

'Business Tourism' and 'Tourism Business' A Study on Bangladesh-Italy Tourism Prospects

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***Abstract:** Business and tourism trend throughout the world, as well as in Bangladesh, not only enhances the possibilities of national financial stature; but also depicts the prospect of intellectual and cultural exchange, technology transfer, overseas employment, export promotion of human resources and many others. Although tourism in developed countries has started emerging as a thrust revenue sector entailing national economic development agenda in the late fifties in compliance to new economic order approach; this is quite new for most developing countries in South Asia. In Bangladesh, tourism seems to have started gaining momentum since the late eighties only. Comparative study findings suggest that business and tourism have become the timeliest global economic adaptation. Embedding of business and tourism appear to become a universal global trend too. In both Italy and Bangladesh, business expansion prospects lie in the sectors like- jute and jute goods, apparel, pharmaceuticals, glass and glass products, information technology and telecommunications, computers and office equipment, and a plethora of accessories. The prospect discussed in this paper calls for proper coordination between country's commerce and finance ministry for simplifying institutional procedures and systems to anticipate and respond to the expanding global economy; along with, attempts to assess the extent of Bangladesh's prospect in formation of effective economic tourism alliance with Italy.*

Introduction: Global Perspectives of Business-Tourism Intersection

In this era of globalization, the 'global village' metaphor captures the essence of bridging the gaps between global citizens; narrowing down of physical and attitudinal distances between them; as well as expansion in human interaction through spatial mobility, transmigration, overseas fortune-hunting and sharing of livelihood stakes (MacCannell 1999, Weaver 2006, Jenkins 1994). By and large, this has become expedited along people's sharing of stakes through expansion of tourism network and people's continued strive for innovative business ventures (Hart 2007, Hawken, et. al., 1999, Harris et al., 2002).

Two essential elements of business and tourism have emerged throughout

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the above process. These are 'business tourism' and 'tourism business' (Brewer 1978, Beech & Chadwick 2006, Bond & Ladman. 1972, 1974). Multi-lateralism and bilateralism thus far have been becoming a mutually inclusive consequence of global tourism economic adaptation. At the same time, it is playing an active role in bridging the gap between the North and the South-the developed and developing countries striving towards economic prowess (Böröcz 1992, Bosselman et al., 1999, Chambers 2000).

The first and foremost concern for the developing countries of the South, hence, is to identify the most suitable countries befitting for their 'business tourism' and 'tourism business' ventures. In 2004, Italy has been identified as the most perfect place for the Third World Countries' tourism-based economic partnering (Hansen 2004). In this backdrop, this analytical paper attempts to examine the extent of Bangladesh's prospect in formation of effective tourism economic alliance with Italy.

Rationale, Objective and Methodology of the Paper

The rationale of this paper is to dig deep into underlying prospects of mutually benefiting business and tourism ventures between Italy and Bangladesh. The objective, in this respect, is to aid policy planners and stakeholders in 'business tourism' and 'tourism business' to concretely understand cross-country facts. The methods and techniques of this study is constituted of extensive and intensive document review and content analysis towards recording a plethora of prospects in economic tourism between the countries. It is hypothesized that Italy could constitute one of the most prospective business and tourism frontiers for Bangladesh. As well, Bangladesh could provide a unique space to Italy for its business and tourism expansion. A glimpse of the global business and tourism scenario is worth presenting at the very outset of this discussion.

⁴ Business tourism means anyone traveling in a business or official capacity for purposes related to their work/profession or in some cases other official capacity. 'Business' implies a continuation of the respondent's normal/ main occupation during the visit. The respondent do not become part of the labor force of the region during tours. It cannot be considered business tour when tourists enjoy working holiday unless business, whenever work is not the main reason for visit, whenever weekly or fortnightly commuters returning to or from their main occupation, whenever people are identified as military/ embassy personnel/ merchant navy/ aircrews; wherever people visit overseas for voluntary work; and wherever temporarily stay with a religious community but not a priest.

