

FOR PUBLICATION



Moving forward with determination

Revitalising Anadolu EFES Sportsclub through the design of an updated identity

CLIENT / ANADOLU EFES

AGENCY / BROWN&CO (THE BRAND COLLECTIVE)

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ANADOLU
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Executive Summary

Anadolu Efes Spor Kulübü (AESK) is a professional basketball team, based in Istanbul, Turkey. It is the oldest and most successful club in the history of the Turkish Basketball Super League (BSL), having won the league's championship 14 times. However, by the end of the 2017/18 season it hadn't actually won the league for nine years, and it finished in last place in the European league. The club's focus on old victories had opened up a disconnect with current fans who were no longer buying into the club as they once had – average attendance rates and ticket sales had dwindled.

Additionally, besides developing youth players, no-one really knew what the club stood for – the club brand wasn't rooted in anything that people could get behind and believe in.

We were asked to bring clarity to the club's positioning through a new brand identity and to give the management, team and fans something to unite behind, with the goals of:

1. Making the club fit for a digital world to enable more mutually beneficial partnerships
2. Doubling average attendance rates to get to 30% arena capacity, and
3. Increasing overall sponsorship revenue by 10%

By bringing the club's reason for being upfront and centre in the identity, we have given fans and players a cause to rally behind and a reason to believe. Our digital first and living 'Flaming Star' identity highlights the club's passion, progress and determination showing why Anadolu Efes is fit for the future and a leading light in youth basketball.



BEFORE



AFTER

As a result;

- average attendance rates rose by +120% to 32% of stadium capacity
- season ticket sales increased by +238%
- AESK secured a new merchandise partner, opening up new channels to market
- merchandise sales grew by +711%
- the number of sponsorship partners doubled, with new sponsors including global male grooming brand Old Spice
- sponsorship revenue grew by 11%
- Twitter followers increased by +26%
- Instagram followers increased by +173%
- AESK's youth development program won the EuroLeague Gold Award, making history as the first Turkish club to do so.

And in the ultimate display of passion, progression and determination, Anadolu Efes won the league for the first time in TEN years.

The rebrand gave the team and its supporters a reason to believe and something they could rally behind. It provided a sense of belonging and a synergy between the team and fans that kicked off a true transformation for the club.

Case Study Overview

ABOUT ANADOLU EFES SPORTS CLUB

Anadolu Efes Spor Kulübü (Sports Club) is a professional basketball team, based in Istanbul, Turkey. It is the oldest and most successful club in the history of the Turkish Basketball Super League, having won the league's championship 14 times. It has a reputation for mentoring players from the youth leagues all the way into the professional league, and often into coaching after retirement.

The club is owned by Anadolu Group which operates globally in various sectors including beer, soft drinks, retail, agriculture, logistics, automotive, stationery, hospitality, real estate and energy.

OVERVIEW OF MARKET

In recent years, Anadolu Efes has developed a fierce rivalry with Fenerbahçe, with the two clubs often meeting in playoff series and cup finals, as well as vying for the BSL title.

The BSL was founded in 1966, and it has grown in popularity and stature over the years. In fact, Turkish teams have reached such a standard, that they have appeared in the final of the Turkish Airlines EuroLeague – the top professional club competition in Europe and the benchmark for basketball outside the NBA – every season since 2014/15.

The EuroLeague has also soared in popularity over the years, experiencing growing attendance and increased sponsorship and television revenues meaning that basketball was fast becoming a digital first sport. In 2017/18 the average attendance for a league match was 8,780 – the fifth-highest of any professional indoor sports league in the world, and the second-highest of any professional basketball league in the world, only behind the National Basketball Association (NBA).

OUTLINE OF BRIEF

Anadolu Efes is the most successful club in the Turkish league and, as such, it has played a key role in the improvement of Turkish basketball and in encouraging a passion for the sport amongst young people. However, over recent years the club felt that it had been harking back to its former glories and it had lost its stronghold over the youth market – it hadn't actually won the league for nine years whereas Fenerbahçe had won it six times and, in the 2017/18 season, it finished 16th in the EuroLeague. The team's lacklustre performance had seen average attendance rates and ticket sales dwindle, and fans were no longer buying into the club as they once had.

