BRAND IDENTITY: INTRODUCING RENEWED CONCEPT FOR COFFEE SHOPS

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Abstract

Building a strong brand identity has become a major marketing concern for many services. In previous years, the focus was on the interaction between the organization and the customers. This study extended previous research by focusing on the concept of coffee shops. A qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews was used to explore the food and beverage industry. The interviews were carried out with 15 independent coffee shops in Christchurch, New Zealand. There were two key findings from this research that indicated attentiveness among the respondents about brand identity, first, a distinctive concept and second, having a fresh concept that will assist the process of brand identity creation. This study contributed to our understanding of how brand identity was built and then connected it to the internal culture of the coffee shop. The findings suggested that the process of creating and building a brand identity

was more complicated than just creating the visual imagery in order to build distinctiveness.

Keywords

Brand, Brand identity, Coffee shops

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1. Introduction

The rationalization of brand management by marketing scholars (Aaker, 2012; Brochado, Vinhas da Silva, LaPlaca, Bruwer, & Bruwer, 2015; Kapferer, 2012; K. Keller, 2013; Vanauken, 2002) is important in order to diminish misunderstandings about brand construction. The need to have a common understanding of the term "brand" is critical in order to have a further understanding of brand, and also brand identity. A brand is expected to echo more with consumers if it has an identification mark, symbol, word(s) or mixture of those to distinguish its product or service from other companies, thereby creating a unique identity (Godin, 2009; Imber & Toffler, 2008; Jevons, 2005; Kotler, 1997)

The definition of branding can be defined as, "a brand will be understood as a unique identity, given specifically to a product or a service, which is communicated in the form of a term, symbol, design, sound, experience or a combination of these, to consumers. When a brand communicates to the customers it sends a promise of what will be delivered or experienced. Like a person, a brand must have an identity and it should be clearly revealed" (Rashid, 2012). This definition has provided a new height on the brand plethora with the addition on the importance of having its own creative identity.

Brands are substantial because they are able to easily outline the customers' perception and decision towards them. Moreover, there is a common absenteeism of a clearly defined approach taken by brands to penetrate emerging markets with their names and concept, and for this particular research context, it will be the coffee shops. This research focus on the brand identity building and it's significant. The emerging market of coffee shops has stimulated noise in this sector. Coffee shops are experiencing a rising in attractiveness, developing new lifestyle and changing the way the world drinks (International, 2014). Thus, this call for the need to have a renewed concept in order to have a distinguish identity and be a competitive player in the industry.

2. Overview of Brand Identity

The concept of brand identity has been researched in some depth (Christmann, Alexander, & Wood, 2015; De Chernatony, 1999; K. L. Keller, 2001; Lawrence & Kaufmann, 2015; Lory & McCalman, 2002; Nandan, 2005; Phillips, McQuarrie, & Griffin, 2014). Kapferer (2012) argues that having an identity indicates "being your true self, driven by a personal goal that is both different from others' and resistant to change".

Harley Davidson, for example, has a powerful and well-established brand identity that creates its own community (Muniz Jr & O'guinn, 2001). The Harley Davidson brand represents "a unique light, with a great respect and distinction", along with an image of "power, rebellion and classic style in any American that hears it as well as many people worldwide, witnessing to the strength of Harley Davidson brand"(Pugliese & Cagan, 2002). Konini and Go (2008) give new insights into the concept of brand identity. They assert that brand identity states what the brand aspires to be. A successful brand:

- *Constitutes a set of associations that the brand strategist seeks to create and maintain.*

- *Represents a vision of how a particular brand should be perceived by its target audience.*

- *Establishes a relationship between a particular brand and its clientele by generating a value proposition potentially either involving benefits or providing credibility, which endorses the brand in question.*

In accepting Koneke and Go's insights, it appears likely that a better understanding of the brand identity concept will be communicated to potential customers. The brand of a product or service needs to have its own unique identity that makes it stand out and be recognizable by its customers. Kapferer (2012) believes that a brand with identity is more likely to survive in the fast-growing marketing industry since it can connect better with customers. As can be seen, the coffee shop industry is an emerging market currently, thus, it is important to have a unique identity and recognizable.

