

Future of Work in a Digital Era: The Potential and Challenges for Online Freelancing and Microwork in India

Rajat Kathuria
Mansi Kedia
Gangesh Varma
Kaushambi Bagchi
Saumitra Khullar

December 2017



INDIAN COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS
Core 6-A, 4th Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110 003

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 <i>The Labour Market in India.....</i>	2
1.1.1 <i>Labour Market Trends.....</i>	2
1.2 <i>Digitisation and the Labour Market</i>	5
1.3 <i>The Online Freelancing Revolution.....</i>	6
2. Online Freelancing/Microwork Ecosystem in India.....	8
2.1 <i>Definitions and Background</i>	8
2.2 <i>The Online Freelancing marketplace</i>	11
2.3 <i>Analysing the ecosystem using data from Stakeholder interactions.....</i>	14
2.4 <i>Summarising the Online Freelancing Ecosystem in India and policy challenges....</i>	23
3. Survey Data Analysis.....	24
3.1 <i>A Gender Divide in Online Freelancing?.....</i>	26
3.2 <i>Online Freelancing – Something for Everyone</i>	27
3.3 <i>The will to freelance – advantages and disadvantages of free-lancing.....</i>	30
3.4 <i>Exploring Microworkers.....</i>	36
4. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations	38
Appendices.....	41
Bibliography	76

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Labour Force Participation Rates (2015-16)	3
Table 1.2: Gender Divide in India’s Labour Market express using WPR and UR.....	4
Table 2.1: Characteristic of Platforms/ Organisations Interviewed for this study.....	17
Table 3.1: Sample Characteristics.....	26
Table 3.2: Current Freelancers by Gender	27
Table 3.3: Freelancers by Type of Work, Average Compensation and Average Time on a Job....	29
Table 3.4: Significance of Difference in Scores Assigned to Advantages of Freelancing ..	31
Table 3.5: Significance of Difference in Scores Assigned to Disadvantages of Freelancing	35
Table 3.6: Average Score for Benefits of Microwork (Score 1-5, 5 being the highest)	37
Table 3.7: Microworkers by Type of Work	37

List of Figures

Figure 1: Distribution of Employed Persons by Sectors	3
--	---

Future of Work in a Digital Era: The Potential and Challenges for Online Freelancing and Microwork in India

1. Introduction

The traditional imagery of “labour” as referring to the hedgehog grind is giving way to a freer way to work, enabled by the ever increasing digitization that threatens to replace labour as we have known it for centuries. Bots or software designed to automate certain functions are the most visible and popular manifestation of the attempts to simulate certain simple human interactions such as scheduling meetings and discovering prices of flights and hotels to name a few. As technology becomes functionally mature, bots will turn into more intelligent beasts capable of disrupting even the more cognitive tasks performed today by humans.

Given the technological dynamic nature of societies and economies, it is natural for labour markets to have undergone momentous change. Beginning with the Neolithic Revolution that transformed agriculture, the Industrial Revolution that transformed large scale manufacturing and gave rise to the modern city, we are now in the throes of a digital revolution that is yet anticipated to be the most disruptive in its effect on the labour market. Each technological disruption has constantly redefined the role workers and “labour” play in the economy, along with regulations that describe the institutional structure of the market. For the record, labour force of an economy includes all those who are actively looking to work for a living as distinguished from those who are not expected to work, children, old persons etc or have voluntarily dropped out of the labour force.¹

The extraordinary rise of the Internet, and of late christened the Fourth Industrial Revolution² is disrupting almost every industry in every country. The depth and breadth of these changes are a symptom of the transformation underway-of entire systems of production, management, and governance that happen only rarely. It is one of those seminal moments in history which could lead to yet another disruption in the labour market and completely redefine how we work. The question of how many jobs (and where) are created and destroyed depends on the speed of adoption, the economic activities which are based on them, and the social relations which develop around them, all informed by the local context. Moreover, jobs lost and new jobs offered may take place in different areas or points in time and would almost certainly require different skills, leading to contemporary mismatches and mismatches over time.³ This report assesses the growth of Microwork and Online Freelancing in India, an opportunity to work independently and temporarily by the rise of web-based platforms that are pairing talent with businesses⁴. These concepts are elaborated in subsequent sections of the report.

¹ Dr. T. N. Bhagoliwal, Economics of Labour and Social Welfare, 5 (1976).

² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-and-how-to-respond/>

³ Mario Pianta, (2003), Innovation and Employment, Chapter 22, Handbook of Innovation, OUP

⁴ <https://www.fastcompany.com/3049532/heres-why-the-freelancer-economy-is-on-the-rise>

The Harvard Business Review ran an article on the Rise of the SuperTemp⁵ in 2012, *the community of refugees from big corporations and law and consulting firms who value the autonomy and flexibility of temporary or project-based work and find that the compensation is comparable to what they earned in full-time jobs—sometimes even better*. Equipped with a laptop, Internet connection and skills in demand, the phenomenon for online freelancing is becoming increasingly popular in India. In this study we outline the universe of online freelancing platforms and networks in India along with a survey analysis of freelancer perceptions. The scope of our discussion also includes the lesser skilled communities that engage in small and simple tasks - microwork, which is completed using a web interface. In order to contextualise this discussion into a policy narrative it is important for us to first outline the existing labour market in India.

1.1 The Labour Market in India

1.1.1 Labour Market Trends

Historically, employment in India has been dependent upon agriculture, referred to as the primary sector. For several years the largest percentage of people were employed in agriculture and related activities. However, trade liberalisation in the early 90s saw a structural transformation as agriculture's share in employment dropped from 68.5% in 1983 to about 46.1% in 2015-16⁶. Although this has been a characteristic feature of the development processes of other East and Southeast Asian countries, in India (and South Asia in general) the shift from agriculture to manufacturing has yet not taken place on the same scale ; India has instead metamorphosed into a service driven economy which has contributed to 62% of its gross value-added growth in 2016-17⁷⁸.

Data from the most recent Employment-Unemployment Survey of India in 2015-16 shows the change in the distribution of employed persons by sector. The graph below (Figure 1.1) compares data from the 2nd round of the Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS) conducted in 2011-12 with the 5th round conducted in 2015-16. It shows that employment in the primary sector (agriculture) has declined while that in secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary sectors (services) has increased, in tertiary more than secondary.

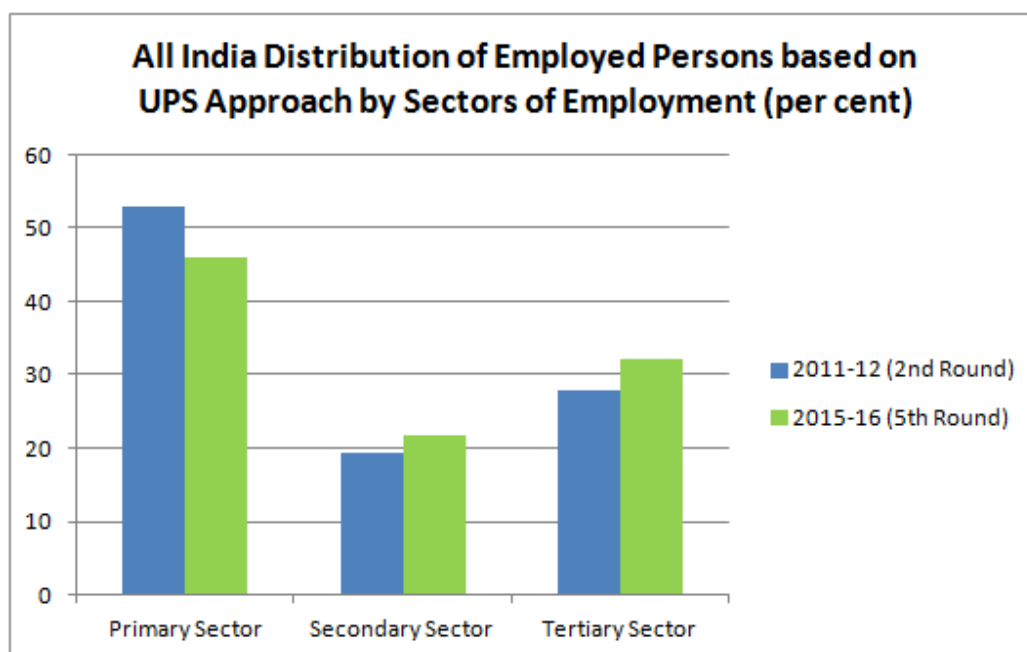
⁵ <https://hbr.org/2012/05/the-rise-of-the-supertemp>

⁶ Fifth Employment Unemployment Survey (2015-16), Labour Bureau, India, available at http://labourbureaunew.gov.in/UserContent/EUS_5th_1.pdf

⁷ <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=169876>

⁸ India Labour Market Update, ILO Country Office for India, 2016. Available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_496510.pdf

Figure 1: Distribution of Employed Persons by Sectors



Source: Report on 5th Annual EUS, 2015-16 (Labour Bureau)

Note: Primary Sector refers to Agriculture, Secondary Sector refers to Manufacturing and Tertiary Sector refers to Services

The gender divide in India's labour force is also a cause for concern. It has among the lowest female labour force participation rates (LFPR) in the world, also exhibiting a declining trend since 2004-05, dropping from 42.7 per cent in 2004-05 to 23.7% in 2015-16. The male labour force participation stands at a significantly higher 75%. Table 1.1 shows the gender divide in LFPR, based on the Usual Principal Status (UPS) approach.

Table 1.1: Labour Force Participation Rates (2015-16)

Sector	Male	Female	Transgender	Person
Rural	77.3	26.7	51.1	53.0
Urban	69.1	16.2	41.2	43.5
Rural + Urban	75.0	23.7	48.0	50.3

Source: Report on 5th Annual EUS, 2015-16 (Labour Bureau)

Other measures of employment such as the Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and the Unemployment Rate (UR) also indicate the abysmal rate of female participation in India's labour force. Table 1.2 presents the latest data on WPR and UR in rural and urban areas which reinforce the gender divide.

Table 1.2: Gender Divide in India’s Labour Market express using WPR and UR

Parameter	Rural			Urban			Rural + Urban		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
WPR	74.1	24.6	50.4	66.8	14.3	41.4	72.1	21.7	47.8
UR	4.2	7.8	5.1	3.3	12.1	4.9	4.0	8.7	5.0

Source: Report on 5th Annual EUS, 2015-16 (Labour Bureau)

Notes - WPR - Worker Population Ratio; UR - Unemployment Rate

The decision as well as ability of women to engage in the labour force hinges on a number of factors such as educational attainment, fertility rates and the age of marriage, economic growth/cyclical effects and urbanisation⁹. The logical link between education and jobs is broken for women in India. The decline in female labour force participation coincides with girls making massive advances in education¹⁰. According to various rounds of the National Sample Survey on employment and unemployment, a substantially high proportion of females report their activity status as attending to domestic duties¹¹. Women in India largely continue to serve as “untapped potential” in the labour force as they tend to end up in marginal jobs, often home-based (as a contributing family worker/unpaid worker). Moreover, much of their work remains unreported or unaccounted for in official statistics, which leads to under-reporting of their economic contribution¹². Flexibility provided by the digital economy offers hope for this domestically tied section of the society.

The other challenge in India’s labour market is its segmented nature, a socio-economic environment that has given rise to the informalisation of labour in the country. Data from the 5th round of EUS shows an increase in casual labourers and contract workers in 2015-16 as compared to 2011-12. A large proportion of the employment in the Indian economy is still dependent on agriculture, however, the prevalence of underemployment in the sector is well known. Every year, people migrate to cities in large numbers, in search of employment in the non-farm sector, albeit at levels that are unusually low when compared to other Asian countries¹³. India’s informal workforce has been rising rapidly, both in the unorganized as well as organized sector. The accepted definition of the informal sector in India includes *proprietary and partnership enterprises (excluding those run by non-corporate entities such as cooperatives, trusts and non-profit institutions), in the non-agricultural sector and in*

⁹ Lin Lean Lim, “Female Labour-Force Participation”, Gender Promotion Programme, International Labour Office, Geneva. Available at

<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/completingfertility/RevisedLIMpaper.PDF>

¹⁰ <https://thewire.in/165005/indian-workplaces-losing-women-nationwide/>

¹¹ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/genericdocument/wcms_342357.pdf

¹² *Op Cit*

¹³ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/ruraltourban-migration-in-india-has-slowed-down-expert/article17336550.ece>

agriculture-related activities excluding crop production. The reported employment share of India's informal sector is 75% in rural areas and 69% in urban areas¹⁴. This is largely attributable to the stringent size based regulation that applies to India's manufacturing sector. Employment in the informal sector is commonly thought of as largely low-skilled or unskilled based on two empirical facts – low levels of formal education and training and low productivity prevailing in this sector. Nevertheless, currently and in the immediate future it is likely to maintain its dominance in employment. We would like to think that in India's current economic environment, formal and informal sectors are not competing with, rather complementing each other.¹⁵ With appropriate policies to reorient skills, allow easier access to credit, and availability of markets, the sector can grow while the debate on labour reforms and the grounds for defining informalisation are resolved. A well drafted social security program, delinked from employment will also simplify the subject.¹⁶

1.2 Digitisation and the Labour Market

The rise of bots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought new job opportunities for established industries. According to a recent report by Deloitte¹⁷, technology has created jobs especially in knowledge intensive sectors such as medicine, education and other professional services. However, it is erroneous to assume that technology is only a privilege of the skilled and an opportunity for the formally employed. Technology is not only creating jobs for less educated workers¹⁸, it is also an opportunity for informal workers to use technology and digital platforms in their work. The exponential increase in the number of digitally driven startups is testament to the immediate impact of digitization in India's informal labour markets. There are multiple definitions of what constitutes the informal labour market; some distinguishing characteristics (also discussed above), include whether workers are subject to government taxes, have access to social security or insurance, whether workers receive minimum wage, etc.¹⁹. The informal sector not only comprises a significant part of India's existing labour force, it also absorbs new entrants to the labour force each year. More than 90% of India's labour force constitutes the informal sector.

Measuring the impact of technology and innovation on the informal economy, has been the subject of recent academic research²⁰. The occupational sectors sampled for India in a study by the John F Kennedy School of Government, included garment makers, construction workers, incense stick rollers and waste pickers. The findings from this study suggest that informal workers and their organizations are beginning to use technology in their work. While individuals rely on mobile phones, organizations use the Internet and online platforms.

¹⁴ <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/Chandrasekhar/indias-informal-economy/article11119085.ece>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/wbGabfgoBnHwJPWHBZbPLI/Is-informal-the-new-normal.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/aug/17/technology-created-more-jobs-than-destroyed-140-years-data-census>

¹⁸ <https://hbr.org/2014/03/how-technology-creates-jobs-for-less-educated-workers>

¹⁹ Abu S Shonchoy and PN Raja Junankar (2014) "The informal labour market in India: transitory or permanent employment for migrants", *Journal of Labour & Development*

²⁰ <http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Chen-technology-informalworkers-cities-2016.pdf>

Another study also cited the use of web-based platforms by waste pickers in Bangalore to track and trace trash in the city²¹. I Got Garbage, a solution developed by the technology firm Mindtree Consulting and implemented in Bangalore has the potential to transform waste management solutions throughout the country. It also creates opportunities for the marginalized section of waste-pickers to go about their work each day with more dignity and recognition. Technology upgradation is also a huge opportunity for one of the largest informal sectors of the economy – retail trade and distribution. The expansion to omni-channel formats, to own or collaborate with an existing e-commerce platform is now common even to mom-and-pop shops in most urban centres. There is no doubt that Internet based businesses and digitisation hold enormous promise not only in expanding markets and their reach but also more importantly to loosen the wedge of palpable dualism in India’s labour market between the formal and the informal.

Online Freelancing and Microwork have evolved as rewarding prospects of what is primarily India’s informal labour market. Along the continuum of rudimentary to complex business processes, the digitally enabled labour force finds opportunity for employment and maximising productivity. The scope of work covers skill heterogeneity, experience, preferences in work schedules, etc. In fact, research has established that employers can eliminate inefficiencies and lower costs by introducing a dual job market within their organisation, which is a combination of high paid commitment employees and lower paid freelance workers²². Fortune 500 companies are now leveraging online freelance platforms to source specialised talent. Some Indian companies find that processes of conventional staffing do not always align with their operations. Case studies of Fortune 500 companies reported that while previously the teams determined what work was performed, work now determines the composition of the team. Moreover, while companies previously made a choice between freelancers and permanent employees, these options now coexist²³.

The rise of online freelancing is briefly discussed in the section below.

1.3 The Online Freelancing Revolution

Dating as far back as medieval times, the term ‘Freelancer’ was commonly used as a way of referring to a hired lance, a mercenary who offered to fight for the highest bidder²⁴. Over time the word transcended battlefields and found usage in business - loosely, someone willing to offer unique and much-needed skills to those willing to pay for them. The Internet allowed for dynamic growth of freelancing. It became much easier for independent professionals to publish their profiles, while for those seeking a service, the Internet allowed for a far more efficient and expansive search. Freelancers were no longer constrained by barriers of time and geography or limited to cold-calling, print advertisements and local area networks to find freelance opportunities. In 1998 Harvard Business Review published a prescient article titled

²¹ <http://www.urb.im/c1503>

²² Maria Saez-Marti (2011), "Siesta: A Theory Of Freelancing". Working Paper No. 55, Department of Economics, University of Zurich

²³ <https://www.upwork.com/hiring/for-clients/how-fortune-500-adapting-online-freelancing-platforms/>

²⁴ <http://www.vandelaydesign.com/freelance-defintion/>

"The Dawn of the E-Lance Economy" which seemingly predicted many of the ways that the internet might change how work is done. Contemporary literature calls this phenomenon the 'gig economy', a growing number of workers abandoning traditional 9 to 5 employment in favour of working independently on a task-by-task basis for various employers²⁵.

The nature of freelancing has completely transformed with the emergence of online platforms such as Guru.com, Truelance and Elance.com (Now Upwork). It has revolutionised the way a client could hire and interact with freelancers. For the first time, clients and freelancers who have never met in person or on the phone are working together to complete and deliver projects. Freelancers offer a wide variety of skill sets to choose from, and are able to source work from anywhere across the globe sitting at home. This particularly benefits people in service heavy countries like India where local compensations are lower than the global average. A subset of such online "outsourcing" channels wherein simple and small jobs require basic literacy and numeracy, is called microwork. When microwork is outsourced to vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups in developing countries such as India it is called impact sourcing. In the following sections we will deal with the multiplicity of definitions surrounding online outsourcing and freelancing²⁶.

The rapidly rising digital penetration has helped fuel the online freelancing trend in India, a market that has risen manifold over the past five years. According to some estimates India is home to the second largest market of freelance professionals (about 15 million), standing next only to the US (approx 53 million). These 15 million Indian freelancers contribute to about 40% of total freelance jobs offered worldwide²⁷. As the market develops, platforms will evolve to deliver better quality searches and nuance their services to target specific population groups. The types of existing models and their target groups are discussed in the sections below.

The Online Labour Index (OLI) developed under the iLabour project at Oxford University is the first economic indicator that provides data related to the gig economy which is equivalent to conventional labour market statistics. It measures the supply and demand of online freelancers across countries and occupations by tracking the number of projects and tasks across platform in real time²⁸. In July 2017 the index reported skills that different countries were bringing to the global online market. The top occupational category in the United States is writing and translation, while in India it is software development and technology. While the index currently uses data from four of the largest online labour platforms²⁹, it is representative of the global trends in online freelancing. Based on traffic statistics, we can

²⁵ Martha A Chen (2016), "Technology, informal workers and cities: insights from Ahmedabad (India), Durban (South Africa) and Lima (Peru)", Environment and Urbanization, International institute for Environment and Development. Available at:
http://cdn.aigroup.com.au/Reports/2016/Gig_Economy_August_2016.pdf

²⁶ Lis Meyers et al (2017), "The Nexus of Microwork and Impact Sourcing: Implications for Youth Employment", Global Center for Youth and Employment and banyan global. Available at:
http://gcyerti.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Nexus-of-Microwork-and-Impact-Sourcing_Final_ONLINE_02.28.17_v2.pdf

²⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/indias-freelance-economy-booming-2016-rupak-das>

²⁸ <http://ilabour.oii.ox.ac.uk/online-labour-index/>

²⁹ The four platforms are Fiverr, Freelancer, Guru and People Per Hour

estimate that these four sites represent at least 40 percent of the global market for platform-based online work. As the scope of this data collection increases, we hope to see a more nuanced disaggregation of this global market.

