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Collaborative consumption in consumer behavior of Polish young people

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Abstract

Aim/purpose – On the basis of a critical analysis of related literature, the article attempts to explain the concept and essence of collaborative consumption, a dynamically developing consumer trend. The principal goal is to demonstrate that young people in Poland are distrustful of sharing goods with strangers, and thus are much more willing to engage in collaborative consumption when they know the people with whom they make transactions. Following the analysis of the research material, it was also possible to confirm that a key reason for young people to participate in collaborative consumption lies in financial benefits and access to a wide range of goods and services.

Design/methodology/approach – The tool used to conduct the research was my original questionnaire comprising 50 closed-ended questions regarding alternative consumer trends, including collaborative consumption. The survey was carried out from 10th May to 10th June 2017. The participants were recruited via the ankietka.pl website and social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, and e-mail. In order to partake in the survey, those interested had to visit a specific website containing the questionnaire. It was also distributed across special forums, university and private school fanpages. 240 people aged 18-34, belonging to Generations Y and Z, took part in the survey.

Findings – The research shows that the higher the value of goods, the less likely younger consumers are to share them. Respondents most frequently exchange goods such as books, clothing and games. Their disposable income is a crucial factor influencing their interest in collaborative consumption. The most important advantages of collaborative consumption include the possibility of earning money and unhampered access to a wide range of goods and services. On the other hand, the central disadvantages are distrust and possible fraudulent transactions on the part of strangers.

Research implications/limitations – Given the limited financial capacity, the study of collaborative consumption in consumer behavior of young people was confined to an online survey.

Originality/value/contribution – This article is one of few publications in Poland that seek to provide some insight into collaborative consumption in the purchasing behavior of young people living in Poland and into the most important factors influencing respondents' participation in the examined consumer trend.

Keywords: young people, collaborative consumption, sharing, consumer behavior.

JEL Classification: D19, Q01.

1. Introduction

Contemporary consumption does not mean the use of material goods and services in order to satisfy the felt needs, but has also become an indicator of the standard of living, a criterion of the structure of society and a way in which individuals communicate their identity. In the light of ongoing digitization, it can be noticed that generational changes are an essential determinant of consumer behavior in the market. The modification of purchasing patterns ensuing from the development of new technologies and the ever widespread Internet access is characteristic especially of Generations Y and Z¹. Therefore, by taking over active roles in the purchasing process, young people are susceptible to new consumer trends including collaborative consumption.

Collaborative consumption has been expected to alleviate societal problems such as hyper-consumption, pollution, and poverty by lowering the cost of economic coordination within communities. However, beyond anecdotal evidence, there is a dearth of understanding why people participate in collaborative consumption. It should be strongly stressed that this trend is most frequently followed by young people. Their participation in collaborative consumption is driven by many factors such as sustainability or enjoyment of the activity as well as economic gains.

¹ Consumers representing Generation Y (people born between 1978 and 1994) and Generation Z (those born after 1994) primarily communicate through social media such as Facebook or Twitter, and their purchasing decisions are determined by their peers' opinions posted on online forums. What is characteristic of this group is impulse buying and a large share of online transactions. Generation Y consumers excel at modern technologies and feel good in virtual communities. They expect diverse products, competitive prices, new experiences and pleasure, and 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, with such characteristics as: connected, computerized, always clicking, community-oriented, and content-centric. Compared to Generation Y, they use new technologies even more. More in: Cohen (2009, pp. 57-59) and Williams & Page (2011, pp. 1-17).

Attitudes towards consumption have shifted in recent years and brought increasing concern over ecological, societal, and developmental impact. A growing concern about climate change and a yearning for social embeddedness by localness and communal consumption have made the ‘collaborative consumption’/‘sharing economy’ an appealing alternative for consumers. Past literature shows that people are turned away from ethical consumption because of economical and institutional reasons, yet with the development of new ways of consumption through the sharing economy, such as collaborative consumption, these issues are addressed and potentially overcome (Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2011, pp. 597-608). The sharing economy is an emerging economic-technological phenomenon that is fuelled by developments in information and communications technology (ICT), growing consumer awareness, proliferation of collaborative web communities as well as social commerce/sharing. The sharing economy is an umbrella concept that encompasses several ICT developments and technologies, among others collaborative consumption, which endorses sharing the consumption of goods and services through *online* platforms (Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016, pp. 2047-2048).

Young consumers were chosen for the research in view of their importance and growing decision-making power in today’s households, and because they respond to the changing environment, globalization and its impact on consumption, lifestyle and emerging new consumer trends more intensely than other market participants. Undoubtedly, understanding their reasons, behaviors 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 product (service) offer attractive to new customers, especially young ones, despite dynamic changes in consumption and ever faster development of mobile technologies and applications.

The article seeks to identify young people’s consumer attitudes and behaviors that can be defined as collaborative consumption. An attempt has been made to explain what most motivates young people to participate in collaborative consumption and how important financial benefits of transactions based on the sharing of goods and services with other people are to them. With this in mind, the article puts forward two research hypotheses:

H_1 : Young people in Poland are distrustful of sharing goods with strangers, and thus are much more willing to engage in collaborative consumption when they know the people with whom they make transactions.

H_2 : Key motivators for them to participate in collaborative consumption are financial benefits and free and unhampered access to a wide range of goods and services.

The structure of the article is as follows. After explaining the concept of collaborative consumption, the further part focuses on this phenomenon and tools supporting its development as well as on the quintessence of confidence in this alternative consumer trend. Subsequently, after outlining the research methodology and briefly describing the research sample, the concentration is on the examination of collaborative consumption in the purchasing behavior of young Polish consumers and crucial factors determining the participation of respondents in the examined consumer trend. Finally, a conclusion of the analysis and major findings end this text.

