

Don't Sell Yourself Short



He is a changemaker, pioneer and novel thinker. During his career spanning over 40 years, he has introduced many firsts to Sri Lanka and

prompted many revolutions within the country's creative space. Through his diverse interests, wide-range of talents and thirst for knowledge, he has made an immense contribution to Sri Lanka's advertising and marketing sector. Two of his most iconic advertising campaigns are noteworthy marketing case studies in Sri Lanka. Athula Mahawalage, Conceptualist and CEO, AM Kreations reveals that his driving force is self-satisfaction. He believes in gaining inspiration from Sri Lanka, and that creative conceptualization should be unique to the Sri Lankan audience. He shares his thoughts on the industry, learnings from his career and advice for the emerging generation.

By Udeshi Amarasinghe Assisted by Keshini De Silva
Photography Menaka Aravinda

Who is Athula Mahawalage?

I have always worked towards utmost self-satisfaction. I am responsible, but I am also relaxed and easy-going. I do not do anything that I am not satisfied with.

I was first a writer, a cartoonist and picture story artist. I am also a lyricist, documentarian and television commercial director, scriptwriter and music composer for TV commercials. From a professional perspective, I am a conceptualist and strategic marketing consultant; after all my work revolves around selling ideas. For many years, I have lectured on multimedia marketing at Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT).

You are known for introducing many firsts to Sri Lanka in the creative sector. Could you tell us about this?

I did not know that my name was being taught at Universities in Sri Lanka as a game changer in the industry or as the instigator of the 'calendar revolution'. Renowned Swedish design maestro Prof Lars Valentine had even spoken about me

in several countries, where he had conducted seminars, as a marketing and packaging maestro. In retrospect, although I did not think about it, there have been many firsts for Sri Lanka through my work.

Back in the day, the masthead of newspapers in Sri Lanka was in the centre with advertisements on the sides, according to international trends. When I did the conceptualization for 'Lakbima' newspaper, I moved the masthead to the side. Today, many of the newspapers in Sri Lanka are placing their masthead to the side. People are not aware that it was I who did this first in Sri Lanka.

I Did Not Know That My Name Was Being Taught At Universities In Sri Lanka As A Game Changer In The Industry Or As The Instigator Of The 'Calendar Revolution'.

When I entered the industry, the calendars featured the best or most popular actor or actress such as MGR or Jayalalitha from South India. Or else, images of kittens in baskets or flower bouquets were used. However, I had seen how tyre calendars printed overseas featured glamorous models. Inspired by this, I decided to use new models in various poses to create imagery for calendars. In the past, although they used popular actresses in traditional poses, I changed the concept by using models in the 'Ayubowan' pose, with betel leaves or lighting a lamp. I changed the concept and this became the trend. Thus, without my knowledge, they teach my name at local Universities as the Architect of the Calendar Revolution in Sri Lanka.

In terms of bridal fashion photography, back in the day, no one modelled bridal attire as they only wore bridal attire for their wedding day due to social superstitions. I wanted to do a bridal fashion calendar and no one wanted to be featured in it. Finally, I found a Malay model who agreed to model in a Kandyan bridal attire. That was the start of the bridal fashion modelling industry in Sri Lanka.

Can you speak about your career and journey throughout the years? How did you get into this field?

My father was an accountant, my mother was an artist and I had five siblings. My mother passed away when I was in grade eight. By that time, I was already a cartoonist for the newspapers and was popular in school. Although I studied Bio-Science, I also followed art as a subject and was able to achieve many Distinctions. At that point, my work with the newspapers was a hobby where I won many cartoon competitions. I really liked this industry and I felt that my talents lay in this sector. However, I was criticized and many advised me against it, stating that those who are artists or designers were not economically successful. I saw this as a challenge. While my peers became doctors, I decided to become a designer against everyone's wishes. Everything with regards to creativity, I learnt from my father's brother M D Jayatissa. With the cameras of my bio-science teacher, Tissa de Silva and my friends, I delved into photography as well. Before taking a photograph, I would first sketch it on paper using my experience as a cartoonist. It is that start in life, that brought me to the position where I am at today.

Many Questioned Why I Would Produce That Film As It Was Not A Film That Would Generate A Profit. My Response To Them Was That It Was A Social Responsibility Film.

