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NAVIGATING TRANSFORMATIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

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TEACHING CASE

	Title	Page
1.	Medilabz Signature Marketing Strategies in Hybrid Business Model <i>Sanggetha Gopalan, Narentheren Kaliappen</i>	1
2.	Journey to Success: The Entrepreneurial Odyssey of Jeeha's Tailoring Venture <i>Norashidah Hashim, Lily Julienti Abu Bakar, Shuhymee Ahmad, Azahari Ramli, Sahadah Abdullah, Maryam Sakinah Md Faudzi</i>	9
3.	Ready or Not: Driving Change at Tanjung Rhu Construction <i>Nazahah Rahim, Faizahani Ab Rahman, Marini Kassim, Rosnia Masruki</i>	16
4.	Space Crunch and Food Loss: A Bakery Dilemma <i>Siti Nurulhuda Nordin, Norasikin Hj Salikin, Intan Fatimah Anwar, Ummi Salwa Ahmad Bustamam, Syadiyah Abdul Syukor, Nur Aliya Amalin Ramli</i>	20
5.	Self-Distribution of Business Zakat for CSR Initiatives: The Case of Bank Rakyat <i>Muhammad Syahir Abd. Wahab, Hasnah Shaari, Fathiyyah Abu Bakar, Norfaiezah Sawandi</i>	25
6.	Hendak Seribu Daya, Mahu Seribu Cara <i>Azrihisyam Jambut</i>	41
7.	Marketing Mix Analysis and International Expansion: A Case Study of Gano Excel Amidst Global Challenges <i>Shir May Ooi, Afifah Alwani Ramlee</i>	63
8.	Kulat Oh Kulat <i>Mohd Nusi Abdul Rahman, Rohalinda Ahad, Rahmathbee Zarinatun Mohd Abdul Kader</i>	73
9.	Cegah Sebelum Parah: Kajian Kes Koperasi Bulat Air Bhd <i>Salwana Ali, Mohd Hamzah Kasim</i>	80
10.	Sudah Terhantuk Baru Terkadang: Koperasi Radio Berhad <i>Hajar Azwin Mohamad Ashi, Siti Hafizah Ramli, Norfaezah Mahmood</i>	83

RESEARCH CASE

	Title	Page
1.	Is It Revive or Survive: The Case of Langkawi's Muslim-Friendly Budget Hotel (MFBH) <i>Mohd Shafiq Abdullah, Noor Amalina Mat Yusof, Rozila Ahmad, Asmahany Ramely</i>	89
2.	A Study of Digital Marketing Through Consumers: The Impact of Digital Marketing Tools on Consumer Behavior (USAS Students) <i>Azlydia Johar, Sarah Nur Ahmad</i>	102
3.	Building and Repairing Homes for the Poor: Prudent or Burden? <i>Zalinah Ahmad, Noor Liyana Hassan, Haslinda Hamzah, Nur Hikmah Subri, Badrun Hisham Zulkarnain, Nur Natasya Hasni Mohd Rosle</i>	117
4.	The Relationship Between Actual Revenue and Gross Regional Domestic Product, in Indonesia 2010 - 2023: Provinces Level Analysis <i>Ice Anggraini Larasati, Osaid N A Abdaljawwad</i>	128
5.	Strategic Analysis Case Study: M K Land Holdings Berhad <i>Mohamed Farith Mohamed Jamal, Muhammad Hanif Idris, Fatimah Zahra, Shafa Dewi Nugroho, Amir Mursyid Roslan, Ong Koon Loong, Mehdi Cherif Seridji, Ismail Nizam</i>	139
6.	The Failure of China State Grid in Acquiring Eandis in Flanders: A Marriage Takes More Than Two <i>Haiyan Zhang</i>	166
7.	University as a Zest for Human Capital Development <i>Marfunizah Ma'dan, Vally Senasi</i>	174
8.	Observation of Youth Awareness on Data Analytic-Related Skills and Knowledge <i>Ahmad Hafiz Mohd Hashim, Noraida Abdullah, Abdul'aziz Misland, Nazarul Abidin Ismail, Adli Bahari, N.Azis</i>	183

