**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SHARING ECONOMY AND THE CHANGING CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR**

***Introduction***

Sharing economy as a 21st-century phenomenon can be described as a platform where people can share their properties, such as cars, houses, trips, etc. and their services. Mostly, sharing economy examples are platforms like Airbnb, Uber, BlaBla Car, CouchSurfing, TikTak, etc. Today, some scholars suggest that sharing economy platforms affect people’s perception of ownership. In other words, these platforms make it easier to access what people need in time, and this leads people to step back from long-term investments. In this paper, I will try to examine scholars’ suggestions about sharing economy through platforms.

**Platform Economy**

The economic model used by organizations like Amazon, Uber, and Airbnb, which use digital platforms to link buyers and sellers or service providers and clients, is known as the platform economy. The term "platform economy" refers to a group of software programs that utilize algorithms to integrate buyers and sellers of various goods and labor services. There are platforms designed for both consumers and businesses. (Schor, 2018). These applications gain low commissions from each order or rent and create a fund to employ software developers, couriers, call center workers, etc. The main argument of the platform economy is generally fast, convenient, and cheap services. There are some sub-categories of the platform economy like the on-demand model, the consumption-based model, and the gig economy model as known as sharing economy. Firstly, the consumption-based model aims for high numbers of orders, and it works with couriers, call centers, software developers, etc. The best example of the consumption-based model is Amazon in the world and Trendyol in Turkiye. These applications use algorithms to rise sells. In other words, consumption-based platforms create webpages for each user according to their interests and needs and aim to increase orders. Also, the products are generally ready for shipping. Also, the on-demand applications include human services like cleaning, driving, pet walking, food delivery, etc. For example, Uber, TaskRabbit, Armut, Yemek Sepeti, etc. are some examples of on-demand applications. Lastly, sharing economy as known as the gig economy can be defined as a platform that gives the opportunity to people to share their goods, commodities like vehicles, houses or rooms, photography equipment, or trips in exchange for money (Thelen & Rahman, 2019). In nutshell, the platform economy mostly gives its customers a way to provide for their needs and interests more conveniently through applications and a chance to save their time by purchasing human services. It creates new employment areas and helps economic growth.

Another factor to consider is that the rise of the platform economy is relevant to developments in technology. This development brought some disadvantages to society aside from advantages. In other words, while developments in technology were making using applications easier, and making life easier, these developments brought exploitations and other problems within. To continue with advantages, fast delivery food, online shopping, online grocery, online taxi/driver/car, online laboring, etc. are the practices that give their time to users. On the users’ side, the platform economy may be the best thing to happen in the 21st century because they can order or rent whatever they need, and it will come to their door (Fang & Li, 2022).

Thirdly, platform capitalism expanded new employment areas like couriering, call centers, software development, shipping, hosting, etc. Thanks to these new business areas, both new professionalism is formed, and new exploitations appeared. The traditional labor market continues to be a tie-in for the platform economy. Except for individuals who can demand superior market positions, the risky model of independent contracting without benefits, protections, or guaranteed income is unlikely to be favored (Schor J. B., 2018), but there are lots of couriers working without insurance, long-term contracts, or any contract. On the other hand, development in technology that brings humanity to a tech-oriented life, also makes people unemployed. That means, Artificial Intelligence is able to replace many human jobs today, and one of these jobs is call centers. Previously, when more people were working in call centers, today, many transactions can be done with a voice response system and artificial intelligence called assistants without connecting to the call center. While the development of technology leaves people unemployed, it also creates inequality among the people who use the apps. There is a gap between the less educated part of society and the middle and upper sections. It can be said that learning to use applications is not seen as a skill, and those who cannot do this are excluded (Fang & Li, 2022) People who can't use the app are seen as old-fashioned. Also, another group that fits this definition is the elderly. Here, we can see the impact of ageism. In a study conducted in Turkey, it is said that the group that uses e-commerce the most is between the ages of 20-35 (Ticaret Bakanlığı, 2021).

Finally, another group is people who live in areas that companies do not give access to because they do not see them as efficient. These areas are the rural parts of the country and the peripheries of metropolitan cities. For example, the car rental app TikTak is only available in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir in Turkey. These three places are the cities with the largest population in Turkey. When we consider these groups, we can say that the people who do not benefit the most from the developing platform economy do not have enough capital or time to learn or do have not access to apps. In summary, being able to use applications creates inequality in itself. Which service is accessible where and who can use it determines the audience of that platform. Thus, platforms are able to create their advertising focus. In summary, the services provided by the platforms reveal the equation of time equals money. Those who can afford to buy that service are buying their time. Although the new working areas provided by the platforms look good, factors such as unhealthy working conditions and precariousness also devalue the workers and their life. The fact that workers who are replaceable in the company’s eyes, often work precariously also explains the mobbing they are subjected to. In the end, it can be seen that platform capitalism forms new types of mobbing, precarity, and working styles while it was expanding employment areas.

