

The hidden potential of Bangladesh’s “attention” market

The cross-currency vehicle in digital media

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Bangladesh is often discussed in terms of labour, manufacturing, and remittances. Yet an equally powerful economic resource remains largely invisible in policy discussions and investment theses: attention.

Every day, tens of millions of Bangladeshis spend hours on YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, mobile games, and messaging platforms. Measured in time, engagement, and cultural influence, this attention is already being bought and sold. The issue is not whether Bangladesh has an attention market - it is that we have failed to recognise it as one.

Attention as an economic asset

In modern digital economies, attention functions like a raw commodity. Platforms monetise it through advertising. Creators convert it into income. Brands transform it into demand. Unlike physical exports, attention requires no ports, no shipping containers, and no inventory. It scales instantly and travels frictionlessly across borders.

Bangladesh holds three structural advantages in this market: a large, young population, high mobile internet penetration, and cultural fluency with short-form, social-first content. Yet, attention generated in Bangladesh is rarely captured at its full value locally. Instead, it is exported, often unintentionally, through global platforms that settle earnings in foreign currencies.

The undervalued attention economy

On a per-user basis, Bangladeshi attention is among the cheapest in the world. CPMs are low, brand budgets are constrained, and local advertising sophistication remains limited. From a global perspective, this makes Bangladesh a high-volume, low-cost attention pool. This mispricing creates arbitrage.

A Bangladeshi creator earning views locally may be paid in USD by YouTube. A D2C brand can acquire domestic attention cheaply and convert it into sales from diaspora customers abroad. A freelancer builds an audience on LinkedIn or X and translates credibility into foreign contracts. The attention originates locally. The value is realised globally.

Digital media as a cross-currency vehicle

Digital media platforms function as currency exchangers. They convert: Bangladeshi time into foreign ad revenue, local cultural relevance into global reach,



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

and low-cost attention into high-value outcomes.

This explains why many digital-native businesses - from content studios to niche D2C brands - are more export-oriented than traditional SMEs, even when they appear domestic. Some of Bangladesh's most successful "fashion" or "lifestyle" brands are, in practice, content companies first. Brands such as Gorur Ghash and Get The Juice have demonstrated how sustained storytelling builds both audience and demand.

In effect, Bangladesh is exporting attention much like it exports labour, except this export requires no visas, factories, or intermediaries. Waiting for only large manufacturers to go global is a strategic blind spot.

Creators, brands, and the silent export economy

Thousands of Bangladeshis already operate within this system. There are creators monetising global platforms with foreign payouts, agencies running campaigns for overseas clients, brands using social media to reach diaspora markets, and founders building English-language audiences before local scale. Yet, none of this activity is formally

classified as an export sector. There are no dashboards tracking attention flows, no incentives linked to monetised reach, and no policy language that treats attention as an economic input.

As a result, this economy grows quietly, despite being one of the most capital-efficient growth engines available to the country. Ghorerbazar's emergence as a trusted food brand for Bangladeshi expatriates in the US, UK, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE illustrates this clearly: a Bangladeshi-global brand built through attention before logistics.

Why investors and policymakers miss it

Traditional economic frameworks struggle to price attention. It does not appear cleanly in trade balances. It does not always move through banks in predictable ways. It is fragmented across platforms and individuals rather than concentrated in large firms. But ignoring it has consequences.

Countries that recognise attention early invest in creators, media infrastructure, and digital storytelling capacity. Countries that do not become raw attention suppliers - exporting value without capturing the upside. Bangladesh

risks falling into the latter category unless the narrative shifts.

A strategic reframe

If attention were treated as an exportable resource, several changes would follow. Creators would be recognised as micro-exporters, and digital media businesses would qualify for export incentives. Furthermore, reach, engagement, and audience data would be tracked alongside revenue. Capital would also flow earlier into audience-first ventures. Most importantly, young Bangladeshis would learn that attention is not merely consumption. It is production.

The opportunity in plain sight

Bangladesh does not lack opportunity. It lacks recognition of where value is already being created. The attention market is not speculative. It is operational, global, and expanding. Digital media is its cross-currency vehicle, converting local engagement into foreign value every day.