9. **Beyond Hospitality: The Inclusive Community Model of Kampung Stay at Kem Modal Insan** 191
Norasikin Salikin, Siti Nurulhuda Nordin, Intan Fatimah Anwar, Syadiyah Abdul Shukor, Ummi Salwa Ahmad Bustamam, Nuraliya Amalin Ramli
10. **A Cut Above: How C-Cut Hair Salon Transformed the Local Barbershop Scene** 196
Siti Nurulhuda Nordin, Norasikin Hj Salikin, Intan Fatimah Anwar, Ummi Salwa Ahmad Bustamam, Syadiyah Abdul Syukor, Nur Aliya Amalin Ramli
11. **Bouquets & Brews: A Look Inside Hannah Petal's Blossoming Café Culture** 203
Intan Fatimah Anwar, Siti Nurulhuda Nordin, Norasikin Hj Salikin, Ummi Salwa Ahmad Bustamam, Syadiyah Abdul Shukor, Nur Aliya Amalin Ramli
12. **Resilience and Balance: A Journey Through Woman Entrepreneurship and Family Values** 207
Nur Harena Redzuan, Siti Saffa' Shahrudin
13. **Putting Oils to Avoid Friction: An Islamic Microfinance Aid for Cafepreneurs** 213
Mohd Faizuddin Muhammad Zuki, Razinda Tasnim Abdul Rahim, Nur Harena Redzuan, Salina Kassim, Romzie Rosman, Siti Saffa' Shahrudin
14. **Sambal Kak Cah: The Story of a Woman with an Iron Heart** 223
Salina Kassim, Ieman Huda Adnan, Siti Nursyawani Misman
15. **Playing Rock, Paper, Scissors: Haris's Barbershop Journey** 231
Siti Saffa' Shahrudin, Nur Harena Redzuan

Putting Oils to Avoid Friction: An Islamic Microfinance Aid for Cafepreneurs

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Abstract

This case study presents the entrepreneurial journey of Syafiq, the owner of Kupikir Cafe in Jitra, Kedah. At 34 years old, with a Diploma in Hotel and Catering Management and five years in the F&B industry, Syafiq leverages Islamic microfinance to establish and grow his business. This financial aid, compliant with Shariah principles, provided crucial support for renovations, quality improvements, and digital transformations, such as marketing through Instagram and partnering with Grab Food for deliveries. Despite these successes, Syafiq faces challenges like inconsistent income, rising material costs, and managing employee behaviour. His contemplation of reapplying for the microfinance facility is influenced by both the positive impacts and the ethical alignment with his Islamic faith, despite the appeal of lower rates from conventional microfinance options. Additionally, Syafiq plans an early exit strategy, seeking a balance between business and family life. As he navigates this “Moment of Inertia,” the pivotal question remains: **Does borrowing again matter?** This decision will shape the future of Kupikir Cafe and Syafiq’s personal aspirations, highlighting the complex interplay between entrepreneurship, ethics, and strategic planning.

Keywords: Islamic microfinance, Financial aid, Cafepreneur, Cafepreneurship, Strategic management.

LIFE IS A ROLLER COASTER: A REALITY OF CAFEPRENEURSHIP

Syafiq, the owner of Kupikir Cafe, embarked on his journey in the Food & Beverage (F&B) with a heart full of dreams and a head buzzing with ideas. As a passionate cafepreneur, he envisioned Kupikir Cafe as a cozy haven where people could savour the aroma of freshly brewed coffee and indulge in delightful conversations. The aesthetic decor, the ambient lighting, and the eclectic menu were all meticulously crafted to provide a unique experience for his customers.

However, Syafiq soon realized that cafepreneurship was like riding a roller coaster—full of exhilarating highs and daunting lows. The initial days were a whirlwind of excitement and hard work. He delighted in seeing his cafe bustling with patrons, each cup of coffee bringing him a step closer to his dream. But as time went on, the challenges began to surface, and the reality of running a cafe hit him hard.

One of the most significant struggles Syafiq faced was the relentless rise in material costs. Every week, the cost of ingredients seemed to be on a never-ending upward spiral, making it increasingly difficult to maintain a stable pricing strategy for his menu. Syafiq would spend hours recalculating his costs and adjusting his prices, but the ever-changing expenses made it feel like an impossible task.

“Costs always change every week.” Syafiq would lament, frustration evident in his voice. It was a constant battle to keep up with the financial demands of his business. Each week brought new surprises, but not the pleasant kind. It was like being strapped into a roller coaster, climbing to great heights only to plummet unexpectedly. The unpredictability kept him on edge, always bracing for the next twist or turn.

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The roller coaster ride of cafepreneurship didn't end there. Finding suitable workers became another uphill struggle. The cafe industry demanded a unique blend of skills—barista expertise, customer service excellence, and a passion for the craft. Syafiq often found himself hiring and training new staff, only to see them leave shortly after. The turnover was exhausting, and the constant search for reliable employees added another layer of stress to his already burdened shoulders.

