Ensuring the promotion of a British Delicacy: The growth of Bob's Fish and Chips in the UAE

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Abstract

England birthed the national dish of the United Kingdom (UK) known as fish and chips during the 19th century. The dish is battered fried fish served with chips which has evolved to include additional elements like peas and sweetcorn. The takeaway food culture in English-speaking Commonwealth nations has adopted fish and chips as a popular dish. People serve fish and chips both on paper and on plates. Patrons can enjoy fish and chips with various accompaniments such as salt and vinegar, tomato sauce, brown sauce, tartar sauce, curry sauce or macaroni cheese. Regional variations affect the sauces and sides served with fish and chips as Scottish fish and chip shops typically serve brown sauce, unlike other UK locations. The specific type of fish used in fish and chips depends on location since some restaurants choose haddock whereas others prefer cod.

Bob's Fish and Chips opened its doors in 2022 in the Marina district of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. British businessman Vinay Khosla owns the business. Vinay observed Dubai had few British food options like fish and chips which led him to establish Bob's fish and chips. The Marina area of the UAE hosts a significant expat population from the UK and Europe which is expanding along with large British, Irish, Russian and American communities. Bob's Fish and Chips offer chips served with cod or haddock and provides choices of brown sauce, curry sauce and tomato ketchup together with peas and sweet corn sides. Additionally, the business offers pie and curry-based dishes with a British influence. The pricing of the dishes at Bob's fish and chips are affordable where a fish and chips meal ranges around 65-80 AED (UAE Dirhams).

The business has seen significant growth in on-site, telephone-based and online orders since its inception in 2022. This has been attributed to Vinay employing *innovative methods* to promote and sell products via online social media and applications like Talabat where customers can pay and order meals for delivery to their homes. This innovative behaviour by Vinay can be aligned with the *Sustainable Development Goal* (*SDG*) 9: *Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.* However, during the last couple of years, Vinay has encountered challenges like similar businesses opening nearby and offering consumers British meals at lower prices. Therefore, the purpose of this case study is to offer an insight into the position of Bob's Fish and Chips in Dubai. Additionally, this chapter wants to challenge readers to develop solutions to ensure the survival and growth of the business in the UAE market. Recommendations are also provided by the authors to better inform the business in taking future steps.

Keywords. UAE; British; Fish and Chips; Marina; Innovation; SDG 9.

1. Introduction

The growth of fish and chips as a staple dish in the United Kingdom has been so significant that just over 200 years ago it would have been difficult to find any places in the UK serving fish and chips. Most food historians believe that fish and chips were introduced as a dish in Portugal in the 15th century which debunks the widely believed perception of fish and chips originating from England. The Jewish community based in Portugal developed fish and chips in preparation for the requirements of the Sabbath where Jews were restricted in food consumption in terms of timings in a day (International Rescue Committee, 2020). The origins of fish and chips can be traced back to the 16th century in the UK (United Kingdom) where Spanish and Portuguese refugees may have pioneered the recipe for fish and chips. However, others argue that fish and chips may have been initially developed by Jewish communities in London, UK during the 17th century. The famous author Charles Dickens referred to fish and chips in his Oliver Twist story in the 19th century. Based on Charles Dickens' novel, fish and chips were initially brought to the wider population by northern industrial towns in the UK during the 1860s. An entrepreneur by the name of John Lees opened one of the first fish and chips shops in Mossley, Lancashire in the UK in around 1863. Mick's Fish Bar founded in 1860 was also another fish and chips shop that represented the first wave of fish and chips shops in the UK. An image of Mick's Fish Bar is illustrated in Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. Mick's Fish Bar **Source.** Tastes of History, 2024

As shown in Fig. 1, Mick's Fish Bar proved to be successful with consumers immediately. Regardless of the origins, fish and chips have long been considered a British staple. The first Friday in June has been established as National Fish and Chips Day in the UK (Bernardi, 2024). Fish and Chips have been widely acknowledged as the national dish of the UK, however, there are rival claims of Chicken Tikka Masala being the national dish. Fish and Chips were originally served with salt and vinegar in a newspaper in a cone shape which is attributed to rations on paper during the 2nd World War. However, due to hygiene reasons (due to the newspaper ink potentially contaminating the fish and chips), shops stopped serving fish and chips in newspaper cones (Ironbridge, 2025). Additionally, due to a change in consumer tastes in later generations, customers have developed a preference for consuming fish and chips with tomato ketchup or curry sauce over salt and vinegar. The serving of fish and chips in a newspaper cone is shown in Fig. 2.



