

## CONSUMER CHOICE BEHAVIOR TOWARDS MOBILE PHONE OPERATORS IN BANGLADESH

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### ABSTRACT

This study discloses Consumers Choice Behavior Pattern towards Telecommunication Operators. People in Bangladesh are becoming busy day by day and more professional than previous. They need to share more information to each other because demography has changed due to the era of globalization. Mobile phone has introduced a tremendous change in the communication sector in our country. It has changed the communication structure also. People in various occupations and income levels are using mobile phone intensively for their occupational purpose and personal purpose as well. Now a day the world is called 'Global village'. It is only possible for the developed and modern communication technology. The business world and general life is becoming more complex day by day. Women are coming outside from the four walls. They are working with male hand in hand. They are engaging with various types of professions. In this situation information is essential to respond to the changing environment. 95 consumers were interviewed with a structured questionnaire. Both primary and secondary data were used. This study finds that the Grameenphone users are extremely satisfied (90%) followed by the other operators. This study is expected to help solid understanding of Consumer Behavior Pattern.

**Keywords:** Choice Behavior, Operators, Global Village, Networking, Globalization.

## INTRODUCTION:

Citycell is the first mobile phone operator in Bangladesh. Thereafter, Grameenphone (market leader in Bangladesh), Banglalink, Robi, Teletalk, and Airtel entered into the telecom industry in Bangladesh. Now the total numbers of mobile phone users are 70.340 millions in Bangladesh (BTRC, January, 2011). It is one of the most important communication tools in Bangladesh. The study is able to explore mobile phone users expectations to the operators those are helpful to make policy and based on it another researcher may conduct other study. The mobile operators have created one million jobs & contributed over 10 percent to the national budget of Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 09.02.2011). The government has identified ICT as one of the thrust sectors for rapid economic development, unemployment, & poverty alleviation (The Daily star, 09.02.2011). In recent years, mobile communications are experiencing higher growth rates in low income countries. For instance, during 1995-1998, mobile subscribers in low income countries registered an annual percentage growth rate of 117% compared to rate of 47% for high income countries during the same period (ITU). The wider acceptance & adoption of digital technology has reshaped the way of communication as well as changed social and individual behavior. The term of consumer behavior refers to the behavior that customers display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs (Schiffman, 1994). According to Professor Theodore Levitt of the Harvard Business School, 'The study of consumer behavior is one of the most important in business education, because the purpose of a business is to create and keep consumers'. Customers are created and maintained through marketing strategies. And the quality of marketing strategies depends on knowing, serving and influencing customers (Brent, 1975). Consumer behavior involves a sequence of decisions and activities. Those are: decisions about whether to consume, decisions about what categories of goods and services to consume, decisions about what brands to consume, decisions about buying and shopping behavior, and decisions about how products will be used and discarded (Robertson, 1994). The study of consumer behavior is quite complex, because of many variables involved and their tendency to interact with and influence each other. These variables are divided into three major sections, those are: External Environmental Variables Influencing Behavior: These are the factors influenced by external environment like; culture, subculture, social class, social group, family and interpersonal influences (Brent, 1975). Individual Determinants of Behavior: Major individual determinants of consumer behavior are the human mind and its attributes. These variables are personal in nature and they are influenced by the above set of external factors, they are: personality and self concept, motivation and involvement, perception and information processing, learning and memory and attitudes (Brent, 1975). Consumer Decision Making Process: The buying decision comes as a product of the complex interaction of the external factors and the personal attributes. The inner most circle denotes the consumer decision making process regarding products and services. Whose major steps are: Problem Recognition, Information Search, Evaluation of Application, Purchase Decision, and Post-purchase Behavior (Kotler, 1999). Consumer research is the methodology used to study consumer behavior; it takes place at every phase of the consumption process; before the purchase, during the purchase and after the purchase (Brent, 1975). Consumers have a great deal of choices and options to decide on. They have the products on an extreme range of attributes (the 1<sup>st</sup> P- product), they have a great range of cost and payment choices (the 2<sup>nd</sup> P- price), they can order them to be supplied to their door step or anywhere else (the 3<sup>rd</sup> P- place), and they are worried about more communications from more channels than even before (the 4<sup>th</sup> P- Promotion) (Robertson, 1994). The study of consumer behavior is very important to marketers because it enables them to understand and predict buying behavior of consumers in the marketplace; it is concerned not only with what consumers buy, but also with why they buy it, when and where and how they buy it, and how often they buy it, and also how they consume it, and dispose it (Brent, 1975). Broad objective of this study is to analyze the Consumer choice Behavior toward Telecommunication Operators in Bangladesh. This broad objective is divided by several specific objectives. They are to identify consumers of which age, profession, sex, religion and social class purchase benefits from telecommunication operators (Grameenphone, Robi, Banglalink, Citycell, and Teletalk), to find out on which factors influence the purchase decision, who are those groups and what kinds of group influences, to find out TV channels and Radio programs preferences of the consumers, to find out consumers overall satisfaction level. Behavioral pattern will cover what they buy, why they buy, what features do they look for, what benefits do they seek, and their satisfaction level.

