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Article

Clarifying the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies and their implications for entrepreneurship: A systematic literature review

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Clarifying the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies and their implications for entrepreneurship: A systematic literature review

Gustav Hägg, Agnieszka Kurczewska

ABSTRACT

Objective: The article aims to develop conceptual clarity around the three distinct terms emanating from the growing platform economy, i.e., the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies and link them to entrepreneurship.

Research Design & Methods: We applied the aggregative systematic review methodology. We did it to clarify and operationalise the differences among the on-demand, gig, and sharing economies, as well as seek to address implications for how each specific type of platform economy concept influences entrepreneurship and impacts our understanding of it.

Findings: The article sets out to define and increase understanding of what is behind the on-demand, gig, and sharing economies. We argue that the lack of consistent definitions of all three phenomena has resulted in several misconceptions and perhaps reduced potential progress with further studies, which now require more knowledge structuring and organisation regarding the three concepts.

Implications & Recommendations: The article provides important nuances to concretise fundamental distinctions among the three concepts and their implications for platform entrepreneurship. Although, at first glance, the differences might seem subtle, they are essential to address a rising complexity related to entrepreneurship.

Contribution & Value Added: Through its findings, the article presents criteria for enhancing conceptual clarity among the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies as well as links these three concepts to entrepreneurship. By doing so, the article also identifies some intersections with different entrepreneurship forms.

Article type: original literature review

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; the gig economy; the sharing economy; the on-demand economy; SLR

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become largely reliant on digitalisation (Nambisan, 2017). Thus, interest regarding platform entrepreneurship has increased (Kraus *et al.*, 2022a; 2022b). As more entrepreneurial opportunities become tied to digitalisation (*e.g.*, Autio, 2017), both through its reach in customer groups and through its importance for business model innovation (Ghezzi & Cavallo, 2020; Kraus *et al.*, 2019), the focus on different platform economies and their impact on entrepreneurship has increased in research discussions (*e.g.*, Cockayne, 2016; Kraus *et al.*, 2022b; Nambisan & Baron, 2021; Woodcock, 2020).

Although the platform economy is a relatively new phenomenon and, on an aggregate level, we can tie it to companies such as Facebook and Amazon, in this study, we investigated its sub-related terms: the sharing economy, the gig economy, and the on-demand economy. These relate more to the rapid development of companies such as Airbnb, Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit, Mechanical-Turk (a subsection of Amazon), Bolt, Deliveroo, and Voi. The concepts of the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies as

well as the entrepreneurial ventures operating in these spaces have rapidly gained ground as a result of both an established platform economy infrastructure (Kenney & Zysman, 2016) and innovative business model developments (Bick, 2019; Ghezzi & Cavallo, 2020). On a research level, to this day, the literature has either unambiguously praised all phenomena related to digital technology or adopted a highly critical perspective, focused on precarious work conditions that many of the platform businesses create (*e.g.*, Cockayne, 2016; De Stefano, 2016; Ravenelle, 2017; Schor, 2017). However, regardless of the approach presented, we identify that on a more exploratory level, scholarly works use concepts such as the gig, sharing, and on-demand economies interchangeably without making clear distinctions on their different assumptions and foci (Kraus *et al.*, 2022b; Woodcock, 2020). Although the first studies on the subject date to the 2010s, the multifaceted and rapid growth of the platform economy requires clarity and structure on the basic differences among the key terminologies used.

We based the motivation for this study on the premises that entrepreneurship in the digital age is a highly heterogeneous phenomenon (Sahut *et al.*, 2021; Elia *et al.*, 2020; Kraus *et al.*, 2019) and that different digital contexts and their terminologies mean different things to different types of entrepreneurial opportunities (Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2018; Liang *et al.*, 2022; Acs, 2022), whether they are non-profit social entrepreneurial opportunities, micro-mobility gigs, or fast-fashion on-demand delivery business opportunities. An example that illustrates this confusion is Uber, which the literature labels both as the sharing economy (*e.g.*, Geissinger *et al.*, 2020; Garud *et al.*, 2022) and the gig economy (*e.g.*, Berger *et al.*, 2019; Burtch *et al.*, 2016). In this article, we claim that the basic assumptions behind business model innovations built on terms such as ‘sharing economy,’ ‘on-demand economy,’ and ‘gig economy’ have different meanings for different entrepreneurial processes. Hence, we aimed to develop conceptual clarity around the three distinct terms emanating from the growing platform economy and link them to entrepreneurship. We did this through an aggregative systematic literature review (SLR). We posed two guiding questions:

1. What are the distinctive and differentiating features of the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies?
2. What implications do these types of platform economies have on entrepreneurship?

These questions reflect the articulated need in the literature for more nuanced insights on the platform economy and its link to the entrepreneurship ecosystem (Cutolo & Kenney, 2022).

The article contributes to the existing literature on platform entrepreneurship in at least three different ways. Firstly, our study provides conceptual clarity on the maze of terminology that has been tied to the growing platform entrepreneurship literature. In other words, it indicates important differences that need to be acknowledged when applying these terms for different types of entrepreneurial opportunities. Secondly, our study provides a balanced viewpoint on the sub-categories within the platform economy and how they relate to both positive and negative perspectives tied to entrepreneurship. Finally, the study stakes out new avenues for future research with respect to the interplay between entrepreneurship and the three types of platform economies.

The paper is structured as follows: first, we outline the methodology and steps of the systematic literature review; next, we present the literature review alongside the bibliometric and thematic analysis; and finally, we discuss the implications for entrepreneurship and conclude with recommendations for future research.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Our point of departure was the need to develop conceptual clarity around the emerging phenomenon of platform entrepreneurship, more specifically, developing stronger connections among different types of entrepreneurship and the terms ‘sharing economy,’ ‘gig economy,’ and ‘on-demand economy’. Therefore, we decided to conduct an SLR as it focuses on developing a process to identify relevant scholarly work in a transparent and replicable manner (*e.g.*, Hägg & Kurczewska, 2022; Pitaway & Cope, 2007). Gough *et al.* (2012, p. 1) argue that ‘systematic reviews are a form of research; they are (and the theoretical and ideological perspectives underlying these methods) a way of bringing together what is known from the research literature using explicit and accountable methods.’ In

the following sections, we will address the specific type of aggregate literature review adopted in this study and its different steps.

