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PODIUM: Kira Plastinina, the 16-year-old Russian designer, poses before a collection is presented in Rome.

Plastinina retreats from the US

MOSCOW
Bloomberg

Kira Plastinina, a 16-year-old Russian fashion designer whose father says he spent \$80 million setting up stores under her name, will close almost all of her 12 U.S. outlets after less than a year as demand slumps.

"The number of shoppers in the U.S. fell significantly," said Sergei Plastinin, Kira's father, the food entrepreneur who co-founded Wimm-Bill-Dann. "It also became harder to find money for investment because of the financial crisis. We had enormous plans: New York, then India and China in 2009."

Kira Plastinina told New York magazine in May that her dad offered to turn her notebook dress-sketching hobby into actual clothes sold by her own retail chain when she was 14. She appears in the brand's advertising. The company will focus on its 70 stores in Russia as U.S. retailers mark down inventory to cope with the recession.

"We have to live through the crisis and see what happens next before making any decisions," Kira's 40-year-old father said in an interview in Moscow. A spokeswoman for the chain said the teenager's father speaks to business reporters, while Kira only gives interviews to the fashion press.

Following Thales's olive track in Manisa

SİNAN DOĞAN
İZMİR - Referans

A Turk who studied philosophy in Germany and Austria, decided after he graduated that he preferred to work in the olive business, reminiscent of pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Thales.

Kağan Doğançay, who wrote a thesis on the philosophy of Descartes during graduate studies abroad, started an olive business on 12 acres of land in the Akhisar district of Manisa, in Turkey's Aegean region. Doğançay, who studied in Istanbul University's philosophy department and then took language classes in Britain, is now producing high-quality, low-acidic olive oil.

Expressing his preference to be close to nature rather than becoming an academic, Doğançay said, "It is possible to have an honest relationship with soil, trees and humans, in which one feels at ease with one's conscience. Therefore, I prefer farming. Whenever I get some money, I buy land and plant olive trees."

He is gradually increasing the amount of land he owns. "I started the olive business with only a few acres, but now I have over 12 acres. My target is to have 24 acres or more, to get a better income." Doğançay's current aim is to market his olives and olive oil online under his registered brand "Altın Sızma."

Marketing channels

Doğançay said olives and olive oil are products of the future. "Most of my production consists of domat and gemlik olive types. I halve the table olives. To establish a factory is expensive, so I do not do my own packaging. I also hire factories in the region to press the olives to make the olive oil," he said.

"I accomplish [producing high-quality olive oil] by taking good

After his graduate studies in Vienna, a Turkish entrepreneur prefers the olive business to a life in the academy. Kağan Doğançay produces olive oil of high quality on his 12 acres in the Aegean region and looks for ways to market his product



OLIVES: Thales, a Greek philosopher was involved in olive business. Kağan Doğançay (R) is now treading in the same path, producing high-quality olive oil.

care of the trees, collecting their produce on time and pressing them without delay," Doğançay said. "I have established a drip irrigation system and I consult agricultural engineers at every stage. In this sense, I would describe myself as a conscious producer."

Having obtained registration for his "Altın Sızma" brand, Doğançay said he planned to market products with this brand in bottles. He said it did not matter how good the quality of the oil he produced was, because as a small producer it was tough to enter the market, so he planned to market the product himself.

"A certain amount of capital is required for marketing. That way, you can either enter big markets or open your own store. I lack this opportunity, therefore I will sell online after creating a Web site."

Doğançay said he had faced different reactions to his olive business from people in the region. "Some think people enter the olive business because there is money in it. Others think farming is difficult and cannot understand why a person like me tries to do it, but others appreciate it," he said. "I try to learn as many things from as many people as possible and try to teach them new production techniques. Meanwhile, I show consumers the way to produce and market quality oil."

Commenting on global warming and people going hungry in the world, Doğançay said, "Prior to a food problem, the world is likely to face an oil problem. Olive oil is a very special product. People in the United States and China have started to consume olive oil. Olives, however, are only produced in limited geographical regions. Therefore, Turkey may have a significant economic position if we produce and market consciously."



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Service sets your company apart

It does not matter if you think you deliver a superior customer experience. The only thing that matters in the end is what your customers think

Some years ago, companies figured out how to build quality products. In almost every sector, and in almost every cost position, you'll find good design and quality manufacturing. However, what most companies haven't figured out is how to provide high-quality customer service. Now and into the future, service is exactly what will differentiate companies from one another.



TROUBLE: ISPs in Turkey can cause headaches.

The concept is simple, but when you are looking from inside a company out, the obstacles might seem complex. Throughout the business world, managers say, "The bigger a company gets, the more complex it becomes." This excuse is demotivating and it certainly doesn't do customers any good. When your customers encounter one-sided solutions to their problems, it just creates more problems instead of solving the original one.

For example, take the Internet service providers in Turkey. Regardless of which ISP I use, my connection at home goes down most of the time. I'm paying for a service, but I'm not getting it. Changing from one ISP to another doesn't seem to solve the problem, since all the ISP's depend on one monopoly company for their infrastructure. Whenever there's a problem with the service, they blame "regional work" that's out of their hands. Instead of acknowledging the problem and taking responsibility for solving it or making up for it, they tell me I have to bear the consequences.

