

LOYALTY TO THE LOGO, THE SLOGAN AND THE PACKAGE: THE LEBANESE CASE

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With globalization and the excessive presence of Mass Media, the level of competition has increased in noticeable approach. This made customer relationship inevitable, before making a purchase decision. This case is valid on the international level and in Lebanon where the market is global and products from all over the world are available (Belle de France products from France, Henkel products From Germany, Haagen-Dazs from the U. S. A). Traditional Lebanese companies are excessively focusing on advertising, marketing, and promotions, not only to emphasize the quality of the product that is on the top of the pyramid in decision-making process before doing the act of buying, but also to offer the customers the chance of identifying the brand or the product. Even more, many companies head towards rebranding to redefine their selves and adapt to the changes in the environment by doing a change either in their logo or slogan or package to stay up to date. Since 2012, Gandour (a well-established Lebanese company) has been adopting a new strategic plan to pump life to its products, adopting rebranding and repositioning. Rebranding and repositioning of three Gandour confectionaries were studied: Tarboosh Chocolate, Unica Wafer, and Dabké Cookies. Research is based on focus groups as a primary qualitative research methodology used for data collection from one person or a group of persons who have buying features in common. The acknowledged results showed that “52%” of interviewed people appreciate that Gandour is a traditional Lebanese brand that survived many life cycles , “78%” believe that this campaign did not reach them properly, “32%” of interviewed persons are not aware of the changes that occurred. The study indicated that Lebanese like better if the company works on one branding (repositioning the brand itself) using nostalgia technique.

Keywords: Loyalty, Nostalgia, Rebranding, Repositioning.

Introduction

Gandour is a Lebanese confectionary company established in 1857 in the Lebanese capital city Beirut. At that time, chocolate and cookies were internationally considered as luxury dessert and consumer were few (no mass consumers), to an extent that it was used as a form of currency that replaced the monetary exchange in Mesoamerica (Watson, 2013). 157 years ago, the number of chocolate and cookie manufacturing companies on the national level was limited. Trade in Lebanon was also limited; therefore Gandour did not have many competitors in the market as compared to 2016. Back then, Gandour was offering to Lebanese customers new ingredients full of taste.

Ever since the establishment, the number of products produced by Gandour is increasing. The company became more diversified. In parallel, competition in the market in Lebanon became fierce and Lebanese customers are in 2016 harder to please.

The mission of the company is to treat its different customer segments equally, offering them a good quality, fair prices and lately, a revamping marketing campaign. For Gandour, customer loyalty is “when the Lebanese consumer becomes the ambassador of the ground. That is when the customer does not eat Unica or Tarboosh or Dabké (three nostalgic products of Gandour) because he is craving for chocolate but because these are heritage products of the brand and because the brand is part of the Lebanese custom. It is more like an exciting experience. The vision of the brand is to fulfill the desire of consumers of receiving something they love (Malek Shehab, 2014, personal communication). The company’s marketing team is fully aware of the goals of the brand. Therefore, they are crossing hands together to offer the Lebanese new generation a package of satisfactory chocolate/ wafer and a creative way to identify with each product to create and maintain loyalty.

Since 2012, Gandour has been adopting a new strategic plan to pump life to its products, implementing rebranding and repositioning. Gandour is not marketing the brand; it is designing different marketing plans for its different products. A creative team composed of a number of brand managers is recruited to work on different marketing mixes, a marketing mix tailored for each product. There is no common marketing mix for the whole brand which makes the work harder and more expensive. To give examples from the Lebanese Market, “El Wadi Al Akhdar” and “Belle France” and “Maxims” are all brands with several products, these companies advertise for the brand stating at the end or during the advertisement the different products they produce. Gandour is marketing products as if they are the brand (Wells and Burnett and Moriarty, 1989). The company is trying to avoid Nostalgia marketing, but then again, in the first place being a Lebanese product is what attracts this new generation. The company is demanding innovation and is investing much on this point.

Focus Groups

Gordon Shank Chief Marketing Officer at Levi Strauss states that loyalty starts by being there and different, and by offering products customization to clients. On the other hand, Jasse James Garrett, Director of User Experience Strategy, Adaptive Path says that customers cost money, time and effort and keeping them loyal minimizes costs especially that loyal customers do not have any problem paying more to get the product or the service (Garrett, 2006: 35).

A company has to offer product that fills a need, with a quality relative to the price to reach the customer in the first place. Then it has to connect and build emotional bridges with audiences through improving customer service, strengthening quality control and minimize the percentage of deficiency and invest in customer relationship. The customer is firstly attracted by visuals (package, logo, and slogan).

