MODERATING EFFECT OF M-BANKING APPS USERS' DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EASE OF USE AND BRAND TRUST

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the impact of m-banking apps' ease of use on brand trust, including the moderating effect of users' demographic factors on that relationship. The research was quantitative, where 400 samples were selected based on simple random sampling. The participants were m-banking app users based on their availability and popularity and concentrated on the Dhaka division. The collected data were processed through the SPSS V23 and SmartPLS. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was run to test the hypothesis. The study revealed a positive significant impact of m-banking apps' ease of use on brand trust. In addition, gender and age had a moderating effect on the relationship between ease of use and brand trust, especially the male and older class groups who had strong brand trust at the high level of m-banking apps' ease of use.

KEY WORDS

m-banking apps, ease of use, brand trust, moderation effect, demographic factors, Bangladesh

JEL CODES

M1, M3, C12

1 INTRODUCTION

The modern electronic paradigm we see influences every part of our lives (Khan and Arif, 2023). Computers have almost always determined which things to sell in stores. They are doing functions that humans previously performed, and they will undoubtedly drive automobiles in the future (Khan et al., 2015).

The advancement of mobile marketing is even more remarkable because marketers must deal with the critical tasks of product development, promotion and advertising, distribution channel selection, and customer relations, all of which have been reinvented by the various online systems, social media, business manage-

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ment apps, and mobile devices (Roy et al., 2016). Regardless of function, every company sector has been touched, either directly or indirectly, by technological advances in the external environment (Khan et al., 2022b). For instance, the financial institutions industry has had to embrace technology, as seen by online (electronic) banking, ATM and credit cards, mobile banking, money transfers, and other services that cater to the specific demands of various clients (Khan, 2020). Mobile banking, in particular, has piqued the market's attention and is regarded as the business's future, particularly with the convergence of communications, technology, electronics, and media (Khan et al., 2019). The mobile device has risen primarily due to the requirement for mobility, driven by both the customer experience and the convergence angle. As a result, organizations are embracing mobility solutions from both corporate and individual users (Khan et al., 2015). Mobile devices have become an integral component of most people's everyday life.

Innovation and mobile technology advancements can revolutionize how customers conduct financial transactions by providing new options that match their lives. Mobile money transactions have been adopted more widely in underdeveloped nations than industrialized countries (Khan and Hossain, 2021). For example, consumers in the United States are suspicious of the benefits of mobile financial services. They are concerned about the degree of security and susceptibility of hackers gaining access to their financial records via mobile, hence the lower acceptance rate (Williams, 2012). Mobile banking is the supply and use of banking and financial services through mobile communications devices (Ngatia, 2013). Services may comprise the ability to execute bank and stock market deals, manage accounts, and obtain mainly designed information. They also claim that many clients are prepared to pay a fee to use the mobile banking facility. Mobile device absorption, new generations entitled by technology, enhancing consumer movement, and the swift convenience of mobile apps have all contributed to the rapid growth and adaptation of mobile banking, providing enormous business possibilities for

organizations seeking to satisfy their consumers more conveniently (Shankar and Rishi, 2020). Technical advancements heavily impact consumer behavior.

Several studies were explored in m-banking literature. For example, the adoption and acceptance of m-banking (Tan et al., 2010; Shaikh and Karjaluoto, 2015; Baabdullah et al., 2019), the technology acceptance model, and m-banking (Tiwari and Tiwari, 2020; Paramaeswari and Sarno, 2021), service quality of m-banking (Arcand et al., 2017; Shankar et al., 2020), trust in m-banking (Ramos et al., 2018; Tiwari et al., 2021), ease of use in mbanking (Olasina, 2015), m-banking satisfaction (Hamidi and Safareeyeh, 2019; Kamboj et al., 2021), transaction and using convenience, (Sulistyowati et al., 2021; Shahid et al., 2022), m-banking apps (Khan et al., 2022a; Saprikis et al., 2022), m-banking and demographic factors, (Haider et al., 2018; Vasudeva and Chawla, 2019; Windasari and Albashrawi, 2021). However, there is a gap in the existing literature on users' demographic characteristics' role in the relationship between m-banking apps' ease of use and brand trust. Hence, based on the above discussions, the following research questions can be searched to answer from a new study:

- RQ₁: How does the ease of use in m-banking apps influence brand trust?
- RQ₂: What kinds of demographic factors influence the relationship between m-banking apps' ease of use and brand trust?

