

Young entrepreneurs in the wedding scene

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SHOOT

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The Bangladeshi wedding scene has exploded with Bollywood-style productions replacing the simpler weddings our parents' generation had. With that, businesses focused on weddings have also taken new forms, making room for young entrepreneurs in old well-established fields like photography, catering, and event management.

Wedding photography has come a long way from the awkward footage of people eating at weddings that we grew up watching. But even modern wedding photography and cinematography have become so saturated that it's quite difficult to have a presence in this world as a young entrepreneur.

Ayna Mahal has recently made a solid footing in the world of wedding photography by going back to where it all started. Najmul Nahid, photographer and co-founder of Ayna Mahal, shared his experience saying, "It was not and still is not easy for us to find clients. It's not that we think generic wedding photography is bad. But we as a team believe that the product we create is intimate, meant to be watched with family at home, not on a big screen."

What initially made it hard for Ayna Mahal to get clients is also what's creating a brand identity for the team. "We want our photos to reflect a 90s photo album, which is why we focus more on the emotion behind moments that take place in a wedding," says Nahid.

Md. Anik Faysal, founder of Palmera Events & Catering shared a similar story, saying, "It is not easy to get into the catering business in Bangladesh. Especially considering most catering businesses have

decades of experience under their belt which makes people trust them. But the difference in our approach to catering is what's drawing clientele for us."

is related to people's health and I do not think that is something you should mess with. But many of the established catering businesses in our country do not follow any hygiene protocol, nor do they ensure quality ingredients. With a vision to change this and make health a priority while preparing food, I started my catering business."

"I let my clients see the ingredients beforehand. They are also welcome to go grocery shopping with us. Additionally, we have a hygiene protocol that we maintain strictly. The transparency we maintain with clients throughout the whole process is what's helping us create a presence in the



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



PHOTO: MEHENDI ARTS BY PRANTIKA

Faysal graduated with a degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering but decided to follow his passion and work with food. His business started with him being disappointed with the quality of ingredients and concerned about the hygiene protocols in Bangladesh catering businesses.

Faysal shares, "Food to their local parlour and get their mehendi done. But now brides want very specific designs like a Pakistani bride inspired mehendi look. Some brides go the extra mile and want an actress or celebrity's mehendi



PHOTO: HILL VALLEY PRODUCTIONS



PHOTO: MUNMUN PAUL

design copied. Even the type of mehendi they want to use is customised now. Recently, the concept of mehendi night where the bride and her friends or cousins all get their henna done."

Media influence and clients who are aware of their preferences are also visible in the makeup industry. Rubaiyet Kabir Rabita, makeup artist and founder of Glamour Beats by Rabita says, "When I started my business, brides rarely had an idea about what they wanted. But brides these days are aware of different looks, styles, makeup products, and techniques. I have loved observing this change as a makeup artist."

Additionally, the need for more creative vendors is giving space to small businesses. Spilled Ink is one such business owned and founded by Fareeha Emdad Kamal. Fareeha is putting a new spin on the old-fashioned wedding invitation cards by

offering minimalist designs that are popular abroad.

Nahian Ibnat Beg, co-founder of an event management firm named Trivents, also noticed a change in her field. "The industry is moving from conventional packages to customised ones. People are appreciating minimalism," says Nahian.

This has worked well for Nahian and her business partner Shanila Ainab who strongly believe in "less is more" and "balance" in their approach to event decor.

With inspiration and knowledge available thanks to the internet, brides and grooms have a more curated preference specific to their needs. These preferences are often influenced by Western, Indian, and Pakistani wedding trends as well. While newer trends are replacing old traditions, some old traditions are being revived by young entrepreneurs.

Alpona used to be rather common in Bangladeshi weddings. But now families are showing a renewed interest in this lost

art. Munmun Paul, founder and owner of Alpona, did not know her side hustle that she did out of passion would turn into a small business. But with her creativity, she has managed to secure a solid clientele.

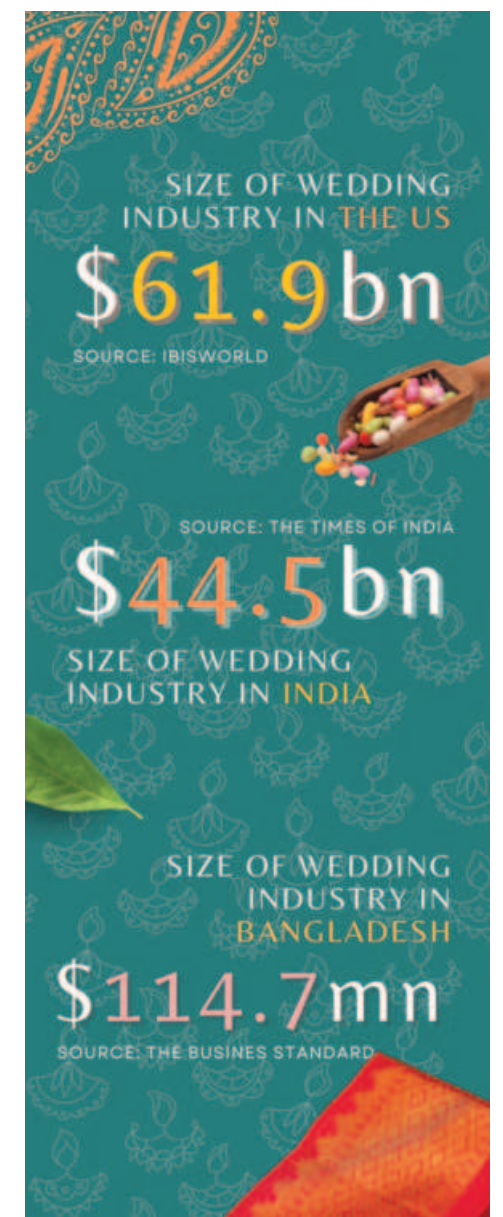
"At first I barely charged any money for my work. But I started getting bigger projects which took hours of hard work to produce. This is when I had to turn it into a more professional endeavour. I am pleasantly surprised with the positive response I am getting and people's renewed interest in the art of alpona," says Munmun.