Aggregative Systematic Literature Review

Gough *et al.* (2012) distinguish between two types of systematic reviews, *i.e.*, the aggregative and the configurative. They argue that the configurative review seeks to interpret and understand the world by arranging information and developing concepts. On the other hand, an aggregate approach seeks to collect empirical data to test and describe predefined concepts and their development (Gough *et al.*, 2012). The main difference between the two is that configurative reviews are explorative and seek to understand concepts in new ways and develop new patterns (*e.g.*, Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2020), whilst the aggregative review focuses on a priori methods and using predefined concepts and testing them (Gough *et al.*, 2012), implying an interest in the homogeneity of studies (see Hägg & Kurczewska, 2022). The logic underlying the aggregative systematic review method relies on identifying studies that support one another, giving the reviewer more confidence about the studied phenomenon (Gough *et al.*, 2012). Given the specific research questions on (1) the distinctiveness of the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies as well as (2) the implications of these types of platform economies on entrepreneurship, an aggregative systematic review method was suitable as it seeks to synthesise existing evidence in a structured manner and to compile results from previous studies to identify areas for further research. In the following section, we will address the steps taken to develop and conduct the review.

The Steps of the Systematic Literature Review

When developing an SLR, several steps need consideration. We followed and took inspiration from systematic review methodology guidelines found in prior studies (*e.g.*, Gough *et al.*, 2012; Pittaway & Cope, 2007; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). These studies include numerous recommendations to acknowledge when developing an SLR as well as a few steps to be taken when crafting the study. Our research inspiration was Tranfield *et al.* (2003), with regard to the three main steps that an SLR should include. We will report on the steps taken to provide both clarity and transparency about the study.

Step 1: Study Purpose and Boundaries

We followed the study's purpose to develop conceptual clarity around the three distinct terms emanating from the platform economy – *i.e.*, 'sharing economy,' 'gig economy,' and 'on-demand economy' – and link them to entrepreneurship. As the starting point of every SLR, the boundaries for what will be studied need to be set (see Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). Here, we discussed what to include in the study, including the sub-categories of the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies as well as their influence and connection to the growing phenomenon of platform and digital entrepreneurship (*e.g.*, Kraus *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b; Nambisan & Baron, 2021). One notable concern in scholarly discussions is the conceptual diffusion regarding how scholars use interchangeably sub-categories within the platform economy and how this creates a blurred understanding of what is what, who may be part of what, and for what reasons. Therefore, we decided to focus on three well-known terms that have received much attention in contemporary society and how they may play different roles depending on the type of entrepreneurship being studied. When setting the boundaries for our systematic review, we followed the advice of Tranfield *et al.* (2003) and of Hägg and Gabrielsson (2020) and developed a coding structure to enable standardisation of the information from each article, including the following: author-level data, topic area, theoretical frameworks, the methods used, the main question and purpose, and the main findings. The standardised coded material creates opportunities to develop transparency and to group the data for analysis.

Step 2: Conducting the Review (Search String, Database, and Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria)

To conduct the review, we started by creating a Boolean search string and used EBSCO Business Source Ultimate as the bibliographic database. Keywords used in the search were as follows: 'entrepreneur*' (or) 'business' (or) 'organisation' (or) 'organisation' and 'gig economy' (or) 'on-demand economy' (or) 'sharing economy' (or) 'platform economy'. We only include peer-reviewed articles written in English. The timeframe was set from 2008 as that year marks the birth of the most known platform economy

businesses (Uber and Airbnb). The search generated 1 102 hits, starting in 2014. Curtis and Mont (2020) applied the same logic of operation. In this article, we present the findings of SLRs covering the years 2014-2022. This left us with a final sample of 121 articles used in the study. While the sample of articles analysed may seem small, we attempted to extract only those that dealt directly with the platform economy and entrepreneurship. By doing so, we eliminated several articles dealing with the circular economy, crowdfunding and blockchain, and even the digital transformation of a company, along with a few articles from 2022 that dealt with the specifics of artificial intelligence and entrepreneurship. We have also excluded numerous articles related to labour markets, managing and organising work, working relations, nonstandard work arrangements, and trust, as well as logistics and platforms' typologies. However, we often considered articles that relate to business models, value creation, and innovation. This approach allowed us to focus on the purpose of the study and the guiding research questions.

Step 3: Analysis, Outcomes, and Implications

In the analytical process, we focused on creating clarity among the concepts which have often been used interchangeably in the literature. Gough *et al.* (2012) inspired us to make an aggregative review. More explicitly, in the following sections, we will discuss the development of the platform economy with attention to the interplay between the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies and entrepreneurship. This leads us to discuss how conceptual clarity about these sub-terms within the platform economy plays different roles for different types of entrepreneurship and their implications for future research when connecting platform and digital entrepreneurship to these terms. The final part of the aggregate SLR method was to provide some conclusions for how, when, and for what reasons the different terms are to be treated when conducting research in the digital context of entrepreneurship. Synthesising the analysis and reporting on the outcomes allowed us to identify future research avenues by highlighting gaps in the current literature while also providing practical insights for policymakers to shape evidence-based policies.

We are aware that 'sharing economy,' 'gig economy,' and 'on-demand economy' are terms not reserved only for the digital world and technology-driven developments; they also exist without the Internet. Therefore, to avoid misconceptions, we focused solely on conceptualising these terms as economies that emerged in the context of Internet platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the main interests in research on entrepreneurship relates to the rapid digitalisation that we are experiencing today (Autio, 2017), which has only accelerated through the COVID-19 pandemic. With an increased focus on digitalisation, more scholars became interested in the development of innovative business models (Parente *et al.*, 2018) that centre on platforms regarded as a key advancement of the digital revolution (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2000) and most broadly defined as 'virtual locations through which various users communicate and transact' (Kenney & Zysman, 2019). The platforms, multisided digital frameworks for operations that enable interaction, offer a wide range of human activities and open new opportunities for innovation in many areas of life, from how we work and spend money to how we socialise and spend our leisure time. One of the most known examples is Airbnb, which focuses on connecting homeowners and individuals seeking a place to sleep. Other platforms connecting service providers with customers are Deliveroo and TaskRabbit. What these examples have in common is the use of an intermediary digital platform matching both sides of the market. Oftentimes these different activities are bundled together under the term 'sharing economy' or 'gig economy' as well as 'on-demand economy' (*e.g.*, Cockayne, 2016; Woodcock, 2020).