Fig. 2. Fish and Chips served in a newspaper cone Source. Ironbridge, 2025

As shown in Fig. 2, the serving of fish and chips in newspaper cones may have proven to be cost-effective. It should be noted that the ingredients of fish and chips vary based on geography. For example, in the USA (United States of America) French Fries are served instead of normal chips. In England, fish and chips are served with tomato ketchup whereas in Scotland Fish and Chips are served with Brown sauce. Additionally, in Belgium, consumers prefer to consume fish and chips with mayonnaise, in Denmark fish and chips are served with Remoulade and in Australia fish and chips are served with Tartar sauce which is shown in Fig. 3.



Fig. 3. Australian Fish and Chips served with Tartar sauce Source. Skull Creed Dockside, 2025

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As shown in Fig. 3, the serving of fish and chips in Australia varied from that of the UK. The advent of industrial-scale trawl fishing in the North Sea in the late 19th century led to a lower cost of fish being transported to all areas in the UK (Zaino, 2013). Therefore, Fish and Chips experienced a very high demand in the 1920s when there were 35,000 fish and chips shops in the UK which grew from 25,000 fish and chips shops in 1910 (Castelow, 2015). Comparatively, there are fewer fish and chip shops in the UK with approximately 10,500 shops which serve around 360 million customers per year. It is widely believed that Belgium invented the concept of fried potato pieces in 1680 (Royal Museums Greenwich, 2025). Fish and Chips were primarily offered in Western regions like the UK, Europe, North America, South Africa and Australia throughout the 20th century, however, fish and chips became more widely available in Asia, the Middle East and the Far East due to the increased demand (Castelow, 2015; Zaino, 2013). This has also been demonstrated in the UAE with the growth of fish and chips shops where Bob's Fish and Chips appears to be the market leader (Resto Guru, 2025).

2. Background of Bob's Fish and Chips

Bob's Fish and Chips opened in 2011 in the Marina district in Dubai under the original banner of 'Bob's Curry House' which was eventually changed after significant customer feedback indicating a preference for 'Bob's Fish and Chips'. Vinay Khosla a British national of Indian origin is the owner of the chip shop (Resto Guru, 2025). Bob's Fish and Chips logo and branding are shown in Fig. 4.



Fig. 4. Bob's Fish and Chips Source. Resto Guru, 2025

As shown in Fig. 4, the logo of Bob's Fish and Chips is distinct and unique. The menu of Bob's Fish and Chips consists of cod and chips, haddock and chips, curry and chips, donner kebab and chips, and chicken tikka masala as well as donner kebab, jacket potatoes and savoury pie-related items in regular and large sized portions (Deliveroo, 2025; Talabat, 2025). As per the menu, Bob's Fish and Chips offer authentic British and British-style Indian food. The approximate price for a large fish and chips meal is 100 UAE Dirhams which is slightly price in comparison to the typical price of a fish and chips meal in its home country of the UK, eg Fish and Chips meals are on average priced at around 10 pounds (50 UAE Dirhams) in the UK which is half of the price in the UAE (Lumby, 2024). The location of the Marina for Bob's Fish and Chips may have been strategically intended by Vinay as the Marina is one of the wealthier areas in Dubai with the largest British, and European populations (Progeny, 2024). To further excite customers, Vinay employed a Charlie Chaplin impersonator to entertain customers which proved to be a hit with visiting customers.

Bob's Fish and Chips has proven to be a major hit with the British and European expat population as well as other residents in Dubai where customers travel from all over the UAE to taste Bob's Fish and Chips famous fish and chips. This led to Vinay offering customers the option of home delivery by phoning the business itself or via platforms like Talabat and Deliveroo which further drove growth and led to him increasing the workforce at his Marina branch. Vinay ensured that the business was open till 3 am to ensure the business was able to capitalise on the significant customer numbers departing the local pubs and clubs in the area, especially, the local McGettigan's branch located in Jumeirah Beach Road (JBR). There was a period when Bob's Fish and Chips was regarded as the only authentic British chippy in Dubai (Dyer, 2022). Despite its overwhelming success, Bob's Fish and Chips has encountered its fair share of challenges.

3. Challenges for Bob's Fish and Chips

In recent times, customers have highlighted their dissatisfaction with the level of service offered at Bob's Fish and Chips where they have highlighted that the waiting staff are quick to seat you but their follow-up including taking orders and setting up cutlery is much too be desired (Connector, 2024). Additionally, numerous customers have mentioned the hastiness of waiters removing plates from the table even though customers have not finished eating. However, loyal customers came for the food despite the inconsistent service (Connector, 2024; Honestly Foodie, 2012). The customers also complained about a miming artist employed by the chip shop who proved to be irritating rather than entertaining, especially, for adults in comparison to children (Honestly Foodie, 2012).

