

Beyond commercial platforms: Guest experiences in non-commercial shared accommodation

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Abstract

This study aims to understand guest experiences within the context of the non-commercial sharing economy in tourism. The research treats the guestbook records kept at Velesbid Bicycle House, a community-based, volunteer-driven example of shared accommodation, as a natural data source and analyses them using a descriptive phenomenological approach. The data were examined using thematic analysis, and it was determined that guest experiences were shaped around four fundamental experience areas: hospitality experiences, community experiences, emotional experiences, and spatial experiences. The findings show that guest experiences are not limited to functional services or host-guest interactions; they are established through volunteering, collective belonging, shared values, and community-based practices. Furthermore, it has been revealed that space is transformed from a physical 'space' into a meaningful 'place' through collective labour and social relations. The study goes beyond the commercial and market-centred approaches that dominate the sharing economy and shared accommodation literature, offering a contextual and experience-based contribution to how non-commercial sharing practices shape guest experiences.

Keywords: Sharing economy, P2P accommodation, home-based accommodation, tourist experience, place experience, community based-tourism.

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1. Introduction

Sharing economy is one of the research areas that has been receiving increasing attention in tourism literature in recent years. This interest stems from the fact that tourists are becoming active actors in processes where experiences are co-created, rather than passive consumers of services (Cui *et al.*, 2021; Celata & Stabrowski, 2022; Hall *et al.*, 2022; Cui *et al.*, 2024). Digitalisation and the opportunities offered by online platforms have supported consumers in these changing roles and paved the way for the proliferation of sharing economy applications in the tourism sector (Richardson, 2015; Hall *et al.*, 2022).

The tourism industry is one of the sectors where sharing economy applications are most visibly evident for transportation (Su, Cheng & Zarifis, 2025; Valente, Patrus & Guimaraes, 2019; Leighton, 2016), food and beverage (Heo & Kim, 2024; Puram & Gurusurthy, 2023; Atsız & Cifci, 2022; Octavia *et al.*, 2022) and accommodation (Lho *et al.*, 2022; Kuhzady, Seyfi & Beal, 2022; Phua, 2019; Schuckert, Peters & Pilz, 2018; Pietilä, 2011). A significant portion of academic work in this field has focused on the accommodation context and primarily on commercial platforms such as Airbnb and Booking (Hall *et al.*, 2022; Kuhzady, Seyfi & Beal, 2022). Commercial sharing economy examples, particularly guest motivations on Airbnb (Cai *et al.*, 2025; Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; So, Oh & Min, 2018; Tussyadiah, 2016a) and experience preferences (Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Cheng & Jin, 2019) are among the topics examined.

Nevertheless, sharing economy literature does not present a conceptually homogeneous structure. It is debatable whether the sharing economy is merely an alternative distribution channel or a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing broader social processes such as value co-creation, community formation, and normative ideals (Celata & Stabrowski, 2022; Hall *et al.*, 2022; Petrucci *et al.*, 2022). These debates are particularly deepened by the fact that commercial and non-commercial sharing practices are often addressed under a single framework. However, non-profit, community-based, and reciprocity-based forms of sharing require a separate analytical framework to understand the experiential dimensions of the sharing economy (Petrucci *et al.*, 2022; Habibi *et al.*, 2017; Habibi *et al.*, 2016).

Within this context, one can say that that empirical studies on accommodation experiences offered within the non-commercial sharing economy are limited, and the existing literature largely focuses on platform-based commercial examples (Tussyadiah & Zach, 2017; Hall *et al.*, 2022; Kuhzady, Seyfi & Beal, 2022; Casais and Cardoso, 2023; Cui *et al.*, 2024; Cai *et al.*, 2025). Couchsurfing, in particular, has been examined as a non-commercial platform; however, it has also been criticised for subsequently taking on a commercial nature (Habibi *et al.*, 2017; Celata & Stabrowski, 2022). On the other hand, there are initiatives such as WarmShowers—a free platform—as well as religious centres offering accommodation not only to pilgrims but also to other travellers (Casais and Sousa, 2020). In addition to the obvious advantage of free accommodation, these platforms enable people who were once strangers to form personal bonds and share their interests and activities (Heimel, Drescher & Gkekas, 2025). Casais and Sousa, who have conducted research on this topic, state that the primary motivations of those using these platforms are to encourage cultural experiences and to form new friendships. Furthermore, it is believed that trust and reciprocity play a significant role in the success of these platforms (Lauterbach *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, in non-commercial hospitality settings, host-guest relationships may be characterized by a sense of community and collective experiences, potentially transcending the conventional host-guest dynamic. Previous studies have emphasized the significance of host-guest relationships in fostering unique experiences within the sharing economy, irrespective of its commercial nature (Cui & Meng, 2021; Cui *et al.*, 2024; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Tussyadiah, 2016b). However, questions about how community-based guest experiences are interpreted in non-commercial sharing practices and the dimensions around which these experiences are shaped have not been answered adequately.

This study aims to examine guest experiences within the context of the non-commercial sharing economy from a community based perspective. The research was conducted using the example of Velesbid Bicycle House, a non-profit civil society initiative. This case provides a suitable context for an in-depth examination of non-commercial sharing experiences due to its provision of free, community-based accommodation, the fact that host-guest interaction is based on volunteerism rather than an institutional platform, and its intensive contact with the local community. The study aims to reveal the fundamental themes of guest experiences shaped within the non-commercial sharing economy by analysing visitor narratives found in the guestbook, a natural source of data.

Within the European context, the sharing economy can be examined not merely as a market-oriented exchange, but as a set of relational practices grounded in social economy, voluntarism, and community-based initiatives (Grönroos, 1994; Möller & Halinen, 2000). Despite the emergence of non-commercial forms of shared accommodation as an alternative to commercial platform-mediated models, empirical studies on such European-context experiences are limited. This study serves to examine a non-profit, volunteer-based shared accommodation initiative operating in Europe, revealing how guest experiences are shaped beyond commercial platforms.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. *Sharing Economies in Accommodation: Commercial and Non-Commercial Forms*

Sharing is defined as an alternative form of distribution based on the exchange of goods and services and gift-giving practices (Belk, 2007) and is considered a type of social behaviour that does not involve an expectation of monetary reciprocity (Benkler, 2004). Technological developments and the digital transformation process have paved the way for new forms of consumption that go beyond the traditional ownership-based consumption paradigm; this has enabled sharing practices to scale up and become an economic structure (Richardson, 2015; Minami, Ramos & Bortoluzzo, 2021; Fang & Li, 2022). Nowadays, many elements, from housing to transportation, clothing to food, have been included in the scope of the sharing economy. Eventually, this concept has come to be used alongside terms such as collaborative economy, collaborative consumption, peer-to-peer (P2P) economy, platform economy, and gig economy (Molz, 2013; Hall *et al.*, 2022; Kuhzady, Seyfi & Beal, 2022).

