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The Sharing Economy in the Tourism Sector: Microeconomic Factors

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Abstract: This research endeavours to explore the intricate dynamics of microeconomic factors that significantly influence the evolution of the sharing economy within the vibrant landscape of Lithuania's tourism sector. By harnessing an extensive dataset comprising diverse tourism metrics and online platform activities, advanced regression analysis techniques are employed to uncover the intricate interplay between tourism employment and key determinants such as tourism output, accommodation infrastructure, internet accessibility, and other pertinent variables. The empirical insights gleaned from this analysis reveal compelling correlations, shedding light on the pivotal role played by these factors in shaping the burgeoning sharing economy within the tourism realm. Moreover, this study provides nuanced insights into the potential implications for future research endeavours. By elucidating the complex relationships between various economic variables and the sharing economy, this research lays the groundwork for further empirical exploration and theoretical refinement. The ramifications of this research extend beyond academia to encompass practical implications for industry practitioners and policymakers alike. By gaining a deeper understanding of the microeconomic drivers of the sharing economy in the tourism sector, stakeholders can devise more informed strategies to leverage its potential for sustainable growth and development. In conclusion, this research represents a significant contribution to the burgeoning field of sharing economy studies within the context of the tourism sector. By revealing the intricate web of microeconomic factors underpinning its development, this study provides valuable insights that can inform both academic discourse and practical decision-making processes. Ultimately, it is hoped that this research will catalyse further exploration and innovation in the field, driving continued growth and prosperity within Lithuania's tourism sector.

Keywords: collaborative consumption; internet platforms; recreation industry; regression analysis.

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1. Introduction. A microeconomic analysis of the determinants of the sharing economy is crucial, as the tourism sector in the European Union is recognized as one of the priorities generating significant value economically and socially. The impact of tourism is a crucial factor in national, regional, and societal planning, as well as economic development circumstances. According to data from the European Parliament (2023), in the European Union, in 2018, the travel and tourism sector directly contributed 3.9% of GDP and 5.1% of employment (i.e., employing approximately 11.9 million people). Considering its close links with other economic sectors, the contribution of the tourism sector is even greater (10.3% of GDP and 11.7% of all employment, i.e., employing 27.3 million people).

Considering the importance of developing the tourism sector, the European Commission proposed an action program and measures to strengthen the European tourism sector in the communication "Working Together for the Future of Tourism in Europe" (COM(2001)0665). The priority focus on the tourism sector is also reflected in the resolution on the future of tourism, which sets the goal for Europe to become the most visited tourist region. Furthermore, for Lithuanian tourism, the national progress plan for 2021-2030 sets the goal of achieving the 49th position in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (2019-59th place) by 2030.

One of the forms of quality transformation in the tourism sector, aimed at its development, is the sustainable integration of the sharing economy in the tourism sector. The sharing economy services complex in the tourism sector consists of accommodations, transportation, information about tourism services, and on-site service provision (Belk, 2014; Guttentag, 2015). According to data provided by the World Tourism Organization, sharing economy enterprises currently represent a substantial share of the total revenue generated within the tourism sector, accounting for approximately 10 to 15%. Projections indicate a significant growth trajectory, with anticipated revenues reaching \$794 billion by 2031, up from \$150 billion in 2023, sustained by a robust annual growth rate of 32 percent (Statista Research Department, 2024). These data unequivocally underscore the escalating prominence of the sharing economy within the global tourism landscape, affirming its status as an indispensable and influential component of the industry.

Based on research conducted by Benoit et al. (2022), Hall et al. (2020), Jia et al. (2018), Siuskaitė et al. (2019), Martin & Martinez (2020) and Henry et al. (2021), the sharing economy exerts a substantial positive influence across economic, environmental, and social dimensions. Scholars investigating the advantages of the sharing economy underscore the pivotal role of the tourism sector in generating employment opportunities not only within its domain but also in associated sectors. Moreover, the distinctiveness of the sharing economy as a more sustainable mode of tourism and a catalyst for enhancing resource efficiency is emphasized. Additionally, a more comprehensive understanding of community engagement and personal responsibility is elucidated.

Although the expansion of the sharing economy in the tourism sector may be considered a prerequisite for regional development, it is essential to note that the sharing economy in tourism is not an autonomous process. One of the crucial factors shaping the development of the sharing economy is its interaction with internal and external factors. Various complex microeconomic factors, reflecting the distinctiveness of the development of the sharing economy, determine the pace and direction of its growth. Research on microenvironmental factors is essential for understanding the impact of direct factors on economic activity, identifying competitive advantage and increasing the efficiency of value added. According to Smith & Johnson (2020a), a microeconomic understanding of factors such as service quality, pricing policies, and consumer behavior is essential for developing effective strategies for the development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector. The results of this analysis can provide useful insights for policymakers seeking to create favourable conditions for the development of this economic activity. In addition, Jones & Williams (2018a) highlight that microeconomic factors, such as competition between firms and the legal regulatory environment, need to be carefully examined to make appropriate decisions on the integration of the sharing economy into the national economy. Therefore, understanding the influence of microenvironmental factors has become a prerequisite for the successful and sustainable development of the sharing economy.

