

Bringing WeChat Pay to Malaysia

BY TAN ZHAI YUN

Last August, Malaysia became the first country outside of China to have WeChat Pay in a local currency. The e-wallet is embedded within WeChat, a popular messenger service in China that is also widely used in Malaysia.

WeChat Pay Malaysia (MY) CEO Jason Siew says Malaysia is one of the fastest-growing markets in terms of adopting digital trends. With a high number of smartphone users, the Malaysian market is ready for the digital economy. According to him, WeChat has over 20 million registered user accounts in Malaysia.

"WeChat started in Malaysia as a social media platform that allows users to connect with peers. We must evolve to meet the needs of WeChat users. Malaysian consumers today are keen to try new things. They embrace technology evolutions. With that understanding, we are constantly exploring how WeChat Pay MY can be weaved into local digital lifestyles," Siew says.

WeChat Pay MY is an e-wallet that enables social payments, defined as the use of social media to transfer money. WeChat is a product of the Chinese technology company Tencent.

"Malaysia is the first country in Southeast Asia that we are operating WeChat Pay MY, a domestic wallet in local currency. Moving forward, Tencent will continue to leverage its payment platform's experience, technologies and abilities to offer users an excellent social payment experience," Siew says.

To use WeChat Pay, users need to first download the WeChat app. The functions it currently offers include QR payments at retail outlets, mobile credit top-ups, peer-to-peer payments, purchase of movie, flight and bus tickets. WeChat Pay MY users can also withdraw money from their e-wallet and transfer it to their bank accounts. The limit for withdrawals is RM4,999.

Siew notes that WeChat Pay Malaysia is actively recruiting more partner merchants. So far, it has signed up Starbucks, Petron, KK Mart and Tealive. In the future, the list could include convenience stores, food and beverage outlets, petrol stations and roadside vendors.

One popular feature is the Money Packet, which was launched during the recent Chinese New Year period. Close to two million virtual angpows were sent and received in the country between Jan 28 and Feb 10, Siew reveals.

"The feature serves as a digital proxy to the physical red packets, also known as angpow, which are used to distribute gifts in the form of cash to give blessings. The Money Packet feature is now a permanent one and will continue to be used for other occasions and festivals in Malaysia," Siew says.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR WECHAT PAY MY?

WeChat Pay MY organised an event in March last year to showcase its use cases in Malaysia, according to reports. Among the services it introduced were petrol purchases using the e-wallet prior to arriving at a petrol station. Another potential use case is an online ordering service for mamak restaurants.

Siew says that the latter is something that will come soon to Klang Valley. "It is an online ordering service that allows users to order their choice of food and beverage through WeChat Pay MY and make a payment instantly. This service provides regular mamak stall goers a smoother way of ordering and paying for food without having to wait for a person to take their orders or queue up to pay for their bill."

In China, WeChat Pay users can use it as



a cross-border payment option. It also hosts in-app purchases, where users can buy items from official accounts of merchants. Last November, it launched a beta version of a money market fund that users can invest in via the e-wallet, according to reports.

Asked if these features will come to Malaysia, Siew replies that WeChat will respond to customer demands. "To launch any new service, we will listen to customer feedback and conduct the necessary research to understand their behaviours and requirements to make sure we offer relevant product services," he says.

The goal in Malaysia is to innovate new ways for people to engage, communicate and share within the app. For the merchants, WeChat Official Accounts open a new channel for them to engage with consumers.

"On the business level, merchants can engage with consumers throughout their shopping journey, from raising awareness

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and interacting with followers on their official WeChat accounts and converting it into sales directly with WeChat Pay MY, and ultimately sustaining the relationship through various marketing promotions such as a branded Money Packet and coupon all within the WeChat app," Siew says.

