

Nation Branding: Beautiful Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Recently a word 'Nation Branding' or 'Branding Bangladesh' is practiced a lot. A nation brand is the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the mind of international stakeholders which may contain some of the following elements: people, place, culture, language, history, food, fashion, famous faces (celebrities), global brands, etc. The way for a nation to gain a better reputation is to communicate to the international audience that how good you are, is called nation branding. There is a misconception among most of the people that it is required to develop tourism sector of any country in case of nation branding. But nation branding focuses on the nation as a whole – its people, culture and heritage, investment and immigration, governance, exports and tourism. The objective of this paper is to clarify this misconception about nation branding, help our citizens to know about the branding Bangladesh and reveal the possibilities of branding Bangladesh. Process of nation branding – Nation Brand Index and Country Brand Index are discussed in this paper. This research is based on secondary sources and the researcher comes up with the Nation Branding Hexagon for Bangladesh. Hopefully this paper will be helpful for awaking our consumers and making responsible to come forward for unbeaten nation branding for Bangladesh.

Keywords: Brand, Nation Branding and Bangladesh

1 INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh located in a disaster prone delta at the center of Bay of Bengal and surrounded by the massive India on three sides and the introvert Myanmar on the south, is known to the world as a backward developing country. Bangladesh is seen as a country afflicted with many problems like political instability, hunger, population growth, corruption, natural disasters, illiteracy, human rights violation and a country heavily dependent on foreign donations. This international image of Bangladesh has been initiated mainly by the international media notably BBC, CNN and VOA.

Bangladesh is a country bestowed with the gifts of nature. It has nurtured some of the most ancient civilizations of this continent. The young country came into existence after a blood-spattered liberation war in 1971. But the pace of growth and development has been impeded by many factors. Bangladesh, as a Least Developing Country (LDC), faces a reputation challenge which is popularly known as its image problem. Bangladesh has gained the image of a country with too many people, too much poverty, too little resources, too frequent disasters and too little ability to change for better (Yunus, 1992). Recently poor law and order, bad investment climate and Islamic terrorism have killed its image more. To remove all the negative aspects and image surrounding Bangladesh and to make it as a beautiful and prospective country it is highly recommended to branding Bangladesh.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In developing a brand identity for Bangladesh, first the term – brand should be understood. A more sophisticated definition is offered by Aaker (1996): a brand is a multi-

dimensional assortment of functional, emotional, relational and strategic elements that collectively generate a unique set of associations in the public mind. Brand is defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Kotler, 2001)". A brand is a promise that is made to customers about the quality and value of the products or services they purchase (Kotler, 2003). The best brands convey a warranty of quality. Branding can convey up to six levels of meanings: attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality and user. The branding challenge is to develop a set of positive associations for the brand. In the same way as companies, stores and individuals have specific images among their respective audiences, countries can also have a brand or image among a target audience (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001).

Simon Anholt (1998), pioneer of nation branding, argues that brand is intangible because it has brand value as outlines in his book Brand New Justice. The brand value lies in the trust of a brand name for quality and reliability, a form of guarantee for its reputation, a promise the brand delivers and the service it provides to the consumers. The idea of nation branding is an extended form of place branding. Simon Anholt's approach of competitive identity is about helping countries, cities and regions to earn a better and stronger reputation in the following ways:

- Through courageous and enlightened social, economic, environmental and foreign policies
- Through the dynamic development of tourism, foreign investment and exports

- Through carefully chosen international cultural, sporting and political events
- Through improved cultural and academic relations with other countries
- Through a strategic commitment to international development and poverty reduction
- Through productive engagement with multilateral institutions, regional organizations and with NGOs at home and abroad
- Through effective coordination between government, industry and civil society
- Through enhanced public and private diplomacy overseas
- Through a visionary long-term approach to innovation, investment and education

According to Steenkamp and Verlegh (1999), “a country image is not merely a cognitive cue for product quality, but that it also relates to emotions, identity, pride and autobiographical memories that transform country-of-origin into an expressive or unique attribute”. The origin of nation branding study can be traced to four different sources, namely, country-of-origin (Heslop & Papadopoulos, 2002), place or destination branding (Gertner & Kotler, 2002), public diplomacy (Fan, 2008 & Melissen, 2005) and national identity (Bond, et al. 2001). In 2002, Anholt proposed a concept of branding hexagon where he distinguished six main factors influencing country image (Figure 1). Nation branding focuses on the nation as a whole – its people, culture and heritage, investment and immigration, governance, exports and tourism.

