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Customer Service Channels and Response Time in Online Retail: Global Insights with Evidence from Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT :

This thesis examines how customer service channel choice and response time shape customer satisfaction in Bangladesh's online retail, comparing local and international providers and interpreting results through SERVQUAL, Expectation–Confirmation Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model. Two structured, self-administered Google Forms surveys were deployed—customers (n = 70) and retail staff (n = 30)—and the realized data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations and targeted tests where cell counts permitted, implemented mainly in Excel with selective Python for reproducibility.

Messaging channels, especially WhatsApp, concentrated minutes and sub-hour first responses and were associated with higher resolution and more positive expectation confirmation. Customers most often perceived phone and live chat as fastest, while staff rated social media as the most efficient to handle, signaling an operation–perception gap. Formal SLAs were not universal (43%), yet many teams still reported sub-hour first replies; first-contact resolution was strong for a majority (≥76% in 63%). Delays carried behavioral costs, with 46% of customers reporting at least one purchase abandoned due to slow support. On perceived performance, 47% judged local providers worse than international peers, though localization levers—Bengali language support, cash-on-delivery, domestic returns and local-hour coverage—mitigated risk, accelerated replies and raised assurance when executed well.

This thesis contributes Bangladesh-specific evidence on channel–timing mechanisms, integrates SERVQUAL, ECT and TAM into a parsimonious pathway from response speed and channel fit to satisfaction and continuance, and offers a dual-stakeholder view that triangulates customer experience with staff operations. Practically, the thesis recommends publishing channel-specific SLAs, prioritizing WhatsApp and live chat coverage in peak windows, adopting lightweight ticketing and live-chat tools, training agents to signal ownership and timelines, and tracking first response, FCR and abandonment by channel. Limitations include non-probability sampling, closed-ended measures, self-reported timings and a single-country cross-section. Future research should pair probability sampling with system telemetry, and A/B test SLA thresholds and staffing models to quantify causal impacts on satisfaction and loyalty.

KEYWORDS: Customer service, online purchase, response time, customer, online retailer

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Bangladesh's online retail has expanded rapidly with rising smartphone use, cheaper data and growing comfort with buying through websites, apps and social media. As this shift to online purchasing continues, customer expectations now extend beyond product price and variety to include the quality and responsiveness of service provided when assistance is required. Customer service channels such as phone, email, live chat, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, now act as critical touchpoints that shape reassurance, information flow and problem resolution across the journey (Ferdous & bin Ahsan, 2024; Slack & Singh, 2020; Mofokeng, 2021; Mardosaitė et al., 2024).

The post-pandemic digital surge has further heightened customer expectations for responsiveness and consistency across channels, positioning speed, clarity and reliability of support as key sources of competitive differentiation in e-commerce. In developing-country contexts, particularly Bangladesh, customer service also serves as a mechanism for building trust in digital transactions. Limited consumer protection enforcement, logistical challenges and low baseline trust make prompt, transparent and competent replies especially valuable (UNCTAD; Kartiwi, 2006). Prompt initial responses, regular status updates and accessible agents reduce perceived risk, while delayed or unclear communication undermines confidence and discourages repeat purchases. These patterns are especially visible in South Asia, where proactive support, local-language communication, cash-on-delivery and simple return processes help compensate for structural weaknesses in infrastructure and regulation (Ferdous & bin Ahsan, 2024; Kartiwi, 2006). The market mixes with international platforms (e.g., AliExpress) with localised or domestic providers (e.g., Daraz's Bangladesh operation, Pickaboo, Othoba). Localization such as Bengali interfaces, local-hour support, domestic returns, mobile payments and cash-on-delivery, can shorten resolution cycles and improve perceived empathy. By contrast, cross-border distance, time zones and language can slow responses or complicate returns for international sites despite breadth and pricing advantages. Evidence summarised in the literature review (including a case on AliExpress localisation) shows how

these attributes map to satisfaction: localisation tends to reduce perceived risk and accelerate resolution, whereas foreignness can delay responses and weaken assurance signals (Shia et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2023). Table-based contrasts of local versus international providers in Bangladesh highlight differences in language support, payment, delivery times, accessibility of service and trust signals, clarifying why channel fit and response time jointly shape satisfaction (see Table 2 and Figure 4).

Channel adoption patterns also matter. Where customers perceive a channel as useful and easy to use, they migrate toward it for support; where it is hard to access or ineffective, they revert to alternatives. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) helps explain these choices: perceived usefulness and ease of use drive uptake of faster, digital pathways such as in-app chat, WhatsApp or Messenger, particularly when interfaces are localised in Bengali and simple to navigate. Conversely, clunky chatbots or hidden contact options depress adoption and can push users to slower channels (Hossain & Biswas, 2024; Khalid, 2024). Bangladesh-specific discussion in the subsequent literature review notes that older or less tech-savvy customers may still prefer WhatsApp or phone over web chat unless the design is very intuitive, reinforcing the link between design quality, channel choice and experienced response time.

Against this backdrop, the thesis focuses on the joint effect of service channel and response time on satisfaction in Bangladesh's online retail. The concept note specifies a qualitative-dominant design using structured, closed-ended semi-structured interviews with online shoppers and retail staff, centring on channels used, first-response bands, resolution outcomes and satisfaction judgements. This design enables quantification of patterns and triangulation with theory in a context where localisation, trust and operational reality converge to shape outcomes (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Oliver, 1980).

1.2 Problem statement and research gap

Although responsiveness is repeatedly linked to perceived service quality and loyalty, Bangladesh-specific evidence that jointly models channel choice and response time against satisfaction remains thin. Existing studies often examine service quality in aggregate or focus on single channels, leaving little understanding of which channels respond

or resolve issues more quickly, and how these timing variations shape satisfaction and customer actions (Slack & Singh, 2019; Paulo et al., 2019).

Research comparing international and local online retailers also shows fragmented findings. While prior studies suggest that localization—such as local-language support, domestic payment systems, simplified return procedures and greater staff accessibility—can enhance service quality, the specific operational mechanisms through which localization produces faster and more reassuring interactions are not yet clearly articulated for Bangladesh (Shia et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2023; Ferdous & Ahsan, 2024).

Building on these observations, this thesis addresses the empirical gap by quantifying relationships between customer service channels, response-time categories and satisfaction outcomes, using primary data from both online shoppers and retail staff in Bangladesh.

Another important gap relates to customer expectations. In developing e-commerce markets, expectations regarding service speed and quality are often unstable, leading customers to react strongly to either prompt and courteous responses or delayed and unclear communication (Ferdous & Ahsan, 2024; Kartiwi, 2006; UNCTAD). Analyzing how these expectation–performance discrepancies vary across channels and response-time bands in Bangladesh is therefore essential to understanding why even minor differences in responsiveness can substantially affect satisfaction, trust and repurchase intentions.

1.3 Research aim, objectives and questions

1.3.1 Aim

To examine how customer service channels and response time affect customer satisfaction in Bangladesh's online retail sector.

1.3.2 Objectives

a. Assess the impact of different customer service channels on satisfaction.
b. Analyse the relationship between response-time bands and satisfaction in the Bangladeshi context.
c. Identify shoppers' preferred channels and the reasons for those preferences.
d. Contrast perceived responsiveness and satisfaction between local and international providers.

1.3.3 Primary research question

How do customer service channels (e.g., phone, live chat, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger) and their associated response times influence customer satisfaction in Bangladesh's online retail sector?

1.3.4 Sub-questions

a. Which channels are most frequently used for pre-purchase and problem resolution, and which are perceived as fastest?
b. How do first-response and resolution-time bands correlate with satisfaction ratings?
c. Do perceptions of responsiveness and satisfaction differ between local and international providers, and along which attributes (language, payments, returns)?

1.4 Theoretical framing

The study is anchored in three complementary lenses. First, Service Quality (SERVQUAL) conceptualises satisfaction as a function of gaps between expectations and perceived performance; responsiveness and assurance are particularly salient in mediated service encounters (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Slack & Singh, 2020). Second, Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) posits that satisfaction results from the comparison of perceived performance with prior expectations; response times that meet or exceed expectations should yield positive confirmation and higher satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Vijay, 2025). Third, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) helps explain adoption of support technologies and channels—perceived usefulness and ease of use can shift customers toward faster, digital pathways such as app chat or messaging, thereby indirectly improving satisfaction (Hossain & Biswas, 2024; Khalid, 2024). This tripartite framing allows us to connect channel characteristics and response dynamics to satisfaction outcomes in a market where localisation and trust are pivotal.

1.5 Context: localisation versus foreignness in Bangladesh

International platforms offer breadth and pricing, yet cross-border logistics, language and time-zone differences can elongate response cycles or reduce perceived empathy. Local players leverage support in Bengali, cash-on-delivery and domestic logistics to improve accessibility and speed. Evidence summarised in the literature review shows how

these features map onto satisfaction: localisation reduces perceived risk and accelerates resolution, while foreignness can slow responses and complicate returns (Shia et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2023). Daraz, though part of a global group, has invested in local hotlines and social media support during local hours, illustrating how foreign ownership can co-exist with strong localisation of service (provider documentation summarised in section 2). This contrast motivates our empirical comparison of perceived performance between local and international providers.

1.6 Scope, assumptions and delimitations

The study focuses on online retail in Bangladesh, excluding adjacent services such as ride-hailing or food delivery. It concentrates on mainstream support channels used by retailers and marketplaces operating locally, including phone, email, live chat, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Inclusion assumes respondents are regular online shoppers or active retail staff with recent support interactions; responses are self-reported, so recall and social desirability may affect accuracy. Instruments are closed-ended to support quantification, which constrains depth yet enables robust comparisons by channel and response-time band. The shopper sample is urban-leaning, English is used for administration, and the setting is single-country, which limits external generalisability. These boundaries align with the thesis aim to quantify observable patterns and triangulate them with theory while maintaining analytic clarity.

1.7 Thesis structure

Chapter 2 synthesises literature on service channels, response time and satisfaction, presents SERVQUAL, ECT and TAM, and situates Bangladesh within developing-country service realities and the localisation–foreignness lens. Chapter 3 details the methodology: design, sampling, instruments, data collection, analysis plan, ethics and quality assurance. Chapter 4 reports customer results with frequency tables, key crosstabs and figures built from the customer dataset. Chapter 5 reports retailer results using the staff dataset with analogous tables and visuals. Chapter 6 integrates findings across groups, interprets them through the theoretical lenses, and contrasts local versus international

provider dynamics. Chapter 7 states practical recommendations, limitations and directions for future research. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis. Appendices contain the full instruments, consent materials and supplementary tables to support replication.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Customer Service Channels in Online Retail

Customer service channels refer to different types of media through which companies interact with and assist their consumers, such as traditional media like email and phone and online media like chat, social media messaging, and chatbots. In e-commerce, these channels constitute essential touchpoints that influence the experience of a customer prior to, during, and following a purchase. Proper customer service via various channels can bring convenience and trust to the customers in the scenario of online shopping (Khalid, 2024). For instance, the majority of online stores provide real-time support via live chat or social media to answer customers' questions in real time, mimicking an omnichannel model to serve. Khalid (2024) explored that in the online fashion shopping market, integration and synchronization of various customer service channels (online and off-line) were linked to greater customer satisfaction due to the fact that it enables customers to get support continuously across platforms. Providing uniform support on various channels helps make a combined and positive experience, ensuring that whether a customer contacts the retailer via phone, Facebook Messenger, or website chat, they receive promptly and helpful support (Batat, 2022).

Customer service channels are beneficials to various customer preferences and expectations. While some customers might like the quickness of live chat, others would prefer talking to a representative over the phone or contacting on channels such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Research on omnichannel retailing suggests that the customer appreciates being able to decide on his/her own support channel and that a continuous customer service experience across channels can drastically increase levels of satisfaction (Khalid, 2024). The choice of channels can also influence the perceived quality of the service. For example, live chat has been found to attain high customer satisfaction in e-commerce settings, most probably because of its immediacy and convenience (e.g., problems can be solved within the shopping timeframe). Conversely, a badly serviced channel, for example, calls or social media inquiries not responded to, will undermine customer trust. (Slack & Singh, 2020b) highlight that service quality delivered through

these channels directly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. They observe that companies with better performance on those aspects acknowledged by customers (e.g., sensitivity, empathy, reliability) increase higher satisfaction and repeat business. In online retail, where there is no face-to-face contact, the service channels literally become the "face" of customer service. Retailers must invest in technology and training to ensure that each channel (telephone support, email, live chat, and social media) is responsive and useful. Research in Fiji retail industry, for instance, unveiled that perceived service deficiencies on more than one channel were associated with decreased overall satisfaction and loyalty, highlighting that good service across channels is required to retain customers (Slack & Singh, 2020b). In brief, customer service channels are key element of e-commerce quality: they allow problem-solving and information exchange, and their expert management is needed to address customer needs and gain online purchase satisfaction (Ngo et al., 2025). For a summary of the strengths and limitations of different customer service channels, see Table 1 for comparison and examples of each channel.

Table 1. Comparison of Customer Service Channels

Customer Service Channel	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example Platforms
Phone	Direct human interaction, immediate problem-solving	Generally long waiting times, higher resource costs (more staffs)	Daraz, Pickaboo
Live Chat	Immediate responses, allows multitasking	Limited complexity handling, less costly	Daraz, Pickaboo, AliExpress
Social Media	Easy access, informal and convenient	Less structured, potentially slower replies	Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp
Email	Detailed, formal responses	Slow response times	AliExpress

2.2 Response Time and Customer Satisfaction

Response time refers to how quickly a company replies to customer inquiries or resolves issues. In online retail, where transactions occur in real-time and customers may encounter immediate problems (such as payment issues or questions about a product), prompt response time is a critical aspect of service quality. Responsiveness, the willingness and quickness of the providers to act on behalf of customers, is a traditional SERVQUAL dimension presented by (Parasuraman et al., 1988). When customers get timely responses, they feel that the company is attentive and values their time. Conversely, delayed or slow

responses will cause frustration, doubt, and an impression of lower quality service. Service quality theory presents that customer develop a perception of service excellence based on some unique attributes such as responsiveness; and, therefore, quick response adds value to the satisfaction score of the customer.

