

Online Platform firms: Tactics labour unions use to safeguard worker rights

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ABSTRACT

Since recently, the platform economy has gained more and more attention from different researchers and is becoming increasingly popular in today's world. The focus of this paper will be on the platform workers (peer service providers), their rights and interests and the tactics labour unions use to safeguard these rights. Consideration is further given to power and whether labour unions have the power to safeguard worker rights. Due to the lack of worker rights, labour unions are considered very important to make sure that the rights are protected. For this study, a literature review was first performed to find out which human resource practices are used by Foodora. Second, interviews have been carried out to open up which tactics labour unions use to make sure that these rights are not being violated by the platform provider. The study provides a process of organizing platform workers within a labour union but also specific tactics that are used in Germany to safeguard their interests and rights. Labour unions in Germany start with unionizing workers and next make use of work councils to protect the rights of platform workers. Furthermore, lobbying at politicians is also one of the tactics. Collective bargaining is widely used in Germany since labour unions have more power collectively than as a single individual. In general, this study reveals a process of the tactics that labour unions are using in the platform economy in Germany.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last years, the number of organizations that are conducting business online has rapidly increased. For example, one of the most popular online platforms today is Airbnb with over 200 million total guest arrivals at Airbnb listings around the world since the company was founded in 2008 (Airbnb Fast Facts, 2017). The growing popularity of online platform firms, however, also raises some difficulties relating to managing employees, since we now encounter a different employment relationship between three parties. These three parties include the platform provider, peer service provider and customer, whereby the peer service provider is employed as freelancer and not as a traditional employee. The use of human resource (HR) practices in online platform firms is therefore different from the use in regular firms; since the employment relationship on platforms can be characterized as triadic and following this, HR practices need to be adapted (Benoit, Baker, Bolton, Gruber & Kandampully, 2017). When looking into regular firms, we find a customer who buys the product or service and a company who produces the product or service. This exchange relationship only happens between two parties and can, therefore, be characterized as dyadic (Benoit et. al., 2017). To the contrary, in online platform firms, there are three parties involved in the production and consumption of goods and services including the online platform, the peer service providers and the customers.

This new form of exchange has a number of different labels, for example access-based consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012), access-based service (Schaefer, Wittkowski, Benoit & Ferraro, 2016), commercial sharing programs (Lamberton & Rose, 2012) and the most prevalent being collaborative consumption (Benoit et. al., 2017). At the heart, collaborative consumption is a form of sharing and differs from standard consumption in the way that the cost of purchasing the good or service is not borne by a single individual but instead divided across a larger group. It's therefore important to analyze the HR practices in online platform firms, since the triadic relationship is even more complex compared to regular firms. Furthermore, we will look at labour unions outside of the triadic relationship and see what tactics they have in place to further protect the online platform workers whose rights might be harmed by HR practices. In general, HR practices are used to develop employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities. However, when looking into the platform economy, HR practices sometimes harm worker interests due to the execution of these practices from the platform providers.

The main focus of this paper will be on the tactics labour unions use to protect the rights of online platform workers and whether the HR practices used by online platform firms harm worker interests or not. Online platform workers are not traditional employees, since they have less rights and more freedom to design their working day. Therefore, most of the workers are freelancers, and need more protection from labour unions to make sure their rights are not being violated by the online platform firm. Labour union is an organization that represents the collective interests of workers and protects their rights. Peter Levine (2001) defines labour unions as "Non-profit associations, but also coercive economic agents; working class communities, but also powerful special interest embodiments of rights, but also incompatible with certain individual freedoms" (p.529). They will have discussions with the employers about salaries, working hours and working conditions. Collective bargaining, strikes, lawsuits and lobbying are some of the tactics they use to safeguard worker rights. However, one aspect which is important to consider here is the power that labour unions might or might not have to protect worker rights. Three dimensions of power need to be mentioned here, namely the power of resources, the

power of processes and the power of meaning (Ferner, Edwards and Tempel, 2012).

The new triadic relationship which we come upon in online platform firms also evokes some new challenges on platform providers as well as labour unions and hence labour unions also need to adapt their tactics to protect the peer service providers. One of the challenges is the fact that platform workers are freelancers who have more freedom to design their job and do not have all the rights a traditional employee has. Furthermore, online platforms bring about a new way of working within this triadic relationship and therefore, it is very important that labour unions adapt to this and adopt new tactics to safeguard online platform worker rights.

The research problem is that, at the moment, we do not have the knowledge about how labour unions safeguard the rights of the platform workers, especially when looking at the German market. Therefore, the study is undertaken to get more knowledge about the relationship between online labour platforms, peer service providers and labour unions. It is important to consider the labour unions outside the triadic relationship since the peer service providers work as freelancers which means they are not properly protected by the online platform firm and hence need their support. In addition, the workforce is more dispersed in this context and as individuals, they have less power against corporations.

The goal of this research paper is to analyze the platform firms in relation to the HR practices they use to manage their employees and to discover what tactics labour unions use to protect the platform workers. This research goal leads to the following research question:

'What tactics do labour unions use to safeguard worker rights in relation to the HR practices that online platforms use to manage their employees?'

In this study, I am going to analyze online platform firms regarding their use of HR practices to manage employees and what tactics labour unions have in place to protect the platform workers. It is important to study this topic to get new insights on online platforms and to give labour unions an overview of how they can improve their tactics to protect the peer service providers in this new triadic relationship. Furthermore, it is important to undertake this study to also provide some guidelines to newcomers working with and on online platforms. Additionally, it contributes to the existing literature on platforms by providing an overview of what tactics labour unions use to protect platform workers and what exact practices are in place.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first section, the underlying theory which will be used as the basis for the study will be presented. This is followed by the methodology section describing whether to use quantitative or qualitative research and how the data will be collected and analyzed. Third, the results of the research are presented which include an analysis of the data which was gathered during the literature review, document analysis and interviews. Finally, the paper ends with a discussion and a conclusion, as well as limitations of the research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Platforms

Nowadays, it is important to understand the role online platform firms have in the business environment and how that differs from traditional companies. This new form of exchange which happens between three parties is called collaborative consumption, and is defined as "the peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving or sharing the access of goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services" (Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2015, p.2047). In addition, collaborative

consumption occurs in organized networks where sharing activities in the form of lending, trading or swapping are conducted (Möhlmann, 2015). Furthermore, one aspect that all online platform firms have in common is the reliance on electronic reputation mechanisms, also called algorithms (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). According to Botsman and Rogers (2010), it takes a critical mass, an idling capacity, a belief in the commons and trust between strangers to make this process of exchange on online platforms successful. A critical mass is described as the participants an online platform needs to be attractive. Idling capacity means that goods and services can be used anywhere. Furthermore, a belief in the commons means that it is possible to provide value to the community and at the same time enable social value to expand for oneself. The last one, trust between strangers must and is going to be enabled on platforms.

In addition, I want to elaborate further on some of the particularities of online platforms. First, according to Benoit et. al. (2017) “a platform provider links a consumer that aims to temporarily utilize assets with a peer service provider who grants access to these assets and with this delivers the core service” (p.220). The second characteristic of online platforms is the nature of exchange between three actors, however, with no exchange of ownership. The three actors are:

1. The platform provider – links consumer with peer service provider
2. The consumer – temporarily utilizes the assets
3. The peer service provider – grants temporarily access to these assets

One is the peer service provider, in other words the online platform worker. When comparing them to traditional employees, one can see that platform workers have more flexible working hours, can freely decide their starting and ending time of a working day and do not have a formal permanent contract (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). At the same time, however, they have less rights than traditional employees in relation to health care or other insurances. The workforce is also hard to unite, since everything happens online and worker and employer (the platform provider) do not meet on a daily basis. Therefore, peer service providers are not traditional employees but mostly freelancers, because they do not have all the rights other employees have and have more freedom as well. Due to the fact that most of them are freelancers, HR practices within the platform firm need to be well designed to develop the platform workers and make sure that their rights are not being harmed.

