

3.10 Case Study of Malaysia¹

3.10.1 Profile of a Woman Entrepreneur



“My name is Nur Asyikin Binti Ismadi. I was born in Kuching, Sarawak, 7th March 1990. I am 27 years old and of Malay ethnicity. I live at Kuching, Sarawak with my parents. I run a small shop here which is called Borneo Box registered under the company Alysa and Soo Company. I obtained my diploma from Polytechnic Kuching majoring in Civil Engineering. After that, I furthered my study for my bachelor at University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) in Politics and Government Studies. I work full time at an Electrical Engineering Company in Kuching as an Assistant Engineer. Prior to this I worked part time by helping my aunt in her business from the years 2005 until 2011. I also worked as a draughtsman at a Civil Engineering Company from 2011 until 2012.”

All my family members started their career in business. My family has inherited the business of salted Terubuk fish from my grandfather. My grandfather was first doing this business and followed by other family members. My grandfather has been in this business for over 20 years. The salted fish business was introduced by my grandfather and only ran on a small scale. Their business is in Kuching which is call Medan Niaga Satok. Direct selling was the only method my family used to run the business until now”.

¹ This case study was conducted by Parveen Kaur, Senior Lecturer, University Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia.

3.10.2 Profile of a Company

Alysa and Soo Company was established on 25th June 2016 and is registered under the District Office. The name of the shop is *Borneo Box*. This shop sells products which originate from Sarawak. This shop has been operating for over one year now. The business operation hours are from 9 am until 8 pm from Monday to Sunday. It is a shareholder business and was set up by Nur Asyikin and Nur Alysa (her partner). Their company's aim is to keep the business in strong position and secure profitable growth. They have two workers including the entrepreneur herself. One is her sibling who is responsible in managing the shop in her absence. Nur Asyikin manages the account and marketing of her company. Besides that, she also processes the salted Terubuk fish and bakes Sarawak layered cake.

The company's vision and mission are;

Vision: Create highly trained and efficient team and good customer service.

Mission:

- Create and cultivate long term relationship with supplier and customer.
- To achieve complete customer satisfaction and improve service continuously.

Alysa and Soo Company uses many methods to reach the customers. First, they sell a variety of products. Besides salted Terubuk fish and layered cake Sarawak, Alysa and Soo also sells other products that can fill the customer's needs. This company uses direct selling and online methods to reach their customers. Direct selling customers come to the shop and buy the product directly. Postage method is also used when customers order online. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Email, Twitter are used extensively to reach a wider range of customers. Hashtags are also used to make it trendy and easy for potential customers to find the products. The benefits of using social media are also that the customer's questions will be replied instantly. The social media is also beneficial as the release of information and feedback are often updated easily. Communication with customers are important in following up positive and negative feedback so that improvement to their service and products are done.

Cost and Profit.

The graph below shows the profit after six months of starting her business. From the graph, the high profit that she obtained was in October and December 2016 which was RM7500 (\$ 1842) due to the school holidays. June shows lowest profit as it was the beginning of her business and people didn't know about her shop yet.

The table below shows the cost when starting her business.

Table 1. Cost Starting the Business

Starting business	Cost
Shop Deposit	Rm6,000 (\$ 1430.28)
Raw Material	RM3,000 (\$ 716)
License	RM500 (\$ 120)
Others	RM500 (\$ 120)
Total	RM10,000 (\$ 2384)

The graph below shows income after 6 months of starting business

Figure 1. Graph Income after Six Months (from June until December 2016)



The products sold in her shop are:

- Salted Terubuk Fish and other fish
- Sarawak Kolok Mee (noodle)
- Handmade Layered Cake Sarawak
- Tabaloi (a mixture of desiccated coconut, sago and sugar)

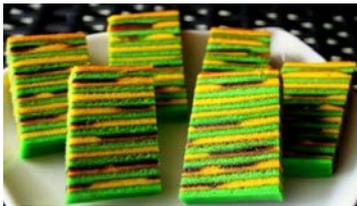
- Sarawak Black Pepper
- Shrimp Paste
- Sarawak Laksa (Curry) Paste
- Salted Fish Egg
- Sarawak Cencaluk (fermented small shrimps or krill)
- Ring Cookies
- Sarawak Songket Fabric (machine embroidery)
- Gambir Sarawak Asli (an astringent extract obtained from the leaves and young shoots of a tropical Asian shrub)

Below are photographs of her products:

