

# MEDIA EQUITY

A portrait of a woman with short dark hair, smiling, wearing a maroon jacket over a black shirt. The background is a solid brownish-pink color.

The Shining Carat



Margaret Lim

**A multi-faceted  
media strategist  
shares her life  
and aspirations**

*By Seelan*

Insightful analysis is one of Carat Malaysia's (Carat) forte. This is why Malaysia's first media specialist company, founded over a decade ago has become the country's leading media solutions agency in terms of delivering media strategies.

Revenue wise, Carat is among the top 4 in the country. Not bad for a company which was ranked number 11 when it first took off as MediaBase in 1991. Eventually, a growing MediaBase was acquired by London-based Carat in 1998.

Incidentally, Carat's client list include names such as Malayan Banking, Carlsberg, BMW, Nivea, Lam Soon, KFC, Pizza Hut, Southern Lion, Boh Tea, Cadbury's and Unza.

And behind it all is Margaret Lim, its executive chairman. A media industry heavyweight, she has since the 70's headed the media departments of several leading advertising agencies. She is also active in the media training environment.

So what are her impressions about the ascension of Carat thus far? 'Well, it has moved along the times, and I would like us to be the best. The media scene is changing at an accelerating pace and this makes planning very challenging. How we reach our audiences in the most effective and innovative way is the key. What I would like for Carat to be is a media specialist company that can deliver cutting-edge solutions,' says Margaret.

And she resolutely credits her team at Carat. 'The bulk of the current business was pitched for and secured by a great team we have here. I am immensely happy to see that we have a team of better planners than me. My role is to enhance their skills and make them do better. Though rising cost concerns us, I must point out that our people are rewarded more than the market rate because they continually prove their worth.'

And how far into the future has Margaret envisioned growth? To this, she says one has to evaluate the market place. 'As an independent media, we can only do so much. Last year we explored the advantages of collaborative partnerships for the opportunity to grow and compete effectively.'

But her rise in the professional domain presented its own challenges. She adds that later on media became complicated and the process of accountability came into being. 'I joined O&M in the 70s. During the first year, my employers gathered that my forte was in media. I moved from account management to the media department as its executive. Eventually, I grew to love the job.'

Her greatest challenge at the time was to take raw data, analyze it and gain insights. 'I guess I was creative from the media point of view. What I did then on the job is considered absolutely basic today. At the time people did not know the difference between reach and frequency.'

'In addition, it was a time of critical changes in Europe. And to make matters worse, clients chose advertising agencies because they delivered the best in terms of creativity. Media was the last option in the decision process,' says Margaret.

'Internally and within the industry, media was not a priority in terms of support and resources. Respect for media strategy was not mutual. The focus was on creative and client servicing. Besides, the media scenario was simple enough. You could either advertise in the New Straits Times or the Nanyang or RTM; options were very limited.'

Margaret ascended into the media director's chair in the 80s and eventually took the plunge with the formation of MediaBase; and never to look back. Immensely successful and at her peak, Margaret's energies are now dispersed into fulfilling her other passionate pursuits.

There are other facets to Margaret's life as well. 'Other things gave me satisfaction at different stages of my life. When I was younger it was my work, my family and later on the church I frequent and of course, managing the agency. Today I also am involved with a ladies cell, where we share and help people.'

On the family side, she has two girls. 'The way I brought them up is a little different from the average Malaysian. This is through my own experience. When I was 17, I went to the US on an exchange program.'



Students in the US do not respect their teachers but spoke a lot, and whatever was on their minds. But when it came to exams they did badly, while my scores were above average.'

'As Asians you are taught not to speak unless you have something clever to say. I also observed that this also applied in our working lives. This is not acceptable because though Westerners do not do well at school, they are better employees because they are highly self-confident.'

'I nurtured this attitude in particular with my children. My eldest is a scriptwriter in the US while my second daughter is here doing her own thing.'

Life must be balanced. Margaret believes that at the end of the day one must have a vision and a

purpose. 'I believe balance comes when we give our best in whatever we do and love what we are doing.'

So how does she balance family and work? 'I do not think one has to choose. If there was a crisis like the time my husband was unwell for a year, I was home most of the time. I try to do the best I can in whatever I do, otherwise I do not get involved at all.'

'Values are important,' says Margaret. 'Forgiveness is mandatory. And we have to be honest as well in order to manage conflicts. I will not hesitate to apologize if I have done wrong to any staff, even though it may be difficult.'

So, is retirement anywhere in sight? Not for a while though as

she loves working and having fun at the same time. 'I try to keep myself occupied, and happily that is. I go to the movies, the gym, play the piano and sing as well. There are things I also wish I had time for; like gardening. Last year I bought a farm and I spend time there as well.'

