
GOING DIGITAL? MISSION POSSIBLE: HAWKERS UNITED – DABAO 2020’S TAKEAWAY FROM THE PANDEMIC FALLOUT

If you want to survive, you have to accept the use of technology, you have to engage in social media, and you have to do home delivery.

- Melvin Chew, Founder of Hawkers United – *Dabao*¹ 2020 Group²

June 19, 2020 was probably a day second-generation hawker Melvin Chew, who ran the Jin Ji Teochew Braised Duck and Kway Chap stall at Chinatown Complex Food Centre with his mother, would not forget anytime soon. That day, his customers could once again dine in at the hawker centre after an interval of almost two-and-a-half months.

With the Covid-19 pandemic worsening in Singapore, the government had imposed a “circuit breaker” from April 7 onwards, under which most workplaces would be closed and students would adopt full home-based learning. More importantly, for those in the food and beverage (F&B) trade like Chew, hawker centres and all other F&B establishments could only accept takeaway or delivery orders. Dining in would not be allowed.³

As he recalled his harrowing experience during that period, Chew remembered that on April 3, the day the circuit breaker measure was announced, he was thinking furiously about what he should do to help himself and others in the trade. Already, he had found that the walk-in crowd comprising mostly office workers was beginning to disappear when Singapore raised its DORSCON (Disease Outbreak Response System Condition) level from yellow (level 2) to orange (level 3) in early February. This was about a fortnight after the first Covid-19 case in the Republic was confirmed. By early April, sales had fallen by 50% to 70%.⁴

But what could Chew do? The non-techie hit upon the idea of getting hawkers to **promote their food through the ubiquitous Facebook platform**. Not only were there no advertising and other costs to be incurred, any hawker could post their offerings on it. As the excited Chew got busy contacting people who could help him run and moderate the Facebook group, the day was drawing to a close. But fast-forwarding to late June, Chew would never have imagined that the age of the digital Singapore hawker had begun in earnest. As the memories of those challenging months came flooding back, he marvelled at the fighting spirit that he and his fellow hawkers had shown. Indeed, when they were already at rock-bottom, the only way to go was up and up they had gone.

¹ “*Dabao*” was a Mandarin phrase that meant “takeaway”.

² Tom Benner, “Coronavirus Eats into Singapore’s Already Struggling Hawker Trade”, Al Jazeera, May 5, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/coronavirus-eats-singapores-struggling-hawker-trade-200504090429208.html>, accessed August 2020.

³ Toh Ting Wei, “Coronavirus: No More Dining in at Hawker Centres, Coffee Shops, Restaurants and Other F&B Outlets, Says MTP”, The Straits Times, April 3, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/no-more-dining-in-at-hawker-centres-coffeeshops-restaurants-and-other-fb-outlets>, accessed August 2020.

⁴ Alanna Tan, “Covid-19: Hope for S’pore Hawkers Comes in the Form of a Booming Facebook Community”, Vulcan Post, <https://vulcanpost.com/696286/hawkers-united-facebook-group-singapore/>, accessed August 2020.

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Hawkers United – Dabao Group 2020

The group, which gained 25,000 members within just two days of its founding on April 3,⁵ had more than 260,000 members,⁶ a phenomenal 10-fold jump, by May 19, less than two months into its existence. It was run by a group of eight volunteers, including a photographer, a senior content strategist with South China Morning Post, and Chew. **Essentially, it allowed hawkers to post their offerings, promotions and takeaway or delivery options, while customers could join the group to pre-order food from these hawkers.**⁷

To maintain order and ensure that the Facebook page would operate smoothly, a set of group rules was laid down. Notably, live videos, negative comments or posts, feedback posts, posts seeking recommendations and soliciting were disallowed.⁸ Hawkers meanwhile were told to upload attractive photos of their food, and specify their prices, the areas they would deliver to, the payment methods they accepted, and the ordering instructions customers should abide by in their posts.⁹ As for customers, they were advised to take screenshots of the hawker's profile and post, as well as their conversation with the hawker, including the orders they made, plus the hawker's replies, confirmation, and delivery schedule.¹⁰

There were a number of key benefits to be gained from using the page for both hawkers and customers alike. First, with no middlemen involved, hawkers did not need to fret that they would not be getting the full proceeds of the sale.¹¹ Second, hawkers could also deal directly with the customers, thus reducing miscommunication and misunderstanding, among other issues.¹²

Reasons for Establishing the Facebook Group

Chew's decision to set up the group was chiefly driven by his desire to help his peers in the hawker trade, especially those who were clueless as to how they could promote their stalls and their offerings when almost the entire nation had to remain at home. Other reasons included the need to come up with alternatives to the major food delivery platforms that charged prohibitive commission fees, as well as the imperative to prevent hawking from being obliterated by the circuit breaker, which was basically a partial lockdown.

