

Sustainability in Gastronomic Family Business Management: The Case of Karaman Birtat Restaurant

Gastronomik Aile Şirketleri Yönetiminde Sürdürülebilirlik: Karaman Birtat Lokantası Örneği

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ÖZET

Küresel dünyada ekonomik faaliyet alanında aile şirketleri önemli bir yere sahiptir. Her geçen gün kapanan şirket sayısı düşünüldüğünde, uzun yıllar işletmecilik alanında varlığını sürdüren aile şirketlerinin başarısı günümüzde gittikçe önem kazanmaktadır. Günümüzde insanların ev dışında yemek yeme alışkanlıkları artmış durumdadır. Gastronomi alanında faaliyetlerini sürdüren işletmelerin sayısı gittikçe artacağı düşünülmektedir. Yeni açılacak ya da başarılı olmak isteyen işletmeler dikkate alındığında nesiller boyu süreklilik sağlayan işletmelerin incelenmesi önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Karaman'da üçüncü kuşak aile şirketi olarak faaliyetlerini sürdüren Birtat Lokantası'nın başarısının altında yatan faktörlerin belirlenerek, süreklilik sağlayamayan ya da yeni kurulacak işletmeler için öneriler sunulması ve bir model oluşturulması amaçlanmıştır. Anadolu'nun gelişmekte olan illerinden Karaman gastronomik anlamda çok önemli bir zenginliğe sahiptir. Literatürde, Karaman'da yapılmış bu çalışma ile benzerlik gösteren herhangi bir çalışmaya rastlanılmamıştır. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan yüz yüze görüşme tekniği ile yapılan mülakatların ses kayıtları tutulmuştur. Bu kayıtların çözümlenmesi yapıldıktan sonra araştırma amacına uygun bir şekilde metinleştirilmiştir.

ABSTRACT

Family-owned companies play a crucial role in the global economy. Considering the number of companies closing day by day, the success of family companies, which have existed in the field of management for many years, is gaining more and more importance nowadays. Today, people tend to eat out more, which is why the number of gastronomy-related businesses is expected to gradually rise. When considering new or aspiring businesses, it is essential to examine companies that have been providing services for generations. This research aims to determine the underlying factors of Birtat Lokanta's success, a third-generation family-owned restaurant in Karaman, to provide suggestions and examples for businesses struggling with continuity or newly established ones. Karaman is a developing province in Anatolia and has significant gastronomic diversity. There is no study in the literature that is similar to this study conducted in Karaman. Audio recordings of the interviews made with the face-to-face interview technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, were kept. These records were analyzed. Afterward, it was transcribed in accordance with the research purpose.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

İşletme,
Aile Şirketi,
Gastronomi,
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1. GİRİŞ

Today, family businesses have an important social and economic position both in Turkey and around the world. One of the main purposes of family businesses; is to transfer it to future generations by ensuring the sustainability of its businesses. Competitiveness is the driving force for national and international success in the business world of the 21st century, and this power plays an important role in the future of enterprises (Yörük, 2006:182).

Family-owned businesses play a significant role in the economy by contributing to job creation and economic growth. These types of businesses often have a strong commitment to their communities and are more likely to make long-term investments that benefit the local economy. Family-owned businesses tend to have a more personal and hands-on approach to management, which can lead to greater efficiency and profitability. Many of the world's largest and most successful companies were founded as family businesses, demonstrating the enduring impact that these enterprises can have on the economy. In addition to generating wealth and creating jobs, family-owned businesses can also help to preserve traditional industries and cultural practices, which can be a valuable asset to society as a whole. Family businesses need to be professionalized in order to survive and show superior performance in the long run (Yazıcıoğlu and Koç, 2009:499; Polat, 2018:1).

Family businesses are essential elements for demonstrating and maintaining competitiveness. Businesses with a strong entrepreneurial aspect have gained a special importance in recent years (Yörük, 2006). It is known that family companies or partnership companies that have continued together since the establishment have a rate of 18% to continue the business after the third generation. However, it was determined that 91% of family companies were deleted from the sector after a short time due to management errors (Kıran, 2007:14).

Although family businesses have a long history, the first academic studies on this subject date back to the 1990s. More comprehensive studies, on the other hand, made progress in the 2000s. 95% of businesses in Turkey operate as family businesses. However, the number of enterprises that have passed from generation to generation and continue their activities actively is decreasing. While the rate of transferring their businesses to the second generation after establishment is around 30%, this rate drops to 12% in the transfer to the third generation. Family businesses that can be transferred to the next four generations are around 1% (Birinciöglü and Acuner, 2015:492).

