jewellery (one or more items of gold or silver, such as a nose pin, bangles, earrings, or a necklace), sweets, a *sari*, cosmetics, footwear,

and so on” (Hossain, 2010c: 491). A larger dowry is required for older brides and brides with a dark complexion because age and a dark complexion are considered drawbacks (Huda, 2006). On an average, a dowry payment is more than 200 times the daily wage of a villager, and dowry contributes significantly to poverty for many families with daughters (Davis, 2008). Davis (2008) identified dowry as one of the driving reasons behind early marriage.

Although examples of marriage without *joutuk* or *pawn* are not uncommon, *joutuk* remains a problem irrespective of literacy and education because sometimes men with a high level of education and good earnings demand more *joutuk*. Due to the demand and supply of dowry in the marriage market, these burdensome practices are unlikely to disappear, despite laws which sanction fines and even imprisonment to prevent dowry payments and early marriage (Amin, 2008).

Historically the culture, religion, and social restrictions of the patriarchal society in Bangladesh confined women mostly to the *bari*. But some changes in the status of women in rural Bangladesh are also evident (Balk, 1997a, 1997b, 1994). Although the intervention of governmental and various non-governmental organizations coupled with higher literacy rates enable some women to leave their homestead to participate in various income-generating activities, such as crop production, post-harvest activities, poultry rearing, livestock and fisheries management, among others, women must depend on the father, husband, and son in different phases of the life cycle to survive. Still, the male members of the family generally make the important household decisions (Hoque and Itohara, 2008). The decision-making process is more democratic in families where both the husband and wife are literate than in households where the husband and wife are illiterate. In educated families, the husband and wife discuss matters and arrive at conclusions together. On the other hand, in households where the husband is literate and the wife is illiterate, the husband makes all the important decisions and the wife must rely on his decisions. Moreover, due to the long patriarchal tradition, women often eschew a more active role in decision making, as they feel more comfortable playing the passive role. Very rarely do women make most household decisions. Thus, the woman’s level of education is an important factor in household decision-making in Bangladesh.

The rural people of Bangladesh are simple and generally hospitable to guests. Although the older respondents in this study mentioned that interpersonal relationships and respect for seniors were in decline, interpersonal relations in the villages are usually very good, and the people band together and help each other in times of need, such as in preparations marriages or funerals and during natural disasters. In the home, families usually try to provide their children with at least some special education about norms and behavior. On the one hand, juniors usually respect their seniors and try to obey them. In return, seniors shower the love and affection. The *morol–matobbor* (rich and influential people) of the villages would sometimes exploit the poor and illiterate because of the social pressure to obey the *morol–matobbor*. Things are gradually changing now with the rise in literacy rates and economic development. The people of a village generally have

the opportunity to express their views, unlike before, when no one would dare say anything against the will of the morol-matobbor.

A common understanding dictates that work performed outside the home is for men and work performed inside the home is for women. Men rarely performed any household job in a grand family, where the father, mother, brothers, sisters, and the wives and children of the brothers live together in the same house. Even foods are served by women. Normally, the wife or some other women serve the foods from cooking pots to different bowls and pots. Men are only expected to eat and leave the women to clear the table and clean the utensils. Women who work in any profession outside home must also complete those tasks before going out. In single families, however, men do help with household work. When one's wife becomes ill, pregnant (women in rural areas go to their parents' house to deliver, which is virtually certain for the delivery of a woman's first child), or when she goes elsewhere, the men must do something. In such cases, the men's female relatives or neighbors also help. Nowadays, with the growing number of single families and due to education, men more often perform some household tasks, but women still perform the majority of household tasks.

The general understanding is that leisure activities involve some costs. Rural people of Bangladesh often define leisure activities as activities that refresh the mind. Such activities, which mostly involve nature and are free of cost, include watching television, listening to the radio, going the local field to watch a football or cricket match, or chatting with people in a tea stall. Since women are often secluded inside the four walls of the home, their leisure activities differ from those of men. Nowadays, rural women also enjoy some 'free time' by engaging in leisure activities such as watching TV, chatting with others, visiting neighbors or relatives, and so on.

