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Towards Sustainable Consumption: Generation Z's Views on Ownership and Access in the Sharing Economy

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Abstract: The sharing economy substitutes owning with accessing, promoting sustainable development by reducing excessive consumption and resource overuse, which harm the environment. Sharing reduces resource and energy use, lowering emissions and waste disposal costs, thus reducing environmental damage. This study identifies key factors that encourage Generation Z to embrace the sharing economy for goods and services, emphasizing its role in sustainable development. Conducted in May 2023, the study surveyed 442 Polish Generation Z individuals to examine their attitudes and behaviours regarding climate change. The research focused on this demographic due to their crucial role in addressing global issues. Data was collected using the CAWI method and analyzed with IBM SPSS and AMOS software through structural equation modelling (SEM). The analysis revealed three factors: Willingness to Share for Savings (WSS), Digital Customer Engagement (DCE), and Environmental Concern (EC). The results show that ecological concerns and digital engagement significantly influence people's willingness to share, boosting environmental awareness and cost-saving behaviours. Generation Z's sharing propensity and environmental consciousness are significantly shaped by digital engagement.

Keywords: sharing economy; sustainable consumption; digital platforms; climate change; generation Z; environmental concern

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1. Introduction

Over the past 10 years, there has been a rapid emergence of a novel economic phenomenon called the sharing economy. This phenomenon has been made possible by the widespread use of digital platforms that allow direct transactions between individuals, allowing them to share resources, goods, and services. The sharing economy is gaining popularity due to its ability to disrupt conventional business structures, provide flexibility to both enterprises and consumers and give advantages in terms of sustainability and resource efficiency. According to Statista Research Department (2023), the global sharing economy is projected to increase in value from $113 billion in 2021 to $600 billion in 2027 [1]. Based on projections from the European Parliament's Bureau of Analysis, the sharing economy is expected to produce approximately €20 billion in global revenues by the end of 2023 [2]. Countries with advanced economies, particularly the United States and countries of the European Union, have extensive experience in implementing sharing economy initiatives [3–5]. Collaborative creation or sharing of products is intended to improve the efficiency of existing resources [6]. Many entities operating within the sharing economy have achieved global success with unprecedented speed in developed countries [7]. However, difficulties in achieving favourable outcomes are particularly noticeable in emerging economies [8].

2. The Essence of the Sharing Economy

2.1. Definition of the Sharing Economy

Although the market share has been consistently growing, there is ongoing scholarly discussion on the precise definition of the term 'sharing economy'. The absence of a clear and consistent conceptual framework is emphasised, making it challenging to establish distinct conceptual and empirical boundaries of the sharing economy [9–12]. According to Belk [13], sharing has been a part of human behaviour since ancient times but shared consumption and the sharing economy are concepts that emerged in the era of the Internet. Most authors agree with this statement, acknowledging that, while there may be various definitions of the sharing economy, two fundamental aspects remain constant: the Internet as the central medium for communication and the act of sharing with others as a means of accessing underutilised products efficiently [14]. Botsman and Rogers [15] (2010) define the sharing economy as a system that allows individuals to gain economic advantage from their under-used resources by sharing or renting them out. According to Shmidt [16], various interpretations of the sharing economy exist, including collaborative consumption, access-based consumption, the on-demand economy, and the gig economy. Each definition centres on the allocation of a particular object and the allocation techniques. This underscores the intricate and varied character of the notion of a sharing economy. Singh [17] defined the sharing economy as a socio-economic framework where individuals are prepared to share their own 'social' products and services, focusing on both the concept's social and economic components. Cooperation is a fundamental mechanism in the sharing economy that enhances the overall efficiency and dependability of the system [18]. Sundararajan [19] defines the sharing economy as an economic and business model where people have free access to resources, such as goods or services, through renting, swapping, leasing, or selling. This model encourages the maximum use of resources, often resulting in savings and reduced waste. This term underscores the need to shift away from a consumption-focused mindset and instead highlights the importance of prolonging the lifespan of things.

2.2. Components of the Sharing Economy

Acquier et al. [9] divided the sharing economy into three main categories: the access economy, which involves sharing under-used assets to maximise their use; the platform economy, which facilitates decentralised exchanges between individuals via digital platforms, and the community economy, which involves non-contractual, nonhierarchical, or non-monetary coordination. Official European Commission texts define a "sharing economy" as business strategies that employ collaborative platforms to temporarily trade commodities or services. Private individuals run these platforms, which generate a public market [20]. The Polish authors define the sharing economy as a socioeconomic model based on grassroots initiatives of individuals (P2P relationships) that relate to underused resources, relying on technological platforms to share for a fee or for free [21]. Szymańska [22] defines the sharing economy as the direct offering of resources and services by private individuals, either for a price or for free. The sharing economy stimulates business innovation. In numerous activities, one can manifest. Małecka and Mitręga [23] highlight the link between sharing economy and product/process innovations. The sharing economy is extensively studied in economic models [24–26]. Balińska and Staśkiewicz [27] and Niezgoda and Markiewicz [28] offer the sharing economy in the tourism business, emphasising social innovation and relationship building [29]. Pawlicz emphasises the growing influence of the sharing economy in hotel services [30]. Under-utilised resources, aided by technology, define the sharing economy [31]. According to some studies, digital platforms allow people to rent out their skills and resources for money [32]. Hamari et al. [33] define the sharing economy as the peer-to-peer acquisition, delivery, or provision of goods and services via a community-based Internet platform. Other authors believe that it encompasses all economic activities based on resource or asset sharing, whether or not they are aided by digital platforms. Despite the defining dispute, the sharing economy affects many companies and sectors.

2.3. Scope and Application of the Sharing Economy

Acquier et al. [9] categorised the sharing economy into three primary components: (1) the access economy, which entails the sharing of underutilised assets to maximise their utilisation; (2) the platform economy, which facilitates decentralised exchanges between individuals via digital platforms, and (3) the community economy, which involves coordination through non-contractual, non-hierarchical, or non-monetary forms of interaction. The term "sharing economy" in official European Commission documents refers to business models that involve the use of collaborative platforms to facilitate the temporary exchange of goods or services. These platforms create a publicly accessible market and are often operated by private individuals [21]. Among Polish authors, it is worth noting the definition that describes the sharing economy as a socio-economic model based on grassroots initiatives of individuals (P2P relationships) that relate to underutilised resources, relying on sharing facilitated through technological platforms, for a fee or free of charge [21]. The essence of the sharing economy, according to Szymańska [22], can be broadly defined as the provision of available or underutilised resources and services, whether for a fee or free of charge, directly from private individuals. The sharing economy is recognised as a significant stimulus for the development of innovative activities in enterprises. One can manifest in various areas of activity. Małecka and Mitręga [23] emphasised the connections between sharing economy and product and process innovations. The issue of sharing economy is often discussed in the context of the economic model [24–26]. From a sectoral perspective, the application of the sharing economy in the tourism market was presented by Balińska and Staśkiewicz [27] and Niezgoda and Markiewicz [28], who particularly emphasised the context of social innovation and the creation of social relationships in the tourism market [29]. Meanwhile, Pawlicz emphasised the growing role of the sharing economy in the market of hotel services [30]. The main characteristic of the sharing economy is considered to be the underutilised resources, whose utilisation is facilitated by technology [31]. Some researchers define it as an activity facilitated by digital platforms, where people rent out their skills and/or share their resources for money [32]. Hamari et al. [33] describe the sharing economy as a peer-to-peer activity based on the acquisition, delivery, or provision of access to goods and services, often facilitated by an online platform based on a community. Other authors argued that it is a broader concept that encompasses all economic activities based on sharing resources or assets, regardless of whether they are facilitated via digital platforms. Despite the lack of consensus on the definition, it is widely acknowledged that the sharing economy has a significant impact on a variety of industries and sectors.

