



Controlled, Uncontrolled Communication, Brand Name and Brand Attitude: A Relational Study on Cellular Telecom Sector of Bangladesh

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Received: Nov 17, 2014;

Accepted: Nov 27, 2014;

Published: Dec 10, 2014

Source of Support: Nil

No Conflict of Interest: Declared

ABSTRACT

The main objectives of the study is to examine the impact of communication variables like controlled communications, uncontrolled communications and brand name on brand attitude in the context of Grameen Phone Telecom. A systematic sampling method was adopted to collect data from the respondents. A total number of 100 questionnaires were distributed, and 93 completed (usable) questionnaires were considered for statistical analyses and research hypotheses testing. The researcher used statistical techniques like mean, standard deviation, correlation and regression analysis. The results of regression analysis are show that controlled communication and brand name are statistically and significantly associated to brand attitude. These results provided full support to research hypotheses 2 and 3. Uncontrolled communication failed to enter into the regression table which indicates that uncontrolled communication is not statistically and significantly associated to brand attitude. The results of regression analysis provided no support for research hypothesis-1.

Keywords: Communication, Brand Name, Brand Attitude, Grameen Phone

JEL Classification: M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

For the last two decades there has been a huge change in the global economy due to the consistent development of telecommunication sector and communication technologies. This particular sector has been hugely influenced due to remarkable advancements in the technologies, markets and the global economy, and contributing to the overall productivity and providing a foundation for sustainable competitive advantage (Madden and Savage, 1999). Furthermore, the development of the global telecommunication industry has enabled a huge improvement in cross border information flows, lessening transaction costs, and stimulating customer demand for high quality products services and brands (Leff, 1984).

Traditionally, the telecommunication sector was considered to be a part of public infrastructure that should be provided by state. Considering historical and international view, the telecommunication sector was considered as one of the potential economic sectors with the highest level of state ownership and activity (Grande, 1994). In general, the public telecommunication sector is being monopolized by the state owned telecom sector as it controls the operation of telecom networks, the

provider of the full range of services, and issues related to licensing, distribution and maintenance of terminal equipment are often controlled by government based telecom sector (Jamali, 2003). Melody (1999) argued that the telecommunication sector in particular can be characterised by an "intensive and extensive politicization of functions" (cited in Jamali, 2003, pp. 35).

In recent years, however there has been a huge change in the field of telecommunication. Innovative technologies, huge economise of scale, and intensity of quality service delivery have minimised traditional telecommunication monopoly boundaries (Jamali, 2003). In the field of telecommunication, customers are becoming more demanding than before and that has created a scope for market forces to promote efficiency, creativity and innovation in the telecom based technology (Rickford, 1998). Therefore, the old monopolistic condition in telecom sector started losing its footing and global telecom sector is becoming more liberalized and competitive as a process of telecommunication reform.

A number of countries have however partially privatized their telecommunication sector. According to recent statistics, by 1999, nearly 90 countries had privatised their telecom firms partially and 95 had formed separate

regulatory authorities (Wallsten, 2002). However, the reform approach in the telecommunication sector is now putting stress on the importance of establishing institutional framework supporting to promote competition (Noll, 2000; Wallsten, 2001). Developing a strong regulatory base prior to privatising telecom companies is significantly correlated with performance improvements (Wallsten, 2002; Borotollotti et al., 2002).

This study investigates the relationship between uncontrolled communications (i.e. word-of-mouth and non-paid publicity), controlled communications (i.e. advertising and promotion) and brand name on brand attitude in the context of cellular telecom sector Bangladesh. The telecom sector in Bangladesh is becoming extremely competitive with the entrance of new privatised cellular telecom companies. In general the telecom sector in Bangladesh can be divided into two segments: Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) and Cellular Telecom Sector (CST). Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) sector (i.e. land lines) in Bangladesh has been controlled entirely by the state owned (governmental) telecom sector known as Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB). Cellular Telecom Sector (CST) however has been dominated by a number of privatised cellular telecom companies namely Grameen Phone, Citycell, Aktel, Banglalink and Warid telecom. Grameen Phone (GP) Telecom is the current market leader having a market share of 70% (Mondal and Ahmad, 2006).

