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Business

Online platforms Chope and Qoo10 working with Chinatown businesses to give precinct a boost



People walk past shops in the Chinatown area of Singapore on Jan 25, 2021.
(Photo: AFP/Roslan Rahman)

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/chinatown-digitalisation-chope-qoo10-online-initiatives-14478808>

SINGAPORE: Tie-ups with two well-known digital platforms are among the initiatives to bring people back to Chinatown, where businesses have been battered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collaborations with reservation platform Chope and online retail platform Qoo10, as well as other efforts, were announced by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), Enterprise Singapore (ESG) Singapore Tourism Board (STB) on Wednesday (Mar 24).

The three agencies lead the Chinatown Digitalisation Committee, supported by the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI) and Chinatown Business Association (CBA).

The committee was set up in July last year to help businesses find ways to grow revenue after footfall dried up with the pandemic.

As a start, the committee has appointed Chope and Qoo10 to develop digital initiatives focused on Chinatown as a precinct.

"The two companies will provide dedicated support for digital marketing, outreach, onboarding and training to interested businesses," said IMDA, ESG and STB in a joint release.

For instance, Chope will feature and onboard F&B businesses on ChopeDeals - its arm that drives e-voucher sales - and curate a collection of dining deals in the area.

These include 1-for-1 promotions or buffet and set meal bundles.

"(This) involves no upfront cost to businesses, does not require any device installation, and is extremely easy to adopt, even for businesses who are not tech-savvy," said the release.

There will also be bundled dining and staycation deals to give Chinatown hotels a boost.

In addition, over the next few months, Chope will create content such as food maps and guides for the area to encourage "young locals to explore and rediscover the historic gem, and reinject sales amongst its businesses".

Meanwhile, Qoo10 will bring firms onto its platform, while offering in-store pick-ups to help drive people to the precinct.

Visitors can also play location-based games on the Qoo10 mobile app to collect virtual monsters, which can be redeemed as vouchers at selected stores in Chinatown.

Mr Bernard Leong, the chairman of the precinct's business association said: "With (these initiatives), we are hopeful that our tenants and stakeholders' digital infrastructure and platforms are multi-pronged and amplified."

He added that the initiatives will start with the Kreta Ayer, Telok Ayer, Bukit Pasoh and Keong Saik areas, as those are key places that tourists and locals used to frequent.

Based on a count by STB last September, there are about 1,000 merchants within these zones across a variety of trades, he said.

With the initiatives, Chinatown joins the likes of other cultural precincts, such as Little India and Kampong Gelam, which have embarked on efforts to go digital.

At an event marking the launch of the initiatives, Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information Sim Ann said: "In the case of Chinatown, it makes a lot of sense to digitalise as a precinct instead of as individual businesses.

"We rely on the ingenuity of tech partners to help to recreate a precinct experience online, or better yet, create something quite new, so that the identity of the precinct is still there, and yet at the same time, the online customers can experience something new."



Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information Ms Sim Ann and Minister of State for Trade and Industry Ms Low Yen Ling speaking with a Qoo10 representative. (Photo: Ministry of Communications and Information)

NEW ADVISORY CENTRE FOR SMEs

A new centre for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has also been set up in the area to complement the digitalisation initiatives and support businesses in their transformation efforts. said the release.

The SME Centre@Chinatown, a collaboration between ESG and SCCCI, provides customised advice to businesses in areas such as productivity, innovation and internationalisation.

It will also organise workshops and events to help these business build their capabilities.

Located at Chinatown Point, it is the 12th SME Centre in Singapore and the third such centre set up by SCCCI and ESG.

Ms Chew Mok Lee, Assistant Chief Executive Officer of ESG, said Chinatown is home to many long-established brands, but these traditional businesses will need to adapt - and that is where the centre can help.

“I am confident that the experience SCCCI has built up over the years through running two other SME Centres and other enterprise development initiatives can be readily adapted to suit the needs of the businesses in this area,” she said.