

MARKETING

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WEEKENDER™

FROM PIONEER TO CHALLENGER

George Ang - CEO
Inter Mark Resources
A&W Malaysia



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Say What



"A PERSON HEARS ONLY
WHAT THEY UNDERSTAND."

Goethe



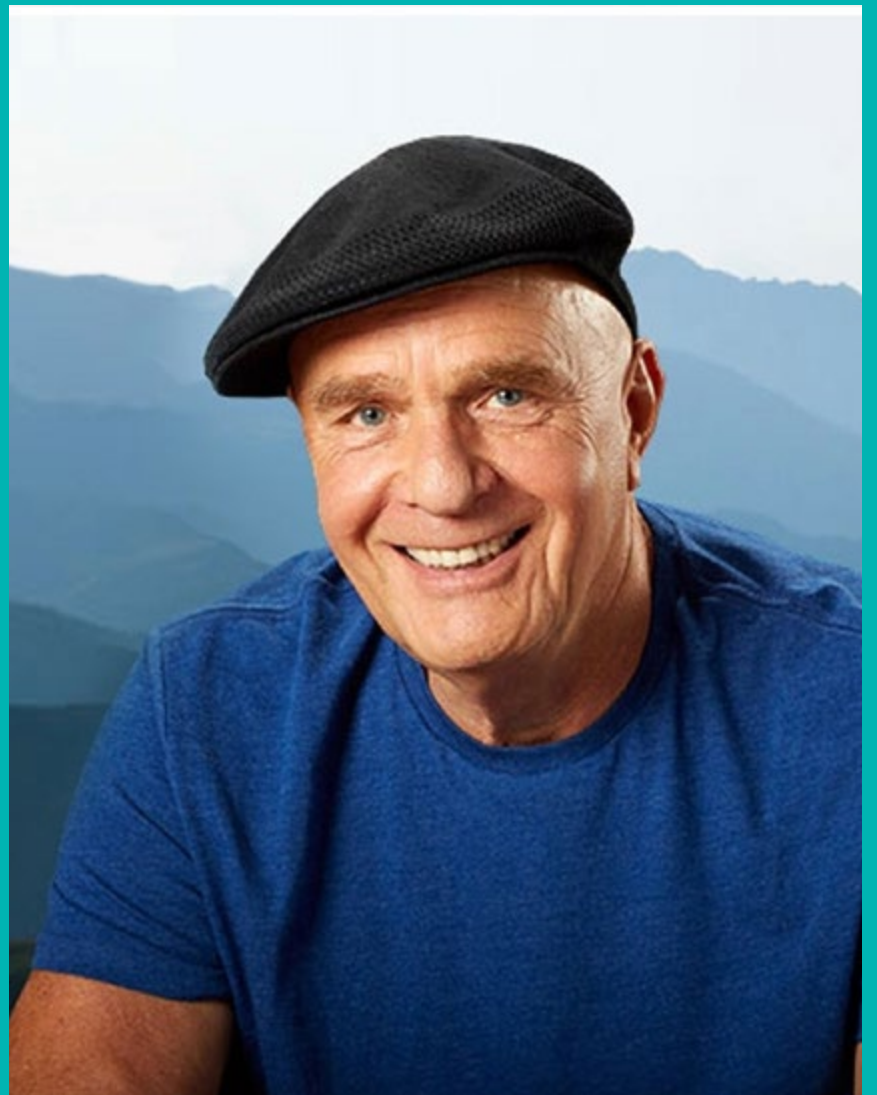
"PEOPLE ACTING
LIKE THERE'S
NO PANDEMIC IS
GOVERNMENT'S
SUCCESS INDICATOR."

**Federal Territories Minister
Annuar Musa**



"CONSISTENCY IS WHAT
PEOPLE PAY ATTENTION
TO, AND WHEN IT'S NOT
THERE, THEY MAKE UP A
STORY ABOUT WHY."

Seth Godin



"OUR INTENTION
CREATES OUR REALITY."

Wayne Dyer

EDITOR'S NOTE

The long lunch.

My adventures with copywriting genius [Jude](#) Mohan continued recently just before the FMCO.

Like a true officer and gentleman, he announced lunch for three at the British Raj and suggested we wear blazers.

