

Impact of Demographic Characteristics on Platform Dependence and Earnings Stability among Tourist Vehicle Drivers in the Nilgiri District

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Abstract-- Digital services have changed the way it works for passenger transport which involved jobs matched with customers demands and drivers get work digitally. The change has made it possible to make trips for drivers of tourist vehicles as well as making them more reliant on customer connections through the applications. This paper discusses platform dependence and earnings stability of tourist vehicle drivers in the Nilgiri district focusing on the demographic influence. The type of research used is categorized as quantitative study and sampling method used in this study is Judgement sampling with respondents being drivers who engaged in the study was 249 people. The study involved seven indicators platform dependence and five measures for earnings stability. The group comparison is done using composite scores with the low, moderate and high categories being maintained for association testing. The analysis used involved percentage analysis, descriptive analysis, chi square analysis, independent sample t test and one way analysis of variance. The outcome suggests that the platform dependence is relatively high and that the earnings stability of the responses were low to moderate. The marital status, age and education show selected differences in the mean scores and a significant association occurs between the platform dependence and earnings stability. The results revealed digital platforms have the potential to increase access to a range of tourist trip opportunities and not consistently. The research points out the need for locally attuned policy options to decrease over-reliant channel dependence and enhance predictable earnings for tourist transport.

Keywords-- Platform dependence, Earnings stability, Digital platforms, Demographic characteristics Nilgiri District.

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of the digital intermediary has rapidly transformed not just from a complementary booking channel but has become a way of organising most of the work of passenger transport transportation. The location based platforms help drivers to find customers in real-time, transform search, allocation and payment to data-driven processes. This can cut down on the drivers' uncertainty in looking for passengers who can redirect access to work and non-worker controlled system.

This is significant for tourist transport as it is geographically concentrated and is dependent on the tourist flow.

The digital visibility could increase the benefit for a driver whilst entrenching their dependency into the same channel for trip opportunities. Taxi and delivery work was among the areas highlighted by the ILO as forms of location-based platform work and it highlighted a shift in work allocation and the economic risk distribution between companies and workers as a result of the use of digital platforms (International Labour Organization, 2021). The working on a platform is perceived as a technology preference and condition of employment.

There is income generation is likewise an important question as it is clear that more use of trips does not ensure that income is generated and kept stable. The recently conducted studies in these three countries (India, Indonesia and Kenya) have revealed drivers have increased their labour supply and platform work has been seen to be more profitable in terms of monthly earnings. The margin of improvement for hourly returns is not necessarily proportionate because the higher costs of operating and longer working periods are an offset. The evidence reveals that platform driving functions as a financial safety net during downturns of the labour market without being always secure line of work (Adhvaryu et al., 2026). The tourist vehicle operators are subjected to variability due to the fluctuation of tourist flows from one site to another from season to season. The platform bookings can help spread out demand which will not take away any fluctuation in tourist arrivals. The stability of earnings in this research is thus meant to signify the frequency and predictability of earnings not in a year but the regularity of earnings.

The Indian context will find this relationship to be very pertinent based on recent work in Delhi compares low-skilled platform and non-platform workers which concludes that platform workers earn a daily earnings premium.



The study uncovered that the higher gross earnings associated with greater economic insecurity (Chaudhary et al., 2025) which assessed the relationship between wages, working time, training characteristics and socio-demographic factors. This mix challenges the notion of an increase in digital access and income security going hand in hand. The tourist vehicle drivers will be able to use platforms to get more customers and uneven monthly receipts.

There is an aspect of employment that may feature in platform operations where even if drivers are not formally employed by the platform, employment control is relevant to the platform operations. The study on the Indian App-based Taxi industry has found that with no traditional supervision, behaviours of the drivers and the earnings opportunity can be influenced through automated profiling, targeted incentives and information asymmetry (Parth & Bathini, 2021). The bottom-line impact is that drivers react to those applications to get a signal from them. The algorithmic control as such is not attempted to be assessed in this research. It rather focuses on how dependent tourist vehicle drivers are on platforms when it comes to generating trips and how their dependency on platforms may be associated with income continuity. The demographical dimension is included as drivers have different background and value of access to platform as well as the ability to absorb an income change may be affected.