2.2 Human Resource Practices

In the following part, I will look at the HR practices that a platform uses to manage the peer service providers (platform workers). By definition, HR practices are the practices that a company/platform uses to manage their employees (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). In an online platform, however, HR practices are needed as well but not to manage employees, but to manage peer service providers. In total, six HR practices (see table 1) will be analyzed and these six practices need to be externally as well as internally aligned. They can be used to reach opportunity, abilities and motivation and are grouped as follows:

1. Work design and workforce planning
 - a. Job Design
 - b. Workforce Planning
2. Managing employee competences
 - a. Recruitment and Selection
 - b. Training
3. Managing employees attitudes and behaviors
 - a. Performance Management
 - b. Compensation and Benefits

2.2.1 Job design

In the first category, Job design defines the task and responsibilities that a worker is expected to carry out as well as how they should interact with co-workers (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). When looking into platforms, we can see that job design greatly differs from traditional organizations. One aspect of job design is how much autonomy an employee has in his or her job. Platform workers are independent contractors or freelancers and have the freedom to schedule their work on their own, but the platform provider often is determining the way they have to carry out the work. One example of worker autonomy can be seen in Uber, who once in a while sends messages to drivers with tips on how they can improve their client rating and earnings. However, this is rather meant as advice than what the firm demands (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). Furthermore, when looking at the concept of flextime, which is defined by Lepak & Gowan (2010) as arrangements whereby workers can freely chose at what time they want to start and end their work as long as they work the anticipated number of hours a week, one can say that platform workers are able to control their own working hours (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). In general, online platforms make use of algorithms to assign their workers to tasks (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). Furthermore, it is important to look at how job design can violate or harm worker interests in the platform economy. The platform provider minimizes the responsibility of peer service providers, which means that their jobs are very standardized and this can lead to jobs being very boring. In addition, peer service providers do not interact with one another which leads to a more dispersed workforce and to a risk that peer service providers do not feel part of the organization.

2.2.2 Workforce Planning

Workforce planning needs to ensure that employees with the right skills are at the right place to meet the company’s needs (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). Workforce planning is concerned with labour supply and labour demand within an online platform firm. Managers always need to consider both internal considerations (labour supply and labour demand) as well as external considerations when planning their company workforce (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). When looking into online platform firms, it is rather hard to plan the workforce since most of the platform workers are freelancers and can decide on their own when their working day is starting and when it ends. One example is Uber, where drivers can freely decide at what time they want to actively work for Uber and pick up customer and at what time they want to have free time. However, Uber is expecting to have more employees working during rush hour, and therefore is offering “bonuses or earnings guaranteed to drivers who work late night or weekend peak hours [...]” (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017, p.189). This is one way to make sure that labour demand does not exceed labour supply. Workforce planning is done through algorithms and can in a way also harm worker interests. The problematic issue about algorithms assigning work tasks to peer service providers is that if you work more, you will get more work assigned to you. This may lead to peer service providers working too much and consequently running the risk of getting a burnout.

2.2.3 Recruitment and Selection

In the second category, an organization needs to identify, acquire and develop employee skills and talents. Lepak & Gowan (2010) define recruitment as “the process of identifying potential employees, communicating job and organizational attributes to them, and convincing them to apply for available jobs” (p.150). Selection is defined as the process where the employer decides which applicants he or she wants to hire (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). Recruitment and Selection in online platform firms are different compared to traditional organizations. Due to the fact that platform workers are not employed within the platform but are

seen as independent contractors, recruitment and selection processes need to be newly defined. Selection, in the context of online platform firms, could refer to “whether individuals are allowed to register to work on a platform, whether they are assigned to a particular work opportunity, or what work opportunities they are allowed to compete for or chose among” (Kuhn & Maleki, 2010). When looking into how recruitment and selection might harm worker interests, we need to keep in mind that platform providers hardly make use of selection procedures, because one can always apply and sign up to work via an online platform. However, this might harm worker interests since algorithms for selecting future employees of the platform are designed by humans and therefore might be biased in a way that they, for example, do not want specific nationalities to work for them. In addition, for worker safety purposes, it might be better to have a good selection process in place, since there also might be people that are not destined for this particular job.

2.2.4 Training

Another aspect of managing employee competences is the training of employees, which is defined by Lepak & Gowan (2010) as a process that helps employees to develop skills, knowledge and abilities that are necessary to perform their job. One example of training is given by Uber, who launched UberShaan in 2016 with the aim to create one million micro-entrepreneurs by 2018. To achieve this, “Uber will help the graduating drivers receive commercial licenses and support the entrepreneurial ambitions of [...] drivers requiring vehicle financing and leasing solutions” (Desk, 2017, p.1). Furthermore, training can also harm worker interests. Online platforms mostly do not want to train their workers since they will not be ensured of a return on investment if they train them (human capital theory).

2.2.5 Performance Management

Performance management is defined as “The process of: (1) evaluating employee performance against the standards set for them and (2) helping them develop action plans to improve their performance” (Lepak & Gowan, 2010, p.260). Online platforms regularly track and evaluate worker performance with the help of electronic feedback from customers (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). An example is Deliveroo which shows that the riders get monthly performance reports that show the riders average delivery time compared to what the algorithms calculates of how fast they should have been able to deliver the order (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). Performance management, in particular customer feedback, can be biased, because they only give feedback when their experience was purely positive or negative, so there is no in between. This is not a good reflection of the general population and therefore might harm worker interests and rights.

2.2.6 Compensation and Benefits

Compensation is defined as the rewards, monetary and nonmonetary, a worker receives for the work they do for the company (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). When looking into compensation of one of the platforms, the drivers are paid per ride and additionally, are in a sense free to reject any ride request, but the more rides they reject, the lower their performance will be, because their performance is assessed by how many rides they accepted and how many rides they cancelled (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). If this rate of acceptance/cancellation is low, their account will be deactivated, which is another expression for being fired. Compensation might harm and violate worker interests since peer service providers have to work too much to get a decent living due to the low salary. Therefore, labour unions need to take care of this issue and make sure that their hourly compensation will increase.

All in all, these six HR practices are used to manage online platform workers and therefore are also mentioned in table 1. One key aspect is that “the worker also bears most or all of the risk associated with providing necessary equipment and tools [and] interruptions in service by the platform, irregularity in income flows, deactivation of the service or the relationship [...]” (Stewart and Stanford, 2017, p.424). Therefore, it is also relevant to look at labour unions and see what tactics they have in place to protect the platform workers and make sure that worker interests are safeguarded.

2.3 Labour Unions

At last, I will take a look at labour unions and analyze which tactics they have in place to ensure that the HR practices used by online platform firms meet the needs and interests of the peer service providers. Labour unions are by definition “Non-profit associations, but also coercive economic agents; working class communities, but also powerful special interest embodiments of rights, but also incompatible with certain individual freedoms” (Levine, 2001, p.529). Each country has its own labour unions in place to make sure that the rights of the worker are protected. In Europe, the European Trade Union Confederation was founded in 1973 to look after the interests of the working people at the European level. When looking at specific countries inside the EU, for example, Germany, they further have more centralized labour unions for various industries and the largest one being the German Confederation of Trade Unions. According to the German law, members are free to join a labour union and not forced to join one (Dribbusch & Birke, 2012). However, German labour unions are not working towards the benefits of unemployment or pension payments, but rather focus on collective bargaining (Dribbusch & Birke, 2012).