Empirical studies support that the key role of response time is changing the satisfaction level. Shorter first-response times, for example, have been associated with better satisfaction scores and stronger customer intent to remain loyal in e-commerce customer service (aithor, 2024; Rita et al., 2019). Consumers are progressively expecting almost instantaneous responses online, sometimes referred to as the "Amazon effect", where speedy service is now the norm. If an online retailer answers a customer's inquiry in minutes (e.g., through live chat or social media), the customer is likely to feel valued and assured of the retailer's commitment to service (aithor, 2024). Conversely, if a customer's message or email is not responded to in days, or a call back promised by a retailer is tardy, it contradicts the customer's expectation and results in dissatisfaction (Vijay, 2025). Expectation Confirmation Theory explains that: customers look for timeliness in service interactions, and where actual response time is slow (disconfirmation), there is dissatisfaction. In the Bangladeshi online retail context, where consumers are largely e-commerce beginner, speed responses are particularly necessary to ensure trust. Ferdous & Ahsan (2024) identified that slow responses in the case of e-commerce return procedures (e.g., slow refund processing or tardy response to return requests) were a key contributor to customer dissatisfaction in Bangladesh. This suggests that post-sale, after sales service (returns, refunds, complaints) is integral part of the overall satisfaction and loyalty.

It also kept in mind that response times can differ by channel. Customers will wait a few hours for a response via mail but expect instant response when using live chat. Slack and Singh (2020) explain, companies that constantly match or beat customers' response time expectations generally record greater satisfaction and loyalty results. In summary, fast response times when addressing customer needs are a critical aspect of service quality that can play an elementary role in customer satisfaction in online retail.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction in Online Retail

Customer satisfaction is generally defined as the customer's reaction of fulfilment- to what degree the performance of the product or service lives up to (or exceeds) their expectations (Oliver, 1980). It is a cumulative result of a series of "encounters" or transactions and important to business success as satisfaction affects repeat purchase intentions, brand loyalty, and favourable word-of-mouth (Slack & Singh, 2020b). An online customer who is satisfied with the services will more likely trust the retailer, come back for more purchases, and suggest the site to other people. On the other hand, dissatisfaction may cause complaints or brand switching. Service Quality theory theorizes that perceived service excellence is among the most significant antecedents of satisfaction. In the online context, this is the e-service quality, the degree to which online platforms and customers support work to provide a seamless shopping experience. For instance, research by (Truong et al., 2020) assumed that innovation service features (e.g., new functionalities in customer support or personalized support) in conjunction with functional attributes affect online customer satisfaction and subsequent behaviour.

Customer satisfaction in online retail also closely corelates with risk reduction and confidence, especially in emerging economies. Since customers in online shopping cannot inspect products before buying, they are relying on retailers' service reliability (on-time delivery, exact products details) and post-purchase support to become satisfied. Developing country research has established that clear policies (such as, return and refund policies) and better service recovery (after sales service) significantly contribute to satisfaction and trust within e-commerce (Ferdous & Ahsan, 2024). Ferdous and Ahsan (2024) found that if Bangladeshi consumers experienced issues like discrepancies in the product, the manner in which the retailer's customer service handled returns and refunds influenced total satisfaction and loyalty. Poor business policy, mismanagement or absence of good service during the product return process led to dissatisfaction. On the other hand, responsive support and better communication guaranteed that satisfaction always won the day. Slack and Singh (2020) described that in retailing services, better service quality leads to increased customer satisfaction, which drives loyalty. Paulo et al. (2019) notes that satisfied customers from positive outlooks and choose to purchase

with the store again, positively influencing their future behaviours. Satisfaction is gained by being in a position to meet or exceed customer expectations throughout the whole online shopping experience.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

This study applies several theoretical frameworks to better understand the impact of service channels and response time on satisfaction. Three pertinent frameworks are service Quality Theory (SERVQUAL), Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT), and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

2.4.1 Service Quality Theory (SERVQUAL)

Service Quality theory, as developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, provides a basic technique to conceptualize how consumers evaluate the quality of services (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In their SERVQUAL model, service quality is explained as the gap between customers' expectations of service and their perceptions of the real service received.

Nowadays researchers have adapted the concept to e-service quality for applying SERVQUAL to online retail. For example, Zeithaml et al., (2002) extended SERVQUAL to estimate electronic service quality, launching dimensions like efficiency, system availability, fulfilment, and privacy in the context of websites. However, the main idea remains that superior service performance (such as, quick responses, accurate information, well-mannered agents) will lead to a positive disconfirmation of expectations (service better than expected) and thus higher satisfaction. Slack and Singh (2020) provide actual support for the link between service quality and satisfaction: in their study of Fijian supermarkets, higher service quality notably increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. They observed that when service quality dimensions (including responsiveness and empathy in staff interactions) were rated by customers, those customers were not only satisfied but also more likely to remain loyal to the retailer. This arbitrating role of satisfaction aligns with SERVQUAL's proposition that minimizing the gap between expectations and performance.

In the context of Bangladesh's online retail environment, Service Quality theory suggests that online retailers must focus on delivering reliable and responsive service via their support media to satisfy customers. This theory supports the most of relationships investigated in this thesis: that improved service through sufficient channels and quick feedback improves perceived quality, driving customer satisfaction and loyalty for online retail (Slack & Singh, 2020b). A visual summary of the Service Quality Theory is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Service Quality Theory - SERVQUAL Model (Self-created)

2.4.3 Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT)

Expectation-confirmation Theory, initially developed by Richard L. Oliver (1980), is a framework that describes customer satisfaction as a result of the gap between prior expectations and actual performance. According to ECT, customers enter a service channel with some certain expectations about the services, such as, quick response or helpful agents. After receiving the service, they compare their perception of the performance to these expectations. If the service performance meets or surpass expectations, customers feel satisfaction or even more delight. If the performance falls short of expectation, negative disconfirmation occurs and it results in dissatisfaction (Vijay, 2025).

If the company's response time aligns with expectations, suppose the customer receives a quick reply in two hours when he expected a 4-hour wait, the expectation is fulfilled or positively exceeded, yielding satisfaction (Peltomäki, 2025). Vijay et al. (2025) high-

light that ECT is particularly useful for service-based contexts, achieving customer expectations and ensuring performance delivers on those expectations is primary theme to earn satisfaction and loyalty.

In Bangladesh, majority of the consumers are still building trust in online shopping, expectations around service quality might not always be established. In this ground, retailers have the big opportunity to amuse customers by outperforming expectations. If a customer expected, a hassle-free return process but faced bureaucratic hurdles and slow service, the unfulfilled expectation would significantly erode their satisfaction and future purchase intentions (Ferdous & Ahsan, 2024).

Now, Figure 2 presents the Expectation-Confirmation Theory, describing how customer expectations, performance, and confirmation or disconfirmation lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

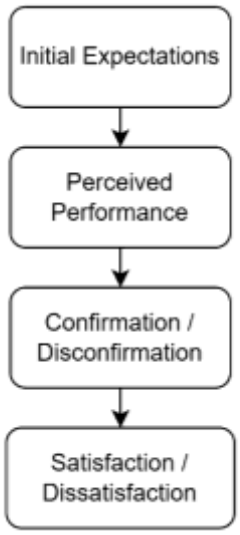

Figure 2. Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Self-created)

2.4.4 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which is introduced by Davis (1989), presents a framework for understanding how users come to accept and use new technologies. TAM highlights those two major factors influence an individual's intention to use a technology: perceived usefulness (the level to which using the technology will enhance their

performance or experience) and perceived ease of use (the level to which using the technology is free of effort) (Hossain & Biswas, 2024). These perceptions present to an attitude toward using the technology.

In the ground of online retail and customer service channels, TAM unfolds how customers adopt and interact with various service technologies. For example, a customer's interest to use live chat support or a self-service chatbot on an e-commerce website can be analysed through TAM. If the live chat is supposed as useful (e.g., it gives fast answers) and easy to use (e.g., easily accessible and user-friendly), customers are more interested to accept that channel for support (Khalid, 2024). In contrast, if a support technology is not providing value, customers might avoid it and pick out more traditional channels. For example, older or less tech-user customers in Bangladesh might find WhatsApp or phone calls easier to use than a web chat interface, and thus the acceptance rate of the newer channel may be decrease unless the design is very intuitive.

Hossain and Biswas (2024) highlighted TAM in the context of AI-based online shopping platforms in Bangladesh received trust and service quality, emphasizing that effectiveness and service quality had the major influence on attitudes towards using the platform.

While the online retailers in Bangladesh apply TAM, they should emphasize *user-friendly design* and clearly explain the benefits of using digital service channels. If customers see that using, say, the mobile app's support feature is faster and yields results (high perceived usefulness), and if the interface is localized in Bangali and simple to navigate (high perceived ease of use), they will be more inclined to use it. As a result, more customers utilizing efficient channels can lead to overall higher satisfaction levels, since their issues are addressed effectively. Conversely, if a technology like a support chatbot is hard to use or frequently unable to solve problems (low usefulness), it may frustrate customers and detract from satisfaction.

In summary, TAM represents the clear understand of the adoption of customer service technologies: assuring that service channels are both useful and easy for customers can increase their use and positively impact the customer's satisfaction with online retail service (Hossain & Biswas, 2024; Khalid, 2024).

Now. Figure 3 visualizes TAM and describes the main components that are responsible for influencing and acceptance the use of technology.

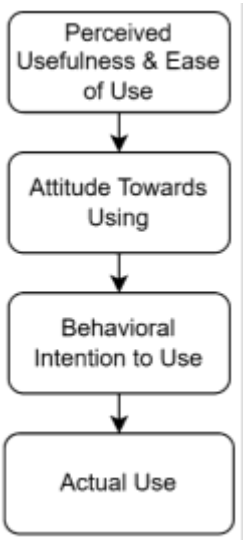

Figure 3. Technology Acceptance Model - (Self-created)

2.5 International vs Local Providers: Service Experience Differences

The e-commerce market of Bangladesh includes both foreign marketplaces (including AliExpress and local titan Daraz, owned by the Alibaba Group of China) and local online retailers (including Pickaboo and Othoba.com). Such international vs. local providers do not always provide similar service experiences, and localization vs. foreignness aspects can have great influence on customer satisfaction.

Among the benefits of international platforms are extensive product lines and lower prices, but these providers can face difficulties when serving customers across borders. Prolonged shipping and returns time are one of them e.g., when ordering items in AliExpress (a Chinese based platform it may take months to deliver them plus they make returns tricky). This automatically affects the speed of service and may challenge the customers' patience. Moreover, aid on global websites may not be within the domestic language or time zone, which may result in delayed response or a communication block. According to a case study conducted by Shia et al. (2016) on the localized AliExpress site in Indonesia despite localization, it failed to comply with the expectations of the user's concerning information and the quality of the services provided (Shia et al., 2016). The

study identified clear shortcomings in the timeliness of information and the level of assurance provided to customers. Many users reported uncertainty about delivery commitments and felt that the information offered was insufficiently adapted to their local context.

This implies that international e-commerce providers need to do more than join the market in a developing country; they require saturation of their customer service modes (language, policies, responsiveness) to please local consumers. Otherwise, the liability of foreignness can be in the form of customer frustration or distrust.

Foreign e-commerce providers tend to have home-court advantage with consumption expectation of local consumers and that of cultural peculiarities. They can provide localized services. Such example may include the fact that Bangladesh-based platform frequently offers cash-on-delivery payment systems and customer support in local languages, the latter of which may build up customer trust in the case of customers that are skeptical about online payments. Local suppliers can move things inside of the country, and it is possible that they move their logistics process and provide more rapid delivery and returns, and that is connected to faster customer service resolution. As an example, a domestic company such as Pickaboo can organize a product to be returned or replaced with days inside Bangladesh, but returning a product to a foreign seller via AliExpress would be unreasonable or require considerable time, and you may become an unhappy customer after all. The channels that provide the services of a local player and an international player may also vary.

Daraz being an international based company has a good local presence too, it has local customer care centers, local hotline number (with hotline agents communicating in Bengali), and also social media support during local working hours (Contact with Daraz BD - Call Daraz Helpline Number | Daraz Life, 2024). This geographical base probably is of assistance to Daraz in addressing such inquiries and complaints in a way that can be accessed by Bangladeshi clients. By comparison, a worldwide platform such as AliExpress traditionally provided a more centralized customer service solution (usually forcing a user to use online self-service or communicate in English), and that may not feel personal or challenging to a local user. In their survey, the authors have found that localized versions of globally present sites should deliver the relevant information locally pertinent

and offer responsive assistance to give the customers a real pleasure of using the service; a significant expectation-performance disparity was observed in their study due to poor localization of the services.

Trust and assurance are yet another aspect. It is natural that consumers may be generally less confident in local brands because they feel that the brands lack reputation as well as consumer protection that are provided by their large international counterparts, but this may be overpowered by service excellence. International platforms, on the other hand, may experience trust shortage because of foreignness (will they reward returns, are they concerned with Bangladesh customers) unless they signal well on a local level. Studies conducted on cross-border e-commerce revealed that trusting and perceived risk factors influence satisfaction and the intention to use it significantly (Liu et al., n.d.; Mou et al., 2017). Liu et al. (2025) explored Chinese buyers that purchase at overseas sites and pointed out that satisfaction is critical towards consumer ability to overcome the risk perceptions that arise in international shopping. Analogically, Bangladeshi consumers who purchase with foreign e-commerce sites currently require much satisfaction (in terms of good experiences) to keep on using the purchasing power that they take up with foreign e-commerce sites since there is a higher level of perceived risk. This puts the international providers under pressure to do a great job to local customers (fast response, easy resolving disputes, mutual understanding).

