

Destination \$1 billion

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The days of Golden Fiber (Jute) may have tarnished away, but the golden days of Optical Fiber i.e. country's IT Sector has just begun. Having a consistent 25% growth at present, IT sector is immensely blessed to have several growth drivers like a large pool of efficient young professionals, a collaborative environment with the government, effective dynamic leadership from BASIS and positive media involvement etc. Software Export earnings stood at around \$100 million in the period July-May 2012-13, rising from \$70.81 million in the same time a year ago.

Yes, we have come out with flying colours within a few years. Yet I think with our booming potential, we can go even farther. I firmly believe we can target even \$1 Billion within a few years to come.

While discussing different aspects of branding our country globally-with regard to IT sector, at the final session of BASIS IT Marketing Forum 2013; my belief has rather got reassured. All the eminent panelists of the session: 'Bangladesh Next', opined that, "IT Industry in Bangladesh is an untapped

opportunity, radiant with huge possibilities. Given its lucrative potential, if only we could strategically market our products via creating effective brand identity, the dream for \$1 billion will not remain as a dream anymore."

As Raihan Shamsi, CEO of GP IT correctly mentioned, the demographic dividend that we have; should be the cornerstone of any road map we want to devise regarding IT development. Bangladesh has one of the most attractive population demography in the world - relatively high young population base as over 34% are in age group of 15-34 years; which is favourable for IT-BPO industry. The total industry size for ICT and ITeS is estimated to be around Tk 2500 crore (USD \$ 400 million) where approximately 70,000 professionals are employed. Now question is how to confirm growth of this market by many more folds? How to ensure continuous connectivity as to propel the growth? As to answer this, Nazrul Islam Khan, the ICT secretary assured that government will facilitate BASIS and the industry with all the possible solutions with a view to developing the skill set of the ITpreneurs and promoting their products



among global audience. Khan also briefly described current initiatives of his ministry on developing HR pool for the industry through training.

Over the last few years, Bangladesh has made major strides in laying the groundwork for a diverse and successful outsourcing market. Gartner, a global research agency, ranked Bangladesh top 30 outsourcing destinations. Also in the freelance outsourcing arena, our freelancers are among

the top 5 by oDesk.com. But these success stories were not highlighted in media the way they should have been. As Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star correctly pointed this out. He also offered a partnership model where BASIS and media can work together to feature positive news of IT sector. I think all forms of mass media should be aware of this fact and come forward as to support this uprising sector.

Government authorities have been

demonstrating an impressive determination for IT sector by initiating ICT incubator, IT park etc. Bangladeshi companies are now graduating from low value added tasks to higher end engineering and product development assignments. For example, REVE Systems is now global leader in VoIP Mobile Dialer Solutions, Tiger IT is developing biometric solutions for international clients, SSD-Tech has been developing VAS mobile platforms for companies across two continents. These are all indications that, yes, we can turn our dream of \$1 billion into reality and a long wait may not be needed this time.

BASIS IT Marketing Forum was just the beginning. Many more follow up sessions to be organised involving government, media, academia, international relevant agencies and others.

We need to identify the challenges to overcome and it's now high time to develop a road map towards achieving \$1 billion goal involving all stakeholders for a brighter tomorrow.

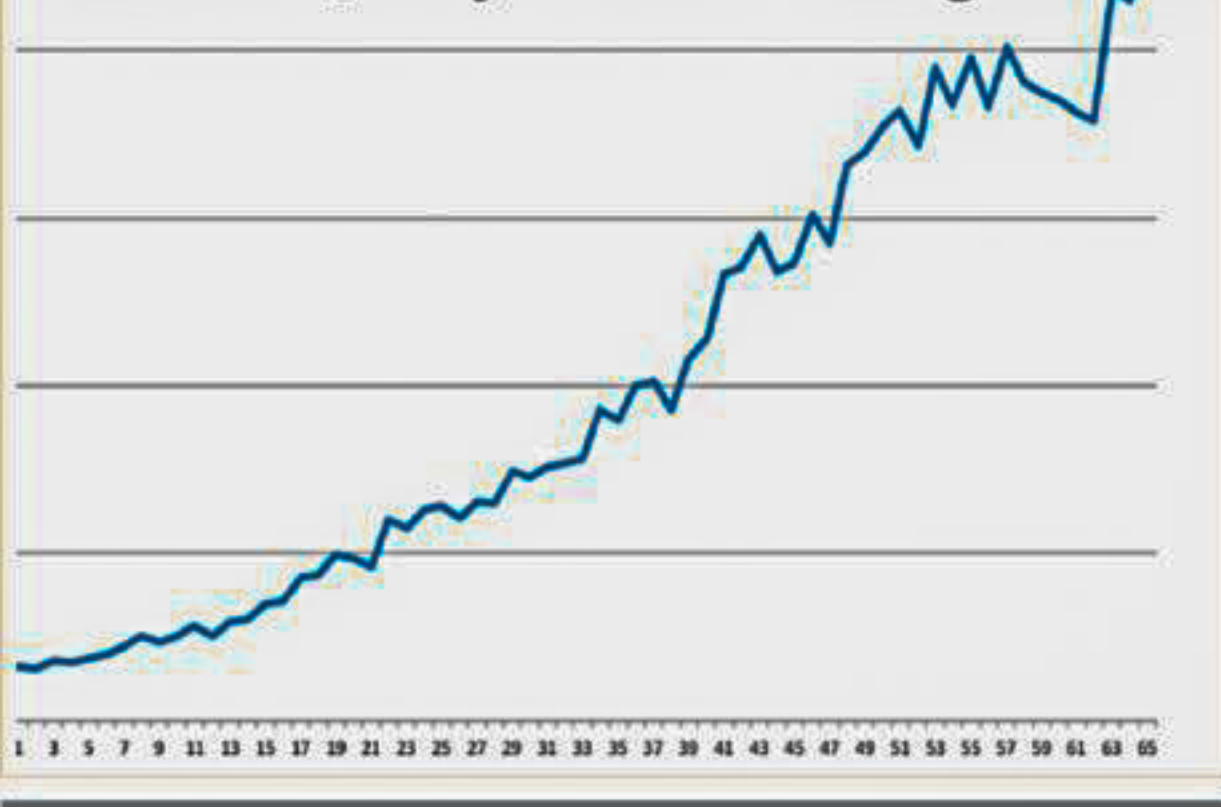
Let's work together. We can, surely we can.