Scholars study the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies as part of the platform economy, and they rely on digital platforms that facilitate interactions among service providers, customers, and businesses. Therefore, what they have in common is peer-to-peer interactions matched and coordinated digitally. They are also all tied to some form of economic disruption (for example, the sharing economy challenges traditional ownership models, the gig economy disrupts conventional employment, and the on-demand economy shifts expectations around the timing of service delivery). Thus, there is an overlap

among these economies, which is why they are often grouped together under the platform economy. This overlap, considering the novelty of all these phenomena, creates confusion with regard to the terminology and weak societal understanding of these concepts. However, upon closer inspection, the rationale and underlying reasons for these distinct entrepreneurial activities are significantly different:

- The logic behind the sharing economy is basically one of sustainable behaviour to lessen the impact on the environment through the more efficient use of different resources. Acquier *et al.* (2017) characterise it as an access economy (sharing for optimising), platform economy (decentralised intermediation), and community-based economy (equality-based interaction).
- The on-demand economy aims to meet behavioural changes among customers to constantly decrease the delivery time (often focused on the last-mile delivery that has expanded in presence because of the COVID-19 pandemic).
- The gig economy has emerged as a vehicle to match unused service capacity with specialised customer demands (Cockayne, 2016). This economy describes a work environment in which temporary jobs are prevalent, and companies often prefer hiring independent contractors and freelancers over traditional employees (Hägg & Kurczewska, 2021). An example of this is the website Freelancer.com, where a customer broadcasts a project and, through the platform, finds a suitable service provider (*e.g.*, language editing) at an agreeable price.

The discussion on platform economies notably relates to labour markets. Rapid digitalisation brought changes to the structure of the economy, including the transformation of labour markets and the nature of work (Kenney & Zysman, 2019). The platform economy quickly resulted in the emergence of alternative work arrangements with less traditional and less stable relationships between employers and employees, resulting in work fracturing. However, online-based platforms with their redefined jobs offered through online marketplaces, which connect service providers and customers, also bring legal ambiguities and questions related to the creation and capture of value or control and responsibility over the platforms (*e.g.*, Novitz, 2021; Wood *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, the discussion about the role of platforms goes beyond the labour market and becomes a broader topic related to entrepreneurship, ethics, and the economy. Platforms have begun to be regarded as not only a new social technology or a new infrastructural formation of business and work but also an organisational form of the new economy that changes and rematerializes markets (Cohen, 2017) and, with its entrance, also disrupts industries.

The research discussion on the platform economy is a new phenomenon that started to emerge no longer than a decade ago. It attempts to follow and scientifically explore the developments taking place as well as different mutations of its meaning. This poses a challenge as the emerging boundaries of each development and mutation are blurred. The role of the platform in each sub-development (the gig economy, the sharing economy, and the on-demand economy) is different and serves different needs, which requires scrutiny to create clarity. What they all have in common, in addition to digital dependency, is the crowd and network effect, new types of communication, and the unique nature of their transactions. However, despite these common characteristics, growing interest in scholarly discussions provides a plethora of categorisations and taxonomies, depending on the perspective applied. For example, Kenney and Zysman (2019) distinguish platforms depending on the type of work. They identify workers employed directly by the platform and its contractors, platform-mediated work, and platform-mediated content creation. Adopting an income perspective, Forde *et al.* (2017) distinguish three other categories of workers: moderate beneficiaries, random surfers, and platform-dependent workers. In this article, we follow the three most classical forms of new economies that have emerged through the platform economy and attempt to distinguish their implications on entrepreneurship. Few articles have systematically covered any of these types of platform economies, even less so their entrepreneurial aspects. The most scientifically exploited type of platform economy is the sharing economy. According to an SLR conducted by Mallinson *et al.* (2020), the sharing economy literature primarily covers topics such as the determinants, motivations, barriers, and impacts of the sharing economy, along with its regulation and links to entrepreneurship, with the emergence of new types of businesses with new models and frameworks. To give another example, in their systematic analysis, Plewnia and Guenther (2018) identify four dimensions to characterise sharing systems: the shared good or service,

the market structure, the market orientation, and the industry sector. However, the bulk of articles lack coherent definitions in the platform economy literature.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section is divided into three sub-sections. The first addresses the bibliometric analysis and insights gained from the SLR. This part presents the descriptive data – such as the number of published articles, the division of the articles based on area, the type of study, the data collection approach, and the context of the studies. The second part focuses on a thematic analysis and describes the different key terms. Next will be an analysis of the relationship between the phenomena explored and entrepreneurship.

Bibliometric Analysis

The SLR addresses several key insights. An important first step when understanding the development of a research field or topic is the bibliometric development on how research emerges, grows, and matures. The topic of the platform economy (including the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies) and its relation to entrepreneurship is no different, and to gain an overview, we began our analysis by addressing the growth of articles in the area (Figure 1). In total, we analysed 121 articles. We noted a massive development of studies from 2017 to 2018, where the number of studies has seen substantial growth, reaching its peak in 2020. However, a more interesting finding is the incredibly slow growth of studies addressing the sharing, gig, on-demand, and platform economies in the early years (2014-2017), given their high presence in popular media outlets since the establishment of Airbnb in 2008 and Uber in 2009. A potential explanation is that the use of collaborative consumption was more popular in the early stage and that the topics were not focused on connections to entrepreneurship per se but more on flexible work, new types of sustainable consumption, as well as regulation and law issues. The clear connection to entrepreneurship has slowly grown as the platform economy has gained a more central position when addressing new trends and development in entrepreneurship research (e.g., Nambisan, 2017).

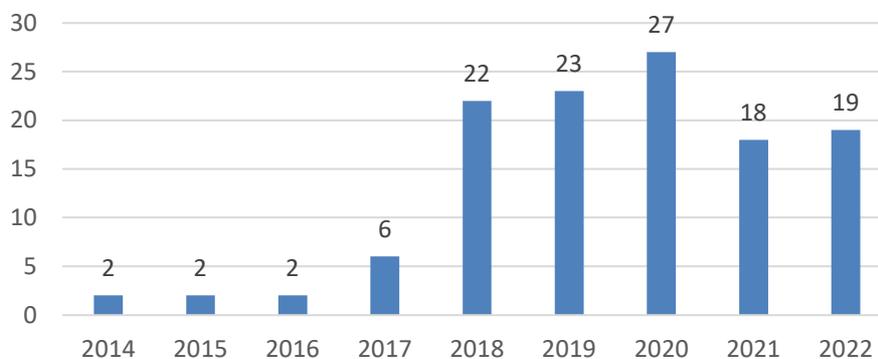


Figure 1. Number of articles included in the SLR (2014-2022)

Source: own elaboration.

