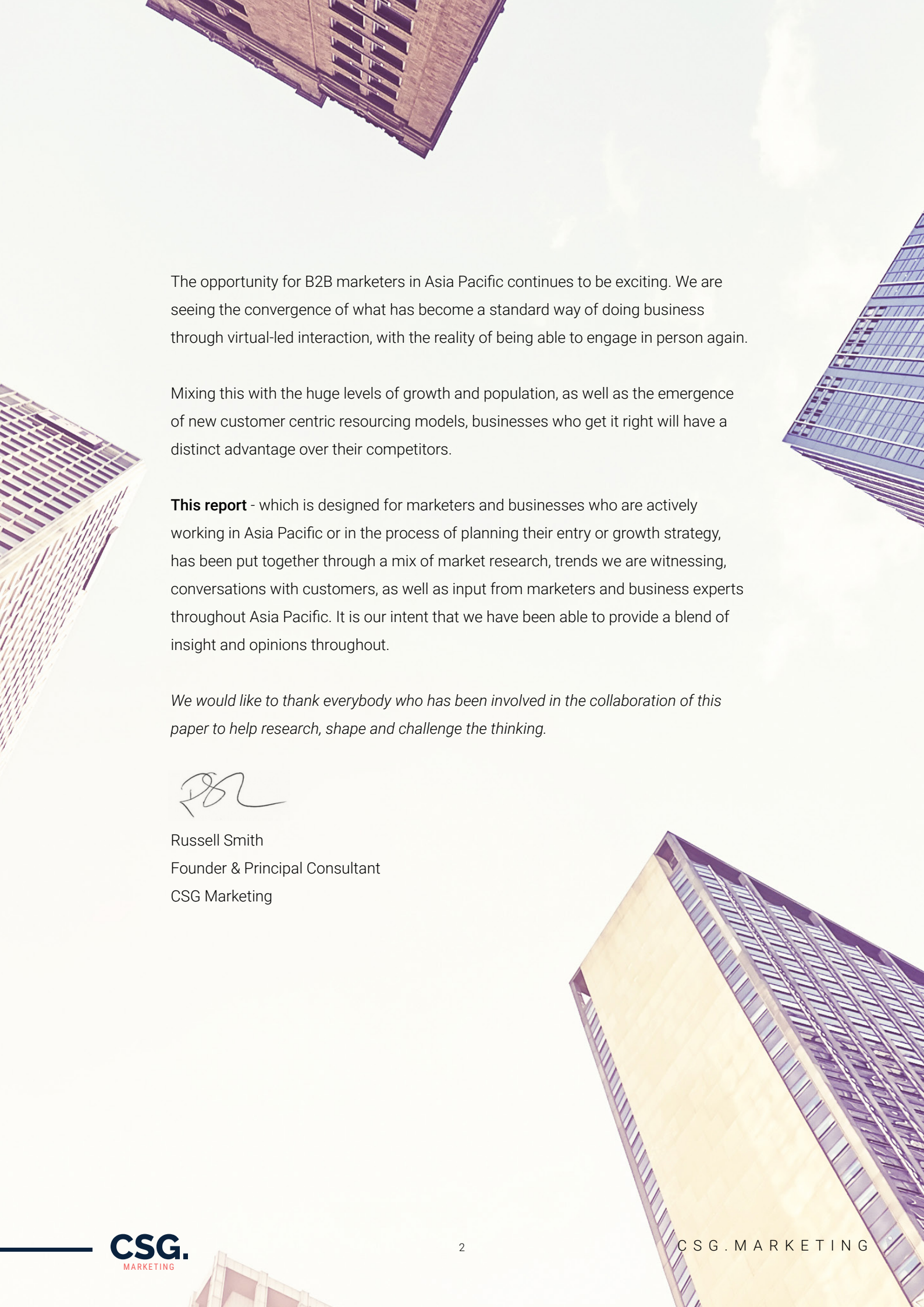




KEY MARKETING TRENDS IN ASIA PACIFIC

2022



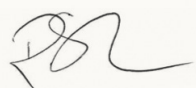
The background of the page features stylized, low-angle illustrations of skyscrapers. On the left, a purple building reaches towards the top. On the right, a yellow building with purple accents reaches towards the top. The sky is a light, hazy blue.

