

# Under which conditions does reputation transfer create or destroy value for workers on online labour platforms?

Marco Rotthues  
University of Twente  
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede  
The Netherlands

## ABSTRACT

Building and maintaining an online reputation is increasing in importance to the extent that it is becoming an integral part of daily life and a good reputation in the digital world might become more important than money, in that reputation is the single most valuable resource on online labour platforms in the gig economy. However, the effectiveness of reputation transfer for workers on online labour platforms has still not been clearly researched yet. The purpose of this exploratory study is therefore to enlighten and identify the not yet researched conditions under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for workers on online labour platforms. In order to conduct this exploratory study qualitative data collection in the form of interviews followed by thematic analysis have been chosen to provide an answer to the research question. Resulting from the data analysis the following four categories of conditions under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for the worker on online labour platforms have been identified: worker characteristics, characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform, characteristics of the transaction on the target platform and characteristics of the target platform. Concludingly, this research provided an answer to the research question by stating that reputation transfer creates or destroys value for the worker on online labour platforms under the three categories of conditions: characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform, characteristics of the transaction on the target platform and characteristics of the target platform and is further maximized or minimized by the conditions of the category worker characteristics. On top of that, several important implications have been offered for the research field of reputation and reputation transfer and recent findings from various researches have been enforced and/or further developed.

**Keywords:** Reputation, value, resource, online labour platforms, data portability, transaction

**Graduation Committee members:**

1. Dr. Jeroen Meijerink
2. Prof. Dr. Tanya Bondarouk

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Conducting business online has become highly conventional nowadays as large numbers of platform businesses have emerged in recent years. Peer-to-peer online labour platforms such as Airbnb, Uber, Deliveroo, Amazon Mechanical Turk, Fiver and many more are part of the gig economy, in which value is created by transactions of services and goods between two parties, where the user of the platform can jump into the role of the worker and/or the requester (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Consequently, online review systems on platforms have drastically increased in importance, as workers can establish a reputation on a platform, but there are also downsides as issues for platform workers emerge with platform competition being at risk.

The term reputation is derived from “being known for something” (Lange, Lee & Dai, 2010, p. 157) and is defined as a worker’s accumulated and documented evaluation by prior transaction partners (Jarvenpaa et al. 2000; Kim et al. 2004). Workers’ success (or failure) in the gig economy depends on how they are regarded by potential requesters, i.e. their reputation on a platform, as reputations of workers are of great importance to potential requesters (Resnik et al. 2000). Reputations function as an indicator of trustworthiness to potential transaction partners on a platform and may have this effect outside the platform as well (Duggan J. 2020). An important factor is that workers need to build and maintain a reputation on the platforms on which they operate and a majority engages in multi-platform usage (Hesse and Teubner 2019; Teubner et al. 2019). It is worth noting that, as platform businesses have created new paradigms in the context of e-commerce, the potential impact of transferring a worker’s reputation across multiple platforms has become even more essential than in the conventional e-commerce field (Huang et al. 2017). Regarding the current situation, building and maintaining an online reputation is increasing in importance to the extent that it is becoming an integral part of daily life (Hesse and Teubner, 2019) and a good reputation in the digital world might become more important than money, in that reputation is the single most valuable resource in the gig economy (Fertik and Thompson, 2015). But, first and foremost, reputation transfer has proved its apparent economic potential as a result of the tangible value of reputation and the fact that multi-platform usage is fairly common (Teubner et. al, 2017). For instance, research into the tangible economic value of reputation in the gig economy has shown that a platform worker’s reputation on Airbnb has a significant impact on the listing prices (Teubner et. al, 2017). Consequently, research has been conducted with regards to reputation on platforms, reputation transfer and reputation portability across platforms in order to limit and overcome the downsides of online review systems that platform workers face. For instance, platform workers currently still need to manage separate reputations, one per platform they are operating on, as each platform only focuses on one peer-to-peer online market (Teubner et al., 2019). Therefore, the concept of reputation transfer was introduced in the way that enables a platform worker to transfer his/her reputation from platform A to platform B, so that a platform worker can reference to his reputation on platform A when working on platform B (Teubner et al., 2019).

The European Commission identifies cross-platform data and reputation portability as an important means of addressing issues such as data ownership, platform effects such as lock-in effects or newbie effects and of ensuring overall platform competition (European Commission, 2017). Furthermore, it has been shown that newbie effects can be overcome by the power carried by reputations (Wessel et. al, 2017). On the other hand, reputation transfer not only has potential for creating value, but may also destroy value for platform workers. For instance, with reviews that build a platform worker’s reputation not being subjected a

“right to forget”, the risk of a loss spiral might emerge for certain platform workers. Moreover, with the introduction of reputation transfer, incumbent platform workers may rather experience the negative effects of reputation transfer as platform competition becomes more equal.

The research carried out by Teubner et. al has also revealed that the transferability of this result to other platforms shows limitations due to differences in the type of resource, motives of the requesters and mechanisms of reputation, and that on certain platforms reputation transfers less into economic value, and on certain platforms more, due to the dependence on personal interaction and the dependencies on the worker (Teubner et. al, 2017). Moreover, research has shown that only 5% of a sample involving 505 participants, who were either requesters or workers, do not use any platform yet and that 65% who use platforms are active on more than one platform (Teubner et al., 2017). Thus, despite an apparent economic potential due to the high amount of workers engaging in multi-platform usage and the tangible value of reputation, service providers focusing on reputation transfer have been fairly unsuccessful so far with research showing that they do not yet play a serious role in practice (Teubner et. al, 2017). Besides that, the effectiveness of reputation transfer is still an unanswered question from an empirical point of view, so there exists a need for an examination of the boundary conditions and drivers which make reputation transfer valuable or not valuable for platform workers (Teubner et. al, 2017). Hence the question arises whether reputation transfer is instrumental, and more specifically under which conditions, in creating value for platform workers and whether reputation transfer has the potential for negatively impacting value for platform workers which originates from reputation being transferred. With regard to the problem stated above, this research will aim at addressing the following research question:

*“Under which conditions does reputation transfer create or destroy value for workers on online labour platforms?”.*

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, the concepts of reputation transfer, the “Conservation of Resource (COR) Theory” (S. E. Hobfoll, 1989), which is used as the theoretical framework for this research, and marketplace effects which are connected with the advantages and disadvantages of reputation transfer, will be described. As reputation on a platform is seen as a key resource to platform workers, e.g. in creating economic value, we will examine the responses of platform workers and platform representatives to reputation transfer. This will be done by using the conservation of resource theory as a lens in order to gain insights into the conditions under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for platform workers.

Therefore, we will first take a glance at how the notion of value is defined and conceptualized. More explicitly, we will make use of definitions and conceptualizations of value that originate from marketing literature as these definitions and conceptualizations appear to suit the needs of this research the most. With that being said, it is meant that definitions and conceptualizations of value from the marketing literature fit best into this research as the notion of value has become the most fundamental aspect that is to be addressed across all activities in marketing (Holbrook, 1994, 1999) and this research also provides the concept of value with a spot amongst the key concepts of this research. Next to that, as we attempt at operationalizing this aforescribed fit of the definition of value, reputation transfer, to my understanding, can be seen as the product that is marketed to a customer, which may perceive this product as valuable or not valuable, with the customer being the platform worker. Moving on to the actual definition, value in the marketing literature is suggested to be

defined as the customers overall perception of the product's utility that is based on the perception of what the customer receives from the product and what the customer sacrifices (Zeithaml, 1988) or as the mere trade-off that the customer makes between the benefit and sacrifice (Babin et. al, 1994; Holbrook, 1994, 1999; Mathwick et. al, 2001, 2002; Sinha and DeSarbo, 1998; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001).

## 2.1 Online labour platforms, reputation and reputation transfer

Online labour platforms such as Airbnb, Uber, Deliveroo, Amazon Mechanical Turk, Fiver and many others are online marketplaces in which users are able to engage in the role of a worker and/or requester in transactions with other individuals (Teubner, Hawlitschek & Adam, 2019), and value is created by transactions of services and/or goods between the worker and requester. Since achieving transactions is the most essential task for workers on online labour platforms, building a reputation is important for these workers. Another important aspect of online labour platforms, on which we will elaborate more extensively later in section 2.3, is the process of connecting requesters with workers, whereby either requesters can be given autonomy such that it is up to them to choose a worker, or random assignment is applied to match workers with requesters.

