

ASEAN Time is **Rubber Time !?**



Exploring the Gaps in ASEAN Consumers' Time Perception

Time, a universal measurement, controls people's lives both in everyday life and at work. However, in the ASEAN region, you might find differences between their perception of time from the Japanese. It also differs even within each ASEAN country.

"Time is money" is a Japanese proverb, whereas in Indonesia there is a phrase "Jam karet," or rubber time, which means that "TIME can be stretched or shortened just like rubber."

It is said that a large reason of this term is due to the climate.

Indonesia has a tropical climate and is warm all year round. Endowed with natural resources, season or time have never been factors that take control over life as is true in countries with four seasons. Indonesians have always enjoyed a relaxed way of life and it is said that this sense has remained in them up to the present day.

This is a matter of a temperament rooted in the climate of the land and is neither good nor bad. Rather, it is what defines their perception of time.

Everyday in Tokyo, hurrying passengers attempt to get on overcrowded subway trains. In Bangkok on the other hand, people take it easy and wait for the next train rather than getting on the packed BTS Skytrain.

This leads us to believe that there may be differences between Japan and ASEAN and also between different ASEAN countries. What are those differences?

In this issue, we explore the consumer's actual life through the different perceptions of time in each ASEAN country.

Survey Outline

- Survey method: On-site interviewing (Five ASEAN countries)
- Survey subject: General consumers; Men and women aged 20-59 (SEC classes A-D)
- Survey location: Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Bangkok (Thailand), Jakarta (Indonesia), Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)
- Sample size: 500 from each country Distribution: According to the demographics of each country Research: Tokyo Survey Research

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Appointment with a friend

How long do you wait for them? How long do you make them wait?

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Period of time you can wait for a friend arriving late.



PICK UP | 1

People in Thailand are the most patient within the five ASEAN countries in waiting for friends.

People in Indonesia believe they are entitled to be late more than in any other of the five ASEAN countries. The only people in the ASEAN regions who think they can make others wait longer than they wait for others!

27.3 minutes

23.5 minutes

31.4 minutes

27.6 minutes

25.5 minutes



《Singapore》



《Malaysia》



《Thailand》



《Indonesia》



《Vietnam》



17.7 minutes



17.0 minutes



24.4 minutes



28.6 minutes



19.2 minutes

PICK UP | 3

Period of time you think you can make your friend wait.



In Malaysia, the results shows the shortest period of time on both sides!

[Comment from Hakuodo researcher]

Indonesia Devi

In Indonesia, we have a flexible sense of time as seen from the phrase "Jam karet," or rubber time. As shown in our responses, the fact that "the period of time you can be late for an appointment" is longer than "the period of time you can wait for others" might be suggesting a quality you can see in Indonesians. Indonesians in general are considered to be demanding rather than empathetic. For instance, we complain about flooding year after year when in fact our own trash dumping is causing those floods. In a negative sense, a "dependent on others" personality is supposedly due to an influence from their colonial past that is still playing a role today.



Experimental Study

in Indonesia & Malaysia

What happens if you intentionally arrive late?!

— Appointment with a friend —

[Survey Outline]

In Indonesia where they think “they can be late” the most and Malaysia where the period of time “they can wait for others” and “they make others wait” is the shortest, a meeting site by a group of friends in the same gender in two countries was closely observed. (Executed in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur) One of the friends in each group was asked to arrive one hour late on purpose in order to study the differences of the perception of time from their behavior as a person who is “waiting for others” and “making others wait.”

Experimental research: TNC inc. /Life Style RESEARCHER

What happens if you intentionally arrive late?! — Appointment with a friend —

[Indonesia]

Member: 2 close female friends / Meeting site: A cafe in a popular shopping mall.

Person waiting



Arrived on time. Sent a LINE message to inform her arrival.

I usually arrive first.

On Time

Person making others wait



Left late. Waiting for a bus.

Waiting for a bus for a long time is very common because of the heavy traffic.



Passing time checking Facebook while eating ice cream since there was no response.

20 minutes late



Still waiting. Chatting with a different friend. Hasn't contacted the friend she was making wait.



