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WANDER-FUL TAIWAN

THE REAL DEAL

Last month, we sent the winner of our Travel2Taiwan contest – Grace Aik – and her friend Sophia to Taipei to report on the 'Real' and 'Surreal' aspects of this bustling city. From wacky food items to awkward hotel experiences, here's what Grace has to say about 'Real Taiwan'.

STREET FOOD AND NIGHT MARKETS

The best advice I was given before my trip was "when in Taiwan, eat all the street food!" So we did! Over 3 days, we headed to the night markets of Ximending, Ningxia, and Shilin to hunt down some popular food items. Here are my top 3 favourites:

1. AY CHUNG FLOUR-RICE NOODLES
This is a must try in Ximending! It's hard to miss the stall as it is usually packed with customers queuing for or enjoying their hot bowl of noodles. It's a simple bowl of Mee Sua with pig intestines, but it makes for a very satisfying (and affordable) meal!

2. HOT-STAR LARGE FRIED CHICKEN
Another popular item which can be found in both Ximending and Shilin is the Hot-Star Large Fried Chicken! It's a big piece of juicy chicken fried to perfection and seasoned generously.

3. CHEESE POTATOES
There are 2 versions, the baked and fried, depending on your preference. Remember the humble baked potato you used to enjoy, sometimes with bacon flakes and mayonnaise in the middle? It is like that, but a far more sinful version with drizzles of cheese all over and your choice of additional ingredients like chicken and sweet corn.

SHRIMPING IN SHILIN

While this is a popular hobby for locals, it was our very first shrimping experience. You are charged per hour for the fishing rod and two kinds of bait - mini shrimps (cannibalism?) and pig liver. You will feel a surge of adrenaline the first time you feel the tugging on the line which signals that you've caught a live one! After retrieving it, you gently place it into a net and back in the water (to keep the shrimp fresh) and continue fishing. When time is up, you proceed to wash, salt, and BBQ it to enjoy your spoils!

SHENKENG TOFU STREET

Like the name suggests, this entire street is filled with, yup you guessed it, tofu creations! We tried Tofu Ice Cream, BBQ Tofu, Tofu Egg Tart, and Tofu Milk. My favourite was the Tofu Egg Tart which is made using organic soy milk. The result? A creamier version of the egg tart with health benefits: less heaty and with lower cholesterol.

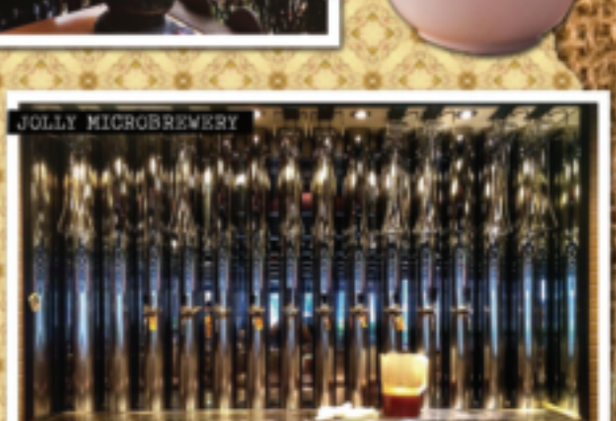
MAOKONG GONDOLA AND YAO YUE TEAHOUSE

One the list of "must dos" for first time visitors is Maokong, a popular spot for tea tasting, hiking, and viewing the cityscape of Taiwan. There is only one proper way you should go up the mountain - via the Maokong Gondola. There are two options here, the more popular one being the "Crystal Cabin" with a glass bottom floor for your viewing pleasure. Those who are afraid of heights can opt for the ordinary gondolas that are a) faster, and b) will give you an additional (false) sense of security.

It is a slow journey up the mountain, and you can enjoy the view of Taipei city from amongst the clouds. Upon reaching the top, take a leisurely stroll and stop at any of the numerous teahouses along the way for a bit of tea tasting. You can choose from a wide range of tea flavours, and learn how to make your own tea like a professional. Fun Fact: there are no cats to be seen at all, and Maokong means "Cat Empty". Coincidence?

SHIFEN SKY LANTERN

A favourite for tourists in Shifen is the release of Sky Lanterns at this old railroad town (which is still served by functioning trains, so do watch out when camwhoring along the railway tracks). It is believed that you release your wishes into the sky so that they will be granted. Wishes are colour coded into categories (which I assume, is logistically more efficient for your wish granter with all the requests that pour in each day) before lighting and setting it free.



JOLLY MICROBREWERY

This place specialises in locally-brewed craft beer. It has a rather cosy interior, and is a good place to chill and maybe knock back a beer or two. We arrived at lunchtime, determined to try out the different flavours. While the tables around us were feasting away, we had the Jolly Beer Set. It must have been a strange order coming from two girls in the middle of the afternoon, and the customers next to us gave our drinks a double take. Still, we persisted. There's a good variety of flavours, which comes with a handy description of each drink such as its level of bitterness, brix colour, and ABV percentage. My favourite was the "Weizen".

For more tours, check out
www.taiwan.net.tw

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BEITOU HOT SPRINGS

Here you have 3 small pools flowing into one another, with the one at the top being the hottest one. There are sign boards around which give you instructions on how best to benefit from the hot springs, namely alternating between hot and cold pools, and taking breaks in between. It was definitely a cool (hot?) experience. Also if you are curious, there is no nudity is involved.

Taiwan
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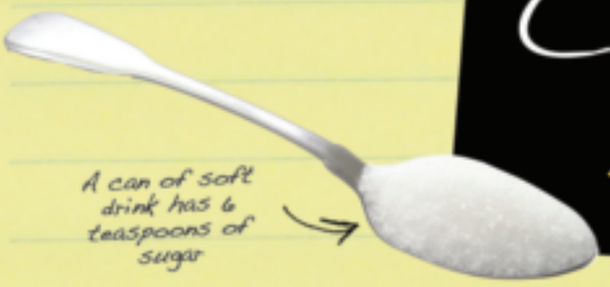
Cheat Sheet

By Nina Gan

#33 Sugar Debate



A can of soft drink has 6 teaspoons of sugar

Sugar is the prime culprit in our nation's expanding waistlines and deteriorating teeth. so a new guideline by the World Health Organization (WHO) states that sugar should only make up 5-10% of our daily energy intake (about 25g or 6 teaspoons) per adult. But what do you really know about this ingredient that appears to be in (almost) everything we eat?

WHAT IS SUGAR?

If it has '-ose' in its name. it's sugar. like:

GLUCOSE - essential fuel for our muscles and liver.

FRUCTOSE - found in fruits. honey. etc.. it elevates cholesterol and triglycerides. Bad stuff!

SUCROSE - table sugar (half glucose. half fructose): white/brown/unrefined are all the same.

LACTOSE - yes. there's sugar in milk.

SOME OTHER FORMS OF SWEETENERS:

HONEY: Contains fructose and glucose. but it also lowers bad cholesterol levels.

STEVIA: Derived from plants. it's a lot sweeter than table sugar with no calories. and allegedly has a lower effect on blood glucose levels.

CORN SYRUP: Far from being 'natural and containing large amounts of fructose. High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) is found in almost every processed food (including savoury foods).

AGAVE NECTAR: Processed from cacti. it contains more fructose than table sugar or HFCS.

SOME SUGAR SUBSTITUTES:

CALORIC SWEETENERS: Sugar alcohols – sorbitol. isomalt and xylitol – are present in plants. labelled as 'natural' and 'sugar-free'. With less calories and sweetness than table sugar. they don't cause tooth decay and some have health benefits.

NON-CALORIC SWEETENERS: With no or very few calories. artificial sweeteners like aspartame. saccharin and sucralose have intense sweetness and should be used in small amounts.

Too much is bad for health

A recent study from the Weizmann Institute of Science showed that artificial sweeteners (saccharin. sucralose. aspartame) leads to an increased risk for obesity and diabetes due to a change in gut bacteria.