- Salted Terubuk Fish and other dry fish



- Handmade layered Cake Sarawak



- Sarawak Laksa Paste



- Sarawak Cencaluk



- Sarawak Songket Fabric

- Sarawak Kolok Mee



- Tabaloi



- Salted Fish Egg



- Gambir Sarawak Asli



- Shrimp Paste



- Ring Cookies



- Sarawak Black pepper



The flow chart on how Nur Asyikin processes the salted fish is shown as below;

- Workers will process by cutting the fish into two



- Workers will clean the fish that has been cut and ferment the fish with sufficient amount of salt



- Finally, let the fish sit in and dry up for two hours Salted fish is ready for sale



3.10.3 Findings

3.10.3.1 Success Factors

Model /Capital

Model/ capital is crucial in any business. Although Nur Asyikin had lack of capital before starting her business, she decided to withdraw and use up all her savings. A pointer here is that it is important to know what your business goals are going to be on to help in the capital investment decision.

Partnership

One of the success factors in starting up this business was because of her partner. Alysa and Soo Co. is actually a shareholder business. Her partner's name is Nur Alysa bt Dillah. She encouraged Nur Asyikin to start the business as she was very interested in doing one. They shared the same goals and vision. She had a skill in baking layered cake while Nur Asyikin had a skill in processing salted Terubuk fish. Due to their skills, this encouraged them in starting the business. They planned their business during their final semester and started right after they graduated. This was helped by their good communication in keeping each other up to date on all things related to their business.

Family Influence

One of her success factors is her family influence. She liked the way her aunt handled her business. After her aunt took over the business from her grandfather, their business became more successful. She admired how she handled the business in term of accounts, promotions and communication with customers. Besides that, in her family all of them are involved in business as their career.

Skills

Nur Asyikin is a good learner in business. She gained her experience in business when she was doing her part-time job with her aunt. She learnt how to have a good communication with the customer, ways to reach the customer and also learn marketing and promotion with and without using ICT.

The Opportunity

Before starting a business, the location of the shop needs to be convenient for the customers. The reason this location at Kota Samarahan is chosen is because if the people nearby want to buy salted Terubuk fish, they have to go to the market that is located in Kuching within 45 minutes from Kota Samarahan. In order to make it easier for the customer to find Salted Terubuk fish without having to travel a long way, the ideal location is considered. Besides that, there are many shops, restaurants

and a higher learning institution near to this shop. This gives an opportunity in providing a good business environment.

Love for Business and Work Independently

Her background is from a family of business people. Her aunt, younger brother and grandfather are all involved in business. Therefore, she makes them as her inspiration to start the business. She always had a passion for business. She wanted to be her own boss. Besides that, as a businesswoman all the decision making is in her hand. So, if her business fails it is because of herself, but if it is successful it because of her too.

Hands on

In the business world, one has to create their own products to achieve more satisfaction. As we know, Salted Terubuk Fish is one of the popular food in Sarawak, so her long term intention is to market the salted fish internationally. When she creates something new, she feels more satisfied. One of her dreams is to create something that doesn't exist yet and become the first to penetrate the market.

Income

Money is another factor for her to take on a new career as an entrepreneur. After her graduation, she didn't have a stable job, so that encouraged her to start a business to live a better life. By starting her own business, she can break free from actuarial perspective and redefine the value of market.

Make a Change

Business is her dream and she loves to be involved in the business world even though she knows there are a lot challenges and risks. She wants to prove to her family that even though one has education, it doesn't mean they have to work in the government sector in order to have a good life. Business is also a career that can change one's life. The success in her business is due to hard work and effort. She wants to attract young people and women especially to venture out into the business world. As we can see, nowadays people fear to face and take a risk in business. That motivates her to challenge herself to venture out in business.

ICT/ Smart Technology

Nur Asyikin started her business without the use of any ICT/ Smart technology method. Her business was slow and she found it difficult to reach a wider population as she only relied on customers coming to her shop on their own. After 6 months, she started promoting her business via Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp and found that her business bloomed easily and at a significant pace. Her income doubled and her motivation to succeed even more was apparent. Thus,

ICT is one of the most important mode for any business to flourish. Today she is learning to build her own website and is very thankful to the benefits of ICT.

3.10.3.2 Challenges

Lack of Capital

After graduation, she didn't have any permanent job and was only doing part- time job by helping her aunt. At that time, she also had small savings of her own. Besides her money, her partner also invested in the company and helped to get more money to invest. They started a business with limited capital and only sold goods in a small quantity.