Reputation essentially consists of evaluations from requesters who have engaged in a transaction with the platform worker as well as other factors such as the number of transactions and the number of years a worker has already been active on a platform. Regarding evaluation, requesters can evaluate the worker's performance for instance in the form of simple scores from one to ten, five-star ratings, badges and emojis, textual comments and performance-related criteria. Therefore, these evaluations lead to an accumulation that is documented on the respective platform, such that a worker is given a reputation consisting of the accumulated and documented evaluations which can be composed of one or several of the aforementioned types of evaluations and which are documented and accumulated in the reputation system on the respective platform. Reputation systems are that part of the platform which then ultimately present all the information about the reputation to the requesters. Furthermore, these evaluations making up the reputation of a worker on a platform may be subject to transfer to other platforms.

As requesters are about to make a decision on whom to engage in a transaction with, reputation consisting of the documented accumulation of evaluations, as well as other additional factors such as working experience and the number of transactions on a platform, give the requester a first impression of the worker's capabilities. Therefore, building an online reputation is important to platform workers. With regard to previous research showing that reputation transfers into economic value, e.g. in the form of significantly influencing the listing prices on Airbnb, (Teubner et. al, 2017), such that reputation exerts an impact on platform workers' revenue, reputation can be identified as a resource from the perspective of a platform worker.

The concept of reputation transfer is described as the transfer of a worker's reputation from the source platform to the target platform, as well as the effectiveness of a worker's reputation on the source platform in establishing trust on the target platform (Teubner et al., 2019). The transfer of workers' reputations includes the complete accumulation of the documented evaluations making up the reputation and is done by the source platform sending the raw data underlying the accumulation of the documented evaluations to the source platform. From a practical perspective, reputation transfer reflects the question of whether a

worker's eBay rating would be of use in beginning to rent out rooms on Airbnb (Teubner et al., 2019).

## 2.2 Newbie and lock-in effects

A couple of infamous issues, as newbie effects and lock-in effects, that occur regularly on marketplaces causing unequal market conditions are potentially to be addressed by the concept of reputation transfer (BEUC 2016, Wessel et. al 2017). Newbie effects and lock-in effects are effects that frequently occur in a wide variety of markets and make for a number of difficulties, restrictions and consequences for various players on the respective market, as for instance the workers on platforms, the platforms themselves and the customers. The so-called lock-in effect appears when peers on an online labour platform are disincentivized to change platforms and/or to expand to other platforms due to the lack of data portability (BEUC, 2016). In practical terms, workers with an already well-established reputation cannot take their reputation to another platform should they intend to switch platforms or engage in multi-platform usage. Thus, as workers have to start from scratch when switching platforms or starting to engage in multi-platform usage, they are disincentivized to do so. On top of that, there is a significant hindrance to competition between platforms due to the switching costs that workers face (BEUC, 2016). The newbie effect on platforms, also known as the cold start problem, can be described as the problem of not having accomplished any transactions via the platform, so requesters on platforms do not obtain any kind of insight into the capabilities of the worker, with the result that the worker's offer is unlikely to attract requesters even though it might be of the same quality as – or even better than – what is being offered by incumbent workers who have already built a reputation by achieving transactions (Wessel et al. 2017). Concludingly, reputation transfer can help to reduce or even avoid marketplace issues as newbie effects and lock-in effects but also bear drawbacks e.g. for incumbent workers or for workers with a track record of evaluations that leads only to more or less decent reputation. Therefore, conservation of resources theory will be deployed to conceptualize and operationalize more of such potential advantages and disadvantages that reputation transfer creates for platform workers and to ultimately make a transition from the conservation of resources theory to the stated research problem.

## 2.3 Conservation of resources (COR) theory

Regarding the fact that reputations constitute a resource for platform workers, the conservation resource theory will be used as a lens in order to examine and understand platform workers' responses to the concept of reputation transfer. The basic tenet of the conservation of resource theory is that individuals are motivated to protect their current resources (conservation) and acquire new resources (acquisition) (S.E. Hobfoll, 1989). In the COR theory, resources are defined as objects, states, conditions and other things that people value (Hobfoll, 1989). Due to the fact that Hobfoll's definition of resources has frequently been the subject of criticism, the adjusted definition will be adopted (Halbesleben et al., 2014) that everything that an individual perceives as being helpful in attaining his or her goals are resources. Recalling that reputation can be identified as a resource from the perspective of a platform worker due to the transferability of reputation into economic value, it is of interest to examine platform workers' responses to the concept of reputation transfer. Furthermore, taking the adjusted definition of resources from Halbesleben et. al as a basis seems to be more appropriate, considering that achieving a certain amount of revenue can indeed be identified as a goal from a platform worker perspective, with reputation as a resource being helpful in attaining this goal.

The COR theory includes two principles and four corollaries which more narrowly describe the conservation and acquisition of resources and the complexity of resource acquisition, and therefore constitute the main tenet of the theory. Principle 1 deals with the primacy of resource loss, stating that losing resources is, from a psychological perspective, more harmful than achieving similarly valued resource gains is helpful (Halbesleben et al., 2014). The principle of primacy of resource loss further implies that gaining resources related to employment will carry greater significance in the context of resource losses (Hobfoll, 1989). Principle 2 deals with resource investment, implying that investing resources is used as a means to protect against resource loss, recover from such resource loss and expand resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Corollary 1 describes that people with more resources find themselves in a better position to gain more resources and those with fewer resources are more likely to be able to cope with resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989). Corollary 2 states that resource loss leads to further resource loss, and corollary 3 implies that resource gains lead to further resource gains (Hobfoll, 1989). Corollary 4 emphasizes that lack of resources will lead to defensive behaviour by measures to conserve the remaining resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

## 2.4 Conservation of resources (COR) theory and reputation transfer

Recalling that reputation bears tangible economic value and that reputation is considered a resource for platform workers the conservation of resource (COR) theory serves as a relevant theoretical framework that can be used as a lens when examining the platform workers' responses to the concept of reputation transfer. In order to provide a tentative answer to the formulated research question, a theoretical framework in the form of a diagram will be developed by connecting the principles and corollaries of the COR theory with the research question. In order to approach the operationalization of such a theoretical framework, an outcome variable and three input variables were identified in order to enable potential conditions leading to either the creation of value for platform workers – as value creation would equal resource accumulation – or to the destruction of value for platform workers – as value destruction would equal resource loss – to be identified and organized around the three different players that make up a platform: the worker, the requester and the platform itself. To this end, the three input variables *worker characteristics*, *requester characteristics* and *platform characteristics* and one outcome variable *value of reputation transfer for the worker* have been identified. Therefore, depending on the aforementioned characteristics that ultimately function as conditions, reputation transfer results either in resource acquisition or resource loss for platform workers.

Regarding the input variable 1, worker characteristics, four underlying characteristics can be described. First and foremost, recalling that a resource is everything that is helpful for an individual to achieve his or her goals (Halbesleben et al., 2014) and that reputation can be identified as a resource from the perspective of a platform worker, the *goal of the platform worker* makes for an essential characteristic. It is necessary to state that not every platform worker pursues the goal of making money from their work on platforms. Thus, for platform workers who do not necessarily work on platforms, generating revenue reputation might not even constitute a resource for them. In practical terms, for a platform worker who does not pursue revenue as his or her goal on a platform, the introduction of reputation transfer would probably not result in any created value for the platform worker. On the other hand, for platform workers who do pursue the goal of making revenue from their platform

work, the introduction of reputation transfer may well lead to created value for the platform worker, as reputation constitutes a resource for them.

Secondly, the *interest in multi-platform usage* has been identified as a second characteristic that is closely linked to the first characteristic. Similarly to the goal of the platform worker, not every platform worker may be interested in working on multiple platforms. Thus, as in the case of the first characteristic, the introduction of reputation transfer would probably not lead to any added value for the platform worker, should the platform worker show no interest in working on multiple platforms simultaneously. On the other hand, for platform workers who are interested in multi-platform usage, the introduction of reputation transfer may well lead to added value for them, as reputation constitutes a resource for them.