Local providers have an opportunity to use localization to raise satisfaction: by displaying Bengali language interfaces, being aware of local holiday seasons (and staffing appropriately), and displaying local cultural awareness in dealing with customers. A system based on a local customer service agent may understand a customer in a better context or the urgency behind a customer (like wanting a product prior to a festival) and give a more tailor-made answer. Multinational corporations usually attempt to replicate this either by setting up local branches (as Daraz has done) or by partnerships. The fact that Daraz is heavily localized in Bangladesh with a market share of around one-third of the e-commerce market (ver, 2024) can partially be attributed to the localization strategy, which means that Daraz is seen as a Bangladeshi company by the consumers, that it has local warehouses, advertisements, and customer care that is perceived as local by the consumers.

There are other less obvious effects of localization vs. foreignness on satisfaction. Customers may have more goodwill with local channels as they believe they are helping local business and being able to contact them quickly in case of any problem. On the other hand, when a local site falls short of their service (e.g., they are not able to properly address a complaint), customers may be even less forgiving because it is assumed that a firm is operating both in the same context and which therefore must set a better example. There may be a bit of leeway on international sites (the customers may explain "well, it is coming overseas, the delays are unavoidable"), but since e-commerce is coming of age, these kinds of get out expectations are growing old.

In the end, customers will be drawn into platforms that can effectively serve them with an established track record with little or no trouble, foreign or local. As an example, one study was based on an empirical comparison of Chinese and Bangladesh e-commerce websites in which the researchers concluded that although the purchasing decision factors may be cultural, two prevalent barriers that adversely impact online consumer behavior were revealed in both settings (Khan et al., 2023). Instead of customer service, the study mainly mentions the challenges like logistics delays and concerns about trust as universal problems that must be found by platforms to keep customers satisfied (Khan et al., 2023).

To conclude, the services of international and local e-commerce providers in Bangladesh differ to some extent. The distance and foreignness drawbacks faced by international providers should be addressed by internationalizing their customer service lines so that there is a quick response time and delivery time as well as the establishment of trust through quality service. The local providers are in position to use their closeness and cultural knowledge to offer customized, quick assistance. Localization plays a tremendously important role: with perfectly localized foreign platform (such as Daraz), the probability of its competitive struggle on an equal basis with local organizations will be high, but with a shabbily localized one, customers will be dissatisfied (as it turned out in the AliExpress case in Indonesia) (Shia et al., 2016). Bottom line to Bangladesh consumers is to get responsive understanding and effective service; whoever can provide that on synergized basis always will get better customer satisfaction level. The major disparities of international and local providers of e-commerce in Bangladesh concerning the aspects

of customer support features, confidence issues, and general customer satisfaction are summed up briefly in Table 2.

Table 2. International vs Local Providers in Bangladesh

Factors	International Providers (e.g., AliExpress)	Local Providers (e.g., Pickaboo, Othoba.com)
Language Support	Primarily English	Primarily Bengali
Payment Methods	Online pre-payment	Cash-on-delivery, Mobile Payment
Delivery Times	Longer (cross-border shipping)	Shorter (domestic logistics)
Customer Service Accessibility	Primarily automated, less personal	More personal and accessible
Customer Trust & Assurance	Moderate to Low	Higher due to local presence

The graph provided in figure 4 illustrates the effects of localization strategies and foreignness on customer satisfaction by the factors that contribute to greater satisfaction of customers. Figure 4 summarizes the mechanism: localization reduces perceived risk and accelerates resolution, whereas foreignness can slow responses and complicated returns. To show how these dynamics appear in practice, Table 2 translates the model into concrete, comparable features—language support, payment methods, delivery times, accessibility of service, and trust signals—contrasting international providers (e.g., AliExpress) with local players (e.g., Pickaboo, Othoba). This linkage from concept (Figure 4) to attributes (Table 2) makes clear why response time and channel fit jointly shape satisfaction in Bangladesh's market.

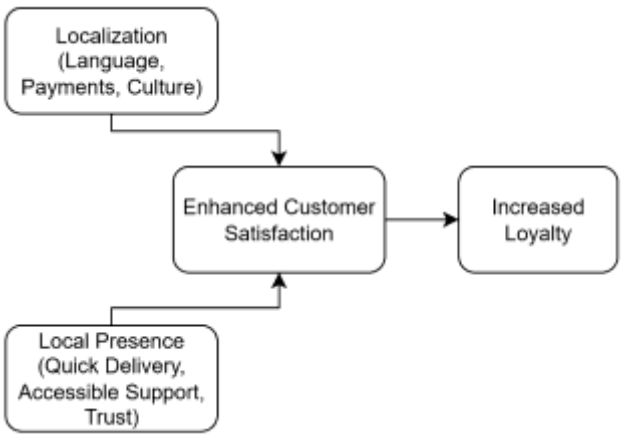

Figure 4. Localization vs. Foreignness Impact on Customer Satisfaction

2.6 Customer Service in Developing Countries: Overview and Challenges

In the small e-commerce markets of developing countries customer service is very central. Some developing markets are still quite new at online shopping, and such consumers can be more inclined to show some prudence due to reasons such as unreliable consumer protection statues and regulations, limited trust in online purchases and incomplete infrastructure. Consequently, good customer service should be offered to foster adoption and satisfaction. A brief review of the provision of customer services in developing countries provides an insight into typical problems, as well as opportunities that such contexts bring along.

Among the most noticeable obstacles is establishing trust among the consumers. UNCTAD has observed that trust is just like connectivity when it comes to the growth of e-commerce in developing countries and warned that untrust among the online shoppers can stall the growth of e-commerce (Trust as Vital for E-Commerce as Internet Connection, UN Meeting Hears | UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), n.d.). Most consumers in some developing countries such as India and Bangladesh are concerned that a fraud may occur, the claim about the products may be false, or what can they do when they something goes wrong with an online sale. Customer service is directly connected to how these issues of trust can be solved, e.g. providing a competent channel of complaints/questions communicated to the company may assure the customer that the company is holdable. Comparative study between advanced and emerging markets showed that e-commerce has been facilitated by receiving trust in all levels however in the emerging market consumers tend to pay more attention to signals such as responsiveness of service and seller accountability to feel safe (Kartiwi, 2006). Thus, developing country e-tailers must often go the extra mile in service to compensate for the general climate of lower consumer trust. This might involve generous return policies, cash-on-delivery options, or proactive customer support outreach.

Infrastructure limitations in developing countries also affect customer service delivery. Less reliable logistics and delivery systems mean customer service teams frequently must handle inquiries about late deliveries, lost packages, or product availability issues. This makes the responsiveness and honesty of customer service even more critical. If a

package is delayed beyond the usual timeframe, a prompt update from customer support can keep the customer informed and somewhat satisfied despite the inconvenience. On the other hand, silence or misinformation can severely frustrate customers. Ferdous and Ahsan's (2024) research on e-commerce returns in Bangladesh underscored that *operational issues like delayed refunds or unclear procedures* become customer service issues and significantly impact satisfaction and trust. Developing country consumers, perhaps having fewer past experiences to guide expectations, may need more guidance and reassurance from service agents during such processes. Companies that provide clearer communication and faster resolution of these issues are rewarded with higher customer confidence.

Another characteristic in many developing markets is the prevalence of social media and messaging apps as service channels. In regions where formal websites might be less used, businesses often leverage popular apps (like WhatsApp, Facebook) for customer interaction. In Bangladesh, for example, many small online sellers use Facebook pages and respond to customer queries in comments or direct messages. Even larger e-commerce players maintain active social media support. This informal blend of marketing and customer service is a double-edged sword: it makes support very accessible (since customers are already on these platforms), but it can also become chaotic to manage high volumes and maintain service quality. Studies of omnichannel strategy in developing contexts highlight the need to integrate these channels effectively. For instance, Khalid (2024) noted that integrated customer service across channels contributed to customer satisfaction in Thai retail, suggesting that coordinating social media responses with other support systems is beneficial. In developing countries, companies that manage to unify their traditional and digital service channels tend to offer a more reliable experience (Khalid, 2024).

Cultural factors also influence customer service norms. In many developing countries, consumers appreciate a more personalized and relationship-oriented service approach, reflecting broader service culture. A friendly, empathetic customer service agent can leave a strong positive impression. On the flip side, customers might take offense at what they perceive as rude or indifferent service more strongly, possibly due to expectations of higher respect in personal interactions. Training customer service representatives to

be culturally sensitive and polite is therefore important. For example, using local languages, appropriate honorifics, or even just the right tone can significantly improve service interactions. The concept of *"service recovery paradox"* (where a customer thinks more highly of a company after the company effectively handles a problem) could be especially relevant in developing markets where baseline expectations might be lower.

A study on retail banking in an emerging market found that effective complaint resolution boosted customers' post-service satisfaction dramatically because it exceeded their expectations of service accountability (Quintus et al., 2024; *Trust as Vital for E-Commerce as Internet Connection, UN Meeting Hears | UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)*, n.d.). This suggests that in Bangladesh's e-commerce, companies that visibly take responsibility and fix issues to the customer's benefit (for example, sending a replacement product quickly or issuing refunds without hassle) could not only salvage satisfaction but enhance loyalty.

In summary, customer service in developing countries like Bangladesh is integral to the success of online retail due to the trust-building role it plays and the need to navigate infrastructural and cultural challenges. Key points include: (1) Trust and risk mitigation; service must assure customers their money and data are safe and that the company will stand by its promises; (2) Responsiveness under constraints; despite logistical hurdles, being transparent and timely in customer communications is essential; (3) Leveraging popular channels; meeting customers on platforms they use (social media, messaging) and providing support there, while ensuring quality; (4) Cultural atonement; delivering service with a human touch, patience, and respect, which can greatly influence satisfaction. Developing countries often present a steeper learning curve for new online shoppers, so the customer service function becomes not just reactive (solving problems) but also proactive and educational (guiding customers on how to shop online, what to expect, how to resolve common issues). Done well, strong customer service can be a catalyst for accelerating e-commerce adoption and satisfaction in these markets, helping to overcome initial consumer scepticism and infrastructural gaps (Ferdous & Ahsan, 2024).

2.7 Methodological insights from prior studies

Prior research on customer service and satisfaction in e-commerce typically adopts semi-structured interviews with non-probability sampling, emphasising information richness over representativeness. Most studies rely on purposive selection of participants who have recent, relevant service encounters, occasionally complemented by snowballing to reach niche subgroups or hard-to-access informants (Patton, 2015; Robinson, 2014). For focused questions in relatively homogeneous populations, sample size guidance converges around small-to-moderate numbers: classic work shows many themes stabilise within ≈12 interviews under homogeneous conditions, with additional cases adding redundancy rather than novel concepts (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). More recently, information power arguments propose that required size depends on the narrowness of the aim, sample specificity and quality of dialogue, often supporting ranges of 10–20 for studies like the present one (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). These practices are consistent with interview-based work in developing-country e-commerce contexts where the goal is to surface patterned mechanisms rather than population estimates. As summarized in **Table 3**, interview-based e-commerce studies predominantly use purposive sampling, often supplemented by snowballing, with small-N designs of roughly 10–20 participants.

Table 3. Common sampling strategies in interview-based e-commerce/service research (methodological insights)

Strategy	When typically used (focus)	Strengths reported in prior studies	Common caveats noted	Relevance to Bangladesh online retail context (indicative)
Purposive (criterion-based)	Target participants with recent, relevant service encounters	Information-rich cases; direct alignment to RQs	Not statistically representative	Suitable for regular online shoppers and retail staff with recent support interactions
Maximum-variation	Capture diversity across age, gender, tech-savviness, platform/channel use	Reveals patterning across heterogeneous cases	More screening; analysis complexity	Useful to contrast WhatsApp/FB vs email/phone users; urban vs semi-urban
Stratified purposive (quota-like)	Ensure minimum numbers per key subgroup (e.g., channel used, issue type)	Guarantees subgroup coverage for cross-tabs	Requires advance quotas; risk of over-engineering	Helpful to compare perceived "fastest channel" across segments
Snowball / referral	Reach niche or hard-to-access cases	Efficient access; leverages trust networks	May cluster similar profiles; monitor bias	Appropriate as a supplement to purposive recruitment
Typical / homogeneous	Focus on a relatively uniform group to map core processes	Quicker saturation; clean thematic patterns	Misses extremes; less breadth	Works for mapping standard support journeys on major marketplaces
Critical / extreme case	Examine unusually positive or negative experiences	Surfaces mechanisms and failure points	Not generalisable; anecdote risk	Useful to study service recovery (fast vs delayed refunds)

Convenience (with caution)	Fast access (e.g., student/staff networks)	Easy, low cost	Bias risk; weaker transferability	Use only as a back-up; document limits

Data collection is typically conducted in person or online, with clear screening for recency of service interaction, and with brief demographic capture to support segmentation by age, experience or channel familiarity (Patton, 2015; Robinson, 2014). To temper recall and social-desirability bias, prior studies recommend concrete prompts (e.g., "your last contact with support"), neutral wording and consistent ordering of channel options, alongside assurance of anonymity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). In developing markets, messaging and social media often double as contact and recall anchors, so interviewers reference chat logs or timestamps where possible to support accuracy (Patton, 2015; Robinson, 2014). Analytical approaches commonly reported in this literature are summarized in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Qualitative analysis approaches and tools commonly used (methodological insights)

Approach / Tool	Typical use in prior studies	Strengths reported	Caveats / cautions	Outputs commonly reported
Thematic analysis (manual)	Identify patterned meanings across interviews (coding → themes)	Transparent, flexible, well-documented	Needs clear codebook and audit trail	Codebook, theme map, exemplar quotes
Framework analysis	Matrixing cases × themes for structured comparison	Excellent for subgroup comparison	More rigid; upfront framework needed	Framework matrix (case/theme grid)
Directed/summative content analysis	Map data to prior constructs (e.g., responsiveness, assurance)	Clear theory linkage	Risk of forcing data to codes	Construct-aligned counts with narrative
NVivo (CAQDAS)	Organize codes; matrix queries; retrieve exemplars	Powerful retrieval; audit trail	License cost; learning curve	Node hierarchy; co-occurrence tables
ATLAS.ti (CAQDAS)	Coding + network views for relationships	Visual network mapping	License; similar learning curve	Network diagrams; coded segment reports
MAXQDA (CAQDAS)	Code frequencies; document profiles	Clean reporting tools	License; training required	Code frequency charts; profile tables
Excel/Sheets (structured blocks)	Quick frequencies/cross-tabs for closed-ended items	Ubiquitous; easy charts	Limited for deep qual retrieval	Descriptive tables; bar/stacked charts
Python/R (optional)	Reproducible descriptive/visuals for categorical items	Automation; versioning	Set-up overhead	Cross-tabs, χ^2, Cramér's V
Word/Docs (manual coding)	Very small datasets; quick start	Zero cost; simple	Weak retrieval; error-prone at scale	Inline highlights; memo notes

Analysis commonly follows thematic analysis with an explicit codebook, moving from initial coding to theme generation, review and definition. Trustworthiness is strengthened by audit trails, reflexive memos and peer debriefs, and by linking exemplar excerpts to final claims (Nowell et al., 2017; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Although manual coding is viable for small datasets, many studies employ CAQDAS to

organise material and queries: NVivo for node structures and matrix coding, ATLAS.ti for network views, and MAXQDA for code frequencies and document profiles (Bazeley & Jackson, 2019; Friese, 2019). Where instruments include closed-ended blocks (e.g., channel chosen, response-time band, resolution), authors often complement themes with descriptive statistics and simple cross-tabs to show pattern salience across sub-groups. This mixed descriptive-qualitative practice is widespread in-service research because it aids theory triangulation without overclaiming generalisability (Miles et al., 2014; Nowell et al., 2017).

