

Case Study

Brick's Burguer House: The challenge to grow without losing the taste

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Abstract

Objective: To propose a case study to analyze the growth and development strategies of a handmade hamburger, Brick's Burger House - the "star's snack", which intends to expand its business to other cities. **Context/Reality investigated:** With two years of existence, in the city where it operates, the company has become market leader in its segment. The competition, which aggressively tries to get a bigger share of the market, imposes to the partners the great challenge of defining Brick's growth strategy. **Diagnosis/Problem situation/Opportunity:** The big challenge is to grow without losing the main reason of the hamburger's success: to provide customers with the Brick's experience. **Results:** The result of the research corroborates the orientation towards entrepreneurial marketing (OME), a characteristic in the behavior of the snack bar and hamburger shop sector, which points out looks focused on the market, the opportunity and the customer. This brings to light the discussion, in class, about entrepreneurial skills and the proposal of solutions for decision-making.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneur Marketing; Decision of making.

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Resumo

Objetivo: Propor um estudo de caso para analisar as estratégias de crescimento e de desenvolvimento de uma hamburgueria artesanal, a Brick's Burguer House - o "lanche das estrelas", que pretende expandir seus negócios para outras cidades. **Contexto/Realidade investigada:** Com dois anos de existência, na cidade onde atua, a empresa se tornou líder de mercado do seu segmento. A concorrência que, de forma agressiva, tenta conseguir maior fatia do mercado, impõe aos sócios o grande desafio de definir a estratégia de crescimento da Brick's. **Diagnóstico/Situação-problema/Oportunidade:** O grande desafio é crescer sem perder a principal razão do sucesso da hamburgueria: proporcionar aos clientes a experiência Brick's. **Resultado:** O resultado da pesquisa corrobora a orientação para o marketing empreendedor (OME), característica no comportamento do setor de lanchonetes e de hamburguerias, que aponta olhares voltados ao mercado, à oportunidade e ao cliente. Isso traz à tona a discussão, em sala de aula, sobre as habilidades empreendedoras e a proposta de soluções para a tomada de decisão.

Palavras-chave: Empreendedorismo; Marketing Empreendedor; Tomada de decisão.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Sebrae (2017), enterprises specializing in hamburgers are no longer fashionable and are already standing out among the most profitable in the "Food and Beverages" sector, which occupied the top of the list of the most promising to invest in 2018. Data published by the Institut of Gastronomy (IGA, 2017), indicate that in São Paulo alone, one of the country's gastronomic poles, this line of business grew 575% between 1994 and 2017. In Brazil, 40% of the population eats outside the home at least once a day, according to the IBGE (2017). And, according to the Average Price 2018, in a survey conducted by the Association of Meal Companies and Food Partnership Agreement (PNAD, 2017), the average expense per meal on the street is R\$ 30.48.

In the last decade, São Paulo has seen hamburgers become mania. Leaving the plates of snack bars and bakeries, the hamburger started to occupy the menu of sophisticated restaurants and came to be enjoyed with a fork and knife and even cost more than main dishes. At the moment, gourmet excesses are no longer fashionable and are replaced by sandwiches made to be eaten by hand. The recipe on the rise at the moment involves no longer a thin and almost toasted piece of meat. Currently the bet is on the quality of the meat, which can be prepared to the point or underdone, according to the customer's preference.

In the state of Ceará, the capital Fortaleza has about 16 large hamburgers. Among them, three deserve to be highlighted due to their success with customers. The first of them had its appearance in 2011 and today has two stores, one of which is the home that created the hamburger culture in Fortaleza. In addition to handcrafted recipes, the hamburger shop won over the public through the creation of its own concept of experience with stores decorated in retro style. Another highlight hamburger comes from Belém and has been in the capital of CE since 2015, finding in Fortaleza a favorable environment for the installation of its second unit.

With an industrial style ambience, young, friendly and attentive attendants, the house conquers above all for its hamburgers, listed on a lean menu and which facilitates the choice. It is also interesting to highlight a third establishment, which was born due to the street food movement in 2014, where the great fashion of gastronomy in Brazil was food trucks, trailers and itinerant restaurants. Initially the hamburger shop was just a table and a barbecue, which evolved into a trailer, and after two years traveling through the Northeast, it became a fixed restaurant. Street food, handmade, that deconstructs the idea of gourmet is the great proposal of the place, which offers sandwiches to lunches and desserts.