The process of creating and maintaining a brand needs to be systematically planned. Brand identities are built using two elements; specialization and authority (Kitchen & Schultz, 2003). Specialization is what the organization does best and what makes it different from other

organizations in molding the brand and its identity. The second element, authority, is about the basis of the identity and encompasses dimensions such as quality, leadership and trustworthiness among individuals in the organization. It is essential for a brand to have both virtues (specialization and authority) to grow and compete with existing brands. This research focuses on the concept of identity creation, specialization and authority among the essential elements that are needed to distinguish an organization. Integrating these two elements together is likely to provide a complete guide to building a unique coffee shop.

More actions for building a brand have been suggested by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) who claim that "brand identity needs to resonate with customers, differentiate the brand from competitors and represent what the organization can and will do over time." The researcher agrees with Aaker and Joachimsthaler that it is important to identify what are the customers' desires and to identify what competitors are doing.

3. Brand Building Identity

"A set of brand associations enable a brand to develop a rich and clear brand identity" (Ghodeswar, 2008). Brand building relates to brand identity in many ways. For example, a new brand in the market depends mostly on identity creation. Brand identity is strongly related to consumer perception and visible elements (including brand names, logos / symbols, typeface, colours, shapes and product benefit descriptions used in advertising, package, product identification, publications, letterheads and websites), either real or imagined (Zaichkowsky, 2010).

Therefore, creating a distinctive brand is necessary to get customers' attention. In the article, *"Who owns the brand?"* Shultz (2002) suggests that building a brand should start internally before it is released to the public. The members of the organization should be provided with clear brand knowledge in order to communicate the brand to the public. Vallaster and de Chernatony (2005) agree with Schultz. "The process of internal brand building advances when a clear brand vision creates tension between the actual and ideal work setting, forcing people to work together to reduce this gap".

Ambler (2002), however, advocates a different starting point in the building of a brand. Many scholars (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Schultz, 2002) suggest that brand building should start within the organization, but Ambler suggests that it has to be formed from the consumers'

expectations in order to meet their demands. Both views are right based on the context of the situation. For example, as shown in the brand identity prism model (Kapferer, 2012) a brand can be simultaneously constructed internally (within organization) and externally (by consumers), thus it has a sender (the organization) and a receiver (the customers) to demonstrate the process of building a brand.

This process could be a time consuming process (Ghodeswar, 2008) as it involves a lot of internal and external processes. As does Ghodeswar, Schultz (2002), who describe the process of branding as something that does not happen overnight, but which needs to be nurtured over time, "branding isn't rocket science, but it isn't something done on the spur of the moment or by a committee in one afternoon. Most of all it isn't done by communication alone. Brands are built by customer and stakeholder experience. Communication is just one of those experiences." Empirical research on brand identity has provide gaps (Coleman, de Chernatony, & Christodoulides, 2015) and calls for the need to carry out this research and explore in depth.

4. Method

The focus for this research is to emphasize on the significance of having an identity build in a brand. In order to comprehend and address the matter, the researcher unfolds the findings by using qualitative approach and conducted semi structured interviews with 15 participants. This study has been conducted in Christchurch, New Zealand. Participants for this study are the owners of independent coffee shop (ICS) outlet.

The qualitative approach may unfold the data in depth. The in depths interviews were transcribed and analyzed by using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis provides an understanding of the data and what has been revealed from this study. Besides, in depth interviews, continuous observations in the outlet were also being carried out during this procedure. Activities in the outlet were recorded and reflect upon.

