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Interviewees forenames: Imtiaz	Sex: Male
Generation: 2 nd	DOB:
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[0:00]

Thank you for coming here today. Can you tell me your name, your ethnicity, your age and your generation please?

Imtiaz Hussain. Date of birth 9/06/56, male and originally from Pakistan so Pakistani heritage.

And your generation?

I would consider myself because my father came first in 1960 and I came in 1963, so I would say I am one and a half generation. I am from the early period but I was a child at that time so I am not an adult that came at that time to do work, so I came at the age of 6 year old. Which meant I grew up as a child of the 60s and 70s and sometimes I consider myself second generation.

Obviously you speak very good English; you were born and bred in the UK. So for the purpose of the tape how should I refer to you? Brother Imtiaz?

Yeah. Just Imtiaz will do.

So can you tell me a little bit about yourself? What you do every day, your hobbies, your interests.

My main job is here. I am a manager at a day care centre. It's a day care centre of older people from the ageing community. Because I don't actually live in Burry and I've been here a long time, 8 and a half years in this particular job, and before that I worked for three years at one of the projects they called junior project so for the last twelve years I've been involved with the community in burry and I think because my background has always been social work, youth work and obviously in the care for sector I enjoy working with communities. Especially helping to solve their problems and difficulties. Because often people don't know where to turn to for help. Also because I was brought up in the 60s there wasn't many people who could read and write and help others. And even at the age of 8 years old I remember my dad bringing me a form and saying fill this up it's a tax log. I said I don't know how to do it and he told me why do you think we send you at school? So I remember even at a young age I was filling forms for people of the community. So I grew up helping people and assisting people. Reading letters. Even if somebody needed an annual leave and they needed a note for the factory or whatever. So from a young age I was involved in doing things for people of the community and I think because I was one of the first Asian children of the community and at that time they weren't any other Asian children so I kind of grew with an English culture and English friends. So that's a little bit of my background. Yes I got this job here as a manager at a day care centre but I have other interests as well. I am a family man. I have three daughters. When they have assignments and essays I assist them. Apart from that I am involved with quite a few community groups. I am in the Muslim youth foundation which I attend. I go at radio stations, radio Ramadan for example. I think it's important for people to take part in community affairs and talking on the radio and giving their views I suppose at how the community can live a better life and life of community cohesion.

Why do you feel you have such a responsibility towards the community? Because your job and activities seems to be centred around your people and your community.

Because I think it's about job satisfaction. Because sometimes people can do that things themselves. For example somebody came here to this country let's say as a wife or a husband of somebody who settled here. And then there is a procedure that people need to follow and that's first to get their permits to stay and then apply for citizenship and eventually get a passport. That is a route that people usually don't know about. But because that I always worked in the community I know this things from experience so I can people at ease. Because I've got the knowledge and experience I can tell people don't worry, this is what you have to do. And I can refer people as well. So I know what else happens in Burry. So if its hard immigration advice I tell them to go to the Burry law centre. If

somebody wants welfare life advice I know where to send them. So I think I have knowledge of things that going on and I can help people with different things. I also feel that this is the nature of our community that we help and assist each other. Don't forget when people came in the 60s and 70s they relied on each other for everything. If you needed a job you told your friend get me a job at the place you are working. Or how to renew my Pakistani passport, so people kind of assisted each other. And the other thing. Because I live in the England of the 60s there was a community that lived there. People supported each other. Often people used to use the back door. The front door was just for guests. The back door was for neighbours, friends and people from the community. And you could go to your neighbour's house push the door and get in. and I think I was lucky in that because when I came from Pakistan I left the extended family and friends and I had to find myself in a different community. I didn't have English language skills at that time but I had good friends. For example I used to visit his grandmother once a week and often I went with him and she made little snacks, so you became part of the community. I think that is why you appreciate the meaning of community. And community development to me means helping other people and I think we should all help people from our communities. Sometimes it might be little things. It could be just someone being so isolated that they just need you to do shopping. I can remember the child we had the suspect of an errand. Do you know what an errand is?

Like a chore?

