

MARKETING

ISSUE #473 SEPTEMBER 2026

WEEKENDER™

MALAYSIAN MEDIA CONFERENCE 2026

MACAM- MACAM



The 22nd Malaysian Media Conference is about all kinds of everything right now. Old and new collide, budgets swing, expectations spike, and everyone sells a different route to results. This conference is where we make sense of it all.

November 19, 2026
KLGCC Convention Centre

YES! REGISTER ME NOW



WEEKENDER

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MACAM-MACAM**

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TRADING DOWN.**

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BOERNISMS

"I THINK ADVERTISING AWARDS EXIST TO REMIND US OF THE VALUE OF IDEAS."

"ADVERTISING IS NOT GOING ANYWHERE. PEOPLE NEED TO SELL STUFF."

"I WAS BORN INTO THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY."

"WE WORK IN AN INDUSTRY WHERE CREATIVITY IS CONSTANTLY UNDER ATTACK."

"THIS IS WHAT GREAT ARTISTS DO. THEY CONNECT HISTORY AND USE IT TO MOVE FORWARD."

**DANILO BOER
GLOBAL CREATIVE
LEAD & PARTNER,
MCCANN, AND
PRESIDENT OF
THE GLOBAL
CREATIVE
COUNCIL**

WHEN AN AGENCY DEALS THE CLIENT A BLOW



Publicis Groupe has landed PepsiCo's enormous global media business.

And then promptly withdrew from the pitch for the rest of Coca-Cola's estimated US\$4 billion global media account.

That must sting.

Publicis already handles Coca-Cola's media business in the US and Canada. But PepsiCo has now appointed the Groupe as its exclusive lead global media partner across more than 200 markets.

The appointment reportedly came without a conventional pitch.

It followed a media capabilities review and will unite strategy, planning, activation, identity, data and technology under a new AI-powered "One PepsiCo" model.

PepsiCo spent US\$5.4 billion on marketing in 2025, including US\$3.4 billion on advertising.

For Publicis, the choice appears obvious.

For Coca-Cola, it is a brutal reminder of how quickly the balance of power can shift.

Clients like to believe agencies are permanently grateful for their business.

But the largest agency groups are now global platforms with their own ambitions, technology investments and commercial priorities.

Sometimes the agency does not merely lose the client.

Sometimes it chooses the competitor.

That may be the biggest blow of all.

Would you consider this smart business, or an act of disloyalty?

Just goes to show that in the advertising world of high stakes, you never know what happens behind the scenes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Herman" or "Hermana", with a stylized, scribbled flourish underneath.

channel, we broke the media ecosystem into neat, isolated ingredients.

You don't dissect the spice, the coconut milk, and the noodles of a rich mee curry—it only works when the entire bowl sings in harmony.

"Macam-Macam" is our antidote to fragmentation. This edition of the Malaysian Media Conference rips up the old single-channel playbook. It embraces a uniquely Malaysian expression to remind us that today's media landscape is a chaotic, beautiful mix of "All Kinds of Everything."

On November 19, 2026, we are bringing together the architects of the new media era—visionary strategists, brand disruptors, and cultural observers. They will step up as keynote speakers, panelists, and front-line storytellers to share raw data, real case studies, and uncompromised insights.

We will explore how complexity becomes opportunity, and how orchestration—not just orientation—becomes the ultimate survival tool.

The 22nd Malaysian Media Conference — November 19, 2026. Media used to be simple. We had a few channels, a few big slots, and a clear script. We knew where the audience was, and we knew exactly how to reach them. Then the floodgates opened.

We fragmented the landscape. We built walls around data, chased platform trends, and tried to isolate creators from commerce, AI from communities. In the rush to master the next shiny new

IMAGINE A MEDIA MIX THIS AWESOME



CHINESE CURRY NOODLES

A rich, spicy coconut milk soup filled with toppings).



YONG TAU FOO

A savory, thick, amber-colored gravy made of starch, garlic, and salted yellow bean sauce.



ROJAK PSEMBUR

A warm, spicy, and distinctively sweet potato-and-peanut gravy.



CHAPPATHI

Made from 100% whole wheat flour (atta), water, and a touch of salt.



NASI LEMAK

Undisputed national dish of Malaysia. It features fragrant rice cooked in coconut milk and pandan leaves.



SATAY

A thick, sweet, and slightly spicy peanut dipping sauce (kuah kacang), compressed rice cakes (nasi impit), raw red onions, and crisp cucumber chunks.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

BUSINESS THINKERS • MARKETING AND CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS • LEADING MARKETING COMPANIES • AGENCIES • MEDIA SPECIALISTS • DIGITAL PROFESSIONAL • MNCS • GLCS • SMES AND SMIS KEEN ON JUMP-STARTING THEIR MARKETING AGENDA IN THE MARKETPLACE.

