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Independent Business Review Volume: 01, No: 1, January 2008

2008-01-01

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ABSTRACT

A conceptual model or framework has been employed to investigate the impact of few explanatory variables like communication effectiveness, service quality (which has two comprising dimensions called technical quality and functional quality), and trust on relationship commitment in the context of two groups of subscribers of a major private telecommunication company of Bangladesh. Structural equation modeling was used to test the model on two sets of data collected from 629 pre-paid and 538 post-paid subscribers to know how subscribers' relationship commitment vary in two groups. According to the results, most of the hypothesized relationships are supported and the model is found to have perfect fit to the data collected from post-paid subscribers. Communication effectiveness is found to be the most powerful antecedent of relationship commitment in both groups. A clear understanding of the antecedents of relationship commitment might encourage the service provider(s) to take necessary measures to foster subscribers' relationship commitment.

Keywords: Communication Effectiveness, Service Quality, Trust, and Relationship Commitment

INTRODUCTION

In the past three decades, owing to significant liberalization and privatization the entire telecommunications industry has become a dynamic service sector with huge growth potential which is subject to new opportunities as well as threats (Graack, 1996). In recent years, in some Asian countries the number of mobile subscribers even passed the number of fixed-line subscribers (Fink, Matto, & Rathindran, 2001). Hence, lately the strategic behavior of telecommunications companies or mobile operators has attracted so much attention, both in the academic literature and in the popular press. In Bangladesh the scenario is not much different. At present the socioeconomic profile of Bangladesh provides a great opportunity for the mobile industry to expand as the regulation on the

mobile services has become somewhat relaxed. Although the number of mobile operators is still limited to a few (five private mobile operators and one state-owned operator), aggressive competition has forced the incumbent telecommunications companies to reconfigure their strategy to sustain or improve their competitive advantage by attracting new customers while retaining the existing customers.

Currently the mobile telecommunications companies serve two types customers (subscribers): pre-paid and post-paid. Although in the early years the mobile services were primarily targeted to the post-paid subscribers, pre-paid services have become more and more popular in recent years. By the end of 2003 the proportion of pre-paid subscribers became more than 50% of the install base worldwide (Lonergan, Swain, Guy, Yunus, Jackson, Mallinson, Barrabee, Minoru, Hatton, Entner, Putcha, Hoffman, & Quigley, 2004). Pre-paid subscribers pay in advance for a limited amount of services and if they want to consume more airtime, they just refill their scratch cards by paying service providers or their channel merchants. However, post-paid subscribers usually have long term contractual relationships with the service provider and pay on a monthly basis according to the usage of services in the previous billing period (Turel & Serenko, 2004).

Pre-paid subscribers and post-paid subscribers tend to develop different type of relationships with their service provider because of dissimilar contractual obligation. According to Turel and Serenko (2004) pre-paid subscribers have low commitment relationship, whereas post-paid subscribers have high commitment relationship with the service provider. Moreover, average switching likelihood of pre-paid subscribers is usually higher than that of post-paid subscribers; which ultimately influences the subscribers' relationship commitment (Turel & Serenko, 2004). For service oriented companies the essence of marketing is to develop a long-term, and value leaden relationship with customers (Berry, 1983; Palmer & Bejou, 1994). In relationship marketing relationship commitment is considered essential for successful long-term relationship with customers (Anderson & Weitz, 1992; Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995). Therefore, understanding the behavior of these two groups of subscribers in reference to the various antecedents of relationship commitment is strategically important to mobile service providers for long term success.

In the growing telecommunication market of Bangladesh, pre-paid and post-paid subscribers behave differently, indeed, as suggested in the literature, but both have one trait in common - none is exhibiting strong loyalty or commitment to any particular service provider as they have options of switching to other service provider(s) for more convenient and suitable service offerings. Therefore, the major private telecommunication companies must realize the importance of studying and understanding various antecedents (viz. service quality, switching cost, trust, and customer satisfaction) of the subscribers' relationship commitment to chalk out the imperatives of creating a loyal customer base.