I realised he was not joking because Malaysia's best comedian Allan Perera showed up. In a polka dotted blazer!

I could sense a riot looming as both these fine gentlemen set the course for a talkfest afternoon.

Both are creative souls and both didn't give a hoot to other hoots.

Allan does not crack many jokes when he is around us because we make fun of him.

He rather observe Jude and I bantering as he knows the stuff can be used in his shows.

Where do you think [Rukumani Jones](#) came from?

That's Jude Mohan letting it rip!

Yes, the truth is out - Jude and I are the clowns in this game.

We don't really think Allan is funny, but we'll kill anyone who agrees with us.

Jude's career in advertising started how it ended, he gatecrashed his way in and gatecrashed his way out.

Standing on ceremony with glass in hand, Jude summons Ludhiana-legend masterchef Gurdial Singh aka Guru every 10 minutes to the bar just so we were suitably pampered with some ravishing dishes that were all named by Jude.

You see, this Jude is one helluva genius fellar.

He conceptualised the whole place and decked it up too.

From the posters on the walls (mostly featuring blood thirsty Sikhs) to rounding up some crooks (I mean cooks) on the run in the Punjab heartland, the place is a heaven for those who love full serving bars (not just well stocked) and a respite for the creative spirit in us.

So I did the mandatory tour of the posters to check the ads, with glass in hand as per house protocol, and I was served a feast of brilliant copywriting.

EDITOR'S NOTE

And before I forget, now that I am on my fourth single-malt, the website is simply spectacular (hic).

But Jude's talent goes beyond the walls, and gatecrashes right into the heart of kitchen.

The man is taken, but his flair for cooking is next level. Especially Anglo-Indian cuisine.

To spoil yourself at the British Raj (Block D, Jaya One), look for Chief Sepoy Dharvin (bald and beautiful) or Sepoy Ram (curly haired whizz who keeps it dry behind the bar, and is far from wet behind the ears).

All the stuff on the menu are Jude's original curations: Bombay Pav Bhaji (in a Bruschetta!), Paani Puri Shots (with Vodka instead of Paani) and worth fighting for is the Gurkha Gunpowder Pork.

Sweet revenge can be savoured with a castrated creation called Lord Mountbatten's Balls: minced lamb balls hand-made with Indian spices, then stewed painstakingly into a beautiful, iconic red Rogan Josh curry.

Jude claims it was a personal favourite of Lord Dickie himself.

We believe him.

I mean what do I know about food reviews, I'm just trying to

finish this blady editor's note (hic).

Another setengah Ram! Make it double stengah!

Jude does not own this fine dining establishing but he pretends like he does (what typo?).

In fact, he gives the impression anyone can own the place as long as they pay their bills.

In other worst, bragging rights are rentable as you walk through the door.

