

Platform work – empowering or exploiting the labourers?

A Case Study of Taxify: An analysis of the relationship between the company and
its labourers

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PLATFORM WORK – EXPLOITING OR EMPOWERING THE LABOURERS? A
CASE OF TAXIFY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMPANY
AND ITS LABOURERS

ABSTRACT

The people's need and dependence for community has led to a sharing economy in which underused resources or leisure time are monetised. This new type of economy has brought on the growth of the digital labour platforms that offer sharing solutions in various fields. For instance, it has created a ridesharing and providing trend. Apps like Uber offer seemingly easy options to earn money yet have regulations that make the labour conditions very precarious for the workers who are providing gigs for the companies. Many scholars have conducted studies about sharing economy and digital labour phenomena yet the current research on transportation sector lacks information from the labourers' side. This empirical study dives into the transportation platform work and tries to uncover what is the relationship between Taxify, a ridesharing app, and its drivers. To what extent are the labourers exploited by the company and why? In order to answer the research question and sub-questions a qualitative research design was chosen. A case study method was chosen to analyse the relationships between the company and the employees, as well as, to understand the role of a digital labourer by looking into how the structuring of Taxify works. A thematic analysis was conducted based on the 100 latest posts from four different Facebook groups, in addition to two focus groups in which Taxify and the drivers were interviewed separately. The study revealed quite a lot of new information in regards of how the workers perceive the gig labour and their work conditions. Contrarily to the previous literature on the matter, this research showed that the drivers have a neoliberal view of the job and believe themselves to be responsible for their success. The relationship that Taxify has with its drivers can mainly be explained as transparent and supportive. The analysis showed no existence of exploitation and revealed that the drivers perceive Taxify's treatment as fair. The main reason for the misconception surrounding the treatment of drivers might be caused by the fact that the regulations seem to leave all the responsibility on the drivers while the company actually has many positive activities that are not written down and announced to the larger public.

KEYWORDS: *Taxify, Platform work, Digital labour, Gig economy, Precarious labour*

1. Introduction

The life in year 2018 can be compared to the Soviet era when sisters would pass down their clothes or bikes to their younger siblings because they had not enough money to buy new things for every family member. Or ladies from the same apartment building who would drive to work together to save money on fuel. Only now the situation is not as much based on the economic difficulty. It is about sharing underused resources, creating a sustainable society and democratising choice.

The growth of information technology has expanded into all areas, making more products, services and solutions available online daily. And the hyper-consumption that the technology development has caused has also created the gig and the sharing economy - a situation in the society where sharing resources has become the new norm. For instance, selling the items you no longer need to someone who does (i.e. Ebay) or sharing a car ride home through platforms like Uber or Lyft. These activities have given a whole new income category known as the “side hustle,” which means that people are earning money for example through ride-, house- and skill-sharing sites (McDermott, 2017). Technology has changed many traditional concepts of how things in life are supposed to be done, or have been done for a long time. Employment fields are changing fast, making digital labour a new reality. Digital labour is a term understood as any kind of human activity production that involves the use of digital technologies (Chandler & Munday, 2016). With such innovations in the workplace, new challenges arise, and the managers, as well as the workers have to learn to re-examine and re-negotiate these new pathways.

Critics of digital labour have indicated that even though the workers have become important in the new media landscape, their individual autonomy and freedom are compromised. So, while companies start to design their work environment around gig economy workers, the more likely it is that the labourers will be exploited, as the lines between professional and personal are getting blurred. People in the sharing economy are often unaware of how they are being exploited. Thus, companies can use people’s personal ambitions and leisure activities to earn money in this digital economy (Kvasny, 2013). The capitalist development’s gains of productivity may have conquered scarcity and therefore made global communism a real possibility (Fuchs, 2014). In other words, companies that are making the personal property the

community's property and using it according to the "needs" of society are the definition of global communism.

While there are valuable and tangible benefits for many workers, there are however a variety of challenges and costs that excessively affect the digital labourers means of income (Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017). Therefore, a good comprehension of the relationship between exploitation and oppression can introduce important new methods about digital capitalism, like how to provide insights about the reality of unpaid labour in capitalism (Fuchs, 2017). Researchers like Fuchs and Scholz have revived communism and Marxism applying it to areas such as digital labour and gig economy. However, there is sparse empirical evidence on these ideologies, and thus this thesis will use the empirical data to analyse to what extent is the exploitation really happening.

Even though the gig economy platforms create new "peer marketplaces," they may also be utilised to evade employment regulation by having informal operations in traditionally regulated markets. The ride-sharing app Uber has had similar problems. Uber's drivers complain about having to pay for their gasoline and other vehicle related costs while Uber can terminate them without warning (Aloisi, 2016). Uber has become polarising in recent times alienating almost everyone else besides venture capital firms. Taxi drivers consider Uber as an unsafe and rapacious competitor causing lawmakers to close down certain markets (Rogers, 2016). In addition to causing discontent among its drivers that led to protests, due to unfair treatment and the company not taking responsibility for its employees, their own media statements have been ridiculed. A *Slate* journalist who was writing a story on Uber's claim that its Average New York City driver earns \$90,000 per year found it so difficult to verify, so she captioned her article "In Search of Uber's Unicorn" (Griswold, 2014). As Uber's labour discontent has become so widespread it is worth examining similar companies and their labour relations and communication with their workers to gauge the perception of the employees and strategies on what counts as fair labour today.

Different online forums and Facebook groups are very relevant to companies like Uber, because these are the platforms where the labourers discuss their issues and where they come together as a less regulated version of a union. So far, much of the previous scholarship has focused on researching labour laws (Aloisi, 2016), company structures and policies, as well as the labourers' communication about the firm (Rogers, 2016). Thus, the company and the

employees have been two separate parts. This study is looking at the relations of those two parts, trying to shed more light on the extent to which the gig economy of the transportation sector is empowering or exploitative.

The central theme of this study will surround the employees of Taxify - who are digital workers much like in Uber. Using Taxify allows you to hail taxis using an app based on GPS coordinates, while also GPS tracking the journey and offering an easy and automatised payment system. Its system is actually built up relatively similarly to Uber with the exception that the drivers work for Taxify and drive the company cars. Taxify also assures that their drivers get continual training and education (Hackwill, 2016). Their mission is to expand Taxify's services to more areas around the world and provide a trustworthy, affordable and convenient ride with a tap of a button (Treija, 2016). They appear to have recognised Uber's mistakes and have shaped their business model as an alternative to this major competitor. In some markets Taxify's rates are higher than Uber's, but they believe to have a winning strategy: "be nice to drivers" (Chutel, 2016). Following this example there are many different reasons why the seemingly similar company appears to be an emerging competition in this gig economy in the transportation sector. The company's foreign investments, such as China's Didi, will help to expand Taxify's presence in different regions and to develop smarter products (Russell, 2017). Simply said, Taxify's business revolves around these workers - if they have no drivers then the business model does not exist. Which is why Taxify makes an interesting case study and provokes us to ask an essential question of whether Taxify can serve as a genuine alternative in the gig economy of the transportation sector. To reify this broad enquiry, I ask the following questions:

RQ: What is the relationship between Taxify and its drivers? To what extent are the labourers exploited by the company and why?

The company has said to have a strategy that entails for them to be nice to drivers (Chutel, 2016), this study will try to find out whether that is the case or are the employees being exploited, similarly to Uber. By looking further into the company's strategies, policies and internal communication their concept of digital labour is going to be unpacked.

Sub-Q1: What kind of labor policies does Taxify have in place to avoid labour exploitation?

Sub-Q2: What kind of communication strategies does Taxify have with their drivers?

Sub-Q3: How do Taxify drivers perceive the treatment they get from the company, do they believe the treatment is “fair” and what are the reasons given?

Sub-Q4: How does the temporary digital work provided by Taxify impact drivers’ lives? How do they perceive this ‘gig’ labour?

Previous research in terms of digital labour and the gig economy has focused on the consumers and looking at what their needs, opinions or expectations are. Aloisi (2016) discovered labour law issues that were arising from gig economy platforms: while those platforms foster productivity, the company shifts the business risks to workers who are often paid rates near the minimum wage. Research has also looked at Uber’s influences on the society, including employees merely as one part of it without going deeper into the subject (Rogers, 2016).

The studies that have focused on digital labourers provide a variety of theoretical knowledge, leaving much room for empirical data on the workers perspective. a few empirical studies look at areas such as labour conditions of Uber (Prassl & Risak, 2016) lawsuits and dynamics of the sharing economy in the transportation sector (Cherry, 2016). Hence, this research intends to fill the gap in the literature by providing an empirical study from the labourers’ point of view on what constitutes as fair labour in today’s digital economy by looking at the relationship between the labourers and the company.

There have been many studies about large businesses like Uber or Airbnb. Although they are market leaders or innovators, choosing a company that is active in a similar field on a distant market provides a more interesting and diverse insight into the same business world. Thus, Taxify, a competitor of Uber and founded in Estonia was chosen for this study. Estonia is said to be revolutionary in its pursuit of the Technology Dollar, as they are one of the leading countries in digital technology. In addition to leading the way in NATO’s Cyber defence (Grove, 2017), Estonia has a vast list of online solutions: launching an e-residency initiative in 2014, using e-voting since 2005, providing online tax returns in matter of 3 minutes, when mentioning just a few. Estonia will possibly be the first European country to regulate and legalise ride-sharing

services (Munford, 2017). Assumedly having such an e-environment makes it easy for innovative digital labour companies to come to life, such as Taxify.

The case study would focus primarily on the employees - the drivers - who are providing the service. Showing the drivers' perceptions and experiences in addition to the perception of how the company thinks the situation looks like. Using this new information, big changes can be made by future companies. Furthermore, it provides information on how to create genuine alternatives to Uber that would be less exploitative and fairer to its workers. This would provide some initial solutions to the current problem in the transport sector of the gig economy.

As this is a case study research it will focus on the company Taxify. For obtaining data valuable to this research Taxify's staff and drivers based in the Estonian market will be interviewed and their most active communication channels analysed. Taxify has agreed to participate in the interviews, as well as giving access to certain forums that are otherwise exclusive only to the company and the drivers. That will provide insight to the relationship that takes place between Taxify and the drivers to find solutions to the proposed research questions.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss the main theories regarding the field of the study: gig and sharing economy, digital labour, labour exploitation and lastly global communism and the precariat. Introducing the setting and industry first and then going in more detail in sub-chapters to show what other topics and issues are related to it. Providing a good basis of what kind of research has already been done and what are the findings of them. It also introduces concepts, such as digital labour and global communism that may have an influence on the study's findings as well.

2.1 Gig and Sharing Economy in the transport sector

Now a distinguished example – this new sharing economy empowered by innovative technology provides a new way of conducting a business (Barry & Caron 2015-2016). The world has now become highly connected through the mobile collaboration, through which it can find and reach anyone at any time by simply using a phone (McDermott, 2017). The employment rules are changing and companies are depending more on short-term contract workers (Zwick, 2017) who usually take on the job as a 'side hustle' to enhance their regular income (McDermott, 2017). Schor (2016) found that all sharing economy platforms effectively create "markets in sharing" by making exchanges. Nevertheless, the necessity for a platform to make profit impacts *how* the sharing takes place and *how much* of the revenue is assigned to management and owners. The organisations hire labourers under the label of independent contractors to cut costs, when various indicators actually expose a masked employment relationship between the two parties (Aloisi, 2016). The ongoing debate sees sharing economy as a controversial phenomenon. It is said to use innovative digital technologies and empower people (Schor, 2016), while the critics claim that the unregulated field will bring about labour exploitation, precarious 'gigs' and disruption (Zwick, 2017). In the "gig economy" firms who are matching labour supply and demand are on the rise (Aloisi, 2016). The growth of information technology platforms has notably accelerated this trend over the past decade (Zwick, 2017). People with a particular type of entrepreneurial character stand out in this competitive environment who are smart and uncannily persistent to get what they want (Stone, 2017). But the actions of these ever-changing determined people also influence their business, as they are the ones who run it. The innovative and possibly complicated ways to generate profit might not suit well with labourers who are

looking for a flexible way to have additional income. If the entrepreneurs are so focused on achieving success then how are those platforms treating the gig workers?

Uber has mastered the neoliberal playbook by having the driver tacitly consent to the terms and conditions by using the software, however, that automatically includes them not being an employee of Uber – who is signing their paycheck (Zwick, 2017). Sharing economy has many broad categories but this study will focus on the transportation sector. The sharing of assets has been taking place for a long time (i.e public buses, airlines or car and bicycle rentals) but what stands out now is how the new sharing economy is using the latest information technology inventions to provide innovative sharing solutions (Barry & Caron 2015-2016)

The supporters of the sharing economy claim that the new technologies will yield highly positive outcomes, such as empowerment of people, earning additional resources through “side hustle”, efficiency, and even lower carbon footprints. This can have positive changes by offering more training to the knowledge workers to have a career without boundaries (Cherry, 2016). Yet, the real situation is more complicated. It might also entail compromising a person’s autonomy or freedom, exploitation and no job security to mention a few. For sites like Lyft or Uber, being a driver will limit your personal freedom, as the working hours are far from regular, often suggesting drivers to fulfil their quotas by having nightshifts. Or having an ever-present reminder that the company can easily fire them at any time with almost no consequences. And while the for-profit firms may be making wrongful moves, the new technologies used for the peer-to-peer economic activity are influential tools for creating a sharing and cooperation centred social movement (Schor, 2016). Zwick (2017) discusses how sharing economy entities are just the latest set of companies to put the neoliberal playbook into practice by (mis)classifying workers, engaging in regime shopping and employing the most economically vulnerable, instead of creating a new world of work. The innovative digital transformation of work makes way to a rising automatic management changing the work to an even more precarious state (Cherry, 2016). Thus, they do provide a service for the company’s clients but they do not receive any benefits that employees have (i.e. healthcare coverage). This, according to him, results in replacing middle-class employment with precarious ‘gigs’ that do not entail legal protections and benefits. The situation has gotten a lot of attention in the U.S where litigations are taking place, aiming to understand if the platform labourers should be taken as employees or independent contractors (Cherry, 2016).

Another aspect not to be overlooked when dealing with the transport sector is the lack of diversity. The number of women participating in the labour market has been growing globally since the second World War, when the women who were left behind had to make a living in order to support their families. Nevertheless, there is still a clear distinction of the type of jobs men and women have, as well as a solid pay gap due to the occupational segregation by gender. In the UK only 22 percent of workers in the transport and storage sector are women, and the number has not showing any changes in the past two decades (Wright, 2016). The gender disparity situation within the taxi companies might have previously been related to personal preference or choice (i.e. unsecure position, irregular hours) yet the platform labour has changed that. The drivers can choose which clients' rides they accept and during what time they work. Thus, the new technology has also given opportunities for women to move into the sector they might have previously avoided. It is especially important to include women in the conversation, as Eurostat (2018) announced in March 2018 that Estonia has the largest gender pay gap in Europe. The main reason behind the gender wage gap is said to be caused by occupation and industry effects (Blau, Kahn & National Bureau of Economic Research, 2016). This study is focusing on a company in the transport sector that already indicates a male dominant scene, which is why it was made sure that there would be women included in this study's sample.

Companies often make aggressive moves from which it can be assumed that ethical behaviour is not their first priority. But those moves are rarely exposed to the (possible) employees. For instance, Uber shows a gentle image to the world that David Ploffe, Obama's campaign manager, helped to manage. When in reality their behaviour is not a gentle as they portray it (i.e. recruiting its competitors' drivers) (Schor, 2016). As the relations between the company and the labourers are often complex and involve different issues, this research tries to clarify the reasons behind this situation and discover if exploitation takes place or not. And if not, then what actions is the company taking to avoid exploitation and how do they treat their digital labourers.

