
The Polish Journal of Economics

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The Sharing Economy and the Behaviour of Young Polish Singles: The Case of BlaBlaCar

Abstract: This article is a research exercise. The purpose of the study is to provide an insight into what young singles know about the sharing economy and what their key motives are for using the BlaBlaCar platform, the most popular sharing economy venture for passenger transport. In the theoretical part of the text, based on a critical analysis of the literature, the concept and essence of the sharing economy are explained, the BlaBlaCar transport service is characterised as a flagship example of the sharing economy, and an attempt is made to explain the terms “single” and “young single”. The empirical section focuses on the research conceptualisation and a description of the research sample and its characteristics. Subsequently, following the author’s own research, the knowledge of young singles about the sharing economy is analysed, and the most important motives encouraging them to use the BlaBlaCar platform are discussed. The analysis is based on a survey questionnaire administered from May 1 to July 30, 2018 in a sample of 826 young singles who made independent decisions in the market. The survey shows that young singles demonstrated fairly good knowledge of sharing economy ventures and the most popular car sharing websites. However, they are confused about the rich terminology associated with collaborative platforms and often misunderstand the sharing economy, identifying it with the access economy, gift economy or on-demand economy. BlaBlaCar is undoubtedly one of the most popular examples of the practical application of sharing economy fundamentals. The survey reveals that almost three-fifths of respondents use the BlaBlaCar platform. Its active participants are most often men in the 18–23 age group, with a bachelor’s or engineering degree, earning a monthly income not exceeding PLN 3,000, and living in cities with over 500,000 inhabitants. Lower travel costs, better travel conditions, the possibility of reaching a destination quickly and directly and environmental consider-

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ations proved to be the most important motives for the respondents to use BlaBlaCar. In turn, social relations that are established among the users of websites such as BlaBlaCar.pl are a kind of hybrid of relations developed in direct interaction during shared rides and those built up in cyberspace.

Keywords: sharing economy, BlaBlaCar sharing platform, young singles

JEL classification codes: D11, D23, M13, O10, O31

Article submitted June 11, 2020, revision received September 25, 2020,
accepted for publication October 6, 2020.

Gospodarka współdzielenia a zachowania polskich młodych singli: przypadek BlaBlaCar

Streszczenie: Artykuł ma charakter badawczy. Celem opracowania jest uchwycenie wiedzy posiadanej przez młodych singli na temat gospodarki współdzielenia oraz kluczowych motywów skłaniających ten segment konsumentów do korzystania z serwisu BlaBlaCar jako najpopularniejszego przedsięwzięcia *sharing economy* w zakresie transportu osobowego. W części teoretycznej tekstu, na podstawie krytycznej analizy literatury, wyjaśniono pojęcie i istotę gospodarki współdzielenia, scharakteryzowano usługę transportową BlaBlaCar będącą jej sztandarowym przykładem oraz podjęto się próby wyjaśnienia pojęć „singiel” i „młody singiel”. W części empirycznej artykułu skoncentrowano się na konceptualizacji badań oraz opisie próby badawczej i jej cechach charakterystycznych. Następnie na podstawie badań własnych przeanalizowano wiedzę młodych singli na temat *sharing economy* oraz omówiono najistotniejsze motywy zachęcające ich do korzystania z serwisu BlaBlaCar. Podstawą analizy jest kwestionariusz ankiety przeprowadzonej w okresie od 1 maja do 30 lipca 2018 roku na próbie 826 młodych singli, którzy podejmowali suwerenne decyzje na rynku. Z przeprowadzonego badania wynika, że młodzi single wykazali się w miarę dobrą znajomością przedsięwzięć *sharing economy* i najpopularniejszych serwisów internetowych w zakresie współdzielenia pojazdów, jednak gubili się w bogatej terminologii związanej z platformami współpracy i często nieprawidłowo pojmowali gospodarkę współdzielenia, utożsamiając ją z gospodarką dostępu, gospodarką daru czy gospodarką na żądanie. BlaBlaCar to niewątpliwie jeden z najpopularniejszych przykładów zastosowania fundamentów gospodarki współdzielenia w praktyce. Z przeprowadzonego badania wynika, że prawie 3/5 ankietowanych korzysta z serwisu BlaBlaCar. Aktywnymi uczestnikami wspomnianej platformy wymiany są najczęściej mężczyźni z grupy wiekowej 18–23 lata, legitymujący się wykształceniem licencjackim lub inżynierskim, dysponujący miesięcznym dochodem nieprzekraczającym 3 tys. PLN i zamieszkujący miasta powyżej 500 tys. mieszkańców. Najważniejszymi motywami skłaniającymi badanych do korzystania z BlaBlaCar okazały się niższe koszty podróży, lepsze warunki podróżowania, możliwość szybkiego i bezpośredniego dojazdu do miejsca docelowego oraz względy ekologiczne. Z kolei relacje społeczne, jakie nawiązują się między użytkownikami serwisów typu BlaBlaCar.pl, stanowią swoistą hybrydę relacji powstających w bezpośredniej interakcji w czasie wspólnych przejazdów oraz tych, które powstają w cyberprzestrzeni.

Słowa kluczowe: gospodarka współdzielenia, platforma wymiany BlaBlaCar, młodzi single

Kod klasyfikacji JEL: D11, D23, M13, O10, O31

Artykuł złożony 11 czerwca 2020 r., w wersji poprawionej nadesłany 25 września 2020 r.,
zaakceptowany 6 października 2020 r.

Introduction

Globalisation processes and the digital revolution, in particular the inclusive character of new technologies, have contributed to significant changes in the organisation and forms of transactions that are not strictly based on the market mechanism but on direct contacts and interpersonal relations. According to D. Tapscott and A.D. Williams [2007], as a new network and a new generation of users clash with the forces of globalisation, we enter a world where crisscrossing waves of change and innovation lead to the overthrow of common judgements about the economy, and the natural human propensity to communicate and to be entrepreneurial is combined with increasing access to the internet and a growing popularity of new, user-friendly tools enabling joint action.

One of the new ideas that began to be thoroughly analysed at the turn of the 21st century is the sharing economy. The concept is directly related to the spread of the internet, the development of modern technology and the popularity of platforms and applications enabling the sharing of goods and services. The sharing economy seems to be a trend that allows for reducing the problem of unlimited human needs in the face of scarce resources. As the quantity of purchased goods increases, their utility for the consumer decreases, which may result in the underutilisation or extreme wastage of such goods. The extent of this process may be limited by creating areas of better social interaction and platforms for the exchange of information where demand can match supply. The new phenomena accompanying the “trend of sharing” have become a subject of intense discussion due to the market success of companies such as Airbnb or BlaBlaCar [Martin, 2016]. The emergence of new players offering alternative forms of travel via technology platforms in the market may cause uncertainty among enterprises that provide their professional services in this area. For this reason, what has been noticed is a significant impact of sharing on the economy and related consequences. This impact is reflected, *inter alia*, in the redefinition of the hitherto way of life or operation of business [Schor, Fitzmaurice, 2015; Strähle, Erhardt, 2017]. The development of the sharing economy is indirectly linked to what has become known as the singlisation of the population. Currently, living alone and being unmarried, notably among young people, is taking on positive connotations, becoming a symbol of the idea of freedom, independence and self-sufficiency, and reflecting a focus on personal fulfilment. The specific nature of young singles’ lifestyle and activity in professional, social, societal and cultural life directly affects their consumer decisions, including those prompted by the sharing economy idea.

The purpose of this study is to provide an insight into what young singles know about the sharing economy and what their key motives are for using BlaBlaCar as the most popular sharing economy venture for car transport. With this in mind, three research hypotheses were put forward:

H₁: The sharing economy is misunderstood by most young singles, who often identify it with other notions related to collaborative economy platforms such as the access economy, the gift economy and the on-demand economy.