There are a lot of researches have been conducted on consumer behavior pattern. As like as, 'Consumers Attitudes towards Mobile Phone Services in Bangladesh (Azam, 2006)'. The author observed customers' perception. The study report that among 16 service attributes the actual competition are taking place in network coverage, call charge, BTTB connectivity, internet service, service duration of prepaid cards, balance transfer facility, Text SMS service, Customer care, SIM replacement facility, as well as music and sports news service while no significant difference exists in the remaining attributes. Other study was on 'Service Quality, customer

Satisfaction, and Behavior Intension: Evidence from China's Telecommunication Industry (Hing, 2002)'. In this paper the author paid attention to the measurement model of service quality in China's mobile phone market based on the well-known 'SERVQUAL' model, but with modification on the basis of focus group discussions & expert opinions to reflect the specific industry attributes and the special culture of China. Emphasis is then paid to the study of the dynamic relationships among service quality, customer value, customer satisfaction and their influences on future behaviors after the key drivers of customer value & customer satisfaction are identified.

Another study was conducted on 'Applying Theory Reasoned Action in anticipating Mobile Phone Usage Behavior in Bangladesh (Azam, 2008)'. The study reveals the Theory of reasoned action is applicable in the Bangladesh setting to significantly explain intension to use mobile phones. Attitude towards behavior emerged as the significant predictor of intension to use mobile phone in Bangladesh. Subjective norm is also observed as another strong predictor in explaining the intension to use mobile phone in Bangladesh; because it has become as part of the country's culture from upper class to lower class in connecting and making communication with the nearest ones or the associates through mobiles since the price of SIM card and charges for mobile uses are very low in Bangladesh at present as well as the penetration of mobile users are increasing rapidly. The situation insists the mass people to be connected through mobile phone. Thus the individuals expect their associations and family members, friends, relatives, colleagues and different stakeholders or partners in mobile networks having mobile connections. Other study was on 'A study of the relationship between the values and customer decision'- making style of telecommunications of university students (Tang, 2009)'. The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between personal values and customer decision making style of telecommunication service of university students. Another study was on 'factors affecting customer equity of telecommunication enterprises (Wang, 2010)'. Based on this paper the author concluded that the factors affecting the customer equity of telecommunication enterprises are composed of value equity, brand equity, potential equity and retention equity, and further put forward the management strategy to increase the customer equity of telecommunication enterprises. Other study was on 'relationships between customer satisfactions and service loyalty: user's perception on telecommunication provider (Chong, 2008)'. This study seeks to contribute to the development of a conceptual framework that integrate service quality, corporate image, price, customer satisfaction, and service loyalty. The study uncovered that service quality, corporate image, and price are found to act on service loyalty via customer satisfaction. Another study was on 'integrated approach to understanding customer behavior at bottom of pyramid (Saroja, 2008)'. This paper ends to study what and why they consume, and how firms can best address those needs. Consumers brand choice behavior for motor cycle (Kamal and Uddin, 1994). The main focus of the study was to identify attributes that affect the brand choice behavior and to identify why consumers give special emphasis to some particular attributes. Other study was on consumer's brand choice behavior for television (Kamal, 1992). The core of the study was to identify factors that affect the brand choice behavior of television and to find out why consumers give special emphasis to some particular factors. Another study was conducted on the consumers of Bangladesh Biman to explore consumer's opinions about the quality of service rendered by it (Abir, 2001). The main focus were to find out how consumers perceive various areas of services of BG and then to put forward suggestions for improvement of the standard of services of Biman. The above studies were conducted on a small portion about consumer behavior pattern that was why consumers give special emphasis to some particular factors and attributes that affect the consumers' choice behavior. By which it is not possible to understand the behavioral pattern of consumers absolutely. But this study which is titled as 'consumers' choice behavior towards mobile phone operators in Bangladesh where Grameenphone, Robi, Banglalink, Citycell, and Teletalk play the pioneering role to solid understanding of consumer behavior pattern. This study has been conducted in order to cover the lacks of aforesaid studies. The study is able to cover what customers buy, what features do they look for, which factors affect their buying decision making process, their media preferences, and satisfaction level. All of which will be helpful to the absolute understanding of consumer behavior pattern.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The broad objective of the study is Consumer Choice Behavior towards Mobile Phone Operators in Bangladesh and the specific objectives are:

- to find out demographic profiles that influence users' choice behavior;
- to find out operators' awareness to the customer;
- to find out customers' satisfaction level; and
- to make suggestions on the basis of findings.

**METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:**

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected from the respondents by using various methods like; observation, survey and questionnaire. This research adopts with open ended and close-ended questionnaire. In this study, respondents were asked why they buy, which factors they consider, their media preferences etc. This study is quantitative in nature. Population of the study was defined here in terms of elements and unit. Elements are all consumers of Grameenphone, Robi, Citycell, Banglalink, and Teletalk in Dhaka city. Unit is each individual consumer of Mobile Phone users within the population. Cluster sampling method was followed for the study. Here, Likert five point scales were used to measure the satisfaction level of mobile phone users. Sources of significant secondary data included Newspaper, Journals, Articles, Books, Publications and Websites.

Among the respondents, male are 55, and female are 40, while respondents' age is below 20 is 22 persons, 20-29 is 46 persons and 30 & above is 27 persons. Among them Muslim are 75, Hindu 12 and Christian 08. The highest number 32 respondents are from upper middle class, 24 are from lower middle class, 19 are from middle class, 12 are from lower class and only 08 respondents are from upper class. On the basis of the occupation of respondents students are the highest number 33, Businessman 28, Service holder 20, Unemployed 14. The highest number of respondents 39 use Grameenphone's SIM, Banglalink's users 23, Robi's users 19, Citycell's users 12 and Teletalk users only 02, dual SIM users are 19.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

The highest numbers of respondents watch 'Channel i', they are 79 %. Second highest 66% respondents enjoy 'ntv'. And 62 % respondents enjoy radio today. The highest number of respondents (89 %) read the Daily prothom Alo and the second largest respondents (69 %) read The Daily Kaler Kantho. The highest numbers of respondents enjoy various channel programs at 10-12 pm that is 29 % and the second highest numbers of respondents enjoy at 06-08 pm that is 22 %.

Consumers give most value to the brand image. Male respondents are more influenced by friends than female respondents. Female respondents are more influenced by family members than male. Grameenphone users spend more money than others. Grameen Phone users are extremely satisfied (90%) followed by the other mobile phone operators in Bangladesh. Teletalk's users are not satisfied at all. The highest numbers of Teletalk's users have been suffering from network problem (100%).

