

BRANDING BANGLADESH: IDEAS AND CHALLENGES

Director General Md. Shameem Ahsan, ndc

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh represents an interesting case among the developing countries. Despite its huge potentials and impressive success in many sectors in recent decades, notwithstanding its numerous failures, its overall image in the outside world remains largely negative. A section of the global media also tends to downplay its achievements and overplay its negatives which also contribute to its negative posturing. As a result, Bangladesh lacks the level of visibility in the international arena which it rightfully deserves. Quite ironically, its name appears in the international media more often with incidents associated with, among others, floods, poverty, corruption, political instability and likely worst impact of global warming. It is imperative that necessary steps are taken to aggressively pursue “country branding” in a way which not only creates a positive image about the country but also upholds its unique characteristics and attributes before the international community and also to her own people.

In an increasingly globalised world, a country with poor or negative perception cannot thrive. A Bangladesh brand can play a critical role in boosting trade, increasing foreign investment, and eventually fostering economic growth. This is also important to forge mutually beneficial strong relationship with the foreign countries and international entities. Correct country branding may be effectively utilized to address both the reality and the misperception Bangladesh is currently confronting.

Bangladesh is a paradox in the sense that despite being ridden with endemic poverty, massive corruption, frequent natural disasters and confrontational politics, it showed commendable success both at home and abroad which earned appreciation worldwide. This was largely possible due to the vibrancy and resilience of the people who were always an energetic force for the country to move on despite numerous odds. This vibrancy was identified as the most single unique characteristic to brand the country before the world. An effort was made in the article to argue, with ample justifications, in favor of branding the country as “Vibrant Bangladesh” while elaborately touching on the other unique traits and credentials which also speak about the strength of the society and prospects and potentials of the country.

It is hoped that correct branding, if pursued aggressively, could mark the beginning of a journey to change the image of Bangladesh which will ultimately generate greater interest about the country. This may eventually help Bangladesh prosper and earn a respectable place in the comity of nations.

Branding : An Overview

“Branding” has become a fascinating issue in Bangladesh recently and has gained huge attention among the marketers, business communities, and consumers as well. Similarly, the concept of “Nation Branding” also attracted the policy-makers, diplomats, bureaucrats and other stake-holders of the country.

The Concept of Nation Branding

Nation branding is all about positioning a particular country or a nation in the minds of people. In other words, earning reputation for a country by utilizing its inner resources and opportunities. The concept of nation branding was elaborated by brand *guru* Simon Anholt in 1998 through his article “Nation Brands of the 21st Century” in the *Journal of Brand Management* where he pointed out that “brands create a value that is invisible”¹. In 2005, Anholt introduced the *Anholt-GMI Nation Brand Index* along with GMI, an e-business solution provider. Based on responses from about 25,900 consumers drawn from 35 countries, the index provided a score addressing six core areas of a country depicted through a hexagon: *Tourism, Culture, Governance, Exports, People* and *Investment*.

Figure: 1: How to change the perception²



Source: Anholt, Simon(2007)The Anholt Nation Brand Index, Q I

1. “ In Search of Another “Brand” for Bangladesh”, Bhattacharya, Debapriya, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka.
2. Anholt, Simon(2007)The Anholt Nation Brand Index, Q I

The top 10 countries (in descending order) were: UK, Switzerland, Canada, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Japan, France, Australia and USA.

Till date, *Anholt-GMI Nation Brand Index*, widely considered for brand rating of the nations, has not yet included Bangladesh. But as Bangladesh moves on, it will hopefully generate enhanced interest in the international community and the sponsors of the index is expected to include the country in its exercise in near future. A limited survey carried out by the CPD, among a set of young professionals ranked the six core areas of brand reputation under the Anholt Index, found that the numerical distance of the weakest area (governance) was significant from the rest.

Misperceptions about Nation Branding

Unfortunately, when there is a discussion about nation branding, many bureaucrats and policy-makers refer to traditional lobbying with overseas investors, beautifying the cities with billboards with sporting idealistic slogans. Advertising people often get confused especially between country branding strategy and advertising. Ads are part of a country's branding strategy, yet often simple tourism advertisements are confused as a country's branding strategy. They may be part of a larger country branding strategy, but those ads in themselves do not represent the complete country branding strategy, because that focuses on its micro perspectives.

