



Research Article

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Retail Store Choice Criteria in the Overcrowding of Retail Stores Neighbourhood: A Study on Grocery Retail Customers at Sylhet City, Bangladesh

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Abstract: This paper aims to find out the criteria by which a customer/consumer chooses a grocery retail store in the congestion of retail stores. This article consists of various sections describing the problem, its background, research objective and literature review. The data and analysis section describes in detail the variables identified how they are measured and prepared for analysis. Then the next section illustrate all the study analysis findings and what we have conclude our research. This research has been conducted on Sylhet city within 309 grocery retail customers who purchase their household items daily, biweekly, weekly or monthly basis. The collected data were processed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 to get output in simple statistical tool: mean, cross tabulation and logistic regression. The output was analyzed objectively to find various information regarding customers' choice criteria of retail store. Among retail store criteria convenient location is important to 38.5% and very important to 43.7% respondents. 83.30% respondents choose the retail store which has good store inside and outside atmosphere. Out of 309 respondents 220 were male and 89 were female. Female respondents significantly choose the store which store has varieties of products with different price brand. It means so that they can purchase their expected products from various alternatives and the best one in terms of price and quality. All of the respondents irrespectively male and female whatever their profession and income expect ethical retailer. Customer also choose store with the crowd. It implies that customer believe crowd in a store is a positive attribute of a retail store.

Keywords: Grocery Retail Store, Store Choice, Store Attributes, Customers, Household.

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BACKGROUND

Retailing is one of the biggest industry ever in the world. Due to some advantages its popularity is increasing day by day in business society. In recent decades it is seen that grocery retailing is contributing both in national as well as global economy in many ways. Developing countries are facing emerging competition in retailing. Moreover, being rapid growth grocery retail store is having different shapes and format based on the demand of retail customers (Leszczyc *et al.*, 2000). Most of the retail products are identical and the features of stores are alike. Furthermore, customers require many factors to consider selecting retail store. As today's customers are very much savvy and smart in purchasing their daily needed commodities they are also sensitive in selection of retail store as well. This study is on the general type grocery retail store except super store or department store and super shop in nature. These store are competing with each other by maintain different attributes. But the matter is which attribute is how much important to what customers based on their gender, education, occupation, income and frequency of retail store visit. Retailers will have to take in account what things customers drive to select a retail store and to look structural modification, with some of the modifications being replicated by consumer preference about when and where to purchases. As a result super store, department store and super shop have grown substantially for concentrated target customers why with a view to survive and prosper in the competitive business environment

(Zulqarnain *et al.*, 2015). The retail industry, in particularly persist. But traditional retail stores are still popular and demanded by the common people for their demographics convenience (Jhamb & Kiran, 2012). It is noticed that developed countries are getting exponential growth and developing countries are getting rapid in developed countries and rapid enlargement in retail industry along with emerging competition. Among these stores different formats are attributed as the new scenerio to compete with each other (Leszczyc *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, consumers take an account many factors before selecting a retail store.

