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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

This issue of the Journal of Business Administration (JBA) is being brought out to celebrate 100 Years of the University of Dhaka and 50 Years of Independence of Bangladesh. The theme of this Dhaka University Centennial Special Issue is ‘Nation Branding Through Business’. On this auspicious occasion, we would like to remember the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with utmost respect and gratitude.

With the vision to provide tertiary education, the University of Dhaka started its journey in 1921. The mission of the university has always been to uplift the educational standards for the people of this region. This institution has contributed significantly to the socio-cultural and political development of this region, which is now Bangladesh. In addition to its contribution in creating and disseminating knowledge, the university takes great pride in being an incubator of ideas, nurturing renowned scientists and academicians, great leaders, policymakers, bureaucrats, technocrats and entrepreneurs.

In today’s globalized and highly competitive world, it is imperative for a nation to be part of the global value chain. As the products and brands trades across the borders to capture the global consumer market, a strong and unique nation brand is extremely important to create differentiation and gain an edge over competing nations. Under this circumstance, Bangladesh must create and establish itself as a brand in the world market to ensure its transition to a developed nation. The concept of nation branding consists of several aspects of a country’s competence, namely, tourism, exports, governance, people, culture and heritage, investment, and immigration. From a business perspective, a strong and positive image of a nation is immensely important to differentiate and outperform the competitors, access the global financial markets, and attract foreign investments and opportunities.

This special issue aims to promote dedicated research on nation branding, to theoretically advance understanding of the concept and its myriad aspects. Scholarly articles were invited from different functional areas of business focusing on innovation, excellence, leadership and strategies, technology adoption, networking, and others that can provide a competitive edge to the businesses of the country and create a distinct position in the global economy.

The nation's journey from 1971 to the current date is nothing short of inspirational. From a bottomless basket, Bangladesh has transformed itself into a role model for the developing world in terms of alleviating poverty, achieving success in the health and education sectors, and fighting climate change. In 2018, Bangladesh graduated from a lower-middle-income country. As of 2022, the country is on a trajectory to establish itself of being a developing nation by 2026.

We, the editorial board, strongly believe this tremendous journey is only the beginning. While we celebrate our achievements, we must accept greater responsibility and address emerging challenges. At IBA, we are wholeheartedly committed towards contributing to the the development of the nation by cultivating the leaders of the future. The publication of this journal is a testament to that commitment. Through this, and future endeavors, JBA aims to create and disseminate knowledge that will prove beneficial to academia and industry and by extension, in crafting the future of our beloved nation.

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Dhaka University Centennial Special Issue

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CONTENTS

<i>Saiful Islam</i> Tourist Spots' Readiness and Tourists' Revisit Intention : Mediating Role of Tourists' Satisfaction and Moderating Role of Transportation Facilities	1
<i>Shakila Yasmin</i> <i>Swarup Saha</i> <i>Ireen Akhter</i> Nation Branding Through Jamdani	19
<i>Md. Shawan Uddin</i> <i>Md. Mahabub Alam</i> <i>Md. Salah Uddin</i> Measuring Trade Union Effectiveness in the RMG Industry in Bangladesh: The Mediating Effects of Buyers' Codes of Conduct	43
<i>Syed Ferhat Anwar</i> <i>Rezwanul Huque Khan</i> <i>Khaled Mahmud</i> Internal Nation Brand Equity of Bangladesh: Conceptualization and Measurement	69

TOURIST SPOTS' READINESS AND TOURISTS' REVISIT INTENTION : MEDIATING ROLE OF TOURISTS' SATISFACTION AND MODERATING ROLE OF TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Saiful Islam*

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Abstract

This study explores the effect of tourist spots' readiness on tourists' revisit intention through the mediating effect of tourists' satisfaction and the moderating effect of transportation facilities. Using convenience sampling, data has been collected from 306 tourists from eight divisions of Bangladesh through a structured survey questionnaire. The partial least square-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) has been used to assess the measurement and structural models of the study. The findings show no direct relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention in Bangladesh. However, a direct positive relationship is evident between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' satisfaction, and between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. Additionally, tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention, and transportation facilities moderate the relationship between the tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. These findings generate important theoretical and practical implications for academics, policymakers, and tourism practitioners.

Keywords : Bangladesh, Destination Image, LDC, Tourism Competitiveness, Tourists' Loyalty.

1. INTRODUCTION

Repeat visitors offer more revenue, recommend others, and contribute to branding and cost reduction (Park & Yoon, 2009). Consequently, determining tourists' revisit intentions recently received much attention from destination managers and tourism researchers (Pratminingsih, Rudatin, & Rimenta, 2014). The readiness of a tourist spot, particularly the destination's image, also received considerable attention in tourism marketing research (Pike, Pontes, & Kotsi, 2021). Therefore, understanding the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention has become significant to destination competitiveness studies (Nguyen, 2020). Besides, tourists' satisfaction mediates the destination choice, the decision of consuming tourism products and services, and tourists' intention to revisit (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Surprisingly, no universal set of standard attributes has been developed to measure tourist satisfaction across diverse destinations (Dwyer, Cvelbar, Mihalič, & Koman, 2014). Furthermore, as part of destination image, transportation facilities might positively enhance tourists' satisfaction, and influence revisit intentions (Islam, Hossain, & Noor, 2017).

* Assistant Professor, Department of International Business, FBS, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Even though tourist spots' readiness is notably associated with tourists' revisit intentions, previous tourism research on this relationship is scant, especially in developing and least developed countries (LDCs). As destination competitiveness attributes are location-specific (Dwyer et al., 2014), previous research of similar scope in developed countries might not be appropriate in designing tourism policies and services for other developing and LDCs. Tourism has a greater association with economic development and growth, which could benefit residents of LDCs with economic diversification and skills development (Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2019). Besides, authors also contend that LDCs can offer a very different tourism experience to domestic and international tourists by offering their different unexploited environmental and cultural assets. Previous literature supports that tourist spots' readiness not only directly influences tourists' decision of revisiting the spot but also generates tourists' satisfaction, and such satisfaction again influences tourists to revisit the same destination (Markus, Perovic, Pekovic, & Popovic, 2019; Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). However, this mediating role of tourists' satisfaction in the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intentions and the moderating role of transportation facilities in the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention in LDCs are not adequately researched previously.

To minimize this gap, this study explores the effect of tourist spots' readiness on tourists' revisit intention in a selected LDC and considers Bangladesh as representative. Bangladesh embraces outstanding opportunities in tourism with its forests, hills, valleys, sea, beaches, and broad rivers (Hossain & Islam, 2019). The country is blessed with two world heritage sites, the Sundarbans, the world's largest natural mangrove forest, and Cox's Bazar sea beach, the world's longest unbroken sea beach (Islam et al., 2017). These natural resources and other tourism amenities attract millions of domestic and foreign tourists to the country's different tourist spots all-round the year. In 2019, domestic visitors spent around USD 8,038.3 million (96% of the total), and foreign visitors spent USD 354.5 million (4% of the total) (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021). The industry contributed 2.7% of the national gross domestic product (GDP) and 1.86 million employees. This scenario indicates considerable potential for tourism in Bangladesh, where policymakers and practitioners require further insights.

This study addresses five research objectives, of which three (i, ii and iii) explore the direct relationship among study variables, and two (iv and v) are relevant for a better understanding of mediating role and moderating role of study variables:

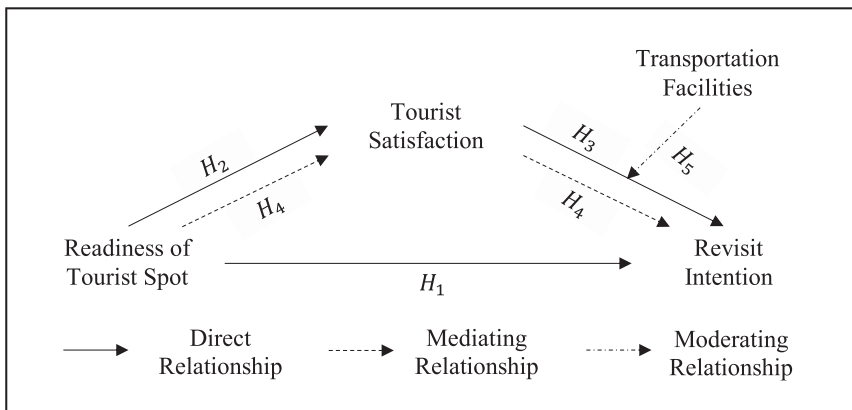
- i) To identify the effect of readiness of tourist spots on tourists' revisit intention
- ii) To examine the impact of readiness of tourist spots on tourists' satisfaction
- iii) To evaluate the effect of tourists' satisfaction on tourists' revisit intention
- iv) To assess the mediating effect of tourists' satisfaction on the relationship between the readiness of tourist spots and tourists' revisit intention
- v) To observe the moderating effect of transportation facilities on the relationship between the tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention

This study makes three main contributions. First, this study improves the current literature on tourist spots' readiness, tourists' revisit intention, tourists' satisfaction, and transportation facilities, enhancing the scope of further research in these fields. Second, the policymakers get new insights about Bangladeshi tourist spots' readiness, tourists' satisfaction, transportation facilities, and tourists' revisit intention. Policy measures are expected to facilitate more infrastructure, especially in transportation and communication, improve destination image, and increase destination competitiveness. Finally, this study outlines the role of tourists' satisfaction and transportation facilities in bringing the tourists repeatedly to the same spot, which would be an essential consideration for destination managers. Destination managers will understand how to design services and facilities to bring the same tourists and ensure a positive word of mouth and recommendation from the current visitors to the potential future ones.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the research framework and the development of hypotheses. The methodology of the study is described in Section 3. Section 4 presents the results and relevant discussion. Finally, Section 6 concludes the study.

2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

This study deals with four different variables: tourist spots' readiness is the independent variable, tourists' revisit intention is the dependent variable, tourists' satisfaction is the mediating variable, and transportation facilities is the moderating variable. The research framework is developed based on the existing literature of these four variables, depicted in Figure 1. This framework and proposed hypotheses are discussed in detail in the following.



Source : Authors' development based on previous literature

Figure 1: Research Framework of the Study

2.1 Tourist Spots' Readiness and Tourists' Revisit Intention

Tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention received much attention individually in tourism research over the last few decades. Different destination attributes create a favorable overall image of the destination, positively influencing the tourists' experience and visit intention (Phau, Quintal, & Shanka, 2014). Destination image also affects tourists' evaluation of different experiences and behavior (Herrero, San Martin, Salmones, & Collado, 2017). Therefore, the readiness of a tourist spot affects tourists' attitude toward a place or attracts tourists to visit and motivates revisit of the place (Huang & Hsu, 2009; Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfe, 2013). Nguyen (2020) proposed a positive influence of destination image on tourists' attitudes toward a future revisit. Rajesh (2013) modeled destination image as a construct that creates tourists' loyalty toward a place, expressed in revisit, word of mouth, and recommendations to others. Therefore, this study hypothesized that,

H₁ : There is a positive effect of tourist spot' readiness on tourists' revisit intention

2.2 Tourist Spots' Readiness and Tourists' Satisfaction

Previous researchers considered destination image and destination competitiveness framework to determine the readiness of a tourist spot in attracting tourists. If a destination has a positive image in tourists' perception, it is more likely to attract more tourists and increase tourists' satisfaction (Islam & Khayer, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). Researchers also argue that the presence of required destination attributes not only adequately attract tourists toward a destination but also generate expected profits for managers and make the place competitive (Dwyer et al., 2014; Zehrer, Smeral, & Hallmann, 2017). Different destination attributes positively influence the tourists' experience and generate satisfaction (Correia, Kozak, & Ferradeira, 2013; Islam & Khayer, 2018). Therefore, this study hypothesized that,

H₂ : There is a positive effect of tourist spots' readiness on tourists' satisfaction

2.3 Tourists' Satisfaction and Tourists' Revisit Intention

Tourists with a positive experience and satisfaction level are more likely to revisit the same spot or recommend others, which results in higher economic returns for the destination (Correia et al., 2013). Tourists' revisit intention is also considered an extension of the tourists' satisfaction (Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006). When tourists are satisfied with tourism products, services, or other resources, they become interested in revisiting, recommending others, and positively contributing to the destination image (Nguyen, 2020). Several researchers proposed that tourists' satisfaction positively influences tourists' loyalty, which influences the revisit decision of the tourists (Li, Lien, Wang, Wang, & Dong, 2020; Nguyen, 2020). Therefore, this study hypothesized that,

H₃ : There is a positive effect of tourists' satisfaction on tourists' revisit intention

Previous literature also suggests that tourists' satisfaction connects both tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention. The tourist spots' readiness favorably influences tourists' satisfaction, resulting in tourists' loyalty and motivation to revisit the same place (Nguyen, 2020). It can be assumed that tourists' satisfaction performs the mediating role between the readiness of tourist spots and tourists' revisit intention. Destination attributes related to transportation and communication can also influence tourists' revisit intention even when they are satisfied with the tourism experience. Transportation facilities like availability and quality of transportation services, easy access, and quality of tourism infrastructure, roads, and highways importantly shape destination competitiveness and tourists' satisfaction which might further influence tourists' revisit decisions (Islam et al., 2017; Islam & Khayer, 2018). Therefore, it can be assumed that transportation facilities moderate the tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. Therefore, this study hypothesized that,

H₄ : There is a positive mediating effect of tourists' satisfaction on the relationship between the readiness of tourist spots and tourists' revisit intention

H₅ : There is a moderating effect of transportation facilities on the relationship between the tourists' satisfaction and revisiting intention

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, which investigates the propositions by analyzing the prevailing relationship among measured variables through statistical procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). People who have visited at least once within two years- February 2018 to February 2020 have been considered for this study. Since the population is unknown, a sample of slightly more than 380 is representative (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). However, this study considers a sample of fifty respondents from each of the eight divisions of Bangladesh, constituting a sample of a total of 400 tourists. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, is employed to collect data from respondents. A structured survey questionnaire is distributed online from September 2020 to February 2021. Among the distributed questionnaires of 400, 358 replies were received, yielding an 89.5 percent response rate, which is adequate to apply the PLS-path model (Fan, Mahmood, & Uddin, 2019). However, another 52 questionnaires were found incomplete. Thus, the final sample size is 306.

Table 1 : Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars	Percentage
Gender	
Male	80.72%
Female	19.28%
Age	
11 to 20	10.78%

21 to 30	55.23%
31 to 40	20.59%
41 to 50	8.50%
50+	4.90%
Educational Qualification	
SSC	5.23%
HSC	20.59%
Bachelors/Honors	32.68%
Masters	33.00%
Others	8.50%
Average length of stay during a visit	
≤ 4 days	76.47 %
≥ 5 days	23.53%
Number of travels last 3 years	
≤ 3 times	67.65%
≥ 4 times	32.35%
Sources of Information for choosing the place	
Friends/relatives/business associates	64.25%
Media (Travel booklet, TV, Radio, Internet)	22.47%
Travel agencies	7.00%
National tourist organizations	6.28%

Source : Primary data collection, 2021

The survey questionnaire used in data collection consists of two main sections. Section 'A' comprised questions related to tourists' demographic profiles, and section 'B' comprised questions related to study variables. Table 1 shows the demographic features of the respondents. Around 80% of the respondents are male, while the rest are female. The highest percentage of the respondents belongs to the age group of 21-30 years, followed by 31-40 years. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents hold a bachelor's or master's degree, while the rest have an education qualification of SSC or HSC. Nearly 75% of the respondents stayed a maximum of four days in a place while the rest continued for five or more days. More than two-thirds of the respondents visited places three times or more in the previous three years, and the rest visited four times or more in the same period. Finally, two-thirds of the respondents mention that recommendations from friends, relatives, or business associates are the primary source of information while deciding a tourist spot for a visit, followed by media.

Table 2 : Measures adapted in this Study

Construct	No of Items	Example Items	Sources
Readiness of Tourist Spots	6	Reasonable accommodation, quality and variety of food taste and beverage, safety and security	Crouch (2011), Dwyer et al. (2014)
Revisit Intention	5	Intention to revisit within three years, intention to recommend others, friendliness of different tourism services	Nguyen (2020), Zhang et al. (2018)
Tourists' Satisfaction	10	Price of different products, natural attractions, ambiance and amenities, shopping and entertainment	Nguyen (2020), Rajesh (2013)
Transportation Facilities	3	Quality of transportation infrastructure, roads and highways, availability and easy access to transportation services	Islam et al. (2017), Islam and Khayer (2018)

Source : Authors' development based on previous literature

In addition to the demographic profile, the survey questionnaire includes the measurement of selected four study variables. Each variable employed several items where the responses to items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The items are selected based on previous research in the tourism field. The three variables- readiness of tourist spots, revisit intention and tourists' satisfaction and their associated items are selected from previous studies in other country settings, which considered the direct and mediating relationships stated in this study. Besides, transportation facilities and its associated items are selected from previous tourism studies focused in Bangladesh. The details of the variables with the sources from which items are adapted are shown in Table 2.

In the analysis of the relationship among variables, the PLS-SEM is used with the help of Smart PLS version 3. PLS-SEM assesses the mediating effect of tourists' satisfaction in the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and revisit intention and moderating effect of transportation facilities between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. The PLS-SEM is a variance-based estimation process that assesses the constructs' reliability and validity and estimates the relationships between those variables (Barroso, Carrión, & Roldán, 2010). Consequently, the data analysis method used in this research contains two sub-processes. First, to assess the measurement model in order to ensure the reliability and validity of each indicator. Second, to evaluate the structural model through the examination of the coefficient

of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and goodness of fit model, as well as testing of both direct and indirect hypotheses using a 95% confidence interval.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study predicts the relationships among the study variables using Smart PLS-SEM, where the first phase is the assessment of the measurement model (outer model), and the second phase is the assessment of the structural model (inner model) (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). The inner model determines the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables, while the outer model determines the relationship between constructs and related indicators (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014).

4.1 Common Method Bias

Before assessing both measurement and structural models, this study applied Harman's single-factor test to check the common method variance (CMV) in the data. Uddin, Mahmood and Fan (2019) suggested that if a single factor explains more than 50% of the total variation, considerable bias in the sample is possible. Thus, this study has no CMV problems, as a single factor may explain only 39.83 percent of the overall variance.

4.2 Assessment of Measurement Model

The assessment of the measurement model is required for reliability and validity, where internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are usually tested (Hair et al., 2014). The internal consistency reflects the model reliability, whereas convergent and discriminant validity reflects model validity. The reliability of the proposed model has been determined based on the Cronbach alpha and composite reliability (CR), where a model is considered reliable if CR exceeds 0.70 (Hair, Anderson, Babin, & Black, 2010) and the alpha value is more than 0.70 (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). Nunnally (1978) further supports that an alpha value between 0.50 and 0.60 is acceptable in the early stages of model development. Table 3 demonstrates that all Cronbach alpha and CR exceeded the recommended value of 0.70, confirming the reliability of the model, items, and constructs. Further, both convergent validity and discriminant validity are assessed to establish the model's validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) is used to assess the measurement model's convergent validity, where the suggested value of AVE is greater than 0.5 (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele, 2017). Table 3 presents that the AVE score for all constructs exceeds the minimum acceptable value of 0.50, providing adequate support to the convergent validity.

Table 3 : Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Construct/Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Tourist Spots' Readiness		0.968	0.974	0.861
TSR 1	0.938			
TSR 2	0.939			
TSR 3	0.946			
TSR 4	0.908			
TSR 5	0.928			
TSR 6	0.907			
Revisit Intention		0.858	0.898	0.637
RI1	0.839			
RI2	0.826			
RI3	0.776			
RI4	0.776			
RI5	0.772			
Tourists' Satisfaction		0.951	0.962	0.763
TS1	0.529			
TS2	0.920			
TS3	0.902			
TS4	0.920			
TS6	0.859			
TS7	0.926			
TS9	0.927			
TS10	0.928			
Transportation Facilities		0.759	0.862	0.675
TF1	0.804			
TF2	0.864			
TF3	0.796			

Source : Primary data collection, 2021 [Note: TSR = Tourist Spots' Readiness, RI = Revisit Intention, TS = Tourists' Satisfaction, TF = Transportation Facilities; Items TS5 and TS8 is deleted]

In the assessment of discriminant validity, Fornell and Larcker criterion and HTMT criterion have been used. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hair et al. (2010), the AVE of the latent variable should be higher than the squared correlation between the latent variable and all other variables. In addition, the HTMT value should be lower than 0.85 to prove discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, &

Sarstedt, 2015). Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate the model's discriminant validity by the Fornell and Larcker criterion and the HTMT criterion.

Table 4 : Fornell and Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Constructs	TSR	RI	TS	TF
Readiness of Tourist Spot	0.928			
Revisit Intention	0.300	0.798		
Tourists' Satisfaction	0.432	0.446	0.873	
Transportation Facilities	0.261	0.468	0.295	0.822

Source: Primary data collection, 2021 [Note: TSR = Tourist Spots' Readiness, RI = Revisit Intention, TS = Tourists' Satisfaction, TF = Transportation Facilities]

Table 5 : Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Constructs	TSR	RI	TS	TF
Readiness of Tourist Spot				
Revisit Intention	0.320			
Tourists' Satisfaction	0.443	0.486		
Transportation Facilities	0.302	0.576	0.340	

Source: Primary data collection, 2021 [Note: TSR = Tourist Spots' Readiness, RI = Revisit Intention, TS = Tourists' Satisfaction, TF = Transportation Facilities]

4.3 Assessment of Structural Model

The successful assessment of the measurement model leads to the assessment of the structural model of this study. Researchers need to evaluate the significance of the path coefficient, consider variance explanation of endogenous constructs (R^2), determine effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) to assess the structural model (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). Hence, this study considers R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 , Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) (Collinearity testing), and Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) to assess the structural model.

