# ASIAN TRENDS FOR 2020

Three powerful consumer trends for 2020.

From WeChat to WeWork and Grab to Gangnam Style, the 2010s has rewritten consumer expectations in radical ways. Now a new decade is upon us, and the pace of innovation will only accelerate. Are you ready?

In this briefing we have curated three key consumer trends that will shape Asia in 2020 and beyond. Each one features best-in-class innovation examples that collectively signal new emerging consumer expectations. Dive in, share it around, and use this as your innovation roadmap for the year ahead.

**1. SUSTAINABLE STEWARDS**
In 2020, sustainable lifestyles become the new status symbol.

**2. GOOD POLICE**
Asian consumers demand brands to use data and technology for good.

**3. BUSINESS AS SOCIAL**
Community-driven commerce is the next e-commerce frontier.

Remember, trends mean nothing if you don't use them to make what you do – and the world – better. So absorb these trends, take them to your team, share, discuss, argue and conspire.

But most of all, *act*.

# 1. SUSTAINABLE STEWARDS

In 2020, the sustainable lifestyle is the new status symbol.

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**Emerging out of 2018's war on plastic, the sustainability message is reshaping the entire consumer landscape. It is exposing many of Asia's traditional status symbols – from traveling to luxury fashion to eating meat – as key culprits in the looming climate crisis. Now in 2020, as mindsets shift and the definition of status is upturned for millions of Asians, sustainability is the new status symbol.**

## WHY NOW?

### ACUTE AWARENESS

2019's rise of sustainable food alternatives, paved by Impossible Foods in Hong Kong and Singapore, is educating consumers that even their most basic activity (eating!) can have bad repercussions for the planet. This acute awareness will spread to every aspect of consumers' lives, and they will demand sustainable alternatives across all categories.

### DESIRABILITY SHIFT

Awareness is causing a fundamental shift in what Asian consumers now consider desirable. One indicator? Buying second-hand used to be a taboo as it signaled low economic status. Today, 51% urban Chinese are happy to rent or buy pre-owned products as it is good for the environment (Mintel, March 2019).

### SCARCITY DILEMMA

While consumers know that the sustainable lifestyle is preferable, it is not (yet) the most easily attained, for reasons ranging from convenience to availability. One illustration: local produce – which has a significantly lower carbon impact compared to imported foods – currently makes up less than 10% of Singapore's food supply (SFA, 2019). Scarcity breeds status!

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# Examples

IMPOSSIBLE FOODS — In March 2019, US-based startup Impossible Foods launched in Singapore, with dishes using its plant-based meat on the menus in eight high-end restaurants, including the Marina Bay Sands' Bread Street Kitchen by Gordon Ramsay, Adrift by David Myers, and CUT by Wolfgang Puck. Made from wheat protein, coconut oil, potato proteins, and heme, the plant-based meat uses 87% less water and produces 89% fewer GHG emissions than the meat equivalent.

UNSPUN JEANS — Here is a great innovation infusing the sustainability story into the status of buying and owning bespoke, custom-made products. Based in Hong Kong, tech-style startup Unspun is developing a 3D-weaving machine that can spin yarn into a custom-made pair of jeans fitted to any individual consumer, with zero cut fabric waste. It aims to disrupt denim, currently one of the most polluting fashion items to produce.

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## YOUR RESPONSE?

### PREMIUM PLAYS

Sustainability is the new status, so can you package your sustainable offering in a conventionally premium experience? Impossible Foods' high-profile debut in Singapore was in partnership with seven high-end restaurants, while Unspun's zero waste jeans are also custom tailored.

### PERSPECTIVE SHIFTS

High prices have traditionally been a signal of high status. Sustenir's clever campaign flipped this, by showing the high (environmental) cost of imported food. What costs could you display to shift consumer attitudes to your products?