WHERE DO YOU FIND IT

The most common hidden culprits are:

- **FRUIT JUICES**
  Fruit juice (even freshly-squeezed) is pure sugar water (almost like soft drinks) because all the fibre. vitamins and minerals are removed. Eating whole fruits is better. as the fibre slows the absorption of fructose.
- **YOGHURTS**
  The low-fat versions are the main culprits as they use sugar to substitute the fat.
- **CEREALS**
  Some "whole-grain" ones contain sugar. even if they don't taste sweet.
- **CONDIMENTS AND SAUCES**
  Sauces like ketchup and sambal use sugar to counter the tartness and spiciness.
- **MEDICATION**
  Some cough syrups have HFCS to make them more palatable.
- **PROCESSED FOODS**
  The more refined (processed) the food. the quicker it'll convert into sugar. Harvard researchers have found that white bread. french fries. and other simple carbohydrates have nearly identical effects on our blood sugar as glucose.

Sugar can be found even in the most unlikely places

Find out how much sugar is in your daily foods at **www.sugarstacks.com.**

HOW DO YOU FIND IT

Read the nutritional information on food packaging: Look at 'carbs from sugars': this includes both natural and added sugars. Less than 5g per 100g is low. more than 15g per 100g is high. Generally 1 teaspoon of sugar is about 4g.

Check the ingredients list for anything ending in '-ose' (glucose. sucrose. etc) in addition to agave. molasses and syrups. The higher up the ingredients list. the more sugar the product contains.

WHY IS IT BAD

When you consume sugar. you either burn it as energy. or convert it into fat. A high sugar intake gives us that 'high' followed by a slump which leaves us tired. irritable and craving more sugary foods. It's a vicious cycle that contributes to weight problems and health concerns like diabetes. chronic kidney disease and heart disease.

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with #chopetheroad winners JERROLD AND FRIENDS

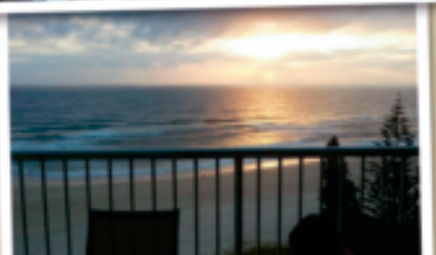
Jerrold

Jerrold and Friends consists of long-time buddies Jerrold, Nigel, Daryl and Jeevan. They took part in (and won) "#chopetheroad", a Hertz Drive Challenge organised by Campus magazine. "We all loved the race because it felt like a mini road trip around Singapore and we had a whole bunch of laughs along the way. We won the race and this was our prize; a 7-day adrenaline-packed road trip to the Gold Coast!"

"Eithad's Business Class definitely surpassed my expectations. Great food + great comfort. Couldn't have asked for more!"

Jeevan

When we touched down in the Gold Coast travelling on the business class of Etihad Airways, which I must say was a genuinely exciting experience, it was time to pick up our Hertz rental car from the booth in the airport. Hertz portrayed efficient and hassle-free customer service, and it only took us less than 5 minutes to collect the car, which was practically brand new.



View from The Breakers

1 SURFER'S PARADISE

From Brisbane Airport it was an 80km drive over to Surfer's Paradise. It was a huge expanse of just pure sandy beach for miles. The beach was so close to the city, and we had the whole beach practically to ourselves while we were there. Our 2-bedroom apartment at The Breakers – located right on the beach! – had the most beautiful view of the entire area.

"It was the most carefree feeling in the world. Like you're on top of the world."

2 SKYDIVING

First thing on day two's agenda was skydiving with Gold Coast Skydive. We were extremely excited about the activity because none of us had ever skydived before. Jumping out an aircraft 12,000 feet up in the sky, we conquered fears and the skies all in one go. Gold Coast Skydive had extremely friendly and supportive tandem masters which made us feel at ease and in control. It was definitely an amazing experience and we got the once in a lifetime opportunity to free fall a few thousand feet while managing our own parachute.

Nigel

"Jetboating is like drifting a car on water."

3 JETBOATING

On Friday, we experienced jetboating for the first time. Before we took the ride, we had no idea what to expect. We thought that jetboating was just going to be a ride around the coastline; little did we know how wrong we were.

Our jetboat driver at Paradise Jet Boating was extremely skilled. He managed to accomplish exhilarating spins, impressive tricks, and had our adrenaline pumping harder for every second we were on the jetboat. We got really lucky on the ride because we saw jumping dolphins right next to our boat!

Apart from the exhilarating ride, we also had the chance to admire the Sovereign Islands, a display of the most expensive holiday houses along the quay.

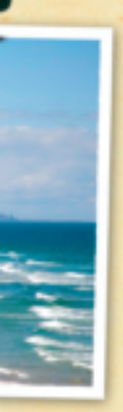
"We started with the scariest ride in the park. At the end, I felt like I conquered my fear of heights."

Daryl was here

4 DREAMWORLD

On day 3, Dreamworld awaited us. Starting off our trip with skydiving helped prepare us for being tossed around by an uncontrollable force. That was what we viewed the rides as, as we did not know how some of the rides would manoeuvre us about.

Thankfully on the Thursday that we went, it was not extremely crowded and we managed to sit on almost every ride Dreamworld had to showcase. Dreamworld really thrilled us in many ways, and we found the Tower of Terror II the most exhilarating ride in the theme park.



DINING & NIGHTLIFE

All in all, the food in Australia is really great and the restaurants are very reasonably priced. Some of us spent almost every night indulging in the nightlife of Surfer's Paradise. Clubs closed at 5am, giving us the opportunity to party into the night.

Check out a video of their time in Queensland here!
http://bit.ly/chopetheroad

Getting in Line : Our love of Queues

By Priya Sunil

Popular food and drink haunts like Gong Cha, Koi, Tim Ho Wan and Eighteen Chefs have created much hype when they opened here over the past years. Desserts, in particular, are the in-thing with the younger crowd; that's because we're forever trying to satisfy our sweet tooth.

The Hype : it all starts here

Every few months, Instagram and Twitter feeds buzz with posts of something new in town – people just love to share new experiences. Queues get longer and crazier for stores like Honey Creme and Llao Llao – originating from Korea and Spain respectively – as Singaporeans are lured to try out the new 'kid' breaking into the Singapore market.

Even if it means queueing for 2 hours for ice cream.

Curiosity's Peak

"I did it out of curiosity and because it was new," said Tan Kai Wen, a Nanyang Polytechnic student who queued for Llao Llao. When there is a constant hype with people going on and on about the latest craze, curiosity tends to get the better of us, and suddenly we have a need to satisfy it.

According to a study by the American Psychological Association, curiosity has a larger impact on us than we imagine: "Curiosity has been consistently recognised as a critical motive that influences human behaviour in both positive and negative ways at all stages of life." Curiosity is definitely one of the driving forces that encourages us to queue, at least for the first time – with 66% of customers recently interviewed at a queue said they wouldn't do it again.

Herd Mentality

Feeling the need to join a trend (or the hype) and be able to talk about it is another big reason why Singaporeans are willing to join the long queues, because queueing itself has become a "trend". Our uniquely Singaporean trait – "kiasu-ism" – makes us always want a part of everything. "If someone else has tried it, I have to try it too," is typical of our herd mentality – one that drives us to follow others. Even though bargain-hunting is another Singaporean trait, it doesn't deter anyone from queueing for – and paying for – a $5 for a cup of yoghurt or $3 for a cup of bubble tea.

As one queuer put it, "people just jump on the bandwagon as a way to feel included in trends instead of being a bystander."

Satisfied Customers

While a percentage of queuers are first-timers, the other half comprises satisfied customers – as logic dictates, these are the ones that come back for more, and recommend their peers to do so.

According to a research paper by David H. Maister, people tend to wait longer in line when they find a service valuable. It is all about the mind-set: we tend to come back to places we are satisfied with. Shops, restaurants, and retail outlets all desire queues as these loyal fans translate directly into profits.

These are just some of the reasons Singaporeans will queue for ages to try out the latest food trends. As more and more people rely on – and follow – peer reviews, long queues are inevitable.

Apart from wasting time, queueing also has other negative effects – namely for smaller, less popular brands. According to herd mentality "if there is no queue, that brand must be lousy and offers nothing special" and as a result, we automatically assume that the brand that happens to have a longer queue has something much better. The longer the queue, the better we assume it is. Brands can't continue to sustain such queues for long, and when the hype dies down, queues disappear, leaving a brand to fade into the background.

As newer brands pop up, the cycle and issue of queuing is definitely bound to continue, until Singaporeans find another trend. The question is: do you queue for the sake of the food, or just a mere part of the trend?