2.2 Digital labour

Fuchs (2014) defines digital labour separate from digital work and as something that is an alienated form of work where people do not control and own the means and results of production. It is also said to increase flexibility for businesses as it creates the connection between the specific work and available independent workers. In a way, the firms and workers

select each other (Aloisi, 2016). The rise of digital work has also created a possibility that not only capital, but also labour can compete in a global market. The use of digital labour platforms is growing globally by 25 per cent a year (Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017). Digital labour platforms are now considered to be alternatives to traditional employment, in which firms seek to find hidden talents from the crowd (Kvasny, 2013). They are also used as an economic development strategy to create jobs in areas of need (Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017). On one side, there is the digital work that labourers complete online, mostly micro tasks on different platforms for companies like Amazon. On the other side is the digital labour field where people are taking on services in real life where they are offline and have direct relations with the customers (Prassl & Risak, 2016). Researchers have also tried to understand how to conceptualise the real-time surveillance of users' activity on the platforms that is collected and sold as data to advertisers (Fuchs & Musco, 2015) This is considered unpaid digital labour where people participate mostly without their own knowledge.

The digital platforms (i.e. Uber) see themselves as digital agents who connect customers and independent contractors. While their terms and conditions are different their common aim is the denial of the worker status (Prassl & Risak, 2016). According to the current state of the world's society flexibility is seen as an indication of prosperity with one downside – precariousness (Miller, 2010). The work has changed into a commodity where the workers are transformed into a 'computation service' (Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017). The continuous economic and legal instability are the cause of the bargaining power's significant disproportion, as the majority of digital workers have poor working conditions with low wages and barely regulated employment regulations (Prassl & Risak, 2016). The workers are always available in case there is a need and the firm only pays if they are satisfied with the results (Kvasny, 2013).

While the industry fosters productivity, uncertainty and insecurity are the price for extreme flexibility (Aloisi, 2016). In this situation, the added pressure of work insecurity leads to a state where many people find it hard to envision their future (Gill, 2014). What is more, when Rogers (2016) discusses the implication companies like Uber can have on the future of low-wage work the results are unsettling. He proposes that similar platforms will take over the jobs from other low-wage workers (i.e. deliverymen, supermarket clerks, etc.). As the digital labour field is complex and the communication strategies are playing an important role between the company and the labourer, they need further investigation, which is what this study is trying to do. The

companies are also so far portrayed as greedy, while leaving the labourers without the necessary support. It is important to understand what perception do the workers have of the company and whether the treatment is considered to be fair or not. In order to do that, this study first looks into the communication between the drivers and the company, to understand how the two sides interact with each other. This will give insights about the attitudes, possible exploitation, loyalty and overall relations. In general, the previous studies have emphasised on the communication before, it has mostly been discussed as a method for giving different tasks or hiring new ‘employees’.

2.3 Labour exploitation

Numerous companies are rapidly increasing their profits through the use of new technologies that let them cut transaction costs and contain fixed costs by outsourcing the workforce (Aloisi, 2016). Van Doorn (2017) argues that the labour platforms should be considered as new players in the temporary staffing industry, as their devices and practices aggravate the already precarious terms of freelancers in today’s low-income service economy. They exacerbate the conditions by strengthening the *immunity* of platform intermediaries and clients, by increasing managerial *control* over workers and by arranging a pervasive sense of unviability and superfluity with respect to this workforce (Van Doorn, 2017).

The new tools that technology has created now allow companies to divide a list of jobs into many different detached tasks. These assignments can be given to “on-demand” workers when the company needs to deal with them. Those strategies may transform into a way of circumventing the employment laws. Thus, researchers have said that the new digital technologies have exploitative tendencies that resemble the ones which already were pre-eminent a century ago (Aloisi, 2016). In platform labour, inequality is considered “a feature rather than a bug.” (Van Doorn, 2017, p. 907) The working conditions are known to be challenging for many and it is difficult to bring about change, since those workers do not have a union to represent them or organising power to stand up for themselves (Prassl & Risak, 2016). As platform labour exists in a world that is established by capitalist values, it thus depends entirely on the gendered and racialised inferiority of low-income workers, the unemployed and the unemployable (Van Doorn, 2017). The field is based on the labourers, who produce the commodities but are working under unregulated terms, and are thus easily misused. Not much is known on Uber’s longer-term impact on labour standards, nevertheless, it might have more universal negative consequences

for the future of low-wage workers (Rogers, 2016). Similar companies may share the same negative implications.

If a person is part of the social or collective work force who produces commodities then they consequently are thus exploited and productive (Fuchs, 2014). The innovative ways of flexible work that manage to evade employer responsibilities create a situation in which the “worker’s rights are often theoretical” (Gleeson, 2016). As digital labour still lacks enough regulations which due to added pressures of the international competition and unorganised workplaces creates “digital slaves” working in their “virtual sweatshops” (Prassl & Risak, 2016). The sharing economy is enabled through the global exploited labour, as the economy is made of using the combination of: the “free” corporate digital media (i.e. digital labour on Facebook), the slave labour of people of colour who extract minerals to produce hardware, the highly exploited industrial labourers in Asia who assemble the tools, low-paid knowledge workers from third world countries, highly paid Western engineers and the precarious service of data processors in the knowledge industry. All of these exploited labour forms rely on each other and are essential for generating profits in the industry (Fuchs, 2014), as the full product cannot be made when there is a gap in the previously described labour chain. The previous example shows that the exploited labour forms rely on each other and that the work is done in order to serve the overall good of the community. Since the global workers are employed to produce goods for the general public worldwide, it is once again a definition of communism. It also proves that communism is not our distant past, but exists to a certain degree in each society (Fischer-Blaess and Fuchs, 2014).

2.3.1. Precarious labour

Precarious labour also known as precarious employment that is un-certain or not permanent type of employment, where the labourers have temporary or part-time contracts, that are not completely regulated by labour laws and policies (Cranford, Vosko, & Zukewich, 2003). Precarious work is considered to be a trend that keeps growing in the Western world, especially among the young people aged between 15-24 years (Morgan, Wood, & Nelligan, 2013). Precarity and non-standard work contracts are frequently looked upon as one yet it is important to mention that not all non-standard contracts are precarious, as well as not all regular jobs are secure (Doellgast, Lillie & Pulignano, 2018). While the precarious conditions have now become a standard in different fields they still have great impact on the workers: the non-existent social security benefits and the absence of sick pay or pension cause foremost anxiety (Gill,

2014). Someone can take a calculated risk which can be a burden of labour for another where the eminent inequality is shown as a consequence of ethics, while the young should just take the instability as an opportunity instead of a limitation (Miller, 2010). These largely undocumented workers have a difficulty dealing with injustices as they do not have the common right of employees. Thus, issues like women's pay inequality, racial discrimination and discrimination of LGBT workers are taking place with a higher probability (Gleeson, 2016).

Freelancers, who are known as independent contractors dealing with short-term jobs with various clients and whose wage depends on a project, are also part of the precarious labour market (Kuhn, 2016). Being participants of the gig economy they have been part of some recently conducted studies to shed more light to the situation that is currently controversial. For instance, Gill (2014) created an overview of cultural labour to discuss freelancing in terms of labour, power, privilege and exploitation. Interestingly enough, this categorisation of being a freelancer is portrayed differently to the labourers that were previously discussed. According to the current scholarship freelancers are seen as talented individuals who are considered to be more alike to entrepreneurs (Born & Witteloostuijn, 2013). Since most of those workers are highly skilled, and although working on projects for different companies, their employer remains the same, as they are independent contractors. This surprising because the politicians and activists have so far portrayed the gig economy workers rather like susceptible labourers instead (Kuhn, 2016). At the same time, there are sources that tend to agree with the latter view, measuring influences that this lifestyle brings about. The cultural freelancers live by the saying 'you cannot say no to a job', which has made the work central to their life while negatively affecting other parts like their personal life (Gill, 2014). In addition, international studies have found that the precarious labour conditions have a global pattern and is repeating itself all over the world (Curtin & Sanson, 2016). What might also be essential in this discussion is the term *freelancer*. It seems that for some researchers it embodies a more stable position than that of a regular gig worker. Which on the one hand could be true, as they often have actual contracts for those short-term projects while the other digital labourers who are signed up for a transport platform, such as Lyft, can be fired at any time.

To conclude, the job exploitation mainly takes place due to the lack of regulations, not only between the company and the employees but for the employees themselves as well. For instance, different groups in Germany have been successfully fighting precarity by creating trade

unions that build and maintain the workers power (Doellgast, Lillie & Pulignano, 2018). Thus, it is of utmost importance to find out to what degree does the precarious labour exist in case of Taxify and its drivers. Since, there is more that needs to be done in order to understand how gig economy and digital labour are influencing the workers' lives. This study hopes to discover some of those influencing factors.

2.3.2. Immaterial labour

The concept of immaterial labour first came about in the early nineteenth century by Henri Storch that was later frequently used by Marx and restated as a type of work that produces goods that are not material, such as communication or information (Haug, 2009). While many have related it to the creative industry or knowledge workers, it is also much used when talking about freelancers. The mental activity in immaterial labour is personalised in contrast to industrial labour where it was mainly a theoretical part of the general labour force (Hesselberth, 2017), which makes the field complex and hard to regulate. A lot of the previous research about immaterial labour has mainly focused on it in abstract sense taking it as simply a process of capitalist exploitation (Zhongxuan, 2018). This direction is not very helpful, as it is too late to discuss whether this kind of economy should or should not exist while dissecting its pitfalls. In order to make a contribution to the digital field it is important to look into ways to make sure that the labourers will be able to access decent work and have social protection when conducting platform work (De Stefano, 2016). After all, platforms can actually improve the life quality and be part of the economical growth when controlled instead of increasing discrimination and economic instability (Dobson, 2016).

Zhongxuan (2018) however gathered knowledge by conducting case studies in Macao to learn about the relations between exploitation and empowerment in the digital immaterial labour. And thus, that study introduced innovative information about the field showing that the digital media produced by immaterial labourers makes them withstand mainstream media better. It also creates their own community with a feeling of family and belonging, resulting in positive personal feelings and gives them a different approach to "being-in-the-world" during the digital media era. Economists have previously discovered that people who have regular jobs but are earning substantial amount of income by being gig workers do not distinguish it as a second job (Kuhn, 2016). The situation is also difficult as it is almost impossible to define productivity in immaterial labour because the subject matter of labour becomes mental that therefore makes it

hard to define the production limits (Hesselberth, 2017). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that for the gig workers to have decent labour conditions the gigs they do on platforms must be considered as work (De Stefano, 2016).

In order to understand the new world of digital immaterial labour better, many researchers across the world have tried to create different methods to analyse its effects. “Digital unhu” is a tool based on the Zimbabwean immaterial labour, which is made to help interpret the affective driving force behind the digital networks, like wish to connect, meet new people and create one’s persona inside a community. It has three main parts that focus on merging traditional history and behaviour with novel technological solutions, highlighting cooperation and community and lastly, strategies of mobility (McClune, 2018). This framework might be useful for this and future research elsewhere than in Africa as well, since it provides neutral yet important categories for studying the topic. Where the research subject can then determine if the categories in the particular immaterial labour situation are negative and/or positive, as well as bringing out the consequences.

2.4 Global Communism and the Precariat

According to another critical view by Scholz (2012) in “Marxist Theory of the Internet” notes that the social web is based on the communism’s three main elements - cooperative forms of production, common control of the means of production and well-rounded individuality. Fuchs (2017) states that digital data commodity is gendered and racialised, as capitalism in character is essentially patriarchal and racist using ideology and discrimination to deepen exploitation and domination.

Due to the recent economic crises and the rising income gap between the rich and the poor, the dark side of the capitalism is now known worldwide (Žižek, 2008). Scholarship has suggested that the instability of the digital labour shows signs of a digital version of Taylorism (i.e. the efficient exploitation and expropriation). Meaning that the exploitation can bring about harm to security, education, and skill development of those workers (Aloisi, 2016). Resulting in a renewed interest of Marxist theories, as neoliberalism is not seen as common sense anymore (Žižek, 2010). Researchers have brought up a need to establish “a democratic form of communism as an alternative to capitalism.” (Firer-Blaess and Fuchs, 2014, p. 3).

Global communism is a form of communism on an international scope where the community owns all property and each person has to contribute and receive in accordance with

their capabilities and necessities (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). Where the long-term goal is a global stateless communist society for the world (Oxford Handbooks, 2013). Even though, the concept does not have a very positive history due to the monstrosities that communists, such as the Soviet Union leaders created, there is currently a strong romanticism with the global communism concept as its being applied to the digital labour scholarship. This study will use its empirical evidence to see how the global communism theory actually plays out through the perceptions of the workers themselves on what constitutes as a fair society. As this is an ongoing debate in the digital labour field, it will also be included as one of the key debates in this thesis.

Based on the previous theoretical topics one of the major criticism of the transportation apps (i.e. Uber) have is their precarity of labour – the gig economy, the insecurity and the lack of power these drivers seem to have. One of the most prominent forms of precariousness the digital labourers are facing is taking on the risk and responsibilities that are shed by the employers (Graham, 2016). Which has led to global capitalism needing a workforce – the precariat – working class with precarious jobs without any predictability or security (Standing, 2015). What is more, since the precariat does not have a certain occupation or career, it also creates an *existential* insecurity (Standing, 2016). What in the past was the life of musicians and artists who were rather creating their pieces and being independent instead of having a stable job has now become a standard way of working in almost every economy sector (Miller, 2010).

There are many questions that are surrounding the topic of the precariat. Frase (2013) brings out the three most dominant ones: is there a certain way to show that the work has become more precarious in the recent times? Do the precarious labour providers have a certain distinction to be unified under one class? And if precarity is indeed on the rise, what consequences will it have on the demands and tactics of the precariats and their employers? Starting off with the first question, relying on the previous subchapters of this theoretical framework, it can surely be said that there are many new ways which have made the work more hazardous. The variously wide possibilities that the digital workplace offers comes with additional precarious factors. While offering additional flexibility, it has been shown from the examples of Uber how an employer can easily let the precariat go and how they do not have enough power to then fight such a big organisation. Secondly, when looking at different workers in the sharing economy they all have commonalities yet that would rather be a basis for a political identity than an economic class. Since being a class – according to Karl Marx and Max Weber – means to have a certain position

in the economic system of production and distribution of goods and services, and reproduction of human beings and society as a whole. And thus, multiple researchers have disagreed with Standing's definition of the precariat as a class, because it is negative and mainly focuses on what the workers in precarious labour lack (Frase, 2013). The concept should instead have a positive content and an economic role. Lastly, the rise of the precarity is something that scientists have argued over for some time. While it can be said that there are new ways of how the work has become precarious, there is no proper method to make sure if it is indeed rising. What can be said is that the workload has intensified with the birth of digital labour, for those workers "all the time is 'crunch time' now" (Gill, 2014). And in the nineteenth or early-twentieth centuries the working terms of the American or European workers were at least as precarious as for the current day labourers (Frase 2013). Studies have also argued that the new platform work has similarities with Taylor's deskilled industrial processes minus the loyalty and job security (Cherry, 2016).

More attention needs to be paid when categorising people into different classes or political identities. Frase (2013) has stated that many people who are somewhat underprivileged in the labour market automatically are considered as a precariat. Which not in any way is the same, thus when talking about the precariats, careful consideration must be made beforehand. For example, in Western Europe and Japan there is a cultural entity that is impervious to the mainstream criticism of the precariat. Their patron is the "San Precario" who defends the spirit of "flashing lights of life" and "protects his children against evil bosses." Those people understand that today's working life is unstable but they like the atypical and flexible way of life and stand up for it, fighting against the current neoliberal model (Miller, 2010).

The precarious labour situation has received a lot of attention and in Canada the government is working on finding a solution on how to regulate the employers' obligations towards the gig economy workers (Dobson, 2016). But while different situations are very different globally, there are still many people for whom digital work has brought many opportunities and empowerment. Therefore, it is important to conduct further studies to understand this specific worker class and its peculiarities. That would give insights to create alternatives or better strategies that could bring "a fairer world of work" (Graham, 2016).

