

ANALYSIS OF SHARED TRANSPORTATION PLATFORMS IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

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Abstract:

Research background: Sharing economy is an economic system in which assets and services are shared between individuals. It is peer-to-peer based activity of sharing and obtaining to goods, services, and resources. The functioning of sharing economy platforms and specifically shared transportation of goods and services is still an area that is not fully explored. It is necessary to pay attention to the profitability of the platforms, but in addition to economic indicators, it is also necessary to deal with environmental issues, which are directly connected with these facts.

Purpose of the article: The study deals with how revenue and profitability are achieved by shared transportation platforms, specifically the platforms Bolt Services SK, Uber Slovakia, Wolt Slovakia and Bistro Slovakia considering their operation within the territory of the Slovak Republic. Following this issue, the study reveals which economic and environmental benefits the shared transportation system can bring.

Methods: Methods of determining the profitability of selected sharing economy platforms in the field of transport and delivery services are used in the studies. Environmental factors are explored through studies by authors dealing with this issue.

Findings & Value added: The main findings of the study point to the unstable situation of platforms operating in the segment of shared transport and delivery services. Through profitability analysis, we were able to find out the fact that the global COVID-19 pandemic has affected the operation of shared transportation platforms in various ways. The unstable profitability of platforms for the shared transportation of people, goods and services was observed especially in the time before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, we observed positive changes in profitability, or there was almost no worsening of the financial situation during the pandemic.

Keywords: sharing economy; shared transportation platforms; sustainability; economic analysis; transport in cities

JEL Classification: D16; E26; F60; F64

1. Introduction

The sharing economy as a part of human life in its essence has existed for a long time. Many times, people used its services or products daily. However, the exact name as the sharing economy or the collaborative economy, has only spread in recent decades (Gabor and Lajos, 2019; Botsman and Rogers, 2010). This fact was mainly caused because many experts and the public became more interested in this type of economy. With the current development of the world, economic, but also environmental needs, the view that shared transport can contribute to a more economical and ecological mode of transport by its functioning resonates (Akan and Tepeler, 2022). In the last ten years, the emergence of a sharing economy has modified the way goods are consumed and owned. The sharing economy is generally understood as all borrowing, lending, renting, sharing, bartering, and swapping practices mediated by digital platforms (Popov and Veretennikova, 2022; Tham et al., 2022). The economics discipline known as the "sharing economy" is relatively new and is rapidly gaining favor in academia and business. It has numerous uses, including in the fields of materials science, hospitality, transportation, and knowledge sharing. It is also associated with several economic and environmental factors, such as circularity, sustainability, environmentally friendly practices, reduced production, and more conscientious resource use. The sharing economy is considered a means of achieving economic opportunity, a more sustainable mode of consumption, and a bridge towards a sustainable and just society. It is closely associated with sustainability (Daglis, 2022; Martin, 2016; Boar et al., 2020).

In addition, sharing can work even without technological facilities, but the continuity of the development of information and communication technologies mediates the use of available forms of shared goods and services for a large part of the population that is interested in participating in this business model and thus increases its marketing, economic and consumer reach and familiarity. This principle is also supported by the very concept referred to as the so-called P2P, peer to peer economy (Huynh and Gurtner, 2023). Literally, this term can be translated as "equal to equal". The P2P economy, which also includes the sharing economy, is generally referred to as a decentralized model of providing, obtaining, or sharing access to goods or services, the operation of which is significantly facilitated by a community platform (Kuhzady et al., 2022). The shared economy, and its rapid development, is caused by scientific and technical progress. It is mobile applications that form the most important element that allows connecting supply with demand, that is, those who provide their services through sharing economy platforms and thereby earn money, and those who are willing to use and pay for such a service. Compared to traditional taxi services, the applications are the methods that provide a more flexible and adaptable way of using transport services (Williams et al., 2020). In today's digitized world, shared mobility is experiencing a boom. and it can be observed in various forms. Digital platforms, bikesharing, sharing of scooters, community use of cars.

