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BLOGPOST: Media Landscape Asia: Between Tradition and Modernity



The Asian continent is home to almost 50 countries. A vast area, with a media landscape just as large and diverse. How does traditional media in the Asia-Pacific region experience the current challenges? We talked about this with [Jennifer Kok](#), founder and CEO of [Media OutReach](#). She provides insights into the special role of print media in Japan and India and the most popular social media channels in Korea, China and Hong Kong. In addition, we learn which mistakes PR professionals should avoid when communicating with the Asian market and local media representatives.

news aktuell: Asia is a whole continent; each country certainly has its own particularities as far as the respective media landscape is concerned. Nevertheless, there are also commonalities. Could you give us a sense of the media landscape in Asia?

Kok: Like the rest of the world, Asia has seen an upheaval in the media landscape with declining advertising revenue and readership for traditional print media. The newsroom faces the harsh reality of having to cut jobs. Driven by necessity, media companies have accelerated their digital transformation from print to survive and thrive. Increasingly, across this region we have seen many traditional print media are dropping their print copy and move towards being fully digital. The challenge now is how to derive revenue. Many CEOs of these publications shared their frustrations on how to pursue revenue from the known financial model of yester-year to the now digital revenue model. Does one now pursue subscriptions, advertising or run joint events with clients to drive revenue instead of pursuing the traditional advertising revenue model? The media ability to survive and thrive impacts the newswire and PR industry since we are inter-dependent.

In Asia, traditional media still holds strong and research has found that eight out of ten business leaders in Asia view national news publications as trusted information sources. As such, the press release occupies an important role in Asia where majority of companies view press releases as an important communications tool for corporate developments, product releases and announcements. Indeed, a recent survey has found 72% of journalists in Asia have expressed preference for the release as an important source of information.

Social media and digital media are very prevalent and in markets such as China and India, adoption rates are fuelled by increased ubiquity of wireless connectivity. The power of social media plays a very important role – especially within intersection of FMCG and the Gen Y/Z demographic. In China, over 70% of this demographic sources' information from social media and KOL/Influencers have proven to be a very powerful force driving messaging and sales, where livestreams can generate millions of RMB in revenue for lifestyle products.

In terms of government regulations, traditional media in Asian countries falls under varying degrees of oversight, and in recent years the roles and responsibilities of social media as a communications platform is being examined by various governments. Being aware of the dos and don'ts for each market is essential for any company and PR professional to navigate different market conditions.

news aktuell: What do you think are the biggest differences between the media landscapes of the individual Asian countries? Please feel free to give us 2-3 concrete examples.

Kok: The proportion and power of digital media versus traditional news channels can vary widely between countries. For example, **Hong Kong** has been quick to embrace digital media and is highly competitive with many of its 600+ newspapers and publications

being online, including an increasing number of online-only news platforms where news is updated real-time.

Conversely, in **Japan**, traditional media such as newspapers and magazines are still very dominant and therefore more influential compared to their online counterparts. Even though online is the fastest way of broadcasting information, business trends start offline first before moving online.

news aktuell: The digital age has brought great challenges to print media and traditional radio and tv. What is your prediction for the future of those "old media companies" (in the coming years) in Asia? Or, to put it more provocatively: Do the classic media such as newspapers or trade journals, but also radio and TV, still play a role at all for PR professionals in Asia alongside the dominant social media channels (such as WeChat, Weibo and Co.)?

Kok: The "old media companies" have and will continue to have a significant share of voice in the media landscape. Print media still has a certain prestige cachet, and more than often, clients still value write up from print media more over online media.

The print media will stay but they will continue to invest in digital. The adaption will differ from country-to-country. I do not believe the print version of newspapers and magazines will disappear. I expect it to remain, but the target audience will be towards the higher demographic. Like in Europe, the good old cassette tape is coming back in fashion and predictions of the demise of television viewership are being proved wrong thus far. One can see that television viewership has grown because of content. As such, the future of any media would be subject to the quality and type of content. We cannot dismiss the intrinsic pleasure of having the feel and smell of the newspaper or magazine in our hands which will be one of the selling points of the print media of the future.

If we take our conversation to be more specific: In markets such as India and Japan, print is very much alive. Even with COVID lockdowns, India's Dainik Bhaskar has a daily circulation of 4.3 million, and print dominates Japan media with print and digital editions priced the same where newspaper circulation is estimated at one per household – considerably higher than most of the world.