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Communication Effectiveness

According to Sharma and Patterson (1999), communications effectiveness refers to the service provider's effort to share information (both formal and informal) with the customers/subscribers in a meaningful and timely fashion in order to educate them and keep them informed about the service offerings with genuine empathy. Communication can be called effective only when service provider shares information in a comprehendible manner to the customers to help them to achieve or maximize their service objectives. Sharma and Patterson (1999) identified that strong communication skills of a service provider can corroborate customer understanding of services being received and thus the customers become more assured in their ability to assess the quality and outcomes of the service. Specifically, due to the service provider's timely communication a customer can assess whether expected service is received, how much value is realized against the money spent, and future opportunities and risks associated with the service. So it appears that offering good quality service is not enough unless that is not coupled with effective communication.

Trust

Researchers had established that trust is essential for building and maintaining long-term relationships (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Singh & Sirdeshmukh, 2000). Morgan and Hunt (1994) stated that trust exists only when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity. While defining trust Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman (1993) referred to the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence. According to Lau and Lee (1999), if one party trusts another party that eventually engenders positive behavioral intentions towards the second party. According to Crosby, Evans and Cowles (1990) trust is defined as the belief that the service provider can be relied on to serve the interests of the customer in the best possible way. According to Sharma and Patterson (1999), due to inherent credence properties and complex intangibles of service, many customers find it difficult to assess whether service objectives were achieved or optimized and that's why trust plays an important role in motivating the customers to continue the relationship with the service provider.

Service Quality: Technical Quality

Service quality comprises two components – technical quality (the core service or "what" is delivered) and functional quality ("how" the service is delivered) (Grönroos, 1983; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). For the sake of clarity, it should be mentioned that in this study wherever service quality, technical quality, or functional quality is mentioned the researcher has referred to perceived service quality, perceived technical quality, or perceived functional quality. According to Lovelock (1996)

technical quality refers to the actual outcomes or the core service as perceived by the customers. Technical quality refers to the competency of any service provider in assisting its customers to achieve or maximize their service objectives or values at an acceptable level of risk by providing their expected services. Specifically, technical (outcome) quality involves what a customer actually receives from a service or a service encounter and at times it might be difficult for the customer to evaluate the technical quality objectively. Generally speaking, the customers who are unable to evaluate technical (service quality) outcomes confidently or objectively will have a favorable perception of the service provider on the dimension of technical quality if they find their expectations regarding the service have been fulfilled (Sharma & Patterson, 1999). For example, in health care, the customers lack the ability to assess technical quality, so they rely on other measures of quality – such as attributes associated with the process ("how" –viz. reliability and empathy). According to Hauser and Clausing (1988), technical quality refers to the intended the set of technical/engineering attributes, characteristics, and activities which completely define a product/service from a technical/engineering point of view.

Service Quality: Functional Quality

Functional quality means how the service provider delivers the services (Grönroos, 1983; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Grönroos (1978) illustrated that functional quality is concerned with the quality of interaction between the service provider and a customer. Functional (process) quality focuses on the ways how a service is delivered to the consumer, which is subject to customer's perception of the interaction took place during service delivery/exchange. The process includes courteous attention, proper presentation and sufficient explanations regarding the service offerings, insightful suggestions and recommendations with customers' best interest in heart, and responding to customer queries and complaints completely and promptly. According to Sharma and Patterson (1999) core service (technical quality dimension) sooner or later becomes a commodity as competition increases and the industry becomes mature; then functional quality dimension becomes more and more important to create a sustainable competitive advantage. However, according to Richard and Allaway (1993) utilizing only functional quality dimension to explain and predict customers' could be misleading as it has low predictive validity.

