



Beloved Animated Characters for Greater China

Rights & Brands Asia brings Finnish characters the Moomins to new audiences through its joint venture in Hong Kong.

When Finnish artist Tove Janssen first created the Moomins in the 1940s, no one imagined that these fantastical characters would have a strong following internationally. Helsinki-based Moomin Characters and Stockholm-based R&B Licensing have an established licensing relationship with Hong Kong's PPW in Greater China. To further strengthen their presence in the region and expand business opportunities, they brought into this partnership Japan powerhouse ITOCHU Corporation. Rights & Brands Asia (RBA) was launched in 2021 to consolidate the aspirations for this quartet of companies.

Strategic Base for Partnership Building in Asia

"This joint venture is a win-win for all parties," stated Bianca Lee, CEO of Rights & Brands Asia. "Our Hong Kong office is the headquarters for our Greater China business. From here, we manage our intellectual property (IP) licensing business in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as ensure alignment and communication with all shareholders in Hong Kong and abroad."

Hong Kong is a good match for RBA's regional management of IP licensing due to its infrastructure and geographical location. "It has strong legal and financial structures and a deep talent pool of legal, finance and licensing professionals," Lee elaborated. "Its proximity to Mainland China and most other Asian markets, plus the wide use of both Chinese and English, are all advantages making it a strategic base for our industry."

Opportunities in the Gaps

RBA intends to capitalise upon Moomin's popularity in Greater China by filling in gaps for growth in key categories such as home and fashion. It will also ramp up



With a deep talent pool of legal, finance and licensing professionals, [Hong Kong's] proximity to Mainland China and most other Asian markets, plus the wide use of both Chinese and English, are all advantages making it a strategic base for our industry.

Bianca Lee
CEO
Rights & Brands Asia

collaborations with promotional partners and tap into new retail and location-based entertainment opportunities. It plans to further expand its content distribution of animation programmes and maintain a dialogue with its fans via social media and on-the-ground marketing activities. "Our objective is to grow RBA's business. But more importantly, we want each of our partners' business with us to flourish as well. We are hoping to be able to bring new Japanese and European brands to Greater Chinese consumers in the near future," Lee said.

To help RBA grow, Lee is looking to hire locally from Hong Kong's wealth of human resources. "I appreciate Hong Kong people's high efficiency, consistent quality work, high integrity, and multi language and dialect capabilities," she said. "The city is

also one of the relatively more forward thinking markets in Asia which embraces gender equality – something which I personally believe is critical to the overall health of an organisation."

Lee acknowledges that the huge consumer base offered by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) is attractive. "We will happily consider GBA coverage for licensees who have built a GBA network," she revealed. "We are also looking into GBA options for our own expansion into Mainland China."

As a veteran in the brand management and licensing industry, Lee also shares some tips with brand owners. "The role of consumer products licensing is not to transform unknown brands into popular properties. The IP must have a solid marketing plan to build brand awareness and affinity before it can utilise product licensing strategy to further expand its business."

Rights & Brands Asia

- A licensing agent headquartered in Hong Kong for brands including Finnish animated characters the Moomins for the Greater China market
- A joint venture between Hong Kong's PPW Sports & Entertainment, Japan's ITOCHU Corporation, Finland's Moomin Characters Oy and Sweden's R&B Licensing AB, the company was established in September 2021

 rightsandbrands.com/asia