Nation Branding versus Product Branding

Nation branding is substantially different from product branding and can be explained in many different ways. Nowadays, we hear catchy words used by several nations primarily for promoting tourism in their countries, for example "Malaysia-Truly Asia", "Incredible India" and "Amazing Thailand". Although the underlying principles are same, there exist differences between branding a product and branding a nation. Mercedes Benz, Giorgio Armani or Nike, these are corporate brands. But when we talk about U.S. education, Italian opera, or French holidays, these are nation brands.³

3. Ahsan, Mohammad Badrul. Brand Bangladesh. The Daily Star, 30 September 2005.

Nation Branding: An option or necessity ?

In this age of competition, nation branding has become a necessity rather than an option. Bangladesh has suffered long due to negative brand image created by misrepresentation both at home and abroad. The time has come to rebrand Bangladesh to highlight the amazing accomplishments of its people despite the hardships.

Why branding matters

Diplomatically, a positive and clear image of a country can help generate interest. Economically, the image can facilitate trading concessions and incentives as well as greater flows of investments. These in turn stimulate the national economy which eventually help create jobs and increase wealth with consequent rise in tax revenue.

Branding a country by taking all the ingredients is not an easy task. The people, geography, history, literature, art, folklore, music, and culture form a country's personality. It is an umbrella concept, where the "spirit of a nation" is depicted.⁴

Nation Branding: An analysis of few cases

There has been a growing feeling that nation branding should be associated with specific themes or slogans which characterize the potentials or represent its true strength. It will appear that successful themes have been well-received worldwide.

Many countries are coming up with catchy, smart, and intelligent slogans and symbols to re-brand their countries fitting the current business needs. Some of the popular slogans are: "China: Factory of the World," "Malaysia: Truly Asia," "Uniquely Singapore" "Incredible India," "Amazing Thailand," "Sri Lanka: The Pearl of the Indian Ocean". Few more instances are : "Cool Britannia", "Simply Thai", "Korea Sparkling", South Africa's "Alive with Possibility" etc. Even small countries like Bhutan, is trying to use their image of being small, unique, unspoilt and fragile that is envied by the developed world.

Kerala has been named as "Gods Own Country" to show how pristine and natural it is. "Dubai: The Jewel in the Desert", Hong Kong 'Asia's World City', Shanghai 'China's Cheerleader' are some other cases of the exercise of city branding.

4. Waheeduzzaman, A N M, Bangladesh's Image needs a(R)Branding?, Daily Star, Dhaka, July 2, 2007.

Initiatives for Nation Branding: Bangladesh Experience

The official brand name of Bangladesh is “Beautiful Bangladesh”. Meanwhile, many enthusiasts have come up with various themes and ideas to brand Bangladesh. Some of them are as under:

1. Hospitable Bangladesh
2. Bangladesh: Nature’s Gifted Child
3. Bangladesh: Voice of The South Asia
4. Bangladesh: the Heart of Asia
5. Bangladesh: Global Tourist Map
6. Bangladesh: Touch of the East
7. Bangladesh: The Greenest Delta
8. Breathtaking Bangladesh
9. Bangladesh: Undiscovered Gem of Asia
10. Bangladesh: The Nation of Language Heroes
11. Invincible Bangladesh
12. Indomitable Bangladesh
13. Bangladesh, the Next Asian Tiger
14. Bangladesh, the Emerging Asian Tiger
15. Bangladesh: The Next IT destination
16. Bangladesh: Asia’s Next Big Opportunity
17. Digital Bangladesh
18. Experience Bangladesh
19. Vibrant Bangladesh

Some suggested Jute (the golden fiber of Bangladesh) for branding the country for its unique traits (biodegradable, historic place in the history of the Bangalee’s movements in 60s etc.). Some argue for projecting Bengali New Year or International Mother Language Day to brand Bangladesh using the mega event as a strong tool of our distinct culture. Some also felt that projecting Kazi Nazrul Islam, the National Poet, could help promote the image of the country.

