

Subscription economy in the leisure behavior of Polish consumers

Justyna Ziobrowska-Sztuczka¹, CDFMR, Ewa Markiewicz², CDFMR

¹University of Wrocław, Department of Innovation and Development, Institute of Economic Sciences, Union Research and Documentation Center, Poland, e-mail: justyna.ziobrowska@uw.edu.pl (corresponding author), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9572-1438>; ²Adam Mickiewicz University, Department of Tourism and Recreation Poznań, Poland, e-mail: ewa.markiewicz@amu.edu.pl, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7600-054X>

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Abstract. The article aims to determine the preferences of Polish consumers in the use of the subscription model in their leisure time behaviors, taking into account the size of their place of residence. The study employed a diagnostic survey method and statistical analysis as the research approach. The authors' research has shown great interest in the subscription model among Polish respondents in behaviors related to spending leisure time; however, no significant differences were observed between the studied groups based on place of residence, indicating a consistent pattern of consumer preferences among respondents from both urban and rural environments. The main areas of interest turned out to be primarily VoD platforms and music streaming, and the most important factor influencing consumer behavior in the context of subscription services is the economic factor, mainly the price of the subscription. It is expected that, due to new trends in consumer behavior, the discussed model will gain popularity among Polish respondents, particularly in the context of their leisure time, which will result in an increase in its areas of application.

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1. Introduction

Leisure time behavior is an inseparable element of human existence and interests representatives of various scientific disciplines. In the literature, one can find three: free time, leisure time, and leisure. The authors do not focus on defining leisure time, assuming that it has been exhaustively described in numerous publications on human behavior in leisure time. The article assumes that free time is the time at the disposal of an individual at his or her discretion (time free from biological and economic compulsions), and leisure time is the section of free time (this free time) that is devoted to the realization of free time values. Whereas leisure means a complex of self-realization and self-enrichment, achieved by an individual as a result of using leisure time for an activity of his choice, which provides relaxation, which is the main, although not the only, function of leisure time (Pięta, 2004; Jankowski, 2006).

Over time, the nature of leisure time has continually changed and been influenced by various factors. Since the 1960s, the term leisure society has been used in the literature (Vattimo, 2003; Veal, 2011), and leisure time has become an important determinant of quality of life (as an essential indicator of scales and tools for measuring such quality). There has been a democratization of leisure time, meaning it is now accessible to all classes and social strata (Rojek, 2006).

In the modern world, changes are noticeable in that the boundaries between leisure time and the time a person devotes to fulfilling their duties are blurred. On the one hand, the development of modern information technologies has increased leisure time and expanded the range of existing possibilities for leisure behavior. On the other hand, it has led to a blurring of the boundary between work and leisure time. In this view, leisure has become another concept of work, and having free time is seen by many as unproductive and undesirable (Juniu, 2009). Bryce (2001) uses the term 'heterotopic space' as the juxtaposition of several spaces and the merging of the boundaries between work and leisure that constitute a unity. According to the author, technology has changed the notion of leisure time and space, but has also intruded into individuals' lives, making it difficult for them to stay away from work even during leisure time. Related to this is the concept of mediatization (Lundby, 2009) and the associated virtualization of consumption, understood as the satisfaction of needs through electronic media (including the Internet) (Bywalec, 2007). Mediatization, virtualization of consumption, and homeocentrism have led, in terms of leisure

behavior, to an increased interest in passive media-based activities (TV, Netflix, listening to music, and computer games). It is therefore essential, in the context of these phenomena, to find the proper relationship between work and leisure time, i.e., to be able to manage leisure time, which means being able to clearly distinguish between the activities we do in life out of a sense of duty and those we do for pleasure. This is not a matter of sharing time exactly equally, but of finding an arrangement that allows for a satisfying and healthy functioning in both areas.

Comparing Poland to other European countries, it is worth noting that Poland lags behind in terms of work-life balance, with a longer workweek and less leisure time. The average actual work week in Poland is 38,9 hours, which places Poland among the countries with the most extended working hours in Europe (EU average 36 hours.). The Netherlands had the shortest work week (32.1 hours), followed by Denmark, Germany and Austria (each 33.9) (Eurostat, 2025). Work-life balance in Europe is best in Scandinavia, the Benelux countries, and Spain and France, where shorter working hours, flexibility, and extensive social benefits are the norm (Clockify, 2025).

In response to the aforementioned changes in attitudes towards leisure, new business models are emerging, including, of interest to the authors of this article, subscription economics, which refers to a business model in which customers regularly pay a set fee, usually monthly or annually, in exchange for access to specific products or services (Choi & Hong, 2017; Bray et al., 2021). The new approach marks a shift from an ownership model to access, from a single payment to multiple recurring payments, from an anonymous transaction to a valuable relationship, and from one- or even two-way communication to a whole community gathered under the umbrella of an organization. In this way, the model in question corresponds to concepts such as access-based consumption, sharing economy, relationship economy, and membership economy (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2015; Baxter, 2015; Kammer et al. 2015; Ritter & Schanz, 2019; Janzer, 2020; Liu et al. 2020; Sign up, 2021; Eyal, 2022; Subscription Economy, 2023). The model analyzed influences the increase in leisure resources and enhances the availability of products and services that consumers purchase in pursuit of their leisure behavior. The subscription economy increases the accessibility of leisure behavior products and services (e.g. a person with a mobility disability can use a streaming platform instead of going to the cinema, and an indigent

person can use a luxury car or enjoy a luxury hotel on a subscription basis). The model also provides a solution to noticeable social and environmental trends relating to consumers' concern for sustainability and sustainable consumption, which is also reflected in their leisure behavior. The subscription economy, based on the principle of access in exchange for ownership, promotes sustainable consumption and can be regarded as a sustainable business model (Bocken, 2023).

