

BRANDSutra

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"LIFE LOSES HALF ITS INTEREST IF THERE IS NO STRUGGLE — IF THERE ARE NO RISKS TO BE TAKEN."

— NETAJI SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE, FREEDOM-FIGHTER, INDIAN NATIONALIST AND LEADER

Oh to be free, fierce and female!

On January 26, 1950, the Constitution of India came into effect, guaranteeing Indian citizens fundamental rights and personal freedom. Republic Day is, therefore, an apt day to review the actual sense of liberty in our ecosystem, especially for women



By SHAVON BARUA

Celebration of the country as a republic is as important as celebrating our Independence Day, or perhaps more important, as Republic Day actually gave citizens freedom in its truest sense. Freedom is an emotion, a blessing, a privilege and an honour. Being citizen of a free country is invaluable. We will soon be celebrating the 74th year of our Republic, as the Constitution declared us free people on January 26, 1950. It is also an apt time to reflect upon and review the significant sense of freedom that we have been able to establish in our ecosystem, especially for women.

SOME PROGRESS

I know it will hit a raw nerve and open many wounds about how the basic safety and health, education and livelihoods of a large number of women in this country are still abysmal, but it is important to also look at some of the small but significant progress made. Every now and then, we must stop to review how much more we must strive to do.

In the world I know, the women and their struggles and challenges may be a little drop in the huge ocean of women's issues, but they are issues nevertheless. I was raised by strong women and continue to be surrounded by equally strong ones. Some of these women saw the country march towards freedom. My grandmother was a feisty Ahom (Assamese) woman who always felt she got a raw deal education-wise, compared to her brothers. She sneaked in on the tutorials given to the boys at home and self-taught herself. She pushed her daughter and grand-daughters to never give up. My mother was a genteel Bengali lady who laid huge emphasis on education and empathy. Both these women, along with my feminist father (I use that term, as he had no biases and raised his son and daughter as absolute equals) played a pivotal role to tell me that I have to keep bashing on. Then came my doctor mother-in-law, as determined as ever; my strong sisters-in-law and now my netizen nieces, plus a long list of support staff, friends and co-workers. All part of the free country. All with the common thread to be free and seek opportunities promised in our free land.

RATHER LIMITING

Yes, we have moved up many notches, and my grandmother's voice that I carry in my head ensures I keep moving, but even in the educated corporate world, freedom has been rather limiting. Women have been battling both blatant or subtle prejudices, at some level a punch to the freedom at work. Let us remember that our

Constitution gives us freedom to work, irrespective of gender. So, what really defines freedom at work? Equality and acceptance on the basis of capability, equality in remuneration, opportunities, growth and welfare. A safe and non-sexual workplace. Flexibility and encouragement for all, irrespective of gender. Big words? Or simply words? I recently met two women from adland. One of them has a top job and is a freshly minted national leader. She faces blockages, albeit subtle, from the boys' club to accept her leadership. The other one is a junior writer, very talented and very pretty. She is at the receiving end for being pretty! The talent is being overlooked as she is blatantly harrowed by all kinds of co-workers. Both these women are trying hard not to buckle under the pressure. But why this is still happening is the question. There has been big talk about being cognisant, about #metoo. And bigger talk about acceptance of women in leadership, narrowing the gender gap. It seems agencies are in a rush to bring the old (read toxic) atmosphere back.

FINDING BALANCE

Another point is the hybrid way of working to help more women return to work and manage the work-life balance. It is becoming more than common to slot people (mostly women) as second-class employees if they opt for this. Is choosing to work

remotely bringing in some freedom, but at a cost? Is there a penalty for trying to find work-life balance? The pandemic had a huge mental wellbeing impact, and there is no getting away from that. Many working women were unable to return to office, lost jobs and have overall faced many challenges. All the progress that the women workforce made, took a beating. Perhaps more so than the men did. It's a shame if we do not help and encourage women to find ways to go back to work. If corporates have the vision, they should not lose out on this huge talent pool, and assess people on the basis of real work and not merely face time. Access and attendance in person are great, but they are not the sole criteria for performance review. Performance is clearly defined by results, not by filling office chairs. Women who choose work-life balance should not be labelled as less serious, less committed or less ambitious. Our work life freedom will suffer a hard blow if we allow this to happen. Encouragement, empathy and, most importantly, equality is what women want to be genuinely free and be the best version of themselves.

