

Y-GENERATION'S PERCEPTION OF SHARING ECONOMY

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Abstract: *Nowadays, development of regions depends not only on its economic potential, but also on the application of modern manners of management. One of the concepts that allows for more effective use of resources and thus - for better development of regions - is sharing economy. Despite the fact that it is not a new concept, it still has not achieved its maximum effectiveness. Such a situation is caused by the fact that many people still either have no idea about it or do not trust it. In the article the essence of the sharing economy was presented. Characterization of the Y generation was also made, with particular emphasis on the key features for the development of the sharing economy. Y-generation is completely different from its predecessors - Millennials looks differently at social relationships or modern technologies. Both of these aspects are the hallmark of the Y-generation and the key to the practical application of the sharing economy. The aim of the article is to examine the Y-generation approach to the sharing economy. The basis of considerations is the method of analysis and criticism of the literature, own observations and a survey carried out on persons belonging to the Y-generation. The study was conducted on a nonprobability sampling with aiming to best reflection of the diversity of the generation Y – the sample consisted people with different level of education or income. The acquired data has been aggregated, processed statistically and synthetically presented in graphical and tabular form. The conducted study clearly shows that education of the society is still necessary, because the knowledge of this concept is still too tight, therefore it cannot be maximally used. Nevertheless, the Y-generation may be a definite opportunity for the development of the sharing economy.*

Key words: *sharing economy, network relationships, regional development, generation Y, millennials*

JEL codes: *D16, J11, O12, O35*

1. Introduction

The contemporary, very dynamic market requires seeking more and more solutions allowing for continuous satisfaction of the growing needs of people, while also considering the problems affecting our civilization - pollution of the natural environment, uneven access to goods or incomplete use of resources. One of the most interesting solutions offers the concept of sharing economy. This is not a new concept, but its use in an innovative way may turn out to be a direction of changes for today's existing business models and a way of dynamic development of regions.

Society has a very large impact on the development of regions through the use of modern economic concepts. It is people decide which economic models suit them and are worth using and which are not. Currently, the Y-generation dominates the market and it defines the development of modern economics by making everyday consumer choices. This generation is also quite different from its predecessors - they drive other motives, set different goals for themselves and seek other methods of achieving them.

This article is an attempt to identify the Y-generation approach to the sharing economy, and thus to identify real opportunities for a wider use of this concept. The sharing economy is a concept that can significantly contribute to regional development, but the final result will depend on the scale of its use. This scale is determined primarily by the demand side of the market, i.e. a society that consists of different groups, distinct values and characteristic traits. A large part of this society is so-called Y-generation (Millennials), who by their very nature can be an ideal carrier for the sharing economy.

2. Methodology and Data

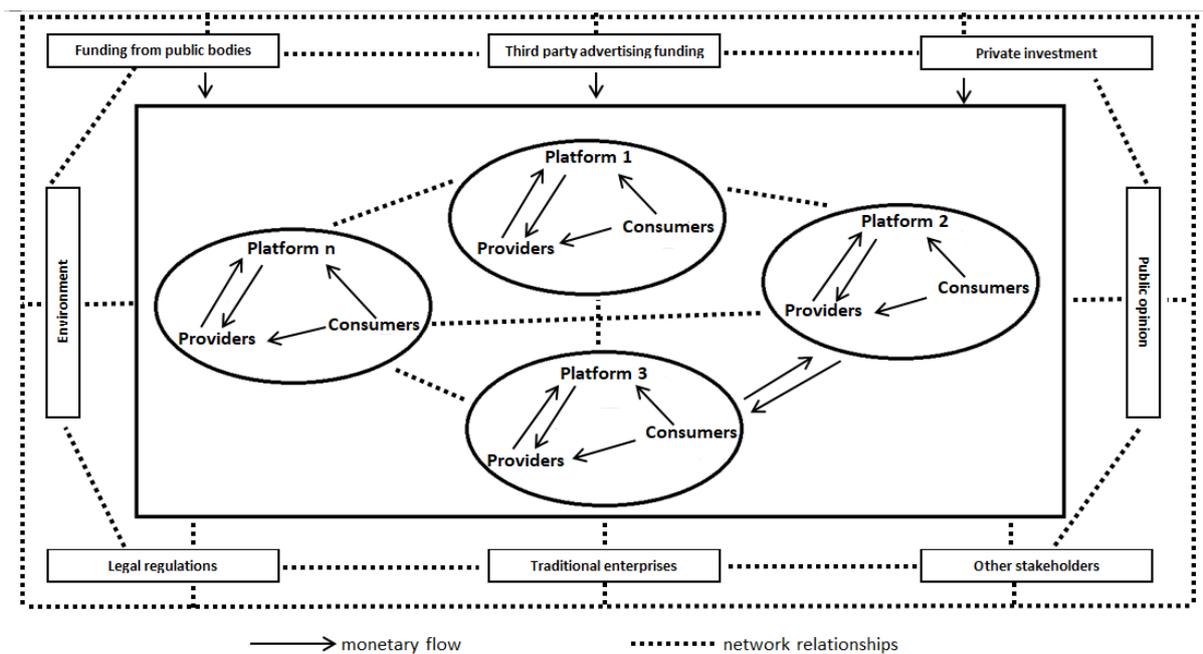
This article consists of two parts. The first part (chapters 3 and 4) were based on the method of analysis and criticism of the literature. The sharing economy has been characterized, with particular emphasis on the network relations. Also the opportunities and risks associated with the Y-generation on the sharing economy were presented. Second part and the core of the article is questionnaire research (chapter 5) carried out in the period from March 11, 2019 to April 15, 2019 on the group of 408 people belonging to the Y-generation. The survey was carried out both in a traditional (paper) manner and by the on-line form. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: qualitative and quantitative. The obtained data was subjected to statistical processing and presented in this article. The survey consisted of 5 open questions and 11 closed questions (using the single choice answer and the Likert scale). The study made it possible to formulate