When looking into tactics that labour unions use to protect the online platform workers, we generally find some tactics which are most often used, for example, collective bargaining, lawsuits, strikes and lobbying. ‘Collective Bargaining’ is defined as “a process used by union representatives and employers to establish the terms and conditions of employment in a unionized workplace” (Guest & Needle, 2014, p.31). One can distinguish between good faith bargaining and bad faith bargaining, the former being accepting to meet at a reasonable time and be ready to reach an agreement. Another tactic labour unions might use is ‘lobbying’, for example at politicians, which means that labour unions can influence politicians to change the rules and regulation to their advantage (Campos & Giovannoni, 2006). Lobbying can be defined as “a firm-level political strategy in which corporations spend resources to influence government officials” (Unsal, Kabir Hassan & Zirek, 2017, p. 413). Furthermore, ‘strikes’ are also used by labour unions to demand wage increases and work regulation. A strike is often the outcome when parties to a union are not able to reach an agreement (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). Therefore, strikes are also used to achieve a labour unions objective (Lepak & Gowan, 2010). ‘Lawsuits’ is another tactic which is being used by labour unions to make sure the employees have the rights they need. In relation to online platform firms, a lawsuit most often can be started when the labour union thinks the peer service providers are not properly protected by their employer and the online platform is not willing to negotiate with the labour union.

2.4 Power

At last, it is important to see if labour unions have the power to safeguard worker rights and support them. Here, we will have a look at three power dimensions, namely power of resources, power of processes and power of meaning (Hardy, 1996). In the first dimension, power of resources, “power is exercised by actors to influence decision outcomes and bring about the desired

behavior through the deployment of key resources on which others depend [...]” (Hardy, 1996, p.7). Second, the power of processes, to the contrary, “resides in the organizational decision making processes which incorporate a variety of procedures and political routines that can be invoked by dominant groups to influence outcomes by preventing subordinates from participating fully in decision making” (Hardy, 1996, p.7). Lastly, the power of meaning relates to language, rituals and class mechanisms (Hardy, 1996).

Additionally, Robbins and Judge (2014) refer to power as “the capacity that A has to influence the behavior of B so B acts in accordance with A’s wishes” (p. 224). This definition of power can be translated to the platform economy as follows: The capacity of labour unions to influence the HR practices of online platforms so that these platforms act in accordance with worker interests. The power issue is central to this research since it is crucial to see if labour unions actually have the power to influence the HR practices. The more members a labour union entails, the more power they have towards influencing the HR practices of a platform. In addition, power is also measured by the tools and money a labour union has for exerting power on a specific platform.

Table 1 – Tactics Labour unions adopt to protect the platform workers

	Collective Bargaining	Strike	Lobbying at politicians	Lawsuits
Job design				
Workforce planning				
Recruitment and selection				
Training				
Performance Management				
Compensation and Benefits				

The tactics that labour unions use to safeguard workers interests may be used in different ways relating to the HR practices. Therefore, I will introduce the above mentioned table for the study (see table 1). The role of the table is to show that for different HR practices, different tactics may be used by a labour union. The goal of this research is to fill in the table with relevant information gathered from the literature review, document analysis and interviews with the labour unions.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research question presented earlier, an exploratory research will be carried out. This research design was chosen since it is not certain at the beginning which tactics are being used by the labour unions. First, the context of the study will be explained which includes the online platform used for this study as well as the labour unions which safeguard the rights of the peer service providers. Next, it is also important to see how the data is going to be sampled and what type of procedures will be used for this matter. Finally, this section will be concluded with the operationalization of the variables as well as the process of coding the interview data.

3.1 Context of Study

For this research, I will be looking into “Foodora”, one of the platforms operating in the online food delivery sector. Foodora is currently operating in 22 countries worldwide in more than 260 cities and with 36.000 restaurants available on their online platform (Foodora Homepage). Only one specific online platform was chosen to get a deeper understanding of the subject in the limited time frame of the research. The advantage of a single case study is that they are not as time consuming as multiple case studies. Furthermore, different sectors are represented by different labour unions and hence, the focus of this research will be on the online food delivery platform Foodora. Focusing on one online platform also brings the advantage of gathering more into depth information in the time available for the research.

This sector of online food delivery services is mainly represented by the German food and allied workers (NGG – Union for Nutrition, Catering and Restaurants), a labour union in Germany with more than 205.900 members. This labour union is one of eight affiliates of the German Confederation of Trade Unions. Furthermore, the NGG gives strong support to the bicycle couriers who are currently stepping up for their rights. Another labour union which is involved in safeguarding the rights of the platform workers is the FAU (Freie Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter Union. The FAU is an independent self-organized labour union that helps the workers in the gig economy to fight for their rights. Their new #Deliverunion campaign was introduced for cyclists to raise their voices. Furthermore, Verdi (Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft), comprised of 2 million members from about 1000 professions, is another labour union from Germany who campaign themselves for the new emerging form of workers. The focus of this study will be on the NGG and the FAU to get a deeper understanding of their work with the platform workers. Since both of the labour unions are represented in cities across Germany, it is interesting to see if labour unions in different cities also use different tactics to safeguard platform worker rights. Hence the results will be based on these two labour unions and the tactics they are using.

3.2 Sampling and Procedures

3.2.1 Units and Variables

One can distinguish between units of analysis and units of observation. Units of analysis are the objects the research question is about. In this study, the units of analysis will be the labour unions. Labour unions will be the main focus of this research since the goal of this paper is to give a clear framework about the tactics they use to protect the platform workers. Also, one aspect which we need to consider here it the power they have or might not have to protect the new form of workers. Units of observation, however, are the objects of whom we collect the data from. The units of observation are influential people within the labour unions from whom we will collect data by means of interviews. The influential people are people who work for the labour unions, either a head of a division or the person responsible for public speaking.

Variables are measures representing an underlying construct (Dooley, 1995). The variables included in the study are (1) The HR practices, namely ‘Job design’, ‘Workforce Planning’, ‘Recruitment’, ‘Selection’, ‘Training’, ‘Performance Management’, ‘Compensation and Benefits’, (2) The Tactics and (3) The Power of meaning, processes and resources.

3.2.2 Collection of data

The study is going to be a multistage study since we first do a literature review about what HR practices are in place within the online platform Foodora and second, we will conduct interviews

with influential persons from labour unions in Germany about which tactics they have in place to further protect the platform workers. These labour unions were carefully chosen to be representative of the larger population of all labour unions from one sector. HR practices are considered important, too, since the framework also includes these practices to analyze the labour union tactics.

First, a literature review combined with a document analysis will be carried out to find out which HR practices are being used by one particular online platform firm, in this case Foodora. It is relevant to find out which HR practices Foodora employs to see if these practices might harm worker interests or not. If they might harm worker interests, then it is the task of the labour union to safeguard these rights. Furthermore, the problematic HR practices will be used for the interviews to see what labour unions do about it. Since Foodora belongs to the platform firms that are very secretive in what they do, we make use of a literature review and document analysis. Combining the two approaches makes it possible to obtain more up-to-date information, because the platform economy is changing at a rapid rate. In addition, primary data has been gathered from the interviews about what HR practices Foodora uses from the viewpoint of the labour unions. The secondary data will be gathered from the online platform firms' website, policy documents and relevant articles. This data will be used as a basis for the interviews to be able to link the interview questions with the tactics and hence, fill in the framework which was presented earlier.

