



## ENTERTAINING THE ISLAND THROUGH THE CRISIS

# CHASSY CORTES

*Head of Marketing and Public Relations at Scope Cinemas*

Born in Cebu, Philippines, Chassy has earned extensive experience in the entertainment industry while mastering the craft of building brands and client servicing through skills acquired from different fields related to the industry. More than just a corporate personality in marketing and public relations, she is also a multimedia personality, event host, event voice-over artist, and commercial and corporate video voice-over artist. In our recent conversation with Chassy, she shares her background and journey thus far, as well as her hopes and aspirations for Scope Cinemas.

### Tell us about yourself. How did you get into the entertainment industry in Sri Lanka?

I have always been on the mic since I was 17 years old - whether it be radio, TV or event hosting. With my BA degree in Mass Communications that I completed at the University of the Philippines, I have always believed that I was meant to work in the entertainment industry. I first arrived in Sri Lanka in 2014 where I worked as a presenter in one of the media companies here. It must have been the right timing and sheer luck that my previous employer, who was good friends with one of the Filipinos who started a local radio station in Sri Lanka, told me about the job vacancy in Colombo and I just jumped at the opportunity.

It was when I worked for TNL Radio Network that I was able to truly discover my potential. The freedom and trust given to me by our Chairman were what it took for me to push myself further.

It is also because of my job that I was able to meet the team of Scope Cinemas. Having worked with them through our exclusive partnership since they re-opened the new Liberty by Scope Cinemas back in 2017, it opened a new opportunity for me to try something new. Essentially, it was the kind of career breakthrough that I needed. And I keep on learning everyday. I like the challenges that are attached to my role in an industry I am very new to.

### What are the latest global trends in the entertainment industry?

Promotion through digital platforms, use of the latest technologies and innovative ideas may be the go-to answer, but if you look closely, it is simplified and personalised messaging that trumps all that. We are constantly bombarded with choices, but we tend to gravitate towards content we see are genuine. Technology may have brought us closer, but it also is one of the reasons why we now have impersonal interactions with other people. This is the beauty of cine-

mas, you enjoy the latest in technology, you have a lot of movie choices, but you get the opportunity of experiencing all these with other people in person. It is a personal experience in itself, that regardless of the increase in streaming services, you still do not get the same experience as you do watching movies on the big screen. The cherry on top would have to be the cheering with friends and strangers and how the audience just comes together.

### How do you perceive Sri Lanka's entertainment industry - and what priorities should we focus on?

Sri Lanka's entertainment industry is ever-growing and it is continuously evolving. I believe a better understanding of what customers need and want, has helped the industry strive despite the current economic crisis. Now we have to shift our focus to what customers deserve. I say, quality over quantity. We must continue to innovate and exceed customers' expectations.

### In your opinion, what is the impact of the prevailing economic crisis on your industry?

Pardon me for the cliché but, "In every crisis lies an opportunity." This crisis that we are going through can be depressing if you don't have a temporary break, an escape from what ails you. You need to know that there is another world out there waiting for you, real or imagined. That's where Scope Cinemas comes in. My job - our job at Scope Cinemas is to remind people that a crisis, like the movies, has a beginning and yes will have an ending.

### What were the main challenges faced by Scope Cinemas in recent times - and how have you overcome them?

One of the biggest challenges we ever had to face was the pandemic. With the closing of our cinema halls for several months and not knowing when we could possibly open, it was admittedly extremely difficult. However, the pause gave us the opportunity to be

able to re-evaluate how we conduct our business and create new strategies to be able to better serve our patrons. In pursuit of providing the quality of entertainment Sri Lankans deserve, we realised that in challenging economic times, people have a tendency to clamp down and avoid spending. However, we just need to continue to remind everyone that relaxing and taking a break is good for the mind, good for your mental well being and plays an important role in your overall health. We are here for that purpose - we are the escape that you need to be able to recuperate from all the hardships that you are facing.

### How does Scope Cinemas leverage the power of non-traditional marketing campaigns?

As we aim to fast-track the future of Sri Lanka's cinema sphere, we focus our efforts in providing new experiences by introducing events like advance screenings, fan screenings and red carpet premieres, all of which have not been organised in the country. Yet, we see other territories do and formulating promotional campaigns that allow our patrons access to official movie merchandise and movie-themed snacks. These events and promotions cemented Scope Cinemas as a brand that is willing to go above and beyond to give our patrons memorable experiences making Scope Cinemas the most preferred cinema chain in Sri Lanka.

It wasn't an easy process for our territory to have been granted access to these experiences by Hollywood studios, but we are blessed to have worked with movie distributors who guided us throughout the process and with partners who understand the value of following guidelines that have been put in place for us to be able to maximise the advantages of working with multi-billion dollar brands.

### Could you outline Scope Cinema's plans in terms of expansion?

Scope Cinemas have dedicated itself toward raising the bar in Sri Lanka's cinema experience and as the country's first international standard cinema chain, we aim to introduce the market to various Premium Large Format screens. To kick start this mission, we have recently announced that we will be bringing down the first IMAX with Laser screen to the country. It is also only the second IMAX with Laser screen in South Asia. Due to the current crisis, the project timeline has been pushed back, but we remain optimistic that we will be able to offer this experience in 2023.

In addition, we are planning to reach more Sri Lankan moviegoers by building multiplexes outside of Colombo. Plans for our first out-of-Colombo multiplex are already set in motion and we are looking forward to more locations so we can bring the distinct Scope Cinemas brand of entertainment to more people.

### Finally, what is your message for the women who are looking forward to embarking on their career in marketing?

Marketing does not have a gender. Women have been in marketing positions for a long time. So I say this to both men and women, dare to be different. Don't be afraid to try new things, experiment and most importantly, do not be afraid to fail. Our failures do not define us; it is what we do after we fail that does. Marketing involves a lot of imagination and making sure that we continue to excite our target market. With that said, it is also important that we find joy in what we do - in our chosen jobs, because that joy is evident in the results of our efforts.

Times have changed and we have seen so many doors of opportunities open for us in recent years and we have become empowered more than ever. The best thing to do right now is to keep moving forward, not look back and not linger on things that will not serve our purpose.