THE ROLE OF THE SHARING ECONOMY IN STIMULATING INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

PhD Anna Sobczak

The Jacob of Paradies University Gorzow, Poland

Abstract: *This article examines the impact of sharing economy platforms on traditional business frameworks. The sharing economy is an economic model in which resources are shared and used more efficiently through collaboration between individuals. It affects entrepreneurship in several key ways. One of these is lowering entry barriers to sales markets and reaching customers faster. Sharing platforms allow individuals and small businesses to access markets more easily without requiring large upfront investments. Companies can develop mobile applications or web platforms that connect suppliers with customers. The growth of service and product providers in the sharing economy can increase competition and innovation. The aim of this article is to show how the sharing economy stimulates entrepreneurial opportunities.*

Keywords: *sharing economy, collaborative economy, entrepreneurship, sustainable development, innovation*

Introduction

The sharing economy stimulates innovation primarily by introducing new business models that are based on digital platforms that enable effective matching of supply and demand in real time. (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Sharing economy platforms often use modern technologies, such as mobile applications, big data, artificial intelligence or blockchain, which facilitates the creation of innovative organizational and technological solutions (Liu et al., 2022).

The sharing economy promotes product and service innovations because it forces the offer to be adapted to the changing needs of users and to respond quickly to feedback. (Mazzella Sundararajan et al., 2016). Platforms such as Airbnb and Uber have introduced flexible service delivery models that differ significantly from traditional ones, based on the availability of user resources and efficient logistics.

The sharing economy fosters social innovation by creating new forms of cooperation and trust between users. Reputation mechanisms and rating systems encourage greater transparency and honesty, which is an innovative approach to building economic relationships. (Einav i Levin, 2014). This in turn can lead to the creation of new networks of cooperation and communities that can generate further innovations.

The research problem was defined: What are the main factors that enable entrepreneurs to use the potential of the sharing economy to create innovative business models? On this basis, the research questions were defined:

Q1- What are the key features of the sharing economy that foster entrepreneurship and innovation?

Q2 - Which of the sharing economy factors determine entrepreneurs to introduce innovations into new and existing sharing models?

Q3 - What is the impact of the sharing economy on traditional business models and the creation of new ventures?

Based on the above, two research hypotheses were put forward:

H1 - The sharing economy leads to the creation of new ventures that disrupt traditional markets and industries, which forces existing companies to innovate and adapt.

H2 - Cooperation and resource sharing within the sharing economy foster the creation of new business opportunities that would not be possible in traditional models.

Literature Review

Sharing economy, sharing economy, collaborative economy – a social and economic phenomenon that involves a profound change in organizational and distribution models. These changes are moving towards distributed networks of interconnected individuals and communities. It includes various forms of cooperation, such as direct provision of services by people, sharing, co-creation, co-purchase, etc. This allows for a significant increase in the efficiency of resource use (Sokolowski et al. 2016,).

The sharing economy has gained popularity in the last decade thanks to the development of digital platforms enabling the sharing of goods and services (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). In economic literature, this concept refers to business models based on short-term rental or sharing of resources between users, which leads to increased efficiency in the use of resources (Belk, 2014). Examples of sharing economy platforms include Airbnb, Uber and BlaBlaCar, which are revolutionizing traditional transport and tourism services sectors (Frenken Schor, 2017).
There are several key divisions in the sharing economy that help us understand its diversity and complexity:

- Platform Division P2P (peer-to-peer) i B2C (business-to-consumer):

P2P: Platforms where transactions take place directly between users, such as Airbnb, Uber (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012).
B2C: Platforms where transactions take place between a business and a consumer, e.g. Netflix, Spotify (Rudnick et al., 2015).

- Division into ownership-based and access-based platforms:

Ownership: Users own resources that they make available to others, e.g. rental apartments by owners (Zervas et al., 2016).
Access: Users use resources that are owned by a company or community, e.g. city bike rentals (Kaufman et al., 2015).

- Division into sharing-based platforms and co-creation-based platforms:

Sharing: Users share existing resources, e.g. car sharing (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012).
Co-creation: Users create new resources together, e.g. crowdfunding platforms, collaborative art projects (Benkler, 2006).