Despite the significant increase in the number of subscription-based businesses, very little is still known about consumers' experiences of the business model under review, especially in the Polish market. The authors decided to fill this gap.

The article aims to determine the preferences of Polish consumers in the use of the subscription model in their leisure time behaviors, taking into account the size of their place of residence. The authors pose the question: What are the preferences of Polish consumers regarding the use of the subscription economy in their leisure time behaviors, taking into account the size of their place of residence? The article presents empirical findings from the authors' research on Polish consumers' experiences with subscription economics in their leisure behavior. The paper employs the methods of literature analysis and criticism, diagnostic survey, and statistical analysis.

2. Research materials and methods

This article aims to determine the preferences of Polish consumers regarding the use of the subscription model in their leisure time behaviors, taking into account the size of their place of residence. The study employed a diagnostic survey method and statistical analysis as the research approach. The quantitative survey was conducted between October 2, 2023, and December 4, 2023, on a sample of 350 individuals. Respondents used the standardized online CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) method. The study was carried out with a small sample, as it is a pilot. The pilot can help identify potential logistical or organizational issues that may arise during the full implementation of the survey. A small sample may not be representative of the entire population, which can lead to errors in inference and the generalization of results on a larger scale. The survey questionnaire, which was made available electronically, required respondents to have access to the Internet, meaning that not everyone had the opportunity to be included in the

research sample. As previous research has shown, residents of large cities are more knowledgeable about and express more interest in the subscription model (Subscriptions 2021). However, there is no comprehensive study in the available literature on the preferences and experiences of Polish consumers regarding the extent to which subscription economics is used in leisure behavior, taking into account the category of residence size. The authors pose the question: What are the preferences of Polish consumers regarding the use of the subscription economy in their leisure time behaviors, taking into account the size of their place of residence? Based on the knowledge available at the stage of preparing the article and the literature review, the following research hypotheses were put forward: H1: People in large cities show higher levels of engagement with the subscription model in leisure time behavior compared to other groups of adult consumers. H2: Irrespective of the size of the place of residence, the most important factors influencing consumers' leisure behavior in terms of subscription economics are economic factors (subscription price). To examine the relationships between the size of the place of residence and consumer behavior in the context of the subscription model, statistical analyses were carried out. Given the categorical nature of the variables (e.g., place of residence, declared behavioral responses, and assessment of influencing factors), the Chi-square test of independence was applied. This method was deemed appropriate for identifying statistically significant associations between qualitative variables.

Among the respondents (350), 53% were women and 46% were men, with three respondents identifying as a different gender. Those aged 18–24 accounted for 30 percent of the respondents, those aged 25–44 accounted for 32 percent, and those aged 45–59 accounted for 24 percent. The smallest group comprised those aged 60 and over (14 percent). More than half of the respondents held a college degree (28 percent) or an incomplete college degree (26 percent), a third had a high school education (33 percent), and a distinct minority had vocational (8 percent) or primary (5 percent) education. The most significant number of respondents came from localities with a population of 150,000 to 500,000 (27 percent), up to 50,000 residents (22 percent), more than 500,000 residents (20 percent), and from 50,000 to 150,000 (17 percent). Rural residents accounted for 14% of the respondents. Taking into account the monthly net income of respondents, the largest group were those who declared their income between 3 and 4 thousand zlotys (28 percent) and between 4 and 5 thousand zlotys (24

percent). A similarly sized group 5 was made up of those earning between PLN 1,500 and PLN 3,000 and above PLN 5,000. The least numerous group consisted of those with an income of less than PLN 1,500.

3. Research results

The analysis examined the Poles' preferences and experiences with the analyzed business model as part of their leisure behavior. The actual part of the questionnaire began with a question about respondents' participation in the subscription economy. Nearly 80 percent of respondents answered this question positively and proceeded to complete the rest of the survey. To test whether users and non-users of subscription systems and services differed in terms of the size of their place of residence, an analysis of differences was carried out using the Mann-Whitney U test (Table 1).

