

# 2020 ASIA-PACIFIC CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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Strategies, Challenges and Corporate News Content

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a CISION company

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# Preface

The Asia-Pacific (APAC) region is a key global growth engine, accounting for more than one-third of total global GDP. Corporate communications in this region is challenging due to diverse languages and cultures, as well as the uneven adoption of communications technologies.

With the participation of various APAC partners, PR Newswire surveyed 948 public relations and communications professionals from 10 major markets<sup>1</sup>, to explore the top corporate communications challenges and channels, as well as trends in communication strategies and corporate news production.

Content production, measuring campaign impact and budget constraints are the top three APAC communications challenges. Maintaining trust and audience engagement shows the greatest regional variation.

Despite regional differences, our survey reveals that news websites, social media channels, official websites and print media are prioritized by APAC businesses with regard to corporate communications channels.

We hope that the findings of this survey can provide public relations and communications professionals with a valuable reference point for APAC communications planning.



**Lynn Liu**

Director of Audience Development  
and Distribution Services

*\* The survey was conducted from September to November 2019.*

## Thanks to PR Newswire's APAC partners for their support



<sup>1</sup>This survey's respondents are from: Australia (40), mainland China (453), Hong Kong (41), Taiwan (65), Indonesia (58), Malaysia (28), Singapore (96), South Korea (53), Thailand (55), Vietnam (43) and others (16).

## Key findings

**Content production, measuring campaign impact and budget constraints** are the top three communications challenges faced by APAC businesses, with maintaining trust and audience engagement showing the greatest regional variation.

**Enhancing brand influence is prioritized** by 59% of businesses in their communications campaigns. The remaining 41% focus on sales conversion and growth.

**News websites are the preferred communications channel** for 70% of businesses, with different social media platforms showing significant regional variation. Traditional print media remains an important communications channel in the APAC region.

**Press releases are preferred** by 85% of businesses to announce significant business developments or promote a new product/service. This is followed with news posts on official social accounts (79%) and corporate websites (72%).

**The number of media pickups is prioritized** by 54% of businesses, followed by search engine visibility (50%) and readership metrics, e.g. number of views (48%) when evaluating press release impact.



## **Future Challenges**

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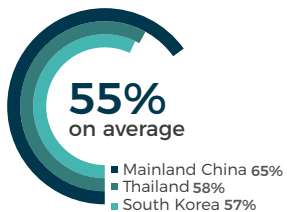
In 2020, content production (55%), measuring campaign impact (54%) and budget constraints (51%) are the top three communications challenges faced by APAC businesses. Maintaining trust and audience engagement shows the greatest regional variation.

# What are the major communications challenges faced by APAC businesses ?



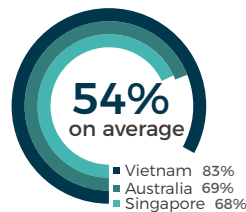
## Content creation

Producing diversified content for various channels



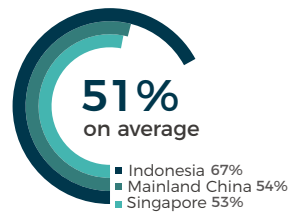
## Impact measurement

Measuring the impact of communications



## Communications budget

Communications budget allocated to content production



Keeping relevant audiences engaged and measuring the impact of communication efforts will be two of the key communication challenges for 2020. Global companies must strive for authenticity, relevance and transparency across their messages to drive engagement. This will enhance communication outcomes as global audiences will respond to companies and brands seeking to contribute to a better world.



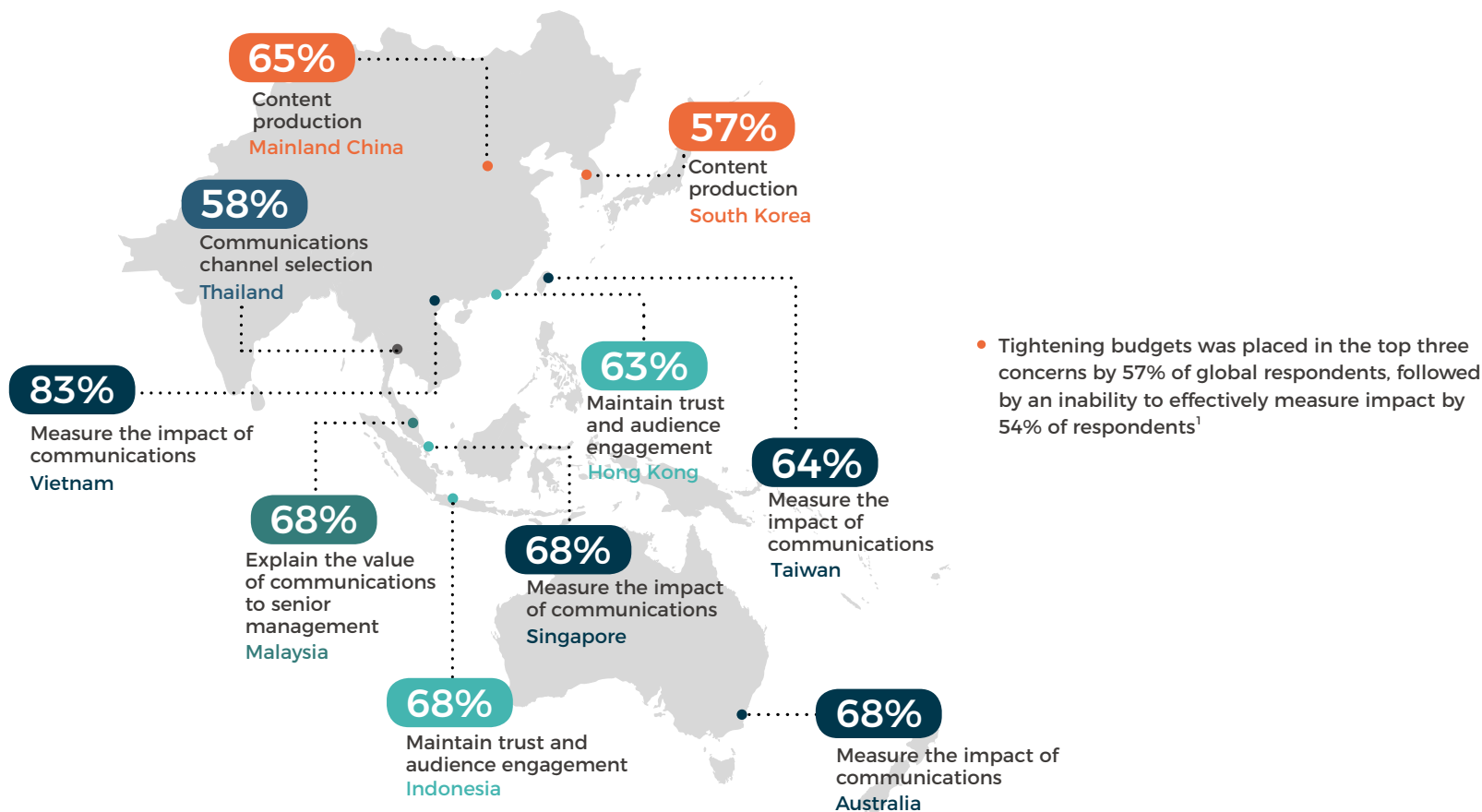
**Martin Roll**  
Business & Brand Strategist at Martin Roll Company, Author of *Asian Brand Strategy*

In terms of communications challenges, we are focused on three key questions: How to promote and increase our content's impressions, how to evaluate which media or channel is more effective and how to find the right story angles to engage different countries' media. Currently, we evaluate media or channel effectiveness through coverage and performance reports. For example, the size of the potential audience pool and whether there's an overlap with our current audience. We will also track the organic traffic after a campaign is launched to evaluate whether it drives long-tail benefits.