• Division into sharing-based platforms and co-purchase-based platforms:

Sharing: Users use resources together, e.g. sharing city bikes (Kaufman et al., 2015).
Co-buying: Users invest in resources together, e.g. housing cooperatives, joint purchasing (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012).

• Division into collaborative and competitive platforms:

Collaboration: Users collaborate with each other, e.g. collaborative content creation platforms (Benkler, 2006).
Competition: Users compete with each other, e.g. short-term rental platforms where owners compete for customers (Zervas et al., 2016).

Recent research has focused on various aspects of the sharing economy: from analyzing the impact on the labor market, through regulatory aspects, to social and environmental effects (Martin, 2016; Frenken i Schor, 2017). Another important topic is the issue of trust and reputation in peer-to-peer platforms, which is crucial for the effective functioning of these models (Einav i Levin, 2014). In addition, the literature addresses challenges related to legal and tax regulations, which often fail to keep up with the dynamic development of the sharing economy (Codagnone i Martens, 2016).

There has also been significant progress in research on the impact of the sharing economy on sustainable development. Some studies indicate that the sharing economy can help reduce the consumption of natural resources by efficiently using existing goods (Hamari et al, 2016). However, there are also critical voices emphasizing that the uncontrolled development of sharing platforms may lead to negative effects, such as increasing inequality or degradation of local markets (Sundararajan, 2016).
However, the latest research indicates that the dynamics of the sharing economy development are becoming increasingly complex. In the post-pandemic context and socio-economic changes, new challenges and research directions have emerged. According to Zhang et al. (2023), The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the way sharing economy platforms are used, including an increased focus on hygiene, safety, and local resource use, which is changing consumption patterns and leading to the evolution of platform strategies. In the study by Liu et al. (2022) the growing role of blockchain technology in building trust and transparency in sharing economy transactions is emphasized, which has the potential to reduce the risk of fraud and improve user experience.

New approaches to the issue of sustainable development and social responsibility of sharing platforms also appear in the literature. Work by Kim and Park (2022) suggests that the sharing economy can contribute to reducing CO2 emissions if platforms introduce pro-ecological solutions and promote the sharing of local resources. At the same time, concerns have arisen, as noted by González et al. (2023), regarding potential greenwashing and the need for strict regulations to prevent marketing abuses and ensure real environmental benefits.

The aspect of regulation and public policy remains an important topic in recent publications. In the work by Fernández and Martínez (2024) it is emphasized that the dynamic development of the sharing economy requires a flexible legal framework that, on the one hand, protects consumers and employees, and on the other, enables innovation and competitiveness in the market. The analyses of these authors indicate the need for cross-sectoral cooperation and dialogue between platforms, government and local communities.

The importance of the sharing economy in the context of the gig economy and flexible forms of employment is growing. This situation is causing growing interest in research on working conditions, social security and rights of platform workers (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2023). This trend is being critically examined from the perspective of social justice and equality (De Stefano, 2022).

The sharing economy has had a significant impact on the development of entrepreneurship, creating new opportunities for individual entrepreneurs, microenterprises, and startups. Sharing economy models enable easier access to resources and markets, which lowers entry barriers for new businesses (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Thanks to digital platforms such as Airbnb, Uber, and TaskRabbit, individuals can quickly and cheaply start a business, often without the need for large capital investments (Sundararajan, 2016).

Firstly, the sharing economy supports the so-called "micro-entrepreneurship", i.e. economic activity carried out by individuals or very small companies that use platforms as a channel for selling services or renting goods (Martin, 2016). This allows for a flexible approach to work and combining entrepreneurial activity with other duties, which in turn promotes innovation and diversity of market offers (Kalleberg i Vallas, 2023).

The sharing economy is influencing the emergence of new entrepreneurial ecosystems in which collaboration between users, platforms, and service providers generates synergistic effects (Frenken and Schor, 2017). Such environments foster the exchange of knowledge and experiences, which can accelerate the development of innovation and the scaling of economic activity (Liu et al., 2022).

