

SETTING UP IMMIGRANT BUSINESS IN MALAYSIA

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Synopsis: The top priority of the survey was to examine the success of a new business as a foreigner in remote area. The uniqueness of this restaurant was, it offered premium quality Bangladeshi flavoured cuisines which were not only admired by the local people but also many foreigners from different countries repeatedly visited the restaurant. The growth of restaurant Taufeeq Bistro was positive and profitable.

People who lived surrounded community started visiting the restaurant and the business of Taufeeq Bistro had grown rapidly. The return on investment was yet to collect fully, however the restaurant would be able to generate profit on its expenses to prepare foods. Location of Taufeeq Bistro was the crucial for its success. The restaurant is just around 8 miles away from the Northern University of Malaysia campus and situated within highly populated residential area. Thus, it was easy to penetrate the local, migrated and international community, since the university hosted lots of foreign students and faculties. From the survey, it can be said that foreigners contributed around 20% of the restaurant's profit. Within a year of establishment, the owner of Taufeeq Bistro made this decision to extend, but according to him, it was needed for the continuous growth for his previous restaurant, since the new building was covering him little from the front.

Operating a restaurant successfully is a major challenge. One of the most significant success factors in the restaurant business is the location. If we look into the case of Taufeeq Bistro (Mr. Obaidullah), he was doing extremely well in the road side food stall in Paya Terubong, Penang. His business maintenance costs were immensely low. Business setting up cost was visibly lesser than Changlun. He hired fewer employees that required less labor cost. However, he earned a very high profit. But, we saw it's not always our wish to relocate, sometimes it's the policy that pushed us to decide.

1. Introduction

It's a muslim country but a completely different one in terms of history, significant parts of the culture, language and the common understanding that guides business contracts. These are some of the thoughts of any foreigner from a Muslim country as he contemplates opening a restaurant in Malaysia.---how does one cope with all the challenges---business Visa, labour laws, health codes, menus, supplies, cooking, service, furniture, location, land rental versus purchase and so on. These are some of the questions that must be thought of, and the answers found, as the decision to open and operate are finalised. They are particularly acute as he has had to move from a larger city, Penang, and chosen to relocate in Changlun.

a) Taufeeq Bistro is a new restaurant serving Bangladeshi/Indian/Arab food located in Changlun, where it moved about two years ago. It faces competition from restaurants inside campus and from local Malay food. How to position itself in a new location so as to able to maximise profits is the problem facing the owner, Mr. Md. Obaidullah. The problem is acute because he also had a restaurant earlier in Penang which did not make profits and so he had to close it down.

b) Urban myth has it that restaurants fail easily---about 90 to 95% in the first year---but this has not been sustained by detailed studies in the USA. Failures range from 25% to 35% in a year. But this does not mean that the ten rules that new business have to follow do not apply: The most common reasons why failure rates increase at the beginning of a business :<http://possector.com/management/restaurant-failure>

- Low start-up capital
- Poor knowledge about competition
- Wrong Location
- Poor restaurant promotion
- Inconstant offer
- The bad partnerships relations
- Poor inventory and staff management
- The lack of original ideas

In the USA, the greatest danger is starting up with inadequate capital and being forced into compromising with quality thereafter. It will be interesting to see how far the same features apply in Malaysia and whether foreigners are especially prone to some of them.

c) Profits of course depend upon revenues and costs, with revenues based on demand and supply largely determining costs. Demand for Indian/Arab food must have two components: a steady demand based upon those who already have a taste for Indian/Arab

food and a growing demand for those who will come to acquire the taste and enjoy Indian/Arab food. Let us call these the foreign and local components respectively. As foreigners will be the base demand this requires a location close to them, but how close? And if it is too close to the foreigners, how will the locals ever get to acquire a taste? Solving the question of location is the first issue for a restaurant. Proximity to demand has to be solved in conjunction with land price, rental rates and availability of labor.

d) Product differentiation requires a niche for Indian/Arab food, but then it has to be cooked so as to be distinctive. Arabs prefer bread to rice, the opposite is true of the Malays. While the resident foreign population is substantial---several thousand---this is not a proper location because the students are mostly undergrads who cannot afford cars and therefore are unable to come outside campus. It is only the graduate students who have more funding to buy cars and drive out. Earlier experience in AS showed him that advertisements through leaflets at Tesco and MyDin do attract some Malay customers but they are only occasional ones. A steady customer base needs to be built.

