

11 September 2019

Strategy | Strategy-Singapore

Singapore Equity Strategy

Uncertain Outlook, Stay Defensive!

Year-end STI target 3,250
 Ratings (Buy/Neutral/Sell): 32 / 27 / 3
 Last 12m earnings change Negative

- 2Q19 results were a tad below expectations**, with c.25% of stocks under our coverage reporting an earnings miss. Along with CPO companies, which reported second consecutive quarter of dismal earnings, there was notable earnings misses by large-cap companies: Dairy Farm International, Wilmar International, ST Engineering, SembCorp Marine, ComfortDelGro, and Singtel. Earnings revisions for the STI have turned negative again, and we foresee risk of further downgrades to consensus estimates if US-China trade tensions escalate or remain unresolved.
- STI's valuations are reasonable, but do not expect much upside now till year end.** After a 7.4% decline from its 2019 peak, the STI is trading at 12.6x 1-year forward P/E, which is at its -1SD band. The 4.4% forward yield looks attractive and is the highest amongst Asian markets. The index's valuations are looking reasonable relative to its long-term history. However, past trends suggest that the STI's returns follow Singapore's GDP growth closely. As we expect a slower GDP growth in coming quarters, we believe it will be tough for the index to generate strong positive returns from now till end 2019. We lower the STI's year-end target to 3,250, which is based on 13x target P/E.
- Reiterate our strategy to invest in REITs and defensive stocks.** We maintain that amidst the slowing economic growth in Singapore and an uncertain external environment, investors should continue to stay selective and invest in stocks that offer stable earnings (low volatility), strong balance sheets (lowly geared or preferably net cash position), and sustainable dividends (high confidence on expected dividend payouts). REITs, which should benefit from declining interest rates, along with selective stocks from consumer and industrial sectors, are our preferred picks.
- Top Picks.** Wilmar and Sheng Siong are our preferred consumer picks, and ST Engineering is our preferred industrial pick. Given its lower exposure to China as compared to other local banks, more reasonable valuation and 5% yield, United Overseas Bank (UOB) remains our preferred financial sector pick. We remove Thai Beverage from our Top Picks, as the share price has reached our TP. Suntec REIT replaces Cache Logistics Trust in REIT Top Picks and CSE Global replaces Silverlake Axis in small & mid (SMID) cap Top Picks.
- Downside risk to earnings.** 2019 consensus earnings for the STI, which had witnessed a pause in downgrade since March, has been lowered 2% since end June. 2020 consensus earnings were also downgraded 2%. If the trade tensions between the US and China remain unresolved, which seems to be the base case right now, we foresee an accelerated decline in global manufacturing and a sharper slowdown in global trade flows – this could lead to further downgrades to the STI's earnings growth.

Singapore sector ratings:

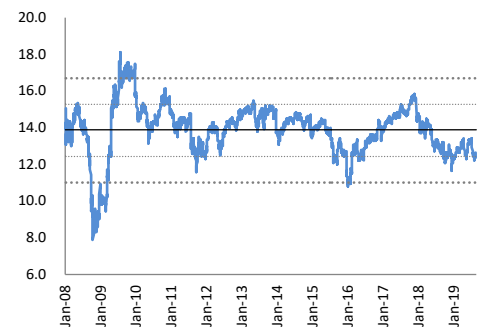
Overweight Banks, REITs
 Neutral Consumer, healthcare, offshore & marine, plantations, real estate, technology, telecom
 Not rated Materials

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STI Index's forward P/E



Source: Bloomberg

Company	Rating	TP (SGD)	% Upside (Downside)	P/E (x) Dec-19F	P/B (x) Dec-19F	Yield (%) Dec-19F
CDL Hospitality	Buy	1.79	9.8	15.5	1.1	5.7
CSE Global	Buy	0.69	48.4	9.7	1.3	5.9
Fu Yu Corp	Buy	0.24	11.6	12.0	1.0	7.9
Manulife US REIT [^]	Buy	0.98	7.1	13.7	1.1	6.5
Oxley Holdings ^{**}	Buy	0.41	32.3	3.4	0.7	8.1
Sheng Siong	Buy	1.32	10.0	23.3	5.8	3.1
ST Engineering	Buy	4.70	20.5	20.1	5.3	3.8
Suntec REIT	Buy	2.08	7.2	18.0	0.9	5.2
UOB	Buy	29.50	14.5	9.9	1.1	5.0
Wilmar	Buy	4.50	18.4	14.3	1.0	2.7