Internet-based platforms have enabled individuals to share their under-utilised with others, and these platforms have become increasingly widespread and popular over time (Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Gupta & Chauhan, 2021). However, these platforms do not exhibit a homogeneous structure; while some have developed in line with market-based commercial activities, others have taken shape as non-commercial models that prioritise community welfare, social solidarity and reciprocity (Light, 2019). Due to the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of the sharing economy, there is no single agreed-upon definition in the literature (Tham *et al.*, 2023).

There are numerous definitions of the sharing economy in the literature. Lessig (2008) defines the sharing economy as collaborative consumption based on the sharing, exchange, and rental of resources; Botsman and Rogers (2011) consider it an economic model based on the sharing of underutilised assets through peer-to-peer transactions in exchange for monetary or non-monetary benefits. Hamari *et al.* (2016, p. 2047) defines the sharing economy as the sharing of goods and services between individuals coordinated through online communities. Munoz and Cohen (2017) assess the sharing economy as a socio-economic system that aims to make efficient use of idle resources. Whereas, the fundamental components of the sharing economy are listed as the existence of an online platform, a peer-to-peer structure, and access to under-utilized resources (Hou, 2018; Gössling & Hall, 2019).

Nonetheless, the concept of the sharing economy is subject to significant debate at both theoretical and practical levels. Conceptually, there is an ongoing debate in the literature on whether the sharing

economy is merely an alternative distribution channel (Hall *et al.*, 2022) or a multidimensional social phenomenon involving complex processes such as value co-creation (Cui *et al.*, 2024) and even value co-destruction (Vasil *et al.*, 2025). When examining the emergence of the sharing economy, it is rooted in an ideological and normative framework rather than merely a model of exchange (Richardson, 2015; Celata & Stabrowski, 2022). Gössling and Hall (2019, p. 75) define the sharing economy as a normative concept that has developed as a response to the structural problems of the dominant capitalist system. According to Richardson (2015), the cyber subculture at the origin of the sharing economy has strong links with post-capitalist movements through values such as autonomy, anti-hierarchy, and community-based organisation. In this sense, the sharing economy goes beyond economic savings and sustainability goals; it also highlights social values such as intense interpersonal interactions, meaningful social bonds, uniqueness, community building, and sharing (Frenken & Schor, 2017; Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2018; Celata & Stabrowski, 2022).

At a practical level, attitudes towards the sharing economy vary considerably. One approach views the sharing economy as a threat due to reasons such as unfair competition, untaxed income, and incompatibility with local regulations; another approach supports the sharing economy due to local economic contributions, longer stays, and community-based interactions (Celata & Stabrowski, 2022; Hall *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the core of the issue is the debate over whether sharing activities are profit-driven. Within this context, it is observed that commercial and non-commercial sharing models have different motivational and experiential dynamics (Gössling & Hall, 2019). It is stated that the fundamental motivations in non-commercial sharing platforms are socio-cultural elements such as friendship, cultural exchange, learning, and altruism, while in commercial platforms, economic benefit (earning income or saving money) is prioritised for both hosts and guests (Kuhzady, Seyfi & Beal, 2022). However, it is observed that values such as social interaction and sustainability do not completely disappear in commercial models (Petruzzi *et al.*, 2022). Geissinger *et al.* (2019) argue that these two forms of sharing (sharing and exchange) represent market and non-market logics and that the sharing economy is positioned in a constant tension between these two extremes. Habibi *et al.* (2017) argue that sharing economy practices are inherently hybrid in nature and prepose the conceptualisation of a 'Sharing-Exchange Continuum'. According to this approach, sharing economy applications are positioned between the extremes of sharing and exchange, depending on the relative weight of qualities such as social bond, reciprocity, sense of joint ownership, money relevant/irrelevant and social reproduction.

In conclusion, the sharing economy is a complex social phenomenon encompassing both profit-driven and non-profit activities, generating monetary and non-monetary benefits, and thus difficult to categorise under a single definition (Hall *et al.*, 2022; Kuhzady, Seyfi & Beal, 2022). While the literature acknowledges a tension between market and non-market logics, there is a general consensus that the sharing economy is not a temporary trend and will continue to exist in the foreseeable future. Though, considering the post-capitalist and community-based ideals at the root of the sharing economy, the dominance of commercial examples in the literature creates a significant paradox. Indeed, the vast majority of studies drawing on business discipline in the hospitality and tourism sectors treat the sharing economy as a business model and focus on commercial platforms, particularly Airbnb. This situation leads to the relative neglect of non-commercial sharing economy practices and the guest experiences shaped within this context. However, non-profit, community-based accommodation experiences based on reciprocity offer an important area of research for understanding the normative and experiential dimensions of the sharing economy. In this context, the question of how accommodation experiences offered within the non-commercial sharing economy are perceived and experienced by visitors remains an insufficiently addressed area of research.

2.2. Guest Experiences in Commercial and Non-Commercial Shared Accommodation

Guest experiences play a central part in understanding demand-side dynamics related to the sharing economy and are considered a multidimensional psycho-social structure that shapes tourists' accommodation preferences. Tourists seek not only basic services during their travels, but also authentic, satisfying, meaningful and memorable experiences (Hosany, Sthapit & Björk, 2022). Experiences in a destination significantly influence visitors' travel memories, destination perceptions, and future behavioural intentions (Wang *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, experiences, which play a central role in tourism studies, are also a key element in understanding the diverse applications of sharing economies.

The literature on accommodation models evaluated within the scope of the commercial sharing economy largely focuses on platforms such as Airbnb. Studies under the terms P2P accommodation, HBO, and homestay also provide insights into guest experiences. These studies reveal that factors such as price, location, and physical amenities are decisive in shaping guest experiences (Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Kuhzady, Seyfi & Beal, 2022). However, it is also noted that experiential dimensions such as social interaction, authenticity, and novelty are part of the guest experience in commercial sharing models (Sigala, 2017; Guttentag *et al.*, 2018). As an illustration, Cheng and Jin (2019) analysed online reviews to investigate the characteristics that influence Airbnb users' experiences, concluding that three key characteristics—location, host, and amenities—are the primary influencers. In their study, De Canio *et al.* (2020) identified social interaction, social trust, economic benefit and sustainability as the behavioural intentions underlying peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation.

