Consumers' Expectation and Perception toward Mobile Telecommunication Usage in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Recently telecommunication sector like the mobile phone has made a revolution in the world. For the last few years, it has become part and parcel of our daily life. Business, commerce, and society cannot go out without the use of mobile phone. With the continuous diversification, the use of mobile is not only limited to talking, but its use ranges from using internet, sending messages, listening to music, to organizing various works are comfortably completed in time. City Cell Company introduced the use of mobile phone in Bangladesh in the middle of 1989 .Now with the lapse of time; another five operators have in the market. The mobile operators need to understand well, the perceptions of service quality of customers and their expectations. The study "Consumers' expectations and perception toward mobile telecommunication usage in Bangladesh" attempts to analyze the gap in telecom sector regarding customers' expectations and perceptions. It is important to investigate the differences which may provide scope for improvement of mobile service operators. Descriptive analysis, cross tabulation, Chi-square, frequency distribution was used to test the collected data and hypotheses of the research study. The study concludes that, given the severe competition in the business arena where mobile operators have to stay alive and breed by pricing strategy, network facilities, and promotional activities. Telecom companies will have to focus on the reduction of the gap in customer expectations and perceptions about their service quality if they are to race internationally. Hence, mobile operators should continually assess and reassess how customers perceive their services and to implement appropriate corrective action for retaining the existing customers and getting new customers.

Keywords: Mobile telecommunication, Consumers' Perception, Consumers' expectation, price, promotion

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the poorest, most densely populated, least developed countries in the world. Apart from its lowly economic status, major impediments to growth have included frequent cyclones and floods and the slow implementation of much-needed economic reforms. The country also has a reputation for the inefficiency of its state-owned enterprises. Growth of the mobile internet customer base is expected to continue into 2016 and 2017. Present scenario of mobile phone subscribers in Bangladesh is like follow:

The total number of Mobile Phone Subscribers is as follow at the end of January, 2016

The Mobile Phone subscribers are listed below:

Operator	Subscriber (in Millions)
Grameen Phone Ltd. (GP)	56.204
Banglalink Digital Communications Limited	32.368
Robi Axiata Limited (Robi)	27.795
Airtel Bangladesh Limited (Airtel)	10.510
Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (Citycell)	0.867
Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd. (Teletalk)	4.211
Total	**131.956**

Source: www.btrc.gov.bd
* Subscribers in Million
**The above subscribers' numbers are declared by the mobile operators
For the month of January, 2016

Customer perception defines the way that customer usually view or feed about certain services and products. It relates to customer satisfaction which is the expectation of the customer towards the product/service. Telecommunication services providers are of paramount importance to both developed and emerging economic in the world. With stiff competition between the mobile operators, customer satisfaction is a necessity for survival in the market. Many telecommunication services providers are offering various products and services in the market. Customer perception is a personal feeling of either pleasure or disappointment resulting from the evaluation of service provided by an organization to an individual about expectations.

Meeting and exceeding expectations of clients and customers that means delighting, is a viewpoint that has gained most attraction. This concept is all inclusive and cuts across service domains, but expectations change and

experiences with alternate service providers could shape the customers' expectations. The research gap here is attaining customers' expectation towards a particular service. A gap is a difference, imbalance or disparity which is determined to exist between customers' perception of firm performance and their prior expectation.

Rahman Sabbir, Haque Ahasanul, Ahmad Mohd Ismail Sayyed (2011), in their study "Choice Criteria for Mobile Telecom Operator: Empirical Investigation among Malaysian Customers" investigated the choice criteria for a mobile phone operator in the Malaysian Mobile Telecom market by the customers. The outcome of this research shows a comprehensively integrated framework in which to understand the close relationships among several dimensions of service quality, price, and brand image to have a handful idea on the consumers' perceptions.

