

one-north's conducive environment allows creative minds to excel and innovation to flourish.



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# ES

EXPERIENCE SINGAPORE



## Stronger Together

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN SINGAPORE'S START-UP ECOSYSTEM



## Life, Disrupted

THE WAYS LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS HAVE REIMAGINED HOW SINGAPOREANS LIVE, WORK AND PLAY



## Africa's Urban Agenda

SINGAPORE-UN HABITAT INTERNATIONAL LEADERS IN URBAN GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME

## Notes from a NEW ECONOMY

Learning points from Singapore's vibrant start-up scene

MARKETING

BIG BOSS

35%

45%

25%



**Singapore's vibrant start-up scene has been nurtured through initiatives by both the public and private sectors.**

TEXT BY ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN

# AN ECOSYSTEM FOR THE FUTURE

As an undergraduate in the mid-2000s, Ms Gwendolyn Regina was drawn to the possibilities that technology and entrepreneurship offered. "Global developments in tech – especially those in Silicon Valley – excited me," the 33-year-old told *Experience Singapore*. "But in Singapore, the nascent start-up scene [then] was muted and far from lively." Although there were emerging start-ups, their growth were restricted because of limited exposure to resources, markets and investors. More than a decade later, however, that scene has evolved completely. "There are now plenty of resources for budding entrepreneurs to tap on, from networking sessions to grants and regional investors," said Ms Regina, who charted the evolution of the Republic's start-up ecosystem on her blog *SGEntrepreneurs*. Encouraged by the newfound vibrancy of Singapore's start-up scene, she joined a group of friends to start an angel investment group a few years ago. Investors like Ms Regina poured in more than S\$1.9 billion into Singapore-based start-ups in 2016, according to Tech in Asia, a web portal covering the region's start-up scene. These figures make Singapore the start-up capital of Southeast Asia and one of the best cities for young entrepreneurial minds.

Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Dr Koh Poh Koon (front row, seventh from right) with tenants of JTC LaunchPad.



Cover Photos: Shutterstock, JTC Corporation

Photo: JTC Corporation

## CONTENTS

-  **3 FOCUS**  
**An ecosystem for the future**  
How the public and private sectors have nurtured Singapore's vibrant start-up scene.
-  **6 REFLECTIONS**  
**Partnering UN-Habitat on Leadership Development towards Africa's new urban agenda**  
City leaders and urban planning officials from 12 African countries were in Singapore to share best practices.
-  **8 IN SINGAPORE**  
**Life, disrupted**  
Innovative start-ups reimagine life for everyday Singaporeans.



-  **10 JOINING HANDS**  
**Stronger together**  
Collaborations with global partners ensure that Singapore's start-ups are competitive, and ready for the future.

Dear readers,

From the time of its founding, Singapore has been a business and trading hub. The entrepreneurial ethic has long been entrenched in the nation's psyche. As this issue of *Experience Singapore* shows, this ethic has evolved in step with the changing nature of global business. Technological advances have given rise to a new breed of business that often departs from the traditional brick-and-mortar set-up, and 'disrupts' the established order of doing things in the name of progress. **An ecosystem for the future** puts the spotlight on Singapore's vibrant start-up scene and how its development has been supported by both the government as well as private sector. In **Life, Disrupted**, we look at some of the fruits of such enterprises, in a showcase of innovative products and services that this new breed of start-ups have come up with, which have impacted the daily lives of Singaporeans.

But Singapore's start-up scene isn't an insular phenomenon – indeed, one common mark of such businesses is the relative ease of their scalability, and many have gone on to become 'mini MNCs' in their own right. **Stronger Together** examines how Singapore has been collaborating with other countries in the development of their own local start-up scene, and how this in turn is helping to ensure that Singapore businesses remain vibrant and competitive.