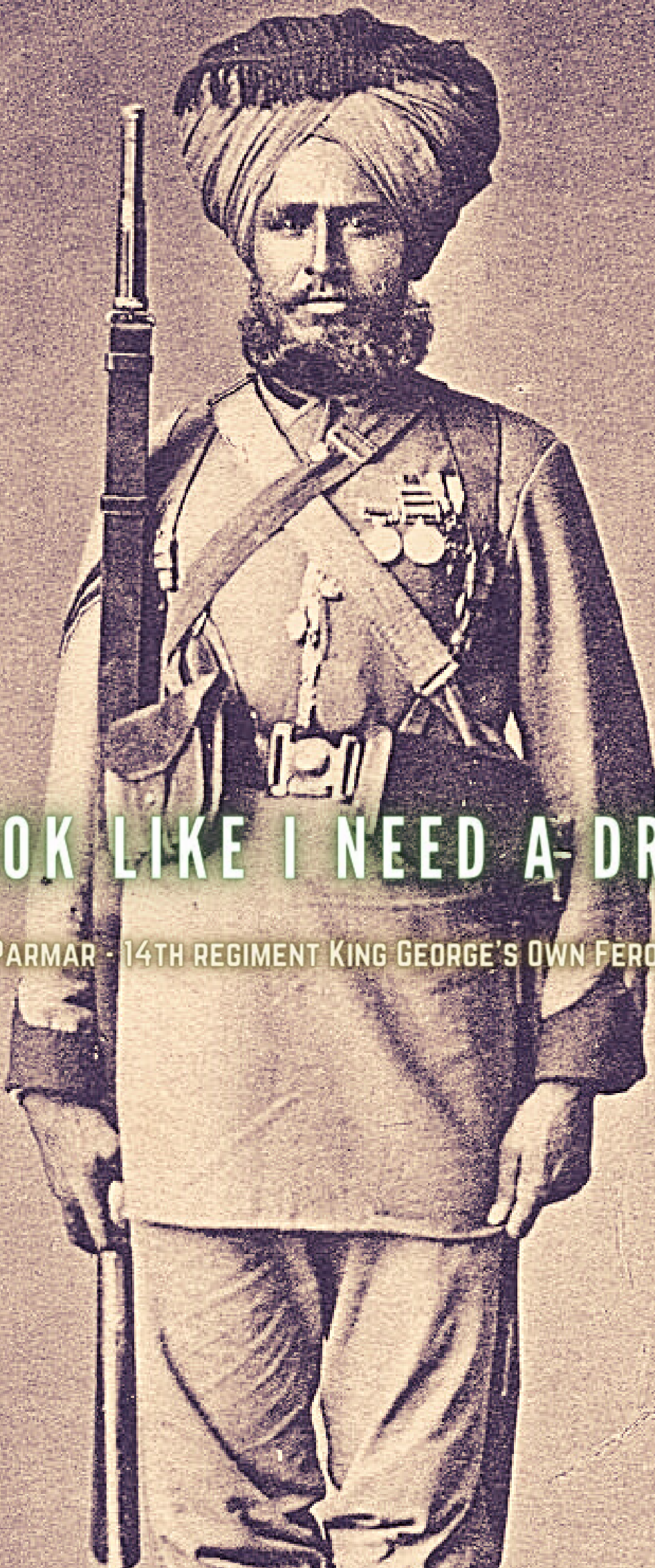
I don't member paying the bill when I left at 5, but Allan suggested we bhai the place instead.

Jude has not been answering our calls since.

That fellar is a blady genius I tell you (hic).



PiS: Ayam now magnetic after getting DNA jab fu daze ago.



"YOU LOOK LIKE I NEED A DRINK..."

LAKHBIR SINGH PARMAR - 14TH REGIMENT KING GEORGE'S OWN FERROZEPURE SIKHS

You look like you could do with one too. It's not a bad idea. Alcohol is, after all, much cheaper than a bloody psychotherapist.



The British Raj

A CONTEMPORARY ANGLO-INDIAN KITCHEN

Math-Men, Mad Men and Meth-Men.

by Tony Savarimuthu

Brand-man, Ad Contrarian and Enemy of the Same.



So some footballing 'royalty' have sounded out their preferences and life choices (or otherwise) at the Euro 2020/21 pressers. Of course they are compensated well for their skills which in turn earns them a fair amount in endorsements and sponsorships. I don't want to get into that part of the discussion however as much has been said.

What really makes great product placements?

Brand-owners use this in their marketing armoury because people are enthralled by great content the likes of Breaking Bad, Mad Men and GOT; Better Call Saul or The Crown. All multi-awarded at the

DO THE MATH



 [CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

Emmys and many other shows. Brilliantly written and scripted; with stellar performances and production.

Mad Men wasn't just about ad-men, it had great moments in time set in history: gay, women's and civil rights, racial discrimination, anti-semitism, Clay vs Liston, the Kennedy assassination, the Moon landing and the Vietnam war.

Similarly, The Crown while having granted itself some creative licence in the story-telling is set in history. The Queen has met 14 US Presidents and has reigned from Churchill to the current BoJo. Her observances as sovereign have

chronicled a narrative of world history.

Marketers know well that people do not switch on their devices or turn on their screens to view ads.

If they make ads then many do their utmost to ensure that the ads are compelling enough for their audience. You can't compete with the content so one tries to be part of it as product placement if the content is on OTT/streaming. Or in a choice spot within a break if the content is on satellite or broadcast.