The rest of the report is organised as follows. Section 2 describes the online freelancing and microwork ecosystem in India. We present the data collected from our interaction with several platform owners to outline the breadth of this industry. Section 3 uses primary survey data collected from an online survey to analyse the experience of online freelancers and microworkers in India. Section 4 concludes and offers policy recommendations

2. Online Freelancing/Microwork Ecosystem in India

2.1 Definitions and Background

The ecosystem for online freelancing and microwork consists of three principle groups of stakeholders, clients - looking to outsource work, service providers including web based platforms - that facilitate the outsourcing, and workers - individual freelancers, groups of people, professionals, etc willing to offer their service. The business model using which these groups of stakeholders engage and the socio-economic objective of such an engagement has led to a variety of definitions that often confuse a reader. In order to iron out the overlaps, the well-established idea of business process outsourcing (BPO) is a good starting point.

While outsourcing of manufacturing is an old story, outsourcing to services is a relatively new phenomenon. Services outsourcing to India started in the 1980s and rapidly accelerated in the '90s. India offered a unique combination of attributes that established it as the preferred destination for IT-BPO services. This included an abundant, skilled, English-speaking manpower and high-end telecom facilities and infrastructure which were at par with global standards. More recently, automation has reduced demand for some of the standard BPO services including data entry, technical support and customer services. *Online outsourcing* developed from the BPO model enables companies/ clients to contract with a third-party firm or individual (often in a different country) to supply products or services that are delivered and paid for via the Internet³⁰. For clients online outsourcing provides broader access to specialized skills, more flexible and faster hiring processes, while for workers it has created new opportunities to access and compete in global job markets³¹. Online outsourcing can be divided into two major segments - microwork and online freelancing (often referred to as e-lancing). *Microwork* and *online freelancing* often overlap, the major difference between them often being the size and complexity of the tasks, as well as the compensation offered. In the illustration below (2.1) we use existing definitions to explain some of these terms using examples to help illustrate the difference, along with other popular nomenclature used by the

³⁰ *Op Cit*

³¹ Siou Chew Kuek et al (2015), "The Global Opportunity in Online Outsourcing", World Bank Group. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/138371468000900555/pdf/ACS14228-ESW-white-cover-P149016-Box391478B-PUBLIC-World-Bank-Global-OO-Study-WB-Rpt-FinalS.pdf>

industry. Moreover, even within a particular type of model, there can be several sub-models. A report by the Global Centre for Youth Employment³² explains the different business configurations within microwork (i) a direct model builds and operates delivery centres (physical locations) and trains local workers to complete work in those centres. An example would be iMerit (ii) a microdistribution model that runs on a crowdsourcing platform, breaks down large complex tasks obtained from clients into a series of small microtasks for potential workers to select from and work independently from home, cyber cafes, etc. An example would be Amazon's Mechanical Turk and (iii) an intermediary model (indirect model) adds an additional layer between client and workers, where the platform often partners with smaller or location specific entities for implementation of the work. The primary platform is responsible for marketing, business development, business acquisition, etc, while the partner organization manages recruitment, training and delivery. An example would be Rural Shores. Samasource while primary a direct model, sometimes uses the intermediary model by networking with partners in India and Africa.

Across microwork models when companies outsource to suppliers that employ individuals from the lowest economic segments of the population it is popularly referred to as *impact sourcing* or socially responsible outsourcing. Similarly, we can distinguish between online freelancing models on the basis of intermediation by the platform owners, type of tasks posted on these platforms, target market of freelancers, etc. The World Bank Report on the future of Online Outsourcing discusses some of these aspects³³. The variety in freelancing and microwork platforms is discussed in the next section using the data collected from our stakeholder interactions.

Components of the online labour market that are characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts as opposed to permanent jobs is now referred to as the “gig economy,” popularized by platforms such as Fiverr and Craigslist in the early days of the market. Popular perception might suggest that this is the world of the millennials, who have undoubtedly embraced the freelance economy. Interestingly, however, several mid-career professionals in the US are now using online outsourcing as a platform to stay employed beyond the traditional retirement age³⁴. We expect for this trend to pick up in India as well. In our detailed discussion on online platforms in the next section, we refer to Flexing It, an online freelancing platform that focuses on experienced professionals looking for freelance opportunities.

³² *Ibid*

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elainepofeldt/2017/08/30/why-older-workers-are-embracing-the-gig-economy/#4f97b7e142ce>

Illustration 2.1 Nomenclature and Definitions to understand the Online Freelancing and Microwork Universe



Source: Compiled by Authors from the World Bank Report on Global Opportunity in Online Outsourcing, Global Centre for Youth Employment on the Nexus of Microwork and Impact Sourcing

2.2 *The Online Freelancing marketplace*

A marketplace can be understood as the intersection or meeting point of two or more distinct type of users, most commonly buyers and sellers. These buyers and sellers typically engage in the exchange of goods, services and information. Traditionally these marketplaces in the “offline” sense have existed since time immemorial, forming integral factors in the growth of trade, commerce and economies. One can take the example of an ordinary village market, where sellers from nearby towns and cities exchange their goods with the locals under the supervision of the village chieftain who may levy a tax for the use of the physical space that the village puts at their disposal³⁵. Theoretically, the same idea can be applied to the digital space. We are witness to the rapid rise of online marketplaces for both goods and services - Online Freelancing and Microwork falling within the services category. Here, the Freelancers are the suppliers of the work demanded by Clients, and online freelancing platforms such as Upwork, Guru etc. form the intermediaries and the marketplaces where these two users interact with one another, often charging one or both sides for this provision, akin to the role of the village chieftain. Work thus flows from freelancers to clients and money flows from clients to freelancers.

The prime attraction of this model is the reduction of transaction costs for both sides; digitalization and online platforms bring the freelancers and clients together in one place (virtually), transcending the barriers of time and space, offering a greater variety to clients, and access to increased work opportunities for freelancers. This inadvertently leads to a “Chicken and Egg³⁶” scenario: more clients will attract more freelancers to the marketplace, and vice versa. In order to attract clients, an online platform must have a large number of registered freelancers, but these freelancers will be willing to register only if they see a large enough pool of clients on the platform. For network effects to kick in, platforms use a variety of strategies. Most platforms operating in this two sided market³⁷ subsidise one side by making registrations free for freelancers, and charge clients to access this database of registered freelancers (eg. Upwork, Flexing It, Ghar se Naukri etc). Platforms are in fact market creators in this evolving space for online freelancing.

Online freelancing is a complete paradigm shift in how work is sourced, completed and delivered, overcoming inefficiencies created by time lags and geographical distances. While online freelancing is understood as a completely virtual business model, in practice varying types of interactions have created grey areas, that are organic extensions of the traditional online model.

Understanding the origin and growth of Online Freelancing in India is imperative to make sense of its current state. Although never seen as a full-time profession, freelancing for the

³⁵ Bertin Martens (2016), “An Economic Policy Perspective on Online Platforms”, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, JRC Technical Reports, Digital Economy Working Paper 2016/05

³⁶ Caillaud, Bernard, and Bruno Jullien (2017) “Chicken & Egg: Competition Among Intermediation Service Providers” Rand Journal Of Economics. Available at: <http://www.rchss.sinica.edu.tw/cibs/pdf/CaillaudJullien.pdf>.

³⁷ Jean-Charles Rochet and Jean Tirole (2004) “ Two Sided Markets: An Overview”, Institut d’Economie Industrielle working paper

most part was primarily restricted to low-skill odd jobs in a local setting – carpentry, plumbing etc. The early technological revolution and the birth of the personal computer and the Internet transformed this stagnating pool by providing an alternate medium to existing freelancers, and opportunities for creating new freelancing jobs. What was once a space restricted by barriers such as geography and skill had now been opened up to everyone, tying in well to the “Flattening of the Earth³⁸” that economists of the time sought to achieve through globalization.

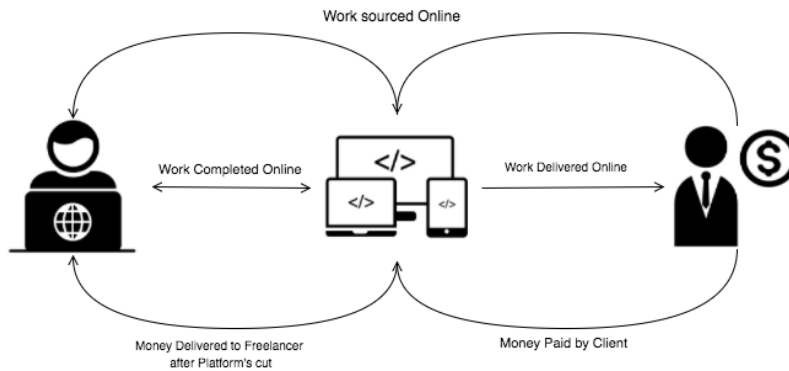
The freelancing ecosystem in India did not see a complete transition from an offline to an online marketplace. A large number of freelancers do not engage in what is theoretically defined as online freelancing, i.e., where work is sourced, completed, *and* delivered online. As mentioned earlier, there exist various permutations and combinations of online and offline media that are used by freelancers and clients. A departure from the stringent definition of online freelancing helps outline this ecosystem better.

For the purpose of this study we use online freelancing as an umbrella terms to include all forms of interaction in which digital technologies are leveraged. In this report, we have developed a simple marketplace, with clients on the demand side and freelancers on the supply side to understand the nature of interactions (both offline and online) and to trace the flow of work and money. We have outlined four different options using which freelancers and clients engage with each other. The technology and online component vary across these options as does the level of intermediation by platforms. In all four models work is sourced online, but maybe completed or delivered off-line. When an engagement is completed or delivered off-line, it would mean limited use of the Internet, either due to the nature of work, client preference or inadequate availability of technology and Internet infrastructure. We observe such instances of freelancing in design, photography, writing, etc. However, this broadened definition implies that work must be sourced online for it to fall within the category of online freelancing. In traditional forms of freelancing, work is sourced through word of mouth and other off-line channels, that don’t fall under the category of online freelancing, and role of platforms and other online sources of information on freelancing opportunities are limited or non-existent. We represent these four cases in Illustration 2.2 under the larger umbrella of online freelancing. While the illustrations find platforms playing an important role in managing payments to freelancers, in several cases, the role of platforms are limited to only that of match-making, for which they charge a fee. This is an extension of the initial use case of the mobile and Internet and their application to the business of aggregating buyers and sellers.

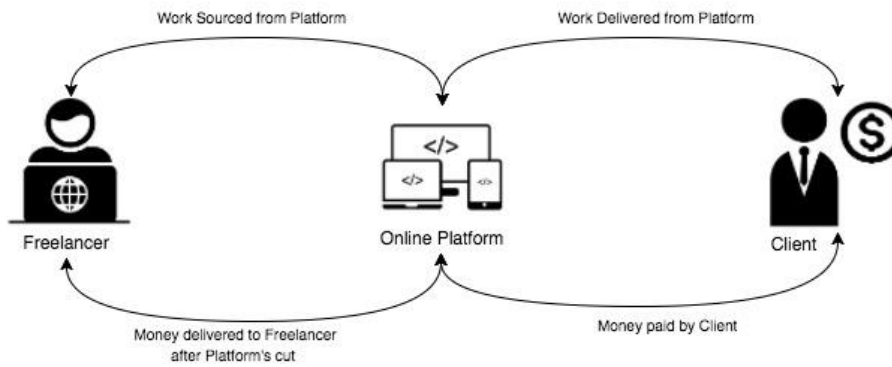
³⁸ Thomas Friedman (2005) “The World is Flat”, Farrar Straus and Giroux

Illustration 2.2 Different models of Online Freelancing in India

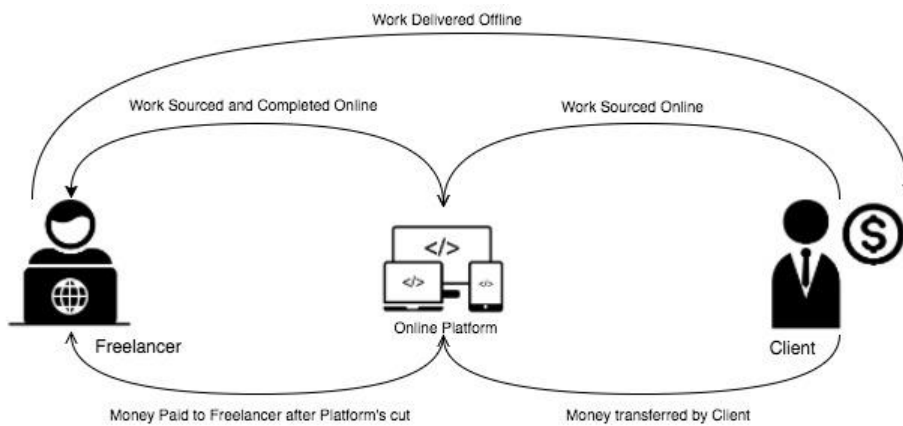
1) Sourced Online, Completed Online, Delivered Online



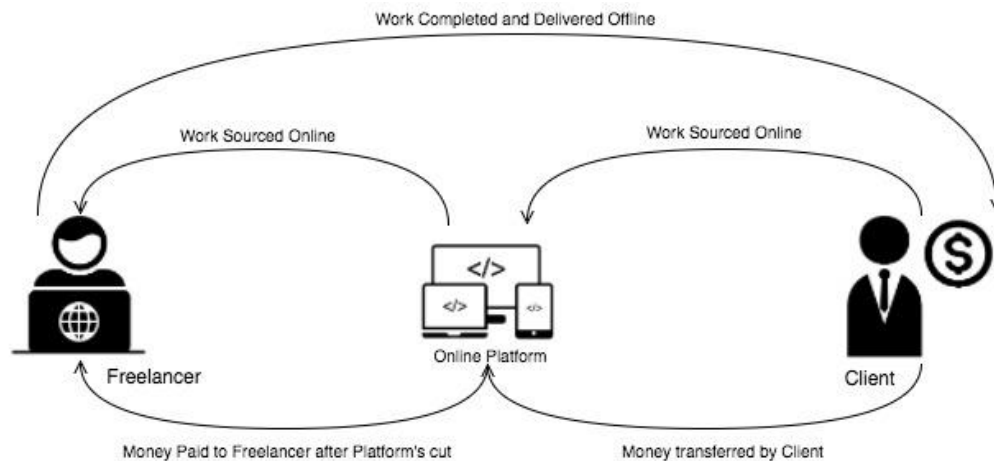
2) Sourced Online, Completed Offline, Delivered Online



3) Sourced Online, Completed Online, Delivered Offline



4) Sourced Online, Completed Offline, Delivered Offline



2.3 Analysing the ecosystem using data from Stakeholder interactions

As a part of the research design we spent time browsing the Internet and interacting with freelancers to list out firms that constituted the microwork and online freelancing sector in India. Through this search, we created a list of 50 firms³⁹ that were contacted over email and phone for interactions on what could help us build an understanding of the microwork and online freelancing ecosystem in India. While not exhaustive, the list is broadly representative of the variety inherent in the ecosystem—that includes clients, platforms (service providers) and freelancers and how they interact with each other. Other studies that have examined this market before us have focused on the state and future of online freelancing globally. A study that focused on the future of freelancing in IT selected a list of 10 platforms on the basis of registered users, traffic, mention of the platform in academic writing and other Google trends⁴⁰. A competition analysis of platforms, revealed a monopolized demand structure while the IT provider's market describes a rather high degree of competitiveness, even between global regions⁴¹. Other studies have also evaluated platforms, their advantages and disadvantages and their ability to impact the global workforce⁴². Interestingly most of these narratives feature India as an important part of the overall discussion. Since this report focuses only on India, microwork and online freelancing platforms have been interviewed from the perspective of impacting the Indian economy.

Over a period of 2 months we connected with 18 of the 50 firms, some over phone and others in a face to face interview. Using the background of definitions and other characteristics of operation, differences across these platforms have been illustrated in Table 2.1 below. The list of *nine characteristics* which help summarise the objective, operation and impact of each platform are:

³⁹ Refer to Appendix 1 for the list of organisations

⁴⁰ Mihai Gheorghe (2015) "State Of Freelancing In IT And Future Trends". International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business, and Industrial Engineering, Volume 9, Issue 5, pp 1474-1478

⁴¹ *Op Cit*

⁴² Fathima N. Thabassum (2013), "A Study On The Freelancing Remote Job Websites". International Journal of Business Research and Management (IJBRM), Volume 4, Issue 1

(i) Primary Objective of the Platform: While business models may overlap, the key driver of each organisation type is fairly distinct. For example, in the microwork category, several organizations that worked on the direct model in India (DataHalli, Desicrew) placed social upliftment of the local community as their primary objective. Platforms such as JobsForHer and SHEROES address gender issues and focus primarily on employability of the female work force. Some general category freelance platforms are working towards changing perceptions associated with freelancing and internationalisation of the experienced Indian labour force. Enunciating these objectives help understand and align the other aspects of the organisation.

(ii) Type of Platform: Each interviewed organisation is classified by its platform type. We have covered a mix of organisations across the entire spectrum of microwork and online freelancing. From Illustration 2.1 we have the broad categorisation of organisations with definitions that provide a ready reference to understand the general scope and nature of work each organisation type is engaged in. Where available, the scale of operations in terms of registered number of users, number of tasks outsourced, etc., has been provided to understand the relative size of the organisation.

(iii) Task Complexity: The segmentation in task complexity is based on a general understanding of the skills and training required to complete a task. Task complexity is also closely tied to the level of compensation associated with the corresponding task. For this analysis we adopt the definition used by the World Bank Report on “The Global Opportunity in Online Outsourcing” published in 2015. Low complexity tasks refer to those where no specialized skills or training is required including activities such as search and click, voting, data entry, etc.; medium complexity tasks require basic literacy, numeracy, and some degree of soft skills that include activities such as translation, content development, etc.; high complexity tasks require specialized technical knowledge that often involves vocational training, experience and a university degree. This includes tasks related to market intelligence, business, accounting and HR consulting, etc. In an associated inference from stakeholder consultations we found that microworkers and freelancers can be easily trained for low and medium skills tasks. On the other hand, high complexity tasks are generally undertaken by previously trained and experienced professionals.

(iv) Skill/ Applicable Sector: Some platforms offer generalised posting of tasks, cutting across sectors and skill type while others are niche that curate the best talent for a particular type of task. For example, Truelancer and Upwork are platforms that allow postings for all types of freelancers. The range of services for Upwork includes coding, software development, content writing, administrative support specialists, finance professionals, etc. However, there are some platforms that provide only specialised services for a given sector. For example, Problogger for writing and content development, 99 designs for design and web development, Toptal and Codementor for coding and software development. Platforms that focus on niche services often follow a screening process using tests to identify capability. In case of generic platforms, freelancers are vetted based on reviews.

(v) Revenue Model: Most platforms earn revenue as a share of the payment made by clients to engage freelancers on the platform. This could range from 5 - 20%, depending on the platform, nature of work, value of transaction, etc. On some platforms freelancers are charged an upfront registration fees and occasionally a transaction related fee. In services that are managed by the platforms or where the platform plays an active role in the identification, initiation and completion of a task, the fee is often higher, paid by both parties and linked to the value of transaction. While most platforms maintain an escrow account to transfer payments to the freelancers after completion of a task, some platforms do not engage themselves in the payment process at all.

(vi) Target User Groups: This aspect of the business model is very closely related to the primary objective of an organisation. Generic platforms that work towards creating a marketplace for online freelancing keep the platform open to all categories of users. However, during our interactions we found several platforms that worked dedicatedly towards women empowerment, employability of the specially-abled, etc. In fact, niche consulting firms also target users groups that are trained in specific skills. Demographics of the user category become an important aspect not only for scalability of the business, but also with respect to building a policy narrative around training and skilling of the labour force.

(vii) Level of Intermediation by platform: Platforms can be divided into two main categories based on the platform's involvement in completing a transaction - open services platform and managed services platform. In an open services platform, workers and employers connect and negotiate directly based often on a process of competitive bidding. Under the managed services model, platforms take care of finding and hiring individual workers and are accountable for the quality of work. Platforms don't necessarily exist on the two extremes; most platforms today follow a combination of the self-service model along with a premium model that handholds clients and freelancers through the entire outsourcing process.

(viii) Availability of Job-Seeking options: Some online freelancing platforms are vertically integrating their service supply chain to offer recruitment services. This was especially true in case of platforms that focused on helping women join or reenter the labour force. The process of job placements was often accompanied with a mentoring facility that helped women feel ready for work outside of their homes.

(ix) Provisions for training and upskilling: Training and skilling form an integral part of the microwork culture, especially in case of the direct model where a group of microworkers operate.

