

A Qualitative Study on Scopes and Gaps in Re-Branding Bangladesh Through Effective Communication

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Abstract

This study investigates the scopes and gaps that Bangladesh has in terms of re-branding her existing image throughout the world. Equally, the study also examines the consequences that Bangladesh is facing due to lack of effective communication. The topic has been chosen to find out all possible ways of correcting the existing negative image of Bangladesh around the world. To address the topic properly, the researchers have identified one general objective and five specific objectives. One of the objectives is to examine the importance of effective communication and how a well-planned effective communication can reduce existing gaps in re-branding Bangladesh. This research paper aims to find out that dedicated team, i.e. the opinion leaders of Bangladesh who can play a vital role in evoking the positive image in re-branding Bangladesh. This study also emphasizes on strengthening the scopes that can help the re-branding process more effectively. A qualitative research approach has been applied to conduct this research. The data has been collected through semi-structured in-depth interview and focus group discussions. While choosing the participants, the researchers used the purposive and the snow-ball methods to collect more verified data from the participants. Findings from the data analyzed show that Bangladesh lacks proper communication with both external and internal stakeholders. These gaps should be reduced in order to practice a proper and effective communication and to enhance a positive image of Bangladesh around the world.

Keywords: Bangladesh, effective communication, public relation, re-branding

Introduction

"Perception, unfortunately, always trumps reality"

This is how Simon Anholt, the policy advisor, place brand expert and the founder of Good Country Index has defined, how a good or bad perception about a country can win or lose the attention of the people (Anholt, 2013).

21st century is being led by effective communication and international relations are being more prioritized to make a stronger bridge between governments to government. Professional communicators are being appointed to empower and uplift the image of the individual countries making a brand perception throughout the world. A proper communication at the national policy and strategy level can enhance a country to create a brand image for itself or recreate a new image in the eye of the world erasing the previous negative image. At this moment, countries around the world are emphasizing on building and re-building their brand image using the potential and existing but undiscovered attractions in persuading a positive picture in the communications, and Russia is one of the potentials on the race right now (Simons, 2011).

Over the last decade, various nations have hopped on to the brand wagon, embracing slogans as "Incredible India", "Malaysia, Truly Asia" and "Drink Finland." By promoting social sends out, countries tend to tap an endless global market throughout. And nation-branding can be a frame of "soft power," a way of picking up back-door impact within the worldwide community. Countries have continuously looked for to impact how the rest of the world sees them (Zax, 2013).

The aim of this paper is to find out how the world is seeing Bangladesh as a country and how is brand image of this country worldwide. To re-brand the existing image of Bangladesh, it is necessary to find out the problem that comes as a barrier in re-branding Bangladesh.

Re-branding a country with negative image can be quite difficult but not impossible at all. Before planning the strategy to re-brand a nation or country, policy makers needs to find out the scopes and gaps first. Two things should be considered mainly in this case, a proper infrastructure and peoples' skill or talent.

Like any other developing countries, Bangladesh has its own shortcomings and those are more recognized by the world itself due to the lack of proper communication and proper marketing strategies to uplift the positive image of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is quite a well-equipped and well-resourced country which is developing every single day ever since she got independent after the 1971 war against Pakistan. Despite of all other natural disaster and obstacles, Bangladesh managed to come this far and competing successfully with many other developing and developed countries.

In spite of all these struggles and effort, Bangladesh is still known as the most densely populated country with poverty only according to the report (BBC News, 2018). Recently the Islamic terrorism attack in 2016 in Gulshan Holey Artisan Café has 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 re-brand the image of Bangladesh (Shahan Tinne, 2013).

However, there can be confusions on the concept of rebranding a country or a nation especially if it has negative image like 'terrorist', 'rogue', 'Poor' or 'weaker' throughout the world. Surely nations with these images have a long way to go to achieve a stronger position having a positive rebranded image about them (Krishna, 2011).

Even forty years back, it was known as a country of flooding and overly populated country, and still the world media is portraying Bangladesh as the same like before. Bangladesh has moved towards inimitable success in both economic and socio sectors and hope the world media will also move on. Bangladesh is the only country that fought for her language and achieved it. It is also the second largest exporting country in ready-made garments and seventh largest country in earning remittance. 66% of the entire population is workable here, where 60% of that 66% is young generation. Bangladesh has numerous brands in product and service but branding the country itself is a very new concept in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi cricket has also helped Bangladesh to enrich the brand image of Bangladesh and made her a world recognized nation throughout the world (District Branding Strategies draft for constructing Bangladesh, 2018).

