

## Analyzing the Factors Affecting Long-Term Relationship between Manufacturers and Retailers

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*In a retailing environment, the relationship between retailers and manufacturer is a two-way relationship with the focus on a mutually beneficial principle. Retailers are working as a medium for these firms to make sure that products are available for consumers in any corners of the country. As a result, a manufacturer can focus more on production, marketing, and supplementary strategies to achieve their objectives. A manufacturer needs to understand the significance of retailers in reaching its business goals. The manufacturer must find out the factors that can influence to build a long-term relationship with retailer and analyze those factors. It is believed that a company should keep its distributors satisfied; in turn, distributors will help a company to achieve its objectives. Moreover, in the traditional distribution channels, the relationships between retailers and manufacturers have yet to be explored in research in Bangladesh. This study aims to fill this gap. A descriptive research method was followed to conduct the research. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data from the target population during the time period of July to September 2017. The findings suggest that proposed model is suitable to find out the components for a long-lasting relationship between manufacturer and retailers. The results provide evidence to support the hypothesized relationship and useful information for firms to devise strategies to construct a long-term relationship with its retailers.*

**Field of Research:** Marketing

### 1. Introduction

In a retailing environment, the relationship between retailers and manufacturer is a two-way relationship with the focus on a mutually beneficial principle. On one end of this relationship, retailers who have a long-term relationship with manufacturers can achieve a competitive advantage by receiving merchandise even in a short supply, favorable delivery terms, information on new and best-selling products, best prices, and advertising and markdown allowances (Chung, et. al. 2006). On the other end of the relationship, manufacturers who have long-term relationship with retailers can achieve a competitive advantage by obtaining information on best-selling products, better cooperative advertising, and special displays for their merchandise (Ganesan 1994). Smart Phone industry of Bangladesh is often dominated by both big local and international firms such as Symphony, Samsung, Walton, and others. These big manufacturers always use retailers to make their products accessible to their final consumers. Undoubtedly these retailers play a vital role in achieving manufacturers'

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business objectives. Despite political instability and harsh economic conditions in Bangladesh, the Smart Phone industry grew almost 17% over the past few years. A manufacturer can conduct its business without any assistance from retailers, only to find out an inconvenient and expensive way to conduct business. That's why both small and big companies use retailers to sell their products to the customers because they perform duties to achieve business goals at low-cost and easily for the manufacturer. The company needs to understand the importance of nurturing and continuing a long-term relationship with its retailers by keeping them satisfied. But unfortunately, despite the importance attached or attributed to relationship between a manufacturer and retailer in a number of ways, there seems to be fewer studies about this especially in the Bangladeshi context.

There are many local as well as foreign firms are producing smart phones for consumers. Retailers are working as a medium for these firms to make sure that products are available for consumers in any corners of the country. A retailer also works as a helping hand for the salesperson from manufacturer to satisfy the needs of final consumer. As a result, a manufacturer can focus more on production, marketing, and other strategies to reach their goals. A manufacturer needs to understand the importance of retailers in reaching its business goals. The manufacturer must find out the factors that can influence to build a long-term relationship with retailer and study those factors. It is almost impossible to survive without the help of retailers thus making it significant for manufacturers to keep their retailers satisfied. A belt of satisfied distributors is an extremely powerful weapon in any company's arsenal (Rolnicki, 1998). It is believed that a company should keep its distributors satisfied; in turn, distributors will help a company to achieve its objectives. Moreover, in the traditional distribution channels, the relationships between retailers and manufacturers have yet to be explored in research in Bangladesh. This study aims to fill this gap. The objective of the study is to identify the critical factors for creating and maintaining a long-term relationship between manufacturers and retailers. The study is specific only to smart phone market of Bangladesh. The paper is organized as follows, Section 2 deals with Literature review, Section 3 contains methodology, Section 4 discusses results and section 5 provides conclusion

