

Moments with food, optimism and joy

"We are not here to change the world but we're here to make little moments with food and culture, and filled with optimism and joy." --Shadab Ahmed Khan



In a warm conversation Mr. Shadab Ahmed Khan, the Managing Director of Coca-Cola Bangladesh, talked about Coca-Cola, its brand value, relevance to culture and food and many other issues.

In reply of first question, why Coca-Cola is doing so much in Bangladesh this Ramadan and what a beverage brand could possibly

have to do with this Holy Month, Mr. Shadab, with big gestures, said, "From a brand standpoint, you know Coke has always had the stature of one of the best brands in the world. And the reason is that we believe not just in the product, but in how it can play a role in people's lives. Festival is a time when people come together.

There's a lot of joy and happiness, and friendships are built and strengthened at that time. From a Coca-Cola standpoint, the brand being what it is, is also a harbinger for bringing social connections. Ramadan in particular is one of those moments when friends and families, people in offices come

together for Iftar and Eid celebration. Coke wants to be part of that celebration in a meaningful, yet understated way, because our idea is 'How can we add to an already happy and joyous occasion being the great tasting beverage that we are?' So that's the reason why Coke and Ramadan have come together – and we do this across the world! In every market where we operate, we look at possibilities of celebrating Ramadan and Coca-Cola together," he added.

What about Bashay Iftar (Iftar at home)?

He answered, 'We've basically revived *Bashay Iftar* with Radio Foorti again this year. The intent of that is, 'How do you ensure that families don't have to worry about preparing Iftar?' So Coca-Cola brings together, with Radio Foorti and Nando's, *Bashay Iftar*, so that these busy families can get the full Nando's platter with a case of Coke to celebrate without having to hassle.'

What about Sehri Nights and what is your plan with the cricketer Mustafizur Rahman?

"We created two properties around *Sehri*. One is a continuation of what we did last year – the *Sehri Nights* which we do with Foodiez, and was on the 23rd and 24th of June. Consumers from across all walks of life can come to *Bashundhara* and enjoy a great *Sehri* while having a chilled Coca-Cola. "And, for an exciting reveal, all the winners of the *Bashay Iftar* contest will have the opportunity of meeting with Mustafizur Rahman over a meal. It's a great combination with Coke, in my mind! We also asked Mustafizur to join us during one of the *Sehri Nights* and share a meal with fans of food and Coca-Cola, and last Friday fans

were ecstatic to meet the young legend in such a close and intimate space!

We believe it's a great platform, we believe it's a great opportunity for people coming together – Coca-Cola at the end of the day only facilitates the whole process," he added.

The other thing is that Coke has always had a perspective to events and things happening in the world at any given point in time. Because of that unique heritage that we have with Coca-Cola as a brand, we always work to try and see how it works in a manner that works with the consumer group that we're working with. And therefore across the world whether in terms of food or culture, Coke has always tried to be a part of it, as a great tasting beverage. We are not here to change the world but we're here to make little moments with food and culture, and filled with optimism and joy," he further added.

When asked about the new Coca-Cola television commercial that has been airing and how it captures the idea of Ramadan; what does a brand have to do to be able to capture that essence?

He replied, "Our perspective to any commercial at the end of the day is that it has to work for the consumers who are looking at it. It has to be a slice of life. If it is not that, if it doesn't build relatability. Especially with festival advertising, building relatability is key. Therefore one of the things that we have tried to do is that we have tried to ensure moments of consumers lives in Bangladesh and use it in the ad that we did. So whether it is taking a train journey back home to celebrate Eid with loved ones which is what it

depicts, or it is breaking a fast and sharing it with friends and neighbors on the train who are absolute strangers. It's part of what Bangladeshis do! And that's what we've tried to use in the ad. And it's the same that then goes into the theme of the television commercial as well – how people come together and how Coke can make the moment special.

How the brand finds itself relevant to culture and food? So what is it about sharing a meal that is so important these days than before?