When moving forward to Figure 2, we see that so far, most articles focus on the sharing economy (89 articles), and thus, we sought to develop our scholarly understanding of the phenomenon. This might also be why there is much confusion on what the sharing economy implies as most articles seem to research it as an economic phenomenon, whilst in hindsight, this might have been an oversimplification of the term itself (see, e.g., Schor, 2017). Moreover, we noted an extremely slow development of studies that address the more overarching platform economy, as we observed that fewer studies mix the terms and that there are almost no studies on the on-demand economy.

Following the analysis, we can see in Figure 3 that most of the studies (77 articles) were of an empirical nature, where they seek to explore the phenomenon and try to provide pieces to the puzzle. The number of conceptual studies was fairly low (31 articles), and there were also relatively few review

articles (13 articles), which is natural in a new field lacking empirical understanding and conceptual clarity on what the concepts actually mean.

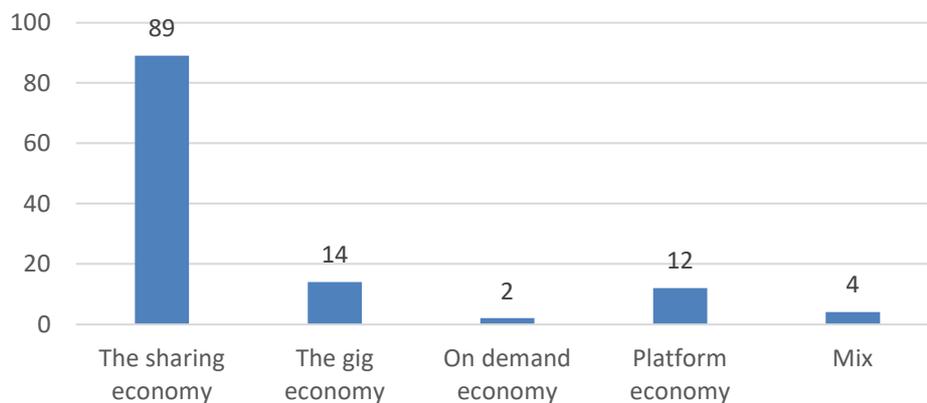


Figure 2. Categorisation of articles included in the SLR (2014-2022)

Source: own elaboration.

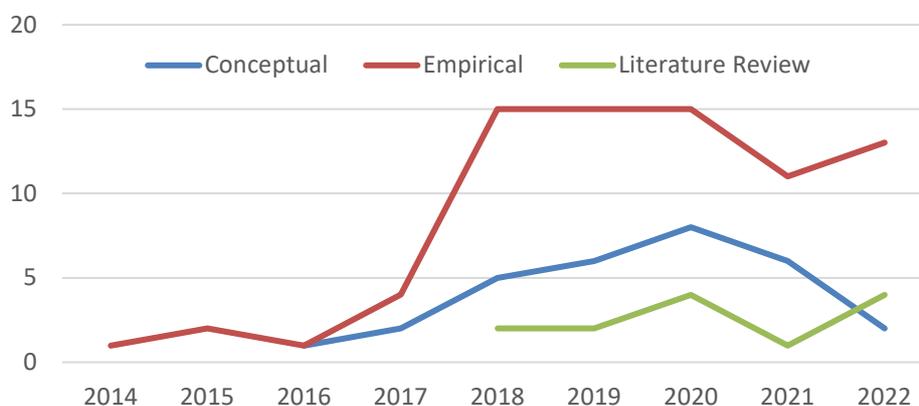


Figure 3. Types of studies conducted in the article included in the SLR (2014-2022)

Source: own elaboration.

Looking closer at the empirical articles (Figure 4), we found that the majority of the studies were qualitative throughout the period (49 articles in total, in contrast to 18 quantitative articles and 10 with the mixed-methods approach applied). This may imply that the field is highly driven by individual scholars who take a variety of perspectives to grasp the phenomenon, a similar development as has been seen in entrepreneurship (Landström, 2020). It might also explain why there has been a plethora of interpretations on what the sharing economy might mean, everything from the ideal sharing of devices and space to reduce overconsumption to highly economic-oriented business models such as Uber. However, the continued dominance of qualitative studies may become problematic in the long run to create conceptual clarity and boundary conditions for defining key terms.

Continuing the analysis of empirical articles, Figures 5 and 6 show the distribution of sources of data used in quantitative and qualitative research, respectively. As we can see in quantitative research, questionnaires and secondary data dominate. In the case of the qualitative approach, researchers frequently use secondary data and interviews as well as mixed methods to provide triangulation to their studies.

Finally, in Figure 7, we can see the contextual development of the studies. In the first phase, the studies mainly took place in North America and Europe, which is logical given the birth of Airbnb and Uber, as well as other platform economy businesses.

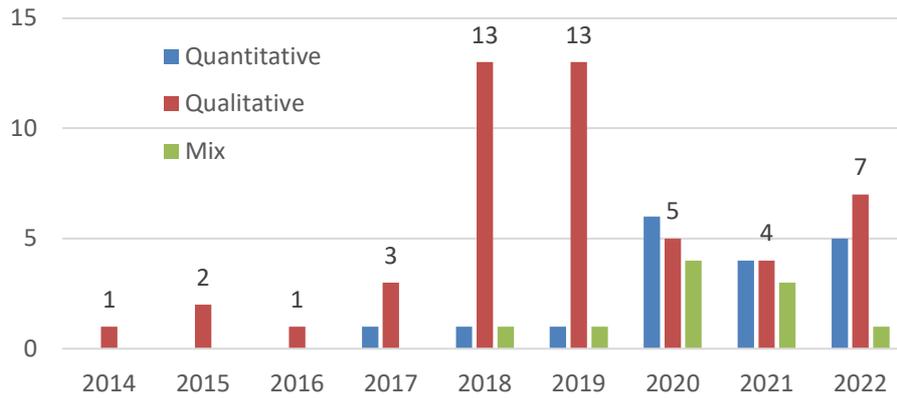


Figure 4. Data collection methods in articles included in the SLR (2014-2022)

Source: own elaboration.