Researchers emphasize that evaluating the impact of the sharing economy in the tourism sector requires a multidimensional approach (Sundararajan, 2016; Hamari et al., 2016; Zervas et al., 2017; Cheng & Foley, 2018a). This entails considering various dimensions, such as service price and quality, market competition and company strategy, technology and innovation, consumer behavior, regulation, and the legal environment, as well as infrastructure. Researchers who have conducted comprehensive studies on the sharing economy in the tourism sector emphasize that conventional economic metrics may inaccurately identify the impact of the sharing economy. They propose expanding the set of indicators used to reflect the uniqueness of the sharing

economy (Hock & Weismayer, 2020a; Pesonen & Sundstrom, 2018a; Xiang et al., 2017a; Boes & Buhalis, 2020a; Gretzel et al., 2015a). Existing research on the sharing economy in the tourism sector has focused predominantly on macroeconomic trends and societal impacts, overlooking the microeconomic factors that drive its development and sustainability (Heo & Blengini, 2019; Dogru et al., 2020; Ordóñez-de-Haro & Torres, 2019; Chinoracky et al., 2021). While studies have examined the overall growth of sharing economy platforms and their effects on tourism destinations, there is a dearth of literature that systematically analyses the underlying economic mechanisms at play. This gap in research presents an opportunity to delve deeper into the microeconomic dynamics of the sharing economy and their implications for market efficiency, consumer welfare, and industry innovation.

Despite the growing body of research on the sharing economy in tourism, several key gaps and assumptions persist. First, existing studies often adopt a macroeconomic perspective, overlooking microlevel interactions. Second, there is a tendency to generalize findings across different contexts without considering the heterogeneity of sharing economy platforms and their respective impacts on local economies. Additionally, assumptions regarding the positive or negative effects of the sharing economy on traditional businesses and employment patterns require closer scrutiny to inform evidence-based policy decisions. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to address the following research question: What are the microeconomic factors that drive the growth and sustainability of sharing economy platforms in the tourism sector, and how do they influence market dynamics, consumer behaviour, and regulatory frameworks?

The analysis of the sharing economy in the tourism sector from a microeconomic perspective allows researchers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to thoroughly understand the changing market dynamics and adequately assess the scope, growth rate, and market share of sharing economy platforms in the tourism sector. Microeconomic analysis reveals finer details such as service quality, consumer behaviour, and company strategy, which can have a significant impact on business efficiency and competitiveness. The results of the study are relevant for stakeholders, as informed decisions can be made in the areas of investment planning, resource allocation, and risk management. In addition, the results of the microeconomic analysis help to strike a balance between fostering innovation and safeguarding the public interest, creating the right conditions for sustainable economic development. The European Commission's agenda points out that the microeconomic environment is critical because it directly affects the performance of firms and consumer behaviour.

Based on the literature reviewed, it is hypothesized that the level of internet accessibility, measured by the percentage of households with internet access, is positively correlated with the growth and performance of sharing economy platforms in the Lithuanian tourism sector. This hypothesis is grounded in the understanding that internet accessibility plays a crucial role in facilitating the engagement of both providers and consumers in sharing economy transactions, thereby enhancing the efficiency, reach, and overall success of such platforms. This paper is composed of five major sections. Subsequently, section 1 presents the introduction. Section 2 provides the literature review. Section 3 describes the methodology and research methods. Section 4 presents the results. Finally, section 5 provides a discussion and conclusions.

2. Literature Review. The development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector is linked to the creation of benefits for the local community, the creation of new opportunities, and more sustainable consumption of tourism services. The microeconomic factors influencing the development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector are categorized based on research that seeks to identify how the development of the sharing economy is affected. Based on the research sources, microeconomic factors have been meticulously examined and categorized into various dimensions by several prominent scholars in the field (Figure 1).

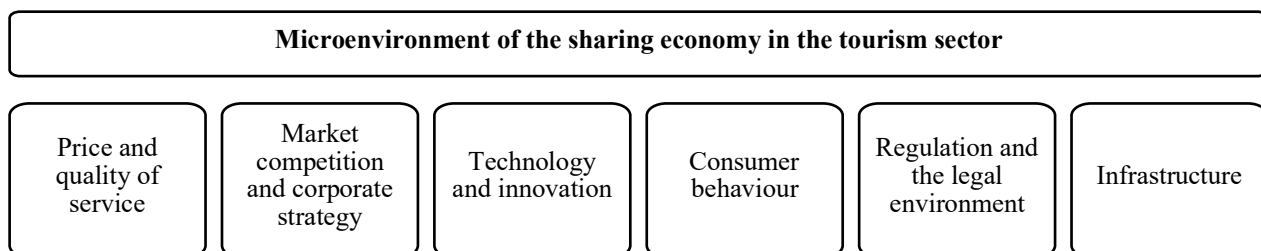


Figure 1. The sharing economy microenvironment in the tourism sector

Sources: developed by the authors.

