



Orchestrating the Concerto of Digital Transformation Through Wholesale Business

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I have often struggled to find the right way to fully encapsulate the TM Wholesale (TMW) business. The word “wholesale” calls to mind images of warehouses, the haggling that comes with bulk-buying and immediately turns the idea of wholesale business into one that is unglamorous and untidy.

However, there is one analogy that I have now found very effective in capturing the importance of TMW’s contribution to the TM Group. It likens my role of Executive Vice President of TM Wholesale and the employee body of TMW to that of a concert organiser and the backstage management crew.

When watching a concert, the spotlight is on the artist, their talent and musical capabilities and the performance. Their audience is wowed with the sheer magnitude of the performance; a full symphony of sensorial engagement, from lighting design to sound quality to dance choreography and more. However, behind the attention-grabbing performance sits the concert organisers who are responsible for sourcing, managing and executing the set-up, while managing the talent, facilities, equipment, coordination and venue capabilities that is all required to come together to form the perfect show.

From this analogy, TMW are the backstage crew providing the infrastructure and capability that allows the “artists”, or in this case, businesses operating within the telco industry, to perform a mind-blowing show. Our infrastructure provides the main ingredients such as nodes, data centres, edge facilities that allow telecoms and technology service providers to effectively deliver the services and content that end-users routinely consume. Services you and I enjoy daily, such as the coverage on our smartphones from our providers, or the movies we watch on Netflix, or the videos we zone out to on TikTok are all, in one way or another, supported by the infrastructure provided by TM Wholesale.

TMW IS BIG...

It brings me great pride to say that TM Wholesale has been a highly trusted partner to several service providers across many years through our connectivity infrastructure. This has been our bread and butter for decades, sustaining us and growing us into the industrial titan that we are today. With over 650,000 kilometres of fibre optic cables nationwide, we are in possession of the widest network coverage in Malaysia. We also have a formidable global presence complementing our powerful domestic network. 30 submarine cables, 6 regional offices, 96 Content Delivery Network (CDN) nodes and 28 Points-of-Presence (PoP) enables Malaysia to look out into the world and allows the world to connect to us. In the analogy of concert organisers, our capabilities could perhaps successfully organize an Ed Sheeran concert.

... BUT WE WANT TO GET BIGGER

Organising an Ed Sheeran concert is probably less comparable to the likes of a concert by the world’s current biggest boyband, BTS. While Ed Sheeran is an amazing performer, his concert organisers need to be able to support just the man and his guitar. A concert of the BTS scale requires infrastructure on a different level of grandiose – state-of-the-art lighting systems,



accessories for the audience that sync to seating sections and performances, sound systems capable of supporting the cacophony of sounds in each of BTS's songs. Concerts of the BTS scale are capable of drawing audiences reaching almost hundreds of thousands per show (or millions in the case of their online concerts), appealing to an entire global audience and have effectively cemented South Korea as a world-class entertainment hub.

TMW intends to mirror this magnificent scale of delivery by continuing to innovate and expand on our infrastructural capabilities with the intent of positioning Malaysia into becoming the bespoke digital hub for the ASEAN region. Our ultimate aim is to grow beyond our current Ed Sheeran level capabilities – we want to be supporting BTS levels of telecoms and technology service delivery.

Can TMW do this? With full confidence, I say yes!

THE ASEAN TELECOMS MARKET IS QUICKLY EVOLVING INTO AN OPPORTUNE ONE

1) EXPONENTIAL GROWTH IN DEMAND FOR TOP-LEVEL DIGITAL EXPERIENCES WITHIN SOUTHEAST ASIAN POPULATIONS

As the pandemic rolls on, its' powerful effect on global digital demand continues to grow. Our home region of ASEAN is showing significant changes in our consumption of digital services. In 2022, we saw a surge in consumption of digital content and web application use, growing our regional digital population to a strong 440 million. While web application usage is on the rise, omni-channel consumption is showing the most growth. There are over 700 million mobile subscribers within the Southeast Asian region consuming digital content on-the-go across multiple devices, showing a clear indication of a real need for seamless and powerful connectivity as they access content from anywhere, anytime, on multiple devices. In terms of content consumption, the gaming industry is also showing mouth-watering levels of potential with a strong pool of 250 million online mobile gamers which is steadily growing in numbers and popularity.

