

Individual Social Responsibility?

Consumers in the Platform Economy and their Support for Workers' Access to Social Protection

Student: Pauline Luise Herbert

Student Number: 1862332

European Public Administration

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First Supervisor: Dr. Giedo Jansen

Second Supervisor: Dr. Guus Meershoek

University of Twente

5, Drdrienerlolaan

7522 NB Enschede

Netherlands

Abstract

In recent years, a new way of connecting people who offer services to potential clients has emerged: the so-called platform economy. Within the discussion of the conflicting priorities of workers and service platforms, the clients' point of view remains understudied. This paper investigates the degree to which consumers support an improvement of the platform workers' access to social protection. Furthermore, the willingness to pay more for platform services in order to help improve the situation is studied. It is the aim of this thesis to explore the influence of consumers' socio-economic status and as well as their awareness of worker protests on the willingness to pay more and the degree of support for social protection. An online survey with n=176 consumers was conducted. A multiple linear regression revealed that a consumers' socio-economic status had no influence on either of the two issues. However, the factor of whether a consumer was aware of the protests led to a significant increase in support as well as willingness to pay more. Additionally, the support for better social protection showed an influence on the willingness to pay more.

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1. Introduction: Social Protection of Workers in the Platform Economy and the Consumers' Perspective

In recent years, a new way of connecting people who offer services to potential clients has emerged: the so-called platform economy. As the name indicates, online platforms serve as the intermediate agency between workers and consumers managing supply and demand (Berg 2016). Workers get paid for completing a particular task, sometimes referred to as “gig”, or working for a fixed amount of time (Friedman 2014). In the platform economy, there are three groups of stakeholders: workers, the platforms providing the online infrastructure and consumers (Schmidt 2017). In general, new branches on the labor market are often criticized for sacrificing workers' ability to make a stable living in order to maximize profit. Therefore, it is not surprising that several service platforms have come under fire after workers made concerning claims about their situation in the industry. The public as well as the academic debate around the topic can be broken down into one central question: do online platforms provide chances for more flexibility, sustainability and creativity in the service economy (Anttiroiko 2013) or do they in fact create a dangerously unregulated marketplace (Martin 2016)?

A classic example for the controversy around working conditions in the platform economy is the food delivery industry: riders hired through the online platform Foodora have reported more and more issues related to their working conditions. Workers have denounced the fact that they themselves have to cover the costs for bike maintenance and internet connection on the job. Additionally, the couriers have heavily criticized the company's practice of paying the riders per delivery instead of on an hourly basis, making national regulations on hourly minimum wages void (Maccarrone & Tassinari 2017).

Within the discussion of the conflicting priorities of workers and service platforms as intermediate agencies, the clients' point of view beyond their willingness to purchase the services remains understudied. This paper argues that the consumers can actually be seen as the connecting element between the two sides of the argument and that researching their considerations is a valuable addition to the debate for several reasons. Below, the unique role of consumers in the platform economy will be explored.

1.1 The Special Role of Consumers in the Platform Economy

First of all, it is important to note that both companies as well as private individuals can purchase services via online platforms. This paper exclusively focuses on the latter: the so-called peer-to-peer economy (Selloni 2017). The first circumstance making the consumers' role in the platform economy remarkable is the direct manner in which they engage in the transaction with the worker or provider of the service. In the following paragraph, the relationship between corporations and the development of measures regarding social protection will be examined in order to explain consumers' possible (sense of) responsibility in the platform economy.

As Hacker and Pierson (2002) describe, significantly sized corporations in general try to influence public decision making in order to prevent reforms towards (social) policies endangering profits. On the other side, next to labor unions and state actors, employers' associations historically played an important role in the development of policies regarding social protection of workers (Hegelich & Meyer 2008). As many scholars argue, corporations indeed do have an interest in social policy protecting their workers from impoverishment and social isolation (Swank & Martin 2001). The support for workers' protection can be motivated by (financial) benefits for the corporations themselves such as avoidance of labor unrest (Ferguson 1984) or the hope for general economic growth (Myles 1989). However, it can also be seen as part of corporate social responsibility (CSR): in order to make a contribution to a better society, businesses include social concerns in their operations beyond their legal obligation (Dahlsrud 2008). In the platform economy, workers are "[...] no longer employed in 'jobs' with a long-term connection with a company, a job ladder, and mutual interest in the well-being of both the company and the worker" (Friedman 2014: 171). Arguably, this detachment could lead to the absence of CSR-related measures regarding the social protection of workers in the platform economy.

When looking at the role of platforms as "middlemen" between providers and consumers of services, one thing becomes evident: in most cases, the private individuals are the ones who hire and pay the worker, not the platforms as corporations themselves. As a consequence, one could argue that consumers of services act as the employer of the worker in the scenario. Taking this circumstance into account, could there be a "switch" the sense of responsibility from corporations towards the clients themselves? In the special case of the platform economy, is it *individual* social responsibility that matters more? In other words, do the consumers of the services offered via online platforms actually care about the state of social protection in the industry and would they want for these to change for the better?

One of the most debated issues related to the platform economy is labor market regulation. For the most part, the new branch remains unregulated as many concepts such as “worker” would have to be re-defined in order for existing frameworks to apply. When it comes to social protection of people offering their services via online platforms, many scholars argue that those individuals are in need of special protection that can only be achieved by regulating the rapidly growing industry (Drahokoupil & Fabo 2016). In contrast to that, others believe that the casual nature of work in the platform economy should under no circumstances be controlled by government agencies but self-regulated instead (Cohen & Sundararajan 2017).

When it comes to political debates on service platforms, people often forget about consumers as the third group of actors. As campaigns such as #DeleteUber¹ have proven, said consumers have a lot of leverage in controversial and politicized public debates. From this perspective, researching consumers’ perception of social security for platform workers seems to be highly relevant. Especially considering the fact that the process of regulating the platforms has only just begun, having a closer look at the consumers and their opinions on the matter is undoubtedly of great importance.

1.2 Literature Review

When studying the existing literature on the matter, it becomes evident that the way clients discern the social protection of workers they hire has not yet been researched. However, the consumers’ perception of working conditions in general has previously been studied; mostly by scholars who did research in the field of economics. The question that most of those authors aim to answer is: do consumers care about the ethical behavior of a company when making a buying decision? Attalla and Carrigan (2001) did qualitative research in order to find out whether consumers of products cared enough about the ethical behavior of corporations, specifically towards the employees, to influence their purchase behavior. Valor (2007) researched whether the information that college students received on bad working conditions had an influence on their behavior as customers regarding the clothing industry. Both studies found that even though consumers were aware of poor working conditions

¹ #DeleteUber was a twitter movement urging consumers to delete their accounts on the transportation platform after the company had allegedly tried to capitalize on protests regarding the Trump-administration’s “travel ban” (Isaac 2017).

regarding particular corporations, they would still very likely purchase goods or services by the firm in question. Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) researched the “attitude-behaviour gap” and stressed that only because somebody purchases a product or service by a company they perceive as ‘unethical’ does not mean that they do not care about ethically questionable practices. As the review shows, the existing body of knowledge is quite limited to economic theory and approaches on consuming behavior. None of the existing literature researches the consumers in the context of the platform economy specifically.

In this paper, the clients’ perception of social protection in the platform economy is the main subject of interest. Seeing as how social policy in general is a heavily politicized topic, researching differences in awareness and possible support for an improvement in some of the problematic issues seems to be highly relevant. To the best of my knowledge, no research has been conducted on socio-economic characteristics that could explain if and why some consumers are more likely to care about the state of access to social protection of platform workers they hire than others.

1.3 Research Question

A precisely formulated research question is essential in order to clearly define the aim of the research conducted. The main research question to be answered in this paper is as follows:

Which socio-economic groups of consumers are more likely to support the improvement of social protection for platform workers?

This research question can be answered by analyzing empirical data. Consumers who have hired workers through an online platform before are the units of analysis. “Support for Platform Workers’ Social Protection” is the dependent variable and the independent variables which possibly provide explanations for the central concept are mainly socio-economic characteristics. These factors will be deduced and conceptualized from existing literature in the field later on. For a more detailed approach, the main research question will be “broken up” and the following sub-questions can be derived:

(a) To what extent are consumers aware of the protests regarding platform workers’ access to social protection?

(b) To what degree would consumers be willing to pay a higher price for a service via an online platform in order to ensure an improvement of the workers' access to social protection?

(c) What influence does the socio-economic status of a consumer have on their willingness to pay more for a platform service in order to improve the situation?

In order to answer the main research question as well as the sub-questions, hypotheses derived from existing framework are to be established. Following this, the methodological approach as well as the data collected via an online survey will be discussed. The chosen approach for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses is multivariate regression using the IBM software package SPSS. Finally, with the hypotheses clarified, qualified answers to the research questions can be provided.

2. Theory

A study of existing framework is the first step to developing concepts regarding the factors explaining consumers' consideration of social protection in the platform economy. In the following paragraphs, a theoretical framework will be established. As a consequence, hypothesis can be formulated. Furthermore, the individual variables will be conceptualized along the lines of previous research.

2.1 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Naturally, implementing a higher level of social protection for workers in the platform economy would be costly. Within the context of the platform economy, consumers could directly influence a potential trade-off: higher prices of the services in exchange for a higher level of social protection granted to platform workers. From a purely economic point of view, the concept of voluntarily paying a price premium does not make any sense: as Ramert (2003) points out in his analysis regarding the willingness to tip waiters, a socio-economic approach to the issue is far more revealing. Furthermore, he states that the phenomenon of paying more for a service can be explained with a consumer's 'social conscience'.

In the context of this thesis, the willingness to pay a price premium that does not result in higher quality of the service can be seen as a convincing sign of commitment to the issue. De Pelsmacker et al. (2005) asked 808 Belgian participants about their willingness to pay more for Fair-Trade coffee. They found that on average, consumers were willing to pay 10% more for the Fair-Trade product. When purchasing a Fair-Trade product, consumers ensure the correction of power imbalances in international trade and therefore guarantee significant economic benefits to producers and therefore workers (Nicholls & Opal 2005). Considering this aspect of Fair-Trade exclusively, the research seems to be closely related.

As part of her research on corporate social responsibility in the cosmetics industry, Zhao (2012) posed the question of whether consumers would be willing to pay more for cosmetics produced in a socially and environmentally responsible way and found that most consumers were. While both of the articles did investigate the consumers' willingness to pay more for certain products, neither of them deals with social protection of workers specifically. In addition to that, due to the environmental aspect in both cases, the higher price buys a different quality of a product as well. Therefore, the willingness to pay more could be influenced by more than ethical considerations and therefore not be directly translated to this paper's research question. However, the findings can be used as a starting point.

When aiming to find out whether consumers of platform services care about the workers' access to social protection, researching the consumers' *support* for certain facets of the concept seems to be most revealing. In general, social protection can be defined as "[...] public measures to provide income security for individuals [...]" (Holzmann 2001: p, 2). In order to specify this concept in context of the platform economy, it has to be made less abstract.

In 2016, an international group consisting of agents actively involved in platform-based work such as workers' unions and researchers came together in order to put together a declaration stating demands for a socially sustainable working conditions in the platform economy (Hofmann et al. 2017). As a result, the *Frankfurt Paper* on platform based work (Smyrek 2016) was published. From this paper, concrete demands that translate into platform-specific aspects of social protection can be derived. In this paper, the focus lies on three issues: the payment of at least minimum wage is the first aspect referring to platforms' common practice of hiring workers not by hour but e.g. per client and thus making void national regulation on minimum wages. The second feature is the workers' right to organize

in unions. Seeing as the degree to which workers are unionized is directly related to the well-being of the middle class in general (Smyrek 2016), this aspect can be seen as a part of social protection as well, referring to the definition stated above. The third issue is the platform workers' access to social security regarding sickness, disability and liability without exception.

Splitting up the concept of "platform workers' access to social protection" into those three sub-categories has the obvious advantage of setting the right course for a more informative outcome of the study. Additionally, asking consumers about those specific issues makes the question on support for social protection significantly less abstract.

The next step is connecting the two variables "Willingness to Pay More" and "Support for Platform Workers' Social Protection". The willingness to pay more can be seen as a behavioral consequence that demonstrates a consumer's support for an improvement. Because the higher price would not lead to any advantage for the consumer such as a higher quality of the purchased service, it seems evident that the support for better access to social protection is the reason consumers are going out of their way financially without any material gain for themselves. Based on this relationship, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H1. The more a consumer supports an improvement of social protection in the platform economy, the more he is willing to pay in order to ensure an improvement.

