

The logo for 'the coffee roaster' is located at the top center. It features the words 'the coffee roaster' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with 'coffee' in a larger size. To the left of 'coffee' is a stylized infinity symbol. Below the text, the year '1991-2014' is written in a smaller font. The entire logo is set against a dark circular background.

the coffee roaster  
1991-2014

# TCR X REPORT

IT HAS BEEN AN INCREDIBLE 10 YEARS!



## OUR MILESTONES

Follow our journey from our first coffee joint at International Plaza to our cafe at NUS AS8!

## THE ROAD AHEAD

How we have recovered from COVID-19 and the Academy's future expansion plans



# OUR FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

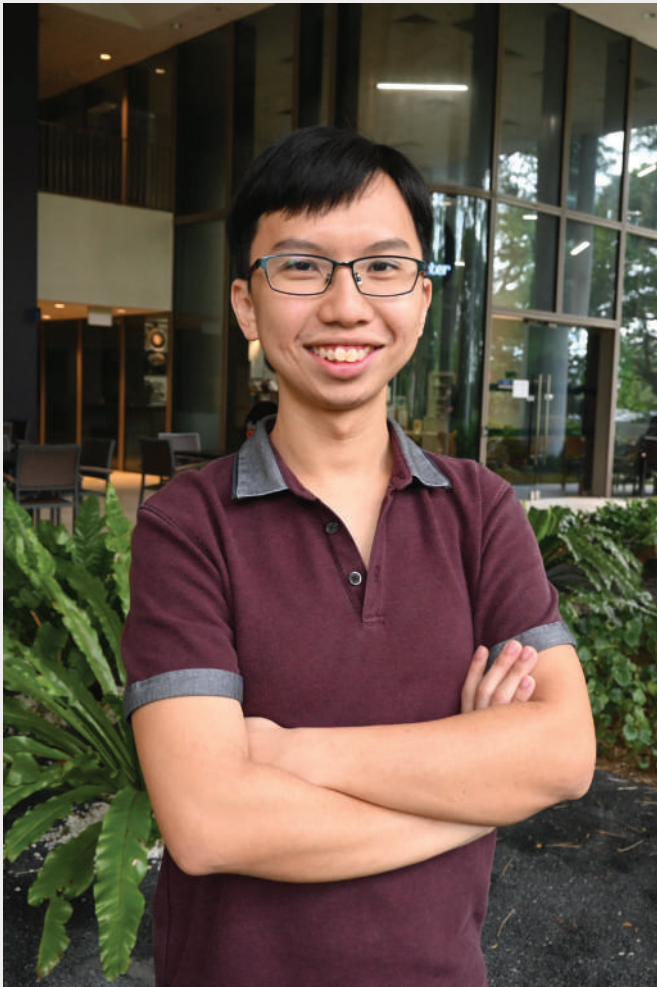
It felt not too long ago when we first pulled up our shutters on Opening Day of our International Plaza kiosk, and here we are, penning my thoughts for the foreword of our TCR X Report.

## **What. An. Insane. Ride.**

Growing up, one of my favourite childhood snacks was my mum's Cereal Cookie. Swarmed by her full-time work as a Chinese tutor, she did not bake frequently, so that made each batch of cookies extra rare and special.

Perhaps driven by my early realisation that I came from a low-income family, and my desire to start contributing financially during my teens, I floated the idea of selling Cereal Cookies to neighbours and friends during Lunar New Year. Seeing that my mum did not entirely object to the idea, I drew up a simple order form and plucked up enough courage to go door-to-door around my HDB block to solicit orders.

Sometimes I had dismissive neighbours who waved me off, and a couple of them even slammed their doors. But for the most part, though it was an exhausting operation for both my mum and me, hearing awesome feedback from happy customers filled us with an indescribable sense of satisfaction. I guess this was the moment that the seed of entrepreneurship was planted in me.



I was 20 years old when I started The Coffee Roaster (TCR) with my mum. At that time, many relatives voiced their concern that I was “too young to run a business”. I kept my head down and proceeded nonetheless, hungry to learn as much and as fast as I could.

