

Documentary Films to Digitalize Engineering Marvels of Bangladesh: A Case Study on the Prospects of Current and Future Development Projects

Mehedi Shahnewaz Jalil

Assistant Controller of News (BCS),
Bangladesh Betar – Ministry of Information,
Government of Bangladesh
Independent Researcher on Social Science
E-mail: msjalil298@gmail.com

Sharmin Sultana

Lecturer,
Hospitality and Tourism Management,
Department of Business Administration,
Southern University Bangladesh
Corresponding Author's E-mail: sharmin.sunny53@gmail.com

Abstract

Films are an expression of histories of human, nature, society and culture. Films depict the ways human interact, behave with others, express their utmost feelings and uphold their very way of existence for a frame of time. A film can very well represent the time and situation of an era, a decade or even a century. Documentaries are very special type of films that are informational and formal in nature and different from the mainstream films. They're structured and provide its viewers a specific knowledge. This article goes in depth of the documentary films in particular and searches the very difference that makes it unique among the other categories of films. Then it focuses on some of the documentaries made in Bangladesh. After that it goes on providing with prospects and suggestions to film documentaries in major locations, structures, monuments and other engineering marvels that Bangladesh boasts upon. The article gives an idea that some of the engineering projects on which documentary films could be made; that those are already built, those that are under construction and those that will be built in the future. In a target to achieve the vision of a digital Bangladesh; branding of Bangladesh can be done through these documentary films to the foreign investors, tourists, law and decision makers and state leaders alike.

Keywords: Digitalization, Documentary films, Engineering, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, the progressive diffusion of affordable technology, along with a frustration with traditional media, the pressure of an audience eager for information and political discussion, and the works of outstanding (and often controversial) filmmakers such as Errol Morris or Michael Moore, have led documentary film to go mainstream. As Bill Nichols suggests, it is sufficient to consider the movies that have been awarded an Oscar from the mid-eighties on to realize to what extent documentary has risen as a compelling form, and how much interest it has aroused in both scholars and the general public. (Nichols B., 2010, P. 12)

On the Internet, amateur and professional movies proliferate, dealing with new topics and pushing the boundaries of the form as never before. (Hoenisch & Sappino, 2010, P.2) While the topic attracts a lot of interest from media community, many find this form of communication as confusing and sometimes overreacting. Nevertheless, the famous documentary films as such *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *O.J. Made in America* (2016) caught global attention and won prestigious awards. In Bangladesh documentary films gained popularities from the era of liberation war, portraying of Bangladeshi lifestyles, popular societal topics and subcultures, societal problems and challenges etc. In global perspectives, documentary films sometimes focuses on engineering perspectives; such as shows like: *Big*

Bigger Biggest (2008 - 2011), *Modern Marvels* (1993 - 2015), *Megastructures* (2004 - Present), *Extreme Engineering* (2003 - 2011) Bangladesh lacks significantly towards it as few major documentary films have recorded regarding engineering triumphs. Some documentaries are made regarding a specific place; but engineering it stays behind. As Bangladesh advances, the country needs to be in the eyes of the globe; as well as to meet global standards of achieving Sustainable Development Goals, Bangladesh must showcase its engineering, current works that undergoing in various projects and future potential megaprojects that have been passed by the government. This study tries to identify those opportunities where documentary films can be produced that will heighten Bangladesh's engineering capacities and suggest a way of various parties to work towards it to make it happen.

RATIONALE, LITERATURE & AREA OF INTEREST

Bangladesh is a developing country that is going to be a middle income country within 2021 with focusing on development work as it's first and foremost priority. The development works that revolutionized the engineering projects, such as; building flyovers in Dhaka, Chittgaong; first of its kind; building monuments, memorials that are from the past such as; Parliament Building, Savar Memorial, Shahid Minar are true symbol of nationality of Bangladesh. The works of these are heard from mouth to mouth, but filming of these never took place. Today it can be seen that the Savar Memorial is standing there amidst the green surroundings, but the blood and toils that are underneath the soil remain hidden from the eyes. It can be felt in the heart for a Bangladeshi, but as

'seen is believing'; for someone from outside if they could see the project unfolding piece by piece, they would truly get an idea of the intensity of the project. Currently many megaprojects are taking place and in future more to come. As Government of Bangladesh aims to present the country towards the foreigners, tourists, investors, state leaders; documentation of these works in visual format is all too necessary.