Offering Assistance to Fellow Hawkers

Explaining his reasons for deciding to set up the Facebook group, Chew said, "I foresaw that many hawkers who are used to relying on walk-in customers will now need to promote their stalls on social media."¹³ However, given how many were getting on in years and not IT (information technology)-savvy, this would hardly be possible for these hawkers. He added,

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Rachel Quek, "Hawkers Go Digital during Covid-19 Circuit Breaker", The Straits Times, May 19, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/multimedia/hawkers-go-digital-during-covid-19-circuit-breaker>, accessed August 2020.

⁷ Genevieve Sarah Loh, "Covid-19: Here's How You Can Support Your Favourite Singapore Hawker Stalls", CNA, April 22, 2020, <https://cnalifestyle.channelnewsasia.com/dining/singapore-hawker-food-takeaway-delivery-12665742>, accessed August 2020.

⁸ Hawkers United – Dabao 2020, "Hawkers United 2020 Group Rules", <https://www.facebook.com/notes/hawkers-united-dabao-2020/hawkers-united-2020-group-rules/289972898670418/>, accessed August 2020.

⁹ Hawkers United – Dabao 2020, "Sellers Guide on How to Post in This Group 2.0", <https://www.facebook.com/notes/hawkers-united-dabao-2020/sellers-guide-on-how-to-post-in-this-group-20/289858615348513/>, accessed August 2020.

¹⁰ Hawkers United – Dabao 2020, "Buyers Guide on How to Shop Efficiently and Safely", <https://www.facebook.com/notes/hawkers-united-dabao-2020/buyers-guide-on-how-to-shop-efficiently-and-safely/289746048693103/>, accessed August 2020.

¹¹ Ilyas Sholihyn, "Singapore's Hawkers and Restaurateurs Team up via Facebook Groups to Promote Delivery Options", AsiaOne, April 9, 2020, <https://www.asiaone.com/digital/singapores-hawkers-and-restaurateurs-team-facebook-groups-promote-delivery-options>, accessed August 2020.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Genevieve Sarah Loh, "Covid-19: Here's How You Can Support Your Favourite Singapore Hawker Stalls", CNA, April 22, 2020, <https://cnalifestyle.channelnewsasia.com/dining/singapore-hawker-food-takeaway-delivery-12665742>, accessed August 2020.

Most hawkers do not have any social media accounts or [the] know-how, because we have been dedicated solely to cooking, looking after our day-to-day business and taking care of customers face-to-face. That's why I created a space where it's free for all hawkers [and it] also welcomes consumers who are interested in patronising these stalls.¹⁴

Chew further confided, “The struggles of a one-man operation are real... Many of us didn’t know who to turn to and what to do.”¹⁵

Seeking Alternatives to Food Delivery Platforms

Food delivery platforms like GrabFood, Deliveroo, and Foodpanda generally charged an average commission fee ranging between 30% and 35% for an order.¹⁶ Compared to restaurants that might be in a better position to stomach these considerable fees, hawker stalls were mostly not comfortable with them. Commented Chew,

If my duck rice is \$3 a packet and 30% is deducted by the mega ordering platforms with delivery services, you can quickly calculate how little we get back. I still have to pay rent, utilities, suppliers, packaging, etc.¹⁷

He added that one of the main reasons he had set up the Facebook group was to hopefully push down the commissions charged for delivery orders by allowing customers, freelance delivery personnel and hawkers to communicate directly.¹⁸ For his own stall, he had decided that if the circuit breaker were to be extended, he would look for more freelance drivers to help him with the deliveries, or in the worst-case scenario, he would make the deliveries on his own.¹⁹

Saving the Hawker Trade

In March 2019, Singapore had submitted a nomination to inscribe its hawker culture on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.²⁰ But despite much that had been said then about the importance of the hawker trade, it was badly affected by the pandemic.

