Engaging Digital Entrepreneurs for Thailand's Public Health Service Delivery

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DISCLAIMER

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The future of digital entrepreneurship in Thailand is promising, especially in the health care sector. Our study has confirmed the vital role that entrepreneurs play as economic resilience enablers. Notably, in Thailand, we witnessed an exciting form of public–private partnership that is in operation to fight against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. A digital entrepreneurial community called Pedthaisupai (Thai Ducks Fighting the Crisis) is a group of Thai tech start-ups who united and pulled together their various digital solutions on a volunteering basis and worked with the Medical Council of Thailand to apply the start-ups' technological innovation and capabilities in supporting the workflow of government field hospitals and medical staff to combat the pandemic. The digital entrepreneurs worked together as a community and joined hands with the Government of Thailand to rethink the delivery of public health care services in the face of the COVID-19 crisis.

The application of digital solutions from various industries was orchestrated end-to-end for the entire health care journey, such as the call traffic system, patient data and contact information collection, bed booking, communication between patients and staff, patient case management, a dashboard for field hospital management, and vaccine queuing management. This entrepreneurial community engagement highlights the critical role that digital entrepreneurs play in helping Thailand manage the health care crisis and lead economic recovery (figure). This collaborative phenomenon can draw two main insights and related policy implications.

Joint Force Start-ups x Government in Fighting against COVID-19
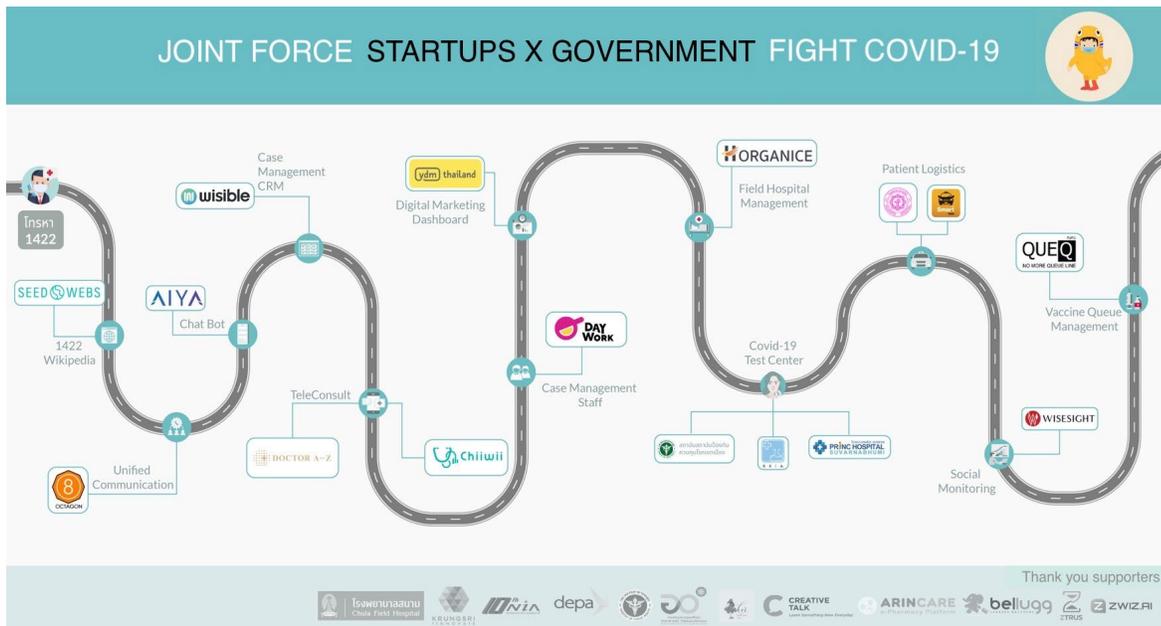
COVID-19 = coronavirus disease.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/pedthaisupai/.

Promoting Cross-Sector Collaboration

Digital entrepreneurship can cross the boundaries of industry sectors. The digital health industry is not necessarily confined to players that directly target this segment. Pressured by the pandemic crisis, start-ups in other sectors have found opportunities to apply their digital technologies, products, and services to the health care industry. As evidenced in the QueQ example, what was originally designed for retail can be rapidly deployed to another field and, in this case, health care for vaccine queuing management. Similarly, Wisible adapted its business-to-business (B2B) customer relationship management solution to serve as patient case tracking in managing field hospitals. Horganice's rental apartment and dormitory management solution was deployed as bed booking at the field hospital facility. YDM Thailand, offering a digital marketing platform, reconfigured its digital solution to provide a dashboard that shows the number of patients in and out, occupancy rates, and the number of patients based on their treatment period so that medical staff can make daily and strategic decisions.

As digitalization has the effect of blurring product and industry boundaries, it opens opportunities for innovative combinations across product and sector boundaries. Cross-sector collaborations could expand the market size and resource pool. Thus, engaging entrepreneurship communities and cross-fertilizing across sectors should be promoted.   Promoting cross-sector networking and

collaboration could uncover synergies between different start-ups and innovate business models with even more significant positive impacts on all stakeholders. The Government and related stakeholders could provide financial and nonfinancial incentives, support programs, or match partnership for entrepreneurs to help them look beyond the single sector and adapt or pivot their business models for various services. Co-working spaces, establishing associations and councils, and innovation districts pulling solutions seekers and providers across industries are some examples to drive this endeavor. Specifically, the health care innovation district could incorporate players and stakeholders that may not directly involve the health care industry but relate to the lifestyle behaviors of well-being consumers.

Role of Digital Entrepreneurs in Driving Social Missions

It is evident that social missions drove digital entrepreneurs together to address public health care service delivery. The volunteering of digital start-ups that collaborate to apply their solutions to manage the COVID-19 crisis suggests that social mission could mobilize digital entrepreneurs for economic recover. The adaptability of their existing products and services is mainly because of the combination of entrepreneurial mindsets and digital assets, allowing them to sense opportunities, reconfigure their operations and digital assets, and experiment in new environments quickly. Therefore, related stakeholders can leverage digital entrepreneurs for social impact and create platforms to tap into their social-oriented collaborative potentials. In addition, the cultivation of entrepreneurship mindsets is best served through education. Through education systems, the government and relevant agencies can promote the development of entrepreneurial skills, such as opportunity recognition, action orientation, experimentation, teamwork, and collaboration.