Malaysia is one of the main business and financial centres in the Asia-Pacific region. Accounting is playing an important role in the growth of the corporate sector and has the potential to spearhead the development of capital market in Malaysia (Susela, 1999). The Malaysian government has attracted substantial foreign direct investment and participation in the securities markets and this has increased significantly in the last 30 years. While there is an abundance of studies on the effect of immigrants on the labor market outcomes of natives, 4 much less is known about their firm-level effects. Recently some studies have emphasized mechanisms that would allow the absorption of immigrants within firms without a negative wage impact.

Food is one of the key rudiments of culture and presents possibilities for dissemination of numerous cultural contents (Kim et al. 2016). Nyonya cuisine, also called as Peranakan cuisine is the product of cultural borrowing and cultural innovation through exposure to local sources of food such as ingredients and principles of food preparation which are non-Chinese (Tan, 2001).

The inventive Peranakans altered the traditional Chinese food brought from China due to the limited main ingredients and to suit the local palates. By also mingling the dissimilar cooking methods, they created the exotic Nyonya cuisine is one of the most enduring components of their distinctive culture. The Peranakans are localized Chinese, a distinct ethnic group with its own unique customs developed from the blending of Malaysian

and Chinese cultures (Hall, 2013). The arbitrary term is an Indonesian/Malay word with multiple meanings.

The intermarriages between the immigrants and indigenous women were pivotal during the early expansion of the unique culture. Therefore, the social phenomenon is not a biological factor of 'mixed blood' (Clammer, 2000). It is important to note that the Peranakans today are identified by virtue of their culture and self-identification and not because they are of mixed blood. The intermarriages lasted for basically one generation and for hundreds of years, the Peranakans preferred endogamous marriage whereby they married exclusively amongst their own (Lee, 2008).

2. Background of the Organisation

It was 2004, Mr. Md. Obaidullah immigrated to Malaysia searching for a better life and secure future. He is a Bangladeshi citizen who came to Malaysia with Guru visa (known as a visa for Islamic school teacher). He explained the Guru visa is for prospective teachers who wish to teach at Madrasah (Islamic school) in Malaysia, however, they needed to obtain enough qualification; such as, Dawrah Hadith, Hifzul Quran and other core Islamic education that also examines by the related authority before granting the visa. The basic salary of him was RM 1200, a round ticket annually and some occasional income as Hadiyah or gift during the month of Ramadan.

He first arrived in Kuala Lumpur (KL), the capital city of Malaysia and joined in a Madrasah to teach the Holy Quran to its students. After few years of residing in KL he moved to Alor Setar, the capital of the state of Kedah to teach at another Madrasah for a year. Then he moved to Penang and resided there for quite a longer period. He was using same visa status during his relocation in different places for living and found similar job. By the time passed, he found ways to be blended with the local community as a teacher and started learning the local language.

His social orientation with local community presented him as a good person to others, thus, one of his colleagues brought to him a proposal to get married with a lady from Penang. With the family's willingness in 2009, the couple started their new life together. Sooner after, he realized family life requires more money to survive, but his salary from teaching at Madrasah was less than requisite. Though his wife also contributed in household income, yet the couple faced a struggling life. As a result, he started looking for other possible opportunities.

Generally, foreign workers in Malaysia like him are not allowed to involve in any formal income generating activities except the work has permitted by the visa status s/he holds, or without the formal and written approval by the sponsored employer. However, the case of his has changed since his marriage with a Malaysian citizen. As a spouse of local citizen, he had options to work extra in different forms and enhance his household income, but taking the right decision was not easy for him. He consulted with many peoples whereby some advised him to start a business. Perhaps he liked the idea of new setup a business, but doing that in real with zero experience of business was simply unpredictable for him. However, he began saving money from his job.

