



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING ON PADDY FARM  
PERFORMANCE IN BANGLADESH***

**FARHANA IRIS**

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**INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING ON PADDY FARM  
PERFORMANCE IN BANGLADESH**

By

**FARHANA IRIS**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**November 2021**

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## **DEDICATIONS**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, my husband, and my loving daughters, for their continued support and understanding over the years that this journey has taken.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## **INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING ON PADDY FARM PERFORMANCE IN BANGLADESH**

By

**FARHANA IRIS**

**November 2021**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Nolila binti Mohd Nawi, PhD**  
**Faculty : Agriculture**

Nowadays, many firms/individuals are moving towards business relationships, becoming closer, and developing business ties with their business partners in the supply chain. Relationship marketing could underpin strategic marketing to minimize economic problems and enhance performance. It is considered a way of reducing cost, enhancing efficiency, increasing profit and competitive advantage, and improving personal relationships. Nonetheless, the business transaction between paddy buyers and farmers are not efficient in terms of economic return for farmers in Bangladesh. The commencement of modernization draws much theoretical debate and practical concern, some of which have received little research attention, especially the influence of relationship marketing on the farm performance of the farmers. The strategic use of relationship marketing is essential for both farmers and marketers. This study developed a model of relationship marketing based on existing literature to empirically investigate the influence of relationship marketing on the farm performance of paddy farmers in Bangladesh. Specifically, this study aimed to examine the direct and indirect influences of relationship marketing on farm performance and considered the mediation effects of satisfaction and loyalty. The dimensions of relationship marketing, namely trust, commitment, communication, and power, were employed in the study as independent variables, satisfaction and loyalty as mediating variables and farm performance as the dependent variable.

Primary data was collected through a quantitative survey-based approach with 356 farmers interviewed from the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh. The survey used a structured questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale. A systematic random sampling technique was used to collect data. Descriptive analysis was employed to summarize the farmers' demographic profiles, farmers' attitudes, and experiences towards their preferred buyers. Partial Least Square Structure Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the hypotheses developed in this study.

The findings revealed that trust, communication, satisfaction, and loyalty were positively related to farm performance. Trust, commitment, communication, and power had indirect relationships with performance in the presence of satisfaction and loyalty. It indicates that satisfaction and loyalty were the key mediators between relationship marketing and the farmers' business relationship. The results also showed that trust, commitment, communication, and power had significant relationships with satisfaction and loyalty. These findings are a valuable insight into the relationship marketing and farmers' farm performance, especially in terms of profit, sales, and cash flow growth. It also set a step forward to developing a unified theoretical framework for understanding the role of relationship marketing and the mediating roles of satisfaction and loyalty on farmers' farm performance. The findings will also serve the policymakers as a basis for formulating essential policies and procedures introducing relationship marketing as a marketing strategy. In turn, it will help inspire paddy farmers and buyers to practice relationship marketing to ensure improved farm performance, especially for Bangladeshi farmers.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENGARUH PEMASARAN PERHUBUNGAN TERHADAP PRESTASI  
LADANG PESAWAH PADI DI BANGLADESH**

Oleh

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Pada masa kini, banyak syarikat / individu bergerak menuju hubungan perniagaan, menjadi lebih dekat dan mengembangkan hubungan perniagaan dengan rakan perniagaan mereka dalam rantaian bekalan. Pemasaran perhubungan dapat menyokong pemasaran strategik untuk meminimumkan masalah ekonomi dan meningkatkan prestasi. Ia dianggap sebagai cara untuk mengurangkan kos, meningkatkan kecekapan, meningkatkan keuntungan, meningkatkan kelebihan daya saing, dan hubungan peribadi. Walaupun demikian, urusan niaga perniagaan antara pembeli dan petani padi tidak begitu berkesan dari segi pulangan ekonomi kepada petani di Bangladesh. Permulaan pemodenan menarik banyak perbincangan teori dan keprihatinan praktikal, beberapa di antaranya hanya mendapat sedikit perhatian dalam penyelidikan, terutama pengaruh pemasaran perhubungan terhadap prestasi ladang petani. Penggunaan strategik pemasaran hubungan mempunyai kepentingan yang signifikan bagi petani dan juga pemarkas. Kajian ini membangunkan model pemasaran perhubungan berdasarkan literatur yang ada untuk menyelidik secara empirikal pengaruh hubungan pemasaran terhadap prestasi perniagaan petani padi di Bangladesh. Secara khususnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh langsung dan tidak langsung pemasaran perhubungan terhadap prestasi perniagaan, sambil mempertimbangkan pengaruh perantara kepuasan dan kesetiaan. Dimensi pemasaran hubungan iaitu kepercayaan, komitmen, komunikasi dan kekuatan telah digunakan dalam kajian ini sebagai pemboleh ubah tidak bersandar, sementara kepuasan dan kesetiaan pula digunakan sebagai pemboleh ubah perantara dan prestasi dianggap sebagai pemboleh ubah bersandar.

Data primer dikumpulkan melalui pendekatan berasaskan tinjauan kuantitatif dengan menemuramah seramai 356 petani dari daerah Mymensingh Bangladesh. Soal selidik berstruktur dengan skala Likert 7 mata digunakan dalam kajian ini. Teknik pensampelan rawak sistematik pelbagai peringkat digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Analisis deskriptif digunakan untuk meringkaskan profil demografi petani, sikap dan pengalaman petani terhadap pembeli pilihan mereka. *Partial Least Square Structure Equation*