Finally, to present Bangladesh at the formal platform of the world, Bangladesh started a campaign, 'Beautiful Bangladesh' back in 2008. To add with that, Bangladesh has also targeted the goal to upgrade them as the 'Middle Income Country' by 2021 using information technology through the campaign, 'Digital Bangladesh' (District Branding Strategies draft for constructing Bangladesh, 2018).

In spite of being a well-resourced country, Bangladesh failed to portray an actual image of 'Beautiful Bangladesh' in the eye of the world. Irrational political pressure, lack of proper marketing strategies, proper steps from opinion leaders and lack of well maintenance of the resources could be few of most crucial obstacles in making a positive brand image of Bangladesh around the world.

According to Anholt, a fantastic brand image comes from the fantastic services provided by the fantastic product, sold to a fantastic large number of consumers. If the consumers get a good service buying the product, they will perceive a powerful brand image about the product through a good reputation. Gradually the reputation will empower the non-users as well. The brand image will get stronger spreading the reputation in wide range (Anholt, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, worldwide practitioners from the field of communication have been engaged to improve the image of the countries for different target groups, e.g. tourists, citizen, different governments, and the media of course through which things get the maximum exposure these days. There was a time when it was practices among the developed countries only but now days, many other developing, struggling and under developing countries are also allocating some specific budget in the communication field to develop the brand image of their country worldwide. It is high time now to find out the strategies and approaches and communicate those with the policymakers for further steps towards re-branding the image of countries (Herstein, 2016).

This study briefly discusses the scopes that Bangladesh can use as her strength to rebrand herself outside its territory looking at the gaps that have been overlooked for a long time. A proper attention is required in fixing the loopholes to make a greater filling in overcoming the negative image that Bangladesh has now.

Before curing any disease, doctors need to identify the symptoms first and then only it is possible to go for remedies. The same way, before attempting to demolish the negative image of anything, it is important to know the reasons that caused

the negative image. Therefore, before re-branding Bangladesh, it is necessary to find out the reasons that are holding her back from presenting herself as a positive progressive Bangladesh. Therefore, this paper aims to find out the gaps in effective Communication in Bangladesh and how those gaps can be used as strength along with other existing scopes to re-brand the image of Bangladesh around the world.

Theoretical Literature Review

Many theories have been reviewed to support the research and for critical analysis from different perspectives. Most of the time, consumers try to have an overall idea of the product or service that they are planning to buy. Either they do an extensive research online or they take peer suggestion before buying it. This pattern of behavior of having a certain insightful idea about anything is known as perception.

Market researchers often study the purchase behavior of the consumer to understand their decision better. Things that influence the consumers to buy any product or service are the key point of study by the market researchers. Consumer Perception Theory can be used to design a campaign for a product or service or to understand the psychology better of the consumers. This perception is the successful positioning of a product by the marketers to build a brand image over a product. These marketers deliberately put an effort to make the product or service distinguishable than the other competitive product available in the market (Flamand, 2018).

Before trying to rebrand the image of Bangladesh, a good number of market researchers are required in the field to know the world perception about the country and what should be done in repositioning the image of Bangladesh through proper implication of well-crafted plan.

The Spiral of Silence theory refers to that minority group who remain silent about their view when it comes to voice their opinions. This theory explains that people or any community tends to keep quiet about expressing their opinion when they know that they belong to the groups of minority. The ratio of opening up about certain opinion or belief depends on the opinion more favorable by the majority. If the opinion is less likely the majority, the minority group tends to be less expressive about it (Universiteit Twente, 2018).

On the other hand, Agenda Setting Theory has a powerful influence over media. Agenda setting theory discusses the power of the mass media in making an issue as a public agenda. Once an issue succeeds to draw the attention of the public concern, it becomes the center of attraction around the world. Mass media has the power to frame any issue according to their agenda, mass media has power to color any issue for their targeted audience and thus they shape and influence the public opinion and agenda (Zain, 2014).

Cultivation Theory suggests that high viewer audience seems to believe whatever is shown in the mass media. It discusses about a psychological state of mind where people start believing that the world is a worst place to live in and everything surrounded is bad. A negative idea spreads over and people tend to believe that as a reality. These negative ideas do not create misconception about violence only but also enlarge the misconception about different country, their culture, political stands etc. Cultivation theory has gradually taken the whole ground of mass media. Mass media these days change our perception towards every single thing in different way. The media cultivates stereotyped ideas upon audience mind manipulating the power one nation and culture holds onto (Davie, 2010).