Thirdly, the *tenure of a worker on a platform* makes for an important characteristic, as there are newbies, who are workers just beginning to work on a platform and who have no, or only a small number of, transactions and evaluations – and consequently no reputation either, and there are incumbent workers, who are workers that have already built a reputation by completing many transactions and collecting evaluations on platforms. Considering corollary 3, newbies could potentially benefit from the introduction of reputation transfer as lock-in effects and newbie effects would be overcome. Hence, newbies could more easily achieve resource gains, leading potentially to further resource gains, and would have an easier time starting out on a platform and/or making use of multi-platform usage right from the beginning. Newbies might transfer their source reputation onto a new platform, either in order to switch to another platform or to engage in multi-platform usage, and therefore they do not experience a cold start again when starting from scratch. In contrast, incumbent workers might also benefit from the introduction of reputation transfer as it would be made easier for incumbents to switch platforms or to engage in multi-platform usage. Again based on corollary 3, and in addition to corollary 1, the previously offered assertion can be supported as – just as for newbies – the introduction of reputation transfer would enable workers to engage in multi-platform usage and switch platforms more easily, as achieving resource gains leads to further resource gains. Additionally, due to the fact that incumbents already possess a significant amount of resources they are better positioned for further resource gains.

Lastly, the *quality of the source reputational data* is another important characteristic when considering worker characteristics which influence the value that is created through reputation transfer for the worker. Assuming that negative evaluations on platforms are not subject to a right to forget, platform workers who have a bad reputation on their source platform(s), which are the platform(s) they are active on, would probably dislike the introduction of reputation transfer as their bad reputation would be exposed to more transaction partners. Thus, transferring reputation would probably only lead to resource loss for platform workers with a bad reputation, resulting in a loss spiral and therefore leading to value destruction for the worker. Recalling that corollary 1 describes that people with more resources find themselves in a better position to gain more resources and those with fewer resources are more likely to cope with resource loss, and corollary 2 states that resource loss leads to further resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989), the previous offered assertion of value destruction that platform workers with a bad reputation on their source platform(s) would probably dislike the introduction of reputation transfer can be supported.

Moving on to input variable 2 – platform characteristics – two underlying characteristics can be identified. First and foremost,

the autonomy provision to requesters in selecting workers plays an essential role in determining the value of reputation transfer for workers. Workers who are active on platforms which do not provide requesters with any autonomy to select a worker, but rather make use of random assignment or of an algorithm-based assignment influenced by factors such as distance, would probably not obtain any created value through the introduction of reputation transfer, as in such cases reputation is not a resource for the workers. Considering that reputations are not a resource for the workers in such a case, and that they do not influence the assignment process of workers and requesters, reputation transfer would not lead to any value creation for the worker. Hence the autonomy provision to requesters to select the worker can be identified as a condition for reputation transfer to result in value creation for the workers.

Secondly, the diversity of reputation systems is of importance when determining the value of reputation transfer for workers. As the extent to which a reputation system is diverse and extensive, since such a system can consist of textual comments, five-star ratings, scores from one to ten, badges and/or performance-related criteria, it probably has a significant impact on the requesters' perception of how valuable or worthless the insights coming from the reputation are. Therefore, it is possible not only that certain types of data which a reputation systems consists of might be more valued than others, but also that more diverse and extensive reputation systems are perceived as being more valuable by the requester than a very simple and limited reputation system and that as a result they lead to value creation for the worker. On the other hand, a reputation system which for instance merely provides badges may not have a significant influence on the requester and his or her process of engaging a worker and, therefore, not create any value for the worker either.

Considering input variable 3, the requester characteristics consist of two underlying characteristics. Firstly, the dependency of the requester on the worker is of importance as a characteristic. In cases where the requesters are heavily dependent on the workers' skills, it is likely that reputation transfer leads to the creation of value for workers due to the fact that the requester literally bears a risk that the work that is done involves a great variety of ways in which it can be done – such that the work can be done at its best very well and, at its worst, very badly. In practical terms, a requester would probably want to select the worker carefully, for instance when the work is about writing the code for some software, or when the requester hires a taxi driver on a rental platform such as Airbnb. Therefore, reputation itself and reputation transfer appear to be valuable for the worker in order to be engaged. In contrast, for platforms on which the requester is less dependent on the worker, reputation transfer might not lead to any added value, or merely to minor added value for the worker due to the simplicity of the work that is being done. Regarding platforms as eBay on which goods are sold, requesters might still base their decision on whom to hire for a transaction, but there is much less room for error compared with the previously mentioned examples of providing code for software or taxi driving. Secondly, personal action that takes place between the requester and the worker appears to constitute a characteristic similar to the former one. Moving back to the example of taxi driving on a rental platform, in addition to the dependency of the requester on the worker, something which also plays an important role is the personal interaction. As there is personal interaction when taking a taxi ride, requesters might place more emphasis on the selection process of a worker than in cases where there is little or no personal interaction between requester and worker. Therefore, reputation itself and reputation transfer appear to be valuable for the worker in order to be engaged, so that it can be stated that value creation is also

attached to the level of personal interaction between requester and worker.

Finally, the following theoretical framework has been devised which incorporates all the conditions described and explained above, under which reputation transfer might lead to the creation or destruction of value for the worker or to no significant value added.

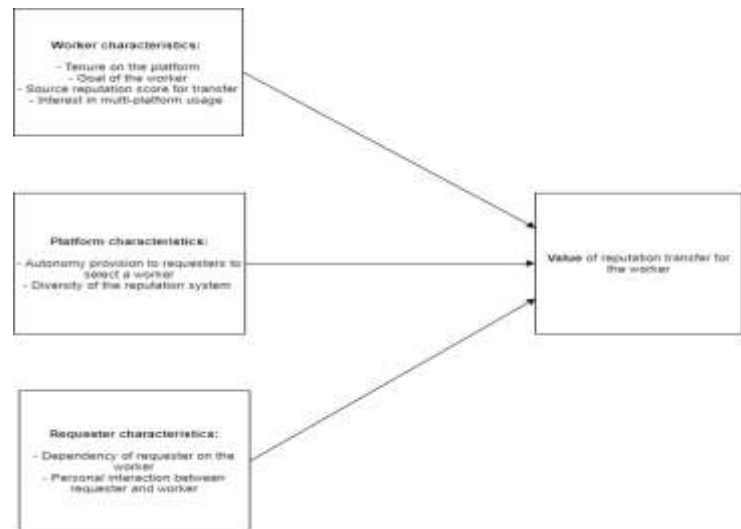


Fig. 1: Potential conditions leading to creation or destruction of value for a platform worker

### 3. METHODOLOGY

For addressing the formulated research question, it is necessary to collect and analyse data. In consideration of the fact that the conditions under which reputation transfer is instrumental for value creation for platform workers have not been clearly researched yet, an exploratory research design will be applied in order to shed light onto this research lacuna of the concept of reputation transfer and platform workers' perceptions of it in terms of the potential reputation transfer bears for the creation or destruction of value, as well as to provide a basis for further research regarding reputation transfer with an emphasis on platform workers.

#### 3.1 Data collection

As this research aims at shedding light onto this aforementioned research lacuna through exploring the conditions under which reputation transfer creates value or destroys value for the platform workers, it can be identified as an exploratory research type. Primary data in the form of interviews was used for data collection for the reason that interviews are well-suited for describing, contextualizing and achieving in-depth exploration into certain concepts, since secondary data such as literature is not able to answer the stated research question. Besides this, interviews enable the interviewees to give independent and open answers such that biases from other respondents' answers can be avoided (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019). More explicitly, semi-structured interviews were conducted as it is helpful to guide the interviewee through the interview by formulating the interview questions closely to the operationalized concepts in the theory part, so each of the three categories of characteristics is followed by a set of questions that link to the single characteristics of a category. Therefore, semi-structured interviews fit well into the context of exploratory research. Also, semi-structured interviews guarantee that the interviewees are given the freedom to answer the questions in their own terms and expressing their own views (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006) and that

follow-up questions can be asked in order to dive more deeply into the answer that was given to the initial question. Next to that, as the topic that is being pursued is still, in practice, uncharted territory, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews can be used to give the interviewee as much latitude as possible in answering the questions (William C A, 2015). Lastly, semi-structured interviews can avoid the participant drifting too far into an irrelevant direction as the interviewer can, in a sense, guide the interviewees through the course of the interview. Therefore, for each category of characteristics from our theoretical framework a set of questions that link to the single characteristics will be asked, to ensure as far as possible that the questions will measure what is intended to be measured. For instance, a question from the interview scheme for platform workers, that is linked closely to the 'goal of the platform worker' characteristic, has been formulated as follows: "Why do you work for platform XXX and what benefits / outcomes do you hope to realize through your work as a platform worker?". Further, the key concepts that were operationalized are divided into three categories: *worker characteristics*, *platform characteristics* and *requester characteristics*.

