



Grow Women Entrepreneur Newsletter



CONFEDERATION OF ASIA-PACIFIC CHAMBERS
OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (CACCI)

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Message from Chairperson

Dear All,

Greetings and looking forward to engaging with each other once more .

Today, the world has acknowledged that we are depending on women-led economies to create a better and more sustainable world. Therefore there is no denying the fact that women's empowerment and gender equality and opportunity are vital for global economic progress, as well as for building blocked in society, in communities, and in nations at large.



While the path to women's empowerment is advancing, we are far from where it should have been. There is much to do to propel and direct women to the rightful place.

It is imperative to create an enabling environment for women's full and effective participation in all spheres.

With this objective in mind, CACCI Women Entrepreneurs' Council (CWEC) was formed as one of the Product and Service Councils to help in the economic empowerment of women .

CWEC is continuously working towards achieving gender parity across all CACCI member countries. The philosophy behind our work stems from the fact that gender equality is essential to the effectiveness of our work, and we cannot afford to miss out on the contributions of half of the world's population.

We, at CWEC, are very clear that we cannot work towards a sustainable future and fulfil the objective of transforming the world with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, without full participation of women.

CACCI, our parent organization, has enabled us to work towards this objective in a structured and concerted manner. Since 1966, CACCI has been the premier international platform for business networking. It is an apt forum to develop business partnerships, promote business activities, and enhance economic growth in the Asia Pacific region.

With strong and active engagement with Eurochambers (The European Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry - a representation to the institutions in 45 European countries) and with the Federation of Gulf Council Chambers of Commerce (FGCCC), (whose membership includes the Gulf Arab States of the Kingdom of Bahrain, State of Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), CACCI has established a strong network of like-minded organisations that strives to achieve enhanced economic activities, active trade engagements and global cooperation.

With over 12 dedicated Product and Service Councils, CACCI has been working towards policy advocacy, networking amongst different countries, training, information sharing, government interactions and forming strategic alliances.

At CWEC, we are trying to speed up the process of women's economic empowerment and facilitate trade opportunities specifically for women by advocating, monitoring, documenting, and engaging in the best possible manner.

To conclude, I am reminded of this recent and very powerful statement by Michelle Yeoh, who became the first Asian woman to win best actress award at the Oscars at the age of 60 for her leading

performance in the movie “Everything Everywhere All at Once.”

In her acceptance speech, she said, “I think this is something that we have been working so hard towards for a very long time, and tonight we broke that glass ceiling. I kung fu’d it out and shattered it, and we need this because there are so many who felt unseen, unheard.”

Last but not the least, I would like to thank each one of you for your unstinting support and your dedication towards the shared goal of creating an enabling environment for women to grow and make the best of their potential.

Let us together make women feel seen and heard, and help them fulfil their dreams. “Light that fire in your soul and stay on the path”, borrowing from Yeoh’s words once again!

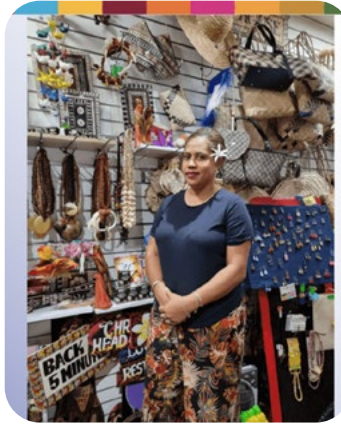
Best regards,
Mukta Nandini Jain
Chairperson, CWEC
Past President, FLO (2006-07)

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Enabling Women's Entrepreneurship in Asia and the Pacific through Smart Legislative and Policy Reforms

By Sudha Gooty and Nisha Narekapudi



As the owner of a small business at the Suva flea market, Vilisi Wavu knows what it takes to be a female entrepreneur in Fiji. It requires a “shift in attitude and a sense of urgency” to succeed in an environment that is often more challenging for women than men. Indeed, many women in Asia and the Pacific face a regulatory and financial landscape that does not adequately support their ability to start and run their own businesses. These discriminatory practices not only hold women back, but also impede firms’ productivity, as they are associated with lower levels of sales and output.

Such findings corroborate those of [Women, Business and the Law](#), a World Bank Group project identifying the laws and regulations that affect women’s economic opportunity in 190 countries. In [2022](#), *Women, Business and the Law* found that a typical woman in East Asia and the Pacific has less than three-quarters of the rights of men in the areas measured. Persistent gaps remain, for example, in adopting leave policies that can affect women’s work after having children, protecting women from sexual harassment in employment, and preventing inequalities in access to credit. Out of 25 countries in the region, 17 do not prohibit discrimination based on gender in financial services, freely allowing lenders to discriminate against women who are trying to start a business and earn a living. As confirmed by the [East Asia and Pacific Gender Innovation Lab](#), a gender lens should be applied to all micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) policies to ensure equitable access for women. In fact, a more equal legal environment is associated with a higher share of female entrepreneurs.

To turn this data into action, the ESCAP [Catalyzing Women’s Entrepreneurship Programme \(CWE\)](#) is working directly with countries on policy and governance initiatives to create an enabling ecosystem, enhance access and use of financial services, and strengthen use of technology and digital solutions for female businessowners. In Viet Nam, for instance, CWE undertook a comprehensive review of the SME Law to assess opportunities and gaps in its scope and implementation. As a result, several recommendations related to women entrepreneurs were incorporated, including important stipulations on

incubation, human resource development, financial services and counselling support. Programs in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Nepal and Samoa are also ongoing to make the policy and institutional environment more gender-responsive and advance women’s economic empowerment.

Taking the opportunity to further examine relevant data and build on the success of these initiatives, the World Bank Group and ESCAP together recently hosted a regional dialogue titled “Enabling Women’s Entrepreneurship through Smart Legislative and Policy Reforms”. The event, attended by more than 100 participants, focused on the legal and regulatory challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the region, presented case studies of successful reforms, and identified strategies for the way forward. In her opening remarks, World Bank Group Global Director for Gender, Hana Brix, emphasized the need to “draw on everyone’s experiences and work together to prioritize women as the essential drivers of economic growth that they are.”

Sessions included an overview of relevant legal and economic research, a presentation of positive policy reforms, and a panel discussion of experts on gender equality and women’s entrepreneurship. The panelists’ insights ranged from resilience measures and legal reforms needed for female entrepreneurs in Pakistan, to hearing from women entrepreneurs in the Suva Flea Market about the urgency of interventions needed. They highlighted positive experiences of collaboration between private sector startups and governments, such as in Bangladesh to create a women entrepreneur hub, and presented innovative instruments that support scaling up access to finance.

Breakout sessions also allowed for a free-flowing discussion of key policy solutions that can boost women’s entrepreneurship and advance gender equality. Participants agreed that some initiatives are vital to improve women’s economic opportunity. For example:

- The adoption of data management frameworks to improve governments’ capacity to collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data related to women’s entrepreneurship.
- Gender-responsive procurement plans to increase political commitments to women-led MSMEs.
- Governments can lead and facilitate access to markets and networks for women entrepreneurs.
- Integrated support systems, with targeted programs aimed at providing digital literacy and facilitating legal certification for women entrepreneurs.
- Grants, trade guarantees and partnerships with banks to help bridge gaps in access to finance.
- Women-centric measures in laws and policies to disable discrimination toward female entrepreneurs in the region.