In addition to the above points, Dubai has seen a significant increase in restaurants offering British-style fish and chips in Dubai which indicate rivals for Bob's Fish and Chips like Anglers Fish and Chips, Fish Court Fish Trading, The Chippy Al Seef Village, Dampa Seafood Grill, Surfish Fish and Chips, English Fish and Chips and Atlantic Fish and Chips (Anwer, 2022; Time Out, 2022). The increased number of rivals in the Dubai market may have had a detrimental impact on the market share of Bob's Fish and Chips. Therefore, steps will need to be taken by Vinay to ensure the long-term survival and growth of the business in the UAE market.

4. The future of Bob's Fish and Chips in the UAE

The UAE despite its smaller population in comparison to countries like the UK and the USA, does still have 7 emirates Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and Umm Al Quwain (UAQ). Therefore, Bob's Fish and Chips has an opportunity to expand its business to other emirates outside of Dubai, especially, in emirates with limited to no chip shops (Time Out, 2022). Although not on the same scale as Dubai, there are still numerous chip shops present in Abu Dhabi which present a challenge to Bob's Fish and Chips (My Bayut, 2025). However, there are limited chip shops in other emirates which offers an opportunity for Vinay's business to expand into these emirates where there is limited to no opposition to Bob's Fish and Chips an opportunity to be the first mover in that particular emirate which in the case of Dubai has significantly worked in Vinay's favour (Anwer, 2022; Zaki, 2019).

5. Recommendations

The writers advise Bob's Fish and Chips to use its research and development department to promote innovation in its business practices and product lines. In the UAE market, where several studies have shown a favourable association between business growth and innovation, innovative techniques and technology could help Bob's Fish and Chips expand (Aseer, 2024; Gernal et al., 2024; Gilani et al., 2023b; Gilani et al., 2024a). However, regardless of industry or location, innovation is heavily reliant on dependable infrastructure, as Gilani and Faccia (2022) point out (Al Jaghoub et al., 2024; Gilani et al., 2022; Krupicka, 2024). Research suggests that leadership gender roles along with corporate leadership styles influence the level of innovation adoption (Gilani et al., 2023a; Moussa et al., 2024; Sulthan et al., 2022). Organizational health behaviour was identified as essential by Jaafari et al. (2023) for sustainable business growth and this principle supports Bob's Fish and Chips' necessity to develop robust organizational strategies for competitive advantage in the UAE market. The research by Tantry & Singh (2016) on psychological hardiness among various professions helps to explain how entrepreneurs such as Vinay Khosla can demonstrate resilience and adaptability when facing business obstacles in Dubai's tough food market.

Vinay relies heavily on leadership skills to foster business growth and motivate his employees which enables efficient workforce management (Khan et al., 2023). A recent research investigation identified strategic leadership functions in digital transformation processes while spotlighting Vinay's online innovations through Talabat that helped boost consumer interaction and sales figures (Golshan Sorour et al., 2024). Employee engagement and retention represent essential elements for Bob's Fish and Chips to deliver quality service and ensure customer satisfaction within a competitive marketplace (Mainali & Tantry, 2022). Iyer et al. (2024) researched big data and AI applications in business decision-making which corresponds to Bob's Fish and Chips' approach of utilizing online platforms and digital ordering systems to expand their business. Hussein & Tantry (2022) researched total quality management performance within pharmaceutical businesses which can also improve consistent service quality and customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry. The study by Tantry & Ali (2020) on job satisfaction for non-teaching staff offers insights into how employee satisfaction at Bob's Fish and Chips can improve both productivity and customer service outcomes. Additionally, Gilani et al. (2025) researched how gender affects business expansion in Europe and MENA regions to aid in evaluating demographic consumer patterns and gender-specific preferences within the UAE restaurant industry with a focus on drawing British and European expatriates to Bob's Fish and Chips. Businesses that adopt innovative practices not only achieve growth and survival but also enhance customer satisfaction across various sectors including higher education which can help Bob's Fish and Chips retain its UAE customer base. The authors recommend Bob's Fish and Chips strengthen its hiring process and enhance creativity by forming business incubator-based partnerships with universities through collaborations with UAE institutions (Yasin and Gilani, 2022; Yasin et al., 2023).

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