For the purpose of data collection two interview schemes will be developed with a set number of open-ended questions enabling the interviewee to be guided through the interview, one scheme for platform workers and one scheme for platform representatives. According to scientific literature, it is important that the participants in interviews can be identified as persons that have had experience and possess knowledge that is relevant for your specific area of research (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019). Therefore, platform workers who engage in platform usage and platform representatives were identified as the most appropriate group of participants for our research, as both possess either work experience with platforms or work as a representative for platforms themselves and therefore possess significant insights into their platform workers' motivation, opinions and motives. The participants' age, gender and geographical location did not play any major role in the selection of participants. In total, eleven participants were interviewed, comprising four platform workers and seven platform representatives from 10 different platforms, for more detailed information a table has been provided in the appendices.

Interviews will be collected until the notion of data saturation is fulfilled, which means that no single number can be stated regarding how many interviews are needed for our research in order to provide a reliable answer to the research question. The notion of data saturation is defined as the point at which no new findings or themes originate from the collected data (Guest et al, 2006). After the interviews have been conducted, the data will be analysed and related to the formulated research question in order to recognize themes relevant to our area of research. This will be done by using thematic analysis. All the interviews were recorded in such a way that the interviewer would not have to type the interviewees' responses at the same time as conducting the interview, but would in fact be able to fully focus on what happened during the interview (Kvale Brinkmann 2009 p. 179) and transcribe the interviews verbatim in order to transfer the content of the interview transcripts from spoken content to written content. Concerning data storage, the participants were asked in the initial introductory e-mail, and prior to the interview itself, for their consent for the interviews to be recorded and used for scientific purposes during the timeframe of this project. As far as research reliability is concerned, 7 of the 11 interviews with the representatives of platforms were conducted together with fellow student researchers, thus ensuring that the interviews were conducted in a professional manner. Additionally, all interview

transcripts were checked by the fellow student researchers to check for errors and completeness.

## 3.2 Data analysis

In order to analyse the qualitative data that has been collected, thematic analysis will be used in order to filter the interview transcripts for themes that occur frequently and/or are perceived as being important for the research objective. More specifically, deductive coding will be used as the basis of our thematic analysis, so that the themes, categories and codes originated from the theoretical framework as there were themes appearing in the interviews that were predicted to come up in the interviews based on the theoretical framework. Nevertheless, there will be frequently occurring themes in the interview transcripts that are generated in an inductive way, which means that these themes were not expected to come up during the interviews by the theoretical framework *per se* and were thus heard for the first time during the interview. Therefore, codes that have been generated in an inductive way are marked in the coding scheme that is attached to the appendices. The coding scheme involves all codes, the full name of each code, an explanation of each code and a text excerpt from the transcripts will be used to provide an overview of the data analysis process. The codes were afterwards used to generate the themes and subthemes of our thematic analysis, with the subthemes ultimately functioning as the conditions under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for the platform worker on online labour platforms, and the themes functioning as the categories of the conditions. Concerning levels of language, the focus during the coding process will be placed on the semantic level, meaning that the participants' opinions will be emphasized rather than what their opinions reveal about the participants' assumptions and social context (Caulfield, 2019).

## 4. RESULTS

In this section we will show the results from the data analysis, which consist of 14 characteristics that are divided over the four categories *worker characteristics*, *characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform*, *characteristics of the transaction on the target platform* and *characteristics of the target platform* that ultimately lead to the creation or destruction of four different types of values for the platform worker. Therefore, the results indicated that these four different types of values are *monetary value*, *functional value*, *emotional value* and *epistemic value*. Addressing clarity for the different types of value, monetary value has mainly been linked by the interviewees with the motive of generating revenue, functional value with flexibility/freedom, emotional value with the striving for experiences and epistemic value with the motive of growth and development. However, first and foremost the results have shown that there are two types of categories of conditions with the first type containing the category *worker characteristics* and being defined by workers being in full control of the conditions in this category such that the worker can directly influence the conditions. However, according to the results conditions of type 1 cannot directly create value or destroy value for the worker but can complement and maximize/minimize the following three different values, that are created by conditions of the categories of type 2, *epistemic value*, *emotional value* and *functional value*. That being said, the three aforementioned values can be complemented and maximized/minimized by conditions of the categories of type 1 since these types of values are not restricted by the necessity of value being first created for the requester and consequently value being created for the worker as it is the case with *monetary value*, which will be explained in the next paragraph.

The second type of categories involves the three categories *characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform*,

*characteristics of the transition on the target platform and characteristics of the target platform* and was defined by the conditions belonging to one of these three categories being outside of the control of the worker such that the worker cannot directly influence these conditions. Here, the characteristics composing the four categories ultimately function as the conditions that this research aimed to identify. Elaborating further on these two types of categories, an important insight that has been identified in the data regarding the type 2 categories has revealed that reputation transfer leads only to value creation for the worker under conditions belonging to type 2 categories, when the transfer of reputational data first creates value for the requester on the target platform and consequently creates value for the worker. In practical terms, only if the transfer of reputational data leads to the creation of value for the requester on the target platform – which takes place when the requester on the target platform experiences the insights coming from the transferred reputational data as being helpful for his or her decision regarding whom to hire – will value be created for the worker under conditions of type 2 categories. Conversely, as the requester perceives the transferred reputational data on the target platform as not being helpful, so that he or she does not gain any insights into the worker's platform history, the transferred reputational data simply has a neutral effect on the value of reputation transfer for the worker on the target platform. In conclusion, all the conditions that were identified either create or destroy value for the platform worker on the target platform as a consequence of reputation transfer creating value or destroying value for the requester on the target platform.

## 4.1 Worker's characteristics

The first category that has originated from the interviews is the *worker's characteristics*, which focuses on the knowledge a platform worker possesses about platforms, meaning how well does a worker know how to work with platforms and what aspects attention should be paid to, which is the interaction and communication with a platform as well as the ability to advertise and market yourself as a worker. Further, this category of conditions focuses also on the interests of a platform worker in terms of the interest in switching from platforms and/or engaging in the usage of multiple platforms simultaneously. As stated in the introduction of this results section, it has to be recalled that the following type 1 conditions can merely complement and maximize/minimize the value that reputation transfer creates or destroys for the worker under the conditions of type 2 on the target platform, except for monetary value which cannot be impacted by the type 1 conditions as the data has shown.

### 4.1.1 Worker's interest in multi-platform usage or/and switching platforms

The condition *worker's interest in multi-platform usage and/or switching platforms* was defined by interviewees as the interest that a worker shows for using multiple platforms at the same time and/or switch his or her platform. This condition complements and maximizes the value that reputation transfer creates under the conditions of type 2 for the worker on the target platform when the worker shows interest in making use of multiple platforms simultaneously and/or when the worker has interest in switching his or her platform. Oppositely, when these described interests are not represented by the worker the value that reputation transfer creates under the conditions of type 2 for the worker on the target platform is not complemented and maximized.