So, what is her advice to the young who want to join the media advertising industry?

'They must be outward looking. Advertising is no more a 30 second commercial. People involved in this industry need to be well read. And one has to live life well; otherwise creativity will be hard to come by. Working and going home at 2 am will not do. Live well and play hard. Enjoy while at work is my philosophy.'

That pleasantly is Margaret Lim!

# THE CAREER JOURNALIST

Expect the Utusan Group to accelerate the execution of strategies to secure a better grip on readers.



Tan Sri Mohamed Hashim

*By Seelan*

The Utusan Melayu Group, a media heavyweight is seeing its performance ascend, despite operating with constraints. The group has performed well over the last three years, from 2002.

And at RM215 million, it is ranked the third in terms of adex revenue for 2005. Not surprisingly its net profit was RM12.4 million in 2004, representing an increase of RM4 million from 2003.

But it was a season of changing winds for the group in 2004. In came Tan Sri Mohamed Hashim Ahmad Makaruddin to inject vigor and vitality into the group as its executive chairman from the first day of 2004.

So what has been his vision for the Utusan Group? Brand Equity, in a scoop interview presents his aspirations and views.

‘When I came in I wanted to position Utusan Melayu as a successful and profitable Malay media group. I believe that the core business should focus on magazines and newspapers. But as we move along, we will be happy to consider opportunities in news related content, like a radio station. In fact we have applied for a radio license but its release is frozen for the time being,’ says Hashim.

About acquiring existing radio licenses to expand, Hashim is of the opinion that its cost is prohibitive. As for plans for venturing into the English medium environment or even starting a purely business publication, Hashim clarifies they neither have the capacity nor the expertise.

‘We are strong in the entertainment environment, but not in business. Our popular titles include URTV, Harmoni and Umph; all of them are doing well.’

Hashim adds that another key task of his was to ensure the profitability of Utusan’s subsidiaries. ‘My objective is to boost the entire group’s financial performance. When I came in a number of our subsidiaries were not doing well and I have managed to turn them around, except for UPD Sdn Bhd. There are key constraints, making it hard to be

profitable. More importantly, our subsidiaries should contribute to good results.’

So what steps has he taken to achieve his goals? ‘Among others, I initiated the senior management meeting. Although this is the first meeting this year, it has delivered a number of positive outcomes.’ Hashim also visits the plant, the staff and union leaders to explain his plans.

Commercial strategies aside, Hashim’s believes in contributing to society for social development? He tells about the Hadiah Sastera, which was conceived a long time ago.

‘We take the initiative to support and print winning novels, plus give out cash prizes. That helps us to scout for new writing talents. In fact, some of these novels have become textbooks. Overall, it is a prestigious event.’

He also tells about the KL fashion week targeted at the fashion community and is into its eight year of running. Of course there are seminars, sporting events and charity runs for the disabled.

Back to publications, Hashim spoke about reviving the unpopular Utusan Jawi publication because of declining readership but with 6,000 weekly readers. Hashim says there has been talks with the Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage Datuk Rais Yatim; and the decision is to revive the magazine.

Does he have any specific plans with regards to the various titles in the Utusan Group? To this he clarifies, ‘We will monitor market demand and requirement for each product and initiate the necessary measures. Mingguan Malaysia and Utusan Malaysia have a new

look and the response has been favorable.’

‘To increase Utusan’s awareness among readers, we promote its benefits over the radio and organize concerts as well.’

Meanwhile, one of Utusan’s success stories is Kosmo. The rationale behind its conception and launch?

‘Getting readers, especially the young is tough business. Other media such as the Internet is getting popular. Our response was to launch Kosmo. I believe the brand will be an important source of revenue for us. In fact, its circulation has hit 55,000. The Menteri Besar of Johor was pleased that the paper was making its way there,’ says Hashim.

‘Kosmo is a Malaysian newspaper, as we have a team consisting of the various ethnic groups. We want to enhance national unity, which is why the content is of interest to all Malaysians. Kosmo is not about sensationalism. We want Kosmo to become a niche newspaper that augurs well with our readers. We have plans to launch it in the East Coast in April this year.’

In addition to Kosmo, ‘Oomph’, launched last year has been doing well. ‘We are also planning to launch a health and fitness magazine as well. We believe there is appeal for it.’

Approval from the Ministry of Health has been given and Hashim intends to launch it in April. ‘We have other titles in the bag and will announce our plans for them at the appropriate time. The content will be in Bahasa.’

