



Inspiring Excellence

Hassan Book Depot: An eminent member of the Publication Industry

By

Mohammad Tawhid Alam

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Publication Industry

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Prepared By: Mohammad Tawhid Al Alam

ID: 13304153
Brac Business School

Prepared For:Ms. IffatTarannum

Brac Business School
Brac University

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Ms. Iffat Tarannum

Brac Business School

Brac University

Dhaka

Dear Ma'am,

It is my honor to present you the dissertation I prepared for my Internship Program. This is a case study titled "Hassan Book Depot: An eminent member of the Publication Industry".

The paper has insights on publication houses of Bangladesh, how they are contributing in the economy, and especially how one of the major publishing houses of Bangladesh (Hassan Book Depot) runs their business in the country.

I hope you will find my paper explanatory and deductive. Please let me know if you have any other query, confusion or any doubts. I will be more than happy to explain all the matters by myself.

Sincerely,

Mohammad Tawhid Al Alam

ID: 13304153

Brac Business School

Brac University

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Mohammad Tawhid Al Alam

Sign of the Supervisor

Date

Sign of the Co-Supervisor

Date

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Thank you everyone.

Abstract

Despite having a huge population, if we compare with other countries like China and India, Bangladesh has not been able to take much advantage of it. Except for one or two sectors particularly, population has been a liability, rather than an asset. Whereas, there are theories that shows a direct proportional relation between human capital & economic development (Simkovic, 2013). It can be seen in the neighboring countries as well. India, building some of the world's renowned universities, now has one of the biggest economy. Similarly, China is now the global manufacturer of almost everything that exists in this planet, just by training their workforce in that way.

However, currently, scenario in Bangladesh is changing by a wide margin as well. According to a recent report, Bangladesh has advanced incredibly in the education sector, in last two decades.(The World Bank, 2016). This case study focuses on one of the major stakeholders of the education sector, a publishing house. In this report, it is portrayed how education industry of Bangladesh is effected by the publishing houses of the country. Also, it is shown how it can contribute in the country's economy directly, or indirectly.

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Article I. Overview of the company

Innovi, is an advertising startup, founded by two young 1st year students. From their college lives, they were working together on different outsourcing sites. Initially, it all started as a hobby, over the time, it turned into a passion for them. In 2011, after working on numerous projects, they finally decided to form a formal licensed partnership entity.

From 2011 to 2014, it was a tough time to for the two to cope up with the real world. At first, they were bombarded with real expenses, corporate laws, bank handling, however they were quick learners, survived the hard part. From 2015 till today, they have managed to accumulate investment, sell directorship of the company.

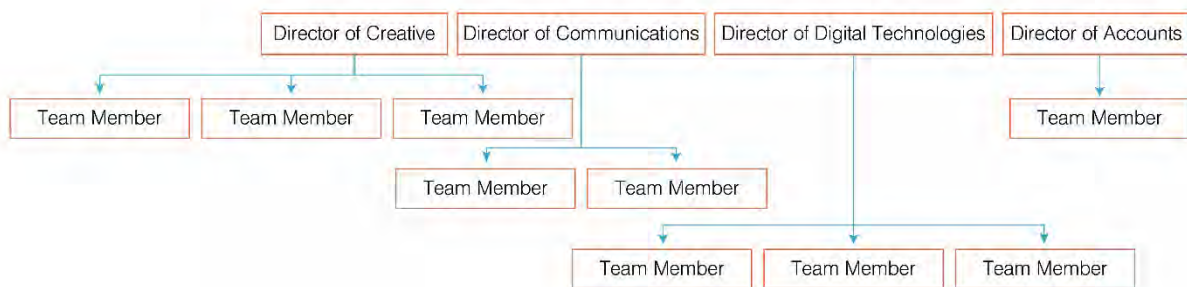
Article II. Mission & Vision

Mission Statement of Innovi, “Our mission is to help people make them and their businesses a cherishable brand”

Vision of Innovi is to make every people aware the power of branding, so that every people in the country work hard to establish at least one brand. Bangladesh will be known as a country with Brands in Billions.

Article III. Organogram

Being a startup, and a very small team, Innovi maintains a very flat organogram. Each director is head of one department, and responsible for the employees of that department.



Director of Creative is responsible for three team members, who works under the supervision and guidance of the Director. This department as stated works on the creative side of the organization, like content creation both motion pictures & still pictures, idea generation, creative writing etc. Mainly, they are the major executioners of the planning for every client. All other departments work in collaborate with this department.