Second, for the collection of primary data, interviews will be conducted with influential people from labour unions in Germany on what tactics they use to protect platform workers. This data collection method can be described as verbal, since the interview is dealing with spoken language. The interview will be semi-structured, since it has the advantages of being more flexible in asking additional question and it will generate qualitative data through the use of open questions (McLeod, 2014). Furthermore, it is also semi-structured since we formulated interview questions on the basis of theory. For the interview questions, the HR practices will be linked to the tactics from labour unions. An interview will be carried out since it is a rather new topic we want to research and open question can be asked to the interviewees. Interviews have several advantages. One advantage of a face to face interview is the interviewee being more spontaneous the answers since they have to react directly to what the interviewer asks. Another advantage of a face to face interview is the fact that an interviewer can always ask additional questions spontaneously to the interviewee, since the interview is characterized by "synchronous communication in time and place" (Opdenakker, 2006, p.3). Open ended questions, which will be used in a face to face interview, have several advantages when comparing them to closed questions. They allow the interviewees to include more relevant information about the tactics they use and aspects we might not think of at the beginning and to understand the subject and allows the researcher to obtain extra information from them.

During the interview, data will be gathered from the interviewees current and expected future experience with Foodora platform workers and what tactics are they employing right now to safeguard worker rights. Influential persons from the labour unions, the interviewees, have a good understanding and knowledge about the platform workers in the online platform Foodora. Two out of five interviews were conducted via telephone since the distance to travel was too big. Three out of five interviews were face-to-face interviews in three cities in Germany. The interviews lasted between 10 and 39 minutes and were conducted from the 22nd of May until the 4th of June. Interview 3 was conducted with a person who launched a

campaign in February 2018 to help the platform workers from Deliveroo and Foodora. Now, this campaign is connected to one of the biggest labour unions in Germany. The reason for interview 4 not lasting longer than 10 minutes is due to the fact that the FAU in Place Y is currently trying to unionize Foodora riders but at the moment is not working together with them and hence, could not elaborate further on the protection of these workers.

Table 2 – number of interviews, labour union, place, date and duration of the interview

#	Labour Union	Place	Date	Duration
1	NGG	Telephone	22.05	33 min
2	FAU/ Campaign "DeliverUnion"	Telephone	22.05	25 min
3	NGG/ Campaign "Lieferrn am Limit"	Place X	24.05	21 min
4	FAU	Place Y	29.05	10 min
5	NGG	Place Z	4.06	39 min

3.3 Validity and Reliability

When conducting research, one must keep in mind that the outcome should be valid and reliable at the same time. Reliability is defined by The Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests as the "degree to which test scores are free from errors of measurement" (p.19). In addition, validity refers "to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores" (APA, 1985, p.9). To make sure that the outcomes of the interviews are reliable and valid, one need to include multiple independent labour unions, by using pre-formulated questions for the interview to make sure that every interviewee gets to answer the same questions. Furthermore, validity can be reached when you stick to what you intended to research in the beginning and not deviate too much from it.

3.4 Operationalization

For the literature review, articles have been searched manually and electronically with the help of Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar and the library of the University of Twente. In order to find relevant books and articles on platforms and the HR practices they use, the keywords that have been used are 'Foodora', 'HR Practices', 'collaborative consumption', 'labour unions in Germany', 'employee representation', 'worker participation in decision making', 'Human Resource Practices Platform firms', 'Foodora' and 'employee representation'. The gathered literature, which has been found with the help of these keywords, has been evaluated based on relevance related to the main research question. Inclusion and Exclusion criteria are also important to mention to make sure the literature found is relevant and valid for the study. Included are articles and documents that are written in the English and German Language and they should not be published before 2015. The publication date of the article was one criteria since articles older than 2015 are inadequate for this research. Articles older than 2015 will not contain useful and up-to-date information since the platform economy is a fast growing and changing field of research. Furthermore, the documents and articles should mention the name 'Foodora' as one of the inclusion criteria. In addition, the last inclusion criteria is that all practices should focus on the German market since the interviews will be conducted with labour unions from Germany. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in table 3.

Table 3 – Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Articles in English or German	Articles in another language than English or German
Foodora is mentioned	Foodora is not mentioned
Documents and Articles after 2015	Document and Articles older than 2015
HR Practices ‘Foodora’ in the German market	HR Practices ‘Foodora’ outside Germany

For the operationalization of the tactics labour unions use to protect platform workers, an interview will be performed to uncover these tactics. An interview will be used for gathering primary data since collaborative consumption is a very new and emerging topic and for that purpose, we can use open questions. First, a general question has been posed to the interviewee if their labour union aims to protect the interests of the platform workers that find work via the platform Foodora. Next, an HR practice which was revealed by the literature review and document analysis was explained and afterwards asked if they consider the way Foodora conducts the HR practice problematic or not. If yes, how are they actually helping the platform workers with this issue and how effective the initiatives are to solve this issue. All in all, if all aspects of a construct are included in the operationalization, it is said to have content validity. Therefore, it is important to make sure that all aspects are included.

3.5 Coding of the interview

In the beginning of each interview, the interviewee was asked for permission to record the interview, and all interviewees affirmed. In the following, a transcription was custom built for each interview and sent for verification. The next step included the coding of the interview results with the help of atlas.ti. Hereby the open coding combined with the list coding technique were applied and resulted in a list of different codes. These codes were combined under the code groups “HR practices”, “Labour union tactics” and “Power issue”. After coding and quoting the interview data, the data which was classified with one of the codes, was copied to another document and translated from German into English.

4. RESULTS

The results section will be split into three main parts. The first part is about the HR practices used by Foodora and is comprised of information gathered through a literature review, document analysis and the interviews. Based on this, the next part is about the tactics labour unions use to safeguard platform worker rights whose rights might be harmed by the HR practices. The data was gathered through conducting interviews with the labour union representatives. The third part is about the power issue related to the use of different tactics and the representation of platform workers. The interviews were conducted with persons from two labour unions, NGG and FAU. Interviewee 1 is head of division ‘hospitality industry’ within the NGG, Interviewee 2 is a member of the FAU and further co-responsible for the DeliverUnion campaign, Interviewee 3 is a member of the NGG and co-responsible for the Liefern am Limit campaign, Interviewee 4 is a member of the FAU and Interviewee 5 is a member of the NGG.

4.1 HR Practices Foodora

In the following part, I will conduct a literature review combined with a document analysis to find out which HR practices Foodora uses to safeguard the rights of the platform workers. This document analysis is mainly composed of newspaper articles and

reports from test drivers, since it is a new and emerging field of research and there are not many scientific articles available about Foodora. However, further information about the HR practices Foodora uses have been gathered during the interviews with different influential people from the labour unions. One of the labour unions launched a campaign in 2016 for improving the rights of Foodora and Deliveroo riders. This campaign includes various demands such as enough shifts for the workers, more hourly compensation and compensation for attrition of bike and smartphone battery (Facebook, DeliverUnion, 2016). A closer look will be given to these three demands in the following sections.

4.1.1 Work Design and Workforce Planning

The daily working life of a platform worker is determined by algorithms and their shifts can be traced online with the help of GPS signals (Töpfer, 2016). The member of the FAU mentioned that *“The biggest problem is the shift planning system which runs via an algorithm. So people who don’t drive fast enough or who make mistakes immediately receive fewer shifts.”* (Interview 2). Most of the orders are coming in when the weather is the worst outside, making it hard for the riders to do their job. Additionally, one problem which most often occurs in summer is that there are too many riders and too less shifts, resulting in less hours of work for each individual and less income a month. At the Moment, Foodora does not try to balance demand-supply for labour, as they continue to hire new people. Considering the problem of the unavailability of enough shifts for the riders, hence a labour surplus, the FAU proposed a solution model that *“Foodora needs to have a puffer of at least 20 percent available shifts at any time”* (Interview 2). At the Moment, however, Foodora did not implement a solution to the problem.