Studies have shown that interaction with the host is a key determinant of guest experience. Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto (2018) found that negative Airbnb experiences typically revolve around poor communication between guests and hosts, leading to a loss of time and/or money. Similarly, according to Tussyadiah (2016b), the fundamental characteristic of the Airbnb user experience is its ability to offer an authentic tourist-host encounter that cannot be replicated in traditional hotels (Tussyadiah, 2016b). Recent studies also point to experiences of emotional solidarity in homestay experiences (Cai *et al.*, 2025). The concept of emotional solidarity has been introduced to the tourism community to capture the intimate host-guest relationship (Joo & Woosnam, 2022). Emotional solidarity refers to an individual's sense of unity, connection, and identification with other people (Cai *et al.*, 2025; Hammarström, 2005). Sigala (2017) emphasised the appeal of P2P accommodation compared to traditional accommodation and argued that contemporary tourists primarily seek authenticity, socialisation, and co-creation of experiences. Empirical studies show that home-based accommodation offers a value co-creation experience based on host-guest interaction (Cui & Meng, 2021; Cui *et al.*, 2024). These elements are mostly addressed within the framework of market-based service relationships and are seen to take shape in a context where the experience is intertwined with economic exchange. Research on accommodation experiences offered within the non-commercial sharing economy is relatively limited and mostly focuses on platforms such as Couchsurfing. These early studies reveal that guest experiences in non-commercial sharing environments are shaped around values such as cultural exchange, social interaction, entertainment, and social responsibility, beyond financial motivations (Schuckert, Peters & Pilz, 2018; Zgolli & Zaiem, 2018; Ku, Khan & Hsieh, 2022). Studies have recorded that among the significant experiences of guests who prefer Couchsurfing are the search for cultural exchange (Schuckert, Peters & Pilz, 2018) and local experiences (Karahan, Uca & Özkul, 2022). Furthermore, according to Decrop *et al.* (2018), guests experience transformational experiences through the interactions provided by Couchsurfing. Trust-building pathways among guests, changes in beliefs, attitudes, and values, personality changes (open-mindedness, enduring friendships), and other socio-psychological outcomes (reciprocation: acting as a host, proselytism, engagement in the local community), and behavioural outcomes are observed. Similarly, Karahan *et al.* (2022) found evidence of personal development experiences. Ku, Khan & Hsiyeh (2022) also found that Couchsurfing fosters a

sense of community belonging. Heimel *et al.* (2025), in their study on WarmShowers—a platform offering free accommodation for cyclists—noted that the factors highlighted in the literature, namely trust, altruism, solidarity and general reciprocity, are prominent in P2P platforms. Long *et al.* (2022) examined interactions among P2P accommodation guests and specifically investigated the role of other guests in shaping the motivations and on-site experiences of P2P accommodation guests. The study identified the themes of price balance, the co-creation of stimulating experiences, reluctant sharing, and sharing partnerships. Such experiences are shaped around intense interpersonal interactions, trust building, and shared values.

Although studies are limited in number, they point out that special interest groups (Dolnicar, 2018) and religious centres (Casais & Sousa, 2020) are driven by a sense of community to engage in sharing. The joining together of accommodation service providers and users within the sharing economy is also being assessed from a neo-tribe perspective (Maffesoli, 1996). For instance, Dolnicar (2018) describes the case of an initiation of a new member in the context of peer-to-peer accommodation, and Goodfellow, Hardy & Dolnicar, (2018) provide examples of rituals and signifiers in the peer-to-peer accommodation network neo-tribe (Hardy, Dolnicar & Vorobjovas-Pinta, 2021). Accordingly, community building and maintenance may be decisive in understanding guest experience in the non-commercial sharing economy. In this regard, this study aims to examine guest experiences within the context of community based and non-commercial accomadation case (the Velesbid Bicycle House).

3. Methodology

3.1 Study design

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design grounded in an inductive and phenomenological approach. The inductive orientation enables patterns and themes to emerge directly from the data rather than being imposed a priori, allowing for an in-depth understanding of visitors' experiences within a non-commercial sharing economy context (Thomas, 2006). Phenomenology focuses on how individuals perceive, experience, and make meaning of a phenomenon in their everyday lives (Patton, 2002). The study is informed by a descriptive phenomenological orientation, which seeks to describe the essential structure of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals, while remaining as close as possible to participants' original expressions (Husserl, 1970). In this regard, the study seeks to capture the essence of guests' experiences of staying at the Velesbid Bicycle House in relation to the non-commercial sharing economy investigation.

Rather than relying on researcher-elicited data such as interviews, this study draws on naturally occurring narrative accounts produced voluntarily by the guests. These unsolicited texts reflect guests' lived experiences in situ and provide rich phenomenological insights while reducing the potential influence of researcher intervention. Accordingly, the study seeks to capture the essence of guests' sharing experiences at the Velesbid Bicycle House within the framework of the non-commercial sharing economy.

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

Founded in 2013, the Eskişehir Cycling Association (VelEsbid) is active in various areas related to cycling. It maintains relations with local and national authorities, civil society organisations and the press on matters concerning cycling as commuting. The association has also organised day trips and camping tours, cycling tours to different regions within the country and national cycling festivals. According to the figures for 2026, the association has 130 members.

The Bicycle House, launched in 2017 by Velesbid, is a self-funded and volunteer-run facility open to cyclists from all over the world, offering free and unlimited accommodation. Located approximately 5 km from the city centre, it is a converted old country house with a guest room equipped with electricity

and water infrastructure, a washing machine, a dishwasher, and a refrigerator. The primary purpose of the Bicycle House is to host cyclists, and it accommodates an average of approximately 50 guests per year, most of whom are independent cycling tourists. Independent cycling tourists are defined as individuals who travel away from their place of residence for at least one night and for whom cycling constitutes an integral component of their travel experience (Lamont & Buultjens, 2011).

At the Bicycle House, various tasks, such as welcoming and informing guests, cleaning, and general maintenance of the house, are carried out voluntarily by association members. There are also various indoor areas for social gatherings and an open area of approximately four acres. Many different recreational events and activities take place in these areas, such as film screenings, fairs, yoga practices and bicycle riding lessons for children.

In addition to guests, these events are attended by local cyclists and non-cyclist public people. Therefore, guests staying at this establishment have the opportunity to engage with the local community. Furthermore, the house functions as a pivotal meeting point for individuals with a shared interest in both bicycles and nature, with or without affiliation to the Velesbid Association. The house functions as a forum for a community of individuals who share a common interest in topics such as love of nature, sustainability and ecological living. This community structure can be conceptualised within approaches such as Turner's 'communitas' (1969), Anderson's (1983) 'imagined community', Bauman's (2004) 'liquid community', and Maffesoli's 'neo-tribe' (1996). The common emphasis of these approaches is that modern individuals self-identify as part of the same community through shared symbols, narratives and values (e.g. freedom, solidarity and environmentalism for cycling communities), beyond traditional ties such as blood relations and kinship. Despite the absence of physical congregation, the sense of belonging is perpetually reproduced through social media, events, and shared discourse. In cycling tourism research, the definition of a cycling community has been established as the network of social relations formed among people who participate in cycling activities and gather around cycling. The development of mutual emotional bonds, shared lifestyles and shared values is a key feature of these relationships (Aşan et al., 2022; Lamont, 2014). Thus, beyond its accommodation function, the Bicycle House serves as a social and symbolic meeting point for individuals who share values related to cycling, nature, sustainability, and ecological living, regardless of formal association membership. This community-oriented structure provides a meaningful empirical context for examining visitor experiences within a non-commercial sharing economy setting, where hospitality is embedded in shared values rather than monetary exchange.

Similar sharing accommodation practices can be seen in the context of cycle tourism. For example, *Warmshowers* is a vast network based on reciprocity, established for cycle travellers worldwide. In addition, initiatives such as *Welcome To My Garden*, which are becoming widespread across Europe, operate on the principle of "commons", providing cycle travellers with camping areas.

