

AURORA

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ON THE COVER



UPENDING THE DINING TABLE

Driven by social media and the desire to experiment, Gen Z are changing what we eat, when we eat and how we eat.

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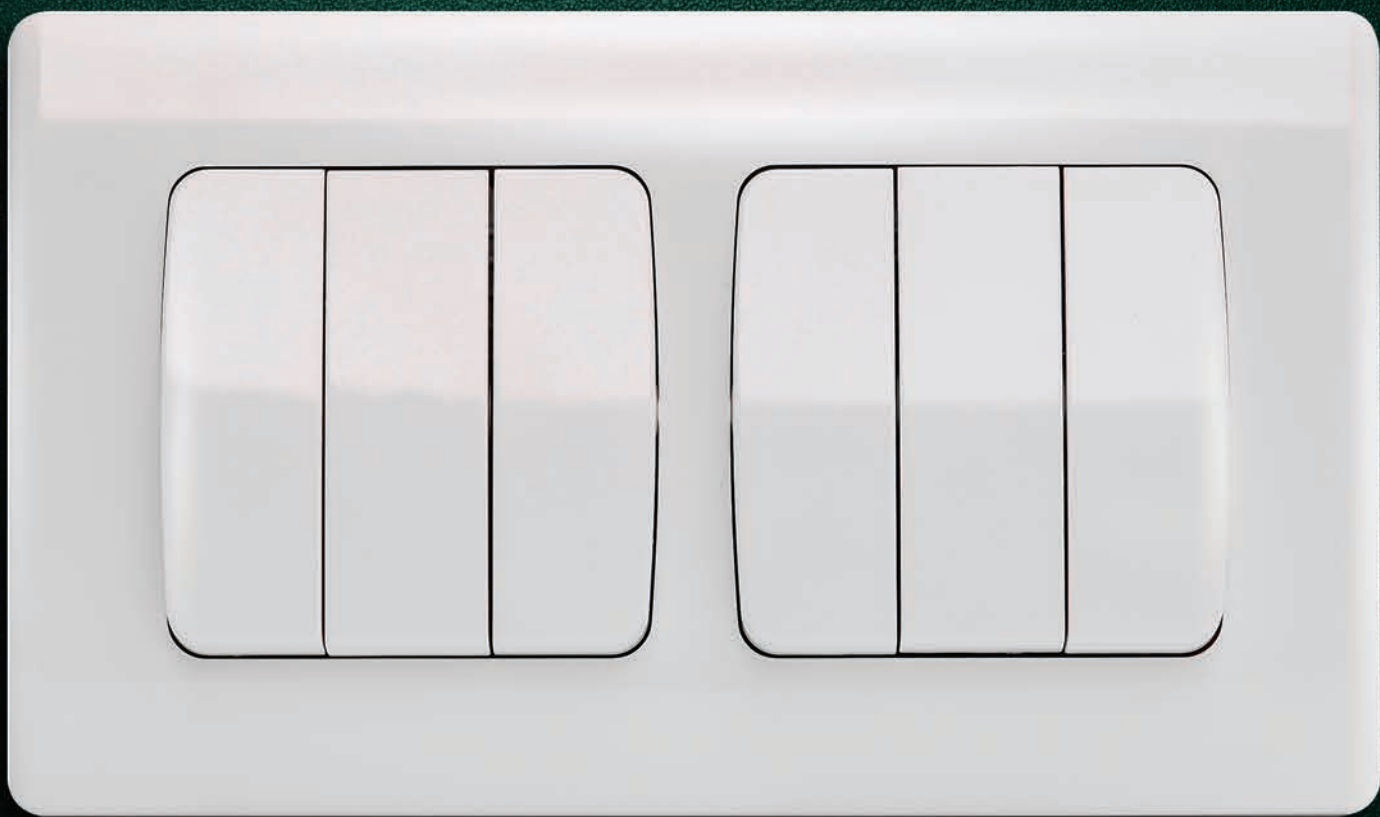


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EDITORIAL

Editor: Mariam Ali Baig
Assistant General Manager: Mamun M. Adil
Content Coordinator: Abdul Samad

DESIGN: Creative Department,
Magnum Management Services (Pvt) Ltd

OPERATIONS

Assistant Manager Advertising (Karachi):
Junaid Akram
Senior Manager Advertising (Lahore): Adnan Saqib
Manager Advertising (Islamabad): Saman Shamim

KARACHI: Haroon House, Dr Ziauddin Ahmed
Road, Karachi 74200 Tel: +92 (21) 3561-3066,
Fax: +92 (21) 3568-7221
E-mail: circpromo@dawn.com
LAHORE: 20-N, Gulberg II, Lahore 54660
Tel: +92 (42) 3575-8120 (6 lines)
Fax: +92 (42) 3575-7745
E-mail: circ.lhr@dawn.com
ISLAMABAD: Plot 12, Sector G-7/1, Mauve Area,
Near Zero Point, Islamabad 44000
Tel: +92 (51) 220-4771
Fax: +92 (51) 220-2707
E-mail: circ.isb@dawn.com
UAN: 111-444-777
Website: aurora.dawn.com
E-mail (Editorial): aurora@dawn.com
(Marketing): advt.aurora@dawn.com

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JUST SAYING

First things first. Despite the stress and the gloomy times we live in; the economic uncertainties, the rising cost of living and the frustration of not understanding why, when the prescriptions are so obvious, Pakistan is unable to turn the corner and move towards some sort of long-term economic stability and progress – despite all this, we have a ray of bright sunshine. So without further ado, very warm congratulations to the wonderful women and men who recently shone at the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity.

Congratulations to Raaj Kheraj and Ezza Syed from the Adcom Leo Burnett team for winning the Silver Medal at the Young Lions Competition and to Sameer Ali, also from Adcom Leo Burnett, for his selection to the Creative Academy. Congratulations to the indomitable Atiya Zaidi from BBDO Pakistan for winning the Glass: The Lion for Change Gold Award, for EBM's campaign 'Schoolgirls Newscasters' – and felicitations to EBM for being the sort of client ready and willing to move the needle (we need more!). Finally, and not least, congratulations to Ali Rez, a veteran recipient of innumerable international and local advertising and creativity awards. Ali Rez has brought honour to Pakistan for being the first creative from Pakistan to have been selected as Jury President of the Cannes Festival. An amazing triumph for Pakistani creativity and a source of inspiration for everyone involved in this exciting calling that is advertising.

On to our cover story, where we take a look at Gen Z through the prism of food. By any measure, and whichever way one chooses to take it, Gen Z are inherently different from any of the preceding generations. Of course, all generations are different – especially when young – until the passage of time, the assumption of responsibilities and challenging encounters with the unexpected reshape outlooks, equalising them to the dimensions of what we call the human condition. Nevertheless, this generation is different.

Gen Z are different because they exist in an age of accelerated evolution, where change is a state of being rather than a happenstance. Because they exist in a time when the rules that govern our customs and behaviour – what is expected of us and what we can be certain of expecting – have been disrupted. Because they exist in a time when the definition of what is true and what is false is disappearing. And perhaps most of all because Gen Z inhabit two worlds; the physical and the digital. All previous generations, the Millennials included, were born at a time when it was still possible to experience (in varying degrees of advancement) the transition to the new world we are living in. For Gen Z, the world as experienced by even their immediate preceding generation, is a world that belongs to the past; a world they can perhaps imagine but will not have as a reference point for a lived experience. And all this is expressed in the way they want to live and in their lifestyles.

Implied in all the above is the overarching influence of social media. Social media has made Gen Z both more sociable and more isolated. More social because they can pretty much connect to anyone they want to. Isolated, because almost (but not) everything they do is through the agency of the screen rather than person to person, eyeball to eyeball. And this applies to their food preferences too. It is through their screen that they learn about and discuss food. They may not be able to eat through their screen (at least not yet), but their food experience is not complete unless it has been given a screen presence before, during or after consumption – preferably all three.

This said, it is not only about the screen. Gen Z bring a robust approach to what they like to eat. Their worldview embraces both diversity and authenticity, leading them to try what is different, and then blend different flavours and textures and conjure new dishes if not cuisines, and while their awareness about sustainability motivates them to lean towards the organic and embrace ingredients that are locally available. They are also price sensitive; they live in times when the cost of living is on a perpetual rise, irrespective of where they live. And they love to share their food experiences, and in so doing they multiply the experience exponentially across different social media platforms, creating new trends that make it hard for the purveyors of food, be they brands or the establishments that serve or deliver food, to keep up. And yet keep up they must. Not only in what they serve but also in how they serve it (everything must be Instagrammable) and when they serve it (traditional opening and closing hours may need revising).

Like everything they do, Gen Z are bringing a new outlook to the dining table – an outlook that is the product of the way they live. To even start connecting with them, brands in Pakistan will need to take an altogether more granular approach to understanding this generation. ■

FEEDBACK

Stepping Into the Unknown

AI is not for countries like Pakistan. It has too many artificial entities; we don't need one more.

Syed Ali

Rewrite, Repeat, Rant: A Peek into the Psyche of an AI Chatbot

I fear for the future of writers. AI does such a good job that companies will stop hiring creative writers.

Ashraf P

Fronting Pakistan's Tech Transformation

I thoroughly enjoyed your profile of Badar Khushnood and enjoyed it with a cup of morning tea. It was concise yet compact and

covered all the major milestones of Badar's life. Badar is a role model for us and yet not many people actually know him in Pakistan. I wish someone would do a detailed vlog about him so we could take lessons from his life. We need more serious stories like this in this chaotic time-wasting age of YouTube vlogs, funny TikToks, and annoying reels.

Waqar Aziz

All young people and mobile crazy kids should read this article.

Syed Sajid Ali

A Rahber Revival?

I still remember the Rahber cooler in my teens back in the eighties and nineties. Good to see its revival.

M. Emad

Chinese Cool

This is an interesting read. However, I wish the writer could have linked the Chinese lessons to the efforts made by Pakistani firms to establish brands of repute and where they failing in this.

Naeem

The article is very clear and one of the few that dares to report positively on Chinese products. Of course, Chinese manufacturing is also growing and needs improvement, but at least it's not synonymous with hypocrisy.

Khan

And what do you think?
aurora@dawn.com

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“Food security is not just an abstract concept; it lies at the heart of human dignity, nurturing the spirit of a nation and promoting the well-being of its people.”

Farrukh Amin, CEO - Unity Foods Limited,
emphasizes UFL's active role in nurturing the nation and empowering lives.

Can you share with us the fundamental values and principles that motivate Unity Foods' dedication to its mission of providing 'Food for Life'?

Farrukh Amin: I believe, greatness is not a fleeting achievement but a continuous journey towards excellence. At Unity Foods, our core values encompass sustainability, quality, and community, as we conduct our business in a manner that not only benefits stakeholders but also contributes to societal well-being and environmental preservation. We staunchly believe that 'Food for Life' serves as the ultimate currency that drives our purpose. It encapsulates the profound understanding that nourishment is not merely a transactional exchange, but a sacred bond that sustains and enriches lives. Our firm commitment to sustainable farming practices, mitigating food waste, and ensuring the utmost quality products stands at the forefront of our operations, exemplifying our dedication to holistic excellence.

UFL emphasizes the importance of the Crop Transformation and Farm-to-Fork journey. Could you share some insights into how UFL ensures the traceability and sustainability of its products?

Farrukh Amin: The Crop Transformation and Farm-to-Fork ideology, conceived by our visionary team, have permeated the agricultural landscape in Pakistan. We have woven this ideology into the fabric of our existence, treating it not merely as a concept but as a sacred pledge. From seed to food process to the final meal on the table, we are ensuring the 360-degree implementation of this ideology. Collaborating with a network of over 1000 farmers, we diligently train them in sustainable farming practices, augmenting their productivity and fostering long-term, sustainable livelihoods. By eliminating intermediaries, we empower our farmers to reap maximum benefits from the sale of their products. Moreover, our rigorous quality control measures, implemented at every juncture of the supply chain, ensure impeccable traceability and product safety, setting new industry standards.

Could you provide some insights into the initiatives and measures undertaken as part of the Taqatwar Pakistan program, operating under your subsidiary Sunridge Foods Limited?

Farrukh Amin: A well-fed nation lays the groundwork for resilience and progress. The Taqatwar Pakistan program is a pivotal initiative dedicated to enhancing food security in Pakistan. We have successfully distributed food ration packages to 45,000 families in need, with plans to extend our reach to an additional 80,000 households. To facilitate swift donations and efficient distribution of rations, we have developed a high-quality web and mobile application. This digital platform enables transparent and scalable operations, allowing donors to contribute funds, track impact, and NGOs to manage inventory and allocate resources effectively. With real-time data, automated notifications, and feedback mechanisms, the application ensures efficient and accessible support to vulnerable families, striving to eliminate food insecurity and malnutrition across the nation.

How has UFL aligned its efforts with Sustainable Development Goals to address food insecurity and support vulnerable populations?

Farrukh Amin: I believe, if you truly want to eradicate hunger, then confront and dismantle the underlying structures of injustice that perpetuate it. Even if you have the means to provide for only a single person, do not hesitate to extend a helping hand. UFL is committed to addressing food insecurity and reducing inequalities, aligning with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Since March 2018, UFL has implemented numerous initiatives to provide nourishing meals to various vulnerable groups. Initially able to feed 5,000 people, we offered free food distribution at a dedicated shed, collaborating with NGOs and covering expenses ourselves. In response to heavy rains in 2019, we expanded capacity to 15,000 individuals to meet increased demand. Sheds in industrial zones were opened to serve poor laborers, providing quality food free of cost. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, our

operations grew significantly, catering to 50,000 people daily. We also assisted flood victims comprehensively, from rescue to rehabilitation. Furthermore, we prepared and distributed food for 50,000 people during religious occasions in small villages. Aligning with SDG 10, we established a dignified Langer Khana for marginalized groups. Our food drives operate continuously, including providing meals in jails to address the challenges faced by prisoners. Our mission is to eradicate hunger and promote equality, leaving no one behind.

UFL also focuses on education. Could you shed some light on your education wing CSR initiatives that align with SDG 4: Quality Education?

Farrukh Amin: Education is an essential cornerstone of sustainable development, a catalyst of profound change. I firmly believe in its transformative power. Under our education wing, we collaborate with esteemed organizations such as SOS Children's Village to support initiatives that provide quality education to underprivileged children, empowering them to build a better future. We've taken a step towards giving back to the community by adopting a school that's dear to our hearts - The School of Karachi in Ghaghar Pathaak. We have made significant contributions, as capital expenditure for running the school and to support students' educational expenses. By aligning our efforts with SDG 4: Quality Education, we aim to create a positive and lasting impact now and for generations to come.

How does your company empower women and foster an inclusive environment for their professional growth?

Farrukh Amin: We are committed to women's empowerment as a vital factor in achieving true equality and equity. I am proud to share that our key Leadership positions are led by women. Equality is giving everyone the same pair of shoes. Whereas, equity is giving everyone a pair of shoes that fits. By fostering an inclusive environment, nurturing talent, and eliminating barriers, we enable women to thrive. We promote gender diversity through policies, provide mentorship

programs for guidance and support, and offer leadership development initiatives to break through the glass ceiling. Empowering women is not just a choice; it is the key to a brighter future for all, where societies blossom, businesses flourish, and the world prospers.

Are there any specific philosophies or ideologies that you consistently turn to for inspiration when faced with challenges?

Farrukh Amin: Life is a mysterious journey filled with unexpected challenges that often test the depths of our understanding of human psychology. It is through these trials, like a sudden curve ball thrown our way that we truly learn and grow. Life's hardships shape our perspectives and resonate with our inner frequencies. In many ways, organizations mirror the intricacies of human nature. They possess a heart that can both hurt and heal. However, amidst adversity, we must remember that the show must go on, and it is crucial to face challenges with grace. I firmly believe that it is only when we have experienced the bitterness of illness that we can truly appreciate the sweetness of life's victories.

Could you provide our readers with a glimpse into the future of Unity Foods Limited and the vision you have for the company?

Farrukh Amin: As we look to the future, our vision for Unity Foods Limited is to continue expanding our reach and impact in the food industry. We strive to lead the innovation, providing customized solutions that enhance the performance and profitability of industries handling food and feed products. We will remain steadfast in our commitment to sustainability, ensuring responsible sourcing, production, and distribution practices. Our ultimate goal is to create a sustainable and resilient food ecosystem, not just for Pakistan but for the global community. By leveraging our expertise and collaborating with stakeholders across the value chain, we aim to build a stronger, Taqatwar Pakistan and contribute to a more secure and nourished world.

Redefining the Smartphone Landscape:

The Rise of Sparx

Smartphones in Pakistan

In a world increasingly dictated by technological progress, the shift in Pakistan's smartphone market offers a compelling narrative. For years, the market has been dominated by international brands, but a recent upheaval has turned the tables. Sparx Smartphones, a local brand, has risen from the undercurrents, challenging the norm and setting a new precedent in the industry.

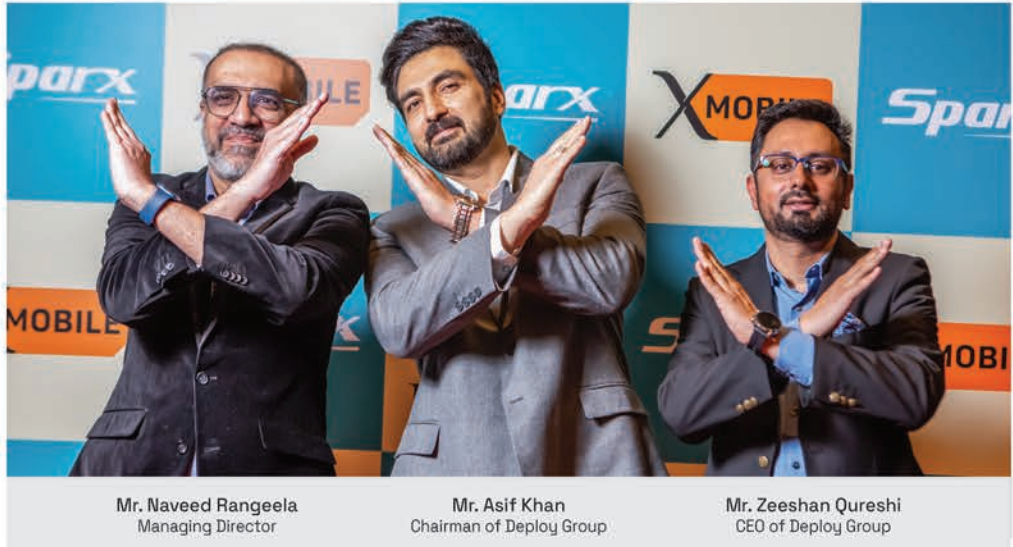
Sparx's ascent is attributed to its cutting-edge, in-house manufacturing plant, a rarity in Pakistan. With a commencement certificate from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), the facility ensures a localized production process. This business model adeptly sidesteps the complexities often associated with importing mobile components, thus promising consistency and affordability despite the turbulent economy.

Sparx's Journey Towards Digital Democracy
Sparx Smartphones is the brainchild of the Deploy Group, founded on a principle to facilitate equal access to smartphone technology and propel digital inclusivity across the nation.

Mr. Asif Khan, the visionary Chairman of Deploy Group, sees smartphones as catalysts for the nationwide digital revolution. "Digital connectivity," he says, "is a universal right, not a privilege. Sparx's mandate is to bridge the digital gap in Pakistan by making high-quality, affordable smartphones accessible to all. Our ultimate aim is to facilitate every Pakistani's entry into the digital realm, fostering socio-economic growth in the process."

Mr. Khan's unwavering commitment to digital inclusivity has not only positioned Sparx as a market leader but also merited national recognition. He was recently honored by the President of Pakistan, a testament to Sparx and Deploy Group's transformative impact on Pakistan's technological fabric.

Innovation and Affordability - The Sparx Promise Sparx's commitment to technological excellence is showcased in its new models - Neo7 Ultra, Neo5 Plus, Neo7 Plus, and Neo X. These smartphones offer a blend of advanced features housed within sleek designs, crafting a narrative of affordable opulence.



Mr. Naveed Rangeela
Managing Director

Mr. Asif Khan
Chairman of Deploy Group

Mr. Zeeshan Qureshi
CEO of Deploy Group

However, Sparx's commitment extends beyond product excellence to encompass exceptional customer service. Zeeshan Qureshi, CEO of Deploy Group, emphasizes, "Sparx Smartphones is a tangible realization of a vision. We aim to challenge

innovation."

Echoing these sentiments, Naveed Rangeela, Managing Director, says, "Sparx signifies more than a smartphone brand. It is a symbol of our dedication to bettering the lives of Pakistanis. We believe that through technological accessibility, we can navigate our nation toward a prosperous digital epoch. Each Sparx phone brings us a step closer to this goal."

In an industry where service often plays second fiddle to sales, Sparx stands out. They offer a unique home-based solution that takes customer service to new heights. A device pickup, repair, and return service within 48 hours is a shining example of Sparx's commitment to convenience and care.

The Future - Locally Grounded, Globally Minded Sparx, while a proudly Pakistani brand, is not limited by geographical boundaries. The company envisions extending its influence to Central Asia and beyond, subject to government support and favorable policies. On the home front, the company is keen on launching a 'Tech Transfer Drive.' This initiative aims to equip Pakistani youth with the knowledge and skills required for mobile phone assembly and manufacturing, thus nurturing a competent workforce for Pakistan's tech industry.

Sparx Smartphones is more than a brand - it is a testament to Pakistani innovation and entrepreneurial resilience. Competing head-on with international brands, Sparx is not only holding its ground but also leading in terms of technological progress and customer care. With a clear vision and strategic initiatives, Sparx is set to redefine the Pakistani smartphone landscape and make a global impact.

Sparx Smartphone is a beacon of hope, symbolizing empowerment and progress. It is bridging the digital divide, handing the key to an opportunity-rich world to every Pakistani. It is not just a phone, but a lifeline to a brighter, digital future. It stands as a concrete testament that with tenacity and innovation, the sky is indeed the limit for Pakistan."



Mr. Asif Khan
Chairman of Deploy Group

international competitors, not only in terms of technology and quality but also in affordability and customer care. We celebrate our progress and remain unwavering in our mission to foster



Mr. Zeeshan Qureshi
CEO of Deploy Group

Mr. Asif Khan
Chairman of Deploy Group



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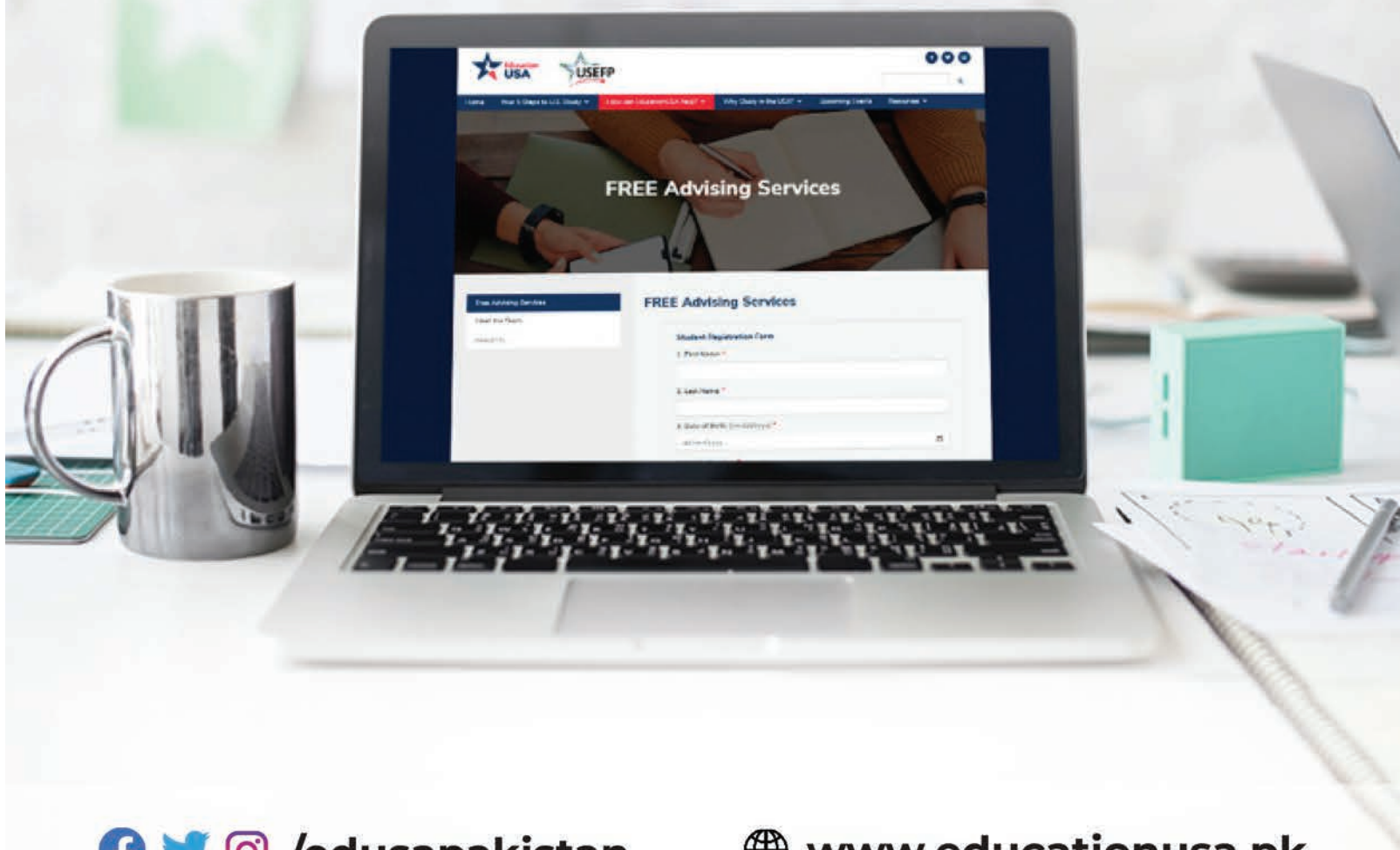
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The ABC of Marketing Food to Gen Z

Shoab Qureshy on what food brands and the hospitality sector need to do to make an impression on the pickiest and most difficult-to-please generations.

There has been a great deal of talk in marketing boardrooms about Gen Z in terms of who they are and how to target and appeal to them. Yet, the marketing and advertising work that we see around us tends to show that there is still some way to go in terms of better understanding and connecting with this new generation.

Who are Gen Z?

Gen Z is different. Of that there is no doubt. However, given that the answer to the question about who qualifies as Gen Z differs so much, it would suggest that we don't really know enough about them, and if this is so, how can we effectively market to them?

In this respect, I would say that the single biggest issue is the fact that Gen Z are often interchangeably equated and confused with Millennials. Yet, it is very important to draw a solid line between the two and the difference is as much about behavioural differences as it is about age. So let me first sort the age debate and state that anyone born between 1997 and 2015 (eight to 26) are part of Gen Z and people born between 1981 and 1997 (26 to 42) are Millennials.

What I also see happening is that marketers often tend to club the two generations together as being 'digital natives' which only adds to the problem. The reality is that they are two different generations, and although they may both look young, they do not respond to marketing campaigns in the same way. They shop differently, interact with brands differently and view money differently. They are also in totally different stages of their lives with very different priorities.

How To Approach Gen Z

● Make Them Feel Unique and Important: Gen Z were born in the online world and are therefore fully aware of the way advertising attempts to influence them into taking action. The key to reaching them is to make them feel included as this will make them feel important. This is what they want because the grown-up world around them tends to keep them at a distance.

● Speak Their Language: Communication has always been key to marketing success, and in this context using the language that Gen Z understands and relates to is essential. If you are not well-versed in this, then learn by immersion. Follow Gen Z creators, watch their content and pay attention to their vocabulary, their acronyms and their jokes. Flowery copywriting does not work, nor will verbal acrobatics. This generation speaks a different language.



● Entertain Them: Gen Z are at the stage of life where everything is about entertainment. They follow influencers because the content and information they provide are entertaining. Boring content (and advertising) will get you nowhere. Yet, most brand communication is putting them to sleep. Gen Z are sharp, smart and often have a dark sense of humour. Showing that you can take a joke makes a big difference to them. But brands don't seem to get that. Their work is serious, boring and too adult; it sounds just like their parents do – and therefore they will not pay attention.

● Use the Right Platforms and the Relevant Content: If you are trying to connect with Gen Z, don't skip TikTok. Yet, most brands either are not on the platform or they don't know how to market on this platform. The only 'channels' that rank above TikTok with Gen Z are real-life endorsements – recommendations from friends and family and seeing them actually using a product. Instagram also ranks high, but Facebook less so. Here again, brands are still stuck in ancient times. They continue to produce their hero content for TV and force-fit it into every social platform they can. And this is how they miss the target because their message is not crafted for the medium.

Pulse Consultants conducted a nationwide study on Gen Z in 2021. A total of 200 young people between 11 and 26 took part in the study.