Furthermore, Foodora changed their shift planning system from their own developed one to a new developed Rooster-App (Facebook “Liefer am Limit”, 2018). From their point of view, with the help of this app it will be easier for the riders to plan their shifts. However, one massive problem which occurred with the introduction of the new App was the aspect that all riders had the same password, and the only way to ensure safety and privacy was through the private email address of the riders (Facebook “Liefer am Limit”, 2018). Fortunately, this problem has been solved a few weeks after the introduction.

In the following, I will closely look at the new shift planning system “Rooster” and see if it actually benefits the riders or further harms their rights (Facebook “DeliverUnion”, 2018). With the old shift planning system, riders were free to work as many hours as they wanted as long as they stayed within their weekly limits which were set down in their contracts (Facebook “DeliverUnion”, 2018). Now, there is a minimum and maximum of hours riders have to work. When looking at the shift hierarchy, “Shifts are now made available to riders at different times according to their performance statistics” (Facebook “DeliverUnion”, 2018). First, riders who are performing best (belonging to the best 30 percent) are free to choose first and afterwards more average riders can choose from the leftovers (best 70 percent). If it is not possible for a rider to find suitable shifts, he/she will get randomly assigned leftover shifts. The problem here is the fact that the system does not consider ‘non-availabilities’ when assigning the shifts. *“With the allocation of shifts we have a system which favors some riders and that is a problem, regardless of the temporary contracts.”* (Interview 2). If you don’t achieve the performance to end up in group 1, *“you just get assigned to shifts, and whether you are available at this time or not, the system doesn’t care at all. Only a certain percentage can be placed in the first class.”* (Interview 1). The head of the hospitality division explains what conditions a rider has to fulfil to get into the first class: *“The riders are divided into*

four batches. Those who do not have any no-shows, complete at least 2.2 deliveries per hours, who also take over the unpleasant weekend shifts, are put into the first class and they can indicate their shifts in this new planning system app earlier than others.”(Interview 1). This means that only a small percentage can freely choose their shifts and the other bigger part needs to take what is left at the end. Another disadvantage of the new shift planning system compared to the old one is the fact that shift planning is now more time consuming than before (Facebook “DeliverUnion”, 2018).

4.1.2 Managing Employee Competences

When looking into the recruitment and selection practices of Foodora, one can see that the process of applying and getting selected for the job is rather easy compared to traditional job applications. First, you will need to sign up with your name, email address, phone number and available working tools (Foodora Homepage). Without a bike and smartphone, one is not able to work at Foodora, since Foodora does not provide these kinds of working tools. The next step is uploading all the relevant documents they need to finish the application, like the tax identification number, the social security number, a health insurance card, enrolment certificate in case you are a student and a work permit in case you are a non EU-citizen (Foodora Homepage). The employment relationship is characterized by “temporary limited contracts” (Interview 1) which is resulting in riders having no assurances concerning income. However, one advantage compared to their competitor Deliveroo is that all riders are employed with an hourly compensation, whereas Deliveroo mostly makes use of freelancers (Facebook “Lieferrn am Limit”, 2018).

The temporary contracts are limited to two years with a “probation period of six months” (Interview 3). Temporary limited contracts do harm worker interests since the employer can dismiss the rider at any time, especially during the probation period. One aspect which is problematic about the selection process is the fact that everyone can work at Foodora when they are hiring at this specific moment in time. However, Foodora does not check whether the person has certain health issues or other interferences that make it impossible or dangerous for the person to work as a rider. Relating to this, the head of the hospitality division also said that “If you really cannot do the job, you will be sifted out again really quick. So the question of how healthy the working conditions are, that everyone can apply and take a trial round first, I wouldn’t be so critical about.”(Interview 1). Furthermore, a critical point the member of the FAU talked about was the employment policy of Foodora, where he stated that “they hire an incredible number of people in winter, fire many in spring and hire again in summer.” (Interview 2). This needs to be controlled and a regulation on open contracts and on hiring people must be implemented. In relation to the temporary contracts, a labour union member said that “If I have a temporary job, I cannot sign any rental contracts, I cannot get any credits.” (Interview 3). Furthermore, a company can be characterized by the fact that they have a healthy core workforce. However, at Foodora, “[there are] a lot of non-active employees who will start someday, take a test ride and then never appear again, because they do not feel committed to this kind of employment relationship.” (Interview 5). This needs to be controlled to make sure that they do not have too many non-active employees in their company files.

4.1.3 Managing Employees Attitudes and Behaviors

This section is about managing employee attitudes and behaviors, including performance management, compensation and benefits. At Foodora, the riders are getting paid per hour, and

this hourly rate depends on the city they work in ranging from 8.50€ to 11€ (Klar, 2016). In addition, they are dependent on tips from customers to make a decent living and consequently raise their hourly wages. This is an advantage over the biggest competitor Deliveroo, where the riders are freelancers and are only getting paid per order. Furthermore, the rider does not have any assurance of steady income due to the labour surplus where not enough shifts are made available and hence cannot obtain credit or sign a rental agreement (Interview 3). At the beginning of the year, Foodora introduced a bonus program in cooperation with “LiveCycle – Alles rund um’s Fahrrad.Mobil” (LiveCycle Homepage, 2018). This programs aims to help the platform workers cover most of the costs from worn out parts of their bicycles. They would get a 25 cent credit per hour they work for Foodora. This is limited to 42 € a month, which counts for 168 working hours a month (Facebook “Lieferrn am Limit”, 2018). However, this credit can only be used in “LiveCycle” exclusive online shops for Foodora workers or in one of their LiveCycle repair shops. Due to the fact that the amount is limited, the head of the hospitality division said: “There are also people who drive more, and for them, it is too less money.” Furthermore, “there are high quality bikes in use, with which it simply goes faster and better than with normal or older bikes. There is also a wish of Foodora that every rider can do 3 deliveries per hour, and one can only accomplish that with a well-oiled bike.” (Interview 1). The member of the FAU added the fact that “the total amount of 42 Euro does not cover the costs that actually arise in reality. The costs of bicycle wear are almost as high as those of a car”. (Interview 2). Within the labour union FAU, they also made calculations that “it takes at least 35 cents per kilometer to actually cover all the attrition costs.” (Interview 2). Another problem which arises when the 42 Euro are not enough for the maintenance repairs is that “the minimum wage is undercut again, because they have to invest money again from their own pocket.” (Interview 3).

When looking at the benefits, it is remarkable to see that Foodora riders are medically insured and that Foodora provides clothes like bike tricots and jackets to their riders. Moreover, the riders need to have their own working tools such as a bike and a smartphone. One food delivery service is currently offering e-bikes for riders in Germany to make it more convenient for them but also to handle depreciation of the bicycles in a more convenient way. However, one interviewee claims that “I am just not quite sure whether the rider really wants this, because you handle your own tools in a completely different way. Especially if you have a passion for it.” (Interview 1). Moreover, Foodora has a bonus system in place where the rider has to meet specific conditions in order to receive the bonus. The conditions are: “The rider must have signed the bonus agreement. The rider receives a surcharge on the contractually agreed hourly rate of 50 cents (gross) per delivery in the following month, if he had no no-shows (not started), no late log ins, and at least 6 weekend shifts and has an average delivery rate of 2.2 deliveries per hour.” (Interview 1). The conditions point out that it is not easy to receive the bonus, especially since 2.2 deliveries per hour is hard to achieve. Additional information about this topic was given by the head of the hospitality division, who said that “Foodora works with the so-called strikes, one could translate with warnings, so when you do not start your shifts on time or do not wear the right clothes, you get a strike and after three strikes, Foodora will terminate the contract.”(Interview 1) Furthermore, he proposed that “through such spontaneous incentives (drive one more shift and get 5€ more, or drive longer today and you get another 50 Cents per delivery more) they will get even more riders into the system”. This shows that Foodora uses policies to assess the riders’ performance, but still needs to further implement spontaneous incentives.