The history of the shared economy is not particularly long within the Slovak Republic. Uber started providing its services in the capital of Slovakia Bratislava in the middle of 2015, marking the beginning of the sharing economy movement in Slovakian transportation services. Only traditional taxi drivers and public transportation existed up to that point. Uber brought numerous new features to Bratislava's urban transportation system that set it apart from the city's taxis. Uber platform is historically the first platform whose operation on the territory of the Slovak Republic can be found as official. In Slovakia, the sharing economy is not yet anchored in any law, which makes it impossible to prevent undeclared work or other tax and levy fraud. Certain changes are necessary in this case, as they will help eliminate the mechanism without conditions and contribute to the creation of fair competition. Uber Technologies offers freight transportation, food delivery, and ride-hailing services. The first ridesharing app in Europe is

called Bolt. Bolt is an Estonian startup that provides ride-hailing, food and grocery delivery (through the Bolt Food app), carsharing, and micromobility rentals. Wolt platform is a technology company founded in Finland. The main function of this company's operations is to allow customers to place orders for food and other related products from restaurants and other affiliated businesses via the Wolt mobile application or website (Pap et al., 2021). Bistro Slovakia is the biggest online food delivery service in Slovakia. In 2021, Bistro was bought by the Dutch company Just Eat Takeaway, which is one of the world leaders in this industry. Customers can order their food online through application or directly through the website. Just Eat Takeaway.com is a Dutch multinational online food ordering and delivery company. Using an app or website, users can order food from restaurant menus online and have it delivered straight to their house or place of business. Just Eat Takeaway has multiple meal ordering and delivery platforms (Goffe et al., 2021).

Sharing economy is closely connected with the concept of sustainability, socially responsible business, a more sustainable and ecological way of life. Currently, there are several problems that are topical within the environmental situation: global warming, climate crisis, deforestation, combustion of fossil fuels. Excessive consumption of natural resources. An increasing number of countries at risk of extreme poverty. These global problems and many others are a reality, and the global population will face their unprecedented consequences (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2023). In an increasingly urgent situation, the countries of the world are looking for a compromise and for a more gentle, environmentally acceptable, and sustainable way of life for individuals, but also for societies and countries. Two of the most discussed and significant advantages of the sharing system are sustainability and its ability to assist both individuals and the state in addressing environmental concerns, which is why many nations are implementing it. A concept called the "circular economy" calls for reducing and doing away with waste and pollution in the environment (Jalles, 2023). Recycling, the reuse of products that have not yet lost their value, is the basic principle on which this system is built. In principle, the companies operate largely on a linear economic model. Extraction of natural raw materials, transport to different countries of the world, where different types of goods are produced from them. They are distributed by logistics chains to businesses and households, where they are used by consumers and then mostly thrown away. This system creates a large amount of waste, which can be found in incinerators, landfills, or simply thrown in the natural environment. It is a constantly repeating circle, the basis of which is mining and the enormously high consumption of fossil non-renewable raw materials (Morseletto, 2020; Diana and Maria, 2020).

The main aim of the study is closely linked to the research question, and it is: How does the profitability of shared transport platforms affect their operation and how does sharing affect the environment?

The study is divided into the following sections. The methodology section presents the methods we used in this study. Using widely used ratio indicators of profitability, we examined the platforms' profitability, which express the profitability of business efforts. Profitability indicators express the efficiency of business activities. We applied profitability indicators to all investigated platforms. We discuss the findings from the conducted analysis in the results section. This part also contains a mention of the analyses we used in describing the environmental benefits of shared transportation. In the discussion part, we pointed to authors dealing with the issue of shared transportation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operation of platforms and the impact of platforms on improving environmental conditions. The final, conclusion part contains a summary of the most important findings and addition of research limitations with a focus on future challenges within the sharing economy.

2. Methodology

Financial performance is the economic effect within an enterprise. The link between the economic gains that businesses obtained and the expenses they incurred to obtain those benefits reflect in financial performance (Do, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). An economic entity's financial performance is a key area of interest for both its internal and external environments. For a business to be thriving, appealing, effective, and showing promise, it needs to turn a profit. In the circumstances of a dynamic, constantly changing economic climate with a focus on maximizing profitability or the primary goal of is the capacity to turn a profit as a gauge of performance the operations of a business. The financial health of companies depends on profitability. When business profitability rises, so does the profitability of invested capital. This contributes to the growth of a company's financial health (Nagy and Valaskova, 2023).