A study should be a top priority to look into in order to answer the research questions above and fill in the gaps in the current literature. Thus, the study aimed to measure the role of users' demographic characteristics on the relationship between m-banking apps' ease of use and brand trust. The upcoming sections of the research were designed as follows. The second section highlighted the closely related literature to the research context. Then, the third section pointed out the methodology of that research. After that, the fourth section explains the analysis and discussion of the research findings. Finally, the study concluded with limitations, implications, and future research direction.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Mobile Banking (M-Banking)

Mobile banking or m-banking, according to most academic definitions, is an extension of m-commerce that allows users to connect bank accounts using mobile devices to carry out operations, including checking account balances, moving funds, online payment, or trying to sell stocks (Alafeef et al., 2011; Shaikh and Karjaluoto, 2015). Banking markets in developing and/or least developed countries might become more affordable and accessible through mobile banking and other digital financial technology (Lee et al., 2022). Even though ATMs (automated teller machines), cell phones, and Internet banking provide efficient distribution pathways for conventional banking product offerings, mobile banking is expected to have a considerable impact on the economy as the most recent distribution hub created by the banks' retail as well as micro-financing in several developing and developed nations (Hossain et al., 2018; Kamboj et al., 2021; Naeem et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2022).

Remarkably, the enhanced use of smartphones has expanded the market for mobile banking services, leading a large number of banks, microfinance organizations, software companies, and network operators to offer this cutting-edge service alongside new clusters of apps and services intended to boost the share of the market, enhance customer retention, attain unbanked communities, and create employment opportunities (Shaikh, 2013; Shaikh and Karjaluoto, 2015; Tiwari et al., 2021) even though retail m-banking offers several advantages. Nevertheless, it is not widely adopted or used (due to the concern for trustworthiness, transaction safety, ease of use, convenience, technology acceptance, demographic factors, and service quality) by consumers, particularly in developing nations (Baabdullah et al., 2019; Shankar et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2022a; Windasari and Albashrawi, 2021; Shahid et al., 2022). Therefore, the study considered mbanking apps' ease of use, brand trust, and demographic factors of m-banking users to measure the impacts on the banking industry.

2.2 Brant Trust

Brand trust is essential for fostering brand loyalty among consumers (Tiep Le et al., 2021). The concept has been recognized in the extant literature because the vital element concerns the improvement and upkeep of the connection between two alternate partners in diverse contexts (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Amani, 2015). There were several conceptualizations of brand trust considered in the branding literature. For instance, (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003) Operationalize brand trust considers a state of feeling at ease while interacting with a brand based totally on the belief that the brand will continue to be dependable and responsible for satisfying the consumer. Different scholars also view brand trust as clients' willingness to rely upon a brand (Tran et al., 2022). Brand trust is highlighted as perceptions and expectancies based on beliefs that a brand has precise features and traits that can be regular, capable, and credible (El Naggar and Bendary, 2017).

Furthermore, consumers prefer to feel confident in a brand before purchasing, mainly when there is uncertainty over several identical items to pick from and when significant risks are involved. In these circumstances, brand trust is a gateway to purchasing decisions (Sanny et al., 2020). These corporate traits are directly connected to consumer and brand interaction. As a result, enterprises publish research to attract consumers' perspectives on the brand, establish it in their thoughts, create a favorable brand reputation, and enhance brand trust by interacting with their entire brand communication channels (Bilgin, 2018). Wallace et al. (2021) suggested that Brand trust is a final result of previous experiences and interactions, and it mirrors the method of mastering over the years. This idea rationalizes that brand experience is the most relevant and essential source of brand trust (Kang et al., 2017).