Together, we can continue to share lessons around legal

inequalities, advance concrete solutions for female entrepreneurs, and put gender equality at the top of policymakers' reform agendas. As Kaveh Zahedi, the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP said in his address, "Our support is based on a conviction that if countries are to successfully rebuild after the pandemic, women must flourish as decisionmakers and as businesspersons. No country can afford to forego advancing gender equality that could add as much as \$4.5 trillion annually to the region's GDP. The time to act is now."

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

About Authors

Sudha Gooty

Programme Manager, Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship Programme, Social Development Division

Nisha Narekapudi

Private Sector Specialist, Women, Business and the Law, Global Indicators Group, Development Economics, World Bank Group

Online Business Brings Old Problems Along with New Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs

By Priyal Keni

Shifting business online has proven benefits for women entrepreneurs, the wider economy, and even society as a whole. But women are still held back from seizing these opportunities by long standing gender inequalities as well as newer, online forms of harassment and abuse.

The internet has revolutionised the way businesses work, by building a global marketplace for entrepreneurs. It has also proven to be an effective tool for empowering women entrepreneurs in both rural and urban areas to drive economic development. Traditionally, women entrepreneurs have faced systemic barriers and biases that limited their access to funding, networks, and mentorship.

However, the internet has served as a lucrative level playing field to promote women-led businesses and increase their chances of success. Online marketplaces have made it possible for women entrepreneurs to reach customers beyond traditional retail channels. By using social media, women entrepreneurs can reach a wider audience, increase their visibility, and engage with customers in real time.

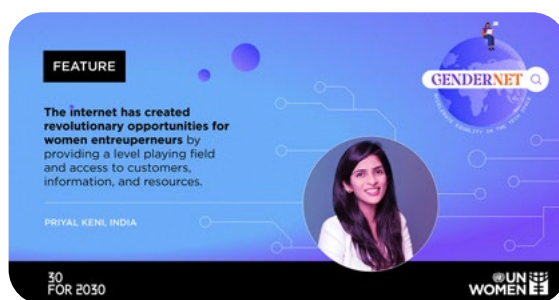
Additionally, the internet provides access to resources that can help women entrepreneurs develop new skills, grow their businesses, and stay up-to-date on the latest industry trends. Online networking has made it possible for them to connect with other entrepreneurs, potential customers, and investors regardless of their location to build relationships and find mentorship and support to access new business opportunities.

Women entrepreneurs who use digital tools in their businesses are twice as likely to expect to see revenue growth of more than 15 per cent over the next three years compared to those who do not.

Campaigns run by women on crowdfunding platforms are 32 per cent more successful than those run by men.

Women who use online lending platforms are more likely to receive loans at lower interest rates than those who use traditional lending sources.

Around 71 per cent of women entrepreneurs who use social media to network believe it has helped them grow their businesses, and 64 per cent say they have found mentors through



social media.

Women entrepreneurship can play a vital role in promoting economic development by increasing employment opportunities, generating income, and contributing to the overall growth of the economy.

When women start their own businesses, they create jobs for themselves and others, leading to an

increase in the overall workforce and a rise in the female labour-force participation rate. Additionally, women entrepreneurs often bring unique perspectives and approaches to their businesses, leading to innovation and new market opportunities.

Women's involvement within the entrepreneurial circuit can also help to close the gender wage gap and increase financial independence among women. By empowering more women to participate in the economy, countries can tap into a significant source of potential growth and progress towards more equitable and sustainable socio-economic development.

However, while the internet has the potential to promote women entrepreneurship, online gender-based violence (GBV) is a growing concern. Online GBV can take many forms, including cyberstalking, cyber harassment, and online hate speech.

Ending online GBV would allow women entrepreneurs to operate in a safe and supportive online environment and maximise the opportunities the digital space provides. Online GBV can lead to feelings of anxiety, stress, and depression, and can also impact their physical health.

- Around 47 per cent of women entrepreneurs in developing countries reported experiencing GBV in the form of online harassment, threats, and stalking.
- 20 per cent of women entrepreneurs in Europe have experienced online harassment, with the majority of incidents occurring on social media platforms.
- Around 38 per cent of women entrepreneurs who had experienced online harassment reported that it had a negative impact on their business operations.

For women entrepreneurs, this can make it difficult to focus on their businesses or secure funding and access to mentorship, which are critical components of success. Online

GBV also has a negative impact on women's reputations and personal brands.

Ending online GBV is also important for the wider community as it can have a ripple effect, impacting not only the target but also her family, friends, and community. It can also set a dangerous precedent, normalising violence and abuse against women.

By ending online GBV, we can help to create a safer and more supportive online community, promoting equality and respect for all. All individuals, regardless of gender, have the right to be free from violence and abuse.

Governments, businesses, and society as a whole must work together to address online GBV and create a safer and

more supportive online community for everyone. This can be achieved through a combination of education, policy, and technology solutions, as well as the promotion of safe online practices.

By working together, we can create a brighter future for women entrepreneurs and empower them to drive economic growth and development!

UN Women Asia and the Pacific

Women-led firms in Asia-Pacific need more support to grow their businesses: JPMorgan

By Priyal Keni

Women entrepreneurs need more targeted support in areas like networking and mentorship to overcome societal barriers that might hinder them from growing their businesses, given that these make up only a small proportion of high-growth companies across the Asia-Pacific.

The observation is gleaned from a report by JPMorgan released on March 8, which found that just 5.7 per cent, or 848 companies, of 15,000 high-growth private businesses in the region were founded, co-founded, led or managed by women as at the end of 2021.

High-growth businesses refer to companies that have secured significant funding in recent years – through Series A to J funding, private equity or private debt – and have potential to raise more capital for future growth.



While more women have joined the workforce, the trend is slower when it comes to entrepreneurs and those in key management roles, says JPMorgan's Asia-Pacific private bank chief executive Kwang Kam Shing.

Commenting on the report during a visit to Singapore last week, JPMorgan's Asia-Pacific private bank chief executive Kwang Kam Shing said: "We have been serving ultra-high net worth individuals and families in the region, and I have to say, women are not well represented. For the most part, the decision-makers we are dealing with are men.

"But this is changing. We are seeing more and more women, whether they are first-generation founders or entrepreneurs of their own businesses, or daughters of founders. When they take over, we can see the value-add they bring to the business."

While more women have joined the workforce, the trend is slower when it comes to entrepreneurs and those in key management roles, she added.

The report, which studied "women-powered" businesses across 12 Asia-Pacific markets – where women are founders or co-founders, or hold C-suite management positions – also found that Singapore had the second-highest proportion of women-powered businesses in the region, at 13 per cent of all high-growth businesses here.