5. Finding and Discussions

This research found that building a brand has identifiable processes that were needed in order to achieve a fresh and distinctiveness in shaping the brand identity to augment its relationship with customers. It was also found from this research that, the creation of an internal culture may be the fundamental to uphold and sustain the internal operations of ICS and related

elements, such as, the individuals involved in the outlet and their values and practices.
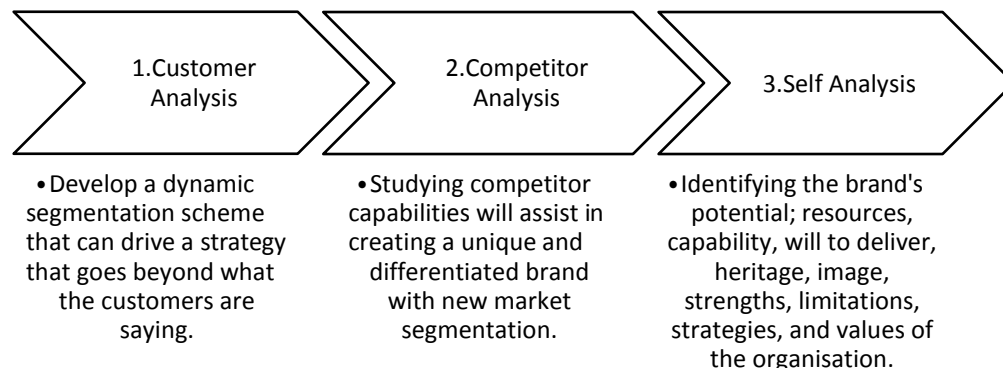
5.1 Distinctive Identification Conception

Creating a unique identity for coffee shops is not a straightforward process (Rashid, 2012). Most ICS participants were from small sized shops. These owners lacked resources to design and support their own identity that would distinguish them from their competitors in this industry. ICS generally did not have the formal training and knowledge to build their brand identity.

Therefore, it was surprising to observe how well several ICS managed to build their brand identity. Based on the interviews with the owners and observations during field research, the most possible explanation for the owners working on the identification of their outlets could be the vision the owners had, which had a huge impact on building the identity. For example, Sam from ICS 13 has a large plan for the future that involves expanding the coffee shop,

Umm… we have got plans to build 12 guestrooms and turn it into a motel lodge, [or] hotel park. And there is nothing here in [the area name] for people staying in the area. We figured it [will] has nice outlook, building space. We got 12 rooms; we will have small board rooms comes meeting room comes private function.

Sam's future plan demonstrated his passion with his current business in hospitality and, thus, Sam needed to develop an identity that suited the coffee shop and also the new accommodation plan in order to avoid an ambiguous identification with his brand. To facilitate the brand identification process, the researcher utilised part of the strategic brand analysis process designed by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) to understand how owners might have defined their brand. Aaker and Joachimsthaler suggested three stages for brand analysis: customer analysis, competitor analysis and self-analysis.

1.Customer Analysis	2.Competitor Analysis	3.Self Analysis
•Develop a dynamic segmentation scheme that can drive a strategy that goes beyond what the customers are saying.	•Studying competitor capabilities will assist in creating a unique and differentiated brand with new market segmentation.	•Identifying the brand's potential; resources, capability, will to deliver, heritage, image, strengths, limitations, strategies, and values of the organisation.