No sign of crankiness. Received a message from the friend she was waiting for.

I've finished my ice cream. She says she got on a bus.

40 minutes late



Got on the bus. For the first time, messaged her friend that she got on the bus.

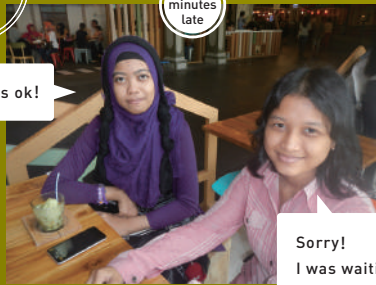


Arrived, but having trouble finding the entrance of the big mall.

I still can't remember after so many visits..

Joined up!

60 minutes late



(With smile) That's ok!

Sorry! I was waiting for the bus and I was late!

[Malaysia]

Member: 4 close male friends / Meeting site: Mamak (A traditional cafe, a relaxing place for people in the town.)

Person waiting



Three people hanging together arrived on time. Each ordered a drink. No one cared if the other friend was late after only 10 minutes or so.

On Time

Person making others wait

Being late by car.



We are all close friends and I can be late!



Started to be bothered by their friend's delay after 20 minutes.

He is a little late. A traffic jam, maybe? We should call him.

20 minutes late



Sent a WhatsApp message after 30 minutes. Some started to become irritated.

40 minutes late



"Where are you??"
"On the way."

One said "We should go if he is coming any later." The others agreed. Though, they understood it's just a part of daily life of their close friends.

Thought he was way too late compared to usual.

Joined up!

60 minutes late



I'm so sorry! The traffic was terrible.

(The three) You're the worst coming an hour late! It's ok only if you were my girlfriend. (laughs)

[After The Experiment]

In Indonesia, their time perception was flexible as was expected. It seems both sides "waiting" and "making others wait" didn't particularly concentrate on the delay. The experiment was tested on men as well, and they thought "waiting for an hour is a usual thing" showing the same result. In Indonesia, people in general don't expect everyone to show up on time, even if they set a meeting time. Instead, they arrange a meeting place where they can stay relaxed. A time conscious person might tell you the meeting time is an hour earlier than it actually is if you always tend to arrive late. In Malaysia, on the other hand, the result suggested they are quite conscious about being late. They realized he was arriving late, got impatient waiting for him and started contacting him. Usually people give advance notice if they know they are going to be late but these subjects in the experiment did not. Tardiness is acceptable among close friends but in a business setting it would not be tolerated without prior notice.

Business meeting

Patience to wait, generosity for delay

Period of time you can wait for a meeting to start after the scheduled time.



Period of time you think you can be late for a meeting.



《Singapore》

16.0 minutes 10.1 minutes



《Malaysia》

15.7 minutes 13.0 minutes



《Thailand》

23.0 minutes 18.6 minutes



《Indonesia》

22.6 minutes 17.0 minutes



《Vietnam》

10.8 minutes 5.9 minutes



PICK UP | 1

In Vietnam, people wait for others and make others wait significantly less within ASEAN countries!

PICK UP | 2

In Thailand, the result shows the longest period for both sides among ASEAN countries! Indonesia follows.

[Comment from Hakuodo researcher]

Vietnamese sense of time is not punctual in their daily life similar to Thai and Indonesians, and their nature is more lax. It generally applies to both their private and business lives. The phrase "rubber time" ("gio cao su" or "gio day thun" in Vietnamese) is popular in Vietnam to describe the habit of often being late. This experiment result seems to indicate the awareness of their perspective of time. They appear to understand the term "time is money," though it hasn't been put into practice in their everyday life. However, because of the influence of globalization in recent years, the attitude toward punctuality has begun to improve within the younger generation. When it comes to business situations or something relating to their benefits, they notably try to improve their punctuality. The younger generation faces more competitive working environment so they have to make the change to survive.

□ Vietnam Lien



Experimental Study

in Vietnam

What happens if you intentionally arrive late?!

