GlutenFree 4-2-1 Project

47 Students in Strategic Management Class (MGT 449)*

17 Students in Integrated Marketing Communications Class (MKT 370)*

Abstract

Background

Approximately 2.2 percent of the Saudi Arabian population - over 600,000 people - is affected by Celiac disease, a public health problem which remains largely unrecognizable by many of the Saudi Society segments.[1] Celiac Disease is an auto-immune disease which is mainly caused by an unusual reaction of the immune system to the gluten protein that is found mostly in the food we eat. When people with celiac disease eat foods or use products containing gluten, their immune system responds by damaging or destroying villi - the tiny, fingerlike protrusions lining the small intestine. Diverse problems such as dental anomalies, short stature, osteopenia bone disease, lactose intolerance, infertility, iron-deficiency anemia, and non-specific abdominal pain are only among its manifestations. Unfortunately, there is no specific medicine to cure the disease. The only treatment available is the lifelong avoidance of dietary gluten.[2]

Defining the Social Problem

At present, the severity of Celiac disease in Saudi Arabia, as well as in Gulf Countries, are caused by three major issues. The **first issue** is the lack of awareness about Celiac disease by

* College of Industrial Management - King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Saudi Arabia.

[1]Aljebreen AM, Almadi MA, Alhammad A, Al Faleh FZ. (2013). Seroprevalence of celiac disease among healthy adolescents in Saudi Arabia. World Journal Gastroenterol, 19: 2374-2378. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3631990/

[2]http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/digestive-diseases/celiac-disease/Pages/facts.aspx

many society's segments, including patients, parents, businesspersons, social investors, and even some physicians surprisingly. Such ignorance of the Celiac disease deteriorates the public health in society at large. The **second issue** is the lack of gluten-free products in the market, including the unavailability of restaurants that serve meals to Celiac patients. Such shortage or unavailability does not only create physical deprivation for Celiac patients but psychological pain especially for the parents of children who suffer from Celiac disease. The main concern for these parents is how to create a normal life for their children at home, school, and public places. The **third issue** is the high price of gluten-free product, which makes them unaffordable for some patients or their families. For example, based on some observations, the price of gluten-free bread is more than 30 times of the price of regular bread in Saudi Arabia.

Defining the Business Solution

Based on the above raised critical issues, we believe that the suffering of Celiac patients in Saudi Arabia needs to end. There were many calls and social media campaigns from patients and their parents requesting solutions for their continuous suffering. However, that has not significantly changed their reality. The reason for the ineffectiveness of efforts could be its lack of a well-defined solution for the suffering of the Celiac patients and their families. In general, most people have good intentions and are willing to help and support each other. However, the issue is not their willingness to help but the clarity in how they can help.

At the end of January 2015, a group of faculty and their students in the College of Industrial Management (CIM) decided to create a change in the reality of Celiac patients in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Countries. Their strategies in creating such change are to focus on (1) creating a well-defined business solution, and (2) creating a marketing campaign to raise

awareness of the Celiac patients' problems and offer a well-defined business solution to address these problems.

The Methodology of Building the Business Solution

In the beginning of Spring 2014/2015, two class sections of the Strategic Management Course (MGT 449) were turned over to be completely Project Based Learning (PBL) course focusing primarily on creating a well-defined solution for the Celiac patients' problems. In addition, the students in the Integrated Marketing Communications course (MKT 370) participated in this project by dedicating one of its course requirements towards creating a social media marketing campaign to raise awareness about the suffering of Celiac patients in Saudi Arabia and to direct the campaign towards implementing the suggested business solutions.

I. Creating a Well-Defined Business Solution

To craft a comprehensive solution to the Celiac patients' problems, the two strategy classes decided to use a strategy called 4-2-1, an organizing strategy metaphor borrowed from a football game, that shows how Gluten Free Businesses would organize itself in dealing with the patients' problems. (refer to Figure-1). Accordingly, the 47 students of the two Strategic Management classes were divided into seven teams, each focusing on a business related to Celiac disease. The seven Gluten Free Businesses are described below:

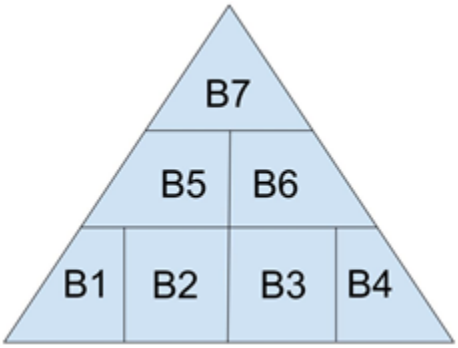

Figure-1: GlutenFree 4-2-1 Project

B1. Health and Training Center: This business aims to create a health center that has expert nutritionists to help in discovering the Celiac disease in early stages, provide guidelines for patients and check the status of patients from time to time. Furthermore, this business will provide training for parents in order to deal with their children, and provide training for the patient himself/herself to overcome the obstacles and challenges.

B2. Grocery Store: This business aims to create a grocery store that provides Gluten-Free products. The store is going to offer a variety of products according to nutrition's quality standards.

B3. Bakery: This business aims to create specialized bakery products that are Gluten-Free. The bakery will provide different items such as bread, cupcakes, pastries etc. The bakery should use the latest technology to produce these high quality products.

