

Consumer Attitude towards Corporate Social Responsibility Practices in Bangladesh: A Study on Grameenphone Ltd.

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Abstract

CSR involves the commitment shown by the companies to contribute to the economic development of a local community and the society at large. The desire of most organizations is to have a positive impact on the society where they are generating revenue. The study finds out the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices in the telecommunication industry of Bangladesh by evaluating the factors influencing CSR adoption. Primary data were obtained from pretested questionnaire administered to 100 respondents (Subscribers of telecommunication industry) across three districts of Bangladesh (Dhaka, Comilla and Chittagong) using a purposive sampling technique. Secondary data on the annual reports of the related company were examined. The authors find out that CSR impacted positively on the environment, subscribers and other stakeholders. Factors that influenced CSR practices of GP in Bangladesh were identified as competition (A1), subscriber's demands (A2), government policy (A3), workers welfare (A4), organizational culture (A5), service quality (A6), environmental issues (A7), legal requirements (A8), infrastructural decay (A9) and call rate (A10). Authors uncover that many of the respondents think that GP plays a major role in the CSR practices in Bangladesh. 54% respondents believe that GP thinks about not only profit but also health, education and environmental issues of the stakeholders.

Keywords Corporate social responsibility (CSR), subscribers, Grameenphone Ltd. (GP).

1.0 Introduction

“Watson, come here: I want you.” This was the first message ever transmitted from one place to another, through a device called telephone. American genius, Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922) along with his assistant Thomas Watson invented the device. It was March 10, 1876, an important day for human civilization, the first step towards developing means of communication.

Bangladesh is one of the poorest, most densely populated, least developed countries in the world. But this country has some surprisingly energetic sectors. Telecommunication is one of the sectors. Though these companies are based on profit seeking tendency, some non-profit activities are also done by these companies. Stakeholders expect companies to manage the social and environmental impacts of their operations. In response to these agitations, many organizations have adopted corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. Many of such programs are not integrated into the organization's operations but are merely taken as philanthropic gestures, public reporting through newspaper and television media so as to give the notion that they are practicing CSR. Many organizations in Bangladesh are driven by the need to make more and more profits to the detriment of all the stakeholders. Some do not adequately respond to the needs of host communities, employees' welfare, environmental protection and community development. The adoption of CSR policy should not be driven or motivated by increased profit. Rather, giving back to the society that gave to the business first should be the motivating factor. The organizations must have realized that stating CSR as one of their mission statements hold special appeal to the stakeholders. Hence, there is an increasing awareness and recognition accorded CSR by corporations. CSR as implemented by some organizations is mere superficial window-dressing. It is widely believed by many that CSR efforts are mere campaigns by organizations to promote corporate brands.

This study therefore investigates and assesses consumer attitude towards CSR practices of one of the telecommunication companies (Grameenphone Ltd.) in Bangladesh. Grameenphone Ltd. always tries to ensure that company thinks about the host country, local people and their welfare. For that it has involved with different types of social activities. Author tried to find out different factors that affect consumer attitude towards CSR practices of Grameenphone Ltd.