— Business meeting —

[Survey Outline]

In Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City) where the period of time “they can wait for others” and “they make others wait” is the shortest at the scene of a business meeting, a business meeting pertaining to a new project orientation by four people (two male, two female) was set in the experiment. One of them was asked to arrive 30 minutes late on purpose in order to study the perception of time in a business setting from their behavior as a person who is “waiting for others” and “making others wait.”

Intended participant: Tuyen Aged 27 Female,
Dung Aged 26 Female, Tung Aged 24 Male, Nghia Aged 36 Male

Experimental research: TNC inc. / Life Style RESEARCHER

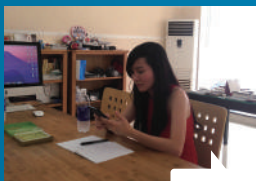


What happens if you intentionally arrive late?! — Business meeting —

Person waiting

(Dung, Tung, Nghia)

Tung calls and says he will be late due to his "motorcycle trouble" 20 minutes prior to the appointment. Nghia also has trouble at his other job and cancels on the day. Oh my, this development is so unexpected.



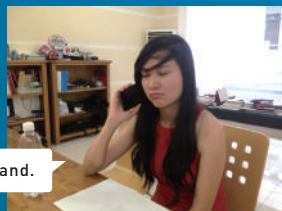
Dung arrived 5 minutes prior to the appointment. She was the only one on time after all. She confirmed Tung's message about being late.

Oh, Tung will be late. 10 minutes late is nothing special, and it doesn't bother me.

Checking Facebook, eating snack and eventually trying to take a selfie since no one has showed up.



Her face clouded over a little when she received a call from Tuyen for her further delay. Tung hasn't arrived yet.



I understand.



My motorcycle broke down. I'm sorry.



Now, Tung finally arrived. He apologized Dung for the delay.



Both were almost silent using their smartphone and preparing for the next job afterward while waiting for delayed Tuyen. Dung put on a stern look.

The meeting finally started when all three got together. The experiment's intention was then revealed! And yet, Tuyen seems to be feeling guilty.



Person making others wait

(Tuyen)

Tuyen intentionally leaves late for a designated meeting place. 5 minutes past the appointed time, she sends Dung a message to inform her she will arrive a little late.



I always try to give notice when I'm late because I don't like unpunctual people myself.

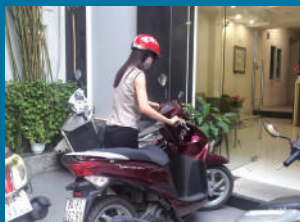
On Time

10 minutes late



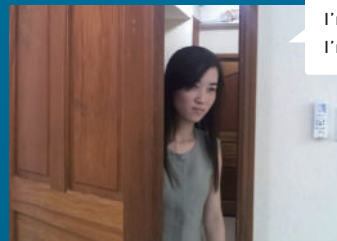
"I'm sorry. I took a wrong way and I got stuck in traffic. I'm going to be late about 10 more minutes."

20 minutes late



Tuyen finally arrived the meeting place 30 minutes late!

30 minutes late



I'm really sorry I'm late.

Joined up with an apologetic look.

[After The Experiment]

The experiment in Vietnam had an unexpected turn of events. One of the two subjects who was meant to be on time to wait for the other subjects to arrive ended up not being able to make it for the meeting. Apart from that, both of the other subjects were late when only one was asked to be late. The result supports the presumption that many people are actually unpunctual even in a business setting. As tardiness is viewed negatively by both the ones who wait, and the ones who are late, this leads them to give prior notice of their delay. The interview after the experiment obtained some responses such as "tardiness is bad and I would give a lecture if it was a friend" and "Punctuality is vital. Especially in a professional situation." The result indicates the improvement in awareness about punctuality among younger generations has been progressing.

Queueing behavior

Do you join a queue? Reluctant to queue?

