

Budget Telecom Network Model to drive broadband in South Asia

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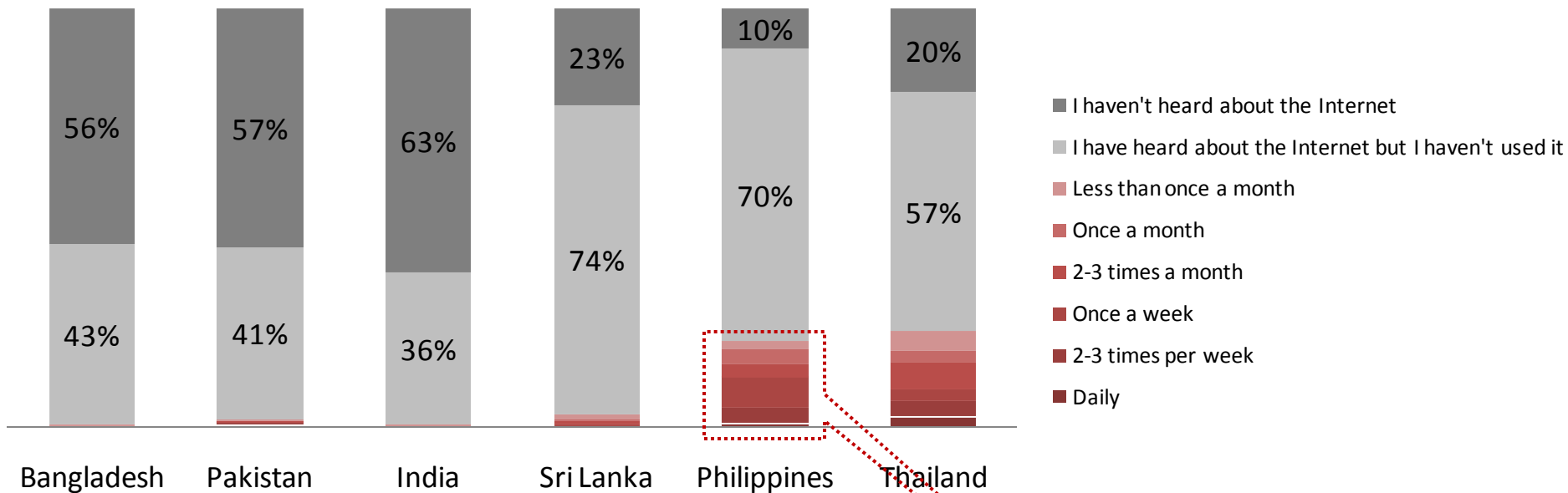
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The problem: Internet use & awareness among the poor in Indo-Gangetic Plain in 2008, acc. to large-sample survey

Internet use (% of BOP teleusers)



Use the Internet

0.6%

2.2%

0.8%

3.2%

20.7%

23.0%

What is the Internet?

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black sleeveless top, is sitting at a desk and looking at a computer monitor. She is typing on a white keyboard. The computer system includes a CRT monitor, a tower PC case, and a mouse. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Is it this? And this only?