Sharing our expertise – be it in business or in other areas – has always been a cornerstone of Singapore's international relationships. In June this year, we extended an invitation to representatives from several African states to learn more about our best practices in the areas of urban planning, as part of the International Leaders in Urban Governance Programme. Read about their experiences in **Partnering UN-Habitat on Leadership Development towards Africa's new urban agenda**. So as we embrace the future together, it is our hope that this issue of *Experience Singapore* will prove inspirational and demonstrate once more the benefits of sharing, collaboration and goodwill between countries.

*Teo Lay Cheng*

Director  
Strategic Communications Directorate  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore

Keep in touch!

Share with us your memories, photos and experiences in Singapore under the Singapore Cooperation Programme. Email us at [mfa@mfa.sg](mailto:mfa@mfa.sg)



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SINGAPORE

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Publishing Consultant  
Mediacorp Pte Ltd



Incubator Mediapreneur with local start-ups at Echelon Asia Summit 2016, which attracted top digital professionals from the region.



START-UPS ARE AN IMPORTANT DRIVER OF INNOVATION AND ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT AS SINGAPORE TRANSFORMS TO BECOME AN INNOVATIVE AND VALUE-CREATING ECONOMY

SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY DR KOH POH KOON

**WHY THEY MATTER**

The transformation of Singapore's start-up scene is largely the result of an understanding across both the public and private sectors that today's start-ups will drive the future economy of the country. By definition, start-ups are fast-growing and designed to scale quickly. As Mr Lim Der Shing, a member of the Government-initiated Committee on the Future Economy pointed out to *Experience Singapore*, the nature of these enterprises gives them the potential to become smaller-scale multinational corporations very quickly. Take digital food-ordering system provider Oddle, which launched in the Republic in 2013. In just four years, the firm has gone global, with customers across five Asian markets. It now supports the operations of more than 1,300 restaurants.

Highlighting the importance of such innovative firms to Singapore's future economy, Senior Minister of State for the Ministry of Trade and Industry Dr Koh Poh Koon said in a statement in August 2017 that "Start-ups are an important driver of innovation and are becoming increasingly important as Singapore transforms to become an innovative and value-creating economy."

To nurture start-ups, Mr Lim - an angel investor himself - believes that a whole-of-society approach is important. "Start-ups do not operate in a vacuum. They can only thrive with the involvement and support of both the public and private sectors," he emphasised.

Here are six ways that the start-up scene in Singapore has been nurtured for success:

**MENTORS ABOUND**

To support new start-ups in their journey to success, incubators and accelerators have sprung up in a variety of industries. These organisations are a key element of a start-up ecosystem, as they provide crucial mentorship and seed funding. Mediapreneur, offered by local media conglomerate Mediacorp, is one such incubator programme. Catering to media start-ups, it boasts a mentor network of 26 leading industry practitioners who run workshops and networking sessions for participants. "Our goal is to provide paths for local entrepreneurs to achieve their dreams in the media space," Mr Guillaume Sachet, Mediacorp's Head of Strategic Planning told *Experience Singapore*.

**FUNDING MADE EASY**

Barriers to raising capital have also been lowered, thanks to an agreement between the Singapore Exchange and the Infocomm Media Development Authority. Announced in May this year, it creates a streamlined pathway for Singapore-based infocomm and media firms to raise capital on the local bourse. This in turn allows them to expand more efficiently. Through this pathway, selected firms can tap on sponsors, as well as law and audit firms on their journey to being listed. These services will be offered at a preferential rate. "This in turn will help drive the number of tech companies willing to consider capital markets and make Singapore as an attractive venue for capital raising," said Mr Benjamin Mah, a local entrepreneur.

First-time entrepreneurs can also turn to SPRING Singapore, an agency responsible for helping Singapore enterprises grow. Its Startup SG Founder programme matches S\$3 to every S\$1 raised by first-time entrepreneurs for up to S\$30,000. Budding start-ups can also tap on SPRING SEEDS Capital (SSC), the investment arm of SPRING Singapore. In July 2017, SSC announced a commitment of up to S\$100 million to groom high potential start-ups in three areas: advanced manufacturing and engineering, health and biomedical sciences and urban solutions and sustainability.