Table 6 : Quality Indices of Structure Model

Constructs	R^2	Inner VIF	f^2	Q^2	SRMR
Readiness of Tourist Spots		1.276	(RI- 0.004; TS-0.229)		0.080
Tourists' Satisfaction		1.130	0.075	0.134	
Transportation Facilities		1.409	0.184		
Tourists' Revisit Intention	0.347			0.210	

Source: Primary data collection, 2021

Table 6 shows the different quality indices of the structural model. Hair et al. (2014) suggested any R^2 greater than 0.20 in behavioral science is acceptable, while Cohen

(2013) suggested an R^2 value of 0.30. In this study, the R^2 value is 0.347 suggests that the model variables can explain 34.7% of the variance of the dependent variable, supporting the significant predictive power of the model. Cohen (2013) described f^2 value of 0.02 as small, 0.15 as moderate, and 0.35 as strong. In this study, the f^2 for tourist spots' readiness to revisit intention is 0.004 revealing no effect. The f^2 for tourist spots' readiness to tourist satisfaction is 0.229, revealing a moderate to strong effect. The f^2 for transportation facilities and tourist satisfaction to revisit intention is 0.184 and 0.075, respectively, revealing medium and small effects. The inner VIF score ranges from 1.276 to 1.409, supporting that the result has no multicollinearity issues. Besides, any SRMR score beneath 0.080 (Hair et al., 2017) and Q^2 value above zero are desirable (Chin, 1998; Henseler et al., 2009). Table 6 reports an SRMR value of 0.080 and Q^2 value of 0.134 for tourist satisfaction and 0.210 for revisit intention, indicating the model's sufficient predictive relevance.

4.4 Test of Direct, Mediating, and Moderating Effects

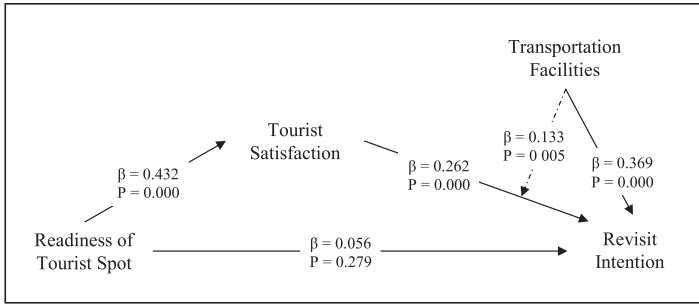
Under the structural equation modeling, all kinds of effects are studied to test the hypotheses. Hypotheses are confirmed by path coefficient, t statistics, and P value. Table 7 and Figure 2 show all the direct, mediating, and moderating hypotheses. Among the three direct hypotheses, H_2 and H_3 are accepted as with $P < 0.01$ and $t > 1.96$, while H_1 is rejected ($\beta = 0.056$, $t = 1.083 > 1.96$, $P = 0.279 > 0.05$).

This study used PLS bootstrapping to observe the mediation effect of tourists' satisfaction, particularly carried out at 5000 re-samplings to examine the t value. Results from table 7 confirm that tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.113$, $t = 3.939$ or $P < 0.05$). Moreover, Nitzl, Roldán Salgueiro and Cepeda-Carrión (2016) alluded that a full mediation occurs when the indirect effect is significant, but the direct effect is insignificant. Table 7 and Figure 2 report that both the direct relationships between the readiness of tourist spots and tourists' satisfaction, and tourists' satisfaction and revisit intentions are significant. However, the direct relationship between the readiness of tourist spots and revisit intention is not significant. Thus, H_4 is accepted or shows full mediation.

Table 7 : Test Statistics of Direct, Mediating, and Moderating Effects

HYPOS	Path Relations	β	Mean	SD	t Value	P value	Decision
H_1	TSR -> RI	0.056	0.055	0.052	1.083	0.279	Not Supported
H_2	TSR -> TS	0.432	0.433	0.043	10.084	0.000	Supported
H_3	TS -> RI	0.262	0.259	0.062	4.200	0.000	Supported
H_4	TSR -> TS -> RI	0.113	0.113	0.029	3.939	0.000	Supported
H_5	TS * TF -> RI	0.133	0.141	0.047	2.816	0.005	Supported

Source: Primary data collection, 2021 [Note: TSR = Tourist Spots' Readiness, RI = Revisit Intention, TS = Tourists' Satisfaction, TF = Transportation Facilities; R Square = 0.341]



Source : Primary data collection, 2021

Figure 2 : The Structural Model with Path Estimates

Furthermore, H_5 anticipated that transportation facilities moderate the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. Table 7 and Figure 2 reflect the significant moderating effect of transportation facilities in the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention ($\beta = 0.369$, $P = 0.00$). However, Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested that the moderation hypothesis is confirmed if the product term of the predictor and moderator (interaction term) is significant. In this study, the interaction term (tourist satisfaction* transportation facilities) generates a significant result ($\beta = 0.133^*$, $P < 0.05$, $t = 2.816 > 1.96$). Thus, H_5 is confirmed, indicating that transportation facilities significantly strengthen the positive relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention.

4.5 Discussion

This study finds no direct effect of tourist spots' readiness on tourists' revisit intention, contradicting previous research (Nguyen, 2020; Phillips et al., 2013). The relationship with a t value of 1.083 and β value of 0.056 indicates no substantial effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. So, there is insufficient statistical evidence to support the hypothesis that tourist spots' readiness positively affects tourists' revisit intention in Bangladesh. In the developed and developing countries, previous studies found that tourist spots' readiness or destination image positively influences tourists' loyalty, resulting in revisiting, word of mouth, and recommendations to others (Nguyen, 2020; Phillips et al., 2013). However, in the context of LDCs, this study contends that tourists consider other influencing and contributing factors in revisiting a place rather than solely considering its image or readiness.

In contrast, this study finds a statistically significant direct positive relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' satisfaction with a t value of 10.084 and a β value of 0.432. The result also matches some of the previous studies, where researchers established a positive association between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' satisfaction (Islam & Khayer, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). This study also finds a statistically significant direct positive relationship between tourists'

satisfaction and revisit intention with a t value of 4.200 and a β value of 0.262. This finding matches with the findings of some of the previous research, which considers a positive influence of tourists' satisfaction on tourists' loyalty, revisit intention, and recommendation to others (Li et al., 2020; Markus et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2020).

Additionally, this study shows that tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention with a t value of 3.939 and the β value of 0.113. This finding supports a few previous research (Nguyen, 2020; Rajesh, 2013). This study also shows that transportation facilities significantly moderate the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention with a t value of 2.816 and a β value of 0.133.

5. CONCLUSION

Destination managers are interested in determining tourists' revisit intentions as repeat visitors generate more revenues for the firms and recommend others. Tourism researchers and policymakers are also concerned with destination image and tourists' satisfaction as it positively contributes to destination competitiveness. Therefore, understanding the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention becomes worthwhile. Previous studies on the effect of tourist spots' readiness on revisit intention are insufficient, especially in LDCs like Bangladesh. Hence, this study determines the effect of Bangladeshi tourist spots' readiness on tourists' revisit intention. This study also considers the mediating role of tourists' satisfaction on the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention and moderating role of transportation facilities on the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention.

The findings show no statistically significant effect of tourist spots' readiness on the tourists' revisit intention in Bangladesh. Tourists in Bangladesh perceive a constant image of different spots' readiness while connecting other factors in their revisit decision. This nature of decision-making makes sense when other findings of this study are considered. A direct positive relationship is evident between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' satisfaction and between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. The tourist spots' readiness largely shapes tourists' satisfaction, which is more likely to influence tourists to revisit the same destination. Therefore, tourists' satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and revisit intention. Additionally, transportation facilities are found significant in moderating the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. Tourists, highly satisfied in their first visit, are likely to revisit when better transportation facilities are offered.

This study creates important implications for academics, policymakers, and tourism practitioners. Considering the importance of tourists' satisfaction and transportation facilities in the relationship between the tourist spots' readiness and revisit intention, destination managers and policymakers should design the tourism facilities for

all intended visitors. A holistic approach including all stakeholders of Bangladesh tourism could be a starting point to design tourism facilities that create a competitive destination image, generate higher satisfaction to visitors, and influence tourists' revisit intention. Additionally, this study broadens the scope of future research in the tourism field. Similar studies might be initiated to examine the relationship between tourist spots' readiness and tourists' revisit intention in specific tourism fields like nature, leisure, medical, education, sports, and in other LDC settings as destination attributes vary among countries (Dwyer et al., 2014). Future studies might also consider this model in examining revisit intention in the specific tourist zone of Bangladesh.

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NATION BRANDING THROUGH JAMDANI

Shakila Yasmin *

Swarup Saha **

Ireen Akhter ***

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Abstract

Nations across the world are taking different approaches to create a distinctive image about their countries or cities in the minds of people as such to create a national brand. Through nation branding countries thrive to attract tourists, accelerate inward investment, enhance export and maintain supportive diplomatic relationships. This paper focuses on Jamdani, a unique product of Bangladesh and analyzes how it may contribute in our nation branding. Thus, the aim of this article is to identify the unique features of Jamdani; explore its history and cultural heritage; the current market situation; analyze how Jamdani can contribute in nation branding; and lastly to provide a road map to brand Jamdani in international market. Both secondary and primary data are used for this exploratory research. For secondary data, different articles, books, and web-page were reviewed. For primary data BSCIC personnel in-charge of the Jamdani Palli and two large Jamdani retailers, were interviewed. Observation methods and informal discussion technique were applied at Jamdani Palli to have an overview of the weavers' livelihood, and artisan technologies. To evaluate the prospects of Jamdani towards nation branding, potentials of Jamdani were analyzed through Simon Anholt's (2003) six-dimensional model of nation branding. As a unique heritage product, originated from Bangladesh, Jamdani has got geographical indication (GI) in 2016. The multiple fine strings of different color with flora, fauna and geometrical shapes, and handmade weaving process are the unique features of this 600 years old product of cultural heritage. Presently, around 2000 weavers are producing around 60,000 jamdani products, fetching around \$40 lac from internal market and \$7 lac from international market. Given the potentials of Jamdani to nation branding this research proposes a road map to brand Jamdani in the international market following Keller, Pramassaran and Jacob's (2015) brand building block. Jamdani traders and other stakeholders can use the road map proposed in the paper as a practical guideline to present Jamdani in world market. This paper makes unique contribution to branding literature by analyzing a particular product through the lens of nation branding model and assimilating product/service branding strategies with nation branding.

Keywords : Brand Building Block, Cultural Heritage, Geographical Indication (GI), Nation Branding Hexagon.

* Associate Professor, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

** Lecturer, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

*** Professor, Institute of Business Administration, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'Nation branding' introduced by the British brand practitioner Simon Anholt in 1996 has become one of the important topics of interest to different areas of researchers (Cheregi, 2018). Anholt (2013) asserted that the fame of countries, cities, and regions works like the brand images of products and firms, and this reputation is critical to the management, progress, and prosperity of those areas. Nations across the world are taking different approaches to create a distinctive image about their countries or cities in the minds of both local citizens and foreigners. There are three main reasons for which nations are making effort to enhance their country branding: to draw the attention of tourists, to accelerate inward investment, and to improve export (Dinnie, 2008).

According to American Marketing Association (AMA), "A brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers" ([Branding | American Marketing Association \(ama.org\)](#)). When we associate the term brand with a nation, we mean some distinctive identity through which a country/nation positions itself in front of the global community as such to excel in international trade, attract flow of foreign funds in the form of investment, remittance and revenues from sale of products and services and promote positive diplomatic relationship (Nebenzahl, Jaffe and Usunier, 2003; Kleppe and Mossberg, 2006; and Yan, 2008).

In the context of globalization and increased interdependencies among the countries for survival and growth; individual countries and nations must present and maintain a positive national identity and image before the international community. Concerted efforts to build and communicate such an image can be coined as nation branding. Thus, Nation branding is seen from different angles, such as political marketing strategy (Varga, 2013), international public relations (Jordan, 2014), public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2008), social constructivism (Kaneva & Popescu, 2014), and marketing point of view (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). However, Anholt (2003) indicated six areas of national competence: culture and heritage, people, exports, investment and immigration, tourism and governance. The Bloom Consulting Index (2020) judge's brand's value of a country depending on five factors: investment, tourism, talent, country's reputation and exports. Some other elements are also considered for branding a nation, such as food, fashion, prominent personalities, etc.

Since the inception of the concept, like many other countries of the world, Bangladesh has taken initiative to create a national brand. The outcome is the launching of the tag line 'Beautiful Bangladesh' and a logo of rising sun from the waves of blue sea (Tinne, 2013). But this logo and tagline has not yet been widely publicized and recognized let alone improved Bangladesh's image among the international stakeholders. As per the Country Brand Index (Toursim) 2022 published by Bloom Consulting Bangladesh ranks 39 out of 46 Asian countries and 144 out of 203 countries around the globe. However, when the indexing is done in terms of trade, Bangladesh holds 17th position among 48 Asian countries and 45th among 206 countries across the world.

Literature focusing on branding Bangladesh mostly focused on the tourism sector or analyzed the country's prospect as a whole (Tinny, 2019; Tinne, 2013; Ahsan, 2013; and Hasan, Bhuiya and Kamruzzaman, 2013). Most Research papers focusing on Jamdani have highlighted its intricate quality, design and cultural heritage associated with it (Tabassum, 2021; Kumar, 2021; Karim & Karim, 2017 and Iqbal, 2014a). Researchers like Tabassum (2021), Bhattacharya (2014b) and Ghajnavi (2006) have demonstrated the traditional weaving technology, livelihood of the weavers. Others, such as Halder (2021) Karim & Karim (2017), Bhattacharya (2014a), and Iqbal (2014b) dedicated on the issue of GI on Jamdani and its implementations. None of these researches have evaluated Jamdani through lens of nation branding. The objective of this research is thus to evaluate prospects of Jamdani in nation branding. Specifically, this research intends to :

- a) identify the unique features of Jamdani in terms of the quality, texture of the fabric, intricated designs and themes;
- b) explore the history and cultural heritage associated with Jamdani;
- c) evaluate the current market situation;
- d) determine how Jamdani as a brand can contribute in nation branding; and
- e) to present a road map to brand jamdani in international market.

2. METHODOLOGY

Secondary as well as primary data are used for this qualitative exploratory research. Literature related to origin, history, cultural heritage of Jamdani fabric and its intricate designs and themes is reviewed thoroughly. Academic literature on branding, nation branding and its dimensions are also reviewed. Archived data from Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) were accessed to have an estimate of the current production and market size of Jamdani and its recent trends. Primary data are collected to get an updated view of the craft of Jamdani, its trading, and the potentials to associate it with national brand. Qualitative inquiries thriving to have an in-depth understanding of certain phenomenon can rely on small sample size. For a meaningful qualitative research information-rich sample and a thorough analysis of the information are more crucial than large sample size (Patton, 2002). Hence, In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected two large Jamdani retailers. BSCIC personnel in-charge of the Jamdani Palli at Narayanganj, Dhaka was interviewed. Observation and informal discussion technique were applied to have an overview of the weavers' livelihood, their community and artisan technologies. Primary data and most of the secondary data obtained from literature were thematically analyzed. The prospects of Jamdani in nation branding is analyzed using Simon Anholt's models of nation branding. Finally, to formulate the branding road map Keller, Pramesarn and Jacob's (2015) Brand building block is used.

3. UNIQUE FEATURES OF JAMDANI

Jamdani has been a coveted and adored fabric for hundreds of years with its history being rooted in the remote past. The researchers' observation of the Jamdani weaving in Noapara, Narayanganj area and conversation with the weavers reveal that

Jamdani produced in Bangladesh are completely handmade. Most of the materials used in weaving Jamdani are locally sourced and processed. Cotton yarn is produced in Madhobi region. Weavers purchase white (uncolored) yarn. Silk yarn comes from china and Jari yarn are produced locally while a portion comes from India. Local retailers sell all sorts of yarn and powdered color. As per requirement, the weavers make a mix of color and arrowroot and dip the bundles of yarn into the mix, rinse the liquid mixture out by twisting the bundle with hands and dry them in the sun. Sun dried color do not spill over.

Historically, Dhakai Jamdani or Jamdani weaved on the bank of the river Shitalakhya covering number of villages in Narayanganj and Sonargao region is well known for best quality Jamdani. According to Iqbal (2014a and 2014b), the reasons for concentration of Jamdani in this region. First of all, the area is located in the middle of places which produced 'shimul' cotton, a specific variety of cotton from which the delicate fine yarn is made to weave Jamdani. Second, the river system which facilitate the marketing activities like, supply of raw cotton and distribution and marketing of finished products. Third, the quality of the water of that area. The river 'Shitalakhya' was remarkable for the purity and coolness of its water. Since water was needed for processing cotton, it may be assumed that the water of Shitalakhya have some specific mineral mix that used to create the ambience to produce good quality yarn for Jamdani production. Fourth, the humidity of air in this region was found to be congenial. Too dry air may make the yarn hard and easily breakable on the other hand too much humidity may make the yarn too heavy to handle and make the texture kind of coarse. Fifth, the crisscrossing of rivers, which offered internal navigation and connected ports to the oceanic trade network.

The weavers and traders opined that Jamdani weaved in other geographical locations do not have the same texture and quality. Dhakai (Made-in-Bangladesh) Jamdanis have no coarse side. Both sides of the fabric are finely finished. It is really difficult to identify the front and back side of the fabric. On the contrary Indian Jamdanis are mostly machine-made, hence the back side of the fabric remains coarse which makes it uncomfortable to wear.

It is observed that flora, fauna and geometrical shapes are main themes of Jamdani. Weavers themselves create the designs being inspired by the nature and surrounding objects. Weavers and traders have validated these observations. However, the retailers interviewed reported that these days professional designers employed by big retailers are getting involved in the process. This intervention is somewhat good in terms of making the design trendy and modern while keeping the heritage associated with it.

While visiting the weaving facilities, the researchers have found that the weaving process is very intensive and time consuming. The weavers create the designs by using multiple fine strings of different color. The yarn / strings are so thin that one can barely see this with naked eye. Weavers, must have very good eye sight to craft the designs. They have to twist, turn and pull up and down at different angles to create the delicate designs. Handling the yarn with adept hands is also essential otherwise

the fine yarn will rip off. Typically, one master weaver and a helping weaver works over days to weave a piece of fabric. The time required to weave one 5.5-meter fabric (saree) depends on the design, and quality measured by the fineness of yarn or the number of yarns per centimeter length of the fabric (in other words ‘count’). Table 1 shows the required man-hour to weave Jamdani with different design and count.

Table 1 : Required Man-hour to Weave a Piece of Jamdani

Features of Jamdani		Man-hour Needed to Produce	
Design	Count	A Saree (5.5 m)	A Meter
Light floral/geometric design on the borders (‘parh’) and the edge (‘aanchol’) and lightly spread small floral/geometric shape (‘buti’) all-over.	50-60	150-250	28-45
	60-80	250-350	45-60
	80-100	350-450	60-80
Floral/geometric design only on the borders (‘parh’) and the edge (‘aanchol’) and moderately spread small floral/geometric shape (‘buti’) all-over	60-80	300-400	55-70
	80-100	400-500	70-90
Delicate floral/geometric design on the borders (‘parh’) and the edge (‘aanchol’) and gorgeous and densely spread floral/geometric shapes (‘buti’) all-over	80-100	700-800	125-145
	above	800-900	145-165
	100		

Source : Developed by the researchers based on information collected from the weavers and BSCIC personnel at Noapara, Narayanganj

Apart from the intricacy, variety, density (compactness) of design, and color combinations; the quality of Jamdani is determined by the fineness of yarn and the number of yarns per centimeter length of the fabric in other words ‘count’. Sophisticated fine design, matt color, fine finish on both sides and consistent smooth texture throughout are the special features of our Jamdani.

4. THE HISTORY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSOCIATED WITH JAMDANI

‘Jamdani’ also known as ‘Dhakai Jamdani’ can be considered as one of the prides of Bengal whose history started at Sonargaon, the old capital of Bengal along the banks of river Sitalakhya in Bangladesh. The weaving culture of Jamdani is said to have begun in the Maurya period, c. 320 B.C.E. and gained popularity during the Akbarian era (Mughal Dynasty) and earned a flared recognition during the rule of Aurangzeb (Iqbal, 2014a; and Ghuznavi, 2006).

According to some historians, Jamdani is considered to be Persian origin. The name Jamdani is thought to be taken from two words ‘jam’ means ‘flower’ and ‘dani’ means ‘vase’. However, the history of Jamdani is outlined in the 3rd century, found in an ancient economics book, named Kautaliya’s Arthashastra, where it has been sketched as very delicate and transparent silk saree. It is found in different books that a saree was so thin that it could be channeled through any Match Box. In some books, Jamdani has

been considered as Muslin. But, in reality these two resembled different fabrics with different way of waving, though motifs are same in some cases. The present versions of Jamdanis are different from Muslins in terms of fineness, thread counts and even motifs (Bhattacharya, 2014a; Bhattacharya, 2014b; and Ghuznavi, 2006).

It is believed that the early weavers used to weave Jamdani for Muslims as they used to use motifs and patterns made up of geometric representations of non-animal images like flowers, and leaves, as to use images of animal is forbidden in Islam. The Sultan of Delhi Muhammad bin Tughlak brought some Persian weavers to weave Jamdani for Muslims in the 14th century in this sub-continent. As ecological climate such as temperature, level of humidity, quality of water with minerals, is very important for producing Jamdani, all weavers from Persia therefore carefully chosen the area in and around Dhaka in this sub-continent due to its specific geographic and ecological context. Sonargaon, the old capital of Dhaka was considered as uniquely important not only for ecological climate, but because of many reasons. It was also served as an important inland port connected Bengal with the Middle East and Far Eastern countries. Thus, Sonargaon and Narayanganj region was considered as a thriving center of trade and commerce according to numerous early travelers like Ibn Battuta (Iqbal, 2014a).