It is imperative and desirable that while branding the country, Bangladesh's unique attributes which broadly characterize the whole nation should be reflected, not by any element which partly represents the country. Any branding which represents a segment of the country's total personality may not suffice. It is important that branding is all inclusive and not sectoral.⁵ Country branding has far broader focus than branding for tourism purposes.

The official brand-name of Bangladesh is 'Beautiful Bangladesh'. Projecting Bangladesh as "beautiful" is, no doubt, a good idea but it does not actually identify any unique characteristic of the country as many countries may appear beautiful or they will be keen to claim so! .

The themes (vide serial: 1-9) primarily sound more touristic than encompassing broader national traits. Title at serial 10 primarily relates to a particular glorious sacrifice of the nation. Themes at serial 11-12 may be applicable to many nations. Driven by investment and commercial interests, branding the country (vide serial 13-16) perhaps overlooks the broader non-economic aspects of the nation. Terming "Digital Bangladesh"(serial-17) essentially suggests an ambitious vision to digitalise the country i.e. a national priority than describing the unique trait(s) of the country. "Experience Bangladesh"(serial-18) is more like an inward looking approach. It appears that "Vibrant Bangladesh" truly represents the unique traits of the country.

How should We Brand Bangladesh?

There are divergent views as to how we should brand the country/nation. Anholt's National Brand Index (NBI) score is made up of six categories: People, Governance, Exports, Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Investment and Immigration. An attempt has been made to contextualise these categories while other aspects, not directly related to the Index, have also been highlighted to give a broader perspective in this regard.

Bangladesh is not known well enough outside and it deserves better. This was the tone of the discussants at a seminar held in Dhaka on branding Bangladesh.⁶ There were general agreements that the country had good ingredients for a strong brand, but lacks initiatives both from the public and private sectors for a brighter image.

5. Quayes, Mijarul, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh at a seminar held at BICC, Dhaka on 25 November 2011 organized by the BGMEA on "Nation branding & Export: How can it Impact Bangladesh economy".

6. At a seminar held in Dhaka on 25 November 2011 at the BICC organized by the BGMEA on "Nation branding & Export: How can it impact Bangladesh economy".

Branding Strategy

People

The people of Bangladesh are hard-working, resilient, and religiously moderate. The people of Bangladesh can themselves be a major drawing factor for tourists.⁷ The resilient people of Bangladesh has also shown incredible courage despite being struck by disasters like floods and cyclones over and over again.

Bangladesh may not have Aamir Khan (India's Brand Ambassador), but iconic cricketers like world's best all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan can be effectively used in the branding campaign. As some positioned themselves as cricket-loving countries in the world of cricket playing nations, Bangladesh can also position itself as the cricket loving nation. Considered as the Father of tabular designs for high-rises and Einstein of structural engineering, Bangladeshi architect Fazlur Rahman Khan was the designer of the 110-storey Willis (Sears) Tower – the tallest building in the United States (the tallest building in the world for over 20 years). He was also the architect of the Chicago's 100-storey John Hancock Centre. Bangladeshi national Jawed Karim was one of the creators of YouTube – a video-sharing website. Bangladeshi expatriate engineer Dr Maksudul Alam and his team members were successful in decoding the crucial genome sequence of jute which is, by all counts, a fundamental contribution in scientific research. Mr. Alam earlier decoded the genome of papaya in the US and rubber plant in Malaysia. The latest ground-breaking findings in the search for the Higgs boson called “the God Particle” is also (along with Peter Higgs) associated with the name of Satyendra Nath Bose, a Bangladeshi physicist born in Bikrampur, Dhaka. A Bangladesh-born architecture student Saiman Miah's design won as the official commemorative coin of London Olympics 2012.

Culture and Heritage

Rich culture and heritage of the country needs to be highlighted. Ekushe February has got worldwide recognition as the International Mother Language Day. Bangla is the 7th largest spoken language and it is only the country named after a language. Great events like *Pahela Baishakh* could showcase country's rich and varied culture and heritage. Country's glorious past can easily put the whole nation into a civilisational image. Therefore, its history and civilization; its glorious war of liberation; its rich cultural diversity; music, song and dances; its cuisine; its economic successes; all should be woven into a theme. That would be the branding part.

