

# HOW TO CONNECT WITH EMERGING CUSTOMER BASES

*Roundtable on Connecting evolving consumers with meaningful communication*

Industry leaders representing different sectors of Bangladesh came together for a roundtable discussion on 'Connecting evolving consumers with meaningful communication' on March 19, 2017 at The Daily Star Premises. The roundtable was organised by Kantar Millward Brown and The Daily Star. Kantar Millward Brown is a leading multinational research firm with over 40 decades of experience in advertising, media, brand equity research, and consulting. Nigel Hollis, Chief Global Analyst of Kantar Millward Brown, discussed and shared some valuable insights from over 30 years of experience in the industry.

The session was moderated by Professor Syed Ferhat Anwar of Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka. Syed Gousul Alam Shaon, Managing Partner & Country Head, Grey; Rajesh Ramakrishnan, CEO, PVM; Sabbir Hasan Nasir, Executive Director at ACI Logistics Limited; Shadab Khan, Managing Director – Bangladesh at Coca-Cola; Asif Iqbal, Executive Director Marketing at Meghna Group of Industries; Ashraf Taj, Managing Director, International Distribution Company Bangladesh (Pvt.) Ltd.; Aftab Khurshid, Marketing & Brand Catalyst; Solaiman Alam, Director, Marketing at Grameenphone Ltd.; Nazmul Karim Chowdhury, Senior Vice President and Head of Brand, The City Bank Limited; Syed Mahbub Ali, Head of Trade and Distribution at British American Tobacco Bangladesh; Muneer Ahmed Khan, MD, Unitrend (a McCann affiliate); Tajdin Hassan, Head of Marketing, The Daily Star; and Khandaker Samina Afrin, Country Manager, Kantar Millward Brown participated in the forum.

Professor Syed Ferhat Anwar set the tone for the afternoon: "Four categories of individuals are coming up very strongly. There is the youth, making up a huge population. Women are another category seeing stable growth. The third is the netizens. And there is yet another group that we time and again forget – the aging population, whose traits are entirely different from the others. These are evolving consumers and we need to address them."

The discussion revolved around two communication strategies – gut feeling versus research and the use of digital data and research. Intense and thought provoking debates led to the basic understanding that even though the extent may vary among industries, the need for data and research in order to understand the consumer mindset is crucial for a marketer in this era. However,

whether the decision made is affected by the research is a factor decided by the gut feeling, experience, and confidence of the marketer.

Sabbir Hasan Nasir commented, "The major problem today is the media mix. Millennials are more digitally sensitive, but at the same time, you have to be present in print or on television. I am not sure if the research and digital agencies here are even fully conversant with what we need because it is a completely new demand from us marketers."

Asif Iqbal heavily emphasised on the need to test strategies: "When you are in doubt, when you do not know whether the positioning or the communication message that you would like to deliver will connect with consumers, you research on whether your

Ashraf Taj added a new dimension to the floor: "When we asked students if they watch ads on their mobiles, 70 percent said they skip. So I feel the challenge for the industry is building capacity within itself for the right kind of content."

Syed Mahbub Ali added, "Creative concept development should always be insight backed. Insight can come from the accumulated knowledge on consumers and the operating environment. The client and the agency must work hand in hand to prepare the creative brief and ensure full clarity. Once the brief is made, the agency can use secondary information to build the product. If time allows, going back to the consumers is always preferable in order to see how something has resonated with them. For research, I recom-

discussion further delved into how digital data may be wrongly analysed to interpret a conclusion that could possibly be misleading.

Tajdin Hassan added, "Growth of digital media has caused a strategic shift in both consumer behaviours and marketing expenditure. Consumers nowadays are more cautious than ever before. Hence marketers have to find innovative ways and creative routes to better connect with the consumers. Big media houses are also analysing reader profiles, which vary across channels like print, digital and multimedia, to develop and deliver contents accordingly." Khandaker Samina Afrin similarly pointed out: "With the emergence of digital media, the media space has become very cluttered. Proper strategy is required to connect your consumer in this

