



SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

STRATEGIC MARKETING MANAGEMENT

INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT

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INTRODUCTION:

Ocean Basket was developed from a South African six-item seafood restaurant into an international franchise operating across Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Ocean Basket's expansion logic has never been conventional. Throughout its growth, the company has remained closely attuned to customer needs rather than growth for its own sake. As the Chief Marketing Officer explores expansion into Muslim-majority markets, Malaysia presents a compelling opportunity, with Muslims accounting for approximately 63.5% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Successful international expansion requires more than compliance, as companies must align market selection and marketing strategy with local consumer needs and market conditions rather than transferring a formula that works at "home" to a new context (Katsikeas et al., 2019).

However, halal certification alone cannot guide targeting strategy. Mortimer et al. (2020) demonstrates that religiosity, lifestyle, and consumption priorities vary significantly within Muslim populations, creating distinct purchasing behaviours even among consumers of the same faith. For Ocean Basket, this means the strategic challenge is not whether to certify, but rather which customer segments within Malaysia's Muslim majority the brand should prioritise, and how to position itself against competitors who have already met the certification baseline.

This report evaluates the attractiveness of Malaysia as a potential growth market for Ocean Basket. It begins with the analysis of the Malaysian market environment and the factors relevant to Ocean Basket's entry and expansion. It then applies segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) theory, drawing on international marketing and Islamic marketing literature, to evaluate alternative customer segments and targeting approaches and justify this recommendation.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Malaysia's halal regulatory system, which is administered by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), has achieved substantial international recognition, with 88 foreign halal certification bodies across 49 countries accredited by JAKIM as of 2024 (Malay Mail, 2024). Certifying a food premises in Malaysia requires JAKIM approval against 17 general conditions covering ingredient sourcing, hygiene, food

handler training. For restaurant chains specifically centralised certification, and in some cases at least one Malaysian Muslim staff member on every shift (Mishu, 2026). Since May 2025, all applications for Malaysian Halal Certification have been processed entirely through the MYeHALAL digital platform, replacing the previous paper-based system as part of the broader government drive to modernise public service delivery (The Malaysian Reserve, 2025). Beyond halal-specific regulation, foreign franchisors such as Ocean Basket must also register under the Franchise Act 1998, with the 2020 Amendment extending mandatory registration requirements to foreign franchisors that previously only required ministerial approval, however, are now valid for five years and must be prominently displayed (Tay & Partners, 2024). For Ocean Basket, this regulatory landscape presents as both a challenge and an opportunity. Certification is administratively demanding, but the process is transparent and well-precedented, offering the brand a clear pathway. This therefore reflects that successful market entry depends on the firms understanding and adaptability to local institutional conditions (Katsikeas et al., 2019).

Beyond Halal certification, there is franchise regulation, Ocean Basket must navigate Malaysia's seafood regulatory environment. Seafood imports and seafood products sold in Malaysia are subject to food safety requirements under the Food Act 1983 and Food Regulations 1985, which establish standards relating to food safety, contaminants (Minister of Health Malaysia, 2025). Complying with these regulations may strengthen consumer confidence by providing safety, quality, and traceability assurance that help consumers evaluate product attributes which cannot be directly observed prior to purchase (Wu et al., 2021). For Ocean Basket, compliance with food safety regulation extends beyond legal requirements. Consistent sourcing standards and visible quality assurance may strengthen consumer trust by reducing uncertainty surrounding quality and safety, thereby increasing the brands credibility among Malaysian consumers.

Beyond regulation, Malaysia's economic conditions lend themselves well to casual dining expansion. Malaysia is a stable, upper-middle income economy, with a GDP growth reaching 5.2% in 2025, sustaining the strong growth recorded in 2024 with 5.1%, and GDP per capita being USD 13124.6 (World Bank, 2026). Urbanisation stands at 75%, indicating a large, geographically concentrated consumer base which

is favourable for a franchise like Ocean Basket, multiple outlets in the same city reinforce brand presence (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Within the Malaysian economy, the domestic halal food market alone was valued at approximately USD 50.66 billion in 2024, this is forecasted to grow at a compound annual rate of 6.2% through 2031 (BlueWeave, 2024). This large, expanding market reduces entry risk for Ocean Basket, since there is a strong demand for halal food. The market aligns well with Ocean Basket's brand positioning of affordability and accessible dining.