**Cara Huang**  
Marketing Lead at Fourdesire

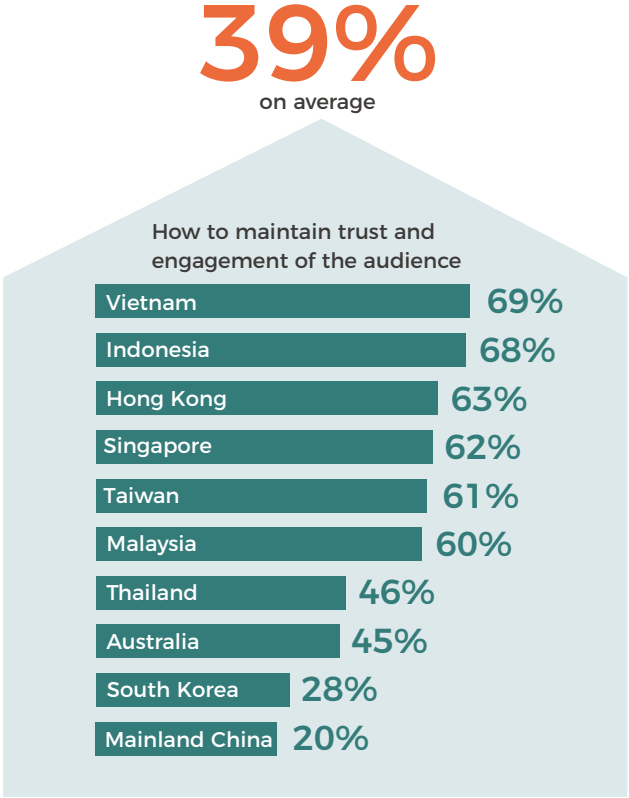
# Core challenges across APAC markets



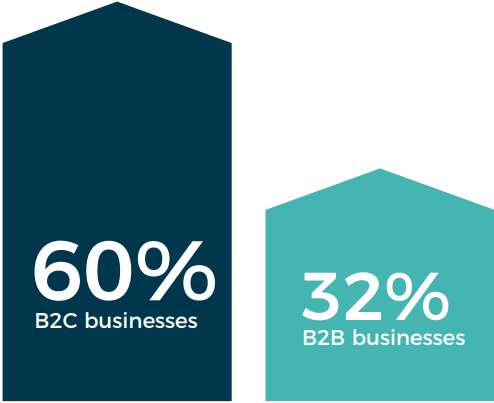
<sup>1</sup>PRWeek/Cision Global Communications Report 2019

# Responses to “maintaining trust and audience engagement” shows the greatest variation across markets:

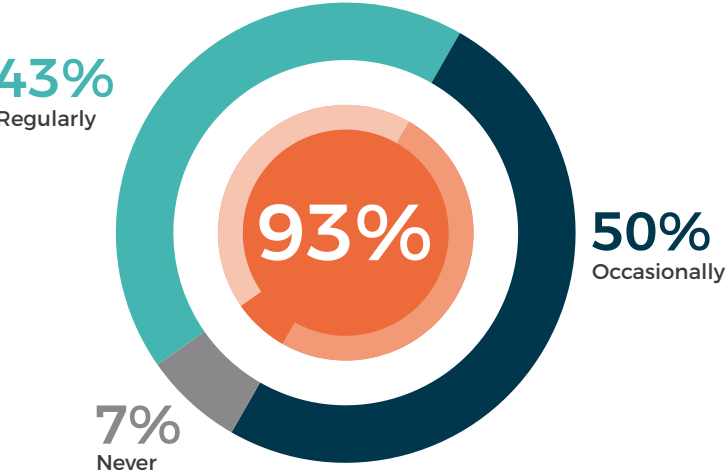
Many APAC businesses list maintaining trust and audience engagement as a key challenge, but only 20% of enterprises in mainland China and 28% of enterprises in South Korea list this as a challenge



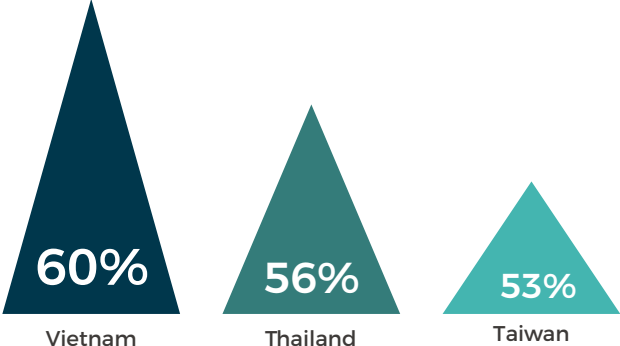
60% of B2C businesses ranked maintaining trust and audience engagement as a challenge, relative to 32% of B2B businesses



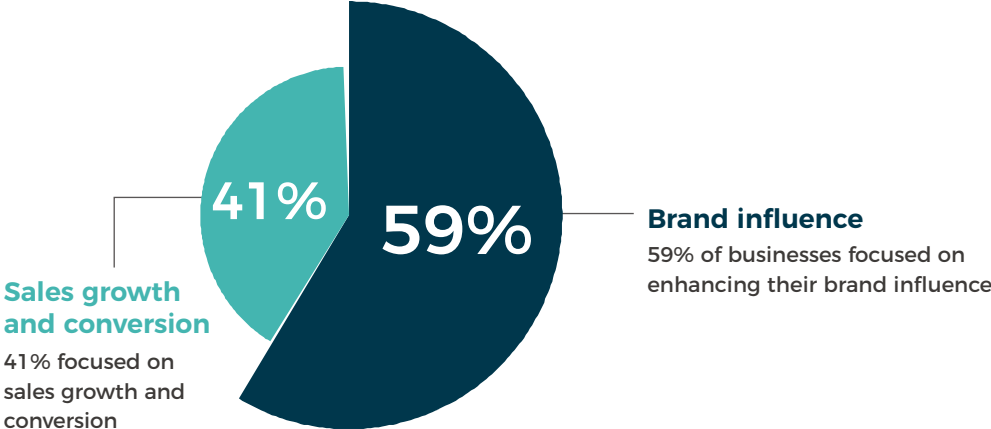
# 93% of C-level executives participate in content discussions



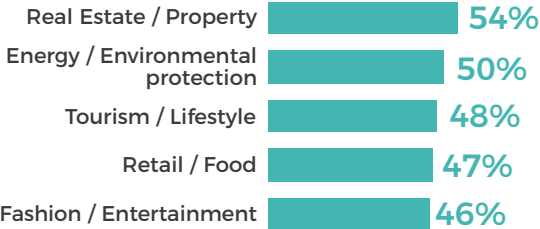
Top three markets where C-level executives indicate they regularly participate in content discussions



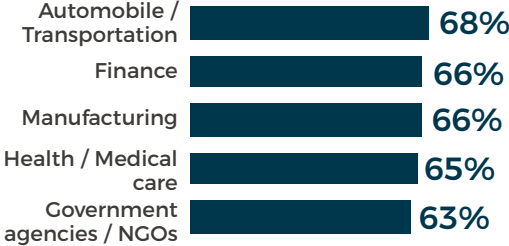
# Which communications outcome is prioritized by APAC businesses?