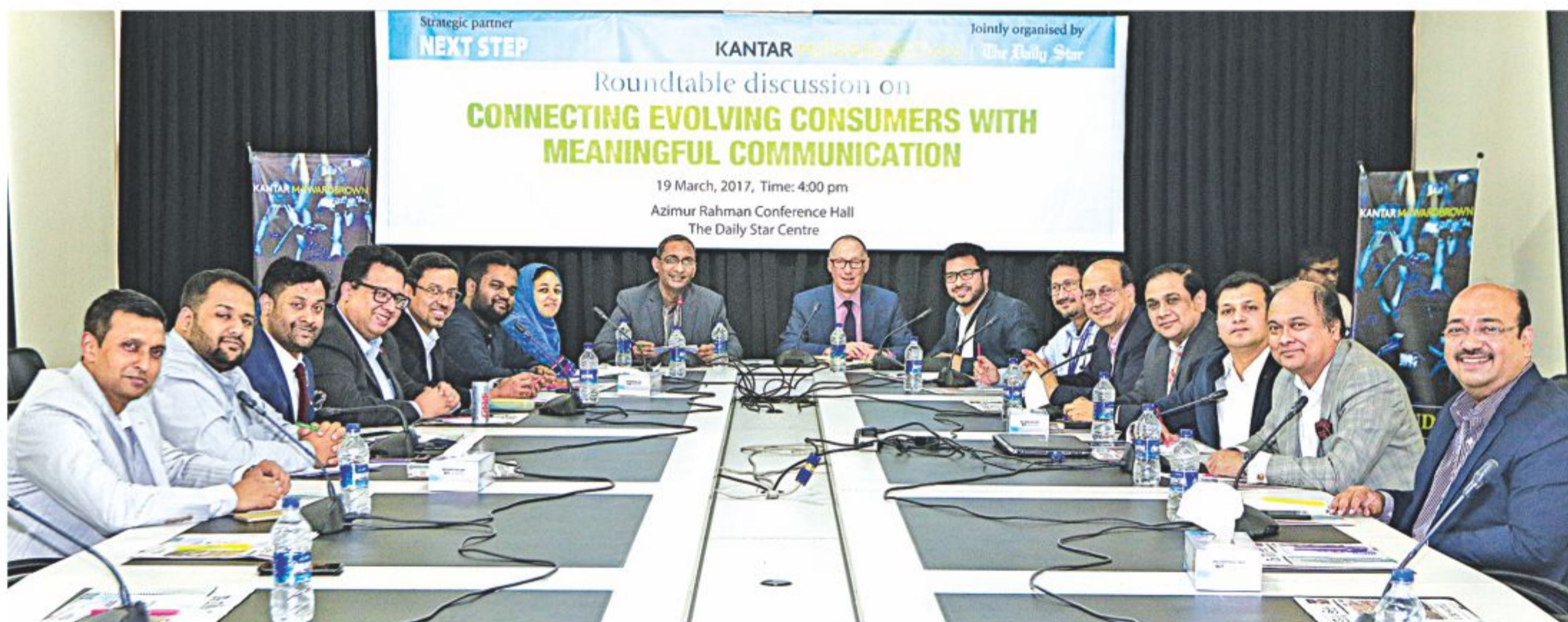


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

method will work or if there are other ways of doing it. If you have second options, go back, and do a preview test to see if it is justified."

"I frankly cannot say how much research can help with creativity itself. You have to do your research long before the creative process. Even 20 consumers cannot help me correct my final copy," refuted Syed Gousul Alam Shaon.

Aftab Khurshid elucidated on exactly what kind of research marketers should be pursuing: "First of all, gut feeling depends on how many years of experience a marketer has or how observant he or she is. If I have doubts or if I have to make a more confident decision, it is critical to take up formal research which is objective oriented – clear and focused regarding what results it wants to achieve."

mend both the creative agency and the client to go to the field to get a first-hand feel of the consumer. This helps to build consumer relevant and intriguing communications."

Nazmul Karim pointed out: "Research allows me to have the gut feeling and experience to take bold decisions over time." Solaiman Alam also shared his experience: "I am a decision maker based on data. Being in the telecom industry, our decisions are heavily backed by data, be it big data or research."

The discussion of the use of digital data in advertising strategies was less controversial than the debate beforehand. Muneer Ahmed Khan said, "Digital data is critical for decision making, especially when the number of consumers in the digital arena is rising. But data analysis is what makes the difference." The

cluttered space."

The discussions also included the role of advertising agencies and market research agencies in the competitive and evolving business environment to make communication more meaningful. "Marketers need to understand that they must earn the attention of the consumers instead of assuming they already own it. This is the reason why consumers are gradually beginning to avoid ads – especially Generation Z," commented Nigel Hollis, "Advertising should integrate creativity that resonates with people, so as to make the communication meaningful."

SABRINA RAHMAN

The writer is a contributor at Next Step, The Daily Star

## THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



## GP ACCELERATOR BATCH 3 STARTUPS BEGIN THEIR JOURNEY

Grameenphone Accelerator (GPA) has unveiled the newest batch of startups beginning their four-month long acceleration journey on March 29 at GPHouse. After a rigorous process of screening over 600 applications, face-to-face interviews and pitch presentations, six startups were introduced to the startup ecosystem and the attendees of the media launch today.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith was present as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said, "GP has been a good partner of the digitalisation process and the introduction of GP Accelerator will

increase the cooperation with the government."

GPA, in partnership with SD ASIA, has been designed to support early-stage, home-grown tech startups. Five startups are provided with an intensive, rapid, and immersive training over the course of the programme. The startups each receive BDT 11 lakh in seed funding, workspace at GPHouse, and a set of relevant industry contacts to speed up the life cycle of their businesses. This fixed-term, cohort-based programme allows the ventures to build a robust business model, become investable, and scale up. The programme ends with

a demo day where startups pitch to a plethora of experienced investors, partners, and key clients.

The third batch application round saw some strong teams and GPA decided to make room for one extra team. However, the sixth team will not receive any funding nor will they have to give up equity.

Welcoming the new batch to GP House, GP CEO Petter-Børre Furberg said, "GPA is here to support the young innovators and entrepreneurs of Bangladesh to make a mark in the digital world. They can be the vehicles of the next phase of development for this country."



## YOUTH VOICE OF BANGLADESH HOLDS CORPORATE LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

Youth Voice of Bangladesh (YVB) conducted its second corporate leadership workshop titled Corpo Route Key 2 on March 25.

Accommodating 1,000 students from universities across Dhaka, Chittagong, Noakhali, Jessore and Gopalganj, the event was held at the Krishibid Institute of Bangladesh. The workshop was brightened by the presence of iconic corporate

idols at pioneering companies of the present in Bangladesh.

Solaiman Shukhon, Head of Marketing, Aamra Networks Ltd; Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Programme Manager-Education, BRAC International; Ayman Sadiq, Founder and CEO, 10 Minutes School; and Prito Reza, Photographer and Director, Prito Reza Productions graced the event

with their presence. Mushfiq Hasan, Student Advising Outreach Coordinator at US Embassy Dhaka was present as special guest.

The speakers delivered fresh ideas on how students can reach their goals. After each session, the floor was open to questions from the students. The participants expressed their will to attend more of such career leadership workshops.

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