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Long-Term Orientation**

Ganesan (1994) and Zhengyi Chen (2006) showed that a retailer's long-term orientation is the perception of interdependence of outcomes where both vendor's outcomes and joint outcomes are expected to benefit the retailers in the long term. Jesus Cambra-Fierro J. and Yolanda Polo-Redondo (2010) concluded that a long-term direction of a company is that it is willing to sacrifice a benefit in a short-term in order to receive benefits in a long term from the relationship. Retailers with a focus on a short-term orientation are only concerned with the options and outcomes of the current period; whereas retailers with a long-term orientation focus on achieving future goals will be concerned for both current and future outcomes (Zhengyi Chen 2006; Ganesan 1994). Long-term orientation focuses on a strong desire and intents to establish a long-term relationship, rather than just on the desire for probable future interaction (Zhengyi Chen 2006; Ganesan 1994). The difference between

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short-term orientation and long-term orientation can also be explained by the nature of the transaction between retailers and sellers through distribution channels (Phusit Wonglorsaichon 2004). The company with a short-term orientation only considers profits from each transaction, while companies with a long-term orientation will aim to maximize profit in various transactions. Despite the short time of a current transaction potentially affects a long-term orientation of a retailer, it is argued that it is not enough to capture a long-term orientation (Phusit Wonglorsaichon 2004). Long-term orientation refers to an orientation toward a specific vendor, not a generalized orientation toward all vendors (Zhengyi Chen 2006; Ganesan 1994).

### 2.2 Manufacturer's Attitude towards Retailers

Distributors closely evaluate the attitude of manufacturer towards them. The relationship between the manufacturer's attitude (as perceived by the distributor) and the distributor satisfaction seems clear: the more positive these attitudes are, the greater the distributor's satisfaction (Iglesias and Vazquez 2001). Manufacturer's flexibility is an important factor while negotiating in a bargaining process. A lot of manufacturers are extremely rigid in making duties and responsibilities for distributors whereas a lot of them are exceptionally flexible considering the needs of distributors (Venugopal, 2001). Andaleeb (1996) found the climate of the distribution channel (a construct that includes the leader's contemplation towards the other firms) has a positive influence on satisfying the channel members. A key factor in sustaining a profitable relationship between a manufacturer and distributor is to cooperate with distributors. The manufacturer should consider its distributors as partners, not just other businesses that work for them (Rolnicki, 1998). A manufacturer that partners with the distributors to understand their business, their customer, and the customer needs can play a critical role in helping the distributor increase their business and market share (Iglesias and Vazquez 2001). A manufacturer needs to convey all information to distributors honestly and accurately even it's painful (Rolnicki 1998). A manufacturer also needs to show interest in distributor's well-being by communicating regularly and solve any conflict that arises. It's difficult for a well-managed firm to perform successfully in the long run without regularly reviewing the performance of its channel members, as the success of the firm in meeting its objectives is dependent on how well the channel members perform (Li and Dant, 1997). A manufacturer should help its distributors to perform well in order to meet its own objectives. As a result, the manufacturer should provide easy payment terms for the distributors. Distributors frequently favor those manufacturers that have above-average payment policies (Rolnicki, 1998).

**H1a:** Manufacture's attitudes have a significant impact on Retailer's long-term orientation

**H1a0:** Manufacture's attitudes have no significant impact on Retailer's long-term orientation

### 2.3 Current Economic Results

Every business wants to make a profit to survive in the marketplace. Distributors are usually small or medium size businesses who also want to make a profit to survive and flourish in the market (Rolnicki, 1998). Research suggests that there is a link

between economic outcomes obtained by distributors and the degree of satisfaction (Geyskens, et al. 1999). The very first thing a distributor asks a manufacturer is, "How much money am I going to make with your product line?" (Rolnicki, 1998). Geyskens and Steenkamp (2000) defined retailer's economic satisfaction as "the retailer's evaluation of the economic results that stem from its relationship with the supplier". Distributors usually refer economic outcomes as rewards; such as higher sales volume, elevated profit margin, superior discounts/margins etc received as a result of a positive relationship with the manufacturer (Venugopal, 2001). A good relationship with the manufacturer helps a distributor to get the most powerful brands which in turns provides the distributor with greater sales volume.