Yeah, like a job that you do for a neighbour. We had an elderly lady that all she had to do was peak through her curtain. That meant she needed an errand. So you go knock on the house and she said get me a pack of sugar or something and you done that and there wasn't any payment, she didn't give you anything. And as you did that, your friends might say do you want to play football? And you said no, I can't. I am on an errand. I think we were brought up to help vulnerable people in the community and it didn't need any money. You only got the satisfaction that you helped somebody. And because of that I feel I need to assist and help people. And sometimes I go home on the bike and often I help motorists that maybe their bikes broke down, or they need a push just to get to the side streets. I get off my bike start pushing and sometimes I involve other member of the public because I've been in situations like that and I appreciated other people who helped me. I am not saying this is the nature of people.

[10:00]

So what about your friends group? Is it a mix of ethnic and non-ethnic groups?

As I mentioned, when I went to school I was the only Asian boy in the school and boys used to do kind of boys things, play football, ride bikes, play cricket. And I am lucky that in the area that I lived in I still got friends that used to go school with me. And we are still friends; we have a chat when I say them at the shopping centre and you get the latest news of all your friends. So I have that contact because I lived in the same area for 51 years. Obviously I know a lot of the neighbours and a lot of people from the community. Not only them. Their father and grandfather who used to live there. So sometimes when you are in one place you naturally make friends with people around you. So I've got friends and neighbours from all backgrounds and over the years obviously because I live in different places I still have contacts with my former colleagues. I never lost contact. I still phone up some people that I met 20 years ago and sometimes they will phone me up asking for advice. So I am lucky. Sometimes people move and break relationships but always managed to maintain relationships. I think the nature of the community in the UK it's quite diverse. If you look at my friends they are also diverse, from every nationality.

Obviously you are British – Pakistani. So what language do you speak at home?

This is where we get to a difficult... Yes I came here in 86. I had to learn English. I think because there wasn't a mosque and an opportunity to improve your own language, I suppose you start speaking to

your brothers and sister in English. And because three of us came from Pakistan, me and my older brother. My older brother was lucky that he attended school in Pakistan and new to read and write and I kind of missed that out. I only went for about a year. And obviously when I came here it was English. And when we had three more sisters and brothers that were born in this country it just was English. Am I fluent in Punjabi? No. can I read and write? No. But I can speak. Make conversation, speak to my parents and my parents don't want to speak any other language. I am grateful that I have some knowledge but I strongly believe that language will die out. Because I know that my skills are far less than my parents and my children are far less than me. My grandchildren will know nothing. I don't think is a bad thing. I think it's a natural phenomenon that happens when people live in communities where there is language being spoken, because language is something that needs to be spoken. You can learn a language and read and write with no problem. But I know that sometimes people try to preserve language but it's a losing battle. So speak English when you are in England but if you got the ability to learn another language by all means use it. Working at the day care centre improved my Punjabi because the older people don't speak English and I kind of became more fluent than I ever was. My children they sadly speak hardly any. There is something I call mother tongue. Mother tongue is the language that your mother used to speak to you when you were a baby. That you never lose because I always believed my mother tongue is English. I think in English, read and write in English and give a speech in English. But you know when you waken up from a deep sleep and you only notice, after I got married the wife pushed me in the middle of the night and I won't say oh what time is it? You know what language you are wrapped in? Your mother tongue. Often it happens to people who have a stroke. I remember a Polish gentleman who has been in this country for 48 year. He could speak Polish and English but when he had a stroke he forgot English. He didn't know a word of English. He could only speak Polish but after a few months it came back. But the mother tongue never goes away. But the mothers nowadays speak English and gradually lose other languages.

Do you think that is a bad thing or a good thing?

I think it's a natural thing. I think it's good to speak different languages. But if you are not using a language what is the point. Because I know a lot of people, our youngsters they believe they can speak Punjabi but they can't. They will use certain phrases and try to speak but they don't know it and they are not that fluent and confident do use that language. The only way you can is either living in a community and speak the language or you stop it. But I don't know if it's that important. The other thing is that our first generation of Muslims that came they intended to go back. Now the second and third they are not going back. If you said lets go live in Pakistan or India they will say no. So I believe the language will go out gradually over time but that's not a bad thing. That can be a good thing.

Moving on to your ethnicity. You stated before that you are British-Pakistani. For you what group do you feel closer to?