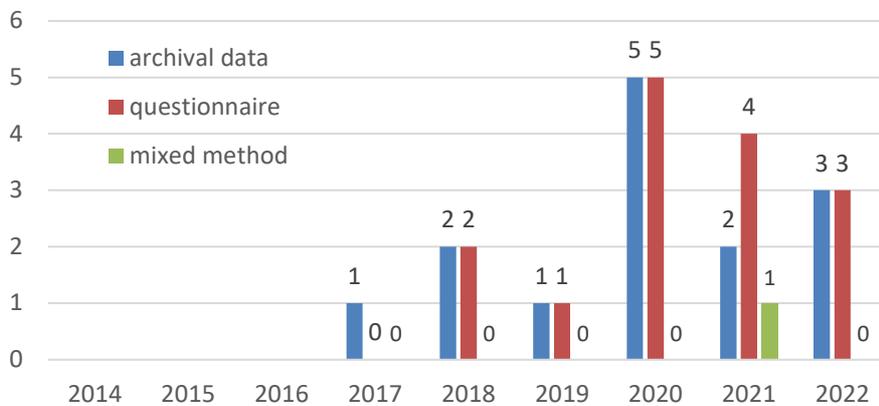


Figure 5. Source of data in articles in the SLR that apply quantitative methods (2014-2022)

Source: own elaboration.

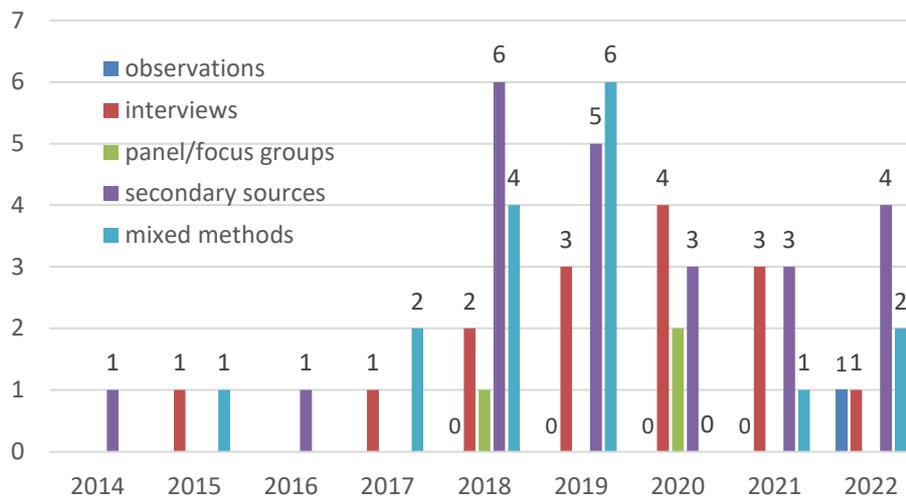


Figure 6. Source of data in articles in the SLR that apply qualitative methods (2014-2022)

Source: own elaboration.

An interesting trend is that Asia is starting to emerge as empirical ground for making sense of the platform economy and its sub-areas, and we can also see in 2019 that studies from Africa and South America are gaining presence in the sample.

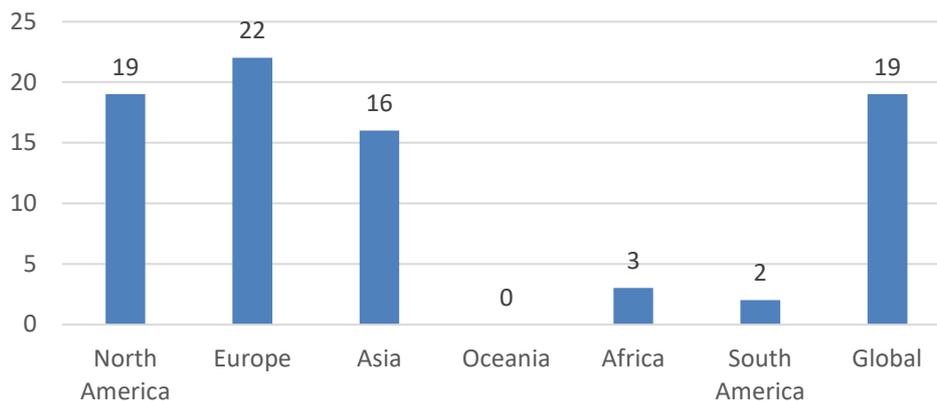


Figure 7. Geographical context of studies in the SLR articles (2014-2022)

Source: own elaboration.

Thematic Analysis

An important part of our SLR was a thematic analysis. Our coding structure enabled a standardisation of the information from each article, including the main research question, purpose, and main findings. The themes emerged through a structured coding process in which the research team manually reviewed and analysed the descriptive data. By systematically categorising and synthesising this data, patterns and recurring topics across the literature were identified, allowing us to extract and define the core themes.

The topics covered in the analysed articles on the platform economy are rather dispersed, and the research approach is interdisciplinary, primarily spanning disciplines such as business, economics, law, ethics, and ecology. The main themes include (but are not limited to) the following:

- *Business perspectives of the platform economy*, in particular strategies for success in new types of economies, how to gain competitive advantage in the conditions of new types of competition, new types of business models and ecosystems, creating business value within the new types of economies, and customers' satisfaction and loyalty in the new economy-driven business context (e.g., Sigler & Corcoran, 2020).
- *Institutional frameworks of the platform economy*, in particular, institutional logics in the context of business model development, the impact of new economies on the tax regime, and institutional power as being subsequently leveraged by new entrants (e.g., Elert & Henrekson, 2016).
- Changes in the labour market arising from platforms' new logic of employment (but related to some extent to entrepreneurship) (e.g., Ahsan, 2020).
- *Sustainability and green logic*, in particular examining emerging and innovative types of sustainable business models as well as sharing as part of a sustainable approach (e.g., Turaa, 2020; Grinevich *et al.*, 2019).
- *Typologies and classifications to explore the phenomena*, in particular types of sharing, types of platforms and their consequences for running the business in new economies, and a conceptually and empirically grounded taxonomy of platform business models (e.g., Kenney & Zysman, 2019).