Leaving Fortaleza and walking 220 km to the north of the capital of Ceará, Sobral is found, the fourth largest economy in the state, in a ranking where the first place is occupied by the capital. Sobral is the 9th largest economy in the northeastern interior and has the largest university center and health center in the interior of Ceará, offering the best basic education in Brazil, according to IDEB. With regard to the gastronomy branch, Sobral has a well-heated market, with several restaurants, from the most traditional and stylish, to the simplest, serving only the famous PF (made dish). However, despite this promising scenario, the city did not have any 100% hamburger style restaurants until the end of 2015, which was being built as a great business opportunity.

HISTORY BACKGROUND

A hamburger shop is born

Brick's birth is related to the love story of one of its partners, Pulga Neto, Pulguinha, with cooking. Born and raised in Sobral, Pulguinha moved to Fortaleza, in 2001, at the age of 16, to finish high school. Then, as he already likes to cook, Pulguinha decided to take an entrance exam for Nutrition, attended two years of the course, gave up and decided to take a new entrance exam, now for Pharmacy. He studied until the eighth semester and again gave up to study Administration, where he spent two semesters and finally dropped everything and decided to return to Sobral in 2010.

Upon arriving in Sobral, he started to work at a bank and later at a credit union. Four years later, we are in June 2014 and Pulguinha is fired from his job, not knowing what to do to get his income. The only thing he was sure of was that cooking made him happy. This passion always made him invite his friends over for dinner at his house and, at one of those dinners, dessert caught everyone's attention. A different flavored pudding made friends suggest that dessert would be a good business opportunity.

So Pulguinha thinks:

— *Half money is over. How will I pay my bills? I have to pay for the gym, my only distraction these days ...*

Thinking about it, every Wednesday Pulguinha took his desserts to sell at the gym and it was a success! This income made it possible for him to maintain his expenses. One of the friends suggested that the name of the pudding was related to his own name, so the puddings got the name of La Pulga.

The success of La Pulga puddings was so great that two months after the start of sales it was necessary to build an industrial kitchen to support the demand for orders. And such popularity came only through digital marketing and "word-of-mouth" advertising. But the best is yet to come. On a gastronomic night, when he received a group of friends at his home, the main course caught everyone's attention. A simple gourmet burger, handcrafted style, caused such a stir in the night that all the guests asked the host: why not turn that simple dish into a business?

The suggestion came from his friend Anastácio, who already supported him in transporting material for the events where Pulguinha took the puddings to sell. Anastácio suggested opening a hamburger shop in Sobral, but Pulguinha thought it was not the time, because he was afraid to take a chance on a deal and not be successful.

We are in May 2015 and Pulguinha makes another dinner at his house. And when being approached again by Anastácio, Pulguinha replies:

— *I don't know ... I need to think...*

At a third dinner and the consequent third approach made by Anastácio, Pulguinha decides to give in:

— *Okay, let's talk about it...*

But Anastácio did not want to waste time, already on Monday he called Pulguinha and said:

— *I found a nice spot, shall we look?*

Thus, the future partners decide to know the place that in the near future would change their lives. Upon entering the site, an old spot in the middle of Avenida Dom José, a noble and well-known area in the city, Pulguinha stepped on something that



caught his attention. A R\$ 1.00 coin that would be your “lucky charm” and that makes you think:

— *...the first value I managed to earn in my new business !!*

Thus, Pulguinha kept that coin in his pocket, which is still there today, exposed to everyone who frequents the hamburger shop, which was named Brick's Burguer House, due to the peeled wall showing its bricks (Figure 01). Thus, in January 2015, the partners started the work of what would soon be a successful business.



Fig. 01
Lucky coin

Source: Research data.

The Taste of Success

Brick's was opened in December 2015, with eight employees and resources divided between loan and equity. Although with inexperienced partners and without much preparation, the business only grew. So, in order to meet the need for management knowledge and improve the product, the partners often went to São Paulo to participate in gastronomy and management courses.