To all you wonderful women who read this, be free in your head. Be free in your soul. Don't let them tell you that you are not good enough or capable enough or any such nonsense. You are enough. Be proud and celebrate your freedom.

(The author is an independent brand curator, coach and consultant. She tweets at @landsdownlane)



HOW ABHAY PARNERKAR DRIVES HOME THE 'GHAR KA FAST FOOD' PROPOSITION

CEO TRACK

BY SRABANA LAHIRI

When Abhay Parnerkar had the ubiquitous ready-in-two-minutes Maggi in his childhood, little did he know that one day he would lead Godrej Tyson Foods, with a vast portfolio of vegetarian and non-vegetarian ready-to-cook frozen foods under popular brand names like Real Good Chicken and Yummiez. Conscious of fitness, his focus remains on ensuring taste, health and hygiene of the entire range of products, in effect delivering to customers the 'Ghar Ka Fast Food' experience.

Please take us through your background and growing up years... What life experiences from those years have shaped you as a person?

The biggest life-shaping experience for me was diversity I've never spent more than 3-4 years in one place. I have lived across multiple cities and countries. I was a very outgoing kid. Growing up, I experienced diverse foods and cuisines, thanks to multi-cultural neighbours. In fact, though my family had strictly vegetarian food habits, I grew up eating non-vegetarian food with neighbours and friends.

What are the marketing lessons you have garnered while working with The Coca-Cola Company across Asia, Africa and Europe, and now at Godrej Tyson Foods?

Every market – be it Africa, Europe or Asia – comes with its own advantages and disadvantages; hence each market has been a learning ground for me. I was associated with The Coca-Cola Company for more than 17 years in these markets at various levels. I have lived in five countries, while leading businesses and teams in 20+ countries across three continents. For a country as diverse as ours, with a promising economy, these learnings are a plus point. This is especially true when it comes to strengthening and expanding our existing portfolio in cities where we have a limited or zero presence. The experiences gathered in multiple international markets, especially consumer insights, come to my aid in the long run, especially while launching new products.

You recently launched the Crispy Potato Starz under Godrej Yummiez. Tell us about the expansion strategy of the company's vegetarian ready-to-cook product portfolio as well as plans to drive penetration of products.

Godrej Yummiez Crispy Potato Starz has been our latest launch, making it the third back-to-back launch from the Godrej Yummiez stable, in 2022 alone. While Godrej Yummiez began its inaugural run with the launch of non-vegetarian products, our persistent endeavour to gather feedback from our consumers made us realize that two-thirds of the demand in India's snacking space is for vegetarian products. Keeping that in mind, in 2018 we began a state-of-the-art facility in Ludhiana, Punjab which helped us increase our traction. With price points for vegetarian products being lower than that of non-vegetarian products, we are in the process of penetrating stand-alone stores as well as e-commerce websites with more of our products. Plans are afoot to expand distribution in cities where we are present currently, and also expanding to other cities where we have a limited or no presence



ABHAY PARNERKAR, CEO, Godrej Tyson Foods Limited, talks of expansion strategy of the Yummiez portfolio, USP of keeping products preservative-free using Individual Quick Freeze (IQF) technology, future plans for the business as well as growth outlook for the ready-to-cook frozen foods category as a whole

such as Udaipur, Varanasi and Mangalore. **How are the company's non-vegetarian ready-to-cook products doing? What is the outlook for Real Good Chicken? Is demand higher for veg or non-veg products across markets?**

Today, we have outperformed our competitors by becoming the market leader in the non-veg ready-to-cook frozen foods category. In terms of sales, Godrej Yummiez non-veg products contribute 55% to our total sales versus 45% from our vegetarian products. The outlook for Real Good Chicken is positive and extremely encouraging. The consumer shift from butcher-cut to packaged chicken is driven by better shopper experience and hygiene. Since we have the advantage of backward integration, we have farm-to-fork control on the hygiene of the chicken. We will continue to deliver that to our consumers.

