

MARKETING

ISSUE #453 DECEMBER 2025

WEEKENDER™



PROUDLY MALAYSIAN, FIERCELY INDEPENDENT

EDITOR'S NOTE

Confessions of an Agency...

04



16

4 Things Every Marketer Must Learn From Labubu



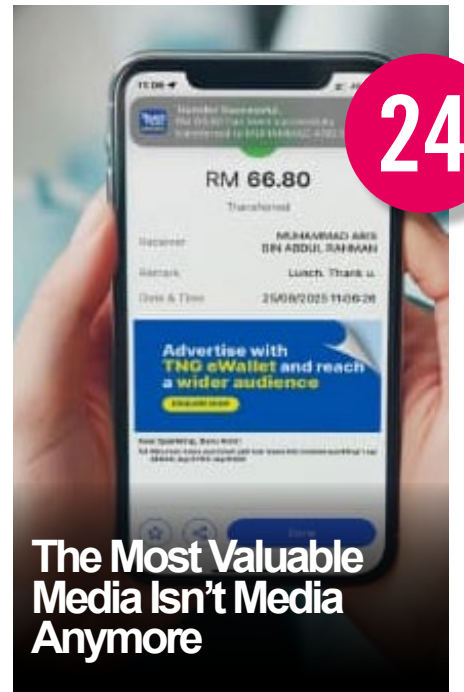
20

Rage Bait Is Oxford's Word of the Year — And What It Quietly Reveals About Modern Marketing



24

The Most Valuable Media Isn't Media Anymore



COVER STORY

Future-Proofing Solutions Through Intelligent Collaborations

06



35

AI saw mummy kissing Santa Claus



40

ADVERTISING'S ANNUS HORRIBILIS



29

CIMB's Kita Bagi Jadi Movement Continues To Spark Positivity and Resilience

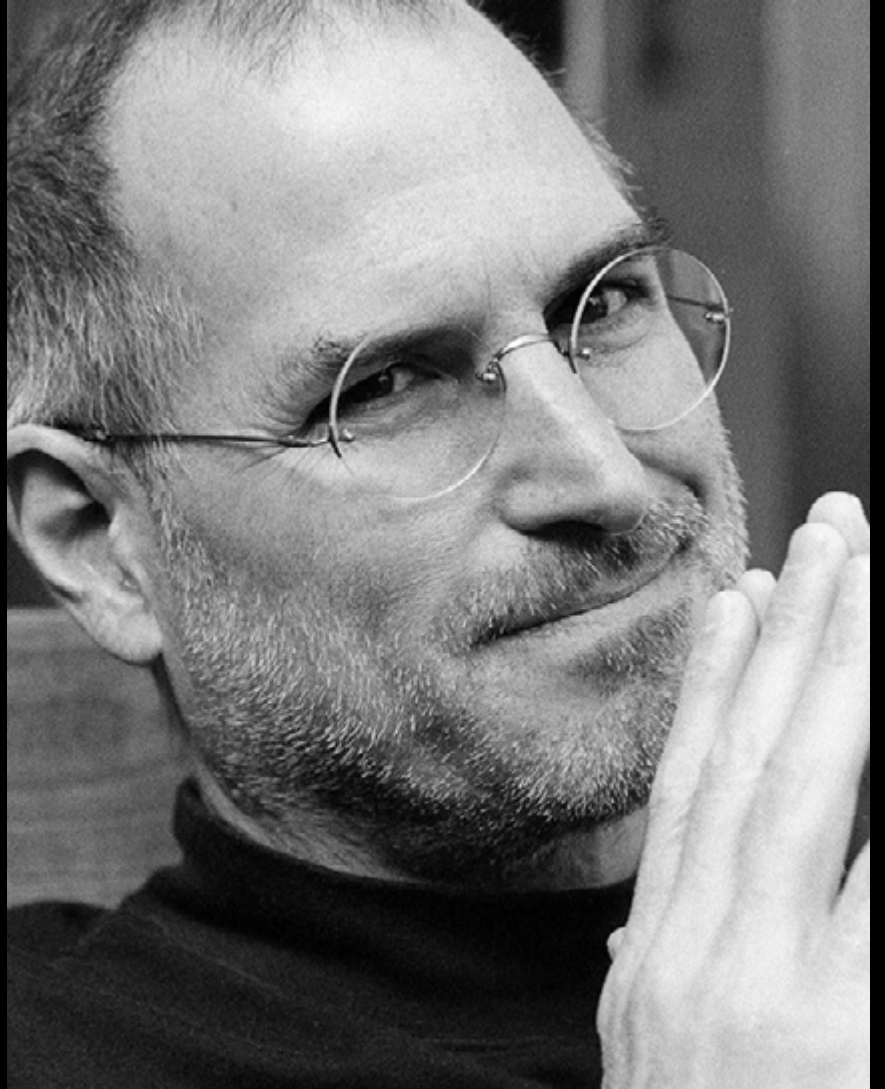


What Say



“Start small. Stay small. Think big.”

Rodd Chant



“It’s better to be a pirate than join the navy.”

Steve Jobs



“Consistency isn’t even a question for us. Consistency is a fundamental.”

Callum Laming, Chief Customer Officer at British Airways.



“If you want to be a brand that actually reaches people, you’ve got to be entertaining. There is no such thing as a captive audience; they’ve always got other places to go.”

Rachel Delphin, CMO at Twitch.

EDITOR'S NOTE



Confessions of an Agency...

“Okay, numbers first,” the marketer says. “ROAS is green, CAC is stable, revenue’s on track. You did well this quarter.”

“We did,” the agency replies. “That’s exactly why we wanted to talk.”

The marketer looks up. “Uh oh. You sound worried.”

“Think of it as a confession,” the agency says.

“Alright,” the marketer leans back. “Confess.”

“You’re winning the quarter,” the agency starts, “and we’re not

sure you’ll still be winning in two years.”

“You know my board lives quarter to quarter, right?” the marketer says. “They see green, they’re happy. What’s the problem?”

“The problem,” the agency says, pointing at the screen, “is that this dashboard tells only half the story. Together, we’ve built a strong performance machine. Marketplace ads, retargeting, promos – they’re doing their job. But a lot doesn’t show.”

EDITOR'S NOTE

“Like what?”

“First, platform dependence,” the agency replies. “Most of your growth is inside ecosystems we don’t control. One algorithm change, one new fee, and this green ROAS gets shaky.”

“Fair,” the marketer nods. “But that’s the game now.”

“It is,” the agency says. “But promos are working maybe too well. We’re training customers to wait for deals. CAC creeps up, margins get eaten, discounting becomes a reflex, not a strategy.”

“And then there’s sameness,” the agency continues. “AI, templates, best practices – they make execution fast, but they also make everyone look and sound similar. Your ads are good. So are your competitors’.”

“So what are you saying?” the marketer asks. “Turn everything off and go back to print and jingles?”

“No,” the agency laughs. “We’re saying you need two engines, not one.”

They grab a marker and sketch two circles on the whiteboard.

“This,” they tap the first circle, “is your Performance Engine. We keep it, optimise it and let it feed the quarter.”

“And the second?”


“The Brand Engine,” the agency says. “It builds recognition, preference and pricing power. It makes people search for you by name even when you’re not shouting or discounting heavily.”

The marketer is quiet. “And what do you want from me?”

“Protect a slice of budget – say 20–30% – for that Brand Engine,” the agency replies. “Not as decoration. As insurance. When platforms change their rules, your brand still stands.”

The marketer looks at the dashboard, then at the whiteboard. “So your confession is you don’t just want to keep my graphs green. You want to make sure this brand survives the next wave.”

“Yes,” the agency says. “We can help you win the quarter. Or we can help you win the years. Ideally, we do both.”



CAC – Customer Acquisition Cost
ROAS – Return on Ad Spend

Future-Proofing Solutions Through Intelligent Collaborations

Trapper Group has long been recognised as Malaysia's most formidable independent media force – a homegrown powerhouse built not on global backing but on Malaysian grit, diverse talent and an unwavering belief that homegrown agencies can stand tall alongside multinational networks.