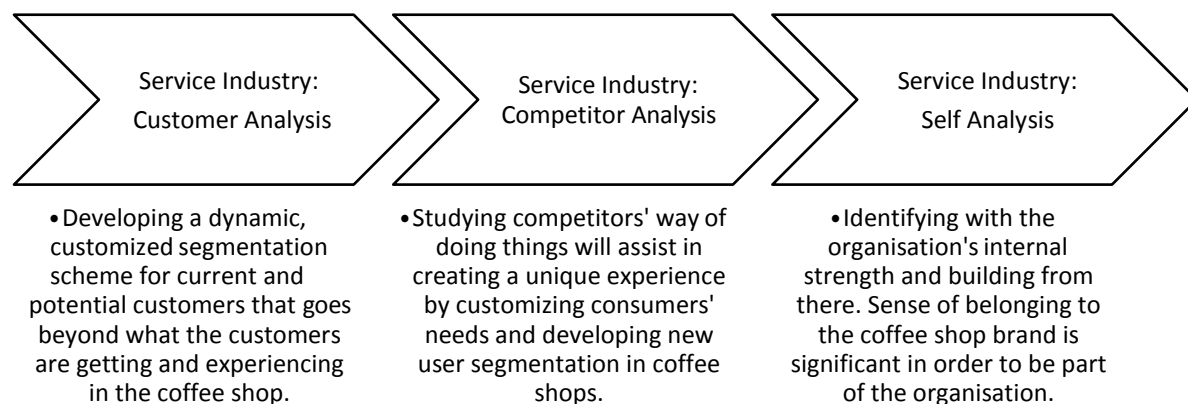**Figure 1:** *Strategic brand analysis*

The respondents provided evidence for each stage of the Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) model by their views of their customers, competitors and their own operations. Examples of these are presented in the Table 1, below.
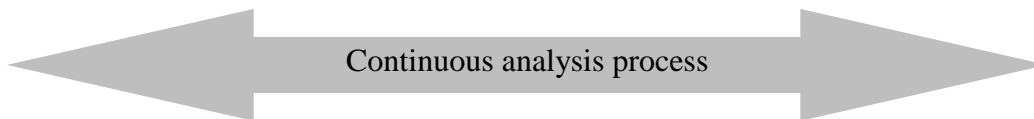
Table 1: *Participants' strategic brand analysis*

Stage	Findings from participants	Examples from participants
1. Customer Analysis	The owners' views on the customers' needs: • To be remembered • Value for money • Same quality of food every time • To feel relaxed and comfortable	"... you know I want them to know that they can come back any day of the week and have the open sandwich and it's going to be as good as what they remembered last time. And, just for people to go away feeling like they've had a really good value for money and a really nice time ...". (Lorelai, ICS 07)
2. Competitor Analysis	The owners' view on competitors' issues: • To be above the normal standard • The sales slowdown when there are many competitors	"Flat. Not growing just pretty much because of the economy and the competition. So many people making coffee, so many competitors everywhere. For the first six years or so, we had a lot of market dominance. It was better for us, but now a lot more competitors keep coming up, there are so many. And people can't drink so much coffee." (Daniel, FCS 05)

| . Self Analysis | The owners' views on their outlets' names/brands:

• Sense of belonging to the brand
• To stand out | "... to make sure we stand out to make sure the brand is looked after by the customers, by talking about it. The quality, the brand the marketing, the advertisements, or even the logo on the serviettes, even the sugars have a brand. The brand grows strong and so definitely, everything they do and I do goes to the brand and to make a strong brand. To |
| | • Creating a strong brand from internal sources
• The importance of the name | look at any cafe in New Zealand, now I still, think FCS Charlie's Desert is one of the top brands." (Scott, FCS 02) |

From Table 1, it is clear that the participants, in general, were analytical in assessing their brand performance. They were aware of their position within the industry and displayed a high level of passion and desire to improve their performance. The researcher embedded her current findings in Anker's and Joachimsthaler's (2000) design for strategic brand analysis to make it functional for the service industry in general, as shown in Figure 2.

Service Industry: Customer Analysis

Service Industry: Competitor Analysis

Service Industry: Self Analysis

• Developing a dynamic, customized segmentation scheme for current and potential customers that goes beyond what the customers are getting and experiencing in the coffee shop.

• Studying competitors' way of doing things will assist in creating a unique experience by customizing consumers' needs and developing new user segmentation in coffee shops.

• Identifying with the organisation's internal strength and building from there. Sense of belonging to the coffee shop brand is significant in order to be part of the organisation.

Figure 2: An enhancement of Anker's and Joachimsthaler's design of strategic brand analysis for coffee shops.

Referring to the figure above, coffee shops might be able to use it as guidance when analyzing their brand. Through detailed analysis, it was possible for a brand to create its own identification and business concept. Besides analysis, there were also other factors found from this research that contributed to having a distinctive identification. According to ICS owners, artistic elegance, business intelligence and creativity were ingredients required to make the coffee shop concept appealing to customers. Owners felt it was essential to invest energy and undertake careful planning in order to create a concept that would produce good feelings and uniqueness. The participants' analysis about this matter was consistent with the study by Nanking & Jang (2008) that recommended detailed concept planning to ensure excitement, pleasure and relaxation for customers.