## Top 5 industries focused on sales growth and conversion



## Top 5 industries focused on brand influence



In the FMCG industry, the most intuitive way to measure communications outcome is additional sales volume. Across different industries, communications channels and platforms, communications impact varies across time periods. Shorter-term metrics include the number of reads, shares, etc., while the longer-term - and more important metrics - are share of voice and brand building within the industry.



**Angela Chen**  
Director of China Business,  
Lee Kum Kee Company Limited



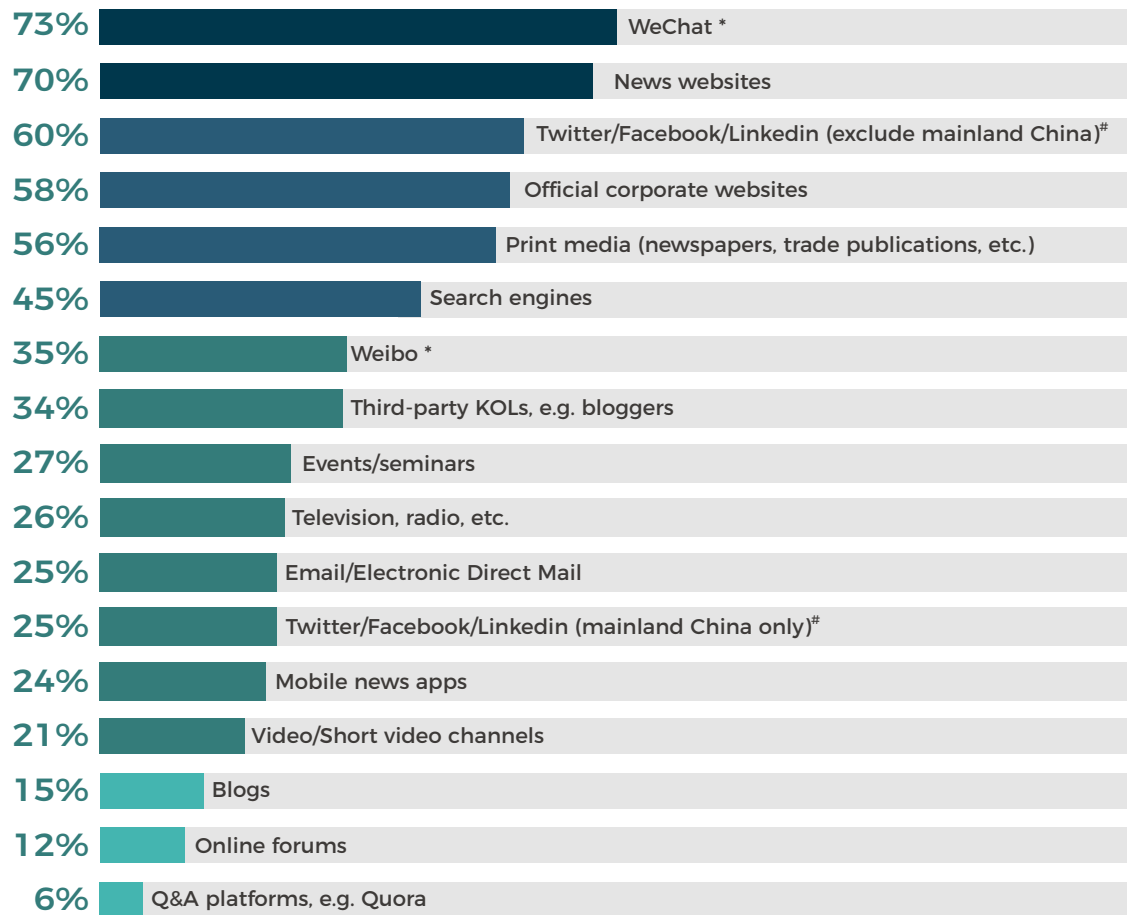
# Multi-Channel Distribution Strategy

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## Channels

News websites (70%) are the most prioritized communication channels for APAC businesses, with significant variation in preferred social media platforms across various markets. Traditional print media remains an important communications channel.

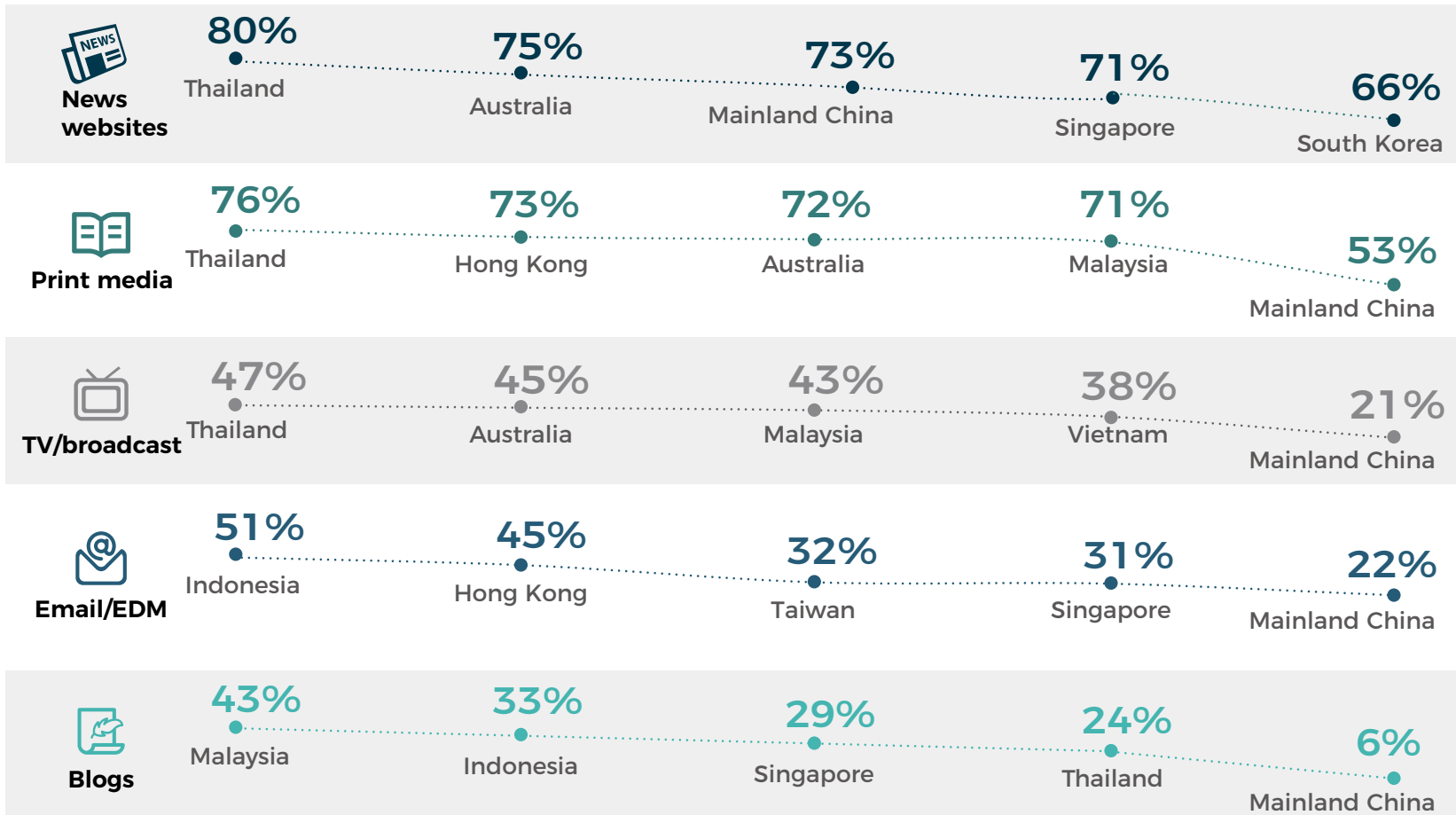
## Top channels prioritized by businesses in terms of where content appears



\* Data collected only in mainland China

# The results for this channel are shown separately as there is significant difference in the results for mainland China and the rest of the region.