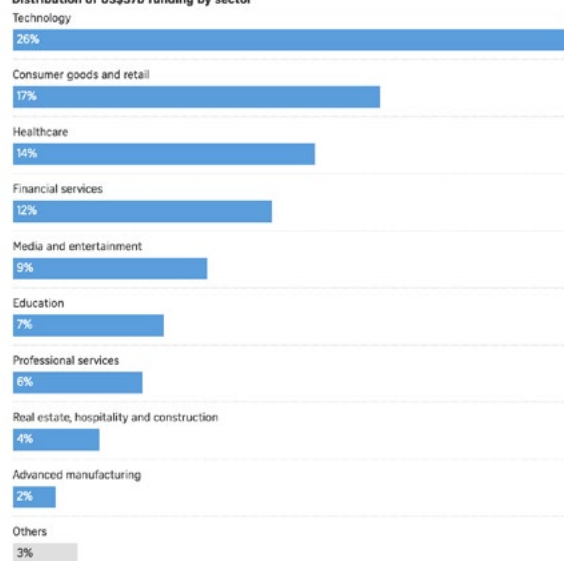
Malaysia emerged top, with 16 per cent. Japan had the lowest proportion, at 2.5 per cent, followed by Taiwan at 4.1 per cent and China at 5 per cent.

These figures are not enough, said Ms Kwang.

"Half the world is made up of men and the other half is women, so in everything we do, half of the representation should come from women," she said, citing McKinsey research estimating that advancing women's equality could add US\$4.5 trillion (S\$6 trillion) to the Asia-Pacific's collective annual gross domestic product in 2025.

Singapore women-powered businesses raised the second-highest volume of US\$2.4 billion among the 12 Asia-Pacific markets. This accounted for 6.7 per cent of the total funds raised by these businesses in the region as at April 2022.

Distribution of US\$37b funding by sector



*Data covers the firms' funding from their incorporation until April 2022.
Chart: STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS • Source: JPMORGAN PRIVATE BANK

China took first place due to its large size, with women-powered businesses there raising US\$27 billion, or 72 per cent, of total funds raised by these companies in the Asia-Pacific.

Still, Ms Kwang noted the persistence of a funding gap, adding: “The portion of capital (women-powered businesses) raise is really a much smaller proportion of what’s available in the market.”

Fifteen of the 98 high-growth, women-powered companies in Singapore made it to a list compiled by JPMorgan of the top 100 such businesses in the region.

The ranking uses methodology by professional services firm EY that considers a company’s revenue and workforce size, total funding since its inception, investor confidence and industry.

More than half of the Singapore list-makers came from the tech sector, a key driver of Singapore’s economy, noted JPMorgan.

To further boost women’s presence, the Government and business community can create more platforms to help them build their expertise and learn from one another, say industry players.

Ms Jennifer Zhang, chief executive and co-founder of Singapore-based artificial intelligence start-up WIZ.AI, which was featured on the list, suggested introducing more mentorship opportunities and a wider range of programmes to nurture women’s and girls’ interest in technology.

There can also be more opportunities for them to discuss emerging trends and products in the tech space, as well as develop their management skills, added Ms Zhang, who started her company in 2019.

“Most of the time, I think if you present a valuable company, idea and products, and you have a fitting personality and a good team, it shouldn’t be too much of a challenge (to get funding). No matter what, money is driven by facts more than gender,” she said.

Her company’s Talkbots can converse in various languages and colloquial forms of English such as Singlish and Taglish (a form of Filipino English). It has more than 200 large clients, including in banking, telecommunications and healthcare, in addition to smaller companies.

Ms Kwang noted that the Singapore Government has grown the entrepreneurship ecosystem through platforms such as Startup SG, which provides mentorship, funding and opportunities for private sector investments.

“But these are generic; more concerted efforts by the Government to help women entrepreneurs will beef up the percentage here,” added Ms Kwang, who previously headed JPMorgan in Singapore.

There is also a lack of networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs to learn from their peers and secure funding crucial to growing their businesses, she said.

“We have to create ecosystems that will help them get started so they can move on from there. Networking is really important when it comes to business,” she said, adding that these initiatives need to be improved in both the public and private sectors.

Singapore already has a handful of networks for women leaders, including one launched by the Singapore Business Federation in 2021 to bring together women entrepreneurs across the Asia-Pacific region, especially those in South-east Asia.

A group of executives – including Dr Sandhya Sriram, group CEO and co-founder of cultivated seafood and meat company Shiok Meats, another company on JPMorgan’s top 100

list – also set up non-profit organisation Women Venture Asia in 2022.

The network aims to connect women entrepreneurs, investors and business leaders and address the gender gap in entrepreneurship, according to its website. Dr Sandhya could not be reached for comment.

JPMorgan also has a Women on the Move initiative, which provides access to tools in areas such as business coaching and financial literacy for its 17,000 members across the region.

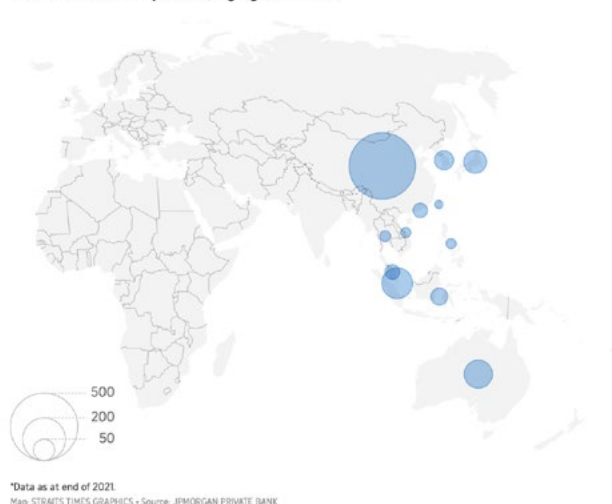
It also supported a US\$900,000 project in 2021 to help small enterprises in Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand recover from pandemic disruptions and adopt more sustainable business models, in collaboration with government agencies, employers, women entrepreneur associations and financial institutions.

Despite the current shortcomings, there are bright spots for women entrepreneurs and business leaders, said Ms Zhang. These include a growing number of women-led venture capital firms and a larger number of successful role models, she added.

Top high-growth Singapore firms founded or run by women

- Insider (technology)
- Homage (healthcare)
- ADDX (financial services)
- ShopBack (consumer goods and retail)
- TurtleTree (healthcare)
- Silent Eight (technology)
- Parcel Perform (technology)
- Shiok Meats (consumer goods and retail)
- Speedoc (healthcare)
- Atlan (technology)
- WIZ.AI (technology)
- PatSnap (technology)
- ErudiFi (technology)
- XOPA AI (technology)
- Igloohome (manufacturing)

Asia-Pacific’s women-powered, high-growth firms



The Straits Times

Founder and CEO of NaaS Technology Inc., awarded the “2023 Ernst & Young Asia-Pacific Successful Female Entrepreneur” award



Wang Yang, founder and CEO of NaaS Technology Inc.

Wang Yang, the founder and CEO of NaaS Technology Inc., has been selected as the recipient of the “2023 Ernst & Young Asia-Pacific Successful Female Entrepreneur” award amongst 15 finalists, becoming one of the five outstanding female entrepreneurs from China to receive this honor.

NaaS Technology, a leading new energy service provider in the world’s largest new energy market, is helping to advance a historic opportunity for global energy transformation. As the leader of the company, Wang Yang expressed her gratitude for receiving this award.

“I would like to thank EY and the Entrepreneurial Winning Women Asia-Pacific program for inviting me to join this team full of vitality and female wisdom. NaaS Technology has the honor of competing in the world’s largest new energy market at the tip of an energy revolution. We look forward to applying our industry-leading solutions to improve the efficiency of charging station manufacturers, operators, and supply chain members, optimizing car owners’ charging experience and supporting the development of the new energy vehicle industry. We strive to bring green energy to everyone in the near future.” Wang said after receiving this award.