Rahman Dr. Muhammad Sabbir, (2012), in his study "Service quality, corporate image and customers' satisfaction towards customers perception: An exploratory study of telecom customers in Bangladesh" aimed at the determinants that are significantly influencing telecom customers' in Bangladesh. The study revealed that most of the telecom customers are highly concerned about service quality followed by corporate image

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The prime purpose of the research is to identify consumers' expectation and perception from mobile phone companies in Bangladesh. To emerge the objective some other supporting objectives are:

- To investigate the nature influencers in the selection of mobile operators.
- To appraise the impact of promotional offers.
- To justify the impact of network facility on consumers' expectation.
- To see a relation between satisfaction on network availability and connection type.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leisen B, Vance C,(2001), in their research paper "Customer satisfaction, Globalization, International Trade, Service Quality, Strategy, Telecommunication Industry" examined the strategic implications of service quality dimensions about customer satisfaction in a cross- cultural study of telecommunication service provision in Germany and the USA. Significant differences found between the two countries regarding the relative importance of particular service dimensions.

According to Leisen and Vance (2001), service quality helps to create the necessary competitive advantage by being an effective differentiating factor. Service quality was initiated in the 1980s as the worldwide trend when marketers realized that only a quality product could not be guaranteed to maintain competitive advantage (Wal et al., 2002). However, competitive advantage by firms is a value-creating strategy; simultaneously potential competitors were not able to implement it (Barney, 1991). As a result, service quality can be used as a competitive advantage which is related to customers' satisfaction and also leads to consumer loyalty and future purchase (Johnson and Sirikit, 2002).

In particular customers prefer service quality when the price and other cost elements are held constant (Boyer and Hult, 2005). It has become a distinct and significant aspect of the product and service offering (Wal et al., 2002). Moreover, according to them, a competitive advantage also sustained when other companies are unable to duplicate the benefits of this strategy. Service quality is essential for a telecommunication service provider company to ensure the quality service for establishing and maintaining loyal and profitable customer (Zeithaml, 2000; Leisen and Vance, 2001). Conversely, Johnson and Sirikit (2002) state as service delivery systems has the ability to allow managers of the company to identify the real customer feedback and satisfaction on their telecommunication service. Quality reflects the customers' expectations about a product or service. Lovelock (1996) stated that this customer driven quality replaced the traditional marketing philosophies which were based on products and process. Service quality is different from the quality of goods. Since, services are intangible, perishable, produced and consumed simultaneously and heterogeneously (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000).

Lehtinen & Lehtinen (1991) suggest that quality cultivates during two-way interaction between service providers and customers. According to them, there are three dimensions: physical quality includes the tangible aspect of the service; the corporate quality which involves the company's image and interactive quality which originates from an interaction between customer and service provider. (Lehtinen & Lehtinen 1991) Has observed that service quality has two dimensions – process and output. Process quality emphasizes in the way service is catered to a consumer and output quality is judged once service is provided. Evaluation of service process plays a vital role in building the perception of consumers. Process quality is evaluated while the service is being provided and the outcome is evaluated once it is provided.

Perceived quality is a kind of attitude that results from a comparison of expected service with perceived service. It is a consumer's verdict developed about the superior performance of the service (Gi-Du Kang, 2006). Expected service originates from the word of mouth communication, personal needs, and past experiences. Expected services are the desires, wants of a consumer i.e. what they feel that service should offer rather than would offer. A perceived service is the outcome of external communication to consumer and service delivery process. According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), service quality depends on the incongruity between expected services and perceived services.

