

Monday
AGRIBUSINESS

Tuesday
ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday
TRAVEL, TOURISM & AVIATION

Thursday
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Friday
ENTREPRENEURSHIP



AGREEMENT: Executives of Çilek and Alghanim sign the franchise deal.

Çilek will open to the Persian Gulf

ISTANBUL
Hürriyet Daily News

Çilek, a Turkish furniture brand specializing in products for the 0-24 age range, plans to open 30 stores in the Gulf region as part of a franchising agreement with a Kuwaiti firm. Joining Turkish President Abdullah Gül's visit to Kuwait following an invitation from Amir Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah, Çilek signed a master franchising deal with the Alghanim Group, one of Kuwait's largest companies.

Çilek has rapidly grown by opening concept stores through the franchise system in more than 40 countries, said Çilek Managing Director Muzaffer Çilek.

"We are pleased to have signed a deal with the Alghanim Group, which is active in Gulf countries. This is a master franchising deal that includes the Gulf market, such as Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, and covers retailing and distribution activities. With this agreement, we will open 30 more stores within three years," he said. At present, there are four Çilek stores in Kuwait.

Stressing the trust for Turkish brands in Arabic countries, Çilek said: "Arabic children and families are fond of our products. The Turkish brand Çilek will conquer the hearts of Arabic children."

Brand from Costa Rica enters Turkish market

ISTANBUL
Hürriyet Daily News

A Turkish entrepreneur has entered the country's rapidly growing coffee market with Coffee Village, a brand originating in Costa Rica.

The brand's first Turkey branch opened last month in Moda, a district on Istanbul's Anatolian side. Zekai Akin, a textile sector player who heard the story of Coffee Village during his business trip to Costa Rica, plans to open 25 branches in Istanbul in 2010. Having obtained the brand's rights, Akin plans to grow without franchises at present. It has designated 159 proper spots in Istanbul for opening branches. Akin plans to cover the investment of 25 branches through their own equity capital.

The cost of each branch is estimated at between 250,000 and 300,000 Turkish Liras, said Akin, managing director of Coffee Village Turkey. Unlike other coffee chains, Coffee Village does not aim to grow through franchising, he added. "We have not considered franchising. We would like to see the concept of our design progress within the framework of our plans."

Aiming to transform the coffee-house concept in Turkey, Coffee Village Turkey offers 60 different coffee tastes from around the world.

The Costa Rica model

Coffee Village introduces Turkish consumers to the Costa Rica model, a model that is valid for coffee-producing countries. It has a system developing around the large mills located at the center of coffee-producing villages.

"In these villages, the production covers the phases from mature seed on the tree to ready coffee in the sack. However, this system is no longer sufficient to cover the demand of international brands," said Akin. "Platforms such as Coffee Vil-

The Coffee Village brand has entered Turkey through the efforts of Zekai Akin, a businessman who has been in the textile sector for 20 years. Having opened the brand's first branch in Istanbul's Moda district, Akin plans to add 25 more Istanbul branches. The entrepreneur says he aims to change the coffee-house concept



SWITCHING JOBS: Akin was in the textile sector for 20 years before entering the business. The problems in textiles, particularly its turmoil, has led him to different alternatives; the business daily Referans yesterday.

lage develop the existing mentality with world-renowned coffee beans. This way, the most valuable coffee beans of many coffee producing countries are collected and a different coffee concept emerges."

Coffee Village offers tastes from several countries, including Costa Rica, Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, Kenya and Sumatra. The remaining job belongs to Turkish baristas. "This is a high-cost business, but because we aim to become the coffee brand that comes first to mind, we do not avoid costs," Akin said.

Akin heard about Village Coffee's story in Costa Rica and visited its Valle Central region, where the villages have two means of living: growing coffee beans and donkey

transportation. "Juan Ricard Callas, remembered as Don Juan, is among these coffee transporters. He brought not only coffee, but also the money coffee wholesalers pay peasants. In time, the villagers began referring to the town as Juan Ricard. Following his death, in order to immortalize him, wholesalers founded Coffee of Village and Village Coffee brand. The brand first entered the United States," he said.

"We have brought the Coffee Village brand as a family company. It is therefore 100 percent Turkish. We signed our agreement this way while obtaining the rights of the brand. During the talks we expressed that [the name] Coffee Village is more proper for Turkey and

started operations under this name. Thus, we returned to the brand's foundation name."

Akin said he is not anxious about global coffee chains opening branches consecutively in Turkey. Coffee Village is ambitious with its prices as well as different coffee tastes, he said. Coffee Village has not designated a turnover target, yet. Its specialties include pişmaniye, a Turkish sweet in fine strands made by blending flour roasted in butter into pulled sugar, and coffees such as "Don Juan."