Bangladesh competes in World Cup cricket and achieved test cricket playing status. Although football was the most popular game in Bangladesh, due to the disappointing performance of football at the national and international level, cricket now appears to be the most popular game in Bangladesh. Therefore, people often watch live cricket matches on television. Tea stalls have become an important place for recreation in rural areas. Nowadays, rural men from all walks of life go to the tea stalls. Farmers and others who work in the daytime assemble in the tea stalls in the evening and drink tea, gossip, and watch television (Fig 19).

In recent years both the number of television channels and the duration of programs have increased noticeably. Unsurprisingly, television has emerged as the dominant medium of popular cultural consumption and cultural entertainment in Bangladesh (Shrestha, 2002).

Since 1956, the Bangladeshi film industry has produced approximately 100 movies per year (Wikipedia, 2010). Although Bengali films initially attracted the middle-class people of the country, nowadays, except to see a few films, educated middle-class people seldom go to the cinema halls. They complain that films nowadays are of 'inferior quality' and that the condition of the cinema halls is poor and unhealthy. Still, rural people enjoy

watching Bengali films aired on television channels – especially by the BTV– on weekends and holidays.



Fig. 19 Gossiping (wearing *lungi* and a shirt) in a tea stall in the evening

The globalization of the media landscape of Asia, which began in the 1990s, has developed most rapidly in terms of growth in the number of satellites, transnational television channels, and online networks (Kim, 2010). Current “changes in the modes of production, distribution, consumption and regulation of culture related to changes in the organization of media and communication systems are reconfiguring the scales, spatialities and territorialities of the cultural” (Barnett, 1999: 390). In Bangladesh, however, the Bollywood film culture is circulated and consumed amid a longstanding ‘love-hate relationship’. Bollywood films are seldom shown in cinema halls or theaters in Bangladesh due to a ban imposed by the then-Pakistani Government in 1965. Nevertheless, Bollywood films were in many ways ubiquitous in popular culture, and most Bangladeshis watch Bollywood films, film trailers, and film songs on various transnational television channels (Raju, 2008). Hindi songs from Bollywood films are also used to entertain passengers in public transport vehicles, such as inter-city coaches and steamers; as ringtones for mobile phones; in loudspeakers, radio sets, and audio players in shopping complexes; at family gatherings, such as weddings and puberty rites; and at religious and social festivals in the cities and villages of Bangladesh (Raju, 2008). The print media in Bangladesh are also very active in popularizing Bollywood films. Many local film magazines “carry the latest upheavals in the personal and professional lives of Bollywood stars. All the serious dailies and weeklies also devote one or more sections to the gossip and news of the Bollywood film industry” (Raju, 2008: 157–58). The pictures of Bollywood film stars appear on posters, postcards, notebooks, calendars, albums, and so

on, all of which are available on virtually every street corner in Bangladesh (Raju, 2008). Young people also follow the fashions of their favourite stars.

Thus, Bollywood cinema is a very popular means of entertainment which has influenced cultural/media consumption in Bangladesh. As mentioned earlier in the sections on technology, televisions, VCRs/VCPs, and DVD players have made the household consumption of Bollywood films and songs much easier in the absence of theatrical viewing options. Although Bollywood films are very popular, many people feel that violate Muslim and Bengali culture, which they should uphold. But this view is growing weaker in practice due to the effect of globalization/transcultural consumption, where people negotiate their national, cultural, and religious identities.

3.4 The Consumption of adulterated foods

Although this article (Article IV) aims to answer separate research questions, it discusses the same issues of food consumption and everyday life in Bangladesh. For this reason, this article is also related to the other three, which focus on consumption and everyday life in Bangladesh.