These digital networks not only meet cyclists' physical needs but also serve as virtual "safe havens" that facilitate local knowledge sharing and cultural interaction. However, according to the literature review, research on tourist experiences in these areas is quite limited and awaits further investigation.

3.3 Data collection

The present study employed document analysis as the primary data collection method, which is frequently utilised in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013). The Bicycle House encourages its guests to record their experiences in a guest book, which constitutes the main data source for this study.

The guest book includes a variety of written texts and drawings reflecting visitors' experiences, recorded in several languages, including Turkish, English, French, and Russian. The entries vary in form, with

some authored by individual visitors and others produced collectively by groups travelling with family members, friends, or partners. Prior to data collection, written permission and ethical approval were obtained from the association's board of directors to address potential ethical considerations.

The dataset consists solely of textual narratives reflecting visitors' experiences; any identifying or contact information and drawings contained in the guest book were excluded from the analysis. Between November 2017 and May 2025, a total of 149 distinct visitors or visitor groups recorded entries in the guest book, all of which were included in the analysis.

As the guest book entries were produced voluntarily and independently of the research process, the data can be characterised as non-reactive (unobtrusive) data (Webb *et al.*, 1966). Such data are generated without researcher presence or intervention, thereby minimising the risk of social desirability bias and reactivity effects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). In this regard, the guest book provides naturally occurring narratives that offer authentic insights into visitors' lived experiences (Bowen, 2009).

3.4. Data analysis

The textual components of the 149 guest book entries included in the study were manually transferred into a digital format prior to analysis. Each entry was assigned a unique sequential identifier (e.g., E1, E2, ..., E149). Entries written in languages other than Turkish were translated into Turkish using artificial intelligence-based translation applications. To minimise potential loss of meaning, all translations were reviewed and cross-checked by researchers with familiarity in both the relevant linguistic and cultural contexts.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. In line with the three-stage coding procedure proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the analysis followed open, axial, and selective coding phases. Theme development was supported through the application of the "similarities and differences" and "cutting and sorting" techniques. The former enabled systematic comparisons across data units (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), while the latter involved the identification of meaningful excerpts and their organisation according to thematic similarities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Together, these techniques facilitated the systematic comparison of data units and the organisation of analytically meaningful excerpts into conceptually coherent themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Theme identification and naming were guided by a dual strategy that integrated inductive insights emerging from the data with relevant theoretical concepts drawn from the existing literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Specifically, the axial coding stage was informed by established constructs in sharing economy and tourism literature (for example; emotional solidarity (Cai *et al.*, 2025), social interaction (Tussyadiah, 2016a; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Cai *et al.*, 2025) or sense of place (Asan & Bingol, 2024). However, certain themes such as 'community pride' and 'hope and optimism' for independent cyclists emerged entirely inductively from the raw data. This approach ensured that the themes remained grounded in participants' narratives while being analytically linked to broader discussions in tourism and sharing economy research.

In qualitative research, confirmability is established through systematic control of the research process rather than through claims of objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance confirmability in this study, the coding of the identified themes was independently repeated by two researchers, after which consensus was reached through discussion. In addition, two members of the research team are official members of the association Velesbid, which is directly involved in the case examined, and have volunteered in the organisation's activities over an extended period. This long-term involvement has provided the researchers with an in-depth understanding of the communication codes and shared meanings prevalent within the cycling community, thereby contributing to the study's credibility, particularly with respect to prolonged engagement—a key criterion in qualitative research (Glesne,

2015). This insider position enabled a move beyond mere description, facilitating a theoretically-informed interpretation of the symbolic meanings embedded in the guestbook narratives. While this enhanced contextual sensitivity and interpretive depth, reflexive awareness was maintained throughout the analysis to minimise potential bias. Furthermore, credibility was reinforced through sustained engagement with the field, and dependability was supported by transparent and systematic documentation of the coding process.

4. Findings & Discussion

A thematic analysis was conducted on the guest book entries in order to explore and interpret guests' experiences at The Bicycle House. The findings revealed four overarching themes and their associated sub-themes (see Figure 1): *hospitality experience*, *affective experience*, *community experience*, and *place experience*. These themes capture the ways in which guests made sense of their lived experiences through spontaneous, non-reactive expressions recorded during or immediately following their stay. As such, the themes represent organically produced narratives that reflect visitors' personal meanings and experiential interpretations of their time at The Bicycle House.

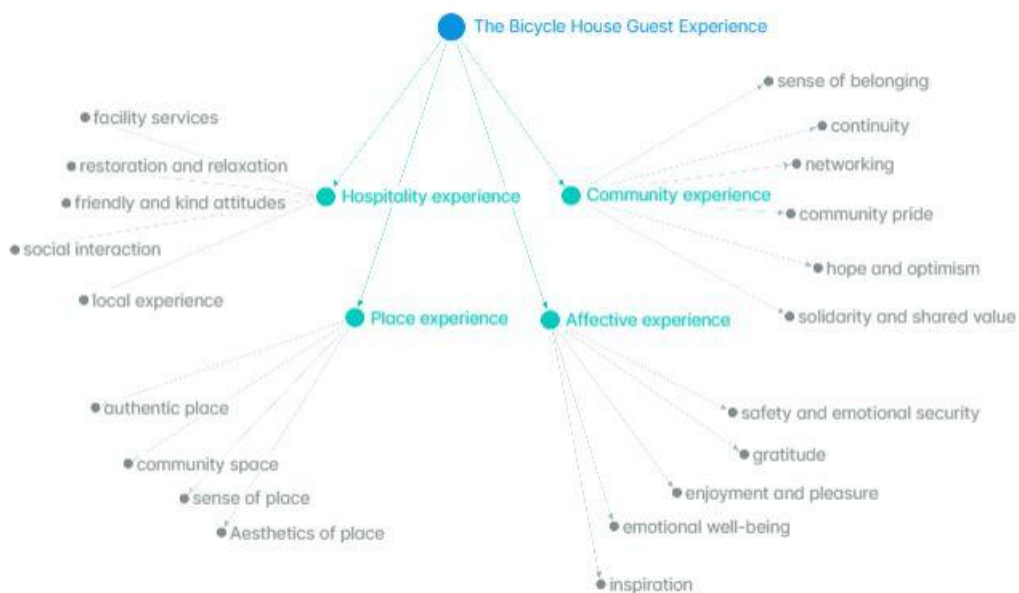


Figure 1. The guest experience at The Bicycle House as a non-commercial sharing accommodation.
(Source: Developed by the author and visualized using GraphCommons.)

4.1. Hospitality experiences

Hospitality experiences emerged as a salient theme in the guest book entries, encompassing both the functional dimensions of accommodation and the relational aspects of hosting. Guests portrayed The Bicycle House not merely as a facility that satisfies basic needs, but as a supportive and socially engaging environment that contributes positively to the overall travel experience.