While a number of authors have researched the willingness of consumers to pay more for "responsible" products, the question of *why* some consumers are more willing and support an improvement more than others remains, to the best of my knowledge, unaddressed. Moreover, the consumers' consideration of platform workers' access to social protection when purchasing services in particular has not yet been studied. Broadly speaking, Berger and Heath (2007) connect the behavior of consumers to them expressing part of their identity. Therefore, relating the degree to which consumers care about the people they hire to part of their *political* identity or opinions can be a starting point for deriving causal explanations. In addition to the expression of attitudes, the social setting in which individual consumers find themselves in could explain the degree to which they support platform workers' access to social security as well as the willingness to pay more for a service.

2.1.1 Socio-economic Factors

In general, socio-economic factors are very frequently considered in order to explain a variety of circumstances such as mortality rates (e.g. Adler et al. 1994) or academic performance of students (e.g. Yorke & Thomas 2010). More specifically, the influence of socio-economic traits on the support for certain political preferences is one of the most popular branches in the field of political sociology. As part of electoral research, the “[...] relationship between social divisions and political behavior [...]” (Manza et al. 1995: p. 38) has been elaborately studied for decades. In most cases, such behavior is conceptualized as an individual’s preference for a political party: which socio-economic groups statistically cast their vote for social democratic, conservative or green parties? In the following paragraphs, existing theoretical framework on the link between individuals’ socio-economic characteristics and their political preferences will be explored and translated to consumers’ support for platform workers’ social protection.

Above, an expectation for the causal relationship between the support for the cause and a behavioral consequence has been established. It is, however, of extreme importance to differentiate this hypothesis when it comes to analyzing the influence of different socio-economic characteristics. More concretely speaking, the expected effect a socio-economic factor is said to have on a consumer’s support for more social protection will not automatically generate the same expectations regarding the willingness to pay more for an improvement. As a consequence, it is crucial to define the expected effects on the support for social protection and the possibly resulting behavioral consequence separately.

Social class might be one of the most commonly used indicators to explain political preferences. In the nineteen-nineties, Clark and Lipset (1991) claimed that both the Marxist as well as the Weberian understanding of class as an economic and value-based stratification was outdated and had lost most of its explanatory power since World War II. As a contrast to this claim, other scholars have argued that, based on different conceptualizations and measurements of social class, class voting was alive and well (Van der Waal et al. 2007). According to Bourdieu (1987), class divisions are made up of different forms of capital. While economic as well as cultural capital are relevant factors, social and symbolic capital are far more important. Seeing as those relationships and networks take place on a personal level, it seems best to refrain from an attempt to objectively measure them. Instead, this paper puts the focus on a subjective class measure on the basis of the respondents’ own assessment on

the belonging to a certain social class. One example of approaching the conceptualization is the assessment of “working class” by McLean and McMillan (2009):

To be working-class is to have some badge(s) of status such as wearing heavy protective clothes at work, being subject to tight discipline on attendance such as having to clock in and out of work at fixed times, and working in a heavily unionized occupation. The criteria are vague and it is not clear how they are to be fitted to those not actually in work; nevertheless almost everybody uses and has subjective understanding of them. (p. 566)

As this quote demonstrates, the social class of an individual is or at least also can be related to their profession. Seeing as how this project does not include the participants’ profession as its own explanatory factor, considering social class is the closest thing to finding out whether a consumer is conducting mostly manual, low-skilled labor or not. Van der Waal et al. (2007) established a framework that aims to predict political preferences resulting in voting behavior based on social class. The authors make a clear distinction between economical and cultural preferences. While people belonging to the working class are more culturally conservative, they are also more liberal² when it comes to economic preferences. People belonging to the upper class on the other hand are more liberal in a cultural sense but tend to support economically conservative ideas.

The support for better access to social protection for platform workers can be considered an issue located on the “economic axis” rather than the cultural one: when detaching the three issues regarding social protection from online platforms and applying them on a more general level, they can definitely be associated with an economically liberal agenda. Seeing as in this paper, the focus of the factor “Social Class” is mainly based on identity rather than the individuals’ economic situation, the established effect (support for social protection) is likely to lead to a behavioral consequence. Translating the causal relationships established by the scholars to the issues discussed in this paper, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H2. The lower the social class of a consumer, the more likely he is to support an improvement of platform workers’ access to social protection.

² Seeing as the term ‘liberal’ varies massively across the literature, it is crucial to define the phrase. According to Lipset (1959: p. 485), “Economic Liberalism refers to the conventional issues concerning redistribution of income, status, and power among the classes.” In this context, “liberal” stands for the support of redistribution while a “conservative” attitude implies the opposite.

H3. The lower the social class of a consumer, the more likely he is willing to pay more for an improvement of platform workers' access to social protection.

Another socio-economic characteristic which can be considered a “classic” in political sociology is the economic situation of an individual, most of the times measured in income. As a contrast to the chosen approach to social class outlined above, Houtman (2001) presents a concept with income as the most important indicator. In his paper, he researches the influence of social (or financial) class on the support for economically liberal policies. His findings confirmed a positive effect of belonging to the working class to supporting economically liberal positions. As Wright (2005) states, individuals with low incomes tend to endorse economic liberalism because of their economic vulnerability and job insecurity. Because workers who belong to the lower class have ‘less to lose’, they are more willing to accept higher taxation as a trade-off for a stronger safety net in terms of social protection. People with high incomes however prefer the exact opposite: seeing as those individuals’ financial situation is far more stable and secure, they are opposed to accepting significant cuts to their paychecks in the form of taxes. Their economic status makes them less exposed to existential financial restrictions and hence does not make them as dependent on social protection as individuals with lower incomes.

At this point, it is important to note that the subject of interest is not an individual’s income itself, but the extent to which they find themselves in an economically stable situation. Therefore, the actual indicator is the “difficulty to pay bills” a consumer experiences. Again, the variable is intentionally subjective. While the income remains an important factor, things like management of expenses and lifestyle also matter.

In the case of “income” or rather degree of financial security, translating the established relationship to the framework is slightly more complex and demands further specification. The literature supports a very similar connection to the willingness to pay more for better social protection of workers to the one established on “social class”. While individuals with lower incomes might support the cause more, they ultimately have less money to spare and therefore might be less likely to connect their position to an actual behavioral consequence (paying more for the service). Looking at it from the opposite perspective, people who find themselves in a financially stable situation would have the means to pay a little extra in order to help others. As a result, the expected effects are as follows:

H4. The more difficulties consumers have with paying their bills, the more likely they are to support an improvement of platform workers' access to social protection.

H5. The less consumers struggle with paying their bills, the more they are willing to pay in order to improve the state of platform workers' access to social protection.

The influence of people's level of education on their (economical) political attitudes is another possible explanation for the relationship. While the effect of education on socially liberal political views has been repeatedly proven (e.g. by Stubager (2009)), the influence on economically liberal views remains unconfirmed. Phelan et al. (1995) researched the perception of homeless people amongst the population and found that the effect of education on 'economic aid for homeless people' to be nonlinear: a low level of education as well as graduate school education was found to be a strong predictor of the wish for economic aid. Because there is no proven effect of education on the support for leftist economic policy, a different approach needs to be applied.

Hyman and Wright (1979) did research on the effects that the exposure of a college education in particular has on individuals and found out that people who attended higher education were taught to *care for others*. Based on those assumptions, Pascarella et al. (1988) wanted to find out whether postsecondary education was indeed fostering humanitarian and civic values. An important component of the applied research design was the long-term nature of the study: the scholars were aiming to explore the long-term effects of higher education on the value profile. In order to make a conclusive statement, they considered pre-enrollment characteristics as well as factors that might have influenced the participants' value orientations after they had graduated. Ultimately, they found that the attendance of college has a "[...] significant, unique impact on the humanizing of values that is independent of the individual characteristics the student brings to college, the selectivity, size and predominant race of the institution attended, and subsequent education attainment and post-collegiate occupation" (Pascarella et al. 1988: p. 429).

Coming back to the initial idea, the degree to which consumers support platform workers having better access to social protection could also be seen as a more straight forward question: do consumers care about the struggles of the platform workers they hire? Considering this aspect, it seems evident that humanitarian values (that are strengthened by higher education) lead to a higher degree of support. Additionally, there is no reason to conclude that the resulting support would not translate into the willingness to pay more for a

service in order to ensure an improvement of the situation. Consequently, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H6. Consumers who attended university are more likely to support an improvement of platform workers' access to social protection.

H7. Consumers who attended university are willing to pay more for the service in order to improve the platform workers' access to social protection.

2.1.2 The Role of the Awareness of the Protests

In the past years, platform workers have engaged in protests in order to voice their concerns with the current situation. The protests initiated by Foodora workers mentioned in the introduction are just one case out of many. Another example are strikes called by drivers using the applications Lyft and Uber in order to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the low wages (Philips & Miracle 2017). Seeing as this thesis aims to understand the different levels of support for better social protection for workers amongst consumers, the effects that those protests might have on that support is another important factor that needs to be examined. In other words: does it make a difference whether a consumer is aware of the protests that have been voiced?

According to Halady and Rao (2010), the awareness of a problematic issue does lead to significant changes in behavior. In their research, the scholars investigated the influence that the awareness of climate change had on the behavior of managers in India. While their findings relate to an entirely different issue, they do seem to relate to this thesis in the way that the actions of managers as well as consumers can have a direct impact on the issues of concern (climate change and low level of social protection of platform workers). In the case of the platform economy, it might take the specific 'nudge' of an informing newspaper article or TV-piece for consumers to want to change something about the current situation. The expectations are as follows:

H8. Consumers that are aware of the protests do more likely support an improvement of platform workers' access to social protection.

H9. Consumers that are aware of the protests are more likely willing to pay more for the services in order to improve the situation.

2.1.3 Attitude Towards Social Protection in General

As discussed above, the most central concept is the consumers' support for a better access to social protection for platform workers. In addition to that, the participants were asked to state two more (sets of) attitudes that are being included in the framework.

The main dependent variable, 'support for improvement of platform workers' access to social protection', is a very specific set of opinions on a quite limited amount of workers in a particular context. Therefore, it seems important to examine whether the participants' attitude towards social protection is limited to workers in the platform economy exclusively or applies to all workers. By including a more generalized opinion on social protection of workers, it is possible to review the possible effects of the socio-economic characteristics in comparison to the support for social protection in general.

2.1.4 Control Variables

As Becker (2005) claims, the reasons for including variables for statistical control are often neglected in empirical research. While those concepts do not require the same in-depth theoretical foundation as independent variables, it is important to discuss the motivation for including them as control variables specifically (and not as another set of independent variables).

In his *Economic Theory of Democracy*, Downs (1957) established a so-called market analogy. Just like on the free market, voters rationally choose the party to cast their vote for based on what option is closest to theirs. The political space is reduced to one dimension: a left-right scale reaching from 0 to 100 which parties (supply) as well as individual voters (demand) position themselves on. This model has been criticized for various reasons; the most obvious being the lack of differentiation regarding specific issues that make up the political landscape (Caramani 2004). On the other hand, a self-placement on a one-dimensional scale is quite intuitive and suitable for a dataset including participants with different nationalities.

Taking those arguments into account, a left-right placement is the most convenient way of measuring an individual's general political orientation.

The most central aim of this paper is to explore the reasons for different levels of support for platform workers' access to social protection amongst consumers that are founded in socio-economic differences. Therefore, it is vital to control the findings on the possible effects of socio-economic characteristics for a measure of political orientation. That way, a qualified statement can be made on whether the social class influences the variables *via* the political orientation or not.

An important part of a person's everyday life is their place of residence. An individual living in the countryside is likely to have a completely different experience regarding a number of aspects to somebody living in an urban environment. Historically speaking, the political and ideological divide between urban and rural communities is one of the most important cleavages (Lipset & Rokkan 1967) and therefore significant for the development of today's landscape of political parties. Initially, the conflict line represented different economic interests: while traders from the cities pushed for liberal trade policy, farmers settled in the countryside advocated for protectionist measures in order to protect themselves from foreign imports. Since World War II, those conflicts have significantly lost in explanatory power and most agrarian parties shifted their focus towards other issues.