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Power of digital media

Roadmap to IT branding: A preview

Search Query Trend - Bangladesh



AYESHA SABRINA

Imagine you are a startup company, with a small capital that needs allocation among operations, HR, infrastructure and what not and you need to start branding right away or you wouldn't survive in this competitive world. Sounds scary, doesn't it? This is what every IT venture in all the emerging markets across the world faces and needs responding to.

But "Do not fear. Size is not everything. If your idea is powerful and consumers love your product your brand will be successful" - so goes the mantra created by Anand Tilak, regional head, agency business and sales development, Google South East and an emerging market expert. Utilising the blessings of digital media and being smart about it, even the smallest companies can create their own identity in the global arena. And trends in Bangladesh are in favour of IT entrepreneurs taking brand building initiatives despite the capacity or capital constraints.

As analysis would suggest, search queries by Bangladeshis have gone increased 15 to 30 times in different sectors, in just 2 to 3 years and consumers have become smarter. They no longer look for categories, they look for specific brands or specific solutions. The brand awareness buildup is done on a national level. It is time to act on these opportunities.

Digital media has several advantages over traditional media because it is less expensive and more targeted, scalable and supports long tail advertising. Tilak points out, Google depends more on a large number of small companies investing less than USD \$50 a month in promotion rather than a few MNCs spending millions. He believes, in a changing market scenario where consumers research online and purchase offline (ROPO phenomena), Fortune 500 status or gigantic marketing budget does not account for competitive edge anymore. Ensuring talking to the right consumers with the right messages, in other words the contextualisation of brand promises needs creative thinking and strategic media mix decisions. Increasing dependence on peer review and usage of internet for decision making makes it extremely important for brands to engage in remarketing and response management. Usage of analytics and trend search provides a business, free of cost, not just the proper target group identification, but the situational need for response as well. Marketers can identify exactly where they are hurting and be quick to remedy the incident. These tools help with psychographic targeting as well, where consumer response can be converted into immediate sales just by being smart about the query management. There are 10-15% new internet users, who just react very ardently to any innovative initiative in the digital world and Bangladesh consumer market fit right into this scenario. This gives Bangladesh ITpreneurs enough scope to energise their brands through this new mantra: "Going digital and going wisely about it". Focusing on the positives and utilising this opportunities while ruling out the size or infrastructure issues from mindset, Bangladeshi entrepreneurs can start establishing their brand identity in the digital media from today, for "Future depends on what you do today".

So you have an IT company, right? You have invested a lot, yet not as much return as you expected. No sales growth, customers are sending you dissatisfaction mails and what is your brand again? Sorry, never heard of it.

So your IT brand is not performing well. In fact, it is not even a brand. If it were, your balance sheet wouldn't have shown the nulls.

The core problem is, even if you make good products, you are not really sure whom to cater, how to sell and what to say. Now that we know, where your Achilles' heel is, we will try to solve it. Let's take a tour through this report and find out how exactly we are solving it. With derived insights from industry experts, we have designed a complete guidebook to branding and marketing IT ventures with case studies and well researched evidences. Here you go:

Vision matters: Before starting with any marketing plan, as an evolving IT-preneur you need to ask yourself- 'First, What am I offering and to whom?'. Then, 'How do I serve differently than others?'. And lastly, 'Where do I see my venture going in the

foreseeable future?' By answering these questions you are just setting a vision for your venture.