### LEVERAGE LIFESTYLE

Sit in any cafe in Asia and you'll see people taking endless pre, during and post coffee selfies. Nudes' recycled cardboard café leverages this ubiquitous behavior to raise awareness of cardboard's potential as an innovative new sustainable building material. Similarly, how could you get consumers to promote your sustainability initiatives?
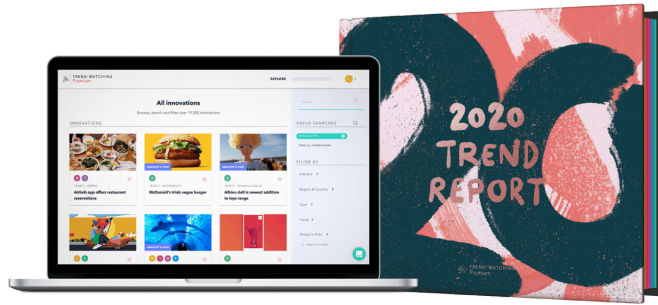
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# 2. GOOD POLICE

Asian consumers demand brands to use data and technology for good.

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**The privacy paradox will remain a key battleground in 2020. People across Asia will have if not a love-hate then a tolerant-anxious relationship with data sharing. Scandals will blow up, but most people will look at the problems they face – both individually and as societies – and accept data sharing initiatives that bring tangible social benefits such as improved safety, better hygiene and wellbeing, and greater access to education and the digital economy.**

# WHY NOW?

### PRIVACY VS PERKS

Asian consumers are used to enjoying the benefits that come from giving up some forms of privacy, and will continue to demand those benefits. 70% of Thais and Indians are willing to share their data for personalised offers (Accenture, 2019).

### SURVEILLANCE SUSPICIONS

However, there is little trust: only 31% consumers in APAC trust organizations offering digital services to protect their data (Microsoft, 2019). Consumers are also more aware than ever that the same technology that brought them Zao and FaceApp could also be used as surveillance weapons as in the case of Hong Kong protests and China's Uyghurs controls.

### RISING EXPECTATIONS

Yet consumers remain optimistic – 78% of Singaporeans indicated that digital technology has improved their lives (Limelight Networks, 2019). The opportunity? Brands that can demonstrate tangible and meaningful benefits of data sharing – both personal and societal – will win in 2020.

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SUNSHINE KITCHEN — Government authorities in Shaoxing, China, are utilizing surveillance cameras and AI to catch breaches of hygiene in the city's commercial kitchens. Part of a six-year long province-wide project known as 'Sunshine Kitchen', the system uses an AI algorithm and IoT technology to scan camera footage and identify 18

LIMESTONE NETWORK — A pilot project by a Singapore-based startup tested the idea of a smart city in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in June 2019, powered by blockchain technology. The scheme collects all residents and workers data to create digital passports on the Limestone Network app. The founders claim data generated from

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types of unsanitary behavior, including lack of hand washing and smoking.

the project will help local governments resolve existing urban challenges.

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## YOUR RESPONSE?

### DATA IS THE NEW TAX

Your job is not just to safeguard consumers' data. Instead, think of sharing data as a new way of paying taxes. Consumers might not love it, but they'll do it when there is transparency and a clear demonstration of benefits. Sunshine Kitchen is doing just that.

### INTERVENTION SEEKERS

Data can help people make better, more informed decisions. Like Nissan's innovation, your brand can be THE GOOD POLICE by leveraging technology and data to help consumers act better, and intervene on their potential bad decisions.

### COMMUNICATE FOR CONSENT

Let's take a moment to acknowledge that the picture around this trend is highly nuanced, and there are no hard rules (yet) governing the use of data. But communication and consent are key – even in dictator-led China, consumers are protesting against opaque surveillance.
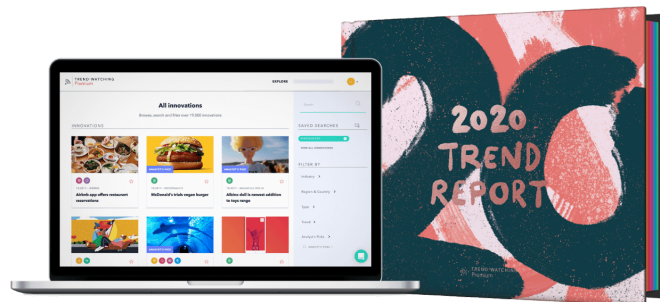


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# 3. BUSINESS AS SOCIAL

Forget business as usual, it's time for business as social.

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**Across Asia, social commerce will continue to be the next growth frontier for online retail. Its continuing popularity has primed consumers to expect online transactions that are not just convenient, but also communal. The real opportunity here? Smart brands will go beyond selling stuff on social to facilitating community-driven commerce. In 2020, forget business as usual – it's time for business as social.**

## WHY NOW?

### PRIME PLATFORM
Social media was the gateway to the internet for many Asians. It had also allowed small and informal players to join the e-commerce revolution. Looking back to 2017(!), 80% of Asian merchants already considered social media a viable business platform (Paypal, 2017).