conclusions regarding the Y-generation approach to the sharing economy, and thus the possibilities of using this concept in the development of regions.

3. The essence of sharing economy

Sharing economy is the concept of better use of resources, which became fashionable at the beginning of the 21st century. This situation is related to the change in values professed by society and the development of modern digital technologies (Cheng & Edwards, 2017). This allows the creation of additional value by redistributing or sharing resources with other interested entities (Ertz & Sarigöllü, 2019), and thus - achieving monetary or non-monetary benefits. One of the basis of the sharing economy are internet platforms that allow access to various goods and services provided by both, traditional B2C companies and, increasingly, by private individuals - C2C (Guyader & Piscicelli, 2019). It creates a very complicated network of mutual connections which, on one hand, is a great opportunity for this concept, and on the other - a threat. Figure 1 presents a simplified model of network connections between platforms, users and the environment including cash flows.

Fig. 1 Network relations in the sharing economy



Source: own elaboration based on: (Gössling & Hall, 2019) and own observations

The network as part of the concept of sharing economy is characterized by great complexity. Cash flows can take place both between the supply and demand sides, and between both parties and the platform, as well as between different platforms (network of relationships).

In addition, enterprises operating within the framework of the sharing economy may receive external financing (e.g. funding from public bodies, third party advertising findings, private investments). What's more, the platforms are connected with each other by a network of mutual interactions. The platform is also influenced by the environment, which is also characterized by network relations between individual actors. Furthermore, the figure shows only one market - in fact, there are many such markets, creating a global market, which can be described by the term "multi-network" (a network composed of other smaller networks, which consist of subsequent networks). Therefore the economy of sharing could be described in the micro-, mezo- and macroeconomic scale.

On the one hand, the sharing economy contributed to the creation of new ways of generating income through a better use of the surplus of owned goods, on the other - completely changed the nature of gaining access to products and services and redefined the concept of ownership and employment (Ferrell et al., 2017). The benefits of sharing include a positive impact on the natural environment, economic benefits (savings) and social (increasing the number of contacts and social interactions). Nevertheless, this concept also entails threats - above all on the level of fair and sustainable development of enterprises. The question arises whether the sharing economy cannot be regarded as unfair competition in relation to traditional enterprises and whether it does not create the foundations for the creation of monopoly or even monopsony. Such a situation causes the creation of opinions that such a form of conducting business activity should be regulated by the authorities to a much greater extent (Leung et al., 2019).

Another, decisive problem of the concept of sharing economy is its conceptual ambiguity. Terms such as "sharing economy", "collaborative economy", "access economy", "peer economy", "gig economy" are often used as synonyms (Kos et al., 2018). This raises serious methodological problems in the efficient use of this concept in research and business, because despite many points of contact these terms are relate to other levels of cooperation or are a refinement of other, broader concepts.