H₂: Blablacar.pl is the most popular website in Poland as regards ride sharing among young singles.

H₃: Savings, convenience and flexibility are the key motives for young singles to use BlaBlaCar.

The study consists of two parts: theoretical and empirical. In the first one, based on a critical analysis of the literature, the concept and essence of the sharing economy are explained. The BlaBlaCar transport service is then characterised as a flagship example of the sharing economy, and an attempt is made to explain the terms “single” and “young single”. The empirical section focuses on the research conceptualisation and a description of the research sample and its characteristics. Subsequently, following the author’s own research, the knowledge of young singles about the essential meaning of the sharing economy is analysed and the most important motives encouraging them to use BlaBlaCar are discussed thereafter. A summary of considerations and visions of sharing economy development with reference to ride sharing conclude this article.

The sharing economy as a new economic model – concept and essence

Attempts made hitherto by researchers in economic sciences to interpret sharing-related phenomena have not led to a better understanding of these issues. On the contrary, numerous proposals in this respect are causing a kind of interpretative chaos, which can be a major obstacle to their proper comprehension by people who are interested in learning about but also studying these phenomena.

The sharing economy is a component of a larger construct called the collaborative economy¹. This involves a shift away from transactions primarily based on large, organised market structures to dispersed networks, correlated individuals and communities that rely on mutual provision of services, shared use, co-creation, shared purchase or sharing [Rifkin, 2014; Russel, 2016]. Nevertheless, the sharing economy is developing on the basis of both a hard market mechanism (economic motivation – profit maximisation/cost minimisation)² and moral and ethical factors. Research conducted by L. Böcker and

¹ The collaborative economy can be defined as a set of resource circulation patterns that enable consumers to both receive and provide, temporarily or permanently, various resources or services through immediate interaction with other consumers or through intermediaries [Menor-Campos, Baños García-Moreno, López-Guzmán, Hidalgo-Fernández, 2019]. The collaborative economy affects both people’s mentality and their way of thinking, their social and professional relationships, and some economic sectors such as accommodation and transportation.

² The issue of profit generation and thus the emergence of money as a means of exchange is not indifferent to social relations, as pointed out by D. Graeber in a well-documented anthropological work entitled *Debt: The First 5000 Years* [2011]. This argument should be taken into account when deciding whether “sharing” may involve an intentional pursuit of money. A positive answer to this question is reminiscent of the axiom of money neutrality characteristic of the

T. Meelen [2017] shows that the motivation to engage in the sharing economy differs depending on the object of sharing and socio-demographic differences among people. Those most frequently motivated by profit are consumers and bidders sharing their housing space. In turn, the wish to build relationships and social sensitivity are characteristic of meal sharing individuals. On the other hand, sustainable development becomes a motivation for consumers and bidders travelling together.

The sharing economy covers four elementary areas: collaborative consumption, collaborative production, collaborative finance, and collaborative education [Botsman, 2016] (Table 1).

Table 1. Selected sharing trends from the historical perspective

Sharing trend	Author	Year
Collaborative consumption	M. Felson and J.L. Spaeth	1978
Share economy	M.L. Weitzman	1984
Sharing economy	L. Lessig	2008
Mesh economy	L. Gansky	2010
Peer-to-peer economy	J. Silver	2010
Access economy	J. Blaisdell	2011
New approach to access economy	G.M. Eckhardt and F. Bardhi	2015
On-demand economy	J. Wortham	2012
Gig economy	V. De Stefano	2015
Gift economy	D. Chael	2015

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Wardak, Zalega [2013]; Rostek, Zalega [2015]; Zgiep [2014]; Botsman [2017].

The aforementioned notions concerning the economy of collaborative platforms remain separate and, despite numerous similarities, the names of the presented concepts cannot be considered synonymous. In addition, differences between individual notions result from the fact that they emphasise various elements of a particular system, e.g. the collaborative economy focuses on entities, the access economy on coverage, and the sharing economy on behaviour.

The sharing economy, also known as the collaborative economy, is an ambiguous term. It was introduced in 1978 by M. Felson and J.L. Spaeth in *Community Structure and Collaborative Consumption: A Routine Activity Approach*, where the issues of sharing were raised for the first time. The development of the sharing economy is catalysed by the internet, applications, P2P³

subjective-marginalist school in economics that adopts a demand approach but has little to say about sharing.

³ P2P, or peer-to-peer, is a computer network that allows its users to communicate on an equal footing. Anyone using this type of online application can initiate a connection at any time. The P2P structure is fluxional, i.e. it depends on the number of logged-in people and does not have a central server [www.techopedia.com/ definition/25777/peer-to-peer-network-p2p-network].

(peer-to-peer) file sharing, freeware and social networking sites enabling the generation of bonds and the building of a diverse mosaic of contacts, shared values, interests and goals. One of the first to use the concept was L. Lessig, a professor of law at Harvard Law School, a well-known supporter of a copyright reform and a founder of Creative Commons. The sharing economy is considered the opposite of the so-called Business-As-Usual (BAU) economy meaning the previous economy dominated by attachment to economic growth [Schor et al., 2014]. The related literature contains a whole range of definitions referring to various concepts within the “sharing trend”. E.W. Koopman et al. [2015] claim that the lack of a uniform definition of the sharing economy results from a rapid increase in the popularity of this notion among today’s consumers. According to R. Belk [2014: 1596], the sharing economy involves making our resources available to others and receiving resources that we do not own, with a clear distinction between sharing, where ownership rights are transferred, and making a particular resource available for a predetermined period of time. L. Richardson [2015: 121] indicates that the sharing economy results from an excess of a given good and a readiness to relinquish it, which may be motivated by a desire to reap profit (income argument) or reluctance to waste resources (savings argument). J.B. Schor, E.T. Walker, C.W. Lee, P. Parigi and K. Cook [2015: 13] perceive this phenomenon as the first step towards a shift away from the neoliberal market and a firm response to hyper-consumption. In turn, J. Hamari, M. Sjöklint and A. Ukkonen [2015] believe that the sharing economy is a form of activity founded on peer-to-peer (P2P) solutions involving making available, receiving and sharing access to goods and services, coordinated through online platforms based on user communities. According to D. Dredge and S. Gyimothy [2015], the sharing economy is a socio-economic system the core of which is sharing and collaboration. It covers co-creation, production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services by various people and organisations. G. Petropoulos [2017] argues, however, that the sharing economy involves matching users who want to share goods and services with each other via the internet. By using an intermediary platform, the supply side (having an excess of any resource) meets the demand side. As claimed by J. Owyang [2015], the sharing economy is an economic model in which commonly available technologies enable people to obtain what they need from each other. C. Codagnone and B. Martens [2016] argue that the sharing economy rests on some kind of compromise and increased involvement of parties to the transaction. Users give something from themselves and receive something in return. They selflessly share the surplus of their resource, thereby satisfying a part of market demand. On the other hand, OviShare defines the sharing economy as an initiative relying on horizontal networks and community involvement, based on the energy and trust of communities as opposed to centralised institutions, blurring the boundaries between the producer and the consumer, where interactions take place via online networks, P2P platforms and shared spaces [De Grafe, 2016]. The quoted definitions of the sharing economy emphasise various issues such as

paid and unpaid pecuniary or non-pecuniary exchange, free-of-charge or paid activities covering tangible and intangible assets/resources and various perspectives (micro, macro and meso). Furthermore, they highlight miscellaneous aspects (e.g. digital platforms, technologies, access, sharing, collaboration) and consider different types of business models – B2C (business-to-consumer), B2B (business-to-business) and P2P (peer-to-peer) [Schor, 2014]. This state of affairs results in the related literature blurring the boundaries between the sharing economy and other forms of access to goods and services [Cohen, Kietzmann, 2014; Palos-Sanchez, Correia, 2018]. Although closely related, these phenomena cannot be identified with the sharing economy.