No Support from Dad

As a parent, her dad wants a good life for her. He wants her to work as a civil servant because she has a good education and deserves to get a job based on her qualifications. Thus, he didn't support her in building the business with her partner. From her dad's point of view, he thought that nowadays there are many cases of partners backstabbing and absconding the business. Therefore, she told her dad to give her time to prove that she is able to manage her business with her skills. She also convinced her dad that she was able to handle the business and promised not to give up.

Tricked by Customers

As a newcomer in business, she was always tricked by people who liked to take advantage of her business. For example, there were some customers who brought her products by not paying for the items. The customers told that they forgot their wallets at home and promised to pay by the evening. But, until now the customers have not paid for the purchased items. After that incident, she is very careful when is confronted by a customer who gives the same excuse. She is afraid that customers repeat the same thing so she takes the initiative to be more insistent with the customer.

Abscondment

Her partner left their business suddenly after 6 months without giving any reason or explanation. This is because of their misunderstanding, miscommunication and lack of cooperation in marketing and profit. After that incident, Nur Asyikin became very moody and didn't want to further her business, but her family and friends gave her the support and motivated her. She then decided to handle the business herself by getting more knowledge and learning from the past mistake. She also got motivated and confident after reading motivational books about successful businesses.

Short of Manpower and Trained Workers.

She has problems in finding a worker that can process and package the salted Terubuk fish and bake layered cake as there are lack of trained workers because the work needs professional training.

Lack of Marketing Skills

Prior to this, she didn't have any knowledge about marketing using social media applications. She started the business by setting up the shop and only displaying the product. She also provided brochures to give to nearby communities. She started learning how to use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter in order to make people know about her business. She learnt about marketing by reading successful business books. She realises that using ICT and without ICT when running the business is different. By doing online business, she now gets more customers not only from people living in Sarawak, but also outside of Sarawak.

Time Management

Besides running her business, she also works full time in a private company. Prior to this, her partner manages the business while she was working. After the incident, she has to manage her time working and handling business. On weekdays, after work she goes to her shop and processes the Terubuk fish. During weekends, she bakes layered cake and also processes the fish. This may cause lack of focus and lead to generally lower quality of product. She often feels stressed and too rushed to do what needs to be done and more likely to make mistake and overlook details.

Lack of Opportunity for Loans.

When she first started the business, she had the problem in terms of capital. Due to limited capital, she could only sell goods in small quantity. She even tried to apply loans from the government at the beginning of the business, but one of the procedure to apply was she needs to start up and run the business for 6 months. Only after that, the loan can be applied. Besides that, to get the loan it took time to approve. Some government agencies take until half a year to approve.

3.10.3.3 Policy Recommendations

Association for Women Entrepreneur

Create an association only for women entrepreneurs which renders services such as teaching and learning. Some women have low confidence to show their self-worth in business. They might think that they are not as strong as man to do business and compare themselves with other success businessman. So, if an association for them (women) is established, they can be consulted, motivated and advised so they will think outside the box and be positive.

Focus on Rural Areas

Focusing on areas where women are less active such as rural areas. As we know, there is less focus on rural areas. There needs to be some research on women entrepreneurs in rural areas. This is because these women don't have enough money to go to the city to ask about business opportunities.

3.10.3.4 Advice for Women Entrepreneurs

Believe in Yourself

Believe that you can do what other people can do. You need to believe that you can succeed and find ways through difficult obstacles and challenges. Don't find excuses if you want to become a successful businesswoman.

Have a Vision, Take Action and Know Your Goals

Start your business with listing out your vision and mission. Always keep your vision clear at all times and remember that success comes through action. Start doing and quit talking about your dream without action. Focus on your target. Set your goals and remind yourself about your goals. Keep this in mind every day to ensure you're working on it.

Be Patient and Invest Your Time

In business, one shouldn't expect success immediately. No one successful entrepreneur starts the business and become successful easily. It takes a lot of patience, determination and endurance to become successful. Be patient and do what you think is best and don't afraid to invest time in your business. Remember sometimes we make loses, but take it as a challenge. In business, there are many challenges we have to face. Learn from the mistake that will make you closer to success even though you initially failed.

Target on Your Customer's Needs.

Customer is one of the main key to success in business. Know those you serve and you are able to deliver the solution to their needs. Sometimes there are some customers complain on your service that might not be good. So, take it as a greatest source of learning and let the customer teach you where the gaps in your service are. Learn to ask the customer's feedback.

Seek the Source of Financial Help

Finance is one of the key aspect to run the business. Having not enough capital can have a serious impact on the future of any business. Invest in your company to allow new opportunities that arise and create new products to enable you to expand. Source financial help that can provide a useful advantage to your company.