In this article, the term "sharing economy" refers to the bottom-up initiatives of consumers seeking to establish P2P relationships with the aim of exchanging their products or providing services, either for a fee, partially for a fee, or for free. These initiatives are based on the idea of sharing and are facilitated through technological platforms. It should be emphasised that sharing access to certain goods can refer to several activity areas, including material products and service provision. Ganapati and Reddick [34] indicate that the sharing economy is applicable in numerous areas of service activity. It has a significant impact on many different sectors of the economy [35], and the implications arising from its use should determine the decision-making process of market entities [36,37]. This is confirmed by Ciulli and Kolk [38], who demonstrated that the changes implemented by operators in their business strategies to participate in the sharing economy have influenced the creation of environmental, social, and economic value. Ritter and Schanz [39] evaluated the fundamental principles of sharing in the context of business models to classify research on business models in the sharing economy. Laukkanen and Tura analyse the capacity of various sharing economy business models to create sustained profit [40]. The economy of sharing is also becoming an increasingly common topic in operations management [41]. Curtis and Mont [42] aim to enhance the modelling of the sharing economy business by assisting in the development and implementation of sustainable business models. Claudelin et al. [43] explain the techniques for launching public services in the sharing economy.

Cheng et al. [44] provide some solutions for the challenges facing the accommodation-sharing sector. Mair and Reischauer [45] propose a research plan aimed at comprehensively examining the dynamics of the sharing economy at the level of individual organisations, broader industries, and interactions between different industries.

2.4. Dimensions and Consumer Behaviour in the Sharing Economy

John [46] examines the act of sharing in three domains: Web 2.0, where sharing links, photos, status updates, etc., is the primary activity; the "sharing economy" in production and consumption; and intimate interpersonal relationships, where sharing emotions is culturally normative. Martin [47] identified six main dimensions related to the sharing economy: (1) economic opportunity, (2) a more sustainable form of consumption, (3) a path towards a decentralised, fair, and sustainable economy, (4) unregulated markets, (5) reinforcement of the neoliberal paradigm, and (6) an inconsistent innovative space. An important area of research conducted by many authors is the presentation of the sharing economy in the context of consumer theory, attitudes, and consumer behaviour. Research indicates that participation in the sharing economy is influenced by the personal characteristics of consumers. For example, Fraiberger and Sundararajan [48] found that access to the sharing economy is more likely for consumers from low-income groups, while Hsiao et al. [49] demonstrated that higher income or education levels do not affect sharing economy behaviour or intentions. Hellwig et al. [50] indicated that women are more likely than men to engage in the sharing economy. An important variable, from the perspective of the development of the sharing economy, is age, which has been the subject of numerous empirical studies [50–52]. The segments most frequently studied include young people at various stages of the educational process, as well as individuals entering the job market [53–55]. They are the ones who will choose the direction in which the development of the sharing economy will head in the next few years. The research context itself constitutes the scope of this study.

2.5. Paper Objective in the Context of the Sharing Economy

The article aims to identify the key factors driving the development of the sharing economy as an alternative form of access to goods and services among Generation Z consumers and highlight their significance in sustainable development. The authors attempted to answer the question of whether young consumers of Generation Z attach importance to owning a product or if they are satisfied with simply having access to the product without acquiring ownership rights, as well as what factors determine their attitudes in this regard. The answers to these questions will be crucial for sustainable development in the coming decades. Therefore, the identification undertaken in this article is of great significance from the perspective of sustainable development. The implementation of the idea of sharing through technological platforms among the younger generation of consumers seems almost inherent, as young people are more receptive to new trends than older consumers and adapt to other consumer behaviours faster than others [56,57]. Representatives of Generation Z identify themselves with groups that share certain closely aligned views while also having a need to stand out and showcase their originality [58]. In particular, peers [59,60] are beginning to have a growing influence on their behaviour. These are those who respond quickly to environmental challenges, aspire to continuous immediate interactions, consider themselves experts in technology, are inclined to self-learn, and feel comfortable in a digital and visual environment [61]. The engagement and establishment of relationships online are often just as important for them as those in the real world [62], which is significant in terms of participation in the sharing economy. They are characterised by a positive attitude toward purchasing used products, the prevalence of online shopping, and the analysis of information on the products they want to acquire [63]. Young consumers place importance on ecological issues, which can have a crucial impact on the future development of the sharing economy [64]. They possess the necessary understanding of healthy lifestyles, have developed behaviours that promote reverence for the natural environment and are more

receptive to accepting alternative modes of consumption, such as shared consumption [65]. The authors postulated the main hypothesis that among young consumers representing Generation Z, their digital engagement and their pursuit of cost-effective solutions in accessing products and services while simultaneously caring for the environment contribute to the sharing of goods.

In Poland, which is the spatial scope of empirical research, more than half of consumers (58%) perceive the problem of excessive consumerism [66]. According to the EY Future Consumer Index 2023 study, the image of the Polish consumer emerges as someone who does not feel the need to keep up with the latest trends, both in fashion (73% of respondents) and in the field of technology (64% of respondents). Consumers are increasingly reducing their purchases or seeking cheaper alternatives. It should be emphasised that up to 65% of consumers surveyed intend to buy used items more frequently [67]. The research results conducted among Polish consumers [68–71] mainly align with the findings of consumer research conducted in other countries. The increase in the proportion of consumers who opt to rent or exchange goods rather than own them is supported by numerous studies conducted in the past decade [33,72–75]. The research conducted by the authors aligns with the discourse introduced and aims to identify the factors that determine the attitudes of young Polish consumers toward the sharing economy. This is an important and current research topic from the perspective of sustainable development since the participation of young consumers in the sharing economy may play a crucial role in mitigating the growing climate crisis and implementing the principles of sustainable development in the near future.