In examining the microeconomic dynamics of the sharing economy, researchers delve into distinct sets of factors, which are subsequently delineated into specific components. This breakdown is informed by insights gleaned from scholarly investigations. Sundararajan (2016), Hamari et al. (2016), Zervas et al. (2017), Cheng & Foley (2018b), and Hock & Weismayer (2020b) have contributed significantly to delineating these dimensions. They encompass critical aspects such as the price and quality of services, market competition and corporate strategy, technology and innovation, consumer behavior, regulatory and legal environment, and infrastructure (Figure 1). Smith & Johnson (2020b) shed light on the pivotal role played by service quality and pricing policies in influencing consumer preferences and market dynamics within the sharing economy. Similarly, Jones & Williams (2018b) emphasize the impact of competition among firms and strategic decisions made by sharing economy platforms on market outcomes and industry structure. Moreover, Xiang et al. (2017b) and Boes & Buhalis (2020b) delve into the significance of technology and innovation, highlighting their role in driving the evolution of sharing economy platforms and enhancing their competitiveness. Gretzel et al. (2015b) and Pesonen & Sundstrom (2018b) contribute to understanding consumer behavior patterns and preferences, which are crucial for shaping adoption and usage patterns within the sharing economy. Additionally, Jones & Williams (2018a) stress the importance of regulatory frameworks and legal considerations in shaping the operational landscape for sharing economy platforms. Moreover, Hock & Weismayer (2020a;b) underscore the significance of robust infrastructure, including digital infrastructure and transportation networks, in facilitating the efficient operation and growth of sharing economy activities within the tourism sector.

The structure of these microeconomic factor clusters is outlined in the following table (Figure 2).

Table 1. Microenvironment of the sharing economy in the tourism sector

Factor group	Factors	Source
Price and quality of service	Service pricing; service quality	Zervas, G., Proserpio, D. and Byers, J. W., 2017; Fang, B., Ye, Q. and Law, R., 2016
Market competition and corporate strategy	Level of competition; corporate strategy	Guttentag, D., 2015; Singh, S. and Kundu, S., 2017; Neirrotti, P., Raguseo, E. and Paolucci, E., 2018
Technology and innovation	Platform technology; level of innovation	Gansky, L., 2010; Tussyadiah, I. P. and Pesonen, J., 2016; Hawlitschek, F., Teubner, T. and Gimpel, H., 2018
Consumer behaviour	Consumer confidence; consumer awareness	Mohlmann, M., 2015; Belk, R., 2014; Tussyadiah, I.P. and Pesonen, J., 2016
Regulation and the legal environment	Local, national or international law; regulatory flexibility	Ranchordás, S., 2015; Edelman, B. G. and Geradin, D., 2016; Zekanovic-Korona, L. and Grzunov, J., 2017
Infrastructure	Logistics infrastructure; communications infrastructure	Wang, D. and Nicolau, J. L., 2017; Cohen, B. and Kietzmann, J., 2014; Sigala, M., 2017

Sources: developed by the authors.

In the sharing economy within the tourism sector, the pricing and quality of services emerge as pivotal determinants influencing consumer preferences. This paradigm shift has engendered novel opportunities for both consumers and providers, effectively circumventing the intermediaries prevalent in traditional tourism markets. Nonetheless, the efficacy of these ventures hinges upon the pricing strategies employed and their alignment with consumer expectations.

Table 2. Microeconomic determinants of the cost and quality of services in the tourism sector

Indicator	Source	Estimated impact of the indicator	Long-term	Short-Time
Number of new services or products introduced in a given period	Chen, M. and Sheldon, P.,+ 2016; Zervas, G., Proserpio, D. and Byers, J. W., 2017; Fang, B., Ye, Q. and Law, R., 2016			+/-

Indicator	Source	Estimated impact of the indicator	Long-term	Short-Time
Number of orders in a given period	Chen and Sheldon, 2016; Zervas et al., 2017; Guttentag, 2015	+		+
Number of new users who arrived through partner networks	Singh and Kundu, 2017; Hawlitschek et al., 2018; Mohlmann, 2015	+	+	
Share of income generated through partnerships	Ranchordás, 2015; Cohen and Kietzmann, 2014; Neirotti et al., 2018		+	

Sources: developed by the authors.

Chen & Sheldon (2016) conducted a study on dynamic pricing in the aviation industry and found that price flexibility, based on fluctuations in demand and supply, can increase the supply and attractiveness of services to consumers. Sharing economy platforms such as Airbnb use similar principles to set prices, taking into account competition, location, season, and other factors (Zervas et al., 2017). The quality of service is a very important aspect that can lead to consumer loyalty or dissatisfaction. On sharing economy platforms, user reviews and ratings are key factors that allow other parties to evaluate a service provider. Fang et al. (2016) conducted a study to analyse the impact of service quality on consumer loyalty on sharing economy platforms. They found that consumer satisfaction is directly related to consumers' intention to use such a platform in the future. In the context of the sharing economy, quality covers not only the standards of the housing or transport service itself but also additional services, communication with the service provider, the ease of booking and using the service and other aspects.