Beyond helping start-ups, the Government has also rolled out tax incentives to encourage investment into start-ups. Introduced in 2010, the Angel Investor Tax Deduction Scheme offers angel investors a tax deduction of 50 per cent of their investment at the end of a two-year holding period.



Dr Emilio Frazzoli, co-founder and chief technology officer of self-driving car start-up nuTonomy.



**IN NUMBERS**  
SINGAPORE'S START-UP ECOSYSTEM AT A GLANCE

Valued at nearly **S\$15 billion**

Home to between **1,600 to 2,400** tech start-ups

The average software engineer is paid around **S\$48,000** a year

**28 years** The median age of start-up founders based in Singapore



SOURCE: 2017 GLOBAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM REPORT AND RANKING

Photos: Mediacorp Pte Ltd, nuTonomy, SGINnovate



SGInnovate's six-storey campus is home to engineers and research scientists.

a merry-go-round, our shared experier us to er as a community as



Photos of Mr Ngoo and Mr Lin first appeared in the Jan-Mar 2017 and Apr-Jun 2017 issues of NUS' The Alumnus magazine. Read the articles online at alumnus.nus.edu.sg/alumnusmagazine

**FAST FACT**

ONE OF THE BIGGEST NAMES TO COME OUT OF JTC LAUNCHPAD @ ONE-NORTH IS REGIONAL PEER-TO-PEER SALES PLATFORM GIANT **CAROUSELL**

**DRIVING RESEARCH FORWARD**

Efforts have also been made to support the development and deployment of new technologies. "(Currently), many start-ups replicate proven technologies and business models to take advantage of regional growth. But to sustain (growth), we need to create value through innovation," Deputy Prime Minister Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam has said.

SGInnovate, launched in November 2016, will play a key role in promoting innovation in Singapore's deep-technology start-up ecosystem. "It will be a focal point for interaction between deep-tech scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs in various domains, and financiers," said Mr Shanmugaratnam at the opening of SGINnovate. He added that the entity would bridge capabilities to help Singapore achieve its full potential by providing a nurturing environment for budding innovators to turn their science and deep-technology ideas into reality. Researchers in a variety of fields receive mentorship and access to research institutes. Focus areas include healthcare, resources and transportation.



**GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURS WILL COMPLEMENT OUR LOCAL FOUNDERS**

GROUP DIRECTOR FOR INDUSTRY & ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION & STARTUPS OF SPRING SINGAPORE MR EDWIN CHOW

**ATTRACTING GLOBAL TALENT**

Recent revisions to a work visa scheme for foreign entrepreneurs make it easier for global talent to set up shop in Singapore. The enhanced EntrePass scheme, announced in August this year, offers a broadened evaluation criteria for foreign entrepreneurs keen to start innovative businesses in the Republic. "Global entrepreneurs will complement our local founders, with their skillsets and understanding of foreign market opportunities, to build stronger and fast-growing start-ups that create good jobs," said Group Director for Industry & Enterprise and Innovation & Startups of SPRING Singapore Mr Edwin Chow.

**STARTING YOUNG**

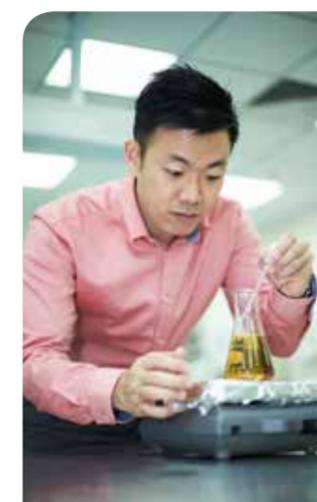
According to the 2017 Global Startup Ecosystem Report and Ranking, Singapore has some of the youngest start-up founders in the world, with a median age of 28. In contrast, the global average is 40. The youthful nature of Singapore's entrepreneurs may be a result of the Republic's educational policies, which encourage entrepreneurship and innovation at an early age.

