


Hugging Like Koalas Do: The Story of KitapKoala, a Social Enterprise From Istanbul, Turkey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to present a social entrepreneur and his social enterprise from Istanbul, Turkey. It is aimed to provide a real-life example for social entrepreneurship readers which would show the entrepreneurial motives, the start-up problems, market struggles, and the hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Changing the world is hard work. Social entrepreneurs are the pioneers that accept the hard work and take action. As the examples are more visible, more people can be inspired to step in. This case study hopes to be a means of inspiring new social entrepreneurs.

INTRODUCTION

...the truth is, there are no superheroes. There is just us, and too often we are the ones that we keep waiting for. (Shiza Sahid, the co-founder of The Malala Fund (Pacor, 2015))

We live in a world where the prominent mindset glorifies wealth, defines success in financial terms and uses up resources recklessly. The same mindset creates the perception that, if we want change, we need saviours to do that: there is not much

we can do as individuals. Movies and books keep telling us stories of superheroes that make a change and we know that we are not one. That very fact – *we are not superheroes* – might bring us to the understanding that if it's only us, then it is us, who should change the world.

Social entrepreneurs are the ones who stop waiting for someone as a saviour. They are clearly aware of the social problems and needs. They take responsibility and action to change what they are able to change. They accept the entrepreneurial risks and establish social enterprises. As businesses are widely seen as the fundamental causes of social, economic and environmental problems (Porter and Kramer, 2011), social enterprises are like superheroes that make a difference and contribute to a better image for 'the businesses' and, social entrepreneurs are 'panacea to failure in market and state mechanisms' (Parkinson and Howorth, 2008, pp.292) Businesses are 'increasingly judged on the basis of their relationships with their workers, their customers, and their communities, as well as their impact on society at large' (Social Enterprise Alliance, 2018, pp. 2). As a result of the social pressure towards businesses regarding the harm they cause, there has been an increasing corporate tendency on improving stakeholder welfare, in addition to maximising shareholder value (Awaysheh and Bonfiglio, 2017). Businesses engage in corporate philanthropy and emphasise acting in a socially responsible manner. This is how we distinguish social enterprises from commercial ones: their *value propositions*. While commercial enterprises primarily create financial value and personal wealth through satisfying needs and wants; social enterprises exist to create social value through solving social problems (Austin et.al., 2006). Commercial enterprises have financial and market-related goals whereas social enterprises have social goals (Certo and Miller, 2008; Van de Ven. Et.al, 2007).

Dees (1998) describes social entrepreneurs as change agents who have the mission of creating a sustainable social value whilst continuously innovating and pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission. Ashoka's (2012) definition is also similar 'Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems.' They create new ways and models to solve social problems and add social value.

As mentioned earlier, businesses increasingly emphasise improving stakeholder value and developing responsible leadership practices. Similarly, social enterprises are now the focus of attention. Thus, experiential learning materials may well serve business and social entrepreneurship students and readers in their efforts to better understand this hot topic (Awaysheh and Bonfiglio, 2017; Short et. al, 2009). In such an attempt, this paper will present the short case of a social entrepreneur from Istanbul, Turkey and the social enterprise he created and will share their story.

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