Table 3. Microeconomic determinants of market competition for the development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector

Indicator	Source	Estimated impact of the indicator	Long-term	Short-Time
Number of new start-ups in the sector	Guttentag, D., 2015; Singh, S.+ and Kundu, S., 2017; Neirotti, P., Raguseo, E. and Paolucci, E., 2018			+/-
Changes in the scale of existing businesses	Guttentag, 2015; Singh and Kundu, 2017; Neirotti et al., 2018	-	+	
Positioning companies in the market	Singh and Kundu, 2017; Neirotti et al., 2018; Guttentag, 2015	+	+	
Methods of differentiation used	Zervas et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2016; Chen Sheldon, 2016	+		+/-

Sources: developed by the authors.

Competitive factors in the tourism sector are vital in the sharing economy and determine the strategic direction and success of companies. The emergence of new firms in the sector, as shown by researchers Guttentag (2015), Singh & Kundu (2017), and Neirotti et al. (2018), has a positive impact on the market by stimulating innovation and increasing consumer choice. However, it can also lead to short-term instability due to increased competition, which can be both beneficial and detrimental, depending on market adaptation and evolution. The scaling-up of existing firms is another important aspect that, according to Guttentag (2015), Singh & Kundu (2017), and Neirotti et al. (2018), can have a long-term negative impact if the downsizing of a firm is a reaction to excessive competition or other negative market developments. Moreover, firms' positioning in the market and the differentiation techniques they use are central factors that can help firms differentiate themselves, build a stronger brand image, and adapt to consumer demands.

Singh & Kundu (2017), Neirotti et al. (2018), and Guttentag (2015) noted that positioning and differentiation are essential factors for both the long-term and short-term success of a company, given the competitive environment and consumer expectations.

Table 4. Microeconomic determinants of technology and innovation in the tourism sector

Indicator	Source	Estimated impact of the indicator	Long-term	Short-Time
Presence of technologies that facilitate use	Gansky, L., 2010; Tussyadiah, I. P., 2016; Hawlitschek, F., Teubner, T. and Gimpel, H., 2018			+/-
Reliability and performance of platforms	Gansky, 2010; Tussyadiah, 2016; Hawlitschek et al., 2018	+	+	
Frequency of introduction of new service or product features	Tussyadiah, 2016; Hawlitschek et al., 2018; Gansky, 2010	+	+	
Investments in research and development	Tussyadiah, 2016; Hawlitschek et al., 2018; Gansky, 2010	+	+	

Sources: developed by the authors.

The impact of technology and innovation on the microeconomic factors in the tourism sector of the sharing economy is evident and dynamic. Digital technologies, including various platforms, software, and mobile applications, enhance the coordination of supply and demand, allowing easy assessment of service providers and consumers and thus fostering the growth of the sector (Zervas et al., 2017). In addition, data analytics enables companies to better understand consumer behavior, needs, and preferences, helping them to offer personalized services and improve the consumer experience (Sundararajan, 2016). Automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming increasingly integral factors that can increase operational efficiency while threatening the existence of certain jobs (Nosko and Tadelis, 2015). Innovation, especially its adaptation and deployment, is essential to remaining competitive and accountable in the face of changing market conditions and consumer expectations (Guttentag, 2017). All these aspects of technology and innovation work together as microeconomic factors that shape the structure, operations, and strategies of the sharing economy tourism sector. They not only facilitate change but are also necessary to maintain and strengthen the sector's position in the global economy by adapting to ever-changing consumer demands and market conditions.

Table 5. Microeconomic determinants of consumer behaviour in the tourism sector

Indicator	Source	Estimated impact of the indicator	Long-term	Short-Time
Number of reviews and recommendations	Mohlmann, M., 2015; Belk, R., 2014; Tussyadiah, I.P. and Pesonen, J., 2016			+/-
Level of consumer loyalty	Mohlmann, 2015; Belk, 2014; Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016	+	+	
Access to information about services	Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016; Belk, 2014; Mohlmann, 2015	+	+	
Consumer awareness of prices and quality of services	Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016; Belk, 2014; Mohlmann, 2015	+	+	

Sources: developed by the authors.

Microeconomic factors related to consumer behavior in the sharing economy tourism sector include price sensitivity, convenience, flexibility, trust, social interaction, technological experience, acceptance of innovation, sustainability, and environmental awareness. Consumers choose the value price of the sharing economy services over the quality and the value they obtain from the services. The convenience and flexibility of services in terms of availability, booking, cancellation, and payment are also important factors influencing consumer behaviour. Trust in the service provider, the platform, and other users is a key element in shaping consumer opinions and decisions. Consumer behaviour is also influenced by consumers' technological experience, ability, and willingness to use and adopt new technologies and innovations, which are inherent in the sharing economy model. Consumers' interest in sustainability and their eco-consciousness are also

important factors influencing their choices and behavior, especially in the context of growing interest in environmental protection and sustainability.

All these factors are interlinked and together influence consumer behavior, decisions, and satisfaction in the sharing economy tourism sector. Sharing economy platforms and service providers must consider these microeconomic factors, which are vital to understanding how best to meet consumer needs and expectations and how and what to improve to ensure the long-term success and growth of the business.