Source: Company data, RHB; Note: ^{**}FY20 (Jun); [^]USD; Data as at 10 Sep 2019

2Q19 Earnings Wrap

2Q19 results were a tad below expectation

For our coverage universe, about a quarter of the companies reported earnings that were below our estimates. In addition to the palm oil companies, Dairy Farm International, Wilmar International, ST Engineering, SembCorp Marine, ComfortDelGro, and Singtel reported earnings that were below expectations. Amongst key stocks, Silverlake Axis reported earnings that were above our expectations.

Figure 1: 2Q19 earnings vs RHB estimates

	In line	Above	Below
Consumer discretionary	4	-	3
Consumer staples	3	1	5
Energy	1	-	-
Financials	4	-	-
Healthcare	4	-	1
Industrials (conglomerate)	-	-	1
Industrials (offshore marine)	1	-	1
Industrials (others)	2	-	1
Industrials (transport)	-	-	1
Real estate (developer)	2	-	1
Real estate (REIT)	13	-	1
Technology	7	2	-
Telecom	1	-	1
Total	42	3	16
% of total	69	5	26

Note: Based on 61 stocks that were under active coverage during 2Q19
Source: RHB

Figure 2: 2Q19 earnings vs consensus estimates

	In line	Above	Below
Consumer discretionary	4	-	3
Consumer staples	3	1	5
Energy	1	-	-
Financials	4	-	-
Healthcare	3	-	2
Industrials (conglomerate)	-	-	1
Industrials (offshore marine)	1	-	1
Industrials (others)	2	-	1
Industrials (transport)	-	-	1
Real estate (developer)	2	-	1
Real estate (REIT)	13	-	1
Technology	8	1	-
Telecom	1	-	1
Total	42	2	17
% of total	69	3	28

Note: Based on 61 stocks that were under active coverage during 2Q19
Source: RHB

Figure 3: Number of changes in TP after results

	Increase	Decrease	Unchanged
Consumer discretionary	-	3	4
Consumer staples	3	4	2
Energy	-	1	-
Financials	-	3	1
Healthcare	-	1	4
Industrials (conglomerate)	1	-	-
Industrials (offshore marine)	-	2	-
Industrials (others)	-	1	2
Industrials (transport)	-	1	-
Real estate (developer)	1	1	1
Real estate (REIT)	5	2	7
Technology	1	1	7
Telecom	-	1	1
Total	11	21	29
% of total	18	34	48

Note: Based on 61 stocks that were under active coverage during 2Q19
Source: RHB

Figure 4: Number of changes in rating after results

	Upgrade	Downgrade	Unchanged
Consumer discretionary	-	-	7
Consumer staples	-	1	8
Energy	-	-	1
Financials	-	2	2
Healthcare	-	-	5
Industrials (conglomerate)	-	-	1
Industrials (offshore marine)	-	-	2
Industrials (others)	-	-	3
Industrials (transport)	-	-	1
Real estate (developer)	-	-	3
Real estate (REIT)	1	1	12
Technology	1	-	8
Telecom	-	-	2
Total	2	4	55
% of total	3	7	90

Note: Based on 61 stocks that were under active coverage during 2Q19
Source: RHB

Amongst stocks under our coverage universe, c.41% witnessed an increase in 1FY revenue estimates, but only c.18% witnessed an increase in 1FY earnings forecasts. Among the key stocks, Suntec REIT, Keppel REIT, and Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp witnessed more than 3% increases in 1FY earnings estimates. Almost 46% of the companies saw a decline in their net profit forecasts, as they guided for a weaker 2H19.