The socioeconomic situation of Bangladesh in a way restricts the expensive expansion of cellular telecom sector, and therefore cellular telecom companies are relying heavily on attracting or drawing subscribers away from competitors to expand their own subscriber bases. Branding in privatised cellular telecom sector is becoming increasingly important and cellular telecom companies in Bangladesh are striving hard to create positive brand attitudes among subscribers by employing creative communication strategies. So there is an importance of studying the related factors of controlled communication, uncontrolled communication, brand name and their affect on brand attitude in the context of privatised cellular telecom sector Bangladesh.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The researcher's interest in this subject area arose from the previous study conducted by Grace and O'Cass, which emphasized on the "effects of service brand communications on brand evaluations" (Grace and O'Cass, 2005). Findings from that study showed that controlled communications and brand name have a significant impact on brand attitude. The study performed by Grace and O'Cass (2005) analyzed the impact of brand communications on brand evaluations and data were collected from consumers intercepted in a shopping mall through a questionnaire survey. The focus of such relationships however has not been examined in the case of mobile telecommunication sectors in Bangladesh. The current study takes a different focus as it aims to examine the

impact of communication variables (i.e. controlled and uncontrolled communications), and brand name on brand attitude in the context of mobile telecom sector in Bangladesh. A number of earlier researches have explored the factors related to traditional communication avenues like advertising, promotions, publicity and word of mouth and more recent studies have shown that brand names are also important source of information to consumers (Janiszewski and van Osselaer, 2000).

The objective of this research is to inspect the effect of three communication variables (i.e. controlled communications, brand name, and uncontrolled communications) on customer response variable such as brand attitude. By examining their relationships, we can better identify those factors of communication that exert the most influence on consumers purchase decisions and formulate their attitude towards service brands. The findings will expand our knowledge of the associations that exist between market communication and brand attitude thus will improve our practical and theoretical understanding on the proposed research area.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To provide direction to the investigation the researcher developed a conceptual framework based on the knowledge gained from the earlier research conducted by Grace and O'Cass (2005) and relevant literature review. As mentioned by Ticehurst and Veal (2000), "a conceptual framework indicates how the researcher views the concepts involved in a study-especially the relationships between concepts".

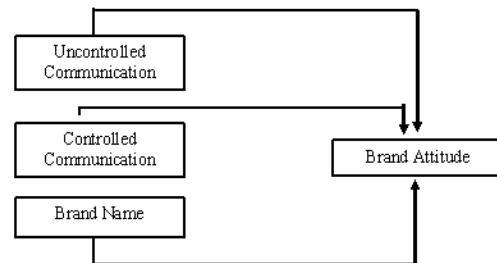


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Research Variables and their relationship

The conceptual framework shown in Figure-1 has four major components. Component one is uncontrolled communication, component two is controlled communication, component three is brand name and the last component is brand attitude.

Component 1: Uncontrolled Communication

The concept of earlier research on "Examining the effects of service brand communications" by Grace and O'Cass (2005) was adopted for this particular study. Uncontrolled communications such as WOM and non paid publicity are argued as having stronger influence on brand attitude (Swanson and Kelly, 2001).

Component 2: Controlled Communication

Controlled communications like advertising has been asserted as "an important avenue by which marketers can

make their offerings to customer in tangible" (Grace and O'Cass, 2005). Other traditional communication avenues like promotion, publicity and brand name have also been considered as controlled communications, and it is argued that controlled communications can influence consumer's response to the brand (Grace and O'Cass, 2005).

Component 3: Brand Name

Bennett (as cited in Moore and Turley, 1995) defined brand name as a "name, sign, symbol, design or any combination of these concepts, used to identify the goods and services of a seller". Brand name has often been considered as an essential component of brand and as well as an important source of information to the customer, because in numerous cases, service features are difficult to explain through other means (Moore and Turley, 1995). Grace and O'Cass (2005) suggested that brand name should be acknowledged for its contribution in communicating the brand rather than simply being judged as an element of a brand.

Component 4: Brand Attitude

Low and Lamb (2000) defined brand attitude as the general assessment of consumers regarding a brand whether good or bad. As mentioned by Hoek et al. (2000) positive brand attitude can create long term success and sustainability of the brands. Effective brand communications are however important for creating and maintaining positive brand attitudes (Grace and O'Cass, 2005).

Following the formation of conceptual framework, research questions and hypotheses were developed to address the research problem (Ticehurst and Veal, 2000). The research questions and hypotheses can be addressed in the following section.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS

Due to the diversify nature of service brands for example telecom services, banks, insurance services, hairdressers, health care services, child care services, retail store services, etc., Grace and O'Cass (2005) argued that "researches related to services arena often faces the problem of theory generalisability". Pecotich et al. (1996) and Grace and O'Cass (2005) further argued that some effects and relationships may differ between various service categories and situations. The rising competition in mobile telecom sector in Bangladesh has meant that subscribers now have more options to switch to the brand that is more favourable to them. In order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, the cellular telecom operators are trying to develop positive brand attitude among subscribers through effectively controlled communication strategies like advertisements and promotions. Uncontrolled communication avenues like word of mouth or non-paid publicity are considered as having strong influence on brand attitude (Swanson and Kelly, 2001).