The opportunity for B2B marketers in Asia Pacific continues to be exciting. We are seeing the convergence of what has become a standard way of doing business through virtual-led interaction, with the reality of being able to engage in person again.

Mixing this with the huge levels of growth and population, as well as the emergence of new customer centric resourcing models, businesses who get it right will have a distinct advantage over their competitors.

This report - which is designed for marketers and businesses who are actively working in Asia Pacific or in the process of planning their entry or growth strategy, has been put together through a mix of market research, trends we are witnessing, conversations with customers, as well as input from marketers and business experts throughout Asia Pacific. It is our intent that we have been able to provide a blend of insight and opinions throughout.

We would like to thank everybody who has been involved in the collaboration of this paper to help research, shape and challenge the thinking.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RS' followed by a stylized flourish.

Russell Smith
Founder & Principal Consultant
CSG Marketing

Some of the challenges in Asia Pacific.

First and foremost, let's take a look at some of the challenges, or perhaps more appropriately - the differences associated with marketing in Asia Pacific than other parts of the world. While this is not the focus of the paper, it is important to understand key differences so businesses can remain cognizant of them to ensure they approach their strategy and programs through the right lens.



Each country is very different.

At the most fundamental level, while we can look at Asia Pacific as an overarching region, working on the assumption that you can market the same way throughout the entire geography would be incorrect. Too often we continue to see an assumption that businesses will just 'start marketing in Asia Pacific'. This is the equivalent of suggesting that a business will start marketing in Europe. A country by country approach is needed.

Each country has its own way of operating, its own trends, its own way that it likes to do business and its own platforms. In addition, the vastly different cultures, languages and operating methods are something that needs to be planned for up front.

A key theme that emerges throughout this report is one of localisation and importantly the drastic differences that need to be accounted for, particularly when looking to run micro-programs. As such, many businesses should be considering taking a bottoms up approach to their marketing, when entering Asia Pacific, as opposed to an umbrella type strategy initially.

Maturity levels are different from other parts of the world. B2B marketing is a relatively mature exercise throughout the US and in parts of Europe. However, there are many parts of Asia where it is still emerging and growing. Businesses cannot work on the assumption that the same type of B2B offering is going to be applicable across the entire region.

This consideration is also applicable at a country level and likely worth mapping out as appropriate. For example, one country may be quite mature in their digital transformation journey, such as Japan, whereas parts of Southeast Asia are still very much emerging in this field. So the discussion point is not only on the differences in maturity between western markets and Asia Pacific, it is also the differing maturity levels within Asia Pacific that need to be accounted for.

Purchasing cycles are different.

The way businesses and people engage in a purchasing cycle will vary from country to country and, as discussed above, will vary based upon the maturity of the market. At a macro-level, Asia-Pacific business has traditionally been built and strengthened on in-person relationships. While this has been challenging over the past 18 to 24 months, it will still remain a priority.

Having a clear understanding of how to allow for the traditional in-person involvement when looking to navigate the current landscape and potentially scale your marketing efforts will require a lot of thought.

Sales cycles and the planned strategy will need to be mapped out aligned to the country, the target customers, and the products or services that you are selling. This will help allow for country nuances and what is important to the consumers. In addition, providing a level of fluidity as part of this process is something that needs to be employed to allow enough flexibility to be successful. This is discussed in length as part of the key trends.

Asia Pacific in its entirety is growing very quickly.

Asia Pacific continues to grow at a rapid speed. This means, businesses need the ability to adapt quickly with changing trends and in the same effort, have the ability to scale the message. This is a challenging notion.

While this growth allows for exciting opportunities, the way that organisations balance their approach from the beginning will be important. Organisations will need a well defined and structured foundation in order to manage the growth opportunity. If this is not in place, things can turn bad, quickly.