This study has been concentrated in the Nilgiri District where the mobility of the tourist relies to a large extent on road transport between the scattered destinations. The research formulates research topic around the work organisation of tourist vehicles and stability of income of the taxi-drivers. The analysis is conducted on the basis of three objectives. The demographic comparisons are made to further these goals not to make each individual characteristic an individual research issue.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The platform dependence occurs when there are fewer and fewer ways that customers can be accessed digitally. Even if drivers have in theory or practice the right to work off line dependence may develop. The qualitative study across India revealed customers have increasingly shifted from street hailing to auto-rickshaw matching through apps. The impact of the market change has increased the costliness of exit from the platform and it has reduced the impact of the formal independence (Muralidhar et al., 2022).

This evidence is particularly important for the tourist driving sector as customers are looking for transportation prior to the travel experience with digital tools. The platform can thus be useful not just for allocating trips but it controls the visibility to potential passengers. The three factors involving trip generation, customer acquisition and continuity of booking opportunities are used in this study to summarize this dependence of behaviour and market dependence.

There are differences in dependence between transport markets. This field study in the platformised taxi market in Oslo identified and interviewed a group of taxi drivers who could access more than one platform and who could secure work outside of platforms as well. This field study in the Oslo taxi market which is highly platformized, identified and interviewed taxi drivers who were able to access several platforms and secure work from non-platform sources as well. They were able to easily move between channels which decreased the appearance of algorithmic control despite allocation rules being unclear (Oppegaard, 2026). The ability to obtain this implication is beneficial in the Nilgiri setting as the tourist drivers might even mix the hotel calls and calls from the platforms. The driver uses the application frequently but the other sources of customers are strong where driver might be economically independent. The dependency is measured through the use of a number of indicators rather than dividing drivers into a category of platform users and non-users.

The claim that carriers can move between platforms offers another level of defence against dependence, but there is cost of switching. The multi-homing and switching costs have been shown to affect labour supply and market share of platforms and driver welfare through structural modelling of ride-hailing drivers. The less frictions allow workers to adjust to platform conditions whilst more frictions may prevent workers from being able to switch to less preferable conditions. The obstacles can be encountered by tourist vehicle drivers that different services involve a different customer rating, account history and operating procedure. The platform dependence can thus be due to sunk switching costs as well as technological familiarity. It examines their observable effect on the drivers sense of effort to stay in business.

The competing digital channels may create biasing shifts in socio-demographic groups with regard to how they allocate work between the different channels. The city-wide study of ride-sourcing drivers in Hangzhou examined platform switching behavior of ride-sourcing drivers through multi-platform data which revealed that there is a relationship between driver characteristics, income and waiting-time characteristics.

The results showed that one single particular operating factor contributed to the selection of which platform to use and that individual attributes played a role in the choice of a multi-homing platform (Yu et al., 2021). This offers a direct means of analyzing difference by demographics concerning platform. The digital literacy and the inclination to go along with customers relying on apps may be different among the generations. Drivers' readiness to understand platform interfaces of income making could be modified by provision of education. The demographic analysis is employed as a comparative evaluation and not based on a premise that demographic factors necessarily have a standalone effect on economic outcomes.

The earning stability reflects the amount of regularity of the income during normal working cycles. This is not the same as a high earning on a day to day basis due to a temporary demand increase. The income from these jobs fluctuated with the demand for the workers and job locations making ride-hailing drivers one of the most burdensome groups. The drivers tried to address this uncertain situation by planning and positioning themselves strategically but an algorithmic allocation still presented significant uncertainty to many drivers (Cameron & Meuris, 2026). This research uses stability measured in terms of consistency, predictability and continuity in the face of less demand. This treatment is particularly applicable to tourist transport where monthly earnings are likely to fluctuate even if those for the busy season are good.

The digital rewards can help to temporarily secure earnings and boost reliance on system regulations. The mechanism can be economically interesting as participation happens while simultaneously increasing the cost of reducing engagement (Maffie, 2024). The relationship sought is therefore only empirical not one that is necessarily assumed to be uniformly beneficial. The study that created market model to test conditions in the New York City and Seattle marketplaces which showed that some cases minimum-earnings regulations can enhance driver incomes. It also lead to higher idleness and have a potential influence on the marketplace. (Asadpour et al., 2022). The earnings-stability scale used here thus includes continuity in times of weaker demand, in addition to floor covering perceived adequate income in times of normal demand. The demographic differences are important since opportunities of alternatives vary between workers. The workers that were offered more stable alternatives are having a higher level of education reduced the likelihood of staying in the job (Shome et al., 2026). These variables provide the analysis for determining whether there is evidence for different average dependence/reliability scores

for meaningful categories of drivers. The immediate impact was income consequentialism and algorithmic management which has an impact on worker experience of the digital labour. The findings indicate that platform economies have an impact on workers both economically and behaviorally (Li et al., 2023). This research is a conscious narrow down of the analysis to the aspects of economic need and earnings continuity.