[20:00]

I feel sometimes younger people of my heritage try to deny their Pakistani heritage. So you ask a young person where you are from and they will tell you Salford even if they are from Pakistan originally. It's difficult to be honest because I was born in Pakistan and I know what Pakistan is about. I have roots. Sometimes is good to know those roots and appreciate them and that's one of the reasons I took my children to Pakistan. I wanted them to have a look and to say oh that man looks like you dad, or that man looks like grandfather. And because my wife is not from Pakistani heritage, she is from Arabic heritage and so my children are between two cultures and two languages and when it comes to ethnicity is easy for me. I just take Pakistani. For them I said this is for you to work out what you are. So I think sometimes they are moving. Sometimes they might say this and sometimes they might say something else. And I think this happens. Amongst ourselves and someone say what are you? You will say I am Punjabi. But if you met an English person and have the same conversation you won't say Punjabi because that won't mean anything to him, so you will say I am Indian or Bangladeshi or whatever. So sometimes move the conversations a little bit depending on the situation. So to me each person had defines their own identity. I am not ashamed I am Pakistani background. I think Pakistan has not lived up to the expectations but it's a beautiful country. You have the mountains on the north. Nine of the highest peaks in the world, second highest mountain in Pakistan, desert on the south and river flowing through the country. Every terrain you can think of. It's a beautiful country and the agricultural. I went a few year ago and I couldn't believe... Miles and miles of wheat. It shows that it's a very fertile land. You go around and see the rice fields. It has so many potential and so many resources. We don't have to feel ashamed about our politicians that is a bad country. But a lot of young people have bad experience. They go to Pakistan in their summer holidays and don't really have good time because it was hot and had flies. Then they come back and say I don't like it and I don't want to go there. So we should be exposed to that, to say our roots and I think for me, my identity I am Pakistani in terms of heritage and cultural identity because if I step out on the street and see an English person and I ask him where do you think I am from he would say Pakistani or Indian or whatever. But I also appreciate; we can say the kind of English characteristics. What I mean by that? I grew up in Salford. One of the great things of people of Salford said to me. Every single person can say funny things. They can pick up on words that you say. I remember I was in the shopping centre at the weekend and I was speaking to one of my friends and he sees his wife at the distance and said watch out the enemy is coming. That is a typical English thing to say, which we wouldn't say. So I kind of absorb a lot of English characteristics and habits which I enjoy and I think this is diversity being celebrated. You have to acknowledge your own identity and background and take the good aspects from the English culture. We don't have to start boozing every night and getting drunk and going to clubs. Sense of humour, honesty, being on time. These are good habits that we can learn.

And what is the role of British culture in your life?

British culture, especially with my children I s something that you feel comfortable in. I remember last week the passport office phoned my house and my daughter picked up the phone. And off course it was from the Liverpool passport office and the lady who called was speaking with kind of Anglo-Saxon and that made my daughter for a whole day and all the day my daughters spoke in Anglo-Saxon. I think you peak up the culture and I think culture is comfort. You feel comfortable in that, you appreciate it and I think is something to be celebrated.

What about Asian culture. If I asked what Asian culture is, how would you describe it?

Asian culture means you come late for appointments. You take it easy in everything. It also, I suppose, you feel familiar with some things. So for example in the family if somebody gossips, you say here it comes radio Pakistan. Or you say things which reflect your own culture. So sometimes maybe you will find my daughters saying something and copying their grandmother in some of the phrases

she uses. So they kind of adopt things from the Asian culture.

Moving on to religion. What is the role of Islam in your life?