Most businesses that centre on weddings see a significant surge in demand during the wedding season. However, people now prefer hiring professionals for other functions and parties as well. This is why these businesses get clients all year round.

Shanila Ainab, co-founder of Trivents, says, "The fact that we are offering a wide range of services keeps us agile throughout the year. Although the wedding season is hectic and mostly consists of wedding functions, off-season comprises birthdays, anniversaries, proms, graduation ceremonies, etc."

While Bangladeshi weddings are becoming more elaborate affairs with every passing season, it is also becoming more individualised and creative. Thanks to this creative flair, young entrepreneurs are making headway into a field of business that used to depend mostly on traditions, and is now becoming a fast, exciting, new industry.

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DESIGN: ABIR HOSSAIN

Patients should be looked after by a multidisciplinary team of specialists to take advantage of advanced technologies

Prof. Dr. Pierce Chow, Sr. Consultant, National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) told in an interview

Interview By: Ahammad Parvej Khan

"To take advantage of advanced technologies, the patients should ideally be looked after by a multidisciplinary team of specialists", said Prof. Dr. Pierce Chow, Senior Consultant, National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS).

In an exclusive interview, Prof. Chow said SingHealth is a comprehensive institution as SingHealth provides a complete range of services within its disciplines.

During the conversation, Prof Chow preferred collaboration between countries through research and subsequently through mutual consultancies for further excellence in medical disciplines

Prof. Dr. Pierce Chow described elaborately about the latest technological development in terms of surgical oncology.

The excerpts of his interview is produced for our valued readers.

Question: At the outset, could you please brief us about the latest technological development globally in terms of the Surgical Oncology?

Prof. Pierce Chow: There are advanced technologies globally in different fields of healthcare including surgical oncology. To take advantage of all these advanced technologies, the patients should ideally be looked after by a multidisciplinary team of specialists. We can take the Liver Cancer as an example because I work in this field. The diagnosis of Liver Cancer is further specified based on different types and stages.



Twenty-two percent of Liver Cancer are diagnosed at the early stage, twenty-six percent are at intermediary stage and Thirty-two percent at the last stage. The stage at diagnosis determines the therapeutic aims in Liver Cancer. For patients at first stages of cancer, they are very fortunate to have visited the specialist at a timely manner. At this stage, the doctor may provide curative therapy or maybe liver resection. For patients at intermediary stages, they are given regional therapy to shrink the tumour and following that, the patient will be offered curative therapy once the tumour is shrunk. All these jobs are done by a few different specialists such as medical

surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists etc. Since the hospital have all these people working together, the team of doctors are able to offer the right treatment that is best for the well-being of the patients.

Question: Could you tell us institutional approach developed globally in providing better treatments. As we know that SingHealth is a very big institute and has total solution with regards to this?

Prof. Pierce Chow: Singapore General Hospital (SGH) is understood to be an excellent hospital because of its global ranking being one of the top three. SGH is a comprehensive tertiary institution as it offers a complete range of services within its disciplines. Firstly, for Liver Cancer there are whole range of facilities available here. And secondly, SGH also provides integrated services.

Question: As an expert in the relevant field are you happy with the research works which is going on in your institution?

Prof. Chow: Definitely. In SingHealth and in the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS), we are involved with the latest research. Which means we can offer latest therapy to suitable patients as part of clinical research. When research is concerned, the rules are very strict, there are no short cuts in this, it has to be done properly because it is scientific studies.

Question: In your views, how effective collaboration could be made in between Bangladesh and Singapore?

Prof. Pierce Chow: The way to start collaborations are through research and mutual consultancies. Bangladesh is a huge

country and Singapore is a very small country. Bangladesh have many complicated and challenging medical cases. Through these complicated cases, we can both learn and hone our skills.

Question: In this regard, please share about the challenges you are facing?

Prof. Pierce Chow: Firstly, we have to overcome the Covid situation. Going forward, the challenges most likely lies within the scientific advancement. New technologies are taking place and some of them are very expensive. So as they are very expensive, so we need to make them cost-effective to the patients and of course to the clinicians, therefore we conducted clinical trials before we apply new technologies in standard treatment.

Question: Now please brief us about the special contributions of SingHealth mitigating the surgical oncology issues?

Prof. Pierce Chow: Early detection is the main area that SingHealth promote and perform. In fact, SingHealth also organises specific programs for early detection. For example, in early detection of ca breast, SingHealth promotes and organises early detection programs through annual Mammogram. In addition, SingHealth also involved in cutting-edge research to discover and improve the effectiveness of early diagnostics for the patients.

Question: What about the dream, mission and vision of SingHealth?

Prof. Pierce Chow: SingHealth is very clear about its future direction. The current concept is that we should not just be a hospital, but we should be an academic medical centre where we provide the clinical service and do the teaching and research as well. The long term goal of SingHealth is it wants to be among the top ten academic medical centres in the world.