

FSSA Asia Opportunities Fund



Investment objective and strategy

The Fund aims to achieve long term capital appreciation and invests all or substantially all of its assets in the FSSA Asia Opportunities Fund (the “Underlying Sub-Fund”), under the Dublin registered First Sentier Investors Global Umbrella Fund plc. The Underlying Sub-Fund invests primarily (at least 70% of its net asset value) in equity securities or equity-related securities of companies that are listed, or have their registered offices in, or conduct a majority of their economic activity in the Asia region (excluding Australia, New Zealand and Japan).

On 22 September 2020, First State Asia Opportunities Fund was rebranded as FSSA Asia Opportunities Fund.

Fund information

Fund size (S\$m)	21.7
Benchmark	MSCI AC Asia ex Japan Index▲
Number of holdings	38

Available share classes

Share class	Inception date	Nav/per share	ISIN code
Class A (SGD - Acc)	26 Nov 1999	S\$1.4324	SG9999000152

▲Inception - 30 Nov 08 : MSCI AC Asia Information Technology Index (Previously known as MSCI AC Asia Free Information Technology Index)
 From 1 Dec 08 : MSCI AC Asia ex Japan Index

About FSSA Investment Managers

FSSA Investment Managers is an autonomous investment management team within First Sentier Investors, with dedicated investment professionals based in Hong Kong and Singapore. We are specialists in Asia Pacific and Global Emerging Markets equity strategies, managing assets on behalf of clients globally.

We are bottom-up investors, using fundamental research and analysis to construct high-conviction portfolios. We conduct more than a thousand direct company meetings a year, seeking to identify high quality companies to invest in. We look for founders and management teams that act with integrity and risk awareness; and dominant franchises that have the ability to deliver sustainable and predictable returns over the long term. As responsible, long-term shareholders, we have integrated ESG analysis into our investment process and engage extensively on environmental, labour and governance issues.

Annualised performance in SGD (%) to 31 December 2024 ^

	Since Inception	10yrs	5yrs	3yrs	1yr
Fund (Ex initial charges)	1.6	3.8	2.0	-2.4	10.7
Fund (Inc initial charges)	1.4	3.2	0.9	-4.1	5.1
Benchmark	1.2	5.2	3.2	-0.8	16.4

Cumulative performance in SGD (%) to 31 December 2024 ^

	Since Inception	5yrs	3yrs	1yr	3mths
Fund (Ex initial charges)	50.8	10.3	-7.1	10.7	-0.8
Fund (Inc initial charges)	43.2	4.8	-11.7	5.1	-5.8
Benchmark	35.3	17.2	-2.4	16.4	-1.5

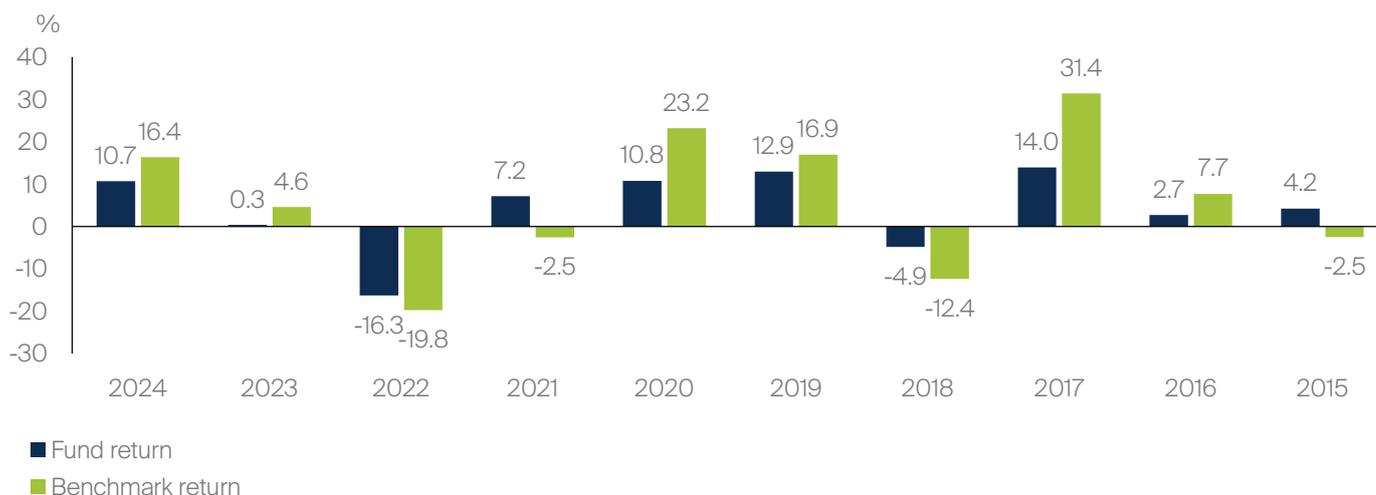
^ The performance prior to 18 Oct 02 is in relation to the Fund before its conversion to a feeder fund.

