

# Expanding digital opportunities through partnerships

Lydia Nathan - November 17, 2021 7:30 AM



Going onboard the Grab platform on MDEC's Shop Malaysia Online campaign has helped boost business during the pandemic, say several companies.

PETALING JAYA: The food and dining sector was one of the hardest hit industries due to the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing many to shut their doors permanently.

But for others, pivoting into digitilisation helped them to sustain their businesses through the tough times in the last one-and-a-half years.

Grab Malaysia has been one such supporter of digital transformation and has accelerated its efforts in helping micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) to digitilise while furthering consumer reach.

As a homegrown tech enabler, one of its major initiatives is a partnership with the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) for its Shop Malaysia Online (SMO) campaign, which was also part of the short-term economic recovery plan.

This campaign proved to be successful as it included several eCommerce platforms, including Grab, to help digitise MSME's. Following its success, the government introduced an incentive package of RM200 million under Budget 2021 to provide support to businesses from different sectors to go onboard the eCommerce and digital platforms.

It consists of two pillars – Go-eCommerce Onboarding and SMO – where Grab co-funded promotions to drive demand, expand services and enhance operations from webinars to a fully digital onboarding process.

Many merchants have reaped the benefits of the programme, including Restoran Abu & Co 1959 located in Johor.

Its director, Sulaiman P Abu Bakar, said the food and beverage (F&B) outlet began operating earlier this year, focusing on quality and good pricing.

"The restaurant offers fried items but we are particularly famous for our Western cuisine. This is because it is not only affordable, but also served in big portions, with special attention to any requests by customers.

"We also do a fusion mix, like grilled chicken fried rice, chicken chop fried rice, chips and meatballs and more," he told FMT.

Sulaiman said it had been challenging during the pandemic, but digital platforms like Grab and Shopee offered his business a chance to sustain by utilising what they were famous for, which was great food.

"When food outlets were not allowed to open, we became worried about losing income. But using the Grabfood service, our orders increased rapidly and the business grew. Going through all the various phases of the movement control orders (MCO), we maintained sales and, in fact, grew our reputation.

"Our loyal customers continued ordering from us throughout the MCOs and when dine-in was allowed, we served many people. We were also able to employ more people as demand grew, thus helping with employment," he said.

Another F&B outlet that benefitted from the programme was Dong Guan Kopitiam, located off Jalan Irrawaddy in Penang.

Director Ong Seng Theam said the outlet, serving local breakfast, joined GrabFood in January.

"We were particularly hit by the second lockdown in June but we did not lose momentum as delivery services like Grabfood helped push our sales levels to another level," he said.

He said his business joined the platform to gain visibility and offer promotions to customers who could not dine out.

"Through the SMO campaign, our sales increased by 63%. This was the result of the initiatives spearheaded by Grab and the government. Despite business slowing down at first, it got back on track and has been growing till today and we are seeing better revenue," Ong said.

Meanwhile, Lim Cai Jin, co-founder of skincare brand Handmade Heroes, said the results after joining the campaign were very encouraging.

"I hope to see more similar government-led campaigns and partnerships with private businesses in the future. They not only empower businesses who are already online such as ourselves, but also assist traditional merchants to leverage the power of eCommerce to grow their businesses," Lim said.

Grab said the success of the campaign was a good example of what could be achieved through private-public partnerships.

Grab's SMO campaign ends on Nov 30.