Table 2.1: Characteristic of Platforms/ Organisations⁴³ Interviewed for this study

Organization Details	Primary Objective	Revenue Model	Target User Group	Level of Intermediation by platform/ Business Model	Availability of Job Seeking Options	Provisions for training and Upskilling
<p>Flexing It</p> <p>No. of Freelancers: 50,000</p> <p>No. of Clients: 19,000</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: High</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Business/Strategy Consulting</p>	<p>To create a market for specialized, experienced independent consultants in India</p>	<p>Charge Clients fixed fee for basic services</p> <p>Premium “Primo” service is hand-held - 25% of the total transaction value is charged as fee.</p> <p>No involvement in transfer of payments</p>	<p>Highly skilled consultants ranging from senior associates to experienced directors and strategy consultants.</p> <p>People who want to change their careers and groups like young mothers.</p>	<p>Combination of open service and managed service platforms</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Ghar se Naukri</p> <p>No. of Clients: 750</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Low to Medium</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Content development, social media development, translations, chat assistants etc.</p>	<p>Social empowerment of women by providing work from home/part-time/freelancing opportunities</p>	<p>Paid services to clients, determined on a case to case basis as per needs of client and freelancer. Thus far, signing up for women has been free.</p> <p>Collaborates with third party firms who carry out re-skilling and up-skilling of freelancers.</p>	<p>Women, especially those from remote areas of the country.</p>	<p>Managed Services Platform</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes – (third party tie ups)</p>

⁴³ Details of the interaction with each organization is available in Appendix 2

<p>V-Pact</p> <p>No. of Freelancers: 200-300</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Medium to High</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Consulting, research, IT services, teaching etc.</p>	<p>Creating a market for women who have taken a break in their careers - single mothers, retired women who wish to work part-time etc.</p>	<p>Clients are charged upfront for access to the platform and network.</p> <p>Freelancers only charged for additional services like counseling, upskilling and provision of infrastructure</p> <p>No involvement in transfer of payments</p>	<p>Women, especially those who have taken a break</p>	<p>Open Services Platform</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Gaia Internet</p> <p>No. of Freelancers: 70-100</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Medium to High</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Content writing</p>	<p>To create a network of specialized content writers for hire</p>	<p>Freelancers charge on a per article basis, depending on the word count and rates are fixed across the board.</p>	<p>No particular target</p> <p>Stay at home moms and students constitute the greatest percentage of freelancers</p>	<p>Managed Services Platform</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>JobsForHer</p> <p>No of Clients: 3000</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Low to medium</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Translation, content writing, designing</p>	<p>One stop shop database on women who have taken a break and trying to return to the job market</p>	<p>Clients are charged but platform is free for freelancers</p>	<p>Women, particularly those in their 30s who have taken a break of 1-3 years</p>	<p>Open Services Platform</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>

<p>SHEROES</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Low to medium</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Call centre and help chat service</p>	Empower women by creating a growth network for them	Clients pay for availing services and women freelancers can use the portal for free ⁴⁴	Restricted to those residing in the metros Women- especially those who had taken a sabbatical from work or relocated for personal reasons	Combination of managed services and open services platforms	Yes	Yes
<p>Desi Crew</p> <p>Organization type: Rural BPO</p> <p>Task Complexity: Low to medium</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Data entry and conversion, content creation, GIS based mapping services, transcription and localisation⁴⁵</p>	To train and employ rural youth through opportunities enabled and created by technology	Clients pay for services directly. Cheaper than competitors but overheads are low since they function from tier II cities and villages.	People residing in rural areas especially rural youth and women	Microwork Direct Model	No	Yes
<p>HarVa</p> <p>Organization type: Rural BPO</p> <p>Task Complexity: Low</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Data entry, processing and conversion, document scanning, web research and call centre services</p>	Sustainable inclusive growth by creating value in rural India through skill development, microfinance etc.	Enterprise modeled on end-to-end solutions and backward and forward integration of their business verticals helps them rationalize their overall expenses. ⁴⁶	Focus on rural areas, especially women	Microwork Direct Model	No	Yes
<p>Truelancer</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Medium to High</p>	To build a global community of trusted freelancers	Both clients and freelancers are charged. Includes 3 broad membership plans	No particular target group. Freelancers are a mix of all nationalities and ethnicities.	Open Services Platform	Yes	No

⁴⁴ <https://inc42.com/buzz/sheroes-wants-to-connect-1-mn-women-with-opportunities-in-next-3-years-founder-sairee-chahal/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.nextbigwhat.com/social-entrepreneurship-interview-with-desicrew-founder-rural-bpo-297/>

⁴⁶ <http://www.harva.co.in/slider2.html>

Skill/Applicable Sector: Graphic designing, content writing, basic data entry, video production, digital marketing etc.		and Truelancer deducts 10% of that as commission	The gender ratio is skewed with men outnumbering women			
Data Halli Organization type: Rural BPO Task Complexity: Medium Skill/Applicable Sector: Cheque processing, xml/html coding, customer services, fund-raising for NGOs etc.	To leverage and capitalize on the latent potential of educated girls in rural India in order to eradicate poverty and empower women ⁴⁷	Takes a business to delivery approach and runs on shared resources. It is not a commercial venture	Focus on rural India, especially women	Microwork Direct Model	No	Yes
iMerit Organization type: Data processing and analytics organisation Task Complexity: Medium to High Skill/Applicable Sector: Simple data based jobs	To unlock the value within unstructured data and to improve technical process efficiencies while making a social impact ⁴⁸	Although, revenue numbers are unavailable, the venture was supported by eBay founders and it has recently turned profitable and expansion is possible ⁴⁹	People from poorer sections of society	Microwork Direct Model	No	Yes
Hansa Cheetah Organization type: Online survey platform Task Complexity: None Skill/Applicable Sector: Filling up surveys for various sectors like telecom, media, financial services, consumer products and technology spaces ⁵⁰	To create a panel for answering survey questions on a periodic basis and thus assist in activities like market research	Clients sending questions are charged a fee and panelists are incentivized by payments ⁵¹	On the demand side, market research and other organizations that require responses to survey questionnaires	Micro distribution Model	No	No

⁴⁷ <https://yourstory.com/2013/08/datahalli-a-village-of-data-empowering-its-women-with-the-rural-bpo/>

⁴⁸ <https://imerit.net/ourstory>

⁴⁹ <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/helping-youth-in-hinterland-acquire-deeplearning-skills/article9707238.ece>

⁵⁰ <http://www.hansaresearch.com/>

<p>Croogster</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Medium to High</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Logo design, content writing, digital marketing etc.</p>	<p>To create an online marketplace of freelancers and create equivalent opportunities for freelancers when compared to a full time job</p>	<p>Both clients and freelancers are charged</p>	<p>No particular target group</p>	<p>Managed service platform</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Upwork</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Low to High</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: App development, social media marketing, content writing, graphic design etc.</p>	<p>To connect businesses to a reliable and larger pool of quality talent, while workers would enjoy freedom and flexibility to find jobs online, enabled by technology⁵²</p>	<p>Earlier it had a 10% flat fee, but now it has moved to a sliding fee system based on a freelancer's lifetime billings with a client⁵³</p> <p>A 10% fee for \$500-\$1000 jobs and 20% fee for jobs costing less than \$500⁵⁴</p>	<p>No particular target group</p>	<p>Open Services Platform</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Youth for Work</p> <p>Organization type: Online Freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: Medium</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: No particular sector. Matches freelancers with companies based on skill assessment tests etc.</p>	<p>To create a platform for students and recent graduates who do not have a job but need a source of income</p>	<p>It monetizes on models on preparatory material, online courses and connecting youth to companies and offer talent solutions and customer assessment solutions for companies⁵⁵</p>	<p>Targets students and recent graduates</p>	<p>Combination of open service and managed service platforms</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>

⁵¹ <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.hansaresearch.cheetah&hl=en>

⁵² <https://www.upwork.com/about/>

⁵³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elainepofeldt/2016/05/03/freelance-giant-upwork-shakes-up-its-business-model/#10e546c41855>

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ <https://kb.youth4work.com/identify-improve-showcase-your-talents-4e3caab8a8a6>

<p>Vindhya</p> <p>Organization type: Rural BPO</p> <p>Task Complexity: Medium</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Contact centre solutions, data processing, onsite support etc. and work closely with sectors like telecom, microfinance and banking</p>	<p>To bring business and philanthropy together by providing employment to the differently abled and disadvantaged while providing value addition to its clientele⁵⁶</p>	<p>They only monetize through the projects they secure</p>	<p>Differently abled, women for socially disadvantaged backgrounds etc.</p>	<p>Microwork direct model</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Data Pure</p> <p>Organization type: Online freelancing</p> <p>Task Complexity: High</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Data enrichment, marketing, research, sales, intelligent personal assistants etc.⁵⁷</p>	<p>To create an on-demand pool of experts for data generation, verification, structuring, research and other custom services⁵⁸</p>	<p>Clients are charged for access to high quality data</p>	<p>No particular target group</p>	<p>Combination of open service and managed service platforms</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>IndiVillage</p> <p>No. of workers: 98</p> <p>Organization type: Rural BPO</p> <p>Task Complexity: Low to Medium</p> <p>Skill/Applicable Sector: Data entry and verification, image editing and processing, content writing⁵⁹</p>	<p>IndiVillage specializes in business process outsourcing with a unique value proposition: Rural price structures for world-class outsourcing with immense social impact⁶⁰.</p>	<p>Clients are charged directly for their services on a per project basis.</p> <p>Not for profit- all profits reinvested into infrastructure building in the rural communities</p>	<p>People belonging to rural settings, particularly women.</p>	<p>Microwork Direct Model</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes</p>

⁵⁶ <http://vindhyainfo.com/about-2/>

⁵⁷ <https://in.linkedin.com/company/datapure>

⁵⁸ <https://www.datapure.co/>

⁵⁹ <http://www.indivillage.com/services#bposervices>

⁶⁰ <http://www.indivillage.com/#ruralbpo>

2.4 Summarising the Online Freelancing Ecosystem in India and policy challenges

There is no doubt that microwork and online freelancing have grown rapidly in India. Several international platforms for microwork and online freelancing host a very high percentage of workers from India. Several India specific platforms and microwork organisations have emerged that now cater specifically to the capabilities offered by Indian demographics and focus on the upliftment of the local community. General platforms that host all categories of freelancers are competing in the same market. Since the market is still in its infancy, market evolution will decide the number, type and nature of firms and competition that prevails in the future. Surely there will be space for niche platforms. This trend is already visible in the types of services that platforms now offer including training, upskilling, recruitment, etc. Platforms are experimenting with innovative ideas to improve ranking and visibility of freelancers on their platform.

However, a sector that holds promise is also fraught with challenges, both social and regulatory. The latter is only to be expected since online freelancing and microwork are a relatively new phenomenon with significant bearing on the functioning of labour markets. On the social side, a typically deep seated hindrance to growth is the general perception related to online freelancing. A stakeholder mentioned how freelancers were treated “second grade” to individuals with permanent jobs in the Indian society. The stability and security of a traditional “9 to 5” job is still seen to be a superior option among the older generation. This apparent stickiness in mindset can have adverse future effects on the freelance market. This perception is often reinforced by the irregularity in income for freelancers - in certain cases they have to go without work for several months.

It is also true that Indian companies are still unwilling to see the benefits of outsourcing to freelancers. Mr. Ajat Shatru, founder and CEO of Ghar Se Naukri, one of India’s first Online Freelancing platforms, stated that around 70-80% of jobs in the economy could be potentially outsourced given the right infrastructure. Perhaps, a fundamental limitation is the stickiness in mindset, also within the employer group. Inertia also prevents even bigger firms from experimenting with a more mixed labour force that comprises both contractual and flexible labour, since the solution is not only cost efficient but also increases worker productivity⁶¹.

The almost meteoric rise in the number of Online Freelancing platforms active in the Indian market over the past decade is a clear indicator of their demand in the market. However, our interactions with stakeholders have revealed the presence of an active offline community in the freelancing space which prefers to grow outside of the world of online platforms. We also understand that these communities are not a threat to online freelancing, infact works complementary.

The lack of recognition of freelancing as a legitimate means of employment is another serious flaw in labour policy design. While India’s labour market largely comprises of informal labour, policy hasn’t done enough to recognize and stimulate its development focusing

⁶¹ Maria Saez-Marti (2011), "Siesta: A Theory Of Freelancing", Working Paper No. 55, Department of Economics, University of Zurich

instead largely on the miniscule formal employment. The long-established belief that informal work is mostly “unskilled” and hence not as productive with minimal contribution to tax revenue has left the section grossly neglected. However, the Online Freelancing revolution over the past decade has proved that there exists a broad, diverse spectrum within India’s informal economy. Failing to address these developments in policy design could prove to be counter-productive, especially in view of India’s demographic profile. Even today, freelancers have mentioned they are regularly denied loans from banks for purchasing homes due to the fluctuating nature of their incomes, as is also the lack of clarity on the taxability of their income.

Despite major developments, policy making tends to overlook the informal section of the labour force. For instance, the recently introduced Goods and Services Tax (GST) grants tax exemptions only for work sourced from within a city/town, removing the existing exemption for work sourced from outside⁶². This is largely detrimental for freelancers and small online freelancing platforms such as GaiaQ which rely primarily on foreign clients for business.

Microwork and Rural BPOs, flourishing a few years ago, are now up against automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) which are rapidly rendering certain types of jobs obsolete. Our interactions with stakeholders from several active Rural BPOs led us to believe that this is indeed the most pressing challenge faced by the industry currently, for it questions the very need for its existence. However, we also encountered unique solutions to these problems that could very well become the norm for BPOs and similar organisations in their struggle to remain future relevant. While some private sector managed BPOs such as DataHalli integrated their work flow with their parent companies by performing low skilled components of larger projects, others such as IndiVillage and Vindhya use their social impact driven narratives as the unique selling points and differentiators to foreign clients. Others still, such as iMerit, have embraced changing technology and transformed their business into one that delivers Artificial Intelligence driven solutions to clients, whilst using microworkers to aid and manage the data being fed into the machine learning algorithms. HarVa has completely overturned its microwork model into a micro-entrepreneurship model offering its workers a platform to run their own low-skill and small-scale business. Clearly, the sector’s ability to adapt to changes in the technical and business environment is what will help it remain an active contributor in this ecosystem, even in the long run.

3. Survey Data Analysis

The survey analysis in this report supplements the in-depth interviews conducted by CKS for current and potential freelancers. Our approach for the survey analysis was to develop a structured questionnaire, first piloted with a small group of freelancers and then through an online platform. The questionnaire⁶³ was revised after each round of the pilot and finally placed on an online survey platform⁶⁴ for two months. Given the time constraint, an online survey was the best option available to assimilate responses from a diverse group that helped

⁶² <https://cbec-gst.gov.in/pdf/igst-exemption-concession-list-03.06.2017.pdf>

⁶³ Please see Appendix 3 for a copy of the final questionnaire

⁶⁴ We subscribed to Survey Monkey for administering the online survey

shape our understanding of trends in online freelancing and microwork in India. We also sought the help of Frapp, a digital platform that enables students to network, learn about internship opportunities, etc. The association with Frapp⁶⁵, helped build the response count to about 1976. Majority responses in the survey are from students. While we had hoped to capture other demographics equally, the large number of student responses has brought to light the existing and rapidly increasing trend among students to freelance and an opportunity to compare experiences and perceptions of students with freelancers belonging to other demographics.

Freelancing is reported to have become a huge opportunity for students to earn money while studying. 21 % British graduates with a first class degree, are reported to freelance⁶⁶. Businesses look for student copywriters, bloggers and essay writers to help with their online content. Online platforms are also advertising freelancing opportunities to students as a means for extra income, helping make a career choice, working independently and getting a paid opportunity to practice and build experience. College Recruiter is an online platform only for students. However, research doesn't completely recognize students as a potential core of future freelancers. In a recent study by Andrey Shevchuk and Denis Strebkov⁶⁷ that measured correlation between self-employment and work values, excluded among others, students from that sample on the basis that their *“engagement in self-employment is transitory and shaped by specific life circumstances rather than by work values as goals or “career anchors”*⁶⁸”⁶⁹.

Freelancing has been a trend among students in India, much before the advent of the online world. Word of Mouth was a powerful marketing tool, helping students connect with the freelancing community that works very well even today. IIT Mumbai recently set up a cell for freelancers⁷⁰. The new generation of startups in India signs up student freelancers from the IITs who are trained in mobile app development, coding, design, etc. Through our survey we received enthusiastic response from students on opportunities to freelance. Student based online communities are becoming increasingly active and involved.

In the following sub-sections we draw interesting comparisons between the student and non-student responses in our sample. Of 1976 respondents, 1844 are students, which is approximately 93% of our sample. The rest of the 132 respondents, categorized as “Non-Students” are engaged in other established professions such as business, private and public sector employment etc. Through this categorization, we attempt to evaluate whether or not there are features unique to the student community that might give a boost to the gig economy in India in the long run. We explore some of the broad themes that arise from our

⁶⁵ <https://frapp.in/>

⁶⁶ <http://www.studentworldonline.com/article/want-to-get-a-freelance-writing-job-for-students-here-s-how/503/>

⁶⁷ Andrey Shevchuk and Denis Strebkov (2015), “The rise of freelance contracting on the Russian-language Internet”, Small Enterprise Research, Volume 22 – Issue 2-3, pp 146-148

⁶⁸ Ros et al. 1999; Schein 1990

⁶⁹ Andrey Shevchuk and Denis Strebkov (2012), “Freelancers in Russia: Remote work patterns and e-markets”, economic sociology_the european electronic newsletter, Volume 13, Issue 2, pp.37-45

⁷⁰ <https://www.gadgetsnow.com/jobs/IIT-undergrads-freelance-with-startups/articleshow/48526706.cms>

survey analysis and corroborate findings from our detailed interviews with platform owners and other literature references to the growth of online freelancing in India.

Responses were received largely from the states of Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Telangana –states with cities that traditionally host the highest number of IT companies, under the presumption that basic training in Computers and Information Technology is necessary for online freelancing. Moreover, these are also states with relatively better network infrastructure and consequently higher Internet penetration. There is also a sharp gender divide in our sample. While we cannot claim it to be representative of the population, it is a red flag that reflects the overall poor female labour force participation in India and an issue that needs policy attention.

Table 3.1 reports the sample characteristics as categorized into students and non-students.⁷¹

Table 3.1: Sample Characteristics

State	Students			Non-students		
	Male	Female	Average Age	Male	Female	Average Age
Andhra Pradesh	44	7	19.22	4	1	26.40
Assam	11	4	19.78	1	1	37.50
Bihar	14	2	19.13	0	0	0
Chandigarh	11	9	19.05	0	0	0
Chhattisgarh	6	2	20.00	1	0	21.00
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1	0	19.00	0	0	0
Delhi	106	60	19.28	10	10	24.70
Goa	4	1	19.80	0	0	0
Gujarat	50	8	19.24	2	0	20.50
Haryana	31	10	19.07	1	0	28.00
Himachal Pradesh	5	2	19.85	0	0	0
J&K	6	2	20.25	0	0	0
Jharkhand	13	5	20.00	0	0	0
Karnataka	166	71	19.42	8	9	34.00
Kerala	24	6	20.30	2	2	27.00
Madhya Pradesh	42	10	19.08	1	1	20.50
Maharashtra	367	164	19.15	24	16	24.78
North East	4	4	20.25	1	0	20.00
Odisha	14	6	19.45	0	1	31.00
Puducherry	0	1	20.00	1	0	25.00
Punjab	19	9	19.64	1	0	22.00
Rajasthan	50	7	19.30	3	0	21.33
Tamil Nadu	89	27	19.23	4	1	28.00
Telangana	101	25	19.70	0	1	22.70
Uttar Pradesh	79	29	19.27	3	3	26.00
Uttarakhand	22	6	19.59	1	0	26.00
West Bengal	53	31	19.92	3	3	21.83

3.1 A Gender Divide in Online Freelancing?

The focus on women empowerment was loud and clear in our interactions with microwork organizations. Most of the models for microwork are based on an all female labour force recruited from local communities. Some online platforms covered in our primary survey also

⁷¹ Please see Appendix 4 for more tables with the survey results

focused only on women freelancers. The idea of freelancing is closely aligned with the constraints within which women in India seek employment. The ability to work from home, at a time convenient is a huge advantage for women, especially those who are primary caretakers of children and the aged at home. In fact some platforms claimed that freelancing was often thought of as a domain for women, but those trends were quickly changing as men have expressed the need for more control over work hours⁷².