Figure 5: Number of changes in 1FY revenue estimates

	Increase	Decrease	Unchanged
Consumer discretionary	2	3	2
Consumer staples	1	6	2
Energy	1	-	-
Financials	4	-	-
Healthcare	2	-	3
Industrials (conglomerate)	1	-	-
Industrials (offshore marine)	1	1	-
Industrials (others)	-	2	1
Industrials (transport)	1	-	-
Real estate (developer)	2	-	1
Real estate (REIT)	7	5	2
Technology	3	-	6
Telecom	-	1	1
Total	25	18	18
% of total	41	30	30

Note: Based on 61 stocks that were under active coverage during 2Q19

Source: RHB

Figure 6: Number of changes in 1FY profit estimates

	Increase	Decrease	Unchanged
Consumer discretionary	-	4	3
Consumer staples	1	6	2
Energy	-	1	-
Financials	4	-	-
Healthcare	-	1	4
Industrials (conglomerate)	-	1	-
Industrials (offshore marine)	-	2	-
Industrials (others)	-	2	1
Industrials (transport)	-	1	-
Real estate (developer)	1	1	1
Real estate (REIT)	3	6	5
Technology	2	2	5
Telecom	-	1	1
Total	11	28	22
% of total	18	46	36

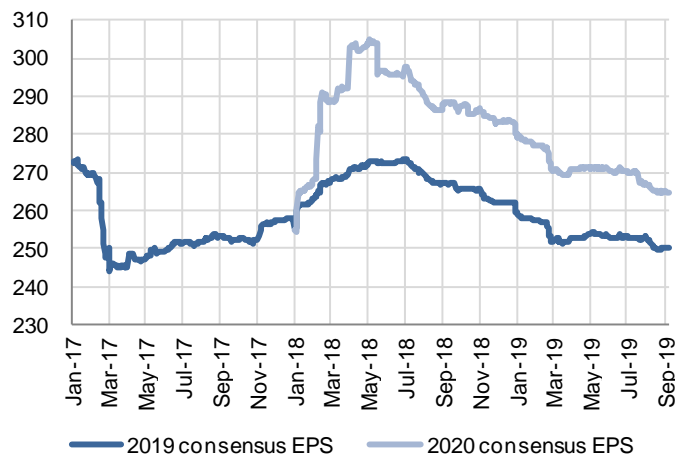
Note: Based on 61 stocks that were under active coverage during 2Q19

Source: RHB

Earnings downgrades have started again

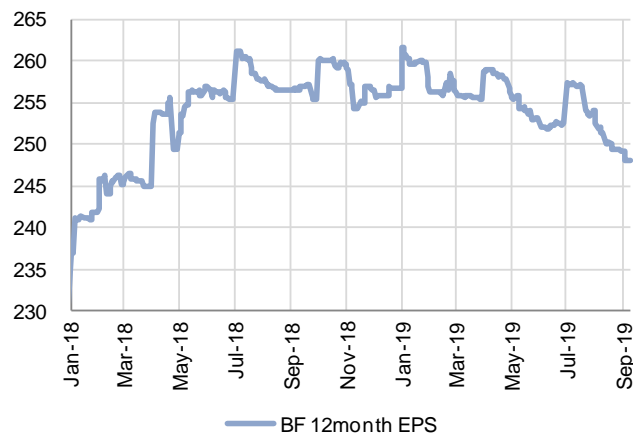
2019 consensus earnings for the STI, which had witnessed a pause in downgrades since March, witnessed a 2% reduction since end June following a weak 2Q19 earnings reporting season. 2020 consensus earnings were also downgraded by a similar magnitude. Most downgrades came from the financial, offshore marine, and transport sectors. Based on Bloomberg estimates, the consensus net profit growth for 2019 now stands at 3.9%.