Within this theme, *facility services* emerged as a prominent sub-theme, with guests frequently emphasising the availability of essential amenities that are particularly meaningful in the context of bicycle travel. References to “a warm shelter with a shower, kitchen, and bed” (E126) underscored the

importance of basic comfort, while other entries highlighted practical forms of support, such as “*we charged our devices, took a shower, and went to the recommended bicycle shop*” (E113). These statements suggest that the infrastructure provided by Velesbid was perceived as functional, reliable, and well adapted to the specific needs of cyclists. Consistent with these findings, previous studies on commercial sharing platforms have identified home facilities and service-related attributes as key determinants of the accommodation experience (Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Cheng & Jin, 2019).

The sub-theme of *restoration* further emphasised Velesbid’s role as a restorative stop within longer travel trajectories. Guests frequently framed their stay as an opportunity for both physical and mental recovery, as reflected in statements such as, “*We rested very well here for two days and now we are ready to continue our adventure towards Australia*” (E14), and “*This place became a resting point for me, and I am extremely grateful for that*” (E65). Such expressions position Velesbid Bicycle House as a place of pause and renewal within the broader rhythm of travel. While rest and relaxation constitute fundamental components of accommodation experiences in general, the restorative dimension identified here appears to represent a distinctive aspect of the experience of independent cycle tourists, whose journeys rely heavily on sustained physical effort (Lamont & Buultjens, 2011).

The relational dimensions of hospitality were particularly evident in guests’ references to kindness and hospitable attitudes. Across the entries, guests repeatedly acknowledged the attentive, friendly, and supportive behaviours of the hosts, often expressing deep appreciation in affective terms. For instance, one guest wrote, “*We sincerely thank you for your attention and kind welcome*” (E143), while another noted, “*I thank you with all my being for your hospitality, smiling faces, and help*” (E19). Such expressions suggest that hospitality at Velesbid Bicycle House was experienced as genuine and emotionally resonant, rather than formal or transactional in nature.

Social interaction also emerged as a central component of the hospitality experience. Several guests described how initially brief stays evolved into extended visits as a result of social encounters, shared activities, and interpersonal connections. As one entry explained, “*I was only going to stay one night. Then I met many people... and I spent four days here*” (E26), while another recalled, “*We laughed a lot together and had wonderful conversations*” (E82). These narratives illustrate how hospitality at Velesbid Bicycle House fostered social bonding and encouraged prolonged engagement. This finding supports existing research highlighting the importance of guest–host communication and social interaction in both commercial and non-commercial forms of the sharing economy (Tussyadiah, 2016a; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Cai *et al.*, 2025).

Finally, guests frequently referred to local experiences, indicating that hospitality extended beyond the physical boundaries of the accommodation. Hosts facilitated guests’ engagement with the surrounding city and local culture, as reflected in comments such as, “*Thanks to you, we discovered many things in the city*” (E75), and “*We walked around the city, drank ‘rakı’, and ate A LOT of delicious Turkish food*” (E71). These accounts suggest that Velesbid Bicycle House functioned as a gateway to place-based experiences by integrating accommodation with everyday local life. Previous studies within the context of Couchsurfing similarly emphasise the role of sharing accommodation in enabling access to local culture and processes of acculturation (Schuckert, Peters & Pilz, 2018; Karahan *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, socio-cultural experiences appear to be more salient in non-commercial forms of accommodation that prioritise sharing over market exchange.

These findings indicate that hosting at The Bicycle House is characterised by a relationship-oriented logic rather than a transactional one. Consistent with prior research on sharing platforms such as Airbnb and Couchsurfing (Schuckert, Peters & Pilz, 2018; Decrop *et al.*, 2018; Karahan *et al.*, 2022; Petrucci *et*

al., 2022), the hospitality experiences observed at The Bicycle House extend beyond the basic provision of accommodation services to encompass supportive host attitudes, social sharing, and facilitated access to local life.

4.2. Community experiences

Community experiences constituted a central and highly visible theme in the guest book entries, revealing how The Bicycle House was experienced not as a temporary accommodation, but as an ongoing, relational, and value-based community. Guests frequently framed their encounters in terms of continuity, extending relationships beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of their stay. This continuity was evident in reciprocal invitations and future-oriented gestures, such as *"If you ever need a place to stay in Germany, please contact us"* (E58) and *"We would love to host you on our land in the village of Murotinos on the Camino de Santiago route in Spain"* (E74). Such expressions suggest that community at The Bicycle House is imagined as durable and translocal, sustained through ongoing social ties that transcend geographical boundaries.

The sub-theme of *networking* further highlighted the connective role of Velesbid Bicycle House within cycling communities. Guests frequently referred to links between different cities, organisations, and informal encounters, as illustrated by comments such as, *"I bring greetings and love from the Bicycle Movement Association in Ankara"* (E4), and *"While riding towards Eskişehir, we coincidentally met three cyclists on the road, and they invited us to stay here"* (E81). These narratives underscore the function of The Bicycle House as a nodal point where diverse cycling networks intersect, facilitating the circulation of people, information, and shared values within a broader cycling-oriented social infrastructure.

A strong *sense of belonging* emerged as a defining aspect of the community experience. Guests articulated a collective identity grounded in a shared passion for cycling, emphasising emotional attachment to and symbolic ownership of the space. For example, one entry described the house as a home, stating, *"Velesbid is now our home"* (E23). Such expressions illustrate how guests positioned themselves not as temporary outsiders, but as members of a broader and enduring community.

Solidarity and shared values also constituted key elements of the community experience. Acts of contribution and mutual support were articulated through both material and symbolic gestures, as reflected in comments such as, *"We hope you like the mural we painted; please use the remaining paint for another artwork"* (E121), and *"We would always like to stand by you"* (E145). In addition, guests frequently emphasised common ethical orientations, including environmental consciousness, empathy towards animals, and broader humanistic values. This is exemplified by statements such as, *"I warmly greet my Velesbid friends who live in harmony with nature, respect it, feel empathy and love for animals, and resist in the struggle to remain human"* (E17), and *"A home truly suited to nature-loving people"* (E2).

Community experiences were further characterised by expressions of *community pride*, reflecting a collective sense of appreciation for both the space and the people sustaining it. Guests openly conveyed admiration for the volunteers and the house itself, as illustrated by remarks such as, *"We are proud of you. You are doing wonderful work"* (E145), and *"Velesbid has built one of the most beautiful places I have encountered in all my journeys so far"* (E126). Such expressions contribute to the symbolic elevation of the community and reinforce its perceived moral and social value.

Finally, expressions of *hope and optimism* framed the community as socially meaningful and future-oriented. Guests associated the practices observed at The Bicycle House with broader aspirations for social change, as reflected in statements like, *"This pure kindness and hospitality make the world a better place"* (E11), and *"I hope we will all succeed together in spreading this culture"* (E38). These narratives

suggest that The Bicycle House is perceived not only as a place of accommodation or community, but also as a hopeful model for alternative ways of living, sharing, and relating.