7. Meet Bangladesh-Asia's Big Opportunity, Brand Bangladesh Forum.

Tourism

Bangladesh has a good number of interesting and attractive tourism spots which could entice many people from around the world. So great were the attractions of Bangladesh that French traveler Francois Bernier was quoted saying “it has a hundred gates open for entrance but not one for departure”.⁸

One of them is the Sea Beach at Cox’s Bazaar, best known as the longest unbroken beach in the world. Bangladesh has other attractions like the Sunderbans (the largest mangrove forest in the world), and a few historical and archeological heritage sites. These can and should easily attract tourists if branded properly. Also Bangladesh can benefit from religious tourism. The second largest congregation of the Muslim world-Bishwa Ijtema, takes place in Bangladesh annually. Rash Mela of the Hindus is another major annual event where people from outside world come and attend.

RMG and Other Exports

For hundred of years, Bangladesh (Eastern Bengal) was known for its muslin and silk fabric. These are powerful perceptions that can help build a Bangladesh textile brand.⁹

Bibi Russel, the astounding model of Bangladesh, is currently promoting Bangladeshi fabrics and handicrafts for domestic and international markets under the slogans ‘Fashion for Development and Positive Bangladesh’. *Aarong*, an iconic Bangladeshi brand and the country’s largest retail chain, stands out as a unique mix of design, quality and convenience of the traditional and the contemporary.

Bangladesh has developed a world-class ready-made garment industry that demonstrates Bangladesh is a player to be reckoned with in the global marketplace. Today, be it Wal Mart, Macy’s, JC Penny, GAP, Sears or Zellers, or any other retailer, the “Made in Bangladesh” tag has become ubiquitous abroad. Our RMGs are of high quality and in many ways are the silent ambassadors of our country. Despite the global economic recession, earnings from RMG sub-sectors are continuously increasing. During the FY 2011-12, the sector earned US\$ 19.09 billion (78.6% of total export revenue of US\$24.28). In addition, nearly 3 million workers are employed in the garments industries, and most of them are females. This is directly contributing to women empowerment. It is pertinent to mention it here that although every single person of the country enjoys the benefits of this sector, directly or indirectly, this sector was never branded positively.¹⁰

8. Islam, Asiful . Term Paper on “Branding Bangladesh: How to Proceed”.

9. Ries, Al , The future of Bangladesh Depends on One Word: Brands, Best Brand Award Bangladesh , A Bangladesh Brand Forum Initiative, 2008.

10. Ibid

Health

Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in the health sector which is quite visible and also earned international recognitions. Health indicators of socio-economic development show that there is a sharp decline in the child mortality and birth rate. A revolution has also taken place with birth control in Bangladesh and it is now cited as an international success story. Child immunisation and vaccination is another matter of great pride for Bangladesh. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received MDG Award during the 65th UN General Assembly and the Duhphine University in Paris also awarded her a medal in recognition to Bangladesh's laudable success in the social and other sectors.

ORS (Oral Rehydration Salt) therapy was developed in the late 60s by researchers in International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, Bangladesh for the treatment of cholera. ORS is thought to have saved the lives of over 40 million people and it is still saving millions of people from diarrhea and fluid loss.

Remittances

Bangladeshis should feel proud of her expatriate community, working in different countries and sending billions of dollars in remittances. Despite the global economic recession, remittances have continued to grow and have played an important role in reducing the poverty rates and in keeping the buoyancy of the economy. During the fiscal year 2011-12, Bangladesh earned \$12.84 billion as remittances which makes Bangladesh one of the largest recipients of remittances among the LDCs.