Today, he is the owner of a mixed-cuisine restaurant named Taufeeq Bistro. The restaurant is located in Changlun, a suburb town of the state of Kedah, Malaysia and about 7 miles away from Malaysia-Thailand land border and 8 miles away from UUM. The restaurant is serving a variety of foods to both local and international communities living in this area. But his journey through the years was not smooth and successful as today. The major reason behind the potential difficulties was his citizenship.

3. Setting up Business as a Foreigner and Expansion of Business

Mr. Md. Obaidullah was motivated for his new business and he was looking around for potential scope. He used to visit places in Penang where a large number of Bangladeshi workers live or gather in their weekend. Bukit Jambur in Penang is, among other spots where he found not only Bangladeshis, but also many others nationalities' people usually visit both occasionally and repeatedly. The reasons behind the attractiveness of this place are big factories where foreign labours work and available shops that give them access to their home countries' products.

As a citizen of a different country, he easily understand the feelings and demands of home countries' products. It is an emotional and psychological attachment rather than the market demand. Therefore, he decided to open up his own shop. The guy helped him to get necessary products and items on due amount from the suppliers. He considered that a huge support for newbies in the business.

After facing all those obstacles, he managed to kick up his first business a Mini Market in Bukit Jambul, Penang. He neither took any loans from formal or informal financial intermediaries, nor any financial supports from family-friends or others. Sooner later, he realized the business portfolio was getting stronger and the return on investment also

enhanced, but it required more time. Therefore, he left his teaching job at Madrashah and concentrated on his business. The investment cost of the Mini Market was as per the table 1.

Table 1: Cost of investment for the Mini Market

	Cash Investment (Savings)	Purchase of Products (A/C payable)	Total
	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)
Mini Market	30,000	87,000	117,000

Bukit Jambul is a place where many Bangladeshis, Nepaless, Indonesian and Indian workers often visit in both working days and weekends. Besides various departmental stores, there were a number of restaurants owned by Bangladeshi businessman that served food items cooked by Bangladeshi chefs which logically different in taste. Bangladeshi cuisines are prepared through a good mixture of various spices and salt that eventually finish as flavoured and spicy dishes. The demand of those different tasted food items was very high.

As a result, he got inspired to start a food stall since he also had the same access to the resources like other Bangladeshi restaurant owners. That motivation pushed him to rent a small extension besides the Mini Market, which he used to prepare basic foods for regular and occasional customers. Most of the inventories needed to prepare food items were also supplied by his Mini Market. Within a few months, the small food stall showed more profits than the Mini Market. Thus, he realized the food business was more profitable and his competitive advantage was the ability to prepare different tasted foods.

In addition to this, he decided for further expansion of his food business and he started looking for the most appropriate location. Subsequently, he found a new location in Relau, an industrial area of Penang which was just 2-3 miles away from his Mini Market in Bukit Jambul. He quickly rented a shop on the ground floor of a multi storied residential building and established a full fledged restaurant. The main reason of opening restaurant at this location was prospective customers. Since Relau is an industrial area and a large number of factories situated here, thus many foreign workers lived in surrounding areas.

His restaurant was earning positive, but by the time passed more and more people started taking foods on the account payable basis. It should not be problematic if he managed to get back all accounts receivable. But the default rate was increasing and the restaurant profit was decreasing. Among the other, the most common reason of default was relocation of workers. A majority of the workers often change their place based on the working site and

some went back to their country. Though people who still lived there did not repay the full amount, whereby they paid a partial and continue extending the account payable ledger balance.

Another bad experience of him faced at his restaurant in Relau. His shop position was on the ground floor of a residential building and the back side he set up the kitchen. He putted the exos fan on the top of the wall near to the stoves that vacuum hot air created by cooking. Unfortunately, there was a parking area on the other side of the wall. Therefore, vehicle parked in that spot sometimes got dirty due to the exos fan. However, he gave strict instruction to his employees to clean up any vehicle parked there if that got dirty.

