

# From workers to Entrepreneurs:

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## The Development of Bangladeshi Migrant Businesses in East Asia

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# Introduction

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- The emergence of migrant businesses has been a part of the urban landscape in some relatively developed countries of East and Southeast Asia in recent decades.
  - migrant businesses such as *Halal* food outlets, Indian restaurants, ethnic retail stores, travel agencies, used car businesses, and others owned and operated by South Asian migrant entrepreneurs have developed.
  - While the outcomes of international migration have affected many aspects of the lives of immigrants and their receiving societies, one of the visible but often neglected outcomes of international migration in Asia is the development of immigrant-run businesses.
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# Labour Migration Programs in East Asia

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- Trainee Program
- Work permit

However, a large number of Bangladeshi migrants overstayed their visas and became irregular migrants.

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# Research Questions

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- Who are these migrant entrepreneurs?
  - How do migrants circumvent restrictions imposed on them?
  - What role does innovation play in migrant businesses?
  - Do we need to go beyond transnational entrepreneurship to understand current immigrant businesses?
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# Conducting Research on Migrant Entrepreneurship in Asia

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Participant observations, in-depth and small focus group interviews with migrant entrepreneurs, salesmen, migrant workers and other community members in South Korea and Japan

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# Migrant Entrepreneurship: Under conditions of temporary migration

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- I point to the fact that the making of migrant entrepreneurship is a complex process and it demands an appreciation of the globalization of markets.
  - Hence, while I accept that cultural circumstances conducive to migrant entrepreneurship and opportunity structure provide the necessary conditions to facilitate migrant businesses in the host country,
  - I also maintain that innovative practices and transnational and multinational linkages are critical to the understanding of migrant entrepreneurship in Asia.
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# Bangladeshi Migrant Businesses: Japan and South Korea

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- Halal Food Trade
  - Calling Card Trade
  - Used Car Trade
  - Ethnic Restaurants
  - Other Businesses
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# Pathways to Entrepreneurship

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- Immigration Policy
  - Motivation for Migration
  - Strategies embedded in the migration process
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# Stumbling Block to Migrant Entrepreneurship in East Asia

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Immigration Policy

How do migrants Circumvent it?

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# Why do migrants want to change their immigration status?

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- 'The cycle of remigration'
  - Strategies embedded in the migration process
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# Innovation

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## Migrant Businesses and Innovative Practices in East Asia

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# Innovation

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- Innovation is the attempt to make one's business as dissimilar as possible from one's competitors  
(Engelen, 2001:212)
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# Innovative Practices

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- Product Innovation
  - Sales
  - Distribution
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# Product Innovation

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- Introducing New Products
  - Trading in local products
  - Hiring skilled ethnic personnel
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# Introducing New Products

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- Introducing Home Products
- Introducing Regional Products

Ethnic groceries are indeed multiethnic  
in both products and clienteles

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# Trading in Non-ethnic Products

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- Calling cards, used cars and tires, Japanese silks and electronics (computers), Japanese herbals
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# Hiring skilled ethnic personnel

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- Hiring Cooks from South Asia
- Hiring IT skilled professionals from South Asia



# Sales and Distribution

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- Spatial Strategies
  - Temporal Strategies
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# Spatial Strategies

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Spatial Strategies involve attempts to relocate firms to more rewarding markets

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# Spatial Strategies

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- Restaurant businesses in the case of internal market
  - Used car, herbal, used tires, silks, electronic products in the case of international market
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# Temporal Strategies

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- Temporal strategies refer to modifying selling or production hours
  - However, due to changes in the modality of sales and distribution, temporal strategies have a minimum impact in the retail business
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# Unique Features of Migrant Businesses in East Asia

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- Online shopping
  - Tele-sales
  - Pay-upon-delivery
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# Bangladeshi Migrant Businesses: Transnational or Multinational?

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- It is transnational in the transactions of *halal* food, ethnic restaurants and apparel, and used tyres; and multinational in the transactions of used cars, electronic accessories, calling cards, and Japanese herbal products.
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**Thank you**

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