The EY Entrepreneurial Winning Women™ Asia-Pacific program is an executive leadership program designed for women with established businesses who are ready to scale operations and grow to become global market leaders. The award has been successfully held for eight consecutive years and has celebrated more than 130 women entrepreneurs for their extraordinary vision, insights, innovative spirits, and remarkable growth.

The transition from oil to electricity marks a significant shift in how we power our world. The adoption of electric vehicles in China has continued to gain traction in recent years. In 2022, the penetration rate of electric vehicles in the country reached 25.6%. Furthermore, according to NaaS Research Institute’s forecast, the penetration rate of electric vehicles is expected to reach around 35% in 2023.

Conversely, compared with the rapid popularization

of electric vehicles, the availability of supporting high-quality charging infrastructure is lagging. Persistent issues such as insufficient charging network coverage and the need for unified standards for chargers and charging connectors continue to cause roadblocks in the industry.

To resolve these pain points, NaaS has focused on developing charging infrastructure with its comprehensive range of charging solutions, including site selection, design, hardware procurement, EPC, inspection and certification, operation, and maintenance management. Additionally, NaaS is connecting charging station manufacturers, charging operators, and production sites to secure its supply chain and meet rising market demands.

NaaS Technology was listed on the NASDAQ on Jun. 13, 2022, becoming North America’s first Chinese charging service stock. As of Sept. 30, 2022, NaaS Technology has served 1,282 charging operators, connected over 45,000 charging stations and over 434,000 charging connectors, and reached 1.892 billion kilowatt-hours in total charging volume in the first three quarters of 2022.

As a new energy technology company, NaaS Technology prioritizes carbon neutrality in the transportation energy sector. It encourages the entire transportation industry, from manufacturers to vehicle owners, to reduce their environmental impact. As of Jun. 30, 2022, the company has provided 458 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, of which 360 million kilowatt-hours were from clean energy sources (photovoltaic, wind, and hydropower), accounting for 78.6% of the total. In addition, in the first half of 2022, the company reduced its carbon output by 700,400 tons--nearly 80% of the total in the entirety of 2021. In parallel, NaaS has launched a “carbon account” program in collaboration with strategic partner KuaiDian, which rewards users for using green energy sources. To date, the service has garnered more than 463,000 users.

About NaaS Technology Inc.

NaaS Technology Inc. is one of the largest and fastest growing EV charging service providers in China. The Company is a subsidiary of Newlinks Technology Limited, a leading energy digitalization group in China. NaaS provides one-stop services to charging pile manufacturers and operators, OEMs, companies with their own delivery fleets as well as fleet operators, with online, offline, and non-electric services covering the whole value chain across the EV sector. As of September 30, 2022, NaaS had connected over 434,000 chargers with a total charging volume reaching 1,892 GWh in the first three quarters of 2022. On June 13, 2022, the American depositary shares of the Company started trading on NASDAQ under the stock code NAAS.

Global Newswire

Three Indian Entrepreneurs Named in 2022 Asia Power Businesswomen List

By Bhawana Bisht

India is seeing a growing tribe of female entrepreneurs lately, and Indian women are creating their mark worldwide with their achievements and powerful career trajectories. Recently, *Forbes Asia* revealed its annual list of Asia's Power Businesswomen featuring twenty women from the Asia-Pacific region.

Ghazal Alagh, Namita Thapar and Soma Mandal are the three Indian women entrepreneurs who have been named in the 2022 Forbes list of powerful businessmen in the Asia-Pacific region.

These mentioned were in the annual list of powerful businesswomen who have left a mark in the business world aim at honouring these entrepreneurs who have relentlessly worked their way up in their respective industries and taken charge of their companies as powerful leaders.

Honouring these trailblazers, the list named 20 women from the Asia-Pacific region, including three Indian women. Ghazal Alagh, Namita Thapar and Soma Mandal are the three entrepreneurs honoured by Forbes. Apart from India, the 2022 list features three women each from Indonesia, Japan, and Australia as well. The list includes two women each from Singapore, South Korea and Thailand, and one woman each from China and Taiwan. The women selected are on the basis



of their achievements while running their businesses alongside displaying effective leadership through the course of their careers.

34-year-old Ghazal Alagh is the co-founder of Honasa Consumer, a company that houses care brands like Ayuga, Aqualogica, The Derma Co and Mamaearth.

Soma Mandal also features on the list. Mandal's list of achievements is high and

inspirational. She was the first woman to chair the state-run Steel Authority of India Ltd. The organisation's annual revenue has grown by fifty per cent with profits surging threefold ever since Mandal took charge of the company last year becoming the first woman leader at the company.

The executive director of Emcure Pharma Namita Thapar is the third entrepreneur honoured on the list. Thapar is not only a powerful businesswoman, but she is also an author and runs her YouTube channel titled Uncondition Yourself With Namita Thapar.

The twenty women mentioned in the list have been considered looking at their leadership trajectory in the face of diversity considering the challenges all businesses faced in the post-pandemic world.

SheThePeople

International Women's Day 2023 in Asia-Pacific



The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2023 (IWD 2023) is, "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality." This theme is aligned with the priority theme for the upcoming 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-67), "Innovation

and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

The United Nations Observance of IWD recognizes and celebrates the women and girls who are championing

the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. IWD 2023 will explore the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities. The event will also spotlight the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital spaces and addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence.

Bringing women and other marginalized groups into technology results in more creative solutions and has greater potential for innovations that meet women's needs and promote gender equality. Their lack of inclusion, by contrast, comes with massive costs: as per the UN Women's Gender Snapshot

2022 report, women’s exclusion from the digital world has shaved USD 1 trillion from the gross domestic product of low- and middle-income countries in the last decade—a loss that will grow to USD 1.5 trillion by 2025 without action. Reversing this trend will require tackling the problem of online violence, which a study of 51 countries revealed 38 per cent of women had personally experienced.

A gender-responsive approach to innovation, technology and digital education can increase the awareness of women and girls regarding their rights and civic engagement. Advancements in digital technology offer immense opportunities to address development and humanitarian challenges and to achieve the 2030 Agenda’s Sustainable Development Goals. Unfortunately, the opportunities of the digital revolution also present a risk of perpetuating existing patterns of gender inequality. Growing inequalities are becoming increasingly evident in the context of digital skills and access to technologies, with women being left behind as the result of this digital gender divide. The need for inclusive and transformative technology and digital education is therefore crucial for a sustainable future.

In the Asia-Pacific

The United Nations Observance of International Women’s Day under the theme, “DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality”, will be marked by a high-level event on Wednesday, 8 March 2023, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. EST. The event will bring together technologists, innovators, entrepreneurs, and gender equality activists to provide an opportunity to highlight the role of all stakeholders in improving access to digital tools and be followed by a high-level panel discussion and musical performances.

In Asia and the Pacific, UNESCAP and UN Women joined hands with the UN family in Thailand for a hybrid event on the same date, March 8, 2023.

UN Women Asia and the Pacific

State incentive program has set up greenhouses in Sirnak, Türkiye for 14 women entrepreneurs

With the support of the state, 14 women from Sirnak became greenhouse owners. Thanks to the project implemented by the Sirnak Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry, 14 housewives from Sirnak became greenhouse owners.