COVER STORY

Independence has never been a disadvantage. For Trapper, it is a competitive edge. Founded by Sivanathan Krishnan and Beverly Koh, Trapper has grown from modest beginnings into Malaysia's leading independent media group, grounded in its belief as Growth Engineers in delivering real and measurable business outcomes for its clients.

At Trapper, everything starts with the people leading the business. The leadership team brings together different backgrounds, perspectives and strengths, but what unites them is a shared belief in doing media with purpose – and doing it well.

Chief Operations Officer, Agnes Yee, is the steady hand behind the scenes, making sure the business runs smoothly without ever stifling creativity. Having worked across global and local brands, she's known for building structures that support big ideas while keeping teams nimble and grounded.

Chief Business Officer, Sheley Lim, keeps the focus firmly on growth and results. Her experience across categories – from FMCG and finance to automotive and luxury – means she understands what clients

really need. She's direct, commercially sharp, and deeply invested in turning ambition into outcomes that matter.

Media leadership sits with Louise Moo, the Chief Media Officer, who thrives on complexity. She has a knack for connecting insight to execution, shaping campaigns that make sense across different markets while still feeling relevant on the ground.

Leading strategy and content is Gita Sriram, the Chief Strategy Officer – a global thinker driven by curiosity about people, culture and behaviour. She's known for asking the uncomfortable questions, challenging familiar thinking, and pushing teams to create work that feels both brave and meaningful.

Driving Trapper's digital momentum is Dev Banarjee, the Chief Digital Officer. With a deep understanding of how technology can elevate ideas, he ensures digital innovation isn't treated as an add-on, but as something that strengthens every campaign from the inside out.

Together with the founders, this diverse yet closely aligned team has helped shape Trapper into one of Malaysia's standout independent agencies – focused, future-facing, and built to deliver

COVER STORY



work that makes a real impact.

From its humble beginnings, Trapper is today a RECMA ranked agency of International repute

In October, the Paris-based Research Company Evaluating the Media Agency Industry (RECMA) ranked Trapper among the top five media agencies in Malaysia, the 5th best independent agency in the Asia-Pacific region, and 14th globally – standing shoulder-to-shoulder

with major players.

While Trapper invests deeply in tools, platforms and infrastructure, its philosophy has always been human-centred.

“For me, the real engine of Trapper isn’t our tools or our scale – it’s our people and the culture we’ve built together. Operations only become ‘intelligent’ when the humans behind them are empowered, trusted and fuelled by purpose,” says Agnes.

For clients, this independence becomes a strategic advantage –

COVER STORY



“Operations only become ‘intelligent’ when the humans behind them are empowered, trusted and fuelled by purpose,”

AGNES

unlocking agility, faster pivots and freedom from bureaucracy.

“We don’t need to be part of a network that we’re handcuffed to,” says Sheley.

“We don’t need a spread of tools with different logos when we can build what we need ourselves. It is better to have a strong network of collaborators.”

For most agencies, integration is a claim. At Trapper, it is a way of working – ingrained in how teams collaborate, make decisions and move in rhythm with clients.

“Strategy is the glue that holds every campaign together,” Gita explains.

Her team of strategists and analysts work directly within client teams, responding in real time as

COVER STORY

the market shifts.

“While many agencies talk about integration, Trapper lives it. It’s in our DNA. At Trapper, strategists sit inside client teams, not in parallel silos, allowing campaigns to adapt in real time as market signals shift,” Gita notes.

This approach enables Trapper to track and interpret changes in consumer sentiment early – ensuring campaigns are shaped by both present realities and predictive insight.

“Crafting in the traditional sense belongs to a slower era. There is no perfect plan; agility is everything, with frameworks acting as guides rather than constraints. The magic happens when a fresh idea or new trial complements proven, safer approaches – keeping consumers excited and the competition on edge,” Louise says.

“As digital and AI transform media, we champion bold, imaginative thinking, grounded in performance and elevated by innovation. We strive to unlock new opportunities that move audiences and increase impact,” Louise adds.

A defining moment in Trapper’s growth came in May 2024



“We don’t need to be part of a network that we’re handcuffed to,”

SHELEY

when the agency secured the global media remit for Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG). It won against formidable global network agencies in a highly competitive pitch.

This victory marked a progressive shift toward the “local for local” trend sweeping the region – where homegrown brands partner with local agencies in mutually beneficial collaborations that combine cultural insight with world-class execution.

The alliance between MAG, one of Malaysia’s largest

COVER STORY



“Strategy is the glue that holds every campaign together,”
GITANJALI

multinational companies, and Trapper, the nation’s leading independent media agency, has created a seismic shift in market perception.

This partnership has elevated the credibility of all Malaysian media agencies and opened doors for similar collaborations that can genuinely strengthen and grow the overall domestic industry.

To enhance capabilities that champion their philosophy of bold and imaginative thinking, Trapper launched Sticky Rice, its social-first agency, in 2023. Known for

regional relevance and high-performance content, Sticky Rice doesn’t merely publish content – it shapes brand influence – building reputation and engagement with clarity, intent and purpose.

Siva is emphatic that we are now in a “Creator Economy”, shaped by immersive experiences, niche content and AI-powered personalisation.

“In this environment, the advantage belongs to those who can craft AI-driven immersive content that moves at the speed of culture and resonates with real human behaviour,” he says.

This ambition led to Trapper Group’s newly launched Content Innovation Arm. Designed to complement Sticky Rice’s established social expertise, the Content Innovation Arm focuses on scalable, adaptive and AI-enabled content frameworks that allow brands to respond to increasing social demands with speed, consistency and commercial efficiency.

This structure enables Sticky Rice to continue leading with strong creative thinking and narrative development, while the new arm supports the speed and scale essential to modern social ecosystems.

COVER STORY



“T-REE is how we future-proof our work,”

DEV

“Sticky Rice brings the spark, and the Content Innovation Arm provides the system. Our clients include both local and global brands, who don’t just need content anymore; they need ideas that can travel, adapt and remain relevant across platforms and formats,” Gita says.

In an environment where every marketing dollar is expected to deliver measurable value, the absence of real-time clarity can stall both growth and decision-making.

For this reason, the next leap forward for the industry is not

simply another tool, but a shift towards smarter ways of working. Intelligent operations bring unified data, automated workflows, machine-assisted insights and transparent governance together within a single ecosystem – allowing teams to think with greater clarity and move with greater speed.

This conviction led Trapper Group to reimagine how media operations should work, resulting in the creation of T-REE, developed in partnership with Australian technology firm Rubii.

“T-REE is how we future-proof our work,” Dev explains.

“My focus at Trapper is ensuring Transformation, Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency work in harmony. That’s where true growth occurs.”

Rather than operating as another standalone tool, the platform acts as an intelligence layer designed to fix the structural inefficiencies built into legacy media systems. It brings data from major platforms into one view, automates campaign monitoring, streamlines reconciliation, and delivers real-time performance visibility.

This shift towards intelligence-led operations is changing how

COVER STORY



“We strive to unlock new opportunities that move audiences and increase impact,”
LOUISE

agencies are built and how they work.

By removing much of the manual and repetitive workload, analysts, planners and strategists can spend more time on higher-value, strategic thinking.

Leadership teams benefit from a more consistent and scalable operating model, while clients gain access to reliable data, real-time visibility and clear tracking of

marketing investments, making it easier to move faster and act with confidence.

As data volumes grow and platforms become more complex, agencies that place intelligence at the centre of their operations will be better equipped to drive efficiency, accountability and long-term value.

Trapper’s early growth was powered by local SME clients, and as the Group accelerates its upward trajectory, it remains committed to supporting this segment at scale.