BY CHONG ZHI HAO

THE ONLINE FACES OF SCAMS

With the rise of the internet, it becomes easier for one to fall into the trap of online scams, and while Singapore experienced a decrease in crime rates last year, there was an increase in cyberspace crime.

To combat this 21st century scourge, Interpol has even set up a base in Singapore - Interpol Global Complex for Innovation (IGCI) - dedicated to combating cyber crimes. Here's a look at some common online scams you can find in Singapore:

'DAMSEL IN DISTRESS' SCAM:

Online dating scams involve a 'dream partner' from another country claiming to arrive in Singapore to marry single ladies, only to be arrested by the police for a variety of reasons, and asking victims to pay for their release.

A variation of this replaces the 'dream partner' with someone claiming to be a relative or family member, using similar circumstances. There is an increased chance of people falling for this, as one would be more willing to help a family member in need.
In the first half of 2014, there have been 82 such cases reported compared to 13 cases in the first half of 2013, with victims losing a total of $3.1 million in contrast to $28,000 in 2013.

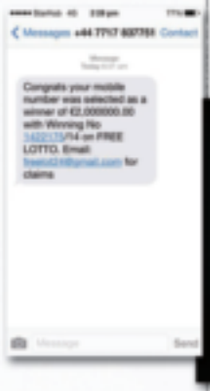
ADVICE: Be cautious of who you meet online - not everyone's the way they make themselves out to be online, and double-check their whereabouts (in cases of "relatives" contacting you) before remitting money.

SCAM OF GREED:

It's not rare these days to find an email from someone pretending to be a relative of government officials offering large sums of money in return for your bank account to process the 'fees', which you will also be paying for, in order to facilitate the transfer of large sums of money overseas.

Also known as the 'Nigerian 419 Scam', similar versions of this scam replaces the "government officials" with an organisation, telling the victim they have won the Grand Prize in a lottery or lucky draw, which the victims have most likely never participated in, and they must transfer money to a foreign bank account in order to 'process' their 'winnings'. While figures are unclear, the scam has victims from all over the world.

ADVICE: If something sounds too goodto be true, it most likely is.



ONLINE SHOPPING SCAM:

Looking for offers on something you want (like a limited-edition handbag or camera), you find it selling way below market price. Excited, you eagerly buy it. However, a few days later, one of the 3 scenarios happen:

1. Your order never existed and the 'seller' has run off with your money. There have been many locally-reported cases involving Facebook sales, with sellers (some of them providing local bank account numbers) changing identities and duping multiple victims at a time.

2. You make multiple payments to the seller for a variety of reasons, from delivery to customs taxes, but your order never arrives and before you can bring this up to the 'seller', all contact is cut. This Multiple Payment Online Purchase (MPOP) scam uses local 'mules' with local bank accounts to process payments.

3. You receive your order, but it's a counterfeit. Plenty of scammers claim to be a 'factory warehouse' site, but in fact are selling counterfeit goods. In the case of designer goods, items may be confiscated at customs, with no refunds to the buyer/victim.

The first half of 2014 saw 302 such cases, a sharp rise from 13 cases in the first half of 2013. Victims lost $237,000 in the first half of 2014, compared to $28,000 in the first half of 2013.

ADVICE: Shop only with trusted retailers online.

International wire transfers are a scammer's preferred mode of payment

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SIM GLOBAL EDUCATION

WHAT'S BREWING AT INDEPENDENT CAFES?

BY LEE JIA MIN

Have you been exploring new places for food with your friends, or do you find yourself often instagramming pictures of cute places and food? In the past few years, independent cafes have been sprouting up all over Singapore, creating a trend that infiltrates the lives of Singaporeans. As the café culture in Singapore continues to bloom, we take a look at why independent cafes are now a popular alternative to established coffee chains such as Starbucks, The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf and Costa Coffee.

IN THE HEARTLANDS

Cafés are now attacking the heartlands! While it might be common to find cafés in areas like Tiong Bahru and Tanjong Pagar, more and more cafés are starting to appear under the void decks of HDB blocks too.

If you're living in the area, cafés in the heartlands are a convenient way for you to spend your money on fancy coffee. However, if you're living in another area of Singapore, this would be a chance for you to travel, and discover the hipster side of the country. Some cafés found under HDB blocks include Creamier at Toa Payoh, To-Gather Café at Bedok and Sunday Market at Lim Tua Kiad.

SNAP AWAY

The camera eats before the person does! It's now common to see people whipping out their phones or cameras to photograph their food before they eat and posting it on Instagram. Photos of new 'hipster' cafés are also popular on Instagram, creating a buzz as we open our options to new trendy places for food. So new places will have at least one (if not all) of these: 1) interesting plating, 2) quirky/hippy decor or 3) bizarre fusion food.

DEVELOP A SKILL

Since you're at a new place for food, why not try out new experiences too? Nowadays, cafés are not just places for food and coffee, they can also be a place for learning – some cafés in Singapore provide workshops for their patrons so that they ensure you'll be back for your lessons, and of course, more food! Some interesting options that you can try out include art workshops at Cups and Canvas, and baking workshops at Maple and Market.

SHOP TO YOUR TUMMY'S CONTENT

Do you like the teacup you're sipping from? Or have you finally found that childhood candy you've been looking for? Don't worry because you can have them – for a price, of course!

Some cafes have introduced small shopping corners to satisfy your shopaholic impulses. These include Carpenter and Cook where you can bring home vintage furniture, and W39 Bistro where you can find old school delights like flag erasers and push-pop candies from a yesteryear that is probably too old for you to remember.

FEED YOUR CREATIVITY

Let your creative juices flow with food and coffee! Cafés these days are not limited by the items on their menus – they're now allowing you to experiment and create unique food items suited to your tastebuds (and skills). Also, if your food doesn't taste good, you can't blame the staff!

At NOOK DIY House of Pancakes, you can create your own pancakes on a personal griddle, or customise your own blend of coffee at d'Good Café.

With these engaging concepts, it's no wonder cafés are becoming more popular with Singaporeans, as simply eating and drinking at a café might be too boring for the average consumer.

As cafés try to provide consumers with new experiences, what do you think cafés will have to come up with to stand out from competition and attract our attention?

FORCE OF HABIT: ALL ABOUT ADDICTION

BY NADINE STAES-POLET .
RESEARCH BY
SUGENYA MANOGARAN

Addiction is defined as a state in which a person compulsively engages in an activity to the extent that it interferes with ordinary life responsibilities, like work, relationships, or health. We all know some of the more serious addictions: drugs, alcohol, gambling… But any thing done to an extreme can develop into an addiction. And anyone can become an addict. So when do we know if we have crossed that fine line and become addicted to something? Coffee. Social media. Shopping.

TEST YOURSELF

So are you addicted to something? Take the test below to find out:

Fill in the blanks with whatever you think (or someone else claims) you may be addicted to.

1. I have to _____ at least once a day or I will feel uncomfortable.
2. Once I have started _____ I find it hard to quit.
3. I spend most of my time and energy focusing on _____.
4. My _____ interferes with the rest of my life, work, family, leisure etc. in a negative way.
5. I refuse to acknowledge my _____ is a problem. I think I can stop any time I want.

If you answered yes to most (or all) the questions above, you might just have an addiction. Read on to find out more about some common addictions that aren't taken that seriously.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In today's wired world, social media has become a great way for people to connect with each other and express themselves. Social networking sites such as Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram and Facebook have blown up in recent years, with 500 million tweets being sent out per day and 1.28 billion people (or 15% of the world's population) using Facebook on a regular basis. Though social media clearly has its benefits – like finding a long lost friend on Facebook – it is hard to deny that social media has taken over many people's lives.

In fact, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders considered including "internet addiction disorder" to the list of addictions in the most recent handbook for psychologists. Think that's going too far? To give you a bit of a perspective, nearly a quarter of Facebook users check their accounts five times or more per day, and when smartphone owners age 18-44 go out to the movies, 58% use their device to post a status update to Facebook, and 13% post to Twitter via mobile. A whole category of its own, smartphone addiction has become a very big problem, especially in Singapore.

Singapore tops the list when it comes to our smartphone penetration rate percentage. Some 87% of Singapore's 5.4 million population own smartphones. In the United States, where there are similar concerns about the impact of smartphones on society, a 65% penetration rate would not even make the top five in Asia Pacific.

