

The Artisan Entrepreneurial Spirit of Redland Family Business

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Prologue

A gentle drizzle tapped against the windowpane, signaling the end of a long, hot summer. The dusk sky stretched across the horizon, painting the evening in deep gold and indigo. Mr. Syafie Shukery sat by the window, his fingers curled around a warm cup of coffee, enjoying the quiet. However, his mind was far from calm. The dream of owning his own bakery had always been on his mind, but now, it was no longer just a dream—it had to become a reality.

The steam curling into the air like the warmth of a freshly baked loaf, he let out a breath and set down his cup. His hands, which were frequently covered in flour, had spent years honing the art; he knows he had excellent cooking and baking skills. Courage was what he needed now. He had already left his job at the Hotel Perdana, Kota Bharu, Kelantan and finding another was out of the question. There was no turning back. His skills, his passion, and his years of experience—all of them had to be poured into this one endeavor. Failure was not an option. But having a great product was not enough. He had seen many skilled bakers struggle, not because their pastries weren't delicious, but because no one knew about them.

"The real challenge isn't the baking—it's the marketing," he muttered to himself.

He exhaled, putting down his cup. If he wants his bakery to thrive, he needs a marketing strategy. How will he get people to see his creations? How can he make his brand stand out in an industry flooded with options? Marketing isn't just an option; it's key to keeping his business going, without it, even the best pastries won't get noticed.

The Journey of Mr. Syafei: From Passion to Pastries

Mr. Muhamad Syafei bin Muhamad Shukery is an entrepreneur with a diverse background. Since childhood, Syafie Shukery was surrounded by the rich aromas of his mother's home-cooked meals, a passionate cook who would often call him over, handing him a spoon to stir a simmering pot or letting him shape the dough with his floured little hands.

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Disclaimer

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What started as a hobby of cooking in the kitchen soon turned into an unwavering passion. He learned to distinguish flavors, understand textures, and master the delicate balance of various ingredients. Every meal was a lesson, every mistake a new discovery. Little did he know, those early days spent at his mother's side would lay the foundation for his journey as an entrepreneur—where food would not only be a source of comfort but also a path to success.

“Cooking is not just about following a recipe, it has to have a soul,” his mother said one day. Those words stuck in Mr. Shafi's memory.

As a teenager, his interest grew. He loved watching cooking shows, especially pastry shows, and often tried new recipes, and occasionally surprised his family with his cooking abilities. Now, he realizes that cooking is not just a hobby—it is his passion. However, he knows one thing: to succeed in this field, not only cooking skills are important, but also the related business knowledge and cooking skills. Then, Mr. Syafie continued his diploma in culinary at Management and Science University (MSU) Kota Bharu, Kelantan and then started working and gaining experience in the pastry and cake field at Hotel Perdana, Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

For Mr. Syafie, commitment is not just a word, it is a way of life. His unwavering dedication to his craft has not gone unnoticed, earning him accolades such as the No-Leave Employee Award and the Full Attendance Award. While others may see this as a simple workplace recognition, to him, it is a symbol of his relentless pursuit of excellence. Behind his professional achievements, Syafie finds inspiration in pastry. He spends hours engrossed in popular baking shows, studying the intricate details of fondant work and the art of creating edible masterpieces. Every swirl of frosting, every delicate sugar flower fuels his passion, reminding him that creativity knows no bounds.

While working in Perdana Hotel, the world of business fascinated Mr. Syafie; with a gastronomic interest, complementing his income, he plunged into a small restaurant by the side of the road. The nasi lemak aroma wafting through the breeze in the mornings, comforting heat of freshly baked roti canai, delectable bowls of bakso—these treats made his little eatery famous among locals. Operating this venture was not easy. A full-time job coupled with managing a business tested his resilience but became the best teacher in its true sense. He learned how to face obstacles, fine-tune his cooking, and the subtle balancing of quality and cost versus customer satisfaction. More than that, it fanned a dream—a dream which, many years later, took him along the route to becoming a chef-entrepreneur.



Figure 1: Mr. Syafie working at Perdana Hotel

This was until Mr. Syafie finally plucked up enough courage, driven by experience and ambition, to open his own bakery business. Finally, on 24 December 2017, Telaga Bunga Enterprise was born—a fruition of his journey, determination, and experiences learned from his previously run small restaurant business. Something initially done as a sideline had fully grown to be an entrepreneurial pursuit and had marked the beginning of his success in the world of culinary.

Business Challenges

It was in 2021, at the time of one of the darkest moments in contemporary history, that Mr. Syafie ventured into entrepreneurship. The Covid-19 pandemic that had swept the globe since the late months of 2019 had brought uncertainty, fear, and economic havoc. In Malaysia, the Movement Control Order (MCO) was enforced to reduce the spread of the disease, bringing life to a standstill. Businesses closed, roads were empty, and the poor, in particular, found it difficult to cope.



Figure 2: Cake Decoration

But amidst this misfortune, Mr. Syafie was not slow to seize a glimpse of opportunity. It had always been his dream to have his own bakery, and he did not let circumstances get in the way of making that dream a reality. With determination in his heart, he set up his bakery business during the pandemic, fully knowing that the path he chose would not be smooth. The obstacles were incessant. The recession reduced customers, supply chain disruptions made ingredients hard to come by, and the stringent lockdown measures stifled business activities. Each day was a trial by fire. Yet, Mr. Syafie would not be defeated. He innovated—discovering new channels to deliver to customers, modifying his business model, and adopting digital technologies to remain in business.

