The Emerging Digital Culture of Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

The neoliberal globalization process accelerates the development of information and communication technologies in the postmodern society. With the process of these development there emerges the concept of digitalization. The traditional culture of Bangladesh is being replaced by the digital culture and mostly due to the influence of information and communication technologies. And in these cases web technologies, Internet, satellite communication throughout the world are playing the key role in this regards. The traditional culture like the celebration of Pahela Baishakh, Halkhata and other customs of the family life as well as kinship ties also has been reshaped due to the influence of virtual communication and digital technology. Now we are living in the era where the personal presence became lesser significant than that of virtual presence. In almost every sector like agricultural, business, governance systems are running mostly through electronic systems like e-commerce, e-governance, e-shopping and likewise. The digitalization of all of these sectors has both pros and cons. Digital culture is emptying the roots and displaces it with the hollywoodization and bollywoodization. Digitalization saves time and money and promote better and quicker services thus accelerate the development of the country but at the same time it has different types of complexities too. Throughout the present study it is trying to find out the emerging digital culture of Bangladesh along with its problems and prospects. The study has been conducted after reviewing the previous research papers and the statistical data regarding information and communication technologies from Bangladesh perspectives. And at the end some recommendations has been proposed in this study for the adequate and necessary development of the digital culture of Bangladesh for the betterment of the country.

Keywords: Digital Culture, Information and Communication Technology, Civilization, Traditional culture, Globalization, E-Commerce, E-Governance, Social Media, Virtual Relationship, Bangladesh.

Introduction:

Information Technologies have spawned profound changes in human society. These are quite diverse from social transformations caused by earlier scientific developments. With the invention of the telegraph in the early 19th century the modern Information & Communication Technology (ICT) has been inaugurated and from then the new sectors of information and communication technology are flourishing day by day. Now in the 21st Century we witness a dramatic new wave of ICT, leading to massive socio-economic changes. Due to the development of information and communication technology now everything are becoming digitalized even digital itself. Now technology influence each and every moment of our life including the way we interact and maintain our relations with others either inside the boundary or the global level.

The term digital culture is a new phenomenon and basically it emerged after the development of information and communication technology. Digital culture analytically investigates the role of internet, new media and digital technologies and the roles they play in contemporary society, media, culture, business, politics, the arts and everyday life of the people. The Digital Cultures places intelligent, interactive, mobile and networked technologies in context, drawing on media studies, cultural studies, new media studies, science and technology studies, sociology, media arts and philosophy to understand the changes that happened around the globe and of course which are associated with digital media.

Bangladesh is one of the least developed and overpopulated nations in the world with more than 16 crore people living in an area of 1, 47,570 km (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2012). It is almost completely surrounded. Bangladesh a country of 3rd world is not out of the influence of this digital culture. Now day by day technology is including in every sector and thus paved the way of our life. The culture of Bangladesh is becoming digital and of course not in a full pledge but it's a continuous process. The digitalization of the culture of Bangladesh has both merits and demerits and a lot of stage have to pass to get the full interest of this digitalization.

Digital culture:

Whenever we talk about culture we basically talks about a society which practice some rules and norms and thus they continue their way of living in their own society. For example- when we think about the cultural practice of Bangladesh then the thing which comes in our mind is nothing but the cultural practices like the celebration of pahela baishakh on the first day of Bangle New Year and other norms and practices with which we regularly interact.

Many scholars defined culture from many perspectives by using their domain of knowledge but the best definition of culture was given by Tylor. On the first page of Primitive Culture, Tylor provides a definition which is one of his most widely recognized contributions to anthropology and the study of religion:

'’Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (Tylor, Edward; 1920)

So it can be said that Culture refers to the collective sum of knowledge, experience, dogmas, morals, attitudes, meanings, orders, religion, ideas of time, roles, spatial affairs, concepts of the universe, and material objects and belongings acquired by a group of people in the course of peers through individual and group determined. It is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.