Market size does not guarantee success. Malaysia is a culturally and religiously diverse, meaning that the market cannot be treated as a homogenous market segment (Mamun et al., 2020). The Malaysian population is comprised of majority Muslim individuals at approximately 63.5%, alongside Chinese and Indian minority communities (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Ethnicity and perceived halal integrity are intertwined in Malaysian consumer decision making. Although Chinese and Indian owned establishments are genuinely compliant, Malay Muslim consumers that such establishments may not strictly adhere to halal standards, whereas Malay frequently harbour doubt about their halal standards, while Indian Muslim-owned establishments benefit from an inherited trust independent of formal certification status (Mohd Zahari et al., 2025). Religiosity itself is not uniform, even within Malaysia's Muslim population. Levels of religious observance and halal-consciousness vary considerably, operating more as a continuum than a fixed binary, and this variation produces differing risk perceptions and purchase behaviours even among consumers who share the same faith (Mortimer et al., 2020). Together these dynamics carry a direct implication for a foreign entrant like Ocean Basket, which carries no inherited ethnic association in Malaysia, unlike other Chinese or Indian owned establishments, and is therefore not subject to the same lingering consumer doubt that complicates positioning for local competitors. The absence of ethnic baggage represents a strategic opening, but only if Ocean Basket treats halal compliance as something to be actively and visibly communicated, rather than assumed to be self-evident from certification status alone.

Reaching this fragmented consumer base which is divided by ethnicity, religiosity, and patterns of halal trust that do not map clearly onto each other has been made

considerably easier by Malaysia's mature digital food ecosystem. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2026) most recent ICT survey, internet usage among individuals reached 98.3% in 2025, up from 98% the previous year, while mobile usage stood at 99.6%, these statistics indicate near-universal digital access rather than a partially connected population. Malaysia's near-universal internet and mobile connectivity reinforce a rapidly growing food delivery market. Malaysia's food delivery market was valued at approximately USD 9.8 billion in 2025 and is projected to more than double to USD 25.7 billion by 2031, registering a compound annual growth rate of 17.5% (Mobility Foresights, 2025). This trajectory is attributed to rising smartphone adoption, deeper digital payment integration, and a decisive consumer shift toward convenience-based dining (Mobility Foresights, 2025). Cloud kitchens have been identified as the fast-growing segment of the country's broader foodservice industry, enabling restaurants to reduce operating costs and focus entirely on delivery, operating without dine-in space, and housing multiple brands under one roof (Mobility Foresights, 2025). Within this market, platforms such as GrabFood and Foodpanda dominate transaction volume, with Grab alone holding an estimated 55% share of the broader Southeast Asian food delivery market by transaction value (Momentum Works, 2026). For Ocean Basket, this combination of near-universal connectivity and an already scaled delivery infrastructure provide a channel for building initial brand awareness in Malaysia, extending the brand's reach beyond physical outlet locations well before the franchise achieves meaningful physical density.

Malaysian cuisine reflects the country's multicultural composition, incorporating Malay, Chinese and Indian culinary influences that have evolved through historical and cultural exchange (Nahar et al., 2018). Commensality, defined as the practice of eating together, is integral to Malaysian food culture, with food serving as an important medium through which social relationships and shared experiences are formed and maintained (Fong et al., 2024). This cultural orientation towards collective dining creates a favourable environment for Ocean Basket. The brand's seafood platters are specifically designed for sharing among family members and social groups, allowing Ocean Basket to participate naturally in dining occasions that emphasise togetherness and interpersonal connection. This alignment between local dining practices and Ocean Basket's service format may enhance consumer acceptance by allowing the brand to fit naturally within existing consumption behaviors.

Digital reach alone, however, will not determine Ocean Basket's success, that depends on how it is positioned against brands already competing for the same trust it will need to build. Global restaurant brands such as McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut and Domino's have all secured JAKIM halal certification, treating halal compliance as a prerequisite for participation rather than a source of meaningful differentiation (The Halal Times, 2024). Nando's, a fellow brand of South African origin, entered Malaysia with its entire menu certified halal by JAKIM, across 78 outlets (Food & Beverage Outlook, 2026). The Manhattan Fish Market, a Western-style seafood casual-dining chain and Ocean Basket's closest direct competitor, has operated in Malaysia since 2002 and markets itself as halal certified (Malaysian Foodie, 2018). The company positions itself within the premium casual dining segment, with pricing and a brand philosophy of "We do not cheapen, we enhance", which reflects an elevated, experience driven dining concept rather than an everyday value option (Vulcan Post, 2023). This leaves a gap for Ocean Basket, whose brand identity has instead rested on affordability and a simple accessible menu. Together, these examples confirm that halal compliance in Malaysia functions as a baseline expectation for Western casual-dining brands seeking to establish credibility in the Malaysian market, regardless of category or country of origin. For Ocean Basket it's clear that securing JAKIM certification is not a competitive advantage, but simply the price of entry required to compete for the same consumer trust that Nando's and Manhattan Fish Market have already established.

