

Brazilians venture into the UAE

Expats living in the Arab country bet on their own businesses. Their stories show that venturing outside Brazil is a viable solution.

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São Paulo – The fourth biggest dream of Brazilians, trailing travelling, home-ownership and car-ownership, is to have their own business. One in three Brazilians aged between 18 and 64 years old already have or is opening one. There are 48 million people.

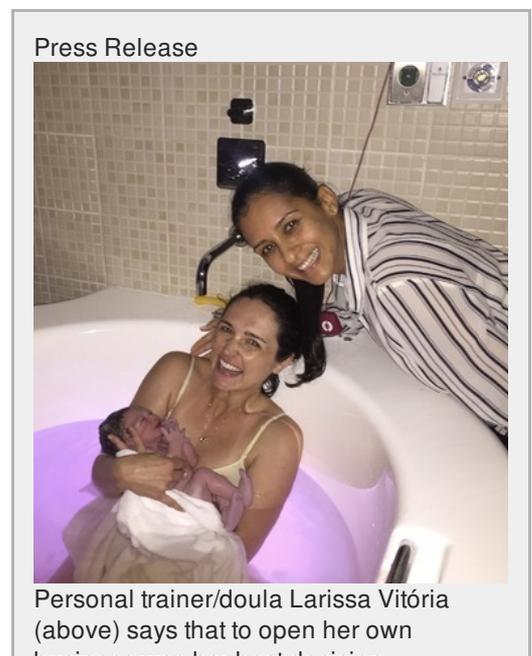
The data is from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM 2016), a survey by the Brazilian Institute for Quality and Productivity (IBQP), sponsored by the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE) and released in April of this year. It puts Brazil among the top ten most entrepreneurial countries in the world.

Thus, it's not a surprise that many Brazilians living abroad choose to work on their own. This is the case of a series of Brazilian entrepreneurs that today manage companies in the United Arab Emirates.

To have her own business was always the dream of Larissa Vitória, personal trainer, doula and owner of Art Maternity, a clinic specialized in helping pregnant women during pre- and post-labor periods. Living for eight years in Dubai, she celebrates the possibility of organizing her own schedule.

“To work on your own was the best thing that I've done. Here in Dubai people work a lot, six days per week, eight hours per day. I can't say I work less today, but I have the flexibility and the money goes to me,” explains the Brazilian with a major in Physical Education at Universidade Gama Filho, in Brasília.

Larissa Vitória always worked in the healthcare and physical fitness sectors, but ended up specializing in the



pregnancy area. She is, today, the only Brazilian doula properly licensed to work in Dubai hospitals, now that the profession was finally regulated in the Arab country. “That’s why I have many Brazilian and Portuguese clients. In some cases, I also take the role of interpreter,” she explains.

Upon arriving in Dubai, she worked first in gyms – she’s also licensed to work as a personal trainer in the country –, but, after some years, decided to go solo. “My wage wasn’t pleasing me and I didn’t leave the area. I love what I do and the best way is to have your own business,” she says.



To venture was also the way chosen by Marcio Saboya to live in the UAE. A former flight attendant at Emirates Airline, the business owner now manages the The Açai Spot, a coffee shop that, last month, opened its second store, the first as a franchise, in Dubai.

“I always had the idea of opening my own business. After six and a half years working at Emirates, I thought it was time to chase this goal. I saved money for two years and opened the coffee shop in April 2015,” says the business owner.

The idea of focusing on the Amazon fruit came in a flight from Dubai to São Paulo. Soon, the açai berry gained popularity among the citizens of Dubai – and not only among Brazilians. According to Saboya, since the beginning the focus was on the international clients. Two years later, the business worked so well that the next step was work with the franchise system. The entrepreneur’s goal is to have from 30 to 50 stores in the Middle East in the next 5 years.

Thinking about venturing

At 28 years old, Fábio Araújo, born in São Paulo’s east side, decided to quit his job in a warehouse of a company in Sorocaba, 101 km from São Paulo, and bet everything in a new career: design. He went to college and began to work in the new area throughout São Paulo state and now, seven years later, works for Abu Dhabi Media, the official agency of the capital of the UAE, producing images for government ads.

Simultaneously, Araújo runs a personal project that has made him very well-known in his area. His works were prominently featured at Behance, a social media app focused on designers’ portfolios, which made many specialized publications contact him. “These are my pictures or ones that I bought. I edit, cut up and make collages, creating a new image. Some have more than 400 layers, that is, 400 different images that, together, form a new image,” explains the designer.

The Brazilian doesn’t even think about leaving the UAE. His long-term plans are to open his own design studio in the country. “Abu Dhabi changed my professional life. I don’t think about



leaving in the moment, I already received proposals from the United States and other countries, but I feel good in here. I have a lot of freedom for creation,” says the designer.

A small sample of his personal project can be seen at Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/fabioaraujo.art/>

Informal beginning

One of the main doubts of Brazilians that decided to venture into the UAE is to choose which type of business they will adopt. The country offers two ways: to associate themselves to a local business owner or open a company in a free trade zone, where immigrants can have 100% ownership of their businesses.



For this reason, many start to work in an informal way before regularizing their situation. That was the case with Fernanda Troy, owner of Gula, the company that supplies coxinha (chicken-filled dough), brigadeiros (truffle-like sweets), empadas (small pies), croquette and other Brazilian snacks to the people of Dubai.

It started with small cook-to-order requests when she was still a flight attendant at Emirates. In the beginning, she only cooked for the Brazilian community and the idea of making it into a business was something remote, because the high costs to open a company in Dubai scared the now

entrepreneur.

But it started growing and in 2012 Fernanda Troy made the decision to dedicate herself 100% to the orders for snacks. Fate determined, however, that this step was postponed: a proposal from another airline, the Dutch KLM, put off for some time Fernanda's move. "It was a very good wage for an office job in Dubai," she explains.

Since her own business was doing well, the entrepreneur quit her job and, in 2014, dedicated herself fully to the company. Currently, Gula supplies half ton of food per month, reaching 800 kilograms in November and December, the months with greater demand.

The Bianchi family is beginning to think about formalizing their business. Living for two years in Ras Al-Khaimah, Sueli and her son João Francisco are getting increasing orders for a type of gingerbread. "Most of the orders come from Brazilians, but we also serve other nationalities," says the 15-year-old boy that helps his mother prepare the sweet since he was little, when they still lived in Aldeia da Serra, greater São Paulo.

They moved to the UAE due to a work proposal to Sueli's husband, who is a jiu-jitsu professor. Upon arriving in RAK, they found out that there was a demand for gingerbread. They opened a [Facebook page](#) and started to take small orders, cooking at home. "We haven't promoted much because we still haven't registered a company. But we will," she says. The name has been



chosen already: Mr. Pão de Mel and Cia..

The personal trainer/doula Larissa Vitória is also in the process. Although licensed in two professions in the UAE, she still doesn't have a large structure for Art Maternity. She had decided to complete the procedures in the free trade zone, but recently received a proposal from a business owner from Bahrain to associate with him. "In this case, the localization would be even better. I'm still deciding what to do," she explains. She has a staff of two people and creates jobs in the country she adopted as her home.

***Translated by Sérgio Kakitani**

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