Social media is the most popular media at this media and people hardly depends on the traditional media like television. They can watch and read all the whereabouts the world through social media or digital media. The world media has shown Bangladesh as one of the worst places to visit in. as a result the general audience do not see the real progressive picture of Bangladesh. Hence, the ratio of both tourist and investors are comparatively less in Bangladesh.

Marketing scholars believe that, implied marketing strategies can fall hard in case of any one missing elements of AIDA. The whole idea of this model is to create 'awareness' in-between the consumers about the product. Once the awareness promotion is done successfully, the consumer will automatically be 'interested' about the product. As the consumers get interested about the product, they will feel a 'desire' to experience it. And finally, that desire will lead them to 'action' as per marketers plan (Suggett, 2018).

The reasons of the negative image of Bangladesh at this moment can be the effect of consumer perception theory and spiral of silence. The world media does not convey quite a good feedback about Bangladesh therefore the foreigners tend to have a negative perception about Bangladesh and avoid visiting or investing in Bangladesh. On the other hand, being

one of the youngest countries, Bangladesh has the fear of being isolated and as a result she keeps quiet and refrain herself in voicing her opinion, which can be defined by the spiral of silence theory. In order to overcome this situation, Bangladesh needs to set policy agenda to establish her as one of the fastest growing country around the world. Having this objective, it is really important to cultivate the goals in both external and internal stakeholder mind. So, using cultivation theory would be the best choice in this scenario. Once, strategically all plans are set, policy makers will have to implement the strategies carefully so that it removes all the negative stereotypes from the stakeholders and creating an awareness about Bangladesh which will lead them to action. Therefore, the AIDA Model will be a perfect choice at this phase.

Research Design and Methods

Qualitative research method has been used as it best fits the paper. This research demands in-depth analysis from the opinion leaders, policy makers and the people that occupy higher positions in the society who have the profound knowledge and insight about the present situation of Bangladesh around the world. All the primary and secondary data have been collected from Bangladesh as it is the most appropriate place to facilitate the research. Research design has been followed to find the closest and authentic result. The researchers use the non-probability sampling method under which the purposive and snowball techniques were followed. The participants or population for the study is selected purposefully in this technique.

The sample population for this study is all the concerned high officials from the selected field required to conduct the study. In total 13 active participants were involved in this study from the targeted field of study. There were focus group discussion and in-depth interview involved in the research to get the best result. Since the entire process is a bit unstructured or semi-structured, it might be one of the most difficult phases in research. The researchers therefore used inductive approach to analyze the data.

Data Analyses

The objective of this research is to diminish the negative image of Bangladesh and to create a new brand image of her. The researchers have tried to find out the obstacles blocking the way of re-branding Bangladesh and present a brand fresh image in front of the world. One of the most common anticipated obstacles in re-branding Bangladesh is lack of effective communication both internally and externally.

The researchers believe that, through effective communication in every little step, it is possible to create a brand new image of Bangladesh. Hence, this paper tries to find out the possible solution to reduce the gap in effective communication and how the scopes can be used effectively.

To collect data, the researchers used focus group discussion, in-depth interview and content analysis approach. In total, 15 interviews were conducted; in fact one of the interviews was taken through telephone with prior appointment. There were 3 focus group discussions as well with the concerned participants. The entire interview has been recorded with the prior permission of the participants. Most of the interviews continued for about 2-3 hours. The participants switched code between English and Bengali as all of them were Bengali speaker. For the convenience of the study, the entire conversation has been translated into English. There was not any fixed set of questionnaire for the participants. Rather, it follows a semi-structured interview format while taking in-depth individual interview or focus group discussion.

There is a set of techniques that can be used to identify the themes, patterns or relationships on the basis of the responses from the participants during interview. The paper tries to find a connection following those techniques. One of the most effective techniques to find a co-relation with participants' responses is 'word and phrase repetitions'. The researchers used this technique in order to organize the collected data (Research-Methodology, n.d.).

Discussion and Research Findings

After conducting the interviews, the researchers found some common factors that almost all the participants were concerned with. It shows that, Bangladesh is stuck in some common ground and if those things can be sorted out, the scenario of Bangladesh will change eventually.