Today, other issues dominate the discourse around the "urban-rural divide". As Friedman (1961) points out, people living in urban areas usually find themselves in an environment characterized by heterogeneity in race, occupation and creed. On the other hand, the population living in the countryside is typically far more homogenous when it comes to those characteristics. Furthermore, many scholars are talking about a digital divide (Philip et al. 2017): because of a lack of digital communications infrastructure, people and businesses settled in rural areas get digitally excluded from the benefits that the use of the internet can have. Having studied the literature on the matter, no causal expectation towards the support for platform workers' social protection can be established.

It is, however, essential to mention that online platforms such as Uber or AirBnB are considered to be an *urban phenomenon* (Davidson & Infranca 2016). This new type of economy is offering the supply for the demands that life in densely populated urban regions poses. As a consequence, an overrepresentation in the data set of platform users living in urban areas is to be expected. Reflecting upon these circumstances, the participants' place of residence is being included as a control variable.

Demographic measurements such as age and gender have been used as explanatory variables in empirical research for decades. As Ingelhart (2006) as well as many other authors claim, the age and the gender of an individual have been proven to have an influence on their value orientation. Yet, seeing as the focus of this paper lies with socio-economic characteristics as explanatory factors, they will not be included as independent variables. Both the gender as well as the year of birth have however been measured for each of the participants and will be included as control variables. That way, the imbalances in the data set resulting from the sampling method (see chapter 3.4) can at least be balanced out mathematically.

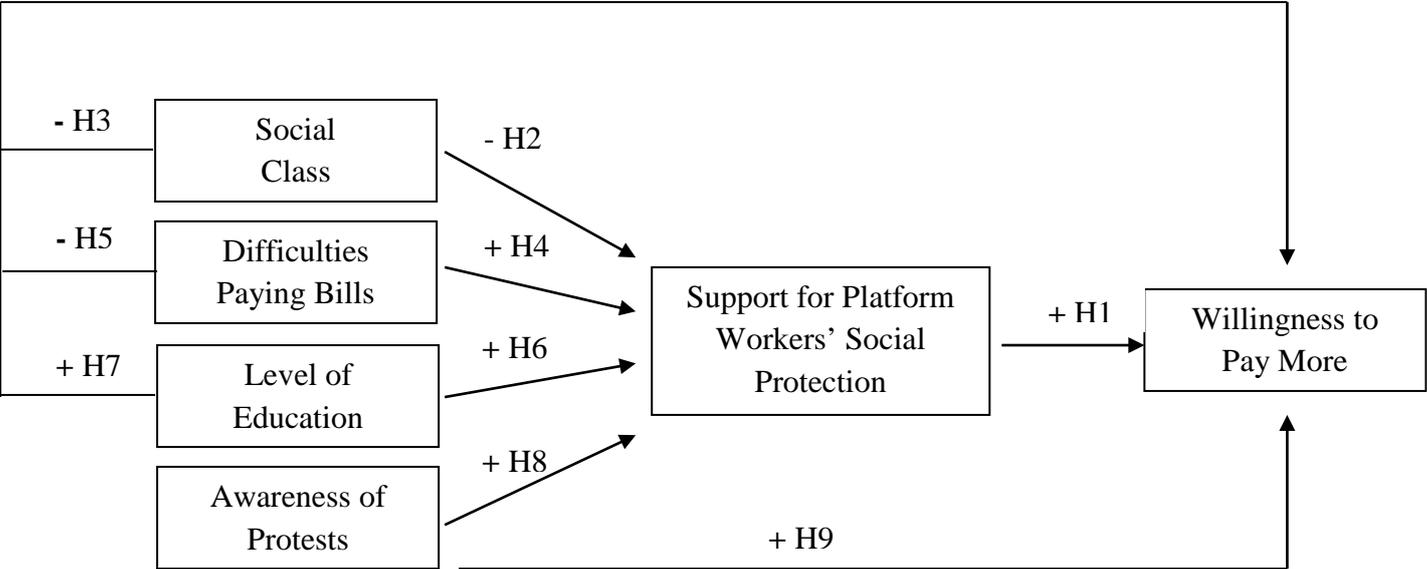
2.2 Causal Model

This model sums up the causal expectations that have been established in the paragraphs above and puts them into context. With the exception of “Awareness of Protests”, the variables fall under three categories: Social structure, attitude and behavioural consequence. In the statistical analysis, the effects of the participants’ age, gender, political orientation as well as place of residence will be controlled for.

Social Structure

Attitude

Behavioural Consequence



3. Data and Methods

In the following section, the methodological approach chosen for this thesis will be described and critically reflected. This includes a discussion of the research design, case selection and sampling. Furthermore, all variables are being operationalized based on the theoretical framework established above.

3.1 Research Design

Universally speaking, the research design determines the underlying logic of research. This paper is investigating a causal relationship. Therefore, a crucial aspect to be considered when deciding on a research design is paying close attention to the implications for the three aspects of causality: association, the correct time order and the non-spuriousness of the relationship. A *cross-sectional* design is the chosen approach in this paper.

In general, when applying a cross sectional research design, the researcher measures the dependent variable at one moment in time, once the independent variable(s) or treatment(s) have taken place. That way, conclusions regarding the association between the variables can be drawn. In this paper specifically, the link between the support for better access to social protection for platform workers as well as the willingness to pay more and the independent variables will be investigated by obtaining data at one specific moment in time. Hence, the causal association between the characteristics of consumers and the central concept can be researched.

Within a cross-sectional approach, a post-test of the dependent variable is not conducted (de Vaus: 2001). Therefore, the correct time order or the direction of the causal relationship cannot be fully confirmed. However, in the case of this research, the nature of the independent variables needs to be discussed. The independent variables whose influence on the support for better access to social protection for platform workers I am aiming to test are socio-economic characteristics. Hence, a reverse causal relationship can be ruled out logically: the fact that someone cares about the working conditions of a platform worker is not going to influence their level of income, education or social class. As a result, a reverse relationship between the variables is not a threat to internal validity.

The third aspect of causality that needs to be considered is the causal influence of third variables. In order to fully prove a causal relationship between socio-economic characteristics of consumers and the support for better access to social protection for platform workers, it is crucial to rule out spuriousness. Generally speaking, cross-sectional research designs are vulnerable to the threat of invalid causal relationships caused by the influence of effects that have not been considered. While choosing a classic experiment as the research design can definitely ensure non-spuriousness of causal relationships, applying such an approach is impossible due to time, resources and context of this research. Although the threat of unknown or unmeasured influences cannot be fully ruled out when applying a cross-sectional research design, the inclusion of control variables for consumers' age, gender, political orientation and country of residence can remove some possible external effects.

3.2 Case Selection and Sampling

Primarily, sampling is the process of connecting the units of analysis to the data conducted. In this paper, consumers of platform services are the target population. Consequently, the main question one needs to consider when choosing an approach to sampling is how well the conducted data reflects the units of analysis.

The probability of any platform consumer being selected for the sample to be analyzed cannot be calculated. Hence, the approach falls under the category of *non-probability* sampling. Considering the fact that platforms such as Foodora or Uber have a strong interest (and legal obligation) to protect the data of the users, the sampling frame is not accessible for the purpose of research. Therefore, the researcher needs to rely on other ways of locating consumers of platform services. Joining forces in terms of data collection with a fellow student also researching the consumers' "point of view" is highly valuable. Although both the dependent and independent variables differ from one another, the units of analysis and most control variables are similar or identical. As a consequence, a joint survey is being sent out to the same participants. At the very beginning of the survey, participants state whether they have or have not participated in the platform economy before. Considering how the units of analysis in this thesis are consumers of platform services exclusively, cases valuable for the research are being 'filtered' right away.

Snowball sampling is a non-probability technique for accessing participants. In this context, snowball "refers to the process of accumulation as each located subject suggests

other subjects” (Babbie 2011: p. 208). In practice, the process of finding consumers of platform services starts out in the personal circle of acquaintances who themselves send the survey to platform consumers known to them. In the case of this study, participants who were part of the personal circle were sent an anonymous link via e-mail or on social media. In addition to that, they were asked to contact further individuals and ask them to fill out the survey. Eventually, this practice leads to the access to a broader group of participants. Obviously, this approach is quite biased due to the personal connection to a percentage of the consumers to be analyzed.

Additional *opportunity sampling* is a way of at least partly balancing out the “personal-bias”. In this case, the technique involves recruiting random participants online that are not personally known to the researcher. In the case of this thesis, the survey was posted on the online platform Reddit as well as in open Facebook groups. This approach could significantly increase the number of participants with no personal connection to the researcher. However, it remains important for one to be aware and to address the fact that not every consumer of platform services is “online”. Additionally, Reddit in particular is a platform with predominantly male users. This poses an additional, but ultimately less problematic bias.

3.3 Operationalization of the Concepts

Resulting from the lack of available data on consumers in the platform economy in general, collecting data via an online survey is the first essential step to answering the research questions. It is the aim of this section to describe how the concepts established in the theoretical model are made measurable for statistical analysis.

3.3.1 Dependent Variables

The first dependent variable is the “Willingness to Pay More”, referring to the amount of money in percent consumers are willing to pay additionally to the current price of a platform service in order to improve the situation for platform workers. The interval variable reaches from 0% to 50% and was presented to the participants in the form of a slider which they were asked to drag to the value of their choice.

As established in the theory section, the consumers' "Support for Platform Workers' Access to Social Protection" is being derived from the participants' stance on three issues. They are presented in three normative statements: (a) "Platform workers should be paid at least minimum wage.", (b) "The right to organize in labour unions should be granted to platform workers just the same." and (c) "Platforms should provide insurance regarding sickness, disability, and liability for people working via the platform." The participants state their opinion by choosing to either "Strongly Agree" (1), "Somewhat Agree" (2), "Neither Agree nor Disagree" (3), "Somewhat Disagree" (4) or "Strongly Disagree" (5) to the statements on a five-point Likert scale. For the sake of a high value expressing a high degree of support as well as coherence with another, similar variable presented below, the values associated to the answers are being reversed³. In order to create one value for Consumers' "Support for Platform Workers' Access to Social Protection", the average of the three different values is being taken. With a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .79$, the three items have a sufficient degree of internal consistency. Therefore, they are suited for this approach.

This measure as well as the amount of money consumers are willing to pay extra entirely relies on self-report. This makes them vulnerable to social desirability bias. According to Fisher (1993), "[...] the basic human tendency to present oneself in the best possible light can significantly distort the information gained from self-reports" (Fisher 1993: p. 1). In order to counter that bias at least to a certain degree, the three statements are presented to the participants amongst five other statements that related to the platform economy in some other way. While this approach does not fully free the data from the bias, it makes the intention of the three questions of interest somewhat less obvious. Ultimately, keeping in mind the limited time and resources that are available, the bias can only be recognized and be taken into account when interpreting the results.

3.3.2 Independent Variables

As described in the theory section, "Social Class" is an extremely subjective concept that can be conclusive on a number of issues. In the context of this thesis, the participants are presented with the following question: "Some people talk about 'social classes', whereby they refer to a division of a society based on social and economic status. In which of the 'social

³ The values change as follows: 1=5; 2=4; 3=3; 4=2; 5=1.

classes' would you place yourself? ” The variable is being measured in five ordinal categories: “Working Class” (1), “Lower Middle Class” (2), “Middle Class” (3), “Upper Middle Class” (4) and “Upper Class” (5). In addition to that, the option “Don’t Know” was, as with most of the other variables, available. In the case of “social class” in particular, a relatively high number of participants (7,4%) chose not to answer the question. Those cases are simply coded into an additional category (6), as no satisfactory way of replacing the values systematically without altering the outcome could be established. When including the variable in a regression model, the variable is treated as a dummy variable with only two categories: working class, lower middle class middle class and the missing values are coded as 0, while upper middle class and upper class are assigned the value 1.

When it comes to “Difficulties Paying Bills”, participants are given five different options to choose from: “All the Time” (1), “Most of the Time” (2), “From Time to Time” (3), “Almost Never” (4) and “Never” (5). Again, in order for a higher value to represent more difficulties with paying the bills, the numbers were being reversed. In the context of a regression analysis, the variable is being coded as a dummy variable with two categories. People who have no difficulties at all with paying their bills are assigned the value 1, while the rest is assigned the value 0.