2. Literature review

2.1. Collaborative consumption – theoretical perspective

The term ‘collaborative consumption’ was introduced to the economic literature by Felson & Spaeth (1978), who jointly wrote the article *Community Structure and Collaborative Consumption: A Routine Activity Approach*. They raised issues related to renting cars to other users. However, it was only Algar (2007), a British management consultant, with his article *Collaborative Consumption* published in “Leisure Report Journal”, who made this notion very widespread. Alongside those authors, economists Botsman & Rogers (2010a) played an extremely important role in promoting collaborative consumption by publishing their exquisite book entitled *What’s Mine Is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption*. They sought to prove and simultaneously convince readers that collaborative consumption was not only a short-term alternative manner of consumption but a long-lasting revolution in behaviors and habits of modern consumers.

The research conducted by Bardhi & Eckhardt (2012, pp. 881-889) and Bainbridge (2013) confirmed a change in the attitudes and actions of contemporary consumers as regards purchasing things. The change means that the group of people who consciously choose not to possess certain goods but decide to borrow them instead is increasing more and more dynamically. Their research proves that collaborative consumption is a long-term change that has been clearly seen in the behavior of today’s consumers already for a few years. Interestingly, collaborative consumption certainly cannot be classified as a niche trend. This alternative consumer trend comprises over one million participants worldwide, with many of them not being even aware that they are taking part in this incredibly fast-growing trend. There are more than 80 million collaborative

consumers in the United States, about 23 million in the United Kingdom, and 'only' 10 million in Canada (Owyang, Samuel, & Greville, 2014). Interestingly, almost every 2 seconds accommodation is booked on Airbnb, and CouchSurfing records as many as 40 million views a day. Furthermore, freecycle.org has more than 7 million users in 86 countries, and slightly over 9.1 million items are exchanged there annually. Additionally, it should also be mentioned that only in the first week after the launch of the ZipCar mobile application, over 100,000 downloads were registered (vimeo.com/11924774). These are just a few examples that confirm the huge popularity of this trend (Rostek & Zalega, 2015a, p. 12).

According to Belk (2014, p. 1596), in order to explain what collaborative consumption essentially involves, some definitional inaccuracies in related literature should be first rejected. Felson & Speath (1978) define the acts of collaborative consumption as events in which one or more persons consume goods or services in the process of engaging in joint activities with one or more others. Examples include talking on the phone or drinking beer with friends. Although these events are actually centred around joint consumption-related activities, Belk claims that the definition of consumption is too broad and insufficiently focused on the acquisition and distribution of goods and services. Instead, it concentrates more on coordinated consumption as such. For instance, if people drinking beer together pay for it separately, they do coordinate their consumption at a specific time and place, yet the act of consumption itself is an element of trade. If someone bought a pitcher of beer for the whole group, it would be an act of sharing because it concerns the distribution of what is ours for use by others. However, if there are two people who do not want to buy a whole pitcher of beer or pay an excessive price for a glass of beer, they can convince a couple at another table to share the pitcher, with each couple paying a lower price and receiving half a pitcher of beer. Only the contract so constructed involves collaborative consumption whereby both purchase and distribution of the good are jointly organized. The foundation for the definition of collaborative consumption is the common ground between sharing and trade, with elements of both (Belk, 2014, pp. 1596-1597). Collaborative consumption thus consists in renting, borrowing and exchanging goods or barter contracts. This trend refers to the concept of sharing as well as to the focus on product function, the so-called product service approach, while deriving many benefits from the item without having to own it. For this reason, more and more users are beginning to use city bikes or globally popular web portals offering the possibility of sharing vehicles, such as ZipCar (Belk, 2010). The key advantages of collaborative consumption include: saving money, time and space, increasing the number of friends and acquaintances, strengthening social ties and relationships, reducing environmental deg-

radation, minimizing waste and surpluses that are generated through overproduction and overconsumption, and using goods in a more efficient and deliberate manner. Thanks to the Internet, we can now express our identity in multiple ways by ‘owning something’. Consumer research conducted in the USA and many European countries shows that more attention has been paid in recent years to a group of interrelated business and consumption practices described as ‘sharing’ (Belk, 2013). These practices are described differently in related literature and called in a variety of ways by many researchers, from the classic terminology of “collaborative consumption” as defined by Botsman & Rogers (2010b) through ‘the mesh’ (Gansky, 2010), ‘commercial sharing systems’ (Lamberton & Rose, 2012), ‘co-production’ (Humphreys & Grayson, 2008), “co-creation” (Lanier & Schau, 2007), “consumer participation” (Fitzsimmons, 1985) or “online volunteering” (Postigo, 2003). This interest results from an increased number of commercial and non-profit ventures that are developing thanks to the growth of the ‘sharing economy’. Examples of companies that qualify for one or several of these terms are: Airbnb, Zipcar, Wikipedia, YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, Freecycle and Twitter. In a broad sense, the Internet itself is a huge database of shared content that can be accessed by anyone who has an Internet connection (Sacks, 2011).

In related literature, a discussion is ongoing about whether collaborative consumption may be expressed as entirely altruistic acts or whether the motive of specific personal benefits is necessary for distinguishing collaborative consumption from among synonymous phenomena. Haski-Leventhal (2009, p. 274) emphasizes that altruistic behavior can only cover such behavior whereby one person acts unselfishly for the benefit of another. Therefore, making a flat/house available for the time of absence in exchange for care should not be considered altruistic.