Food adulteration is an old problem in consumer protection in both developed and developing countries. The United Kingdom faced this problem early in the 19th century, and although the advancement of the consumer movement gradually led to the passing of consumer laws to protect consumers, legislation has failed to eliminate problems of food adulteration, which continued to plague the United Kingdom during the late 1930s (Phillips and French, 1998). After the Second World War, consumer protection drew attention and, consequently, consumer legislation, authorities and organisations emerged, thus strengthening the consumer movement in Western countries (Brewer and Trentmann, 2006; Trentmann, 2006b; Cohen, 2003; Daunton and Hilton, 2001). Although the fourth or alternative wave of consumerism (Gabriel and Lang, 2006) has emerged with a strong emphasis on ethical and ecological issues since the 1980s, a number of food scares such as BSE-infected meat and Salmonella bacteria in eggs in the United Kingdom in the 1990s reveal the weaknesses of regulation and consumer protection.

The extent of the problem of food adulteration is greater in less-developed countries such as Bangladesh. Food adulteration involves “debasement of the foodstuff in some way so as to produce a cheaper imitation product, which differs from that specified or implied” (Sumar and Ismail, 1995: 12). Sumar and Ismail (1995) and Kamala (1974) mentioned the following four ways in which food may be adulterated:

- 1) Adding extraneous matter (e.g. sand to food grains or water to milk),
- 2) Mixing inferior quality material with a superior one (e.g. mixing used/spent tea leaves with fresh tea leaves),
- 3) Using prohibited dyes and preservatives (e.g. coloring spices),

- 4) Extracting valuable ingredients (e.g. abstracting fat from milk or oils from spices) (Sumar and Ismail, 1995: 12).



Fig. 20 Spraying chemicals to ripen tomatoes

Source: Law and our rights. *The Daily Star*, 14 December 2003

In Bangladesh, harmful chemicals such as calcium carbide, sodium cyclamate, cyanide, urea (a nitrogen-release fertilizer), and formalin are sometimes used in foods and food stuffs. Hazardous chemicals are used to ripen green tropical fruits or to color vegetables, and textile dyes are used to prepare popular sweetmeats, soft drinks, beverages, and confectionaries, as well as to preserve fish, fruits, and milk to achieve the comparative advantage of lower prices while maintaining higher profits (Hossain et al., 2008).

The following sections discuss the reasons and extent of chemical use in food stuffs, consumer perceptions and attitudes towards these chemically treated foods, and its effect on consumer health.

Reasons for using hazardous chemicals in foods and foodstuffs

Most of the sellers/producers interviewed and observed in this study used harmful chemicals. The reasons why these sellers/producers use hazardous chemicals include making the product more lucrative, extending the product's shelf life, substituting unavailable natural raw materials (natural raw materials were not always available), consumer demand, and because the adulterated raw materials were cheaper than natural goods. Sellers/producers eschew the use of health-friendly, permitted chemicals and food colors to increase the attractiveness and longevity of foods due to their high price.

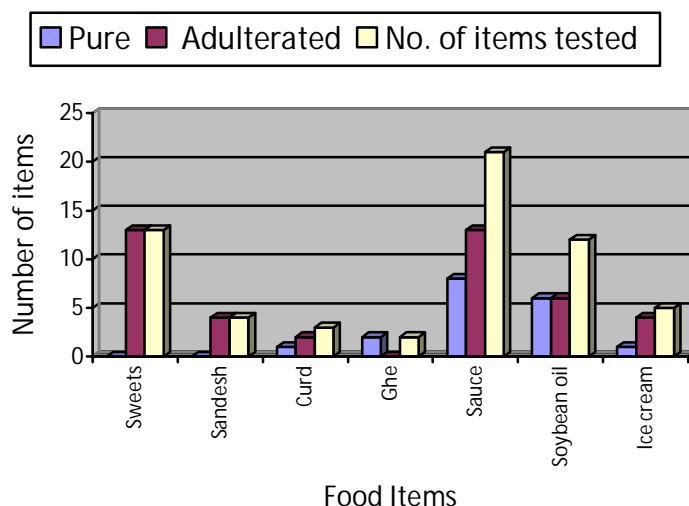


Fig. 21 Food survey of the Dhaka City Corporation public health laboratory
 Source: Based on Amin et al., 2004