“Level of Education” is recorded on a five-point scale as well, consisting of “No School Finished” (1), “Primary School” (2), “High School” (3), “Vocational Training” (4) and “Bachelor/ Master or More” (5). Because the survey is targeting participants of different nationalities, the measurement of the level of education is quite vague. However, seeing as the existing theory by Pascarella et al. (1988) comes down to the participants having attended college or not, this measure was chosen over asking about the number of years spent in education. Additionally, the categories one to four, representing the category of “no college attended”, are recoded as (0) and “bachelor/ master or more” remains its own category assigned the value (1).

In addition to the questions on socio-economic background, the participants are asked about their “Awareness of Protests”. More precisely, they are first being informed about the existence of protests amongst platform workers on the issues on low wages, lack of insurance and not being allowed to organize in labour unions. Following up, the question of whether they had been aware of those protests is being posed to them. “Yes” (1) and “No” (0) as well as “I Don’t Know” are the possible answers. Seeing as people who had stated that they did not know were not explicitly aware of the protests, their answers are coded as (0).

3.3.3 Other Variables

The possible answers to the question on the participants' "year of birth" were presented via a drop-down list. In order to be able to handle it as an interval variable, it was transformed into the variable "age" by subtracting each recorded value from "2018". While the actual age of the participants might not be accurate in some cases, the advantages of the transformation clearly outweigh the disadvantages.

In order to investigate the participants' "place of residence", they were asked to state whether they lived in an environment that was "urban" (1), "suburban or small town" (2) or "rural" (3). In the regression analysis, a dummy variable is used in order to control for place of residence. For this purpose, the variable is recoded as "urban" (1) and "not urban" (0), seeing as the primary interest is the possible interfering influence that living in an urban area might have on the respondents' opinions.

When it comes to the participants' "gender", three possible answers were displayed: "Male" (0), "Female" (1) and "Other". Seeing as none of the participants stated the third answer, only two categories are being used in the analysis.

As described in the theory section, the general "political orientation" was measured on a left-right scale with integral numbers reaching from "0" all the way on the left of the scale to "10" on the opposite side.

Regarding the participants' stance on the "social protection of workers" in general, six statements are presented: Social protection of workers... (a) "costs businesses too much in taxes and charges", (b) "place too great a strain on the economy", (c) "prevents widespread poverty", (d) "lead to a more equal society", (e) "make people lazy" and (f) "make people less willing to care for each other". Just as the normative statements on social protection of platform workers, five possible opinions are presented on a Likert scale reaching from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). Seeing as later on, the average of the numbers is used in order to create a value based on the six different statements, the numbers coded to fit the answers to (c) and (d) have to be reversed. With a Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha=0.7$, the six items are internally coherent enough for their average to be conclusive.

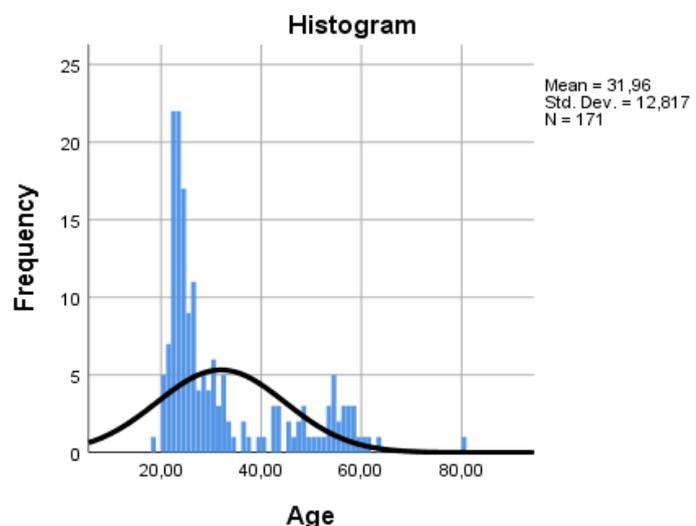
3.4 Descriptive Statistics and Potential Threats to External Validity

External validity is the degree to which the findings of conducted research are transmittable to the “real world”. Or in other words: are established causal relationships only true for the selected sample? In this study, the representativeness of the sample definitely poses an issue that needs to be addressed.

Generally speaking, the over-representation of certain groups can be found in a number of categories. There are two variables, however, that demonstrate the limited resources in terms of data collection the most: age and level of education. As shown in Figure 1, a vast majority of participants are between twenty-two and twenty-four years old.

Due to the method of *snowball sampling*, the distribution does not show surprising results as most participants are more or less in the same age bracket as the researchers themselves. Moreover, 76.9% of the participants stated that their level of education is “bachelor/master or more” (compared to each around 10% with “vocational training” and “high school”). However, it is also

Figure 1. Histogram displaying the frequency of “Age”



important to recognize that young people who are well educated might actually be a group that is very involved when it comes to the use of service platforms. Unfortunately, this assumption cannot be supported by any previous findings, which makes it a mere speculation.

While the participants' nationality will not be included in the model in any way, it is important to at least reflect upon this aspect briefly. An overwhelming amount of participants are of German nationality. Furthermore, three or more participants each stated that they are from the United States, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and Poland. 14 more cases are distributed between ten more nationalities. What all of those countries have in common is a similar level of development to one of Germany, which provides a certain sense of coherency. Obviously, the data set does not provide the bases for a comparative study amongst different countries. However, the analysis can, to a certain degree, be generalized to German consumers of platform services.

In order to provide an overview, all of the variables used in the model and as control variables are listed in Table 1. It displays the frequencies in percent for the categorical variables as well as the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum value for the interval variables. For reasons of better legibility, the variable on the left-right-orientation is treated as an interval variable reaching from 0 on the very left to 10 on the very right.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Frequencies

	mean	s.d.	min.	max.	freq.
Willingness to Pay in %	14.60	10.38	0.00	50.00	-
Support f. Platf. Workers’ Social Protection	4.10	.96	1.33	5.00	-
Support for Social Protection	3.97	.63	1.83	5.00	-
Left- Right- Orientation	3.97	1.62	0.00	8.00	-
Age	31.96	12.82	18.00	80.00	-
Social Class					
Working Class	-	-	-	-	2.8%
Lower Middle Class	-	-	-	-	9.1%
Middle Class	-	-	-	-	39.8%
Upper Middle Class	-	-	-	-	37.5%
Upper Class	-	-	-	-	3.4%
(Missing)	-	-	-	-	7.4%
Level of Education					
No College Attended	-	-	-	-	23.1%
College Attended	-	-	-	-	76.9%
Awareness of P.					
Aware	-	-	-	-	50.0%
Not Aware	-	-	-	-	50.0%
Gender					
Male	-	-	-	-	37.8%
Female	-	-	-	-	62.8%
Difficulties Paying Bills					
Never	-	-	-	-	50.6%
Almost Never	-	-	-	-	23.3%
From Time to Time	-	-	-	-	20.3%
Most of the Time	-	-	-	-	2.9%
All the Time	-	-	-	-	2.9%
Place of Residence					
Urban	-	-	-	-	64.2%
Suburban or Small Town	-	-	-	-	23.7%
Rural	-	-	-	-	12.1%

When it comes to the interval variables, the left-right orientation with a mean of 3.91 and a standard deviation of only 1.62 is a variable that catches the eye on the first sight. It can thus be concluded that the cases are concentrated around the left (3 and 4). This circumstance is likely connected to the sampling method which leads to an overrepresentation of young and rather leftist students. Furthermore, it becomes evident that women are slightly overrepresented in comparison to men. As expected, the frequencies for “social class” peak around middle- and upper middle class. Moreover, people living in an urban environment are

by far the strongest group, which can be, at least partly, attributed to the fact that service platforms are an urban phenomenon (Davidson & Infranca 2016).

4. Analysis

In the following paragraphs, the data conducted via the online survey will be analyzed. Here, the focus lies on taking a closer look at the descriptive statistics as well as bivariate correlations before conducting and discussing a regression analysis. First and foremost, it is the goal of this section to either accept or refuse the hypotheses that have been established on the basis of existing framework. Consequently, the structure of the following section is made up along the lines of the order in which the hypotheses were established.

4.1 A Consumer's Willingness to Pay More and Support for Platform Workers' Social Protection

As described above, the participants of the survey were asked to express their willingness to pay more by dragging a slider to their number of preference. First of all, it is important to note that 89.9% of the participants, an overwhelming amount, stated that they would be willing to pay *something* extra, reaching from 1% to 50%. On average, people would pay 14.6% extra in order to help improve the situation for platform workers they hire. The histogram in Figure 3 displays the distribution of the variable. As expected, the cases mostly concentrate around round numbers, with the peak being at 10%. Additionally, the variable is far from being normally distributed.

The intermediate variable, "Support for Platform Workers' Social Protection", consists of the average on the participants' stance on three different issues. With a mean of 4.10 points on the scale (and 5 being the highest possible score), the support expressed by the participants is very high. 35.2% of cases score an average of 5.00, which means that those participants strongly support all of the three issues (minimum wage, right to unionize and insurance of workers). As Figure 3 shows, the cases clearly concentrate towards the higher end of the scale.

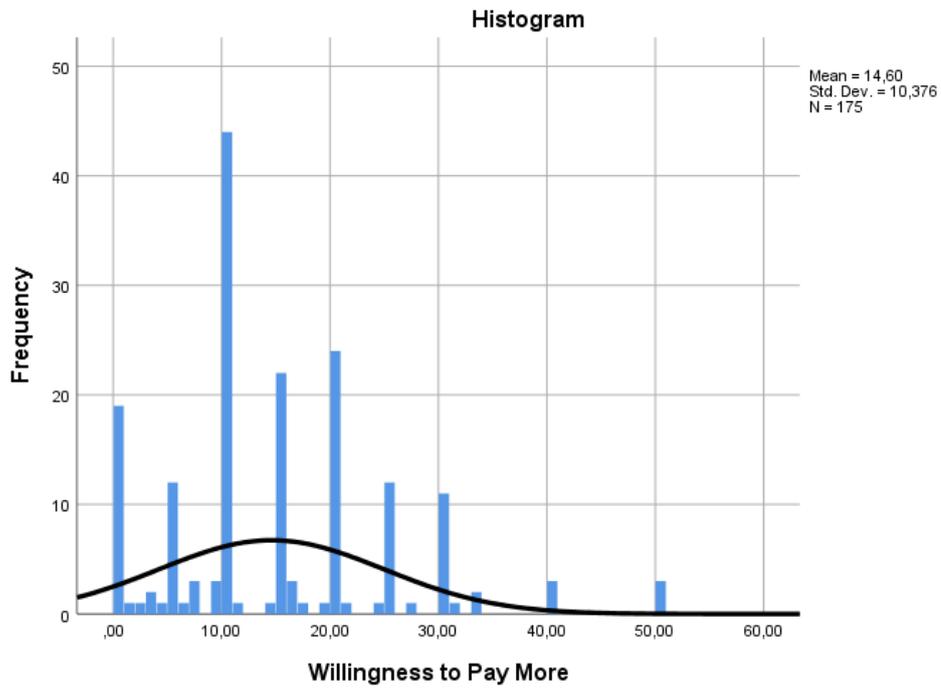


Figure 2. Histogram Displaying the Participants' Willingness to Pay More

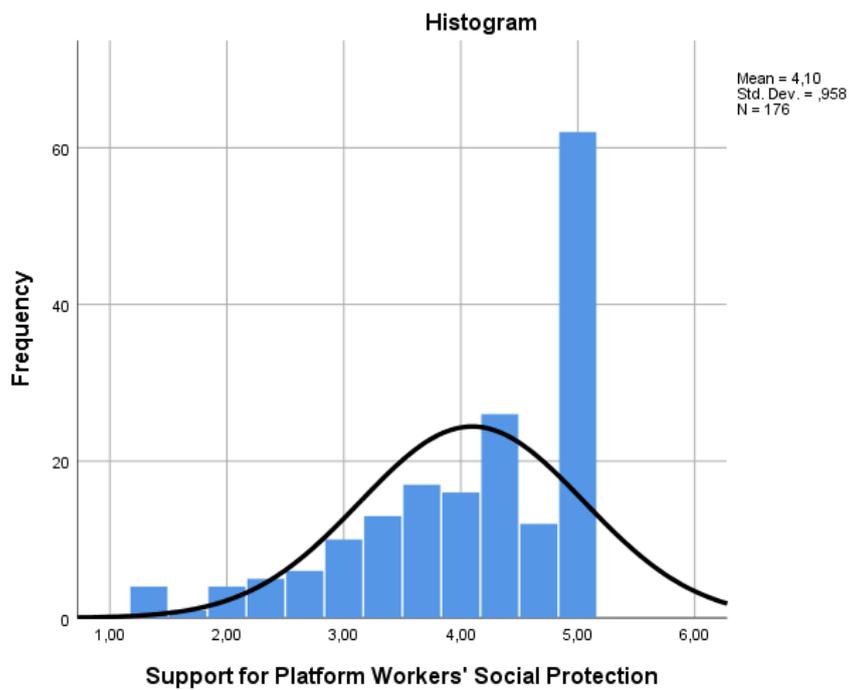


Figure 3. Histogram Displaying the Participants' Support for Platform Workers' Social Protection