Price plays a vital role in telecommunication market especially for the mobile telecommunication service providers (Kollmann, 2000). It includes not only the buying price but also the call and rental charges. A price-dominated mass market leads to customers having more choices and

opportunities to compare the pricing structures of diverse service providers. A company that offers lower charges would be able to attract more customers committing themselves to the telephone networks, and hence, a significant number of "call minutes" might be achieved. According to Kollmann (2000), income from the number of call minutes determines the commercial success for the network providers. He also added that the success of the telecommunication sector in a market largely depends on continuing usage and pricing policies, which need to be considered on several levels. Draganska and Jain (2003) stated that a strategy for a company extending their product or service is to differentiate their offerings vertically. In this era of information age, price competition has become cutthroat in the mobile telecommunication industry. Trebing (2001) mentioned that there are three sets of strategies for pricing behavior. The first is entry limit pricing, which is used for protection of the market position of the firm; a second is the high access charges for new entrants, and the third one is tie-in sales to write off the old plant or standard investment against captive customers. According to the author, entry limit pricing involves setting low prices in highly flexible markets to attract or retain large customers with monopolistic buying power, while maintaining high prices in inelastic markets. Consumer research over the past three decades has documented the persistent impact that price has on consumer perceptions of a product (Janakiraman et al., 2006; Vanhuele et al., 2006). Customers in telecommunication industry have preconceived notions about the price and value of telecommunications services. Customers have historically complained about the level of local charges, more than they have about long distance; although, local service is frequently offered at a price lower than actual cost. When long-distance service is priced well over cost, and local service is priced well under cost, customers expect to pay very low prices for local services and apparently do not mind that long distance could be less expensive but is not (Strouse, 1999)

Consumer's perception of product quality is always an important aspect of a purchasing decision and market behavior. Consumers regularly face the task of estimating product quality under conditions of imperfect knowledge about the underlying attributes of the various product offers with the aid of personal, self-perceived quality criteria (Bedeian, 1971 adapted by Sjolander, 1992). According to Sjolander (1992), the consumer behavior in the modern market is different from the theoretical case of consumer decision making in free markets. Generally, free and competitive markets are composed of buyers and sellers each of whom must possess perfect information about all possible products and their respective utilities; a well defined and explicit set of performances; the ability to determine optimal combination of various products given their budget constraints; a knowledge of prices, which does not affect the subjective wants or satisfaction of the consumer (Monroe and Petroshius, 1973 adapted by Sjolander, 1992). It is necessary to define quality in the first place before it can be measured. There is no global definition of quality exists (Sebastianelli and Tamimi, 2002), it can be defined in varieties of ways. Yoon and Kijewski (1997) pointed out that quality can be categorized into two perspectives. One is the marketer's perspective, which is product-based or manufacturing-based and the other one is consumer's perspective, which is user-based or value-based. Product quality from the marketer's perspective is associated with feature, function or performance of a product. On the other hand, product quality from the consumer's perspective is associated with the capacity of a product to satisfy consumer needs (Archibald et al., 1983). According to Lambert (1980), consumers often attribute the quality to branded products on the basis of price, brand reputation, store image, market share, product features and country of manufacture. So, price is an indicator to measure the product quality, which is based on the theory that quality is a measure of the utility, or the want-satisfying capacity of products (Sjolander, 1992). The author has also added that the more the quality a product possesses, the more the utility it contains, and the higher the price it will obtain in an open market exchange. This means that similar products offered to the market at different prices, contain different amounts of utility, and that there is a direct relationship between quality and price. The actual price-quality relationship is a complex interaction between price, brand name, store image, product features, and brand awareness (Lambert, 1980; Gerstner, 1985). Oliver (1993) identified a few major elements that differentiate between service quality and satisfaction. It was suggested that, the dimensions that comprise quality judgments are quite specific to the service delivered. As for satisfaction, it can be determined by a broader set of factors including those which are outside the immediate service delivery experience (e.g. a mobile phone subscribers satisfaction depend on his/her mobile phone operators may be influenced by whether his/her need; mood on that particular day when that consumer want to purchase a line). Ting (2004) indicated that perceptions of service quality do not depend on experiences with the service environment or service providers, while judgments of satisfaction depend on past experiences. He also mentioned that quality is believed to be determined more by external cues (e.g. price, reputation) whereas satisfaction is more driven by conceptual cues (e.g. equity, regret).