### SOCIAL SHOPPERS
From consumers soliciting peer recommendations to showing off their buys, there has always been a communal element to shopping. Social media has amplified that, and is evolving into a direct channel to allow for seamless shopping – 85% consumers find it 'quick and easy' to make purchases on social media (Econsultancy, October 2019).

### EXPERIENTIAL E-COMMERCE
Interactive social media features like livestreaming made online shopping fun. Taobao Live pioneered a platform that prioritized community and content, with shopping thrown in for extra. This created expectations – and opportunities – for experiential retail with a human touch online.

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## Examples

IDLE FISH — Idle Fish is Alibaba Group's secondhand goods platform, where consumers can sell to one another. The platform is built around micro-communities called 'Fish Ponds', formed based on user location or common interests, such as cycling or skin care. Users can join Fish Ponds, interact with other members, and buy and sell from them. In January 2019, Idle Fish launched a new premium channel that allows brands to operate their own stores, selling sample items, overstock merchandise and more. As of September 2019, Idle Fish had 20 million daily active users.

KROGER AND TIKTOK — In August 2019, Chinese social media platform TikTok launched a new social shopping feature, the Hashtag Challenge Plus. US grocery chain Kroger was the first to make use of the new feature, challenging users to post videos of their school dorm makeovers with the hashtag #TransformUrDorm. The hashtag landing page also features a separate tab where products from the brand campaign can be purchased within TikTok. #TransformUrDorm has generated thousands of videos and over 869 million views.

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## YOUR RESPONSE?

### STRATEGY SHIFT
One e-commerce strategy for you to consider in 2020? Start with building interest-based communities in which consumers can interact with – and buy and sell to – one another. Later, join in and invite more brands! Idle Fish generated USD 14 billion in GMV via transactions within its consumer communities.

### FOMO FACTOR
Social commerce taps into consumers' fear of missing out – on what their peers know, own and buy. Understand your consumers' biggest FOMOs and then connect them over it: Price Kaki is based on Singaporeans' drive to find the best value for money.

### SUPER SELLERS
The mainstreaming of online communal commerce is an opportunity for regular consumers to participate in the market, and reap benefits traditionally enjoyed only by KOLs. Meesho's platform and Tokopedia's initiative are allowing consumers just that.
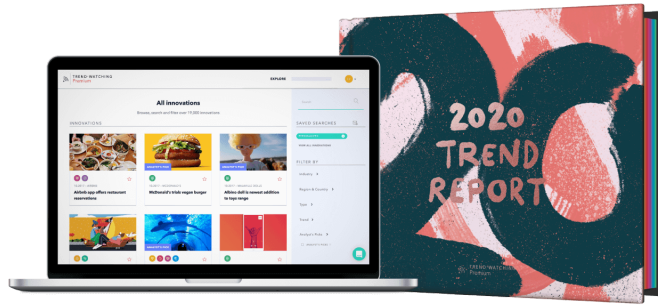
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## THE BIGGER PICTURE

The trends featured here are important, but they represent just a small fraction of the consumer landscape.

Clients of our Premium Service have an instant global Trend Department at their fingertips. They have access to our entire Trend Framework, built around the 16 mega-trends that define modern consumerism. Beneath these sit 120+ actionable trends (the trends featured here, along with a host of others we continue to track), all illustrated with 20,000+ hand-curated, best practice innovations. If you're serious about trends, it's a no-brainer.

## OVER TO YOU

As always, we wrap up these annual Trend Briefings with a call to action…

While it's our job just to watch trends, ambitious business professionals should read this Briefing with only one thing in mind: how to *apply* these trends to create compelling new innovations that will delight your customers (and win new ones!).

So, what are you waiting for? Time to make 2020 your best year yet!

**Cheers! Proost! 干杯! Salud! Skål! 건배! Santé! Prost! Şerefe! Mabuhay! Saúde! Chok dee!**

IT TAKES A TEAM

This Trend Briefing has many hands on it. A huge thanks to the team that pulled this together with such positivity and enthusiasm, especially: Nathania Christy, Henry Mason, Vicki Loomes and Harry Metzger. THANK YOU!

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