These findings highlight a market that is structurally favourable but strategically demanding. Malaysia's halal regulatory system is strict and demanding, but it is transparent and well-established. Its food safety compliance under the Food Act 1983 offers Ocean Basket an avenue to build consumer trust through visible quality assurance. Its economic conditions support a value-oriented dining concept, its digital infrastructure offers a low-cost route to market entry via delivery platforms. Its socio-cultural landscape offers a specific opening for a foreign entrant unburdened by the ethnic trust associations that complicate positioning for local competitors, while its strong cultural emphasis on commensality and shared dining aligns naturally with Ocean Basket's existing sharing platter menu format. This favourability, however, is not unconditional. Ocean Basket will face intense competition from established local franchises, and the added administrative burden of navigating both franchise

registration and halal certification, which all pose real risks to the brands margins and pace of expansion.

However, the competitive landscape reveals, that halal certification alone will not differentiate Ocean Basket from Nando's, Manhattan Fish Market, or Malaysia's dominant local franchises. Ocean Basket's success depends on identifying which consumer segment within this heterogeneous market to prioritise, and how to position against competitors.

STP ANALYSIS:

Segmentation

The Market Analysis established that Malaysia's dining market cannot be treated as a single, homogenous entity, consumers differ by ethnicity and by religiosity (Mamun et al., 2020). Trust tends to follow assumptions about a restaurant owner's ethnicity rather than its actual halal compliance (Mohd Zahari et al., 2025). This is reinforced by the fact that religiosity itself varies among Muslim consumers, meaning demand cannot be assumed to move uniformly with religious identity either (Mortimer et al., 2020). Segmentation creates a map of possibilities from which a firm selects its target market (Lappeman et al., 2021). Effective segmentation identifies the product-market segments most worthwhile to pursue, recognising the dynamic nature of markets, and helps a firm determine which products to market to the consumers most likely to purchase them. Applying this standard to Malaysia requires testing possible bases for segmentation, including demographic, geographic, psychographic, and behavioural approaches against the Market Analysis. .

For Malaysian consumers, religiosity operates as a psychographic segmentation variable, reflecting how deeply religious beliefs and practices influence individual values and consumer behaviour. Rather than dividing consumers into "Muslim" and "non-Muslim", religiosity should be understood as a spectrum of religious observance. Among Muslim consumers who share the same faith, some are highly observant while others are less so, and this difference shapes how risky they perceive an uncertain dining choice to be, and whether they choose to eat there (Mortimer et al., 2020). In principle, this allows Ocean Basket to distinguish highly religious, moderately religious, and less religious sub-segments of Malaysia's Muslim population, each with different

sensitivity to halal signalling. Despite this theoretical appeal, religiosity performs poorly against the measurability and actionality criteria, foundational research conducted by Wilkes et al. (1988). Religiosity is not observable at the point of sale and cannot be reliably inferred from other data Ocean Basket already hold, making it a poor segment to pursue directly at a franchise level.

Ethnicity emerged in the Market Analysis as a powerful driver of halal trust perceptions, independent of formal certification (Mohd Zahari et al., 2025). However, ethnicity presents a problematic segmentation basis for Ocean Basket's entry strategy. Segmenting by ethnicity would require the brand to develop distinct positioning and messaging for Malay, Chinese, and Indian Muslim consumers. As a foreign entrant, Ocean Basket is unburdened by the ethnic-trust associations that disadvantage local competitors. However, developing district ethnic based positioning would eliminate this advantage by creating the perception of ethnically differentiated offerings.