Table 6. Microeconomic factors in the regulatory and legal environment for the development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector

Indicator	Source	Estimated impact of the indicator	Long-term	Short-Time
Level of compliance with legal requirements	Ranchordás, S., 2015; Edelman, B. G. and Geradin, D., 2016; Zekanovic-Korona, L. and Grzunov, J., 2017			+/-
Number of conflicts with legislation	Ranchordás, 2015; Edelman and Geradin, 2016; Zekanovic-Korona and Grzunov, 2017	-	+	
Frequency and speed of adjustment changes	Edelman and Geradin, 2016; Zekanovic-Korona and Grzunov, 2017; Ranchordás, 2015	+		+
Involvement of industry in the regulatory process	Ranchordás, 2015; Edelman and Geradin, 2015			

Sources: developed by the authors.

Microeconomic factors in this area include laws, regulations, licensing, taxes and liability, which directly affect both providers and consumers.

- First, licensing and certification are important for guaranteeing the quality and safety of services. Businesses operating in the sharing economy tourism sector must comply with certain standards set and maintained by regulatory bodies to ensure consumer protection and confidence.

- The second area is tax regulation. This area covers the obligation of service providers to pay taxes, the amount and conditions of which are set by the State. Sharing economy companies and their partners must comply with all tax laws and rules, which provides legal clarity and business transparency.

- Third, liability and insurance issues are crucial in the sharing economy model because they cover the rights and obligations of service providers and consumers in the event of unexpected events or problems. Liability regulation includes provisions on indemnification, liability insurance, and other related aspects.

Legal and regulatory factors lay the foundations for the functioning and development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector, providing legal clarity, security, and protection for both service providers and consumers. To successfully operate and develop a sharing economy business in the tourism sector, it is necessary to keep legal and regulatory requirements constantly under review and up to date to adapt them to the changing business environment and consumer needs.

Table 7. Microeconomic Infrastructure Drivers for the Development of the Sharing Economy in the Tourism Sector

Indicator	Source	Estimated impact of the indicator	Long-term	Short-Time
Level of accessibility and convenience	Wang, D. and Nicolau, J. L., 2017; Cohen and Kietzmann, J., 2014; Sigala, M., 2017			+/-
Use of modern communication technologies	Sigala, 2017; Cohen and Kietzmann, 2014; Wang and Nicolau, 2017	+	+	

Sources: developed by the authors.

The characteristics of infrastructure, as the physical and organisational structures, systems and equipment that enable businesses to operate and provide services efficiently, are crucial to ensuring the availability and convenience of high-quality services for tourists. Important aspects of infrastructure include transport and

logistics systems, communication technologies, and social and financial services, which have a direct impact on the demand and supply of tourism services. Transport and logistics infrastructure is inextricably linked to the movement and experience of tourists. An efficient and modern transport network, encompassing air, rail, roads and other modes of transport, is essential to ensure easy and convenient access for tourists to a wide range of tourist attractions and services.

Communication technology infrastructure, including the internet, mobile connectivity and databases, is important for the development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector because it allows service providers and consumers to communicate efficiently, share information and conduct transactions electronically. Social and financial infrastructures such as healthcare, education, banking and insurance services also have an impact on the quality and satisfaction of the tourist experience by providing the necessary support and services during tourism. All of these infrastructural aspects influence the development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector, determining competitiveness, quality of service and innovation. To succeed, businesses need to continuously invest in improving and upgrading infrastructure and to work closely with the public and private sectors in the development and implementation of infrastructure projects.

3. Methodology and research methods. Many studies in this field have utilized quantitative research methods to analyse large datasets and identify statistical relationships between various economic variables. Techniques such as regression analysis, econometric modelling, and statistical inference have been employed to quantify the impact of microeconomic factors on the sharing economy in tourism. Notable researchers, such as Benoit et al. (2022), Hall et al. (2020), and Jia et al. (2018), have utilized these methods to examine the economic dimensions of the sharing economy in the tourism sector.

In addition to quantitative approaches, qualitative research methods have also been employed to gain a deeper understanding of the microeconomic factors shaping the sharing economy in tourism. Qualitative techniques such as interviews, focus groups, and case studies have been used to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of key stakeholders, including tourists, accommodation providers, and policymakers. Scholars such as Siuskaitė et al. (2019), Martin & Martinez (2020), and Henry et al. (2021) have conducted qualitative research to delve into the social and environmental aspects of the sharing economy in tourism.

Some studies have adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of microeconomic factors in the tourism sector. By triangulating data from multiple sources and employing a variety of analytical techniques, researchers have been able to validate findings, uncover hidden patterns, and generate more robust conclusions. Notable scholars such as Smith & Johnson (2020a) have embraced this integrated approach to explore the multifaceted nature of the sharing economy in tourism.

The methodology of this study aims to investigate the impact of microeconomic factors on the development of the Lithuanian tourism sector. The study is based on available data from the Lithuanian official database on the tourism sector and related variables from 2018 to 2022. The main objective is to determine how the number of people employed in the tourism sector, the number of beds in accommodation establishments, the number of households with internet access, the number of students, and the cost of tourist arrivals affect tourism output.

