SUBSCRIPTION VACATIONS. THE SUBSCRIPTION ECONOMY IN THE TOURISM MARKET: THE CASE STUDY OF POLAND

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Abstract: The purpose of the article is to identify the scale of application of subscription models in the tourism market in Poland and to analyse experiences of Polish consumers using this model. The study was based on a literature review, case studies, and an online Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) survey among 350 respondents, 190 of whom used travel subscriptions. Guided by three research questions and two hypotheses, the analysis focused on the prevalence of travel subscriptions, the perceived benefits, and the influence of socio-demographic factors. The results have confirmed that booking platforms (33.1%) and accommodation (27%) are the most frequently used subscriptions, and that discounts (64.3%) and booking flexibility (44.1%) are key benefits, while personalisation and exclusivity play a secondary role. Age and income were found to significantly differentiate subscription usage and preferences, thus partially confirming the hypotheses. These findings provide practical recommendations for tourism companies on how to design, segment, and implement subscription models, which can help stabilise revenues and address the seasonality of tourism demand.

Keywords: subscription economy, business model, trends in consumer behaviour, tourism market, tourism product

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Introduction

The subscription economy is a term referring to a business model in which customers regularly pay certain fees, usually monthly or annually, in exchange for access to certain products or services (Tzuo, Weisert 2018, Iyengar et al. 2022, Cobzaru, Țugui 2024). The business model of paying for access to goods or services in the form of a regular subscription has been used in the economy for many years, its popularisation in almost all industries, however, only became possible at the turn of the 21st century – owing to the virtualisation of consumption and the development of technology. This is undoubtedly the dominant trend in the market today, with the level of interest varying here according to the specific industries offering subscription services and products. In recent years, the tourism industry has also increasingly embraced subscription services, whereby a tourism subscription can be defined as a recurring fee (usually monthly or annually) charged

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by a tourism company in exchange for access to a specific tourism product. Despite the significant increase in the number of subscription-based tourism businesses, still little is known about consumers' preferences and experiences of the analysed business model, especially on the Polish market. The authors decided to fill this gap.

The purpose of this article is to determine the scope of implementation of subscription models in the tourism sector in Poland and to analyse the experiences of consumers using this type of solution. The first part of the article presents the characteristics of a tourism product as internal determinants of the development of a subscription economy in the tourism market and examples of companies using subscription models, while the second part contains the authors' research findings on the experiences of Polish tourists with the analysed model. Discussing the subscription economy in the context of the tourism market, this article analyses the application of this model in various sectors of the industry. The authors used a novel, holistic approach to analyse the model in the tourism market and identified the following categories: transport subscriptions (including airline subscriptions), transport subscriptions (city bicycles, scooters, carsharing), accommodation subscriptions (e.g. hotels), subscriptions to booking platforms, vacation clubs (permanent access to various destinations and travel services), subscriptions to travel planning services, subscriptions to tourist attractions, subscriptions to tourist tangible products (e.g. travel equipment), and subscriptions to travel insurance. The article uses literature analysis methods and case studies, which allows for a holistic view of the development of this business model. Statistical analysis was also carried out (frequency analysis of survey questions and cross-tabulations with a chi-square independence test). The results obtained will provide practical recommendations for companies interested in implementing the subscription model and contribute to a better understanding of its role in shaping the modern tourism market.

Subscription economy in the tourism market: A theoretical approach

The issues related to the subscription models in the tourism market discussed in the subject literature mainly concern their perception in the context of loyalty programmes, treating them as a marketing tool for building emotional ties with the company and rewarding customers for their loyalty. As the purpose of the article is different, the authors do not focus on the definition and aspects of loyalty, assuming that they have been exhaustively described in many publications on this subject. It is presumed that loyalty is a sense of connection with the company or sentiment towards its employees, products or services (Jones, Sasser 1995), confirmed by the intention to continue cooperation and express positive assessments through further actions, such as: further purchases and willingness to recommend to others (Mustonen et al. 2016), and the factors influencing loyalty should be considered in a dynamic way, changing and evolving over time. In the digital age, customer loyalty has evolved significantly, driven by the development of subscription models and the changing dynamics of consumer expectations (Tudose 2024). The main trends in consumer behaviour that determine the development of the subscription economy include: virtualisation and heterogenisation of consumption, home-centredness, promotion of a healthy, active lifestyle, reduced ownership of goods, and concern for sustainable development and consumption (see more: Ziobrowska-Sztuczka, Markiewicz 2024). Traditional methods of building loyalty (discounts, rewards or programmes for regular customers), which were designed to reward customers for their continued presence, are being replaced by subscription models that offer an innovative approach to increasing customer loyalty (Kiky 2024). Walsman and Dixon (2020), who have conducted research on the evolution and structure of loyalty programmes over the last 200 years, identified subscription models within paid membership programmes and showed that consumers who paid for membership (subscription) exhibited different loyalty patterns. Subscription programmes are extremely effective in building long-term customer loyalty, but their design shows that they differ from traditional loyalty programmes. This is because a subscription programme does not require customers to show loyalty or regularly engage with the company in order to use it. Examples of subscriptions show that customers who pay a recurring subscription fee receive access to products or services regardless of how often they use them and how much they spend with the company. They receive similar benefits to members, but the difference between a loyalty programme and a membership programme boils down to how privileges are earned. In addition, as research has shown, members who pay directly for loyalty programmes will enjoy different benefits than customers who receive membership in a traditional loyalty programme; they are more likely to take advantage of the full range of available benefits, even those that are less popular or less frequently used (Walsman, Dixon 2020).