2.3 Ease of Use in M-Banking Apps Toward Brand Trust

In order to foresee and simplify the consumers' psychosocial intention, the TAM (technology acceptance model) emphasizes the roles that anticipated benefit, anticipated ease of use, and mindset toward the action play (Hansen et al., 2018). The notion of ease of use in marketing has sought to identify, explore, and incorporate viewpoints on the origin of convenience and a related theory of convenience direction into more contemporary advances in marketing (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971). Initial use of the concept of comfort may be seen in the term 'convenience products,' where ease of use refers to clients' financial savings in time and effort in buying an item (Malureanu et al., 2021). Ease of use has constantly emphasized effort and time as aspects of convenience, and increasing this attention on these consumer inputs, which are focused on acquiring products and services, led to the notion of convenience as a product or item feature that decreases its non-monetary value (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971; Akdim et al., 2022).

Customers' comfort has long been examined, particularly in retailing and consumer behavior studies (Eger et al., 2021; Anderson et al., 2021). In addition, rising customer demand for ease of use is recognized due to socio-economic change, technical advancement, and increased competitiveness in corporate contexts, whether online or offline (Seiders et al., 2007; Alaimo et al., 2022). The perception of customers' ease of use in purchasing can enhance the trust in a particular online platform and the likelihood to continue engaging in future buy transactions (Saoula et al., 2023). Customers tend to refrain from utilizing a technologyenabled system that presents challenges in terms of comprehension (Silitonga et al., 2020). On the contrary, they would search for alternative options that offer comparable activities but include a more simplified and trusted process (Khan and Sharma, 2020; Wilson et al., 2021). Recent research findings have revealed that the perceived ease of use of e-commerce platforms significantly impacts customers' trust in the e-commerce sector (Botha et al., 2020;

Albayrak et al., 2023; Marthanti et al., 2022). Moreover, the ease-of-use elements positively and statistically significantly impact consumer brand trust. Likewise, the extent to which customers regard a system or technology as easy to use significantly impacts their trust levels (Maryanto and Kaihatu, 2021; Khan et al., 2022a). Hence, the following hypothesis can be drawn:

 H_1 : The mobile banking apps' ease of use significantly impacts brand trust.

2.4 Moderating Effect of Demographic Characteristics

The existing body of literature unequivocally demonstrates that customers exhibit distinct attitudes and actions when analyzed through demographic variables. Several studies within the marketing literature have employed demographic characteristics as moderators in their research endeavors (Mihić and Kursan Milaković, 2017; Akbarov, 2022; Higueras-Castillo et al., 2022; Alwan and Alshurideh, 2022), and these factors distinguish how customers decide in respect to their purchase intentions and/or habits (Gilal et al., 2020; Riva et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2022). The relationship between ease of use and brand trust may vary based on various factors (Khan et al., 2022a). This study aimed to check the moderation impact of gender, occupation, residence, and income on the relationship between ease of use and brand trust. For this purpose, researchers consider gender (male and female), occupation (student and other), residence (urban and non-urban), income (below 20000 taka and above 20000 taka), and age (less than equal to 25 years and more than 25 years) as a categorical variable to assess the moderation impacts (See Tab. 2).

Attempting or transitioning to a novel product or service entails a certain level of risk. Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that individuals of the male gender have a higher propensity for risky decision-making and display a lower inclination toward brand trust than their female counterparts (Lu et al., 2021). Gender differences influence e-commerce transactions to particular businesses and consumers'

Demographic Variables	Group 1	Group 2
Gender	Male (0)	Female (1)
Occupation	Student (0)	Others (1)
Residence	Urban (0)	Rural and Sub Urban (1)
Income	≤ 20000 Taka (0)	> 20000 Taka (1)
Age	$\leq 25 \text{ years } (0)$	> 25 years (1)

Tab. 1: The demographic variables of the two groups

trust in their brand (Murphy and Tocher, 2011; Effendi et al., 2020). Earlier studies found that female consumers were more influential on brand trust than male consumers (Ratnasari et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2020). On the other hand, another study found the reverse outcome of gender moderation on brand trust (Khan and Rahman, 2016). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H₂: Gender moderates the relationship between Mobile banking apps' ease of use and brand trust.