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Population and sampling design: The data were collected from different areas of Dhaka, Sylhet, Rajshahi, and Chittagong divisions from December, 2015 to February, 2016. The sample size was 150 and sampling method adopted was a combination of Judgmental and Simple Random Sampling.

Sample characteristics: The respondents were chosen irrespective of gender, age, income, education, occupation, religion, location. All the interviewed respondents were the subscriber of different mobile phone operators.

Instrumentation: The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed to assess consumers' expectation and perception toward telecommunication usage. To measure the responses of the respondents a five- point scale of strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2) Strongly disagree (1) were used.

Data analysis: Cross tabulation, Chi-square, and frequency distribution were used for analyzing the data. For, sharp outcome of those analyses, Statistical software, SPSS was used.

Reliability: Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability. In this study, the alpha value was found 0.739 which is a good indicator.

Hypotheses of the Study

H_1: There is no relationship between gender of the respondents and influencer in mobile operator selection

H_2: There is no relation between factors affects mobile phone subscription and gender of the respondents

H_3: There is no relationship between connection type and price based satisfaction

H_4: There is no relation between internet related service satisfaction and connection type

H_5: There is no relation between satisfaction on network facility and connection type

H_6: There is no significant relationship between connection type and promotional offers based satisfaction

Data Analysis and Survey Findings

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	male	106	70.7	70.7	70.7
	female	44	29.3	29.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	
Age	15-20 years	19	12.7	12.7	12.7
	21-25 years	98	65.3	65.3	78.0
	26-30	19	12.7	12.7	90.7
	30-35	9	6.0	6.0	96.7
	36-40	5	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	
Monthly family income	less than tk. 10,000	15	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Above tk. 10,000-20,000	21	14.0	14.0	24.0
	above tk. 20,000-30,000	41	27.3	27.3	51.3
	above tk. 30,000-40,000	26	17.3	17.3	68.7
	above tk. 40,000-50000	18	12.0	12.0	80.7
	above tk. 50,000	29	19.3	19.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	
Marital status	single	117	78.0	78.0	78.0
	married	33	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	
Educational level	primary	5	3.3	3.3	3.3
	secondary	3	2.0	2.0	5.3
	higher secondary	32	21.3	21.3	26.7
	graduate	94	62.7	62.7	89.3
	post graduate	15	10.0	10.0	99.3
	others	1	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	
Occupation	business	26	17.3	17.3	17.3
	service	15	10.0	10.0	27.3
	student	103	68.7	68.7	96.0
	house wife	4	2.7	2.7	98.7
	others	2	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Satisfaction level of the respondents

Satisfaction level	means	Std. Deviation	Percentage of response				
			Highly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Highly satisfied
By price (SIM price, call/ video call charges, etc.)	3.2133	.87919	8 5.3%	18 12%	61 40.7%	60 40%	3 2%
By internet packages, charges and services	2.9800	.99306	15 10%	27 18%	57 38%	48 32%	3 2%
By network facilities	3.3733	.76454	3 2%	13 8.7%	63 42%	67 44.7%	4 2.7%
By customer care service	3.3267	.77283	1 0.7%	19 12.7%	66 44%	58 38.5%	6 4%
By various promotional offers	3.3067	.80223	5 3.3%	13 8.7%	67 44.7%	61 40.7%	4 2.7%

Table-2 shows the satisfaction levels of respondents on the basis of different criteria. It is found that satisfaction level on the basis of price is almost moderate (mean value 3.2133). The amount of highly dissatisfied or highly satisfied is not noteworthy. 40% respondents implied that they were satisfied with the SIM price, voice and video call charges where as 40.7% respondents took a neutral position.

The internet is now the part and parcel of mobile phone subscription. While examining the satisfaction level of respondents for internet packages, charges, and service, the mean value of the responses was found 2.9800 which indicate that respondents are merely dissatisfied in regarding of internet service provided by the operators.