Coming back to the Breaking Bad clip attached - in this example and many others where a brand is mentioned or showed

DO THE MATH

“Do you really want to live in a world without Coca-Cola?”



in the series you can't tell. You are not meant to tell. You can guess but it is not in the credits, and marketers and show-runners leave you none the wiser. But the impact hits you in the face like Muhammad Ali's right cross.

“Do you really want to live in a world without Coca-Cola?”

This particular episode of BrBa was written by Peter Gould, the show-runner (with Vince Gillian) of Better Call Saul. When the most admired writers place your brand into script-writing

folklore, paid or otherwise, it is a hard act to follow. Brand storytellers must find more exciting pathways in the age of content.

When the Math-Men are done, the Mad Men need to write for the Meth-Men.

Walter White of BrBa featured in this clip is the bad-asses' bad-ass, and mightily worse than Cersei or Prince Joffrey on GOT but the audiences had great empathy for the character played by actor Bryan Cranston.

There were no expansive sets or CGI. Just great actors and brilliant writers, storytelling and scripts.

Mexican drug cartels, meth warlords, psychopaths - few marketing angels will dare to tread there.

PS: I ask Siri instead for the time now as I don't wear a watch.

But have always liked the Casio calculator watch which Mr. White wore as a humble high-school



chemistry teacher (until Jesse's gifts him with the Tag Heuer Monaco).

I think I will buy it for someone.. the Casio.