The analysis carried out showed that users and non-users of subscription services and products are similar in terms of the size of their place of residence. In the following question, respondents were asked to select from a list of products or services they use on a subscription basis as part of their leisure activities. The model in question was most popular for VoD platforms (e.g., Netflix, Player, HBO GO, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV) (72.5 percent), music streaming (e.g., Spotify, Tidal, YouTube Premium, Empik music) (55.8 percent), and physical activity services (e.g., passes to fitness clubs, gyms, swimming pools, tennis, dance classes, etc.) (37.7 percent). Further products were online games for computer or console (e.g., Xbox Live), indicated by 26.1 percent of respondents, as well as audiobooks (e.g., Audioteka, Storytel) and online

press/papers on subscription via the Internet (e.g., Wyborcza.pl, Newsweek), which received almost 20 percent of responses (19.2 percent and 18.5 percent, respectively). Respondents also use the subscription model for services related to their hobbyist activities (e.g., subscriptions to arts, crafts, cooking, photography, remote gardening, etc.) (12.3 percent) and cultural/entertainment (e.g., subscriptions to cinema, theatre, football matches, etc.) (11.6 percent). Just under 10 percent of respondents also indicated subscription purchases of sports equipment (bikes, skis, surfboards, climbing equipment, water sports equipment, etc.) (9.4 percent), educational products (e.g. educational products (e.g. Skillshare, Lynda, Udemy platforms) (8.7 percent) and tangible products for hobbies (e.g. board or card games, painting, crafts, floristry, fishing (mystery box), music, gardening (vegetable box), etc.) (6.9 percent). In the "Other" responses, there were indications that were expanded upon in the next question for respondents, regarding products and services related to tourism. Only 3 percent of respondents indicated that they do not use products and services related to leisure activities effectively. When analyzing the data on the use of subscription services by place of residence, several interesting trends emerge (Figure 1).

In villages, the most frequently used subscription service is VoD platforms, with 62.16. percent popularity. The second most used category is music streaming, with 45.95 percent of respondents. Cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants are dominated by VoD platforms (76.67 percent) and music streaming (60.00 percent), indicating a high interest in online video content and music in this group. Cities with a population of 50,000 to 150,000 are distinguished by the use of physical activity services (40.00 percent) and VoD platforms (70.00 percent), which may be indicative of the diverse interests

Table 1. Results of Mann-Whitney U test of difference analysis comparing users and non-users of subscription schemes by size of residence

Dependent variable	Non-use of subscriptions (<i>n</i> = 74)	Use of subscriptions (<i>n</i> = 276)	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
<i>Me</i>	3,00	3,00			
<i>Min</i>	1,00	1,00			
<i>Max</i>	5,00	5,00	-0,38	0,705	<0,01
average rank	171,64	176,53			

Explanation: *n* - number of observations; *Me* - median; *Min* - minimum value; *Max* - maximum value; *Z* - value of test statistic; *p* - statistical significance; η^2 - effect strength index

Source: Own elaboration based on test results

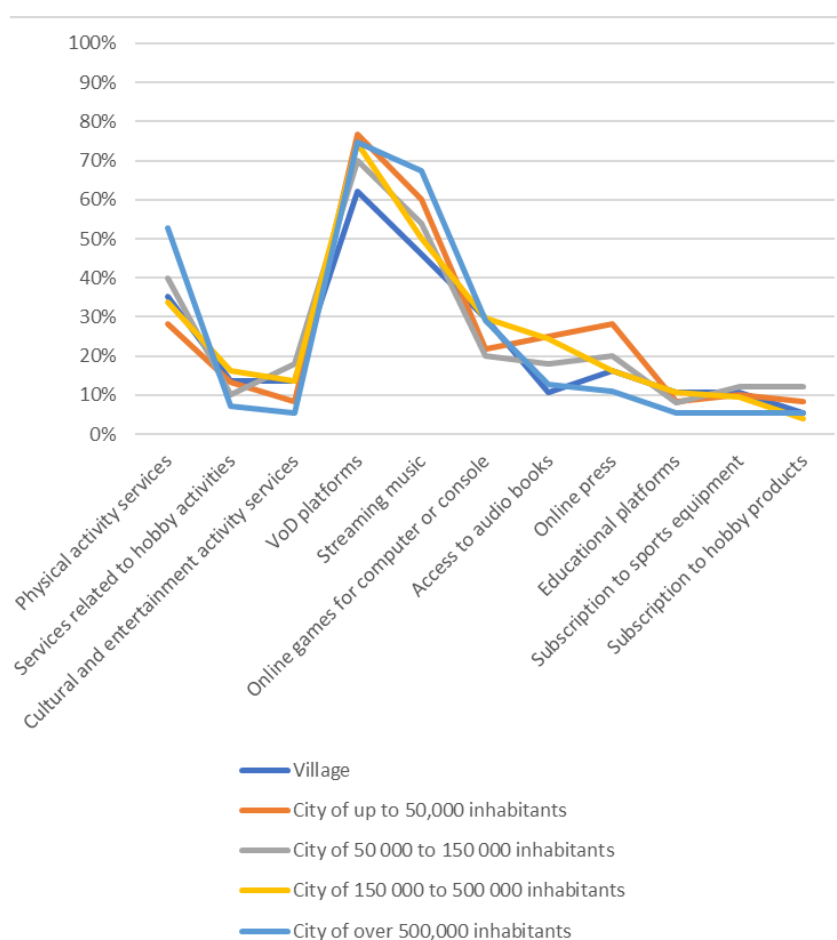


Fig. 1. Subscription services by place of residence

Source: own elaboration

of residents in this category of localities. In cities between 150,000 and 500,000 inhabitants, VoD platforms (74.32 percent) and physical activity services (33.78 percent) are most frequently used. In cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, on the other hand, there is a high interest in physical activity services, with as many as 52.73 percent of respondents expressing interest. VoD platforms and music streaming are also very popular, reaching 74.55 percent and 67.27 percent, respectively. In the next part of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate the factors influencing their decision to participate in the subscription economy. Considering the factors influencing subscription decisions, the subscription price was the most important for all age groups, followed by respondents (overall) who marked the range of services/products available through subscription (42 percent), convenience of use (31.2 percent), and freebies and promotions (23.9 percent). In terms of factors influencing the decision to subscribe to a service or product, those