Extent of the use of chemicals

Numerous newspaper articles attest to the seriousness of the problem of food adulteration in Bangladesh. “At present, to say which food or food item contains no harmful chemicals is very difficult. The condition is so alarming that the educated, wealthy, and cautious citizens of the country are also compelled to consume adulterated foods and food stuffs” (Hossain, 2008: 590). Almost every sector of the food industry presently uses hazardous chemicals (Figure 21). Vegetables, fruits, sweetmeats, milk, fish, bakery products, puffed rice, cereals, soybean oil, mustard oil, butter oil, and other foods are adulterated in different ways with different chemicals on four different levels: importer, producer, wholesaler, and retailer.

Importers adulterate various products such as flour, biscuits, bread, oil, condensed milk, fruits, soft drinks, and others. Producers adulterate food items such as bakery products, nodules, *chanachur* (fried nuts and other salted and spiced foods), different spices, oil, and others. Mustard oils are extracted from a mixture of mustard seeds and another kind of cheaper, toxic seed which is similar in appearance. Fruit juices are produced with artificial and prohibited ingredients instead of with original fruit substances. Hydrogenated oil and animal fats are used to adulterate *ghee*. Small amounts of cyanide and artificial color are added to soybean and palm oils to prepare adulterated mustard oil. *Muri* is whitened with urea. Harmful substances are added to turmeric powder to brighten it and to make chili powder spicier. Cheaper but harmful sodium cyclamate is imported and used as a substitute for sugar in preparing bakery products and soft drinks, and burnt Mobil oil is used to fry *chanachur* (Hossain et al., 2008). Wholesalers use calcium carbide, formalin, and various low-cost colorings in fruits, fish, vegetables, and more. Many retailers, such as restaurants, supermarkets, confectioners, food shops, and even medicine shops, adulterate their products; they may recycle burnt oil to deep fry

various food items even though cooking oil should be used only once. Many milk men also add formalin to their milk to preserve it, and some hotels and restaurants use dead chickens in preparing their food items or rotten mangoes in preparing fruit juice, and so on (Hossain et al., 2008).



Fig. 22 Pile of formalin-treated fish seized by a mobile court at Sawarighat in the capital
Photo: *The Daily Star*, 25 February 2007

The perceptions and attitudes of consumers

Most consumers are aware of the use of harmful chemicals in foods; they either believe it or have at least heard of it.

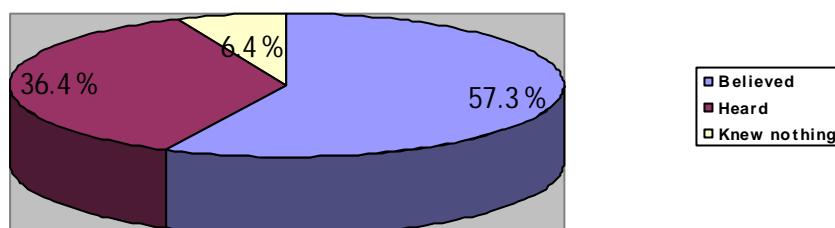


Fig. 23 Consumer awareness regarding the use of hazardous chemicals in foods
Source: Based on Hossain et al., 2008

More male consumers than female consumers are aware of the use of harmful chemicals in food production, and almost every respondent says that foods mixed with chemicals were harmful to one's health. Surprisingly, however, most consumers are compelled to buy adulterated foods due to the unavailability of unadulterated foods. Other probable reasons include inadequate information available to consumers (Burnett, 1989), food consumption patterns, the longer shelf life of adulterated foods, and the attractive appearance of chemically treated foods.

