## The Key to Driving Success: Geolah

Started by Singaporeans Mr Deniel Singh and Mr George Lim Ting in 2020 during the COVID-19 Circuit Breaker — in part due to Mr Singh's personal private-hire driver experience when he saw significant disruptions in last-mile delivery — Geolah prides itself as the next-generation, artificial intelligence-powered and on-demand multiservice platform that offers ride-hailing, carpool, limousine, e-mall, parcel, and food and grocery delivery services.
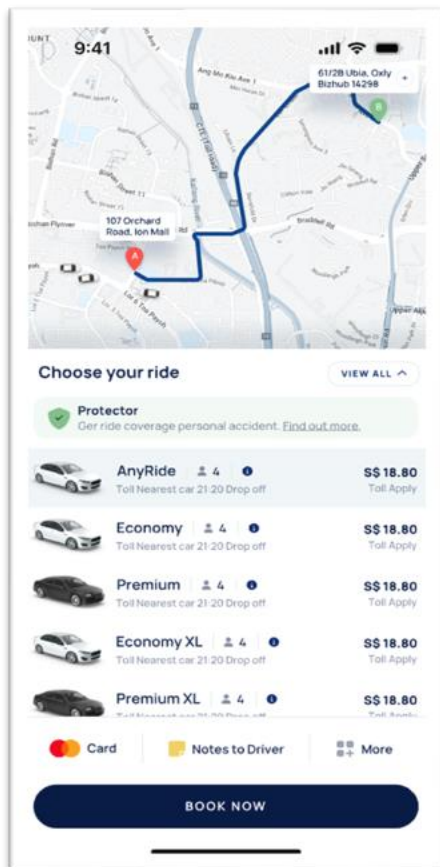
Screenshot of the transportation services available for passengers on the Geolah app, including economy, premium, taxi and four- or six-seater rides.

Geolah's goal is to leverage digital transformation to make transportation, food and parcel delivery more accessible and affordable for consumers and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Geolah rolled out its beta test on 14 Feb 2022 with a small focus group of 400 private hire drivers to further test the platform and improve user experience. With 5,200 enrolled drivers today, Geolah's biggest key differentiator is its introduction of the zero-commission scheme, which aims to create more job opportunities for drivers and smaller businesses.

In the challenging landscape it operates in, Geolah's key rivals are Grab, Gojek, TADA, Ryde and ComfortDelGro, as well as public transportation, including mass rapid transit (MRT), light rail transit (LRT) and bus services.

However, considerable opportunities abound in this sea of competition. For example, in 2021, the ride-hailing market hosted nearly 15,000 taxis and about 68,000 private hire cars, totalling 83,000 vehicles. If these drivers are receptive to using Geolah, then the company could focus on attracting them to its platform. Otherwise, Geolah may need to allocate additional resources to encourage new drivers to sign up.

Breaking into an industry with established and well-resourced incumbents requires a robust, data-driven strategy. To better understand these challenges and opportunities on the driver and passenger sides — as well as possible tactics to increase its market share more effectively — Geolah commissioned a team of three student-consultants under the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI) SME Consulting

Programme (SCP), who were supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and supported by a Project Manager from the Institute.

Using a combination of primary and secondary research, face-to-face interviews and online surveys, the student-consultants helped Geolah assess potential opportunities and gaps within the market, identify its key target groups and understand the key benefits of its services. The insights generated from the study, alongside specific recommendations by the team, will ultimately help Geolah form a robust go-to-market strategy.
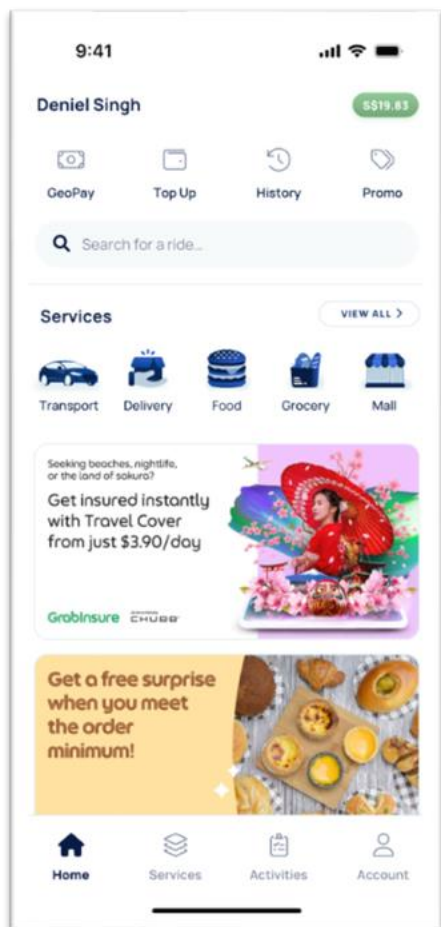
Screenshot of the transportation, delivery, food, grocery and e-mall services available for passengers in the on-demand super-app Geolah.