In short, the methodological consensus in the literature i.e., purposive/snowball sampling, ≈10–20 interviews, thematic analysis with CAQDAS support, plus light descriptive statistics on structured items, provides a coherent template for studies examining the mechanisms linking channel choice and response time to perceived service quality and satisfaction in online retail. These insights inform, but do not prescribe, the design detailed later in this thesis.

2.8 Synthesis and conceptual model for this thesis

Synthesising the literature suggests a simple, testable pathway (Figure 5): channel choice and response time jointly shape perceived e-service quality, which then drives customer satisfaction and downstream repeat intention/continuance. Three theoretical lenses explain the links. First, e-service quality research extends SERVQUAL to digital contexts, emphasising efficiency, fulfilment, system availability and privacy, with responsiveness cutting across dimensions (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Malhotra, 2002). Faster first replies and clearer guidance increase perceived responsiveness and assurance, improving overall quality judgments. Second, Expectation-Confirmation Theory posits that meeting or exceeding timing expectations produces positive confirmation, raising satisfaction and continuance intentions (Bhattacherjee, 2001). Third, technology adoption perspectives indicate that customers prefer channels with higher perceived usefulness and ease of use, which often correspond to quicker, more convenient pathways such as app chat or messaging (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003).

The model recognises contextual moderators, notably localisation vs foreignness in Bangladesh. Localisation, including Bangali interfaces, local-hour staffing, COD and domestic returns, can both shift expectations and enable faster responses, amplifying the channel–response–quality pathway. Conversely, cross-border logistics, language and time zones may slow performance and dampen perceived assurance on international sites even when prices or assortment are attractive. In service recovery, swift, fair resolution is expected to elevate satisfaction disproportionately, consistent with recovery research that ties timely, empowered responses to better evaluations after failure (Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekaran, 1998). Finally, the model allows for controls (age, shopping frequency, product category, issue type) and an IS-success perspective where system/service quality → satisfaction → intention offers an alternative but compatible framing (DeLone & McLean, 2003). This synthesis directly motivates the measures used in our instruments (channels, response-time bands, resolution, satisfaction) and the cross-tab analyses employed later.

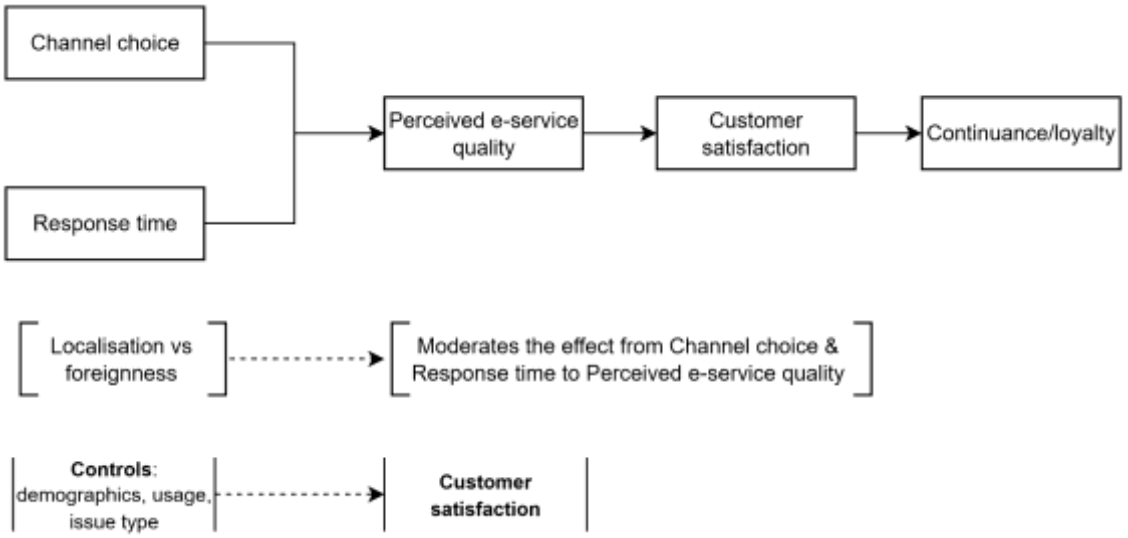

Figure 5. Study conceptual model

Channel choice and response time influence perceived e-service quality, which drives customer satisfaction and continuance/loyalty. Localization vs foreignness moderates the pathway from channel/response to e-service quality; demographic, usage and issue-type controls are included.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design and rationale

This study employed a quantitative, questionnaire-based design using two structured, self-administered MCQ/Yes–No instruments delivered through Google Forms: one for online shoppers and one for online retail staff in Bangladesh. Instruments captured channel use, first-response time bands, resolution outcomes, satisfaction judgements, and perceptions of local vs international providers, thereby enabling descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations aligned to the research objectives. The content of the instruments was derived directly from the constructs synthesized in the literature review and operationalized in the final survey schedules (Form 1 and Form 2).

Data collection outcome. In total, 100 valid responses were obtained: 70 from unique customers and 30 from retailer personnel. This sample size provided sufficient variation to compare channels, timing bands and outcomes across the two respondent groups while remaining feasible to analyze with the selected toolchain. The end-to-end workflow is shown in **Figure 6**.

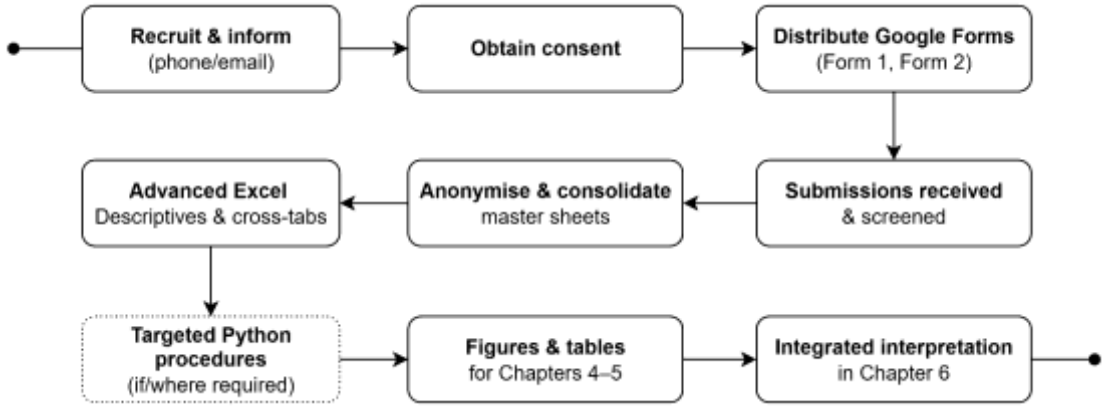

Figure 6. Data pipeline (recruitment to analysis)

3.2 Philosophical position and approach

The study followed a pragmatic stance oriented to producing actionable, context-specific evidence for Bangladesh's online retail sector. Reasoning was abductive in the sense that construct selection and item wording were grounded in prior theory (SERVQUAL, ECT,

TAM) and refined to fit observed data patterns in the completed responses. The use of structured questionnaires allowed clear measurement of channel usage and response-time bands at scale, while optional interviewer notes (where applicable during clarifications) preserved minimal context without compromising comparability across respondents.

3.3 Sampling and participants

3.3.1 Population and inclusion

Target populations were: (a) regular online shoppers in Bangladesh who had recent experience with customer service; and (b) online retail personnel involved in customer service (owners, managers or customer service staff). Inclusion required age ≥18 and self-reported familiarity with online retail support in Bangladesh.

3.3.2 Recruitment

Participants were contacted by phone or email through professional and community networks. The study purpose was explained, consent was obtained, and the relevant Google Forms link (customer or staff) was shared. Responses were submitted asynchronously at participants' convenience.

3.3.3 Final sample

70 customer forms and 30 retailer forms were completed by unique respondents and passed quality screening (completeness and internal consistency). Basic profile distributions appear in Chapter 4 (customers) and Chapter 5 (retailers).

3.4 Instruments

Two instruments were used and are reproduced verbatim in Appendix A (customers) and Appendix B (retailers). Construct-to-item summaries appear in Table 5 (customer) and Table 6 (retailer).

- **Form 1: Customer Survey** (Online Shoppers in Bangladesh): sections on demographics/behavioral, issue and channel contacted, first-response time, reso-

lution, satisfaction and professionalism, expectations, preferences (fastest vs preferred channel), behavioral outcomes (multi-channeling, abandonment), and local vs international comparisons.

- **Form 2: Retailer Survey** (Online Retail Business Personnel in Bangladesh): sections on business profile & volume, channels offered/used, hours/SLAs, first-response time, tools & training, perceived CSAT and FCR, challenges, investments and competitive positioning.

Table **5** and Table **6** below provide the instrument mappings used in the analysis.

Table 5. Instrument summary – Customer (Form 1)

Construct	Example items (Q#)	Scale/encoding	Use in analysis
Profile & behavior	Age, gender, frequency, platforms used (Q1–Q5)	Categorical bands	Sample description; segmentation
Issue & channel	Issue type; channel used last (Q7–Q9)	Single-choice categorical	Anchor for timing & outcome
First response time	Time-to-first-reply band (Q10)	Minutes / <1h / few hours / <24h / >24h/no reply	Responsiveness proxy
Outcomes	Resolution (Q11)	Full/partial/none	Effectiveness
Satisfaction & speed	Solution satisfaction; professionalism; speed rating (Q12–Q15)	5-point evaluative	Perceived service quality
Expectations & preferences	Met expectation; perceived fastest; preferred (Q16–Q18)	Categorical	ECT & TAM indicators
Behavioral effects	Multi-channeling; abandonment; overall CS in BD (Q19–Q23)	Yes/No; 5-point	Consequent measures
Local vs international	Comparative performance; improvement trend; loyalty (Q24–Q30)	Categorical; Likert	Localization lens

Table 6. Instrument summary – Retail staff (Form 2)

Construct	Example items (Q#)	Scale/encoding	Use in analysis
Business profile & load	Role, years, category, monthly orders, daily inquiries (Q1–Q4, Q11)	Categorical bands	Context & capacity
Channels & hours	Channels offered, most used, support hours (Q5–Q7)	Single/multiple	Portfolio & access
Responsiveness & SLAs	Typical first response band; SLA presence (Q8–Q9)	Categorical; Yes/No	Operational targets & delivery
Inquiry mix	Most common inquiry type (Q10)	Single choice	Case complexity proxy
Tooling & training	CRM/live chat/chatbot; training frequency (Q15, Q18)	Multiple; 3-band	Enablers of speed & quality
Efficiency & difficulty	Most efficient channel; most difficult channel (Q16–Q17)	Single choice	Channel capability mapping
Performance & FCR	Perceived CSAT; first-contact resolution (Q21–Q22)	5-level; 4-band	Outcome metrics
Challenges & strategy	Challenges; investments; competitive view (Q23–Q27)	Multiple; categorical	Constraints & plans

3.5 Data collection procedures

Data was collected through structured, self-administered questionnaires using Google Forms, which offered a practical and reliable mode for obtaining primary quantitative data from geographically dispersed respondents. Online survey tools have been widely employed in recent e-commerce research because they enable rapid distribution, automatic data capture and reduced interviewer bias (Mofokeng, 2021; Ferdous & bin Ahsan, 2024). This mode was particularly appropriate in the Bangladeshi context, as the study targeted respondents who already engage in online shopping and are therefore comfortable with digital platforms.

Prospective participants were contacted via phone or email, briefed on the study's purpose and provided with the survey link to either the customer or retailer questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained electronically before any questions could be accessed, following ethical practice for voluntary participation and anonymity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

All responses were time-stamped automatically and subsequently screened for completeness and internal consistency. Duplicate entries were detected and removed using Google Forms metadata such as submission times and answer patterns. After cleaning, 70 valid customer responses and 30 retailer responses were retained for analysis. The finalized instruments and coding frameworks appear in Appendices A and B, while Chapters 3 and 4 present the descriptive results derived from these datasets.

3.6 Data management and ethics

All data collected for this study were handled in accordance with standard research ethics and data protection principles. No personally identifiable information (PII) was included in the analytical datasets, and recruitment through phone or email did not result in the storage of any contact details within the survey files. Each dataset was downloaded directly from Google Forms into Microsoft Excel and stored on controlled-access devices to ensure data confidentiality. Intermediate versions of the working files were systematically versioned and encrypted to prevent unauthorized access or modification.