Almost all of Singapore's educational institutions have some form of a programme that nurtures innovation and entrepreneurship. "These develop in students an entrepreneurial dare, which is an attitude; a mindset of pushing boundaries, of wanting to innovate and finding a breakthrough," said Minister of Education (Schools) Mr Ng Chee Meng, adding that such an attitude would benefit students outside the start-up realm as well. "It applies across all domains, not just in business and enterprises, but also in scientific research, engineering and the arts."

**SPACE TO INNOVATE**

"For start-ups to thrive, they need a space that is buzzing with creativity - and I think many local start-ups found that at JTC LaunchPad @ one-north," said Mr Ivan Chang, the President of SMUpreneurs, an alumni group for entrepreneurs from the Singapore Management University. Opened in 2015, the 6.5-hectare site comprises eight blocks of office space. Monthly rental prices here are affordable, starting at S\$20/sqm. In contrast, monthly office rental rates in the island's Central Business District start at S\$100/sqm.

Located in the heart of the one-north precinct, the site offers more than just a space to work: it is also the centre of a community of founders, entrepreneurs, product developers, venture capitalists, accelerators and incubators. "Innovators embarking on a new entrepreneurial journey can plug into this ecosystem and tap on readily available support," says Ms Khoo Wee Lin, Director of Info-comm, Media and Start-up Cluster at JTC, the government agency that developed the space. JTC is responsible for the development of industrial infrastructure to support and catalyse the growth of industries and enterprises in Singapore.



Mr Ricky Lin, founder of Life3 Biotech, which uses natural plant-based ingredients to create innovative functional foods and beverages.

Mr Lucas Ngoo, co-founder and chief technology officer of peer-to-peer sales platform Carousell.

# PARTNERING UN-HABITAT ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS AFRICA'S NEW URBAN AGENDA



◆ Singapore is a case study that presents many insights for policymakers who are interested in the area of sustainable urban development.



◆ The programme presented participants with opportunities to learn about Singapore's best practices on the integrated planning processes for cities.

City leaders and urban planning officials from 12 African countries were in Singapore to attend the inaugural Singapore – UN-Habitat International Leaders in Urban Governance Programme (iLUGP) in June.

In 2016, 54.5 per cent of the world's population was classified as urban. By 2030, 60 per cent of people will live in cities, with one in three living in cities with half a million inhabitants each. These trends present both opportunities as well as complex challenges for leaders and urban planners of these metropolises. As a compact (less than 800 square kilometres) city-state with 5.7 million people, Singapore's nation-building story is intrinsically linked to how best to harness the opportunities of its urban setting, while mitigating its negative effects. Sustainability in Singapore is not just a buzz word but a way of life.

Under the Singapore Cooperation Programme, Singapore welcomed 42 city leaders and urban planning officials from 12 African countries to Singapore to attend the inaugural Singapore – UN-Habitat International Leaders in Urban Governance Programme (iLUGP) in June. The leadership programme is aimed at sharing Singapore's best practices on our integrated planning process for cities, and the decision-making process that leaders and planners have to consider in order to achieve sustainable development.



◆ Singapore's Second Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee and Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat Dr Joan Clos at the signing of the MOU during the Habitat III conference in Ecuador in 2016.



Dr Aisa Kacyira, former Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat.



◆ Among the places that programme participants got to visit was Toa Payoh Town, an example of a high-density urban living solution.



IF YOU HAVE THE WILL AND VISION AS A LEADER, YOU CAN MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UN-HABITAT DR AISA KACYIRA AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE INAUGURAL SINGAPORE - UN-HABITAT INTERNATIONAL LEADERS IN URBAN GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME.

## LIVEABLE CITIES AND NEW URBAN AGENDA

The programme marks a milestone in Singapore's cooperation with UN-Habitat, which was formalised through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on joint capacity-building by Second Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee and Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat Dr Joan Clos, at the sidelines of the HABITAT III Conference in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. The MOU seeks to support the UN's 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, also commonly known as the Sustainable Development Goals, and the "New Urban Agenda" which was adopted at Habitat III.