To bring out the positive sides of Bangladesh and to present it in the global platform, a proper communication with the key concerns are required to connect with all responsible personals to spread the news around the world about Bangladesh. For instance, a constant communication with the western media, taking part and having strong stand in global issues,

making strong strategic marketing plan to introduce Bangladesh as one of the safest destination to invest and visit, having good relation with the foreign diplomats and joining more international conference and seminars can a positive market in the world market about Bangladesh. Along with having a proper communication with the external stakeholders, a proper communication with the internal stakeholders is also required. This is more important to create a concrete ground for future growth of Bangladesh.

The data collection method of the research has included participants from both public and private sectors. And people from both the sectors have come out with this same common issue. From both in-depth interview and focus group discussion, the research found that, there is lack of joint effort in working together for a common goal from both private and public sectors. When it comes to work on anything related to the country, the private sectors need approval from the government sectors. Most of the time, the approval is delayed or denied for the chain of command ruling in the authoritative positions.

Once both the public and private sectors are ready to work together in this particular matter, they need to come up with strong marketing strategies and other relevant approaches to make it to next level. From the data analyses, the researcher has found that there is lack of consistency in the projects that are being taken care of at this moment. It takes years to get approval from one sector to another and internal board of members sometime are not co-operating with each other to finalize a matter. There are a lot of project that started long year back for re-branding Bangladesh, but due to lack of continuation the audience or the concern project members have already forgotten and lost their interest form it. At the same time, new projects are being included without having a proper backup plan or group of people to look after the previous projects. These unstable approaches of handling different project should stop.

Bangladesh needs more result oriented people in every sector. People having 'go get' attitude only can help Bangladesh to achieve the goal. Prompt decision needs to be taken when it comes to any approval. And the other common issue that has been addressed by the participants is budget allocation. Apart from the big companies or organization, most of the organizations do not have a proper budget allocation for CSR (corporate social responsibility) or any other funding for the welfare of Bangladesh. Since Bangladesh is still a developing country, she has other thousand things to fix first and thus the allocated budget is quite low.

It has been observed that, in different organizations, be it private or public sectors, experts from different countries around the world are being appointed in higher position. Even though 45 million young population of Bangladesh are now unemployed at this moment, they are not being hired due to lack of expertise and real life experiences. The education system in Bangladesh is still quite book based and it needs to be changed. Apart from the class room based education system, the students need to provide more hands on experience so that they can use those experiences in their work life. For instance, many young people are working in the field of communication, journalism and advertisement without having any educational background on those fields. As a result, first few years of the career become a nightmare for them as they do not have any proper education or primary knowledge and etiquettes of their job. So, it is very important to emphasize on hands on training and a changed curriculum in the educational institutes.

The basic infrastructure of Bangladesh has not yet been developed compared to other developed nations. Therefore Bangladesh is lagging behind to connect with the other countries. As a result many business dealing are not seeing the success even though having lots of resources to do so. The transportation and communication system needs to be developed for a better connection with the other part of the world.

Unstable political situation in Bangladesh is one of the major obstacles in changing the current situation of Bangladesh. Every leading government has their autocratic attitude over the country and the citizen. On the contrary, the alternative opposition panel has always made the situation more chaotic for the citizen. The political leaders need to be more responsible in their action and should not forget that their main concern should be serving the general people of Bangladesh not to support their incapable member of the political team.

On the basis of the participants' feedback, the most important tools in re-branding Bangladesh should be eco-tourism, RMG (readymade garments), Cricket as sports and remittance. Bangladesh has humongous prospects in these sectors. A proper nurture and well planned execution in strategic marketing planning can only achieve the success in re-branding Bangladesh around the world.

Bangladesh has many places for tourists' attraction and many resources to export in humongous amount around the world. She has the largest number of young workforce at this moment in the history that can change the shape of the country

overnight if proper guidance and training can be provided to them. Currently Bangladesh is doing really good in the famous sport, cricket and she has world class top ranked players in this sport who are well recognized for their performance worldwide.

In spite of being a very resourceful country, Bangladesh is yet to recognize herself as one of the fast growing countries around the world due to lack of her communication skills with concern authorities. Bangladesh has already fulfilled MDG (Millennium Development Goal) set by UNDP back in 2000 (UNDP in Bangladesh, 2015). Bangladesh needs to inform the world that she can be good hub for investment or a place of destination for tourism. And for this, it is required to follow some common communication tools through mass media.