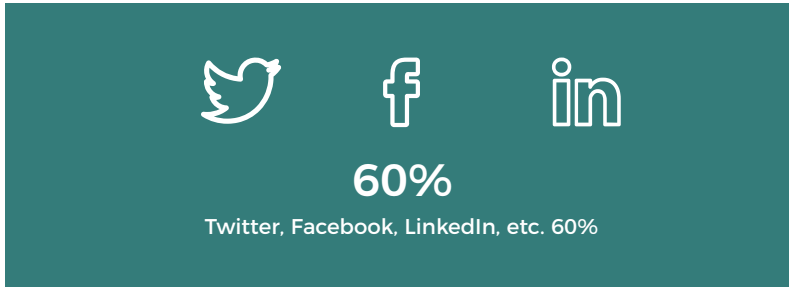
# Core communications channels in key APAC markets



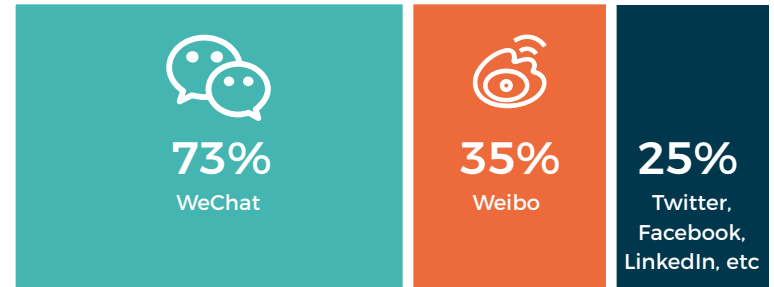


# Social media platforms

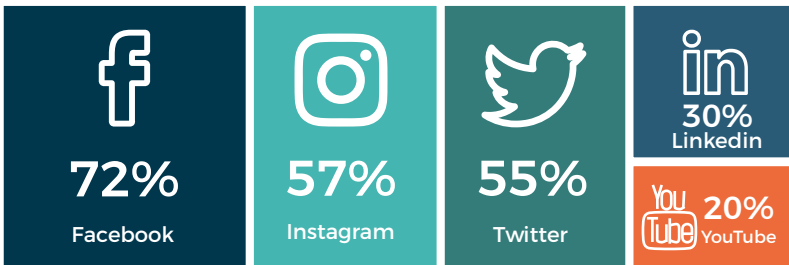
## APAC region (exclude mainland China)



## Mainland China



## Global



## Satisfaction level across various channels for APAC businesses





Rather than making traditional approaches to media analysis and evaluation obsolete, new technology builds upon the existing foundation. A complete earned media analysis program now looks like this:

- **Quantitative measures:** Frequency (number of news stories and social posts) and Reach (circulation/audience/followers/likes, etc.)
- **Qualitative measures:** Sentiment/tone, intended/unintended corporate and brand reputation messaging, spokespeople, influencers, issues, etc.
- **Comparative measures:** Performance over time, against objectives and versus competitors/peers.
- **Attribution measures:** The new essential element; digital earned media clicks and click-throughs, audience demographics/firmographic profiling and segmentation, and conversion from reading a news item to downstream activity including shopping cart actions, revenue and lead generation

**Mark Weiner**

Cision Chief Insights Officer, who sits on the board of directors at the Institute for Public Relations, where he chairs the Commission on Measurement and Evaluation

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of APAC businesses will increase their earned and owned media budget this year

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Additional budget is likely to go to earned media (37%) and owned media (42%), with paid media (21%) budget least likely to increase.

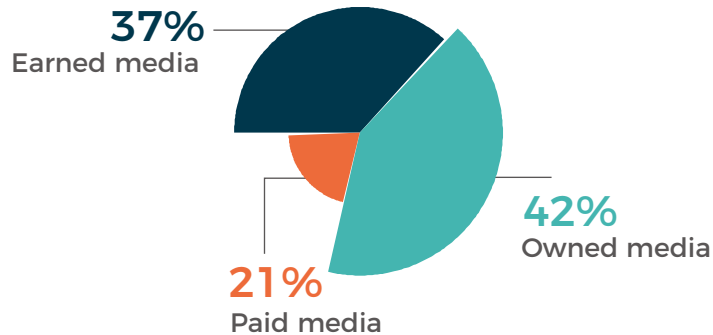
Globally, 34% of the overall media budget of respondents went to earned media, up from 26% last year. Paid media accounted for 35% of the budget, while owned media took up 31%.<sup>1</sup>

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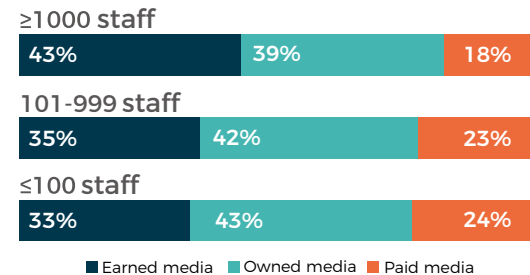
<sup>1</sup> PRWeek/Cision Global Communications Report 2019

# Which communications channel does your business expect to allocate additional budget this year?

This year, 37% of businesses plan to increase their earned media budget, with larger businesses with over 1,000 staff (43%) showing a greater willingness to do so relative to their smaller counterparts.



## What type of media are businesses focusing on this year?



There are many channels for the public to obtain content, but traditional advertising and promotional content are getting filtered out psychologically. Paid media is associated with ongoing fraud issues and poor returns on investment. As a result, it is facing lower budgets.

**Zhang Zi**  
Global Marketing Manager at Dexta Robotics



The success of communications campaigns is related to earned media performance. Can our viewpoints attract the attention of the media, and win reporting that results in high-quality content for our users and the wider public?