1. What is your age?

	Combined	Males	Females
11-13	14%	13%	16%
14-16	15%	15%	16%
17-19	20%	21%	19%
20-23	26%	27%	24%
24-26	24%	24%	26%

2. Is eating out

	Combined	Males	Females
Your decision?	60%	66%	42%
Your parents' decision?	40%	34%	58%

Do you dine out?

	Combined	Males	Females
Yes	51%	53%	44%
No	49%	47%	56%

3. Where do you usually dine out?

	Combined	Males	Females
Fast food outlets	26%	23%	36%
Restaurants	23%	23%	25%
Food streets	22%	20%	27%
Dhaabas	19%	23%	9%
Food stalls	6%	7%	2%
Chinese restaurants	2%	2%	0%
Hotels	2%	2%	1%

4. Do you order food online?

	Combined	Males	Females
Yes	13%	13%	12%
No	87%	87%	88%

Gen Z are also into deals. They are always short of money and value every rupee they have. They are always on the lookout for a smart buy.

How Gen Z Are Influencing Food Brands

● A Snacking and Foodie Generation: Gen Z opt for multiple 'on the move' eating experiences throughout the day rather than sit-down meals. They like personalisation and local food. They bring a sense of curiosity to their eating habits. Satisfying

Gen Z's craving for healthy products while responding to an inclination for unique flavours and eating experiences can be a challenge for food and beverage manufacturers – and no wonder why brands like Lay's and Kurkure keep expanding their portfolio of flavours. Gen Z genuinely consider being 'foodies' a part of their identity. Driven by their desire to discover new recipes, they find inspiration from their social media platforms. Sharing their culinary experience ranks high with them. They search out foods that are personable and photogenic and they use social media to communicate and make decisions about where and what to eat. It is not surprising that Gen Z are today's top food influencers, using social media and its in-app features to shape food trends. We have seen how TikTok is influencing the way food companies develop new brands and product lines based on their user's social media engagement algorithms.

● More Aware Than You Think: Gen Z are part of a fast-paced world and they have instant access to whatever is happening globally with their mobile devices. They are plugged in and enjoy exploring and talking about food with their online social circles. They are very aware of current events and they are socially conscious, ethnically diverse, technologically connected and politically engaged. As a generation that welcomes diversity, they have been exposed to a host of cuisines and cultures – again thanks to social media. Connectivity is crucial to them and

they thrive on posting and sharing information, which also drives their decisions about food.

● They want control: This generation wants control over what they eat and order, and online ordering apps like Foodpanda offer them the control and the variety they seek as well as the opportunity to build meals with made-to-order options. But make no mistake, they find ways to go to high-end restaurants for the food experience and photo opportunities.

● Convenience Ranks High: Convenience is at the centre of social media. E-commerce sites offering online ordering and take-out, grocery and restaurant orders will continue to grow.

● The Food and Hospitality Experience: Gen Z are changing the face of the food and hospitality industry and reshaping trends. Food trucks are 'in' because they like the experience and the convenience. To stay relevant with this desirable but difficult-to-impress consumer base, food providers will have to refresh their menu offerings, add new flavours, sustainable options, small plates and natural, authentic and locally grown options, as well as personalised twists on traditional items, such as gourmet coffees, teas, smoothies, snacks and to-go items. They will have to impress and inspire them to come and sample their menu; Gen Z does not like to miss out on trends and what is 'in'. Finally, they will have to create an integrated online ordering system, that includes the ability for their customers to tag the restaurant, and for the restaurant to read and respond to customer reviews.

To conclude, Gen Z is a very demanding generation and as they move into adulthood and gain more economic power, securing their approval is going to be essential to the future of any food and beverage business and brand. Are you equipped to take on this most difficult-to-please generation? ■

Shoaib Qureshy is Managing Director, Bullseye BBD. shoaib@be.com.pk

5. Do you order food via...

	Combined	Males	Females
A mobile app	48%	51%	40%
The telephone	36%	31%	48%
The internet	16%	17%	11%

6. What is your favourite food item?

	Combined	Males	Females
Ice cream	19%	18%	21%
Fast food	18%	18%	20%
Biryani	17%	17%	19%
Shawarma	17%	16%	19%
Burger	17%	16%	18%
Fish	15%	16%	13%
Barbecue	15%	13%	18%
Karahi	14%	15%	13%
Kabab	13%	13%	12%
Pizza	13%	12%	15%
Haleem	11%	11%	10%
Chicken	11%	12%	7%
Rice	10%	11%	7%
Pulao	10%	10%	9%
Gol gappay	10%	10%	12%
Chaat	10%	9%	12%
Pakoray	10%	10%	9%
Nihari	9%	10%	6%
Beef	9%	10%	8%
Chinese	9%	9%	8%
Dahi ballay	9%	8%	12%
Haandi gosht	9%	9%	8%
Achar gosht	9%	9%	9%
Qorma	8%	9%	6%
Cholay	8%	9%	7%
Jalfrezi	8%	8%	6%
Sajji	8%	8%	7%
Halwa puri	8%	9%	5%
Daal chawal	8%	8%	6%
Koftay	7%	7%	6%
Aloo ka paratha	7%	8%	5%
Macaroni	7%	8%	6%
Anda paratha	7%	8%	4%
Mutton	7%	8%	5%
Vegetables	6%	7%	4%
Qeema	6%	8%	3%
Kaleji	6%	7%	6%
Anda chana	6%	6%	4%

NB: All percentages have been rounded up.



I'm Instain' It

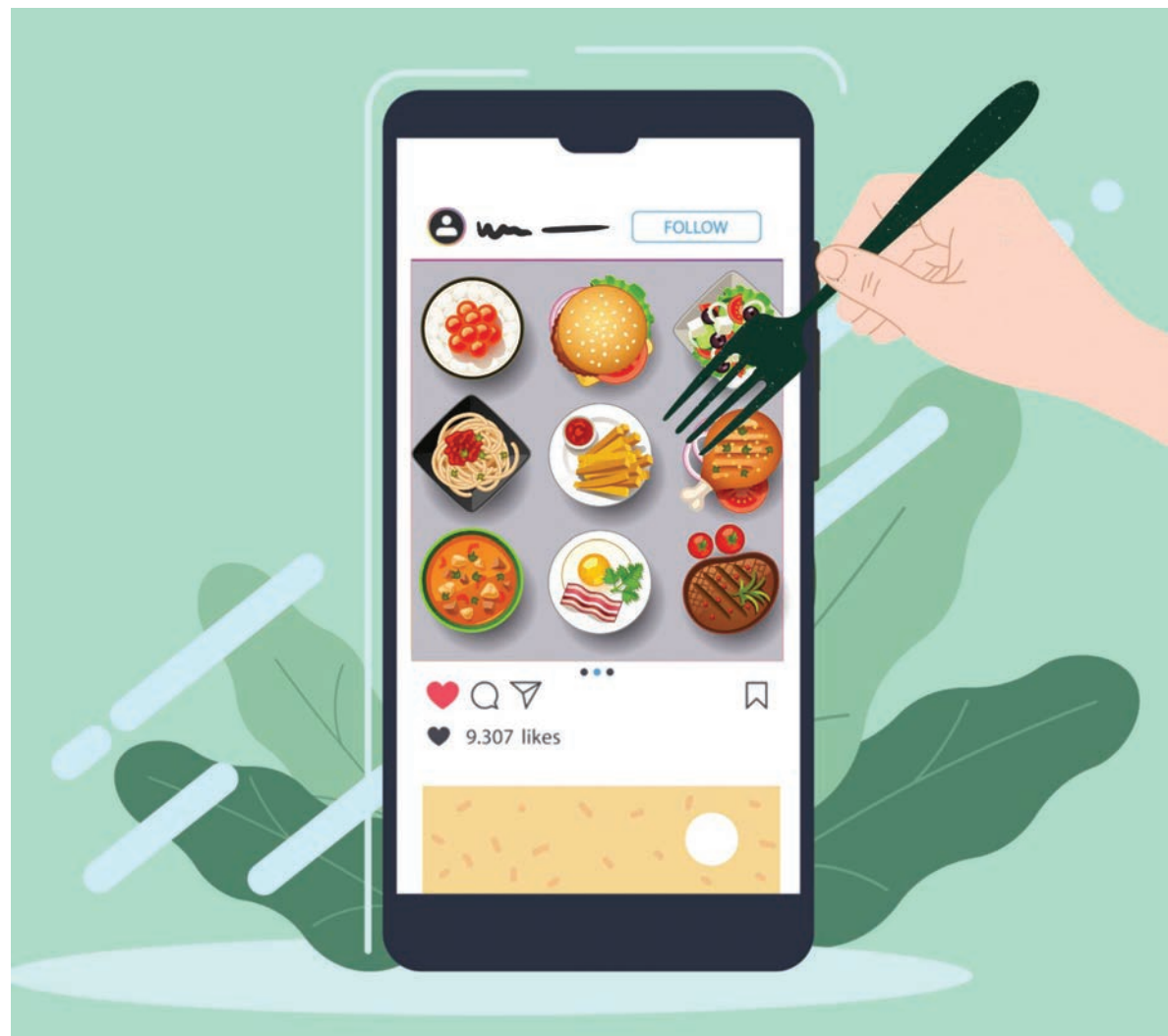
Muhammad Bin Husain explores transformations in food and culinary preferences among Gen Zers.

To try and write about the changing lifestyle choices among Gen Zers would take a full volume to capture. However, narrowing it down to their food preferences may be worth the attempt within the limits of this article's word count. Let's begin with the fact that in terms of age, Gen Z ranges between nine and 24. As to why the food preferences of this generation have changed, it is important to understand that whereas Millennials grew up while adopting and adapting to the rapid changes in digital technology, Gen Z were born with technology at their fingertips and have never experienced any limits to the information they can access. Furthermore, whereas Millennials always lived with one foot in the physical world, Gen Z's life experiences are defined by what is happening online. As a result, many of the routine and mundane tasks that used to be functional for previous generations have become experiences for Gen Z. Food is one of them.

Food used to be a means to an end. A way to acquire the sustenance and energy we need to live a meaningful life. However, it is also a fact that food has multiple emotional benefits. It is a way of winning hearts, changing minds and facilitating conversations. For Gen Z, the emotional aspect is very important and they have elevated culinary experiences to a form of lifestyle. Young people today do not just use food to function; for them, food has to be experienced, enjoyed, analysed and critically assessed.

Multiple research papers have proved that peer recommendations are a stronger influence on this generation compared to any previous one – and this applies to food too. Recommending what to eat and where to eat it has become the social currency of these times and a tool to gain popularity. You are not cool if you haven't been to the latest 'in' place to eat. Gone are the days when the roadside *halwa puri* tasted better than anything else, and when the company and the conversation filled any gaps in flavours and ambience. Food and the appreciation of its taste, quality and experience are key with this new generation – and the reason why culinary adventures hold such a central position in their lives.

A typical weekend kicks off with a message on a Whatsapp group. The most active member of the group replies in the affirmative first, then others join in, the person known to eat out the most is called upon to advise where to go (suggesting an already visited place is a cardinal sin) and after much debate, a time and place is set.



The appointed time arrives, the friends gather and after the mandatory Instagram check-ins are done and the food is ordered, gossip and conversation ensues. Then suddenly, like a twist in the tale, everyone falls silent. The food has arrived! One by one, the dishes are served, photos are taken out and a short photography session ensues, enhancing the delectability tenfold. The food is enjoyed and the event ends with a group selfie. Or does it?

Later the same day, multiple reviews on Instagram follow one another, each one better worded and hashtagged than the last one. A straightforward eating-out plan only concludes when it is etched forever in the annals of the internet.

This process of charting memories on our Instagram feeds started with the Millennials, mostly motivated by the dopamine hit that came with the validation accrued from the engagement that follows on other people's personal accounts. What has changed is the fact that the indigenous relationship Gen Z have with the digital landscape has turned them into social media creators rather than consumers. It is this creative quotient and the need for peer reviews that has led to the dramatic rise in 'food blogging' in Pakistan.

What started with *Food Fusion* and high-quality content pieces has now given way to organic blogging styles such as Irfan Junejo, *GirlGottaEat* and *Mystapaki*, among many other food bloggers.

In this emerging niche, every creator has his or her own area of expertise. Some cover street food and *desi* cuisine in a *desi* tonality with 10-second videos covering the mouth-watering dishes found on the streets of Pakistan. Others take a more sophisticated approach and critically review the more refined options available providing a thorough review of prices, menu items and facilities. Food bloggers are so prevalent now that any culinary decision can be thoroughly researched and evaluated.

The impact of the heightened attention to the culinary arts and the impulse to amplify every experience is so strong that hardly any food vendor in Pakistan is oblivious to the impact one bad review or unappetising picture can have on their business. This relentless digital scrutiny has led to both fear and opportunity. Our local cuisine has had to be reinvented to provide superior quality and greater innovation as well as a constant influx of new and exciting options. This has led to a multitude of local food entrepreneurs breaking into the scene with innovative dining options, from Cloud Nan's menu of *naan* filled options to variations of local favourites such as *nihari* and barbecue. If anything, this has reinvigorated our local restaurant brands and forced them into much-needed innovation, compared to the early 2000s when global fast food chains dominated the market.

Along with a renaissance in our local cuisine, Gen Z has had a significant impact on global culinary food trends, as their awareness and exposure increases. Gone are the days of generic 'Chinese' or 'Continental' restaurants. Today, it is about being 'authentic' Italian, Thai, Turkish, Lebanese, Japanese – you name it. Entire menus are curated to provide patrons with the flavours of another country, and for this group of restaurateurs, offering multiple styles is a cardinal sin. Gen Z demand a specialist experience in everything they do. The result is that young chefs are receiving professional training abroad in order to provide their patrons with bespoke and exclusive experiences.

To conclude, the relationship that has emerged between food, the food industry and Gen Z is unique. It is much more intimate and demanding. It has led to a higher level of culinary appreciation and digital advocacy. It has also led to more innovation, the introduction of global flavours and boutique dining experiences. The rise of food blogging is the visible handle that guides this important new audience to their next food experience, an interplay that has led to the overall improvement of the food industry.

Bon appétit everyone! ■

Muhammad Bin Husain is
Marketing Manager – Skin Care,
Unilever Pakistan.
For feedback: aurora@dawn.com



Food Fetishes and Social Media

Khalid Naseem on the impact of social media on the food choices of Gen Z and Millennials.

Given how essential social media is in our lives, it is not surprising that it significantly impacts what we eat, especially when it comes to Millennials and Gen Z. There are, however, some important differences in the way social media influences their food choices. Gen Z are more likely to be influenced by visual content, such as photos and videos, while Millennials are more likely to be impacted by text-based information, and although Gen Z's choices are driven by sustainability, Millennials are more influenced by their sense of personal taste. Here are some of the ways social media impacts their approach towards food.

1. Reviews and Recommendations:

Both generations rely on online reviews and recommendations shared on social media and they take into account the experience and opinions of others when deciding where to eat and what food products to try. Blogs such as *Food Fusion* by Mahnoor Malik, *Flour & Spice* by Sarah Tariq and *Come.Con.Ella* by Mehrunnisa Yusuf, share recipes for local and international dishes and provide tips and opinions on different foods. Popular food influencers such as *Foodies of Pakistan* and *MangoBaaz* have garnered massive followings by showcasing unique food spots and highlighting local delicacies.

2. Pakistani Food Culture:

Social media has transformed how people connect with Pakistani cuisine and has provided Gen Z and Millennials with a platform to express their culinary interests, discover new recipes and showcase their food adventures. Both generations are actively engaged in a digital food culture that has significantly influenced their eating behaviour.

3. Local vs International:

Although both generations are exposed to international food trends, Millennials show a stronger inclination toward local and traditional cuisine. They take pride in exploring and promoting Pakistan's rich flavours and culinary heritage, whereas Gen Z has a higher propensity to go for fusion foods that combine local and international flavours that create unique and Instagram-worthy dishes. They actively seek out unique and exotic food experiences.

4. Health and Wellness: Gen Z and Millennials have benefited from social media's promotion of health and well-being. Influencers, bloggers and fitness enthusiasts share information about nutrition, healthy eating habits and alternative dietary choices. Millennials prioritise nutritious



and organic food options and seek out content related to healthy eating. Gen Z is not significantly focused on health trends and indulges in fast food or snacks without much concern for nutritional value.

5. Documentation and Sharing:

Given the popularity of apps, there is growing emphasis on aesthetically pleasing food displays and Gen Z and Millennials often document their meals and share them on social media. This allows them to express their personalised style and creativity and contributes to the growing food culture and aesthetic preferences.

6. Online Food Delivery Services:

Social media has contributed to the growth of online food delivery services such as Foodpanda and Careem. Gen Z and Millennials rely on these platforms to order food at their convenience, explore new eateries and share recommendations. This has led to a shift in dining habits, with an increasing preference towards ordering in rather than cooking or dining out. Gen Z exhibits a higher dependency and inclination towards ordering food online regularly. Millennials, although they do order in, prefer to cook at home or dine out.

7. Food Aesthetics and Presentation:

Due to social media's impact on visual appeal, both generations value the way food is presented. Gen Z is more

inclined to value presentations that are Instagram-worthy and aesthetically pleasing and to frequent eateries and cafés that serve visually appealing food. Millennials place more emphasis on flavour and authenticity.

8. Home Cooking and Recipe Sharing:

Social media has facilitated the sharing of recipes and cooking tips. Gen Z, in particular, are more likely to experiment with home cooking and share their culinary creations online. They like to participate in cooking competitions, follow culinary influencers online and interact in recipe and food-related online groups. Although Millennials like cooking at home, they tend to draw their culinary inspiration from offline sources and family traditions.

9. Food Culture and Community Building:

Social media has fostered the emergence of a thriving culinary culture and sense of community among Gen Z and Millennials. They participate in online forums focused on food, engage in talks about food, and exchange experiences, and they do so in order to develop a feeling of community and mutual interests.

10. Cooking and DIY Food Culture:

Due to Gen Z's exposure to social media, DIY food culture is on the rise. They engage in cooking challenges, recipe videos and home cooking experiments showcased on

platforms like TikTok and YouTube. Millennials are more inclined to rely on traditional cooking methods and family recipes. Trends are more quickly embraced and followed by Gen Z as a result of viral social media posts. They are more willing to explore new trends such as unusual food pairings. Food fads are approached by Millennials with increasing scepticism.

11. Sustainable and Ethical Food Choices:

When choosing food, Gen Z are often more ethically and environmentally conscious. They are likely to prefer sustainable and socially responsible food options, such as organic, locally sourced, or ethically manufactured foods. Although Millennials are aware of these challenges, Gen Z places a higher emphasis on this.

12. Organic Food:

Both generations are more likely to prefer locally sourced or organic foods and other ecologically and socially conscious dietary choices. They are more aware of the advantages of eating organic food thanks to the social media platforms devoted to this topic. As organic food becomes increasingly popular, Gen Z and Millennials are more inclined towards eating wholesome and environmentally friendly meals. ■

*Khalid Naseem is a freelance brand and marketing strategy consultant and writer.
khalid.naseem.795@gmail.com*



Wanting It All in a Single Food Package

Instagramming may be the rage among Gen Z, but influencers not so much, argues **Fatima S. Attarwala**.

Weat out at McDonald's or KFC all the time; my whole class does," laughs a seventh-grade Grammarian. An A' Levels student from Nixor nods. "KFC is just five minutes away, so we go there every week," she says.

The fast food joints that have long dominated our food landscape are still the go-to place for a quick get-together for school-aged Gen Zers. However, hot pot places, Test Kitchen by Okra and a slew of new restaurants are not far behind for fancier meet-ups, especially for those who are slightly older.

Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z are social media natives. According to some estimates, they spend up to four hours on their mobiles daily, scrolling through posts and reels. So how can restaurants attract Gen Z traffic in the plethora of content available? *Aurora* reached out to influencers and talked to Gen Zers to answer this question.

● No Love for Star Power: "Unlike previous generations who were receptive to celebrity content, Gen Z crave authenticity. They do not believe in star power because celebrities are paid to endorse a product. They want authenticity and that the person reviewing the product has actually tried it," says 31-year-old Zulekha Ahmed, a food content creator on Instagram whose page *Karachi Food Adventure* has about 50,000 followers.

Influencers are careful about recommending products they genuinely believe are of interest to their followers. If they do not like a restaurant, they will not trash it, but neither will they promote it in order to maintain their overall credibility with their followers. Conversely, no teenager I talked to believed any influencer to be truly authentic. Although interested in recommendations, they are unanimous in the opinion that it is all paid content and the endorsements are not genuine. Influencers are seen as a source to learn about new places but not as a trusted source of information, which is why there appears to be limited loyalty, making it very easy to swipe to the next reel.

● Twenty-Second Windows: "Gen Z have very short attention spans," says Ahmed. "When I first started blogging, the content was mostly photo-based, now it has turned to reels." Reels are not linear videos but multiple videos of

one second each, edited for a coherent narrative of 20 to 30 seconds. Each reel has to start with a hook, without which a Gen Z-er will simply swipe to the next one. With so much content, if the reel doesn't engage them within three seconds, they will just go on to the next one. Novelty is an important factor in driving traffic.

● Standing Out: "Gen Z want to eat something beyond what is cooked in a typical Pakistani household," says Iman Aib, who runs the Instagram page *Foodiemaniac* and has 217,000 followers. "They are not so different in taste and more in mindset and perspective. The pasta and

biryani are the same that have been eaten for generations, but the way it is presented has to be different." She adds that pasta reviews can go viral, but a *biryani* review will garner fewer views.

It is the novelty factor that is a huge hook and the reason why every teen I spoke to was a regular frequenter of a hot pot place. Should the local cable operator ever run a targeted advertisement for a new restaurant offering a unique experience, Gen Z would be up for trying that as well.

● Embracing Collaboration: Instead of hiring professional photographers and videographers to advertise, brands hire bloggers to cross-platform share. "When I started blogging, I created picture content for KFC using my own family and settings to create a realistic feel," says Ahmed, illustrating how fast food franchises are using the power of influencers and micro-influencers to reach out to Gen Z. She has also collaborated with brands such as National Foods and Knorr. Cross-collaborations mean multiple influencers working together and sharing content across platforms; in this way, influencers share followers and engagement, boosting their own popularity and benefiting the brand as well.

● The Snowball Effect: Although influencers are a popular way to get news about the latest hangout and new products, Gen Z trust their own circles the most. The way it works is that an influencer posts a reel about a new hangout which attracts the attention of a group of friends. The group will then go to the new hangout, take photos and post them on Instagram, thereby reaching out to a wider audience who see the photos and the cycle will repeat itself and eventually snowball.

● Instagrammable Vs Legacy: The content must always be Instagram-worthy. While female influencers post pictures and reels of pretty places with glam groups shots, male influencers prefer street dining or out-of-the-way places that tend to be dark and a bit 'creepy', but have a history of serving traditional dishes such as *nihari*, *biryani*, *paratha* and barbecue.

● Value Conscious: Gen Z are value-conscious across socio-economic groups, partly because of an inflation-struck economy and partly because they are students or just starting out in their careers. They tend to gravitate towards deals, which is why most pizza places have buy-one-get-one deals. They are also fickle. They love trying new things, but when the new becomes old or tried and tested, they move on to the next best thing. This is why most restaurants and influencers have to be constantly on their toes in their quest to engage with an audience who gets bored easily and wants value for money, authenticity and novelty all in one package. ■



Fatima S. Attarwala heads Dawn's Business & Finance desk. fatima.attarwala@dawn.com

STORY OF HOPE

with Fawad Khan

Childhood memories are usually sweet. But when you are Fawad Khan, an icon and inspiration for millions; unearthing the true Fawad Khan beyond the star is key. Let's go back down memory lane and tell us something about your childhood and teenage years.

I had a pretty alright childhood, very normal, nothing extraordinary in that way. I was born in Karachi, and due to my father's job, we moved around quite a bit. Eventually, we settled down in Lahore. I attended LGS (Lahore Grammar School), and after schooling, I enrolled in a Computer College. During that time, I was part of an underground band where my journey in acting began, mainly as a hobby with a monthly income of Rs. 12,000. Back then, I felt like the richest guy in class, and my friends and I would pool in Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 each to go and enjoy a burger or something similar. I have fond memories of my college and school days, and that's how I started my career, leading me to where I am today; as the Fawad you see now.

Talking about your childhood. One moment came in your life that created a complete paradigm shift; a new turn of events. Can you tell us something about it?

When I was 17 years old, my body experienced an auto-immune response, which led to the condition known as Type 1 Diabetes. It happened after I had a bout of high fever, during which I lost around 10 kilograms of body weight in just 8 days. Soon after, I noticed an increase in thirst, a condition called polyuria, which meant I frequently needed to use the bathroom due to excessive water intake. Despite drinking 6 to 7 liters of water, my mouth remained dry due to dehydration. Recognizing the symptoms, my GP conducted a blood sugar test, which revealed my blood sugar level was at 600. I was checked in at the hospital and was rehydrated and given insulin and I have been on insulin since the age of 17 and today I am 41, so it's been a career in diabetes for 24 years.

In terms of monitoring your glucose, obviously now you are not pricking¹ anymore, you have the FreeStyle Libre system with you and the pricking¹ routine has finished, do you feel a difference?

It's much more convenient², it makes your life very easy. Pricking¹; thank god those times are gone. Why should you keep pricking¹ your finger with blood coming out each time when you can just apply³ the sensor, scan it anytime⁴, anywhere⁵ to get your reading and each sensor works for 2 weeks before you have to replace it.

When you first had to prick yourself and pricking became a part of your life, how was that feeling?

Living with diabetes involves frequent finger pricks, which can lead to calluses and small black dots on the fingers due to micro wounds. It becomes a constant routine to manage insulin, your glucose meter and other supplies. Being forgetful, I often had to go back for these essential items before leaving. Carrying all the necessary equipment required a separate bag, making it inconvenient to move around freely. I do wish I didn't have to deal with it, but there are ways to manage the condition effectively.

Let's talk about depression connected with diabetes. How were those depression episodes when you initially had them, what was going on and how does one deal with them?

It's like the chicken and egg argument; it's difficult to determine what triggers what. When you have a strong sense of purpose and determination, diabetes or even other adversities like cancer cannot hold you back. Mental strength plays a crucial role here. Great things can be accomplished when you utilize that energy positively.

What would be your message for parents who are dealing with children with diabetes?

To all the parents dealing with children with diabetes, I want to say this; show courage and strength and avoid displaying weakness. Your attitude will have a significant impact on your child's outlook towards the condition. I remember my mother telling my father that if they consider me weak due to diabetes, I would grow up with that sense of weakness. It's crucial not to make it a handicap or limitation; instead, educate yourselves and your child about the condition. I don't think you can experience it until I give you a dose of insulin, if I give you a dose of insulin, chances are that you would die. At times I have even felt it, when my sugar gets low it seems like your soul is being sucked out and I would sometimes fall to the floor finding it hard to breathe along with sweating. There was a point where one of my eyes would start to roll up, so I had no control over that as well. It has different affects; you feel thirsty, you get aches in your calves, your legs, naturally diabetics lose a lot of muscle mass on their legs. They gain weight in their mid-area because your constantly administering insulin, so yeah an exercise regimen is needed. People don't know what the impact is, they just know they have diabetes but it can be a harrowing experience.



“ I got into continuous glucose monitoring back in 2014, now using Abbott's FreeStyle Libre system.”

Every time your sugar levels get low, you can feel it across your body. I think there is low level of awareness, there are polio awareness programs but how come no diabetes awareness programs? And honestly speaking because there is a lack of awareness regarding it, I don't think that they take their disease seriously as well. For the first 2 years, I controlled myself in the first 3-4 months, I was in my first year of A-Levels at the time and as the term progressed, I stopped caring about it. I'll be very honest; I would have soft drinks all the time because I was angry and I wanted to live life the same as everyone else. It's better you take care of yourself because you are going to have to live with it.

I am saying that people are not educated regarding the disease. If you have a person having an epileptic attack in front of you, well not really epileptic but literally at times you can just be on the floor and that has happened to me as well where I am just having trouble breathing or talking because my sugar levels had become so low.

What is the first response? People don't really know. I am saying that we need to make school environments more conducive to be inclusive that I think is necessary, if it is a disability then own up to it, you know. You need to admit to it. Not hide it from the world. There were a lot of times where people would say not to tell anyone that you have diabetes. And I asked why; because people would think less of you or they will think that you won't be able to do things. I think I can do a lot of things. I feel proud of it.

Tell people that I have this ailment. We need to own up to it, what do I mean? Make people aware of it and increase awareness among people that there is a way to handle this, because for a child, it is a traumatic event.

Back in the day we had sheets, the sheets had 6 slots; pre meal, post meal, pre meal, post meal. What the reading was before breakfast (fasting), what the random was, then for lunch. It was a whole chart paper that we got. I never filled the chart as it was a tedious task. You prick¹ your finger 6 times a day, so I'm just saying that now we have better things. I got into continuous glucose monitoring² back in 2014, now using Abbott's FreeStyle Libre system and I think it's a good device and has great door-to-door service as well. I am using that and in this you wear the sensor on your arm³, its applied on the skin. Just take the reader out from your pocket and scan the sensor and get your reading instantly. So you're free of pricking¹ yourself.