However, the market continues to evolve, and at the end of the first year of life, Brick's started to count on a direct competitor in the city, another hamburger was opened, with a new concept, bringing a differentiated bread for the sandwich, black bread. The novelty made some want to know the new, but it did not shake the Brick's market. On the contrary, the demand for household products only grew. Long queues formed at the hamburger door and about 30% of the revenue came from customers who were going to pick up the product at the store, as it did not offer delivery service. Thus, at the beginning of 2017, Pulguinha and Anastácio realized that with a single store they were unable to meet all demand. In a conversation between

them, Pulguinha questions Anastácio:

— *What's up? What we do? We have queues and we don't deliver ... We have customers coming back because they can't get a table and can't wait so long ...*

What's up Anastácio? How to solve this?

— *We need to think, we have to find a solution!*

— *Anastácio replies.*

The truth is that the partners did not want to open a branch in another location, because they were afraid of not being able to manage both houses and thus lose their quality and consequently the good name they had on the market ...



Fig. 02
Character posters
Source: Research data

So, here's an idea! At a point in front of Brick's, in June 2017, the partners open Brick's Express, a place where the customer can stop by and pick up their product to take home, place an order

for delivery, or eat there. Brick's Express also appears as an app, where orders can be placed and tables are also reserved for Brick's. The new house is a two-storey store, where the service is on the ground floor, a small kitchen and living area in which people make quick snacks. On the upper floor there is an area where customers can enjoy their snacks at shared tables.

Brick's Express, within a short time of operation, has also become a success. After two months of opening, the partners doubled their revenue, with revenue coming mainly from customer service via delivery, where 70% of orders are placed via application. At the end of 2017, in addition to the competitors that already existed (hamburgers, snack bars and restaurants as a whole), two more strong names emerged in the city, which initially caused Brick's to lose 15% of its revenue, since customers decided to try other flavors. However, Brick's has such differentiated service, stores and products, that when comparing the sales of the last quarter of 2016 x 2017, it appears that the company grew 30%.

However, the success of the house did not come to nothing, due to the competition, Brick's needed to change its marketing strategy, starting to work with value generation through experience. So, customers go to the burger shop not to eat a burger, but to eat a Brick's. And the passion of customers for Brick's is so great, that the house also sells bags and blouses with its brand printed. All decorated in a retro style, at Brick's you can find posters of bands and characters from the 80s and 90s, such as: Jaspion, Chapolin, your Madruga, Hommer Simpson and even artists and iconic bands like Nirvana, Amy Winehouse, Bob Marley, Michael Jackson, Queen, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, among others (Figure 2). In addition to these, which he could not miss, Albert Einstein, because the theory that launched him to stardom, the theory of relativity, was proven four years after its emergence, thanks to an experiment carried out simultaneously in Sobral, Brick's city and on the island of Príncipe, in Africa. So Brick's couldn't help but reference this historical fact.



Fig. 03
Hallucination - hamburger in honor of Sobral
Source: Research data

A clear example of the "Brick's experience" is the connection between the house and the city and, consequently, its customers, so we can mention the case of the creation of the Hallucination, a hamburger made in honor of Sobral and served only on the city's birthday (Figure 3). For the owners of Brick's, Sobral is

a special city and being from Sobral is a pride. So the owners of Brick's paid homage to the Princess of the North (as the city is called), with what is most peculiar about it, creating a genuinely hamburger Sobralense. The name of the hamburger, Hallucination, was given in honor of Belchior, an artist from Sobral, and all the ingredients that make up the sandwich are also from Sobral, such as: crispy crackling flour made in the traditional Bar do Dermeval (one of the oldest bars in the city), baked coalho cheese produced by Lassa (dairy factory in Sobral, founded in 1969), crispy bacon caramelized with Guaraná Delrio (soft drink factory also in Sobral), special vinaigrette from Bar do Lulu (another traditional bar in the city), bread from Pão Mix (bakery also Sobralense and Brick's partner), handmade ketchup from Brick's and to drink a super cold Delrio. As expected, the sandwich was successful in the city and among customers.



Fig. 04
Brick's Music Session Announcement
Source: Research data



Fig. 05
Pedal boats coming from Fortaleza to eat a Brick's
Source: Research data

The house also has the Brick's Music Session (Figure 4), presentations that take place once a month with songs in the style of pop, reggae and rock, which attract even more and which also have a social nature, since the amounts collected with the cover charge are donated to causes social.

With so many attractions and differentiated products, Brick's attracts customers even from the state capital, Fortaleza. The most emblematic case of this passion was the pedalers who traveled 4400km (round trip from Fortaleza to Sobral), just for the desire to eat a good Brick's (Figure 5).