2) STRONG GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN NATIONAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS EFFORTS

Our Malaysian home ground is keen on keeping up with the changes, as well. Minister of Communications and Multimedia, Annuar Musa, released a statement recently ([link to article](#)) expressing explicit interest in turning Malaysia into an ICT hub. MCMC is paying keen attention to efforts in fortifying digital infrastructure, attracting digital investments and growing the digital talent pool to support Malaysia's digital transformation. Nationwide initiatives such as JENDELA and the launch of MyDIGITAL indicate concrete first steps towards realizing the government's objective in transforming Malaysia into a digitally-enabled and technologically-driven high income nation by 2030. This national objective aligns strongly with TMW's aspiration in positioning TM, and Malaysia, as a bespoke digital hub for the ASEAN region, signalling a new era of growth well within reach for TMW.

3) GEARING UP FOR 5G

As Malaysia inches closer towards a national 5G rollout, this signals another wave of significant change in our consumption of digital services. The implementation of 5G will trigger a chain reaction of changes in requirements from end-users and providers. There will be a new and fast-growing need for edge facilities to deliver low-latencies and data processing co-located to be closer to users, more powerful data centres and higher demands for cloud services to store the monumental amounts of data that will be consumed. We will also witness the emergence of new hyperscalers, OTT providers and start-ups racing to bring content into



the region as Southeast Asia continues to grow on the backs of faster, more widespread connectivity as 5G becomes the norm.

In short, Malaysia and the entire ASEAN region is primed, ready and screaming to receive those BTS concert levels of digital experiences and services!

TMW IS READY TO POUNCE!

The market is set to change at a scale that is already outstripping the likes of what we witnessed during the transition into 3G. However, TMW has already laid the infrastructural grounds to make the most of these changes.

1) ENRICHING OUR CURRENT INFRASTRUCTURE

For TMW to be able to play the significant role it can offer in Malaysia's digital transformation, we need to ensure that we supply the right tools that can support the oncoming influx of demand.

We have made in-roads towards preparing in depth in-country Edge Facilities targeting densely populated areas nationwide for 5G and Content Delivery Network (CDN) offerings for faster data processing that is closer to users and planned data centre expansions targeted to be completed by 2024 to cope with higher data storage demands. We have made subsea cable investments and capacity upgrades for enhanced reachability towards the United States and European countries, along with creating localised content ecosystems via TMiX network with over 60 nodes nationwide. These steps taken are adding newer features to our already solid foundation of infrastructure capabilities that is meant to house the new levels of digital services coming our way in the coming decade.

In many ways, this concert organiser is now enriching and elevating the performance stage on which our artists can perform on, by providing them with new tools and accessories to our already well-known and maintained performance facility.

2) CHOOSING PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDUSTRY PLAYERS TO ENHANCE OUR ECOSYSTEM

However, concert organisers must always be cognisant of their limitations. Sometimes the tools that are desired by performers are too new, the stage requested is too big, or the organisers do not have resources immediately at hand to meet their artists' demands. Which is why each concert organiser has their own band of extended organisers and crews who can support them!

TMW recognises that partnership ecosystems, who are able to leverage off each other's strengths in collaboration, is the key to proliferating digital inclusivity in Malaysia. Hence, we have created an ecosystem with our national 5G provider and domestic service providers, and established collaborations with several hyperscalers and global connectivity providers on regional edge services to create connectivity and business adjacencies aimed at expanding growth and enriching our services for our customers.

While the telecom wholesale business may not be the most glamorous job in the world, I do believe it is the very spine that holds up the industry and will be playing an incredibly critical role for Malaysia in realising her potential to become an ASEAN digital powerhouse. By leveraging off our already strong foundation, coupled with our infrastructure readiness for a transformational era in digital content consumption, and enriched with our strong ecosystem of alliances and partners, we are ready to stand tall and rise towards turning Malaysia into a



powerhouse of digital services; from serving our end-users more effectively in their changing needs, to supporting providers with world-class infrastructure, to readying our country and region towards the new scales of success in the digital economy.

The stage is set, the performers are ready, and we are in for one hell of a show!

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