Our sample however, does not reflect equal participation of women among online freelancers. This as mentioned earlier, could be a reflection of the overall gender inequality prevalent in education and employment statistics. Responses from Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat recorded the widest gender gap with 86% - 88% male respondents among students. For the overall category of students and non-students 74% and 60% were male respectively. Table 3.2 reports the current freelancers in our sample by gender for student and non-student categories.

Table 3.2: Current Freelancers by Gender

Online Freelancers	Male	Female	No response	Total
Students	526	180	1	707
Non-students	39	25	1	65

These responses alert caution towards an ingrained sexism in society. According to a recent paper, conscious or subconscious biases regarding gender and race have influenced hiring decisions in traditional labour markets, thus limiting opportunities for marginalized sections of society⁷³. The potential advantage of online freelancing marketplaces, is the algorithmic allocation of jobs that excludes human biases and offers labour equality. Studies suggest that these platforms may not be foolproof. Most of them are designed around a “traditional” workflow, where customers search for workers and browse their personal profiles before making hiring decisions. These profiles normally contain the worker’s name, gender and a brief description of his/her skills and past experience. This, along with the system of ratings and recommendations that power search systems, create space for clients’ biases to seep in. Once the input data to the algorithm gets impacted by social biases, these systems reinforce the real-world hiring inequalities.⁷⁴

3.2 *Online Freelancing – Something for Everyone*

In our sample 38% students and 49 % non-student respondents were reported current freelancers. Among the current student freelancers in our sample, 11% have been freelancing for more than a year. The corresponding number for the non-students category is 26%. While the phenomenon seems largely recent in our sample, it does not take away from the potential opportunities that online freelancing offer to both students and non-students alike.

⁷² <http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/FVuxxlqzbWnV7uywcLSPBM/The-new-highend-freelancer.html>

⁷³ Aniko Hannák et al (2017), “Bias in Online Freelance Marketplaces: Evidence from TaskRabbit and Fiverr” In CSCW, pp. 1914-1933

⁷⁴ *Op Cit*

One of the oldest respondents in the non-student category is a 61 year old, independent professional from Bengaluru, Karnataka. Our one-on-one interactions with platform owners also confirm the freelancing trend to have become popular among retired professionals. Studies show that the flexible opportunities that are presented by freelancing are well suited to retired professionals who want to continue to participate in the labour force, either to address inadequate savings, or simply a desire to stay active and engaged.⁷⁵

As discussed earlier, the freelancing market records active participation from students, due to the variety of opportunities it offers, alongside full time educational program, which traditionally supported unpaid internships for experience. Some students begin to freelance right after high school. In our sample for student freelancers, 52% had completed senior secondary level education and about 40% were graduates. Among non-student freelancers, 57% are graduates, and about 29% are post-graduates. From the survey it is hard to report if the level of education impacts the choice of work or the willingness of an individual to freelance. In a recent survey the percentage share of freelancers and self-employed respondents are constant across all education levels.⁷⁶

Data entry, online marketing, writing and translation are reported the most popular engagements among both student and non-student freelancers (Refer Table 3.3). The average duration of work and the compensation offered vary over a wide range depending on the type of job, skill, volume and quality of work. However, not every field is receptive to freelancing – freelancer journalists for instance, are reported to be very poorly paid. However, the variance in time committed and skill required⁷⁷ for a freelancing task, makes it an opportunity for anyone and everyone. In most freelancing jobs, the minimum time required is less than an hour. Moreover, since freelancing is yet to emerge as a stable and legitimate career choice, it is often a secondary source of income, even for non-students. For students this is extra income, over and above the support they receive from parents and college scholarships. The concept of offering free services seems common, especially among students who use freelancing as an opportunity to practice and build both expertise and experience.

⁷⁵ James Manyika et al (2016), “Independent work: Choice, necessity, and the gig economy”, *McKinsey Global Institute*

⁷⁶ *Op Cit*

⁷⁷ Please see **Appendix 4** for a Table on Level of Education for Current Freelancers in the Student and Non-Student categories

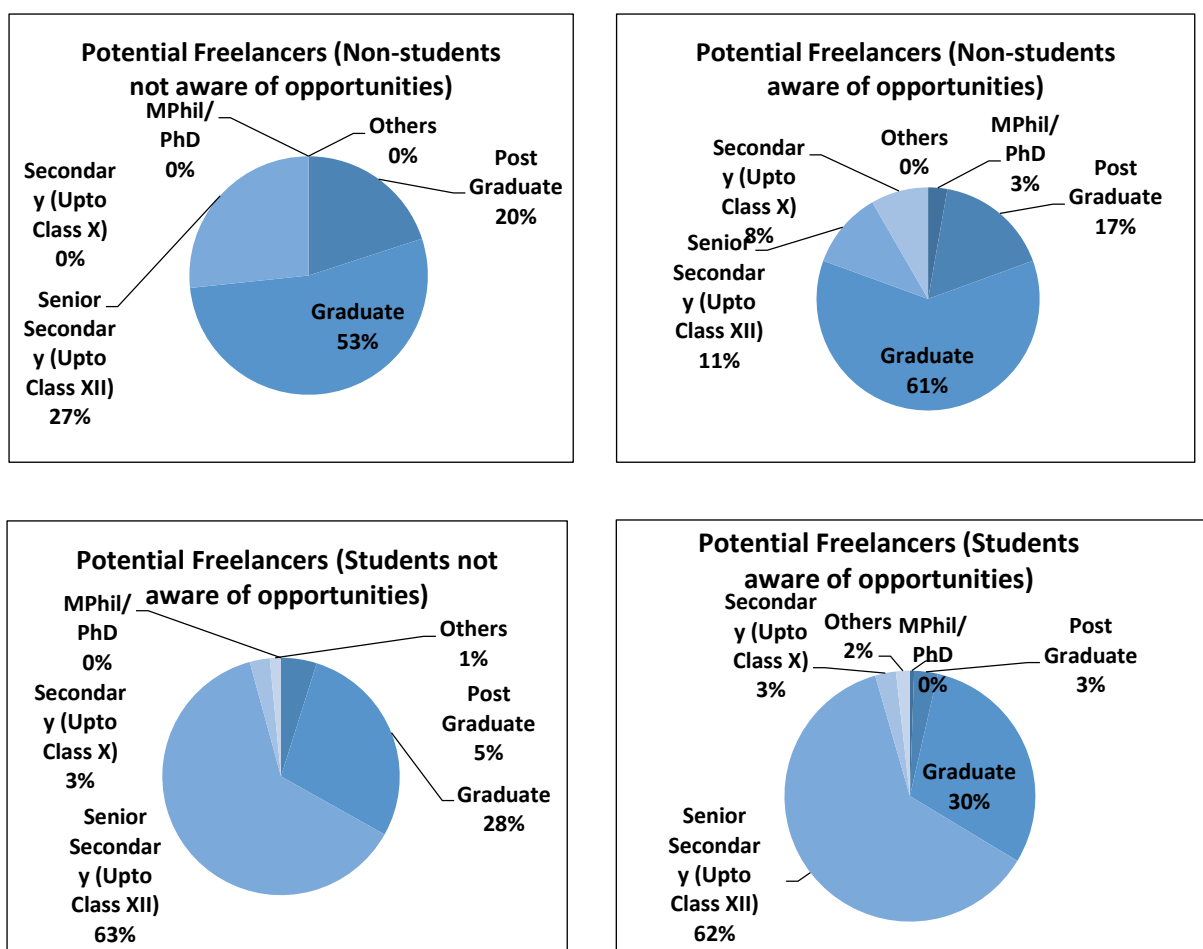
Table 3.3: Freelancers by Type of Work, Average Compensation and Average Time on a Job

Online Freelancers	Data entry (Typing in Word/entering in Excel)	Graphic design (Logo design, Photoshop Editing, Banner ads design, Web design, and development etc.)	Video and Animation (Animation and 3D, puppets, commercials)	Music and Audio (Mixing and mastering, sound effects, songwriters, composers)	Programming and software technology (Coding, WordPress, web programming, convert files, mobile apps)	Online marketing/advertising (Search Engine Optimization (SEO), keyword research, social marketing)	Writing and translation (Content Writing, Translation, Transcription, copy writing, proofreading, Editing)	Business (Career advertising, business plans, financial planning)
Students	180	89	32	40	87	147	172	38
Average Compensation a job	Free to Rs. 20000	Below Rs. 100 to Rs. 50000	From Rs. 10 to Rs. 10000	From Rs. 10 to Rs. 45000	From Rs. 25 to Rs. 50000	Free to Rs. 10000	Free to Rs. 10000	From Rs. 400 to Rs. 10000
Average time on a job	From 1 hour to 50 hours	Largely 1 hour to 30 hours. One respondent reported 2 weeks	From 1 hour to 20 hours	Largely 1 hour to 150 hours. Two respondents reported 2 weeks and 2 months each	Less than 1 hour to 72 hours	Less than 1 hour to 3000 hours	From 1 hour to 70 hours	Less than 1 hour to 36 hours
Non-Students	12	7	2	4	3	11	27	2
Average Compensation on a job	From Rs. 100 to Rs. 30000	From Rs. 500 to Rs. 30000	Rs. 30000 for a single task	From Rs. 10000 to Rs. 30000	From Rs. 100 to Rs. 30000	From Rs. 100 to Rs. 30000	Below Rs. 100 to Rs. 30000	From Rs. 500 to Rs. 5000
Average time on a job	From 2 hours to 6 hours	From 2 hours to 72 hours	72 hours for a single task	From 4 hours to 72 hours	From 2 hours to 5 hours	From 2 hours to 48 hours	From 1 hour to 72 hours	From 3 hours to 6 hours

3.3 The will to freelance – advantages and disadvantages of free-lancing

The sample captures the inclination to freelance within the student and non-student categories. We define potential freelancers as students and non-students who are willing to freelance whether or not they are aware of opportunities to freelance. The percentage of students in our sample who are not aware of freelancing opportunities but willing to freelance is 37% and those who are aware and willing to freelance are 63%. The corresponding numbers for the non-students category are 29% and 71% respectively. At best, these numbers suggest that students are more flexible and open-minded about freelancing opportunities, even when they are not aware of its existence. This is not unexpected given that career paths for students are relatively undefined and a stable income may not be necessary. Pie-charts in Illustration 3.1 below report the number of potential freelancers among students and non-students across different levels of education

Illustration 3.1 Potential Freelancers by level of education (student and non-student categories)



In order to better understand the preferences of potential and current freelancers we ran a comparison across students and non-students on different advantages and disadvantages of

free-lancing. The list of advantages and disadvantages were compiled from literature and our interactions with individual freelancers as well as platform owners. The lists were refined to arrive at 7 advantages and 12 disadvantages of freelancing. Each advantage and disadvantage was ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest. The average score for students and non-students were then compared using a t-test, to measure the statistical significance in the difference of the mean score across the two groups, i.e. the reasons that drive willingness to freelance across the two categories. The results for advantages are provided in Table 3.4 below. The difference between the average scores is significant for current student and non-student freelancers on the advantages related to work hour flexibility, opportunity to pursue an educational program alongside, and the average pay from online-freelancing. Non-students report work hour flexibility as statically more advantageous than students. However, the flexibility to work from home is the highest reported advantage among both student and non-student freelancers. It also appears to be the highest rated advantage for potential freelancers in the student category. Among non-student potential freelancers, the ability to make extra income is reported as the highest rated advantage of online freelancing. Among the potential freelancers, average score for perceived advantages is not statistically different, except, for non-students who believe that freelancing offers them a secondary source of income.

Table 3.4: Significance of Difference in Scores Assigned to Advantages of Freelancing

Difference in Scores (Between Students and Non-Students)	Offers work hour flexibility	Offers an opportunity to pursue an educational program/ another job simultaneously	Offers flexibility to work from home	Offers opportunity to make additional income alongside primary income	Offers independence and choice of assignments/projects to work on	Average pay for work done online is higher than what one would earn in a comparable full-time job with a private/ public organization	More and easily accessible options for work are available
Current freelancers	Significantly lower mean score for students	Significantly higher mean score for students				Significantly higher mean score for students	
Potential freelancers who are aware of opportunities				Significantly lower mean score for students			
Potential freelancers who are not aware of opportunities				Significantly lower mean score for students			

(The blank cells imply insignificant difference in mean scores across the two categories)

A comparison of the disadvantages also brings forth some interesting perspectives to the discussion on the potential for freelancing. The disadvantages are related to work-life preferences as well as practical issues of skill, connectivity and overall infrastructure availability for online freelancing. **The top rated disadvantages by current student freelancers are fear of job security, inadequate income and issues related to the platform.** Among students who are not freelancers the perceived disadvantages are fear of job security, lack of approval from friends and family and issues related to payment on an online platform. **For the non-student category of freelancers the top rated disadvantages are similar to students with the addition of not having enough time given their current occupation.** The ratings for problems related to payment mechanisms on online platforms point to the need for some effort by companies to make the process simple, secure and reliable. Platforms can learn from each other. From our discussion in the previous chapter we know that some platforms are very involved in the assignment of freelancing tasks while others are hands-off. Users of Hansa Cheetah, a micro distribution microwork model reported satisfaction on the payment mechanism. Payments to survey participants were transferred through Paytm. While this may not be possible for the bigger online freelancing platforms, there might be best practices that platforms must adopt to encourage freelancers. We look at the response on payment mechanisms in some detail in Illustration 3.2 and 3.3. Illustration 3.2 captures the factors driving payments to freelancers and Illustration 3.3 focuses on the mechanisms for determining compensation. Factors driving payment to freelancers include quality of previous engagement, samples of work or online availability of portfolio, level of training etc. The mechanisms for determining compensation are negotiations with the client, determined by the platform, bidding etc.

From the reported results we find that the factors driving payments to freelancers are uniform across the student and non-student category. Quality of previous experience is the highest rated determinant of payment to freelancers in both categories. With respect to mechanisms, the ability to negotiate with clients is much higher in the non-student category; percentage of non-student responses directly negotiating with clients is higher than that for students. On the other hand, the proportion of students working with platform determined rates is much higher than that in the non-student category.

For those not freelancing in the non-student category the critical disadvantages are fear of job security, inadequate income, lack of time given their current occupation, approval by friends and families and lack of adequate skill.

Illustration 3.2: Factors driving payments to freelancers in the student and non-student categories

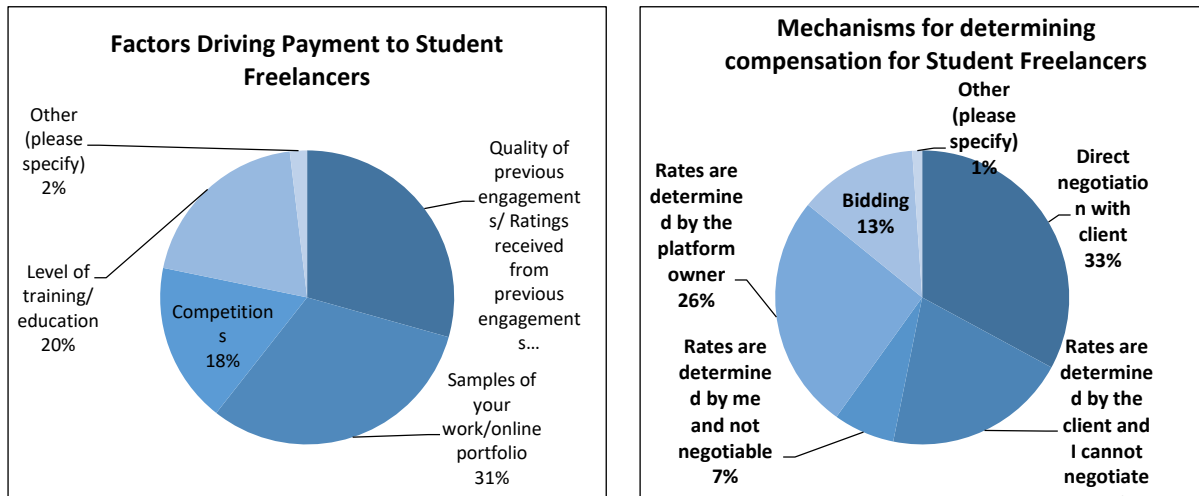
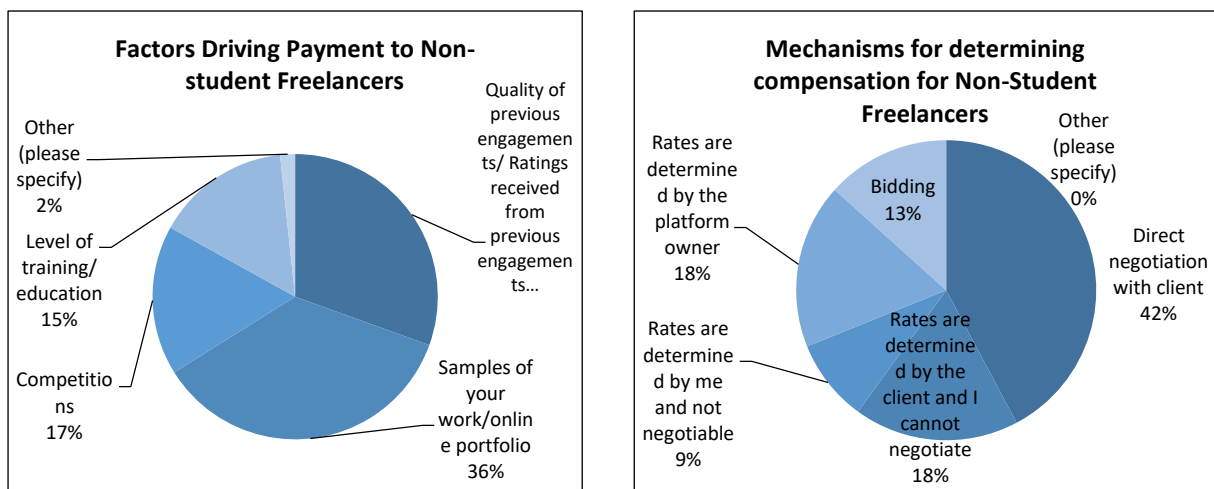


Illustration 3.3: Mechanisms for determining compensation (student and non-student categories)



Comparing the mean scores across the two categories we find a statistical difference in the mean scores related to payment mechanisms, lack of skill and lack of opportunities in online freelancing. The reasons to not find opportunities to freelance among students and non-students might vary; literature finds evidence of freelance contractors from less developed countries having a lower chance of being hired than applicants from developed countries. The research explains this outcome on grounds of a monopolization in the demand for freelancers. Over 80% of employers belong to developed countries and over 70% of freelancers belong to developing countries⁷⁸. There perhaps exists a prejudice related to level of skill and quality of

⁷⁸ Hema Yoganarasimhan (2013), “The value of reputation in an online freelance marketplace”, Marketing Science, Volume 32, Issue 6, pp.860-891

work expected from workers in developing countries, if not all across, related to some types of skill.

Such a largely disintermediated ecosystem can face challenges of information asymmetry and therefore the need to develop feedback mechanisms to help minimise market failure. Studies show that job seekers with more platform verified work experience are likely to be hired and this premium is disproportionately high for workers from less developed countries as compared to developed countries. Our survey respondents also report how compensations for online jobs are largely determined by feedback and ratings from previous engagements. Platforms must focus on helping the relatively disadvantaged freelancer, build a portfolio with information on credentials that influence a potential employer's perception of the applicant. (Figlio, 2005; Heckman et al., 2008; Lang & Manove, 2011; List, 2004; Tilcik, 2011).⁷⁹

Among students and non-students who do not currently freelance and report disinterest in freelancing in the future, the only two factors that are reported as a higher disadvantage among students are income from freelancing being inadequate and not being interested in freelancing overall. Table 3.5 below captures the difference in mean scores for current and potential freelancers on the limitations and disadvantages of freelancing.