The data will be retained securely for the full lifecycle of this thesis and subsequently deleted after final evaluation and submission, ensuring compliance with institutional data retention policies. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents had the right to withdraw prior to final submission of their survey. All findings are reported in aggregate form, without any identifying information that could reveal the identity of individual participants or specific firms. This approach follows ethical research standards that emphasize participant autonomy, confidentiality and integrity of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.7 Data analysis plan

The data collected from both customer and retailer surveys were analyzed using a combination of advanced Microsoft Excel and Python to ensure analytical accuracy and reproducibility. Excel was employed for descriptive statistics, including the computation of frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations using PivotTables, Pivot Charts, and relevant statistical functions such as *COUNTIFS* and *SUMIFS*. This facilitated a structured examination of response distributions and allowed for efficient visualization of categorical patterns. Python, specifically the *pandas* library and associated statistical and visualization packages, was used selectively for validation checks and for generating figures that required multi-dimensional or automated plotting.

Key comparative analyses included cross-tabulations such as first-response time band by channel contacted, resolution status by channel, and satisfaction by response-time category for customer data, along with SLA presence by typical first response and most efficient versus most difficult channels for retailer data. Where expected cell counts were adequate, chi-square tests of independence were performed to identify statistically significant relationships between categorical variables, and Cramér's V was computed to assess effect sizes. Figures and tables were primarily produced in Excel for clarity and consistency, except in cases where Python provided enhanced multi-panel visualizations. The analytical results derived from the 70 customers and 30 retailer responses are presented in Chapters 3 and 4, supported by descriptive tables and charts that illustrate the key relationships between service channels, response times and customer satisfaction.

3.8 Quality, validity and reliability

To ensure content validity, all survey items were carefully aligned with the theoretical constructions established in the literature review and were directly mirrored in the final research instruments—Form 1 for customers and Form 2 for retail staff. This alignment guaranteed that each question accurately represented the intended dimensions of customer service, response time, and satisfaction. Reliability and stability checks were performed by examining the frequency distributions for internal coherence; for example, relationships between response-time bands and satisfaction levels were reviewed to confirm logical consistency. Where composite indices were created—such as by grouping evaluative items, internal consistency was checked pragmatically to ensure dependable interpretation of results.

To mitigate bias, all survey items were written in neutral language and presented in a consistent order across both instruments. Channel options were structured uniformly, and respondents were instructed to answer with reference to their most recent customer service experience, serving as a clear recall anchor to enhance response accuracy. While every effort was made to reduce potential sources of bias, the urban-leaning nature of the sample and the use of closed-ended questions are acknowledged in Chapter 6 as methodological limitations that may restrict generalizability.

4 Results (Customer Survey)

4.1 Sample profile

The customer sample comprised 70 unique respondents. Age skews to the tails: Under 18 (19, 27%) and 55+ (13, 19%), with mid-bands more evenly distributed (18–24 and 25–34 each 11, 16%; 35–44 and 45–54 each 8, 11%). Gender reports as Female (31, 44%), Male (22, 31%) and Other/prefer not to say (17, 24%). Shopping intensity is balanced: weekly+ (20, 29%), few times/months (18, 26%), few times/years (17, 24%) and rarely/never (15, 21%). These distributions are summarized in **Table** 7.

Platform use reflects four available categories in the dataset: international sites (23, 33%), official brand sites (20, 29%), large marketplaces in Bangladesh (17, 24%) and Facebook/Instagram shops (10, 14%). Because the instrument captured platform categories rather than individual brands (e.g., Daraz, Pickaboo), the visual reports category shares. **Figure 7** shows the relative usage.

Table 7. Customer demographics and shopping frequency (n = 70)

Category	Count	Percent
Age – Under 18	19	27.1
Age – 18–24	11	15.7
Age – 25–34	11	15.7
Age – 35–44	8	11.4
Age – 45–54	8	11.4
Age – 55+	13	18.6
Gender – Male	22	31.4
Gender – Female	31	44.3
Gender – Other/PNTS	17	24.3
Shopping frequency – Weekly+	20	28.6
Shopping frequency – Few times/month	18	25.7
Shopping frequency – Few times/year	17	24.3
Shopping frequency – Rarely/Never	15	21.4

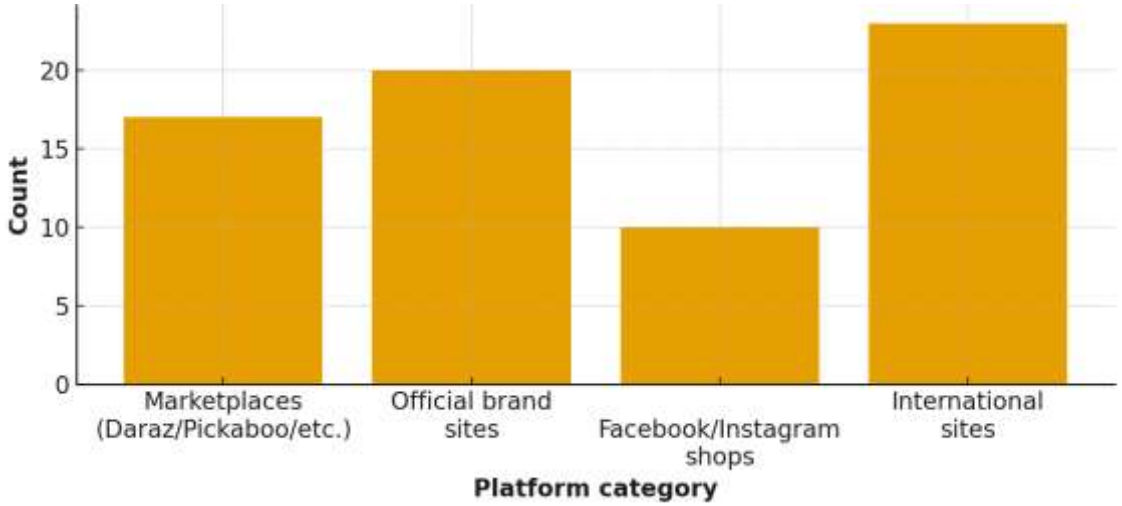

Figure 7. Customer demographics and shopping frequency

4.2 Channel usage and preferences

Among those who reported an issue requiring support, the most recent channel contact was WhatsApp (24) and Facebook Messenger (17), with Phone (14), Live chat (8) and Email (7) trailing. By contrast, preferred channels overall skew to Phone (22, 31%) and Live chat (14, 20%), with email (10, 14%) and Other (8, 11%) also present; social channels are less preferred than they are used in practice. **Table 8** presents used vs preferred side by side.

Age moderates' preferences: younger cohorts show a larger share of social and live chat, while older bands weigh more strongly. **Figure 8** stocks preferred-channel shares by age group to show this gradient.

Table 8. Channels used (last issue) vs preferred channel

Channel	Used last issue – Count	Used last issue – %	Preferred – Count	Preferred – %
Phone	14	20.0	22	40.7
Email	7	10.0	10	18.5
Live chat	8	11.4	14	25.9
WhatsApp	24	34.3	0	0.0
Facebook	17	24.3	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0	8	14.8

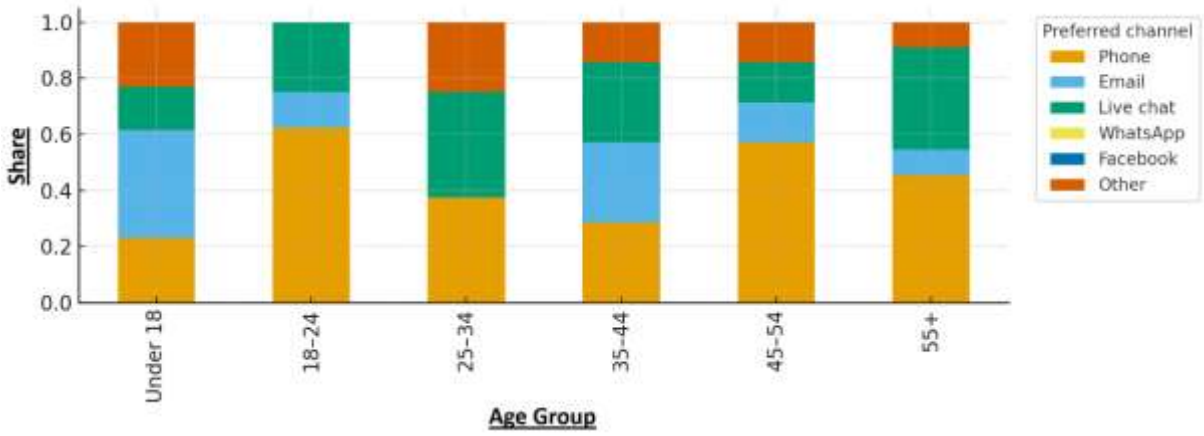

Figure 8. Preferred channel by age group (stacked shares)

4.3 Response times experienced

Experienced first-response times vary by channel (Q10 × Q8). Immediate replies (minutes) cluster in WhatsApp and Facebook, and <1-hour responses are again concentrated in WhatsApp. Few hours are common across Phone and Facebook, while >24h/no response appears across all channels but is proportionally higher for Phone and Email in this sample. Detailed counts by band and channel are shown in **Table 9** and visualized as a heatmap in **Figure 9**.

Table 9. First response time bands by channel contacted (counts)

First response band	Phone	Email	Live chat	WhatsApp	Facebook
Minutes	1	0	0	2	1
<1 hour	0	1	2	5	3
Few hours	7	2	3	4	7
<24 hours	1	1	1	8	3
>24h/No response	5	3	2	5	3

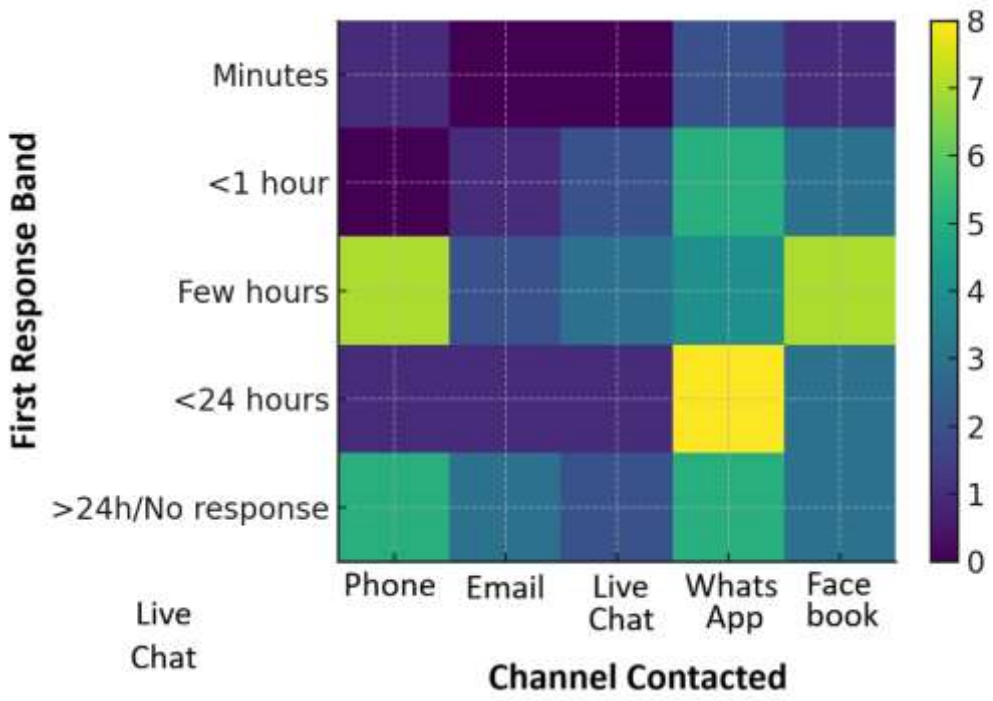

Figure 9. Heatmap of response-time band × channel (counts)

4.4 Resolution and satisfaction outcomes

Resolution outcomes (Q11 × Q8) differ by channel. Resolved fully is highest on WhatsApp (7) and Phone (6). Partially resolved is frequent on WhatsApp (9) and Facebook (9). Not resolved cases appear across channels, with WhatsApp (8), Facebook (5) and Live chat (5) notable in this dataset. **Table 10** shows the channel-by-resolution distribution.

Satisfaction levels (Q12) show a middle-heavy shape overall. By channel, somewhat satisfied and Neutral are the largest bars across most channels, while very dissatisfied concentrates more on Facebook than other channels. **Figure 10** reports satisfaction distributions by channel.

Table 10. Resolution status by channel (counts)

Resolution status	Phone	Email	Live chat	WhatsApp	Facebook
Resolved fully	6	2	2	7	3
Partially resolved	5	2	1	9	9
Not resolved	3	3	5	8	5

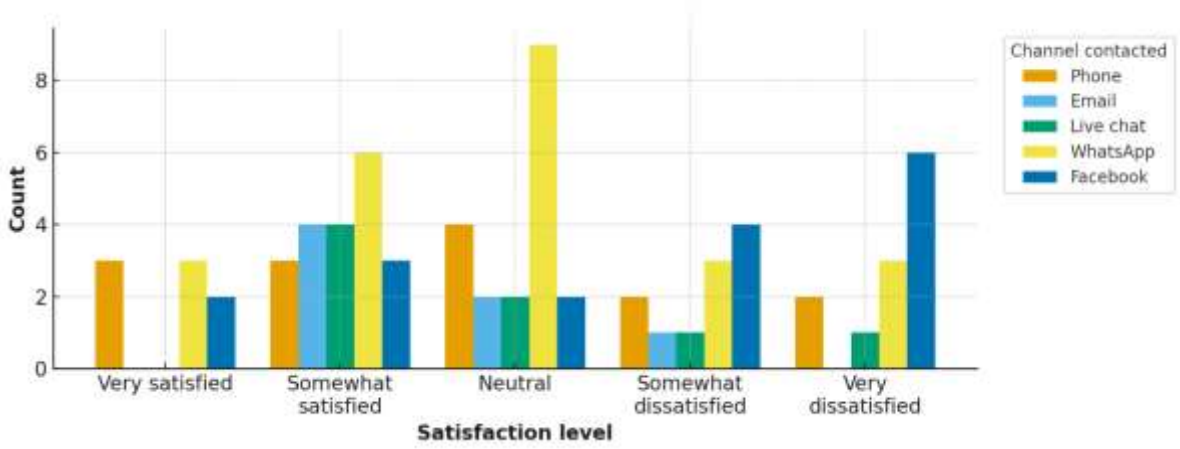

Figure 10. Satisfaction distribution by channel

4.5 Behavioural impact

Purchase abandonment due to slow support (Q20) is reported by 32 respondents (46%) overall. Cross-tabbing by first-response band (Q10) indicates a higher abandonment share at <1 hour and few hours than at minutes or <24 hours, with the >24h/no response band split evenly (Yes 9, No 9). **Table 11** shows the Yes/No distribution by time band. Intentions are strongly positive when service is quick and helpful: repurchase “very likely” (40, 57%) and recommend “very likely” (37, 53%), with a further shift into somewhat likely. **Figure 11** plots repurchase (Q27) and recommend (Q28) side by side.