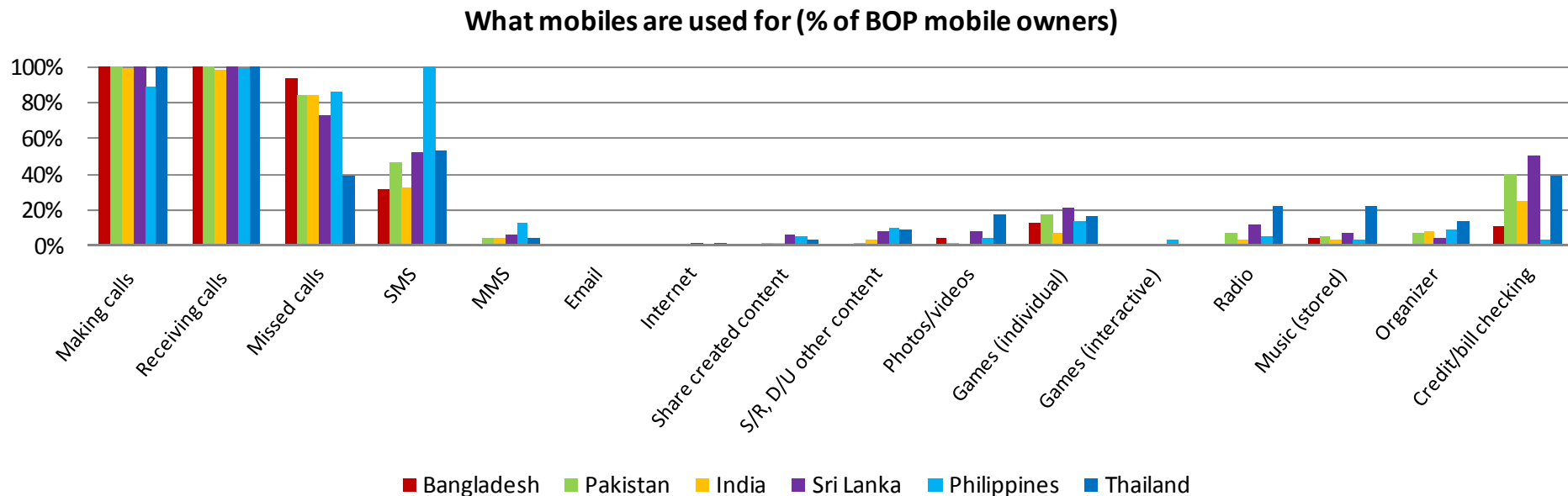
Alternatively, is the Internet a metamedium that allows one to engage in . . .

- Communication in multiple forms, synchronous/asynchronous, one-to-one/one-to-many, etc.
- Information retrieval
- Publication
- Transactions (including payments), and
- Remote computing??

And does using **some** of these functions over distance, using electronic means, constitute participation in the Internet Economy?

Poor are participating, according to teleuse@BOP survey