2.0 Literature Review

Helg (2007) noted that CSR has the potential to make positive contributions to the development of society and businesses. Drucker (1954) has found a close link between firm's profitability and its social responsible activities. He stated that "It is not enough to do well; it must also do good. But in order to "do good", a business must first "do well." Drucker's view incorporated the views of Friedman and Freeman. In recent times, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an ever-increasing and interesting field of study by researchers and practitioners. However, a complete definition of CSR is, indeed, elusive and opinions vary. Oketch (2005) defined CSR as a function that transcends but includes making profits, creating jobs and producing goods and services. Some researchers argue that it has come to mean the positive actions that a company takes to discharge its responsibilities to external stakeholders; while other definitions include financial performance as an aspect of CSR. In line with this, a wide range of behaviors are categorized under CSR including cause-related marketing, sponsoring charitable events, offering employee volunteerism programs, making charitable donations, utilizing environmental initiatives and demonstrating a commitment to health and safety issues (Maignan & Ralston, 2002). Carroll (1979) designed a four-part conceptualization of CSR that included economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic elements. Carroll model entails that all business responsibilities rely upon the economic responsibility, which includes maximizing profitability and maintaining a strong competitive position. Legal responsibilities state firm's compliance with laws and regulations while doing business. Ethical responsibilities replicate societal standards, expectations and norms that have not been specifically legislated. Finally, philanthropic responsibilities comprise actions that are in response to society's expectation that businesses be good corporate citizens. These are distinguished from ethical responsibilities in that they are of a charitable nature and, as such, a company is not considered unethical if it does not provide them (Carroll 1991). Matten and Moon (2004) posited that explicit deals with corporate policies with the objective of being responsible for what interests society while the implicit CSR is a country's formal and informal institutions that give organizations an agreed share of responsibility for society's interests and concerns. A very popular definition of CSR by Lord Holme and Richard Watts in the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's publication 'Making Good Business Sense'.....the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the local community and society at large" (www.wikipedia.com). Till today, most of the businesses in Bangladesh are family owned and first generation businesses. Businesses are involved in community development work in the form of charity without having any definite policy about the expenses or any solid motive regarding financial gains in many instances. (Mondol, 2007). It is evident that the importance of CSR in the first-world, questions regarding the extent to which corporations operating in developing countries have CSR obligations are still to be worked out. (Jamali and Mirshak, 2007). There has been increasing pressure on national and multinational corporations in Bangladesh to consider the social implications of their actions (Belal, 2001). CSR practices in Bangladesh are still in infancy. Companies are getting aware of it because being a part of global market, it is really difficult to ignore CSR standard particularly in the export sector. Most of the companies operated in Bangladesh (especially MNCs) are trying to involve directly or indirectly with CSR. Telecommunication industry plays a major role in this case. Telecommunication companies try to organize different types of corporate social activities. Grameenphone Ltd., one of the reputed telecommunication companies in Bangladesh, differentiates itself by providing superior network and participating different types of social welfare works (related to health, education, environmental and other factors). In this study the authors finds out the CSR practices of Grameenphone Ltd. in Bangladesh.

3.0 Grameenphone Ltd.

Currently there are six mobile operators in Bangladesh. Grameenphone Ltd. is one of them.

Strength: Network coverage.	Weakness: Short term defensive strategy & high call rate.
Opportunity: To get link to the upcoming technology.	Threat: Upcoming technology may not support the present technological infrastructure of this company.

Table-1: SWOT analysis of Grameenphone Ltd.

4.0 CSR of Grameenphone Ltd.

4.1 Health-

4.1.1 National Immunization DAY (NID) Campaign

GP partnering with Bangladesh Government and WHO has been conducting polio vaccination awareness raising campaign since 2007 in order to eradicate the re-emergence of polio from Bangladesh. Campaign activities include: SMS reminder, RJ endorsement (FM radio), awareness through folk songs, mobile vaccination centres, press ads and so forth. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.1.1 SMS to call for vaccination

GP was the first mobile operator sent SMS to parents & guardians of under five children reminding them to go to the nearest vaccination centers across the country to have polio vaccine. The initiative was greatly appreciated by the Ministry of Health, Bangladesh Government, World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and others. Inspired by the initiative, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) now sends letters to all the telecommunication service providers every year urging them to send SMS to all their subscribers. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.1.2 Public service announcement in two main newspapers

Grameenphone supports this effort by printing public service announcement in two of the dailies with the highest circulation and readership – The Daily Star and Prothom Alo. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.1.3 Popular folk songs

GP also runs decorated vans full of a group of “Baol Singers” across the Dhaka City Corporation during the national immunization day. These traditional folk singers create a festive mode and inspire the city dwellers to get their children to the nearest vaccination center. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.2 Every Sight Counts