As if the ride wasn't wild enough, the roller coaster continued to accelerate when it came to Syafiq's finances. Debt was a looming shadow over his business. The initial capital required to set up the cafe had come from loans, and the mounting profit rate was a constant reminder of his financial pressure. Paying off these debts became increasingly difficult, especially with the unpredictable costs and fluctuating revenue. There were times when he had to delay payments, a situation that weighed heavily on his conscience. The fear of sinking deeper into debt made him cautious, and he was determined to avoid taking on any more than absolutely necessary.

“.....if possible, I want only one debt. I don't like having multiple debts. It's stressful to think about.”

The stress of these challenges often overwhelmed Syafiq. The dream that once filled him with excitement now felt like a relentless series of obstacles. Yet, despite the hardships, Syafiq's passion for his cafe and determination to succeed kept him going. He learned to adapt and find creative ways to cut costs without compromising on quality.

Syafiq's journey as a cafepreneur was a testament to the highs and lows of entrepreneurship. It was a ride filled with moments of triumph and times of struggle. Through it all, Syafiq remained committed to his dream, navigating the unpredictable path with courage and tenacity. Kupikir Cafe continued to be a beloved spot in the community, symbolizing Syafiq's unwavering spirit and the roller coaster adventure of cafepreneurship.

THE RIDER: A CAFEPRENEUR

“In 2020. I started the business during COVID”, replied Syafiq, the owner of Kupikir Cafe, after being asked about his business's starting period. Syafiq, a 34-year-old cafepreneur, has spent the past five years carving out a niche for himself in the Food & Beverage (F&B) industry. With a Diploma in Hotel and Catering Management from Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin in Perlis, he combines his academic knowledge with practical experience to run Kupikir Cafe, a quaint establishment located in the small town of Jitra, Kedah. Married and a father of two, Syafiq draws immense support from his family, with his spouse often stepping in to help manage the cafe's operations.

Syafiq's entrepreneurial journey is strongly supported by his wife, who works as an officer at the Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia. Her expertise in taxation has been invaluable to Syafiq, particularly in navigating the complex landscape of business taxes. She diligently assists him with the financial intricacies of Kupikir Cafe, ensuring that all tax matters are handled efficiently and accurately. This collaboration not only strengthens their business but also deepens their partnership as they work together towards the shared goal of growing and sustaining their cafe.

Syafiq's entrepreneurial venture, Kupikir Cafe, is nestled in the charming small town of Jitra, Kedah. The cafe is situated in an old shop-lot building, a structure steeped in history and local lore. This building, one of the oldest in the area, once served as a strategic post for Japanese soldiers during a tumultuous period in history. Its weathered facade and vintage architecture provide a nostalgic backdrop, drawing in customers intrigued by its rich past.

The unique location of Kupikir Cafe adds a distinctive character to the dining experience. Syafiq has cleverly integrated the historical essence of the building into the cafe's ambiance, creating a blend of the old and the new. The cafe's interior design subtly hints at its storied past, with preserved architectural elements and carefully chosen decor that honour the building's legacy. This historical

charm, combined with Syafiq's innovative menu and warm hospitality, has made Kupikir Cafe a beloved spot for both locals and visitors.

Kupikir Cafe, a name imbued with meaning and cultural nuance, derives from two words: “*kupi*” and “*pikir*.” “*Kupi*” is a local slang term for “*kopi*,” which translates to coffee in English. “*Pikir*,” on the other hand, is a slang version of “*fikir*,” meaning to think. This thoughtful combination signifies more than just a place to grab a cup of coffee. It reflects the cafe's deeper purpose: to be a haven for ideas, a nurturing ground for creativity, and a stimulating environment for thought.

The name Kupikir Cafe embodies the vision Syafiq had when he first conceptualized his business. He envisioned a space where the rich aroma of freshly brewed coffee could inspire conversations, spark innovation, and facilitate the flow of ideas. In a world that often rushes by, Kupikir Cafe invites its patrons to slow down, savour their coffee, and engage in meaningful reflection. It's a place where students, professionals, and dreamers alike can find solace and inspiration, nurturing their thoughts in a cozy, welcoming atmosphere.

Kupikir Cafe is far more than just a typical coffee shop; it is a culinary haven that serves an enticing fusion of local, Western, and Arabic cuisines. The diverse menu features a variety of delectable dishes, including the flavourful Grilled Mando Chicken, the rich and Creamy Mushroom Pasta, the zesty Spicy Chicken Alio Olio, the tantalizing Spicy Tomyam Pasta, and the hearty Panini Kapit Sandwich, among many other mouth-watering options. This eclectic mix of flavours ensures that there is something to delight every palate, making Kupikir Cafe a beloved destination for food enthusiasts.