The current study then examines the impact of communication variables like controlled communications, uncontrolled communications, and brand name on brand attitude in the context of Grameen Phone Telecom. The

following research questions were generated from the research problem:

- Is there any significant relationship between uncontrolled communication and brand attitude in telecom sector (Grameen Phone) in Bangladesh?
- Is there any significant relationship between controlled communication and brand attitude in telecom sector (Grameen Phone) in Bangladesh?
- Is there any significant relationship between brand name and brand attitude in telecom sector (Grameen Phone) in Bangladesh?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Uncontrolled Communication in Marketing Literature

Considered as having a stronger influence on brand attitudes are uncontrolled communications like word of mouth (WOM) and non-paid publicity (Swanson and Kelly, 2001). It is because; uncontrolled communications are not marketer-driven and are perceived to be more credible (Mangold et al., 1999). According to Cox (1967) WOM advertising is nothing more than a conversation regarding products, while Arndt (1967) formally defines WOM advertising as, "oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand a product or a service offered for sale".

Considering the impact of uncontrolled communications on brand attitudes recent research shows that positive WOM and publicity can enhance brand attitudes (Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Hauss, 1993). Similarly brand attitudes can be diminished through negative WOM or "bad" publicity (Ennew et al., 2000). However it has been argued that, in many cases the effect of negative WOM on brand attitude is stronger than that resulting from positive uncontrolled communications (Ennew et al., 2000). Considering the literature review discussed above the following hypothesis has been developed.

H₁: *There is a significant relationship between uncontrolled communication and brand attitude in cellular telecom sector (Grameen Phone) in Bangladesh.*

Controlled Communication in Marketing Literature

Issues related to the controlled communication like advertising of services have been at the forefront of research in recent times (Grace and O'Cass, 2005). Such research has emphasized on the assessment of services in terms of intimacy theory (Stern, 1997), the variation between business-to-business and consumer services commercials (Turley and Kelley, 1997), and the impact of services advertising on brand salience and brand image (Miller and Berry, 1998).

Firms often attempt to develop favourable, unique and strong associations with a product though their messages to consumers (Keller, 2003). Consumers' reactions to these messages apparently determine the association between ad evaluations and brand evaluations (Yi and Suh, 2005).

Advertising can play a major role in developing brand beliefs (Mackenzie, Lutz, and Belch, 1986) and feelings (Olney, Holbrook, and Batra, 1991; Park Jaworski, and Macinnis, 1986). These beliefs influence attitudes toward advertisements and consequently toward the brands being commercialised. As noted by Grace and O’Cass (2005), Consumer’s attitude or feelings towards the controlled communications eventually influence their response to the brand. Considering the literature review discussed above the following hypothesis has been developed.

H₂: *There is a significant relationship between controlled communication and brand attitude in cellular telecom sector (Grameen Phone) in Bangladesh.*

Brand Names in Marketing Literature

As Bennett (1988) states, brand name is the element of a brand which can be expressed by words, numbers or letters and can be spoken or verbalized. Considering the importance of brand names in consumer evaluations of brands; a number of studies suggest that brand names assist the consumer in recalling brand benefits (Janiszewski and van Osselaer, 2000) and they play an important role in reputation and choice (Holden and Vanhuele, 1999). Brand names are considered as a valuable source of information. As Zinkhan and Martin (1987) states, “based on product name alone, customers form instant, non-neutral attitudes about the product may prove difficult to change through the use of subsequent communications” (p. 170). Considering the literature review discussed above the following hypothesis has been developed.

H₃: *There is a significant relationship between brand names and brand attitude in cellular telecom sector (Grameen Phone) in Bangladesh.*

Brand Attitude in Marketing Literature

Brand Attitude has been defined by Low and Lamb (2000) as “the consumer’s overall evaluation of a brand whether good or bad” (p. 352). Brand attitude reflects the meaning that consumers associate to brands which in turn influences their buying behaviour (Low and Lamb, 2000). As a result, positive brand attitudes are essential to the long term success and sustainability of brands (Hoek et al., 2000).