Proportion of reluctance level for queueing in each country

Percentage of people with and without reluctance for queueing among those who have joined queues

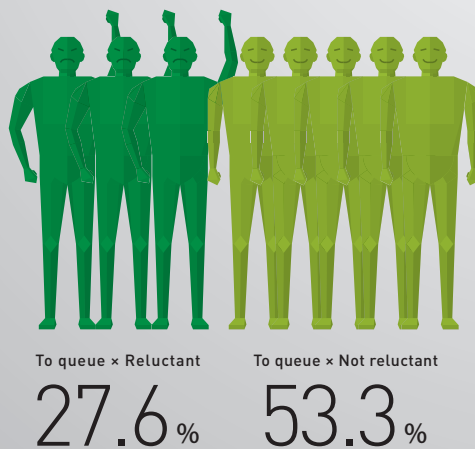
PICK UP 1

In Thailand, people are almost not at all reluctant to queue!

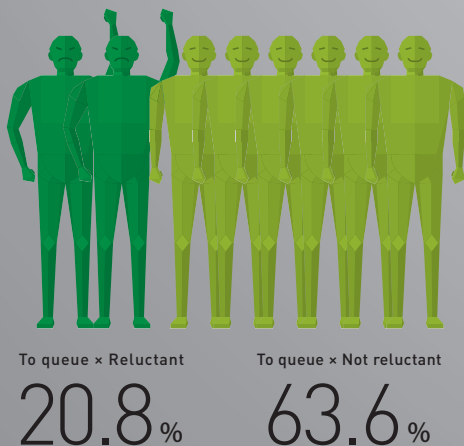
PICK UP 2

In Indonesia and Singapore, reluctance level for queueing is rather high.

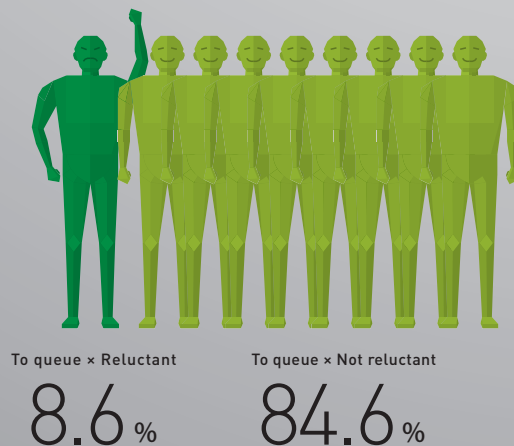
《Singapore》



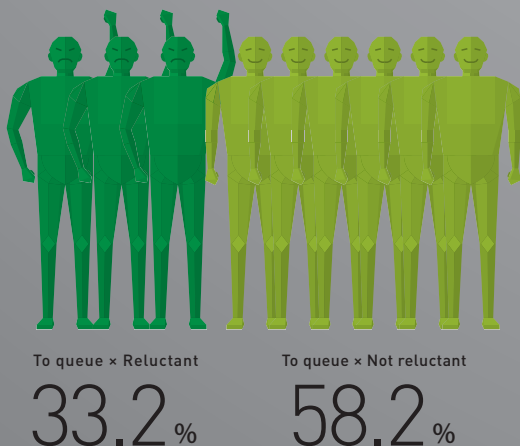
《Malaysia》



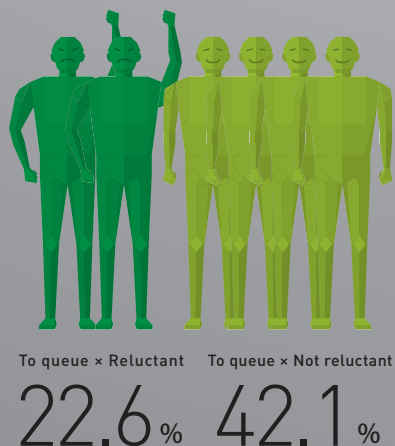
《Thailand》



《Indonesia》



《Vietnam》



[Comment from Hakuodo researcher]

□ Thailand Nan

In Thailand, the sense of no reluctance for queueing seems to be a part of youth culture centering on teenagers. They perceive that queueing is the right thing to do and some people actually find joy in queueing whereas others become moody having been kept waiting too long. As they want to follow a trendy lifestyle, perhaps they are not reluctant to queue and even enjoy it if that brings about their desire. One of their key traits is they feel no stress while queueing as long as they can stick with social network via their mobile phones.



Interview

in Thailand

How long can you wait in a line?