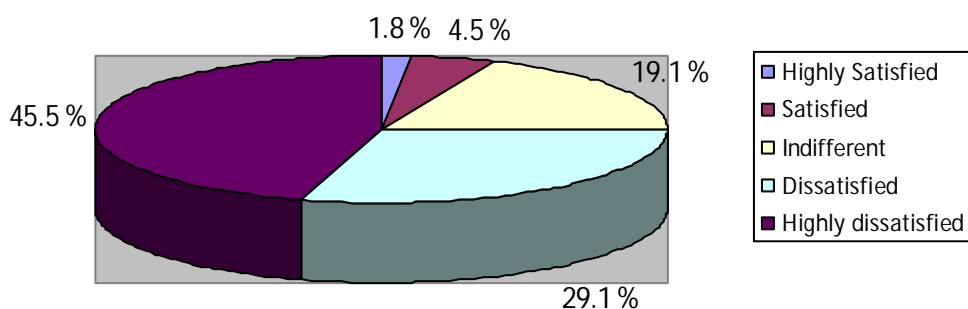


Fig. 24 Consumer satisfaction levels

Source: Based on Hossain et al., 2008

Levels of consumer satisfaction with adulterated foods and foodstuffs are very low. Most people are dissatisfied (45.5% highly dissatisfied and 29.1% dissatisfied) and nearly all feel that introducing hazardous chemicals into food products should be stopped. Interestingly, as consumers, 72% of producers/sellers were aware that food stuffs mixed with chemicals were harmful to one's health, and 68% avoided consuming foods mixed with chemicals (Hossain et al., 2008). On the other hand, only 40% were aware of the particular effects of consuming such foods, and 84% of producers/sellers felt that introducing harmful chemicals into foods should be stopped.

Effects on consumer health

Food adulteration is a burning problem in Bangladesh and is increasing daily. Health experts are very anxious about the condition of the nation's health because the chemicals used to adulterate foods are potent carcinogens and pose serious dangers to public health. Various doctors and pharmacists mentioned that eating foods mixed with hazardous chemicals may result in food poisoning, paralysis, food allergies, diarrhea, allergies, cancer, gastroenteritis, and even liver cancer or cirrhosis. Even those who spray or inject formalin over a long period of time will likely suffer health complications such as blindness, asthma, and even lung cancer.

Anti-adulteration drive

The government of Bangladesh is trying to stop food adulteration. In addition to regulatory and maintenance authorities such as the BSTI, the public health departments of city corporations, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, and the Ministry of Food, the government introduced mobile anti-adulteration courts to nab culprits who adulterate foods and food stuffs. Such efforts are less successful, however, due to producers'/sellers' lack of conscientiousness and motivation to stop food adulteration, unprotected borders, dishonest trading practices, and unholy associations among business communities and administrative and law enforcement authorities.

4. Conclusion

The findings mentioned above are based on the analysis of the data, and the interpretations of the results originally appeared in Articles I–IV. I have used both qualitative and quantitative data to investigate consumption and everyday life in rural Bangladesh. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data also served as a triangulation of data and enabled me to use multiple methods. The qualitative approaches enabled me to examine more closely people's interpretations and experiences of consumption and everyday life. On the other hand, different quantitative secondary data helped me to verify and supplement the findings obtained through the qualitative approaches.

The consumption patterns of wealthy people (or upper class) are the same as or similar to those of their counterparts in developed countries. The poor (or lower class), who live mostly in rural areas, do not have the access to consumer markets that developed countries have. Despite the wider differences in well-being, hunger and unemployment are common in Bangladesh. Employment is no guarantee fulfillment of one's basic needs. The basic needs of a day-laborer vastly exceed his ability to pay for them. As a result, the gap between income and need persists. Those who cannot bridge this gap suffer severely. The scenario in the rural areas is more volatile: first, work is unavailable against the demand, and second, even if one finds a job, the salary/wage is very low.