**H2a:** Current economic outcomes have a significant impact on Retailer's long-term orientation

**H2a0:** Current economic outcomes have no significant impact on Retailer's long-term orientation

### 2.4 Dependence of the Retailer

This factor is recognized as a key element needed for retailers and vendors to achieve the desired goals. Dependence exists when one party cannot make the goals without the cooperation of the other party (McQuiston 2001). In channel relationships such as the one mentioned in this paper, dependence is identified as one firm's necessity to maintain a relationship with another firm in order to achieve a desired goal (Frazier, 1983). In this scenario, the Manufacturer's dependency on the Retailer is being focused. That is, if a channel member is highly dependent on its channel partner, the channel partner has power over the member (Emerson, 1962; and Frazier, 1983). Resource dependence theory says that an organization's survival depends largely on its ability to obtain critical resources from the external environment. These resources could be physical resources such as raw materials, semi-finished goods, waste products, by-products and unsold stocks; or nonphysical resources such as skilled and unskilled labor, administrative, financial, legal, technical and managerial staff, expertise know-how, information, reputation action etc. These resources must be essential to the organization or resources that cannot be substituted so that the other party gets a significant level of importance. (Sushil, 2014)

**H3a:** Dependence of retailer has a significant impact on Retailer's long-term orientation

**H3a0:** Dependence of retailer has a significant impact on Retailer's long-term orientation

### 2.5 Retailer's Trust in Manufacturer

Trust is a popular concept which is widely adopted in different research areas such as sociology, economics, organizational behavior, strategic management, international business, decision sciences, and marketing. Child (2001) defines trust as the willingness to rely on other partner with the belief that both parties will gain benefits from this relationship. Four definitions of trust which were often cited in the

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theory of exchange relationship: (a) Trust is a willingness to believe in an exchange partner because partner is reliable (Norapol Chinundej 2003; Moorman et al.1992); (b) The party believes that their needs will be completed in the future by the other party (Phusit Wonglorsaichon 2004; Anderson & Weitz 1990), (c) Trust is the expectation of the party about the exchange relationship when the other party would be better to cooperate and perform tasks (Dwyer et al. 1987), (d) trust is the belief that the words and the promises of a party are trustworthy and they will perform their obligations in an exchange relationship (Phusit Wonglorsaichon 2004).

**H4a:** Retailer's trust in manufacturer has a significant impact on Retailer's long-term orientation

**H4a0:** Retailer's trust in manufacturer has a significant impact on Retailer's long-term orientation

### 3. Research Methodology

This study will identify and obtain information to assess retailers' orientation toward the vendors in smart mobile phone category in Bangladesh. This study can be considered as a descriptive research, which is defined as a type of conclusive research which major objective is to describe existing phenomena (Hussey and Hussey, 1997) and it is assumed that the researchers have much prior knowledge about the problem situation ( Malhotra,2004). Target population is a total group of people from where the researcher might obtain information to meet the researcher's objectives (McDaniel and Gates, 2001). In this survey, target population will be any smart phone retailer in Dhaka city, who buy smart phones from different manufactures, dealers or vendors and sell those smart phones to ultimate consumers or end-users and who have been in mobile phone business at least for two years.

A period, retailers purchased goods from the suppliers for two years possess the long-term relationship in an initiation stage (Tuong, Linh, and Hong, 2014). The data of this study was directly surveyed from retailers who are dealing in smart phone business in Bashundhara City shopping mall, Metro shopping mall, Eastern plaza, and Suvastu shopping mall in Dhaka city. All these shopping malls have specific floors for mobile phone retailers. A non-probability judgment sampling plan was implemented in the study to distribute questionnaires to retailers. This method was used in this research because some judgment on the part of the researchers was necessary in order to make sure the "right" respondents were chosen.