3. Factors That Contribute to the Growth of the Sharing Economy in the Context of a Transition from Excessive Consumerism to Sustainable Practices

In scientific studies, the prevailing approach is that the sharing economy is an alternative consumption model that prioritises access to goods without the need for ownership [13,33]. Therefore, an alternative to ownership is the sharing of goods, which, as Botsman and Rogers [15] have already stated, represents the future of our world, in which we have indulged excessively in consumption. A positive attitude towards sharing generally leads to increased commitment and exploration of other options, although this is not always the case [76]. Sharing economy platforms facilitate the convenient use of commodities and services that may not be easily accessible through conventional methods. Sundararajan [77] has identified this factor as a crucial determinant of participation. He points out the need to understand how the relationship between consumer value and cultural significance changes when the boundaries between what is personal and what is commercial blur. He also indicates the need to understand how social motives and the desire for interpersonal connections are intertwined with commercial goals to co-create consumer value in sharing economy experiences. The identification of factors determining consumer engagement in the process of product sharing within the sharing economy, and hence the shift from excessive consumption toward sustainability, is a complex and multifaceted process, dependent on the specific characteristics of certain consumer groups. In the study, the authors attempted to identify these factors in relation to representatives of Generation Z. Based on the review of the literature, three fundamental categories (constructs-hidden variables) that determine consumer activity in the sharing economy were identified: Willingness to Share for Savings (WSS), Digital Customer Engagement (DCE), and Environmental Concern (EC). Table 1 comprises the literature that the authors consider significant for the preparation of the research process, although it has not been referenced in the literature review pertaining to the three research variables.

Table 1. The scope of the research in terms of the subject literature—selected results.

Willingness to Share for Savings (WSS)	Say et al., 2021 [78], Rossmannek & Chen, 2023 [79], Joshi & Rahman, 2017 [80], Gadeikiene & Svarcaite, 2021 [81], Minami et al., 2021 [82], Oral & Thurner, 2019 [83], Nguyen et al., 2018 [84], Zalega, 2018 [85], Kuźniar et al., 2023 [86]
Digital Customer Engagement (DCE)	Ham et al., 2019 [87], Akbar & Hoffmann, 2020 [88], Cheng et al., 2021 [89], Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2018 [90], Sashi, 2012 [91], Ruan et al., 2014 [92], Wang & Hu, 2009 [93], Urban et al., 2009 [94], Hollebeek & Macky, 2019 [95], Eigenraam et al., 2018 [96], Salo & Karjaluoto, 2007 [97]
Environmental Concern (EC)	Bellotti et al., 2015 [98], Gomes et al., 2023 [99], Le et al., 2022 [100], Borusiak et al., 2021 [101], Maichum et al., 2016 [102], Aruta & Paceño, 2022 [103], Gu, 2022 [104], Chien, 2022 [105], Sadiq et. al., 2023 [106]

Source: Own case study.

3.1. Economic Motivations

One of the primary incentives for engaging in the sharing economy is the pursuit of financial benefits. By engaging in asset or service sharing, individuals can generate cash or reduce expenses by using their under-utilised resources. As an illustration, people can lease out their extra rooms through platforms like Airbnb or offer transportation to others through services like Uber or Lyft. In their study, Nguyen et al. [84] investigated how customers perceive the value of the sharing economy by analysing the economic, functional, emotional and symbolic benefits and sacrifices associated with it. A study conducted among German consumers reveals that the primary drivers for co-consumption are financial success and less emphasis on "ownership" [107]. The study by Henseling [108] confirmed that economic motivations have the highest priority, followed by ecological motivations. Social motives, on the other hand, have a much lesser influence on participation in co-consumption activities compared to the other two motives. Studies by Bardhi and Eckhardt, Hamari et al., and Möhlmann demonstrate that financial incentives play a crucial role in driving participation in the sharing economy [33,72,109]. Hamari et al. [33] found that in the sharing economy, people are increasingly driven by external rewards rather than internal satisfaction, indicating that economic incentives are gaining importance. Möhlmann [109] emphasised that utility, trust, and cost savings are crucial elements in determining enjoyment and the probability of repeating solutions in the sharing economy in a comparable situation. This emphasises the economic factors that impact customer behaviour. The significant role of financial variables as incentives to participate in sharing economy activities is also evident among Polish consumers. Szymańska [110] showed that representatives of Generation Z perceive sharing economy activity to be primarily related to convenience, cost savings, waste reduction, and an environmentally conscious mindset. Furthermore, it offers the chance for personal development, expanding one's perspectives, and cultivating entrepreneurial attributes. Analysis has been conducted on the financial incentives for participating in the sharing economy across various platforms and services. Guttentag et al. [111] performed a segmentation analysis to understand the elements that influence the decision of visitors to choose Airbnb. The findings highlighted distinct characteristics associated with lowering expenses and a desire for new encounters. Tussyadiah and Pesonen [10] conducted a study to analyse the influence of peer-to-peer accommodation on travel behaviour. Their research provided useful insights into the economic incentives and outcomes associated with sharing economy accommodation. Horn and Merante [112] conducted a study to analyse the influence of house sharing on rental pricing, presenting empirical evidence on the economic effects of lodging in the sharing economy. Meshulam et al. [113] highlighted the role of savings and convenience in driving the higher demand for goods and services. Kim's [114] research indicated that the level of savings significantly influences customers' decision-making processes. This underscores the importance of financial considerations in influencing consumer loyalty toward sharing economy platforms. In their study, Curtis and Mont [42] emphasised the capacity of sharing economy company models to generate sustainable value. Specifically, their attention was

directed towards the monetary rewards and challenges related to expanding voluntary community-based models. Zervas et al. [115] conducted a study to assess the influence of Airbnb on the hotel sector. Their research emphasised the economic consequences of the expanding sharing economy and its influence on well-established sectors such as tourism and hospitality. Mont et al. [116] performed a comprehensive examination of the sharing economy over a period of ten years. Their evaluation encompassed various domains, including concepts, users, commercial perspectives, and governance. The study also offered valuable information on the financial aspects of the sharing economy and how they have changed over time. The literature also examines the financial consequences of sharing economy business models for sustainability, as demonstrated by research conducted by Mont et al. and Curtis and Mont [42,116]. This study provides a detailed understanding of the intricate correlation between sharing economy models, financial factors, and sustainability objectives.