living in urban areas are most influenced by the subscription price (75.68 percent) and the range of services/products available through the subscription (43.24 percent). Rural residents also seem to value convenience (40.54 percent) or the opinions of other users (32.43 percent). In cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants, the subscription price is a key factor (70 percent), as well as convenience of use (30 percent) and lifestyle changes (23.33 percent). In cities with 50,000 to 150,000 inhabitants, residents are primarily guided by the price of the subscription (68 percent) and the range of services/products available through the subscription (26.00 percent). The opinions of other users (22.00 percent) and freebies and promotions (20.00 percent) are also important. Cities with a population of 150,000 to 500,000 are characterized by the high influence of the subscription price (77.03 percent) and the variety of the range of services/products available in the subscription (31.08 percent). Residents in this category of town also pay attention to

freebies and promotions (25.68 percent) and brands (22.97 percent). In cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, the dominant factors are the subscription price (85.45 percent) and the range of services/products available in the subscription (67.27 percent). The convenience of use (40 percent), trial period (36.36 percent), and promotions (36.36 percent) are also influential.

In the next part of the analysis, we examined whether where people lived made a difference in what influenced their decision to purchase a subscription. To do this, we made cross-tables with a chi-square test.

Statistically significant differences were noted for two variables: the range of services/products available through subscription and the trial period or satisfaction guarantee. The range of services/

products available through subscription turned out to be a factor significantly more often indicated by residents of the largest cities (over 500,000 residents) - 53.6%, compared to the other groups (35.6% to 21.1% indications of "yes"). This means that those living in the most significant metropolitan areas placed more importance on the variety of offerings in the subscription model. Additionally, the trial period or satisfaction guarantee was a factor indicated significantly more often by residents of large cities, especially those with more than 500,000 residents (29.0%), compared to those living in smaller towns and rural areas (ranging from 17.2% to 5.3%). However, both effects were weak ($V_c < 0.3$). For other factors, such as subscription price, convenience of use, opinions of other users, access to exclusive products, change in lifestyle, time

Table 2. Relationship of place of residence to factors influencing the decision to subscribe - results of the chi-square independence test

Variable		Up to 50,000.		From 150,000 to 500,000.		From 50,000 to 150,000.		Above 500 thousand.		Village		$\chi^2(4)$	p	V_c
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Subscription price	Not	34	46,6%	35	40,2%	24	42,1%	23	33,3%	20	41,7%	2,67	0,615	0,09
	Yes	39	53,4%	52	59,8%	33	57,9%	46	66,7%	28	58,3%			
Range of services/products available for subscription	Not	47	64,4%	67	77,0%	45	78,9%	32	46,4%	32	66,7%	21,04	<0,001	0,25
	Yes	26	35,6%	20	23,0%	12	21,1%	37	53,6%	16	33,3%			
Convenience of use	Not	57	78,1%	71	81,6%	43	75,4%	47	68,1%	33	68,8%	5,16	0,271	0,12
	Yes	16	21,9%	16	18,4%	14	24,6%	22	31,9%	15	31,3%			
Feedback from other users	Not	68	93,2%	76	87,4%	46	80,7%	57	82,6%	36	75,0%	8,93	0,063	0,16
	Yes	5	6,8%	11	12,6%	11	19,3%	12	17,4%	12	25,0%			
Access to exclusive products	Not	64	87,7%	72	82,8%	45	78,9%	63	91,3%	45	93,8%	7,45	0,114	0,15
	Yes	9	12,3%	15	17,2%	12	21,1%	6	8,7%	3	6,3%			
Trial period or satisfaction guarantee	Not	63	86,3%	72	82,8%	54	94,7%	49	71,0%	44	91,7%	16,35	0,003	0,22
	Yes	10	13,7%	15	17,2%	3	5,3%	20	29,0%	4	8,3%			
Lifestyle change	Not	60	82,2%	72	82,8%	48	84,2%	65	94,2%	42	87,5%	5,71	0,222	0,13
	Yes	13	17,8%	15	17,2%	9	15,8%	4	5,8%	6	12,5%			
Season	Not	67	91,8%	78	89,7%	50	87,7%	64	92,8%	45	93,8%	1,70	0,791	0,07
	Yes	6	8,2%	9	10,3%	7	12,3%	5	7,2%	3	6,3%			
Brand/service known from previous experience	Not	68	93,2%	71	81,6%	53	93,0%	58	84,1%	40	83,3%	7,49	0,112	0,15
	Yes	5	6,8%	16	18,4%	4	7,0%	11	15,9%	8	16,7%			
Gratuities, promotions	Not	62	84,9%	69	79,3%	47	82,5%	50	72,5%	42	87,5%	5,52	0,238	0,13
	Yes	11	15,1%	18	20,7%	10	17,5%	19	27,5%	6	12,5%			

Explanation: N - the number of observations; χ^2 - the result of the chi-square test; p - statistical significance; V_c - the index of the strength of the effect.

of year, familiarity with the brand or service, or promotions, no statistically significant differences were shown by place of residence.