Since its independence, Bangladesh has been developing rapidly, and its economy has progressed steadily over time. Such development and economic progress fueled certain changes in the consumption patterns of Bangladeshis, including those living in rural areas (Article I). The study of consumption patterns among rural Bangladeshis is significant, as the majority of the population lives in rural areas. Nowadays, in the post-independence period, rural people consume more food and drink, clothing, and footwear (Article I). Patterns of food intake are also changing; people now eat more potatoes and vegetables and fewer cereals. Housing conditions in rural areas have improved considerably, and almost every household has access to safe drinking water. Achievements in education are also notable, as the number of schools has increased significantly since independence. Consequently, the literacy rate is rising day by day, and the literacy rate among women has also improved significantly since independence. Medical facilities are also better than in the pre-independence period, although it remains unsatisfactory and insufficient. Many complain about the absenteeism of public-sector doctors and how they shirk their public duties to focus on their private practices. Technological developments and the consumption of technology can significantly alter consumption patterns, and the use of technologies has made the everyday lives of rural Bangladeshis much easier than before (Article II).

Along with changes in consumption patterns, a consumer culture is also emerging. Little literature is available on the consumer culture of rural Bangladesh. Article III focuses on the cultural aspect of consumption and explores the everyday life of rural

Bangladeshis. The rural people are very simple and enjoy festivity. Many religious and national festivals are celebrated in rural Bangladesh. Although dowry is a comparatively new phenomenon in Bangladesh, it has become an integral part of most marriages in rural Bangladesh (Article III). Despite legal ban, marriage at an early age and dowry are common. A larger dowry is needed for an older bride, which makes it very difficult to break the vicious circle of marriage at an early age and dowry. Dowry also involves a significant exchange of goods, money, and property. Studies claim that dowry payments contribute significantly to the poverty of many rural households. Unfortunately, laws alone are insufficient to eradicate the curse of the dowry.

Women in rural Bangladesh perform most of the household work, and as in many other patriarchal societies, men make most major decisions. Most educated men share decision making with their wives, help with household tasks, and marry without taking a dowry. The government and NGOs can boost awareness among rural people through education. To prevent early marriage, effective birth registration systems and proper verification of age at marriage should be implemented.

Rural people have their own way of pursuing leisure activities. Nowadays, women can also enjoy some free time for leisure (Article II, III). Despite a government ban on showing Bollywood films and Hindi songs in the theatres and the efforts of conservative groups concerned about preserving Bangla culture, Bollywood film and Hindi songs have remained a popular means of entertainment for many.

The extent of food adulteration is very alarming, and finding unadulterated foods is difficult (Article IV). Food adulteration in Bangladesh continues to imperil public health. Consumers in Bangladesh are at the mercy of unscrupulous producers and sellers because the government is unable to eliminate corrupt practices and alliances through law enforcement. Although producers and sellers cited many reasons, this study found that producers/sellers sought mainly to increase profits and to conduct business with less capital and equipment by mixing hazardous chemicals with foods and food stuffs (Article IV). To safeguard consumer rights, a permanent solution involving better law enforcement and scientific food testing is needed. Some consumers also prefer foods with a colorful and attractive look without considering the quality or ingredients the foods contain. The government should improve consumer awareness and motivate sellers/producers through various actions and programs.

To achieve further success, Bangladesh should emphasize rural development because a major portion of the population lives in rural areas. The adaptation and consumption of more modern and appropriate technology in everyday life in rural areas will play a vital role in rural development. The adoption of technological innovations and services takes time (Repo et al., 2004); therefore, attention should also be focused on their proper use. As some of the respondents mentioned, adult movies were shown in small shops without observing age restrictions. Others noted the misuse of mobile phones with features for photographs and videos, and that young people talk unnecessarily on mobile phones late at night due to the cheaper price at that time, and so on (Article II). Generally, if parents are

not careful, these lackadaisical habits can make children less attentive in their studies and hamper teenagers' normal activities, which could ultimately threaten to spoil them.

