**IJCRT.ORG** 

ISSN: 2320-2882



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

# A Systematic Literature Review Of The Sharing Economy In The Transportation Space

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#### **Abstract**

The emergence of the sharing economy has significantly transformed the transportation landscape, reshaping how individuals access mobility services and how urban systems are managed. The sharing economy which has emerged and received much attention in the recent past is a pattern of exchange, whereby individuals can obtain the use of a resource without actually owning it. This kind of consumption changes the orientation from ownership of goods and property, to temporary use of objects such as automobiles, spaces for living and work, and different services. The sharing economy was launched with the primary aim of dealing with the under utilization of more resources, coming up with an enhanced device of fulfilling the consumer demand cheaply. In the context of transport, this economic model has created the so-called platforms of sharing, including and not limited to ride-sharing, car-sharing, biking-sharing, etc, which means access without ownership. Services like Uber, Lyft, and Cars are seen to have disrupted the transportation system since they link consumers with providers or users with vehicles or carsharing services in a way that results in optimised utilization of the transport stock.

This systematic literature review (SLR) explores the evolution, impact, and implications of the sharing economy in the transportation space from 2013 to 2023. Drawing upon 33 peer-reviewed and authoritative sources, the review analyzes key trends across sectors such as sharing economy, ride-hailing, car-sharing, micromobility, platform logistics, and policy frameworks. The study employs a structured review methodology, with inclusion criteria focused on transportation-related sharing models, and highlights publication trends and year wise representation of the scholarly research articles. The findings reveal that the sharing economy has influenced mobility patterns, urban planning, equity considerations, and sustainable transport policies. However, critical gaps persist in areas such as regulatory frameworks, equitable access, and platform labor practices. The review provides evidence-based insights for policymakers, transport planners, and academic researchers seeking to understand the complexities and future directions of shared transportation systems in an increasingly digital and urbanized world.

**Keywords:** sharing economy, car-sharing, mobility, platform economy, shared transport, urban mobility, sustainable logistics

# 1. Introduction and Research Objectives

Over the past decade, the concept of the sharing economy has emerged as a transformative force in global transportation systems. Traditionally, transportation was built on ownership-based models—private cars, taxis, and government-operated public transport. However, with the advancement of digital platforms and mobile technology, there has been a paradigmatic shift from ownership to access-based consumption. This evolution has led to the rise of the sharing economy, a socio-economic system that leverages underutilized resources and matches supply with demand in real-time using digital interfaces. Nowhere is this shift more evident than in the transportation sector, where services such as car-sharing, ride-hailing, bike-sharing, and scooter-sharing have disrupted conventional systems and introduced new patterns of urban mobility (Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014).

Platform-based transportation services like Uber, BlaBlaCar, Lyft, and Bird have become emblematic of this shift. These platforms do not own fleets in the traditional sense; instead, they act as intermediaries that facilitate peer-to-peer or business-to-consumer transactions. Their rapid adoption has been fueled by convenience, flexibility, cost-efficiency, and technological integration. Urban commuters now have more choices than ever before, from booking a ride through an app to accessing a shared bicycle through QR-code entry systems. This platformization of mobility has fundamentally altered the urban transport ecosystem, introducing both opportunities and challenges (Jin et al., 2018).

The implications of the sharing economy in transportation are multifaceted. Economically, it creates new forms of micro-entrepreneurship while disrupting traditional taxi and transport services. Socially, it raises issues of accessibility, labor rights, and digital inclusion. Environmentally, it presents both promises and paradoxes: while shared modes may reduce private vehicle usage and carbon emissions, they can also lead to an increase in vehicle miles traveled due to convenience, thereby challenging environmental gains. These layers of complexity highlight the need to understand how the sharing economy is truly impacting transportation systems from multiple perspectives (Standing et al., 2019).

Despite a growing body of literature, existing reviews tend to focus on individual modes (e.g., only carsharing or only ride-hailing), specific regions, or singular themes such as environmental sustainability or user behavior. Very few studies take a holistic, systematic view that spans across geographies, transport modes, and thematic concerns. Moreover, past reviews often overlook the broader ecosystem that includes governance, equity, innovation, and the integration of emerging technologies. There is thus a need for a structured synthesis of current academic discourse that not only maps existing research but also identifies thematic gaps and provides direction for future inquiry.