According to Yi and Suh (2005) consumers’ past experience with the product, ads and corporate image are the determinants of brand attitude which in turn influences brand loyalty. According to the theory of reasoned action, brand attitudes are a function of beliefs that a brand has desirable or undesirable attributes and evaluations of these attributes (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Yi and Suh (2005) further mentioned that past experience, ads and corporate image can influence these beliefs or evaluations (or both) and consequently brand attitudes.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Sampling Method

A systematic sampling method was adopted to collect data from the respondents. The systematic sampling was accomplished by selecting elements from a randomly

arranged sample frame according to ordered criteria (Dane, 1990). Kumar (1997) mentioned that this particular process of choosing sample from the overall population saved time as well as financial and human resources. The researcher surveyed the mobile telephone users located in Gulshan residential area in Bangladesh for the current study.

The sample frame for this research, or list of elements or people from which the sample was drawn (Zikmund, 1997), has been provided by Grameenphone Telecom. It covers the information regarding all its subscribers living in Gulshan residential area. This list is considered to be the appropriate source for this study as it is provided by one of the most reliable sources Grameen Phone telecom, the leading mobile telecom operator in Bangladesh.

Research Instruments

Due to lack of secondary data (e.g. articles, journals, and publications on telecom sector Bangladesh) in the case of Grameenphone Telecom, it was required to investigate primary data’s for analyzing the research problem. The researcher used structured questionnaire to collect primary data from primary sources.

To obtain information from the users of Grameenphone Telecom the researcher used the questionnaire method. The questionnaire method has been considered as an appropriate method to collect data from subscribers for the following reasons. First the current study was about controlled communication, uncontrolled communication, brand name and brand attitude and subscribers might feel uncomfortable to discuss these issues with an interviewer. A questionnaire survey can be considered as a better option in such a condition as it ensures anonymity (Zikmund, 2000). Second, the researcher has conducted a questionnaire survey on 100 respondents. To interview such a large number of respondents would have been expensive as well as time consuming. For this reason, the researcher conducted questionnaire survey rather than direct interview. Third, the postal system of Bangladesh is too slow. Hence conducting a mail survey would have been too much time consuming. Forth, internet is not widespread in Bangladesh. As a result, online survey was not also feasible for the current study. Finally the earlier study (i.e. Grace and O’Cass, 2005) concerning the same variables (i.e. uncontrolled communication, controlled communication, brand name and brand attitude) had used questionnaires. This was another reason for the researcher to use questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining the approval from Grameen Phone Telecom authorities, the researcher distributed questionnaires to the respondents. The respondents for this study were drawn from the list of subscribers (i.e. sample frame), provided by Grameen Phone. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed and 93 completed (usable) questionnaires were considered for statistical analyses and research hypotheses testing.

The researcher distributed the survey questionnaires among the respondents. This approach was adopted for a

number of reasons. First the number of internet users is limited in Bangladesh. As a result it was not possible for the researcher to conduct internet survey. Second the researcher conducted a survey on 100 respondents and to interview such a large sample of respondents would have been time consuming and difficult. Time constraint was another factor, and finally earlier studies conducted on the variables of the current study (i.e. Grace and O' Cass, 2005), the researchers used questionnaire for their study.

Data Analysis Procedures

To examine the quantitative data, the researcher used statistical techniques like mean, standard deviation, correlation, and regression analysis. Correlation analysis was employed to determine whether relationships exist between measured variables or not. Besides that the mean and standard deviation of all variables were calculated. Stepwise regression analysis was conducted to test the strength of associations between measured variables.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE STUDY VARIABLES

The means and standard deviations of all the measured items are shown in Table-1. As mentioned by Rouf, M. A. (2011), "the major concern of descriptive statistics is to present information in a convenient, usable, and understandable form". He further mentioned that it is however important to calculate the frequency of the data collected, to calculate the measures of central tendency (means, median, and mode), to measure the dispersion of the scores (variances and standard deviations) and to analyse the distribution of the scores.

Table-1: Descriptive Statistics (N=93)

Scales	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Con_com	2.50	5.00	4.38	0.51
Uncon_com	2.60	5.00	4.28	0.48
Brand name	2.80	5.00	4.37	0.49
Brand Attitude	3.20	5.00	4.47	0.41

Note: Con-com=Controlled Communication;
Uncon_com = Uncontrolled Communication

Table-1 displays the means and standard deviations of the measured items. On a five point Likert scale, the mean scores for communication variables like controlled communication, uncontrolled communication, and brand name are 4.38 ($sd=.51$), 4.28 ($sd=.48$), 4.37 ($sd=.49$). The mean score for brand attitude is 4.47 indicating that subscribers have favourably high positive attitude towards Grameen Phone.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table-2: Correlation Matrix

Variable	Con.Com.	Uncon.Com.	Brand Name	Brand attitude
Con.Com.	1	0.65**	0.57**	0.76**
Uncon.Com.		1	0.56**	0.46**
Brand Name			1	0.61**
Brand attitude				1

Note: Con-com=Controlled Communication;
Uncon_com = Uncontrolled Communication; **p <.01 two tailed

The results of correlation analysis are shown in table-2. It examines the correlations among uncontrolled communication, controlled communication, brand name and brand attitude. The variables significantly correlated with brand attitude were controlled communication ($r = .76, p <.01$), uncontrolled communication ($r = .46, p <.01$) and brand name ($r = .61, p <.01$). These results provided strong support to all the research hypotheses under study.

STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

In order to test research hypotheses, the researcher employed a stepwise regression analysis to determine which independent variable (s) individually or collectively provide a significant contribution towards the explanation of dependent variable. As mentioned by Ho (2006), correlation and regression are closely related as both these approaches examine the relationship between variables; however correlation analysis examines the extent and direction of the relationship whereas regression analysis concentrates on employing the relationship for prediction. Rouf, M. A. (2012) advised that stepwise regression can be employed to determine the most significantly associated variables in addressing the behaviour in question.

Cohen and Cohen (1975) cautioned that the use of stepwise regression analysis may create problems when a large number of independent variables are considered for the study. However they also mentioned that stepwise regression can work as an useful tool when both dependent and independent variables are selected on the basis grounded theory and the original number of independent variables are not too many.

Considering the current study, the researcher did not employ a large number of independent variables. As mentioned by Mendenhall, Reinmuth & Beaver (1989) stepwise regression analysis can be utilized as a process to eliminate redundant variables and to establish a model in which all independent variable provide a significant contribution toward the explanation of dependent variable (cited in Jahangir 2003).

Table-3: Stepwise regression on Brand Attitude

Variable	B	SEB	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				0.587	
Controlled Com	0.625	0.055	.766***		
Step 2				0.633	0.046
Controlled Com	0.504	0.064	.617***		
Brand Name	0.220	0.066	0.260**		

Note: **p<.01 two tailed, ***p<.001 two tailed.

The results of regression analysis are shown in table-3. In case of Grameen Phone the results of regression analysis shows that controlled communication ($p<.001$) and brand name ($p<.01$) are statistically and significantly associated to brand attitude. These results provided full support to research hypotheses 2 and 3. These two variables together explained 63.3% of the variance in brand attitude. Individually controlled communication and brand name

explained about 58.7% and 4.6% of the variance. Uncontrolled communication failed to enter into the regression table which indicates that uncontrolled communication is not statistically and significantly associated to brand attitude. The results of regression analysis provided no support for research hypothesis 1.

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of the current research provide a number of theoretical and practical suggestions; however the study is limited by a number of factors. First the researcher surveyed subscribers of only one cellular telecom company (Grameen Phone) operating in Bangladesh for this study and the sample was drawn only from Gulshan residential area Dhaka, Bangladesh because of time and economical restrictions. Perceptions of subscribers using other cellular telecom services (i.e. Aktel, Citycell, and Banglalink) were not investigated. The rationale behind conducting this research only on Grameen Phone Telecom was that, Grameen Phone Telecom (GP) is the current market leader having a market share of around 70% which is being the highest in the cellular telecom sector in Bangladesh (Mondal and Ahmad, 2006). Therefore, the researcher was convinced that the current study would be significant in analysing the cellular telecom sector in Bangladesh. However, the researcher acknowledges that longitudinal studies including all other cellular telecom service providers in Bangladesh (i.e. Aktel, Citycell, Warid Telecom and Banglalink) would produce more significant results; hence future research concerning the subject area should consider longitudinal studies so that the relational inferences could be made more accurately. Second, the sample size considered for this study was limited to represent the proposed scenario. Third, there may be some other factors (i.e. customer satisfaction, service quality, brand loyalty) that influence customers/subscribers attitude towards brand and it is practically impossible to examine the influence of all those factors on brand attitude in a single study. Therefore future studies should also examine whether customer satisfaction, service quality and brand loyalty can significantly influence brand attitude particularly in the context of cellular telephony sector Bangladesh.

The relationships among measured variables (i.e. uncontrolled communication, controlled communication, brand name and brand attitude) examined in this research were correlational, not causal. Therefore causal studies are required to examine causal links among the communication variables and response variable. The present research shed a new light on the subject area, and therefore can be used as a foundation for future studies.

The current research has shown that in cellular telecom sector Bangladesh, communication avenues like uncontrolled communication, controlled communication, and brand name can significantly influence customers brand attitude. Hence, the marketers in telecommunication sector should emphasize more on

affective communication avenues to develop positive brand attitudes among subscribers/customers.

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