At various junctures, the mounting pressures of keeping it all together broke me down and I entertained the real prospect of giving up. But as the classic adage goes, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. We learnt from our mistakes and celebrated small wins.

In the blink of an eye, TCR has been here for a decade and I would like to think that we must be doing something right. In our TCR Story, we grew from our naivety, transformed ourselves into newer versions, expanded to uncharted territories, bounced back from significant setbacks and continue looking towards the future with hopeful eyes.

Throughout these 10 years, there were so many stories and highlights (lowlights too!) which we want to share with you in this short read. Thank you for taking time to journey with us!

“

*What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. We learnt from our mistakes & celebrated small wins.”*

With love,  
ANG SWEE HENG

Director,  
The Coffee Roaster

# thecoffeeroaster journey

## OUR GROWTH FROM BEAN TO CUP

### 1. Planting

It all started with an interest of starting a business. Our founder, together with his mother, decided to embark on an exciting journey.



Our founder Swee Heng, and his mother Joreen

The seed of starting a coffee business was planted.



### 2. Harvesting

Much time and resources were spent putting our plans of opening our first outlet into action!



Our first batch of customers were served.

In 2014, TCR at International Plaza was born!

### 3. Fermenting

After much patience & anticipation, a new door opened for us and we relocated the cafe to the bustling NUS Campus.



In 2016, TCR opened at NUS AS8



### 4. Roasting

Just like how roasting can unveil new flavours, we decided to reveal our next expansion plans of branching into Coffee Education.



In 2017, TCR is a front-running coffee education institution in Singapore

Showcase of TCR brand and Latte Art to President Halimah Yacob in 2019



### 6. Brewing

We are achieving our goal of brewing for customers from all walks of life, one cup at a time!



### 5. Grinding

Besides being involved in cafe operations, our founder dedicated his time towards perfecting his craft.



Singapore Latte Art Championship in 2018

# KEY STATISTICS

10 YEARS IN A NUTSHELL

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*Total Number of  
cups served*

478,000



*Number of Workshops  
conducted*

440

*Total Number of  
Workshop Participants*

11,000



# GENESIS

## OUR FIRST STEP

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### *We're Open!*

TCR's first coffee joint opened in International Plaza, with the goal of serving the working crowd in Tanjong Pagar, a busy business district in Singapore.

Occupying a small 150-sqft space, we served specialty coffee along with quick-serve foods such as croissants and wraps.

What was most memorable from our International Plaza days were the relationships we forged with our customers.



### *Reality Hits...*

Unfortunately, the business reality of intense competition and high overheads meant that the kiosk at International Plaza was not sustainable in the long run.

As business pressures mounted, and with our backs to the wall, we decided to relocate our coffee joint.

# METAMORPHOSIS

OUR SECOND LEASE OF LIFE BEGINS IN NUS

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## A New Hello

As we waved goodbye to our former outlet in International Plaza, we exclaimed a warm hello to our new home at National University of Singapore (NUS). It was an entirely different customer base, and we tailored our services to cater to them.

TCR swiftly established a strong reputation within the NUS Community, with daily volumes reaching 400 cups during university term.

## Beyond Coffee

In NUS, our relationship with the community extended far beyond serving coffee.

It has been a blast since we started serving the NUS Community in 2016. We were embraced by the warmth of people we meet on campus, and it has been an absolute honour to be a part of this incredible community!



Conducted coffee workshops in conjunction with NUS WellNUS Festival to support students' mental well-being.



Collaborated with student groups & Freshmen Orientation Programmes through sponsorships & social media efforts to welcome new students in the community.



Hosted student performers at TCR Café to showcase their singing talents, a step in materialising our vision to be a lifestyle hub for the community

# FORAY INTO COFFEE EDUCATION

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TCR ACADEMY

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Characterising our next phase of growth, we ventured into Coffee Education as an avenue to further value-add to our customers. We observed that while many consumers count coffee as part of their daily lives, there still exists many myths surrounding this beverage.