Despite political instability, frequent natural disasters (e.g. floods, cyclones, and draughts), extremely high population density, a vast uneducated population, a poor base of natural resources, insufficient power supplies, corruption and inefficient governance, all of which hinder the economic and social development of the country, Bangladesh has achieved much success.

Although the results of this study show changes in rural consumption scenarios along with an increase in income and GDP, the living conditions of many rural households remain miserable. Corruption is a major obstacle to achieving macroeconomic goals such as reducing income poverty. As a result, many in Bangladesh do not benefit from GDP growth. An important question, then, could be how to make GDP growth more beneficial for the common people, and especially the poor. Finding fruitful, solid answers to these questions will require further substantial research.

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Appendix

(For Articles I, II, and III)

A schematic outline for the Flexible Life Story Interview (based on Thompson, 2000)

Interview number: Date of Interview: Place of Interview:
Name:
Male/Female:
Address:
Date (year) and place of birth:
Current Occupation:
Marital Status: single / married / divorced / widowed / ...
No. of children:

Starting

First of all, can you tell me when and where you were born?
How many years did you live there?
Where did you move to then?
Can you remember why the family made those moves?

Grandparents' generations

May we talk about your grandparents?
Let's take your mother's parents first.
Do you remember your grandmother?
Grandfather?
Where did they live?
What was their occupation?
Can you describe their characteristics?
How much did you see them?
Did they help to rear you?
Did you ever stay with them?
Has your mother helped them in any way?
Were they religious?
Were you close to them?
Was either of them a strong influence on you?
How many children did they have?

May I now ask you about your grandparents on your father's side?

(Questions are the same as on the mother's side)

Father

When was your father born?
Where?
(How old was he when he died?)
Please tell us something about your father

Can you describe his characteristics?
Did he show affection?
Was he easy to talk to?
What about anger?
Was he religious?
Were you close to him?
Would you please tell us about your father's occupation?
What kind work did he do?
Did he always do that kind of work?
Did he sometimes do more than one job?
Was your father ever out of work? If yes, how did you manage then?

Mother

When was your mother born?
Where?
(How old was she when he died?)

Please tell us something about your mother (Can you describe her characteristics? Did she show affection? Was she easy to talk to? What about anger? Was she religious? Were you close to her?).

Would you please tell us about your mother's occupation? (What work did she do before and after having children? Did she always do that kind of work? Did she continue working after she had her children? If yes, who looked after you while she worked?)

How many children did she have?
Can you remember when they were born?
Did all your brothers/sisters live with you? All the time? If not, where did they live then?
Did your parents bring you up to consider certain things important in life?
What kind of a person did they hope you would grow up to be?
Was either of them a strong influence on you?
Would you please tell us something about their relationship as a couple (husband and wife)?

Siblings/Cousins/Uncles/Aunts

Let us talk about the other people in your family.
Brothers, (where and when, visits, get togethers, festivals or weddings, funerals, etc.)
Sisters, (where and when, visits, get togethers, festivals or weddings, funerals, etc.)
Uncles (where and when, visits, get togethers, festivals or weddings, funerals, etc.)
Aunts, (where and when, visits, get togethers, festivals or weddings, funerals, etc.)

Daily life in childhood

Who did what around the house when you were a child? The cooking/cleaning/washing, etc?
What kind of things did you have to do?
Did your brother/sister have to help?
Who made your clothes?
Did your father help with household tasks? In what way?
Did he look after you on his own or play with you?
Did your mother play with you?
Who did you play with as a child? What sort of games did you play?
Were you free to play with whom you liked?

Employment

Can you tell me something about your working life? (What kind of job, for how long, education and skills needed, always the same kind of job or not, do you have a permanent job, how do you manage when you are unemployed...)

Marriage

- Can we talk about your marriage and family life?
- Can you tell me how you got married?
- What was the role of your parents in your marriage?
- How old were you then? And s/he?
- Did you know your wife/husband before your marriage?
- Did you receive/give any dowry?
- Do you support taking/giving dowry?