*Modelling* (PLS-SEM) pula digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis yang dibangunkan dalam kajian.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kepercayaan, komunikasi, kepuasan dan kesetiaan berhubung positif dengan prestasi perniagaan. Selain itu, kepercayaan, komitmen, komunikasi dan kekuatan berkait dengan prestasi secara tidak langsung dengan adanya kepuasan dan kesetiaan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kepuasan dan kesetiaan adalah perantara utama antara pemasaran hubungan dan hubungan perniagaan petani. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa kepercayaan, komitmen, komunikasi dan kekuatan menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan dengan kepuasan dan kesetiaan. Penemuan ini akan memberikan gambaran yang berharga tentang hubungan pemasaran dan prestasi perniagaan petani terutamanya berkaitan dengan pertumbuhan keuntungan, jualan dan aliran tunai. Kajian ini juga dapat mengembangkan kerangka teori sedia ada dengan memahami peranan pemasaran hubungan dan peranan perantara iaitu kepuasan dan kesetiaan terhadap prestasi perniagaan petani. Penemuan ini juga akan bermanfaat kepada pembuat dasar untuk digunakan sebagai asas untuk membentuk polisi penting dan prosedur tertentu dengan memperkenalkan pemasaran hubungan sebagai strategi pemasaran. Ini seterusnya akan memberikan inspirasi kepada pembeli dan penjual padi untuk mempraktikkan pemasaran hubungan dalam memastikan peningkatan prestasi perniagaan, terutama prestasi perniagaan petani di Bangladesh.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BTB	Business to Business
CMB	Common Method Bias
CR	Composite Reliability
CTT	Commitment-Trust Theory
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HTMT	Hetero Trait-Mono Trait
KMV	Key Mediating Variable
PLS	Partial Least Square
RM	Relationship Marketing
ROI	Return of Investment
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SET	Social Exchange Theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
SRMR	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual
VAF	Variance Accounted For
VIF	Variable Inflation Factor
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains seven sections. The first section provides the background of the study, including an overview on paddy production in Bangladesh and the size of paddy farm. It explores the difficulties faced by the farmers and paddy buyers in Bangladesh, relationship marketing between farmers and paddy buyers, and relationship marketing and farm performance. The second section specifies the problem statement and research questions that led to the identified research objectives. The significance and scope of the study are presented in the third and fourth sections, respectively. After that, the assumption of the study, operational definition of the variables, and organization of the study are presented in the fifth, sixth, and seventh sections, respectively.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Bangladesh is one of the world's most highly populated countries, with 161 million people (World Bank [WB], 2018). Agriculture is one of the major pillars of Bangladesh's economy, contributing to national revenue income, export earnings, and remittance. In Bangladesh, about 77% of people depend on agriculture directly or indirectly for their livelihood (Quddus and Kropp, 2020; Islam, Fujiwara, Sato, and Hyakumura, 2018). The agriculture sector contributes 13.32% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 2019). In Bangladesh, more than 70% of the population and 77% of its labour force live in villages (World Bank, 2016). The agriculture sector accommodates 40.60% of the labour force (BBS, 2020), and two-thirds of the rural workforce is employed in agriculture (WB, 2016), where employment in the service and industry sectors constituted 39% and 20.40%, respectively (BBS, 2020). Agriculture is the primary sector for employment opportunities in Bangladesh. Most importantly, rice is the staple food that feeds 161 million people in the country (Siddiquee, 2019). Thus, paddy production is an important agricultural activity that fuels the national economy (Hasan, Osmani, and Hossain, 2017).

##### 1.1.1 Paddy Production in Bangladesh

Paddy production areas accounted for about 75% of total cultivable land, while other crops, such as potato, wheat, maize, pulse, oilseeds, spices, tea, jute, sugarcane, fruits, and vegetables accounted for the remaining 25% (BBS, 2018). The arable land amounts to 7,764,210 ha or 59.65% of the total land (WB, 2016). Table 1.1 shows the percentage of cultivable land for paddy production and other crops.

**Table 1.1 : Area under Cultivation of Different Crops in Bangladesh**

No	Crops	Land Area (%)	No	Crops	Land Area (%)
1	Rice	74.85	7	Spices	2.60
2	Wheat	2.92	8	Sugar cane	0.65
3	Potato	3.13	9	Jute	4.46
4	Maize	2.20	10	Tea	0.39
5	Pulse	2.44	11	Fruits	0.99
6	Oilseed	2.73	12	Vegetables	2.64

(Source : Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics BBS, 2018)

Table 1.1 shows that paddy is produced in about 75% of cultivable land. The production of jute and potato is merely at 4.46% and 3.13%, respectively, of the total cultivable land. Among the 12 categories of crops, tea is grown at the lowest percentage, accounting for 0.39%.

Bangladesh produced about 33.86 million metric tons of rice in 2016/17 (BBS, 2018), as shown in Table 1.2. Also shown is the consecutive increase in paddy production from 2012/13 to 2016/17, though the land for paddy production remains almost similar year after year. However, the production recorded in 2016/17 slightly declined, as is the production area from the previous year. Nonetheless, the outlook on rice yield remains increasing every year.

**Table 1.2 : Rice Production from 2012/13 – 2016/17**

Items	Year				
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Rice '000' M. Tons	33833	34356	34710	34710	33860
Area '000' Acres	28228	28101	28209	28124	27184
Yield (Per Acre, Kg)	3355	3452	3663	3491	3536

(Source : Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics BBS, 2018)

Bangladesh has achieved food self-sufficiency (World Food Programme, 2016), and the gross production of rice plays a pivotal role in attaining food security status (Kashem and Faroque, 2011). In 2018, Bangladesh was the fourth leading rice-producing country in the world, after China, India, and Indonesia (Table 1.3).

**Table 1.3 : Paddy production worldwide in 2018, by country (in million metric tons)**

Name of the Country	Paddy (in million metric tons)	Position
China	208.1	1 <sup>st</sup>
India	169.5	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Indonesia	74.4	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Bangladesh	53.0	4 <sup>th</sup>
Vietnam	44.2	5 <sup>th</sup>
Thailand	34.5	6 <sup>th</sup>
Myanmar	30.4	7 <sup>th</sup>

(Source : Shahbandeh 2019)

There are three main types of paddy production in Bangladesh, notably Aus, Aman, and Boro. Aus is a pre-monsoon paddy produced from mid-April to mid-August; Aman is a crop of monsoon season produced from mid-August to mid-December; Boro is a dry season irrigated paddy produced from mid-December to mid-April (BBS, 2018; Shelley et al., 2016; Quddus and Kropp, 2020). The paddy land remains fallow from January to March. In 2015/2016, Aus was cultivated on 8.94% of the total land area dedicated for paddy cultivation, while Aman was grown on 49.12% of the land and Boro on 41.94% of the land (BBS, 2018). There are several reasons to attribute this outcome. First, Aman is grown on more cultivable land than Boro and Aus because Aman is monsoon-season rainfed paddy (Shelley et al., 2016) since natural irrigation is favourable for Aman paddy production. Second, cultivation of both Boro and Aus tend to be affected by flash floods, whereas Aman is mainly affected at the seedling stage (Chakraborty, 2017). Thus, farmers use more cultivable land for Aman paddy production. Interestingly, the yield of Boro is the highest among all three rice varieties.

