

SUBSCRIPTION ECONOMY AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION IN POLAND

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Purpose

The purpose of the study is to present subscription economics as a model that that can promote sustainable consumption. Linked to the research objective is a research problem taking the form of a question: Does subscription economics promote sustainable consumption patterns? and specific questions were developed: What are the perceived barriers and benefits for consumers in adopting the subscription model from a sustainable consumption perspective? How do subscriptions affect consumers' consumption habits and environmental awareness?

Based on the knowledge available at the stage of preparing the article and the literature review, the central research hypothesis was established:
H1: Subscription economics has the greatest impact on sustainable consumption regarding economic rationality.
H2: Subscription economics has the most significant impact on sustainable consumption in terms of social and environmental rationality for Generation Y and Z

Introduction

Entities using business models that integrate sustainability principles into business practice are gaining popularity through innovative activities. These include adapting existing solutions and creating entirely new models that not only reduce negative environmental and social impacts, but also generate positive externalities. One innovative business model that can foster business growth while taking care of financial stability, customer relations, optimal use of resources and minimizing negative environmental impact is the subscription economy. This is a model in which customers regularly pay for access to products or services, rather than purchasing them on a one-time basis.

Methods

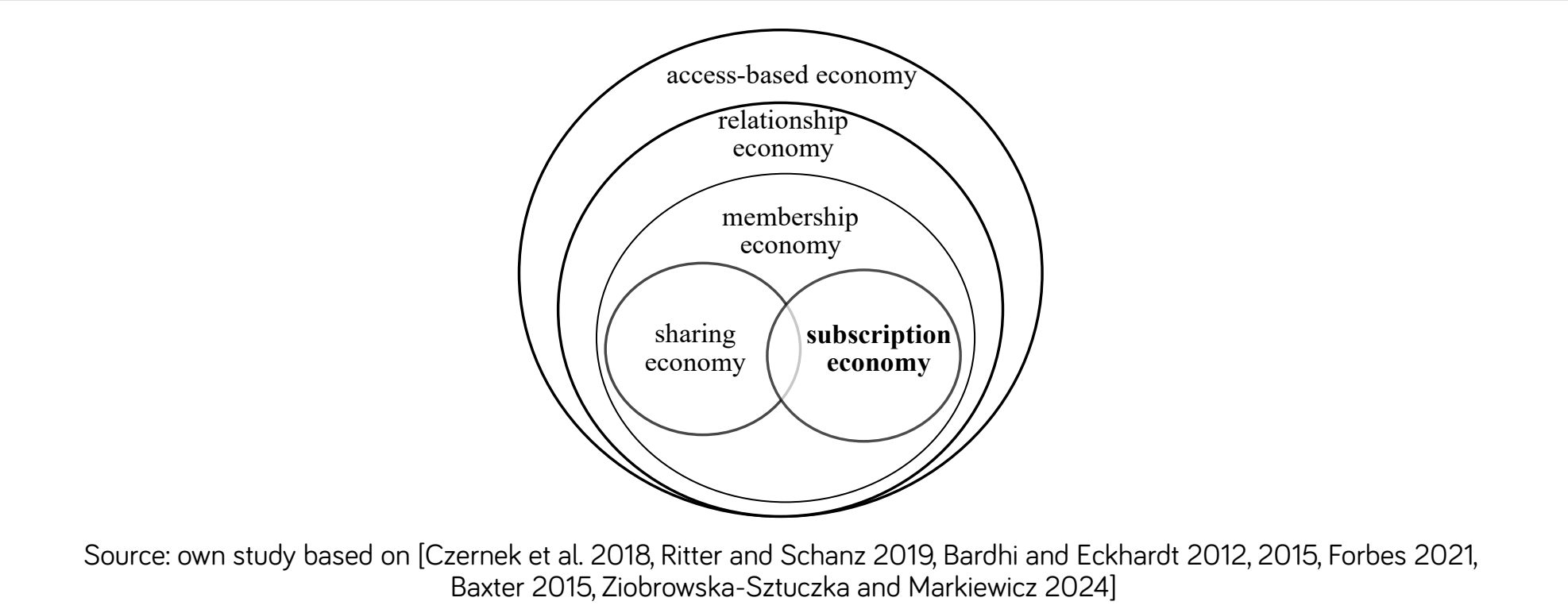
The study employed a mixed-method approach combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The first stage involved a comprehensive analysis and critique of the literature to establish the theoretical framework and identify existing knowledge gaps regarding the subscription economy and its link to sustainable consumption. The second stage used an empirical approach in the form of a diagnostic survey supported by statistical analysis. The quantitative survey was conducted between October 2, 2023 and December 4, 2023 on a sample of 350. respondents using the standardized online CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) method.

