

Truth must be communicated to keep customers, build brands

New Zealand Dairy Products (BD) Ltd Chief Executive Officer Mohsin Ahmed says at The Daily Star's The Chief Executive Show powered by Marico

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

When changes come, everyone starts diverting their attention to it and acts like the past has become obsolete. The same happened during this coronavirus pandemic when almost every company tried to connect their products with the Covid-19 in one way or another.

To New Zealand Dairy Products' Chief Executive Officer Mohsin Ahmed, such technique has both good and bad consequences because the pandemic may not last forever.

The products that have nothing to do with the pandemic but are being linked will face a challenge in future, he said.

"The truth must be communicated. Because authenticity is paramount in brand communication."

All dairy products of the country's largest dairy product manufacture contain vitamin D. Now, it would not be a good idea to promote these as immunity booster to relate with the situation.

"There must be a balance, no matter whether the marketing of the product has changed the dimension or the textbooks have been upgraded."

He believes that if the traditional way of communication shifts fully to digital platforms, it would be challenging as most people still think the traditional way and the brands will be at a loss.

Ahmed, a veteran corporate personality, said opportunities existed everywhere, but companies are not ready to seize them all the time.

"A market is a dynamic place, and the consumer need is also changing. It's the CEOs job to identify the need gap and keep his organisation prepared."

New Zealand Dairy's vision statement is "Adding value to life through offering the best quality

products at affordable prices to support a healthy and long life."

As seen in the business world, all companies showcase a vision statement, but Ahmed said most companies' vision statements are only to be displayed, not being appropriately followed.

A CEO should be able to craft the vision and nurture employees through the vision to take the organisation forward, he said.

Like many other successful business leaders, Ahmed did not imagine that he would end up in the corporate sector as he was interested in public service.

During post-graduation, he attended the Bangladesh Civil Service exam. Simultaneously, he applied for a job at British American Tobacco Bangladesh Company.

During his last interview at BATBC, he was asked what he wanted to



Mohsin Ahmed

achieve in life.

"At that time, I didn't know what the designation of the top position is. But I said that I wanted to see myself in that position," he said.

He joined BATBC. Afterwards, Ahmed started his career in public service as an assistant commissioner. But he missed the corporate environment of the multinational company so much that he came back after a year.

Ahmed, who went to Jhenaidah Cadet College, said the ideology of his college principal guided him throughout his career.

"One day, he asked us to write an application for the job of a sweeper, as we were intermediate level students and were eligible for that job only.

Seeing our reaction, the principal said: I don't care if you become a sweeper. But you have to be the leader of the sweepers."

While most CEOs of leading companies are business graduates, Ahmed is not, and he believes that it's his strong suit.

"I get to learn on the job, especially from the customers. If you have a problem and can't think of any solution, go to the consumers, and you'll get a solution," said Ahmed, who studied applied physics and electronics at Dhaka University.

BATBC was a great place to learn for Ahmed, and he always stayed prepared to learn from every opportunity that came his way.

"I didn't have to be master of



everything, and I didn't mind learning from juniors. The seniors didn't have much time to teach or coach, and I had to learn anyway."

During his stint, his goal was to learn and imitate the good deeds of senior leaders which shaped his understanding about the corporate world in a different way than a regular business graduate.

Ahmed also worked for New Zealand Dairy, Unilever, Nestle, Emami and Linde before helming the current role.

"Leading a company is always hard. But leading companies in the 21st century is even harder as leaders have to deal with different generations of employees."

"If we, as a part of Generation X or Y generation, don't change our mentality, we will have to face a real challenge. We have to change ourselves," he said.

Generation X is the age cohort born before the 1980s but after the Baby Boomers; the Generation Y, or Millennials, are typically thought of as those born between 1984 and 1996; and the Generation Z are those born after 1997 and are next to enter the workforce, according to an article in the Harvard Business Review.

"Leaders must be coached first about how to manage these employees from different generations," he said.

According to the CEO, leaders have two different approaches: toward their children and their employees. "I suggest my team members, particularly senior managers, to nurture young

employees like their own children."

