

THE STAGES OF BRANDING PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF A SERVICE COMPANY**GÜNEŞ AÇELYA SİPAHİ**

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Abstract:

Due to globalization and increase in competition, branding and process foundation of branding are of vital importance for whole establishments all around the world. In spite of this, the stages of the branding process and the case studies that related to this subject have been studied very little. This study is about of a local company's real story which has succeeded in having 800 workers and 16 branch offices in 5 cities only with its own sources.

The goal of the study is to explain the labeling story of the establishment which became a label in food and beverage sector in big cities all over Turkey. Furthermore, it explains the stages that have been experienced meanwhile from the point of the Kırçiçeği Company's owner. Those collected experiences can be road maps to entrepreneurs who are willing to work on service sector.

Key Words: Brand, Branding Strategies, Service Sector

Introduction:

This research provides an applicable vision framework for all companies of the food and beverage sector, which is one of the rapidly changing sectors particularly in developing countries. In this study it will be tried to explain how establishments ensure their sustainability, how they position and how they create their brands undergoing which stages.

It is obvious that a strong brand means a high market share, high sales and profit. Presently a market has obtained the attribute of a sellable financial value in financial context. Another important aspect in respect of a brand is that brands are creating loyalty in the eyes of the consumers (Uztuğ, 2003: 21).

The goal of the study is to explain the labeling story of the establishment which became a label in food and beverage sector in big cities all over Turkey and to explain the stages, it has experienced in the meanwhile and its goals for the future, as well. Throughout the study, the method of "interviewing deeply" was used with the owners of "Kırçiçeği".

1. Subject Related Literature Analysis:**1.1. Brand Concept:**

As per the definition of the American Marketing Association, brand; "is a name, symbol, design or various combinations thereof used by persons presenting the products for sale in order to describe said products and to distinguish it from the similar ones on the market". In Knapp (2002:7), brand is defined as "an internalized summary of all impressions depending on the emotional and functional gains coming from the customers and consumers and perceived from the images, and creating privileged position".

According to David A. Aaker (1991:15), promoter of the brand concept and known as a brand guru, inventor “a distinguishing name and/or symbol i.e. (logo, packet design) defining products or the services of a seller or a group of sellers, and distinguishing a product or services from its competitors”. Thus, a brand draws the attention of the customer to the source of the product and protects both the customer and producer against competitors trying to procure products seeming to be decisive.

And Kapferer (1992: 4) describes the brand as a symbol, which gives the products a meaning, provides a communication about the past and future of the product, and provides the user with clues about the properties of the product, and benefits to be gained consuming the product, value carried, personality, and the pertinent culture.

Kotler and Armstrong (2010: 291) are describing that brand is corresponding to more than just a name and symbol. Brand name is a word or word series defining the brand. In other words, the brand name is the part of the brand expressible in words. Accordingly, the brand name has a narrower extent (Mucuk, 1999:150). As a result, the brand is the focus point of the marketing and advertising activities effecting and forming both the consumer and the purchasing decision process of the consumer, and particularly distinguishing substantial products. In respect of the success of a brand also is it effective to define a visual expression style, which remembers the brand to the consumer from the selection of an appropriate strategy and brand name (Kırdar, 2005).

1.2. Process and Stages of Branding:

Keller (2003) showed the stages required for the creation of a strong brand in the “Consumer Based Brand Value Model” as follows; (Ural,2009: 20).

- Defining consumer’s level recognizing the brand, creation of the brand identity, which shall allow the consumer to establish in his memory the connection between the product category, requirements and brand,
- Based on the concrete and discrete features of the brand to create a brand meaning, which shall ensure that the consumer understands the benefits of the brand for him-/ herself,
- Based on brand’s identity and meaning, to ensure that the consumer desires the brand,
- To turn this desire of the consumer into a loyalty relation between the consumer and brand.

In Aaker (1996) the brand construction process described via a model of five stages. These stages of brand construction are realized as strategically brand analysis, brand identity, value suggestion determination, positioning and finally as implementation. In the strategically brand analysis the characteristics of the target market determined by the company and the identities, images, positions, weak and strong sides of the brands created on this market by the competitors are defined. After the performed assessment, considering the internal dynamics of the company, it is gone over to the stage of creating its own brand.

