

the truth about

MBA-Founded STARTUP UNICORNS

MBA
REPORT

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*** Spoiler alert: It's “for worse”**

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NextView pitched in, too, creating this HBS-specific report last year:



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Although valuations aren't everything, this is a readily-accessible metric we can use to measure the success of a specific cohort of entrepreneurs. In this case, we looked at unicorns with at least 1 MBA as a co-founder.

(The following data is based on research completed on January 1, 2016. As of this writing, 1 unicorn has since sold – Legendary Entertainment.)

Key Insights:

38 unicorns, or **24%**

have at least 1 MBA founder

Key Insights:

63 MBA founders

are found among the 157 unicorns
(meaning several have more than 1 MBA as a co-founder)

Key Insights:

**MBA-founded unicorns
are valued at about**

\$65 BILLION

**of the combined \$533B
valuation of all unicorns**

Key Insights:

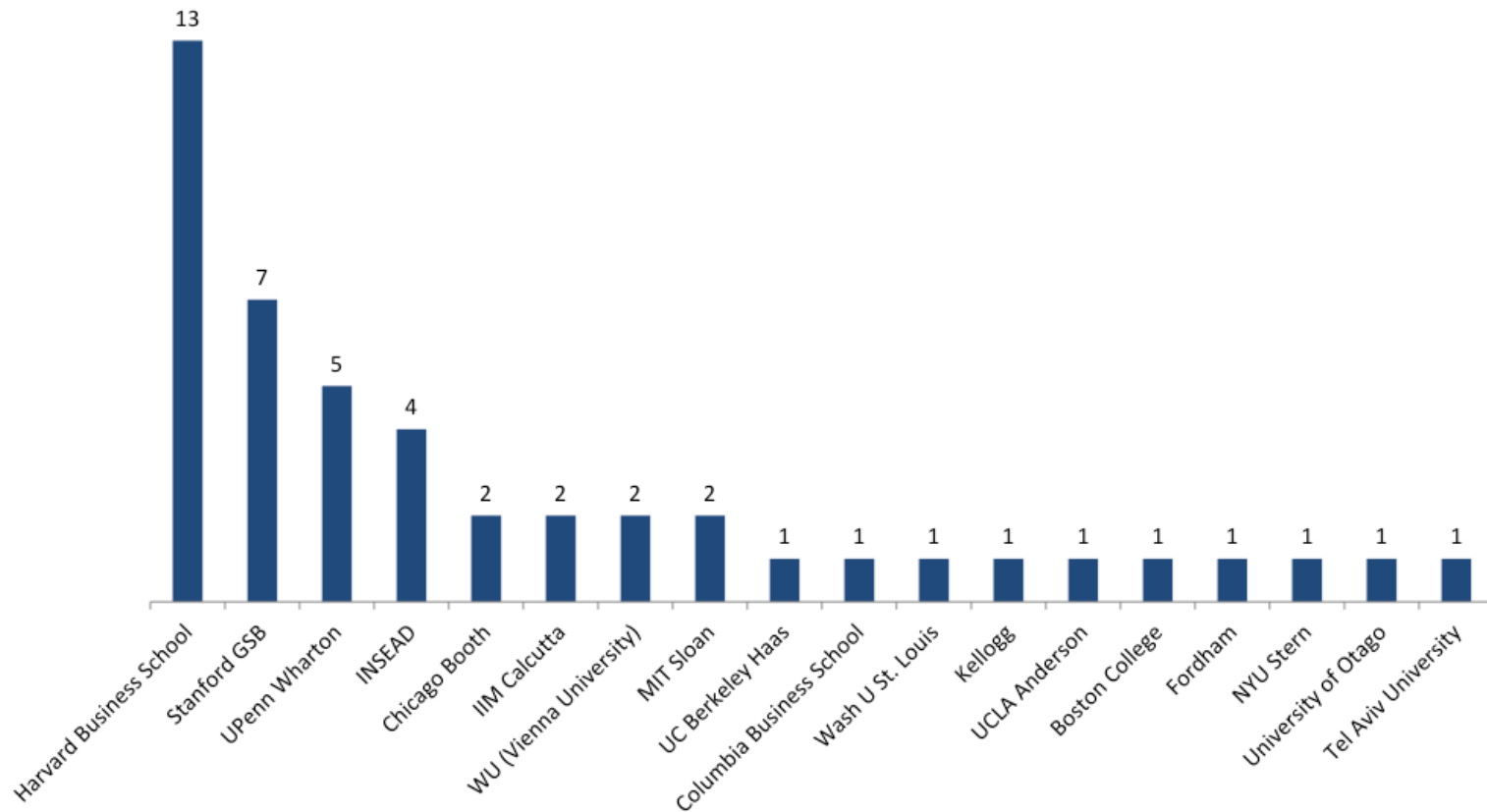
The MBA programs with the most unicorn startups founded by alumni:



(HBS has the largest class size among MBA programs – a factor to consider throughout.)

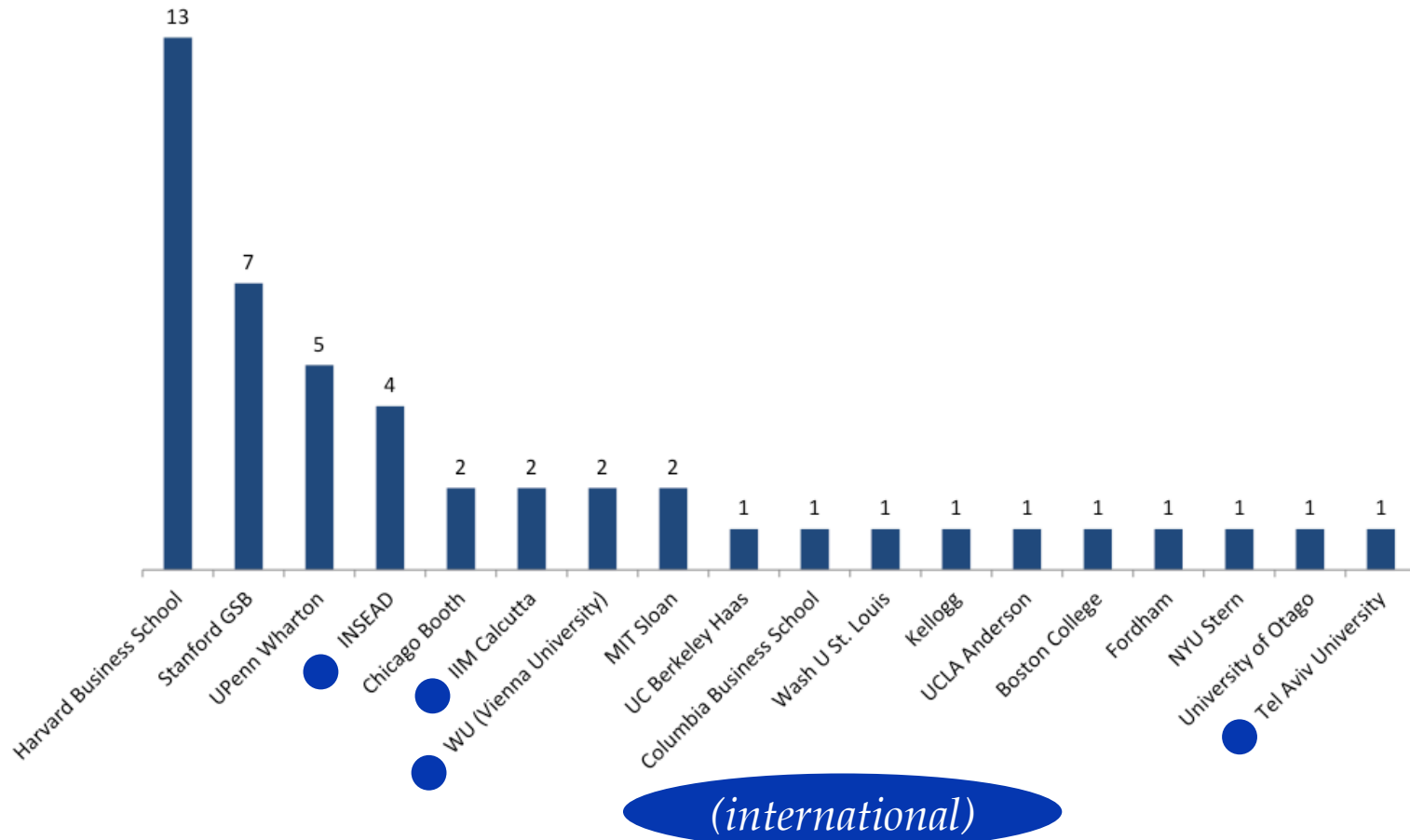
Unicorns Founded by MBA Alumni

of MBA Unicorns by MBA Program



