

KERATAN AKHBAR

TARIKH : 9 SEPTEMBER 2021
AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES

FREELANCERS

Will gig economy survive post-pandemic?

THE landscape of our economy is evolving with the current situation.

Many people have lost their jobs and income due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In retrospect, gig economy has become increasingly on-demand.

The gig economy comprises short-term jobs offered to independent or freelance workers, who may come from diverse backgrounds of academic qualifications, age and skills.

With the pandemic the world over, where some people have lost their permanent jobs and others have found it dull to stay home without an income, opportunities have opened up for them to do gigs.

According to a survey in 2018, there are close to four million freelancers in Malaysia.

A majority of these freelancers or gig operators are youths, unemployed fresh graduates and housewives who have taken the gig jobs to support themselves and their families financially to survive the pandemic.

What makes gig economy in Malaysia so alluring? The fact that digital platforms have become a convenient way to shop and connect with people has brought together a marketplace where there is a need for certain jobs to be done and there are takers for the jobs through this platform.

Besides that, there is a rising

popularity to be self-employed and to have autonomy or control to make extra cash.

Although the job is not permanent, it allows for flexibility. As reflected in the 12th Malaysia Plan, it is a growing new economic source of revenue.

The downside to this is that you do not get a steady income and you get paid based on the number of gigs you do. There are no Employees Provident Fund or Social Security Organisation contributions as added security. Basically, you get paid for each gig and nothing more.

A recent survey by UiTM Rembau on the trend of gig economy among undergraduates found that

64.71 per cent of the respondents joined the gig economy to generate some side income.

The most popular gigs were food delivery and pick-up, and delivery of goods or items. However, 64.7 per cent also lamented the lack of a minimum wage.

The study also revealed that 62.75 per cent believed that the gigs helped them gain skills and experience that could not be attained in their varsity studies.

Albeit all these data, the question is, can the gig economy survive post-Covid-19 pandemic?

As the economy recovers and more and more shops and companies are allowed to operate in line with the National Recovery Plan,

it would seem that the demand for online markets would shrink.

However, like some people who have started to enjoy shopping online and others who have started making small incomes online, I believe that this trend will not die easily.

As a matter of fact, I foresee it even growing and changing depending on how employment and the workplace function.

Even then, nothing can be for sure and every day is another day for survival.

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DR SOO KUM YOKE**

Academy of Language Studies
UiTM, Negri Sembilan