4.2 Labour Union Tactics

During the interviews with the different labour unions from Germany, an insight into the tactics they use within the platform economy was given. The tactics they mentioned were work council, collective bargaining, lobbying at politicians and public relations activities. These tactics are used by the two labour unions FAU and NGG in Germany to make sure that the HR practices mentioned earlier do not harm worker interests. Noticeable here it that the labour unions do not use one specific tactic for each HR practice, but rather follow a process where they start with unionize workers, establishing work councils and then use other tactics to complement it. First, a short summary will be given about the process followed by the tactics explained in more detail.

4.2.1 The process

In general, a labour unions task is to protect worker interests and rights where employers are not safeguarding them. In this study, Foodora makes use of HR practices that harm worker interests and hence, labour unions need to take action. In the early stages, the labour unions and the platform workers *“get in contact with each other, ensure the protection of the works constitution act and start to establish work councils.”* (Interview 1). Before establishing work councils, it is important that a specific number of riders are unionized within the labour union to start collectively into work council elections. A member of the NGG who is also co-responsible for a campaign further mentioned that *“We support riders who are interested in setting up a work council in other cities, we support them with our knowledge and experience and try to organize meetings.”* In the first meeting between the rider and the labour union, the main questions which need to be considered are *“How is your work organized? What are your problems? How does your contract look like? What do you have to contribute in order to work for Foodora?”* (Interview 5). The NGG is in favor of establishing a work council, whereas the FAU (Interview 2) thinks that *“work councils are not a good way of fighting for improvement due to the limited contracts.”* They rather focus on *“publicity campaigns to bring the protests of both online platforms, Foodora and Deliveroo, together, but also to raise public awareness of the situation.”* (Interview 2). Here we can see that the labour unions have different approaches to achieve improvements in working conditions for the platform workers.

Moreover, campaigns are used by both labour unions to draw attention to their work. One campaign is called “Lieferam Limit” and was found by three people who were working on one of the two platforms, either Foodora or Deliveroo. After a while, they allied with the NGG. Related to this, a member of the NGG said that *“I try to convince the riders on the street to join the labour union.”* (Interview 3). Another campaign called “DeliverUnion” was established by the FAU Berlin to demand fair working conditions for the platform workers. A member of this labour union mentioned that *“various groups of riders came to us, at the end of 2016 and decided to organize within the FAU. Especially because we have the possibility of co-determination within out labour union and because we were internationally networked from the beginning.”* (Interview 2). Due to the fact that all riders around the world face the same problems within the gig economy, it is considered highly valuable to be internationally networked to see how they tackle the challenges. First of all, both labour unions try to *“achieve co-determination which depends on the degree of organization in the regions”* (Interview 5). Afterwards, moving towards collective agreements is seen as the ultimate goal. Furthermore, to counteract the temporary limited contracts, the labour union NGG *“tries to exert pressure on politicians”* (Interview 5).

4.2.2 Work council

In this part, the tactic “work council” is explained in more detail. Work councils are seen as one of the oldest forms of worker participation in decision making within companies. By definition, a work council is an institutionalized body representing the employees in communications with the employer (Rogers & Streeck, 1995). When looking at creating a work council, the German Works Constitution Act demands that workers show initiative for a work council to be established and employers have no right to demand for the recantation of the work council (Rogers & Streeck, 1995). Therefore, the first step of a labour union should be that *“[they] are first trying to secure the protection of the German Works Constitution Act, also for the riders, and that [they] are starting to set up work councils”* (Interview 1). Moreover, work councils are independent of unions, but one needs to bear in mind that most of the candidates are also union members (Addison, Schnabel & Wagner, 1997). A work council can be established when a company exceeds a size threshold of five full-time employees who work for the company for at least six months (Addison, Schnabel & Wagner, 2001). This is one disadvantage for setting up a work council in the platform economy, as one interviewee also mentioned that *“You have to be in the company for at least six month to be elected to the works council.”* (Interview 3). As mentioned earlier, most of the riders stay with Foodora for three to six month, which makes it hard to set up an effective work council. The NGG accomplished to extend the contracts of the work council members for an indefinite period of time. A member of the NGG said that *“this has been negotiated with Foodora and we pointed out that there are gaps in the contracts, where the gaps are and that we want a consolidated body that does not have to be re-elected every time a contract runs out”.* (Interview 5). Nevertheless, she wanted twice the number of people to stand for election (normally it is a committee with 9 people), because when one contract expires as we go along, there are still enough replacements.

At the moment, there are two work councils of Foodora in Germany. They both were established in 2017 and are working on achieving better working conditions for the riders. *“If there are work councils, there will also be co-determination and as a consequence Foodora can no longer act as they like”* (Interview 3). One example is the introduction of the new shift planning system ‘Rooster’, which is controversial and therefore wasn’t introduced in Cologne, since the work council did not approve it (Interview 3). Moreover, members of the work council have *“a special dismissal protection”* (Interview 1). It means that they are protected against dismissal and Foodora cannot easily fire them. The work on the platform is contingent on algorithms and on account of this the human factor is missing. And this human factor will ultimately be the *“work council who will ensure that a more human work is possible”* (Interview 5).

4.2.3 Collective bargaining

The next step after implementing a work council would be *“to find a collective contractual arrangement, i.e. a collective agreement”* (Interview 1). Collective bargaining is a process where the employer has to collaborate with the labour union in order to reach an agreement. However, when looking into the gig economy, and especially Foodora, *“The negotiations that we had failed, and we had to drop the negotiations after Foodora had not held any real negotiations.”* (Interview 2). This shows that Foodora was not willing to bargain with the labour union and most of the times did not even show up or responded to bargaining enquiries. As shown in the theory section, for collective bargaining to be successful, employer and labour union should meet at a reasonable time and be ready to reach an

agreement. However, Foodora was not willing to meet with the labour union and hence, collective bargaining was not successful.

4.2.4 Lobbying at politicians

The NGG is currently planning on working together with an influential politician to make sure that temporal limited contracts are going to be abolished in the near future. A member of the NGG mentioned that “[they] are trying to exert pressure on politicians at this point. There will be a meeting soon with the labour minister, but not much will happen yet, since the coalition agreement that 3 parties have negotiated does not provide for the abolition of temporary contracts”. (Interview 5). This shows that the labour union cannot undertake much at the moment, since the coalition agreement first needs to change in order to achieve the abolishment of temporary contracts. Although it is not possible to change this at the moment, the new policy would include wage agreements and ensures that the rider will have more assurances than with a temporary limited contract.