3.2. Customers' Digital Engagement

The sharing economy has arisen due to many technological advancements that have improved communication and facilitated the exchange of tangible and intangible products and services. For a long time, researchers have recognised that effective communication plays a crucial role in determining the amount of commitment to collaboration [117]. The proliferation of various information systems on the Internet has greatly aided the advancement of communication. In addition, the widespread use of mobile applications has expedited the rapid dissemination of information [72]. This has increased the desire to establish connections, foster trust, and cultivate a feeling of community, facilitating people to engage with individuals who share similar interests and forge significant relationships [15]. To properly manage customer sharing behaviour, it is essential to comprehend the idea of customer engagement and how it influences consumers' likelihood to share information with others. Vivek et al. [118] provide a definition of customer engagement as the extent of an individual's participation and connection with a company's products or activities, which can be initiated by either the consumer or the company. Digital customer engagement is establishing an emotional bond between organisations and customers using digital platforms [119]. Thakur [120] emphasised the significant impact of client involvement in influencing consumer loyalty in the digital business landscape. Meire et al. [121] conducted a comprehensive study on the impact of marketer-generated content on the level of digital customer engagement. They offer valuable information about how content strategy affects client engagement. Szymańska [24] highlights that the public is actively participating in novel kinds of collaboration through the utilisation of current media. Bapat and Khandelwal [122] elucidate the growing significance of consumer engagement in digital business settings, as customers assume an active part in the digital economy. The author emphasises the evolving character of client interaction in the digital era. Alkhalifah [123] highlights the significance of enhancing consumer trust in social platforms, underscoring the crucial role of trust in influencing customer engagement with social networks. Heller et al. [124] examine the use of service automation and the interaction facilitated by technology in augmented reality. They illustrate how technology can improve consumer engagement in digital service environments. User networks, trust, and underused resources are prevalent components of the sharing economy. The widespread adoption of digital features such as rating systems and user evaluations has greatly facilitated the establishment of personal ties, including sharing vehicles or other valuable items. The websites allow profiles to be improved by adding biographical and qualification details. Moreover, the incorporation of a photograph can substantially enhance consumers' confidence in the site. However, these functions frequently encounter difficulties when attempting to conform to established social norms. Another concern pertains to the credibility that exists between users and the platform itself. This matter emphasises the importance of users' confidence in the platform's ability to create reliable relationships [90]. Additionally, it promotes cooperative efforts in emerging sharing economy initiatives [33]. Studies conducted by Bauwens, Mendoza,

Iacomelli [125], John [46], and Denning [126], among others, have verified the substantial influence of advances in the field of ICT on the growth of collaborative consumption. The authors highlighted reducing transaction costs as one of the main benefits of collaborative consumption. This leads to more affordable buying and selling of used goods, as well as sharing possessions.

Researchers are striving to determine the parameters that can differentiate the appropriate segregation of digital platforms and their study as instruments of the sharing economy. There is an ongoing discussion of the role of the sharing economy within the digital economy. The expanding reach of the digital economy highlights the increasing recognition of the significance of various components, such as the sharing economy. Trust is a necessary condition for participating in digital engagement and sharing within the sharing economy. The research underscores the significance of trust as an essential element for establishing and advancing the sharing economy. This is explicitly highlighted by Botsman and Rogers [15], who noted that trust serves as a form of currency in the sharing economy, distinct from money. Trust is intricately connected to interpersonal relationships and extends to individuals who are completely unknown. Trust in unfamiliar individuals is considered an essential requirement for transactions in the sharing economy [127]. Chen et al. [128] affirmed that trust is a key factor in facilitating customer interaction with platforms, underscoring its critical importance in improving customer engagement and loyalty. Portes et al. [129] established the correlation between digital transparency and confidence in the digital realm. Pelgander et al. [130], Aityoussef and Belhcen [131], Ye et al. [132] and Sundararajan [16] all emphasised the issue of trust in the sharing economy.

Rifkin highlights that the sharing economy is highly dependent on social capital rather than market wealth. The author emphasised that the sharing economy is based primarily on social trust rather than anonymous market forces [133]. The sharing economy is believed to have the potential to foster social cohesion by bringing individuals together, promoting community unity, and enhancing interpersonal relationships [134]. Czernek, Wójcik and Marszałek [21] examined the issue of trust in the sharing economy among Polish authors. According to the authors, trust in the sharing economy can be referred to as inter-addictive trust. This type of trust is based on individuals making decisions to participate in sharing activities based on the opinions and experiences of other participants. Thus, it can be regarded as a hypercognitive classification, where the qualifications and viewpoints of particular communities articulated on technology platforms strengthen the significance of the cognitive aspect.

Consequently, this determines whether or not one will participate in the sharing. In contrast, Jaros highlights the advantageous nature of the sharing economy in terms of supporting contemporary social connections and fostering reciprocal trust [70]. However, Markiewicz highlights that these linkages may be more intricate than initially believed. Hence, the author recognised the necessity of seeking solutions to determine the level of sustainability and authenticity of established relationships [29]. Several authors have emphasised the intricate and diverse attributes of digital client involvement and trust on social media platforms. A crucial element of research in this field involves recognising the significance of online consumer evaluations in establishing trust. Zhao et al. [135], together with other researchers, have underlined the importance of online customer reviews in branding, engagement, trust, and connection between companies and customers. They also emphasised the varied influence of reviews on customer trust. The study conducted by Faizi and Fkihi [136] sought to examine the influence of customer interaction with online reviews on the credibility of the website and purchase intentions. The researchers wanted to shed light on the relationship between customer engagement, online reviews, and trust. Shaheen et al. [137] argued that it is necessary to investigate the distinct attributes of online reviews that establish trust among internet shoppers.

3.3. Environmental Concern

Several scientists are examining the potential of the sharing economy to tackle environmental and social issues and promote sustainable development [12,17,138]. The sharing economy is regarded as a means of addressing environmental and social issues, including pollution, fostering personal relationships, improving access to resources, and alleviating poverty [33]. The sharing economy harmonises the contradictory elements of human nature, namely the persistent quest for ease, contentment, and variety, with increasing awareness and obligation towards the planet and its inhabitants [66]. It facilitates optimal use of resources and minimises waste. Sharing and reusing assets helps to minimise overproduction, thus contributing to environmental conservation. Minimising the size of abandoned products results in a decrease in disposal expenses and subsequently mitigates environmental degradation. According to Belk's research [13], some individuals engage in the sharing economy as a means of supporting their beliefs about sustainability and promoting a more sustainable way of life. Prolonging the life cycle of items helps to decrease the amount of resources required for their production and minimise waste [139], thus helping to conserve the environment [140]. Liang et al. [141] observed that numerous specialists perceive the sharing economy as a means to address environmental and social concerns, including carbon emissions and ecological footprint. This emphasises the potential ecological advantages of collective consumption. Penz et al. [142] emphasised that certain industries in the sharing economy contribute to sustainability by decreasing waste, eliminating the need for new production or acquisitions, and reducing the ecological impact. This underscores the capacity of the sharing economy to contribute towards environmental objectives. Bostrom and Klintman [143] suggest that a growing number of modern consumers concerned about climate change and environmental pollution express a strong willingness and conviction to make significant changes in their daily lives. Their aim is to reduce the detrimental impact of human activities on the environment. The association between participation in the sharing economy and concerns about the environment has been revealed to be particularly substantial [10,99]. According to Schor and Wengronowitz [144], respondents generally believe that sharing takes a smaller amount of resources. This is supported by the findings of studies carried out in several industry sectors. As an illustration, individuals who use car-sharing services have successfully reduced their emissions by 50% per individual [15]. However, a study conducted by Khan et al. [145] focussing on the garment market revealed that although respondents recognised the significance of environmental concerns, economic incentives were the dominant factors influencing the sharing of clothing. Zhang et al. [146] used the theory of planned behaviour to examine the inclination of Chinese students to participate in carpooling. The study's findings indicate that environmental concern significantly influences an individual's attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. In a study conducted by Zhu et al. [147], the objective was to examine how customers' environmental concerns affect their readiness to embrace bike-sharing programmes. The results indicate a robust and favourable correlation between consumers' environmental concerns and their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control toward bike sharing. The results indicate a variation in motives between different industries. The practice of sharing expensive products, such as accommodation, is driven by a compelling economic incentive. Environmental considerations play a crucial role in the context of ride-sharing and car-sharing services. Regarding the act of sharing meals, which involves a substantial level of personal interaction, it seems that social factors greatly influence this process. The outcome is the generation of food waste, mainly caused by particular consumer behaviours, often accompanied by deliberate choices to discard edible food items [148]. According to Schanes, Dobernig and Gözet [149], among other researchers, this situation frequently goes against the stated commitment to the environment. The authors suggest that the reason for the disconnect between the intention to minimise food waste and actual actions may be due to a disparity between individuals' attitudes and claimed environmental beliefs and their actual behaviours when it comes to buying and consuming food. An individual who is environmentally conscious develops a pro-environmental