Subscription-based programmes should be seen as the next evolution in the tourism industry, whose growth has undoubtedly been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Faced with changing business conditions during and after the pandemic, traditional loyalty programmes have lost their appeal, prompting companies to seek alternative strategies such as subscription models. Unlike traditional loyalty programmes, which are mainly used by frequent travellers (e.g. business tourists) and where rewards accumulate over time, subscription models provide immediate value by encouraging customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are key metrics for subscription-based businesses, as they directly impact customer retention, recurring revenue, and long-term profitability. Satisfied and loyal customers are more likely to renew their subscriptions and remain engaged over the long term. In today's competitive environment, redefining loyalty through subscription models allows for building long-term customer engagement. As research has shown, compared to traditional loyalty models, subscriptions increase customer engagement, activity and brand attachment, in line with the need to 'justify the investment' (sunk-cost effect), which directly translates into economic stability for companies operating in conditions of economic uncertainty (Walsman, Dixon 2020, Iyengar et al. 2022, Tudose 2024, Wu et al. 2024). A comparison of subscription models with traditional loyalty programmes is presented in Table 1.

The tourism market is vast and intrinsically complex, encompassing an extensive range of demand-driven forms of economic activity that involve the operation of entities that create goods and services for which the demand-generating factor is exclusively tourism (e.g. rides, accommodation, guide services, etc.), goods and services that occur at the time of tourism, but which are only a certain substitution for consumption at other times and elsewhere (footwear, clothing, catering, transport, etc.), and goods and services that meet the needs of both tourists and other

Table 1. Subscription model vs. traditional loyalty programme.

Criterion	Traditional loyalty programme	Subscription model
Fee structure	Most often free participation or low barrier to entry; customers earn points, rewards, benefits based on activity/transactions	Usually a fixed, periodic fee (e.g. monthly, annual) that gives access to specific benefits/membership; requires a financial commitment up front.
Source of loyalty/customer retention mechanism	Source of loyalty/customer retention mechanism	Additionally, strong 'lock-in' through subscription fees; it is often assumed that the subscriber will regularly use the benefits offered, which increases the cost of change/opting out.
Duration of relationship/commitment	Short-term rewards – the customer buys more often to enjoy the benefits sooner. Flexibility – the customer can participate without a large commitment; the relationship may be less intense if the benefits are not very attractive.	Long-term commitment – the customer 'stays' because of the ongoing benefits and sunk costs. Financial commitment generates higher expectations regarding the value of the service – there must be consistent value.
Value for customer	Reward depends on the frequency and amount of purchases.	Continuous, immediate value (e.g. free delivery, access to premium content, exclusive services).
Business objective/revenue model for the company	Increase in purchase frequency and value, less predictable revenue; loyalty increases purchase frequency.	Ensuring predictable, repeatable revenue – subscription fee provides steady cash flow but there is also a risk of subscriber churn.
Risks/barriers	Barriers to change, but lower entry costs; difficulty in designing attractive rewards and maintaining interest.	Risk that users will not take full advantage of the benefits (less use than expected), rejection due to cost, higher expectations of service quality; greater sensitivity to perceived value.

non-tourists (e.g. communications, health care, banks, etc.). The multiplicity of elements that form the basis of exchange and the involvement of many supply-side actors make the analysis of the subscription economy in the tourism market not easy and requires the adoption of certain limitations. The concept of subscription economy in the tourism market, by industry, has been analysed by representatives of various fields in relation to various industries related to the tourism market: hospitality (Xie et al. 2015, Jiang, Anderson 2024, Kiky 2024), transport (Baek, Kim 2022), gastronomy (Walsman, Dixon 2020, Fosker, Cheung 2021, Loic 2024, Tyagi, Bolia 2024), tourist attractions (Byun, Jang 2015, Pompe et. al. 2018) or tangible tourism products (Van Alstyne et al. 2016, Nasir, Rahman 2022).

The rise of the subscription economy is a consequence of a number of simultaneous changes that have taken place in four key areas: economic (the dotcom crisis of 2001, the global economic crisis, the growing share of services in GDP creation); technological (the development of communication technologies, home-centrism, the development of the online payment system); social (the heterogenisation of consumption, the promotion of healthy, active lifestyles, the reduction of ownership of goods on property, the tendency to create virtual communities); ecological (attention to sustainable development and sustainable consumption) (see more: Ziobrowska-Sztuczka, Markiewicz 2024). These factors also apply to the tourism market, determining the activities of supply and demand actors in this market. The possibilities of using subscription models in the tourism market are additionally determined by the specificity of the market and the features of the tourism product (intangibility, complexity, seasonality, simultaneity of the provision and consumption process, lack of ownership, lack of storage possibilities), which the authors consider as internal conditions for the development of the analysed model. Due to the fact that the aforementioned key areas of change (external factors) have been described in detail in the literature on the subject, this paper focuses on internal factors that determine the potential for the development of subscription models in the tourism market.

Internal conditions for the development of subscription models in the tourism market

Tourist consumption is an element of free consumption and expenditures on tourism products are among expenditures by preference, and therefore only occur with income above the level of satisfaction of basic needs. This is particularly important in times of uncertainty, when financial security has also become important for consumers seeking more flexible payment models to avoid large one-time purchase costs and long-term high commitments. The economics of subscriptions provides for more predictable cash spending and, consequently, more efficient budgeting, which may induce consumers to purchase travel products offered in this model. However, it is important to note that the long-term costs associated with subscriptions may disproportionately affect lower-income consumers, raising concerns about economic inequality (Chen et al. 2024). Companies using a subscription model can employ flexible pricing structures (combining a fixed membership fee with usage-based fees). For example, some vacation clubs charge a fixed annual fee, based on membership levels, and a varying additional fee, based on the consumption of the product offered (for each trip taken by the consumer). Basic fees in this case guarantee predictability for both consumers and businesses, while usage-based fees reflect the value the consumer derives from the offering (McKinsey&Company 2021).