If you go back today, what would you say to that 17-year old boy, that same Fawad?

Always follow your gut. Your first instinct is always the right one. Regarding diabetes, you should be more careful. You are born into a world where you would have to create your opportunities and be strong enough to compete in those times. You would have to adapt, the world will not change. When you face rebellion and anger in life, roll with the punches. Tomorrow will be a better day. During times of difficulty is when you succeed the most. Looking back, this is a story of survival. Survival of the fittest doesn't just mean physical fitness; taking care of your mind matters too.

To all the kids out there, know that by saving yourself every day, you are stronger than those around you. Don't lose hope. You are the heroes of your own lives.





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1. Finger pricks are required if glucose readings do not match symptoms or expectations.
2. In a study conducted by Abbott Diabetes Care, 99% of patients surveyed (n=123) agreed that the FreeStyle Libre system would reduce the hassles of glucose monitoring.
3. The FreeStyle Libre system is only approved to use on the back of the upper arm.
4. 60-minute warm-up required when applying the sensor.
5. Sensor is water resistant in up to 1 meter (3 feet) of water. Do not immerse longer than 30 minutes. Not to be used above 10,000 feet.
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I Am a Person, Not a Label

In trying to force Gen Z into labels of their own creation, brands should actually try to understand what defines them, argues Nadeem F. Paracha.

Marketeers, consumer brands, advertising agencies and streaming outlets are chasing Gen Z. They are trying to pin it down with holistic definitions. Giving generations names is a sociological pursuit. The names are coined after studying the changing economic, political and cultural attitudes of each generation.

From the sixties onwards, such studies started to become useful for marketers to understand young consumers. Before the birth of the term 'Baby Boomers,' there was already a 'great generation' and a 'silent generation', although they were never treated as markets. It was the numerous studies on Boomers in the late sixties and seventies that encouraged brands to begin moulding them into marketing strategies to attract young consumers.

As teenagers, Boomers began to assert themselves by rebelling against post-war conformity, and all kinds of rigidity and biases they saw in a system constructed by their elders. They wanted to live outside this system. They condemned economic greed, political power, war and organised religion. They looked towards enacting fabled tales of communal living – until the economy began to tank due to the 1973 international oil crisis.

By the early seventies, advertising agencies had cleverly used the insights formulated by the sociological studies of this generation. The agencies explored the cultural, social and even political outcomes of this generation to create 'chic' brands. The Boomer 'rebellion' was cleverly commodified. The youth thus became an important market. When Boomers began entering their thirties, brands started to investigate the next batch of young consumers.

Next up was what became known as Generation X. These were folk born between 1965 and 1980. In the West, they grew up in an environment of rising divorce rates, failing ideals and a new kind of conformity that was ironically facilitated by the Boomers who had entered their mid-thirties and forties in the eighties. Gen X was thus described as cynical, disaffected and sardonic. It was also highly individualistic, with no interest in collective action.

Yet, the cultural outcomes of Gen X's disaffection were co-opted and commodified as the 'new cool.' A young, individualistic, and sardonic Ethan Hawke smoking Camel cigarettes in the quintessential Gen X film, *Reality Bites* (1994), is an example of savvy product placement in a film about a generation that apparently detested commercialism.



The next generation, the 'Millennials,' born between 1981 and 1994, was however perfectly fine with commercialism. In fact, Millennials remain a favourite of marketers and brands. They are largely apolitical and had the advantage of a protected childhood provided by their Boomer parents. They lived 'in the now,' wanted to have 'fun' and make a lot of money as soon as possible. They are also the first generation to fully embrace digital technology.

Millennials too unabashedly embraced identities defined by consumer brands. They are the first truly globalised generation, mainly due to the increasing use of the internet. Brands and advertising agencies seemed to want to stick with them because, as one German marketer recently wrote, "They were just so easy to sell your brands to. They became the brand."

In 2017, there was a sudden rush to understand a new generation of consumers. Sociologists were engaged and their findings were neatly compartmentalised – and a generation of kids born between 1995 and 2010 became the next big batch of consumers. Initially, Gen Z were treated as an extension of the Millennials. This was wishful thinking.

Gen Z was then defined as the 'woke' generation. It is said that this generation is searching for 'authenticity,' even though it spends much of its time scrolling through social media sites. It was also said that Gen Z is far more political than the Millennials. Most of its politics revolve around 'identity politics.'

So, consumer brands raced to place themselves in these settings. In 2017, Pepsi placed a good-looking white model with a Pepsi can at a mock protest rally. The TV commercial was brutally castigated, although Millennials would have it hailed as an 'iconic' commercial. So, brands began to pretend to be 'subtle' in their message, even if Hollywood and many streaming services got so excited by the loudness of the 'culture wars' led by Gen Z that they began to dish out not-so-subtle woke products. Most of them bombed.

What many agencies and brands fail to realise is that generations do not remain static. Things start to change when a generation begins to enter their twenties and join the workforce. New realities trigger new worldviews. For example, how can one explain the sudden switch from the 'hair metal' and glossy MTV fodder of the eighties to the raw, angry sardonicism of grunge, or the conscious 'intellectuality' of Alternative Rock in the early nineties? This happened during the period of a single generation, Gen X.

Gen X entered their teens in the early eighties. Of course, they would love MTV, Madonna, kitschy hair metal and those wonderful teen movies by John Hughes. By the late eighties, many Gen X folk had entered their twenties, were part of the workforce and were better equipped to understand their parents 'failed' politics and ideas of morality. So they suddenly went 'grunge,' 'alternative,' and 'ironic.' Brands

that were riding the wave of MTV quickly switched gears and began to glamourise torn jeans, flannel shirts, messy hair and... errm... irony. It must have worked because Kurt Cobain shot himself.

If only brands, agencies and marketers had been as quick to gauge the switch happening to Gen Z. By 2025, a large number of Gen Z folks will be in their early and mid-twenties. Some already are. Their worldview is rapidly evolving. This must be investigated. Moreover, brands wanting to sell to this generation patronise it by hailing their 'wokeism'. This approach is clearly not working. Maybe they should instead concentrate on the darker aspects of this generation: narcissism and self-righteousness? When Camel placed itself in the hand of Ethan Hawke's cynical, sardonic, 'slacker' and anti-commercialism character in *Reality Bites*, this wasn't perceived as a clumsy act of product placement. Camel was seen as the apt brand for that character. I know, because I was part of that generation.

I believe that if brands were to say to Gen Z "We do not understand you," then they just might get its attention and respect. Appeal to Gen Z's image of being 'authentic' and 'complex,' not easily profiled and tough to comprehend. It is bound to work. ■

Nadeem F. Paracha is Head of Ideas & Research, Adcom Leo Burnett. He is also a published author and a weekly columnist for Dawn. nadeemfparacha@gmail.com



The New Agents of Change

Gen Z are redefining our lifestyles and the sooner brands understand them the better, argues Danial Pirani.

The 21st century has seen a host of multi-faceted developments and changes in terms of advancements in technology and digitisation. However, in as much as these factors have changed the shape of the world we live in, there is now a primary agent of change at work that is redefining global trends. I am talking about Generation Z.

Aged between 11 and 26, Gen Z are on their way to superseding previous generations and bringing new perspectives to lifestyles, making them of great interest to the marketing community. Logically, it should not be a surprise that any succeeding generation would be different from the previous one, but in the case of Gen Z, we are dealing with something far more exciting, because they are in fact exposing the world to a new dimension of possibilities.

In Pakistan, this trend is no different. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS, 2017), approximately 30% of the population is now made up of Gen Zers, which is equivalent to approximately 64 million individuals. This is a generation that is ambitious, self-aware and likes to stay ahead of the curve in whatever they do. They are concerned about the world around them and want to play a role in making it better.

1. Gen Z's Digital Identity

Digital platforms are essential to the lifestyle of a typical Gen Zer. Beyond the entertainment preferences of this generation, these platforms also reveal who they are. Stats show that Gen Z in Pakistan are very particular about their online activities and they believe that people perceive their online image to be a true reflection of their personality, and are therefore sensitive to any potential for misrepresentation through fake information; almost half of them have expressed their concerns about being tagged in unsolicited posts that may misrepresent them – for example, if they post funny content, people may think of them as being funny or jolly and they will be seen forever as being so.

2. Outlook on Life

Born at a time of global economic and political turmoil and high competitiveness, Gen Z are concerned about topics that previous generations would not have related to at the same age. They stay updated regarding current events and tend to locate themselves in the larger scheme of things. Finances are of prime importance to them, with over half worried about the rising cost of



education. On top of this, anxiety about meeting future expenses motivates them to save. In a country with the fifth largest youngest population in the world, this is a source of alarm, where young people perceive themselves as deprived of a primary need (education) and anticipate a future filled with difficulties instead of opportunities.

Socially, Gen Z are breaking stereotypes and setting new trends. A significant proportion want to do something they love as a full-time career. On the personal front, many of them (this is more applicable to males), believe it important to be in a relationship at their age. Yet, despite their ambitious outlook, they are not inclined to rebel, and they care about what others think of them and their social, professional and cultural traits. They are equally cognisant of the influence their friends and family have in their selection of a career. As a result, they are balanced in their approach, aware that they have to find a middle way in designing their lifestyles while aiming for their own well-being.

3. Gen Z and Food

Food is part of our identity as a country and as a region, and Gen Z are curious to explore new cuisines and styles. They are also in step with the emerging global phenomenon that prioritises organic and nutritional food. A large proportion of them are concerned about food hygiene, especially after Covid-19. This is manifested by washing groceries before cooking, adopting healthy habits during the cooking process and taking ancillary measures to ensure food safety.

Looking at their food preferences more generally, in Pakistan, Gen Z actively seek cuisines that provide a balance in health and taste as a priority in their food selection. Closely linked to this is their inclination towards natural ingredients, for which they are willing to pay premium prices. They also gravitate towards food that provides additional energy. This is more of an aspirational element and they are willing to switch to brands that can fulfil these needs. Another trait is that they perceive food not only for its functional benefits.

Fun and the 'experience' attached to food is an important component. In this respect, food manufacturers in Pakistan have a space to indulge in more creativity – hence fun – in their offerings. When it comes to food, it would be safe to say that by their particular choices, Gen Z are redefining the culinary experience, giving food manufacturers the opportunity to rethink their choices.

Eager to experiment and early adopters of global trends, Gen Z in Pakistan are redefining the lifestyles landscape. It remains to be seen how they will evolve as they grow older, but given their efforts to bridge trends with their own set of values, we can be certain that they will be a force for good. It would, therefore, be wise to put more momentum into understanding their perspectives to gauge what may lie ahead.

**All stats mentioned in the article are derived from NielsenIQ research. ■*

Danial Pirani is Manager, NielsenIQ BASES MENAP. danial.pirani@nielseniq.com



Dad's Nostalgia Kitchen, 2045

Umair Kazi imagines himself in 2045... until he is plunged back into reality...

The year is 2045. An 18-year-old boy from Karachi receives a notification on his iPhone 67 Pro Max about a new product launch that matches his interests and social data. He gestures through to find out more. It's about the 'Nostalgia Food Processor' and it looks like the perfect gift for his father's 40th birthday. He orders it, intending to surprise his father at the dinner date they have planned the following evening.

Cut to the dad's apartment. It's compact and minimal (thanks to Karachi's sky-high rental costs), but that's okay; the point of this evening is for the father and son to bond one-on-one. After the cake, the son pulls out the gift-wrapped box of the Nostalgia Food Processor and gives it to his father.

"So what does this thing do again?" asks the father, as he unboxes the sleek little gadget.

"It uses molecular technology to create literally any dish from the past, just so long as enough people have been posting and talking about it. You just have to input which dish you want to have. The AI first pulls in data points, such as the chef and the restaurant's menus and recipes, as well as people's reactions to taste, texture and aromas from social media listening, and then rearranges the molecules from the hydrogenated ingredient cartridges to recreate the dish down to the exact taste, appearance and aroma."

"Huh?" is all the dad can muster, scratching his head. He is obviously confused and the son realises that he should have dumbed it down. "It's sort of like one of those 3D printers, but for food," he says, turning the machine on.

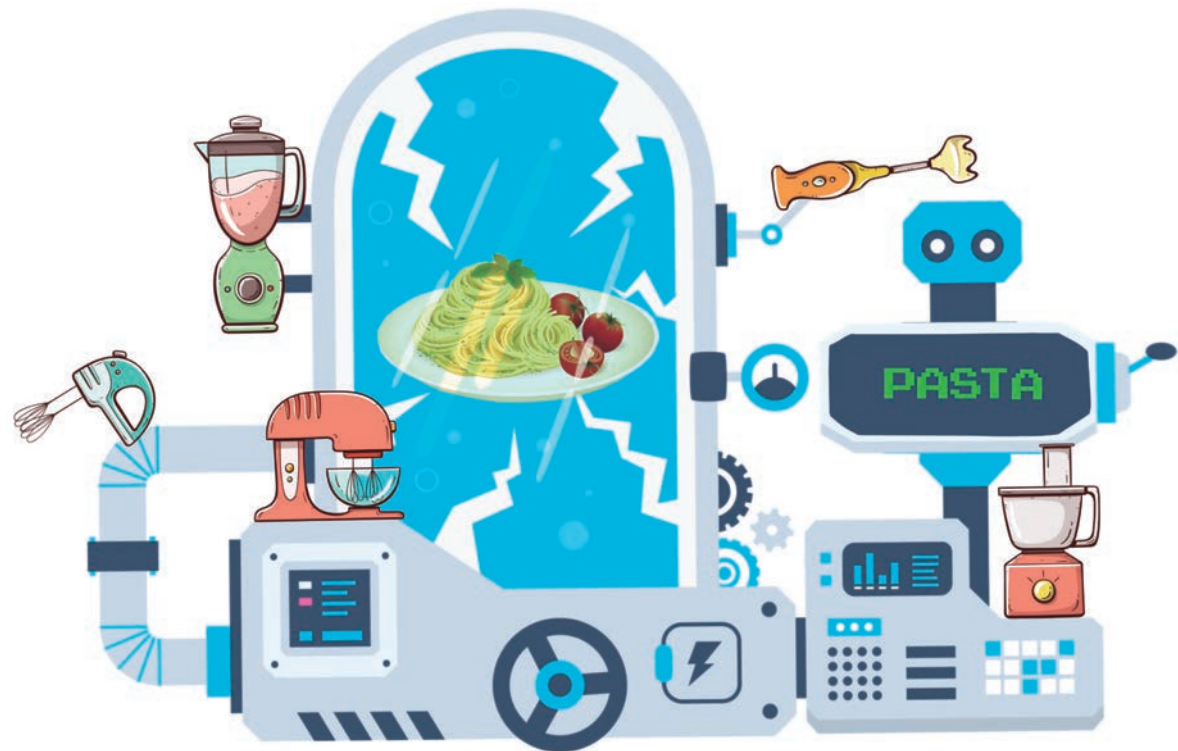
"Whoa... that's like... magic," says the dad.

"Any sufficiently advanced tech is indistinguishable from magic," replies the son nonchalantly, as he suddenly realises that there is only one set of molecular cartridges in the device; he will have to order more, or sign up to their stupid monthly subscription model. "Uh... but there's a catch. I forgot to order extra supplies and unfortunately we only have enough to do one dish today."

The dad is still confused, so the son explains a little more. "Just say out loud what dish you want recreated, press this red button and it will do it immediately. For example, what was your favourite restaurant order when you were my age?"

A light bulb goes off in the dad's brain. He's instantly taken back to Karachi's eating out scene in the early 2020s. Within a few seconds he blurts out "Babar Pasta from Xander's."

"Kaunsa pasta? Babar?! What kind of a name is that for a pasta dish! Is this from some *desi* hole-



in-the-wall place, like a wannabe fusion food truck or something?" asks the son.

"No, no. Xander's was the go-to place for upscale casual dining back in my day. Fancy crowd, Etrons parked out front... their Khayaban-e-Bukhari branch was our usual haunt."

The son shrugs with a "Okay, sure," and puts a plate next to the machine and reaches to press the red button.

"Wait, wait, we can only do one dish tonight, right?" asks the dad. "Wait, let me consider a few more options. Maybe I can go through my old IG stories to jog my memory," he says, quickly flipping out his ancient Android device as he tries to find the archived stories and photos.

"Ahhh... yeah now we're getting somewhere. Okay, I'm going to run through some of my old favourites with you and we can decide which one to choose, okay?"

The son decides to play along. This is the bonding time the evening was about anyway. They go through the archived stories together.

"Oh, oh... check this out. *Kulchas* with spinach and artichoke dip from Koel. That place was like old-school cool. But nah... the quantity was too little. Can I increase the quantity on this thing?"

"No, I'm afraid it takes populated data from hundreds if not thousands of photos of the same dish from back in the day and makes an exact replica. So the same quantity as what you remember," explains the son.

"Okay then let's try..." trails off the dad as he flips through more old boomerangs and stories.

"Clucky's *a la* Kiev burger? Oh man, that thing was filling. You had melted cheese oozing out of the patty – yum!" The

dad interrupts himself. "But no, if I recall correctly... the spice levels were way too high. It overpowered the taste of the chicken and even the cheese."

It's like he's having an internal dialogue, weighing the pros and cons of each food candidate. The son really doesn't have to contribute much to the conversation.

"Hmm... how about this pizza from POMO with burrata and basil. Everybody else preferred Famous O's, but I was always a POMO loyalist!... No, no. They were really stingy with the cheese – I mean, despite the fact that we had this import ban and everything..."

"Okay, let's see... Hot Pot from Wang Wang? Meh. It was sort of like a pioneer, but the quality went down and people kept complaining about the odd cockroach in their food. Don't want that to happen here, nopes. Korean Bao Buns? Bao Bae was like a runaway hit... no, no... from Caffé Praha! I loved those! But nah... the buns were thicker than I liked. I watched way too much Korean food content on YouTube back then. Whew!"

"How about something *desi*?" suggests the son.

"Ohhhhh yeah. That's a good idea. *Paneer reshmi handi* from Kolachi. Ohhhh," says the dad as he smacks his lips in anticipation. "Or, or... *haleem biryani* from *Paan Mandi* in Kharadar. They only served it in Ramzan but..."

"Dad, there's no way I'm having *haleem biryani* with you tonight. Sorry, I veto that one out," interrupts the son.

"Acha, acha, Mr Fancy Pants. Would you prefer some Bang Bang Cauliflower from Chop Chop Wok? Perhaps

some gyozas from Tao? Kindo Chicken with sesame seeds from Cocochan?" retorts the dad drily, flipping through more old photos.

The son sits up like he's just had a revelation. "Dad, I have an idea." With a super serious expression, he cautiously asks, "Did you ever have the Original Recipe Chicken from KFC?"

This piques the father's interest. "You mean the *original* original recipe? Before 'hot and crispy' variants became their standard baseline in Pakistan? That's... *ancient*, man. They only had it for like the first decade of the launch here. I'm surprised you even know about it."

"I've heard about it... never actually had it. Legend goes that KFC couldn't afford the margins without the thick crispy coating increasing the portion size..." says the son.

"Those are just old wives' tales. Nobody really knows the real reason they phased it out. But yes, let's decide on that. KFC Original Recipe Chicken Bucket."

The machine's voice analyser picks up the command, and flashes "Please confirm."

The dad cautiously moves his hand closer to the red button. He looks at his son, their eyes meet and the son nods in approval. "Go for it, dad."

But before he can press the button, the scene goes dark. Pitch black.

"Oh, I've had it with this," comes the dad's voice, his face dimly illuminated, as he pulls out his phone. He dials a number.

An automated voice comes on the speaker phone.

"Thank you for calling K-Electric! To register a complaint..." ■

Umair Kazi is Partner, *Ishtehari*.
umair@ishtehari.com



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By Uzma Khateeb-Nawaz

Crazy For Cookies

Ice cream demand and sales rise as summer approaches and peaks during the Eid season. Given these considerations, Wall's ice cream released a new flavour – Cookie Craze – at the end of June this year, just before Eid, a new product extension that was accompanied by an extensive advertising campaign to boost sales potential.

According to Wall's research, the Eid season usually sees a 50% increase in in-home ice cream consumption. According to Shehzar Zaman Khan, Assistant Brand Manager, Unilever Pakistan, "It is a popular choice for post-dinner festive moments, especially when entertaining friends and family. Ice cream is also seen as a delightful gift to share with relatives when visiting their homes."

Cookie Craze was introduced with a single SKU, which is a normal practice when Wall's introduces new flavours that cater to the 'mass premium market' (LSM 5 to 8+). In this case, the SKU was a one-litre tub, which is convenient in terms of deep freezer storage. The tub is priced at Rs 700, which is 55% higher compared to their other 'regular' flavours such as vanilla and chocolate and which are available in brick packs (soft paper 'bricks') and are priced at Rs 450.

Wall's competition comes primarily from Omoré and Hico. Hico's 'Cookies and Crème' is



priced at Rs 840 per litre, and Omoré's Cookie Mania's 1.4-litre tub is Rs 800. Khan adds that the existing annual market size for ice cream in Pakistan stands at 80,000 tonnes, of which Wall's enjoys a market share of 80%.

When asked why Wall's opted to introduce Cookie Craze rather than another flavour that Wall's had already introduced globally but not in Pakistan, Khan says that "prior to introducing a new flavour, we conducted market research to assess the prevailing trends. We tested a consumer segment aged between 18 and 45 years, and the study revealed that the top choice among consumers was Cookie Craze."

Ice cream parlours pose another form of competition for ice cream brands, as many people

prefer to enjoy their desserts there. However, Khan says Wall's does not perceive such parlours as direct competition, as they offer "a fun outdoor experience", while Wall's primarily focuses on providing ice cream that can be eaten at home in their tubs and brick packs. "These are two different markets that do not correlate with each other."

At the moment, Wall's does not have a permanent advertising agency on retainer to handle the creative elements for their brand. Instead, they are hiring agencies on a project basis and for the launch of Cookie Craze, the company collaborated with We Are Transmedia (WRT) who designed a concept that centred on highlighting the product's appearance and ingredients and

also made a conscious decision to exclude any human element from the campaign.

Commenting on this aspect, Umair Anwar, CEO, WRT says that because the campaign was about a new flavour, the goal was to present consumers with a physical feel of what the product looks like and the emphasis in the T/DVC was on a close-up of the pack and depicting the components such as chocolate chips, sauce and cookies that came together to create the flavour. Khan elaborates that the big idea was "to tempt consumers to try the product."

Cookie Craze is available in both physical stores and e-commerce platforms such as Pandamart and Krave Mart across Pakistan, using Wall's existing distribution system. Major cities like Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Multan are the primary markets.

Despite it being early to evaluate the flavour's success, which typically requires a 100-day period for conclusive results, Khan says that Cookie Craze has performed well and garnered a positive response. He adds that research is an ongoing process at Wall's to identify flavours that are in demand as this enables them to introduce the right new and appealing flavours. ■

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Sab Ko Redmi Chahiye?



By Abdul Samad

There was a time when Chinese products were associated with inferior quality and frequently garnered negative comments such as ‘*Yeh toh China ka maal hai.*’ However, more recently, Chinese products have shed these negative associations, and Xiaomi is one such brand that has made significant waves with their campaign, ‘*Sab Ko Redmi Chahiye*’, (‘Everyone wants Redmi’), promoting the Redmi 12C mobile phone.

For context, Xiaomi officially entered the Pakistani market in 2016 and in 2022 they started to produce smartphones in Pakistan; before that, Xiaomi phones were available in the grey market.

The ‘*Sab Ko Redmi Chahiye*’ campaign kicked off in mid-June and is expected to run until the end of August. The TVC is about a young man called Nabeel who is constantly trying to talk to a girl (his love interest?) on his Redmi 12C but is repeatedly interrupted by his own family members. His older sister wants Redmi 12C because it has a large display, his younger brother wants to play a game on it and even his neighbour wants to use it. All the while, Nabeel’s mother keeps imploring him to submit to each person’s request – which he begrudgingly does. The mother’s repeated requests add a comic touch and reinforce the tagline.

Muhammad Ali, CEO, Visual Prophecy (Xiaomi’s creative agency) says that the brief was to create a witty and engaging

ad to reinforce the tagline ‘*Sab Ko Redmi Chahiye*’. Ali adds that one of the challenges in producing the ad was the casting, particularly finding the right people to enact Nabeel and his mother. In particular, “finding the right mother took a lot of time and deliberation. Gohar Sultana (the mother) exudes a certain aura and, even though she doesn’t say much, she fits into the role perfectly.”

Muhammad Hasnain, Senior Brand Manager, Xiaomi, underlines the fact that the “character of the mother was very important and Hisham Bin Munawar (the director) was particular about finding the right actor to fit into the role. It did not matter how well-known the actor was; what was important was ‘pulling off the expressions.’” Another challenge was finding the right location, one that was reflective of “the living space of a large middle-class family.”

Hasnain adds that the campaign reinforces the image Xiaomi has been cultivating for the past 18 months. Before that, he says, “We focused on dancing, singing and catering to Gen Z, but now, we have pivoted to storytelling because such ads have better recall. This ad also fits the brand image of Xiaomi as an affordable phone with good features and specifications. The agency came up with the tagline of ‘*Sab Ko Redmi Chahiye*’ originally and we were immediately sold on the idea.”

Hasnain says that for some models, the company adapts global campaigns, tailoring the

messaging according to the country they are released in. However, since this is a mid-tier phone aimed at the Pakistani market, they opted to produce the entire campaign in Pakistan.

Although the campaign primarily targets SEC B, it also aims to cater to a wider demographic. According to the agency, the target audience ultimately consists of people who want a good-quality phone but do not have a lot of spending power. “We are targeting people across the country,” emphasises Ali. “This is an ‘entry-level’ phone and usage is split equally between urban and rural areas, and our male-to-female ratio is approximately 60:40. Our communication strategies to reach urban and rural areas remain predominantly digital with this campaign, although the platforms differ. For example, to reach rural areas and smaller cities, we focus on TikTok and for urban areas, we use Instagram and YouTube.”

Hasnain identifies Oppo, Vivo and Samsung as competitors, although he adds that Redmi 12C is an all-round device with a good battery and camera. At the time of writing, the Redmi 12C (4GB RAM and 64GB internal storage) variant is available for Rs 30,999 while the (4GB RAM and 128GB internal storage) variant is priced at Rs 33,999. “Unlike previous campaigns where the low-price element was emphasised, this time it was crucial not to hammer the price point as much, as Pakistanis tend to equate low price with

inferior quality. Instead, we focused on the features and concentrated on the tagline to increase recall.”

According to him, no one in the market is offering phones with Helio G85 processors (which the Redmi 12C has) in the price range offered by Xiaomi. “Phones have recently become pricier, putting them out of reach for the average Pakistani customer. This is why this model was highly anticipated and continues to be in high demand.”

As perceptions about the quality of Chinese phones have pivoted, the market share of Chinese mobile brands in Pakistan has grown and Hasnain puts their penetration at approximately 80%. He points out that the “element of inferior quality is no longer attached to Chinese phones. Once Huawei entered the Pakistani market, it provided a major boost to the image of Chinese phones. In fact, Xiaomi’s interface is no less than that of Korean brands.”

Hasnain is optimistic about the future of the smartphone business. “The cellular industry is a growing segment with great potential for expansion as currently, 55% of people in Pakistan have a smartphone and this figure could reach 85% in the next 10 years due to the rapid pace of digitisation and the fact that the internet and smartphones have infiltrated even remote areas. As a result, now is an excellent time to invest in Pakistan. In fact, because of the market’s potential, companies such as Samsung, Xiaomi, Oppo, and Vivo have prioritised Pakistan.” ■

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The Colours of Nostalgia



By Abdul Samad

What first springs to mind when you think about paint? For me, paint is about infinite colour combinations and a scent that wafts through our olfactory senses. And although paint may not evoke any particular sentiments in me, Dulux, in their recent campaign, 'Karay Khushiyon Ki Hifazat' has attempted to connect their new Weathershield Powerflex Triple Defence Technology paint with emotion and nostalgia – yet another example of a brand utilising an emotional storytelling strategy to strike a chord with its audience.

'Karay Khushiyon Ki Hifazat' was released in May and at the time of writing, is still on air. The reason for the timing is because we are now in the 'painting season'; people it seems prefer to have their houses painted before the onset of the monsoon.

The TVC is about a family that has moved in and lived in the same house for over a decade and throughout this period they have used Dulux for their paint jobs. Taking the perspective of a mother, the film highlights how over the years Dulux's Weathershield Powerflex new Triple Defence technology has protected her home and her family by shielding them from wear and tear and weather hazards, while her children, particularly her son, grow up. The audience views the ad through the lens of a mother, and her emotions are crucial in evoking a sense of protective warmth.

Kiran Murad, Creative Consultant, MullenLowe Rauf (Dulux Paint's creative agency) says the challenge was to "ensure that the ageing couple (mother and father) looked natural."