After selecting the motivators for participation in the subscription economy, respondents were asked to identify the advantages and disadvantages of this model. More than half of the respondents identified the ability to share costs with others (sustainable consumption) (56.5 percent) and fixed costs, which enable them to plan their spending (54.3 percent), as the most significant advantages. This was followed by respondents who cited not having to make payments each time (37 percent), time savings (32.2 percent), the ability to test the product/service (free trial period) (20.3 percent), personalization of the product/service (18.1 percent) and access to the most current version of the product/service (15.6 percent). As the survey results showed, high quality of service is not a significant advantage of the subscription model for most respondents. "Other" responses included indications of a sense of security of continuity in accessing the service. When analyzing the advantages of the subscription system according to where people live, differences emerge in what residents value most in various areas. In villages, the most significant advantages of the subscription system are not having to pay each time (40.50 percent), being able to share costs (37.80 percent), and fixed costs (37.80 percent). Rural residents also value time savings (21.60%) and access to the most up-to-date version of the product or service (18.90%). In cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants, the dominant advantages are the ability to share costs (61.70 percent), fixed costs (58.30 percent) and not having to make payments every time (31.70 percent). Saving time (33.30 percent) and personalization of the product/service (13.30 percent) are also crucial for this group of residents. Cities with 50,000 to 150,000 inhabitants stand out for advantages such as fixed costs (60 percent), the ability to share costs (50.00 percent), and not having to make a payment every time (40 percent). Time-saving (16 percent) and product/service personalization (22 percent) are also crucial in this category. Cities with 150,000 to 500,000 inhabitants are characterized by valuing fixed costs (55.40 percent), the ability to share costs (59.50 percent), and not having to make payments every time (32.40 percent). Saving time (35.10 percent) and high-quality customer service (18.90 percent) are also crucial to this group of residents. In cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, the most important advantages of a subscription system are the ability to share costs (65.50 percent), fixed costs (54.50 percent), and not having to make payments each

time (43.60 percent). Also highly valued are time-saving (49.10 percent) and the opportunity to test a service or product (30.90 percent). The detailed distribution of responses is shown in Figure 2.

After highlighting the advantages of the subscription model, the next part of the survey asked respondents to identify its most significant disadvantages. Half of the respondents believe that subscribing to too many services at once that are not used regularly can lead to unnecessary spending. Additionally, respondents identify risks associated with the use of personal data collected by companies operating under the subscription model (48.2 percent). One in three respondents also cited price volatility (29.3 percent) and a lack of product or service ownership (28.6 percent). Difficulty in canceling subscriptions and dependence on the company/service provider are significant to about 20 percent of respondents. Analyzing the biggest disadvantages and threats of the subscription system according to the place of residence, it is possible to distinguish differences in the perception of these issues by residents of different areas. In the villages, the most concerning threats are subscribing to too many services at once (59.46 percent) and the use of personal data collected in the system (48.65 percent), suggesting that rural residents are concerned about the privacy of their data. Additionally, a lack of ownership of products, content, and services (29.73 percent) is considered a significant drawback. In cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants, residents express concerns about the use of personal data (53.33 percent) and the lack of ownership of products, content, and services (33.33 percent). Difficulties with unsubscribing are also noted (21.67 percent). Cities with a population of 50,000 to 150,000 are characterized by concerns about the use of personal data (40.00 percent) and dependence on the service provider (40.00 percent). Difficulty in unsubscribing (16.00 percent) is also significant for this group. Cities with a population of 150,000 to 500,000 are distinguished by concerns about subscribing to too many services at once (51.35%) and the use of personal data (43.24%). Difficulty in unsubscribing (24.32 percent) is also notable. In cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, the two most significant disadvantages of the subscription system are subscribing to too many services simultaneously (65.45 percent) and the use of personal data (56.36 percent). The difficulty of unsubscribing (25.45 percent) is also significant for this group of residents. Complementing the issue of the disadvantages and risks of the model in question was another question, in which respondents were asked to respond to the statement: subscriptions