It can be assumed that the sharing economy may turn out to be the future for efficient management and become one of the new economic paradigms. Its influence on regional development depends on the attitude towards contemporary society. The Y-generation is the greatest chance for the sharing economy, because of their contact with modern technological solutions since birth and support for revolutionary concepts.

4. The Y-generation as an opportunity for sharing economy

The Y-generation include people born between 1980 and 2000. Usually, they do not have any financial obligations and spend most of their income arbitrarily, mainly on entertainment, food and travel (McCrinkle, 2003). Their characteristic feature is the fact that they are the first generation that was born and raised in a digital society, which significantly influenced their way of behaving, making choices and functioning in society (Bolton et al., 2013).

Y-generation is significantly different from previous generations. The characteristic features of Millennials are, for example:

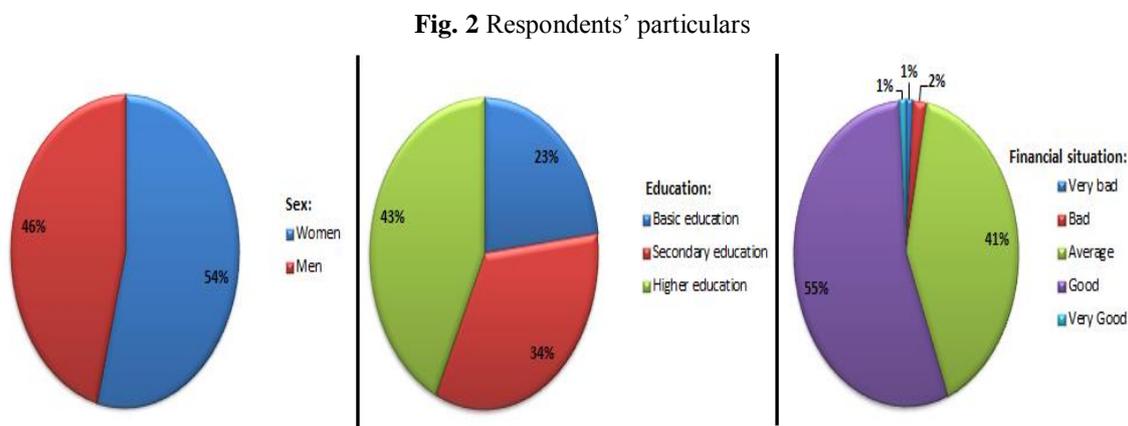
- no language barrier,
- active and everyday use of technological novelties and the Internet - they are a reflection of life in the so-called "global village" - they have friends practically all over the world,
- they consider the quality of life and life experience more important than the possession of material goods,
- they grew up in the free market reality,
- stable work for a long time is not important for them, they often change employment, look for new solutions - they pay a lot of attention to private life, expect great freedom and flexible working time,
- they have a very high opinion of themselves and their abilities, their own uniqueness. Also, they are characterized by their excessive expectations and a strong criticism aversion,
- they are not looking for authorities, no one can impose anything on them,
- modern technology often leads to lack of autonomous thinking and develop their own views incompetence, but at the same time enables them to check knowledge in various sources - problems appear with proper information selection (Fazlagić, 2008; Harvey, 2010; Van Den Bergh, Behrer, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2010,).

The mentioned features cause the fact that young people (part of the Y-generation) are more and more often involved in the development of so-called new urban movements, i.e. activation of citizens in various urban initiatives that significantly improve the social efficiency of the region. Y-generation perceives the quality of life in the city differently and in other way evaluates the functioning of solutions and emerging problems (Kos et al., 2018). The activities of these movements are often connected with the organization of protests, which are caused by the attitude of city council authorities, which very often ignore the needs of residents,

and concentrate their activities and efforts on attracting various external resources (Kurnicki, 2013). Such authorities actions are associated with an attempt to develop a given region by allocating new resources in it. The new urban movements, led by people belonging to the Y-generation, are increasingly negating the classic approach of city management and regional development, and thus they seek, use and often create new social, cultural and economic solutions. One of such solutions is the sharing economy, which is currently experiencing a kind of renaissance associated with the entry into the professional activity of people belonging to the Y-generation.

5. Research results

The survey was conducted between March 15 and April 15, 2019 on a group of 408 respondents. Figure 2 presents the structure of respondents, in terms of sex, education and subjective assessment of the financial situation.