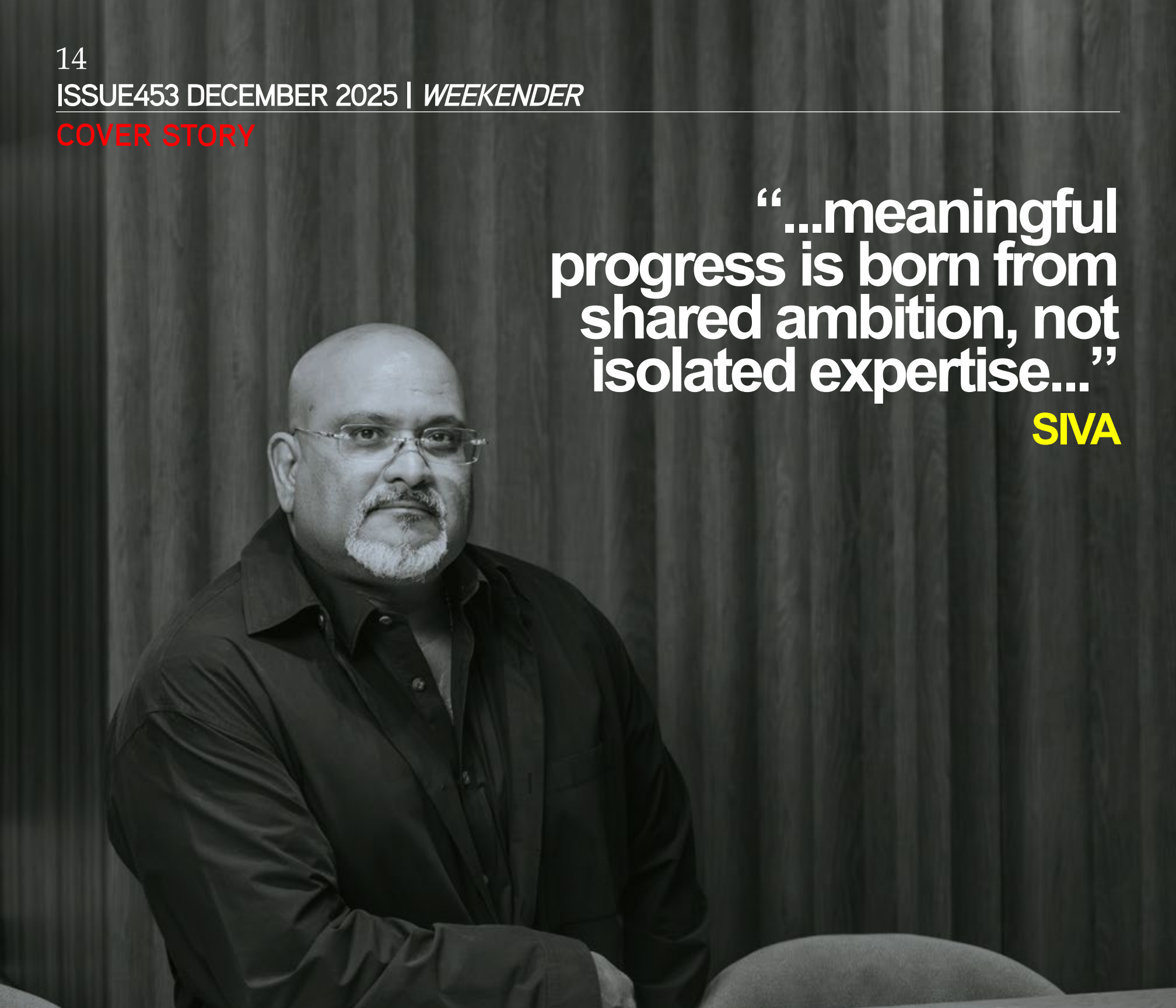
This commitment led to the launch of AdWork in 2024 – a custom-built, collaborative, self-service media-buying platform that brings SMEs and Trapper teams together, giving businesses access to the structure, tools and data typically reserved for large-scale marketers.

“We’re not interested in just planning and buying media,” Sheley says. “We aim to build momentum that propels brands forward. It’s far more rewarding when we can see, feel and celebrate the impact we create together.”

Siva asserts that “this spirit of collaboration sits at the heart of Trapper – a profound belief

“...meaningful progress is born from shared ambition, not isolated expertise...”

SIVA



that meaningful progress is born from shared ambition, not isolated expertise: breakthrough innovations rarely emerge from solitary genius but rather from the fertile ground where different minds, experiences, and perspectives meet and merge. Trapper champions the idea that when we pool our collective wisdom and unite behind common goals, we unlock possibilities that may seem unsurmountable.”

Trapper is a local champion with world-class capabilities. It

has never waited for permission, validation or a global stamp of approval. It forged its own path – and forced the industry to take notice.

With new platforms, expanded capabilities and a rising generation of Malaysian talent, Trapper Group is preparing for its most ambitious phase yet.

Rooted in purpose, fuelled by people and driven by independence – Trapper remains proudly Malaysian and fiercely independent.



STRAWBERRY-FLAVORED EMPHYSEMA.



Electronic cigarettes
are harmful to your health.



GOVERNMENT OF
RIO DE JANEIRO



4 Things Every Marketer Must Learn From Labubu

When was the last time that your Marketing truly transformed the performance of your business?
When did you totally disrupt your industry?

For most marketers – if they’re honest – the answer is “Never”. Which is why I love Labubu.

Because it was Labubu’s Marketing – and only its Marketing – that created a US\$1 billion+ business out of nothing. And transformed an industry forever.

Here’s why Labubu’s Marketing has set a new standard for the world.

IDEAS FOR GROWTH



Labubu is just another 'Ugly-Cute' Doll

Labubu's Product is Totally Unoriginal

The least innovative thing about Labubu is the character or the product design.

Both reflect the perennial trend of "kimo-kawaii" or "busu-kawaii" (meaning 'creepy-cute' or 'ugly-cute').

This trend originated in Japan as a rebellion against the flawless, Japanese "kawaii" look – which emphasised cute, innocent beauty typified by generations of sweet, doe-eyed dolls and animes.

Globally, it's been popular in toy design for over 75 years – from the Trolls to Sesame Street, from UglyDolls to Fugglers, Gremlins and Stitch.

And it's been a leading fashion trend for much of this century – through designers like Prada, Miu Miu, Jean Paul Gaultier, Vivienne

Westwood, Rick Owens and Gareth Pugh.

Labubu is a simple 'me-too' – one of thousands of 'ugly-cute' toy dolls available around the world.

It's nothing special or distinctive – let alone unique.

What set it apart was its Marketing.

Labubu's Marketing is 100% Magic

While the product was predictable – Labubu's Marketing was radically new – in both Strategy and Tactics.

Here's 4 lessons for every Marketer:



Labubu's Strategy created an uncontested 'Blue Ocean'

1. A 'Blue Ocean' Marketing Strategy

Labubu created a new, uncontested market space by totally rethinking their industry

For decades, the playbook for toy & character success was written by giants like Disney, Mattel & Hasbro.

IDEAS FOR GROWTH

It was a formulaic world of ads, movies, retail distribution, displays & shelf-domination – all targeted at children and their adult purchasers.

But Labubu identified a radically new business opportunity. They shifted the market from:

- Children's Toys to Adult Collectibles – targeted at Gen Z and Millennials, not kids.
- Functional Child-Play to Social & Fashion Accessories

That ability to see and seize this new 'Blue Ocean' was the key to Labubu's success.

The strategy defined their tactics – and determined their success.

And – as a result – Labubu's tactics were also pretty cool:



*The Labubu 'Blind Box':
Which Labubu will you get?*

2. 'Mystery Marketing' that creates Addiction

Labubu was among the pioneers of 'Blind Box' Marketing – a radical innovation in the industry.

Because you didn't choose to buy a specific Labubu – you bought a sealed box with a random figure inside.

And you didn't know which figure you're going to get until you opened it.

So – for \$20-30 – you don't just get a toy.

You get a shot of dopamine – and a chance of finding something even more exciting inside.