2.5 Concluding the theoretical framework

The theoretical framework pointed out the most significant topics in relation to this study and introduced the phenomena that are essential to understanding the field in which Taxify

operates in. Taxify employees are digital labourers in the sharing economy due to which both of them were discussed in terms of the positive and negative factors. As well as explaining in detail what the current state of the situation is and presenting areas that can still be complemented with new data. Since labour exploitation has been an important issue in both of those fields that needed to be clarified. The issue was explained through international examples, from which some also offered solutions on how to improve the current situation. Later on, the results of Taxify can then be compared to the issues that have taken place in other companies to see the commonalities and differences. It was also important to explain precarious and immaterial labour, as those are the ways of working that most often come in pair with labour exploitation in the digital field. The two concepts were discussed in broad manner to cover different views and give ideas and tools that could be useful for this study as well. Global communism and Marxist theories have resurfaced in regards of media studies, especially in terms of digital media and labour. It is interesting to see whether the results of this study will support the current neoliberal model or indicate similarities to the global communism concept instead. The precarity of the new labour has been one of the most prominent issues in the digital labour field which is why it was also introduced, as it is different worldwide. A detailed description and characteristics of the precariat has been brought out and it is interesting to see how and if it relates to Taxify drivers in some ways.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology of the study and why those decisions were made based on the research design.

3. Methodology

This part of the paper will explain what kind of methods were used in the study and will provide reasoning as to why those methods were chosen and why they were the most suitable choice. Additionally, the research operationalisation, data collection and analysis methods are discussed to give clear insights into the validity and reliability. Taxify's organisation as the subject of this study and its role are revealed.

This study uses qualitative measures to answer the research questions. The main research question has also four sub-questions in order to separately address the different parts and make the research feasible. The research question and its sub-questions are stated below.

RQ: What is the relationship between Taxify and its drivers? To what extent are the labourers exploited by the company and why?

Sub-Q1: What kind of labour policies does Taxify have in place to avoid labour exploitation?

Sub-Q2: What kind of communication strategies does Taxify have with their drivers?

Sub-Q3: How do Taxify drivers perceive the treatment they get from the company, do they believe the treatment is "fair" and what are the reasons given?

Sub-Q4: How does the temporary digital work provided by Taxify impact drivers' lives? How do they perceive this 'gig' labour?

3.1 Case Study as the choice of method

In order to research the relationships between the company and the employees, in addition to thoroughly understanding the role of a digital labourer, a case study method was chosen for this study - to focus on how the structuring of Taxify works. Case study's' emphasis is on bringing out the characteristics and aspects of social life (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993) while focusing on a single phenomenon (Thomas & Myers, 2015) that in this case is Taxify and its relations with their drivers. It rigorously explores the complexity of real situations from different perspectives (Simons, 2009). The approach is used to discover the uniqueness of the phenomenon whilst trying to fully understand the phenomenon itself as well (Thomas & Myers, 2015).

This study has an empirical approach and focuses on Taxify's employees and additionally its influencing factors. The employees, drivers and communication channels used are all based on the Estonian market. As this study uses a scientific method all empirical data is based on

evidence collected for this research. The basis of this empirical study are the digital labour and gig economy phenomena that have already been observed and measured and will provide new information by the conduction of content analysis and focus group interviews to derive knowledge from actual experiences instead of theory.

A qualitative and empirical research design was chosen to answer the research questions. As it deals with understanding the underlying meanings and bringing out the trends that are happening in the sample it was the most suitable method to use. It was critical to discover *what* motivates and influences both the drivers and Taxify, *how* the communication takes place and *what* it is about, and *how* do the drivers perceive the company's treatment. The comprehension of *how* and *why* is an essential part of a case study, as it is important to have a multidimensional view to form a more rounded, deeper, more objective picture of the subject (Thomas & Myers, 2015). Case studies use different methods with an aim to examine the single case at hand through a sociological perspective (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993). So, to discover and analyse the patterns of human behaviour and its link to the general society a combination of the following analyses was chosen.

Firstly, a content analysis of various Taxify forums on Facebook was conducted using thematic analysis as the method. Four different Facebook groups and their last 100 posts until the March 28th of 2018 were used for the content analysis. As the forums seem like platforms for semi-unionisation they are interesting to look at. In addition, the Facebook groups are also more active than the homepage forums. There are four dominant ones in Estonia, two of which are run by Taxify: Taxify's drivers' forum and Taxify friends' forum, including even the CEO in the conversation. The prior is meant for Taxify's drivers to share their experiences, attitudes, recommendations and constructive criticism for the company. Access for that forum was granted by the company, as a permission to work with this content was given. The latter forum has open access and is for their clients who use the service and want to share their experience or give feedback. Since the drivers can also be part of the group it is also informative for them personally, as well as for the company itself.

The other two are groups made by Taxify's drivers, one of which is private and only for the drivers. Access for that was granted through one of the drivers participating in the focus group interviews. And the second one is similar to the Taxify friends' forum including the clients and drivers both that is accessible for everyone. The content analysis will provide a basis to the

labourers' relationship with the company. The groups will give an initial understanding of what are the main problems, key factors, positive sides or major events that received a lot of attention. They will also serve as the initial seed to gather information for the focus group interview questions.

Secondly, two different focus group interviews were chosen to carry out the last part of the research, as it is an interpretative study the focus is on the meaning not measurements. Using focus group a researcher can generate multifaceted information with minimum cost and in a short amount of time. It is also suitable in various settings and with a range of different people (Liamputtong, 2011). This method is relevant for this study because both Taxify and the drivers from different levels will be interviewed. More detailed information is provided in the sampling and organisation paragraphs. Especially in communication research, focus groups also offer a substitute for the 'well-used hammers' creating new data collection ways to reach data that may otherwise not be obtainable (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Which in terms of this study is relatively important and useful.

To understand the findings of the focus groups and the content analysis a thematic analysis was chosen to examine the gathered data, as the method captures the intricacies of meaning inside that textual data set (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). The thematic analysis that was conducted for this research followed a systematic approach to be able to transparently communicate the findings to others (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). The approach is further explained in the data collection and analysis chapter.

3.1.1 Comparison

The research question looked into whether Taxify's employees are exploited or not. Previous research has shown how Uber exploits its employees by trying to evade labour laws in order to take less business risks (Aloisi, 2016). That is also supported by Marxist theory that states that if a person is a social worker producing commodities then that person is exploited (Fuchs, 2014).

This study shows whether there is exploitation by the company and if so, is it similar to what Uber is doing or is it different. Or when there is almost no indication of exploitation then what are they doing differently than Uber or their other competitors and how.

3.1.2 Units of Analysis

The first focus group was conducted with the specific staff of Taxify who are either working with the drivers or administrating the online groups, to discover their motives behind creating those groups. Today Uber has been banned from Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy, London, and Vancouver to name a few due to its loose regulations and unfair trade practices. As similar businesses have hopefully learnt from Uber's example, it is in their best interest to know what the major problems are (Rhodes, 2017). Thus, it provides an interesting viewpoint from the company to hear their opinions and reasons behind the two-way communication methods that Taxify is using, as they are the ones who originally created the methods and are therefore distantly leading the conversation.

Lastly, the study looked more closely at drivers. The second focus group was conducted with them. The idea behind this interview was to find out a more precise information about drivers who have just started out, mediocre drivers and more experienced drivers with excellent rating. In addition to just getting demographic information and understanding their communication with the company, this series of interviews tried to uncover deeper insights. It was important to gather information from drivers on different levels to see how effective their communication with the company is, and whether their stage is affecting it in any way. The drivers were reached and contacted through the Facebook groups.

3.1.3 Sampling

As Taxify was founded in Estonia and has the most prominent standing there, the drivers, Taxify staff and forums used in the study are all from the Estonian market. This study uses a purposive sampling method. Purposive sample's main objective is to construct a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of specific the population (Lavrakas, 2008). The drivers were chosen from the Facebook group in a non-random manner selecting those who have the elements that represent the cross-section of the Taxify drivers.

The use of purposive sampling was important in order to have a variety of drivers on different levels. Thus, that provided a more thorough picture of drivers' perspectives of the company and its communication. Because the longevity and experiences differed from driver-to-driver and it was also important to understand whether there is any difference in their treatment by Taxify. So, the five drivers selected for the interview were all in different stages in their career at Taxify. All of the drivers were chosen from the Facebook group, based on the variety of their

time in the company. Therefore, even if it was a purposive sampling method, the research only gave structure as to which categories the sample should fill. In the end, it was a mix of purposive and convenience sample, as not all people agreed to participate in the focus groups. The people who were responsive and forthcoming represented a relatively similar age group. Which due to approaching them through Facebook is understandable, as they are the main users of that platform. Thus, the sample was purposely chosen as different as possible under the circumstances (Table 1).

Driver's information	Age	Length of driving for Taxify	Driving seasonally or all year long	Average hours driven per week
Male Driver 1	21	4 months	Seasonally	10 hours
Male Driver 2	30	1,5 years	All year long	10-15 hours
Male Driver 3	27	1 year	All year long	3-10 hours
Male Driver 4	21	3 months	Seasonally	12 hours
Female Driver	24	1 year and 3 months	All year long	10-20 hours

Table 1. Taxify drivers' focus group information

In regards of the Taxify's own sample three people were interviewed who all have a relation to the drivers through literal or distant contact. The Social Media Manager, the Automation and Communication Specialist and the Tech Support Engineer were interviewed (Table 2).

Position	Age	Gender	Relation to the drivers	Length of working for Taxify
Social Media Manager	23	Male	Communicating with drivers & riders through social media platforms	1,5 years
Automation & Communication Specialist	23	Male	Dealing with automated communications to drivers & riders	9 months

Tech Support Engineer	25	Female	Helping the internal Taxify team & the drivers with technical issues and to understand the system	2 years
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Table 2. Taxify focus group information

The content analysis was conducted based on the last 100 posts until March 26th of 2018, including all the comments to make sure that there is enough information to analyse. The used Taxify forums were all from Facebook.

3.1.4 Organisation

This research is conducted as a case study of Taxify. The firm was contacted beforehand to find out their willingness to participate in this study. The Social Media Manager (SM Manager) was appointed as the contact person through whom the overall communication in regards of the thesis will be conducted. He first contributed to the research by suggesting different field representatives of the company for the focus group interviews. For content analysis purposes the SM Manager also guaranteed access to the internal communication forums that only the drivers and the firm sees.

3.1.5 Operationalisation

In order to study which factors influence the communication between Taxify and their drivers and whether exploitation is taking place a semi-structured focus group guide was constructed based on the theoretical concepts. The semi-structured guide was used for leaving the participants some room to deviate (Longhurst, 2003). Also, mostly open question were asked to avoid leading the respondents in any directions and to let them freely express their opinions to provide reasoning. The idea behind both focus groups was introduced to the drivers and Taxify employees as the first research question:

RQ: What is the relationship between Taxify and its drivers? To what extent are the labourers exploited by the company and why?

Thus, analysing their relations with each other. The exploitation part of the research question was left out, as this is something that was yet to be discovered during the data analysis. Therefore, there was no reason to guide either part towards that topic.

The first set of questions focused on the demographics and breaking the ice, thus questions about the drivers themselves were asked. The questions then moved on to their relation to Taxify (i.e. how they started out, how long have they been working there). Those were all related to sub-question 4:

Sub-Q4: How does the temporary digital work provided by Taxify impact drivers' lives? How do they perceive this 'gig' labour?

Then slowly the questions let them express their opinion by adding in issues that arose from the theory. That was done in a simple manner not to confuse the interviewees with academic concepts. Leading them into topics that discussed how Taxify is treating the drivers and would show whether the exploitation is present or not. And if so, in what ways is it presented, what are the consequences. This part of the focus group was gathering answers for sub-question 3:

Sub-Q3: How do Taxify drivers perceive the treatment they get from the company, do they believe the treatment is "fair" and what are the reasons given?

The last part of the interview focused on the communication between the drivers and Taxify. What the drivers think their relationship with the company should look like and how they would want the company to participate in communication with them. This was touching upon sub-question 3 once again, as well as sub-question 2:

Sub-Q2: What kind of communication strategies does Taxify have with their drivers?

The focus group with Taxify's own employees also had a small introductory question set in the beginning and then concentrated on the employees' role in the company. That was done in order to make them more comfortable and build the trust. Also, to understand what their tasks are really about and how their related to the drivers. Then the focus moved on to gather general insights about the drivers, how do the internal systems work in regards of the drivers and what processes they have to go through. This section of the focus group was related to the previously discussed sub-question 4 and sub-question 1 (shown below):

Sub-Q1: What kind of labour policies does Taxify have in place to avoid labour exploitation?

The final part was once again about the communication channels that Taxify has with its drivers, the purpose behind it and overall questions about how the communication is conducted. The next part surrounded the most active groups and discussed the topics that are the most significant and come up often. It also tried to uncover the company's motives and whether there

is exploitation in the moves they make through their communication. The last part looked at the main learning points that the company has discovered through the channels and future outlooks and ideas were also discussed. It was all connected to the sub-question 2 that was discussed before, as well as to the general research question.

For analysing the focus groups and to conduct content analysis of the Taxify's forums, as already mentioned, a thematic analysis was utilised. A coding frame was developed with different relevant categories to discover the most significant topics and issues. Based on the theoretical framework themes such as digital labour, global communism and precarious labour were used and narrowed down in specific categories (i.e. negative/positive aspects of the job, tone of communication, most prominent problems, etc.). Thematic analysis was chosen for data analysis since it is important to analyse the discussed topics, as well as to go beyond of "what is actually said" (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000).

3.2 Data collection and analysis

The objectives of this analysis were to understand the relationship between Taxify and its drivers, as well as whether exploitation is present or not. Additionally, questions about digital labour, the general communication systems, the information about the drivers and Taxify were researched. The focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher in Estonia in April 2018. The focus group with the drivers took place in a conference room of a University providing a quiet and safe space for the interviewees. The Taxify staff focus group took place in a meeting room at the Taxify office in Tallinn, Estonia. The focus group data was recorded with two devices to assure that the collected content had a good quality and would be comfortable to work on later. And finally, the content analysis used 100 last post up to March 28, 2018 to gain further insights about the topic.

The data analysis spiral developed by Creswell (2007) was chosen as the general analysing method. This model uses the spiral to represent different data analysis phases that the researcher goes through in the data analysis process: data managing, reading/memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting, and representing/visualising. Thus, when the data from the Facebook groups and focus groups was gathered, it was first read and listened fully through while making notes. Next, the focus group data was transcribed verbatim for the final analysis. And while using the Creswell data analysis spiral to work through the different steps of the

analysis efficiently in a bigger scale, thematic analysis was used to discover the more detailed information within the data.

Thematic analysis was deemed suitable as it tries to uncover the real meaning behind the text and is a method that interprets social realities” (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Which is important in case of both - the drivers and Taxify staff. Especially because the company might be making politically correct statements while their tone and behaviour can give away much more information. On the other hand, the drivers can also be overly dramatic or vague instead, which means that a deeper analysis is definitely needed.

Because thematic analysis offers further insights the last three steps of Creswell’s spiral (classifying, interpreting, representing/visualising) were conducted through that. During the data analysis process, much effort was put to avoid the first impressions and discover the real meaning behind the data through a thorough and purposeful interpretation process (Sofaer, 2002). Therefore, after the data was already read through with first notes the thematic analysis began.