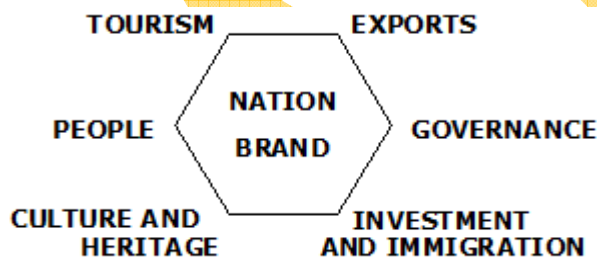


Figure 01: Branding Hexagon (Anholt, 2002)

Country-of-origin and place branding have a clear focus on promoting specific economic interests (export, tourism or inward investment), whereas nation branding is concerned with a country’s whole image on the international stage covering political, economic and cultural dimensions (Fan, 2006). A country image sometimes can be linked to specific products. German cars, Danish furniture, French wine, etc. are favorable product-class which is linked with country image. Views of countries are formed not just by what a country says about itself, but by what it does, by its products, by what it looks like, by what people say about it and by the company it keeps. According to Dinnie (2007), there are five objectives for nation branding. Nation brands itself to stimulate export

growth, increase inbound tourism for tourism receipts, attract foreign investment into the nation, enhance political influence internationally and manage negative stereotypes. All of these play a role to the brand identity and brand image.

Every country has a unique name and images in the mind of people both inside and outside the country, so a nation does have brands. A nation brand is the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the mind of international stakeholders which may contain some of the following elements: people, place, culture, language, history, food, fashion, famous faces (celebrities), global brands, etc. A nation’s brand exists, with or without any conscious efforts in nation branding, as each country has a current image to its international audience, be it strong or weak, clear or vague (Fan, 2006).

Two distinctions need to be made. Firstly a nation brand should not be confused with a national brand. In contrast with a global brand, a national brand is originated from a country and its use is probably still confined to the country; while a global brand is recognized in the world marketplace. Secondly when compared with a commercial brand, there are more differences than similarities. Unlike commercial brands many elements in nation brand construct are not in the control of those engaged in nation branding management, they are difficult to change in the short term.

Table 01: Comparison between nation branding and commercial branding (Fan, 2006)

	Nation Brand	Product Brand	Corporate Brand
Offer	Nothing on offer	A product or service on offer	Related to the product or sector
Attributes	Too complicated to define in simple terms	Clearly defined	Well defined
Benefits	Purely emotional	Functional and emotional	Mainly emotional
Image	Complicated, diverse, vague	Simple, clear	Simple, visible or hidden
Association	Secondary, numerous and diverse	Primary and secondary, relatively fewer and more specific	Mainly secondary, fewer and specific
Purpose	To enhance national reputation	To help sales and develop relationships	To enhance reputation and develop relationships
Dimension	Political, economic, social and cultural	Mainly economic	Economic and social

Ownership	Multiple stakeholders unclear	Sole owner	Sole owner
Audience	International, diverse, "significant others"	Targeted segment	General public or targeted

Nation branding is not a myth. The impact of nation branding should not be exaggerated or dismissed. For a nation to change its image, it needs first to change its behavior. Then, equally important, it needs to tell the people in the world about the changes. The way for a nation to gain a better reputation is to communicate to the international audience that how good you are, is called nation branding (Fan, 2010).

3. PROCESS OF NATION BRANDING

Leading nation brand specialist Anholt introduced in 2005, the Anholt's Nations Brand Index (NBI) that ranks country as their brand value. 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: people, governance, exports, tourism, culture and investment. It was initially published four times a year. Since 2008 research activities from GFK Roper Public Affairs and Media and Simon Anholt are joined and resulted in an expanded version of the index which is since then known as the Anholt-GFK Roper Nation Brands Index. Published on an annual basis, 20,157 interviews have been conducted with approximately 1,000 interviews per country for the 2008 index to determine how countries are perceived by others. People over the age of seventeen have been interviewed in twenty countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Turkey, Japan, China, India, South Korea, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt and South Africa.