Syafiq's determination and resilience are the driving forces behind his success at Kupikir Cafe. He is always on the lookout for innovative ways to keep his cafe competitive, dedicating significant effort to enhancing both the menu and the quality of customer service. This relentless pursuit of excellence has earned him a loyal customer base that appreciates the unique dining experience he offers. As a leader, Syafiq places great importance on valuing his employees and creating a positive work environment. Despite his best efforts, managing employee behaviour remains a persistent challenge, but his commitment to his team never wavers.

“Alhamdulillah, I have five employees; during the COVID-19 pandemic, none of my employees were laid off, and they still received full salaries.”

He continues, *“Salaries aren't burdensome. For me, salaries are important. For me, I always pay more than the minimum.”*

Syafiq's commitment to his staff's welfare has been unwavering, even during the challenging times brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Remarkably, he ensured that none of his employees were laid off during this period, demonstrating his dedication to their well-being. When Malaysia's authorities announced the implementation of the minimum wage, Syafiq not only complied immediately but went a step further, paying his staff more than the mandated amount. This gesture underscored his deep appreciation for his team and reinforced his belief in fair and supportive employment practices.

“.....Then, during COVID, there was a Bank Rakyat microfinance program with a zero-percent profit rate.” That's when Ms. Masyitah messaged me, *“Do you want it or not?”*. *“If you can give it, I'll take it.”* *“It is the first financing I found myself”,* he utters. *“Coincidentally, Ms. Masyitah is my customer and is also from Jitra.”*

Syafiq's entrepreneurial journey received a pivotal boost from the Islamic microfinance he secured, which provided the crucial capital injection needed to elevate Kupikir Cafe. This Shariah-compliant financial aid (an Islamic microfinance product of the Bank Kerjasama Rakyat Malaysia) was instrumental in the cafe's early success, helping it to flourish during its initial stages. However, as the business has grown, Syafiq now faces significant challenges with repayment due to inconsistent income

and the escalating costs of materials. These financial pressures have also made it difficult for him to maintain consistent savings, adding another layer of complexity to his entrepreneurial endeavours.

As a prior information, Islamic microfinance is a specialized financial service that provides financial assistance to individuals and small businesses typically excluded from conventional banking while adhering to Islamic law principles (Shariah). This type of microfinance integrates Islam's ethical and moral values with financial practices to ensure compliance with Islamic principles.

Central to Islamic microfinance is Shariah compliance, which prohibits interest (*riba*), uncertainty (*gharar*), and speculative behaviour (*maysir*). Instead, it employs profit and loss sharing, asset-backed financing, and other ethical investment practices. Profit and loss sharing models, such as *Mudarabah* (a partnership where one party provides capital and the other provides expertise) and *Musharakah* (a joint venture where all partners contribute capital and share profits and losses according to their investment), are commonly used.

Another key aspect is asset-backed financing, which is tied to tangible assets. Examples include *Murabaha* (cost-plus financing, where the lender buys an asset and sells it to the borrower at a profit margin agreed upon in advance) and *Ijarah* (leasing, where the lender buys and leases out an asset).

Islamic microfinance also emphasizes social responsibility, focusing on poverty alleviation, community development, and financial inclusion. It often includes charitable components like *Qard al-Hasan*, which are benevolent loans that are interest-free and aimed at helping those in need. Risk management is another critical element, with various risk-sharing mechanisms and transparency in operations to reduce the likelihood of default and ensure fair treatment for all parties involved.

Ethical investments are a hallmark of Islamic microfinance, avoiding industries or activities considered harmful or unethical, such as gambling, alcohol, and tobacco. Additionally, Islamic microfinance institutions often work closely with local communities, providing financial services and support in areas like education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship development. Islamic microfinance fosters economic development, social justice, and financial inclusion, ensuring that underserved and disadvantaged populations can access fair and ethical financial services.

Among the offerings by Bank Rakyat, the Micro Financing-i stands out, providing tailored financial assistance to micro-entrepreneurs like Syafiq. This product is part of a broader initiative that includes the Micro Enterprise Fund (MEF), which supports the growth and development of small businesses with affordable financing options. For rural entrepreneurs, the Rural Economic Financing-i Scheme (SPED) offers vital capital to help expand their ventures, fostering economic development in underserved areas.

Despite these challenges, Syafiq remains steadfast in his commitment to Kupikir Cafe and dreams of expanding the business to secure a brighter future for his children. He is an active participant in local community events and regularly networks with other small business owners, consistently adhering to ethical business practices rooted in Islamic principles. His dedication to social responsibility shines through in his frequent contributions to local charitable causes, reflecting his deep commitment to giving back to the community whenever possible.