attitude through the development of information and ecological sensitivity. Although the literature on pro-environmental attitudes suggests a connection between attitude and consumer behaviour, empirical research yields uncertain findings on the specific type, strength, and direction of this relationship. Consumers' expressed concern for the environment does not always translate into actual behaviour in the market. The advantages of making conscious consumer choices in the food market are primarily related to health benefits and less frequently to environmental benefits [150]. Environmental concerns are frequently identified as the second most common motivation for Polish respondents to engage in the sharing economy, following money rewards. The sharing of resources leads to a decrease in the use of materials and raw materials, resulting in decreased emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases [27]. In addition, there is a decrease in energy demands and the amount of items disposed of, resulting in reduced disposal costs [151]. Research conducted by Szymańska [22] has substantiated the major influence of the sharing economy on enhancing the quality of life and the operation of urban areas. This impact is evident in the establishment of social connections, the integration of local communities within the city, and the preservation of the environment.

4. Materials and Methods

The research was conducted in the first quarter of 2023 among a group of 442 young people (non-random, purposive sampling). The research was conducted using the CAWI technique, known as the Computer-Assisted Web Interview. The study covered young consumers up to 24 years of age, representing the Z Generation. The phenomena being examined were defined in relation to three latent (theoretical) variables in the constructed conceptual model. During the later phase of the investigation, specific variables were established by referring to the existing literature. These variables were then used to create a survey questionnaire, which served as the primary research instrument in this study. The empirical material that was gathered was subjected to Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), a statistical approach used for testing. This technique is employed in psychometric research to examine structural theories regarding the connections between variables. It enables researchers to evaluate empirical data in relation to the theoretical structure of the model being constructed, thereby aiding in the validation of the theory. Based on the analysis conducted, variables with factor loadings above a threshold of 0.473 were chosen and included in the model. Any explicit variables with factor loadings below this threshold were excluded and were not considered for the study. The description of the respondents surveyed in the southeast part of Poland is included in Table 2. The first row (section) of the table describes the average monthly net income per person in the household among the surveyed (2250 PLN according to the Main Statistical Office in Poland; participants were inquired about whether they considered themselves to be at the average level or above or below it). The analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 29 and IBM AMOS 29 graphics.

Table 2. The characteristics of the surveyed respondents.

	Below the Country's Average Monthly Net Income per Person in the Household			**Above the Country's Average Monthly Net Income per Person in the Household**			**Within the Country Average Monthly Net Income per Person in the Household**		
	Number of	**% of N in a Row**	**% from N in a Column**	**Number of**	**% of N in a Row**	**% from N in a Column**	**Number of**	**% of N in a Row**	**% from N in a Column**
women	60	23.2%	57.7%	55	21.2%	52.9%	144	55.6%	61.5%
men	44	24.0%	42.3%	49	26.8%	47.1%	90	49.2%	38.5%
village	62	27.8%	59.6%	36	16.1%	34.6%	125	56.1%	53.4%
city $\leq$ 100 K	28	25.9%	26.9%	27	25.0%	26.0%	53	49.1%	22.6%
city $\geq$ 100 K	14	12.6%	13.5%	41	36.9%	39.4%	56	50.5%	23.9%
Total	104	1	1	104	1	1	234	2	1

Source: Own case study.

An analysis of the literature enabled the development of a theoretical framework (Figure 1) that describes the decision-making patterns of young consumers of Generation Z. The creation of the model considered the attitudes of young people toward the sharing economy, which directly influences behaviours that restrict excessive consumerism and the resulting hazards to the natural environment.

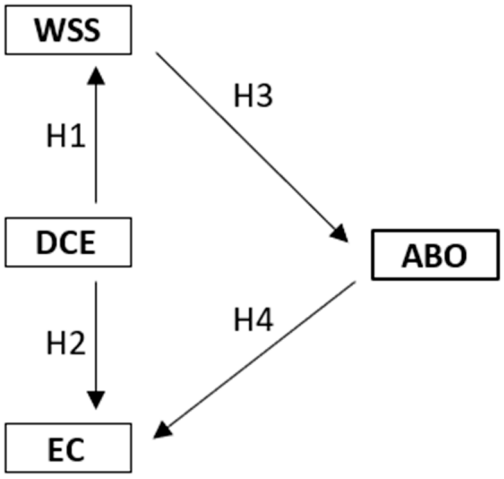

Figure 1. Conceptual model of ecological attitudes of the customer. Willingness to Share for Savings (WSS); Digital Customer Engagement (DCE); Environmental Concern (EC); Access Better Than Ownership (ABO). Recursive model, sample size n = 442. Source: Own case study.

In the research process, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: *Digital user engagement promotes the pursuit of cost savings when purchasing products and services.*

H2: *Engagement of users on digital platforms promotes a higher level of environmental awareness.*

H3: *The pursuit of cost reduction through sharing has a favourable influence on the belief that having access to something is preferable to owning it.*

H4: *The respondents' belief that access to products is more significant than ownership is associated with environmental concern.*

After conducting a thorough review of the existing literature and doing their own primary research, the authors of the study presented a conceptual model (Figure 1).

