



Uzbek Motifs

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www.uzbekmotifs.com



Motivation

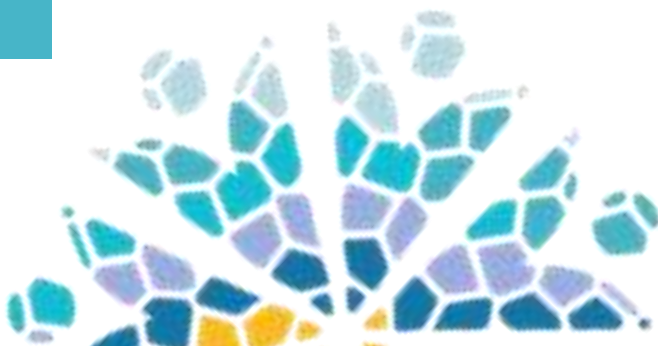
First of all, my main motivation is that I personally see much more opportunities and ways I can make an impact as an entrepreneur than being an office worker.

Second, I am free to realize my ideas and projects in the ways I want and not be limited in my creativity. I don't need to make sense to anyone ;)

Third, I like the lifestyle that comes with it as well: twice as busy than classic 9-5 jobs where certainly harder to keep the work-life balance if you are not very disciplined, but still comes with a lot of flexibility and opportunity to adapt your routine to your needs.



Uzbek Motifs “ is a sustainable artisan fashion brand and social initiative committed to the revaluation and preservation of the know-how of Uzbek Ikat - traditional fabric hand-woven by artisans from the Fergana Valley, in Uzbekistan, Fergana, where I (founder of this project) was born and raised. The business is registered in France as micro-entreprise but all production chain concentrated in Ferghana/Uzbekistan. I collaborate directly with artisan who make the traditional fabrics and with tailor shop where 6 women carefully and with a lot of attention make the “prêt-à-porter “ garments that I design. The goal of this entrepreneurial endeavor to open another channel to French and European an economical market for Uzbek artisans.





Your Story

Originally I come from the family of entrepreneurs. My parents were engineers but when my youngest brother was born because of financial struggles they had to quit their job in the local factory and with my mom being someone with entrepreneurial core nature they started selling home goods and garments in small local bazaar. I was 9 years old when I started to help my parents in their work and would replace them as seller after my school. So that sales is something that helped my family to get over poverty and also gave us opportunity to study and get well-educated. My both brothers knew always that they want to continue this entrepreneurial path and both of them did their university studies in finance and business management and followed the path of business making and I actually never wanted to do business cause it comes with a lot of challenges and almost no-weekend or proper vacation lifestyle. Also at that time the "business" my family did wasn't really meaningful to me. I didn't like the concept of "buying-reselling

goods". I also saw the commerce and business as something that harms society in many ways, leads to ecological crisis, massive unconscious consumerism and etc.. It didn't align with my values at all. I did my studies in Law and did want to have 9-5 job with weekends and fixed salary like all "normal" people. For 5 years worked in Judicial sphere in Uzbekistan. But Entrepreneurship was in my blood and I couldn't resist it eventually. It came naturally. My passions and hobbies I had on the side led me eventually to fully concentrate on them and quit the judicial sphere. The type of activity I started with at first somehow made a noticeable impact on the neighborhood and here is how I naturally started to get familiar with "making impact while making and income" and be excited on how businesses when done "properly" actually can contribute in solving social and even environmental issues. I ended up to do my masters research in "The business in the context of sustainability".



Challenges

The French System: The main challenge is not being fully familiar with how things function and work in France. It wasn't always intuitive or even logical to me personally. Even if I chose the simplest form of business registration as micro-enterprise which is supposed to be simplified taxation and etc., it is still much more complex compared to the same organisational form of business in Uzbekistan for example. The legislation is much more complex and with a lot of nuances, even very experienced businessmen would not easily navigate often not speaking about someone who is both new in business and also in the country.

Cultural Difference: Also, it is interesting to note that even cultural differences between French and my Uzbek mentality somehow affected my business and led to misunderstandings. I believe I should mention that making a business as a foreigner and specifically as a woman from a developing country is challenging twice from both sides actually: from one side - with your family and parents not being really happy with you leaving the country, not being married and doing their best to manipulate you to come back and follow the classic Uzbek women's path and from another side - the French government who imposes a lot of strict rules and conditions on

foreigners wanting to start small business in France with almost no initial investments to the country's economy.

Added Pressure to succeed as a foreigner: As a foreigner, you don't have the right for a mistake or any failure which is very normal and common in the path of any entrepreneur. You have strict limits and minimums of how much revenue you must show already starting from the very beginning of your activity in order to be able to prolong your residence permit first years of your activity which in its base contradicts to the reality of how businesses work and develop: actually, it is very rare when any business starts to make enough revenue right from the beginning and even rare that any business project starts to make profit before the third year of activity. So fear of being unable to prolong your residency permits or fear of taking business risks because the consequences for you is much more serious than for French citizens who will not be kicked out of the country if they fail for example limits you and doesn't help you at all to fully concentrate and work with full enthusiasm which is necessary in entrepreneurship. So it is a round lock. Mentally not easy always.



Advantages

May be the only thing I can mention here is the support you receive from the people and society itself, cause French people (not all but most) are aware and conscious of their actions and its impacts, they do try to support small businesses, sustainable brands, artisans especially from developing or underdeveloped countries and communities... And I saw that Uzbek Motifs is in full alignment with values of French people so they do show support. They are also very interested in cultural and educational aspect of my project. People are curious to know about Uzbekistan and my culture, to participate in cultural events I organize. On governmental level however there is no any visible advantages for immigrants trying to start or run a small business here in France.



Were interventions specifically for underrepresented entrepreneurs?

I was accompanied by SINGA in the context of their "Business incubator", to support specifically immigrants, refugees, expats, foreigners in kickstarting their entrepreneurial projects and to overcome together any challenges they are facing. They bring the volunteers from different spheres and aspects of business development to provide the immigrants with all the knowledge necessary: business owners, marketers, social media managers, bank workers to talk about funding opportunities and even lawyers to explain all the legal aspects and bureaucracy of properly and correctly registering the business activity.

Were interventions/support did you receive?



Here I should definitely start with the fact that even though there is not much support from the government, it is indeed comforting to be in the country with strongly developed civil society and lots of associations and non-profit organizations always ready to assist and help you overcome whatever challenges you are experiencing and for me it was "SINGA" - which were a big support to kickstart my project.



Describe the impact of these interventions?

SINGA plays a key role in me being able to stay in France and start my business project in here. Their attestation of validity of my business project and direct representation in the court helped me to win the case against the decision of Prefecture to reject my request of work residency permit and imposition on me to leave the country in 30 days without any legal reasoning and proven base for such a decision. With no proper residency permit there can be any discussion of doing a business here in France.

Future Plans

I want to develop it further and expand to make it not just commercial project but more like cultural. My dream is create a creative and art space where gallery, shop and space for cultural events would be harmonically combines together.

Follow Maftuna's progress and visit Uzbek Motifs website