

3.4 Case Studies

Apart from local field trips and analysis of questionnaire survey, analysis of case studies is another means to review the licensed food business practices in remote villages under different city context. This section provides the findings of both local and overseas village house food business practices in terms of the investigation of constraints and ideas of licensed food business operation.

3.4.1 Case Study 1: Tai O Crossing-Boat Restaurant

Tai O Crossing-Boat Restaurant is a licensed restaurant of Tai O's specialty cuisine under the category of General Restaurant. The restaurant is in Kat Hing Street, Tai O that used to be a fishing village in Hong Kong situated at the western corner of Lantau Island, and with numbers of stilt houses along the river and at the seaside.

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| Strength | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The spatial layout of the 3-storey small house is in compliance with licensing requirements. The building is divided into domestic and non-domestic uses where the shop area is only on the ground floor and cockloft that meets the statutory plan restrictions. The design and installation of water tanks on the roof level solves the structural or spatial constraints of installation of water tanks for the sprinkler systems.• The adjoining area of the restaurant allows provision of |
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means of escape. As most of village houses are separated from the adjoining occupancy by walls, there is structural and spatial constraint to provide space for means of escape. As the building of restaurant is situated next to vacant site, there would generally be no major problem on means of escape provision.

Weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of staircases limits the use of space. The village house consists of three levels and rooftop, and the single-staircase design connecting different levels limits the use of space. According to guidelines of building safety requirements, at least two properly fire protected escape staircases should be provided to the restaurant for premises on upper storeys and basements, only the ground floor and cockloft of the studied case can accommodate specified maximum number of persons at any one time.
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Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of Tai O facilitates the establishment and operation of licensed food businesses. Featuring several graded historic buildings and traditional customs, Tai O has been developed as a tourist spot with hotel and stores. It provides sufficient customers that makes the business viable and sustainable. • The external transportation system provides stable access to Tai O. The provision of bus and water transports enable people to visit the remote Tai O at any time that provides incentive for the establishment of licensed food businesses.
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Threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of neighborhood of Tai O threatens the licensed food business operation in Tai O. With the vast amount of attractions and restaurants that are open as competition in the neighborhood such as Ngong Ping and Pui O, it imposes operation pressure to the current restaurants in Tai O.
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Under the approved Outline Zoning Plan, both the sites of Tai O Crossing-Boat Restaurant and Lai Chi Wo village fall within an area zoned 'Village Type Development'. Sharing the similar context of village houses, the spatial layout that resolves the construction and spatial constraints of Tai O Crossing-Boat Restaurant provides reference to the case of Lai Chi Wo village especially the allocation of shop area and means of escape. In contrast, the village houses of Tai O and Lai Chi Wo village are built in different ages that building structure and spatial layout are varied from each other, which might tackle different constraints upon licensing requirements. In addition, the differentiation in village development degree is associated with the constraints of licensed food business operation. Sufficient and regular transportation service is provided in Tai O that promotes business viability, and the provision of community facilities such as markets and health clinics in Tai O supports and benefits business operation. While the lack of basic facility provision in Lai Chi Wo village induces unfavorable environment conditions for business operation. Therefore, the support for facilities provision from relevant government departments would facilitate licensed food business in remote old villages.



Photos of Tai O Crossing-Boat Restaurant ¹

¹ Photos retrieved from

<https://hk.ulifestyle.com.hk/spot/detail/400491/%E6%A9%AB%E6%B0%B4%E6%B8%A1%E5%B0%8F%E5%BB%9>

3.4.2 Case Study 2: Wing Kee Seafood Restaurant

Wing Kee Seafood Restaurant is a licensed restaurant of seafood cuisine under the category of General Restaurant. The restaurant is in Kat O Main Street, Kat O that used to be the major fishing market in the Northeast Hong Kong.

Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The spatial layout of the building is in compliance with the licensing requirements. The provision of two exits in the roofed-cover area allows a capacity of more than 30 persons at any one time.• The required exit routes lead directly to a street due to the adjoining vacant site of the building. There is no major problem on means of escape provision for restaurant operating on the ground floor.
Weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The source of customers is limited. The restaurant currently only serves club members during weekdays and visitors during weekend and holidays. The number of visitors is limited due to the ferry capacity to Kat O. The single source of costumers imposes instability of business and hence influences the profitability.
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The operation of restaurants is positively associated with the planning of Kat O. The planning of Ma Liu Shui - Ap Chau - Kat O ferry transportation provides stable customer inputs to the restaurants. Kat O is the only option of place for food after returning from Ap Chau for the day tour from Ma Liu Shui to Kat O and Ap Chau that provides incentive to food business operation.
Threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The planning of transportation network to/from Kat O threatens the business viability. Water transport is the only means of access to/from Kat O, and the provision of ferry service is limited. The limited provision of access

and transportation service to Kat O discourages visits to Kat O and so does the business profitability.