Or look at the online banking system. It is cumbersome and you have to keep an array of information with you at all times, just so you can log on to your account. To activate an online account, some banks take the extra step of sending you to an ATM. Then they ask you to change your password every few months, and if you enter it incorrectly, they lock you out of the system. You can only regain access via a message they send to your cell phone. So, you have to have the phone with you and hope that it is fully charged. If it's not charged, you have to hope you remembered to bring your charger with you.

Somehow, the banks' management decided that constructing a labyrinth-like security process made for better security, and that their customers would appreciate them for it. Instead, they are consigning their customers to a security system hell. Actually, it is possible to create systems that deliver both security and a positive customer experience, and banks elsewhere have managed to do it. But two things are required: First, managers need to put customer experience first, and second, customers need to stop accepting mediocre service.

Diverging views

According to a 2005 Bain & Company survey, 80 percent of companies believe they deliver a superior customer experience, but only 8 percent of their customers agree. Right here in Turkey, companies proudly present statistics on how many customers are satisfied with their services, and they prominently display the awards they are winning. But even if you are an award-winning, customer-serving company with a 90 percent satisfaction rate, if you have five million customers, that 10 percent still means you have half a million customers out there spreading the word about their dissatisfaction. It doesn't matter if you think you deliver a superior customer experience. The only thing that matters is what your customers think. And your customers don't care how complex your company is, or how special you think you are. They only care about receiving streamlined services that are dependable and easy to use, and when something breaks, they want it fixed quickly. Learn how to deliver that kind of smooth customer experience, and you will be truly differentiated and ready to prosper in the years ahead.

Turkish citizen leads young entrepreneurs

İSTANBUL
Hürriyet Daily News

The European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs, or YES, the pan-European organization that brings together 16 national federations and represents 40,000 individual entrepreneurs, has appointed a Turk as its new director general.

Suat Lemi Şişik has been closely following the activities of YES since 2002 as the Brussels representative of the Young Businessmen Association of Turkey, or TÜGIAD. A mathematician and economist specializing in applied economics consultancy, Şişik has replaced Philippe Léonard from France in his new position.

Şişik will focus on YES' expansion activities during his term, business daily Referans reported. "I am aware, however, that I represent Turkey in the background. We will define and promote Turkey as a part of Europe in all communication channels," said Şişik.

Europeans abstain from risk

Commenting on European businessmen's approach to the global crisis, Şişik said, "The problems of Turkish entrepreneurs and Europeans are the same during this period. However, we have gained immunity to crises over the years. Young Turkish businessmen are more enterprising, compared to

young businessmen from continental Europe."

In Europe, young entrepreneurs are accustomed to conducting their businesses within certain standards and with comfort; therefore they do not have a great potential when encountering risks, Şişik said. "European young entrepreneurs are afraid of the climate created by the crisis and prefer to stand aside. However, Turkish entrepreneurs do not abstain from risks despite the crisis."

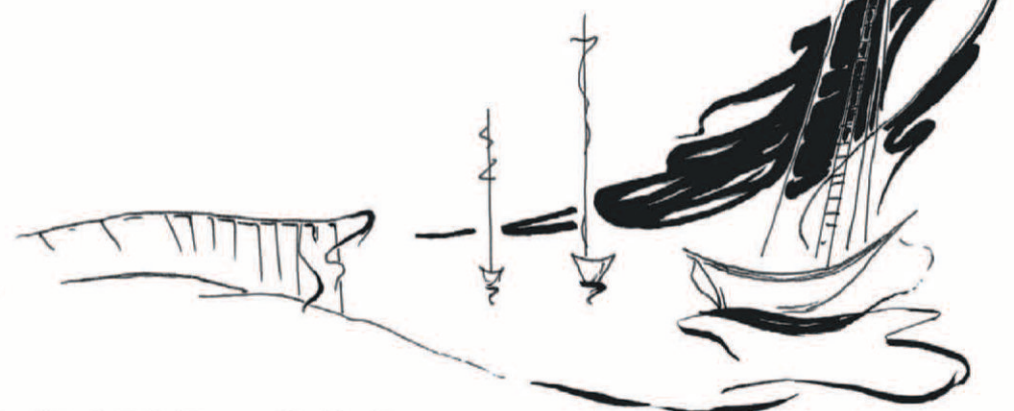
"Turkey has a young population to compensate for Europe, where the population is getting older, however, we have serious problems in terms of education," he said. "Despite the education problem in Turkey, the young population is always an advantage."

Meanwhile, the YES General Assembly in Germany confirmed Martin Ohneberg from Austria as the president of YES for one more term. Ohneberg is a successful Austrian entrepreneur, chief financial officer and partner of Soravia Group, a real estate development, properties and equity group, based in Austria with large operations in southeastern Europe, YES said in a press note. President Ohneberg will be supported by the Presidents Committee composed of Lütfü Küçük from TÜGIAD and two vice-presidents, Annibale Chiriaco from Italy and Ivan Sempere from Spain.

Göcek by



"Slow me down, Lord"
Change the route of your life and
steer your helm to Göcek...



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