The tourism product is characterised by immateriality, and experiences are a component of the modern tourism product (impressions, emotions, and new experiences as components of the 'environment' included in the definition of the tourism product) (Kaczmarek et al. 2010). It therefore becomes necessary to apply the assumptions of the experience economy to the tourism market, treating consumers as buyers not of products or services, but of accompanying experiences. The relevant products in the experience economy are experience goods (Pine, Gilmore 2013), which are characterised primarily by the fact that they appeal to feelings and senses and consist of messages that affect the imagination, have an element of surprise, create a desire to repeat the experience, and provide emotional benefits (Buhalis, Sinarta 2019). Subscription models, through exclusive benefits, foster deeper customer engagement in this market, providing a more personalised experience (Elanda et al. 2024). The success of the subscription economy, however, depends largely on correctly identifying audience needs and offering benefits that are relevant to specific audiences who will be willing to pay 'upfront' to join a given programme. Research findings indicate that appropriately tailored subscription benefits to individual travellers increase customer satisfaction, which is crucial to subscription success (Byun, Jang 2015, Elanda et al. 2024). It is important in this regard to maintain flexibility and offer appropriate tiered structures and different subscription levels with unique membership benefits with the option to upgrade or downgrade as needed (tiered membership).

A tourism product (understood as a service) cannot be produced for stock or stored. In addition, it is associated with the need to incur high fixed costs associated with the so-called 'being on standby' (fees for rental of premises, energy consumed, salaries of employees, etc.), which is particularly noticeable in the hotel industry (Kaczmarek et al. 2010). In addition, in the tourism market we have to deal with the phenomenon of seasonality, which means clearly occurring periods of a significant increase in demand and a marked decrease in demand for a specific product. It is assumed that seasonality is one of the most visible and most problematic features of modern tourism (Higham, Hinch 2002, Duro, Turrion-Prats 2019). Subscription fees provide a buffer against seasonal fluctuations, guaranteeing businesses a basic income and financial stability throughout the year. Membership promotes more frequent visits by members, and thus contributes to cross-selling by engaging various tourism supply players. In addition, the subscription model, by helping entities (e.g. theme parks) optimise the number of visitors per day, allows for efficient management of personnel that prevents labour market instability, which consequently makes it difficult to maintain economic stability in the destination. In response to problems caused by seasonality, subscription models offer greater price flexibility, as companies can adjust certain subscription rates based on changes in demand, e.g. apply reduced rates during the off-season. Subscriptions thus provide entities with financial stability and enable them to plan better (Osterwalder et al. 2020).

Owing to the specific nature of tourism products (intangibility, lack of ownership or simultaneity of the provision and consumption process) and the risk of not meeting tourists' expectations (at the time of purchase, buyers are unable to familiarise themselves with the product), a sense of security becomes important. A holiday subscription gives tourists a sense of certainty about the standard of the product offered, a sense of belonging, 'care' and concern for users.

The subscription economy in the tourism market is also responding to emerging new product forms within the so-called hybrid tourism driven by the Covid-19 pandemic. Remote work has become the new norm for many workers (Hermann, Paris 2020), forcing companies to adapt their business strategies to the new situation. The flexibility gained in choosing where to work is causing many people to move their home office to travel destinations for limited periods of time. This phenomenon is referred to as workation and involves the departure and simultaneous provision of work from a vacation destination (Bassyiouny, Wilkesmann 2023). It mainly involves more frequent travellers (including business tourists), who represent the best segment for the subscription economy that guarantees its success in this market. The so-called 'digital nomads' (Makimoto, Manners 1997) have become an important customer segment for many tourism supply entities offering the subscription model.

The scale and examples of the subscription economy in the tourism market

The subscription economy in the tourism market is gaining popularity. The 2022 study by OnePoll and eDreams ODIGEO, which surveyed 10,000 respondents in eight markets across North America and Europe, including the UK, US, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Sweden, found that a total of 87% of travel subscribers plan to increase (47%) or maintain (40%) their current level of travel subscriptions. At the same time, nearly a quarter (24%) of buyers in all geographic markets who do not currently subscribe to any travel products said they would consider subscribing to travel in the future (Globetrender 2022). A 2021 survey of hotels around the world offering or willing to introduce

Table 2. Selected examples of tourism companies operating under the subscription model.

Type of tourism product	Example of company / Name of subscription programme	Examples of benefits
Transport	Lufthansa / Flight Pass Wizz Air / WIZZ MultiPass Alaska Airlines / Fllight.Pass Emirates / Skywards+ Volaris / All You Can Fly Wheels Up / Prior Bespoke Good Sam / Good Sam Membership Hertz / Hertz My Avis / Avis Preferred Uber / Uber Eats Wolt / Wolt+	– discount on your next purchase, – access to airport lounges, – free access to luggage storage, – priority service, – advance product purchase (e.g. certain number of flights) within certain period or region, – exclusive partner offers, such as invitations to monthly dinners, parties and other special events for members only, – access to iconic properties.
Accommodation	Couchsurfing InterContinental Hotels & Resorts / InterContinental Ambassador Ennismore / Dis-loyalty Accor / Accor Plus Bidroom CitizenM / CitizenM+ Zumper / FlexPass Travel + Leisure Co. Zoku / WorkZoku Holiday Park & Resort / bronze, silver, gold and platinum	– unlimited number of stays at facilities included in programme, – guaranteed permanent discounts on accommodations and early access to promotions, – free lodging, – late check-out, – guaranteed room upgrade of one category, – free access to coworking and business space, – discount on food and beverage outlets in facility, – exclusive events (e.g. culinary cooking courses), – free airport transfers, – free ironing of clothes.
Gastronomy	Panera Bread / MyPanera+ P.F. Chang's / Platinum Rewards Goldbelly Frog / voucher	– convenience for people with regular consumption habits, – priority reservations and exclusive dishes, – regular deliveries of favourite products eliminate need for frequent purchasing decisions, – products at lower price compared to regular purchases.
Booking platforms / Tour operator / Holiday club	eDreams ODIGEO / eDreams ODIGEO Prime TripAdvisor / TripAdvisor Plus**. Inspirato / Inspirato Pass Travel + Leisure Co.	– unlimited number of stays at participating accommodations (including five-star hotels and luxury vacation homes), – discounts on stays at resorts and hotels, – car rental discounts, – discounts on cruises and tourist attractions, – discounts on renting coworking space, – virtual cooking lessons, – privileges for intermediary service in visa application process, – free subscription to trade journals.
Itinerary	ZeoRoutePlanner Wanderlog / Trip Planner App TripIt Pro Trip Planner Splitwise Pro	– access to optimised routes and live location sharing, – real-time flight alerts, – ticket refund monitors, – information for loved ones about travel plans, – risk alerts, – automatic scanning of travel receipts, – converting all travel bills into any currency, using current exchange rates.
Travel insurance	Safety Wing Seven Corners Staysure Gaarmin Search and Rescue Insurance Age PZU	– medical evacuation insurance, – constant monitoring and assistance, – dedicated account manager, – free account analytics.

