

Chapter 12

Riders' Participation in the Ride-Hailing Sector of the Gig Economy

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on riders (consumers) who use the Uber ride-hailing application as a gig platform for accessing transportation services, thereby assigning drivers the task of transporting them from one location to another. Respondents were sampled using a multiple sampling approach comprising convenience, random, and purposive sampling. 20 out of 40 respondents were purposely selected for in-depth interviewing and thematic analysis. The findings suggest that riders found the platform to offer both personal and shared convenience, cost and time saving, as well as trustworthiness. The platform also substituted the means of finding transportation for some of the riders, while for other riders it complemented their means of finding transportation. With these findings, this study contributes to the few scholarly studies that have sought to explore, in detail, user perceptions on gig platforms from a developing economy context and provides stimulating insights on the gig economy and its adoption in developing economies.

INTRODUCTION

On-the-demand jobs are emerging and growing rapidly in developing countries (O'Sullivan & Shiffrin, 2003). More recently, the advancement in technology otherwise seen as the 'digital revolution' using digital platforms has influenced the way job seekers and employers negotiate for work in what is now known as the 'gig' economy (Brinkley, 2016). The term "gig(s)" was initially used in the 1920s in the music industry to refer to 'one-time' music performance (Zumbrun & Sussman, 2016). However, it is now actively used in the employment and labour sector in reference to technology-facilitated short-term consultative tasks that are performed on a project-by-project basis (Cutter, Litan, & Stangler, 2016; Kes-

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sler, 2014; Manyika, Lund, Robinson, Valentino, & Dobbs, 2015). Instead of signing long-term contracts, workers are independent and self-employed, engaging with firms only on a temporary or short-term basis. This implies that the new generation of gig work is not distinguished by the type of work or skill set but rather by the nature of the underlying work relationship (Friedman, 2014). The gig economy is seen to be making inroads in a number of sectors. These include (i) the field of computer and information technology (where jobs are done in web and software development, computer programming and graphic designing), (ii) media and communications (where technical writers, interpreters, translators, musicians, and photographers are hired) and (iii) the transportation and dispatch sector (where there are services such as Uber, Deliveroo and Foodora) (Torpey & Hogan, 2016).

On the part of employers, the gig economy aided by digital platforms present an opportunity to access a broader number of prospective job seekers, to speed up the hiring process and more importantly to reduce the cost of hiring workers (Broughton, Gloster, Marvell, Green, Langley & Martin, 2018). These ever-evolving benefits in employing and working gigs supported by technology (online platforms) have become vastly widespread, and many persons seeking to employ or to be employed are taking advantage of this opportunity to hire and be hired respectively. As with all peer-to-peer platforms of which the gig economy is included, there are generally three actors in the ecosystem; The (1) riders (consumers), (2) drivers (service providers) and (3) market aggregator (the digital platform) (Brinkley, 2016). However, this chapter focuses on only one of the actors; riders (consumers) on the Uber platform.

In this regard, this chapter by way of purpose seeks to explore, qualitatively, riders' perceptions of their use of the Uber ride-hailing application as a gig economy platform for accessing transportation in Ghana. Specifically, the chapter addresses the following questions:

1. What is the perception of riders on the nature of the ride-hailing sector of the gig economy in Ghana?; indicating the forms of digital technologies used by riders as well as riders' characteristics and;
2. What are riders' perceptions of the motivations and outcomes of participating in the ride-hailing sector of the gig economy in Ghana?

The next section of this chapter provides a background on how the gig economy has been defined. Following this section is a section that discusses how digital platforms aid the gig economy and also touches on the various ways the gig economy has been categorised. Next is a discussion of the benefits and challenges of the gig economy. Following this section is a presentation of the research problem, followed by a section that presents the analytical framework employed in this research. Then is the section which presents the methods employed for data collection and analysis. Next is a presentation of the findings and analysis of the research and then a discussion of the findings. Next is a presentation of the implications and recommendations for future research and finally, a conclusion of the chapter.

BACKGROUND

Defining the Gig Economy

The concept of Online labour is fast becoming an economic phenomenon and thus, will shape how work is done in the future for both developed and developing countries (Heeks, 2017). In the basic form of

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