Africa is a natural area of focus for Singapore's collaboration with UN-Habitat. A century ago, the urban population in Africa was 8 per cent of the total African population. Today, half of Africa is urban. In 2020, Africa's urban population will surpass that of Europe (569 million vs 553 million). This critical mass presents great opportunities. For example, Africa has one of the highest economic growth among all regions in the world. There is a strong correlation between urbanisation and increased prosperity.



This iLUGP shared Singapore's liveability framework developed by the Centre for Liveable Cities think-tank in Singapore. It also added the perspective of UN-Habitat experts to link the Singapore urban story with that of Africa's own path towards the New Urban Agenda. One linkage that was fleshed out was how Singapore's compact city model could be adapted to fit into Africa's own plans for compact cities at a human scale that optimises (i) demographics and economic densities; (ii) the proximity of people and businesses through a mixed-use land pattern; and (iii) conditions that promote social diversity.

## TOWARDS A COMMON AFRICA AGENDA

Excursions to the Singapore River, the Marina Barrage, the Housing Development Board Hub and Toa Payoh Town helped the participants to learn how a compact city was more than the sum of its parts. Participants also had intensive group discussions and worked on action plans for their own cities.

At the end of the programme, the participants developed a strong camaraderie and resolved to continue working together for a better Africa. During the closing ceremony, Nigeria's Deputy Director of Urban and Regional Development Ms Edna Deimi Tobi put it best when she said, "Together, let us strive for a common Africa Agenda".

We wish the participants the very best in this endeavour! ●

◆ Participants also took in the sights at Marina Barrage as well as the domes at Gardens by the Bay.

## What is the Sustainable Development Goals?

The United Nation's 2030 Agenda, also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is a set of 17 Global Goals aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity for all. It was adopted by all 193 UN member states on 25 September, 2015 at the historic Sustainable Development Summit in New York. While aspirational in nature, the SDGs provide guidelines and targets for countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and challenges. The attainment of the SDGs will require the partnership of governments, private sector, civil society and citizens to ensure a better world for future generations.



Here is how some home-grown start-ups have reimagined the way Singaporeans work, live and play.

TEXT BY ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN

# LIFE, DISRUPTED

## WHEELS FOR TOMORROW

It is the morning rush hour in Singapore and Mr Syukri, 25, alights from the subway at Kent Ridge MRT station. The call centre operator heads for a row of some 10 electric scooters parked nearby. Whipping out his smartphone, he opens the **Neuron** app and scans a QR code at one of the docking stations. With a soft click, an e-scooter is released. "Off I go," Mr Syukri told *Experience Singapore* as he whooshed past.

Less than five minutes later, he's off the e-scooter and returning it to a docking station next to his office. "It's a convenient way to get around, especially for short distances. If I had to walk, it would have taken more than 10 minutes – and I'd be a lot sweatier!" said Mr Syukri, a loyal customer of an e-scooter sharing trial.

FOR THE SAFETY OF USERS AND PEDESTRIANS, THE SPEED LIMIT OF EACH E-SCOOTER IS CAPPED AT **15KM/H**



Mr Zachary Wang, CEO of Neuron Mobility.

Launched in June 2017, the six-month pilot is the brainchild of local transport technology start-up Neuron Mobility and urban developer Ascendas-Singbridge. It is currently available in two precincts in Singapore: Science Park 1 and the Central Business District. There are nine stations across these two areas, providing commuters with 70 e-scooters. These can be rented for S\$0.50 for 15 minutes – around half the price of a soda.

Mr Zachary Wang, 32, CEO of Neuron Mobility said, "Technology offers solutions to the connectivity problems that dense cities like Singapore face. E-scooter sharing will encourage people to use public transport, since it boosts first- and last-mile connectivity. This can help Singapore realise its vision of building a 'car-lite' society."

Since its launch, the service has clocked 1,600 trips. Also Mr Syukri said, "It's affordable, convenient and I'm doing my part for a greener future. What's not to like?"