*"They can diversify instead of putting your bets on one horse only, so applying for multiple jobs at the same time, on different platforms."* (Platform representative 7)

*"Yeah I think for the workers that means they keep their reputational data, so the workers never start with a clean sheet, so this can be positive. So workers would not experience the cold start problem on a new website."* (Platform representative 2)

### 4.1.2 Interaction with the target platform

The condition *interaction* has been defined in their interviews as the manner in which a worker uses the platform and communicates with requesters on the platform as well as with the platform itself. First and foremost, the interviews have shown that it is of crucial importance for the worker to interact actively with the platform in order to achieve access to jobs. So in order to make reputation transfer valuable to a platform worker, it is nevertheless required that the worker has a certain understanding of how to work with platforms, meaning that a worker has to know that he or she has to interact with the platform on a very regular basis, communicate with customers in a kind way and also communicate with the platform itself.

*"They need to interact with the platform quite often such that the benefit of flexibility/freedom actually takes effect. It is important that you do things on your own, nobody is doing something for you."* (Platform representative 3)

*"Also it is important that workers communicate with their customers. So interacting and communicating with the platform as well as the requesters is important to release the goal of flexibility/freedom."* (Platform representative 2)

### 4.1.3 Advertising and marketing skills

The condition *advertising and marketing skills* has been defined as the ability of worker to advertise and market him or herself, including his or her profile, to potential transaction partners. Here, the results have shown that a strong ability of these described skills does significantly complement and maximize the value that reputation transfer creates under the conditions of type 2 for the worker on the target platform. Contrarily, the results indicated that if the ability of the two described skills is weak the complementation and maximization of the value that reputation transfer creates under the conditions of type 2 for the worker on the target platform is not significant such that no value is minimized nor maximized for the worker.

*"At our platform is really important to step into the shoes of a customer. So it is important for a worker to think about what customers would like to see. Therefore workers have to market and advertise themselves well on the platform and showing to the customer why they are the perfect guide."* (Platform representative 3)

## 4.2 Characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform

The second category that has originated from the interviews is the *characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform*, which showed to put the emphasis on the reputational data, that accounts for the reputation of a worker on a platform, constitutes one of the three categories of conditions of type 2 and therefore possesses the ability to directly create value, in an epistemic, emotional or functional way for the worker as well as indirectly create monetary value by first creating value for the requester on the target platform.

### 4.2.1 Types of reputational data

The condition *types of reputational data* has been defined by the interviewees as the different types of reputational data that compose the reputation system, which can include comments, badges, performance criteria, star ratings and plain scores. Here, the results have indicated that a strong ability of these described skills does strongly complement and maximize the value that

reputation transfer creates under the conditions of type 2 for the worker on the target platform. For instance, during the interviews it has been stated that textual comments, when being transferred, are more valuable to the worker on the target platform than a star rating. Further, interviewees have stated that in general more effort that has been invested into the creation of the respective type of reputational data on the source platform the more the respective reputational data is of value for the worker on the target platform. On the opposite side, there has not been any finding from the interviews addressing the value destructing potential or the potential to exert a neutral effect on the value that is created by reputation transfer for the worker on the target platform.

*“The most trustable reputation data is the one on a white paper where the customer just writes something, so the more effort the customer puts into the rating, the more reliable it is for me. Clicking a few stars is easier and less valuable than a written out comment.” (Platform representative 4)*

#### **4.2.2 Quality of the reputational data**

The condition quality of the reputational data has been defined in the interviews as the extent to which the accumulated reputational data is perceived as good or bad by the worker, which is based on past performances that have been evaluated by requesters, and accounts for one of the most important conditions in order for reputation transfer to result in the creation of value for the worker, as the interviews have shown. Therefore, when the quality of the reputational data that is being transferred is high/good reputation transfer results in value creation for the worker on the target platform. Oppositely, as the data has shown the condition quality of the reputational data places amongst the conditions that also bear destructive potential for the value that originates from reputation transfer as reputational data that is bad/low in quality will destroy value for the worker on the target platform.

*“When you have a positive track record, it would be beneficial to transfer your reputational data, but when the track record is only more or less positive, people would probably like to have it not taken with them.” (Platform worker 4)*

Besides this, there is one interesting finding which emerged repeatedly and applies to both the condition quality of the reputational data and the following condition quantity of reputational data has shown that an increase in the quality and in the quantity of reputational data both bear economic value for the worker, leading either to higher wages or listing prices and/or leading to easier access to jobs on platforms.

*“What is also interesting here that shows the economic value of reputational data is that workers on our platform are increasing their prices/hour as they gain more and better reputational data.” (Platform representative 3)*

#### **4.2.3 Quantity of reputational data**

The quantity of reputational data, like the quality, constitutes an important condition for value creation for the platform worker and has been defined by the interviewees as the number of times that a requester creates a textual comment, a score, a star rating or any type of reputational data for the worker on the source platform. The results showed that the higher the quantity of reputational data is the more reputation transfer leads to value creation for the worker on the target platform due to the requester experiencing the reputational data as more stable and reliable – and hence as more helpful in his or her decision-making. Addressing the potential negative effects, it was shown in the interviews that a low quantity of reputational data does not lead to destruction of value but to a neutral impact which reputation

transfer ultimately exerts on the value for the worker since the reputational data is considered less significant by the requester.

*“Although, I think having a lot of them is also super important such that the customers recognize sort of a stability and therefore get a more reliable picture.” (Platform worker 4)*

*“Generally, without reputational data on our platform it is just hard to find a job.” (Platform representative 7)*

Furthermore, an interesting correlation was identified in the data, showing that in combination with good-quality reputational data a certain quantity is even necessary to make the requester gain trust such that the good quality reputational data yields value on its own for the worker. That being said, interviews showed that an almost non-existent quantity of reputational data could make the requester think that the reputational data, even though it is of good quality, cannot be trusted and would therefore not lead to any value creation for the worker as the requester does not regard the reputational data as being reliable. Hence the reputational data is not valuable to the requester, and consequently neither to the worker when transferred to the target platform, because then reputation transfer would have a neutral impact on value creation for the worker on the target platform.

*“It is definitely valuable, but only if the amount of people that rated you as worker is big enough for me as customer to trust the ratings” (Platform worker 2).*

#### **4.2.4 Amount of working experience in time**

The amount of working experience in time has been mentioned in the interviews as another somewhat important condition, even though being categorized as significantly less important the quality and the quantity of the reputational data, under which reputation transfer creates value for the worker on the target platform when the amount of working experience in time is high. On the other side, if this condition is low reputation transfer does not add or destroy any further value for the worker on the target platform.

*“Also, my working experience on the platform, because I already work there since they have 2000 employees and now it is 35000, helps me a lot realize these goals.” (Platform worker 1)*

#### **4.2.5 Information about the creator**

The last condition of the *reputational data* category occurred in the form of the information about the creator of the reputational data and was defined in the interviews as the amount of information that is provided by the source platform about the creator(s) of the reputational data and the respective types that make the reputation up. Here, the results have shown that the more information is given in that respect the more value is created for the worker on the target platform by reputation transfer. Oppositely, as with other aforementioned conditions the condition information about the creator bears no potential for the destruction of value but shows to be a neutral impact on the value that is created by reputation transfer for the worker on the target platform.

*“That is why we put the full name of the person that gave the rating, as this increases the trust of the customer as well. Anonymous ratings are worth less, everyone can create them.” (Platform representative 5)*

### **4.3 Characteristics of the transaction on the target platform**

The third category that has originated from the interviews is to be found in the characteristics of the transaction on the target platform constitutes the second category of conditions of type 2 and therefore possesses the ability to directly create value, in an epistemic, emotional or functional way for the worker as well as



indirectly create monetary value by first creating value for the requester on the target platform.

#### **4.3.1 Complexity of the transaction and personal value to the requester**

The condition complexity of the transaction and personal value to the requester came up repeatedly during the interviews and constitutes an important condition with the complexity being defined as the difficulty of the transaction in combination with the extent to which the service of the transaction is handtailored/unique. Here, the results have shown that the more complex and of personal value to the requester the service entailed in the transaction becomes the more value is created by reputation transfer for the worker on the target platform as the increasing complexity leads to an increasing importance of the transaction for the requester such that the requester increasingly wishes to ensure a proper choice of whom to hire. Thus, as with all characteristics of this category, the previous category and the following category monetary value can be created for the worker by reputation transfer on the target platform when value is created beforehand for the requester. On the opposite, as the personal value to the requester and the complexity of the transaction are low the effect of reputation transfer on the value for the worker will be neutral.