To focus on the collaborative interaction in the relationship between the company and the customers living in Lebanon who might have characteristics that are different from customers in other countries, three focus groups of 15 participants each were conducted. The segmentation was based on three patterns: the need of the consumers, the buying power and the spending pattern (Reene and Greene, 2008: 298-311). Based on the three slogans used for the three products of Gandour: “Mare2 3a Rass El Kell” (translation: passed through all heads) for Tarboosh, “3ayesh Essasna” (translation: witness to our lives and urban legends) for Unica and “Dabketna Kebrit” (translation: our folkdance got longer) for Dabké. These slogans target two different groups at the same time; it connects being young and alive with nostalgia and being Lebanese. Based on that, the first focus group was with the Lebanese youth. The second focus group was with adults who are shopping decision makers in their families. The third focus group was with the segment that is the target of all companies working on enlarging their sales rate, and these are the potential future customers.

The outcomes focused on the period between 2012 that is the year of launching of the marketing campaign, and 2016. Target audiences in Lebanon are affected by visuals, and what does a change in the look suggests in their mind, focusing on the Gandour brand. The focus groups examine if this change in the marketing mix is applicable to the Lebanese society or do Lebanese customers have special characteristics that inquire a different marketing blend.

Focus Group Questions

The focus group was divided into three phases: Opening phase, central core and closing phase (Kitchen, 2006). The main questions were distributed as follows:

Opening Phase: What kind of chocolate/ cookies do you like to consume? How do you relate your choice of chocolate/ cookies to its price? How do you relate your choice of chocolate/ cookies to its taste? How do you relate your choice of chocolate/ cookies purchase to the image it conveys? What do you expect from eating a chocolate/ cookie? How much are you affected by others choice or point of view when taking purchase decision? How much are you affected by others choice or point of view when eating in public? How do you describe yourself best?

Central Core: What is Gandour to you? Are you likely to buy Gandour products? How many times per week? Do you find Gandour products cheap, affordable or expensive? Have you noticed any changes in Tarboosh? Have you noticed any changes in Unica? Have you noticed any changes in Dabké? What was the impact of these changes on you? What other changes would you like to see for Tarboosh? What other changes would you like to see for Unica? What other changes would you like to see for Dabké? How do you compare Gandour to other brands? Are seen advertisements enough for awareness?

Closing Phase: Open discussion for comments.

Focus Groups Results

Table 1 offers a comparative quantitative assessment of focus groups findings which leads to scientific conclusions.

Table 1. Conducted Focus Groups Results

<i>Response</i>	<i>Focus Group One</i>	<i>Focus Group Two</i>	<i>Focus Group Three</i>	<i>Focus Groups Average Percentage</i>
Consume specific international brands	69%	8%	64%	46.46%
Like dark chocolate	15%	28%	14%	19.09%
Gandour is their preference	15%	14%	0%	9.53%
Higher price= Better taste	69%	8%	64%	46.46%
Price is not relative to quality	15%	42%	7%	21.48%
The taste is the priority	62%	92%	64%	72.92%
Trust advertisements	85%	7%	29%	39.24%
Eat chocolate/ cookies for pleasure	84%	50%	50%	60.78%
Not affected by others	63%	42%	79%	61.29%
Act in public differently	77%	8%	7%	29.53%
Act the same in public and private	33%	72%	93%	66.8%
Find themselves Energetic	39%	57%	65%	54.02%
Gandour is a Lebanese nostalgic tradition	84%	44%	29%	51.56%
Are aware of only few products of Gandour	15%	35%	43%	31.39%
Loyal to Gandour	62%	93%	0%	51.41%
Gandour is affordable	92%	7%	7%	33.95%
Gandour is cheap	8%	93%	93%	66.04%

Haven't noticed any changes for Tarboosh	16%	28%	36%	26.92%
Noticed the variety offered by Unica	38%	21%	29%	29.12%
Noticed a change in Unica wrap	30%	43%	14%	28.97%
Haven't noticed any changes for Dabké	71%	58%	93%	74.07%
The repositioning of Gandour had an impact on them	15%	36%	14%	21.82%
Suggested ameliorating the taste of Tarboosh	10%	37%	28%	25.36%
Suggested a new wrap design for Tarboosh	30%	21%	7%	19.07%
Suggested ameliorating the taste of Unica	40%	50%	64%	51.6%
Suggested ameliorating the taste of Dabké	31%	54%	29%	38.17%
Careless about giving suggestions for Dabké	69%	36%	64%	56.02%
Other brands taste better than Gandour	40%	36%	21%	32.14%
Good for the Lebanese business	6%	21%	43%	23.75%
Gandour rebranding advertisement campaigns are not enough	31%	72%	86%	63.78%

Following is an evaluation of key findings:

- 72.92% of interviewee considers the taste a priority in evaluating a chocolate/ cookies brand.