Spending the time up front to ensure there is the appropriate resourcing, local focus as well as centralised support and governance will help organisations take advantage of the growth in a planned way.



Key trends in Asia Pacific marketing and how to take advantage of them.

For the purpose of this report, we have identified three key trends for discussion. While this list is not exhaustive - and there are many other trends that sit outside of what we discuss, we wanted to highlight what we deemed to be some of the significant trends that businesses can look to use to their advantage. By taking this approach, we hope it allows a level of prioritisation, and businesses can look to develop successful strategies to take advantage of them.

Digital self service is more prevalent than ever.

Marketers need to build structures that allow for as much digital self service as possible. Prospects continue to move incredibly far down the sales cycle before they have any interaction with the business itself. This is further exacerbated by the fact that consumers will look at multiple offerings during this research phase and would have already made numerous comparisons with your competitors. Therefore, this trend, if done right, has the ability to be a key differentiator for your business.

While this approach has been known since the formation of inbound marketing, where the trend becomes particularly pointed in Asia-Pacific is that there is such a vast amount of differences between each of the sub-regions and countries. This means individual plans need to be nuanced and optimised to allow for country and platform specifics.

Ultimately, it is about building trust. To allow for this, marketers need to have a deep understanding of who they are targeting and importantly, how the business or solution can help fulfil their needs. This requires a highly planned approach with input from all levels of marketing, cross-functional insight as well as market research.

Interestingly, marketing's role continues to be even more pivotal as digital self service becomes increasingly prevalent, as we are seeing the lines blur between post-sales customer service and more top and middle of funnel activity.

An example of what this means is that from a content standpoint, marketing is now expected to help inform and shape technical content that reaches deep into the sales

cycle. While this may not be the responsibility of marketing to produce this content, it is certainly a requirement to oversee and guide the technical, product and pre and post sales teams to align their content as part of the overall self-service journey.

By doing so, marketing is taking a leadership role and responsibility for helping not only take the prospect as far through the sales cycle as possible, but to ensure the business develops trust, is consistent in its approach and is able to highlight its technical competence.

This structure continues to reinforce the importance that global or centralised marketing plays with in-region marketing to provide content and programmatic support. Marketing's role in the region will be to continually provide on-the-ground insight for what prospects and customers are saying, with a goal of feeding that back to centralised teams. Corporate marketing needs to provide the 'muscle' to help automate and scale the marketing function, while local marketing provides the country specific inputs.

What also comes with this, is the requirement to have quality levels of insight at each stage of the purchasing cycle so we can understand what is working and what may need optimisation. This again would be best approached via a cross-functional collaborative approach, with multiple members of the business understanding the insight and informing the decisions around it.

Sales & marketing need to be highly aligned, agile and understand the digital to human mix.

For anyone who has worked in Asia Pacific, the idea that business continues to be won and lost on relationships should by no means be a surprise. However, there are now more players in the game, more expertise required, and more ways to do it.

So, finding the right balance with how sales and marketing work together and strengthening that via the right digital and human mix is a huge opportunity.

The modern day sales cycle is built on a mix of repeatable always on activity and agility. This will ensure businesses can repeatedly scale their marketing efforts through items such as automation, and always on digital programs, while still having a clear understanding of the importance of allowing field level autonomy.

When done right, a local and agile sales cycle is one that is built around the customer and supported by centralised structures, process and governance. This means businesses have the ability to quickly adapt to the changing consumer needs, while also having the necessary support models in place to allow for consistency and best practice.

So, how do you do this? To start verticalized growth plans will form the foundation. This approach will ensure the business has the right level of focus, promote cross-functional support and open up access to the required deep industry expertise. Think of this like getting everyone on the same page or the regions 'north star'.

Second, businesses will need a very well structured and informed global to field relationship. Global's role in providing support to the field through centralised programs, content, functional expertise, guidance and reporting is the bedrock for success. This should allow predictable decision making between the field and global marketing function that enables localised autonomy to move fast and effectively, while providing the appropriate level of governance.