There are many supporters of the view that the sharing economy is basically nothing new. They adduce the argument that people have always shared, and that an increased popularity of this concept is solely the result of marketing activities by large corporations. The author of this study is also of the opinion that the sharing economy is not a completely new idea because the sharing of goods and mutual help are practices that have long been commonly followed by family members and immediate neighbours, with the difference that this practice has gained a dimension of behaviours typical of small communities in the last two decades, thereby having been upgraded to an idea that allows significant changes to be made in social awareness. Considering the currently observed characteristics of the sharing economy, however, it can be seen that it is not just sharing. R. Belk [2014] points to a significant division between sharing in and sharing out. The first phenomenon (inclusive act) concerns primarily a group of close friends and family (it was already studied in the 1970 s by M. Felson and J. Spaeth) whereas the second one goes beyond this framework and involves sharing among strangers. The lack of unanimity about the classification of various forms of human activity implies that the sharing economy is understood in narrow and broad terms. The sharing economy in the strict sense is identified with making available unused or partly used resources as part of shared consumption by means of P2P platforms, where the sharing of resources is free of charge or based on cost sharing (e.g. BlaBlaCar, Couchsurfing, JadeZabiore, iParkomat, and Dog.Vacay.com). Trust among exchange-sharing participants plays an important role in the sharing economy in the strict sense. Research conducted by IBRIS [PwC, 2016: 2] reveals that only 23% of respondents are of the opinion that most people can be trusted, almost three-quarters think that it is necessary to be careful while dealing with others, and 3% cannot give a definite answer. The level of trust within individual generations is also interesting⁴. Millennials are much more

⁴ Baby boomers denote people born between 1945 and 1964. Members of this generation grew up in a period of intense economic and social transformations. They are generally characterised by a high stability of behaviour, recognition of authorities, patience and moderate language. Baby boomers are also prone to accept the rules imposed by organisations. They usually need support in the process of organisational change, along with recognition and appreciation, yet what they consider most important is the good of the employer and what they can offer. This

distrustful of others (only 20.3% declare trust in most people) than Generation X (30.8% of its representatives trust the majority of people) and from the point of view of their functioning in the sharing economy, they seem to have a more insular attitude towards the new reality and towards politics and religion. It is also a generation of people who are reluctant to marry (26% in 2014, compared to 36% for Generation X, 48% for baby boomers, and 65% for silent baby boomers). This generation also has a larger social circle (250 friends on average) than previous generations, with 200 for Generation X and 50–98 for baby boomers. The ability to share their image (popular selfie) is also clearly higher in this generation – almost three-fifths declare sharing their selfies, compared with 25% for Generation X and 5%–9% for and baby boomers [<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/07/6-new-findings-about-millennials>].

In a broader sense, the sharing economy is associated with making resources available not only on the basis of shared consumption and includes more relationship models than just P2P (e.g. C2C, B2C), while also emphasising thrift and convenience [Denning, 2014]. The sharing economy in a broad sense includes, among others, car sharing, co-housing, and co-working. In other words, the sharing economy so construed is the equivalent of the access economy, which does not take into account, *inter alia*, shared purchase, re-lending, resale or collaborative production (e.g. Airbnb, Washio). According to G.M. Eckhardt and F. Bardhi [2015], the activities of companies whose business models rely on sharing more and more often go beyond the framework of the classical sharing economy and are perceived as the so-called access economy, i.e. the economy of access to a product or service. This means that various online platforms such as Uber, Airbnb and Cabify and other websites that are service providers and that were initially classified under the C2C model should be included in the B2C model (i.e. links: company – platform operator – customer), which – according to the definition and classification proposed by

generation may be reluctant towards their peers, prioritising the process rather than the result. Generation X comprises those born in 1965–1979. Its representatives care for the quality of private and professional life simultaneously. They are independent in their decision making and rather active professionally and socially. Their humility and respect for work make them conscientious employees who can appreciate what they have. Members of this generation need a sense of meaningfulness to their actions but are at the same time cooperative. Unlike the baby boomers, they are result-oriented, not process-driven. Although they are tech-savvy, use computers and smartphones, they most trust face-to-face contacts. Also, they tend to be sceptical and pessimistic. They are also distrustful of their bosses and treat a mistake as a personal failure. Generation Y, called Millennials (those born between 1980 and 1999), and Generation Z (those born after 1999) primarily communicate through social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and their purchase decisions are determined by their peers' opinions posted on online forums. Another characteristic of this group is impulse buying and a large share of online transactions. Members of Generation Y excel at modern technologies and feel good in virtual communities. They expect diverse products, competitive prices, new experiences and pleasure as well as products and services tailored to their individual needs and preferences. Generation Z, on the other hand, is the youngest group of consumers in the market that is connected, computerised, always clicking, community-oriented, and content-centric. They use new technologies even more than Generation Y. More in: Cohen [2009: 57–59] and Williams & Page [2011: 1–17].

R. Botsman and R. Rogers [2011] – excludes them from the category of the classically understood sharing economy.

In the document *A European Agenda for the Collaborative Economy*, the sharing economy refers to business models where activities are facilitated by collaborative platforms that create an open marketplace for the temporary usage of goods or services often provided by private individuals. Sharing economy transactions generally do not involve a change of ownership and can be carried out for profit or not-for-profit [EC, 2016]. Within the sharing economy, three groups of participants are distinguished [Sundararajan, 2014]:

- 1) service providers who share resources, time or skills; these can be private individuals offering services on an occasional basis or professional service providers,
- 2) private individuals and business operators being users of services,
- 3) intermediaries that service transactions and match service providers with users via online platforms.

Regardless of its fuzzy construct, the sharing economy is understood by most researchers as a socio-economic model based on grassroots initiatives of individuals (P2P relations) that regard underused resources without transferring ownership rights and rely on sharing via technology platforms, for a fee or free of charge [Feelländer et al., 2015; Sundararajan, 2016; Signorelli, 2017]. Sharing is the opposite of “ownership”, which strongly emphasises the attitude of market exchange participants, while forming the foundation of the sharing economy. It can therefore be concluded that the approach whereby access to goods is better than their possession is a visible consequence of opposition to hyperconsumption and an attempt to move towards consumption minimisation. Undoubtedly, growing criticism of hitherto forms of consumption has contributed to the perception of excessive accumulation of goods as a significant threat not only to the economic situation of the individual but also to other people and the state of the environment. Thus, the sharing economy in its narrow and broad sense is a subordinate concept in relation to the collaborative economy.

Currently, the sharing economy is not only a subject of scientific discussion but has also become an element of everyday life, and even the core component of a particular life attitude. Research conducted by PwC [2016] shows that more than four-fifths of respondents said it was more profitable for them to use other people’s goods and services than to own them. Over 43% of respondents regard ownership of resources as an unnecessary burden on their budget and 57% see the idea of access to resources as an attractive alternative to the idea of ownership. As argued by R. Botsman, the best evidence that the sharing economy is now a consolidated idea rather than just a temporary economic trend used by social media, and that it is deeply rooted in culture and social awareness, lies in the fact that the notion of the sharing economy was included in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2015⁵ [Botsman, 2017].

⁵ According to that dictionary, the sharing economy is an economic system in which private individuals share assets or services, either free of charge or for a fee, usually by means of the internet.