Figure 7: Revisions to STI's 2019 & 2020 consensus earnings



Source: Bloomberg

Figure 8: Revisions to STI's 12 month blended forward consensus earnings



Source: Bloomberg

There exist risks of further downgrades to estimates

If the trade tensions between the US and China remain unresolved, we foresee an accelerated decline in global manufacturing, a sharper slowdown in global trade flows, and further declines in global investments. All of this could lead to further downgrades to the STI's 2020 consensus earnings. We believe much of these downgrades could come from the financial sector, which could be impacted by falling interest rates. Based on Bloomberg consensus estimates, almost a quarter of 2020 net profit growth is expected to be derived from the financial sector.

In addition to the risks from worsening of the trade war, there exist macroeconomic risks from Brexit, sharp contraction in Global Purchasing Managers' Indices, growth cycles in Europe turning while interest rates are still negative, and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and Asia.

Key TP changes after the recent results season

Figure 9: Key target price changes post 2QCY19 results

Company	BBG ticker	M cap USDm	Rating	New TP	Old TP	% change	Link to note
Large cap							
CapitaLand Commercial	CCT SP	5,924	Neutral	1.98	1.86	6%	Acquisition Of MAC Positive But Priced In
CapitaLand Mall Trust	CT SP	7,058	Neutral	2.38	2.20	8%	Stable Performance But Valuations Are Lofty
ComfortDelGro	CD SP	3,846	Neutral	2.55	2.65	-4%	2Q19 Results Below Expectations
Dairy Farm International	DFI SP	9,469	Neutral	7.38	8.25	-11%	Nothing To Milk At The Moment
DBS Group Holdings	DBS SP	46,197	Neutral	25.30	30.30	-17%	NIM Peaking In 2Q19; D/G To NEUTRAL and NIM Squeeze To Cap Share Price Upside
Genting Singapore	GENS SP	7,734	Neutral	0.97	1.02	-5%	High Win Rate Offsets Decline In Mass Gaming
Golden Agri	GGR SP	2,446	Sell	0.22	0.23	-4%	Likely To Remain In The Red In FY19
Keppel REIT	KREIT SP	3,053	Neutral	1.20	1.12	7%	A Mixed Bag; Stay NEUTRAL
OCBC	OCBC SP	33,954	Neutral	11.50	12.20	-6%	2Q19 Strength In NII, But Weak For Insurance and Greater China Potential, But Already Priced In
ST Engineering	STE SP	8,816	Buy	4.70	4.45	6%	Defensive Growth Story; Reiterate BUY
Suntec REIT	SUN SP	3,934	Buy	2.08	1.90	9%	Enhancing Earnings Quality; Upgrade To BUY
UOB	UOB SP	31,159	Buy	29.50	30.80	-4%	Strength Across The Board In 2Q19; BUY
Wilmar International	WIL SP	17,446	Buy	4.50	3.94	14%	The Worst Is Over; Maintain BUY
Mid cap							
Bumitama Agri	BAL SP	712	Neutral	0.54	0.62	-13%	Dry Weather Impacts 2Q19 Output
China Aviation Oil	CAO SP	742	Buy	1.50	1.60	-6%	Near Term Growth Driver; Reiterate BUY
First Resources	FR SP	1,757	Neutral	1.45	1.53	-5%	EU Biodiesel Tax To Hurt Downstream Margins
Sembcorp Marine	SMM SP	1,848	Buy	1.63	1.99	-18%	Early Signs Of Order Win Recovery
Sheng Siong Group	SSG SP	1,308	Buy	1.32	1.23	7%	Retail Safe Haven; Still Our Sector Top Pick
Silverlake Axis	SILV SP	872	Buy	0.56	0.65	-14%	Strong Quarter, Expecting Better Growth Ahead
StarHub	STH SP	1,632	Neutral	1.52	1.72	-12%	Cyber Security Losses Tapering Off
Small cap							
APAC Realty	APAC SP	129	Buy	0.65	0.67	-3%	Volumes Stabilising Post Measures
Avi-Tech Electronics	AVIT SP	38	Neutral	0.31	0.27	15%	Improving Outlook Ahead; Stay NEUTRAL
BreadTalk Group	BREAD SP	264	Neutral	0.67	0.81	-17%	A Stale Bread; Try Again Later and The Acquisition Of Food Junction
Cache Logistics Trust	CACHE SP	567	Buy	0.80	0.83	-4%	A Disappointing Quarter
Centurion Corp	CENT SP	247	Neutral	0.43	0.41	5%	Adding Beds As It Grows; Stay NEUTRAL
EC World REIT	ECWREIT SP	427	Buy	0.82	0.85	-4%	Another Stable Quarter Barring FX Impact; BUY
Food Empire Holdings	FEH SP	198	Buy	0.73	0.69	6%	Better Margins Post Rationalisation; Still BUY
Moya Holdings Asia	MHAL SP	195	Buy	0.08	0.10	-13%	1H Impacted By Absence of One-Offs
UG Healthcare	UGHC SP	23	Buy	0.30	0.32	-6%	Capacity Rise Delay, Valuation Attractive; BUY