Income and geographic location are measurable segmentation bases. Income and demographic data are readily available through government statistics and market research, and franchise viability depends on urban outlet placement and consumer density (World Bank, 2026; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). These variables are observable and recorded, satisfying the measurability criterion. While these variables effectively explain *where* Ocean Basket should locate, like into affluent, urbanised areas, they do not distinguish between consumers within those areas based on factors that drive purchasing decisions. The Market Analysis established that halal trust perceptions and dining choices vary by ethnicity and religiosity, not income level (Mohd Zahari et al., 2025; Mortimer et al., 2020). Income and geographic segmentation therefore cannot guide meaningful strategic differentiation.

Behavioural segmentation focuses on how consumers interact with products and services, making it useful for identifying groups based on shared consumption patterns and purchase motivations (Lappeman et al., 2021). Within Malaysia, commensality remains an important feature of food culture, with food serving as a medium through which social relationships and shared experiences are formed and maintained (Fong and Kee, 2024). An Occasion-based segment emerges around family gatherings, social outings among friends and casual group dining experiences. This segment

aligns closely with Ocean Basket's platter-based menu format, which is designed for collective consumption rather than individual dining. Unlike religion or ethnicity-based segments, dining occasions cut across demographic boundaries, allowing Ocean Basket to engage a wider range of consumers through common consumption context. This segment satisfies the criteria of effective segmentation by being measurable, substantial, accessible and actionable (Lappeman et al., 2021).

Religiosity explains variation in halal sensitivity but performs poorly against measurability and actionability. Ethnicity influences halal trust perception but risks undermining Ocean Basket's appeal as a foreign entrant. Geographic and income variables assist outlet location decisions but provide limited insight into dining motivations. By contrast, behavioural segmentation based on dining occasions offer the strongest overall fit because it aligns directly with Ocean's Basket's existing value proposition, demographic boundaries and satisfies the requirements for effective segmentation.

TARGETING

Having evaluated several possible market segments, Ocean Basket must determine which segment offers the strongest combination of attractiveness, accessibility and strategic fit. Consistent with a customer-centric strategy, the segment selected should not simply be the largest available market, but rather the one that demonstrates the strongest alignment with Ocean Basket's value proposition (Tuominen et al., 2023).

A broad Muslim market strategy initially appears attractive because of its scale. However, large segment size alone does not guarantee strategic attractiveness. Tuominen et al. (2023) suggests that customer-centric growth is achieved by targeting consumers according to shared needs and motivations rather than broad demographic categories. While Halal certification is essential for participation within the Malaysian market, it does not in itself identify the consumers who are most likely to respond favourably to Ocean Basket's offering. Consequently, treating Malaysia's Muslim population as a single target market would provide substantial reach but limited strategic focus, making its difficult for Ocean Basket to create a distinctive and relevant offering.

While ethnicity influences halal trust perceptions (Mohd Zahari et al., 2025), restaurant choice is shaped by dining occasions and context-specific consumption factors rather than demographic characteristics alone (Chua et al., 2020). Customer-experience insights argue that behavioural outcomes are shaped more strongly by customer experienced quality and perceived value than by demographic variables alone (Chua et al., 2020; Anshu et al., 2022). Targeting consumers according to ethnicity therefore risks overlooking the behavioural drivers that influence restaurant selection. Since Ocean Basket is entering Malaysia without inherited ethnic associations, a narrowly focused ethnic strategy would restrict market reach.

While higher-income consumers possess greater purchasing power, Ocean Basket has traditionally competed through affordability and accessibility rather than exclusivity. For Ocean Basket, this suggests that competitive advantage is unlikely to come from targeting higher-income consumers alone. Instead, success will depend on delivering a superior value proposition through a dining experience that combines affordability, service quality and customer satisfaction (Anshu et al., 2022; Chua et al., 2020). Restricting the target market to affluent consumers would therefore risk creating a disconnect between the selected segment and Ocean Basket's established value proposition.

Ocean Basket should target urban middle-income consumers who participate in family-orientated and social-dining occasions. Ocean Basket's platter-based menu, affordable pricing and casual dining format are already designed around group consumption and shared dining experiences. Ocean Basket can serve this segment without requiring significant adaption to its existing offering. This reduces market entry risk because Ocean Basket can enter the Malaysian market using capabilities it has already successfully developed in markets like South Africa, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Furthermore, by targeting a segment whose needs align closely with the brand's existing value proposition, the company can minimise adaptation costs while strengthening its competitive position (Rintamaki & Saarijarvi, 2021).