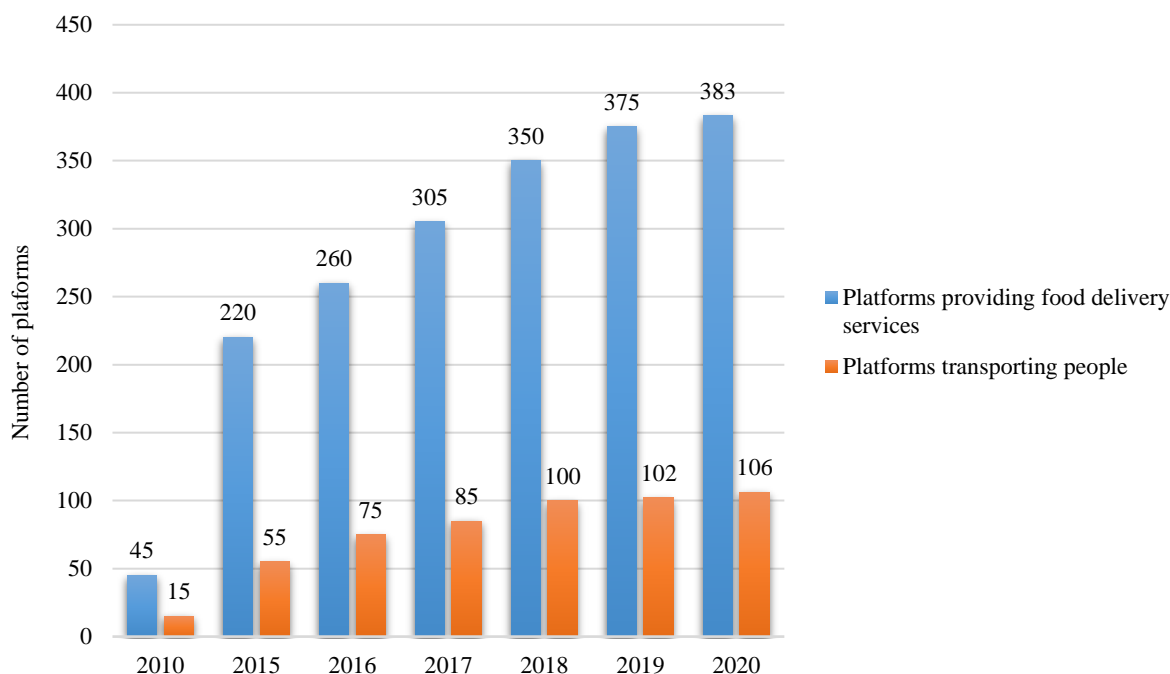
As part of the quantification of selected economic and financial indicators, we investigated profitability indicators. Profitability is one of the forms of expressing economic efficiency with summarizing the efforts made to obtain the expected results. Some of the most important metrics for evaluating financial performance are return on assets (ROA) and return on sales (ROS). Profit is defined as observed revenue less observed cost (Barbero and Zofio, 2023). Return on assets (ROA) is a profitability ratio and is calculated by dividing net income by average total assets. Return of sales (ROS) is determined by scaling operating (net) profits by total sales recorded over the same period (Alipour and Pejman, 2015). Profitability of sales expresses how much €1 of sales brought the company's profit. Return on assets expresses how much €1 of company's profit was produced by €1 of assets. We used EAT (Earnings after tax) in the numerator of individual formulas. We used this form of profit because we performed the analysis in the conditions of the Slovak Republic without comparison with other countries. It is not necessary to abstract from the impact of interest, tax burden and depreciation policy of companies. We focused on indicators of profitability of sales and profitability of assets.