Even before the circuit breaker was implemented, a Hong Lim Food Centre hawker surnamed Tay who ran a famous curry noodles stall had quipped in late February,

No matter how nice the food is, how famous you are or how many awards you have, the coronavirus prevents people from coming. People stopped wanting to eat at hawker centres. It is the worst place to be, because people are sitting near each other. The impact [of Covid-19] on our hawker business is worse than SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). Technology has enabled people to be better informed of the virus situation. With everyone wanting to take the necessary precautions to avoid getting infected, nobody is willing to come.²¹

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Alanna Tan, “Covid-19: Hope for S'pore Hawkers Comes in the Form of a Booming Facebook Community”, Vulcan Post, <https://vulcanpost.com/696286/hawkers-united-facebook-group-singapore/>, accessed August 2020.

¹⁶ Rachel Quek, “Hawkers Go Digital during Covid-19 Circuit Breaker”, The Straits Times, May 19, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/multimedia/hawkers-go-digital-during-covid-19-circuit-breaker>, accessed August 2020.

¹⁷ Tang See Kit, “As Covid-19 Hits F&B Sector, Calls Emerge for Delivery Apps to Lower Commission Fees”, CNA, April 16, 2020, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/covid-19-food-sector-delivery-apps-lower-commission-fees-12643252>, accessed August 2020.

¹⁸ Wen Wei Zhong, “160,000 People Join Facebook Group to Let Consumers, Delivery Personnel and Hawkers Communicate Directly, Thus Saving Businesses”, Lianhe Zaobao, April 10, 2020, <https://www.zaobao.com.sg/news/singapore/story20200410-1044310>, accessed August 2020.

¹⁹ Eunice Quek, “Coronavirus: Help for Hawkers to Deliver Food”, The Straits Times, April 12, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/food/help-for-hawkers-to-deliver-food>, accessed August 2020.

²⁰ Melody Zaccheus, “Singapore Submits Unesco Bid to Recognise Hawker Culture”, The Straits Times, March 29, 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapore-submits-unesco-bid-to-recognise-hawker-culture>, accessed August 2020.

²¹ Lena Loke and Nabilah Awang, “‘We’d Try to Endure’: Hawkers See Business Plunge by up to 50% Due to Covid-19 Outbreak”, TODAY, February 22, 2020, <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/wed-try-endure-hawkers-see-business-plunge-50-due-covid-19-outbreak>, accessed August 2020.

Hawkers that served migrant workers were already experiencing acute pain from a sharp plunge in customer numbers as their customers could not patronise their stalls. Towards the end of February, a hawker from Tekka Market and Food Centre located in Little India reported that she used to be able to finish using 25kg of flour in two days, but now it took seven days to use up the same amount as “fewer migrant workers visit the market on Sundays compared with before the outbreak”.²² Another hawker selling mixed vegetables rice at the Haig Road Market and Food Centre said he used to have “dozens of Chinese foreign workers” coming to buy takeaways from him, but “only two came in the last two weeks”, since many “had returned to China for the new year and are unable to return”.²³

In view of the worsening situation, the setting up of the Facebook group was a godsend for many. Giving his take on the mind-blowing jump in membership, Chew said,

*I think Singaporeans want to preserve hawkers [which are a treasure] ... They want to save the auntie, uncle who are like family because [they] buy [these hawkers'] food so often. Whether rich or poor, you go to the hawker centre for comfort food.*²⁴

Obstacles to Hawkers Embracing Digitalisation

The government’s drive to get hawkers to digitalise their business had started in 2017. This followed the National Day Rally speech that year during which Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had related an anecdote about then Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say being regarded as “*suaku*” (a colloquial Singapore English word for “country bumpkin”) for paying a Shanghai roadside chestnut hawker in cash, when QR (Quick Response) code payments had become a way of life there already.²⁵ However, the response then was lukewarm.

Many of the reasons behind the less-than-enthusiastic response from the hawkers continued to hold true in early 2020. Chief among these was the hawkers’ digital illiteracy and inability to understand English. Others included practical obstacles and the fact that digitalisation was not a panacea, despite its much-touted benefits.