**Table-1. Characteristics of Customers**

		Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	50	53 %
	<b>Female</b>	45	47 %
<b>Age</b>	Below 20	22	23 %
	20-29	46	48 %
	Above 30	27	28 %
<b>Social Class</b>	Lower Class	12	13 %
	Lower Middle class	24	25 %
	Middle Class	19	20 %
	Upper Middle Class	32	34 %
	Upper Class	08	08 %
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	33	35 %
	Service Holder	20	21 %
	Business	28	29 %
	Unemployed	14	15 %
<b>Religious</b>	Muslim	75	79 %
	Hindu	12	13 %
	Christian	08	09 %

**Source: Field Study**

Total questionnaire were 95.

The table-1 shows that out of 95 respondents 53 % male and 47 % female. Among them 23 % respondents age are below 20, 48 % respondents 20-29, and 28 % respondents are above 30. 13 % are coming from lower class, 25 % from lower middle class, 20 % from middle class, 34 % from upper middle class, and 08 % from upper class. Out of 95 respondents 35 % are students, 21 % service holder, 29 % respondents are businessmen, 15 % are unemployed. 79 % respondents are Muslim, 13 % Hindus and 09 % are Christian.

**Table: 2. Number of SIM users**

Company Name	No. of users	Percentage
Grameenphone	39	41 %
Banglalink	23	24 %
Robi	19	20 %
Citycell	12	13 %
Teletalk	02	02 %
Dual SIM Users	19	20 %

**Source:** Field Study

The table-2 represents that out of 95 respondents 41 % are using Grameenphone’s SIM, 24% Banglalink, 20% Robi, 13% Citycell and only 02% are using that of Teletalk. The highest number of respondents use Grameen phone’s SIM because of its brand image (derived from table6.a). 20% respondents are using more than one SIM to get benefit offered by the operators time to time.

**Table: 3. Effect of various channels on Customers**

Preferred Channels	Male		Female		Total respondents	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Total No. of respondents	Percentage
BTV/BTV World	14	25 %	19	46 %	33	35 %
ATN Bangla	43	78 %	21	53 %	44	46 %
Channel i	37	67 %	37	93 %	74	79 %
Channel 1	28	51 %	25	63 %	53	56 %
ntv	54	98 %	39	96 %	63	66 %
Radio today	43	78 %	16	40 %	59	62 %
Radio furti	21	38 %	19	46 %	40	42 %
Bangladesh Betar	4	7 %	22	55 %	26	27 %
Bangla Vision	29	53 %	32	80 %	61	64 %
BBC/CNN	22	40 %	13	33 %	35	37 %
Fashion tv	13	24 %	03	8 %	16	17 %
Star Movies	21	38 %	15	36 %	36	38 %
Baishakhi	18	33 %	21	53 %	39	41 %
Discovery	08	15 %	07	16 %	15	16 %
Desh TV	05	9 %	28	70 %	33	35 %

**Source:** Field Study.

The highest number 79 % respondents enjoy ‘Channel i’. Second largest 66 % respondents enjoy ‘ntv, 35% BTV/BTV World, 46% ATN Bangla, 56% Channel 1, 62% Radio Today, 42% Radio Furti, 27% Bangladesh Beter, 64% Bangla Vision, 37% BBC/CNN, 17% Fashion TV, 38% Star Movies, 41% Baishakhi Television, 16% Discovery and 35% respondents enjoy Desh TV. These channels have great influence on consumer choice behavior.

**Table: 4.Respondents Response towards Newspapers**

Name of Newspapers	Number	Percentage
The Daily star	36	39 %
The Daily Ittefaq	65	68 %
The Daily Newage	21	22 %
The Daily Observer	49	52 %
The Daily Prothom Alo	85	89 %
The Daily Bangladesh Protidin	29	31 %
The Daily Janakatha	52	55 %
The Daily Kaler Kantho	65	69 %

**Source:** Field Study.

The above table shows that the highest number of respondents (89 %) read The Daily Prothom Alo and the second highest respondents (69 %) respondents read The Daily Kaler Kantho, 39% The Daily Star, 68% The

Daily Ittefaq, 22% The Daily Newage, 52% The Daily Observer, 31% The Bangladesh Protidin and 55% respondents read The Daily Janakantha. The respondents become aware about their desired services and offerings from these print medias.