- If the answer is yes, millions of poor people in the Indo-Gangetic Plain are beginning to participate in the Internet Economy through the mobile phone
 - Inchoate, but understandable as services are just beginning to be offered & business models are being worked out



10,000-sample, 6-country Teleuse@BOP survey in 2008 found that most poor people had . . .

Used a phone in the last 3 months

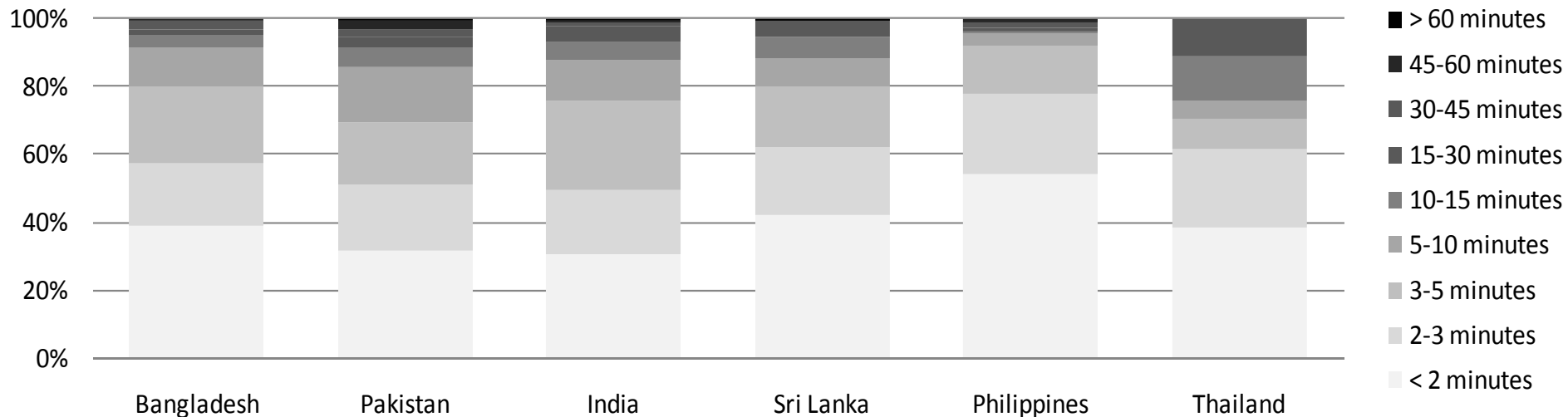
	Bangladesh	Pakistan	India	Sri Lanka	Philippines	Thailand
% of BOP (outer sample)	95%	96%	86%	88%	79%	77 %