From delivery boy to reinventing the fast-food business

BY THE HAMMER

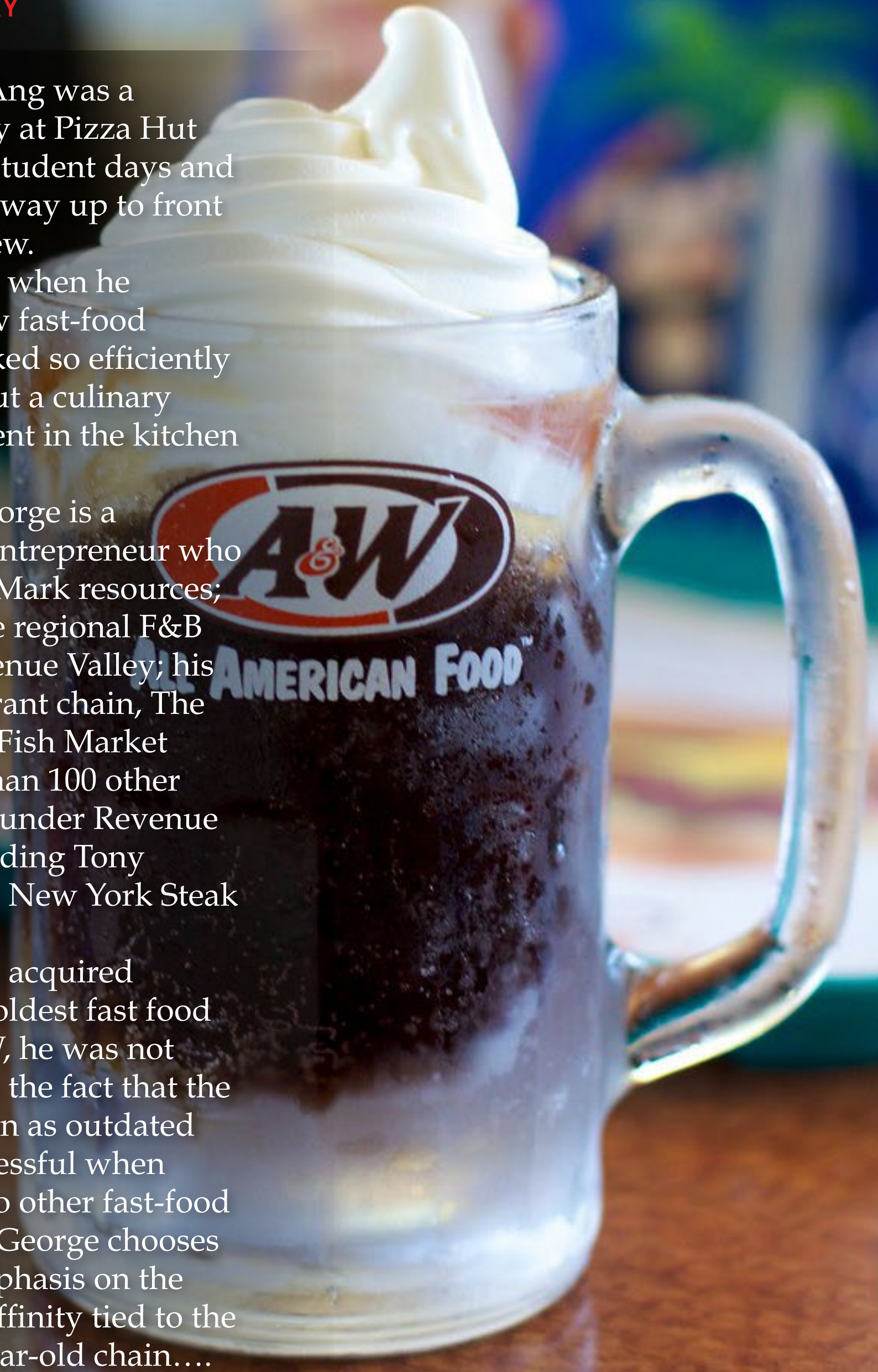
COVER STORY

George Ang was a delivery boy at Pizza Hut during his student days and worked his way up to front of house crew.

This was when he learned how fast-food chains worked so efficiently even without a culinary expert present in the kitchen at all.

Now, George is a successful entrepreneur who owns Inter Mark resources; founded the regional F&B group, Revenue Valley; his own restaurant chain, The Manhattan Fish Market and more than 100 other restaurants under Revenue Valley including Tony Roma's and New York Steak Shack.

When he acquired Malaysia's oldest fast food chain, A&W, he was not oblivious to the fact that the brand is seen as outdated and unsuccessful when compared to other fast-food names, but George chooses to place emphasis on the consumer affinity tied to the iconic 56-year-old chain....



COVER STORY

What prompted the decision for Inter Mark Resources Sdn. Bhd. to take-up the entire interest in A&W Malaysia back in September 2018?

We saw a sizzling opportunity to take ownership of a fast-food brand that had strong brand equity with timeless core products such as Coneys, RB (Rootbeer) and Waffles. There are not too many F&B brands in Malaysia that can scale up and grow in excess of 100 profitable stores and A&W is one of them.

As the oldest fast-food brand in the country, what have you done to revitalise the brand in the short space of two years?

A&W has always carried terrific core products but was sometimes inconsistent in its user execution. We first had to ensure that our guests received consistent, great products. Examples of this included when we first took over, the Rootbeer (RB) for dine-in was occasionally served in a room temperature mug instead of a frozen one. Why? A lot of the mug freezers were not working or A&W colleagues did not bother to ensure we serve them in cold frozen mugs. As simple as it



sounds, the first order of business was to get all the freezers fixed and ensured our team served guests in frozen mugs – no excuses!

The other product that we quickly improved was the fried chicken. A&W used to be famed for its Golden Aroma Fried Chicken but over the years, the product was neglected and I was surprised that when we first took-over, we were using frozen instead of fresh chicken. We now use fresh chicken, and although it costs us a bit more, we see a lot of guests coming back and saying great things about our Golden Aroma Fried Chicken.

COVER STORY



After looking at the core menu items, the next thing we did was to look into improving the ambience. Some people may still say A&W looks like a tired brand and store. So we worked on a new store design that incorporated retro-style with the modern comfort of an American diner. The first restaurant that incorporated this state-of-the-art new interior design was at Seventeen Mall in PJ. It worked very well and a lot of guests started talking about the look and feel. We even had one of the biggest QSR players in the country replicate our idea by building a retro unit a year later.

After the product and store design, the third piece of the puzzle we are working on

currently is to improve our 'service' or 'hospitality'. How can we make our guests feel like we are there to really make them happy and not just provide a meal. We look forward to rolling out some rather innovative plans in the coming months that further propels our connection with consumers.

Largely perceived as a traditional and heritage brand, how do you aim to target a new, younger audience to embrace A&W so warmly as some of the older generation once did?

The young ones are more technologically savvy, more social media savvy and possibly less loyal, in general. When we first took-over at end 2018, all transactions at A&W outlets accepted cash only. We invested and inserted credit card machines, allowing payments via e-wallets, and started delivery and online sales.