Documentary Films are commonly known as "Pramanno Choloচিত্র" in Bangla. Since the liberation war, a number of documentaries are produced keeping in head about the social stigma, national crisis or lifestyle showcase. The works like: *Stop Genocide* (1971), *Muktir Gaan* (1995), *Muktir Kotha* (1999), In 2016 Jahedur Rahman Arman wrote a publication on Documentary films in brief. Also in 2016 a publication regarding the language of documentary films had been published by Bangladesh Film Archives Journal. One focused on a broad array of all the items related to documentaries, and the other focused on a specification.

This study also focuses on a specific topic by putting the engineering projects under the umbrella of documentary world. However, unlike previous studies, this study focuses on current and future development projects to be documented and used to show to the foreigners for development and commitment of Bangladesh towards being an economic giant. To do so, it focused on suggestions, recommendations as well as action plans to fulfill the requiem of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Basically secondary sources of data from different articles, reports and websites are used. Some primary data are

used from interview with different officials involved in films and media.

OBJECTIVE

Main objective of this study is to analyze the history of production of documentary films on major engineering projects in Bangladesh, identifying the ways of orchestrating ongoing and future engineering marvels and an action plan to document those.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS

The documentary is the branch of film production which goes to the actual, and photographs it and edits it and shapes it. It attempts to give form and pattern to the complex of direct observation. According to Grierson, the roots of documentary are in what can be called "reality". However, actuality is submitted to the creativity of the filmmaker, who manipulates it through more or less deliberate processes of selection and association, in order to go beyond the boundaries of direct observation, and to give it a precise, often politically-oriented meaning. (John Grierson, 1946, P. 159-162)

In his 'The Documentary Handbook', Peter Lee-Wright divides documentaries based on several criteria. In his first part he mentioned: *Talk to the camera*, on which he mentioned 4 types: Reportage, Exposé: investigations, undercover & the so-jo, from lectures to landmarks: history & ideas and Vox populi: the voice of the people. In his second part he says about *Observing the people*, on which he talked about Real life, Docu-soap and mocu-soap and Extreme television: flashing lights and freak shows. In his final part: *Entertainment for all*, he tells about Formats and reality TV, Lifestyle: house and garden, makeover

and motors, food and travel, Performance & performers, Drama-doc & docu-drama and Art & anarchy (Lee-Wright, 2010, P. 9-128 & 217-295)

FORMAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DOCUMENTARY AND FICTIONAL FILM

There are differential effects between documentary and dramatic fictional reenactment film. It is necessary to review existing literature regarding known differences between these two media messages. Within the documentary and fictional film literature, there are established differences of visual and auditory features (Eitzen, 1995; P. 94-99). For example, common features of film include close shots, rapid pace of editing, a frequent moving camera, studio-created sounds, and dramatic music, whereas common features of documentaries are the opposite—long shots, slow pace of editing, immobile or seldom traveling cameras, location sounds, and background noises (Pouliot & Cowen, 2007, P. 241-259). To date, much of the research regarding such differences relies heavily on the premise that documentaries and fictional dramatic films adhere to these format differences, and pay little attention to the growing hybrids between documentaries and dramatic films. Newer evidence suggests that these formal features are only tendencies and are not hard and fast distinctions. Renov (1993a) argues that documentaries can contain fictive elements such as musical accompaniment, narration, close shots, telephoto or wide-angle lenses that distort space, or high or low camera angles. In fact, Renov (1993a, p. 3) suggested that the two domains 'inhabit' one another and that narrative is the fundamental condition that binds the two film types. Simply put, storytelling is the essential element of both genres. Nevertheless, documentaries are based in nonfiction and films are based in

fiction, and the fundamental tendencies of documentaries (i.e., to record, reveal, or preserve; to persuade or promote; to analyze; to express) are not as present or dominant in fictional films (Renov, 1993b). It would be hard to argue that the main focus of a fictional film is 'pleasurable learning,' as is the case with many documentaries (Renov, 1993b, p. 35).

ENGINEERING DOCUMENTARIES

Engineering documentaries, like all documentaries, are generally aimed at a broad audience. For this reason, in-depth technical detail content can be somewhat limited but that usually doesn't detract from the watch-ability of them. Some of the popular engineering documentaries have been mentioned in the study. In addition, these are some of the popular engineering documentaries from around the globe:

Some of the documentary films presented here is finished and some still continues. These documentaries show how engineering of different industries can easily be understood. Documenting these helps understand the process as well as visual documentation helps reduce time for decision making.

CONCERNED AUTHORITIES FOR PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTARIES

In Bangladesh primarily, Ministry of Information from the government is entitled to document the country's important resources. Under the ministry however different institutions work independently to achieve the goal, e.g.: Bangladesh Film Archives, Press Information Department, Bangladesh Film & Television Institute, National Institute of Mass Communication, Bangladesh Film Development Corporation, Department of Films and Publications and sometimes

Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television also play significant role. From the private sectors various agencies and companies make documentaries. Some government, state-run organizations and ministries also make documentaries on their own.