Director of Communications is basically who maintains the communication inside and outside the organization. With two team members, director of communications work with the clients, understand their needs, and then coming back to the office, they disseminate the ideas to the creative and other respective departments. So, it is mostly their job to ensure if the client is getting what they are looking for. Moreover, when a client is not satisfied, this communication team members are the ones who take over the situation, rectify the mistakes, and make sure the client is satisfied. From pitching to bill collection, and after service, everything is maintain by these people.

Director of Digital Technologies has a team of three members. This team strategizes how a brand can work better with digital technology. This is not only limited to digital marketing, IT solutions, but also they work with hardware as well. In some cases, clients may need to setup a server at their office, or may be install an inventory management system, it is the digital technology team who looks after all these matters. Other than that, the obvious digital marketing is one of the major job responsibilities of this team. How a brand can create their online presence, whether is through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or a website, all solutions are provided by this small team. This team works closely with the creative and communications department.

Director of Accounts is just the person who maintains all the accounts and payment system. With just one member, he keeps the track of the money. For instance, which money is coming from which project, and which vendor is to be paid with which money. It is their job to ensure that, no vendor, or strategic partner remains unpaid, even after client's payment, just because that money was spent somewhere else. Relationship with vendors are maintained with great attention in this organization.

Other than this team members, they regularly hire interns for different purposes, who works under one, or sometimes more than one departments.

Article IV. Services they provide

Being an advertising agency, there is not much things they do not do. Basic purpose of the company is to do anything & everything to upraise the brand name of the clients. Nevertheless, they have in house team of graphics, video editing, creative writing and digital content management. Other than that, they have a well-set contract with several vendors for printing, events, video production and souvenir items.

Graphics team work under the creative department. Basic job is to do the illustration and artworks for clients. From logo making to brand design, every kind of designing work is done by graphics team. Especially, main effort goes to content creation, for both online and offline media.

Like graphics team, video editing and creative writing too falls under the creative department. Video editing team works on projects where clients ask for video content for online media. In this case, creative writing team works on the script of the video story, and then video editing team works on the video. If shooting is necessary, they hire freelancers for this kind of jobs.

Digital content management team works under the digital technology team. They fix strategies and methods of marketing on digital media. Obviously, these posts are made by the creative team of the office. Currently they provide their service in Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Google AdWords, Google Analytics, LinkedIn, SEO, SEM, Google AdSense, Virtual reality, Augmented Reality and some other platforms as well.

Article V. Job Responsibility & Learning

Section 5.01 Responsibilities

In this 3 months of internship, I had the opportunity to practice my skills in real life by implementing what I learned at the university. My major is in Marketing and minor in E-business. So, for obvious reasons I was under the department of digital technologies.

Although, I was assigned tasks under the digital technology department, I had to work with communication department as well. Sometimes, I had to attend the meeting along with the director. Upon returning to office, I discussed client needs with fellow team members, and fix a strategy for that brand.

My regular task was to maintain the constant update of the social media pages of existing clients. Most important part of my job was to keep track which brand will have posts on which day.

According to content posting schedule, I discussed it to the creative team, and once they are done with the content making, I made them posted on social media pages. Also, put that post as advertisement if necessary.

Section 5.02 Learning

This whole 3 months was a learning period for me. Every second I spent at the office was like I developed myself by a little bit.

(a) Technical Skills

At first, as because I was responsible for regular posts and advertisement, I had to learn the techniques of posting on Facebook in an efficient way. I particularly learned the knowhow of Facebook advertisement, for instance, when is the best time to post on social media, how to target a very specific crowd, how much to spent on which content. Everything is done by a web based app. I was successful to adopt the technicalities of this app.

Besides, I also had the opportunity to watch how a website is build. Although website building is not yet my forte, I know how a website is built, how it works, and what procedures are needed to be followed to maintain a website.

Other than that, I got to know which software to use for which kind of content. Being a part of digital team helped me in making my foundation of becoming a digital marketer.

(b) Professional Skills

Having the opportunity to attend client meetings often, I could closely see how a professional communication works. How a client is pitched, and how a client is treated. I believe this has developed my communication skill by a lot. Besides, I had to communicate with my other team members as well. To make them understand what I am trying to say is also a great challenge which I did not realize before this experience. So, in this 3 months, communication skill is what I had to develop most.

Moreover, I had to think of the contents that are posted on social media pages of the clients. I had to keep the business and its prospect in mind while thinking about the content. Therefore, I developed the ability to convert the company message into a poster while doing this.

Besides, as this was a startup, most decision made in this office was instantaneous. Most of the plans, ideas were made promptly, no chance of pre-planning. In this 3 months, practicing it made

me a fast decision maker. Although, all this long I did not have the chance to make real hard decisions, but I believe the practice has grown in me, and I will be able to deduce any situation in quickest possible time, and come up to a decision. Not only that, even if the decision is wrong, I learned how to cope up with that situation and rectify the mistake.