He said, "From a larger standpoint sharing a meal is an important aspect – I fully agree. Building personal connections and relationships is more important as we live in the social realm. In Bangladesh, the society itself is culturally family-oriented. So there is a lot of people-to-people connection. So in Bangladesh we're just trying to enhance that connection. And again, it's not what Coca-Cola is doing – it's what people are doing in their normal lives, and if we can be part of that journey I guess we have done our job so that's what we're hoping we can do."

How long has Coca-Cola been available in Bangladesh?

"Coca-Cola started its journey in Bangladesh in 1962 in its first form. So we've been available here for 54 years, in some form or fashion across the country.

We could become more integrated and I think it's a journey-- a journey of us working here and growing here and being a part of everyday life in Bangladesh and a part of the people's lives," he summed up.

Interviewed by Sohel Rana

A Sehri night to remember



A new trend has been emerging in Dhaka over the last two years – going out with family and friends for *Sehri*. Almost every restaurant in the city has picked up the pace and joined in on offering menus tailored to *Sehri* eaters and staying open late hours. Coca-Cola has been one of the first brands to take up the mantle and organize the Coca-Cola *Sehri Nights* with Foodiez, a huge congregation of restaurants from around town and diehard food lovers braving the time of night for the opportunity to eat delicious food and meet up with family, friends and relatives all under one vast roof.

Deciding where to eat for a big group becomes a big problem, because everyone has unique tastes and want to try different restaurants, *Sehri Nights* is the hub which can satisfy everyone's palate while the group can still sit in one table together – enjoying delicacies from a plethora of different cuisines.

This year's *Sehri Nights* saw teeming masses of people from all walks of life, availing exciting offers from different restaurants, eating and chatting together on huge



communal tables on the second floor with a view of the entire festival, with children running around and groups of friends taking selfies with the most unexpected but welcome

guest of the first night – the internationally celebrated Bangladeshi cricketing hero and Coca-Cola's Brand Ambassador Mustafizur Rahman!

A meal that is more than food



ALMOST every single thing that we integrate into our culture as Bangladeshis, we make our own. Even disparate concepts and customs become uniquely Bangladeshi once they cross borders into Bangladesh and get picked up as our own tradition. This is why any Bangladeshi worth his or her salt immediately knows what *iftari* means, which is a word we coined to describe all traditional *Iftar* food – whether we eat them around the year or not, we will eat them during the one month. While our culture seamlessly integrates and adapts certain things never change such as breaking your fast with a date, or eating *Iftar* together with the whole family.

Tanvir Islam, a lecturer at AIUB, participated in *BashayIftar* through Radio Foorti, and not only did he win, coincidentally just a few days prior his sister had also won! Tanvir can't believe that lightning can strike the same spot twice. "For a while now, because of my busy schedule as a lecturer I've been unable to have *Iftar* at home and usually just do it at work or somewhere outside. However, this year after my sister won the *Bashay Iftar* on 2nd Ramadan, I made sure to clear my schedule given it was a special occasion and had a great time with my family after so long. Not only that, when just a few days later I won again, I decided to do something different.

Billkis Parveen Jhinuk, a High Court lawyer, once she found out that she won the *BashayIftar* contest decided to call all her friends over. "There was so much food that I knew just my family wasn't enough to eat it all – so I invited over all my friends and had a great *Iftar* get-together where I was surrounded by the people closest to me –

my family members and my closest friends. It's not always easy to find the time to organize something like this but having such a wonderful meal delivered hassle free really takes care of all the problems and all we had to do was get together and enjoy our time!"

One thing that a lot of the participants did not know when entering the contest is that they have not only won a hassle-free, deli-



cious *Iftar* for themselves and their families, they have also automatically been added to a list of people to meet the young cricketing legend of Bangladesh, and Coca-Cola's Brand Ambassador – Mustafizur Rahman! The winners will meet The Fizz over a meal after Eid and talk to him about whatever they want to talk about.