**Sharing Economy- Customer Behaviors**

As discussed before, sharing economy or gig economy can be defined as a sub-category of the platform economy. According to Juliet B. Schor and Mehmet Cansoy, the sharing economy, as it is now known, first appeared in the United States in 2008. It was first known as "collaborative consumption" and was a result of both technology potential and practical economics (Schor & Cansoy, 2019). Collaborative consumption is centered around peer-to-peer lending, home sharing, and car sharing. The main aim of the gig economy is the idea was to create a new market that allows people to rent or freely share those assets to others (Schor & Cansoy, 2019). Furthermore, the notion of sharing in the gig economy could lead to a more sustainable form of consumption, as it allows for the more efficient use of resources. For instance, the sustainability of sharing economy is peer-to-peer home-sharing platforms like Airbnb. These platforms (Airbnb, CouchSurfing, etc.) allow individuals to rent out their homes or apartments to travelers, which can lead to more efficient use of housing resources. Instead of having multiple empty homes or apartments, homeowners can use their property to generate income while they are away, while travelers have a more affordable accommodation option. In other words, the advantages of the gig economy can be listed as cost-saving, accessibility, convenience, environmental benefits, increased incomes that come from cost-saving and rent, and innovation. On the other hand, the disadvantages of the gig economy can be sorted as a lack of legal regulation, income equality, job loss, quality control, and data privacy (Fang & Li, 2022). When the pros and cons are compared, one can the overall result will turn out over time.

The thing that can be assured, is that changing behavior of customers. By altering consumption behaviors, boosting confidence in online transactions, encouraging more frequent and varied purchases, altering expectations for customer service, altering how people perceive ownership, and encouraging a more cooperative and community-oriented mindset, the sharing economy can change consumer behaviors (Fang & Li, 2022). To illustrate, Air Bnb is an example of changing consumer behavior. Airbnb is a platform in the sharing economy that allows people to rent out their homes or apartments to guests. The platform can change customer behaviors in a number of ways, such as: Changing consumption patterns by making short-term rentals more accessible and affordable, increasing trust in online transactions by building trust between hosts and guests, encouraging more frequent and diverse purchases by making it easy for people to find and book accommodation in new locations, changing expectations for customer service by providing personalized service, changing the way people view ownership by allowing them to monetize their assets and fostering a more collaborative and community-oriented mindset by encouraging people to share their homes and neighborhoods (Lutz & Newlands, 2018). In this period, old-fashioned behaviors like buying summer houses or booking hotels, become less favored. People distance themselves from long-term investments and transition to a freer market economy. Overall, Airbnb has a significant impact on customer behavior, changing the way people think about consumption, trust, service, ownership, and community. Not only Air Bnb, but also applications such as Zipcar & Uber & TikTak have a similar effect on vehicle purchase behavior. In conclusion, While the sharing economy has negative effects on the market economy, we can say that the market economy also benefits due to the emergence of new, large companies. When customers change their behaviors from the market economy to the gig economy practices, social relations which are embedded in the economy also change. Short-term rentals through Air Bnb and other apps are changing the perception of landlord and neighborhood culture. Changing consumer behavior has not only individual consequences but also societal consequences. The fact that people can move more easily increases heterogeneity and turns to homogeneity eventually, but on the other hand, it creates the danger of the destruction of neighborhood culture and the subjectivity of cultures themselves.

**Conclusion**

Customer behavior has been significantly impacted by the platform economy, which is the use of digital platforms to link consumers with goods and services. Peer-to-peer transactions are facilitated through these platforms, including Uber and Airbnb, and frequently entail the involvement of third parties. This has sparked the growth of the sharing economy, in which people can use these platforms to monetize their goods and abilities. The classic consumer's behavior has been significantly impacted by the sharing economy. Customers now have more alternatives to choose from and a more individualized service. Due to this, buyers are now more inclined to choose convenience and cost-effectiveness over brand loyalty, which has caused a change in traditional consumer behavior. Because people may monetize their assets and talents through sharing platforms, the sharing economy has also increased the number of consumers who work in the gig economy.  Businesses now operate differently as a result of the platform economy and the sharing economy. In order to compete with the new market competitors, businesses must now adapt to the new market conditions. Businesses are increasingly concentrating more on giving clients a seamless and customized experience. Overall, the sharing economy can have a significant impact on customer behavior, changing the way people think about consumption, trust, service, ownership, and community. The sharing economy can make it easier for customers to trust strangers and build relationships with them, as platforms like Airbnb and Uber have the built-in reputation and rating systems. The sharing economy also encourages customers to think differently about service and ownership, as they can access goods and services without needing to own them outright. Additionally, the sharing economy can foster a sense of community, as customers can share resources and experiences with one another. This can lead to the creation of new social connections and a sense of belonging. Notedly, we still need time to see the results of the platform economy and the sharing economy, which we can say is just emerging, more clearly.

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