Kotler and Armstrong (2004) mentioned that for decision processes are required basically in order to create a brand after definition of the brand identity; these are: brand positioning, brand name selection process, brand varieties and brand development strategies.

1.3. Brand Image, Brand Personality and Brand Positioning:

These personal perceptions of the consumer constitute the basis of a successful brand. One of the factors

effecting consumer's personal perceptions is the positioning, which is the process of establishing a position about the establishment, brand or product. Positioning in marketing is the process of creating an image or identity for the brand. It is the perception desired to be generated in the mind of the target audience (Buluç, 2013: 159). While developing a positioning an establishment needs to the target market, differentiation from products of the competitors, presenting this value of this difference to target market, and the ability to transmit the difference to the target market. These factors are related with the brand positioning components defined by Aaker (1996). These brand positioning components; target audience, identity / value offer sub sets, advantage creation and active communication. The concept of brand positioning assumes a key role for creation of a strong customer base and developing a brand value. The basic concept of being strong in the target market and to be able to create the perception of distinguishing from the competitors is positioning. Correct positioning is to assist the customers in the product selection (Manhas, 2010: 18). By means of correct positioning the target audience has to be explained clearly why they have to prefer this brand? Because positioning ensures that processes related to the establishment and its brand are animated in consumer's mind. (Akand Sağdıç, 2011: 29). By means of a successful positioning it is caused that the consumers welcome the brand in a manner providing them with the best benefit for their needs (emotional, functional etc.), and evaluate why the competitive brand will not be the correct preference (Sutton and Klein, 2007: 88).

A good brand positioning assists the establishment in developing market strategies. Because the position of the brand allows the establishment by revealing the similar and differentiating sides of competitive brands to ensure that the consumers know why they purchase and use the brand. Brand positioning requires taking decisions regarding four basic questions: who is our target market, who are our primary competitors, what are the different aspects of our brand compared to competitor's brand, what are the similar aspects of our brand with competitor's brand (Ural, 2009: 38).

2. Objective, Method, Sampling and Research Findings of the Research:

2.1. Objective and Method of the Research:

Objective of the research is to tell the "branding history" of the "Kırçiceği" chain of restaurants, who has active activities in big cities and touristic towns in general of Turkey and made great steps in becoming preferred brand. The research is a qualitative research, and the used data collecting method is the intensive interviewing method. An interview form approach was applied for the interview made with the founders of the brand "Kırçiceği", and easy understandable open ended questions were written prior to attendance for the interview. Prior to the interview made by means of semi-structured research questions used as data collection method, company's web site details, newspaper news were studied and preliminary information regarding the company were obtained. Further, articles, thesis and further publications were scanned and the content of questions to be asked during the interview was supported. It was particularly refrained from directing the managers of the interviewed companies, and taken care that the answers they will give are more valid and reliable. An interview of totally three hours was realized with Mr. Kemal Ipbaz of the Chairman of the Board of Directors, who is one of the founders of the establishment, and his daughter Mrs. Meryem Ipbaz, who is the General Manager, in order to reveal the branding history of the family company Kırçiceği.

2.2. Research Findings:

In course of the primary objective of the research, the research questions which answers are searched for, and the answers given to the questions are as follows;

2.2.1. How the Brand has become evident:

Who happened the construction of the Kırçiceği brand during the historical development process of the Company?

Mr. Kemal İpbaşı, who is the creator of the brand, comes from the Palatmutçuk village of the district Karacasu of the province Aydın. İpbaşı, who is engaged since his 15th age with farming worked for 2-3 years after his secondary school and high school education as tallyman with the Highway Authorities. After having won the accountancy branch of the SüleymanDemirel University MYO, enjoyed highly the spicy meat filled Turkish pizza (lahmacun) baked by a chef in Kyrenia at his market vacations during his military service as typer officer in Cyprus in 1983. After having completed his military service and returned to his village, he was impressed from a friend, who came for a visit and told him that he has opened a pita restaurant and paid his debts within a short term of 9 months. He was encouraged from the success obtained by his friend in such a short time. In the morning of a religious holiday he decided to open a pita restaurant together with his nephew Osman İpbaşı, who is a pita chef, and started to search for a place in various localities of İzmir and environment.

