THE GENERATION GAME
Catering to Asia’s Future Life Stages
Declining birth rates, aging demographics, urbanisation and the need for higher productivity are all forcing change in Asian societies. This change is rapidly becoming apparent throughout Asia, with each market being disrupted in different ways due to shifts in population, cultures, regulations and technological stages of development.

Here, we shine a spotlight on what companies need to be aware of when catering to the changing needs of Asia’s future life stages, with snapshots of the new campaigns, products and services brands are launching to tackle the task.
The jobs we see in today’s workplace simply did not exist a few years ago. With rapid development of new technologies, the future of work and, therefore, education are still areas where there is much speculation and conjecture. Education in Asia, and globally, is set to undergo massive conceptual changes and Asia’s already densely tech-embedded societies are uniquely positioned to adapt to those changes. They are also likely to be in the vanguard pushing new boundaries in technology adoption in the evolution of education.

However, the needs of education systems differ greatly by country, levels of existing education and economic growth. Governments are already investing more in education, but are also looking at pursuing a shift towards smarter, personalised curriculum that incorporates more of the critical thinking and adaptive skills that Asia’s youth will need to compete with in the workplace.

86% of Chinese students say they are working hard to achieve the future they desire.
Teens are social sponges, soaking up all the advice and cultural influences they can get. Asian teens are looking to express their identities in constantly changing, increasingly digitally influenced societies. Their influences are, therefore, also manifold, and rapidly and constantly changing. This makes Asian teens both very complex and potentially confused consumers. This is where wisdom and understanding needs to be offered to teens without being patronising. They will need help dealing with future uncertainties as the world of work constantly changes.

Digital media needs to keep up not just with their voracious entertainment appetites, but also with their need for safe environments for social interaction, new ways to learn and study, opportunities to experiment with business ideas, their increasing responsibility for their financial futures, and the means for which they find and develop their careers.

62% of Indian consumers aged 18-24 have accessed the internet in the past 3 months.

The Digital Age requires brands to become partners in people’s lives

Whether it is fashion or food, movies or music, games or grades, teens are a key market for the next, new, big thing. But they don’t just need to be sold to and left alone. Their increasingly complex and fast-moving worlds need brands to also offer continuing engagement and advice.

The Digital Age requires brands to offer more than products, services and a lifestyle badge; they need to become partners in people’s lives as Asian consumers seek a deeper meaning from their consuming patterns and lifestyle choices. Brands must supply support and a deeper engagement with teenagers in navigating through what are often the most emotionally difficult years of people’s lives, and aid in preparing them for the world of further education and work.

Only by building trust and long-term relationships can brands stand a chance of building any kind of loyalty among consumers in the longer term among the many competing brands and rapidly changing consumer tastes.

Snap Counselling, India

Snap Counsellors is a service aimed at teens that provides support and information around domestic and sexual violence through Snapchat. Snap Counsellors sends out daily stories with information ranging from healthy relationships and mental health to signs of abuse. The nature of the app means that advice is provided in short instalments and is automatically deleted after being opened, providing users with a sense of protection.
As far back as the late 1960s, Alvin Toffler was predicting the “Future Shock” of people living less attached to places and things and more focused on experiences. In Asia, this prediction is now coming true, with younger consumers focused on being free to move about and enjoy experiences, rather than tying themselves to purchasing a home and living in a single location. This will significantly change the way this age group thinks about consuming and how they invest their incomes, in turn altering their relationship to products and services, and with brands and companies. This is a shift that will force marketers to change the way they communicate and engage with consumers in the future.

Shifting needs hold opportunities for brands to help young people achieve their goals

Brands need to learn how to make the products and services they provide flexible to the shifting needs of Asia’s young consumers. Renting temporary homes will decrease the likelihood of buying big household appliances and increase the likelihood of hiring services, such as laundry or home cleaning. This could shift the relationship for household appliance manufacturers or personal care brands to service providers, rather than the end consumer, or perhaps to providing those services as well as the products that go with them.

Shifting work needs and the drive for continual learning can also offer brands opportunities to adapt alongside their young Asian consumers, and offer opportunities to create products and services that help young people progress towards their goals. Changing work and life patterns will also drive further differentiation among consumers. Brands will need to use big data more to individualise their product and service offerings to suit an increasingly diverse set of lifestyle goals and needs.

76% of students in China say that living happily in the moment is the most important thing.
Across Asia we are seeing young people challenging the traditional life/career path, and instead finding the self-confidence to choose to go it alone. They are not simply rejecting tradition or advice from their elders, but they are incorporating new options to the traditional along with the advice of their closer peers.

New technologies have opened up new opportunities and created ways of seeing the future not available to preceding generations; young people are learning to adapt to the new world by themselves and with the help of others. Companies and brands, therefore, have the opportunity to be part of that voyage of discovery and engage with young Asian consumers in helping them to make the best choices for their future, not necessarily the ones prescribed in the past.

There is an opportunity to help singletons avoid isolation

With more young people delaying or opting-out of marriage and focusing on career development, consumer lifestyles are changing. More single-person households means more demand for solo-portion foods, “me-myself-and-I” meals and travel-size personal care products, as more mobile, possession-light young adults keep moving to where their career takes them.

Products and services designed to suit the lifestyles of singletons will see growing demand, challenging brands and manufacturers to come up with corresponding portions and packaging sizes. The fact that young people seek peer recommendations and advice via social media creates an environment where brands can join in those conversations so as to gain trust and align their products and services to emerging needs.

Creating sponsored social events or forums that encourage singletons to find others with similar tastes and interests can be a way for brands to help singletons with real life needs while aligning a brand’s relevance to their lifestyles.