[Survey Outline]

People in Thailand feel the least reluctant to queue among the five ASEAN countries. Such being the case, an interview research was conducted in Bangkok, which is thriving economically with many new businesses and trendy spots, to understand their attitude or perception of "waiting" in a line.

Interview: TNC inc. / Life Style RESEARCHER

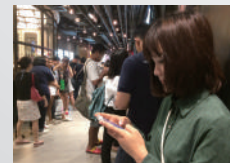
How long can you wait in a line?

A hugely popular chicken restaurant "BonChon Chicken"



A long line in front of the restaurant

I've come here countless times. Every time there is a line but I always join the queue for their delicious chicken! I just came and there are already about 20 people before me. I wonder when I can get inside. For the fried chicken, I can wait for an hour!



Constant use of SNS on a smartphone while queuing



The fried chicken everyone waits for!

We talk about this restaurant a lot at school (junior high school), and I come here with my classmates quite often. Today, we've been waiting for about 30 minutes. We just enjoy ourselves talking, taking selfies, and posting them on Facebook while waiting. Waiting? I don't mind at all. Sure I get hungry, but I can wait for an hour!



Some wait sitting relaxed on the ground after receiving a numbered ticket. They seem to rather enjoy waiting?!

A famous pastry café in Thonglor "After You"



I've waited for about 10 minutes by now. I play with my smartphone and talk with my friends while waiting. The longest time I've ever waited for this place is about 30 minutes. I don't like waiting in a line but I have no choice but to wait!



Everyone enjoys LINE or online games while waiting.



Honey toast is a must order.



Many Thai people take selfies inside.

An extremely popular Taiwanese restaurant "Din Tai Fung"



Today, it's been only about 5 minutes. But I have waited more than an hour before. We love their xiao long bao (soup dumpling)! We can wait in a line for the delicious treat. When we are too hungry to wait though, we go to a different place. (laughs)



Fresh dim sum visible from outside stimulates the customers' appetite.



An experienced staff takes orders in advance from the customers in the line.

[After The Interview]

In Thailand, their peaceful nature and generous perception of time can be seen in the result. Many people say they feel no stress in waiting for thirty minutes to an hour for a food they want. In fact, they rejoice in going to those popular places for their special dishes and they are eager to brag about it to their friends on SNS and such. Those popular places with a queue to get in usually issue numbered tickets to customers. After they receive the ticket, it seems they take pleasure in waiting having casual communication with their friends, using SNS, taking selfies, and for some people, sitting relaxed on the ground.

Perception of time in other cases ①

Chat and email



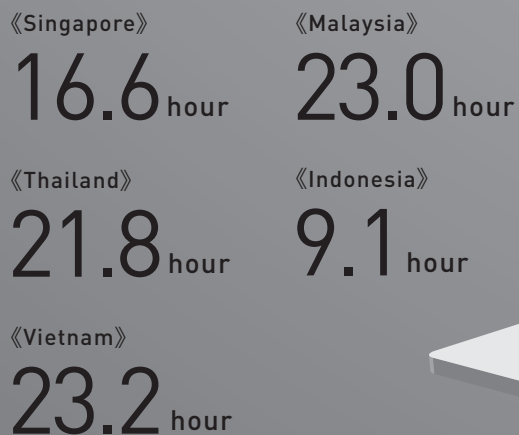
PICK UP

A nation in love with chat apps! In Indonesia, people want to stay in constant contact with their friends and family. The period of time they can wait for a reply when chatting is conspicuously short compared to other countries. The result for an email exchange was the same.

Period of time you can wait for a reply on chat apps such as LINE and What's app



Period of time you can wait for an email reply (In private)



Perception of time in other cases ②

Romantic relationships

PICK UP

In Singapore, people are efficiency-oriented even in their romantic relationships and they don't wait much!