Type of tourism product	Example of company / Name of subscription programme	Examples of benefits
Tourist attractions (museums, theatres, botanical gardens, amusement parks, ski lifts, etc.)	Walt Disney World / Walt Disney World (Florida) Subscription Six Flags / Six Flags Member Natural History Museum, London Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York / 6 membership levels Kennedy Center Theater, Washington / Kennedy Center Subscriptions Cinema City / Cinema City Unlimited Cineworld / Unlimited Cinema National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass / America the Beautiful Pass	– ticket discounts, – discounts on season passes, – discounts on food and beverage outlets in facility, – discounts on souvenirs, – priority access to closed spaces and exhibitions (e.g. so-called 'opening receptions'), – exclusive partner offers, e.g. invitations to special members-only events, 'talking to the director', virtual and real previews of selected exhibitions, performances, films, – early access to best seats in, e.g. theatre each season, – guarantee of permanent place, e.g. in a cinema / theatre for entire season and possibility of retaining them in future, – unlimited free ticket exchange up to 48 hours, – children's classes and camps – early registration and discounts, – free parking, – free digital magazines and newsletters, – birthday gifts.
Tangible tourism products (e.g. tourist equipment, tourist clothing)	Bike Club, Cycle (bicycles and scooters) Camp Life (camping products) Nomadik; Battlbox / Advanced, Pro, Wedio (camera equipment) Pro Plus; Think Outside (outdoor products). Fabletics; SpandexBox (sportswear box) Wordy Traveler (book box) Little Passports / World Box, USA box; Backpack the World / Kids Geography Subscription Box (educational products).	– free themed products, 'surprise effect', additional tasks to be performed, e.g. 'monthly outdoor challenge', original theming of product, e.g. related to seasons, – free insurance and repair of tourist equipment, – option to buy back touring equipment, – membership in charitable activities.

* Food services will be discussed in detail in a separate article on subscriptions as they have unique challenges and business models that require detailed analysis.
** closure of the programme in 2024.

subscription hotel memberships found that the subscription model was the main distribution strategy for hotels to sell new products and services other than room revenue worldwide. About a quarter of the hotels surveyed already offered such a service before the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), while 27% were considering introducing subscription memberships in the future. In contrast, 28% of the surveyed hotels had no plans to introduce this offering (Statista 2023a).

According to the world's first Prime travel subscription platform (eDreams ODIGEO), in just 12 months its subscriber base has grown by 1.45 million new customers now exceeding 6.5 million members (eDreams ODIGEO 2024). Inspirato has seen similar success with its Inspirato Pass programmes, providing the opportunity to join a luxury travel club, which now has more than 14,000 members (Inspirato 2025). In January 2025, the company announced plans to expand to new destinations in Europe, the Caribbean, California, and the US East Coast, among others, indicating the undeniable success of the subscription model used.

There are many subscription programmes in the tourism market, offering specific benefits to their members. Table 2 presents examples of tourism companies operating under the model in question. An extreme case of interest in the subscription economy is the activities of *timesharing* entities, e.g. the conversion of the Chateau Marmont in West Hollywood into a private members-only hotel, which owns its shares in the property's portfolio and can use its membership for other destinations (Scholes 2021).

On the Polish market, subscriptions in tourism are offered mainly by foreign companies or their Polish representatives (e.g. Wizz Air, InterContinental Hotels & Resorts, Avis, eDreams ODIGEO, Uber, Wolt, Cycle, Cinema City). A pioneer of the subscription economy among Polish companies is Holiday Park & Resort. Other examples of Polish companies using the subscription model include *Powszechny Zakład Ubezpieczeń Spółka Akcyjna* (PZU) and *Żabka*, which offers the first coffee subscription in Poland and plans to expand the model to include other products offered by the company.

Materials and methods

In line with the declared aim of the article, the study was guided by the following research questions: (1) What is the scale of subscription model usage in the Polish tourism market? (2) What benefits and amenities are most frequently indicated by Polish consumers using travel subscriptions? (3) Do socio-demographic characteristics (such as age and income) influence subscription usage and preferences for subscription benefits? On this basis, two research hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The most frequently chosen forms of travel subscriptions in Poland are booking platforms and accommodation.

H2: Age and income significantly differentiate both the use of subscription models and preferences regarding their benefits.

These questions and hypotheses structured the empirical analysis and provided a framework for interpreting the results. The statistical analysis was based on the results of surveys conducted on a group of 350 respondents between 2 October 2023 and 4 December 2023, using the standardised CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) web method. The survey questionnaire used, provided electronically, required respondents to have access to the Internet, which meant that not everyone had the chance to participate in the survey sample. Of the responses obtained, the experiences of consumers using subscriptions, including travel subscriptions, were included for further analysis (N=273 total, N=190 using travel subscriptions). The final sample was close to gender-balanced (52% of women, 48% of men), but uneven across age categories, with younger respondents (18–24 years of age: 29%) relatively overrepresented. In terms of income, the 4001–5000 PLN category accounted for 26% of the sample, while higher and lower income brackets were less represented. Recruitment was voluntary and non-probability based, which introduced self-selection bias and limited the representativeness of the results. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as descriptive of the surveyed group rather than fully generalisable to the adult population of Poland. Frequency analysis of survey questions and cross-tabulations were performed, along with a chi-square test of independence. The level of significance in this chapter was taken as $\alpha = 0.05$, while p-values between 0.05 and 0.1 were treated as significant at the level of statistical trend.