Table 11. Purchase abandonment due to slow support (Yes/No) by first response-time band

First response band	Yes	No
Minutes	1	3
<1 hour	6	5
Few hours	12	11
<24 hours	4	10
>24h/No response	9	9

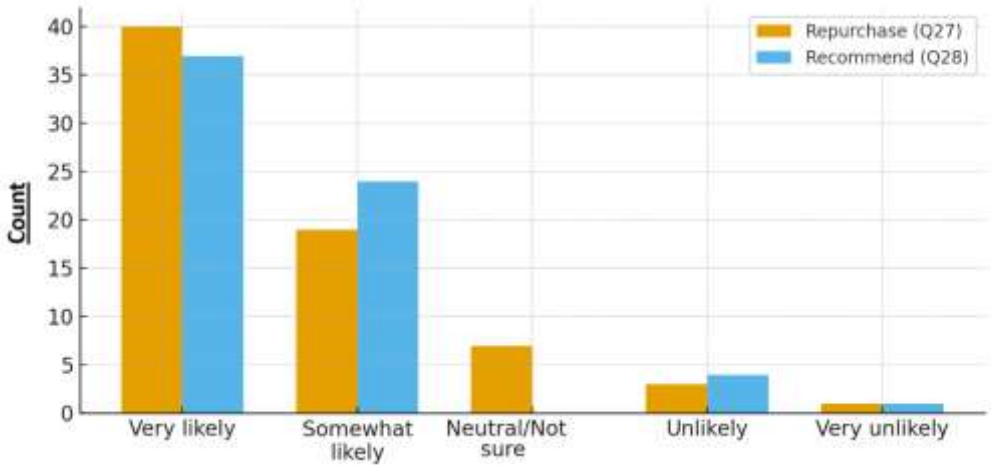

Figure 11. Likelihood to repurchase vs recommend with quick, helpful service

4.6 Local vs international comparison (customer perspective)

Perceived comparative performance (Q24) leans “local worse” (33, 47%) against international sites, with “about the same” (17, 24%), “local better” (12, 17%) and “not sure” (8, 11%). These single-item perceptions are in **Table 12**, with a column chart in **Figure 12**. Because the instrument did not collect separate SERVQUAL-style sub-scores by provider type, a radar plot by dimension is not produced; instead, we report the comparative distribution directly and interpret it alongside Section 4.4’s satisfaction and Section 4.3’s responsiveness patterns.

Table 12. Perceived performance (local vs international)

Comparison category	Count	Percent
Local better	12	17.1
Local worse	33	47.1
About the same	17	24.3
Not sure	8	11.4

4.7 Key takeaways (customer side)

The findings from the customer survey reveal several important patterns regarding channel use, responsiveness and satisfaction. A notable use–preference gap emerges although customers frequently use WhatsApp and Facebook to contact support, they express a stronger preference for Phone and Live chat. This suggests that social media

channels are primarily chosen for their ease of access and availability, whereas synchronous channels like Phone and Live chat are perceived as more effective for resolving issues (see Table 8 and Figure 8).

In terms of speed dynamics, WhatsApp shows a greater concentration of responses within minutes or less than one hour, outperforming other channels. In contrast, Email and Phone exhibit longer response times, with a significant portion of replies taking more than 24 hours or receiving no response at all (see Table 9 and Figure 9). Regarding resolution outcomes, full resolution is most frequently achieved through WhatsApp and Phone, yet partial or unresolved cases remain across all channels. These patterns correspond with mid-range satisfaction levels overall and higher dissatisfaction reported among Facebook users (see Table 10 and Figure 10).

Customer behavior also demonstrates a degree of elasticity in response to service quality and speed. When support is perceived as quick and helpful, both repurchase and recommendation intentions increase sharply. However, nearly half of respondents indicated that they had abandoned a purchase at least once because of delayed responses or unhelpful interactions (see Table 11 and Figure 11). Finally, in comparing local and international providers, customers more often perceive local retailers as slower or less effective, though a sizeable minority rate them as comparable or better. This perception should be interpreted alongside the widespread use of WhatsApp and Facebook platforms typically managed by local firms, which indicates that accessibility and response discipline remain key determinants of satisfaction in Bangladesh's online retail market (see **Table 12 and Figure 12**).

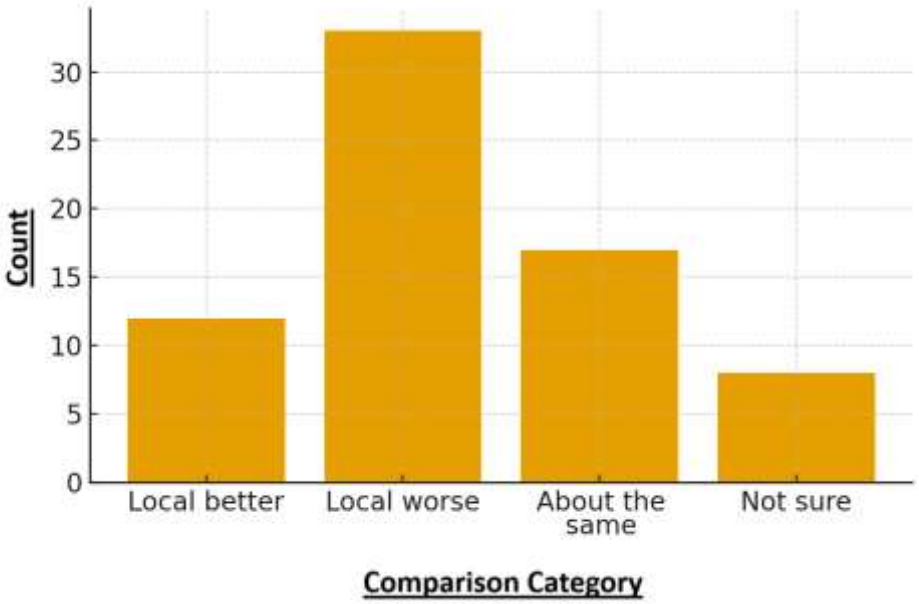

Figure 12. Perceived local vs international performance (distribution)

5 Results: Retail staff survey

5.1 Business profile and volume

Retail respondents are mainly managers (11, 36.7%) and owners (10, 33.3%), with the remainder split between other roles (6, 20.0%) and customer service staff (3, 10.0%). Business tenure is balanced across 1–3, 4–6 and >6 years (each 8, 26.7%), with 6 (20.0%) under 1 year. Categories are mixed: home appliances and multi-categories (each 6, 20.0%), electronics and other (each 5, 16.7%), clothing and grocery (each 4, 13.3%). Monthly order volume centers on 50–200 orders (10, 33.3%), then 501–1000 (7, 23.3%), 201–500 (6, 20.0%), <50 (5, 16.7%) and >1000 (2, 6.7%). **Table 13** shows these details. Daily inquiry volume shows a spread from 1–5 per day to >50 (**Figure. 13**).

Table 13. Business profile (n = 30)

Block	Category	Count	Percent
Role	Manager/Supervisor	11	36.7
	Owner/Proprietor	10	33.3
	Other	6	20.0
	Customer service staff	3	10.0
Age of business	<1 year	6	20.0
	1–3 years	8	26.7
	4–6 years	8	26.7
	>6 years	8	26.7
Category	Home appliances	6	20.0
	Multiple categories	6	20.0
	Electronics/Gadgets	5	16.7
	Other	5	16.7
	Clothing/Fashion	4	13.3
	Grocery/Food	4	13.3
Monthly orders	50–200	10	33.3
	501–1000	7	23.3
	201–500	6	20.0
	<50	5	16.7
	>1000	2	6.7

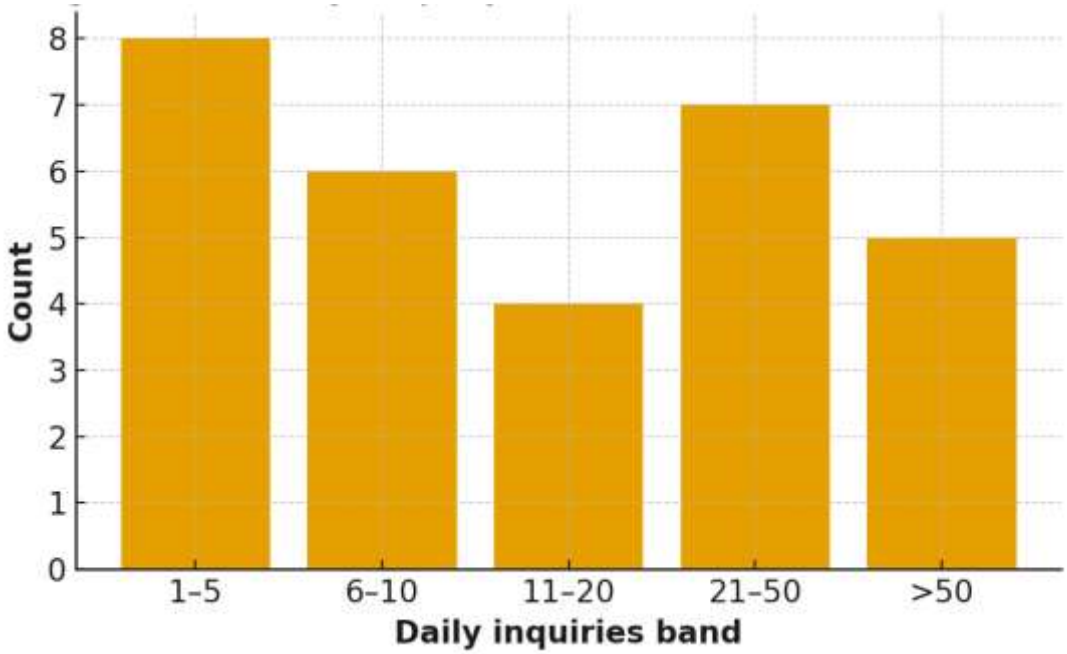

Figure 13. Daily inquiry volume distribution (n = 30)

5.2 Channels offered and used

Email is most reported among offered channels (10, 33.3%), followed by social media (6, 20.0%), WhatsApp (4, 13.3%), live chat and in-person desk (each 3, 10.0%), phone and other (each 2, 6.7%). In contrast, customers most frequently use phone (10, 33.3%), social media (9, 30.0%) and WhatsApp (8, 26.7%), with email (2, 6.7%), other (1, 3.3%) and live chat (0) trailing. There is a gap between what firms say they offer and what customers use (**Table 14, Figure 14**).

Table 14. Channels offered vs most used (n = 30)

Channel	Offered (n)	Offered (%)	Most used (n)	Most used (%)
Phone	2	6.7	10	33.3
Email	10	33.3	2	6.7
Live chat	3	10.0	0	0.0
Social media	6	20.0	9	30.0
WhatsApp	4	13.3	8	26.7
In-person desk	3	10.0	0	0.0
Other	2	6.7	1	3.3

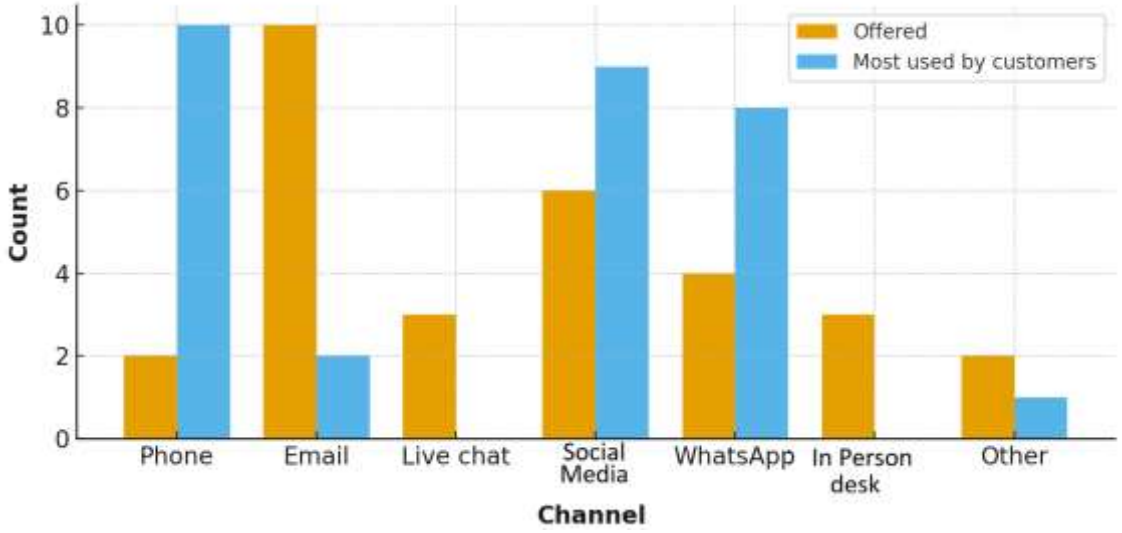

Figure 14. Channels offered vs most used (n = 30)

5.3 SLAs, tooling and training

Just under half report a formal SLA target (Yes 13, 43.3%; No 17, 56.7%). Typical first response is within 30–60 minutes or the same day (each 8, 26.7%), with smaller shares at ≤30 minutes (4, 13.3%), 1–6 hours (5, 16.7%) and >24 hours (5, 16.7%). Staff see a "reasonable maximum" initial wait mostly as 6–12 hours (9, 30.0%) or 3–6 hours (8, 26.7%), indicating more tolerant internal targets than observed quick responses. Observed response bands are quicker than the 'reasonable maximum' targets in many cases (**Table 15, 16 and Figure 15**).