Smartphones are now a constant part of people's lives. When IDC (International Data Corporation) conducted an online survey of smartphone owners age 18-44, they found that 79% have their phone on or near them for all but up to 2 hours of their waking day, 62% reach for their smartphone immediately after waking up, and 25% say they can't recall the last time their smartphone wasn't next to them.

This worrying dependency on smartphones have led to a name being coined for the fear of being without your phone: nomophobia. That rush of anxiety, fear and panic you get when you realise you are disconnected from your friends, family, work and the world because your phone is not at your side.

SELFIES

A few months ago Danny Bowman, a British teenager, made the news when he attempted suicide after failing to take the perfect selfie. The 19-year-old also dropped out of school, didn't leave his house for six months and lost more than 12 kg because of his addiction to selfies. Before his failed suicide attempt, Danny was reported to have spent 10 hours a day taking up to 200 photographs of himself on his iPhone.

While Danny's case may be an extreme one, more and more teens today are obsessed with getting that perfect selfie. It's hard to go anywhere now without spotting someone with their phone up in the air, snapping pictures of themselves in different poses, pulling different faces, and aiming for the best lighting and angle that would get them the most likes on social media.

The rise of this addiction showcases exactly how narcissistic and obsessed with looks today's society is. And while some selfie addicts may have huge egos, many have very little self-confidence and take selfies in the hope of receiving recognition and gratification for their looks. In fact, according to psychiatrist Dr David Veal: "Two out of three patients who come to see me with Body Dysmorphic Disorder since the rise of camera phones have a compulsion to repeatedly take and post selfies on social media sites."

SHOPPING

We've all heard about how the family of gambling addicts can apply to have their loved ones banned from casinos in Singapore. But what about shopping addicts? On November 29, a Malaysian man went on Facebook to ask Zalora, an online fashion retailer, to ban his wife from their website. This story, hilarious as it may be, brings to light the issue of shopping addiction.

Shopping addiction, also known as compulsive-buying disorder or compulsive shopping, is the compulsion to spend money, regardless of need or financial means. According to medical experts, a compulsive shopper gets the same rush or "high" from making a purchase as a drug addict gets from taking drugs. Once the brain associates this high with shopping, the addict tries to re-create it again and again by buying more and more items.

Many compulsive shoppers hide their addiction well, by hiding their purchases, or making it seem as if they have plenty of money to shop without limits. They might also convey an image of wealth and success while in reality they are deeply in debt. The situation has become so serious that many towns and cities across the world have Shoppers Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, or Over-spenders Anonymous programmes that operate much like Alcoholics Anonymous.

DEFINING ADDICTION

BY DR SURESH JOSEPH

While many people feel it's all down to moral shortcomings or a lack of willpower on the part of the addict, the clinical reality is that nearly all specialists agree today that chemical changes that occur in an addicts brain, and the biological responses to these triggers, qualify it as a real disease. It's simply that some of us are hard-wired minutely differently than others, meaning we have weaker or stronger thresholds for addiction triggers. The medical reality is, any human being could be susceptible to addiction of one sort or another, depending on circumstances.

Secondly, most people suffering from this disease will deny the fact that they are. It's often only when the activities start really getting in the way of our everyday lives, start physically hurting us, or stretching (or simply tearing) the social fabric of our relationships, that it becomes absolutely clear you're an addict. The problem is, prior to that breaking-point, addiction still wreaks havoc on your life.

Lastly, there are infinite types of addictions out there. There's the obvious ones: sex, food, alcohol, drugs, gambling. But then, let's say you have a need to wash your hands 20 times a day does it mean you're addicted to cleanliness? You won't think you are, but ask the person who watches you do it, and they might feel otherwise.

Since addiction can afflict anyone, in any form, it's fair to say that many of us are guilty of some form of addiction.

Level Up

Transition from Diplomas to Degrees

You've probably heard the saying "education is important" a thousand times during your lifetime right? Often, it's the benefit of being more "knowledgeable" that gets mentioned when it comes to pursuing higher education. Unfortunately, one thing that doesn't get mentioned very often is the financial benefit of earning a diploma or degree.

If there's one benefit every student should know about, it's this – earning a diploma or degree will have an immediate impact on your salary. Not only that, choosing a diploma or degree that's "in-demand" will not only boost your initial salary – it will boost your lifetime earnings as well.

That's not to say that you shouldn't pursue an education in doing something you love. But if you take a more pragmatic approach to education based on earnings, you might be surprised at how much more you can earn after graduation.

Leveling Up Your Starting Pay

Leveling up your education won't just raise your level of knowledge – it will boost your salary too. And if you graduate from an Honors Programme, you're more likely to earn much more than someone from a normal programme.

If you're curious about how much a higher level of education will increase your pay, here's a breakdown of how much a diploma or degree will earn you (*hint* pay attention to which programmes pay more):

Diploma	**Median Pay**
Information & Digital Technologies	$2,200
Applied Sciences	$2,200
Business, Management & Design	$2,300
Degree	
Computing (Computer Science)	$3,425
Science (Hons)	$3,100
Business Administration (Hons)	$2,800

What About Jumping from a BA to an MA?

On average, having a higher level of education can boost your monthly income by around $1,000 a month – whether you're making the jump from "O" levels to diploma or diploma to degree.

But will making the jump from a degree to a master's degree earn you an even higher increase in pay? Here's how much you can potentially earn by upgrading your bachelor's degree to a master's degree:

Median Starting Salary from BA to MA

Business Administration (Accounting/Finance)
Bachelor's: $2,800 | Master's: $5,100 | Up: 82%

Business Administration
Bachelor's: $3,200 | Master's: $4,300 | Up: 34%

Computing (Computer Science)
Bachelor's: $3,425 | Master's: $4,100 | Up: 20%

Computing (Information Systems)
Bachelor's: $3,000 | Master's: $3,600 | Up: 20%

Engineering (Civil Engineering)
Bachelor's: $3,200 | Master's: $3,800 | Up: 19%

MASTER'S DEGREE
BACHELOR'S DEGREE
DIPLOMA

Sources:
Poly - https://www.polytechnic.edu.sg, http://www.polygov.sg | ITE: http://stats.mom.gov.sg | University Degree – http://www.moe.gov.sg, http://www.haygroup.com | Masters Degree – http://www.payscale.com

The Fast Track Education Pathways

When it comes to jumpstarting your career, nothing opens more doors and sets you up for success better than a university degree. Of course, just having a degree won't guarantee you the job of your dreams in your field of choice – but it'll give you an edge over competition when it comes to the hiring process.

Also, having a degree makes career advancement easier (some positions require it) and more profitable – that's because degree holders on average make $1,000 more per month than diploma holders.

Of course, you need to earn your degree first. And in Singapore, that's no easy task. Slots at universities are limited. Competition is fierce. And two years of National Service (NS) make it a difficult task.

But there is a path towards attaining your degree faster than the normal four to five year route – through accelerated pathway courses and programmes.

How Accelerated Pathways Work

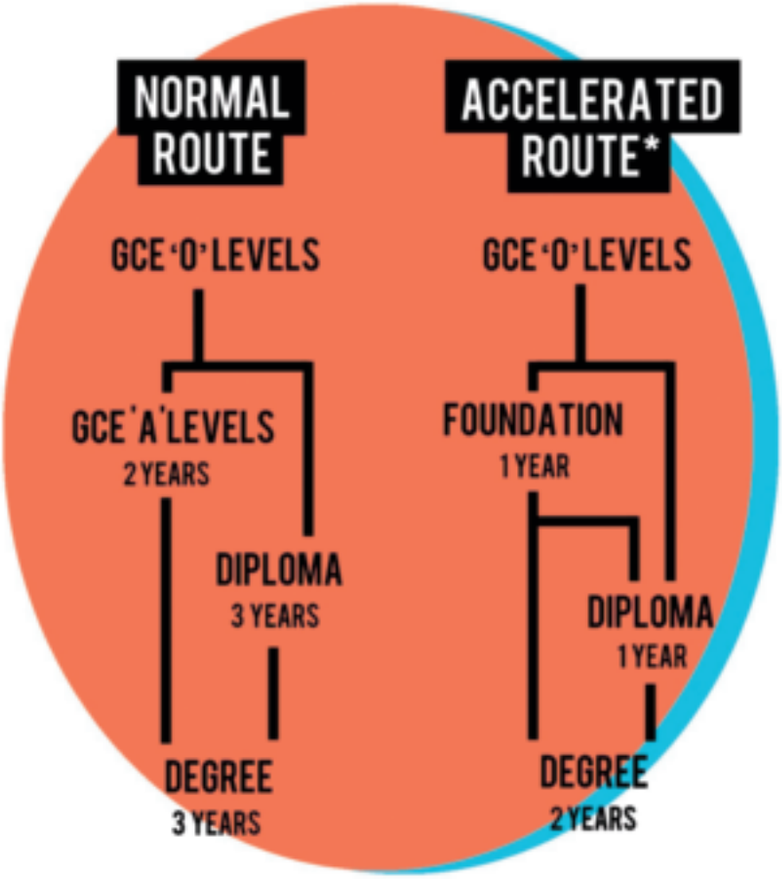
Most students take the typical route to a university degree, which involves taking their GCE 'O' levels, then their GCE 'A' levels and then university – or alternately, polytechnic and then university.

