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Reflection Report 06

# Scaling a Hybrid Plant-Based Mission Across Markets: Reflections on Green Monday





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## CASE SUMMARY

Green Monday was founded in Hong Kong on 22 April 2012 as a non-profit advocating a plant-based, “flexitarian” diet through a once-a-week movement. It later evolved into a hybrid group of three legally independent, mission-aligned arms: Green Monday Foundation (a Section 88 charity), Green Monday Holdings (containing Green Common, the retail chain set up in 2015, and food-tech arm OmniFoods), and Green Monday Ventures (a private equity fund established in 2016 to invest in Food 2.0 companies). The Foundation remained the group’s non-governmental organisation (NGO) anchor, running international school and corporate outreach programmes and receiving internal transfers from the commercial arms (1% of Green Common sales; 10% of Ventures’ management and performance fees).

The group’s hero product, OmniPork, launched in 2018 as a plant-based minced-pork substitute tailored for Asian chefs and cuisines, and was extended into an “Omni” family including OmniEat, OmniPork Strip, and OmniPork Luncheon. For halal-oriented markets, the product was kept essentially unchanged but marketed as OmniMeat with halal certification obtained. By April 2020, OmniPork was in over 800 outlets in Hong Kong. Green Monday officially launched in Singapore — its first overseas market — on 16 November 2018; by May 2020 it had a commercial presence in nine countries and regions with around 15,000 points of sale, and David Yeung had set a year-end goal of 18–20 countries and 40,000–50,000 points of sale.

The case centres on four questions the founder identified as the group scaled: formulating an international growth strategy and resource allocation across markets; talent recruitment and retention during aggressive hiring; extending product development capability; and maintaining corporate governance as the organization branched from an NGO advocacy movement into commercial distribution, product development, and investment. The COVID-19 pandemic, which kept David in Hong Kong and disrupted the overseas travel on which international business development had relied, added further complexity.





## FUNDAMENTAL LEARNINGS

### **Cultural and Geographic Proximity Shaped the Choice of First Overseas Market**

Green Monday chose Singapore as its first overseas market because, as stated in the case, Singapore was “very similar to Hong Kong SAR in terms of customer profile, business culture, and social awareness”; geographic proximity also facilitated communication with the local distributor. David Yeung framed the choice in terms of “balance vision with execution” and described the group as “always pragmatic”, noting it was easier to replicate the Hong Kong operating model in Singapore than in Malaysia or Indonesia. The subsequent 2018–2019 rollout followed a close-radius logic — China Taiwan, Macau SAR, Thailand, mainland China — before wider ASEAN plans.

### **Product Design for Asian Cuisines Differentiated Green Monday from Western Alternatives**

OmniPork was designed for Asian palates and cuisines: an unseasoned minced-meat format using pea protein, non-GMO soy, shiitake mushroom, and rice, at a time when Western plant-based companies — Beyond Meat, Impossible Foods, Gardein, Lightlife and others — were, as the case puts it, “more interested in beef or chicken substitutes” with product formats suited to Western diets. For halal-oriented markets (Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia), the product itself was kept essentially unchanged but marketed under the brand name OmniMeat, with halal certification obtained from the Central Islamic Council of Thailand; the rebrand came after initial OmniPork growth in Singapore stagnated because the word “pork” deterred Muslim consumers and halal certification was required by many quick-service restaurant chains.

### **Partner Selection Combined Operational Capability with Mission Alignment**

Green Monday sought local distributors with cold-chain logistics and established retail and food-service networks, while treating alignment with its philosophy as, in the case’s words, “particularly important”. It avoided specialised vegetarian distributors, judging their customer base too narrow, and worked instead with general meat distributors. The Executive Director’s contrast between a “simple buy-and-sell relationship” and a “mission-driven partner” is the logic the case presents as central to partner selection.

### **External Shocks Affected the Group’s Channels Unevenly**

The second half of 2019 saw Green Monday’s Hong Kong retail and catering sales decline by 20–30% year on year. COVID-19 brought a further initial decline in February–March 2020, followed by a rebound in which April–May retail sales were reported at 120% above January levels and the online shop saw a 350% increase, offsetting a 50% drop in restaurant business. The pandemic also constrained the founder’s overseas travel, on which international business development had relied. Within the same period, the retail, online, and restaurant channels of the same group moved in different directions.