⁷⁹ Ajay K. Agrawal, Nicola Lacetera and Elizabeth Lyons (2013), "Does information help or hinder job applicants from less developed countries in online markets?", Working paper No. 18720, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Table 3.5: Significance of Difference in Scores Assigned to Disadvantages of Freelancing

Difference in Scores (between students and non-students)	Fear of job security	Income is inadequate	Online work platforms lack smooth payment mechanisms	My friends and family don't approve of such jobs	I don't have enough time, given my current occupation	I'm not interested in online freelancing	I'm not skilled enough to engage in such jobs	Tried, but didn't get jobs/ orders	Tax payments for online jobs is unclear/ complicated	My internet connectivity is too slow to work online	My internet connectivity is too costly to work online	Power cuts in my area affects my ability to work online
Current freelancers			Significantly higher mean score for students				Significantly higher mean score for students	Significantly higher mean score for students				
Not freelancing, currently, are aware of opportunities but don't want to freelancer		Significantly lower mean score for students				Significantly higher mean score for students						
Not currently freelancing, not aware of opportunities and don't want to freelance		Significantly lower mean score for students				Significantly higher mean score for students						

(The blank cells imply insignificant difference in mean scores across the two categories)

With global markets becoming increasingly volatile, full time workers are being laid off, as considerable costs are associated with their retention. Hence, there is as much risk and insecurity associated with regular jobs, as with independent work. This is leading to changes in the nature of job creators and hiring patterns. Benefits of hiring from the “fluid” workforce are aplenty – employers save on costs as they do not have to pay for health insurance, provident fund, gratuity etc. while also saving on costs of training and infrastructure.⁸⁰ With the rise of entrepreneurship and mushrooming of start-ups all over the world, young businesses have now become the drivers of job creation. This reinforces our earlier inference about students considering freelancing as a primary source of income, as opposed to those in established professions who view freelancing as supplemental. A survey conducted by McKinsey Global Institute shows that more than 50% of independent workers across the six countries surveyed were supplemental earners. With stronger evidence, this result could be extended to India as well. The emerging market for online freelancing provides the millennial population the freedom and flexibility to choose their assignments, work whenever and from wherever they wish to and strike a work-life balance that few full-time workers can hope to achieve. Results from this survey confirm several perceptions related to the future of online freelancing in India and identify potential challenges that should be addressed by policy.

3.4 Exploring Microworkers

Microwork is a subset of the online outsourcing industry, brings \$400 million in revenue and employs less than 1 million people.⁸¹ Drawing from our engagements with microwork platforms in India, most of them are impact sourcing initiatives, with the objective of providing low skilled, less-educated and disadvantaged sections of society with job aspects such as skill training, professional and personal development, continuing educational opportunities, steady work pay that is above poverty levels, reduced need to migrate or travel for work, and offering fulfilling work.⁸² This substantiates our survey findings where microworkers highly rate flexibility of working from home and the opportunity to simultaneously pursue an educational program/another job as benefits of microwork.

⁸⁰ <http://www.financialexpress.com/jobs/gig-economy-has-arrived-in-india-on-demand-model-being-adopted-by-workers-across-generations/457541/>

⁸¹ Lis Meyers et al (2017), “The Nexus of Microwork and Impact Sourcing: Implications for Youth Employment”, Global Center for Youth and Employment and banyan global. Available at: http://gcyerti.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Nexus-of-Microwork-and-Impact-Sourcing_Final_ONLINE_02.28.17_v2.pdf

⁸² *Op Cit*

Table 3.6: Average Score for Benefits of Microwork (Score 1-5, 5 being the highest)

Microworkers employed by an organisation	Offers work hour flexibility	Offers an opportunity to pursue an educational program/ another job simultaneously	Offers flexibility to work from home	Offers opportunity to make additional income alongside primary income	Offers independence and choice of assignments/projects to work on	Average pay for work done online is higher than what one would earn in a comparable full-time job with a private/ public organization	More and easily accessible options for work are available
Students	3.83	4	4.58	3.92	3.83	3.75	3.5
Non-Students	3.67	4.33	4.33	4	4	3.33	4

Despite the predominance of impact sourcing initiatives in India, our survey suggests that the demographics of microworkers are not limited to rural areas and vulnerable groups. Of the total online freelancers, there are 15 students and 3 non-students who report being employed with a microwork organization or a rural BPO. Among the non-student microworkers, all are males from cities like Hyderabad, Pune and Delhi. For some respondents, microwork too serves as their secondary source of income. Among non-students, business persons as well as private sector employees engage in microwork, which is typically perceived to be low or medium skilled. A 2011 study by Matthias Hirth, Tobias Hobfeld and Phuoc Tran-Gia found that the distribution of microworkers across developed and developing countries is nearly the same, however the motivation for undertaking such work might be different. While workers from developing countries might depend on the money earned from microwork, those in developed countries might treat it as additional income. This explanation might arguably, be stretched to rationalize the profile of microworkers in our sample, who are not from absolute rural areas; they belong to cities, and use microwork opportunities as a secondary source of income.

Table 3.7: Microworkers by Type of Work

Microworkers	Data entry (Typing in Word/ entering in Excel)	Graphic design (Logo design, Photoshop Editing, Banner ads design, Web design, and development etc.)	Video and Animation (Animation and 3D, puppets, commercials)	Music and Audio (Mixing and mastering, sound effects, songwriters, composers)	Programming and software technology (Coding, WordPress, web programming, convert files, mobile apps)	Online marketing/advertising (Search Engine Optimization (SEO), keyword research, social marketing)	Writing and translation (Content Writing, Translation, Transcription, copy writing, proofreading, Editing)	Business (Career advertising, business plans, financial planning)
Students	7	3	1	2	2	5	8	1
Non-Students	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	0

Respondents working with microwork organisations reported a mix of online and offline training, ranging from 2- 26 hours. Training was both paid and free, depending on the organization/ platform they were empanelled with. The most popular jobs across microworkers are data entry, content writing and online marketing jobs.

Our survey finds that for student microworkers, the primary barrier to microwork is inadequacy of income, while for non-student microworkers, costly and slow internet connectivity is the top rated barrier. A deeper engagement with rural microworkers will highlight additional aspects of this sector. Nevertheless, from our discussions in the previous section that covers our interaction with the microwork platform we know that impact sourcing initiatives in India have delivered impact and can potentially contribute to empowerment of the marginalized by using technological interventions. At the same time, these businesses have to constantly improvise on skills to beat the rising automation of low-skill jobs traditionally outsourced to the sector.

4. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Much before this study was conceptualised and research was initiated a lot was already being written about the rapid growth of online freelancing and microwork in India. The existence of an English speaking young population as well as a thriving IT sector were key ingredients for the creation of a sustainable freelancing ecosystem in the country. Like with any disruption, there is both a challenge and an opportunity. The risk of job destruction due to digital technology could be converted into an opportunity through online freelancing and microwork in which at least some percentage of the millions of new and young entrants to the labour force could find livelihood opportunities. It affords an opportunity to the vast pool of informal labour in the country, especially women. The flexibility offered by the platforms could fit in well with the demands of an evolving society that is looking for fulfilling and independent opportunities of livelihood that involve working some of the time. The research highlights the expanding scope and scale of this ecosystem to incorporate a wider variety of skills, work type and commitment to freelancing.

From our stakeholder interactions we find that platforms are constantly innovating to increase participation of freelancers in this steadily expanding ecosystem, including training facilities that ready its users for technological developments. Platforms have also acknowledged teething issues related to payments, bidding and navigating websites – algorithmic upgradations are targeted towards simplifying the use of platforms for clients and freelancers. The findings from our study corroborates with others on online freelancing that report a rising trend of freelancing among students and professionals in India, and new tasks and skills being added to the list of freelancing opportunities, even though data related tasks and content writing continue to dominate a large part of the online freelancing and microwork tasks outsourced to India. According to the latest statistics from the Online Labour Index (OLI) India commands 55% market share in the global market for outsourced software development and technology gigs.

As is any new trend in the economy, the growth of microwork and online freelancing is limited by several challenges which have been highlighted in the sections above. The sector so far has grown organically without any intervention by state actors. Any policy support must be evaluated in the light of the existing impact created. The important policy levers include labour policy design – a focus on acknowledging online freelancing as an acceptable occupation and source of income. Efforts in this direction will help mitigate perceptions related to the unreliability of online freelancing as the only/ full-time means of livelihood. This shift in perspective will be interlinked to the definitional choices for formal and informal employment in India.

The need to build awareness and correct perceptions is a related aspect. It requires concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders. In most interactions there has been mention of a mindset that privileges full-time employment over freelancing. Policy corrections will help enforce the idea of a mixed labour work force that picks between full time and contractual work based on personal preferences. If the economic and social arbitrage between the two options is minimised, freelancing is sure to become a preferred option of many more. As reflected in our survey findings, social approval is one of the primary deterrents to the growth of online freelancing. In addition to the barrier related to perceptions, there is a significant lack of awareness among students and professionals about opportunities available in online freelancing. There seems to be a chunk of the population that is willing to experiment with online jobs despite their lack of awareness. Clients, current freelancers, platforms and the government can collectively and simultaneously address this problem of awareness and incorrect perceptions. Government efforts under the Digital India platform to provide freelancing opportunities to computer literates in India are a step in the right direction. While such policies are slow to take-off, they play a huge role in inspiring confidence among the labour force on the legitimacy of online jobs in India. Since students are likely to comprise a huge section of online freelancers in the future – the role of educational institutions also becomes critical in exposing students to the idea of freelancing.

There must also be an effort toward improving network infrastructure. Internet connectivity is a basic requirement, especially in smaller cities for online freelancing to benefit the larger pool of informal workers. This aspect while not reflected in our survey findings was often spoken about during interactions with platform owners, especially microwork organizations that worked in rural and semi-urban areas. Along with infrastructure, there is a need to reorient skilling among the working youth. As bots take over a wide range of low skill repetitive tasks, the government must focus beyond computer literacy for individuals to sustain the growth of online freelancing and microwork. In addition to the technical training, surviving online freelancing jobs also requires soft skills training which include people skills, communication skills, social intelligence, etc. The government could allocate resources to create a database along the lines of the Online Labour Index (OLI) that help better understand the composition of this market. It will also help direct policies on formalization and re-skilling of the labour force in India.

In its current form in India, online freelancing is neither very glamorous nor viable. It might take years of perseverance from both clients and freelancers to establish trust. Unless both sides of the market work together to address concerns, the growth of online freelancing will never achieve full potential.

Appendices

Appendix 1⁸³

Sr. No.	Name of Platform	Brief Description	Headquarters
1.	Upwork	A global online freelancing platform where freelancers and companies are connected to work remotely. It is the most commonly used/preferred platform by freelancers	Mountain View, California, USA
2.	Guru	A global online freelancing platform and has a network of 1.5 billion freelancers	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
3.	PeoplePerHour	An online freelancing company, connecting savvy businesses to skilled freelancers and has more than 1 million users	London, UK
4.	Freelancer	An online freelancing platform where freelancers are allowed to compete with one another in contests to prove their skills, acting as added certification	Sydney, Australia
5.	Gaia Internet	An online freelancing platform that mainly operates in the niche space of content writing and aims to create a network of skilled content writers	New Delhi, Delhi, India
6.	Craigslist	A local classified forum as well as a platform that is used by freelancers to offer their services. It allows one to browse through both local and remote offerings	San Francisco, California, USA
7.	Fiverr	A global online marketplace that offers tasks and services, beginning at \$5 per job performed	Washington DC, USA
8.	Toptal	An online freelancing platform primarily for seasoned freelancers. It has a difficult screening process and only 3% of the applications they receive are accepted	New York and San Francisco, California, USA
9.	ProBlogger	A site dedicated to blogging – for those who want to start a blog, create content and blog professionally	Victoria, Australia
10.	Bidsketch	It is a proposal writing tool that helps customers develop structured and presentable proposals	Florida, USA
11.	Behance	Allows customers to build consulting and online portfolios sites to present to clients	New York, USA
12.	SuperTasker	An innovation of PeoplePerHour that allows customers to outsource and manage high volumes of small tasks to a pool of curated experts who are matched by an algorithm to the work that they are best suited for	London, UK
13.	WorknHire	An online freelancing platform, exclusively for India	Noida (Uttar Pradesh) and New Delhi, India

⁸³ Compiled by authors from the websites of these platforms and other resources on the Internet

14.	99designs	An online graphic design marketplace connecting freelance designers to businesses and individuals. Allows freelancers to enter competitions and get instant feedback from clients	San Francisco, California, USA
15.	Freelance Writing Jobs	A website for freelance writers to learn, grow and discuss issues and questions	London, UK ⁸⁴
16.	CollegeRecruiter	A platform that provides internships, part-time, seasonal, full-time and entry level jobs for college students and recent graduates	Minnesota, USA
17.	iFreelance	A platform for independent professionals looking for freelance jobs. Unlike other sites, it lets freelancers keep 100 percent of their earnings	Unknown
18.	Project4Hire	A platform connecting freelancers with hiring agents. It charges freelancers a fee for accepting projects depending upon their type of subscription	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
19.	Truelancer	India's largest on-demand, curated, freelance marketplace with over 3,00,000 skilled freelancers from across the globe and is one of the few platforms that have fully functioning Android and iOS apps	New Delhi, Delhi, India
20.	FreelanceIndia	An online freelancing platform that has been in existence for over 10 years and is one of the oldest freelance websites in India. Jobs can be posted from any country and freelancers can get a personalized webpage on the website and in turn get a quick Google listing	Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
21.	DreamStarts	A job search engine for Indian startups where they can post jobs and connect with job seekers. It targets elite professionals, marketing gurus, freelance designers and developers and students	Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
22.	WorkMonk	A platform that connects freelancers and small and medium businesses (SMBs) to businesses all over the world	Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
23.	Youth4Work	An online freelancing platform for students and recent graduates who do not have a job but need a source of income. Its objective was to create pre-assessed talent communities for companies to connect with	New Delhi, Delhi, India
24.	Creative Freelancers Inc	A premium online hub for creative freelancers to turn into creative entrepreneurs or "solopreneurs"	Gurugram, Haryana, India
25.	Flexiport	A community network for skilled professionals and businesses to connect, communicate and collaborate. On the job supplier side, they also have SMEs and startups posting jobs	Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
26.	Galilea3	A multilingual online-market for micro-jobs that connects job seekers and suppliers across the globe	Poznan, Poland

⁸⁴ This is the headquarter of Spalshpress Media that bought Freelance Writing Jobs

27.	Flexing It	A niche and premium online freelancing platform that focuses primarily on experienced, highly skilled consultants ranging from senior associates to experienced directors and strategy consultants	New Delhi, Delhi, India
28.	UniversalHunt	A global online freelancing platform that provides cost effective hiring solutions to businesses from SMBs to Fortune 500 companies	Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India
29.	FindYahan	A hyper local marketplace for lifestyle services that uses location based discovery to connect skilled individuals and home businesses to their target customers	Gurugram, Haryana, India
30.	OnContract.com	A marketplace for finding people and services on contract. It is focused on the contracting domain and helps skilled professionals find onsite contracting jobs where they can choose to work on a full-time, part-time or one-time basis	Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
31.	Ghar se Naukri	An online freelancing platform, exclusively for women that offers work-from-home, part-time and other freelancing opportunities, in remote settings	Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India
32.	Taskr	A platform where entrepreneurs can affordably get work done by freelancers	New Delhi, Delhi, India
33.	HiFreelancer	An online freelance marketplace that connecting clients to freelancers all over the world. It allows freelancers to bid for the amount they would charge for a job or service	Massachusetts, USA
34.	Croogster	An online freelancing platform that replicates the model of an e-commerce portal for hiring freelancers and makes hiring freelancers and getting high quality and timely work delivered at a minimum fixed price of Rs. 299	Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
35.	V-Pact	An online freelancing platform exclusively for women that provides part-time employment opportunities to skilled women, especially those who are looking to restart their careers after a break	Hyderabad, Telangana, India
36.	SHEROES	A job portal exclusively for women, that helps businesses connect with talented women and also provides these women mentorship and career support programs	New Delhi, Delhi, India
37.	JobsForHer	An online jobs platform for women who had taken a break in their careers and wish to return to the workforce after a sustained period of leave and aims to be a comprehensive database for their target audience	Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
38.	TouchTalent	An interest based social networking platform for creative people. It allows users to discuss and share their work with other creative people and platforms across the world	New Delhi, India
39.	Scuhio	A virtual workplace connecting organisations to talented professionals and students	Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India
40.	Designhill	An online graphic design marketplace that connects passionate designers with customers who need quality and affordable design services. The selection of designers for a particular job or task is based on contests launched by clients	New Delhi, Delhi, India
41.	EngineerBabu	An online platform that manages entire projects for companies. It hires, manages and delivers products at a better price and quality	Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

42.	Toogit	A platform for online jobs that helps connect freelancers and clients and also provides the former with tools to manage and deliver freelancing products	Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
43.	Desi Crew	A rural BPO that aims to create opportunities and solutions in villages using technology to enable youngsters to find jobs without moving away from their homes	Chennai, Tamil Nadu and Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
44.	HarVa	A women-centric rural startup that primarily focuses on skill development, BPO, community based farming and microfinance	Gurugram, Haryana, India
45.	Datahalli	A rural BPO exclusively for women that aims to capitalise on the latent potential of educated girls in rural India in order to eradicate poverty and empower women	Vijaynagar, Bellary, Karnataka
46.	iMerit	Offers an on-demand human empowered, computing workforce and aims to unlock value hidden in unstructured data and help boost businesses	Kolkata, West Bengal, India
47.	Hansa Cheetah	An online survey application that aims to create a panel for responding to targeted survey questions and thus help with activities like market research	Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
48.	Vindhya	A social impact oriented rural BPO that combines business and philanthropy and focuses on the differently abled	Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
49.	Data Pure	A data dissemination portal whose objective is to create an on-demand pool of experts for data generation, verification, structuring, research and other custom services	San Mateo, California, USA
50.	IndiVillage	A social impact driven rural BPO that is focused on providing education and economic opportunities to rural women and youth	Yemmiganur, Andhra Pradesh, India

Appendix 2

1. Flexing It

- a. Type of Organisation:** It is a niche and premium online freelancing platform that connects organisations to professionals on projects, consulting assignments, advisory roles and other short-term, part-time and flexible work structures.⁸⁵ Their focus is primarily on experienced, highly skilled consultants ranging from senior associates to experienced directors and strategy consultants and their core comprises of professionals from consulting, general management, finance, HR, marketing and sales etc.⁸⁶ Expert 360, Catalant and Talmix are some of its international competitors.
- b. Operations:** Flexing It's talent pool consists of 58026 consultants and experts, with 60% of them holding more than 10 years of experience and 2163 clients spanning corporate, consulting firms and start-ups. 2600 projects have been posted on the platform so far.⁸⁷ Some consultants also register as start-up consulting firms, especially legal service start-ups. While the client base is diverse, due to the niche model of the platform, the majority comprises of startups (around 45%), large MNCs, and consulting firms. Profiles of job seekers are curated and verified to make sure that the skills and experience of the applicants are accurate, and based on this information, open positions are recommended in the applicant's preferred location that fit his/her profile.⁸⁸ Recent trends show a definite, continued increase in the percentage of freelancers from Flexing It, at large consulting firms. The feedback mechanism on consulting engagements also helps improve future prospects of consultants. However, they do not offer job seeking opportunities or provisions for training or upskilling. The rising acceptability of Indian consultants in foreign countries for *thinking jobs versus doing jobs* has also helped the internationalisation efforts of Flexing It. The platform's efforts can help create a market for independent consultants in India.
- c. Revenue Model:** The platform is free for job seekers.⁸⁹ However, to help price one's time and services, they offer a service called FeeBee, which is a community driven fee benchmarking tool.⁹⁰ It provides an average amount charged for a particular job by taking into account years of experience, type of company and other factors.⁹¹ It also provides real examples from job seekers, while keeping discreet their personal information, to help figure out the right price for a type of work.⁹² There are two primary paid service offerings for clients – a self-service model at Rs 1500 per project and a hand-held service (Superflex) at Rs 20000 per project. It is more involved in the latter in identifying the most suitable consultant for a project. The third offering mostly focused on international

⁸⁵ http://www.readstartups.com/interview.php?pt=Flexing%20It-Chandrika%20Pasricha&interview_id=98

⁸⁶ *Op Cit*

⁸⁷ <https://www.flexingit.com/>

⁸⁸ <https://www.techinasia.com/meet-indian-startup-flexing-it-offering-freelancing-surprise-twist-profile>

⁸⁹ *Op Cit*

⁹⁰ <https://www.flexingit.com/feebee/>

⁹¹ *Op Cit*

⁹² *Op Cit*

clients (currently in Australia, UK and USA) is called Primo, which is also a handheld service. Individual consultants are interviewed and verified by the platform for their client. Based on the success of the arrangement, about 25% of the total transaction value is charged as fee by Flexing It. However, it does not involve itself in the payment process between the client and the consultant. Thus, it is a mix of an open and managed services platform.