To satisfy customers and build a relation, Gandour is to invest in the taste of its products. Focus groups participants, recommend that Gandour ameliorates its ingredients to satisfy the consumers, increase customer ship, and consequently increase sales rates and profitability. The matter is not only about attracting new possible or future customer, it is also about keeping the current loyal or semi- loyal customers satisfied.

- 60.78% eat chocolate/ cookies for pleasure.

Feeling pleasure is related to psychology, and understanding customer psychology leads to a pleasurable delivery of products. One of the questions chocolate/ cookies marketers should consider prior to a repositioning or rebranding campaign is what is learnt from market observation and what feeling do customers get after using the product? It is essential to understand the customers to come up with a campaign that leads to a relationship between the company and the market components (points of sales, sales persons, clients, consumers). 61.29% are not affected by others in their purchasing behavior.

- 66.8% Act the same in private and in public.

If 61.29% are confident of their consumption choice, then it is logical that these persons consume the same products in private and in public. A customer who makes his purchase decision based on personal conviction and who is not affected by others point of view, is determinate enough to become a loyal or semi-loyal consumer. The role of rebranding for this category of consumers is to offer clear information about the product to attract and convince.

- 54.02% describe themselves as energetic.

Understanding the psychographics of internal and external public (existing and potential customers) is important to be able to act correctly. Energetic customers like to take their decision; they prefer and choose the brands they identify with.

- 51.56% label Gandour as a Lebanese nostalgic brand.

In the intervening time, marketers on the international level consider nostalgia a smart strategy for a brand success. A number of both Gandour consumers and Gandour non-consumers said that this brand is a

Lebanese mark. According to Mr. Malek Shehab, Gandour brand manager, the repositioning of Gandour is to create a new revamping image of the brand. Gandour marketing campaign in 2014 focused on the fact that the products were given a lift.

- 51.41% are loyal to Gandour.

Gandour consumers reconsider consuming its products repeatedly, which makes them loyal or semi-loyal customers. To increase the percentage of loyal customers, the company is recommended to focus on the brand and not on specific products; therefore if a product started to deteriorate, the brand stays vigorous and visible.

- 66.04% find Gandour cheap compared to competing brands.

Customers judge a brand by comparing the price of the products versus the quality offered to them. “More for the same” is when a company offers more for almost the same price. The company could be offering more in taste (better taste), bigger, additional options (variety), more in identification (social actions) or more in promotion (tasting).

- 74.07% haven’t noticed any changes for Dabké.

Gandour introduced to the Lebanese market a bigger size of Dabké cookies using a more revamping wrap and a new slogan. The frequency of Dabké advertisements is lower than the frequency of Unica and Tarboosh advertisements.

- 51.6% suggested ameliorating the taste of Unica.

Customers required a better taste for the same price, in view of competing brands in the Lebanese market actually offering a better taste. 29.12% are not aware, in the first place, of the new flavor of Unica (Unica dark).

- 56.02% were not invigorated to suggest changes for Dabké.

The efforts invested in Dabké are not equal to the efforts invested in Unica and Tarboosh, which explains why the frequency of Dabké advertisements is less than the two other products. Gandour is differentiating between one product and another.

- 63.78% believe that Gandour rebranding advertisements are not enough.

Many factors can ensure a wider reach of advertisements: an accurate segmentation, target audience identification, geographic attributes, choosing the right media, choosing the right point of sales and conducting attractive promotional actions.

Theoretical Approach

Cognitive Theory

The cognitive theory of social actions, including eating, states that people’s actions are rational. Therefore a person does an act in order to reach satisfaction on both social and sentimental levels (Boudon, 2001). The definition of satisfaction varies from one person to another. For one person it is delight and pleasure, for others it is happiness, for others it is feeling a sweet taste. The high majority of focus groups participants loyalty is a choice and they usually consume the product they chose based on wants versus satisfaction (72.92% consider taste as a priority, 66.04% find Gandour products cheap compared to other brands and 66.8% act the same in private and public and).