Global Business and Tourism Situation: A Brief Reflection

As presented in the global business tourism almanac (2004), world business tourism has marked a three-fold rise by the year 2000 in compared to that in 1980 (Harris et al., 2002, Goeldner & Ritchie 2003, Hart 2007). Recent studies present that the United States (US) alone doubled outsourcing its industries and multinational corporations to developing countries in every yearly basis during 1990-2000 (Cooper 1993, Cross 1993, Mohiuddin 2006). Eighty percent of such outsourcing is made to the developing countries like Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines, Heiti and other Caribbean states. Although European countries remained much lagged behind in outsourcing compared to that of the US, they also seem to have grown greater interest of similar ventures in recent days (Bakalis 1994, Bandy 1996). This is because conventional top-down and bureaucratic trade diplomacy tends to be replaced by more people-centered entrepreneur-level bilateral arrangements towards creating congenial business environment (Bennett 1994).

Bangladesh instance is worth depicting in this context. Immediately before inception of the gradual phasing out of multi-fibre agreement since 2000, the Bangladesh garment sector drew huge positive attention of the overseas buyers of the US and Europe (Absar 2001, 2001a). This is not only because of the advantages of cheap labour, but also for Bangladesh's efficiency in quality control; favorable water, weather and climate for fabric processing to preservation (Bhattachariya 1994, 1996, 1999; Bhattachariya & Rahman 2001), and serving the global clothing market with the commitment to remain uncompromising about best quality product supply (Quddus and Rashid 2002, Mohiuddin 2004).

Now comes the point of tourism. In reality, business and tourism constitutes two sides of a coin. For instance, the garment sector in Bangladesh resulted in establishment of about one-thousand buying houses of different sizes and magnitude; visits of about half million foreigners for business, research, consultancy, internship, training and journalism every year; construction of a large number of international quality hotels, inns, hostels, dormitories, restaurants, parks, commuter transportation, aviation, cruise services and tourist sites; sprouting of thousands of tours and travel farms, rise of eco-sensitivity and notions of eco-tourism etc (Mohiuddin 2004). All these instances indeed represent that tourism and business retain the potentials of bringing out various

layers of backward and forward linkages of development.

These processes give rise to humane and human development discourses too. Despite some academic-arena criticism of women's wage-exploitation in the garment sector-there is a growing acknowledgement of the fact that Bangladesh has become the best role model in women's empowerment in South and South-east Asia in part due to embedding with business principles influence, urge, insistence, campaign and lobbying of the overseas buyers and human rights activists the agenda of elimination of child labour from factories, and conditions of ensuring just environment for workers (Zaman 1995, 2000, Zohir 1998, 2000; Zohir & Paul-Majumder 1996).

It is worth noting that the fastest emerging and the second biggest foreign revenue-earning sector in Bangladesh-the pharmaceutical sector-is also thought to invoke a further boost in tourism and business (VanDuzer 2006).

Business and tourism trend throughout the world, as well as in Bangladesh, not only enhances the possibilities of national financial stature; but also depicts the prospect of intellectual and cultural exchange, technology transfer, overseas employment, export promotion of human resources, life-skill and capacity building of people, strengthening of higher study opportunities for promising students, formation of overseas research networks, outreach expansion of humanist projects, sharing of aesthetics, literature, arts and craftsmanship; attainment of globality in culinary and costume adaptation, and above all growing interaction between people of diverse cultural backgrounds (Angell 1967, Anzola-Betancourt 1974, Archer & Sadler 1976, Armstrong 1972).