Bangladesh has the highest number of blind people compared to its population. There are approximately 750,000 adults and 40,000 children in Bangladesh who are blind due to cataract or other ocular diseases that could have easily been cured with timely and proper intervention. The major challenge in eliminating blindness in Bangladesh is reaching the rural and underserved population, as the majority of country's eye-care facilities are based in towns. 80 percent of Bangladeshis who live in rural areas are almost completely deprived of eye-care services. Jointly launched in 1999 by WHO and IAPB, to eradicate blindness from the world by the year 2020. As a part of the country's mission to combat blindness, Grameenphone Ltd., in partnership with Sightsavers Bangladesh is a signatory of VISION 2020. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.2.1 Right to Sight, a global initiative

International organizes free eye camps throughout the country, in areas where eye-care services are not readily available. Grameenphone Ltd., along with Sightsavers International, organizes the eye camps in different parts of the country. Prior to the eye-camps, community-based public announcements are carried out in targeted localities to ensure optimal participation in the community. During the eye camps, two types of services are provided: free prescriptions based on necessary medical check-ups and free cataract surgery, if necessary. During the project period (2007 – 2010) around 36,327 patients received free eye-care support and 4,743 cataract surgeries being performed so far from 24 eye camps have been conducted in different parts of Bangladesh. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.3 Pilot TeleDermatology in Bangladesh

Grameenphone Ltd. is collaborating with the Telemedicine Working Group of Bangladesh to bring quality dermatology care to rural communities. In Bangladesh, approximately 30 percent of the population will suffer from a skin disease at one point during their lifetime. However, there are fewer than 300 dermatologists in Bangladesh and all of them are urban-based, leaving most rural people without access to treatment. As part of Corporate Responsibility program, Grameenphone Ltd. is bringing dermatology to rural residents through a new pilot project. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.3.1 Pilot Phase:

Grameenphone Ltd. is implementing this project at four of their Community Information Centers (CIC). These local hubs for Internet and mobile services are now host to remote, real-time patient consultations with specialized doctors. They are able to consult with a physician live with the help of Digital Imaging and Communication in Telemedicine (DICOT) as well as Telemedicine Information, Management and Education System (TIMES). The digitalized system will also provide both printed and online prescriptions and maintains a database of each consultation for future reference. Telemedicine services at CICs (4 in pilot phase) have shown an increase in accessibility and affordability of specialized consultations for the rural underprivileged community.

'Telemedicine' has successfully consulted & treated more than 1500 patients from mid February till date. The pilot phase would continue up to Q2 of 2013. We are planning to do an evaluation of this phase tentatively on July 2013. We are doing some feasibility to improve the telemedicine device to address other health issues & services. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.3.2 Focus on healthcare needs in Bangladesh

Grameenphone Ltd., being a responsible citizen of Bangladesh, is recognized for its social responsibilities especially towards the less privileged, is putting a special focus on the healthcare needs of Bangladesh. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.4 Safe Motherhood and Infant Care (SMIC)

Motherhood is celebrated as one of the most extraordinary times in a woman's life. But the reality in Bangladesh is striking. With only 13 percent of women delivering their babies with skilled attendants present, the country reports one of the highest maternal mortality rates (320 per 100,000) and infant mortality rates (52 per 1,000) in Asia (BDHS 2005). Safe motherhood is not only vital to avoid untimely and painful maternal and child deaths, but also to nurture a healthy and prosperous nation. As a result, reducing infant mortality and improving maternal health have been identified as two of the United Nations' eight millennium development goals. Grameenphone's Safe Motherhood & Infant Care Project is designed to ensure free yet quality safe motherhood and infant care services to poor mothers and their infants throughout the country. It also aims to assist in necessary infrastructure development and the expansion of basic healthcare services, especially in the hard-to-reach and remote areas. The project was launched in 2007. In partnership with Pathfinder International and through USAID's network of Smiling Sun clinics in 61 districts, free primary healthcare services are being provided by health professionals via 318 static clinics, 8000 satellite clinics and 6000 community-based health-workers across the country. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.4.1 Project Milestones