Relationship Commitment

According to Anderson and Weitz (1992) and Kumar et al. (1995) relationship commitment has been considered to be a critical element of successful and long-term business relationships. According to Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987) relationship commitment is the pledge for relational continuity between/among exchange partners. In the context of buyer and seller commitment, relationship commitment is referred to the desire for continued relationship and an effort to ensure its continuance (Wilson,

1995). Sharma and Patterson (1999) had conceptualized relationship commitment is as the function of communication effectiveness, perceived service quality covering both technical aspects as well as functional aspects of the service under consideration, and trust.

Relationships between Communication Effectiveness and Relationship Commitment

For a continuing buyer-seller relationship communication effectiveness is instrumental. In relationship marketing literature, numerous researchers reported that typically relationship commitment is positively linked with trust, satisfaction and communication (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Dwyer et al., 1987; Moorman, Deshpande & Zaltman, 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Sheaves & Barnes, 1996). According to Sharma and Patterson (1999), communication effectiveness has direct impact on relationship commitment given that a sense of reliability and trust can be portrayed by the service provider in all possible forms of communication (written or spoken). When effective communication is ensured the customers eventually become or remain more committed to the service provider.

Hypothesis 1: The higher the communication effectiveness of the service provider, the stronger the relationship commitment.

Relationship of Communication Effectiveness with Technical Quality, and Functional Quality

To improve the customers' perception of quality of service being offered communication plays an important role (Headley & Choi, 1992). According to Franke (1988) improving communication can definitely form and shape customers' perception of service quality. Explaining various service related issues, and sharing relevant information to the customers in order to help them to achieve or optimize their service objectives typically influence customers' perception and assessment whether the service (covering both technical and functional dimensions) was delivered competently. Accordingly, the service provider's effective communication may help the customers to assess the quality of service objectively, properly, confidently or favorably. Thus, the following can be hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: The higher the communication effectiveness of the service provider, the greater the technical quality;

Hypothesis 3: The higher the communication effectiveness of the service provider, the greater the functional quality.

Relationship between Communication Effectiveness and Trust

As gathered from Morgan and Hunt (1994), frequent and high quality communication between the customer and service provider engenders trust. Customers generally want to do business with such company or organization which they can trust, but at an early stage they do not have a clear idea who to trust. Therefore, if the

company can ensure effective communication to help the customers to achieve their objectives it can earn customers' trust. Anderson and Narus (1990) had also reported that communication is positively related to trust.

Hypothesis 4: The higher the communication effectiveness of the service provider, the greater the trust in the service provider.

Relationship of Technical Quality, and Functional Quality with Trust

A service encounter is mutually rewarding and satisfactory only when service can be delivered competently or the quality of service has not been compromised. According to Sharma and Patterson (1999), rewarding and satisfactory service encounter typically strengthens the customers' confidence (trust) in the service provider. Generally speaking, the customers can objectively evaluate the service provider's credibility and competence when it is assessed in the dimension of technical quality. When service is delivered competently, this definitely helps service provider to earn customers' trust. Sharma and Patterson (1999) also said, "the process of delivery and creation of service is important in forming trust". So the relational quality of the interaction (functional quality) between the customers and service provider is also important to cultivate customers' trust.

Hypothesis 5: The greater the perceived technical quality of the service provider, the stronger the trust in the service provider.

Hypothesis 6: The greater the perceived functional quality of the service provider, the stronger the trust in the service provider.

Relationships between Technical Quality and Relationship Commitment

Sharma and Patterson (1999) stated that technical quality has a strong, significant, and direct impact on relationship commitment. If more attention is paid to service outcome(s) and technical quality is continually improved, customers will become more satisfied and become more committed to the relationship with service provider (Wetzels, Ruyter & Birgelen, 1998).

Hypothesis 7: The greater the perceived technical quality of the service provider, the stronger the relationship commitment.