34% of consumers in Indonesia say they look to buy snacks which come in single portion packs.
Marriage (and weddings) are having to change with the times. Brands can take cues from shifting social dynamics and adapt to appeal to those who are choosing to delay marriage and having children.

Similarly, companies and brands need to realise that they can provide help to people facing the sometimes challenging process of divorce. Services to help them make financial arrangements, educational material to help them learn to cope with becoming a household of one, products for single diners, etc., could all help with the stress of readjustment.

Companies have the opportunity to go beyond the “nuclear family” norm

Companies can engage with consumers to help them on their journeys into (or out of) marriage. Whether it is travel services or products for newly-wed or newly-single households, companies have the opportunity to see households as being beyond just the “nuclear family” norm.

As more and more consumers delay marriage – and more women look to go back into the workforce after having children – they will have increased earning power (and thus spending power) to invest in products for their families.

India’s largest hotel network OYO has launched a new search feature that allows unmarried couples to book ‘couple-friendly’ hotel rooms. Aiming to cater to 18-30 year olds, the company highlighted that this wasn’t a ‘gimmicky marketing tactic’, but rather as a customer-focused business they are identifying and solving problems that can impact the stay experience.

27% of single Indian consumers aim to get married in the next 3 years.
Slowing birth rates mean fewer babies, resulting in more earning adults per infant and higher spending power per child. So, it follows that demand for higher quality, higher value products and services will increase. This is already manifesting in parents spending more on higher quality baby food and clothes, but also increasing the propensity to buy the very best child car seats, pre-school education, activities and toys.

Growth in demand will create new competitive opportunities for more niche brands with specialised products to offer. But there will also be a growing demand for better parenting advice and information about the best products and services. This will all be part of the growing investment by parents in providing the best possible future for their children in an ever-competitive world.

Brands can offer help, create trust and establish a long-term relationship

Education, information and reliable advice are all areas where brands can take an active role in helping parents with creating the best start in life for their precious babies. From nutrition and feeding to skin care and bathing, sleep training, nappies and hygiene, new parents need advice. They will continue to seek previous generation’s advice, but will still seek out the latest thinking and scientific studies on baby care, and this is where brands can step in by offering guidance.

As babies grow, because of the competition for educational places in Asia, brands can also help parents by providing the optimal products and services to help their babies develop and learn to the best of their potential. This will increasingly include helping young children prepare for the kind of life of digital integration not previously seen.

28% of single Chinese consumers say that life is not necessarily incomplete without having a kid.
ONCE THE BIRDS HAVE FLOWN

Once the birds have flown

Older people still in the workforce are facing the likelihood of having to continue to work later in life, and needing to retrain in order to remain relevant in the increasingly automated and digitised workplace.

While they may have the advantage of more work experience and accumulated savings, they are not necessarily any more “settled” than their younger peers in the rapidly changing Asian economies. There is, therefore, a need for more products and services suited to their current lifestyles, but also to adapt with them as they navigate the rapidly changing societies they live in.

Brands need to keep in mind that older lifestyles need change, and that this often ignored consumer segment presents a lot of opportunities for companies that take the effort to find out the needs of older consumers.

Asia’s older consumers are just as dynamic in society’s evolution as younger generations

One of the best things brands can do is to stop ignoring older consumers as a potentially lucrative market in countries across Asia. Even if they are actively trying to engage with them, brands need to take heed about how much the lifestyles of older Asians have changed already, and are continuing to change. Older Asians are having to adapt to the rapidly changing societies they live in as much as their younger peers and they are also actively exploring new potential lifestyles to suit their own tastes and interests.

28% of Chinese consumers aged 55-74 say they would like to spend more time travelling in the next 12 months.

WeChat Travel Guide, China

British Airways’ “Flying the Nest” campaign highlights the services the airline provides to parents who want to visit their children abroad, but are anxious about the language and cultural barriers. Through a QR code which is shown at the end of the video, parents can download a WeChat page that explains how travellers can navigate a trip with the airline, including what they should and should not bring, airport signage translations, immigration steps, and more.
As Asia’s population ages, this is going to upset the existing balance in elderly dependence, need for extra healthcare and elderly care services, and challenges for Asian societies and their economies. But, with good planning, these challenges can create new opportunities.

Elderly Asians are increasingly enjoying their leisure time, finding new hobbies or learning new skills, while taking the opportunity to travel more and further afield. However, there will be a growing need to help grown-up children of seniors to cope with looking after their aging relatives while they themselves tackle the time and money constraints of their own busy lives.

19% of Thai consumers say that having an active social life is an important part of leading a healthy lifestyle.

Brands need to become more sensitive to the needs of the elderly

Brands in Asia have so far concentrated on marketing to young consumers, largely ignoring the senior market, and that is a missed opportunity, especially given the rapid aging of Asia’s population. As people get older, their diets change, they face different kinds of skincare and haircare issues, they need more help with mobility and eyesight, and yet they continue to remain keen to enjoy themselves and learn new things.

There is huge scope to fulfil the demand for products and services suited to the many needs of elderly people in Asia, including home care, transport, health and wellness, travel and tourism, social media and communication.

Brands need to provide sensitivity and discretion in the way they market products and services to elderly consumers and their adult children. They have the opportunity to tap into a huge future potential market if they do.
What’s next?

Looking ahead, the challenge will be for companies and brands to learn how to adapt quickly to the economic and social changes Asia has on the horizon. Those that adapt quickly, and continue adapting, will be the ones that succeed, while those that struggle to keep up will likely be the victims of rapid obsolescence.

The future of Asian families will provide huge potential for both quick-adaptors and sector specialists.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Mintel Trends

The insights from ‘The Generation Game’ was inspired by Mintel Trends.

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