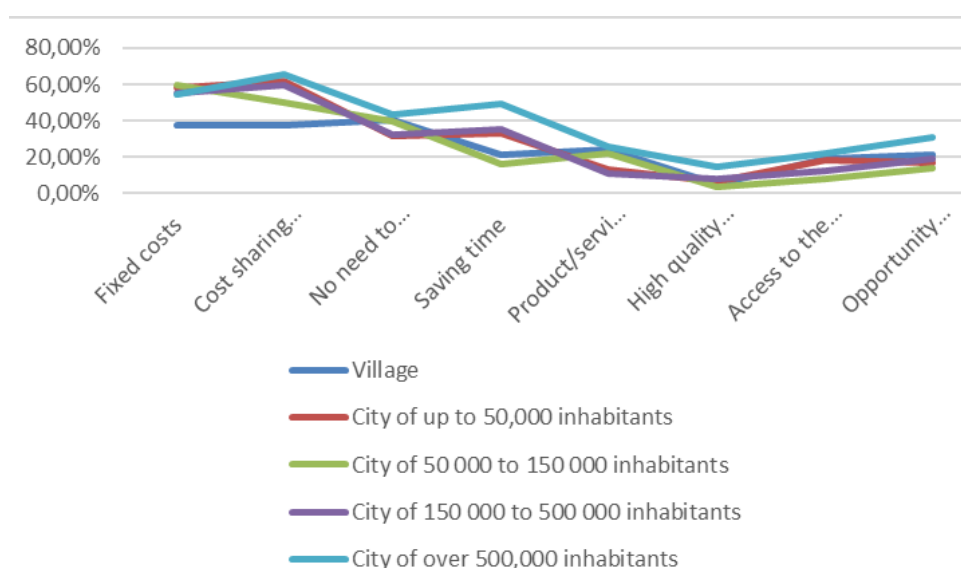


Fig. 2. Advantages of using subscriptions

Source: own elaboration

lead to excessive accumulation of things or services that you do not use. Half of the respondents agreed with the statement (answers included 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree'), while less than 40 percent held a contrary opinion, and the rest could not make a clear statement on the subject. Respondents were also asked about reviews of their subscriptions. 54.3 percent of respondents regularly review their subscriptions to see if they are still relevant and profitable for them, and 45.7 percent do not. Next, it was examined whether respondents who controlled their subscription services and products were differentiated by their place of residence. It appears that the regular control of owned subscription services and products did not determine the size of the place of residence of the people surveyed. The final part of the survey focused on the future of respondents' participation in the subscription economy. Respondents were asked the question: Do they plan to increase their subscriptions in the coming years? As the survey results showed, almost half of the respondents intend to increase their participation in the model in question (yes and definitely yes answers), nearly one in three declare no such action, and 25 percent are unable to answer this question.

In the next step, it was analyzed whether the respondents' place of residence differentiated the planned increase in involvement in subscriptions related to various leisure activities. Cross-tabulations

with a chi-square test of independence were performed as before.

Statistically significant differences were noted in two cases: subscription to physical activity services and use of VoD platforms. Physical activity services were most often indicated as a planned area for increasing participation in the subscription model by residents of cities with a population of 50,000 to 150,000 (28.1%). In contrast, residents of the largest metropolitan areas (with more than 500,000 residents) were least likely to plan such an increase (4.3%). VoD platforms were also used at different frequencies, depending on the place of residence. Residents of rural areas and the smallest cities (with populations of up to 50,000) were most likely to plan to increase their use of such services (27.4% each). In comparison, those in the largest cities (with over 500,000 residents) were significantly less likely to declare such an intention (7.2%). Both effects were weak ($V_c < 0.3$). For the other areas analyzed, such as streaming music, online gaming, access to audiobooks, online press, educational platforms, and subscriptions to sports equipment or hobby products, no statistically significant relationships were found between place of residence and these factors.

When analyzing the factors that may lead those surveyed to increase their subscriptions in the coming years, depending on their location, differences in the expectations of residents in various areas stand out. In villages, a greater variety of subscription

Table 3. Relationship of place of residence to planned increase in subscription model participation in selected leisure areas - results of chi-square independence test

Variable		Up to 50,000.		From 150,000 to 500,000.		From 50,000 to 150,000.		Above 500 thousand.		Village		$\chi^2(4)$	<i>p</i>	<i>V_c</i>
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%			
Physical activity services	Not	60	82,2%	72	82,8%	41	71,9%	66	95,7%	60	82,2%	17,48	0,002	0,23
	Yes	13	17,8%	15	17,2%	16	28,1%	3	4,3%	13	17,8%			
Hobby activity services	Not	68	93,2%	82	94,3%	52	91,2%	67	97,1%	68	93,2%	3,48	0,482	0,10
	Yes	5	6,8%	5	5,7%	5	8,8%	2	2,9%	5	6,8%			
Cultural and entertainment activity services	Not	67	91,8%	82	94,3%	52	91,2%	64	92,8%	67	91,8%	1,26	0,868	0,06
	Yes	6	8,2%	5	5,7%	5	8,8%	5	7,2%	6	8,2%			
platforms	Not	53	72,6%	65	74,7%	43	75,4%	64	92,8%	53	72,6%	11,73	0,019	0,19
	Yes	20	27,4%	22	25,3%	14	24,6%	5	7,2%	20	27,4%			
Streaming music	Not	69	94,5%	79	90,8%	53	93,0%	69	100,0%	69	94,5%	6,84	0,145	0,14
	Yes	4	5,5%	8	9,2%	4	7,0%	0	0,0%	4	5,5%			
Online games for computer or console	Not	70	95,9%	81	93,1%	54	94,7%	69	100,0%	70	95,9%	7,26	0,123	0,15
	Yes	3	4,1%	6	6,9%	3	5,3%	0	0,0%	3	4,1%			
Access to audio books	Not	66	90,4%	81	93,1%	52	91,2%	65	94,2%	66	90,4%	1,04	0,904	0,06
	Yes	7	9,6%	6	6,9%	5	8,8%	4	5,8%	7	9,6%			
Online press/press subscription over the Internet	Not	71	97,3%	79	90,8%	54	94,7%	67	97,1%	71	97,3%	4,64	0,326	0,12
	Yes	2	2,7%	8	9,2%	3	5,3%	2	2,9%	2	2,7%			
Educational platforms	Not	73	100,0%	86	98,9%	52	91,2%	66	95,7%	73	100,0%	9,47	0,050	0,17
	Yes	0	0,0%	1	1,1%	5	8,8%	3	4,3%	0	0,0%			
Subscription to sports equipment	Not	71	97,3%	84	96,6%	53	93,0%	66	95,7%	47	97,9%	2,25	0,690	0,08
	Yes	2	2,7%	3	3,4%	4	7,0%	3	4,3%	1	2,1%			
Subscription to hobby products	Not	70	95,9%	87	100,0%	55	96,5%	65	94,2%	47	97,9%	5,05	0,282	0,12
	Yes	3	4,1%	0	0,0%	2	3,5%	4	5,8%	1	2,1%			