Under the approved Outline Zoning Plan, both the sites of Wing Kee Seafood Restaurant and Lai Chi Wo village fall within an area zoned ‘Village Type Development’. Sharing the similar context of village houses, the space planning upon use division and means of escape provision that resolving the spatial constraints of Wing Kee Seafood Restaurant provides reference to the case of Lai Chi Wo village. In contrast, the coordination with neighborhood of Kat O encourages the establishment of licensed food business in remote village. Notwithstanding the limited source and number of visitors travelling to Kat O, the tourism route planning of Ma Liu Shui-Ap Chau-Kat O provides incentive and favorable conditions for business operation. In case of Lai Chi Wo village, it would be the potential stopover of the Wu Kau Tang Country Trail that introducing licensed food business to the village. Village planning with coordination of the neighboring villages would facilitate the establishment of licensed food business in terms of business sustainability.



Photos of Wing Kee Seafood Restaurant ²

² Photos owned by Hong Kong Countryside Foundation

3.4.3 Case Study 3: Rainbow Café

Rainbow Café is a licensed restaurant under the category of Light Refreshment Restaurant. The café is in San Hing Praya Road, Cheung Chau where it is an island in the southwest of Hong Kong Island.

Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The spatial layout of the building is in compliance with the licensing requirements. The café is operated in a 3-storey small house that separated from domestic use. A separated staircase is designed outside the building that domestic use is allowed on the upper levels.• Direct access to the street is available in the café, so there would generally be no major problem on means of escape provision.
Weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The spatial layout of the small house limits the space planning of the café. Due to the construction constraints, the customer capacity is limited by means of escape provision and space planning of food room and seating area, and so as the business profitability.
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular public ferry to/from Cheung Chau provides stable and convenient transportation to visitors.• Development of Cheung Chau as attraction spot with introduction of attractions such as Cheung Po Tsai Cave and Pak Tai Temple provides incentive for food business establishment.• Provision of public facilities such as water supply, power supply, schools, municipal building, market, hospital, and other facilities makes it a convenient place for business activities.
Threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With introduction of tourism development of Cheung Chau, vast number of restaurants serving signature cuisines open as competition in the island.

Under the approved Outline Zoning Plan, both the sites of Rainbow Café and

Lai Chi Wo village fall within an area zoned 'Village Type Development'. The division of domestic and non-domestic of village house in Cheung Chau is one of practice to meet the licensing requirements in case of village houses. The design of staircase that separating from the restaurants is also the practice satisfying the building safety requirements while maximize the use of space building floors. In contrast, the development degree of Cheung Chau that varied from that of Lai Chi Wo village provides favorable conditions for business activities. The provision of facilities such as water supply, power supply, social amenities solves the problem of meeting licensing requirements especially in the village context. A well-developed village with provision of public facilities would promote and facilitate food business in remote area.



Photos of Rainbow Café ³

3.4.4 Case Study 4: Soma Pastry Shop

Soma Pastry Shop is a traditional pastry shop in the city of Towada, Aomori where Aomori is the northernmost prefecture on Japan's main island. Towada is a village that 3.5 hours of bus travel from Tokyo with population density of 84 persons per km² only. Sources of customers and food ingredients are key factors to the successful operation of the shop. It mainly serves the residents of Towada with manufacture and sales of traditional Japanese pastry through takeaway service while the main source of food ingredients is from Aomori Prefecture where famous for seasonal fruits.

³ Photos retrieved from <https://www.openrice.com/zh/hongkong/r-rainbow-cafe-%E9%95%B7%E6%B4%B2-%E8%A5%BF%E5%BC%8F-%E8%96%84%E9%A4%85-r102590/photos>

A restaurant licence is required for operating restaurants and bars in Japan. The restaurant operators are required to obtain the licences from the Public Health Center in the prefecture of proposed restaurant. The restaurant licence is only valid in the prefecture of the restaurant located. There are certain requirements for the structure and equipment for restaurant facilities such as provision of sink, hand washing equipment, gas cooking stove, water heater, refrigerator, and entryways. In addition, restaurants are necessary to appoint at least one Food Hygiene Manager that holding a cooking license or certificates issued in Japan for hygiene management in the kitchen and hygiene education for employees. Abolishment procedure is required when the business is closed in Japan.

The licensing requirements of food business are varied from prefectures in Japan that provide flexibility for food business. The restaurant licence is only valid in the area of the proposed restaurant and for the current facilities as the equipment requirements are different from prefectures. The respective Public Health Center provides consultation service to the operators in terms of structure, restaurant facilities, and employee requirements. The licensing requirement provides flexibility for food business establishment while the division of Public Health Center provides procedural guidelines for licensing application according to respective prefectures.



Photos of Soma Pastry Shop ⁴

3.4.5 Case Study 5: 四代務農

⁴ Photos retrieved from <http://aoimorinobibouloug.blog.fc2.com/blog-entry-1108.html>

四代務農 is a family-based restaurant in Fenglin, Hualian where Fenglin is an urban township in central Hualian County, Taiwan. The restaurant examines food business practice in the traditional vernacular architecture, *Sanheyuan*. The architecture used to be the dwelling for several generations, and currently is revitalized into a restaurant serving Hakka-styled food. The architectural characters of *Sanheyuan* are retained such as the single-story structure on three sides of a courtyard. Rooms on three sides are the eating places that accommodate around 10 persons respectively. The building structure and roof have been reinforced to against the extreme weathers. The restaurant adopts the operation approach of farm-to-table and serves customers around the city.