That being said the "normal" route to university is time consuming. Unfortunately, there are many things that can make the journey even longer such as serving NS or not having marks high enough in your 'A' levels to gain direct entry into university.

Thankfully, there are schools and institutions that offer accelerated pathways courses and programmes that'll help you make up for "lost" time or avoid it all together.

For students, accelerated pathways allows you to take "foundation" or "preparatory" courses that'll lead directly to a diploma and then to the second year of your undergraduate degree in your chosen programme.

Just keep in mind that every school and institution has its own entry requirements and criteria (minimum age, grades/GPA, English proficiency, etc.) for exiting the programme.



*NOT AVAILABLE FOR ALL COURSES OR SCHOOLS. TIMELINE ILLUSTRATES THE FASTEST ROUTE AVAILABLE.

Accelerated Pathway Programmes

Accelerated pathway courses and programmes aren't just for young students looking for a fast-track to a degree – working professionals can also use them to upgrade from their existing diploma to a degree or certification that's critical to their profession.

Here are some of the accelerated courses and programmes offered in Singapore:

Singapore Institute of Management University (UniSIM): UniSIM offers an accelerated pathway programme that you can take concurrently while pursuing a diploma. Currently, UniSIM offers the programme for its Social Work, Engineering Electronics, Engineering Aerospace Systems and Building and Project Management degree programmes.

Bath Spa University: Offered via Training Vision (academia@TVI), you can finish a Business and Management Degree (Top Up) awarded by Bath Spa University in just one year, depending on your qualifications. Also offered are related bridging programmes ranging from 4-12 months.

Kaplan Higher Education Academy: Kaplan offers a variety of disciplines including Business & Management, Finance & Accounting, IT, Law and Hospitality. Their diploma courses can be completed in as little as 8 months, and their degrees in 16 months, subject to entry requirements.

Alternately, you can also pursue pathway courses abroad as well. There are many schools in Australia that offer pathway programmes such as Monash University and the Queensland University of Technology.

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PLAYING THE FIELD

Looking Outside Your Area of Study

It's true that your degree can take you places. But you might be surprised as to just "where" it might take you when it comes to your career. Because the reality of today's working world is that the days of "sticking to your field" of study are long gone.

In fact, numerous consulting firms have published reports indicating that 50% to 60% of graduates don't work in their field of study. But that's not just true for liberal arts and humanities degree holders. Even if you've earned a degree in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), there's a 75% chance you'll probably end up working in a career that's outside your field of study, according to a recent U.S. Census Bureau report.

Taking a Different Career Path Isn't a Bad Thing

While the odds of having a career in your field of study seem about as good as a coin toss or worse, pursuing a career in a lateral or completely different field is not as bad as it sounds.

If anything, this new reality means that you're no longer restricted to following a particular career path. For example, an English major doesn't have to be a teacher, a psychologist doesn't have to treat patients and a graphic designer doesn't need to design flyers and posters.

That means you can now pursue new and rewarding career paths by not working in your field of study.

What Does it all Mean?

What does it all mean? Well, it's not all doom and gloom. On the contrary, it means that employers aren't just looking at your degree – but the intangible skills you can bring to the job.

Employers are particularly interested in graduates having the following intangible skills:

- Critical Thinking
- Reliability
- Adaptability
- Leadership
- Positivity

This also means that companies are looking beyond just your degree when it comes to management positions, even if your degree is not directly related to a company's work. That's why Ken Chenault (Degree in History) is CEO at American Express, Richard Anderson (Degree in Political Science) is CEO at Delta Airlines and Roger Iger (Degree in Communications) is CEO at Disney.

Here are some interesting career options you can pursue with the following degrees:

Degree in...	Related jobs
English	Copywriter Legal Assistant Technical Writer PR Specialist Journalist
Psychology	Social Worker Sales/Marketing Executive Career Counselor Technical Writer Advertising Agent
Mathematics	Data Mining Financial Analyst Market Researcher Cryptoanalyst Materials Scientist
Art & Design	Art Therapist Fashion Designer Printmaker Advertising Account Executive Museum/Gallery Curator
Engineering	Logistician Operations Manager Technical Trainer/Consultant Technical Salesperson Supply Chain Manager
Computer Science (IT)	Data Scientist Mobile Applications Developer Credit Analyst User Experience Designer Security Engineer
Political Science	Events Planner Media Specialist PR Specialist Market Researcher Diplomat

GAIN A WIDE PERSPECTIVE

SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Bachelor of Arts
(in Liberal Studies with concentration in Mass Communications)

Awarded by Oklahoma City University, USA

Oklahoma City University

SCHOOL OF FASHION AND DESIGN

Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Fashion Design

Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Fashion Marketing and Branding

Awarded by Nottingham Trent University, UK

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES

Bachelor of Science (Hons) Biotechnology

Awarded by Northumbria University,UK

northumbria UNIVERSITY NEWCASTLE

Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Biomedical Sciences
(Specialisations in Medical Biochemistry/ Medical Cell Biology/Cancer Biology)

Awarded by University of Bradford, UK

UNIVERSITY of BRADFORD

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Bachelor of Science
(in Behavioural Studies with concentration in Psychology)

Awarded by Oklahoma City University, USA

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BY SHUSHAN LAM

FIRST WORLD PROBLEMS:

WE'VE GOT TOO MUCH FOOD!

It's the festive season in Singapore, with an extended celebration that stretches from Christmas all the way through Chinese New Year, and supermarkets and restaurants are gearing up to meet peak consumption. That is about 2-3 months of turkey, roast ham, pineapple tarts and bak kwa. But in between all this feasting, have we ever paused out of concern that all this excessive consumption may actually be quite wasteful?

Last year, we accumulated 796,000 tonnes of food waste in Singapore. That is about the weight of 1,420 fully-loaded Airbus A380s. Globally, a third of the food we produce for human consumption is in fact never consumed by us at all – it ends up as waste.

HOW DID THIS ALL HAPPEN?

The world has not always had this amount of food to spare – in fact in the last few decades, society was on the brink of a serious food crisis. In the 1960s there was speculation that the world would be unable to feed the expanding population, and so in fear of widespread famine and social unrest, consortiums around the world vowed to find a solution to the impending doom. Thus came about the Green Revolution – the breakthrough in agriculture which through selective breeding, enabled us to develop crops that would multiply our food production.

Fast forward to 30 years later, and scientists are able to engineer our crops to give us the most desirable traits, a method more notoriously known as genetic modification (GM). The sudden boom in crop production along with the rising global affluence demanding more food meant that in a relatively short period of time, we were able to increase our food production to the point where today we have enough food for 10 billion people – that is an excess of food for +3 billion people. Not to forget the environmental costs that come along with all this. We have cleared out forests equivalent to the area of South America for agriculture, and an even larger area for livestock. Yet there is still a push to double our food production by 2050 – the year in which our population is expected to peak at 9 billion. So why are we trying to produce more food when there is in fact excess food in the system?

WHERE DOES ALL THIS EXCESS ACTUALLY GO TO?

