

Asia – Transformation from Workhorse to Creator

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What are the most relevant trends in Asia at the moment?

Brian Tiong: I've been working Asia for most my life and what I've seen the last couple of years has been nothing but remarkable. Asia is bubbling with business opportunity but it is both complex and chaotic to navigate. Each country is at its own stage of development, has its own unique culture, language and its own political, economic and climate challenges. There is a constant transformation happening all the time in Asia.

Over the last five years, the youth energy in Asia has changed quite dramatically. The main driver to this trend is this amazing transformation from being the Workhorse to Creator.

This decade will see the rise of the Asian Creator. The mindset of the youth in Asia has evolved. Asia is in beta, they now believe that they have the power to change the world and today they are ready to take on this global challenge.

#localtogloball

What of this will be of consequence for the next decade?

Brian Tiong: The world has been focused on China as the main driving force in Asia for the last decade. It is now slowing down but interestingly many ASEAN countries are just starting their journey. Take Singapore as an example, it has led the trend and shown the world that a tiny Asian island can transform from Workhorse (3rd world) to Creator (1st world) in a short couple of decades. It is now a model to all its much

larger neighbours. ASEAN countries (625 million population) are looking, learning and want the same kind of success.

ASEAN countries

The leading model market: Singapore

The near mature markets: Malaysia/ Brunei / Thailand

The emerging markets: Indonesia/ Philippines/ Vietnam

The next frontier markets: Cambodia/ Laos/ Myanmar

Today only a third of the ASEAN countries are at mature stage. The remaining two thirds are developing at an accelerated pace. They are all very hungry and now empowered by technology. It will be these young Asians that will own the next decade.

What will happen to advertising? For example tv campaigns become less relevant as people use netflix etc. and other on demand services?

Brian Tiong: Advertising agencies are evolving and transforming as well. Some faster than others. When doing business in Asia, a deep understanding on the different cultures is the key to success.

I work with agencies mostly with their youth focused brands and seen the best and the worst campaigns over the years. To be successful these days, brands needs to have a belief, be aspirational, authentic and credible in their actions.

Asians work hard and love to play hard as well. Entertainment content in Asia is very important, but TV is not the main screen anymore. In many countries in Asia, the mobile smart phone is the predominant screen and most content is consumed on-demand from mostly social media sites by recommendation. Engaging content is key.

Agencies will continue to have a role if they can help their brand partners be part of this digital conversation and to create relevant, cultural cool content that can be accessed over multiple different screens. For brands to have fans like

bands, they would have to be part of this digital culture. Social media is huge in ASEAN countries. Looking at digital growth and engagement numbers on leading social media platforms (like Facebook, Youtube & Twitter), it is one of the highest in the world and it is a clear indication where the future allocation of brand media dollars will go. That's the same direction advertising will need to go.

What new professions will be needed that have no name yet?

Brian Tiong: The youth of Asia today want a different life from what their parents had. They are a generation in beta – fast thinking/ fast acting/ creative/ nimble/ adaptable and used to daily political/ economic/ climate chaos. They know change is the only constant in Asia, and is constantly thinking global while acting the best they can local.

This generation is multi-talented and most possess a strong restless spirit with energy and passion. They were born digital and live a life that is always on. They are inspired by young global technopreneurs (e.g. Steve Jobs/ Mark Zuckerberg/ Sergey Brin) and also realise that Asians entrepreneurs can do it too (e.g. Jack Ma).

They are inspired to be successful. They will dream of new ideas, start their own companies and create these new professions. This is the spirit of Asia and tomorrow's young workforce.

Technology startups all over Asia are growing, developing and gaining momentum. Everybody wants to be a successful internet star. We are at the start of this entrepreneurial trend that will evolve the Asian workhorse into a global creator.

What's your personal outlook?

Brian Tiong: Living in Asia is full of opportunity, unbelievable choices and the cost of living is low (except in Singapore). Asia has a big population that is young, and countries are developing well. The middle class is getting richer. The young consumers are equipped with latest

technology and with the internet, their dreams have transformed from local to global.

My personal outlook is that young Asia is hungry to move forward and catch up with the rest of the world. The youth of Asia will be at the forefront of this trend, many are educated at top schools in the west and now back in the east to influence their peers and together seek out these local/regional/ global business opportunities.

It will be huge for ASEAN countries for the next decade. Watch out for Indonesia (250 million), Philippines (98 million) and Vietnam (90 million) and then the decade after, watch what Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao can do. ASEAN will be one of the fastest growing consumer market over the next 2 decades with a combined GDP of USD\$10 trillion by 2030.

The future of business is Asia.

About Brian Tiong

Brian is a passionate, multi-disciplinary youth brand marketing and culture specialist. He enjoys exploring cultural trends and has a deep understanding of global popular culture from an Asian perspective. Over the past two decades, Brian and his company B-side has inspired and helped numerous youth focused brands and agencies in the Asia by translating these cultural insights and trends into actionable brand strategies. B-side understands the power of culture in the Asian context and maintains an authentic and legitimate connection with the top tier of the youth market across Asia. We have one foot on the street and the other in the boardroom with relationships with leading influential tastemakers in every country in Asia.

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