Before starting the analysis of all bivariate correlations, it is worth taking a closer look at the variable “Support for Platform Workers’ Access to Social Protection”. In the introduction, the claim is made that in the platform economy, consumers play a special role which possibly leads to a higher sense of responsibility when it comes to the workers. This is the assumption standing at the centre of this analysis. The question that comes to mind is: are people who support social protection for platform workers also supporters for social protection in general? One way of finding out is comparing the levels of support for platform workers’ social security to the support for social security altogether. Looking back at Table 2, the descriptive statistics for both variables reveal outcomes quite similar to one another. The next step is conducting a reliability analysis for all nine items measuring support in general and for platform workers specifically. With a Cronbach’s Alpha of $\alpha=0.69$, the items seem to be at least somewhat internally coherent, which would suggest that the support, when it comes to platform workers, is just an expression of the attitude towards social protection in general. However, when examining the correlation between the two scales, the analysis reveals a Pearson’s r of .163* (two-tailed). While this value does represent a very weak correlation, it is nowhere near as high as one would expect when assuming that support for social protection in general and for platform workers specifically are just “the same thing”. Coming to a careful conclusion, it can be stated that there is no evidence suggesting that the consumers’ view on social protection for platform workers is the same as their support for social protection in general.

4.2 Bivariate Correlations

The first step to a quantitative evaluation of the data is examining the empirical relationships between two variables that have been connected to each other theoretically. The first pair of variables to be analyzed are the “willingness to pay more” and the “support for social protection of platform workers”.

A number of participants ($n=175$) entered the amount they would be willing to pay more in percent ($m=14.6$ and $s.d.=10.38$) as well as their stance on three issues combined into one score for the support for platform workers’ social protection ($m=4.1$ and $s.d.=.96$). When examining a scatter plot, the cases loosely resemble a positive linear relationship.

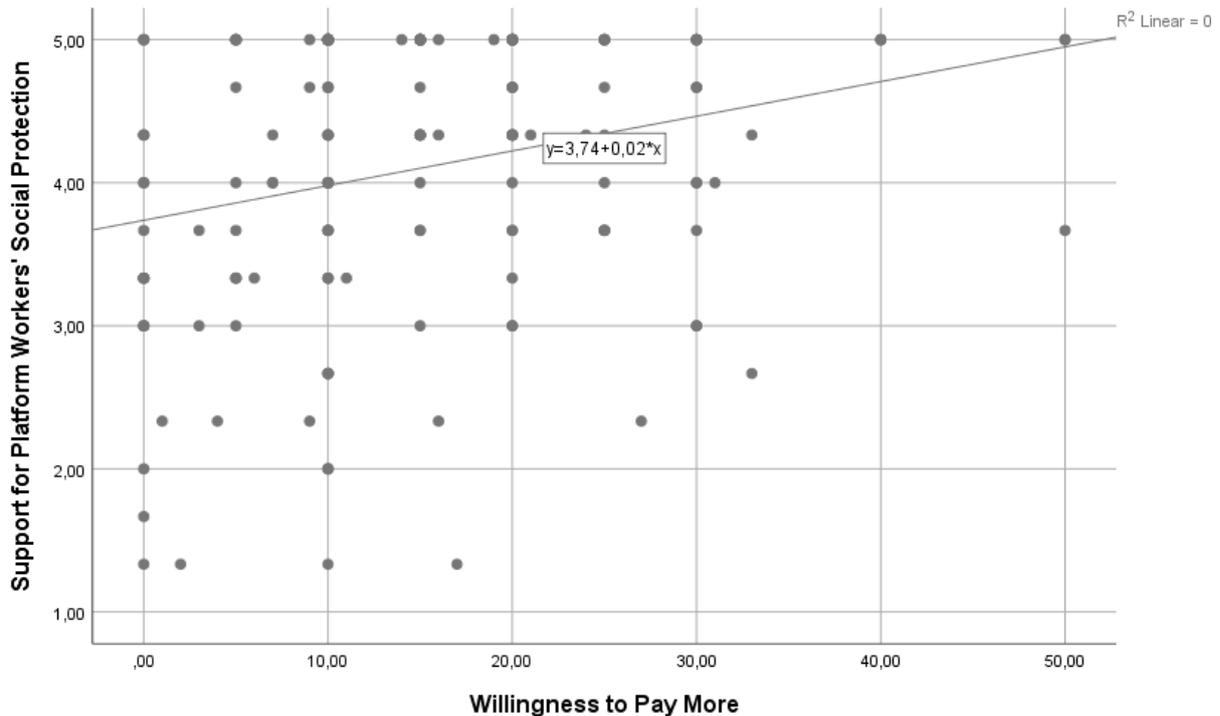


Figure 3. Scatterplot

As both variables are measured on an interval level, Pearson’s r seems to be the obvious choice for an indicator of bivariate correlation. However, the scatter plot highlights the presence of outliers. This is problematic due to the fact that Pearson’s r is sensitive to such values. Additionally, when looking at the histograms displaying the distribution of the variables (see Figures 2 and 3), it becomes evident that both of them are skewed to one side. Because Pearson’s r is not robust under conditions of non-normality, Spearman’s ρ or Spearman’s Rank-Order Correlation is used to assess the relationship.

The Spearman’s ρ data analysis revealed a weak, leaning towards moderate positive monotonic correlation of $\rho = .257$ which is statistically significant at the 0.01** level (two-tailed). Participants who were willing to pay more reported a slightly higher level of support for platform workers’ access to social protection.

Following up, the relationship between the independent variable “willingness to pay more” with each the socio-economic factors “social class”, “difficulties paying bills” and “level of education” as well as the binary variable “awareness of protests” will be analyzed in order to determine the possible correlation with the most central concept. As described above, the all of the independent variables have either an ordinal or nominal level of measurement. Because of the fact that Pearson’s r requires two interval level variables, calculating

Spearman’s ρ is the method of choice once again. The results, which are displayed in Table 2 (a), are quite clear and unambiguous: Neither one of the socio-economic variables display a correlation coefficient higher than 0.1. Additionally, none of those values are statistically relevant. However, things are different when it comes to the “awareness of protests”: the Spearman’s ρ data analysis revealed a weak, leaning towards moderate positive monotonic correlation of $\rho = .211$ which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). Seeing as awareness of protests has been assigned to the value 1 and none-awareness to the value 0, the test reveals the following: participants who were aware of platform workers’ protests reported a slightly higher willingness to pay more for a service in order for the situation to improve.

Another way of examining bivariate relationships is looking for evidence of a significant difference between population means by conducting an independent samples t-test⁴. For this purpose, the values for “Difficulties Paying Bills” were divided into two groups of people who have no difficulties at all paying their bills (5) and people who do at least have difficulties at all (<5). The values for “Social Class” were divided into participants who belong to the upper- or upper middle class (≥ 4) and people whose class is middle class or lower (<4). The outcomes, displayed in Table 3 (a), confirm the previous findings: neither one of the variables expressing socio-economic characteristics are statistically significant. For both “Difficulties Paying Bills” as well as “Social Class”, the different operationalization into two groups each did not lead to an observable significant difference between population means for “Willingness to Pay More”. Solely for “Awareness of Protests”, the null hypothesis can be rejected. With a confidence interval of [-7.463, -1.397], which does not contain 0, it is in line with the small p-value and the resulting significance at the **0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 2. Correlations between “Willingness to Pay More” / “Support for Platform Workers’ Access to Social Protection” and Independent Variables

	Willingness to Pay More	Support for P.W. Social Protection
Level of Education	.024	.065
Difficulties Paying Bills	.046	.021
Social Class	.022	.022
Awareness of Protests	.211**	.211**

Significant at *0.9%, **0.95% and ***0.99% level

⁴ In addition to the t-test, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied. This is a nonparametric test that does not assume normal distributions of the variables. Seeing as the results did not differ substantially, the results produced by applying the t-tests are the ones being used to illustrate the bivariate relationships.

Table 3. Outcomes Independent Sample t-Test between “Willingness to Pay More” (a) / “Support for Platform Workers’ Access to Social Protection” (b) and Independent Variables

		Willingness to Pay More		Support for P.W. Social Prot.	
Categories		Means (N)	Mean Diff.	Means (N)	Mean Diff.
Awareness of Protests	Yes (1); No (0)	12.48 (87);	4.430**	3.89 (87);	-.390**
		16.69 (88)		4.30 (89)	
Diff. Paying Bills	1; ≥ 2	14.99 (86);	-.663	4.09 (87);	-.017
		14.33 (85)		4.07 (85)	
Social Class	≤ 3 ; > 3	14.47 (90);	.228	4.14 (91);	-.064
		14.69 (72)		4.08 (72)	
Level of Education	No College (0); College (1)	14.85 (40);	.289	3.96 (40);	-.169
		14.56 (132)		4.13 (133)	

All values except for “Level of Education” (a) and “Awareness of Protests” (b) display the values for equal variance assumed (Levene’s Test Significance > 0.05).

Significant at *0.9%, **0.95% and ***0.99% level

After having examined the relationships between the “Willingness to Pay More” and five independent variables, it is now the “Consumers’ Support for Platform Workers’ Access to Social Protection” that is to be treated as the independent variable. Here, the same approach as before has been applied. In Table 2, Spearman’s correlation coefficient as well as the statistical significance for each of the independent variables is displayed. Again, “Awareness of Protests” is the only significant relationship. The data analysis revealed a weak, leaning towards moderate positive monotonic correlation of $\rho = .211$ which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). Summing up, participants who were aware of platform workers’ protests reported a slightly higher amount of support for platform workers’ access to social protection.

Once more, a t-test was conducted in order to further examine the relationships. Table 3 displays the results. Except for “Awareness of Protests”, none of the values are statistically significant. With a confidence interval of [.670, .110], which does not contain 0, it is in line with the small p-value and the resulting significance at the **0.01 level (two-tailed). To sum up, the bivariate analysis revealed that none of the variables expressing socio-economic characteristics are significantly correlated with either “Willingness to Pay More” or “Support for Platform Workers’ Access to Social Protection”. However, the factor of whether a consumer is aware of platform workers’ protests was proven to be weakly, leaning towards

moderately, correlated with both concepts. Additionally, the two dependent variables were proven to be at least weakly, leaning towards moderately correlated.

4.3 Regression Analysis

In this section, the model established in the theory section is to be tested. By applying multivariate regression analysis, the hypothesis will be examined and either accepted or rejected.

Table 4⁵. Results for „Willingness to Pay More“. Model 1a: Excluding Control Variables; Model 1b: Including Control Variables

Adj. R Square	.024			.046		
Constant	13.59			16.42		
	Model 1a			Model 1b		
	B	Std. E.	Beta	B	Std. E.	Beta
Awareness of Protests	4.525**	1.601	.219	3.587*	1.708	.172
Being Upper- or Upper Middle Class	.766	1.644	.037	1.422	1.716	.067
No Diff. Paying Bills	-.854	1.587	-.041	-.275	1.673	-.013
College Education	-1.427	1.924	-.058	-2.098	2.001	-.084
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Political Orientation	-	-	-	-1.361*	.527	-.209
Age	-	-	-	.019	.066	.023
Being Female	-	-	-	1.653	1.713	.077
Urban Residence	-	-	-	1.015	1.752	.046

Significant at *0.9%, **0.95% and ***0.99% level

⁵ As described in the section on operationalization, some of the independent as well as control variables in the regression model are used as binary categories. In the left column of each of the tables, the category coded as “1” is represented, as the numbers show the influence of belonging to that category in comparison to the reference category. The reference categories are: “Not Being Aware of Protests”, “Being Middle Class or Lower”, “Having Some Difficulties Paying Bills”, “Not Being College Educated”, “Being Male” and “Suburban or Rural Residence”.