On the other hand Charlie (2008) argued that in this digital era m most forms of mass media, television, recorded music, film, are produced and, increasingly, distributed digitally. These media are beginning to converge with digital forms, such as the Internet, the World Wide Web, and video games, to produce a seamless digital Medias cape. When at work we are also surrounded by such technology, whether in offices, where computers have become indispensable tools for word processing and data management, or in, for example, supermarkets or factories, where every aspect of marketing and production is monitored and controlled digitally.

In the era of globalization much of the means by which governments and other complex organizations pursue their ends rely on digital technology. Physical money, coins and notes, is no more than digital data congealed into matter. By extension, information of every kind and for every purpose is now mostly in digital form, including that relating to insurance, social services, utilities, real estate, leisure and travel, credit arrangements, employment, education, law, as well as personal information for identification and qualification, such as birth certificates, drivers licenses, passports and marriage certificates. (Charlie Gere: Digital Culture: 2008; 13-14)

So whenever we talk about digital culture the things that come to our mind is the combination of information and communication technologies with cultural practices and which makes ones culture digital. Digital culture analytically investigates the role of internet, new media and digital technologies and the roles they play in contemporary society, media, culture, business, politics, the arts and everyday life of the people.

Digital culture and Bangladesh:

The telecommunication facilities like Radio, Television, Landline telephone, Cell phone and final edition the internet play a significant role in the development of digital culture and thus digitalizing our lives. Dr. Jude Genilo et.al (2009) in their articles '’Narratives on Digital Bangladesh: Shared Meanings, Shared Concerns’’ stated the following definition of digital culture.

Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) Secretary Enamul Kabir, in an interview, specified that in Digital Bangladesh the "citizens would get information through electronic channels. Human interaction would be minimal. Most of the services can be given over electronic channels." In this sense, he merely spoke about the provision of government services.

Former Secretary of the Ministry of Science and ICT Nazmul Huda Khan defined it as applying "the latest advancements in science and technology" in reaching government development targets such as the "amelioration of life and emancipation from causes vexing humanity."

IT Specialist Shahid Uddin Akbar explained it simply as "integrating ICT in social and economic activities."

Bazlur Rahman, CEO of Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) stated that "I see digital Bangladesh in a way which would bring change in life and livelihood of people in rural areas, income would increase, narrows the gap. All the disparities, divide in terms of technology would be reduced."

The digital culture that has been continuing its functions in Bangladesh has been discussed under the following topics-

The role of e-governance

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) were recognized by the world leaders as a key development enabler in World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 (Tunis Commitment).Development of an e-administration platform and creation of affordable, transparent e-services using ICTs that are already in the hands of millions such as mobile phones, radio, TV in addition to internet are key. Important areas to address are education, healthcare, agriculture, administration of land and water resources, social safety nets, law enforcement and judiciary and disaster management. (Karim; 2010)

In Bangladesh, service at doorsteps through ICTs is vital not only to establish a democratic and transparent government, but also to fight against poverty and act as a cross-cutting enabler for interventions geared towards attainment of all the millennium goals. Service at doorsteps is also necessary for ensuring government accountability, decentralization and providing effective and efficient service delivery to citizens.

Electronic governance or E-governance can be defined as the delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means to support good governance. Along with Governments of many developing nations, Bangladesh is also coming to a fast realization that ICT is not only necessary for promoting economic growth but also can be a great engine for driving good governance. E-governance often refers to the use of ICT by the government agencies to transform relations with citizens, business and other arms of government in the delivery of services. The use of ICT in government facilitates an efficient, speedy and transparent process for performing government administration activities and for disseminating information to the public and other agencies. E-governance promises transparency, shortens service delivery time, alleviates poverty, reduces corruption, strengthens democracy and implements good governance. Good governance can play an important role in economic and social development cooperation. Bangladesh can be benefited by implementing E-governance both in internal government sectors and the public sectors for the ultimate socio economic development. (Chowdhury and Satter; 2012)

The government of the people's republic of Bangladesh plays significant role and still continuing its role for the development of a successful e-governance system to reach each and every citizen of the state. In all the area like Policy and Law, Local government, Law Enforcement, Legal Services, Judiciary, Disaster Management, Environment and Climate Change, Social Safety Nets

Land and Water Resources, Healthcare facilities, Education and above all agricultural sector are now under the system of e-governance. Now anybody from anywhere gets the information and facilities from the governmental level. Each and every sector under the government are controlled through the information and communication technologies which play a significant role for the reduction of bureaucratic complexities, minimize cost, enhance services, make skill human resources and thus the development of Bangladesh is ongoing.