WHY ATTEND

- Make sense of today's fast-moving and fragmented media landscape.
- Understand how AI is reshaping advertising, media and marketing.
- Connect media investment to measurable business growth.
- Learn how creativity and technology can work together at scale.
- Discover the competitive value of Malaysian talent and cultural intelligence.
- Balance short-term performance with long-term brand building.
- Turn data, platforms and technology into practical business action.
- Learn how traditional media can succeed in a digital-first world.
- Gain insights from Malaysia's leading media and business leaders.
- Build a more integrated, resilient and future-ready marketing strategy.



WINNIE CHEN-HEAD
CEO - WPP MEDIA MALAYSIA



CHRIS GREENOUGH
GM - GROWTHOPS ASIA
(MALAYSIA CAMPUS)



JO YAU
GROUP CEO - INVICTUS BLUE
GROUP

INVITED
**MEDIA
MASTER
CHEFS**



EILEEN OOI
APAC CEO - OMNICOM MEDIA
GROUP



DARREN YUEN
CEO - OMNICOM MEDIA
MALAYSIA



NICHOLAS SAGAU
COO - REV MEDIA GROUP



BALA POMALEH
CEO - DENTSU MEDIA



HENRY TAN
GROUP CEO - ASTRO



CELEBRITY CHEF

WINNIE CHEN-HEAD
CEO - WPP MEDIA MALAYSIA

Winnie Chen-Head is the Chief Executive Officer of WPP Media Malaysia, leveraging over 24 years of cross-sector expertise. Appointed in May 2026, she is a transformation-focused leader renowned for driving commercial growth, operational precision, and future-ready capabilities.

Her diverse background spans executive leadership roles across major media networks, e-commerce, aviation, telecommunications, and tech startups. Previously, Winnie served as CEO of Omnicom Media Group Malaysia, Managing Director for Media at Dentsu Malaysia, and Head of Product at Mindshare.

Today, she champions data-driven media platforms and scales integrated frameworks, cultivating a high-performance organizational culture rooted in innovation, creativity, and technology.



SWEET & SOUR

CHRIS GREENOUGH

GM - GROWTHOPS ASIA
(MALAYSIA CAMPUS)

Christopher Greenough is the General Manager of the Malaysia Campus and Regional Head of Creative Services at GrowthOps Asia, where he specializes in scaling business value by pairing creativity with technology.

With a rare professional blend spanning advertising agencies, enterprise consulting, and tech startups, he brings a deeply rounded perspective to digital transformation and brand growth. Notably, Chris co-founded the conversational AI startup Hyperlab, which was successfully acquired by customer experience firm Everise.

An award-winning leader, he has won an EFFIE and a Mumbrella Campaign of the Year award, and frequently serves as a judge for the Malaysian and APAC EFFIE Awards.



GOURMET COURSE

JO YAU

GROUP CEO - INVICTUS BLUE
GROUP

Jo Yau is the Group Chief Executive Officer of Invictus Blue Group, bringing over 24 years of diverse experience across media owners, integrated creative agencies, and fintech startups. Appointed in May 2024, she spearheads the fully independent agency's modernization agenda, steering its operations toward data, AI, and digital transformation while championing 100% local Malaysian talent.

Throughout her career, Jo has managed blue-chip global portfolios, including Toyota, Maybank Group, HSBC, and Emirates. Her prominent agency track record includes serving as the General Manager at Grey Malaysia—where she oversaw award-winning campaigns that clinched Cannes Lions and Kancil Awards—alongside strategic leadership roles at GroupM, Zenith, and Malacca Securities.



EILEEN OOI

APAC CEO - OMNICOM MEDIA
GROUPGREAT
TASTE

Eileen Ooi is the Asia-Pacific (APAC) Chief Executive Officer of PHD, a premier global media network under Omnicom Media Group (OMG). Appointed to the regional role in September 2024, she concurrently double-hats as the Executive Integration Lead for OMG Malaysia.

Eileen is a highly celebrated veteran with over 20 years of experience in advertising, digital strategy, and change leadership. Known for her fierce “challenger mentality,” she has built a formidable track record transforming agencies, driving multi-market growth, and securing global brand accounts like Singapore Airlines, Volkswagen, and Chanel. Previously, she served as the CEO of OMG Malaysia and made history as the first female President of the Malaysian Digital Association (MDA).



BUILT FOR
THE HEAT

NICHOLAS SAGAU

COO - REV MEDIA GROUP

Nicholas Sagau Tony Ngimat is the Chief Operating Officer of REV Media Group, where he drives the operational efficiency, strategic direction, and revenue growth of over 40 digital brands.

Concurrently serving as the Digital Operation and Technology Transformation Officer at Media Prima Berhad—Malaysia's largest integrated media conglomerate—he plays a vital role in spearheading corporate innovation and the practical implementation of AI workflows.

With over 25 years of digital media expertise, Nicholas also serves as the reappointed President of the Malaysian Digital Association (MDA) for the 2026–2028 term, actively championing local industry growth, the creator economy, and tech incubation.



