

# POWERING HYPERLOCAL PUBLISHERS WITH E-COMMERCE

## CONTEXT

TheSmartLocal Media Group (TSL) is an independent media publisher group that locals trust for hyper-local information on what to do in and out of their country. Each year, TSL received over 200 million website pageviews and additional 200 million video views across the various brands under its wings – such as TheSmartLocal, Eatbook, MS News, ZULA and TelegramCo, with strong online presence across their website, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. The TSL website is one-part editorial based and one-part community based where members can upload their own reviews and have their say about everything Singapore.

Through the years, TSL has built up a strong base of followers across its various lifestyle brands, such as Eatbook.sg (F&B), MS News (news and current affairs), and ZULA (female lifestyle). With their viewers' life tightly integrated across TSL brands, this is an opportune time to bring together multiple partners and their ecosystem players, to jointly create hyperlocal deals and offers that is personalised for each follower.

Thus, TSL is keen to build a virtuous cycle of business innovation, creating the flywheel effect for its ecosystems. They are keen to promote a hyperconnected e-commerce landscape that leverage the existing data across their brands, so as to provide a streamlined ecosystem that allows access and insights to information across the brands, merchants, partners, to work together and co-create to expand their reach and value. The possibilities are expanding and TSL envisions, but not limited to, a front-end shopping application that provides hyperlocal deals used to connect their followers to the most relevant partner merchants. Each successful transactions would not only reward the followers (e.g. via cashback), but also optimise the learnings to deliver more relevant campaigns and deals in the future.

With a strong understanding of its followers, and ability to connect data to data across the brands, TSL is keen to explore new ways to more effectively partner with business merchants to orchestrate compelling and relevant deals for each customer. Through harnessing data insights across TSL platforms, the solution should facilitate hyperlocal deals through timely campaigns and optimised deal placements, so TSL can deliver more relevant deals to its followers while also supporting merchants to eliminate promotional waste. Such a data-driven platform enables various ecosystem players to co-create and co-share TSL's reach, to drive connections of greater value for consumers.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

How might we empower a hyperconnected e-commerce site to create a virtuous cycle of online deals driven through data in real-time for merchants, consumers, and partners?

## WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

TSL is looking for a solution where consumers and merchants can create value together through seamless deal discovery and purchase, that is safe, secure, and easy to use. The solution would aggregate existing data from TSL's database of merchants and products, and reward consumers for purchases made via the solution, thereby creating a customer loyalty programme. The solution sought includes the following features:

- **Interactive discovery and matching of deals:** The solution should help consumers discover deals based on their products of interest and recommend the latest and most enticing deals to the consumer while they are on TSL website or owned content such as articles.
- **Seamless experience linking to external e-commerce sites:** The solution should allow consumers to click on a desired deal from TSL's website or owned content such as articles and bring them to the designated e-commerce site where the transaction will take place. The discount for the product should already be applied when consumers arrive at the e-commerce site. The consumer should only have to complete the transaction.
- **Effortless gaining of cashback rewards with each purchase:** The solution should be able to record each time a consumer successfully makes a purchase via clicking on a deal featured on the platform. Where applicable, consumers will be credited with cashback rewards for each successful purchase be credited to their account. The more consumers use the platform to purchase a product, the more cashback rewards they can earn.
- **Fuss-free platform for merchants to promote deals:** The solution should help merchants determine the type of deals to be featured on the platform with the sales team. The solution should be able to notify merchants when a sale is made, who then proceeds to pay a commission of the sale to the solution owner, who can then credit a proportion back to the consumer seamlessly.
- **Seamless data integration for a great customer experience:** The solution should be able to integrate data across leading e-commerce sites, merchants, and payment providers to facilitate the purchasing of feature products, available deals, and payment to ensure customers are rewarded for using the platform and will want to keep returning to use it to shop for deals.
- **Demonstrating value with data and machine learning:** The solution should be able to collect data and track the effectiveness and success of deals featured on the platform for merchants to measure success and encourage them to continue using the solution for their products. The solution should also collect data and provide useful metrics to add value to merchants.

## **Overall Performance Requirements**

The problem solver should meet the following performance criteria in their proposal:

- **Intuitive Interface:** The user interface should be easy to understand and use by users of different computer literacy skills and job experience. It should be able to communicate effectively with the users. The user interface should help facilitate users to stay informed and act accordingly with relative ease.
- **Secure:** The solution should not pose cybersecurity risks for users of the platform. The data collected on users and businesses should be stored safely, preventing malicious attacks and data theft. Transactions performed should be trustworthy, assuring no unexplained loss of income and revenue.
- **Reliable:** The solution should be reliable and not be subjected to technical or network disruptions to ensure that users can carry out their purchases and collect their rewards.

