



Research Project:

Identifying discrimination on online platforms

Goal of the research project

This research project, supported by the French Ombudsman, aims at identifying discriminatory practices on online platforms. The research team will perform several Randomized Controlled Experiments in order to identify whether ethnic minorities suffer from discrimination in their online activity and if existing, the mechanisms behind these discriminations. This experiment should allow to formulate relevant policy recommendations to limit these behaviours. Four hypothesis will be tested :

1. If existing, the degree of discrimination, will depend on the capacity to access to a secure payment, thus avoiding physical contact and limiting the risk connected with the transaction
2. If existing, the degree of discrimination will depend on the amount of information available in the ad
3. If existing, the degree of discrimination will depend on the characteristics of the territory where the ad is located within the relevant market
4. If existing the degree of information will depend on the market tightness of the relevant market

The experiment will take place on two online platforms:

- Le Bon Coin, which is the leading French website for second hand sales
- BlaBlacar, which is the leading French car sharing platform

The research team will test whether, minorities face more difficulty to sale or purchase goods on Le Bon Coin (less responses and longer time to sell/buy a good) or to book or propose a ride in Blabla car.

The USE of Luminati proxy

To perform the experiment the research team has to post and answer a relatively high number of online ads on both platforms. In order to avoid that this intense activity lead to a ban of the IPs of the team we need to rely on proxy services such as Luminati. The fact that Luminati offers a large number of French IPs is an important point to reduce the risk of banning. The proxy would thus be used in order to post the online ads. The creation of user accounts won't be performed with Luminati's service.

The data collected will be information on the number of answers and response time for the different ads posted. These data will be collected directly with the email sent by these platforms, no scraping will be needed for the data collection process.

Ethical Concerns

The research protocol has been submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of INSEAD.



The LIEPP

The laboratory for interdisciplinary evaluation of public policies (LIEPP) is an "excellence laboratory" (Labex), a title it has been granted by an international scientific jury appointed by the French National Research Agency (ANR). LIEPP aims to play a major role in evaluating various aspects of public policy through an innovative method based on multidisciplinary and the combination of qualitative, comparative, and quantitative analysis. It also aims to develop and disseminate the best academic methods and research in the field of policy evaluation. First within the social sciences: to transform policy evaluation into a proper academic fundamental research field thanks to interdisciplinary collaboration, leading to the best research and publications. Second within the public administration and policy fields: to improve the quality of policy evaluation in France through the incorporation of best methods and practices. LIEPP has become a central hub for social science research on policymaking and evaluation within Sciences Po, at the national level and at the international level. It brings together more than 100 Sciences Po researchers from various disciplines (economics, political science, sociology, but also law and history) and 80 external researchers from more than 60 different institutions of which 33% are abroad.

The defender of rights (Défenseur des droits)

The Defender of Rights is an independent institution responsible for defending individual rights and freedoms in 5 areas defined by law:

- defending the rights of public service users,
- defending children's rights,
- observance of ethics by security personnel (police, gendarmes, private security services, etc.),
- anti-discrimination and the promotion of equality,
- guidance and protection for whistleblowers.

The research Team

The research team is composed of several Researchers:

- The principal Investigator is Morgane Laouennan. Co-director of LIEPP "Discriminations et politiques catégorielles" Research Group. She is a CNRS researcher at the *Centre d'Economie de la Sorbonne*. She is specialized in Labor Economics and Applied Microeconomics.
- Pierre Deschamps is a researcher at SOFI (Stockholm University) and is specialized in Labour Economics and Discrimination.
- Dylan Glover is an assistant professor at INSEAD and is specialized in Labour economics and Discrimination.
- Xavier Lambin is an assistant professor at Grenoble School of Management and is specialized in online and energy economics.
- Guillaume Chapelle is assistant professor at THEMA, CY Cergy Paris Université and is specialized in Urban economics and public policy evaluation.
- Paul Grisola is a research assistant in charge of the automation process in the project
- Magloire Seshie is a research assistant in charge of the data analysis