The role of E-commerce

Electronic commerce has been seen as a way to reduce friction in the marketplace. It allows larger volumes of transactions to take place than would otherwise be possible in the conventional marketplace, and it effectively expands markets while opening up opportunities for new ones (*Zainudeen et. al (2011)*).

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) is the conduct of commercial transactions over electronic networks (OECD, 2002). It has been seen as a way to reduce friction in the marketplace, allow larger volumes of transactions to take place and effectively expand markets. It also offers a way to open up entirely new markets, allowing smaller and larger marketers to exploit the "long tail" of demand for goods or services (Anderson, 2006).

With the spread of the Internet in developed markets, it was suggested that e-commerce based on the Internet would change the way that companies in developing countries big and small transact business, by connecting them through the Web to international markets through specialized networks. Transaction costs would be reduced, and competitiveness would be improved, propelling growth and development. (*Zainudeen et. all; 2011*)

E-marketplaces can offer several benefits to buyers and sellers, leading to market widening and improved market clearing. For buyers, such applications can reduce search costs; with the simple click of a button, information on a variety of sellers and goods and services is available. This can lead to an increase in demand for goods and services and an outward shift in the demand curve. For sellers, e-marketplaces can contribute to a reduction in seller costs by allowing sellers, particularly microbusinesses lacking the necessary resources to run brick-and-mortar shops (rent, employee salaries, etc.), to market their wares using their mobile or a computer; this benefit is especially relevant for low-income users in developing markets. Such marketplaces also open up markets for the sale of less popular or long-tail products, because the cost of selling them is considerably reduced (Anderson; 2006)

Feedback mechanism, secure payment method, secures and reliable delivery has been providing by e-commerce. In recent times with the access to the internet and due to the establishment of 3G network by all mobile companies online shopping as well as E-commerce is becoming popular in Bangladesh both to the producer and to the consumer. Recent report says that there are three core peoples in Bangladesh have already access to internet communication. E-commerce sites are becoming popular day by day. In the past In a country like Bangladesh, people has to depend on metro cities for searching commodities with good quality and wide selection but now, Online shopping offers wide, easy and thought-provoking shopping experience. It provides several advantages like 24 hours shopping, and thus requires less travel, rich product availability and qualifications etc. Almost all online shopping sites that are functioning in Bangladesh now offer items in discounted price and free shipping for selected items and thus attracting the customers to have a try. Through the website unlike conventional shopping the customer can get a detailed account of the specifications of the products they required. Almost all types of necessary things are now available in e-commerce services like mobile, accessories, jewelry, clothing, food, books, cars etc. The Online shopping has demerits too, we cannot

touch and feel the item, delay in shipping, risk of losing the money etc. are a few.
Some e-commerce currently functioning in Bangladesh is as follows-

There are more than thousands of companies who are currently running their business via online.

The role of Social media and the creation of virtual relationship:
In the era of internet social media or "social networking" has almost become part of our daily lives and being tossed around over the past few years. Social networks provided us the opportunity to connect with people and build better relationships with others, with whom we are unable to meet in person, and let them know about our lives and take input about their lives and events happening with them. (Azim: 2003)

Social media is a rapidly growing phenomenon in Bangladesh. On 4th May 2014, with roughly 7.4 million people using the world's strongest social medium, face book. According to BTRC (Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission) the total number of Mobile Phone subscribers has reached 116.553 million where the total population is around 150 million at the end of June 2014.