According to Szubrycht (2012), collaborative consumption is a clear and dynamically developing social movement on the one hand, and – on the other – a new economic model that allows for alternative ways of acting and satisfying needs, although it is also sometimes presented as a specific lifestyle. Nonetheless, I believe that this trend is not a new idea whatsoever, since the sharing of possessed goods and mutual help have long commonly existed among family members and closest neighbors, with the difference, however, that in the last two decades this practice has evolved into a behavior typical for larger communities (beyond local ones), thus becoming the idea that can significantly change social awareness (Zalega, 2017, p. 34). Certainly, new technologies have greatly expanded the possibilities of exchanging and paying for borrowed consumer goods and services. For the above reasons, collaborative consumption can be regarded as the opposite of the so-called BAU (Business-As-Usual) economy, which means the hitherto economy dominated by the attachment to growth (Martin, 2016; Schor, 2014).

Rather than a precise definition of collaborative consumption, Belk (2010, pp. 717-718) suggests contrasting the prototypes of sharing (mothering and the pooling and allocation of household resources) with the prototypes of gift giving (the exchange by Della and Jim in O. Henry's story "The Gift of the Magi") and of marketplace exchange (buying bread at a shop for money). Belk (2007 p. 126) suggests that collaborative consumption involves "the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use". A more succinct definition is provided by Benkler (2004, pp. 278-279), who sees collaborative consumption as 'nonreciprocal pro-social behavior'.

Collaborative consumption is often associated with phenomena and initiatives that do not have much in common with it, hence the need to systematize its various manifestations. An attempt at such systematization and association of collaborative consumption with other types of economic activity can be found, among others, in the latest works by Frenken (Frenken, Meelen, Arets, & Van de Glind, 2015; Frenken & Schor, 2017; Frenken, 2017) and Schor (2017). Nevertheless, the most important factors driving the development of collaborative consumption at its current stage include: online provision of products, environmental concerns, resurgence of community, peer-to-peer technologies, and cost consciousness (Olson & Connor, 2013, p. 74; Voight, 2013, pp. 20-23; Wardak & Zalega, 2013, p. 6; Hamari, Huotari, & Tolvanen, 2015, pp. 145-147).

2.2. Online provision of products

The Internet, in particular Web 2.0, has given rise to many new ways of sharing and has enabled a larger-scale development of its older forms. Beginning with Napster, music and digital films were distributed freely among strangers who downloaded and frequently uploaded contents through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing systems (Hennig-Thutau, Henning, & Sattler, 2007, pp. 12-13). This resulted in the loss of significant sales of CDs and DVDs in the film and music industries, followed by a number of actions to enforce the intellectual property rights (IPR) by means of lawsuits and inclusion of digital rights management (DRM) software in products in order to put an end to duplicating and uploading false or damaged files online (Giesler, 2008, p. 741). That 'war on sharing' (Aigrain, 2012, pp. 93-95) proved to be largely futile. Although Napster was closed (and later restored as a legitimate digital music shop), numerous alternative sites appeared in its place, including those with BitTorrent files such as The Pirate Bay, Grokster, Gnutella and Freenet. Furthermore, albeit iTunes, Rhapsody,

Pandora and Spotify have been successfully offering legal downloads or stream music and sometimes also films and TV shows for years, most video and music files as well as software, e-books and games are still downloaded from illegal sources, in particular by young people. Estimates vary greatly from country to country, but there is no doubt that this practice is widespread. In Sweden, sentiments in favor of the Internet are so strong that The Pirate Bay, a torrent file-sharing site, has even won seats in the Parliament (Belk, 2014, p. 1597). And although most file-sharing sites do not work according to market rules, the BitTorrent portal differs slightly due to its operational specificity. It requires users to balance uploads and downloads, changing the rules so that they are more similar to a barter system, which can be regarded as a specific form of trade. On the other hand, while illegal music and film downloads are in the media spotlight, there are many other forms of their sharing that have been initiated or facilitated by the Internet. YouTube asks us: "What do you want to share with others?". It thus expects users to freely upload their videos or mashups that they have made from other video materials. Although people who make highly popular videos available there may also receive some compensation, most uploaded contents are 'unprofitable'. Financial gains from similar activities are absent on many other websites such as those offering the possibility of sharing photos (e.g., Flickr, Facebook, and Twitter) or allowing the sharing of similar interests (e.g., Pinterest), to rating services (e.g., TripAdvisor or Angie's List) and ratings of books or films on digital shopping sites, for example Amazon.com. The point is not that these websites are unprofitable as such. They earn from online sales and advertising, as do search engines, such as Google, which facilitate access to a huge collection of online information. Yet, the overwhelming majority of their users and people who post much content that can be made available online share information, ratings, photos or videos for free, without expecting any compensation (John, 2013, p. 169).

What then contributes to the development of collaborative consumption? In answering this question, it should be stressed that what is characteristic of today's society is living in a vastly digitized world. In addition, the growing importance and use of social media and the Internet as well as substantial mobility of contemporary consumers have made it possible for people from various parts of the globe to easily communicate with one another. This also offers them the opportunity to exchange all kinds of products and services. As claimed by Botsman & Rogers (2010b, p. 30), the continuing dynamic evolution of digitization of the world is the fundamental reason why people have ceased to be only passive consumers. Moreover, based on their own observations and research, those authors distinguished four priority determinants driving the development of col-

laborative consumption. These include: resurgence of community, environmental concerns, peer-to-peer technologies, and cost consciousness (Wardak & Zalega, 2015, pp. 25-26).