Tell us about your 'Ghar Ka Fast Food' proposition, and USP of your products in an increasingly health-conscious marketplace. What are the differentiators vis a vis competition in the category?

In a space where consumers are increasingly conscious of the choices they make during a purchase, we at Godrej Tyson Foods are aware that we need to deliver products that are safe and hygienic, while keeping the taste intact. For a brand such as Godrej Yummiez, consumers look at us with a sense of legacy and trust. The 'Ghar Ka Fast Food' proposition is built on the same principles, by maintaining the authentic taste of our products while also providing a dining out experience at home. As market leaders, we are also responsible to constantly invest and evolve in delivering our best. As such, we use Individual Quick Freeze (IQF) technology, to ensure the highest safety and quality standards, across taste, hygiene and health. The best outcome of IQF technology is that our food products do not need any preservatives – which makes us stand out compared to our competitors today. Be it the new addition, Crispy Potato Starz, or the existing product portfolio, they are devoid of any preservatives which today is a major health concern for many consumers in India.

What can be called the top three talking points at Godrej Tyson Foods as a business right now? What are your plans for it in the coming year?

We are focussed on expanding and strengthening our distribution channels by increasing the existing store count by 50% in cities in which we are currently present. We also have goals to penetrate new cities, to reach out to a wider customer base. Further, we are focused on probable new launch-

es in the upcoming financial year. Our latest launch has been the Godrej Yummiez Crispy Potato Starz, which was the third in the category after Godrej Yummiez Paneer Pops and Godrej Yummiez Mix Veggies, and we expect this to boost overall growth by 30% in FY23.

How do you expect the ready-to-cook frozen foods category as a whole to grow? What are the challenges before it in India, and what immediate steps are required to make the industry function better?

The frozen foods market in India is pegged at approximately Rs 3,500 crore today. I am bullish about the frozen foods category seeing over 10% growth in the coming years. The definition of what the best-suited snack is for an individual or a household has changed. While it will be interesting to watch India's snacking industry growth story, we at Godrej Yummiez need to continue to invest in research and development, to which we are highly committed as responsible marketers and manufacturers.

What are some key insights from the India Snacking Report recently released

“We are focussed on expanding our distribution channels by increasing the existing store count by 50% in cities in which Godrej Tyson Foods is currently present. We also have goals to penetrate new cities.”

– ABHAY PARNERKAR



Finally, tell us about Abhay Parnerkar, the person, beyond the realm of work. What are you passionate about? What defines your personality?

I am very close to my family – my wife and three lovely daughters. As I move through life, I'd like to spend a lot of time with them. Unfortunately, I don't get much time these days as they are in a different city. I am also passionate about travel and use travel as a means to experience different cultures and societies in India as well as around the world. As a direct impact of travel, I am also very experimental with food. I have been to 60+ countries and enjoyed different kinds of food and cuisines. Over the years, I have also been taking fitness seriously and like to engage in outdoor sports and other fitness activities. I am very keen about making an impact on people and society around me; so I intend to spend at least some time every week on volunteering.

What is a motto that you believe in and follow every day?

Every day is a new day that can teach us something or the other and help us in expanding our thinking and planning horizon for the future. I am a firm believer that as a business operator, I must consistently deliver much ahead of plan results, to which I am committed.

Brands must be persistent in the Metaverse: Rajat Ojha

ACING IT

BY SRABANA LAHIRI

As founder and CEO of Immersive Gamitronics Private Limited, based in Hyderabad, Rajat Ojha, veteran creator of chart-topping games on mobile and Playstation, is on course to develop high quality titles both for hardcore gamers and casual players. As someone who has spent 16 years in the Silicon Valley, working across multinational giants like IBM, Toshiba, etc, he is invested in the next-gen of digital evolution in India. As an expert in AI and the simulation industry, he is excited about creating a Metaverse platform – PartyNite, dubbed India's very own Metaverse – adding a blockchain and commerce layer and facilitating brand collaborations on it.