Subsequently, I entered the advertising industry with a position at Phoenix Advertising. Interestingly, at the same time that one of my projects for Phoenix was being shown, five other projects that I had done as a freelancer was already being aired as commercials. Therefore, my profession was automatically directed. In this backdrop, I started studying marketing. Moreover, music was one of my hobbies as well. Thereafter, I launched my photography portfolio and started my advertising company. I felt that I needed to focus on concepts. Therefore, without using the word 'agency', I used the term 'advertising media consultancy' for my company. I decided that I would not pitch for work but would instead focus on my portfolio and success stories, which would lead to invitations for me to work on client projects. I continue to follow this approach and, I study and research the subject as much as I possibly can. I dedicate my time from 11pm to 2am for research and study; and thereafter I go to sleep. I will never give up on gathering knowledge.

You are a film producer and 'Premaya Nam' was an award winning film. Can you elaborate on this aspect?

I ventured into film producing in 1975, even before I sat for my Ordinary Level Examinations, while working on 'Sikuruliya', the country's second cinemascope, wide screen film. 'Sikuruliya' was the first logo I designed for a film, and I also managed the press campaign and developed the tagline for the film. Subsequently, I received invitations for many other film advertising campaigns, and I did around 25 to 30 films. Although I was primarily involved in film advertising, I delved into everything concerning film production and worked with the entire team.

In this respect, I wanted to venture into film direction rather than film production. By this stage I had already directed documentaries and television commercials. In fact, I started filming commercials even before video cameras were introduced by using the CINE camera for film halls. After the 'Nestomalt - 'Balaya, Javaya, Shakthiya' campaign, four producers approached me to direct a film. However, I decided that I would not undertake anything unless I found a good script. It was difficult to find a good script. Many scriptwriters including award winning scriptwriters, sought me because they had heard of my plans to direct a film. I contracted some scriptwriters, however, they did not produce anything to my satisfaction because they did not represent the thinking I had hoped for. Therefore, I shelved this idea as I did not want to risk a failure after all the successes I have achieved. Subsequently, I learnt that two new entrants to the cinema industry, Kalpana Ariyawansa and Vindana Ariyawansa, were creating the film 'Premaya Nam'. I loved the script because of its important social responsibility message. I was a co-producer for the film. The end result was quite successful, and 'Premaya Nam' won awards and was screened at 15 international film festivals in three continents. Many questioned why I would produce that film as it was not a film that would generate a profit. My response to them was that it was a social responsibility film.

You are a conceptualist, artist, writer and photographer, what does it mean to be in this creative field? What is the potential?

I have observed that those who enter the marketing industry are those with management talents. They manage creative people and motivate them to perform. I believe that I am a combination of both of my father's and mother's thinking patterns. Therefore, despite being a creative individual, I always consider everything from a business perspective as well. I have never undercut anyone through prices and have always charged the highest rate in the industry. When I

was designing book covers in 1975, I charged according to the industry rate. I have always maintained industry standards and at times I have even charged higher rates.

For example, my charges for photography are higher than the industry standard. I introduced exclusive photography packages, where charges varied based on how the client use the photographs. For projects with luxury hotels, where photographers work on campaigns for long periods of time, I included contracts that they should be provided meals at the hotel coffee shops and restaurants. I introduced that practice.

Back then there was a perception that creative people do not have money. I worked to balance that status quo. Luckily, I received the opportunity to work with the crème de la crème of the industry. In 1980, I was involved in a political advertising campaign marking the completion of three years for the J R Jayewardene Government. I was the designer while the concept was by Cyril B Perera. I worked with journalists such as Sirilal Kodikara and Ralex Ranasinghe. From a professional perspective, working with them was instrumental for my own ventures as well. Back in the days, lawyers and doctors were held with professional esteem, and I wanted to bring that same esteem to creative fields such as photography. During this time, I was the official photographer for 13 international publications in Sri Lanka, such as Asian Business, Textile Asia, InAsia, Jewellery News Asia and International Tax-Free Trader. It was Nalin Wijesekara who assisted me with networking and making those connections.

For instance, I was once near a bomb explosion in Sri Lanka, and after helping those affected in anyway I could, I took my camera from the vehicle and took photographs. Subsequently, all the photographs published by AP News and Strait Times were taken by me. I earned large sums of money, all of which I donated to camps for the destitute. Therefore, while earning I have never forgotten my social responsibilities.

This is not an easy field to succeed in, can you tell us the challenges you have faced and how you overcame these?

