



# Social Media and Flexible Employment from the Perspective of the Digital Economy

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**Abstract.** In the current era of the digital economy, new production and management models are constantly emerging in various economic industries, and with them, a large number of new employment forms have emerged. From online purchases and sales in the e-commerce industry to smart distribution in the logistics industry, to the increasingly digital and diversified service industry, people's employment and working methods are becoming more and more flexible, and the associated issues such as technological development, platform mechanisms, and labor relations have It also poses new challenges to traditional production relations and labor management models. Stimulated by the free market, the platform economy and flexible employment phenomena have developed rapidly. According to the "China Flexible Employment Report", China's flexible employment workforce will reach 200 million in 2021, and the labor dispatch model has gradually expanded from so-called "blue-collar" workers to "white-collar" groups. According to iResearch forecasts, the flexible employment market is expected to maintain an average annual growth rate of 20% in the next three years. In response to this social phenomenon, this study focuses on technological upgrading, individual characteristics, and new employment and labor models developed based on the Internet platform, and reflects on and discusses issues such as data standards, labor protection, social ethics, and development models. With the help of the framework of platform economic policy, labor control, and agency theory, it provides an in-depth understanding of the current social status quo, job market characteristics, and the path to balanced social development.

**Keywords:** platform economy, social growth, flexible employment

## 1 INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development and deep integration of Internet information technology and digital technology, the digital economy has gradually become a new driving force for the healthy development of society and enterprises. China's "14th Five-Year Plan" Digital Economy Development Plan, released in 2022, further proposes policy support for the development of industrial digitization and public service digitization. It must focus on the deep integration of digital technology and the real economy to

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collaboratively promote digital industrialization. Digitalization empowers the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, cultivates new industries, new business formats, and new models, and builds a digital China. According to the "2021 China Digital Economy Development Report", the scale of China's digital economy in 2021 is CNY 45.5 trillion, accounting for 39.8% of GDP; the scale of industrial digitalization is CNY 37.18 trillion, accounting for 81.7% of the digital economy. The digital transformation of industries continues to accelerate and develop in depth. During the development process, several platform enterprises relying on Internet technology have emerged, thus forming a platform economy. According to Deloitte China data survey and analysis, the scale of China's platform economy will reach a breakthrough of CNY 100 trillion in 2030. The 2021 "14th Five-Year Plan and Outline of 2035 Long-term Goals" proposes a series of relevant policy measures to develop the digital economy, aiming to create an internationally competitive digital industry cluster through the establishment of data resource property rights, and transaction circulation. The digital economy has been included in government work reports for five consecutive years since 2017. Policies for the development of the digital economy have been relatively intensively introduced, which is the core reason for the explosive growth of digital economy research results.

Compared with traditional business formats, flexible employment solves unemployment and reduces labor costs for enterprises on the one hand, but also brings new uncertainties to workers on the other. This article will start from the three key points of the platform's economy, social growth, and flexible employment, and conduct an in-depth analysis of its operation and employment models. At the same time, it will be supplemented by data resources from human resource service providers and online employment platforms to understand and summarize it from a macro level. The development characteristics of social growth and flexible employment in the current platform economy. In addition, this research will involve important labor process theories in sociology and economics, including key concepts such as technical control, the ideology of capital, and individual autonomy, to enrich the theoretical connotation of the project and expand this research's understanding of social reality and academic meaning of the discussion.

## **2 DIGITAL ECONOMY AND PLATFORM CAPITALISM**

Existing literature conceptually defines the platform economy, pointing out that a platform refers to a place where buyers and sellers exchange products, services, information, and other economic activities based on each other's needs Gong Xue and Jing Linbo [1]. Shifu and Changqing [2] demonstrated the policy evolution and theoretical research context of China's digital economic development, showing the vision of the digital economic platform and the country's strategic support. With the help of a new generation of intelligent information technology, massive data resources, and explosive user scale, the digital economy has significant advantages in development momentum, development efficiency, and development quality Brynjolfsson et al., [3], giving the

service industry economies of scale. The three new characteristics of economy of scale, economy of scope, and long-tail effect play an important role in expanding the scale of the service industry and improving operational efficiency, which in turn is conducive to promoting the optimization and upgrading of the service industry structure.

