

# A Saga of Frozen Delight

**Lazza, the ice cream pioneer of Kerala, shares the story of the 'churn of events' that made it one of the most well-recognised brands in the country**

The organised ice cream industry in Kerala began at a party hosted by L C Java, one of the pioneers of the Indian ice cream industry, in the early 1970s. During the party, he mentioned to his good friend and retired senior bureaucrat M C John that he was starting a new ice cream factory using a novel concept known as the 'franchise'. John was immediately interested. Soon after the party, John arranged to meet L C Java again with another partner to discuss the details. Even



**Simon John**  
Chairman

Kerala forces you to shut down the unit? Even if you did manage to make some profit in the seven months of sunshine, these would all be wiped out in the remaining five months of incessant rain. Indeed, the first year closed with paltry revenue, almost making the naysayer's words seem prophetic.

It was at this time that John's son, Simon John, decided to join the business after completing his engineering and MBA degree. He continued to run pillar to post asking people if they would like to buy ice cream. Eventually, sales started picking up as many hotels realised that it was difficult to comply with PFA standards using hand-cranked

that factory returned a profit of Rs 1,50,000 in the first year of operation itself! From then on, there was no turning back. By 1995 it was managed to establish one factory in almost every district of Kerala, albeit small scale ones. During the early years, most of the sales were to the hotels and parlours and in the form of four litre bulk packs. This was as a result of the traditional dessert after a meal, Payasam, being replaced with ice cream. An interesting anecdote here is that Payasam is now making a comeback as Payasam Ice Cream. Call it nostalgia if you will, but Simon firmly believes the ice creams of yesteryears were as rich and creamy as today's, if not better. What has really changed is only the scale of production and

part of the landscape for fairs and festivals throughout the country. The in-movie promotion has become a common thing these days, but one of the earliest examples for the ice cream industry was done by Simon in 1984 for the runaway hit children's 3D movie, 'My Dear Kuttichathan', where the kids fulfil their fantasy by getting to play inside a giant cup of ice cream.

This rich experience has led the way to the introduction of the brand Lazza in the year 1990. Over the past decades, Lazza has introduced several popular and hit flavours



**A hanseat—the ice cream delivery vehicle of yore**

has also become a popular choice for customers.

## QUALITY INGREDIENTS AND PROCESSES

Lazza serves up ice cream and social upliftment by partnering with local farmers as far as possible. Milk, butter, fruits, and flavours, are all sourced locally to the extent that is feasible. Wherever that is not possible, Lazza sources ingredients from reputed large farms and food processors. The brand also resorts to using natural variants in colours and flavours, as compared to artificial flavouring, to the furthest extent.

In either case, the ingredients that arrive at the factory are incorporated into the ice cream only after passing stringent quality checks. Lazza strongly believes that quality ingredients and processes are what eventually determine the final outcome of the ice cream. For this reason, Lazza's factories observe the highest hygiene requirements, complying with HACCP principles and ISO 9000 standards in food production. The high-level of automation at the

Lazza factories ensure that the ice cream is not touched by human hands at any

point while in production. In fact, the first pair of hands that the ice cream comes in contact with are the consumer's!

## THE FLAVOUR OF LIFE

The creators of Lazza are ice cream enthusiasts who are well-versed in the market. For instance, they understand that ice cream is more than just a 'dessert'. It is a source of delight, comfort, and happiness. Ice cream and time spent together make up a large portion of a family's best memories. Lazza keeps going above and beyond expectations because they have their finger on the pulse of customer needs. Their commitment to excellence and their astute understanding of the timeless appeal of ice cream ensure their leading presence in this market. As long as the world continues to love ice cream, Lazza will continue to capture people's hearts.



though the meeting was scheduled for 10 am, Java did not arrive until 1 pm. John's would-be partner had become irritable owing to the delay and therefore, dropped the idea and hastened back home. But Java explained that he was at a personal meeting with Sai Baba and that there was no way he could have arrived any sooner but he granted John full rights to start the business in the franchise model. Thus, John inadvertently became the pioneer of the ice cream industry in Kerala. But now there was a problem. Without his partner, he was not in a position to make the entirety of the required investment himself. Here, Java had a novel solution. John could start the factory without a mix plant (the first stage in ice cream manufacturing), and Java would send the fresh mix by flight to Kochi each day!

## FACTORY LIKE NO OTHER

And so began the first ice cream factory in Kerala in a 1,000-square-foot refurbished factory without a mix plant. Expert advice began to pour in about the absurdity of starting an ice cream factory in Kerala.

How can you sell ice cream in a state that doesn't even know what it is? What if the labour situation in

ice cream machines and passed on the responsibility to organised players. The first freezer he purchased was a 20-litre APV batch freezer. Something unimaginable in this modern era of 2,000-litre continuous freezers and extruder lines. But back in the day, it was considered an advancement over the hand churners. The first delivery vehicle was a Hanseat with an insulated body; a curious three-wheeled vehicle that has since gone extinct.

## THE GLIMPSES OF SUCCESS

Having tasted some success, a second small scale factory at Thiruvananthapuram, was setup. Thereafter having heard of a major brand appointing franchise in Kozhikode, Simon John invested in a factory there using entire savings to date of Rs 40,000. Amazingly,

the degree of automation. One unintended casualty of this is the extinction of labour intensive products like the ball cassata, which even the most advanced modern machines cannot make.

## ICE CREAM COMES CLOSER TO YOU

The creation of mobile vending is another fascinating story as well. During the early years, Simon saw thousands of people consuming snacks during fairs and festivals and asked himself how he could sell ice creams to them. So he first began to deliver ice cream to locations in ice-and-salt packaging in insulated boxes. This evolved to putting freezers on tricycles. He added a eutectic lining to the freezers to hold temperatures without having to be plugged in. This trend caught on and today, mobile vending units are a

and run several iconic ice cream parlours.

Lazza has also introduced other dairy and fruity concoctions. With a presence all across South India and the Middle East, it has been an eventful journey for the brand. The brand reach and recall have caused the trademark Lazza to be included in the list of well-known trademarks in India by the Trademarks Registry.

Simon and his team embarked on a deep exploration of the ice cream market in Kerala and its neighbouring areas. Through Simon's visionary leadership, Lazza emerged as a leading brand. Overcoming numerous hurdles with perseverance, they transformed Lazza into a market favourite, earning well-deserved recognition and success, epitomising their journey's resilience.

Another well-known food brand from the Simon John Group is called Skol. Its primary product categories include frozen meals, syrups, toppings, and ice cream. Over the past decade, the trademark Skol