

Maybank sees ASEAN as next growth area for tech startups

Maybank is confident that ASEAN will see a quantum leap in technology startups as more businesses in the region seek to expand their digital presence and grow their revenue by using non-traditional channels.

This will also be boosted by the increasing interest among financial institutions and venture capital companies to fund tech startups.

Maybank Group Chief Strategy Officer, Michael Foong said that this was evident by the overwhelming response of ASEAN tech startups which participated in the MaybankFintech programme.

MaybankFintech is the first of its kind programme by a bank in South East Asia which seeks to support startups to generate ideas in the financial technology sphere.

A total of 115 tech startups participated in the programme, including 109 from the ASEAN region, pitching their ideas revolving around seven main areas such as Channel, Digital & Mobile, Payments, Operational Excellence, Business & Operating Model, Responsible Banking and Sales Effectiveness.

Michael noted that that global investment in Fintech ventures has tripled from around US\$4.05 billion in 2013 to nearly US\$12.2 billion in 2014**. During the same period, investments in Asia-Pacific Fintech ventures have also more than tripled, from US\$245 million in 2013 to US\$767 million in 2014.

He said one of the major challenges in the past for tech startups has been to navigate through the various financial institutions in order to pitch their ideas.

“We are now seeing increasing openness among venture capital firms and banks in this region to listen to these startups and support them, given that these companies themselves stand to benefit should the startups succeed with their projects.”

Maybank, he said, is committed to being at the forefront in this effort, as it seeks to sharpen its focus in the digital and technology space in order to boost its competitive edge as well as enhance customer accessibility, loyalty and operational efficiency.

“Our MaybankFintech programme is a unique platform for aspiring innovators to showcase their ideas. We want to be a central member of the Fintech community in the region, to help grow and support entrepreneurs, by providing them with an avenue to connect directly with the financial industry,” he said.

He added that MaybankFintech was a tremendous opportunity for Maybank to harness the startups ecosystem regionally, to acquire the best innovation ideas in financial technology.

“Ultimately, we not only want the Bank to gain from these innovations, but also for the ASEAN region to benefit from the economic and social impact of such technological advances.”

The MaybankFintech 2015 programme comprised preliminary ignite sessions in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Manila and Jakarta where Maybank met potential startups personally and introduced them to the programme.

Following this, the Bank received submissions which came mainly from the Asian region, and from as far as Tunisia, Ukraine, Chile and even the United States. A total of 21 were then shortlisted for the final session in Kuala Lumpur. The finalists were from Malaysia (4), Indonesia (2), Singapore (4), Thailand (4), Philippines (5), Vietnam (1) and Japan (1).

The finalists attended a three-day Alpha Startups pre-accelerator programme which was facilitated by Maybank along with 1337 ventures, a company which assists startups by providing them with advice and proper guidance especially in developing their ideas in the areas of customer, product and go-to market strategies. Following the three-day programme, the finalists participated in a Demo Day where they were given 7 minutes each to pitch their ideas to Maybank's leadership team and potential venture capitalists.

“Our long-term aim is to support the growth of ASEAN not only in terms of financial services and economic progress but also in the area of technology where we feel there is tremendous untapped potential,” said Michael. “We are determined to make ASEAN the next growth area for tech startups.”

** Source: Accenture Report -Future of Banking & Fintech 2015