Relationships between Trust and Relationship Commitment

Trust is one of the most important antecedents of long term relationships between service provider and customer (Fox, 1974; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Garbarino and Johnson (1999); and Doney and Cannon (1997) stated that business relationship between partners is inextricably influenced by trust and commitment. Mukherjee and Nath (2003) have stated that trust is a significant precursor of customer relationship commitment. Similar notion has also been supported by Sharma and Patterson (1999). While discussing about channel relationships Morgan and Hunt (1994) identified trust precedes commitment.

Hypothesis 8: The greater the trust in the service provider, the stronger the relationship commitment.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

A conceptual model/framework has been chosen to investigate the causal links among the studied variables as the research hypotheses suggest by testing the model on two sets of data (collected from both prepaid and post-paid subscribers) for best data fit (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Sharma and Patterson (1999) worked with the same model for personal financial planning services. Table I presents all the paths from Communication effectiveness to Technical quality, Functional quality, Trust, and Relationship commitment; paths from Technical quality to Trust, and Relationship commitment; path from Functional quality to Trust; and path from Trust to Relationship commitment as hypothesized to draw causal inferences. In other words, the model intends to investigate the direct relationship of Communication effectiveness with Technical quality, Functional quality, Trust, and Relationship commitment as well as the indirect (mediated) relationship of Communication effectiveness with Relationship commitment where Technical quality, Functional quality, and Trust have been identified as mediating variables.

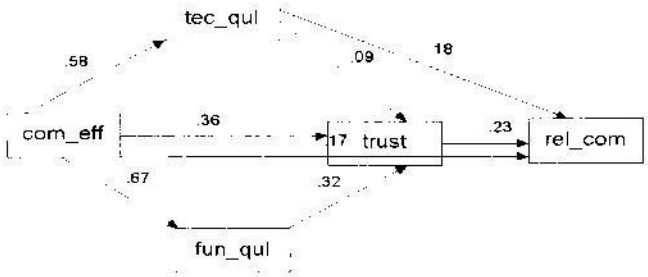


Figure- 1: Conceptual model (pre-paid subscribers) with results

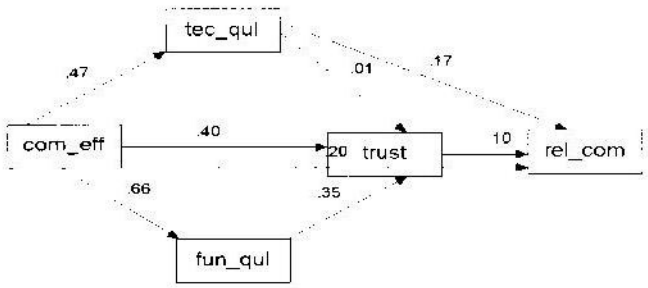


Figure- 2: Conceptual model (post-paid subscribers) with results

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and Data Collection

The researcher used the quota sampling and total 2000 self-administered questionnaires were distributed among 1000 pre-paid and 1000 post-paid subscribers of a major private telecommunication company in Bangladesh who had been receiving its services for last one year or more. These participants are the residents of Dhaka metropolitan area. The mode of participation was voluntarily. The response rate was 63% for pre-paid subscribers and 54 % for post-paid subscribers. The minimum age of the two groups of respondents was 19 and the maximum age was 53. The average age of the respondents was 29 years. Of 629 prepaid subscribers, 67 % were male and 33 % were female. Of 538 post-paid subscribers, 61 % were male and 39 % were female.