Previous studies have identified the presence of communal structures within sharing economy contexts, including social bonds (Petruzzi *et al.*, 2022) and emotional solidarity (Cai *et al.*, 2025). However, this body of literature has predominantly conceptualised community experiences in terms of short-term encounters, reciprocity, and interpersonal social interactions. In contrast, within the context of The Bicycle House, community is understood as a more comprehensive social formation grounded in continuity, collective identity, and shared normative values. Rather than being confined to specific accommodation-based interactions, community in this setting is experience-centred and manifests as a cycling-oriented social community (Asan *et al.*, 2022; Lamont, 2014).

The emergence of community pride, hope, and a shared vision for the future through accommodation sharing is particularly noteworthy. These findings suggest that, in non-commercial sharing contexts, guest experiences do not merely generate individual satisfaction, but also contribute to the social reproduction and sustainability of the community itself (Habibi *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, the results demonstrate that community is not simply a by-product of social interaction; under certain conditions, it can be experienced as a collective project, an ethical orientation, and an alternative way of living. While previous studies on commercial accommodation sharing models emphasize 'cultural exchange' (Cui & Meng, 2021; Cui *et al.*, 2024; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Tussyadiah, 2016b; Schuckert *et al.*, 2018), the findings here point to a more specialized subcultural capital centered on cycling. The translocal nature of the community demonstrates that this is not a transient encounter but a 'collective project' (Habibi *et al.*, 2017). By framing their stay through metaphors of 'home' (E23), guests reinforce their identity within the cycling community. This validates the host-guest relationship not as a transaction, but as a ritual of initiation into a global cycling network.

The case of The Bicycle House therefore highlights the need to re-evaluate the concept of community within the non-commercial sharing economy literature. By foregrounding continuity over transience, collective meaning-making over individual benefit, and collective responsibility beyond affective bonds, this study contributes to a more nuanced conceptualisation of community in sharing-based tourism and accommodation practices.

4.3. Affective experiences

Affective experiences constituted another prominent theme in the guest book entries, illustrating how guests' encounters at The Bicycle House were deeply shaped by positive emotional states. These experiences were articulated through expressions of gratitude, well-being, enjoyment, feelings of safety, and inspiration, indicating that the stay extended beyond functional satisfaction to encompass meaningful emotional engagement.

Expressions of *gratitude* were particularly prevalent across the narratives. Guests frequently articulated thankfulness in relation to both material comfort and the broader context of care and shelter. For example, one guest reflected, "*After a good night's sleep, I felt gratitude for this wonderful place*" (E77), while another highlighted the significance of shelter under challenging conditions, stating, "*In these rainy days, having a roof over us is very valuable*" (E36). Such statements suggest that gratitude emerged from an acute awareness of comfort, protection, and care, especially within the uncertainties inherent in long-distance travel.

Feelings of *safety* and *emotional security* also emerged as a salient sub-theme. Guests described Velesbid Bicycle House as a space that provided reassurance and a sense of protection, often employing domestic metaphors. One entry noted, "*The existence of this place made me feel safe*," while another stated, "*I felt*

like I was at home" (E64). These expressions indicate that perceptions of safety extended beyond physical security to encompass emotional reassurance, reinforcing the characterisation of Velesbid as a secure, caring, and emotionally supportive environment.

Cai et al. (2025) identify emotional closeness as a key dimension of emotional solidarity in host–guest relationships. The affective expressions observed at The Bicycle House closely resemble this notion of emotional closeness, encompassing shared meanings such as commonality, belonging, and trust. However, in the context of The Bicycle House, the non-reciprocal and monetarily irrelevant elements emphasised by Habibi et al. (2017) in their conceptualisation of pure sharing appear to be particularly salient. Consequently, the affective states observed in this setting can be characterised as more intense and positively valenced than those typically reported in commercial or semi-commercial sharing contexts.

Enjoyment and pleasure also emerged as salient components of affective experience. Guests frequently referred to shared activities and moments of leisure that fostered feelings of joy and enjoyment. For instance, one guest remarked, *"I feel very lucky to be here on movie night and to watch a film together with everyone outside"* (E108), while another recalled, *"We joined the Velesbid party on September 28 with the dogs and cats"* (E121). Such accounts illustrate how communal activities and informal celebrations contributed to pleasurable and memorable experiences. Consistent with prior research, enjoyment and pleasure have been widely reported as central experiential outcomes in sharing-based accommodation contexts (Schuckert, Peters, & Pilz, 2018; Zgolli & Zaiem, 2018; Ku, Khan, & Hsieh, 2022). The present findings further support this body of literature by demonstrating the prominence of community-based entertainment activities in non-commercial sharing settings.

The sub-theme of *subjective well-being* further highlights the affective impact of the experience. Guests described feelings of relaxation, happiness, and contentment associated with their stay. As one entry noted, *"We had a wonderful time in your home. We rested, enjoyed the house (together with the cat), and shared truly beautiful moments with the members"* (E37). Another guest succinctly captured this emotional ease, stating, *"You made me feel very comfortable and happy"* (E134). These expressions suggest that well-being was closely linked to both physical restoration and social interaction. In the tourism literature, such experiences contribute to overall life satisfaction and tourist well-being (Kim et al., 2015). In contrast to other affective sub-themes, subjective well-being was conceptualised as guests' holistic evaluation of their emotional state and was defined in accordance with Diener et al.'s (2002) framework of subjective well-being. Moreover, previous studies within the sharing economy literature similarly indicate that home-stay accommodation can enhance subjective well-being (Cui et al., 2024; Deb et al., 2023).

Finally, *inspiration* emerged as a frequently articulated affective outcome. Guests reported being motivated by the philosophy and practices of Velesbid, extending the emotional impact of the experience beyond the immediate stay. For example, one guest noted, *"You inspired us to create a similar place in Romania"* (E81), while another wrote, *"This place is truly inspiring, and I will carry this concept in my mind"* (E83). These statements indicate that affective experiences at The Bicycle House possessed generative qualities, encouraging guests to imagine and potentially replicate similar initiatives elsewhere.

This finding aligns with Decrop's (2018) assertion that sharing economy experiences may engender transformational outcomes. The Bicycle House case demonstrates that affective experiences not only facilitate individual emotional transformation, but also possess an outward-looking, expansive capacity that motivates future-oriented action. Guests' expressed intentions to establish similar spaces suggest that inspiration functions as a catalyst for the diffusion of alternative practices. Furthermore, the

emergence of inspiration can be linked to the cyber-subcultural and post-capitalist, community-based origins of the sharing economy (Richardson, 2015; Parigi *et al.*, 2014; Celata & Stabrowski, 2022). Overall, guests' narratives indicate that the sharing economy is perceived not merely as an alternative accommodation model, but as a more cooperative, ethical, and human-centred way of life. This finding underscores the role of affective experiences in generating normative and value-based interpretations within the sharing economy paradigm.

4.4. Place Experiences

Place-based experiences emerged as a salient and distinctive theme within the guestbook entries, revealing that Velesbid Bicycle House was perceived not merely as a physical setting, but as a socially and emotionally constituted place. Guests' narratives consistently pointed to a transformation from space to place, wherein material environments were endowed with symbolic meanings, social relations, and affective attachments. This processual understanding of place underscores how collective practices and shared values contributed to the construction of a meaningful spatial experience.