Within the framework of the ‘Women’s Hands on Greenhouses Project’ implemented by the GAP Regional Development Administration with the aim of bringing the barren lands to agriculture, contributing to the employment of women, and providing job opportunities to the citizens, a 75% grant was given to 14 women in the villages and towns of Sirnak, Cizre, Silopi, and Idil districts to establish greenhouses. With the support provided, Sirnak Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry provided women with 500,000 winter vegetable seedlings along with a 75 % grant to establish a greenhouse on an area of 250 square meters each. The Governor of Sirnak,

Osman Bilgin, visited the greenhouses, made observations here and chatted with the farmers. Sirnak Governor Osman Bilgin said, “Our only way to economic prosperity is production. We only produce 7 % of the consumption needs of Sirnak province. Our residents need to produce. We are there to support our residents, especially women, in greenhouse cultivation or in different agricultural areas. Our motto is, ‘Where our women are, there is also quality.’”

Altan, Director of Crop Production and Phytosanitary Branch of the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry, said, “There is almost no vegetable production in our province. We identified this as a problem and prepared projects to improve vegetable production both in open areas and greenhouses. We have built 14 high-tunnel greenhouses, each of them being 250 square meters in size. We want to improve greenhouse cultivation in this area. Our aim is to end Sirnak’s dependence on foreign sources in the field of vegetable production. We will plant cucumbers and tomatoes after we have harvested lettuce. We will contribute to our economy, as well as create job opportunities for our women.

Horti Daily

Empowering Vietnamese women entrepreneurs to combat wildlife trafficking



Businesswomen joined Ms. Nga Thyr Bui, Senior Programme Officer for TRAFFIC for a panel discussion.

The Danang Association for Women Entrepreneurs (DNAWE) and TRAFFIC organised a celebratory ceremony to mark the engagement of the women’s business community of Da Nang against the consumption of illegal wildlife products on March 31, 2023.

The ceremony gathered 70 businesswomen leaders to present their achievements toward sustainable development, including wildlife conservation and discuss how wildlife-focused actions, such as spreading messages like ‘saying no to the use of illegal wildlife products,’ could encourage customers and enhance the business reputation.

“The business community is important to economic development and new trends and lifestyles. Changing the behaviour of this target group and encouraging them to become Wildlife Conservation Ambassadors is one of the effective

solutions to reduce the demand for illegal wildlife products,” said Ms. Nga Thúy Bùi, Senior Programme Officer at TRAFFIC.

TRAFFIC has worked with the business community in Viet Nam to reduce demand for tiger products through Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) interventions since 2020. Most recently, a workshop was organised on 25 March for e-commerce businesses on managing the risks of being unknowingly involved in wildlife cybercrime. Defining TRAFFIC approaches has been influenced by research, which identified Vietnamese men and women, typically aged 45-60, living in big cities, with average incomes above VND20 million, high education, and stable professions like business owners, to be those likely to purchase tiger products and influence others.

During the ceremony today, DNAWE members dedicated a special show featuring a collection of Ao Dai – a traditional Vietnamese dress. Often worn to show respect and national pride, these dresses, with embroidered images of wild animals, symbolically highlight the involvement, leadership and determination of Viet Nam female leaders to stop using illegal wildlife products and encourage others to follow their lead.

“It is our responsibility to promote and create an environment for female entrepreneurs to operate businesses effectively. With the help of TRAFFIC, we want to ensure that women entrepreneurs are well-equipped and empowered not only to manage any potential business risks associated but also to adopt proper corporate ethics and environmental responsibility practices, including the non-use of illegal wildlife products,” said Ms Le Thi Nam Phuong, Chairman of DNEWA.

Five enterprises pledged to become Ambassadors and show their commitment to wildlife protection. They guarantee to incorporate wildlife protection messages or interventions into their upcoming business operations, such as the placement of SBC banners and integrated staff training. The female leaders also reinforce their commitment to spreading the messages to employees, families, and partners.



Five enterprises pledged to become Ambassadors and show their commitment to wildlife protection.

This initiative could not be timelier in the light of Viet Nam becoming in recent years one of the global hotspots for the illegal trade in wild species. A prime example is the demand for tiger products, like tiger bone glue, driven by the belief that it can prevent and treat diseases related to bones and joints. Since 2000, Viet Nam has seized the equivalent of 216 tigers, accounting for around 10% of tigers seized in 13 tiger range countries.

This workshop also contributed to a three-year social

marketing program aiming to reduce demand for tiger products in Vietnam, funded by the UK government through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

About the Da Nang Association for Women Entrepreneurs (DNAWE):

DNAWE is a local professional social organisation including a diverse group of female leaders and managers doing business in the city, regardless of ethnicity, religion, age, economic class, and business size. The Association aims to promote and create an environment for female entrepreneurs to operate businesses effectively with prompt response to the integration and development pace of the city. The Association supports them in strengthening solidarity and mutual assistance simultaneously, exchange of knowledge and experiences in culture, society, management experience, family issues, and activities relating to gender equality. Events, activities, and training programs are frequently organised to help female entrepreneurs develop their business skills and enhance their capacity to build sustainable businesses.

traffic.org

Women entrepreneurs show how it's done amid adversity

By Richa Noriega, GMA Integrated News

They started small, but had big ambitions. And, they really mean business.

Three women entrepreneurs from Bulacan in the north of Metro Manila shared their journey into the challenging world of business and showed how they beat the odds.

Gloria Lupera, Jeanly Galicia Santiago and Jessica Marie Bellen Rosario learned there's no magic pill for success, only hard work and perseverance of not giving up.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas cited its study with Asian Development Bank which said that 58 percent of women-owned micro small medium enterprises (MSMEs) cited lack of access to funding as an issue in doing business, against 37% of male-owned MSMEs.

Of the 1,000 MSMEs consulted in the survey, it was found that 45% of micro businesses were female-led, against 15% led by males. Most of the female-owned MSMEs are active in the wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, and manufacturing.

The study said both men (78%) and women (64%) use their own funds to build up capital for their small businesses.

The central bank said financial institutions need to consider serving more female-owned MSMEs, which are disadvantaged in accessing capital relative to male-owned businesses.

In business in general, women's power remains limited with an average 68% of firms across the world that did not have any women ownership, while only 16% were owned by women from 2010 to 2019, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTD).

Among the significant economic and social costs associated with women's underrepresentation in business include lower economic growth and fewer decent employment, the UNCTD said.

Despite all adversities, these women entrepreneurs from Bulacan proved that perseverance, hard work, and determination can turn their small businesses into a success.

Gloria Lupera: Betting her future on corn



Before becoming a successful business owner of wholesale and retail store "GAL Supersweetcorn," Gloria Lupera managed a corn cart in the market.

An eatery owner provides her a small capital to sell at least 100 pieces of corn a day to earn a living. She goes to the same spot every day until she became a familiar face to customers.

Knowing she could not take on all jobs as she lacked a college degree, Lupera vowed to be the best corn vendor in town.

With every piece sold, she kept her earnings until she was able to save enough to rent her own stall.

"It's challenging to be managing all aspects of the business. I sell my products, look for suppliers, take care of deliveries, oversee the accounting aspect of the operations," Lupera said in Filipino.

To know her product by heart, she said she also learned planting corn and the techniques on how to grow them.