Used a phone in the last week

	Bangladesh	Pakistan	India	Sri Lanka	Philippines	Thailand
% of BOP (outer sample)	82%	66%	65%	77%	38%	72%

Among non-owners, ~80% can get to a phone in under 5 minutes

Time to reach the nearest phone (% of BOP non-owner teleusers)



Most non-owners walk to the nearest phone

Clearly, success has been achieved with mobile voice in South Asia

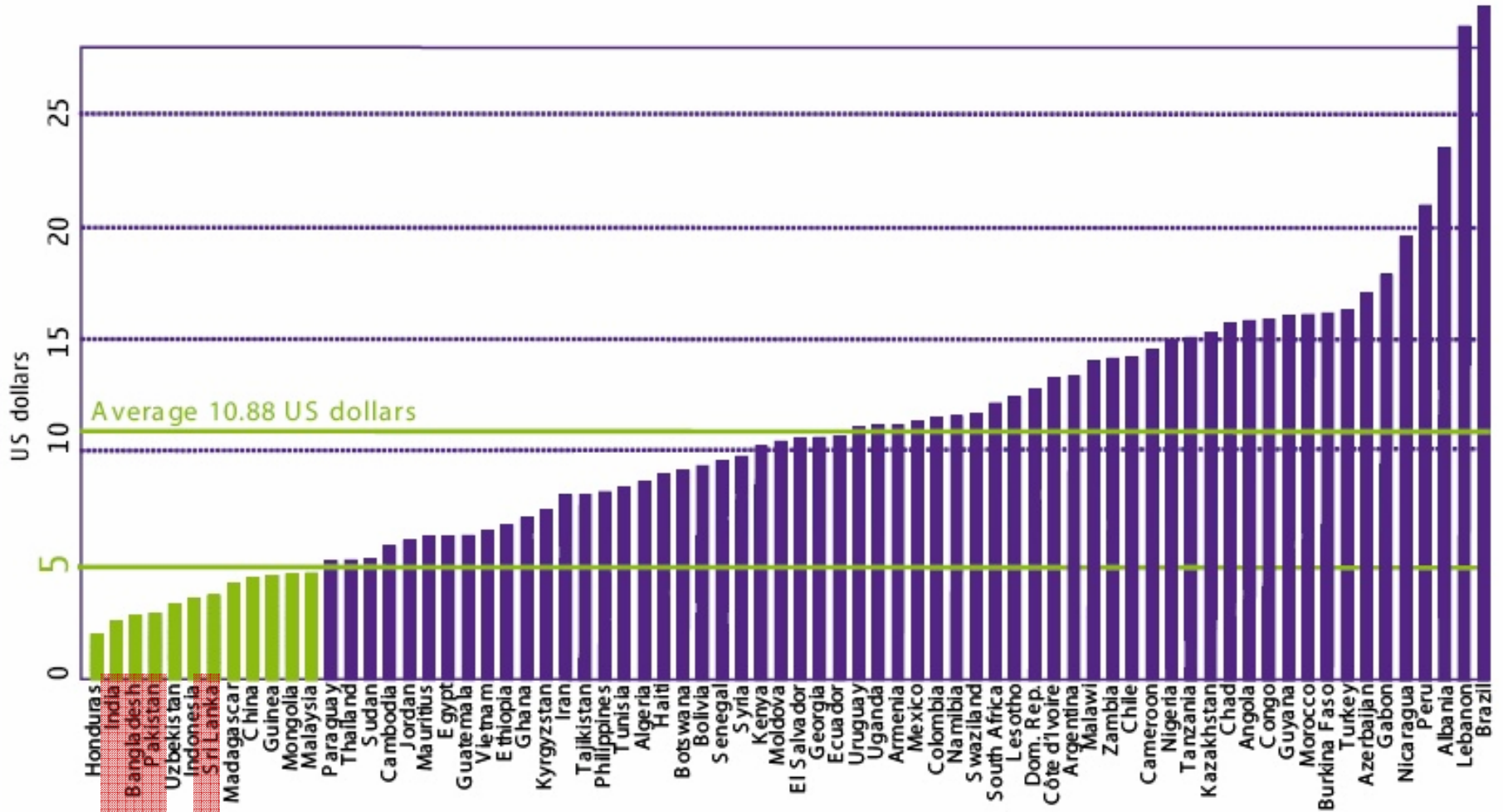
- How has this region which has a large concentration of poor people (world's largest is in the Indo-Gangetic Plain), achieved this?
 - Despite or because of policy and regulatory actions?
- How can the lessons be applied to Internet access?