One day someone missed the instruction and a Malaysian guy found his car got dirty that made him extremely angry. The guy came to the restaurant and bullied on restaurant workers. The situation went out of control, eventually the guy broke down the exos fan and some other equipment of the restaurant. He was absent on the spot during the wasting, thus his employees called him to come up urgently. He, along with his wife reached there rapidly and found the devastating stuffs on the ground. It was very unfortunate and unlikely happened situation.

However, the incident was unacceptable, though he wanted to avoid it, but his wife wanted to bring the guy to justice since he took the law and order in his own hand. They called the guy and talked each other. Later it solved peacefully without involving any law enforcement authority. But the concluding scenario could be different for a person who had not married with local citizen. Locality gave stronger legitimacy, power to a person compared to a foreigner. That is why he felt less confident to combat with a local citizen, but his wife didn't.

Although it was peacefully settled, but he did not want to continue there, thus he was looking for another place to move. One day he was hanging around and stop by a suburb named Paya Terubong. There he found few road side food stalls near to the police quarter who was selling homemade food items in really comfortable ways. It attracted him deeply. He searched for a stall and he found a lady who was the wife of a police officer, she owned a position there. He talked with the lady and finalized the stall for immediate operation. The investment amount has presented in table 2 bellow.

Table 2: Cost of investment for the food stall in PayaTerubong

	Deposit	Rent	Renovation	Furnitures	Total
	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)
Food stall	300	300	1200	200	2000

After basic renovation and setting up furnitures (transported from other restaurant) he started his food stall in Paya Terubong as a temporary basis in late 2011. This place was around 5-6 miles away from Bukit Jambul and 2-3 miles from Relau. He instructed workers at Relau restaurant to prepare Roti Chanai and Dal and brought those to Paya Terubong stall to sell. Primarily, he sent prepared foods and 1-2 workers to sell in the morning. The foods were appreciated by the communities and the demand increased dramatically within a very short period of time.

He increased his focus on the Paya Terubong food stall. He extended the sitting areas, rose workers from 2 to 5 and also enlarged food items. He set up a kitchen and started making food there. Though, it was his half day business from early morning to noon, the portfolio showed a sharp increase in revenue. Within few months he collected his return on investment and the food stall generated more profit than Mini Market, food stall beside Mini Market and restaurant in Relau. The main reason was lower expenses compare to other business in Bukit Jambul and Relau.

On one hand, He got more profit from less expenses in Paya Terubong, on the other hand, he was gaining less profit from high cost plus mental stress. Therefore, he decided to shut down his previous business in Bukit Jambul and Relau. Consequently, he sold out the Mini Market and a food stall extension at RM 72,000 and the restaurant in Relau at RM 15,000. Thereafter, he fully looked after his food stall in Paya Terubong and extend its operation hours from half day to full day.

He successfully did 4 years business on road side food stall until the official notice came out to remove every stall from there. At the beginning, it was loose, police came and fine RM 15 per day to people who did not remove their stall and continue opened. But a few days later, they came and demolished every road side stall that did not follow the legal notice. As a result, he needed to relocate his restaurant business to somewhere else. Since he grew up well and experienced, he was looking for sustainable business environment and a permanent location for his prospective restaurant business.

3.1 Relocation and Reformulation

Mr. Obaidullah wanted a fruitful relocation for this future restaurant. At this stage, he took more professional and formal ways to establish his restaurant. He first contacted within his network to get information regarding an appropriate location. Secondly, he registered a company “TBP Barakah Sdn Bhd” at Companies Commission of Malaysia or Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia (SSM) under his spouse name. He spent RM 11,000 to register the company. He is one of the two Board of Director at the company. He also employed an audit firm from Penang for annual auditing and help him in taxation purpose.

Suddenly one day he received a call from one of his old friend who has a restaurant within the campus of the Northern University of Malaysia. The university is located in Sintok which is about 7 miles away from Changlun and nearly 32 miles from Alor Setar. He found it interesting since he already knew the area due to his previous visit. Hence, he immediately came to see his friends. The guy offered him a place beside his restaurant within the university campus, but the position was not permitted to open another restaurant.