The sharing economy has changed consolidated perceptions and existing behavioural patterns of individuals that were generally regarded as dangerous. Using technology platforms, people now decide to travel with strangers (BlaBlaCar) or invite complete strangers to their flats/houses (Airbnb, Couch-Surfing). Observations of these processes in business practice have stimulated the interest of numerous researchers. Nonetheless, in the related literature, the sharing economy remains a poorly explored area that requires further research [Sinclair, 2016]. At the same time, its development in some economic sectors is much faster than in others. A good example is the tourism services sector, where technology platforms such as Airbnb, Couchsurfing and BlaBlaCar can be distinguished. Without a doubt, the growing popularity of shared use and sharing of resources is reflected in the dynamic growth of the entire sharing economy market and clearly translates into market values. In 2015, the value of sharing economy transactions in Europe was EUR 28 billion, developing most dynamically in France and the UK [Vaughan, Daverio, 2018]. PwC reports from 2013–2016 testify to its unwavering growth and increasing public acceptance. PwC economic forecasts [2015] predict that the value of transactions generated by the sharing economy in 2025 on the European continent alone will reach EUR 570 billion. In turn, according to Statista reports, the value of the global sharing economy market is expected to increase from USD 19.5 billion in 2018 to USD 330 billion in 2025 in areas such as transport, tourism, hospitality and financial services [Biedrzycki, 2019].

The sharing economy is mainly stimulated by people born between 1980 and 1999, who are also referred to as Generation Y, and those born after 1999, representing Generation Z. It has been pointed out that representatives of these two generations are playing and will play a crucial role in the development of P2P sharing services in the next decade. Eurobarometer research [2016] shows that 52% of Europeans have heard about sharing economy platforms, 17% have used them, and among those users, one in three has also been a supplier of goods and services [*Flash Eurobarometer 438. Report...*, 2016: 5]. In turn, research conducted by IBRIS [PwC, 2016: 4, 9] reveals that two-fifths of adult Poles have heard about platforms where private individuals provide services for a fee and one in four actively uses them. At the same time, respondents say that the main advantages of such platforms include an affordable price (54% of responses), an opportunity to meet interesting people (30%), and convenience (21%). Moreover, data from the ABR SESTA Market Research Institute on the state of collaborative economy in Poland indicate that over 91% of Polish internet users recognise at least one sharing economy service but their awareness of being part of this “community” is quite low [Sokołowski et al., 2016: 10]. According to a report by the French Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations, households participating in the sharing economy are able to save up to 7% of their yearly expenses and waste generation can be reduced by up to 20% [<https://www.good.is/infographics/sharing-is-contagious-the-rise-of-collaborative-consumption>]. This clearly depicts the strength of this economy, which creates a new

space for the way transactions are carried out. Clearly, the sharing economy can contribute to sustainable economic growth by raising the quality of people's lives by means of existing resources and promotion of values other than excessive consumerism [Bonciu, Bâlgăr, 2016: 42].

Although the areas of sharing economy development in the world and in Poland overlap, local initiatives competing with global platforms can be spotted. Examples include JadeZabiore (shared car rides – local competitor to BlaBlaCar or Lyft), SirLocal (hiring a specialist – competitor to TaskRabbit) or PolakPotrafi (a crowdfunding platform – competitor to Kickstarter). The emergence of these platforms is associated with a steady increase in the popularity of the sharing economy among Polish consumers, especially young people, despite its relatively limited scope (in 2018, Poland ranked 92 among 213 surveyed countries in terms of the popularity of the sharing economy) [<https://timbro.se/ekonomi/timbros-sharing-economy-index/>].

The basic determinants of the scale of sharing and its popularity in various areas of the economy include new technologies (the spread of the internet, social media and smartphone applications), social factors (social trust, the need to share resources with others, “servitisation” of the economy, and the development of alternative consumption trends such as cocooning, conscious consumption, collaborative consumption, and sustainable consumption), environmental factors (increased environmental awareness and recycling), and political factors (European Union policy on sustainable development and the development of environmental, anarchist and consumer movements).

The sharing economy and car transport

Until recently, the term “transport” was commonly used, whereas today the notion of “mobility” is increasingly being invoked in the theory of social sciences. Why? Because mobility is a broader concept that takes into account not only the means of transport but primarily the approach to moving around. How we travel is less important – what matters is how to get from point A to point B smoothly, conveniently and cost-efficiently.

The understanding of mobility derived from the theory of social sciences should be extended to include its interpretation from the point of view of transport. In this context, mobility is defined as the movement of people and things in space by means of transport, which is a prerequisite for sustainable development, or as people's travel attitudes and behaviours that determine demand for certain means of transport, i.e. travel modes. This means that mobility is understood as an element of travellers' activity in order to satisfy their transport needs. This term is construed as the so-called travel behaviours that are defined as all the views, opinions and beliefs related to the intention to travel over a distance. In order to meet transport needs, many options are made available for all kinds of destinations, with a variety of motivations, such as work, study, and leisure, taken into account. Simultaneously, the destination

and travel mode can be selected thanks to an efficient transport network which, taking into account the time, convenience and cost of travel, connects individual sources and destinations. It is up to a (mobile) traveller to choose the destinations, means of transport, route and time of travel.

Car transport is one of the fastest growing travel modes. It offers passenger transport methods alternative to public transportation and contributes to the dynamic development of the sharing economy, in both C2C and B2C relations. The sharing economy in the field of car transport can take three basic forms [Kozłak, Pawłowska, 2017]:

- 1) providing private car transport services (e.g. Uber, Lyft),
- 2) sharing the space in a car as part of a journey that the driver intends to make (e.g. BlaBlaCar, Zimride),
- 3) sharing a car as such – car sharing in the following forms:
 - publicly available, when an institution or company provides a group of users with a fleet of vehicles for shared use,
 - sharing private cars via an online platform.

Short-distance transport usually refers to ride sharing within a city or suburban areas. Such transport may relate to a situation when a group of people regularly travels together, usually to work, to the university or to school, and use a car of another member of the group (carpooling)⁶ every day. Another option is to share a car with others by renting it for a limited period of time (e.g. Zipcar). For short-distance trips, a private car with a driver can be ordered via an available application, and this can be treated as a good alternative to taxis (e.g. Uber and Lyft). In the case of transport on longer routes between different cities, those interested look for other people planning to travel to the same destination in order to reduce travel costs; reach the destination directly; enjoy better travel conditions; shorter travel time—if there are separate transit lanes on the route, so-called High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes intended for cars transporting more passengers; meet other people; and benefit the natural environment by reducing the number of vehicles on the roads, especially during morning and afternoon peaks. Although fee-based, shared rides are also targeted at establishing new social ties and helping people with limited access to cars (e.g. having no driving licence). The main communication channels for people announcing a journey and those looking for transport are dedicated websites that have made it possible to travel in this way on a larger scale.

⁶ Carpooling involves the vehicle owner offering seats to other people, which brings the benefits of saving time and costs to both parties. This concept can materialise in many variants such as: 1) group daily commuting (e.g. to school – one parent transporting several children to school, so-called schoolpool, and group transport to the airport, so-called airpool, train station, educational institution or work); 2) group, periodically regular trips, and 3) group occasional trips (e.g. holidays, concerts, football matches, so-called eventpool, or trips targeted at exploring other countries by car with others, so-called carVoyage).

BlaBlaCar as an example of the sharing economy

BlaBlaCar is an international company whose core business involves matching drivers who have empty seats in their cars with passengers who want to travel to the same destination. Passengers contact drivers through a website and an application. The main assumption of BlaBlaCar is that passengers pay some of the fuel costs, thus offering drivers the possibility of travelling economically along a route that they intended to travel anyway with or without passengers.