How were this many poor people connected electronically?

- “Budget Telecom Network Model” that allowed South Asian telcos since 2005-06 to make excellent (if highly volatile) returns by serving “long-tail” markets of poor people by
 - Dramatically reducing transaction costs primarily through prepaid
 - Allowing poor people to pay for services when they need it and when they have money (as opposed to fixed monthly payments)
 - Controlling operating expenses through business-process innovation
 - Focusing on revenue-yielding minutes rather than ARPUs
- Akin to Budget Airline Model that allows Air Asia to make profits while conventional airlines flounder
- Downsides
 - Patchy quality of service for consumers
 - Volatile returns; increased risks for suppliers

Total cost of mobile ownership in 77 emerging economies

Monthly TCO by country



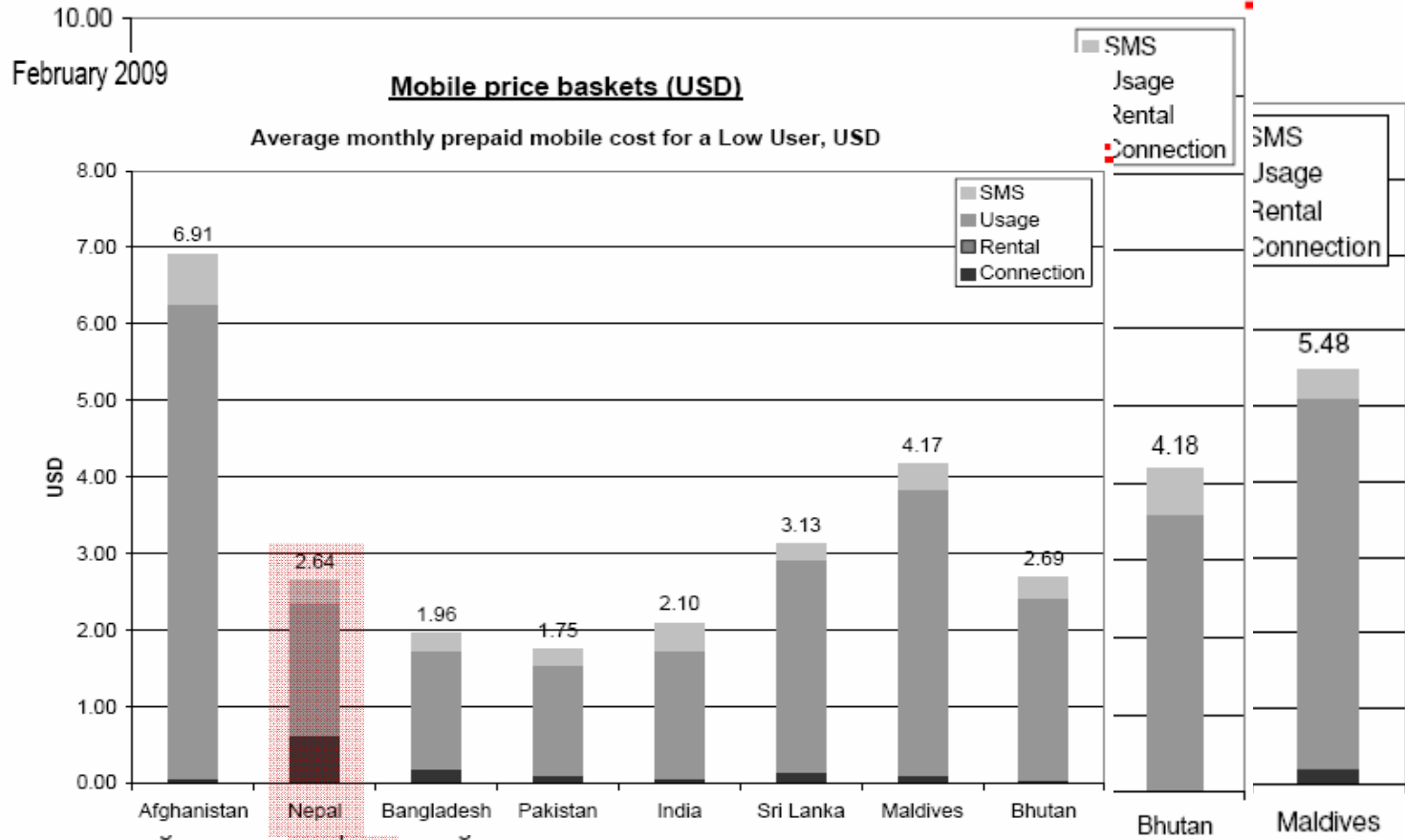
Competition as the necessary condition

- Despite being similar to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Nepal had high prices until 2009
 - Backdoor entry to mobile space by “fixed” CDMA operators was the explanation for prices dropping in 2009