The first step of the analysis, or model 1a, is testing the possible effects that the four independent variables have on the dependent variable “Willingness to Pay More”. This includes the hypotheses H3, H5, H7 and H9. Furthermore, the control variables on gender, age, political orientation as well as place of residence are to be applied in model 1b.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict consumers’ “Willingness to Pay More” based on their awareness of protests, social class, difficulties paying bills and level of education. The regression equation was found to be none-significant ($p = .09$) and has an adjusted R^2 of .024. Therefore, the model explains only 2% of the dependent variable variation. The awareness of the protests is the only significant predictor of the “Willingness to Pay More” ($p = .005$). When controlling for the participants’ age, gender, place of residence and political orientation, the significance of the effect of the variable decreases and the Beta-value changes from .219 to .172. The control variable “Political Orientation” has the highest Beta-value and is statistically significant. Therefore, the effect of the awareness of the protests can be partly explained by a consumer’s political orientation. This circumstance in particular is to be investigated further at a later point in the analysis.

Summarizing the outcome, it can be said that people who are aware of the protests are willing to pay 3.6% more for the service, provided that all other variables are kept constant. As a result of the analysis, the hypothesis H9 can be accepted: *Consumers that are aware of the protests are more likely to be willing to pay more for the services in order to improve the situation.* Meanwhile, the hypothesis H3, H5 as well as H7 can be rejected, as they had no significant effect on the “Willingness to Pay More”. For hypothesis H3, representing “Social Class”, that means that being in the upper middle- or upper class does not have a significant influence on a consumer’s willingness to pay more. Furthermore, having no difficulties with paying the bills (H5) and having a college education (H7) do not have a statistically significant effect either. However, it can be said that for each point to the right on the scale representing political orientation, the amount the consumers are willing to pay extra decreases by -1.4%, provided that all other variables are kept constant.

In a second model, the intermediate variable “Support for Platform Workers’ Social Protection” is to be included as an explanatory factor. This part of the analysis aims at answering the hypothesis H1. In Table 6, the results for both excluding as well as including support are displayed next to each other for a better overview.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict consumers' "Willingness to Pay More" based on all independent as well as control variables. The intermediate variable has been included as another independent variable (displayed on the right). When it comes to the variance of the dependent variable explained by the model, adding the support slightly increases the explanatory power of the model from 4% to 6%. Comparing the model before and after including the support, it becomes evident that the "Awareness of Protests" is no longer statistically significant. While the control variable "Political Orientation" remains statistically relevant, it is important to note that its Beta value has decreased and the p-value has increased (from .011 to .049).

Table 5. Results for "Willingness to Pay More" and "Support for Platform Workers' Social Protection". Model 2a: Excluding Control Variables; Model 2b: Including Control Variables

Adj. R Square	.046			.066		
Constant	16.42			8.745		
	Model 2a			Model 2b		
	B	Std. E.	Beta	B	Std. E.	Beta
Awareness of Protests	3.587*	1.708	.172	3.081	1.707	.148
Being Upper- or Upper Middle Class	1.422	1.716	.067	1.207	1.701	.057
No Diff. Paying Bills	-.275	1.673	-.013	-.368	1.656	-.018
College Education	-2.098	2.001	-.084	-2.097	1.980	-.084
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Political Orientation	-1.361*	.527	-.209	-1.076*	.540	-.165
Age	.019	.066	.023	.009	.066	.011
Being Female	1.653	1.713	.077	.883	1.735	.041
Urban Residence	1.015	1.752	.046	1.193	1.736	.054
Support for Plat. W.'s S.P.	-	-	-	1.888*	.915	.171

Significant at *0.9%, **0.95% and ***0.99% level

The newly added variable "Support for Platform Workers' Social Protection" itself does have a significant effect: for every point on the scale for support, the amount that consumers are

willing to pay extra increases by 1.89%, provided that all other variables are kept constant. Therefore, the hypothesis H1 can be accepted: *The more a consumer supports an improvement of social protection in the platform economy, the more he is willing to pay in order to ensure an improvement.* Furthermore, seeing as both “Awareness of Protests” as well as “Political Orientation” show higher p-values, it can be concluded that the effects that the variables have on the “Willingness to Pay More” can be, at least partly, attributed to the significant effect that the support has. In other words, it can be said that, at least partly, hearing about protests increases a consumer’s support for the cause, which in turn leads to a higher willingness to pay more for a service. In order to be able to fully confirm the status of support as a mediating factor, a third model will be run.

Finally, the effect that the independent variables have on the “Support for Platform Workers’ Social Protection” is to be examined. That way, the hypothesis H2, H4, H6 and H8 can be either rejected or accepted.

Table 6. Model 3: Results for “Support for Platform Workers’ Social Protection” (Constant: 4.07)

	B	Sdt. E.	Beta
Awareness of Protests	.269**	.149	.142
Being Upper- or Upper Middle Class	.112	.149	.059
No Diff. Paying Bills	.052	.145	.027
College Education	.000	.174	.000
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Political Orientation	-.152**	.046	-.260
Age	.005	.006	.068
Being Female	.490**	.149	.211
Urban Residence	-.093	.152	-.047

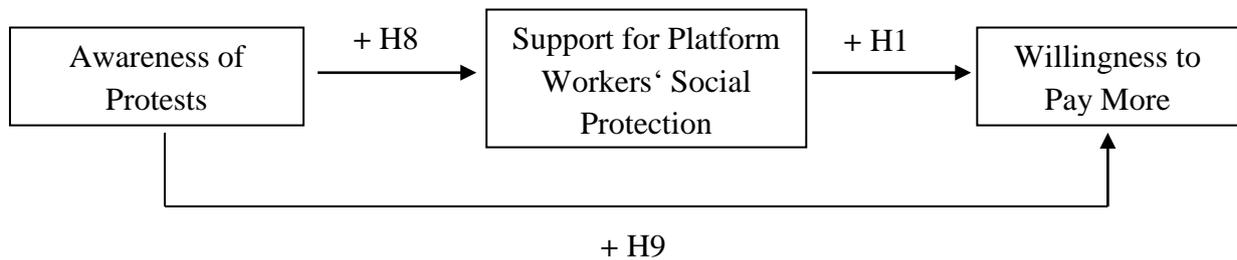
Significant at *0.9%, **0.95% and ***0.99% level

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict consumers’ “Support for Platform Workers’ Social Protection” based on their awareness of protests, social class, difficulties paying bills and level of education. The model controls for the participants’ political orientation, age, gender and place of residency. With an adjusted R² of .118, the model

explains 11% of the variation of the dependent variable. When it comes to the independent variables, “Awareness of Protests” is the only one with a statistically significant effect ($p = .008$). Consumers that are aware of the protests support the social protection of platform workers by .269 points more than those who have not heard of them. As a consequence, hypothesis H8 can be accepted: *Consumers that are aware of the protests do more likely support an improvement of platform workers’ access to social protection.* The other hypothesis making predictions about the relationships between socio-economic characteristics and the support for platform workers’ social protection (H2, H4 and H6) have to be rejected. For H2, that means that no influence of being part of the upper middle- or upper class on the support could be found. When it comes to H4 and H6, neither having no difficulties with paying the bills nor having a college education have an influence on the consumers’ support for the social protection of platform workers.

When examining the outcomes concerning the control variables, “Political Orientation” as well as “Gender” are statistically significant. Gender, or in this case being female, did not have any effect on the dependent variable “Willingness to Pay More” that was even close to being statistically significant. While the degree of support is higher amongst female consumers of services, this effect does not translate into the behavioural consequence of being willing to pay more. The effect that the consumers’ political orientation has on the mediating variable is in line with the findings from the previous models: participants’ support for platform workers’ social protection decreased by .152 points for each point to the right on the scale representing political orientation.

Summing up the outcome of the regression analysis, it can be said that except for “Awareness of Protests”, none of the other independent variables could be proven to have any statistically significant effect. Therefore, a consumer’s level of education, financial situation and social class do not predict how much they would be willing to pay extra or how high their level of support is. The variable “Support for Platform Workers’ Social Protection” does have a statistically significant effect on the willingness to pay more as well as mediation between the awareness of protests and the dependent variable.



5. Conclusion and Discussion

First and foremost, it is the aim of this section to answer the initial research questions. The findings presented in the analysis will be discussed and put into context with the theoretical framework as well as concerns from a methodological point of view. Throughout this section, recommendations for future research will be expressed.

Regarding the main question, none of the socio-economic factors could be proven to have an effect on the consumers' level of support for the improvement of social protection for platform workers. Furthermore, sub-question (a) addressed the role of the awareness of protests: as demonstrated in Table 2, exactly half of the participants stated to be aware of the protests, while the other half was unaware. In contrary to the socio-economic characteristics, the analysis revealed an influence of having heard of the protests to a higher willingness to pay more as well as a higher degree of support.

In the sub-questions (b) and (c), the main dependent variable was brought up and related to the consumers' socio-economic status. Just as when it comes to the support for platform workers' access to social protection, no influence by the participants' socio-economic status could be proven. Taking a step back, one of the first, more general questions in this paper was asking whether consumers of services via online platforms actually cared about the workers they hire and their access to social protection. Taking into account the "Willingness to Pay More", this question has to be answered in the affirmative: almost 90% of the participants stated that they would be willing to at least pay 1% in addition to the standard price. While social desirability might still be an issue that needs to be taken into consideration, the outcome does seem to be unambiguous: most people care to the point

where they would be willing to pay more without any personal material gain. Or in other words, most people are willing to accept individual social responsibility.

Considerably, the most important finding of this study is the fact that the influence of a consumer's socio-economic background on their willingness to pay more for a service or the support for platform workers' social protection could not be proven in any way. In the following paragraphs, the possible explanations for this outcome will be explored.

As discussed in the section on data and methods, the data collection of this project and the sampling method specifically does have some weaknesses which have partly been addressed already. As always, an imbalanced sample has the disadvantage of possibly leading to inconclusive and statistically insignificant results. When it comes to the variable that expresses the level of education, future research should put the emphasis on including more people with a lower level of education in the sample. That way, more opinions of people who have not attended university can be measured and categories such as "no school finished" are large enough on their own. The same recommendation is true in regards to the variable measuring the participants' social class: including data from more people who place themselves in the working- or lower middle class as well as the upper class would most certainly be a valuable asset.

In the case of the variable aiming to measure the participants' economic status, "Difficulties Paying Bills", it turned out that a great number of respondents (73.9 %) stated to either never or almost never have difficulties paying their bills. These circumstances, which lead to highly skewed data regarding the variable in particular, can be attributed to both the data set and the method of measurement. While future research should consider a more objective measure such as the annual net household income, issues such as many people's hesitation to share explicit information on their financial situation remain a concern.

Another approach to discussing the results is shifting the focus away from issues concerning the data and assuming that the results are in fact externally valid. From this standpoint, there is another, more "straight forward" point to be made: socio-economic factors, at least in the way they were measured in this study, do simply not have an influence on consumers' willingness to pay more for a service.

There is no doubt about the fact that supporting social protection of the people somebody hires through a platform and being willing to pay more in order to improve the situation is, at least to some extent, a political issue. As was discussed in the theory section, many scholars believe for "class politics", at least in western European countries, to be

declining altogether, e.g. Evans & Tilley (2011) or Jansen et al. (2013). From there, one could conclude that, because the issue is of a political nature, the fact that socio-economic factors could not be proven to have any explanatory power is in line with that assumption. However, the lack of explanatory power in the consumers' level of education contradicts the findings of most scholars, who claim that a cleavage based on differences in education was taking over the traditional class cleavage. Therefore, future researchers dealing with the matter should explore this discrepancy in more depth.