Results. Analysis of consumers' experiences with travel subscriptions

First, the distribution of responses to the multi-choice question "What products or services offered through a subscription model do you use in the field of tourism?" was examined. When responding, the surveyed individuals most often indicated subscriptions to booking platforms (33.1%). Accommodation subscriptions, such as hotel subscriptions, were the next most popular option (27%). Transport subscriptions, including city bicycles, scooters or carsharing, were

Table 3. Distribution of responses to the question on the use of products and services offered in the subscription model in tourism

What products or services offered through the subscription model do you use in the field of tourism?	N	%
Transport subscriptions (including permanent access to flights from specific line)	36	13.7%
Accommodation subscriptions (e.g. hotel subscriptions)	71	27.0%
Vacation clubs (permanent access to various destinations and travel services)	30	11.4%
Subscriptions to booking platforms	87	33.1%
Subscriptions to tourist attractions	36	13.7%
Subscriptions of tangible tourism products (including tourist equipment)	19	7.2%
Transport subscriptions (city bikes, scooters, carsharing)	46	17.5%
Travel insurance subscriptions	23	8.7%
Subscriptions for trip planning	19	7.2%
I don't use any	73	27.8%
Total	263	

Table 4. Distribution of answers to the question about the most important facilities in travel subscriptions.

What amenities do you consider most important in travel subscriptions?	N	%
Discounts on flights, hotels and other services	169	64.3%
Flexibility of booking and cancellation	116	44.1%
Access to exclusive offers and attractions (e.g. VIP clubs)	57	21.7%
Personalised trip planning	68	25.9%
Ongoing travel support	49	18.6%
Total	263	

indicated by 17.5% of respondents, while transport subscriptions (including airline subscriptions) and tourist attraction subscriptions were indicated by 13.7% each. The least frequently chosen categories were subscriptions to tangible travel products (including travel equipment) and travel planning subscriptions (7.2% each), and travel insurance subscriptions (8.7%). It is worth noting that 27.8% of respondents said they did not use any subscriptions in this area (Table 3).

The next question analysed was what amenities respondents considered most important in travel subscriptions. Respondents most often cited discounts on flights, hotels, and other services, which received 64.3% of responses. Flexibility of booking and cancellation was important to 44.1% of respondents. Access to exclusive offers and attractions, such as VIP clubs, was considered important by 21.7% of participants, and personalised travel planning by 25.9%. The fewest respondents indicated ongoing travel support as a key amenity (18.6%). Details are shown in Table 4.

The last question analysed referred to plans to increase participation in the subscription model in the field of tourism. Respondents most often indicated subscriptions to booking platforms (38.1%), transport (30.5%), and lodging (29.7%). Fewer people planned to increase participation in subscriptions related to vacation clubs, transport, and travel insurance – 14.4% each. Subscriptions to tangible travel products and subscriptions to travel planning were indicated by 12.7% and 8.5% of respondents, respectively. It was noted that 14.4% of respondents said they had no plans to increase subscriptions in the area of tourism.

Consumers' experiences with travel subscriptions vs. gender

In the next step of the analysis it was examined whether consumers' experiences of tourism subscriptions varied by gender. To do this, a series of cross tabulations were performed with a chi-square test of independence.

First, it was examined whether gender had an impact on the use of specific products and services in the tourism area in the subscription model (Table 5).

There were no statistically significant relationships between the variables. This means that women and men did not differ in how frequently they used the subscription model of individual products and services in the field of tourism. It was noted that there was a significant difference at the level of statistical trend between genders in the use of subscriptions to travel planning services (p = 0.098). It turned out that men were more likely to use this type of subscription (10.3%) compared to women (4.8%).

Next, it was examined whether gender influenced preferences for amenities considered most important in travel subscriptions (Table 6).

The analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between the variables. Thus, gender was not associated with respondents' preferences for amenities in travel subscriptions.

As a final step, it was checked whether there were gender differences in the areas of tourism with plans to increase participation in the subscription model. Again, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups in terms of the response distributions tested. This means that women and men declared similar plans related to increasing participation in the subscription model in the area of tourism.

Consumers' experiences with travel subscriptions vs. age

Analogous analyses were then carried out using the chi-square test of independence to compare the distributions of responses to the analysed questions among three age groups: those aged 18 to 24, those aged 25–44, and those older than 44. The results of the analysis are shown in Tables 7 and 8.

The analysis showed a single statistically significant relationship between the age of the people surveyed and preferred amenities in travel subscriptions (Table 8). Based on data from the cross tabulation, it was found that 18–24 year-olds were significantly more likely to consider discounts on transport, hotels and other services (75.8%) to be important in travel subscriptions, compared to 25–44 year-olds (58.5%) and older (57.7%).

Significant at the level of statistical trend, on the other hand, were the relationships between age and the use of transport subscriptions, including airline subscriptions (p = 0.086) and transport subscriptions such as carsharing, city bicycles or scooters (p = 0.061; Table 7). It turned out that these types of subscriptions were used more often by people over 45 years old (19.2% and 25.6%, respectively) compared to the youngest (7.7% and 12.1%, respectively) and middle-aged people (14.9% and 16.0%, respectively).

There was also a difference, significant at the level of statistical trend, between age groups in terms of planning to increase subscription participation on booking platforms (p = 0.070), with the

Table 5. Relationship between gender and the use of individual products and services in the tourism subscription model. Results of the chi-square independence test.

Variable		Women		Men		$\chi^2(1)$	p	ϕ
		N	%	*N*	%			
Transport subscriptions	No	127	87.6%	98	84.5%	0.52	0.477	0.04
	Yes	18	12.4%	18	15.5%			
Accommodation subscriptions	No	107	73.8%	84	72.4%	0.06	0.888	0.02
	Yes	38	26.2%	32	27.6%			
Holiday clubs	No	127	87.6%	104	89.7%	0.27	0.698	0.03
	Yes	18	12.4%	12	10.3%			
Subscriptions to booking platforms	No	93	64.1%	82	70.7%	1.25	0.290	0.07
	Yes	52	35.9%	34	29.3%			
Subscriptions to tourist attractions	No	123	84.8%	102	87.9%	0.52	0.588	0.05
	Yes	22	15.2%	14	12.1%			
Subscriptions of tangible products	No	135	93.1%	107	92.2%	0.07	0.814	0.02
	Yes	10	6.9%	9	7.8%			
Carriage subscriptions	No	121	83.4%	95	81.9%	0.11	0.745	0.02
	Yes	24	16.6%	21	18.1%			
Travel insurance subscriptions	No	131	90.3%	107	92.2%	0.29	0.664	0.03
	Yes	14	9.7%	9	7.8%			
Subscriptions for trip planning	No	138	95.2%	104	89.7%	2.91	0.098	0.11
	Yes	7	4.8%	12	10.3%			

N – the number of observations; $\chi^2(1)$ – the result of the chi-square test along with the number of degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance; ϕ – the effect strength index

Table 6. Relationship between gender and preferences for amenities in travel subscriptions. Results of the chi-square independence test.