There are always two sides of everything; it depends on the perspective on how we perceive it. The same goes for social media, most people admire it as a revolutionary invention and some perceive to take it as a negative impact on the society.

Jr, Richard (2013) argued that, Impression management is a key concept of interpersonal communication. The people, with whom we are very close or intimate, are likely to share many or most of our beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, and values. And some forms of new media allow us more tools for presenting ourselves than others. But the good thing is much of the research on Face book, though, has focused on the less intimate alliances that we maintain through social media. Since most people maintain offline contact with their close friends and family.

Besides, Social media is changing our relationship styles in several important ways. First, it's allowing us to connect with more people more rapidly. Second, it's easy to overestimate the level of intimacy of our online relationships. Third, it makes us more susceptible to a sort of social media contagion effect, which means you may possibly start adopting behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs from those within our social network. Fourth, social media facilitates comparing ourselves with others, which may have positive or negative effects (Jain, 2010). The most notable thing is social media have glamour, which attract people to explore themselves in this virtual world and to discover a new horizon of relationship without responsibility.

Azim (2003) in her study ''Impact of Social Media on Interpersonal relationship: Case of Bangladesh'' showed that that there is strong impact of social media on interpersonal relationship in some extant. But a big

portion of them (66%) thought these are positive influence for relationship. Such as: Social media reduce distance, where people have no space to contact with others, social media make it possible to communicate with them frequently, it gives the opportunity to share personal emotions, information, photos etc. In any case, people who cannot present physically, can ensure their presence virtually which they missed. Though social media is a big space to share opinions, feelings and people can get quick feedback on his post, sometime it may help to solve personal problem, to get new or innovative idea to enrich existing relationship, to express love, affection on face book which people may not express in real life. These respondents believe social media increase interpersonal interaction. Social media can encourage people to maintain their relationship. When people see other's relationship bondage, then they can realize the attachment to their friends and relatives when they miss vigorously and may become enthusiast to communicate with them. 22% respondents' thoughts, social media can play a good role to search new friends.

The negative impact of Social Media (Facebook) in interpersonal relationship.
Source: Somoyer konthossor: 29th October 2014

Azim (2003) also finds negative impact of it on interpersonal relationship. They mentioned some facts which may cause bad influences toward interpersonal relations. Such as-Social media interaction can increase jealousy in physical world. Though it is a virtual world but partner of any intimate relationship cannot tolerate any kind of sharing. Virtual world is totally touching fewer worlds. So exercising touch less relationship for a long time may cause of emotion less. Beside this people may derail from his normal life. People may become unsocial in physical world. People may maintain more than one intimate or affair relationship at a time in facebook. Vulnerable people may motivate by others, which may create problems for their relatives. If anyone has bad intention to do harm others, they can misuse it and do crime also.

Prospects of digital culture in Bangladesh:
For the development of digital culture a country must have IT experts, Human resources, IT training facilities and overall the connectivity with the global world and a flourishing working environment. According to *M. Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury & A.K.M. Zaidi Satter (2012*), 79% of Ministries/Divisions,   76% of Departments/Corporations, 75% of Academic Institutions are currently connected to the Internet. At the Ministry/Division level, about 11.6% of the offices have broadband and about 7% have radio--link connectivity. At the Department/ Corporation level, about 10% of the offices have broadband and about 4.2% have radio-link connectivity. At academic institutions, 8.3% of the offices have broadband, and about 12.5% have radio link connectivity. At the Ministry/Division level, about 30.64% officers and about 32.64% staff use PCs. At the

Department/ Corporation level, about 20.6% officers and about 6.49% staff use PCs. In academic institutions, about 40% officers and about 7.4% staff use PCs. At Ministry/Division level, percentage of officers trained in IT is 28% and percentage of staff trained is 29%. There are 28%, 27% and 50% IT training facilities at ministries/ divisions, departments/corporations and academic institutes respectively. In Academic Institutions, the number of IT trainers stand at 37% of IT Human.At Department/ Corporation level, the number of IT trainers stand at 28% of IT Human Resource.

