

# Differentiation through constant innovation: A conversation with Ninja Van's Lai Chang Wen

The cofounder of a Singapore-based express-delivery start-up, which has thrived with a vast addressable market and an equal emphasis on technology and human nature, talks about sticking to the core and a commitment to relentless innovation.



In this episode of *The Venture*, we share a conversation with Lai Chang Wen, CEO and cofounder of Ninja Van, a Singapore-based express-delivery company with operations in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Chang Wen discusses with McKinsey's Andrew Roth his unlikely journey into logistics, the importance of establishing dominance in your core business before branching out, and the need to constantly reexamine your key differentiator. At the close of the interview, McKinsey's Simon Wintels offers his insights.

An edited transcript of the podcast follows.

### Podcast transcript

**Andrew Roth:** From Leap by McKinsey, our business-building practice, I'm Andrew Roth, and welcome to *The Venture*, a series featuring conversations with legendary venture builders in Asia about how to design, launch, and scale new businesses. In each episode, we cut through the noise to bring practical advice on how leaders can build successful businesses from scratch.

Today I'm excited to share with you a conversation I had recently with Lai Chang Wen, CEO and cofounder of Ninja Van. Chang Wen is an inspiring leader, and the thing that I found most fascinating about Chang Wen's business-building journey was hearing about his passion for continuous innovation. Let's be honest—business building comes with a lot of unexpected challenges, and all new businesses deal with pain points. To succeed, the best leaders move quickly and adapt. You'll hear Chang Wen tell us how he believes it's critically important to establish a dominant core business before branching out into new ventures, and then we dive deep into the importance of reexamining the key differentiators of your business. At the end of our conversation, Simon Wintels and I discuss

the key elements in Chang Wen's growth story, which you can apply to your business-building activities.

Chang Wen, welcome. Great to have you on the show. Ninja Van has been in the market for some time now, but you started in the fashion business. Can you tell us how you started Ninja Van, the original segment you were attacking, and how you expanded from there?

**Lai Chang Wen:** To be honest, we were quite lucky, because we were running a fashion omnichannel with online and retail stores. And the pain point we faced throughout that journey was a shipping experience that just didn't live up to the online promise. I'd spent some time in the United States, and it became evident to me that our parcel journey, especially in logistics, was a problem. So that's what inspired me to get into logistics and shipping.

**Andrew Roth:** Tell us, from a start-up perspective, what you think about the addressable market and what you need to do to define one that's realistic?

**Lai Chang Wen:** The reality is that we identified the addressable market on day one, and it's still the addressable market we are looking at today. Thankfully, this addressable market is huge, with massive tailwinds from e-commerce growth, and the entire business segment we chose has just been growing tremendously. This is probably not something every start-up is fortunate enough to face. And after some time, they may realize that their market segments are a bit too small.

A frequent challenge I've seen with start-ups and pitch decks is that people are not realistic about the size of the target addressable market, which could be much smaller than they realize. But they take a leap of faith, project what the next layer of the business and

adjacent businesses could look like, and build up a huge addressable market on the back of that.

But reality needs to be based on what you have to do today, or even the next few years, focusing on a particular area first. And to always depend on adjacencies and the future could be a pipe dream that could get quite dangerous.

So it's important to be realistic about your target market. Be clear about where it starts and ends, about its potential and its growth rates. And be more optimistic about your ability to succeed in a more realistic segment.

**Andrew Roth:** As you mentioned, you're fortunate that you started with small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), and you're sticking with them. Why is that?

**Lai Chang Wen:** We target e-commerce, not just SMEs. So, within the e-commerce space, there are large marketplaces like Lazada, Shopee, and Amazon, and large brands like Uniqlo, Nike, and Zara, as well as smaller SMEs with more homegrown brands. So, our focus wasn't an SME play; it was express logistics for an e-commerce play, and this cuts across all different sizes of shippers.

I think the key to thinking about differentiation is that nothing holds true with the passage of time. It's a constant evolution, a constant sharpening to remain best-in-class in the market over time. So I don't think we necessarily offer anything that differentiates us. What I mean by that is when we started in 2014, we thought the key differentiator was to have real-time traceability. Back then, you would get a notification three days after your parcel was delivered. If it was late, there was no way to reach out to customer service to try to expedite it, because there was no real-time visibility.

At that point, our differentiator was simply real-time tracking, but the market soon caught up.