At the same time, the club discovered that even though it has been around since 1976, supporters and players have never really connected to the team's badge – a flat red, white and blue star – saying that it lacked depth and meaning.

It was clear that the club needed to reposition itself to galvanise fans and players. To reposition Anadolu Efes as a club fit for the future – rather than the past. And as one that, once again, could ignite passion and appeal to a new generation of fans in line with its vision of developing youth basketball in Turkey.



Case study overview

OUTLINE OF BRIEF (CONTINUED)

We were commissioned to provide a new brand positioning and identity with relevance and meaning – one that would:

1. Make the club fit for a digital world to enable more mutually beneficial partnerships
2. Encourage fans to re-engage with the team and double average attendance rates (from 14% to 30% arena capacity), and
3. Make the club a more attractive proposition to sponsors, thereby increasing overall sponsorship by 10%

DESCRIPTION

In order to create a positioning that resonated with the team's fans, players and future followers, we needed to find out what was working (and not working) from the club's key stakeholders, as well as carry out a complete audit of the club's visual language.

From our questioning, it was clear that Anadolu Efes had a rich heritage and was a pioneer in Turkish basketball, being the first Turkish team to play in and host the European Cup Final, as well as the first to send a player to the infamous NBA. But over recent years this legacy was becoming just that; a legacy. The club was beginning to lose its appeal to young players and fans as its wins were in the past. And it had lost its sense of team culture that had once set it apart.

When we questioned players and fans specifically about the club badge, people didn't know what it stood for – it was very functional and just conveyed basketball – and they felt that it looked dated. There were also many elements to the badge that people felt were confusing. In fact, the only elements people could recall unprompted were the star and dark blue colour.

Our new identity needed to move AESK from an analogue world to a digital world, to allow both club and potential sponsors the ability to perform well across TV and social media. Therefore, we simplified the badge, elevating the key brand assets of blue and the star, but redefining it in a way so as to build in relevant mental and emotional equity.

To get to a meaningful positioning we looked at the brand's why, rather than the what, which was where the club had previously focused. Doing this instantly creates an emotional connection with the intended audience which means it's more likely to result in a reaction or action.

Our clear positioning statement sets the club up as a dynamic, forward-facing pioneer – everything that resonated with the club's stakeholders to constantly remind them why Anadolu Efes is great and what sets them apart from the competition.



Case study overview

THE FLAMING STAR

We are the leaders in Turkish basketball, holding a torch up high so others can follow. **We are a club of stars and a club that nurtures stars, growing new players and future ambassadors of basketball and Turkey.** We are a team that plays honestly and ethically, standing in the light where everyone can see us – an example to all. We're always moving forward with determination, and we never give up. We are Anadolu Efes, and we shine.



Forward Moving Arrow
Determination / progress /
we never give up

+



Flame
Victory / leadership / ethics /
youth development / passion

=



The Flaming Star

Building distinctive assets with meaning

The badge was applied to absolutely everything from the players' kits and merchandise to the website and social media, where it was immediately more legible and modern.

Case study overview



A digital first brand

To help launch the new identity, the club's advertising agency created a campaign entitled 'BenimYerimBurası' or 'Where I Stand'. The campaign, which was fundamentally based on this positioning statement, included club legends, the current team and young players standing together to hold up the torch (or flaming star) for Anadolu Efes – instantly showing the relevance of all the past wins and the club's esteemed history.

They also invited fans, partners and members of the media to experience the thrill of moving forward with the club on social media through the hashtag '#BenimYerimBurası' before the new season. We worked closely with the ad agency to ensure the club's vision and positioning was brought to life in the right way.



Airline sponsorship and merchandise opportunities secured by the rebrand

Results

When researched, all key stakeholders felt that the club's previous identity lacked any kind of heritage or meaning. The new brand identity, which formed the foundation of the supporting campaign, gave players and fans a single-minded purpose to get behind and the all-important reason to believe.

It gave meaning to the Anadolu Efes star, imbuing it with the club's heritage, values, ethos and vision. Because these values were better represented in the identity, they were more easily remembered and re-adopted by the supporters, players and managers. It galvanised everyone involved in the club and it gave them something greater to rally behind.