A structured questionnaire was designed. The researchers used a self-administered questionnaire to collect data for the research. Self-administered questionnaire is the survey in which respondents take responsibility for reading and answering the questions. It is considered as a superior mode for minimizing bias and improving response rates (Bell, Halliburton and Preston, 2004). The effect of independent variable on the dependable variable was assessed by the 5-point Likert attitude scale. The scale rates the lowest level of agreement at 1= "Strongly Disagree", 2= "Disagree", 3= Neither Disagree or Agree", 4= "Agree" and 5="Strongly Agree". In order for the research to produce a realistic outcome, the collation of data has to be distributed over a large population. The questionnaire was distributed among the 240

respondents. The questionnaire was surveyed physically in retailer's outlet and via technological platform such as e-mail. The questionnaire was prepared in both Bengali (Native Language) and English for the convenience of the respondents. The data collection procedure took place approximately from the month of July to September 2017. In this study, both primary and secondary data was collected and used. Secondary data was collected from books, magazines, journals, newspapers and online databases via internet etc. These data are usually available, can be obtained quickly, inexpensive and supports the analysis of primary data. The primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire survey.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 170 respondents were used in the analysis and 98.23% (167 participants) comprised of male respondents and 1.77% (3 participants) comprised of female respondents. Of the respondents who participated in the survey, 140 respondents (138 male, 2 female) were in the age range of 21 to 35 years; 18 respondents (17 male, 1 female) were in the age range of 36 to 50 years; and 12 respondents (12 male, 0 female) were in the age range of 51 to 65 years.

### 4.2 Reliability Analysis

All accumulated data were analyzed using statistical software. Reliability findings (Cronbach's Alpha) of the multiple items were performed to measure the internal consistency. According to George (2003), reliability coefficient of 0.7 is acceptable, more than 0.8 is good and more than 0.9 is considered excellent. Table 1 shows that all constructs met the reliability test. Three of the variables have Alpha value in "good" range and two in "acceptable" range.

**Table 1: Reliability Analysis**

Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Retailer's perception of manufacturer's attitude	3	0.725
Dependence of Retailer	4	0.814
Retailer's trust in Manufacturer	5	0.716
Current economic outcomes	4	0.811
Long-term orientation	4	0.848

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

Statisticians suggest that before applying regression analysis, multicollinearity among explanatory variables should be checked by a researcher. Multicollinearity or collinearity is where two or more independent variables are exceptionally correlated and can have unfavorable effects on the results of multiple regressions (Haitovsky, 1969). A correlation matrix is an effective tool for getting a rough idea of the relationship between predictors (Kaur, 2015). The proposed general guideline is that, if the pair-wise or zero-order correlation coefficient between two regressors is high, more than 0.8, then multicollinearity is a serious problem (Gujarati, 2009). The solution is to drop that variable and thereafter run the regression analysis with rest of

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the variables. Another approach to check the multicollinearity is to compute the average variance inflation factor (VIF). As a rule of thumb, if the average VIF of a variable exceeds 10 which will happen if correlation coefficient exceeds 0.80, then that variable is said to be highly collinear (Gujarati and Porter, 1999). In accordance with the above guideline, all the values in the analysis, whose VIF value does not exceed 10. Hence, we can draw a conclusion that data are free from the problem of multicollinearity. In addition, the Durbin-Watson statistic was utilized to test the assumption of independent errors (autocorrelation). This statistical value between 2 or close to 2 is considered as better and Table 4 indicates the value is 1.901, which is almost near to 2 (Gujarati and Porter, 1999). As a result, the assumption has almost been accomplished. Eventually, it can be said that the model is valid and reliable.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 (\text{Manufacturer's attitude}) + \beta_2 (\text{Dependence of the retailer}) + \beta_3 (\text{Economic outcomes}) + \beta_4 (\text{Retailer's trust}).$$

$$Y = - 0.646+0.167+0.212+0.449+0.159$$

Here Y is the distributor's overall satisfaction, and  $\alpha$ , the constant.