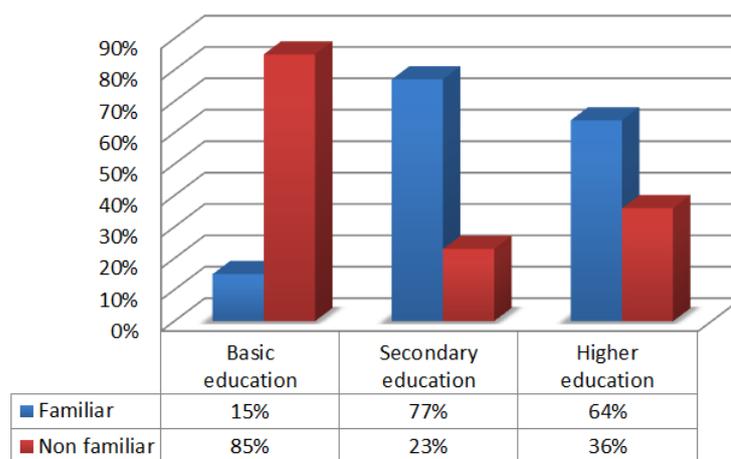
Source: own elaboration based on the conducted survey

That kind of data structure is relatively well reflection of Generation Y. Only a small group of declared basic education, because of the age of the respondents (born between 1984 and 2000) - most of them either already graduated or are still studying. The gender structure also seems adequate. The task of asking about the financial situation was determined by the will to find whether there is a noticeable correlation between income and the decision regarding the use of solutions in the field of sharing economy.

One of the primary questions concerned the knowledge of the concept of "sharing economy". 57% of respondents said that such a concept is known to them. However, it should be noted, that the awareness of economic trends is definitely higher in people with higher

education and still studying. Figure 3 shows the structure of the answer to the question about the knowledge of the concept of sharing economy.

Fig. 3 Familiarity with the sharing economy concept



Source: own elaboration based on the conducted survey

Conducted studies have shown that despite the fact that some people have never seen the statement "sharing economy", they are still able to intuitively identify platforms or solutions that are closely related to this concept. In the question regarding the identification of platforms in the field of sharing economy, answers related to broadly understood transport appeared most frequently (approximately 82% of all responses). Table 1 presents the most frequently indicated platforms related to the concept of sharing economy.

Tab. 1 The most frequently indicated platforms related to the concept of sharing economy

Platform	Number of indications	Platform	Number of indications
BlaBlaCar	192	Nextbike	24
Uber	156	Couchsurfing	22
Bike-sharing	72	Coworking	18
Car-sharing	72	Timeshare	16
Airbnb	60	Wikipedia	16
Trafficar	44	Vozilla	14

Source: own elaboration based on the conducted survey

In the largest number of responses, either BlaBlaCar or Uber were pointed out, which means that these platforms can be considered as flagship solutions in the field of sharing economy (however, greater awareness is related to the Polish platform). However, one can wonder, whether platforms such as Uber and Airbnb can be included in the concept of sharing economics, as they are not connected with providing unused resources, but rather focus on paid services, which, according to the author, do not correspond with assumptions of the concept of

sharing economy. Among the answers, there are also platforms that do not belong to the concept of economy of sharing, for example, websites that allow you to watch movies online (CDA, Netflix, HBO Go) - definitely related to the "access economy" concept, freight exchange (Trans.eu), auction portals (Allegro, OLX, OtoMoto) or Facebook. The last one can be helpful in establishing a sharing relationship (e.g. through dedicated groups), but in itself is not related to the concept of sharing economy.

There is also a lack of knowledge about the differences between the various concepts related to cooperation and sharing. 38% of respondents indicated that the concept of collaborative economy and sharing economy are not different from each other, 30% considered that they are different concepts, but they cannot indicate differences, and 31% of the question answered that they do not know. Only 2 people out of 408 respondents (i.e. 0.5%) relatively well defined the differences between these concepts.

54.5% of respondents in their lives have at least once used sharing economy solutions. Moreover, in every group associated with the financial situation, there were people who used such platforms. Figure 4 shows the structure of people declaring the number of using platforms related to economic sharing within one year. Individuals were divided according to the declared assessment of their financial situation.

Fig. 4 Frequency of using platforms in the field of sharing economy within one year



Source: own elaboration based on the conducted survey

It can be noted, that people with a better financial situation more often indicated that they were using sharing economy solutions only once or several times. Such a situation may be caused by curiosity, willingness to try another car or sudden transport need (e.g. returning home). People with a worse financial situation did not use such solutions at all or used them more regularly. It can be noted that respondents declaring a very bad financial situation have never once pointed to the sporadic use of the platform - either using it very regularly or not at all. Nevertheless, such a platform usage structure allows to presume that it is a development market and that there is room for new sharing economy concepts.