Television - broadcast and streaming, is widespread in Asia. In developed markets such as Hong Kong, almost 90% of the population watch free-to-air TV, spending over 22 hours per week on average and in Vietnam, 85% of the population watch TV every day. The same trend is also seen in broadcast and streaming radio, which has increased in listeners driven by the work-from-home mode.

In short, even with the rise of social media powerhouses such as Tencent (China), Baidu (China), Naver (South Korea), Line (Japan) et al, traditional media remains a significant channel in Asia that PR professionals need to factor into their communication activities.

The commercial media are adapting quickly to the digital world with real-time news and new business models to succeed. However, most of the "government linked media companies" are struggling to embrace digital transformation and this has wider impacts as they are often the mouthpiece of the government.

news aktuell: Which social media channels are primarily used in Asia?

Kok: Except for China, the usual suspects such as Facebook, Google, Twitter etc. are used extensively in Asia, although there are some country variations where local language platforms dominate:

- In **China**, Weixin and QQ dominate chat, Weibo (Facebook equivalent), Youku and Tiktok/Douyin for video. TouTiao is positioned as a news, information and entertainment platform. Wechat, the international version of Weixin is particularly popular in the Chinese diaspora around the world.
- In **Hong Kong**, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram. Twitter is used, but less so in comparison to other countries. With a significant number of residents with relatives and friends in China, WeChat has built an extensive user base and is the second most used chat app. As an international city, Hong Kong users are wary of Facebook's breach of trusts with security, and as such, there is an increased usage of Telegram and Signal.
- In **Korea**: KaoKaoTalk for chat. In contrast to other countries (with the exception of China), Google's presence is diminished and South Korean platform Naver dominates search and other social media such as video, online communities (Naver Café) and video streaming.

news aktuell: Regarding the "way of doing PR" and the "way of journalism" – where would you see the main differences between the "western" and the Asian way? Or asked differently: What should German companies avoid at all costs in their communication measures for the Asian market and the Asian media landscapes?

Kok: Asia is a heterogeneous region with many ethnic groups not only between countries but also within the country. There are large differences between countries in terms of infrastructure, economic development, and government structures (political) that all shapes the state of the media in each country.

Therefore, companies must be careful to avoid taking a "one size fits all" communications approach which will not be effective. Each country and each community have its own idiosyncrasies and nuances that the PR professional needs to be aware of when communicating. However, generally speaking:

- **Communicate in local language:** Across Asia Pacific English or French may be second language. In China, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, and South Korea using local language in communication is essential to gain any traction with the local media as more than 90 percent of the media are published in local language. In other countries in the region, single language distribution in English is acceptable.

- **Craft ethnic and religion sensitive message:** In a multi-ethnic and multi-culture society such as Asia, most governments practise communication policies that does not inflame racial or religion disharmonies.
- **Be politically aware:** For example, sensitivities regarding China and Taiwan. Many organizations refer to China as a “country” and Taiwan as a “market” to avoid complications.
- **Relevance:** This is the golden rule for any communication, any news release with local relevance will always increase the chances of media running the story.

In conclusion, it is practical to have a campaign that does not touch on sensitive issues like culture, religion nor politics.

About: Jennifer is Malaysian where she grew up in a multi-cultural and multi-religion society. She pursued her higher education in Australia. In her career, she works with clients and business partners across the world. Currently, she is a resident of Hong Kong where she founded Media OutReach Newswire. The company is the first global newswire founded in the region and the only one that owns its distribution network for 24 countries in Asia Pacific region.

Interview: [Beatrix Ta](#)

Want to learn more about international media landscapes? The blog also provides a detailed overview of the media and conditions for professional communication for the following countries: [USA](#), [UK](#), [Sweden](#), [Mexico](#), [South Korea](#) and [Spain](#).

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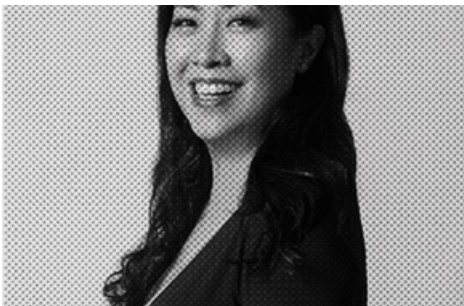
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