Note: Market cap = Small cap: <SGD1bn, Mid cap: <SGD3bn

Source: RHB

Key rating changes after the recent results season

Figure 10: Key rating changes post 2QCY19 results

Company name	BBG ticker	M cap (USDm)	New rating	Old rating	Change	Link to note
Upgrades						
Suntec REIT	SUN SP	3,934	Buy	Neutral	Upgrade	Enhancing Earnings Quality; Upgrade To BUY
Venture Corp	VMS SP	3,204	Buy	Neutral	Upgrade	New Product Ramp-Up In 4Q19; U/G To BUY
Downgrades						
DBS Group Holdings	DBS SP	46,197	Neutral	Buy	Downgrade	NIM Peaking In 2Q19; D/G To NEUTRAL and NIM Squeeze To Cap Share Price Upside
Starhill Global REIT	SGREIT SP	1,194	Neutral	Buy	Downgrade	Fair Value Reached; Cut To NEUTRAL
Singapore Exchange	SGX SP	6,575	Neutral	Buy	Downgrade	Earnings Driven By Derivatives, But Priced In
Thai Beverage	THBEV SP	16,109	Take Profit	Buy	Downgrade	D/G: High On Alcohol; Drink Again Later

Source: RHB

Market Outlook

The STI has underperformed other ASEAN markets

The STI has given up most of its gains from early this year, given moderating profit growth expectations amidst a weakening macro outlook. YTD, in USD terms, the index has outperformed only the FBM KLCI within ASEAN. Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia have delivered 6-13% returns vs the STI's 2% during the same period.

Figure 11: YTD regional market performance in LCY

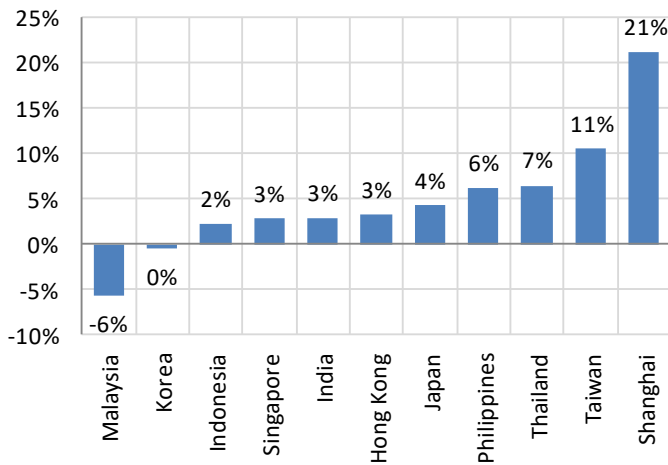
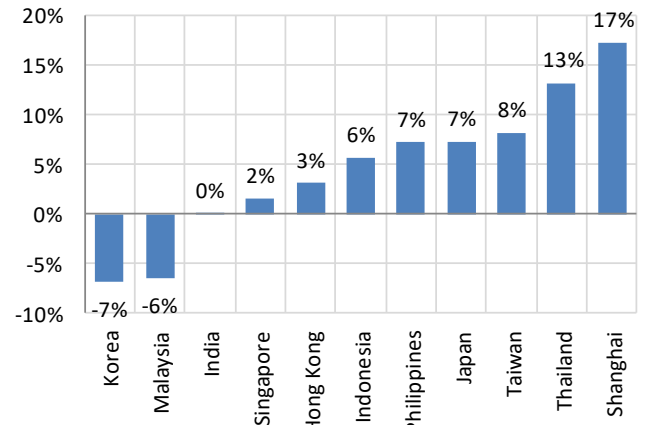