Although tourism in developed countries has started emerging as a thrust revenue sector entailing national economic development agenda in the late fifties in compliance to new economic order approach; this is quite new for most developing countries in South Asia. In Bangladesh, tourism seems to have started gaining currency since the late eighties only. Beforehand, tourism had been being considered through the lenses of amateurism, not with professionalism. It scantily created an image of viable occupation option for youth-as well as in the mindset of national policy planners. New university graduates hardly chose tourism as career option. A study⁵ of the first author conducted in late Nineties revealed that

only 0.5% Chittagong University fresh graduates (1 in 200 respondents) preferred hospitality management as their career option. At that time, tourism was commonly perceived as an exclusive and fancy venture of the well-off people, and treated as synonym of pleasure trip, leisure and relaxation, and nomadic obsession of a few finger-countable travelers by instinct.

However, a recent-most follow-up of that study⁶ conducted in this year reveals a considerable reversal in occupational preference of fresh graduates. By now, 20.5% (41 in 200) fresh graduates prefer tourism and related activities⁷ as occupation. It constitutes the second top-most preference of the top-ten⁸ preferences. Most interestingly, "business"-the other discussion topic of this paper tops the ladder. Business as occupation is the preference of 20% fresh graduates by now. However, in 1989, only 5% students preferred business as their desired occupation, and it stood as the seventh of the top-ten choices at that time.

These comparative study findings suggest that business and tourism have become the timeliest global economic adaptation. Embedding of business and tourism appear to become a universal global trend too. Once hospitality and care provisions have been being considered as service delivery options. By now, they are considered as institutions. Once they were based on the principle of 'guaranteed customer satisfaction'. Now they embody the principles of skill, efficiency, delicacy and sophistication. This is evident in opening of tourism and hospitality management higher degree courses in most leading universities throughout the world. About twenty new tourism discourses (for inst. a few of them are ecotourism, business tourism, sport tourism, culinary tourism, accessible tourism etc.) are already developed and much more are being emerged in recent time university curricula. In respect to business, mushrooming of independent business schools in universities and ten-fold rise of business graduates⁹ in only a decade (1995-2005)

⁵ The study titled "Job Preference of the Chittagong University Graduates in Arts and Social Sciences" was conducted in 1999.

⁶ The research report is under preparation.

⁷ Hospitality and caring management, chef, airhostess, travel agency jobs, package tour management etc.

⁸ Top ten preferences are business (22%), tourism (20.5%), government jobs (19.5%), NGO and development related jobs (12%), teaching (7%), journalism and media occupation (5.5%), politics (3%), film and drama (2.5%), legal practice (1.5%) and expatriation (1%). "Other" occupations constitute the rest 1.5% job preference."

Business Graduate Chronicle, Vol 3, N. 3, p.2. Chicago.

throughout the world prove the reality of interdependence of business and tourism. This statistics also refers that business and tourism inclination is growing fast even among the people of non-business disciplines (Saliba 2004).

Tourism and Business: Italian and Bangladesh Experience

A rough global tourism prevalence estimate of the Sommersett Foundation, US is that during the period 2002-2004, Italian residents made about 2.3 million overseas business tours per year. Their staying for business during tours accounted about 6.7 million bednights per year. They spent an annual average of about £7.8 million every year. In 2002, overnight business tourism income in Italy totaled about £150 million. About half million people made their business tour to Italy. Their staying solely for business purposes amounts about 2.1 million bed-nights. Besides business tourism, it was projected through global average trend that all other forms of tourism revenue earned and spending incurred would be at least three times more from this estimate.

While tourists from the USA constitute the largest portion of visitors in Italy, Germany and the Netherlands are other tourist bases for Italy. Among South Asian countries, Indian tourists outnumber any other countries. Tourism from Bangladesh to Italy is minimal. Although some business tourism of Bangladeshis in Italy takes place every year, eco-tourism and tourism for leisure and recreation, and filmmaking takes place with insignificant frequency.