Previous research has indicated differences in consumption patterns between employed and those who are not (Stamper and Van Dyne, 2001). Reports indicate that individuals' attitudes toward employment can influence consumer behavior, leading to a distinct market segment (Schaninger and Allen, 1981; Pervin and Khan, 2022). Individuals often seek insights from an informative group of experts by conducting information searches or witnessing the behavior of influential individuals (Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka, 2019; Srivastava et al., 2016). Based on this information, it can be inferred that time constraints may significantly impact brand trust for working consumers as they prioritize ease of use. In contrast, nonworking consumers prioritize the development of brand trust. Thus, the following hypothesis can also be proposed:

H₃: Occupation moderates the relationship between Mobile banking apps' ease of use and brand trust.

Given that various geographical areas have distinctive cultures, consumers will likewise differ based on where they are from one another. One of the qualities touched by culture seems to be the level of trust consumers have in a brand (Munaier et al., 2022). Consequently, a study found that residential areas can play a moderating role in consumers' brand trust. Hence, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H₄: Residence moderates the relationship between Mobile banking apps' ease of use and brand trust.

Income is a parameter that has garnered significant research interest in mobile banking, as it has the potential to either facilitate or hinder the adoption of e-commerce (Hernández et al., 2011; Paul, 2019). The connection between higher income and the perception of fewer hidden risks in engaging with online platforms impacts the interest among online-based consumers. The limited financial resources of individuals can act as a barrier to engaging in e-commerce. The perception of ease of use and trust will likely enhance as income levels increase (Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka, 2019; Atulkar, 2020; Akbarov, 2022; Alam et al., 2022). Thus, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H₅: Income moderates the relationship between Mobile banking apps' ease of use and brand trust.

Age is a significant determinant in shaping consumer behavior, influencing individuals' views and behaviors toward products or services (Thaichon et al., 2016). When examining banking services, it is observed that elderly clients exhibit a restricted capacity for information processing compared to their younger counterparts. The discrepancy above resulted in variances in their attitudes towards ease of use in offerings and their levels of trust (Homburg and Giering, 2001; Lu et al., 2021). Therefore,

the age group can also be considered to play a moderating role in ease of use and brand trust (Herrando et al., 2019). More studies found that younger consumers have more positive trust in the brand trust than older consumers (Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka, 2019; Alam et al., 2022).

Therefore, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H₆: Age moderates the relationship between Mobile banking apps' ease of use and brand trust.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Model

The proposed research model is depicted in Fig. 1 to investigate the assumed hypotheses. It was projected that ease of use would have a beneficial impact on brand trust.

In addition, the demographic factors were predicted to moderate the relationship between ease of use and brand trust while using their respective m-banking apps.

3.2 Measurement Design

A structured questionnaire was developed based on literature analysis. The mobile banking brand trust scale was picked by (Hansen et al., 2018; Moon et al., 2022), and the ease of use scale was developed by (Shankar and Rishi, 2020; Khan et al., 2019) from the literature survey. The questionnaire was split into two sections (Khan and Rammal, 2022; Khan et al., 2022c). The first section comprised demographic information, while the second section contained model measurement elements. A 7-point Likert metric was devised, with '1'

indicating strongly disagree and '7' indicating strongly agree (Khan et al., 2018; Khan and Roy, 2023). The study picked 13 factors for the model: 5 under brand trust and 8 under ease of use. Only 8 factors were retained from EFA and CFA analysis. Tab. 2 of the following states the measurement items of the research.

3.3 Sampling, Data Collection, Analyzing Tools, and Procedures

The empirical study is based on the primary data type (Jayarathne et al., 2022; Roy et al., 2023). In Bangladesh, only 16 banks serve millions of private bank users and commercial enterprises under mobile finance services (Khan et al., 2022a). In Bangladesh, there are 114.051 million mobile banking service users, and only 33 million are active under this service (Khan et al., 2022a; The Business Standard, 2022). However, there is no specific statistic about total m-banking app users in Bangladesh. According to Gefen et al. (2011), it is recommended to have a minimum sample size of 77. A recent study by Tabachnick and