Variable		Women		Men		$\chi^2(1)$	p	ϕ
		N	%	N	%			
Discounts on transport, hotels and other services	No	56	38.6%	38	32.8%	0.96	0.365	0.06
	Yes	89	61.4%	78	67.2%			
Flexibility of booking and cancellation	No	76	52.4%	69	59.5%	1.30	0.262	0.07
	Yes	69	47.6%	47	40.5%			
Access to exclusive offers and attractions	No	117	80.7%	88	75.9%	0.89	0.366	0.06
	Yes	28	19.3%	28	24.1%			
Personalised trip planning	No	103	71.0%	91	78.4%	1.86	0.200	0.08
	Yes	42	29.0%	25	21.6%			
Ongoing travel support	No	114	78.6%	98	84.5%	1.45	0.266	0.07
	Yes	31	21.4%	18	15.5%			

N – the number of observations; $\chi^2(1)$ – the result of the chi-square test along with the number of degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance; ϕ – the effect strength index

Table 7. Relationship between age and the use of individual products and services in the tourism subscription model. Results of the chi-square independence test.

Variable		Age						$\chi^2(2)$	p	V_c
		18–24		25–44		45 and more				
		N	%	N	%	N	%			
Transport subscriptions	No	84	92.3%	80	85.1%	63	80.8%	4.91	0.086	0.14
	Yes	7	7.7%	14	14.9%	15	19.2%			
Accommodation subscriptions	No	65	71.4%	68	72.3%	59	75.6%	0.41	0.814	0.04
	Yes	26	28.6%	26	27.7%	19	24.4%			
Holiday clubs	No	84	92.3%	82	87.2%	67	85.9%	1.98	0.372	0.09
	Yes	7	7.7%	12	12.8%	11	14.1%			
Subscriptions to booking platforms	No	65	71.4%	58	61.7%	53	67.9%	2.03	0.363	0.09
	Yes	26	28.6%	36	38.3%	25	32.1%			
Subscriptions to tourist attractions	No	80	87.9%	83	88.3%	64	82.1%	1.71	0.425	0.08
	Yes	11	12.1%	11	11.7%	14	17.9%			
Subscriptions of tangible tourism products	No	84	92.3%	89	94.7%	71	91.0%	0.90	0.639	0.06
	Yes	7	7.7%	5	5.3%	7	9.0%			
Carriage subscriptions	No	80	87.9%	79	84.0%	58	74.4%	5.58	0.061	0.15
	Yes	11	12.1%	15	16.0%	20	25.6%			
Travel insurance subscriptions	No	80	87.9%	87	92.6%	73	93.6%	2.01	0.367	0.09
	Yes	11	12.1%	7	7.4%	5	6.4%			
Subscriptions for trip planning	No	84	92.3%	89	94.7%	71	91.0%	0.90	0.639	0.06
	Yes	7	7.7%	5	5.3%	7	9.0%			

N – the number of observations; $\chi^2(2)$ – the result of the chi–square test along with the number of degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance; V_c – the effect strength index

Table 8. Relationship between age and preferences for amenities in travel subscriptions. Results of the chi-square independence test.

Variable		Age						$\chi^2(2)$	p	V_c
		18–24		25–44		45 and more				
		N	%	N	%	N	%			
Discounts on transport, hotels and other services	No	22	24.2%	39	41.5%	33	42.3%	8.12	0.017	0.18
	Yes	69	75.8%	55	58.5%	45	57.7%			
Flexibility of booking and cancellation	No	45	49.5%	52	55.3%	50	64.1%	3.68	0.159	0.12
	Yes	46	50.5%	42	44.7%	28	35.9%			
Access to exclusive offers and attractions	No	68	74.7%	77	81.9%	61	78.2%	1.41	0.494	0.07
	Yes	23	25.3%	17	18.1%	17	21.8%			
Personalised trip planning	No	63	69.2%	68	72.3%	64	82.1%	3.85	0.146	0.12
	Yes	28	30.8%	26	27.7%	14	17.9%			
Ongoing travel support	No	73	80.2%	80	85.1%	61	78.2%	1.46	0.482	0.07
	Yes	18	19.8%	14	14.9%	17	21.8%			

N – the number of observations; $\chi^2(2)$ – the result of the chi–square test along with the number of degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance; V_c – the effect strength index

oldest people planning to increase their subscription in this area more often (52.5%) compared to the young (31.6%) and middle-aged (30.0%).

Consumers' experiences with travel subscriptions vs. income

As a final step in the analysis, it was examined whether consumers' experience of tourism subscriptions depended on income. To do this, a series of cross-tabulations were again performed with a chi-square independence test (Tables 9 and 10).

The analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between income and the use of vacation clubs in the subscription model (Table 9). It turned out that people with net incomes between 4001 and 5000 PLN (22.1%) were significantly more likely to use such services compared to other groups (incomes up to 3000 PLN – 3.1%;

incomes 3001–4000 PLN – 12.7%; incomes above 5000 PLN – 6.7%).