2.3. Environmental concerns

Collaborative consumption arose mainly as the opposition to and dissatisfaction with advancing hyper-consumption. As aptly noted by Ritzer (2001, pp. 56-58), in the postmodern society, there is a large group of people who are even disappointed with consumerism. Although they can afford to buy many different goods and services, they refrain from it for ideological reasons. In the context of sustainable development, the understanding of consumer behavior and the ability to introduce changes are crucial to reducing the impact of consumption on the environment. Various disciplinary perspectives based on social sciences offer separate, if not contrasting, views on the conceptualization of changes in pro-environmental behaviors. Extensive academic literature and political interventions today mostly rely on psychological models of consumer behavior or on sociological theories. Current patterns and levels of consumption in industrial economies are commonly regarded as unsustainable. Excessive consumption and the culture in which products are continuously and recklessly thrown away are responsible for serious environmental problems such as depletion of resources and waste. A possible solution to prevent unnecessary use of resources and excessive losses is to limit new purchases and promote the re-use of old products (Tukker et al., 2006, pp. 10-12). In this context, collaborative consumption is a socio-economic model based on the joint use of certain products, illustrating how to avoid, or at least delay, accumulation of waste and losses by exchanging, giving away, renting, trading, lending and borrowing unused or unwanted goods among individuals and groups (Botsman & Rogers, 2010b, pp. 78-79; Botsman, 2015). Thanks to community interaction and the increasing use of online technologies, collaborative consumption has grown so much that it has converted from a chiefly private or local behavior into a powerful transformation movement that could disrupt traditional business models. Some known examples of this trend include the already mentioned projects such as eBay, Airbnb, TaskRabbit, BlaBlaCar, Uber and Zipcar (Owyang et al., 2014). These innovative business models are largely supported and operated by means of Product-Service Systems (PSSs). PSSs are a specific type of value proposition oriented towards needs and ensuring consumer (or user) satisfaction by providing an integrated system of products and services (Manzini, Vezzoli, & Clark, 2001). They enable

cooperation that can be generally classified as ‘user-oriented’ and ‘result-oriented’ services allowing access to company-owned products (e.g., bicycle and car rental systems or laundries) or making it possible to share private property with others within a community (e.g., clothes exchanges, accommodation with peers). Since sustainable PSSs can satisfy economic interests that additionally exert a positive, both social and environmental, impact, much attention has been paid in recent years to such systems as a promising pattern leading to sustainable consumption (Tukker & Tischner, Eds., 2006, p. 1553). This creates opportunities for developing new (and possibly most profitable) proposals having a potentially lower environmental impact and offering users more meaningful feelings. For example, travelling by train together is an opportunity to reduce driving costs and negative environmental consequences, but also a chance to meet new people while travelling or commuting. Finally, given the dependence on social networks and interactions, collaborative consumption can promote social innovation and contribute to building stronger and closer communities (Tukker & Tischner, 2006, pp. 1554-1555).

2.4. Resurgence of community

Research highlights the growing role of co-production and community membership in consumer behavior. Membership of a specific community or aspiration for membership in a given group or community are some factors determining the practice of sharing or joint consumption (Närvänen, Kartastenpää, & Kuusela, 2013, pp. 360-361). In one of their books, *From Generation Me to Generation We*, Botsman & Rogers (2010c, p. 49) discuss a significant change in society that arose some time ago and is still progressing. The authors claim that today’s generation of Facebook users is trying to establish contacts with people similar to them, both in social media and offline. Albinsson & Perera (2012, pp. 308-310) emphasize that the sense of togetherness acts as the prime factor in regular participation in the sharing process. They claim that people attend community meetings, among others, to share knowledge and goods for ideological and practical reasons. A growing part of society is beginning to look for a way to find their feet in today’s world of chaos and anxiety by attempting to define their life values and goals as well as to apprehend what is authentic. The return to such authenticity is well exemplified by the noticeable increase in the popularity of local shops and places where individuals can purchase handmade goods. These three basic values, namely simplicity, traceability and transparency, as well as consumer participation in the surrounding world constitute the key foun-

dation of a new attitude and approach of contemporary consumers. Simplicity is a symbolic desire to return to the times when products could be bought in the then local markets with their traditional realities and greater confidence in the seller-consumer relationship. Traceability and transparency reflect the willingness to know as much as possible about the product, its origin and production method. The last mentioned value is consumers' desire to stop being passive, sometimes unaware victims of hyper-consumption and their aspiration to be individuals who control what surrounds them (Botsman & Rogers, 2010b, pp. 34-35).

2.5. Peer-to-peer technologies

Peer-to-peer (P2P) networks are one of the key factors driving the development of collaborative consumption. They enable communication and interaction within a computer network without using a server. In this model, each user has the same possibilities and rights, hence each can start transmitting and receiving data. Moreover, the currently used social networks and new technologies play an extremely important role. The web as the infrastructure of Internet connections makes it possible to connect individuals directly, which is why the peer-to-peer model is functioning without the necessity or requirement to involve an additional person who would have to intermediate in this process. Each person who is online is free to sell or buy something on websites such as Allegro, OLX, tablica.com, Amazon or eBay, post videos on YouTube or find a job through LinkedIn, Gumtree or GoldenLine. The items that are ideally suited for collaborative consumption are relatively costly and are used quite rarely.

As already mentioned, the Internet and mobile communications underpin the emergence of a more active social culture as compared to the previously popular egocentrism. This has become a reality thanks to Generations Y and Z, which are and were growing up in the virtual world. Mainly through the Internet, they now share different skills, interests, interesting knowledge or favorite music and films. It is the Millennial Generation that somehow commenced the transformation of culture more focused on 'we' rather than just 'I' (Gansky, 2010, pp. 121-122). Another benefit from the spread of P2P platforms is easier access to desired goods and services without having to own them. The last few years have seen the emergence of many Internet platforms that enable the development of collaborative consumption and may have both international and local reach. However, each of these businesses relies on contemporary consumers and their behaviors that induce them to interact with others.