The authors considered the potential for fostering pro-environmental attitudes by shifting the focus of consumer behaviour from direct purchase to accessing goods through sharing. There is a notable lack of research on how the three components—DCE, WSS, and EC—are integrated, particularly in relation to Generation Z's environmentally conscious attitudes towards the sharing economy. Although the cost-saving component has been extensively recorded, its connection to environmental concerns has not been adequately investigated. Environmental Concern (EC) has a substantial impact on sustainable consumer behaviour. Although a significant amount of research has been conducted on the influence of EC, there is still a lack of research on how EC, DCE, and WSS shape the attitudes of Generation Z towards the sharing economy. This divide hinders a thorough understanding of efficiently involving Generation Z in sustainable behaviour through consumption-sharing models. In order to address this deficiency, our research constructs and evaluates a theoretical framework that combines DCE, WSS, and EC to investigate their combined influence on the environmental attitudes of Generation Z in the context of the sharing economy. This study offers three distinct contributions: it presents a comprehensive perspective

by combining these essential elements into one unified framework; it specifically targets Generation Z, a crucial demographic for the future of sustainable consumption; and it provides practical advice for policymakers and companies aiming to encourage sustainable behaviours among young consumers through effective engagement strategies.

Statistical Description of the Variables-Parameter Estimation Results

Utilizing the findings from the literature review, a survey questionnaire was designed and employed as the primary research instrument in this study. Subsequently, after performing a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), variables with factor loadings of 0.473 or higher were chosen and incorporated into the model. All other theoretical variables utilised in the model were defined using the same explicit variable selection approach. The constructs in the resulting model were developed using the evaluation of respondents' opinions, which were assessed on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). Table 3 provides a description of the values found in the resulting path diagram.

Table 3. Regression Weights in the Model.

	Content		Standardised Estimates	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	*p*
WSS	<---(H1)	DCE	0.654	0.934	0.128	7.296	***
ABO	<---(H3)	WSS	0.466	0.601	0.071	8.413	***
EC	<---(H2)	DCE	0.518	0.813	0.119	6.851	***
EC	<---(H4)	ABO	0.223	0.190	0.039	4.887	***
WSS1	<---	WSS	0.588	0.720	0.074	9.678	***
WSS2	<---	WSS	0.647	0.847	0.084	10.029	***
WSS2	<---	WSS	0.698	0.987	0.089	11.069	***
WSS4	<---	WSS	0.762	1			
DCE1	<---	DCE	0.467	1			
DCE2	<---	DCE	0.551	1.232	0.102	12.069	***
DCE3	<---	DCE	0.670	1.498	0.191	7.851	***
DCE4	<---	DCE	0.706	1.546	0.199	7.752	***
DCE5	<---	DCE	0.642	1.598	0.205	7.784	***
EC1	<---	EC	0.818	1			
EC2	<---	EC	0.678	0.799	0.052	15.447	***
EC3	<---	EC	0.773	0.880	0.049	17.871	***
EC4	<---	EC	0.823	0.998	0.057	17.366	***
EC5	<---	EC	0.883	0.978	0.050	19.727	***

*** Shows significance at $p < 0.001$. Source: Own case study.

The created model, which includes three theoretical variables (WSS, DCE, EC), was analysed in relation to the diagnostic assumptions stated in the literature. It is important to observe that the described model includes four research hypotheses while examining the path diagram. The study examined the phenomena of individuals from Generation Z who tend to share items and services with others on the market. This behaviour is referred to as Willingness to Share for Savings (WSS) and is measured by a CR (composite reliability) of 0.8 and an AVE (average variance extracted) of 0.47. This variable was defined by four distinct variables characterising the respondents' inclination to share their belongings in the context of earning and amassing funds. In the model, this phenomenon has been designated as a theoretical variable known as WSS. Throughout the conceptual development, it was also assumed that the Z Generation's inclination to share resources would positively impact their concern for the environment. This concern is represented in the model by the theoretical variable Ecological Concern (EC), which is defined by five clearly identifiable variables, CR 0.9 and AVE 0.63. These entities were constructed with the intention of actively supporting environmental activities and taking care of the environment. This is seen as a significant factor that influences their willingness to share information and the value of their products or services with other participants in the market. Theoretical

variables WSS and EC are both linked to the Digital Customer Engagement (DCE) variable, with an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.50 and a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.8.

The implementation of the research method is described in Table 4.

Table 4. The characteristics of the survey.

Designation in the SEM Diagram (Observable Variable)	Content of the Determinant	Assigned Hidden Variable	Factor Analysis FCA
WSS1	I see no problem in agreeing to exchange/share my own home/apartment for tourist purposes with strangers from other regions of the world to travel cheaper.	Willingness to Share for Savings (WSS) (Average Variance Extracted—AVE 0.47; Composite Reliability—CR 0.8)	0.603
WSS2	I have no problem sharing my things with others, even strangers, to save money.		0.768
WSS3	To earn additional funds, I am prepared to lend items that I occasionally use to other people, even strangers, through special online platforms.		0.608
WSS4	If there is a possibility, I use to borrow a product from another instead of buying to own it.		0.683
DCE1	I am happy to leave opinions/reviews/comments on the Internet that can be used by other users as a reliable source of information.	Digital Customer Engagement (DCE) (Average Variance Extracted—AVE 0.50; Composite Reliability—CR 0.8)	0.837
DCE2	I am happy to use opinions and reviews on the Internet about the products I use (e.g., in an online forum on a shop's website)		0.857
DCE3	I intend to initiate in my environment/or on the online platform actions of exchange/resale of products that I use little.		0.512
DCE4	I am using peer-to-peer service, or I plan to start using it next year.		0.565
DCE5	I think you can trust people on peer-to-peer platforms		0.473
EC1	I choose products that are environmentally friendly, even if I have to pay more.	Environmental Concern (EC) (Average Variance Extracted—AVE 0.63; Composite Reliability—CR 0.9)	0.813
EC2	I am convinced that my actions can contribute to the improvement of the environment.		0.751
EC3	It is important to me to take care of the environment and reduce pollution.		0.821
EC4	I am always happy to support the educational activities of environmental organisations.		0.776
EC5	I attach great importance to the environmental and health aspects associated with the products purchased.		0.815
	ACCESS BETTER THAN OWNERSHIP	ABO	

Factor extraction method—Principal components. Rotation method—Varimax with Kaiser normalisation (rotation reached convergence in seven iterations). Source: Own case study.

5. Results

The chi-square was 204.584 with a number of degrees of freedom df = 76 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$ (the chi-square measure allows testing the null hypothesis about the lack of discrepancy between the observed covariance matrix and the matrix implied by the model). In the analysed model, the relative chi-square is 2.692, less than 3 for a well-fitted model to empirical data [152]. In contrast, GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)—an indicator of the goodness of matching the model to empirical data) is: 0.944, which suggests that with other indicators at an acceptable level, the quality of the model may be satisfactory [153].

On the other hand, the AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)—index is 0.909, more than the recommended ≥ 0.9 [154], while CFI: 0.957, with ≥0.9 as the excellent fit [155]. Another measure is RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), which is the root of the mean square error of approximation, which is a measure of the divergence of the model adjusted for its level of complexity, i.e., the number of parameters. The RMSEA value for the obtained model was 0.062, the recommended range (≤0.08); as a further diagnostic activity, no problems were found with the reliability of the measuring scales (high composite reliability—CR) [156]. The model fit with the empirical data is described by the following set of standard diagnostic measures; the values in parentheses show the recommended thresholds for models with an acceptable fit based on: [156]. The built model based on empirical research conducted (sample size n = 442; male = 183; female = 259) is the recursive model (Figure 2).