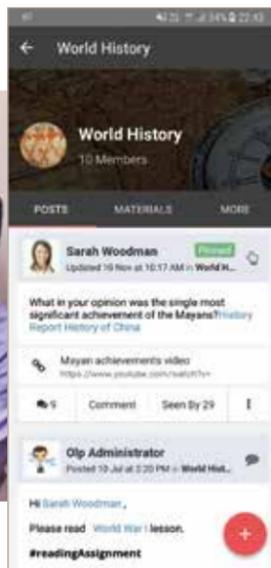


Teamie's co-founders, Mr Ashwin Singh (left) and Mr Shivanu Shukla.

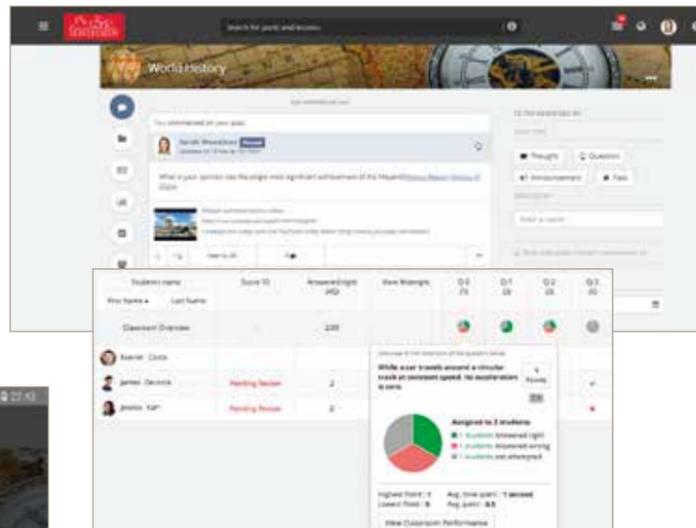
## LEARNING REDEFINED

Education has been digital for more than two decades, thanks to the plethora of online learning platforms available. As students, Mr Shivanu Shukla, 34, and Mr Ashwin Singh, 37, experienced many of these first-hand. "But they were very transactional in nature: as learners, we only downloaded content (to study offline). There was little engagement and participation," said Mr Singh.

Together with Mr Shukla, he transformed the online learning space by starting **Teamie** in 2011. Leveraging on growing technology adoption and accessibility, the start-up has created online classrooms for more than 500,000 users in 10 countries. In these digital spaces, students share ideas, collaborate and learn together – sometimes remotely – while teachers use analytics to track the performance and participation rates of students.



Photos: Teamie



Teamie's easy-to-navigate interface is a hit with students and teachers alike.

Using data to tailor lesson plans to individual abilities and needs have improved learning outcomes, said the co-founders. "Teamie allows teachers to identify each student's weak spots, so they can intervene accordingly," shared Mr Singh, who serves as the firm's Chief Operating Officer. He believes that Singapore's push towards lifelong learning offers the start-up even more avenues for growth. "Learners will have little contact time with their teachers as they will be working. This means mobile learning will be an important aspect of education in the future."



Photos: BonAppetour

## CUISINE CONNECTION

Each of Ms Tang Ling Nah's yearly holidays are a chance to explore a new cuisine. "Eating like locals is the best way to learn about another culture," the 45-year-old artist told *Experience Singapore*. So it's no surprise that she jumped at the chance to try **BonAppetour**.

Launched in 2013, the local start-up gives tourists the opportunity to try authentic food experiences in more than 15 cities. "We offer food tours, home dining experiences and cooking classes," said BonAppetour's co-founder Ms Rinita Vanjre, 26. Each experience costs between S\$20 and S\$100.

Ms Tang opted for a cooking class and a home dining experience when she visited Osaka, Japan last year. "I learnt how to boil *dashi* (a Japanese stock) and fry a rolled omelette," she said, adding that she forged a connection



Experiences available to users of BonAppetour include home-cooked meals and cooking classes.

with her host. "It was a great cultural exchange – I shared a bit of Singaporean culture with her by giving her a bottle of *kaya* (coconut custard)."

BonAppetour's co-founders hope to create more of such moments for tourists. "Food has the magic to bring people of different cultures together," said Ms Vanjre, an avid traveller herself. "We hope that people will be inspired (during their experiences) to share their stories and traditions with others."