2.6. Cost consciousness

Another determinant that drives collaborative consumption is cost saving. Mont (2004, pp. 138-140) asserts that the satisfaction of customers sharing a car is greatly influenced by cost savings, including the initial cost of investing in the choice of a particular vehicle (Mont, 2004). Bardhi & Eckhardt (2012, pp. 884-886) argue that financial benefits of sharing are crucial to usage, and highlight that economic considerations are frequently the chief reason (surpassing even other fears such as ethical issues) for collaborative consumption. Moeller & Wittkowski (2010, pp. 182-183) in turn emphasize that exchange options are usually cheaper than non-sharing. They believe that price consciousness is decisive for choosing the sharing option. The *New Sharing Economy* report, which concerned collaborative consumption, indicates that people with relatively low disposable income are much more inclined to get involved in such consumption and also feel slightly greater satisfaction while sharing their goods with strangers than those who are wealthy. Research on consumer behavior has also revealed that additional income is the most crucial motivator that initiated a new way of acquiring goods (Latitude, 2013).

The exchange of many goods and services as part of collaborative consumption has resulted in the emergence of its many forms. The most important ones include (Wardak & Zalega, 2013, p. 10):

- 1) clothswap, toyswap – cashless exchange of toys or clothes;
- 2) cohousing – separate, independent flats joined together by a certain common space that is used by all residents of a given place, for instance laundry, kitchen, or playground;
- 3) couchsurfing – a platform where it is possible to offer free accommodation to people from every part of the world or to find someone who would take us in while we are travelling;
- 4) crowdfunding – raising capital socially for a specific purpose, for example starting an innovative business; people who will like the idea have a chance to support the originator with some small amounts;
- 5) coworking – renting various rooms in which people can work; this form is extremely popular among remote workers as well as freelancers;
- 6) carpooling – sharing a car for a fee to reduce travel costs (e.g., BlaBlaCar);
- 7) carsharing – renting private cars via online portals;
- 8) home swapping – home exchange, for example during holidays, between inhabitants of different regions or countries via online portals;
- 9) roomsharing – renting one's room on predetermined days via online portals; such rental is usually short-term and most popular among tourists.

It is also important to note that individuals used to build mutual trust mainly on the basis of frequent direct contacts with family, friends and other people known from everyday life. Those relationships developed in stages through continuous, more frequent conversations, interactions, mutual assistance and support for closest neighbors or friends in their daily life. Putnam (2000, pp. 74-78) refers to such a relationship as 'social capital'. In addition, he proves that everyday human relationships are now declining as more and more people, instead of building relationships with others, spend their free time chiefly working and continually accumulating more wealth. Furthermore, we spend longer time online, in front of a computer, and that is where we build a new social capital that, in this case, is based on trust, though in online communities (Putnam, 2000, pp. 80-84). All entrepreneurs who engage in collaborative consumption, however, agree that today, under present conditions, building trust among participants of the new business model that has primarily resulted from the dynamic and ubiquitous development of modern technologies and the Internet is one of the vital issues and factors in business development and maintenance (Gansky, 2010, pp. 91-94).

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research conceptualization

The tool used to conduct the research was my original questionnaire comprising 50 closed-ended questions regarding alternative consumer trends, including collaborative consumption. In addition, respondents were presented, among others, with cases concerning various imaginary situations in which young people had to imagine themselves as potential buyers. Those cases were intended to check whether they would be willing to participate in the sharing process or not. Furthermore, respondents were asked to indicate what they considered to be the key disadvantages and advantages of collaborative consumption as well as examples of products that they would be more inclined to purchase or use as part of such collaboration with other users. The survey was carried out from 10th May to 10th June 2017. The difficulty lay in appropriate definition of the study subject because the category of 'young consumer' is not clearly specified in the literature. Scholarly publications refer to various age ranges for the group of young consumers, for example 15-29 years (Szulce, 2009, p. 637), 15-34 years (Olejniczuk-Merta, 2001, p. 40). In this article, those between 18 and 34 years of age are considered to be the population of young people. The upper age limit,

that is 34 years, is regarded as the end of youth in Polish literature. The participants were recruited via the *ankietka.pl* website and social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, and e-mail. In order to partake in the survey, those interested had to visit a specific website containing the questionnaire. It was also distributed across special forums, university and private school fanpages. In accordance with the research assumptions, the sample included persons aged 18-34, representatives of Generations Y and Z, who took independent purchasing decisions in the market. In order to select the sample, the selective quota sampling procedure was applied. The characteristics (quotas) covered by the research were: sex and age. In addition to the basic measures of descriptive statistics, the analysis of variance and the LSD test (LSD – Least Significant Differences) for $\alpha = 0.05$ were performed. The survey was conducted as part of statutory research and fully funded by the Faculty of Management of the University of Warsaw.

3.2. Selection and characteristics of the research sample

240 people took part in the survey, including 112 men and 128 women. Slightly over half of respondents lived in cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants. Every third participant had completed secondary education, less than 2/5 of respondents held a bachelor's or engineering degree, and every fifth held a master's degree. The average age of respondents is 24 years. They were mostly students who combined studies with work, whereas the unemployed formed the smallest group. Almost half of respondents lived in cohabitation or LAT (Living Apart Together) relationships. More than 2/5 of them were single and one in ten was married. As regards monthly disposable income per capita, the largest group earned from PLN 1001.00 to PLN 2000.00. However, astonishingly many (half of respondents) assessed their current financial situation as good, and 6.7% as very good (Table 1).