It is difficult when you only think from a creative or artistic perspective, which is why I have also considered things from a business perspective. Firstly, I made a decision that I would not seek out work. Secondly, I wanted people to seek me, based on my successful portfolio. I did not launch publicity campaigns for myself or my company. However, once I had completed a project and it was successful, clients would try to find the person who created it. To this date, I have received projects based on my portfolio; I do not know what tomorrow holds. Moreover, I also pay great attention to industry standards. I would always create a long term plan with the help of my wife. While I would consider something to be an investment, she would point out that it was instead an expense. We would have arguments; however, it was through these discussions that we were able to professionally build the Company.

I Always Hope For The Best, But Prepare For The Worst. With Every Campaign, I Always Think From The Negative Perspective; I Consider What Could Go Wrong. By Doing So, I Have The Answers For Any Prospective Challenges From The Beginning Itself.

I was always in a race against time considering the projects that I have undertaken. It may sound absurd, but I do not do projects in the manner the clients want it to be done, but rather I look at ways in which the client's objectives can be achieved through accurate positioning of the brand.

Similarly, I never instruct my designers to make the letters bold or colour them in a particular colour, instead I request them to highlight the letters. The method is the next step. There is a clear purpose in everything I do, be it colours, photography or marketing concepts. I have instructed my team that everything they do must have a clear purpose as well.

I always hope for the best, but prepare for the worst. With every campaign, I always think from the negative perspective; I consider what could go wrong. By doing so, I have the answers for any prospective challenges from the beginning itself. This is my approach in everything, even in terms of the words I use for campaigns. Once a tagline has been created, I analyse it to identify if it can be portrayed in a negative manner. Similarly, I gave much thought to the taglines for the Nestomalt and

Maggie campaigns. From the first project, we consider our counterattack if a competitor says anything against our campaign. No matter how tight the schedule, I do not provide the client a campaign that I am not satisfied with. In certain instances, the client may not agree with me, however, I point out that this is the best for the brand and I provide my reasoning. I have trained my staff to operate in the same manner. After all my training, my staff are head hunted, however, 17 years on I am proud to say that I continue to work with my original team.

Your thinking is novel and concepts are different, you have done some of the most innovative advertising campaigns and rebranding initiatives such as People's Bank, Nestomalt and many more. Can you elaborate on this?

I believe that visual art and design must be created through a powerful concept. Or else, it will be difficult to execute it effectively. Similarly, no matter how powerful the concept is, if you make a mistake during the execution stage, failure is inevitable. We have witnessed powerful concepts fail to resonate with the people.

I was invited by Hemasiri Fernando to create the People's Bank concept based on his idea. At that stage, there was great change taking place with the transformation of the atmosphere at the Bank through creativity and an advancement of banking operations through technology. However, the public did not witness these changes and assumed the operating culture of the bank was the same as in the past. Our project was based on the theme of communicating this change to the public. We did not consider this to be a changing of the bank's logo. Instead, we enhanced the brand image.

In terms of the Peoples' Bank project, we considered that this was a 60-year-old bank and that it was the Bank with the most accounts in the country. Therefore, we needed to contemplate on the existing customers. If a visual change took place, we needed to consider its impact on existing customers. In marketing, the smallest mistake can result in the upheaval of the brand or service. There are many case studies that reflect this. Therefore, with the aim of preserving the core values, I did a lot of research. On my personal travels to the West, I gathered knowledge, and learnt what should not be done through these real life examples. Our aim was to consider the thinking of the general public and appeal to the younger generation. We received a lot of freedom and I discussed most of the concepts in-depth with Hemasiri Fernando. He is an artist, photographer and writer as well; and thus it was

easy to engage in the creative process with him.

In Terms Of The Peoples' Bank Project, We Considered That This Was A 60-Year-Old Bank And That It Was The Bank With The Most Accounts In The Country.

Before we started the creative process, I studied the colours of every brand; not only the finance sector I also analysed the international transformation of Nestle, Pepsi and Shell logos. I studied the logo revolutions in the world and then analysed the people's thinking. Pensioners and customers who had been with Peoples' Bank for decades were critical of the plans to change the brand image. Many personally called and questioned me. There was a yellow in the middle of the Peoples' Bank emblem, which I enhanced to a golden yellow. The font was maroon, but through research I learned that only 20 per cent of the existing customers identified that colour. However, they were able to identify the colour of other banks. This was because maroon was not a primary or secondary colour, and thus people would not remember it. When the shade of maroon was saturated it became red. We realised that there was no bank in Sri Lanka with the red and yellow colour combination. Our analysis showed that this was a strong combination, which caught the attention of the customer. Furthermore, strong brands in various sectors such as Shell and Kodak had differentiated themselves with this colour combination. The lemon green line was introduced to represent the 'green banking' or paperless banking concept of the new operating environment. Following the introduction of these changes, the customers did not feel that the logo had changed, yet it did not feel old either. With this change, the public started to notice the Peoples' Bank ATMs across the country.