Period of time you can stay in one-sided love

《Singapore》	《Malaysia》
6.9 month	10.1 month
《Thailand》	《Indonesia》
14.6 month	3.7 month
《Vietnam》	
13.3 month	

Period of time you can wait to kiss after first date

《Singapore》	《Malaysia》
4.6 month	8.9 month
《Thailand》	《Indonesia》
7.9 month	5.1 month
《Vietnam》	
5.8 month	



[Comment from Hakuodo researcher]

☐Singapore April

In Singapore, it's a recent trend to find potential date matches on SNS or dating applications. This is due to the fact that career development is priority for most young professionals in Singapore. People in their mid to late 20s tend to hang out with people within their network, and these dating applications work best for meeting new people. Outside of work, they emphasize on utilizing time wisely, even when it comes to romance. The younger generation has more time and energy to devote to finding love when they go out to night clubs and other places to meet new people. People in Singapore like to use their time more efficiently.





Interview

in Singapore

How patiently can you wait when you are in love?

[Survey Outline]

In Singapore, the result shows that people develop romantic relationships relatively quicker than other ASEAN countries. In recent years, online tools such as dating apps and other internet services have created more opportunities to meet new people, making romance a lot easier to happen. An interview with a Singaporean couple reveals their perception of time in a romantic relationship.

Interview: TNC inc. / Life Style RESEARCHER

Interview in Singapore

How patiently can you wait when you are in love?



A Singaporean couple aged 23 met each other through Facebook. Having been together for two years, they respect each others' goals and aspirations such as career development and trips, and have future plans to get married. An interview with them tells you their real sense of time in relationships and marriage.

Interview

Q:How did you two meet each other?

A(Her):On Facebook, I received a message from him out of the blue. We had a mutual friend and that led us to start communicating. Before that we didn't know each other at all. All of a sudden he messaged me and I was surprised (laughs).

Q:Why did you send her a message?

A(Him):I was checking Facebook friend list of our mutual friend and her profile caught my eye. I thought she was very pretty and wanted to be her friend and somehow meet her. (laughs) For about a week we contacted each other and then I asked her out to dinner. I finally met her in person and was very excited.

Q:How long did it take to start dating after the first encounter?

A(Her):A month. We went out for dinner and coffee for about five time. And then he told me how he felt about me.

Q:How long did it take to kiss after first date?

A(Her):We had our first kiss a week after. We were just playing some kind of game and we kissed as a penalty. Our "official" first kiss was a month after our fist date, I think. He sent me home and I think he kissed me before saying goodbye.

Q:So, it took some time to have the second kiss after the first one. Did it seem long to you?

A(Her):We were just joking around when we had our first kiss, so I did want to kiss him again. But we were kind of teasing each other, and I think we were enjoying going through that stage with feelings of anticipation and excitement.

A(Him):Well, I was really trying to be patient. Three weeks was as long as I could wait. (laughs)

Q:A survey shows the period of time "to stay in one-sided love" and "to wait to kiss after first date" is shorter for people in Singapore than other ASEAN countries. What do you think about that?

A(Her):I think it's because Singapore has been greatly influenced by Western culture and many people have open relationships with others and with the opposite sex. Also, professional career, money and leisure like traveling are important factors in our lives. We are always busy trying to have a fulfilling lifestyle. A lot of people have an attitude like, "This doesn't work, Next!! I can find another one soon!" rather than devoting their time to one person to make them like you. About the period of time to wait for a first kiss, a kiss itself isn't that important, and I think many people do it without giving much thought.

A(Him):It could partly be because Singapore is a small country. We can meet each other after work easily, and quite frequently. And that naturally leads to the development of early romantic relationships, and an early first kiss.

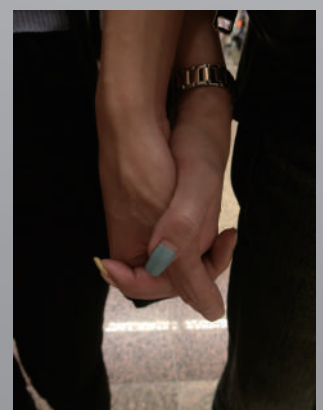
Q:What about marriage?

A(Her):Marriage is different from dating. Marriage affects the rest of your life, your family and relatives not just yourself, and people give it more thought and time. There is also another reason. A couple have to wait three to five years to get keys after applying for HDB (public housing units), so you do need proper planning for marriage!