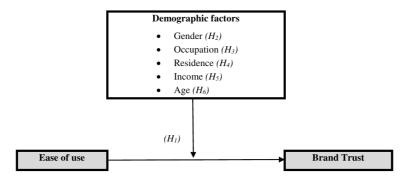


Fig. 1: Proposed model

Tab. 2: Measurement Items

Item code	Items
Ease of us	е
EU1	I am really adept at utilizing my m-banking apps.
EU2	I am considerably more familiar with utilizing my m-banking apps than other individuals.
EU3	I feel comfortable working on financial transactions by using my m-banking apps.
EU4	I am comfortable comprehending the words and contexts used in m-banking apps.
EU5	Easy to use mobile banking apps for me.
EU6	Utilizing mobile banking apps is not particularly complicated.
EU7	My bank offers relatively simple applications.
EU8	I have no trouble using my m-banking apps.
Brand trus	t
BT1	I fully trust my bank.
BT2	My bank aspires to have a reputation for being reliable.
BT3	My m-banking apps are very reliable.
BT4	Both my bank and m-banking apps are trustworthy.
BT5	I believe my bank does have the tech ability to prevent being supplanted on m-banking apps by another bank.

Source: Hansen et al. (2018), Shankar and Rishi (2020), Khan et al. (2019), Moon et al. (2022)

Fidell (2007) has introduced new test statistics that enable estimating models with a minimum of 60 participants. The minimum sample for SEM analysis through SmartPLS should be 200 (Kaur et al., 2022; Belwal et al., 2023). This study calculated the sampling amount using the Raosoft sample measurement calculator (http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html). According to the calculator, it is recommended to obtain a sample size of 377 in order to achieve a 95% confidence level for a population size greater than 20,000.

Hence, a simple random sampling technique was used to reach 400 respondents (Roy and

Ahmed, 2016; Al Ahad et al., 2020). The respondents were given questionnaires. The questionnaire was classified into two parts. One part had demographic questions, and another contained questions related to the latent construct of mobile banking adoption. Only 230 responses were utilized for the study based on the data suitability. The response rate was found to be 57.5%. MS Excel (V2007), SPSS (V22), and SmartPLS (V3.3.5) software (Ringle et al., 2015) were used to evaluate the data. Measurement and structural modeling were used to execute and evaluate the suggested model (Al Ahad and Khan, 2020).

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Analysis

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Tab. 3, which shows diversity in gender, occupation, monthly income, and residential area. Male respondents accounted for 66% of the total sample, whereas females were 34%. In total, 49% of the re-

spondents were students; the service sector and business represent 47.4% and 4.1% of the total respondents, respectively. The monthly Income level of almost 49% of the respondents was below 10,000. Besides this, the respondents' 26% monthly income level was above 30,000. In total, 63.5% of the respondents were residing in urban areas.

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative $(\%)$
Gender	Male	178	66.4	66.4
	Female	90	33.6	100.0
Occupation	Service	127	47.4	47.4
	Business	11	4.1	51.5
	Students	130	48.5	100.0
Monthly Income (BDT)	Below 10,000	129	48.1	48.1
	$10,\!001-\!20,\!000$	35	13.1	62.2
	$20,\!001 -\!30,\!000$	35	13.1	74.3
	Above 30,000	69	25.7	100.0
Residence	Rural	43	16.0	16.0
	Sub-Urban	55	20.5	36.5
	Urban	170	63.5	100.0

Tab. 3: Descriptive Statistics of the Collected Data (n = 268)

Note: BDT = Bangladeshi Taka

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

To assess the measurement model, researchers check the factor loadings (λ) , Cronbach's alpha (α) , composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010; Roy, 2022). From the result, it was found that (see Tab. 4) the factor loadings for all variables were substantial and surpassed the indicated cutoff threshold of 0.60 (Chin et al., 1997). Furthermore, the findings of construct consistency using Cronbach's values varied from 0.852 to 0.882, more significant than the 0.70 indicated by (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). All latent constructs' composite dependability (CR) values varied from 0.910 to 0.919, much higher than the tolerable limit of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). Based on the high relevance of items in assessing their respective constructs and all latent variables having composite reliability of at least 0.70, it is possible to infer that the assessment model has appropriate convergent validity.

Furthermore, the AVE value exceeded the recommended 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). Again, to assess the discriminant validity of the measurement model, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) conditions and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) criteria were applied. The entire HTMT ratio value is less than the threshold of 0.85 (Kline, 2015), as shown in Tab. 4.