In addition to the 400 Facebook posts along with its comments were the focus group transcripts and all of this data constitutes as the corpus of analysis. The material was read through once again in order to catalogue it according to the content and was then divided into separate parts. The data was then reassembled in order to transform it into findings (Boeije, 2010). The Strauss and Corbin (1998) coding system with open, axial and selective coding was used to categorise the content, where codes are the labels that represent the meaning of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first dominant themes were already written down after the second reading. Those themes were the open codes that represented the initial concepts from the material. An effort was put to balance thoroughness, logic and vision while developing codes to construct a well-organised system of categories (Costa, Breda, Pinho, et al., 2016). The data was read through a third time during axial coding, now carefully analysing the data to carefully construct the categories and discover more specific sub-categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Seven main categories emerged covering themes such as characteristics, relationships, Taxify system, digital labour, etc. As the last step, the categories were integrated and distinguished to make a larger theoretical scheme about the content (Appendix C) through selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.3 Validity and reliability

Since this is a qualitative study the validity and reliability are not as clearly definable as in quantitative study. Yet the following explanations will offer insight into why future research can depend on this current one.

As this is a qualitative study and the researcher is the research instrument, all initial assumptions about the data were put aside to provide a credible study (Silverman, 2011). When conducting the focus group interviews the materials and information was used solely for this research and the confidential information will not be shared outside this paper. No information about the interviews will be revealed to other participants or members of the community. That is done in order to respect the company and also its drivers.

The reliability of the research comes across in the transparent description of the research design. First and foremost, the study's results give new information in terms of digital labour, sharing economy and exploitation. As exploitation is the most talked about topic in regards of these industries it was important to see whether there are additional exceptions or do most firms share the same pitfalls.

Additionally, the results of this study will add value to the current debate between the neoliberal model and global communism that is active in the media research field. By analysing the results in relation to these theories another addition to support one of them was made. Although, based on the theory that has been included it can be assumed that Taxify will relate more to the current neoliberal model.

In order to answer the research question, focus group interviews and content analysis was conducted with Taxify. A case study method was chosen as this study dealt with empirical inquiry through focus groups and content analysis. And investigated a contemporary problem: the communication and existence of exploitation in Taxify, within its real-life context by conducting the research on their channels and with their employees and drivers. As the industries of sharing economy and digital labour have been growing with a high speed in recent years (Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017), it made the choice of Taxify a good match as the topic is very current.

3.4 Concluding

This chapter introduced the research design for which a qualitative empirical case study was chosen. And provided details on why focus groups and content analysis are best suitable for

this research. Additionally, the comparison factor in the research question was explained, sampling information brought out and operationalisation described. Then, the data collection method and analysis were introduced and arguments for choosing those were presented. Taxify – the organisation that the case study research is about, was also mentioned further, adding information of the company’s input in the study. The reasons indicating the method’s validity and reliability through a transparent description were mentioned last.

4. Results and Analysis

This chapter introduces the combined findings resulting from the thematic analysis that was based on the conducted focus groups and content analysis from the four Facebook forums. During the focus groups eight people were interviewed in total – three from Taxify’s staff and five Taxify drivers. The purpose of the focus groups and the content analysis was to discover the relationship between Taxify and its drivers. Seven themes emerged during the analysis: characteristics, relationships, Taxify system, support, communication, precarious labour and digital labour. After carefully studying each theme, different, more specific subtopics were discovered that describe the settings of each of the bigger themes. The research question and sub-questions are used to provide this section with a clear structure, presenting the overview in a organised manner. The main themes that emerged regarding these questions are brought out with each sub-chapter. To start off, the findings will first try to explain the relationship between Taxify and its drivers. And within that discussion exploitation is talked about as well, to discover if it is indeed taking place or not. The Taxify policies in terms of exploitation will be discussed after that. Next, the communication strategies and platforms, as well as their effectiveness is assessed. And that is naturally followed by evaluation of the treatment that the Taxify drivers receive from Taxify. Whether it is fair or not and what are its main characteristics. Lastly, the chapter looks at how the digital labour affects Taxify drivers lives and what is their opinion about the gig labour.

4.1 RQ: What is the relationship between Taxify and its drivers? Are the labourers exploited by the company or not and if not, why?

This subchapter will start analysing the relationship between Taxify, the drivers. The main themes related to this research question were characteristics between the parties, multi-layered relationships and specifics of the Taxify system. It is first important to understand what kind of an organisation Taxify is and how they conduct their daily business. After that is established, it is possible to start looking into the relationship between Taxify and the drivers itself.

4.1.1 Taxify: its mission and company culture

In order to discuss this topic, it is important to first introduce Taxify as a company. Knowing that the company owns a transportation app and provides jobs to digital labourers

describes *what* they do. Yet it is also essential to understand *how* and *why* they conduct their business.

When interviewing Taxify staff it was easily noticeable how at ease the employees were with each other. The downstairs office had similarities to a large living room and the interview took place in a separate small meeting room with just four chairs. Even though all three participants were from different departments and are not regularly working side by side there was a sense of comfort in the air, as if they were all part of the same family. With Taxify being a relatively new company, the start-up atmosphere is still there, especially at the Tallinn headquarters. Instead of a strict corporate conduct, the whole team is on friendly terms and there is a no nonsense attitude when doing the job. The staff described the core team as dedicated and genuinely nice people, who are all passionate about what they do. This being one of the reasons why internationals also decide to relocate to the Tallinn office when there is a vacancy, like one of the participants of this focus group did. Since the company has been rapidly growing and expanding to different markets, the job is said to have gotten more serious. Yet as Taxify operates on a bigger scale now the employees have more responsibilities and tasks which gives them more opportunities and is perceived positively.

The company's main goal is to provide transportation to as many people as possible around the world. And according to the focus group participants this is what drives all activities inside the office, the CEO is said to be the representation of Taxify spirit, as you can see that he is always driven by the mission. As there are other similar apps like Uber or Lyft, Taxify has worked hard to distinguish themselves while trying to avoid mistakes made by others. Generally comparing themselves to the competitors the employees described Taxify as a caring and fair firm, trying to offer the drivers a good work environment. Most importantly, Taxify's driver commission is lower than its competitors', thus the drivers are able to keep more of their earnings to themselves. The Taxify team said the following:

If we take money out of the equation, it is because of the attitude. It's because we actually do want to do something ... The company itself is not pushed by the want to earn more, not in that sense. So, Markus (edit: The CEO of Taxify) actually is going around and he is saying that he wants for people to move around. Like, he wants to make it easier. It's the whole purpose, so that's how the whole team is working. So, you can feel

that. You can feel that when you talk to those people and you can feel that through the communication in that sense. And for drivers, they get more for...well, for not doing less but they get more for doing the same thing that they would do on other platforms. (Tech Support Engineer, Taxify focus group)

(Edit: about the CEO and Taxify's mission) He doesn't communicate it, he lives it. It sounds stupid but it's true. (Social Media Manager, Taxify focus group)

As their work is very much driven by their mission and the team is led with one specific vision, it constitutes to the general family attitude that was mentioned in the beginning of this subchapter. Still, a good office environment does not necessarily show *how* the company is succeeding. Discussing their key to success during the interview, it was concluded in a straightforward manner:

I guess we are able to do more with like less resources. We are trying not to spend time on stuff that does not really matter in the long term. I mean we have two types of tasks. There are tasks when it is okay to do that and then there are other tasks that are crucial to something like development. So, we are trying to make smart decisions. (Automation and Communication Specialist, Taxify focus group)

A lot of companies...what I see or think, do a lot of things just to show that they have done something. What we do is that we actually measure the set of tasks and we see which one has the biggest impact overall and we prioritise them. We do that everywhere all the time. And that makes us super effective with less resources. (Social Media Manager, Taxify focus group)

The start-up thinking that we had before it has not ended, not in that sense, which is not bad ... I mean, we are doing good but it's not only about doing good, it's about that we want to do better. So, it all the time keeps us up to speed. (Tech Support Engineer, Taxify focus group)

4.1.2 The relationship and characteristics of Taxify, its drivers and the system

The procedure when one starts out as a Taxify driver is relatively simple. Which is most likely the cause of their growing drivers list, as the drivers' focus group mentioned. In a situation where they needed or decided to have an additional income Taxify was simply the easiest way to achieve that. Since Taxify has positioned itself quite well since the beginning, media picked up their ads due to the innovative business model and created a large buzz around it. The interviewed drivers said that since Taxify was so largely covered in all channels it created an interest in them. Essentially, as many of their acquaintances had also signed up as drivers they seemed to be the strongest influence in encouraging to try out the position. During Taxify's focus group it was eminent that word-of-mouth is their most effective marketing solution and the drivers usually join after someone has recommended the job to them. The media had portrayed the Taxify driver position in a way that made it seem fascinating. One could drive around, meet and communicate with new people. Some years ago, when Taxify had already established itself and people received information about becoming a driver everywhere, working there had become highly competitive as well. The popularity of the App motivated many people to sign up and become a driver. According to one of the drivers' focus group participants "The city was buzzing like a beehive (Male Driver 2)," meaning that there was a myriad of drivers using the App at the same time. Most drivers that use Taxify are doing it as a side job. That was concluded during all focus groups and by the content analysis. The interviewees were all either working, studying in university or both and driving for Taxify during their leisure time. Which means that they usually drive during the weekends, weekday nights and evenings, which concluded to ten hours per week for one driver on average. This shows that in the Western countries platform work is considered more as part of the gig economy, where people are earning additional incomes. Yet in the global South these companies are part of the main economy as alternatives to the traditional employment (Kvasny, 2013), offering primary income for the drivers (Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017). As these transportation platforms grow they are facing the issues of globalising their labour practices. Since the platform work has diverse meanings in different contexts – in the wealthier nations, it is considered an opportunity to earn a supplemental income while in areas like South Africa or Mexico, it is considered a full-time job and is hence exploitative.

All the participants of the drivers' focus group said that they use the App in order to have an additional income. Thus, they are also perceived by the company as people who provide the job part-time. That is also said to be the main difference between the drivers and Taxify's own employees. Since already the process of becoming a Taxify employee is much more difficult than that of becoming a driver, it is clear that those people have different motivations as well. Taxify's office employees are very ambitious and work hard to achieve their goals while the drivers are mostly doing the job as a "side hustle" using an easy way to increase their income. Additionally, Taxify provides opportunity to people in regions where work is hard to come by (i.e. Africa), so that those people could still be able to provide for their families. This is highly important, as gig platforms are an important source of income for 68% of workers in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia (Graham, et al., 2017). Providing jobs for people in diverse situation is tightly related to the company's core values – the sense of family and the care that exists alongside it. In order to work for Taxify a person simply needs a driver's licence, everything else can be arranged by Taxify if necessary. There are different options depending on the market, for example in Estonia Taxify has their own cars that the drivers can rent if they do not have a vehicle to provide the service with. In some other countries this role might be taken by a fleet provider who offers the cars instead of Taxify. Ultimately, Taxify is trying to make the driving possible for everyone. The vehicle expenses are indeed higher when using the Taxify fleets yet they do not have a significant difference from the amount a driver has to pay to maintain their own new vehicle in good condition. It is the most useful solution for drivers in areas such as South Africa, where renting a fleet is their only option for being a Taxify driver, as they often do not have their own cars. Since those drivers are also mainly full-time drivers this practice is still shown to be profitable for them. All in all, Taxify is trying to offer a relatively simple way for people to earn an (additional) income.

In Europe people are also signing up for the App for various additional reasons. Many people also wish to use their leisure time more efficiently through meeting new people and having different experiences as they otherwise would. Thus, this type of work is blurring the lines between leisure and labour by keeping the drivers company while they work and earn money. As discussed before, mobile phones have taken over many sources of communication (McDermott, 2017) and the digital solutions are making the people in contemporary societies more isolated by creating additional ways for online communication and mobility. Even though

these kind of platform apps also encourage and create a sense of community through the human interaction, they are in fact driven by the neoliberal agenda of the platform creators who are reaping profits from this so-called communication.

It can be assumed that Taxify's reputation as a platform provider remains intact and is rather positive since about seventy per cent of their new drivers hear about Taxify through word of mouth. Thus, it is clear that the drivers or riders who are recommending driving for the App find it satisfactory or at least profitable. Taxify also has the referral system on some markets where a driver can refer another driver and earn a referral fee from that. The employees clearly pointed out that it does not work on every market and what ultimately invites people is the App itself. As stated by the Social Media Manager: "Basically having a good App is how you get the most drivers and riders." The App was also the feature that the interviewed drivers named as the easiest part of being a Taxify driver. Once the initial training is done and instruction on how to use the App are received, the use of it becomes systematic and clear.

Starting out as a Taxify driver is quite easy, one has to sign up, present the required documents to Taxify who conducts a background search on the potential driver and then attend a training during which a car evaluation will also be conducted. Depending on the market, there can also be a remote training via videos and presentations if that solution has been deemed suitable. So, in most cases the drivers have their first contact with the company during the training. The Estonian training is usually conducted with groups of 10 to 20 potential drivers at the Taxify headquarters in Tallinn. The groups are generally quite diverse with the exception of gender, having only a few women. Yet the age range is very wide, drivers estimating the average trainee to be 30 years old. The groups also often consist of some internationals who are currently living in Estonia. The main source of diversity was the fact that those potential drivers come from many different places and backgrounds in Estonia. Thus, what might seem easy and obvious to some may not be so for others. For instance, how a driver should communicate with the client, how to respond to a complex situation with the rider and a reminder to always maintain a polite behaviour.

According to Taxify the training is to get the initial sense of the driver and to be sure that they know what being a Taxify driver entails. From the drivers' perception, the training seemed to be a method that would help to equalise the driver level by setting standards that every driver should follow. As the training is an introductory part the drivers usually stick around after that

and the highest drop-off rate takes place after the first ride. Because then the person can try out the App, how it all works and then after having the full experience come to a conclusion that it does not suit him. Often it happens due to the fact that the driver does not know how to conduct rides in their city and waits in a suburb area where there are no clients. Another aspect of the job that might not be suitable for everyone is the communication with the clients. The drivers said that when providing a transportation for the first time, the initial communication is nerve-racking. It seemed to be a common theme within the drivers, especially when starting out without a previous service industry experience. The main reasons given were that then the driver has to provide a service to other people, communicate with total strangers in close proximity and know how to serve their customers.

4.1.3 Threat of exploitation

As the company grows fast, it is clearly very profitable for Taxify yet in some cases it might cause problems for the drivers. When the firm suddenly has many service providers the prices automatically go down, as there is no scarcity. When the market and the company adjust to the new situation the changes are made once again to provide better conditions for the drivers in addition to the customers. The drivers who have been providing rides for over a year now explained what that situation meant for the drivers:

In the beginning, the wages were really good. At one point when the competition had grown very high the conditions declined. It seems that now the situation is changing for the better once again. (Male Driver 2, Drivers' focus group)

There was a moment when the interest in being a Taxify driver was so incredibly high. So, when you logged into the App in the evening you could see how tremendously big amount of drivers were using it at that moment. And from that moment the wages started to go down because there were so many drivers available. (Male Driver 3, Drivers' focus group)

The success of the company initially happened in parallel with negative results for the employees. This was due to the Taxify's fast growth and the fact that they were not able to manage all the new drivers and riders so fast, as their own team was not big enough for that. The

old wisdom ‘when the corporation succeeds, the worker succeeds too’ is a notion that is not necessarily linked with gig economy. Moreover, the companies are generating large profits because of the abundance of clients and market demand. However, there is usually a scarcity in regards of the support team that would make the growth more stable for the labourers as well. Thus, the conditions have been changing with its declines and increases, yet from the drivers’ perspective it seems that they understand why it is occurring and are not necessarily judging the company. This is especially so for drivers who have used Taxify for more than a year, because they know how the process looks like when the situation gets difficult and what the company does in order to make it better for the drivers. They even bringing out the fact that once the company was able to grasp the growth better their conditions also started to improve. As Taxify then was able to come up with better solutions for the drivers’ problems and hire more manpower to deal with their inquiries. At least that was the how the focus group drivers perceived the situation.

