

Platform Economy in Southeast Asia: Progress, Prospects and the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract— Over the past decade, the platform economy emerged as a ‘disruptive’ technology that stands against the traditional model of production and consumption. As these platforms – characterized by the use of algorithmically-managed digital networks to connect users with demand and users with need – insert themselves into societies, discussions about the implications of the platform economy have begun and views span a spectrum of a perfect opportunity for a truly inclusive economy to a looming economic doom. Scholars have taken some major approaches to explain outcomes for platform economy: innovation, labor and legal issues. The panel further weighs in by providing perspectives from different areas:

- Socio-cultural - How do the platforms adapt to specific country cultures? Who are the winners and losers in this technological revolution?
- Technological - What would be the impact of blockchain technology? Are startup valuations justified by the current trends?
- Economic - In what ways do they really "disrupt" the existing economic structures? What are the future prospects of these companies in the context of ASEAN integration?
- Environmental – How is the platform economy faring in terms of its sustainability promises?
- Political – How are governments responding? What are the regulatory tensions?

Faced by an extraordinary challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, several industries reacted by adapting their business models in the platform economy. The delivery and e-commerce platforms played a key role in bringing essential needs to users during the lockdowns. Panelists would also examine the ways in which this phenomenon is unfolding in different parts of Southeast Asia. The panel considers theoretical and empirical approaches from various fields with an aim of painting the current landscape of the platform economy in Southeast Asia and comes up with possible future scenarios based on the analysis of the contributors’ findings.

Keywords— platform economy, ridesharing, ecommerce, startup, COVID-19.