

# **Family business growth study with life history methodology: Cremoladas Angélica case**

Summary:

This work seeks to characterize family business growth stages to understand facilitators and barriers, using a Peruvian case study of the gastronomic sector. It explains how this type of organization's capacities, added to external conditions and to abilities and decisions of the entrepreneur manager allow a favorable situation for the company. Life histories methodology is used to characterize each stage "Cremoladas Angélica" has passed. As results, the facilitating position of the Peruvian Gastronomy Association (APEGA by its Spanish acronym) stands out for its market positioning role. Also new professionalization requirements due to family generational change and production scaling from artisan to industrial scope are relevant to strengthen sustainable business progress.

## 1. Introduction

Although they have unique characteristics and require different management as compared to other organizations, family businesses play an important role especially in developing economies, such as Peru. According to INEI (National Institute of Statistics and Informatics), the 2016 Peruvian market structure was constituted by approximately 2 million 125 thousand companies, of which 99.1% were MYPES (Micro and Small Enterprise) (INEI, pág. 7). They have high influence on economic and social performance, taking into account that around 80% are of family origin (Cáceres, 2018) and that they generate between 60 and 70% of the country's employment (Garland, 2010).

In the specific analysis of the gastronomic sector context, food expenditure in 2011 was 45 billion soles, representing 9.5% of Peruvian GDP, of which 96% was domestic consumption. Restaurant sector accounted for around 12 945 million soles, which represents 28% of the year's total food expenditure (APEGA, 2013, pág. 39). Therefore, the mentioned numbers suggest the outstanding importance of national culinary industry both in employment promotion and GDP contribution.

In this context, Cremoladas Angélica, gastronomic organization with more than twenty years in national market, has evolved despite the fluctuating local economy. From its initial stage, led by Mrs. Angélica Obregón, it has striven to maintain balance between business performance and family harmony. This entrepreneur has built in its organization her personality's main characteristics. Thus, the values, culture and fundamental axes of the study subject are image of and have been determined by the owner's actions.

Little has been written about models that characterize the stages through which a family business passes throughout its existence. However, several authors have developed some approaches that enable to determine the growth phase of a generic company, without distinction of its organizational structure, management and ownership. Scholars such as Steinmetz (1969), Greiner (1972), Churchill (1983), Adizes (2004) suggest that organizations must overcome certain structural, contextual and managerial condition periods that are turning points between stagnation and business growth. According to this, business growth could be understood as "the process of adapting to environment demanded changes, or to manager's entrepreneurial spirit, that compels the company to develop or expand its productive capacity adjusting or acquiring new resources (...) in order to obtain lasting competitiveness over time" (Blázquez, Dorta, & Verona, 2006, pág. 187).

On the other hand, life histories methodology "represents a qualitative research method that provides information about events and practices to demonstrate how the person is" (Chárriez, 2012, pág. 53). However, the research will seek to extrapolate this characteristic to try to explain the "personality" and important events the studied company has gone through. This will evidence how and why, Cremoladas Angélica has managed to attain the success it currently has, since its start and development.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Business growth stages

Business growth can be analyzed from different perspectives because there is no homogeneous and agreed definition. This concept, studied by Blázquez, Dorta and Verona (2006), gives significant importance to the organization's adaptation ability to compete in a volatile environment and to generate economic benefit. However, there are also theories regarding other variables relevance such as increase in the company's size and its financial capacity (Greiner, 1998, pág. 38) or organizational size and business mortality reduction (Correa, 2000, pág. 258). This research will consider the explanation provided by the first cited authors because it reflects the current context, takes into account the organizations structural and managerial changes experienced and highlights its financial performance increase.