Because of another Labubu Marketing Innovation:

3. 'Engineered Scarcity' that sparks Obsession



成交价

RMB 1,242,000

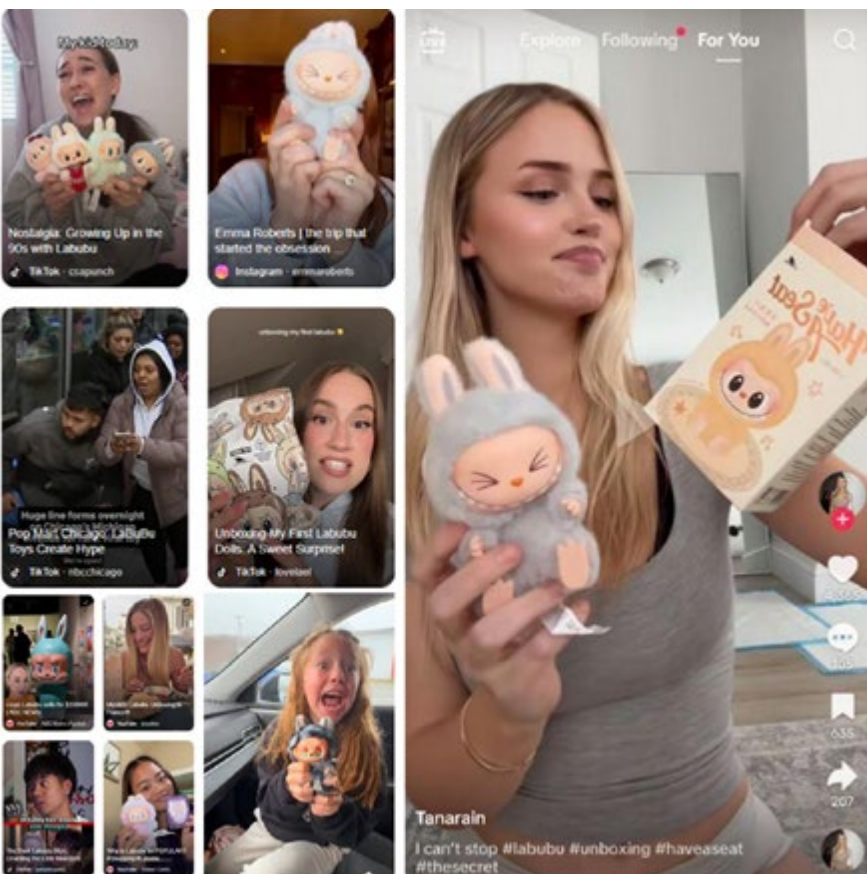
How much could your Labubu be worth?

In every series, one ultra-rare "secret" figure was randomly hidden in about 1 in 144 boxes.

IDEAS FOR GROWTH

In fact, some were so rare that they could sell for over \$1,500 on the secondary market.

The Effect? Massive FOMO – and a social obsession. Everyone hoped to find the secret treasure inside their mystery box. And this, in turn, led to another breakthrough in modern marketing:



The Excitement of Labubu 'Unboxing'

4. 'Science-Based Rituals' that ignite Social Sharing

Instead of encouraging audiences to share their toys on-line – Labubu encouraged everyone to share something far more powerful: Their experience of 'Box-Opening' – the irresistible moments of anticipation & surprise.

This simple technique taps into the ultimate science of social sharing – the critical trigger of virality that most Marketers simply don't understand.

[If you want to learn more about the Science of Virality – just let me know.]

The result was a tsunami of free, authentic, peer-driven social marketing – days and weeks of TikTok excitement.

Can You Transform Your Business?

These are just a few of many Labubu innovations: innovations that transformed an industry.

Whereas most Marketing today is 100% predictable:

The usual social media content. Some underwhelming UGC. Some overpaid influencers. Loads of likes. A few Gen Z hot buttons. The latest in live-streaming. Blah blah blah...

But if you really want to make a difference – to your business, to your industry and to your life – you can learn a lot from Labubu.

If you'd like to know more, just get in touch: Connect@YourTransformers.com



Chris Jaques is Asia's #1 Innovation Coach



WORD OF THE YEAR

Rage Bait Is Oxford's Word of the Year — And What It Quietly Reveals About Modern Marketing

by *The Marketeer*



rage bait

noun

There's a bleak sort of poetry in Oxford University Press naming "*rage bait*" as its Word of the Year for 2025. A dictionary is supposed to reflect culture, not shape it.

Yet here we are, with one of the world's most respected linguistic institutions confirming what Malaysian marketers have felt in their bones for years: *anger drives clicks because anger keeps people scrolling.*

But underneath the headline is something more valuable for brands and agencies — a warning, a mirror, and oddly enough, an opportunity.

The Age of Outrage — and the Algorithms That Feed It

Oxford defines "*rage bait*" as content "deliberately designed to elicit anger or outrage... typically posted to increase traffic or engagement."

WORD OF THE YEAR

... Outrage is the currency that social platforms quietly bank on because it extends session time and fuels the machine...

Simple enough. But the story lives in *why* rage bait has risen to the top of the global lexicon.

Casper Grathwohl, head of OUP's languages division, put it well: the surge of such terms "reveals how **digital platforms** are reshaping our thinking and behaviour."

Notice the phrasing: not shaping our feeds, but shaping *us*.

In today's algorithmic economy, outrage isn't a glitch — it's a feature.

Every angry share, quote-tweet, and WhatsApp forward is treated as proof of relevance.

Outrage is the currency that social platforms quietly bank on because it extends session time and fuels the machine.

And marketers, willingly or not, often get dragged into that current.

When 30,000 people vote in three days for a word that essentially means "content engineered to upset you," it tells us something fundamental: anger has become a growth hack

Malaysia's Marketing Industry Knows This All Too Well

Scroll through Threads Malaysia on any riotous day and you'll see the playbook.

Brands teasing each other. Snipey comments about "lazy ads." Creators "exposing" brands for shady packaging or tone-deaf campaigns. Political snark masquerading as consumer advocacy.

None of this is accidental. Outrage — even light, comedic outrage — spreads.

But here's the catch: Malaysian audiences are now savvy enough to know when they're being manipulated.

As quickly as "rage bait" grows clicks, it can also trigger brand fatigue, trust erosion, and the most feared metric in 2025: *negative sentiment velocity* — how quickly a backlash picks up steam.

WORD OF THE YEAR

And once the spiral begins, no amount of “we apologise for any misunderstanding” statements can put the genie back in the bottle.

Rage Bait Isn't Just About Anger — It's About Emotion

Marketing has always been in the business of emotion. What's changed is the emotional hierarchy of the internet.

In the **attention economy**, not all emotions travel equally:

- Anger spreads fastest.
- Humour spreads widely but briefly.
- Joy spreads softly but steadily.
- Sadness spreads selectively.
- Calmness rarely spreads at all.

So algorithms — optimised for engagement, not wellbeing — reward the strongest provocation.

The rise of the word itself shows the emotional distortion field we're all operating in.

Oxford's data scientists tracked usage across a “30-billion-word corpus.”

The fact that “rage bait” outpaced “aura farming” and “biohack” — two of Gen Z's favourite self-improvement vocab terms — says something worrying: *people weren't talking about becoming better; they were*

talking about becoming angrier.

For marketers, that's a cultural fault line.

Brands talk about building emotional connections — but the digital behaviour of consumers reveals emotional exhaustion.

What Should Malaysian Marketers Read Into This?

Three things.

1. Outrage may get reach, but trust gets retention.

Short-term spikes from controversy are tempting. But Malaysian consumers have long memories. They reward consistency, warmth and effort — not provocation for provocation's sake.

2. The next phase of marketing is “emotion stewardship.”

If tech platforms are shaping how people feel, then brands — the only entities with daily, human-scale influence — have a responsibility to recalibrate the emotional climate.

Brands that help people feel *better* (not angrier) will enjoy longer-term engagement.

Think about Etiqa's recent “Born here with you” campaign, or even the wholesome banter

WORD OF THE YEAR

that works on Threads. These succeed because they *restore* something — not agitate it.

3. Emotion is now a competitive advantage.

Not data. Not AI. Not personalisation.

Emotion.

And the brands that understand the emotional condition of Malaysians — our humour, our tensions, our sensitivities, our love for nuance — will outperform those still chasing clicks with shallow tactics.