Performance review

Over the past 12 months, key contributors to performance included TSMC, as growth has remained strong at a time when demand is generally weak. Revenue and profits are expected to continue to grow this year, as management commented on the "extremely robust" AI demand. TSMC's smartphones and personal computing (PC) businesses are also expected to be resilient, as content per chip is rising due to the growing adoption of AI. Tencent also added to performance as it continued to develop new functions within WeChat (such as Video Accounts and Mini Shops) to slowly improve monetisation and enhance the quality of the franchise. Tencent has proven its ability to deliver decent growth despite the weak environment – for example, its Video Accounts grew by 60% in 9M24 and contributed to a high double-digit percentage of its total advertisements' revenue.

On the negative side, China Resources Beer (CRB) fell as weak demand led to a decrease in beer sales volumes. Although we underestimated the growth slowdown, CR Beer's execution operationally has been decent amid a difficult environment. The premium beer segment is still growing faster than the overall portfolio (albeit at a slower pace than before). Naver declined on concerns about AI headwinds and competition from alternative e-commerce platforms like Coupang. However, there are some bright spots of improving user engagement, ad targeting and growth and commerce monetisation; and there is better financial discipline after Covid excesses.

Calendar year performance (% in SGD) to 31 December 2024



Source: Lipper and First Sentier Investors, single pricing basis with net income reinvested. Unless otherwise specified, all information contained in this document is as at 31 December 2024. Investment involves risks, past performance is not a guide to future performance.

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Portfolio review

New purchases over the quarter included Jardine Matheson (JM) on attractive valuations. We have owned the shares previously and reinitiated a position after noting positive changes in its subsidiaries, Hongkong Land and Dairy Farm. We believe there is a group-wide urgency to improve, given the poor performance over the last decade. Hongkong Land will exit development property, recycle capital, including buybacks (at the right valuation) and is aiming to double profits and dividends per share in the next decade. Dairy Farm, with its new CEO, is focused on cleaning up mistakes, cutting costs/improving profits, and paying dividends. We believe the risk-reward for the JM group looks attractive with these changes.

There were no significant disposals over the quarter.