The shared transportation platforms examined were Uber Slovakia and Bolt Services SK. As part of platforms that provide food delivery, Bistro Slovakia and Wolt Slovakia were studied. However, it should not be forgotten that transport is an integral part of the shared economy. Because in most cases, the primary goal is not to own a vehicle, but to use its capability and transport from a certain place to a chosen destination. Shared transport thus represents an innovative short-term approach to any available means of transport that the consumer needs to use, usually in the form of a mobile phone application (Castellanos et al., 2022). In this context, we are already getting to specific companies that typologically belong and fall into the field of shared transport and transport services. A closer specification and focus of the study on the area of sharing transport and transport of people, goods and services is obvious from the point of view of the importance of the functioning of this segment and the need for constant progress. Shared transportation platforms have also been forced to face the unprecedented consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of further investigation, we also demonstrated the impact of shared transportation on the environment. We assessed the impact of the shared economy on the environment according to published studies that clearly demonstrate a causal relationship between the introduction of the shared transport system and the benefits that result from its use. As part of the analyses, we analysed the financial statements of the platforms Bolt Services SK, Wolt Slovakia, Uber Slovakia, and Bistro Slovakia. As part of the calculation of individual indicators, we examined earnings after taxes, sales, and asset platforms on sales or assets. In this way, we quantified profitability indicators, namely return on sales and return on assets. The environmental factors associated with the use of shared transportation were investigated through concrete practical examples that were investigated within the framework of studies focused on this issue.

3. Results

The more efficient use of cars was considered one of the most key factors for the development of this segment at the beginning of the operation of shared transportation. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate how the industries in the field of transport and transport services have developed worldwide in the framework of sharing. According to the research of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) promoting social justice and the recognition of human, social and labour rights, published a survey based on the report on World Employment and Social Outlook, which points to the development of the number of platforms registered after worldwide in the field of transport and transport services (Berg et al., 2021). Figure 1 shows the number of digital platforms in the field of transport and transport services.

Figure 1: Number of digital platforms in the field of transport and transport services



Source: own research according to International Labour Organization (2021)

According to the research of the ILO, over the last decade, digital work platforms have grown in the sum of both categories from 60 platforms in 2010 to 489 registered official platforms in 2020. Through analysis, we find that the food delivery industry, food, and services that are directly related to such activity is significantly higher than a segment that provides services similar to classic taxis (passenger transport). The genesis of the development of digital platforms in the field of transport is directly related to the provision of increased demand and the willingness of consumers and providers to participate in this economic model, where each group has its own requirements.

Further, we analysed the profitability of selected shared transport platforms operating in the territory of the Slovak Republic. In the following Table 1, we quantified the profitability indicators of the platform Bolt Services SK.

Table 1: Profitability of sales and assets of Bolt Services SK platform

Platform	Year	ROS	ROA
Bolt Services SK	2018	–	–
	2019	0.04	0.25
	2020	0.04	0.23
	2021	0.03	0.12

Source: own research based on data in Register of financial statements Bolt Services SK (2023a)

Table 2: Profitability of sales and assets of Uber Slovakia platform

Platform	Year	ROS	ROA
Uber Slovakia	2018	0.08	0.14
	2019	0.04	0.07
	2020	0.05	0.08
	2021	0.04	0.04

Source: own research based on data in Register of financial statements Uber Slovakia (2023c)

We proceeded in the same way with the Wolt Slovakia platform. Table 3 shows profitability indicators (ROS and ROA).

Table 3: Profitability of sales and assets of Wolt Slovakia platform

Platform	Year	ROS	ROA
Wolt Slovakia	2018	–	–
	2019	0.09	0.02
	2020	0.01	0.05
	2021	0.01	0.03

Source: own research based on data in Register of financial statements Wolt Slovakia (2023b)

We also quantified profitability indicators (ROS and ROA) for the Bistro Slovakia platform, which is one of the largest delivery services in Slovakia (Table 4).