Thus, Dhaka's cotton products, especially muslin became a world-renowned item of trade of commerce in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Kumar, 2021). The most elegant and expensive muslin was called MalbasKhas, locally called Jamdani which was especially manufactured for the Delhi emperor and his household. The Nawab of Bengal at that time sent MalbasKhas to the emperor as honors (Iqbal, 2014b). However, at the time of British colonialism, due to import policies favoring industrially manufactured textiles, the Jamdani and muslin industries rapidly declined. The import of cheaper and lower quality yarn from Europe also contributed behind this declination (Bhattacharya, 2014a).

With pace of time, Jamdani became popular in and around present Bangladesh. It catches the eyes of sophisticated, stylish, and elegant women of upper class of the society as Jamdani was symbol of aristocracy of that time. Jamdani became popular regardless of religion and became popular among all the women of this sub-continent. It stepped in India for its demand and trade between these two countries. In the 18th century, the artisans in the Uppada village of East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh of India started to produce Jamdani sarees, recreated with a local quality (Karim and Karim, 2017) with the technique of weaving Jamdani from 'Bengali roots', and named as 'Uppada Jamdani', which is actually diaphanous silk saree, not same as Jamdani of Dhaka.

5. CURRENT MARKET SITUATION OF JAMDANI

5.1 Market Size

Currently the craft of weaving Jamdani is surviving in around 155 villages of Sonargaon, Rupganj, and Siddhirganj (Tabassum, 2021) area under Naryanganj

district of Dhaka division. At present there are around 2000 weavers in the BSCIC Jamdani industrial city and altogether 5000 weavers in Bangladesh. The industrial city produces and sells around 60,000 jamdani products, fetching around taka 36 crores. Moreover, the market outside this industrial city also trades around taka 5 to 6 crore per year (Tabassum, 2021). Altogether it is a big market inside the country. However, we came to know from weavers and retailers that recently local market is being flooded with Jamdani from India. These Indian Jamdani sarees are cheaper, mostly synthetic and machine weaved. Middle income customers and also customers who are not properly aware of the intricacy and design of Jamdani are buying these Indian Jamdani.

5.2 The Business Model

Informal discussion with the weaver families reveals that traditionally Jamdani weaving was a family-based occupation. Children used to start learning from an early age (10-12 years), help parents and other elderly members of the family to do the task. Now a days people outside of the weaver community, even people from other regions of the country come to the weavers to learn this skill. Usually large weavers having a good number of handlooms recruit these people. They start working as apprentice. Apprenticeship takes about 6 months to one year. During the apprentice period new (to be) weavers get food, shelter, and some allowance. However, new generation of the weaver families are moving away from weaving, because weavers usually get very minimum wage e.g., around Tk 25,000 per month. They cannot live a good life by weaving only. New generation of the families are focusing more on trading of Jamdani. They are exploring networks to sell directly to the consumers. They are installing large number (8-12) of hand-looms and employing other weavers (15-20) to increase production.

As majority of the craftsman are poor, they don't have any sales center. They sell their products at the weekly 'Haat' which is maximum 60 x 80= 480 square feet space. The "Haat" starts early in the morning every Friday and continue for only couple of hours. The researchers visited the 'haat' and found out that the main buyers in "Haat" are wholesalers, some retailers and a number of well-off weavers who own and run a large number of handlooms. Businessmen who buy from the "haat" sell these items to different markets of Dhaka and other cities.

5.3 Investment, Cost of Production and Margin

By compiling information collected from the BSCIC personnel and a few large weaver families it is estimated that capital investment required to establish a weaving facility of the 8-12 hand-looms is around Tk 7-10 lac. Material cost is not high - around 15%-25% of revenue. However, the labor cost turns out to be 60%-70% of the revenue despite the substandard wage rate. The entrepreneur weaver/trader can hardly enjoy 5%-10% margin. If we take the cost of fund and selling and distribution expenses into account the net income for the owner become very low. Retailers usually buy the items on credit with 60 to 90 days term. Only a few big retailers purchase on cash.

some of the retailers have their own designers, they get the products weaved as per their design and color scheme. From this kind of large orders sometimes the loom owner/ weavers get advance payment. In such instances, they follow make to order model of operation.

6. JAMDANI'S POTENTIALS TOWARDS NATION BRANDING THROUGH SIMON ANHOLTS' MODEL OF NATION BRANDING

Anholt's hexagon of nation branding is one of the most widely used models in business literature. As we did google scholar search with keyword 'nation branding' and downloaded and reviewed about 56 relevant papers we have found that all of them have referred to Simon Anholt's Nation Branding Hexagon (Figure 1), which focuses on the nation as a whole – its people, culture and heritage, investment and immigration, governance, exports and tourism.

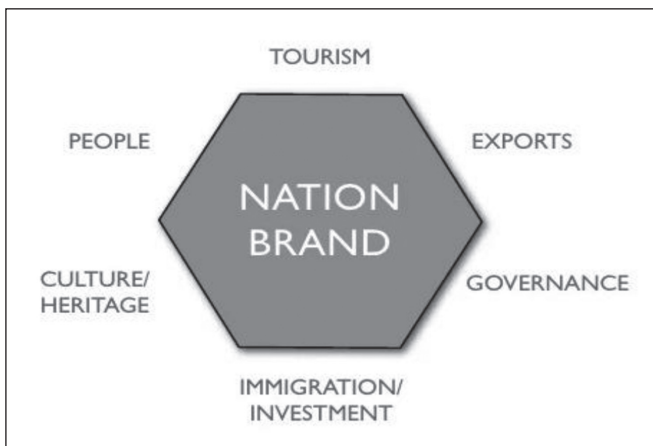


Figure 1 : Nation Branding Hexagon adopted from Anholt (1998)

In 2003, Anholt introduced Nations Brand Index (NBI) that ranks countries as per their score across these six core areas. The potentials of Jamdani towards nation branding is presented below using Anholt's Nation Branding Hexagon.

6.1 People

People aspect scores a nation in terms of general education level, openness, friendliness and other qualities of the population as well as perceived levels of hostility and discrimination in the nation.

The Sultan of Delhi Muhammad bin Tughlak brought some Persian weavers to weave Jamdani in the 14th century in this sub-continent. They ultimately migrated here and became the citizens of this sub-continent. Some of the weavers now claimed and believed that their ancestors were of Persian origin. However, now they have harmonized with the culture of this region.

Aesthetic skill is the most important skill of this community. These weavers themselves play the role of weavers as well as designers. They themselves decide the design, color, fabric (count of cotton) everything. Before weaving a saree, their artistic eyes understand its exclusiveness. They acquire this skill from their childhood when they start to give support to their parents as most of the weavers make saree at their own front yards or loom-sheds inside their homes. Presently almost 65,000 weavers are earning their livelihood from this trade. Generation after generation they are involved with this craft. Generally, they start their day in the very morning, normally from Fajr Prayer and continue up to evening. Sometimes they continue up to midnight, if required. On average, every craftsman spends their time not less than 12 to 14 hours per day and 72 to 84 hours per week. As anyone walks through the weaver's village he/she will hear the continuous clattering sound of the hand loom from the houses. The sound goes on from dawn to dusk. Barely any one will be seen loitering aimlessly or sitting idle. This represents the hardworking nature of the population in the community.

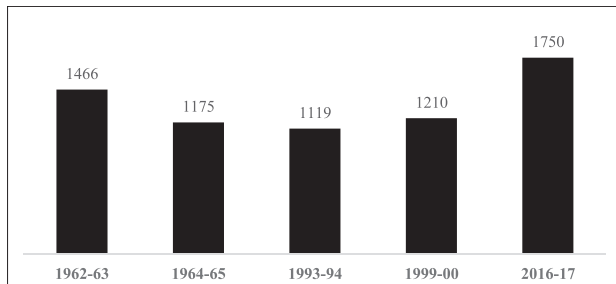
In general, the weaver community represents the closely tied families of Bangladesh irrespective of their religion, caste, social status and political beliefs. The community represents the peace loving, hospitable people of the country. So, the livelihood of the people involved with the trade and the social fabric of the community have the potential to contribute to the people dimension of NBI.

6.2 Governance

Governance aspect measures the public opinion regarding competency and fairness of national government, as well as perceived commitment of a nation's government to certain universally important issues such as democracy, justice, poverty alleviation and the environment conservation.

The government of Bangladesh has rightly pointed out the potential of Jamdani in the global market. One of the prominent initiatives taken by the government to protect and promote this heritage is the establishment of a Jamdani Industrial Estate & Research Centre.

Most of the Jamdani artisans live in Narayanganj district near Dhaka in areas such as Noapara, Dakkhin Ruposhi, Ruposhi Kajipara, Gandabpur, Shiddhirgonj, Mugrakul, Khidirpur, Imkoli, Tarabo, Khalpara, Dighborar, Khadun, Pabankul, Sultanbagh and some areas of Sonargaon upazila. Government owned organization, Bangladesh small and cottage industries corporation (BSCIC) conducted a number of longitudinal studies on Jamdani weavers and the progression of the trade (Figure 2).



(Adopted from BSCIC periodical surveys on handlooms)

Figure 2 : Number of Operating Hand Loom Units Over the Years

It is evident that the number of handloom units in operation were declining since 1962-63. It started to rise only when the government intervened through BSCIC. Starting in 1993, BSCIC completed building Jamdani Industrial Estate and Research Centre in 1999, in Noapara village in Narayangonj district at a cost of Tk 58.563 million across a land of 20 acres. About 407 industrial plots (each of about 1500 square feet) over 14.39 acres of land has been allotted to weaver-entrepreneurs. This initiative of the government has so far been a vantage ground for the artisans. As of 2017, about 3000-3500 weavers run the 1750 hand loom units in the Jamdani Industrial state and annually produce fabrics worth TK 12-15 crores. In 2020, the estate's entrepreneurs earned around Tk 30 crore to Tk 32 crore by selling around 60,000 pieces of sari, salwar kameez, panjabi, screens, neckties etc. The objective of the industrial state is to enhance the production quality and marketing, supply designs and samples that are likely to have high demand in markets and conduct research on improving qualitative standards. But somehow over the last two decades, it seems the project has lost its focus.

Recent visits to the estate reveal that development and maintenance work is inadequate in the area. The roads are dilapidated, sewerage and water distribution networks are very rudimental. BSCIC officials alleged that the entrepreneurs who have got industrial spots are not following the rules laid by the BSCIC. There are plentiful examples of how the heritage and craft of a particular region can contribute in creating a nation's identity through ample governance of the region and the trade as a whole. Therefore, the bottom line is that the area where this unique craftsmanship take place should be developed and maintained in a way to portray sustainability, safety, and a unique ambience to feel and appreciate the art, craft and its underlying legacy, history and story.

Another useful intervention of the government has been the persuasion for a Geographical Indication (GI) certificate for our Jamdani Fabric. Bangladesh has got GI on Jamdani in 2016. Furthermore, UNESCO has declared the distinct method of weaving Jamdani as a world heritage. After the recognition of Jamdani as the GI product, 66 weavers have been given the GI certificates by the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC). But they do not have any idea about

how they can be benefited from GI (primary source) as they have not received ample training, guidelines, and framework to use the tags in the production and marketing of Jamdani. There is even a paucity of relevant metrics such as the number of tagged items sold so far, the countries where the exports have been made, the customer satisfaction, etc. (Halder, 2021).

However, big retailers such as Aarong, Kumudini, and some shop owners at Sunrise Plaza, Dhaka are found to be aware of GI. But they too are not sure how they can benefit from GI. This indicates that although it has been more than 5 years since we have received the GI, we have not been able to reap any big gain from it in the global markets. Therefore, the Government should come up with proper guidelines, policies and support to reap the benefits of GI.

6.3 Exports

In terms of exports, a country is scored based on the image of its products and services and the extent to which consumers proactively seek or avoid products of the country.

Although Jamdani is highly accoladed and has already garnered a tremendous reputation in the local market, its true potential in the global market is yet to be tapped (Aiman, 2021). Sales of Jamdani in the international market is concentrated in India (around \$6.5 million in 2011) and some other South Asian countries. A large volume also goes to Bangladeshi, Indian and South Asian immigrants in Europe, Middle East and North America. Jamdani sari worth Tk 0.12 billion was sold on spot in the International Jamdani Taant Bastra Mela (Handloom Textile Fair) organized by Bangladesh Weavers Product and Manufacturing Business Association (BWPMB) in 2011. Total export of Jamdani from Bangladesh was \$4.84 million and \$10.41 million in 2008-09 and 2010-11 respectively. These numbers indicate that the popularity of Jamdani in the international market was flourishing in the last decade. But no official estimate of recent (over this decade) sales of Jamdani in the international market is available. From our interview with some traders in the weekly 'Haat' at Noapara, Narayanganj, it is revealed that a number of large Indian buyers buys Jamdani from the 'Haat' and/or directly from the weavers and resell them to Indian consumers using an informal channel. A good number of Jamdani sarees also are sent to customers abroad via mail either by the customers' relatives or friends or by the retailers themselves. This is also not a formal channel of selling. Jamdani is also sent abroad by the state as official gifts to foreign delegates. Hence, if proper policies are formulated and implemented and bi-lateral trade agreements are negotiated with the destination countries, Jamdani can be one of the significant sources of export earnings for Bangladesh.

In this regard, getting GI certification is a positive step forward to excel in the export market to build a reputation, ensure fair price, and broader access to the larger marketplace. In fact, it assures the authenticity of origin and manufacturers.

6.4 Tourism

The level of interest of the tourists in visiting a country for its natural and man-made attractions determines the tourism score in the NBI.

In many countries, handcraft is important for local tourism and can act as an alternative source of income for the local people. Handcraft is one of the most noticeable and significant symbols of the cultural identity of a nation (Mevhibe & Ozdemir, 2012).

Jamdani weavers'/ artisans' livelihood, their life stories, unique craftsmanship and even localized technologies can be showcased to attract tourists. Even the weekly Jamdani Haat that starts at dawn on Friday ends within two hours. Local weavers come to the Haat with freshly finished fabric to sell to the big buyers. This Haat has its own colorful, crowded, busy ambience. Weavers show off their work by holding the fabrics up above their head and waving them to draw attention of the buyers. They also call buyers by declaring the significant features of the fabrics and asking price aloud. This 'Haat', representing the local market culture, can be a place of visitation for the tourists.

Present Government has taken initiatives by giving spaces for weaver families and named the area as 'BASIC Jamdani Industrial State'. As mentioned earlier, the weavers do the weaving in their homes, visiting the households in the area can be of interest to the tourists. Visitors will get a feel of the context /origin of a delicate product that they would love to possess. Visitation in the community will also communicate the tale of livelihood of the craftsmen. Different tour operators have already included this area as part of 'Day Tour' around Dhaka city.

6.5 Culture and Heritage

Culture and Heritage are the image of a community that transfer from generation to generation. According to the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), heritage includes customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values and so on, which entail from both tangible and intangible elements. Tangible elements include: art, memorabilia, artifacts, clothing, food, physical spaces, products, landscapes, buildings and many more. Intangible elements include customs, tradition, values, beliefs, language, achievements, history, religion and skills (Ahmad, 2006). As per Jamdani, the fabric, its inherent fineness, inherited floral and geometric themes from the Mughal dynasty and before, and the intricate hand-made designs are the tangible elements of heritage. Moreover, the technology and tools used in weaving- the hand loom, choroka etc. are the symbol of local heritage. Historically, Jamdani is a delicate party wear for the King/ Nawab/Emperors' families, carrying the legacy of the elite class. Even these days, the person wearing a high quality Jamdani on any occasion are considered to be an elegant aristocrat. Bangladeshi women and even the women of some provinces of India wear Jamdani saree on special occasions. Hence, Jamdani represents a specific culture and heritage of Bengal.

Heritage cycle (Figure 2) conceptualized by Thurley (2005) presents how a product associated with a particular culture and heritage is propagated across communities and generations. In the first stage of the cycle, the prospective consumer identifies and understands the culture and heritage; in the second stage they value it, then they care for it and enjoy it; finally, they feel the thirst to understand it further.

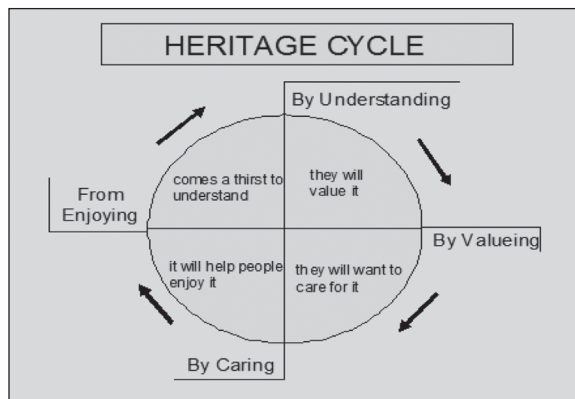


Figure 3 : Heritage Cycle Adopted from Thurley (2005)

Researchers of this study have observed from their surroundings and their personal experiences that Jamdani buyers quickly fall in this heritage cycle. Once someone gets acquainted with the culture and heritage associated with Jamdani, she/he usually values it. Upon using this, she/he feels the delicacy, enjoys it and becomes enticed to explore more about it. That is why Jamdani, although started its journey in 320 BC, is still a fondly desired fabric of attire of the new generation Bengalis.

6.6 Investment and Immigration

It estimates the power of a nation to attract people to live, work or study in a country and reveals how people perceive a country's economic and social situation.

Jamdani has the potential to attract people from across the globe to come and live in Bangladesh at least for a short term. If Jamdani as a fabric becomes popular in other countries (beyond India where it is already popular), the government of Bangladesh, private sector companies, non-government organizations (NGOs) can approach foreign investors to provide funding to boost up the sector.

Moreover, Bangladesh has got geographical indication (GI) in 2016. Bangladesh can also explore getting foreign funds to formulate policies and guidelines to implement GI and train the traders and weavers regarding ways to realize the benefits of GI. Even, foreign brands involved in the business of clothing and luxury goods may become interested in making investment in the sector if the potentials of the sector are effectively promoted in the international market.

Based on the analysis presented above, it is evident that Jamdani has immense possibilities in branding Bangladesh. It has the potential to uplift all six dimensions

of the nation brand as proposed by Anholt (1998). In order to strengthen our assertion from this section, the following section presents some evidence about how GI products like our Jamdani can contribute to nation branding.

7. HOW GI PRODUCTS CAN CONTRIBUTE IN NATION BRANDING

A geographical indication (GI) used on a product that has a particular geographical origin and possesses a reputation globally. GI is part of branding any product or place based on the cultural, natural, and traditional attractions and the uniqueness of the products that shape the local identity (Rahmah, 2014). GI certification is a sort of stamp guaranteeing the authenticity of the cultural heritage and unique localized craftsmanship, skill set and knowledge associated with the product. Marketing GI products in the global market, thereby, is a way to let the world know about the unique heritage, specialties of the product and its origin. The image of a country is the summation of impressions and beliefs people hold about a certain place or a country, which shapes peoples' perception about products or services from that place, investors' attitude regarding whether to invest, and tourists' expectations about the experience to have (Kenzhalina, 2013). Proper marketing and branding of GI products can attract not only tourists but also educationists, researchers, historians, entrepreneurs and investors from different destinations. For example, studies have found that countries benefit from the food products with GI labels (Başkaya, 2020), tourism potentials of any area with GI labels infrastructure (Misra, 2021). Hence, GI products have a significant contribution in boosting the image of a country across the borders (IŞIK & BİLİCİ, 2021). In fact, studies have found that countries are recalled with their localized food items, and this can contribute to the branding of cities.

8. A ROAD MAP TO BRAND JAMDANI

It is evident from our analysis presented so far that Jamdani, if marketed properly as such to establish a successful unique brand, will automatically contribute to our national brand. This section therefore presents a road map to brand Jamdani.

Branding activity is important to get recognition in the market, differentiate the offerings, and have legal protections. In fact, brand level assets permit firms to charge a premium price for their products or services (Agarwal & Barone, 2005). To brand any product or service, we need to follow some steps. Baliga, Joshi, and Shenoy (2019) provided a step-by-step framework for branding strategy. As per their framework there are four broad steps of branding, i.e., (i) consumer segmentations and positioning, (ii) protection strategy, (iii) brand awareness campaigns, and (iv) brand associations and judgment. These steps are highly interrelated; later steps are built on the foundations of preceding steps. Again, brand building blocks proposed by Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob (2015) provide a detailed manifestation of the later three steps of branding strategy. Hence, the branding road map we are presenting here starts with segmentation, targeting and positioning and then moves on the Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob's (2015) building block.

8.1 Market Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP)

The preliminary objective of STP is to subgroup customers with unique features and position the brand into their minds (Jewel & Kalam, 2020). According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), “Market segmentation means dividing the market into distinct groups of buyers who have different needs, characteristics, or behaviors and who might require separate marketing strategies or mixes”. For the Jamdani product, first, we need to segment the market based on the customers’ needs, and the most attractive markets or segments should be targeted. The targeting strategies can be undifferentiated (considering everyone is the potential customer), differentiated (targeting several segments with separate offers for each), concentrated (targeting to obtain a large share of a niche segment), or micromarketing (catering the needs and wants of individual customers) (Grewal & Levy, 2017). From these four strategies, we recommend that Jamdani follow the concentrated targeting strategies as this product requires special soft skills, favorable environment, extreme care, and significant time to produce, therefore, it is expensive too. Considering these, it cannot be a brand for everyone, rather this study recommends that it be positioned as a luxury product. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), “Positioning is the act of designing a company’s offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of the target market”. While positioning as a luxury item will help reap the benefit from the market, doing so calls for a meticulous strategy.

Therefore, having the market segmented and target market identified, this study proposes following the brand building blocks provided by Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob (2015) to develop a robust branding for the Jamdani. Figure 3 shows the model along with the specific sub dimensions relevant to the branding of Jamdani and the major objectives to achieve at each stage.