Spouse and Household

- Can you please tell us the meaning(s) of consumption to you?
- Would you please tell us something about your spouse? What does s/he do?
- Does s/he help you with household and other work? If yes, how often?
- How do you make decisions in the family?
- Do you see your spouse as a consumer?
- (I inquired about unpaid labor in households to learn about the division of labor in the household.)
- Who takes care of the cooking/cleaning/washing/child care, etc?
- (For information regarding gender-based learning and material possession)
- What materials and stuffs do you have in your household?
- Who won these? How did you obtain these? Did you buy with cash, credit, or receive them as a gift?
- Who uses those objects?
- How are these used?

Food consumption

- What is your staple food?
- What other foods do you consume?
- Do you eat the same menu every day?
- How many times a day do you eat? At what times of the day?
- Do you buy all your food or make it at home? Who prepares/cooks the foods for your household?
- How do you collect or prepare the raw materials (rice, flour, salt, spices) needed for cooking?
- Do you produce enough food grains to cover your consumption over the year? If no, then how do you manage?
- What is the source of your drinking water?
- What other drinks (tea, coffee, milk, alcohol) do you consume in your household? Do you prepare them in your household or buy them from shops?
- What kinds of shops?
- Does your family sit down together for meals?
- Who usually eats first?

In terms of the availability of food, is the present time better than your earlier age?

Do you find any difference in your consumption patterns between your childhood and the present? How is that?

What is the effect of the recent price hike on your food consumption?

Clothing

What are the main items of clothes you and your family members normally use?

How do you obtain the clothing? Do you buy or make them?

Who used to buy/make them?

What are the changes you have seen in clothing consumption over the period?

What is your opinion about clothing consumption compared to earlier days?

Do you think your clothing consumption has increased? If so, how?

Education

Would you please tell me something about your education and schooling (when did you start schooling, level of education, types of education, can you remember your teachers, how did you feel about them, did your parents encourage you with your schoolwork, how did you go to school, how did you dress up for school, what extra things did you consume compared to those who did not go to school, what sports/games did you play, what superstitions did you follow as a child or student, did you receive a stipend/scholarship/subsidies from the government, etc.)

Can you please compare your total education scenario with that of your children (present scenario)?

What changes (and similarities) have you observed between now and your time? Can you tell something about female education and food for education programs?

Housing

Please tell us something about the house you used to live in during your childhood.

How was it?

What was it made of?

How many rooms?

Can you describe the house to me?

Do you still live in the same house?

If not, please describe your present house.

Medical consumption

Can you describe the medical facilities you have at present?

Are you satisfied with them?

Why or why not?

What else could be added to the facilities?

How do you compare the contemporary situation with the pre-independence situation?

Leisure

May we now talk about your leisure activities?

What do you do during your leisure time?

Have your interests changed?

Do you have any hobbies?

Do you belong to any groups/clubs/associations?

Did/do you go to the cinema, dance hall, shopping, etc?

Eid (Muslims' greatest festival, two Eid festivals annually)

Would you please tell us how you celebrate the Eids (with reference to food, clothing, and culture)?

Bengali New Year celebration

Please describe the Bengali New Year celebration (what, how, when, where, and with whom)

Role of technology in consumption

What is the role of electricity and electronic machines (e.g. TV, radio, and VCR)?

What is the role of the mobile phone in your everyday life?

Has technology changed your consumption patterns? If so, how?

How is your relationship with others at work?

How far has changing technology affected your working life?

How are technologies adapted?

What disturbances do they created?

Consumer experience

How do you regulate your emotion and desire when you prepare your budget?

How do you manage the recent price hike of essentials in preparing your budget?

Conclusion

How would you describe yourself?

How has that changed since your childhood?

Are you satisfied with your life?

What has been the best thing in your life?

What has been the worst thing in your life?

Thank you very much for giving me a full account of your life and experiences, which will be very valuable for my research.