Gain Family or Husband Support

Women especially need a strong support from their family or husband. Some families worry and are concerned because they do not want these women to fail, or they are afraid of the risks involved. Family plays an important part in the business. Gain your support by discussing your business plan with your family personally, to acknowledge their concern and make them understand how important this business is to you. Show and prove to them that you are serious about the business and gain the support of your family. Besides that, convince them that you are focused to start the business by showing some progress.

Use Your Skills to Create Product

Use your own skills to create your own product. The products that you create are based on your goals and most important are what the customer needs. You will get your satisfaction when the customers are satisfied. Design your own logo to make it more attractive and personal.

Public Relations

Meet other entrepreneurs so that you learn their experiences. Build public relations with them and ask for their help about the business world. Get them excited about the concept of your business. Find a mentor that can be someone you look up to who has already achieved a level of success so that you can follow their ways. Find a way to connect with a person you want to be mentored by and ask if they would consider mentoring you. You can also improve your public relations with your customer by interacting with them frequently.

Social Media/ Physical

Social media is a powerful marketing tool for businesses. It can quickly become a vital part of online business. If we don't have enough to start the business, use social media first. We can create the account in order to run the business. People can easily connect with the business using social media. You can provide network setup, maintenance services and management from there; you can learn how to manage business and your customer's needs. Marketing often takes time. Be patient for it will be beneficial to your business generating activities.

3.10.3.5 Summary and Discussion

Below is the summary of Nur Asyikin's journey in her own words.

Method Used in Starting Business without ICT

“When I started my business, I set up a shop by displaying my products. After that, I was distributing brochures to nearby communities and students at nearby institution of higher learning such as University Malaysia Sarawak and University Institute Technology Mara. I placed banners in front of my shop to introduce my business to people nearby. I told my friends about my business by giving them my business card and making promotions early in the business”.

Method Used with ICT

“After six months of running my business, I started using ICT such as Facebook to sell my products on social media. We created an account page on the name Borneo Box as my shop’s name. I updated all my products in Facebook to let people know more about my shop. After that, we also created Email, Twitter and Instagram so people can easily connect with the business. Due to using social media after six months, my profit increased more than I got without using ICT. I learned and got more knowledge on how to use social media to promote my business. I obtained customers not only people who live in Sarawak, but outside Sarawak as from West Malaysia. Now, I will start to create Website and Blog, so that the customers can get more information about my business”.

Support

“I have great motivators such as my parents, friends and also all of my family who always inspire me to build a business. One of my support to build business are my mother and siblings. They give me advice and support in terms of money and help me in my shop when I have to bake the Sarawak layered cake. Besides that, my friend that I have known since study and also love business, Sabtuyah Annur always gives me advice and motivate me when I encounter problems in business. Also, my lovely lecturer Dr. Parveen Kaur whom I know since semester one in University Malaysia Sarawak who motivates me not to give up and always be strong to face the challenges in business. They also buy the item from my shop to show their support and promote to their friends about my business. Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) also gives me support by providing equipment to bake the cake. Besides that, I get motivation from reading books about successful business such as Dr. Azizan Osman, Dato’ Alif Syukri and others to know their experiences when they started the business until successful today. All these have kept on supporting me in business until now”.

Speciality of My Own Product

Alysa and Soo Co. has their own products which are Salted Terubuk Fish and handmade Layered Cake. The specialities of my own product are;

- Salted Terubuk Fish

“There are two types of Salted Terubuk Fish which are dry and wet. The speciality of Salted Terubuk Fish is that it can only be obtained in Sarawak. Besides that, the speciality of Salted Terubuk Fish is on how we package the fish in a box when the customer wants to bring in on a flight. The price of Salted Terubuk Fish depends on the market price of fish”.

- Handmade Layered Cake Sarawak

“Speciality of Layered Cake Sarawak is we bake the cake fresh by request of the customer. If the customer orders the cake, I will bake it one day before. Handmade Layered Cake Sarawak has many colours and flavours. Flavours that customers love are chocolate cheese, oreo cheese, watermelon, apple.”

Future Plans

“To improve my business, I want to upgrade my company by making frozen food based on Salted Terubuk Fish. As we know, people only know to cook Salted Terubuk Fish in terms of fried Salted Fish and steamed. Therefore, I want to introduce the variety of cooking Salted Terubuk Fish such as Ikan Terubuk Masak Asam Pedas, Masak Asam Jawa and the most popular that customers love is Ikan Terubuk Masin Masak Lemak. This is my next plan to improve my business and become the supplier of Salted Terubuk Fish and other local products of Sarawak internationally”.

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