According to Mohtashim Naqeeb, Brand Manager, AkzoNobel (the parent company of ICI Pakistan and Dulux), the campaign's goal is to showcase Dulux Paint's innovative Triple

Defence technology while concentrating on the product's longevity. "At the end of the day, the objective of any campaign is to increase recall and brand awareness and rather than simply rehashing the product's name, we opted for an emotive storytelling campaign."

Naqeeb says that the campaign's creative concept is focused on the idea of paint protecting your home. "A house is more than just a structure; it is a symbol of happiness for every family. This is where the phrase 'Karay Khushiyon Ki Hifazat' came from. The family moved there when the child was a toddler and could barely walk, demonstrating the paint's endurance. The boy changes over time and the TVC attempts to elicit sentiments and emotions associated with a child's journey."

Weathershield Powerflex is the premium and most expensive exterior paint in Dulux's portfolio. According to Naqeeb, the Triple Defence technology further improves the paint, making it "water-repellent, weather-resistant and crack-proof. In the premium exterior paint market, performance and quality matter, and durability is a key deciding factor for the consumer." He adds that "one of the key drivers through which we differentiate ourselves from our competitors is product innovation. In the paint sector, performance is just as important as brand reputation and is the reason why we have incorporated anti-bacterial, antiviral, and anti-fungal properties into our product. These product enhancements have enabled us to extend the Weathershield Powerflex warranty from 10 to 12 years."

Naqeeb underlines that in the past, regional campaigns were aired in Pakistan that targeted a global audience, such as the 'Kung Fu Panda' campaign which was originally aired in Malaysia and Singapore. However, it was felt that local

campaigns were needed as "research revealed a disconnect between the communication and the target audience in Pakistan. In 2022, the first campaign we developed and executed locally was the independence campaign called 'Pehchaan Ka Rung', which garnered a phenomenal response. It was the first time AkzoNobel stirred the emotions of the Pakistani consumer."

In terms of the response, Naqeeb is upbeat: "The campaign is still live and we have not yet conducted a post-study, but the response from digital, radio, and TV has been above our expectations."

Individuals between the ages of 30 and 40 who have purchasing power and influence over brand decisions are the primary target group. This market segment, says Naqeeb, is in the "phase of constructing their own homes and can also influence renovations in their parents' homes. The mother of the 12-year-old son in the campaign falls into this age group." Naqeeb thinks that men have more influence in terms of brand selection, whilst women have more influence in terms of colour choices. Input is also provided by children aged 10 to 18.

Although in the mid-tier and lower segments of the paint market, painters and contractors exert their influence in guiding customer choice, in the premium paint market Naqeeb says "the customer is brand conscious, and that is a good thing for us."

To remain competitive in a highly fragmented market, Dulux is focusing on the in-store shopping experience because ordinarily, paint shops look more like warehouses. "We have recently opened the first Dulux Experience store in Bahria Town, Lahore, where customers are guided by a consultant who helps them review the complete range of Dulux products with the various colour combinations."

The Pakistani paints and coatings market is predicted to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.18% between 2023 and 2028, rising from \$384.74 million in 2023 to \$472.16 million by 2028 (source: Mordor Intelligence 2023 study). It is divided into two major segments. The first is the unorganised 'unbranded' category which includes over 100 players and predominantly serves construction firms in semi-urban and rural areas (source: Pakistan Credit Rating Agency, 2020) and is particularly price sensitive. The second is the organised section and includes multinationals such as AkzoNobel, Berger, Kansai, and Nippon, as well as local players such as Brighto Paints and Diamond Paints.

Despite the fact that prices have more than doubled in the past year, Dulux has been able to maintain its sales volumes, because according to Naqeeb, "the premium paint industry is not overly sensitive to price. They have already invested millions of rupees in a house so they see paint as the finishing touch to their investment and are not unwilling to compromise on quality at this stage."

Looking to the future, Naqeeb acknowledges that the paint industry is facing unprecedented challenges due to the sharp rise in input costs. Furthermore, the slowdown of the economy and a decline in construction has had an adverse impact on the paint industry, while supply chain constraints arise from the reliance on imported raw materials, despite some local production. Taken together, the market sentiment indicates a slowdown that affects all price levels.

Naqeeb, however, remains optimistic because the government relies heavily on the construction sector to drive economic growth. He is confident that with political stability, the overall economic outlook will improve and that the situation will improve next year. ■

Celebrating Digital Innovation



By Sadia Kamran

On June 24, 2023, the seventh edition of the Pakistan Digital Awards (PDAs) was held, with notable winners, including Adamjee Life (Best Website of the Year), BankIslami (Best BioTechnology), Jubilee Life Insurance (Best Social Media Campaign), Walee (Best Digital Innovation & User and Entity Big Data Analytics), Zindagi powered by JS Bank (Best Start-up of the Year) and TPL Insurance (Best Mobile App). Synite Digital received the most prestigious award, Best Digital Agency of the Year.

It was Ashifa Paracha who founded the PDAs, leveraging her 25 years' worth of experience in digital marketing and advertising to shine a light on a fast-increasing and significant sector of the marketing industry. A year later, she was joined by Sami Qahar; the awards were launched in 2017, with the goal of rewarding advertising performance and effectiveness in the digital realm.

The Awards' motto is 'We believe in Pakistan's digital industry and encourage the best digital innovation,' and the PDA team see the event as 'a conversation starter' in Pakistan's digital environment.

"The 2021 government and its policies brought a lot of foreign funding to Pakistan and this resulted in a lot of digital start-ups," Qahar explains. "While economic setbacks and the subsequent failure of many start-ups dented investor confidence in the years that followed, they

also gave rise to tenacious success stories like Bagallery and Daraz, and we are here to make these success stories a part of the conversation."

Looking back, Qahar recalls that the first PDAs were held in 2017 with just two jury members. However, since then, the awards have grown in terms of categories, jury members, competitors, and sponsors, as well as credibility.

The first PDAs comprised 25 'simpler' categories, such as Best Digital Start-up, Best Social Media Campaigns, Best Digital Campaign and Best Digital Innovation. These categories were fine-tuned over the years to recognise the use of technology in innovative ways to enhance marketing, and have increased in number to 40 with sub-categories that include Best Digital Payment Processor, Best Digital PR Campaign, Best User and Entity Big Data Analytics, Best Meme Marketing, Best Influencer, Facebook Community of the Year and TikTok of the Year.

Furthermore, the PDAs not only recognise digital communication efforts but innovation and talent in the broader digital sphere. Several categories are targeted at apps, technology-based start-ups, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software and technological adaptations that help companies improve their customer services.

On another note, initially, jury members were from Karachi only, but the evaluation procedure now takes place in Lahore as well.

"The speed with which the digital sphere is evolving has compelled us to open up new categories," says Qahar, adding that while the Effie awards have been honouring advertising effectiveness, "digital marketing and innovation can no longer be restricted to a single category – the digital landscape needs to be identified as a separate domain of marketing communications."

For Qahar, the USP of the PDAs is merit-based selection. The jury performs detailed evaluations on all entries and works according to the Competition Rules established by PDA.

Participants have to ensure that their entries meet the PDA's requirements, which include the budget of the campaign/project, target audience, implementation mechanisms, results, challenges, and the team's reason for considering a campaign a worthy candidate. Based on these criteria, participants submit their cases that are evaluated in phase one by the jury members and in the second phase they receive seven minutes to present their case to them. The winners are chosen based on the scores assigned by individual jury members.

As the event expanded, so did the number of sponsors as brands could see that the event was providing them with exposure. "This year's sponsorship funding was three times that of last year," says Qahar. Bank Al Falah, Invictus Brands and Jubilee Insurance are among the organisations that have consistently supported the event over the last seven years.

When it comes to other initiatives organised under the PDA banner, Qahar points to the Digi Leaders Conference, which has had two editions so far. The Creataverse Mentorship Platform is another endeavour for digital content makers such as TikTokers and Instagram influencers. A panel at this event advises budding content makers on how to increase their digital presence.

Organising an annual award programme while maintaining the legitimacy of its merit-based selection procedure is not without its obstacles. "Initially, our credibility as a forum that evaluates digital marketing success was called into question," Qahar continues. "However, over the years, we have established our credibility by assuring participants that evaluations are conducted by a jury of impartial experts. Another challenge we still face, unfortunately, is that some participants try to buy an award in a specific category. When we reject them, we feel pressured, but we have grown even more focused on delivering a transparent jury-based evaluation process."


In the future, the PDAs intend to expand the scope of the awards and organise more editions of the Digi Leaders conference and Creataverse in Pakistan as well as in Silicon Valley. Furthermore, the team hopes to represent Pakistan's digital landscape on an international level in the near future. ■

Campaign Watch

By Ammarah Haroon

When someone asks you to give your opinion on the work out there, the first instinct is to grasp the opportunity and vent all the frustration stemming from your own work realities, and finally let the world know what you are capable of – if not through your work, then through your critical analysis of other people’s campaigns. However, after working for 18 years in this field, I know that this profession is no child’s play and what goes on in the endless rounds of revisions - and yet another epiphany moment by the client – all of which usually lead to the kind of work we generally see around us. So kudos to all the lucky people whose campaigns came out looking mediocre or run of the mill! At least you were able to deliver the baby after an intense labour. Here are a few campaigns that recently caught my eye.

Brand: **Sprite**



Agency: Soho Square Pakistan
Campaign: *Garmi Mein Bhi Thand Rakh*
Message: Sprite can take the heat out of any unpleasant moment
Effectiveness: At first, one feels that this is going to be yet another forced ‘cool’ idea, but the campaign surprises with its on-point insights. The humour balances out the frustration in each story and never leaves out the product’s relevance.
Verdict: Light-hearted, relevant and refreshing, the new sprite ads are a beacon of hope for traumatised creative and client service teams who one day may see their fun scripts transcend into actual ads.

Brand: **Brite**



Agency: Spectrum VMLY&R
Campaign: *Brite Sab Right Ker De Ga*
Message: All the tell-tale stains of Pakistani food will be washed away
Effectiveness: The recent TVC in this ongoing campaign is based on the classic product demo approach. Generally, such campaigns are perceived as the demeritors of the advertising world, sucking the soul out of a creative. However, this smart team didn’t let that happen and framed the functionality in a light-hearted yet product-driven way that stayed easy on the soul and effective on the mind.
Verdict: Imagination and consistency can make the most functional and basic commercials noticeable and is one of the key reasons why this long-running campaign has still not lost momentum.

Brand: **Nido 1+**



Agency: Publicis RED Communication Arts
Campaign: *Jitna Saara Mama Ka Pyaar, Utni Bharpoor Nash O Numa*
Message: Nutrition as wholesome as a mother’s love
Effectiveness: No one is immune to the economic challenges we are facing these days and as a response, a lot of brands are coming up (quite rightly) with value reframing campaigns. In this context, Nido 1+’s is a simple yet effective campaign that captures those innocent and cherished moments between a mum and her toddler. The stories are cute enough to warm up your heart and effectively remain immersed within the brand identity.
Verdict: If you really put your heart into any communication, it becomes meaningful and memorable. And in the current financial climate keeping it crisp, light-hearted and relevant seems a good strategy.

Brand: **Sensodyne**



Agency: Prestige Communications
Campaign: Moments
Message: Life is too short for sensitivity
Effectiveness: Nine out of 10 medicated toothpaste ads look the same. However, this global campaign by Sensodyne was able to create a breath of fresh air. Although done some time ago, the campaign’s TVC and digital presence were able to communicate to all the GENsss out there. The digital spots were engaging, fun and noticeable.
Verdict: A perfect example of adapting the golden strategies of advertising to the vocabulary and interests of the present times. Despite the novelty of the execution, the brand identity remained intact and the brand relevance could be heard for miles despite the whisperings in the mic. ■

Brand: **OLX**



Agency: In-house
Campaign: *No Khwari, No Lara, OLX Per Tinak Din Tara*
Message: Life and its many problems are sorted with OLX
Effectiveness: You may raise an eyebrow but when India says “*iss koh laga dala toh life jingalala*” I hear applause, so why not appreciate this too?! “*No khwari, no lara, OLX per tinak din tara*” might be random slang, but it works for the audiences. Although the situations could have been crafted better, the campaign is on point and the brand seems to understand its target audience well enough.
Verdict: Over-intellectualising advertising is the worst thing we can do to our careers and the brands we work for. In this age of virality and transparency, easy and natural flows!

Ammarah Haroon Dar is ECD, Publicis RED Communication Arts.

It is going to be will take whose That is

AURORA: KFC was among the first fast food franchises to open in Pakistan in the nineties. What has the customer experience been like over these many years?

M. RAZA PIRBHAI: Pizza Hut opened in 1993 and it was the brand then. It was followed by KFC in 1997 and in 1998 by McDonald's, and all three enjoyed good times until 2010. KFC started to lose their edge around 2007.

A: What happened?

MRP: Pizza Hut and KFC gained acceptability from the very beginning and they were a huge success in the market. But then they started to lose their way on how to take their brand forward. Pizza Hut got lost somewhere between the dining and delivery concept and they began losing ground when they started to compete with Domino's. KFC was a very acceptable brand, especially in terms of their taste palette, but in terms of price, positioning, marketing, assets and people, they failed to evolve. Part of the reason why this happened was because their original customer base started getting older and the brand was aging with them rather than innovating. They continued to live with their legacy model, and then when Cupola started venturing into different directions, they failed to focus on how KFC was evolving globally and how consumer dynamics were changing. By 2007, the brand was in decline and when I took over in 2014, it was on a ventilator. People had stopped going to KFC because the experience was so bad. The challenge was to revive a dying brand and I call KFC a crocodile brand' because it would not die. It was literally being killed but it was not dying, and in my opinion, the reason why it refused to die was because it had a very strong local taste acceptability. Fried chicken, spicy, fried, whole muscle – everything was so correct. It is so close to the local consumer tastes. We cannot go wrong with this product.

A: The local taste was there from the start?

MRP: Fried chicken is a very Asian product; it is the food that we like to eat. And acceptability increased further when KFC introduced spicy and crispy in Pakistan. It was an all-time hit. The problem was that the product was wrongly priced and wrongly positioned. QSRs (Quick Service Restaurants) globally are at the bottom of the food ladder and their offerings have to be priced in such a way to reflect this. Starting from the bottom, you have QSRs, fast casual dining, casual dining and finally fine dining. Globally, QSRs are the most affordable, and therefore consumer expectations are not very high. The expectation is to be served a quick hygienic meal at an affordable price along with a reasonable experience. In Pakistan, KFC was positioned as the place to go, but the experience was miserable, and on top of it the prices were premium because it was an American brand. We had to change the entire landscape. We are in a business of scale and of high number volume. I don't want people to come to me only to celebrate special occasions like birthdays, I want them to think about me every day as a habit. Our first step was to launch an everyday value menu, and it was a game changer because we opened a price space that allowed us to welcome more consumers.

A: By how much did you drop your prices?

MRP: We did not drop them. We changed our product offerings and introduced a new range of menus. We introduced a smaller sized burger and a two-pieces of chicken and fries combo. For the mid-tier pricing category, we provided added value through disruptive offers and for the upper family end we created a menu letter. The point is that only four to five percent of the market is affluent and you cannot survive on that. To survive, you have to go deep and we went deep with pricing, value and the right

offering, and this is what gave us the leverage to expand. In 2014, we had 58 stores and we cut them down to 52 and remodelled them. Then we began opening new stores and currently we have 119 stores and we are targeting 15 to 18 new ones every year. This is the kind of space we have created for ourselves.

A: How did the rising trend in home ordering change the market dynamics?

MRP: The digital food arena started to expand with aggregators such as Foodpanda and EatOye and they created new behaviours which provided us with a new space.

A: What was this new behaviour?

MRP: At dinner time, three separate riders come to my house. Earlier, what would typically happen was that Dad would decide what to order. Today, my son decides what he wants to order, my daughter decides what she wants to order, and luckily my wife and I both agree on what we want to order. That is the extent to which consumer habits have changed. There is much more independence of choice.

A: How has this affected trends in dining in-store?

MRP: Dining in-store is still a trend in Pakistan; it is the reason why I spend a lot of money on bricks and mortar. Delivery is basically an offshoot of dine-in; if people don't see the dine-in, they will not have believability in the delivery. Globally the trend is different and they have started to spend less on the dine-in experience. In Pakistan, it is still a very strong reality.

A: In percentage terms, how would you classify your sales mix?

MRP: The mix is 40% dine-in, 35% delivery and the remaining 25% is made up of take-away and drive-through.

A: And your dining breakdown over 24 hours?

MRP: Noon to 4 p.m. accounts for 23 to 24%, and this has been forever; I have not seen this change. Dinner accounts for 30 to 35%. The snacking

period in the evening is eight to 10%. What has really grown is the late hour window post 10 p.m., and which accounts for another 20 to 30%. The late-hour window has been supported by Foodpandas of the world; they have given consumers that kind of access and luxury in terms of the service available, particularly to Gen Z. Gen Z have become so much more opinionated about their food preferences and what they order. The access and the opportunity to order has given them that power.

A: Which age group constitutes your core target market?

MRP: Thirteen to 35 is our bull's eye, although the data says the profile is between 19 and 45. When we came in 2014, we asked consumer research to define us as a brand personality and the reply was Atiqia Odho.

A: Meaning?

MRP: That we were still graceful but we have aged. When we asked what we should be, the response was Ali Zafar. Consumers wanted us to look young, vibrant, colourful and communicate in their language. Don't just give product shots; show us colour, humans; show us people we can relate to. We had to make our brand younger. Today our brand scores have significantly improved. We were on 2.4; our rating is now at 6.4, and in the last nine years our sales have grown 20 times and we have become the largest food retail operator in Pakistan.

A: When it comes to Gen Z, are they ordering stuff that is really different from what older people are ordering?

MRP: They generally prefer boneless chicken. They are also more experimental when it comes to new flavours.

A: So the big change is their ability to order independently?

MRP: Definitely. To order what they want when they want it.

A: Do socio-economic indicators affect Gen Z's behaviour when it comes to when and what they order?

MRP: Not in terms of when they order; in terms of flavours, there is maybe a little bit of a difference; for example,

M. RAZA PIRBHAI

about who share the game

CEO, KFC, speaks to *Aurora* about survival in a time of economic stress and staying relevant to Gen Z.

barbecue sauce would work better in Defence and Clifton than elsewhere.

A: What about price?

MRP: They all are price sensitive. Of course, the dynamics differ according to their socio-economic category, but that is not confined to Gen Z.

A: When it comes to advertising, is TV or digital the more important medium?

MRP: I would rank TV as number one. I get a lot of criticism for this, but I think TV still holds a huge viewership, and that viewership is not only on TV; it can be on any screen, so the TVC will get into so many different formats and different media. However, TV still has a lot of reach in Pakistan.

A: Potentially, how large is the QSR market?

MRP: It is a 250 million people market and with 120 stores I have not even reached the addressable market, which I estimate at 24 million.

A: How did you reach the base number of 24 million?

MRP: From a total population of 250 million people, we take families who earn Rs 50,000 a month as KFC customers and according to research, this would account for 11% to 14% of the population.

A: What is preventing further expansion?

MRP: Limitations in our capacity to open that many stores; find that many sites, deal with landlords and a lot of other capacity constraints. In Karachi for example, how can I open in Lalukhet or on M.A. Jinnah Road without the kind of proper infrastructure where I can place my brand? I have been looking for a building in Shah Faisal Colony, yet I cannot find one with a decent infrastructure. Sindh and Karachi are very difficult areas to expand in terms of the right infrastructure. Punjab is very different.

A: Has the economic situation made your customers more price sensitive?

MRP: There has been a 40 to 45% depreciation of the rupee and inflation is now at 40%. How does one pass this on to

the consumer, especially when I am sitting at the bottom of the pyramid trying to be affordable? I cannot pass on everything to my customer.

A: What did you do?

MRP: Absorb.

A: You did not increase your prices?

MRP: We did. But given the rupee depreciation and the inflation rate, I have only taken an eight or nine percent price increase.

A: Has there been a drop in your footfall?

MRP: Not so far. We have been able to attract a lot of share from elsewhere because we are still the most affordable. People still have to go to work and eat. What will happen is that the one who absorbs the most and passes on the least will divert the share, because the market is not going to grow. During times of inflation, the overall pie cannot grow, so it is going to be about who will take whose share. That is the game.

A: In terms of developing new flavours and recipes, how much input does KFC Pakistan have?

MRP: We create our own local innovations and we also take a lot from the global library if we think that it will be relevant to our market. We created Zingeratha which was then taken globally. It's a chicken *paratha* roll, done with zinger, chutney and onions. That is the magic of KFC. We are about real food; we don't do freezer to fry.

A: Where do you source your chicken from?

MRP: All four major suppliers are my vendors; K&N, Sabroso, Big Bird and Menu, and they are all approved by KFC global.

A: What about your potatoes?

MRP: We used to import them, but this is now being localised. All our Category A vendors have to be approved by KFC global. So chicken is a Category A, where the customer directly consumes the product and we need to know who the bird's parents were; was it given any antibiotics in the last 15 days; what is it fed? All this is a part of KFC's sustainability improvement process.



A: What about potatoes? I ask this because, unlike chicken where there are several suppliers who rear their chickens to a certain standard, potatoes all come from the central Sabzi Mandi.

MRP: You are right, and that is why we resisted having to suddenly source our potatoes locally and we now have a few months' space to source them. We are working with Fauji Foods to develop our own product and start seeding our potatoes.

A: What about your buns?

MRP: They are from Dawn Bread; they are the only approved vendor.

A: Do you think companies like KFC and McDonald's should be localising further and encouraging competition among local suppliers to raise their standards?

MRP: We would consider working with anyone who is ready to invest; we are working

with Dipitt for our sauces. But we just don't approach the big names, we are ready to consider anyone willing to invest and who can qualify and clear their audits. It is important to keep in mind that any company that supplies a brand like KFC must also have a large local retail base. The four chicken suppliers I mentioned earlier have that large local retail base and that is how they are surviving and the same goes for our bread vendor. If they were only supplying KFC, they would not be able to survive; they would not be able to compete on costs for a start. But there are not many Pakistanis who want to go into manufacturing because there is so much unpredictability. ■

M. Raza Pirbhai was in conversation with Mariam Ali Baig. For feedback: aurora@dawn.com

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Although Pakistan has received the much-anticipated IMF bailout, it is clear from the report on the standby arrangement that we are not out of the woods. Based on projections by the IMF, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, real GDP growth is set to be at two to 2.5% in FY '24, which is far below South Asia's 5.9% (source: World Bank), and it is projected to rise to 3.6% in FY '25 and 4.6% in FY '26 (source: IMF). Furthermore, a tight monetary policy to contain high inflation, combined with import restrictions (due to low foreign reserves) is expected to curtail growth in the near term. Inflation is expected to remain above 25% in FY '24 followed by 11.6% in FY '25 and 7.4% in FY '26. The gradual recovery will be dependent on strong policy implementation of the framework and timely external financing.

In the near term, there seems to be a limited upside in GDP growth (exceeding projections); however, there are significant downside risks that need to be managed.

- A tense political environment leading up to elections and policy slippages due to social pressures.
- The delays in the disbursement of planned external financing; tighter global financial conditions continue to put pressure on the exchange rate and external stability. Any increase in near-term domestic financing requirements may overburden the financial sector and cause disruption.
- Volatility in food and fuel prices due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. A case in point is the recent withdrawal of Russia from the Black Sea grain deal that was facilitating the export of millions of tons of grain from Ukrainian ports. As a result, grain prices have been fluctuating, sparking concerns in food-insecure countries.
- Delays in structural reforms, including increasing the tax base, managing spiralling circular debt, and improving public financial management, particularly of State Owned Enterprises.
- Mounting risks from climate change with impact on rural and urban areas. This is one of the biggest challenges requiring immediate attention.

Barring a few minor changes, the policy recommendations, the need for structural reforms, and the downside risks have been similar over the years.

So why don't things change? Why is the country stuck? Economic policies typically assume humans behave rationally and focus on incentives to change outcomes. Is there something in the Pakistani psyche or mindset that is preventing progress? Are there mental models that have been shaped over decades that cause people to think and behave in a manner contrary to the assumptions behind policy development? Or as Einstein warned, "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it."

The 2015 World Development Report *Mind, Society, and Behaviour*, based on hundreds of studies demonstrates that a more realistic understanding of choice and behaviour can make development interventions much more effective. The report creates a framework of human thinking centred on three principles:

1. People think fast and often automatically rather than carefully and deliberately. Automatic thinking allows for rapid and pragmatic decision-making, but can also lead to systematic errors in judgement. Even seemingly insignificant details in the presentation of a situation can influence our perceptions as we often tend to make quick assumptions based on limited information.

2. Humans are inherently social. When making decisions, we are frequently influenced by the thoughts, actions and expectations of others. The influence of others can lead us towards specific perspectives and collective behavioural patterns. For example, certain segments who collectively believe they should not be paying taxes.

Fail and Repeat

What is it that prevents Pakistan from moving forward economically? Amin Rammal poses the question.

3. Thinking with mental models. When individuals engage in thinking, they typically do not rely on the concepts they have personally created. Instead, they draw upon concepts, categories, identities, stereotypes, narratives and worldviews that are shaped by their communities. Rather than responding directly to objective experiences, individuals react to their mental representations of those experiences.

Taking a behavioural view, the mindset in Pakistan tends to favour short-term, easy fixes versus analytically driven, longer-term solutions. Perhaps it is driven by the need to survive today, not knowing what tomorrow will bring. Policies that are driven by short-term populist goals tend to follow a similar train of thought, perpetuating a cycle and

Table B shows the impact where operating margins are cut in half but more importantly, the nine percent WHT nearly wipes out the profit as the advance tax paid (Rs 9.5) is more than the operating profit (Rs 6.4).

Sales/Revenue	Rs 105
Operating cost	Rs 96
Operating profit	Rs 9
Taxes based on 29% corp. tax	Rs 2.6
Net profit based on 29% corp. tax	Rs 6.4
Actual tax paid based on 9% WHT	Rs 9.5
Actual net profit based on 9% WHT	Rs -0.4

In what context would this increase in WHT be considered acceptable? The company is under pressure to cut costs, most likely to the detriment of employee growth, which makes talent retention difficult. It undermines business confidence and reduces any incentive for new investment and makes those paying taxes resentful. It also disincentivises people who are not paying taxes to become filers.

Over time, short-sighted policy decisions lead to mistrust between the state and its citizens. There is merit in Einstein's quote, "If I had an hour to solve a problem, I would spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions." The point he makes is important: preparation has great value in problem-solving.

The survival mindset, if not driven by purpose or goals, can have another side effect – creating opportunists versus builders. Countries that experience frequent black swan events, and where there is a lack of information and transparency, tend to encourage

speculative and ad hoc decision-making. Rumours become 'facts', which opportunists exploit and manipulate to make an extraordinary windfall, usually at the expense of others. Yet, evolving a common sense of purpose and being driven by an ethical belief system, can shift the mindset from individual opportunists to collective builders.

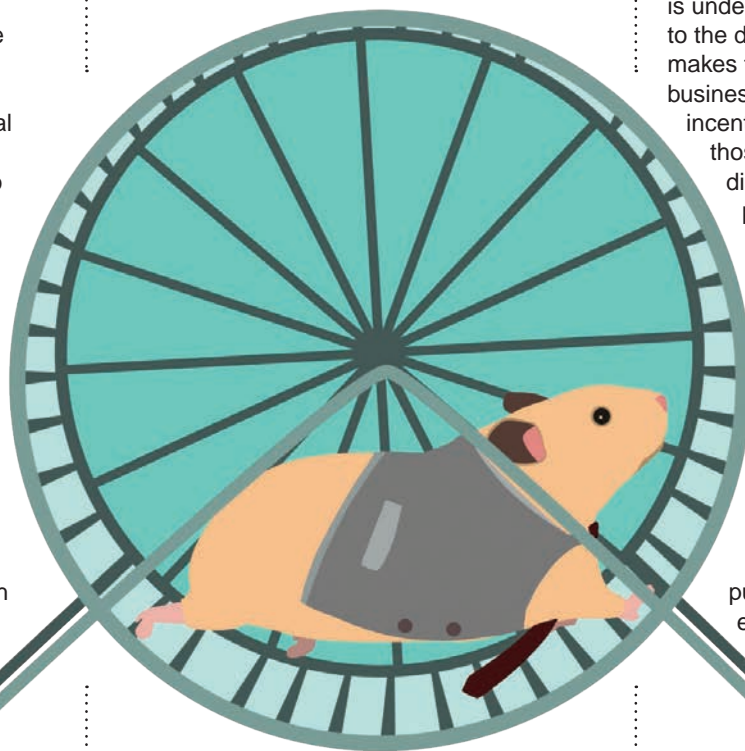
While survival instincts were probably advantageous in the early years of Pakistan, after 75 years of existence, the expectation is of stable growth. Like start-ups, where investors begin to lose interest in companies that constantly pivot, frequent changes in leadership, high cash burn and inability to scale up are leading lenders to Pakistan, who have witnessed decades of unaddressed structural issues (causing low growth with high spends), to lose interest as promises remain unfulfilled.

