

When your customers don't know who you are

This morning, I came across an article on EaterDC about the new Isabella Eatery food hall at Tyson's Galleria in McLean, Virginia: Gargantuan Isabella Eatery is Confusing Customers. It seems that although some of the elements of the food hall get good reviews for quality and design, customers don't know what to make of the whole thing. It seems that Isabella Eatery is offering so much that its customers no longer know what Isabella stands for. (Some background: Mike Isabella was a contestant on Top Chef. Later he went on to open up Graffiato, an Italian restaurant in Washington, DC and later a Italian sandwich shop called G by Mike Isabella. He then expanded into Greek food with three Kapnos restaurants, and then into Spanish food with Arroz. He heads up a company called Mike Isabella Concepts, which also operates a French restaurant, a Mexican restaurant and the aforementioned food hall.)

Something for every one?

And then there's the local pizza chain with the catchy jingle that says it offers "something for every one." The place is called [name] Pizza, and its current TV commercials show pictures of a burger and fries. Because, of course, if you want a burger and fries you'd call a pizza delivery place, right?

Jack of all trades, master (brander) of none

When you seek to please everyone by offering tons of choices, you end up pleasing no one.

In terms of branding and marketing, when you offer so many choices (and in Isabella's case, cuisines and restaurants) you are violating the first two of *The 22 Immutable Laws of*

Branding by Al Ries and Laura Ries. The first law says that your brand loses its power when you expand your scope, and the second, which really is the inverse of the first, is that having more focus strengthens your brand.

A strong brand is focused, a weak brand is not. It seems to me that Mike Isabella is expanding at the expense of his brand. And the pizza place? Well I don't think it would be anyone's first choice for pizza *or* for burgers.

Your brand is your mark of distinction. How well are you communicating it? If you need help with your branding, check out my new Brand Identity Kit.