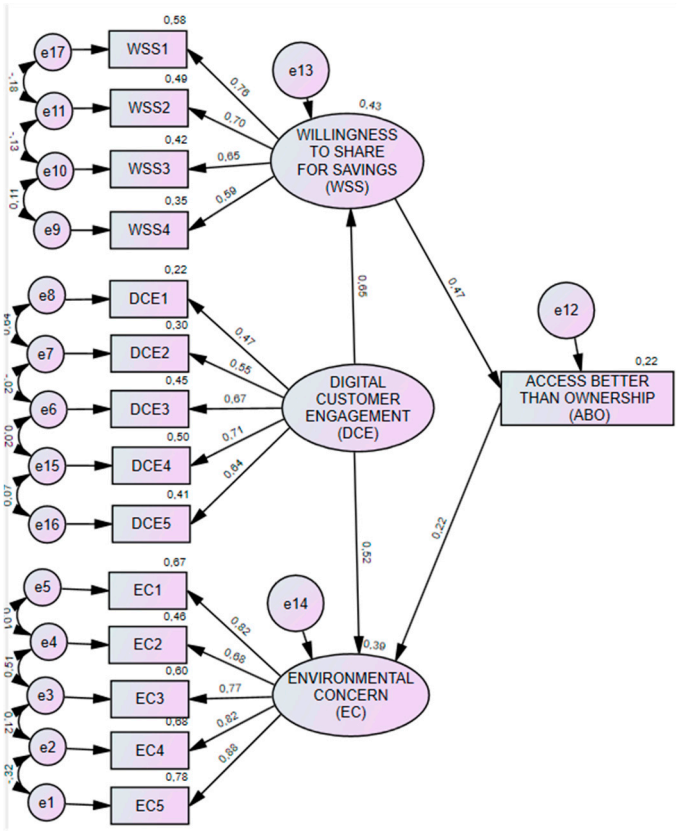

Figure 2. Structural and measurement model of customer ecological attitudes (standardised estimates). Recursive model, sample size n = 442; Minimum was achieved; Chi-square = 204.584; Degrees of freedom = 76; Probability level = 0.000; Chi-square/df = 2.692 (<3); p-value for the model 0.000 (<0.001); GFI = 0.944 (≥0.9); CFI = 0.957 (≥0.9); AGFI = 0.911 (≥0.8); RMSEA = 0.062 (≤0.08). Source: Own case study.

When examining the path diagram, it is crucial to note that the model provided includes four research hypotheses. The study posits that the environmentally conscious mindset of Generation Z will prioritise the fulfilment of needs, namely the ability to utilise the value of acquired things without personally acquiring them. This is not directly related to the individual's formal ownership of the item but rather connected to the concept of the "sharing economy" and meeting the requirements of both the owner and the person using the good.

The sharing economy, in the context of growing environmental consciousness, should be defined by an approach that is not driven by the intention to buy and possess property rights to a thing but solely by the utility derived from using the good. This has additional

ramifications for environmental conduct and the mitigation of excessive consumption, consequently, unregulated manufacture of commodities and accompanying carbon emissions.

Studies indicated that digital engagement promotes greater environmental awareness by providing content to the audience within the framework of information acquisition and sharing of ideas and personal experiences. The investigations carried out have proposed research hypotheses (H1 (0.65; $p < 0.001$), H2 (0.52; $p < 0.001$) that need to be specified in relation to their impact on the inclination to share the utilitarian value of products with others (H1) during the pursuit of financial gains (WSS). Digital participation of users facilitates the exploration of cost-saving opportunities when purchasing items and services, hence supporting the adoption of this theory.

DCE plays a vital role in reducing costs when buying items and services by enabling price comparisons, providing access to discounts, using reviews and testimonials, automatically notifying potential price reductions, and allowing group purchases. Consumers can use digital tools and platforms to make well-informed and cost-effective purchasing decisions, thus promoting environmentally friendly choices. The assumption is that the attitude to sharing information with other market participants (DCE) has an impact (H2) on the concern for the environment (EC). The act of exchanging information among participants in the market fosters a culture characterised by transparency, cooperation, and innovation. This behaviour creates synergies and has a direct impact on environmental concerns and actions. By fostering collaboration and exchanging information, people can better address environmental issues, resulting in the implementation of sustainable practices and the development of environmentally friendly solutions.

Furthermore, the model tests hypotheses (H3 (0.47; $p < 0.001$); H4 (0.22; $p < 0.001$)) that examine attitudes toward the ability to meet requirements by accessing a property without owning it, known as Access Better than Ownership (ABO). The desire to minimise expenses through resource sharing promotes the notion that having access to something is preferable to possessing it. This ideology promotes environmental stewardship by reducing excessive consumption, efficient resource use, decreased CO_2 emissions, advocacy for a circular economy, transformation of social perspectives, and advancing innovative technology and services. Based on the path diagram in the constructed model, it is evident that this link is of the least significance, possibly due to the inadequate education of young individuals. This should lead to an increased focus on promoting environmental education among children and young individuals, resulting in a greater number of environmentally friendly behaviours in the short run.

6. Discussion

Generation Z's environmental sentiments are strongly influenced by digital customer engagement (DCE). These findings indicate that implementing enhanced digital engagement tactics, such as customised and interactive digital platforms, can have a substantial impact on Generation Z's perspectives on environmental sustainability. Additionally, the study found that digital customer engagement (DCE) had a substantial impact on both the desire to share savings and environmental concerns among Generation Z. Digital platforms improve communication, create trust, and facilitate information exchange, all of which are crucial to promoting participation in the sharing economy. This finding aligns with prior research that emphasises the significance of digital platforms in enhancing consumer engagement and loyalty [46,121,123]. Research has shown that interactive digital experiences can improve customer retention and readiness to adopt suggested solutions [91,120]. This study further expands on these findings by revealing that digital customer experiences also have a favourable influence on environmental attitudes. Therefore, it is logical for enterprises in the sharing economy to allocate resources towards implementing digital engagement tactics in order to successfully advocate for sustainability. Compelling content and platforms have the potential not only to promote economic advantages but also to enhance consumers' understanding and concern for the environment.

Additionally, the research revealed that economic incentives play a significant role in driving Generation Z's participation in the sharing economy. While the impact of WSS was slightly less strong compared to DCE, it still has a significant influence on the formation of environmental attitudes. This discovery emphasises the significance of monetary rewards and cost-saving advantages as influential factors for Generation Z's participation in the sharing economy. Therefore, including cost savings in sustainability initiatives can enhance engagement levels and facilitate the implementation of sustainable practices. This finding aligns with previous research that highlights the significance of economic incentives in the sharing economy [33,72,84]. Previous research has indicated that the primary drivers of participating in sharing economy activities are financial savings and additional income [85,86,109,111]. Hence, it is important for sharing economy platforms to prioritise and highlight the potential for cost savings and financial advantages in order to attract and maintain users from Generation Z. Emphasising the financial advantages can enhance participation and encourage the adoption of sustainable consumption habits.