Pakistan needs to evolve from an early-stage start-up survival mentality to a disciplined growth one. It needs to shift from making do with a bare minimum 'chale ga' attitude to an obsession with producing the best quality output. Policies need to be framed and instituted to help the country graduate from a minimum viable product to a unicorn.

Change can only come from a strong leadership team that can articulate a credible vision and inspire trust and confidence in people to follow and help execute.

"The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking." – Albert Einstein. ■

Amin Rammal is a marketing technology enthusiast and Director, Asiatic Public Relations. amin.rammal@gmail.com



making it more ingrained in the psyche of the country. A case in point is the recent effort to increase tax revenue by slapping an additional 2.5% tax on salaried people earning over Rs 200,000 a month/2.4 million a year, plus a one percent increase in withholding tax (WHT) on companies selling goods and services, both of which are already taxpayers.

Let's analyse the impact in 2023 on a fictitious small to medium size company categorised in other services paying WHT of eight percent. We will call the company XYZ. The global benchmark for strong operating margins of a service-based company is between 15% and 25%. In Table A, the assumption is that XYZ had a 20% margin in 2023.

Sales/Revenue	Rs 100
Operating cost	Rs 80
Operating profit	Rs 20
Taxes based on 29% corp. tax	Rs 5.8
Net profit based on 29% corp. tax	Rs 14.2
Actual tax paid based on 8% WHT	Rs 8
Actual Net profit based on 8% WHT	Rs 12

Even at eight percent, the calculation clearly shows that the company was paying more advance tax (eight rupees) than its liability, calculated on a corporate tax of 29% (Rs 5.8).

Now let's look at what the numbers in Table B for XYZ could be in 2024, incorporating a sluggish five percent growth due to a slow economy, a 20% increase in cost due to inflationary pressures and an increase of one percent in WHT, making it nine percent.

“In the last 20 to 25 years, we have not solved a single big problem”

Dr Miftah Ismail, a PhD in Public Finance from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, has had two brief stints as the Finance Minister of Pakistan under PML-N-led governments. In September 2022, he resigned from his position as Pakistan’s finance czar after a falling out with his party leadership. Kazim Alam sat down with Dr Ismail in his Karachi office recently to seek his views on the economic situation and the way forward.

KAZIM ALAM: Do you think the economy will do better in the next five years compared to the last five years?

MIFTAH ISMAIL: I think so. The last five years have not been good for the economy. Our per capita GDP in dollar terms today is lower than what it was five years ago. We have made many, many mistakes in the last 20 years or so – hopefully, we have learned from them and will do the right thing. If we stay in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, we will not grow economically very fast. However, the last five years have been so bad that we should be able to do better now.

KA: What are the top three challenges the next finance minister is likely to face?

MI: The first big challenge is managing the current account deficit. This is the reason why we have to borrow money every year, which means that we have to pay back even more money every year – and today we have a huge external debt to pay back. The second challenge is the fact that we have a very low tax-to-GDP ratio which results in very high twin deficits. The National Finance Commission (NFC) Award also contributes to these high deficits. The third challenge is productivity. Pakistanis have not become more productive, they have not become more literate and they have not become more educated and every year we lag behind in the comity of nations. We have to find the fiscal space to do something about this.

KA: Do you intend to run for public office?

MI: No. I have been blessed and honoured to be the finance minister of Pakistan twice; I have decided that there are other ways to serve Pakistan. I don’t feel like running for political office anymore.

KA: The word out there is that you are being considered for a position in the interim setup.

MI: I don’t know anything about it.

KA: In your opinion, should the caretaker government be given the mandate to tackle issues that go beyond the day-to-day running of the economy and should it be empowered to take economic decisions that are medium-term in nature?

MI: The law has been changed to allow the caretaker government to continue working on international agreements that are already done. We have to give this power to the caretakers to enable them to conduct their day-to-day affairs in a proper manner. However, to initiate major reforms, we have to take the people along, and there has to be a broad consensus. That is an issue because the caretaker government will not have this public mandate.



Photo: Tanveer Shahzad/White Star

KA: Do you think the recently signed three billion dollar Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the IMF will be followed by a longer-term Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with a broader scope for structural reforms?

MI: The SBA has to be followed by an EFF or another longer-term programme, otherwise Pakistan will not remain liquid. I hope that this time not just the fiscal numbers will be targeted. Structural issues, such as privatising public-sector enterprises, and deregulating administrative prices like electricity tariffs and gas rates, will also have to be targeted. I think there should also be reforms in the taxation structure. For example, we do not tax property properly. We do not tax the agriculture sector in a correct manner. We do not tax the retail sector. Many areas have been exempted from taxation and they have to be brought into the tax net. We also have to revisit the NFC Award so that the federation does not go bankrupt financing the provinces. The provinces should be asked to raise some of their own taxes. There are many things that need to be done.

KA: Electricity tariffs are going through the roof and circular debt is out of control. Do you think this mess in the power sector is reflective of the incompetence of successive governments, and how would you solve this if you were in a position of power for a full term?

MI: There are two things that we need to understand before addressing the question of the power sector. One is the ineffectiveness of all our

governments. I am not talking about a particular government; I am talking about our system of governance, the rules of business in government, how we make the rules – different institutions, the National Accountability Bureau and so on. All of the above make governance ineffective. In the last 20 to 25 years, we have not solved a single big problem. We have one of the highest population growth rates in the world, and certainly the highest in South Asia, and half of our children are out of school. Yet, we are unable to do anything about this. The other half that is in school, on average, fails in maths and science and we don’t do anything about that too. And if you have functionally illiterate people, you are not going to progress. The biggest problem is our education system. The World Bank estimates literacy poverty in Pakistan stands at 75%, which means that 75% of our 10-year-olds cannot read two age-appropriate sentences in any language. Therefore, the power sector issues are just one aspect; the failures in the gas sector, the failure to fight terrorism, to curb street crimes are the other issues that need addressing. And it is not just about incompetence. It is about individuals. It is about the fact that the system of governance in Pakistan has failed. We need to rethink this. Furthermore, for many reasons, there is incompetence in the bureaucracy and among politicians. They do not understand what needs to be done to solve the major problems. So there is an issue

of competence as well. This is why we talk about reimagining Pakistan. We need to reimagine or rethink how we should govern this country; whether we should devolve powers to the local governments, whether we should introduce competition among the provinces, districts and divisions; how we should tax people and how we should spend the tax money. We need to rethink a lot of stuff. Coming to the power sector, raising prices after an IMF agreement is not a reform, but privatising the power sector companies is a reform and so is privatising Pakistan International Airlines Corporation. Too many dreams have been sold about fixing our state-owned enterprises, but this is not happening. We need to privatise wholesale, bring in competition, and only then will we see a decrease in the prices of energy; otherwise, the cost will keep going up and the IMF will say that since our cost of buying power has increased, we have to pass it on to the customer. That is another reason why there is a lot of inflation in Pakistan.

KA: You mentioned the need to review the NFC Award. What are the headline changes the government should bring to the formula used to distribute fiscal resources among the provinces and the federation?

MI: First of all, there is absolutely no confusion about the fact that I am all for the 18th Amendment. In fact, I think more power should be given to the provinces and those powers should then be devolved to the local government. However, I do think that the division of resources between the federation and the provinces is tilted too much in favour of the provinces. The provinces have become rich; they have more money than they know how to spend, which is why they keep spending so much and why their workforce keeps growing and the remuneration packages of that workforce keep increasing. The bureaucrats in Balochistan and elsewhere are making more money than the federal bureaucrats. If you give someone free money, they are not going to raise their own revenues. We need to make the provinces raise their own revenues through property (which are in the control of the provinces) and agriculture taxes. The federation needs to give less money to the provinces. Only then will we be able to control the federal deficit and then once the federal deficit is under control, we will be able to get a handle on the current account deficit. ■

Kazim Alam is a staff member of Dawn. kazim.alam@dawn.com
For feedback: aurora@dawn.com

Pakistan's journey to becoming a 'Market of Tomorrow' has been hindered by various challenges in creating a cohesive economic narrative. Fragmented vision and political instability have led to inconsistent policies that have left investors uncertain about the country's economic prospects. Furthermore, negative perceptions, ineffective communication and recently, a significant emphasis on security concerns have overshadowed Pakistan's potential. To overcome these hurdles, a proactive and strategic approach is essential. Pakistan must develop a coherent economic strategy with long-term goals, continuity and stability.

The concept of competitiveness has evolved and is no longer defined merely by GDP figures. Instead, the emphasis is on delivering 'beyond-GDP goals'. Pakistan holds several competitive advantages, including a young, tech-savvy population and emerging sectors, such as the 'Orange Economy', centred on knowledge and information generation.

Pakistan holds the potential to become the trade and transit hub, positioning itself as a strategic pivot for global commerce. By leveraging its geographical location and enhancing trade, Pakistan can foster regional connectivity and facilitate the seamless movement of goods and services. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and export-oriented industries will further boost its trade capabilities, while digital infrastructure and a skilled workforce will drive innovation and efficiency in trade practices.

Pakistan has recently unveiled the 'Economic Revival Plan', a strategic blueprint that aims to harness the country's potential and elevate its global competitiveness. At the core of this ambitious endeavour lies a strategic focus on key sectors that can attract investments and drive growth. One such pillar is agriculture technologies (agri-tech), which holds the potential to revolutionise the agrarian landscape through modernisation and innovation. By adopting precision agriculture and sustainable practices, Pakistan can ensure food security, boost exports and enhance agricultural productivity.

However, challenges persist in the agricultural sector, with notable gaps between Pakistan's crop yields and international standards for major crops like wheat, rice, sugarcane, maize, gram and cotton. Inefficient irrigation practices, limited use of agri-tech tools, such as fertilisers, pesticides, and advanced seeds, reliance on outdated crop varieties and limited access to credit are some of the factors hindering productivity. The 'Green Pakistan Initiative' aims to transform barren land into fertile ground, fostering increased productivity and revenues. Encouragingly, many Gulf countries have expressed interest in investing, leading the country to aspire for a transformative \$30-50 billion investment boost in the agriculture sector.

Can Pakistan Become a Market of Tomorrow?

Amir Jahangir discusses how Pakistan can transform its inherently rich potential into meaningful economic growth.



Pakistan also holds a unique geo-economic advantage, being in proximity to the world's two most populous countries, China and India. This favourable position opens up opportunities for Pakistan to become the breadbasket of the region. Southern Asia and China combined are home to over 3.5 billion people, constituting nearly 43% of the world's population. The vast potential market size presents a compelling incentive for Pakistan to harness its agricultural capabilities and cater to the growing food demand.

Pakistan embraces the concept of large-scale corporate farming, which offers the prospect of enhanced efficiencies and cost reductions in the long run; there is also growing emphasis on expanding cultivation to address food security challenges. The approach extends beyond simply improving yield benchmarks per hectare and aims to ensure a sustainable supply of food to meet the needs of the population.

On the energy front, Pakistan can take centre stage by harnessing its abundant natural resources. Embracing renewable energy sources like solar, wind and hydroelectric power not only guarantees energy security but also positions the country as a vanguard of sustainable development. Moreover, Pakistan's strategic positioning in the regional energy corridors, with gas and oil supplies from Kazakhstan, Iran, Russia and other Central Asian countries, bolsters its potential to emerge as a net energy exporter to Europe, China and Africa.

Venturing into the digital realm, Pakistan's vibrant tech-savvy population can fuel the rise of digital trade and e-commerce. With a large market eager to embrace digital solutions, the potential for growth in e-commerce platforms and digital trade is immense. By capitalising on this, Pakistan can tap into both domestic and international markets. Young Pakistanis are already making attractive incomes through opportunities on Amazon, Alibaba, Fiver, Upwork and other digital platforms.

Pakistan's youthful population requires accessible and quality education. EdTech initiatives have the potential to democratise education, offering e-learning platforms and skill development programmes. The shift from long-duration degree-based education is transitioning into a more skilled-centric ecosystem. Transformative and generative AI is creating opportunities for people to learn irrespective of the lines of divisions between literacy and illiteracy, language barriers and digital divides. With a population of 240 million plus, it has the potential to create a life-smart, *jugar*-centric (innovation-based) and solution-oriented population.

Pakistan's freelancing market has experienced remarkable growth, with an impressive 78% annual growth rate, making it the fourth fastest-growing country in the world. The Ministry of IT and Telecom has reported that the freelancing market has generated over \$500 million in the last year alone. The country currently boasts an estimated three million freelancers, with graphic designing and web development emerging as the most sought-after skills. Pakistani freelancers are also making their mark in the international arena, earning an average hourly rate of \$20. The majority of these freelancers are under the age of 30, showcasing the potential of Pakistan's youth in driving growth in this sector. The country is also number one on multiple freelancing platforms, such as Upwork, Freelancer, Fiverr – a further testament to how the young generation can be part of the global value and supply chain of technology and of creative responsibilities. This potential is something that governments and the private sector should explore in the Orange Economy.

In fact, Pakistan holds immense potential for the Orange Economy, also known as the 'Creative Economy'. This sector encompasses creative industries, such as arts, culture, media, architecture, design, technology and video games. As creators, Pakistan's talented young can play a pivotal role in driving the

growth and innovation of this sector on the global stage. In fact, the Orange Economy's role in income generation and job creation can contribute about 30 million jobs globally.

In Pakistan, nearly one-third of creative occupations are filled by people under 24, showcasing their significant participation in this sector. With a more strategic focus on local creativity and skills, the creative industries can contribute substantially to GDP and foster sustainable economic growth. However, to unlock this potential, it is essential to expand access to affordable and high-speed internet services, while the local creative industries must focus on producing culturally relevant and diverse content that resonates with the Pakistani audience, while also creating native platforms and indigenous products to benefit local creators. Leveraging digital platforms and social media will empower creators to reach millions of users and foster engaged communities around their content.

Nurturing a supportive ecosystem for start-ups and creative entrepreneurs is equally critical. Initiatives like incubators, accelerators, and co-working spaces will cultivate creativity and innovation, offering access to funding, mentorship and networking opportunities that encourage individuals to turn their creative ideas into sustainable businesses.

To achieve excellence, Pakistan must undertake certain fundamental steps. Firstly, by enhancing accountability to ensure transparency in financial and performance aspects as well as by promoting transparency through open government mechanisms and data-driven policies. Embracing data for policy designs and implementations is crucial. Secondly, by establishing a "Prosperity Council" (promoting reforms and optimising strategic plans for economic resurgence and inclusive growth) with a team of apolitical experts focused on implementing reforms based on professional expertise and knowledge. This approach will foster transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in addressing critical issues.

With innovative thinking and a commitment to growth, Pakistan can become a beacon of opportunity, attracting investments and shaping a vibrant and diverse economy on the global stage. ■

Amir Jahangir is a global competitiveness, risk and development expert. He leads Mishaal Pakistan, the country partner institute of the Centre for the New Economy and Society Platform at the World Economic Forum. aj@mishaal.com.pk

Still Beleaguered

The recent Budget announcement has brought little cheer to an auto industry in crisis, argues Mazhar Mohsin Chinoy.

The ongoing ordeal of Pakistan's automobile industry is no secret, and the unfolding story is little short of a tragedy for an industry that only until recently was endorsed as being among the leaders of Pakistan's economic resurgence.

A growing, young population and a rising middle class with increasing disposable income had provided a welcome boost in the demand for cars. The successful implementation of the five-year Automobile Policy and the focus on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had also promised to create avenues for collaboration with Chinese automakers, bringing advanced technologies and investment to the country. Once dominated by a handful of manufacturers, the sector had seen a surge in investments from new players, a boost in local production and advancements in technology. Pakistan, the 15th largest automobile manufacturer-assembler in the world, was poised to rise even higher and very quickly.

Yet, the promise has effectively fallen flat. In the last year-and-a-half, political upheaval and economic instability have resulted in rampant inflation, a heavily depreciated rupee, stringent import restrictions, production shutdowns and a crash in demand.

● **What Went Wrong?** The dollar ran amok against the Pakistani rupee; the greenback an endangered species fast vanishing from State Bank coffers as well as the open market. As a result, the government clamped down on imports to save what little dollar deposits were left (at an estimate as little as under one billion dollars). With thousands of tonnes of imports stranded at Karachi ports, local industrial production had little to run on, resulting in most of the major auto assemblers shutting down their plants for extended periods of time. Figures by the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA) paint a sad picture. Production declined by nearly 55% in FY 2022-23, with only 101,984 units produced compared to 226,433 assembled in FY 2021-22.

The depreciation of the Pakistani Rupee, which crossed Rs 300 to a dollar at one stage, resulted in astronomically high prices for all vehicles – from passenger cars to trucks and motorcycles, inevitably leading to stagnant demand. Making matters worse, further economic tremors discouraged new local and foreign investment. The inflation that ran wild nearly barricaded all classes (save the elite) from any type of car



purchase. The current mark-up rates of 23% have been the highest ever in Pakistan's financial history, and reflect the gravity of the economic situation. Not surprisingly, passenger car sales have taken a severe thrashing. In FY 2022-23, only 126,879 units were sold, compared to 279,267 units that were sold in FY 2021-22 – a decline of nearly 60%.

● **The Budget.** The industry, therefore, hoped to see some light at the end of the tunnel in the budget announcement, albeit without holding out much hope. Industry worries hovered around a raft of possible taxation jack-ups across the usual suspects – advance income tax, capital value tax, customs duty on new cars and withholding tax based on the invoice price.

Fortunately, when the budget was finally rolled out, none of these salvos were fired, at least not on the surface. But it was not good news for cars with engine capacities of 2000cc and above. The new policy indicated that a fixed tax of six percent will be imposed on the value of vehicles with engine capacities from 2001cc to 2500cc. Vehicles with engine capacities from 2501cc to 3000cc will be taxed at eight percent of their value. Cars with engine power exceeding 3000cc will be subject to a 10% tax based on their value.

It is interesting to note the way the value of the cars will be ascertained. The Customs Department will be tasked to evaluate the authentic import value of such cars, which will then be used to calculate the applicable customs duty, federal excise duty (FED) and sales tax. For completely built-up (CBU)

and locally assembled cars, with engine capacities above 2001cc, the total invoice value (inclusive of all taxes and duties) will be used to impose the fixed tax regime for all three categories of passenger cars respectively. This step has effectively increased the price of passenger cars in these categories from Rs 300,000 to Rs 1.7 million at a single stroke and is already reflected in passenger car prices in July 2023.

Moreover, a flat 35% customs duty has been imposed on the import of specified car components. In this respect, industry commentators believe that they should have been adapted across different parts, given their critical nature and importance in the overall functioning of the vehicle. By adopting a flat rate for parts as varied as bumpers, spare tyres, suspension and brake components, protective strips, and luggage compartments, the government is stonewalling assemblers already struggling to keep their costs of production down.

Despite the prevailing doomsday scenario, the elite class is apparently unaffected. In the month of June 2023 alone, 1,159 cars worth \$20 million were imported. This is primarily because of a suspected recent change in the policy, which now apparently allows such imports based on the assessed value of the vehicles (opening the door for 'under-invoicing' practices) and not on the engine capacity as was the case earlier. This will mean more imports in the coming months. Such double standards built into a policy are suicidal and hardly beneficial for the industry in general.

● **Silver Lining.** Perhaps the only policy positive in the budget is permitting the import of fully assembled hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs) at a one percent duty rate. Similarly, the import of HEV components will be allowed at a four percent duty rate, provided they meet certification and import quota requirements. Another bit of happy news is that Pakistan is making small dents in the export market for parts, with Toyota Pakistan signing a memorandum with Toyota Egypt to export locally-made parts.

● **What next?** Although no new taxes were levied on regular car categories, the budget has not given any policy direction on the critical issue of importing completely knocked down (CKD) kits without permission from the State Bank of Pakistan. This dilly-dallying over the last one year has been one of the main reasons why auto manufacturers are continuing to shut down their plants, triggering unemployment, disinvestment and plummeting revenues, both for the industry and the government. Industry analysts believe that the federal government has not taken any steps to address the issues of the core automobile industry and given the IMF conditionalities, the unfortunate assessment is that the industry will remain stagnant for many more months to come. ■

Mazhar M. Chinoy has led the marketing services function for a leading multinational automobile company and is currently a director at LUMS. mm_chinoy@hotmail.com

Stretching the Basket

Fatima S. Attarwala examines how price increases are changing what goes into the average grocery basket.



A hot cup of tea, a few slices of toasted bread and an omelette is a ubiquitous breakfast that graces dining tables across Pakistan's socio-economic strata. Yet, inflation has pushed up the price of this rather humble fare by 34% and up to Rs 124, this year. This is considering the fact that according to estimates by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), eggs are now purchased for Rs 260 per dozen, although one would be hard pressed to find such reasonable rates in any supermarket or *khokha* in Karachi. Even using PBS's conservative estimates, for a family of four, the price of breakfast has been jacked up by roughly Rs 4,000 a month, a substantial amount for people whose family incomes have not increased at the same pace as the rate of inflation. So how has the monthly grocery basket changed for households trying to stretch incomes to meet expenses?

● Consuming less for more: "Volumes have dropped across the industry as purchases have declined, yet in terms of value, purchases have increased because inflation has pushed the prices up," says a contact in the FMCG industry. According to him, in broad terms, the volume has dropped 10% to 20% across categories.

Companies follow one of two strategies. Either they try to keep the volume intact by decreasing weight or keep the value (the revenue earned from the sale of a single product unit) intact, by increasing the price and keeping the weight the same. For example, a premium one kilo pack of washing powder sold for Rs 500 last year can either be sold for Rs 550 for one kilo, in which case the grammage remains the same, or the price stays at Rs 500, but the weight decreases to 900 grams.

Think Cocomo. A mother gives a child Rs 10 to buy a snack from the *kiryana* store. As the cost of production rises, the number of biscuits in a five rupees Cocomo packet decreases from five to four. If the price were to increase to six rupees for five biscuits, the shopkeeper would then have to

return four rupees in coins – never a popular option owing to the awkwardness of the transaction. And the child who could previously buy two packs of goodies for Rs 10, will now have one packet of Cocomo and loose change. But as no self-respecting child would have one of something when he can have two of something else, hence the decrease in the number of biscuits for the previous price of five rupees.

With inflation skyrocketing, companies follow both strategies simultaneously, meaning consumers pay more for less. This dictates consumer behaviour in one of two ways. Either they downsize on consumption by continuing to purchase the 900-gramme pack and making it stretch or they buy a cheaper brand.

In terms of non-essentials, purchases have fallen significantly. "Recently, the price ticket of the biscuit category has increased from five rupees to 10, hitting volumes significantly, especially in smaller towns, particularly in interior Sindh," says the CEO of Premier Sales, Rafique Jackwani.

● Switching brands, not stores: If consumers do not have money in their pockets, sales start to dip. This affects the shopkeeper's purchasing power and lowers his inventory levels which in turn impacts general trade. So if your neighbourhood shop keeps running out of your favourite chips, it may be because the shopkeeper is purchasing 100 packets of chips rather than the 150 he used to previously. Nevertheless, even if the volume of trade in supermarkets decreases, consumers are not hopping away from their preferred place to buy their monthly groceries; the convenience and comfort of knowing where to park and which aisle to find the shampoo in induces people to stick to the tried and tested, and if a brand or product is missing, they prefer to opt for another SKU or brand rather than change where they shop. However, if a store is consistently running out of favoured brands, customers are likely to start shopping

elsewhere. Hence, shopkeepers maintain a minimum inventory of popular brands to prevent losing regular customers.

Supermarkets' volumes correspond to 15 to 20% of a product's sales and the rest comes from general trade and includes pharmacies, wholesalers, *khokhas*, and small mom-and-pop stores. These are the local neighbourhood shops where the husband stops by on his way home to pick up the day's groceries, as requested by the wife. Furthermore, the small stores are important for the lower end of the socio-economic ladder because they extend credit and facilitate purchases of smaller quantities in loose form, allowing consumers to spend as and when required.

● Local or Irani? According to Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, Chairman, The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and owner of the supermarket chain Al-Fatah, Iranian goods are being smuggled under the guise of barter trade and flooding the market, although the competition is mostly in confectioneries. Furthermore, the presence of Iranian goods is more marked in Karachi owing to the logistic challenge of transportation that pushes prices up, making them less competitive. Iranian goods are also more readily available in retail trade than in supermarkets.

In Tier II cities, local players have become more active. They are small setups, often operating out of home or tiny workshops and provide cheaper alternatives to name brands by evading taxes and sourcing raw materials locally. The quality difference is offset by price differences. In these cities, bulky products tend to be dominated by localised players as their weight increases transportation costs. Tea is a common example, with many local manufacturers setting up their own blends which they sell within the city and its outskirts. Transporting further afield would be too expensive and would erode the lower price point, their only competitive

edge. Counterfeit products are another popular option; for example, there are a lot of fake copies of Sooper, with different spellings and similar packaging.

● Deals and Discounts Online:

"We buy diapers from Daraz because our card offers us discounts," says a father from a relatively well-to-do family. Clearly, the ease and savings that come with e-commerce have made many families shop for groceries online, if only partially.

Over the last six months, Daraz's grocery category has seen a jump of 82% in orders, says Muhammad Ammar Hassan, Chief Marketing Officer, Daraz Pakistan. The e-commerce giant is offering discounts on bank cards in partnership with top banks/wallets, with an additional 10% off. Since free shipping is triggered above a certain order value, bulk orders are made to increase the cart value for discounts, and in March, Daraz recorded its highest average order value, as consumers stocked up pre-Ramzan. Another insight shared by Hassan is that Daraz users are attracted not only to price-offs but also to value in quantity. So, 1+1 or cross-sell bundle offers (tea tagged with tea whiteners) are often in the user cart.

The rise of local brands is also seen on the e-commerce platform. Instead of lavish purchases of imported brands (snacks, pet foods, cosmetics and diapers), consumers are opting for home-grown labels. For example, top-performing local beauty brands on Daraz have seen a six-time increase.

Another change is the increase in the purchase of perishables online. The majority of fruit and vegetables sold in the city are sold by middlemen sourcing the items from the Main Sabzi Mandi. Daraz initiated its fresh segment by directly working with suppliers from the *mandi*, removing margins and reducing costs, which is evident in the strong 50% repurchase rate in the Daraz Fresh segment. ■

Fatima S. Attarwala heads Dawn's Business & Finance desk. fatima.attarwala@dawn.com

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They Made It To Cannes — and Won

Aurora sounds out the three creative winners who won it for Pakistan.

Pakistan shined – and shined brightly at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

Ali Rez (Chief Creative Officer, Impact BBDO), was the first – in the 70 years of the Festival's history – creative from Pakistan and the MENA region to have been selected as Jury President. BBDO Pakistan led by Atiya Zaidi, MD & ECD, BBDO Pakistan won the Glass: The Lion for Change Gold Award for their 'Schoolgirls Newscasters for EBM' campaign.

And then three Adcom Leo Burnett advertising professionals won their own accolades. They are Raaj Kheraj, Senior Manager, Digital & User Experience and Ezza Syed, Creative Manager; they won the Silver Medal at the Young Lions Competition, while Sameer Ali, Assistant Creative Director became the first Pakistani to graduate from the Young Lions Academy and was one of only 10 individuals to have been selected for a scholarship to the Creative Academy. Here is what they have to say about their experiences in Cannes; the hardest and easiest aspects of competing; the insights they took home, the personal traits that helped them achieve success and the advice they would offer to young Pakistani creatives ambitious to make their mark.

Sameer Ali: Associate Creative Director, Adcom Leo Burnett



"Cannes Lions was truly a life-changing experience. Connecting with creatives from around the world with different backgrounds but with a common passion for creativity through which we all could connect, was unbelievable. I was lucky to be a part of a cohort where we were able to form lifelong bonds in just eight days.

"The best part was to see the creativity of an industry celebrated. As advertisers and creatives, we get very few opportunities to be celebrated, and to have a platform that recognises and celebrates creativity is a huge motivation to keep going. What appealed to me the least was the visa process; it is jarring and a morale sapper that takes away from the initial excitement of the experience. Pakistanis are not lagging behind anyone when it comes

to creativity and ideation. Getting to know the cultures of other countries; it was a real eye-opener to see how much we have in common. I think what helped most get this far in Cannes was my curiosity.

"My message to young creatives is: 'Don't undermine yourself. Take the necessary step forward. The world stage is waiting for you to conquer it.'"

Raaj Kheraj: Senior Manager, Digital & User Experience, Adcom Leo Burnett



"Oh boy, being 24 and in Cannes was like stepping into a marketing dreamland. It took a while for my brain to process the fact that I was sitting in the same room as industry legends. But once I did, the whole week was a rollercoaster of excitement where creativity was on steroids and the possibilities felt endless. Making friends was the easiest, especially with the Indian team. I gained more followers in a week than ever before. I loved the inclusivity; whether an industry giant or a newcomer, everyone was treated equally. The hardest part was time scheduling. So much was happening every day, with events overlapping. Keeping track and choosing what to attend was the most challenging aspect.

"What appealed to me the least were the exclusive parties I couldn't enter, leading to some FOMO. However, every day felt like a party at Cannes, so I didn't miss out on the fun.