FLAME GRILLED

DARREN YUEN
CEO - OMNICOM MEDIA
MALAYSIA

Darren Yuen is the Chief Executive Officer of Omnicom Media Group (OMG) Malaysia, where he drives operational excellence and commercial strategy for the network's local agencies. Appointed to the position amid Omnicom's global acquisition of IPG, he reports directly to the regional leadership.

Prior to taking the helm at OMG Malaysia, Darren served as the CEO of IPG Mediabrands Malaysia and accumulated nearly two decades of transformative leadership experience at Carat Malaysia.

A business-oriented media strategist, he specializes in building brand resilience, navigating economic shifts, and aligning marketing investments directly with measurable corporate outcomes.



CURRY HOT

BALA POMALEH

CEO - DENTSU MEDIA

Bala Pomaleh is the Chief Executive Officer of Dentsu Media Malaysia, leading the network's core media agency brands through strategic innovation and commercial growth. A highly revered industry veteran with over 20 years of management experience, he officially returned to dentsu in March 2025.

Previously, Bala spent nearly nine years as the CEO of IPG Mediabrands Malaysia, consistently securing top industry rankings and driving organizational turnarounds. Known for fostering a high-performance culture, he focuses on delivering impactful business outcomes and scaling technology-driven media solutions for diverse client portfolios.



HENRY TAN
GROUP CEO - ASTRO

MAIN DISH

Henry Tan is the Interim Group Chief Executive Officer of Astro Malaysia Holdings Bhd, having stepped back into the top executive seat in June 2026 to guide the company's next operational chapter.

He previously served as Astro's Group CEO from February 2019 to January 2023, steering the content and entertainment conglomerate through crucial market evolutions. In his interim capacity, Henry provides comprehensive corporate leadership, overseeing the group's performance, media operations, and strategic transition frameworks.

He is supported by Astro's established executive leadership team to maintain momentum across its broadcast and digital platforms.

REGISTRATION FORM

APPROVED HRD CORP
TRAINING PROGRAM
NO 10001749969

DATE
19 NOVEMBER, 2026

TIME
8.30AM TO 5.30PM

VENUE
KLGCC CONVENTION
CENTRE

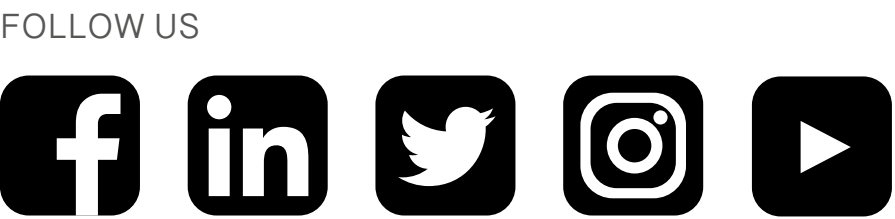
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ACCOUNT
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Swift Code:
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CONTACT PERSON INFORMATION

FULL NAME : _____

DESIGNATION : _____

ORGANISATION : _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

EMAIL : _____

ADDRESS : _____

PARTICIPANT DETAIL

FULL NAME : _____
(AS PER IDENTITY CARD)

NRIC NUMBER : _____

DESIGNATION : _____

ORGANISATION : _____

CONTACT NUMBER : _____

EMAIL : _____

ADDRESS : _____

PARTICIPANT DETAIL

FULL NAME : _____
(AS PER IDENTITY CARD)

NRIC NUMBER : _____

DESIGNATION : _____

ORGANISATION : _____

CONTACT NUMBER : _____

EMAIL : _____

ADDRESS : _____

Registration & Payment for Non HRD Corp Employer

- Full payment is required upon registration.
- Registrations without full payment will be treated as provisional and will not be guaranteed a training place.

Payment can be made via a crossed cheque payable to 'Sledgehammer Communications (M) Sdn Bhd' at least 7 days before conference commencement.

Registration & Payment for HRD Corp Employer

- HRD Corp employers must apply for the HRDC Training Grant – Public Training via the e-TRiS portal under HRDC Claimable Courses (SBL Khas).
- Employers must obtain HRDC Training Grant approval for the Public Training at least **three (3) calendar days before the Event Date.**
- Participants are required to attend 75% of the total training hours as per HRD Corp requirement. In the event of non-compliance, we will invoice

NO CANCELLATION is allowed but a replacement participant can be sent.

Sledgehammer Communications (M) Sdn Bhd reserves the right to change the workshop programme due to unforeseen circumstances.

EVENINGS THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING: LIFE AT INSTITUT ILHAM.



In 1996, I found myself stepping into the warm, buzzing classroom of Institut Ilham School of Communication Studies, sent there by the agency I was with at the time: Bozell Worldwide. I never knew then that those evening classes would become some of the most exciting, inspiring and downright fun chapters of my life in advertising.

ILHAM WASN'T YOUR TYPICAL SCHOOL. IT WAS A SCENE.