Explanation: N - the number of observations; χ^2 - the result of the chi-square test; p - statistical significance; V_c - the index of the strength of the effect.

models is most important (43.24%), suggesting that rural residents expect a range of options available for subscription. Lower prices (35.14%) and greater personalization of services (27.03%) are also important. In cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants, the predominant expectation is for lower prices (60.00 percent) and a greater variety of subscription models (40.00 percent). Residents in this category of town also show interest in greater personalization of services (28.33 percent) and a more straightforward cancellation procedure for subscriptions (16.67 percent). Cities with 50,000 to 150,000 inhabitants are distinguished by the expectation of a greater variety of subscription models (32 percent) and increased market competition (28 percent). A lower price (36.00 percent) is also essential in this group. Cities

with 150,000 to 500,000 inhabitants are characterized by the expectation of lower prices (51.35 percent) and a greater variety of subscription models (39.19 percent). Additionally, greater personalization of services (27.03%) and the ability to control individual subscriptions (21.62%) are essential to this group of residents. In cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, lower prices (70.91 percent) and a greater variety of subscription models (29.09 percent) are the most important. The ability to control subscriptions individually (27.27 percent) and the ability to cancel subscriptions easily (27.27 percent) are also expected. When asked in which leisure-related areas do you plan to increase your participation in the subscription model? Most responses related to products offered by VoD platforms (76 indications), physical activity

services (55 indications), and music streaming products (46 indications). This was followed by an increased interest in this model for audiobooks (27 indications) and cultural and entertainment activity services (26 indications). Online gaming on a computer or console, press subscriptions, and hobby activity services each received around 20 indications, while other leisure activities received interest from around 10 respondents. When looking at the percentage distribution of leisure-related areas by place of residence, where respondents plan to increase their subscription services, the following patterns were observed. In villages, residents are most likely to plan to extend their subscriptions to VoD platforms (21.62 percent) and music streaming (21.62 percent), suggesting that access to online video content and music is an important part of their leisure time. Online games for computers or consoles (13.51 percent) and physical activity services (8.11 percent) are also of some interest in the context of planned new streaming services. In cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants, VoD platforms (38.33 percent) and music streaming (15.00 percent) are planned extensions of existing streaming services. Physical activity services (26.67 percent) also play a role in these individuals' plans, which may indicate an active lifestyle for residents in this category of town. Cities of 50,000 to 150,000 inhabitants stand out with a high share of physical activity services (32.00 percent) and VoD platforms (30 percent) as planned extensions to their subscriptions. Music streaming (20 percent) is also often a planned extension of owned services, which may indicate diverse cultural and entertainment interests. Cities with a population of 150,000 to 500,000 are characterized by a balanced approach to expanding their owned subscription services, which include a variety of offerings. VoD platforms (32.43 percent) and music streaming (22.97 percent) remain relatively popular. Interest in physical activity services is also evident in this category (21.62 percent). In cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, cultural and entertainment activity services (10.91 percent) and VoD platforms (10.91 percent) are the most popular. Physical activity services, access to audiobooks, and subscriptions to hobby products (7.27 percent) are also notable.

4. Discussion

The article aimed to determine the preferences of Polish consumers regarding the use of the subscription model in their leisure time behaviors, taking into account the category of the size of their place of residence. The authors' research showed

a high interest of Poles in the subscription model as part of their leisure behavior, with users and non-users of subscription services and products being similar in terms of the size of their place of residence. H1 is therefore not confirmed: People in large cities show higher levels of engagement with the subscription model in their leisure time behavior compared to other groups of adult consumers. This does not confirm the results of previous studies indicating differences in the use of subscriptions depending on the size of the town in which the respondents live: first of all, rural residents use subscription services significantly less often than the rest of the research sample (Subkrypcje PL, 2019; Ziobrowska-Sztuczka, Markiewicz, 2024; Gombos, 2025). Subscription Economy Impact: How Local Services Should Adapt, Jasmine Business Directory 11 June). In terms of products and services, regardless of the size of the place of residence, the most commonly used subscription services are VoD platforms and music streaming, which does not confirm the research results indicating that in both categories this is more often the domain of people from cities than from rural areas (Subscriptions, 2021). In larger towns, respondents also identified physical activity as an essential category in their use of the subscription economy for leisure behavior, which may be due to the greater availability of facilities such as fitness clubs. Notably, statistical tests revealed no significant differences between the studied groups based on place of residence, indicating a consistent pattern of consumer preferences across both urban and rural environments. Therefore, there is no basis to reject H2: Regardless of the size of the place of residence, the most important factors influencing consumer behavior in their leisure time in terms of subscription economics are economic factors (primarily the subscription price).