The reasons for that were identified by researchers through focus group discussion with respondents. The prominent reason are- unclear promotional messages, high price, and slow network speed.

Respondents' satisfaction level is relatively high in case of network facilities. 42% provided neutral response where 44.7% respondents stated that they are satisfied with current network facilities. Focus group discussions revealed that increased competition among the service providers is the dominant factor for improved network facility.

Respondents' customer care service experience is also pleasing. Though 44% took a neutral position, 38.5% were satisfied, and 4% were highly satisfied with customer care services. Only 12.7% of the respondents were dissatisfied with customer care service. A negligible 0.7% was highly dissatisfied.

All mobile operators provide different promotional offers to attract and retain their customers. It is found in the study that a significant number of respondents were satisfied with those promotional offers. Focus group discussion with respondents identified that due to severe competition most of the operators give different innovative and attractive promotional offers.

Table 3: influencer in mobile operator Selection

		Factors influenced you in choosing mobile phone operator					Total	Chi-Square
		Family members	friends	relatives	Advertisement	dealers/ retailers		
Gender	Male	29	55	10	7	5	106	Value-13.870^{S} (Sig 0. 008)
		27.4%	51.9%	9.4%	6.6%	4.7%	100.0%	
	Female	24	17	0	3	0	44	
		54.5%	38.6%	.0%	6.8%	.0%	100.0%	
Total		53	72	10	10	5	150	
		35.3%	48.0%	6.7%	6.7%	3.3%	100.0%	

S=significant

Table 3 shows the influence of respondents' mobile operator selection. It is found in the study that females (54.5%) are more influence by family members than male (27.4%) respondents. Male respondents are mainly influenced by their friends (51.9% of the total male respondents). The overall influences of dealers/retailers are little (only 3.3%). Since P-value is found 0.008 at 5% level of significance researchers reject the H01 and came to a conclusion that there is a relationship between gender of the respondents and influencer in mobile operator selection.

Table 4: Factors considered in deciding mobile phone subscription

		In deciding mobile phone subscription, which factor do you consider?					Total	**Chi-Square**
		Brand image	Price/ charges	Availability (network)	Customer care service	Offers and features		
Gender	Male	12	43	42	6	3	106	Value-18.439[S] (Sig 0. 001)
		11.3%	40.6%	39.6%	5.7%	2.8%	100.0%	
	Female	3	24	5	6	6	44	
		6.8%	54.5%	11.4%	13.6%	13.6%	100.0%	
Total		15	67	47	12	9	150	
		10.0%	44.7%	31.3%	8.0%	6.0%	100.0%	

S=significant

Customers consider various factors in deciding mobile phone subscription. Table-4 shows that 44.7% of total respondents consider the price (call rate or SIM) for selecting their subscription. It is found in the study that female respondents more about customer care services and offers, features than male. However male respondents pay attention to network availability after price. The p-value is found for Chi-square test is 0.001 at 5% level of significance that is why H02 is rejected. Researchers accepted the alternative hypothesis and concluded that gender of the respondent and mobile subscription factors are related.

Table 5: Price based satisfaction and Connection type (cross tabulation)

		Your satisfaction level, by price (SIM price, call/video call charges, etc.)					Total	Chi-Square
		Highly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Highly satisfied		
Connection Type	Prepaid	7	17	51	53	3	131	Value-2.078[NS] (Sig 0.721)
		5.3%	13.0%	38.9%	40.5%	2.3%	100.0%	
	postpaid	1	1	10	7	0	19	
		5.3%	5.3%	52.6%	36.8%	.0%	100.0%	
Total		8	18	61	60	3	150	
		5.3%	12.0%	40.7%	40.0%	2.0%	100.0%	

NS= not significant

It is found in the study that prepaid subscribers are more satisfied than post paid subscribers (Table 5). None of the post paid customers were found highly satisfied whereas a majority of the post paid customers took a neutral position (52.6%). The H03 (there is no relationship between connection type and price based satisfaction) is accepted since p-value is found 0721 at 5% level of significance.