On the other hand, some scholars have conducted critical research on the capital power of digital platforms. Zhou Shaodong and Dai Yifan [4] explored the monopoly capitalist nature of digital platforms from the perspective of Marx's land rent theory, found that the platform rent of digital labor is collected in both directions and believed that digital platforms can build ecological monopolies based on industry monopolies. trend. In this regard, they gave relevant management suggestions from a policy perspective, including adjusting the corresponding tax structure, standardizing the digital economic order, and promoting the development of public information platforms. Jiao Yong and Zhu Jianfeng [5] believe that the multi-dimensional monopoly of the platform economy will bring serious consequences, mainly manifested in the loss of consumer welfare, damage to the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises, misallocation of resource factors and suppression of social innovation and development. Dai Kuizao et al. [6] found that the development of the digital economy has significantly promoted the structural upgrading of China's urban service industry. The development of the digital industry, the increase of digital users, and the construction of digital platforms are conducive to the development of the modern service industry; however, in terms of digital innovation, the effect of digital innovation on the structural upgrading of the service industry is not obvious, perhaps due to insufficient ability to transform digital innovation results. Xia Changjie and Yang Haowen [7] proposed that platforms should embed a variety of digital technologies and services from the perspectives of the digital economic environment, job creation, and international competition to lead industrial upgrading, reduce costs, and increase efficiency, absorb flexible employment, and create new occupations and new positions. Cheng Enfu and Wang Aihua [8] believe that large digital economic platforms have a dual monopoly phenomenon. A "data monopoly" is formed through the free possession of "digital labor". In addition, some scholars have also discussed in depth the role and value of users in digital platforms. Zhou Jin [9] believes that value co-creation with user experience as the core should be jointly created by both enterprises and users, emphasizing the shift of the enterprise's focus from products to services. In "The Road to Interaction Design", Alan Cooper created the "role + goal + scenario" design method based on user portraits, emphasizing the importance of user perception in product design.

In addition to discussions on the production process of the digital economy, related research also explores the impact of digital economic models on social relations. The digital economy not only brings about technological changes but also brings about organizational changes and changes in production relations. Li Sanxi et al. [10] proposed that the emergence of platforms has changed traditional employment patterns and labor-employment relationships, giving rise to the concept of the gig economy. Typical job types include online ride-hailing drivers and takeaway riders. In the gig economy, workers have greater freedom, but they also lose social security. High-skilled workers and part-time workers gain flexible employment opportunities and higher incomes, while low-skilled workers face the management of platform algorithms and fierce

competition from their peers, bearing lower hourly wages, longer working hours, and stronger labor intensity. In addition, the large amount of user data generated during platform transactions should also belong to the users, rather than being used by companies as production factors to further seize profits (Jones and Tonetti, [11]. Scholars such as Wang Weihua [12] revealed the dominance of platforms over people's digital labor. They proposed that the development of platform capitalism relies on the data and information generated by user participation. On the one hand, content platforms rely on a large number of user activities to create content and enhance platform value; on the other hand, they use users' free labor and information to generate data products to obtain commercial benefits. In the process of the operation of platform capitalism, "data is gradually becoming a new factor of production." This kind of data seems to be text, pictures, expressions, audio and video, voice, symbols, codes, etc. left by users on the platform. In essence, it has become a digital landscape presented by capital's use of data power. The added value of digital data is automatically completed with the help of intelligent machines in the process of data extraction, calculation, analysis, classification, and modeling. Through the operation methods of quantification and control, the rights and wealth effects of data are constantly pursued.