*“So I think that the more handtailored and complex the work is, the more you want to know from the potential worker you may choose, so reviews also play a more important role as the task becomes more complex or involves more risk/uncertainty.” (Platform representative 4)*

*“I think it (the importance of reputational data) is dependent on the value and the importance of the task for the requester.” (Platform representative 7)*

#### **4.3.2 Duration of the transaction**

The duration of a transaction is, like its complexity, another condition that is closely connected with complexity and is defined as the time that is necessary for the worker to execute the service entailed in the transaction. It was stated that the longer the duration of the transaction lasts, the more valuable the reputational data becomes to the requester, because the requester increasingly wants to be certain of engaging the right worker as the duration of the assignment increases. Hence the value that reputation transfer creates for the worker also increases when the duration of the transaction increases. On the contrary, again a neutral impact is exerted on the value of reputation transfer for the worker under this condition when the duration of the transaction is low.

*“I mean, when a meal is delivered via a food delivery platform as deliveroo, I would definitely not make the effort and use the reputational data as a criteria for whom to hire, on the other hand it is absolutely key to do so when hiring a worker for a service that is complex in its nature and also an assignment that lasts for a significant amount of time, like someone providing you a graphic design that has taken a few days.” (Platform representative 5)*

#### **4.3.3 Personal interaction during the transaction**

The condition *personal interaction during the transaction* constitutes an important condition for value creation or value destruction for the worker and has been defined in the interviews as the amount and intensity of personal interaction that occurs between the requester and worker during the execution of the service entailed in the transaction. It was stated that the more the personal interaction during the transaction increases, the more

valuable the reputational data becomes to the requester, because the requester increasingly wants to be certain of engaging the right worker. Hence the value that reputation transfer creates for the worker also increases when the duration of the transaction increases. Conversely, if the transaction if there is limited personal interaction, the transfer of reputation will lead to a neutral effect on the value which reputation transfer creates for the worker.

*“Yes I think personal interaction is a very important factor, reputation is definitely more important when personal interaction rises. If you would have a webshop and would send me a product I just bought, I would not give a damn about you because there is no direct personal relationship between us, so I would just order the product with the best price. On the other side, if I as a requester would take a ride with the taxi I would have to sit in a car with you.” (Platform representative 2)*

### **4.4 Characteristics of the target platform**

The forth category that has originated from the interviews is to be found in the characteristics of the transaction on the target platform constitutes the third category of conditions of type 2 and therefore possesses the ability to directly create value, in an epimestic, emotional or functional way for the worker as well as indirectly create monetary value by first creating value for the requester on the target platform.

#### **4.4.1 Selection autonomy for the requester**

The condition *selection autonomy for the requester* came up in almost all the interviews. The condition is defined as the autonomy that is given to a requester by the platform in selecting a worker. Based on what occurred in the data, it was indicated that value creation for the worker on the target platform only takes place when the requester is granted autonomy in selecting whom he or she prefers to engage for the transaction. Conversely, when there is no autonomy given to the requester on the target platform, reputation transfer will neither create nor destroy any value for the worker on the target platform, so again exert a neutral impact.

*“When you cannot choose someone, then you will not even make the decision. When you are not making the decision, you do not need any information that accounts for important criteria, as reputational data. As simple as that.” (Platform worker 3)*

#### **4.4.2 Source target fit**

The source target fit is another repeatedly occurring condition that accounts for an important condition under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for the worker on the target platform. This condition is defined as the fit between the characteristics of the source platform and the target platform, which includes the fit of the respective type of transaction both platforms offer, the industry in which the platform operates and the perceived image of the platform that is to be found in the society. Findings from the interviews indicate that a low fit between source and target platform leads to low value that reputation transfer provides to the worker. Conversely, when the source target fit between the two platforms is high, the value of the reputation transfer for the worker on the target platform is high.

*“But the source target fit does play an essential role, this should not be underestimated. So if the fit is very low, also the value of reputation transfer is low.” (Platform worker 1)*

#### **4.4.3 Reputation system interface design**

The last condition that is found in the interface design of the reputation system, which is defined as how the interface of the reputation system is designed by the developers of the platform

and the reputational data transferred from the source platform is used and displayed to the requester by the target platform. What has been meant here in the interviews is first that the design of the interface of the reputation system can be designed without giving much attention to the interface which is ultimately presented to the requester or it can be extensively and large-scaled designed such that a vast amount of attention is given to the interface such that the presentation of this interface to the likely attracts the requesters' attention more. And second, using and displaying the transferred data: the way in which the transferred reputational data is presented to the requester on the target platform has to be well-structured, easily understandable and coherent to the requester, so that the requester perceives the transferred reputational data as being valuable. Here, the results have shown that the more the two aforementioned aspects, which constitute this condition, are fulfilled the more value is created through reputation transfer for the worker on the target platform.

*"If the reputational data from the original platform can be transferred in a structured and coherent to the target platform then there would probably be a benefit."* (Platform representative 4)

*"And also, very important is that the information is displayed absolutely understandable and structured to the requester. So for example with technical services I as a customer would probably rather need to see criteria like reliability, fair salary, communication abilities rather than criteria that are technically too detailed."* (Platform representative 6)

## 5. DISCUSSION

In this section I will provide a short summary of the research problem to re-highlight the relevance of this research and its results, reflect on my initial theoretical thoughts and discuss the changes in the theoretical framework that have emerged from the results, discuss the implications of the results and present the modified version of the initial theoretical framework.

In the field of study in which this research has been conducted, i.e. the concept of reputation transfer and its potential for value creation for platform workers on online labour platforms, there exists a need for an empirical examination of the conditions under which reputation transfer would be effective (Teubner et. al, 2017). Even though multi-platform usage is fairly common nowadays, and although an apparent economic potential has been identified which reputation has, the reputation on an online labour platform like Airbnb can significantly impact the listing prices (Teubner et. al, 2017). Resulting from this research, several conditions were identified under which reputation transfer creates value or destroys value for platform workers on online labour platforms. The results show that reputation transfer creates or destroys value for the worker on the target platform – the one to which the reputational data has been transferred to – under the following nine conditions, which are divided over three themes: *reputational data from the source platform*, *type of transaction on the target platform* and *target platform characteristics*. Reviewing the initial theoretical framework that was devised to offer a tentative answer to the research question, the results show that it is not a framework consisting of the three categories *worker characteristics*, *platform characteristics* and *requester characteristics*, functioning as the conditions under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for the platform worker. In fact, the results have shown that it is a framework consisting of the four categories: *worker characteristics*, *characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform*, *transaction characteristics on the target platform* and *target platform characteristics*.

Reflecting on my initial theoretical thoughts, what immediately attracts attention are the modifications that have been made to the theoretical framework based on what the results have shown. Here, the most significant modifications are to be found in the removal of the initial *requester characteristics* category, the additions of the two categories *characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform* and *transaction characteristics on the target platform* as well as the addition of another instance in form of different types of value that can be created or destroyed. Further, many more smaller-scaled modifications in the theoretical framework have occurred from the data as for example single characteristics being further split up into other characteristics, single characteristics changing its category, characteristics dropping out and other characteristics becoming incorporated. Requester characteristics appeared to be not as relevant as the characteristics of the transaction on the target platform, in fact a trend occurred in the interviews suggesting that importance is rather attached to the characteristics of the transaction that is exchanged on the target platform since both characteristics of the initial category requester characteristics were frequently mentioned in connection with the characteristics of the transaction on the target platform such that both of the initial characteristics dependency of the requester on the worker and personal interaction transitioned to the category characteristics of the transaction on the target platform. Moreover, the initial characteristic dependency of the requester on the worker has not only moved the category but has also been split up into the three single characteristics: complexity of the transaction, duration of the transaction and transaction's personal value to the requester. Due to that, it can be stated that the dependency of a requester on the worker on the target platform is of such a importance that this dependency has initially been too broad and needed to be split up into the aspects that create the dependency. Nevertheless, the necessary condition of creating value first for the requester and consequently value is created for the worker in order to create monetary value on the target platform shows that requester characteristics are certainly not irrelevant. But this described requester characteristic in fact plays an essential role but cannot be compared with other four groups of characteristics that compose the modified theoretical framework as the requester characteristic essentially accounts for an intermediary condition that only comes into play when potential monetary value is created. However, regarding that monetary value occurred from the interviews to be the most important driver for platform workers the described requester characteristic comes into play extremely often and can be therefore also considered as an important characteristic, but not with the function of a condition but with an intermediary function. Addressing the second addition in form of the category *characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform*, it occurred from the interview data that this category accounts for an essential category that consists of two characteristics that were already incorporated in the initial theoretical framework and of two characteristics that have emerged in the interviews. Here, the initial characteristics diversity of the reputation system, which has initially been categorized under platform characteristics, and quality of source reputation score for transfer, which has initially been a worker characteristic, both moved to the *characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform* category as the results suggested. Regarding the later, this shows that the quality of the reputational data from the source platform is not the only characteristic that has to be considered, thus there is more complexity to it. Next to the quality, also the quantity, the types of reputational data that the reputation on the source platform consists of and amount of information that is provided about the creator of pieces of reputational data is of importance for reputational data to be valuable to the platform worker on the