Illiteracy in More Ways than One

While much had been said and written about hawkers not being digitally literate, it was also not surprising that the older hawkers tended to struggle with speaking in English as well. This could prove to be a formidable obstacle to any attempts to digitalise their business. Explained Ng Bee Choon, who ran the Kaya Kaya stall at Old Airport Road Food Centre,

*These [food delivery] companies usually write about their services in English. Many of us in our 50s and 60s were Chinese-educated and not fluent in English. To engage with these platforms in English would be very hard for us.*²⁶

Practical Reasons

Advocates of hawker digitalisation also often failed to take into account the fact that hawker stalls started off as brick-and-mortar businesses, usually of a very small scale, such that if the digital model were to be implemented in its entirety, the result could be less ideal than envisioned.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bhavan Jaipragas and Tashny Sukumaran, “Taste of Freedom: How Coronavirus Is Changing Asia’s Relationship to Food”, South China Morning Post, April 20, 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/economics/article/3080502/taste-freedom-how-coronavirus-changing-asias-relationship-food>, accessed August 2020.

²⁵ Singapore Prime Minister’s Office, “National Day Rally 2017”, August 20, 2017, <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/national-day-rally-2017>, accessed August 2020.

²⁶ Alanna Tan, “Covid-19: Why Going Online Is Not a One-Size-Fits-All Solution for S’pore F&B Businesses”, Vulcan Post, <https://vulcanpost.com/696821/going-online-cannot-save-all-fb-businesses/>, accessed August 2020.

According to Ng, the price of the drinks sold at her stall ranged between S\$0.80 (US\$0.58²⁷) and S\$2.50 (US\$1.83). It would simply not be worth it for delivery companies to take such orders to begin with. Moreover, the packaging she used for takeaway drinks would not suit these delivery riders. Also, it hardly made financial sense to change the packaging to something more expensive when her takings had already shrunk considerably during the pandemic.²⁸

Peter Seow, HawkerFoodDelivery.com co-founder, gave a different perspective. Contrasting the typical hawker stall set-up with that of a restaurant that had a point-of-sale (POS) system and wait staff in tow, Seow said,

*The hawker is expected to be the chef, order taker, cashier, and [now he has to] manage online orders... that's a huge challenge for anyone. Whatever the technology you equip them with, they need to be ready and able to adapt. Being a one-man show, how much can you expect them to do? They need to respond to online queries from customers, while ensuring the delivery driver picks up the order. It's not easy. Can they turn off the online component if they have a long queue to deal with on-site? There are questions like these that no one has addressed.*²⁹

Yet another hawker, Mrs Ng of Tian Tian Fatt Rice and Porridge at Toa Payoh Lorong 8 Market & Food Centre, offered a practical reason as to why she was not exactly keen on electronic payments (e-payments) as a way to digitalise her business, even though she accepted them. She shared that for customers who opted for QR code payments, **she had to check whether the transactions were successful, but she was too busy to do this during peak hours.**³⁰

As for elderly hawker Xu from Hoe Heng Porridge and Lor Mee at the same hawker centre, despite having used an e-payment app for two years already, he and his elderly customers were constantly worried they might press the incorrect button or enter the inaccurate amount. He confided,

*For old people, it is troublesome. The best is still cash.*³¹

Digitalisation Not a Panacea

It was also a fact that even though digitalisation had helped many hawkers survive during the pandemic, it did not work equally well for everyone. Kevin, owner of fish soup eatery Fu Ji at Clifford Centre, pointed out, “[Even after going digital], we only get two or three more orders a day. Some days, we might get zero delivery orders.”³² As for Teochew Seafood White Mee Hoon hawker assistant Yu Sen, he said that even though the e-payments option was available at his stall, no customer has requested to use this payment mode so far.³³

Ecosystem Efforts to Nudge Hawkers towards Digitalisation

While the government acknowledged that there were several obstacles that prevented hawkers from readily adopting digitalisation measures, the global march towards digitalisation was inexorable even before the pandemic. As such, the authorities could only do their best to help the

²⁷ US\$1 = S\$1.37 as at August 2020.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Eileen Yu, “Traditional Businesses Finally Embrace Digital, But Still Face Limits”, ZDNet, July 28, 2020, <https://www.zdnet.com/article/traditional-businesses-finally-embrace-digital-but-still-face-limits/>, accessed August 2020.

