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Abstract- Competition and brand war are facing new dynamics and challenges every day. So, brands need to identify the factors that can affect their brand image to achieve brand preference. The objective is to examine some factors that can impact brand preference. The sample examined here is 328 from all across Bangladesh. Data collection is done by an online Google form through the snowball sampling technique. Regression analysis is used to test the hypothesis. The finding shows a strong association of the factors with brand preference. The significance of the research is that it can help marketers to justify the elements and design their offerings accordingly. The research findings can be used in similar product strategies and may contribute to capturing customer attention.

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Factors Affecting Brand Preference for Purchasing Mobile Phones-Evidence from Bangladesh

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Abstract- **Competition and brand war are facing new dynamics and challenges every day. So, brands need to identify the factors that can affect their brand image to achieve brand preference. The objective is to examine some factors that can impact brand preference. The sample examined here is 328 from all across Bangladesh. Data collection is done by an online Google form through the snowball sampling technique. Regression analysis is used to test the hypothesis. The finding shows a strong association of the factors with brand preference. The significance of the research is that it can help marketers to justify the elements and design their offerings accordingly. The research findings can be used in similar product strategies and may contribute to capturing customer attention.**

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I. Introduction

Mobile phones are part and parcel of our modern lifestyle. Today, it has become something with which we can communicate across the world. Almost everyone uses their mobile not only for communication purposes but also as a personal assistant for an easier life. The advancement of mobile communication technologies such as wireless internet, MP3 players, and GPS navigation systems has opened up a new horizon of innovation that is constantly adapting to changing consumer needs (Odia & Adekunle, 2020). This inevitably brought fierce competition among the various mobile phone brands available in the market. Every day, a new phone is introduced with more unique features and technologies. Because of this competition, consumers are availed of a wide variety of mobile phones. This also created a dilemma among consumers about which mobile phone best suits their needs the most. This problem of choice can be defined as a brand preference (Kumari & Kumar 2016).

The consumer has different values, perceptions, and behavior patterns due to various environmental influences. Demographics, leisure habits, health factors, and lifestyle have a significant role in affecting the buying behavior of a customer. Research helps to track cultural shifts that might suggest new ways to market and sell products to consumers. Analysis of different cultural lifestyles also provides a better understanding of products and customers' preferences.

A brand can be defined in various ways. Phillips explained a brand as something like a term, symbol, or a combination of a number or elements to identify and differentiate the product of any seller (Kotler & Keller, 2006) while Keller mentioned a brand as "the sum of all marketing mix elements" (Keller, 2003). We can also define a brand as any characteristic or attribute that distinguishes one seller from another. A brand is a tool through which a firm's identity can be well established by differentiating the offerings and building a sustainable image in the customer's mind (M. Tanveer et al., 2021). A brand also creates a specific association in the target customer's mind (X. Wu et al., 2020).

The word "brand choice" is what we use to evaluate consumer preference for any brand. So, this term is used to calculate the demand level of a brand in comparison with the other brands (M. Tanveer et al., 2021). Globalization is transforming the whole world into a single market. Prior to liberalization, Indian consumers showed a distinctly stronger affinity for imported items and "foreign brands." However, after two decades of liberalization, the Indian apparel market is flooded with brands made in foreign countries.

II. Literature Review

Branding is not a new concept. It was evident that the ancient brick-makers in Egypt used to draw symbols on bricks to identify their bricks (A. Zia et al., 2021). A brand is meant to identify the products of a seller. Brands typically consist of elements such as the brand name, image, logo, design, packaging, and promotional activities. Brand choice or brand preference means that consumers' decisions differ from brand to brand. Consumer brand preference is begetting brand loyalty, which is repurchasing the same brand for an extended period (R. Donnelly et al., 2021). Brand loyalty means a consumer prefers a brand among competing brands (Keller, 2003).

The brand choice depends on the performance of the products. It also depends on psychological and objective factors (F. Quoquab et al., 2020), and understanding the different sorts of consumers is crucial (J. Vesalainen et al., 2020), apart from the usage of products and personality (Coelho et al., 2020). Before 2010, Nokia was the market leader in the Asian subcontinent and worldwide. Nevertheless, a rivalry

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emerged in the Asia-Pacific region between other brands like Micromax, Nexian, and I-Mobile, which captured Nokia's market share. In the region, Android-powered smartphones have also become more popular. Although Nokia introduced the Lumia Smartphone, it was not enough to cover the huge loss in revenue from Symbian-based smartphones over the next few months. Recently, in this region, the top 10 manufacturers were Samsung (20.6%), Nokia (9.5%), Apple Inc. (8.4%), LG (4.2%), Huawei (3.6%), TCL Communication (3.5%), Xiaomi (3.5%), Lenovo (3.3%), ZTE (3.0%) and Micromax (2.2%) (Kaur, 2015). According to some research in the early nineties, companies paid enormous attention to analyzing and assessing the factors responsible for affecting consumers' choices associated with purchasing any brand (R. Donnelly et al., 2021). It was also evident that there were several factors that pressurize consumers to prefer any particular brand (Odia & Adekunle, 2020).