It was obvious that the first visual sensation experienced by a customer was the feeling when entering the outlet. This experience was often a reflection of the concept created by the founder of the outlet. It was in the 1960s that psychologists began to focus on the effect of physical settings in their attempts to understand customer behavior (Bitner, 1992). It was interesting to note that all participants discussed the physical setting of their coffee shop. They wanted a space that was comfortable for customers and employees. Jason, from ICS 06, had a very small coffee shop. He designed it in a way that suited his (mostly business) customers best. With only two sets of sofas and five stools (Figure 6.3), the size of the coffee shop was an advantage for Jason, as his regular customers saw it an ideal, private, comfortable, casual outlet in which to conduct meetings.

Business people from the area usually choose this place for their business meetings because it is quiet and they can have some privacy here. We do not have a big space for our customers. With only two sets of sofas and few stools, we depend a lot on our regular customers. We have lots of repeat customers because they know what we have to offer them. It is important for you to know who your customer is and to understand your customer (Jason, ICS 06).

Jason offered a wide range of takeaway food for his customers, especially during the lunch

hour. The physical setting of the outlet had ample waiting spaces and also stools for his customers. The simple concept of Jason's coffee shop also provided a cozy and uncrowned private meeting outlet for his regular customers. Jason also offered a spacious and comfortable outlet for customers to escape from the busy streets into a quiet and calm space.
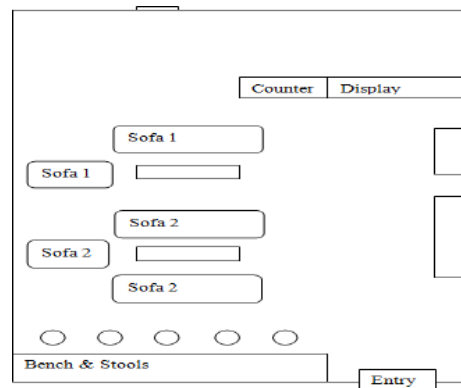
Figure 3: *ICS 06 floor layout*

Several obvious ambience-relevant factors were regularly identified by the participants regarding their outlets. Figure 4 illustrates the factors considered important in creating an appropriate atmosphere for this type of business. These factors also have the significance of having a distinctive concept with regard to their buildings' physical settings.
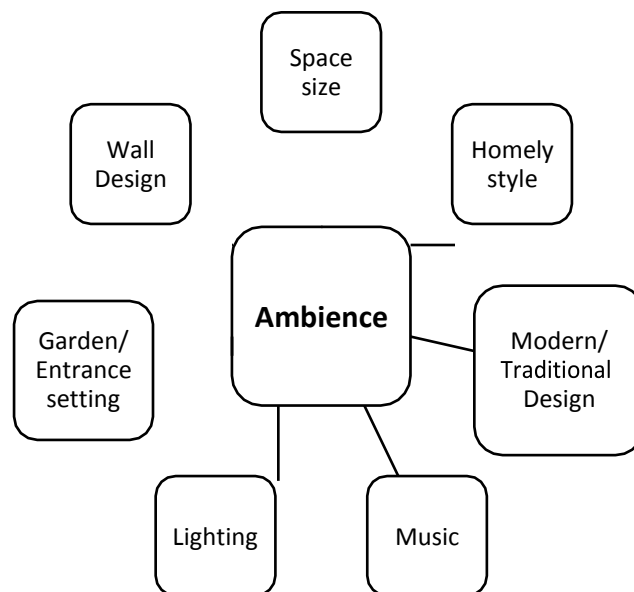

Figure 4: *Factors to augment the coffee shop ambience*

These factors identified by the participants contributed to the pleasant ambience of the outlet. These findings complemented findings from a study by Bitner (1992): A complex mix of

environmental features constitutesthe servicescape and *influence internal responses* andbehaviours. Specifically, the dimensions of the physicalsurroundings include all of the objective physicalfactors that can be controlled by the firm to enhance (or constrain) employee and customer actions. Thosefactors include an endless list of possibilities, such aslighting, colour, signage, textures, quality of materials, and style of furnishings, layout, wall decor, and temperature and so on.