(c) Behavioral Skills

One thing I have learned working professionally is, working in team. Although we were practicing group works all the time in university, this is a whole lot different scenario. In university, if any member of the group did not do any task, someone else in the group will come up and do it. But in this small experience of mine, I learnt no one else will do your job for you. If I could not manage the creative team to give me the contents, then I could not post on social media. Nobody will say anything to creative team, because posting on social media was my task. Hence, I had to communicate with the creative team, get into their free time, and get the outputs from them, for my own sake. So, working in team is one of the great things I have learned.

Also, maintaining a positive attitude towards everything is also a practice I had to develop in myself. I always had to maintain this positive attitude, while I am at the office, or with some clients. In business, nobody can afford to lose a client, just because of wrong attitude. Besides, whenever in the team shared any idea, we could not just throw it away without thinking. We had to think the output of it, how it will affect the business, and only then we could come to a conclusive decision.

Article VI. Introduction

Complying with the UNESCO's global movement, Education For All (EFA), article 17 of Bangladesh Constitution establishes the right for free and compulsory education for all. In this regard, government has been working to secure an appropriate education policy over the time. Moreover, as contribution to the main purpose, government of Bangladesh has encouraged different private organizations & NGOs to come forward to work on the same issue. As a result, literacy rate of Bangladesh has jumped from 46.66% to 72.76% in just 9 years (Bangladesh: Education & Literacy, 2017).

Many businesses have emerged as the outcome of transformation of education sector. Education has turned into a massive business industry. As a part of that industry, Hassan Book Depot, a publishing house, has been operating long before this industry has got this big. Although their business was started as a small component, it gradually became large step by step, and now one of the largest publishing houses of the country.

As Hassan Book Depot is in this industry for a long time, they are ideal to understand the uprising of the education industry, and also how a publishing house operates their business, their obstacles, their contribution to the economy, their involvement in the future of the education sector of Bangladesh.

Section 6.01 Limitations

Most of the information of this paper was acquired from the studied organization itself. So, there are possibilities of respondent's biasness to reflect on this paper. It would have been better, if it was possible to view the business from other competitors' and its clients' point of view.

Also, a complete revenue model of the business would have enriched the paper by many times. However, due to their company policy, it was not disclosed entirely.

Section 6.02 Literature Review

In Bangladesh education industry, several factors have appeared as inevitable parts of it. For instance, the academic coaching, which can come as both coaching centers, or private tuition. Although private tutoring is common all over the world, to get ahead, situation in Bangladesh is quite different. Private tutoring, at this moment, has become a cure and curse at the same time (Anika Huq, 2010).

Guidebook is just another example of it. Guidebooks are a kind of taboo, that nobody can avoid. In National Education Policy of Bangladesh, it is clearly mentioned giving private tuitions, coaching centers and publishing guide books may lead to penalty and jail time (Ittefaq, 2016). However, this is not what the actual scenario is. Both of them are practiced relentlessly throughout the country. And students are even benefitted from it, not in the long run of course. Studies show that students with private tutors and guide books do better in the examinations than those who do not have tutoring (Samir Ranjan Nath, 2011). The reason is quite clear. It has become a paradox now. Teachers in schools do not push themselves to teach properly in the schools. Therefore, students rush to these coaching centers, and take help of guide books, to understand the complex matters of science and mathematics, to fill out the gaps.

Despite government's strict regulation and policy, guidebooks can not be completely banned, because of the demand and supply. Mauritius and South Korea tried to get rid of these issues, but failed because of the same reasons (The Daily Star, 2011).

Guide books are not well accepted in major portion of the civil society. It is said that guide books drive a student towards memorizing everything, without understanding (Iqbal, 2017). Even many parents believe there is no alternative of tuition and these guide books. They think their children will fall back, especially from rich people's kids, who keep tutors for all subjects (Banu, 2017). Moreover, to mitigate the habit of memorization, government introduced a new system of education, where questions will be from real life situations, and students will answer them from concepts only. However, it only worsened the situation because of poor teaching. Almost nobody understands the system properly. As a result, they take guide books as their teachers (Banu, 2017).

Nevertheless, no matter how people do not like the free distribution of guide books, the business of these publishing houses is growing. Currently, there are many publishing houses operational to meet up the growing demand. At present, there are about 1200 publishers, of which 650 are educational (International Publishers Association, 2016). The growth in of this educational publishing is relatively higher than any other kind of publishing. Last year, educational publishing rose up to 22%, revenues earned from children's book were raised to 10% (International Publishers Association, 2016).