### **3 CHINA'S PLATFORM COMPANIES AND FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT**

Huang Yiping [13] summarized the opportunities and challenges faced by the platform economy. First of all, the biggest advantage of China's platform economy is its market size and active user data, but this brings about problems in data protection, data confirmation, and platform governance. China's flexible employees still face problems such as unstable income from "gig" employment, manual labor, difficult working conditions, long working hours, and insufficient social security. In addition, at the national level, there is no basic pension insurance and basic medical insurance specifically for flexible employment in new business types. Flexible employment requires independent payment of social security, which increases the burden on flexible employment. Looking at the development of today's media communication and platform economy, the core element is linking users. The trends of communication's mobility, fragmentation, full-scale, interactive, precise, and holographic communication continue to deepen and merge, forming a new communication ecology. For the platform economy, no matter what form it is, there are only two most basic functions, one is to display and promote, and the other is to sell goods. However, the current development status of China's digital economic platform is that employees and consumers in new industries are coerced by "big data algorithms" and controlled by "big data analysis", and their labor rights are easily infringed. At the same time, the information content of multiple Internet platforms is complex, information is generated spontaneously, and information confirmation is ambiguous. The matching efficiency of various types of information affects the speed of production, distribution, exchange, consumption, and other economic links.

On the other hand, China's internal market penetration rate is already relatively high, but there is still a gap between it and the international market. In 2021, Tencent's

overseas revenue accounted for 7%, and Alibaba's overseas revenue accounted for 6.8%. This is not commensurate with the scale of China's digital economy and platform economy, which ranks second in the world. The international competitiveness of platform companies needs to be strengthened. Research on user paths under the new communication ecology Jiang Bowen [14]. Pang Ruizhi and Li Shuaina [15] believe that the digital economy can weaken the original non-storable and non-tradable characteristics of the service industry, give the service industry new service methods and service content, and alleviate the "cost disease" of the service industry. The service industry is an important engine for improving the resilience and vitality of China's economy. However, the overall development of China's service industry is still lagging, and there are still problems such as low productivity, lack of innovation capabilities, and unreasonable structures. In addition, the development of platform enterprises has brought incremental space, activated new business formats and new demands, spawned several new occupations, and created more new employment opportunities. New business formats of the platform economy are emerging one after another, and emerging digital jobs are constantly being created, absorbing more workers. The role of platform companies in participating in international competition has become increasingly prominent. A digital platform built on digital technology can accurately match labor supply and demand with high quality and on a large scale, improving labor market efficiency and the capital mechanism of the digital economy. The platform economy has changed the original fixed employment model. Workers can freely switch between multiple platforms and multiple employers, work more freely in time and location, and earn more income; employers can form an "employing unit-platform- "Individual workers" new employment model, thereby reducing the company's production costs. The platform can realize short-term contracts and instant contracts, thereby making the calculation method of labor compensation more flexible. The flexibility of the platform has attracted more and more people who choose their careers to enter the labor market. Through negotiation and deployment of human resources, we will promote the further development of flexible employment models, develop a shared employment big data platform, improve supply and demand docking capabilities through digital means, solve employment efficiency problems, and stabilize social employment.

#### **4 DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PLATFORM ENTERPRISES**

In recent years, changes in the international power structure have also affected the development of technology companies, and many Chinese platform companies have encountered challenges in their innovation and development. The local supply of core technologies for platform innovation is insufficient, and data security and other aspects are faced with the dilemma of being controlled by others. The comprehensive capabilities and resource integration capabilities of the platform need to be strengthened. Information islands exist, making it difficult to achieve integration and sharing. Some platforms have weak industrial data modeling and analysis capabilities. To promote the

construction of digital infrastructure more efficiently, governments at all levels should more effectively promote the construction of digital infrastructure represented by 5G base stations, the Internet, supercomputing centers, data computing power, sensors, receiver facilities, etc. The state must support platforms Enterprises create an international service ecosystem and combine blockchain technology. Platform enterprises should focus innovation on basic software and hardware, core components, key materials, production equipment, and other fields. Although China's smart computing power ranks second in the world, accounting for 27% and 20% of the world's total respectively, slightly lower than the United States, the core components on which its computing power depends are dependent on foreign supplies, and its technical shortcomings are concentrated in CPU, GPU, In the production of FPGA and other chips. Cities should build hardware facilities such as intelligent sensing, edge computing, and communication networks appropriately ahead of schedule to provide basic support for sensing, transmission, and computing in building application scenarios. From an enterprise level, it is necessary to focus on hardcore technologies and interface standards such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing and big data, the Internet of Things, and blockchain, carry out innovative scenario practices for integrating new technologies, new models, and new business formats, and accelerate the deployment of new infrastructure Support new scenes, etc. The green development of the digital economy also has an important impact on whether China can achieve the goal of carbon neutrality and peaking as scheduled. We insist on encouraging the integration and innovation of big data technology and green technology.