**Leo Tang**  
Chief Brand Officer at Shenzhen Skyworth Group-RGB Electronics Co. Ltd

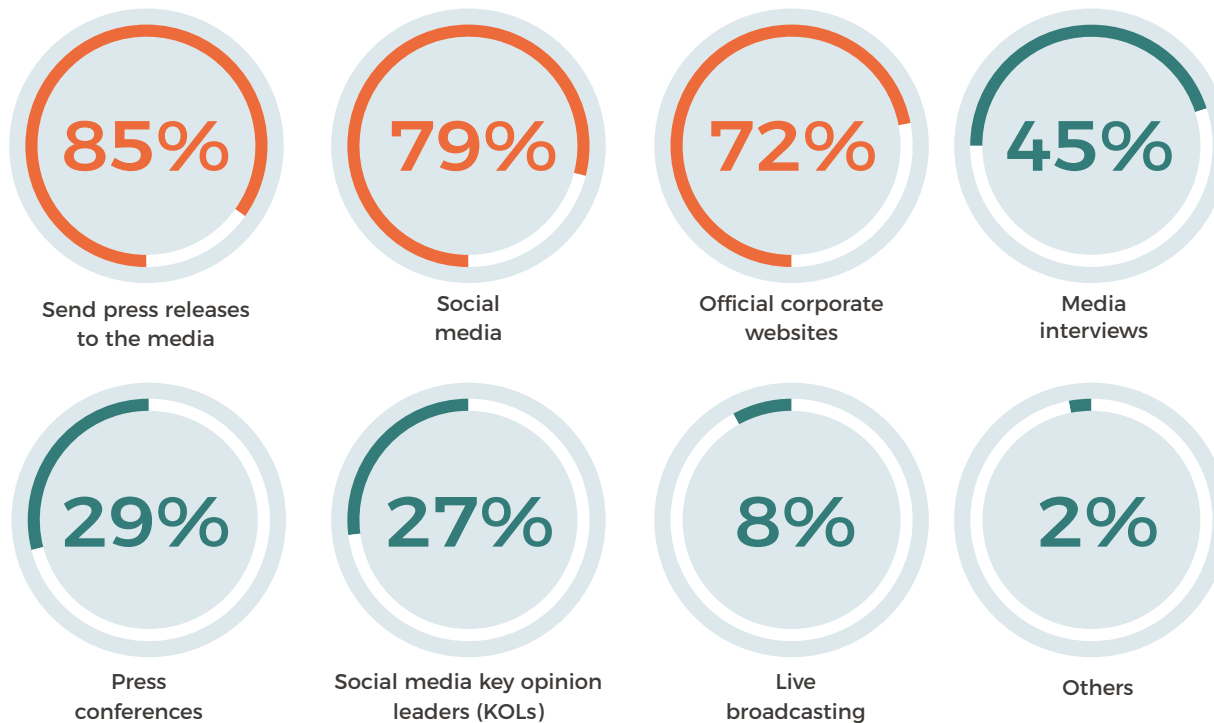


# Corporate News Content and Communications Strategies

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85% of APAC businesses choose to send press releases when promoting new products/ services or major business developments, followed by releasing news on official social media accounts (79%) and official corporate websites (72%).

# Top content distribution channels that businesses use to promote new products or business developments

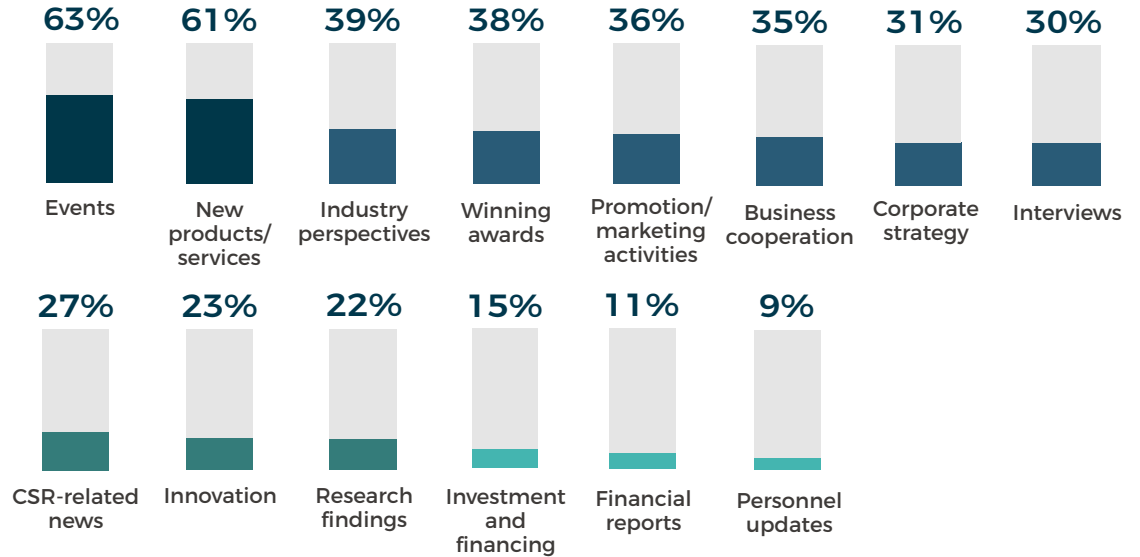


35% of B2C businesses leverage social media KOLs, far higher than their B2B counterparts (18%). B2C businesses in Indonesia (60%), Thailand (53%) and Singapore (33%) have the highest preference for social media KOLs.

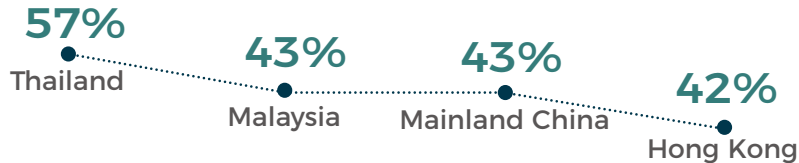
# What are the topics of press releases sent by your business?

Event-related news (63%) and new products/ services (61%) are the most frequently seen topics in corporate press releases.

50% of B2C businesses publish content related to promotion / marketing activities, while B2B businesses (37%) publish content related to business cooperation.



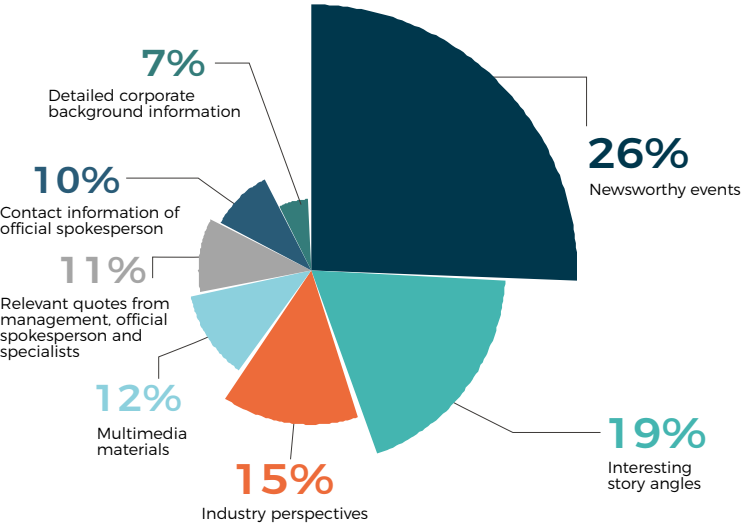
## B2B - Business collaboration content



## B2C - Promotion / Marketing Activities



# What content do journalists prefer in press releases?



To win greater attention from journalists, businesses may consider weaving in interesting story angles and insightful industry perspectives into press releases – especially for those related to events and new products/services.

Source: PR Newswire APAC Media Survey 2016-2017 and PR Newswire Mainland China Media Survey 2016-2017

A press release is circulated on various channels – it stays on your official website and gets featured on search results. I believe press releases are a cornerstone of corporate communications. It not only transmits information but also sets the official corporate tone of voice. It enables people to search for the “official version” among the different opinions on social media channels. With press releases serving as an anchor, corporate communications can be more dynamic, substantiated with facts and opinions, and become more interesting as well as persuasive.