Currently, BlaBlaCar is the largest social network based on the idea of ride sharing that is available in 19 European countries: France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Italy, Poland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal, Russia, Turkey, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Ukraine. BlaBlaCar's entry into the Indian, Mexican and Brazilian markets in 2015 strengthened its position as the world's largest community of long-distance journeys. In 2019, the BlaBlaCar site attracted a community of almost 70 million in 22 countries, including over 25 million in Central and Eastern Europe, including 4 million in Poland. BlaBlaCar started operating in Poland in November 2012 and in just a few months became the largest network of this type in the country. In 2018, BlaBlaCar members saved over 675,000 tonnes of oil equivalent, 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, and over 70 million rides were made available globally [<https://blog.blablacar.pl/newsroom/news/blablacar-osiaga-rentownosc-i-wykazuje-40-wzrostu-aktywnosci>].

Despite the constant emergence of new websites and applications enabling ride sharing, carpooling is not as popular in Poland as it is in France, Germany, the Netherlands or Portugal. Mostly young people, both studying and working, are interested in it. They typically travel in this way several times a month. In order to attract more customers, BlaBlaCar consciously develops its search engine so that users, notably from smaller towns and suburbs, who have difficult access to public transport (bus/coach and rail) can find convenient transport connections. To this end, in 2017, BlaBlaCar, after analysing data from many rides, expanded the system with ride sharing points on the map that are meeting places convenient for drivers and passengers. These are usually located along or near the most popular routes travelled by drivers using the website. Most of these points can be reached by public transport and drivers can park there comfortably and safely. There are already over 50,000 such meeting points in Poland. Moreover, BlaBlaCar has developed its search engine so that passengers can easily find journeys in their immediate vicinity. Additionally, in 2019, BlaBlaCar launched an outdoor campaign in several Polish cities with limited transport options. The campaign involves putting up stickers on city buses or shop windows with information about the number of BlaBlaCar drivers who travel through the area daily and can pick up passengers.

However, shared car rides are nothing new because they first appeared as an alternative to car ownership in the 1940s in the United States, with the

aim of reducing civilian consumption of then rationed petrol. The idea was revived during the oil crisis in the 1970 s. As a result of an oil shock unleashed by OPEC countries after the outbreak of an Israeli-Arab war, petrol prices in the United States increased fourfold in a few months, from 25 cents to over a dollar per gallon. The American Automobile Association reported that 20% of petrol stations were out of fuel for over a week. A number of regulations were introduced to reduce oil consumption, including a speed limit of 55 miles per hour [Morawski, 2007]. Ride sharing was the only way to reduce transport costs in the absence of alternatives such as efficient public transport [Ferguson, 1997]. In Poland, ride sharing was promoted in the 1970 s as part of the “Give Your Neighbour a Ride” social campaign. It was designed to encourage car owners to spread the idea of ride sharing with friends. Cars used to be rare goods; therefore, the idea was promoted in order to facilitate journeys for people who did not have their own car and used public transport. Today, the primary aim is to reduce road traffic congestion and travel costs while taking into account environmental considerations (mainly to decrease air pollution with carbon dioxide from car exhaust gases).

Who are singles? An attempt to define the notion

The “singlisation” of the population is becoming ever more common. Singlehood is a sign of independence rather than a cause for shame; it offers an opportunity to build diverse relationships and acquaintances as opposed to a sole focus on the family. There is, therefore, a chance of choice contrasting with the old, uniform pattern. Changes in mentality, a growing reluctance among young people to marry and start their own families, the cult of independence, and a drive to build one’s own social and professional position make up the socio-cultural landscape of the 21st century.

The diversity of singles makes researchers redefine them for their purposes, referring to variables such as age, marital status, and economic independence. However, social sciences lack a uniform conceptual framework for singlehood. The adoption of legal, economic and lifestyle-related criteria describing the category of singles should be considered necessary, yet insufficient.

The first attempts to define singlehood scientifically were made in the 1930 s in American literature [Hillis, 1936]. The classic American definition of a “single” assumes that it is a person who is not married or in an informal heterosexual or homosexual relationship [Stein, 1981]. In English, “single” usually refers to all unmarried people, that is spinsters, bachelors, the divorced, widows and widowers [Stein, 1976]. Due to an increased number of cohabitation relationships in the Western world, people in permanent informal relationships have been recently excluded from the category of singles [Chambers-Schiller, 1999: 678]. It is controversial to consider people living alone who have informal partners in LAT (living apart together) relationships as singles [Hertel et al., 2007]. In addition, singlehood is defined

as a specific lifestyle covering diet, way of spending free time and, above all, the worldview [Bauereiss, Bayer, 1995: 35–60]. L. Rosenmayr and F. Kolland [1997: 256–287] also emphasise that the notion of being single encompasses not only the physical form of living alone but also a lifestyle in which individual values and relationship patterns materialise. The term “single” is used in English in a narrower sense, referring to people following a lifestyle devoid of any family responsibilities and resulting from a conscious choice; under this approach, singles do not include old bachelors and spinsters who are unsuccessfully looking for life partners [Watters, 2003]. German literature most commonly defines a single as a person who lives without a lasting, deep relationship in a single-person household, regardless of the voluntary or enforced nature of such a lifestyle [Deml, 2009]. In Polish, in turn, given that the word “single” has been imported, it has acquired cultural connotations and refers only to some people living alone. Living alone is not only considered as an alternative form of married and family life but as a thought-out and ultimate life project for a growing group of women and men. This subcategory is formed by inhabitants of large cities who are educated and earn wages guaranteeing economic independence and who are at an age enabling intense, both professional and social, activity and most often (however, this is not a *sine qua non* condition) live in single-person households.

In this article, young singles will be understood as adults aged from 18 to 34 who live alone by choice (in a single-person household or a separate flat), have no parental responsibilities, are economically independent, most often have a higher or secondary education, a large group of friends and acquaintances, and are strongly focused on themselves [Zalega, 2019]. In addition, this study assumes that singles cannot remain in informal LAT (living apart together) or distant relationships and their possible romantic relationships cannot be lasting⁷. This definition thus excludes those who are in a permanent heterosexual or homosexual relationship and narrows the group of singles, allowing research uniformity.

Research conceptualisation

The tool used to conduct the research was the author’s original questionnaire comprising 35 closed-ended questions regarding the consumer behaviour of young Polish singles. The survey was carried out from May 1 to July 30, 2018. The difficulty lay in offering an appropriate definition of the study subject because the “young single” category is not clearly specified in the literature. In this article, those between 18 and 34 are considered to be young singles. The upper age limit, that is 34 years, is regarded as the end of youth in the Polish literature. The participants were recruited via the “ankieta.pl”

⁷ This definition of a “young single” was presented to people participating in the survey before they filled in the survey questionnaire.

website and social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Messenger, and e-mail. In order to take part in the survey, those interested had to visit a specific website containing the survey questionnaire. It was also distributed across special forums, university and private school fanpages. In accordance with the research assumptions, the sample included only persons aged 18–34, members of Generations Y and Z, who lived alone by choice and took independent purchase decisions in the market. In order to select the sample, the selective quota sampling procedure was employed. The characteristics (quotas) covered by the research were gender and age⁸. During data processing, information from respondents was eliminated if the questionnaires were incomplete or incorrect (15 instances). From among 841 initial questionnaires, 826 were considered eligible, representing 98.21% of the total sample. Further, they were coded, and the data set thus created was processed by a statistical package. For the statistical analysis of the data, the statistical package SPSS, version 23, was used. Relationships between selected factors characterising young singles and their behaviour consistent with the sharing economy idea were examined by means of Pearson's correlation test and Spearman's rho correlation coefficient. The results were considered statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$.

