

(Form 1)

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Thesis Title	Digital Platforms Strategies and Informal Economy: A Qualitative Study of Indonesian Platform-driven Firms		
(Thesis Summary)			
<p>This thesis examines the challenges of digital platforms in transforming informal economies in the context of emerging markets. In this thesis, three challenges confronting digital entrepreneurship and its platforms to strive in the market are highlighted. The first is related to the process of legitimacy building. In emerging economies where law enforcement is weak, it is critical to investigate the entrepreneurial process of legitimacy building on an unregulated domain. Second is related to the interaction between platforms and informality. Last is the clarification on how technology changes the status quo of informal economies. The thesis aims to delve into these issues by conducting empirical studies using a qualitative approach and focuses on the Indonesian case. The thesis concentrates on Indonesia in particular and emerging economies in general arguing that unlike entrepreneurs in developed countries, those who start businesses in less developed countries are vulnerable to ecosystem uncertainty, and resource constraints.</p> <p>After reviewing the literature and pointing out the gaps in the literature, Chapter 2 considers a dynamic mechanism between digital entrepreneurs and established institutions. It employs a qualitative method by interviewing sixteen respondents, including founders, CEOs, and managers of digital-driven start-ups in Indonesia. The chapter reveals distinctive approaches performed by start-ups within three-level institutions: users, market, and regulation; with each level representing digital entrepreneurs' unique behavior.</p> <p>Chapter 3 analyzes how platform-driven firms assist informal economy actors in utilizing technology. Furthermore, it aims to pin down the distinctive characteristics of digital platforms and the informal economy in shaping the interaction. The chapter employs multiple case studies of firms in Indonesia using a grounded theory method. Building from nineteen cases of platforms, the chapter shows four different types of interactions of platform-driven firms accommodating informal economy.</p> <p>Chapter 4 examines the abovementioned conceptual issues in employing a single case study. It thus investigates how and what changes are created by platforms towards motorbike taxi or ojek through a single case study of a company called Gojek. Instead of describing the phenomenon from a sharing economy standpoint, the chapter focuses on the notion that platforms are also responsible for fostering informal activities. It employs interviews, available press releases, news, and other documentation of the selected company in a seven-year time frame.</p> <p>Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a summary of the whole thesis, its theoretical and practical implications. This thesis also argues for future research directions regarding the generalization of its findings to different companies and institutional settings.</p>			

(Form 2)

(Thesis Evaluation Summary)

This thesis contributes to the literature on digital platform strategies, informal economy, and institutions. It examined the entrepreneurial process of digital-driven firms in tackling legitimacy constraints at different levels, users, market and regulation. By delving deeper at the market level, it raises three concerns encountered by digital platforms in emerging markets, which are namely knowledge shortage, technology resistance, and the need for formalisation. It then applied the findings of its theoretical arguments to a single case study, Gojek.

This dissertation yields both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, this dissertation proposes a new conceptual framework to enrich the understanding of platforms' strategies in an emerging market, mainly when ventures employ informal economy activities – an unregulated domain – as their services. From a policy perspective, it suggests that rather than perceiving platforms as rule-breakers, regulators must admit that platforms offer the opportunity for institutions to redefine the concept of informality and provide an avenue for platforms to co-establish policy.

This dissertation, however, also has some limitations. More effort can be put into deeply examining the roles of institutions in supporting, if not hindering, innovation. Further, some of the key concepts, such as legitimacy, can be clarified further to substantiate the arguments and novelty of the findings. Finally, the use of one case only limits the generalizability of the findings of the thesis.

Yet, overall, this thesis shows the candidate's extensive knowledge on the field of platform business studies and informal economy. It is written and presented in a clear and systematic manner. While the thesis has certain limitations, it serves as a valuable reference for future research. Following the oral examination held on July 26, 2022, the thesis examination committee therefore concludes that the candidate has passed all of the requirements for the PhD degree in Economics.

Publication date of the thesis summary (Form 1) and thesis evaluation summary (Form 2) : 12/25/2022