Ok, very good question. I was one of those people who came in 86 and there were no mosques, no Coran, I didn't know there was a Friday prayer till I was 17. But the community in those days was a religious community. Sometimes people ask me what school did you go to? And I say I went to Clarinen road, Islamic primary school. And they say what do you mean Islamic. It was a Christian school but it had religious values. I remember primary and secondary school we used to have an assembly in the morning and we had prayers. We read stories about Jesus and about some prophets. We were kind of told moral behaviour. So Christian values and Islamic values are kind of similar. They are differences of Theology but that doesn't involve a six year boy. That's for scholars to debate. That doesn't affect ordinary people. So yes I grew up with my religion being taught from the school. So, lots of stories from the Bible, when I got a copy of the Coran I was surprised to see them. In fact I remember my father saying right we are all going to the cinema. And my father normally would not let you go to the cinema. And I said what's on and said there is a film about Moses called the Ten commandments. And he even took my mother. Just because he felt we needed, he didn't say oh no this is kind of English version of the story of Moses. He just accepted it. I think that had an impression on me. I remember my head teacher in the secondary school, one of the boys put a firework in a girls' hand back and six of us, including me, were lined outside the head teachers' office and came to each person individually and said can you in the site of God Almighty sincerely say it wasn't you. I hadn't done it but I almost felt confessing. Religion is important and every night we used to put our chairs on the table and reside the Lords' prayer. For me, I wasn't becoming a Christian, but there was an aspect of spirituality and I don't think we ever doubted when it came singing hymns. We just joined in and had a good sing. We sang the Christmas carols, but it dint occurred to us what we were singing. So I was grounded and learned OF Islam from a non-Muslim view. It was about when I was 16-17 that I started thinking about religion. So, my friends who weren't Muslim start going to the pub. I said no I don't want to come to the pub because I was a Muslim. And they said to me what is Muslim and that age maybe you start looking and thinking. I remember going to the central library in Manchester and going to the religious section and found a book that had Arabic verses and Arabic headings and then translation. That was the first time that I realised that the Coran meant something. Because of that I became interested and wanted to learn. So at the age of 16-17 you kind of learn about your own faith.

[30:00]

So you could say you taught yourself?

Yes I think so. You read a lot. First thing was try to get a Coran in English and had to go to Huddersfield and found a Muslim bookshop. Eventually I found the bookstore and an English woman opened the door and I said I am sorry I got the wrong place and she said what do you want and I told her I am looking for a Muslim bookstore. She then told me this is the place. Then her husband came. Pakistani man with long beard and at the front room he had books all over the floor and then I got the Coran translated and it was wonderful. I started my journey about learning about my own faith and belief, but I never felt there is something different. I don't see Christianity as something different. I lived in Christian religious background and because of the religion people were good and honest and shared things. I am really sad this day with all the atheists which destroyed the beliefs of the good community we used to have in the 60s and 70s.

Are there any gifts that you consider forbidden?

I wouldn't give alcohol but I don't think so. I don't think there is anything I wouldn't give it but I give the appropriate gifts.

Why would something forbidden not give that as a gift?

Because I think is morally wrong. Because, if for example alcohol is forbidden and is bad for me and for everyone else, so why should I poison them by giving it to them?

Moving on to the gift you brought today. What is the gift?

I have to show you.

So what's the gift you brought?

Well I am going to let you open it. It's wrapped up here. Open it and you describe what it is.

It looks like it's something that has been handcrafted.

Correct.

It looks like I don't want to say is anything fancy. It looks like something that you might made in a class, or something that your children might have made you. It looks like a rhine of some sort. I don't know. A camel, a rhino or a cow.

Yeah, the last one you are getting closer.

A bull?

Yeah that's right. Why does it have this hump?

No idea.

Because that gives you the origin. Which culture has a hump like this?

Buffalo?

No it's a cow, a bull. This large hump shows its nationality you can say. What's its nationality?

Pakistani?

Yes. This is a present from my cousin. As a child in Pakistan what we used to do we used to go to the local lake and have a swim around. But on the site of the lake was clay and you could make a toy. And you make it and leave it in the sun and afterwards it becomes rock hard. So you made your own toy that you can play with and it's something I love doing. When I went to school here I used to do pottery and when I went back to Pakistan 6-7 year ago I went back to that place with my cousin. We made and this is one of the thing he made and dried and I always remember. So it's a gift that reminds me of my childhood and it's a bit artistic you can say. Its earthy and heavy. Its natural from the lake. It's just natural.

How old were you when you received this gift?

6-7 years ago but I value it. It reminds me of my childhood and because the bull is shaped from that part of the world. Because in this country they don't have the hump and it's like a camels' hump. It's something that belongs to that part of the world.

On what occasion did your cousin give it to you?

[40:00]

Just a visit to the village. Because my father is one of those who came in 1960 and 1980 went back and made a nice house in Islamabad. But I never feel happy there. I always feel happy going back to the village and saying cows and donkeys and horses and beautiful village life. I love the village life. I used to climb on the roof, go to neighbours house and aunts house and non-stop visiting people and playing outside.

Where do you keep it?