However, he liked the offer due to very low cost of rent and deposit. Since he could not able to open a restaurant, he intended to start a laundry shop. After waiting long for water line he finally managed to run his laundry shop. But it was not his ultimate business plan. Therefore, he was continue searching a good location to relocate his restaurant. One day he was on the way back to Penang and luckily he noticed few newly constructed shops waited to be rented out in Changlun. The location was so attractive to him due to the large parking facility, roadside area and easily accessible.

He contacted to the landlord and made the further process to rent a big shop for his restaurant. He hired employees from the local community and transported some kitchen equipment's, fridges and furniture's from his Penang food stall. Within 6 months of opening the laundry shop he launched his new restaurant in Changlun on 1st May, 2015 and named it Taufeeq Bistro. But later he left the laundry shop. The shop he rented for the restaurant was newly constructed premises, thus he needed to expense a lot of renovation and side construction costs. The investment cost was as per the table 3.

Table 3: Cost of investment in the Taufeeq Bistro

Deposit	Rent	Renovation	Furniture and Equipment	Total
(RM)	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)

Taufeeq Bistro	3,500	1,000	40,000	15,000	69,500
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Besides his investment for buying new furniture and equipment he also transported some RM 15,000 valued items from his previous shop in Penang that cost him RM 1200 as transportation expense. Besides that he had to construct a prayer room and restroom, extended roof that covered little courtyard and moulded the floor. Though it was a really big initiative by him, who started his business career in a foreign country with nothing, but his business showed a positive momentum over the years. Similarly, the return from the sale at Taufeeq Bistro was positive so far, except a month when the restaurant faced RM 250 loss.

3.2 Growing the Business of Taufeeq Bistro

People who live surrounded community started visiting the restaurant and the business of Taufeeq Bistro has grown rapidly. The return on investment was yet to collect fully, however the restaurant able to generate profit on its expenses to prepare foods. Location of Taufeeq Bistro was the crucial for its success. The restaurant is just around 8 miles away from the Norther University of Malaysia campus and situated within highly populated residential area. Thus, it was easy to penetrate the local, migrated and international community, since the university hosted lots of foreign students and faculties. Foreigners are contributing 20% of the restaurant's profit.

On the other hand, the location he has chosen was not very popular to food lovers and also not well developed. While the Taufeeq Bistro was getting a desired place among people to hang out and chitchat, the nearby land owners also focused to develop their premises and build shop lots. The construction of new shops was quite fast and he found a good piece of shop lot to extend his restaurant. This extension changed the outlook of Taufeeq Bistro. With this extension he managed to set up an outdoor sitting area, a large prayer room, large parking lot and an additional restroom. Customers also focused this sudden change and their curiosity brought them in. However, it also cost him quite a lot, which has presented in table 4.

Table 4: Cost of extension in the Taufeeq Bistro

	Deposit	Rent	Renovation	Furniture's and Equipment's	Total
Taufeeq Bistro	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)	(RM)
	4,000	1,500	9,000	-	14,500

Within a year of establishment he made this decision to extend, but according to him, it was needed for the continuous growth for his previous restaurant, since the new building was covering him little from the front. Apart from that, he also spent RM 7,000 to put tiles on the floor, RM 4,000 to brought new refrigerator and lump sum amount for other renovation and maintenance purposes. The steps have taken by him after relocating from Penang to Changlun for establishing Taufeeq Bistro was timely and appropriate. That gives a picture of an experienced entrepreneur.

Besides business strategies, the foods offered by the restaurant are scrumptious and desirable. The uniqueness of this restaurant is, it offers premium quality Bangladeshi flavoured cuisines. Which are not only admired by the local people, but also many foreigners from different countries repeatedly visited the restaurant. However, with the increasing demand he recently also added local and Thai cuisines. The growth of Taufiq Bistro is positive and profitable. According to him, within 1.5 years of establishment he managed to collect his investment back. Even the extension and other renovation took place later were from the profit of the restaurant.

3.3 Relocation: Challenges or Opportunities

Operating a restaurant successfully is a major challenge. One of the most significant success factor in the restaurant business is the location. If we look into the case of him, he was doing extremely well in the road side food stall in Paya Terubong, Penang. His business maintenance costs were immensely low. Business setting up cost was visibly lesser than Changlun. He hired less employees that required less labour cost. However, he earned a very high profit. But, we saw it's not always our wish to relocate, sometimes it's the policy that pushed us to decide.