The forums provided a more critical viewpoint and showed that some drivers have quite the opposite views about the situation. Around half of the posts, whether in the post itself or in comments, included arguments about Taxify paying their drivers very low salaries. Discussing the same situation in which there are many drivers, the forum content also tried to prove that there are many clients, thus the company should raise their fares. What now needs to be clarified is the fact that in all four forums there were specific users under incognito user names who always were carrying out the negative directions. While it is understandable that some of the drivers might remain anonymous, it does make it more difficult to take their criticism as truth when there are many similar claims made from under the same name and not that many others who dispute or agree with it. It does not however mean that their claims are not at all correct, simply that there are dominant voices who frequently discuss the same topic that cannot be taken as a representative voice of the whole group of drivers. The interviewed drivers also stated that the general content on the forums tends to be rather negative and overly dramatic from time to time. Since many drivers are part of the forums to stay updated and informed about the main issues and do not engage in the conversations themselves. That fact was also confirmed, as there were indeed main characters who would repeatedly create posts taking turns.

4.2 Sub-Q1: What kind of labour policies does Taxify have in place to avoid labour exploitation?

In order to respond to this sub-question Taxify's different legal documents were first analysed. The focus groups served as a source of additional information in terms of this question. There were four themes related to this sub-question: characteristics, Taxify system, precarious labour and digital labour. Firstly, the General Terms are discussed to get a sense of how Taxify defines their drivers, what is allowed and what not. After that, the policies that are directly related to avoiding exploitation are mentioned. Lastly, the information that was gathered about this topic from the focus groups will try to humanise this legal chapter by showing what do the drivers and Taxify employees have to say about this sub-question.

4.2.1. Overview of the general Taxify driver policies

General Terms for Drivers are available on the Taxify website and drivers can even find out terms about a specific market they are driving in. The following overview is based on the General Terms for Drivers that every person who wants to provide a transportation service through the Taxify platform has to agree to (Taxify, 2018). The main theme of the document is portraying the driver as a transportation service provider who is responsible for most of the situations and consequences while Taxify serves simply as a platform provider not a party within the service contract. Which contradicts the traditional work agreements in which the employees are protected by companies' insurances for liabilities and experiences with unexpected issues. The only other role they Taxify has in regards of their drivers, is acting as a commercial agent in order to transfer the in-app payments to the drivers. So, in case the drivers violate the state law or do not pay taxes they are personally responsible for the misdoing not Taxify. Similar to other transport platforms, the terms explicitly state that the drivers are not in any way Taxify employees and are not allowed to behave as one. In addition, the company is not liable for any loss or damages that the drivers may experience in relation to using the Taxify App.

One of the most significant expenses in the ride sharing business is the vehicle. And according to Taxify's policies the drivers have to cover all the costs related to providing transportation services. This is something that the drivers believe influences their income the most. As there might be great profits from active periods, yet the expenses that the vehicle demands will decrease it significantly.

The default base rate for rides is recommended by Taxify according to the local market situation. The drivers can also negotiate a lower fare from Taxify and can therefore charge the customer less while the Taxify fee will remain the same. This eventually would be good to customers but will does not provide that many benefits to drivers, as that also means a lower income from the rides. Additionally, Taxify has the right to change the fare if a violation has taken place, to avoid drivers being fraudulent. In case there is a problem with the customer's payment and for some reason the driver does not receive the fee then Taxify is not obligated to compensate the fare. Taxify also has no obligation to reimburse the driver when they fail to provide Taxify with a fare review when there has been a mistake in the fare calculation. As there are multiple ways to pay for the ride, they all should be treated equally by the drivers and the drivers are not allowed to refuse to accept any of them. Especially the in-app payment which means that the client pays straight through their account to Taxify and then the company will later transfer the fare minus Taxify's cut to the driver. It is also important that the drivers pay attention on who they pick up and if that indeed is their client. Because in case of wrongful in-app billing the driver will receive a penalty. If a customer has any claims against a driver then they have to compensate the damage for that customer or to Taxify if they have to take legal action to deal with the claims.

There is also a lot of general information that is essential to these kind of digital labour contracts. So, even if the low barrier to entry appeals the drivers to join, the reality is that the learning process is far more demanding that it initially might appear. Taxify drivers need to know about the state law and regulations while functioning on a high risk with little insurance or security if things go wrong. Such as, the driver has to comply with the state laws, pay determined fees to Taxify, do not own Taxify's intellectual property, has to stop using the Taxify app after termination and etc. As well as giving Taxify the right to process their personal contact data, which will be deleted after the person either quits or is terminated. In case a driver denies access to their data they are giving away their right to provide the transportation service, as that is essential to the app, such as the geo-location to inform the customers about driver's location.

There are various situations which can end in Taxify being entitled to block and/or delete the driver's account without a prior notice. For instance, refusing an in-app payment from the client, not meeting Taxify's minimum activity score or violating customers' personal data. If the

driver breaches their Taxify agreement, the law or causes harm to the brand Taxify can terminate the agreement immediately and forbid the creation of a new account.

Taxify also has the right to terminate the agreement 'at any time for any reason by informing the driver three days in advance. It initially looks like an aggressive method to rather end than to solve difficult situations. But in reality, Taxify also allows the drivers to contact the company to clarify and revoke the actions if they can prove that they have not violated the terms.

As Taxify provides a digital labour platform, it is obvious that they provide different forums and chats on their website for drivers to communicate among themselves, as well as with the company. One part of the General Terms also states that if the driver's behaviour on those platforms is disrespectful towards the company then the driver's access to those channels may be restricted.

4.2.1 Policies avoiding exploitation

One of the most important things brought out in the terms clearly states that only the driver has the right to decide when and how long they are working. Thus, it is not dictated by the company in any way. It is an important point to mention, as many digital labour companies have their labourers working round the clock with overly demanding deadlines (Prassl & Risak, 2016). The drivers are allowed to work or provide services for other employment activities in addition to working for Taxify. The company provides the drivers with information on minimum requirements that must be fulfilled to continue in the role. Additionally, the drivers are also allowed to end the agreement at any time by notifying Taxify at least seven days in advance. Furthermore, Taxify also helps out the drivers with information about specific events that will create more demand for drivers or send in schedules that recommend driving times when the drivers can earn more money. When the drivers were talking about this topic during the focus group they said that the information is rather helpful and filling the requirements was not pointed out as an issue. Taxify also notifies the drivers of any campaigns that are taking place for customers and will compensate the difference back to drivers. Thus, the company pays for the price difference back to the drivers and covers the campaign discounts not the drivers themselves.

In case the driver is a licensed taxi service provider they can use a taximeter to calculate the ride fare which can also bring a positive change for the driver's income. This can also further be influenced with the base rate that is generally recommended by Taxify. When there should be

an issue and a customer is not willing to pay then Taxify will help the driver to collect the fare. Also, when there might be errors in the final fare calculation, the drivers can submit their correct fare calculation via the Taxify App to receive the right fare fee. The drivers are also able to make Taxify reconsider the blocked access to the App if they provide information that works in their favour.

Another positive aspect that should be helpful for drivers is the penalty fee when a customer cancels the request after 3 minutes or is not there to take the ride. In that situation Taxify collects the penalty of up to five euros, keeps the Taxify Fare and transfers the rest of the penalty to the driver. In case a client should damage the drivers' vehicle, the driver can also request a penalty of fifty euros and compensation for the damages. If the client refuses to do so, the driver should contact Taxify in the next twenty-four hours and explain the situation by giving them proof. During the focus groups the female driver explained that she had been in a situation where a client had broken a cover for her luggage area and left without paying anything. She contacted Taxify by writing them an email with photos of the situation and Taxify covered fifty percent of the repairing fees. She added that whenever there is a similar kind of problem it is very easy to contact the company and even though recently the responses have been delayed, Taxify is always willing to support and help their drivers in such situations.

The drivers' ratings and comments are also regularly checked by the company, which has a positive influence on the drivers' image because if there is content that has not been created in good faith then Taxify may remove it. Providing the driver with a fair profile.

4.2.2 Drivers' knowledge & opinion about the policies

During both focus groups the policies did not have a significant part and were only briefly mentioned. Not surprisingly the situation was the same in the Facebook groups where the drivers mostly focused on the situations or aspects of the job that they are not pleased about. Taxify mentioned that the Morning Coffee Meetings produce more feedback on how to improve their relationship with the drivers and offer them better solutions not ideas on changing the policies. From the focus group with the drivers it can be concluded that the only time those drivers actually read the policies was concluded during the registration and training. The few exceptions where the drivers speak up have taken place when the policies or conditions for the drivers have changed.

Recently Estonian Government introduced a new law according to which all digital labourers who provide transportation service need to have a vehicle and service permit. Some of the participated drivers are still listed as the drivers but have not actively been driving for some time. The main reasons behind this decision were the changing Taxify policies that were updated due to the government's new regulations. Thus, the drivers now need to have specific vehicle and service provider permits, that can be obtained from the city council. In order to obtain those permits, the drivers have to pay a modest fee and apply for them through the city council. Considering that the majority of the drivers are using Taxify to earn an additional income and started providing the transportation service due to its simplicity, these changes have created a discontentment amongst the drivers. Since the situation is currently becoming more complex than it originally was, the drivers find it overwhelming and irritating to fulfil additional requirements in order to do their side job. This shows how the policies that were originally intended for social good can sometimes become the burden for the very groups it intends to serve.

The matter is made more complicated by the fact that the system is new for the city council as well. Thus, the organisation of issuing the new permits is tumultuous and often delayed. While at the same time, being a Taxify driver, one is required to have those permits in order to provide the service. So, currently there are many drivers who are in the 'grey area' since they have not yet received their permits but are still providing rides for Taxify. Which according to the drivers is unsettling because some of them have applied for the permits, and have yet to receive them. While others have not even applied for the permit, since they are aware of the situation and hope to use the current loopholes in their favour. If the city council and Taxify will not devise a more thorough way to control or execute the issuing of the permits, it is likely to create more confusion and conflict in the future. Especially because the current lack of control creates a more precarious environment for the drivers, where the consequences of disobeying the system is still unknown. This is consistent with the global patterns of precarious labour (Curtin & Sanson, 2016) as it is difficult to grasp the consequences because there are no specific regulations about them. The creation of trade unions would help the drivers to fight precarity (Doellgast, Lillie & Pulignano, 2018).

The government created the service provider permit in order to gather taxes from the drivers that so far have been unregulated. The government now has the right to inquire driver's

information from Taxify and demand the required amount of taxes from that driver based on Taxify's data. This is the main reason why drivers are reluctant to apply for the permit, as their income has so far been non-taxable. Therefore, the idea of their additional income decreasing has not been perceived very positively. Mostly because drivers who provide the service part time do not receive relatively high income from it to begin with. This is due to the fact that the ride fares for the clients are currently quite low, meaning that the part time drivers do not have the possibility to reap great profits, as the time they can spend on driving is limited. These are just some of the existing tensions in the field that are the consequence of the government trying to formalise an informal economy. Lagos (1995) claims that while the procedure of formalising might be sometimes complicated it can be achieved through attaining legality and maintaining that over time which requires official and financial demands. He also stated that in general the bureaucracy is not an obstacle to legalising these kind of informal economies. While the unions who are creating campaigns or regulations to avoid uncertainty are not perceived well by the labourers (Morgan, Wood, & Nelligan, 2013) because in a way it takes away a part of their profits and supports the capitalist system.

Consequently, the new taxation law has caused a lack of motivation among the drivers. Which led to a drop in drivers working or actively driving for Taxify. After Taxify became aware of what consequences the matter had had on drivers they started making changes. And their modifications were immediately noticed by the drivers. First, the drivers base tariff was raised by ten percent, and additional bonuses were created. For the latter, the company has created updated offers for already existing bonuses, thus the drivers now have the ability to increase their earnings with daily or weekly bonuses that allow them to earn about 75-100 extra euros that could then cover the taxes. The drivers concluded that the company gave them an easy opportunity to cover the amount of their income that they otherwise would lose to the taxes. The similar ride sharing apps also create different campaigns for their drivers to earn extra income, yet their motives are so far unknown, so it is difficult to compare them with Taxify.

4.3 Sub-Q2: What kind of communication strategies does Taxify have with their drivers?

The dominant themes that occurred regarding this subchapter were communication and support. The communication between Taxify and the drivers takes place in various forms. In most cases the drivers contact the company if they need or wish to. Otherwise, the main communication occurs through in-app messages, emails, Facebook, walk-ins and phone calls.

Taxify is very active on Facebook and will respond to all forms of communication, such as comments and direct messages. The purpose of combined communication solutions is to “use every channel that works”, so that Taxify would be easily reachable for the drivers and riders both.

Taxify also has a walk-in option available globally, where the driver can go to the Taxify office if they have any questions. This specific solution is very popular in Africa where there may be around a 100 people waiting in line when the office opens. At the headquarters in Estonia there is a specific driver dedicated event being held every month where the drivers can communicate with the company.

4.3.1 Significant communication strategies and their effectiveness

The main communication with the drivers takes place through the App, which is their most popular communication channel as well. Whether Taxify needs to inform the drivers or the drivers need to contact the company, the App is the most suitable solution for that. The system is built up in a manner where all the emails that the drivers send to them company are also displayed and connected to the App. Thus, almost everything can be done by the driver via the app. Taxify sends the drivers various notifications depending on the driver and the market situation. When a driver has signed up for some deals then they also receive text messages on their phones in addition to the in-app messages. Some of the most frequent in-app message types are discussed below.

One of the main things Taxify communicates to the drivers is showing most efficient times to drive. Informing them of specific dates and times which allow drivers to earn more than usual. Like mentioned before, oftentimes new drivers have trouble finding clients or knowing where to be in order to do their job efficiently. And this is precisely what the Automation and Communication Specialists are trying to improve. They are guiding the drivers to the right places at the right time. This is what the team Automation and Communication Specialist had to say:

With automated communication we are guiding users, like educating them. So, for drivers, we are sending them maps of where to drive and at what time to drive, and so on. So that they would get into the thing.

Additionally, issues may arise because a driver has not been completely focused during the training, and perceives it as something so mundane that does not require attention. The drivers said that even though the training features some basic etiquette rules and other topics that are essential to decent behaviour, the training groups are also highly diverse which makes that sort of a content vital for some of the participants. Thus, here the automated communication creates a solution for the problems by going through the steps once again, such as introducing the driver App once again or how to deal with situations drivers may come across while using the App. Those problems can still and would have in the past been solved through direct communication. Traditionally, face to face communication was perceived as empowering when the company took time to take care of their own. Now, with automated communication the situation has moved towards a more efficient approach. In order to have a more symbiotic relationship between the people and automated solutions a renewed sense of artificial systems' capabilities is needed (Stapleton, 2018).

A similar situation can also take place when the App has been updated and introduces some new features. Then Taxify will also send informative messages to introduce the updates and tries to ensure that the drivers understand and know how to use the new solutions. They continue to educate their drivers, so that they would be able to do their job well. It is essential that the driver knows how, when and where to drive. The knowledge of how to use the App helps the driver to drive at the right places to get the best earnings, gives them insights on their driving and suggestions on things they could improve. The idea is to continue helping the drivers even after they have joined to make sure that they could maximise their gains while using the App.

Another part of the communication takes place on social media where the Social Media Manager communicates with the current or potential drivers through the posts by sharing new content or advertisements and responding to the drivers' comments. Following the word of mouth, social media is the second important way through to which the people find the information and sign up to be a Taxify driver. And that is why the company tries to be as accessible as possible, replying to messages in all forms (i.e. comments, posts, direct messages). Having their business in a form of an App it is crucial for the company to maintain a good digital presence to be available and as up to date as possible. A representative of the company is usually present in different Facebook forums as well and even though they do not usually enter the conversation, it is a useful way to understand some of the issues that take place. The company

appreciates the input that the drivers or clients give, especially when it is constructive criticism. Since they have received good ideas through social media critics there is no reason to disregard those posts. Taxify does hide the content that can be classified as negative when it consists of swearing and does not have any actual meaning or substance.