Vision guides a venture, helps forecast the future and mostly, helps against complacency with immediate success that might derail a company from its goals. Marketing decisions have to be rational for your startup company, since you cannot afford designing a plan B. An entrepreneur has to be passionate about the work and absolutely in love with it. Only then, his work can flourish. This can be done by choosing to be 'benefit' oriented, rather than being 'product' focused only. McDonalds does not just offer fast food, rather it promises to serve customers with "good time, great taste, with your family". So be driven, be a visionary and let it guide you

Be Localised: The typical IT-preneurs develop world class apps and software for their foreign clients. They do not consider the local market to be in their favour. Or when they do, they go for it in wrong ways. But it's time you started going against this trend and set your own example.

Bangladesh has the advantage of demographic dividends, unilateral linguistic and an inborn interest for art and music in the popular culture. You may benefit from aligning your ideas with these features and get a unique brand theme. See how Bkash has done it. They set a vision first, created an imagery of that vision. And they incorporated a sense of localisation in the process. The logo, tagline, campaign theme; every where they attach a feeling of Bangali identity. That's the beauty of strategic localisation.

Make Marketing a culture: From day one, do not consider marketing to be distinctive function of your business. Your finance guy should be a part of your marketing strategy as well. Every touch point of your business should send the right message to the people. This should be consistent, acknowledged and practiced with consensus. You should make it an internal culture before it steps on to become public.

Rather be fluid: Global market has become so dynamic that it develops every second. You have to be ready to get hold of every second of these changes or you

are already lagging behind. Fluid marketing refers to flexible approaches of touching every possible option. This means that marketing criteria should not be fixed from day one. You need to settle on the ever changing notions, not setting one option or strategy market their products. IBM does this so flawlessly, it might amaze you. Even during global recession in 2008, they set up a brilliant campaign named "Let's build a smarter planet" which went responsibly about promoting in a crisis market. And at the end of the day, this spontaneity got rewarded.

Now that you have set the vision and built your attitude towards following it, we can explain to you how you are going to execute these thoughts and make your balance sheet as lucrative as you are capable of. Hold your patience and stay with us till the end of this journey. We promise to serve you with something worthy of your patience.

This is a preview of a report on the critical findings of IT marketing forum-2013 to be prepared by "Team Alternatives". Full version will be available soon on www.basis.org.bd

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Is marketing an investment or an expenditure?

AMITABH GUHA ROY

When you approach your head of the marketing department with a brilliant Oh-So-WoW marketing campaign for your product, the first thing you might notice is your boss doesn't seem so excited about it. Don't blame your boss, because there are always several dilemmas that CXOs and heads of marketing department face before taking any kind of marketing decisions. The biggest of them is always the one prime question, "Will this marketing be an investment or an expenditure?"

Prabir Sarker, CEO of Kaspersky Bangladesh, thinks that the myth is over long ago. Marketing is always an investment which is now, not an option, rather an integral part of the success behind any kinds of product. The doubt about marketing being an expense lies in the traditional thinking of comparing sales with marketing. Most of them are also

driven by the idea of immediate sales rather than establishing their brand for a longer term.

According to Gousul Alam Shaon, managing director of Grey Bangladesh, this kind of short term, immediate sales-driven strategy can be attributed as 'Bottom line driven Myopia' where the managers miss the bigger picture of their products. According to him, this kind of vision leads companies to choose a rather cliché strategy, where they always position their products on how low their price can be.

Based on his personal experience, Munirul Kabir, country representative Bangladesh, Google, believes marketing is an investment, proven with overwhelming evidence year after year. But then comes the important question, how to do proper marketing? What to choose? ATL? BTL? Or TTL? What should be the best strategy for an IT based product?

Shameem Ahsan, senior vice president,

BASIS, thinks marketing is like telling a story. Instead of being a narrative story, rather he believes 'Some times less means more'. Based on selective retention theory, the communication message should not be elaborative, rather it should be more precise and specific. You can even start with a logo. There should be a vision which should be the invisible guiding principle behind the marketing strategies. Vision should not be product specific, rather it is about a larger benefit/scheme your product is offering.

Kamal S. Quadir, CEO of Bkash says, for an IT product, it is very important to have a global (globally local) vision. Based on the huge interest from foreign investors such as Paypal, Huffington Post etc, IT products have a huge potential market which can be capitalised using the human resource that Bangladesh have.

Sudhir Nair, senior vice President and head of digital, South Asia, Grey Digital, believes apart from ATL, BTL and TTL

strategy, social media strategy should not be different from the marketing strategy. Social media is also a kind of marketing, people are marketing themselves through word of mouth every day. It is a new trend of marketing you own product through social media.

Success of any kind of marketing strategy actually depends the combination of sales and marketing rather than specifying each of them separately. Sales is more labour intensive whereas Marketing is more talent and idea intensive. So, a structured alignment between these two is the ultimate stairway towards success.

Worried about how to manage finance for you marketing budget? Shaon believes, when there is a vision, when you know what you are going to do, budget is not a hurdle you should be worried about. If a vision is powerful, it can be achieved, through discussion and collaboration between parties by developing a proper revenue generation model.