The only independent variable that was proven to have a significant effect was the awareness of the protests. This outcome might suggest that the issue is not as political as initially suspected: the choice of whether wanting to pay more or not could be solely made on a personal, completely apolitical level. When somebody becomes aware of the protests, they are very likely to support the protests, as the numbers suggest: out of 89 participants who had heard of the protests, an overwhelming majority of 73 stated to either strongly support or rather support the protests. Arguably, the protests make most people feel empathetic towards the workers and are therefore willing to pay more money in order to improve their situation. These findings can be connected to literature that aims to shine a light on the impact of protest movements in general. As a number of scholars have claimed, protests have the power to influence the amounts of votes cast for a political party and ultimately policy making (e.g. Madestam et al. 2013). But what about protests regarding the practices and policies of private corporations? Yue et al. (2013) found that movements protesting specific companies do not only have an impact on the corporation itself, but also create "information spillovers". Consequently, protests against the practices of one company in the platform economy, such as those against Foodora mentioned in the introduction, could have an effect on consumers' perception of Uber or Helpling. In the end, the findings of this paper suggest that workers' protests are a means with good prospects when it comes to gaining the support of the consumers and probably of the public in general.

Adding the control variables into the regression model demonstrated that the participants' political orientation, measured on a left-right scale, was a significant factor. In addition to that, in Model 2, the significance of the awareness of protests decreased, when the political orientation was added as a control variable. This suggests not only a correlation, but a mediating effect: part of the reason that people are aware of the protests can be attributed to the fact that their political orientation is leaning more towards the left. According to Stroud (2008), individuals select the information they consume via different sources of media based

on their political beliefs, which she calls “Selective Exposure”. Within this context, it seems very plausible that left-leaning participants have exposed themselves to news sources talking about the often times difficult situation of platform workers. When it comes to future research, it would be highly interesting to examine whether the effect of “Awareness of Protests” differs when examining people on the left and right separately. However, in order to conduct such an approach, it would be essential to use a sample that is not as heavily concentrated onto the left as this one.

Finally, it is not clear whether the result would have been different if the imbalances regarding the sample could be minimized. In the future, research could focus on repeating the tests with a more representative sample as well as studying the role of political orientation and awareness of protests more thoroughly.

Indeed, this research shows that the actions, considerations and ultimately empathy of consumers in the platform economy matter and are connected to workers’ strive towards better access to social protection. In an industry that so heavily encourages customers to rate their experiences and service personnel, consumers are, together with their opinions and concerns, extremely important to the business model as such. Further research could focus on issues such as the rating mechanisms or the consumers’ willingness to boycott the services in order to improve the workers’ access to social protection. To conclude, the topic of consumers in the platform economy requires more academic attention and should not continue to be as heavily understudied as it is at this point.

6. Literature

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7. Data Appendix: Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 This survey is about the so called platform economy. Platform economies are economies organised via a digital platform, that means a website or application. We would like for you to tell us about your experiences regarding these platforms. However, you also are an important participant in case you have never heard of such platforms.

We will focus on two particular forms of the platform economy: In the sharing economy (that means sharing platforms), consumers grant each other access to their under-utilized goods, possibly for money (e.g. foodsharing, second-hand marketplaces on facebook, carsharing such as uber, blablacar or neighbourhood-cars, ebay classifieds, couchsurfing, or Airbnb).

Please note: Sharing can mean an ultimate transfer of ownership or lending a good to someone temporary. Both options can be either for free or for money.

In the service economy (that means service platforms), people provide services and offer them to customers (e.g. delivery services such as foodora or postmates, transportation services such as uber or lyft or household services).

However, some platforms fit in both categories. A good example is Uber, where drivers offer a service but also share their cars with you.

Q2 Using or buying a service or good via one of the platform types introduced before means participating in the related economy. Have you ever participated in a sharing and/or a service economy? If yes, in which form?

Note: Some platforms are difficult to categorize in one of the options below, as for example Uber or Airbnb. In the case you used such a platform, please choose "I participated in both".

- I have never participated in the sharing or in the service economy
- I only participated in the sharing economy
- I only participated in the service economy
- I participated in both types

Skip To: Q4 If Using or buying a service or good via one of the platform types introduced before means participa... = I have never participated in the sharing or in the service economy

Skip To: Q76 If Using or buying a service or good via one of the platform types introduced before means participa... = I only participated in the sharing economy

Skip To: Q75 If Using or buying a service or good via one of the platform types introduced before means participa... = I only participated in the service economy

Skip To: Q8 If Using or buying a service or good via one of the platform types introduced before means participa... = I participated in both types

Q4 Remember: The sharing economy is about sharing a good, as for example a car, an appartement, clothes you don't wear anymore or food, possibly for money. Which of the following statements is true for you?

- I have never heard of the sharing economy
 - I have heard of the sharing economy but have never used related digital platforms
-

Q14 We now continue with questions on your personal value orientation and your political orientation.

Q5 People sometimes talk about what the aims of your country should be for the next ten years. Below, some of the goals which different people would give top priority are listed.

Would you please say which one of these you, yourself, consider the most important? (choose one of the four options below under "first choice")

And which would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under "second choice")

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
A high level of economic growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making sure my country has strong defense forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing that people have more say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6 If you had to choose, which one of the things presented below would you say is most important? (choose one of the four options below under "first choice")

And which would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under "second choice")

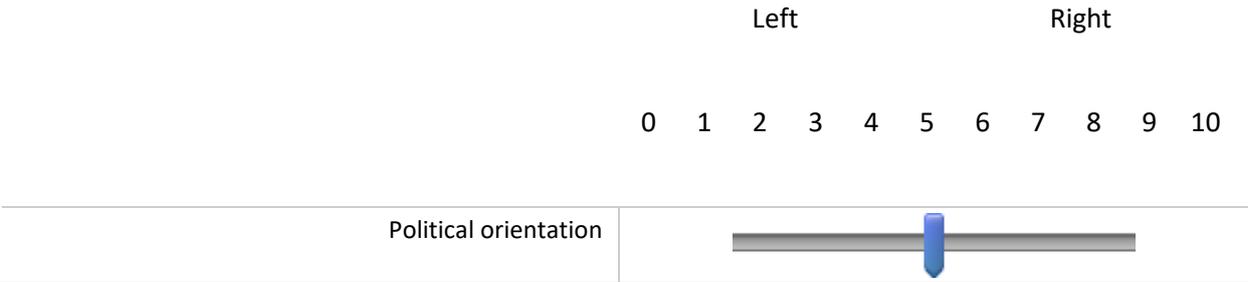
	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
Maintaining order in nation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving people more say in important government decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fighting high prices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protecting freedom of speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 Here is another list. In your opinion, which one of these is most important? (choose one of the four options below under "first choice")

And what would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under "second choice")

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
A stable economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress toward a less impersonal and more humane society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress toward a society in which ideas count more than money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The fight against crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q15 In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?



Q16 The final questions are about your background.

Some people talk about "social classes", whereby they refer to a division of a society based on social and economic status. In which of the "social classes" would you place yourself?

- Working Class
- Lower Middle Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Middle Class
- Upper Class
- I don't know

Q17 What are you currently doing in your daily life?

- Houseperson
- Wage employed
- Self employed
- Retired
- Student
- Unemployed
- Disabled/long term ill
- Other

Q18 What is your current occupation? Please state the title and your main tasks (e.g. Nurse: Taking care of patients; Store Manager: scheduling and handling customer service; Carpenter: Shaping and installing building materials).

Q19 How often do you have difficulties paying bills?

- All the time
 - Most of the time
 - From time to time
 - Almost never
 - Never
 - I don't know
-

Q20 What is your nationality?

Q21 How would you describe the area you live in?

- Urban
 - Suburban or small town
 - Rural
 - I don't know
-

Q22 What is your level of education? Please select the highest achieved level. If currently enrolled, please select the criteria which fits your enrollment.

- No school finished
 - Primary School
 - High School
 - Vocational training
 - Bachelor/ Master or more
-

Q23 What is your year of birth?

▼ 2018 ... 1919

Q24 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Male

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Female

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Other

Q76 Which are the specific platforms you have used before? Examples are: Uber, AirBnb, Couchsurfing, marketplaces on facebook, eBayClassifieds, Foodsharing, Blablacar and ToGoodToGoo -but there are many more!

Q77 Remember: The sharing economy is about sharing a good, as for example a car, an appartement, clothes you don't wear anymore or food, possibly for money.

Which of the following statements describes your frequency of participation in the sharing economy best?

- I have been on one or more of the sharing economy platforms and participated once
- I participate in the sharing economy occasionally (once every few months)
- I participate in the sharing economy regularly (at least every month)

Q78 To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your motivation for participation in the sharing economy?

I participate in the sharing economy because...

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
... it allows me to save money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I like the social interaction it enhances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I want to avoid buying a good I would only use very seldom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I want to make sure my goods are fully used	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I like its character of innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... it allows me to make money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I like the alternative economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q79 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
 Participating in the sharing economy raised my awareness for...

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
... different motives for participation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the importance of environment protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the importance and opportunities of making/saving money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the importance of social interaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... alternative economies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q86 We now continue with questions on your personal value orientation and your political orientation.

Q87 People sometimes talk about what the aims of your country should be for the next ten years. Below, some of the goals which different people would give top priority are listed.

Would you please say which one of these you, yourself, consider the most important? (choose one of the four options below under "first choice")

And which would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under "second choice")

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
A high level of economic growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making sure my country has strong defense forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing that people have more say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q88 If you had to choose, which one of the things presented below would you say is most important? (choose one of the four options below under "first choice")

And which would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under "second choice")

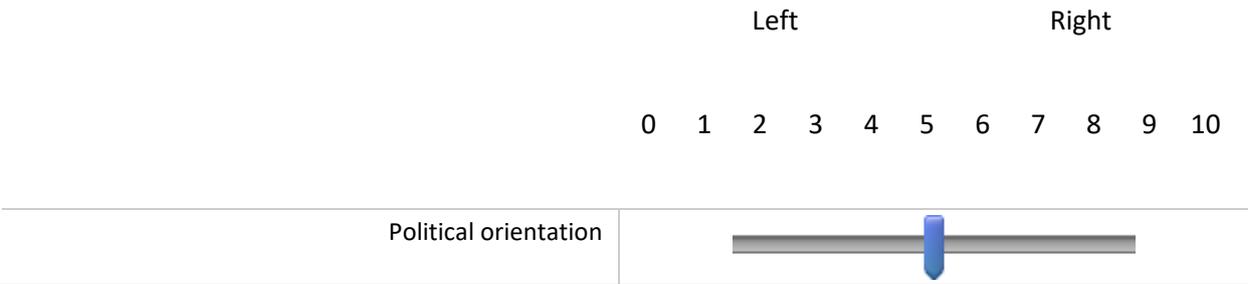
	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
Maintaining order in nation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving people more say in important government decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fighting high prices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protecting freedom of speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q89 Here is another list. In your opinion, which one of these is most important? (choose one of the four options below under "first choice")

And what would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under "second choice")

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
A stable economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress toward a less impersonal and more humane society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress toward a society in which ideas count more than money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The fight against crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q90 In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?



Q62 The final questions are about your background.

Some people talk about "social classes", whereby they refer to a division of a society based on social and economic status. In which of the "social classes" would you place yourself?

- Working Class
 - Lower Middle Class
 - Middle Class
 - Upper Middle Class
 - Upper Class
 - I don't know
-

Q63 What are you currently doing in your daily life?

- Houseperson
 - Wage employed
 - Self employed
 - Retired
 - Student
 - Unemployed
 - Disabled/long term ill
 - Other
-

Q64 What is your current occupation? Please state the title and your main tasks (e.g. Nurse: Taking care of patients; Store Manager: scheduling and handling customer service; Carpenter: Shaping and installing building materials).

Q65 How often do you have difficulties paying bills?

- All the time
 - Most of the time
 - From time to time
 - Almost never
 - Never
 - I don't know
-

Q66 What is your nationality?

Q67 How would you describe the area you live in?

- Urban
 - Suburban or small town
 - Rural
 - I don't know
-

Q68 What is your level of education? Please select the highest achieved level. If currently enrolled, please select the criteria which fits your enrollment.

- No school finished
 - Primary School
 - High School
 - Vocational Training
 - Bachelor/ Master or more
-

Q69 What is your year of birth?

▼ 2018 ... 1919

Q70 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Male

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Female

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Other

Q75 Which are the specific platforms you have used before? Examples are: Uber, AirBnb, Postmates and Foodora -but there are many more!

Q9 Remember: The sharing economy is about sharing a good, as for example a car, an appartement, clothes you don't wear anymore or food, possibly for money. Which of the following statements is true for you?