target platform. Regarding this complexity, it appeared from the results that this complexity accounts for an own category of characteristics rather than being part of the worker characteristics. Moving on to the third crucial modification in our theoretical framework, the extension of a third instance in the form of four different types of value that can occur has been another aspect that occurred frequently during the conduction of the interviews thus the results suggested that a differentiation has to be acknowledged and incorporated into the theoretical framework. This shows that platform worker's motives of using a platform are too diverse to focus only on the concept of value itself rather than different, underlying types with each of the types of value occurring differently often. Moreover, the addition of different types of value has, to a certain extent, ultimately lead to monetary value, which has been called the most amongst the four types of value, being the only type of value that has a different value path which has the value for the requester that then creates monetary value for the worker as a intermediary. Moreover, several smaller-scaled changes that were adjusted in the initial theoretical framework are worth mentioning and discussing. First, the tenure of the worker on the source platform has initially been a fairly important characteristic under the worker characteristics. Though, what occurred from the interviews is that tenure is indeed of importance but again, as with the initial characteristic dependency of the requester on the worker, the characteristic has not been defined in detail properly such that the complexity that accounts for the tenure has not been addressed in accurately. Therefore, the different aspects composing a worker's tenure, which are the quality of the worker's reputational data, the quantity of the worker's reputational data and also the amount of time the worker worked on the source platform, have been identified and categorized as single characteristics under the category of characteristics of the reputational data from the source platform. Thus, tenure does play an essential role but firstly has to be broken down into its components and more importantly is not part of the worker characteristics anymore but falls under the category of reputational data characteristics. However, all characteristics listed under the reputational data characteristics category are essentially worker characteristics as the reputational data is from the worker. Second, a characteristic that emerged in the data collection is the reputation system interface design on the target platform and in a certain way replaced the initial characteristic diversity of a reputation system. Speculating why this is the case, the data suggested that the mere diversity is simply too small-scaled and that it is rather about the diversity of the reputation system but also about the design of the interface of the reputation system, meaning how much attention is given from the developers to the interface that is ultimately presented to the requesters on a platform, the manner in which the transferred reputational data is used and foremost what reputational data is exactly transferred by whom. Here, it appeared from the results that the source platform should transfer the complete raw data that is given in the reputation system on the source platform about the worker to the target platform such that the target platform can use the data in appropriately. Therefore, an important insight from the interviews has been that reputation transfer should be understood in the way that has been just explained. Lastly, reflecting on the initial theoretical thought of reputation functioning as a resource to workers it has been shown in the data reputation is indeed a resource to platform workers, even when there is no pursuing of monetary value. This might be the case because reputation did not only prove its economic potential but it also appeared that reputation bears potential in other ways as for instance functionally such that a worker that only pursues flexibility as a goal of their work on platforms may also regard reputation as a resource or emotionally when a

worker merely strives for the experiences with other human beings in his or her platform work.

Further regarding the implications of the results, it can be stated that the results contribute to a clearer understanding of the concept of reputation transfer and its effectiveness for platform workers on online labour platforms – as a framework of overarching conditions under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for the platform workers on online labour platforms which has been identified and developed. An important finding regarding the results is found in the category worker characteristics as the conditions of this category are required to complement the conditions of the other three categories in order to unleash the maximum of the value creation for the worker. That being said, the reason for this described necessity of unleashing reputation transfer's full value creation potential might be that reputation itself does not possess the ability to achieve access to jobs on platforms, neither does reputation transfer, but in fact the owner of the reputation is required to make use of it. Illustrating this claim with a simple example, when a random person states a goal and possesses resources to achieve that specific goal as for example acquiring an electrical car in order to break a world record in maximum speed, the resources themselves do not achieve the goal but the person making use of the resource does, to my understanding.

Considering recent research and literature in the field of reputation and reputation transfer, these results fit well with existing evidence from current research which has shown that reputation has an economic potential due to the tangible value of reputation, for instance by affecting listing prices on Airbnb (Teubner et. al, 2017), that the use of multiple platforms at the same time is fairly common (Teubner et. al, 2017), that reputation on certain platforms transfers more into economic value than it does on others, depending on the personal interaction and dependencies on the worker (Teubner et. al, 2017) and that a good reputation in the digital world might become more important than money such that reputation equals the single most valuable resource in the gig economy. All the described statements, shown by current research, occurred repeatedly in the data. Finally, the modified version of the theoretical framework has been adjusted, which can be seen in the appendices.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to identify the conditions under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for platform workers on online labour platforms. Therefore, a qualitative study was conducted which showed that the types of reputational data from the source platform, the quality and the quantity of the reputational data from the source platform, the information about the creator of the reputational data from the source platform, the complexity and personal value of the transaction on the target platform, the duration of the transaction on the target platform, the personal interaction during the transaction on the target platform, the fit between the source and the target platform, the selection autonomy on the target platform and the interface design of the reputation system on the target platform – that all these function as conditions under which reputation transfer creates value for the platform worker when the aforementioned conditions are completely, or almost completely, fulfilled, and either destroys value or has a neutral impact on the value for the platform worker when the aforementioned conditions are not fulfilled at all or only to a small extent.

Reflecting on this research, it can be stated that the methodology was well chosen for the scope of this research, as it proved to be effective in finding an answer to the research question. Furthermore, the results matched our expectations to a large extent, as the initial theoretical framework offered to provide a tentative answer to the research question remained in its form but went through a vast amount of significant modifications, with one of the initial categories of characteristics being substituted, one new category being added, a new instance containing different types of value being incorporated, one intermediary being added and one initial category being changed in its function of value creation/destruction. As a result, many of the initial characteristics changed their categorization in the framework.

As far as the limitations of this research are concerned, it has to be stated that the ability to make generalizations is slightly limited by the number of interview participants that were part of my data collection, as data saturation was not attained completely as a result of the 11 interviews that were conducted. Therefore, the ability to make generalizations based on the results could be higher if data saturation had been attained. Nevertheless, as it would not have taken much more to attain data saturation, it can be stated that the results are to be seen as a fairly generalized picture. A second possible limitation might be found in the infamous researcher bias. Due to the fact that I have been

the only person that has analysed the data such that the results of my data analysis naturally cannot be regarded as objective and unbiased as they could be when the results from the data analysis would have been checked by other fellow researchers. However, due to this described limitation of the researcher bias originating from the subjective and biased nature of qualitative research it can be stated that the results of this research are not experiencing any harm.

Regarding opportunities for further research and recommendations, it should now be tested, through quantitative research, how the framework of conditions that resulted from our work can be solidified or extended. Therefore, testing research should try to quantify the findings of this research so that a theoretical base for reputation transfer is developed, which should be then followed by the development of interface designs for reputation systems on online labour platforms.

Returning to the initial research problem, the results of this research led to filling a research gap in the field of study covering *reputation transfer and online labour platforms*, as the conditions under which reputation transfer creates or destroys value for the worker on online labour platforms have not yet been clearly researched.

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## **8. APPENDICES**

### **8.1 Appendix 1: Interview protocols**

#### **8.1.1 Interview protocol for platform workers**

##### 1 Worker characteristics

Why do you work for platform XXX? What benefits / outcomes do you hope to realize through your work as a platform worker?