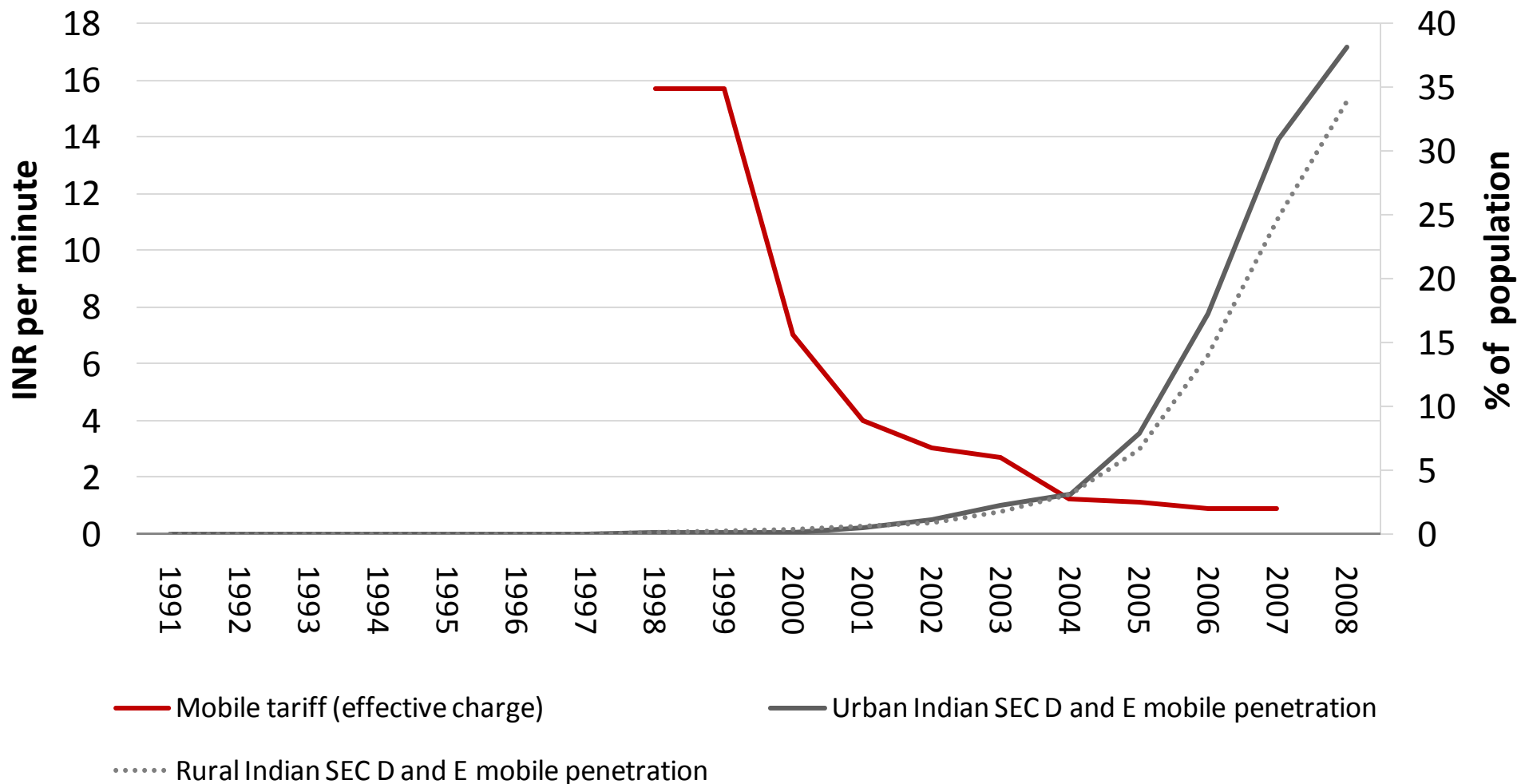
October 2008

Mobile price baskets (USD)