Given these considerations, Ocean Basket should adopt a differentiated targeting strategy, whereby multiple related segments are targeted through a common offering supported by segment-specific marketing activities (Lappeman et al., 2021). Rather

than targeting the entire Malaysian Muslim market, the brand should focus on two closely related customer groups like urban middle-income consumers who engage in family and social dining occasions across Malaysia's Malay, Chinese and Indian communities, while ensuring that halal certification remains a visible and credible component of the brand's value proposition. Although these segments differ demographically, they share a common behavioural need centred on communal dining experiences and value-orientated restaurant consumption. Consequently, a differentiated targeting strategy represents the most appropriate approach for Ocean Basket because it balances market reach with strategic focus, allowing the brand to serve multiple related customer groups while maintain a consistent value proposition.

POSITIONING

Positioning involves establishing a distinctive place a brand within the minds of target consumers relative to competitive alternatives (Lappeman et al., 2021). Given the competitive conditions identified in the Malaysian market, Ocean Basket's challenge is not simply to communicate what it offers but communicate why consumers should choose the brand instead of alternative establishments. Successful positioning requires a clear value proposition that is relevant to target customers and differentiated from competing brands (Rintamaki & Saarijarvi, 2021).

Brand-competition research challenges a purely differentiation led view of positioning, finding that brand growth correlates more strongly with distinctiveness, mental and physical availability, how easily a brand is noticed, recognised, and recalled, than with occupying a narrowly unique position (Sharp et al., 2024). Applied to Ocean Basket, this suggests that halal certification and communal dining should be communicated not merely as differentiating claims but as consistently reinforced, highly visible brand assets that make the brand easy to notice and recall at the moment a consumer is choosing where to eat.

Ocean Basket should avoid positioning around halal certification itself. Although halal certification remains a prerequisite for participation within the Malaysian restaurant market, it does not constitute a meaningful source of differentiation because major international restaurant operators, including McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut, Domino's, Nando's and Manhattan Fish Market, already hold JAKIM halal certification. As a

result, halal compliance functions as a baseline requirement rather than a point of difference and is unlikely to generate sustainable competitive advantage on its own. Instead, certifications should be communicated as a trust signal that legitimises the brands broader value proposition.

The opportunity for Ocean Basket lies in the positioning around affordable halal seafood dining experiences centred on sharing and social connection. The opportunity can be visualised through a position grid, plotting competitors along two axes relevant to Malaysian casual dining: price, from affordable to premium, and dining occasion, from everyday to special occasion (Lappeman et al., 2021). On this grid, Manhattan Fish Market occupies the premium, occasion-driven quadrant, consistent with its “we do not cheapen, we enhance brand philosophy, while ,McDonald’s, KFC, and other fast-food chains occupy affordable everyday quadrant, but compete on speed and convenience rather than a communal dining experience.

Effective positioning requires a value proposition that clearly communicates benefits that are relevant to the needs and expectations of the target customer (Nussipova, 2022). Ocean Basket’s sharing platters, casual dining environment and value-based pricing structure already addresses these needs. As a result, the brand can enter Malaysia leveraging existing strengths and capabilities rather than undertaking extensive adaption, allowing resources to be focused on growth, awareness and customer acquisition.

Customer experience research reinforces this positioning strategy. Customer experiences are important determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty, creating a significant source of long-term competitive differentiation that extends beyond product attributes and price competition (Molinillo et al., 2022). Furthermore, successful international positioning requires alignment between local consumer expectations and the firm’s established capabilities rather than simple replication of home market strategies (Katsikeas et al., 2019).

For urban middle-income Malaysian consumers seeking halal-certified family and social dining experiences, Ocean Basket is the affordable seafood restaurant that delivers quality shared meals and genuine value because it combines trusted halal

compliance, generous seafood platters and a welcoming casual-dining experience designed around people eating together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing together the Market Analysis and the STP, the report recommends that Ocean Basket enter Malaysia through a differentiated targeting strategy centres around urban, middle-income consumers across Malaysia's Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities, positioned as an affordable, halal-certified seafood casual dining brand built around communal sharing platters.