4.2.5 Public relations activities

Public relations activities are important for a labour union to undertake to make themselves known as a labour union that tries to safeguard platform worker rights. A member of the FAU said that “We have opted for publicity campaigns to bring the protests of drivers of both companies together, but also to raise public awareness of the situation.” In addition, “We have made a series of actions, i.e. demonstrations at regular intervals and have ensured that a great deal of attention has been paid to the platform, and we have also exerted effective pressure on them to achieve individual improvements” (Interview 2). Next to doing protests to achieve better working conditions, the NGG in one city is doing a small project this year to help the riders in the aspect of bicycle attrition. “We are doing a repair café in an inner courtyard, where people are volunteering their time to repair their colleagues’ bicycles.” (Interview 5). This project will help the riders to get their bicycles fixed for a cheaper price by only paying the worn out parts.

The FAU claims that it is important to be “internationally networked from the beginning” (Interview 2). The FAU has a strong international orientation which includes links between the UK and their labour union, which benefits both parties, since they see what is happening in the respective country and can help each other. Besides the FAU, the head office of the NGG in Hamburg is also working on an international level (Interview 5). To be internationally connected is important in today’s world, particularly in the gig economy which is growing at a great pace. Tactics that labour unions use in Germany, for example, can also benefit labour unions in the UK or the Netherlands. A member of the NGG said that “...at the European level, there are already opportunities for exchange; there is something happening in all places”. (Interview 5).

4.3 Power

When looking at the tactics which are explained above, the question now is whether labour unions have the power to safeguard platform worker rights. During the interviews, data could be gathered about the power of resources and power of processes, whereas power of meaning did not come up. In terms of power of resources, the more members a labour union entails, the more power they have and the better they can bargain with the specific platform. This is highlighted by the head of the hospitality division who said that “[they] are as strong as [they] have members” since “this area is very new and the fluctuation among the employees is very high” (Interview 1), it is hard to work together as a team and unite the workers, especially when the workforce completely changes every two years. One aspect that the head of the hospitality division mentioned is that “the colleagues have an incredibly high self-motivation, so they are

really combative, very creative and get involved with great ideas and also implement them” (Interview 1). A member of the FAU further confirmed that it is hard to achieve the desired outcomes in a short amount of time since “We have a very high fluctuation, most people stay between three to six months and many people who came to us at the beginning are no longer there.” (Interview 2). Therefore, the power of resources is achieved through organizing the platform workers.

Regarding the power of processes, working in an international context is of advantage to the labour unions since they have more power to discuss with the different labour unions and achieve something together for the platform worker. A member of the NGG mentioned therefore that “...not only the employer has a worldwide network, but we do as well and we further try to build up a solid network.” (Interview 5). In addition, a member of the FAU mentioned that “it is a completely new field, so you can only try what are the best ways to achieve something.” (Interview 2). Lobbying with politicians further relates to the power of processes, since it is used to influence how global practices are designed, in this case the coalition agreement for the abolishment of temporary limited contracts. Furthermore, work councils will likely have an impact on power of processes, since work councils can influence the way HR practices are executed and implemented.

One interview has been conducted with a labour union that is currently not working together with platform workers. Relating to this, a member of the FAU said that “we had several contacts with the riders, also in the WhatsApp group, so they knew that we were there and that we are doing something.” (Interview 4). They distributed flyers, planned events for the riders, “but no one ever said that they would like to join us.” (Interview 4). Most of the riders were described as “demotivated and disillusioned” (Interview 4). In addition, in the city where they are operating in Germany, most of the riders “...do not speak German and are foreigners or international students.” (Interview 4). Nevertheless, they will “continue out of solidarity” (Interview 4) and further attend nationwide events and action days, but “we are not planning a big campaign in the near future” (Interview 4). Here it becomes clear that it is rather hard to achieve power of resources (organize employees) within the gig economy.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Theoretical Implications

When looking back at table 1 which linked the tactics with the HR practices, one can see that new tactics have been uncovered during the interviews. One tactic which was frequently mentioned is 'work council'. Work councils are established to achieve co-determination and to counteract the employer in areas where unfair conditions for the platform worker are in place. Another tactic which was not mentioned in the table before is 'public relations activities'. The labour unions use public relations activities to make themselves known to the public and to the platform workers. The tactic 'Lawsuits' which was mentioned in table 1, however, was not specifically mentioned in the interviews and therefore I am not able to draw a conclusion. Due to the fact that new tactics have been uncovered during the interviews, one can say that the platform economy is a fast growing field of research that needs more and more attention in the future to further uncover tactics. Furthermore, after conducting the interviews with the representatives of the labour unions, it became obvious that with the data which was gathered, the table 1 could not be filled in. The reason behind this is that the labour unions do not use one specific tactic for each HR practice. Instead, it is a process which starts with organizing the employees and goes from establishing work councils to collective bargaining, public relations activities and sometimes lobbying. The tactics mentioned only work in combination with one another, therefore they try to build synergies and are interdependent. One tactic should follow the other one in time in order for them to be effective.

During the interviews, the labour union representatives talked about how they are able to achieve the desired outcome within the platform economy. Organizing the platform workers, which is the first step in the process, will likely have an impact on the power of resources since a labour union can only work if a certain number of platform workers are organized within the labour union. Next, establishing work councils will likely have an impact on the power of processes and power of processes will impact the compliance with HR practices of worker needs. Power of resources has a moderating role and power of processes has a mediating role. Therefore, power of resources also explains best why labour unions are not effective due to the fact that it is not easy to unite the platform workers and motivate them to collaborate with the corresponding labour union.

5.2 Practical Implications

The research revealed different tactics that can be applied by labour unions in the platform economy to protect worker rights. It is recommended for labour unions to find out what is best for the platform worker in the first place and then align their interests. Besides, it is also important to unionize the workers, since that is the biggest hurdle for labour unions right now. The FAU still has problems in some cities to unionize the workers, resulting in no effective starting point and no basis of working together to safeguard their rights. As this topic 'platform economy' is growing immensely at the moment, it is important for labour unions to have the specific knowledge about tactics they can use in this field to protect the worker rights.

5.3 Limitations

When conducting interviews, it is important to collect data until data saturation is reached to make sure that all the important aspects are included in this study. However, due to the limited time available for this research, it was only possible to conduct five interviews. Additional interviews might have led to different and also more reliable outcomes. Furthermore, these five interviews were conducted with two major labour unions from

Germany. Due to the limited time frame, it was not possible for other labour unions to take part in this study. Social desirability is one factor which needs to be considered when doing interviews. This factor is a bias that may have occurred during conducting the interviews. In addition, this study only focused on labour unions in Germany and their tactics to safeguard worker rights. It can be argued that different countries might have different tactics to protect the platform workers and further different governmental policies that influence the relationship between labour unions and platform firms. Hence, the application of the results is only recommended for the usage in Germany.

5.4 Further Research

Future research can further extend the list of tactics that labour union use and also include different tactics from additional labour unions in Germany. Furthermore, this research only includes information from two labour unions in Germany and therefore can be further extended by conducting interviews with other labour unions. In addition, rather than focusing on the German labour market, one can widen the range and also include other countries in the platform economy research. In addition, one can compare tactics across various countries and reveal which country is performing best in protecting independent contractors or platform workers. One point that future researchers in the platform economy should keep in mind is the fact that tactics should all be studied together since they are interdependent on each other.

5.5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to answer the research question: *'What tactics do labour unions use to safeguard employee rights in relation to the HR practices that online platforms use that might harm worker interests?'* The paper displays different tactics which are used by two labour unions in Germany, the NGG and FAU, to make sure that platform worker interests and rights are protected and safeguarded. The NGG first establishes 'work councils' to make sure that there is co-determination for the riders. Second, they also make use of the tactic 'lobbying at politicians', especially in relation to the temporary limited contracts, to ensure that, at some point in time, the platform workers will receive extended contracts for an unlimited amount of time. Next, the FAU does not think that work councils are an efficient way to safeguard worker rights, since all platform workers have temporary limited contracts and this will result in electing a work council every now and then when a contract expires. Therefore, the FAU mostly uses the tactic 'public relations activities' to protect the platform workers. They introduced a campaign to fight for better working conditions as for example a higher hourly compensation and compensation for working tools attrition. For a platform worker, it is essential to work together with the labour unions directly in charge to make sure that their rights are protected and interests are apprehended.