The research hypotheses are formulated below:

H_0 : There is no significant correlation between the level of internet accessibility, measured by the percentage of households with internet access, and the growth and performance of sharing economy platforms in the Lithuanian tourism sector.

H_1 : The level of internet accessibility, measured by the percentage of households with internet access, is positively correlated with the growth and performance of sharing economy platforms in the Lithuanian tourism sector.

The first step of analysis involves gathering, analysing, and describing the available statistical data. The second stage entails performing regression analysis. This analytical technique allows the assessment of the relationships between different variables, such as tourism sector performance indicators and internet accessibility. Through regression analysis, it is possible to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between these variables and to evaluate the strength and direction of this relationship. This helps to ascertain whether internet accessibility influences the activities and growth of the tourism sector. The third stage focuses on further in-depth data analysis using various analytical techniques, such as cartography. In this stage, a more detailed geographic data analysis is conducted, allowing for the visual representation and interpretation of the data in geographical space. This enables highlighting local differences and trends that may be important.

The formula for the linear regression model is:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_4x_4 + \beta_5x_5 + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

where y is the dependent variable (tourism output); x_1 , x_2 , x_3 , x_4 , and x_5 are the independent variables (number of people employed in the tourism sector, number of beds in accommodation establishments, number of households with internet access, number of students, tourist arrivals expenditure); β_0 , β_1 , β_2 , β_3 , β_4 , and β_5 are regression coefficients; and ϵ is the bias or random noise.

The regression coefficients were estimated using a standard linear regression model, which allowed us to determine the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable and its statistical significance. This process was carried out using data from the available dataset to quantify the impact of these microeconomic variables on the development of the tourism sector.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also calculated, which is mathematically expressed in the following formula:

$$R_2 = \frac{SSR}{SST} \quad (2)$$

where SSR is the clarity generated by the regression model and SST is the overall clarity in the model. This coefficient helps to assess how well the regression model fits the available data.

All these calculations and simulations were carried out using statistical analysis packages such as Python and Scikit-learn to derive the exact values of the coefficients and the parameters of the model and to assess the goodness of fit.

4. Results. The results of the study revealed some important facts about the development of the sharing economy in the tourism sector in Lithuania. First, the number of people employed in the tourism sector has shown some stability over the last five years, ranging from 45 to 51.4 thousand (Table 7).

Table 8. Statistical data

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of employees in tourism (thous.)	49.1	51.4	45	46.5	47.1
Tourism output (million EUR)	1114.1	1205.7	675.8	999.1	1425.7
Number of places in accommodation establishments	89813	108488	107750	129924	110037
Households with internet access (%)	74	76.4	76.1	80.3	80
Number of learners (%)	599422	591352	591892	594231	610206
Expenditure of tourist arrivals (million EUR)	955.4	977.8	351.5	369.1	810.4
Expenditure of outbound tourists (million EUR)		1044.3	330	403	960.4
Establishments in operation at the beginning of the year (transport)	8118	8361	8565	8501	8845
Establishments active at the beginning of the year (accommodation)	3546	3562	3743	3791	3987

Source: Developed by the authors based on the Lithuanian Statistical Department.

Tourism output is expressed in millions of euros and shows a trend to increase from €675.8 million in 2020 to €1,425.7 million in 2022, reflecting the rapid development of the tourism sector. In addition, the number of beds in accommodation establishments increased from 89813 to 129,924 over the study period, reflecting the growing demand for tourism infrastructure. Another important factor is the number of households with internet access. The share of households with internet access increased from 74% in 2018 to 80% in 2022, indicating a possible link between internet access and the growth of the tourism sector. The number of learners in tourism remained relatively stable over the study period, ranging between 591.3 thousand and 610.2 thousand. The expenditures of inbound and outbound tourists also increased over the study period. In addition, there was a consistent upwards trend in the number of active operators in both the accommodation and transport sectors.

In a further stage of the study, a linear regression was carried out to identify the main microeconomic factors affecting tourism output (in € million), of which the sharing economy is also part. Each coefficient reflects the impact of a particular explanatory variable on the forecasted tourism output and is important for identifying the significance of these factors and their potential impact on the development of the sector. These coefficients were estimated using available data. The resulting regression equation is presented below (3).

$$\hat{Y} = -43847.73 + 0.31x_1 + 0.02x_2 + 0.03x_3 + 0.08x_4 + 1.64x_5 - 4.91x_6 \quad (3)$$

where \hat{Y} is the forecast value of tourism production (million EUR); X_1 is the number of people employed in the tourism sector (thousands); X_2 is the tourism output (€ million); X_3 is the number of places in accommodation; X_4 is the number of households with internet access (%); X_5 is the number of learners; and X_6 is the cost of tourist arrivals (€ million).