The 2025 Word of the Year proves it: consumers are overwhelmed. Outrage is everywhere. People are craving relief. This creates a gap that only brave, emotionally intelligent marketers can fill.

Rage Bait Is a Mirror — Marketers Must Decide What to Do With the Reflection

Oxford choosing “rage bait” is not an endorsement; it’s a diagnosis.

It tells us the world’s digital bloodstream is running hot.

It tells us people feel manipulated by their feeds.

It tells us the internet, for all its

... In 2026, the marketers who win won’t be the ones who jump on the latest provocation...

promise, has become emotionally overclocked.

But it also tells us something hopeful: the public *noticed*.

They voted for this word because they recognised it — and perhaps because they’re tired of it.

For the industry, that creates an opening.

In 2026, the marketers who win won’t be the ones who jump on the latest provocation.

They will be the ones who understand this moment clearly and respond with something better — work that resonates without exploiting, moves without baiting, and builds without inflaming.

Because if 2025 was the year rage bait became a dictionary entry, then 2026 should be the year marketing chooses another path.

A path where emotion is still the engine — but humanity is the steering wheel.

The Most Valuable Media Isn't Media Anymore

How high-intent ecosystems like TNG eWallet are reshaping modern marketing.



The future of marketing is no longer about chasing attention, it's about earning presence. As TNG eWallet weaves itself into the everyday financial lives of Malaysians, it is evolving into a high-intent ecosystem where brands move beyond interruption and into relevance. Showing up in moments shaped by real behaviour, real needs and real intent.

For decades, marketing has been built around a single pursuit: attention. But attention has become increasingly fragmented. People scroll past more than they absorb. They see more than they

remember. And while impressions continue to rise, genuine influence has grown harder to secure.

What marketers are really seeking now is something rarer and far more valuable: intention.

Intention lives in moments of purpose. When people are not browsing or killing time, but actively deciding. When actions are deliberate, signals are honest and relevance matters more than volume. These moments happen in the flow of everyday life.

This is where platforms like TNG eWallet enter the conversation. Not as a payment tool, but as a reflection of how

THE AGE OF DIGITAL MONEY

... the platform reaches more than 85% of Malaysians, making it one of the widest and most frequent digital touchpoints in the country...

marketing environments are evolving.

When Daily Routines Become Decision Moments

From paying for meals to reloading balances, transferring money, checking bills and planning travel, TNG eWallet lives inside the most habitual actions of modern Malaysian life. What began in 2017 as a digital wallet has since grown into a comprehensive financial and lifestyle ecosystem, connecting over 25 million verified users to everyday needs through routines repeated multiple times a day.

Users open the app more than three times a day on average, completing over 38 transactions per month, with

monthly spend averaging around RM1,700 per user. Collectively, the platform reaches more than 85% of Malaysians, making it one of the widest and most frequent digital touchpoints in the country.

For marketers, it offers something increasingly rare: proximity to real decisions, made in real life.

Presence, Not Interruption

Financial platforms like TNG eWallet occupy a different mental space from social or content platforms. People don't open an eWallet to be entertained. Every interaction inside TNG eWallet is anchored in real-world needs. And within these moments, brands have the opportunity to appear naturally, not as interruptions, but as part of the decision journey itself.

This is not about shouting louder. It is about showing up at the right time.

Through Ads on TNG eWallet, brands can connect with consumers when choices are already forming, rather than trying to manufacture interest from scratch. The result is a marketing environment where brands can guide consumers

THE AGE OF DIGITAL MONEY

meaningfully across the funnel — from awareness to engagement to action — within a single, integrated ecosystem.

Behaviour Speaks Louder Than Profiles

Much of digital advertising still relies on inferred identities: demographics, interests, lookalike segments. Useful, but often removed from real behaviour.

Within the TNG eWallet environment, behaviour tells a clearer story.

Spending patterns reveal what people prioritise in real life. And paired with clear demographic insights across region, age, gender and ethnicity, this allows brands to engage consumers with greater precision.

When marketing aligns with behaviour instead of interrupting it, relevance becomes the default, not the exception.

Habit as the New Advantage

If intention explains when brands can matter, habit explains why they keep mattering.

Perhaps the most underestimated strength of TNG eWallet is not just the quality of its moments, but their frequency. People don't engage with the platform out of novelty,

but necessity. The app is opened not once in a while, but repeatedly. Day after day, transaction after transaction.

For brands, this creates a fundamentally different dynamic. Habitual environments enable compounding exposure: repeated, low-friction interactions that build familiarity over time without the fatigue of forced repetition. Presence accumulates. Recognition deepens. Trust forms quietly.

This is where brand building and performance stop being opposing forces. In habitual ecosystems, every interaction can reinforce both.

From Awareness to Action, in One Place

In many media environments, awareness lives in one place, consideration in another, and conversion somewhere else entirely. Within an integrated ecosystem like TNG eWallet, exposure, engagement and transaction can happen within the same environment... and often within minutes.

Native placements, homepage surfaces, P2P touchpoints, reward programmes, location-based discovery and gamified formats

THE AGE OF DIGITAL MONEY

... the most powerful place for a brand to be is not where people are looking but where they are already deciding...

allow brands to meet users where decisions are already taking shape.

For marketers, this creates the ability to understand how timing influences decisions, how engagement translates into action, and how cultural moments or seasonal peaks drive real outcomes.

Measurement here is grounded in behaviour, not assumptions.

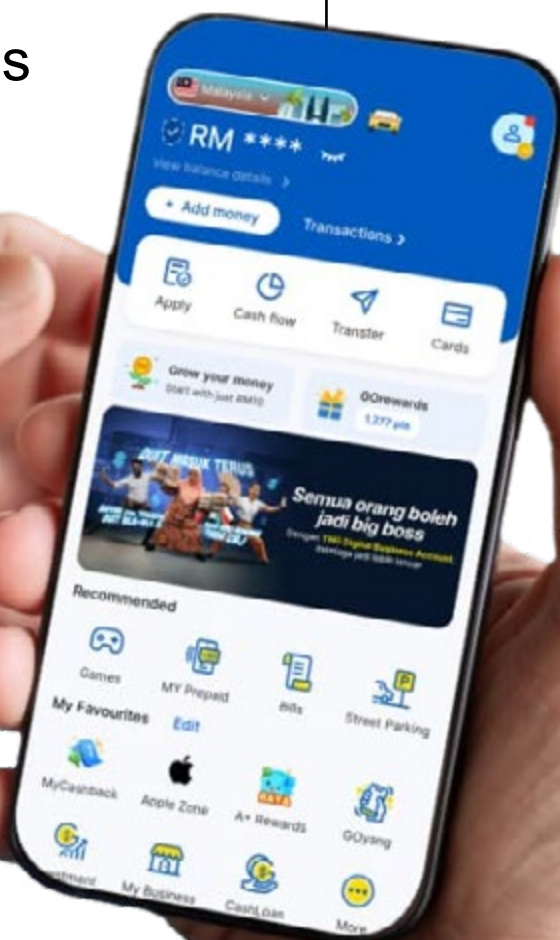
Rethinking What Media Really Means

As marketing continues to evolve, the definition of media itself is shifting. It is no longer confined to content or entertainment spaces. Increasingly, media lives inside systems that power everyday life.

TNG eWallet reflects this shift. Not as a channel to shout louder, but as an environment where brands can show up quietly, meaningfully and at the right moment.

The future of marketing may not belong to the platforms that capture the most attention but to those that sit closest to intention. Where messages align with action, relevance replaces noise, and engagement feels less like persuasion and more like participation.

In a world saturated with messages, perhaps the most powerful place for a brand to be is not where people are looking but where they are already deciding.