A gathering ground for young advertising hopefuls, fresh in the business, convening after work in a classroom that pulsed with ambition and creativity. We weren't there for grades... we were there to grow. To sharpen our minds, fuel our curiosity and learn from the best in the industry.

I still remember the joy of those evenings... racing from work to class, and then the dinner breaks where we'd catch up, trading stories from our agencies.

The class was small, but the energy was electric. My classmates came from all over the ad world; from Bloomingdale to Idris & Associates, Spencer Azizul to People 'n Rich. Agencies that, in many cases, no longer exist, but at that time, each brought a different flavour to the classroom.

THE REAL MAGIC OF ILHAM, THOUGH, CAME FROM THE PEOPLE WHO TAUGHT US.

Ham, the Principal, didn't just teach about ads; he lived them. Inspiring, passionate, and always armed with stories that made you



A different kind of

want to go out and pitch a campaign on the spot.

And then there was Larry Yuen. He was meticulous, insightful and always wonderfully nuanced in his delivery. He had this way of breaking down the strategy behind the glitz, showing us that great advertising starts with great thinking. That it's not just about making things look good, but about knowing what you're talking about, doing the research and being curious about everything.

Ilham drilled into us the fundamentals: how to write proper briefs that would inspire the creative team, the importance of reading, really reading, everything from newspapers to trade magazines to advertising books.

Today, I look back at those evenings at Ilham with deep nostalgia and gratitude.

It wasn't just a school; it was a place that shaped how I think, how I work, and how I see the world of advertising.

Ilham lit something in us - not loud, not flashy - just lasting.

And I guess, that was Ham at Work!

Edmond Lee is now APAC Marketing Director for Propelis.

Institut Ilham eventually became Institute Sledgehammer before it vanished like the proverbial candle in the wind. And, truth be told, it was never profitable. Today, the premises house the offices of Sledgehammer Communications (M) Sdn Bhd

MALAYSIA'S CONSUMER HASN'T STOPPED SPENDING. THEY'VE STARTED TRADING DOWN.

By The Malketeer

... Malaysians are still walking into stores. They are still buying...

There is an easy story to tell about the Malaysian consumer in 2026.

People are nervous. Living costs are up. Discretionary spending is under pressure. Restaurants are feeling it. Retailers are fighting harder for every ringgit.

But look at where Malaysians are still spending and a more interesting story appears.

They have not stopped shopping.

They are becoming far more ruthless about value.

Eco-Shop's latest numbers are difficult to ignore. For the financial year ended May 31, revenue rose to RM2.91 billion while net profit climbed to RM264.56 million. Sales transactions increased 8.1% to 124.1 million.

At 99 Speed Mart, second-quarter revenue jumped 13.6% year-on-year to RM3.08 billion. Transactions climbed to 146.4 million, while the average basket remained a modest RM21.

Then there is MR DIY.

Its second-quarter transactions increased 7.3% to 52 million, yet average basket value fell 3.5%, largely reflecting lower average selling prices from targeted promotions. Revenue still edged higher to RM1.25 billion.

Taken separately, these are earnings stories.

Put them together and they begin to look like a consumer story.

Malaysians are still walking into stores. They are still buying. But the proposition increasingly winning their attention is not premiumisation.

It is reassurance.

How much can I get for my money?

That question is becoming the most powerful pieces of brand strategy in the country.

Retail Group Malaysia has cut its 2026 retail sales growth forecast to 3.8%. Café and restaurant sales fell 4.6% in the first quarter, suggesting consumers are reducing

MALAYSIA'S CONSUMER HASN'T STOPPED SPENDING

≧ They've started trading down. ≦

What recent retail numbers reveal about value-led shopping in Malaysia.

1 ECO-SHOP FY2026



Revenue:
RM2.91b



Net profit:
RM264.56m



Transactions:
124.1m



+8.1% transactions



High traffic shows value retail is drawing repeat visits.



2 99 SPEED MART Q2 2026



Revenue:
RM3.08b



Transactions:
146.4m



+13.6% revenue



+13.6% transactions



Average basket:
RM21



Small baskets. Big frequency. Everyday essentials are winning.



3 MR DIY Q2 2026



Revenue:
RM1.25b



Transactions:
52m



+7.3% transactions



Average basket value:
-3.5%



Shoppers are still buying, but they are watching spend per visit.



4 THE MARKET BACKDROP



Retail growth forecast 2026:
3.8%



Cafe & restaurant sales Q1 2026:
-4.6%



Retail trade June 2026:
+6.6% YoY



Spending has not collapsed. It is shifting toward visible value.



“The Malaysian consumer hasn’t vanished. The threshold for earning their ringgit has moved.”



Sources: Bernama, The Star, DOSM, The Edge Malaysia

dining frequency or moving towards cheaper choices.

Official data still shows retail trade growing, which makes the picture more interesting.

Consumers can spend more in aggregate while becoming more

cautious transaction by transaction. Inflation, promotions and store expansion can lift overall sales even when individual purchasing decisions become defensive.

So this is not a collapse in consumption.



It is a redistribution of consumption.