Problem Statement

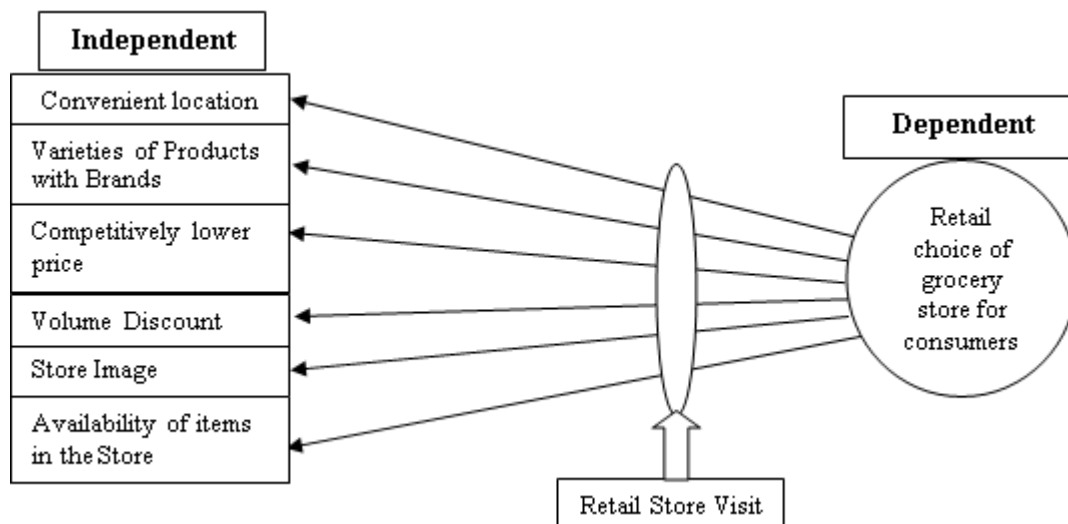
What are the factors that affect to choose a grocery retail store for retail purchase for ultimate consumers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Now, consumers are very much aware choosing retail store therefore, growing importance of ascertain brand identities rather than in a minute opening. In consideration of how does a customer chose a retail store and what features stimulate them to select a retail store among the congestion of competitive retail industry will be a significant contribution to retail industry as the changing demand for retail customers. The retail sector is particularly getting structural changes continuously. Among these changes some of the changes are reflected by the customer and beneficial for the ultimate

customers in terms of customers make their purchase. Diverse store layout are derived from the combination of different price, varieties, brand and customer service and so forth (Solgaard & Hansen, 2003). Consumers decide their retail outlets on the basis of own preferences, purchasing behavior or patterns, competitive price offer and other related attributes which are important to them. An insight study in Pakistan found that store selection does not depend on income level, education level, size of the household size and pattern of store visit. (Mirza, 2010) found in her study that occupation, gender and age have no influence on retail store preference on the contrary, household income, household size, profession and level of education have good impact on retail store selection. She described her results differed from (Prasad & Reddy, 2007) who found age, income level, household size, profession, education level does influence on store selection. Normally grocery retail store sells daily needed commodity which purchased by the customers as usual basis. Purchasing attributes varies from culture to culture. Since, easy to put and some attractive advantages can enjoy a traditional retail store the number of stores are increasing everywhere as their demand. Retail store has made our daily lives easy and comfortable whereas we are passing our busy lives. Retailers are collecting customers' daily needed commodity from their suppliers (wholesaler, distributor/dealer or manufactures) and selling these items at our convenient location. So, retailers' activities are very much significant in our society. Retailer's location should be accessible to the actual and potential target group of customers (Palma *et al.*, 2003). Contemporary study by academics such as Kardes *et al.* (2011:71); & Lusch *et al.* (2011:101) store image is defined basically as a set of features considered mainly by customers. Saraswat *et al.* (2010:168) also redefined store goodwill as the figurative, experimental look of the approach in which customers perceive or think about a store. A universal strand in these classification is that store picture pertains to the insight of patrons about a particular store. A study on Emerging retail store format and attribute on convenient shopping by Deepika Jhamb and Dr (MS) Ravi Kiran found that Customers choose grocery retail store because of retail formats, varieties of product carries of different brands and quality product. Traditional grocery stores usually sells daily needed commodities such as varieties of rice, lentils, edible oil, salt atta, flour, different dry food and some also sell vegetables such as potato, onion, garlic type spices. This is a common attributes of general type retail store rather than super store or department store. Another study on customer satisfaction of retail store (Rana *et al.*, 2014) found that convenient location, product quality, responsive of sales people which is termed as customer