Karaman province bears the traces of many civilizations and cultures with its fertile lands, being on transit routes, deep-rooted history, and historical richness. There are more than 200 kinds of local flavors of Karaman region. Karaman's main dishes; Ecir Ücür, Lakişe, Ölemeç, Maş Soup, Cilbirti, Nahni, Göbede, Tiritli Karaman Lamb Trotters, Bullumbuş, Sulu Pilaf, Fringed Meatballs, Papara, Black Plum Roast, Topalak, Zülbiye, Grape Beet, Lokur, Guymak, Stuffed Quail, Tögmeken, Batırık, Stuffed Ilisıra, Siresir, Ermenek Pekmez Halva, Palize Dessert Therefore, Karaman is important with its rich culinary culture (Şen, 2021:460).

It is thought that the research that has been done and will be done to ensure sustainability in the management of family companies will contribute to the literature and will provide richness to the literature. Among the studies carried out to date, the absence of Karaman, which has a very high potential, is the source of inspiration for this study. In addition, this study, it is aimed to gain a different perspective on this issue by focusing on its relationship with gastronomy, unlike the studies on family companies in the existing literature. This research, it is aimed to determine the factors underlying the success of Birtat Lokantası, which continues its activities as a third-generation family company in Karaman, to offer suggestions for businesses that cannot provide continuity or establish a model and to create a model.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this part of the study, "*the concepts of a family company*" and "*the restaurants in terms of gastronomy*" are included.

2.1. The Concept of a Family Company

Family companies, which are increasing in number today, are not conceptually regulated in line with legislation. In general terms, family businesses can be defined as a type of company that is run by family members, where management is passed down from father to son. The family business partnership dates back as long as human

history. Compared to other companies, family companies are classified under two separate headings: family and company. The most basic feature that distinguishes family companies is: It is the fact that the employees or managers in the business are very committed to family relations and values (Ekim and İpek, 2020:52).

Karpuzoğlu (2000:7-8), Family company; is defined as a company established to create the family's income or to prevent inheritance distribution, managed by the person who provides the family income, consisting of family members in most of the management levels and employing at least two generations from the family.

According to Sharma (2004) and Litz (1997), they stated that family businesses still remain at the descriptive level. As the reason for this, they claimed that the concept of family business has not been adequately researched. Bird et al. (2002) on the other hand; Although the subject of a family business is in the development stage, it tends to become clearer as a result of studies on family businesses.

2.2. The Restaurants in Terms of Gastronomy

Eating and drinking are one of the most important basic needs of human beings in hundreds of years of life. Humanity has met this important need by producing it themselves or by buying from those who produce it. However, the ways of meeting the needs have also changed and transformed over time, along with the changes in people's living conditions and styles. At the point reached, nutrition, which is a must for continuing life, has now become a huge sector (Sürmen and Bayraktar, 2018:47-73).

Based on the most preferred fashion trends today; It has been reported that the restaurant business has a special importance. Variations in income and consumption habits, observed around the world, have led to the tendency of society to eat and drink outside rather than at home (Hanaysha, 2016:46).

Turkish cuisine is thought to be among the richest cuisines of the world due to the interactions of Turks with different cultures in the past. The concept of the restaurant, which has been translated into our language from the Italian word "*Locanta*", is developing rapidly in many ways. The concept of restaurants in Europe entered the Turkish language over time. However, there are many restaurants that are expressed as artisan restaurants today, which have gone beyond the home cooking service. These types of restaurants, which also design changes in the presentation style of Turkish cuisine, have succeeded in being among the examples that reflect Turkish cuisine to the world today (Özdemir, 2022:208; Öztürk and Ertamay, 2017:756).

Turkish cuisine has been influenced by many different cultures due to its geographical location and interactions in the historical process. During the Ottoman Empire, the enrichment in the palace kitchen contributed to the emergence of new recipes and the development of Turkish cuisine (Kızıldemir et al, 2014:193). With the Republican period, the change in Turkish cuisine accelerated. Within the scope of the reforms in the 1920s, a western-style presentation was adopted in the presentation of dishes in Turkish cuisine, and the ingredients used in meals were changed and healthy nutrition was taken as a basis (Solmaz, 2018:117).