Table 15. SLA presence and first response time (n = 30)

SLA presence					
SLA presence		**Count**		**Percent**	
Yes		13		43.3	
No		17		56.7	
Typical first response time					
First response time band		**Count**		**Percent**	
≤30 min		4		13.3	
30–<60 min		8		26.7	
1–6 h		5		16.7	
Same day (<24 h)		8		26.7	
>24 h		5		16.7	
1–6 h		5		16.7	
Cross-tab: SLA × first response band (counts)					
SLA	**≤30 min**	**30–<60 min**	**1–6 h**	**Same day (<24 h)**	**>24 h**
Yes	3	3	2	4	1
No	1	5	3	4	4

Table 16. Tools and training (n = 30)

Primary tool used		
Primary tool used	**Count**	**Percent**
None of the above	13	43.3
Ticketing/CRM	7	23.3
Live chat software	7	23.3
Automated chatbot	3	10.0
Training frequency		
Training frequency	**Count**	**Percent**
Occasional	11	36.7
Regular	10	33.3
No specific training	9	30.0

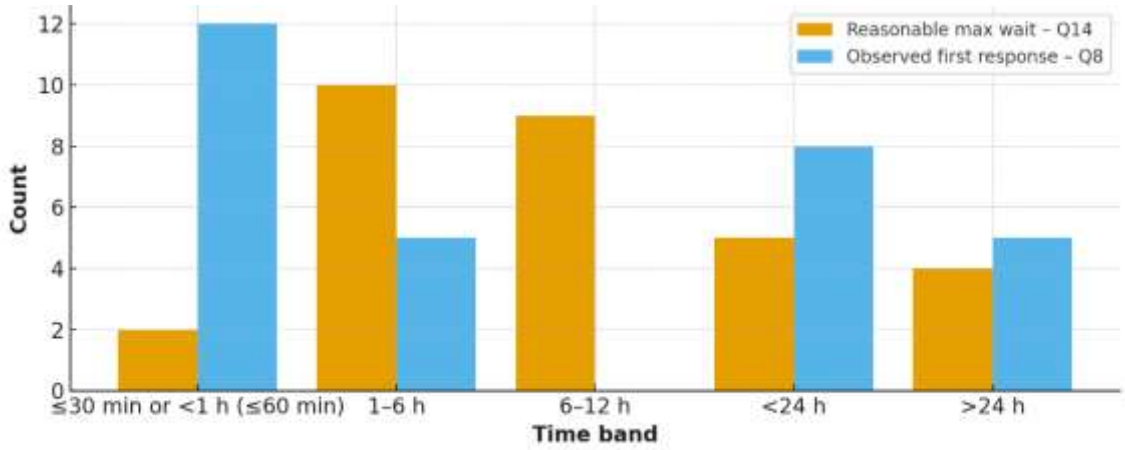

Figure 15. Response-time targets vs observed bands (harmonised bins)

5.4 Perceived satisfaction and first-contact resolution

Perceived customer satisfaction is mostly moderate (13, 43.3%) or low (8, 26.7%), with 6 (20.0%) reporting high and few at extremes. As shown in **Table** 17, First-contact resolution is robust for many: ≥76% FCR in 19 firms (63.3%), including >90% FCR in 8 (26.7%). Channels staff say they handle most efficiently are social media (13, 43.3%), email and phone (each 5, 16.7%), other (4, 13.3%) and live chat (3, 10.0%). The share of high FCR (≥76%) is 61.5% for social media, 66.7% for live chat, 60.0% for phone and email, and 75.0% for "other," noting small ns for some categories (**Figure. 16**).

Table 17. Perceived CSAT and FCR (n = 30)

Overall customer satisfaction (staff-perceived)		
Perceived CSAT level	**Count**	**Percent**
Moderate	13	43.3
Low	8	26.7
High	6	20.0
Very low	2	6.7
Very high	1	3.3
First-contact resolution (FCR)		
FCR band	**Count**	**Percent**
0–50%	3	10.0
51–75%	8	26.7
76–90%	11	36.7
>90%	8	26.7

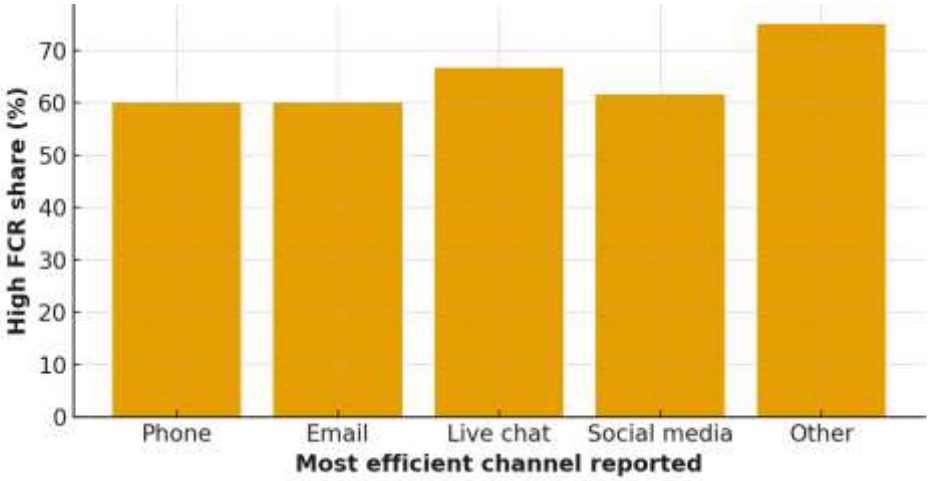

Figure 16. High first-contact resolution (≥76%) by most efficient channel

5.5 Challenges and investments

Top challenge is limited staff (12, 40.0%), then high inquiry volume (9, 30.0%), customers contacting outside hours and multi-channel management (each 3, 10.0%), technical issues (2, 6.7%) and others (1, 3.3%). Planned investments are mostly undecided (17, 56.7%), with 11 (36.7%) planning to invest and 2 (6.7%) not planning (**Table 18**). Heatmap contrasts challenges by monthly order band (**Figure 17**).

Table 18. Challenges and planned investments (n = 30)

Main challenges		
Main challenge	**Count**	**Percent**
Limited staff	12	40.0
High inquiry volume	9	30.0
Customers contact outside business hours	3	10.0
Hard to manage multiple channels	3	10.0
Technical issues	2	6.7
Other	1	3.3
Planned investment (next year)		
Planned investment	**Count**	**Percent**
Maybe/Not sure	17	56.7
Yes	11	36.7
No	2	6.7

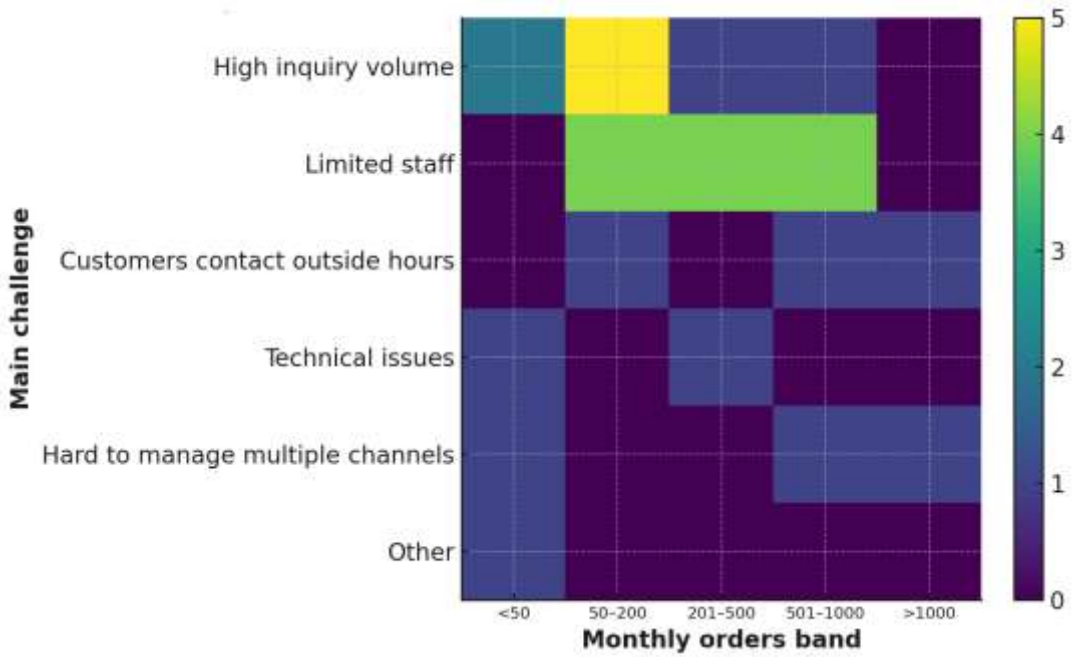

Figure 17. Challenge prevalence by business size (monthly orders)

5.6 Key takeaways (staff side)

The retailer survey highlights several operational patterns in customer service delivery within Bangladesh's online retail sector. Phone, social media and WhatsApp continue to serve as the primary channels for interacting with customers, while email, though frequently listed as an available option, remains less dominant as an inbound communication medium. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are not universally implemented, and many firms define their "reasonable maximum" response times in multi-hour terms. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of retailers still achieve sub-hour first responses, indicating an ability to manage inquiries promptly despite the absence of formal SLAs.

In terms of internal capacity, tool adoption and training remain limited. Almost half of the businesses surveyed reported no CRM, live chat or automation tools, and approximately one-third indicated that staff training is infrequent or irregular. This pattern aligns with the identification of staffing constraints and high inquiry volumes as the leading operational challenges. Despite these resource limitations, many teams maintain strong first-contact resolution (FCR) levels, particularly where social channels are handled efficiently and systematically. Although most respondents acknowledged the importance of improving customer support infrastructure, investment intentions remain uncertain, with more than half of the firm's undecided about committing future resources to customer service enhancement initiatives.

6 Integrated analysis and discussion

6.1 Triangulation: customer vs staff views

6.1.1 Fastest/most efficient channel: where views align and diverge

Customers most often identify Phone (34.3%), Live chat (24.3%) and social media (24.3%) as the fastest routes to a first response (Form 1: Q17). Staff most often report social media (43.3%), then Phone/Email (16.7% each) as the most efficient channels to handle (Form 2: Q16). The table below contrasts the two distributions and shows percentage gaps by channel. The largest divergences are customers over-rate Phone and Live chat relative to staff efficiency, while staff over-rate social media relative to customer "fastest" perceptions (**Table 19)**.

Table 19. Concordance: customer-perceived fastest vs staff-reported most efficient (percent of valid responses)

Channel	Customer fastest – Count	Customer fastest – %	Staff most efficient – Count	Staff most efficient – %	Gap (Customer% – Staff%)
Phone	24	34.3	5	16.7	**+17.6**
Email	5	7.1	5	16.7	**–9.6**
Live chat	17	24.3	3	10.0	**+14.3**
Social media	17	24.3	13	43.3	**–19.0**
Other	7	10.0	4	13.3	–3.3

6.1.2 Expected vs experienced speed (customer side)

Customers' experience speed against expectations varies by channel (Form 1: Q16 × Q8). Figure 18 shows that "slower than expected" shares are highest for Facebook and Phone, whereas WhatsApp yields the best balance of "faster than expected" reports. This dovetails with Chapter 4 where WhatsApp concentrated more replies in minutes and <1 hour (Table 9), and with Chapter 5 where staff frequently handle social channels efficiently (Table 14; most-used inbound) and report good first-contact resolution when those channels are their strength (Figure 16).

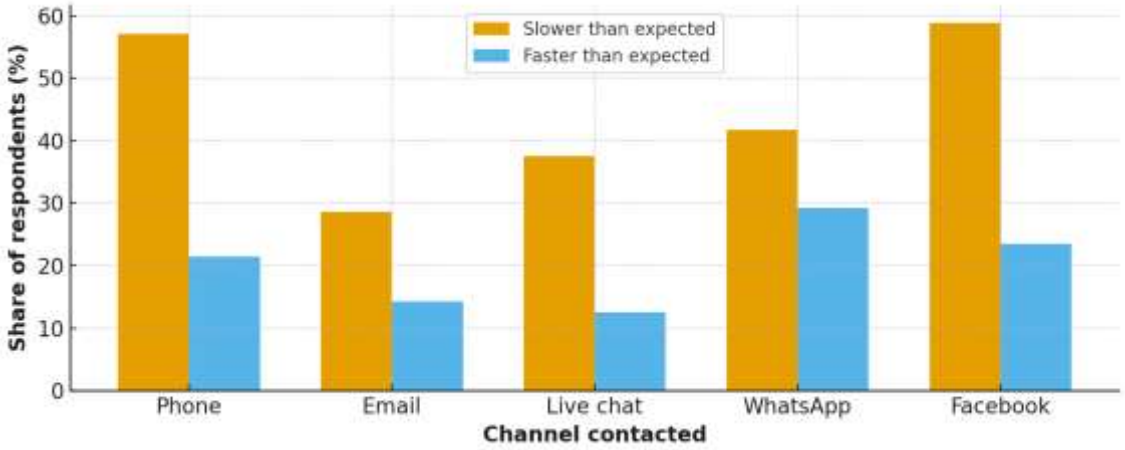

Figure 18. Expected vs experienced response by channel (customer view)

6.1.3 SLAs vs experienced waits (triangulation)

From the staff side, 43.3% report a formal SLA (Table 15A), with typical first responses concentrated in 30–60 minutes and same day bands (Table 15B). Customers experienced first responses, however, show more long-tail delays on Phone/Email (Table 9). The SLA × response band cross-tab (Table 15C) indicates that SLAs are associated with more sub-day responses, yet >24h still occurs for SLA and non-SLA firms. Practically, this suggests coverage and queue management matter as much as declaring SLAs.