Measures

A structured questionnaire composed of five sections had been used. To measure all of variables the researcher also used 5 points Likert scale like previous researchers. Communication effectiveness was measured by using 6 items which were collected from Anderson and Weitz (1992); Sharma and Patterson (1999) and the researcher's qualitative interviews. Trust was measured by combining 5 items, which were developed by Moorman et al. (1992), Crosby et al. (1990), and Sharma and Patterson (1999). Technical quality scale used for the pre-paid subscribers had 7 items; which were adopted from Sharma and Patterson (1999) and the researcher's qualitative interviews. Technical quality scale applied to the post-paid subscribers had 10 items; which was a combination of items adopted from Sharma and Patterson (1999) and the researcher's qualitative interviews. Similarly, the 5 items employed to measure functional quality of both pre-paid and post-paid subscribers were colleted from Sharma and Patterson (1999) and the researcher's qualitative interviews. Relationship commitment had 4 items which were developed by modifying the commitment scales of Anderson and Weitz (1992), and Morgan and Hunt (1994). All the scales had high reliability coefficients with coefficient alphas ranging from 0.68 to 0.90. Other than technical quality, all the scales used for both pre-paid and post-paid subscribers were same. Since technical quality dimensions are little different for two types of subscribers, technical quality for each type of subscribers was measured with slightly different and reasonably attuned scales.

Data Analysis

The proposed study is a causal study. In order to assess direct and indirect relationships among the studied variables the researcher followed a two-step procedure by using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). SPSS version 12 and Amos 5.0 have been used to perform these analyses.

The conceptual model has been tested on two sets of data collected from both prepaid and post-paid subscribers of a major private telecommunication company in Bangladesh to find out for which group of subscribers the model fits the best while performing path analysis as identified in Table I.

Table I: Summary of Conceptual Model

Paths Identified in the Conceptual Model
Paths from Communication effectiveness to Technical quality, Functional quality, Trust, and Relationship commitment.
Paths from Technical quality to Trust, and Relationship commitment.
Path from Functional quality to Trust.
Path from Trust to Relationship commitment.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of studied variables for both pre-paid subscribers and post-paid subscribers are presented in Table II (a) and Table II (b) respectively. The reliabilities of all the constructs used in this study have found to be above the standard set by Nunnally (1978), which is 0.50-0.60.

Table II (a): Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients (Pre-paid Subscribers)

Scales	Number of items	Alpha	M	SD
Communication effectiveness	6	0.65	3.97	0.53
Technical quality	7	0.68	4.01	0.47
Functional quality	5	0.82	3.83	0.65
Trust	5	0.59	3.85	0.49
Relationship commitment	4	0.70	3.77	0.63

Note: n =629

Table II (b): Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients (Post-paid Subscribers)

Scales	Number of items	Alpha	M	SD
Communication effectiveness	6	0.66	3.87	0.53
Technical quality	10	0.78	3.88	0.47
Functional quality	5	0.82	3.70	0.66
Trust	5	0.62	3.77	0.51
Relationship commitment	4	0.65	3.50	0.63

Note: n =538

The range of Cronbach alphas of all the scales used for pre-paid subscribers is 0.59-0.82. Mean scores have been computed by equally weighting the mean scores of all items. For pre-paid subscribers mean scores of all the variables have a range of 3.77 to 4.01 and the corresponding standard deviations range from 0.47 to 0.65.

On the other hand, the range of Cronbach alphas of all the scales used for post-paid subscribers is 0.62-0.82. Mean score have been computed by equally weighting the mean scores of all items. In case of post-paid subscribers, mean scores of all the variables range from 3.50 to 3.88 and the corresponding standard deviations range from 0.47 to 0.66.

These mean scores reflect that subscribers' (both pre-paid and post-paid) assessment of service provider's communication effectiveness, technical quality, and functional quality is above average; their trust towards the service provider is also above average, so is their relationship commitment.

Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis has been done on all the variables for two purposes. The first is to check the presence of multicollinearity, which is revealed when the inter-correlation between explanatory variables exceeds 0.8 (Berry & Feldmann, 1985). Secondly, correlation analysis helps to explore the relationships between independent, mediating and dependent variables. The bivariate correlation procedure was subject to two tailed tests of statistical significance at two different levels- highly significant ($p<.01$) and significant ($p<.05$). Correlations matrices for pre-paid and post-paid subscribers have been presented in Table III (a) and Table III (b) respectively.