"Typhoons can wipe away our crops. I don't know how to recoup our losses. But I can't give up the business because I don't have a college degree. This is my only source of living," she said.

From selling corns per piece, Lupera is now a wholesaler and retailer of corn in Balintawak market. At her business' peak from 2005 to 2015, she said she can sell two to three truckloads of corns per day, with each truck having 20,000 pieces of the produce.

Lupera's business was not spared by the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw her sales go down. The rising prices of seeds, fertilizers and gasoline have also eaten up a chunk of her earnings.

She said her business is now on its recovery stage. At the same time, she added she is eyeing venturing into other business like building transient homes.

"Farming is hard, it requires full attention," she added.

Lupera said success in business chooses no gender, but requires the same basic traits of hard work and perseverance that

women or men entrepreneurs must possess.

Meet Jeanly, the 'pasa-buy' queen



Former overseas Filipino worker (OFW) Jeanly Galicia Santiago said her business started with a jest that customers took seriously.

Santiago, a nurse, returned to the Philippines after almost six years in the United Arab Emirates with her goal accomplished – to save enough after her retirement from her day job.

"I am goal-oriented. When I decided to work abroad, I told myself I should earn enough to tide me over when I return home. I got everything planned, but not this business venture," she said.

Her first business "Jeanly's Pasabuy Cart," which gets direct pre-order of items from Dubai, UAE, and United States, came out as a simple jest in her "my day story" on Facebook and Instagram last 2020.

"I posted an entry on social media jokingly asking whoever wants an item from abroad, I would be willing to help," she said.

Since then, she said orders poured in, necessitating her complete focus on her "accidental" business.

Trying her luck in business for the second time, Santiago and her husband bought the Milk Breeze food and refreshment hub after finding out that it was being sold on "sale" price.

It currently has three branches in Angat and Norzagaray, Bulacan. Santiago said she still wants to expand her business in several towns of Bulacan.

"Let's just say we started with five digit capital then and we've been playing seven digit now," she said.

Santiago, however, shared that competition in food and online selling is challenging.

"There are people selling food everywhere, and with everyone's access to the internet, more and more are also into online selling," she said.

On initiatives in Congress to tax online sellers, she said the idea is good but small sellers should be exempted.

"Tax helps economic growth. I'm in favor of it but with the exemption for small time online sellers, I'm just hopeful that politicians will turn into a true public servant now so everyone will benefit from it justly," she said.

Sharing her "secret" to success, Santiago said it rooted from three qualities — being purpose driven, having integrity, and being persevering

"Whatever challenges, obstacles and self doubt that

come your way, keep moving forward,” she said.

“In business, it’s not Christmas every day. It’s not always a win. But just keep going. Every successful business has experienced challenges,” Santiago added.

For Jessica Marie Rosario, lip tint is life



Businesses come in all shapes and sizes, and this certainly holds true with Jessica Marie Rosario’s lip tint business.

With only P3,000 as capital, the business has found its niche into the Filipino’s beauty regimen.

Rosario said her product did not always sell well. But this did not deter her from constantly marketing it and studying how it would fit into the consumers’ needs.

“You just need to love what you do,” she said. Rosario said she was the business-minded type since she was student. “I felt I can sell anything under the sun,” she said recalling her high school years.

In her business, she learned that “managing a distributorship business is not easy.”

She lamented that her people sometimes come and go. Some of her business partners have also become the cause of her in pursuing entrepreneurship.

She is now a business coach and brand owner of Jessy&Co, Skinny Brew Wellness, and Kagayaki beauty

products.

“Put your heart in what you do. Never think of giving up. Do not give up. Now is the best time to do business. Be consistent, success doesn’t come from what you do occasionally. It comes from what you do, consistently,” Rosario said.

Gov’t interventions, equal opportunities

The women entrepreneurs said government’s support will boost businesses and aid workers in the country. They said there should be equal opportunities for women and men.

Lupera called for subsidies for the farmers, encouraging the government to promote the local products.

“Subsidies for farmers are essential, especially as they are frequently struck by calamities,” she said

She also added that government should import less and enhance local industries, including production.

“We have vast lands that we can cultivate, let’s use them,” she said.

Right now, Lupera lamented the situation is not in favour of farmers who till the soil under the heat and rain, but can only sell their crops at cheap prices.

Lupera also said that there must be equal opportunities for every Filipino, adding that there should not be any discrimination between men and women in handling business.

“There shouldn’t be any difference between women and men when it comes to business. However, when you’re a woman, you really need to work twice and face a lot of adversities because women are often seen as weaker,” she said.

Santiago proposes financial funding and marketing support from the government, especially for small businesses.

“First, I suggest funding. Help the dreamer turn his dream into reality through financial support. Second, marketing support. Simply posting a new business announcement in the social media page of the local unit could help,” she added.

Santiago then advised Filipina entrepreneurs to stop self-doubting and take risks. “Act now. Who cares if you fail or not? Stop doubting yourself. You will not learn if you will not try,” she said.

GMA News Online

10 beauty entrepreneurs in Asia on leadership

By Celeste Lee, Alli Sim, Janice Sim, Azrin Tan, Verity Cheng and Emily Heng

In celebration of International Women’s Day, these female beauty entrepreneurs across Asia share their life lessons and what it means to be a strong and inspiring businesswoman.

Whether you’re a make-up maven or bare-faced beauty, a skincare junkie or novice, a trend chaser or free-spirit, it cannot be denied that every woman’s relationship with the concept of beauty is a deep, personal and unique one—one that will most likely last a lifetime. The modern beauty industry has

seen its fair share of successful female beauty entrepreneurs since its nascent years (think Estée Lauder and Elizabeth Arden), but it has only been in the recent decade that the number of Asian voices flourished exponentially under the global spotlight. These are entrepreneurs who have been diligently putting regional beauty on the map with innovations in cosmetics, skincare, haircare and more.

Each a force to be reckoned with, these rising superstars of the beauty space are inspiring businesswomen

who are motivated by a deep love for beauty and a mission to leave a positive and meaningful impact on the industry through their growing brands. Discover the ways in which the transformative and inspiring powers of beauty are being honed by those at the helm to break down the barriers around the wider issues—including diversity, sustainability and mental health—and to use them as tools of empowerment for all.

In conversation with 10 of these formidable women, Vogue Singapore

uncovers how being in the business has shaped their own personal relationships with beauty and its impact on their individual journeys toward self-love and discovery.

Lynsey Lim, founder of Singaporean skincare brand, Handmade Heroes

What does beauty mean to you?

Beauty is more than looks—it's about being kind, confident, and authentic to yourself.



Being an entrepreneur requires lots of hard work, persistence and drive. What drives you?

I'm driven by a desire to make a meaningful impact on both the industry and our customers' lives. Our commitment to carbon neutrality, plastic neutrality, and environmental sustainability reflects our dedication to creating a better world. But what really sets us apart is our focus on creating real skincare for real people. By prioritising authenticity and accessibility, we are able to provide our customers with products that not only meet their needs, but also align with their values and lifestyles.

What's the most surprising thing that building a business has taught you about yourself?

I've come to realise how resilient and hardy I am when the going gets tough. And the going does get tough.

Tell us about the biggest challenge you faced with Handmade Heroes and how you overcame it.