So the question again became, what's the differentiator? How do we stay ahead of the pack? We came to believe being better meant being more hassle-free, not necessarily faster. So we examined our entire user experience to identify shipping pain points. For example, if customers couldn't be home for a pickup, we wanted to give them the option to drop off parcels at a nearby convenience store, or in the shoe cabinet outside their door.

**Andrew Roth:** Are you starting to see an increase in competition because of the rise of e-commerce among the larger marketplaces?

**Lai Chang Wen:** I think the competition's stiffened up from what it was three years ago, when the e-commerce market was growing exponentially and new players were coming in, starting express logistics businesses. At that time, the market was well served, and there was no capacity shortage or huge barriers to people shopping online.

But a lot of these new competitors were unable to find a clear differentiator, so they differentiated on price. And they obviously sustained losses, because this is a business where you need enough scale to drive the cost down, which allows you to price competitively.

But these new players priced themselves below the cost structures of even the large players, which led to an unsustainable, vicious cycle where players fought over price. But then a consolidation took place, and as the smaller players were squeezed out, the larger players got even larger.

**Andrew Roth:** You're reaching scale. Do you have a specific metric a driver needs to hit, a minimum number of deliveries per day, in order to break even? And as that number comes down, have you introduced new digital capabilities to create those efficiencies?

**Lai Chang Wen:** We take a two-pronged approach to productivity increases. The first is how we leverage digital tools and technology, while the second is how we leverage and better understand human behavior.

In terms of tools and technology, there are many ways around that, such as optimized algorithms and better sorting facilities. Interestingly, one of the biggest things that changed for us was our digital needs when we expanded beyond Singapore. We quickly realized that drivers delivering parcels might not have an active internet connection because they were deep in an apartment block, where mobile signal can be weak. Since our system requires real-time information, we had to build complex caching systems on mobile devices to make sure that we capture all of this data up front.

There are many ways to do it on the tech front, but most people forget that at the end of the day, it's people who are doing the job, regardless of the digital layer, so you need to understand the key motivations of humans. You need the right organizational structures, the right management controls, and the right level of incentivization. When we look at pay schemes, for example, they could be crafted in 100 different ways, so we needed to figure out the best way to craft a pay scheme that maximizes productivity.

**Andrew Roth:** I would imagine that as you started to expand outside Singapore, the need to understand human behavior and localize the product for each of these countries increased. A lot of start-ups from Singapore need to quickly expand all across Southeast Asia and often struggle. Did you have a playbook?

**Lai Chang Wen:** The first thing we did was to be very cognizant that things will be different in other cultures and geographies. Assuming that everything functions the same way on a global level is probably the first mistake people make. You need an open mind going into new markets and a willingness to relearn everything from scratch.

And even if you understand that everything could be different, how do you streamline your HQ? How do you streamline the regional efforts? How do you streamline technology to allow you to cater to six disparate solution sets?

It's also important to really distill problems to the core. So whenever we build a product, such as a database, we always ask ourselves, "This might look like the solution. But is there a more fundamental, more core way of building this?" That way, it can more easily be adapted to other uses thereafter.

**Andrew Roth:** So you started to centralize the technical platform at the headquarters level and then had to build a lot of flexibility across your microservices application programming interfaces (APIs) to localize them. Was there an example of a big challenge that you had to overcome in a specific market?

**Lai Chang Wen:** The way customers' physical addresses work is one. In Singapore, addressing is done by a postal code. In Vietnam, specific addresses are rendered with a string of words, but postal codes are somewhat nonexistent. Each market is slightly different. But if we distill it further into something more core, everything boils down to latitude and longitude, which is universal.

So our challenge was to build a customized system based on the latitude-longitude system that catered to each different market. The big leaps we made in terms of scaling up systems made us the first in Southeast Asia to adopt a microservices architecture. It took a lot of time, but we now have the ability to quickly change parts of our system without affecting too much of the rest, giving us a lot of flexibility in how we adapt and scale the business.

**Andrew Roth:** Making that shift from a monolithic infrastructure to microservices is a big step. Microservices are like Lego

bricks that represent different business logic or capabilities within a platform. And those Lego bricks can each have their own security, storage, and memory processing speed to create this flexibility. That must have been painful to make that switch into microservices.