This can be further strengthened and supported by developing centralised hubs, such as 'centres of sales and marketing excellences', that have a remit to enable sales and marketing teams to align and focus on driving growth autonomously but in a coordinated and well resourced capacity.

Third, there needs to be a healthy mix of localised programs that target specific users with real local challenges. The intent is that this approach will supplement the top down brand awareness exercises with a more specific message and offer.

This is where we see the ability for the digital to 'human to human' handoff supercharge the sales cycle. Organisations who map out their local sales cycles and collaboratively work between sales and marketing to highlight how they can reach potential customers digitally, and then supplement those efforts where appropriate in person will get the most benefit.

As an example, where digital and virtual meetings have been able to create efficiencies and economies of scale, one to one relationships and targeted in-person meetings allow you to go deep on the relationship. It then becomes a coordinated approach with meaningful handoffs, not an either or, or clunky approach.

This is where traditional in-person events, round tables, masterminds, collaborative thought leadership forums and exhibitions become even more relevant for local marketing teams, particularly in Asia Pacific.

We see this as a 1+1=3 opportunity, and perhaps the opportunity has never been more significant given we are coming out of the global pandemic.

Beyond translation; there is an increase in support for local brands.

Finally, it would be remiss to overlook the importance of misconstruing translation with localisation. The fact is, the desire to work with local brands is increasing. In fact, research completed by Nielsen suggests that 49% of people in Asia would prefer to buy from a local brand.

This means, businesses who are entering the Asia-Pacific market or looking to solidify their position need to do all that they can to build a local presence and localise their marketing efforts. While a business cannot change its origin, it can certainly go a long way to build interest in the region by highlighting local presence, investing in locally developed content and support for the local economy.

At a higher level, globally based organisations need to evolve beyond a mindset of just translating content from what has been developed centrally. Simply changing spelling is not enough. It is mission critical for businesses to have a deep understanding of the localised pain points and 'transcreate' content around that. This means offering relevant examples and solutions as well as localised stories that are relevant for the target market.

In addition, ensuring you deliver content in its right format is also important and that is what is optimised for local platforms. Style, tone and formality of both written and spoken communication varies greatly from country to country. What may be appropriate in one country may be deemed as offensive in another. Ensuring that there are specific communication guidelines for how your marketing is pivotal from country to country.

The ability to properly localise should serve as a decision making moment for many organisations to ensure they are able to commit the appropriate resources to 'doing it right'. Too often businesses spread themselves too thin when entering Asia Pacific and don't prioritise and go deep enough into a country. Having a methodical and realistic approach is important.

Summary

There is significant opportunity for businesses to grow and thrive throughout Asia Pacific. However, it is important that it is done the right way. While this report is by no means exhaustive, we hope we have been able to provide some insight into what we believe to be some of the interesting trends that can drive a successful approach to marketing in Asia Pacific.

Sale cycles continue to be as dynamic as ever. We believe businesses who will win are those who can find the right blend of centralised support and enablement from their global organisations, and can mix that with an agile field approach that is empowered and trusted to run locally targeted programs, both digitally and in person.

This means, ensuring that your business is structured correctly on the ground level to maximise these opportunities is going to be paramount your success. This extends from the awareness phase through digital self service programs, all the way to the purchase of a solution or product via local trust building and hyper relevant programs.

It is a fantastic opportunity for marketing to continue to take a leadership role in the organisation as the importance of the function continues to grow with significant cross functional requirement and impact throughout business.



About CSG Marketing

CSG Marketing is an integrated marketing strategy, implementation and managed services organisation. Our innovative framework is centered on a managed marketing model that helps businesses capture the growth opportunity available to them in Asia Pacific.

For more information, visit our website at csg.marketing

About Russell Smith

With a passion for global strategy, innovation and ideas that move the world forward, Russell has spent his career working with businesses in more than 30 countries building programs that focus on growth and value innovation. In this time, he was lucky enough to live and work in Boston, Singapore and New York.

As the Founder & Principal Consultant of CSG Marketing, he spends his time working with business leaders to understand, challenge and unlock the value they have for the world, and uses marketing and insights to help them reach their vision.



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