

Harnessing Digital Technology for Sustainable Growth in Southeast Asia: The Role of Trade Openness and Institutional Excellence

Faiza Saleem

Graduate School of Business
Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
Penang, Malaysia
Email: faizasaleem@usm.my

**Corresponding author's Email:* faizasaleem@usm.my

Author's Biography

Faiza Saleem is a senior Lecturer at the Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia, and Adjunct Faculty, Department of Management Sciences, University of Wah, Pakistan. She obtained her PhD in finance from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, in 2018 with the Best Postgraduate Student Award and distinction. Before that, she served the University of Wah as a lecturer and an assistant professor from 2011 to 2018. She published many articles in reputable journals and presented papers at national and international conferences. Dr. Faiza's primary research areas of interest encompass corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, the environment, financial inclusion, and sustainability.

Abstract

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the importance of harnessing innovation and technology to address pressing global challenges like poverty, inequality, climate change, and economic sustainability. Southeast Asia's ASEAN countries have shown remarkable growth in GDP and the digital economy, but also face significant pollution issues. Despite these dynamics, research into ASEAN's sustainability remains limited. This study examines the impact of digital technology and digital service trade on sustainable development in ASEAN, with a focus on the moderating role of institutional quality. Using panel data from 10 ASEAN countries between 2005 and 2019, this study employs feasible generalized least squares and generalized estimating equations to examine the influence of institutional quality on sustainability. This study incorporates population size and industrial value added as control variables. The findings reveal that while digitalization alone does not ensure sustainability, digital service trade can pose risks unless supported by strong institutions. This research highlights the importance of institutional development in harnessing digital advancements for environmental and social progress. The study showed that enhancing institutional quality and aligning policies are crucial to transforming digital innovation and trade into sustainable and equitable growth across ASEAN.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Digital Technology, Digital Service Trade, Institutional Quality, ASEAN, Economic Growth

Acknowledgement: This work was supported by Universiti Sains Malaysia, Short-Term Grant with Project No: R501-LR-RND002-0000000904-0000



Future of Work and Society 2025

Shaping Tomorrow's World: Human-Centric Approaches to the Evolving Landscape of Work
and Society

13–15 November 2025 | AUST Abbottabad, Pakistan

About the Conference

The Future of Work and Society 2025 bring together academics, researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders to shape human-centric solutions in a rapidly changing world.

Main Theme: Shaping Tomorrow's World: Human-Centric Approaches to the Evolving Landscape of Work and Society

Sub-Themes:

The Algorithmic Workplace

Rethinking the Organization

Public Policy & Social Structures

Education for Tomorrow

Global Work, Local Lives

Organizers:

Abbottabad University of Science & Technology (AUST),

CONNECTING ASIA Malaysia,

Teesside University UK

Venue:

Abbottabad University of Science & Technology (AUST)