Notably, we have not identified any major differences among the gig, sharing, and on-demand economies in terms of applied research perspectives, even as they represent different economic models with different assumptions. Here, we may link some of the conceptual confusion to the indifference among these types of companies when reporting about them in the public press. To provide a bit of clarity, some examples of gig-economy companies active today are Glovo (the food delivery platform), Helping (a cleaning platform mainly operating in Germany), and Uber (the ride-hailing platform). From a sharing-economy perspective, some examples include Vinted (a second-hand platform) and CoachSurfing (a platform for sharing unused short-term homestays for travellers). Finally, examples of on-demand (last-mile delivery) platforms include Amazon Flex (giving individuals the opportunity to deliver goods using their own vehicles).

Most of the articles in all the subcategories were explorative in nature, with some elements of comparison between conventional business models and sharing economy business models to highlight the changes brought by emerging platform economies. The only difference that we identified through thematic analysis was that when addressing the sharing economy and its focus on social value, we see clear ties to social and sustainable entrepreneurial opportunities but not to commercial enterprises that focus on customer value, which we see in consumption-intense businesses in the on-demand and gig economies. An example of existing companies that distinguish the above is between the two platform companies Fairbnb.coop and Airbnb.com, where the former has a cooperative business model and focuses on socially and ecologically sustainable travelling, whilst the latter has a business model focused on customer value creation and financial performance. Furthermore, the issue of precariousness is tied more to the customer-centric platform business models accelerated by the on-demand and gig economies than the sharing economy (exemplified by Woodcock, 2020).

Relationship to Entrepreneurship

When developing the SLR methodology guided by our research questions, we sought conceptual clarity on the above mentioned platform economies and their relation to entrepreneurship. However, this connection is quite weak; it becomes clearer with time, but entrepreneurship is mainly a context or terminology that is added to a broader discussion that centres on the sharing, gig, or on-demand economy as a phenomenon (Geissinger *et al.*, 2020; Nambisan & Baron, 2021). Despite the weak ties, we could still distinguish some fundamental relationships between these three platform economies and the multitude of approaches that have emerged in understanding the differences among the types of entrepreneurship.

Some main insights are the widely different assumptions that drive the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies as well as how they relate to different types of entrepreneurship. Here, the market and sustainability logics are highly contradictory when tracing the basic assumption on why the (digital) sharing economy emerged in the first place (see Schor, 2017); whilst a multitude of platform companies have employed the sharing ideal as their discourse, they are oftentimes more tied to the market logics of the gig and on-demand economies. The differences driving each platform economy also bear some traces towards how we can tie and understand the growing research area of (digital) platform entrepreneurship (Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Nambisan & Baron, 2021), along with sub-topics such as social entrepreneurship, commercial entrepreneurship, and various connections between the selection of business models and the underlying platform economy logic at play.

From our data on dominating definitions, there are several traces of how each platform economy logic shows tendencies towards different entrepreneurship types. We argue that this is the key to creating clarity and definitional boundaries when understanding both broader and more precise implications that the platform economies have on entrepreneurship research. In establishing this relationship, we depart from dominating definitions about entrepreneurship and its relation to the assumptions driving the main definitions found on the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies as well as the claimed value of each type found in our review sample.

1. The sharing economy and entrepreneurship: Connecting the sharing economy with social and sustainable entrepreneurship.

According to our data, the dominating definition of the sharing economy is the one provided in popular science by Botsman (2013), where she specifies it as an economic model based on sharing, swapping, trading, or renting products and services, enabling access over ownership. Following the work of Hamari *et al.* (2016), scholars frequently refer to sharing economy as the peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing access to goods and services coordinated through community-based online services. The third most used definition is by Acquier *et al.* (2017), who position it as resting on three key elements: (1) access economy, (2) platform economy, and (3) community-based economy.

Furthermore, some of the articles in our sample include sharing ‘for a better world’ and focus on ‘the common good’ and ‘common goods,’ which are oftentimes tied to the idea of solidarity and strengthening social ties. From these insights, it becomes quite apparent that we may find what drives the sharing economy ideal in research on social entrepreneurship and the definition by Zahra

et al. (2009, p. 522): 'Social entrepreneurship encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner.' There are also traces of a similar logic in the definition by Bruyat and Julien (2001, pp. 170-171) and their arguments around the dialogic between individuals (the entrepreneurial entity) and the value created to the context in which it operates. Although less closely tied to the social good that ties social entrepreneurship with the sharing economy ideal, the perspective of Bruyat and Julien (2001) brings to our attention the multitude of entrepreneurial types that we do not see in the same sense in the definitions by Schumpeter, Kirzner, Shane and Venkataraman, or Gartner.

2. The gig economy and entrepreneurship: Connecting the gig economy with organising for venturing and growth.

When we moved to the gig economy, we found a slightly different definitional boundary and values claimed by this specific type of platform economy. The main characteristics we found in the articles were optimisation, cost reduction, and a focus on increasing the number of transactions and the speed of providing the services. The main was 'the collection of markets that match providers to consumers on a gig (or job) basis in support of on-demand commerce' (Congressional Research Service Report). Moreover, authors often refer to the gig economy in terms of jobs mediated by digital platforms (De Stefano, 2016).

In line with our reasoning, we found many similarities between the gig economy and the definition by Gartner (1988) related to entrepreneurship as the creation of an organisation. The main argument was the role that organisational activities have played in the growth of the gig economy, where the focus has been less on the profits and more on the creation of the platforms and the infrastructure around them. Some examples are Lime, Voi, and Uber, where profitability has become less of an issue given the massive accumulation of venture capital to grow and establish the organisation. We also see close ties to Schumpeter (1934) and the role of creative destruction that the gig economy ventures have embarked on. The main venture here is, of course, Uber, along with shadow organisations such as M-Turk and the most well-known (and initially addressed as a sharing economy) venture Airbnb. We based the rationale for positioning two of the most well-known sharing economy business models (Uber and Airbnb) on the characteristics of each business and how they deviate fundamentally from the basic assumptions that characterise the sharing economy and its claimed values. When analysing these well-known examples (given that they have appeared in many studies and been tied to a fuzzy explanation or rather a romanticised discourse from practice towards the sharing economy), it becomes obvious that they are not aligned with, for example, solidarity and common goods but rather the optimisation of resources on a financial basis and with a focus on the creation of organisations and creative destruction.

3. The on-demand economy and entrepreneurship: Connecting the on-demand economy with commercial and profit-oriented entrepreneurship.