Table 1. The structure of respondents

Sex	Percentage share	Number of respondents (N = 240)
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Female	53.33	128
Male	46.67	112
Age		
18-23	45.83	110
24-28	34.58	83
29-34	19.58	47
Place of residence		
Country	9.17	22
City of up to 20,000 inhabitants	7.92	19

Table 1 cont.

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
City of 20,000-100,000 inhabitants	8.75	21
City of 101,000-200,000 inhabitants	8.75	21
City of 201,000-500,000 inhabitants	12.92	31
City of more than 500,000 inhabitants	52.50	126
Education		
Primary	2.08	5
Secondary	35.00	84
Bachelor/engineer	37.92	91
Master	22.92	55
PhD	1.25	3
Other, what?	0.83	2
Professional status		
In education	4.17	10
I study	34.58	83
I study and work	37.92	91
I work	20.42	49
Unemployed	2.92	7
Marital status		
Single	41.67	100
In a cohabitation or LAT relationship	48.75	117
Married	9.17	22
Widowed	0.00	0
Divorced	0.42	1
Assessment of the financial situation		
Very good	6.67	16
Good	50.83	122
Moderate	38.33	92
Bad	3.75	9
Very bad	0.42	1
Monthly per capita income in PLN		
Less than 1000.00	12.08	29
1001.00-2000.00	25.42	61
2001.00-3000.00	23.33	56
3001.00-4000.00	9.58	23
4001.00-5000.00	4.58	11
More than 5000.00	2.92	7
I have no income of my own	22.08	53

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Respondents' attitude to collaborative consumption

In line with the definition of collaborative consumption, its basic assumption is sharing goods with others, which means using goods without having to own them. It may comprise commonly used accessories and small consumer

goods but also durable goods sold at high unit prices (e.g., cars, sports equipment), real property and services (as on the Polish Gumtree portal). Therefore, it was decided to examine young respondents' need to possess goods for their exclusive use.

Table 2. The wish to own goods among young consumers surveyed

List of responses	Percentage share	Number of respondents (N = 240)
It is important for me to own all goods (regardless of the cost and frequency of use)	51.3	123
If I can, I borrow goods from strangers	30.4	73
I don't care if I use my own or borrowed goods	18.3	44

Respondents consider it very important to own all goods regardless of the cost and frequency of use (Table 2). This opinion was expressed by every second survey participant. It can thus be concluded that the wish to own goods is so strongly rooted among young consumers that they appreciate ownership more than the real utility of goods.

4.2. Forms of collaborative consumption pursued by respondents

The survey shows that less than every third respondent knows the notion of collaborative consumption. More than half of young consumers did not engage in similar activity and do not plan to undertake such activities in the near future. On the other hand, almost 3/5 of them were quite well aware of the manifestations of collaborative consumption and knew platforms supporting initiatives that fall within the scope of the examined consumer trend. Women (56.3%) scored significantly higher than men (42.6%) on their involvement in collaborative consumption. An in-depth statistical analysis also covered the impact of the other characteristics of respondents, namely age ($p = 0.31592$) and place of residence ($p = 0.32168$), on their reported level of participation in sharing goods and services with others. The survey results have shown that these variables do not significantly affect the participation of young respondents in collaborative consumption.

The analysis of the research material suggests that young people who actively engage in collaborative consumption exchange things eagerly. They most often swap books, clothing and games (Table 3). Such forms of consumption are referred to as clothswap or toyswap and mean cashless exchange of unnecessary

clothes, unwanted gifts, books, films, games, children's clothes, footwear, toys, etc. Cashless direct exchange of goods is a good example of fashion for saving and eco-friendliness in an unconventional style.

Table 3. Products acquired by respondents as part of collaborative consumption

List of responses	Percentage share	Number of respondents
Clothing	13.75	33
Electronics – computers, phones, etc.	5.00	12
Games	9.17	22
Films	7.92	19
Books	15.00	36
Unwanted gifts	13.34	18
Furniture	1.67	4
Toys	3.33	8
Bicycles	3.33	8
Children's clothes	2.92	7
Other, what?	0.42	1
No, I haven't engaged in such activity but I'd be willing to take part	16.25	39
No, I haven't engaged in such activity and I don't plan to take part	54.58	131

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

The questionnaire also contained examples of acts associated with collaborative consumption that those surveyed could perform (Table 4). Almost every third respondent admitted that they would agree to rent a room or entire flat for a few days to a person visiting their city (roomsharing). On the other hand, every sixth claimed that they would not opt for such an idea. Only every eighth respondent would be ready to swap their flat/house with a stranger via the Internet. Their great reluctance to exchange flats or houses for holidays (home swapping) results from the concern about privacy, the way in which guests would handle their home appliances as well as fear of possible devastation or theft of their property. Such behavior is a reaction to press reports appearing from time to time about dishonesty of people who wish to swap homes. This may be exemplified by the case of a woman who rented her house through Airbnb in June 2011. Her home was plundered and robbed by the guests. This incident harmed the reputation of the website and urged its founders to introduce more stringent security measures by raising the property protection guarantee to \$50,000 (Arrington, 2011).