However, the challenges that the sharing economy poses to entrepreneurs cannot be ignored. Flexible, often short-term forms of employment are associated with uncertainty and a lack of standard social security, which requires new legal and organizational solutions (De Stefano, 2022). Additionally, growing competition on platforms and the need to adapt to rapidly changing technologies and customer expectations force continuous innovation and adaptation on the part of entrepreneurs (Fernández and Martínez, 2024).

The sharing economy may disrupt traditional market structures, shifting power and control from large corporations to smaller, more flexible players. Sharing may lead to new forms of employment, such as on-demand work or freelancing, which give entrepreneurs greater flexibility in managing their human resources. The sharing economy may promote more sustainable practices, such as car sharing or apartment rentals, which may appeal to environmentally conscious entrepreneurs. Consumers increasingly expect access to resources (e.g. renting instead of buying), which may affect entrepreneurs' strategies and business models. In sum, the sharing economy not only expands entrepreneurial opportunities, but also requires entrepreneurs to be more flexible, creative, and digitally savvy, which in turn increases the overall level of innovation and competitiveness of the market.

Analysis of research results

The study on the sharing economy was conducted in February 2025. The survey contained 20 questions, including 3 closed-ended questions. The study was conducted on a group of 120 students of economics. The group was selected in a random quota manner. The non-random sampling method involves selecting the sample to reflect the characteristics of the population being studied. Quota sampling is a non-random sampling method that allows for obtaining a representative sample of the population, despite the lack of randomness in the selection of respondents. The data was collected and analyzed using an Excel spreadsheet. The Cronbach's Alpha test was used to assess reliability, which is primarily used to assess measurement tools such as questionnaires and tests. It measures internal consistency, i.e. how well individual questions or elements of the tool measure the same hidden variable. In social

survey studies, the reliability of scales is measured, e.g. scales measuring satisfaction, attitudes or behaviors. Cronbach's alpha analyzes the correlations between individual questions or elements of a measurement tool. If the questions are consistent with each other, i.e. they measure the same concept, the alpha will be high. However, if some questions are inconsistent, the alpha will be low. A high value (e.g. above 0.7) - suggests good internal consistency and reliability of the tool. A low value (e.g. below 0.5) may indicate problems with reliability or the need to modify the tool, e.g. by removing inconsistent questions. Cronbach's test is used to assess the internal consistency of a measurement scale and in this case we can use it to assess the consistency of questions regarding innovation and entrepreneurship. A Cronbach's Alpha result of 0.85 at a confidence level of 95% indicates that the value of the research tool is good and the scale is consistent and reliable.

The next step was to perform an analysis using the ELECTRE method, which allows for the evaluation and comparison of different options in the sharing economy, taking into account the preferences and constraints of respondents. The ELECTRE (Elimination and Choice Transposition Evaluation) method is a decision-support tool that allows for the evaluation and comparison of different options in multi-criteria situations. The method allows for the evaluation of options in terms of many different criteria, which is particularly useful in complex decision-making situations where it is not possible to rely solely on one factor. It allows for the determination of preferences between options, which allows for a more precise reflection of the decision-maker's subjective assessments. It allows for the identification of options that are incomparable due to different sets of criteria, which is important in situations where some options do not meet all the criteria. The method can be used in situations where incomplete or imprecise data is available, which makes it useful in real, often uncertain decision-making conditions. It is used in decision-making processes in which many people with different preferences participate, because it allows for the consideration of different points of view. Due to its wide application, it is a universal decision-support tool.

Table 1. Weights of selected features in the ELECTRE method

Feature	Weight
Price	0,3
Availability	0,2
Quality	0,3
Ecology	0,1
Community	0,1

Source: own study.

After determining the weights for individual features, a ranking of sharing economy variants was defined. For the purposes of the study, only three areas most frequently used in practice by customers were focused on.

Table 2 Comparison of sharing economy variants

Variant	Price	Availability	Quality	Ecology	Community	Weighted sum
Transport	4	5	5	3	4	4,4
Accommodation	3	4	4	4	5	3,8
Equipment rental	2	3	3	5	2	2,8

Source: own study based on research.