service competitive price is significantly related to choose the retail store. So, retailers who are operating retail store in the competitive markets especially in the congestions of retail stores need to be attentive to the convenient location, competitive price offering, quality product selling and customer service as well. Presently traditional retail stores are competing with modern super store type retail store where customers expect more quality product, more varieties, more customer service overall more satisfaction (Huda *et al.*, 2011). Customers expect retailer's location will be easily accessible so that they can perform their purchasing comfortably. Convenient location enjoy some competitive advantages over the market. Customers can visit frequently when the location of retailer is convenient. Retailers add placement value to the customers (Barry & Evans, 2007). It is too difficult for an ultimate customers to purchase 2kgs of flour or 1 pound of snacks food. Retailer has taken this responsibility to make it available to final consumers. To do this well, retailers decorate their store with different types of products and services. They try to attract their customers. But, ultimate customers have a choice criteria to select a retail store to shop in. Retailers have to identify the customer's choice set of a retail store. Convenient location is one of the important factors to make retail purchase especially grocery items (Chaiyasoonthorn & Suksa-ngiam, 2011). Grocery industry recently is powerfully determined by price competitiveness. Price is such a strong variables to the customers especially to the retail store only 2.tk difference of the similar item a customer may leave the store brand forever being dissatisfied. So, this is huge cost for the trailers (Baltas & Papastathopoulou, 2003). Convenient location means customer's nearby store where usually customers reside. Because they can purchase their required products and services comparatively low effort. Normally grocery type retail store is located at the residential area where resident customers can purchase their daily needed commodity easily. When a retail store is at a busy commercial place convenient location is considered as less time consuming and less effort store (Ali *et al.*, 2010). Customers make their retail purchase decision considering convenient location of the store. Time pressured customers are also attracted by convenient location. They search for retail store near at their hand. Retail store competes in perfect competition market because of low investment, low human resource and low effort. This is why this industry face high competition with the rivals. Relatively, moderate type retail store (smaller than super shop but larger than smaller store) is able to attract passersby who are the actual and potential customers of the store (Chamhuri & Batt, 2013).



There are some retail store where customers can purchase their essential products browsing inside the store. In this store products are displayed in different shelves and desks of the store. Here customers can buy their product selecting the best one with the help of sales person. On the other hand there are some store stores are smaller in size where customers are to purchase their needed items standing outside of the store. Customers ask for the required products then sales person delivers it to the customers if it is available in the store. So, size of the store affect in catching the eyes of the customers to shop in. According to Bangladesh Supermarket owners Association (BSOA) customers expect hassle- free, comfortable environment to complete their retail shopping. So, store inside and outside atmosphere is considerable factors of the retailers (Kashem, 2012). Customers feel bothering when pedestrians push or jerk during purchasing products standing outside of the store. This is one of the outside atmospheres of the retail store. Sufficient lights, fans/air-conditions are also expected by the inside store customers so that they can complete shopping happily. Inside or outside atmosphere also affects customers' amount of purchasing. Because, customers may be agitated by the pedestrian or pedestrian may be disturbed by the customers when the store is very much close to the foot path. The retail store culture of our country is to occupy full space in front of the store which create obstacle to the passers-by. As a result customers think about the next store of the area where he/she can buy without any type of disturbance (Jacobsen & Granzau, 2015). When a retailer put a beautiful name to the store customers can perform word of Mouth based on its positioning on behalf of the store. The retail store name which has a good meaning, the name which is able to create good image to the customer's mind, the name which is easy to articulate and the name which is matched to the culture are known as good name to the customers. These help retailers to capture customers' attraction to their store (Wel *et al.*, 2012). Customers' expectation to a retailer to get product promptly asking for the product. Sometimes customers may have hurry to get the product. If retailer fails to

deliver the product promptly busy customer's level of satisfaction may be decreased. As a result retailer will lose some of its customers which ultimately cause to decrease the revenue. Customers feel bothering when retailer keep the customers waiting for long time. Customer switch to another retailer due to the delay of product delivery (Palma *et al.*, 2003). Good image of a retail store create a good number of retail customers. Good image /positive image is the combination of different features of the retail store such as quality products sold, reasonable price or discount on total amount purchase, good customer service, ethics and so forth. Image is a very much sensitive issue of retail business especially when it is daily needed commodity. Always selling low quality items destroy the image of the retailer. Traders should perform image build up activities to attract more and more customers (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). In spite of this retailers can differentiate their offerings providing customer service. Sufficient lighting, fragrance, hygienic environment, comfortable inside atmosphere, employees' eagerness to serve, soft music system etc. can be good differentiation facto in retailing grocery products. Mentioned customer services increase the level of customer satisfaction to the retailers. Satisfied customer more likely to be loyal and make sure to repeat purchase (Philip *et al.*, 2013).