Faced with so many marketing strategies incorporated into the business, Brick's generates more and more value to its regulars, which makes it a public success and praise in the environment in which it is inserted. The house emphasizes quality within a context linked to the universe of its customers, which transcends temporality, which for its customers is priceless.

EVERYONE WANTS TO EAT A BRICK'S. AND NOW?

Brick's success is such that at the end of 2017 the partners received, in its second year of operation and for the second consecutive year, the Sebrae 2017 Quality Seal (Figure 6). The award is the result of a joint action by Sebrae/CE and the trade state tourism, aiming to encourage the implementation of improvements in products and services offered in companies in the field of accommodation, food and events, working as an instrument to recognize the efforts of entrepreneurs who are providers of excellent and quality services in the tourism market. To achieve certification, companies go through an evaluation process, which involves the analysis of more than 200 items, such as the state of the physical facilities of the establishments, compliance with safety rules, storage and handling of food, the correct destination waste and good service practices, among other requirements.



Fig. 06
Brick's members receive awards
Source: Research data

With so many efforts to become increasingly present in the daily life of Sobralenses, in early 2017 the idea arises to reward the so-

called Brick's fanatics, with a contest to elect the biggest fanatic, where the winner would win a "hamburger tour" by the main São Paulo points with everything paid for and accompanied by the founders of Brick's. The contest consisted of several stages, in which all participants had their knowledge about Brick's tested, in addition to developing an authorial recipe for a hamburger so that it would appear temporarily on the menu. The action, like everything done by Brick's, was successful and stirred customers. Everyone wants to live the Brick's experience and taste the delights served there. Bringing the records of hamburger sales and sales to Brick's since the house opened.



Fig. 07
Dessert "A Thing"
Source: Research data

The differentiated service, the environment with every detail designed to provide the Brick's experience, with songs that identify the place and entitled to a play list on Spotify, in addition to its own flavor, full of regionalism and without losing the characteristics of a "true hamburger", Make Brick's something desired by customers in Sobral, neighboring cities

and even in the capital Fortaleza. Brick's success is also seen on social media, the Instagram profile of the hamburger shop has more than 15,000 followers and is one of the company's main means of communication with the public, where publications disclose, for example, new dishes developed by the house and that often remain temporarily on the menu due to some event or landmark date, like the dessert "A Thing", which made reference to the movie It, "A Thing" and which remained on the menu only during the week of Halloween (Figure 7). Thing was a kind of dream stuffed with strawberries and Nutella and that literally occupied the dreams of customers, who until today insist that dessert should return to the menu.

Brick's success with the public is undeniable and even after the creation of Brick's Express there are still queues at the door of the Brick's Burguer House. Customers want to come in, sit down, listen to the music, enjoy the atmosphere, live the Brick's experience, something that goes beyond tasting an excellent hamburger, eating a La Pulga pudding, having a craft beer, milk

shakes specially developed by the chef or natural juices beyond specials.

A Brick's became an object of customer desire and a source of pride for the founders of the hamburger shop. All these facts are the subject of the conversation between Pulguinha and Anastácio in another night of a crowded house, where several questions pass through their minds. Sitting by one of the oil drums that are part of the decoration and serve as waiting desks for customers in line, Pulguinha asks Anastácio:

— *So my friend, are we going to grow up? How? Should our Brick's be established in the capital (Fortaleza), where the company's growth potential is greater and more significant? Or would the best option be to expand inland, going for example to Jericoacoara, the largest tourist destination in our state?*

This is the research question that motivated this study; for which, in the following chapters, possible answers will be listed, based on the academic literature on the subject.

Teaching Notes

This teaching case provides the teaching notes separately.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Authors' statement of individual contributions

Roles	Authors Contributions			
	Bendor, MEMS	Porto, P. M. V.	Linhares, F. J. M.	Santos, R. C.
Conceptualization	X	-	X	-
Methodology	X	X	-	X
Software	-	-	-	-
Validation	X	-	-	X
Formal analysis	X	-	X	-
Investigation	-	X	X	X
Resources	-	X	-	X
Data Curation	-	-	X	X
Writing - Original Draft	X	X	-	X
Writing - Review & Editing	X	-	X	X
Visualization	X	X	-	X
Supervision	X	-	X	X
Project administration	X	-	-	X
Funding acquisition	-	-	-	-

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