- d. **Challenges:** During its initial days, the Flexing It had to work towards convincing companies to broaden their definition of freelancing. Unlike tangible products, skills are marketed differently, which they had to learn and it has been a growing process ever since.⁹³ Until late 2015, Flexing It was bootstrapped till it raised about half a million dollars from angel funding.⁹⁴

2. Ghar se Naukri

- a. **Type of Organisation:** It is an online freelancing platform, exclusively for women. It aims to empower women, by offering work-from-home, part-time and other freelancing opportunities, in remote settings. The intent was to create job opportunities for all women who are capable but unemployed either due to societal prejudice, motherhood and other family commitments, or relocation in a way that they could earn while managing their households. The founder and CEO, Mr. Ajatshatru understood that families would be much more open to women freelancing from home if it brought additional income to the household.
- b. **Operations:** The platform's uniqueness lies in its efforts to create job opportunities on behalf of companies unlike regular job portals that simply publish jobs. They reach out to their clients, negotiate with them and create opportunities for freelancers. Currently they have 4.5 lakh women registered on their platform. Job seekers simply need to register themselves with Ghar se Naukri and upload their resume. The jobs offer flexibility of time and hours as well as the convenience of working from home, which appeals to both freelancers and employers. Some of the most popular services demanded by clients are content development, recruitment, social media development, part-time virtual assistant, translation jobs etc. While job seekers on the platform come from all over India, employers are restricted to metropolitan cities like Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Bangalore etc. In order to create job opportunities for women in rural areas, Ghar se Naukri also provides infrastructure like internet connection to freelancers for a fee. It also collaborates with third party firms that carry out re-skilling/up-skilling of freelancers to assist them in landing more lucrative jobs/assignments. 70 of the 750 companies registered on the platform have become permanent customers and hire regularly. Platforms like Ghar se Naukri that cater exclusively to women and provide opportunities to homemakers to earn additional income from home, also contribute to social empowerment, instigated by both

⁹³ <https://www.techinasia.com/meet-indian-startup-flexing-it-offering-freelancing-surprise-twist-profile>

⁹⁴ *Op Cit*

opportunity and money. Testimonials of freelancers on their platform provide evidence of a positive impact on family and social relations.

- c. **Revenue Model:** The platform, so far, has been free for women. However, charges are levied on services provided to clients. These charges are determined on a case-to-case basis depending on the needs and demands of the client and the freelancer. The payments have to be made upfront. Ghar se Naukri is thus, a managed services platform.
- d. **Challenges:** The biggest challenge is the verification of freelancers who register on the platform. Verified workers are an essential prerequisite to working with big clients. To address this, Ghar se Naukri is trying to partner with verification agencies. There is also a growing demand for multilingual support on the platform.

3. V-Pact

- a. **Type of Organisation:** V-Pact is an online freelancing platform exclusively for women. The platform aims to provide part-time employment opportunities to women who are skilled but are unable to engage in full time employment, either due to family commitments, or those who had taken a break in their careers and now wish to return to the workforce. The part time employment could be assignment based or on the basis of a specific number of hours per week/month.⁹⁵ V-Pact intends to connect skilled women workers looking for part-time opportunities to potential employers looking to fill critical gaps in their staffing.⁹⁶
- b. **Operations:** V-Pact was launched in 2014 and started operations in 2015. Among women who register on the platform, most are recent or single mothers, women who wish to join the workforce after a break of more than 5 years and retired women who want to engage in part-time jobs. The process involves signing up on the platform, posting resume, searching for suitable job opportunities and understanding their requirements and applying for the position. Once the person gets hired, they receive their payment upon completion of the assignment. Some of the categories of jobs that are most popular are analytics, medical research, social media research, web designing and development, digital imaging etc. There is also a huge demand for teachers, however, there are not enough trained teachers in the market. Content writing is also the fastest growing freelance opportunity in the app era. They also provide additional services like counseling, upskilling and provision of infrastructure. While the portal and the services offered would not be possible without the internet, V-Pact still relies on traditional means of outreach, such as newspaper based marketing and face-to-face meetings, especially with regard to the additional counseling services offered.
- c. **Revenue Model:** Up until last year, V-Pact was a pro-bono platform. They have recently moved to a revenue model and there has been a huge uptake. They now charge companies for access to the platform and the network. The platform only charges for additional

⁹⁵ <http://www.v-pact.com/about-us/>

⁹⁶ *Op Cit*

services like counseling to advise and guide women and they have collaborations with skill trainers to help registered job seekers develop communication skills, provide them with interview training etc. Companies directly pay freelancers and no transactions happen through the platform. It is thus, an open services platform. Companies hiring from the platform for permanent placements, have to pay an upfront fee based on position and skill. Companies hiring for freelance assignments, have to pay a predetermined percentage of the transaction cost to V-Pact.

- d. **Challenges:** One of the major challenges they faced on inception was to get companies to understand part-time roles. The other challenge is the gradual increase in preference for contractual jobs due to fear of job security in the freelancing market. Start-ups have the highest demand for smaller microwork jobs and approximately 20% - 30% start-up jobs are microwork. On the other hand, corporates prefer to hire contractual labour in bulk. Contract jobs are outweighing microwork opportunities.

4. Gaia Internet

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Gaia Internet is a small scale online freelancing platform dedicated exclusively to content writing. They do not have an online portal. Work is done directly through phone calls and e-mails with the CEO Aakshey Talwar.
- b. **Operations:** The platform begun as Aakshey's part-time venture in school called 'Weaving Thoughts', which he later launched professionally as Gaia Internet or GaiaQ. Currently, there are 70-100 freelancers on the platform. Their uniqueness lies in their specialisation in content writing through which they were able to create a niche market. For Gaia Internet, their business is contingent on the condition of start-ups. They believe that trickle down effect of Startup India could potentially benefit small firms like Gaia Internet. They would initially advertise through forums, but the market started saturating by 2012-13, hence, they had to hire recruiters. However, they do not provide job seeking options or provisions for training and upskilling on their portal. Most of their clients are companies in the finance and insurance sectors. Some of their major clients are Policybazaar, Hyatt, Sulekha, Kett etc. They are currently working on developing a matching algorithm which would help reduce turnaround time and expenses on managers. This, however, is difficult without the right kind of infrastructure and automation facilities.
- c. **Revenue Model:** Content writers on the platform charge per article, based on the word count. The rates are fixed across the board. Gaia Internet is considered to be in the low to medium price range in the market. It is a managed services platform.
- d. **Challenges:** A major challenge they have been facing is the reduction in tax and duty exemptions under the new GST regulations, as most of their clients are overseas. The other challenge is the unwillingness of Indian companies to spend on content. Even small European companies pay a lot more for content than big Indian companies. In general, the trends highlighted by Gaia Internet was that while in recent times, the demand for

freelancers as well as the number of freelancing portals have increased, however the number of freelancers has remained somewhat constant.

5. JobsForHer

- a. **Type of Organisation:** JobsForHer is an online jobs platform for women who had taken a break in their careers and wish to return to the workforce after a sustained period of leave. It aims to be a comprehensive database for their target audience.
- b. **Operations:** JobsForHer was launched in 2015. It now has over 3000 companies featured on the portal. Marketing for the portal as well as for the registered freelancers is done by a dedicated sales team. Some of the most demanded jobs are translation, content writing and designing. Large clients such as Make My Trip typically hire work from home sales executives. Startups are most willing to hire freelancers especially for marketing roles involving social media. Among their team members, 66% are mothers, 70% have restarted their careers after a break, 45% work part-time or from home, 30% bring their children to work and all of them have the flexibility to choose their work timings.⁹⁷ Of the women registered on the platform, most are in their thirties, 65% women on the platform are looking for full time employment, 20% are looking for work-from-home or part-time employment and 15% want freelancing opportunities. Most of these women are graduates. About 30% of the women are post-graduates. Most of them are less skilled or have outdated skills, which is why plans are afoot to partner with third party organisations to offer paid upskilling services on the platform. However, JobsForHer boasts of a pan-India presence, 13 lakh social media reach, 1.5 lakh monthly visitors and 1600 clients including companies like Capgemini, Citi, Genpact, IBM, Mindtree, Yes Bank, Unilever etc.
- c. **Revenue Model:** The platform is free for job seekers to register. However, they are only involved in matching clients with freelancers and have no involvement in payments and contracts. They provide various services to their clients. They position themselves as a platform for market and brand building for a company as a women friendly enterprise.
- d. **Challenges:** One of the key challenges that they face as a women-centric organisation is the scepticism of employers to hire women due to the newly enforced Maternity Leave Act, which increased leaves from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for working women in organisations with more than 10 employees.⁹⁸

6. SHEROES

- a. **Type of Organisation:** SHEROES is a women's growth network and also an online freelancing platform which evolved after its founder, Sairee Chahal's first initiative 'Fleximoms' that was dedicated to finding flexible work options for women who had

⁹⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/possible-scale-rapidly-flexible-team-neha-b>

⁹⁸ <https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/30/india-maternity-leave-increase.html>

taken a sabbatical from work and wanted to rejoin the workforce.⁹⁹ It is a job portal dedicated exclusively to women. SHEROES offers a range of opportunities - from full time to flexible work options, entrepreneurial work options, internships, projects etc.¹⁰⁰ It not only engages businesses and helps them connect to talented women as employees, partners, customers and business owners, but also provides mentorship and career support programs.¹⁰¹

- b. Operations:** Job listings on SHEROES are freely accessible. Women can register and search for jobs on the platform. Their target group is women who have taken a sabbatical from work and want to restart their careers. Women from about 20,000 locations log in on the platform. Though, freelancers on the platform are primarily restricted to metros and urban areas, there are some freelancers who belong to areas like Wapi, Cuddalore, Lakhimpur and Chapra. Most freelancers on the platform typically have 4-5 years of experience behind them before taking a break. A significant chunk of their pool of freelancers includes women who relocated, especially after marriage. SHEROES runs a 16 hour helpline for women which is operated by a team of counsellors and coaches who speak to women and offer them support and advice¹⁰² for problems ranging from their skills to personal issues. The platform helps connect businesses to women professionals through channel programs, hiring initiatives, employee branding, custom and special projects etc.¹⁰³ The platform works with 7000 companies.¹⁰⁴ They also conduct offline programs where they connect to potential freelancers through events where opportunities, connections with mentors as well as inspirational stories are shared.
- c. Revenue Model:** The platform is free for women 95% of the time, and their primary source of revenue is from clients. SHEROES has two B2B service lines - one is hiring on demand service and the other where they help companies manage remote workforce.¹⁰⁵ SHEROES has a pool of certified remote working professionals and they are contracted to projects from clients to undertake a specific job as per client requirements. Higher the level of certification of the freelancer, better is the quality of freelancers available. There is a designated project manager to assist with services and daily operations. Clients pay for three things - the women centric initiatives and programs that SHEROES builds for them, for staffing needs and for the premium products on the platform such as advertisement space postings, micro sites etc. They also do a lot of custom work for their clients where they help companies establish their diversity programs, and do

⁹⁹ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/earn/startup-portal-sheroes-helps-women-find-jobs/articleshow/50331642.cms>

¹⁰⁰ *Op Cit*

¹⁰¹ *Op Cit*

¹⁰² <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/sairee-chahal-online-career-destination-women-sheroes-lifest/1/909931.html>

¹⁰³ *Op Cit*

¹⁰⁴ <https://sheroes.com/about>

¹⁰⁵ <http://techcircle.vccircle.com/2016/10/13/wherever-we-find-relevance-we-will-acquire-says-sheroes-sairee-chahal/>

benchmarking studies around women and their career space. They also have offline paying users.¹⁰⁶

- d. Challenges:** The primary challenge that they faced was with respect to mindset of companies.¹⁰⁷ While there are companies that would understand the idea behind SHEROES and would be responsive to it, there are many companies that have traditionally hired males and find it hard to change their hiring patterns and also provide adequate infrastructure for women employees such as security provision.¹⁰⁸

7. DesiCrew

- a. Type of Organisation:** DesiCrew is a rural BPO that provides business support services and is incubated with the Rural Technology and Business Incubator (RTBI) of IIT - Madras.¹⁰⁹ It provides service excellence and cost efficiency to clients by leveraging their expertise in the impact sourcing space.¹¹⁰ They realised that there was a talent pool in states like Tamil Nadu that could be tapped into. The village areas had graduates but no opportunities due to rapid urbanisation in nearby areas. The idea behind DesiCrew was to create opportunities and solutions in villages using technology to enable youngsters to find jobs without moving away from their homes. They have now set up operations in over 400 villages across India.¹¹¹
- b. Operations:** DesiCrew began with digitisation services like data entry and data conversion, which were low value but high volume work. They reached out to clients who were willing to outsource such jobs, such as insurance companies and publishing houses. Workers were imparted necessary training to improve speed of typing, understand insurance policies, decipher handwriting etc. This changed with the introduction of Google R&D. Google Maps required data plotting and an understanding of geography and the company took a chance and trained their workers adequately. Now they have been working on Google Maps for 4 years. They have gradually focus to higher value and diversified jobs and now approach different companies like AOL, WalMart and startups. Transcription is now one of their biggest verticals, in addition to services like content creation and validation, GIS based mapping services and translation and localisation etc. Automation has changed the nature of work and training and low value jobs are now digitised. DesiCrew now provides manual curation support and is gradually climbing up the value chain. They are hiring new people with platform skills and those who are adaptable and can be trained in newer activities. They have channel partners with whom they collaborate on certain projects such as translation jobs. DesiCrew's client portfolio spans across 15 industries.¹¹² Their clients work with multiple vendors and they are

¹⁰⁶ <https://inc42.com/buzz/sheroes-wants-to-connect-1-mn-women-with-opportunities-in-next-3-years-founder-sairee-chahal/>

¹⁰⁷ *Op Cit*

¹⁰⁸ *Op Cit*

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.nextbigwhat.com/social-entrepreneurship-interview-with-desicrew-founder-rural-bpo-297/>

¹¹⁰ <http://www.desicrew.in/about-us.html>

¹¹¹ <http://villgro.org/desicrew/>

¹¹² <http://villgro.org/desicrew/>

required to match the standards of other vendors. Being a rural BPO, they are not selective about projects, but they get limited voice based projects as their employees have limited spoken English skills, and there is now a larger focus on training in this area. This is also a reason why their engagement with overseas projects is lower. The difference between rural and urban BPOs is the longer duration of training for the former. Attrition rates are higher in the latter than in the former. DesiCrew has low expenses on human resource and lower attrition rate - 6% - 7%. 76% of their employees are females and 24% are males. Female employees were observed to work harder towards problem solving and had lower attrition rates as compared to their male counterparts. All DesiCrew employees have bank accounts, which also contributes to the larger objective of financial inclusion.

- c. **Revenue Model:** DesiCrew follows a distributed operations model. Their office in Chennai acts as the interface between clients and the rural centres. Since they work out of tier 2 towns and villages, their overhead costs are lower which is passed on to the client in the form of lower price.¹¹³ Their pricing is lower than their counterparts. For example, for insurance companies, DesiCrew gets paid lesser than a corresponding urban BPO. For their overseas clients, the cost savings are up to 150%.
- d. **Challenges:** One of the key challenges that DesiCrew faced was to create infrastructure in a rural setting that matched up to their clients' offices in urban cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore etc. It was also a challenge to bring about a change in perception among urban dwellers that competitive quality of work could not be produced from the interiors of the country. The other key challenge was to introduce the concept of a BPO to their rural teams. It took effort to convey the idea that just as work could travel to them, if the quality standards are not met, then the same work could go to someone else. Though people on the field were excited about the opportunity, and were skilled and hardworking, some of them were also impatient. However, those who survived the initial hardships, now hold key positions at DesiCrew.¹¹⁴

8. HarVa

- a. **Type of Organisation:** HarVa stands for 'Harnessing Value'. It is a women-centric rural startup that primarily focuses on skill development, BPO, community based farming and microfinance.¹¹⁵ They have 14 centres around the country.
- b. **Operations:** HarVa focuses on skill development, especially for women. They deploy intellectual capital and transfer value to create BPO jobs in rural India. They also reorganise traditional agriculture into community based farming groups.¹¹⁶ Most of the microwork is outsourced from the UK and the US. They added a not-for-profit arm dedicated to skill development. As part of their initiatives in microfinance, they had HarVa Suraksha which was a quasi savings product backed by Bajaj Allianz providing

¹¹³ <https://www.nextbigwhat.com/social-entrepreneurship-interview-with-desicrew-founder-rural-bpo-297/>

¹¹⁴ *Op Cit*

¹¹⁵ <http://www.harva.co.in/about-us.html>

¹¹⁶ *Op Cit*

micro insurance to rural people. As of 2013, they were supporting over 1000 households, and their employees earned in the range of Rs. 1500 to Rs. 14000, depending on their contribution to projects like farming, student helpdesks and selling insurance.¹¹⁷ It works with horticulturists to understand how the local soil can be rejuvenated and made fertile again.¹¹⁸ The primary services that they offer are that of online and offline data entry, data capture and extraction, document management systems, copy paste services etc.¹¹⁹ HarVa also works with international companies.¹²⁰

- c. **Revenue Model:** HarVa follows the usual micro-distribution model. They train entire families and employ them based on their skills. This also helps them ensure that the attrition rate is minimal. They are funded by investors and payments from clients are their sources of revenue. In order to optimise and justify the expenses their enterprise has been modeled for end-to-end solutions - from skill development to employment generation. Backward and forward integration of business verticals gives them the opportunity to rationalise their expenses.¹²¹
- d. **Challenges:** The key challenges faced in setting up HarVa were poor infrastructure and bad connectivity. The preconceived notions of companies about poor quality of work from rural enterprises presented a challenge as changing their mindset and convincing them to cooperate and contribute towards inclusive growth towards HarVa, proved to be difficult.¹²² In present times, as increased automation is gradually changing the nature of work and employment, it has limited the scope and revenues of models like HarVa. Most companies are pushed to save costs through automation rather than outsourcing. With increase in digitisation, the quantum of manual work that was the fodder for microwork has been steadily declining.

9. Truelancer

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Truelancer is an on-demand curated freelance marketplace. They currently have 365000 freelancers on board. They help their clients connect to freelancers on the platform.
- b. **Operations:** Truelancer has been in the market for over 2.5 years. Among their pool of freelancers, 45% are from India and 40% are from other Asian countries. Presently, it has registered freelancers from India, Pakistan, USA, Bangladesh, Philippines, Kenya, Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Nepal. They have a special curation process and a recommendation system for which they have developed their own algorithm. It helps them ensure the quality of workers on the platform and identify the best person for a particular job. 72% of the freelancers on Truelancer are males and 28% are females. Among the skill sets that they hold, 30% are software developers, 15%-18% are graphic

¹¹⁷ <https://yourstory.com/2013/09/harva-ajay-chaturvedi/>

¹¹⁸ <http://smartceo.co/harnessing-the-value-of-rural-india/>

¹¹⁹ <http://www.harva.co.in/ruralbpo.html>

¹²⁰ <http://smartceo.co/harnessing-the-value-of-rural-india/>

¹²¹ <http://www.harva.co.in/slider2.html>

¹²² <https://yourstory.com/2013/09/harva-ajay-chaturvedi/>

designers, 8% are content writers, 10% engage in basic data entry, virtual assistance and customer services, 5%-6% are involved in video production, accounting/finance, digital marketing, social marketing etc. Their customers include micro-entrepreneurs, people running blogs or enterprises on e-commerce websites etc. and they are discovered online, sometimes through social media. They have 60% international clients and 40% Indian clients. Truelancer is also registered in the US, but they do not have a physical office there. The average age of freelancers on their platform is 22-26 years. Students also enlist themselves on the platform and those in their final year of college earn Rs. 50,000 per month on an average. The average ticket size for freelancers is \$150 - \$200. Though Truelancer has few old people who have registered as freelancers, they believe that the online freelancing market holds potential for retired professionals as well as women, especially for those from smaller towns as that helps them take care of their family while working from home and thus, financially contributing to their households.

- c. **Revenue Model:** Truelancer has built a secure payment system on their platform. The client makes a first upfront payment that is held by Truelancer and released to the freelancer upon successful submission and approval of the work. As commission, they charge a 10% cut from their freelancers' earnings. They have three broad membership plans. Their pro plan charges a subscription fee of \$10 and the commission charged is 8%. Posting a project is free for freelance service buyers.¹²³
- d. **Challenges:** One of their key challenges is the lack of clarity on taxation rules. Some companies are sceptical of hiring online freelancers due to lack of clarity on TDS for both the intermediary as well as the freelancer. Moreover, the service tax levied on Indian companies is 15%, which increases their cost of services, while it is 0% for international companies. There is also a need for more awareness, especially at the student level. Early awareness reduces the risk on non-employability and helps them establish themselves and get accustomed to the culture of online work.