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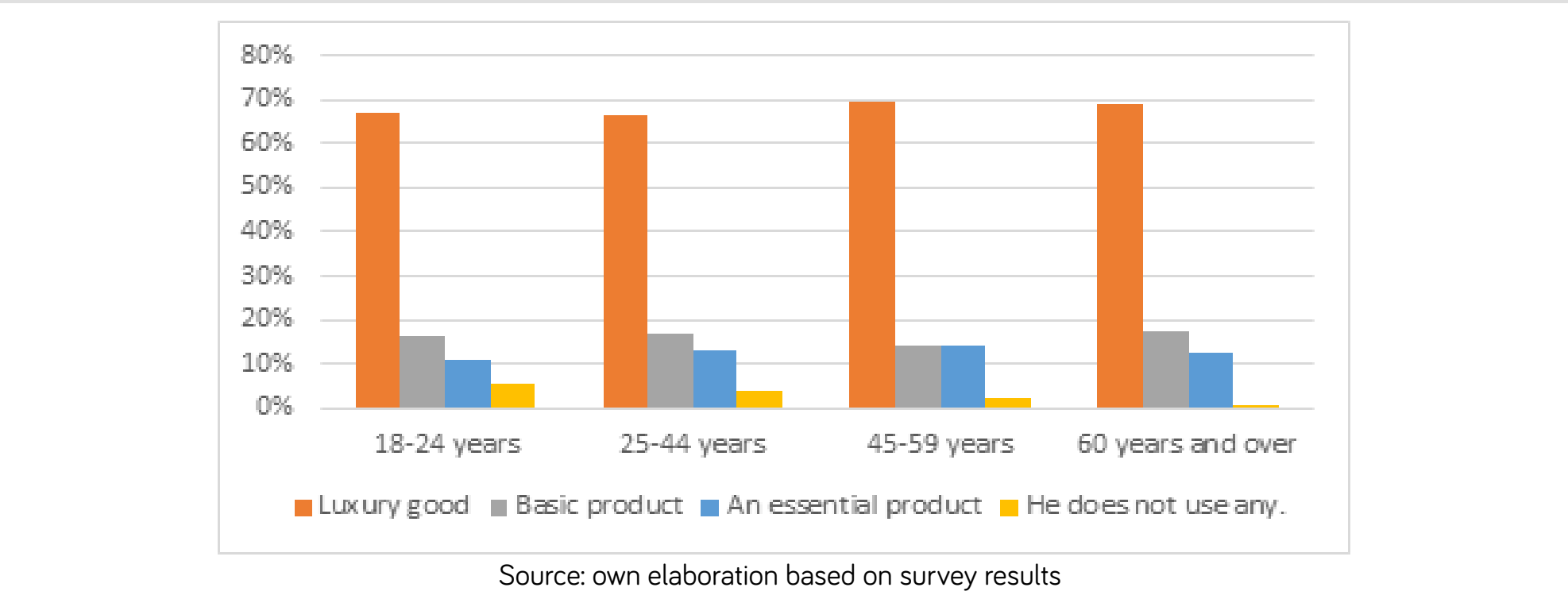
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Graphics

