



Inclusive Cashless
Payment Partnership

Digital Financial Inclusion of Women



**Low adoption
of digital
payments
among female
consumers in
Bhatta Basti**

It is a week after Eid, and the hustle around the market in Bhatta Basti, Jaipur has calmed down. The basti, as the name suggests, is a small, low-income market, and is largely dominated with Muslim population. Two women step into Saloni Fashion, a ready-made store on the main road and quickly move out. Their choice of 'salwaar' (salwar) is out-of-stock. As the women depart, we engage in a conversation with Bhawgan Sayeed, the shop-owner. Sayeed is in his late thirties, and has been handling this shop with another assistant for over three years.

Sayeed wants to expand his business but is new to digital payments. He invested in a PoS machine and got trained to use it. But he has not been able to encourage any of his female customers to pay by card so far.

A little surprised, we interrogate him further on what are some of the reasons for the customers' denial to pay him through cards. The reasons that emerge though not completely unexpected, points to a much deeper lacuna in the financial inclusion model. That is majority of women are either not active bankers or not equipped with credit or debit cards in the lower stratum of the society, and their resultant exclusion in the emerging fintech solutions.



**Cash is the
king for
female buyers
at my shop**

Sayeed says point blank, "You see I sell only women's clothes. Women in this locality hardly carry cards. They always want to pay in cash. It is only when women are accompanied by their husbands, I can ask for card payments". He adds that there is about 5-7 such customers that comes to his shop in a month. So digital transaction though is an exciting mode of payment as per Sayeed has to face such practical obstacles.

He is hopeful that he will be able to attract more customer attention once he puts up stickers and billboards at his shop entrance, but is still not very sure of how many or how often, women (his primary and regular customers) are going to use them.



What can be a possible solution to have more women paying digitally?

The field visit observations highlight presence of not only an inherent divide and gender gap in the financial inclusion model - but also about the possible scope to reduce the gap. The alternative payment model that could potentially work better in smaller and more conservative markets where men run the household and have control over financial decisions, is Aadhar based payments (AEPS).



The bigger question is now to see whether AEPS based solutions where one is just required to put a thumbprint serves women any better than the existing fintech solutions in the market.