The first coefficient β_0 is the slope of the regression model or a constant that indicates the initial value of tourism output when all other variables are zero. The second coefficient β_1 relates to the number of people employed in the tourism sector (thousands). A positive sign for this coefficient indicates that increasing the number of people employed in tourism also increases tourism output. This can be explained by the fact that more employees may imply a higher level of services and attractive tourist offerings. The third coefficient, β_2 , reflects the number of places in accommodation establishments. A positive sign for this coefficient indicates that an increase in the number of accommodation places also leads to an increase in tourism output. This implies that more accommodations attract more tourists, which in turn leads to an increase in tourist expenditure. The fourth coefficient β_3 relates to the percentage of households with an internet connection. A positive sign for this coefficient indicates that a greater number of households with internet access can have a positive impact on tourism output. It is assumed that internet accessibility may encourage tourists to search for more travel information and book accommodations online. The fifth coefficient, β_4 , reflects the number of learners. A positive sign of this coefficient indicates that as the number of learners increases, tourism output also increases. Higher levels of education and learning can stimulate the creation of new tourism businesses and the provision of quality tourism services. The sixth coefficient β_5 relates to the expenditure on tourist arrivals (in million EUR). A positive sign on this coefficient indicates that increasing tourist arrivals also increase tourism output. This can be explained by the fact that higher tourist expenditure may imply a greater number of tourists and growth in the tourism sector.

Based on data from the Lithuanian Statistics Department, the following analysis looks at the distribution of online platforms operating in Lithuania by field of activity.

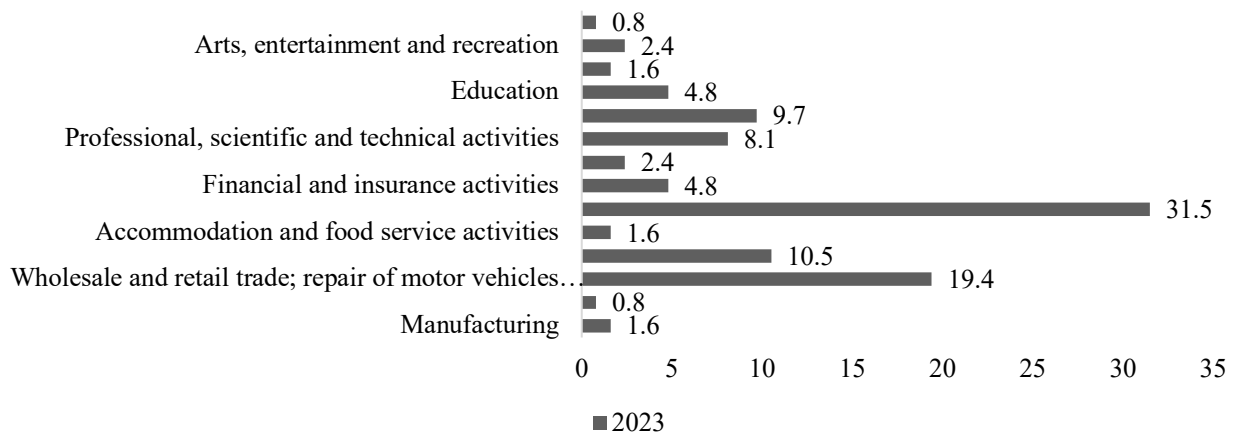


Figure 2. Services areas of internet platforms

Source: Developed by the authors based on the Lithuanian Statistical Department.

The data analysed show that in 2023, Lithuania had a variety of online platforms providing services in different areas. According to the data, platforms in the information and communication sector were the most active, accounting for 31.5% of all online platforms. By analysing the functioning of platforms related to the tourism sector—accommodation (1.6%), transport (10.5%), and entertainment (2.4%)—we can say that sharing platforms in the tourism sector account for approximately 14.5% of the total share of platforms. However, it is important to note that some information and communication channels can also be classified as tourism enablers, so the actual share of sharing economy-based services in the tourism sector is greater.

Below are also data on the number of places in accommodation establishments, including sharing economy platforms, from 2018 to 2023 by region in Lithuania.



Figure 3. Number of places in accommodation, 2023

Source: Developed by the authors based on the Lithuanian Statistical Department.

At the level of the Republic of Lithuania, there is an increasing trend in the number of places in accommodation establishments from 89 813 (2018) to 121 556 (2023). This growth reflects the dynamism of the tourism sector and the potential development of infrastructure. The capital region, which includes Vilnius County, shows a steady increase in the number of places from 2018 to 2023. The regions of central and western Lithuania are also showing growth, albeit with some fluctuations. The largest number of accommodation places is observed in Klaipeda County. This can be explained by the uniqueness of Klaipeda County as a coastal region. Vilnius County is also characterized by a greater number of accommodation places, attracted by its position as the capital and the largest city of Lithuania, which can offer tourists exceptional attractions related to culture as well as to business and academic activities.

5. Discussion and Conclusions This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the sharing economy in the Lithuanian tourism sector. The analysis shows that the tourism sector in Lithuania remains promising and is actively developing, given the increased demand for tourists and investment flows into the sector. The results of the regression analysis provide significant insights into the dynamics of the Lithuanian tourism sector, shedding light on the intricate interplay between microeconomic factors and the sharing economy. Building upon existing research, this study offers novel contributions that enrich our understanding of this complex relationship.