Talking about PartyNite Metaverse, Ojha says, “More than 200 brands reached out to us and a lot of them got converted into actual implementation of experiences on PartyNite. For example, for Airtel, we created a 20-screen multiplex where people consume their OTT content. At the same time, there is another layer that is supporting these audiences with a direct link to subscribe to Airtel services if they like what they see. Metaverse is the only place where brands can capture what audiences are doing, and also what they are not doing – through 360-degree user ana-

RAJAT OJHA, Founder, CEO, Gamitronics, has created PartyNite, dubbed India's very own Metaverse, and is busy creating events and experiences for major brands on it



WHAT IS PARTYNITE?

PartyNite is a digital parallel universe (powered by blockchain) where people can hang out with friends as customizable avatars and have fun exploring new worlds, meeting new people, joining parties, attending events, playing games, claiming/minting/selling playable NFTs, dancing, listening to music, having a drink or just talking.

PartyNite has attracted the attention of many brands, corporates and even government entities amidst the huge uptake for brand collaborations

alloy or car upholstery, etc. At a physical car launch event, people see what the car brand wants them to see, while in the Metaverse, the users customize what they want to see and this participatory audience data can be captured for the brand. There is no limit to what we can do on the Metaverse.”

ENSURE STICKINESS

On major challenges faced while working with brands in the Metaverse, Ojha says, “It's a Catch 22 situation – brands will come where audiences are, and audiences will go where there is engagement. Sometimes it gets difficult. For example, suppose there is a big event that attracts one million people on a particular day, and the next day, after the event is

on the Metaverse. Airtel Xstream did an integration with PartyNite, opening up a 20-screen multiplex on the Metaverse, playing out content pieces from its OTT content partners. Eno did a collaboration on PartyNite with stand-up comedian Zakir Khan and a bunch of other comedians talking about food habits, acid reflux, etc. McDowell collaborated with PartyNite for a Holi event. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) did an event on PartyNite in collaboration with the Telangana Government to launch its space tech policy.

over; what are those audiences going to do? So brands must be persistent, and be part of the permanent world in the Metaverse, with a long-term vision. They should measure ROI not in dollars, but in terms of building a community engagement and stickiness. Only when audiences stick and start trusting will they spend money on the platform.”

Going ahead, Ojha's focus is on creating tools that will be the 'meta' reason for people to keep coming back to PartyNite Metaverse. “We are now creating an entire fantasy city with full infrastructure, not just catering to individual events. We want to give people enough reason to come back every single day.” Meanwhile, Ojha is in conversation with production houses to create immersive trailers for films on the Metaverse. He is also working to bring new age thinking to multiple theme park projects across the globe.

METVERSE TRENDS

One trend that Ojha sees in the Metaverse is that it is going physical. One can make a purchase on the platform and have a doorstep delivery for the product. “Another trend is the emergence of Metaverse-specific brands. Tommy Hilfiger, for example, has launched a parallel apparel brand, only for the Metaverse. Big ticket brands of the world like Gucci, Armani are on to it too, as are corporate entities,” Ojha says.

AROUND ADWORLD

AAAI HONOURS COLVYN HARRIS WITH ITS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR 2022



The Advertising Agencies Association of India (AAAI) conferred the AAAI Lifetime Achievement Award for 2022 on advertising veteran Colvyn Harris, former CEO of J Walter Thompson South Asia, at a well-attended function last week. Seen in pic (L-R) - Anupriya Acharya, CEO, Publicis Groupe, South Asia, Prasanth Kumar, CEO, GroupM South Asia (President of AAAI); Colvyn Harris and his wife Deepa Harris, Rana Barua, Group CEO, Havas Group India and Vishan Hardasani, CFO, GroupM South Asia.