Business permits are necessary before operating the restaurants in Taiwan. Before receiving the business license, the operators are required to process the restaurant name registration, then apply for the health permit issued by the Department of Health. The conditions of health permits include requirements such as the proposed restaurants should be 10m away from any polluting source (septic tank, trash station, public washroom), 1:2 of size ratio of food room to the restaurant, ventilating system, sanitary facilities provision. Body check and training of employee are also parts of the conditions of health permit. Meanwhile, environmental impact assessment and certification of fire safety provision are also required for the application of business license. Upon the receipt of business license, the operators should apply for the tax registration certification as completion of licensing application for food business.

The licensing requirement for food business in Taiwan is subject to the capacity of business. In Hong Kong, the licensing requirement is subject to the categories of food licences. Food business in Taiwan is categorized into three types which of small, medium, and large-scale restaurants that according to the gross floor area or number of customers accommodated in the roofed-cover area. The simple licensing procedure in Taiwan provides incentive for potential operators to establish licensed food businesses.



Photos of 四代務農⁵

3.4.6 Case Study 6: Blue Wren Bush Café

Blue Wren Bush Café is a café in Barkala Farm located in the Coonabarabran, New South Wales, Australia. Coonabarabran is a small country town on the edge of the iconic Warrumbungle National Park with population density of 230/km². The café forms part of the organic farm that practicing the operation mode of self-sustainability. All resources are generated and obtained in a sustainable way such as the water is from rainfall collected from rooftops, food is organic that provided by their organic farm, the electricity is produced by solar power.

Food business licence is mandatory for common food businesses such as restaurants, café, mobile food units, hotels, community organizations and other food-related businesses. With consultation of the State and Territories, the potential operators are required to determine their business classification subject to the potential business premise location. To register the food business license, potential operators have to apply for the licences to local authority with information of food business classification, types of food served, potential customers and details of food safety supervisors. Role of Food Safety Supervisor is mandatory for the establishment of food business as the Food Safety Supervisor oversees a Food Safety Program, builds Food Safety Plan in alignment of Australian Law with customized solution for business, supervises all aspects of food safety at a managerial level. The Food Safety Plan aligns with the food safety requirements and obligations that subject to the business types

⁵ Photos retrieved from <http://www.flfood.com.tw/index.php>

and types of food processed and served.

In contrast, the food business licensing procedure and requirements in Australia are varied from municipal districts that allow flexible arrangement. The food safety requirements and obligations required for business are outlined according to the business classification, the type of food served, the location of potential restaurants, and other factors. In addition, the business classification is determined by the food safety risk of the premises and subject to municipal districts. The classification provides clear and specific guidelines in formulating customized solutions for business to obtain the food business licences.



Photos of Blue Wren Bush Café ⁶

3.4.7 Conclusion and Recommendations

The case studies provide an overview of licensed food business practice in traditional vernacular architectures of remote villages. The local and overseas food business practices reveal the key challenges of establishing food business in remote area, and provide recommendations to this Study.

In general, building structure and business viability are key constraints upon licensed food business in remote village/district. The premises abovementioned are built in different ages that varied from building structure and spatial layout, they therefore, tackle different level of difficulties of operation. Village houses in Hong Kong are built in the style of 3-storey small

⁶ Photos retrieved from <https://www.allaboutthescones.com/the-blue-wren-bush-cafe/08/2020/> and <http://www.barkalafarmstay.com.au/?v=322b26af01d5>

houses with single staircase, that limit the capacity of customers accommodated at any one time. In accordance with guidelines of building safety requirements, the upper storeys can be only served as restaurant if there are at least two properly fire protected escape staircases present in the premise. The provision of means of escape is another challenge due to the spatial layout of remote villages. The village houses are mostly separated from adjoining occupancy by wall, there is not sufficient adjoining area for the means of escape provision. In addition, the instability of business induced by insufficient number of customers and high food transportation cost is another key concern to food business operation in remote villages.

The local and oversea practices also demonstrate potential solutions to tackle the challenges. In view of structural constraint, the food business practice in Tai O reveals the possibility of external staircase of the premises to allow maximum use of the premises while meeting the licensing requirements in terms of means of escape. The oversea practices in food business recommend the adaptive approach for food business under remote village context due to the limitation of licensing requirement, in which the licensing requirements are subject to district level. The flexible arrangement provides incentive for potential operators to establish licensed food business in remote area. In view of business viability, measures that providing favorable operation conditions for business are recommended. For instance, support from relevant government departments for basic utilities provision, tour planning with coordination by neighboring districts, and comprehensive transportation system provision. Meanwhile, self-sustainable practice such as farm-to-table is also recommended to facilitate business viability. The use of local food would be one of potential measures to tackle the logistic limitation in remote villages.