Things to Ponder

Some of the impressions that dominated the psyche of all governments of the country are ; Bangladesh's beauty, its longest unbroken natural beach in the world; its glorious war of liberation; and its sacrifices for language etc. Many would argue that while these factors are useful for domestic consumption; these have little saleable value internationally.¹¹ For instance, the love of Bangladesh's poets in the country's beauty. Notwithstanding, such beauty is average in comparison to natural sites in other countries. Country's longest beach may be a geographical fact but shorter beaches round the world attract much more tourists. Bengalee nation's singular contribution for mother language has won UNESCO recognition but again it does not perhaps appeal to other nationalities

11. Islam, M. Serajul in "Branding Bangladesh and Image Building: Some Problems" Published in The Bangladesh Journal of National and Foreign Affairs, Volume 8; Number 1, March, 2011.

as such. The above perspective may sound partly rational, but its appeal can be maximized which will eventually add values to those issues if it can be convincingly presented before the world.

It is imperative that branding exercise takes into consideration of the distinctive traits of the country. Bangladesh can take pride on many of its successes which outnumber its failures. All aspects of her traits need to be highlighted but the vibrancy of the people should be the core issue which should figure prominently in the branding exercise.

Rationale for Branding as “Vibrant Bangladesh”

Bangladesh’s achievements outnumber its failures, and the branding exercise demands that there should be a one-liner identity to characterize the country. Vibrancy of the people had been the driving force of the country and this unique characteristic may be used to brand Bangladesh internationally.

Rationale

There is no denying to the fact that Bangladesh possesses some unique characteristics, unlike other nations, which may help project it to the outside world. But the debate still goes on as to what should be the “central theme” of the nation branding exercise in the context of Bangladesh. It is strongly felt that “vibrancy” of the people had been the single most dominant trait which defined the nation and its history while other factors also facilitated its march towards progress and helped gain some sort of international visibility.

“Bangladesh Paradox” is often cited globally in the discourse on development and related issues. The country has shown remarkable resilience in terms of sustaining all sorts of turbulence-political, economic or natural despite numerous challenges. The global flag ship publications and financial institutions also predict of a prosperous Bangladesh provided it can overcome confrontational politics, consistently pursue prudent fiscal and other policies and improve governance. Bangladesh is widely recognized as a “contributing member state” in the international community and UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon often quoted Bangladesh as a ‘Development Model’ for the developing countries.

The significant transformation in Bangladesh within forty years from “a basket case” to a modern self-reliant, enterprising and promising country primarily speaks about the vibrancy, resilience and innate strength of the people. This amply justifies to brand the country as “Vibrant Bangladesh” which needs to be pursued aggressively.

Bangladesh truly represents the characteristics of a vibrant country. This is the most unique characteristic which can be focused, and sustained effort to popularize the theme (Vibrant Bangladesh) may help to gain a positive image about the actual strength of the country as well as the huge potentials it holds.

The Issue of Image: A Million Dollar Question

Perception about Bangladesh

Bangladesh, ironically, faces a reputation deficit which is popularly known as its “image problem”. It is regrettable that resilience and endurance capacities of the people of Bangladesh to struggle against overwhelming odds and, still, her ability to make steady and visible progress in various fields are often overlooked and the negatives, ranging from corruption to colossal policy blunders, are generally focused. More often, the only associations that come to mind are those of floods, poverty and the impact of global warming.

Bangladesh badly needs a major face lift as far as its image is concerned. A favourable international rating or image would help the country in trade, business, investment and tourism. Image is closely related to national and international events (for example, the winning of the Nobel Peace Prize and the intermittent success of the national cricket team positively contributed to country’s image),

Impact of Country Ratings on Image-Building

Bangladesh is being regularly ranked at the low end by organisations as diverse as the World Economic Forum, UNDP, UNCTAD, Transparency International, Freedom House, State Department’s Trafficking in Person’s Report etc. Despite their perceived bias and methodological problems, they are useful indicators for “marketing a nation” to the world.¹² Governments, international organisations, and multi-nationals use them for environmental scanning, business investment, entry strategy, market development, segmentation and policy purposes.

12. *ibid*

Bangladesh Paradox

Termed as the “Bangladesh Paradox”, Bangladesh grew consistently around 6% for over two decades despite the country’s confrontational politics, endemic poverty and natural disasters. Data suggest that per capita income considerably increased, inching the country towards a middle-income status.