Section 6.03 Methodology

Primary data of the report was collected by three consecutive interviews of Mr. Arafat Sarker, the Executive Director of Hassan Book Depot. Beside these interviews, I also got help from some of the other employees from different departments.

Other than that, different journals and news articles were used as secondary data to get a overview on Bangladesh Education Industry.

Article VII. Publishing Industry: Contribution to the Economy

After the separation in 1947, the publishing industry in this region started as business, and at the beginning, it was the textbooks and guide books that were only printed(Chandan, 2016).

Although, it got into a complete business after the development of Munir Keyboard by renowned scholar Munir Chowdhury. After the independence, it was the book known as “EkusheBoiMela”, which triggered the business. Till date, “EkusheBoiMela” is one of the greatest economic events of the country. In 2008, this book fair alone sold books worth of taka 200 million, in just one month. Every year, during the month of February, a massive event runs throughout the month, which transects millions and millions of monies.

A publishing house involves hundreds of people, from writers to proof readers, editors, printers and many more jobs. While this industry is with such potential, there is not much government support in this area. Government approves up to five million takas for filmmakers, whereas there is no such thing for book publishers. Still, the business is growing especially in the education sector. In 2015, net turnover of publishing industry was 15% (International Publishers Association, 2016).

Article VIII. Hassan Book Depot: Past, Present & Future

Section 8.01 History of the Company

With the aim to contribute and be a vital part of the education industry, Hassan Book Depot was founded in 1953 by Late Abdul Gafur Sarker, Jessore, the city popular for publishers from British Period. Starting the business from only selling text books of schools, 64 years later, Hassan Book Depot is one of the leading book publishers of the country.

Mr. Sarker started this company with one small library, which sold mostly the text books fixed by the government, also some supporting books to keep the business running. Although in 1965, due to a natural accident, Hassan Book Depot library burnt down with all books into ashes. They were only recovering from this devastating incident, when in 1971, during the liberation war, the shop was under attack once again by the Pakistani militaries. After the independence of the country, Mr. Sarker planned to recommence his business with a different strategy. He started building the foundation of a publishing house along with his, the current Chairman of the company, Mr. Abul Kashem Sarker. It was not very easy to restart a business, when the country itself was recovering from the war. Finally, in 1978, Hassan Book Depot officially entered into the market as a publishing house. The first book of this publishing house was written by Prof. F.M. Abdur Rob, who was later appointed as the advisor of the company.

Abdul Gafur Sarker passed away in 1952, at a very early age of 52. The responsibility of the company then bestowed upon to his sons.

Section 8.02 Present Scenario of the Company

Since founder Mr. Sarker passed away, Hassan Book Depot has gone through several changes in business strategy and top management. Although, currently Abul Kashem Sarker, son of founder Abdul Gafur Sarker is in the highest position of the company, the head of the company, or in other words, major decision of the company is taken by Arafat Faisal Sarker, son of Abul Kashem Sarker.

After entering into the market as a publishing house, Hassan Book Depot secured a contract with National Curriculum of Textbook Board (NCTB) in 1996 for publishing, binding and supplying of the text books of Primary, Secondary and Madrasha level. The contract is still active, and Hassan Book Depot opened up a complete different venture to maintain this whole operation.

Currently Hassan Book Depot operates from 4 different offices, keeping the Head Office in Dhaka. Other than the Head Office, it has two other offices in Dhaka, for distribution and sales maintaining. It still has one regional office at Jessore, exactly from where it all started. They have over 450 employees, and around thousand distributors working in the field from morning to night.

Unlike other publication houses, Hassan Book Depot has strictly maintained its business portfolio limited to education industry only. It has 9 sister concerns till date, and all of them are somehow related to education. Even for the future, the decision makers of the company have set their mind to expand their business, only to reveal more opportunities in the education market. They have a dream to change the face of the education. To serve the purpose, they will keep opening doors after doors, take steps after steps, to gift the nation a whole new genre of great education. This is the present mission of the company right now.

Section 8.03 Major Obstacles of the Business

Being a publication house, major obstacles Hassan Book Depot has to face is with their school guide books.

First of all, present government is not exactly an advocate of guide books. In fact, they want to get rid of these guide books, assuming students are getting more dependent on these books rather than the government fixed text books. So, to write and publish these books, company has to maintain a severe set of terms and conditions. Violation of these rules may result to fine and jail time.