EXISTING MONUMENTS ON WHICH DOCUMENTARIES CAN BE MADE

In Bangladesh places of national interest such as: Shahid Minar, Savar Monument, National Parliament Building, Secretariat, Old Dhaka tourist places, Hatirjheel, Tourist places across the country by nature can be documented for their works of engineering. A 15th century structure can be analyzed and presented visualized so it can be documentation for the authority to use later. The Bangabandhu bridge everyday maintenance work can be a topic of a documentary.

ENGINEERING PROJECTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The construction of Padma Bridge is the most potential documentary project in Bangladesh right now. The work is still fresh and some parts can be documented from the riverside as well as the construction inland. The hatirjheel project is still going that means it also can be documented. The flyover and bridge construction projects across the country are also a possibility that can be put into documentary films. Metrorail project also holds a tremendous possibility of making documentaries so is Installations of murals, artifacts construction works.

ENGINEERING PROJECTS OF THE FUTURE

Karnaphully Tunnel, Matarbari Coal Power Plant, Rampal Coal Power Plan of Bagerhat, Nuclear Power Plant of

Ruppur, Pabna; all of these future projects can be documented. It requires planning from the beginning so that the time needed for preparation can be done in advanced and budget can be allocated to each of these projects for successful showcasing of the project.

DOCUMENTING TECHNIQUES

Taking video shots before the project begins. Taking video shots when work starts. Taking interview of local / foreign nationals working with the project (if possible, Project Director would be preferable) Overhead video shots from helicopter; running shots on a back or front of a vehicle. Use of animation and graphics to better understand the process

Scientific experiments to make clear the viewers of the scientific justification of the project. Involving people; taking positive interviews from the local people and beneficiaries. Inclusion of narration voice from the main narrator as well as for the translator (if needed)

Documentary script can be conversational or formal, it depends on the context but emphasis should be on understandability to the viewers. Reenactment of national vision and governmental commitment towards the project

SUGGESTIONS AND ACTION PLAN

Coordination of Project of the concerned ministry and information ministry. Coordination on ministry and actual field office. Initiative can be a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) on which expertise and professionalism towards the work would be favorable. In case of PPP initiative for preparation of a documentary both parties must make plans and act upon a common interest that is solely for the national commitment

For international projects documentary making budget can be included in the fund allocation process so that the project is approved first-hand from the concerned funding agency. For national projects documentary budget should be included on a scale as long as the project continues

The documentary can be shown partially or fully after completion. If the documentary is partially shown then the messages on the documentary should be the challenges the project is undergoing and sheer believe of the engineers and optimism that the project can succeed. In that case main concentration should be on graphical representation rather than on other aspects. After completion the documentary should be produced and shown publicly. Then it can be stored in Bangladesh Film Archives for archiving purpose

If any private agency wants to document the project work, then they can be approved via information secretary and project director before getting the permission to film. The concerned authority and concerned agency should sit together to find out what part of the project that will be filmed. In this regard it is better that a mutual respect of ideas are appreciated

Professionalism should be maintained in all parts; the documentary will focus on national agenda but not solely on political Educational institutions can engage in producing documentaries and competition can be arranged in regular intervals from the government to encourage and create proficient media personnel. International documentary producing agencies can be assigned if they're willing to produce documentaries as well as if government wishes them to make

EXPECTED OUTCOME / RESULTS

Foreigners, especially investors have a negative idea of engineering as various needs of industrial goods are difficult to grab. If they watch the documentaries, they would have a positive idea about the investment environment in Bangladesh and would be happy to cooperate. So the primary beneficiary will be the country because foreign nationals would be motivated to invest their money in Bangladesh. Bangladesh can also be a destination for foreign worker to come and work here as they would have an idea that Bangladesh is going into a world standard work-giver. From line level worker to executive and manager level each segment of human resources will be willing to work in Bangladesh. Tourists sometimes have confusion regarding the country. With positive documentaries about engineering they will be motivated to see the capacity of Bangladeshi people and would like to come to Bangladesh. Finally state leaders, seeing the development of industries will be willing to visit Bangladesh more and engage in bipartite or tripartite trade relationships. Most importantly Bangladesh's reputation and recognition as a country towards the globe will vastly increase.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh is improving; whole nation is transforming itself with the digitalization. The more people understand and use means of digital technology more people will be concerned about information which is the pinnacle of modern world. As the Rights to Information Act 2009 already in effect and Sustainable Development Goal requires freedom of speech as one of its agendas, Bangladesh faces an obligation in producing the documentaries on its major projects and assure the rest of the world

that all the positive predictions that are been done: is TRUE!