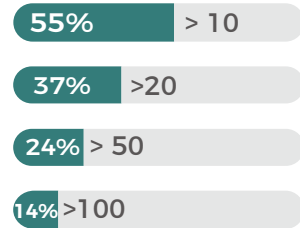
**Geoff Li**  
 Founder & President,  
 VisionWe Consultants,  
 former GM Public  
 Relations, GE China

The most significant changes for media will be in content delivery strategy, with additional tweaks to target key demographics. More analytics will come into play in relation to who receives what news and how. I suggest businesses devise a way to make company news relevant to the current goings-on within the country. Journalists are more likely to latch onto a subject when they see the bigger picture at play, as well as its impact. While this might not apply to every type of news, it should be capitalized on whenever possible.



**Najmuddin Najib**  
 Senior News Editor, New  
 Straits Times, Malaysia

## APAC businesses' press release frequency on an annual basis



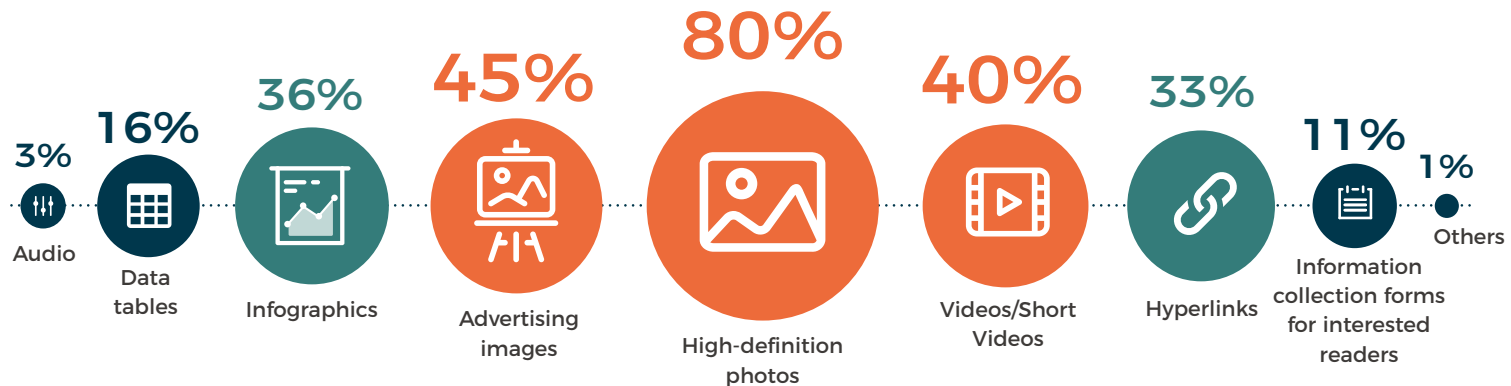
**24%**

of APAC businesses publish over 50 press releases on an annual basis [34% of Chinese businesses publish over 50 press releases]

**48%**

of APAC B2C businesses use multimedia elements in press releases. Videos are most popular with B2C businesses in Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

### Top multimedia elements in product/service launch press releases

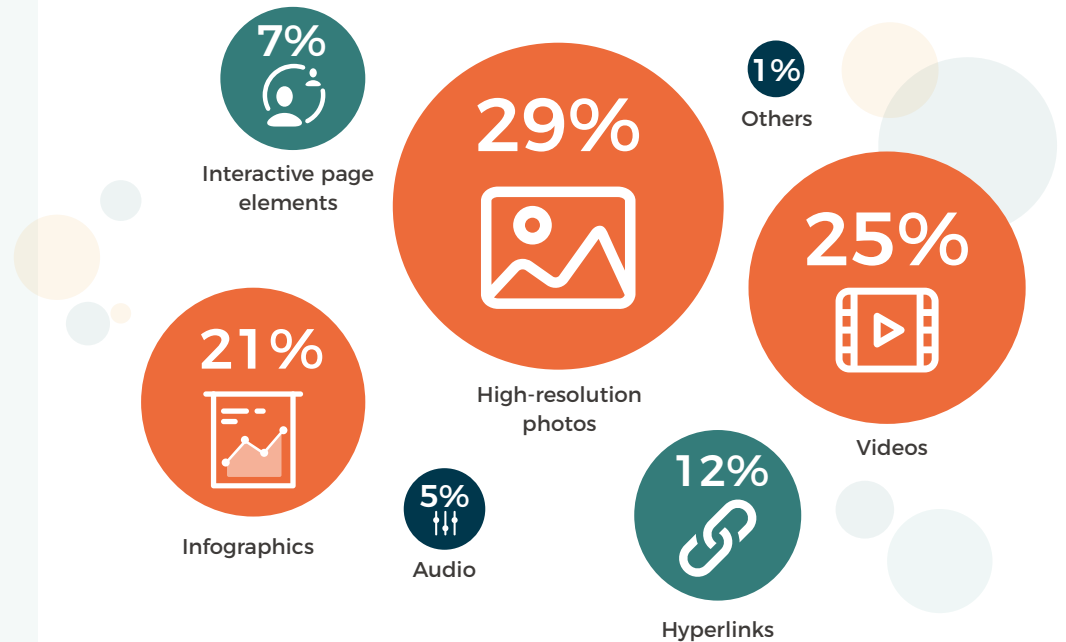


### Use of videos / short videos in B2C press releases



- Businesses from Malaysia (93%), Indonesia (86%) and Thailand (84%) feature high-resolution photos in their press releases most frequently.
- Businesses from Vietnam (60%), Thailand (47%) and Indonesia (44%) include advertising images in their press releases.
- Businesses from Indonesia and Thailand show a preference for both high-resolution photos and advertising images, which suggests that local audiences possess a higher tolerance for these images.