Respondents clearly prefer sharing economy transportation services such as Uber, Bolt, or BlaBlaCar. This is evident from the high weighted sum (4.4), which means that these services meet their criteria for price, availability, quality, ecology, and community. Accommodation services such as Airbnb or Couchsurfing are also preferred by respondents, although with a slightly lower weighted sum (3.8). Respondents appreciate these services for their reasonable price, good availability, and quality, as well as ecological and social benefits. Equipment rental services such as Turo or Lime are unacceptable to respondents due to their low weighted sum (2.8). The main reasons are low availability and quality, which makes these services not meet students' expectations. Price is a key factor for respondents, which is reflected in the high weight (0.3). Services with a reasonable price are more attractive. Availability also remains important (weight 0.2), which means that respondents prefer services that are easily accessible and do not require long waiting times. Service quality has a high weight (0.3), indicating that students value quality even if it means a higher price. Ecology and communities have a lower weight (0.1), but are still taken into account. Respondents appreciate the ecological and socially responsible aspects of services. Transport and accommodation providers should maintain high quality and availability of services to maintain respondents' preferences. Equipment rental providers should focus on improving availability and quality to make their services more attractive to respondents.

Equipment rental services could improve their availability to better meet customer needs. All services should strive to improve their quality to meet high student expectations. ELECTRE analysis showed that respondents prefer transportation and accommodation services in the sharing economy due to their attractive price, availability, quality, ecological and social benefits. On the other hand, equipment rental services are unacceptable due to their low availability and quality. Service providers should adapt their offers to customer preferences and constraints to increase their attractiveness on the market.

Then, calculations for logistic regression were performed, where the dependent variable was the use of sharing economy services and the independent variables were:

- age,
- trust in sharing economy services,
- safety of services,
- impact of services on ecology,
- savings resulting from the use of sharing services
- education
- income
- location - place of residence
- innovation
- entrepreneurship.

Table 3 Logistic regression results - dependent variable: use of sharing economy services

Variable	Direction of influence p-value	p-value
Safety	+	0,002
Innovation	+	0,014
Entrepreneurship	+	0,033
Saving	~	0,09

Source: own study based on research.

Analyzing the results of logistic regression, only four independent variables have a significant impact on the use of sharing economy services.

Sense of security is a significant predictor of sharing economy service use. The higher the sense of security, the more likely a person is to use these services. Openness to innovation is also a significant predictor. People who are more open to new solutions are more likely to use sharing economy services. Entrepreneurship remains a significant predictor. Entrepreneurial people are more likely to use sharing economy platforms. Saving is close to statistical significance ($p = 0.09$). It is possible that people who are more focused on saving money are more likely to use sharing economy services, but further research is needed to confirm this relationship.

The remaining variables, i.e. age, education, and income, were not statistically significant in this sample. This means that there was no significant effect of age, education level, or income on the use of sharing economy services in the study group.

Security, innovation, and entrepreneurship are key factors influencing the use of sharing economy services.

Then, a logistic regression analysis was performed to predict whether students were considering starting their own business (dependent variable) based on other variables – the selected variables for analysis were – frequency of using sharing economy services, assessment of service quality and use of mobile applications.

Table 4 Logistic regression results – dependent variable starting your own business

Variable	Coefficient	p-value
Frequency of use	0,25	< 0,05
Service quality assessment	0,10	> 0,05
Use of mobile applications	0,30	< 0,01
Pseudo-R^2 (Nagelkerke)	0,20	-
P-value (general)	0,01	-

Source: own study based on research.

A coefficient of 0.25 suggests that the frequency of use is significantly related to the dependent variable (i.e., starting a business). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the frequency of use has a statistically significant effect on the result. The more often respondents used the services of the sharing economy, the more likely it is that it will encourage them to start their own business. Using the services may inspire them and influence innovation.