Figure 12: YTD regional market performance in USD



Note: Prices as at 10 Sep 2019
Source: Bloomberg

Note: Prices as at 10 Sep 2019
Source: Bloomberg

Valuations are looking reasonable

The STI's P/E valuation still looks reasonable relative to its long-term history. It is trading at 12.6x 1-year forward P/E, which lies at -1SD below its historical average of 1-year forward P/E of 13.9x. While the earnings outlook has moderated since early this year, consensus is still estimating the STI's net profit growth for 2019 and 2020 at 3.9% and 6.9%. By contrast to Street estimates, our forecast for 2019 net profit growth – which is based on a combination of RHB and consensus estimates – stands at 2.5%.

Figure 13: The STI's forward P/E

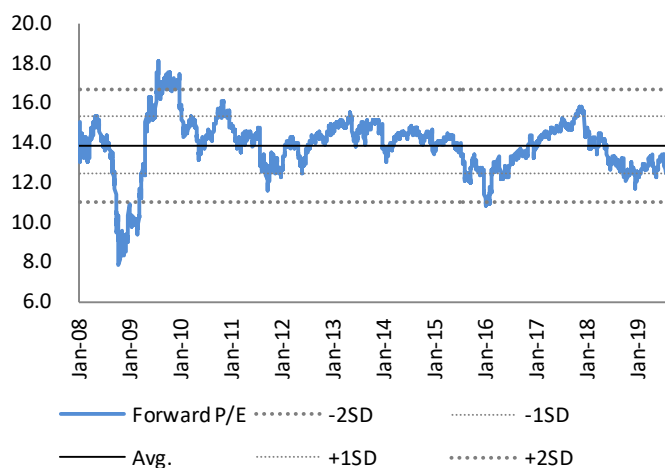
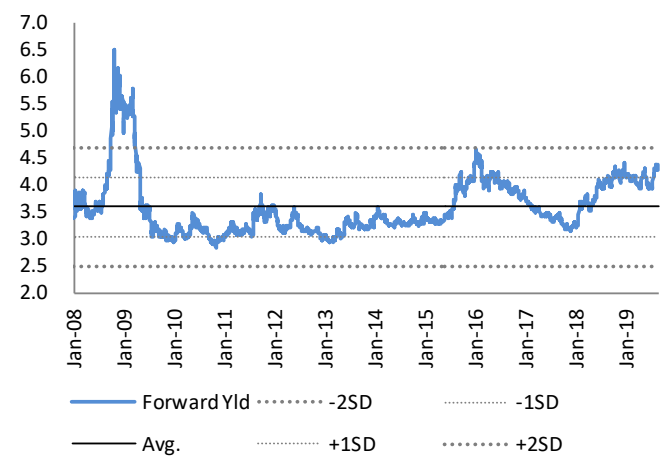