### **The Hybrid Three-Arm Structure Codified Mission Alignment Beyond Statements of Intent**

Green Monday Foundation, Holdings, and Ventures operated as three legally independent entities held together by written transfer rules: 1% of Green Common sales and 10% of Ventures’ management and performance fees flowed back to the Foundation, with the arrangement disclosed in legal and business documents to any potential investor or shareholder before they joined. Investors in Green Monday Ventures were brought in as limited, silent partners so that decision-making remained with the founder and the Executive Director. The founder articulated the operating philosophy as “Green Monday’s goal is not profit maximization, but impact maximization” and described every transaction as “a social mission”.

## FUTURE IMPLICATIONS



### For Social Entrepreneurs and Mission-Driven Organizations

- Green Monday spent roughly three years as an advocacy-only charity before any commercial activity. Whether that sequencing was necessary, advantageous, or simply how things happened is not something the case attempts to resolve. For organisations contemplating a similar path, it may be worth sitting with the question of how mission identity accumulates over time, and how that accumulation then interacts with the pressures of commercial growth.
- Corporate governance is explicitly identified in the case as one of four key issues the group faced. As an organisation accumulates commercial distribution, product development, and investment functions on top of a nonprofit foundation, the governance arrangements drawn up at founding may need periodic revisiting. This is something comparable organisations might find useful to examine as their own structures diversify.



### For Managers Building Cross-Market Teams and Partnerships

Green Monday's case describes recurring difficulty in finding employees who combined the corporate DNA, the relevant experience, and immediate availability, and similar difficulty in finding mission-aligned distributors with the infrastructure to support ambitious expansion. The operating model it settled on — headquarters retaining strategy, marketing direction, product development, logistics, and quality control, with local representatives handling on-the-ground distributor communication, events, and foundation outreach — is one specific division of responsibility among several possible ones. Whether the same division holds up as the portfolio of markets grows, and how the “mission-aligned” criterion is kept operational rather than aspirational at scale, are practical questions managers in similar expansions may find useful to revisit.



### For Policymakers and Governments

Green Monday's Executive Director cited the Singaporean government's supportive stance on the plant-based movement as a factor giving the group confidence in market entry. Which specific policy measures carry the most weight is not something the case attempts to pin down. Even so, the vignette hints at how public-sector signals — regulatory clarity on novel foods, catering practices in schools and public institutions, and public health communication on meat consumption — may form part of the environment in which plant-based ventures enter new markets.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

By the middle of 2020, Green Monday occupied an unusual position: commercially present in nine countries and regions with around 15,000 points of sale, yet not yet at breakeven; aggressively hiring during a pandemic when others had frozen headcount; expanding via a model of mission-aligned distributors and local representatives while its founder, grounded in Hong Kong by COVID-19, kept strategy and quality control centralised. The four issues the founder himself identified — international growth strategy, talent, product capability, and governance — remain open at the close of the case.

How they are worked through over the next phase, and whether the hybrid three-arm structure keeps mission and commercial priorities aligned at a larger scale, is something the case sets up to be observed rather than concluded.

***To explore this case in greater depth, we encourage you to visit the [link](#) and get in touch with the team at ACRC.***



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We sincerely thank the HKU Asia Case Research Centre (ACRC) for providing the case study “**Green Monday: How Should a Hong Kong Social Enterprise Explore the International Market?**” (Authored by: Sammy Fung, Carmen Yam), that serves as the foundation for this reflection report. We deeply appreciate ACRC’s ongoing commitment to advancing knowledge in business and management through its rigorous, context-rich cases focused on Asia.

ACRC’s high-quality case materials have consistently provided essential foundations for our ***NGO ESG case reflection series***. These carefully researched cases bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications, enabling deeper exploration of complex, real-world challenges across sectors and regions. We also recognize ACRC’s significant role in elevating the global visibility and pedagogical relevance of Asian perspectives within management education.

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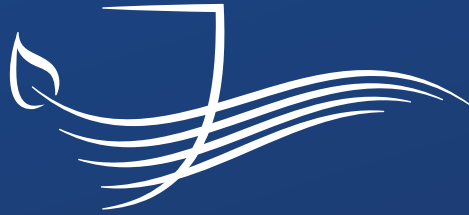
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We work in partnership with academics, government departments, NGOs and corporate partners to harness the transformative power of environmental, social and corporate governance to create a sustainable and equitable future.

### About Asia Case Research Centre

The Asia Case Research Centre (ACRC) is a research centre affiliated with The University of Hong Kong, HKU Business School. Established in 1997 to address a growing demand for research and instructive materials relating to Asian business, the Centre now boasts a repository of context-rich cases drawn from a vast range of industries and disciplinary areas.

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