According to the Nation Brand Index 2012, the top ten nations who have successfully meet up the six criteria are United States, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Canada, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, Australia and Sweden. The six criteria underlying the Nations Brand Index ranking are explained below:

- **People:** Measures the population's reputation for competence, education, openness and friendliness and other qualities, as well as perceived levels of potential hostility and discrimination.
- **Governance:** Measures public opinion regarding the level of national government competency and fairness and describes individuals' beliefs about each country's government, as well as its perceived commitment to global issues such as democracy, justice, poverty and the environment.
- **Exports:** Determines the public's image of products and services from each country and the extent to

which consumers proactively seek or avoid products from each country-of-origin.

- **Tourism:** Captures the level of interest in visiting a country and the draw of natural and man-made tourist attractions.
- **Culture and Heritage:** Reveals global perceptions of each nation's heritage and appreciation for its contemporary culture including films, music, art, sport and literature.
- **Investment and Immigration:** Determines the power to attract people to live, work or study in each country and reveals how people perceive a country's economic and social situation.

A powerful country brand translates into a better perception of the country. South Africa launched the Brand South Africa Project in August 2000. In New Delhi, over 100 people work full time on Brand India as India Brand Equity Foundation with the goal of modifying critical stakeholders attitudes towards this diverse country. Malaysia, Egypt, Costa Rica, New Zealand and many more countries have active nation branding programs in spite of the existence of state institutions such as investment, tourism, exports and public diplomacy dedicated to country products, services and reputation management. Many of them have created slogans and symbols in order to fulfill current business needs.

Table 02: Active Nation Branding Programs

Country	Slogan of Nation Branding
Bolivia	The Authentic still Exists
Costa Rica	Peaceful Destination
Dubai	The Jewel in the Desert
Egypt	Destination Egypt
Estonia	Positively Transforming
Iceland	Iceland Naturally
India	Incredible India
Malaysia	Truly Asia
Singapore	Uniquely Singapore
South Africa	Alive with Possibility
Srilanka	The Pearl of the Indian Ocean
Thailand	Amazing Thailand

The organization, Future Brand introduced another nation brand index that is known as 'Country Brand Index' in 2005. From 2005, it is published annually and based on both qualitative and quantitative research. In 2012-13, it has collected quantitative data from 3,600 opinion formers and frequent international business or leisure travelers. It also have collected qualitative information from a carefully selected and diverse panel of experts in policy and governance, international relations, economic and trade, international law, national security, energy and climate change, urban and regional planning, immigration and the media. The main tool of determine the nation brand index is Hierarchical Decision Model (HDM). It determines how key audiences including residents, investors, tourists and foreign governments perceived a country's brand, from a baseline of awareness all the way up to

brand advocacy. This model takes seven areas of consideration: Awareness, Familiarity, Association, Preference, Consideration, Decision / Visitation and Advocacy.

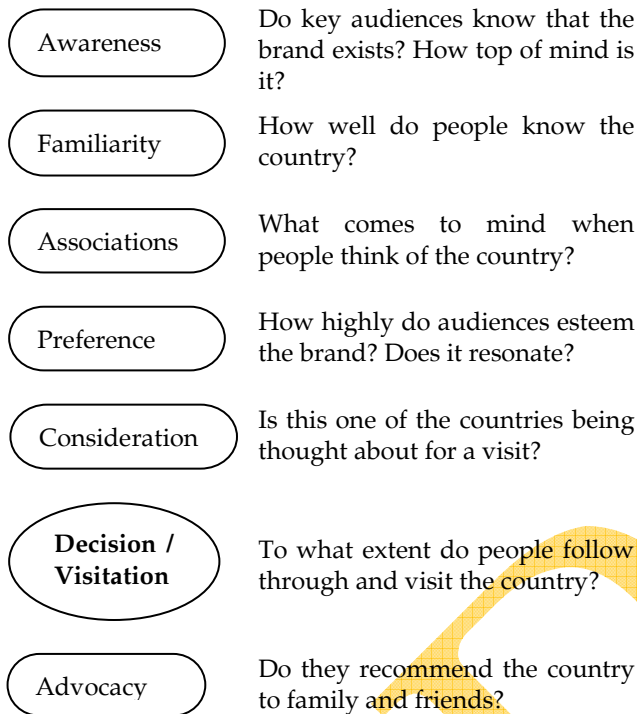


Figure 02: Hierarchical Decision Model (Future Brand, 2005)

In this model, only the third stage – Association deals with five components: Value System, Quality of Life, Good for Business, Heritage and Culture and Tourism. Each component is divided into some parts. Value System consists of political freedom, tolerance, stable legal environment, freedom of speech and environmental friendliness. Quality of Life consists of most like to live in, education system, healthcare system, standard of living, safety and job opportunity. Good for Business consists of skilled workforce, advanced technology, investment climate and regulatory environment. Heritage and Culture consist of natural beauty, history, art and culture and authenticity. Tourism consists of value for money, resort and lodging options, attractions and food. According to Country Brand Index 2012-13, the top ten nations are Switzerland, Canada, Japan, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, United States, Finland and Norway.

