

¡MUCHA LUCHA! BUILDING A BRAND

Jason D Reese, Stephen F Austin State University
Marlene C Kahla, Stephen F Austin State University
Robert M Crocker, Stephen F Austin State University

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES

CASE DESCRIPTION

This case takes advantage of the culinary genius and entrepreneurial spirit of Chef Victor and parleys his creations into the challenge of building a brand image that will create distinctiveness in a highly competitive homogenous market. Mucha Lucha represents the aspects of Mexican culture that includes masks and wrestling—signature moves. The literal translation is “a lot of fight,” referring to the famed Mexican wrestling, lucha libre. For the restaurant in the case, it presents a unique slice of Mexican culture that few, if any, traditional restaurants use. This includes the reference of lucha libre wrestling artefacts on the restaurant walls and within the themes of the restaurant.

The case has a difficulty level that will challenge senior-level marketing students or graduate students, to develop a strategic marketing plan that will unite and identify the various business units. The case may serve as an individual or team project. Independent research is highly recommended and a minimum of two weeks is recommended prep time for students to develop and refine their ideas.

CASE SYNOPSIS

The case begins with Chef Victor Oliveira unveiling his ideas for his latest concept, El Carnes al Mesquite Restaurant. As he shares his ideas about the restaurant, he also reveals his ultimate goal, to unite all of their ventures under one brand.

His brother and sister are his business partners and their shared memories of gathering in their grandmother's kitchen bind them and motivate them to providing great dining experiences. The traditions of his family, the recipes they recreate and their heritage are forces that they hope to include when building the brand.

They know that Carnes al Mesquite will be the new kid on a block that is already crowded with thousands of competitors. They know they must get the customer's attention, dazzle them with the dining experience, get them to tell others and get them to come back.

As a graduate of the prestigious Institute of Culinary Excellence in Boston, Chef Victor knows how to run his kitchen and to create fantastic cuisine for his guests. Now he wants to expand and solidify his brand and to capitalize on his early success. At the same time, Chef Victor needs to manage and prepare his service staffs, who are sometimes overwhelmed with life outside of work, for interactions with patrons, who are sometimes upset about service failures.

Learning Objectives

After reading this case study, students should be able to:

1. Have a basic understanding of the issues related to creating a consistent brand across multiple business units (dining concepts).
2. Explain the importance of brand equity in the service industry.
3. Define and describe the servicescape.
4. Provide an overview of the issues related to creating a family of brands.

Teaching Overview

1. Case focused on dining concepts that are unique, but can be applied to other service industry brands.
2. Pedagogical approaches can include written and oral presentation, group discussion and creative idea generation.
3. Topics of discussion can include:
 - a. Brand consistency
 - b. Brand equity
 - c. Brand identity
 - d. Family of brands

There are a variety of topics related to marketing and management careers in services organizations. While this case focuses on one family of brands, specifically adding a new dining concept, this case may also be used to help students better understand the importance of branding across all service industry brand types.

This section provides teaching notes for instructors so that they may use various approaches to discussing the case within class, online and the formation of class projects outside of class. Creative idea generation, group discussions, written and oral presentations are all pedagogical approaches that could be used with this case. We suggest that the instructor ask students to write a response to the discussion questions, as well as present their ideas in oral format (e.g. group presentations, discussion in class, etc.). However, various teaching practices can be used with this case.

Key Discussion Questions

The case presented here is designed to emphasize the need for consistent brand messages across a family of brands. It shows the importance of servicescape creation in relation to the intended brand identity.

1. Students are to be asked about types of servicescapes and how they affect employees and customers and their interactions. Students should be encouraged to describe how organizations differ in terms of *whom* the servicescape actually affects. For example, the irate customer may have built his expectations on a flawless service experience intended by Chef Victor and was disproportionately angry when the water boy caused the water to spill down his back. He had not expected his meal to take so long nor did he expect to have a weak drink. When each element interacts, the results may be damaging for the business. Here was an opportunity for the wait staff employee, Gene, to save the day and offer his apologies for the inconveniences the customer experienced. But, no, Gene had other things on his mind, he had not been influenced by Chef Victor to understand the culture and brand identity that Chef Victor sought for the restaurant. Only one staff meeting was not enough to instill in the

employees an understanding of the culture and the need to strengthen brand identity for all the restaurants owned by Chef Victor. Brand equity is missing within the family of brands that represent who Chef Victor is. Applying the concept of brand equity in the student marketing plans would be an important addition.

No two servicescapes of his businesses are alike. There is little tangible evidence to connect one business with the others. Northern Mexican cuisine was missing in his other restaurants. With so many competitor restaurants in San Antonio, brand equity can strengthen each of Victor's four restaurants in their specific markets similar to the strength of brand equity for Procter & Gamble strengthening the market for each of its over 300 product lines.