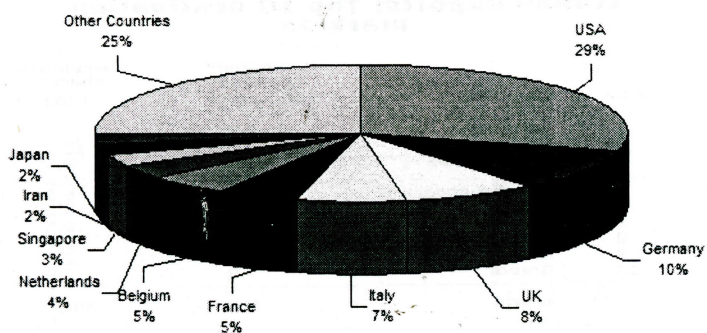
However, business thrusts it Italy and Bangladesh are circled around common stakes. In both Italy and Bangladesh, business expansion prospects lie in the sectors like jute and jute goods, apparel, pharmaceuticals, glass and glass products, information technology and telecommunications, computers and office equipment, radio, TV and telecommunications equipment, software and IT consulting, data processing and hardware maintenance, jewellery and goldsmith, leather - bags and luggage - leather goods, machinery and mechanical appliances such as automatic packaging machinery, bearings and gears, cooling and ventilation equipment (non-domestic use), electric household appliances (and non-electrical appliances for domestic use), equipment for animal rearing, fishing and fish farming, food, drink and tobacco processing

⁹ Business Graduate Chronicle, Vol 3, N. 3, p.2. Chicago.

machinery, means of transport (cars, industrial vehicles, aircraft, ships), metallurgy and metalworking, musical instruments, oil and mineral extracting and salt production, other materials - cement - plaster - marble - stone, paper and paper products and cardboard, printing, rubber and plastics, sporting and hunting goods, sundry items (brooms and brushes, costume jewellery, equipment for amusement parks, linoleum and floor coverings, material for thermoacoustical insulation, prams and pushchairs, stationery and gift items, umbrellas - buttons - zip fasteners etc.), toys and games (incl. video games), water - collecting, purification and distribution, wood and wood products (excl. furniture) - parquet flooring etc. For Bangladesh, importing and exporting chains of these sectors require enrichment and expansion of indenting business and international freight forwarding communication.

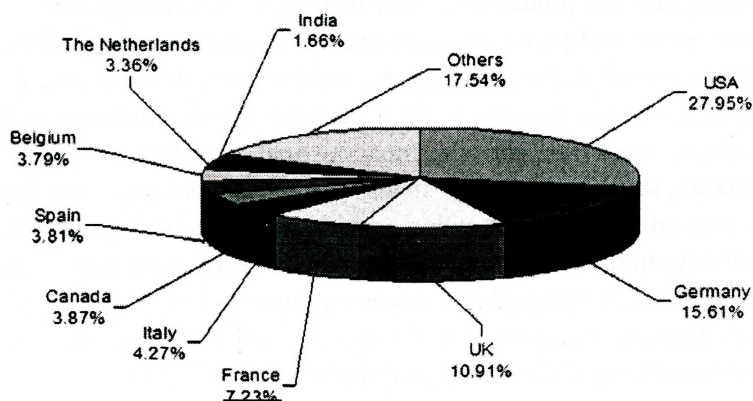
Figure 1

Major Importing Countries of Bangladesh Exportables During 1990-1991



Source: Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau (EPB)

Bangladesh exported to Italy 7% of its exportable goods (Figure 1) in 1990-91. However, the volume decreased to 4.27% in 2004-05 (Figure 2). Although Bangladesh's export to European region is the largest (53.40%) in compared to that in the American region (32.29%), the volume decrease in export earning to Italy requires an immediate reversal.