There is a long history with regards to how the Nestomalt advertising campaign unfolded, and I could write a novel on this story. It is based on the dedication of Trevor Reckerman that I was able to proceed forward with the tagline 'Balaya, Javaya, Shakthiya'. I had the opportunity to work with the likes of Habib Idris, Muhammad Hamza, Sriyan Wijeratne, Samira Fonseka, Asitha Samaraweera and Udaya Samaratunga in the 1990s.

We Must Improve Our Standards Not Only In Terms Of The Cost Charged, But Also In Terms Of Quality.

One of the biggest challenges to Nestomalt was the introduction of PowerMalt by Fonterra in 2003. The campaign to mitigate this competitor was awarded to me. The 'Balaya Javaya Shakthiya' campaign that I had launched four years ago, was the concept that I built upon. There is a case study on this called the 'Malt War'. In fact, the top management of Nestlé approved some advertisements and press campaigns in no time and were aired or published; this shows the trust they had on me. It is through branding and advertisement campaigns that Nestomalt, which had a preconception of being for the elderly and sick, became a brand that appealed to the youth and young adults. I have worked on many campaigns, however it is through the Nestomalt and Peoples' Bank campaigns that I have received utmost satisfaction. The two campaigns were quite successful and have since become marketing case studies.

Can you tell us about your work with the newspapers?

When the 'Ravaya' magazine was re-launched as a newspaper, I was invited to design the masthead. By that time, I had already designed a few logos such as 'Desathiya' for the Information Department. This was in addition to the logos I had designed for films. During the discussion, after a cup of tea, I wrote the name 'Ravaya' on a piece of paper. Back then newspaper logos were in a square or circular font and were within a box. Ravaya was a radical newspaper, so the logo I developed had to suit this character. Due to technological limitations of the time, the drawing, which I had sketched small, was enlarged through photo stat; even then it could only be enlarged to 33 per cent. This process resulted in the rough texture of the logo. The editor also agreed to my suggestion. This logo has been used for the past 30 years.

Thereafter, when the 'Lakbima' newspaper was being launched, they requested me to design the logo. I used the colour orange, which other publications had not used at the time and I also slanted the letters to the left. It was my idea to run a tabloid alongside 'Lakbima'.

The masthead for 'Deshaya' was also designed by me. Many of the mastheads of newspapers currently being published in Sri Lanka have been designed by me.

What can you tell us about this sector in general? What more can be done?

The industry is global. However, many attempt to take concepts and marketing philosophies from the international sphere and implement them in its entirety in Sri Lanka. Firstly, there is no need to do so because the thinking pattern in Sri Lanka is different. We should not look down on rural communities, because they are even more knowledgeable than us; in fact, today there are rarely any villages as most have progressed to towns. Therefore, we need to understand our target audience. Through these international publications we must instead comprehend what we should not be doing. Much of the industry is trying to implement marketing strategies from theory in its entirety which does not work.

Moreover, we must improve our standards not only in terms of the cost charged, but also in terms of quality. That standard must be recognised internationally and not merely focused on Sri Lankan standards. Some create campaigns, where an international version is dubbed or copied, this is not how it should be done. We must create to international standards while reflecting international prices. Similar to BT Options, I always charged in US Dollar and have been doing so for the past 15 years, especially since I took on many projects for Nestlé.

I was deeply involved in the packaging industry and I was the first person to introduce dominant Sinhala letters to packaging of multinational brands. While to this date Nestomalt is only written in English, for Maggi Coconut Milk I introduced large Sinhala fonts for the name. This was because, at the time consumers connected the name Maggi for noodles. It was problematic as back then purchases were made at small grocery stores and there were barely any supermarkets. However, when the words Coconut Milk were written in large Sinhala letters, they were able to easily identify the product. During this time, packaging was designed overseas, and I charged similar rates. Just because it is a project for a multinational company in Sri Lanka, there is no need to charge less than the international rate. In 1988, when the Oberoi Hotel campaign was underway, photographers from America and India worked in Sri Lanka. When I received projects, I charged similar rates. While providing the highest quality to ensure competitiveness, it is important to charge comparative prices. The amount charged is not about increasing profit margins, but this must be invested to obtain optimum results for the client. Therefore, it is the client who benefits. At times, advertising teams show companies

how they have produced a result with a lower budget. I invest the rate I charge to ensure the client receives a benefit of over ten times the fee at the outcome stage. Many do not understand the importance of this philosophy, and it is a grave issue that I have observed within the marketing and advertising industry in Sri Lanka.