8.2 Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob’s (2015) Brand Building Blocks

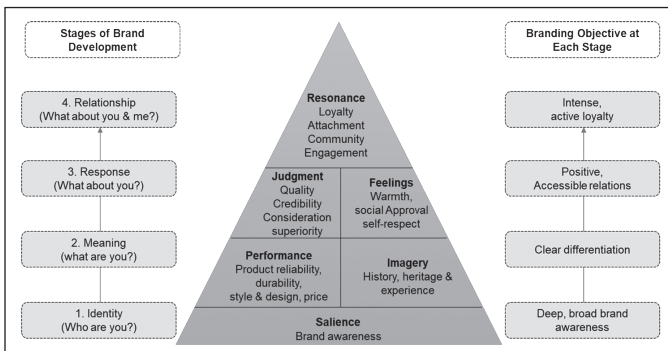


Figure 4 : Brand Resonance Pyramid (Keller et al., 2015) with Sub-Dimensions

The left side of the above model contains the ‘rational path’ to brand building while the right side shows the ‘emotional path’. Each block in the model and how that can be capitalized to brand ‘Made-in Bangladesh’ Jamdani is explained below-

8.2.1 Creation of Brand Salience

The major objective of this step is to create a broad and deep awareness about the Jamdani in the target customers' mind. In creating awareness, the emphasis should be on the Jamdani fabric (not just Saree), so that whenever buyers think of buying fine quality clothes, they consider the items made of Jamdani fabric, which can be used to produce various types of clothes. Now to develop such a brand image, an awareness campaign through multiple media should be launched. For instance, advertisements in targeted global fashion magazines, international broadcast channels such as BBC and CNN, use of suitable celebrity with a fresh image, taking part in pertinent international trade shows, etc. are some of the viable options. Apart from them, use of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube may play a vital role to reach the target audience with core messages at a low cost. However, a coordinated effort and a well thought plan are instrumental to ensure a successful awareness creation program, which, in turn, create a positive emotion about the brand and keep the brand apart from competitions. This study suggests that the focus be made on the unique expertise of the weavers of Bangladesh and the rich history of Bangladeshi Jamdani. Thus, to create that broad and deep awareness, this study proposes the following more specific ideas.

KEYWORD SELECTION : To represent Jamdani as a luxury item, it is instrumental to use some specific keywords in the communication that connote exclusivity, rarity, heritage, etc. Upon studying the history of Jamdani and talking to the weavers in-person, this study suggests some words or phrases that might be used: "100% handmade", "The ultimate royalty", "hundreds-of-year-experience" etc.

BRAND ELEMENTS : Brand elements are strong devices to create a strong brand awareness, and form a strong, positive, and exclusive brand association (Keller, 2013), such as URLs, logos, symbols, characters, slogans, jingles, packages, signage, and spokespeople.

Brand elements should be meaningful, memorable, likable, adaptable, transferable, and should be protectable as registered trademark. It is important because in the absence of intellectual property rights, the spurious products take the advantage of old fame (Bhat and Singh, 2017). Having said that, the visual aspect of the brand elements requires special care. To improve quality perceptions and boost international image, visual stimuli should play a vital role (Henderson et al., 2003). In one study, to brand the "Kashmir Saffron", Saqib (2015) emphasized on the use and importance of a graphic symbol that can point to a GI.

DESIGN OF SLOGAN/TAGLINE : Having some interesting taglines or slogans centering on a key idea is highly important for luxury brands. For the product in discussion, luxury is the center point. Along with that, this paper proposes some taglines as well: "There is no alternative to a Jamdani", "Jamdani: the true royalty you can wear", "Every style/design of Jamdani carries a rich history", etc.

CREATION OF A LOGO : Creative logos have historically been successful to represent brands globally that can be used across cultures. Thus, this study recommends that a logo be designed, trademarked, and used on original ‘made in Bangladesh’ Jamdani items. Moreover, a clear guideline on proper use of the logo should follow. Of all the brand elements, the logo offers some added advantages. Since logos can be transferred across language, nationalities, and age groups, it becomes the most memorable brand element. Moreover, in comparison to other brand elements such as background music and jingle, logos have widespread appeal with regard to the target market and usage with regard to communication platforms (Aggarwal, Singh and Prashar, 2014).

PACKAGING AND ‘MADE-IN-BANGLADESH’ TAG : There should also be well-designed packaging with a premium image, such as, the logo, the rich history and tradition of the product, guidelines to use and maintain Jamdani for durability, etc. It should be obligatory that the visual elements are displayed on the specific space of the packaging and all authorized users of the package follow the specifications strictly (Aggarwal, Singh and Prashar, 2014). Furthermore, each item should have a product tag. The tag should include the logo and “Made-in-Bangladesh” phrase which will reinforce the authenticity of the product. Moreover, it should also have information about the meaning of the design and style used, time (in hours) and manpower required to produce that particular item, and the portion of profit that will be spent for the welfare of the weavers.

BRAND STORY : Stories, if relevant to the brand, are highly powerful to raise awareness and create association with the product. Since Jamdani has a rich history and tradition, this study highly recommends to develop multiple brand stories that talk about the glorious past of Jamdani, such as how these were used to be produced with utmost care by highly skilled weavers and worn by selective royal families, how the craftsmanship has been transferred from generation to generation, etc. The ultimate purpose of doing so is to associate Jamdani products with factual and interesting stories so that customers trust the claimed expertise of Bangladeshi weavers.

8.2.2 Brand Performance

Since the product will be branded as a luxury item, it should be ensured that the product has the top-notch performance. Therefore, Jamdani fabric should not just meet the requirement only but it should aim to exceed them and it, in return, will establish customer loyalty. The Jamdani fabrics made in Bangladesh offer the best performance as they are finely finished on both sides with no coarse left on either side. Unlike machine-made Jamdani, such handmade fabric is very comfortable to wear. Since it is an exclusive product benefit that no other competitors can offer, it can be used as a strong point of differentiation. Another important part of this block is price which itself signals quality. Since preparation of this fine fabric is an arduous job and requires significant time, extreme caution and patience, this study recommends that Jamdani fabric be priced in the premium range. Moreover, to maintain the luxury image, the brand should not offer any sort of discount.

8.2.3 Brand Imagery

Here the goal is to fulfill customers' psychological and social needs by focusing on the intangible aspects of the brand. There are multiple ways that brands can capitalize on to create strong imagery. For Jamdani, this imagery can be developed by highlighting the hundreds of years of history, culture, heritage, and tradition of weaving the fabric. The focus on the product history which has its root to ancient past will be helpful to create trust in the brand. Again, to compete with the strong players in the global market, it is a good strategy for the small players from the developing country to link the product with the culture and history of the area of production (Mancini, 2013). As suggested earlier, a successful way of informing customers about these intangible aspects is through brand story which creates strong association between the product and its rich history.

8.2.4 Brand Judgment

Successful branding requires understanding the customers' personal opinions and evaluations. Brand users make judgments about product quality, trustworthiness, consideration and superiority. Customers will form an attitude towards the quality of an apparel item based on the comfort to wear, design, style, and appearance, etc. Efforts towards exceeding these criteria over customers' expectations will ensure customers' favorable judgment towards Jamdani. Highlighting that only Bangladeshi weavers have the competency to produce this fabric will ensure trustworthiness. More importantly, brand stories centering on the history will bolster the claim of unique expertise. Making customers consider the brand for purchase is challenging, as the positivity towards quality and credibility may not always translate into purchases. Hence, this study suggests further action. For instance, a portion of profit from the sale of Jamdani should be spent to train and educate the weavers and enhance their living standards, etc. A brand resonating with a strong social cause will have a higher audience, specially from the younger generation.

8.2.5 Brand Feelings

Brand feelings are the customers' emotional response to the brand and its marketing programs. According to the brand building pyramid, these feelings are: warmth, fun, excitement, security, social-approval, and self-respect. For Jamdani, the branding drives should attempt to evoke feelings of warmth, social-approval, and self-respect. The campaigns should focus on a comfortable feeling (a sense of warmth) that one may enjoy upon wearing Jamdani products. It has to be branded so that wearing Jamdani products makes customers feel like royalty, which will invoke social approval and self-respect.

8.2.6 Brand Resonance

This is the pinnacle of the brand building block pyramid, which Jamdani should reach gradually. It explains the nature of the relationship customers have with the brand. Here, the focus of Jamdani branding should be to create a 'sense of community'

among the consumers. With an increase in the engagement on social media, this study recommends creation of an online community of customers, where global customers may share their experiences of wearing Jamdani, or how Jamdani fabric can be tailored to their native-wear. An active engagement will generate a positive attitude towards this product, build up a sense of ownership among the customers, and create a loyal customer base.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper has identified the unique feature and cultural heritage associated with Jamdani. By analyzing Jamdani through the lense of Anholt's nation branding hexagon this paper concludes that 'Jamdani' fabrics have very intricated hand-made designs and specific themes resembling the long dated cultural heritage of the country it can be placed in the global market place not only as a unique product but also as a source of distinct cultural heritage. Jamdani weavers' / artisans' livelihood, their life stories, unique craftsmanship and even localized technologies can be showcased to attract tourists. If the country can market 'Jamdani' effectively, it can also attract flow of foreign funds. Jamdani thus has immense potential to contribute to Branding Bangladesh. This paper also provides a detailed road map to brand Jamdani in the world market which may be considered as a guideline for Jamdani traders and other stakeholders. This paper also makes unique contribution to branding literature by analyzing a particular product through the lens of nation branding model and assimilating product/service branding strategies with nation branding. However, the findings of the qualitative inquiry must be used with caution. The conclusion drawn here may not be generalizable, the road map presented here can not be replicated as it is in practice. In order to, formulate specific operational strategies and action plans for nation branding through Jamdani, extensive market research should be done.

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MEASURING TRADE UNION EFFECTIVENESS IN THE RMG INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH: THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF BUYERS' CODES OF CONDUCT

Md. Shawan Uddin *
Md. Mahabub Alam **
Md. Salah Uddin ***

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Abstract

The purposes of this study are to measure the relative importance of organizational effectiveness (OE), collective bargaining effectiveness (CBE), industrial relations climate effectiveness (IRCE) with the effectiveness of trade unions (TUs) and to examine the mediating effects of buyers' codes of conduct (BCoC) on TUs. This study has been conducted using a positivism paradigm and cross-sectional survey design. Based on the literature and conceptual model, ten hypotheses were drawn. A structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was developed, designed, and surveyed and had 276 responses with an answer rate of 62.73% using the convenience sampling technique. A partial least square (PLS) based structural equation modeling (SEM) approach is used to analyze the data. The study finds a significant positive relationship between the OE, CBE, IRCE, BCoC, and TUs effectiveness where BCoC results mediation relationships of OE, CBE, IRCE, and TUs effectiveness, and such mediation increase the effectiveness of TUs in protecting the rights of the workers in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. The findings of this study have significant policy implications in the Bangladeshi context.

Keywords : *Collective Bargaining Effectiveness, Industrial Relations Climate Effectiveness, International Buyers, Organizational Effectiveness, Trade Unions Effectiveness.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry is creating, now, a huge employment opportunity for semi-skilled and unskilled rural people (Akter & Banik, 2018; Meyer et al., 2021). RMG exports from Bangladesh increased by 28.02 percent to United States Dollar (USD) 19.900 billion in the first six months of fiscal 2021-22 compared to exports of \$15.545 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal 2020-2021 (EPB, 2021). Therefore, Bangladesh has already occupied the position of second-largest apparel exporting country in the world (Islam, 2021). Many studies show that most garments factories fail to gain success because of their unwillingness to improve the working conditions of the workers (Ahad et al., 2021).

* Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

** Professor, Department of Management Studies, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

*** Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

Poor working environment, unskilled workforce, political instability, low wages, inadequate infrastructure are responsible for creating instability in the RMG making huge losses to owners as well as to the government exchequer (Islam et al., 2020). The necessities of industrial workers are freedom from fear, security of work, and freedom from needs (Swazan & Das, 2021). An environment, where they are placated with their works, guaranteed a secured future, and gave their essential requirements in life implies an environment of good industrial relations (IRs) (Van Buren et al., 2021). A conceptual aspect of industrial relations (IRs) includes the organizational interactions and relationships among its actors i.e. employers, employees and their association (trade union), buyers, and the government (Tapia et al., 2015).

The trade union (TU) is a voluntary employee association to defend and upholds members' mutual interests through collective bargaining to ensure fair wages, security of a job, and better working conditions (Baral, 2018). They also protect their members from any injustice and exploitation, and against any violation by their employers (Trebilcock, 2020). The collective platform of the workers' TUs plays a significant role in protecting workers' rights and interests such as improving working conditions, ensuring safety and wages (Risak, 2017). The established TUs assist their members by sharing their knowledge and experience. This assistance develops the tools to serve the members by upholding members' rights and interests. Moreover, such type of assistance generates power to the mind of the workers' help in getting together in the workplace to talk about common problems. Therefore, collective decisions regarding the solutions of the problems of workplace issues can be democratically taken and put these views to the employer (Trebilcock, 2020).

Trade unions also find solutions that meet the business needs of the employers while the employers treat workers' rights fairly. When the workers become unhappy at work then TUs give employees a voice of supporting and improving their retention and reducing absenteeism (Ford, 2019). Unionized workplaces provide workers a satisfied mindset to work in their jobs for a longer time and such satisfaction helps to use their time at work more productively. Moreover, unions not only present themselves for keeping the interests of the workers but also for the organizations (Anner, 2020). TUs assist with the many workplace issues that can be very useful to organizations. The experienced union representatives can provide consultation services gathered from the perceptions of the workers to the organization to make better-informed business decisions (Alam et al., 2018).

The roles, powers, and efficiencies of TUs in protecting and promoting workers' rights and interests were very frustrating particularly in RMG industry in Bangladesh before the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka on 24th April 2013 (Kabir et al., 2019). Currently, the scenario has been changed particularly after the Rana Plaza tragedy. Now TUs play a valuable role in establishing jovial relationships between owners and employees in the Bangladesh RMG sector (Barua et al., 2021). Although there is a general perception that TUs in RMG industry in Bangladesh do not play their proper roles in keeping the rights of their members or workers (Barua & Ansary,

2017). Therefore, TUs experienced various difficulties radiating from declining power membership (Alam et al., 2020). For this, TUs in RMG industry in Bangladesh need to be concerned to find out the ways of effectiveness and enhancement of their positions. Therefore, the matter of union effectiveness has become a more focused issue in the working environment.

Trade unions help workers to address members' problems; make them aware of their responsibilities and rights to create a sound workplace environment (Rahim, 2017). It bargains with management over the privileges and rewards of the workers (Ullah, 2015). The TUs draw awareness from the community, government agents (GAs), and others concerning if the employers do not value their claim (Klasen, 2019). Therefore, TUs are an effective medium for employees to raise their voices and protection of the rights of workers in Bangladesh's RMG sector (Sultan et al., 2020). It is equally crucial that workers continue to recognize TUs as an opportunity and collaborate with them to build a workplace unity that benefits both employees and businesses (Alam et al., 2004).

The Rana Plaza factory building collapsed killing 1,133 people and critically injuring thousands more; in the years before the Rana Plaza building collapse, numerous fatal factory fires occurred in Bangladesh (Uddin, 2020). In response to this and other disasters within the Bangladesh RMG industry, international retailers joined with TUs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to create the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (the "Accord") (Beierlein, 2020). The Accord is a legally binding agreement among the retailers supplied by Bangladesh RMG factories to create and fund a system for factory inspection and repair.

The Accord is overseen by a steering committee made up of equal members representing the signing retailers' TUs, chaired by a neutral representative chosen by the International Labor Organization (ILO) (Cook et al., 2019). In order to export RMG, it is not only the quality parameters that are important towards acceptance of the product as per the intended end use, but also the working environment in which the garments are to be produced is equally important so that the sweatshop concept is taken care of and the code of conduct must be stretched towards achieving the objectives of social compliance issues. Currently, many international buyers are demanding compliance with their "code of conduct" before placing any garment import order. In light of growing competition among RMG exporting countries and consumer preference for products that meet internationally recognized social standards, Bangladesh's RMG suppliers need to comply with the codes of conduct of the buyers (Baral, 2010). Therefore, the pressure from the international buyers regarding the compliance of their codes of conduct relating to the workers' safety and rights is one of the major issues and helps to boost the TUs of the sector under study.

Many studies have been conducted on TUs in RMG industry in Bangladesh. The studies paid attention to the roles of TUs towards the employees' living standards and fair labor practices along with their importance (Nayak et al., 2019). Other scholars paid attention to the effect of TUs on the socio-economic condition of

Bangladesh, the relationship between the workers and owners, and the violations of TUs' rights (Anner, 2020). However, there is a lack in the literature in proving the effectiveness of the TUs in the workplaces of the workers. Moreover, to the best of the knowledge of the researchers, there is no well documentation regarding the effectiveness of TUs in protecting workers' rights in the field of RMG industry in Bangladesh. Therefore, there is the need to increase understanding of the perceptions of the workers regarding the effectiveness of TUs in their rights keeping. Moreover, there is a gap in previous literature on the mediating effects of BCoC through the OE, CBE, and IRCE on TUs effectiveness in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. In view of the above problems, the main question of this study is: what are the perceptions of workers on the effectiveness of TUs in protecting their rights in the RMG industry in Bangladesh? In addition, what are the mediating effects of BCoC on the Trade Union Effectiveness (TUE)?

Hence, this study measures the relative importance of the effectiveness of TUs in protecting and promoting workers' rights in the RMG industry in Bangladesh from the perception of workers. Moreover, this study intends to examine the mediating effects of BCoC on the effectiveness of TUs in protecting workers' rights in the sector under study. This study will add more information to the literature of TUs and improve the understanding of the knowledge of TUs effectiveness. This study will also provide the result regarding the workers' perceptions towards the effectiveness of TUs in addressing and protecting the workers' rights in the RMG industry of Bangladesh and assist this collective platform of workers to advance their strategies. This research work will be helpful to the policy-makers and academics as a reference point. This study also will provide guidelines regarding future research in this field.

2. CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The union's effectiveness indicates a TU that is flourishing and competent in the representation of employees at the time of addressing and safeguarding workers' rights (Bednarowicz, 2019; Mzangwa, 2013). Jha and Kumar (2020) and Sinha (2017) mentioned that there must have a good industrial relations climate, internal union democracy, and internal functional efficiency statutory recognition, goals, and practical implications to obtain those goals to make the TUs be effective. Durazzi (2018) and Pyman et al. (2010) showed their works that enriched working terms and conditions, union density, union leadership style, union voice, and industrial democracy bring the effectiveness of TUs. The literature gets the view that TUs effectiveness can be measured using different types of constructs. Kgaphola (2017) defines TUs effectiveness as 'members' perceptions of a union's performance in negotiation for extrinsic benefits (economic), intrinsic benefit (non-economic), and being responsive to its members. According to Van Roozendaal (2020) most preceding studies find out TUs effectiveness in stipulations of functional activities maintained by the TUs such as addressing employees' grievances, decision-making authority, providing proper employment, providing a favorable work environment, and protecting members from unfair dismissals from the organization.

Bryson (2003) cited in Chidzambwa (2015) mentioned that organizational and collective bargaining effectiveness can bring TUs effectiveness. In this study organizational effectiveness is termed as the capacity of the unions as the collective organization to capture those factors which represent its members under its healthy condition as an organization. This study also defined the term collective bargaining effectiveness as the capability to bring or organize better working terms and conditions of the workers. Tarumaraja et al., (2015) found that union effectiveness is significantly affected by effective union organization. Pyman et al., (2010) and Shamir et al. (2018) emphasized that organizational effectiveness brings by the influence of environmental effectiveness. Environmental influences incorporated with the level of hidden requirements for union services, the degree of employer opposition to unions, and employment growth. It also includes democratic structures, bureaucracy, innovation, and representational specialization (Pyman et al., 2010). Bryson (2003) and Hvidman (2019) postulated that organizational effectiveness can negatively or positively affect the service delivered by a TU. The study conducted by Bryson and Forth (2017) found that there is a significant correlation between organizational and TUs effectiveness from the viewpoint of employee perceptions in safeguarding or protecting their rights such as fair pay, promoting equal opportunities, protecting workers, making work interesting, and enjoyable, and working with management to increase quality and productivity.

Effective collective bargaining among the TUs, workers, and employers or management over the terms and conditions of the employment can provide sound industrial relations among the parties (Atzeni, 2021; Traxler, 1994). The effective function of collective bargaining among the actors of IRs brings an impact on wage dispersion and income inequalities (Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2018). Moreover, collective bargaining can get better the standard of the employment relationship between the workers, management, employers, and the firms as well (Kuruvilla & Li, 2021). This function of the TUs can be a constructive instrument for bringing more stable working relations to ensure industrial peace which leads to a more efficient allocation of resources greater motivation and ultimately productivity in the respective industry or organization (Cazes et al., 2019). While preparing the questionnaire questions have been set to know the perceptions of the respondents about the effectiveness of TUs from the aspect of collective bargaining in the RMG industry of Bangladesh.

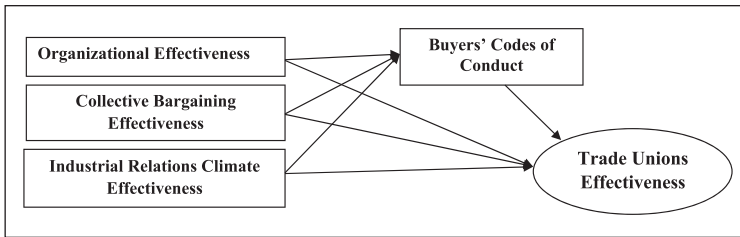
Bryson (2003) cited in Chidzambwa (2015) mentioned that collective bargaining effectiveness can bring TUs effectiveness. Collective bargaining helps to enter a mutual agreement that might change pay rates, working hours, working standards, workplace protection, health and social security, the share of productivity (Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2018). The right to collective bargaining with an employer strengthens the individual rights, equality, and sovereignty of employees by providing them the ability to affect the setting of laws on the job and thereby obtain power over a significant element of their lives, namely their jobs (Jackson et al. 2016). The effectiveness of TUs of the RMG industry can be ensured and enhanced by the

inclusiveness of collective bargaining by reducing inequality and making sure proper practices of labor regulations in order to have labor protection (Ahlquist & Mosley, 2021; Chan & Hui, 2014).