We also reverted back to the 'roots' of being fun and a little cheeky by using Rooty (the A&W bear) in more social media postings and chat postings. We created Rooty 'emojis' where our guests and friends can engage with the brand in a fun way.

COVER STORY

The pandemic has generally been negative but also positive in another way. Our online sales increased by a large percentage and a lot of new users who are much younger tasted A&W for the first time via online orders.

Your retro concept store at Seventeen Mall created quite a stir when it was unveiled becoming an Instagrammer's haven.

Yes, the retro looking stores have been a hit since Seventeen Mall opened. The traditional QSR chain SOP was to standardise every store look and feel. A&W, thankfully, does not need to follow these regimented guidelines. We believe we can create store designs to suit the location and occasion – a customised approach on delivering to individual demographics and cultures depending on location. For example, we wanted to ensure that the Sunway Pyramid store looked and felt more like an American diner for young kids as there is a large student population in the area. For a potentially higher-end store location, we will tweak to make the store a bit more 'premium'

creating an environment where people can have quiet conversations or discussions. We remain creative at the front of house yet mindful of having a consistent operational process and flow for back of house.

How has A&W navigated the of pandemic and how have you maintained a connection with your audience?

The pandemic and the lockdowns from MCO 1.0 to now MCO 3.0 (or is it 4.0) has definitely hurt the economy specifically the retail and restaurant industries. The first thing we focussed on when the first lockdown hit was to devise creative methodologies on how we could keep our cashflow positive so we can be sustainable as a company throughout the crisis. Three key things we focussed on...

How can we increase sales?
We looked at new sales channels especially when 'dine-in' was not allowed during lockdowns. We worked closely with a few aggregators to see how we could quickly increase delivery sales. We started 'Park and Pick up' services in stores that allowed for that so our guests could stay in

COVER STORY

their cars. Currently we are also in the midst of building our own A&W app for delivery, pick-up and even dine-in.

How can we contain or reduce expenses? We worked with our landlords for win-win rental arrangements like rental costs based on sales, we managed our operating hours differently based on the store sales (e.g., stores on the PLUS highway were reduced to one shift as sales slowed down due to the ban on interstate travel) and we cut and controlled fixed expenses at the head office level.

How can we cut losses on certain stores? We closed and relocated quite a few stores last year as we felt that these were stores that would continue to bleed even when the crisis was over. We moved them to better locations and most of the relocated stores are now doing much better.

Despite the pandemic (now into its 2nd year), one of the things we have not done is cut marketing programmes. We continue to launch new products to keep engagement high with our current and new users. In fact, our culinary team continues to be very busy coming up with

new products or improving current products. In the QSR space, it is important to keep engagement strong so that our guests see a reason to keep coming back. How do we keep engagement strong? Ignite their cravings for our core products and provide them with continual variety and choice.

You recently assisted in providing A&W lunches to front liners at Sungai Buloh Hospital, what inspired this?

We exist because of our community. Our community means the people who work for us, talk about us, consume our products and help get our products to our guests. Last year we did a number of programs such as giving meals to delivery riders that helped get our products to the end consumers when 'dine-in' was banned. We also did a program where we allowed our colleagues to send meals to their front liner friends. Our Sungai Buloh store is one of our newest store and it has been doing very well despite opening in the midst of an MCO. We have a great team there and they were more than happy to contribute and engage with the front liners.

COVER STORY

... The QSR industry is not rocket science. It's more about doing the simple things each shift so that we ensure our guests are happy...

Any insights you can share about the brand revival journey?

I don't believe there have been any earthshattering new management philosophies that I have adopted but rather get things back-to-basics and build from there. The QSR industry is not rocket science. It's more about doing the simple things each shift so that we ensure our guests are happy.

What I have implemented is to strategically place the right leaders in the right place,

keeping them engaged and focussed, and also constantly learning from each other. There are many colleagues that have been in the company for more than two decades and they know the brand better than me. My job is to make sure they bring 100% of what they know and what they can do, to the table.

Tell us more about your online commerce moves....