³⁰ Tan Yin Lin, “Transforming the Hawker Industry into a Digital One: Is It Possible?”, Rice, July 21, 2020, <https://www.ricemedia.co/current-affairs-commentary-transforming-hawker-industry-into-digital-is-it-possible/>, accessed August 2020.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Alanna Tan, “Covid-19: Why Going Online Is Not a One-Size-Fits-All Solution for S'pore F&B Businesses”, Vulcan Post, <https://vulcanpost.com/696821/going-online-cannot-save-all-fb-businesses/>, accessed August 2020.

³³ “5,400 Hawkers in Singapore Have Adopted e-Payments with at Least 60pc Logging More than 20 Transactions a Month”, Malay Mail, August 13, 2020, <https://www.malaymail.com/news/singapore/2020/08/13/5400-hawkers-in-singapore-have-adopted-e-payments-with-at-least-60pc-logging/1893451>, accessed August 2020.

hawkers ease their way into it. However, the shock from the pandemic was too abrupt, making a gradual transition all but impossible. Nevertheless, the government still tried to use the carrot to the greatest extent possible. Other players in the ecosystem, including the key delivery platforms and software developers, chipped in as well to make it a society-wide effort, rather than a purely government-led one.

Government

In response to feedback that there were too many QR code payment systems in place during the initial drive to get hawkers and customers alike to embrace e-payments, the Singapore Quick Response (SGQR) code was introduced by e-payment service provider NETS in September 2018.³⁴ This system, unlike the various disparate systems available previously, was compatible with up to 27 e-payment solutions, including PayNow, NETS, GrabPay, DBS PayLah!, Singtel DASH, OCBC Pay AnyOne and AliPay.

Meanwhile, to address criticism that the food delivery platforms were charging unaffordable commission fees, Enterprise Singapore (ESG), a statutory board under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, announced the introduction of the **Food Delivery Booster Package** a day after the circuit breaker measure was made public. Under this package, **ESG would pay for five percentage points of the commissions charged by the three major delivery platforms** – Deliveroo, GrabFood, and Foodpanda.³⁵ No cap would be placed on the food delivery transaction value. It was subsequently announced that F&B businesses could save 20% on their delivery expenses if they chose third-party logistics firms like Lalamove or Zeek to conduct their deliveries, instead of the usual delivery platforms.³⁶

Additionally, in order to provide better support to the hawkers, a new SG Digital Office (SDO) under the Infocomm Media Development Authority was established.³⁷ The SDO would be staffed by 1,000 digital ambassadors who would fan out to all the hawker centres and wet markets across the island to assist hawkers in mastering the use of digital tools such as e-payment systems.

To further incentivise hawkers to make digitalisation a way of life, the Hawkers Go Digital initiative was launched.³⁸ As part of this initiative, hawkers who opted for SGQR would receive a S\$300 (US\$219.60) bonus for every month in which they chalked up a minimum of 20 cashless transactions. The maximum bonus payable was S\$1,500 (US\$1,098), meaning that there were five months in a year for which they could potentially earn the bonus, provided they met the stipulated requirement.

³⁴ Tang See Kit, "Singapore Rolls out Unified Payment QR Code SGQR in Latest Cashless Push", CNA, September 17, 2018, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/sgqr-qr-code-cashless-payment-singapore-rolls-out-unified-10727568>, accessed August 2020.

³⁵ "F&B Businesses to Receive Support for Food Delivery Orders with New Enterprise Singapore Booster Package", CNA, April 4, 2020, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/covid-19-f-b-businesses-receive-support-food-delivery-orders-12609572>, accessed August 2020.

³⁶ Tiffany Fumiko Tay, "Food Delivery Support Expanded to Eateries Not on Deliveroo, Foodpanda and GrabFood", The Straits Times, April 9, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/food-delivery-support-expanded-to-eateries-not-on-deliveroo-foodpanda-and-grabfood>, accessed August 2020.

³⁷ Hariz Baharudin, "New Office to Drive Digitalisation Nationwide and Reach out to Seniors, Hawkers", The Straits Times, May 31, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/new-sg-digital-office-to-encourage-digitalisation-among-seniors-and-hawkers>, accessed August 2020.