It's a common understanding that a harmonious working atmosphere of an organization leads to industrial peace ensures efficient allocation of resources, satisfaction, motivation, and behavior patterns of individuals in the workplace (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2020). Such a harmonious working atmosphere is termed as the industrial relations climate which is affected by a set of causal variables. From an assessment of the literature on TUs-employers-management relations, some potential climate extent that affects the effectiveness of TUs in protecting the rights and interests of their members (Doucouliagos, 2017; Dastmalchian et al., 1989). A handful of studies by De Prins et al. (2020) Dastmalchian et al. (1982); Gandz and Whitehead (1981); Kelly and Nicholson (1980); Nicholson (1979); Warr et al. (1978) utilized the concept of industrial relations climate as one portion of organizational climate connected with the norms and attitudes reflecting management-union relationships. Industrial relations climate can bridge the theoretical gap between employee relations outcomes and organizational characteristics such as disputes and occurrence of strikes (Addison & Teixeira, 2017).

Parties who are purchasing products and services are buyers (Ali et al. 2021). Foreign buyers are importers of final goods according to their requirements (Sarkar, et al. 2020). In the RMG industry, foreign buyers enforce not only order-based requirements but also overall operational climate specific to manufacturers such as working hours, protection of workers, occupational atmosphere, contamination of the climate, manufacturing cycle, procurement of raw materials, quality management and regulation, social responsibility, etc (Islam et al., 2014; Rahim, 2017). Buyers' code of conduct (BCoC) are the principles that can be the effective measures across the industry for ensuring the health, safety, and welfare, the right to collectively assemble and negotiate, letter of employment, and the minimum wage for the RMG employees (Ansary & Barua, 2015). Compliance with foreign buyers is an important requirement for the success of the RMG manufacturers (Tarannum & Ansary, 2018; Alamgir & Banerjee, 2019) for bringing peaceful IRs. For effective trade unions, the organization needs to disclose to the concerned parties regarding its compliance decisions (Alam et al., 2018). Finally, compliance guarantees all human rights and services according to the international buyers' CoC (Ahamed, 2013). Accord on Fire and Building Safety and Alliances for Bangladesh Workers Safety-these two alliances of international buyers and their CoC have also significant effect on the RMG sector of Bangladesh which creates sound IRs, thereby growing the green RMG industry for the betterment and interests of the effective TUs (Hasan, 2018).

Based on the literature the following framework has been developed to measure the effectiveness of TUs in maintaining workers' rights in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Based on the literature, the conceptual research framework mentioned in figure 1 is to be used to develop the hypotheses and survey questionnaire for the quantitative part of this study.



Source : Bryson (2003:6); Gall and Fiorito (2016:202) and Dlamini (2018:11)

Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework of the Study

From figure 1, a number of possible relations among OE, CGE, IRCE, and BCoC and TUs effectiveness in the RMG industry of Bangladesh are drawn. Ten hypotheses are then generated accordingly.

H1a: OE has a positive relationship with the Effectiveness of TUs.

H1b: OE has a positive relationship with BCoC.

H2a: CBE has a positive relationship with the Effectiveness of TUs.

H2b: CBE has a positive relationship with BCoC.

H3a: IRCE has a positive relationship with the Effectiveness of TUs.

H3b: IRCE has a positive relationship with BCoC.

H4: BCoC has a positive relationship with the Effectiveness of TUs.

H5: BCoC will mediate the relationship between OE and the Effectiveness of TUs.

H6: BCoC will mediate the relationship between CBE and the Effectiveness of TUs.

H7: BCoC will mediate the relationship between IRCE and the Effectiveness of TUs.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 Design and Sampling Technique

This is a cross-sectional study in which data were gathered at a single point in time (Uma Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Data were collected from the workers of RMG industry of Bangladesh to understand their perceptions concerning the effectiveness of TUs in protecting the rights of workers in the sector. Moreover, this study is correlational, which is designed to explore a relationship, association, or interdependence among the independent and dependent variables (Kothari, 2004; Uma Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) based structural equation model (SEM). Convenience sampling, which is also known as the judgmental sampling technique, has been used to select the sample of this study. According to Ali et al. (2016) and Sekaran and Bougie (2016), convenience sampling is effective in exploratory research and is considered the best way of getting basic information efficiently and quickly.

3.2 Sample Design

This study has been conducted using 276 questionnaires with an answer rate of 54.50%. Advocates of PLS claim that it has the ability to estimate research models using small samples with no strict distribution assumptions and can model both reflective and formative constructs within the same research model. According to Fornell and Bookstein (1982) and Willaby et al. (2015) PLS-SEM works efficiently with small sample sizes when models are complex. Moreover, Sarstedt and Cheah (2019) state that PLS-SEM can be applied with smaller samples in many instances when other methods fail. Such justification motivates us to conduct our work using 276 respondents. This sample size fulfills the necessary condition of the required sample size i.e., 205 respondents by taking into account 99% confidence level, standard deviation of 0.5, and $\pm 1\%$ margin of error. According to Westland's (2010) software the minimum sample size for our SEM model is 150 cases at 0.3 predicted effect sizes, 0.80 desired statistical power level, 5 constructs, 34 observed variables, and 0.05 likelihood level (Soper,2020). Moreover, according to Hill (1998), a sample size above 200 is enough for sufficient data analysis at 5% level of significance. Accordingly, 276 respondents were considered satisfactory. Table 1 provides the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 1 : Respondents' Profile

Demographic characteristic		% (N=276)	Demographic Characteristic		% (N=276)
Gender	Male	41.30%	Years for worked in RMG Industry	Less than 2 Years	13.80%
	Female	58.70%		+2 to 5 Years	9.40%
Age	18-25 Years old	44.60%		+5 to 10 Years	42.00%
	26-33 Years old	43.10%		+10 and Above	34.80%
	34-41 Years old	10.50%	Monthly Salary	BDT 8000-13000	8.70%
	>41 Years old	1.80%		BDT 14000-19000	10.50%
Marital Status	Unmarried	22.80%		BDT 20000-25000	34.10%
	Married	77.20%		BDT 26000-31000	28.60%
Education	Below SSC	44.60%		BDT 32000-37000	11.60%
	Below HSC	40.60%	BDT 43,000 and Above	6.50%	
	Below Bachelor	10.10%			
	Below Maters	2.90%			
	Masters	1.80%			

3.3 Questionnaire Development

To investigate the significant factors and to test the hypothesized relations among the constructs, a questionnaire was developed and designed. For conducting, the survey this study used a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions. A 6-point Likert scale questionnaire was intended to measure the factors and variables of the effectiveness of TUs. A 6-point scale has been chosen because they allow for improved measuring precision (Li, 2013; Nemoto & Beglar, 2014). Moreover, middle categories cause statistical issues in that rating scale analyses sometimes indicate that neutral categories interrupt calculation in a way that they do not match statistical models well or are disordered. In addition, a neutral category is needless because studies should include only things on a questionnaire that respondents should answer, and this should be verified by piloting (Wolfe & Smith, 2007). A 6-point Likert scale ranging from 6=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree was used on the 34 observed items adapted from Cazes et al. (2019); Dastmalchian et al. (1989); Dlamini (2018) and Mohamed et al. (2010) in their researches.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researchers collected the data physically and using an online-based google form for almost three months. The respondents are selected purposively from the 80 TUs of Dhaka and Gazipur industrial areas, which are registered in the Department of Labor out of 909 registered TUs for this survey. In this study, total 440 questionnaires were distributed to the members of the 80 TUs. The questionnaire was distributed personally through the researcher directly to the potential respondents. Out of 440 questionnaires 70 were distributed electronically using google form link to respondents' email, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger. In the case of the face-to-face data collection procedure, total 370 questionnaires were distributed. From the 290 collected questionnaires, 276 were used of which 30 were responded by the google form and the rest 246 are collected from face-to-face surveys. In the face-to-face data collection procedure, the response rate is 66.49% and the rate of online is 42.86%. The average response rate of the questionnaires is 62.73%. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), there is no standard definition for a minimum acceptable response rate. Therefore, the response rate of 62.73%.for this study has been considered satisfactory. Moreover, of the 440 distributed questionnaires, 164 remained unresponsive due to the pandemic COVID 19 crisis.

3.5 Data Analysis Tools

Cross-sectional studies of relationships between attitudes and behaviors are vulnerable to common method variance (CMV) inflation of correlations. Method biases can have a major effect on their reliability, validity of products, and covariation between latent constructs (Podsakoff et al., 2012). This study used Harman's Single Factor test based on the social research method conducted by Becker et al., (2012). If the common latent factor explains more than 50% of the variance, then common method bias may be present (Eichhorn, 2014). This study accounted for only 34.047% of

the variance; thus, here common method was not a persistent dilemma. Next, the inter-correlations presented no value of 0.9 or more with the highest inter-correlation at only 0.871. Thus, both tests address that method bias is not a major issue in the study. Researchers used SPSS version 23.0 to process the descriptive statistics and reliability analysis of the collected data and to assess the demographic profile of the sample and the internal consistency of the constructs. Further, for analyzing the research model, researchers used PLS analysis with Smart PLS 3.0 software. Approaching the suggested two-stage analytical procedures for SEM, researchers tested the measurement model (validity and reliability of the measures) and then examined the SEM (Hair et al., 2017a). The significance of the path coefficients and the loadings are tested using a bootstrapping method (5000 resample) (Hair et al., 2017a).

4. DATA SURVEY AND ANALYSIS

The surveyed data were analyzed from the perspective of two dimensions such as i) assessment of measurement model and ii) assessment of structural model by using SEM technique (Chin, 1998). Figure-1 illustrates the model. During the survey on the union members of RMG industry 276 respondents' questionnaires were finalized with data collected for 34 items using this questionnaire. The indicators of this study are reflective of why PLS technique is designed to accommodate reflective constructs (Fornell & Bookstein 1982).

4.1 Assessment of Measurement Model

As a systematic methodological process, canonical correlations analysis (CCA) is used in confirming measurement models in PLS-SEM. To assess the measurement model convergent and discriminant validity was used. In this study, such validity measurement techniques were used.

4.1.1 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is the technique of measuring the correlations of the constructs, which indicates the reliability of the observed items. The higher values of the convergent validity ensure the strong correlation of the items in each construct. There are three steps to determine the reliability of the items in each construct. From them, first is to assess the indicator loadings and their significance where the threshold of 0.60 in the association of t-statistic above ± 1.96 for a two-tailed test at the 5% level (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2011). The second step is to check the composite reliability (CR) in which the rule of thumb is above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). The third step to measure the convergent is Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The AVE is obtained by averaging the indicator reliabilities of a construct. The criterion for AVE is the value should be 0.5 (50%) or higher (Hair et al., 2019). The following table 2 shows the validity of the observed variables for exogenous variables in order to assess the measurement of this study highlighting the items loading, CR and AVE.

Table 2 : Results of Measurement Model

Construct	Measurement Items	Loading	t-Statistics	AVE	CR
Organizational Effectiveness	I have no difficulties to contact with the TU officials	0.666	16.72	0.584	0.891
	My TU is much helpful regarding protecting my rights	0.500	8.168		
	I have relied on the TU regarding my workplace	0.484	7.368		
	My TU is accountable and transparent for me	0.660	12.876		
	My TU inform me about its operations.	0.662	14.323		
	My TU has the influence over my company's rules and regulations	0.793	30.981		
	My union has lots of power to protect my rights	0.730	22.553		
	My TU shares information about employer and workplace with me	0.761	24.862		
	My TU is responsive to my problems and complaints	0.661	15.452		
Collective Bargaining Effectiveness	TU represents its members satisfactorily	0.772	29.902	0.589	0.875
	TU protects employees against ill-treatment	0.804	37.741		
	TU promotes equality at work	0.763	27.267		
	TU improves and protects employees' working conditions	0.739	26.429		
	We have strong TU with bargaining power	0.625	13.458		
	TU makes a difference to working terms and conditions	0.459	6.466		
	TU resolved grievances timorously	0.514	8.801		

Industrial Relations Climate Effectiveness	There is proper communication between management and unions in my organization	0.508	7.013	0.502	0.833
	In my organization union and management work together to make a better place in which to work	0.625	11.318		
	In my organization union and management have respect for each other's goals	0.640	10.498		
	My organization safeguards and advances workers' interest	0.538	8.546		
	My organization improved terms and conditions of employment	0.717	18.748		
	Union and management in my organization tend to dislike each other	0.694	14.429		
	Grievances are normally settled promptly in my organization	0.504	8.042		
Buyers' Codes of Conduct	Buyers' Codes of Conduct practices protect the unfairness in the working place.	0.512	8.799	0.533	0.850
	Buyers' Codes of Conduct make sure that everyone is safe in work environment.	0.724	17.35		
	Buyers' Codes of Conduct encourage to organize association	0.739	18.54		
	Buyers' Codes of Conduct encourage collective bargaining.	0.663	12.43		
	Buyers' Codes of Conduct helps to solve dispute.	0.779	23.25		
	RMG industries are very much alert to maintaining buyers' codes of conduct.	0.740	17.22		

Trade Union Effectiveness	TUs of my organization negotiate for pay, benefits, and working conditions for workers	0.754	17.929	0.671	0.910
	TUs assure membership growth	0.785	22.457		
	TUs increase my commitment	0.901	68.325		
	TUs protect me against unfair treatment	0.875	53.195		
	TUs improve my job security	0.777	30.121		

* The highlighted items were discarded due to their loading value resulting below 0.60

The accomplishment of the necessities of convergent validity, 0.6 was indomitable as the least cut-off value for the items loading. Accordingly, seven items OE2, OE3, CBE6, CBE7, IRCE1, IRCE4, IRCE7, and BCoC1 failed to meet the minimum criteria. However, to achieve the minimum acceptable value of AVE and for the goodness of fit (GoF) of the measurement model, items OE2, OE3, CBE6, CBE7, IRCE1, IRCE4, IRCE7, and BCoC1 were discarded; and PLS was run again (Hair et al., 2011; MacKenzie et al., 2011). Then the loading items were exceeding the threshold of 0.6 and fulfill the requirements of the level of AVE and CR. Table 2 confirmed that the 26 items were sufficient to represent their respective construct.

4.1.2 Discriminant Validity

After the assessment of the convergent validity and if the required criteria are fulfilled that is if the results of the items loading, AVE, and CR fulfill the requirements of the level then it needs to measure the discriminant validity. This technique assesses the distinctiveness of a construct. Fornell and Larcker Criteria and heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015) are the two techniques to measure the convergent validity of the measurement model. The criteria of assessing convergent validity using the Fornell and Larcker techniques is that if loadings of an item within a construct are higher than the loading of items of any other construct within the same column then the constructs are assumed as valid (Gefen, Straub and Boudreau, 2000). In the case of HTMT, researchers can apply cutoff scores such as 0.90 to interpret their HTMT results. Additionally, Franke and Sarstedt (2019) recently suggested supplementary significance testing that includes confidence intervals to further assess HTMT ratios and discriminant validity. As shown in table 3, all the values passed the recommended values. Table 4 demonstrates that HTMT inference also shows that the confidence interval did not show a value of 0.90 in any of the constructs of this study.

Table 3 : Fornell-Larcker Correlation Check

Construct	CBE	IRCE	OE	BCoC	TUE
CBE	0.802				
IRCE	0.768	0.709			
OE	0.612	0.594	0.764		
BCoC	0.755	0.641	0.601	0.730	
TUE	0.649	0.497	0.698	0.466	0.819

Note : Diagonals (in bold) represent the squared root of the average variance extracted (AVE) while the other entries represent the correlations.

Table 4 : Heterotrit-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Criteria

Construct	CBE	IRCE	OE	BCoC	TUE
CBE					
IRCE	0.836				
OE	0.802	0.790			
BCoC	0.382	0.564	0.528		
TUE	0.776	0.727	0.806	0.370	

4.2 Assessment of Structural Model

After the measurement model assessment then it needs to assess the structural model, which relies heavily on multiple regression analysis. To perform the measurement of the structural model, the first step is to assess the structural model constructs to verify if high multicollinearity is a problem. The variance inflation factor (VIF) values of the items should be below 5.0 to have free from high multicollinearity and suitable for assessing structural model in case of the indicators on reflective constructs (Hair et al., 2014). This study shows the VIF values between 1.177 and 3.160 indicate that the items are not problematic for assessing the structural model. The predictive relevance that is Q^2 of a reflective model is assessed by using the tool of cross-validated redundancy. The Q^2 value is considered for the reflectively modeled endogenous factor (Geisser, 2012). The Q^2 value higher than zero tells that the exogenous constructs have prognostic relevance for the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2011). This value is calculated by using the blindfolding algorithm that omits every 7th data point for the indicators. As per the analyzed data, the model is considered to have predictive relevance. More specifically, the Q^2 value for TUE of this study is 0.391 and BCoC is 0.450 is more than 0 indicating that the model has sufficient predictive relevance. In this study, the coefficient determination (R^2) is a joint impact of exogenous variables on the endogenous variable. The lowest effect of R^2 is 0, and the highest is 1 Hair Jr et al. (2017) demonstrate that on endogenous variables, the R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 can be considered large, moderate, and weak respectively. This study found R^2 of BCoC showing as 0.558 and TUE

as 0.601, which emphasizes that the exogenous variables OE, CBE and IRCE can describe 55.8% of the variability in BCoC and 60.1% of the variability in their effective TUs. The mediation of BCoC increases the variability effects from 55.8% to 60.1% resulting from the positive significant mediating effects on the endogenous variable (TUE).

4.3 Summary of Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

The results of the hypotheses are summarized in Table 5 shows that all hypotheses were supported. The findings are discussed after the data analysis in the next section.

Table 5 : Result of the Structural Model Assessment for Direct Relations

H	Relation	Std. β	SE	t-values	p-values	f ²	Decision
H1a	OE→TUE	0.496	0.061	8.108	0.000	0.055	Accepted
H1b	OE→BCoC	0.349	0.041	5.409	0.000	0.043	Accepted
H2a	CBE→TUE	0.157	0.059	2.861	0.000	0.023	Accepted
H2b	CBE→BCoC	0.145	0.049	2.661	0.000	0.033	Accepted
H3a	IRCE→TUE	0.204	0.052	3.934	0.000	0.039	Accepted
H3b	IRCE→BCoC	0.534	0.024	19.168	0.000	1.021	Accepted
H4	BCoC→TUE	0.542	0.052	9.421	0.000	0.321	Accepted

Note : $p < 0.05$, (based on Two-tailed test with 5000 bootstrapping)

Table 6 : Results of the Structural Model Assessment for Specific Indirect Effects

H	Relation	Std. β	SE	t-values	p-values	Decision
H5	OE → BCoC → TUE	0.051	0.018	2.350	0.000	Accepted
H6	CBE → BCoC → TUE	0.062	0.016	3.103	0.000	Accepted
H7	IRCE → BCoC → TUE	0.407	0.049	8.751	0.000	Accepted

5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

The analysis of the data obtained from the survey of this study shows a strong positive significant relationship between the OE and TUs effectiveness ($\beta = 0.496$, $t=8.108$, $p < 0.000$) and such finding support the previous research by Bryson (2003); Burchielli (2004); Fiorito et al. (1995) and Hammer and Wazeter (1993). This study finds a positive relationship between the CBE and TUs Effectiveness. The analyzed data indicates that CBE ($\beta = 0.157$, $t=2.861$, $p<0.000$), positively influences on TUs effectiveness which means H2 is significantly accepted. Previous research studies by Carr (2014), Hayter (2011), and Huynh (2015) showed that effective collective bargaining plays a significant role in the improvements of pay, working environments, and fair treatment to create trust and reciprocal respect between management, workers, and their organizations, and contribute in bringing up strong and effective TUs in the organization. CB is encouraged in RMG in Bangladesh (Absar, 2012) to ensure effective TUs (Hayter, 2011; Marginson & Galetto, 2016). The analysis also

shows the significant positive relation between IRCE and TU effectiveness which is supported by previous studies conducted by Dastmalchian et al. (1982); Deery et al., (1999), and Newman et al. (2019). From Table 5, the result of hypothesis H3 exhibits that IRCE ($\beta = 0.204$, $t=3.934$, $p<0.000$) has significantly positive relations of IRCE with TUs effectiveness in the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Moreover, OE, CBE, and IRCE have significant positive impacts on BCoC. The respondents think that OE, CBE, and IRCE are significant motivators in making TUs effective, and such finding supported by the previous research by Abun et al. (2018); Ahamed (2013); Alam et al. (2018); Ansary and Barua (2015); Azad et al. (2019); Hossain and Arefin (2015) and Kaium (2020). These studies have been conducted on the OE, CBE and IRCE and its effect on the BCoC argued that BCoC as a crucial part of the RMG industry which puts more pressure on a healthy and positive working environment and effective TUs. Accord on Fire and Building Safety and Alliances for Bangladesh Workers Safety-these two alliances of IBs and their codes of conduct have also significant effect on the RMG sector of Bangladesh which creates sound IRs, thereby growing the green RMG industry for the betterment and interests of the TUs (Hasan, 2018). The result of the present study shows that the roles of BCoC are very important for establishing and maintaining sound TUs in the industry under study. Table 6 shows the mediating effect of BCoC to establish whether it mediated the relationships between OE, CBE, IRCE and TUE. BCoC ($\beta = 0.051$, $t = 2.350$, $p=0.000$) mediated the relationship between OE and TUs effectiveness; BCoC ($\beta = 0.062$, $t = 3.103$, $p=0.000$) mediated the relationship between CBE and TUs effectiveness and BCoC ($\beta = 0.407$, $t = 8.751$, $p=0.000$) also mediated the relationship between IRCE and TUs effectiveness. Therefore, this study has identified our components such as OE, CBE, IRCE and BCoC to measure the TUs effectiveness in protecting the workers' rights from the perspective of the RMG industry of Bangladesh. These constructs were significantly linked with the effectiveness of TUs where BCoC mediate and increases the effectiveness of TUs in protecting the rights of the workers in the RMG industry in Bangladesh.