SCREAM OR ENJOY THE RIDE: HOW A CAFEPRENEUR HANDLE CAFEPRENEURSHIP?

Syafiq is facing the unpredictable nature of entrepreneurship. Each day brought new challenges and triumphs, making his life a continuous adventure. The roller coaster of cafepreneurship was always in motion, testing his resolve at every turn. But he soon discovered that the path of a cafepreneur was akin to a wild roller coaster ride, filled with exhilarating highs and daunting lows. Each moment makes him want to scream and savour every twist and turn.

One of the steepest drops on this roller coaster came when Syafiq's closest business partner was diagnosed with stage four cancer. This news hit Syafiq like a sudden drop on the roller coaster, leaving him gasping for breath and questioning his ability to keep going. This devastating news shook Syafiq to his core. The partner who had shared his vision and helped build Kupikir Cafe from the ground up was now fighting for his life. Should he scream in despair at the injustice and pain, or should he find a way to enjoy the ride, cherishing the moments they had built together in the cafe?

As Syafiq grappled with this heart-wrenching situation, the roller coaster continued its relentless pace. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic presented another series of intense twists and turns. The pandemic brought both threats and opportunities, creating a complex dilemma for Syafiq. On one hand, the lockdowns and social distancing measures severely impacted his business, reducing foot traffic and slashing revenues. On the other hand, the surge in demand for takeout and delivery services offered a glimmer of hope.

“TikTok boost sales and attract people. However, too many customers will make it hard to maintain food quality.”

“We use GrabFood. But GrabFood has markup the food price about 30%.”

Should Syafiq shout in frustration at the challenges, or should he adapt and enjoy the ride, finding innovative ways to keep his cafe afloat and even thrive in the new norms?

The roller coaster's speed only seemed to increase as Syafiq faced yet another critical decision about Islamic microfinance. Should he borrow money to expand his cafe or hold back to avoid increasing his debts? Borrowing would provide the much-needed capital for growth, but it also meant higher financial risk. Not borrowing would keep his debt manageable, but it could stifle his ambitions and limit the cafe's potential. This dilemma felt like the roller coaster's steepest climb, leaving Syafiq on edge, unsure whether to scream in anxiety or embrace the thrill of making a bold decision.

Through each twist and turn, Syafiq found himself torn between screaming and enjoying the ride. His partner's illness, the impact of COVID-19, and the Islamic microfinancing dilemma were all part of the tumultuous journey of entrepreneurship. Yet, despite the challenges, Syafiq's passion for Kupikir Cafe and his commitment to his dream kept him going. He bears all the problems and tries to find small victories while facing the challenges with resilience. He embraced the ups and downs with a determined heart, realizing that the roller coaster of entrepreneurship was not just about the highs and lows but about the journey itself.

Still! Syafiq proceeded with the ride.

RUSH THE ADRENALINE: HOW FAR ISLAMIC MICROFINANCE IMPACTS

Syafiq's business journey can be likened to a roller coaster, with him as the eager rider. Currently, he is in the exhilarating phase of “rush the adrenaline.” This phase perfectly captures his mixed emotions as he navigates the highs and lows of running Kupikir Cafe. On the one hand, Syafiq is thrilled by the positive impact that Islamic microfinance has had on his business. The capital injection he received from Bank Rakyat has enabled him to expand his offerings, improve his cafe, and attract a loyal customer base. This success fuels his excitement and drives his passion for entrepreneurship.

The positive impacts of the Islamic microfinance products on Syafiq's business are manifold, reflecting a comprehensive transformation that goes beyond mere financial support. One of the most significant outcomes is his ability to afford the rent for his premises, Kupikir Cafe. Located in the historic town of Jitra, Kedah, in a shop-lot building once utilized by Japanese soldiers during wartime, the cafe's location adds a unique charm that attracts customers. With the Islamic microfinance facility, Syafiq secured this prime location, turning a piece of history into a bustling hub of culinary delight.

Moreover, the financial aid enabled extensive renovations, enhancing the ambiance and functionality of the cafe. These improvements not only made the space more inviting but also allowed Syafiq to expand his offerings. The upgraded premises now accommodate a diverse menu that blends local, Western, and Arabic cuisines, featuring dishes like Grilled Mando Chicken, Creamy Mushroom Pasta, Spicy Chicken Aglio Olio, Spicy Tomyam Pasta, and Panini Kapit Sandwich. This variety has attracted a wide customer base, driving increased foot traffic and boosting revenues.

“There’s a noticeable change. When we upgrade everything we do, we can hire better-quality staff. I can focus on management only, and I have more time for my wife and children. Going to the clinic is manageable. I’ve taken medical cards for the whole family; everyone has the medical protection.”