Average monthly prepaid mobile cost for a Low User

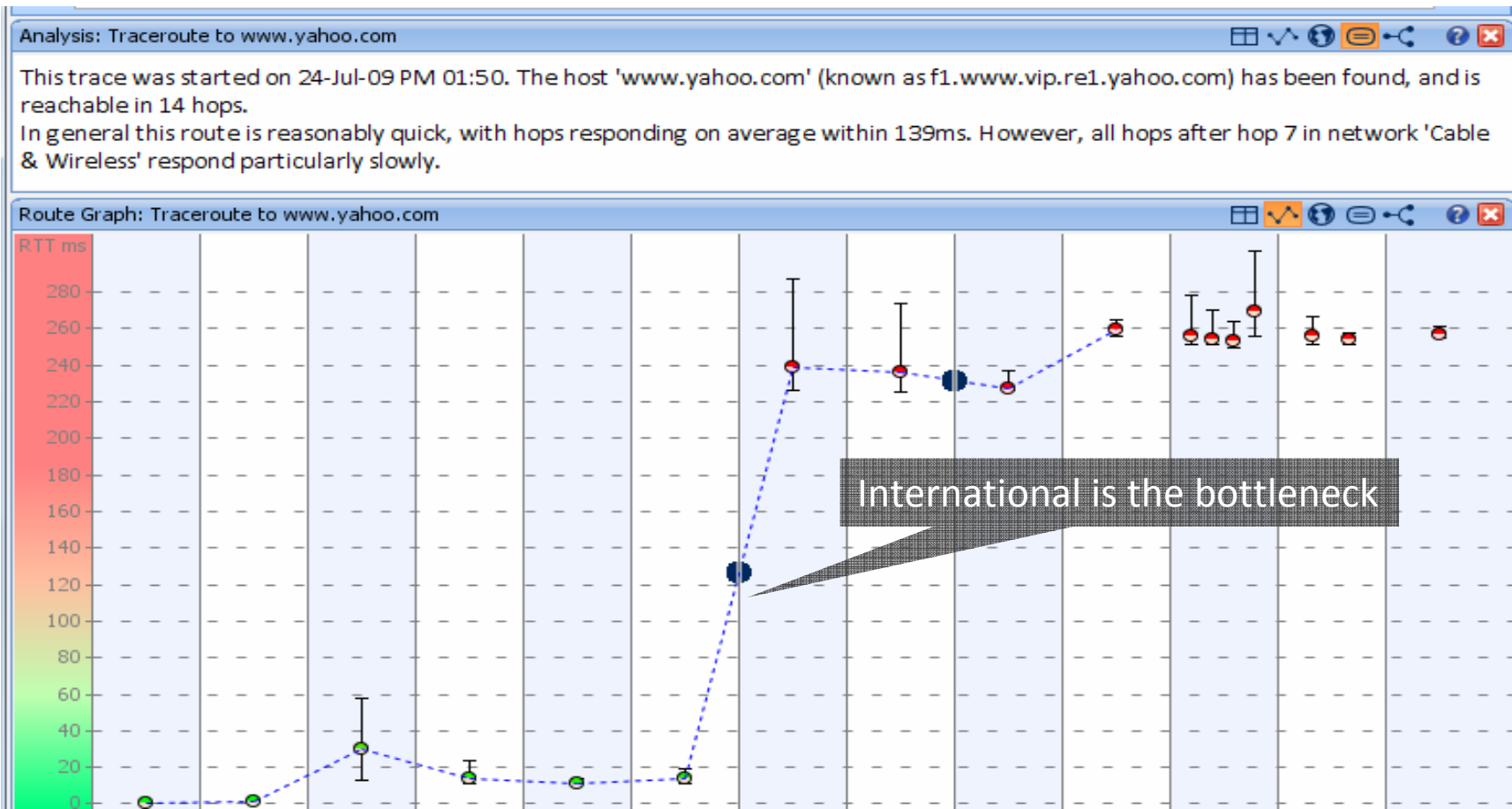


Low prices → greater participation by the poor (urban and rural)



What lessons for broadband?