Selection and characteristics of the research sample

“Young singles” were chosen for the research in view of their growing importance and decision-making power in today's societies, and because, as market participants, they respond to the changing environment, globalisation and its impact on consumption, lifestyle and emerging new consumer trends with more and more intensity. Undoubtedly, understanding their reasons, behaviours and market attitudes can help enterprises not only to decide on appropriate innovative marketing strategies but also to determine the right development path, allowing companies to remain in the market and make their range of products (services) attractive to new customers, especially young people, despite dynamic changes in consumption and ever faster development of mobile technologies and applications.

A total of 826 people who regarded themselves as single took part in the survey, including 456 women and 370 men (Table 2). All participants declared that they lived alone and were not in informal relationships such as LAT or distant relationships and all their romantic contacts were impermanent.

⁸ Due to the nature of the chosen research technique, it was impossible to define the composition of the sample before measurement. In order to determine the representativeness of the sample, information from the report *E-commerce in Poland 2018* was used. *Gemius dla e-Commerce Polska (Gemius for e-Commerce Poland)* [<https://www.gemius.pl/e-commerce-aktualnosci/file-i-w-jaki-sposob-polacy-placa-za-e-zakupy.html>, accessed February 2, 2019]. As the distribution of the sample approximately corresponds to the structure of the studied population, it was assumed that the sample could be considered representative in terms of gender.

Nearly half of the respondents lived in cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants. One in three participants had completed a secondary education, more than two-fifths of the respondents held a bachelor's or engineering degree, and almost one in three held a master's or PhD degree. The average age of respondents was around 26 years. They were mostly students who combined studies with work. As regards monthly disposable income, the largest group earned from PLN 2,001 to PLN 3,000. One in three respondents assessed their current financial situation as good (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient $r = -0.174$, $p < 0.01$) and one in five as very good (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient $r = -0.195$, $p < 0.01$). People born at the end of the 1980 s and in the 1990 s are well prepared to start living independently, are focused on achieving financial success and prestige, and concentrate on the development of a professional career rather than family life. It is also important that representatives of Generations Y and Z decide to get married between 25 and 30 years of age on average. In addition, the burden of anticipated financial costs is often the reason for delaying the decision about marriage or for giving up the idea whatsoever.

Table 2. Structure of respondents

Items	Number of respondents (N=826)	Percentage share
Age:		
18–23	320	38.7
24–29	245	29.7
30–34	261	31.6
Gender:		
Female	456	55.2
Male	370	44.8
Education:		
Secondary	253	30.6
Bachelor's/engineering degree	337	40.8
Master's or PhD degree	236	28.6
Monthly income per capita in PLN:		
Up to 2,000	105	12.7
2,001–3,000	300	36.3
3,001–4,000	233	28.2
More than PLN 4,000	188	22.8
Place of residence:		
City of up to 10,000 inhabitants	40	4.9
City of 11,000–20,000 inhabitants	55	6.6
City of 21,000–100,000 inhabitants	74	9.0
City of 101,000–200,000 inhabitants	100	12.1
City of 201,000–500,000 inhabitants	153	18.5
City of more than 500,000 inhabitants	404	48.9

Source: author's own elaboration.

Implementation of the sharing economy in young singles' behaviour – Research results and discussion

Young singles' knowledge of the concept and essence of selected collaborative economy platforms

The sharing economy is now undeniably not only a subject of scientific discussion but has also become an important element of everyday life and even the basic component of a particular life attitude, notably among young people. As part of the study, the issue of young singles' attitudes towards the sharing economy was addressed. It was essentially checked whether young singles understood the concept and idea of the sharing economy and whether their possible competences translated into practical behaviour. The respondents were first asked if they had heard about the new sharing economy model. Almost 95% of young singles answered this question in the affirmative, while only one in 20 respondents claimed that they had not come across this concept and that it was completely unknown to them. The next stage of the research was to find out what percentage of respondents really understood the concept of the sharing economy correctly. To this end, they were presented with four notions related to collaborative economy platforms – the access economy, the right definition of the sharing economy, the gift economy, and the on-demand economy – and asked to indicate the definition which they thought correctly described the sharing economy model (Table 3).

Table 3. The understanding of the sharing economy by young singles

Sharing trends	Number of respondents (N = 826)	Percentage share
A socio-economic model focusing on profit and covering consumer access to products and services, while excluding the ownership aspect. This model encompasses coordination, network, access, reduction of ownership and also takes into account the fact that products and services may be offered by both consumers and companies (P2P, B2P, B2B models are possible).	242	29.3
A socio-economic model based on grassroots initiatives (peer-to-peer relations) that regard underused resources and rely on sharing via technology platforms, for a fee or free of charge.	325	39.4
A socio-economic model whereby products and services are transferred without any agreement on a specific payment or mutual exchange.	163	19.7
A socio-economic model whereby companies offer their products and services to consumers almost at the same time when demand is reported. Such products or services are often tailored to the consumer's needs.	96	11.6

Source: author's own elaboration.

The complexity and hybrid nature of the sharing economy have confirmed that there are difficulties in understanding it correctly. This is evidenced by the

answers from the respondents. In light of the results of the author's research, it can be stated that only two-fifths of young singles correctly understand the essence of the sharing economy. This answer was more often indicated by men (47.2%) than women (31.6%), those in the 30–34 age group (42.1%), those earning a monthly income of over PLN 3,000 (43.6%), and most frequently living in cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants (45.3%). Nearly a third of the respondents misunderstand the sharing economy, identifying it with the access economy. This type of collaborative economy does not include redistribution of goods, collaborative production, shared purchase, reuse, resale and recirculation. The access economy does not consider more advanced, professional types of activity, i.e. peer-to-peer insurance, crowdfunding or social lending. Sharing is evocative of J. Rifkin's [2001] theses about the arrival of an era of access economy where access to resources is an important form of the producer-consumer relationship. In this economy, there is a clear shift away from the market as a transaction venue defined in time and space. Despite the subtle differences in definition, the sharing economy and the access economy are processes and movements that combine collaborative practices with communication methods with the use of modern technology. Both terms carry a different system of meanings. While the sharing economy involves sharing underused resources or services, for a fee or free of charge, directly between individuals or organisations, the access economy allows payment for access to, instead of ownership of, goods. In light of the results, the access economy and the sharing economy were considered to be synonymous mainly by men (32.7%), as well as respondents in the 24–29 age group (33.1%), earning a monthly disposable income of below PLN 3,000, holding a bachelor's or engineering degree (32.9%), and most commonly living in cities with a population of 101,000 to 200,000 (34.2%). In turn, one in five respondents identifies the gift economy with the sharing economy. The gift economy highlights altruism and its role in forming social bonds. Pro-environmental motives associated with paying attention to resource scarcity and the desire for self-improvement also matter. It is significant that a gift becomes the property of the recipient after the donation act. This distinguishes this form of economy from the sharing economy, where resources are shared but ownership transfer is excluded [Wójcik, 2017]. According to D.J. Cheal, the gift economy is a potential system of redundant transactions that are useful for creating small communities under certain conditions. He states that gifts amount to redundant transactions if they meet three key criteria: they do not comply with standards; they do not benefit the recipient; and they are goods or services that recipients could produce if only they wanted [Iannaci, 2002: 122]. In D. Bell's opinion [1991: 166], the gift economy is driven by relation formation, with the effect of benefits deriving from the improvement of technology focused on building social relations, e.g. increasing the range, opportunities and diversity while creating one's social network. The survey shows that the gift economy and the sharing economy were mostly regarded