6.2 Interpreting results through theory

6.2.1 SERVQUAL (responsiveness, assurance)

- **Responsiveness:** Channels with more "minutes/<1h" responses (WhatsApp; some Facebook/live chat) deliver higher resolution and mid-to-positive satisfaction distributions (Ch. 4, Tables 9–10; Figure. 10). The pattern aligns with responsiveness as a driver of perceived service quality.
- **Assurance:** Phone and live chat are preferred for their perceived ability to resolve and reassure (Table 8), even when speed isn't always the best. Staff professionalism evaluations (Ch. 4) and staff-reported FCR ≥76% (Table 17B) indicate that capability + speed together underpin assurance.

6.2.2 Expectation–Confirmation Theory (ECT)

Where first response is fast, customers report “faster/about as expected” more often (Figure. 18), which flows into solution satisfaction and strong repurchase/recommend intent when service is quick and helpful (Figure. 11). Conversely, Phone and Facebook show higher expectation violations (slower-than-expected), mirroring their heavier >24h/no response tails in Table 9.

6.2.3 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

In terms of technology adoption, the findings reflect the principles of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), specifically perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The results indicate that Live chat is preferred by nearly a quarter of customers (Table 8) and regarded as an efficient service channel by a subset of retail staff. When implemented effectively, live chat combines speed and documentation, allowing agents to manage queues efficiently while providing scripted responses that maintain consistency and professionalism. On the other hand, the ease of use of WhatsApp and social media platforms—which require no separate account creation and offer a familiar user interface—explains their high contact volumes and the efficiency reported by staff (Tables 14 and 16). However, the limited adoption of chatbots and CRM systems (Table 16A) restricts the scalability of these benefits. In cases where such tools are deployed, the gap between targeted and actual response times tends to narrow, as illustrated in Figure 15, demonstrating that effective technological integration enhances both responsiveness and overall service performance.

6.3 Localisation vs foreignness effects

The comparison between local and international service providers reveals distinct patterns in customer perception and performance. Overall, international providers are rated more favorably, with 47% of respondents indicating that local retailers perform worse in terms of service quality (see Table 12). This perception appears to stem from differences in service speed, consistency, and recovery processes. However, local e-commerce firms possess several inherent advantages that, if strategically leveraged, can help bridge this perception gap.

First, language and proximity are strong localization assets. The ability to communicate in Bangali, operate within local business hours, and understand cultural nuances enhances customer assurance particularly when combined with competitive response times on phone and live chat channels. Second, payment and return mechanisms such as cash-on-delivery (COD) and local return logistics significantly reduce customer anxiety about online purchases. When these are paired with prompt responses through WhatsApp or live chat, the likelihood of faster resolution increases (Table 10), while purchase abandonment tends to decrease (Table 11). Finally, platform presence represents another area of local advantage. Many Bangladeshi firms maintain a strong operational presence on WhatsApp and Facebook, aligning with common customer access habits. Nevertheless, maintaining performance standards and meeting response-time expectations (Figure 18) are essential for transforming accessibility into sustained customer satisfaction and trust.

6.4 Comparison to prior literature

The findings of this thesis align closely with established research on e-commerce operations in developing-country contexts. Social/messaging channels dominate contact and often outperform traditional email in responsiveness when adequately staffed, confirming prior studies that highlight digital messaging as a critical driver of customer satisfaction and service efficiency. Responsiveness and assurance drive satisfaction and service recovery, as quick acknowledgements and clear ownership of issues are more influential in shaping positive experiences than the specific channel used for communication. Furthermore, expectation confirmation mediates satisfaction, as evidenced by this study's finding that delays frequently result in purchase abandonment (46%) and weaken loyalty intentions—an outcome consistent with previous literature identifying timeliness as a key predictor of post-purchase behavior. Lastly, TAM-consistent adoption is evident: customers naturally gravitate toward tools that are easy to use and perceived as useful, such as WhatsApp and live chat. Conversely, the limited uptake of CRM and automation tools on the retailer side (Table 16) mirrors patterns observed among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in resource-constrained settings, where technological investment remains modest, leading to inconsistency in service delivery.

6.5 Managerial implications for Bangladeshi e-retail

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for online retailers operating in Bangladesh. Businesses should maintain WhatsApp, live chat and phone as the primary channels for customer support, ensuring consistent entry points and clear option ordering across websites, applications and social platforms. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) need to be designed according to channel type, with a target of no more than sixty minutes for first responses on WhatsApp and live chat, and same-day responses for email inquiries, while adherence should be transparently monitored to sustain accountability. Adequate staffing during peak hours is essential, particularly for messaging and live chat functions, and structured overflow procedures should be implemented so that complex cases are seamlessly transferred from social media to live chat or phone. In terms of digital infrastructure, lightweight CRM or ticketing systems and integrated live-chat widgets should be prioritized before more advanced chatbot solutions, allowing firms to monitor queue loads and first-response times effectively. Standard communication scripts should be developed to ensure consistent acknowledgements, clear ownership of issues and estimated resolution times, thereby enhancing assurance as well as speed. Localized support practices, including Bangali-language communication, cash-on-delivery options and efficient domestic returns, should be emphasized in first responses to strengthen customer trust and reduce potential churn. Continuous monitoring of first-contact resolution rates, time-to-first response and abandonment rates by channel is also necessary. Periodic A/B staffing tests on WhatsApp and live chat are recommended to identify resource allocations that sustain or improve FCR performance above 76 per cent, as demonstrated in Table 17 and Figure 16. Together, these practices can help Bangladeshi online retailers enhance responsiveness, maintain service consistency and build longer-term customer loyalty.

7 Synthesis, Recommendations and Future Research

This chapter synthesizes what the study shows about **how channel choice and response time shape customer satisfaction in Bangladesh's online retail**, and sets out actionable steps for managers, the study's contributions, limitations and an agenda for future work. The section draws on the realized datasets and the integrated analysis in Chapter 6.

7.1 Summary answer to each Research Question (RQ)

Primary RQ — How do customer service channels and their response times influence satisfaction in Bangladesh's online retail?

Faster first responses and clear ownership are consistently linked with higher satisfaction and stronger intent to repurchase/recommend. In this sample, messaging channels (notably WhatsApp) concentrate minutes and <1-hour replies, which correspond to better resolution distributions and more positive expectation confirmation. Phone and email show heavier tails at >24 hours/no response, and therefore higher "slower than expected" reports and weaker satisfaction. Net effect: speed + perceived assurance drive satisfaction more than channel branding per se, but channels differ in their ability to deliver speed reliably.

Sub-RQ1 — Which channels are most used, and which are perceived as fastest?

Customers use WhatsApp and Facebook most often to reach support but prefer Phone and Live chat. They perceive Phone, Live chat and social media as fastest, while staff rate social media as the most efficient to handle. There is a usage–preference gap and a perception divergence between customers and staff.

Sub-RQ2 — How do first-response and resolution-time bands correlate with satisfaction?

Minutes and sub-hour replies tend to align with full or partial resolution and mid-to-positive satisfaction. As bands lengthen, purchase abandonment rises (46% report at least one abandonment due to slow responses), and dissatisfaction concentrates where >24h/no response is more common.

Sub-RQ3 — Do perceptions differ for local vs international providers, and along which attributes?

A plurality of customers judges local providers worse than international peers on service performance. The moderators are localization levels (Bengali support, COD, domestic returns, local-hour coverage) and operational consistency. Local firms can overcome the perception gap where they staff messaging/live chat well and signal assurance early.

7.2 Practical recommendations

Channel mix and accessibility

- Keep a core triad of WhatsApp + Live chat + Phone visible at entry points (web/app/social).
- Make WhatsApp and Live chat the first line for routine inquiries; reserve email for documents and asynchronous follow-ups.

SLA targets and queue discipline

- Publish channel-specific SLAs: ≤60 minutes first reply on WhatsApp/Live chat, same-day for email, and ≤30 minutes for priority issues (payment, delivery exceptions).
- Track adherence by queue and hour; monitor aging buckets and trigger auto-nudges/escalations when thresholds are crossed.

Staffing windows and coverage

- Staff peak windows for messaging and live chat (evenings, weekends before festivals).
- Use skills-based routing and a simple overflow rule (Social → Live chat → Phone) for complex cases.

Tooling and light automation

- Prioritize lightweight ticketing/CRM and live-chat widget before heavy chatbots; instrument time-to-first response and FCR.
- Add response templates (opening acknowledgment, ETA, next steps) to raise perceived assurance without slowing first replies.

Agent training for assurance

- Short bi-weekly drills on de-escalation, clear ownership statements and next-step signposting.
- Reinforce Bengali-first communication norms and tone consistency across channels.

Proactive updates and recovery

- For orders at risk, send proactive WhatsApp updates with alternatives and compensation thresholds.
- Standardize service-recovery playbooks (refunds, replacements, coupons) with time-boxed actions.

Localisation levers

- Promote COD, domestic returns and local-hour support in the first response.
- During major local events, publish extended-hours SLAs and staff accordingly.

Measurement and continuous improvement

- Track FCR, first-response time, abandonment rate and CSAT by channel monthly.
- Run small A/B staffing tests on WhatsApp/Live chat; aim to lift FCR ≥76% cohorts.

7.3 Contributions

Empirical (Bangladesh-specific): Parallel customer and staff views show where perceptions align (messaging speed) and where they diverge (phone perceived fastest vs staff efficiency on social) and quantify the behavioral cost of delay (46% abandonment).
Theoretical (integration of SERVQUAL, ECT, TAM): The results show how responsiveness and assurance (SERVQUAL) and expectation confirmation (ECT) translate timing into satisfaction, while TAM explains adoption of faster, easier channels (WhatsApp/Live chat).
Managerial (localization lens): The study clarifies how support in Bengali language, COD and domestic returns can amplify the speed–satisfaction pathway if paired with disciplined queues and clear ownership.

Methodological: A dual-stakeholder, MCQ-based design demonstrates a pragmatic way to triangulate channel performance and expectations in resource-constrained contexts.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to several methodological and contextual limitations that also provide opportunities for future research. The closed-ended, self-administered survey design constrained the depth of qualitative insight, and the use of single-item measures for certain constructs limited the ability to capture nuanced variations in perception. The non-probability sampling strategy and an urban-leaning respondent base restrict the generalizability of findings to the broader Bangladeshi population. Additionally, on the retailer side, information about “offered channels” was captured as a single primary option rather than a comprehensive multi-select format, reducing granularity in channel analysis. As with many perception-based studies, the data relies on self-reported response times and satisfaction outcomes rather than system-logged evidence, making recall bias a potential concern. Furthermore, the study represents a single-country, cross-sectional snapshot, and thus does not account for temporal or transactional factors such as refund duration, repeat purchase frequency or seasonal effects.

Future research should address these limitations by employing probability sampling across multiple urban and rural tiers to enhance representativeness and enable subgroup inference. Experimental designs, such as A/B testing of SLA thresholds (for example, 15-, 30-, or 60-minute first responses) and alternative staffing models, could quantify causal effects on first-contact resolution (FCR), customer satisfaction (CSAT) and purchase abandonment. Integration of provider-side telemetry, including timestamped queue data and automated log files, would allow direct validation of perception–performance gaps observed in this study. Further investigations could also incorporate open-ended questions and thematic coding to identify underlying causes of delay and dissatisfaction, supported by service-recovery experiments to measure behavioral outcomes. Longitudinal tracking during peak seasons and festivals would reveal how firms manage capacity shocks and recovery patterns. Finally, comparative studies between Bangladesh and other regional markets could provide valuable insights into the cost–benefit trade-

offs of localization, training and technological investments, offering a richer understanding of how context shapes digital service effectiveness

8 Conclusion

This thesis analyzed how customer service channel choice and response time affect customer satisfaction in Bangladesh's online retail sector. Using data from customers and retail staff, the study found that messaging platforms, particularly WhatsApp and live chat, offer the most effective balance of accessibility and responsiveness. Customers often use social media for convenience but prefer phone and live chat for quicker issue resolution. Although international providers are generally rated higher, local firms can improve competitiveness through Bengali-language support, cash-on-delivery and efficient domestic returns. The application of SERVQUAL, Expectation–Confirmation Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model helped explain how responsiveness, assurance and ease of use jointly drive satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

For practitioners, the results highlight that improving responsiveness and assurance is central to achieving customer satisfaction. Maintaining a consistent mix of WhatsApp, live chat and phone support can strengthen accessibility and trust. Clear Service Level Agreements with defined first-response targets, efficient staffing during peak hours, and basic CRM or ticketing tools can improve performance monitoring. Standardized response scripts, regular staff training and Bangali-first communication further enhance customer confidence. Local retailers should emphasize localization strengths, such as cash-on-delivery and domestic returns, to close the perception gap with global competitors.

The study's limitations include its closed-ended survey design, non-probability sampling and reliance on self-reported data, which limit generalizability and introduce possible recall bias. Future studies should use probability sampling across different regions, test SLA thresholds and staffing strategies experimentally, and integrate system-based response logs to validate perception–performance differences. Open-ended feedback and longitudinal or comparative research could reveal deeper causes of delay, satisfaction and trust, contributing to a broader understanding of service quality in developing e-commerce markets.

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Declaration

We, **Sumaiya Afrin** and **Md. Shoaib**, hereby declare that this thesis has been written through our joint collaboration. We have contributed equally to make this thesis more valuable. Our supervisor, **Sadia Tangem**, has approved our collaboration as well.