During the project period (2007-2010) a total of 1,703,767 maternal and child care services provided to economically disadvantaged mothers and infants. Patiya and Bhola clinics at the coastal belt were upgraded to emergency obstetric care centers. 10 motorized vans were provided to facilitate better patients' referral and home delivery (HD) services by skilled birth attendants (SBA). Four clinics-on-wheels are used to increase the accessibility of services in the hard-to-reach areas. (Source: Company's Website)

4.1.5 Ensuring Safe Drinking Water

Lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities are a significant barrier to improving the health and wellbeing and reducing poverty in Bangladesh. Salinity in ground and surface water, arsenic contamination of shallow aquifer, lack of aquifer and difficulties in extracting saline free water are some of the causes. Together, unclean water and poor sanitation are a leading cause of child mortality: an estimated 4,100 children die daily from diarrheal diseases, which are spread through poor sanitation and hygiene. As with many challenges in development, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by scarcities of clean water and adequate sanitation. Women are more than twice as likely as men to be responsible for water collection. On average, women in the developing world on an average walk six kilometers each day to collect water, time which could be spent in school or at work. From Grameenphone CR, their burden is relieved by introducing a SMS based solution through which if a tube well gets non-functional the caretaker will generate a SMS and send to 2765. This SMS will go to HYSAWA Head Office as well as to the local mechanics. The mechanics then come and repair the tube well and send SMS to the same port. A database is maintained at HYSAWA head office for the entire tub well installed. This contains, besides the functional status, an identification number, Installation date, Depth, Water quality (Arsenic, Iron etc.) and Caretaker's Name & mobile number. (Source: Company's Website)

4.2 Education

4.2.1 Online School

At first when the mass people of Bangladesh heard the term school they can visualize the traditional school, where the teacher is standing in front of the student and they can interact with each other. Being a socially responsible company with Education one of the centers of attention areas of Corporate Responsibility, GP found out a way to get involved through which quality education can be ensured. With this objective in mind it launched 'Online School' (pilot). Online school means a remote school is connected with a sub-urban school in Dhaka where the teacher conduct the class using video conferencing technology where the teacher and students

both the party can interact with each other. The students will also get necessary books and stuff in the online school. On 4 October, 2011 Grameenphone Ltd. signed an agreement with Jaago Foundation to launch a CR initiative named 'Online School'. At present, the Jaago Foundation has three schools for the children who are living at the slums. Two of them are at Rayer Bazaar and Banani. The third school is at (Boro Bari, Gacha para) Tongi. The pilot is taking place between the schools at Rayer Bazaar and Tongi. Under this project 80 students participate in the class in two shifts – day shift and morning shift. This initiative provides a quality education simultaneously both rural and sub-urban area. As well as the moderator who helps to operate the class, they also get the on the job training through this online school. Though we also are facing some sort of obstacles to adapt this technology, but the CR team working on it to resolve the problem. In the long run if the initiative is proved successful we are planning to implement this idea for at four Alookdeep (non-formal primary school come cyclone shelters) across the coastal areas of Bangladesh. (Source: Company's Website)

4.2.2 Scholarship

Today's children are the future of tomorrow. And it is education that opens up unlimited possibilities for them to build the foundation for a bright future. However in Bangladesh, 65% of our people live in the darkness of illiteracy, 40% of our children have never gone to school, and 93% of primary school-going students will never progress beyond primary education. Poverty is the main cause behind all this. Therefore, Grameenphone Ltd. is a part of the Grameen Shiksha Scholarship Management Program that makes it possible for the bright but underprivileged students to realize their educational endeavors. (Source: Company's Website)