Most prevailing coffee courses are technically driven, primarily designed for employment rather than for increased appreciation of the coffee craft. We wanted to bridge this gap with TCR Academy.



## Coffee Education Philosophy

Right off the bat, we made it a conscious effort to put Engagement at the core of our programmes. Our courseware must incorporate techniques such as storytelling and interactive facilitation, in order to engage students in active learning.

Furthermore, we strive to position our workshops to be relevant to a wider population, especially casual coffee drinkers. Our workshop educators consciously strive to bridge the barrier presented by technical jargon and industry processes. We actively assist our students in internalising coffee knowledge and discovering how to apply them in their everyday lives.

## Bonding Through Learning



Once these two principles of Engagement and Relevance are fulfilled, coffee can become a powerful medium to bring people closer together.

Our most popular programme – Corporate Team Bonding Coffee Workshop – further incorporates competitive and collaborative elements to create an engaging, yet educational experience for our participants. Over the years, we have had the privilege to conduct workshops for many notable companies and teams.





# AN UNTIMELY EXPANSION: UPPER THOMSON FLAGSHIP STORE

RESILIENCE AND CHARACTER BUILDING

## Calm before the Storm

2019 was a good year for us – both our café and academy were doing well and we had big plans moving forward.

We secured a 1600-sqft shophouse unit at Upper Thomson for our flagship outlet, which would house our second café as well as training facilities of our Academy.

We invested heavily in its infrastructure, and by end-2019 we were ready to thrive in this dual-use space.

Before long, COVID-19 came on our shores and led to a nationwide lockdown. Though we could still open during the Circuit Breaker period, sales were paltry (our NUS outlet managed all but \$23 in a day) and there were zero enquiries coming in for our coffee workshops.

It felt like an airplane having both of its engines down. We knew we were going to lose significant altitude, but the more pressing question is an existential one – should we still continue doing what we love?



“

*It felt like an airplane having both of its engines down.”*

# The Painful Decision

**Our team firmly believed in “Yes”.**

Every member has poured in so much heart and soul into this cause, and it would be a shame to give up without putting up a tough fight. Simultaneously, we were facing huge overheads from our new Upper Thomson flagship.

Realising there was no way to survive by holding on to this flagship, our founders made the extremely painful decision to relinquish the store, just 8 months after its opening.



## Building for... the Future

As we navigated the worst of the pandemic, we were also prepared to build for the future. Back at our NUS base, our café team trained hard to deepen skillsets.

On our business development front, we forged new relationships with People's Association and Breville to create opportunities for the post-COVID world.

We also developed our signature *Latte Art Course Roadmap* during this period! While the pandemic did represent a major setback, we are a stronger, more resilient team having gone through it.



# POSITIONING FOR THE FUTURE

OPENING OF TCR INFINITY COFFEE STUDIOS

## New Academy Home Base

Throughout the pandemic-struck years, we have been creating conditions for a strong recovery and gearing up for a re-launch of our Academy.

In 2022, we opened TCR Infinity Coffee Studios in Lower Delta, functioning as a dedicated facility for our Academy to host coffee workshops with a full suite of equipment.

## Developing New Programs

Recognising that coffee has proven to be a strong medium to bring people closer, our education team has worked hard to develop courseware for Community Development and even Family Bonding!

On the technical front, we have also layered on progressive espresso-focused workshops under the new *Home Barista Education Roadmap* to serve aspiring home baristas better.

## Engaging through Coffee Content

Our marketing team has also created loads of fun coffee content to educate and enrich our follower base.

One of our proudest works is our Kopi Culture series on YouTube, in which we role-played a typical scene at a “Kopitiam” (local coffee-shop serving traditional Nanyang coffee) and presented how to order local beverages for our international friends!



# SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

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## Conducting Workshops for Charities

A core part of TCR's DNA is to continuously seek to leverage our expertise to benefit factions of the larger community that may not have access to certain resources.