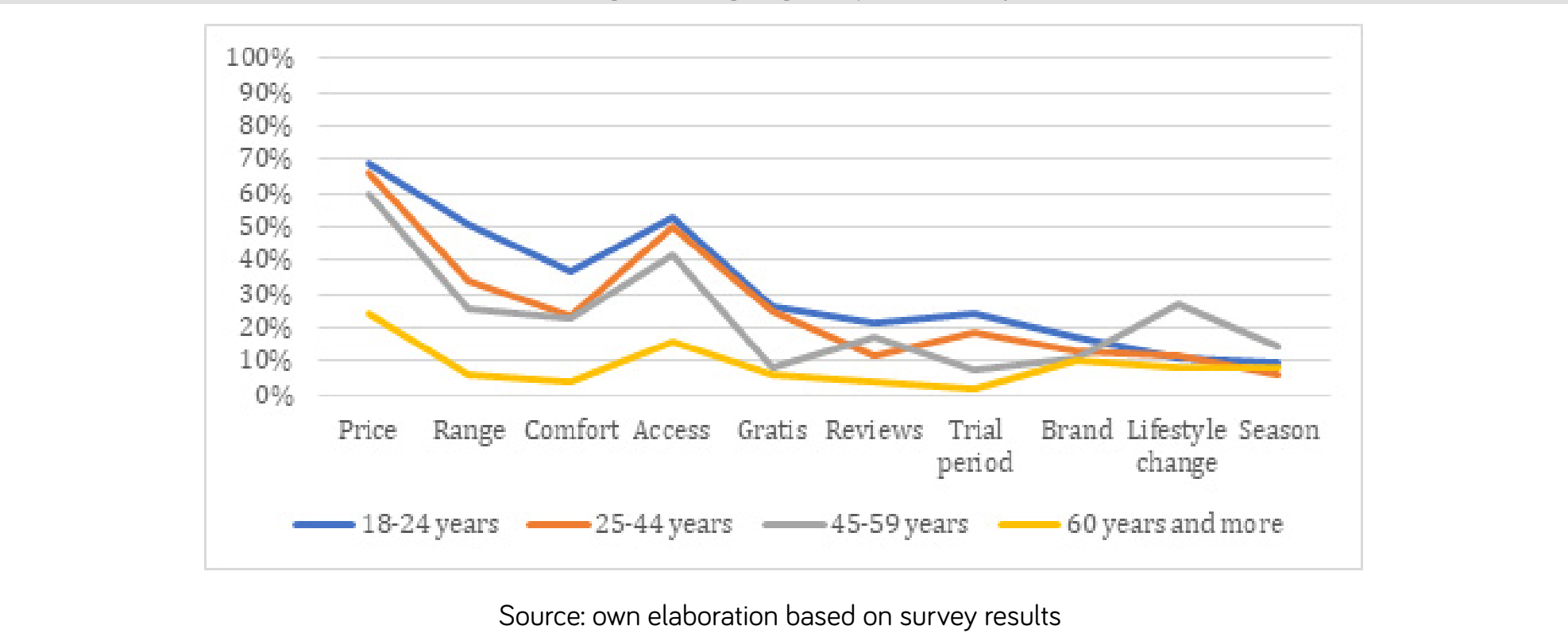
Subscription economics and related concepts



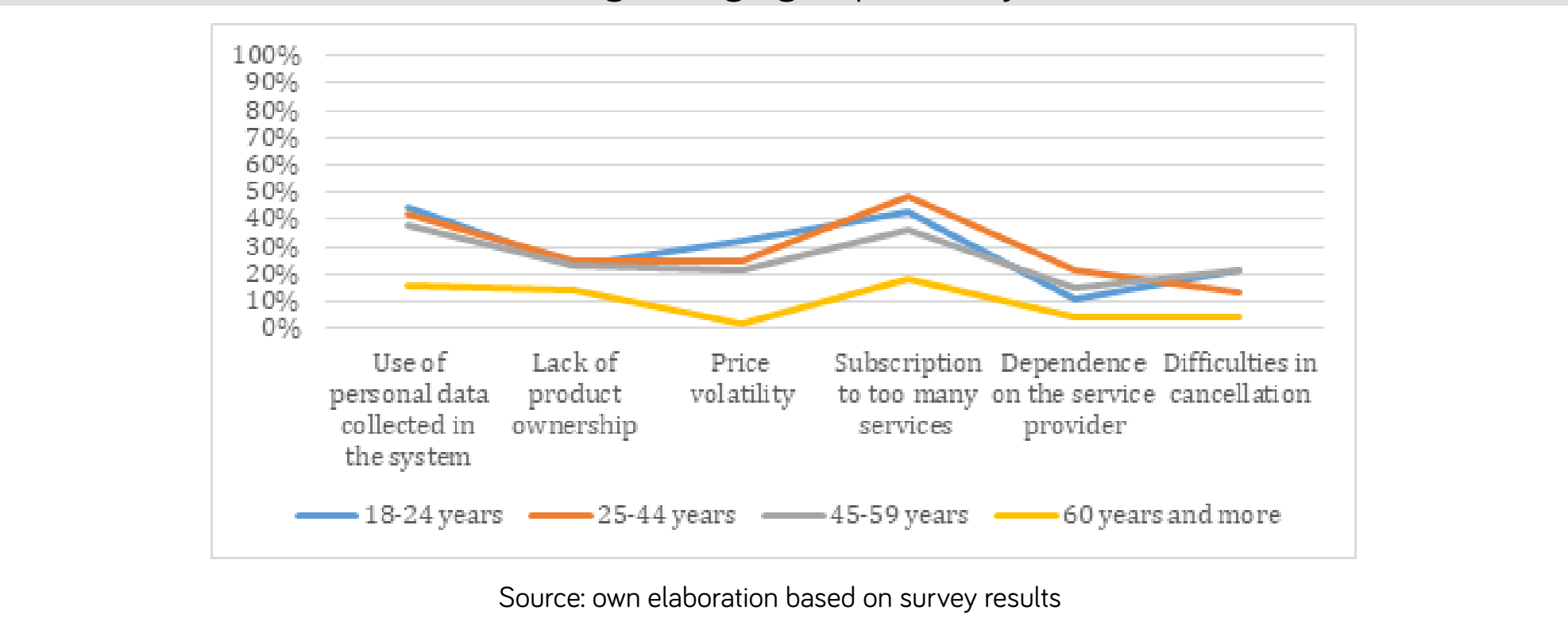
Subscription use of basic, essential, and luxury products