A coefficient of 0.10 indicates a weaker relationship between the evaluation of service quality and the dependent variable (i.e., starting a business). However, a p-value greater than 0.05 means that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the evaluation of service quality has a statistically significant effect on the result. The evaluation of service quality does not have a significant effect on the result. This may indicate that other factors are more important.

A coefficient of 0.30 suggests a stronger relationship between the use of mobile applications and starting a business. Since the p-value is less than 0.01, we can say with high confidence that the use of mobile apps has a statistically significant effect on the result. The use of mobile apps has a strong relationship with the result. The more respondents use apps to take advantage of sharing economy services, the more likely it will lead them to start their own business.

Nagelkerke's pseudo-R^2 measures the overall goodness of fit of the model. A value of 0.20 indicates that the model explains 20% of the variance in the dependent variable, i.e. starting your own business. This is a moderate value, but it may be sufficient depending on the context. The overall p-value tests whether the entire model is statistically significant. A value of 0.01 indicates that the model as a whole is significant and worth considering.

Conclusions

Respondents who feel safe using sharing economy platforms use them much more often. A sense of security (transactional and personal) is a strong predictor of behavior. People who are open to new technologies, independent and focused on earning (including saving) are more willing to use sharing platforms - both as users and service providers. Entrepreneurial activities are undertaken by people for whom innovation supports their involvement in the business. Trust, ecology and saving are important, but they are not as strong predictors as security or individual attitudes. They have a greater image significance and can build long-term commitment. Sharing economy platforms rated best are those that combine the possibility of earning and innovation. In addition, security and communication around it remain very important, which is why educational campaigns should be created on platform user security. For users, identity verification and service provider assessment systems, which allow for obtaining an appropriate security status, remain a very important issue. For users, segmentation of recipients according to the innovativeness of services in order to properly adapt the service to the recipient's preferences remains an important element. Some of the respondents are platform users as suppliers, they emphasized the functionality of platforms as well as innovative factors that caused the change of status from recipient to supplier. Using mobile applications improves the quality of services and convenience for customers. Platforms stimulate the "prosumer" model, i.e. users can use and offer at the same time.

The most important features of the sharing economy that support entrepreneurial and innovative attitudes are the possibility of flexible earnings without the need to create a formal company. Openness to new technologies and business models attracts people who are open to change. Many respondents indicate that the lack of funds to start a business is a decisive factor, which is why low barriers to entry into the market in the case of the sharing economy are a decisive factor. The lack of the need for large capital investments and often technical security from the platform remain an element that determines openness to starting a business. Trust and transaction security offered by platforms also favor participation in the market for non-professional service providers. The above statements are confirmed by the statistical significance of the variables: "entrepreneurship" and "innovation" in the regression analysis. The strongest determinants of sharing economy factors among entrepreneurs remain the introduction of innovations to new and existing sharing models. These factors are a sense of security and trust that enable experimenting with new models. Another factor is the assessment of the usefulness of the platform as a source of income - it motivates entrepreneurs to create their own services in this model. High platform innovation scores encourage entrepreneurs to create analogous or complementary models (e.g. Uber Eats alongside Uber). The sharing economy disrupts traditional business models and the emergence of new ventures – hotels have to compete with Airbnb, and taxi companies with Uber. At the same time, it forces innovation in traditional companies – adaptation of digital platforms, flexible employment models, peer-

to-peer service provision. The "entrepreneurship" variable strongly correlates with platform use – suggesting that new ventures are emerging around this model.

Hypothesis 1 was confirmed and indicates the growth of models independent of traditional companies, the advantage of flexible and digital platforms and a large impact on the strategies of traditional companies (e.g. digitalization of services). Hypothesis 2 was also confirmed by the analyzed research results, which indicate that entrepreneurial people use platforms more often, many platforms allow entry into the market without large capital and sharing models (e.g. car, apartment, clothes) open up new niches in the area of the sharing economy. The sharing economy creates an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and innovation - both through access to resources and inspiration for new models of operation. Traditional businesses have to adapt, and new ventures gain an easier start. The sharing economy attracts innovative and enterprising people, but retains users through trust and a sense of security. The future belongs to platforms that combine convenience, earnings and social responsibility.

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