

Space-sharing experiences in hospitality: a psychological needs perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – Space-sharing is reshaping urban hospitality by providing shared environments that meet psychological and practical needs. However, little is known about how customer expectations align with their actual experiences. This study aims to integrate Basic Psychological Needs Theory and Expectation–Confirmation Theory to explore how motivations shape service expectations and perceptions of service quality and to classify customers by needs and evaluation patterns.

Design/methodology/approach – This qualitative study was conducted in South Korea, using semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis was conducted in MAXQDA, using a combination of inductive and deductive coding approaches to identify and interpret key themes.

Findings – This study develops a framework that illustrates how space-sharing experiences in hospitality contexts address the diverse needs of urban residents. It identifies four distinct customer typologies: integrated thrivers, self-driven achievers, self-driven connectors and focused performers. Service quality in space-sharing is primarily shaped by the accuracy of information and platform accountability rather than by interpersonal interaction. This finding highlights the growing demand for contactless service encounters in contemporary urban hospitality settings.

Research limitations/implications – Theoretically, this study reconceptualises space-sharing as urban infrastructure and extends hospitality theory through a typology-building grounded in psychological needs and service gap formation. Practically, it proposes segmented operational strategies, standardised tools and tripartite governance (platforms, peer-providers and public institutions) to bridge expectation–performance gaps and foster trust-building.

Practical implications – Practically, it proposes segmented operational strategies, standardised tools and tripartite governance (platforms, peer-providers, and public institutions) to bridge expectation–performance gaps and foster trust-building.

Originality/value – This interdisciplinary approach synthesises concepts from psychology, hospitality management and the sharing economy, expanding knowledge in emerging contexts of urban space-sharing.

Keywords Space-sharing, Sharing economy, Customer well-being, Basic psychological needs theory, Expectation–confirmation theory, Customer typology

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

Urban space-sharing enables individuals to share access to underused assets, including physical spaces, fostering a sense of collaboration and community (Jo *et al.*, 2025). However, within urban environments, scarcity and the inflated cost of real estate present challenges, limiting access to suitable and affordable spaces. As urban populations grow, the demand for space often exceeds the supply, creating a gap between available spaces and diverse needs. Space-sharing facilitates social interaction and access to shared resources, thereby reshaping individuals' psychological environments and contributing to their well-being (Chan and Zhang, 2021). Space-sharing research can provide insights into the flexible, temporary use of underused spaces in contrast to traditional venue hire. It serves in the hospitality field (e.g. Laczko *et al.*, 2019) as a transformative model to address urban space challenges and promote efficient resource utilisation (Chan and Zhang, 2021).

As spatial planning shifts from a distributive model to one centred on shared and active use, the scope of space-sharing has expanded to various domains, including living and working spaces, meeting halls, parking facilities and storage areas (Gothe, 2016). Unused urban properties have been repurposed into a multipurpose facility to meet the growing demand for accessible, non-owned spaces (Bernardi and Diamantini, 2018). Recent industry perspectives indicate that the range of users of urban space has broadened to include start-ups, small businesses, creators, event organisers and even larger corporations seeking agility and cost-efficiency (Jung, 2024). This indicates a broader range of commercial spaces that are temporarily shared between space owners and users for multi-purpose, flexible layouts. This study aims to address this gap by introducing space-sharing as an umbrella concept to understand the flexible and dynamic use of urban space.

Unlike Airbnb, which has been criticised for causing housing shortages and gentrification (Ki and Lee, 2019), space-sharing is often seen as beneficial to cities, promoting community development and urban integration (Chan and Zhang, 2021). Space-sharing has enabled the repurposing of vacant commercial properties for small to medium-sized social and work events, particularly in densely populated cities such as Seoul, South Korea (Gothe, 2016). In the post-pandemic era, space-sharing offers safer venues for hosting gatherings, thereby reducing the risk of virus transmission in crowded areas. The rise of social distancing and limited interpersonal contact has increased demand for private venues (De Vos, 2020). Safety and hygiene protocols have been shown to boost customer satisfaction, and scholars have called for technological innovation in the meeting, incentive travel, conference and exhibition sectors (Lekgau and Tichaawa, 2023).

Despite the innovative nature and inherent advantages of space-sharing within the urban environment merits, a thorough understanding of customer needs, expectations and experiences remains largely underexplored. This is critical because aligning space-sharing practices with customer preferences is essential for maximising user satisfaction, ensuring social well-being and addressing the evolving demands of urban living (Huda and Sultana, 2022). Firstly, the Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT) indicates that fulfilling core psychological needs is essential for individuals to thrive and maintain their well-being (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2000). Fulfilling these needs enhances feelings of accomplishment and personal growth, while supporting psychological health. Based on these psychological principles, individuals explore available options and develop expectations for space-sharing services.

Secondly, the Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) posits that customer satisfaction arises when actual performance meets or exceeds prior expectations through a process of comparison and confirmation (Oliver, 1980). If the expected service quality in fulfilling their psychological needs is not provided, the customer experience can result in negative

outcomes (e.g. dissatisfaction) (Zhang *et al.*, 2021), stemming from a failure to promote well-being. The gap between anticipated and actual service performance is therefore important to examine, as it impacts customers' fundamental motivation to engage in space-sharing practices. This framework, which spans pre- and post-engagement stages, offers valuable insights into how individuals form expectations based on psychological needs and how they assess service outcomes.

