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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report critically examines GrabFood, Malaysia's leading online food delivery (OFD) platform, through the lens of contemporary consumer behaviour theory, addressing both Part A and Part B of the assigned coursework. Part A analyses GrabFood's marketing mix (4Ps) and segmentation–targeting–positioning (STP) execution, evaluates two sociocultural drivers — multicultural–Halal identity and the digitally mediated urban lifestyle — shaping food delivery consumption, and applies the dual hedonic–utilitarian motivation framework to explain sustained platform usage among loyal customers. Part B traces the typical GrabFood customer journey using the Engel–Kollat–Blackwell (EKB) consumer decision-making model, integrating perception, learning, motivation, attitude, and personality at each of the five stages, and concludes with two evidence-based strategic recommendations.

The analysis finds that GrabFood's leadership in Malaysia's USD 2.7 billion OFD market rests on a sophisticated super-app architecture, AI-enabled personalisation, and behavioural-segment targeting of Generation Z and millennials. However, low switching costs, intense rivalry from Foodpanda and ShopeeFood, and post-pandemic decline in delivery frequency expose the platform to commoditisation. Two strategies are critically recommended: first, hyper-personalisation through AI-driven self-congruity engagement that aligns recommendations with declared user values — health, sustainability, religion, and adventurous taste; and second, deeper emotional brand engagement through visible Halal-trust verification and gamified sustainability features. Together, these interventions pivot GrabFood from a price-competitive convenience platform to an identity-aligned, ethically credible Malaysian lifestyle brand, securing defensible loyalty in an otherwise transactional category.

Table of Contents

PART A

Question 1: GrabFood's 4Ps Marketing Mix and STP Strategy

The 4Ps marketing mix of GrabFood follows the market segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) theory (Kotler et al., 2023). The marketing mix components are designed to target and capture GrabFood's main segments of Generation Z digital natives, young and time-poor millennials, and urban families concerned about halal status of food and beverages.

Product: Besides being an OFD channel, GrabFood has built a digital ecosystem that includes artificial intelligence-based meal recommendations, real-time order tracking, GrabPay (digital wallet), and GrabUnlimited subscription. As observed by Lok et al. (2024), food variety and service quality are the strongest predictors of GrabFood adoption among Malaysian users.

Price: Tiered segmentation based on consumer psychographics is adopted in GrabFood's price policies. GrabFood captures low-price customers such as college students and value-driven households by means of free-delivery offers and flash sales (Lok et al., 2024) and offers GrabUnlimited subscription service to target a less price-elastic segment focused on convenience and time-saving. Foroughi et al. (2024) showed that perceived value for money was the strongest predictor of Malaysian consumers' OFD continuance intention, which outweighed perceived ease of use.

Place: GrabFood's delivery service held 74% share of Malaysia's OFD market in 2023 (Acumen Research and Consulting, 2024). Geographic targeting allows GrabFood to concentrate on areas of high rider density, which include the Klang Valley, Penang, and Johor Bahru.

Promotion: GrabFood uses behavioural data to deliver in-app game-like promotions, engage micro-influencers, and offer special menu bundles based on local traditions like the Ramadan Iftar set (Kee et al., 2021).

Of particular significance is GrabFood's market positioning statement, "convenient and reliable everyday companion," which can be easily copied given low switching costs found by Tan et al. (2024). By adopting a psychographic approach to positioning towards a narrower group of consumer segments that are value-based and emotional, including health-focused, environmentally conscious, and those concerned with Halal certification, GrabFood could further differentiate itself from rivals in the Malaysia market.

Table 1.1 Application of the 4Ps to GrabFood's Malaysian Market

4P Element	GrabFood Application in Malaysia	Targeted Segment
Product	Super-app ecosystem with AI dish recommendations, GrabPay, GrabUnlimited; food variety from hawker stalls to fine dining.	Gen Z, millennials, urban families
Price	Tiered pricing: free-delivery vouchers, flash discounts, RM15.90/month GrabUnlimited subscription; surge pricing during peak hours.	Price-sensitive students; convenience-led professionals
Place	Platform-to-consumer model dominating Klang Valley, Penang, Johor Bahru; cloud-kitchen partnerships; integrated within Grab super-app.	Urban dwellers (geographic segmentation)
Promotion	In-app gamification, GrabRewards loyalty points, micro-influencer marketing, Ramadan/CNY/Deepavali bundles, push-notification offers.	Behavioural segments (frequency,

4P Element	GrabFood Application in Malaysia	Targeted Segment
		cuisine preference)

Source: Adapted from Lok et al. (2024), Foroughi et al. (2024), Hasan et al. (2025), Kee et al. (2021).

Question 2: Sociocultural Influences on Malaysian Food Delivery Consumption

Two sociocultural factors that are important in the consumption of GrabFood services are: (i) the country's ethnic and religious multiculturalism and the Halal certification, and (ii) urban lifestyle in the country that is more and more mediated by digital technologies.