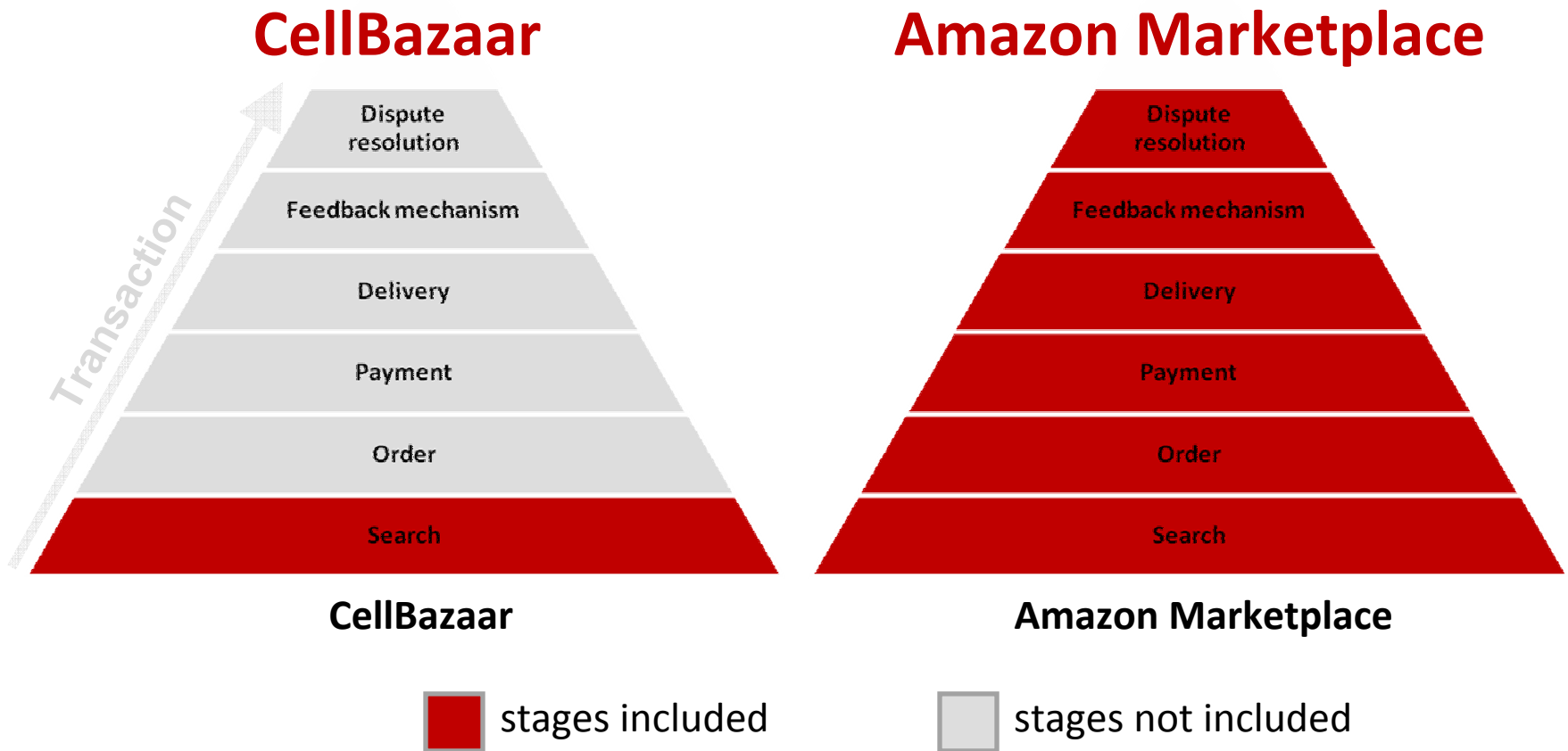
- Lower prices require lower costs
 - Reduce international backhaul costs



Prepaid “sachet” pricing for broadband

- Same as with voice and shampoo, poor people need to be able to pay when the need arises and when money becomes available
- Broadband use in HSPA+ networks, where the relation between the base station and users is in any case not fixed is conducive to this form of pricing
- Of course, sachet pricing can include “buckets” of minutes, MB, etc., and need not be seen as a taxi meter

And of course, new services/applications must be available . . .



- Today CellBazaar can only do search; if payment policy firmed up they can add payments; if postal system improved they can start delivery, etc.

What role for policy and regulation?

- Restating the key point made by Levy & Spiller back in 1994: solutions must fit institutional conditions
- Institutional conditions include the operative business model → policy and regulation must support and leverage the business model, not work at cross purposes to it
- The question then is what can policy and regulation do to leverage the “Budget Telecom Network Model”?

Policy & regulation to leverage BTNM for public objectives such as greater Internet use

- Market entry and spectrum management, including refarming, have to be given highest priority
- More emphasis on availability of, and wholesale access to, “fat pipes” than termination rates per se
- Attention to anti-competitive practices, especially vertical price squeeze
- Old style price regulation to be replaced by forms of forbearance, if necessary bounded to address competition concerns
- Gentle on Quality of Service (QOS) regulation
- Phase out universal-service levies and rationalize taxes