The three co-founders of BonAppetour.

MORE THAN **10,000** CUSTOMERS HAVE TRIED BONAPPETOUR'S FOOD EXPERIENCES

## IN THE FAST LANE

Ms Serena Tang, 25, is at home decorating a cake when the doorbell rings. She opens the door to a deliveryman in a bright red shirt. "**RedMart** delivery," he called out as he handed her two bags, chockfull of baking supplies. Among them was the icing sugar Ms Tang needed to make the sugar flowers her home baking business is known for.

Home delivery is an increasingly common scenario in Singapore, where the online grocery market is set to triple in value by 2020, according to international grocery research organisation IGD. RedMart is one of the bigger players, with more than 1,300 employees and over 60,000 products in stock.

But this wasn't always the case. When Mr Vikram Rupani, Mr Roger Egan and Mr Rajesh Lingappa launched RedMart in 2011, there was only a handful of online grocers. Back then, the service operated out of a 3,000 sq ft warehouse with just one van and one staff member. Manpower was tight so the co-founders sometimes made deliveries themselves. But growing smartphone adoption in Singapore over the past five years helped online grocery gain traction, and today RedMart boasts a fleet of more than 200 delivery vehicles and a 100,000 sq ft warehouse.

For busy Singaporeans like Ms Tang, services like RedMart are a boon. "I teach classes, come up with new recipes and meet (baking) orders, which means my to-do list is almost always full," said Ms Tang, who uses the service for nightly, buying up to S\$50 worth of items each time. "Having someone else pick up my groceries for me allows me to focus on my business."



Photos: Wilson Pang



RedMart deliveries are an increasingly common sight in Singapore.

**NURTURING TOMORROW'S TALENT**

The 2017 Global Startup Ecosystem Report and Ranking named Singapore as the best place in the world for start-ups to hire talent. This was not a feat achieved alone, since many of the Republic's brightest tech and business whizzes benefited from overseas immersion programmes during their university years.

Among the most established of these programmes is the National University of Singapore's **NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC)**. Launched in 2002, the programme offers students half- and full-year internships in nine start-up hubs, including Shanghai, New York and Stockholm. While working, students also take relevant courses at renowned universities in these cities.

"Working in a vibrant entrepreneurial environment like Silicon Valley was a great opportunity," said Ms Guan Dian, an NOC participant who was featured in *Forbes Asia's* "30 Under 30" last year. "There were many networking sessions with foreign entrepreneurs (who taught me) about their journeys to success." Her business partner and fellow NOC participant Mr Jeffrey Tiong added, "Being part of NOC showed me the possibilities of entrepreneurship and how it could make a positive impact in the world." Following their stints at NOC Silicon Valley and Bio Valley in the United States, the duo co-founded PatSnap, a global patents database platform that has a presence in three major economies.

The spirit of global cooperation starts young in Singapore – as early as 17, in fact. Some 30 students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic participate each year in the institution's annual **Overseas Innovation Challenge**. Started in 2013, the challenge was borne out of a partnership with the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Participating students visit Hong Kong-based start-ups to learn about their processes and strategies. They then return home to brainstorm solutions for problems faced by similar firms in Singapore.

**FAST FACT**

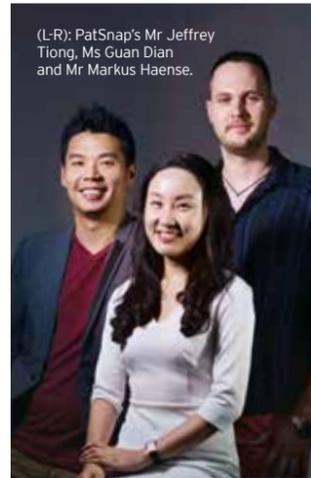
The NUS Overseas Colleges boast an alumni network of more than **2,200** students

THESE STUDENTS HAVE **FOUNDED MORE THAN 300** START-UPS



NUS Overseas Colleges can be found in New York.