Almost in every country where Taxify is active in the drivers create their own Facebook forum groups to discuss issues. Taxify themselves only has Facebook pages not any official Facebook forum groups. Yet they still try to enter the Facebook groups to have an overview of what is happening on different markets and what issues should Taxify try to solve. Since Taxify is active globally in many different countries, it is difficult to have an insight on the global forum content, neither is it their desire. Therefore, on some markets the local teams are at times responding to the Facebook group content but the company is mostly in them to acquire information. Taxify has also made it very clear that those groups are not official channels and are simply there for drivers to discuss matters with each other. They often inform people to contact them through the correct channels if they wish to communicate with Taxify and actually receive help. This also creates confusion as drivers expect their issues to be solved on the third-party controlled environment, which is not how Taxify operates.

The Customer Support department also deals with additional drivers' issues that cannot be solved within an app and require more attention. The driver might also prefer to do contact the department themselves. For example, the interviewed female driver said that even though the App is easy to use and contains all the information and options to contact the firm, she still prefers to communicate with Taxify through emails. At times drivers contact the department because they think that their App is not working, when in most cases they have done something wrong within the App themselves. And so, the Customer Support will help them solve the problem that they are facing. More often though, the issue is not *how* the customer is using the App but on *what device* they are using it on. The Tech Support Engineer shed some light about the situation:

It's not actually about doing things wrong. It's more about using bad devices and hoping that...with a 10 years old iPhone you will still be able to perfectly do your job. Because basically the only instrument that you need to be a Taxify driver is the phone, not regarding the car. Because the phone is the only thing and if you don't take care of your

instrument of course your job is going to be difficult. So, that's what they do not take into account for the majority of the time. But we still try to make it work with whatever we have.

An aspect that can still be considered under communication and that is highly beneficial for the drivers is Taxify's website. The drivers have the opportunity to look at the overview of their last three months' rides on the page. This provided valuable information for them because they then had some statistics of their previous rides, earnings, and could use the data to plan their future rides. Particularly because that allowed the drivers to analyse the profitability of the past rides and spot patterns that helped them to drive more strategically in the future. This type of self-tracking has been quite widely researched and many solutions come out every day, offering yet another way to track everyday activities such as how many steps one has taken during a day. While these solutions can contribute to a person's well-being and health, they also raise concerns about privacy, surveillance and discrimination (Ajana, 2018). Therefore, the drivers might perceive this solution as helpful and informative, however they should understand that Taxify is seeing and providing all this information to them as well.

4.3.2 Effectiveness of the strategies

Generally, the drivers consider Taxify's communication strategies to be highly beneficial. Mainly due to the wide variety of information that Taxify sends out every day or week that assists the drivers. The company's strategy is to provide most insightful material that would help the drivers make smarter and more strategised rides while solving any problems that might take place. Their communication methods can be deemed efficient, as they are indeed aiding the drivers while motivating the drivers to drive more too. However, the drivers value the communication since it offers them knowledge about different topics. First and foremost, the data is used to plan and execute rides at times where there is a chance to earn higher profits. It is also utilised when a driver needs to remind themselves on actions regarding the App. The drivers are also actively receiving information about meetups where they can gather together with other drivers and give their feedback to Taxify.

All the drivers who participated in the focus groups brought out the excellence of the App and how the communication that Taxify uses on it is highly effective and useful for the drivers. They are more likely to use the App on the recommended times if they have a chance to earn

more. The drivers are then willing to drive at times that they otherwise would not have planned or considered to. Thus, it is clear to see that Taxify has the ability to promote driving to drivers as effectively as taking a ride for customers. The Male Driver 2 explained the following:

Taxify does a good marketing job for the drivers through the App. Suggesting different times to drive where the drivers can earn bonus. They have constantly updated the App and the user interface has been developed very well. You have information about how much you have earned, how active you have been, what is your rating and pie chart that displays the percentages of bonuses reached by the driver. It is very cool, I would rate the application with 5+ (top score).

Additionally, the development and improvement of the App is one of Taxify's main tasks. When explaining what drives the App innovation better accessibility, easier usage, various and useful solutions for the drivers were dominantly mentioned. Taxify's effort regarding the App is highly appreciated by the drivers who find the driver centric information beneficial while conducting the rides and also having an overview of their driving statistics and current standings concerning bonuses.

4.3.3 Main reasons behind communication

As described in the significant communication strategies part, Taxify finds it important to continue educating their drivers. Implying that when a driver knows how to use the App and various special aspects of the job they are able to do it more efficiently. Considering that the majority of Taxify drivers do rides to earn additional money, it is not surprising that the main communication topic with the drivers is about earnings. The drivers inquire about ways to improve their earnings and Taxify relies on their statistics when handing out information which then helps drivers make their rides more strategical reaping higher gains. Taxify offers this information in different forms on the App as well yet not every driver is familiar with all the functions that the App offers. Therefore, the Customer Support department also helps out drivers who are trying to get a better sense of the App system and consume this information through the App by themselves without contacting Taxify.

Another common reason for the communication is introducing the new features. At first, Taxify sends out a general email explaining the new solution and how to use it. After that the

drivers generally start communicating with the company to inquire about it further in order to understand it better. Taxify tries to give them as much information as possible to ensure that the drivers would feel comfortable and confident in using the App. Whether or how much of that material is used depends on the driver. Regarding the updates, Taxify generally either tries to improve the solutions that they already have or create additions that are useful for the drivers. Consequently, the changes are then made out of necessity or drivers' requests after determining their importance.

The only way Taxify initiates a conversation with the driver themselves is during a situation when a driver has not been active for some time. Thus, the company will contact the driver through the App to see how they are doing and if Taxify can somehow help them. Taxify tries to be proactive because the driver may have encountered a problem, has an issue with the App or has had a negative experience. That is crucial to the situation, so that Taxify could find out what is the issue and either solve it or learn from it. The company considers it essential because oftentimes when a driver has not been active because of an issue other drivers may have been experiencing the same situation. So, having the knowledge is very important for the company for those reasons.

The monthly morning coffee event that takes place at the Taxify headquarters in Tallinn, Estonia is meant to connect the drivers and the company better. During which the drivers visit the office, discuss the current situation or bring up issues that require the company's attention with the local Taxify team. The drivers visit the office and can discuss matters or give their suggestions directly to the company. This gives the drivers an opportunity to have a voice and what "generally makes the App better for them" according to the Automation and Communication Specialist. It is also considered an important event amongst the drivers, as they even asked the company to start live streaming it on Facebook. Although any of the interviewed drivers had not participated in the event they had knowledge about it and knew other drivers who participate in them. Their reason for not participating was due to the lack of criticism for the App, they simply did not feel the need to take part because they had not faced any serious issues that would motivate them to attend the event. All in all, the event's purpose is to try to respond to drivers' needs even better and to improve the service. And having a digital App offers many solutions for giving feedback yet a face-to-face communication has proved to be most successful in this field.

To conclude the reasons behind Taxify's own communication and the drivers' opinion, it can be said that neither party considers there to be a constant two-way communication. In a sense that the company informs the drivers, clients and the public about the App, in terms of solutions, updates, markets and other highly business-related content. It is not done in order to start a conversation; their intention is to spread awareness. The two-way communication starts with a driver or a client approaching the company. And thus, the information spreading then becomes a dialogue as the drivers are seeking conversation.

4.3.4 Meaningful changes in communication

The Taxify staff and drivers were both asked whether there have been any significant changes in the communication since the start of Taxify. As stated by Taxify staff the biggest and most significant change has been the expansion of the Customer Support team. In the beginning Taxify was growing very rapidly and the company was not able to handle the workload and thus, could not be of service to everyone. That has made a vast difference because having a larger Customer Support team now helps the company to reach more people. Yet they are aware that it is still an issue that they have difficulty with, as people would expect them to respond faster. As the next development, the company could expand the team even more, so that the speed of the service could also improve.

The drivers' focus group also stated that the company responds them and the overall communication is good yet the responses from the company often arrive quite slowly after some time. The same 'feeling' mirrored through the Facebook groups as well. And even though it is clear that the company has an immense workload, the drivers cannot seem to grasp this fact and rather perceive it as ignorance. There was an evident feeling or tone with many Facebook posts that the drivers think that the company does not care about them enough. Having the classic digital labour idea that the company simply uses them to earn more profits. While the focus group attitude was much lighter, even though the 'feeling' of the company not caring was still there the participants seemed to think that every person makes their own career and depends on themselves while doing it.

Interestingly enough, when discussing what could be done better in the future the company found communication the field that still needs to develop the most. In order to reach more people faster and with more accurate information, "giving them information at the right time and right place, more event based" clarified the Automation and Communication Specialist.

The other participants also added that they wish to simplify the communication even further and thus, communicate a clear and honest message. Taking this into account, it is clear to see that the company is very much aware of the current situation and has already made efforts to improve the current conditions. From the attitudes and motivations of the employees it was evident that they do care about their drivers and take actions to make progress when working with them. One thing that they seem to overlook at the moment is how to communicate this care to the drivers as well.

4.4 Sub-Q3: How do Taxify drivers perceive the treatment they get from the company, do they believe the treatment is “fair” and what are the reasons given?

This subchapter includes the previous themes like characteristics, communication, precarious labour and is mostly related to relationships and support. The relations to each theme will be explained in the following text with examples of focus groups and Facebook groups. The drivers' general opinion shared during focus groups described Taxify's treatment positively. The most common keyword was clarity. Indicating that in every way of communication, Taxify shares their message in a clear way that does not usually raise additional questions from the drivers. This is how the Male Driver 2 perceives the situation:

The entire communication is very open and transparent. You have so many different channels where you can contact them, and you can reach them 24/7. I have never had the perception that your question would be left unanswered or that someone would not assist you. In that sense, they are an excellent company.

The drivers' focus group participants very clearly indicated that there is a high level of diverse support from Taxify to the drivers. The support can be divided into four sub-themes including technical, personal, vehicle and collaboration support. The technical support in regards of the App that is sent out as a standard information meant for every driver. That includes all the previously discussed messages about App updates, instructions on how to use the App, messages notifying drivers about prime ride times and driver meetups at Taxify. The personal support focuses on helping a specific driver to either solve an issue, give them specific information on how to improve their rides and communicating with the driver when he/she wishes to share constructive criticism with the company.

The collaboration form of support is offering the drivers various services that are useful for the job. The company informs their drivers of various collaborations and discount deals through many channels, making sure that the info reaches the drivers. The drivers shared more details:

In regards of the support, Taxify is a highly efficient organisation. They have a long list of companies who offer different kinds of discounts for Taxify drivers, for example insurance providers, car wash centres and various dining places. (Male Driver 2, Drivers' focus group)

They also had a very good deal with Olerex (an Estonian gas station chain), where the gas was 6 cents cheaper per litre, which is a huge discount considering it is a gas station chain. (Male Driver 3, Drivers' focus group)

The interviewed drivers stated that Taxify does take the drivers suggestions into account. And are trying to create solutions according to drivers' needs. One of the positive changes was created due to the drivers' suggestions was the opportunity for a driver to accept a new ride when they are completing the previous one. When previously the driver might have lost a ride because they were still completing one, then now that situation has been solved, which allows the drivers to accept thus make more rides and get higher earnings. In addition, Taxify has now created a demand based map, that shows the general city map according to which they drive in different zones. So that the driver would see where to ride to get higher tariffs for the ride. Thus, Taxify is trying to make the notifications very easy to follow for the drivers, hence the drivers can do more strategic rides supported by this information.

Taxify has created the Morning Coffee event in Tallinn in order to understand their current standing with the drivers. This shows a great example of how automated systems can also be balanced with face to face meetings to enhance communication in the digital economy. So that the drivers would have a real opportunity to interact with the company in addition to the digital communication solutions. This event provides an opportunity for the drivers to offer ideas of development and discuss the matters that need attention. As Taxify themselves said, this event is essential to the company to be able to constantly improve the service as well as the App. And as

much as this provides the company with useful information, it also gives the drivers an opportunity to be heard. The focus group drivers found that Taxify uses the drivers' feedback very efficiently. And were keen to notice the updates that the other drivers had asked for were later fulfilled. Providing more benefits to the drivers by doing so. One of the most significant and recent changes was done in the pricing model that is now based on the area and demand. Thus, for example the rides from the city centre on a Friday night give the drivers an opportunity to earn more because of the high demand.

The drivers Facebook groups dominantly discuss earnings and how the conditions for the drivers are not improving. Thus, there was also a strike in January 2018 to discuss these conditions and for drivers to create demands that would improve the current conditions. The event was not very successful, having just 50 participants. Taxify was not allowed to disclose their current drivers amount, therefore it is hard to estimate how small the representation of the drivers was. Yet there are much more than 50 drivers working when one would open Taxify App for example in Tallinn. Which leads to the conclusion that the strike was not a highly serious event and rather a gathering of Facebook critics. None of the interviewed drivers participated in the event, they read the information afterwards from the Facebook groups. Most of the focus group drivers judged the event and supported their previous argument stating that: "every driver makes their own career in Taxify." They also commented the notorious claims on the Facebook group where a driver said that he starts the week with -100 euros and ends the week with the same amount. The focus group drivers did not understand how a situation like that would be possible. Even the interviewed drivers who only drive during weekends can earn enough to gain profits. In addition to the descriptive information about the Facebook groups in the previous chapters, this strike is an even clearer example of the fact that the group content requires careful analysis before making conclusions, as collective representation can be manipulated and gamed by few dominant voices who in reality do not represent the majority of the drivers, rather the opposite. And thus, this creates an additional layer in the communicative challenges for an organisation.

4.4.1 Precariousness of the job

Taxify's current way of conducting business has both positive and negative elements for the drivers in regards of the precariousness of the digital labour. Depending on the market situation, Taxify may also introduce a feature if they see a necessity for it. The platform itself

morphs to suit the context and cannot be seen as a flat non-dynamic node in this analysis, this is instead a response to the globalisation of platformisation. As Taxify is active globally the countries have different issues and they try to create a solution that would solve specific problems. This was the reason behind creating the SOS button within the App, that is used in markets, such as South Africa, where there are safety issues for the drivers. There the competition between the taxi drivers and the private drivers has gotten very tense and dangerous, often involving physical violence or killings. Thus, an SOS button was added to the App which notifies the police. In addition to that Taxify organised self-defence training for the drivers as well. Overall, Taxify is trying to provide a good work environment for the drivers while adapting to the market needs. Here is how the Tech Support Engineer sees it: “The mentality of people is so different, so that’s why our approach to things on every market is different. It’s not one standard, it’s tailored to needs.”

The negative aspects usually surface when big regulatory changes are made. For example, when the government is introducing new regulations and is putting pressure on Taxify to comply. This situation recently emerged due to the vehicle and service provider permits that Taxify drivers need to have. But as the information from the government reached Taxify gradually and over a long period of time, it was difficult for Taxify to give a complete overview to the drivers as well. Therefore, the drivers were notified properly only about a week before the regulation took effect and they did not have sufficient time to comprehend what was needed of them when they already needed the permits.

4.5 Sub-Q4: How does the temporary digital work provided by Taxify impact drivers’ lives? How do they perceive this ‘gig’ labour?