We must think big; we must think global and not local. If all the best printing equipment, computers and publishing equipment are available in Sri Lanka, then why should we provide local orders to foreign companies. For example, Serendib magazine was previously produced and printed in Hong Kong and Dubai for more than 30 years; it is now done in Sri Lanka and there is no change in quality or standard. In fact, it is better.

What inspires you?

I always read business and finance articles and apply these to life. I am inspired by Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Einstein and Steve Jobs because they fused art and technology. They amalgamated concept and thinking with design. They were not one sided in their conceptualization. I have read their biographies and work. We should not merely take decisions based on our knowledge, but must learn from the lives of others. If the new generation is not inclined towards reading, then I urge them to watch good movies. When you are faced with a decision or problem, learnings from these movies and books will inform your decision making. I continue to invest time in gaining knowledge. I am compelled to do so, as when I lecture, students cross check what I say on the internet. Therefore, I must do a great amount of homework. I study extensively before I do anything.

About your family?

My wife Renuka is from the finance sector. She was an accountant at the Shipping Corporation. When I started my business, she joined me to assist with the financial operations and to-date she has handled all the finances. My other ventures include Lanka Premium Drinking Water – which is totally handled by my wife, Toby's Estate coffee chain and FilmAgeMedia. This production house has handled most of the campaigns for Nestlé. I have invested to maintain confidentiality for the client.

While the campaign is being formulated, I wanted to ensure competitors did not get to know about the project, therefore I decided to launch my own production house. We only take on projects for our clients, and I have invested heavily in the facilities with high quality equipment.

I have two daughters. The eldest studied in Raffles, Singapore and is now following her Masters in France; she is involved in the marketing sector. My second daughter studied at NAFA Singapore and is following a Degree program in Melbourne, Australia. She is studying advertising and filmmaking. I did not compel them to follow any of these paths, it is of their choosing. My eldest daughter first started studies in interior design, and after a year she worked with me on a brief stint. While handling presentations for the company, she realised that her talents were in marketing. My younger daughter has continued to work as a freelance photographer and designer. It is probably why she also studies filmmaking.

We Must Think Big; We Must Think Global And Not Local. If All The Best Printing Equipment, Computers And Publishing Equipment Are Available In Sri Lanka, Then Why Should We Provide Local Orders To Foreign Companies.

My company is named Advertising Marketing Kreations, despite misconceptions that AMK stands for my name. Firstly, it is my view that they need to acquire more experience by working and studying overseas. Secondly, I believe that if they choose to return to Sri Lanka, they must start out on their own the same way I did and build something from the bottom.

How can we encourage the younger generations to enter these sectors? But also ensure the quality and standard that is required?

The knowledge of the younger generation is greater than ours. When we started, we did not see what was happening in the world. Instead, we relied on our imagination. Songs did not have accompanying videos, so we visualized it in our minds. It was the same with radio dramas. Therefore, we had imagination as an advantage, because it was part of our daily life. However, today's generation does not need to

rely on their imagination, as they have information at their fingertips. They live in their phones. While walking through the airport you can observe many things about humans, their emotions, behaviour and apparel; as well as the shops and signage. However, I have noticed, especially at airports in Japan and Korea that the youth are glued to their phones. They do not absorb information from their surroundings.

The internet offers the youth around the world access to a large quantity of information. Therefore, how can they differentiate themselves? This is why it is important for them to have conversations with their parents, grandparents and the older generation. It is when they combine their knowledge with real life experiences of their families that they are able to propel themselves to higher places. If you search for tomato on the internet, it is indicated as a red fruit, however if not for the learnings from our grandparents and parents, we would have added this to a fruit salad. We must learn to engage with the generation before us. Today's youth have a "We Know Everything" mindset. At an interview, when I asked a question the interviewee searched online and provided the answer. The others in the panel looked irritated, however I was impressed and hired him because he showed the aptitude to look for the answer to a problem where as others would not answer or look confused.

We Must Learn To Engage With The Generation Before Us.