Photo: NUS Enterprise



(L-R): PatSnap's Mr Jeffrey Tiong, Ms Guan Dian and Mr Markus Haense.

Photos: PatSnap, Ngee Ann Polytechnic



Students at Ngee Ann Polytechnic's Overseas Innovation Challenge in Hong Kong.



**Collaborations and partnerships are the order of the day in Singapore's start-up ecosystem.**

TEXT BY ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN

**STRONGER TOGETHER**

**BENEFITS BEYOND BORDERS**

It's not just Singaporean talent and firms that benefit from collaborations with other countries: the region's start-up ecosystem does as well. **Wonderlabs** is committed to grooming tech leaders in Indonesia to support future start-up operations across Southeast Asia. "While working on my previous start-up, I benefited a lot from great tech talent," Mr Keith Tan, co-founder of the Singapore-based firm told *Experience Singapore*. "I wanted to pay it forward and make more of that available to the local and regional start-up ecosystem."

Wonderlabs' 68 staff – or Wondernauts as they are known – are put through a talent accelerator programme designed to hone their skills. "These aren't limited to tech competencies; they are also taught communication and people skills," said Mr Tan. "We hope that with our training, these staff will bring ASEAN's start-up scene to new heights."



Photos: Wonderlabs



Team bonding is an important aspect of Wonderlabs' operations.

Wonderlabs' co-founders Mr Ivan Chang (second from right) and Mr Keith Tan (first from right).

Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade) Mr Lim Hng Kiang, (second from left) and his Indonesian counterpart, Mr Enggartiaso Lukita (third from left) at the opening of Block71, Jakarta. The space aims to strengthen the Indonesian capital's start-up ecosystem.



Photo: BLOCK71, Jakarta



THE FUTURE ECONOMY WILL BE CHARACTERISED BY A GLOBAL NETWORK OF INNOVATION AND TALENT. CITIES PLUGGED INTO THIS GLOBAL NETWORK WILL HAVE A STRONG ADVANTAGE.

MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY (TRADE) MR LIM HNG KIANG.

Action Community for Entrepreneurship Jakarta



Inking of a partnership between Singapore's Action Community for Entrepreneurship and Vietnam's National Agency for Technology Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Development.

**SHARING MARKETS AND RESOURCES**

In addition to a growing talent pool, start-ups also benefit from the larger markets that collaborations offer. This is especially important for a country like Singapore, which has a small domestic market. To help the Republic's start-ups reach a wider audience, the Action Community for Entrepreneurship (ACE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Vietnam's National Agency for Technology Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Development last year. Under the MOU, both agencies will support start-ups, venture capitalists and stakeholders looking for a presence in the partner country.

"With a population of more than 94 million people, Vietnam is an important market in Asia-Pacific where start-ups can gain a firm standing," said Dr Mark Hon, the chairman of ACE, a private agency that promotes entrepreneurship in Singapore. "(Such) partnerships not only offer our entrepreneurs valuable market access, but also serve as a landing point for foreign start-ups looking to venture into Singapore and the ASEAN region."

The number of similar partnerships is set to grow in the coming years, thanks to the new **Global Innovation Alliance**. Unveiled by Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade) Mr Lim Hng Kiang in March 2017, the scheme will support collaborations between institutes of higher learning, businesses and economic development agencies. Through these partnerships, Singaporean workers can also gain experience in overseas start-up ecosystems and share best practices with their global counterparts.

In its initial phase, the Global Innovation Alliance will be launched in Beijing, San Francisco and various ASEAN cities. "By linking our enterprises and students with overseas partners in major innovation hubs and key demand markets, our companies and people will benefit from the opportunities as well as the overseas exposure," said Mr Lim. ●

**GOING GLOBAL**

THE SINGAPORE-LED GLOBAL INNOVATION ALLIANCE WILL ALLOW START-UPS, BOTH LOCAL AND FOREIGN, TO:

- **GAIN** in-market exposure
- **EXCHANGE** innovative ideas
- **COLLABORATE** on innovation and technology projects