## **5 ENTERPRISE CASE ANALYSIS BASED ON “GROWTH SOCIALIZATION” AND FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT**

### **(1) “Partner culture”: the social and cultural background of social platforms**

Partner culture has increasingly become an important social object for young people, and various partner relationships have enriched the social life of contemporary youth. Due to the development of transportation, the acceleration of urbanization, and the improvement of people's mobility, more and more young people have left their familiar hometowns and entered unfamiliar cities to seek independence in life. This has led to China's gradual transition from a society of acquaintances to a contemporary society of strangers. Different from the comprehensive communication brought about by traditional intimate relationships, in the context of the transformation of modernity, the social interaction between partners has typical fragmented characteristics. For example, travel companions, cycling companions, dining companions, study companions, shopping companions, etc. The impact of technological development on the social style of young people and the over-generalization of online social interactions have also led to people's offline relationships becoming weaker and creating a deeper sense of loneliness in real life. As a result, there is a two-way influence between "online" and "offline" in the social life of young people, and the youth group has fallen into a deeper social dilemma in the shuttle between the virtual and real worlds. In addition, China's rapid

modernization process has caused the youth group to begin to focus on the personal sense of boundaries in their social interactions. The social appeal of this sense of boundaries makes the youth group both long for close relationships and urgently need individual independence. Most existing research focuses on the "individualization theory" from the perspective of modernity. The perspective of individualization was first proposed by the German sociologist Elias and formally theorized by Ulrich Beck. It means that contemporary people have been extracted from their original family background and social relationships, spanning a vast time and space distance, seeking the independence of individual life in a delocalized time and space, and reorganizing one's social relations. In a fragmented state, how can young people actively use the fragmented socializing \ to reconstruct their identity and integrate their social life?

In this social background, this article selects an online social software for case analysis. This software provides precise companionship and professional services for Chinese youth groups overseas. Among them, precise companionship is the basic representation of fragmented social actions; the type of companionship includes life events and personal interests. The formation of the contemporary multicultural pattern also provides the possibility of unlimited subdivision and expansion for the development of interesting groups. The development of multiculturalism gives young people a wider range of choices and diversifies their cultural identity. In addition, the consumer society is extremely open and inclusive. All personal interests, hobbies, and interest groups can become a kind of consumer resource to be explored. This way of turning personal hobbies into commodities for profit is to a certain extent. This has promoted the formation and development of this multicultural pattern.

The operating principles of the platform in this case are the exclusion of favors and relative fairness. This is because of the social boundaries and privacy protection that young people value and emphasize today. In the platform of this case, digital trusted identity technology can help users socialize based on specific tags and better solve this problem. For most young people, the two social demands of emotion and practicality are not completely separated but are intertwined and mixed. In terms of technology and product design, the various "tie-ins" targeted by the platform simplify online and offline social costs. Among them, time and space is used as the only filtering condition, communication is based on a single life event and hobbies, and human relationships and relatively fair social norms are excluded.