"I learned so many things in Cannes, I could fill an entire issue of *Aurora*. But two insights stuck with me: 'With a good insight, the ridiculous can quickly become revolutionary' and 'Infuse trauma-informed creativity, rather than infusing traumas into your creativity.' These concepts challenged my perspective and showed the power of unconventional thinking and empathetic creativity.

"Keeping it simple was key to our success in both the national and international competitions. We focused on the simplest insight and paired it with a straightforward idea. We believed this approach could make or break our chances, and it ultimately led to our victory.

"My message to young Pakistani creatives is that you've got this! Believe in yourself like a superhero with an extra dose of swag.

Trust in your talent, work hard and stay determined. Don't let doubts or setbacks discourage you. Keep pushing forward, embrace challenges, and let your creativity shine. Your mark is waiting to be made, so go out there and make it happen!"

Ezza Syed: Creative Manager, Adcom Leo Burnett



"I am going to write something so cliché that I am going to cringe a little as I type this, but the Cannes Creativity Festival was unlike anything I have ever experienced before. Everywhere I turned, there was something begging to become a muse for my next big idea (it may never see the light of day but I think it's nice to mention that I was inspired by everything and everyone!)

"The pressure to deliver something extraordinary but yet simple and effective in the most competitive category of the Festival pushed me to explore my own creativity and give my best. The easiest part was reaching out for help. Cannes was a wellspring of collaboration and although we were supposed to be competing, people were ready to help. I loved the fact that diversity was celebrated, embraced and accepted. Amidst the sea of creatives from all over the world, we realised that there were only eight Pakistanis present, making us aware that we might still be years away from having dozens of us experiencing this incredible festival that celebrates creatives. Having said this, regardless of where you come from or the language you speak, there is an audience for your idea. No matter how unique or unconventional, there is a brand waiting to embrace and bring your idea to life.

"We see being competitive as an evil but embracing my competitive nature allowed me to channel my energy into delivering my best work, and ultimately played a significant role in my success there.

"Ambitious young Pakistani creatives please remember this: you are extraordinary and the advertising world needs your unique humour and spark. Always have a never-give-up attitude. Believe in yourself, never underestimate your capabilities, and let your creativity shine." ■

Living, Not Just Loving the Brand

Gen Z will not respond to traditional advertising – you have to make them inhabit your brand, argues Sumaira Mirza.

There is no question about it, Gen Z are built differently (although the definition of who qualifies as Gen Z varies, depending on whom you ask – if you ask me, it would be anyone who has never had to rewind a VHS).

They have grown up in a post-internet generation and in an increasingly virtual world; their attention span is short and they have an aversion to 'being sold to', making it all the more important to understand how to market to them. Yet, contrary to popular belief, they do like ads, but only certain kinds. We like to call them 'wanted ads' because Gen Z actually want to see them. *Adweek* has called them "the next consumer powerhouse" and all the signs point to the fact that this 22-and-under cohort is poised to wield more than 40% of all consumer spending by 2020.

Wherever your brand is currently at in engaging with this generation, you can learn much from the way certain food-related brands are reaching out to them (and their stomachs) by building shared social experiences both online and offline – and the trick is to deliver experiences that demonstrate both empathy and utility through immediacy, personalisation, security and entertainment. Brands have to be ready to present their products as live experiences in order to make this generation feel they are getting more than just a transaction. The experience must also be share-worthy.

According to a report on CNN, 61% of teens said they check social media frequently, even obsessively, to see the likes and comments their posts are getting – a behaviour that stems from their focus on inclusion, with 36% saying they wanted to see whether their friends were doing stuff without them.

Highly influenced by the online landscape, brands need to offer Gen Z the opportunity to interact with them in real life and share something cool on social media to document their experience forever. Here are some ways to do it.

Liquid Death



This canned water company known for "murdering your thirst," became one of the latest crazes in capturing global attention, and like Seth Godin's purple cow, it was Liquid Death's distinctiveness that sparked curiosity – a fundamental ingredient for successful marketing.

What began as a single marketing campaign turned the brand into more than just a water company. Liquid Death evolved into a marketing movement based on the fact that it uses cans and not plastic to bottle their water, but in doing so they adopted a stance that was fun and not preachy. In this way, the brand was able to explore multiple revenue streams each proving remarkably successful in the market. It swiftly garnered a devoted fan base through effective marketing and social media strategies, particularly on platforms like TikTok. Recognising the pivotal role of their fan base in their success, Liquid Death strategically nurtured it through various initiatives. For example, the Liquid Death Country Club is a membership programme that grants paying patrons exclusive access to merchandise and live events. There is also the Liquid Death NFT, a non-fungible token and cryptographic asset on a blockchain, featuring unique identification codes and metadata, while the innovative Liquid Death Metal Album ingeniously transforms negative reviews into death metal lyrics called *Greatest Hates*; the album's success even led to the release of a second punk-rock version shortly after.

By harnessing the power of their online audience, Liquid Death has not only become an industry leader, it has established a path where it can continue to scale at an impressive rate.

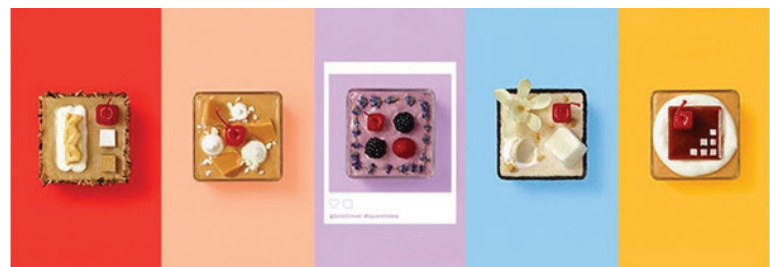
The Museum of Ice Cream



This is another prime example of the power of experiential marketing. Originally a summer pop-up in 2016, the Museum now boasts four permanent locations in Miami, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco – for Gen Z, it is not just about the taste; it's about living the taste.

Vivid installations, drawing inspiration from ice cream, grace each of these museums, boasting pools of sprinkles, gummy bear gardens and suspended whipped cream clouds. The enchantment, however, resides in the interactions visitors can experience and the picture-perfect ambience that entices Gen Z to eagerly share their moments on social media. The museum's success owes a great deal to its strategic incorporation of social media, making it a pivotal element of their marketing and capitalising on platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram. The Museum's success has largely been organic, with little investment in traditional advertising or marketing efforts and proves the power of creating immersive and shareable experiences that resonate with audiences.

Sonic's Square-Shaped Creamer Shakes



Tight on time or budget? How about tapping and integrating your brand into an existing space? Look for experiences that naturally align with your brand's product and values. In doing so, you can instantly add an experiential and relevant layer to your marketing efforts – which is exactly what Sonic did with their Sonic's Coachella 2018 promotion.

Collaborating with chef Christine Flynn, the restaurant chain introduced deconstructed, square shakes exclusively available at Coachella, crafted with Instagram in mind. Sonic launched the promotion with Instagram ads targeted to Coachella attendees and brought together the best of social media engagement, on-demand services, refreshing snacks and event integration.

The only ask here is to be at the right place at the right time, which is why understanding the values, behaviours and preferences of Gen Z is so important. By embracing their values, respecting their privacy, championing diversity and equality, and actively engaging through their preferred communication channels, brands can successfully forge authentic connections and capture the attention of this influential generation. As connections are of the utmost importance, they look at brands that foster unity, and work towards common goals, all the while expecting brands to forge profound and meaningful connections with them. ■

Sumaira Mirza is Creative Director, Ogilvy Pakistan. sumaira.mirza@ogilvy.com

Cut the Rap, They've Won Cannes

Pakistani creatives have so much relevant inspiration to draw from at home, so what's with the rap frenzy that is seizing our advertising, wonders Ad Mad Dude.



Ladies and gentlemen, fasten your seat belts and prepare for an exhilarating journey into the colourful realm of Pakistani advertising, where creativity reigns supreme and sometimes, it can be as unpredictable as a distant relative visiting from out of town!

Imagine a world where “NOT OUT OF THE BOX ORDINARY ADS” roamed freely, each one vying to outshine the other with their rather conventional yet fancy ideas, catchy jingles and glamorous locales. Dashing men selling everything from colas to telecommunication services, and graceful ladies endorsing oil, soap and shampoo. It felt like a delightful *masala* mix, with the same ingredients sprinkled on different dishes!

But, as fate would have it, a revolution was brewing in the underground music scene of Pakistan. The infectious beats of rap music began captivating the hearts of the young and audacious, spreading like wildfire from the narrow alleys of Lahore to the bustling streets of Karachi, eventually permeating the mainstream like a force of nature.

Then, like a torrential downpour during the monsoon season, the industry hopped on the rap bandwagon. Suddenly, there was a deluge of rap-infused ads everywhere you looked. Telco – RAP. Cola – RAP. Car – RAP. Even the venerable *niswar* brand and Hashmi Surma – yes, you guessed it – RAP!

It seems the marketers must have thought, “Hey, everyone’s into rap, right? Let’s toss in some

neon lights, cool boyzzz, and girlzzz dancing with a dash of *latkas* and *jhatkas*, and *voilà*, we’ve got ourselves a ‘super creative’ ad!” It was as if they were on a quest to unlock the secret recipe for a viral rap ad, only to end up with an army of clones, all singing the same tune.

One can’t help but wonder if they even considered the appropriateness of rap for every product. Picture this: a grandfather purchasing his favourite brand of *surma* while a rap song blares in the background, “Yo, yo, yo, Hashmi Surma, it’s the way to go, man!” It’s as peculiar as blending *paan masala* with *gulab jamuns* – a combination that might make our ancestors turn in their graves but still appeals to a brand manager.

Now, you might assume that the advertising wizards had a grand strategy behind this madness. Alas, brace yourself for a reality check – it seems they tossed the concept of strategy out the window and embraced a foolproof plan: Open YouTube > Find a new rap song > Insert brand name. Ta-da! A ready-made ad, akin to instant noodles, but with significantly less flavour.

And let’s not forget the ‘intellectual gymnastics’ they boast about – showering money bags at EVERYTHING. Like confetti at a wedding, they douse their ads with money, hoping it will magically transform into a masterpiece. Newsflash: crafting a memorable ad requires more than just rupee notes.

However, amidst this rap frenzy, let’s not lose sight of Pakistan’s creative prowess on the global stage. We recently won the prestigious Cannes Glass Lion, proving that we have the potential to shine amongst the world’s finest. It’s time to remind ourselves that genuine creativity knows no boundaries, and with a sprinkle of strategic brilliance, our ads can command the world’s attention.

So, my fellow advertising adventurers, let’s take a step back, put our dancing shoes aside, and focus on crafting ads that speak to the heart, not just the feet. Let’s draw inspiration from the diverse tapestry of Pakistan, akin to discovering a hidden gem in the bustling bazaars of Peshawar.

Let’s embrace our uniqueness and showcase it to the world – ads that resonate with our people and leave a lasting impression. It’s time to break free from the chains of repetition and embrace the beautiful chaos that makes Pakistan’s advertising truly one of a kind.

As we navigate this quirky world of Pakistani advertising, let’s remember that a successful ad isn’t just about throwing in a rap track and a bunch of flashy visuals. No, no, no! It’s about understanding the soul of the product, the heartbeat of the audience and finding that magical connection that leaves an indelible mark on their minds.

So, dear marketers, before you jump onto the rap bandwagon faster than a rickshaw on a Karachi street, pause for a moment of reflection. Ask

yourself, “Does rap truly complement the essence of our product? Will it resonate with our target audience beyond the fleeting trendiness?”

There’s a whole pot-pourri of creative potential waiting to be explored in the diverse cultural landscape of Pakistan. Why limit ourselves to a one-size-fits-all approach? Let’s dive into the rich heritage of classical music, the mesmerising allure of traditional dance and the poetic charm of Urdu literature. Embracing these elements doesn’t mean we’re stuck in the past; rather, we are weaving a tapestry that marries the timeless with the contemporary.

As we embark on this creative odyssey, let’s keep pushing the boundaries, challenging conventions, and celebrating the true spirit of Pakistani advertising. Together, we can create a symphony of marketing brilliance that captures not only the attention but the hearts of our audiences, both at home and abroad.

In conclusion, let’s be the trailblazers of advertising innovation, the trendsetters of artistic expression, and the champions of creativity. So, raise your *chai* cups to reset a memorable chapter in Pakistani advertising history and let’s restart a new era that brims with imagination, uniqueness and a touch of the good ol’ Pakistani flair! Cheers!*

Ad Mad Dude runs a Facebook page called Ad Mad Dude. admaddude@gmail.com

or rewards do not solely drive innovation. Instead, he suggests that innovation arises from creating environments or situations that foster the association and connection between different ideas. He argues that when we examine historical examples of innovation, it becomes apparent that breakthrough ideas often emerge when different concepts and knowledge intersect, leading to new insights and discoveries.

Secondly, another subset of environmental influences on creativity is environmental mindfulness, which enables one to comprehend the opinions and technologies that might be used to solve a problem. One can refer to this trait as 'imagination,' whereby one's comprehension of the surrounding technology and concepts influences one's perception that something is possible (or not).

Thirdly, another environmental deconstruction acknowledges failure as an influence on creativity. A hospital would not be conducive to failure, whereas a classroom would present the ideal opportunity. The priority in a hospital is providing immediate healthcare and failure can have serious repercussions and consequently, due to the high stakes involved, limited time or resources may be allocated for reflection, analysis and learning from failures. The focus is on preventing errors and minimising risks to the patient. A classroom, however, will often encourage students to experiment, explore and learn from their mistakes. Students perceive failure as an opportunity for growth and improvement and they are encouraged to take risks and learn from the consequences of their actions. By embracing experimentation, individuals are more likely to step outside their comfort zones, take risks and try new things. This mindset allows for the understanding that failures can provide insights and learning experiences. When someone is willing to experiment and potentially fail, they can discover new and unexpected paths, challenge conventional thinking and unlock their creative potential. When faced with a problem or seeking creative solutions, one can explore various possibilities, ideas, or strategies. It is about being open-minded and adventurous in exploring different avenues, even if they involve uncertainty or the possibility of failure.

These three elements significantly impact creativity if one is not feeling creative today or is merely interested in how to be more effectively creative.

It is frequently deliberated that someone is very creative because he or she is a talented vocalist, dancer, painter or musician. People commonly recognise that creativity depends on a specific ability. In fact, creativity is not dependent on a single talent but rather on a combination of cognitive and behavioural abilities.

Typical creativity related to skills (such as divergent thinking for example) generates a variety



of ideas or approaches to a problem. It entails departing from conventional thought and investigating novel and uncommon possibilities. Associative thinking is the ability to connect seemingly unrelated ideas or concepts. It involves using metaphor and analogy to generate new insights and perspectives. Similarly, flexibility is the ability to adapt and change course as needed and originality requires the ability to generate ideas that are new and unique. It involves avoiding clichés and conventional thinking and coming up with innovative ideas. Persistence is an important factor in this regard, and it is the ability to stick with an idea or project despite setbacks and obstacles. It involves being resilient and persevering through challenges to achieve creative goals.

Many creative people possess a combination of these skills, as they are not mutually exclusive. Creativity can be cultivated and nurtured through exposure to new ideas and experiences and practice.

But still, what really influences creativity?

Creativity is influenced by a variety of factors, not just one factor; e.g. creativity often builds on existing knowledge and expertise. People who have a deep understanding of a subject are more likely to generate creative ideas in that area. The work environment can have a significant impact on creativity. For instance, a cluttered and noisy workspace can be distracting and inhibit creativity, whereas a calm and organised one can foster creativity. People are open to new experiences. They are willing to explore different perspectives and take risks, which can lead to innovative ideas. Brainstorming can be a great way to generate new ideas and perspectives. Collaboration with people from diverse backgrounds can also bring fresh perspectives and lead to innovative solutions. Passion for a topic or an issue is frequently the source of creativity. People are more likely to generate creative ideas when they want to solve a problem or create something new. A mindset that emphasises the belief that hard work and perseverance can develop abilities and intellect can increase creativity. This mindset encourages experimentation, failure-based learning, and perseverance.

Creativity is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by numerous factors. By grasping

these factors, individuals and organisations can create environments and conditions that foster creativity and innovation. Creativity entails many intricate cognitive and behavioural processes that interact with one another.

We regard creativity as a complex phenomenon for several reasons because creativity is not localised to one specific area of the brain. Instead, it involves multiple brain regions, including the prefrontal cortex, the temporal lobes, and the parietal lobes. These regions work together in complex ways to generate and evaluate creative ideas.

Creativity often involves combining and integrating different types of knowledge and information from different domains. This requires the ability to see connections between seemingly disparate ideas and to think flexibly. Creativity is highly context-dependent and can

vary based on the situation and the individual. What is deemed creative in one context may not be deemed so in another, and what is effective for one individual may not be effective for another. Mood, motivation, social norms and cultural values are just a few of the internal and external factors influencing creativity. It is difficult to predict when and how creative ideas will emerge due to the complex interactions between these variables.

Creativity is not a linear process that can be easily replicated or predicted. Instead, it is often a non-linear and unpredictable process that involves moments of insight and sudden breakthroughs. Creativity can be difficult to measure and evaluate objectively. There is no standardised test or metric that can accurately capture the multifaceted nature of creativity.

Creativity is very difficult to measure objectively because it often involves subjective judgments about novelty, usefulness and originality.

More so, it can be difficult to replicate because it often involves moments of insight and sudden breakthroughs that are difficult to predict or control.

Yet, despite these challenges, researchers continue to study creativity and develop new methods for measuring and fostering it. ■

*Arshad Awan is an author, brand strategist and educationist.
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A Few of my Favo

By
Seema
Jaffer

Amazon – Alexa Loses Her Voice

Agency: Lucky Generals, London

One of the top viewed ads on YouTube for 2022 with over 50 million views, 'Alexa Loses Her Voice' promotes Amazon's virtual assistant Alexa. The video depicts a concerned Jeff Bezos being reassured at the Amazon HQ that the situation is under control and stand-ins are ready to replace Alexa. However, the star-studded stand-ins, which include Gordon Ramsay, Cardi B, Rebel Wilson and Sir Anthony Hopkins fail hilariously to replace Alexa. The ad is clever and uses star power brilliantly to drive home the point.



OLX – No Khwari, No Lara, OLX Pe Ao Na Yara!

Agency: In-house

A fun campaign that strikes all the right chords, showcasing 'No Khwari, No Lara, OLX Pe Ao Na Yara'. The campaign taps into the lives of a young couple brilliantly played by Sanam Saeed and Fawad Khan. A series of humorous situations that end up with OLX as being the right answer to all their troubles makes for memorable and engaging advertising. A punchy script, great direction and a catchy soundtrack. The campaign makes us laugh, builds affinity and resonates with the target audience. With all the doom and gloom surrounding us, this is humour done right. Would love to see more of the same.



Lifebuoy & Ministry of Human Rights Partnership – Tum Mazboot Ho

Agency: Ogilvy Pakistan & the European Union (funded by the Huqooq-e-Pakistan Project)

This is a campaign close to my heart whereby we were successful in building a partnership between Lifebuoy and the Ministry of Human Rights to inspire women to raise stronger daughters and fight domestic violence. The campaign not only raised awareness about domestic violence, it also created awareness about the Ministry of Human Rights' free, nationwide helpline '1099' for help against domestic abuse. The campaign is a testament to the importance of partnerships between business and government to create true change.



Nike – Dream Crazier

Agency: Weiden + Kennedy

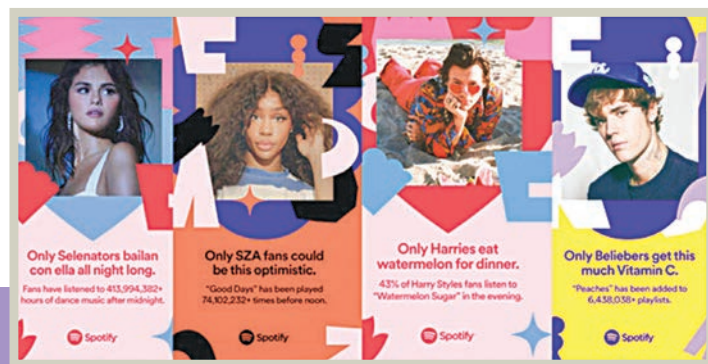
The 'Dream Crazier' campaign, saluting women athletes and narrated by Serena Williams is one of my all-time favourites. There was no better choice than Serena, who, despite being the top-ranking tennis athlete in the world, faced an immense backlash because of her argument with the umpire; something that male tennis athletes have got away with since forever. The ad cuts to the heart of the double standards women have to battle to succeed. The campaign also demonstrates what the Nike brand stands for. "A woman running a marathon was crazy. A woman boxing was crazy. A woman dunking? Crazy. Coaching an NBA team? Crazy. A woman competing in a *hijab*, changing her sport, landing a Double Cork 1080, or winning 23 Grand Slams, having a baby, and coming back for more? Crazy. Crazy. Crazy. Crazy. And Crazy. So if they want to call you crazy? Fine. Show them what crazy can do." It's only crazy until you do it. Just do it.

write Things



Bank AL Habib – AL Habib Woman

Agency: Bond Advertising
Pakistan stands at the low end of the financial inclusion spectrum with an extremely wide gender gap. Only 13% of women hold bank accounts. The AL Habib Woman campaign is a much-needed push for gender inclusion in the financial world. AL Habib Woman is a testament to the strength and resilience of women. The campaign showcases women from diverse backgrounds linking banking to empowerment and financial security. Syra Yousuf, a strong, empowered woman, ticks all the boxes as the brand ambassador. By breaking stereotypes, the campaign promotes a more inclusive and empowering future for women in Pakistan. And I am all for that!



Spotify – Only You

Agency: In-house
I am a real fan of Spotify and their ability to demonstrate how every one of their 356 million listeners is unique and distinctive. Their campaign 'Only You' does just that through data-driven creatives that hone in on the unique traits and idiosyncrasies that define Spotify listeners. Spotify continues to give us more of what we want by focusing on the individual. The power of personalisation.



EBM: Schoolgirl Newscasters

Agency: BBDO Pakistan
EBM's campaign for girls' education 'Schoolgirl Newscasters' resonated deeply with me. To see young girls who could barely read or write three years ago as confident, articulate newscasters on mainstream news channels was not only heart-warming, it drove home the point of how important it is to push the agenda for girls' education. In a country where the literacy rate for girls lags woefully behind their male counterparts, the campaign was an important advocate, highlighting this critical issue and changing the narrative.



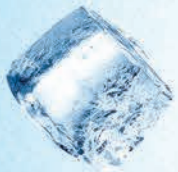
Coke Studio – Season 14

Agency: In-house
Coke Studio, the music platform we have all grown to love, is a great example of how the brand has integrated music as part of its DNA and embedded itself into pop culture with an appeal that cuts across gender, age, socio economic and language barriers. After multiple seasons one would have thought that things may get a little boring, but *Coke Studio* Season 14 knocked it right out of the park. From *Pasoori* to *Peechay Hut*, from *Thagaya* to *Tu Jhoom*, *Coke Studio* had the nation and beyond swaying to its beat. I for one am singing their tune. ■



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*Household Panel Foresight Research - Pakistan

Duty Matters

Julian Saunders discusses why brands need to focus on their duty to their customers, rather than touting their purpose.

One of the things I loved when I was an account planner* was getting out of the office to meet people face-to-face. I enjoyed going into peoples' homes, rooting around in their cupboards, seeing what they pin to their walls and where they shop. I liked to do 'assisted shopping' – there is no better way to understand the trade-off parents have to make on a limited budget than going shopping with them and chatting about their choices.

Data too is a rich source of insight for planners, and there is much more of it available now, and it is also more accessible. At Google Trends you can conduct your own 'sentiment analysis' for free. The growing popularity of search terms such as 'cost of living crisis' and 'energy costs' indicates what people are worried about. Survival, getting by, affording the children's clothes as well as food and energy bills.

As a former Googler, I love data too, but it has a big weakness. It cannot tell you how people really feel. If you just rely on what people type (or bark) into their smartphones, you will miss a gamut of human emotions and feelings that you can only intuit by seeing faces and places. What people do not say is as important as what they do – and it is not captured by search analysis.

My personal view is that ad agencies lost confidence in the face of powerful big data platforms like Google, Facebook and Amazon. Qualitative research, once a vital tool in developing great creative became unfashionable and click-through rates (data) became the all-important measure. So, it's good to see some agencies recovering their mojo. I recently attended an excellent debrief by Saatchi and Saatchi (hosted by the UK APG), with the clickbaity title of 'What the **** is going on?' (I have taken out the f word as I know *Aurora* is a family publication).

The debrief covered how people really felt about the cost of living crisis based on in-depth 'ethnographic' research. They summed up the big themes thus: we are in a living nightmare; no one is in control; we are going backwards; we live in a dog-eat-dog country; society is increasingly divided; pride is slipping away; the system is rigged against us and there have been too many false hopes.

Granted, this is an in-depth UK study, but I suspect that similar themes will be uncovered in many countries. Is this how many Pakistanis feel? It may be interesting to replicate Saatchi and Saatchi's methodology.

A failure to understand how people really feel can be dangerous for brands. It can lead to tone-deaf, cloth-eared communication. It lies behind the backlash against woke advertising, or what I call 'Higher Purpose Branding' (see *How Lofty is your Brand*, *Aurora* May-June

more. The campaign was practical – Ariel packs carried 'his and hers' calendars and relevant, coming from a product that cleans clothes. I have no doubt that the teams behind these higher-purpose campaigns believe sincerely they are doing the right thing. Most of us like to think we are good and can do good in the world.

But at its worst, Higher Purpose Branding can be perceived as narcissism; 'Love my brand, love my values' seemed to be the effective idea behind it. The brand tells people what it cares about and by implication

get caught in the crosshairs of culture wars. Bud Lite is a blue-collar mass-market brand, and it seems to have lost sight of that most basic of marketing principles – always find out what your customers think and feel.

It's not difficult to avoid Bud Lite's mistake. Spend less time talking to well-meaning folk who agree with you. Or just ask your account planner to do some 'qual' among your customers. To be clear, I am not saying you should pander to people's least noble instincts. I am saying that nobody likes to be talked down to by comfortably off-university-educated types who are just a little too pleased with themselves (in my experience, the most generous and community-minded people tend to have the least wealth).

There is a shift in consumer sentiment that brands ignore at their peril. In the future, it will be wiser to think about your brand's duties rather than its higher purpose. A duty is something you perform for others. It is less egotistical, more outward-looking, and more likely to win customer approval because it will be rooted in what they care about.

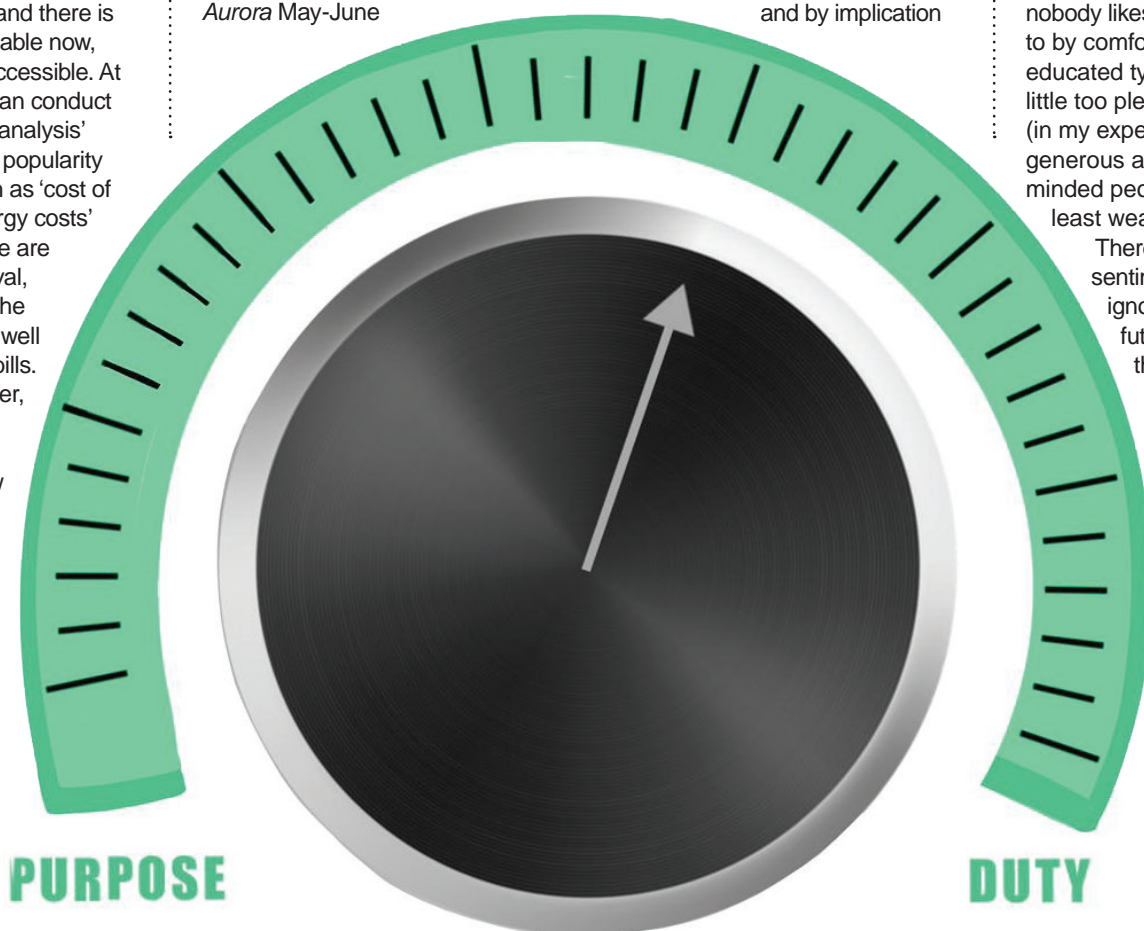
Duty is an old-fashioned word and marketers hate being labelled as that. At Cannes this year, everyone was (predictably) super excited about this year's hot issue –

AI – but the best marketers never lose sight of the fundamentals. Duty was the watchword of the late Queen Elizabeth II and she proved to be a highly successful reputation manager for the House of Windsor. She navigated turbulent, unpredictable, fast-changing times and technologies by cleaving to this immutable value.