Listening histories told about good pita chefs they travelled from Bergama to Canakkale and made their researches. İpbaşı, who came from a poor family, started with the business in 1985 by taking over a pita restaurant for 360 thousand TL, which he discovered in BornovaSikkentavailable “for sublease”, using the money of 800 Lira, which he got by the money given to him by his big brother by selling the tobacco possessed by him, and meanwhile the 400 Lira they received from the state in result of sequestration of the soil houses in the village.

2.2.2. Brand Name Selection:

The answer of the company owner Kemal İpbaşı to the question “How did the name Kırçıceğirose?” was as follows. “... The name Kırçıceği has a certain profundity. Its meaning for me is purity, innocence and striving. While the wildflower (Kırçıceği) is struggling alone against the nature it takes the color of rain and the scent of the wind. Wildflowers are not irrigated, not fertilized, and reveal in result of a struggle. Besides, in 1981 our school received in memory of Atatürk’s 100th birth year the duty to give play from the novel of PeyamiSafa telling the combat of the Turkish Independence War. We played this several times and this play placed words in our vocab, which we never before knew. The scene where a soldier sent a wildflower along his letter to his fiancé while he was dying as martyr left deep traces on me. And with the intensive influence of this play, we desired to use this as a boundless name. The name Kırçıceği is as important as like my children. It would not be this important, if it was a hollow name. And, it is also well-liked by the public. It drew attention even when we wrote it for the first time. We can say that the name made a contribution to me.”

2.2.3. Brand image, Brand Identity and Brand Personality:

What were the most important factors for you while constructing the brand identity?

Kemal İpbaşıand Meryemİpbaşı say; “We are ready to give up everything but our brand. It is not possible for us to overwhelm the negations. We can never make any compromises in respect of quality. Our philosophy is to continue until be good, better, the best. Hygiene is very important for us”. The perspective of the Kırçıceği family, where the herbage are washed 3-5 times using a food disinfectant reflects their endeavor to reach the best and perfectness also to the quality of their meat. The executives of Kırçıceği mentioning, that they do not desire to exist on the market with price competition, are adopting an approach paying importance to respect for employees’ rights, and institutionalization. Kemal İpbaşı, mentioning that the once providing quality and performing their business in a proper manner will survive, adds that they are not adding any soy to the meat and are not using flavored butter and additives. The company executives arguing that persons who do not reflect their effort, heart and sincerity to their work will not succeed in their business, believe that the brand Kırçıceği included as struggle and that one has remunerate this struggle and to refrain from any wrong actions which may harm this. Kemal İpbaşımentions that the expressions committed by the brand have to be “cleanness, good service, friendliness, quality raw materials, flawless presentation”. (Customer Analysis) Brand is a culture creation. Is it possible to speak about the Kırçıceği culture? What are the expectations of the customers, when they come to Kırçıceği? How are these expectation covered?

Kemal İpbaş; “The secret is to address all generations. The ones who were brought by their fathers are now bringing their own children. Customers always expect the same taste and quality. For example, I can’t reduce the grammage; I will receive a reaction, if the prices increase. The business requires always sacrifices. In respect of hygiene, ever after the customer sees us as the kitchen of their homes. In Eskişehir the people are saying we have seen hygiene with you- There is many things that could be subject of tabloid press, by we are not showing these. When a prominent person comes to the restaurant, none of the wait staff disturbs that customer. It is not necessary to harass their private lives. The show side is not our business and this is not necessary for us. And also is the visuality unimportant to us. Customers expect to be comfortable when they come to us. They show they have embraced us in calling all our branches anywhere in Turkey as our Kırçıçeği-. This is a huge proud. Briefly: “being 24 hours open, taste, and perfect service, clean and respectful personnel” are some of the characteristics promised by the Kırçıçeği brand.

2.2.4. Definition of the Target Audience and Positioning of the Brand:

Who are composing the customers of the Kırçıçeği brand?