One of the biggest challenges of the clean beauty industry is the stereotype that its products are not as effective as mainstream or mass-produced products. To overcome this, we use high-quality, active ingredients that deliver real results and put our products through vigorous testing methods such as third-party clinical tests and dermatological tests to prove their efficacy. Through this, we were able to establish credibility and win over our customers' trust.

What has your business taught you about beauty, and how has it affected the way your relationship with beauty evolved over the years?

I've learned that true beauty comes from within and that it's important to stay true to yourself rather than chase trends. My relationship with beauty has evolved to focus more on inner confidence and self-expression, rather than external factors. It's been a journey of self-discovery.

Tell us about a moment which brought you a great sense of achievement for what you do.

The moment I saw Lily Collins using our Cocolicious Luscious Lip Scrub in her Vogue Beauty Secrets video was truly a special one for me. Seeing her using our product gave me a sense of validation and recognition for all the hard work and effort that my team and I have put in over the years. It was not just about the exposure, but also that she believed in the quality of our product enough to use it in her daily routine. That was a moment that made me feel like all the struggles and sacrifices were worth it.

Masaba Gupta, founder of Indian beauty brand, LoveChild

What inspired you to embark on your entrepreneurship journey?

I started LoveChild because I wanted a make-up, skincare and wellness brand that was from India and by India, but for the world. By which I mean that the entire packaging, the aesthetic, the communication is intensely inspired by India and it's meant for the world, for people across skin colours and ethnicities without age and gender barriers.



What do you predict will be a key focus for the beauty industry?

I think the focus is definitely going to be on make-up that has a good sensory feel because we are all becoming extremely conscious of how make-up makes us feel. We are no longer into formulations that just make us look good and don't feel good when you apply them.

What have you learnt about self-care and empathy while running a successful business?

For many years I thought self-care was constantly working and constantly burning myself out to a point of no return. But I think that I've learnt that self-care is a very personal thing. There are days when self-care to me is just sitting down and making notes about what I want the next six months to look like but there are days where I don't want to open a single email and that is also self-care. So, I've learnt that self-care could mean different things on different days.

With empathy, I've learnt that it is important because I've noticed when I take care of myself, I can take care of others better. And when I'm wired or frazzled, that energy translates into everyone around me, whether it be at home or at work. However, I think that even when you run a successful business there is no end point of learning about leadership. It is a constant journey and tug of war between being the right leader and doing the right thing; and also, being motivating but not putting negative pressure on the teams. It's a constant space of learning but most importantly it is knowing when to take the pressure off myself and not see everything as a personal failure.

Tasya Farasya, founder of Indonesian make-up brand Mother of Pearl Beauty

What inspired you to embark on your entrepreneurial beauty journey?

I grew up in a family that really loved make-up, so it inspired me to learn about it. I love seeing how transformative wearing make-up can be. While taking my dentistry degree, I became a MUA on weekends and continued my study on weekdays.



What have you learned about yourself through starting and running your business?

I learned that we have to always evolve and never settle in our comfort zone—criticism was what really helped me grow. Additionally, I learned that when you stay true to yourself and be honest, people can feel it, so we don't need to further validate ourselves.

How would you define beauty?

Beauty for me is a form of art, everyone will always have a different perspective of it. It can't be denied that when we look and feel beautiful, it helps us in so many ways to achieve our goals. Of course, we have to also have a good personality—but looking and feeling beautiful outside doesn't hurt.

How has your relationship with beauty evolved over the years, be it through your entrepreneurship or personal journey?

It started out as an escape from reality and a hobby. But now, this beauty industry has become my life, my job and my passion everyday. I'm so grateful every single day to be doing what I love most while being able to generate an income. Hopefully I can sustain my existence in this overly saturated industry of beauty. I can't wait to show what's up next with my beauty brand and platform.

Tell us about your greatest failure and achievement.

I don't see anything that has happened to me as a failure, because each and every time 'bad' things happen, it only made me better and stronger. As for achievements, I'm so grateful to be trusted by so many international events—such as New York and Paris Fashion Week. I'm honoured to have received 15 beauty awards over the past years, it always warms my heart. I'm grateful for the opportunity to meet the some of the industry's most influential people and I hope to launch my beauty brand globally in the near future. Ultimately, I'm thankful that after all this time, people still believe in me and my vision.

Monica Saranya, founder of Singaporean haircare brand, HaircareByMon

Why did you start HaircareByMon?

I started HaircareByMon—a 16 ingredient Ayurvedic hair oil—three years ago when Covid had forced most salons I patronised to close down and discontinue certain services. So I wanted to give the curly hair girls in my community an opportunity to care for themselves, from the comfort of their homes. I've always believed in the mantra of: 'look better, feel better' and lots of women I knew were struggling to be their usual selves or trying to find a new version of themselves during the pandemic. I knew at that moment if we give them a small tool to look better, they'd instantly feel better, and everything else will fall in place for them.



How would you define beauty.

From what you radiate. They're people who carry themselves well, emanating abundance of confidence, making people around them feel good.

What have you learnt about self-care and empathy while running a successful business?

Too much. I have learned that if I do not take breaks, my work will be crap. After three years of running the business, I've learnt two main things: one: I should never text a customer back instead of finishing that lunch and two: I should never put down my team just for my customer to feel right.

Jane Lau, founder of Malaysian skincare brand, Chuck's

What have you learned about yourself through starting and running your business?

I've learned to let go my ego and ask questions even if it sounded stupid.



How has your relationship with beauty evolved over the years, be it through your entrepreneurship or personal journey?

I find beauty is not about just about appearance, it's about how you see the world.

Where do your best creative ideas come from? What is a constant source of inspiration to you?

Mainly from social media and through travelling. I follow a lot of Instagram accounts—whether it be fashion, beauty, music and comedy—and save posts that inspire me.

Yaumi Fauziah Sugiharta, co-founder and CEO of Indonesian skincare brand, Base

Tell us about a time you failed in the context and how you bounced back. What did you tell yourself in order to move on?

We launched a product that didn't perform as well as we had hoped. But instead of dwelling on the failure, we took the opportunity to gather feedback and improve the product for our customers. I told myself that failure is an opportunity for growth and that we can always learn and improve from our mistakes.



What's a life lesson that you will share with your son, Nagi when he's older?

One lesson I would share with my son is always to pursue his passions, stay true to his values, and never be afraid to take risks and try new things, even in the face of challenges or pressure from others. Success is not just about achieving goals but also about enjoying the journey and learning from every experience.

Where do your best creative ideas come from? What is a constant source of inspiration to you?

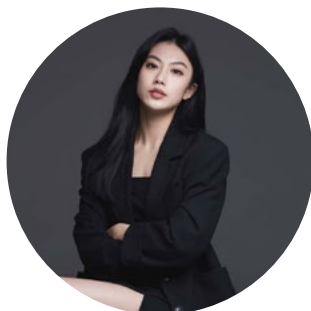
My best creative ideas often come from attending art exhibitions, exploring new music, and understanding the creative process of notable creative figures across industries through articles, books, and journals. I find that immersing myself in

various forms of arts and learning from others' experiences allows me to having broader perspectives that help me to think outside the box and bring fresh ideas to Base.

Are there any leadership lessons you've gained in the course of your career?