There are no restrictions on the geographic location of the problem solvers who may choose to apply to this challenge. However, the prototype needs to be demonstrated in Singapore.

## **POSSIBLE USE CASES**

**1. Providing hyperlocal deals to TSL users** – Louis is a passionate gamer and was googling for relevant articles on 'New gaming shops in Singapore'. He lands on a TSL-owned article on the relevant topic. Based on historical insights, the solution knows that readers interested in such articles are also often keen on late night supper spots. With this insight, the solution surfaces relevant gaming and supper deals at the end of the article. Because of its relevance, there is a high clickthrough rate for this deal, which redirects readers to the partner merchant's site. As Louis lands on the partner merchant's site, discounts have already been applied for easy check out, allowing him to redeem his rewards (e.g. cashback, if relevant) seamlessly.

Such relevant curation of deals makes TSL the preferred news platform for him, as not only does it give him access to the relevant information, he gets privy to good deals and bargains with a simple click of a button.

**2. Supporting merchants to provide hyperlocal deals for higher conversion** – Harry is part of TSL's advertising team that works with various corporates keen to leverage on TSL's outreach to promote and advertise their products and services. Besides ensuring that deals are submitted by bona fide companies and are attractive for the TSL community, much time is spent coordinating with the content team on the specific deal placement and ideal campaign period. Ideally, the deal should be placed with a relevant article so it can reach a more relevant target audience and hence, have higher click-through rates.

With the new solution, Harry is able to quickly determine the ideal deal placement and campaign period as the solution recommends the relevant content for higher click-throughs, based on the inputted deal parameters (e.g. ideal target, content of deal, store location). Each

clickthrough, transacted deal and overall campaign performance is tracked by the system as it improves its insights recommender, while also allowing Harry to easily present data-backed success metrics with the advertising merchant to show clearer campaign ROI.

**3. Connecting TSL users with relevant partner merchants for greater rewards** –Thomas is browsing through an e-commerce site for products to buy. On his logged-in account and browser extension, he gets alerted to some deals found on the site that could earn him cashback rewards. He can also use the solution to browse through a list of existing deals that are currently happening, curated by TSL. He proceeds to make a purchase of those deals. When the transaction is complete, he receives a notification informing him that \$X cashback has been credited to his account. When he logs into the solution the next day, he receives a notification informing him that \$X cashback has been credited to his account. He continues to shop for deals and uses his cashback to offset his next purchase, earning him another round of cashback rewards.

### WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

- SGD \$40,000 of prize money for each winner of this challenge (see Award Model)
- Opportunity to work with a leading digital media company in Singapore
- Opportunity to work with existing network of KOLs and businesses as starting point for platform
- Opportunity to take a successful prototype to scale, including potential equity investment

### EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Applicants shall be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out below.

<b>Solution Fit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does the proposed solution address the problem statement effectively?</li> </ul>
<b>Solution Readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How ready is the proposed solution to go to the market?</li> <li>• Is there any evidence to suggest capacity to scale?</li> </ul>
<b>Solution Advantage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the solution cost effective and truly innovative?</li> <li>• Does it make use of new technologies in the market, and can it potentially generate new IP?</li> <li>• To share estimated cost for pilot trial, deployment, and software support.</li> </ul>
<b>Company Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the product have user and revenue traction?</li> <li>• Do the team members possess strong scientific/technical background?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the company able to demonstrate financial capability and resources to complete the prototype?</li></ul>
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## AWARD MODEL

30% of the prize money will be awarded to each selected finalist at the start of the prototype development process, with the remainder 70% to be awarded during the prototype development process, based on milestones agreed between Problem Owner(s) and the solver.

Note that a finalist who is selected to undertake the prototype development process will be required to enter into an agreement with Problem Owner(s) that will include more detailed conditions pertaining to the prototype development.

Teams with public research performers are required to seek an endorsement from their respective innovation and enterprise office and submit the attached IEO form together with the proposal.

## DEADLINE

All submissions must be made by **29<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 1600 hours (SGT/GMT +8)**. Problem Owner(s) and IMDA may extend the deadline of the submission at their discretion. Late submissions will not be considered.