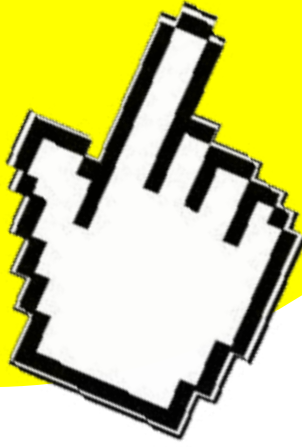


To find out more
click here



TRENDING

MOST READ ON
WWW.MARKETING.com.my
(12th December – 19th December 2025)



2026: The Year Growth Stops Being a Campaign and Becomes a System
Pageviews: 3,305



Meaning That Moves Markets – Inside Havas' 2026 Creative-Commercial Blueprint
Pageviews: 3,102



AI Won't Save You – 2026 Belongs to Culture-Smart Brands
Pageviews: 3,011



Southeast Asia 2025: The Year Brands Tried Everything, And Some of It Worked
Pageviews: 2,975



Brands That Resonate: The Journey of Brand Resonance in Malaysia and Beyond
Pageviews: 2,587

HUMANISING THE BRAND



(From left) Toni Darusman, Group Chief Brand and Marketing Officer, CIMB Group, Aman RA, Malaysian rapper, and Dato' Azizulhasni Awang, CIMB's Brand Ambassador at the CIMB Kita Bagi Jadi Arts & Culture launch event.

CIMB's Kita Bagi Jadi Movement Continues To Spark Positivity and Resilience

CIMB carried its *Kita Bagi Jadi* social movement forward into 2025 with a clear intent: to move beyond symbolism and show how purpose translates into action. First introduced in 2024 to mark the bank's 100-year milestone, *Kita Bagi Jadi* was positioned as a promise to spread positivity and resilience among Malaysians.

This year, the bank demonstrated how that promise is being delivered through a fully integrated, 360-degree approach spanning culture, community, partnerships and consumer experiences.

HUMANISING THE BRAND



The key visual of *Bangun, Kita Bagi Jadi!* music video featuring Malaysian rapper, Aman RA and Olympian, Dato' Azizulhasni Awang.

An anthem for resilience

At the heart of the movement in 2025 is *Bangun, Kita Bagi Jadi!*, a reimagined music video that has emerged as both a creative anchor and a cultural statement. Featuring Malaysian rapper Aman RA alongside Olympian and national cycling icon Dato' Azizulhasni Awang, the refreshed version of Aman RA's iconic track *Bangun* was launched in conjunction with Malaysia's 68th Merdeka celebrations.

More than a music collaboration, the video brings together real stories of resilience and progress. Since its launch in August, it garnered over to 40 million views across

YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, quickly evolving into a unifying anthem that resonated strongly with youth while amplifying a nationwide sense of optimism.

CIMB extended the campaign beyond screens with a surprise guerrilla marketing activation in Bukit Bintang. What began as a routine street busking session transformed into a live patriotic showcase when Aman RA appeared alongside street musicians and the Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra.

Supported by breakdancers, silat performers and nearby digital billboards with the music video, the flash mob drew a

HUMANISING THE BRAND



Toni Darusman, Group Chief Brand and Marketing Officer, CIMB Group

... RM90 billion in financing, split evenly between low-income groups and small SMEs...

spontaneous crowd, many of whom captured and shared the moment across social media.

The social movement's physical presence was further amplified with a full takeover of Masjid Jamek LRT station. Wrapped in CIMB's signature red and emblazoned with *Kita*



The Masjid Jamek LRT station was transformed into a vibrant showcase for CIMB's Bangun, Kita Bagi Jadi! campaign.



Bagi Jadi messages, the station became an immersive brand zone.

Advancing communities through long-term commitment

CIMB Group committed RM200 million over the next five years to advance customers and

HUMANISING THE BRAND

society across ASEAN through the *Kita Bagi Jadi Komuniti* platform. This includes facilitating RM90 billion in financing, split evenly between low-income groups and small SMEs.

The initiatives focus on long-term economic empowerment, community wellbeing and financial inclusion, particularly among youth, the unbanked and underserved. Programmes include the Women Entrepreneur Empowerment initiative, Jaga Duit financial literacy workshops, and TNG Digital's Let's Duit, a nationwide push to strengthen digital and financial inclusion.

Consumer marketing that enables life goals

CIMB's consumer-centric marketing reinforces its positioning as an enabler of aspirations, even when life does not go as planned. Campaigns such as *Travel only with CIMB* frame the bank as a partner in helping Malaysians realise their travel ambitions seamlessly.

Supported by a comprehensive suite of travel-related products, the campaign was brought to life through guerrilla activations at MATTA Fair, KL Sentral, Bukit Bintang,

KLCC and other high-traffic locations, driving visibility and engagement around exclusive travel benefits for CIMB cardholders.

Culture, commerce and MSME empowerment

CIMB also leaned into grassroots economic participation through OCTOFest: Dandang Desa at Pasar Seni. Designed to uplift local MSMEs while accelerating digital adoption, the three-day festival attracted over 3,000 visitors and featured more than 100 vendors across food, crafts, fashion and lifestyle.

By enabling cashless payments via DuitNow QR and onboarding MSMEs onto OCTO App and OCTOBiz solutions, CIMB lowered barriers to formal financial access. Live performances, traditional games and a special appearance by Aman RA reinforced the connection between heritage, community and digital progress.

Backing Malaysian talent beyond the mainstream

Under the Brand Partnership pillar, CIMB introduced rising motorsports talent Amer Harris Jefry as its first partner in this

HUMANISING THE BRAND



OCTOFest: Dendang Desa at Pasar Seni drew an impressive crowd as CIMB, together with KL Foodie, promoted MSMEs' digital adoption through the OCTO App and OCTO Biz.

field. A three-time Asia Go-Kart Champion and the only Malaysian selected for the Porsche Carrera Cup Asia Talent Pool in 2025, Amer embodies resilience, ambition and determination.

He joins CIMB's growing roster of brand partners, including the Bank's ambassador, Dato' Azizulhasni Awang and national squash icon S. Sivasangari, reinforcing the bank's commitment to empowering Malaysians who break barriers and redefine success.

Championing creativity through Artober

Arts and culture remain central to the *Kita Bagi Jadi* movement. The launch of *Bangun, Kita Bagi Jadi!* also marked the start of CIMB Artober: Art & Soul, featuring media engagements and panel discussions on creativity, collaboration and cultural impact.

Celebrating its fifth year, CIMB Artober has raised more than RM20 million for the art community since 2020 and showcased thousands

HUMANISING THE BRAND



(From left) Novan Amirudin, Group Chief Executive Officer of CIMB Group, Datuk Syed Zaid Albar, Chairman of CIMB Group, Datuk Seri Utama Tengku Zafrul Aziz, former Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry, visiting the booth of young neurodivergent artists from HUGE Art at CIMB Artobor Art & Soul 2025.

of artworks. The 2025 edition brought together over 30 galleries and 100 artists, rare works from the late Datuk Ibrahim Hussein's collection, and digital innovations such as AR-enabled catalogues, alongside an art auction supporting humanitarian efforts.

Humanising the brand through digital storytelling

Online, CIMB's social media efforts introduced CIMB Heroes, a reel series spotlighting the people behind the brand. From branch tellers and customer experience teams to technology and fraud specialists, the series highlights the human stories that power CIMB's purpose-driven approach.

“At CIMB, our purpose has always been clear: advancing customers and society,” said Toni Darusman, Group Chief Brand and Marketing Officer at CIMB. “Through the *Kita Bagi Jadi* movement, we aim to turn aspirations into reality by creating tangible, meaningful outcomes that inspire resilience and optimism among Malaysians.”

Looking ahead, CIMB says *Kita Bagi Jadi* will continue to evolve beyond 2025. “Stay tuned – more exciting news will be coming your way in 2026!” Toni added. “By staying true to our purpose and values, we aspire to build a future where resilience and optimism are not just ideals, but lived experiences for all.”



AI saw mummy kissing Santa Claus



paul loosley

Santa Claus is coming to town, and it's time for some seasonal fun, so he wants you to play a special Christmas game. It goes like this.

Ask AI to do you a Christmas ad. Any subject, sillier the better. Any format TV, Social media, print. Any length, 30", 5", 1'. It's great fun and the cheekier the better. But be warned, I tried Viagra, Tear Gas and I.C.E. but AI said that was naughty. You could lose points.