The question is no longer whether Bangladesh has an attention economy. The question is whether we will continue exporting it unconsciously - or choose to build, own, and scale it deliberately.

The Gen-Z guide to managing your manager

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Managing a manager used to sound like an act of rebellion. However, today it has become a quiet professional necessity. Our workplace reality is defined by shifting expectations, hybrid structures, and managers who are often navigating pressures that flow down faster than clarity flows up. In this environment, managing up becomes less about corporate politics and more about building a functional ecosystem where communication is clear, decisions are consistent, and work does not collapse under avoidable confusion. This guide explores how emerging professionals can construct that dynamic deliberately, respectfully, and strategically, without compromising authenticity or emotional boundaries.

Understanding your manager's operating system

Every manager operates through a unique set of rhythms, preferences, and behavioural patterns that essentially form their internal operating system. Identifying this system requires consistent observation rather than guesswork. How a manager responds under pressure, the manner in which they process information, the speed at which they make decisions, and the communication channels they instinctively rely on reveal the architecture of their professional style. Mapping these patterns allows young employees to position their work in a way that complements managerial expectations rather than colliding with them. This is not imitation or appeasement; rather, an analytical exercise in workplace compatibility, enabling smoother exchanges and reduced friction in decision-making.

Establishing clear expectations on both ends Ambiguity is one of the most common sources of workplace inefficiency, and younger professionals often inherit its consequences. Proactively clarifying expectations offers a structural safeguard against such confusion. It transforms vague directives into actionable goals and protects both parties from misinterpretation. This process involves ensuring a shared understanding of what constitutes success, what standards define the quality of output, and how timelines or priorities align within broader organisational demands. When expectations are formalised through conversation rather than inferred through assumption, the working relationship becomes more predictable, more equitable, and significantly more productive.

Practising transparent upward

communication

Transparency is often misconstrued as oversharing, but its real significance lies in maintaining a steady flow of information that enables smoother operations. Managers function more effectively when they are not caught off guard and when their teams communicate progress or barriers in a timely, structured manner. Practising upward transparency means translating one's workflow into clear, coherent updates that focus on progress, constraints, and dependencies without unnecessary narrative. This style of communication builds trust, reduces micromanagement, and positions the employee as someone who approaches work with consistency and accountability.



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

In an increasingly fast-paced professional environment, such clarity becomes the cornerstone of a high-functioning partnership.

Protecting your time, capacity, and mental sanity

One of the greatest challenges for Gen Z employees is balancing ambition with bandwidth. Managing a manager effectively often requires articulating the reality of available capacity while still demonstrating commitment to collective goals. Protecting one's time does not signify resistance but rather a disciplined approach to prioritisation. Communicating competing tasks, renegotiating timelines when new responsibilities emerge, and ensuring that workloads are aligned with feasible expectations cultivates a healthier workflow. This practice not only prevents burnout but also signals to the manager that decisions are being made thoughtfully and responsibly. Time, when

treated as a finite resource, becomes an essential component of managerial management.

Recognising and responding to managerial stress patterns

Stress alters behaviour, and our managers are not exempt from this fundamental truth. A manager's stress responses, whether manifested through heightened urgency, decreased communication, or increased scrutiny, can unintentionally shape the working environment. Understanding these behavioural shifts allows young employees to adapt with precision rather than frustration. Responding appropriately, through clearer summaries, more structured updates, or steadier communication rhythms, stabilises the workflow and prevents escalation. This is not emotional labour in the personal sense; it is strategic regulation of a professional relationship. When a manager's stress patterns are acknowledged and addressed thoughtfully, the team environment becomes sturdier and more resilient.

Delivering feedback with professional diplomacy

Offering upward feedback requires delicacy, especially in environments where hierarchies are strongly felt. The goal is not confrontation but refinement by framing observations in a way that foregrounds alignment rather than criticism. This involves discussing inconsistencies or recurring challenges through descriptive language, focusing on consequences rather than intentions, and positioning feedback as part of a shared attempt to improve collaboration. When feedback is delivered in a measured, non-reactive tone, managers often respond with greater openness. Over time, this contributes to a culture of mutual respect, where adjustments are seen as collaborative rather than adversarial.