Utku Yusuf Özciğer – Digital Media and Marketing Supervisor, AESK says;

KEY FACTS

Project Launch Date

August 2018 – Before the
2018/19 Season

Design Fees

(not including production
cost) – £30k

“Not only did the rebrand encapsulate our heritage and future vision, which made people feel proud again, but it also formed the foundation to give us license to tell the stories of our glorious past that would help people fall in love again with the club.”

“To launch the new identity, we used a campaign that encouraged support for the new look and feel in both players and fans. The launch of the new identity was the start of a movement that allowed us to increase a sense of belonging for the fans and the players. This synergy amongst the fans was reflected on the players and has led to a positive change.”



Results

And undoubtedly the best change possible – **Anadolu Efes won the BSL for the first time in ten years.** In the previous 2017/18 season, Efes finished third in the league and 16th (last place) in the EuroLeague. In the 2018/19 season (following the rebrand), Efes won the BSL and reached its first EuroLeague Final Four in 19 years, and first ever final.

Besides the win, the new identity kicked off a great transformation for the club. There was a reinvigorated sense of support which has been shown through an increase in ticket and merchandise sales, sponsorship revenue and interest amongst potential new sponsors.

PERFORMANCE VS OBJECTIVES

1. Make the club fit for a digital world to enable more mutually beneficial partnerships

The old club badge was hard to reproduce as it was text-heavy. Our new identity is simple bold, graphic and contemporary. The Flaming Star was designed to be extracted from the badge and cropped to make abstract graphic prints, allowing for multiple ways in which the brand can live and breathe online and off. We have given AESK a new distinctive asset – building on stakeholders' recall of the previous star but have given it relevance – providing a mental shortcut to reinforce the brand's values and keep them front of mind.

Before the rebrand, merchandise was only sold in the arena at game time. The new brand positioning to reflect the club's vision of developing youth basketball in Turkey attracted a Turkish partner with the same target audience – sportswear manufacturer and retailer Sportive. This partnership opened up new channels to market through its online and physical stores and merchandise sales rose from 370 units to 3,000 units – a mutually beneficial increase of 711%. Merchandise sales turnover also rose by 833%. But more importantly, these sales were before the season had ended and AESK had won the league, therefore sales were not directly boosted because of the win.

Our positioning work on the team's why instead of the what, alongside the additional scope for the flame to live and breathe outside of the logo, also opened up new merchandising opportunities such as lifestyle-based t-shirts and clothing which were not previously produced.

Additionally, there has been increased engagement on social media due to the brand being designed for digital channels – the identity now works on mobile making fans want to interact with it more on the go. AESK's average number of followers across all social media has increased by +22%, but the +173% growth on Instagram in particular is due to much more visually engaging content – sparked from the rebrand and #WhereIStand activity. Anadolu Efes is definitely now a digital first brand.

Key Social Channels	August 2018	November 2020	% Change
Instagram	47,983	131,217	+173%
Twitter	152,033	191,747	+26%

Results

PERFORMANCE VS OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

2. Encourage fans to re-engage with the team by doubling average attendance rates

In the season prior to the rebrand, AESK's average attendance was 2,337 – just 14% of the stadium's capacity. Obviously the club wanted the arena to be full, but given this stretch target, annual capacity milestones were set over the three years following the rebrand – with Y1 being to approximately double capacity to 30%.

In the season following the rebrand, average attendance rose to 5,149 – an increase of 120% and a seating capacity of 32% – despite a 10% increase in ticket price. Even with this price increase, a +254% increase in ticket sales revenue and a +238% increase in season ticket sales means it's clear that fans are re-engaging with the team.

Average attendance figures are not published for the Turkish league, but to put this into the wider context of the EuroLeague, in the two years prior to Anadolu Efes' rebrand, the EuroLeague saw a total increase in average attendance of +19.7% whereas Anadolu Efes attendance figures dropped by -18.1%.

In contrast, in the year post rebrand, Anadolu's +120% increase in average attendance figures way surpassed the -5.7% decline in the EuroLeague's figures, showing just how much of a stretch target that was.