Figure 14: The STI's forward dividend yield



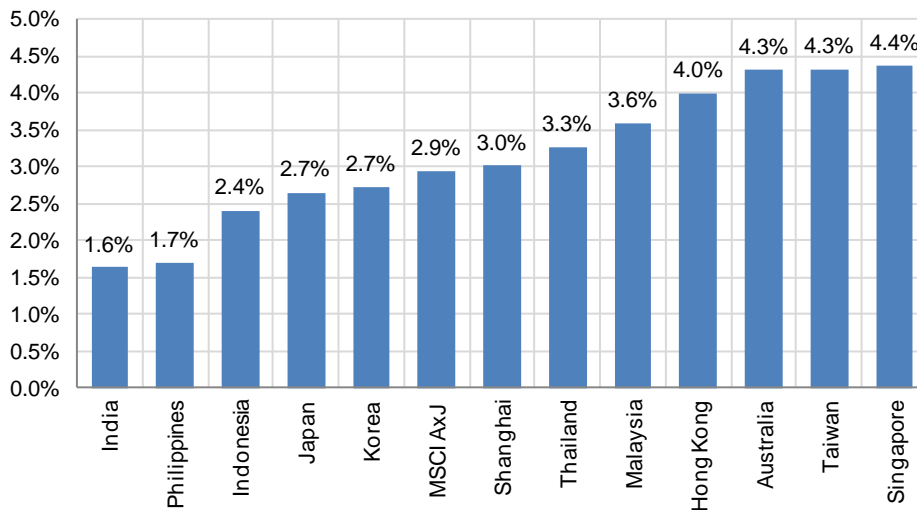
Source: Bloomberg

Source: Bloomberg

The STI offers one of the highest yields amongst Asian markets

The STI is currently trading at a forward yield of 4.4% (based on local currency). This is the highest amongst all Asian markets, exceeding Australia and Taiwan's 4.3%. We believe such a relatively high yield should provide downside support amidst a backdrop of weakening growth and macro headwinds.

Figure 15: The STI offers the highest yield amongst Asian markets



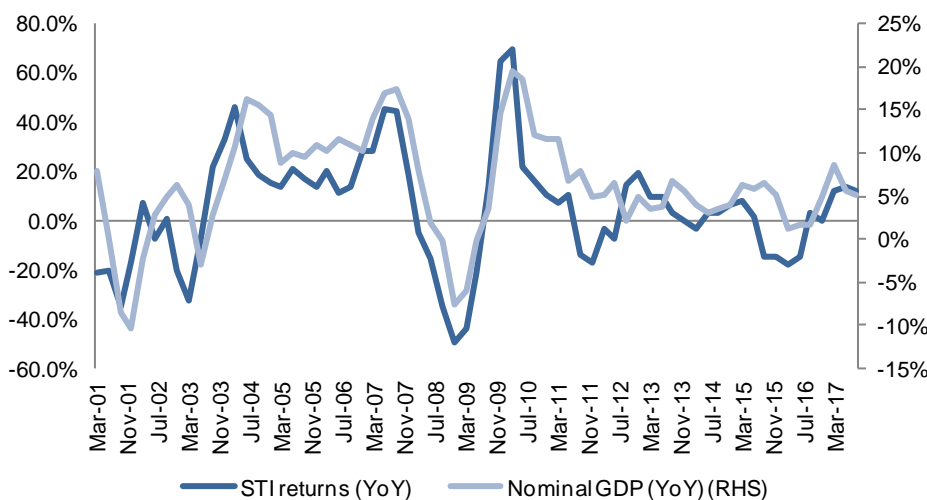
Source: Bloomberg

Tepid upside for the STI from here till year's end

Lower STI target to 3,250 from 3,300 for end 2019. We reiterate that historical trends suggest that Singapore's stock index returns follow the country's nominal GDP growth closely. As we expect a slowdown in GDP growth to extend into 2019 and 2020, we believe it will be tough for the STI to generate strong positive returns from now till the end of 2019.

We use a top-down method to derive our STI target, which is based on a P/E multiple on 2019's forecast EPS. The STI's 12.6x forward P/E is at its -1SD band. With a sharp slowdown in Singapore's GDP growth, we believe a strong P/E expansion will be difficult to pencil in. We value the STI based on a 2019 year-end target P/E of 13x, which is below its 1FY average of 13.9x. Applying this to our 2019 EPS estimate, we derive an index target of 3,250 for end 2019.