I always bring it out when I want to remember the village life and I keep it at work actually. Because sometimes if we have an information stall I bring it out as a talking point. People ask me what is that or where did you get that? Also I have something else. It's a piece from the cloth of the cow there. People always bring that out as well. I think it's kind of bitter things which help you to appreciate your own belongings and culture and something that it was important to you.

What would you do if you lost it?

I don't think I will be affected that much. It's a bit of memorabilia you can say and something I enjoy.

How did you feel when you received the gift?

I was very happy because my cousin made it in front of me. He made two actually but gave this to me. It's also the generosity of the people at the village. They make you feel welcome. As soon as you arrive they will slaughter a chicken and make a nice meal. Everything is fresh and organic

Moving on to gift-giving in your family. Are your parents still alive?

My mother is. My father passed away 7 years ago.

I am sorry to hear that. Do you see similarities or differences in the way you gift to the way your mom or your dad used to gift?

Yes my parents never gave a present as such. But for example on Eid they might buy you clothes normally. It might be a school uniform. I mean my parents if they did give you something it would be something useful. Maybe shoes or something. I think I was probably the first the person in the family which started, with my younger brother, celebrating birthdays. I remember I used to deliver newspapers and it was my younger brother's birthday and I bought him some toys with my cash. After that the other brother and so on. In a way I started this birthday trend. But when I got married and had my own children I thought about it and I thought initially why do we celebrate? It wasn't anything for the prophets or the Muslim community. We are kind of copying English habits. My younger daughter grew up like that and when she was 6 or 7 had secretly invited all of her friends to a birthday party in our house. Me and her mom didn't know anything about it and she was inviting everyone to our house. When I went to pick her up from school a parent asked me if there is a party at our house tonight and I had to say yes there is. So I rushed at home and bought a cake and stuff. I think that brought to my mind why we do things like that. Before that I wouldn't but I think we have to be realistic. The realistic thing is that birthdays are not from Islam and never celebrated. They are part of the community in this life and I do celebrate birthdays but I don't think I am extravagant. I will buy little presents and celebrate my wife's birthday and I think it helps appreciate it people in your family and say it's an occasion. I know we have Eid but I do do it but sometimes I questioned myself. I came to the conclusion that the prophets didn't practise it it's a custom of the people here but you can't make something haram when there is no evidence of it. You won't find anywhere in the Quran saying that you can't celebrate birthdays but I think as long as you don't do it extravagant and spend a lot of money then there is no harm in it. Similarly Christmas. Do we celebrate Christmas? No. But our

neighbours celebrate Christmas. Would we give them chocolates? Yes because they will give you something. Easter. They give you eggs, we have to give them eggs. Some people say no we shouldn't be like that but we live in the community and we should be part of that community and we can't take things and not give them back. Also valentines' day is an opportunity to say something to the wife [laughs] although is not from our tradition.

You said that you started birthday celebrations in the family. Where do you think you picked that up from?

Maybe because I didn't had it myself. Because we didn't celebrate birthdays and I kind of wanted to give more to my brothers and sisters. To have the opportunity to play with toys and little things and make them happy. It's just an occasion because really you can't give them other time.

What about your children? Have they picked up your gift-giving habits? You said you tend to buy people gifts and make them happy. So what about your children?

They take me to the next level. I suppose they kind of gone extravagant levels. They will buy presents for every occasion. One of my daughters I starting university and the others are getting presents for her. They are useful presents. You need a laptop or whatever it is and everybody contributes towards the laptop. I think they are more into that. Giving presents for no reason it is something good in Islam. Prophets said give presents and gifts because it makes you love each other. It can it be something simple. It doesn't have to be something big.

[50:00]

You said you celebrate Eat. Do you get gifts on Eat?

Yes.

What sort of things do you get?

I always told my children to get me sprays and deodorants and perfumes and that kind of things. My wife will probably buy me a jumper or shirts or shoes. But they are more kind of practical things

What about your gifts to your children and your wife?

I used to give little perfume sets and that kind of things. Now, because I have three daughters I just give them money on Eat. 20 pounds each or whatever. They will appreciate that because more. Some of them might say I don't want money I want present and I just get them perfume sets and things like that.

What do you think the importance of Eat is?