What are your brand's duties? They will vary by category and product, but there are common themes. And it is my duty as an account planner to have a stab at answering this question for *Aurora* readers – in the next issue. Watch this space.

**Account Planners often call themselves strategists nowadays which can cause them to lose sight of what their job really is. ■*

Julian Saunders has led account planning departments in agencies big and small, been CEO of a WPP creative agency, worked in a Google innovation team and on behaviour change campaigns for the UK government. julians@joinedupcompany.com.



2015; <https://aurora.dawn.com/news/1140893>). For over a decade brands have championed a range of causes – a trend that kicked off with Dove's campaign for Real Beauty and which became a norm.

Brands championed trans rights, women's rights, gay rights, prevention of violence against women, the disabled, diversity, the environment (increasingly) and so much more.

At their best, these well-intentioned campaigns deliver practical action and more social justice. My favourite is Ariel's 2016 campaign in India (Dads #ShareTheLoad) to release busy mums from the drudgery of having to do all of the laundry themselves – and getting their men to do

what they should care about too. You will have all experienced this. It's like being at a party where you get stuck with someone who can only talk about himself and how he does loads of charity work. The danger is that people who are feeling really pissed off and desperate can be very intolerant of self-regarding narcissists (take a bow, Boris Johnson).

Try Googling "backlash against woke advertising" to see what I mean. In the US, Bud Lite backed American Pride and was quickly seen to have indulged in virtual signalling – as in wishing to be admired as modern and progressive. Brand teams can be misled by the thumbs-up emojis they win from progressive activists in social media. They can also

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Going Against the Grain While Remaining Grounded

Muna Khan profiles filmmaker and musician Babar Sheikh.

What will your visiting card say? Filmmaker, musician or academic?

Someone asked this of Babar Sheikh, ostensibly offering advice on the importance of choosing one's career path. But a few minutes into my conversation with him, I understand this is not someone who can fit into one designation. He has proven that one can wear the hats of a filmmaker – commercials, documentaries and cinema – musician, artist and educator, with confidence and clarity.

It does, however, pose a challenge as far as the interview goes. For the sake of brevity, I chose to focus on Sheikh's trajectory as a filmmaker, while recognising that his links to his music and band were never far behind.

Sheikh was born in Karachi in December 1978 to a humble family; both his parents worked, which he says was not as common as it is now. He recognised early that "if you wanted to become something in this country and you don't have contacts left right and centre, one had to forge one's own identity."

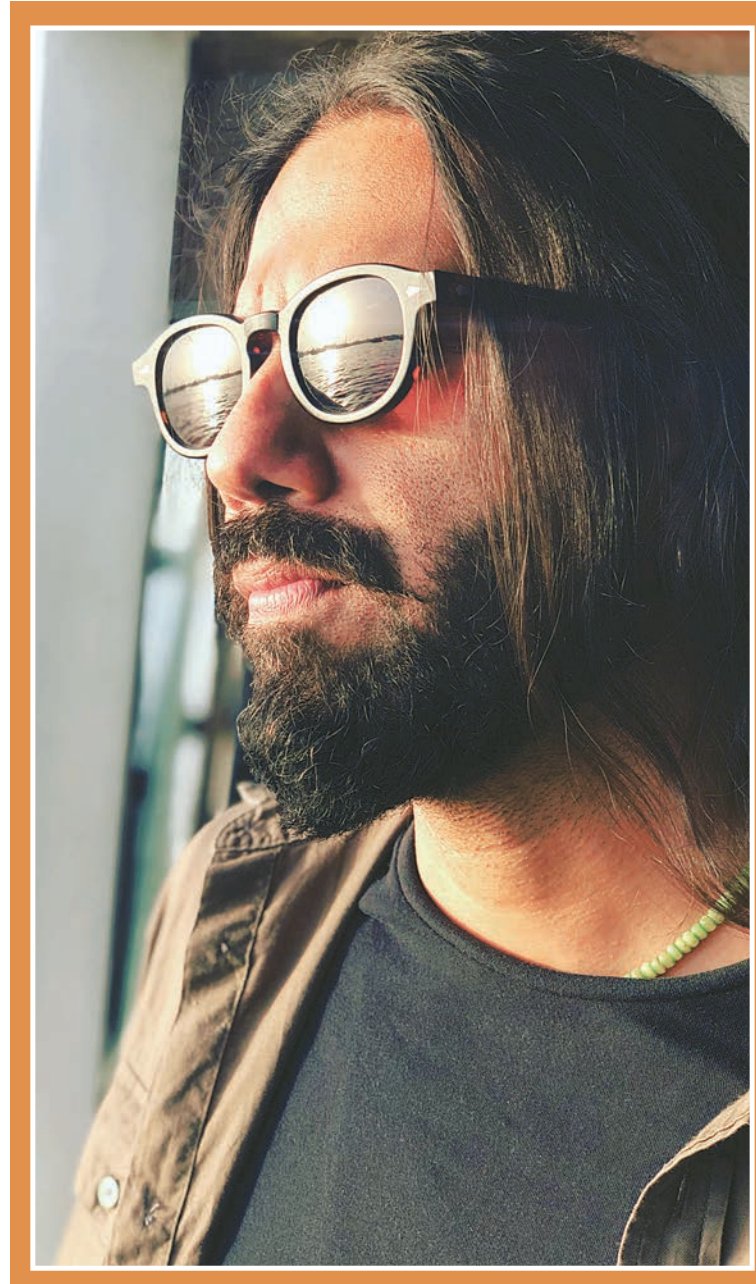
"I think [my upbringing has] contributed marvellously to who I am," he continues, over a cup of coffee at the canteen at Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture, where he is visiting faculty.

He pursued pre-med at college before hearing "my true calling, which was art," in 1993/4. He was spending time with an uncle, a graphic designer from Punjab, in his studio outside Pakistan and saw the appeal of art and design. But when he "dropped the bomb on his parents," there was resistance – they tried to convince him that artists don't make money – but then supported him. He was admitted to Indus Valley in the mid-nineties in the communication design track.

He was the youngest in his class and the youngest graduate. He also received a distinction for his thesis, as he chose to go against the grain by not pursuing the requirement of creating a campaign for a company or product. Instead, his thesis was in purely graphic art – a risk he chose to take and one that paid off well.

I ask whether he learned to take risks at a young age. He nods. "From a very young age, I always thought about doing things my own way, from science experiments to building my instruments."

He credits music – specifically, heavy metal – and which came into his life at a young age, for making him a risk taker. "The



visual of the culture – men with long hair, in bandanas, rock stars – appealed to me." He wanted to grow his hair as a young child but wasn't allowed until he got to Indus Valley. Today, his shoulder-length hair is tied in a ponytail.

While still a student, Sheikh began to watch movies that had been donated to the college by an embassy. These films opened a whole new world for him; as did the photography class which taught him the basics of framing. Armed with that, he was able to play with a friend's video camera. He created an experimental film, which he turned into a CV of sorts and handed out in VHS tape format to agencies.

The late nineties/early 2000s was a transformational time in Pakistan.

Sheikh is playing in his heavy metal band, a local underground band and doing a lot of gigs. He is watching films on his own as part of his learning, and he is working in a design house while studying. Musharraf is in charge, things are opening up in creative art and people are returning to Pakistan to open up businesses, cafés and other ventures. The video CV lands him his first gig at Asiatic as an art director. True

to form, he begins producing work without compromising on his identity.

"The whole gender thing is an issue today," he tells me, "but I used to get a kick out of wearing anklets. I was dressed in *kolhapuris*, painting my toenails black, wearing eye make-up, 23 years ago. I walked into Unilever dressed like that to get my first commercial."

He acknowledges that while he stood out for his look, he was respected and recognised for his talent and confidence.

He has a humility devoid of any of the faux attributes used in interviews to impress audiences. He recognises how, 20 years ago, he was perceived as obnoxious. "I wanted to become larger than life, I didn't know where to stop, and it just kept on going to the point where I was loud."

"I am 40% of what I was then," he says, adding that he has been through a lot and simmered down. "I realise it's not about spreading your vastness; the beauty is containing it. It takes a while to realise this."

Next, he landed a job at Pyramid Productions, then headed by Rohail Hyatt, and soon he was producing music

videos, which caught the eye of Ali Haider, who asked him to direct his new single *Jadu*. It was a kicks-tart to his career in film.

Then came the requests for ads, corporate films and documentaries. He has been the recipient of grants from the Goethe Institute and which opened a whole new vista of opportunities to collaborate with filmmakers in Europe. He has been working as an independent filmmaker for the last 20 years under his company name, 'Diagram'.

The opportunities have been bountiful and he remains grateful, and I believe grounded. Even during the low points, whether it was about things not working out the way he hoped or losing his father during the pandemic.

The industry, which has grown exponentially, can also be brutal. "There's no check on well-being, there's no check on mental health, there's no check on how many hours you are putting in." That, he says, has to change, though he understands how difficult it is to turn down jobs with tight schedules when the market is so competitive. "I'm a sucker for a good storyline," he adds.

The EBM 'School Girls Newscasters' campaign is one such example. The idea was conceived by Ali Rez, Chief Creative Officer Impact BBDO (Sheikh calls him an inspiration) who wanted to highlight the importance of female education in Pakistan. It showed school girls, who three years earlier could not read, playing the role of news anchors. The ad was broadcast earlier this year on three channels. He loved travelling to various TV stations across the country to work on this campaign which was a stark difference from the "glamorous world of advertising." It won the prestigious 'Glass: Lion for Change' at the Cannes Lions Festival.

I have to ask about his highly anticipated cinema debut, which has been reported on for two years, the last being that he has a script with acclaimed writer Bee Gul. He says he is hopeful he will be able to work on it soon. "It's not going to be a super commercial *masalaydar* film, but I am also sensible; it's not going to bankrupt a producer."

While Babar Sheikh has not directed his first film for cinema, he likens being on the production team of *Carma*, an action revenge thriller that released last year and did fairly well, as "nature's way of telling you when to step back and when to step forward." ■

Muna Khan researches newsroom culture in Pakistan and tweets @LedeingLady.

A Slow Scroll Into Addiction

Purush Chaudhary discusses the dangers of social media addiction.

Addiction is a disease of the mind and not of a moral consequence. It is no longer limited to drug abuse or gambling; it exists in the overuse of social media, the internet and dependency on technology. Online experiences can become addictive due to a combination of factors, including ease of access, rewards and reinforcement, social connection, escapism and lack of regulation.

Social media addiction is no different from traditional forms of addiction. People suffering from social media addiction may spend excessive amounts of time on their platform of choice, constantly checking their accounts and experiencing anxiety or restlessness when they are not able to log on, leading them to overlook their other responsibilities, such as work, school or relationships.

Multiple studies have shown evidence of the adverse effect of excessive social media use. Findings from the Problematic Social Media Use and Mental Health in Adolescents (Boers *et al.*, 2020) study, revealed a significant relationship between excessive social media use and depression, anxiety and loneliness among adolescents. Another study (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018), explored the relationship between social media addiction, self-esteem and life satisfaction, indicating that higher levels of social media addiction are associated with lower self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Some people are more susceptible to addiction than others and it can have many different causes, including psychological, social, genetic, environmental and physical factors. Although the categories of addiction are many, they are not always mutually exclusive and can overlap. Social media addiction and smartphone addiction can be closely related as social media platforms are often accessed through smartphones. Similarly, online shopping addiction and online gambling addiction can both involve excessive use of the internet for the purpose of seeking pleasure or escape.

Some technologies are designed to be addictive through the use of features such as notifications, rewards and streaks, creating a sense of accomplishment and motivation to keep users engaged. This said, it is important to recognise that not all technology is addictive. It is normal and even necessary to use technology for work, communication and entertainment. The difference between healthy technology use and addiction is the degree to which it interferes with daily life and responsibilities as well as the manifestation of withdrawal symptoms when unable to access the technology. It is also important to recognise that the causes of technology addiction are complex and multifaceted. While boredom, anxiety, depression and social isolation are common factors, genetics, personality traits and environmental factors play a role. A nuanced understanding of the different categories of addiction involves recognising the potential

for overlap and the importance of healthy technology use, as well as understanding the factors that contribute to technology addiction.

In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) added gaming disorder to its International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), officially recognising it as a mental health condition characterised by a pattern of gaming behaviour. This development was further canvassed by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) which developed the criteria for

diagnosing technology addiction, also known as internet gaming disorder (IGD).

An addictive algorithm refers to an algorithmic decision-making process that can lead to addictive behaviour. The science behind addictive algorithms is based on understanding how the brain responds to rewards. Elements essential to this understanding draw on the principles of behavioural psychology; forming programmed habits through conditioning, leading to persuasive designs that influence thoughts and actions and which create neurological effects that can steer changes in mood, behaviour or sensation. For example, a dark pattern is a user interface (UI) design that intentionally misleads or manipulates users into making decisions that are not in their best interests. They are often used in online advertising and social media platforms to trick users into clicking on ads, signing up for subscriptions or sharing personal information. The range of some of the techniques used in designing includes scarcity (FOMO), urgency, social proof, authority (power of experts) and liking (power of association).

When we do something that is rewarding, our brains release dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and motivation. Dopamine release reinforces a behaviour, making us more likely to do it again. Addictive algorithms are designed to exploit this reward pathway in our brains. They do this by providing us with small, frequent rewards, such as likes, comments and shares. These rewards are often unpredictable – which keeps us engaged and coming back for more. In addition to exploiting our reward pathway, addictive algorithms take advantage of our natural tendency to seek out novelty. They do this by constantly serving us new content, which prevents us from



getting bored. This constant stream of new content can be overwhelming; it also makes it difficult to step away from the app.

The combination of these factors makes addictive algorithms very powerful. They can easily hook us into a cycle of compulsive use, even when we know that our use is excessive. They are designed to keep us engaged for as long as possible in order to generate revenue from advertisements. One of the key mechanisms underlying the addictive nature of social media algorithms are the 'variable' or unpredictable rewards, which are known to activate the brain's dopamine system. When we receive a reward that is unpredictable or unexpected, our dopamine levels spike, creating a sense of excitement and anticipation, which is the reason why they are so effective in keeping us engaged. They not only create this sense of unpredictability and excitement that keeps us coming back for more, but they also form habits that lead to an increase in motivation and in the time spent on social media platforms along with a decrease in overall satisfaction. However, the brain responds differently to predictable rewards. Predictable rewards tend to keep our dopamine levels stable, while unpredictable rewards create a high dopamine rush in anticipation of rewards that we cannot exactly predict. This is because our brains are wired to search endlessly for the next reward and are never satisfied. In fact, variability is the brain's cognitive nemesis, and our minds make the deduction of cause and effect a priority over functions such as self-control and moderation. Humans crave predictability and struggle to find patterns, even when none exist.

Another mechanism is the flow-inducing interface. Social media platforms are designed to be easy to use, with a simple 'flow-inducing' interface that encourages us to keep scrolling content and be engaged for as long as possible, thereby encouraging addictive use. Social media platforms allow users to scroll endlessly, without any clear stopping point. User-

specific data is used to deliver personalised content that is more likely to keep us engaged, as it is more relevant to our interests. Social media platforms collect data on user behaviour and preferences and use this information to deliver content tailored to each individual user. These mechanisms capitalise on classical conditioning and reward-based learning processes to facilitate the formation of habit loops that encourage addictive use.

Simplicity, seamlessness, visual appeal and gamification are some of the characteristics of a flow-inducing interface. These interfaces can activate a range of brain chemicals that are associated with optimal performance and positive emotions and involve dopamine, norepinephrine, serotonin and endorphins.

By understanding the mechanisms underlying these algorithms, strategies to mitigate their negative effects can be developed. For example, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed guidelines for responsible technology use in schools. The guidelines are designed to help schools protect students from the risks of technology addiction. Regulating addictive algorithms can be challenging, as there is no clear definition of what an addictive algorithm is.

While it is important to approach the subject of online experiences and mental health with compassion, it is also essential to understand that social media platforms are designed to keep us online; it is how these companies make money. While online experiences can be a great way to stay connected, excessive use can fuel feelings of addiction, anxiety, depression, isolation and FOMO. It is also important to recognise that spending too much time online can potentially make us feel more isolated and lonely and that the future of the online space is going to be more personalised, more immersive and easier to access. ■

Purush Chaudhary is an award-winning futures researcher and strategic narrative professional. She was featured amongst the World's top female futurists and works for AGAHI. purush@gmail.com

A Legendary-Level Marketing Case Study in the Making

Syed Amir Haleem comments on the battle lines that have been drawn between Twitter and Threads.

Have you ever heard of a brand where the CEO did everything to destroy it, but the brand was so resilient it just kept on going? Well, let me introduce you to Twitter and Elon Musk.

It's not that Musk is damaging Twitter on purpose. It's just the result of his irrational strategy (if indeed there is one) to annoy as many users as possible. I am quite sure that in his head he feels he is infallible. Unfortunately, that logic is a bit misplaced.

At SpaceX and Tesla, Musk was led to believe that anything goes when dealing with consumers. However, the reality is that the resilience of those brands was based on the fact that they were basically monopolies. While SpaceX's main product, reusable engine thrusters, still faces no challenge yet, Tesla's competitors have recently taken their electric vehicle (EV) product lines more seriously.

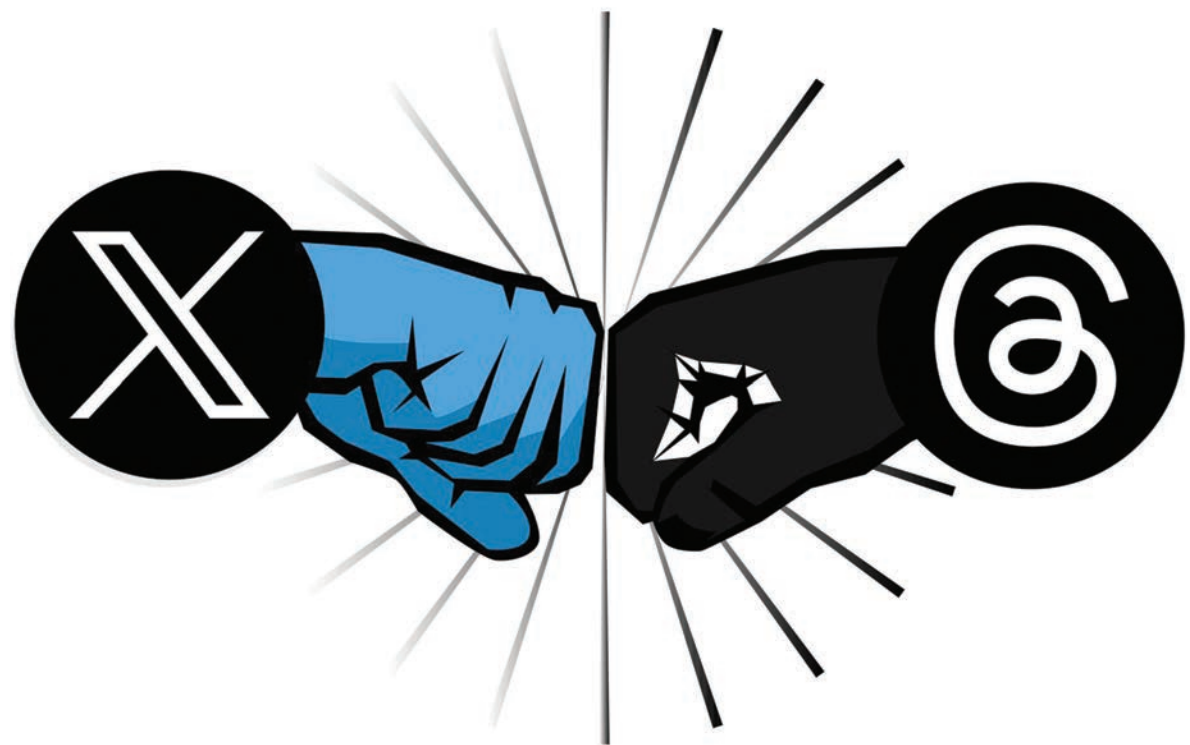
Tesla is no longer the giant it used to be in the EV segment. EV registrations for Q1 2023 placed Tesla with a 23.6% market share (compared to 21.6% last year), with BYD Co. (14.7%) and Volkswagen (7.5%) following closely behind. In desperation, Musk reduced his price again, making the shares tumble by four percent on the New York Stock Exchange.

Twitter too, if you define it very narrowly as a limited-text-based social platform, had the advantage of being unique in what it offered, so that although it did take a huge battering, it kept on ticking. It was pretty much like putting The Rock in a wrestling championship with amateur wrestlers. Even if The Rock is drunk, you know he is going to beat the daylights out of everyone else in the ring on any given day. In fact, none of Twitter's potential challengers (Bluesky, Clubhouse, Cohost, CounterSocial, Discord, Mastodon, Spill, T2, Tumblr or WT.Social) made any sort of dent in its existence.

This all changed on July 5, when the biggest and meanest fighter decided to jump into the ring with Musk. The challenger, of course, was Meta, with Mark Zuckerberg at the helm and the introduction of Threads as a serious contender to Twitter. To make things interesting, so far Threads is free to use, while Twitter is slowly forcing users to pay to use advanced features like a blue tick.

Product features aside, this battle is now between an unpredictable and erratic marketer and the savviest one the digital age has ever seen.

The response to Zuckerberg's move was so huge, it set a world record when Threads surpassed 100 million user



sign-ups in less than a week. Daily users have settled down from an initial 50 million to 25 million. This is quite an achievement for a new product in the social app segment.

Now, whether Threads will continue to pose a serious challenge to Twitter remains to be seen. True to form, Musk is not helping. His strategic reaction to the challenge made against his well-established brand has been to... well, destroy the legacy. He has just declared that he will be substituting the beloved Twitter logo with an X. Absolute insanity or genius that we cannot recognise? Most marketers are putting their money on the former.

Meta, by the way, also has had its share of missteps. While it was a stroke of genius to launch Threads at a time when the market was seriously annoyed with Twitter, Meta rushed in with a very stripped-down version of the app, leading to disappointment among the first batch of users who signed up. In fact, daily users have dropped by 70% to 13 million. It was a calculated risk by Meta to strike during a weak moment in the competition, but the move may not pay dividends in the long run, unless Threads quickly adds the features users take for granted.

For example, Threads does not have a hashtag feature, meaning users cannot effectively search and filter content by topic or trends. Other flaws in the platform include the absence of direct message features; a post once published cannot be edited nor can the alt text be modified; there is no trending section and there are no advertisements. Meta has promised to introduce most of these features very soon.

If you look at all these factors in isolation, it would seem that Threads' initial challenge to

Twitter failed and Twitter has retained its crown. However, when you start to dig deeper, there are red flags for Twitter.

Meta has unlimited world-class resources at its disposal and a determination to make Threads successful. All the missing features will eventually be introduced once Meta has a stable version to roll out. Meta also has highly motivated and empowered employees who believe in the brand; Twitter's employees are confused, insecure and very demotivated. Twitter's declining user retention is a terrible indicator of user loyalty. Fewer and fewer Android users are using the Twitter app frequently and the percentage has fallen from 19% in May 2022 to 16% in May 2023. In contrast, loyalty among new Instagram users has remained constant at about 40%. This is important because Threads is tied to Instagram at the back-end so although you can only use your Instagram account to log in to Threads, you can transfer all your Instagram contacts automatically to Threads.

At the end of the day, it will be your objectives and resources, as well as your comfort level, in terms of devoting time and resources to a high-risk platform (but with great potential) that will determine whether or not you include Threads in your organic content strategy.

If as a brand or an influencer you do decide to step into the world of Threads, keep three things in mind:

1. Be quick as an innovator and early adopter: The app is brand new and gaining users, so the opportunity to establish yourself as a serious content creator is dwindling. Get in and become big before other brands jump in.

2. Take a strategic approach to risk and community management: Although

Threads does not have a direct messenger inbox yet, the conversational nature of the platform is providing users with a new place to interact with brands and promote them. You will be able to communicate with your fans frequently, although for now in public.

3. Hire a social media manager with expertise in copywriting: Due to the

platform's unfiltered real-time interactions, its inability to draft posts or schedule them using third-party applications and the absence of a desktop version, organising a Threads calendar will be challenging and you will be better off hiring a social media manager who can write copy.

What the future holds for Twitter and Threads will depend on what happens in the next two quarters. If Musk stops throwing spanners into the Twitter engine, it might stabilise, but he has a lot to lose. He bought the platform for a staggering \$44 billion and can't seem to find a way to monetise it. Threads is in the more comfortable position of having taken a calculated risk that is backed by a proven and stable platform in the form of Instagram. It rushed in with a stripped-down version but is quickly working towards a stable full-featured release.

Whichever way the wind blows, one thing is for sure. Here is a legendary-level marketing case study in the making.

Agree? Disagree? Any thoughts to share? I would love to have your point of view. ■

Syed Amir Haleem is CEO, Skale Interactive. syedadmirhaleem@gmail.com

Short But Far From Sweet

Rashna Abdi reviews *Frickin' Short Life: Sinfully Alluring (The World's Smallest Autobiography)* by Khawar Salim.

The *World's Smallest Autobiography* is indeed that – it fits into the palm of your hand and measures two-thirds of the width of a Rubik's cube. *Frickin' Short Life* is an autobiography in 268 short paragraphs and Khawar Salim calls it “*Sinfully Alluring*”.

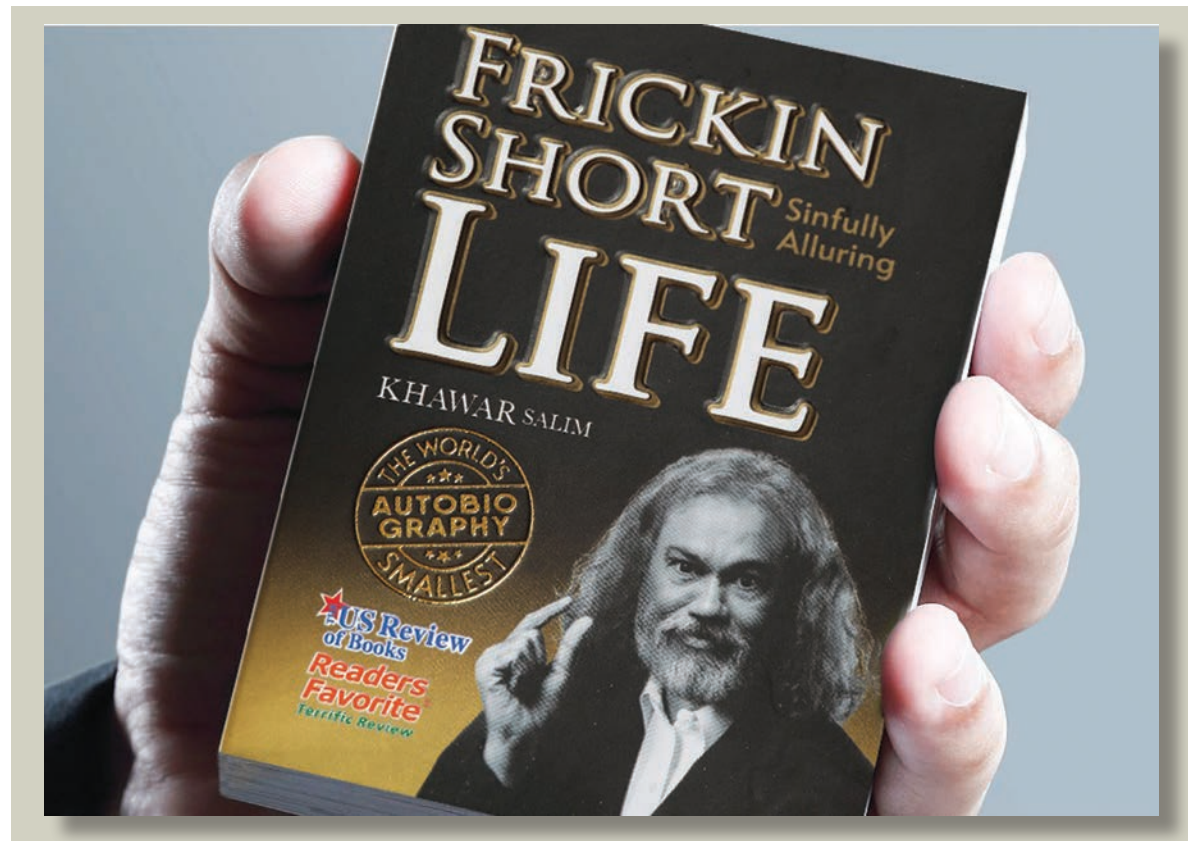
The narrative starts with a brief introduction about the author, a Fine Arts graduate who stumbled upon a career in advertising after a chance meeting with a concept writer. The intro mentions his stints at Prestige (Grey) and IAL Saatchi & Saatchi and the accounts he worked on before starting his own design agency, Creative Workshop. This is followed by over a dozen reccos by people he worked with over the years.