What do you do and what do you need to maximize / realize these benefits/outcomes?

Does your online reputation on platform XXX help to realize these goals? If so, why (not) and how?

What benefits and disadvantages would reputation transfer to another platform offer platform workers in general and to you as an individual platform worker? Why?

What are the benefits and downsides for you if other workers could take their online reputation from another platform to the one where you are active, if any? Why?

##### 2 Platform characteristics

How does the autonomy that is given to a customer to select a worker influence the importance of reviews?

How important do you think is the diversity of a reputation system, meaning that textual comments, badges and/or star ratings can be part of the reputation system, for reviews to be taken into account when a customer selects a worker?

##### 3 Requester characteristics

How does the customer's dependency on a worker influence the importance of reviews for customers when selecting a worker?

How does the personal interaction between customer and worker influence the importance of reviews for customers when selecting a worker?

#### **8.1.2 Interview protocol for platform representatives**

##### 1 Worker characteristics

1.1 Why do you think are platform workers choosing to work on a platform instead of for a non-platform organization? What benefits / outcomes do you think workers hope to realize through their work as a platform worker?

1.2 What do you think workers need and what do they need to do to maximize / realize these benefits/outcomes?

1.3 Does online reputation on platform XXX help workers to realize these goals? If so, why (not) and how?

1.4 What benefits and disadvantages would reputation transfer to another platform offer platform workers in general? Why?

1.5 What are the benefits and downsides for a worker if other workers could take their online reputation from another platform to the one where he or she is active, if any? Why?

##### 2 Platform characteristics

2.1 How does the autonomy that is given to a customer to select a worker influence the importance of reputation on platforms?

2.2 How important do you think is the diversity of a reputation system, meaning that textual comments, badges and/or star ratings can be part of the reputation system, for reputation to be taken into account when a customer selects a worker?

##### 3 Requester characteristics

3.1 How does the customer's dependency on a worker influence the importance of reputation for customers when selecting a worker?

3.2 How does the personal interaction between customer and worker influence the importance of reputation for customers when selecting a worker?

## 8.2 Appendix 2: Overview of interviewees

Interviewee	Type	Platform(s)	Tenure, if applicable	Gender	Date	Duration
1	Worker	Tamper	Incumbent	M	16/05/2020	00:27
2	Representative	Helping	/	F	19/05/2020	00:17
3	Representative	HihiGuide	/	M	22/05/2020	00:23
4	Representative	EJ/Gignow	/	M	25/05/2020	00:33
5	Representative	Jellow	/	M	02/06/2020	00:25
6	Worker	Fiver	Incumbent	M	02/06/2020	00:18
7	Worker	Uber	Newbie	M	02/06/2020	00:24
8	Representative	Roamler	/	M	03/06/2020	00:32
9	Representative	Tamper	/	F	07/06/2020	00:16
10	Representative	RandstadGroep	/	M	08/06/2020	00:41
11	Worker	Klusheeren	Incumbent	M	08/06/2020	00:15

## 8.3 Appendix 3: Coding overview

### Initial codebook

Code	Subcode	Full name of subcode	Excerpt
Worker characteristic	GPW*	Goal of the platform worker	“The most important benefits are income and freedom/flexibility. Being capable of choosing where you want to work at which time gives you a lot of freedom to make an own schedule through each day.”
Worker characteristic	IMPU*	Interest in multi-platform usage	“The most platform workers are on 1, 2, 3 or even 10 platforms and they are in the database of 3 or 4 intermediaries.f”
Worker characteristic	TP*	Tenure on platform	“Especially since I am an incumbent on Temper and then with the right ratings, that I gained in the beginning of the platform work.”
Worker characteristic	VW*	Value for the worker	“Being capable of choosing where you want to work at which time gives you a lot of freedom to make an own schedule through each day.”
Worker characteristic	SRS*	Source reputation score	“It is also the security that I will have work because of my good reviews, more than one hundred.”
Platform characteristic	DRS*	Diversity of reputation system	“So after all, it is not about reputation but about the insights. So written comments give more insights then plain scores.”
Platform characteristic	SAP*	Selection autonomy provision	“Of course the more authority is given to you in selecting a worker, the more the reputational data becomes important. So when the customer has a lot of authority, of course he bases his decision of whom to hire mainly on the reputational data.”
Requester characteristic	DW*	Dependency of the requester on the worker	“Considering our platform, the dependency on a worker hugely influences the importance of reputation because when the worker does not know anything about the topic of the tour, it is of no use for the requester.”
Requester characteristic	PIWR*	Personal interaction between worker and requester	“So as the personal interaction increases also the importance of reputation increases because you, as a requester, you will put more emphasis on making a

			proper choice, for example when taking a tour at Hihiguide or taking an Uber.”
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### Updated codebook including inductive codes

Code	Subcode	Full name	Excerpt
Worker characteristic	GPW*	Goal of the platform worker	“The most important benefits are income and freedom/flexibility. Being capable of choosing where you want to work at which time gives you a lot of freedom to make an own schedule through each day.”
Worker characteristic	IMPU*	Interest in multi-platform usage	“The most platform workers are on 1, 2, 3 or even 10 platforms and they are in the database of 3 or 4 intermediaries.f”
Worker characteristic	TP*	Tenure on platform	“Especially since I am an incumbent on Temper and then with the right ratings, that I gained in the beginning of the platform work.”
Worker characteristic	VW*	Value for the worker	“Being capable of choosing where you want to work at which time gives you a lot of freedom to make an own schedule through each day.”
Worker characteristic	SRS*	Source reputation score	“It is also the security that I will have work because of my good reviews, more than one hundred.”
Platform characteristic	DRS*	Diversity of reputation system	“So after all, it is not about reputation but about the insights. So written comments give more insights then plain scores.”
Platform characteristic	SAP*	Selection autonomy provision	“Of course the more authority is given to you in selecting a worker, the more the reputational data becomes important. So when the customer has a lot of authority, of course he bases his decision of whom to hire mainly on the reputational data.”
Requester characteristic	DW*	Dependency of the requester on the worker	“Considering our platform, the dependency on a worker hugely influences the importance of reputation because when the worker does not know anything about the topic of the tour, it is of no use for the requester.”
Requester characteristic	PIWR*	Personal interaction between worker and requester	“So as the personal interaction increases also the importance of reputation increases because you, as a requester, you will put more emphasis on making a proper choice, for example when taking a tour at Hihiguide or taking an Uber.”
IP	/	Interaction with the platform	“They need to interact with the platform quite often such that the benefit of flexibility/freedom actually takes effect.”
SP	/	Size of the platform	“Would you rather be on a platform with 10 people or 10,000 people? As a worker you want to be on the best platform and the best is the one where the most action takes place. So you can also see it the other way around.”
TT	/	Type of transaction	“If you are going on a short vacation and make a booking on booking.com the reputation is sufficient to make a choice but when you are going a safari for 3 months with your whole family you are going to ask some friends, go to a travel agency or do some research on your own.”



UI	/	Usage of information	"Further constraints of reputation transfer are what you are going to do with the data? If you put stars on the data from my platform I would not be super happy. So the differences in reputation systems plays a role too."
IRC	/	Information about the creator of the reputational data	"That is why we put the full name of the person that gave the rating, as this increases the trust of the customer as well. Anonymous ratings are worth less, everyone can create them."
EC	/	Enhanced competition	"I think this is called competition. This is life. I think that is a disadvantage but I do not complain about it."
STF	/	Source target fit	
QRD	/	Quality of the reputational data	"Further, it is also the security that I will have work because of my good reviews, more than one hundred."
WEP	/	Working experience in time on the platform	"Also, my working experience on the platform, because I already work there since they have 2000 employees and now it is 35000, helps me a lot realize these goals."
DI	/	Displaying of information	"And also, very important is that the information is displayed."
PI	/	Platform's influence on matching	"So I think also the platform itself wants to match requesters with the workers with the best rating possible in order to make sure that the exchange that happens between requester and worker is likely to be a seamless exchange."

All codes marked with \* indicate that they have been generated in an inductive way.

## 8.4 Appendix 4: Updated version of the theoretical framework