Further factors, necessary for all the groups surveyed, include the variety of services/products available through subscription and the convenience of use. Lifestyle change, as an important, social factor for involvement in the model, was indicated mainly by residents of rural areas and small towns. For residents of large cities, promotions and freebies or the opportunity to test products/services (trial period) are more critical. Economic factors (ability to share costs and fixed costs) are also the most essential advantages of the subscription model for Poles, regardless of the size of their residence, which does not confirm the results of Iyengar, Park, and Yu (2020) indicating a greater role of non-economic factors in the behavior of users of subscription models. However, the results of research by other authors suggest that the importance of these factors

may vary depending on the type of subscribed products (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2017; Baek & Kim, 2022; Wu et al., 2025). The lack of need to make payments each time and time savings (more important for residents of large cities) were also found to be important. The subscription to too many services at the same time and the use of personal data are the most important disadvantages of the model in question, according to all respondent groups. Residents of smaller towns and cities also point to the problem of lack of ownership, which means that the development of this model in the Polish market is still hampered by the deeply rooted belief that ownership is an indicator of high social status, which contradicts the indications that the growing interest in the subscription economy has accelerated the advent of a new era known as the “end of ownership” (e.g. McKinsey 2021; Tzuo, 2022; Zuora, 2019; SEI, 2023; Cobzaru & Tugui, 2024; Kang et al., 2024) and the results of a survey conducted by Harris Poll (on behalf of Zuora) among more than 13,000 adults in 12 countries around the world, which showed that nearly 60 percent of respondents prefer to own fewer things, and almost 70 percent believe that a person's status is no longer defined by what they own. At the same time, 70 percent agree that subscriptions to products and services can free them from the burden of ownership (Zuora, 2019). Despite the problem of subscribing to too many services at the same time being indicated as one of the main disadvantages of the model, only half of the surveyed respondents regularly review their subscriptions to check whether they are still valid and profitable for them. In contrast, regular review did not differentiate the size of the place of residence of the surveyed people. Almost half of the respondents intend to increase their involvement in leisure subscription behavior in the future, with the primary factor driving them to do so being the expectation of lower prices. This applies to all respondent groups surveyed. In addition, residents of smaller towns and villages show a higher interest in a greater variety of subscription models and personalization of services. In contrast, residents of large cities show a higher interest in the possibilities for individual control over subscriptions and easy cancellation. Poles are most likely to plan to extend their subscriptions to VoD platforms and music streaming services. The use of the subscription model for physical activity is intended to increase primarily among city dwellers, who also indicate a preference for cultural, entertainment, and hobbyist activity services (the latter applies mainly to residents of cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants).

5. Conclusions

In summary, the results of this study reveal several vital observations. The authors' research has shown great interest in the subscription model among the respondents in the sample in behaviors related to spending leisure time. However, the main areas of interest, irrespective of the size of the place of residence, appeared to be VoD platforms and music streaming. This suggests that access to online video content and music is an essential element of leisure time for the respondents in the sample, reflecting the previously indicated influence of technology on the way it is managed. This may also be an effect of the still limited scope of use of the analyzed model on the Polish market (also in terms of products and services as part of leisure behavior), and, consequently, the lack of awareness among the respondents in the sample of the possibility of choosing it in various areas. The "Subscriptions PL" report, prepared by the Digital Poland Foundation, shows that specific industries, such as streaming media, music, computer games, or health services, are particularly popular in the context of subscriptions, and among the subscriptions held by Poles, the traditional ones, i.e. TV subscriptions or water charges, still dominate (Subscriptions PL, 2019). It is to be expected that, due to new trends in consumer behavior, the discussed model will gain popularity in the Polish market, particularly in terms of Poles' leisure behavior, which will translate into an increase in its areas of use.

Despite the growing importance of subscription models, there is a lack of knowledge about the characteristics of consumers involved in them. Previous studies are limited in scope and often focus on the motivations for participating in the model, indicating its advantages and disadvantages. In this study, attention was paid to the characteristics of participants that may indicate different needs and expectations towards subscription products. The results of the study did not confirm previous studies suggesting that residents of large cities were the primary interest in the discussed model, which has practical implications for supply entities of the subscription market. The model may reveal new opportunities for value creation, which have significant practical consequences for companies. However, it is essential to tailor their subscription offers to include features that are of high perceived value to specific customers. Additionally, previous studies treat leisure products individually. In this study, the authors adopted a comprehensive

approach to the problem, considering a broad range of consumers' leisure behaviors.

The effectiveness of the subscription economy in influencing leisure behavior will depend on companies' ability to deliver consistent value to the changing needs and preferences of different customer segments. Future research should therefore focus on identifying consumer profiles in terms of the specific characteristics of varying leisure products.

Regarding the self-study conducted, it is worth emphasizing that the study was a pilot study. A small sample may not be representative of the entire population, which can lead to errors in inference and the generalization of results on a larger scale. With a small sample, the results may also be more susceptible to the influence of random events. Nevertheless, some of the results of our research are also reflected in the literature and provide a basis for expanding the scope of the study in the future.

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