B4. Restaurant: This business aims to create a restaurant that provides Gluten-Free meals. The meals are prepared according to quality and health standards providing a variety of items such as soups, pasta, desserts, chicken, rice, seafood, etc. The menu should follow nutrition experts' guidelines and the restaurant will be serving its customers through a dine-in, as well as a take away service.

B5. Call and Coordination Center: This business aims to create call and coordination center that interacts with customers in many different ways and links all business units together. The call center will be receiving calls from customers regarding their orders from the grocery store, bakery, and restaurant. The call center will also serve as a customer service center to receive customers' suggestions and complaints.

B6. Delivery Center: This business aims to create a delivery center that provides customers with food from the grocery, bakery, and restaurant. This logistical solution must be

efficient to cover many customers at different locations (e.g., schools, homes, malls, restaurants) in a short period.

B7. Online Community: This business aims to create an online space and platform where all people interested in Celiac disease issues and Gluten-Free products and related services could interact together, sharing their news, experiences, challenges, and solutions.

In this course, a project based learning method is used with students. The students have to apply the strategic management concepts that they have learned during the semester. Each one of the seven students' teams developed its business's vision, mission and objectives. In addition, each team did external and internal analysis using strategic tools and models, such as Porter's 5-Forces, Industry Life Cycle, 4-Blocks of Competitive Advantage. Furthermore, each team developed the business and functional level strategies including business models and operational, marketing, and financial strategies. Moreover, as part of strategy implementation, each team highlighted its organizational structure, cultural values, and key performance indicators. Finally, a growth philosophy (corporate level strategy) as well as corporate governance for the whole project was reported.

II. Creating a Marketing Campaign for the Well-Defined Solution

The focus of the marketing campaign is to raise awareness of the celiac patient's suffering and create buzz in the Saudi Society towards investing in and implementing the 4-2-1 Strategy "The Well-Defined Solution" that solves the Celiac patients' problems. Accordingly, a website for this solution was created aiming to explain its story, vision, mission, and objectives. Short videos about each business and its team members were completed and in the process to be uploaded in each business webpage. Moreover, proposed articles will be written in newspapers and blogs about the Celiac patients' problems and the proposed 4-2-1 solution. At this point, the

students of the Integrated Marketing Communications course (MKT 370) are in the process of creating and implementing a social media campaign - in the coming week - to direct the attention of the society's key stakeholders toward the suffering of Celiac patients and offer the proposed 4-2-1 Strategy. Finally, the students of the Strategic Management class will do - within two weeks - a publically organized event to market their 4-2-1 Strategy.

Conclusion

Currently, we are at the final stages of the GlutenFree 4-2-1 journey. The two classes joined hands to serve one goal, one purpose and that is to alleviate the pain and suffering that Celiac patients currently experience in the Kingdom and the GCC. The experience and learning outcomes of the attempt of solving this social problem are so great for everyone involved, including students, faculty, and administrators. The journey taken was full of risk and challenges, but the experience being lived, is worth every moment being spent. We hope the GlutenFree 4-2-1 Project will be on its way to reality.

Students of Strategic Management Class (MGT 449)

Health and Training Center Team: Hesham Al-Saleh, Fahad Al-Humaidan, Turki Al-Subaiei, Abdullah Al-Gunaisi, Abdul-Aziz Al-Dubaikhi, Abdulmajeed Alshehri

Grocery Store Team: Zakariya Alahmed, Husam Al-Tuwaijri, Mohannad Qandeel, Muath Al Swailem, Osamah Al-Salmi, Khaled Alghamdi, Mohammed Al-Sulaiman

Bakery Team: Sami Al-Onaizi, Bandar Al-Rajehi, Bader Al-Mutlaq, Mohammad Al-Khuwaiter, Nawaf Al-Jarboua, Ahmad Al-Amer

Restaurant Team: Dbas Al-Dbasi, Yazeed Alhababi, Mohammad Alomari, Abdullah Al-Ghamdi, Yazid Al-Sulaiman, Mahmoud Al-Shangaiti, Mohammad Al-Sharekh, Fahad Ba-Sohail

Call and Coordination Center Team: Fahad Maddah, Thamer Al-Sufyani, Ibrahim Al-Suwaid, Hassan Al-Amer, Ahmad Al-Isa, Saleh Alsania

Delivery Center Team: Muntadther Alwayel, Ahmed Alshagag, Ahmad Al-Ali, Taha Al-Hawdar, Mohammad Bu-Kannan, Asaad Alahmed

Online Community Team: Fahd Shaheen, Fahad Al-Dehani, Abdul-Mohsin Al-Buali, Adib Al-Khaiyat, Ali Al-Alawi, Faisal Felemban, Ahmad Al-Otaibi, Abdul-Ilah Al-Saedi

Instructor: Sami Alwuhaibi, PhD
Teaching Assistant: Hisham Jabrah, Majed Fallatah

Students of Integrated Marketing Communications Class (MKT 370)

Video Ad Team: Abdullah Alwuhaibi, Saleh Al-Amri, Abdul-Malik Al-Julaimid, Abdullah Al-Saedi, Mohammad Salman, Ammar Ali, Faisal Al-Shehri, Ahmad Nadeem

Social Media Team: Abdullah Al-Harshani, Abdul-Rahman Al-Ruhaili, Yousef Al-Gahtani, Abdulrahman Awad, Mohammad Al-Sukait, Rayan Al-Dossari, Rayan Jari, Saad Al Homoud, Fahad Al-Ghamdi

Instructor: Saleh AlShebil, PhD