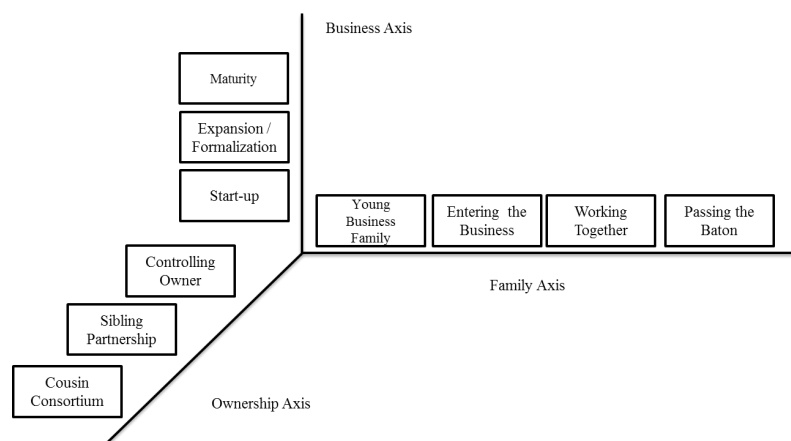
To define an organization's growth in structured phases with unique characteristics, different models have been conceived. These models are useful for general companies analyses, as explained by Greiner (1972), Churchill (1983), Wang (2005) or Adizes (2015) and some others, with the peculiarity of having been designed for family businesses such as published by Kroeger (1974) and Gersick and Davis (1997).

The most outstanding authors with regard to business growth generic models are Greiner (1972) and Churchill (1983). Both propose six stages that companies pass through their existence, although they do not agree in definition characteristics of each company and its management in each stage. On one hand, Greiner assures that a company's life cycle can be synthesized in "creativity, leadership, delegation, coordination, collaboration and alliances" (1998). This model does not warn of the organization's possible decline or disappearance and defines its growth as linear and positive. That is, in spite a company faces inconveniences, it will overcome them and progress. On the other hand, Churchill (1983) proposes his own business growth model constituted by "existence, survival, success -with sub-phase of disconnection and growth-, takeoff, resource maturity and ossification" (1983, pág. 31). The importance of this approach lies in the non-linearity of the company's performance. In other words, the company's growth curve can have both positive and negative slopes, which implies possibility of its decline or disappearance. This model's approach greatly highlights the owner's action and thus, extrapolation to family businesses study scope is possible.

Also, some researchers have focused on establishing a model that allows analysis of a family property organization and considers such entities' peculiarities in the development of their work. Among them, Gersick and Davis (1997) designed the "Three-dimensional evolutionary model", which was cause for reflexion for other authors because "it makes possible to understand family business operation in a dynamic way, that is, over the course of time" (Matute, Fabían, Pacheco, Trinidad, & Ureta, 2010).

This dynamic vision, considering time factor, allows obtaining "a new vision of the family business growth process" (Dueñas, Guaman, & Torres, 2006). Indeed, Gersick and Davis (1997), propose three axes that represent ownership, family and business, which are the subsystems of a family business. This model allows the researcher to place the organization at a specific point on the axes at a defined moment.

Figure: Three-dimensional evolutionary model



Source: Gersick y Davis, 1997

There is some consensus among authors with regard to the increasing structural and management complexity associated with the growth of an organization. Greiner states that when a company is in progress, "coordination and communication problems multiply, new functions arise, management hierarchy levels augment and jobs interrelate" (1998, pág. 56). Obviously, organizational growth is directly proportional to the need for senior management with more knowledge and skills. If the above mentioned is applied to family company scope, disconnection between it and company management could be expected. This happens if there is not a competent and trained owner to cope with the convulsed situations generated by the company's growth boom. In absence of such split, organization stagnation risk or, worse, organization decline will be more likely.

## 2.2. The family business

The importance of family business is because it is the most representative type, linked to business origin and relevant in developing economies (Salomón, 2011, pág. 2). Literature possibly has several definitions of family business, but in general emphasis is given to the fact that this company type has certain characteristics that differentiate it from other businesses. Poza conceptualizes this as the sum of the following elements: "ownership control (15% or more) by two or more family members or family association, strategic influence of family members in company management (...), interest in good family relations, continuity dream (or possibility of) from generation to generation" (Poza, 2004, pág. 6). From these elements, it can be stated that a family business is controlled and directed by a group of people united by consanguinity or marriage, who desire to inherit their work to the family's next generations. Due to the contribution of different types of personal ties in an organization, these have unique characteristics as compared to other institutions. Many authors review the most important characteristics of a family business which can be classified as follows: agency costs benefits, emotional richness, organizational culture and reputation and image.