More research should be done on this topic, not only for education purpose but also to find out way out to help Bangladesh as a whole. This research can be more resourceful if the same phenomenon can be studied from the external stakeholders' point of view. For instance, in-depth interview with the foreign delegates, journalists and diplomats can bring more variety into the studied topic. There should be a tie up with the government sector to study on similar kind of topics that relates the country as a whole. This will encourage the researcher more to go deep down of the topic and bring out the most possible ways outs.

Conclusion

Based on the research done during the study, the researchers found some gaps which are obstacle in re-branding Bangladesh. She lacks proper communication with both external and internal stakeholders. These gaps should be reduced in order to practice a proper and effective communication and to enhance a positive image of Bangladesh around the world. Bangladesh has many talents and to nurture those scopes, Bangladesh requires proper strategic marketing plan and those plans need to be implemented in a disciplined manner afterwards. The prospective opinion leaders have been addressed in this study as participants and their role has been identified as well to overcome all negative images that Bangladesh has now. Being one of the youngest countries of the world, Bangladesh is doing pretty well. Now it is time to let the world know about the Beautiful Bangladesh and its features.

Recommendation

There was lack of available research paper on the topic. As a result researchers had to struggle to find out relevant work for the literature review section. Both the public and private sectors need to come forward with more research project about Bangladesh so that it can help the future researcher with authentic information. It was very tough to reach out the people in the government sectors for the high maintained protocol. This should be bit relaxed for the researcher so that they can meet the hierarchy and have information in detailed manner. Due to time constrain, the researcher had to let go of few of the appointments with the targeted participants during the data collection process.

As mentioned earlier, this research was quite a time consuming and since it used qualitative research method, the study requires more in-depth analysis and observation on the topic. This research topic is quite broad for a limited time limit to conduct and finish the study with satisfaction. More research should be done on this topic, not only for education purpose but also to find out way out to help Bangladesh as a whole. There, there is always a room for further studies regarding this topic. A mixed method of study can be recommended for the future study. This research can be more resourceful if the same phenomenon can be studied from the external stakeholders' point of view. For instance, in-depth interview with the foreign delegates, journalists and diplomats can bring more variety into the studied topic. There should be a tie up with the government sector to study on similar kind of topics that relates the country as a whole. This will encourage the researcher more to go deep down of the topic and bring out the most possible ways outs. It is very difficult to get the permission of the higher authorities for interview; government permission can make the process easier for the researchers.

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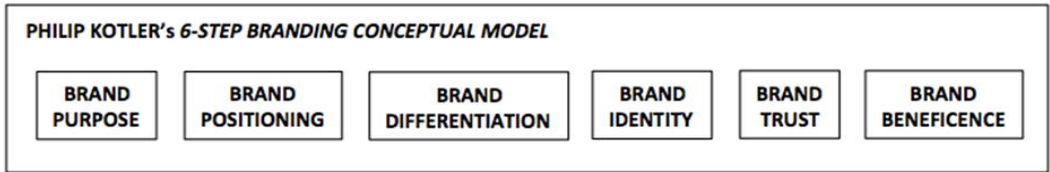