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Key Insight:

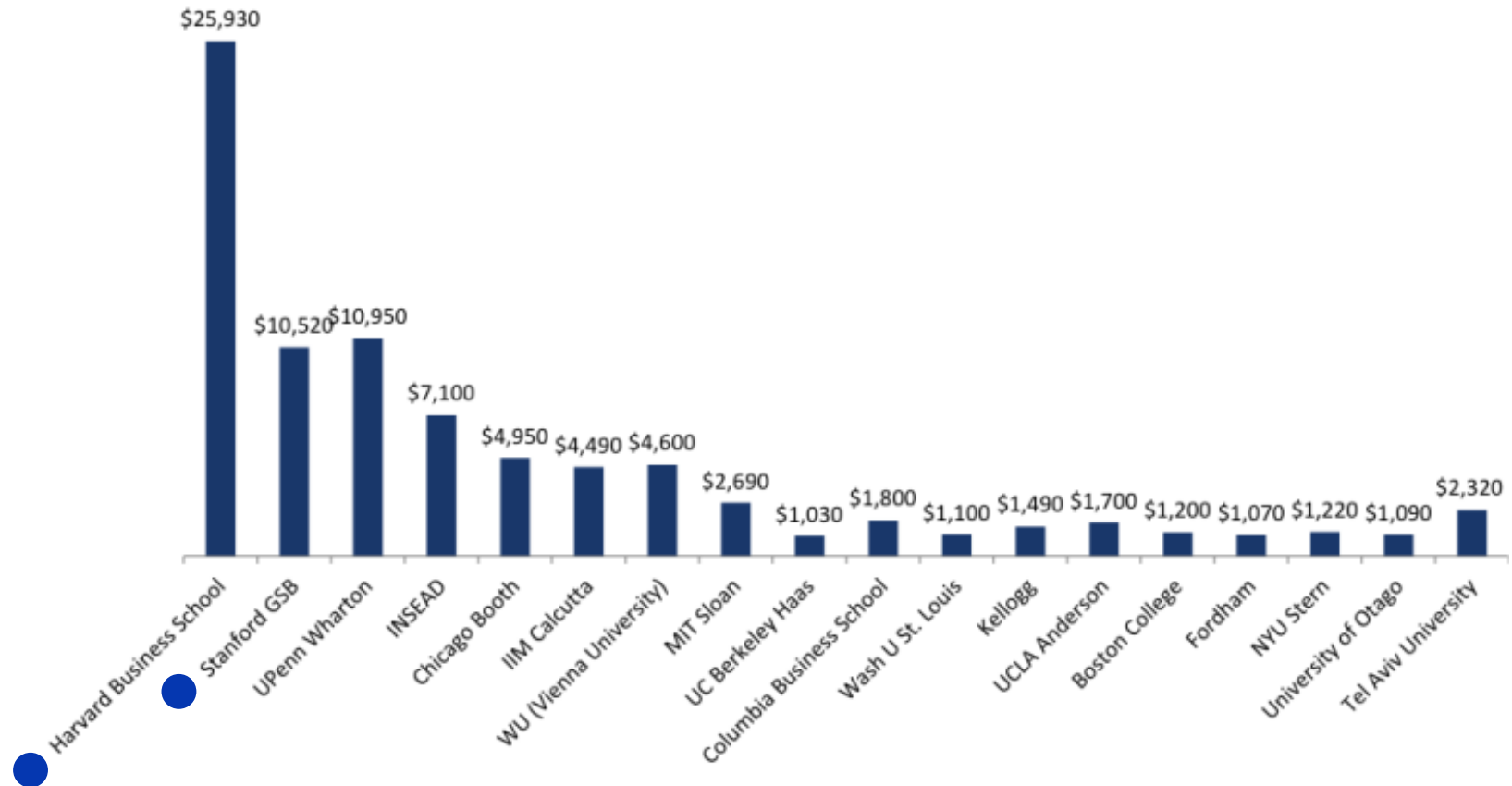
**Harvard's larger MBA classes
have produced almost**