Below are my entries. A couple of rude 30" TV spots,

PAUL LOOSLEY

a print ad and some very short sound bite type spots for noodles. All Christmas themed. Note, I haven't edited anything, it's just the way AI wrote them, I've even left in the sad American spelling. That's the only rule.

So let's play 'The Xmas AI Game' and as usual, there are no winners – you eventually just lose the will to live.

**Christmas TV Spot #1**

Product: Sleigh Safe Condoms

"Wrap It Up This Christmas"

Tone: Playful, cheeky, festive fun

[OPEN ON]

A bustling living room on Christmas Eve. Tinsel everywhere, lights twinkling, a couple in matching Christmas jumpers wrapping presents on the floor.

HER: "You sure we've wrapped everything?"

HIM (smirking): "Almost everything."

"This Christmas, remember — it's not just your presents that should be wrapped."

[Sleigh bells jingle outside. Cut to Santa on the roof.]

Santa pulls out a long scroll of names, sighs.

SANTA (grinning): "Better make sure everyone's on the safe list this year."

He reaches into his red sack — not for toys, but a shiny box of Sleigh Safe Condoms.

[CUT TO: Montage]

Quick shots:

Elf putting condoms on candy canes like little hats

Reindeer shaking their heads disapprovingly

Snowman winking at the camera

[VOICEOVER, upbeat and festive:]

"This Christmas, remember — it's not just your presents that should be wrapped."

[LOGO APPEARS with jingle bells:]

Sleigh Safe Condoms — Be Naughty, Stay Nice.

[FINAL TAGLINE ON SCREEN:]

Wrap up for a merry little Christmas.

PAUL LOOSLEY**Christmas TV Spot #2**

Product: LUNA Underwear

Tone: Playful, cheeky, festive fun

Title: "Own Your Comfort"

Length: 30 seconds

[Scene 1 – 0:00-0:06]

Morning light filters into a cozy apartment. A woman in soft, elegant underwear wraps a ribbon around a gift.

VO (warm, confident): "This year, the best gift isn't under the tree..."

[Scene 2 – 0:07-0:14]

Quick cuts: different women laughing, dancing, relaxing — all wearing beautifully comfortable underwear in neutral tones.

VO: "...it's how you feel when you wear it."

[Scene 3 – 0:15-0:22]

Friends toast with coffee mugs; one woman throws on a blazer over her set, ready to head out.

VO: "Confidence that fits.

Comfort that lasts. Moments that

are completely yours."

[Scene 4 – 0:23-0:30]

Snow falls outside as the women share a smile in a mirror's reflection. Logo appears.

VO: "Own your comfort.

Celebrate your shine."

Logo on-screen: LUNA

Underwear — Gift Yourself.

**Christmas TV Spot #3**

Nostalgic (5 seconds)

Visual: Flashback to childhood — opening gifts, cutting to mom serving noodles.

VO: "Some gifts you can taste."

Logo: Home-Made Holiday Noodles.

PAUL LOOSLEY

“The best gift isn’t under the tree.”



Christmas TV Spot #4

Pet Ad (5 seconds)

Visual: Dog wearing reindeer ears stares at noodles on table.

VO: “Don’t worry, Santa’s bringing yours too.”

Logo: Pup Ramen — Christmas Edition.



Christmas magazine Ad #1

Brand: LUNA Underwear

Magazine Ad: “Own Your Comfort”

Theme: Modern, confident, Christmas minimalism

Target Audience: Women 20–40, lifestyle / fashion readers

Visual layout:

Main image: A woman standing in soft morning light beside a decorated Christmas tree — wearing an elegant, neutral-toned underwear set and an oversized cardigan.

PAUL LOOSLEY



Mood: Calm, cozy, confident — no clichés, no sparkle overload. The tree glows subtly in the background.

Color palette: Warm beige, soft gold, ivory, and candlelight tones.

Headline (top center):

“The best gift isn’t under the tree.”

Body copy:

It’s the way you feel when the day begins.

When comfort meets confidence.

When softness becomes strength.

This season, gift yourself something that fits — not just your body, but your spirit.

Tagline (bottom right):

LUNA Underwear — Own Your Comfort.

Call to Action:

Available online and in select boutiques. Holiday Collection 2025.

If you can’t do better than these without AI don’t let the tinsel hit you on the way out.

Merry Christmas. Ho Bloody Ho!

Paul Loosley is an English person who has been in Asia 47 years, 12 as a Creative Director, 25 making TV commercials. And in recent years, a brand consultant. And still, for some strange reason, he can’t shut-up about advertising. Any feedback: [mail p.loosley@gmail.com](mailto:p.loosley@gmail.com) (Please don’t be naughty)





ADVERTISING'S ANNUS HORRIBILIS



As the year comes to an end, and you kick off your shoes, settling into your most comfy sofa, you may just pause for a moment and think, “What on earth just happened?”

Advertising has just been through its *annus horribilis*. Make no mistake: the advertising industry has never faced this kind of challenge to its very structure and reasons for existence.

Specifically, never have the following things all happened, at the same time:

1. Since the advent of radio and TV, in the early 1920s, never has one medium commanded 75% of ad spends in media. Such is the

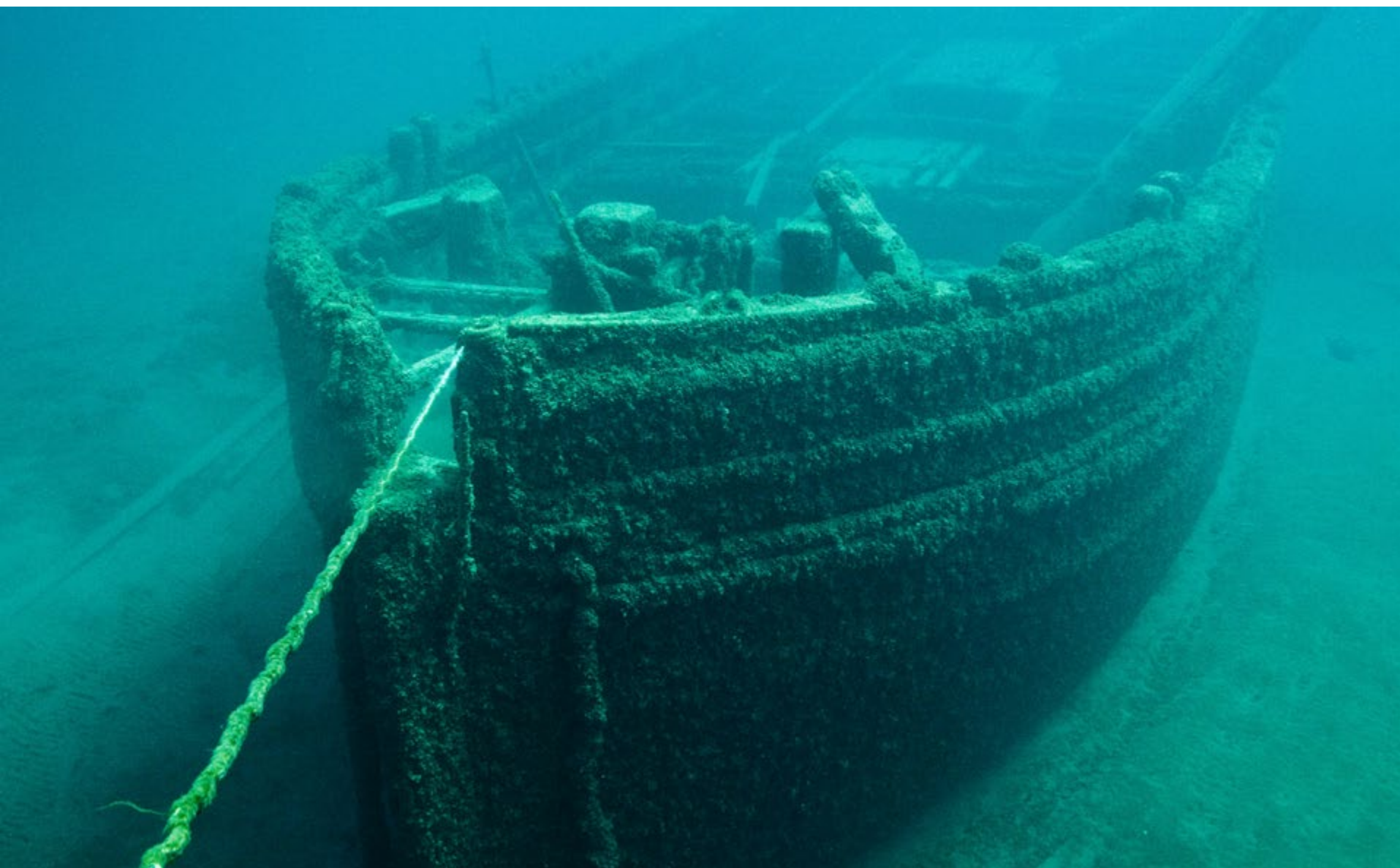
THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY

dominance of digital media, at the cost of every other media. TV and other media are in disarray, like never before.