A central dimension of this place experience was the perception of Velesbid Bicycle House as an *authentic place*. Guests frequently emphasized its uniqueness and distinctiveness, often implicitly positioning it in contrast to standardized, commercialized accommodation models. Authenticity was articulated through appreciation of both the underlying concept and the values embodied by the space, as illustrated in statements such as, "*The existence of such a place where cyclists can stay is not only unique, but should also increase in other places*" (E69), and "*Thank you for creating such a unique place in the world*" (E60). Within the home-based accommodation literature, authenticity is commonly discussed in relation to host-guest interactions or experiential aesthetics (Jiang *et al.*, 2022). However, the guest narratives in this study suggest a broader interpretation, in which authenticity was experienced not only through interpersonal encounters or visual design, but also as a value-driven, purpose-oriented spatial configuration.

Aesthetic appreciation likewise constituted an integral component of guests' place experiences, extending beyond mere visual appeal to encompass perceptions of care, effort, and intentionality embedded in the environment. One guest articulated this sentiment by noting, "*I felt deeply honored to be in this place, which is carefully woven, with labor and beauty in every centimeter*" (E4). More succinct expressions, such as "*This house is very beautiful*" (E34) and "*This wonderful place*" (E6), further reinforce the centrality of aesthetic judgments in shaping guests' perceptions. In studies situated within the commercial sharing economy, spatial experience is predominantly examined through attributes such as location, amenities, physical characteristics, and aesthetic features (Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Cheng & Jin, 2019). This body of literature, largely centered on platforms such as Airbnb, tends to conceptualize space as a consumable product. In contrast, the present findings indicate that space was experienced as a socially produced process, shaped through collective labor, volunteerism, and collaborative forms of production.

Velesbid Bicycle House was also frequently described as a *collective place*, shaped through shared labor, volunteerism, and communal effort. Guests explicitly acknowledged the collaborative nature of the place-making process, as reflected in remarks such as, "*This Bicycle House that you built together through collective effort has become a magnificent project*" (E146), and "*You have created a wonderful environment*" (E38). Such expressions underscore the significance of collective creation and shared responsibility in the constitution of the place. Within non-commercial shared accommodation and home-based accommodation models, co-creation processes are increasingly recognized as a fundamental component of the guest experience (Cui & Meng, 2021; Cui *et al.*, 2024). However, the findings from the Bicycle House extend beyond conventional notions of co-creation, pointing instead to a deeper form of collective creation rooted in communal values and voluntary engagement. In this

regard, Habibi *et al.* (2017) argue that feelings of joint ownership are more likely to emerge in pure sharing experiences than in pure exchange-based contexts. The frequent use of expressions such as “our home,” alongside references to collective effort and volunteerism, indicates that guests’ relationships with the space transcended mere usage rights. Accordingly, the spatial experience of the Bicycle House aligns more closely with the characteristics of pure sharing as conceptualized by Habibi *et al.* (2017).

The theme of *sense of place* further captured the emotional and relational dimensions through which guests connected to Velesbid. Guestbook entries were often marked by highly affective and evocative language, portraying the place in terms of warmth, beauty, and human presence. For instance, guests noted, “*This place is incredible. The two days we spent here were wonderful. This place is a paradise*” (E18), and “*It is a very beautiful and warm place, created with great effort. It embraces you immediately*” (E14). These accounts illustrate how the physical setting, atmospheric qualities, and social interactions converged to generate a strong and immediate sense of place.

Overall, the place experiences articulated in the guestbook reveal that the Bicycle House was experienced as far more than a functional or physical accommodation setting. Through interrelated dimensions of authenticity, aesthetic appreciation, collective creation, and emotional attachment, space was transformed into place—imbued with meaning, belonging, and a shared sense of identity. Existing studies on communities formed around bicycle (Asan & Bingol, 2024) and motorcycle users (Sykes, 2021) point to similar dynamics, suggesting that the coming together of community members in a particular location can transform space into place once it becomes invested with shared meanings (Sykes, 2021). In the present study, this transformation from space to place similarly underscores the central role of social and affective processes in shaping guests’ spatial experiences.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study seeks to advance understanding of guest experiences within the context of the non-commercial sharing economy by analysing guestbook entries from the Velesbid Bicycle House as a naturalistic data source through a descriptive phenomenological approach. Existing research in the sharing economy and accommodation literature has predominantly concentrated on commercial and platform-based accommodation models operating according to market-oriented logics (Cai *et al.*, 2025; Cui *et al.*, 2024; Huang *et al.*, 2024; Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Klegr, 2024; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Cheng & Jin, 2019). In contrast, the present study foregrounds a non-commercial, volunteer-based, and community-centred sharing practice, thereby illuminating how guest experiences are constituted and meaningfully interpreted within a non-market context.

The findings indicate that experiences at the Velesbid Bicycle House, which provides non-commercial shared accommodation, are structured around four interrelated experiential domains. Hospitality experiences transcend functional service, evolving into community ritual of sincere hosting and deep social bonding. Community experiences are constructed through feelings of belonging, community pride, and shared values. Emotional experiences are articulated through positive affective states, including gratitude, enjoyment, and inspiration, whereas spatial experiences capture the transformation of a physical setting into a meaningful place through collective practices. The study provides a nuanced theoretical framework for understanding the resilience and social reproduction of community-based tourism networks. On the basis of these findings, both theoretical and practical implications for the sharing economy in tourism are articulated.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study advances the theoretical understanding of the sharing economy in tourism in three fundamental ways. First, it challenges the dominance of commercial, platform-based, and market-oriented frameworks that have shaped much of the existing research on shared accommodation. By

foregrounding a non-commercial, volunteer-based, and community-oriented accommodation practice, the study extends sharing economy theory beyond exchange-based logics and contributes to a more pluralistic conceptualisation of sharing in tourism contexts. Prevailing research has largely examined guest experiences through commercial peer-to-peer platforms such as Airbnb, where experiences are predominantly theorised in relation to price, location, home amenities, and host–guest interaction (Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018; Kuhzady, Seyfi & Beal, 2022; Cui *et al.*, 2024; Huang *et al.*, 2024; Cai *et al.*, 2025). While a smaller body of work has explored non-commercial platforms such as Couchsurfing—emphasising social interaction, cultural exchange, and transformative experiences (Decrop *et al.*, 2018; Schuckert, Peters & Pilz, 2018; Zgolli & Zaiem, 2018; Ku, Khan & Hsieh, 2022)—these studies remain limited in their theorisation of community-based sharing practices. By contrast, the present study theorises guest experiences as socially embedded and collectively constituted processes, demonstrating how experiences are established and interpreted within a non-market context. In doing so, it foregrounds the community-based dimensions of the sharing economy and contributes to ongoing theoretical debates concerning the boundaries between sharing, exchange, and commodification in tourism.