2.5X

**the total unicorn valuations
of Stanford GSB.**

Total Valuation by MBA Program

MBA Unicorn Valuation by MBA Program (\$millions)



Key Insight:

**How about unicorns founded on a
per capita basis?**

**If we use a weighted average, with
HBS at 10, the “per-MBA-student”
average favors Stanford:**

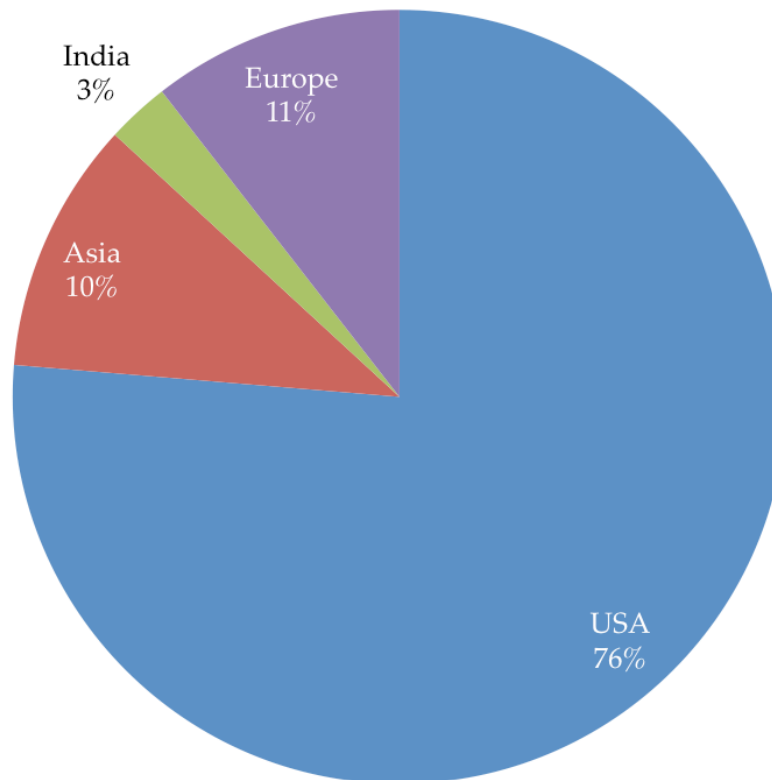
12.2 TO 10

Key Insight:

**A few more data points about
MBA-founded unicorns and
what we learned...**

Geography Breakdown

MBA Unicorns by Region

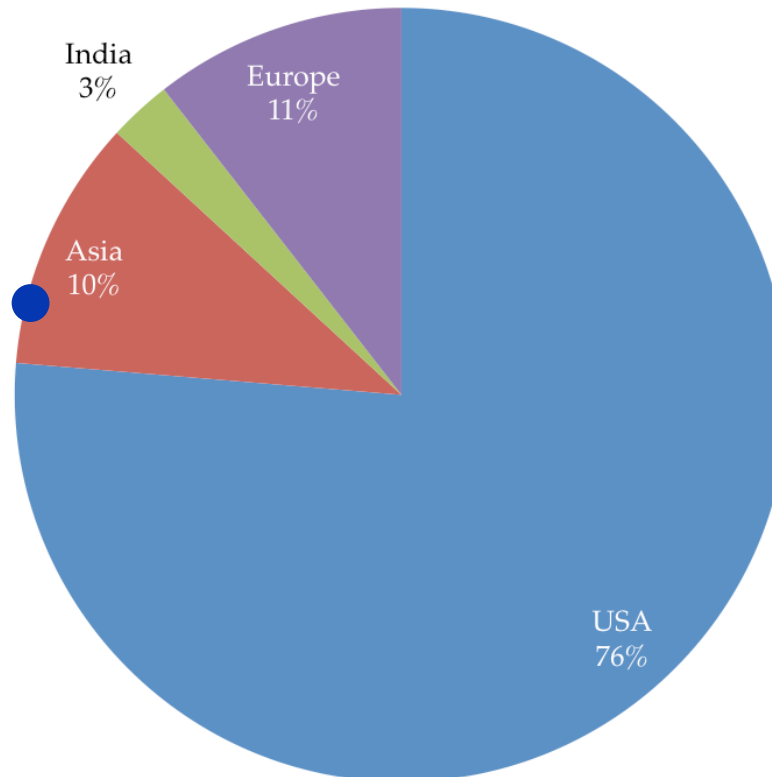


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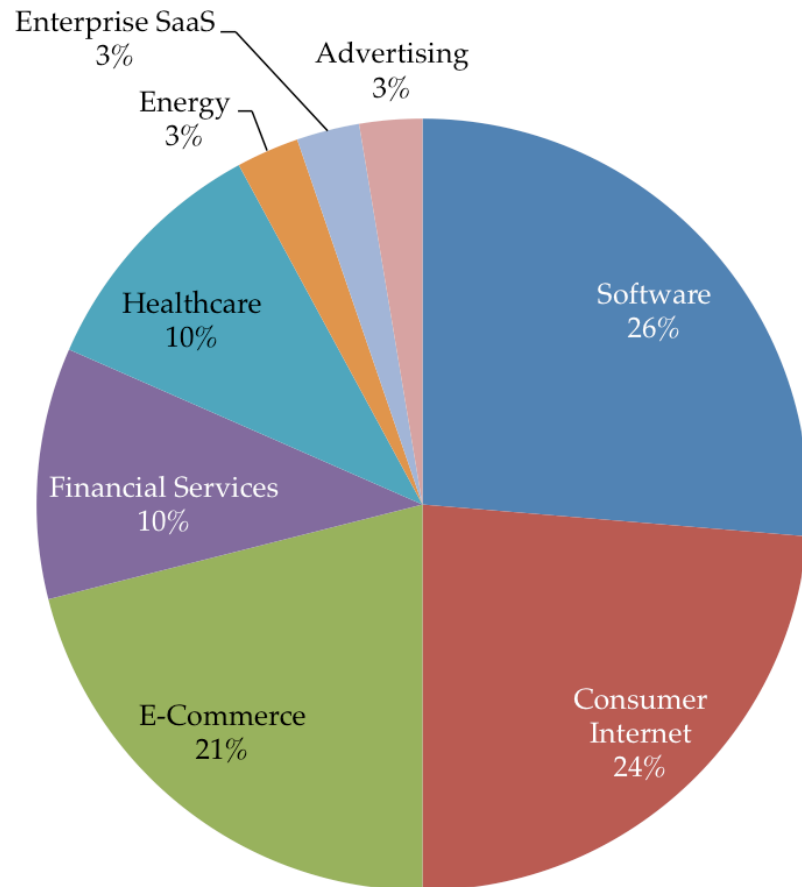


10% of unicorn companies are based in Asia, but they account for 25% of dollars raised by MBA-led unicorns.