The winners increasingly appear to be businesses that remove anxiety from the purchase.

99 Speed Mart promises proximity and everyday necessity. Eco-Shop makes price itself part of the brand architecture. MR DIY combines range with constant cues of affordability. None requires the customer to perform wealth.

That matters.

For years, much of marketing's growth vocabulary revolved around trading consumers up: better ingredients, bigger experiences, more premium packaging and higher-margin tiers.

But when household budgets tighten, the psychology changes.

Consumers do not stop wanting quality or pleasure. They become

more selective about where they are willing to pay for them.

That creates danger for brands trapped in the middle: too expensive to feel economical, too ordinary to feel worth the premium.

The opportunity is not simply to become cheaper. Endless discounting can destroy margin and brand equity.

The harder task is to make value visible through pack sizes, bundles, loyalty rewards, durability, convenience or simply a clearer reason why the product deserves its price.

Malaysia's consumer has not disappeared.

But the threshold for earning their ringgit has moved.

And "value" may now be the market's most important growth strategy.



MALAYSIAN BUSINESSES ARE INVISIBLE ON AI SEARCH. HERE IS THE FIX.

81% of Malaysians now use AI to search. Fewer than 4% of Malaysian businesses show up in the answers.

By Roy Siew, Founder of Cicakify

... **Malaysia's AI citation rate sits at 42.1%, behind Singapore's 58.7%**

Malaysia is one of the most connected markets in Southeast Asia: 97.7% of the population is online, and 81% have used AI to search for information in the past three months (Vodus, January 2026). Yet fewer than 4% of Malaysian SMEs have the basic infrastructure to appear in AI search results, and Malaysia's AI citation rate sits at 42.1%, behind Singapore's 58.7% (Hashmeta, 2025). That gap is not fixed. It is structural, and structural problems have structural solutions.



THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

84% of AI citations, across ChatGPT, Perplexity and Google AI Overviews, come from third-party sources, not brand websites. A brand’s own site accounts for only 5 to 10% of what AI draws on when answering a question about its category (AirOps; McKinsey, 2025). The median B2B brand appears in just 3% of AI Overviews for its own keywords (Walker Sands, June 2026).

I see this gap firsthand. Every AI Search Visibility Report we run at Cicakify for a Malaysian business starts the same way: we ask ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini the exact questions their prospects are typing, and most owners are startled by what does, and does not, come back.

WHERE AI ACTUALLY LOOKS

LINKEDIN: THE PLATFORM MALAYSIA HASN’T CLAIMED

LinkedIn’s domain rank on ChatGPT rose from roughly #11 to #5 in three months, the largest single domain shift researchers tracked all year (Profound, 2026). It’s cited in 14.3% of ChatGPT responses and 13.5% of Google AI Mode responses for professional queries, ahead of Wikipedia and every major news outlet. Malaysia has 10.93 million LinkedIn users, nearly a third of the population, and most local businesses have not structured a presence there for AI visibility.

The content that earns citation is specific: 54 to 64% of cited LinkedIn posts share practical knowledge, not reshares, and 95% is original writing. LinkedIn’s own August 2026 playbook, built around what it calls the Credibility Stack, confirms it further: roughly 75% of LinkedIn’s AI citations trace to individual profiles, not company pages.

Platform	Why It Matters
Reddit	Most-cited platform overall, ~40% of LLM references (Semrush)
YouTube	#1 domain in Google AI Overviews, 20.9% citation share (Ahrefs)
Wikipedia	ChatGPT’s top source, 7.8% of all citations (Profound)
LinkedIn	#1 for professional/B2B queries, 14.3% of ChatGPT citations (Semrush)
Quora	#2 most-cited domain in Google AI Overviews (Semrush)

... Researchers call it the “BM Blind Spot,” and it is largely unclaimed...

Driver	What the Data Shows
Lead with the answer	44% of citations are drawn from the first 30% of a page or post
Teach, don’t sell	54 to 64% of cited content shares practical knowledge, not promotion
Write original	95% of cited LinkedIn content is original, not reshared
Publish consistently	Regular, authoritative posting drives roughly 4x higher citation odds (SE Ranking)

FOUR THINGS THAT DRIVE CITATIONS

MALAYSIA’S OPEN WINDOW

Multilingual content, English plus Bahasa Malaysia, earns 67.3% higher AI citation rates than English-only content, and most Malaysian businesses publish only in English (Hashmeta, 2025). A July 2026 Malaysia-specific pilot found a live example: an English-language loan query returned a full AI Overview citing major banks; the identical Bahasa Melayu query returned none. Researchers call it the “BM Blind Spot,” and it is largely unclaimed.

Malaysia captured 32% of all Southeast Asian AI investment in the past year, USD 759 million. The infrastructure is being built here. The question is whether Malaysian businesses build the citation presence to be found inside it.