**Lai Chang Wen:** Oh, it was painful all right. We had database outages that prevented us from sleeping at night for a while, since we had to constantly check operations to make sure everything was running smoothly.

In our business, there's no downtime. And that created problems, because sometimes, some of these systems just had to go down for a while. So imagine coordinating across 1,000 facilities, telling them that systems will be down for an hour. It was a bit of a challenge when we were doing that. But I think it's always better to bite the bullet earlier than later.

**Andrew Roth:** I guess there's no way around it. But now you're at 1,000 parcels a minute, right?

**Lai Chang Wen:** Two million a day.

**Andrew Roth:** So you made the shift on the back end that enabled you to localize what you're doing much faster across Southeast Asia. Take us through the product side. When did you know you achieved product–market fit and how did you define that in each of these new markets as you expanded outside Singapore?

**Lai Chang Wen:** To be honest, we knew we had a product–market fit when our first customers in Singapore were really pleased. The differentiators we had on tracking led to much-improved customer service for them. When customers asked where their parcel was, we could tell them. When we didn't change anything and order volumes started rising, that's when we knew we had it. Arguably, in our business, I think product–market fit is easy to ascertain. I can imagine that in some pure tech businesses, that could be a lot harder.

**Andrew Roth:** What's on the horizon? Any adjacent businesses you're starting to go into? The pandemic has forced a lot of e-commerce businesses to grow and forced a lot of offline businesses to become e-commerce businesses.

**Lai Chang Wen:** When you look at an addressable market, you have to be realistic, but optimistic about your ability to succeed in that market. Then you can start looking at adjacencies.

Our core business is express logistics, which is how we deliver parcels purchased online. But increasingly, we see that the value we bring to our customers, from traceability to being hassle-free, should extend further into areas outside of our core business. For example, a small online seller needs to ship parcels to his customers, but also has a cross-border supply chain to contend with and requires financing. These are areas we are starting to look at. And we believe that enveloping the shipper in an ecosystem of relevant services drives more value for them and more retention for us.

We have been thinking about this for some time, but actively refrained from doing anything, because we believed it would be overly disruptive. If we weren't able to become dominant in our core service, we thought building ancillary services would only serve to distract rather than accelerate that growth. But now that we're one of the top players in the region, we believe it's time to start looking to adjacencies to further cement our position in this market.

**Andrew Roth:** That takes an enormous amount of patience too. I would imagine if you're getting success since 2017 launching in other markets, you are having conversations with your board around how to expand. Take us into the boardroom. When did you decide to start entering these adjacent businesses?

Is that happening right now? And did you ever experience pressure from the board or other investors to move faster?

**Lai Chang Wen:** Since 2016, we have been under a lot of pressure to look at various forms of things we could be doing with our core business. If we fail to focus on this business and understand the key success factors, and if we lose that leadership position, the adjacency businesses will have no chance of success.

Competitors will start these adjacent businesses first, without a strong fundamental core. But these are customer segments we can win in time, because of our core business. Jumping ahead, I think, will give you short-term success, but nothing to stand on if someone else enters the market.

So, it's always challenging. It's easy for venture capitalists (VCs) and investors to look at the wider market and see many different opportunities. But many times, a lot of these seem a lot more synergistic than they really are. Resisting expansion was a hard fight, but we persisted, and thankfully, the core business grew. And I think that bought us some time to be more measured in the way we expand the business.

**Andrew Roth:** The adjacent businesses, financing in particular, sound interesting. I hear you talking about microfinancing for small businesses as well; how are you approaching that?

**Lai Chang Wen:** We didn't start by looking at financing but by looking at the requirements of our shippers, and we built our adjacencies from there. So by looking at our core, we ascertained if it was worth doing. It's a bit too easy to look at a large market and draw too many connecting lines to tell yourself, "This is highly synergistic; we should do it." You basically self-justify a self-fulfilling prophecy. With a big enough market, you can always find a reason why it's synergistic. And that could be a very slippery slope.

**Andrew Roth:** You talk a lot about understanding human behavior, whether it's the team that works with you or your customers. How are you checking the pulse on those two things as CEO? I can imagine what kind of growth you're going through right now, and you must be getting pulled in a lot of directions.

**Lai Chang Wen:** It's been a slow evolution. When the company was smaller, people were closer. It was very personal. And my belief is that this should continue as long as possible. But the reality is there could be many more degrees of separation between you and someone else in the company. How do you preserve this level of understanding and closeness and drive this kind of culture at the same time?

