

2.8 billion people live within
a 7-hour flight radius of Singapore



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Postcard from Singapore



ISSUE 06

SINGAPORE: THINK UNIQUELY DIFFERENT

by Greg Wood, Managing Director, Singapore



At just under 700 square kilometres, our tiny tropical island is host to 4.5 million people – and an equal number of mobile phones. It's the second most densely populated country on earth, and the third most wired. And with nearly 2.5 times the population popping in for a visit every year, the place really is crowded, yet boosting the population is high priority. Why do we want so many people to come here? And what do they do when they're here – just buy mobile phones? Not at all...

FROM TIGER BALM TO TIGER ECONOMY

With access to some 13 Tbps of direct Internet connectivity, Wired Magazine notes, "As the world's third most wired nation and Asia's most wired, Singapore is a "plug and play" nation. One where online banking and the mobile lifestyle have become the norm. And close to 99% of the population, or almost every home, school and business, has access to broadband Internet."

Forty years ago, the landscape was very different. Singapore has experienced a phenomenal increase in wealth, moving from home remedies and open fires in attap (or thatch) hut kampongs (or villages) to a clean, green, wired economic tiger in just one generation. Real per capita income growth averaged 6.4% from 1965 to 2000, and 2005 per capita GDP is estimated at US\$28,100 – equal to that of the four largest Western European nations.

But in the early part of the new millennium, Singapore suffered under the triple whammy of a global recession, a slump in technology manufacturing and the SARS outbreak. Meantime, the price of production was being radically undercut by much cheaper neighbours – especially China. And the potential shift of airlines and shipping to new hubs in Kuala Lumpur and Dubai was beginning to bite.

The solution? A country less vulnerable to external business cycles. One with high-value products and services to sell. In short, become the true hub of Southeast Asia: financially and commercially, in high-tech and biotech development, in aerospace and shipping, and now digital entertainment.

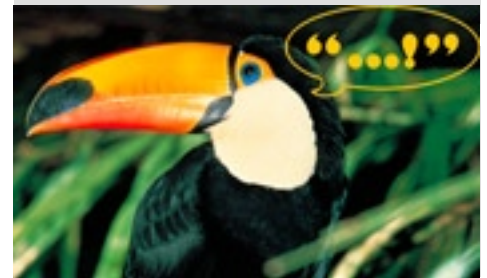
You might believe the biotech and aerospace aims. But digital entertainment? Singapore isn't on the Most Creative Countries list – yet. But watch this space: the powerful Economic Development Board (EDB) has taken a keen interest in developing and maintaining Singapore's position as a digital media trendsetter.

continued overleaf



USEFUL PHRASES

"Unbelievable!" – "Wah lao eh!"



CULTURAL QUIZ

Singlish 101 – complete the sentence:

- Han Ming says: "What did you have for lunch?"
- You say: "Chicken rice, lor – Wonton Mee uncle sold out already, ____!"

- (a) ...lah!
- (b) ...hor!
- (c) ...lor
- (d) ...one!
- (e) ...wat!

(Answer on page 2)

CRAZE OF THE MONTH

One word: shopping!

This year's "Great Singapore Sale" kicked off with S\$20 million spent on MasterCard alone, over the first of eight weekends – an increase of 20% over 2005, when retail sales hit record highs. Monthly visitor arrivals peaked as well, with visitors shelling out S\$650 million, or 50% of the 2005 total. Visitors from China appear to be spending two-thirds more this year than last, reflecting their country's increasing wealth.

More than one in four people in Singapore is not Singaporean



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THE BIG IDEA

Promoting the inflow of new technology and creative capital by providing support to digital media companies, especially those undertaking Research and Development projects in areas such as artificial intelligence, visualisation, hosting and data transfer, the EDB is investing S\$1 billion (US\$600 million) to develop the industry, with the aim of creating a true Digital Exchange by 2018.

It's a recipe for success: Take a highly trained, wired population ripe with latent creativity. Show it an online games market in Asia alone that's worth US\$1 billion by the end of this year*, and a global market for interactive entertainment that is expected to grow to US\$30 billion by 2007**. Add a dash of excitement, a healthy serving of cash, strong support for unleashing creativity, a desire for design excellence, the perfect location in the heart of Asia (a ready market for mobile and MMORPG*** games, and the talent to develop such games), and Singapore is set to sparkle. But is it just a shot in the dark? Consider these results:

"The online games market in Asia alone will reach one billion US dollars by the end of 2006"

- Electronic Arts (EA) and Lucasfilm Animation both settled into Singapore in late 2005, cementing the basis for rapidly expanding electronic games, digital animation and special effects sectors.
- Germany's famed red dot: design concept awards were held in Singapore in 2005, for the first time outside Germany. Singapore now houses a red dot design museum, also the first one outside of Germany. (Incidentally, Profero Singapore's new offices are in the new red dot building on Maxwell Road).
- It's not just gaming companies racing to Singapore; in 2005 we were the only Asian stop on the Cyberathlete Professional League World Tour 2005, and host to 700 gamers from 67 countries at the World Cyber Games (WCG) Grand Final 2005.

We see huge potential for in-game advertising – and development of branded content, including games (mobile-, PC- and console-based) specifically about your product or brand. So what are you waiting for? Come over and let's play!

*IDC Online Gaming Report, Asia Pacific, May 03

**Singapore Media Development Authority (MDA), May 06

***Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Gaming

CULTURAL QUIZ

Answer: (f) All of the above, although each "discourse particle" imparts a slightly different feel. A mélange of English, Hokkien, Malay and Tamil, Singlish is an creole language with its own syntax, slang, rhythm and grammar. As you can see from this example, deeper Singlish can be all but incomprehensible to visitors. Come play-play lah, but bone up in advance at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singlish>



ANOTHER THING ABOUT SINGAPORE...

The TLA

Highly efficient Singapore loves reducing clutter – hence the TLA, or Three-Letter Acronym. There are hundreds in common use; look at just some of the TLAs you'll need to know just to get around: "Sick of the MRT? Get a COE from LTA, buy an MPV, then take the PIE, ECP, AYE or SLE to the CBD – just pay ERP to enter. "The best bit? When too many TLAs (or the cost of running a car) make you want to swear, even the most astounding Hokkien swearwords can be reduced to TLAs – including \$#@ and &%#...!

Find out what the above TLAs stand for – email joel.yeo@profero.com