- I have never heard of the sharing economy
 - I have heard of the sharing economy but have never used related digital platforms
-

Q77 On service platforms, people provide services (e.g. transportation, delivery or household services) and offer them to customers. Which of the following statements is true for you?

- I have never heard of the service platform economy
 - I have heard of the service platform economy but have never used related digital platforms
 - I have been on one or more of the service platform economy websites and participated once
 - I participate in the platform economy occasionally (once every few month)
 - I participate in the platform economy regularly (at least every month)
-

Q78 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
It is cheaper to use a platform service compared to traditional commerce.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is difficult to know who is responsible in the case of failure when using a platform.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Platform workers should be paid at least minimum wage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not trust internet transactions in general.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The right to organize in labor unions should be granted to platform workers just the same.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online platforms are transparent about services and prices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Platforms should provide insurance regarding sickness, disability, and liability for people working via the platform.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using services provided via a digital platform is more	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

convenient than
using traditional
services.

Q79 In recent years, some platform workers have been protesting the conditions under which they work, for example low wages, lack of insurance or prohibition to organize in labor unions. Have you heard of such protests?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Skip To: Q80 If In recent years, some platform workers have been protesting the conditions under which they work,... = Yes

Skip To: Q81 If In recent years, some platform workers have been protesting the conditions under which they work,... = No

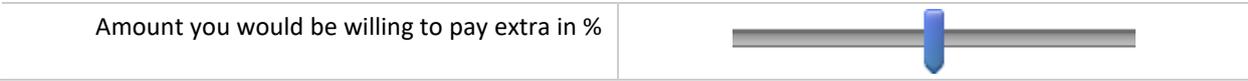
Skip To: Q81 If In recent years, some platform workers have been protesting the conditions under which they work,... = I don't know

Q80 Do you support these protests?

- Strongly support
 - Rather support
 - Might or might not support
 - Rather not support
 - Don't support at all
-

Q81 As a customer, would you be willing to pay a higher price in order to ensure an improvement regarding those conditions (low wages, lack of insurance or prohibition to organize in labor unions)?

0 10 20 30 40 50



Q25 We now continue with questions on your personal value orientation and your political orientation.

Q71 People sometimes talk about what the aims of your country should be for the next ten years. Below, some of the goals which different people would give top priority are listed.

Would you please say which one of these you, yourself, consider the most important? (choose one of the four options below under “first choice”)

And which would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under “second choice”)

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
A high level of economic growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making sure my country has strong defense forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing that people have more say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q72 If you had to choose, which one of the things presented below would you say is most important? (choose one of the four options below under “first choice”)
 And which would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under “second choice”)

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
Maintaining order in nation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving people more say in important government decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fighting high prices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protecting freedom of speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q37 Here is another list. In your opinion, which one of these is most important? (choose one of the four options below under “first choice”)
 And what would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under “second choice”)

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
A stable economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress toward a less impersonal and more humane society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress toward a society in which ideas count more than money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The fight against crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q83 To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

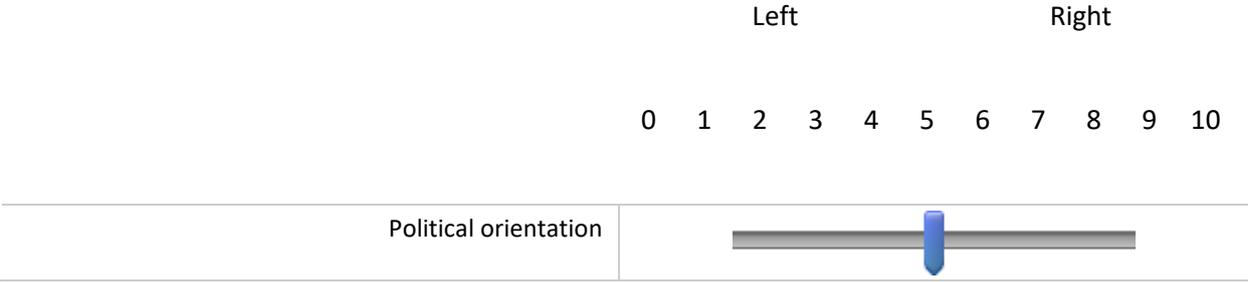
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q82 And again: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Social protection of workers...

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
... costs businesses too much in taxes and charges.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... place too great a strain on the economy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... prevents widespread poverty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... lead to a more equal society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... make people lazy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... make people less willing to care for each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q74 In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?



Q44 The final questions are about your background. Some people talk about "social classes", whereby they refer to a division of a society based on social and economic status. In which of the "social classes" would you place yourself?

- Working Class
- Lower Middle Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Middle Class
- Upper Class
- I don't know

Q45 What are you currently doing in your daily life?

- Houseperson
 - Wage employed
 - Self employed
 - Retired
 - Student
 - Unemployed
 - Disabled/long term ill
 - Other
-

Q46 What is your current occupation? Please state the title and your main tasks (e.g. Nurse: Taking care of patients; Store Manager: scheduling and handling customer service; Carpenter: Shaping and installing building materials).

Q47 How often do you have difficulties paying bills?

- All the time
 - Most of the time
 - From time to time
 - Almost never
 - Never
 - I don't know
-

Q48 What is your nationality?

Q49 How would you describe the area you live in?

- Urban
- Suburban or small town
- Rural
- I don't know

Q50 What is your level of education? Please select the highest achieved level. If currently enrolled, please select the criteria which fits your enrollment.

- No school finished
- Primary School
- High School
- Vocational training
- Bachelor/ Master or more

Q51 What is your year of birth?

▼ 2018 ... 1919

Q52 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Male

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Female

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Other

Q8 Which are the platforms you have used before? Examples are: Uber, AirBnb, Couchsurfing, eBayClassifieds, Foodsharing, Postmates, Foodora, Blablacar and ToGoodToGoo -but there are many more!

Q85 Remember: The sharing economy is about sharing a good, as for example a car, an appartement, clothes you don't wear anymore or food, possibly for money.
Which of the following statements describes your frequency of participation in the sharing economy best?

- I have been on one or more of the sharing economy platforms and participated once
- I participate in the sharing economy occasionally (once every few months)
- I participate in the sharing economy regularly (at least every month)

Q91 On service platforms, people provide services (e.g. transportation, delivery or household services) and offer them to customers. Which of the following statements is true for you?

- I have been on one or more of the service platform economy platforms and participated once
- I participate in the service platform economy occasionally (once every few months)
- I participate in the service platform economy regularly (at least every month)

Q10 To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your motivation for participation in the sharing economy?

I participate in the sharing economy because...

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
... it allows me to save money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I like the social interaction it enhances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I want to avoid buying a physical resource I would only use seldomly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I want to make sure my goods are fully used	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I like its character of innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... it allows me to make money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... I like the alternative economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Participating in the sharing economy raised my awareness for...

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
... different motives for participation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the importance of environment protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the importance and opportunities of making/saving money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the importance of social interaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... alternative economies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q80 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
It is cheaper to use a platform service compared to traditional commerce.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is difficult to know who is responsible in the case of failure when using a platform.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Platform workers should be paid at least minimum wage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not trust internet transactions in general.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The right to organize in labor unions should be granted to platform workers just the same.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online platforms are transparent about services and prices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Platforms should provide insurance regarding sickness, disability, and liability for people working via the platform.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using services provided via a digital platform is more	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

convenient than
using traditional
services.

Q81 In recent years, some platform workers have been protesting the conditions under which they work, for example low wages, lack of insurance or prohibition to organize in labor unions. Have you heard of such protests?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Skip To: Q82 If In recent years, some platform workers have been protesting the conditions under which they work,... = Yes

Skip To: Q83 If In recent years, some platform workers have been protesting the conditions under which they work,... = No

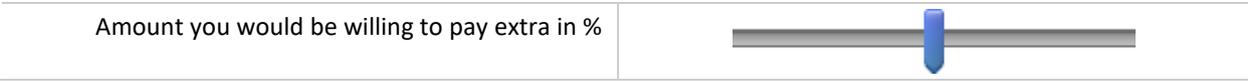
Skip To: Q83 If In recent years, some platform workers have been protesting the conditions under which they work,... = I don't know

Q82 Do you support these protests?

- Strongly support
 - Rather support
 - Might or might not support
 - Rather not support
 - Don't support at all
-

Q83 As a customer, would you be willing to pay a higher price in order to ensure an improvement regarding those conditions (low wages, lack of insurance or prohibition to organize in labor unions)?

0 10 20 30 40 50



Q29 We now continue with questions on your personal value orientation and your political orientation.

Q33 People sometimes talk about what the aims of your country should be for the next ten years. Below, some of the goals which different people would give top priority are listed.

Would you please say which one of these you, yourself, consider the most important? (choose one of the four options below under “first choice”)

And which would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under “second choice”)

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
A high level of economic growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making sure my country has strong defense forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing that people have more say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q35 If you had to choose, which one of the things presented below would you say is most important? (choose one of the four options below under “first choice”)
 And which would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under “second choice”)

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
Maintaining order in nation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving people more say in important government decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fighting high prices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protecting freedom of speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Q39 Here is another list. In your opinion, which one of these is most important? (choose one of the four options below under “first choice”)
 And what would be the next most important? (Choose one of the remaining three options under “second choice”)

	First choice (tick one box)	Second choice (tick another box)
A stable economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress toward a less impersonal and more humane society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress toward a society in which ideas count more than money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The fight against crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Q84 To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

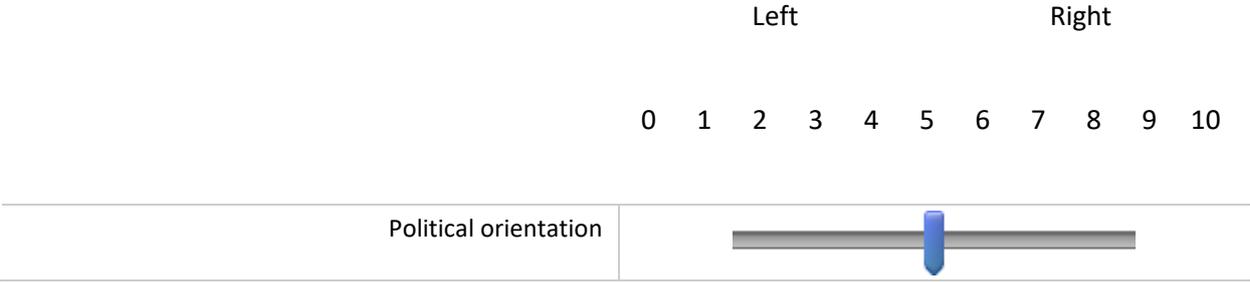
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q85 And again: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Social protection of workers...

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
... costs businesses too much in taxes and charges.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... place too great a strain on the economy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... prevents widespread poverty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... lead to a more equal society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... make people lazy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... make people less willing to care for each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q43 In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?



Q53 The final questions are about your background. Some people talk about "social classes", whereby they refer to a division of a society based on social and economic status. In which of the "social classes" would you place yourself?

- Working Class
- Lower Middle Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Middle Class
- Upper Class
- I don't know

Q54 What are you currently doing in your daily life?

- Houseperson
 - Wage employed
 - Self employed
 - Retired
 - Student
 - Unemployed
 - Disabled/long term ill
 - Other
-

Q55 What is your current occupation? Please state the title and your main tasks (e.g. Nurse: Taking care of patients; Store Manager: scheduling and handling customer service; Carpenter: Shaping and installing building materials).

Q56 How often do you have difficulties paying bills?

- All the time
 - Most of the time
 - From time to time
 - Almost never
 - Never
 - I don't know
-

Q57 What is your nationality?

Q58 How would you describe the area you live in?

- Urban
- Suburban or small town
- Rural
- I don't know

Q59 What is your level of education? Please select the highest achieved level. If currently enrolled, please select the criteria which fits your enrollment.

- No school finished
- Primary School
- High School
- Vocational training
- Bachelor/ Master or more

Q60 What is your year of birth?

▼ 2018 ... 1919

Q61 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Male

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Female

Skip To: Q84 If What is your gender? = Other

Q84 Thank you very much for participating! You made it much easier for us to obtain our bachelor degree. Please press the blue button a last time.

End of Block: Default Question Block