The present review aims to address these deficiencies by conducting a comprehensive systematic literature review on the sharing economy in the transportation sector, covering scholarly works published between 2013 and 2023. The objectives of this review are fourfold: first, to map publication trends over time to

understand the evolution of research interest; second, to analyze the geographical distribution of scholarly contributions to determine global participation in the discourse; third, to synthesize recurring themes such as equity, efficiency, and sustainability within the context of shared transportation; and finally, to identify significant research gaps and propose areas for future academic exploration. This holistic approach not only bridges knowledge silos but also contributes to the development of a more inclusive and forward-looking understanding of the sharing economy's role in shaping modern transport landscapes.

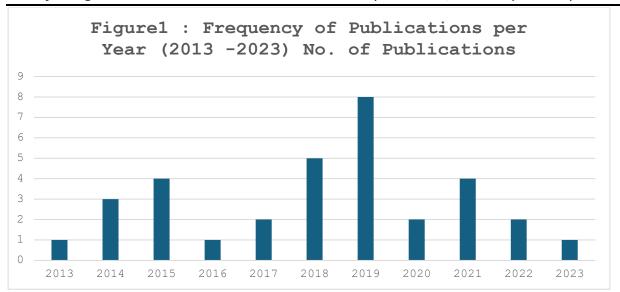
### 2. Methodology

To ensure a rigorous and transparent investigation of the scholarly literature surrounding the sharing economy in transportation, a structured and systematic review methodology was adopted. The objective was to identify, synthesize, and evaluate relevant peer-reviewed studies published between 2013 and 2023 that focused explicitly on transportation modes, services, policies, and impacts associated with the sharing economy. This review drew its methodological inspiration from best practices in systematic review protocols, with necessary adaptations to fit the interdisciplinary and evolving nature of the topic (Nadler, 2014).

The data collection process began with a comprehensive search across multiple academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar. These platforms were chosen based on their broad coverage of journals in transportation research, economics, urban planning, information systems, and social sciences. To maximize the retrieval of relevant literature, a combination of keyword-driven search strings and Boolean operators was employed. Key terms included: "sharing economy" AND "transportation," "ride-sharing" OR "ride-hailing," "car-sharing," "shared mobility," "bike-sharing," "platform economy" AND "urban transport," and "shared logistics." The Boolean logic allowed for combinations that widened the scope while maintaining focus on the thematic boundaries of interest.

Inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters; (2) English language publications; (3) studies with clear relevance to transportation within the sharing economy framework; and (4) articles published from 2013 through early 2023. Exclusion criteria eliminated grey literature, blog posts, government policy briefs, and articles lacking empirical or conceptual depth. Titles and abstracts were initially screened for relevance, followed by full-text analysis of selected papers. Duplicate entries were removed, and only the most conceptually robust studies were retained.

A total of 33 scholarly works were finalized for review, each representing distinct aspects of the sharing economy in transportation. The selection process aimed to balance diversity in themes, geographical coverage, and research methods. However, some limitations are acknowledged. The exclusion of non-English literature may have inadvertently filtered out region-specific insights from non-Western contexts. Additionally, due to the evolving terminology around the sharing economy, some relevant articles might have been overlooked due to varied labeling (Chasin et al., 2018). Despite these constraints, the adopted methodology provides a strong and credible foundation for thematic synthesis and trend analysis in subsequent sections of this paper.



#### 3. Thematic Literature Review

#### 3.1 Car-sharing and Ride-sourcing

The concepts of car-sharing and ride-sourcing represent two of the most prominent transformations within the broader sharing economy movement, particularly in the urban transportation domain. These models have redefined how individuals approach car usage—shifting the emphasis from ownership to temporary, need-based access. In increasingly congested metropolitan areas, such models offer alternative mobility options that claim to reduce vehicle dependency, lower emissions, and contribute to more sustainable cities. However, their actual impact is far more nuanced and context-dependent.

Car-sharing, in its various forms, allows users to rent vehicles for short durations, typically by the hour. This system is especially appealing in urban areas where the cost and inconvenience of car ownership outweigh the benefits. While traditional rental companies follow a centralized model, car-sharing operates on a decentralized network that includes both corporate fleets and peer-to-peer arrangements. The corporate model, often represented by companies like Zipcar, provides users with professionally maintained fleets stationed throughout the city. These services are typically integrated with mobile applications, offering real-time availability and automated billing systems. In contrast, peer-to-peer car-sharing platforms such as Turo or Getaround enable individuals to rent out their personal vehicles when not in use, further decentralizing the transportation system and maximizing the utility of existing assets.