Another profound improvement in Syafiq’s quality of life has been the increased time he now spends with his family. The smoother operation of Kupikir Cafe, facilitated by the Islamic microfinance facility, has allowed him to step back from the day-to-day stress of micromanaging and focus more on strategic growth and personal well-being. With a loyal and motivated team handling the daily operations efficiently, Syafiq finds himself with more free time to devote to his wife and two children. This balance between work and family life has brought a renewed sense of fulfillment and happiness, strengthening the bonds within his household.

In addition to spending more quality time with his family, Syafiq has been able to secure a medical card for them, ensuring comprehensive healthcare coverage. This step marks a significant milestone in providing long-term security and peace of mind for his loved ones. The ability to afford such a crucial benefit directly results from the financial stability and improved income facilitated by Islamic microfinance support. The medical card not only covers routine check-ups and emergency medical expenses but also safeguards against unforeseen health issues, adding an extra layer of protection for his family’s well-being.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the benefits of the Islamic microfinance facility became even more apparent for Syafiq. While many businesses faced severe financial strain and were forced to lay off employees, Syafiq’s prudent management and support from the microfinance facility enabled him to retain his entire staff. This decision was not just a financial maneuver but a testament to his unwavering commitment to his employees’ welfare. He recognized that his team was the backbone of Kupikir Cafe, and their stability was crucial for the business to weather the storm.

By ensuring job security, Syafiq fostered a sense of loyalty and motivation among his workforce. His employees, aware of the challenges faced by their peers in other businesses, felt a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility. This loyalty translated into enhanced productivity and morale, which were crucial in maintaining high service standards during such uncertain times. Customers, too, noticed the consistency in service and quality, which reinforced their trust in the cafe.

Moreover, this stability allowed Syafiq to implement new safety protocols and adapt to the changing business environment without the added pressure of staff turnover. His employees, familiar with the café’s operations and values, were quick to adapt to new roles and responsibilities, such as managing takeout orders and handling increased online interactions through platforms like Instagram and Grab Food. This adaptability was instrumental in sustaining the business and even exploring new avenues for growth during the pandemic.

“We use Instagram and Facebook for marketing purposes. Instagram is used the most.”

“....We use GrabFood for food delivery purposes.”

Another noteworthy impact on Syafiq’s business has been the digital transformation he has embraced. Recognizing the potential of online platforms, Syafiq has leveraged Instagram for marketing and Grab Food for delivery services. This strategic move has allowed him to adapt to the digital age, reaching a

broader audience and significantly increasing sales. By creating visually appealing content on Instagram, he has been able to showcase Kupikir Cafe's unique dishes and attract food enthusiasts from near and far. The vibrant images and engaging posts have not only driven more foot traffic to the cafe but also built a strong online presence that resonates with customers.

The integration of Grab Food has further revolutionized his business model. With the convenience of food delivery, Kupikir Cafe can now serve customers who prefer dining at home, thereby expanding its reach beyond the confines of its physical location. This shift to digital entrepreneurship has not only enhanced the cafe's resilience during challenging times but also positioned it as a modern, customer-centric establishment. The ability to adapt and innovate in the digital space has set Kupikir Cafe apart from competitors, ensuring it remains relevant and accessible in an increasingly digital world. Moreover, the digital transformation has streamlined many operational aspects of the business. Online orders through Grab Food are managed efficiently, reducing wait times and improving overall customer satisfaction. This efficiency has freed up more time for Syafiq to focus on strategic growth and customer engagement, fostering a more dynamic and responsive business environment.

“There are some delays occasionally. But overall, I can manage the payments.”

However, the thrill of the ride is tempered by the challenges that come with it. The same Islamic microfinance that helped him achieve his dreams also brings its own set of difficulties. The pressures of repayment, especially in the face of inconsistent income and rising material costs, create a sense of turmoil. Syafiq finds himself grappling with the financial strain and the need to maintain consistent savings, adding layers of complexity to his business operations.

Another significant drawback is the inconsistency in savings due to fluctuating operational costs. The financial pressure of managing a cafe, with its variable expenses for ingredients, utilities, and other overheads, means that Syafiq often finds it difficult to maintain consistent savings. This financial instability can be stressful, as it impacts not only the business's cash flow but also his ability to plan for future investments or unexpected expenses. The volatility in operational costs is a constant balancing act, requiring careful budgeting and financial management to ensure the cafe remains profitable.

“.....But it's a bit difficult with the new generation. They ask for a job, then after working for two days, they disappear. I don't understand. I provide a monthly salary and daily allowance, but they still can't commit, I really don't know.”