When it comes to consumer behavior, we can define it in various ways. Consumers' activities during possessing, consuming, and disposing of any product are known as "consumer behavior," and mostly, consumer behavior is affected by various environmental and individual causes (Blackwell et al., 2006). (Chowdhury & Rahman, 2013) identified the relationship between demographic variables and brand preference. They elucidated some attributes that impact consumer choice and the reasons behind young consumers' giving special importance to some particular factors in the Chittagong metropolitan city.

Because of their quick switching attitude, young respondents place less emphasis on attributes such as durability, price, others' advice, and opinion. Consumer preference can be analyzed through the classical five-step (need–information search–evaluation of alternatives–purchase–post-purchase evaluation) problem-solving paradigm or by inspecting the succession from a product class to brand selection (Dorsch et al., 2000). Some independent factors affect consumers' choice of mobile service providers. So, literature regarding various factors affecting these independent factors was reviewed.

Two studies by Karjaluoto and his team (H. Karjaluoto et al., 2005) investigated factors affecting mobile phone consumer choice through focus group interviews of graduate students. They identified seven factors: price, multimedia, design, brand and basic properties, innovative services, outside influence, and reliability. Again, they investigated whether the factors of call quality, brand image, handset, income level, and subscription duration affected subscriber choices in Korea.

a) Price

Price can significantly impact consumers' purchasing decisions as this is a factor on which consumers rely on their judgment about any product (M. Tanveer et al., 2021). So, the price should be analyzed and set to encourage a purchase. It was suggested by (Ittaqullah, 2020) that consumers are aware of price differences. Additionally, these variances have an impact on how customers see the company's goods and services, their sense of assurance, and how frequently they purchase.

b) Quality

Product quality means the degree to which a product performs according to customers' desire for its performance and is undoubtedly an essential factor in deciding on a product (M. Tanveer et al., 2021). It indicates the evaluation of actual performance and anticipated performance made by customers based on their perception (Carpenter et al., 2006).

c) Unique Characteristics

People prefer smartphones with newer features, and their decision depends on these innovative features (Petersen et al., 2015). (Barak & Gould, 1985) detected that consumers of the younger generation prefer stylish goods more than older people. Young consumers are more interested in new features, and they seek information. They become more confident, are powered by information, and are transferred into opinion leaders, leading to brand switching (Szmigin & Carrigan, 2001). (Macmuda & Hidayatb, 2012) detected four crucial factors: price, size, and shape, new technology features, and brand name. They also analyzed the impact of these factors on consumers' buying behavior. They found that customers value new technology features as the most critical factor in purchasing decisions.

d) Usability

(Mack and Sharples, 2009) argued that ease of use is an essential determinant, and features, aesthetics, and cost are other factors that have determined the choice of mobile phone brand. Besides, Chandra & Kumar (2012) found price, quality, and style functions as the most influential factors.

e) Brand image

(Sata, 2013) studied in Ethiopia, specifically Hawassa town, and found that the first and most important factor is the brand quality and user-friendliness of the mobile phone. Similarly, (Das, 2012) administered the survey method on factors affecting purchasing behavior of young customers towards mobile handsets in coastal districts of Odisha, India. The study showed that a handset of a reputed brand, smart look, advanced features, and user-friendliness influence young consumers' choices.

f) Promotional Activities

(Zephania, 2020). studied a variety of marketing strategies used by marketers to get customers' attention and recognition and to identify the role these strategies

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play in the consumer buying process. As a result, a family's income, advertising, and education level were all factors in purchasing a mobile phone. Prasilowati et al., (2021) argued that sales promotions positively impact consumer buying behavior.

III. Data and Methodology

Sampling: For analyzing the above factors and their influence on brand preference, a sample size of 350 was determined to represent the possible accuracy of representation.

Data Collection and Measurement: Data was collected electronically by conducting an online survey by distributing Google Forms through social media. Five hundred (500) questionnaires were distributed, and around 350 were answered and returned in 3 months. Three hundred twenty-eight (328) of them were usable.

Hypothesis: the hypothesis for the research is –

H1: Brand preference is directly affected by brand image.