World’s leading financial services institutions Goldman Sachs has included Bangladesh in their list of “Next Eleven”; and J.P. Morgan, one of world’s most trusted investment Banks, in their “Frontier Five”. Citi Investment Research & Analysis of Citigroup, in its Global Economic Review in February 2011, ranked Bangladesh as one of the countries expected high growth and profitable investment opportunities. In Moody’s and S&P’s current ratings, Bangladesh also ranks high for stability in monetary and financial management, ahead of all other South Asian countries, apart from India. This is otherwise corroborated by forecast made by Goldman Sachs Economic Research team about Bangladesh turning into the 22nd largest economy in the world by 2025, with a GDP of US\$208 billion.¹³

Bangladesh represents a success story among the LDCs marked by distinct achievements in the socio-economic sectors. These achievements are lauded by the members of the international community. Statistics also suggest that Bangladesh has experienced a tripling of food production, significant reductions in population growth, steady manpower exports, emergence as the world’s 2nd ¹⁴largest RMG exporter, continuous growth of shipbuilding and pharmaceutical industries, largest troops contributor in peace-keeping operations under the UN, contributions of the NGOs, and educational opportunities especially for women. Bangladesh is overpopulated but nobody noticed that it could feed them as well. Our export basket is widening and Export/GDP ratio experiencing a steady rise. Bangladesh maintained this growth performance in the face of many odds including the recent global economic downturn. On the human development front, Bangladesh has in its record impressive achievements, particularly in the Millennium Development Goals. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received MDG Award during the 65th UNGA in recognition to Bangladesh’s visible progress in meeting MDG targets. Bangladesh today belongs to the medium human development group as per the rankings of the UNDP. The Nobel Peace Prize earned by Professor Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank and the Knighthood accorded to Fazle Hasan Abed of BRAC are other singular attainments that serve as value additions to the nation’s image. Furthermore, through her support for the

13. Available at blog (<http://www.defence.pk/forums/bangladesh-defence/120472-need-branding-bangladesh-successfully.html>) dated 16 July 2011.

14. Ibid

creation of International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) gave the world oral rehydration therapy (ORT) which now saves the lives of about 6 million children globally each year.¹⁵

Bangladesh has come a long way from the “Basket Case” as depicted by the former US Secretary of State by Dr. Henry Kissinger. Bangladesh has today achieved the best preparedness against natural calamities like cyclones and floods that has made the world acknowledge the country’s resilience and its abilities. In fact, when an international conference was held in Japan after the Tsunami, Bangladesh was invited as a special guest to talk in the conference because of its successes in dealing with natural calamities although the country was not affected by Tsunami.¹⁶

Possible Role of the Government and the Private Sector in Branding Bangladesh

Nation branding is a complex process and it should involve all major-stakeholders, both in the public and private sectors. Only a well-co-ordinated approach with correct vision may help achieve the desired target.

It is imperative to remember that the very concept of nation branding is not only for foreigners, rather for the people of the country who are the biggest stake-holders of the concept. Without their support and embodiment of the brand identity, all nation-branding efforts will be futile.

Country branding is a combined responsibility of all citizens under a government leadership and Foreign Office should be the lead Ministry in this regard. The technical details of re-branding Bangladesh can be taken care of by professionally qualified international media firms/consultants, with support from local media/advertising agencies. The team may consist of representatives from relevant government bodies (Foreign Ministry, *Parjatan* Corporation, Export Promotion Bureau, and Board of Investment etc.), academia, media, political parties, religious leaders, civil society, professionals, private sector, cultural world, and business representatives from export oriented firms, and the hospitality and entertainment industries should be there.

Engaging Bangladesh Diaspora for Branding Drive

Bangladesh Diaspora is an underutilized resource that can play a special role in developing and promoting the country.¹⁷ Members of the Diaspora have

15. Greenough, Dr. William B., in *Vibrant Bangladesh*, published by Embassy of Bangladesh, Washington DC to commemorate the Independence and National Day, 2010.