Several of the present study's participants went beyond the attributes shown in Figure 6.4, with the aim of providing greater comfort for their customers and an enhanced distinctiveness. Among the steps taken by these participants were: café in a home concept, providing an exclusive environment, having seasonal decorations for a fresh look and ensuring an appropriate room temperature (Figure 5).
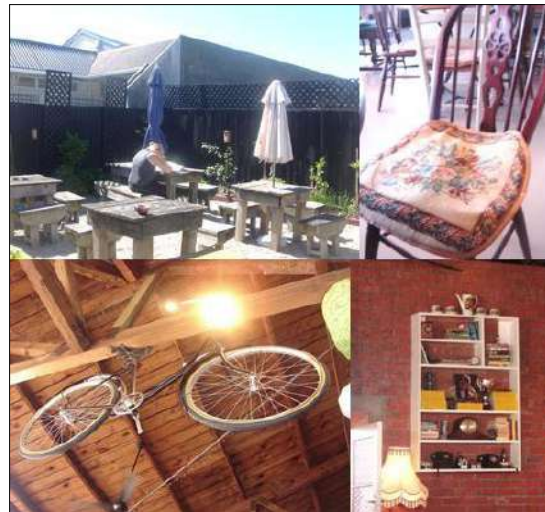
Figure 5: *Photos taken from participating outlets*

Aligned with Bitnet's (1992) view, the majority of the participants were also consc ions of a growing interest in interior and exterior designs. Having the appropriate design had a positive effect on purchasing as it helped send messages that enhanced the outlet's image and influenced the customers' expectations.

The quest for brand identity permeated the conception process. However, the ICS participants, in general, focused less on building brand identity than the FCS participants did in maintaining their corporate images. For example, Luke, from ICS 04, showed his lack of concern

with the design of his shop in relation to his business when he stated, "This is all in place when I got here, so I am doing cooking and managing." Another participant shared his experience in redecorating the outlet, everything is very rough, and the restaurant was in a very bad shape. So we invested a lot of money. We designed the whole interior … decorate it again (Hunter, ICS 01).

Hunter had put a lot of effort into designing the outlet; however, due to his lack of concern with the identity of the shop, he did not fully integrate the design of the outlet with the overall concept of the shop. This was not likely to have happened in a franchise-owned outlet. It was commonly known that franchises provided many advantages when opening a new coffee shop, among them having the brand identity created and developed in advance. ICS participants, however, generated their own identity; mostly by the initiative of the coffee shop owner, while FCS had their standardized identities as projected by their franchisor. While this was a direct and completely guided format, there were also limitations for the FCS owners who wanted to show more initiative in their coffee shops. FCS owners have limited freedom when it comes to making alterations to the menu or the business format. As Sophie from FCS 03 shared with the researcher, we do our bookwork and everything on our own. You do yourself. They do marketing for the whole team. The franchisors organises all the marketing and they put your menu together, the price, what you can have, what you can not have. For the day to day running, I do that myself.

They control what we can sell. Menu has to stay the same. They produce the menu. It has to be that. The only differences we can have are a black board special at the front. We can make proper black board specials. We are allowed to do that.

And for our display cabinet, we are allowed to decide some of the stuff that goes in there. And some of it they tell us we have to have, and others we can source. We just need to tell them what we like, and get their approval, so far they haven't say no for anything you have tried. But you must have their stuff first. If we want to make a different pizza with different flavours, we can put that as a blackboard special. For example, BBQ chicken is not in the menu but we can add that.

The following sections will analyze how the ICS participants molded their outlet's identity.