Again, correlation scores support the hypothesized positive relationships among the studied variables with high statistical significance ($p<.01$) for both pre-paid and post-paid subscribers.

Table III (a): Correlation Matrix (Pre-paid Subscribers, n = 629)

Variables	COM_EFF	TEC_QLTY	FNC_QLTY	TRUST	REL_COM
COM_EFF	-	0.55**	0.54**	0.49**	0.37**
TEC_QLTY		-	0.40**	0.38**	0.44**
FNC_QLTY			-	0.50**	0.29**
TRUST				-	0.41**
REL_COM					-

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01.

Table III (b): Correlation Matrix (Post-paid Subscribers, n = 538)

Variables	COM_EFF	TEC_QLTY	FNC_QLTY	TRUST	REL_COM
COM_EFF	-	0.62**	0.64**	0.60**	0.29**
TEC_QLTY		-	0.43**	0.37*	0.24**
FNC_QLTY			-	0.58**	0.22**
TRUST				-	0.31**
REL_COM					-

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01.

Confirmatory factor analyses

The Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2003), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Steiger, 1990) have been used in judging the model fit. The Comparative Fit Index is a recommended index of overall fit (Gebring & Anderson, 1993), Goodness of Fit Index measures the fitness of a model compare to another comparable model (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2003), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is calculated from GFI (Garson, 2008), Normed Fit Index measures the proportion by which a model is improved in terms of fit compared to base model (another comparable model) (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2003), and RMSEA provides information in terms of discrepancy per degree of freedom for a model (Steiger, 1990). As recommended in the pertinent literature (Bollen & Long, 1993; Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993; Kline, 1998) model fit supposed to be assessed by several indices. The accepted thresholds for these indices are: ÷ 2/df ratio should be less than 3; the values of CFI, NFI, GFI, and AGFI should be greater than 0.90; and RMSEA is recommended to be up to 0.05, and acceptable up to 0.08 (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2003).

Table IV: Summary of Results of Conceptual Model

	X^2	df	X^2/df	CFI	NFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Conceptual Model (prepaid subscribers)	10.96	2	5.48	0.992	0.991	0.993	0.948	0.084
Conceptual Model (post-paid subscribers)	3.26	2	1.63	0.999	0.996	0.998	0.982	0.034

Note: RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; NFI= Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index.

Structural equation analysis

Table IV presents the results of the conceptual model to test the hypotheses with regard to model paths for both pre-paid subscribers and post-paid subscribers. When the conceptual model has been tested on data collected from pre-paid subscribers it has

produced X^2 = 10.96, df = 2, and X^2/ df = 5.48. On the other hand, testing the same model on the data collected from post-paid subscribers has yielded X^2 = 3.26, df = 2, and ÷ 2/ df = 1.63. The results have showed that the model has best fit to data collected from post-paid subscribers. The changes in X^2/ df (improved from 5.48 to 1.63); CFI, NFI, GFI and AGFI (improved from 0.992, 0.991, 0.993, and 0.948 to 0.999, 0.996, 0.998, and 0.982 respectively); and in the RMSEA (improved from 0.084 to 0.034) definitely show that the model has a better fit or almost perfect fit in case of post-paid subscribers.

Path analysis

A result of path analysis is presented in Table V. The path coefficients are also shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 for both types of subscribers. The path coefficients are the standardized regression weights that help us to estimate impact of each variable on the following variable(s) as identified in the paths of the conceptual model. For prepaid subscribers, communication effectiveness, technical quality, functional quality, trust, and relationship commitment all found to be significantly related to each other in the hypothesized directions except the relationship between technical quality and trust. The relationship of technical quality and trust is not statistically significant; however, still it is in the hypothesized direction.