Additionally, finding committed and enthusiastic staff, particularly among the younger generation, poses another challenge. While Syafiq values his team and strives to create a positive work environment, attracting and retaining dedicated employees can be difficult. The food and beverage industry is notorious for its high turnover rates, and young workers often seek jobs that offer more immediate gratification or opportunities for advancement. Syafiq's commitment to his employees during tough times, such as retaining them during the COVID-19 pandemic and paying above the minimum wage, demonstrates his dedication. However, he continually faces the challenge of motivating his staff and instilling a sense of loyalty and passion for their work.

These challenges highlight the complexities of running a business, even with the support of financial aid. The inconsistency in savings due to fluctuating costs underscores the importance of financial resilience and adaptability. Meanwhile, the difficulty in finding and keeping motivated staff emphasizes the need for strong leadership and innovative human resource strategies.

Despite these challenges, Syafiq's resolve remains unshaken. His journey is a blend of exhilaration and uncertainty as he balances the joy of seeing his business thrive with the reality of navigating financial obstacles. This phase is a testament to his resilience and determination, reflecting both the excitement of his achievements and the turmoil of the hurdles he faces. As he continues to ride this roller coaster, Syafiq remains committed to steering his business toward a brighter future, embracing the highs and learning from the lows.

MOMENT OF INERTIA: DOES BORROWING AGAIN MATTER?

Now, Syafiq finds himself in a phase he calls the “Moment of Inertia.” This phase represents a period of significant uncertainty and internal conflict as he grapples with the decision of whether to reapply for the Islamic microfinance facility. The term “inertia” perfectly captures his current state—he feels stuck, unable to move forward or backward, weighed down by the pros and cons of his past experiences with the financing.

On the one hand, Syafiq recalls the immense benefits the microfinance facility brought to his business. It provided the essential capital that allowed him to rent a prime location, renovate Kupikir Cafe, and significantly improve his quality of life. He was able to expand the cafe, retain all his employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, and embrace digital platforms like Instagram and Grab Food, which increased his sales and modernized his business operations. These positive impacts are a testament to the Islamic microfinance facility’s potential for further growth and stability.

“Yes, but I chose the Islamic option. Conventional might have lower rates, but paying back is tough if you breach the agreement. Islamic banking has a proper way.”

“Yes, we’re Muslim. We want blessings in our business”, he continues.

Another compelling factor influencing Syafiq’s consideration of reapplying for the microfinance facility is his strong preference for Bank Rakyat’s Islamic microfinance. While conventional microfinance options might offer lower interest rates, Syafiq has learned from experience that the repayment terms can be exceptionally stringent, with severe penalties for any breach of contract. This realization underscores the importance of choosing a financial product that aligns with his values and offers flexibility in times of need.

Syafiq’s decision is deeply rooted in his faith and ethical considerations. As a devout Muslim, he believes that opting for Islamic microfinance is not just a financial choice but a spiritual obligation and a source of divine blessing. The principles of Shariah-compliant financing resonate with his commitment to conducting business ethically and sustainably. This approach ensures that all financial transactions are free from interest (*riba*), promoting fairness and social justice.

Bank Rakyat’s Islamic microfinance facility has proven to be more than just a financial instrument for Syafiq; it has been a partner in his entrepreneurial journey. The facility’s terms are designed to support business owners, especially during challenging times, without the harsh penalties associated with conventional loans. This Shariah-compliant financing option provides Syafiq with peace of mind, knowing that he is adhering to his religious beliefs while also benefiting from a system that supports ethical business practices. This alignment with Islamic principles not only strengthens Syafiq’s resolve to pursue this financial path but also reinforces his sense of purpose and direction. His choice’s moral and spiritual dimensions bring an added layer of commitment and motivation to succeed.

However, the cons of the facility weigh heavily on his mind. The inconsistent savings due to fluctuating operational costs and the ongoing struggle to find committed and enthusiastic staff have been sources of significant stress. These challenges have, at times, demotivated him and made him question the sustainability of his business. The financial pressure of repayments and the uncertainty of income stability add to his hesitation. Syafiq feels torn between the hope of further growth and the fear of deepening financial strain.

Caught in this dilemma, Syafiq needs an external force to help direct his movement and make a decisive choice, much like inertia in physics, where an external force is required to change the state of motion. He seeks guidance and support, perhaps from financial advisors, mentors, or successful entrepreneurs who have faced similar crossroads. This external input could provide the clarity and confidence he needs to either commit to reapplying for the facility or to explore alternative avenues for sustaining and growing his business.