5.2 Identity the Headings

It was stated earlier that ICS have characteristics that make them different from other coffee shops. In this study, the researcher noticed that introducing new, fresh concepts and being distinctive created an advantage for the coffee shops. This is aligned with Shoptalk's (1977) suggestion that fresh concepts were necessary in service marketing. A fresh concept was required in order to attract new customers, although it also could also be an opportunity for the owners to venture into a new market.

The participant from ICS 05, Gerard, had introduced a new, fresh concept in their outlet; fair trade. Gerard described the concept that he wanted to introduce to the community: "The fair trade concept. We want to advertise and educate people about fair trade. They need to know, to be aware of this concept. It is important to understand the fair trade concept." He then explained the length of time they had taken to design the concept and create the coffee shop brand identity;

We do all our branding. All the concept [controllable aspects of the brand]. We renovated this place on our own. We worked on it for almost four years to set up this place.It is a big learning curve for us. This place was actually a garage before we transformed it (Gerard, ICS 05).

The image in Figure 7 could be seen on every table in Gerard's coffee shop, with the menu on the reverse of this stand (Figure 8). Gerard, and the other founder of the coffee shop, put in the extra effort they thought necessary to educate their community about the importance of supporting fair trade and giving back to poorer communities. It was stated on the stand that every year they invested their profits back into the communities that had been providing them with their high quality products (coffee beans).
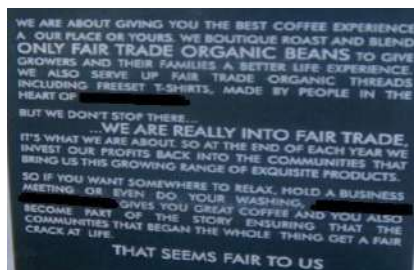
Figure 6: *A table stand put on every coffee table in the outlet to demonstrate commitment to fair trade*

During the interview session, Gerard repeatedly brought up their objective to educate their

customers on the importance of supporting fair trade and in giving back to poorer communities. This determination and the detailed plan for the innovative concept had, within the first few months of running the coffee shop, achieved a doubling of profits and a daily increase in customers.

Figure 7: *Stand menu on the coffee table*

Figure 8: *A large blackboard on the outlet wall indicating the use of 100% fair trade coffee*

Another participant from ICS 02, Maxwell, hesitated about the concept for his outlet but, at the same time, projected his future vision for his coffee shop. Maxwell tried to imitate a concept design from his previous experience, which was an amalgamation of a coffee shop and a book shop,

Originally, because we did think, is this going to work? If this works, we will build it all over the country. This is apparently in the States. We have been to the states, there are a lot of these concepts overseas - bookshop/café kind of thing, I think if you visit, there are one or two in Auckland. Yeah, it is also a kind of life.It is kind of work that you enjoy that is the thing and a whole lot of... pleasure, doing things that you enjoy doing, doing things that people enjoy.

Despite his hesitancy about the success of the concept, Maxwell has managed the outlet for 17 years. The atmosphere in the outlet was the outcome of continuous effort, which included introducing new dishes and drinks to the menu, hiring a skilled barista and the arrangement of the bookshelves. These activities, according to Maxwell, enhanced his unique concept and helped to achieve the outlet's special identity. These two examples from the participants represented an application of business and artistic intelligence that distinguished them from other independent coffee shops.

The field research indicated that the majority of owners had a concept for their coffee shop but did not put much effort into enhancing it. While they were aware of the steps that should be taken to further develop their distinctive concept (e.g. constant new promotions, appropriate ambience), many owners found it unnecessary or less important when compared to service quality. They have focused more on the interaction with customers, food preparation and creating a relaxed environment for their customers,

In any business that you do, someone who is coming from the door, who had a warm welcome, it is important. Let say, in any business, doesn't matter what kind of business, it is important. This is what I believe, it's my personal belief, but I do notice other people who don't. It's me.I am expecting the people... you know, I mean, anyone who comes here, they should feel relaxed and comfortable, they should feel like their home, they come here and relax and have a meal, you know, for whatever lunch or, coffee or tea, they should feel you know, relaxed(Ben, ICS 03).