Most young people are not interested in sharing their own means of transport such as cars or motorcycles (carsharing). Only every twenty-sixth respondents would be willing to rent their private car to a stranger using an online plat-

form. The reason for reluctance to rent or share such goods is the conviction that potential benefits will not fully compensate for possible shortcomings of these solutions. This behavior is an obvious manifestation of their limited trust in strangers and the result of information reported from time to time about vandalism and theft of rented cars and motorcycles. A good example is provided by HiGear, which supports the rental of luxury cars and which had to cease its activity because four cars with a total value of \$300,000 owned by its members had been stolen. This happened despite a number of security measures applied by the company such as verification of users, use of credit cards, car accident insurance, financial deposit, etc. Consequently, the company owners decided that its further operation was too risky (Perez, 2012).

The respondents' answers received in the survey clearly show that over half of them would not be willing to participate in any of the above forms of collaborative consumption.

Table 4. Acts associated with collaborative consumption that respondents would be willing to perform

List of responses	Percentage share	Number of respondents (N = 240)
To rent a room or entire flat to a stranger who is visiting your city for a few days	26.67	64
To exchange both unused and used items with strangers via the Internet	21.25	51
To rent your car or motorcycle to a stranger via an Internet platform/application	3.75	9
To swap flats or houses for 2 weeks with an unknown foreigner via the Internet	12.08	29
I couldn't perform any of these acts	54.17	130

The presented research results clearly demonstrate that young consumers exhibit a greater willingness to share goods that are of a lesser value to them than those which are more expensive. It can therefore be concluded that the higher the value of a given good (e.g., house, flat, car), the lower the tendency to share it with others.

4.3. Sites and portals enabling respondents to participate in collaborative consumption

Most young respondents use sites and Internet portals enabling the participation in collaborative consumption. It can thus be concluded that some people taking part in collaborative consumption are not aware whatsoever that their

behavior is consistent with this alternative consumer trend. Young people most commonly visit Allegro and OLX, whereas they least frequent use such sites as yard sales or Zipcar (Table 5).

Table 5. Most frequently used sites/Internet platforms for collaborative consumption

List of responses	Percentage share	Number of respondents (N = 240)
Second-hand clothes shops	15.83	38
Allegro	49.17	118
Ebay	5.83	14
OLX	44.58	107
Gumtree	10.83	26
BlablaCar	9.17	22
Zipcar	0.42	1
Airbnb	10.42	25
Couchsurfing	4.58	11
Podaj.net	0.42	1
Thingo.pl	0.42	1
Yard sales	2.50	6
Markets organized several times a year in various places in my city, e.g. clothswap	3.33	8
Other, what	7.50	18
I don't visit such sites	27.08	65

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

In the case of collaborative consumption, respondents were requested to imagine a situation associated with the consumer trend under study. They were asked the question: You are going alone by car to a city located 200 km away. The trip will take a few hours. You have four available seats in your car. What are you doing? As many as 58.33% of them answered that they would do absolutely nothing and take no stranger with them. They would set off alone because they feel most comfortable then. In turn, 41.67% of those surveyed said that they would place an advertisement on an Internet platform or in a web application with services offering seats in private cars and the sharing of travel costs.

4.4. The impact of disposable income on respondents' interest in collaborative consumption

The research also sought to explain to what extent disposable income influences young people's interest in collaborative consumption (Table 6).

Table 6. The impact of disposable income on young respondents' interest in collaborative consumption

List of responses	Percentage share	Number of respondents (N = 240)
My budget makes me search for options of sharing, exchanging or buying goods from strangers	51.24	123
My budget does not make me search for options of sharing, exchanging or buying goods from strangers	48.76	117

The research shows that over half of respondents state that their household budget has a significant impact on decisions regarding sharing, exchanging or buying goods from strangers. This opinion is expressed by all respondents who assess their financial situation as very bad or bad. Most respondents who give their financial situation a moderate rating also think that their budget is a key determinant of their decisions to exchange or share goods. Over 4/5 of respondents assessing their financial situation as very good admit that disposable income is not an important factor in sharing, exchanging or buying goods from strangers.

Furthermore, the research intended to check how interested young people would be in collaborative consumption if their budget were unlimited. More than 69% of those surveyed admitted that they would then buy all goods they needed, regardless of the frequency of their use. Every third respondent would confine their purchases solely to the goods that they used frequently. Less than 2.5% of young people would fully engage in collaborative consumption (Table 7).

Table 7. Influence of unlimited income on respondents' interest in collaborative consumption

List of responses	Percentage share	Number of respondents (N = 240)
I would buy all items for both occasional and frequent use	69.14	166
I would buy only those goods that I use often and try to share/ /borrow those less frequently used	28.40	68
I would borrow or share all items, from those that I use often to those for occasional use	2.47	6

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

In order to establish whether respondents' characteristics have a statistically significant impact on the declared attitude to sharing goods and services, an analysis of variance and the LSD test were performed. Based on the obtained results, the material situation can be said to significantly affect the declared in-

volvement of young consumers, as evidenced by the probability value p of 0.03997. The lowest involvement in collaborative consumption was reported by those in the best financial situation (23.9%), and the highest by respondents in the most difficult financial situation (59.8%). Respondents in financial situation described as bad (42.3%) and good (39.8%) did not differ in their involvement in a statistically significant way.

4.5. Disadvantages and advantages of collaborative consumption in respondents' opinion

The research also concerned key disadvantages of collaborative consumption. Following the analysis of the research material, it can be stated that respondents most often pointed to distrust and a possible fraudulent transaction on the part of a stranger. This answer was indicated by 4/5 of all respondents participating in the survey (Table 8). This clearly shows a considerable need to develop new and more effective mechanisms for building trust among all parties involved in collaborative consumption. Respondents also confirmed that they would be more willing to engage in collaborative consumption if they knew the person with whom they concluded a transaction and when sufficiently strict regulations were developed to ensure their safety in such transactions.