Attracting drivers by playing to its strengths
The team found that drivers are attracted to the transportation and logistics industry due to its ease of entry and the flexible nature of the job. However, some drivers raised several concerns, including generally low-income levels, career immobility and financial security. Further face-to-face interviews with drivers also established that they find platforms with a large base of passengers more reliable, thus ensuring the consistent availability of jobs.

Based on these pros and cons, the team explored the possibility that Geolah could market itself as an easy-to-onboard platform with flexible benefits while trying to address the drivers' concerns about industry challenges. Geolah should leverage its primary selling point drawn from the study, the commission scheme, which could help to increase a driver's overall earnings. However, beyond marketing, a strategic effort must also be made to entice more passengers to use the Geolah platform. Only then would there be a real and perceived demand for the platform and draw a steady supply of drivers.

The team also observed that the most common ways drivers learn about a platform are through word-of-mouth and social media via Telegram, WhatsApp and Facebook. This finding led them to recommend a marketing approach using the complementary elements of social media and traditional word-of-mouth tactics.

Steering brand loyalty for passengers

On the other hand, passengers considered safety, price and convenience as the top factors when booking a service on a ride-hailing platform. Studies have also shown that many ride-hailing companies often struggle with brand loyalty. For example, a survey by Accenture in Singapore found that while 90 per cent of passengers expected to maintain or increase spending in 2022, more than 40 per cent said they intended to switch providers in the next 12 months. Through their research, the student consultants found that the top two reasons passengers switch platforms are better pricing and shorter wait times.

As a result, it would be feasible to market Geolah's platform to ride-hailing users. In its go-to-market messaging, Geolah should also focus on its fee scheme, which would result in lower passenger prices and, with the increased number of drivers it can attract, ultimately offer shorter waiting times.

Through their analysis, the team also found that young to middle-aged working adults could form Geolah's target market. This is because these groups are tech-savvy and have adequate purchasing power. As with drivers, these factors show that social media marketing and generating word-of-mouth mentions among passengers are optimal strategies for Geolah.

Geolah's key differentiator is its zero-commission scheme for partner drivers on its ride-hailing service.

Finding a sweet spot among established incumbents

Overall, Geolah should market itself to drivers and passengers as a reliable and affordable platform, with its commission scheme as a key differentiating factor. Additionally, an effort could be made to attract existing users who are open to trying other platforms.

Given the market conditions, it is evident that there is room for Geolah to position itself well among industry giants. To meet the needs of its customers — both drivers and passengers — Geolah must carefully calibrate how it manages and delivers its services. With some users expecting to switch to other

platforms, Geolah's business strategy should focus on ensuring brand loyalty and a functional interface that is efficient and easy to use.

Fuelling a go-to-market strategy
Geolah was "extremely satisfied" with the results of the strategies and insights provided by the team. In particular, Mr Paras, Project Lead, Technology, Geolah, shared that "the ground surveys were very well-planned and executed", and that the team's recommended action plan was feasible and implementable. "We have gathered enough information for the next steps," he added.

Geolah's stakeholders, CEO and co-founder Mr George Lim Ting; COO and co-founder Mr Deniel Singh; and Product Innovation Manager Mr Paras.

This was music to the team's ears, and the team relished their eye-opening and meaningful experience working on the project. Student-consultant Keith Chan said, "The project helped me understand better the different steps to formulating a go-to-market strategy, such as identifying key domains, pain points, value propositions and target segments. I also experienced what it's like to be a consultant in the real world, meeting different client expectations."

Although the project had real-world challenges and expectations, Project Advisor Gerard Teo felt the team conquered these well. Commending the student-counsellors, he said, "This team was analytical, responsible and resilient; showed good initiative; and possessed strong

multitasking skills. They resolutely stayed the course and did their best, despite their other commitments. It has been a most fulfilling and rewarding experience for me."

He added: "Geolah were seeking insights and recommendations that would add value and help them to refine their strategies to compete against entrenched incumbents. It was most gratifying to hear Geolah admit that they were initially sceptical about what the team could do and were positively surprised and impressed by the team's work in the end."

Project Manager Chen Shan Shan summed it up well when she commented, "It is very heartening to know that the end outcome was a pleasant surprise for the SME when they shared that there were insights they had missed while researching on their own. It is the highest recognition for ungraded projects like this."

Geolah was featured on the technology news website, *Tech In Asia*. Read more about Geolah at https://www.techinasia.com/sg-mobility-startup-offers-zero-commission-fees-to-challenge-grab.

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