

Since we were in primary school, we knew the men who go around selling ice cream. We could hear him outside from our class room shouting the Kuwaiti word for ice cream, “Barred! Barred!” We waited patiently for a break from classes and ran to the school’s gate, jostling against the side doors to buy ice cream. The owner of the nearby grocery didn’t need much help selling his stock of marshmallows and “Twenty-Fils Chocolates” either. For people who do not know, a “Twenty-Fils Chocolate” is a Kit Kat bar. At that time they sold for twenty fils each, hence the nickname.

Five pieces of marshmallow were also twenty fils, but one piece was five fils. So, if you bought four, you got one for free! Nearby you would find an Indian man calling out, “Hot sambusa!” Each sambusa was also twenty fils, and if you didn’t pay too much attention to the filthy oil-soaked cart, it was the most delicious sambusa.

In those days, the government provided healthy meals to all students and, with the exception of soft drinks, outside vendors were prevented from selling inside the school. The canteen offered many types of soft drinks such as Crush, Canada Dry, Sabah (7-Up), and Coca-Cola. All of these were also at the same price of twenty fils. Our daily pocket money of hundred fils was more than enough.

Let’s go back to the ice cream seller who can still be seen peddling the same old three-wheeled bicycle throughout Kuwait. I felt, and still do feel sorry for his situation, and I wonder if they work as employees for the ice cream manufacturing companies, or if they’re paid on commission. Either way, I don’t know what stops these companies from developing the concept. Why not provide an air-conditioned