Table 4: Profitability of sales and assets of Bistro Slovakia platform

Platform	Year	ROS	ROA
Bistro Slovakia	2018	- 0.58	- 0.15
	2019	- 0.34	- 0.12
	2020	- 0.06	- 0.03
	2021	1.59	0.34

Source: own research based on data in Register of financial statements Bistro Slovakia (2023d)

Profitability analysis does not provide a clear trend. The range of acceptable values is not specified within the profitability indicators. In general, it is desirable for companies to have the highest possible value of these indicators. Profitability of the Bolt, Uber and Wolt platforms achieve values that are similar. The trend of this indicator is not positive, as businesses generate only €0.01 to €0.09 of net profit per €1 of sales. The profitability of sales for the Bistro platform in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 even reached a negative value, which means that €1 of sales generated a loss. The turning point occurred in 2021, when the Bistro platform generated €1.59 of profit from €1 of sales, which is a much higher than average value compared to the other values within the investigated platforms. The return on assets in some cases already reached higher values. The highest value was achieved by Bistro, when €1 of assets produced €0.34 of net profit in the company. Between 2018 and 2020, €1 of assets generated a loss for the Bistro platform. The profitability of the platforms does not reach the required value even in the segment of shared transportation. The exception is again Bistro in 2021, when we recorded a significant increase in the profitability of both sales and assets. This change was caused by a change in business strategy and especially by a change of owner.

If we analyse the profitability of the platforms in more detail, we can state certain findings. From the point of view of profitability, of all the platforms that were examined, the Bistro platform is the one that showed the biggest increase in profitability. With this platform, it is possible to clearly define that the COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly increased the growth of this company and the services it provides. The year 2021 was decisive for the Bistro platform. The governments of individual countries (including the Slovak Republic) have introduced restrictions on free movement to slow down the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Businesses had to be closed due to anti-pandemic measures and thus lost part of their sales. The Bistro platform operates on the territory of the Slovak Republic. So, it is an established platform. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly contributed to the positive trend of this platform's profitability. Bistro had an advantage over other delivery platforms operating in the territory of the Slovak Republic. This advantage lay in the familiarity and marketing of this platform. Other foreign platforms (especially Wolt) had to convince their customers of the advantages of the offered services. Wolt in the territory of the Slovak Republic thanks to its marketing activities and raising awareness of this expanding company. This platform succeeded mainly thanks to advantageous offers and discounts for consumers in the case of using and discovering the given service, but also to massive advertising throughout the territory of the Slovak Republic. This was also reflected in the increase in sales, but the high share of short-term liabilities reduced the profitability of this platform. Overall, the most significant growth was recorded by the Bistro Slovakia platform. The other examined platforms did not reach the required profitability values. COVID-19 pandemic had a dual impact on platforms, both positive and negative. It brought an opportunity to provide its services to a larger number of potential customers, especially due to closed restaurant operations. This situation was able to bring new financial resources to the platforms and they were also able to expand the portfolio of offered services. However, the platforms were already achieving unstable financial results in the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic was able to increase sales, which, however, could not be reflected adequately in the profitability of platforms operating in the delivery service segment.

4. Discussion

Distinctive feature that must be considered in the area of the shared economy is also the environmental area. Environmental benefits are directly linked to the use of transport services, as the available modes of transport represent a significant share of overall air pollution. Special attention should be paid to enterprises operating in industrial production, where the level of air pollution and waste generation during the production process is enormously high. Furthermore, the responsibility of the final consumer of the products and his judicious handling of the produced waste (Hao et al., 2022). Authors Adam et al. (2021) in a study focused on the environment in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, express the opinion that in response to the rapidly spreading virus around the world and the need to protect public health, state governments have introduced unprecedented measures, such as restrictions on free movement, restrictions on road and air travel transport, which ultimately led to reduced mobility of the population of countries around the world. The authors managed to find that there has been a reduction in atmospheric levels of air pollutants worldwide. A significant decrease occurred in the concentrations of substances such as nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), carbon monoxide (CO) and sulfur dioxide (SO_2).