Attitudes Theory

Studying attitudes is a major component of customer psychology concept. Attitudes theory confirms that a person’s personality affects the cognitive process that includes judging and decision making. At this

stage the mood effect can interfere to narrow the possible choices (Jacoby, 2014). In the first focus group, energetic audience confirmed that their choice of chocolate is related to their psychological situation. In the same focus group 29% mentioned that eating sweets changes their mood positively. Positive response towards a product is essential to reach loyalty or semi-loyalty.

Utilitarian Theory

The Utilitarian theory of social action implies that there is a socio economic cause to actions. On the sociological level, those who are attached to their parents and are emotional, consume the products their parents consume (habitual consumer decision). In the first focus group 62% are likely to buy Gandour products because their parents do. Parents eating habits highly influence children eating habits. In such a case, collecting data from parents is highly important for marketers (Wellner, 2003).

Effects Theory

Organizational learning based on the Effect Application theory: the company is to study the future clients' psychology and behavior and orientation to set up a clear marketing plan for them. The third focus group recognized possible costumers, an important segment for companies working on enlarge their customer ship, this segment is supposed to be the future target of companies who wish to enlarge the scope of their customer ship and increase their market share. Based on this group, the recommendation to invest in the taste was reinforced, 64% suggest that Gandour should invest in taste (same suggestion was given by the two other focus groups participants 62% in the first group and 92% in the second focus group).

Conclusion

Lebanese customers in 2016 are affected by nostalgia, as a matter of fact "51,56%" of interviewed people appreciate that Gandour is a traditional Lebanese brand that survived many life cycles and that offers a variety of products. "51,41%" are loyal to the Lebanese traditional brand Gandour. Marketers on the international level consider nostalgia a smart strategy for a brand success.

The study indicated that Lebanese in 2016, like better if the company works on one branding (repositioning the brand itself) focusing on nostalgia through creating common grounds for all its products.

Therefore, Gandour is recommended to:

- Identify itself as a brand that produces several products, through unifying the font and the color of "Gandour" on all wraps and packages and advertisements of all Gandour products. (For example Cadbury has a unified color to all its products that is purple, in the mind of customers purple is a symbol of that brand). Focus on the fact that the brand is much important than product, and creating loyalty to the brand is stronger than creating a loyalty of the product, so that when the product worsen the brand stays alive (74.07% are not aware of Dabké changes). In this case, the repositioning will be more focused for the same budget. If the repositioning is for the brand and not for the products, the advertising campaign would be more focused and would cost less.
- Invest in the taste; make it the core of the brand. Gandour can still invest in using better and tastier ingredients as suggested by customers, for whom taste is rated as first criteria for evaluating Unica, Tarboosh and Dabké. 60.78% of interviewed people seek pleasure from consuming chocolate/ cookies, this pleasure cannot be reached if the taste is not up to the expectations and standards.
- Be informative and follow the international standards in displaying clearly the nutritional facts of the products on the wrap. Customers in 2016 need to understand the product and know more about it (especially the ingredients). This material cannot be unseen for Lebanese customers.

- Using new promotional strategies (Below the line marketing: form of marketing that is different from paid advertising such as sales promotion and public relations) especially that 63.78% of interviewed personal find that Gandour advertisements are not enough for creating awareness about the products in the Lebanese market as follows:
 - Apply products tasting strategy in big supermarkets and point of sales because customers have to be aware of the kind of changes that occurred. An attractive stand with Gandour logo should be displayed, where a knowledgeable sales person is available to offer information about the brand and its products for shoppers. Tasting is a one to one marketing with already existing customers, from which 51.41% are loyal, to reinforce this relationship. In addition it is an opportunity to introduce the products to Gandour non- consumer with a possibility that those tasting the product might like it and become customers. In the third focus group 14% of non- consumers said that they tried Gandour products when it was offered to them. Lebanese customers tend to be loyal, they need to taste Gandour products and like it to possibly become loyal customers.
 - Put a Gandour stand in points of sales to display Gandour products (23 confectionery products and 3 food products) for branding. This stand will show the variety offered by this Lebanese company, will ensure that Gandour is succeeding in surviving continuous life cycles, and will demonstrate that the productivity of Gandour is still growing. This promotional act is not as costly as advertisements.
 - Propose seasonal packages (e.g. a red bag of Gandour products customized for Christmas) with a unified Gandour Logo (shape, color and font) for apposite branding.

A company with 51.41% loyal customers, a good market share and a variety of products can surely do a better branding strategy for better sales.

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