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8. APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (ENGLISH)

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Labour Union: _____

Place: _____

Date and Time: _____

Aim: The essence of the interview is to find out how labour unions can use their tactics to counteract the HR practices of platform companies.

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE:

- Introduction
- Research related questions
- Comments and end

Inform the interviewee about the interview being confidential.

Ask for approval to record the interview.

Ask whether the transcript can be send for verification.

Introduction

Introduce yourself and the purpose of the interview:

- Bachelor student University of Twente
- Interest in online labour platforms:
 - o Online marketplace
 - o Acts as an intermediary / matchmaker / middle-man
 - o To match supply and demand for labour
 - o The ones that supply labour is what I call: platform workers

Main research question: What tactics do labour unions use to safeguard worker interests?

In this interview I specifically want to focus on the tactics that your labour union uses to protect the interest of the platform workers of Foodora

Introductory Questions

What is your present position in the labour union?

Which responsibilities do you have?

What experience do you have with Foodora as a labour union representative?

What experiences do you have regards protecting independent contractors?

Labour union tactics

Does your labour aim to protect the interest of the workers that find work via the Foodora platform?

- If not, can you explain why?
- If so, how does your labour union aim to protect the interest of the workers that find work via the Foodora platform?

Has the introduction of online labour platforms changed the way your labour union protect worker interests? Or: did you have to change the traditional ways how you used to protect worker rights which might not work for online platforms?

- If so, how and why? Can you give examples?

- If not, why?

What difference is there between representing a platform worker compared to a traditional worker? What is the difference / can you give examples? Why do these differences manifest?

How effective are the activities that your labour union engages in to protect the interest of the workers that find work via the Foodora platform?

- If so, can you explain why these tactics are so effective? And which outcomes do/did they bring for the workers?
 - If not, can you explain why these tactics are not effective in terms of protecting worker interests?
-

INFLUENCE OF LABOUR UNIONS ON SELECTED HR PRACTICES OF ONLINE PLATFORMS

- Recruitment and selection
 - Job design
 - Rewards
 - Performance management
 - Workforce planning
 - Training
 - Employability/career management
 - Facilities or lack thereof (e-bikes/self-driving cars, equipment)
 - Employee benefits: social security, insurances, pensions,
 - Fairness
-

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AFTER PRESENTING A WORKERS' INTEREST ISSUE:

We saw that platform X does X HR practice in X way.

Do you consider the way they conduct the HR practice problematic?

- Why?

What does your labour union do about this issue?

- How? Can you give examples?
- Why (not)

How would/can you help the worker with this?

How effective are the initiatives by your labour union to solve this issue?

- Why?
-

Comments and End

Are there any remaining problems with Foodora that we have not addressed yet?

- If so, can you give examples? Why are they problematic?
- What does your labour union do to help workers in this situation?

Ask if there are undiscussed topics that the interviewee would like to discuss.

Ask if the interviewee has remaining questions.

Ask if the interviewee has remarks on the interview.

9. APPENDIX B – TRANSLATED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (GERMAN)

Interviewer: _____

Interviewter: _____

Gewerkschaft: _____

Ort: _____

Datum und Uhrzeit: _____

Ziel des Interviews: Herausfinden welche Taktiken die Gewerkschaften benutzen um die Rechte und Interessen dieser Plattform-arbeiter zu sichern (in Bezug auf Foodora)

Interview Struktur: Einführung, Fragen in Bezug auf die Foodora-arbeiter, Kommentare und Ende

Notizen: Informier den Interviewten darüber, dass die Interviewdaten vertraulich behandelt werden || Fragen, ob ich das Interview aufnehmen darf || Fragen, ob die Transkription des Interviews später zur Überprüfung und Verifikation gesendet werden kann

Hintergrund Informationen über mich

Vorstellung: IBA Bachelor Student an der University of Twente in Enschede || Interessiert an „online labour platforms“ → online Marketplace, arbeiten als Matchmaker/Zwischenperson, Diejenigen die Arbeit anbieten nennen wir „platform workers“

Hauptforschungsfrage: „What tactics do labour unions use to safeguard worker interests?"/ „Welche Taktiken benutzen die Gewerkschaften um die Rechte und Interessen der Arbeiter zu sichern und gewährleisten?“

Hintergrund Informationen über den Interviewten

Welche Position haben Sie zurzeit in der Gewerkschaft?

Welche Aufgaben haben Sie in der Gewerkschaft?

Welche Erfahrung haben Sie mit Foodora als Gewerkschaftsvertreter?

Welche Erfahrung haben Sie in Bezug auf die Gewährleistung von Rechten für selbstständige Unternehmer?

Taktiken der Gewerkschaft

Gewährleistet Ihre Gewerkschaft den Schutz/Absicherung der Arbeiter die für Foodora arbeiten?

- Wenn ja, wie?
- Wenn nein, erklären Sie bitte warum!

Hat die Einführung von „Online Labour Platforms“ ihre Art wie Sie Arbeiter vertreten geändert?

- Wenn ja, wie und warum? Beispiele
- Wenn nein, warum nicht?

Welche Unterschiede sind dort zwischen vertreten eines Plattform Beschäftigten und vertreten eines normalen Arbeiters? (Beispiele)

Wie effektiv sind die Aktivitäten die Ihre Gewerkschaft betreibt um die Rechte und Interessen der Foodora Arbeiter zu gewährleisten?

- Wenn ja, können Sie erklären wieso die Aktivitäten so effektiv sind? Und welche Folge hatten diese für die Arbeiter?
- Wenn nein, können Sie erklären wieso die Aktivitäten nicht effektiv waren in Bezug auf die Gewährleistung der Rechte und Interessen der Arbeiter?

Beeinflussung der Gewerkschaften auf spezielle Personalpraktiken von Online Plattformen

- I. Einstellung von Arbeitskräften (Recruitment) und Selektion
 - II. Job Design
 - III. Belohnungen
 - IV. Performance Management
 - V. Planen der Arbeiterschaft
 - VI. Training
 - VII. Karriere Management
 - VIII. Ausstattung (e-bikes, Ausrüstung)
 - IX. Zusatzleistungen/Vergünstigungen der Arbeiter (Sozialversicherungen, Versicherungen, Rente)
 - X. Gerechtigkeit, Fairness
-

Folgefragen nachdem ich die Arbeiterprobleme aufgezeigt habe

Wir haben gesehen, dass Plattform Foodora diese Personalpraktiken verwendet. Finden Sie den Weg der Ausführung dieser Praktiken problematisch?

→ Wenn ja, warum?

Was macht Ihre Gewerkschaft in Bezug auf die vorherige Frage?

Wie würden Sie den Arbeitern damit helfen?

Wie effektiv sind die Initiativen von Ihrer Gewerkschaft um dieses Problem zu lösen?

Kommentare und Ende

Haben sie noch weitere Anmerkungen zu der Arbeit von Ihrer Gewerkschaft mit den Foodora Beschäftigten?

→ Probleme, Beispiele

Haben Sie noch weitere Fragen? (zu mir, über meine Arbeit..)

Haben sie noch Anmerkungen über das Interview?

Bedanken für das Interview

9.1 Interview Notes

This part is left out due to confidential information.