First, agency costs benefits occur when in family business, especially when it is still in the first and/or second generation, owners (shareholders) are also company managers. In this sense, Martínez (2011, págs. 22 -23) states that usually shareholder and manager are the same, thus supervision savings are generated. This also guarantees the manager's full effort for organizational growth.

A second characteristic includes socio-emotional richness given by affection and knowledge that exists within a family. Trevinyo-Rodriguez (2010) declares that the effort and commitment to this type of idea or project represents an important intrinsic motivation. Strategies are needed

to strengthen this motivation in various stages in order to make it endure over time and become a source of family richness.

Third, organizational culture refers to values and behaviors ingrained in the company shown as result of the type of leadership implemented by the family (Poza, 2004, pág. 6). Also, "what differentiates family businesses from non-family administration controlled businesses usually are family owners' intentions and values that influence the strategy" (Poza, 2004, pág. 6). Likewise, family not only contributes with its values, but also with behaviors they consider useful or that have had utility for some family member (Molina, Botero, & Montoya , 2016) .

The fourth element focuses on reputation and image. It refers to the company's reputation and the image it projects, directly related and shared with the family. Likewise,

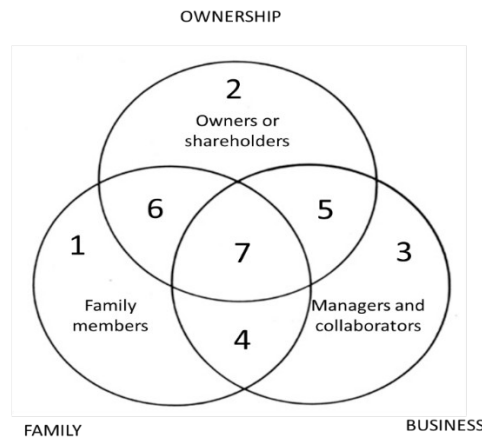
Family ties define a bond and behavior rules for family members. Outsiders associate the family with certain distinctive features and expect to see that behavior. If one or more family members are noisy, undisciplined and bossy, it might be suspected the whole family has potential for the same behavior (Tagiuri & Davis, 1996, pág. 55).

Thus, family characteristics are extrapolated to the company and those of the company to the family. In consequence, it is important that both are adequate so as not to hinder the image and reputation of both dimensions.

### 2.3. Three circles model

The three circles model was stated by Tagiuri and Davis (1992) and consists of: family, business and ownership. These circles intertwine and could generate seven stakeholder types described below. (1) family, referred to family members; (2) company, referred to managers, heads and other organization collaborators; (3) ownership, referred to company owners or shareholders; (4) family and business intersection, referred to those individuals who are family members and work for the organization; (5) business and ownership intersection, referred to those who become owners, but no longer belong to the family; (6) ownership and family intersection, those that do not work for the company, but are owners (shareholders) and family members; and (7) family, business and ownership triple intersection, referred to all those who are family members, work at the company and are owners (shareholders) at the same time.

Figure: Three circles model



Source: Based on (Tagiuri & Davis, 1992)

Hence, Martínez states "This simple diagram enables to easier understand and analyze the problems and dynamics of family business (2010, pág. 21). Amat expresses "the three circles model allows us to make clear one of the central points in understanding the family business problem: the existence of different stakeholders." (2000, pág. 104). On the other hand, Molina, Botero and Montoya (2016, pág. 133) declare: "this model is useful to identify existing role play in family business and to understand generation of rational game and its frequent overlap". However, Poza (2004, pág. 8) asserts "for the organization's optimal performance, subsystems must be integrated so that the entire system functions unified". In addition, he declares "This model shows a family business is better understood and studied as a complex and dynamic social system where integration is achieved through reciprocal adjustments between subsystems" (2004, pág. 9).