The group’s plan is to launch one or two new titles a year. ‘We will close magazines that are not



profitable.' He cites Massa, 'But before closing a title, we will revamp it, cut costs and try to promote it aggressively. If all else fails then we will drop the title.' Utusan's Kawan and Wanita have been doing well since their re-launch.

And his key concerns about competition? It's common knowledge that the advertisement expenditure for Malay readership is quite small despite huge readership, compared with English dailies.

About the Star newspaper's foray into the Malay segment via its website, Hashim welcomes it as part of healthy competition.

Does he have any concerns about adex growth? He adds that total adex grew by 3% to RM4.5 billion in 2005. 'We expect adex to grow by more than 3% this year. The World Cup and 9th Malaysia Plan will grow adex in tandem. I believe that as television audiences become fragmented, newspapers and magazine advertisements will grow continuously.'

But Hashim also cautions that there is disproportionate adex expenditure in Malay newspapers. If one combines English and Chinese dailies, they control about 80% of the newspaper adex, amounting to RM563 million in 2005; a growth of 7% from 2004.

'But the total number of Malay dailies has over 4 million readers, including Sunday readers of 5.3 million. So we have a combined total of 9.3 million readers. On the other hand we only have a combined total of about 3 million among the English dailies readers. Even in the professional, managers and businessmen readership profile of English dailies the adex is double that of Malay dailies, although the readership is much higher. The same goes for the Chinese dailies.'

He emphasizes that advertising agencies must recognize that Malay readership is high and the audience has high spending power. 'We see a lot of Malays driving luxury cars but we do not see that many advertisements in the Malay media. I believe that there is biasness against Malay newspapers.'

And Hashim adds, 'Although the environment is challenging, we will continue to work harder. A new plant to be opened in Prai this year will meet our future requirements. We are also exploring the feasibility for another line in Bangi. In essence we will continue to strive!'

# Choice for Media Strategists?

Media Strategists have access to another media currency for connecting advertisers and end users

*By Raghunath*

It's acknowledged that the Malaysian media scene is considerably fragmented. Advertisers are inundated with choice and that makes the media planning process enormously challenging.



Steve Murphy



Media strategy effectiveness is by and large influenced by the quality of numbers that are delivered by the research fraternity. Readership and viewership data play a vital role in understanding audience coverage and reach.

But choice matters to users of any data. And it is no different for readership and viewership numbers. Previously, the only provider of media indices was Nielsen Media Research. But of late, a new entrant has stepped onto the turf.

Synovate was requested last year by JICPAR (Joint Industry Committee for Print Audience Research) to recommend a methodology that would overcome some of the obstacles associated with a purely face-to-face approach. As a result, Synovate recommended a mixed methodology of telephone and face-to-face interviewing.

The trigger behind the request from JICPAR and the consequent initiative from Synovate has a lot to do with the nature of security in place in today's modern society. This makes residents in urban locations - and particularly upscale areas - extremely difficult to interview via the traditional face-to-face route.

'In general, 80% of households in Kuala Lumpur have some form of security measure that only permits the entry of residents. On top of that, 20% have a guard or security person at the building entrance. People who live in these locations are usually inaccessible for face-to-face interviews. This is why we embarked on the mixed methodology, which we believe is more likely to represent the overall population most accurately,' clarifies Steve Murphy, managing director, Synovate.

Synovate's media research initiative is named 'Media Atlas'. Their philosophy is that telephone represents the most effective way to speak to the upscale/urban groups, while face-to-face still has an important role to play for sampling those urban and rural respondents that tend to be easier to access, including households without telephones.

So the seminal Q3-Q4 2005 Media Atlas initiative kicked off by using CATI (computer assisted telephone interviews) alongside face-to-face interviews in all locations throughout Peninsular Malaysia.

Eventually CATI and face-to-face interviews will record an even split; with the former being most extensively used to reach more respondents in market centers.

When asked about the reliability of CATI, 'Telephone is not the answer to everything, but has a vital role to play in reaching the upscale audiences in market research,' says Steve. 'Those with a phone in market centers are not easily accessible for face-to-face interviews, while not everyone in other urban, rural areas may have a phone.'

According to Synovate, around 33% of Malaysia's population resides in market centers, with the remainder spread almost evenly between other urban and rural areas.

'We deliberately over sample in market center areas to permit a deeper analysis of upscale urban readers, because it is a key target for most advertisers. Of course, the data is weighted back to the population distribution at the total level to see the big picture for the country also' says Steve.

Between September and December last year, 3592 randomly selected respondents were interviewed in market centers as well as other urban and rural areas. 'The interview build-up to August this year will progressively reach 10,000 respondents, thus making the results substantial as well as credible,' says Steve.

But the survey has delivered interesting nuances about the way people live their lives (see Synovate Lifestyle Selection).