THE PLAIN VERSION

AI does not cite brands. It cites answers. Businesses publishing specific, original, expert content on the platforms AI already trusts, consistently, under a named author, are the ones showing up when a Malaysian buyer asks ChatGPT, Perplexity, or Gemini a question. Everyone else is optimising for a search engine that is quietly being replaced.

Sources: Vodus (Jan 2026); Hashmeta SEA GEO Landscape (2025); AirOps 2026 State of AI Search; McKinsey (2025); Walker Sands (Jun 2026); Semrush (Mar 2026); Ahrefs (Jun 2026); Profound (2026); LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, “The Credibility Stack” (Aug 2026); SE Ranking (Nov 2025); AI Mode Malaysia pilot study (Jul 2026); OpenMinds Research (May 2026).

Roy Siew is the founder of Cicakify, a Kuala Lumpur consultancy helping Malaysian and ASEAN businesses get discovered on AI search. Twenty years in digital and eCommerce leadership across ASEAN, including senior roles at TDCX, AXA Affin, Berjaya Sompo, Tune Protect and CompAsia, taught him what actually earns customer trust. He is a Top 25 Southeast Asia eCommerce Marketer (2022) and holds the Malaysian CMO Gold Award for Best Marketer in eCommerce (2019).



SEVEN SECRETS OF A SUCCESSFUL LAZY-ASS BUM

REPRINTED AND
RE-EDITED FROM A
MILLION YEARS AGO

I hate working.

I hate sitting in an office. I hate going to meetings. I hate writing performance reviews. I hate “nurturing” people. I hate listening to the bullshit artists and loudmouths who dominate our business. Yet somehow I managed to be reasonably successful in ad world.

Here are my seven secrets.

- 1. Assume everyone is faking it.** Nobody knows a thing about advertising. All the rules are bullshit. There are some people who can make good ads. The rest is just performance art.
- 2. Preparation is everything.** If you are not the best prepared person in every meeting you are just another empty t-shirt. You will never get your way and you will always be second rate.
- 3. Do as little work as possible in the office.** Do your real work at home. It’s almost impossible to do anything useful in an office. Offices are for meetings and phone calls and memos and emails and zooms and powerpoints and politics and several other dispiriting forms of waste management.



4. Worry about everything. If you don't worry you don't care. Something always goes wrong. Figure out what it's going to be and be prepared when it does.

5. Stay as far away from big organizations as possible. Large corporations will suck all the joy out of your life, and all the life out of your joy. Corporations are poison, and the more they pay you the more they own you.

6. Pay no attention to the industry. The more you pay attention to industry chatter and what other agencies or other marketers are doing or what the marketing miracle of the week is, the more you're going to become a cliché spewing zombie. Figure things out for yourself.

7. Be satisfied. You don't have to work for the biggest agency in the world or be the best art director on the planet to be successful and happy. You're not going to be Bill Bernbach anyway, so forget about it. If you're doing work that is satisfying and respectable, and you're not suffering 90% of the time, you're way ahead of most of the poor bastards in this business. Stop beating yourself up and enjoy it.

That's as close to a pep talk as I get.



Bob is a writer and speaker. He has written seven books about advertising, each of which has been an Amazon #1 seller.



APPROVED HRD CORP
TRAINING PROGRAM
NO 10001735282



AN AI WORKSHOP FOR LEADERS

DIFFERENTIATION IN THE



AGE OF AI

BY RAJIV LAL

27TH OCTOBER, 2026
KLGCC CONVENTION
CENTRE
ROOF GARDEN



INFLUENCER MARKETING IN B2B IS ON THE RISE

B2B marketing in Southeast Asia is evolving, but the region still operates very differently from more mature markets such as London or Singapore.

For Bob Low, who works across B2B marketing, LinkedIn strategy, content creation, media and business networking, the biggest opportunity lies in understanding how digital visibility and personal relationships work together.

Bob advises companies on LinkedIn and lead generation, produces sponsored B2B content, hosts the *Asian Century Podcast* and organises regular networking dinners for business leaders. This combination gives him a close view of how business influence is built across the region.

His main observation is that while B2B influencer marketing is

“Digital helps open the door, but it usually doesn’t close the deal,”



becoming more relevant, Southeast Asian business culture is still strongly relationship-driven.

B2B MARKETING IN MALAYSIA IS STILL DEVELOPING

Compared with Singapore or Western markets, Malaysia has relatively few specialised B2B marketing agencies.

Bob believes this is partly because many companies across Southeast Asia still depend heavily on relationships, introductions and personal networks rather than structured marketing systems.

“B2B marketing here is quite underdeveloped, and that is tied to how business is done in the region,” Bob says. “What still matters most is relationships and connections.”

Singapore is more mature in areas such as LinkedIn advertising, digital marketing and professional services. However, in markets such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam, much of the business process still starts with events, introductions and personal networks.

This does not mean digital marketing is unimportant. Bob believes it plays a major role in building familiarity and opening conversations.

“Digital helps open the door, but it usually doesn’t close the deal,” he says.