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to explore to which criteria people provide more importance in selection of a grocery retail store with special reference to Sylhet city. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To find out the attributes of retail store selection criteria of customers.
- To find out the professional effect to choose a retail store.
- To find out which criteria of retail store are more important to male and which criteria are more important to female.
- To recommend some effective suggestions to retailers about store choice criteria of consumers.

Rationale of the Study

This research is significantly important to the traditional retail industry. This research will benefit the grocery retail store owners to understand the criteria customers choose for a retail store. Customer may choose the next store due to the attractiveness. So, store owners will consider to redesign or reposition his/ her store criteria that customer provide more importance to select a retail store. Moreover, the traders who are thinking to put a retail store will be proactive about the retail store selection criteria by the customers.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive analytical research conducted by nonprobability type convenient sampling. To conduct this research our data has been collected based on primary data. To collect primary data a structured open ended questionnaire consists of 25 questions has given to the sample of respondents to provide valuable data. Data has been collected from those respondents who are involved with household grocery shopping. The data collection area was Sylhet metropolitan area. The questionnaire was distributed to 378 targeted respondents. 318 respondents of them have returned their questionnaire with their answers. 9 of them were cancelled due to outlier and incomplete answers. Data were processed through SPSS version 19. The outputs were analyzed objectively with the judgments of researcher. Several recommendations were made according to the findings for survival and growth of retail store.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

To conduct this research we have gone through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 using raw data we got various significant data.

Table 1(A): Demographic characteristics of target sample:

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	220	71.20%
Female	89	28.80%
Total	309	100.00%

Table 1(B): Demographic characteristics of target sample:

Profession	Frequency	Percent
Service	118	38.18%
Business	86	27.83%
Student	105	33.98%
Total	309	100%

General findings from data analysis show that 82.2% (important 38.50% & very important 43.70%) respondents prefer shopping grocery items from convenient location whatever their profession or level of income. As it is daily needed commodity and most of the products are identical, so customers prefer nearby store to purchase items. Store inside and outside atmosphere

is important to 80.30% (important 35.30% & very important 45.00%) respondents. It means that customers prefer good environment of the retail store to purchase. Store atmosphere attracts the customer from various alternative stores in the market area. Customers' expectation is reflected in customer service question. 79.5% (important 23.8% and very important 55.7%) respondents expect better customer's service than the elsewhere. As retail store's most of the products are identical and no variation in price and quality, only better customer service can be the important tool to differentiate the store. Customer service such as free shopping bag, fan, indispensable lighting, assistance in choosing an item and alternatives. Promptness in answering customers' query etc. are expected by as usual customers. Almost 90% (important 24.3% & very important 65.7%) respondents choose the store carrying good mannerism of sales persons in the store. Cordiality creates goodwill of the store which ultimately bring back more customers to the store. Some retailers provide volume discount which is a small portion of money is lessen from total amount from the customers. This type of store is important to 20.7% and very important to 58.6% (Total 79.3%). A little bit decrease or discount in retail store can increase the total number of customers as a whole in a particular store.

The researchers are concerned to find out the customers under survey of different people their retail store preference criteria among the congestion of grocery type retail stores neighborhood. From cross tabulation analysis we found, there is a positive relationship with sex and store size (contingency coefficient value is 0.092). Bar chart of cross tabulation shows that more than 80% male respondents consider bigger store importantly for their shopping. Because, bigger store ensures good inside atmosphere and variety of products. Sales' people good mannerism (contingency coefficient vale is 0.077) is liked by all professionals irrespectively service (80%), business (more than 70%) and students (near about 60%). When a customer enters into a store then he/she likes to be treated as valuable customer to the store sales people. Good mannerism of store employees deploys the reputation of the business which ultimately attracts the customers. Easy traffic condition on way to the store (contingency coefficient vale is 0.091) is another important variable considered by both male and female for their store selection. More than 80% male and more than 70% female prefer easy way to go to retail store. Near about 80% respondents both male and female (contingency coefficient value is 0.083) are loyal to their store for grocery retail purchasing. As we found that customers prefer convenient location (82.2%) to purchase their daily needed commodities so, store loyalty affects them for shopping. Loyal customers are the valuable asset to the retailer for their business survival and business growth in the competitive retail congestion market.