4.2.3 Alokdeep: Non-Formal Primary School cum Cyclone Shelters

Cyclone SIDR, a category 4 storm, struck Bangladesh in November 2007. It first hit the offshore islands and then swept across the southern coast east to west. This caused extensive damages. More than 3.1 million people in the 28 southern districts were reported to have been directly affected by the cyclone. It has been estimated that more than 3,500 people died, with extensive damages of roads and public buildings, including the destruction and partial destruction of 4,306 educational institutions. The most affected areas include Bagerhat, Barguna, Barisal, Bhola, Gopalganj, Khalkathi, Khulna, Madaripur, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Shatkhira and Shariatpur districts. (Source: Company's Website)

4.3 Environment

4.3.1 Click Green

Climate change is widely recognized as the greatest global sustainability challenge. Its implications are far-reaching for the environment, for the people, and for the global economy. Bangladesh, though being the lowest contributor to environmental degradation, is considered to be among the worst-hit countries to the effects of climate change. In view of this, as a responsible corporate citizen Grameenphone Ltd. launched its environmental and climate change campaign Stay Green, Stay Close. Click Green is an internal initiative of this particular campaign. (Source: Company's Website)

4.3.2 Community power project-A social business approach

90 million out of 140million population in Bangladesh do not have direct access to electricity and remaining 50 million people have access but reliable and quality power is still beyond their reach. A large number of these households are situated in remote rural regions that are unlikely to get connected to the national electricity grid. This limits socio-economic development and has direct consequences at the individual level. In the exact same off-grid regions, network operators are to an increasing extent installing renewable energy equipment, such as wind turbines and solar panels, to power their base stations. The opportunity now exists for mobile network operators to provide excess electricity beyond the base station and into local communities through partnering. (Source: Company's Website)

4.3.3 Climate Change Program

Grameenphone's Climate Change Program was initiated in early 2008 with a vision for reducing carbon emission, being environment friendly and creating a momentum with the community and people. (Source: Company's Website)

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Research Design and Method of Data Collection

There are six operators in Bangladesh's telecoms industry. One of them constitutes the population of this study. Primary data were obtained from questionnaire administered to respondents across three districts of Bangladesh

(Dhaka, Comilla and Chittagong). 100 questionnaires were administered to the subscribers of this company in Bangladesh. Respondents were selected through purposive random technique. Each set of questionnaire was also divided into two segments. The first part of each questionnaire was on demographic factors such as age, years of experience, level of education and occupation. The second part bears questions on core issues in relation to CSR activities as it relates to various stakeholders. Open and close-ended questions were asked. The responses to the questions were rated on a 5-point likert scale. The respondents in the two categories were given opportunity to express other concerns and opinions in the questionnaire administered. Some of the questions asked bordered on mobile network quality, coverage and service. Respondents were also asked to rate the effect of factors on a 5-point likert scale and the factors were competition (A1), subscriber's demands (A2), government policy (A3), workers welfare (A4), organizational culture (A5), service quality (A6), environmental issues (A7), legal requirements (A8), infrastructural decay (A9) and call rate (A10) which influence consumer attitude towards CSR practices of GP.

5.2 Model Specification

5.2.1 Mathematical Model-

In the model, the adoption of CSR, which was assumed to be a function of 10 variables, is mathematically expressed as:

$$CSR = f(A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, A10) + E1$$

Where

CSR = Adoption of CSR

A1 = Competition

A2 = Subscriber's demand

A3 = Government policy

A4 = Workers' welfare

A5 = Organizational culture

A6 = Service quality

A7 = Environmental issues

A8 = Legal requirements

A9 = Infrastructural decay

A10= Call rate

E1 = Error term

The adoption of CSR is dependent variable and the listed ten factors are independent variables.