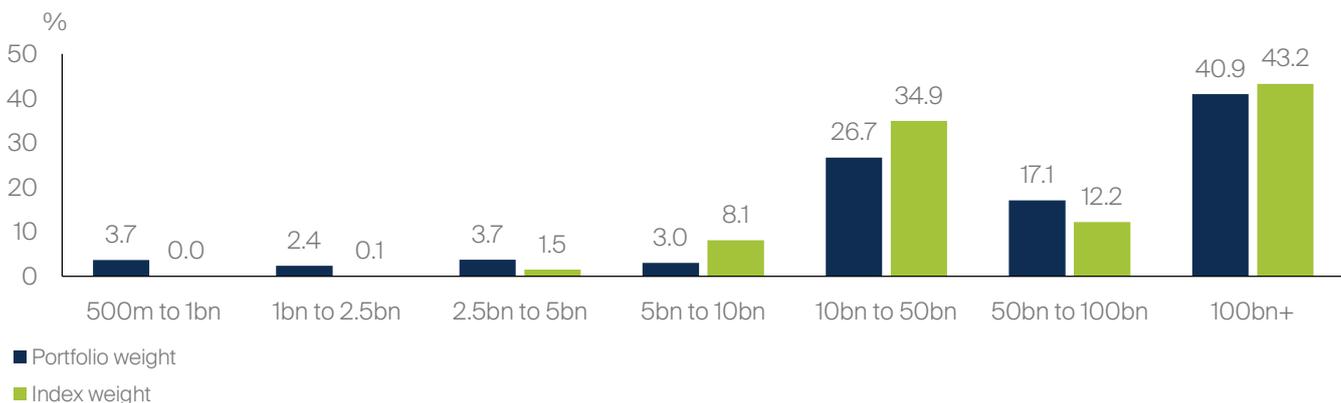
Stock spotlight

Midea Group is China's largest home appliances company and a dominant consumer franchise, well-positioned to benefit from rising income levels and the premiumisation trend in China. The domestic appliances market has become an oligopoly with Midea, Gree and Haier Smart Home holding majority market share. In this mature market, Midea remains no. 1 or no. 2 in every major category, with replacement demand being the dominant driver. While China's demographic tailwinds are not as strong as before, Midea has invested substantial sums in product development to differentiate its high-end offerings in brands like Colmo, and to take the Midea brand up-market. In addition, Midea has been focusing on its B2B business, and aims to become a technology company.

The company's automation level doubled to 80% from 2019 to 2023, resulting in cost reductions every year. A small but growing part of its business is KUKA, a German robot maker which Midea acquired in 2016. It makes more than 80% of the robotics in Tesla's new Shanghai factory and the BYD auto factory. Its traction among automakers is well-aligned with China's growing leadership in this area. While the margins here are still low, we think it shows the company's forward thinking.

The company has more than 30 R&D centres and manufactures in 19 cities globally. Despite its large scale and mature growth profile, the operations are efficient, profitable and highly cash-flow generative. Even after factoring in the beleaguered property market and economic uncertainties, we believe 8-10% annual profit growth may be achievable in the coming 3 years.

Market capitalisation breakdown (SGD)



Source: First Sentier Investors as at 31 December 2024. Portfolio weights may not add up to 100% as cash holdings are excluded and full coverage of stocks is not always available. This information is calculated by First Sentier Investors. Past performance is not indicative of future performance. Reference to specific securities (if any) is included for the purpose of illustration only and should not be construed as a recommendation to buy or sell the same. All securities mentioned herein may or may not form part of the holdings of First Sentier Investors' portfolios at a certain point in time, and the holdings may change over time.

Outlook

The uncertainty that was prevalent across Asian and global markets in 2024 looks set to continue into the new year. With Mr Trump's election win in the United States, the general consensus is that US policy will be negative for emerging markets – particularly as the president-elect has already raised the spectre of more protectionism and higher trade tariffs. But instead of trying to second-guess geopolitics or macro policy, we continue to focus our efforts on finding high-quality companies to invest in for the long term.

Overall, we remain constructive on our portfolio holdings and our ability to generate value in a difficult market environment. We expect there may be volatility in the near term as companies – and investors – recalibrate to the new norm. But we believe there are still pockets of growth to be found and that by investing in high-quality companies we can deliver decent returns for our clients in the long run.

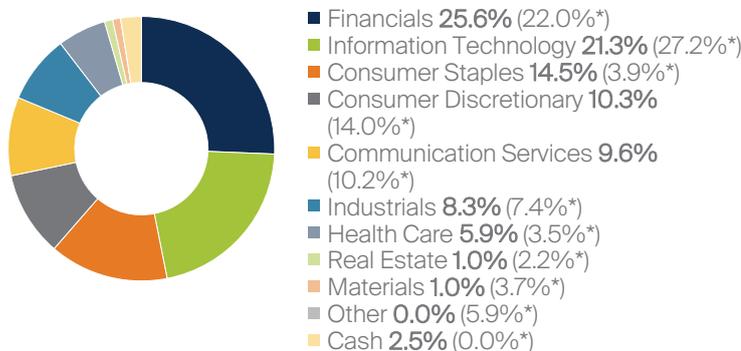
Our long-term investment themes:

- Dominant consumer franchises which have an edge in brand, distribution and innovation.
- High quality financials, supported by a strong deposit franchise or a specific loan niche.
- The rise in healthcare spending, due to increasing incomes and healthy consumer choices.
- Beneficiaries of a smarter, more connected world.
- An ageing population and the growing trend of automation.