**Table: 5. Time when the consumers enjoy the program**

Time	Number	Percentage
6-8AM	13	04 %
8-10AM	32	10 %
10-12AM	14	4.3 %
12-02PM	23	7.1 %
02-04PM	41	13 %
04-06PM	12	04 %
06-08PM	71	22 %
08-10PM	24	7.4 %
10-12PM	92	29 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Field Study

Table shows that the highest numbers of respondents enjoy various channel programs at 10-12pm that is 29 % and the second highest numbers of respondents enjoy at 06-08 pm that is 22 %, 04% 6-8am, 10 % 8-10 am, 4.3% 10-12am, 7.1 % 12-02pm, 13% 02-04pm, 04% 04-06pm and 7.4% enjoy programs at 08-10pm . Most of the respondents enjoy channels at 10-12pm because they watch news within that time.

**Table: 6. Influencing Factors in Buyers Purchase decision.**

Where, 5= Extreme Important. 4= Very Important. 3= Important. 2= Not Bad. 1= Not Important at all.

**Table-6(a) Comment about Brand, Price and customer Service**

Comment about Brand	No. of Regular User	Percentage
Extreme important	40	42%
Very important	26	27%
Important	19	20%
Not bad	10	11%
Not important at all	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Field study

Brand image is extremely important to 42%, very important to 27%, important to 20%, not bad to 11%, and not important at all to 00% users.

**Table-6(b) comment about Price**

Comment About Price	No. of Regular User	Percentage
Extreme important	20	21%
Very important	22	23%
Important	21	22%
Not bad	18	19%
Not important at all	14	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Field Study

Price is extremely important to 21%, very important to 23%, important to 22%, not bad to 19%, and not important at all to 15% users.

**Table-6(C) Comment About Customer Service**

Comment about customer service	No. of regular user	Percentage
Extreme important	07	07%
Very important	24	25%
Important	19	20%
Not bad	26	27%
Not important at all	19	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	

**Source:** Field study

The table shows that customer service is extremely important to 07%, very important to 25%, important to 20%, not bad to 27%, and not important at all to 20% users.

From the above analysis, it is clear that customers give most value to the Brand Image (42%). On the other hand price is second important factor (21%) for buying SIM, thereafter customer service (07%).

**Table: 7. Effect of Various Group Influences.**

		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
<b>Existence of Group Influence</b>	<b>Yes</b>	48	87 %	40	100 %
	<b>No</b>	07	13 %	0	0 %
<b>Influence Exerted by</b>	<i>Friends</i>	31	64.5 %	08	20 %
	<i>Family Members</i>	10	20.8 %	29	72.5 %
	<i>Colleague</i>	05	10.41 %	02	05 %
	<i>Neighbor</i>	02	4.16 %	01	2.5 %

**Source:** Field Study.

From the above table it is clear that female 100 % and male 87 % have group influence. Male respondents are more influenced by friends than female. Female respondents 72.5% are more influenced by family members than male (20.8 %) to buy a product. Neighbors influence 4.16 % ( male), 2.5% female users and colleague 10.41 % influence male whereas female are 05%. Colleague influences 5 % female whereas neighbor influences 2.5 % female.

**Table: 8. Customer Expenditure For Mobile Bill**

Operators	Monthly Expenditure
Grameenphone	Tk.625
Banglalink	Tk.532
Robi	Tk.479
Citycell	Tk.352
Tele talks	Tk.331

**Source:** Field Study

This table shows that Grameenphone users spend Tk. 625, Banglalink users spend Tk. 532, Robi's users spend Tk. 479, Citycell's users spend Tk. 352 and Teletalk's users spend Tk. 331 per month. Grameenphone's users pay more money for their brand image.