4. NATION BRANDING – BANGLADESH

In 2008, Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed launched the first country branding for Bangladesh. The logo of the branding includes a rising sun above waves of seawater with the slogan 'Beautiful Bangladesh' beneath. The image problem of Bangladesh made a low ranking by organizations as diverse as the World Economic Forum, UNDP, UNCTAD, Transparency International Bangladesh and Goldman & Sachs. These rankings are usually based on a mix of objective measures and stakeholder perceptions. In

the Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013 by World Economic Forum, Bangladesh ranked 118th among 144 countries in terms of 12 indicators – Institutions (127th), Infrastructure (134th), Macro-economic environment (100th), Health and primary education (103rd), Higher education and training (126th), Goods market efficiency (95th), Labor market efficiency (117th), Financial market development (95th), Technological readiness (125th), Market size (47th), Business sophistication (108th) and Innovation (130th).

According to the Country Brand Index 2012, Bangladesh stood 110th position among the 118 countries that is diminution from 2011 (107th) and 2010 (102nd). Till now, Anholt's Nation Brand Index (NBI) does not include Bangladesh. But Bangladesh can be analyzed based on the six criteria of Nation brand Index.

a. People: Bangladesh has demographic dividend for last few years. Population aged 60 years and above is likely to exceed the population aged below 15 years in 2046. Demographic dividend results in economic return like labor supply, savings and human capital. The urban growth rate is 3.5% per annum. This high rate of population movement and pace of urbanization can be regarded as a driving force of modernization and centre of economic growth and development.

b. Governance: In order to improve public financial management, the government of Bangladesh has taken a comprehensive Public Financial Management Action Plan. With a population of 140 million, it has only 1.4 million registered income tax payers and 300,000 businesses registered for value-added tax. The government approved a strategic development plan aimed at a tax administration modernization project, fostering tax-payer service and ensuring uniform and equal treatment of business. The government is also trying to build capacity of Board of Investment and Export Processing Zone Authority to reduce administrative barriers in attracting foreign investment.

c. Exports: Bangladesh has become the 'export power house'. 'Made in Bangladesh' labels are now common in American and European stores. McKinsey, the consulting giant, has called Bangladesh the 'next china' and predicted that Bangladeshi garment exports, now about \$18 billion a year, could triple by 2020. It has already underscored the importance of exports for creating dynamism in the manufacturing sector and for the provision of high productivity and high-income jobs. Along with ready-made garments, tea, jute, leather, handicraft, fish, dry food, etc. have earned good reputation from the world.

d. Tourism: Bangladesh is a combination of forests, river line countryside, long stretches of sun-bathed beaches, fearsome wilds, venerable shrines, etc. The world's longest unbroken beach of Cox's Bazar (120 km) is situated on a clean stretch consisting of miles of sands. Sundarbans, world's single largest mangrove forest, is

special to catch a rare glimpse of the Royal Bengal Tiger in its natural habitat. Bangladesh is also crisscrossed by a network of rivers and creeks. It has rich archeological sites like Paharpur, Mahasthangarh and Mainamati. UNESCO has declared Paharpur as a World Heritage Site. In the capital of Bangladesh, it has also some outstanding monuments like Lalbagh Fort, Sonargaon, Ahsan Manjil, Husseni Dalan, Dhakeshwari Temple, etc.

e. Culture and Heritage: Ekushey February has got worldwide recognition as the 'International Mother Language Day'. Pohela Baishakh displays our rich and vibrant culture and heritage. Our food culture can be focused as cuisine can be a powerful agent for shaping public perception. Bangladesh has also a diverse culture of tribal people that can be promoted as well for nation branding.

f. Investment and Immigration: In order to provide infrastructure facilities, government has established Industrial Park, High Tech Parks and EPZ. Economic zone can be set up by local or foreign entrepreneurs or organizations. To reduce power shortage, the government invites the private sector power generation companies. Special incentives have been announced for using Biomass, Solar and Windmill based power. The government has also introduced tax holidays for developed and underdeveloped areas. FDI has increased significantly over the years. Flow of remittances in Bangladesh is around six times higher than it was a decade ago. In 2011-12, it was \$ 12.17 billion that made possible to earn positive balance of payments.