And as the company gets bigger, it becomes harder. You need to look at more technical ways of understanding the employees. And that's why we built up divisions in HR that look at employee engagement and became more scientific about trying to understand what causes employee net promoter score (NPS) to move—what are they talking about, and, interestingly, are their complaints related to NPS?

But what you sometimes see in large organizations that have grown accustomed to all these technical, scientific solutions is that they lose that human touch, and I think that can become very dangerous. To remain effective, you need to do both and understand that personal touch may be limited, but it still matters because it cascades through the organization. If you give up one for the other, that's when you start seeing a lot of problems.

**Andrew Roth:** Does this mean you're still making deliveries every now and then?

**Lai Chang Wen:** Increasingly so. But, to be honest, in the early days, it wasn't to maintain

a personal touch. It was a mere act of desperation, because we just couldn't deliver enough parcels. So we had to do it ourselves, because we promised our customers that no matter what, we will deliver on time.

**Andrew Roth:** With COVID-19, lots of changes are happening with the types of volumes coming from your core business. But is the volume coming from SMEs starting to get so large because they've been forced into this new normal? Or is this something that you've been planning along the way, and you're kind of ready for it?

**Lai Chang Wen:** To be honest, I don't think COVID-19 specifically changed the evolution of the e-commerce market, and we're actually seeing several evolutions. Big, offline retailers are starting to go online in force, social commerce is becoming more prevalent because of strong curation and engagement, and platforms and marketplaces are continuing to grow because of the assortment and convenience they offer.

I think all of these developments were moving along already and don't believe COVID changed how these segments conduct business or interact with their customers. I think what COVID has done is accelerate the evolution of technology. In a span of two or three months, the inability to go out forced people to look at their phones to find entertainment and shopping. I don't view shopping as entertainment, but I'm sure many people do. So, arguably, shopping is entertainment as well. And what better way to do it than combine entertainment with shopping through live auctions, through following influencers, and buying what they suggest.

I think the writing was already on the wall for all of these trends. Could it have taken two to four years more? Perhaps, but COVID compressed that evolution into just 12 months. And on the back of that, we've seen significant growth in all of these segments. We've also seen significant improvements and changes in the mentality, all of which bodes quite well for our core business.

**Andrew Roth:** So this acceleration, as you describe it, from COVID-19 is leading to growth. The future for Ninja Van sounds great, with nothing keeping you up at night?

**Lai Chang Wen:** To be honest, what keeps me up at night is not a lack of growth in our markets. I think a lot of growth in e-commerce and consumerism in the region is driven largely by more open borders and how we move goods from manufacturers in one country to distributors and then consumers in another.

But COVID-19 has shut down many borders. I think questions remain as to whether these closed borders may lead to more nationalistic feelings with significant duties imposed to drive more domestic production and consumption. If borders remain tight, and perhaps continue to tighten, it could influence e-commerce growth, which flourishes on the back of a more open, democratized digital layer.

**Andrew Roth:** Thanks so much for sharing. It was great to talk to you and look forward to catching up sometime again soon.

---

**Andrew Roth:** Now comes a segment where we invite founders and experts from McKinsey to provide more context and to draw practical insights. I'm joined by Simon Wintels, a McKinsey partner who leads our work on digital and advanced analytics transformation in consumer-goods companies in Asia. Simon, welcome to the show.

**Simon Wintels:** Thank you for having me.

**Andrew Roth:** Chang Wen and I discussed a lot in this episode, on business building, and one of the things that struck me is his focus on the value proposition when he was starting off early with Ninja Van. He clearly says that, initially, their value proposition was to do

real-time tracking of parcels—they went straight to solving a problem in the customer journey. What are some of the lessons learned here for incumbents that are trying to launch businesses and that are always facing this challenge of throwing lots of features into a minimum viable product versus honing in on one or two key signature moments?

**Simon Wintels:** You're touching on the core of what needs to be solved. Here's a personal example: I have two young kids, one of whom still takes naps during the day, and both of whom go to bed earlier than most adults do, so I have some real pain points with e-commerce deliveries that require me to interact with the driver. I've had some pretty disastrous instances where packages were delivered at 9:45 at night, waking up my kids in the process.