#### 2.4. Succession planning

The Family Businesses Association of Peru estimates the family businesses percentage to be over 90%, which means more than 700,000 companies, in 2018, contributed to jobs more than 60% and to Peruvian GDP in 40%. Despite this important contribution to national economy, family businesses outlook is discouraging, as "only 30% of Peruvian family businesses pass to second generation and only 5% to third, according to information from the Inter-American Development Bank ( IDB) and the Chamber of Commerce of Lima (CCL)" (Soto Rivera, 2017). Obviously, these figures are consequence of lack of succession planning. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers,

Close to one of every two family businesses in Peru has an already established succession plan. Only one of four considers the plan as solid, documented and communicated. Doubtlessly, this is a figure higher than the average worldwide (2016, pág. 27).

Succession planning is a continuous process and generational transfer occurs when role and work of predecessor and successor intertwine or overlap (Araya Leandro, 2012). Thus, the alternative to this typical family businesses problem is evident: organized succession planning and at the right time, because

Everybody is mortal, and leaders are expected to have the responsibility, during their active life, to identify, train and install their successor, in order to preserve the company's continuity and prosperity. Therefore, it is particularly strange that despite the logic of this seemingly natural transition [...], the option of "doing nothing" is one that founders most often adopt (Leach, 1996, pág. 212).

### 3. Methodology

For this research, life history methodology applied to Angélica Obregón, owner of Cremoladas Angélica, was used to elucidate her business' growth in recent years. Thus, from an interpretative perspective and using a narrative methodology, the information gathered from the interview will be addressed. Also, "life history involves telling facts in orderly manner, through a coherent structure that, although does not guarantee narrated data accuracy, gives consistency to the story" states Gallegos-Noche (2009, pág. 55). For this reason Angélica Obregon's narrative is focused on how her entrepreneur experience has been, how she has experienced her organization's growth and what she believes were main milestones to understand it.

#### 3.1. Case study

As previously explained, a thematic type life history will be studied, where research is limited to a particular topic, in a time period or event in the studied subject life (Mckernan, 1999). In this regard, Angélica Obregón's life history will be examined in reference to the particular fact which is the creation of Cremoladas Angélica. This is a relevant case because it is representative of more than 180 companies that went through the eight editions of the most significant gastronomic Fair in Latin America (APEGA, 2013). Therefore, the main milestones and difficulties along a timeline that had to be faced to achieve business growth will be analyzed. Also, her personal and professional profile will be reviewed.

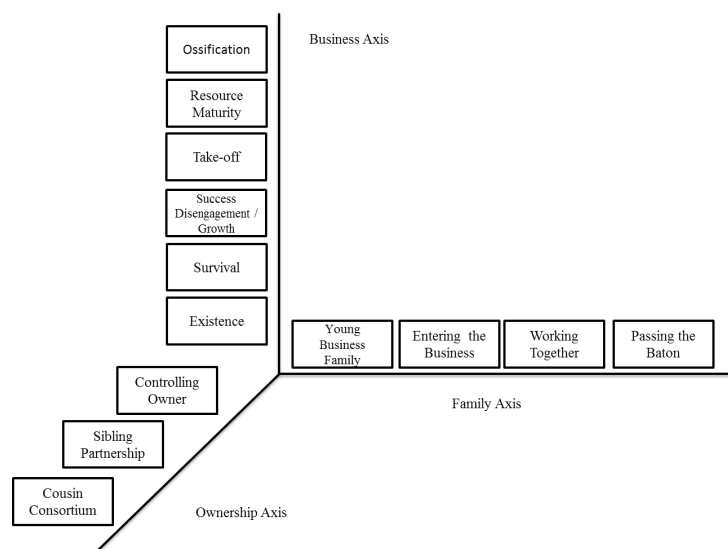
Additionally, the obtained information from the aforementioned person is contrasted with that gathered during the interview with her eldest son, Humberto Guerra, who gave informed consent. Likewise, audiovisual material available from public sources has been collected, containing interviews with Angélica Obregón, which will complement primary information. Therefore, data comes from in-depth interviews where observations of nonverbal language have been registered. Additionally, there are secondary sources, news, magazine and newspaper articles, and videos. In total, two interviews and a total of five videos were obtained.