Examining the objectives of this study adds new dimensions to the literature. The findings help to explain prior empirical work, which established a positive relationship among organizational, collective bargaining and industrial relations climate effectiveness, buyers' codes of conduct and TUs effectiveness (Yao & Zhong, 2013). Second, the important theoretical contribution of this study shows by explaining the perceptions of the workers towards the effectiveness of TUs helps to ensure job security of workers and to capitalize human resources. Under such circumstances, it might be considered that workers believe on the perception that a favorable relationship between management and TUs creates trust in management and assure greater job security. In the same way, it might also look forward to when workers believe the TUs is effective in representing their rights and interests, they will also be more likely to perform highly for the organization (Ma et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2013). The findings of this study have significant policy implications in the Bangladeshi context. It is suggested that TUs should arrange its collective platform

in terms of increasing communication with TUs members. Moreover, it needs in understanding the BCoC to improve the TUs members' perception regarding the effectiveness TUs. It is also recommended to the policymaker to initiate trustworthy lawful systems and well-built enforcement of laws and BCoC which will provide authority and control to TUs and effective labor inspections because some workers claim the TUs do not have enough legal power to deal with their rights and interests. This study suggests that policymakers give more emphasis on brand development of TUs to change the negative image of it because a positive image would help improve the perceptions of all stakeholders, which will develop a constructive relationship between the workers and TUs.

This study does not free from its limitations. Firstly, the present study is conducted on particular union members and workers that is RMG industry. As such, the findings of this research cannot be generalized because the uniqueness and surroundings of the TUs in the RMG industry may vary from other TUs in the country (Hammer & Wazeter 1993). For this, having an overall picture, it needs to conduct a future study on the TUs of different sectors of the country. Secondly, the sample of this study was small and picked from the union members and non-union members of the RMG industry in Bangladesh thus the power of generalization might be limited. Therefore, future studies may consider a larger sample size and collect the data from all parties of the sector under study such as managers, owners, buyers, etc. Thirdly, the developed conceptual model was embodying industry-specific, particularly for the RMG industry in Bangladesh. The results of this study might not explain the same problem from a different perspective even in the same industry in a different economy. Therefore, in the next researchers may consider the different economies to get an overall picture. Finally, yet importantly, in the future, cross-cultural study of trade unionism and workers' rights may be conducted.

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INTERNAL NATION BRAND EQUITY OF BANGLADESH: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT

Syed Ferhat Anwar *
Rezwanul Huque Khan **
Khaled Mahmud ***

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Abstract

The study first attempts to design an integrated model which may help in evaluating the nation and next measures the brand value of Bangladesh. Equity measure was assessed at four distinct levels for both Non-Resident Bangladeshi (NRB) citizens as well as Resident Bangladeshi (RB) citizens, termed as, Dimension variable, Wellbeing variable, Component variables, and Utility variables. Results indicate that there is ample scope for improvement and at the same time, it is also apparent that the perception of NRB differs that from the RB regarding various utility factors. Also, results indicate that the Bangladesh brand equity of internal populace is higher compared to results depicted by global indices. At the macro dimensional levels, the statistical difference between the three dimensions; relational, subjective, and material were undertaken. Though the equity perception of citizens is better than the global perception scores for Bangladesh, however, the scores for economic wellbeing and social wellbeing is significantly lower compared to natural wellbeing and human wellbeing. The final analysis was at the micro level with 36 variables termed as the utility variables. The strengths of Bangladesh comprise of a total of 12 (33%) variables, mediocre performing variables constitute 17 (47%) variables, while the concern areas encompass 7 (20%) variables. One other major finding at the utility level is the, pollution management, lack of media positivity, and public trust. These three implies that the first requires changing mindset and practices of the population in general to create a physical evidence of a clean nation. The second requires the media to be more responsible in portraying the nation, research has clearly outlined many positivity of the nation which must be outlined and communicated to the population at large. The third is a direct outcome of the second, lack of trust on the nation. This is where a serious drive to focus on the basic concept of 'Nation First' must be embedded across all levels of the citizenry.

Keywords : *Bangladesh, Brand Equity, Internal Nation Brand Equity, Internal Nation Brand Equity Measurement.*

* Professor, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

** Associate Professor, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

*** Associate Professor, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

The origin of the word brand can be traced to marking of ownership by farmers to identify their stock (Bastos et al., 2012). The first presence of animal seals dates to the Bronze Age, in the Indus Valley Civilization, presently South Asia (Moore et al., 2008). Today, brand is associated with both tangible and intangible value and is considered as the ultimate equity of an entity, be it, at an individual or a nation. The primary purpose of transforming a product into a brand emerges from the objective to translate an offering into trust (Anwar, 2018), which is expected to ultimately ensure wellbeing of humankind. Thus, it is much beyond the traditional concept of branding, which focused on trade mark or a symbol by earlier scholars (Butler, 1914). Branding pioneer Walter Landor states “products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind.” Thus, Brand is a fundamental entity in marketing to ensure societal wellbeing and translate reality into perception.

The growth of product branding to branding individuals and place branding resulted in the creation of success stories of product branding. Dolores coined place branding as endogenous marketing process that integrates social, economic, environmental, and technological dimension of a society with a focused intent of maximizing benefit to stakeholders through meeting their needs (Dolores et al., 2013). Nation Branding, coined by Simon Anholt first noticed the importance as well as the effects of nation branding and stated, “nations have become far more cognizant of the value of their brand as an asset” (Teslik, 2007). He referred to this as a systematic process of aligning the actions, behaviors, investments, innovations and communications around a strategy for strengthening competitive identity of a nation.” (Anholt, 2008). Wally Olins, one of the most acclaimed country branding specialists in the world, who also happened to be the only globally acclaimed specialist to have advised the state government of West Bengal in India, and reflected on Bangladesh as well, states, “A product is rationally similar (to another) but emotionally different. Also, it’s about profit and pushing up its share margin. It has to be effective immediately.” A nation on the other hand has an audience — both internal and external. “There’s tourism involved as well as investment. You must gauge if you can be effective over 25 years.” (Ikafafeng, 2010).

The emergence of the modern concept of Nation Branding theory can be traced in the fusion of two distinct concepts community and society, which interestingly, are considered as antonyms by many (Tonnies, 1957). Over the years, three distinct components of community have been characterized. First and perhaps the foremost is ‘consciousness of kind’, which is the intrinsic shared consciousness about things, it is more than shared attitude or perceived similarities (Gusfield, 1978). Second, is the presence of shared rituals, social solidarity, and traditions. The third being, sense of moral responsibility that results in the shared responsibility and obligation towards the society (Marshal, 1994). Society on the other hand has been characterized as the outcome of modernity and commercial growth resulting in more depersonalized, mass produced, globalized, and less grounded type of humane experience (Lasch, 1991). Today, in this highly competitive globalized world, the concept of nation

branding has gained immense momentum (Dinnie, 2004). Countries are competing to attract the attention, respect and trust of investors, tourists, consumers, donors, immigrants, media and the governments of other nations.

This psycho-behavioral dimension of people in general, perhaps, has resulted in the belief that brands are built to portray target markets' experience through touching their emotions that is derived from the culture they represent; thus, creating a passion within the target market for the brand. One must however understand that the souls of every individual are driven by their own heritage. All brands are tangible entities plus values and associations that ignite passionate advocacy among people since it is depicting the cultural values they trust and go after. It is therefore evident that any exercise involving nation branding must operate within the general definition of a 'nation'; a large group of people of similar race, language, and experience. Thus, nation should not be considered as a product in the conventional sense. A nation does not offer a tangible product or service only; instead, it represents and encompasses a wide variety of macro and micro factors and associations that essentially results in generating an experience. These factors could include people, policies, location, heritage, environment, economy, beliefs, language, education, communication, global relations, etc. It is evident that this diversity may evoke a dynamic and more complex picture of a nation. More specifically, it may result in a paradox.

The paradox in the conceptual framework of Nation Branding is explained by delineating certain specific framework that explains the overall concept. One must understand that nation branding is not a propaganda but is based on perception regarding a nation. It is entrenched in our mind; we throw together a whole lot of attributes, positive and negative, about countries and we think about them in terms of simple narrative which ultimately converts into belief. We all do that irrespective of our level of intelligence. These perceptions may not be real but based on global communications regarding the nation and peer or personal experience. Thus, it is vital to segregate the concept of communication and propaganda while developing a nation brand strategy. Communication is effective when there is a demand for the information focusing on a unique core value that is treasured by the society being targeted. Propaganda on the other hand works only under unchallengeable authority or if one has total control over the mind of the audience and never contradicted (Anwar, 2010). Thus, nation brand must have wants, interests, and demands. This results in nation brand image, that is perception or intangible element of the brand; and nation brand identity, which is the tangible element of the brand. Nation branding as an operational strategy is basically good housekeeping (Dinnie, 2015).

Based on the discussions outlined above, one of the definitions of nation branding can be outlined as the following. "Nation Branding is concerned with a country's whole image on the international stage, covering political, economic and cultural dimensions; nation branding goes beyond the narrower purpose of country-of-origin or place brands to promote specific economic interests." (Fan, 2010). Annholt (2002) on the other hand outlines, "globalization is turning the world into a gigantic

supermarket, where countries compete to capture mind and market share of exports, tourism, foreign direct investments and immigration⁹. Thus, it is evident that nations are perceived first by their own citizens and second by other publics around the world, the combination of which ultimately results in what is called the nation brand. Figure 1 shows that the success of a nation is reflected in the beliefs of their own people first and that is translated to the world through media to rest of the world (Keller, 2003).

The global brand image of Bangladesh over the last decade has been around the second quartile to third quartile amongst the list of nations in terms of ranking. In FutureBrand Country Brand Index, for example, Bangladesh ranked 50th amongst the top 75 nations by population size and GDP (Brand Finance, 2010). On the other hand, in the Anholt GfK Roper Nation Brand Index, where 60 top nations among 200 nations are evaluated, Bangladesh is not amongst the top 60. In East-West Nation Perception Index, Bangladesh ranked 77th out of 200 nations (East West Communications, 2019). In Good Country Index, which is rated as one of the best general indices, Bangladesh ranked 105th amongst 169 nations in 2021 (Good Country Index, 2021). In Soft Power Index, Bangladesh ranked 78th out of 105 nations in 2021, although Bangladesh did well in economy and COVID management (Bhuiyan, 2021). In Brand Finance ranking, which also considers soft power, Bangladesh ranked 35th among 100 nations; this is primarily due to good economic performance (Brand Finance, 2021). The Legatum Prosperity Index (2021) on the other hand placed Bangladesh in 126th among 167 nations. One very important aspect that requires mention is the overall percentile score of Bangladesh has hovered around the 50-percentile mark. The global rating clearly shows great variations, probably due to the differences in measures and methodology. In addition, one needs to keep in perspective that these are all external perception of Bangladesh, which may or may not have been influenced by experience of individuals, media and word-of-mouth molded by both nonresident Bangladeshi citizens and entities. However, clearly, perception of internal public, citizens of Bangladesh has not been rated till date.

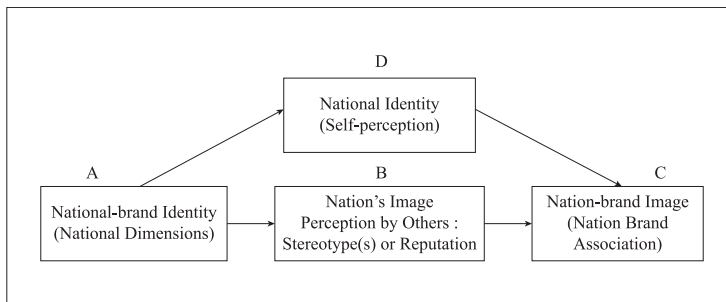


Figure 1 : Conceptualization of Nation Brand Image

2. NATION BRAND EQUITY MODELS

The concept of Brand Equity was first introduced into the business literature in 1980 which resulted in the Brandz model by Millward Brown. The first official definition

of Brand Equity was published in 1989 by Peter who defined it as “the added value endowed by the brand to the product”. The conceptualization of Brand Equity measurement was first published by Simon and Sullivan (1993). The theory was however popularized by Aaker (1991).

While discussing issues relating to nation brand equity, the two most prominent thought leaders of the concept of nation brand, Simon Anholt and Wally Olins, placed the following argument while assessing nation brand equity measurement. Anholt argues that “throughout the twentieth century, most of the really successful international brands have come from countries that are successful brands in their own right, and substantially transfer of imagery and brand equity can often be seen to occur between the two” (Anholt, 1998). Olins (2002), while discussing on the complexity in understanding and measuring nation brand equity concludes, “it is not the concept that people in general detest so much while evaluating nation brand equity, as the word brand, which appears for some people, to have trifling and superficial implications unworthy of the national idea”. Though both have strongly focused on internal as well as external stakeholders’ perception and ground realities of the nation, however, they could not arrive at a singular unbiased and globally acclaimed definition (Rashid, 2013).

Originally, Kotler and Levy identified the potential of researching on nation brands as a marketing effort and building separate theoretical model from the traditional business concept (Harengel et al., 2014). Eight major and most mentionable models can be outlined while measuring brand equity of nations or countries. Interestingly, all these measures have emerged in the private sector domain rather than the academia. They are, Future Brand Country Index (FBCI) (2019), Anholt GfK Roper Nation Brand Index (RNBI) (Feinberg, et al., 2021), Country Brand Strength Index (CBSI) (Fetscherin, 2010), East West Nation Brand Perception Index (NBPI) (East West Communications, 2019), Good Country Index (GCI), Global Soft Power Index (GSPI) (Yavuzasian, et al., 2016), Brand Finance Nation Brand Index (BFBI) (Haigh, 2020), and The Legatum Prosperity Index (LPI).

The conceptual model of the eight indices outlined below have been restructured to help develop a standard guideline for further analysis. However, the basic conceptual framework has been maintained. It needs mention however, that all proponents have time and again outlined the bias associated with developed nations. Moreover, since the weightage assigned are dependent on perception of individuals, developed nations clearly are rated higher. In addition, the nation brand is faced with two diametrically opposing forces, the distinctiveness of the country for unique positioning at the same time being assessed on some common global standards which are set by the developed nations. The paradox is that many unique features are being identified, which may not be enough to create an impression based on the global standards or even worse, may not be considered while undertaking global measures (Fan, 2006). Thus, at one level, the global audience have a certain degree of knowledge and experience about a nation; while at another level, each country has her own cultural values that are decoded with entirely differing perception and belief (Roth, 1995).

2.1 The FutureBrand Country Brand Index (FCBI)

The model was developed by the FutureBrand Team. FCBI measures the strength of perception of countries around the world in the same way as one studies consumer or corporate brands. The five factors considered are quality of life, environmental friendliness, products and services, polarizing politics, and business potential and tourism. Figure 2 depicts the conceptual framework of the FCBI model.

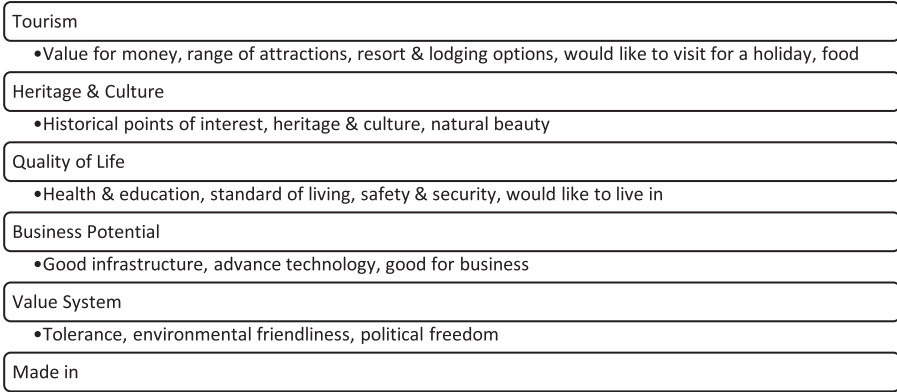


Figure 2 : FCBI

2.2 Anholt GfK Roper Nation Brand Index (RNBI)

This is one of the earliest models measuring nation Brand Strength by the Father of Nation Brand Concept, Simon Anholt. The index was developed to help governments, organizations and businesses, comprehend quantify and ultimately create a strong nation brand image and reputation. The RNBI measures the power and quality of each country’s “brand image” by combining six dimensions; people, culture & heritage, investment & immigration, tourism, exports, and governance as depicted in Figure 3 below.

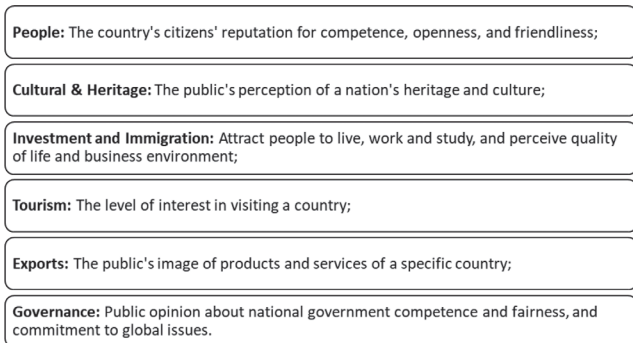


Figure 3 : RNBI

2.3 Country Brand Strength Index (CBSI)

The model was conceived by Mark Fetscherin and attempts to measure country's effort to build and manage its brand framed primarily by the behavior of its domestic stakeholders and factors that has become an essential part of a country's sustainable development. The CBSI helps to assess nation brand value through objective measurement rather than survey perceptions. It helps governments with a tool to measure the strengths of a country brand, identify any weaknesses to help revisit the country brand strategy since countries need to build, manage and protect their brand. The nation brand factors outlined under CBSI are depicted in Figure 4 below.

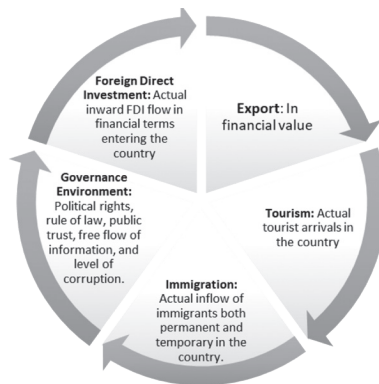


Figure 4 : CBSI

2.4 East West Nation Brand Perception Index (NBPI)

This model was designed by East West Communications. The concept suggests that it is difficult for countries to address their branding and communications problems if they don't know where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Thus, the model utilizes an indirect measurement methodology using a third party, neutral, whistleblower observation approach. It makes an educated guess as to how a country is viewed by the world, based on news clippings, surveys, focus groups and the like, introduced by the local and global media and media personalities. The East West Nation Brand Perception Index is based on analyzing millions of mentions of countries in hundreds of thousands of news articles, every quarter.

2.5 Good Country Index (GCI)

This is the most recent model developed by Simon Anholt and Robert Govers. Good Country Index does not measure what countries do at home; rather, it aims to start a global discussion about how countries can balance their duty to their own citizens with their responsibility to the wider world. The model uses 35 indicators which are again split into seven components each consisting of five indicators. The components along with the indicators are depicted in Figure 5 below.

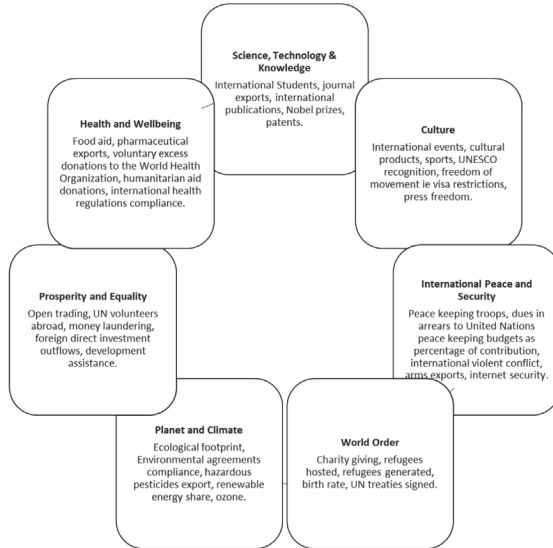


Figure 5 : GCI

2.6 Global Soft Power Index (GSPI)

American political scientist and Harvard Professor, Joseph Nye, introduced the concept of ‘soft power’ in 1990. The main paradigm highlights that alternative methods of foreign policy without the use of force may provide better results for nation building. Soft power index defines the strength of a nation through some special soft attitudinal means which must not include coercion or any financial benefit. This index has considered the present state of global affairs where political and military coercion becomes an important parameter to gain global attention for creation of comprehensive nation brand. The factors considered are outlined in Figure 6.

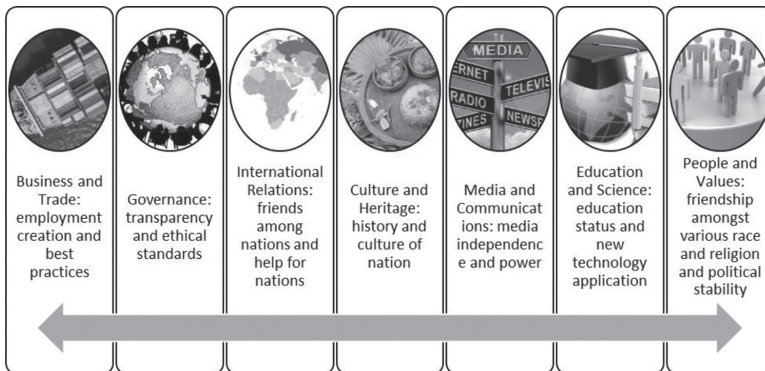


Figure 6 : GSPI

2.7 Brand Finance Nation Brand Index (BFBI)

Brand Finance measures the nation brand strength using a method that is based on royalty relief mechanism employed to ascertain global brand value based on largest corporate brands. It focuses on the parameters of soft power index in five steps rather than focusing on the components, as depicted in Figure 7 below.