One of his biggest challenges was a shortage of funds. But just when all hope seemed lost, a lifeline was extended his way. The Minister of Women's Development took note of his efforts and generously donated a baking oven, freeing him from financial pressure and giving him the impetus, he needed to continue. With this boost, he cut out unnecessary expenses, trimmed his resources, and remained focused on what he did best—baking.

To stand out in the competitive market, he began offering customized cakes, catering to individual preferences and occasions, even during lockdowns. His patience, adaptability, and unwavering

dedication slowly began to pay off. As Malaysia's vaccination campaign gained momentum towards the end of 2021, business confidence started to return. And with it, Mr. Syafie's bakery business began to take root, proof that even in the darkest hour, passion and persistence could lead to triumph.



Figure 3: Mr. Syafie The Artisan

Family-Oriented Business

The success of Telaga Bunga Bakery lies in the strong orientation between Mr. Syafie and his wife, Mrs. Suriani, whose shared dedication and efficient management. Their ability to balance business acumen with culinary excellence has made Telaga Bunga Bakery a beloved destination in the community, demonstrating the power of a family-oriented approach in creating a successful and enduring enterprise. Mr. Syafie, with his creative and culinary expertise, focuses on product development and customer experience, ensuring that every baked good reflects the bakery's commitment to quality and tradition. Meanwhile, Mrs. Suriani, with her background in business management, handles the logistical and financial aspects of the business, ensuring smooth operations and strategic growth.

The couple's hands-on approach allows them to maintain close control over the quality of their products and the overall customer experience. In order to maintain high standards, Mr. Syafei leads the baking process and innovates new recipes. In addition, he manages supplier relationships, oversees the bakery's front-of-house operations, and creates a welcoming atmosphere for customers. On the other hand, Mrs. Suriani manages the supply chain, finances, and marketing, using both traditional advertising and social media to attract and retain customers. This has guided the bakery's new product lines.

Despite being a small operation, Telaga Bunga Bakery thrives through efficient management practices. The division of responsibilities ensures that every aspect of the business is well-handled, from the back-end operations to customer-facing interactions. Mr. Syafei leverages technology, such as modern baking equipment and inventory management software, to maximize productivity and reduce manual labor. This streamlined approach, coupled with a clear workflow, enables the bakery to operate smoothly even with limited staff.

Telaga Bunga Bakery is more than just a business; it's a shared passion, and their daily operations heavily rely on community and family participation. "Family members and close friends step in to

help during festive seasons,” Mr. Syafei recalled with a smile. From kneading dough to packing freshly baked goods, the bakery was filled with the warmth of their support. In addition to adding a personal touch, this close-knit system strengthens the bakery's ties to the local community, encouraging loyalty and trust.



Figure 4: Telaga Bunga Bakery



Figure 5: Wedding Cake Decoration

The power of viral marketing in Malaysia

Viral marketing is a strategy that encourages individuals to share a marketing content, often through social media, email, or word of mouth, leading to exponential growth in the message's reach. The goal is to generate buzz and widespread awareness quickly by leveraging networks to spread the message organically. The success of viral marketing in Malaysia lies in its ability to connect personally with people, encouraging them to share content within their networks, thereby boosting brand awareness and customer loyalty. This type of marketing is particularly effective due to the country's high internet usage and active presence on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. The interconnectedness of Malaysian communities amplifies the spread of viral content, allowing messages to quickly reach diverse audiences. This approach is not just limited to big brands;

small businesses and entrepreneurs also benefit by achieving significant exposure with minimal advertising budgets.

Leveraging this approach has gained Telaga Bunga, a significant visibility and customer engagement. Mrs. Suriani's strategic use of these platforms, beginning with her personal Instagram account and later expanding to a dedicated business account, allowed the business to connect with a broader audience, far beyond their local area in Kelantan. The couple drew creative inspiration from popular television shows and TikTok, which they used to innovate and differentiate their offerings.

As their cakes were shared and recommended online, the business benefited from a ripple effect of social proof, with friends, family, and satisfied customers amplifying their reach. This case highlights how viral marketing, driven by engaging content and community support, can dramatically enhance a small business's success in Malaysia's digital landscape.

Epilogue

Mr. Syafie sits in his small bakery, the aroma of freshly baked pastries filling the air. He watches a customer bite into a buttery croissant with a satisfied smile. The product is good—no doubt about it, but getting people to buy it is a real challenge. He sighs, rubbing his temples, thinking about how to sell more. Word of mouth isn't enough. If this bakery is to survive, its business needs to reach more consumers. Aina nods and thinks.

"I've seen small businesses go viral on social media. One great video, and suddenly everyone wants their product. Maybe we should try it."

This method works for many others and many people enjoy watching behind-the-scenes videos of how the cake is made, funny moments in the kitchen, and customer reactions. It's free marketing if done right. Mr. Syafie realizes that no matter how delicious the pastries are, if people don't know about them, the business won't grow. Marketing isn't just a tool—it's now the biggest challenge standing between him and success.

Mr. Syafie leans back in his chair, thinking. He always believed in hard work, in perfecting his craft. But in today's business world, that wasn't enough. This was a family legacy as much as a business, he opened his notebook, pen whizzing across paper as he fashioned and began writing down thoughts. Should he invite more participation of the community as they could hold workshops on baking? Or should he supply bakery products to nearby cafés? That might enable them to reach more people. The future of their bakery started to take shape as they brainstormed the strategy.



Figure 6: Varieties Products of Telaga Bunga