**Table: 9. Customer Response to network problem**

Operators	Number	Percentage
Grameen Phone	09	23 %
Robi	04	21 %
Banglalink	12	52 %
City cell	04	33 %
Teletalk	02	100 %

**Source:** Field Study

From the above table it is clear that the users acknowledged that they are not happy about the network of Teletalk that is 100%, Grameen phone users 23%, Robi 21%, Banglalink 52%, Citycell 33%. The lowest numbers of Robe's users are unhappy about network although Grameen phone is the market leader.

**Table: 10. Satisfaction Level of Buyers**

1= Extremely Satisfied, 2= Very Much Satisfied, 3= Satisfied, 4= Not very much satisfied, 5= Not satisfied at all. For Grameenphone

Degree of Satisfaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Extremely satisfied	35	89.7%
Very much satisfied	02	5.0%
Satisfied	01	3.0%
Not very much satisfied	01	3.0%
Not satisfied at all	0	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Study

Table shows that the largest number of Grameenphone users are extremely satisfied (90%) because of its brand image and network facility, very much satisfied is 5.0%, 3.0% are satisfied, 3.0% are not very much satisfied, 00% are not satisfied at all because the largest number of consumers give most value to the brand image and price (derived from table-6a and 6b).

**For Robi**

Degree of satisfaction	No. of respondents	Percentage
Extremely satisfied	12	63%
Very much satisfied	01	05%
Satisfied	03	16%
Not very much satisfied	01	05%
Not satisfied at all	02	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Study

From the above table it is found that Robi’s users are extremely satisfied (63%), 05% are very much satisfied, 16% are satisfied, 05% are not very much satisfied, 11% are not satisfied at all.

**For Banglalink**

Degree of satisfaction	No. of respondents	Percentage
Extremely satisfied	14	61%
Very much satisfied	03	13%
Satisfied	01	4%
Not very much satisfied	02	9%
Not satisfied at all	03	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>

By analyzing the above table it is clear that Banglalink’s buyers are extremely satisfied (61%), 13% are very much satisfied, 4% are satisfied, 9% are not very much satisfied, 13% are not satisfied at all.

**For Citycell**

Degree of Satisfaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Extremely satisfied	05	41%
Very much satisfied	01	8.3%
Satisfied	01	8.3%
Not very much satisfied	02	17%
Not satisfied at all	03	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Study

Above table proves that Citycell’s buyers are extremely satisfied (41%), 8.3% are very much satisfied, 8.3% are satisfied, 17% are not very much satisfied, and 25% are not satisfied at all.

**For Teletalk**

Degree of satisfaction	No. of respondents	Percentage
Extremely satisfied	00	00
Very much satisfied	00	00
Satisfied	00	00
Not very much satisfied	00	00
Not satisfied at all	02	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Study

Above table proves that Teletalk’s users are not satisfied at all (100%) because of its network problem. Conversely the highest numbers of Grameen phone users’ are extremely satisfied (89.7%)

**CONCLUSION:**

Consumer shows distinct behavior before purchase, during purchase and after purchase that is called consumer behavior and that is important to know to make policy. Telecommunication operators’ market has a great potentiality because mobile phone in Bangladesh has become as part of the country’s culture from upper class to lower class in connecting and making communication with the nearest ones or the associates through mobiles. Today consumers are more learned, demanding and well informed than previous. Now the consumers enjoy various types of cable channels and newspapers those are used to inform, to persuade and to remind consumers. Consumers are also influenced by family members, friends, colleagues, relatives and by groups. In Bangladesh mobile phone has been introduced in 1993. It has become a very popular communication medium because business people, professional persons, even students are using this products intensively for their personal and occupational purposes. Thus it may also be used as an alternative medium of communication and transaction like introducing mobile transactions, m-commerce and mobile banking. It is hoped that the academic proponents and concerned professionals would accept the study outcomes and its implications for the government, business organizations and the mobile phone operators because this study finds demographic profiles of consumers that indicates their choice behavior, how do they become awarded and their satisfaction level.

**SUGGESTION:**

As price is the second most important factor to the consumer so the operators may reduce their service prices and can improve network facility. The study concentrated on the personal consumer. It did not include corporate customers. Another research could be done on the corporate consumers.

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