Some of these pain points can actually be solved by both technology and change management. It boils down to thinking about value proposition in terms of who your customers are. What would delight them? How do you take away the real pain points in their journey? Some features have tremendous value for me, as a father of two, but they might not have the same impact on others. For me, a heads-up when a delivery is near, like food aggregators do, would really help me. Or the ability to select a time for when the package comes and being able to rely on that time. Or the ability to give written instructions to a driver. If you offer such an option, the customer expects you to stick to it. In a world where a lot is happening at the same time, it's critical to understand these pain points and moments of delight and nail the experiences of a couple of critical ones. It's picking those critical ones, execution, and the timing of that execution that really matters.

**Andrew Roth:** Sometimes just improving the user interface/user experience (UI/UX) can be the differentiator versus dreaming up some blue-sky kind of a feature or jumping onto some new technology bandwagon.

**Simon Wintels:** Yes, and also the human element in logistics. The smile at the door, the friendliness of the person, the fact that they might be willing to just send you a text two minutes before they arrive, all of that sort of stuff comes down to the human element. It's the combination of the human element and the technology. By itself, technology will not solve all these pain points. But that's where identifying these pain points for your target set of customers becomes critical—and knowing which ones to tackle first. You can throw lots of technological solutions and features into your solution or your product, but they need to tackle the real pain points, and you can't do it all at the same time, so you need to prioritize.

Also, in a business like logistics or fulfillment, you need to look beyond the experience of the individual customer who receives the package, to also think about what you are offering to your actual paying customers—the ones that send the packages. They too have their own pain points and might require different types of services. How do you trade off between the two types of customer? And how do you provide your paying customers with the services they need to be successful in their business?

**Andrew Roth:** Ninja Van also was very deliberate about expanding into adjacent businesses. They held off for a long time, staying true to the core business. How should incumbents think about this? Start-ups are very careful about pivoting and not jumping into too many new businesses too fast before they nail the core business. Should incumbents build large ecosystems or jump into the next adjacent business?

**Simon Wintels:** That's the age-old strategy question of where do I play and how do I win? As digital accelerates and blurs many of the traditionally delineated industries, things become more complex, but in the

end it comes down to the questions of where do I play and do I have something—or can I build something—that can generate or give me a competitive, sustainable advantage.

Where you used to have conglomerates or multi-industry businesses, now you are starting to have an ecosystem or a super app where you put businesses together that fundamentally rely on a couple of things. One is network effects, where having more of one group attracts more of the other. With ride hailing, for example, more users attract more drivers, which in turn attracts more users. Food aggregators are another, where more restaurants attract more users, which in turn makes it really hard for restaurants to not play on that app.

This also offers shared customer acquisition costs—now you have a customer that you can offer incremental services to without having to spend again on acquiring that customer. Cost of customer acquisition for new businesses can make or break your P&L in the first couple of years.

And you create high switching costs that create a gravitational pull. If ecosystems personalize their offerings, get to know me as a customer, switching up becomes very difficult for me. People only open so many apps on their phone, so if you're not one of those apps that people open, the chances to get in are very hard. That's why people get excited about the ecosystem or super app strategy, where users can do more with the apps they do use.

But people shouldn't forget that the core business you built this strategy on needs to be sound, for a couple of reasons. The first is that with many of these ecosystem strategies, there's still a lot of growth, which means that you need to attract and recruit new users. If the first experience of your core service on that app is not good and is not up to the expectations of the users, the chances are good that they'll switch to the next best version. In that case, you lose an opportunity to lock them in, and it's really hard to get them back.

The second thing is that consistently poor experiences lower the switching costs. If I continuously have a poor experience with an ecosystem or super app, whether it's ride hailing or food delivery, if the customer interactions aren't great, or shipments or deliveries are late, I will switch. And I then get locked into someone else's ecosystem.

Also, a lot of these ecosystems take a long time to become profitable. Without a solid core business that's at scale, you might be funding these new adjacencies with even more money that you actually have to plow into the core business to be successful.

I'm very much a fan of a deliberate trade-off, asking if my core business is strong enough, exciting enough to recruit new users, and meeting the expectations of my core users, before I plow a lot of money into that. In the end, it's back to the core questions of where do I play and how do I win? And the third question is also, how do I time it? We always love to study the successful businesses but forget that for every successful business, there are probably nine that tried the same thing, just at the wrong time. So we always have to be a little bit careful in drawing implications from what's called survivor bias.