as synonymous by women (24.6%), as well as the youngest respondents in the 18–23 age group (23.8%), those earning a monthly disposable income of up to PLN 2,000 per person, having completed a secondary education (22.6%), and most frequently living in cities of up to 100,000 inhabitants (25.3%). The survey demonstrates that one in 10 respondents does not notice the differences between the on-demand economy and the sharing economy. The essence of the on-demand economy is the time when a need is satisfied, a need that is revealed as sudden demand at any time and place. Demand must be met almost immediately. Hence, another term that is becoming increasingly common and describes the essence of contemporary economic processes is the instant economy, also known as the short-term economy [Petrella, 1998]. The on-demand economy so construed means a different way of meeting demand by using contacts within the community of prospective customers, ICT solutions (in particular, social networks, mobile technologies, cloud computing, big data analysis, and the Internet of Things) and new solutions in the field of (fast) delivery of products and services (including transport). With this in mind, the so-called network effect plays a significant role in the on-demand economy. It amounts to a situation in which consumers of a certain product benefit from its increased adoption by subsequent new consumers. In addition, this effect delimits the breadth and depth of the offering and the impact of enterprises operating under this model. Notably, the network effect is difficult to achieve where small barriers to market entry and exit exist. According to L. Leibovitz [2015], such barriers mean that, on the one hand, competitors quickly appear in the market and develop their own offerings which they then make available via their own networks of customers and collaborators and, on the other hand, customers or partners can be lost very quickly (at any time) due to poor links between them and the vendor. In light of the results obtained, the on-demand economy and the sharing economy were more often regarded as synonymous by women (13.4%) than men (9.8%), young singles with a secondary education (12.3%) and a bachelor's/engineering degree (11.9%), aged 30–34 (11.8%), earning a monthly income not exceeding PLN 3,000 (12.4%), and living in cities of up to 20,000 inhabitants (12.2%).

Recognisability of sharing economy ventures in the field of car transport among young singles

Collaboration platforms have gained enormous popularity in recent years, especially among young people. For this reason, another issue in the research was to find out which sharing economy ventures in the field of car transport are best known to young singles (Table 4).

In the light of the survey, it turned out that young singles are the most familiar with BlaBlaCar among companies operating in the field of car transport and implementing the idea of sharing. Only one in five respondents has heard about inOneCar, a Polish company based in the south-western city of Wrocław that supports and promotes the idea of ride sharing.

Table 4. Recognisability of the most popular sharing economy ventures in the field of car transport among young singles

Platform	Country (year of establishment)	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
BlaBlaCar	France (2006)	765	92.6
Mytaxi	Germany (2009)	224	27.1
InOneCar	Poland (2013)	168	20.3
Turo	UK (2010)	97	11.7
Lyft	USA (2012)	72	8.7
Yandex Taxi	Russia (2011)	60	7.3
Ola Cabs	India (2010)	34	4.1
Cabify	Spain (2011)	17	2.1
Taxify	Estonia (2013)	10	1.2

Note: Respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Source: author's own elaboration.

Young singles' knowledge of car sharing websites

Next, the respondents were asked to mark websites known to them that advertise empty seats in passenger cars (Table 5).

Table 5. Most popular ride sharing websites known to young singles

Website	Number of respondents	Percentage share
Blablacar.pl	765	92.6
Carpooling.pl	498	60.3
Wspolnyprzejazd.pl	325	39.4
Yanosikautostop.pl	313	37.9
Oto DOJAZD.pl	191	23.1
Jedziemyrazem.pl	159	19.3
Catch-me.pl	84	10.2

Note: Respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Source: author's own elaboration.

The survey reveals that the Blablacar.pl website was most frequently (92.6%) mentioned by young singles, with Catch-me.pl being indicated the least often (10.2%). Men (54.7%) knew more about websites. They were most commonly aged 18–23 (39.3%), earned a monthly disposable income not exceeding PLN 3,000 (29.1%) and lived in cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants (25.3%).

How often young singles travel with BlaBlaCar and in what capacity

Another issue in the research was to find out how often young singles used BlaBlaCar. The survey reveals that almost three-fifths of the respondents share rides via the BlaBlaCar website. The differences in the frequency of travelling with BlaBlaCar was confirmed by statistical analysis ($p < 0.05$). More men than women shared rides several times a week (12.1% vs. 4.3%, $p < 0.05$). On the other hand, more women than men shared rides once a month (54.2% vs. 44.4%, $p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, there were no statistically significant differences between men and women who shared rides several times a year ($p > 0.05$).

In light of the results of the author's research, it can be said that young singles are diverse in terms of their role in using BlaBlaCar ($p < 0.05$). Almost three-fifths of the respondents are passengers; one in four respondents is the driver; and one in six takes on the role of driver and passenger interchangeably.

Purposes of young singles travelling with BlaBlaCar and the average length of route

The further part of the survey focuses on the respondents' purposes of sharing rides. Over half of young singles said they used BlaBlaCar to travel to work or school. This response was more often indicated by men than women (67.5% vs. 39.7%, $p < 0.01$). In turn, one in four respondents uses this form of transport for tourist purposes (most frequently at weekends or during the holiday season) and one in three shares rides to visit friends/families residing in another city that is poorly accessible by public transport. For the last two purposes of travelling with BlaBlaCar, there were no statistically significant differences, taking the gender of respondents into account ($p > 0.05$).

Another issue in the research concerned the average length of routes on which young singles travel with BlaBlaCar (Table 6).

Table 6. Average length of routes travelled by young singles with BlaBlaCar

Number of kilometres	Percentage of responses
1-50	4.8
51-100	5.7
101-300	15.3
More than 300	74.2

Source: author's own elaboration.

Almost three-quarters of the respondents share rides on routes of over 300 km, while one in 20 travels on routes of up to 50 km. Men more often than women (87.7% vs. 60.8%, $p < 0.001$) travel on routes of over 300 km. On the other hand, women most commonly share rides on routes of 51 to 100 km (7.1%

vs. 4.3%, $p < 0.05$). For the remaining routes, there were no statistically significant differences, taking the gender of respondents into account ($p > 0.05$).

Methods used by young singles to pay for shared rides and types of chattiness

Another point in the research was how young singles pay for shared rides ($p < 0.01$). Almost four-fifths of those surveyed paid in cash after reaching their destination, one in five paid before the journey began, and one in 20 paid online in advance.

Another issue was the respondents' level of chattiness: 2.3% of them can be categorised as "Bla", almost 80% as "BlaBla", and less than 18% as "BlaBlaBla". A statistical analysis showed a differentiation in the frequency of selecting the level of chattiness ($p < 0.01$). Respondents who were marked as "BlaBla" or "BlaBlaBla" most often talked about their hobbies and passions, travel and professional experiences, and least frequently about personal life and politics. Women more often than men checked the "BlaBlaBla" option, i.e. a very chatty person (24.2% vs. 11.4%). On the other hand, men more commonly indicated the "BlaBla" option, i.e. a moderately talkative person making a conversation during the journey dependent on their mood (84.6% vs. 75.2%). As regards the "Bla" option, i.e. a person who is reluctant to talk (who likes silence while travelling together), there were no statistically significant differences, taking the gender of respondents into account ($p > 0.05$).

Motives for young singles to travel with BlaBlaCar

An important issue raised in the survey regarded the motives of young singles travelling with BlaBlaCar (Table 7).

An important reason why people use BlaBlaCar is savings (lower travel costs). In the survey of young singles, the main reason for using BlaBlaCar chosen by 86% of the respondents was "savings". Less than 74% listed convenience and flexibility, while almost 46% answered "good company". Interestingly, almost two-fifths of those surveyed marked "environmental considerations" as the reason for travelling in this way. Respondents listing convenience and flexibility of ride sharing as a significant motive focused on better travel conditions, direct access to the destination, more convenient travel hours, shorter travel time, and the possibility of making the most of their time during the journey.