### 1.1.2 Paddy Farm Size in Bangladesh

Total farm holdings in Bangladesh amount to 15,183,183 ha, where small farm holdings comprised 12,812,372 ha, the medium is 2,136,415 ha, and the large is 234,396 ha (BBS, 2018). In Bangladesh, agriculture farm holdings are measured by production unit, specifically having farmland equal to or more than 0.05 acres. Accordingly, the farms are segmented into three groups where small farm holdings have a minimum cultivated land of 0.05 to 2.49 acres; medium farm holdings have cultivated land between 2.50 to 7.49 acres, and large farm holdings have cultivated land of 7.50 acres and above (Quddus and Kropp, 2020; BBS, 2013).

Bangladesh's agriculture predominantly comprised small farmers (Quddus and Kropp, 2020; Ullah, 2016). The proportion of pure-tenant farmers who have not own cultivable land is 34% in the overall rural settings of Bangladesh, whereas 37% of farmers at the national level cultivate only their own land. The proportion of mixed-tenant farmers who cultivate their own land and those who take the land as sharecroppers and/or leaseholders is 29% in rural Bangladesh (Ullah, 2016). The study also found that small farms constituted more than half of the total proportion with 58.1%, while medium and large farms accounted for 41.3% and 0.6%, respectively.



### 1.1.3 Challenges Faced by Paddy Farmers

The paddy farmers suffer from a number of challenges in terms of economic return (Abdullah and Hussain, 2013; Rahman, Takeda, and Shiratake, 2005, Sarkar, 2020). Paddy farmers primarily lack adequate knowledge, skill, and ability to bargain with their buyers over marketing decisions (Jahan, 2011). The long chain of buyers or middlemen makes it even harder for the farmers to get a fair price for selling their products. Furthermore, intermediaries take the majority shares of consumers' prices, while farmers are unaware of the current pricing, demand, and supply (Rahman, Takeda, and Mohiuddin, 2006; Rahman, Takeda, and Shiratake, 2005). Farmers also suffer severely due to the lack of storage and transportation facilities (Sultana, 2012; Quddus and Kropp, 2020), which reduces farmers' bargaining power (Abdullah and Hussain, 2013). Access to credit is another problem for farmers. A study showed that only 7.5% of small farmers from a total of 76.6% have access to credit, with only 13.35% of big and medium farmers from a total of 23.40% being granted institutional funds (Ahmad, 2017).

Generally, farmers borrowed money from local intermediaries or money lenders, and sometimes these money lenders demanded more credit (Quddus and Kropp, 2020). Paddy farmers are mostly destitute, forcing them to take loans from local intermediaries at high interest (Siddique, 2015). Therefore, they are likely to sell their paddy to the same middlemen, particularly during the harvesting season. As a result, they cannot get a fair price, which creates a window of opportunity for the middlemen to exploit the paddy farmers. The middlemen's intervention in paddy trading is a major obstacle for paddy farmers to ask for a fair price (Imdad, 2021). There is also the case where middlemen and paddy traders form a syndicate to deprive farmers of negotiating for a decent selling price (Ray, 2018).

In Bangladesh, most of the farm size is small, making it a major impediment to the adoption of new technology in agriculture. That is, the socio-economic conditions of the small farmers are limiting their capacity to embrace technology (Rahman, 2017). Furthermore, only 10% of small farmers have access to extension services (Ahmad, 2017). Other challenges faced by the farmers to get to the market include market structure, transaction cost, lack of information and expertise, transport and storage facilities, and inadequate use of high-quality seed and fertilizer, which, ultimately, force them to depend on the powerful buyers (Osmani and Hossain, 2015; WB, 2007).

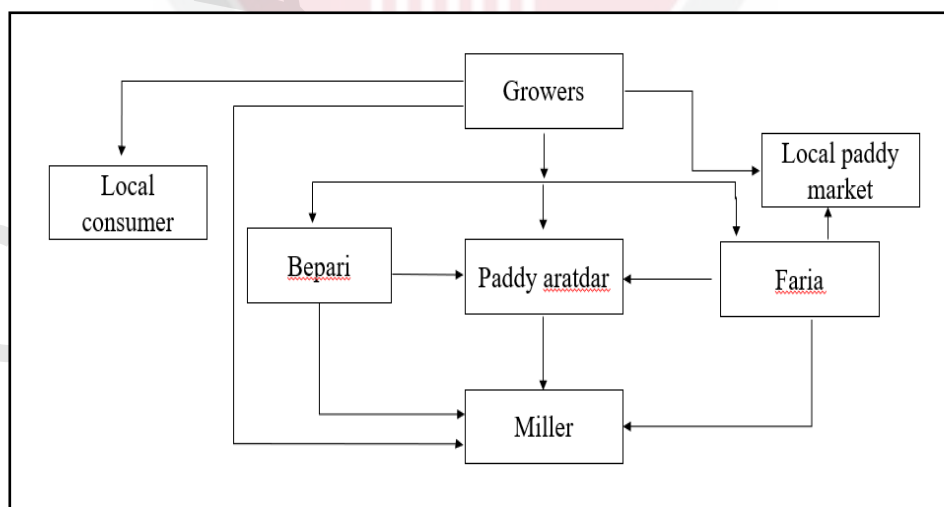
In Bangladesh, the demand for rice is always high because rice is the staple food. But when the price of rice increases in the market, farmers do not get to reap the benefit because farmers must sell the rice at a low price throughout the harvesting and post-harvesting periods. Neither large production nor higher price can increase farmers' total revenue. The middlemen's marketing role further compounds the issue by denying farmers the right to get a fair price for selling their products (Siddique, 2015). Accordingly, an efficient supply chain can shorten the distance between the farmer and the consumer. It can also reduce the middlemen's power in the channel, which improves farmers' economic performance (Rahman, Takeda, and Shiratake, 2005).



The inability to mobilize savings and credit essential to finance working capital and a lack of information and knowledge, may hinder efforts to adopt improved agricultural technologies and investment (Ullah, 2016). Farmers continue to face significant price fluctuations at the farm gate. The price of most farm produce remains low at harvest time, which helps market intermediaries and large farmers mobilize most of the farm surplus (Ullah, 2016). Moreover, due to the traditional marketing method (Miah and Moniruzzaman, 2020), oligopolistic market structure and the absence of a farmer's strong organization, the individual marketing practice for farmers creates a high transaction cost with low bargaining position (Mujeri, 2019). Regardless, the main issue here, despite the challenges faced by most farmers in achieving decent economic returns, is farmers' dissatisfaction with getting a fair price (Mujeri, 2019). As they navigate their produce at the market, they can only rely on loyal exchange partners to find the facilities (Haque and George, 2017). This highlights the importance of an exchange relationship. Therefore, farmers can regard the long-term relationship as a critical success component in achieving farm performance by incorporating elements of relationship marketing. Although numerous research have been done on marketing functions and the farmers' and buyers' activities in paddy production, research on farmers' satisfaction and loyalty to buyers, which influence farmers' farm performance is largely ignored.