## Which multimedia elements do journalists prefer to use in articles?

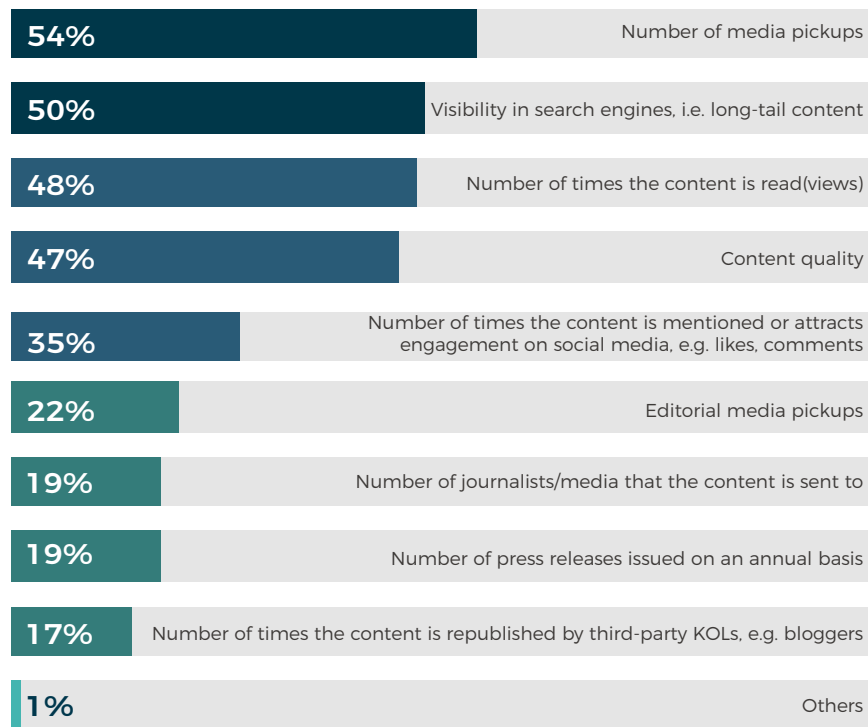


Source: PR Newswire APAC Media Survey 2019

## KPIs

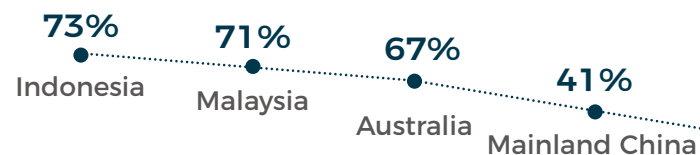
The number of media pickups (54%), search engine visibility (50%) and the number of times the content is read, i.e. views (48%) are the top performance indicators businesses use to evaluate the impact of their press releases.

### When sending press releases, what are the most important priorities (key performance indicators) for your business

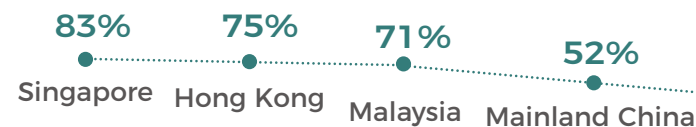


**Content quality is one of the top indicators for B2B businesses, while search engine visibility is one of the top indicators for their B2C counterparts**

### B2B businesses – Content Quality

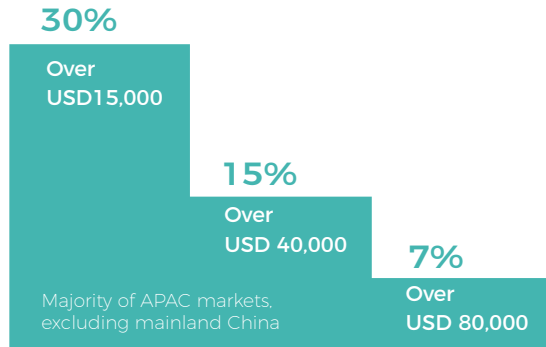


### B2C businesses – Search Engine Visibility

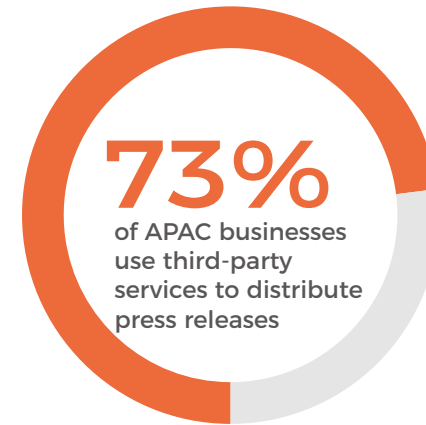
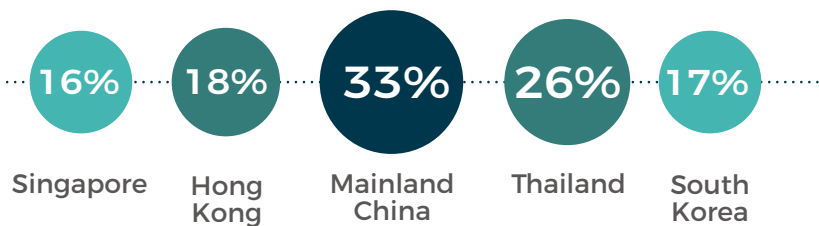


# Budget

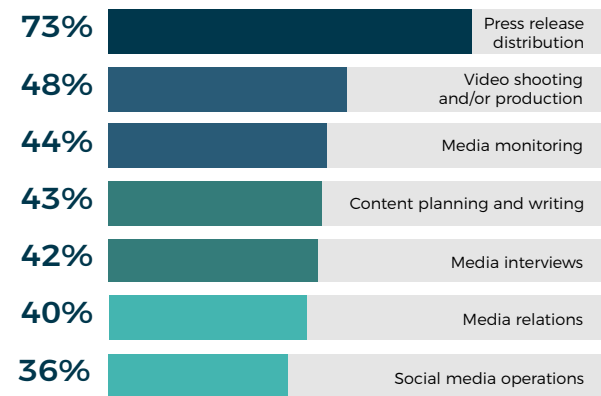
What is your business' annual budget for press release communications?



Top five markets with the largest press release communications budget (> 40,000 USD)



What third-party services are your business using as part of your corporate communications plan?



## Conclusion

We conducted this survey to better understand the challenges faced by APAC businesses and their responses to a rapidly changing communications landscape. We wish to express our sincere thanks to our respondents and interviewees. Without their feedback, this report would not have been possible. We have compiled a list of keywords drawn from our interviewees' quotes – supplemented by PR Newswire's survey findings and recommended best practices – for public relations and communications professionals to refer to:

**Authenticity, relevance and transparency** are increasingly important. As indicated in the survey, maintaining trust and audience engagement is a key communications challenge.

**An official version of corporate news is valuable.** Press releases serve as an anchor amidst different opinions on social media and can become more attractive as well as persuasive if crafted well and substantiated with facts and opinions.