The new sharing economy models have provided different ways for people to work more flexibly. From the previous subchapters, it is clear that most drivers provide rides for Taxify part-time. Thus, these people generally have a more traditional job (i.e. project managers, sales managers) and find Taxify an easy solution to increase their overall income. This means that those people use their leisure time to provide a transportation service, which leaves less time for their own personal matters. Doing this job from the leisure time also sets boundaries on when the driver provides the rides. For traditional workers, that means that they will most likely work during evenings and weekends, which has its own consequences. The interviewed drivers explained that the job is not for everyone, since even though the driver provides a ride, it also

heavily involves communication. Because a driver should stay calm, polite and collected regardless of the client's behaviour. One of the positive aspects about the job, that the drivers mentioned, was the opportunity to discuss a large set of topics with different clients. Especially, when conducting rides during the night, that is more straining for the driver, it was said to be refreshing to have conversations with the clients. After some time, the drivers also learned from the client's behaviour whether they were looking for conversation or not. Those experiences further developed the drivers' people skills. In case the client sat in the front seat, they were more likely to be friendly and interested in having a conversation. However, when the client sat in the backseat and barely greeted the driver, they mostly wanted to sit peacefully in the quiet during the whole ride. The drivers also said that the driving experience has been educating them about the diversity of Estonia as well. During their rides, they have had the opportunity to meet many internationals who live in Estonia. According to the drivers, the number of internationals was surprising to most and they also learned more information about those people and the reasons that have brought them to Estonia.

4.5.1 Drivers perception of the 'gig' labour

The dominant disposition in the driver focus groups was rather positive yet objective about the 'gig' labour and working for Taxify. The drivers have a neoliberal take on their position, stating that being a Taxify driver is a work that is almost entirely dependent on the driver themselves, and thus they have less expectations from the company. As it specifically relates to how much one agrees to contribute when using the App. The drivers in Facebook groups approach the situation slightly differently and are often discussing ways how Taxify should take more responsibility. However, this can also be a clear example of how the focus drivers explained the Facebook content that is generally created by critics where most drivers do not speak up due to the back-fence talk.

As previously discussed, the drivers see this position as a part-time or temporary job, in order to have an additional income. One of the reasons why the interviewed drivers would not want to be a full-time Taxify driver was because of the fact that they would then need to spend such a long period seated inside a car. This opinion is most likely related to the drivers age and the detail that they are all still rather young. As they stated it, "being a full-time transportation service provider is more of an old man career."

The driver's success is clearly related with their usage of the App. Therefore, knowing how to utilise it for making more strategic rides will also result in higher earnings. The system is created so that even if the driver's phone should accidentally turn off during the ride, the ride itself should still be registered. For the interviewees solutions like this were surprising and helpful at the same time. Which helped to avoid difficult situations where for example a ride will not be registered. Considering that using Taxify to provide rides requires the driver to be aware of the current traffic situation too. That suggests that drivers should have a good knowledge of other digital solutions that would allow them to stay updated throughout their driving period. Most often, the drivers use the Taxify and Waze, the traffic and navigation app based on community, in turns. That allows them to have an overview of the latest traffic matters in order to provide the rides more efficiently. As the drivers discussed, one needs to have good knowledge of how and what to use. This understanding comes after having experience as a Taxify driver when the person using multiple applications or car system options will find what works most efficiently for them and helps them conduct rides more easily.

The overall view of Taxify as a service provider is viewed very positively by drivers. Based on the reasoning that it does indeed offer a very easy option to have rides, for the driver and client both. Having a ride is an easy option and much faster option now. As instead of a dispatcher there now is an app that gives both parties a much clearer overview of the ride distance, length and fee. Since the App has widely spread across the market, the car availability and long waiting times are not generally an issue. Understandably they may still take place during weekend or other similar busy events yet it is not comparable to the previous taxi system. As previously discussed, the company has a driver training before people can start giving rides, during which the vehicles and the drivers both are examined. Which also ensures that a relatively new and intact vehicle is used for providing rides with a driver who also has been trained for the job. This has especially influenced the Estonian market, where many older taxi drivers were using old and out of shape cars to provide rides. Whereas now, the interviewed drivers believe that Taxify has raised the stakes for the whole market, by having specific car requirements that fit better with the clients' needs. The previous taxi market was quite diverse thus, it was difficult to know what a client will get before the car arrived. Now, this is all systematised and displayed in the App for the client to see who and which vehicle will be used for the ride. It also makes it relatively easier to find the car, especially when using the App during eventful times. Using the

rating system was considered to be one of the greatest parts of the Taxify system. Through that people will get the accurate rating, due to which the drivers believe “the incompetent drivers as well as the bad clients have disappeared.”

4.5.2 Main influences of the digital work

The drivers focus groups and Facebook forums both unanimously stated that working for Taxify mainly influences the vehicles that they are using. As a Taxify driver, one has the opportunity to either use their own car or rent a car from the company to provide the transportation service. The opinions of Taxify and the drivers vary about this topic. The company states that drivers have the ability to have higher profits driving their own car, since they then do not have the expense of renting a Taxify car. The drivers themselves consider the situation to be more complex. Especially when one has to pay monthly auto loans and wishes to maintain the value of the car that requires regular check-ups and car service visits at official auto body shops that are relatively expensive. And these types of expenses are standard for any car owner who wishes to uphold their car’s good condition. However, using a car to provide transportation services remarkably increases the mileage of the car, and quite rapidly as well. Additionally, when the drivers work during weekends and drive inebriated clients around then their heavy usage of the car doors eventually has its effect on the car’s condition too. And thus, the car service visits become more frequent, which means higher costs in a shorter amount of time for the drivers. Especially considering that most of the drivers use their car to make their full-time work rides and personal rides in addition to the transportation service they provide through Taxify. This, according to the drivers, is something that they noticed only after driving for some time. And once they understood the cost the first moments of realisation were quite troubling. In contrast, it all depends on what is the owner’s situation with the vehicle. If the car is already bought out the situation can be significantly different and more convenient for the driver. The Male Drivers 2 discusses his opinion on the matter:

I imagine that if do not have to pay the car loan, and have already bought the car out. Then you only need to buy fuel and might take your car to a second-rate, maybe even questionable auto body shop where you only pay for the most minimal check-up. Under those terms, being a Taxify driver can be very profitable.

Due to these circumstances, some drivers even acquired cars that scarcely passed the evaluation and were meant for the sole purpose of driving for Taxify. That allowed them to avoid damaging their own personal vehicle and allowed them to drive without worrying about the frequent car service visits, which eventually permitted them to conduct more rides and earn higher profits. This contradicts the general notion of sharing economy where underused resources are meant to be capitalised. In this case, it has enhanced consumption, pollution and traffic instead by adding more cars to the market. Even though, this is not the case with the majority of the drivers, it still begs to question the sustainability factor of this economy and whether it indeed exists.

This behaviour was not perceived positively by those drivers who were trying to uphold the service quality and were using their new cars to provide the rides. The drivers also discussed their own client experiences with “Taxify wolves” which is how the full-time Taxify drivers are called. And professed that they were able to have long conversations about being as a Taxify driver, during which they learned that the “wolves” profit is around three thousand euros per month. That is a significantly different amount compared to a part-time driver. Still, the interviewed drivers clearly stated that that is the earned profit, however, how much of has to be used for car services and other similar matters depends solely on the vehicle the driver is using. This situation is highly relatable to the global communism phenomenon. As Taxify is using the drivers’ personal property through the App and making it the community’s property when the drivers provide rides for the clients, thus using it according to the society’s needs. Which makes it seem like the so far theoretical concept is actually taking place through such digital platforms.

4.5.3 Drivers’ suggestions regarding the digital labour

One of the main suggestions was made in regards of the earnings. The drivers discuss this topic the most on all channels, thus all Taxify drivers have that in common. The focus group drivers pointed out that because they know the market situation they also understand that it is difficult to make a big change in terms of the earnings. Yet their experience with short trips is receiving tip from the clients who feel bad to pay such a small amount. So, according to the drivers’ experience they believe that the clients would continue to use Taxify, even after the prices are made higher. A small change might not make a big difference for the client but it could for the driver.

The driver part of the App is developed very thoroughly yet the drivers find that the client location function on the App could be further developed. Mainly as a reminder, for the client to check if they are indeed where the map displays them or if they should relocate the pin. At the moment, the App sometimes guides the drivers to wrong locations while the client is in front of another house or on the other side of a square instead. There have been also occasions where tourists have order Taxify cars to the Old Town pedestrian area or similar locations that are prohibited to cars. Thus, the system should be more controlled to be able to avoid these types of situations, that would save time and make the ride overall more efficient. Or automation systems could take these points into account, so that the check is done within and controlled by the system instead.

5. Discussion

The main purpose of this case study was to understand and analyse the relationship between Taxify and its labourers, and to additionally discover whether exploitation takes place or not. Taxify's policies were analysed in relation to exploitation avoidance and compared with drivers' knowledge about the matter. Furthermore, examining which strategies Taxify uses, how they communicate and treat the digital labourers and if its considered fair by the drivers or not. Focusing on the drivers' role, the impact of temporary digital work and their perceptions of 'gig' labour has been researched. To start off, the implications of the findings will be discussed and compared with already available literature. One central theme was conceptualised from the results of the first research question and three paradoxes were constructed after the evaluation of all research questions combined.

This case study contributes to the currently scarce information of digital labour on a transportation platform from the workers' perspective. Since, to my knowledge, it is the first research based first of all on Taxify, and that highlights the digital transportation platform labourers perception through an empirical analysis rather than basing the evaluations on secondary sources. As this study focused on bringing the labourers' perception in comparison with the company's opinion, it also contributes by informing Taxify and other transportation platforms on what the workers value and thus, advising companies on which solutions to establish.

5.1 Implications of findings

5.1.1 Meaningful relationships

After critically giving thought to the findings, various matters surfaced. The analysis of results provided an understanding that even though companies in the sharing economy are known to make use of people's leisure time to earn money (Kvasny, 2013) the drivers who work for Taxify do not perceive it negatively, for them it is an opportunity instead. Notably, the big difference compared to the communism the world faced less than a century ago is in the attitude of the platform provider. It might not seem to be the case with Uber, who is known for their exploitation of digital workers (Griswold 2014). However, with Taxify it is clear that the systems for their digital labourers can be improved and it is important to highlight the way they work

hard in order to enhance their service and provide a more productive workplace for their drivers. Those are some examples that work better than those of their competitors, namely Uber.

The drivers have the opportunity to inform Taxify of their ideas or problems on almost every possible digital channel that is currently available. That the company then uses to provide new options to the App that can increase the information a driver can get from the App and thus, gives the drivers additional information on how to make smarter decisions when planning their rides. The drivers believe that the App, its useful and wide functions to be the most positive aspect of the job. The interviewed drivers gave multiple examples on updates that Taxify has created due to the drivers' suggestion and considered the company to offer great support for drivers. So, it can be said that Taxify's strategy to be nice to drivers (Chutel, 2016) is actually working and is not created as a PR stunt.

As there are multiple similar transportation platforms to choose from when one decides to be a transportation service provider, the driver has to make the most suitable choice for themselves. This regularly happens during the training where the person can get a proper sense of the platform provider and of the actual job. It is the same for Taxify. They usually conduct the background search before but still have the chance to meet the potential drivers for the first time during the training. Therefore, it can be concluded that the driver and the company indeed select each other as Alosi (2016) suggested. The drivers' first impression of Taxify will most likely take place during the training, so it is essential for the company to take this under consideration. The interviewed drivers also stated that even though the other communication forms are very supportive and driver-oriented then the conduction of the training process could be conducted with more care. Currently, it is very goal oriented, which is indeed understandable for the content part of the training. However, the training staff should use their overall enthusiastic and motivating attitude while conducting the training as well, not just during the other parts of communication.

Taxify, like its competitors, has also chosen to expand to certain markets in order to assist in developing the foreign economy by creating jobs in areas of need (Graham, Hjorth & Lehdonvirta, 2017). Since the culture is different in those locations, Taxify takes extra measures in trying to be available for drivers. In areas like South Africa the drivers are using their opportunity to visit the Taxify office fully, in order to get a better sense of the App. According to the interviewed Taxify staff, there is a long line of people waiting for the office to open every

day, to be able to receive answers for their inquiries. Offering the required amount of support to their drivers is essential to the Taxify's business. The company has also taken steps to adapt to different markets by and find this to be very important in for example ensuring the drivers safety. Due to the drivers' feedback and open communication between the drivers and Taxify the App now has an SOS button in markets such as Mexico and South Africa.

5.1.2 Paradoxes of the communication between Taxify and their drivers

Three themes were found within the findings that have a paradoxical nature, that are all connected to the central theme of meaningful relationships that was discussed in the previous subchapter and partly to rest of the themes that were discussed in results as well. Comparing the company and the drivers, it is understandable that the two would have different opinions. Yet these paradoxes bring out the participants' opposing opinions or situations within their own representative group that identified underlying tensions and issues. Only the third paradox compares the clashing opinions of Taxify and the drivers.

The realistic focus group drivers vs. critical Facebook group participants

The first and most noticeable paradox that was identified from the results relates to the different perception of focus group and Facebook group drivers. The interviewed drivers all expressed quite clearly that every Taxify driver is in charge of their own career. They also recognised that support and helpful information from the company is a part of that named success. As well as being informed and keeping themselves up to date on different changes or updates that allow drivers to earn higher profits when driving according to a specific system. Being content with the form and amount of the information they receive from Taxify, they believe the communication to be transparent and well-organised. While they feel that they can rely on the company when needed, the job mostly requires independent spirit and self-assurance to organise one's rides with efficient strategy. Thus, the interviewed drivers professed that the size of the earnings and the balance between earnings and expenses relies all on the driver's motivation. In their opinion, Taxify has, especially recently, made highly useful updates that help to balance the situation by offering ways to make higher profits, the driver simply needs to use the opportunity themselves. Their main claim was that this is a part-time work for most people and as they register to be a Taxify driver they should already understand that the job is self-dependent. The Taxify simply offers them a platform the drivers can use to earn an additional income instead of leisure activities.

The Facebook posts in the Taxify groups often discuss the drivers' earnings and the lack of support from Taxify. The content is mainly critical or satirical, stating complaints of negative situation the drivers are in. Having a complete opposite view of the interviewed drivers, they believe that Taxify is responsible for their lack of earnings or other related problems. Oftentimes, the discussions go quite far from the Taxify business model, where the users discuss Taxify's responsibility, or lack thereof. Which makes the discussions troubling, is the perception that the users seem to treat Taxify as any regular work provider, often forgetting that they only provide the platform and drivers should mostly rely on themselves. Those post also included comments from drivers who tried to explain that Taxify is not their official employer, thus they cannot be expected to behave like it either. Yet this type of opposing comments are more of a rarity within the groups. This goes together with the information that the focus group drivers provided, according to which only a small number of drivers are vocal inside those groups, and they are usually the ones who use the sites in order to complain not change the drivers' situation or their own behaviour to achieve better results. The interviewed drivers' opinion was verified with the Taxify strike in January 2018, when only about 50 drivers participated.

The most probable reason why the Facebook group content differs from the focus groups, is the diverse group of users that the Facebook groups have. And the fact that in most cases there are dominant users, usually with an anonymous profile, who are most active and create discussions on these groups. One troubling part is also the uncertainty of the user roles. Since their opinion differed from the interviewed drivers so drastically, and mostly without reliable arguments, they might not be active drivers either. Especially so, because the Facebook discussions frequently include information that is not related to the current situation or provide examples with absolutely extreme situations that seldom exist.

Caring about the drivers vs. inability to demonstrate it

The company's main driving force behind the innovation is the wish to provide a better service and have a high-quality app, as that is the key to having many users. The company is using all channels possible to enable an open communication with their drivers and make themselves accessible to the App users, meaning for both drivers and clients. The company updates their app mainly according to the drivers' suggestions. Thus, they are constantly trying to find new ways to improve the user experience and tailor the App according to drivers' needs, so they could use the App efficiently. For getting feedback, the company has organised monthly

driver gatherings that inform the company of the issues that the drivers might be having. According to Taxify many changes are made after receiving ideas from the drivers' gatherings at the Taxify office. Therefore, having direct contact with the drivers has helped the company to be more resourceful in terms of drivers' needs.

Taxify's biggest change in communication has been the hiring of many new Customer Service team members. That was done in order to reach even more drivers and to meet their needs better than before. As Taxify is continuing to grow at a relatively fast pace, they have acknowledged that this is an issue that still needs their full attention, because the number of drivers that needs assistance is constantly growing. And it is essential to the organisation that the drivers' needs are met, as they are the ones who the platform depends on. In general, the company wishes to keep their drivers happy and be as beneficial to the drivers as they can.