IV. Results and Discussion

a) Respondent Profiles

Age			Gender			Family Income		
Years	Frequency	Percentage		Frequency	Percentage	Monthly Income Level	Frequency	Percentage
15-20	78	23.8%	Male	178	54.3%	Below 30,000	65	19.9%
20-25	75	22.9%	Female	150	45.7%	30,000-50,000	87	26.5%
25-30	110	33.5%				50,000-70,000	102	31.1%
30-35	65	19.8%				70,000 or more.	74	22.5%

Respondents in this context roughly represent both genders. From 15 to 35 years old, the respondents in this study reflect a broad age spectrum. Today, even youngsters in school or college choose the phone brands they wish to use. However, it may be predominantly purchased for them by their parents. The respondents' or their families' average income is over 30,000, and 80% have incomes that are higher than that.

b) Analysis of Frequency

Table 1: Continuous improvement in quality represents a good brand image

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%) Valid	Percentage (%) in total
Valid	Strongly disagree	26	7.9	7.9	7.9
	Disagree	33	10.1	10.1	18
	Neutral	15	4.6	4.6	22.6
	Agree	112	34.1	34.1	56.7
	Strongly Agree	142	43.3	43.3	100
Total		328	100	100	

Continuous improvement is the conviction that a constant stream of carefully carried out improvements will have transformative effects. A company's brand image is more than a logo representing a company, product, or service. Today, it consists of various connections that customers draw from all their interactions with business companies. Most business organizations don't consider their brand image until there is an issue with the perception they are creating. Brand image is a critical factor in why most company ventures fail. The study also reveals that most respondents view quality improvement as vital. They like companies that often provide new designs, features, and software. Therefore, businesses must continually enhance their brand image.

Table 2: Good brands mean easy-to-purchase and service facilities

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%) Valid	Percentage (%) in total
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Disagree	26	7.9	7.9	13.4
	Neutral	20	6.1	6.1	19.5
	Agree	135	41.2	41.2	60.7
	Strongly Agree	129	39.3	39.3	100
Total		328	100	100	

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Consumers are given reasons by brands to select their goods or services. A firm will undoubtedly attract a sizable number of devoted clients if it expresses a clear brand promise and consistently fulfills it over time. Strong brands are frequently seen by customers as "shortcuts" when making purchases. A consistent and clear offering and a positive brand experience put the customer at ease because they anticipate what will happen each time they engage with the brand. Good brands ensure service facilities like showing appreciation, collecting customer feedback, sending product suggestions, staying connected, supporting your clients, creating a complaint section, reviewing requests, and asking for recommendations. Obviously, to improve brand image, the purchasing process and service must be simple and accessible. Respondents inquire about the presence of brand showrooms and service facilities in their neighborhood.

Table 3: Innovative features play an important role in a brand's image

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%) Valid	Percentage (%) in total
Valid	Strongly disagree	22	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Disagree	24	7.3	7.3	14
	Neutral	18	5.5	5.5	19.5
	Agree	145	44.2	44.2	63.7
	Strongly Agree	119	36.3	36.3	100
Total		328	100	100	

Brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand image, and brand leadership are some characteristics of brand equity that have been dramatically impacted by product innovation. High-quality, innovative products that promote a powerful brand image leads to brand trust. The investigation has shown that brand image can only be achieved with innovative product characteristics, and respondents have highlighted this, particularly among younger generations.

Table 4: Promotional activities attain a good brand image

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%) Valid	Percentage (%) in total
Valid	Strongly disagree	36	10.9	10.9	10.9
	Disagree	33	10.1	10.1	21
	Neutral	19	5.9	5.9	26.9
	Agree	153	46.6	46.6	73.5
	Strongly Agree	87	26.5	26.5	100
Total		328	100	100	

Making sure that consumers are aware of the existence and position of products is the ultimate focus of promotion. Promotion is also used to remind customers why they want to buy a product and convince them that it is superior to similar items on the market. Their impacts include the creation of a brand, expansion inside your target market group, the identification of new secondary markets, the building of client loyalty, and the defense against rivalry. Most respondents agree that promotional efforts should increase brand preference more directly and successfully.

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard error	F value	Sigma
1	.727	.528	.514	.599	37.238	0.000
Dependent variable- Brand preference based on good brand image Predictors (Constant) - 1. Quality improvements, 2. Innovative features, 3. Ease of use and servicing facility, 4. Promotional initiatives						

Here we can see that the estimated R value is significantly high which indicates that the independent variables can exert a significant level of variation on the dependent variable. More than 70% variation is evident in the analysis of collected data. It supports that the theory is plausible and true. The F value is 37.238, and as a higher F value denotes a greater connection between variables, we can accept that brand image is positively associated and affected by the degree of effort firms put on continuous improvement of quality, bringing innovation, reaching customers and also communicating them through appropriate promotional initiatives.

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V. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The data analysis shows that the majority of respondents strongly agreed with the statements supporting the significance of quality improvement, innovative features, usability, and promotional initiatives for developing a favorable brand image and, consequently, brand preference. To capture client preferences in this dynamic competitive environment, businesses must concentrate on these characteristics. Customers like brands with high-performing products and a positive brand reputation, which can increase customer happiness and repurchase propensity. In order to build the brand and actively manage sales traffic, it is essential to emphasize the need for these facilities to be strengthened. The study focused on a small number of variables, but as customers' tastes change quickly, more variables may come into play in the future. Future studies may be conducted in that area to find other characteristics or aspects that may affect the brands that customers choose.

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