To illustrate the impacts of shared transportation on the environment, Bolt platform conducted its own internal research, which was carried out in Berlin. The research, called Bolt City Vision, presents a comprehensive analysis processed with more than 800 studies on

mobility in the city, with interviews and personal experiences with Berlin residents and the Bolt platform's own operational research. The research was carried out for the year 2022. It focused mainly on public transport, sharing cars, bicycles, scooters and e-scooters. After performing the analysis, certain results can be drawn from it. The results show that over the next 1 to 3 years, due to the use of all mentioned alternative forms of transport, the number of cars in this city will be reduced by 7%. Legally, this effect of reducing the number of automobiles also has an impact on the environment and the state of the air. With a 7% reduction in the number of cars, the residents of this European metropolis would save 508 hours of sitting in traffic jams every month of the year. The effect would also be reflected in the reduction of CO_2 emissions. In the short term, reducing the number of cars in Berlin by 7% would reduce the monthly emissions of CO_2 by 4.4 kilotons. In the event of a theoretical 32% reduction in the number of cars in 2027, Berlin's monthly CO_2 emissions would decrease by 13.4 kiloton. Converted, it would be equal to the annual energy consumption of 9,000 households. It is also necessary to mention another significant factor. The number of traffic accidents would be significantly reduced, namely approximately 514 fewer traffic incidents per month. It would mean up to 6,000 fewer traffic accidents for the entire calendar year (Bolt City Vision, 2022).

The current rates of food waste in developed economies are unsustainable in the long run from an economic, social, or environmental standpoint. Along the whole supply chain, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of customers, structural adjustments will be required. The sharing economy is making a significant contribution to the effort to establish more sustainable patterns in the food industry as well. Specifically, several programs and start-ups are being established in the US and Europe that involve gathering and utilizing food surplus from shops and customers as well as promoting it (Falcone and Imbert, 2017). Several companies' in-home delivery helps restaurants deliver what, when, and where diners want to be served. Recently, in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, "home food delivery systems" have gained special importance. With most European nations going through at least two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdown measures, the applicability of restaurant delivery has grown, especially as restaurants have been forced to curtail their offerings to choose from (Cesnuiyte et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has had rather negative effects on the sharing economy, but it can adapt and, given its benefits and potential (at least in the case of certain companies), can be expected to withstand and continue to develop (Safrova and Hejdukova, 2021). Public and shared transportation are among the sectors that have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as they were perceived to be risky environments for disease transmission (Haddad et al., 2022). These factors are the main difference between shared passenger transport and delivery services, since the physical presence of the driver and the potential customer is necessary to carry out the journeys, unlike delivery services, which were able to carry out their orders even without the presence of the customer. The analysed platforms thus proceeded to expand their portfolio to include food delivery services in the form of Uber Eats and Bolt Food.

Shared transportation represents one of the most used forms of the shared economy. Platforms acting as an intermediary between the provider and the consumer of shared transportation services contributed to this fact (Sun et al., 2021). The enormous increase in awareness of shared transport offered the possibility to examine the functioning of these platforms, but also to evaluate transport in the territory of the Slovak Republic. In today's world, where digitization, robotization and artificial intelligence move production processes forward in a quick way, it is also necessary to think about the environment, so that innovations, progress, and their creation are in accordance with the principles protecting the environment (Chinoracky and Corejova, 2021). Free movement within countries around the world, within the member states of the European Union, traveling for the purposes of education, work, recreation, vacation

or other purposes is a great benefit. The possibility to travel the world, work and live abroad, travel for an internship was a common thing in the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus, which changed the functioning of countries in the world in terms of health and economy, had a fundamental impact on free movement and travel. A similar statement can also be made in the segment of shared services in the field of transport and transportation of people, goods, and services. Personal contact when the driver transports a traveling customer cannot be replaced by any "online" form. Every day, many people, goods and services are transported along the built roads in the territory of the Slovak Republic. Cities and towns evolve in large part due to transportation and transportation infrastructure. In recent years, many world authors have begun to devote themselves in a massive way to the impact of the shared economy on various areas of human life. In the ride- and car-sharing industry, trust-based commercial sharing is advantageous to both users and providers. In comparison to traditional taxi businesses, drivers in the driving industry experience less obstacles to entrance, earn higher wages, and enjoy more flexible work schedules (Kashyap and Bhatia, 2018; Vaclavik and Pithan, 2018). Customers benefit from enhanced effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, especially when utilizing carpooling services like Uber or Bolt.