#### 1.1.4 Paddy Buyers in Bangladesh

The most common types of intermediaries referred to in the vernacular are faria, bepari, aratdar, and paikar. There are also various local names in different regions of the country, such as cycle bepari, kanda bepari, bharkiwala and lai faria. Although some of the roles played by the intermediaries have evolved, the names, however, have not.



**Figure 1.1 : Paddy Trade Chain in Bangladesh**  
(Source : Ahmed, Hoque, and Shashi, 2019)

Typically, the market consists of several essential intermediation roles performed by numerous specialised agents. There are two reminders here. First, distinct names are used to denote different agents and their functions; however, the same agent also performs certain overlapping activities. Second, various local names are used to refer to the same or similar functions, which sometimes leads to confusion. Figure 1.1 shows a generic representation of the paddy- rice trade circuit in Bangladesh. Different types of paddy buyers are engaged in agricultural marketing in Bangladesh. They are farias, beparis, paiker (wholesale buyer), commission agents/aratdars, contract-buyers, millers, bharkiwala (processor) and wholesaler-retailers (Ahmed, Hoque, and Shashi, 2019; Murshid, 2011). Farias are part-time and non-licensed traders in the villages. They operate their trade in the local market by collecting paddy straight from the farmers' houses. They manage 6-20 tons of paddy and sell them to the local bepari. Beparis are larger trader than faria. They are mainly regular and full-time traders who purchase paddy straight from faria or from farmers' houses on a larger scale; they sell paddy to aratdar. Paiker are larger than bepari and faria. They are more or less regular and full-time paddy buyers and buy paddy directly from the farmers.

Aratdar is basically a commission agent and a larger rice trader than bepari. They have a significant presence in the market area as they have a connection with millers, beparis or other village traders in supplying paddy. Local aratdar also purchases paddy straight from farmers in large quantities. Bharkiwala (processor) is a local paddy processor that uses a traditional system for processing before milling. Usually, they employ a house labour force for drying and boiling paddy; they also collect paddy from farmers, albeit on a smaller scale (Ahmed, Hoque, and Shashi, 2019; Alam and Polash, 2006; Mia and Moniruzzaman, 2020; Murshid, 2011). Local buyers or rice millers are usually ready to buy a large quantity of paddy at a time. Buyers directly visit the farmer's house and buy a large amount of paddy from bulky volume sellers. As a result, large farmers find it more profitable to sell their paddy from the comfort of their homes. Bangladeshi farmers sell their product directly from farm to local faria, bepari, or the rice miller and wholesaler/aratdar. Sometimes they gather their paddy in the nearby village or markets and sell them to the local itinerant and local processor, as shown in Figure 1.1. It depicts a general paddy chain in Bangladesh where farmers have direct buying relations with bepari, faria, paddy aratdar, local consumers, and millers. They also sell paddy to the local paddy market.

Numerous studies have been done on marketing functions and farmers' and buyers' activities in paddy production. However, research on farmer and buyer relationships that would influence on farmers' farm performance is greatly ignored. The preferred buyer indicates that sellers are treated better than others, particularly in terms of price and information (Nollet, Rebolledo, and Popel, 2012). Preference implies a continuous commitment by the purchaser to a complex, expensive and often uncertain process, but one that has the possibility of increasing sales volume and helps to create a network effect (Nollet, Rebolledo, and Popel, 2012). The main criteria in decision-making among the alternatives are a fair price, trustworthiness and a good reputation (Le and Batt, 2011). Growers prefer to transact with buyers who are prepared to invest in their relationship with the growers (Batt, 2003). Suppliers, particularly those recognized as excellent or exceptional, are wooed by potential clients and even by the existing ones

who want to expand their business with them. The purchaser should then strive to improve the exchange processes (Ellegaard, 2006), modify the supplier's behaviour and improve supplier performance (Ghijsen, Semeijn, and Ernstson, 2010).

Bangladeshi paddy farmers are not habituated to practising long-term business relationships; instead, they place a high value on transactions (Murshid, 2011; Mujeri, 2019). The transaction is a short-term relationship that does not create value. Transactional marketing uses mass marketing and promotion to make sales. It focuses on short-term communications, and the interaction with the customer is minimal that does not occur beyond the sale. While transactional marketing uses promotional strategies such as discounts to make one-time sales, relationship marketing uses personalized marketing and builds customer relationships to make sales. Contrary, relationship marketing focuses on the long-term benefits of fostering relationships and brand loyalty. It also pushes for communication with customers via surveys, polls, phone calls, and social media interactions. Most importantly, relationship marketing utilizes loyalty programs and reward systems to encourage customers to return (Edwards, 2020).

To obtain a fair price, Bangladeshi farmers depend on paddy buyers (Osmani and Hossain, 2015; Quddus and Kropp, 2020) without utilising social and personal relationships in the business environment (Haque and George, 2017; Mujeri, 2019). This has piqued the interest of a number of scholars on the impact of social and personal relationships on business-to-business performance, prompting them to conduct studies (e.g., Lobo, Leckie, and Li, 2013; Aji, 2016; Murshid, 2011). The application of relationship marketing is very new in the field of farm performance, particularly in Bangladesh (Mujeri, 2019). The influence of certain powerful relational elements in individual behaviour indicates a condition in marketing governed by an individual or group exchange relationship in coordinating an environment (Berthon, Pitt, Ewing, and Bakkeland, 2003). Such coordination and long-term relation in business enhance performance in a befitting manner (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

#### **1.1.5 Relationship Marketing between Paddy Farmers and Buyers in Bangladesh**

In the paddy market in Bangladesh, exchange relationships among the farmers and buyers are based on their interaction. While many relationship marketing has been built over the years, their domain is mostly transactional exchange rather than value creation. Such relationships do not create value jointly by the participants and hence are unlikely to enhance the competitive advantage in the chain (Mujeri, 2019). Additionally, the intermediaries maintain their roles in the market in minimizing the risks associated with transactions between farmers and strangers, resulting in farmers trusting the intermediaries (Murshid, 2011). Indeed, trust is an essential component of social capital, which is based on others' behaviour that affects moral standards (Chen Han, and Jebran, 2020). Such key element of social relations influences farmers' production decision-making behaviour (Alpenberg and Scarbrough, 2018). Trust also fosters an emotional bond between the farmer and his buyer (Mao, Fu, Cao, and Chen, 2021), resulting in a

cooperative mechanism that reduces transactional costs while increasing mutual benefit for both farmers and paddy buyers (Mao, Fu, Cao, and Chen, 2021).