In industrialised nations, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimates that 1.5 trillion pounds (680,000,000 tonnes) of food is wasted every year, an amount almost equal to the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa. This wastage usually occurs further down in the food chain, at the retail or consumer level. So yes, in the developed world, we the consumer are complicit. Take this Unilever finding for example: Every Christmas, British consumers throw away an estimated 2 million turkeys, 74 million mince pies and 5 million Christmas puddings over the Christmas season.

1/3 of FOOD is WASTED

1 in 7 PEOPLE are HUNGRY

For every 1 HUNGRY PERSON IN THE WORLD, 1.4 TONS OF FOOD IS WASTED EACH YEAR

It may be difficult to fathom how it is possible that we have not ended world hunger even though statistically there is enough food for everyone. But it is not as simple as taking from A to give to B - the FAO explains that part of the food that is wasted is simply lost in our food distribution systems.

In developing nations, the lack of proper infrastructure exacerbates the problem; food is lost during processing, transport, and improper storage even before it gets to the consumer. Poor agricultural techniques, natural disasters and other factors also create wastage – even if there was a supply of food, there is still a great number of people living in poverty that cannot afford to buy any food. That is why hunger is most prevalent in poverty and war stricken countries, where there is inequality and inaccessibility to food.

This situation has been termed as a market failure, an inefficiency in the distribution of food. The situation is stark, and while there is nothing much we can do that would have a direct impact on the food situation in developing countries, we can start by becoming more aware of the environmental consequences of our consumption habits.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

So let's make an effort cut our food waste as we prepare to enter the new year. Here is how we can start:

- Eat local; food that has travelled longer distances have a higher carbon footprint. In Singapore we have the luxury of having gourmet foods from around the world, but let's try to cut down on that – eat foods that are grown within Southeast Asia.
- Don't adhere too strictly to "use by" dates – most processed items can actually be consumed for up to months after the expiry date.
- You can help organise food donations of unsold edible goods to charities.
- Finally, as we prepare for the festive season, let us try not to eat so much. Remember that our greed has greater consequences than just on our waistlines.

In the words of Singapore Environment Council chief executive Jose Raymond: "With the amount of food waste being generated, it is probably timely for Singapore to revisit the possibility of food waste recycling."

Check out **www.savefoodcutwaste.com** on how to cut food waste.

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BY DISHI GAUTAM

BEHIND THE SCREENS: SOCIAL MEDIA MODERATORS

Which fresh graduate doesn't aspire to make it big one day? As an engineering student, I too dream to work at one of those fancy Facebook or Google offices. "How hard can it be to sit in front of a computer and code all day?", I thought. A few months back, I saw an online classified advertisement of a company that claimed to be into social media moderation. "So Facebook doesn't do this itself?" I decided to find out. So I used all my resources (mainly online) to understand what social media moderation is all about.

IT IS NOT JUST AN AUTOMATED SYSTEM!

Turns out, most social networking sites employ companies that provide moderation services. Social media moderators deal with explicit content on the web and prevent it from reaching our Facebook and Twitter feeds. They have to deal with all sorts of malicious content on the web; from murders, beheadings and rape to paedophilia, porn and necrophilia, these guys have to see this every day to make sure you and I don't have to.

THEY ARE PEOPLE LIKE US!

With means of communication slowly changing its face, social networking sites today hire more people to keep inappropriate content off their web pages than they do to create the pages for them. Though a lot of this moderation is done in the United States, a large percentage is outsourced to countries like India, Morocco and the Philippines. While moderators in the US are paid up to $30 an hour, their similarly-qualified and educated counterparts in other countries are paid around $1 per hour.

1 in every 28 messages contains lewd content

WITH GREAT POWER, COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

Stuff online can be moderated at various levels of the chain.

PRE-MODERATION: This is the filtering that is done after the content is uploaded and before it appears on the web. The moderator can choose one of the many actions to take; it could, as in case of Facebook, be deleted, ignored or escalated to a Facebook employee in the California.

POST MODERATION: Sometimes we see some photos, videos or links appear on the web, but then disappear in a fraction of a second and can never be found again. These are removed by moderators as the contents are deemed inappropriate.

REACTIVE MODERATION: This process begins when we hit the "report abuse" button. The content goes through the same process and its fate is decided by the moderators.

IT CAN BE SCARRING!

Continuous exposure to human immorality in its various forms is emotionally scarring. Looking, all day, at obscene child pornography, boorish accidents and other mentally disturbing content can lead to fear, trust issues, depression and paranoia. Having absolutely no control on what they see, many moderators resort to alcohol and substance abuse, as their mental and physical health are greatly compromised. Counselling services can be afforded by US-based moderator companies, but their overseas counterparts don't have such benefits.

Kudos to these behind-the-screen heroes.

THE GRANDMA PROBLEM.

With social media gaining popularity across all generations, the moderators have to work harder to control what goes online. Adrian Chen, in an article on WIRED, says, "Now that grandparents routinely use services like Facebook to connect with their kids and grandkids, they are potentially exposed to the internet's panoply of jerks, racists, creeps, criminals, and bullies." He calls this the grandma problem.

250,000 online abuse complaints are lodged every hour. These include "Can you remove this picture? I don't like it", but also legit objections related to abuse and violence, to mention the least.

Blast from the PAST

meet the 3 WINNERS!

#blastfromthepastSG

thank you all for voting for your favourite entries for Blast from the Past! congratulations to the three winners, who've shown their love of the past while treasuring the present.

WINNER 219 votes

joycelyn

treasuring our heritage

While it's not as famous as the Merlion, Punggol Marina Country Club has been an institution in Singapore since 1994. It's where Joycelyn spent plenty of quality family bonding time. "I chose to recreate this photo to reminisce the good times we had as a family," she said. "It is our parents' favourite photo and has been placed in our living room for years." With plans for Punggol 21 underway to develop the area into a 21st century lifestyle hub, it is good that the club is preserved as part of Punggol's heritage. "Hopefully, we can recreate more of such photos in the near future."

SECOND 176 votes

matthew

this is where we belong

Ten years ago, the girl of Matthew's dreams left for the States. Today, when the railway tracks – and many other buildings – have gone to make way for Singapore's changing landscape, she has returned to her homeland. "Recreating this picture brings me back to the things we dreamt of doing and all the promises we made to each other," he said. "The photo connects me back to the past, giving me a sense of nostalgia," he said. Together, they can now cherish the past while embracing the future.

THIRD 61 votes

kareen

taking care of each other

Kareen and her family have weathered 18 years of change. "My grandma took care of us all by herself back when my brother and I were kids," she said, "And now it's our turn to take care of her." Today, while her brother serves the nation, he is also indirectly taking care of his own family. "That's what family is; we are always there for each other no matter what."

Supported by nexus Organised by CAMPUS .COM.SG

BY NADINE STAES-POLET

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO: ISSUES OF INDEPENDENCE

Relationships are tough. Couples have differences - tastes, ideas, opinions… Countries and citizens are the same, and their relationships can sour, too - sometimes ending in messy breakups, as was the case with Bangladesh and Pakistan, South Sudan and Sudan, the Republic of Ireland and the UK, and of course, our own Singapore and Malaysia in 1965. The residual effects of separation, in almost all cases, never fully recede, and the fight continues in many places today.

SCOTLAND

Scotland's recent referendum made headlines when the country was split over the vote on independence. Voters were asked a simple "Yes" or "No" question: "Should Scotland be an independent country?"

Pro-independence supporters want to break with the UK for a host of reasons, mainly because they think that decision-making power on economic and political affairs should belong to the Scottish people. The argument most vital to their case is the North Sea oil off the coast of Scotland. Independence would give Scotland the right to deploy its natural resources as it sees fit. However, anti-independence supporters argue the "Yes" campaign pinned its hope on something that will eventually be depleted. Moreover, Scotland receives more state assistance than it pays in taxes, making it a net beneficiary of British taxes.

In the run-up to the referendum, opinion polls showed the gap between the two sides narrowing, with "No" triumphing by a slim majority of 55.3%, on an impressive participation rate of 84.5%, meaning the Scottish people were able to exercise their political will freely and fairly, and while the result may be hard for the "Yes" campaign to swallow, they can't question its legitimacy.

CATALONIA

While Scotland's made headlines around the world, Catalonia's story is less well known. A region within Spain, Catalonia has always had an uneasy relationship with the central government in Madrid. And although Catalonia has been part of Spain since the 15th century, it retains its own unique language, culture and outlook.