## **(2) "Socializing of Personal Growth": Digital Platforms and the Comprehensive Development of People**

The target users of the platform software in this case are young people who live and develop in other cities or overseas across regions. The information flow is perpendicular to the differentiated value of individuals in the region. By providing a growth social platform that integrates online and offline, it helps young people achieve their goals. A healthier and more beneficial social life will promote their career development in various places and promote international talent exchange and full employment in the long term. Contemporary young people are keen on experiential scene-based socializing. Their self-awareness and right to speak have become stronger. In the era of individual economy, their expression methods are effective and meaningful. Based on the same interests, hobbies, life, and work needs, and topics of common concern, different

communities, unique circle cultures, and certain group norms are formed on digital platforms, and mutual trust and emotions are established based on interests and opportunities. Dependence on digital algorithms is undoubtedly an advanced technology and productivity. Nowadays, young people pay more attention to growth and gain in social networking, and let their interests create value. In the long term, this case platform focuses on two development directions. The first is to continue to deepen and maximize the functions of a certain product. The keywords are focus and concentration. Continuously refine the industry and consumer groups; the second is to provide consumers with customized services and take a personalized route. Products no longer follow a uniform one-size-fits-all model and highlight features. Changes in these two directions have prompted changes in the market in addition. Differentiation marks the end of the era of market unification, and it also marks that it will be difficult to have unified standards for products and services in the future. Each refined consumer group likes completely different products, so product diversification has become the biggest feature of this era.

In the individual economic platform, the underlying logic of business is the credit effect. From the information gap to breaking the information gap to product value-added, it is a strong information and weak relationship. Consumers and service providers are too scattered, and the linkage is very small. The future will enter an era of strong information relationships, and everyone will have the opportunity to express themselves independently. Consumers will also transform from fragmentation to alliance, so whoever can quickly unite consumers can quickly dominate the market. What you see is what you get, and users are given direct answers to any questions. Any problems that arise cannot be avoided deliberately, so credibility has become extremely important in this era. The platform economy has changed the industrial-organizational structure. The "disintermediation" feature has flattened production and consumption. The platform directly connects producers and consumers for transactions based on regional location and smart algorithms, giving full play to its comparative advantages to promote the independent flow of talents. It improves the service efficiency of resource allocation and is a search engine that accelerates effective social networking. The platform promotes employment, absorbs flexible employment, and creates new professions and new positions.

### **(3) Social responsibility of international platforms**

In recent years, the awareness of platform companies in fulfilling social responsibilities has been continuously enhanced, the protection of consumer rights and interests has been continuously strengthened, and platform governance has also achieved certain results. However, the platform economy still faces many challenges. For example, the platform economy faces its development bottleneck in leading development; the platform economy has labor security issues in creating employment; platform innovation capabilities of platform enterprises are restricted and their ability to participate in international competition needs to be improved, etc. When implementing the main responsibilities of platform enterprises, we will take multiple measures to make up for the shortcomings; strengthen the governance of new technologies and promote corporate science and technology for good; strengthen the collaborative governance of multiple parties to help enterprises effectively fulfill their responsibilities; strengthen the



improvement of research and development levels to boost digital technology core capabilities, etc. Factors such as efficiency, fairness, welfare, and innovation should be comprehensively considered, and the starting point for antitrust should be to improve social and economic efficiency, maintain a fair competitive environment, improve corporate consumer welfare, and stimulate innovation. In the future, platform companies must adhere to equal emphasis on supporting development and normalizing supervision, continue to exert efforts, give full play to the active role of platform companies in leading development, creating jobs and international competition, and use the value of data to promote common prosperity.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This article systematically analyzes the impact of the digital economy on the internal structural upgrading of China's service industry and explores the mechanism by which the digital economy affects the structural upgrading of the service industry from the perspective of allocation efficiency of factors such as technology, data, and labor. The development of the digital industry, the increase of digital users, digital innovation, and the construction of digital platforms are conducive to the development of the modern service industry, thereby promoting the upgrading of the service industry structure, and the promoting effects of digital users and digital platforms are more obvious. The ability and effect of digital innovation to transform results need to be improved, and data value sharing should be used to promote common prosperity. The development of the platform economy must take into account both "quantity" and "quality", and setting up a reasonable evaluation system is the premise and foundation. The state should strengthen the construction of digital base facilities, improve policies and regulations for platform economic development, adjust the tax structure of the corresponding digital service tax, standardize platform employment mechanisms, implement social security for emerging occupations and flexible employment groups, and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of all parties. From the perspective of the digital economy, technological development, artificial intelligence, automation should balance the improvement of human productivity with new jobs and income inequality.

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