One of the marketing constraints that farmers face is the lack of essential market information. Unfortunately, market information is scarce, and it is difficult for the farmers to access it in Bangladesh (Quddus and Kropp, 2020). Information sharing is an integral component of the supply chain in agriculture because it is an important tool for communication and cooperation (Hilary, Sseguya, and Kibwika, 2017). Bangladeshi paddy buyers, such as beparis and paddy aratdars, often provide financial support to the farmers in times of need (Murshid, 2011), indicating the presence of social relations between paddy farmers and the village paddy traders. However, farmers often find an excuse to delay the payment or break the promise of giving back the money. This behaviour increased the risk of failing the relationship that emphasizes commitment in an exchange relationship. Commitment is a proven and essential indicator of relationship marketing because it is regarded as a measure of desire to maintain a long-term relationship. It reflects a willingness to invest in financial, physical, or relational resources to achieve long-term financial benefits (Lees, Nuthall, and Wilson, 2020).

In the Bangladeshi paddy market, a successful track record in the transaction is required, which is why aratdar sometimes plays the role of third-party guarantor. However, it requires a client-based or a network of trusted trading partners. The intermediaries like the aratdars allow the principal to reduce agency costs that agents keep essential information hidden or costly to generate directly, including information on price, quality, and credit worthiness (Murshid, 2011). Building trust and personalised transactions are crucial for the successful execution of complex exchanges, but this is essentially endogenous to the transaction even though supportive external mechanisms (for example, mobile phones) have been found to have a salient impact (Murshid, 2011). Power and dependence are among the factors that strongly influence the exchange relationship, particularly in the Bangladeshi paddy market. Moreover, due to the oligopolistic market structure and the absence of farmers' solid organisation, the individual marketing practice for farmers creates high transaction costs with a low bargaining position. Most farmers struggle to find a fair price as they have to sell paddy to the buyers as soon as possible after harvest because immediate cash is urgent for repayment to the money provider (Mujeri, 2019).

Another problem when buyers do not make timely payments is they leave the business without making any repayments and then vanish without a trace. It diminishes any existing trust, satisfaction, and loyalty towards the buyers, resulting in a failing business relationship (Murshid, 2011). Compounding the farmers' exasperation is their dissatisfaction with the buyers' superior bargaining power in the business transaction (Jahan, 2011). Economy and psychology are two aspects associated with satisfaction, which subsequently translated to social interaction and financial performance (Homburg and Rudolph, 2001). Farmers can strengthen their bargaining power through access to market information, which empowers farmers to ask for a better price (Quddus and Kropp, 2020). However, information sharing rarely occurs, as market agents are willing to share information only with their loyal networks (Haque and George, 2017). It

happens when hierarchical norms create a tendency for market actors to interact and build relationships only with those with similar business and social status. The social gap between buyers and farmers results in non-alliance and non-business relationships (Haque and George, 2017). In an ideal situation, sharing information fosters producer loyalty, and loyal producers are more likely to continue supplying (Liu, Su, Li, and Liu, 2010).

The practice of verbal contracts has disappeared because of the deductive reasoning ability to maintain close cooperation and communication between paddy farmers and the buyers (Murshid, 2011). Both economic research and practice play an essential role in a long-term business that balances traditional marketing methods (Brodie, 2017; Finch, O'Reilly, Hillenbrand, and Abeza, 2015; Grönroos, 2017; Saath, Schönitz, Siems, and Papen, 2018). At this point, satisfaction emerges as the key mediation variable, whereby offering pleasant services results in higher buyer loyalty to the company and, consequently, an increase in sales volume and cash flow. Because satisfied buyers are often associated with market-oriented firms, which leads to a higher repeat purchases, loyalty is expected to impact positively business economic performance. Numerous studies on relationship marketing have examined factors by studying their impact on future behaviour, namely satisfaction and loyalty. It turns out that relational elements, such as trust, commitment, communication, and power, have a direct impact on satisfaction and loyalty, especially when explaining the relational outcomes.

### **1.1.6 Relationship Marketing and Farm Performance**

Agriculture is a dominant sector that fuels the national economy in many developing and developed countries (Kamble, Gunasekaran, and Sharma, 2020; Somashekhar, Raju, and Patil, 2014). It is often referred to as the engine of economic growth (Borah et al., 2020). Today, the protuberant role of agriculture in development, specifically in food security and the accession of countries to the World Trade Organization (WTO), has made policy-making and planning important in this area (Castaneda, Brennan, and Goentzel, 2019; Tefera, 2012). Most agricultural planners and policymakers have concentrated on the agricultural economy, managing production, maximizing farmers' profits and thus their wellbeing (Choi and Guo, 2020; Parwez, 2014). However, the challenges have caused many farmers to struggle to attain decent economic returns. Fortunately, farmers can rely on one critical aspect of success factor in business, namely relationship marketing.

The transformation brought by transactional to relationship marketing has been one of the most powerful developments in a business or marketing environment (Egan, 2011; Brennan, Baines, and Garneau, 2003). Several forms of relationships are present in the supply chain, such as the traditional approach and strategic partnerships (Ellram and Cooper, 1990). Although the conventional marketing approach tends to limit long-term business relationships, strategic partnerships offer effective supply chain management that endorses interdependence between or among the exchange partners (Ellram and Cooper, 1990). Relationship marketing is an interpersonal relationship that is not always visible but one that can only be perceived through the effects of its presence (Mandjak and Szanto, 2010; Saath, Schönitz, Siems, and Papen, 2018). The transaction,



consultation, and agreement are the main features of relationship marketing (RM), which are essential to developing and retaining long-term business relationships between buyers and sellers (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007).

Relationship Marketing (RM) can accelerate the capabilities of a firm to achieve its goal. Developing a relationship between buyers and sellers can increase product quality, reduce inventory, establish systems like just-in-time and reduce time to consumer (Ndubisi, 2004). RM is an instrument that creates a network between buyer and seller in a friendly way, and this will benefit them to realize each other wants and services better. RM is widely considered a company's or farm's undertaking to create and maintain clients by enhancing trust, commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction (Kumar and Reinartz, 2002). The relationship generates and delivers valuable business-to-business transactions (Ndubisi, 2004). It is argued in the previous literature that the cost of serving one new business partner is five or six times more than the existing loyal partner (Ndubisi, Malhotra, and Wah, 2009). Buyers and sellers who believe their desires and service expectations have been met are more inclined to return to the same service provider out of loyalty than to switch to a new customer or service provider. Alternatively, one loyal buyer or seller is not always price-sensitive. Rather, they have become a part of the firm's service marketing and endorse the service to the family and friends by extending positive word-of-mouth. Therefore, the arguments presented thus far highlight the importance of RM practice in business, particularly for paddy farmers who are struggling to make a profit in selling their paddy in the market.