One key finding of this study is the discernible impact of certain microeconomic factors, particularly those associated with professional, scientific, and technical activities, as well as the information and communication sectors, on the growth of the tourism sector. While previous research has acknowledged the importance of these sectors in driving innovation and efficiency gains, their specific influence on the sharing economy within the Lithuanian tourism context has been relatively underexplored. By identifying these sectors as significant drivers of sharing economy growth, this study adds a nuanced perspective to the literature, highlighting the unique pathways through which microeconomic factors shape the tourism landscape.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals notable regional disparities in the distribution of accommodation establishments, with Vilnius and Klaipeda emerging as key hubs within the Lithuanian tourism sector. While previous studies have recognized the competitive advantage of major cities, this study offers a deeper understanding of the underlying factors contributing to this phenomenon. By contextualizing the geographical patterns of accommodation establishment concentration, this research opens avenues for further exploration into the drivers of regional disparities, enriching our knowledge of the spatial dynamics within the tourism sector.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the transformative influence of sharing economy principles and technological advancements on the Lithuanian tourism sector. By elucidating the specific impact of these factors, this study underscores the need for tailored policy interventions and strategic initiatives to leverage these trends for sustainable and inclusive tourism development. Through contextualized analysis, this research offers actionable insights for policymakers and industry stakeholders, providing a roadmap for harnessing the potential of the sharing economy to drive economic growth and innovation in Lithuania's tourism sector.

This suggests that the impact of these factors on tourism needs to be considered strategically, as they can have a range of effects from transforming the way tourism services are delivered to overall economic growth.

First, policymakers should prioritize initiatives aimed at improving internet accessibility, particularly in rural areas, to foster the growth of the sharing economy in the tourism sector. Regulations governing the sharing economy should be tailored to promote innovation and entrepreneurship while ensuring consumer protection and fair competition. In terms of business strategies, sharing economy platforms operating in the tourism sector should leverage the findings to optimize their marketing strategies. They could target regions with greater internet accessibility for expansion and invest in enhancing their digital infrastructure and user interfaces to capitalize on the positive correlation between internet accessibility and platform performance. From a tourism development perspective, destination management organizations can use these insights to develop targeted marketing campaigns promoting destinations with robust sharing economy offerings. This could attract tech-savvy travellers, and collaboration between traditional tourism businesses and sharing economy platforms could enhance the overall visitor experience.

Several key limitations in this study may affect the reliability and applicability of the results. The first limitation relates to data limitations. The data in the study are based on available statistical data, but the quantity and quality of the data may be insufficient or incomplete. This may limit a comprehensive understanding of the tourism sector and the ability to draw targeted conclusions. The survey data cover only a limited period of time, which may not adequately reflect long-term trends or the impact of recent developments on the tourism sector. This may limit the applicability of the results in the future. Another important limitation is the economic and geopolitical context. The results of the study may be affected by a variety of economic and geopolitical factors, such as economic crises or political tensions, the impact of which may be difficult to assess or underestimate.

Further research could benefit from extending the scope of this study and exploring different areas in more depth to gain a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the sharing economy in the tourism sector in Lithuania. The study can be complemented by comparing the Lithuanian tourism sector with other countries to understand international trends and best practices in the sharing economy and possible directions for development. The study can also be complemented by qualitative analysis methods, such as interviews or focus group discussions, to gain a deeper understanding of the business and consumer experience of the sharing economy in the tourism sector.

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Шерінгова економіка в туристичному секторі: мікроекономічні фактори

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У дослідженні проаналізовано складну динаміку мікроекономічних факторів, які суттєво впливають на розвиток шерінгової економіки в туристичному секторі Литви. Використовуючи великий набір даних, що охоплює туристичні метрики та активність користувачів на онлайн-платформах, авторами використано інструменти регресійного аналізу для виявлення взаємодії між зайнятістю в туристичній галузі та ключовими детермінантами, такими як туристична продукція, інфраструктура для проживання, доступ до інтернету та інші релевантні змінні. Емпіричні результати засвідчили наявність кореляції, підкреслюючи важливу роль, яку відіграють досліджувані фактори у формуванні шерінгової економіки в туристичному секторі. Авторами систематизовано можливості та загрози розвитку туристичної галузі. Висвітлюючи складні взаємозв'язки між різними економічними змінними та шерінговою економікою, це дослідження закладає основу для подальших емпіричних досліджень та теоретичних розробок. Результати цього дослідження виходять за межі академічного середовища, маючи практичне значення для галузевих фахівців та політиків. Глибше розуміння мікроекономічних драйверів шерінгової економіки в туристичному секторі дозволить зацікавленим сторонам розробляти більш обґрунтовані стратегії для використання її потенціалу для сталого розвитку. На завершення, це дослідження є значним внеском у розвиток галузі досліджень шерінгової економіки в контексті туристичного сектору. Розкриваючи складну мережу мікроекономічних факторів, що лежать в основі її розвитку, це дослідження надає цінні уявлення, які можуть інформувати як академічний дискурс, так і практичні процеси прийняття рішень. Авторами наголошено, що це дослідження може стати каталізатором для подальшого дослідження та інновацій у цій галузі, сприяючи подальшому зростанню туристичного сектору Литви.

Ключові слова: споживання на основі співпраці; інтернет-платформи; індустрія відпочинку; регресійний аналіз.