“No. My way of exiting is just to own shares. Earning a little profit every month is okay for me. But my plan to exit also depends on whether my business really grows big. If it earns a million a month, I’ll be a bit more comfortable having someone else manage the business. If we have three or four branches by then, it’s confirmed that sales will reach a million. So, owning 1% or 2% of shares in millions is quite a lot for us. How much do we need to live? We aren’t the type to use LV bags or anything...we aren’t headed in that direction. Like people say, if you have RM30 a day, that’s okay...low maintenance. Just enough for us without debts. Everyone has their own way.”

Syafiq also faces a significant pull-out factor in his business journey: his intention for an early exit plan. Unlike many entrepreneurs who envision passing their businesses down to their children, Syafiq harbours no such intention. Instead, he seeks to secure a portion of his share in the thriving Kupikir Cafe while it continues to operate under capable management. This decision stems from a desire to return to a simpler, more balanced life where he can devote more time to his family and personal interests without the constant demands of running a business.

Syafiq’s early exit plan reflects his evolving priorities. After years of hard work and dedication to building Kupikir Cafe, he now dreams of stepping back from the daily grind, enjoying the fruits of his labour, and savouring a more relaxed lifestyle. This plan is not about abandoning the cafe but rather about transitioning to a role that allows him to benefit from the business’s success without being entrenched in its operations. By retaining a share, he ensures a steady income stream while entrusting the day-to-day management to capable hands.

As Syafiq stands at the crossroads of his entrepreneurial journey, he reflects on the myriad experiences that have shaped his path. From the pivotal support of Islamic microfinance that launched Kupikir Cafe to the relentless challenges of fluctuating costs and staffing dilemmas, each step has brought both triumphs and trials. His embrace of digital transformation and commitment to ethical business practices has set his cafe apart, while his early exit plan underscores a desire for a balanced life.

Syafiq’s moment of inertia is marked by deep contemplation. The thought of borrowing again brings both hope and hesitation. On one hand, the financial boost could drive further growth, stabilize operations, and enable new innovations. On the other hand, the burdens of repayment, inconsistent savings, and the pressure of maintaining high service standards weigh heavily on his mind. His ultimate goal is to secure a steady income from the cafe while enjoying a simpler, more fulfilling life with his family.

As he ponders the future, the crucial question arises: **Does borrowing again matter?** This question encapsulates the essence of strategic decision-making in entrepreneurship. Syafiq’s choice will determine not only Kupikir Cafe’s trajectory but also the quality of his personal life. It invites reflection on the balance between risk and reward, the pursuit of growth versus the desire for stability, and the enduring impact of financial decisions on both business and personal well-being. In seeking the answer, Syafiq’s journey continues, guided by resilience, foresight, and the unwavering support of his community.

The pros and cons weigh heavily on Syafiq’s mind. The microfinance facility previously allowed him to renovate Kupikir Cafe, improve the quality of life for himself and his employees, and implement a digital platform that increased his reach and revenue. However, the fluctuations in operational costs and the difficulty in finding committed staff have also been sources of stress and financial instability. The challenges of maintaining consistent savings and the pressure of repayments add layers of complexity to his decision-making process.

Syafiq’s early exit plan, motivated by a desire to spend more time with his family and lead a simpler life, further complicates his decision. He envisions a future where he enjoys the benefits of his hard work without being constantly entangled in the demands of the business. The thought of stepping back,

securing a steady income from his share in the cafe, and witnessing his children grow up without the relentless pressures of entrepreneurship is undeniably appealing.

However, the allure of growth and the potential for further success continue to pull him towards considering another loan. The possibility of expanding Kupikir Cafe, enhancing customer experiences, and further establishing his brand in the digital space are compelling reasons to reapply for financing. The balance between these conflicting desires – the drive for expansion and the yearning for stability – creates a profound dilemma.

At this critical juncture, Syafiq understands that his decision will not only shape the future of Kupikir Cafe but also his personal life and well-being. The external support he seeks from mentors, financial advisors, and his community will be crucial in guiding him through this phase. Their insights and perspectives can provide the clarity and confidence he needs to make an informed choice.

Ultimately, Syafiq's journey underscores the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurship, where financial decisions are deeply intertwined with personal aspirations and values. As he stands at this crossroads, the question of whether borrowing again matters becomes a reflection of his broader goals and the legacy he wishes to create. The answer lies in finding a path that harmonizes his professional ambitions with his personal fulfillment, ensuring that Kupikir Cafe continues to thrive while he achieves the balance he seeks in life.

Once again, **does borrowing again matter?** This question, laden with layers of personal and professional significance, ultimately guides Syafiq's contemplation as he charts the future course of his business and life

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SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER READING

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