Significant at the level of statistical trend were relationships between income and the use of travel planning services in the subscription model (p = 0.065; Table 8), preference for discounts on transport, hotels and other services as the main amenity associated with travel subscriptions (p = 0.067; Table 10), and planning to increase participation in overnight subscriptions (p = 0.064). Analysis of the cross-tabulated data showed that those with incomes between 3001 and 4000 PLN were most likely to use travel planning services in the subscription model (14.1%), discounts on transport, hotels and other services were considered the most important amenity most often by those

Table 9. Relationship between income and the use of individual products and services in the tourism subscription model. Results of the chi-square independence test.

Variable		Up to 3000 PLN		From 3001 to 4000 PLN		From 4001 to 5000 PLN		Over 5000 PLN		$\chi^2(3)$	p	V_c
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Transport subscriptions	No	59	92.2%	61	85.9%	55	80.9%	52	86.7%	3.58	0.310	0.12
	Yes	5	7.8%	10	14.1%	13	19.1%	8	13.3%			
Accommodation subscriptions	No	45	70.3%	52	73.2%	46	67.6%	49	81.7%	3.51	0.319	0.12
	Yes	19	29.7%	19	26.8%	22	32.4%	11	18.3%			
Holiday clubs	No	62	96.9%	62	87.3%	53	77.9%	56	93.3%	13.43	0.004	0.23
	Yes	2	3.1%	9	12.7%	15	22.1%	4	6.7%			
Subscriptions to booking platforms	No	40	62.5%	54	76.1%	44	64.7%	38	63.3%	3.74	0.291	0.12
	Yes	24	37.5%	17	23.9%	24	35.3%	22	36.7%			
Subscriptions to tourist attractions	No	57	89.1%	59	83.1%	56	82.4%	55	91.7%	3.39	0.335	0.11
	Yes	7	10.9%	12	16.9%	12	17.6%	5	8.3%			
Subscriptions of tangible tourism products	No	58	90.6%	66	93.0%	61	89.7%	59	98.3%	4.17	0.244	0.13
	Yes	6	9.4%	5	7.0%	7	10.3%	1	1.7%			
Carriage subscriptions	No	55	85.9%	59	83.1%	55	80.9%	48	80.0%	0.93	0.819	0.06
	Yes	9	14.1%	12	16.9%	13	19.1%	12	20.0%			
Travel insurance subscriptions	No	58	90.6%	62	87.3%	64	94.1%	56	93.3%	2.43	0.488	0.10
	Yes	6	9.4%	9	12.7%	4	5.9%	4	6.7%			
Subscriptions for trip planning	No	60	93.8%	61	85.9%	65	95.6%	58	96.7%	7.23	0.065	0.17
	Yes	4	6.3%	10	14.1%	3	4.4%	2	3.3%			

N – the number of observations; $\chi^2(3)$ – the result of the chi–square test along with the number of degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance; V_c – the effect strength index

Table 10. Relationship between income and preferences for amenities in travel subscriptions. Results of the chi-square independence test.

Variable		Up to 3000 PLN		From 3001 to 4000 PLN		From 4001 to 5000 PLN		Over 5000 PLN		$\chi^2(3)$	p	V_c
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Discounts on transport, hotels and other services	No	16	25.0%	24	33.8%	32	47.1%	22	36.7%	7.15	0.067	0.17
	Yes	48	75.0%	47	66.2%	36	52.9%	38	63.3%			
Flexibility of booking and cancellation	No	33	51.6%	43	60.6%	44	64.7%	27	45.0%	6.15	0.105	0.15
	Yes	31	48.4%	28	39.4%	24	35.3%	33	55.0%			
Access to exclusive offers and attractions	No	51	79.7%	55	77.5%	52	76.5%	48	80.0%	0.34	0.953	0.04
	Yes	13	20.3%	16	22.5%	16	23.5%	12	20.0%			
Personalised trip planning	No	43	67.2%	52	73.2%	52	76.5%	48	80.0%	2.91	0.406	0.11
	Yes	21	32.8%	19	26.8%	16	23.5%	12	20.0%			
Ongoing travel support	No	51	79.7%	61	85.9%	51	75.0%	51	85.0%	3.43	0.330	0.11
	Yes	13	20.3%	10	14.1%	17	25.0%	9	15.0%			

N – the number of observations; $\chi^2(3)$ – the result of the chi–square test along with the number of degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance; V_c – the effect strength index with incomes up to 3000 PLN (75.0%) and least frequently by those with incomes between 4001 and 5000 PLN (52.9%), while those with incomes between 3001 and 4000 PLN (45.2%) and those with incomes above 5000 PLN (36.8%) planned to increase their share of lodging subscriptions the most.

Discussion

This study extends the previous literature in which authors treat subscription models in the travel market in a fragmented manner. The authors applied a holistic approach by analysing the application of the model in various sectors of the industry, from hospitality and transport to tourist attractions and tangible tourism products. In addition, they highlighted the characteristics of the tourism product that determine the applicability of the discussed model and its benefits for both supply and tourism demand entities (complexity, immateriality, experience as a component of the modern tourism product, seasonality, lack of ownership, lack of storability, simultaneity of the process of provision and consumption, and indivisibility).

Poles pointed to booking platforms (33.1%), subscriptions to lodging services (27%) and transport services (17.5%) as the most popular subscriptions. Transport subscriptions, including city bicycles, scooters or carsharing, were also indicated by 17.5% of respondents, while airline subscriptions and tourist attraction subscriptions were indicated by 13.7% each. The least frequently selected categories were subscriptions to travel tangible products (including travel equipment) and travel planning (7.2% each) and travel insurance subscriptions (8.7%). Nearly 30% of respondents said they did not use any subscriptions in this area. The result of the survey regarding future plans for participation in the subscription model in the travel area is promising, as it showed that more than 85% of respondents were interested in increasing their participation in this model. Poles are primarily interested in increasing their subscriptions to booking platforms, (38.1%), transport subscriptions (30.5%) and accommodation subscriptions (29.7%). Fewer people plan to increase participation in subscriptions related to vacation clubs, transport, and travel insurance – 14.4% each. Subscriptions for material products and travel planning were indicated by 12.7% and 8.5% of respondents, respectively. The results of the survey indicate that more than 50% of respondents use the subscription model. Additionally, the vast majority want to increase their participation in it, which shows its potential on the Polish market.