III. RESEARCH GAP

There are many studies providing evidence relating to algorithmic control, switching behaviour and driver earnings while these are typically investigated in isolation from one another. The platform dependence studies tend to be on control or multi-homing and earnings research. There is a need to focus on understanding a brief assessment at the driver level about their dependence upon digital channels for booking in comparison to their perceived income stability. The evidence is largely focused in high-density cities. In a hill destination a different demand structure is implemented due to the linkage of tourist transport options to the flows of tourists and destination-specific mobility. The present research aims at filling this gap by creating two composite constructs and by means of a demography comparison approach.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ◆ To assess the level of platform dependence among tourist vehicle drivers in the Nilgiri District.
- ◆ To examine the extent of earnings stability among tourist vehicle drivers.
- ◆ To evaluate the relationship between platform dependence and earnings stability among tourist vehicle drivers.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative approach that was field-based with tourist vehicle drivers in Nilgiri District as the target groups. The number of field sample was 249 respondents determined by judgement sampling due to the absence of a complete and up-to date tourist vehicle driver population list for probability sampling. The respondents have been included only if tourist passenger transport is part of their work on a regular basis and where they have first-hand experience of access to or booking of online platforms. The driver contact points include designated taxi stands and hotel pick-up points and main tourists movement areas.

There is an effort for representation across age and educational groups to be able to make comparisons across demographics. The numerical results of 249 drivers closely represent the actual design that was finalised for such manuscript development. The statistical tools used in the study are percentage analysis, Cronbach's alpha, Chi-square test, independent sample t-tests and One-way ANOVA.

VI. HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant association between the level of platform dependence and the level of earnings stability.
2. There is no significant difference in platform dependence between married and unmarried tourist vehicle drivers.
3. There is no significant difference in earnings stability between married and unmarried tourist vehicle drivers.
4. There is no significant difference in platform dependence among drivers belonging to different age groups.
5. There is no significant difference in earnings stability among drivers belonging to different age groups.
6. There is no significant difference in platform dependence among drivers with different educational qualifications

VII. RESULTS

The data collected from the tourism based drivers in the study are evaluated which is presented in the following

Table 1 - Demographic profile

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)	Less than 30	73	29.3
	31–40	93	37.3
	41–50	51	20.5
	Above 50	32	12.9
Education	Up to Secondary	63	25.3
	Higher Secondary	81	32.5
	Undergraduate	78	31.3

	Postgraduate	27	10.8
Marital status	Married	187	75.1
	Unmarried	62	24.9

(Source: Primary Data)

The outcome revealed observed that 29.3 percent of sample aged 30 years or less and 37.3 per cent in aged between 31-40 years. There were twenty nine percent of drivers are between 41 and 50 years old and 12.9 percent are over 50 years old. The educational status revealed that 32.5 percent has highest secondary education and 31.3 percent are undergraduates. There were 25.3 percent of the population has up to secondary qualifications and 10.8 percent has postgraduate qualifications. The marital study revealed 75.1 percent of the sample is married man drivers.

Table 2 - Reliability and Overall Construct Levels

Construct	α	Mean $\pm$ SD	Distribution: L / M / H (%)
Platform dependence	0.914	3.46 $\pm$ 0.77	8.0 / 52.6 / 39.4
Earnings stability	0.890	2.96 $\pm$ 0.88	25.3 / 53.4 / 21.3

The internal consistency reliability of both scales is good in the data set. Cronbach's alpha for the platform dependence is 0.914 and that for earning stability is 0.890 which would justify the use of composite mean scores in the inferential tests. The Platform dependence boxes an overall mean of 3.46 with a standard deviation of ± 0.77 is recorded. The category distribution shows that the majority of the respondents (52.6 percent) are in the moderate category and the next large group (39.4 percent) is in the high dependence category with very few (8.0 percent) being in the low dependence category. The mean for this stability of earnings is 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.88. The majority (53.4 percent) have moderate earnings stability, a quarter (25.3 percent) have low earnings stability and one-fifth (21.3 percent) have high earnings stability. There is a relative tendency to use digital booking channels rather than to have income from tourist driving.