16. Islam, M. Serajul in “Branding Bangladesh and Image Building: Some Problems” Published in *The Bangladesh Journal of National and Foreign Affairs*, Volume 8, Number 1, March 2011.

17. Ibid

already developed personal connections across the world specially in UK, USA, Australia and some other important countries. Bangladesh can use its Diaspora serve as “Brand Ambassadors.” Bangladesh Missions have a major role to play to engage our Diaspora effectively. Embassies can sensitise them so that they contribute particularly in the form of sharing their valuable ideas.

Challenges Ahead

The nation branding exercise, however, could be disrupted by one major factor, among others, i.e. the confrontational politics in the country. The fallout of this divisiveness has already affected every major institution in Bangladesh which is expected to produce future leaders.

It would be self-defeating for us to engage in the blame-game and put the entire responsibility on the international community for the poor focus on Bangladesh. We have to admit our inability and failures in projecting the country and the true spirit of the people, necessitating the brand building of Bangladesh. National reputation cannot be constructed, it can only be earned.¹⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For the sake of policy uniformity and institutional continuity, there should be take an initiative to frame a bipartisan approach in country branding which will ensure that it does not suffer due to change of guard at governance.
- There should be a brand cell headed by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh to oversee branding activities at the national level and to co-ordinate with other-stake-holders, both in the government and the public sector.
- Bangladesh needs to find an effective strategy to leverage her Diaspora. This might involve creating an NRB database and greater support and encouragement for events.
- Media should play an important role in the country’s branding effort.
- SNS like on-line tools including Twitter, Face Book, Blogs, forums, YouTube, lobbyists etc. can be utilized to convey the positive message about the country.

18. Anholt, Simon , Places-Identity, Image and Reputation, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

CONCLUSION

Branding Bangladesh globally and locally is a big challenge, and a daunting task, indeed but the inherent and innate strength of the country is definitely a plus for the country. Country's vibrant people remain her greatest asset. Their resilience and vibrancy demonstrated time to time reinforces the belief that this great nation of 160 million people will prove to the rest of the world that they deserve a better place among the comity of nations. Vigorous country branding with the right focus (Vibrant Bangladesh) can help Bangladesh reach to that height. This optimism finds expression in the words of the marketing 'Guru' Philip Kotler, 'not everyone would be interested about Bangladesh, but Bangladesh should be able to occupy the mind space of the right kind of people or relevant section of the international community'.¹⁹

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Author

A career diplomat, Md. Shameem Ahsan joined the Bangladesh Foreign Service on 1 April 1993. His current position is Director General(External Publicity) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and deals with public diplomacy and media management issues.

He served at the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC from September, 2008 as Deputy Chief of Mission/Minister(Political). Mr. Ahsan also served in Bangladesh Missions in Italy, Kenya, Qatar and Kuwait in various capacities. He acted as the Focal Point at the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh in Kenya for the UNEP and UN-Habitat headquartered in Nairobi. He also served in various positions in the Ministry.

Mr. Ahsan attended a number of international conferences and meetings and participated various training programmes on diplomacy, environment, security, immigration and language issues in USA, Italy, India, Kenya and Kuwait. He attended seminars/Talks at Universities, Think-tanks and at the Capitol Hill, USA as a part of public diplomacy effort.

Born on September 1, 1966 in Pirojpur, Mr. Ahsan was educated at Dhaka University and has a Masters & Honors in Political Science (First Class First in both) from the same University. He obtained First Division at S.S.C. and H.S.C (first position in Board in order of merit).He received numerous awards throughout his student life for his academic feat which also included Chancellor Award from the President.

He has authored two books on Diplomacy and International Relations. One of his publications includes near 1000-page “Kutnitikosh” (Encyclopedia of Diplomacy). He has also published several articles on various issues, among others, on diplomatic front of the liberation war of Bangladesh, climate change, international economic relations, regionalism, South Asia & Middle East.

An ardent debater and a passionate poem reciter, Mr. Ahsan actively participates in literary and cultural activities. He received a President Gold Medal during his school days for the best written essay at the national level.

Mr. Ahsan is married to Mrs. Guley Ferdousi Forhad and has a daughter Nahla Ahsan.