Table 6: Internet service satisfaction and connection type (cross tabulation)

		Your satisfaction level, by internet packages, charges, and services					Total	Chi-Square
		Highly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	satisfied	Highly satisfied		
Connection Type	Prepaid	14	21	50	44	2	131	Value-4.698[NS] (Sig 0.320)
		10.7%	16.0%	38.2%	33.6%	1.5%	100.0%	
	Postpaid	1	6	7	4	1	19	
		5.3%	31.6%	36.8%	21.1%	5.3%	100.0%	
Total		15	27	57	48	3	150	
		10.0%	18.0%	38.0%	32.0%	2.0%	100.0%	

NS= not significant

Table 6 shows the cross-tabulation between internet service satisfaction and connection type. It is also found here that prepaid customers are more satisfied regarding internet facilities than the post paid customers. A significant portion of the postpaid customers (31.6%) was found dissatisfied in the study. By performing Chi-square test, researchers accepted the H04 since the p-value is found 0.320 and concluded that connection type and internet service satisfaction are not linked.

Table 7: Satisfaction with network facilities and connection type (cross tabulation)

		Satisfaction level by network facilities.					Total	Chi-Square
		Highly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Highly satisfied		
Connection Type	Prepaid	3	12	52	60	4	131	Value-2.913[NS] (Sig 0.573)
		2.3%	9.2%	39.7%	45.8%	3.1%	100.0%	
	Postpaid	0	1	11	7	0	19	
		.0%	5.3%	57.9%	36.8%	.0%	100.0%	
Total		3	13	63	67	4	150	
		2.0%	8.7%	42.0%	44.7%	2.7%	100.0%	

NS= not significant

In examining satisfaction level of respondents regarding network facilities, it is found that majority of the respondents are satisfied with current network facilities (Table 7). Nearly 11% provided a negative approach toward network facilities. Since the p-value was found 0.573 researchers accept the H05 at 5% level of significance and conclude that there is no relation between satisfaction on network facility and connection type.

Table 8: Promotional offers and connection type (cross tabulation)

		Satisfaction level by various promotional offers.					Total	Chi-Square
		Highly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Highly satisfied		
Connection Type	Prepaid	5	7	62	53	4	131	Value-16.135[S] (Sig 0. 003)
		3.8%	5.3%	47.3%	40.5%	3.1%	100.0%	
	Postpaid	0	6	5	8	0	19	
		.0%	31.6%	26.3%	42.1%	.0%	100.0%	
Total		5	13	67	61	4	150	
		3.3%	8.7%	44.7%	40.7%	2.7%	100.0%	

S=significant

Table 7 shows the respondents' satisfaction regarding various promotional offers provided by the operators. In the case of prepaid connection, subscribers provided almost positive attitude (47.3% were neutral, and 40.5% were satisfied). It is found in the study that a number of dissatisfied customers is more in post paid connection than prepaid. The null hypothesis (H06) is, there is no significant relationship between connection type and promotional offers based satisfaction. Since the p-value is found, 0.003 researchers reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to examine and understand the consumers' expectation and perception toward telecommunication usage in Bangladesh. Researchers have found that there is relationship between gender of the respondents and influencer in mobile operator selection, gender of the respondent and mobile subscription factors are related, there is no relationship between connection type and price based satisfaction, connection type and internet service satisfaction are not linked, there is no relation between satisfaction on network facility and connection type. There is no significant relationship between connection type and promotional offers based satisfaction. The operators should also focus on the smooth flow of network coverage, customer care services, and the speed of internet services as well as corporate social responsibilities. They should be aware about the abuses of the mobile phone. The operators themselves may generate new ideas, initiatives by which they can delight the customers.

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