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Michael Tegos · 8 May 2018 · 3 min read

## Seedly helps millennials manage their money - and Singapore's ShopBack just acquired it



The Seedly team in ShopBack's Singapore office / Photo credit: Seedly

Singapore-based ShopBack, an online product comparison and rewards platform, has made its first acquisition. The company snapped up Seedly, which focuses on personal finance advice and expense tracking for young people.

Founded in 2016, Seedly developed an app that allows users to connect their bank accounts and credit cards as well as get detailed reports about their spending habits.

"We feel there's a lot of room for improvement in our financial products," says Ying Ying Wu, Shopback's regional head of communications. "The Seedly team are the experts in personal finance, and through this deal we hope to learn more about how to further develop this vertical."

## Access to the millennial crowd

Having Seedly on board gives ShopBack a window into the much-coveted millennial demographic. Seedly CEO Kenneth Lou says most of the startup's audience belong to the 25-to-34 age bracket, which mainly includes young people just out of university. They're about to or have recently entered the workplace, and are looking to boost their financial literacy.

A report (PDF link) conducted last year by Deloitte Consulting Southeast Asia shows that Asia is home to two-thirds of the world's millennial population, whose total net worth is expected to reach US\$19 trillion to US\$24 trillion globally by 2020.

Millennials are more sophisticated about seeking financial advice and more receptive to services by tech platforms, according to the report. In addition, 59 percent of the young demographic in Singapore are open to financial products from non-traditional brands and more than half of them validate their choices through advisors after doing their own research.



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"Financial online platforms like Seedly will be a strong complementary feature to existing sales channels for financial institutions," observes Quek. "The challenge, then, is how to find the right business model to monetize independent reviews and scale."

Quek also highlights the challenge of scaling regionally across Southeast Asia's diverse markets. "One might not be able to replicate and scale so easily into another market without truly understanding the localized needs," he cautions.

That's where ShopBack's expertise will come in handy for Seedly, Wu contends. ShopBack is currently in seven markets in Asia Pacific, including Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, and most recently, Australia.

Local teams study their respective markets, looking at details such as which times consumers tend to do their shopping in one country versus another.

## Wisdom of the crowd

Apart from Seedly, other platforms such as MoneySmart, SingSaver, and The New Savvy also help users make more informed decisions about which financial products to use.

Lou believes that Seedly's crowdsourced approach keeps the platform honest and makes it a "source of truth."

On its website, community members can ask each other questions and review products like mobile plans, lending startups, and robo-advisors. A blog dispenses advice and tips about topics like savings, investment, and so on. The result is a Yelp-like platform for online finance.

The site has over 350,000 unique monthly visitors.

On the other hand, ShopBack began as a cashback-awarding platform for ecommerce. It then evolved into a platform for product comparison that covers ecommerce, online travel booking, credit cards, restaurant reservations, and more.

ShopBack now has a team of 150 and counts over five million monthly users across desktop and mobile. It has over 1,300 regional merchants on its platform. In terms of external funding, it has raised a total of US\$40 million from investors like SoftBank Ventures Korea and the Mizuho Financial Group.

Seedly got its first funding from East Ventures and NUS Enterprise, right after its co-founders graduated university. The ShopBack deal gives the young startup a longer runway and some reprieve from having to monetize immediately, although Lou says that Seedly will eventually seek ways to do that.

The deal was made through a combination of cash and equity, but further details were not disclosed. Seedly will continue to operate under its own brand and will be looking to double its nine-people headcount, focusing on software development and further improving the product, says Lou.

## ShopBack → ShopBack is leading the wave of smarter shopping in Asia Pacific, offering a one-stop lifestyle portal that powers smarter purchase decisions for consumers. We are growing strong in 7 countries in Asia-Pacific - Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and Australia, powering over 1,300 ecommerce merchants across different verticals and serving over 5 million users LOCATION Singapore FOUNDED 2014 **EMPLOYEES** 51 - 200 WEBSITE www.shopback.sq LATEST FUNDING Series A HIRING 0 positions

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