From logistic regression analysis we found that female respondents significantly prefer the store which is full of varieties of products with different price and different brands. Variables in equation table we see (Sig 0.015). It means respondents who are female like to purchase their grocery items from the store which contains varieties of goods along with different price brand. From regression analysis we also see that female respondents significantly (sig 0.044) prefer volume discount store. Simply, it indicates that discount from total amount of purchase is important to the female customers. This attributes of the store encourage customers to shop their frequently. As a result retailers can differentiate themselves by offering volume discount to the customers. By using this strategy they (retailers) can obtain loyal customers. In the question of ethics of retailer both male and female expect ethical behavior of retailers. Female respondents significantly (sig 0.018) prefer the stores that maintain ethics properly. In the question of ethics we mean ethics in price, quality, weight, expiry products and any type of fraudulence. Store which is crowded with customers are preferred by female respondents (sig 0.004). Crowdie store represents that this store is popular to the customers in compare to other stores in the same market area. Crowdie in the store customers take it positively. It indicates this store is full of varieties of goods as customers' needs and wants. They store products with huge volume for customers' requirements so that customers can't be refused by asking any item of products. It is the strength of a particular store. Conducting nominal regression analysis we have some findings. In the question of varieties products with different priced brand people from all profession (business, student and service people) prefer retail stores which have varieties of products with different price brand (nominal regression respectively sig 0.093, 0.069 & 0.093). It denotes that all types of customers in terms of profession like to shop which is full of varieties of products related to different price and brand. In the question of comparatively lower price, people from the entire profession like lower price given store (sig 0.095, 0.083, 0.095). Why? Because today's customers are very much price sensitive beyond their profession and income level. Price acts as a significant differentiator in retail industry. Business people, student and service people are attracted by the store containing attractive decor and surroundings (sig 0.090, 0.054, 0.094). It represents all types of customers like better decorated store with nice surroundings. So, attractive decoration and surrounding somehow add value to a retail store in customer's perspective.

CONCLUSION

The nature of this research is both qualitative and quantitative and interpretive approach which have been followed throughout in the research. This article facilitates us to identify and analyze the way different attributes like convenient location, varieties of products at different price brand, customer service, and store inside and outside atmosphere and ethics of retailer affect

people to choose a grocery store when they select for purchasing. It builds up a better understanding of consumers' attitude and behavior and the attributes they take into account to select a retail store. It is very important in present competitive market structure to understand what customers need and are to deliver them not only appropriate products and services but also suitable and right benefits from customers' view point for superior shopping practice. This article will help retail store owners especially grocery in understanding what attributes consumers give importance when choosing a retail store. By coming cross at the survey data and its analyzed result a retailer can make effective decision on what retail strategies should be taken to catch the attention and retention of more customers in competitive market.

Limitations of the Study

The current study has some limitations which should be considered. First, the sample size is 309 and the respondents were only from metropolitan area. As such it is important to note that this study is not entirely representative of all region of the country. Secondly, as it is non-probability convenient nature of sampling and the limitations in terms of sample size, generalizability of the findings must be treated with carefulness. Thirdly, this study is based on custom-made questionnaire which is originally designed and intended for purposes and perspective that differ from those of the study. Finally we acknowledge the general limitations that are associated with the quantitative designed as used in the study.

Further Research

Additional studies can be done focusing on this research to get further in depth analysis of consumer buying behavior and retail market. Since the study focuses on traditional grocery type retail store, future studies could be extended on the purchases of super store, super shop. Second, similar studies could be conducted that include other area other social class and lifestyles.

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APPENDICES

Sample of a Questionnaire

This questionnaire (based on customer’s choice criteria of grocery retail store) is designed to serve my academic purpose. Your information providing will help me to perform my task which will not be used for other purpose.

Consumer Demographics

Sex:	(1): Male	(2): Female
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Profession:	(1) Service	(2) Business	(3) Students
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Level of income				
Below 15,000 tk.	16,000-25,000 tk.	26,000-35,000 tk.	36,000-45,000 tk.	Above 46,000 tk.