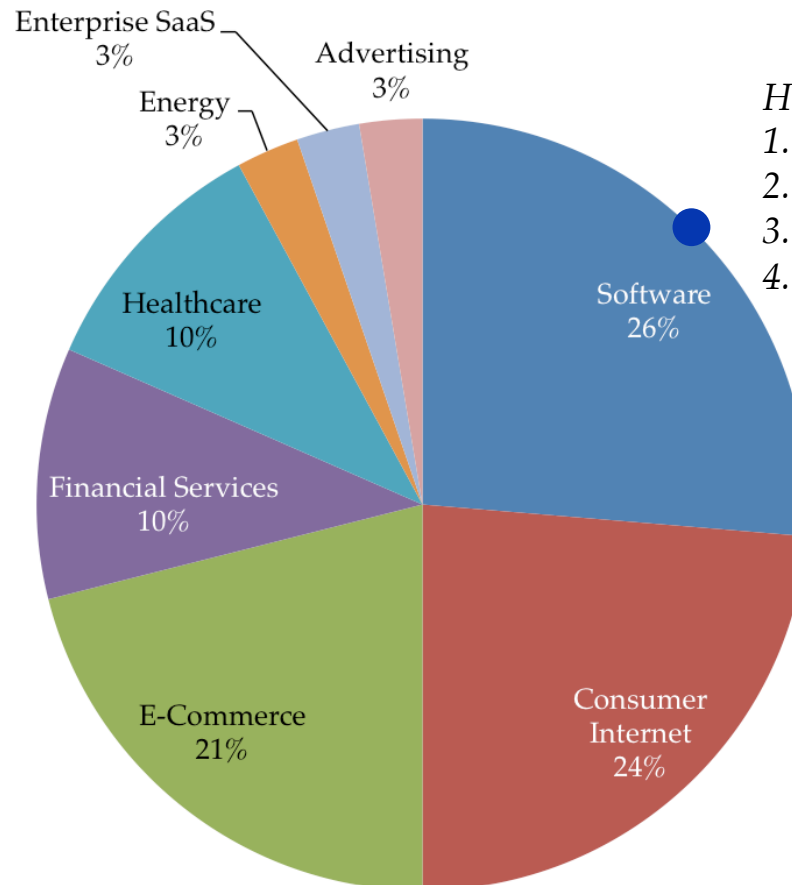
Sector Breakdown

MBA Unicorns by Industry



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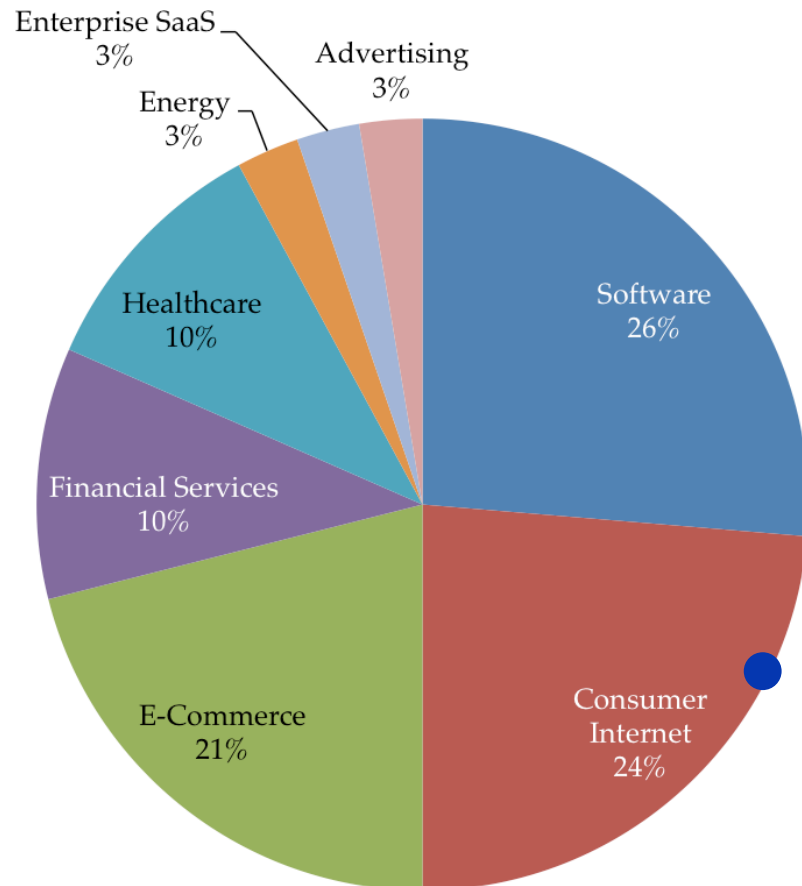