Besides aggressively entering into cashless ordering, we are in the midst of building Self Order Kiosks in some stores and also building our own proprietary App that will cover all sales channels from dine-in to delivery. In the future, it should be as easy as pressing just one or two keys on your phone to get an A&W Mozza Burger straight to you. It should be fast, seamless and super convenient.

Moving forward...

Our intention is to bring convenience, craving and choice to our consumers. To do this, we will build more stores that are easily accessible across different parts of the country. In the next two years, we are focussing on building more 'drive-thru' stores



... Our vision is not to be the biggest fast-food chain in Malaysia but to be the chain that consumers crave for the most...

and also what we call DDT stores (Dine, Delivery & Takeout) in shop lots that are convenient for our guests. Our vision is not to be the biggest fast-food chain in Malaysia but to be the chain that consumers crave for the most.

TV STILL NOT DEAD

Maybe you've noticed that the "TV is Dead" morons who've been haranguing us for almost 15 years with their horseshit seem to have disappeared lately. As the great Tess Alps said, "TV isn't dying, it's having babies."

Along the way, these knuckleheads changed their tune... "oh, we didn't mean TV itself was dead, we meant traditional TV was dead and streaming has taken over."

This week, Nielsen in the US gave us a little idea of what's really going on. It turns out that after all these years, traditional TV viewing (over-the-air and cable) account for about 2/3 of all TV viewing and streaming accounts for only about 25%. The rest of TV time is used for gaming. Despite all the hype about Netflix, it accounts for about 2% of TV viewing.

You may be wondering why it took us so long to get useful



... Now, the streaming industry has some other things to worry about. During the pandemic year, cancellation of streaming services (churn) became epidemic...

data from the streaming folks. The reason is simple -- they were hiding it. One thing you can always count on is that when people refuse to release info, they are hiding something.

When Facebook refused to release click-through rates...when Google and Facebook refused to allow the MRC to measure their "reported" audiences... you knew they were full of shit. And when Netflix and the rest of the streamers refused to release audience data, one thing you could be sure of was that they had something to hide.

Now, the streaming industry has some other things to worry about. During the pandemic year, cancellation of streaming services (churn) became epidemic. Here's some data from a report by Deloitte:

- Between January 2020 and October 2020 the percent of people who cancelled a paid streaming service went from 20% to 46%.
- Of the people who signed up for a paid streaming service, almost 62% did so to watch a specific show. This leads to a big problem. People sign up for a free trial, watch the show, then cancel. This was encouraged by the streaming services who released series all at once. I expect they'll be re-thinking that strategy.
- It costs paid streaming services about \$200 bucks to acquire a customer and they have to keep that customer for 15 months to break even.
- Meanwhile, free ad-supported streaming services are growing quickly. Between January 2020 and October 2020 the percent of people who subscribed to at least one free ad-supported



streaming service grew by 50%.

The big picture here is that people don't give a flying shit about delivery systems. The distinction between "traditional" and "streaming" is an inside-the-media-beltway thing. Real people just think they're watching television.

They don't care if the TV signal comes to their house through the air, through a cable, over the internet, or by pony express. As long as it's entertaining, easy, and affordable the rest is irrelevant.

The problem for the traditional TV industry is that their programming largely sucks. The streamers have invested zillions in quality, well-produced programs that often make traditional TV look like crap.

The problem for the streamers

is that they can't afford to go on forever spending like drunken sailors on production unless their investment in programming can be supported by operating revenue.

Every company in the universe is now competing for a share of the dead TV market (Apple, Amazon, Disney, NBC, CBS, Netflix, Hulu, Google, HBO...and on and on.) This is going to be a very interesting dogfight.

One thing you can be sure of -- the "TV is Dead" clowns will be dead long before TV is.

Bob Hoffman is author of "Advertising For Skeptics", "BadMen: How Advertising Went



From A Minor Annoyance To A Major Menace" and several other books about advertising.



BBDO Shanghai opened consumers' eyes to Ziploc's signature 'seal' which keeps food fresh. To showcase the effectiveness of the product when it comes to storing food, BBDO created giant Ziploc bags by transforming light boxes into giant Ziploc bags with real fresh food inside. And to demonstrate the incredibly fresh food Ziploc bags can deliver, BBDO built a mini vegetable patch inside the displays, soil and all....