Over the years, we have organised and conducted pro-bono workshops for local Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) such as Singapore Cancer Society, Lions' Befrienders and Singapore Children's Society.

Initiatives like these bring deep meaning and joy to the work we do and the skills we build. It also encourages our team members to adopt a mindset of giving back to the society which has given us resources to flourish.



## Bring-Your-Own-Cup Initiative

One of our key sustainability efforts that we have rolled out is a Bring-Your-Own-Cup (BYOC) initiative, in which we offer a small discount off drinks' prices when customers bring their own tumblers or cups.

We believe forming green habits with our customers is equally important alongside our decision to switch to eco-packaging and reduce the use of single-use plastics.

## Long-term Partnership with Project YoungStar

Project Youngstar is a ground-up initiative which aims to continually develop teens and adults with autism to do meaningful and paid work in their homes.

Since 2018, TCR has extended our platforms at both our café and academy to provide visibility and sales of handcrafted items such as cards, bookmarks, and most recently orange enzyme bottles.



# OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

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## Our Founder's Achievements in National Competitions

In 2018 and 2019, our founder Swee Heng entered Singapore Latte Art Championships (SLAC) to benchmark our expertise against industry standards.

We are proud to share that he obtained Finalist position in both years!

## President's Showcase 2019

In 2019, TCR was invited to share our brand story and perform a Latte Art Showcase to former President Mdm Halimah Yacob.

Our team demonstrated the iconic Merlion design before presenting the etching pen to Her Excellency to complete the final stroke of the design – the flowing water spout representing constant flow of good fortune for our country.





# THE ROAD AHEAD

## SWEE HENG'S THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE

These 10 years have been an incredible journey. It started with a leap of faith, which transformed into a passionate flame for coffee and education that continues to burn brightly today.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude for the following groups of people:

- My mum and fellow co-founder, Joreen – for your selfless spirit behind the scenes
- My wife, Evangeline – for your loving encouragement in this challenging journey
- All TCR team members, past and present – for your amazing contributions over the years
- Our suppliers and partners – for your steadfast and reliable support
- Everyone who had faith in us – especially in times when we didn't have much of it ourselves

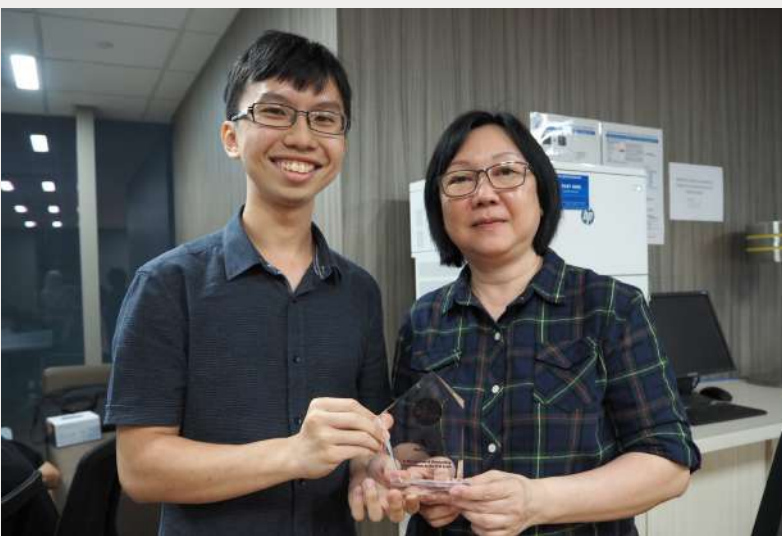
In TCR's next phase, it is my personal goal to leverage our experience to grow the younger generation.

Internally, we hope to continue grooming dedicated team members to pursue greater heights in the craft of coffee.

Through sharing our TCR Story, we also hope to inspire youths to pursue entrepreneurship or join the mesmerising coffee industry, or both!

We will never know what the future holds for us, but what we can do is to continue serving amazing coffee experiences for all whom we are privileged to serve.

Let us write some beautiful chapters together!



With love  
Swee Heng