Figure 2**Major Importing Countries of Bangladesh Exportables During 2004-2005**

Source: Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau (EPB)

Figure 3**Italian exports: Top 10 destination markets**

Rank	Countries	Percentage changes 2003-2004	Percentage shares 2004
1	Germany	2,6	13,6
2	France	4,8	12,3
3	United States	1,8	8,0
4	Spain	7,1	7,2
5	United Kingdom	3,8	6,9
6	Switzerland	17,9	4,2
7	Belgium	-2,8	2,5
8	Austria	9,1	2,4
9	Netherlands	3,2	2,3
10	Greece	7,0	2,2
World		6,1	100,0

Source: ICE calculations on ISTAT data

In case of Italy until 2004, major exports remained confined into ten developed countries (Figure 3). South and Central Asia was able only to entertain 2.2% shares of total Italian exports (Figure 4). Although her food and beverage export prospect is much higher than any other countries in the world, it could secure only 5.5% weight of total export (Fig 5).

Figure 4

**Italian exports by geographical areas
in 2004***(weights on Italian exports and shares on world exports)*

	% weights	% shares
European Union	59,2	5,7
Other European countries	12,4	8,9
North Africa	2,5	11,7
Other African countries	1,2	3,3
North America	8,8	1,8
Latin America	2,9	2,5
Middle East	3,8	5,2
South and Central Asia	0,9	2,2
East Asia	6,7	1,2
Oceania and other territories	1,6	2,8
World	100,0	3,8

Source: ICE calculations on Istat and IMF-Dots data

Figure 5

**Italian exports by industry of specialization
(2004)**

	% weight	% change
Food and beverages	5,5	4,2
Textiles, clothing, shoes and accessories	15,8	-1,1
Household appliances, furniture and building materials	13,6	4,5
Mechanics	17,9	8,3
Made in Italy	52,8	4,0
Total	100,0	6,1

Source: ICE calculations on Istat data

However, the balances of revenue earning in 'made in Italy' tagged export goods increased from 22% in 2002 to 31% in 2004 (Figure 6). Its business sector expanded even under the threat of increased industrial deficits between 2002-2004 (Figure 7).

Figure 6

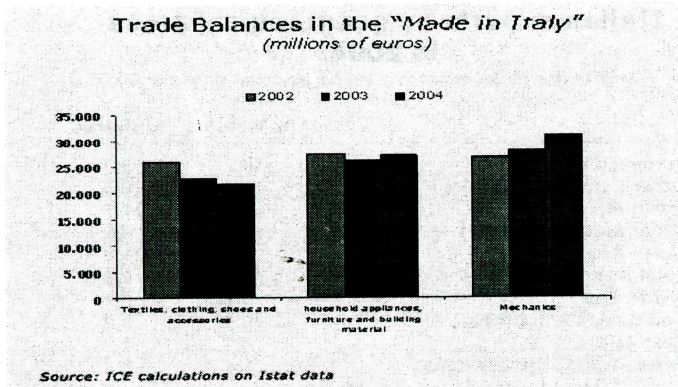
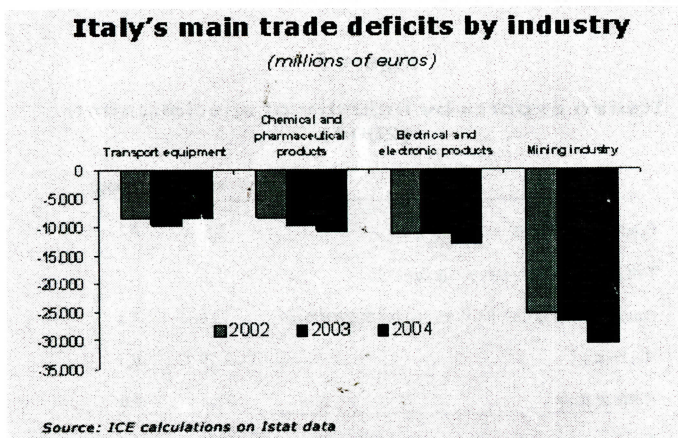