	2015/16 Pre-rebrand		2016/17 Pre-rebrand		2017/18 Pre-rebrand		2018/19 Post-rebrand	
	Fig %	chgYOY	Fig %	chgYOY	Fig %	chgYOY	Fig %	chgYOY
AESK Average Attendance	2,855	n/a	3,136	+9.8	2,337	-25.5	5,149	+120
TOTAL % change in 2 years before rebrand						-18,1		
EuroLeague Average Attendance	7,332	n/a	8,472	+15.5	8,780	+3.6	8,282	-5.7
TOTAL % change in 2 years before rebrand						+19,7		

Figures from EuroLeague data (Wikipedia)

3. Make the club a more attractive proposition to sponsors, thereby increasing overall sponsorship by 10%

The rebrand brought the club and the identity into the modern era, while encapsulating and building on its strong heritage, and it positioned the club as forward-facing and worthy of investment. Through the new branding, sponsors have found it easier to align core values to develop an appropriate, more meaningful and potentially lucrative partnership.

And as a result, following the rebrand, the number of sponsorship partners increased by 100% and sponsorship revenue increased by +11%.

Results

PERFORMANCE VS OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

Some of the new signed sponsors are:

- Global male grooming brand Old Spice
- Turkish sports betting site Bilyoner (3yr shirt deal)
- Turkish airline Corendon Airlines
- Konix – a major player in gaming accessories
- Istanbul Airport's IGA Pass
- Migros – one of Turkey's largest supermarket chains

SCALE OF EFFECT & BREADTH OF IMPACT

It's clear that the new branding has had the biggest direct influence on the fans, with attendance figures and social media engagement both increasing. But the club clearly acknowledges its wider role:

"A transformation has begun with the new identity. As a result of this transformation, the club, which has been harking back to its former glories recently, has become successful with the synergy of fans and team harmony that it has created. We found the opportunity to see this added value more clearly at the end of the first year. The increase in ticket and licensed product sales, the inclusion of new sponsors and the fact that potential sponsorships are getting more interested day-by-day is an indication of how successful the rebrand has been."

Utku Yusuf Özciğer

-Digital Media and Marketing Supervisor, AESK

While we're not claiming that the new club brand was solely responsible for Anadolu Efes winning the league for the first time in ten years, it definitely helped to galvanise a sense of team and belonging amongst the fans, which translated to the players and management.

And this is something that has been documented before by other sports teams, but specifically in basketball with the Toronto Raptors club. Toronto Raptors are the only NBA team outside the US, so they wanted to unite their fans around a singular notion of 'being Canadian'. Positioning the team around 'We the North' revitalised a country to rally around the team and it's recognised as bringing the Raptors to the 2019 NBA Finals. The rebrand also had an impact on the club's youth development program. For several years, AESK has participated in the EuroLeague's 'One Team' social responsibility program which uses the power of basketball to teach valuable life lessons and give important opportunities to disadvantaged people at risk of social exclusion.

The repositioning work led to reviewing areas of the development program and, in collaboration with psychologists and physiotherapists, the club devised and delivered a revised program aimed at young athletes with disabilities to assist their personal development and integration into the community. The 2018/19 season project was deemed the best from over 40 EuroLeague and EuroCup projects and won the EuroLeague Gold Award. And as such, Anadolu Efes made history as the first Turkish club to win this award.

Results

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Did average attendance figures increase due to changes in the team?

It's true that several of the players changed in the 2018/19 season, but there was only one big name signing; US-born Shane Larkin. We can't argue that this won't have had an impact on attendance with fans wanting to see the new signing, however, this would not have caused attendance rates to more than double. Teams regularly change their line up at the start of a season and, in that respect, 2018/19 was no different.

