

WhyItMatters*App gives GSS
a timely reboot***Jessica Lim**

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The Great Singapore Sale (GSS) has a new mobile app this year, the first time in its 24-year history that organisers are venturing into the digital sphere.

The GoSpree app allows retailers to dangle e-coupons for use at physical stores during the June 9 to Aug 13 sale. They can also use the geo-location enabled app to alert nearby shoppers to flash deals.

Each participating retailer will get a unique QR code to display on shopfronts or merchandise. The idea is that users go on a treasure hunt for these codes, scan them with the app and bag special deals.

This reboot is timely and much needed.

Launched in 1994, the annual event helped cement the city's reputation as a shopping paradise, with 400 stores taking part in the very first one.

But all good things have a shelf life. After three straight years of declining sales, experts and industry players called for a revamp last year.

This app could be just the reboot the GSS needs, but it will work only if there is buy-in from retailers.

Several participants – Takashimaya, Millenia Walk, Naisse and Courts – have been announced, and talks are under way for others to come on board. Many more will need to do so for shoppers to find the app worthwhile.

The flash deals, e-coupons and discounts on the app will also need to be good ones. It won't do to clear old stock or offer half-hearted discounts.

Instead, retailers should see this as a chance to get creative and reach out to a different audience. It costs them nothing to register for the app, although, of course, putting out a good sale does involve some investment.

But it is time for retailers to step up. The slow economy, competition in the region and success of e-commerce have given traditional retailing a beating.

There is now a chance to fight back with technology, so do not hold back the punches. Give shoppers the sale they have been waiting for.