In this respect, the findings can be situated within broader debates concerning the normative origins of the sharing economy. Scholarly approaches that conceptualise the sharing economy through non-market logics, community welfare, and ethical considerations (Celata & Stabrowski, 2022; Hall *et al.*, 2022) are rendered experientially visible in the present case, resonating with Richardson's (2015) argument that alternative economic practices are enacted and sustained through everyday experiences. Importantly, however, the findings do not advance a universalising claim that non-commercial sharing practices necessarily generate similar experiences across contexts. Rather, they demonstrate that such practices are inherently sensitive to contextual conditions, including scale, governance structures, and organisational forms.

Within this theoretical framing, Habibi *et al.*'s (2017) Sharing–Exchange Continuum provides a useful lens for interpreting the nature of the Bicycle House as a shared accommodation practice. The framework suggests that shared accommodation arrangements may simultaneously embody elements of both sharing and exchange. Positioned along this continuum, the Bicycle House can be understood as approximating a form of 'pure sharing', characterised by limited monetary exchange and elevated levels of social bonding, reciprocity, and collective belonging. As such, the Bicycle House offers a contextualised illustration of how sharing practices organised through local, face-to-face interactions—rather than platform-mediated exchanges—can, under certain conditions, give rise to community-based and meaningful guest experiences.

Second, the study contributes a community-centred experiential perspective to the literature on guest experiences. While existing research has predominantly examined guest experiences through constructs such as host–guest interaction, peer-to-peer, social interaction, emotional solidarity, and social reproduction (Habibi *et al.*, 2017; Sigala, 2017; Guttentag *et al.*, 2018; Casais and Sousa, 2020; Long *et al.*, 2022; Petruzzini *et al.* 2022; Cai *et al.*, 2025), the present study conceptualises community experience through broader and more enduring dimensions, including continuity, collective belonging, community pride, and hope. These findings demonstrate that guest experiences in non-commercial sharing contexts are shaped not solely through interpersonal encounters, but also through shared values, collective purposes, and sustained communal practices. By advancing this perspective, the study extends beyond the notion of emotional solidarity, arguing that community functions as a constitutive element of the experience rather than merely an outcome of social interaction. In doing so, it offers a more comprehensive theoretical account of how guest experiences are produced and sustained within non-commercial, community-based sharing arrangements.

Third, the study contributes to the literature on spatial experience by explicating the process through which space is transformed into place within the context of shared accommodation. Despite the growing body of research on shared accommodation, spatial experience remains a relatively underexplored dimension within this literature (Cui *et al.*, 2024). In this regard, the Bicycle House illustrates how a setting that might otherwise be interpreted as a service space—often organised according to market-oriented logics—can, within a non-commercial sharing economy, be reconstituted as a lived and practiced place in which values such as solidarity, environmental awareness, and cooperation are materially and symbolically embedded. This transformation from space to place enables guest experiences to be constructed not merely as temporary, functional encounters, but as meaningful and enduring engagements. The findings thus reveal that, in non-commercial sharing contexts, space functions not as a passive backdrop to experience, but as an active and constitutive element that shapes how guest experiences are produced, interpreted, and remembered.

Consistent with its emphasis on sustainable management and community participation in tourism, the findings of this study articulate an alternative accommodation model that reflects a return to the normative roots of Europe’s “sharing culture,” offering a counterpoint to the commodification effects associated with commercial platform-based models such as Airbnb. In this respect, the study moves beyond a descriptive account of a local case and advances a broader theoretical perspective on the future of niche accommodation models within the European tourism ecosystem. Specifically, it contributes to an understanding of how non-commercial, community-based sharing practices can generate social value through processes grounded in sustainability, participation, and collective engagement.

5.2. *Practical Implications*

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for shared accommodation practices in tourism, as well as for local tourism stakeholders. First, the results indicate that non-commercial, sharing-based accommodation practices shape guest experiences not only through the provision of functional services, but also through the cultivation of social relationships, shared values, and a sense of community. This underscores the importance of incorporating social and relational dimensions that extend beyond economic exchange into experience design, particularly for volunteer-based and community-oriented accommodation initiatives.

Second, the findings indicate that, beyond host–guest interaction, the deliberate creation of environments in which guests can feel integrated into a broader community may enhance the overall guest experience. As exemplified by the Velesbid Bicycle House, practices oriented around continuity, collective belonging, and shared objectives can transform the guest experience from a transient stay into a meaningful and enduring engagement. Accordingly, both non-commercial accommodation initiatives and commercial shared accommodation providers may benefit from designing spatial and organisational arrangements that not only deliver functional services, but also actively foster social interaction, participation, and communal involvement.

Thirdly, it offers practical awareness regarding the role of the workspace in the guest experience. The findings demonstrate that the space is not merely a physical infrastructure; it is an active component that shapes the experience through collective labour, volunteerism, and shared values. This points to the importance of planning spatial design and usage patterns in a way that supports guest experiences, particularly in the context of shared accommodation. Common areas and arrangements that encourage collaborative production and sharing can help guests form a stronger connection with the space.

Finally, the research findings offer significant strategic implications for destination management organisations (DMOs) and local authorities, particularly those engaged with sustainable transport and niche tourism markets. The Velesbid Bicycle House exemplifies how low-carbon tourism mobility, such

as cycle tourism, requires support not only through infrastructure development but also via the provision of non-commercial social spaces that facilitate social interaction and foster a sense of community belonging. In this context, it is recommended that local authorities promote volunteerism- and value-sharing-based social incubators as alternatives to standard commercial accommodation facilities along international route networks, such as EuroVelo. Moreover, as a strategic marketing instrument to enhance a destination's perception of authenticity, such initiatives—which cultivate organic connections with local communities—can serve to counteract the commodification and alienation effects associated with digital sharing platforms. By establishing an enabling legal framework and providing logistical support for such civil initiatives, policymakers can enhance social acceptance of tourism, strengthen local community engagement, and contribute to the development of more resilient, community-based tourism ecosystems.

5.3. Limitations and future research

This study has focused on the central role of the community in shaping guest experiences within non-commercial sharing contexts. The findings also open up new horizons for future theoretical research. The deep sense of solidarity and the temporary yet intense bonds observed at Bicycle House suggest that these experiences could be examined in greater detail through the lens of Turner's (1969) concept of 'communitas' or Maffesoli's (1996) concept of the 'neo-tribe'. Such a perspective would provide a deeper anthropological understanding of the identity-focused nature of niche, non-commercial P2P networks.

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the research is confined to the Velesbid Bicycle House, which exemplifies a specific form of non-commercial, volunteer-based sharing practice. Consequently, insights derived from this single case do not permit generalised conclusions regarding non-commercial shared accommodation experiences; rather, they provide a context-specific, descriptive understanding. Second, the study relies exclusively on guestbook entries as a naturalistic data source. While this approach offers access to non-reactive and spontaneous narratives, it may underrepresent negative or critical experiences. Additionally, the data do not allow for longitudinal tracking of how guest experiences evolve over time.

Future research employing comparative designs between commercial and non-commercial shared accommodation models could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how experiences are shaped under differing organisational and value logics. Furthermore, multi-site, cross-cultural, and mixed-method studies would enhance insight into how community, belonging, and spatial experiences are produced and sustained across diverse contexts.

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