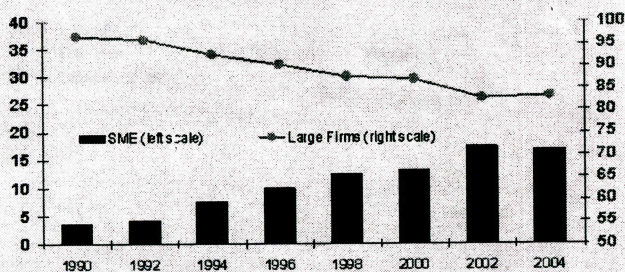
Figure 7



Distribution of foreign workers in Italian affiliates abroad marked differential consequence in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and large firms. In SMEs, numbers of foreign workers increased, with a slight downward trend in 2004. In large affiliate enterprises abroad, intensity of foreign workers reduced gradually. This might have caused due to introduction of computer-assisted manufacturing (CAM)[figure 8]. Yet, in 2004, its position in the global business market was fourth among ten advanced economic regions (figure 9). As well, it secured seventh position among both the top-ten exporting and importing countries of the world (Figure 10 & Figure 11).

Figure 8

Distribution of foreign workers in Italian affiliates abroad by size class of the investing firm
(percentage share on January 1st of every year)



Source: Reprint, Politecnico di Milano - ICE

Figure 9

Size of markets and their contribution to the change of world imports in 2004, in volume
(at 2001 prices)

	1995	2003	2004	1995-2004	2004
	shares			contribution	
Advanced economies	77.7	76.6	75.7	77.0	66.6
European Union	37.5	37.0	36.0	37.5	26.2
France	5.1	4.9	4.8	5.0	3.7
Germany	7.9	7.4	7.2	7.5	5.4
Italy	3.9	3.3	3.1	3.5	1.0
United Kingdom	6.1	5.3	5.1	5.3	2.9
Spain	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1
Newmembers	2.0	2.8	2.8	2.5	3.6
Japan	7.1	6.8	6.6	5.9	3.8
United States	17.3	18.8	18.9	18.0	19.2
NIEs ⁽¹⁾	8.6	8.0	8.4	7.0	11.8
Developing countries	19.5	20.4	21.4	19.8	30.6
Africa	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7
Asia	8.4	9.9	10.9	8.8	19.9
China and India	3.1	6.1	7.0	4.8	15.6
Middle East	2.7	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.6
Central/South America	6.3	5.6	5.6	6.2	6.4
Other countries	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.1	2.8
World	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(1) Taiwan excluded

Source: ICE calculations on IMF, WTO and European Commission - april 2005 data

Figure 10

10 leading exporters in world merchandise trade (2004)

Rank	Countries	values (billions \$)	% change 2003-2004
1	Germany	915	21,7
2	United States	819	13,0
3	China	703	32,8
4	Japan	565	19,9
5	France	451	15,0
6	Netherlands	359	21,2
7	Italy	346	15,6
8	United Kingdom	346	13,1
9	Canada	322	18,0
10	Belgium	309	20,9
	World	9.124	20,9

Source: ICE calculations on WTO, Eurostat and national institutes for statistics data

Figure 11

**10 leading importers in world
merchandise trade (2004)**

Rank	Countries	values (billions \$)	% change 2003-2004
1	United States	1,526	17,1
2	Germany	717	18,7
3	China	561	36,0
4	France	464	16,4
5	United Kingdom	462	17,9
6	Japan	455	18,7
7	Italy	349	17,3
8	Netherlands	320	20,8
9	Belgium	287	22,3
10	Canada	276	12,6
World		9,458	21,0

Source: ICE calculations on WTO, Eurostat and national institutes for statistics data