5.2.2 Graphical Model-

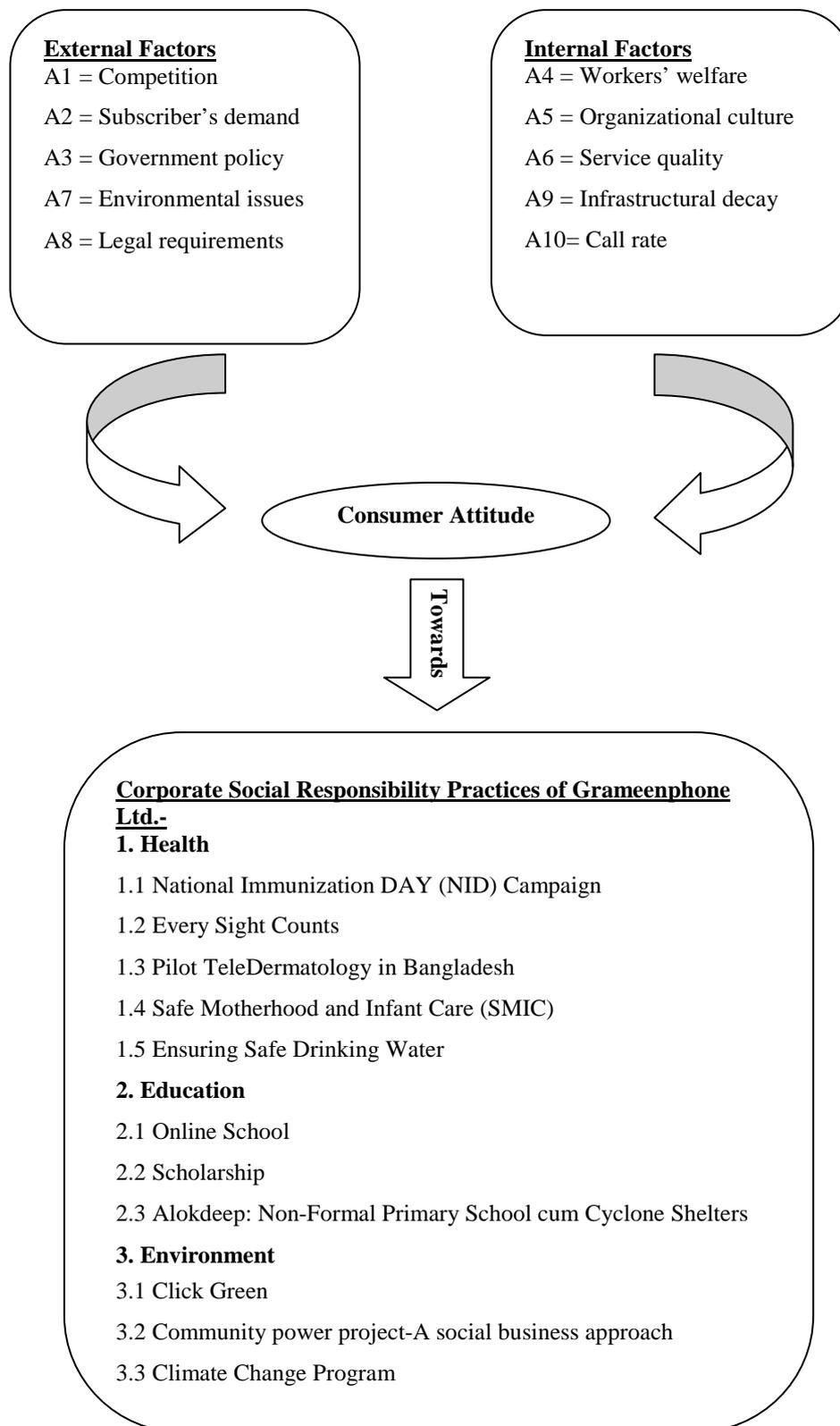


Figure: 1- Factors affecting consumer attitude towards CSR Practices of Grameenphone Ltd. in Bangladesh.