For post-paid subscribers, communication effectiveness is found to be significantly related to technical quality, functional quality, trust, and relationship commitment in the hypothesized direction. Functional quality and trust have been found significantly related in the hypothesized direction. It is also true for technical quality and relationship commitment. However, the relationships between technical quality and trust, and trust and relationship commitment were statistically insignificant even though they are in the hypothesized direction.

Table V: Standardized Path Coefficients for the Conceptual Model

Paths	Conceptual Model (pre-paid subscribers)	Conceptual Model (post-paid subscribers)
com_eff fun_qul	0.67***	0.66***
com_eff tec_qul	0.58***	0.47***
com_eff trust	0.36***	0.40***
tec_qul trust	0.09	0.01
fun_qul trust	0.32***	0.35***
trust rel_com	0.23***	0.10
com_eff rel_com	0.17***	0.20***
tec_qul rel_com	0.18***	0.17***

Note- *** p< .001

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study is noteworthy for two special reasons. As to the knowledge of the researcher no such study has been done previously on the subscribers of any telecommunication company in Bangladesh to examine the impact of communication effectiveness, service quality (technical quality and functional quality), and trust on relational commitment. Though the nature of the current study is somewhat replicative (As mentioned before, Sharma and Patterson (1999) employed the same model for personal financial planning services) but the research context is fresh and exciting. Specially, the researcher has also tried to investigate whether the postulated causal relationships among the studied variables vary in two different groups of subscribers. The study will definitely benefit the mobile service providers to understand what affect(s) most the relationship commitment of their subscribers.

In general, the results have supported most of the hypothesized relationships. The conceptual model has been supported when it has been tried on the data collected from post-paid subscribers. One logical explanation of such finding could be as follows: 'quality of interaction is relatively more important to the post-paid subscribers (due to their frequent encounter and heavy reliance on the service provider) as compared to the prepaid subscribers. Therefore, the model might seem more germane and logically appealing to the post-paid subscribers than prepaid subscribers if the differences in both groups' mobile service experiences and preferences are taken into consideration, which has in a way been reflected in the fitness of model.

The research contributes to our knowledge by providing an empirical support for the notion that communication effectiveness is an important antecedent of relationship commitment (considering both direct and indirect effects) for both types of subscribers. Moreover, functional quality has appeared to be a powerful mediator when coupled with trust between communication effectiveness and relationship commitment for both types of subscribers. However, the main focus of the company should be on both communication effectiveness and service quality. Since, the effectiveness of communication has proved to be a strong precursor of proper appraisal of technical and functional quality of service offerings, whereas the impact of perceived service quality (technical and functional) on preference loyalty is considerably strong which leads to a more favorable disposition towards the service provider and an increased commitment to re-patronize. A clearer understanding of the interrelationship among communication effectiveness, service quality, trust, and relationship commitment might induce the service providers to take appropriate measures to foster subscribers' relationship commitment.

The findings of this study have to be interpreted considering few limitations. First, data were collected only from the subscribers of one private telecommunication company; so the results might not be generalized for other telecommunication

companies. Moreover, data collection was limited to the subscribers who live in Dhaka metropolitan area; so the findings should not be generalized for all the subscribers that company has throughout the country. Second, probability sampling could not be done due to various administrative difficulties related to accessing the sampling frame of that private telecommunication company. While this may be true, probability sampling would have been a better choice to draw causal inferences more safely and confidently. Third, the current study was a cross-sectional study but to determine the causal paths of the studied variables a longitudinal study would have been more appropriate one (Poon, 2004). In addition, the current study not being an experimental one it was not possible to eliminate or withhold the influence of unidentified and undesired extraneous variables from the study. Hence, future researchers might consider the aforesaid recommendations if a similar research study is attempted. Finally, there may be many other variables (e.g. customer satisfaction, price perception, corporate image, perceived switching cost etc.), which influence customers' relationship commitment and inclusion of such variable(s) might have made the conceptual model or framework more robust and interesting. In future researches, additional variables could be incorporated.

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