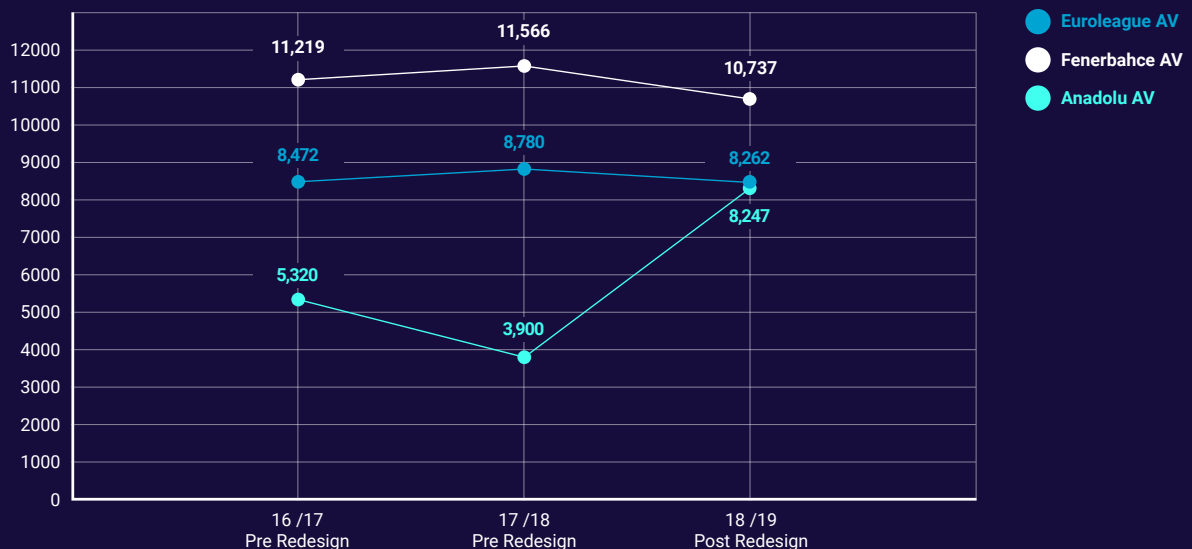
The new branding and launch campaign were the catalysts to get people to remember why Anadolu Efes is great and worthy of their support.

Did average attendance figures increase because of the popularity of the EuroLeague?

The attendance figures show that actually while Anadolu Efes' increased by +120%, the EuroLeague actually took a dip in the season after the rebrand. You could argue that this might be a cumulation effect from previous years, but with two year growth for the EuroLeague at +19.7% the additional attendance far surpasses any expected growth in line with the EuroLeague.

Additionally, if you look at Anadolu Efes' average attendance in EuroLeague games, in the season following the rebrand, attendance increased by +111% (compared to Fenerbahçe's -7.2%), meaning that the drop in average attendance figures for the EuroLeague would have been bigger if it hadn't have been for Anadolu's figures.

Average Attendance in the Euroleague
(by club)



Finally, in 2019, representatives of the EuroLeague and 18 domestic leagues met to review progress of the EuroLeague and how initiatives could be used to strengthen domestic competitions. The review highlighted improvements in ticket sales revenues with gate receipts rising by +7.3% through the first half of the season. Anadolu Efes saw increases way in excess of this at +254%.

Results

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS (CONTINUED)

Did attendance figures increase because the team was doing well?

It's true that if the team is performing well, people will be more likely to cheer them on and feel part of the success. However, as already outlined, the rebrand played a huge role in galvanising fan support. And although getting to the EuroLeague final would have boosted the average attendance, the key thing is that both the team and the fans had been boosted by the new club identity and sense of belonging that it brought to them.

Was sponsorship influenced by changes in ownership, management or sales team?

There were absolutely no changes in personnel here. The existing sales team were essentially provided with a succinct and compelling elevator pitch through the rebrand, and got behind their club. Sponsors were influenced by the clarity and purpose now showcased within Anadolu Efes' brand positioning and they could more easily align their brand with the club.

Was there any other marketing activity to influence fans and sponsors?

The new identity launched in August 2018 with the #BenimYerimBurası campaign as part of its launch, but no other activity was carried out. The social media campaign had an estimated reach of 5m.

Was the ticket price increase responsible for the increase in ticket revenue?

Ticket revenue increased by +238% where ticket prices increased by 10%, so would not have had a significant impact – if anything the price increase would have been more reason not to purchase tickets. Even though the AESK's ticket prices are above average in the BSL, they are still on a par with the major clubs, including Fenerbahçe.

Did the team win the league because they were offered improved incentives or pay?

The chemistry of the new team helped Anadolu Efes to win the league. However, from the point of view of the fans; it was a new season, a new brand and a renewed motivation, which indirectly helped the team to win the games and the league.

The club did not offer any additional incentives to the players. Instead, the fans' reaction to the new identity reminded the players to take more responsibility and push harder. The combination of players and fans working together led to success.

References & sources of
information - Client data - EuroLeague
data - Sports Business - Get Upper Hand