Table 3 - Descriptive Results for Platform Dependence

Measurement item	N	D	S	Rank
Digital platforms are an important source of tourist trip bookings	3.57	0.95		1
A substantial share of regular customers is obtained through digital platforms	3.42	0.94		5
The number of trips received depends considerably on platform-based bookings	3.53	0.91		2
Platform visibility helps secure customers during lower-demand periods	3.35	1.00		7
Digital platforms help maintain continuity in trip opportunities	3.48	0.94		4
A fall in platform bookings would reduce earning opportunities	3.50	0.90		3
Maintaining the present level of business is difficult without platform access	3.41	0.96		6

The results indicate that query of the digital platforms in particular is important to gain tourist bookings. The ones of platforms as an important source of tourist bookings are the highest mean (3.57) followed by the dependence of trip volume on platform-based bookings (3.53). The drop in bookings on the platform is believed to lead to a fall in earning opportunities with a mean of 3.50. Platform visibility when run during lower-demand times has the lowest mean of 3.35. The trend seemed to be that digital was integrated in the travellers' customer acquisition process but it's not enough to compensate for the lack of demand in down years.

Table 4 -Descriptive Results for Earnings Stability

Measurement item	M	SD	Rank
Earnings remain reasonably consistent from month to month	3.07	1.06	2
Approximate monthly income can be predicted with reasonable confidence	2.94	1.01	3
Regular driving income is adequate for routine household commitments	3.10	1.01	1
Earnings remain manageable when tourist trip demand declines	2.80	1.08	5
Current trip sources provide reasonable income continuity through the year	2.90	1.12	4

The earnings-stability indicators continue to be at the 2.5 mark on the 5-point scale. The regular driving income (3.10) and the month-to-month consistency (3.07) have the highest means. The income predictability measured by approximate monthly income was 2.94 while income continuity measured by year-round income was 2.90. The outcome is a distinction between earning adequacy in normal periods and the ability to sustain the revenues during periods of diminished numbers of trips.

Table 5 - Association between platform dependence and earnings stability levels

Platform dependence	Low ES	Moderate ES	High ES	Total
Low	10	8	2	20
Moderate	40	73	18	131
High	13	52	33	98
Total	63	133	53	249
$\chi^2(4) = 24.42, p < 0.001, \text{Cramer's } V = 0.221$				

The Chi-square analysis results suggest that there is a significant association between platform-dependence level and earnings-stability level. The Cramer's V value is 0.221 which suggest a small-to-moderate association. The analysis of first hypothesis is rejected. It is shown that within the sample the stronger the platform dependence the better earnings continuity which is not strong enough that the presence of digital dependence would imply earnings continuity.

Table 6- Independent sample t-tests by marital status

Construct	Group (n)	Mean $\pm$ SD	t statistic	Decision
Platform dependence	Married (187)	3.53 $\pm$ 0.78	t = 2.67; p = 0.009; d = 0.37	Reject Hypothesis 2
	Unmarried (62)	3.26 $\pm$ 0.69		
Earnings stability	Married (187)	3.04 $\pm$ 0.89	t = 2.41; p = 0.017; d = 0.35	Reject Hypothesis 3
	Unmarried (62)	2.73 $\pm$ 0.81		

The independent sample t tests indicate that there are significant differences in marital status in both constructs. The married drivers have a platform-dependence mean score of 3.53 while unmarried drivers have a mean score of 3.26. The comparison in this case suggests unequal variance (as indicated by Levene's Test) and thus the results are presented as the Welch-Approximated $t(117.15) = 2.67$, $p = .009$, Cohen's $d = 0.37$. The marriage is associated with greater stability of earnings ($m = 3.04$) than is not being married ($m = 2.73$), $t(247) = 2.41$, $p = .017$, $d = 0.35$. There was a certain amount of demographic variation and not that it was necessarily that income continuity as well as dominant platform usage equated with marital status.