Ten largest company holdings as at 31 December 2024

Stock name	Geography	Sector	Portfolio weight (%)
Taiwan Semiconductor (TSMC)	Taiwan	Information Technology	7.7
Tencent Holdings Ltd.	China	Communication Services	7.2
HDFC Bank	India	Financials	5.6
Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation	Singapore	Financials	5.0
Midea Group	China	Consumer Discretionary	4.5
Techtronic Industries Co., Ltd.	Hong Kong	Industrials	4.2
Axis Bank Limited	India	Financials	4.2
Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited	India	Financials	3.4
Tata Consultancy Serv. Ltd	India	Information Technology	3.3
Jardine Cycle & Carriage Limited	Singapore	Industrials	3.0

Sector breakdown



Geographic breakdown



*Index weight

*Index weight

Source: First Sentier Investors as at 31 December 2024. Sector and Country classifications provided by FactSet and First Sentier Investors. The Fund may hold multiple equity securities in the same company, which have been combined to provide the Fund's total position in that company. Index weights, if any, typically include only the main domestic-listed security. The above Fund weightings may or may not include reference to multiple securities. Allocation percentage is rounded to the nearest one decimal place and the total allocation percentage may not add up to 100%.

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Top 5 contributors to absolute performance

3 months to 31 December 2024

Stock name	Geography	Sector	Value added (bps*)
Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., Ltd.	Taiwan	Information Technology	56
Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited	Singapore	Financials	17
DFI Retail Group Holdings Limited	Hong Kong	Consumer Staples	17
Tech Mahindra Limited	India	Information Technology	12
DBS Group Holdings Ltd	Singapore	Financials	10

12 months to 31 December 2024

Stock name	Geography	Sector	Value added (bps*)
Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., Ltd.	Taiwan	Information Technology	337
Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.	India	Consumer Discretionary	322
Tencent Holdings Ltd.	China	Communication Services	200
Philippine Seven Corporation	Philippines	Consumer Staples	142
Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited	Singapore	Financials	130

Bottom 5 contributors to absolute performance

3 months to 31 December 2024

Stock name	Geography	Sector	Value added (bps*)
Colgate-Palmolive (India) Limited	India	Consumer Staples	-89
Axis Bank Limited	India	Financials	-71
Godrej Consumer Products Limited	India	Consumer Staples	-66
Techtronic Industries Co., Ltd.	Hong Kong	Industrials	-60
AIA Group Limited	Hong Kong	Financials	-59

12 months to 31 December 2024

Stock name	Geography	Sector	Value added (bps*)
NAVER Corp.	South Korea	Communication Services	-74
China Mengniu Dairy Co., Ltd.	China	Consumer Staples	-74
PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk	Indonesia	Consumer Staples	-65
Nippon Paint Holdings Co., Ltd.	Japan	Materials	-60
Universal Robina Corp.	Philippines	Consumer Staples	-48

Stock contributions show the impact of the individual stock's performance to the total fund performance. These stock contributions show the top 5 and bottom 5 contributors to the fund and are not representative of the performance of the fund as a whole.

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Contributions are calculated at the investee company level before the deduction of any fees incurred at fund level (e.g. the management fee and other fund expenses) but after deduction of transactional costs. Stocks held/listed in non-index countries have economic activity > 50% from developing economies.

* A basis point is a unit of measure used in finance to describe the percentage change in value or rate of a financial instrument. One basis point is equivalent to 0.01% (1/100th of a percent) or 0.0001 in decimal form.

Data source: This information is calculated by First Sentier Investors.

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