The results in Table 2 show that the combination of Retailer's perception of manufacturer's attitude, Dependence of retailer, Retailer's current economic outcomes and Retailer's trust in Manufacturer together contributed to 45.4% effect on Retailer's long-term orientation. The  $R^2$  for the overall study on the four predictors suggests that there is a powerful effect of all four independent variables on Retailer's long-term orientation. From the table, it can be concluded that all four Independent variables have a significant effect on Dependent variable ( $p$ -value = 0.000). By analyzing the Beta values, it can be observed that Retailer's current economic outcomes is most influential for Retailer's long-term orientation with 44.9% whereas Dependence of retailer, Retailer's trust, and Manufacturer's attitude stands 21.2%,15.9%, and 16.7% respectively.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Results**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients $\beta$	t-Value	Significance	VIF
	B	SE				
Dependence of Retailer	0.212	0.074	0.533	6.057	0.000**	1.773
Manufacturers' Attitude	0.167	0.046	0.129	1.887	0.000**	1.070
Economic Outcomes	0.449	0.086	0.112	1.138	0.000**	1.546
Retailer's Trust	0.159	0.053	0.227	2.223	0.000**	1.451
<b>Other Values</b>						
Intercept (Constant)	0.646					
$R^2$	0.454					
Adjusted $R^2$	0.437					
Durbin-Watson	1.901					
<b>Note:</b> **. Significant at 5 percent level						

Analysis of variance (ANNOVA) assesses the overall significance of the model (Hoaglin & Welsch, 1978). Table 3 shows that the model is significant as  $P$  value is  $<0.05$ . Table 3 also conveys that all the independent variables have a positive

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impact on distributors' overall satisfaction. The coefficients of these variables are positive and noteworthy at 5 percent level of significance, hence rejecting H1a0, H2a0, H3a0 and H4a0.

**Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANNOVA) Results**

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	30.720	4	7.680	26.008	0.000**
Residual	36.913	125	0.295		
Total	67.633	129			

### 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to predict the factors influencing long-term relationship between manufacturers and retailers in smart phone industry of Bangladesh. A questionnaire survey was conducted based on relevant research and theories. Data was collected from 170 respondents and analyzed using statistical software. However, only four predictors were chosen to construct the research framework. Items were included for Retailer's perception of manufacturer's attitude, Dependence of retailers on manufacturers, Retailer's trust in manufacturer, and Distributor's current economic outcomes. The study indicates that all the factors are predominantly affecting a long-lasting relationship between manufacturers and retailers in smart phone industry in Bangladesh.

As an Operation or Distribution Manager for a manufacturer in the smart phone industry, it is pertinent that you keep your distribution channel strong and productive to make your products available to your customer base. One of the crucial responsibilities of a distribution manager is to make your channel members satisfied to build a long-lasting and profitable relationship. There are many factors that can influence a long-lasting relationship which has already been identified previously by many types of research. But Retailer's perception of manufacturer's attitude, Dependence of retailers on manufacturers, Retailer's trust in manufacturer, and Retailer's current economic outcomes play the most vital roles in that matter and this research gives some solid evidence to support it. It is evident in the research that Retailer's current economic outcomes is the most influential predictor and that is not a surprise because retailers are also businesses, and every business wants to make a profit. It is also evident that manufacturer's attitude, retailer's trust, and dependence of retailer on manufacturer can substantially influence retailer's willingness to form a long-lasting relationship with a manufacturer. For this reason, the Distribution Manager should be very careful about selecting the best quality retailers first and then instilling trust in them via knowledgeable and committed field sales people. Manufacturer also needs to provide easy payment terms to retailers and offer adequate commission to start a fruitful relationship. Managers should also communicate with the retailers to make sure the right information is flowing among them and always involve distributors in the decision-making process. These efforts show a positive attitude towards your retailers. The result of this study has proven the research model framework is a very effective model to measure the factors responsible for creating a long-lasting relationship between retailers and manufacturers.

Some limitations of this research must be addressed. First, the size of the current sample is modest. Although appropriate analysis procedures are used and the results are robust, it would be desirable to replicate our findings with a larger sample. Secondly, the study consisted of a single industry. Further research could also augment analysis of the effects of the different predictors by considering different industry or all the industries together. Finally, additional insight could be gained by further expanding the unit of analysis in satisfaction research and in exclusive dealing research. For example, the analysis could be broadened to include retailer's satisfaction level, commitment and loyalty of distributors to manufacturers which in turn may reveal different types satisfaction predictors. A satisfied retailer is more likely to agree to be an exclusive dealer for a manufacturer. It is believed that future studies will continue to expand the unit of analysis in satisfaction research and to consider even more complex factor.

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