³⁸ Lester Wong, "Government Will Support Hawkers through Their Digitalisation Journey: Iswaran", The Straits Times, June 11, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/tech/government-will-support-hawkers-through-their-digitalisation-journey-iswaran>, accessed August 2020.

Delivery Platforms

In view of growing calls for delivery platforms to lower their commission fees, Foodpanda rolled out its “pandasupport hawker initiative” in late May.³⁹ Under this initiative, hawkers who decided to use its services **would not have to pay commission for their orders for one month.** It would also be useful for hawkers ineligible for the Food Delivery Booster Package (such as those who had not registered themselves as self-employed hawkers with the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority, a statutory board under the Ministry of Finance). Furthermore, eligible hawkers would be featured in a prime position on the “Hawker Favourites” carousel tile in the Foodpanda app free of charge as a form of marketing assistance.

Separately, rival GrabFood announced a pilot project under which it would lower commissions for orders placed with hawkers at AMK 724 Food Centre.⁴⁰ The extent to which the commissions would be lowered was however not made public. In addition, orders placed with multiple stalls at the centre would be considered a single transaction, thereby reducing the amount of commission payable (the usual practice was to treat each order from different stalls as separate transactions, and commissions were charged on a per-transaction basis).

Software Developers

In the wake of the fuss over how to order food and get it delivered during the circuit breaker, some software developers decided to set up their own platforms to give hawkers a much-needed boost online. Undergraduates Lim Yi Fan and Ng Chee Peng set up ‘FoodLeh?’, a website that allowed hawkers to be listed without having to create an account.⁴¹ Users meanwhile could search for food stalls near their location by entering a postal code. The search results would reflect the stalls’ addresses and the phone numbers to call for placing orders. The website was also intended to eliminate the “middle men” platforms which charged a commission fee.

Another ground-up effort to assist hawkers struggling to survive was ‘Take.sg’ by Facebook software engineer Youmin Kim. This website displayed the hawkers’ menu options, which customers could select accordingly.⁴² Customers then had to give their name and contact details, opt for delivery or self-pickup, and click on a button, which would compile all the information into a WhatsApp message that would then be sent to the hawker. Users benefited from it since there were no charges for using it, and they also did not need to deal with the major delivery platforms. Besides, all that was needed was the use of the WhatsApp messenger app, whose ubiquity level was more than a match for Facebook.

Who Says Hawkers Cannot Digitalise Their Businesses?

When Chew looked around him, he could see people queueing at the stalls and sitting at the tables of the hawker centre to enjoy their favourite dishes once more. Post-circuit breaker, it was as if the pandemic had never happened. But the truth was that the world had changed, and the hawker trade had transformed along the way too. Even though dining in was finally permitted, albeit with only five people to one table at most, digitalisation was here to stay, what with more people ordering hawker food online and making e-payments at hawker centres.

³⁹ “Foodpanda Waives Commissions for One Month for Singapore Hawkers Joining Delivery App”, The Straits Times, May 22, 2020, [https://www.straitstimes.com/business/companies-markets/foodpanda-waives-commissions-for-one-month-for-singapore-hawkers-joining#:~:text=SINGAPORE%20\(THE%20BUSINESS%20TIMES\)%20%2D,on%20Friday%20\(May%202022\),](https://www.straitstimes.com/business/companies-markets/foodpanda-waives-commissions-for-one-month-for-singapore-hawkers-joining#:~:text=SINGAPORE%20(THE%20BUSINESS%20TIMES)%20%2D,on%20Friday%20(May%202022),) accessed August 2020.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Clement Yong, “University Students Launch Website to Help Users Order Directly from Hawkers during Covid-19 Circuit Breaker”, The Straits Times, April 26, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/website-helps-users-order-directly-from-hawkers>, accessed August 2020.

⁴² Take.sg, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Restaurant/Takesg-101226921566684/>, accessed August 2020.

Of course, there would still be those who would continue to resist it, come what may. Nonetheless, a concerted effort was being made to get more hawkers to **embrace the use of digital tools** for their own benefit, and gradually, more were being persuaded.

Would Chew's Facebook group be replaced by something else? Would it become irrelevant in time to come? There would be time to consider that later. For now, the hawker stalls were open for business, and the orders were coming in, both digitally and face-to-face. Pandemic or not, everyone had to eat, and they were there to serve.