Finally, the most recent platform economy, *i.e.*, the on-demand economy, has emerged in relation to the growth of, *e.g.*, Amazon and the expansion of e-commerce, fuelled by the pandemic and changed consumer behaviour, and businesses strive to reduce the delayed satisfaction with purchases that previously was synonymous with e-commerce. The on-demand economy values found in our sample focus on increased efficiency and optimisation, and one of the few articles in our sample that attempt to define the area is that of Cockayne (2016, p. 73). He argues that the on-demand or sharing economy refers to digital platforms that use mobile applications or websites to connect consumers with services or commodities. He explains that scholars use the term 'on-demand economy' interchangeably with the more widely recognised 'sharing economy.' However, to Cockayne, 'on-demand' more accurately conveys the nature of these digital and platform-based economic systems, whereas 'sharing' tends to idealise the broader changes in flexible labour practices that these systems help shape.

This relates to Shane and Venkataraman's definition (2000) focusing on profitable opportunities. However, in these business opportunities, we can also see much of Kirzner's (1979) findings because of the arbitrage profits they reap by providing a solution that is highly sought after from e-commerce busi-

nesses. The main difference between the on-demand economy and the gig economy is the logic of how the businesses are organised and how profits take a central place in the on-demand economy. Despite numerous overlaps between these platform models in relation to optimisation and efficiency, some differences that (so far) have not been fully acknowledged may have implications for how we address them with regard to entrepreneurship research. These may be subtle, such as how each type related to dominating definitions in entrepreneurship provides initial ideas on how to clarify boundaries and specify what logic to follow when contextually seeking to understand potential entrepreneurial opportunities.

Discussion

The aggregate SLR enabled us to identify common features of all three sub-terms deriving from the platform economy. What the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies unquestionably have in common is as follows: online intermediaries, service orientation, and efficiency of use, along with the undeniable advantage of platform owners. Platforms are also unregulated marketplaces (Martin, 2016), where the reduction of costs is possible. They enable and trigger a wide range of activities, often on a large scale, but if scholars consider entrepreneurial opportunities, profits, and risks, they also often raise the problem of fairness and equal distribution (*e.g.*, Cockayne, 2016; Forde *et al.*, 2017). Without more legal regulation and transparency of operation, responsibility, and social costs belong to those without any bargaining power (Woodcock, 2020).

However, our article aimed foremost to provide important nuances to concretise fundamental distinctions among the three concepts and their implications for platform entrepreneurship. To achieve this, based on our SLR and their dominating definitions, we developed a set of criteria enabling differentiation among the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies. The process of developing these criteria involved several key steps, including comprehensive reviews of existing definitions, the identification of dominant elements and characteristics, synthesis and comparison, and, finally, the criteria development.

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies, following these criteria. We divided the criteria into three groups: those devoted to their philosophy of operation (light grey), those related to the characteristics of platforms (medium grey), and those enabling to follow the match with different types of entrepreneurship (dark grey). In the first group of criteria, we considered the characteristics as the expected model and logic of operation, the type of transactions, their claimed value, and the position towards consumption. In the second group, we focused on the role of platforms, the sides that operate within them and their relationship, and their geographical reach. Finally, in the third group, we included the potential connection to entrepreneurship domains and core entrepreneurship definitions.

The analysis of the literature and a careful examination of the business environment in recent years brought to light another important observation for distinguishing between the sharing and gig economies. When digital platforms started to gain more prominence in the market, the nature of the sharing economy started to change. Based on the patterns in our study, was split into two separate paths. The first path related more to the ideal version of the sharing economy, which also exists beyond technology, based on the values of the non-commercial exchange of goods and services. This ideal type of sharing economy has less in common with the second path, which entails highly competitive and venture capital-backed platforms with purely profit-oriented purposes.

The latter path, the spread of the gig economy ideal – which, on a regular basis, uses sharing as a defining slogan (given its potential goodness in the value created) – intensively commercialises its activity and grows rapidly in size (often on a global scale), resulting in huge financial turnovers. This altered focus on the financial side and on optimisation and the predominance of consumption and competitive nature are why we see it as the ‘gig economy.’ The main consequence – a significant amount of confusion and vagueness in both research and practice – has necessitated understanding where sharing ends and where the ‘gig’ starts. The main reason for this confusion has been the broad interpretations of the concept of sharing. For example, Grinevich *et al.* (2019) distinguish between a ‘pure sharing’ economy, a second-hand economy, an on-demand economy, product service systems, and business-to-business (B2B) sharing. The unclear division between the gig and sharing economies is evident in our literature review. Articles on the gig economy are not numerous. Many articles in

Table 1. The characteristics of the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies as well as their relation to entrepreneurship

Characteristics	The (digital) sharing economy	The gig economy	The on-demand economy
Expected model of operation	Cooperation and collaboration Decentralised exchange and circulation	Competition Consumption	Competition Consumption
Logic of operation	Reciprocity	Contractual	Contractual
Types of transactions	Usually non-financial compensation Based on social agreement No transfer of ownership	Financial compensation Contract	Financial compensation Contract
Claimed value	Sharing 'for a better world' and common goods Solidarity, strengthening social ties	Optimising, reducing costs, increasing the number of transactions and their speed	Optimising, increasing efficiency
Position towards consumption	Limiting	Enhancing	Enhancing
The primary role of the platform: a) Perspective of the platform owner b) Perspective of the service provider c) Perspective of the user	a) Ideological/a source of income b) Exchanging for saving c) Exchanging for saving	a) A source of income b) Easy access to users – customers and cheap labour force c) A work marketplace for the giggers, ordering service for the customers	a) A source of income b) Access to cheaper professional services or customers c) A work marketplace
Sides of the platform	Platform owners (entrepreneurs) Users exchanging their services or goods	Platform owners (entrepreneurs) Companies providing services (entrepreneurs) The giggers – actual service providers (users) Customers (users)	Platform owners (entrepreneurs) Professional service providers (freelancers or entrepreneurs) Customers (Individuals or entrepreneurs)
Relationships among the sides	Advantage of platform owners The balanced relationships among users, based on exchange and equality Community-based Non-hierarchical	A definite advantage of platform owners The imbalanced relationship between companies and giggers, with the former being superior; high dependency of the giggers on their contractors Hierarchical	A definite advantage of platform owners The semi-balanced relationship between service providers and customers; independence of service providers Rather hierarchical
Geographical reach	Rather local	Local	Global
Potential connection to entrepreneurship domains	Social, ecological, green – all ventures that incorporate a non-profit motive or are not focused on shareholder value	For-profit ventures that, in some manner, connect the provider and the receiver in the service industry	Last mile delivery, for-profit ventures, all entrepreneurial opportunities that include consumer goods
Connection based on core entrepreneurship definitions	Bruyat & Julien (2001) Zahra <i>et al.</i> (2009)	Schumpeter (1934) Gartner (1988)	Kirzner (1979) Shane & Venkataraman (2000)

Source: own study.

our sample explore this phenomenon but use the terminology of the sharing economy and still claim that they develop the sharing economy stream of research (often because the analysed companies define themselves as part of it). One particularly illustrative business example is Uber, which, in the literature, is classified as both a gig economy and a sharing economy (Berger *et al.*, 2019; Burtch *et al.*, 2016; Geissinger *et al.*, 2020; Garud *et al.*, 2022).