Content can help a buyer recognise a company or individual before an in-person meeting takes place. In many Southeast Asian markets, however, trust is still strengthened face-to-face.

“It helps people recognise you. It creates familiarity. It can get you into the conversation. But in many cases, especially in Southeast Asia, you still need to meet in person if you want to build real trust.”

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR B2B INFLUENCERS

Bob believes B2B influencer marketing has significant room to grow.

Influencers are common in consumer categories, but far less established in business-to-business industries. Bob prefers to describe

“So the same piece of content can do two jobs, it can generate leads first, and then continue working as organic content later.”

Bob Low

himself as a content creator, although much of his work operates within this emerging B2B influence space.

He works with companies and government agencies, creates sponsored content and uses his media platforms to reach professional audiences.

“Yes, and that is exactly why I think there is opportunity there,” he says.

One of the biggest challenges is that many B2B companies struggle to make specialised or technical subjects interesting.

“The challenge in B2B is often not the topic itself, but how you present it,” Bob explains. “A lot of these subjects do matter deeply to businesses, but they need a more compelling angle.”

A strong example is an episode of the *Asian Century Podcast* about Malaysia’s e-invoicing requirements.

Rather than presenting it simply as an informational discussion, the episode focused on the potential RM20,000 fine businesses could face. The stronger, more urgent framing helped the episode attract close to 100,000 views.

“A lot of people also shared that episode on WhatsApp, because it covered something that affected nearly every business,” Bob says.

The lesson is that technical B2B content can still generate strong engagement if it is timely, useful and presented around a clear business consequence.

ONE PIECE OF CONTENT CAN DO TWO JOBS

Bob also sees content as a practical lead-generation tool.

A webinar, podcast or interview does not need to exist purely for awareness. It can first be used to generate leads and then continue to work organically afterwards.

In one project focused on board governance in Singapore, Bob recorded the discussion as a webinar. It was promoted through LinkedIn advertising, and viewers registered by providing details such as their company, job title and contact information.

The same content was later released publicly on YouTube.

“So the same piece of content can do two jobs,” Bob explains. “It can generate leads first, and then continue working as organic content later.”

This makes B2B content easier to connect to measurable commercial objectives.

“If I can tell a client they spent, say, 5,000 dollars and got 100 relevant leads, that is a strong B2B result,” he says.

SAFE CONTENT CAN BECOME BORING CONTENT

One of the biggest problems with sponsored B2B content is that companies often want strong reach while also wanting the communication to remain extremely safe and controlled.

Bob says marketing teams may understand the value of stronger storytelling, while senior executives sometimes prefer technical, polished and carefully managed communication.

That can create content that is accurate but uninteresting.

For Bob, the solution is to agree on the objective early.

“If the client wants views, then I tell them we need to optimise for views and that means giving me some creative freedom,” he says.

“If they want very technical, controlled content for a narrow professional audience, that is also fine, but then they should not expect big numbers.”

Sometimes, he creates two versions: a more formal version for the company’s own channels and a more engaging version for his own platform.

The main point is that brands

need to be realistic about the relationship between creativity and reach.

BUILD A COMMUNITY, NOT JUST AN AUDIENCE

Bob is also less concerned with constantly trying to understand or “hack” LinkedIn’s algorithm.

“People overcomplicate algorithms,” he says.

For him, community matters more.

His regular business dinners help him build relationships offline. Those relationships then continue online, where people are more likely to engage with his content because they already know him.

“The bigger thing, in my view, is community. That matters much more than obsessing over algorithms.”

His advice is straightforward: “Don’t just build an audience, build a community.”

For B2B companies, that community can be developed through events, professional circles, media platforms, dinners, podcasts or other formats that encourage genuine interaction.

EMPLOYEE VOICES MATTER MORE

Bob also believes employee advocacy is becoming more important on LinkedIn.

Company pages still have a role, but buyers, jobseekers and potential partners increasingly look at the people behind the company.

“If I see employees posting, engaging and looking genuinely positive about the place, that tells me something much more credible than the company page alone,” he says.

Company pages themselves can also become more human by commenting, engaging and participating in conversations rather than only publishing announcements.

“Company pages can still do a lot, but they need to feel more human.”

START WITH WHO YOU WANT TO REACH

For companies that are only beginning to invest seriously in B2B marketing, Bob’s advice is not to start with channels.

Start with the audience.

“Who exactly are you trying to reach? Is it CEOs, CTOs, CFOs, procurement heads, government officials? The answer changes everything.”

Once the target audience is clear, the strategy can be built around where those people actually spend their time.

If the goal is to reach senior corporate leaders, LinkedIn may be the right platform. If government stakeholders are the priority, industry and government events may be more important.

“So I would always start there: who are you trying to reach, and where do they actually pay attention?”

For Bob, the future of B2B marketing in Southeast Asia will not be purely digital or purely

relationship-based.

It will be a combination of both.

“If you are posting regularly on LinkedIn, appearing on podcasts, or creating useful content before you meet people in person, then when you finally show up at an event, you are not a stranger anymore.”