If he had options not to move from his Paya Terubong food stall, he would do that. Because he was getting well what he wanted to get as a business owner. However, he faced the issue of sustainability. He chose a location which was economically profitable, but logically unsustainable. Government policy did not allow him to continue a road side food stall where he wanted in Paya Terubong. However, he still had plenty of options to relocate within Penang, since he had two shops previously in this well-known big city.

But, he chose to relocate about 100 miles away in a suburb of Changlun town. According to him, he has multiple reason behind this relocation. Firstly, if he wanted to relocate within Penang he had to spend a higher amount than he spent in Changlun. Penang is a big and expensive city compare to Changlun. The cost of rent, labour, maintenance, etc.

everything are much higher in Penang. As a result, one of the prime reasons for relocation was to reduce the cost of the restaurant operations.

Secondly, he must need to find a sustainable business location. The location which is legally permitted to conduct restaurant business, since he has experienced how sudden changes in the government and administrative policy affect business operation, even a complete halt. Therefore, the relocation of his food business was must. Apart from that, he also wanted to move somewhere, where religious environment within the community would be preferable for Muslims. He explained that Penang is a less Muslims oriented place, whereby he preferred the opposite environment for his kids' future. The brief comparison has presented in the table 5 below.

Table 5: Daily Transactions Summary

Description	PayaTerubong	Changlun
	(RM)	(RM)
Workers work	5	8
Workers' wages	300	320
Inventories used	400-500	600-700
Utilities	15	44
Total	715-815	964-1,064
Sale	950-1,050	1,250-1300
Profit	135-335	186-336

Moreover, Changlun and its surrounding areas were known to him. While he decided to relocate and was looking for a new place, he found it could be a new, but profitable market for him if he managed to penetrate nicely. He looked nearby food shops around the Changlun town, but there was no one who could offer the same quality and tasted cuisines. A complete competitive advantage in the business term, indeed. However, the relocation decision and reformulation as Taufeeq Bitro found so far profitable. The restaurant has passed 1.5 years successfully and collected back its investment with profit.

Although it is not logically significant to compare between his road side food stall in Penang and Taufeeq Bistro in Changlun, however, we took a step to know how it actually differs. We compare the daily expenses, sales and average profit he earned in both of his food business. However, the table 5 just presented an average of daily transactions, though it

varies based on many factors and every day is not same profitable. But, according to him, his business is now profitable and he earned back his investments. He said that his average profit from Taufeeq Bistro is between RM 3000-4000 per month. On the other hand, his profit in the Paya Terobong food stall was higher than this, but he is satisfied with his relocation decision and the portfolio of Taufeeq Bistro. He believed it was his most matured decision and the benefits he is enjoying every day.

4. Conclusion

The constructed data platform provides new statistics regarding the patterns of business formation by immigrant entrepreneurs and the medium-term success of those businesses. Beyond immigrant shares of entrepreneurs, rates of entry are more difficult to reconcile due to many alternatives for both the numerator (who is an entrepreneur?) and the denominator (what population are we comparing this to? It would be helpful to build a more solid research foundation for quantifying the magnitudes of immigrant contributions to the creation of new entrepreneurial firms in business management. A better understanding of how the existing immigrants in the United States can more effectively engage in starting new businesses requires careful study of the choices and policy constraints faced by immigrants in their decisions to build and grow new firms versus being workers in a larger corporation.

While the current study provides some descriptive analyses for a broader set of geographic areas, a more-detailed analysis of the impact of immigrant entrepreneurship on local job growth and economic development is warranted. It would be useful to build on this past work to understand the specific case of immigrant entrepreneurship. Many cities and local areas are attempting to leverage immigrant entrepreneurship directly, and we need to know more about the potential efficiency of such efforts and how any stimulus actually accrues. Finally, Mr. Obaidullah learned how to deal with high cost during his entrepreneurial journey using shifting method to minimize labour cost.

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