Nowadays, businesses are not only meant for business; they are also bound to play a vital role in the betterment of society, he said.

"The role is even more vital in the business environment in Bangladesh, where the regulatory framework is weak, and consumers are not much aware of their rights."

"If we ask only one thing to ourselves whether we are offering the best quality product that my family members can consume confidently, then it would be a great service to society."

Ahmed thinks that every successful business has to think about how it achieves success.

"How we achieve must be evaluated based on good values. If not, the achievement will be short term, and it will not be an achievement at all."

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DCCI signs deal with BIAC to avail ADR service

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bangladesh International Arbitration Centre to help its members secure services from the centre.

During the signing ceremony at the BIAC secretariat in Dhaka on Thursday, Muhammad A (Rumee) Ali, chief executive officer of the BIAC, explained the centre's institutional ADR services under its own rules of arbitration and mediation to help resolve commercial disputes outside courts.

He said that ADR is an international practice that allows disputes to be resolved in a cost-effective, confidential and neutral manner, said the chamber in a press release.

DCCI President Shams Mahmud said that arbitration and mediation are useful tools of commercial dispute resolution and the members of the chamber would get the benefits of the



mechanisms through the institutional support of the BIAC.

Mahmud stressed the need for promoting ADR mechanism among the business community. "ADR would help small and medium enterprises to a great extent in quick dispensation of disputes originated from business contracts."

BIAC Director M A Akmal Hossain Azad and DCCI Acting Secretary-General DCCI Afsarul Arifeen signed the document. Under the agreement, the DCCI will recommend the BIAC as a forum for arbitration and mediation to its members.

Both parties will also exchange technical assistance for conducting mediation and arbitration proceedings. They will plan and implement joint programmes like seminars, webinars, workshops, training and consultations to promote the BIAC as a platform for institutional ADR. DCCI Senior Vice President N K A Mobin was present during the signing ceremony.

Battle of the billionaires: Bezos, Ambani gun for India retail supremacy

REUTERS, Mumbai/New Delhi

Jeff Bezos and Mukesh Ambani, two of the world's richest men, face a turning point in a battle for preeminence in India's booming, nearly trillion-dollar retail market.

The outcome of a legal dispute which has embroiled the billionaires' Amazon.com and Reliance Industries Ltd empires - where a court ruling is imminent - may shape India's retail landscape for years to come.

The winner in the fight for Future Retail Ltd, Amazon's estranged local partner, will get pole position in the race to meet the daily needs of more than a billion people.

Accusations of insider trading and contractual breaches, as well as nationalistic cries to keep the US giant at bay, mark the high-stakes fight, which has snowballed from what began as a dispute between Amazon and Future.

If Amazon succeeds, it may slow Reliance's plans to expand its e-commerce and brick-and-mortar operations. If Amazon loses, its hopes of expanding its interests in India's second-largest retailer and cashing in on its key grocery supply chain will be dashed, industry insiders say.

Amazon is trying to stop Reliance's \$3.4 billion purchase of Future Group's retail assets. The US company, which won an injunction from an arbitrator to block the Reliance-Future deal, accuses its partner of breaching some pre-existing agreements, misleading the public and insider trading. Future denies the allegations.

Amazon, Reliance and Future did not respond to requests for comment.

Bezos's behemoth is a formidable foe, but Ambani has a history as a disrupter. He has shaken foreign telecom firms by offering dirt-cheap data. Industry executives see his e-commerce plans as a threat for Amazon and Walmart Inc's Flipkart.

"If Reliance moves faster and faster, obviously it'll become very difficult for anyone else to gain," said Himanshu Bajaj, head of consulting firm Kearney's India retail practice.

Reliance, seeking to expand its

JioMart e-commerce business, this month completed a \$6.4 billion fund-raising by selling a stake in its retail arm to such investors as Silver Lake Partners and KKR & Co.