10. Datahalli

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Datahalli is a rural BPO at Vijaynagar, Bellary, that was started as part of JSW Foundation's CSR initiative in 2005 and was the first rural BPO that was exclusively for women.¹²⁴ Their aim was to capitalise on the latent potential of educated girls in rural India in order to eradicate poverty and empower women.¹²⁵
- b. **Operations:** Datahalli does sub-sourced work that is part of the lower end processes outsourced by international companies to a domestic firm that is further subcontracted to rural BPO units.¹²⁶ This helps Indian companies stay cost competitive due to lower wages in rural areas as compared to urban areas.¹²⁷ Apart from this, they also ensure that land

¹²³ <https://www.truelancer.com/press/truelancer-fastest-growing-freelance-community>

¹²⁴ <https://yourstory.com/2013/08/datahalli-a-village-of-data-empowering-its-women-with-the-rural-bpo/>

¹²⁵ *Op Cit*

¹²⁶ <http://www.financialexpress.com/archive/rural-bpo-datahalli-is-on-a-mission-to-empower-women/759063/>

¹²⁷ *Op Cit*

use compensation is provided for the JSW steel plant, in form of cash, employment, serving the male members of the family well and helping women of the displaced families. Most of their employees have a class 10 or 12 certificate from a local school. The work is rule based and they undergo basic training in typing, English and soft skills¹²⁸ for a period of 2-3 months. The initiative was started as an experiment and they had not anticipated it to become a full fledged business with high value and low margin jobs. 2011 was a particularly volatile for BPOs in the country as work was drying up. However, the JSW brand helped them secure business. From 2011 to 2017, the number of seats in their office has increased from 400 to over 1000. Datahalli also has clients from Canada and the US. They now have three BPOs - two in Bellary and one in Maharashtra. The average household income in the area is Rs. 8000. By training and employing educated women, Datahalli has helped them achieve financial independence and dignity. This has also changed their roles in their families. It has also helped boost the overall economy of the area with more than 1500 jobs in the town and thus higher disposable income.

- c. **Revenue Model:** Datahalli follows a business to delivery model. They place substantial focus on skill development and follow a multiple layer approach. They follow a shared services model and have thus been able to integrate delivery capability by adding the rural BPO to their major shared services. There are different salary slabs for employees based on their experience.¹²⁹ In addition to the basic salary, there is provident fund, an insurance cover and conveyance allowance for employees.¹³⁰
- d. **Challenges:** Most rural BPOs face issues related to developing physical infrastructure. While Datahalli used power from their own plants, many BPOs have shut down due to lack of access to power supply. With increasing cost of living expenses, a higher remuneration is also required for rural people working in BPOs. Additionally, with increased automation, there is a possibility of microwork jobs drying up in future. The challenge therefore, lies in moving up the value chain and explore high end projects.¹³¹ Businesses offer negligible lead time which does not work with rural BPOs as significant time and resources have to be invested in building the necessary skill set and this is the advantage urban BPOs have over rural ones.¹³² However, to move up the value chain and grab higher value and more complex projects, Datahalli is investing in its employees to broaden their skill sets and potentially transform into a KPO in the near future.¹³³

11. IndiVillage

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Indivillage is a social impact driven rural BPO located in Yemmiganur in the Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh. It was founded in 2009 and

¹²⁸ *Op Cit*

¹²⁹ *Op Cit*

¹³⁰ *Op Cit*

¹³¹ <https://yourstory.com/2013/08/datahalli-a-village-of-data-empowering-its-women-with-the-rural-bpo/>

¹³² *Op Cit*

¹³³ *Op Cit*

specialises in business process outsourcing with a unique value proposition. It is focused on providing education and economic opportunities to rural women and youth in India.¹³⁴ IndiVillage aims to create a self-sustaining environment where profits from successful business giving livelihood to those in the community are used to benefit the community instead of going into the pockets of a few.

- b. Operations:** The primary services offered by IndiVillage are content management including social media content, image editing and management, writing on e-commerce, data entry and verification etc. Indivillage invests all profits from the business back into the neighbouring communities by providing clean water and education initiatives. Their clean water project supplies water to 1,200 school children and 1,000 families i.e. approximately 4,500 people, thus providing access to underserved communities. 300 children study in schools operated and developed through these funds. For the basic training of the underutilised talent pool from the surrounding villages, they collaborate with local NGOs for a few months. Of their 98 employees, 51% are women. Most of them are mothers of students and they are given flexible working hours. First-time employees form 68% of workforce and 30% of employees are pursuing higher education. Their clients are primarily US firms. They are attracted to both the lower price at which IndiVillage offers the same service as any urban BPO as well as the aspect of social impact of the BPO. Most of their clients are recurring. These firms save about 70% of their costs. There has been a definite improvement in lives of all those living in the community. Women have gained financial and social freedom and mobility due to stable jobs, access to free education and healthcare.
- c. Revenue Model:** The fees charged from clients are negotiated on a per project basis and profits reinvested in social impact initiatives. The women in the village earn more than the men, whose average income is Rs. 3000 - Rs. 4000 per month.¹³⁵ They aim to expand their franchises and help young entrepreneurs from villages set up their own BPOs.¹³⁶ There has been a 40% increase in individual income and 58% increase in household income reported in 2016 by their social impact report and over 10,000 people impacted overall.¹³⁷
- d. Challenges:** The attrition rates are high as people relocate often, especially young women who get married off, change residences and fail to continue working in the BPO. With improvement in technology and rise of automation, some of their work would ultimately become redundant and new skills will need to be developed. There is also a need for proper policy intervention in this space as there are no current government policies to assist such endeavours.

¹³⁴ <http://www.indivillage.com/our-story/#enable-earn-empower>

¹³⁵ <https://yourstory.com/2014/10/indivillage/>

¹³⁶ *Op Cit*

¹³⁷ <http://www.indivillage.com/#ruralbpo>

12. iMerit

- a. **Type of Organisation:** iMerit offers an on-demand, human empowered computing workforce.¹³⁸ It is based out of the USA and India. Its aim is to unlock the value hidden within unstructured data and improve technical process efficiencies while creating a social impact.¹³⁹
- b. **Operations:** iMerit currently has over 1000 employees across five delivery centres with most of them based in India, except for a sales team in the US.¹⁴⁰ 80% of their employees belong to underprivileged backgrounds i.e. families with a monthly income of less than Rs. 6000.¹⁴¹ In partnership with Anudip Foundation, they undergo training in specialised skill sets ranging from data extraction and categorisation to natural language processing and sentiment analysis.¹⁴² Employees undergo intensive, on-the-job training for two weeks that is focused on skill development. Specialised atypical training such as improved hand-eye coordination for handling visual data, motor skills, deductive reasoning skills, contextual learning of language etc. are also imparted. Most of their clients are based out of US and Europe which includes names like Microsoft, eBay, Catholic Relief Services, Aptara etc. and they have a few pilot projects running in India.¹⁴³ iMerit initially engaged only in simple data entry jobs. However, the nature of their work has changed over time. They now work with account managers of different companies to manage their data journey, thus helping customers focus on the projects that drive their company forward while iMerit looks at ‘big data lifting’.¹⁴⁴ As companies are increasingly using artificial intelligence, employees are trained to be more digitally literate. They claim to have an attrition rate of less than 5% and output accuracy of higher than 95% in delivering cost-effective, quality projects on time and on budget.¹⁴⁵ iMerit now uses automation to drive the life cycles of their projects.
- c. **Revenue Model:** Some of the major investors in iMerit include Omdiyar Network, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and Khosla Impact and their plans of expanding from about 600 employees to 6000 in 15 centres by 2020 are contingent on the funds they raise from investments.¹⁴⁶
- d. **Challenges:** There is less focus on re-skilling in India as compared to their global counterparts which can pose significant challenges for the workforce given the dynamic

¹³⁸ <https://imerit.net/ourstory>

¹³⁹ *Op Cit*

¹⁴⁰ <https://yourstory.com/2017/10/imerit-big-data-lifting/>

¹⁴¹ *Op Cit*

¹⁴² *Op Cit*

¹⁴³ *Op Cit*

¹⁴⁴ *Op Cit*

¹⁴⁵ *Op Cit*

¹⁴⁶ <http://www.forbesindia.com/article/startups-special/solving-for-india-five-startups-tackling-social-problems/43653/1>

nature of the job market which demands unlearning and relearning of skills at regular intervals.¹⁴⁷

13. Hansa Cheetah

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Hansa Cheetah is an online survey application. It aims to create a panel for responding to survey questions and thus help with activities like market research. Conducting surveys and ensuring an adequate number of responses to them are tedious tasks and business decisions cannot take so much time. Because of the high smartphone penetration, the fastest way to get people to respond to surveys is through their mobile devices and Hansa Cheetah works with that model.
- b. **Operations:** Hansa Cheetah's parent body, Hansa Research has been in the market research domain since 1983. Various companies outsource their surveys to Hansa Cheetah and it ensures that the responses on these survey meet the specific research requirements. They recruit people on the panel based on a set of criteria such as gender, age, city, socio-economic classification etc All of these respondents have smartphones on which the app is loaded and survey questions are periodically pushed to them. The data then directly goes to the dashboard and can be reported. The respondents are paid only when the response is submitted. They have approximately 8500 empanelled respondents. However, they send surveys only to 3000-4000 respondents, filtered by their software based on the particular needs of the survey. Two to three questionnaires are sent to respondents on an average, in a week. None of the empanelled respondents depend on Hansa Cheetah for their primary income and most of them belong to financially well off families. If respondents leave the panel, then new people are empanelled in their place. The platform also offers survey data analysis and reporting services that are conducted by full time employees who are on Hansa Cheetah's payroll. The real freelancers on their platform are those who are hired to recruit people for the panel. These recruiters are hired on a job-to-job basis. Hansa Cheetah usually advertises for these positions on platforms like LinkedIn and the applicants are then screened and hired for a specific job. These people are, however, not on their payroll and are called 'retainers'. They are assigned different projects based on their calibre and this serves as their primary source of income. Their qualifications range from virtually no formal education to those with secondary level education. Once hired, they are trained to go on field, ask relevant questions and recruit people for the respondent panels. Workshops are conducted for 2-3 days to demonstrate how interviews should be done. Different types of skilling are required for different types of interviewers. Most of them learn on the job. These recruiters or retainers are not allowed to work for a competing firm and are provided substantial work to keep them engaged for 25 days in a month. Aside from these conditions, Hansa Cheetah is not involved in any other jobs that these retainers might take up additionally. Hansa Cheetah's clients include Unilever, Mother Dairy, pepsi, Amazon, Myntra etc. They also conduct opinion polls for newspapers and television channels. They believe that the platform can also be used by the government not only to run surveys but also for

¹⁴⁷ <https://yourstory.com/2017/10/imerit-big-data-lifting/>

third party implementation checks, campaign effectiveness etc. and thus also help Hansa Cheetah to enter smaller markets and rural areas.

- c. **Revenue Model:** The empanelled respondents are paid in the range of Rs. 20 - Rs. 40 per questionnaire response. The exact amount is determined by the platform based on the length and complexity of the questionnaire. From the money paid by the client to Hansa Cheetah, 60% - 65% is given away as remuneration to respondents and only a small percentage is kept by Hansa Cheetah as overhead charges. Every respondent has to open a Paytm account to receive their payments. They follow an integrated UTI system and there is no intervention by the portal. The respondents receive the payment directly in their Paytm accounts as soon as they submit their responses. As for the 'retainers', their payment depends on the type of interviews they conduct (eg: face to face interviews with corporate employees, interviews with villagers etc.) and their quality of work. They either receive cheque payments or the money is directly credited to their bank accounts.
- d. **Challenges:** One of the major challenges they face is to maintain their panel without surveys being sent to them. The other challenge is the relatively less payment offered in research which renders it unattractive to freelancers in face of several alternate opportunities. This is also partly due to clients who reduce their budgets. Due to a dearth of good freelancers in this industry, Hansa Cheetah tries to pick interviewers from underprivileged backgrounds and train them for which they incur significant costs.

14. Croogster

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Croogster is an online freelancing platform that replicates the model of an e-commerce portal for hiring freelancers.¹⁴⁸ It is a service marketplace that makes hiring freelancers and getting high quality and timely work delivered at a minimum fixed price of Rs. 299.¹⁴⁹ The platform had started its operations with India, but now freelancers from across 30 countries use the platform to sell their services and earn money.¹⁵⁰ However, it remains a primarily Indian platform. Croogster has been in the market for over two years.
- b. **Operations:** Freelancers on Croogster provide over 50 different types of services, including graphic designing, content writing, digital marketing, video editing, programming and web development etc. Services like content writing are dominated by women while programming and web development are male dominant. The age of freelancers on the platform is between 18 years and 32 years. Croogster allows a person to explore the platform without a login identity, unlike other freelancing portals. Once they register, Croogster handholds freelancers through the process. Service buyers (clients) can identify the service that they need and compare prices, portfolios and delivery time, provide a brief on the job to the selected seller of service (freelancer), use the in-built conversation and transaction management system to exchange files and

¹⁴⁸ <https://inc42.com/startups/croogster/>

¹⁴⁹ *Op Cit*

¹⁵⁰ <https://croogster.com/about-us/>

feedback with the seller, approve the service once delivered after which Croogster ensures that the freelancer gets paid.¹⁵¹ Freelancers, on the other hand need to post the service they are offering as accurately as possible, communicate promptly with buyers and build a reputation which would help them grow.¹⁵² While, Indian designers lag behind their Indonesian, Serbian and Ukrainian counterparts, they are better skilled than most in content writing, digital marketing and software development. Freelancers on Croogster are also given reviews and ratings and are promoted to higher levels based on their quality of work.¹⁵³ There are five levels for freelancers - beginner, professional, Expert, Master and Celebrity. However, they are trying to do away with this system to create equal opportunities for all. Indian freelancers are not adept at estimating project costs. Thus, the platform is developing a tool to help freelancers make such estimations. Currently they have 3000 active freelancers and 5000 unique clients. The platform does not allow freelancing agencies and companies to register as it destroys the level playing field for individual freelancers. All freelancers on Croogster are engaged full time as their objective is to create equal opportunities as compared to those with traditional full time employment. Approximately 5% freelancers on the platform turn inactive within a month, but the customer support system reaches out to them and conveys information about available opportunities offline.

- c. **Revenue Model:** Croogster charges both freelancers as well as clients. A 10% processing fee is levied on both buyers and sellers after completion of the task. The payment made by the client is secured in an escrow account created by the company and is released only when the client is satisfied with the service.¹⁵⁴ Their objective is to make the platform available in the B2C market in the near future so as to help common people use the expertise of freelancers to get tasks done.¹⁵⁵
- d. **Challenges:** Their key challenge is possibly from competitors like Truelancer and other platforms that work with similar models, which makes the marketplace very competitive. The challenge here is to ensure that freelancers get paid as per global standards as well as to constantly innovate to build a uniqueness quotient.

15. Upwork

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Upwork is a global online freelancing platform where freelancers and companies are connected to work together, albeit remotely.¹⁵⁶ Its aim was to bring visibility and trust to remote work and provide the business world with access to a larger pool of talent while workers could enjoy freedom and flexibility to find online jobs.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ <https://croogster.com/how-it-works/>

¹⁵² *Op Cit*

¹⁵³ <https://inc42.com/startups/croogster/>

¹⁵⁴ *Op Cit*

¹⁵⁵ *Op Cit*

¹⁵⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upwork>

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.upwork.com/about/>

- b. Operations:** The platform operates as a marketplace for freelancers. Clients can post jobs and Upwork's uses data science to highlight freelancers who best fit the job profile.¹⁵⁸ Clients can also look for talent on Upwork and freelancers can view the job posting and submit proposals.¹⁵⁹ They have a built-in chat system which also has a video conferencing tool which helps clients schedule interviews with shortlisted freelancers.¹⁶⁰ Freelancers have the freedom to select their clients and projects and they can essentially be treated as business entities on the platform. Upwork's algorithms highlight projects that best fit their profile.¹⁶¹ Freelancers' profiles also display their Job Success Score and feedback on past projects.¹⁶² 80% of their clients are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and it is a great platform for companies that want to scale up, to find talent to suit their requirements. As of 2017, Upwork has 14 million users spread across 180 countries.¹⁶³
- c. Revenue Model:** Upwork has recently shifted from charging a 10% flat fee to freelancers to a sliding fee and under the new model, the fee depends on a freelancer's lifetime billings with the client.¹⁶⁴ It also transfers a 2.75% payment processing cost per transaction to freelancers' clients on jobs done through the platform - this cost would earlier be absorbed by Upwork.¹⁶⁵ It is however, not directly involved in transactions between clients and freelancers. Moreover, payments are released to the freelancer only when it is completed and authorised by the client. Additionally, it offers a service called Upwork Pro where pre-vetted talent is curated for clients to meet their specific requirements.¹⁶⁶ They also have an Enterprise version for clients.
- d. Challenges:** The challenge, specifically for India lies in surviving in the highly competitive freelancing marketplace where similar platforms with similar business models are operating.

16. DataPure

- a. Type of Organisation:** DataPure is a privately held, for profit data dissemination portal. Their objective is to create an on-demand pool of experts for data generation, verification, structuring, research and other custom services.¹⁶⁷
- b. Operations:** DataPure aims to help drive businesses using data. They have about 51-200 employees.¹⁶⁸ All employees undergo training for more than 30 days when they are

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.upwork.com/i/how-it-works/client/>

¹⁵⁹ *Op Cit*

¹⁶⁰ *Op Cit*

¹⁶¹ <https://www.upwork.com/i/how-it-works/freelancer/>

¹⁶² *Op Cit*

¹⁶³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upwork>

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elainepofeldt/2016/05/03/freelance-giant-upwork-shakes-up-its-business-model/#2f062f1e1855>

¹⁶⁵ *Op Cit*

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.upwork.com/i/how-it-works/client/>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.datapure.co/>

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/10492819/>

hired.¹⁶⁹ The work that they engage in is high in value and they bring accurate and scalable human labour to their companies.¹⁷⁰ DataPure helps generate high quality and customised training data for machine learning initiatives and automate business processes through workforce supported by human labour.¹⁷¹ They process approximately 6000 tasks in a day with over 95% accuracy.¹⁷² The portal has supported a wide range of tasks and activities including CRM data verification and enrichment, collection of intent data, product categorisation, medical image labelling, self-driving cars and intelligent personal assistants.¹⁷³

- c. **Revenue Model:** DataPure charges its clients for access to high quality data but. Four autonomous vehicle companies, eleven image recognition AI companies, and multiple national B2B data providers are their customers.¹⁷⁴ Some of them are Amazon, BCG, Crunchbase etc. They also have a dedicated team lead for each customer.¹⁷⁵
- d. **Challenges:** The company could potentially face issues of scalability in India and working around government rules and regulations. The other challenge could come with automation as much of the work related to data generation and verification would not require manual labour for much longer.

17. Youth4Work

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Youth4Work is an online freelancing platform for students and recent graduates who do not have a job but need a source of income. The company was started in 2011. Its objective was to create pre-assessed talent communities for companies to connect with.¹⁷⁶
- b. **Operations:** Youth4Work sets itself apart from portals like Naukri.com and LinkedIn by creating a list of students who were actively seeking jobs, sorted on the basis of their proficiency in certain skills i.e. students would be ranked on a quality scale, unlike other profiles where companies can only access a list of people with certain skills. There are currently over 2 million people on the platform. There are more than 14000 registered companies, over 10000 colleges, approximately 54000 jobs to search from and 8000 youth being contacted daily.¹⁷⁷ The platform has now integrated with a course provider. Its preparation test platform for college students has over 274 different exam preparation materials and 5000 test takers everyday who are preparing for different examinations.¹⁷⁸ They have over 400 different skill tests that help the students on the platform to assess

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.datapure.co/>

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/10492819/>

¹⁷¹ *Op Cit*

¹⁷² <https://www.datapure.co/>

¹⁷³ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/10492819/>

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.datapure.co/>

¹⁷⁵ *Op Cit*

¹⁷⁶ <https://yourstory.com/2017/07/youth4work-startup-job-preassessed-talent/>

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.youth4work.com/>

¹⁷⁸ <https://yourstory.com/2017/07/youth4work-startup-job-preassessed-talent/>

themselves based on their level of skills.¹⁷⁹ It also suggests the right courses to users based on their requirements and a possible career growth path, based on over 1500 courses that the portal provides.¹⁸⁰ The portal has an algorithm called yRank, which rates a candidate based on their scores in tests, how active they are in seeking jobs and their performance in freelance projects.¹⁸¹ The users on the platform are engaged in work related to IT, engineering, sales and marketing, finance, retail, human resource, design and work that comes under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) skill programme, among others.¹⁸²

- c. **Revenue Model:** Youth4Work's revenues come from both job seekers as well as job suppliers. They monetise on the talent solutions and customer assessment solutions that they offer to the companies. In case of job seekers, they charge for online preparation tests, online talent certification courses etc. that they offer to students to improve on their skills.
- d. **Challenges:** The key challenge was to start the business and attract the right kind of talent to successfully run a startup. The other challenge is the growing market of similar portals, both nationally and internationally.