Encouraged by the Scottish referendum, on 9 November 2014 the Catalonian government held a non-binding "consultation" on independence. The ballot consisted of two questions: "Do you want Catalonia to become a state?" and "Do you want this state to be independent?" - essentially a peaceful, public-opinion survey, which was immediately declared illegal by the Spanish government.

Despite that, on the day itself 2.3 million votes were cast - out of 5.4 million eligible voters. Of the votes, 80.8% supported Yes-Yes, 10.1% for Yes-No, and 4.5% for No-No, with the pro-independence campaign arguing that the turnout was impressive considering the vote had been declared unlawful by the Spanish Government, thus making it a crime to even participate. Not surprisingly, this political impasse has deep roots.

THE SEED OF DISCONTENT

During the harsh dictatorship of General Franco (1939-1975), Catalan identity and language were aggressively suppressed. During Spain's subsequent transition to democracy, Madrid tried to deal with minority peoples like Catalans, the Basque and Galicians by creating "Autonomous Communities" within the Spanish state, christening 17 new regions under a blanket policy that came to be known as café para todos, or "coffee for all".

Catalans saw this as a deliberate dilution of their autonomy, as now every community had equal autonomy - meaning no one really did, although some groups fared better than others. For instance, the Basque community administers its own finances and its unemployment rate (15%) is significantly lower than the rest of Spain (26%), while Catalonia is not allowed to collect taxes or control spending, and has an unemployment rate of 22% - a significant paradox given Catalonia is Spain's most economically productive region.

In fact, Catalonia has 7.5 million people, or 16% of Spain's population, but generates roughly 20% of Spain's tax revenue. Tax money is collected directly by Madrid, by-passing the local Catalan government (unlike in some other regions). Catalonia then receives only a portion back from Madrid, which works out to an estimated shortfall of €16bn/year (S$26 billion). Catalans have long felt at best overlooked, and at worst targeted by Madrid, citing the fact that Madrid controls all of Catalonia's money, and meanwhile in return it has arguably the nation's worst public roads despite having the highest road tolls in the country, the most under-resourced schools (students in other regions get free school books while Catalans must pay for theirs), and myriad other discrepancies.

Put another way, the surplus overpayment from Catalonia is going to support other less-productive regions. And during the last decade, Catalonia has dropped from being Spain's richest region to its fifth richest today, despite having the country's highest GDP and most taxable income.
Since 2009, Madrid's remittances back to Catalonia has decreased by 71.7% and are now at their lowest in 17 years. In 2015 (the first budget year after the "consultation"), Madrid has even suspended all Catalonian expenditure on things like care for dependent adults and promotion of Catalan culture.

Madrid has also flatly refused to discuss a "Fiscal Pact" which would give Catalonia an autonomous tax system similar to some other regions.

There's also the emotive issue of the Catalan language. The current bilingual school system in Catalonia teaching Catalan alongside Spanish is now under threat. The Spanish Government recently passed an education reform bill that curtails the use of Catalan in schools with Spain's education minister going so far as to say its aim was to "Spanish-ize Catalan schoolchildren."

Until a few years ago, the majority of Catalans still felt they had a future in Spain. For many, the turning point came in 2010, when anger at the financial situation was added to indignation generated by a court ruling that struck down key parts of an Autonomy Charter approved by Catalans in 2006 and even signed by the King of Spain - but summarily "reassessed" by the Constitutional Court of Spain and then "diluted". The feelings of many Catalonians was summed up by their leader, Artur Mas: "The key moment for me was the court ruling, when I saw how they humiliated us."

Catalan reactions (and protests) thus far have been almost universally peaceful, including forming a 480km human chain across the region in 2013, and recent street demonstrations which have seen over a million people publicly supporting calls for the right to openly discuss independence.

WHAT'S NEXT?

There are plans for a snap election in February or March 2015, where contending Catalan politicians will stand on only one platform: for, or against independence, making it a de facto referendum on independence. Most Catalans already assume Madrid will just deny the legitimacy of any such vote, even if it's in the context of a legal, sanctioned election.

Given the Spanish central government 's unwillingness to discuss the issues at the heart of the matter, unsurprisingly recent opinion polls show most Catalans feel the situation has reached a point of no return. On his first visit to Catalonia since its symbolic vote, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy concluded his speech with the very attitude that pushed many Catalans away in the first place, saying "The unity of Spain will not be negotiated, and we will never discuss it".

While this stubbornness is not a surprise to Catalans, the results - and consequences - of the snap election may surprise many in Madrid. What happens then? No one knows. Catalonia and Spain's deteriorating relationship is heading into uncharted territory that no other EU nation has ever faced.

Why does this matter? This could rewrite the entire way the EU deals with members, from currency, to citizenship, to peoples' legal rights under a democratic government. The EU block is also the world's largest economy; turmoil there does not bode well for the world, and with Spain's economy barely limping along, uncertainty there could spell very bad news for the EU, global markets, and the tenuous worldwide recovery upon which we're all depending on one way or another, even in Singapore.

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Meet our Top 6:

Our 6 contestants each picked out various items from CommonThread's store and were challenged to style their wardrobe with them. Fans got to vote on their favourite looks on Campus' Facebook page.

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Luxpho

Styling by

THE VINCE EXPERIMENT

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Behind the Scenes

shunji matsuo

Hair session

MAKE UP FOR EVER PROFESSIONAL – PARIS

Makeup session












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NUANCE: DRAGON NATURALLYSPEAKING

1 SET

With Dragon NaturallySpeaking, typing is as simple as speaking. (Literally!) What's more, Dragon even aids in viewing photos, sending emails and surfing the internet — all by voice. Better still, it adapts to your voice and improves upon usage. Your wish is its command! With personalised settings such as region, accent and a reading test, this program is extremely efficient and simple to use even with our 'Singlish' accents.

PRODUCTIONS

1 PAIR TIX

9 – 25 Jan 2015
1pm, 2pm, 6pm & 8pm
Mastercard Theatre
Tickets: from $65

CATS

A musical based on Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats by T. S. Eliot, Cats has been performed around the world over 300 times and has won numerous awards. Written by legendary composer Andrew Lloyd Webber, it is one of the longest-running shows in West End and Broadway history and will finally be performed here in Singapore.

MOVIES

2 PAIRS TIX

DRAGON BLADE
(19 Feb, 2015)
Cast: Jackie Chan, Adrien Brody, John Cusack, Choi Siwon

Dragon Blade tells the story of Roman general Lucius (John Cusack) who crosses into China after being accused of treason. In the Gobi Desert, he fights and then befriends Huo An (Jackie Chan), a former high-ranking commander, who himself has been framed by corrupt court officials and forced into slavery. The film also features other notable Hollywood actors such as Adrien Brody and John Cusack, as well as Choi Siwon of Super Junior.

GIGS

1 PAIR TIX

9 Jan 2015 | 7.30pm
Esplanade Concert Hall
Tickets: from $12

OMM Goes to the Movies II

Orchestra of the Music Makers returns to Film Music in January with Conductor Joshua Kangming Tan and the Vocal Associates Festival and Children's Chorus. This act features the best hits from Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Sherlock, How to Train Your Dragon, Frozen, Totoro and many more.

1 Feb 2015 |4pm
Victoria Concert Hall
Tickets: from $22

Discovering Music! Enigma Variations

Associate Conductor Jason Lai and the SSO will be performing one of the most popular orchestral works of all time, the Enigma Variations by Edward Elgar. This major orchestral score consists of the theme, followed by 14 variations, each variation a musical portrait one of Elgar's friends.

2 Feb 2015 | 8pm
The Star Theatre
Tickets: from $128

Lily Allen Live

Lily Allen will be performing live in Singapore for the very first time on 2nd February. The singer, songwriter, actress, and TV presenter returned in 2013 from a musical hiatus with her cover of Keane's "Somewhere Only We Know," which reached No. 1 in the U.K. Her third studio album, Sheezus, was released on 2 May 2014 and debuted at number 1 on the UK Albums Chart.

1 PAIR TIX

27 Feb 2015 | 8pm
The Coliseum
Tickets: $110

Christina Perri Head or Heart Tour

Christina Perri's Head or Heart Tour, named after the singer-songwriter's second studio album, will be making a stop in Singapore on 27 February. Her debut single "Jar of Hearts" sold over 3 million copies in the US and a song she wrote and recorded in 2012 for the movie "Breaking Dawn – Part 1" was certified 4× platinum.