Tab. 4: Convergent and discriminant validity

Factor	Items	λ	α	$\mathbf{C}\mathbf{R}$	AVE
Brand trust	BT1	0.892	0.856	0.912	0.776
(BT)	BT2	0.908			
	BT3	0.842			
Ease	EU1	0.868	0.893	0.926	0.757
of Use	EU2	0.882			
(EU)	EU3	0.881			
	EU4	0.850			

Brand Trust (BT)		Easy of Use (EU)			
Fornell and Larcker's criteria					
Brand Trust (BT)	0.881*				
Ease of Use (EU)	0.691	0.870*			
HTMT ratio					
Brand Trust (BT)					
Ease of Use (EU)	0.816				

Note: Diagonal elements (*) represent the square root of AVE values.

4.3 Structural Equation Model (SEM) and Discussion

The study then examines the path coefficients of the structural model, illustrated in Tab. 5 and Fig. 2. As for H_1 , the Mobile banking app's ease of use significantly impacted its brand trust ($\beta = 0.606$, t-value = 5.373, p-value < 0.001). The hypothesis was supported, which firmly

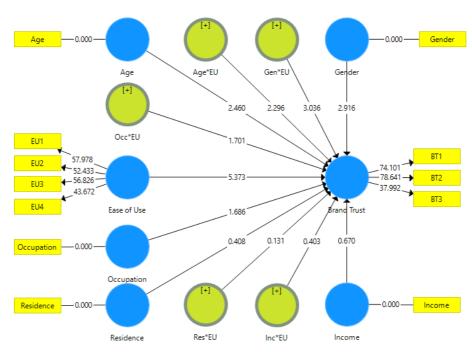


Fig. 2: Results of the structural model

confirms that the Mobile banking app's ease of use positively impacts its brand trust. The study outcomes were supported by earlier research (Botha et al., 2020; Albayrak et al., 2023; Marthanti et al., 2022). However, so far, our knowledge and according to the mobile banking literature analysis, this is possibly the first research by any researcher (both global and Bangladeshi perspectives) to test ease of use as brand trust's measurement variable. The research outlined that business firms like banks whose services may be connected with apps may consider ease of use as a platform for users' brand trust.

Again, the results of moderation analysis revealed that only gender ($\beta = 0.282$, t-value = 3.036, p-value < 0.01) and age ($\beta = -0.337$, t-value = 2.296, p-value < 0.05) significantly moderate the relationship between ease of use and brand trust, supporting the hypothesis H₂ and H₆. That means the ease of use of mobile apps differs for male and female consumers, which in turn moderates the association between ease of use and brand trust of the users.

Fig. 3 shows that women's curve is much steeper than men's.

At the low level of ease of use, male users have a high level of brand trust compared to female users. Nevertheless, female users have more vital brand trust than men at the high ease of use. The outcomes supported the earlier studies (Khan and Rahman, 2016) and did not support the findings (Ratnasari et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2020). Hence, the moderation result can infer that the male users are more worried about ease of use and brand trust for any financial transaction services than the female users. Similarly, the age group moderates the relationship between ease of use and brand trust. It was found from Fig. 3 that curves for the age group above 25 years were much steeper. With a high level of ease of use, the older group has much more trust in the brand than the young group. The adverse outcomes were found in the earlier research (Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka, 2019; Alam et al., 2022). That means in the case of fanatical service, older users are much more concerned than the younger group.

Tab. 5: Structural Equation Model (SEM) with Results

Н	Relationships	β	t-values	p-values	Supported	
Dire	Direct effect					
H_1	Ease of Use \rightarrow Brand Trust	0.606	5.373	0.000	Yes	
Mod	Moderation effect					
H_2	Gender* Ease of Use \rightarrow Brand Trust	0.282	3.036	0.004	Yes	
H_3	Income* Ease of Use \rightarrow Brand Trust	0.043	0.403	0.689	No	
H_4	Occupation* Ease of Use \rightarrow Brand Trust	0.222	1.701	0.095	No	
H_5	Residence* Ease of Use \rightarrow Brand Trust	0.014	0.131	0.897	No	
$_{\rm H_6}$	Age* Ease of Use \rightarrow Brand Trust	-0.337	2.296	0.026	Yes	