Kemal İpbaş; “Our target audience covers all people. Without distinguishing poor-rich or any other discrimination, everyone can eat at Kırçıçeği. Our priority is to provide quality service and address a large audience. We receive appreciation; we have a nice customer profile. We did not desire to separate our customers into sections, our desire is that everybody comes together and eats in the same environment. We desired that that also their employees with together with their children are able to make their celebrations, even if once monthly, while businessmen are sitting at a table”.

Separating the market into segments in accordance with customers’ needs (hygiene, quality, taste, accessibility, respectful personnel taking care for privacy), facilitates the implementation of strategies. How are brand owners evaluating their brand in accordance with customer’s needs?

- A place, where everyone can go
- where it is convenient to eat,
- which is hygienically
- where the taste, quantity and quality won’t change.

“...The secret is to address all generations, in respect of hygiene ever after the customer sees us as the kitchen of their homes, the customer expect to be comfortable when they come to us; we are possessing all certificates from ISO, we are enduring the cost of trying to perform the business in correct manner with a certain quality,...”(Kemal İpbaş).

2.2.5. Brand Positioning:

(Sector / Competitor Analysis) In which areas are you differentiating from your competitors?

Kemal İpbaş; “We are company working since 2013 entirely institutional. All expenditures are made by the headquarter. We are making regular payments to our suppliers every 15 days. We possess a meat chopping facility in Isikkent with 25 employees and frigorific vehicles. Our meat chopping in Isikkent is a premise exemplary in respect of European standards and operating on SME-level under quite good hygiene conditions. We possess all certificated from the Administration of Agriculture and ISO. We are not announcing this, and don’t consider it necessary to announce it. As long as we do not make any compromises in respect of quality, the brands will survive and sustainability will be ensured in this way. The one, who does not include its effort, heart and sincerity into the business, will return to its starting point. Recently we procured a meat grinder from Italy. It is a machine with an ice hopper, which preventing heating of the grinded meat while being grinded. Since heated minced meat may generate bacteria, we are

preventing this by means of this machine. This machine simultaneously separates the nerves. We consider nerves as wastage. Our minced meat is grinded as medium and low-in-fat. We endure the cost of trying to perform the work with a certain quality. I let my employees work 8 hours, the competitor establishment lets his employees work 12 hours, I'm paying my tax punctually, by competitor does not pay. I'm making regular payments to my suppliers, my competitor sets back. I don't know where this game will go. Our target is 30 branches in the 30th year, however the negations happening sometimes are worrying us, and we are in a very merciless and unfair competition system”.

2.2.6. Brand Culture:

Particularly the ones occupied in the service sector have a great share in the development of the organization culture. Therefore, which aspects is your considering when selecting personnel?

Kemal İpbaşı; “We are a brand having made great efforts regarding this issue. We esteem humans. We grant them their rights. There are people who desire to work with us after faced many incidents. It is not very easy for them to leave us. May be our salaries are not that high, however annually leaves and insurances are complete with us. But our principle is to not employ someone, who has left us once.” Kemal İpbaşı says one should definitely avoid doing business with close friends, relatives and mates, and adds “you lose your mate, friend and partner. In the first times of the establishment we made an irreparable mistake, and gave kith and kin from our village a job and gave the shares of 12,5 % in order to make them have a job, everybody started supposing to be the boss, and it became difficult to control. When situations like caprice, jealousy and intolerance occur under relatives; offenses and distance are developing between them. In 2013 we gave them their rights and have separated us from all of them. If the relatives were never involved, Kırçıçeği could be 50% bigger than its current status”.

3. Has the communication strategy (from the eyes of the imager) ensured a synchronized structuring from the eyes of the company owners?

Kemal İpbaşı; “We worked with a professional advertiser one year long. He led us to work professionally, it is correct, but neither everything he said was correct nor everything we said was wrong”.

Since at the present time many customers are acting much more conscious in respect of ethical issues, ethical brands have started to create a more competitive advantage for the companies. In this respect, what is Kırçıçeğidoing regarding subjects i.e. animal health, fair trade, standards of employees and public health?

Kemal İpbaşı; “We are fulfilling social responsibility projects. We have constructed the Kırçıçeği Anatolian High School in our village. And we are granting scholarship to successful students, who get into university. We have a 50-60 year old mosque. We have renovated it. We did not break us loose from the lands of our birth. Village is a nice thing; I would desire that my children and grandchildren do not break themselves loose. Further, Kırçıçeği is a brand awarded with prizes from the Turkish Language Institution. We care to be a brand using only Turkish words”.