### 3.2. Analysis and data interpretation

The three-dimensional evolutionary analysis model developed by Gersick and Davis (1997) was used. The reason is that it allows understanding of the family business evolution over time from the three fundamental aspects of a family business: family, business and ownership. This model together with the collected information will allow to position Cremoladas Angélica at a certain stage and present those that have elapsed, evidencing if there has been business growth over time.

However, to make more accurate information linkage, the business axis was modified. For information analysis purposes, it is convenient to position the company in a business growth stage described by the Churchill model (1983). It has great flexibility to apply in different organization types and considers relevant factors that denote its progress, as structural complexity and economic benefits.

Figure: Proposed evolutionary model



Source: Based in model of (Gersick & Davis, 1997).

## 4. Results

Angélica Obregón is the protagonist of this story. She is a successful entrepreneur in the Peruvian gastronomy field, who started selling in Lima streets and worked her way up to the top management of APEGA, an organization whose innovative gastronomic fair model enabled her



to have what the Guerra Obregón family and the Cremoladas Angelica company currently enjoys.

Angelica begins her business career when she starts selling fruits at a store in La Molina, one of the most exclusive Lima districts, which quickly grew to become a commercial area with large influx of people. The competition increase around the store affected Angelica's sales and forced her to search for solutions (Obregón, 2018). In her small business, a client of large plum quantities appeared before Angelica. She was intrigued and asked the reasons for this peculiar purchase (Guerra, 2018). The answer was that the fruit was to be used for preparation of cremoladas and although the client did not give her the complete recipe, this was not an obstacle for Angélica to search more information about this popular Peruvian dessert.

Mrs. Obregón ventured into cremolada preparation, however on the first attempt, she did not know perfectly well its preparation "*It used to result as juice, but with practice I could do it (cremolada)*" (Obregón, 2012). Guerra (2018) adds that first results were a cremolada with an unpleasant taste and, therefore, they were not sold and were given as gift to neighbors. However, Angelica never gave up and continued improving the formula. Obregón (2018) saw in a newspaper ad a cremoladas preparation Course delivered by the National Agrarian University La Molina (UNALM). Once registered, she noticed that the course was not focused on cremoladas elaboration as the name said, but in fruit nectar elaboration, technology that she then used to improve her product. This is how, with this course, Angélica's cremoladas began to be tasty and attractive for consumers. This marked a fundamental milestone, because the number of flavors and sales increased when Angelica improved her formula. Obregon (2018) says, "*We started with two flavors, now we have more than forty*".

In 2009, the family business's course begins to improve. The most representative figure of national cuisine and world-renowned chef, Gastón Acurio, as part of his tours in search of the best pottages in Lima, makes contact with Angelica's products and recognizes them as good quality and rich taste dessert through his television program. Next, APEGA invites Angelica to participate in the fifth edition of the Mistura International Gastronomic Fair, in 2013, for which she had to meet two requirements: brand and logo, as well as uniform for her staff (Obregón, 2018). In consequence, Angelica decides to create her brand "Cremoladas Angelica". Although, the first Mistura experience was not as she expected, because they sold little, at the end of the fair they gave away leftover products to their colleagues and to people who were still there. The idea was to make the brand known and to take advantage of the products she had brought. Angelica was not discouraged, and decided to go ahead, because she assumed that she had to improve her brand and the projected image, both in the glasses and in uniforms and other product's elements.

In Mistura's next edition, the company's participation was initially uncertain, as it was matter of debate whether it was right to return to the fair, and even Angelica's husband thought it would be a waste of money, as was the previous year. However, Angelica ended up giving a positive response to Mistura organizers. When they arrived at the sixth edition of Mistura (2014), they met an audience that already knew the product because of the tasting experience of the previous fair. With a renewed company's image, Angelica's eldest son, Humberto Guerra (2018), says that in the first two hours all the cremoladas they had brought were sold, and they had to replenish the stock five times in a single day to be able to supply the demand. Angelica says: *"My business is booming after 11 years. Thanks to Mistura is where I become known"* (Obregón, 2012).