Level of your education	Below SSC (1)	SSC-HSC (2)	Graduate (3)	Post Graduate and above (4)
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Please indicate type of your Purchase:

Type of your retail store visit	
Daily	(1)
2-3 times per week	(2)
Once per week	(3)
Once every two weeks	(4)

Please, Show your level of importance putting tick (√) mark in the following criteria of grocery retail store:

Sl. No.	Retail Store criteria	Level of importance				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Retail Store size					
2.	Convenient location with the similar items					
3.	Store inside and outside atmosphere					
4.	Promptness in product delivery					
5.	Customer service (free shopping bag, fan, light etc.)					
6.	Sales person’s mannerism					
7.	Varieties of product with different brand					
8.	Credit benefit					
9.	Store image					
10.	Knowledgeable sales persons about the items and alternatives					
11.	Customer caring (Listening customers’ opinion & complaints)					
12.	Availability of items in the store					
13.	Traffic conditions on way to the store					
14.	Comparatively lower price than others					
15.	Quality of products with relevant price					
16.	Volume discount (a small portion less from total)					
17.	Assistance in choosing an item and alternatives					
18.	Size of the store sales person					
19.	Store loyalty					
20.	Easy to access in the store					
21.	Ethics of retailer					
22.	Attractive decor and surroundings					
23.	Refund /return policy					
24.	Store name					
25.	Crowded with customers					

Thanks

Statistical Output

Table 1: Importance of retail store size as choice criteria distributed by sex group
Crosstab

Count

		Sex		Total
		male	Female	
Q1	Not important	11	4	15
	Less important	22	11	33
	Neutral	52	14	66
	Important	85	39	124
	Very important	50	21	71
Total		220	89	309

Source: Field survey conducted on October-December, 2017

Table 2: Importance of retail store size as choice criteria distributed by profession group
Crosstab

Count

		Profession			Total
		Service	Business	Student	
Q1	Not important	7	5	3	15
	Less important	5	16	12	33
	Neutral	20	10	36	66
	Important	50	44	30	124
	Very important	36	11	24	71
Total		118	86	105	309

Table 3: Importance of retail store location as choice criteria distributed by sex group

Crosstab				
Count				
		Sex		Total
		male	Female	
Q2	Not important	1	1	2
	Less important	15	2	17
	Neutral	33	3	36
	Important	82	37	119
	Very important	89	46	135
Total		220	89	309

Table 4: Importance of retail store location as choice criteria distributed by profession group

Crosstab					
Count					
		Profession			Total
		Service	Business	Student	
Q2	Not important	0	0	2	2
	Less important	3	2	12	17
	Neutral	10	13	13	36
	Important	42	42	35	119
	Very important	63	29	43	135
Total		118	86	105	309

Table 5: Importance of retail store customer service as choice criteria distributed by sex group

Crosstab				
Count				
		Sex		Total
		male	Female	
Q5	Not important	10	1	11
	Less important	12	3	15
	Neutral	33	7	40
	Important	54	17	71
	Very important	111	61	172
Total		220	89	309

Table 6: Importance of retail store customer service as choice criteria distributed by profession group

Crosstab

Count

		Profession			Total
		Service	Business	Student	
Q5	Not important	4	1	6	11
	Less important	4	3	8	15
	Neutral	14	12	14	40
	Important	22	19	30	71
	Very important	74	51	47	172
Total		118	86	105	309

Table 7: Importance of retail store’s varieties of product with different brands as choice criteria distributed by sex group

Crosstab

Count

		Sex		Total
		male	Female	
Q7	Not important	11	3	14
	Less important	11	5	16
	Neutral	34	4	38
	Important	53	21	74
	Very important	111	56	167
Total		220	89	309

Table 8: Importance of retail store’s varieties of product with different brands as choice criteria distributed by profession group

Crosstab

Count

		Profession			Total
		Service	Business	Student	
Q7	Not important	9	3	2	14
	Less important	5	3	8	16
	Neutral	11	10	17	38
	Important	24	23	27	74
	Very important	69	47	51	167
Total		118	86	105	309