Secondly, as these books are for students, publishing companies cannot use direct marketing approach to its prospects. So, it is quite a difficult task to make people aware of the products. This situation leads to another severe situation, and that is marketing through the teachers. As these books cannot be marketed using traditional ways, often publishers pursue the teachers to promote their books to their students. This brings on a competition among the publishing houses. The more these teachers can be “motivated” through different means, the more they promote the books of that particular publishing house.

Thirdly, there is a crisis sometimes with the transportation of the books. Although Hassan Book Depot has their own transportation system to maintain a neat supply chain, often due to political

unrest, or natural calamity sometimes make it impossible to reach certain locations. Some of these books are written to help the students for seasonal exams. Failing to deliver those books on time may lead to huge market loss.

Other than that, there are some critical situations this company face regularly, like the concept of a book gets stolen, or losing contact with one of their writers, and of course the tremendous competition with the other publishing houses.

Section 8.04 Adopting Techniques of the Company

Hassan Book Depot has been open to new technologies in the recent times. Especially, after Mr. Arafat Faisal Sarker joined the business returning from abroad, he has reformed the company quite a bit. Being a business graduate, he understood continuing the business in same old way will not develop business from where it was. He started diversifying the business portfolios. One of the major steps he had taken was to digitalize the whole inventory management, which resulted in a solid supply chain for the company. He even visited all the distribution points in all districts, figured out which place needed what modification and executed accordingly.

As this company dates back to a very old time, most of the departments were ran by aged people, basically who were hired during the first phase of the company. He hired some young blood for every department to work under these experienced people. Also, he heavily invested on the R&D department. This whole department was newly designed and hired to cope up with the current world.

Not only in the corporate sector, but also new machineries were brought in for publishing. He changed the whole process of book designing and printing. He emphasized on the outlook of the book, just the way inner content of the book is.

Mr. Sarker, grandson of founder Abdul Gafur Sarker, introduced online presence of the books in the company. As the books cannot be marketed directly, he started spreading educational and motivational messages on social media with the name of the company. As a result, more and more people are getting acquainted with their brand name.

Section 8.05 Future Plan

As a major participant of the education industry, Hassan Book Depot plans to expand business in the same line. They have a plan to digitalize the whole education system. For starters, they are

thinking of bringing model tests online. Students will be able to participate in subject/topic based model questions through their website. Answers & results will be shown instantly.

Besides, small fragments of their guide books will be available on the website too. So that, students will get to know which methods, or which techniques are followed by their books. Moreover, often writers of these books are not on limelight. Hassan Book Depot plans to introduce these writers in front of the world, so that people will be able to judge how competent their guide book writers are.

Furthermore, they have plans to design small less complicated apps for smartphones, which will be like a tiny library for students. They will be able to search on different topics of their subjects, and the app will suggest them which book to follow for which purpose. Not only that, brief information on the searched topic will be described in the app too.

All these steps will be taken in next couple of years. Even though, Hassan Book Depot has great sales number in the suburb areas, it is not quite popular in the capital city. With these stepping stones, they are basically targeting the urban crowd. Their plan is to gradually capture the market of students, and provide them with everything they need, or they may need. No other publication houses this large has limited their profile to education industry only. Hassan Book Depot believes, they can only reach to the peak of the mountain, if they solely concentrate on one industry.

Additionally, they have several other plans, which will help them to make changes in the teaching methods of schools as well. Some plans are already in sketch, which will be collaborated with the government. But of course, these plans will not be revealed anytime soon, as the competition in the market is fierce, and stealing ideas are very common among these competitors.

Article IX. Recommendations

There are few recommendations I would like to suggest for Hassan Book Depot-

- Hassan Book Depot should focus more on the writers of the book. If they want to expand their business in the capital city as well, they need to get writers who are more experienced in teaching, and who can discuss problems in more efficient way.

- Hassan Book Depot should diversify their business portfolio, not keeping it exclusive to education industry only. If government rules out against the note guides, and completely ban these books, they need other homes to get shelter in.

- Although, Hassan Book Depot is already adopting to new technologies, but other competitors have already started using modern methods of marketing. If they fail to do the same, or better within a year, they will again fall back from the competition. So, it is high time they adopt to new technologies, and allot funds for massive BTL marketing.

Article X. Conclusion

Publishing industry is one competitive, yet potential industry of Bangladesh. Specifically, with the growing number of schools, and students, the number of books will be increased every day. Yet, like any other business industry, there are severe challenges as well. If any organization fails to cope up with the evolving technologies and knowhow, they will not be moving forward. In the case of Hassan Book Depot, it is clearly evident that, the previous management were reluctant to adopt to new technology. Hence, they are yet not the market leader, even being the one of the oldest in the industry. On the contrary, people who evolved with modern techniques, are now the market leaders.

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