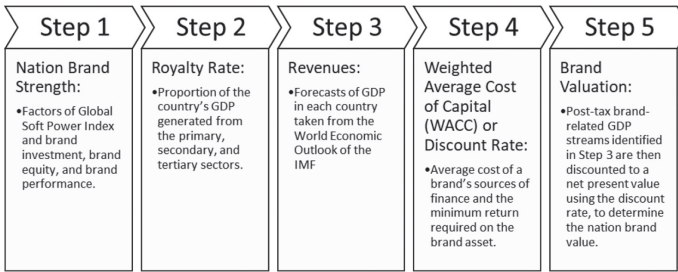


Figure 7 : BFBI

2.8 The Legatum Prosperity Index (LPI)

The LPI was initiated by Legatum Institute, a UK based think tank in 2007, with the mission of ‘creating the pathway from poverty to prosperity’. It evaluates long term changes in global and national prosperity focusing on various drivers of growth and recognizing nations which have made substantive or mentionable progress. LPI defines prosperity as something much more than mere wealth or economic growth; true prosperity is when all people have the opportunity to thrive. In a prosperous society, people live in peace, free from the threat of violence, oppression, and crime. Everyone’s inherent dignity is respected; all are free to vote, to protest, and to follow their beliefs. Governing institutions in every sector act with truth and are subject to the rule of law. Also, it comprises of stable families and supportive communities that instill the values that shape the culture and build the bonds of trust needed for society to flourish through harnessing individuals’ inner obligation towards society. Thus, prosperity must be driven by an open economy that harnesses ideas and talent to foster employment, enhance productivity through technological emancipation, and ensure a sustainable growth model that can take nations out of poverty and ensure wellbeing through ensuring quality education and health as prerequisite. The indicators are organized into 12 pillars which are grouped into three domains essential to prosperity: Inclusive Societies, Open Economies, and Empowered People. Figure 8 below explains the basic pillars considered in the LPI evaluation.

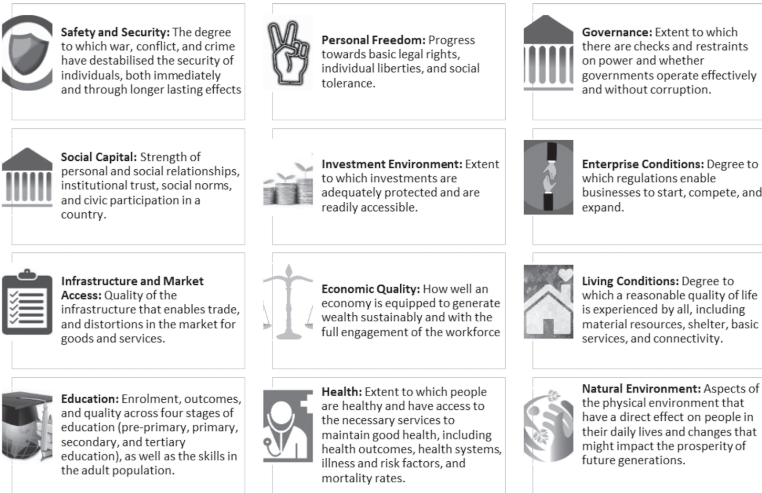


Figure 8 : LPI

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Problem Definition

The problem definition of the study can be outlined in three distinct constructions; first, it is evident that several measures of Nation Brand exist which have both similarities and dissimilarities, it is therefore important that an integrated measure be used which incorporates all dimensions using some level of standardization. Second, all measures are global as far as Bangladesh is concerned, though the theoretical dimension of nation brand building exercise considers local brand image as the foundation for global brand imagery. Third, there is no single research on brand perception of Bangladesh based on perception of Bangladesh citizens to help strategize future nation brand agenda of the nation.

3.2 Objective

The study has been undertaken to cover three distinct objectives as outlined below.

1. To develop an integrated nation brand model based on the existing eight models outlined in the literature survey.
2. Assess the brand equity of Bangladesh based on an integrated model as perceived by the citizens of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
3. Outline possible strategies to strengthen equity of Brand Bangladesh.

3.3 Sampling

This paper tries to measure the Brand Equity of Bangladesh based on the perception of both Nonresident Bangladesh (NRB) citizens and Resident Bangladesh (RB) citizens. A total 4738 respondents were targeted of which 753 were NRB while the

rest 3985 were RB. All respondents were considered homogenous, since, the global scores do not differentiate between respondents. However, only adults (above the age of 18) were considered. In addition, analysis was not based on demographic profile since all are citizen of a single country. Rather, differences in perception regarding the various components are considered important, since strategies for nation brand equity strengthening is based on the components and the indicators.

Online survey was conducted due to COVID and a total of only 1745 responses (answered to all statements) were obtained. This constitutes 36.83% of the targeted population. In addition, NRB response was 227 (30.15%), while the rest 1518 (38.09%) were RB.

3.4 Measuring Internal Country Brand Equity

The description outlined above implies that while various models are used to measure the brand index of nations, however, they do not necessarily measure the same thing and therefore it is likely to give different results. This paper tried to integrate all the models into one based on the combined importance of all the components outlined. The first task was to arrive at a singular definition for the variables outlined at various levels in the models. In addition, each level has been explained based on the specific indicator/s for respective level. In addition, the weightage of each variable at various levels was ascertained based on the combined importance of all the models outlined above.

To ensure that each resultant level has equal importance, the number of indicators representing the level has been kept equal and selected based on the outcome of the 8 models discussed above. Finally, each of the indicator was independently evaluated based on primary online survey using 7-point Likert scale to arrive at indicator score. To ensure that the overall score is indicative of the integrated model, weights are assigned based on the outcome of the integration and final equity score calculated accordingly. Since it was online survey and open-ended perception was difficult to gather, an open ended space was provided for comments. The detailed illustration of the methodology is outlined for ease of understanding.

Step 1. Literature survey identifying major models and all possible levels and variables associated with nation brand equity measures (Figure 1 through Figure 8 above).

Step 2. Cluster analysis using qualitative NVivo software to illustrate the levels and variables.

Step 3. Tree mapping using NVivo to determine the weights for each of the variables within various levels and to determine the weight differences by qualitative assessment.

Step 4. Calculate the variable weights based on the above two analyses to help in measuring brand equity.

Step 5. Measure difference in perception between NRB and RB, if any, using radar chart, mean and deviation.

Step 6. Calculating mean to measure importance for each of the variable across levels to outline score.

Step 7. Measuring brand equity based on the results from the primary survey and various weights based on the cluster output.

Step 8. Evaluating the perception outcome of Bangladesh citizens and the possible position comparing with maximum possible value achievement.

Step 9. Outline strategic direction to strengthen the brand equity of Bangladesh at various utility level intervention.

4. FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed based on the three distinct objectives outlined earlier. The first is to develop an integrated model, the second is the perception of Bangladesh citizens regarding brand Bangladesh based on the integrated model followed by delineating the strategic direction.

4.1 Integrated Nation Brand Model

The model categorizes three levels of factors or dependent variables, *dimension, wellbeing, components* and independent variables as *utility variables*.

From the eight models, a total of 26 components and 115 distinct utility factors were identified. However, it had duplication in terms of the definition and conceptual parameter of some of the components as well as utility factors. Thus, data cleaning was considered essential to ensure that a logical framework based on the earlier models could be developed. This required selection of an appropriate conceptual framework, and as such the concept of nation wellbeing surfaced (White, 2008) and was used as a starting point. The rationale of using wellbeing entails from the recent global acceptance of the fact that economic security, growth and material prosperity alone cannot create sustainable nations, economic performance should be seen more as means to human prosperity, not the end itself (Stiglitz et al., 2009). However, it is also important to note that, though, wellbeing as the outcome is being used at all levels, it is also considered to be extremely complex. Thus, one must clearly define the components of wellbeing to be able to measure them.

In clarifying the concept, the components of the wellbeing have been segregated to reduce the level of obscurity embedded in wellbeing; as such, in terms of clarity it has been described in terms of, *Relational Dimension*, which is an outcome that is dependent on the interrelationship between various factors and players operating within a society; *Subjective Dimension*, which represents emotional features of individuals that carve societies; and *Material Dimension*, which represents clear measurable dimensions that reflects achievement of societies” (White, 2018).

Four major wellbeing criteria have been identified based on the dimensions mentioned above, ***Social Wellbeing*** (Bakar et al., 2015) outlining the basic need of health, education, security, etc.; along with ***Natural Wellbeing*** (Sustainable Society Foundation, 2012), focusing on the environmental and planet parameters; these two are part of the relational dimension since they also relate to the overall societal norms that are outcome of interrelationship between every single player within a community. ***Human Wellbeing*** (Horlings et al., 2019), which is more to do with the individualistic people emotions and beliefs and thus part of the subjective dimension and finally ***Economic Wellbeing*** (Council of the European Union, 2019), which is clearly the material dimension highlighting the economic return due to nation brand.

The Cluster analysis involving clarity of each variable under each level was undertaken using reduction method to minimize the number of variables and delineate each of the variable for later measure involving perception mapping through primary survey of Bangladesh citizens. As indicated earlier, literature survey identified 26 components and 115 utility factors. Thus, the outcome of cluster analysis ensured more meaningful, measurable and adequate variables. Figure 9 illustrates the outcome of the detailed NVivo based qualitative cluster analysis which has 3 dimensions, 4 wellbeing indicators, 12 components and 36 utility variables. The number of utilities was reduced to three each for each of the 12 components to ensure some level of similarity and to ensure some degree of standardization. The definition of each of variables for all levels is outlined in annexure 1. For the purpose of consistency, items under each level, that is; dimension, wellbeing, component, and utility, the term variable has been used.

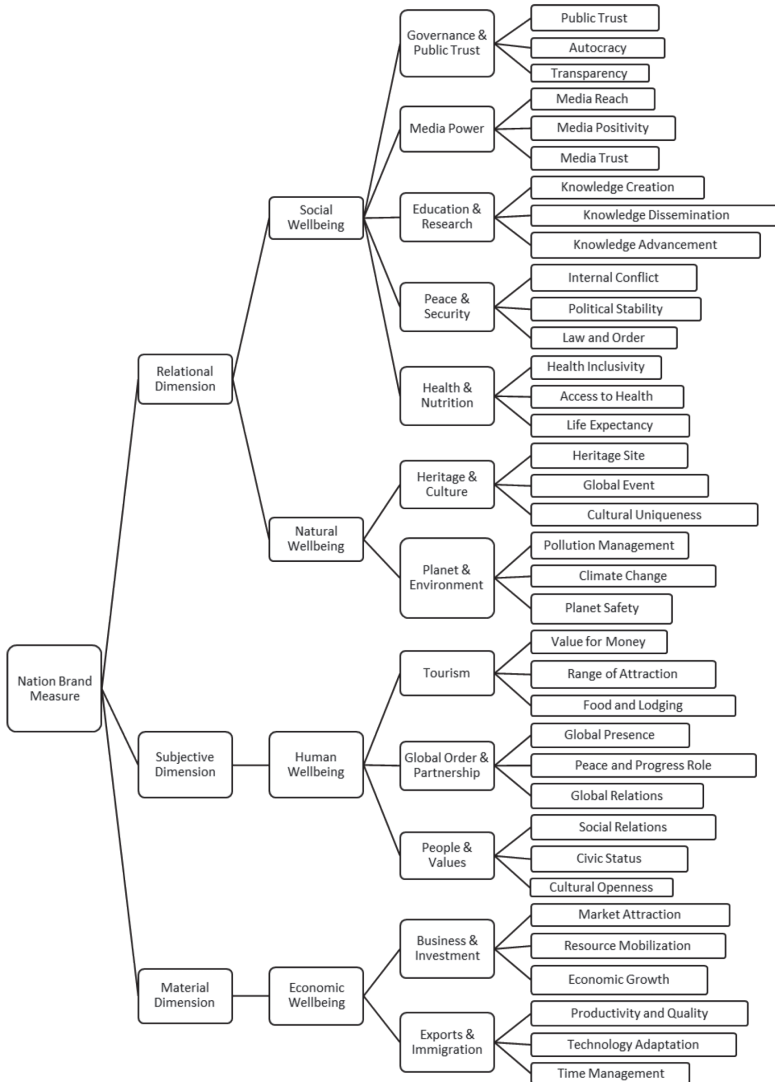
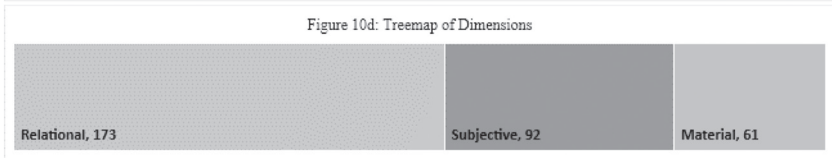
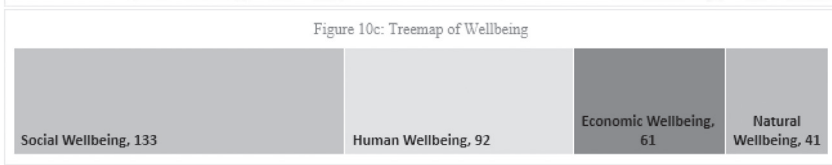
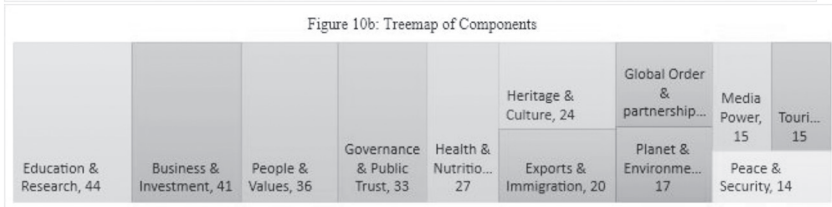
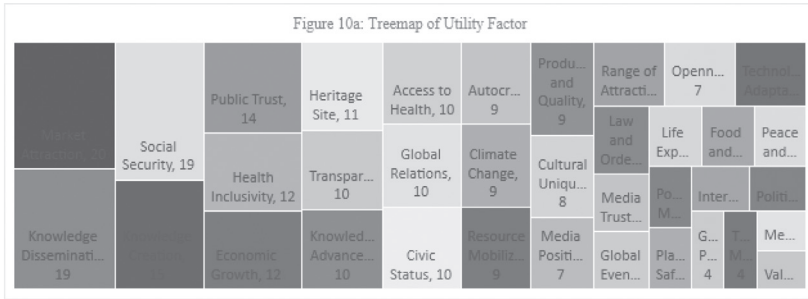


Figure 9 : Brand Measure Variable Decision Tree

4.2 Analyzing Distribution using Tree Map

Next analysis was conducted to determine importance of utility factor outlined in Figure 9 above which ultimately resulted in determination of the weight or importance of each dimension based on the comprehensive literature review using NVivo based distribution, Figures 10a through 10d illustrates the importance of the various concepts and constructs.



The results of NVivo severed from the normal belief that material dimension is considered important. Interestingly, Relational Dimension is considered the most important followed by Subjective Dimension and Material Dimension has least importance. Though, in Bangladesh we have been putting more importance on Material Dimension. In addition, in terms of the Wellbeing factor, Social and Human Wellbeing are considered far more important compared to Economic and Environmental Wellbeing though countries such as Bangladesh have been putting more importance on the latter two. At the component level however, Education and Research, followed Business and Investment followed by People and values hold top three position. This clearly implies that at a more micro level, variables associated with Economic Wellbeing and thus Material Dimension have importance. Though Relational Dimension and Social Wellbeing are still considered significant. At the ultimate micro level, that is utility level, Market Attraction, which is ultimately part of Material Dimension takes precedence over the rest. This indicates that while Nation Brand Building is a macro strategic approach, nations may get carried away at the utility level without giving due importance to the overall outcome outlined under nation brand building purpose.

4.3 Calculating weights for level of Variables

The weights for each of the variable under each of the level is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Weights of the variables by level

Dimension	Weight	Wellbeing	Weight	Component	Weight	Utility	Weight
Relational Dimension	5.3	Social Wellbeing	4.1	Governance & Public Trust	1.1	Public Trust	0.46
						Autocracy	0.29
						Transparency	0.33
				Media Power	0.5	Media Reach	0.10
						Media Positivity	0.23
						Media Trust	0.16
				Education and Research	1.4	Knowledge Creation	0.50
						Knowledge Dissemination	0.62
						Knowledge advancement	0.33
				Peace and Security	0.5	Internal Conflict	0.10
						Political Stability	0.10
						Law and Order	0.20
		Health and Nutrition	0.9	Health Inclusivity	0.40		
				Access to Health	0.33		
				Life Expectancy	0.16		
				Heritage Site	0.36		
Natural Wellbeing	1.2	Heritage and Culture	0.8	Global Event	0.16		
				Cultural Uniqueness	0.26		
				Pollution Management	0.13		
		Planet and Environment	0.5	Climate Change	0.30		
				Planet Safety	0.13		
Subjective Dimension	2.8	Human Wellbeing	1.9	Tourism	0.5	Value for Money	0.10
						Range of Attraction	0.23
						Food and Lodging	0.16
				Global Order and Partnership	0.6	Global Presence	0.13
						Peace and Progress Role	0.16
						Global Relations	0.33
				People and Values	1.2	Social Security	0.62
						Civic Status	0.33
						Cultural Openness	0.29
Material Dimension	1.9	Economic Wellbeing	2.8	Business and Investment	1.3	Market Attraction	0.66
						Resource Mobilization	0.30
						Economic Growth	0.39
				Exports and Immigration	0.7	Productivity and Quality	0.29
						Technology Adaptation	0.23
						Time Management	0.13
Total	10.0		10.0		10.0		10.0

The sum of the weight at each level is considered 100% to ensure internal consistency and to assess the importance of each variable within respective level. Table 1 indicates that as high as 53% weight is placed on relationship dimension while the material dimension comprises of only 19% weight. Though, as a nation, governments ignore the relationship dimension which may seriously impact the brand equity rating.

However, when looked at wellbeing point of view, though social wellbeing holds 41% weight, economic wellbeing is also important holding 28% weightage. This also implies that developed nations put more emphasis on factors that are more conducive towards their rating. For example, though they contribute much more in terms of environmental pollution, especially in case of creation of carbon footprint, the importance on natural wellbeing is the least at 12%.

As one moves to more micro level assessment, example if wellbeing dimension is further analyzed; two components surface, education and research (14%) and governance and public trust (11%). One each component, business and investment (13%) and people and values (12%) surface as part of economic and human

wellbeing. This clearly implies that while relational wellbeing had major share of weightage; however, national strategy at the micro level must be adjusted to seek global presence.

At the utility level, only 4 utilities out of the 36 have more than 5% weightage points, market attraction (6.6%), social relations (6.2%), knowledge dissemination (6.2%), and knowledge creation (5%). Clearly, larger markets such as China, India in terms of population size and developed economy having greater purchasing power are likely to win the race. Also, knowledge plays a very important role along with basic social security. Thus, nations must focus on education and unique market creation (blue ocean or unique offerings), to be able to successfully create a brand image.

4.4 Measuring difference between perception of NRB and RB

Figures 11 below depicts the difference regarding various utility factors as perceived by the Nonresident Bangladeshi and Resident Bangladeshi. Unlike the initial observation, where all respondents were considered homogenous, since, the global scores do not differentiate between respondents. The results clearly indicate that even within the two groups under study, NRB and RB, based on the outcome of the perception of respondents under the primary survey, there is a huge difference in perception. A 7-point Likert scale was used to measure level of agreement. 7 was considered strongly agree while 1 was considered as strongly disagree. Thus, depending on the statement, utility variables below, 4 are considered below par. Out of the 36 utility variables, according to all the respondents inclusive of deviation; 14 were positive, 13 neutral, and the rest 9 weaknesses. This implies that Bangladesh according to the Bangladeshi citizens have a good opportunity to be a brand as far as the perception is concerned.

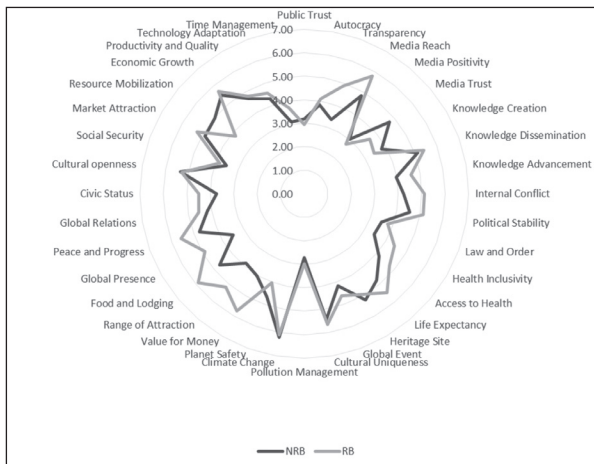


Figure 11 : Mapping Difference Between Nonresident Bangladeshi (NRB) and Resident Bangladeshi (RB)

Out of the total of 36 utility variables considered in the study, 19 were statistically significantly different while 17 were found to be having similar perception. This indicates that even within the Bangladeshi citizenry, under the classification of resident and nonresident, similar strategies to strengthen nation brand building intervention is unlikely to work. The detailed finding is presented in annexure 2.

4.5 Qualitative Analysis

The findings based on the perception score of utility variables as outlined in annexure 2 indicate that out of 36 variables, 10 have positive scores, 7 have negative scores, while the rest 19 are more or less neutral. The qualitative analysis of the 12 component variables is outlined below.