THE BLUE ISSUE

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF E.D.

BY NINA GAN

If you dug into your spam inbox, you'd probably find lots of emails with subjects like "Enhance Your Girth" or "Make An Elephant Out Of Your Ant". While the ferocity of Viagra spam has somewhat curtailed in the last few years, it's still a big industry. Otherwise, why is it still spamming the inboxes of our grannies and nieces?

What is it?

What we universally know as Viagra (or the "Blue Pill") is a compound called Sildenafil. Developed (ironically) for hypertension and heart disease, the side effect raised a few eyebrows (among other things). In 1996, "Viagra" was marketed as erectile dysfunction (ED) medication.

Suddenly, half the world stopped paying attention to maladies like malaria or TB in favour of "curing" ED, and they're prepared to pay to get their mojo back. Enter pharmaceutical companies who are ready to stroke their egos, with new players – like Cialis and Levitra – giving Viagra some stiff competition.

Money, money, money

Lifestyle drugs – for stuff like baldness, ED and wrinkles – are huge business in developed nations. You can blame it on capitalism (and vanity), as it channels more resources to lifestyle drugs than to address diseases that destroy millions of lives each year (like malaria). From a company's standpoint, "why spend money developing something that only afflicts the poor?", like malaria meds.

After all, it costs about US$1 billion in R&D to create a new drug. In 2012 alone, Viagra's sales peaked at just over US$2 billion.

It's not just companies getting in on the action. In 2010, the public paid the University of California US$1.5 million in stimulus funding for ED research, but it was a big flop as researchers couldn't provide any hard evidence.

The big issue

Older men are, not surprisingly, the biggest market for Viagra, but guys in their 20s are also susceptible to ED. Especially if you watch lots of porn – at least that's what Gleneagles Hospital urologist, Dr. Lim Huat Chye says. He sees many such cases each year.

Sex is basic human nature; there won't be future generations without it. Almost all life forms on earth "do it" – unless you're a paramecium or something.

Here's the thing: ED does not *cause* infertility or even prostate cancer, it's a symptom. The main causes? Hypertension and diabetes, as well as stress and poor lifestyle.

However, ED has been perceived to be more deadly that it actually is. Last year, in a Korean study among men in their 30s to 40s, ED was seen as more serious than diabetes or even early-stage cancer! In Ireland, the government spent €6.3 million on ED drugs in 2010, while in 2008 they scrapped the cervical cancer vaccination programme that cost them €5 million. Today, there are 5 FDA-approved ED drugs but only 4 types of painkillers for headaches.

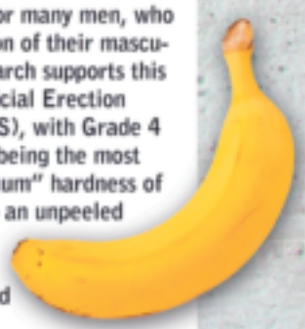
Not a hard sell

Ask your average Singaporean guy, and they'll tell you that performance in bed is as ego-boosting as a selfie or ootd. This may explain the increasing number of young men (under 30) without ED getting these pills for 'recreational enhancement'. Pop into any male-oriented online forum, and you'll find guys asking for discreet ways to procure said pills.

There is huge demand for these pills and most GPs here dispense them. About 1.8 billion Viagra pills have been sold worldwide since 1998, with over 3.5 million in Singapore. Levitral and Cialis have experienced a rise in sales since their arrival here as well.

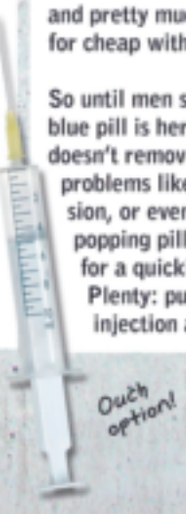
Rising to the challenge

The drive to have a stiff member will forever be an issue for many men, who consider it a reflection of their masculinity. Plenty of research supports this – there's even an official Erection Hardness Score (EHS), with Grade 4 (optimum hardness) being the most desired. A "suboptimum" hardness of Grade 3 is likened to an unpeeled banana.



With so much demand for Grade 4, it's not surprising that the ED business is huge – not just for the pharmaceutical companies, but also those dealing with counterfeit versions. These are available online, and pretty much anywhere that touts it for cheap without a prescription.

So until men stop having desires, the blue pill is here to stay. Although it doesn't remove the underlying medical problems like diabetes and hypertension, or even psychological ones, popping pills seems like a quick fix for a quickie. The alternative? Plenty: pumps, pellet insertion, injection and implants.



STRESS RELIEF

You've probably gotten over the hump of your most stressful days at school. Most of you are still probably quite buzzing from the stress, and are needing an outlet to keep your brains entertained. Fear not - we have just the thing for you (and give you a bit of education on art in the process). See the large picture below? It's a reproduction of 'The School of Athens', which was originally painted in the 16th century by Raphael and widely considered his masterpiece.

DID YOU KNOW?

Commentators have suggested that nearly every great Greek philosopher can be found in the painting, but determining which are depicted is difficult.

See if you can find some of the philosophers in the picture. They are:

Plato	Ptolemy
Aristotle	Zoroaster
Socrates	Raphael
Pythagoras	Sodoma
Euclid	Diogenes

You can check out more of Eugene Soh's works at Chan Hampe Galleries (Raffles Hotel) from now till 5 January 2015.

Food for Thought

(an homage to The School of Athens)

by Eugene Soh

Wanna be a **#Millionaireby25**? Don't we all. And unless your plan is to **#play4D** (and that's not a real plan, you know), you need to start mapping out the next few years **#ASAP**! One route to riches is to **#getintofinance**. Banking, investment, stocks, shares, futures... **#Ferrari**? You name it. Another is to become your **#ownboss**, and make a future where you **#calltheshots**, and **#donttakerubbishfromanybody**, unless of course your business deals in rubbish, which can be extremely profitable given all the trash out there these days (and we don't mean your frenemy's Instagram feed full of **#toomanyselfies**), in which case, you **#takerubbishfromeverybody**, and charge them handsomely for it. Good for you! There's other ways too, of course. You could become the next **#kuehking**, **#ramenchampion**, or whatever, but unless you're handy in the kitchen, that's not a plan either. But then, you already know that. Just like anyone else who ever had the **#accidentalmisfortune** to taste your **#badcooking**. You know what we mean. That **#sambalmeatthing** you call a **#ramleeburger**, but everyone else calls revolting. Something you're all too aware of, but that's ok. You're not a culinary **#superman** (or **#batman** for that matter). Maybe **#poisonivy**, but that's another story altogether. So where do you go from here? You'll need to understand how to **#kickstartyourownbusiness**. The first step is **#knowwhatyouwant** to do. What are you good at? What are your interests? The most successful businesses often start with a personal spark or a **#greatidea**. Next comes the **#paperwork**. Unfortunately. Luckily Singapore's the second easiest place in the world to register a business. It takes around an hour, and is **#supercheap** - it only costs from $50 to register a company. Find out more at www.acra.gov.sg. You'll also need a bank account - namely, somewhere to put all that **#money** you make, sooner or later, **#thesoonerthebetter** of course. Most banks have entrepreneur-friendly **#business** accounts. So shop around, and see which one of the banks fits your needs. Next is the **#businessplan**. This will be the blueprint for your success. Of course, all of this assumes that you already have the **#skills** and **#knowledge** to make it happen. We're not saying it's hopeless if you don't have **#knowledge** and skills, but then you may also **#strike4D**. Frankly **#anythingispossible**, but then possible and probable are very different things. Ask yourself: do you understand **#globalmarketing**, accountancy, corporate ID or customer service? Maybe you're thinking you'll need **#sugardaddy** investors? If so, you'll need to prove to them you have a handle on the **#importantbits**. If you're not even sure what those important bits are, then you probably should build on that whole **#knowledge** part first. You could get a **#diplomaby17** and start from there. Or a **#degreeby19**. Or an MBA and become a **#masterofbusiness**, in more ways than one. The most important thing is to understand where you're at, right now. And where you want to be next week, next month and next year. So if you want to start getting your **#eduswag** on, check out **www.kaplan.com.sg**

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