Relationship marketing seeks to understand the expectation, develop partnership business, and implement unified quality management that subsequently leads to satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately, increased profitability. The main attributes of relationship marketing are commitment, trust, cooperation, mutual goal, interdependence/power imbalance, performance satisfaction, adaptation, shared technology, social bonding, etc. (Wilson, 1995). However, this study has narrowed down to focus on several attributes, namely trust (Kam and Lai, 2018; Lobo, Leckie, and Li, 2013; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Villena, Choi, and Revilla, 2019), commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, and Evans, 2006; Yen and Abosag, 2016), communication (Bich, Tuoi, and Batt, 2016; Sin, Tse, and Chan, 2006; Yen and Abosag, 2016), power (Batt, 2003; Cacciolatti and Lee, 2016; Setyawan, Dharmmesta, Purwanto, and Nugroho, 2014), satisfaction (Aji, 2016) and loyalty (Boniface, Gyau, Stringer, and Umberger, 2010; Boniface, 2011; Lobo, Leckie, and Li, 2013).

The attributes chosen for this study were based on the previous findings that demonstrated the influence of those elements in relationship marketing between Bangladeshi paddy farmers and their buyers (e.g., Quddus and Kropp, 2020; Mujeri, 2019; Murshid, 2011; Jahan, 2011). Those elements also have a tremendous impact on maintaining both short- and long-term amicable and cooperative environments through emotional, social, and economic bonds that connect the two parties, i.e., help small farmers to thrive in the business. Secondly, farmers and local paddy buyers form an emotional, social, and economic bond through social capital, i.e., trust, commitment, communication, satisfaction, and loyalty, allowing small farmers to thrive. Therefore,

the present study seeks to determine the influence of trust, commitment, communication, power, satisfaction, and loyalty on paddy farmers' farm performance. The focus is primarily on the impact of relationship marketing on paddy farmers' farm performance in Bangladesh.

The debate on performance measurement, which in the context of this study considered the paddy farmer's farm as a business, demonstrates the complexities of the definition of performance (Ruiz, 2000; Setyawan, Dharmmesta, Purwanto, and Nugroho, 2014). Performance is the outcome of business activities, which generating revenue, managing costs and expenses, and presenting profit outcomes (Jones, Taylor, and Reynolds, 2014). In research settings, performance has taken on different forms, for instance, business performance by Setyawan, Dharmmesta, Purwanto, and Nugroho (2014) and Sin, Tse, and Chan (2006); economic performance by Kavak, Sertoğlu, and Tektaş (2016), and financial performance by Lobo, Leckie, and Li (2013) and Hu, Lin, and Shieh (2018). Some of the measures that contribute to economic performance include selling volume, profitability, and company growth in a business-to-business relationship (Setyawan, Dharmmesta, Purwanto, and Nugroho, 2014; Kim, 2000; Ruiz, 2000; Ramaseshan, Yip, and Pae, 2006).

Others, such as Megicks (2007), proposed return on investment (ROI) growth in measuring economic performance, whereas Sin, Tse, and Chan (2006) suggested sales growth, profit growth, ROI, and market share relative to competitors as the main aspects of measuring business performance. Indeed, Musa, Boniface, and Tanakinjal (2014) evaluated the business performance of smallholders in terms of sales, profit, and market value. Lobo, Leckie, and Li (2013), on the other hand, associated financial performance in terms of better profit, better ROI, and better cash flow than the competitors, whereas Kavak, Sertoğlu, and Tektaş (2016) measured economic performance as improved profit and sales than competitors. Hence, it can be inferred that performance measurement is a typical proxy for economic and financial performance.

Meanwhile, ample research has utilized various measures to determine farm performance. For instance, Xayavong, Kingwell, and Islam (2015) measured farmers' farm performance using the growth rate of farm profit; Bone (2003) used the change in net wealth and farm size, and earnings; Ho et al. (2017) and Okello and Luttah (2020) used financial and economic growth of milk dairy farm. Hu, Lin, and Shieh (2018) evaluated farmers' performance in terms of return on investment, return of sales, sales volume, and sales growth. They also measured farm performance in terms of satisfaction with the overall performance from the last year, the production investments met expectations last year, return of investment, and price received.

Performance can be considered as either a short- or long-term financial benefit (Kam and Lai, 2018), a competitive outcome of relationship quality, and a competitive advantage (Lees, Nuthall, and Wilson, 2020). However, it has been previously viewed from two angles: subjective and objective (Sin, Tse, and Chan, 2006). Subjective mainly concerns the firm performance compared to its competitors (Golden, 1992); the objective

concept is based on the entire measures of performance (Chakravarthy, 1986; Cronin and Page, 1988). Most Bangladeshi farmers are illiterate, and they cannot apprehend the dynamics of agricultural marketing. Farmers are also inadequate at implementing basic business practices, such as gross margin analysis and record-keeping, which would otherwise help them set appropriate prices for their produces (Quddus and Kropp, 2020). Thus, in this study, the subjective concept of farm performance is employed for farmers to understand and respond appropriately.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Despite Bangladesh's abundant paddy production, farmers' economic returns are below par. Poor economic and social status and under-privileged government service have forced farmers to depend on local paddy buyers all year round. Such dependency on paddy buyers affects farmers' resilience and agility in developing a business tie with the buyer. Additionally, the distance to market facilities, limited access to market price and frailty to the market competition further compounded the challenges faced by the farmers. Sometimes middlemen exploit them instead of sharing appropriate information. However, there is a scope for the farmers to utilize their social and cultural relations in accomplishing profit. The practical scenario is that middlemen and paddy buyers form a syndicate that will deprive farmers of negotiating a fair price. Thus, farmers cannot trust middlemen and become dissatisfied with the business transaction. Sometimes farmers or buyers may fail to maintain close communication and cooperation since information sharing is absent outside loyal networks. This is because farmers are unaware of the benefits of maintaining close communication. Thus, the long-term business relationship will not happen in their exchange relationship. Regardless, communication remains the key tool that enables farmers to gather market information from the paddy buyers.