Now in the era of neoliberalism now a country like Bangladesh is maintaining its level of development in a standard way. Government of Bangladesh and its maintenance body is also working to make a digital Bangladesh with its vision 2021. And its success rate is higher. Now Bangladesh has a favorable environment for the development of digital culture as it is interconnected with the global world.

Problems for the emergence of digital culture in Bangladesh and its byproducts:
M. Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury & A.K.M. Zaidi Satter(2012) identified the following problems which work as a hindrance for the development of digital culture in Bangladesh as well as for the development of good e-governance. Those constraints are , poor ICT infrastructure, scarcity of it policy, lack of awareness of government officials, non-acceptability of it systems, lack of coordination, low level of it literacy, lack of it training , high-cost, lower liability of internet access, lack of it funds, poor salary structure, wrong task and blocked post *,* wide spread corruption, lack of attention in complain center ,law and order situation, hassle in getting required service and lack of information.

At the same time due to the development of digital culture some byproducts has been emerged with it which play negative role in a serious way. The digital culture of social networks are reducing the one to one or interpersonal communication among humans and giving a rise to a digital identity that differs from the person's actual identity or personality. Now the human relations are becoming weaker due to the development of virtual communication system through mobile phone, social media. The kinship ties are decreasing as a result the societal and family problems are increasing day by day. Digital crimes are also increasing with cybercrime. The real culture like providing honor to the elders are now decreasing and in this state a culture of real virtuality are increasing. Now people are becoming westernized due to the influence of satellite technology. Bollywodization also influence the real culture of Bangladesh. The organic solidarity among the people is increasing. Now no one knows anyone in presence everyone maintains virtual relations.

Conclusion and recommendation
Digital culture is the gift of information and communication technology. After the intrusion of satellite and optical fiber technology in Bangladesh the people got the opportunity to be familiar with both national and multinational cultures through internet, satellite television. As a result they are becoming interconnected with those cultures and make their own culture digitalized. The government of Bangladesh is also working for the digitalization of Bangladesh in every sector which brings new dimensions in each and every sector of the society and thus helps to construct digital culture. The digital culture has both positive and negative sides and of course it's fully depends on the motives of people how they are using those technologies in their life. So at the end it can be said that above all of its disputes, the digital culture of Bangladesh keeps its development process in a running horse.

Recommendation
It must be apprehended by both the government and the development partners that ICTs have amalgamated as a non-threatening approach to catalyze, not force, managerial reform through numerous efficiency enhancement tools and knowledge controlling platforms, but most notably, by providing a natural vehicle for re-engineering business methods both for provision delivery and for organizational judgment creation. Following are the recommendation for the development of digital culture in Bangladesh, most of which are literally mentioned by the scholars in their writings. The recommendations are as follows-

    a) Human resource development.
    b) Financial allocation and institutional capacity.
    c) Affordable connectivity.
    d) Locally relevant and local language content.
    e) Public and private partnership (PPP) framework.
    f) Reliable and continuous power.
    g) Legal reform for businesses and consumers.
    h) Branding Bangladesh as a software/ITES outsourcing destination.
    i) Provide Website, E-Mail and Phone based Government Services
    j) Must have strong road map.

   The following recommendation also can be added for the development of digital culture in Bangladesh.

a) Reduce internet and local bandwidth costs
b) Every organization should have strong IT division
c) Must have structured IT posts with handsome salary.
d) Provide information through Village Info Centers.
e) Establish online Mobile Phone based complaint center
f) Arrange more TV programs on Social and Economic Development issues
g) Provide Weather Forecast through Mobile Phone:
h) Submission of Utility Bills through SMS
i) Internet which could decrease the Educational Expense
j) Make Disability-Friendly software with steps from the Government.
k) Technical infrastructures should be flexible.

By following all of the above recommendation it can be make possible to make a better and successful digital culture in Bangladesh which will enhance the wheel of the economic prosperity of Bangladesh.

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