6.0 Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Category	Number	Percentage
Age	10 to 19 years	10	10%
	20 to 29 years	45	45 %
	30 to 39 years	14	14 %
	40 to 49 years	27	27 %
	Above 49 years	4	4 %
	Total	100	100 %
Educational Qualification	Under S.S.C.	2	2%
	S.S.C.	8	8%
	H.S.C.	15	15%
	Graduate	20	20%
	Post Graduate/Professional	55	55%
	Total	100	100%
Occupation	Student	51	51%
	Business	7	7%
	Government job	19	19%
	Housewife	13	13%
	Others	10	10%
	Total	100	100%
Income	Below Tk. 10,000	61	61%
	Tk. 10,000 – Tk. 20,000	14	14%
	Tk. 21,000 – Tk. 30,000	20	20%
	Tk. 31,000 – Tk. 40,000	2	2%
	Above Tk. 40,000	3	3%
	Total	100	100%

Table-2: Demographic profile of the respondents. (Source: Survey)

Marital Status	% of customers
Single	54
Married	46
Total	100

Table-3: Marital status of the respondents. (Source: Survey)

Gender	% of customers
Male	33
Female	67
Total	100

Table-4: Gender of the respondents. (Source: Survey)

7.0 Empirical findings of the study

Age	Number of respondents	Number of customers					
		Grameenphone Ltd.	Banglalink	Airtel	Robi	Citycell	Teletalk
10 to 19 years	10	5	3	1	0	1	0
20 to 29 years	45	25	6	6	3	3	2
30 to 39 years	14	2	0	2	1	3	6
40 to 49 years	27	7	2	7	5	2	4
Above 49 years	4	3	0	0	0	0	1
Total	100	42	11	16	9	9	13

Table-5: Number of customers of different Telecommunication companies among the respondents. (Source: Survey)

Name of the company	Age					
	10 to 19 years	20 to 29 years	30 to 39 years	40 to 49 years	Above 49 years	Total
Grameenphone Ltd.	3	21	2	6	1	33
Banglalink	3	13	3	4	0	23
Airtel	0	6	3	4	0	13
Robi	2	2	0	3	0	7
Citycell	2	1	0	2	2	7
Teletalk	0	2	6	8	1	17
	10	45	14	27	4	100

Table-6: Most preferred Telecommunication Company in Bangladesh from the Perspective of CSR. (Source: Survey)

Serial No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
01	Normally Grameenphone Ltd. (GP) has provided the regular flow of goods/services at right time.	57	13	16	9	5
02	GP has provided the regular flow of goods/services at reasonable price.	8	12	13	8	59
03	When a customer has a problem, GP shows a sincere interest in solving it out.	56	12	14	10	8
04	GP shows only those advertisements and statements, which are true and fair.	62	15	5	8	10
05	GP performs satisfactory corporate social activities.	67	7	6	12	8
06	GP thinks about not only profit but also health, education and environmental issues of the stakeholders.	54	17	19	4	6

Table-7: Respondents attitude towards Grameenphone Ltd.

It can be observed that GP holds 42% of the respondents as customers and among them approximately 60% (25 respondents) are from 20 to 29 years group. 33% among the respondents think that GP is the most preferred telecommunication company in Bangladesh (in terms of CSR).

8.0 Conclusion

This study is based on the data collected from only three sample districts of Bangladesh and the result may vary from other districts. Any primary data based study through pre-designed questionnaire suffers from the basic limitations of the possibility of difference between what is recorded and what is truth, no matter how carefully the questionnaire has been designed and field investigation has been done. Since obtaining the opinion of customers was the sole objective of study, the sample size was kept limited to 100 consumers of this industry in Bangladesh. The respondents were selected from the urban areas only. Though there are some limitations author tried to find out the true factors that influence consumer attitude towards CSR practices of GP in Bangladesh. Maximum respondents believe that GP is the most preferred telecommunication company in Bangladesh (in terms of CSR) and it thinks about not only profit but also health, education and environmental issues of the stakeholders.

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