A(Him):And I think another big reason is that you have to save for your wedding. In the age of our parents most people had ROM (solemnization of marriage) ceremony and wedding banquet on the same day, but many of the younger generations these days go for ROM first and then have their wedding reception after two years or so. There are your family, relatives, friends, just so many people to invite to the wedding, and you have to save first. Men especially consider proposing more carefully until they reach a certain age and have established a career to gain financial security.



University graduation ceremony



Hands always held tight

[After The Interview]

In Singapore, their characteristics appear in the result, in which people have open relationships when dating and it doesn't take much time to develop a romantic relationship, but with marriage they are more cautious. The development of early romantic relationships can be explained by the fact that only single Singapore citizens over 35 years of age are eligible to purchase HDB flats under their name and until then they usually stay with their parents. Rent is very expensive and not many people live alone like in Japan. Singles who live with their parents can freely spend their income. And many of them have plenty of free time after work since they get away with not doing household duties. Therefore, they actively enjoy meeting and dating people of the opposite sex and their relationships tend to develop quickly. When it comes to marriage however, they are more thoughtful. And that's because they put more emphasis on their career development and economic stability. Even couples having dated for more than five years hesitate to make an official marriage proposal or to get married until they have an established career and financial security. Their employment system is also Western-style, and therefore there is no job security to stay employed with the same company for the rest of their lives and that makes job hopping more common. With this social background, the reality is they hang back when the time comes to pop the big question.

ASEAN Time is Rubber Time? — Conclusion —

Through this research we have come to feel that Rubber Time is actually a wise lifestyle in which one can relax and enjoy life. At the same time it enables respect of one another's different pace of life. In a society where economic growth is prioritized, "time is money" sounds like a wise attitude but in a society where people's life is more valuable, Rubber Time is a valid alternative value.

Indonesia: Rubber Time at your own pace

Waiting and making others wait is not important. Just enjoying life at their own pace.
Rubber Time in Indonesia could be an indication of the principle of respect for the individual.

Thailand: Harmonious Rubber Time

Waiting time, if relaxed, can be an enjoyable moment with your friends.
Rubber Time in Thailand could be ingenuity for a better way to harmonize time.

Vietnam: Discontinuing Rubber Time

In everyday life, Rubber Time is being practiced. With economic development there appears to be a growing change in their attitude toward Rubber Time.

Singapore, Malaysia: Rubber Time < Time is money

Time is money seems to have a deeper sense of worth in Singapore and Malaysia.

What is Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living ASEAN?

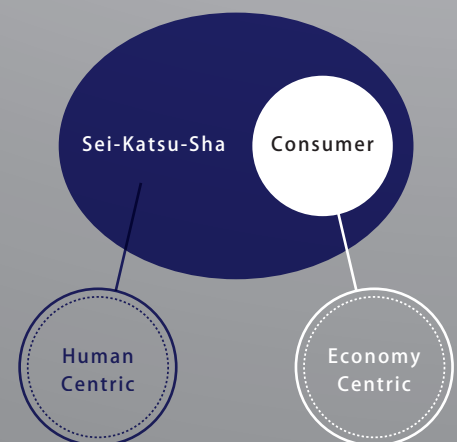
A think tank dedicated to studying Sei-Katsu-Sha from their point of view.

The whole person and the real underlying causes of their beliefs, that reflect their ideals.

Here at Hakuodo we describe people not simply as consumers but as Sei-Katsu-Sha. Understanding the whole person with their own lifestyles without being limited to their consumption. Getting to the real underlying causes of their beliefs in an attempt to penetrate the products and services they desire: that's the Hakuodo approach.

Institute of Life and Living ASEAN is a think tank observing the sense and behavior of the ASEAN Sei-Katsu-Sha as an organization that embodies their ideals.

We value the capacity both for the big picture and for the fine details. For the big picture, we conduct large-scale quantitative surveys placing importance on tracing changing Sei-Katsu-Sha patterns over time. For the fine details, on the other hand, we bolster comprehension of deep insight of Sei-Katsu-Sha by introducing a unique methodology like the experiments conducted for this issue.



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