The study also discovered that environmental concerns play a significant role in shaping Generation Z's participation in the sharing economy. The significant correlation emphasises the crucial influence of environmental concern on the formation of environmental attitudes. Generation Z highly prioritises environmental sustainability, and their attitudes towards the environment are heavily influenced by their concerns regarding environmental issues. Therefore, it is imperative that companies pay the utmost attention to environmental messages and genuine sustainability practices to strengthen the fundamental principles of this specific population. The awareness and dedication of this demographic group to environmental issues motivate them to engage in sustainable consumption practices. This finding is corroborated by previous research that demonstrates the capacity of the sharing economy to address environmental concerns and foster sustainable behaviour [10,13]. Previous studies have indicated that customers who are environmentally sensitive are more inclined to participate in sharing economy practices as a means of diminishing their environmental impact [14,82]. Therefore, it is advisable for companies to emphasise the ecological advantages of their services in order to appeal to environmentally conscious clients. Marketing initiatives that prioritise sustainability can enhance user participation and facilitate the growth of the sharing economy.

The study can provide valuable insights for managers. The significant impact of the CE on environmental attitudes implies that organisations and decision-makers should prioritise environmental messages and sustainability programmes in order to effectively engage Generation Z. Marketing strategies that emphasise the ecological advantages of the sharing economy are expected to have a significant impact on this specific population. Furthermore, the notable influence of DCE suggests that enhancing digital interaction might effectively promote sustainable behaviour. Companies must allocate resources towards interactive and captivating digital platforms that not only ease transactions within the sharing economy but also foster community development and promote environmental education. Although WSS has a relatively minor impact compared to EC and DCE, it nonetheless holds significant importance. The financial dimension associated with sustainable practices can enhance environmental messaging and digital engagement initiatives. This multifaceted strategy can successfully incentivise Generation Z to embrace and sustain environmentally friendly behaviours. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that the sharing economy has its drawbacks [157]. The occurrence of issues related to the market for transport services and lodgings is reported with increasing frequency [47,138,158–160]. Additional concerns are also identified, such as security vulnerabilities or changes in the job market [161]. However, it is important to note that these elements were not the focus of the investigation, which can be considered a limitation of the study and a potential field for future research.

There are other limitations that might be recognised in this study. A primary constraint is associated with the sample used in the investigation. The research primarily examines Generation Z, which yields useful insights on this specific demographic. However, this exclusive focus restricts the generalisability of the findings to other age groups or demo-

graphics. Although structural equation modelling (SEM) offers a reliable framework for assessing interactions, longitudinal research would be more efficient in establishing causal relationships and comprehending the evolution of these dynamics over time. Another constraint is the dependence on self-reported data, which could be influenced by many biases, including social biases. The share economy survey may not accurately represent all sectors due to its focus on digital customer engagement (DCE), willingness to share savings (WSS), and environmental concerns (EC). Although the study incorporates significant aspects that influence environmental views, it does not consider other potential variables. Various factors, including cultural disparities, political impacts, technological progress, and individual psychological traits, can also contribute to the formation of environmental attitudes. Taking into account the limitations mentioned, further investigation can expand on existing discoveries and improve our understanding of the elements that impact environmental attitudes and sustainable behaviour within the framework of participation in the sharing economy. Future research should conduct an analysis of these parameters among various demographic groups and cultural contexts in order to verify and expand on the findings of the current study. An investigation of the enduring effects of DCE, WSS, and EC on environmental attitudes and behaviours could yield valuable insights into the long-term development of these components. Furthermore, the incorporation of additional factors, such as technical advances and legal modifications, could increase the understanding of sustainable conduct in the sharing economy.

7. Conclusions

The sharing economy is an intricate and diverse notion that has a substantial influence on several sectors of the economy, with distinct social, economic, and environmental consequences. Within the realm of sustainability concerns, the sharing economy has the capacity to initiate a fundamental change in our perspectives on ownership, consumption, and production. Every aspect of production and consumption is intricately connected to the environmental costs involved, such as trash generation, carbon dioxide emissions, and water use. These costs ultimately contribute to a climate catastrophe. The empirical studies of the authors have demonstrated that the primary factor influencing the growth of the sharing economy among young consumers is the technological progress linked to the expansion of the digital economy. The prevalent practice of consistently using mobile devices among Generation Z simplifies the communication process by providing access to items without the need for ownership. The analysis conducted demonstrates that the involvement of the digital user promotes the pursuit of cost savings in the acquisition of goods and services (H1) and increases the environmental awareness of young customers (H2). Engaging in the sharing economy promotes a feeling of inclusion and collaboration, which in turn makes it easier to find economically sustainable solutions. An empirical verification demonstrated that the act of seeking savings through sharing has a beneficial impact on the mindset that it is preferable to have access to a product rather than owning it (H3), which is a fundamental aspect of the sharing economy. The emergence of attitudes that prioritise access to products over ownership is closely linked to environmental considerations. Ultimately, the strong dedication of Generation Z to digital platforms, together with their environmental awareness and conviction in the importance of cost-effective alternatives for accessing items, are crucial drivers behind the growth of the sharing economy. The authors argue that the ecological education of Generation Z and future generations should play a central role in fostering sustainable consumption patterns through the sharing economy. The primary obstacle lies in persuading young consumers that the transition from excessive consumerism to sustainable consumption will be imperative to mitigate the detrimental effects of climate change and environmental hazards in the coming decades.

The correlation between DCE, WSS, and EC has a mutually beneficial impact on the development of people's attitudes toward the environment. Although EC was found to be the most powerful predictor, the contributions of DCE and WSS are equally substantial and complementary. DCE not only has a direct influence on environmental attitudes but

also has the ability to amplify the impact of EC. Using digital technology can facilitate the efficient distribution of environmental information and improve understanding of these factors. WSS improves the whole paradigm by incorporating an economic aspect to incentivise sustainable behaviour, making the adoption of environmentally friendly measures more appealing by offering cash advantages. By incorporating these elements, companies can design more efficient tactics to captivate Generation Z. Enhanced digital involvement can promote the spread of environmental messaging, while monetary rewards can strengthen the adoption of sustainable activities. These findings improve the current body of knowledge by providing a detailed understanding of the interplay and impact of these factors on sustainable behaviour.

To summarise, this study emphasises the significant influence of EC, DCE, and WSS on creating environmentally conscious attitudes in Generation Z regarding the sharing economy. By incorporating these elements into a well-organised plan, firms and policymakers can more effectively involve the younger generation in sustainable activities. Further studies should continue to investigate these processes in many contexts and populations to better authenticate and advance our findings.

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