Akin was in the textile sector for 20 years before entering this business, reported business daily Referans yesterday. "I will completely abandon textile," he said.



FATMANUR ERDOĞAN

fatmanur@kariyeryolculugu.com

Turn the light onto yourselves

You can learn a lot about people by watching how consistently they apply their standards of behavior. For example, take how people react to Turkey's ban on YouTube. YouTube is the world's most popular video sharing site, and many of us are puzzled by Turkey's banning of it. We question our democracy. We blame the courts for not understanding how the Web works. We get angry at the people who found a few of the videos and comments so offensive that they took the issue to court and got the whole site shut down. We claim to not understand this intolerance, and we blame it on conservatives or the provincially-minded. We think that if only people were more open-minded, if only they knew better how the Web works, YouTube would be accessible.

Turkey's blogger community, one of the most Internet-savvy groups in the country, can't believe anyone could misunderstand the nature of YouTube so badly. Most bloggers here believe the ban is ridiculous, and the people responsible for it should be embarrassed for themselves. They look at the situation with a smug sense of self-satisfaction, and they congratulate themselves on being so open-minded and so understanding of the world.

Moderating comments at blogs

But before bloggers congratulate themselves, they should take a closer look at their own actions. For example, take how they handle the comments people make on their blog posts. Over the years I have seen many bloggers who choose to "moderate comments." This means that if a reader reads a blog post on, for example, Turkish politics, and tries to leave a comment, the comment won't show up until the blogger sees it, decides it's okay, and approves its appearance on the Web page.

It's kind of off-putting. It's like the writer is saying, "This blog is my castle, and you can only come in if I decide to let you." And it's not just beginners who set their defenses so high. Recently, I came across a blog started by a communications consultant in Turkey who has been in the communications business for 25 years. Her blog's headline stated, right at the top of the page for all to see, "Commenters who are rude will not be allowed to comment."

This consultant's business is all about understanding changes in the communications world and showing people how to adapt to them quickly. You would think someone like that would have a more thorough understanding of social media tools. Yet by bluntly exerting her control over potential commenters, she was showing a terrible misunderstanding of the user dynamics of the blog world. Blogging is about sharing, and if you are putting your opinions out there for the world to read, you need to be ready to receive commentary from all sorts of people. A blog is a community discussion, and the community decides what is rude and what is not. It's not something the writer alone gets to control.

There is an important parallel between YouTube's being banned in Turkey, and the attitudes of bloggers in general. Both instances deal with wanting to have control over a conversation so you can avoid anything you might not like personally. In the case of YouTube, a minority has an emotional reaction to a comment, and they use the courts as a lever to shut down the entire site. In the case of bloggers, the owners monitor and delete comments they personally don't like.

It's natural to want to exert control over the world around you, but the Internet isn't really a good place to do it. That goes double for blogs. I've been writing them for years and reading them for even longer, and I know from experience that they are about conversations, and the best conversations happen when the person who starts them is willing to relinquish control over them.

So before you ask others to meet your standards for respect, tolerance, or anything else, examine your own actions first. When other people see you living up to your own standards, they will be far more likely to accept your request that they live up to them, too.



MEET: Delegates are seen at the Twitter Conference LA in Los Angeles, California in this Sept. 22 file photo. Twitter's global popularity is rising each day.

Twitter seals search deals, to post profit

NEW YORK
Bloomberg

Twitter Inc. will make about \$25 million from Internet-search deals with Google and Microsoft announced in October, enough to push the site into profitability, people familiar with the matter said.

An agreement that made Twitter's messages searchable on Google's site will generate about \$15 million, said the people, who asked to remain anonymous. A similar deal with Microsoft's Bing search engine will earn Twitter about \$10 million.

The multiyear agreements will allow Twitter to make a small profit in 2009, said the people, who estimate that its operating costs are about \$20 million to \$25 million a year. The San Francisco-based

company, which started in 2006, has about 105 employees.

Until earlier this year, Twitter wasn't even focused on revenue - let alone profit. The company attracted millions of users with a free service that posts 140-character messages, known as tweets. Chief Executive Officer Evan Williams said two months ago that the company was spending almost all its time improving the product, rather than seeking ways to make money.

That left many analysts and investors wondering how Twitter would convert its popularity into earnings. Twitter has more than 58 million global monthly users, according to ComScore. The service is the third most popular social-networking site in the U.S., after Facebook and MySpace.



Office: 0212 351 51 98 (Pbx)
Fax: 0212 351 50 68
Contact Mr. Husein 0532 736 13 30
Mr. Burak (Francophone)
0533 35275 66

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