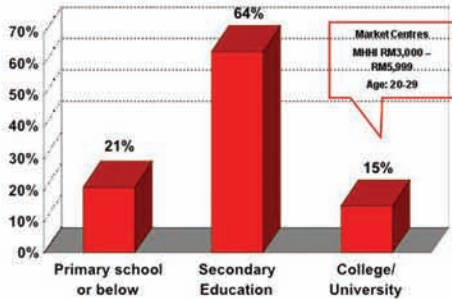
And the media planning fraternity's response? 'The Media Specialist Association is supporting our initiative. About ten media specialists have installed our software tool and are currently working with and analyzing our data to understand its full value. The response has been quite favorable so far,' says Steve.

It will be interesting to see how the media information turf will take shape. Synovate is raising the ante with its Media Atlas.

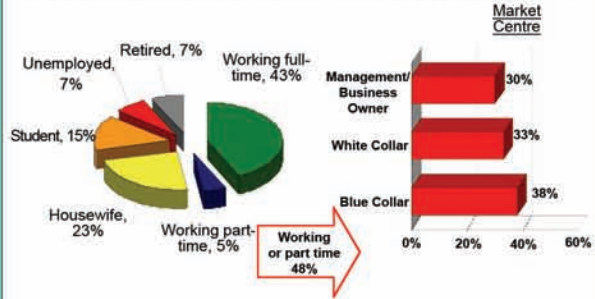
Eventually, time will showcase the clear winner.

# Synovate Lifestyle Selection

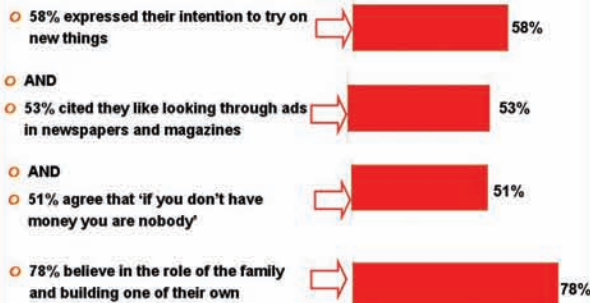
## Those in Market Centres, and with higher income, more likely to have tertiary education



## 48% work full or part time. Amongst this group one third management or top management roles, with a further third in white collar roles



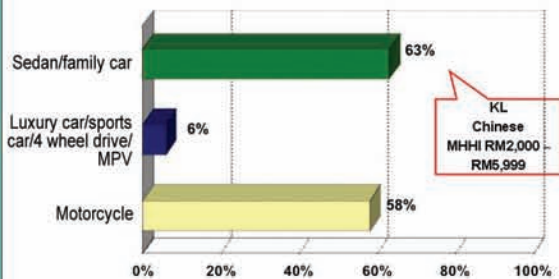
## Influential and ambitious people...



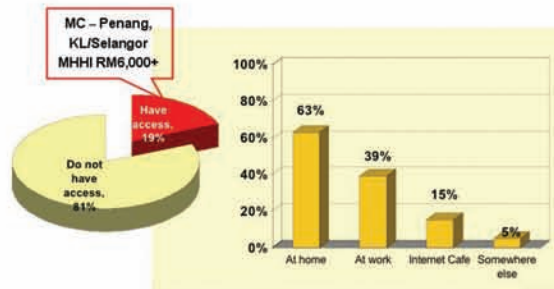
## What do they own...?

	Total (%)	Market Centre (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Mobile phone without internet access function	66	67	68	62
Hi-Fi System	42	46	44	36
CD player	40	50	48	22
Desktop Computer	32	44	33	19
Insurance/Takaful	30	40	30	19
DVD Player	29	46	28	12
Microwave oven	28	37	33	14
Digital camera	13	27	9	3
Credit Card	01	23	11	6

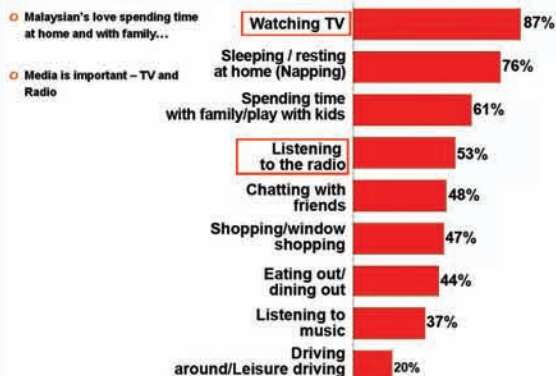
## Vehicle ownership is the norm



## 19% have access to the Internet



## Media is an important "leisure activity"



## General Topics of interest

