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# The Interaction and Value Creation between Ambitious Labor and Commercialized Free Labor

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**Abstract:** In the context of the rapid development of the digital economy, the form of labor and work motivation are undergoing profound changes. Traditional career paths are gradually being replaced by more flexible and diverse work models, two concepts that have come to the forefront in this shift, especially driven by the spread of information technology and the Internet, are “Ambition Labor” and “Commercialized Free Labor.” Although these two concepts may seem separate, their intersection in the modern work environment reveals new dimensions of labor and value creation in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Ambition Labor; Ambition Labor; The digital age

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## 1. Introduction

In the boom of the digital economy, two unique but complementary forms of Labor - Ambition Labor and Commercialized Free Labor - are popularizing the way people work and their career paths. Labor refers to the extra effort and input that an individual puts into achieving career goals and personal ambitions, and this labor is often voluntary and driven by intrinsic motivations, such as the pursuit of career development, personal growth, and a sense of accomplishment. In addition, commercial free labor involves individuals creating value for commercial entities or platforms without direct compensation, and this labor is often exploited commercially, such as user-generated content, open source software development, and so on.

With the rise of social media, content creation platforms, and open source communities, more and more individuals are engaged in these fields, doing a lot of independent labor in pursuit of personal career goals and literature. These platforms not only provide individuals with the opportunity to showcase their talents and gain recognition, but also commercialize these free labor, creating huge economic value. However, this new form of labor also brings serious problems and challenges, including the protection of workers' rights, mental health, and work-life balance.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Research status of ambitious labor

The motivation of ambitious labor is mainly derived from the individual's inner career achievement, personal growth and professional recognition. Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in driving individual behavior, especially in highly competitive industries. Studies have shown that ambitious workers usually invest a lot of time and energy in the strong pursuit of career goals and achievements in academia, creative industries and business management (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ambitious labor takes various forms and usually involves individuals going beyond their formal job duties to actively seek additional career development opportunities, such as training, certification, and taking the initiative to take on challenging tasks. The influence of ambitious labor on career development is multifaceted. The positive aspects include career advancement, skill enhancement, and increased career satisfaction, with individuals making significant progress in their careers through continuous effort and self-improvement (Stoeber & Damian, 2016). However, excessive ambition can also have negative effects, such as increased occupational stress, health problems, and work-life balance problems (Demerouti, Bakker, & Leiter, 2014).

### 2.2 Research status of commercialized free labor

Commercial free labor involves individuals creating value for commercial entities or platforms without direct compensation. The concept stems from the study of the digital economy and online culture, especially in the field of User-Generated Content (UGC) and open source software development. Commercialized free labor is widely used in various digital platforms and online communities. Users post articles, videos, and comments on social media, which drive traffic and advertising revenue to the platform. Commercialized free labor has a signifi-

cant impact on economic value creation. First, this form of labor brings a large amount of user-generated content and technical resources to platforms and business entities, which promotes the innovation and development of business models. Second, by leveraging the free labor of users, platforms are able to significantly reduce operating costs while improving the quality of content and services (Fuchs, 2014). However, this form of labor also raises ethical discussions about workers' rights and platform responsibilities. Although workers play an important role in the process of creating economic value, their labor is often not entitled to economic return and security.

### **2.3 Research gaps and opportunities**

The existing researches mainly discuss the motivation and influence of ambitious labor and commercial free labor respectively, but lack systematic analysis of their intersection. Future research could further explore the interplay between the two in the digital economy, in particular how career goals can be achieved through commercialized free labor, and how platforms and organizations can harness the power of ambitious workers to promote innovation and productivity. In addition, it is important to explore the challenges of these two forms of labor in terms of labor rights and ethics. These studies can not only enrich theoretical knowledge, but also provide references for practical management and policy formulation.

## **3. The influence of ambitious labor groups on commercialized free labor**

The progress of modern science and technology, especially the rapid development of information and communication technology, has contributed to the emergence of commercial free labor phenomenon, which has significantly increased the popularity of Internet applications and online services. It is assumed that part of the ambitious labor force will move into commercial free labor. Rapid increases in Internet use and online business adoption, such as digital transformation, are becoming critical in Africa's formal and informal sectors (Mourine.S, Masike, 2022).

### **3.1 Social media content creators: How to create value through hard labor and free labor**

Content creators on social media play a key role in value creation, both in terms of their hard work and unpaid contributions. Specifically, these creators spend a significant amount of time creating, editing, and optimizing their content, often providing high-quality work without pay. For example, content creators maintain personal branding and audience engagement on social media platforms, relying on a large amount of money-less transactional contact labor to build and maintain their influence. Creators attract fans and advertisers through self-branding and the "micro-celebrity" phenomenon, further increasing the market value of individuals and brands (Ngai, 2022). The data shows that the popularity and influence creators build on the platform ultimately help them realize financial gains through brand partnerships and advertising revenue.

### **3.2 Motivation analysis of open source community contributors and its impact on career development**

The motivations of open source community contributors and their impact on career progression is an important area of research. Research shows that the motivations of open source community contributors can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and these motivations have a profound impact on their career development. First, intrinsic motivation such as enthusiasm for technical challenges and the pursuit of self-growth are important drivers for contributors. Many open source contributors are driven by technical challenges and learning opportunities, and these motivations help them to improve themselves in the field of technology. For example, they may want to prove their competence by solving complex technical problems and gain knowledge and skills in the process.

Second, extrinsic motivations such as career development opportunities and networking also play a key role. Open source contributors often build professional networks by participating in open source projects to gain access to potential employment opportunities and career development support (Krogh et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the research shows that the career advancement of open source contributors is significantly influenced by their reputation and influence in the open source community. Active contributors to open source projects tend to get more career opportunities, including job advancement and salary increases.

## **4. Conclusion**

In summary, while research on ambitious labor and commercial free labor has revealed many positive effects on individuals and organizations, existing research has limitations such as sample bias, neglect of long-term effects, quality control, and legal issues. Therefore, future research should focus on a broader sample and long-term effects, and employ diverse research methods to more fully understand the complexity of these two forms of labor.

Future studies of ambitious labor and commercialized free labor need to focus on mental health and work-life balance, performance in diverse industrial and cultural contexts, the impact of technology on labor forms, as well as exploitation and equity, content quality and copyright. Through these research directions, we can more fully understand the impact of these two forms of labor and provide strong support for related policies and practices.

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