When considering the different types of platform economies described in Table 1 (based on the various criteria found in our SLR), some of the representatives claimed values found in our sample include sharing ‘for a better world.’ A company such as Uber, with its focus and market presence, aligns much more with the gig economy. However, several empirical articles devoted to analysing Uber portray it as part of the sharing economy, which may be due to a broad and vague interpretation of what the sharing economy implies and potentially a positive outlook on the development of Uber as an entrepreneurial opportunity that sought to create positive change for drivers. However, we know now that the romanticised perspective of this creative destruction of the taxi industry was far from the truth and instead was built on venture capital injections to dope the market (The Guardian, 2022). Therefore, our argument is that we are seeing the initially broad and all-encompassing sharing economy as becoming more nuanced through digital technology transformation, becoming what we now refer to as the gig economy.

Given our argument, we may then ask, ‘Are the digital sharing economy and the gig economy two sides of the same coin?’ In this article, we claim that they are not and that we need more conceptual clarity to differentiate these two distinct phenomena. However, at the same time, we witness a disconnect between the reality and the idea of the original vision of the sharing economy (*e.g.*, Botsman, 2013; Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Schor, 2017). We may even argue that some forms of entrepreneurship mutated the ideal of the sharing economy, which led to the rise of the gig economy. In a sense, we may view the sharing economy as an ideal to pursue and the gig economy as our economic reality based on neoliberal market pressures (Cockayne, 2016; Woodcock, 2020). Nevertheless, the thesis that the gig economy is the consequence of the digital transformation of the sharing economy through entrepreneurship requires further research inquiry.

CONCLUSIONS

Following Barnes and Mattsson (2016), the rise of disruptive platform businesses should make us more sensitive to what is happening at the crossroads of technology, entrepreneurship, and formal institutions and their regulations. Although the ideas of sharing and arranging temporary jobs are nothing new in the economy, the rapid development of digital platforms and the widespread start-up culture enable the global reach and unprecedented scope of these platform economies, which scholars should scrutinise. From a research perspective, platform entrepreneurship is still a relatively fresh topic, with numerous concepts that overlap and take on hybrid meanings. Two phenomena that seem to be durable and change the rules of the game of entrepreneurship are the gig economy and the sharing economy. They both fall into conflicting definitions and scope but, at the same time, gain increasing public attention, given several idealised views on how they may create social and sustainable value. Such attention has taken on various shades, and the discussion is highly polarised as a result of broad interpretations of what each platform economy might imply. Scholars either praise the sharing and gig economies as a new type of economy helping to overcome many pressing defaults that have emerged in society or criticise it for worsening societal inequalities through market liberalism and deregulations (*e.g.*, Acquier *et al.*, 2017; Bick, 2019; Burtch *et al.*, 2016; De Stefano, 2016; Grinevich *et al.*, 2019). However, researchers began to investigate both the gig and the sharing economies to determine what they have to offer to contemporary society and the economy, with growing pressure from grand societal challenges such as fending off economic crises and climate crises based on excessive consumption patterns. Thus, the question arises, ‘Are they just new ways to operate within the capitalistic society, and do they enable the growth of consumerism, or are they changing the entrepreneurial landscape?’

The conducted SLR does not answer this overriding question, but it takes a step back and attempts to set out definitions for and increase our understanding of what is behind these concepts.

We argue that the lack of consistent definitions of all three phenomena has resulted in numerous misconceptions and perhaps reduced potential progress with further studies, which now require more structuring and organisation of knowledge about these platform economy logics. Therefore, in this article, we developed criteria for enhancing conceptual clarity on the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies, which are the result of the growing platform economy. We also sought to link these three concepts to entrepreneurship, aiming to identify some intersections and determine how they could be related to sub-disciplines in entrepreneurship. We believe that bringing entrepreneurship into the discussion of the platform economies helps to differentiate these concepts. Drawing from different definitions of entrepreneurship sets some boundaries for both gig and sharing economies, and links the discussion with their natural component (entrepreneurship) as all the ventures studied are, in some ways, based on recognised entrepreneurial opportunities.

This study has implications for society and policymakers in several key areas. Firstly, it brings attention to many intertwined aspects found in the platform economy, including its regulatory framework, social and economic equity, labour protection, and environmental impact. Moreover, the article draws attention to the proper use of the terms 'sharing economy,' 'gig economy,' and 'on-demand economy.' Secondly, our study broadens the view of the link between entrepreneurship and the gig, sharing, and on-demand economies, indicating both positive and negative perspectives. Hence, it provides opportunities to reflect on a deeper understanding of the intersection between entrepreneurship, with its operation logic, and the different types of platform economies.

Future research could examine the differences and overlaps among the gig, sharing, and on-demand economies, nuanced in this study, and explore whether, in time, these models remain distinct or whether they are converging in practice. Noteworthy questions include the following:

- How do entrepreneurial processes and outcomes differ across the gig, sharing, and on-demand economies?
- How do these platform economies disrupt or complement traditional business models?
- How is entrepreneurship reshaping industries in the platform economy?

Future studies could also delve further into the social and ethical implications of entrepreneurship in the platform economy. On a more general level, we see great potential for a deeper inquiry into how platform entrepreneurship evolves and intersects with various economic, technological, social, and regulatory factors, given the growth of and interest in digital entrepreneurship (e.g., Elia *et al.*, 2020; Kraus *et al.*, 2022b; Nambisan & Baron, 2021).

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Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors declare that the text is free of Ai/GAI usage.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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