2.1 Multicultural–Halal Identity and Subculture Theory

Ethnic and religious subcultures within Malaysia's plural society of Malay, Chinese, Indian and indigenous people determine food choice. According to Schiffman and Wisenblit's (2023) theory of subcultures, subgroups have different rules and norms, including food rules. The food rules of Malaysian Muslim people, over 60 per cent of total Malaysian population, are non-negotiable, meaning they must consume only Halal food. Belk's extended self-identity concept (Belk, 1988) states that food consumption may be symbolic. Consumers use nasi lemak or briyani as GrabFood orders in addition to satisfying physical hunger; ordering such dishes via GrabFood is not merely caloric but reinforces ethnic and religious belonging. GrabFood's Halal status filter and special menu bundles targeted towards cultural and religious groups tap these subcultural identity markers.

2.2 Digitally Mediated Urban Lifestyle

The urban lifestyle of Malaysian consumers has changed over the years to become an extension of digital life and convenience. Statista projections cited by Warris et al. (2025) suggest the Malaysian OFD market will reach USD 996 million by 2030, driven by dual-income

households and time-poor professionals in the Klang Valley. Solomon (2023) explains that this lifestyle approach is reflected in OFD adopters such as "Achievers" and "Strivers," who look to GrabFood services as an easy way of life and status symbol. Based on the findings of Tan et al. (2024), many post-pandemic Malaysians still use GrabFood service as the habit had become an integral part of the daily routine, a finding which supports the theory of habit-based consumption. From the perspective of consumer identity, a regular GrabFood user is signalling his or her affiliation to the identity of a modern urban resident.

Question 3: Motivation Theory: A Hedonic–Utilitarian Application

The dual hedonic–utilitarian motivation model (Babin et al., 1994; Hu et al., 2023) best captures the continued use of GrabFood by loyal customers in Malaysia.

A utilitarian motivation is a dominant one among loyal GrabFood users, whose reasons for using the service revolve around convenience, time savings, value for money and the range of food products offered. Price value, food quality and service quality have been found to be significant predictors of Malaysian customers' intention to continue using a local food through an online food delivery (OFD) channel (Foroughi et al., 2024), where perceived ease of use was found to be non-significant, suggesting that functional benefits, as opposed to the novelty of the user interface, are more significant for loyal customers.

However, the utilitarian motivation model is found to be insufficient to predict the continued use of GrabFood. In their study of an emerging market, Shankar et al. (2024) reported hedonic motivation as an important predictor of both adoption intention and continued intention of food delivery apps, where hedonic motivation is defined as the extent of the consumer’s perception that using food delivery apps provides enjoyment, exploration and trust. A hedonic benefit that can be derived from the GrabFood app is the presence of Gamified GrabRewards and other promotional offers such as Grab’s AI-curated cuisine recommendations and GrabFood’s Ramadan and Hari Raya promotional bundles where Rebollo and Hinlayagan (2023) found that among a sample of Gen Z OFD users, there was a strong influence of hedonic–convenience factors on customers’ satisfaction.

The dual hedonic–utilitarian motivation model suggests that a consumer that uses an OFD channel has both utilitarian and hedonic motivations. A loyal GrabFood customer may continue using the platform because Grab is reliable, functional and useful as well as hedonic. A loyal consumer is therefore more motivated by the functional benefits and emotional benefits.

PART B

Question 1: Consumer Decision-Making Process for GrabFood Customers

In the decision-making process for buying online food in Malaysia, the Engel–Kollat–Blackwell (EKB) model can provide a framework, with its identification of five consumer decision stages that are influenced by various internal factors specific to an individual (Were, 2024).

Figure 1.1 Adapted EKB Consumer Decision-Making Model for GrabFood

Need Recognition → Information Search → Evaluation of Alternatives → Purchase Decision → Post-Purchase Evaluation

Mediated by: perception, learning, motivation, attitude, and personality

Source: Adapted from Were (2024) and Solomon (2023).

1.1 Stage 1: Need Recognition

A need is first recognised when the actual state (hunger, tiredness, lack of time to cook) deviates from the desired state (satiation, rest, ease). A push notification in the lunch hour acts as an external stimulus that attracts selective attention and triggers conscious awareness of the need.

1.2 Stage 2: Information Search

Internal search consists of a consumer recalling his own previous experiences; external search consists of browsing the application to compare the food and ratings of other restaurants. Learning and memory strongly play a role in this phase; after several positive reinforcement instances, a customer will remember the restaurants as schemas and will proceed directly to the restaurant pages. Foroughi et al. (2024) point out that information quality and credibility are important factors at this stage in the process. The consumer personality affects the intensity of search.