Inconsistency in repayment of loans intensifies dissatisfaction and distrust with an exchange partner, which impedes an exchange relationship. In a social relationship, trust and satisfaction are crucial in long-term business relations, and both trust and satisfaction create loyal buyers and sellers. An important construct in relational exchange is trust because relationships characterized by a trust are highly valued, and parties will commit themselves to such relationships and are likely to stay loyal. While loyal buyers or sellers are not price sensitive, what enhances social and emotional bondage is loyalty which will undoubtedly benefit farmers in reaping profits. Contrary, less known buyers tend to disappear and leave the business without any notice, resulting in uncertainty growing in the exchange relationship with the farmers. Wherever there is a relational element, commitment ensures certainty.

Social gaps between paddy traders and farmers result in power imbalance, with powerful actors often dominating the weaker party. Effective interaction strongly requires trust, commitment, and communication; they drive word of mouth and customer loyalty. In turn, nurturing a relational behaviour is critical for gaining commercial profit through a dyadic and effective interaction between the parties. In this regard, loyalty act as a mediation between relationship marketing components and performance. Therefore, a



high-quality relationship with solid trust, commitment, and communication, as well as power, will satisfy the buyer/seller, and an exchange partner who is satisfied with a relationship is likely to talk positively about the organization, recommend the services to others, and be more loyal. At this point, satisfaction emerges as another key mediation variable.

Relational elements can increase satisfaction by providing pleasant services, which will certainly enhance consumer loyalty to the company while also increasing sales volume and cash flow. As a social-relational dimension, power is regarded as an influential behaviour that encourages taking a proper decision in exchange. Thus, there is a crying need for farmers to make a business alliance with nearby and well-known paddy buyers and create relationship marketing to foster a friendly environment of cooperation.

In Bangladesh, the short-term paikari baki (trade credit) among paddy traders fosters trust, commitment, and loyalty. Engaging in such relational activities necessitates deliberate efforts to build trust, commitment, communication, power, satisfaction, and loyalty, all of which lead to improved performance. Trust-based relation makes a long-term business and repeated market exchange environment and shortens the length of a long chain of middlemen. This relationship creates an opportunity for farmers and paddy buyers to establish a reputation of reliability, less costly transactions, and a more stable business environment. Social relations, consumption patterns, and social equality are conducive to economic growth for a country. Therefore, these are the motivating factors for introducing the influence of RM on the paddy farmer's farm performance.

The aratdari system in Bangladesh has responded well to the (changing) nature of agency, helping to reduce cost and improve competitive outcomes. This way, the market exchange has become less tied and more equitable. Therefore, relationship marketing between farmers and aratdars could be beneficial and enhance the profit in a business relationship for both parties. Relationship marketing reduces the distance between the farmer and the final consumer, thereby reducing the middlemen's share in the channel and ultimately increasing the farmer's share of the consumer's price, resulting in improved farmers' farm performance. Hence, it is essential to find the connotation between the relationship marketing and farmers' farm performance.

These issues highlight the complexity and challenges in paddy selling/buying relationships in paddy supply chains, necessitating more studies to explore this area. Furthermore, it is observed that most of the research on the buyer/grower relationship overwhelmingly draws on data and examples from East Asia, Africa, and Australia. This study attempts to address these gaps in several ways. First, the structural dimensions and measurement of relationship marketing and farm performance are explored in the context of relationships within paddy supply chains.

Secondly, using the theoretical framework of Relationship Marketing and Social Exchange Theory, the relevance of these theories is applied to the context of paddy selling relationships on farm performance. Thirdly, this research is also undertaken in the unexplored context of the agricultural supply chain in a different geographical context that involves paddy selling and is uniquely different from the majority of research into buyer-seller relationships. Fourth, it considers a power dependence relationship between buyer and farmer that are primarily dyads. Previous RM studies have emphasized farmers of other produce (e.g., potato farmers, sugarcane farmers, vegetable farmers, fruits farmers, milk producers, and meat producers). However, paddy farmers remain less focused, particularly on relationship marketing-related studies. Drawing upon the argument by Crosby, Evans, and Cowles (1990) that studying anything depends on the perspectives, this study centres on paddy farmers' perspective.

Relationship marketing has been the main focus of many studies. However, the issue of why farmers should enhance their relationships with their preferred buyers has achieved little attention in the context of farm performance. The lack of empirical study that describes the influence of RM on farm performance motivates the present study to address the gap. Hence, to examine the influence of RM on farmers' farm performance, the present study considers satisfaction and loyalty as mediators to elucidate their association with farm performance.

### **1.2.1 Research Questions**

This research addressed the following questions that consider the ability of relationship marketing components (trust, commitment, communication, power, satisfaction, and loyalty) in predicting performance.

1. How do trust, commitment, communication, power, satisfaction, and loyalty directly influence farmers' farm performance?
2. How do trust, commitment, communication, and power directly influence satisfaction and loyalty?
3. How does satisfaction directly influence loyalty?
4. What is the indirect influence of trust, commitment, communication, and power on farmers' farm performance mediated by satisfaction and by loyalty?
5. How does satisfaction indirectly influence farmers' farm performance mediated by loyalty?

### **1.2.2 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine the influence of relationship marketing on farm performance among farmers in Bangladesh.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the direct influence of trust, commitment, communication, power, satisfaction, and loyalty on farm performance.
2. To identify the direct influence of trust, commitment, communication, and power on satisfaction and loyalty.
3. To determine the direct influence of satisfaction on loyalty.
4. To evaluate the indirect influence of trust, commitment, communication, and power on farmers' farm performance mediated by satisfaction and by loyalty.
5. To determine the indirect relationship of satisfaction on farmers' farm performance mediated by loyalty.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The present study focused on understanding the influence of RM on satisfaction and loyalty, and it also aims to determine the magnitude of RM on farmers' farm performance. In doing so, this study strives to enrich the existing knowledge on RM by providing empirical findings. The significance of the study lies in how the insights can contribute to the farmers, policymakers, and academicians. Firstly, the role and scope of relationship marketing have expanded from one country or region to the next (Samiee and Walters, 2003). Although RM has evolved over the last two decades (Samiee and Walters, 2003), little is understood about the paradigm of RM in the agricultural context (Boniface, 2011).

Insights from this study will benefit most of the actors in paddy production, i.e., farmers and paddy buyers, particularly in developing marketing strategies and understanding the importance of maintaining their relationship, whether beneficial or not. To do this, the farmers are introduced to the six key dimensions of the widely accepted RM strategy (trust, commitment, communication, power, satisfaction, and loyalty) to assist them in developing relationships with their preferred buyers. This will allow them to navigate their interaction with their preferred buyers, ideally who are not price-sensitive, willing to share market information and agricultural knowledge, sympathetic to their seller, and responsive when the farmers need any help or service. The present study will also demonstrate the influence of RM on farmers' farm performance and inspire farmers to expand their business by offering relevant services to their preferred buyers.