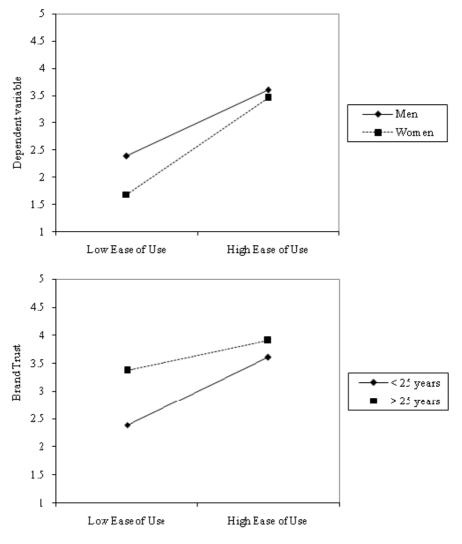


Fig. 3: Moderation effect by gender and age $\,$

The other moderation effects were found insignificant, so hypotheses $(H_3, H_4, \text{ and } H_5)$ are not supported. This study revealed that occupation, residence, and income do not moderate the relationship between ease of use and brand trust.

4.4 Predictive Power (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The quality of the structural model was evaluated by the coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) . The model has

substantial explanatory power as ease of use explains 57.3% of the variance in brand trust. Again, the predictive relevance value was 0.356, greater than 0, indicating good predictive relevance (Chin et al., 2020). The researchers also checked the goodness of fit (GoF) index. The approximate fit of the structural model was assessed by standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR). For the excellent fit of a model, the SRMR value should be less than 0.08 (Henseler, 2012). The SRMR value of the study was 0.046, which indicates considerable goodness of fit.

5 CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE RESEARCH

5.1 Implication in Practice

The current study demonstrates how banks may generally foster brand trust in mobile banking services and mobile banking apps. Firstly, bank officials might benefit from knowing the significance of demographic factors, such as gender, occupation, residence, personal income, and age, in connection to brand trust when developing strategies for specific demographic groups, especially ease of use in m-banking apps. Based on such findings, they may develop their m-banking apps' features, which could assist the m-banking users using them for banking purposes. Additionally, the study explains how bank regulators and analysts gain from mbanking apps' ease of use on brand trust in light of the various business and individual class groups. This study's outcome demonstrates that gender and age factors are significant in m-banking apps' ease of use and brand trust. Additionally, this research has the potential to serve as a blueprint for how the ease of use factors can assist in creating brand trust in the marketplace.

5.2 Implication in Theory

The current work may serve as a blueprint for future research. One research cannot possibly cover everything. Hence, the current study,

which is focused on the moderation effect of m-banking consumers' demographic factors on the relationship between apps' ease of use and brand trust, restricts the inclusion of many related but potentially significant characteristics. As a result, researchers are offering the existing study's constraints as a potential area for further investigation on mobile banking apps. Future research can be developed with more variables such as service quality, trustworthiness, brand performance, loyalty, convenience, etc. The abovementioned variables will test the relationship between apps' ease of use and brand trust. Few demographic variables, such as education, experience, etc., can be applied to the proposed and validated new research model as a mediating and/or moderation effect. Finally, a comparative study on the same topic among similar patterns of m-banking markets would be another appreciable investigation in the existing literature.

5.3 Ending Remarks

Outcomes embrace the idea that conceptual foundations and empirical relationships cannot be separated. As a result, the research has been carried out in such ways: firstly, the study proved the necessity of the research by explaining why learning more about mobile banking apps is crucial for Bangladesh, which is growing

in technology-based banking services. Secondly, the issues of m-banking apps' ease of use affect brand trust through empirical testing. Lastly, the role of app users' demographic factors affects the relationship between ease of use and brand trust. The fundamental limitations of the study were data collection challenges. The pandemic and post-pandemic situations were challenging, including less technology-oriented knowledge of the mobile banking app users. Another critical issue was research funding. Due to such constraints, the study could not

collect mass data across the country. However, owing to such limitations, the research has some implications that were explained clearly. Based on the findings of the study, there are some recommendations for the policymakers of mobile banking service providers. The marketing manager should focus more on convenience features for the upgraded brand trust to grab the market share. Besides, they should also concentrate on developing effective marketing mixes such as proper cost features and availability.

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