Figure 16: The STI's returns are highly correlated to Singapore's GDP growth rate



Source: Bloomberg

Top Picks

Stay defensive as macro headwinds persist

Given the uncertain external environment, we continue to recommend investors to stay defensive in their stock picks and focus on buying counters that offer stable earnings, strong balance sheets, and sustainable dividends.

REITs should continue to perform well amidst expectations of further cuts in interest rates. Among other sectors, we selectively prefer stocks that meet the abovementioned criteria. CSE Global, Fu Yu Corp, Oxley Holdings, Sheng Siong Group, ST Engineering, UOB, and Wilmar International are our preferred non-REIT picks.

Within the REIT sector, Suntec REIT replaces Cache Logistics Trust in our Top Picks. The latter reported a weak 2Q19 results amidst a decline in committed occupancy rates. This led us to lowering forecast DPU 4-7%. In contrast, we upgraded Suntec REIT to BUY from Neutral amidst attractive below book valuations and higher-than-sector yields.

In the SMID cap space, we replace Silverlake Axis with CSE Global. Although the former was one of the key stocks that reported above expectation earnings, we had to lower earnings forecast 7% to account for potential higher taxes. In contrast, we have lifted CSE Global's earnings forecast 15-17% following its recently-announced acquisition of Volta – a custom-engineering electrical equipment centre solutions provider.

We remove Thai Beverage from our Top Picks, as the stock was downgraded to TAKE PROFIT from Buy after its share price reached our TP. We still like the growth prospects for Thai Beverage and recommend investors to accumulate if the share price goes below SGD0.83.

Figure 17: Top Picks

Company	M cap		Target price	Upside/down. (%)	1FY year	P/E (x)		P/BV (x)		Yield (%)		ROE (%)	
	(USDm)	Rating				1FY	2FY	1FY	2FY	1FY	2FY	1FY	2FY
Large Cap													
ST Engineering	8,816	Buy	4.70	20.5	Dec-19	20.1	18.3	5.3	5.0	3.8	4.0	25.5	26.9
Suntec REIT	3,934	Buy	2.08	7.2	Dec-19	18.0	14.3	0.9	0.9	5.2	5.3	5.4	6.7
UOB	31,159	Buy	29.50	14.5	Dec-19	9.9	10.1	1.1	1.1	5.0	5.4	11.7	11.4
Wilmar International	17,446	Buy	4.50	18.4	Dec-19	14.3	13.4	1.0	1.0	2.7	2.9	7.2	7.4
SMID Cap													
CDL Hospitality	1,431	Buy	1.79	9.8	Dec-19	15.5	15.0	1.1	1.0	5.7	5.9	6.7	6.9
CSE Global	171	Buy	0.69	48.4	Dec-19	9.7	8.0	1.3	1.2	5.9	5.9	13.9	15.4
Fu Yu Corp	117	Buy	0.24	11.6	Dec-19	12.0	11.3	1.0	1.0	7.9	7.9	8.2	8.6
Manulife US REIT	1,282	Buy	0.98	7.1	Dec-19	13.7	13.4	1.1	1.1	6.5	6.8	7.7	8.1
Oxley Holdings	934	Buy	0.41	32.3	Jun-20	3.4	4.9	0.7	0.6	8.1	8.1	25.0	10.5
Sheng Siong Group	1,308	Buy	1.32	10.0	Dec-19	23.3	21.2	5.8	5.4	3.1	3.4	24.7	25.3

Note: Prices are as at 10 Sep 2019

Source: Bloomberg, RHB

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Buy:	Share price may exceed 10% over the next 12 months
Trading Buy:	Share price may exceed 15% over the next 3 months, however longer-term outlook remains uncertain
Neutral:	Share price may fall within the range of +/- 10% over the next 12 months
Take Profit:	Target price has been attained. Look to accumulate at lower levels
Sell:	Share price may fall by more than 10% over the next 12 months
Not Rated:	Stock is not within regular research coverage

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