The sustainability implications of these models are both promising and contested. On one hand, by encouraging shared use of vehicles, car-sharing systems can reduce the total number of cars on the road, leading to fewer emissions, lower congestion, and more efficient use of urban space. On the other hand, some studies caution that the convenience of these services can generate new trips that would otherwise not occur, potentially increasing traffic volumes and environmental burden. In cities where public transport is underutilized or inadequate, car-sharing may inadvertently divert users from more sustainable travel modes rather than private car usage, complicating its environmental credentials.

Ride-sourcing services such as Uber and Lyft have further complicated the urban mobility landscape. Unlike car-sharing, which emphasizes self-drive, ride-sourcing connects passengers with drivers via app-

based platforms, enabling door-to-door transportation on demand. These services are generally hailed for their accessibility, particularly in areas underserved by traditional taxis or public transit. However, they raise critical concerns related to traffic congestion, labor conditions for drivers, and regulatory compliance. In densely populated urban environments, the influx of ride-sourcing vehicles has been associated with increased traffic density, especially during peak hours.

Gansterer et al. (2022) argue that while the sharing economy has the potential to disrupt traditional transport paradigms, the true realization of its benefits depends on thoughtful integration with existing infrastructure and regulatory systems. Similarly, Koźlak (2020) emphasizes the need to distinguish between various car-sharing configurations and their alignment with the broader smart city agenda. Peer-to-peer models, while economically inclusive, require more robust mechanisms for quality control and insurance compliance. In contrast, corporate models may offer reliability but often come with higher operational costs and limited geographic reach.

## 3.2 Shared Mobility and Built Environment

The advent of shared mobility has not only transformed how people move through cities but has also introduced profound changes to the way urban environments are planned, experienced, and inhabited. As services such as ride-hailing, bike-sharing, and carpooling become more prevalent, they are steadily influencing patterns of travel behavior, residential decision-making, and even long-term urban development strategies. The shift from personal vehicle ownership to on-demand access to transportation is subtly but steadily reshaping the physical and social infrastructure of modern cities.

One of the most noticeable impacts of shared mobility is the way it alters travel behavior. Individuals who previously relied on private vehicles or were dependent on limited public transit options now have flexible alternatives at their fingertips. These services allow users to tailor their transportation choices to fit varying needs, such as convenience, cost, and time. Over time, this flexibility leads to changes in how people commute, when they travel, and even the frequency of their trips. Shared mobility reduces the necessity of owning a personal vehicle, which in turn lowers the demand for large-scale parking infrastructure and opens up urban space for alternative uses, such as green zones or pedestrian areas. Mouratidis et al. (2021) highlight that such behavioral shifts can encourage more sustainable city living by reducing reliance on private automobiles and promoting mixed-modal transport systems that better integrate with public transit networks.

The implications for housing and residential patterns are equally significant. In cities where shared mobility options are widespread and reliable, proximity to transit hubs or workplace locations becomes slightly less critical for residents. This can lead to greater dispersion of housing demand and more balanced urban development. Conversely, in areas where access to shared mobility is limited, these services may concentrate demand around tech-enabled zones, reinforcing socio-spatial inequalities. Kim et al. (2019) argue that the integration of shared mobility with land-use policies has the potential to reshape residential preferences, making high-density, transit-friendly neighborhoods more attractive, particularly to younger and more mobile populations who prioritize flexibility over permanence.

From a planning perspective, the emergence of shared mobility compels urban authorities to rethink traditional models of transport infrastructure and zoning. The static infrastructure built for private cars—such as sprawling parking lots and wide roadways—is increasingly at odds with the fluid, decentralized nature of shared mobility networks. This shift calls for more adaptive planning frameworks that can accommodate multiple forms of mobility, including bicycles, e-scooters, and ride-shares, all coexisting within the same urban space. Planners are now faced with the challenge of designing for mobility ecosystems that are far more dynamic and user-centric than their predecessors. Meilă (2018) emphasizes that this new reality requires a collaborative governance model, where policymakers, platform operators, and community stakeholders work together to create mobility solutions that are not only efficient but also equitable and sustainable.

#### 3.3 Platform Models and Logistics

The rise of gig economy platforms has brought a new operational model into the transportation and logistics sector, particularly influencing last-mile delivery and service-based transport systems. Companies like Uber Eats, Bolt, and other platform-based logistics services have introduced a dynamic form of labor—characterized by independent contractors, algorithmic task distribution, and real-time responsiveness—that distinguishes them from traditional employment and logistics models. This shift represents more than just a change in how people move or receive goods; it signifies a transformation in the very structure of labor, logistics, and digital governance in urban mobility systems.