2. There are only 6 major ad agency groups: WPP, Publicis, Dentsu, Omnicom, IPG, Havas. Never have ad agencies been so disrupted, with two of these top 6 merging (Omnicom+IPG), and another 2 are apparently on the block to be sold to anyone naive enough or brave enough to buy them (WPP and Dentsu). It's carnage with the expected order of things in complete flux.
3. By my estimates, over 150 people have lost their jobs in Malaysia, in the ad industry, over the past 1 year. It is not openly spoken about, but these numbers include CEOs of large groups, creative rank and file, as well as film production teams and more. Production houses have shuttered, Outdoor entities have merged or folded, and with the merger of Omnicom and IPG, more losses are expected.

4. Paradoxically, while the industry struggles, never have consumers spent more time consuming media, almost ten hours of media per day as a global average. In the USA it's 13 hours, in Malaysia it is more than 11 hours. This means ads are constantly fighting with content for consumer attention, and consumers are so overloaded with content that ads don't necessarily cut through.
5. Never have consumers been given more choice to skip ads. Over 90% of Gen Z skip ads. More than 36% of Malaysians use ad blockers.
6. AI is crunching timelines diabolically. Press releases that used to take 3-5 days now take less than a day to draft. Production budgets, a major source of revenue for agencies, are being slashed. Music is being composed by AI. Photographers are losing business.

The ad industry is like the Titanic, after it struck the iceberg. It's all hands on deck and deploying the life rafts.

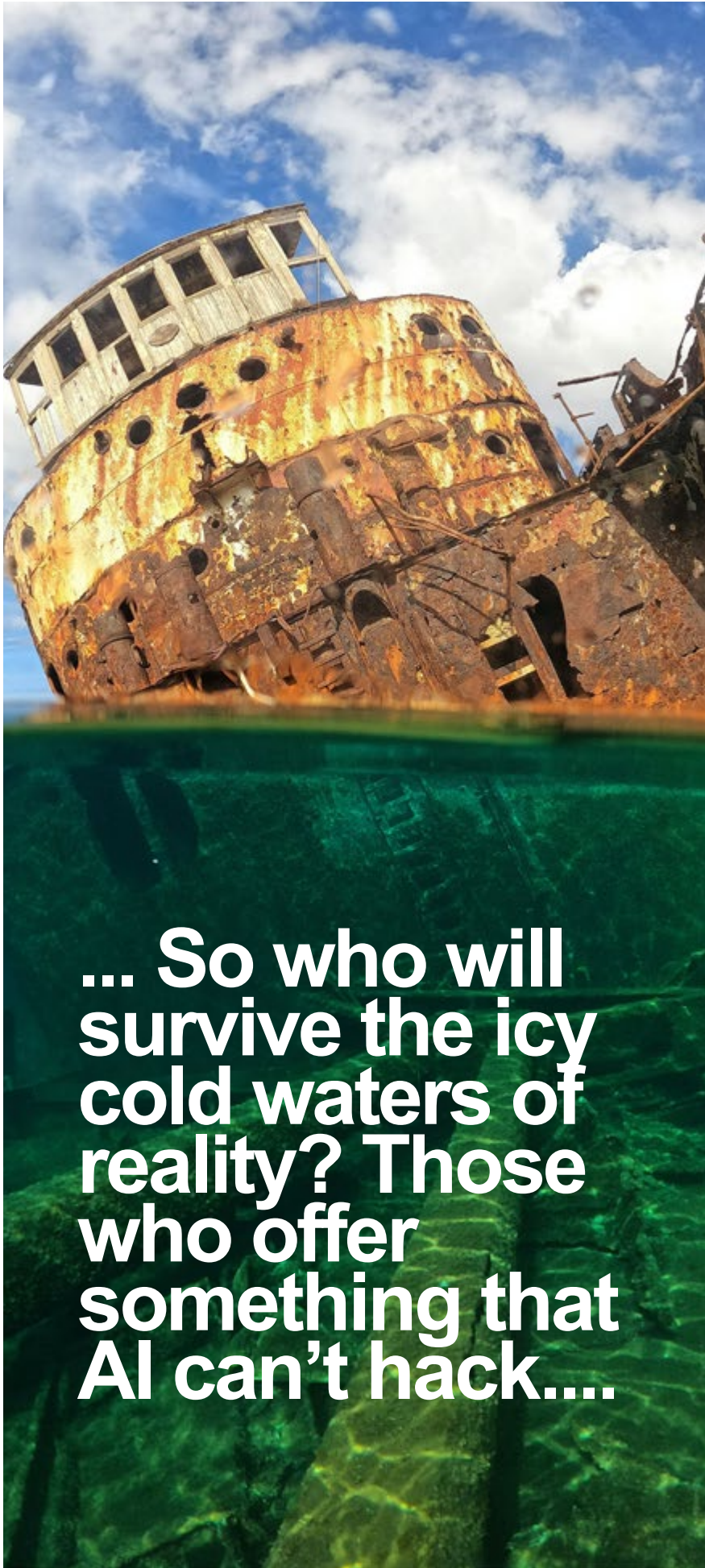


... The ad industry is like the Titanic, after it struck the iceberg. It's all hands on deck and deploying the life rafts...

So who will survive the icy cold waters of reality?

1. Those who can tackle AI and use it to their advantage. They will need to retool and reskill their agencies, cutting off those who can't swim in these new tech waves. They will need to re-structure pricing and offerings.
2. Those who offer something that AI can't hack: advice, experience, knowledge and, importantly, soft skills. I know a former agency head who now earns a handsome living advising clients how to work better with their agencies.

THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY



Something that today AI can't replicate-yet.

3. Media agencies who deliver value: the landscape is still complicated and clients are not in-housing media as fast as they in-housed creative.

4. Gen Z who are nimble, quick to learn, digitally native, adaptive and crucially, not expensive.
5. Gen X who own their own entities and can adapt, by managing costs, giving more rein to their digital savvy folk and have a clear strategy to offer clients.
6. Strategy personnel who are media agnostic and not creatively biased (these are rarer than unicorns, btw). They must innovate and find ways to blend execution with pretty slides.
7. Gen Y who don't manage others, but guide, and also roll up their sleeves and actively row in the lifeboats.
8. You, if you read this article, take heed, enjoy your break, and come back refreshed and recharged!

Seasons' Greetings, Merry Christmas and see you on the other side!



Sandeep Joseph is the CEO and co-founder of Ampersand Advisory, Campaign Global Media Independent Agency of the Year and FT Statista 500 High Growth Companies Asia Pacific 2023, 2024. He can be reached at sandeep@ampersand-advisory.com



**“NEVER DOUBT
THAT A SMALL
GROUP OF
COMMITTED PEOPLE
CAN CHANGE THE
WORLD. INDEED,
IT IS THE ONLY THING
THAT EVER HAS.”**

MARGARET MEAD

NATHALIE TAY

DAWEEN MAAN

HARMANDAR SINGH

ONE YOUNG AND AMBITIOUS PERSON AT A TIME...