Previously, through conversations with parents and grandparents, we were able to increase our output by ten times. However, the younger generation of today are ignorant of many things. They may not be aware that a concept they are pitching today, had been done years ago. I read in the magazines and newspapers where people speak of new concepts, however these are things that we had done in the past. For example, with ties, the width of the tie has reduced and the thin tie style that we wore in our youth is now back in vogue. When we were young we also wore cartoon ties and floral ties, which are back in style. In fact, I have begun to wear the ties that I wore during the Nestlé 1980 campaigns because these styles are back in trend. The younger generation should not think that everything they do is novel. They must research the past and learn from what has been done. They have information, however they do not have the imagination. Photographers today can immediately view a sample of the photograph to check if everything is okay. We did not have this opportunity as we had to wait for the printed photographs to arrive

from Australia to check if the exposure was accurate. In 1982, we would fly to Singapore for colour-checking and as their technology was also not quite advanced, we would have to wait for ten days for the result. The younger generation is very intelligent; however, they must communicate with the generations before them to truly optimize their talents.

There are many negative aspects emerging in the advertising industry. How should these be corrected?

I never pitched ideas to attract sales. If someone invited me to make a pitch, I would show them my portfolio of work and ask them to contract my services and I would create the pitch. Today, firms make pitches by undercutting the other. When I compare the prices charged for advertising campaigns in the 1980s and now, there is a massive difference as advertising firms charge much less. Obviously, costs have reduced due to technological advancements, but I cannot comprehend on how they deliver quality work according to prices they charge. They use less equipment and output a result the client is satisfied with through the use of editing tools. They cover their costs by increasing the quantity of work and charge less.

I would like to advise the younger generation to always ensure that they are satisfied with the final outcome. Before thinking about the quality of the product, consider the result of the campaign. There are award winning campaigns that bear no result for the client. The advertisement is good and is remembered, but customers do not remember the brand. The commercial may have received awards, but the client will call the following day and say please do not take a similar approach as we did not even garner one per cent in sales.

You must have confidence in your work, however you should not be overconfident. Similar to positive thinking, you must consider the negative perspective. Today, many firms try do their best to score the contract. This is why I have never used the term 'advertising agency' in my business cards and instead maintained the terminology advertising consultants.

“Amplification Through Simplification” Is My Personal Motto And I

Follow It As My Creative Philosophy. Therefore, My Advice To The Emerging Generation Is To Release Their Hold On Their Smart Devices And Be Practical.

Over 20 years ago, international advertising agencies approached me. When we worked on international campaigns, we held meetings in Europe and Asia, however, in the end I decided that I would continue on with my Company in Sri Lanka as when working with international companies, I would have had to send 49 per cent of the profits from Sri Lanka and to that firm's country. When asked what they would provide us in return, they suggested that they would provide equipments. However, I already had Apple Macs, and was in fact one of the first in the industry to use Apple Macs. Subsequently, they suggested that they would offer knowledge and insights. I said that was important, however we had access to this through books and research. To me it was more important to understand the pattern of Sri Lankan thinking and feel the pulse of the local population. For example, we changed the concept of Nestomalt to suit the mindset in Sri Lanka. We received this campaign, despite advertising companies from Europe and India operating in Sri Lanka. Instead, I suggested the launch of an international branch of a local company. In retrospect, that may have been a bad idea due to the limitations of the rupee. However, I am confident that it was a good idea to not join an international advertising firm as we maintained our freedom. Or else, if we receive the contract when an agreement had been signed overseas, then these become their projects. Moreover, multinationals do have the freedom to seek local companies for advertising requirements if they are unsatisfied with the international companies. That is why I received the project for the Nestomalt campaigns despite international firms operating in Sri Lanka.

Future plans and message to the younger generation?

I do not have a future plan in terms of business. Unlike in the past, I believe that it is difficult to plan in the long term, due to phenomena taking place across the world. Due to my current workload, there are a few things that I have been unable to complete for personal satisfaction. For example, I wanted to write a few books and produce a movie. I am satisfied with my work and what I have achieved in a business sense. My hobby is to travel and explore destinations across the world, and I have a few more destinations that I plan to visit.

The views I have expressed on the younger generation is not limited to youth in Sri Lanka, but across the world. “Amplification through simplification” is my personal motto and I follow it as my creative philosophy. Therefore, my advice to the emerging generation is to release their hold on their smart devices and be practical. Real life does not revolve around the smart device. They must move outside their comfort zones, engage, use technology and practical thinking to climb higher.