The acceleration of industrialization, urbanization and migration in Turkey led to changes in Turkish cuisine. Due to the fast lifestyle, consumption of ready-to-eat food products increased and fast food culture became widespread. However, in recent years, with the healthy eating trend, interest in Turkish cuisine has also increased (Düzgün and Özkaya, 2015:44). Today, Turkish cuisine has a rich cultural heritage and is recognized worldwide. In addition to traditional Turkish dishes, innovative dishes are also emerging. There is also a growing interest in Turkish cuisine with the use of local products and the widespread use of organic products (Güler, 2010:27).

In Turkey, restaurant management is one of the sub-sectors with the highest demand intensity in the service sector and therefore there is intense competition. The reason why it is in such demand is that the profit rate is high (gross profit 50%) and the customer potential is quite high. Due to the increase in profitability in this sector in Turkey in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of people working in restaurant businesses (Sürmen and Bayraktar, 2018:57-58). The Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) also publishes statistics on restaurant and hotel establishments. According to 2020 data, the number of people working in the restaurant and other eating and drinking places sector in Turkey was recorded as 1 million 30 thousand people.

3. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

A qualitative research method was used in this study, focusing on a family-owned restaurant. In the field of gastronomy and tourism, the use of qualitative research methods is increasing in order to describe in depth the opinions, knowledge, experiences, attitudes, habits and practices of individuals in society (Aktaş and Saillard, 2014). In this study, descriptive research model was preferred among qualitative research methods. A face-to-face interview technique was used to obtain the research data. The semi-structured interview form used as a data collection tool in the study was prepared by the researchers after reviewing the relevant literature and preliminary interviews with individuals who have the characteristics of being a source person.

The family company, which is main subject of this research, was established in 1953. The interviewee is Ali Kaymaz, the third-generation representative of the family company. The interviewee was chosen because he thought he had the knowledge and experience to clearly explain the history of the family company and the historical process it went through. By the researchers, Ali Kaymaz, the third-generation representative of the family company, was interviewed at his workplace through twenty open-ended questions.

Before the interview, an appointment was made and the face-to-face interview was held between 15.00 - 18.00 in the afternoon when the workload was known to be at a minimum level. The questions posed to the interviewee during the face-to-face interview are capable of revealing the stages and effective events experienced by the restaurant from its establishment to the present. Additional questions were asked in cases where adequate answers were not obtained during the interviews. Short notes were kept to support the data. During the interview, an audio recording was made after obtaining permission. Then, the obtained data were analyzed by content analysis method. In addition, occasional quotations are included in order to increase validity and reliability.

In qualitative research, while preparing the "*reflectivity interview*" questions, which are among the validity and reliability criteria, the questions should be considered comprehensively. In addition, interview questions should be prepared in an effort to transform them into "*better*" with corrections. For this purpose, the interviewer should put himself in the place of the people he will interview. The interviewer should ask himself the following question: "*What would I think, how would I feel if these questions were asked to me?*". He should try to form his questions by evaluating this (Polat, 2022:167). In line with these rules, the questions were tested with pilot interviews. It has been determined which questions are working or not and what kind of new questions should be added. In addition, related questions were asked to individuals who were not subject experts and were tested with feedback.

The questions asked to be answered in the interview are listed below. Interview Questions;

- Could you tell us about the establishment story of your business?
- Do you have professional experience in the field of food and beverage before the family business? Can you give information?
- Has your business partnered with other companies?
- Do you have any plans or education policies for future generations to grow up in this field?
- To what extent do other members of the family have knowledge and authority about company activities?
- Does your business have future plans? How are decisions made in this direction?
- Why wasn't the opening of a branch affiliated with your business success? Is it planned to branch out in the future?
- How many people work in your business with a family member?
- How many years has your oldest employee been working with you?
- Do you have any dishes that have not changed since the first day it was opened?
- How do you make the changes to the menu?
- What is your success story? What is the secret that you have been serving in this sector for three generations?

- Where, and how, do you procure the food products and materials you use in meals?
- What is the most important criterion for you to be successful in your business kitchen?
- What is your most popular dish?
- What type of menu do you offer?
- Is there a characteristic of your kitchen type, namely the kitchen layout in your restaurant?
- What do you pay attention to in terms of hygiene?
- What are the issues that you pay attention to in the clothing of your employees?
- Do you include Karaman's local dishes in your menus?

4. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

In the interview with the third-generation representative of the family, Mr. Ali Kaymaz, accompanied by twenty open-ended questions, the following chronological findings were reached. The establishment of the family company, which is managed under the name of Birtat Lokantası, dates back to 1953. Dursun Şahin Kaymaz, the first owner and founder of the family business from Karaman, decided to enter the food industry in 1953 to earn a living with his five sons. Despite the difficult conditions and limited opportunities of those years, they first stepped into the sector by opening a small kebab shop under the name of "Birtat Kebab" in Karaman district. The third generation representative of the family, Mr. Ali Kaymaz, said, Can you tell us about the establishment story of your business? When he was asked replied as;

"My grandfather is a shepherd. He has lung cancer because he can't stand the dust in the mountains. He has five sons. They decided to enter this profession and started as a small kebab shop. Then my uncles get involved in this business, they grow it, and they give it to my father. My father is deceased, he made it to his current state, and he handed it over to me. I have two sons, and I will hand them over to them if I get the chance"

The business, which has continued under the name "Birtat Lokantası" since it's founding, took the name "Birtat Lokantası from my grandfather" after the first founding owner. Although there was no change in the sector, initially only grilled products were available. In the 1970s, "etliekmek" was added to the menu with the addition of a wood oven. The business has gained great momentum in the sector day by day.

Mr. Ali started to help his family since primary school age. Over time, his grandfather realized his mastery potential. He continued to work more with the warmth of the family environment and the excitement of the discovery of his skills. He then left school in the second year of secondary school. He literally aimed that he would receive the business flag in the future. The family business gained continuity in this way (*The family business continues today with two sons raised by Mr. Ali and with whom he is currently working*).

Asking Mr. Ali, "Does your business have any future plans? How are decisions made in this direction?" when asked; He replied, "First I consult with my children, then we consult with the employees. Then I and my sons make the decision". To the question "How many people work in your business with the family member?"; "When we include 21 workers and my sons, this number becomes 23". We have no working relatives other than my sons. All of the employees are foreign, but our oldest employee has been working with us for 45 years. In addition, we have employees who have been working with us for 35 years, and 25 years. This is one of the biggest factors in our success. More than half of the employees in the business consist of people who have been working here for many years. Apart from that, there are students who "work part-time", he gave answered.

"How many years has your cook been working with you?". Here is our cook, the person who has been working with us for 45 years. Regardless of when employees are included in the company, the department unit they work in is different. The baker, the griller, the waiter, the cashier, the busboy, and the cleaner are different people. The fact that a person does not have more than one task also accelerates the operation of the restaurant and provides order. When asked, "to what extent do other members of the family have knowledge and authority about the company's activities?", he replied: "No one except the managers is informed. Everything must be under our control".

He answered the question, "*Do you have any dishes that haven't changed since the first day your business was opened?*" as follows: "*Of course there are. We have dishes such as tirit and paça in the morning, oven kebab, etliekmek, Karaman's dish calla, roasted beans, dried beans, and chickpeas at noon. It has remained unchanged to this day*". He replied that "*etliekmek*" has been on our menu since 1970, that is, the construction of the bakery.

How do you make the changes in the menu? He replied to the question as follows: "*We have fixed meals. In addition, we also have dishes such as eggplant kebab, moussaka, peas, stuffed meatballs, and kadinbudu meatballs, provided that they change daily*". We also serve one or two different meals a day. Those meals are being prepared for those who want a change. These meals are usually preferred by civil servants.

Among the most important reasons why the business maintains the same taste and quality in food for years; are "*Procuring the products used in meals from a single field*", "*using fresh products in meals*", and "*not using frozen products in the kitchen*". The owner of the business: "*The most important issue in the kitchen is hygiene*", he said. Moreover, by taking precautions such as aprons, gloves, and bonnets, they stipulated that their employees should wear uniforms.

To the question "*What is your most popular dish?*": "*Tandoori kebab*" and "*paça and tirit in the morning*". "*Since there is no place that makes juicy dishes other than us, we are highly preferred*". The answer to the question "*Do you include Karaman's local dishes in your menus?*" was "*yes*".

"*What type of menu do you apply?*" The answer to the question: A la carte. "*Does your kitchen type and kitchen layout have a feature?*": "*Of course; cooking is done in the back section. Because of the smell, it would not be appropriate to be in the service area. Then it is served to the front in bain-maries*", response has been given.

To the question "*What is your success story, what is the secret that you have been serving in this sector for three generations?*";

- As I learned from my grandfather, I stay at work more.
- We attach great importance to cleanliness.
- We try not to change our cook so that the taste of the food remains constant.
- When a decision has to be made, we always make it ourselves.