Ride sharing can strengthen social ties and increase trust, which is closely linked with the functioning of civil society. This was aptly articulated by J. Urry [2008: 265], who stated that in the 21st century automobilism establishes a civil society of wandering herds of hybrid "car drivers" who enter the public sphere with their mobility, living in cars and excluding those who do not have a car or the "right" to drive it.

Table 7. Motives of young singles to travel with BlaBlaCar

Demographic characteristics of respondents	Motives			
	Savings	Convenience and flexibility	Good company	Environmental considerations
	85.6	73.8	46.2	38.6
Age:				
18–23	90.3	72.7	47.2	41.3
24–29	84.2	72.4	46.1	38.4
30–34	82.3	76.3	45.3	36.1
Gender:				
Female	87.7	77.1	49.8	42.3
Male	83.5	70.5	42.6	34.9
Education:				
Secondary	90.1	71.1	49.1	39.7
Bachelor's/engineering degree	85.1	74.1	45.2	35.2
Master's or PhD degree	81.6	76.2	44.3	40.9
Monthly income per person in PLN:				
Up to 2,000	93.2	72.9	41.6	32.7
2,001–3,000	86.4	74.3	43.8	34.1
3,001–4,000	82.7	72.8	47.9	39.6
More than PLN 4,000	80.1	75.2	51.5	48.0
Place of residence:				
City of up to 10,000 inhabitants	86.3	74.5	46.1	36.5
City of 11,000–20,000 inhabitants	84.7	74.1	44.8	37.1
City of 21,000–100,000 inhabitants	88.6	73.8	47.2	39.2
City of 101,000–200,000 inhabitants	87.3	74.2	45.3	37.7
City of 201,000–500,000 inhabitants	85.1	73.4	46.5	39.4
City of more than 500,000 inhabitants	81.6	72.8	47.3	41.7

Note: Respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Source: author's own elaboration.

Assessment of ride sharing by young singles

Over three-fifths of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that ride sharing improved their transport options. These declarations can be construed in different ways. On the one hand, in the case of short-distance journeys, travellers have gained the opportunity to use a solution that is cheaper than traditional taxis. On the other hand, when travelling over longer distances and by sharing a ride, a trip is possible between cities that are poorly connected. Almost 70% of the respondents stated that ride sharing provided new sources of earnings and 65% considered it to be environmentally friendly. Interestingly, more than half of the respondents said that ride sharing did not affect the economy and 58% believed that ride sharing solutions did not have to be legally regulated.

Demographic and social characteristics of young singles and the propensity to use BlaBlaCar

The survey shows that young singles' propensity to use BlaBlaCar was statistically significant and positively correlated with age (Spearman's rho coefficient was $r = 0.463$, $p < 0.01$), the level of education (Spearman's rho coefficient was $r = 0.421$, $p < 0.01$), and economic status (Spearman's rho coefficient was $r = 0.473$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, statistical analyses based on the results of Spearman's rho correlation analysis demonstrate that the frequency of using BlaBlaCar was positively correlated with the level of affluence and age of the respondents ($r = 0.361$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = 0.117$, $p < 0.01$, respectively) as well as their place of residence ($r = 0.422$, $p < 0.05$).

The survey results should not be treated as representative of the Polish population of young singles. They only provide some insight into actual consumer behaviours and motives of young consumers using BlaBlaCar. Undoubtedly, in relation to young Polish singles, the sharing economy in the field of passenger transport is a relatively new area that requires thorough and holistic research.

This publication should contribute to a broader discussion and exchange of views on young singles' consumer behaviours that are consistent with the sharing economy idea, thereby encouraging other Polish scholars and researchers from various scientific and research centres to carry out extensive research in this area. Obviously, there is a need for further studies on the interactions between consumer behaviour and other behaviours related to the lifestyle of young Polish singles.

Conclusion

The digitisation of the economy and computerisation of society have contributed to the development of the collaborative economy, including the dynamic evolution of the sharing economy. An increased use of smartphones and smartphone applications has led to a situation where the crucial determinant of new opportunities to gain a competitive advantage is the development of network business relations and a new approach to innovation and relationship building with the contemporary consumer and prospective customer as the increasingly important stakeholders. Social networks play a big role in forming new customer relations. One of them is BlaBlaCar. It is perfectly harmonised with the collaborative economy idea, especially with the sharing economy trend. Most young singles are confused about the rich terminology associated with collaborative platforms and often misunderstand the sharing economy, identifying it with the access economy, gift economy or on-demand economy.

Young singles demonstrated fairly good knowledge of sharing economy ventures and the most popular car sharing websites. BlaBlaCar is undoubtedly

one of the most popular examples of practical application of sharing economy fundamentals. The survey reveals that almost three-fifths of the respondents use the BlaBlaCar platform. The most active participants of this sharing platform are men in the 18–23 age group, holding a bachelor's or engineering degree, earning a monthly income not exceeding PLN 3,000, and living in cities with over 500,000 inhabitants. Lower travel costs, better travel conditions, the possibility of reaching a destination quickly and directly, and environmental considerations proved to be the most important motives for respondents to travel with BlaBlaCar. In turn, social relations that are established among the users of websites such as BlaBlaCar.pl are a kind of hybrid of relations developed in direct interaction during shared rides and those built up in cyberspace.

At present, the final future shape of the sharing economy cannot be predicted. However, many questions arise about the dynamics and direction in which it will develop in the area of ride sharing. Without a doubt, social factors, in particular social trust, which is a key feature of the sharing economy, may inhibit its development. It is important to remember that direct interactions do not accompany transactions in the sharing economy. In this situation, trust cannot be built or strengthened through direct interaction or face-to-face contacts. In particular, indirect relationships in the virtual community play an important part. On the other hand, in real life, trust may carry the risk of physical harm (rape, murder, accident) or financial risk (theft, the driver overstating the transport cost), which may (but does not have to) inhibit its development.

Demographic and social changes and the atrophy of the traditional family model (in particular the progressive “singlisation” of the population) are further determinants that will contribute to the development of the sharing economy in the field of ride sharing. Referring to the concept of F. Tönnies, contemporary societies are more of a *Gesellschaft* (association) than a *Gemeinschaft* (community) [Tönnies, 1988]. With the advancing industrialisation and urbanisation as well as progressive singlisation, they are becoming professional, mass, mobile and increasingly sharing communities. Individuals are entering into various types of contractual relations, becoming members of and operating within formal groups, i.e. *Gesellschaft*-type groups that prevail in the structure of today's societies. Ch. Cooley, following F. Tönnies, pointed out that contemporary society is dominated by secondary, contractual and complex groups in which the system of collaboration is based on indirect contacts, with social bonds relying on formal relationships [Levine, 1995]. The new type of society is and will increasingly be characterised by high mobility of its members, their numerous internal connections, anonymity and openness to sharing (access to a given product rather than its direct acquisition and ownership), with the predominance of formal bonds.

Another factor that, in the author's opinion, will significantly influence the development of the sharing economy in the field of ride sharing is the state's regulatory policy. This is expected to be consistent with and adequate to the types and scale of market mechanism failure. Ride sharing could be substantially promoted by new (alternative) consumer trends oriented towards sus-

tainable development and a more efficient use of scarce and rapidly depleting resources, mainly non-renewable natural resources, including energy and minerals. A further contributing factor is a shift towards more conscious consumers who attach great importance to environmental protection and do not identify “being” with “having”. These trends will be even more reliant on community and collaboration than on ownership and accumulation. Some alternative consumer trends are likely to shape young people’s lifestyles towards environmental considerations. These include sustainable consumption, conscious consumption, collaborative consumption, and presumption. They will be combined with the consequences of climate change, the dynamic development of autonomous electric cars, and more sophisticated and advanced travel modes (including car sharing) based on an increased use of alternative energy sources.

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