That combination of content, recognition, relationships and trust may ultimately define the rise of B2B influencer marketing in the region.

As Bob puts it: “The content creates recognition, and the in-person meeting helps close the deal.”

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CHRIS CHAN has been promoted to **General Manager, L'Oréal Dermatological Beauty (LDB) Malaysia & Singapore**, marking a new chapter in her career with L'Oréal. She steps into the regional leadership role with extensive experience in the beauty and personal care industry, and will now lead LDB's business across two key Southeast Asian markets, Malaysia and Singapore.



IRENE FOO has been appointed Marketing Director of foodpanda Malaysia, joining the company after more than two and a half years as Integrated Marketing Lead at **TikTok Shop Malaysia**. At TikTok Shop, Irene led major shopping campaigns, activations, partnerships and creator initiatives, building experience at the intersection of content, commerce and culture.



PRIYA MENON has joined **Bursa Malaysia** as Senior Manager, Media & PR, bringing with her extensive experience in corporate communications, media relations and reputation management. She moves to the national stock exchange after three years with CARSOME, where she worked across regional communications, stakeholder engagement and major corporate initiatives, including the company's expansion in Indonesia.



FAIZ MOHAMAD has been appointed Chief Marketing Officer at **MedicPhysio Empire Sdn Bhd**, taking on responsibility for the company's marketing and brand growth agenda. He brings entrepreneurial and brand-building experience from his time with Saigon KOPI, where he was involved in growing the Malaysian coffee brand. In his new role, Faiz will oversee marketing strategy, brand development and customer engagement as MedicPhysio enters its next phase of growth.



NORIMAN SAFFIAN has joined **Warnakala Studios** as Senior Manager, Sales & Marketing, bringing some 16 years of experience in strategic marketing and business growth. His track record includes leading integrated campaigns spanning digital, OOH, brand collaborations and entertainment marketing, including the Papa Zola The Movie campaign, which accompanied the film's RM69 million box-office performance across Malaysia and Indonesia.



DANIAL SHAFRI has joined **Naga DDB Tribal** as Head of Strategy, bringing a strong blend of strategic, digital and data-led experience to the agency. He joins from Monks and has built a reputation for combining cultural insight with data and social intelligence. An award-winning strategist, he was named Silver Best Strategist at the MARKies 2022 and was part of the team behind Petron's APPIES Gold-winning Koleksi Mistik campaign.



CATHERINE YAP has been appointed Marketing Director, **Chocolate, Mars Snacking Asia**, following 27 months leading the company's chocolate business across the region. During that period, Yap and her 19-strong team delivered consistent double-digit year-on-year growth while strengthening Mars' portfolio of iconic chocolate brands. In her expanded role, she will help steer the next phase of growth as the Mars and Kellanova brands come together under Mars Snacking across Asia.



GILLIAN CHAN-LOWE has taken on the role of Chief Operating Officer & Managing Partner at **ENIGMA X**, the newly established agency she helped build alongside a group of industry veterans. She brings years of agency and business leadership experience to the venture, where she will oversee operations and help shape its growth, culture and commercial direction as ENIGMA X builds its presence in the market.



SHARON GOMES has also joined **ENIGMA X** as HR & Operations Consultant, bringing a decade of industry experience to the fast-growing independent agency. In her new role, Gomes will focus on scaling the business, strengthening operations and building a strong people-first culture as ENIGMA X enters its next phase of growth.

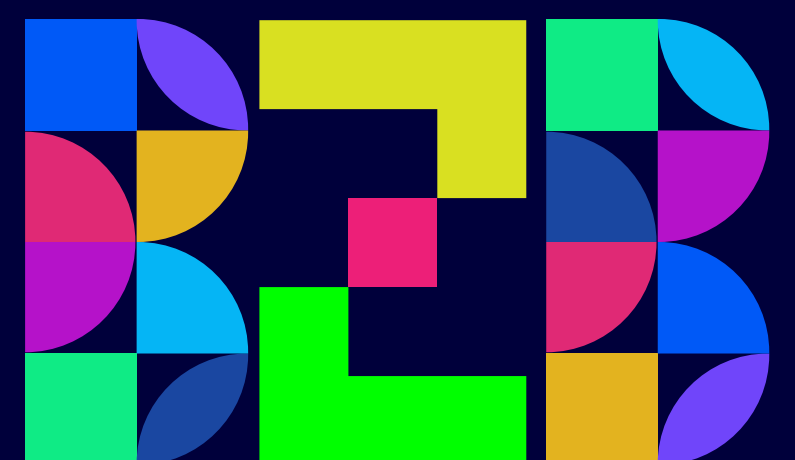


FAISAL M. RAIS has returned to **Sarawak Media Group** as Creative Director, marking a homecoming to the organisation where he previously played a creative role. In his new position, Rais will lead the group's creative direction and help shape its content and brand storytelling, bringing his industry experience back to a team and organisation he knows well.

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