

Interview with CEO Joshua Koh of Commune:

# 'Europe presents a much larger and more diverse market compared to Singapore'

Before the summer break we interviewed Joshua Koh

(<https://www.interiordaily.com/article/9644502/we-have-a-strong-focus-on-expanding-globally-with-europe-being-the-key-market/>), CEO of the Singaporean brand Commune, discussing the strategic expansion of Commune and its premium brand, ALT.O into the European market. Today we'll dive deeper into the differences between the Singaporean and European markets and adapting to the wishes of consumers.



*Left: CEO Joshua Koh. Right: the Linate Collection.*

**How does the European market differ from Singapore? Do you notice any differences in the economy for instance?**

'The market and trade landscape in Europe differ from Singapore in several key aspects, each influenced by unique economic, cultural and regulatory factors. Here are some of the main differences we have observed:

1. Market size and diversity: Europe presents a much larger and more diverse market compared to Singapore. With a population spread across multiple countries, each with its own cultural preferences and purchasing behaviours, the European market requires tailored strategies to cater to regional differences.

2. Consumer preferences: European consumers tend to place a high value on sustainability, design, and craftsmanship. There is a strong demand for eco-friendly products and a preference for unique, high-quality designs. In contrast, Singaporean consumers may prioritise innovation, technology, and space-saving solutions due to the urban living environment.'



*The Linate Collection.*

'3. Retail and distribution channels: The retails landscape in Europe is characterised by a mix of large multinational chains and small, independent stores, with a significant presence of ecommerce. Distribution channels are also more fragmented,

requiring partnerships with local distributors. In Singapore, retail is dominated by large shopping malls and integrated ecommerce platforms, offering more streamlined distribution.

4. Cultural factors: European markets are deeply influenced by rich cultural heritage and regional traditions, which affect consumer behaviours and marketing strategies. In Singapore, a melting pot of cultures creates a dynamic and diverse consumer base but within a more homogeneous market structure.

5. Economic cycles: The economic cycles in Europe can vary widely. This requires a flexible and adaptive approach to market entry and expansion. Understanding this difference allows us to craft a more effective market entry and growth strategy, ensuring that ALT.O by Commune meets the unique needs and expectations of European consumers while navigating the complexities of the market and trade environment.'



*The Note Collection.*

**How do your designs cater to the cultural and lifestyle differences across various European countries?**

'At Commune, we are dedicated to creating designs that resonate with diverse cultural and lifestyle preferences across various European countries. How we cater to

these differences, is first of all by investing in extensive cultural research to understand the unique tastes, traditions, and lifestyles of different European regions. This helps us create designs that reflect local aesthetics and cultural heritage, ensuring our products feel relevant and familiar to customers.

Secondly, our designs prioritise versatility and customisation, allowing customers to personalise their furniture to suit their individual tastes and living spaces. This flexibility ensures that our products can seamlessly integrate into a variety of home styles, from minimalist Scandinavian to classic Mediterranean.

Many European consumers also value sustainability and environmentally friendly products. We respond to this by using sustainable materials and eco-friendly manufacturing processes. This not only aligns with European values but also adds an ethical dimension to our stylish and comfortable designs. Speaking of comfort, European homes vary in size and layout, from spacious countryside houses to compact urban apartments. Our designs focus on maximising functionality and comfort, offering multi-purpose furniture and space-saving solutions that cater to different living environments while maintaining high aesthetic standards.

We also emphasise timeless design principles that appeal to a broad spectrum of tastes and we stay attuned to emerging lifestyle trends across Europe, such as the growing preference for home offices and outdoor living spaces. Our product lines evolve to meet these trends, ensuring our furniture remains relevant and enhances the lifestyles of our customers.'





*The Axel Collection.*

**Looking ahead, what are some of the major milestones or goals you hope to achieve with Alto by Commune in the European market over the next few years?**

'We hope that through our aggressive business development efforts together with a deeper understanding of consumer preferences in Europe, we are able to build our brand recognition and sales channels in every major European city. Because we control the entire value chain from design and production and distribution, we are also looking at developing the commercial/project market as we have the know how and capabilities to be able to develop products for the commercial and hospitality space on top of our current strength in the residential segment.'

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