Do you intend to spread to national and international new regional areas?

Kemal İpbaşı; “Briefly, our target is to grow in Istanbul. However, another target is to benefit from Turquality. We intend to open a shop in Chios, Rhodes and Paris with the brand Turquality. There is a place on the 10th Avenue in Paris, our negotiations are still continuing. We are planning to open a branch in the Turkic Republics. Sometimes the countries, we are intending to enter, require partnerships. Regarding this subject we are going to get the support of Chamber of Commerce. We are not granting Franchise. Abroad is not an easy operation”

Where would you desire to see your brand in the future?

Kemal Ipaş; “Brining a brand to the peak and keeping it there is very difficult. This is what I’m most afraid of, and thus we are making many sacrifices”

4. Conclusion and Suggestions:

The branding phenomenon comes gradually to a position of priority also for Turkish companies, as like as it is in the entire world. Philip Kotler draws attention to this when saying:”if you are not a brand then you are only something”. In today’s competitive market environment brand is the primary feature distinguishing a product or a company from its competitors. The brand takes an important place in the decision making process of the consumer with the many components hidden in its structure and promised by it. SME’s in the first place, developments observed in Turkey in the last years in course of branding, were the source of inspiration for this study. Nearby everywhere in Turkey we witness the rise, growth and spreading of many successful domestic brands. The story behind the brand Kırçiçeği is important in this respect.

A brand concept has to be seen as a long term investment, which is fed by obtaining the competition advantage on a long term and which is improvable. When the created brand concept (its ideology) is converted into certain aspects, it will reveal more advantageous results for retailers and managers. In this respect the brand Kırçiçeği has been born in result of a certain struggle, and stuck in the minds and continued is propagation reflecting this struggle to its brand name and logo. The effectiveness of a company’s ideology requires the widely implementation of the brand in every aspect. Particularly the brand Kırçiçeği has reflected its aspect of quality as of the first day of its establishment from its meat procurement to the cut, distribution and even till brining the meat on the dish of the customer, endured the fierce competition conditions and thus continued its growth. The company has reflected its quality not only to its products, but also to its personnel policy, social responsibility projects, and its position in the sector. Thanks to its policy of being 24-hours open; they stayed in continued contact with its customers in certain regions, and increased its accessibility compared to its competitors. The brand, having progressed towards institutionalization by the centralized management after having entirely ceased its partnership structure in 2013, is trying to resist the unfair competition continuing its studies in the institutional structure. In this respect, the brand Kırçiçeği has preferred the centralized management to Franchising in order to continue its growth slowly, but in a more positive manner, and desires to grow in the way of being a brand.

The decision of domestic brands in the process of nationalization to act with project logic under the scope of a branding strategy instead of acting with the foresights of the entrepreneur and the trial- and error method, will both reduce the process and facilitate the brand loyalty development. For a company desiring to make a step in becoming an international brand, using the franchising method seems to be a more accurate strategy.

5. Literature of the Research and Leading Contribution to Future Researches:

Thus, the research provides companies, who desire to remain as a competitive company in the service sector, various foresights regarding the legibility of the organization creating the brand. The conclusions to be drawn from this research will assist the creation of sustainable and competitive brands in the food and beverage sector. It is targeted to be models for companies, who intend to create a brand, position the brand correct, carry the brand from a regional level to an international and even international level. The study will be advantageous for academicians, who are occupied with this subject, in respect of showing that new researches are possible also in itself of every stage when drawing a certain line, and will provide a different perspective.

The research has some basic restrictions. First of these restrictions is limited scale of the generalization ability of the research. The research was performed on the brand Kırçiçeği occupied in the food sector. The second one; was the difficulty of reaching the participants. Considering that a brand grows along all stakeholders in its environment, it is necessary to talk also with various stakeholders. Due to the busy

working tempo in the food sector no interviews could be made with the shop (store) employees or their managers, and only an interview with the general manager and chairman of the board of directors was possible. And the final one is the time restriction. Due to the intensive working tempo only an interview of 3 hours was possible.

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