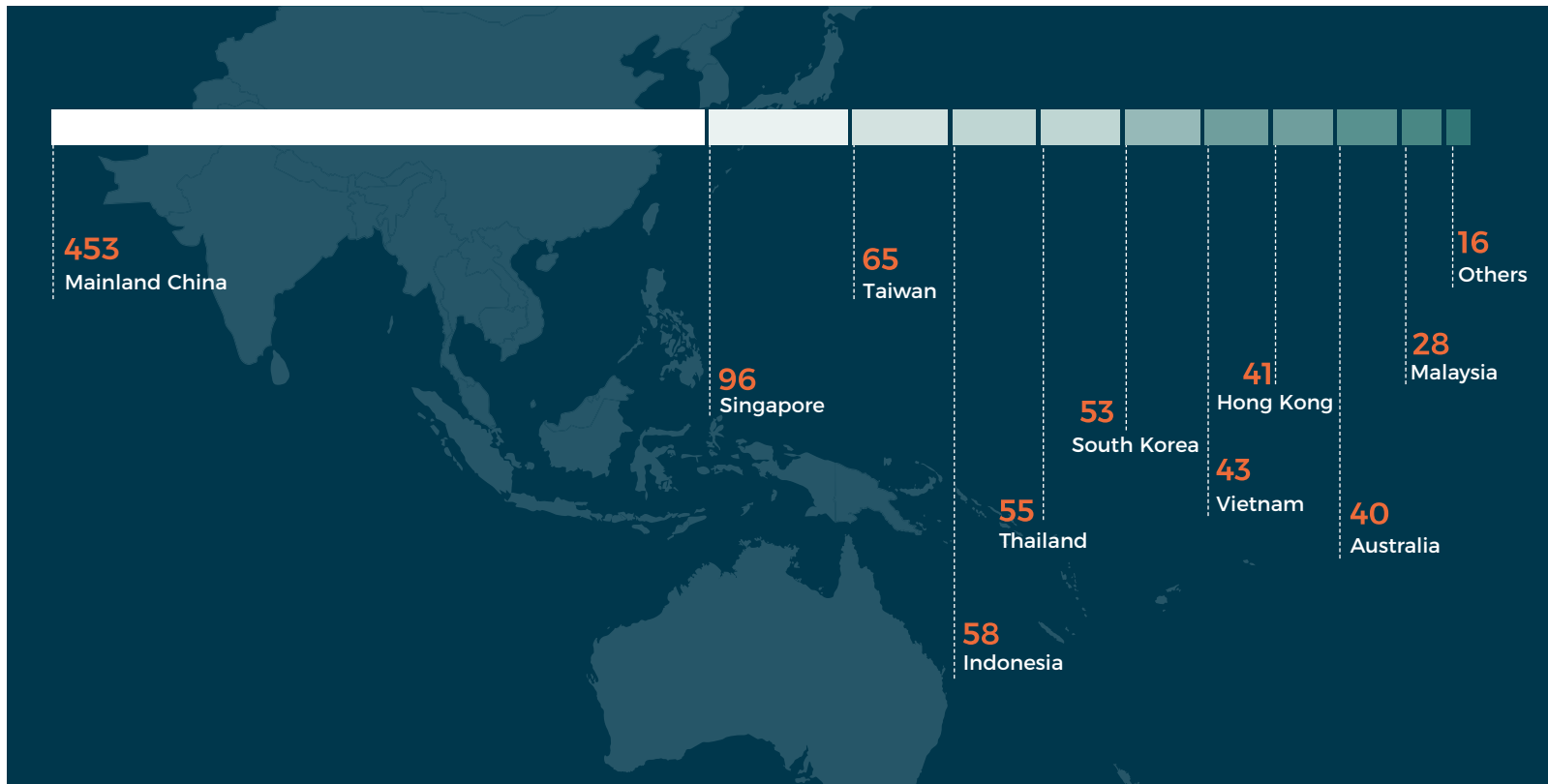
**Long-tail content is vital** as survey results indicate that search engine visibility is a top communications priority to make it easier and faster for potential customers to find specific content on digital platforms.

**Corporate news should latch onto subjects relevant to “the bigger picture”** in a market to win journalists' attention and get recommended by news websites' algorithms.

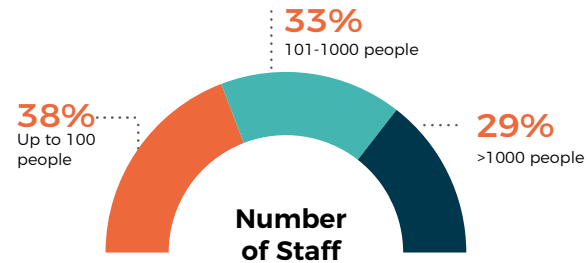
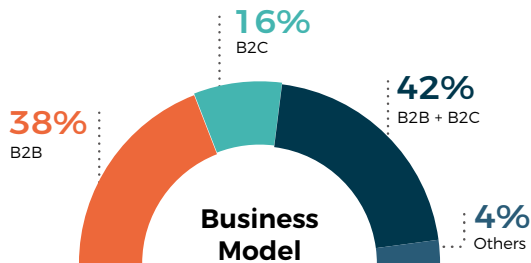
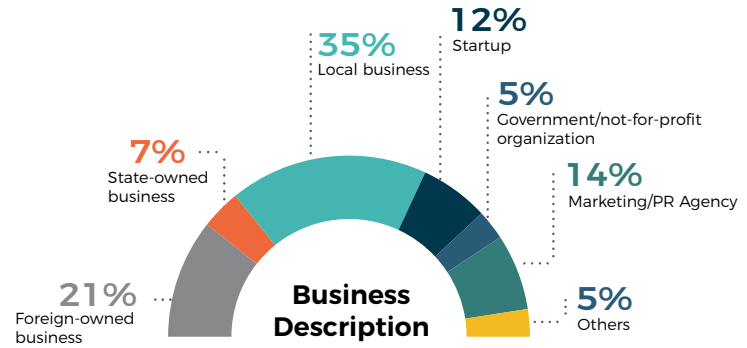
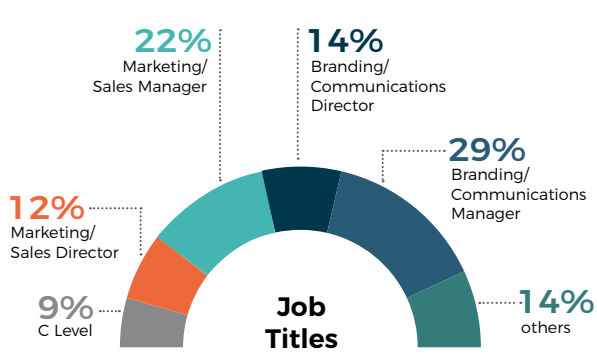
**Attribution metrics are evolving.** These new metrics include audience demographics/firmographics profiling and segmentation, and conversion from reading a news item to downstream activities that contribute to revenue.

# Methodology

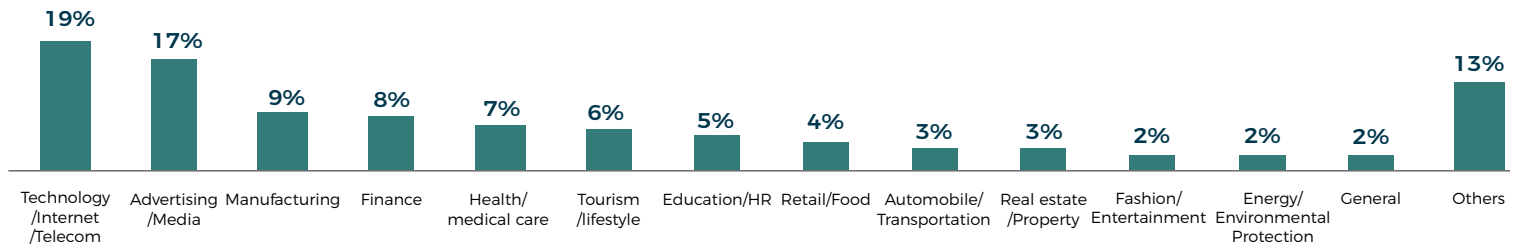
Most respondents answered online questionnaires in English or relevant local languages after being sent email invitations. From September to November 2019, a total of 948 public relations and communications professionals responded from 10 major markets in the APAC region, including Australia (40), mainland China (453), Hong Kong (41), Taiwan (65), Indonesia (58), Malaysia (28), Singapore (96), South Korea (53), Thailand (55), Vietnam (43) and others (16).



# Demographics of report participants



## Industry



## About PR Newswire

PR Newswire, a Cision Ltd. company, is a leading global provider of news distribution and earned media software and services. In conjunction with Cision's cloud-based communications product suite, PR Newswire's services enable marketers, corporate communicators, and investor relations officers to identify key influencers, engage target audiences, craft and distribute strategic content, and measure meaningful impact. Combining the world's largest multi-channel, multi-cultural content dissemination network with comprehensive workflow tools and platforms, PR Newswire powers the stories of organizations around the world. PR Newswire serves tens of thousands of clients from offices in the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific regions. For more info, please visit [www.prnasia.com](http://www.prnasia.com).

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