Khawar Salim for the uninitiated was a bit of a rock star of the ad world for a while, an unabashedly bohemian creative and ace designer. When I joined IAL Saatchi & Saatchi, his name was spoken in near reverential tones even though he had left well over a decade earlier. Much later, a former client at a multinational who had worked with Khawar related how the brand team would pamper him to the extent of sending hot soup to his home when he was off sick. Yes, dear readers, there was a time such as this.

The story starts with his debilitating stroke and the mind-numbing monotony that followed; the frustration of not being able to move and the painstaking attempts to tap on his iPad again. The 268 short musings that follow are the prose version of a Haiku poem. Surreal and in staccato, much like the author's own physical condition. It is bittersweet and poetic and startlingly honest – and the honesty is a breath of fresh air, in a society where façades are carefully constructed and cultivated.

There are surreal notes on his birth and the magical gift of life. Of his insatiable curiosity as a child chasing fireflies and butterflies, wanting to catch rainbows and vanishing shooting stars – the latter described as the flames thrown by angels to drive away the devil – and it is abundantly clear this was a person destined for a future in the creative world. It's a pre-technology childhood where beetles are chased and the world is filled with colour, be it yellow sunrises or multi-coloured candy bought by the roadside.

Khawar filled his time by reading books and painting, two activities which he embraced again in later years. The idyllic years of youthful discovery are juxtaposed by painful reminders of poverty, misery and hunger,



the existence of which was exacerbated by his father being laid off and a young Khawar vowing to turn the tide.

He excelled in school but a lack of English skills in college led to stress, depression and ulcers at the age of 18. A fertile imagination and an unrelenting desire for betterment got him through the worst of times. And judging by the writing in the book, English was well and truly conquered.

This is an incredible story of resilience against all odds and of a man who has lived life on his own terms and without regret. And he really did live life to the fullest. The loss of his father at an early age, the loss of his sister to cancer and finally the loss of his mother are painful memories and the recollections in pithy prose are especially poignant, perhaps because of the paucity of words used.

There are digressions into flirtations with mathematics, sacred geometry and gadgetry and a fleeting reference to creating the first computer two years before Steve Jobs. To point out the dual inaccuracies seems pointless and petty. One must forgive a creative imagination many things.

Whiskey and women are spoken of frequently. And the many lost loves, starting with a kindergarten teacher. Barring the last, the many romantic encounters and love affairs did not end well. The description of the women in his office as ‘gorgeous Barbie dolls’ is cringe-worthy, as is the dismissal of women complaining about men

following them as “discount signs that attract buyers”; but it's also a look into a world that once was, and should be taken in that light. The hedonism of his life is in fact almost quaint.

We are informed in passing that his maternal grandfather once predicted on the basis of a birth chart that Khawar would never marry by way of an explanation why he never did. The references to love, what it means in all its forms, are referenced intermittently throughout the autobiography. His friends Amir and Anwar are perhaps the only constants in his life; their homes in faraway LA and Berlin distant interludes of comfort. When he refers to the ruthlessness of life and the salve of intoxication, that joy is a momentary partner but sadness and alcohol are trusted companions, there is a palpable loneliness, a sense of loss, and for the reader a sense of a life of promise that journeyed down a path of darkness.

Despite having spent the better part of his life in advertising, there is very little insight into his experiences in the ad world of the eighties and nineties. The section on advertising is labelled “the utmost fun” and he credits the business with moulding him, from how he approached creativity, to the way he used words, how he spoke, and even the way he dressed.

And yes, the deadline was always yesterday. Good to know some things haven't changed.

At the tail end of the book, he claims that he hates advertising, referring to it at one point as both a demanding and tempting

wife who preaches what is less important, and at another point as a paranoid girlfriend clinging on to him. His profession is clearly a love affair gone awry; did it abandon him, or the other way around, we will never know. What we do know is that his first love, painting, has happily reclaimed him once again.

What stands out in this tiny tome is primarily a love of life, even at the stage where he has to learn to write again and is struggling to regain his mobility – “A little hope can create maddening ecstasy in dreadful silence.”

After travelling with Khawar on his labyrinthian journey, readers may find themselves sympathetic and conflicted. Perhaps even a little frustrated with the dense wordage. But the author's will to live is inspiring, and his ability to bare his soul, enviable. In a world where every aspect of our lives is documented online and yet nothing is truly revealed, the short bursts of authenticity in this book are welcome.

The title of the book may be *Frickin' Short Life* but it will leave the reader rooting for this particular life to be extended. And may the rest of us be a little more fearless.

Frickin' Short Life: Sinfully Alluring (The World's Smallest Autobiography)

By Khawar Salim

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Rashna Abdi is CEO, Vitamin C.
rashna@vitamincdigital.com

Every day, I'm (not) hustling

By Riffat Rashid

Six years ago, I quit my nine-to-five to become a full-time content creator. I did this in pursuit of a career that would allow me the flexibility to have a leisurely breakfast, pursue fulfilling experiences without applying for a holiday, and ultimately remove the voice in my head that had become programmed to say "Okay sure!" to different instructions. (Homework? Tests? Performance Appraisals? Monday meetings? – "Okay sure!")

One thing though, writing a piece on a day in my life would have been much easier back then.

Over the last six years, working as a content creator for my blog *GirlGottaEat*, as the lead strategist for my content creation company Hot Beverage (it provides marketing and content creation services for different brands in the food industry) and being the primary contributor to my food discovery website called *Hungry In Karachi* (www.hungryinkarachi.com), none of my days looks the same.

In fact, I have actively worked to not have a routine.

The only exception: breakfast. I can pause anything for a good breakfast.

A usual day starts with me thinking about a breakfast recipe that I want to try out that day. Usually, it's something I had been thinking about the night before, or sometimes the recipe is inspired by the ingredients I recently bought from an umpteenth trip to Fresh Basket. These days I'm liking the combination of caramelised onions with fluffy scrambled eggs on toasted sourdough. Breakfast (that I make a point to not rush) takes about an hour.

My day then can go in four different directions. One, I have to step out for a shoot that mostly takes place at a restaurant and involves photographing or filming a food item that is being put together; two, I have to edit something I shot earlier and upload to either my blog or Hot Beverage clients' social media; three, I have decided to stay at home, reading and making lists, because I have probably had busy shooting and editing days earlier; or four, I meet a current or a potential client to discuss content trends, upcoming campaigns or taste-testing food. I can't say which day I enjoy the most, except that it is the fact that I get to live all four one after the other knowing full well that I have the liberty to choose.

When at a shoot, my favourite thing to do is to pore over a restaurant's menu and find that one food item buried under a stack of different categories, but I know that when photographed or filmed the right way, will generate a lot of curiosity and 'talkability'. It's fun when no one else can see it.

"But our main product is not this!" Sure, but people don't crave food in categories of side-lines and main courses. They just crave what they crave and a social media presence should really speak to that without judgement.



Creating food content (internet speak for food photography and food videos) over the past several years has given me a direct insight into which food items, when filmed or talked about in a certain way, do well in terms of sales and social media engagement – and this is exactly why while running *GirlGottaEat* as a platform, I started Hot Beverage.

I realised most food content done for brands seemed completely detached. Drone footage of buildings, under-the-table shots of chairs, doors opening, fires blazing, cutlery smacked on the table – but where was the food? As someone who is quite often hungry and consumes content as much as food, I know potential customers keenly look at how something is made and the values it is made from. Ambience, directions, and the architecture of the restaurant come after.

With this belief, I started strategising content not only for my blog but for different restaurants and brands that were looking to amplify their business via social media marketing. Over time, I built a clientele that I genuinely love working with.

However, one aspect of my overall portfolio was still missing – the 'searchable food guides and menus.' It was at that point that *Hungry In Karachi* came about.

Talking frequently to *GirlGottaEat*'s followers, I realised that a lot of people were looking for 'the best of' something – from apple pie and club sandwiches to *biryani* and cheesecake, and there was no way to get that information easily, especially from someone who has personally tried and surveyed the available options in the city. I knew I frequently tried a lot of food for work, for myself, and for content, and as I had all this information parked inside my head, I decided to lay it out on a website. This fairly new website gets almost 5,000 organic visitors every month – which I hope is only the beginning.

After I'm done with work, which roughly takes three to four hours every day, I either plan to meet up with friends, spend time with my mom or share memes with my brother. My mom and I have very different food preferences and we usually end up talking about the nutritional values of

pumpkin seeds or mangoes. We love having coconut water and going for walks together before sunset (gotta get that sun exposure). Back home, I usually order pizza or KFC and watch YouTube videos of people trying to make cinnamon rolls – a recipe I'm currently trying to master.

A large part of trying to regain control of my life after deviating from a set structure was to incorporate things like sleeping without the anxiety of an alarm going off, spending time enjoying my breakfast, trying out new food places without waiting for the weekend, spending time with mom – not as an afterthought but intentionally on a shared activity we both enjoy doing, going for a walk mid-day, having the freedom to make an impromptu coffee plan with friends – all the things which the 'hustle culture' refused to make room for, but I knew brought me happiness.

And so, here we are. A day in the life of me that makes room for all this and then sleep for 10 hours. Shall we end on that? ■

Riffat Rashid is a full-time content creator for digital food content platforms – GirlGottaEat and Hungry In Karachi. She also runs Hot Beverage, a marketing and content creation company. girlgottaeat17@gmail.com

The Epitome of Diligence and Humility

Sabahat Kalim: 1956-2023

Sumera Naqvi remembers Sabahat Kalim.

Sabahat Kalim was gentle and modest. She was also generous and upright, not only in her work but in her relationships with her family and friends. It is painful to write this tribute now that she is no more. It is painful to think that a person as kind as she was had to endure a difficult time fighting a terminal disease. Although she did recover at one stage, she was later caught in a vortex of complications until she could battle no more.

Sabahat was *Dawn's* celebrated librarian. She held a Master's in Persian from the University of Karachi. She also worked in the Library of Congress before joining the National Institute of Public Administration, where she gained valuable experience in library keeping.

Sabahat joined *Dawn* in March 1990 to work with Zubeida Mustafa, who was in charge of *Dawn's* library in addition to her role as Assistant Editor for the newspaper. She quickly learned what had to be done and became the most sought-after person among the writers and researchers who wanted to make use of the treasure trove that is *Dawn*.

No article in *Dawn* could be written without her help in providing the required material to back arguments, analyses and theses. From reporters to feature writers and columnists, to local and international writers and authors, she was their go-to person. Her ingrained sense of professionalism ensured authenticity in everything she provided. Under her calm demeanour, she lived a life etched in competence, honesty, sincerity and diligence.

Sabahat's bright little room on the first floor of Haroon House, right across the *Dawn* library, was a sanctuary for her colleagues, who would step in for a chat before starting their hectic day. Sitting at her desk with a smile, she would have both the English and Urdu language newspapers spread all over as she circled important news items for filing. On the shelf next to her stood framed photos of her nieces and nephews.

All this was before the onslaught of the world of the microfiche. "Sabahat saw to it that all the information she was expected to provide to everyone using the library was available when it was needed,



and this meant a lot of work. She would come in early in the morning so that by the time we arrived, she had any information needed ready. Even the morning newspaper had been marked, clipped and pasted into the relevant file. This is how it was done in the good old days when there were no computers," recalls Zubeida Mustafa. Sabahat was also known as an expert in compiling book indexes and was very much in demand for this skill. It was thanks to her that today *Dawn* can boast of having one of the most professionally compiled indexes of any newspaper in Pakistan.

Along with her professionalism and dedication to her work, Sabahat had

a gentle and soft heart and she was always ready to help anyone who asked. "I cannot forget or be more grateful for the moral support and affection Sabahat bestowed upon me when I was severely ill," says Khursheed Hyder, a former feature writer at *Dawn*. "She and her loving sisters used to come to the hospital and then to my house to keep my spirits high in that very difficult time. Many times, Sabahat would take me home after my chemo and look after me. She never hesitated if she saw someone in pain. Such people are rare these days."

This caring streak superseded everything Sabahat did. Her sister, Nuzhat

Rahman, has not gotten over the fact that her sister has left us. "Sabahat was the fifth of six siblings; she was a role model for the family. She looked after our severely sick mother the most. Whatever the problem, she was there to solve it."

Ayesha Azfar, Assistant Editor at *Dawn* says "Sabahat was always concerned about her team, especially about how they had to make do with so little, and in some cases, about their health issues. Professionally, she was top-notch and meticulous. She was extremely attached to her family and always spoke about them with pride and affection."

Muhammad Ibrahim, who joined the *Dawn* library as an assistant to Sabahat in 1993 and spent the next 26 years under her guidance says, "Her professionalism was unrivalled. She worked hard to deliver on time and always stood by her team."

Sabahat's sister Malahat Kalim reminisces about how Sabahat's nieces and nephews adored her. "They used to call her 'Satho', fondly merging the words Sabahat and *phuppo*."

When her illness resurfaced after 18 months of treatment, her doctors insisted she should have further chemo sessions. "We tried to convince her but she refused," says Nuzhat "She said she knew she did not have long and she wanted to make good use of the time she had left with her loved ones and in peace."

Sabahat survived for eight more months during which she was completely immersed in the love and affection her family and friends showered upon her. Her nieces and nephews, her friends and family kept her company – some physically others virtually – never leaving her alone to feel the pain she was going through.

Sabahat Kalim developed and structured and turned the *Dawn* library into an A-class one. It was a library that any advanced country would have and only Sabahat could have done this and she did, says Zubeida Mustafa.

"Our family will never be the same without her," concludes Nuzhat. It will not be the same for her friends and colleagues either. ■

Sumera Naqvi is a journalist, writer and communications consultant. sumera.naqvi@gmail.com

Campaigns for May-June 2023

CLIENT

Abbott Laboratories (Pakistan)



Brand

Mospel

Brief

Dengue and safety awareness campaign

Creative Agency

In-house

Media Agency

Synergy Advertising – Carat

Creative Team

Imranuddin

Account Team

Zainab Shaikh

Media

OOH, Radio

CLIENT

Bank AL Habib



Brand

AL Habib Woman

Brief

To launch 'AL Habib Woman', a separate platform for the financial needs of women

Creative Agency

Bond Advertising

Media Agency

Bond Advertising

Creative Team

Asif Hussain, Shafaq Siddiqui

Account Team

Reem Ehteram

Media

TV, Digital, Print, Radio

CLIENT

Bestway Cement

Brand

Bestway Cement – World Environment Day

Brief

Promote the sustainable outlook of Bestway Cement

Creative Agency

Synergy Dentsu

Media Agency

Synchronize Carat

Creative Team

Haroon Riaz, Sohail Mazhar, Muhammad Haris Akram, Nosheen Abdurrazzak, Maliha Kamran Chishti, Kamal Shahzad



Account Team

Sardar Omar Faruk, Saqib Shehzad

Media

Print

CLIENT

Colgate-Palmolive Pakistan



Brand

Bonus Tristar Detergent

Brief

Promote Bonus Tristar's superior stain removal properties

Creative Agency

Spectrum VMLY&R

Media Agency

MediaCom

Digital Agency

Digitz

Creative Team

Saher Shakil, Tehseen Naqvi.

Account Team

Uzma Akhtar, Hyder Ali, Hafsa Tahir

Media

TV, Digital, POS Displays

CLIENT

Colgate-Palmolive Pakistan



Brand

Palmolive Shampoo

Brief

Transition from a functional to a lifestyle-focused approach, showcasing manageable hair

Creative Agency

Spectrum VMLY&R

Media Agency

MediaCom

Digital Agency

Digitz

Creative Team

Asrar Alam, Mahmood Ali

Account Team

Uzma Akhtar, Hyder Ali, Hafsa Tahir

Media

TV, Digital, OOH

CLIENT

Eighteen by ORA



Brand

Cluster X Villas

Brief

Promote half and two kanal City Villas

Creative Agency

Golden Circle

Media Agency

Time & Space

Digital Agency

Golden Circle

Creative Team

Naeem Raza, Zara Bangash, Sherjeel Rehman

Account Team

Mehreen Arjumand

Media

TV, Digital, OOH

CLIENT

Fauji Cereals



Brand

Fauji Corn Flakes

Brief

Corn Flakes go with breakfast

Creative Agency

Golden Circle

Media Agency

Golden Circle

Digital Agency

Golden Circle

Creative Team

Zara Bangash, Asif Javed

Account Team

Mehreen Arjumand

Media

TV, Digital, OOH

CLIENT

HabibMetro



Brand

HabibMetro Insta Remit

Brief

Promote HabibMetro Sirat as a progressive Islamic banking institution

Creative Agency

Synergy Dentsu

Media Agency

Carat Media

Creative Team

Syed Ferrukh

Account Team

Shoab Hasan, Saman Farook

Media

Print

CLIENT

Haier Pakistan



Brand

Haier Inverter AC

Brief

Summer Launch

Creative Agency

Golden Circle

Media Agency

Blitz

Digital Agency

IO Digital

Creative Team

Naeem Raza, Sherjeel Rehman, Ibrash Ali

Account Team

Mehreen Arjumand

Media

TV, Digital, OOH

CLIENT

Haier Pakistan



Brand
Haier Refrigerator

Brief
Launch twin inverter refrigerator

Creative Agency
Golden Circle

Media Agency
Blitz

Digital Agency
IO Digital

Creative Team
Naeem Raza, Sherjeel Rehman, Ibrash Ali

Account Team
Mehreen Arjumand

Media
TV, Digital, OOH

CLIENT

Haleeb Foods



Brand
Tropico

Brief
Summer launch

Creative Agency
Golden Circle

Media Agency
Mediacom

Digital Agency
Golden Circle

Creative Team
Zara Bangash, Anum Idrees

Account Team
Mehreen Arjumand

Media
TV, Digital, OOH

CLIENT

Honda Atlas Cars Pakistan



Brand
Honda City

Brief
Post launch campaign

Creative Agency
Golden Circle

Media Agency
Golden Circle

Digital Agency
Golden Circle

Creative Team
Naeem Raza, Asif Javed

Account Team
Mehreen Arjumand, Zain Ashraf

Media
Digital, OOH, activation, Dealership activities

CLIENT

Khushhali Microfinance Bank (KMBL)



Brand
Khushhali Bachat Plus Account

Brief
Differentiating KMBL's savings account and its high return rate

Creative Agency
Synergy Dentsu

Media Agency
Synchronize Carat

Creative Team
Haroon Riaz, Sohail Mazhar, Muhammad Haris Akram, Nosheen Abdurrazzak, Maliha Kamran Chisti, Kamal Shahzad

Account Team
Sardar Omar Faruk, Saqib Shehzad

Media
Print

Account Team
Sardar Omar Faruk, Saqib Shehzad

Media
Print

CLIENT

Mobilink Microfinance Bank



Brand
Mobilink Digital Banking

Brief
Promote Mobilink Bank as the digital bank of the future

Creative Agency
Synergy Dentsu

Media Agency
Synchronize Carat

Creative Team
Haroon Riaz, Sohail Mazhar, Muhammad Haris Akram, Nosheen Abdurrazzak, Maliha Kamran Chisti, Kamal Shahzad

Account Team
Sardar Omar Faruk, Saqib Shehzad

Media
Print

Account Team
Sardar Omar Faruk, Saqib Shehzad

Media
Print

CLIENT

Moiz Foods



Brand
Moiz Gurr

Brief
Align the brand with young audiences

Creative Agency
Golden Circle

Media Agency
IG Square

Digital Agency
Golden Circle

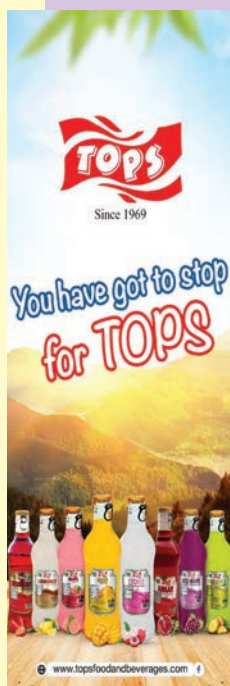
Creative Team
Zara Bangash, Asif Javed, Waseem Amjad, Taskeen Malik

Account Team
Mehreen Arjumand

Media
TV, Digital, OOH, Brand activation

CLIENT

Murree Brewery



Brand
Tops NR Juice

Brief
Promote Tops NR Juice line

Creative Agency
Synergy Dentsu

Media Agency
GroupM

Creative Team
Haroon Riaz, Sohail Mazhar, Muhammad Haris Akram, Nosheen Abdurrazzak, Maliha Kamran Chisti, Kamal Shahzad

Account Team
Sardar Omar Faruk, Saqib Shehzad

Media
TV

CLIENT

Stylo Shoes



Brand
Athleisure

Brief
Promote 2023 Athleisure Collection

Creative Agency
Golden Circle

Media Agency
IG Square

Digital Agency
Golden Circle

Creative Team
Zara Bangash, Asif Javed, Khalid Iqbal

Account Team
Mehreen Arjumand, Zain Ashraf

Media
TV, Digital, OOH

CLIENT

Water and Sanitation Agency (DGPR)



Brand
DGPR – Barsaat Mein Ahtiyaat

Brief
Create awareness about taking precautions during the rainy season

Creative Agency
Synergy Dentsu

Media Agency
Synergy Dentsu

Creative Team
Faheem Akhter, Salman Shafiq

Account Team
Haseeb Rehman, Muhammad Asif

Media
Print

Burp

By Faraz Maqsood Hamidi

When it comes to food (ultimately, it always does), Gen Z are increasingly mirroring their open-minded global outlook, culinary curiosity, and a desire for cultural fusion. As Gen Z opens up, a diverse range of gastro-experimentations are creating a melting pot of flavours and fusions. In Pakistan, India and the Middle East, Gen Z is defining evolving food trends and redefining traditional cuisines by infusing them with international influences together with a preference for healthy, sustainable and globally-inspired choices.

After all, the social feed is fast turning into a gastronomic feeding frenzy. Given Gen Z's adventurous palette and an appreciation for diversity, the popularity of global foods is getting a new lease of life. From Japanese sushi to Mexican tacos, from Mediterranean falafels to Korean bibimbap, young people are being driven by a desire for cultural exchange and the influence of platforms that showcase food from around the world. In other words, if you can't fly to the country of your dreams, then taking a bite out of their culinary export is the next best way to travel.

For instance, cultural fusions and adaptations can be seen in the combustion of Korean and Mexican cuisines, in dishes like Korean BBQ tacos or in the incorporation of Arabic spices in Indian *biryanis*. Closer to home, street food is rising in popularity with (hygienic) food trucks and pop-up stalls offering a wide array of traditional favourites together with innovative dishes at ubiquitous *chaiwalas*. Nutella *paratha*, anyone? Additionally, the influence of Western fast-food chains has introduced a fusion of flavours, combining traditional Pakistani spices or selected ingredients with modern, fast-food formats for a 'glocalised' flavour.

Even for the vegans and vegetarians in India, Gen Z is asking for more plant-based alternatives and vegan dishes with a twist. Examples of such flavours can be observed in dishes like butter chicken pizza or *paneer* tacos, reflecting a desire for cross-cultural experimentation. To our west, the Middle East is witnessing a renaissance with its influx of international residents who are giving rise to a gastronomic revolution. While traditional dishes like hummus, falafels, and shawarmas remain a constant, Gen Z is adopting global food trends (right across neighbourhood supermarkets) with fish-free sushi, poke bowls, bubble tea and other mix-n-match, artisanal and craft creations that are available for

(g)astronomic prices.

While it's important to note that individual preferences may vary, Gen Z, like any generation, have a diverse range of preferences. These include an appetite for convenience where fast-casual dining outlets must also offer healthier alternatives to traditional fast food. This applies to snack culture too, where chips, popcorn, protein bars and fruit snacks are coupled with ingenious combinations to create intrigue and delight. If that weren't enough, there is even a category for social media-inspired food where Gen Z's love for all things visually appealing, driven by social media trends, capture an unfair share of 'likes' thanks to rainbow-coloured bagels, photogenic smoothie bowls, matcha lattes and over-the-top milkshakes – including that wiggly Japanese Soufflé Cheesecake that every home cook is baking and selling across Pakistan. And that's on top of a new breed of chefs who are infusing Pakistan with culturally divergent cuisines from across the world.

But the thing to note is that all this means nothing without the right social ingredients. Which is to say that these trends are increasingly underscored by a growing emphasis on health,

provenance, transparency and sustainability. Gen Z appears more inclined towards natural, locally-sourced and plant-based options. This translates to choices that lead to foods that are organic, authentic, gluten-free, or free from artificial ingredients. They actively seek out brands that align with their values, such as those that promote ethical farming practices, animal welfare, reduced food waste, or in support of fair trade. Gen Z's awareness of the environmental impact of their food choices is

reshaping the industry and driving the rise of eco-conscious brands and industries. For instance, the arrival of "eco-tricity" (environmentally-sound electricity) is one example of how the status quo is being reshaped in an entirely different category.

As Gen Z continue to shape the culinary landscape with their exploratory and conscious choices, they are making it clear that food trends are not just about satisfying cravings, but also about creating awareness for issues that help make the world a little better, and the future taste more palatable. ■

Faraz Maqsood Hamidi is Chief Creative Officer & CEO, The D'Hamidi Partnership, a worldwide partner agency of WPI.



By Atiya Zaidi

Yes, it was super exciting being a part of the short-listing jury for the biggest creativity festival in the world and judging an average of 300+ campaigns. However, winning the Glass: The Lion for Change Gold Award for our 'Schoolgirls Newscasters for EBM' campaign was a totally different ballgame.

Glass: The Lion for Change, "celebrates culture-shifting creativity. It recognises work that implicitly or explicitly addresses issues of gender inequality or prejudice through the conscious representation of gender in advertising."

It is also one of only two categories where every case has to be presented in person or online to the jury – and with the jury, every presentation is open to the delegates; in other words, everyone attending Cannes Lions can attend the presentation if they wish to. To make this even tougher there is a strict time allocation. Ten minutes for the presentation, 10 minutes for Q&A and two minutes to view the case study showreel. All you see in the room is the audience at the back, and upfront, the 10 jury members including the Jury President.

I was fortunate to be presenting along with the best person in the business of advertising – Ali Rez; our Regional Chief Creative Officer and one of the most awarded

Winning Gold for Pakistan



creatives in the world. Ali is also the first Pakistani to become President of the Jury at Cannes. In the 70 years of the Festival's history, no creative from Pakistan or MENA region has ever been selected as the Jury President – until Ali Rez.

We had sat through a few other presentations beforehand to get the lay of the land, and we realised that this was one tough jury. All 10 had a highly developed BS detector. They were focused on results, ideas, their execution and our own passion to live up to the Lion for Change. This was not a normal presentation. This was a one-in-a-million shot where you are

up against the best, the most passionate and most impactful work done around the world.

With wavering confidence and shaking legs, we started the presentation, and 22 minutes whipped past us. And we won Gold.

Now that it is all over, let me say that it does take a village to create work worthy of a Glass, and we were able to make this idea a reality because of our client EBM. Attiyah Inam, Senior Manager Corporate Communications and Aaminah Saeed, GM played a critical part by believing in the idea along with EBM CEO Dr Zeelaf Munir and Executive Director

Shahzain Munir. Our belief in the idea was matched by their belief in the cause of promoting girls' education in Pakistan. This was not a one-off campaign. It has been EBM's lifelong mission to enable millions of out-of-school girls to get their right to education. Winning the award feels amazing and we are still pinching ourselves for having competed against the mightiest of creative individuals and brands in this category.

But we didn't do it to win the award.

We did it to show the world that Pakistani creativity can compete and win on the global stage. We did this to show the world that Pakistani brands are making a huge difference in the lives and livelihoods of their customers. We did this to end the debate that Pakistan is not good enough.

When clients and agencies work together they raise the bar for the entire industry. When an agency's creativity meets the courage of a client, the industry rises collectively and Pakistan rises too. ■

Atiya Zaidi is MD & ECD, BBDO Pakistan and co-Founder, Shero Space. The views in this article are her own and do not reflect the views of any organisation. zaidipride@gmail.com.

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