1.3 Stage 3: Evaluation of Alternatives

Potential customers consider the various restaurants in terms of compensatory evaluation rules (price and quality) and non-compensatory evaluation rules (e.g. they would be eliminated if the restaurants don't serve halal food). In this process, attitude has its greatest role. Tan et al. (2024) find that in Malaysia, a customer's attitude towards online food delivery services is a strong mediator of customer purchase intention. Lin, Au and Baum (2024) also find that the quality of service perceived for online food delivery apps translates to the overall attitude towards such food service brands.

1.4 Stage 4: Purchase Decision

The consumer makes a final restaurant decision, applies a voucher and uses his GrabPay credit to complete the transaction. Motivation reaches its highest level (visceral hunger), and personality traits in terms of risk propensity affect consumer experimentation (i.e. trying a new cuisine) or reliance on a safe brand. Chiu et al. (2024) find that the convenience of the transaction and the availability of coupons increase brand trust and reduce cart abandonment.

1.5 Stage 5: Post-Purchase Evaluation

The consumer either becomes satisfied or feels cognitive dissonance when they receive the food and the food is either in accordance with or better or worse than expectations. Feedback occurs: positive learning reinforces the positive attitude and increases repurchase probability, while negative learning leads to negative electronic word-of-mouth (e.g. app rating). Using the EKB model, GrabFood needs to intervene in all five stages, not only at the purchase stage, to achieve its retention and loyalty goals.

Table 2.1 EKB Decision Stages and Internal Psychological Influences

EKB Stage	Dominant Internal Influence	GrabFood Touchpoint
Need recognition	Motivation, perception	Push notifications, lunch-hour banners, AI-suggested cravings

EKB Stage	Dominant Internal Influence	GrabFood Touchpoint
Information search	Learning, personality	Restaurant ratings, reviews, AI recommendation feed
Evaluation of alternatives	Attitude, perception	Halal filters, photo quality, comparison views, voucher visibility
Purchase decision	Motivation, personality	One-click checkout, GrabPay, GrabRewards points, ETA display
Post-purchase evaluation	Learning, attitude	Rating prompts, dispute resolution, re-order suggestions

Source: Adapted from Were (2024); Foroughi et al. (2024); Lin, Au and Baum (2024); Tan et al. (2024).

Question 2: Strategic Recommendations

2.1 Hyper-Personalisation via AI-Driven Self-Congruity

In the future, GrabFood should consider using its artificial intelligence system to deliver hyper-personalised, as opposed to generic, recommendations based on the concept of self-congruity in which customers prefer brands that are congruent with their actual and ideal selves (Hu et al., 2023). The recommended strategy would layer values-based personalisation on top of the existing order-history logic, which means presenting health-focused meal packs to wellness-conscious customers, plant-based options to environmentally aware Generation Z, or Halal-certified premium meals to Muslim customers committed to their faith (Lok et al., 2024). This is reinforced by the theory of consumption values (Tandon et al., 2021) in the sense that, as the functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional values are all met, the intention to repurchase is enhanced.

Therefore, to take action, GrabFood can integrate a Lifestyle Profile for its customers, in which customers specify the values that define their lifestyle: for example, sustainability, health,

religion, food adventure. Algorithms can then highlight restaurants that share the same values, the packaging that they offer, or the special offers available. This change to the current situation would directly solve the low-switching costs problem that Tan et al., (2024) have identified, as GrabFood would then stand out for its shared values instead of just for being affordable.

2.2 Emotional Brand Engagement: Halal-Trust and Sustainability

To implement this strategy, GrabFood should be positioned as an everyday partner in the eyes of its consumers by showing it is committed to Halal and sustainability. According to consumer emotional engagement literature (Barrett et al., 2025), emotional, cognitive and behavioural engagement creates stronger loyalty than transaction-based loyalty.

(a) Halal-trust verification. Given that Muslim Malaysian customers actively search for Halal certification on food-delivery apps (Omar & Omar, 2024), GrabFood should show the real-time JAKIM status for its restaurants, along with the details of its supply chain and the measures its riders take to segregate their delivery of meat dishes versus other meals. These actions tackle the perceived risks identified by Tan et al., (2024) and turn the Halal certification into a positive factor that distinguishes GrabFood.

(b) Sustainability engagement. GrabFood can further show its commitment to the environment by integrating its initiatives for sustainable packaging and electric vehicles into the GrabFood app in a way that is customer-facing, for example, through a Green Order button that shows its impact in kilograms of CO2 reduction, and with gamification such as green badges and tiers that are unlocked when customers make a certain number of eco-friendly orders. Malaysian customers in Gen Z and Millennials are increasingly conscious of their choice of brand in terms of their sustainability claims (Warris et al., 2025) and Hasan et al., (2025) found that emotional factors that are part of the service experience are significantly related to customer satisfaction in Malaysia.

By adopting both of these strategies, GrabFood would change from a platform that competes on price and convenience, to a lifestyle brand for Malaysia that represents its customers' values

and is ethical to use, the most defensible competitive advantage in a market with low switching costs.

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