Figure 1: 6-steps of conceptual model

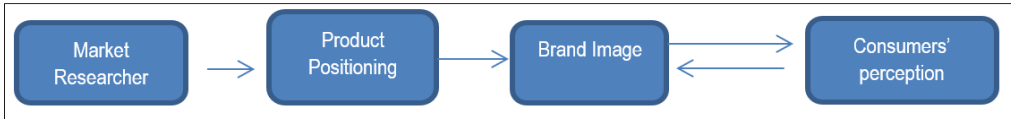


Figure 2: Consumer perception process



Figure 3 AIDA Model

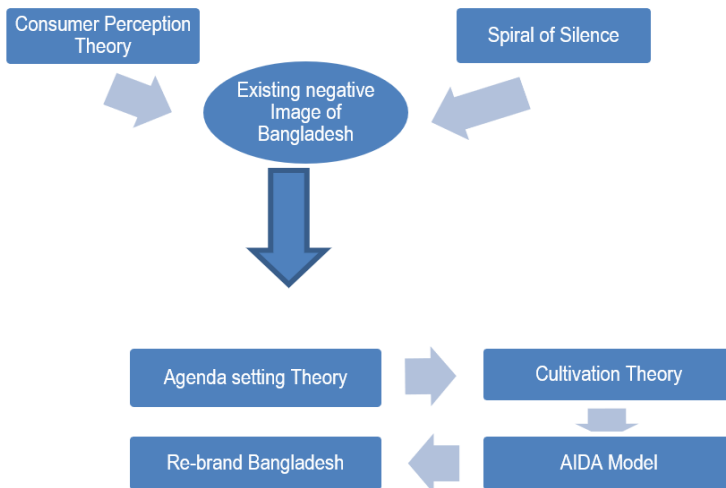


Figure 4: Theoretical Framework for re-branding Bangladesh

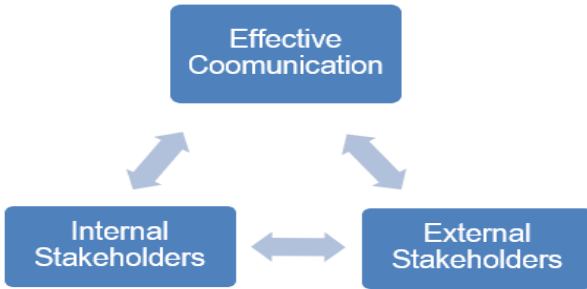


Figure 5: How does an effective communication works

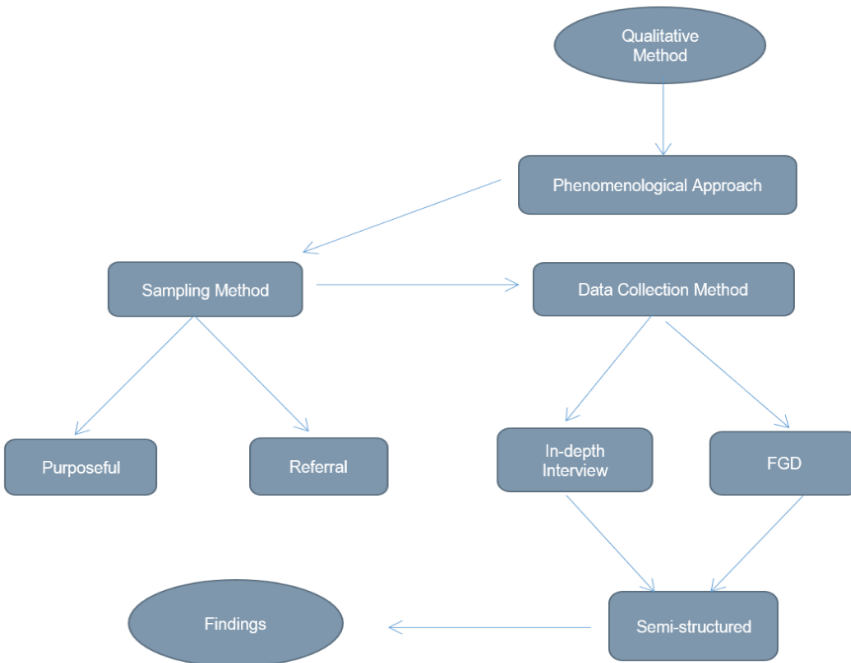


Figure 6: Research Methodology

SL	Participant	Age range	position	Year of Expertise	Field of expertise
1	Participant 1 (Bangladesh)	40-45	Industry Promotion Specialist	20 Years	Journalism, communication
2	Participant 2 (Bangladesh)	30-35	Senior Reporter	15 Years	Journalism
3	Participant 3 (Bangladesh)	35-40	Head of Marketing & Communication	18 Years	Marketing, Communication

4	Participant 4 (Bangladesh)	45-50	CEO & Managing Director	26 years	Marketing, copywriting, advertising, event management, movie making
SL	Participant	Age range	position	Year of Expertise	Field of expertise
5	Participant 5 (Bangladesh)	40-45	DGM	20 years	Public Relation
6	Participant 6 (Canadian)	45-50	Programme Specialist	15 years	Sexual and reproductive health, adolescents and youth, psychosocial support

Table1: Individual In-depth Interview

SL	Participant	Age range	position	Year of Expertise	Field of expertise
1	Participant 7	40-45	Manager (Training and foreign liaison)	25 Years	Communication, Marketing
2	Participant 8	40-45	Manager (ICT Division)	25 Years	Information Technology
3	Participant 9	40-45	Manager (PR & SP)	25 Years	Public Relation

Table 2: Focus Group Discussion-1

SL	Participant	Age range	position	Year of Expertise	Field of expertise
1	Participant 9	35-40	Associate Director	15 Years	
2	Participant 10	35-40	Sr. Manager, Creative Operations	17 Years	Advertising
3	Participant 11	45-50	Sr. Art Director	23 Years	

Table 3: Focus Group Discussion-2