

Abstract

The study was organized to give a preliminary understanding of how immigrant-owned restaurant owners operate within the United States and whether that experience correlates to the ideals of the “American Dream.” Data was collected from immigrant restaurant owners measuring their financial success and identifying the racial difficulties they faced while operating their businesses.

Introduction

This study will attempt to glean into the financial and cultural bearings of these immigrants who own restaurants by measuring the ability of these businesses to remain profitable despite economic or cultural backlash and ultimately showing the ability of immigrants to own and operate a business despite not being native to a country. From there, measuring whether the owners felt they had achieved the American dream is important. Within this study, the “American Dream” is defined by the participants as equality of opportunity to achieve a desired outcome, such as the ability to receive a benefit based on the effort one puts towards a project and political freedom.

Research Question

Do immigrant restaurant owners encounter any instances of racial backlash, and do they perceive their experiences as aligning with the quintessential American dream narrative?

Literature Review

For a long time, the restaurant industry has been a low-level career that allowed many immigrants to enter the United States workforce. Due to the nature of the profession, immigrant-owned restaurants have become both cultural and financial cornerstones for immigrant and local communities alike. In Arizona alone, immigrants make up roughly 22 percent of

Food service positions illustrating how they play a valuable role in feeding Arizona (Gans, 2008, pg 4). However, this trend is present throughout the nation, as roughly two million immigrants work in the food service industry, comprising twenty percent of the national workforce (NAE, 2020, Para 14). Looking further, it is evident that these individuals make up roughly a third of chefs and cooks in the United States (NAE, 2020, Para 15). Due to the critical role immigrants play within the food industry, it is natural that they own and operate their own restaurants over time.

Throughout the United States, immigrants own twenty-nine percent of restaurant and hospitality businesses (Dong Beyer, Pg 4). Ultimately, these statistics display the importance of immigrants in the food sector of American business and industry.

Methodology

The data was collected at random by reaching out to multiple immigrant-owned restaurants throughout the Valley in Arizona. The first part of reaching out included interviewing these business owners to understand the cultural aspect of owning an immigrant-owned business. Then, there would be a follow-up survey measuring the business's financial aspects and whether the individual thought they had achieved the “American Dream.” The survey was conducted on Qualtrics, and Arizona State University commonly uses this platform. The questions aimed to understand the restaurant's financial stability and whether they could financially provide for themselves and their family. Additional questions asked individuals to measure whether they faced any racial barriers. In the end, only by conducting both the interview and the survey would establish an accurate profile of how immigrant restaurant owners view their success within the United States of America.

Results/ Findings.

Out of the four individuals interviewed, seventy-five percent said they felt they had achieved the American dream. Twenty-five percent of those surveyed said, “Neither agree nor disagree.” Every restaurant said they were profitable and felt they could send their children to college. However, half of the respondents said that they had faced racial or cultural backlash throughout the experience of operating a restaurant. Out of these four restaurants, 75 people are employed, and hundreds and hundreds of individuals go to these restaurants to satisfy their hunger. These restaurants stand as a reminder of how important immigrant-owned restaurants are for the economy and the American way of life.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the results lead me to conclude that immigrant restaurants in America are in a healthy state and face minimal racial barriers. Overall, immigrants make up twenty percent of the restaurant workforce and play a key role in providing excellent service and food to millions of Americans every day. Additionally, due to the industry's low entry level, it provides an excellent job for many immigrants who lack a formal United States education. While there were instances of racial discrimination, it was not universal or often. Overall, immigrants are key to sustaining the restaurant industry's work and improvement.

References

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