India's retail market will grow 46 per cent over the next four years to an annual \$1.3 trillion, reckons Forrester Research. The key battle is over groceries, expected to be worth around \$740 billion a year by 2024.

While Reliance boasts around 11,000 retail stores, just 800 of those offer food and groceries, UBS estimates. Future's retail assets would nearly triple Reliance's footprint in the grocery segment and boost its e-commerce plans, said Forrester analyst Satish Meena.

Amazon sees Future as a long-term play to optimise its supply chain for



REUTERS/FILE

A woman shops inside the Big Bazaar retail store in Mumbai, India.

Founded by Kishore Biyani, dubbed India's retail king, Future transformed the country's retailing in recent decades, before COVID-19 hit the business so hard this year that Biyani was forced to find a new buyer.

Around 1,300 of Future's more than 1,700 retail outlets in 400 cities sell groceries. Its budget supermarkets cater to middle-class shoppers, while its upmarket stores offer products like imported cheese and fresh guacamole, relatively rare in India's retail landscape.

That makes Future a prized asset for both Reliance and Amazon.

Reliance and Future dominate the market, with the next competitor, Avenue Supermarts Ltd's DMart, having just 220 outlets in around 70

grocery delivery, an area where it has lagged, Meena said.

"Grocery is the category in which you fight," he said, while losing Future to Reliance would "slow Amazon".

Amazon, Future and Reliance this month hired some of India's top lawyers, who argued at length before a New Delhi judge. She is expected to decide soon whether to restrain Amazon from approaching regulators to block the Future-Reliance deal.

Amid heated legal arguments and patriotic appeals, Future's lawyer attacked Amazon as "Big Brother" in America, arguing Future faces bankruptcy if the Reliance deal fails.

"Please don't allow this American giant to kill Future," the lawyer urged the judge.

US agency opens probe into 115,000 Tesla vehicles over suspension issue

REUTERS, Washington

The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on Friday said it had opened a formal investigation into around 115,000 Tesla vehicles over a front suspension safety issue.

The auto safety regulator said it was opening a preliminary evaluation into 2015-2017 Model S and 2016-2017 Model X vehicles after receiving 43 complaints alleging failure of the left or right front suspension fore link.

Tesla in February 2017 issued a service bulletin describing a manufacturing condition that may result in front suspension fore link failures, NHTSA said.

Tesla did not respond to a request for comment.

The 2017 service bulletin said some vehicles have "front fore links that may not meet Tesla strength specifications. In the event of link failure, the driver can still maintain control of the vehicle but the tire may

contact the wheel arch liner."

NHTSA said 32 complaints involved failures that occurred during low-speed parking maneuvers, while 11 occurred while driving. Another eight complaints may also involve the same issue, NHTSA added.

The agency said "the complaints appear to indicate an increasing trend, with ... three of the incidents at highway speeds reported within the last three months."

On Nov. 20, a class-action lawsuit was filed against Tesla in the U.S. District Court in California over suspension issues in Model S and X vehicles, claiming defects that can result in the front and rear suspension control arm assembly components prematurely failing.

In October, Tesla told NHTSA it was recalling around 30,000 Model S and Model X vehicles in China for front suspension link issues at the request of Chinese regulators "because the environment in China required stronger suspension due to local roads and driving conditions."

Tesla is also issuing a separate rear suspension link recall in China for the Model S vehicles.

But Tesla told NHTSA it did not believe there was any suspension defect and said no US recall was needed, calling the issue "exceedingly rare." It added it is unaware of any related crashes, injuries, or deaths worldwide.

Last week, NHTSA said it was expanding a separate probe into nearly 159,000 Tesla Model S and Model X vehicles.

NHTSA had opened a preliminary evaluation in June over touchscreen failures. The agency said the failure can result in the loss of rear-camera image display when in reverse and reduced rear visibility when backing up. It can impact defogging ability and audible chimes relating to Autopilot and turn signals.

That probe now covers 2012-2018 model year Tesla Model S and 2016-2018 Model X vehicles. The preliminary investigation covered 63,000 Tesla Model S cars.