

London and New York Are Next for this Brazilian Behavioral Research Firm

Contributed by Débora Rubin
Friday, 25 July 2008

Conducting behavioral research and seeking innovative solutions for the corporate world. That is the mission of Mandalah, a company established in late 2006, in the city of São Paulo. Ever since, Igor Botelho and Lourenço Bustani, the agency's founding partners, have been helping large companies, domestic and foreign, to better relate to and communicate with their customers.

"We take a step further, to seek the human being behind the consumer. Hence the H in the name Mandalah," Igor explains.

In early July, Bustani took a trip to the United Arab Emirates and South Africa. The aim was to conduct a behavioral research for an automobile company based in the United States (they never disclose the names of their customers).

According to Lourenço, the complete project involves three regions: Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. As the tendencies that arise in Dubai tend to influence the other countries surrounding the Emirates, the work developed by Mandalah focused on the city.

In South Africa, the team was in Johannesburg. "We went to these sites to talk to consumers and experts and to develop what we call 'ethnography'," explained the partner. "Our investigation work goes beyond the question of consumption."

Mandalah was accompanied by a filming team. The end result of the work is presented in the form of a documentary, accompanied by strategic reports about the three markets studied.

This was the first time that the company went to an Arab country. "But it is not the first time we developed work abroad," stated Lourenço. Mandalah, in fact, has a branch in Mexico City. And the organization should take broad steps in the future, heading to London and New York.

Lourenço Bustani is of Lebanese descent. When his great grandfather arrived in Brazil, he immediately went to Bahia (Northeast Brazil). That was where his grandfather was born and raised. When he became an adult, he moved to Rondônia (North). That was where his father was born. Later on in life, his father moved to Rio de Janeiro (Southeast) to study to become a diplomat. Due to his father's profession, Lourenço was born in New York.

The Mandalah partner explains that his family spent a long time out of touch with his Bustani relatives in Lebanon. Around ten years ago, however, they met.

"And what is most curious is that even without being in touch for all these years, we discovered that we have the same interests, circulate in the same areas and have similar habits," he explained.

One example: José Bustani, Lourenço's father, plays the piano. Distant cousin Myrna Bustani not only plays but also organizes the annual Mozart festival, at the hotel she runs, the Al-Bustan.

Lourenço has been to Beirut twice. In his second trip to the country, two years ago, he went to the festival organized by Myrna. He also traveled to Syria and Jordan. The executive has only been to Dubai once, on business. And he left feeling like somebody who leaves a virtual reality program, in which buildings and Pharaonic works are erected in days.

He saw nothing that recalled Brazil there, apart from social and economic matters, like the tourist and oil industry. "There is also great inequality there," he said. "But it is hard to compare Dubai to any other place in the world."

To him, it is the perfect place for people who want to make money fast. "It is all glamour, the largest, the best, the tallest," he says. And all is transitory - the foreigners, the vast majority, want to stay there for a couple of years and then go away.

"But the Brazilians we met and interviewed there have fixed roots. They know how to enjoy themselves, live comfortably and do not have a definite date to return."

Service

www.mandalah.com.br

Anba