Given the achieved success, opening of a store was essential, as they increased sales (Obregón, 2018). In addition, they started new projects: one of them was the company's participation in school kermesses. The first time they did not do well as expected. However, they noted that these events could enlarge the brand and its reputation. Following the company's trajectory was a proposal negotiated with a local bank for business increase (Guerra, 2018). By that time, Humberto Guerra already belonged to Cremoladas Angelica staff as events manager. He details (Guerra, 2018) that one day they called him to arrange a meeting to talk about a business proposal. The bank proposed him to put a sales stand, without any payment, of the cremoladería in an area destined for restaurants with the purpose that their collaborators could enjoy their refreshing products.

At present, Cremoladas Angelica continues this business model and is a clear success example. With respect to the Guerra Obregón family, some members have started working in the company. Cremoladería is a microenterprise, according to the National Registry of Micro and Small Enterprises of the Labor and Employment Promotion Ministry. Because cremolada is a product of seasonal consumption, its annual sales do not exceed 150 UIT's, that is, 622 500 soles (SUNAT, 2017). Thus, sales volume in spring and summer based on cremoladas, is approximately 1,000 glasses, while in autumn and winter they sell around 500 glasses, valued between 4 to 14 soles. In addition, for the same demand level, this business employs up to 100 people in high season and approximately 30 people in low season, in all its establishments. Worth highlighting is that Cremoladas Angelica not only sells cremoladas, it has diversified its products, now also sells juices, ice cream, fruit salads, milkshakes, among others.

Furthermore, Guerra (2018) declares that his father also works in the company, since he is responsible for supplies, purchases, among others. In addition, he tells that he has two younger brothers, who at present are not involved in the business, the eldest is an architect and the second is a Chef, but he does not live in Peru. They value their mother as an entrepreneur and

struggling woman, deeply involved with the business and transmitting her fundamental principles, such as quality and giving clients a good image.

## 5. Discussion

Considering what has been obtained with organization analysis through life history methodology, it is possible to affirm that the researched company is positioned, with respect to the business axis, in the success stage with a growing sub phase. This classification is because family and owner's continuity in the ruling management has been demonstrated, despite the considerable growth experienced by the company. The skill, expertise and experience of Mrs. Angélica Obregón has allowed her to effectively manage the structural changes and new challenges implied with her company's boom. In addition, the training provided by APEGA has also been an important factor in ensuring family continuity in management and ownership.

Likewise, family businesses meet a set of particular qualities that, used positively, favor the company's growth. The organizational culture can generate a company's strong evolution foundations, because it not only generates workers loyalty, but it is shown to the public as generating greater brand solidity. Hence, both financial credits and opportunities for new premises creation are obtained. Additionally, Angélica's social-emotional attachment was transmitted to her children and collaborators. This has achieved that as a business family they remain motivated even in situations that involved great learning challenge, as was their first visit to Mistura.

The conservation of a family business is one of the great challenges for owners that started it and this life history demonstrates the challenges that family businesses face. The outlook is even more critical in Peruvian context, and hence the need arises to promote tools to ensure this type of business continuity in long term. Business families are primarily responsible for success or failure of their businesses, which face complex situations such as succession planning, without which the death chances could increase.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, Cremoladas Angélica's study, analyzed through the modified evolutionary model proposed in this research, indicates that in the family axis, the organization is positioned in the **working together** phase. This implies that the family is still in charge of the main management but it also has non-family collaborators. Thus, from the conventional organization point of view, the company presents business growth. Also, growth in other family systems is evidenced, which may be due to the **family and business maturity** that has been consolidated in the course of years, as well as to Angélica's motivation to overcome and improve every day. About the ownership axis, it is located in the stadium of **"controlling owner"** where control and

ownership are Angelica's. Although it is positioned in this stadium, Angelica has transferred power to his son.

Finally, Cremoladas Angelica has gone through business growth and other aspects that are particular of a family business. The synergy of family businesses characteristics together with Angelica's entrepreneur temperament and personality have enabled its position in the local market. Particular milestones that marked the company's evolution, which appeared as challenges at the time, are currently considered by Angelica as personal, business and family achievements. She shares this experience as learned lessons for other businesses that seek to scale in the successful Peruvian gastronomic sector.

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