**Andrew Roth:** Chang Wen also talked about social commerce and how especially during COVID-19 shopping became a form of entertainment. What's your take on social commerce?

**Simon Wintels:** People use the term “social commerce” quite loosely, and the question I hear people asking a lot is, what does social commerce mean? Does it mean the sales of goods from individuals to individuals facilitated by social media? We did some research in Indonesia a few years ago that found there were actually ten million users back in 2017–18 that were pure social commerce users in that

sense—individuals who shipped packages and goods to other individuals, facilitated by social media. But people also use the term to refer to the sales of goods through platforms like the Chinese e-commerce platform Pinduoduo, where the commerce itself is socially influenced, with users grouped together by interests to trade or buy and sell.

And how about home shopping or live streaming? This was one of the big social commerce trends during the COVID-19 lockdown in Southeast Asia that happened on some of the traditional e-commerce platforms. Or is it influencers selling a product—is that social commerce too? Or individuals selling on behalf of companies—a new, digital version of multilayer marketing. And brand-organized virtual experiences on social media—does that count as social commerce?

We can go on and on with defining what social commerce is, but what we need to think about is the role that social media or socially influenced commerce play in the shopping journey. When we looked at social commerce in Indonesia, in the more narrow definition of individuals using social media to transact, we found it was much bigger than we had expected.

My main takeaway is that social commerce is now a fact of life. It won't go away, and it will only become more sizeable. For example, Pinduoduo is now one of the most popular platforms in China, but it didn't even exist six or seven years ago. The same is true for TikTok, which was founded five years ago. COVID-19 has just accelerated many of these, drawing new users into the online shopping world. As the pleasant and positive experiences they offer continue to grow, existing users will just use more of it.

What we will see is a blurring of the lines between whatever definitions we do have of social commerce and the existing platforms. It will become harder and harder to keep them apart. We're seeing e-commerce platforms introducing opportunities for sellers and buyers to connect directly to chat right on the

e-commerce platform. Social media sites have introduced buying buttons—buy now or add to basket—which is a traditional communications channel becoming a shopping platform. And now they're integrating different types of payments. I don't think the creativity will stop there, given some of these platforms are enabled by very deep pockets. We'll see more blurring of lines and continuous growth.

The main question for many companies is, how do I manage these new channels to consumers? How does it fit with my direct-to-consumer strategy? For traditional consumer-packaged-goods manufacturers, how does it fit with my traditional retail channel? How do I do digital marketing? How do I use influencers? Should I have a presence on some of these marketplaces? There are so many different new questions now, because the routes to consumers have increased many-fold.

Bringing this back to the conversation with Chang Wen about logistics, it means that the amount of paying customers for the likes of Ninja Van will increase, and they will have more varied pain points. The pain points of a large shopping platform are not the same as they are for an individual with their own small business. If I'm a small business, I might not care about the warehousing and inventory-management needs that a large platform has. I might need different reports and insights from my logistics provider, such as return flows, for example. I need a lot of help from my logistics provider if I want to be a successful SME or even just an individual that sells. For the likes of Ninja Van and others, there's a lot of opportunity for growth in this, but also a lot to do to make sure that they nail the value proposition for these new types of customers and really offer what they need.

**Andrew Roth:** It'll be interesting to see how social commerce evolves. Even now it's starting to happen over messaging more—if

you're able to buy something during a conversation on a messaging app, you wonder if it starts to make all these other mobile apps built for e-commerce sort of invisible. And then that impacts the speed of logistics and gives rise to more direct-to-consumer or consumer-to-consumer businesses that exist out there. We're even starting to hear that there is consolidation happening among the sellers who have set up small storefronts on large e-commerce platforms. It'll be interesting to see how that plays out in the next few years.

We covered a lot here, on what incumbents can learn from how Ninja Van kept it simple in the beginning on their core value proposition, really digging into taking the hassle out of express logistics. And then the elements that need to be in place to step into the ecosystem world. We could probably dedicate a whole show just to ecosystem building and dissecting social commerce further. I really appreciate your time and look forward to talking again.

**Andrew Roth** is an associate partner in McKinsey's Singapore office, where **Simon Wintels** is a partner. **Lai Chang Wen** is CEO and cofounder of Ninja Van.

Copyright © 2021 McKinsey & Company. All rights reserved.