One of the most crucial leadership lessons I've learned is to never stop learning. As the co-founder of Base, our company values include being an eternal student, which means constantly enriching ourselves and being humble enough to learn from others. Managing a team of five versus fifty requires different skills, and as a leader, it's essential to recognise that and be willing to learn and adapt. In a dynamic startup environment, being a sponge and constantly seeking new knowledge is essential to stay ahead and grow the business. It's also crucial to foster a culture of continuous learning and growth within the team, as this not only benefits the company but also empowers team members to reach their full potential.

Haley Kim, content creator and founder of South Korean beauty community, No Foundation No Problem



What inspired you to start No Foundation No Problem?

My viewers have been a tremendous source of inspiration for me. I noticed their comments on how they didn't typically wear full make-up, but struggled to find a creator who promoted make-up that enhanced their natural features.

I saw a gap in the industry: a lack of spaces where viewers could feel comfortable doing make-up without feeling like they needed to cover up with foundation or follow certain trends. For me, make-up should be about empowering yourself and enhancing your own unique qualities.

As a new business owner, tell us about the challenges of starting a business and what motivated you through them?

Honestly, I still feel like I'm struggling at times while building this community-based business. Starting the community itself was the biggest challenge for me. It's not common for business owners to focus solely on community-building instead of product launches. But I wanted to follow my intuition and do something that felt true to myself—something that hadn't been done before.

Despite the challenges, I'm incredibly proud that I've gotten it off the ground. I've learned to trust my instincts and believe in myself. And it's been incredibly rewarding to see positive reactions from my viewers and even some beauty brands who are already interested in getting involved with NFNP.

What's the most surprising thing you've learned from your online presence in the beauty space?

An honest opinion, even if it is niche or unpopular, can always find its audience. I have come to realise that if you stay true to your own expertise and values, there will always be people who follow and support you.

Hayley Teo, founder of Singaporean skincare brand, Rooki Beauty

Being an entrepreneur requires lots of hard work, persistence

and drive. What drives you?

I am driven by my passion for the beauty industry. I've always been fascinated by the power of beauty to transform, uplift and inspire others. Just look at the emotional response that Fenty Beauty elicited from the Black community when they launched their foundation in 50 shades. People finally felt heard. Their skin tones were finally seen.



Tell us about the most surprising thing that starting a business has taught you about yourself.

I'm more adaptable than I thought I was. I've really learnt to embrace the unknown. During Covid-19, many businesses including Rooki had to make decisions with limited information—those that survived were those who were willing to try new things. Of course, hindsight is always 20/20, so I've also learnt not to beat myself up when things don't go according to plan.

What has Rooki Beauty taught you about beauty and its impact on people?

I've seen how the quality of your skin can have an impact on self-esteem and your emotional well-being. I've had people with chronic skin conditions and recurring acne come to me in frustration and helplessness. While my job is to help customers with their skin issues, I try not to make people feel self-conscious. Sometimes the fix is actually simpler than they realise.

What do you hope to see the Southeast Asian beauty industry prioritise in the coming years?

I would love to see a greater focus on gentleness and skin barrier repair. Rooki's latest product, Good Egg Skin Recovery Milk, which launched in Feb 2023, was actually a response to seeing increasing numbers of people with irritated, inflamed and dehydrated skin from overuse of trending ingredients like glycolic acid and retinoids.

Jungmin Lee, founder of Singapore-based curator K-sisters and Korean beauty brand Jung Beauty



How would you define beauty?

Fully understanding who you are. I fall in love with my skin and body more in my 30s than I ever did in my 20s, because I finally fully understand what my skin type is and what sort of style suits me better. You just have to explore and find out who you are to figure out what works best for you.

How has your relationship with beauty evolved over the years, be it through your entrepreneurship or personal journey?

It has evolved from being my favourite hobby to the biggest calling in my life. When I moved to Singapore eight years ago, my skin reacted very badly and my old 10-step skin care routine didn't work any more. Later on I realised the

weather plays a big part here. The hot and humid climate doesn't allow me to do what I used to do. Eventually, I simplified it into four steps instead: cleanse, prep, treat, and protect.

As a business woman, it can definitely be difficult to find moments of rest & relaxation. What are some self-care rituals you've chosen to adopt?

I love doing my skincare routines. A deep pore cleansing mask like Jung Beauty's Baby Pore Kit or a lifting ampoule treatment together with a beauty tool like the EMS facial device—all whilst watching Netflix with a hot cup of tea.

Farah Bashir, founder of Sachi Skin

What inspired you to embark on your entrepreneurship journey?

Being a consumer of beauty for the last two decades, I felt incredibly frustrated by the inadequacy of skincare solutions for skins of colour, especially in regard to concerns like hyperpigmentation and stubborn post-acne marks. This led me to many years of studying, blogging and creating free guides around hyperpigmentation solutions to help educate myself and others.

As a long sufferer of PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome), I constantly endured bouts of acne. I've had to deal with flare ups for 25 years now, and dark marks that appeared post-blemish would take many months to fade, when I hoped they'd be resolved in weeks.

It was this frustration that led to our now award-winning Triphala Pigmentation Corrector being born: I simply wanted the fastest, safest solution to fade dark marks and discolourations, especially on skin like mine. This is how the journey began.



Tell us about your greatest failure and achievement.

I don't see success and failure as a binary or a dichotomy. To see it in black and white would be to limit myself. Even where my expectations have not been met, there have been incredible learning experiences. For example, in 2021 we launched our popular Ursolic Acid and Retinal Overnight Reform serum, but the site crashed just an hour later. Our coder had left for holiday, and we found ourselves scrambling to get the site back up after two days. One of the lessons learnt here was that launching a product on a Friday evening is probably not a good idea. But another thing we learnt is that we have the capability to pull through, even when things get tough. We grew from this mishap, and here we are, still selling that same product with huge success a couple of years down the line.

In terms of success, both as an individual and as part of the greater team at Sachi Skin, I feel incredibly fortunate and blessed to be part of so many achievements over the last two decades, across many different fields. Moving into the future, I know that there will be a lot more to celebrate, but also a lot more to learn from along the way.

Do you have any words of advice for fellow women looking to embark on their entrepreneurial journey with beauty?

If you want something to exist that does not yet, or if you see a gap in the industry that needs to be filled, never be afraid to make it happen yourself. Take it from me. Over the last two decades, I've done the research and the work to create something for an underserved community of people. It started with the Triphala Pigmentation Corrector, it has become so much more. Always be thinking about your communities. Solidarity is a beautiful thing.

If you still need a push, I will leave you with what Emma Watson put beautifully at the United Nations Headquarters: "If not me, who, if not now, when?"

Vogue Singapore

About CACCI

The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) is a regional grouping of apex national chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises in Asia and the Western Pacific.

It is a non-governmental organization serving as a forum for promoting the vital role of businessmen in the region, increasing regional business interaction, and enhancing regional economic growth. Since its establishment in 1966,

CACCI has grown into a network of national chamber of commerce with a total now of 28 Primary Members from 26 Asian countries and independent economies. It cuts across national boundaries to link businessmen and promote economic growth throughout the Asia-Pacific region. CACCI is a non-governmental organization (NGO) granted consultative status, Roster category, under the United Nations.

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**7F-2, No. 760, Sec. 4 Bade Road, Taipei 10567, Taiwan; Tel: (886 2) 2760-1139; Fax: (886 2) 2760-7569
Email: cacci@cacci.org.tw; Website: www.cacci.biz**