Gig-based mobility platforms operate by connecting service providers (drivers, riders, couriers) directly with consumers through mobile applications. These platforms have rapidly become essential in many urban areas, especially where traditional logistics chains struggle with congestion, high costs, or infrastructure limitations. Uber Eats, for example, offers food delivery with minimal overhead by outsourcing delivery to freelance drivers. Similarly, Bolt's carpooling and ride-hailing services provide cost-effective and flexible urban travel. However, this operational flexibility comes with concerns related to labor rights, income insecurity, and worker protections, since most gig workers are classified as independent contractors and thus remain outside conventional labor laws (Strulak-Wójcikiewicz & Wagner, 2021).

In terms of logistics, the impact of these platforms is particularly visible in the "last mile" delivery segment—the final leg of delivery from distribution centers to end consumers. This phase has traditionally been the most complex and cost-intensive part of the logistics chain, but shared and gig-based platforms have offered scalable, decentralized solutions. Retamal and Dominish (2017) emphasize that shared mobility and collaborative consumption models have the potential to address logistical inefficiencies by leveraging underutilized private assets—such as personal vehicles—for freight purposes. Yet, while such systems may enhance convenience and efficiency, they also introduce new regulatory and environmental questions, especially regarding emissions, traffic congestion, and urban delivery zoning.

#### 3.4 Governance, Regulation & Equity

The expansion of the sharing economy in transportation has outpaced the ability of traditional legal frameworks to keep up, creating regulatory grey areas and governance challenges. The legal classification of platform companies—whether as technology firms or transport providers—remains one of the most contentious issues in this space. This ambiguity often allows companies to circumvent local transportation laws and labor regulations, raising questions about accountability and fairness. The broader challenge is that these platforms function as both marketplaces and regulators of their ecosystems, using proprietary algorithms to control pricing, access, and user behavior, often without transparency or oversight.

Schor and Cansoy (2019) argue that the current regulatory environment is ill-equipped to manage the complexities of platform capitalism, where private entities hold disproportionate power over public mobility infrastructures. These platforms often operate informally or semi-legally in new markets, exploiting the absence of clear laws or the sluggish response of municipal authorities. The result is an uneven playing field where legacy transportation services—like taxis or buses—must comply with strict regulations, while digital platforms operate with considerable flexibility.

Katz (2015) notes that cities face a difficult balancing act: they must protect public interests while encouraging innovation. Regulation of data, for instance, has become a key issue, as platforms amass vast amounts of user and traffic data but rarely share it with public agencies. This lack of data transparency limits the capacity of cities to plan effectively or to address issues like congestion and accessibility. Davidson and Infranca (2018) further highlight that equity considerations—such as who benefits from shared mobility and who is excluded—are rarely addressed in regulatory debates, despite growing evidence that platform services often fail to reach low-income or underserved communities. Governance in the age of shared transportation must therefore evolve from a reactive model to a more proactive, inclusive, and adaptive framework.

#### 3.5 Failures, Risks & Socioeconomic Challenges

Despite its disruptive potential, the sharing economy in transportation has also encountered a range of failures and unintended consequences. Not all platform-based ventures succeed, and many collapse under the pressure of scaling too quickly, lacking sustainable revenue models, or failing to comply with regulatory expectations. The market is littered with examples of defunct ride-sharing startups, dockless bike-sharing systems abandoned on city streets, and delivery platforms that could not retain either customers or gig workers.

Richardson (2015) argues that the performative optimism surrounding the sharing economy often masks deeper systemic issues, including overvaluation, unrealistic growth projections, and short-term profit motives that undermine long-term viability. Failures in the sharing economy are not simply business missteps; they reflect structural weaknesses in the model itself, particularly in the context of platform overreach and weak accountability mechanisms.

In addition to economic failures, the sharing economy also faces critiques from social equity and inclusion perspectives. Schoenbaum (2016) explores how gender disparities manifest within platform-based transport systems, where safety, visibility, and access vary significantly based on gender. Women often face greater barriers to participation as both users and workers, due to issues like harassment, lack of female representation in driver roles, and exclusion from planning decisions.

Curtis and Lehner (2019) further emphasize that without explicit policies to promote inclusion, the sharing economy may inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities. Those without smartphones, bank accounts, or digital literacy are often excluded from participating, while workers frequently face low wages, job insecurity, and algorithmic control without recourse. In such a scenario, the promise of democratized access and empowerment through sharing becomes hollow unless supported by inclusive design and social protections.