Percentage distribution of critical factors influencing subscription decisions among the age groups surveyed



Percentage distribution of key subscription disadvantages among the age groups surveyed



Results

The authors' own research has shown that Poles are very interested in the subscription model, and its greatest importance in terms of economic rationality, as the most important component of sustainable consumption. For Polish consumers, the most important benefits are price, the ability to share costs with others and fixed costs, enabling them to plan their spending.

Poles primarily use intangible and luxury products in the subscription model. This confirms the importance of economic rationality on the grounds that the aforementioned types of subscriptions allow costs to be spread over smaller, regular payments, making products (including luxury products) more accessible to more people. In addition, shipping tangible products involves higher logistical costs than access to intangible products. There are therefore no grounds for rejecting H1: Subscription economics has the greatest impact on sustainable consumption in terms of economic rationality.

The young generation is a key target group for setting the future path towards more responsible living (Fischer et al., 2017; Francis & Davis, 2015; Kamenidou et al., 2019; Ziesemer, Hüttel & Balderjahn, 2021). Previous studies have shown that interest in sustainable consumption is growing among young consumers, who are characterised by a high awareness of growing environmental and social problems and a belief that they can improve the environment with their attitude and behaviour (Beccanulli & Biraghi, 2024; Núñez et al., 2024, Zhang et al., 2024). However, as the results of the authors' study have shown, statements of beliefs are not always consistent with actual behaviours indicative of sustainable consumption, for which the economic factor, which in many situations seems to take precedence, is responsible. Sustainability is therefore identified by the young generation as a secondary motivation to personal benefits such as financial security. The authors' research showed that it is older people who show a higher interest in the subscription model in terms of social and environmental rationality. There are therefore grounds for rejecting H2: Subscription economics has the greatest impact on sustainable consumption in terms of social and environmental rationality for generations Y and Z.

Conclusion

The research confirms that the subscription economy can be an effective tool for promoting sustainable consumption, particularly in the dimension of economic rationality. The predictability of expenses and the accessibility of goods and services, especially intangible and luxury ones, make this model attractive to a wide range of consumers in Poland. The primary driver behind adoption is cost-effectiveness, which aligns with sustainable consumption goals by encouraging better budgeting and potentially reducing overconsumption.

However, the data did not support the hypothesis that subscription models significantly impact social and environmental rationality among younger generations (Generations Y and Z). While younger consumers express a high awareness of sustainability issues, their behaviors are more often driven by personal benefits, such as financial security, than ecological or social considerations. Interestingly, older consumers show greater engagement in subscription models aligned with sustainable values.

Future efforts should focus on increasing the variety and visibility of subscription options that integrate environmental and social benefits to enhance the subscription economy's role in supporting broader sustainability objectives. Educational campaigns highlighting these aspects and innovations aligning convenience with sustainability could help shift consumer priorities beyond pure economics.