2. Students should be asked to analyse the level of training that enables the employees of Carne al Mesquite to strengthen the brand equity of the restaurant and eventually the family of brands that represent Chef Victor.

Chef Victor's management team consists of his brother, Jaime and his sister, Rosa. They all know each other, they all understand their culture. They communicate easily and willingly with each other. On the other hand, the staff members at the restaurant appear to have little concern about the aspect of culture that Chef Victor seeks to convey in his restaurant. Students should address how Chef Victor can encourage staff members to buy-in into the culture of the firm.

Students should recognize the importance of communicating the culture of the brand (the concepts and themes developed in the planning stages of the servicescape) with the frontline workers (Gene, wait staff, hosts and hostesses, etc.). Most consumer interactions with the brand will be through those frontline workers and the servicescape and not through management and Chef Victor. Therefore, if the themes created by Chef Victor and his siblings are truly going to be introduced to consumers, they must first start with those employees that interact with them on a regular basis. This should be included in the student's marketing plan.

3. Students should be asked if they believe that brand equity is important to the survival of the restaurants mentioned in the case. In developing responses to this question, they should be encouraged to advise Chef Victor about brand equity and the roles that servicescape and employees play in enhancing brand equity.

While each of his restaurants is a part of who he is, he keeps opening restaurants to fulfil his personality in his cooking. On the brand management side, he sees his family, but not his family of brands. The employees need more than a meeting to better understand what Chef Victor is attempting to build regarding brand equity. There should be plans for additional employee training meetings and activities. Student should include the concept of employee training into their marketing plan.

4. By using servicescape and brand equity as tools, they are to build a marketing plan that will help modify any negative effects of such reviews. While each of his restaurants is a part of who he is, he keeps opening restaurants to fulfil his personality in his cooking. For example, the Mucha Lucha is a concept that shows his Mexican heritage while also showing the fun side of the Mexican culture. He includes the free wrestling ideas in his logo designs and decorations in Carne al Mesquite. His goal is to do this with class while maintaining a prestigious brand image. It is not your traditional fine dining concept.

Have the students read the following reviews of Carne al Mesquite.

“The decorations were lovely. In addition, the patio was fantastic. I loved all of the trees! The problem was that the service was INCREDABLY slow! I was also taken back by the prices.”

“We were really excited about eating at Carnes al Mesquite the first time...However, I cannot believe how HORRIBLE the service was! After an HOUR of waiting for our food, the manager was extremely rude to us.”

5. In their marketing plan, ask the students to identify existing companies that have multiple variations of their primary business unit. Some examples include IHG, Hilton, Proctor & Gamble, etc. Have them identify how these brands balance the communication messages to consumer across the family of brands. What does each brand represent? What type of consumer does it attract? How are the messages consistent, as well as varied, across the family of brands?
6. To better understand this concept of a family of brands, encourage students to think about the impact the brand identity of a university system can have brand equity of a new brand. For example, ask students to think about a university system they are familiar with (e.g. University of Texas system, University of California system, University of Wisconsin system, etc.). Have them select another university not currently part of that system. How might the adoption of that other university into the system impact the brand equity of the university? Does it add a level of prestige? Perceived improvement in brand status?

TEACHING PLAN

Case Introduction

1. This case type should be introduced to students, either orally in class (traditional class format) or online. If the instructor has had experiences in the service industry, this should be included in the introduction. The goal is to get students to think more about every aspect of the service industry and branding concepts.
2. Provide a copy of the case to the students. Present the abstract to the students in class. If the instructor wishes, provide them with the discussion questions listed in the Teachers Notes above. Be sure to give student plenty of time to ask questions about the case and the assignment before they read the case.
3. If the instructor wishes to give this case as a homework assignment, allow the student plenty of time to read the case and answer the discussion questions, if assigned. A time period of at least 24 hours should be given.

Group Presentations

1. The first step (if a group presentation is the teaching methodology chosen) should be to allow students to have active discussion with their peers/group members before and after the case is read. By doing this, you are providing the group members the opportunity to hear from a diverse group of students. This gives each student the potential to hear experiences and ideas that are different from their own. Providing opportunities for diversity of thought can help student gain a better understanding of cultures other than their own.

2. Having students present their analysis of the case in both oral and written form helps students with their communication skills.
3. It is also important to ensure expectations are provided to students before the case is read and analysed. Providing a grading rubric to students for the oral and written presentations is highly suggested. The grading rubrics could focus on: the presentation (finishing on time, professional dress, tone, flow of presentation, etc.), analysis of the case, applicability of the strategies suggested and showing an understanding of the case.

CONCLUSION

This case presents brand managers' needs to better understand and control their brands within the services industry. By controlling brand characteristics, service industry businesses are better able to increase market share and ensure quality experiences for their customers. Topics related to brand equity, identity, how brand consistency leads to substantial impact on a family of brands, as well as servicescape were introduced.