#### 3.6 Future Technologies & Policy Debates

As urban environments continue to digitize, the next frontier in shared mobility will likely be shaped by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous vehicles, and integrated smart city systems. These technologies promise to further enhance efficiency, responsiveness, and personalization in mobility services. For example, AI can optimize ride-matching and route planning, reduce wait times, and improve vehicle utilization. However, the integration of such technologies into public mobility networks requires careful policy planning and ethical oversight.

Smart cities—urban areas enhanced by real-time data, sensor networks, and AI-powered decision-making—are increasingly positioned as ideal ecosystems for future shared mobility models. Yet, the transition to smart mobility raises critical questions about surveillance, data ownership, cybersecurity, and algorithmic bias. Brewer et al. (2019) suggest that while digital platforms can make transportation more accessible and responsive, they also risk excluding those without digital access or those who fall outside algorithmic prioritization models.

### 5. Key Findings and Research Gaps

The systematic review of literature on the sharing economy in the transportation sector has brought to light several recurring themes that have shaped academic inquiry over the past decade. At the core of most studies is the transformative impact of digital platforms in reshaping how people access and experience mobility. Technologies have enabled the rise of ride-hailing, car-sharing, and on-demand delivery services that offer flexible alternatives to traditional transport. These services, often powered by smartphone applications and real-time data, have been praised for improving urban accessibility, reducing vehicle ownership, and offering cost-effective options to users. Environmental considerations are another prominent theme, with many scholars assessing the potential of shared transport systems to reduce emissions, ease urban congestion, and promote sustainable lifestyles. Additionally, the interplay between private innovation and public regulation features strongly in the literature, highlighting ongoing struggles between platform autonomy and the need for oversight and accountability.

However, while the literature is rich in breadth, there are areas that remain insufficiently addressed. One of the most pressing gaps lies in equity-focused research. Most studies tend to generalize user benefits and overlook how shared mobility platforms affect marginalized populations. Issues such as affordability, digital exclusion, physical accessibility, and safety for vulnerable groups—particularly women, the elderly, and people with disabilities—are rarely at the center of analytical frameworks. Wong et al. (2021) emphasize that the success of mobility platforms during high-risk situations like evacuations is often compromised by their failure to adequately accommodate disadvantaged users. Moreover, the gig economy labor model embedded in many platforms raises further equity concerns, as workers often operate in precarious conditions with limited social protections.

In terms of emerging domains, there is growing recognition that future research must move beyond traditional platform models to explore new frontiers like micromobility, AI-powered mobility systems, and digital twin platforms. These technologies have the potential to significantly influence mobility efficiency, predictive urban planning, and real-time traffic management. Yet, Morgan (2018) cautions that such innovations could also exacerbate existing inequalities if they are implemented without inclusive design principles. As cities become smarter and more interconnected, research must critically examine how technological advances can be harnessed to build transport systems that are not only efficient but also socially just and resilient.

## 6. Conclusion and Future Scope

This systematic literature review has provided a comprehensive understanding of how the sharing economy has reshaped the transportation landscape over the past decade. Drawing on diverse studies published between 2013 and 2023, the analysis highlighted the multi-dimensional nature of shared mobility—spanning technological, social, economic, and regulatory dimensions. Core themes emerged around the decentralization of mobility services, the rise of app-based platforms, the potential for environmental benefits, and the disruption of traditional transportation systems. The review also underscored the duality of the sharing economy: while it introduces flexible, efficient transport options, it simultaneously raises critical concerns around regulation, equity, labor conditions, and urban planning.

From an academic perspective, this review points to a growing but still fragmented body of work. While numerous studies have explored the operational and technological aspects of shared transport platforms, there remains a lack of longitudinal and interdisciplinary research that connects platform mobility with broader societal outcomes. For policymakers, the findings call for a more proactive approach to governance—one that moves beyond reactive regulation to shaping inclusive frameworks that ensure fairness, data transparency, and accountability across all stakeholder groups. In practice, city planners, mobility providers, and platform developers must work collaboratively to ensure that emerging technologies are embedded into transportation systems in ways that benefit all segments of society.

Future research must begin to explore the intersections between shared mobility and next-generation technologies, such as artificial intelligence, smart infrastructure, and digital twins. Equally important is the need to investigate how shared mobility can function as a catalyst for social inclusion rather than

exclusion. As Akbar and Hoffmann (2023) emphasize, collaborative consumption models must evolve to reflect ethical considerations and community needs. Trivett and Staff (2013) also remind us that the future of transport lies not just in innovation, but in how innovation is governed, distributed, and accessed. This calls for a renewed academic and policy focus on inclusive, resilient, and human-centered mobility systems.

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