Thus far, Italy's foreign policy and trade policy are supportive to business promotion and franchise expansion in developing countries. Therefore, Bangladesh's revenue to Italy is stronger than import spending. From July 2005 to December 2005, Bangladeshi exports to Italy were 176.78 Million US Dollar while imports from Italy was 63 million US dollars. This information was delivered in a Press Conference of Italy-Bangladesh Trade Promotion Center (IBTPC) on 21 July 2006. The Independent (a Bangladesh daily) of 22 July 2006 reported of this press conference outlining the prospect of Bangladesh's business to Italy titling "Goods worth several million Euro can be exported to Italy". It writes referring to the assertion of the IBTPC spokespersons-"bilateral trade volume between the two countries will increase further if Bangladesh avails greater opportunities of exports to Italy". It was outlined that many Bangladeshi products like textile articles, scarves and foulards, ethnic costume, jewelry, hair accessories, T-shirts, ethnic crafts, furnishing items, jute handicrafts, boutique products, Nakshi Kantha and bed cover have huge demands in the Italian market because of quality and reasonable price.

Uniqueness and specialty of Italian food business also deserve a special note in line with prospective export-import relations between Bangladesh and Italy. Bangladesh middle class and upper middle class people have considerable interest in Italian cuisine. "Good Italian food and good

living" is a slogan that has already been established in the US and most European neighboring countries of Italy. Parma is already being recognized as the "best food capital" throughout the universe. The following cursory description is worth placing in this regard-

"The food supply chain in Emilia involves Parma and 29 bordering council districts, 2070 companies and around 10,500 jobs, for a carnet of products ranging from the famous ham to salami and vegetable conserves, pasta, baked products and, last but not least, Parmesan and Grana cheese. Much of the success is due to exports, where the main market is the US, even if lately Germany, Spain and France have proved to be interesting marketplaces. Exports of cheeses from the area are estimated to be around 206,000 tonnes, up by 4.5% in 2006, and specifically - according to the data of the Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium - the famous cheeses have seen foreign sales rise by 15.1%. More in general, however, the entire food sector in the current year has showed an increase in exports. It is also thanks to the technological system that it has been possible to achieve the current levels of market penetration: always at the forefront both in terms of production and safety and hygiene, technology has guaranteed the essential components that have brought lasting success and customer loyalty. The area around Parma, moreover, is home to numerous companies connected to each other to which products are directed, both to be transformed and already processed. This has made it possible for the companies to keep under almost total control every instant of the production process, which means placing safe and certified goods on the market" .¹⁰

This is to draw Bangladeshi importers' attention toward Italian food import. This may require adequate orientation with Italian franchise rule. As well, there remains the need of modification of franchise rule in Bangladesh towards compliance with international franchise rule without compromising Bangladesh's business interest. A strong business organization for bilateral friendly business ventures between Bangladesh and Italy is another timely need in the present global context.

¹⁰ Source: Internet: Italtrade

Conclusion

It can be said in conclusion that if necessary assistances are provided, and coordination with different trade bodies is established, Bangladesh can rapidly increase her exports to Italy within a very short period of time. Thus, the Independent (22 July 2006) reflects on the need of frequent facilitation of bilateral business and investment growth between Italy and Bangladesh through all stages of each country's economic advantage. The commentary also referred to the instance seven Bangladeshi companies in participating at the Fiera Milano International (CHIBIMART--which was held in Milan from May 26 to 29, 2006), and getting around half million Euro spot and potential order. These participating organizations urged other local exporters and manufactures to utilize similar opportunities for Bangladesh's economic betterment.

There is a proven need of advocacy for escalating professionalism and dynamism in the works of Bangladeshi mission abroad to increase bilateral trade relation with Italy and Bangladesh. The prospect discussed in this paper also calls for proper coordination between country's commerce and finance ministry for easing institutional procedures and systems to anticipate and respond to the expanding global economy. It is also suggested that provision of mutual consultation and dialogue facilities within the prospective economic project circles must be initiated. Such consultations are expected to be beneficial in fostering and cementing relationship between the two countries. As well, there persists an acute need for putting significant emphasis on the needs of arranging business seminars periodically on existing and emerging issues in major business locations of Italy and Bangladesh. These innovative exchanges among cross-section of business executives, media, academics and public policy makers would certainly bring about mutual business and tourism benefit for Italy and Bangladesh.

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