One of the biggest problems for the sharing economy can be a distrust between individual members of the network. 45% of respondents would rather decide to rent their own car to friends for a fee (this result would probably be higher if you also take into account free borrowing - some people would simply not take money from friends). This situation looks completely different, in the case of a question about paying a vehicle for a fee to a stranger - only 27% of respondents would choose such a form of income, while 60% would probably would never decide to do it. The obtained results show how important is the trust in the relationships in the sharing economy - one of the basic functionalities of each platform should be an efficient assessment system of other people. 75% of respondents indicated the importance of such a solution. Only 8% indicated that the comments are not important to them – such situation may be caused by, for example, lack of trust in the comment system caused by the relatively easy possibilities of their falsification. Table 2 presents the results of the survey regarding trust in relations taking place in the sharing economy.

Tab. 2 Trust in the sharing economy

	I definitely disagree	I rather do not agree	I have no opinion	I rather agree	I definitely agree
I would be able to rent my car to friends (for a fee) in times when I do not use it	16%	26%	13%	21%	24%
I would be able to rent my car to strangers (for a fee) in times when I do not use it	30%	30%	13%	21%	6%
In the case of platforms offering services in the field of "sharing economy", the most important for me are the opinions of others (e.g. in the comments)	2%	6%	17%	46%	29%

Source: own elaboration based on the conducted survey

Despite the fact that trust seems to be a key factor in the success of the sharing economy (and thus - one of the biggest barriers), this concept may prove to be the a really forward-looking solution. Such situation results from the very character of the Y-generation - its

tendency to risk, ease in establishing international contacts or excellent knowledge of technological novelties. 73% of respondents indicated that sharing economy is the most noteworthy concept, which may turn out to be a great alternative to classical economics. This is also confirmed by the next question, in which again 70% of respondents disagree with the statement that the sharing economy is only a temporarily popular trend. Thus, the attitude to ownership and accessibility is very symmetrical - 30% of respondents indicated that possession is more important than availability, just as 30% indicated the opposite approach. The reception of solutions in the field of sharing economy is also positive - 73% of the respondents do not consider sharing economics as unfair competition in relation to classical business models. Table 3 presents the respondents' relation to the concept of sharing economy.

Tab. 3 Relation to the sharing economy

	I definitely disagree	I rather do not agree	I have no opinion	I rather agree	I definitely agree
Cooperation and sharing may turn out to be the future for the economy	2%	10%	15%	49%	24%
Cooperation and sharing is just a temporary popular trend	17%	53%	20%	9%	1%
Access to some good is more important to me than to own it	3%	27%	40%	19%	11%
"Sharing economy" is unfair competition in comparison to the classic business model, e.g. Uber compared to classic taxis	35%	38%	19%	5%	3%

Source: own elaboration based on the conducted survey

The ratio of respondents to the sharing economy probably results from the fact that it is a relatively new solution, quite different from those available on the market so far. What is more, it allows for significant savings and, in the case of sharing your possessions, for additional revenues. Furthermore, one of the main characteristics of the Y-generation is the desire to break patterns, search for more and more innovative solutions and easier to go beyond the so-called comfort zone, and thus - the desire to use innovative solutions, which certainly include the sharing economy.

6. Conclusions

Sharing economy is a very interesting concept, which largely responds to the problems of modern civilization. Like any "new" solution, it can initially arouse reluctance and fear, despite its clear benefits. Nevertheless, in the contemporary market, the dominance of the Y-generation is more and more visible. Millennials do not avoid innovative solutions - they often seek them. Therefore, can be assumed that this fact will determine the development of

the concept of sharing economy. The research shows that despite the fact that many people still have not heard about the concept of sharing economy, the majority intuitively understands its assumptions. Millennials also do not avoid the use of platforms enabling sharing on a daily basis, practically irrespective of the declared income. People in the Y-generation very often see in the economy of sharing a very good alternative to classic economic concepts. They also do not consider this phenomenon to be just a temporary trend or unfair competition in relation to classic business models. On the basis of the conducted research, it can be concluded that the concepts related to the sharing economy will develop dynamically in the future, and through the benefits that they bring - they can prove to be very good tools to face modern civilization problems.

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