Table 7 - One-way ANOVA results

Hypothesis	Group means	ANOVA statistics	Decision
Platform dependence by age	≤ 30 3.60; 31-40 3.56; 41-50 3.41; >50 2.95	F = 6.71; p < .001; $\eta^2 = .076$	Reject Hypothesis 4
Earnings stability by age	≤ 30 2.81; 31-40 3.23; 41-50 3.07; >50 2.34	F = 10.17; p < .001; $\eta^2 = .111$	Reject Hypothesis 5
Platform dependence by education	Secondary 3.24; HSC 3.35; UG 3.67; PG+ 3.73	F = 5.73; p = .001; $\eta^2 = .066$	Reject Hypothesis 6

The age produces significant differences in platform dependence. The drivers up to age 30 years have an average of 3.60 and those in the 31-40 age band have an average of 3.56 while drivers aged 41 to 50 years have a mean of 3.41 averages. The lowest time is on average 2.95 (drivers over 50 years). Tukey comparisons used to indicate the significance of differences with the above 50 group. The hypothesis is rejected which reveals significant relationship between age and platform dependence. The earnings stability differs across age categories, $F(3, 245) = 10.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .111$. The 31-40 age group has the highest mean score of 3.23 which is followed by the 41-50 age group at 3.07 and 2.34 for drivers over 50. The rejected hypothesis revealed that age accounts for a sizeable but not a very large amount of the variance in earnings-stability.

There is a very large difference caused by Educational qualification ($F(3,245) = 5.73$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .066$). The post graduate drivers had the highest mean score (3.73) followed by the undergraduates (3.67).



The Tukey's HSD shows that there are significant differences between the undergraduates and both lower education groups and between the postgraduates and up-to-secondary group. It shows a demographic divide in the use of digital platforms which higher education level is the only path to an economic benefit of engaging in digital platforms.

VIII. FINDINGS

There is good reliability ($\alpha = .914$) for the Platform dependence records with an overall mean of 3.46. Most of them (more than half) are in the moderate group with 39.4 per cent using the digital booking channels highly which confirm its significant role in acquisition of tourist trips.

The earnings stability is satisfactory in terms of its reliability ($\alpha = .890$) and has an overall mean score of 2.96. The majority of the respondents (more than half) belong to moderate category while the lowest item mean refers to management of income when there is less tourist demand which reveals seasonality as the major barrier in income continuity.

The higher digitization is consequently related to a higher stability but the size of the magnitude indicates that without a dependence on platforms while income continuity is not the case for part of the sample.

The platform dependence and earnings-stability scores are measured in the study and they indicate that the score for married drivers is significantly higher than the score for unmarried drivers. The means of differences are still small in amount which is a difference in the numbers of people working in a certain way, not a necessarily rigid effect of marital status.

The platform dependence and earnings stability are one of the criteria which can significantly distinguish between age. The mean scores of the drivers over the age of 50 are the lowest for both factors while the scores of younger and middle-aged drivers' have higher scores and higher earnings continuity compared to the drivers over 50.

There is significant difference in platform dependence with educational qualification as groups. The drivers with an undergraduate education level or higher show dependence with a higher level than drivers with lower education which suggests a higher level of integration of digital booking channels among drivers with a higher education.

IX. SUGGESTIONS

There needs to be encouragement for tourist vehicle drivers to use a combination of platform bookings, direct contact with visitors and seen referrals from their local hotels and travel agents etc. The multiple booking channels may help mitigate an overreliance on one source of digital demand and offer more continuity of demand when one channel is faltering.

The driver associations and destination level tourism entities should provide hands-on service in digital support of older and less-educational exposed drivers and respondents. The support should emphasis booking confirmation, communications with customers and safe use of the electronic interfaces. This potentially levels two and certainly level three of the technical content will have limited relevance to the day to day work of the driver.

The seasonal income-management supports need to be designed to surround the seasonally typical times of lower demand for tourism. The drivers can be provided demand information and some earnings planning to help them with more flexible dealing during the lean periods when their earnings are lower but did better during the strong periods.

The operators of platforms as well as local associations of transport operators need to enhance transparency in the allocation of bookings and incentive communication under which conditions do they cancel. The more transparent data can enable drivers to assess the value of adding a platform to their various customer channels and decide between digital and non-digital channels.

X. CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to refine a more in-depth analysis of the dependence of the platforms and stability of earnings for 249 TVDs in the Nilgiri District. It distinguishes between that kind of use of the platform and income continuity which does not presume that greater use is always synonymous with income security. The results exhibit relatively large platform dependence and moderate level of earnings stability. It suggests that digital access can provide a continuity of income for a portion of the drivers and their relationship does not eliminate seasonal uncertainty. The demographic comparisons reveal that there are many significant differences by marital status and age and by educational attainment where platform dependence can be differentiated.

These effects are to be seen as a rearrangement of work places not as determinate personal qualities that have an impact on an economic result. The results lend weight to diversified booking access and towards a greater transparency on the digital work place alongside implementing practical actions that assist drivers to deal with predictable peaks and troughs of tourist demand.

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