Table 8. The biggest disadvantages of collaborative consumption indicated by the consumers surveyed

List of responses	Percentage share	Number of respondents
Limited trust and possible fraudulent transactions on the part of strangers	80.83	194
No warranty for items purchased as part of collaborative consumption	54.17	130
Uncertain origin of a product	49.58	119
Quality of purchased items	32.50	78
No possibility of possessing the purchased products continuously	23.33	56
Other, what?	2.50	6
I think that collaborative consumption has no disadvantages	2.92	7

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

An important part of the research was to learn, apart from the disadvantages, crucial benefits encouraging young people to engage in collaborative consumption (Table 9).

Table 9. Benefits motivating young consumers to participate in collaborative consumption

List of responses	Percentage share	Number of respondents
Knowing the people who borrow goods/exchange items	60.31	145
Well-prepared regulations that would prevent any fraud	54.83	132
Free and unhampered access to various goods and services	53.80	129
An opportunity to earn money	50.26	121
An opportunity to meet new friends and acquaintances	40.62	97
An opportunity to help others	29.17	70
Efficient and deliberate use of goods	9.68	23
Strengthening of social ties and relations	8.65	21
None, I'm not interested in such consumption whatsoever	6.18	15

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

Young respondents indicated four principal benefits motivating them to participate in collaborative consumption via the Internet:

1. Knowing the people who borrow goods/exchange items.
2. Well-prepared regulations that guarantee safe participation in collaborative consumption.
3. Free and unhampered access to various goods and services.
4. An opportunity to earn money.

The answers received in the survey clearly show that financial gains are a significant determinant motivating them to engage in the alternative consumer trend of collaborative consumption. Furthermore, young consumers are willing to share goods and services only if they know the people with whom they make or will make such transactions in the future. This is also confirmed by the fact that more than half of respondents declared that the essential motivator for participation in collaborative was the existence of well-prepared regulations guaranteeing safe online transactions of sale or exchange of goods with strangers. Another important advantage of collaborative consumption indicated by more than half of respondents is free and unhampered access to various goods and services. Hence, it can be concluded that consumers choosing this answer had no previous access to certain goods and services because of their price, since goods and services that can be purchased as part of collaborative consumption are generally available through traditional consumption channels. Accordingly, respondents are probably willing to engage in collaborative consumption of a specific good only if they are unable to buy it.

5. Conclusions

Changes in consumer purchasing behavior occur slowly, yet their pace is strongly dependent on economic, political, psychological and sociological factors. The rise of collaborative consumption was stimulated principally by the global financial and economic crisis and intensive advancement of new technologies. People were seeking new solutions that would allow them to avoid drastic changes in their current lifestyles despite their worse financial situation. Concurrently, social media were developing vigorously, accelerating and simultaneously facilitating interpersonal contacts worldwide. This also became a model for many P2P (peer-to-peer) platforms. Collaborative consumption can thus be said to perfectly interact with other consumer behavior trends that involve a shift from rampant consumerism, the cult of possession and the grasping accumulation of consumer goods. Such consumption relies on borrowing, exchanging, bartering one's goods or making them available to other people for a fee. Thus, it fits into alternative consumer trends distinguished by restraint on consumption, reduction of wastage and encouragement of environmentally friendly solutions.

The research shows that the higher the value of goods (e.g., house, flat, car), the less likely younger consumers are to share them. Respondents most frequently share goods such as books, clothing and games. Most of them use Internet portals enabling the participation in collaborative consumption, which greatly facilitates the sharing of goods and services. Additionally, the research has confirmed that disposable income is a crucial factor influencing their interest in collaborative consumption. This means that if the budget had no impact on consumption decisions of the young consumers surveyed, many of them would not engage in such consumption or would significantly reduce their involvement in favor of traditional consumption. Young consumers consider that important advantages of collaborative consumption include an opportunity to earn money and free and unhampered access to a wide range of goods and services, whereas the biggest drawbacks encompass distrust, possible fraudulent transactions on the part of strangers and uncertain origin of the purchased product.

When analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative consumption and consumer attitudes towards the manifestations of this consumer trend, it can be concluded that while Polish young consumers are developing along with the modern market, economic and cultural determinants still prevent them from fully accepting and understanding contemporary changes and purchase behaviors brought about by the era of the Internet and modern technologies. Given slower technological development in Poland than in Western Europe,

we continue to treat collaborative consumption as risky. What is encouraging, however, is that more and more young people actively participating in this consumer trend appreciate not only savings and earning opportunities but also the chance to meet new and interesting people from around the world. The survey conclusions regarding the frequency of involvement in various acts of collaborative consumption and the assessed eagerness to undertake specific actions are largely consistent with surveys conducted among young American consumers (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, pp. 881-898; Rostek & Zalega, 2015b, pp. 24-34) and young Western Europeans (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007, pp. 6-11; Heinrichs & Grunenberg, 2013, pp. 11-15; Stokes, Clarence, Anderson, & Rinne, 2014, pp. 20-27; Hamari et al., 2016, pp. 2052-2055, Lawson, Gleim, Perren, & Hwang, 2016, pp. 2615-2629).

Taking into account the presented survey results, some limitations resulting from a small research sample should be borne in mind. Thus, the conclusions should not be treated as representative of the population of young Polish consumers. They only provide some insight into actual consumer behaviors of young people as part of collaborative consumption.

This publication should contribute to a broader discussion and exchange of views on collaborative consumption, thereby encouraging other Polish scholars and researchers from various scientific and research centres to carry out extensive research in this area.

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