Highest valuations:

1. InMobi (HBS)
2. Mu Sigma (Chicago Booth)
3. MongoDB (INSEAD)
4. Red Ventures (HBS, Wharton)

Sector Breakdown

MBA Unicorns by Industry

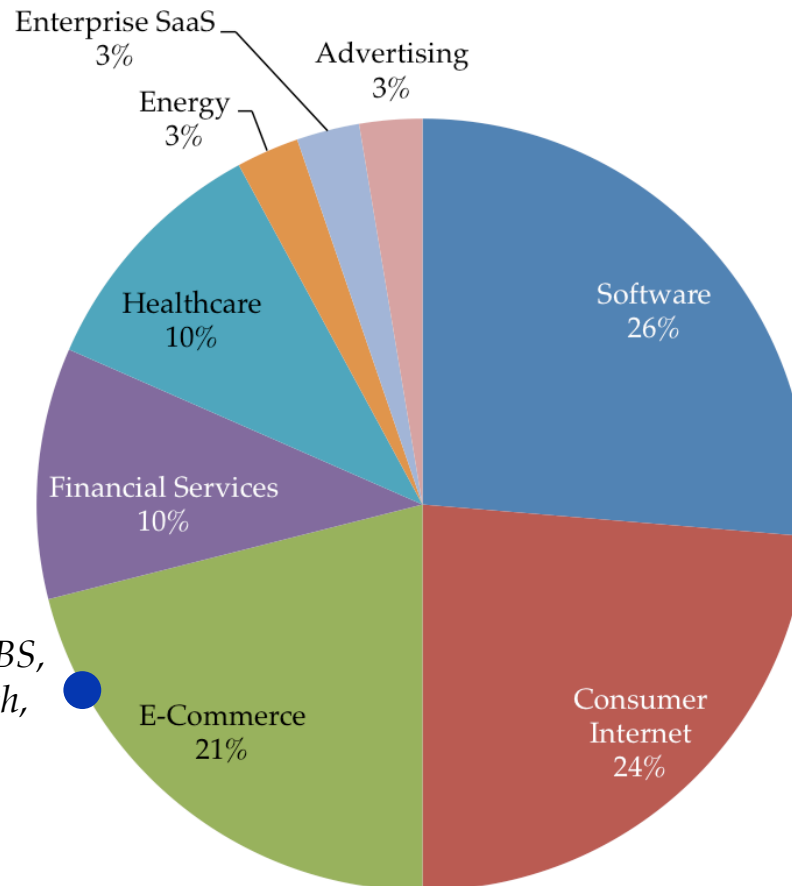


Highest valuations:

1. Dianping (Wharton)
2. Delivery Hero (Vienna)
3. Houzz (Tel Aviv)
4. GrabTaxi (HBS)

Sector Breakdown

MBA Unicorns by Industry



Highest valuations:

1. Coupang (HBS)
2. Global Fashion Group (HBS, INSEAD, Wharton, Booth, IIM Calcutta)
3. Blue Apron (HBS)
4. Honest Co. (UCLA Anderson)

Key Insight:

In general, startup unicorns are found in these sectors too, but none are led by MBA founders:

- **HARDWARE**
- **SECURITY**
- **AEROSPACE/DEFENSE**

Key Insight:

Some hypotheses as to why:

- *These capital-intensive startups aren't as widely pursued by VCs*
- *Speaking very broadly, MBA founders typically launch less technical companies*

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The notion that MBAs are somehow less qualified or less hungry is an overstatement at best, uninformed knee-jerk at worst.

For anyone to conclude otherwise would indicate they're being too romantic about what successful founders look like and where they come from – a slippery slope of personal bias to say the least.



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on our weekly email about startup traction

with advice, stories, and resources shared by
entrepreneurs from these companies and more:



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(we'll reply with our most popular resources)

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NextView