Recommendation 1: Ocean Basket should not position around halal certification alone

Certification should be treated as a baseline requirement of doing business in Malaysia, not as a marketing message itself. The brand should instead lead with affordability and shareable, communal dining as its primary points of difference. Certification functions as a precondition for market participation rather than a source of competitive advantage (The Halal Times, 2024). Sharp et al. (2024) reinforces this by, showing that brand growth is driven less by narrow differentiation claims and more by distinctive and consistent brand assets that are easily noticed, recognised and recognised by consumers. Ocean Basket should therefore ensure that affordability and sharing are the consistent, repeated brand assets that appear across every customer touchpoint.

Recommendation 2: Ocean Basket should avoid segmenting its offering by ethnicity

The brand should market itself consistently to Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities using a single, occasion-based message centred on shared dining, rather than developing separate campaigns or menu variations tailed to each ethnic group. This protects Ocean Basket's most significant structural advantages, including being a foreign entrant with no inherited ethnic association, the brand is not currently subject to the same trust penalty that disadvantages local Chinese and Indian owned competitors, whole halal compliance is frequently doubted, regardless of certification status (Mohd Zahari et al., 2025).

Recommendation 3: Ocean Basket should enter Malaysia in phases

The brand should begin by building initial awareness and trial through food delivery platforms such as GrabFood and Foodpanda, ahead of committing to extensive physical outlet stores. This supports Malaysia's mature digital food ecosystem. A delivery-led launch phase allows Ocean Basket to extend its reach and build recognition at comparatively low capital cost. Ocean Basket should additionally ensure that both JAKIM halal certification and Franchise Act 1998 registration are fully and consistently secured across every planned outlet.

Recommendation 4: Ocean basket should treat halal certification as an operating discipline rather than a marketing afterthought

Certification should be displayed prominently and consistently across every outlet, menu, delivery listing, and marketing communication from the beginning. This responds to the finding from the Market Analysis that perceived halal legitimacy in Malaysia does not automatically follow from formal compliance but instead filtered through inherited assumptions about ethnicity and ownership (Mohd Zahari et al., 2025). Effective positioning requires a value proposition that clearly and repeatedly communicates the benefits relevant to the target customer's actual needs and expectations, rather than leaving consumers to infer trustworthiness on their own (Nussipova, 2022).

Recommendation 5: Ocean Basket should build its Malaysian value proposition around service quality and dining experiences, rather than price alone

While affordability should remain central to the brand's positioning, competitive advantage should come from combining affordability with strong service quality, and a positive, memorable dining experience. Ocean Basket should resist the temptation to compete purely on price against Malaysia's already established franchises and should instead ensure that in-store and delivery experience consistently reflects the brand's established reputation for quality and value. Sharing platters, family-orientated dining spaces and friendly service should remain at the centre of the brand experience.

Recommendation 6: Ensure strategic feasibility

The proposed strategy is feasible because it extends capabilities that Ocean Basket has already developed successfully rather than requiring the creation of a completely new model. The brand's platter-based menu, affordability, casual-dining experiences

have already demonstrated success across South Africa, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Therefore, Malaysia should be approached as the application of an existing and proven business model to a new market environment. This reduces execution risk and allows management to focus resources on market adaption, awareness generation and customer acquisition.

Recommendation 7: Ocean Basket should maintain cultural and religious credibility throughout market entry

Ocean Basket's entry must be managed with sensitivity to the cultural and religious dynamics identified throughout the report. The cross ethnic targeting strategy should be reflected not only in communications but operational practices , like restaurant environments, staff representation, service standards, and marketing materials. In addition, Ocean Basket should consider engaging with local religious and community stakeholders during the launch. Building credibility through visible community engagement may reinforce trust.

CONCLUSION:

Malaysia represents an attractive and strategically viable market for Ocean Basket's continued international expansion. The market offers several favourable conditions, including a well-established halal regulatory system, a large and growing halal food sector, strong economic foundations, high levels of urbanisation and an advanced digital food-delivery ecosystem. However, halal certification alone is insufficient to create a competitive advantage, as it has a baseline requirement for participation within the Malaysian restaurant industry.

The STP analysis identified behavioural segmentation based on family and social dining occasions as the most attractive strategic option. Ultimately, Ocean Basket should adopt a differentiated targeting strategy focused in urban middle-income consumers across Malaysia's Malay, Chinese and Indian communities who participate in shared dining occasions.

To maximise its potential for success, Ocean Basket should position itself as an affordable halal seafood restaurant centred on quality shared dining experiences. This positioning aligns with local dining practices, leverages the brand's existing strengths

and provides a clear basis for differentiation within Malaysia's competitive casual-dining market.

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