He also reported that they had to neglect their social life.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Family businesses are companies that are owned and operated by members of the same family. They are a common type of business structure around the world, and they can range in size from small local enterprises to large multinational corporations. Family businesses often have a unique culture and set of values that are influenced by the family's history and traditions. They can provide benefits such as strong commitment to the business, long-term focus, and a family-oriented approach to decision-making. However, they also face challenges such as managing family relationships within the business, succession planning, and balancing family interests with business objectives. Despite these challenges, family businesses continue to play an important role in the global economy, with many well-known brands and successful companies being family-owned and operated. Family businesses are defined as companies in which the ownership, management, and control are concentrated within a family (Dil, 2016).

These businesses are considered as the backbone of many economies due to their significant contribution to employment and GDP (Eryılmaz, 2022). One of the unique features of family businesses is their overlapping of family and business boundaries. This can lead to both advantages and disadvantages for the business. For example, family businesses have the advantage of having a strong emotional bond among family members, which can lead to a high level of commitment and loyalty to the business (Çubukçu, 2023). However, family businesses also face the challenge of balancing family and business interests, which can lead to conflicts and power struggles within the family (Dil, 2016). Another important aspect of family businesses is succession planning. Succession planning is critical for the long-term sustainability of family businesses as it ensures a smooth transition of leadership and management from one generation to the next. However, it is often a challenging process due to the emotional attachment of family members to the business, and the difficulty of finding a suitable successor (Eryılmaz, 2022).

Overall, family businesses are unique and complex entities that require careful management and planning to ensure their long-term sustainability. The overlapping of family and business boundaries, succession planning, and balancing family and business interests are some of the critical issues that family businesses face. The issue of whether family businesses are long-lasting or not is crucial for their sustainability. Some of the sources suggest that family businesses have the potential to be long-lasting, while others argue that they may have a shorter lifespan.

According to Mazzi's (2011) research, family businesses are more likely to be long-lasting compared to other types of companies. This is due to their long-term planning and decision-making processes, family members' commitment to the business, and the business culture being based on family values. Similarly, Sciascia and Mazzola (2008) have also stated that family businesses have the potential to be long-lasting. These researchers argue that family businesses can survive even during crisis periods due to their high flexibility and adaptability.

On the other hand, some researchers such as Chittoor and Das (2007) have suggested that family businesses may have a shorter lifespan. They argue that family businesses may have limited growth and innovation capabilities, and internal conflicts may negatively impact the company's future. Similarly, Gedajlovic et al. (2004) have also noted that family businesses are more prone to failure.

In conclusion, there are different opinions on whether family businesses are long-lasting or not. Some studies suggest that family businesses may be long-lasting due to their long-term planning, decision-making processes, and family commitment, while others suggest that family businesses may have limited growth and innovation capabilities and internal conflicts that may impact the company's future negatively.

Birtat Lokantası is a good example as a family company that was founded in 1953, has developed from year to year and continues to operate. The secrets underlying the successful story and long-term survival of the family company, which is the subject of the research, for three generations can be listed as follows;

- Order and stability
- Do your job with passion
- Not to compromise on hygiene and sanitation.
- To maintain a balanced and regular social and business life.
- Not making frequent changes in the employees of the enterprise, especially in the cook.
- To progress within the framework of discipline
- Adopting the rules of love and respect within the business
- The desire of the employees to develop themselves and to carry the business to the future with confident steps.

When this study is compared with some studies;

According to research, employees' knowledge, skills and competencies increase productivity (Chowdury et al., 2014; Backman, 2014), create competitive advantage and positively affect organizational performance (Nyberg et al., 2014). Similarly, it supports the results of this study. Some studies have concluded that having a family member as the top manager of the business positively affects financial performance (Andersn and Reeb, 2003). Similarly, in this study, it was concluded that it is important that the business manager is a family member.

In terms of examining family businesses, this study drew attention to the important points of being successful in the sector through an exemplary restaurant business and brought a different perspective to the professionalization of family businesses.

Different theoretical perspectives are needed to understand family businesses. For a better understanding of family businesses in the following studies, other theories that will enrich the research besides the institutional theory should be utilized.

In terms of being a role model, it is important to determine the success and sustainability secrets of family companies that have continued their activities for generations. In future studies, it is recommended to conduct interviews with businesses with different success stories in order to reveal more different clues.

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