This research went beyond just service quality to explore the deeper associations with the outlet itself among the owners or the creators of the outlets. Food and beverage and service, in general, were competitive industries. Therefore, to be identified as distinctive was necessary if owners wanted to stand out from the competition. Having business and artistic intelligence was a particular advantage in this context.

There were many elements that contributed to building a unique identity for the ICS 02 outlet. Among the elements found in the participating coffee shops were the design of the outlet, floor plan, architecture, colors, furnishings, the fair trade concept and the location of the outlet. FCS outlets had an orderly design and were standardized with other franchises. The designs were well executed and planned. This alone helped the franchises establish their brand identity. ICS outlets might lack experience in creating a brand identity, but despite that, they managed to

distinguish themselves when they decided on their concept. It was hard to find similarities in the outlet format among the independent coffee shops. They were extremely diverse, particularly in concept design.

Developing fresh ideas and applying them to business practice, conferred a distinct advantage in building brand identity. According to Godin (2009) and Ghodeswar (2008), all organizations should have something that differentiates them from other outlets. "Know you" was an ancient Greek personal philosophy that could well be applied in modern corporations (Keefe, 2007) in order to be exclusive in this huge industry.

6. Conclusions

The data from the interviews brought into focus on how brand identity concept emerged. Developing an appropriate identity through having a distinctive identification creation process, and introducing a fresh concept, were the recommendations from this research towards having a renewed concept for coffee shop brand identity The researcher adopted the metaphor approach, as described by more than one of the participants that their outlets strived to be as near as possible to "a comfortable home". In its simplest form, a model expressing an overview of this project can be presented as in Figure 10
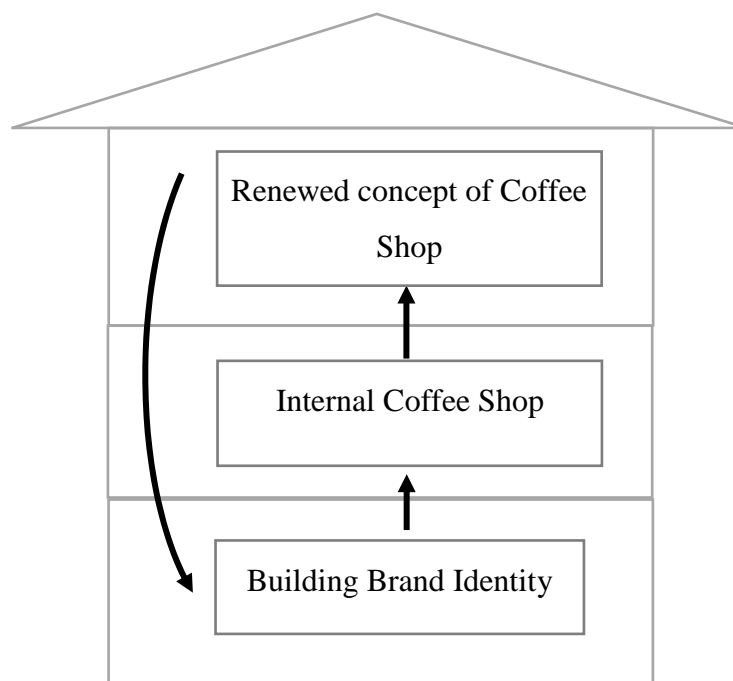
Figure 10: *A route for renewed concept of coffee shops*

Figure 10 demonstrated a route of progress towards a renewed concept for coffee shops, withal route to building brand identity and internal culture, as documented by this research. The findings from this research is very relevant to the current situation which coffee consumption is increasing worldwide (Carvalho et al., 2015) and drinking coffee has becoming a lifestyle. Coffee shops or cafes, or any service industries are encouraged to be more competitive and to be distinctive in renewing their concept. The findings for this research may also be utilized for future research in other areas of service industry.

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