I don't think as a youngster enjoyed Eat. Because there wasn't anybody else to celebrate with, just the family. And I dint like being away from school on Eat. School is fun because you play football, you have your friends. I remember going to school on Eat and my mother told me where are you going there is no school today. So Eat it never used to be fun. Now is different. Families have parties and enjoy the day and so on. So when I had children I used to go overboard with the decorations of the house. I put happy Eat everywhere and try to make it a very joyful occasion. A lot of times I would attend factions. Islamic society might have had a party and I used to take my family there. That's when I started celebrating on a different level. Because of that, some years ago, 20 years ago I might say, we used to organise the Manchester Eat festival to encourage families come. We had car races and waved flags. We tried to give an alternative. We had stalls and Eat prayers in the morning and a fairground. I think is important to have events, Eat events. Now the British-Muslim heritage centre

they have the Eat festival which is popular and it's great to go somewhere on Eat rather than staying at home.

What about fathers' day and mothers' day? Is it celebrated in your house?

My own mother for example the whole family will visit her and give her cards. She will get some presents but she is from that time and doesn't appreciate presents. So we do celebrate mothers' day. In my own family yes. My daughters get my wife presents.

What do you think the significance of these days is? The importance of it.

I don't think it's important as such but it's an opportunity to say thank you. For the family is an opportunity to gather. My mother for example, each year can be her last so for us is kind of gathering. We gather at Eat. After the Eat prayer the whole family gets together and spends time with her. I am grateful we have opportunities like that, to gather.

Is it important to you being together on special occasions?

Yes it's very important. Obviously we was a small family, over the last 50 years we've grown. Now my mother had great grandchildren. All my brothers and sisters are all married and we are a huge family. These kind of occasions the whole family comes together.

You mention Christmas before that you don't celebrate but you might give chocolates and stuff to your neighbours. Do you have Christmas dinner on Christmas?

No we don't [laughs]. We wouldn't go to the extent of Christmas turkey. Many years ago we did try to but it was dry and we didn't like the taste of it. The last few years I have been going away on holidays. Sometimes I try to get away from Christmas because it's kind of materialistic. You have also a lot of bad behaviour associated with it. You have parties and people get drunk. I remember a few years ago my house got robbed. I phoned the police and they told me what do you expect, its Christmas. So I don't like that time of the year, not because it's associated with religion but because is associated with crime and drunkenness. I don't like it from that aspect.

What about Valentines' day. Do you celebrate Valentines' day?

I do it secretly [laughs]. I don't do it in front of my daughters. I buy my wife a little present. What do you usually buy her?

Like perfume sets and you know something like that. Mobile phone or a mobile phone contract.

Do you ever get anything in return?

Yeah. The wife does do it but if I dint get anything I wouldn't be that upset. Because Valentines' day is one of those kind of things and just do it to make the wife happy.

Generally, when you do give gifts on all occasions. Giving cards with gifts and wrapping them up, is it important to you?

Yeah I think it is. Sometimes I feel we waste a lot of things. Like buying wrapping paper and sometimes I wrap them on newspapers. I like wrapping stuff because it's a surprise but I don't write happy birthday on the wrapping paper. I just wrap it on a plane paper and say here you are.

When you give gifts to your friends or the community. When you give presents to people of your own ethnicity and to people of different ethnicities, do you spend more time on choosing the gifts for

different ethnicities?

[1:00:00]

If you are giving to your neighbours, your non-Muslim neighbours it tends to be a box of chocolate or whatever. Those are easier. But when you give to persons like my mother for example, I don't know what to get her, you run out of ideas. You don't know what to give but it's easy with non-Muslim friends and neighbours. Or you go to holidays and you bring back small souvenirs and they are quite happy. So sometimes it's quite easier.

What about the money you spend? Do you spend more money for different ethnicities?

I don't think you should be extravagant. I don't think presents should cost 300 or 400 pounds. A present is something that you want to make the other person happy and they should be happy. My wife will bring lots of presents for each person and she will say oh I have to buy this and I have to buy that and I tell her why? I am happy if someone brings me a hat or a perfume or any of these things, I'll be happy. But she will say I have to buy this and that. So holidays you have to buy gifts and presents which you have to bring back. I think that is the nature of our community. When we do go, we always bring back presents for our friends and family and even for our neighbours.

Oh that's fantastic. That is the end of the interview. Thank you very much for today.

Thank you very much.