18. Vindhya

- a. **Type of Organisation:** Vindhya is a social impact oriented rural BPO that combines business and philanthropy. It focuses on the differently abled and its employees comprise of physically challenged, hearing impaired, socially disadvantaged women and autistic persons. The BPO was founded in 2006 and has its headquarters in Bangalore.
- b. **Operations:** Vindhya employs close to 1500 people currently. Of them, 95% are freshers. Their tasks span across industries like telecom, hospitals, IT, government initiatives, microfinance etc. Work is assigned to employees based on the type of disability they have, for example, those with hearing impairment are given data processing jobs, those who are visually impaired are given audio based jobs, those with severe or multiple disabilities are assigned simple data entry jobs etc. They have over 44 clients that include companies like Wipro, L&T, IndusInd Bank, RBL, Cloud 9 Hospitals, among others. They work with NGOs and institutions for the disabled to identify such people and absorb them into Vindhya. Camps are also conducted in Tier II cities, either with the help of non-profits or existing clients.¹⁸³ People come to them from across India including rural areas. Once people come on board, their skills, type and level of disability are assessed by the HR team, in order to understand what type of jobs should be assigned to them.¹⁸⁴ They are groomed, trained, provided accommodation and given responsibilities. They are

¹⁷⁹ *Op Cit*

¹⁸⁰ *Op Cit*

¹⁸¹ <https://yourstory.com/2013/06/youth4work-ranking-the-employable-talent-pool-to-make-hiring-easy-for-employers/>

¹⁸² <https://yourstory.com/2017/07/youth4work-startup-job-preassessed-talent/>

¹⁸³ <https://yourstory.com/2016/02/vindhya-e-infomedia/>

¹⁸⁴ *Op Cit*

trained in soft skills, communication skills, computer literacy and voice training, among others. A certification is given at the end of the training and they are allotted a buddy to teach, assess and assist them along the way and they are shifted to their desks.¹⁸⁵ The employees are hand-held to ensure that they can deliver independently. The trainers are on Vindhya's payroll and some are also volunteers. Training for the hearing impaired is conducted through sign language which is also the universal language of communication at Vindhya.¹⁸⁶ Employees are also given internal promotions. It has also started employing people without disabilities.

- c. **Revenue Model:** Vindhya only monetises through the projects that they secure.
- d. **Challenges:** Their key challenge lies in the perception of the quality of work that people with disabilities can deliver. Most of their clients who had not opened their doors to the differently abled were doubtful of their professional capabilities and as their learning curve is longer.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, these companies tested them with pilot projects first.¹⁸⁸ However, Vindhya has repeatedly proved that the productivity of people with disabilities is no lesser than those without disabilities.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ *Op Cit*

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.thebetterindia.com/36596/vindhya-e-infomedia-bpo-bangalore/>

¹⁸⁷ http://www.huffingtonpost.in/ashok-d-giri/vindhyas-story-dignity-an_b_7585206.html

¹⁸⁸ *Op Cit*

¹⁸⁹ *Op Cit*

Appendix 3

Online Freelancing: Challenges, Opportunities and Impact in India

For the purpose of the survey, online freelancing includes all types of micro-tasks and business process outsourcing that is mediated on an online platform.

1. All responses are property a property of ICRIER and will be treated by ICRIER as strictly confidential
2. Expected duration of this questionnaire is 20 minutes

1. Age: _____ years
2. Sex: Male/Female/Other
3. State/Province: _____
4. City/Town: _____
5. Please state your highest level of education
 - a. MPhil/PhD
 - b. Post Graduate
 - c. Graduate
 - d. Senior Secondary (Upto Class XII)
 - e. Secondary (Upto Class X)
 - f. Upper Primary (Upto Class VIII)
 - g. Primary (Upto Class V)
 - h. None of the Above/Others _____
6. Please state your occupation
 - a. Self-employed/Independent
 - b. Professional
 - c. Employed (private sector) Industry _____
 - d. Employed (government/public)
 - e. Employed (development sector/NGO)
 - f. Retired
 - g. Unemployed
 - h. Student
 - i. Not actively seeking employment

7. Is your occupation your primary source of income? Yes/No/Not Applicable

8. Is your occupation your only source of income? Yes/No/Not Applicable

9. If No/Not Applicable, your other sources of income include

- a. Capital gain from investments
- b. Rental income
- c. Pension
- d. Other part-time jobs
- e. Other part-time business (if not self-employed)

10. Your income per month is

- a. < Rs. 20,000
- b. Between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 40,000
- c. Between Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 80,000
- d. Between Rs. 80,000 and Rs. 2,00,000
- e. > Rs. 2,00,000
- f. No source of income
- g. Irregular income (Please Specify) _____

11. Are you currently

- a. Married
- b. Living together as married
- c. Divorced
- d. Widowed
- e. Single

12. Do you live with your parents?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. Here is a list of qualities children can be encouraged to learn at home. Name three which you consider to be especially important

- a. Independence
- b. Hard work
- c. Sense of responsibility
- d. Imagination
- e. Respect for people
- f. Thrift, value for money
- g. Determination and perseverance
- h. Religious faith
- i. Unselfishness
- j. Discipline
- k. Self-expression

14. Please indicate how closely you reflect the personalities below

	Very Much Like You	Like You	Somewhat Like You	Not Like You	Not At All Like You
Adventure and taking risks are important to have an exciting life					
To be successful, it is important that people recognize your achievements					
It is important to think up new ideas and be creative and to do things in your own way					

15. When you use the Internet, what do you spend most time on? (Select top three)

- a. Email
- b. Other work related to your current employment
- c. Education/Online courses
- d. Social media/Social Networking
- e. News
- f. Entertainment (Games/Music/Video)
- g. Government service/website
- h. E-commerce/Online shopping
- i. Job search and application
- j. Internet banking
- k. Others, please specify _____

16. Out of the three you selected in Q15, which do you find most useful?

- a. Email
- b. Other work related to your current employment
- c. Education/Online courses
- d. Social media/Social Networking
- e. News
- f. Entertainment (Games/Music/Video)
- g. Government service/website
- h. E-commerce/Online shopping
- i. Job search and application
- j. Internet banking
- k. Others, please specify _____

17. Do you engage in Microwork/Online Freelancing?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If your answer to Q17 is No, finish the questionnaire by answering questions Q18-Q23. Else, proceed to Q24, and answer questions 24-39 to finish the questionnaire.

18. Are you aware of opportunities available on the Internet (online freelancing/microwork) to make money?

Yes/No

(By online freelancing/ micro work we refer to situations where a person is usually self-employed, works for different companies or individuals on assignments, and usually gets paid per assignment. Work usually includes web designing, logo design, creative writing, and accounting. The freelancer usually works from home or another location that is unconnected to the firm/individual who is paying for the job)

19. If Yes, from where did you learn of such freelancing/microwork opportunities? (Select all that apply)

- a. Newspapers
- b. Browsing on the Internet/Social Media
- c. TV/Radio
- d. Friends/Colleagues

- e. Family members and Neighbourhood
- f. School/College/University
- g. Cold contacting
- h. Others, please specify _____

20. Would you be willing to take up jobs on the Internet?

Yes/No

21. If No, what are the reasons for you to not take up online jobs (Rate on a scale of 1-5, 5 being very important)

Serial No.	Reason	Rating (On a scale of 1 to 5)
a.	Fear of job security	
b.	Income is inadequate	
c.	Online work platforms lack smooth payment mechanisms	
d.	My friends and family don't approve of such jobs	
e.	I don't have enough time, given my current occupation	
f.	I'm not interested in online freelancing	
g.	I'm not skilled enough to engage in such jobs	
h.	Tried, but didn't get jobs/orders	
i.	Tax payments for online jobs is unclear/complicated	
j.	My internet connectivity is too slow to work online	
k.	My internet connectivity is too costly to work online	
l.	Power cuts in my area affects my ability to work online	
m.	Other _____	

22. If Yes, what are some of the reasons (Rate on a scale of 1-5, 5 being very important and 1 being least important)

Serial No.	Reason	Rating (On a scale of 1 to 5)
a.	Offers work hour flexibility	
b.	Offers an opportunity to pursue an educational program/another job simultaneously	
c.	Offers flexibility to work from home	
d.	Offers opportunity to make additional income alongside primary income	
e.	Offers independence and choice of assignments/projects to work on	
f.	Average pay for work done online is higher than what one would earn in a comparable full-time job with a private/public organization	
g.	More and easily accessible options for work are available	
h.	Others _____	

23. If answer to Q20 is yes, what is the nature of work you would be willing to engage in on an online/microwork platform? Please select all that apply

- a. Data entry (Typing in word/entering in excel)
- b. Graphic design (Logo design, Photoshop Editing, Banner ads design, Web design and development etc.)
- c. Video and Animation (Animation and 3D, puppets, commercials)
- d. Music and Audio (Mixing and mastering, sound effects, song writers, composers)
- e. Programming and software technology (Coding, WordPress, web programming, convert files, mobile apps)
- f. Online marketing/advertising (Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), key word research, social marketing)
- g. Writing and translation (Content writing, Translation, Transcription, copy writing, proof reading, Editing)
- h. Business (Career advertising, business plans, financial planning)
- i. Others, please specify _____

-----X-----X-----X-----

24. If response to Q6 on Occupation, was “Self-employed/Independent”, “Unemployed”, “Student” or “Not Actively Seeking Employment”, is online freelancing, currently your only/primary source of income

Yes/No

25. Are you registered/empanelled with any online website/platform for freelancers?

Yes/No

26. Are you employed by a Microwork organization?

Yes/No

27. If your response to question 19 or 20 is yes, did you receive any training before empanelling/ registering yourself with the online platform?

Yes/No

28. If Yes, what was the nature of training?

-----X-----X-----X-----

29. How many hours did you spend in training? _____ hours

- 30.** How much money did you spend on training? Rs. _____/free
- 31.** What is the nature of your work you do online (Select all that apply)
- a. Data entry (Typing in word/entering in excel)
 - b. Graphic design (Logo design, Photoshop Editing, Banner ads design, Web design and development etc.)
 - c. Video and Animation (Animation and 3D, puppets, commercials)
 - d. Music and Audio (Mixing and mastering, sound effects, song writers, composers)
 - e. Programming and software technology (Coding, WordPress, web programming, convert files, mobile apps)
 - f. Online marketing/advertising (Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), key word research, social marketing)
 - g. Writing and translation (Content writing, Translation, Transcription, copy writing, proof reading, Editing)
 - h. Business (Career advertising, business plans, financial planning)
 - i. Others, please specify _____
- 32.** Where did you learn about such online freelancing/microwork opportunities? (Select all that apply)
- a. Newspapers
 - b. Browsing on the Internet/Social Media
 - c. TV/Radio
 - d. Friends/Colleagues
 - e. Family members and Neighbourhood
 - f. School/College/University
 - g. Cold contacting
 - h. Others, please specify _____
- 33.** How is compensation for a job/assignment mostly determined? (Select all that apply)
- a. Direct negotiation with client
 - b. Rates are determined by the client and I cannot negotiate
 - c. Rates are determined by me and not negotiable
 - d. Rates are determined by the platform owner
 - e. Bidding
 - f. Others. Please specify _____

- 34.** The money you receive for your work is affected by (Select all that apply)
- Quality of previous engagements/ Ratings received from previous engagements
 - Samples of your work/online portfolio
 - Competitions
 - Level of training/ education
 - Others. Please specify _____
 - Others
- 35.** How much do you charge (on average) per job/assignment Rs. _____
- 36.** What is the average time you spend per job/assignment _____ hours
- 37.** What is the average/approximate number of jobs you do per month/ assignment: _____
- 38.** What are some of the reasons (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very important and 1 being least important) for you to be engaged in online freelancing/ micro work?

Serial No.	Reason	Rating (On a scale of 1 to 5)
a.	Fear of job security	
b.	Income is inadequate	
c.	Online work platforms lack smooth payment mechanisms	
d.	My friends and family don't approve of such jobs	
e.	I don't have enough time, given my current occupation	
f.	I'm not interested in online freelancing	
g.	I'm not skilled enough to engage in such jobs	
h.	Tried, but didn't get jobs/orders	
i.	Tax payments for online jobs is unclear/complicated	
j.	My internet connectivity is too slow to work online	
k.	My internet connectivity is too costly to work online	
l.	Power cuts in my area affects my ability to work online	
m.	Other _____	

- 39.** What according to you are some of the disadvantages of online freelancing/ microwork (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very important and 1 being least important)

Serial No.	Reason	Rating (On a scale of 1 to 5)
a.	Offers work hour flexibility	
b.	Offers an opportunity to pursue an educational program/another job simultaneously	
c.	Offers flexibility to work from home	
d.	Offers opportunity to make additional income alongside primary income	
e.	Offers independence and choice of assignments/projects to work on	
f.	Average pay for work done online is higher than what one would earn in a comparable full-time job with a private/public organization	
g.	More and easily accessible options for work are available	
h.	Others _____	

Appendix 4

Table 4.1: Current Freelancers

Online Freelancing/ Microworkers	Yes	No	No response	Total
Students	707	1130	7	1844
Non-Students	65	64	3	132

Table 4.2: Current and Potential Freelancers

Potential Freelancers	Students	Non-Students
Current Freelancers	707	65
Potential Freelancers	890	51
No response	3	2

Table 4.3: Current Freelancers by Level of Education

Online Freelancers	MPhil/ PhD	Post Graduate	Graduate	Senior Secondary (Upto Class XII)	Secondary (Upto Class X)	Upper Primary (Upto Class VIII)	Primary (Upto Class V)	None of the above/Others	No response
Students	0	33	280	371	12	1	0	8	2
Non-Students	0	19	37	7	1	0	0	1	0

Table 4.4: Current and Potential Freelancers by Source of Information

Freelancers	Newspapers	Browsing on the Internet/ Social Media	TV/ Radio	Friends/ Colleagues	Family members and Neighbourhood	School/ College/ University	Cold Contacting	Other (please specify)
Students (Current)	39	311	14	170	28	106	15	5
Students (Potential and aware)	92	476	25	252	48	141	8	0
Non-Students (Current)	4	34	0	16	4	3	3	0
Non-Students (Potential and aware)	5	29	2	17	3	6	1	0

Table 4.5: Microworkers by Source of Information

Microworkers	Newspapers	Browsing on the Internet/ Social Media	TV/ Radio	Friends/ Colleagues	Family members and Neighbourhood	School/ College/ University	Cold Contacting	Other (please specify)
Students	2	12	1	7	1	6	2	1
Non-Students	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	0

Table 4.6: Length of Freelancing Experience

All online freelancers	Students	Non-Students
less than a year	262	19
1 years	41	5
2 years	21	5
3 years	6	3
4 years	3	1
5 years	4	1
No response	370	31
More than 5 years	0	2

Table 4.7: Potential Freelancers by Level of Education

Potential Freelancers	MPhil/ PhD	Post Graduate	Graduate	Senior Secondary (Upto Class XII)	Secondary (Upto Class X)	Upper Primary (Upto Class VIII)	Primary (Upto Class V)	None of the above/Others	No response
Students (aware of opportunities)	3	17	168	346	15	2	1	4	3
Students (not aware of opportunities)	0	16	93	206	9	1	0	2	2
Non-Students (aware of opportunities)	1	6	22	4	3	0	0	0	0
Non-Students (not aware of opportunities)	0	3	8	4	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.8: Potential Freelancers by Type of Activity

Potential Freelancers	Data entry (Typing in Word/entering in Excel)	Graphic design (Logo design, Photoshop Editing, Banner ads design, Web design, and development etc.)	Video and Animation (Animation and 3D, puppets, commercials)	Music and Audio (Mixing and mastering, sound effects, songwriters, composers)	Programming and software technology (Coding, WordPress, web programming, convert files, mobile apps)	Online marketing/advertising (Search Engine Optimization (SEO), keyword research, social marketing)	Writing and translation (Content Writing, Translation, Transcription, copy writing, proofreading, Editing)	Business (Career advertising , business plans, financial planning)
Students (aware of opportunities)	397	159	56	103	146	207	299	134
Students (not aware of opportunities)	221	78	29	46	90	109	142	103
Non-Students (aware of opportunities)	22	6	5	5	8	13	20	7
Non-Students (not aware of opportunities)	11	2	0	4	4	4	7	4

Table 4.9: Change in Demand for Freelancing

Change in demand for freelancing	Yes, Demand has Increased	No, Demand has remain constant/unchanged	Yes, Demand has Decreased	No response
Students	178	128	18	383
Non-Students	22	13	3	27

Table 4.10: Percentage Change in Income from Freelancing

Percentage of increase or decrease in income	Less than 15%	15 - 45%	46 - 60%	61 - 75%	76 -100%	No response
Students	75	73	20	12	13	514
Non-Students	9	10	3	0	2	41

Bibliography

- Abu S Shonchoy and PN Raja Junakar (2014)**, “*The informal labour market in India: transitory or permanent employment for migrants?*”, IZA Journal of Labor and Development, July 2014
- Ajay K. Agrawal, Nicola Lacetera and Elizabeth Lyons**, “*Does information help or hinder job applicants from less developed countries in online markets?*”, Working Paper No. 18720, National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2013
- Andrey Shevchuk and Denis Strebkov (2012)**, “*Freelancers in Russia: Remote work patterns and e-markets*”, economic sociology_the European electronic newsletter, Volume 13, Issue 2, pp. 37-45
- Andrey Shevchuk and Denis Strebkov (2015)**, “*The rise of freelance contracting on the Russian-language Internet*”, Small Enterprise Research, Volume 22, Issue 2-3, pp. 146-148, July 2015
- Anniko Hannak et al (2017)**, “*Bias in Online Freelance Marketplaces: Evidence from TaskRabbit and Fiverr*”, In CSCW, pp. 1914-1933, February 2017
- Bernard Caillaud and Bruno Jullien (2003)**, “*Chicken & egg: competition among intermediation service providers*”, RAND Journal of Economics, Volume 34, Issue 2, Summer 2003, pp. 309-328
- Bertin Martens (2016)**, “*An Economic Policy Perspective on Online Platforms*”, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, JRC Technical Reports, Digital Economy Working Paper 2016/05, May 2016
- Fathima N. Thabassum (2013)**, “*A Study on the Freelancing Remote Job Websites*” International Journal of Business Research and Management, Volume 4, Issue 1, April 2013
- Global Center for Youth and Employment and banyan global (2017)**, “*The Nexus of Microwork and Impact Sourcing Implications for Youth and Employment*”, March 2017
- Hema Yoganarasimhan (2013)**, “*The value of reputation in an online freelance marketplace*”, Marketing Science, Volume 32, Issue 6, pp. 860-891
- ILO Country Office for India (2016)**, “*India Labour Market Update*”, International Labour Organisation, July 2016
- James Manyika et al (2016)**, “*Independent work: Choice, necessity and the gig economy*”, McKinsey Global Institute, October 2016

- Jean-Charles Rochet and Jean Tirole (2004)**, *“Two-Sided Markets: An Overview”*, Institut d’Economie Industrielle working paper, March 2004
- Labour Bureau (2016)**, *“Fifth Employment Unemployment Survey”*, Government of India, September 2016
- Lin Lean Lim**, *“Female Labour Force and Participation”*, Gender Promotion Programme, International Labour Office, Geneva
- Maria Saez-Marti (2011)**, *“Siesta: A Theory of Freelancing”*, Working Paper No. 55, Department of Economics, University of Zurich, December 2011
- Mario Pianta (2003)**, *“Innovation and Employment”*, Chapter 22, Handbook of Innovation, Oxford University Press
- Martha A Chen (2016)**, *“Technology, informal workers and cities: insights from Ahmedabad (India), Durban (South Africa) and Lima (Peru)”*, Environment and Urbanization, International Institute for Environment and Development
- Mihai Gheorghe (2015)**, *“State of Freelancing in IT and Future Trends”*, International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering, World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, Volume 9, Issue 5, pp. 1474-1478
- Siou Chew Kuek et al (2015)**, *“The Global Opportunity in Online Outsourcing”*, World Bank Group, June 2015
- T.N Bhagoliwal (1976)**, *“Economics of Labour and Social Welfare”*
- Thomas Friedman (2005)**, *“The World is Flat”* Farrar Straus and Giroux