The subscription economy in the tourism market is only in its early stages, as evidenced by the still small number of companies involved in it. However, the preferences of Polish consumers and the characteristics of the product offered in the tourism market determine its development. Tourism supply entities, through the use of the subscription model, can stabilise their income and minimise the effects of the specifics of the product offered (such as seasonality in tourism). However, the effectiveness of such models will depend on the ability of companies to deliver consistent value and adapt to changing consumer preferences. Travel companies should conduct a thorough market analysis to tailor their model to different customer segments, providing flexibility and attractive benefits. As the survey on the Polish market has shown, the key benefit is economic factors (64.3% of responses). Thus, the subscription model responds primarily to consumers' reported behaviour of seeking alternative ways of satisfying needs in an era of financial uncertainty by ensuring the realisation of tourism consumption, which is an element of free consumption. The results obtained coincide with the results of a study conducted in the United States, where hotel or flight price offers, and special offers and discounts were among the most popular choices, indicated by 36% of respondents from that country (Statista 2024). Nevertheless, this is not confirmed by the results of other studies which have shown that only one-third of the impact on customer purchases is due to the economic benefits of the subscription programme, with the remaining two-thirds attributed to non-economic effects (Iyengar et al. 2022). The second key benefit indicated by respondents was flexibility of bookings and cancellations (44.1% of respondents), indicating the aforementioned need for companies to use tiered structures and different, flexible subscription levels with the option to raise or lower the level as needed. As the survey results have shown, the heterogenisation of consumption and the resulting personalisation (25.9%) or access to exclusive products (21.7%) are secondary benefits for Poles. Studies by other authors have proved that personalisation and access to premium offers are the most important factors influencing participation in the subscription economy (Chen et al. 2018, Deloitte Digital 2022). The results obtained by the authors indicate the distinctiveness of consumer behaviour on the Polish market, where economic factors are the most important determinants of participation in the subscription economy.

The survey results suggest that respondents representing different income brackets have different needs and expectations regarding subscription services in tourism. In addition, older people are more likely to extend subscriptions (52.5%) compared to younger people (31.6% percent) and middle-aged people (30.0%). This may suggest that older users are more likely to see the value of subscriptions in terms of their needs. This could be due to greater financial stability or specific preferences for using booking platforms. These findings confirm that demographic variables such as age and income significantly shape consumer expectations, which aligns with the observation of Dolnicar et al. (2018) that market segmentation is essential for understanding heterogeneous consumer needs in tourism. Women and men do not differ in terms of the frequency with which they use the subscription model for specific products and services in the field of tourism in Poland, which is not confirmed by studies conducted in other countries. For example, the results of a study conducted in the United States have shown that travel subscriptions are mainly chosen by men (66%), while in Japan, women were the main stakeholders in this model (Statista 2023b). Women, being more emotional, may be more susceptible to the benefits of the experience economy, which may influence their subscription choices. Ultimately, both financial and emotional aspects play a key role in travel subscription decisions, but it is important to analyse their hierarchy in relation to the conditions of a specific market.

The findings allow us to answer the research questions posed. Firstly, more than half of respondents declared using at least one travel subscription, with booking platforms (33.1%) and accommodation (27%) being the most popular forms. This outcome confirms H1. Secondly, consumers primarily value economic benefits, such as discounts (64.3%) and booking flexibility (44.1%), whereas personalisation (25.9%) and exclusive offers (21.7%) play a secondary role. Thirdly, the analysis showed that socio-demographic variables influenced consumer behaviour: age and income significantly differentiated both the likelihood of using subscriptions and the preferences regarding their benefits, while gender did not. Hence, H2 can be considered partially confirmed. Taken together, these results demonstrate that the declared objectives of the study were achieved, linking the scale of subscription usage with consumer experiences, and they provide a basis for further research and practical recommendations for the tourism industry.

Conclusion

The study provides new insights into the use of subscription models in the tourism market in Poland. Firstly, it indicates that the characteristics of a tourism product are important factors determining the development of the subscription economy (important both for tourism service providers and consumers). Second, while some benefits of applying the model, e.g. price reductions, have significant potential for the development of the subscription model, others, e.g. product personalisation, do not. The study revealed the specific nature of consumer behaviour on the Polish market where economic factors are the most important determinants of participation in the subscription economy.

The model can reveal new opportunities for value creation, with significant practical implications for tourism industry players. From a practical perspective, the results highlight several directions for tourism companies considering the implementation or refinement of subscription models. First, offers should prioritise economic benefits such as discounts and booking flexibility, which are the most valued by Polish consumers, while personalisation and exclusive offers can be positioned as supplementary advantages. Second, firms should tailor their subscription structures to different customer segments: younger travellers respond more strongly to price reductions, while older consumers demonstrate greater willingness to extend their subscriptions, suggesting the need for age-sensitive product design. Income also differentiates preferences, with middle-income groups showing greater demand for vacation clubs and accommodation subscriptions. Finally, subscription schemes can be used strategically to stabilise revenues against seasonality and to build long-term customer relationships. In this way, companies can translate consumer preferences identified in the study into actionable strategies for designing, pricing, and segmenting their subscription offers.

It should be borne in mind that the model in question, although it offers a novel approach to increasing the financial stability of tourism market operators, has its drawbacks and is associated with certain risks. For example, subscribing to too many services at once that are not used regularly can lead to unnecessary spending. In addition, there are risks associated with the use of personal data collected by companies operating under the subscription model. Barriers to the development of this model in a given market, which is based on the right of access rather than ownership, may also be, especially in the case of tangible tourism products, the strongly entrenched belief that ownership is an indicator of high social status. As previous studies have shown, this also applies to the Polish market (Ziobrowska-Sztuczka, Markiewicz 2024). Addressing these limitations and exploring new strategies will be crucial to the future success of the model in question.

With regard to the self-reported research conducted, it should be noted that the study was a pilot. A small sample may not be representative of the entire population, which may lead to errors in inference and generalisation 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 research in the future.

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