Secondly, this study provides crucial information for policy formulation. The relationship marketing theory can open a new door for new policy formulation for Bangladeshi policymakers. Although the theory predominantly originates from the Western perspective, it has evolved with various social, cultural, and environmental attachments. The findings would enable the policymakers to initiate institutional approaches to equip farmers with the essential knowledge and motivation needed to practice relationship marketing strategy in business. Specifically, the advocacy of farmer training programmes aimed at understanding and instilling a positive attitude

among paddy buyers and sellers. Such a relationship is reflected in sharing knowledge and information.

Finally, the present study establishes critical dimensions of RM central to a comprehensive understanding of farmers' farm performance. Trust, commitment, communication, and power are explored, with emphasis on how they associate with satisfaction and loyalty and thus farm performance. The discussion adds value to the academic community in understanding the characteristics of RM, enriches the existing body of literature on RM, and contributes to the theoretical development of RM. Doing so broadens the extant knowledge of relationship marketing literature.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

Relationship marketing (RM) has been preferred in the context of this study, as prior studies had supported that the practice of RM is most applicable to the agricultural firm. Farmers sell their paddy to different market agents, resulting in a lesser economic return for the farmers. Alternatively, when farmers sell paddy to their preferred buyers, it will cut costs and increase the revenue. Therefore, relationship marketing emerges as a critical element for the farmers to seek a competitive advantage as they navigate other challenges simultaneously that limit their economic return. In order to differentiate the paddy buyers, a farmer needs to create and maintain a long-term, good relationship with their preferred paddy buyers. A good relationship happens when the farmer can keep their products and services that meet the preferred buyers' requirements. RM is sometimes described as one-to-one marketing as it demonstrates one's consideration of one's needs. This type of marketing practice indicates the development of long-term business relationships between buyer and seller to understand one's needs and deliver better service that meets the wants of another (Chaffey, Mayer, Johnston, and Ellis, 2000).

This study aims to understand the contribution of relationship marketing to farmers' farm performance. Although previous studies viewed relationship marketing as an action involving suppliers, customers, or other stakeholders in marketing activities, other relationships that may occur in relationship marketing are excluded for the purpose of this study. Therefore, the focus is placed on the farmers since this study viewed relationship marketing from a farmers' farm performance perspective. Accordingly, from a farmer's perspective, relationship marketing is only prescribed when it is profitable for them. Unfortunately, the reasons why farmers enter into relationships and react favourably to relationship marketing efforts have not been thoroughly studied. Therefore, it is relevant for this study to examine relationship marketing.

#### **1.5 Assumptions of the Study**

Several primary assumptions are considered in this study. An extensive review of literature, including articles, reports, papers, and verbal discussion, has led to this study

concluding that the relationship marketing and paddy farmers' farm performance deserved equal attention in scholarly research. The independent variables employed in this study are considered key variables based on previous findings that demonstrated their contribution to farmers' farm performance. Thus, this study assumes that examining the association between the selected independent variables, notably trust, commitment, communication, and power, with satisfaction and loyalty as mediating variables will aid in understanding the farm performance of Bangladeshi paddy farmers. Farmers are socially, culturally, and economically related to paddy buyers since both players live in the same villages. Therefore, this study assumes that the relationships between farmers and paddy buyers would yield benefits in terms of enhanced efficiencies, lower transaction costs, better information sharing, joint decision-making, and joint investments.

## 1.6 Operational Definition

**Trust** refers to benevolence and credibility. Benevolence is defined as believing in oneself, intentions, and motivations that are advantageous to others (Cater and Zabkar, 2009), and credibility is allowing one's belief that the promise and the words of another would be trustworthy (Fullerton, 2011).

**Commitment** is an individual's feeling of obligation or desire to be together with the organization or exchange partner to internalize the process of keeping values and benefits (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

**Communication** is timely information sharing, both formally and informally, and meaningful between two exchange partners; it is also the continuous action of properly transferring accurate, trustworthy, and reliable information between two parties, which is beneficial for both (Anderson and Narus, 1990).

**Power** is labelled as an influence strategy or a source of bargaining capability against their partner (Kim, 2000; Ramaseshan, Yip, and Pae, 2006). It is also known as coercive power as the capability of channel members to stimulate others' attitudes and decisions (Gaski, 1984).

**Satisfaction** is a judgement of post-choice evaluation regarding a specific buying decision and is associated with feelings of happiness, pleasure, acceptance, relief, and gladness (Churchill and Suprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980).

**Loyalty** is a commitment and willingness to continue to do business with a particular firm on an ongoing basis and a state of attachment that is experienced as an allegiance or faithfulness (Liu, Su, Li, and Liu, 2010).



**Farm Performance** is viewed as the outcome of a farm's actions and relations to create a proper decision in the future for business purposes (Valos and Vocino, 2006). It is measured by sales growth, profit growth (Sin, Tse, and Chan, 2006, Kavak, Sertoğlu, and Tektaş, 2016), and an increase in cash flow to competitors (Lobo, Leckie, and Li, 2013).

## 1.7 Organization of the study

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides the background of the study, including an overview of paddy production in Bangladesh, the challenges faced by the farmers, and the justification for the study's adoption of relationship marketing. Topic-related issues that led to the research questions, problem statement, objectives and the significance of the study are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2 provides critically reviewed literature and theories related to relationship marketing. The definition and dimensions of RM are described, followed by a comprehensive examination of past studies contextualizing the relationship marketing in agriculture and farm performance. Other theories are also explored, including the social exchange theory, commitment-trust theory, and KMV model, their relevance to the present study, and the seven variables examined in this study.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the conceptual framework, the hypothesis of the study, and the methodology employed in the empirical examination of the proposed relationship marketing model. This chapter also provides a detailed description of the research design, justification of the use of quantitative methods, the scale items selected to measure the constructs, the instrument employed for data collection, pilot study and final survey, the constructs' reliability and validity, preliminary data analysis, and finally, justification of the techniques used to analyze the collected data.

Chapter 4 presents the outcomes from data analysis, covering the respondents' profiles, farming experiences, and attitudes towards preferred buyers. This chapter also interprets the findings derived from 24 hypothesis tests and discusses the study objectives. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and implications from the theoretical and managerial points of view based on outcomes from Chapter 4; the limitations of the study and further research avenues, followed by the conclusion based on research findings.

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