In 2006, the winning of Nobel Peace Prize by Dr. Yunus, was a great achievement for Bangladesh. Infact, the cricketers of Bangladesh also made us proud by making a significant position in the World Cricket. In the Nation Branding Hexagon, the researcher has replaced Governance with Sport as the governance of Bangladesh has mostly bad impression around the world due to poor law and order, corruption, political violence, etc. whereas sport has already achieved a good feedback from the world, specially cricket. These achievements sometimes reduce the bad impression of Bangladesh and help to achieve a good impression in front of the world.

5. CONCLUSION

There are around 195 nations in the world who are aggressively competing for the attention of investors, tourists and citizens. So it is time to plan a nation branding strategy that must consider two objectives. First making the citizens attached to the brand. Also it is necessary to improve people's standard of living so that a citizen really feel proud of his / her country. Second the brand strategists should concentrate on branding the country beyond the border. Its success depends on how far they can reduce the gap between a native's perception and a foreigner's perception about the country. Country brand strength is a nation's ultimate intangible asset that helps to stand out regionally and globally and to realise future ambitions beyond its geographic size, financial performance or levels of awareness. When a product or service is identified with a strong nation brand, it has a better chance of premium pricing, longevity and preference in emerging markets. On the other hand, a poor nation brand leads to poor differentiation, ambiguous meaning and low recall in the minds of people who travel, consume and do business beyond the border. Nation branding provides the glue among political, social and economic pillars. It defines how a country's own citizens and the world perceive it. It balances substance and form perception and reality. It enhances a nation's ability to achieve its objectives across foreign policy, FDI, trade, tourism, etc. It delivers a unifying platform that builds synergy, allowing for cross-promotion and alignment across the public and private sectors.

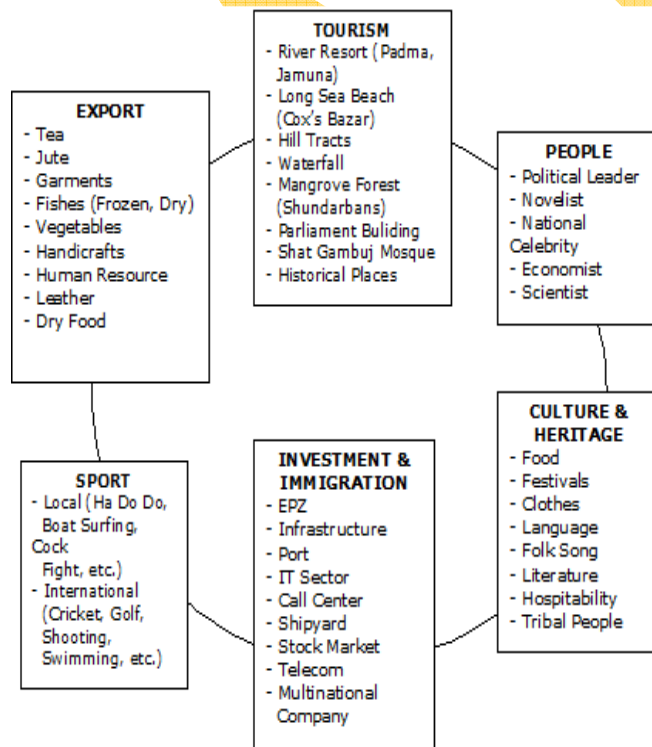


Figure 03: Nation Branding Hexagon for Bangladesh (Adapted from Anholt, 2002)

The government should come up with an aggressive but distinct nation branding campaign immediately. The basic principle underlying any success in nation branding is coordination, a shared vision and a shared strategy for all sectors in the hexagon. Also clever positioning is important. Bangladesh has to find a niche that it can truly own, always underline that one strong point and keep repeating this tiny feature, which is unique, distinctive and good. Only the government is not liable, or even capable enough to enhance national image. Each citizen should contribute according to position and ability. Media can play the most significant role in this respect. Therefore, everyone should come forward to make a successful nation branding platform for our Beautiful

Bangladesh that will bring not only name and fame but also huge foreign currency.

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