Ultimately, managing your manager is less about control and more about coherence. It is about aligning intentions, information, and expectations so that work can move forward without unnecessary friction. For Gen Z professionals, this skill marks a shift from passive compliance to active participation in shaping healthy workplace systems. When practised thoughtfully, managing up becomes an act of professional maturity, one that protects clarity, preserves capacity, and reinforces mutual respect. In a world where hierarchies are flatter but pressures are heavier, those who can stabilise the flow between themselves and their managers are actually the ones thriving at work.

ChatGPT plans to test ads on its platform

NEXT STEP DESK

OpenAI has announced plans to begin testing advertising in ChatGPT, limited to adult users. In an official blog post, the company said ads would be tested in the US in the coming weeks for logged-in adult users on its free tier and its low-cost subscription, ChatGPT Go. Higher-priced plans, including Pro, Business, and Enterprise subscriptions, will remain free of advertising.

According to OpenAI, the move comes as the company rolls out ChatGPT Go more widely. The US\$8 a month plan, which launched in 171 countries, is now being made available in the US and other remaining markets. The company said the tier offers expanded access to features such as messaging, image generation,



file uploads, and memory, while ads are intended to reduce usage limits for free users and lower the barrier to entry for those unwilling or unable to pay.

OpenAI also mentioned that advertising would not influence the responses ChatGPT provides. Ads will be displayed separately from answers, clearly labelled, and shown only when there is a relevant sponsored product or service linked to the user's current conversation. The initial tests are expected to place ads at the bottom of responses. Furthermore, user conversations would not be shared with advertisers and that personal data would not be sold. Users will be able to turn off ad personalisation and clear the data used for advertising at any time. The first ad formats are expected to be tested over the coming months.

Musk demands \$134 billion from OpenAI and Microsoft

NEXT STEP DESK

Elon Musk is seeking up to \$134 billion in damages from OpenAI and Microsoft, claiming he is owed the "wrongful gains" they earned from his early involvement with the AI company.

In a federal court filing on Friday, Musk stated OpenAI gained between \$65.5 billion and \$109.4 billion from his contributions as a co-founder, while Microsoft gained between \$13.3 billion and \$25.1 billion. His lawyer, Steven Molo, said, "Without Elon Musk, there'd be no OpenAI," citing his seed funding and guidance, as per a recent report by Reuters.

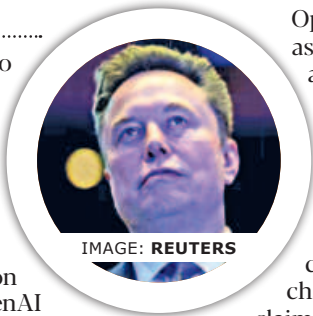


IMAGE: REUTERS

OpenAI dismissed the demand as "unserious" and part of a "harassment campaign" by Musk, who left the company in 2018 and now runs a competitor, xAI, states the Reuters report, adding that Microsoft did not immediately comment. Both companies challenged the damages claim in a separate filing, calling the financial analysis "made up" and "implausible".

Musk's lawsuit alleges OpenAI violated its original non-profit mission. A judge has ruled the case will go to a jury trial, expected to begin in April, further adds the report.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

iDE Bangladesh

- Officer, Program Quality



Deadline: January 21

Eligibility:

🔗 Master's degree in any subject from a reputed university. Economics/ Statistics/ Public health/ Anthropology/ Development Studies will get preference.

Minimum experience: 3-4 years

SAJIDA Foundation

- City Manager



Deadline: January 24

Eligibility:

🔗 Advanced university degree in: public health/ nutrition, social sciences, health policy and/or management, environmental health sciences, socio-medical studies, or another relevant technical field.

Minimum experience: 5 years

Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Ltd.



- Officer/ Sr. Officer, Production

Deadline: January 25

Eligibility:

🔗 B. Pharm/ M. Pharm in Pharmacy from any reputed university, with experience of serving in the pharmaceutical industry.

Minimum experience: 4 years

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It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.

- Theodore Roosevelt