Respect And Trust



Mohideen Saheed, Founder of Stone N String and Mohksha has created a niche in the lifestyle segment, initially with his chic fashion jewellery portfolio and then introduced another lifestyle product. Through it all, his concept of elevating the lifestyle of people has remained a constant. 'Chewy Cinnamon', is the new brand launched by Stone N String, which prides itself in being produced in Sri Lanka, using Ceylon Cinnamon – a resource of great renown. Through his new concept, Mohideen Saheed seeks to unleash the potential of one of Sri Lanka's most valuable exports.

By Udeshi Amarasinghe
Photography Mahesh Bandara and Menaka Aravinda

What are your plans for the future?
There is much that we can do when looking at the future of the fashion jewellery industry. In this segment, we should not be just the jeweller, but must also be style consultants.

We have constantly used gemstones such as garnet, moonstones, pearls and many varieties of semi-precious stones and designed in keeping with latest fashion trends. We have also introduced sapphires and rubies, which are in the precious range and can be offered at a affordable prices due to recent technological breakthroughs. We will be focusing on this segment extensively in the future.

In terms of unleashing the power of this market, we need to engage with our customers effectively, especially online through our website and social media. In addition, we also require spaces where the customer can comfortably come and purchase products. While they want to quickly purchase and leave, they still expect a good in-store experience. As an organisation we are looking at ways in which we can fulfill the aspirations of the customer.

Would you look at expanding further?

Our bread and butter lies in reaching out to all segments and ages, both young and old, as well as being a household name for jewellery and gifts. To do justice to our creative talents, we have specialised in a sector of highly distinguished jewelley ideal for the catwalk and celebrities. Hence, we are also partnering with high-end organisations, which cater to an audience that suits our new strategies.

What can you tell us about the direction of the organisation as a family business?

Our structure is very different, although we started as a family business. We see great potential in the company and as such the family members alone cannot manage it. Thus, we are looking at venturing out, because we believe that a Sri Lankan organisation can do well in the global arena. We will be taking a different approach and will not merely look at being a public company.

You have been able to maintain the name as a reputable organisation. What you can you tell us about this?

This is a very important and pertinent question. Our mantra or business model is that we look at human nature. What is the best model that you can learn from? It is the family unit. Consider the relationship between the mother and child, the love they share cannot be expressed by words. We as an organisation love our product and love what we do. What we tell our customers is that when you purchase an item from us you make it a part of your personality. When time passes, bring it back to us and we will restore it to what it should be. While others may call this a warranty, we call it ‘respect’. We have named our loyalty cards, ‘trust’. All of these cards have inspirational quotes and if a person likes the quote they can use that card as their loyalty card. Our approach is unique. These cards have nothing to do with the value of a purchase or how long you have been with us. It is simply based on the concept of ‘family’. We simply want our customers to love the product and to become a member of our happy family.

We always purchase our material from ethical suppliers and enhance our product by utilising the latest technology on the gemstones. This enables us to complement the individual’s personality. We also have a policy of “no question asked money back guarantee”. We simply offer to add value to the lifestyle of our customers.

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Looking back, 30 years ago we created history when we changed the mind set of our ladies on as to what fashion was, how to accessorise as well as provided chic accessories.

Television was the 'second social media' at that time, which helped change the mindset from only gold to fashion jewellery.

You have also brought recognition to Ceylon Cinnamon where you have introduced innovative products. Can you elaborate on this aspect as well?
The delicate golden colour cigar shaped rolls of the Pure Ceylon Cinnamon has been the toast of civilisations across the globe since the Arabian traders first introduced the aromatic, sweet and strong spice to Europe. They maintained a monopoly on the trade of Ceylon Cinnamon and pepper until the Portuguese decided to take matters into their hands by conquering the island of Sri Lanka.

Cinnamon is the 'spice of life'. US Research has indicated massive potential for Sri Lankan cinnamon, with notable mentions in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry (JAFAC) in May 2013. We were shown the value of Cinnamon dating as far back as 2,000 years ago, and even proved scientifically five years ago.

Stone N String introduced 'Chewy Cinnamon as an upmarket lifestyle health wonder as well as miracle. It is designed in packaging that enables an ease of keeping it about your person so that it can be consumed all day, whenever possible.

There is no need anymore to say I have no time to eat healthy. The very name card holder you carry has been designed to carry cinnamon, in the most innovative fashion, hence you can offer colleagues cinnamon as you socialise. To enjoy our health drink, it is merely a matter of infusing a cinnamon sachet in hot water; the

cinnamon in the sachet can be eaten as it is pure cinnamon. Merely sprinkle on food or enjoy with crackers, honey or jam.

In short, we are making all our customers ‘A Walking Ambassador’ for a healthy lifestyle. Chewy Cinnamon has made this a possibility with its many varieties of cinnamon products such as the Honey Spread, Cinnamon Flakes/Chips as well as Powder.

What inspires you?
I completed my studies at an American Missionary School. Their teaching methods are different to the Sri Lankan system. They make you feel important and encourage you by saying “do not be afraid of failure, if you want to do something, just do it”.

We are all from the country that greets everyone by saying ‘Ayubowan’, which means welcome and may you be blessed with long life. Therefore, we must all be human first. We should unite as Sri Lankans so that we prosper together. My innovations have the human touch, the “4Ps” – Personal Products for Practical People.

The first of these were ‘Anti-theft pockets’ for clothes and handbags – so simple that it can be made by yourself to the invisible walking sticks for gents and ladies. These are aimed at assisting with daily activities. If we do not think about Sri Lanka and the country’s image there is no value in anyone’s brand, including mine.

Be conscience about the brand Sri Lanka. It is critical to remember what Ayubowan means to all of us. All organisations engage in CSR, but what is the basic meaning of CSR? It is to be human and to help each other. If someone is in trouble, we should hold their hand. We must follow the fundamental principles of our respective religions and learn to respect each other and live as one. That is critical to us all. Ayubowan.