1. Governance and Public Trust: The perception of NRB and RB regarding 'public trust' and 'autocracy' are similar while regarding 'transparency' there is a significant difference. Regarding transparency and autocracy, though both have a fairly neutral opinion, however, the RB consider greater transparency. The concern is in public trust; this is a major concern which to a certain extent contradicts the results of other two utility factors. Interestingly, the level of trust amongst RB is less compared to the NRB.
2. Media Power: The perception of the two groups regarding 'media reach' and 'media trust' are significantly different in terms of the weights assigned. Media reach for example is considered strong by both but the RB consider this to be much stronger compared to NRB. On the other hand, media trust of NRB is positive while that of RB is neutral. The area of concern in this component is 'positivity of media' regarding building Bangladesh perception, both have equally negative opinion regarding the role of media in building the image of Bangladesh.
3. Education and Research: According to both groups, academia is weak in 'creation of knowledge' which is part of research and innovation while are strong in terms of teaching and learning representing 'knowledge dissemination'. However, regarding 'advancement of knowledge' beyond the boundaries of Bangladesh, the NRB have a neutral opinion while the RB consider this to be somewhat positive.
4. Peace and Security: Regarding existence of internal 'political conflict' both consider this to be of some concern, however, the NRB consider this to be a much graver issue compared to RB. Interestingly however, both consider that the country is 'politically stable', though RB consider it more stable compared to NRB. Regarding 'law and order' situation, the response is neutral, implying they are neither satisfied nor too much dissatisfied.
5. Health and Nutrition: Interestingly, this component has greater acceptability. The NRB are neutral regarding 'inclusivity' and 'access to health' while the RB are satisfied with the general health management of the country. Both consider hygiene, maternal health and public health offerings to be good resulting in greater 'life expectancy'.

6. Heritage and Culture: The general perception is that Bangladesh has a strong 'heritage' and 'cultural uniqueness'. However, though RB consider global 'cultural events' to be reasonably strong, the NRB have a neutral opinion, implying it is not enough.
7. Planet and Environment: Both groups consider environment as a threat for Bangladesh, particularly when considering the impact of 'climate change'. Moreover, the NRB consider 'planet safety' issue to be a threat for the country. Both are neutral regarding steps taken by the nation to tackle climate change and are extremely negative regarding issues pertaining to maintaining a better planet through 'pollution management'.
8. Tourism: Tourism potential has a neutral to strong perception. The satisfaction level of the RB is far greater compared to the NRB. The major strength considered by both is 'food and lodging' followed by 'value for money' and 'range of attraction'.
9. Global Order and Partnership: The level of acceptability as a global nation is also acceptable. While role in maintaining global 'peace and progress' is considered strong by both, the RB consider it substantive through participation in peace keeping force and Rohingya attention. However, both consider that more could be done in terms of strengthening 'global relations' through greater value addition and thus increasing 'global presence'.
10. People and Values: Although both groups consider 'cultural openness' to be a strong point for Bangladesh, more could be done to strengthen 'social security'. Also, though RB are happy with the 'civic status', NRB consider that much more should be done to improve the civic condition in general.
11. Business and Investment: This component is considered as one of the major strengths of the country. Both groups are happy with the 'economic growth' and consider 'market as attractive', for investment. However, the RB are not very happy with the efforts placed for resource mobilization although resource in terms of human capital as well as financial and technical resources are available.
12. Exports and Immigration: Though 'productivity and quality' of both goods as well as services are considered good by both the groups; improvements in 'technology adaptation' is sought by both groups, nevertheless it is considered as a thrust sector by the government. The major concern is in 'time management', which is one of the major concerns for ease of doing business in Bangladesh.

4.6 Measuring Brand Equity

Brand equity has been measured using the weights obtained for the 'Dimension variables', 'Wellbeing variables', 'Components variables' and 'Utility variables' as outlined in table 1 and the perception scores obtained for the various 'utility variables' from the primary survey. Mean values are used from perception survey since the objective was to obtain a general understanding of the internal brand equity outcome for Bangladesh.

Figure 12 depicts that Bangladesh, as perceived by the internal market, are performing almost the same in all three of dimension variables. However, unlike the global perception outlined in the literature survey (Bhuiyan, 2021), the internal perception outweighs global perception. In general, global perception indices have placed Bangladesh around 50 percentile which is 15 percentiles lower compared to the internal perception mean brand equity score of 65.29%.

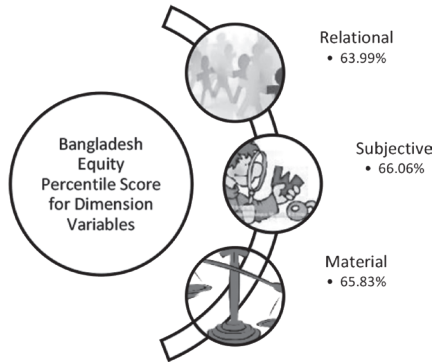


Fig 12 : Bangladesh Equity Percentile Score for Dimension Variables

At the next level of wellbeing variable analysis, as depicted in figure 13 below, the results as expected from the macro analysis far better the results at the global level. The equity scores according to strength is as follows: Natural – 67.55% and Human – 66.03% are statistically same. Finally, Social – 60.43% and Economic 56.83% are statistically significantly lower compared to the rest of the two variables.

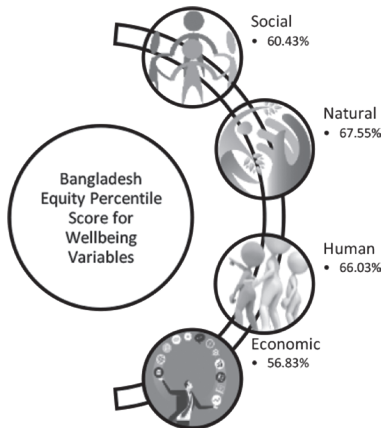


Fig 13 : Bangladesh Equity Percentile Score for Wellbeing Variables

Further analysis of the 12-component level brand equity score of each of the variable is depicted in Figure 14 below. Two major areas of concern which are below 50 percentile points ‘planet and environment’ and more importantly perhaps ‘governance and public trust’. ‘Education and research’ just made it above 50 percentile point and

is another concern area. The areas of strengths are clearly ‘media power’, ‘heritage and culture’, as expected, ‘business and investment’ and to a certain extent ‘tourism’. The rest of the six variables also have opportunity for improvement. The results imply that although at the more macro level, it seems Bangladesh is doing well, however, closer look has identified some major potholes that must be mended to ensure sustainable growth.

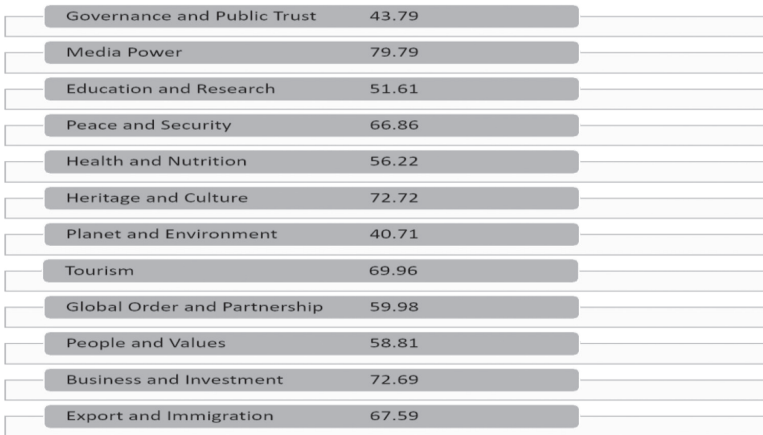


Fig 14 : Bangladesh Equity Percentile Score for Component Variables

The results in Figure 14 clearly calls for closer look to target specific areas outlined in the 36 distinct utility variables to design a strategic intervention for both equity score enhancement as well as to ensure sustainable growth of the nation. Figure 15 outlines the equity score of all 36 utility variables.

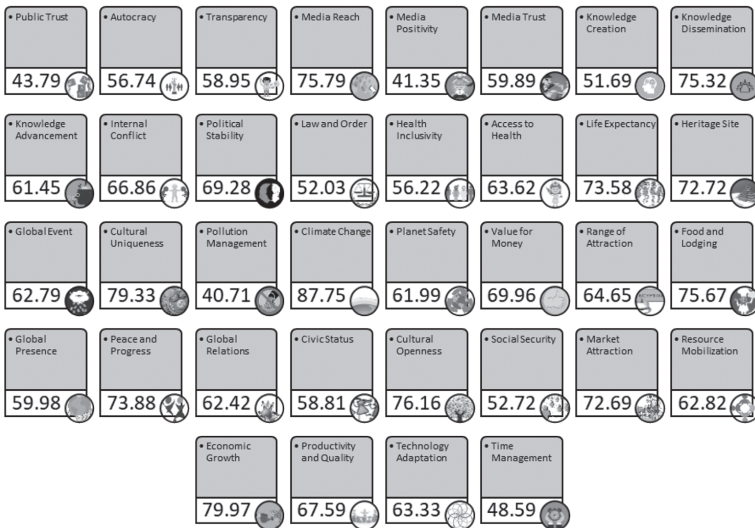


Figure 15 : Bangladesh Equity Percentile Score for Utility Variable

The results outlined in Figure 15 and Annexure 3 can be summarized through creation of three categories of utility variables. The first are the strengths of Bangladesh which have scored a score of around 70 percentiles. These include a total of 12 (33%) variables; media reach, knowledge dissemination, political stability, life expectancy, heritage sites, cultural uniqueness, climate change initiative, value for money in tourism, food and lodging for tourists, participation in global peace and progress, cultural openness, market attraction, and economic growth. The second group are the mediocre performing variables which can be easily worked at for improvement and are those which have scored between 55 to less than 70 percentile scores. They constitute 17 (47%) variables; autocracy, transparency, media trust, knowledge advancement, internal conflict, political stability, health inclusivity, access to health, global cultural event, planet safety initiative, range of tourist attraction, global presence, global relations, civic status, resource mobilization, productivity and quality, and technology adaptation. The last group are the concern areas for Bangladesh with a score of 55 percentile or less. This comprise of 7 (20%) variables; public trust, lack of media positivity, knowledge creation, law and order, pollution management, social security, and time management.

4.7 Strategic Intervention Model

Based on the results outlined and the detailed analysis the following specific strategic interventions can be proposed against each of the utility variables. It is obvious that measures at the utility level is likely to create a positive impact at the more macro level. The strategic recommendation is discussed based on the three levels of intervention, viz, areas of strength, mediocre performing variables, and finally the weak links.

4.7.1 Strategies for Areas of Strength

As discussed above a total of 12 utility variables provide the major positive equity score for Bangladesh. Of these 12, economic growth and life expectancy due to adequate nutrition and public health measures at the bottom of the pyramid is well recognized at the global level. At the same time, these two are likely to taper soon, which implies importance must be shifted and continue with a maintenance strategy for these two variables, however, since the economic growth and life expectancy are positive, new market creation is evident with greater opportunities for investments and global partnership mobilization. The results further indicate that Bangladesh is not only rich in heritage and culture, but at the same time, the country is both unique in many ways and is open to new cultural quintessence. In addition, the infrastructure for tourism is considered good which implies that the country should put extra emphasis on the tourism sector, especially in bringing in foreign tourists through utilization of media, which has a good reach. One of the major global presence of Bangladesh is in the global peace keeping forces, this is also evident in the results of the research. Thus, media should also focus on this very important global uniqueness embedded within the strategic strength of Bangladesh. The strength in knowledge dissemination implies that any awareness drive focusing on knowledge and beyond

is likely to bear positive result. In addition, since knowledge dissemination is directly associated with the young generation of the country, the opportunity to further educate the youth is very promising provided the correct knowledge is channeled through these knowledge outlets.

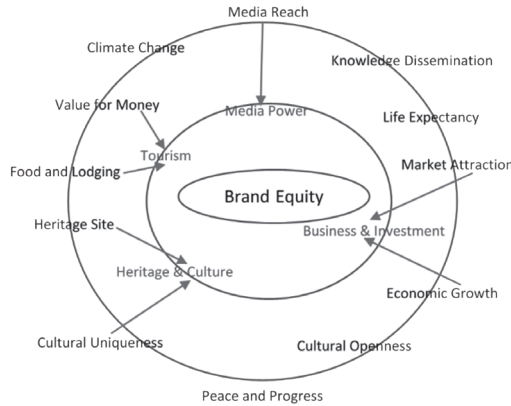


Figure 16 : Model for Strengths of Bangladesh Brand Equity

Figure 16 above depicts the nation brand equity model for determining the strengths of brand Bangladesh. Figure indicates that the strengths reach is up to the component level, implying though the country depicts 12 areas of utility variables as strengths, however the other variables outweigh the reach. Moreover, out of the total 12 component variables only 4 have been reached through utility strength variables. However, three distinct component variables should be focused by Bangladesh, business & investment, heritage & culture and tourism. The media reach can aid in further strengthening the brand equity, provided it is used with due diligence.

4.7.2 Strategies for Areas of Mediocrity

A total of 17 or 47% represent this category. The scores are representative of the present day overall score that Bangladesh has been attaining in various models. One of the most important parameters of middle order scores is the danger of falling into mediocrity trap. The first and foremost mediocrity is in the realm of governance which clearly is one major focus of mediocrity trap. Governance to large extent is a result of mediocrity in internal conflict and political stability. Media trust though relative, does contribute towards creation of mediocrity mindset of the population at large. Health and education are a clear indicator of not pursuing to reach the next level due to mediocrity in knowledge and thus clearly not pursuing the strategies to build a knowledge economy, which requires, strengthening research and innovation drive. The utility variables such as organizing global events, strengthening global relations, global presence, and ensuring multiple tourist attraction are physical evidence of excellence and in absence of these mediocrity supersedes. Also, the global competitiveness increases with emphasis on such utility variables. It is also easier to implement these compared to other variables. Resource enhancement,

productivity enhancement, and technology adaptation are directly correlated with elements of knowledge creation and knowledge advancement. Thus, any lapses in focus of knowledge economy will result in mediocrity trap for these utility factors. Ensuring planet safety and strengthening of civic status of citizens in general perhaps calls for fulfilling all the mediocrity trap utility variable discussed earlier. One other important issue should be considered, aging population and narrowing of demographic dividend. Thus, appropriate skills and human values must be inculcated now to reap the benefits in the future.

Figure 17 below depicts the brand equity model for variables determining mediocrity profile of brand Bangladesh. The scores indicate that Bangladesh at the core of Brand Equity is considered as a mediocre nation, which is quite reasonable since the nation is just now graduating from a least developed nation to a middle-income nation. However, the basic concern is the move to the next level. The middle-income nations represent 75% of the world population but at the same time, constitute 62% of the world poor. This is the contention of middle-income trap (Bulman et al., 2017). Thus, over the years, only a handful of nations have been able to move up the ladder.

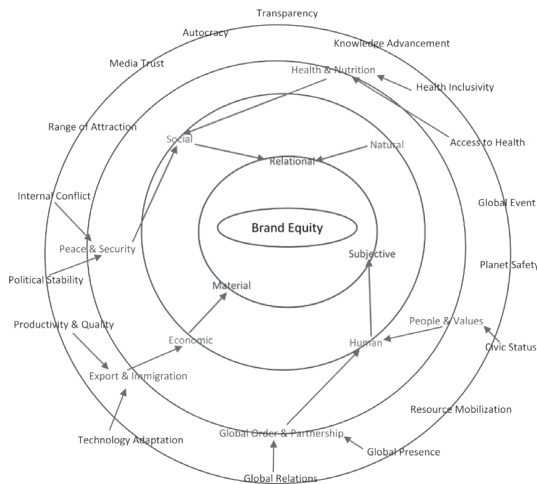


Figure 17 : Mediocrity Model of Bangladesh Brand Equity Strength Determination

Thus, Bangladesh must look at the variables that result in creation of this trap. Results indicate that at the component level the major variables are, health and nutrition, people and values, global order and partnership, export and immigration, finally, peace and security. It implies that an acceptable level in all these areas have been achieved but the next level requires greater effort. A greater focus indicates that for health and nutrition, the nation should focus more on health inclusivity and thus access to health at the lower end of the economy. This is also related to enhancement of public health in general to strengthen civic responsibility of people which is likely to strengthen value dimension of people. Thus, this calls for communicating awareness to change the mindset of greater population. To achieve the above, global

partnership and adaptation of global model in the context of Bangladesh is necessary. Furthermore, although Bangladesh has scored high in economic growth, but the overall score on economic wellbeing remains mediocre. This is mainly due to low productivity of workforce in general and adaptation of technology. Bangladesh has been focusing on labor cost as a competitive advantage, but with the 4th industrial revolution, taking the world by force, gears need to be changed. Last but not the least, peace and security within a middle-income economy has always been contentious and Bangladesh is no exception. This is where more open mindedness along with 'Nation First for Global Harmony' attitude needs to be embodied. A common political vision must be the driving force. Bangladesh has returned to the growth track in the last decade primarily because of this common understanding and appreciation being embedded that we have fought a war for freedom under the leadership of our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and we are a pluralistic nation. To be able to proceed further, cherishing this united effort is essential and at the same time, a more democratic political thought process must be entertained. The rest of the utility variables though important are less impacting the core wellbeing and dimension variables.

The mediocrity trap is further evident in Figure 17 from the outcome, showing that the impact is from the utility level to the core level of dimension. All three dimensions and all four wellbeing variables have a mediocre perception. This is where the nation must commit to work beyond the material dimension and economic wellbeing and must put focus on the other variables.

4.7.3 Strategies for Areas of Weakness

Figure 18 shows that the weakness of brand Bangladesh is represented by 7 utility variables and 3 component variables. Though apparently the core variables are not considered as weaknesses, however, it is apparent that the core values are to a large extent impacted due to these weaknesses. The weakness in planet and environment is acceptable while considering climate change but is unacceptable once pollution management is considered a major concern. Similarly, it is evident that though knowledge dissemination is a strength, however, tertiary level education is not putting emphasis on research and innovation. In addition, the negativity of media clearly indicates why awareness of people regarding positive dimensions of the nation and its role in awareness building in general is perhaps lacking. The major focus however should be on governance and public trust, which is a result of low public trust on the nation. This is perhaps the most important outcome of the study. Time management is again an issue of productivity and law and order more of a perception to be sorted out through good governance.

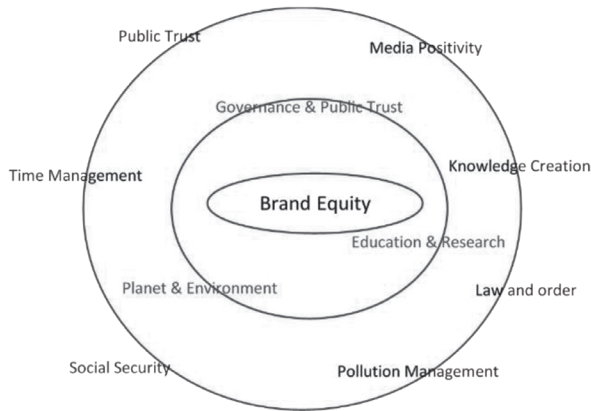


Figure 18 : Model for Weaknesses of Bangladesh Brand Equity

5. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

5.1 Conclusion

In 1947 Simon Kuznets, an economist, presented the concept of Gross Domestic Product or GDP in his famous report, “National Income, 1929-35”. Since then, GDP has been considered by most as the measure of nations overall welfare, an indicator of the soul of an economy, and of course the ultimate Nobel winning statistical indicator of nations health. However, over recent times, it gradually became apparent that GDP could not be trusted to measure the overall health of a nation resulting in the welfare of her citizens. The latest concept of Social Progress Index led by Michael Green focuses on social and environmental needs. Countries and even companies adopting the above are likely to have an edge because they can combine a quality promise with a mission imbued with positive values.

To achieve the next level Bangladesh must focus on the above principle of growth, put more emphasis on subjective and relational dimensions and along with ensuring a wellbeing attitude in all activities rather than just economic growth. At the operational level, the utility variables must be considered by all stakeholders including the general citizens of the country. At the strategic level, the components should be the focus. In addition, strengths must take the scores to 80s, which is likely to be difficult and requires all to focus on perfection and excellence. The mediocre utility variables are something that requires more of changing mindset and should be outlined in every single short-term plan of the nation as well as organizations. The weaknesses must be embedded within the policy framework of government and seriously delved into. There was no theoretical work before for measuring internal nation brand equity of Bangladesh. This paper will help academicians and researchers to take the research of internal brand equity to the next level. Combining all these eight models to measure internal national brand equity is the unique contribution of this study.

5.2 Limitation of the Study

The study considered eight nation brand equity index which may not be exhaustive and may entail differences in terms of approach. The weightage used is based on the outcome of the global indices analysis and thus may not represent the weight that could have been assigned by the sampling frame. The study was undertaken during COVID and thus stress factor may have influenced the rating by the respondents. The study has assumed that the difference between NRB and RB is negligible though the findings have shown statistical difference. Thus, the final mean scores do have an element of standard deviation. Since the study was online, the actual respondent is difficult to ascertain. The study took almost a year to complete, therefore, the response period is staggered and not within a limited time frame. Since the variables are exhaustive, a clear comparison with any single model that are in practice is difficult. The research did not consider validation of the data collected; thus, the primary survey results are considered final.

5.3 Future Research Agenda

The concept of brand equity is very much needed to be inbuilt in the national activities and future planning. Future study can be undertaken in the developing and underdeveloped world to identify weights for each of the variable. Future research should include a third category, the expatriates. Future research can explore to establish a model based on objective behavior beyond perceptual measures. In fact, we also think it is possible to use these measures to assess brand equity of other countries and perhaps create a nation brand equity index. Research may also be undertaken to assess differences between various segments along with geographical location. A post COVID research can be conducted to assess stress related impact. Research on the specific issues of the nation brand building with an intent to translate the more strategic dimension outlined in this research to operational level may be conducted.

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