Sharing is closely linked and connected to the circular economy (or circular economy), which has gained urgent importance in recent years in connection with the global problems of the planet. The impulse of the need to solve climate problems was one of the main reasons for the development of the sharing economy system. The current linear system of consumption and production is unsustainable in the long term. Currently, we already see efforts on the part of institutions to appeal to individuals, but also companies operating in the industrial sector to introduce mechanisms for waste reduction, recycling, reuse of materials and bringing new and innovative procedures in the field of greening production. The findings from the research Bolt City Vision are also important for other European countries, including the Slovak Republic. Derive and apply from this survey also for transport and the situation in transport in the territory of the Slovak Republic. These findings from the research can also be useful for the Slovak Republic. The basic element that must be fulfilled in every innovation is that the innovation must be acceptable to the user. An innovation is of no use if consumers do not actually use it. Bolt City Vision research has shown that residents, especially of larger cities/metropolises, are able and willing to change their transport and travel habits and the way they move around the city. However, a lot of useful and relevant information for the Slovak Republic also flows from the mentioned research. The research did not only discuss shared transportation. A significant role is also played by public mass transport, which, even under the conditions of the Slovak Republic, represents a form of transport that continues to be used. It is not entirely possible to compare the metropolis of Germany with cities in Slovakia, especially in terms of the number of inhabitants, but also the overall traffic situation. However, certain parallels can be observed in both countries. The goal of the sharing economy is not to replace car ownership. However, we can already see that, especially in larger cities, residents prefer to use alternative forms of transport.

5. Conclusions

The financial analysis demonstrated the difference in the functioning of these platforms. We analysed the Uber Slovakia and Bolt Services SK platforms as typical representatives of shared passenger transportation in the territory of the Slovak Republic. The analysis was also supplemented by platforms such as Wolt Slovakia and Bistro, which represent the most widespread platforms in the field of meal and food delivery services. In the profitability

analysis, we did not observe a clearly defining trend. The Uber platform on the territory of the Slovak Republic does not develop its activity in the same way as it was at the beginning of the platform's operation. Overall, we can say that apart from the Bistro Slovakia platform, which in 2021 achieves high above-average profitability values, the profitability of the platforms is relatively low. This fact is mainly because platforms in their balance sheets achieve relatively low values of profit after tax.

Studies in the sharing economy concentrate on platform usage, popularity, benefits or disadvantages of utilizing and offering different services. Research frequently ignores platform operations, financial and economic outcomes, and distinctions from other, more established industries. These facts were the focus of our analysis. Additionally, the research has immediate practical implications for Slovak Republic residents, as the expansion of shared transportation platforms in urban areas and cities can offer a more environmentally friendly alternative, frequently save customers time that they would have otherwise wasted in traffic, and generally offer a more effective mode of transportation. In addition, due to the analysis of studies dealing with the impact of the shared economy and specifically shared transportation, we managed to demonstrate the positive impact of using the available means of shared transportation within the territory of the European Union.

The analysis of shared transport platforms' financial and economic outcomes is crucial from a practical standpoint. Although these platforms are always evolving, their operation in the Slovak Republic—including during the COVID-19 pandemic—showed that they could adapt to changing market conditions and make full use of their platform's potential by diversifying the services they offer. The interests of numerous countries, including those outside of the Slovak Republic, like the countries of the Visegrad Group (the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary), must be considered while addressing future research challenges. One area of difficulty for the study seems to be charting the many sharing economy sectors, particularly the hotel services business (Airbnb). Among the barriers of this research, we can include the absence of other sectors of the sharing economy, such as the accommodation sector of the sharing economy (Airbnb) or the analysis of shared bicycles and scooters, which generally belong to the available forms of shared transportation of people, goods, and services. It is therefore necessary to be inspired by the legislative requirements of countries that have implemented the sharing economy as part of the national economy with the expected benefits and risks that the entire "ecosystem" of sharing can bring to ordinary citizens, villages, and cities. More extensive mapping of the available sharing economy sectors could bring further insights and challenges that sharing economy platforms have to go through.

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