Even though the company has made themselves available for the clients and drivers, there are still many drivers who do not feel that the company values or cares for the drivers as much as they should. Taxify also discussed many ways in which the driving force behind the action is their care for the drivers, yet it is not explicitly brought out and can be easily missed by the drivers. This is a situation that Taxify could improve with campaigns or communication that clearly indicates the care and support. As one of their future goals, the Taxify staff said they wish to communicate in such a transparent way that it would easily be understandable to any driver. Therefore, they understand that there is room for development, and which to make changes in the near future to improve their relationship with the drivers even more.

Shedding responsibility of the machinery vs. helping with vehicle maintenance

As any other transportation platform, Taxify is providing a platform which the drivers can use in order to provide a transportation service. There are solutions that makes Taxify stand out from their competitors. The organisation differs from the regular providers by offering a rental service for drivers who wish to use the App but do not have a vehicle of their own. The company is known to be as helpful as they can in order to make it possible for a motivated person to become a driver. Yet using a personal car or renting one from Taxify still leaves most of the responsibility on the drivers. Particularly so, as it is even stated in the Taxify's Driver Agreement that the driver has to ensure the good state and obtain required services (i.e. insurance) for their vehicle themselves. While Taxify has the right to examine the car and make demands based on the condition of it to the driver. In a situation when a driver does not comply, their right to

provide rides might be terminated. From a business perspective, this is a very smart decision, since having that responsibility globally with a large number of drivers would not be beneficial to the company. Specifically, keeping in mind that Taxify is a platform provider not an employer of the drivers.

The biggest downside to being a Taxify driver was said to be the vehicle expenses. The drivers said that it is quite difficult to estimate its portion of the profits when starting out but after a while it becomes clear and takes away a substantial amount of the profits. Generally, the drivers use their everyday car to provide the service and according to Taxify's vehicle standards, the cars are usually quite new. This provides a big challenge when the car owner wishes to maintain the car's good condition while being a driver. Mainly because it requires regular car service appointments that one has to start making more often while providing a transportation service that increases the vehicle's mileage significantly. In order to help and balance the situation Taxify also provides drivers with many deals through collaborations that make the maintenance of the vehicle considerably cheaper. Yet offering a car wash discounts or great deals with the insurance companies are not of utmost importance for the drivers. One of the most useful solutions that Taxify offered was the discount deal with the Estonian gas station chain, which made a substantial difference and what drivers found surprising yet highly useful. As that deal allowed them to save money on the gas, their vehicle expenses were said to be significantly lower than before.

6. Conclusion

This study has proven that the Soviet era lifestyle and influences of communism are very evident in today's sharing economy. Especially in terms of drivers providing a transportation service for the "needs" of society (Fuchs, 2014). It would be incorrect to state that economic difficulty has no relation to the platform work, but the sharing of underused resources is usually driven by the wish to spend one's leisure time more efficiently and to earn an additional income at the same time. The wish to create a more sustainable society has created many different platforms to provide work more flexibly and Taxify is a great example of such organisations.

When comparing the existing literature to the results of this study there is a significant difference on how the transportation service providers are portrayed and what their perceptions of the job are. This study aimed to understand the relationship between Taxify and its drivers and whether the labourers are exploited by the company or not. The research focused on the driver's perspective, as most previous studies had either focused on the organisations side or conducted theoretical studies. In order to reach the aim of the thesis, a qualitative approach, relying mostly on focus groups, was taken through a single case study. The digital labour and platform industry, as well as the geographical context of Taxify was thoroughly examined to discover the company and drivers' dynamics in Estonia.

The relationship between Taxify and its drivers can be explained as transparent, supportive, accessible and useful. The analysis about the relationship showed that the Taxify drivers are not exploited by the company. Yet this misconception exists due to the regulations the company has with its drivers. Which clearly divide the drivers and Taxify. However, Taxify has many extra solutions to show their care for the drivers that are not regulated, thus they are not mentioned in the conditions or regulations and can often be overlooked. Taxify also has policies that defend or minimise the harm that the client can cause to the driver. Especially so, because everything regarding the vehicle and the ride is the driver's own responsibility, thus they are covered in other aspects that the company is able to control or assist in.

The company and the drivers have an active multi-channel communication, which tends to be one-sided until one party needs additional information or gives feedback. The general idea behind the communication is for the drivers to receive support, in order use the platform as efficiently as possible. In addition, the labourers are encouraged to discuss problems and suggest solutions that would improve their work on the platform. As the company is perceived to be

easily accessible and helpful, the drivers believe that Taxify treats them fairly. There is still room for improvement, in order to provide a faster customer service that would solve the drivers' issues sooner and reach more people.

The majority of digital labourers are using the platform to earn additional income and are therefore part-time drivers. The solutions give the drivers' almost full control to decide when and how long to drive. The labourer complies with the terms by meeting at least the minimum requirements of the amount one has to drive in order to be a Taxify driver. The rest is dependent on the driver, using insights provided by Taxify to help with the ride efficiency. Therefore, the labourers find the work to be flexible and more about sharing their underused resources to use their leisure time more productively. Even though they are using Taxify's platform, they are still in charge of their own career themselves, which is why they see the 'gig' labour as an opportunity.

The study's theoretical implications are that it partly supplements the existing research on digital labour, sharing economy and platform labour by discussing the regulations, overview and innovative sides of the work. The research also complements it by uncovering the drivers' perceptions and empirically evaluating the relationship between the company and the labourers. Additionally, discovering paradoxes among the drivers and within the company as well. And even if the paradoxes show that there are variations on how drivers perceive the whole platform experience, they were keen to suggest that the work efficiency and income essentially depend on the labourer and not on Taxify. While the company takes care of their drivers by making changes according to the drivers' suggestions, they still need to learn how to show that they indeed value their drivers. The digital platforms have given a plethora of options for labourers of all types. Being a Taxify driver principally requires a driver's license and everything else can be obtained if necessary. The simplicity of the platform has created the rapid expansion that will most likely continue, as people are continuously looking for ways to democratise their choice. The businesses like Taxify now need to understand how to provide a form of 'care' that would make the digital labourers feel valued. And try to come up with solutions that would ease the risk and weight that those workers carry. This study showed that the labourers are highly aware that their work is their own responsibility and that they are creating their own income. However, they lack recognition from the company and when that would change it might bring significant positive changes for the drivers and the company both.

1.1 Recommendations for the industry professionals

The information that was gathered for this study gives opportunity to make recommendations on what platform providers similar to Taxify could improve in order to please their drivers even more. The two ways they could make the situation better is to communicate that they value their drivers and to create collaborations that would help the drivers with the vehicle maintenance.

Taxify drivers think of the company as a supportive platform provider. Yet they do not feel valued by the company, even though Taxify claims to work towards helping their drivers and meeting their needs as much as they can, in order to provide a good transportation service. The current issue is most likely caused by the fact that Taxify expects their actions to convey their meaning behind them by itself. However, being active in a digital labour field, especially providing platform work, the company should understand that in order to break the mould of the general perception of having “digital slaves” that should be made clearer in their communication. Since at the moment the drivers perceive the shared information useful and feel like they have the company’s support. Nevertheless, not a single driver mentioned that they feel like the company cares about them or their work, rather that they are simply perceived as the platform users.

Furthermore, the relationship could be further improved by more useful collaborations. If Taxify is already trying to aid the drivers with better prices regarding the maintenance, they should consider starting partnerships with services that could make a bigger change for the drivers. Therefore, instead of offering them great deals at different dining places, the company could provide a discount with car body shops and other similar organisations that at the moment take away a considerable amount of driver earnings. Using this method, the drivers would also feel more appreciated, as the company would be assisting them in matters that influence their earnings a lot. Thus, the drivers would also be able to have a higher income and spend smaller amount on maintenance.

1.2 Limitations

This study has certain limitations that need to be taken into account. As this research is conducted using a qualitative interpretative design, indicating that the data analysis is of subjective nature, which involves a risk of personal bias of the researcher. Nevertheless, the study was executed with utmost rigor, objectivity and consistency when conducting focus groups

and analysing the gathered materials. The methods and interpretations were transparent and clearly stated to ensure a consistent and objective analysis process. Taking the previous theory into account while critically discovering the ‘true meaning’ behind the data. Thus, based on the discussed arguments, it can be concluded that this research is reliable and credible.

Since this study used a combination of focus groups and content analysis, the findings were diverse and focus groups proved to be more reliable. Ideally, the focus groups could have been larger, to solidly validate the Facebook group content’s one-sidedness or to further confirm the found patterns. Due to the choice of method and time constraints creating larger focus groups was not possible. Because the Taxify drivers were recruited through the Facebook group it set some restrictions, mainly in regards of age. Future researchers could try to find more diverse set of drivers by using a different approach of recruitment.

All participants of the study were Estonian or working at the Estonian office, thus some of the findings might be solely specific to the Estonian market. By conducting a global study of the field or the company, more culturally general assessments could be made.

1.3 Recommendations for future research

The field of digital labour and platform work is only growing, thus more people are trying to provide means to understand the current situation on a deeper level. Even though plenty of studies have looked into this field, there is still a need for more empirical studies, that could help to educate the public and the labourers, as well as the companies.

Any future researcher who might be interested in this topic could conduct an international study, as that would provide more general and comprehensive results of the issue. There is still a lot to discover in regards of the drivers’ perspective and their role in the digital platform work. This study’s method proved that the focus groups were a much more reliable and less biased source of information compared to the Facebook groups. Thus, the future studies should gather their information straight from the source rather than using online sources, as previous studies have done so far. This is most likely one of the reasons why the status of a transportation platform worker has thus far portrayed rather negatively. Where in this case, the drivers saw the job as an opportunity instead.

A comparative study looking at different transportation platform providers and drivers could also give more significant insights and bring out patterns or differences between labourers and the companies’ whose platform they are using.

After discussing the paradoxes regarding this field, the future research could use them to study the issues further or treat them as the starting point for their own research methods (i.e. interview guides) and sample selection.

1.4 Strengths

This study took a more empirical approach by directly studying the platform providing company and their drivers. In addition to learning about the previous, more theoretical framework of the field to create the research design, this study was able to discuss significantly different findings due to the direct source. Instead of theorising about the topics surrounding the platform workers, this study was able to obtain diverse data that offers the labourers own viewpoint and contradicts some of the previous studies. Including the company and the workers in the study, allowed the researcher to verify the data collected from both sides and offer one complete picture of the situation.

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Appendix A – Focus group guide for Taxify employees

Part I: The introduction and Taxify in general

1. What is your position in the company?
2. How long have you worked for Taxify?
3. Why did you decide to start working for Taxify? What motivated you?
4. What is the company's mission? What are the core values of Taxify (in your opinion)?
5. Are the company's values also apparent in the working life? Does the company work according to what they have "promised"?
6. What would you say is your firm's key to success?
7. How does Taxify differ from its competitors in your eyes (i.e. Uber)?

Part II: The drivers and their role in Taxify

8. How would you describe an average Taxify employee? How would you describe and average Taxify driver? Do they have something in common?
9. How does a driver begin his/her job at Taxify? What are the initial steps?
10. How do you usually find new drivers, is there a "most popular" method? Referrals, etc? Do you enquire about this when new drivers apply?
11. During the training, is there something specific that has proven to be difficult for the drivers to get used to? Or on the contrary, is there something that most drivers learn very fast?
12. Is there a specific type of driver that you prefer? Or a stereotype that has proven to have "good Taxify driver" qualities?
13. Have you noticed any trends or communalities between the drivers? Is it possible the generalise them with one word?
14. How many drivers are currently working for Taxify (in Estonia)?
15. How is your job related to the drivers?
16. What kind of support do you offer to the drivers? (i.e. loans for taxis, leasing taxis, insurance, training, etc)
17. Does Taxify have any kind of policies in place to protect the drivers (and avoid exploitation)?

Part III The communication between Taxify and its drivers

18. How does the company communicate with the drivers?
19. Why have you chosen these channels? Are the methods effective?
20. What are the most common topics discussed by the drivers? What are the most dominant positive and negative issues?
21. Would you say that the dialogue between you (the company) and the drivers is equal? Do both sides get to share their thoughts equally?
22. How are you using the drivers feedback, in case you receive constructive feedback/criticism?
23. How do you manage negative comments or critique on the communication channels? Do you take action in regards of that criticism?
24. What is the purpose of the Facebook groups (forums)?
25. Who are the main communicators in those groups (the company, the drivers or the clients)? How would you want the communication to look like (which participants should be more active)?
26. Have you considered any alternatives to the current communication methods? Do you have any plans to change the ways of communication in the future?
27. What kind of major improvements in communication have you made since the start of the company in 2013? What are the biggest changes that Taxify has made?
28. What is your vision for the next couple of years? What would you like to accomplish in terms of the communication with the drivers?

Appendix B – Focus group guide for Taxify drivers

Part I: The introduction and the drivers in general

1. How old are you?
2. What is your educational background?
3. How long have you been a Taxify driver?
4. Are you a full-time Taxify driver or is it a side job for you? On average how many hours do you work per week? Do you perceive this as a temporary job?
5. Why did you decide to start working for Taxify? What motivated you?
6. How did your career in Taxify began? What were the initial steps?
7. Was there something that was difficult during the training or when you were starting out? How did you solve your problem?

Part II: The drivers and their work at Taxify

8. What are the main challenges when you are working with the Taxify app?
9. What kind of support does Taxify offer you/has offered you? (i.e. loans for taxis, leasing taxis, insurance, training, etc)
10. Taxify's goal is to make transportation as easy as possible, do you think they're succeeding?
11. What is your view on the automation of the vehicles?
12. How does Taxify differ from its competitors in your eyes (i.e. Uber)? Have you previously worked for any of the competitors?
13. What is the most difficult/most easy part of being a Taxify driver?

Part III The communication between Taxify and its drivers

14. How does Taxify communicate with you? How do you communicate/reach the company?
15. Do you think the communication is effective? Would you want it to change in any way? Could there be some improvements?
16. In which situations do you communicate with the company? What are the most dominant positive and negative issues?

17. Would you say that the dialogue between you (the drivers) and Taxify is equal? Do both sides get to share their thoughts equally?
18. Do you feel like the communication is useful? Is it helping you with your job?
19. Have you participated in any of the communication/feedback sessions that Taxify holds at their Tallinn office?
20. Have you noticed if and how Taxify is using the drivers feedback? Have you seen Taxify taking any actions according to the feedback?
21. Do you communicate with other drivers? If so, what are the main channels where you do that?
22. Do you participate in the conversation on Taxify's Facebook groups (forums)? What is your opinion about the groups?
23. Have you ever engaged in collective bargaining with Taxify? Have you ever needed to? And if so, how (on Facebook or at feedback sessions)?
24. What kind of major improvements (in communication) has Taxify made since you started working there?
25. What in your opinion should be Taxify's mission for the next couple of years? What would improve the service and/or drivers' position?

Appendix C – An overview of the focus group participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Level of education	Place of residence	Doing additional work
Social Media Manager	23	Male	Bachelor's degree	Estonia	N/A
Automation & Communication Specialist	23	Male	Bachelor's degree	Estonia	N/A
Tech Support Engineer	25	Female	Bachelor's degree	Estonia	N/A
Male Driver 1	21	Male	Pursuing the Bachelor's degree	Estonia	No
Male Driver 2	30	Male	Pursuing the Bachelor's degree	Estonia	Yes
Male Driver 3	27	Male	Middle school	Estonia	Yes
Male Driver 4	21	Male	Pursuing the Bachelor's degree	Estonia	No
Female Driver	24	Female	Pursuing the Bachelor's degree	Estonia	Yes

Appendix D – Coding Tree