REFERENCE

- Bill Nichols (2010); Introduction to Documentary, *Bloomington: Indiana University Press*, pp. 2
- Bill Nichols (2010); foreword to Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, *Documenting the Documentary*, cit., 12
- Dirk Eitzen (1995); When Is a Documentary: Documentary as a Mode of Reception, *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1 University of Texas Press: Society for Cinema & Media Studies, pp. 81-102
- Hoenisch & Sappino, 2010, P.2, What is a Documentary Film: A Discussion of Genre, Intensive Program – Coming Together or Coming Apart? Europe and the United States in the Sixties, Intensive Seminar in Berlin, September 12-24, 2011
- Jahedur Rahman Arman (2016); Bangladesher Pramanno Cholochitro: Udvob, Bikash o Samprotik Probonota, Bangladesh Film Archives Journal, 2016
- John Grierson (1946); Postwar Patterns, *Hollywood Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 2 (January 1946): pp. 160
- Peter Lee-Wright (2010); Talk to the camera, Observing the people, Entertainment for all, *The Documentary Handbook*, ISBN 0-203-86719-X Master e-book ISBN; by Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN, pp. 9-128 & 217-295

Pouliot & Cowen (2007); Does perceived realism really matter in media effects? *Media Psychology*, 9, P. 241-259

Renov, M. (1993ab). Introduction: The truth about non-fiction, *Theorizing documentary*, New York: Routledge, pp. 1-36

DOCUMENTARY FILMS MENTIONED IN THE STUDY

Ezra Edelman; O.J. Made in America (2016), United States of America

Michael Moore; Fahrenheit 911 (2004), United States of America

Tareque Masud & Catherine Masud; Muktir Gaan (1995), Bangladesh

Tareque Masud & Catherine Masud; Muktir Kotha (1999), Bangladesh

Zahir Raihan; Stop Genocide (1971), Bangladesh

Table: 7.1Name of Documentaries

Name of Documentary	Country of Origin	Production Year	Detailed Content
Megastructures	USA	2004-Present	This documentary series focuses on extreme construction projects -- be they the biggest, tallest, longest or deepest in the world -- and the machines used to create extraordinary structures
Modern Marvels	USA	1993 – 2015	Celebrating ingenuity, invention and imagination on a grand scale, it tells the amazing stories of the doers, dreamers and sometime-schemers who create everyday items, technological advancements and man-made wonders
Big Bigger Biggest	UK	2008 – 2011	Engineering breakthroughs that have made it possible to develop modern structures. Focuses on historical time-to-time development
To Engineer is Human	UK	1987	Using graphic archive footage of the world's major civil disasters in To Engineer is Human, Horizon illustrates some of the great engineering failures of history and explains how there are a multitude of ways in which structures great and small may fail
Engineering an Empire	USA	2005 – 2007	Rome, Egypt and Greece are some of the topics covered in this series that explores architectural and engineering feats that were characteristic of some of history's greatest societies. Computer renderings help illustrate the methods used in building such structures as the Parthenon
Impossible Engineering	USA	2015 – Present	Explores extraordinary feats of modern-day engineering and introduces pioneers whose techniques changed the world. Each episode traces the details behind some of the most technically advanced structures, from record-breaking buildings to colossal ships, as well as the latest models of planes and trains. The mechanics and designs are explained using 3-D graphics, archived sources and specially shot footage. The show celebrates engineers throughout history for their technical breakthroughs that made it possible to create the constructions that exist today
Mega-factories / Ultimate Factories	USA	2006 – 2013	Viewers get the key to enter some of the world's greatest one-of-a-kind factories for an insider's perspective on what it takes to produce brand-name wonders such as Ferrari, BMW, Harley-Davidson, John Deere and the M1 tank
How It's Made	USA	2001 – Present	A look behind the scenes at how everyday things are manufactured. Typically each episode includes three to four products featured, with a mix consisting of common items such as jeans, aluminum foil and cereal, and less predictable ones like wax figurines, Braille typewriters and pinball machines
Seven Wonders of the Industrial World	UK	2003	Re-creation of the epic moments from the Industrial Revolution
Extreme Engineering	USA	2003 – Present	Extreme Engineering features a major construction and engineering project. Some projects are completed ones, like the new Hong Kong airport. Other projects are those under construction like the Gotthard Base Tunnel under the Alps. Still other episodes showcase futuristic projects that may never be built, like the Transatlantic Tunnel. Most episodes examine possible disaster scenarios that could threaten the projects.
Abandoned Engineering	UK	2016 – Present	Meeting the people who designed amazing engineering projects and those that help revive them. Recreating the engineering marvels from the past.