A qualitative research approach enabled the study to explore customers' perceptions, experiences, gap formation and the impacts on their well-being (Tracy, 2013). This approach can capture the nuanced ways space-sharing repurposes existing spaces, fosters community development and addresses post-pandemic social needs. BPNT and ECT informed the development of the research framework and guided the conduct of in-depth interviews to explore customer perspectives on the space-sharing experience in South Korea. The study had two research objectives:

- (1) to categorise space-sharing customers and their expectations based on their psychological needs; and
- (2) to explore how the different customer types perceive service gaps between expectations and service performance.

This research makes an important theoretical contribution by creating a customer typology that connects expectations shaped by psychological needs with perceived service performance, clarifying the nature of service gaps. The study also provides practical insights that can help to improve peer-to-peer space-sharing service design and address spatial challenges in urban hospitality.

2. Literature review

2.1 *Space-sharing and urban spatial resources*

Space-sharing is closely linked to rapid urbanisation and the repurposing of underused urban resources. Over time, it has evolved to meet individuals' changing spatial needs. In the early 2000s, "dividual spaces" were described as urban environments that offer personal space quickly, affordably and anonymously (Caballero and Tsukamoto, 2006). Unlike traditional private spaces such as hotels, dividual spaces allow customers to access space for short periods, paying only for time used, with minimal staff interaction. Drawing from existing literature, this study considers dividual spaces as an early, pre-digital form of space-sharing. These spaces functioned as an "extension of the home" (Choe *et al.*, 2016) and offered flexible, temporary access to urban environments, particularly for individuals seeking psychological relief from dense, gentrified living environments. Therefore, dividual spaces are conceptually aligned with today's peer-to-peer space-sharing models, though shaped by current social and technological contexts. While dividual spaces are often anonymous and offline, current models are digitally mediated and dynamic, especially in response to post-pandemic space-use patterns, such as increased demand for privacy and hygiene (Song *et al.*, 2023).

This study posits that space-sharing is a construct for understanding dividual spaces exchanged through sharing practices. This term describes the emerging urban phenomenon of spatial resource sharing by developing new communal spaces and establishing innovative socio-spatial relationships (Chan and Zhang, 2021). Space-sharing is an innovative business model that facilitates peer-to-peer sharing of physical spaces with limited capacity, particularly in urban settings, and use relies on sharing rather than ownership (Mody *et al.*, 2021). The peer-to-peer sharing model has three essential components (Benoit *et al.*, 2017):

- the platform-provider who facilitates the online marketplace;
- the peer-provider who shares their assets and/or delivers services; and
- the peer-customer (hereafter “customer”) who purchases and utilises the shared assets and/or services.

This decentralised model allows efficient direct transactions. However, transitioning from the original ethos of sharing economies to their increasingly commercial nature (Dolnicar, 2021) raises questions about their social and economic impact.

Residential crowding is not simply a matter of high density in physical space, but a psychosocial phenomenon arising from the loss of control over one’s environment and social interactions (Huda and Sultana, 2022). This conflict underscores a critical tension: while utilisation of a spatial resource can optimise underused resources, it may also disrupt local communities by prioritising profit over accessibility. For example, accommodation sharing competes with residential housing, and the impact of this practice has led to calls for alternative solutions. Platforms like Airbnb initially focused on facilitating peer-to-peer accommodation. However, the platform has shifted towards commercial short-term rental (Reinhold and Dolnicar, 2018). Commercialisation has negatively affected local communities, particularly in urban areas with limited housing. These impacts have prompted policies to reduce the platform’s expansion and further mitigate housing shortages. Ki and Lee (2019) also highlight that accommodation space-sharing exacerbates housing shortages and disrupts residential environments, particularly for single-person households, by worsening housing affordability. These social consequences underscore the need for flexible space-sharing models that can adapt to the evolving demand for physical space, thereby enhancing urban living.

The extent to which urban space utilisation reshapes the relationship between private spatial resources and urban social life remains unresolved. Hospitality research tends to focus on accommodation-purpose use of space-sharing rather than exploring how the wider public has utilised idle spatial resources. This suggests a limited understanding of space as a resource, stemming from a narrow focus on its original function. Previous research in hospitality and tourism has shown that coworking spaces offer flexible environments that are popular among digital nomads. Within entrepreneurship research, coworking spaces have been highlighted for their emphasis on customer flexibility, knowledge and social connections, which enhance work satisfaction (Bouncken *et al.*, 2020). However, coworking models have increasingly deviated from their original ethos of openness, decentralisation and community, becoming aligned with traditional office leasing structures (Johns *et al.*, 2024). This shift highlights the need to reconsider how hospitality frameworks conceptualise shared spaces, particularly those that arise organically through peer-to-peer access rather than through asset-heavy platform models. According to the taxonomy of physical interaction platforms by Perez-Mengual *et al.* (2024), they are categorised according to customers’ intention, such as innovation, collaboration and market interaction. This research highlights that peer-to-peer space-sharing often spans multiple categories. For example, a single shared venue may serve as a creative workshop (collaboration), a testbed for a new food concept (innovation) and a temporary pop-up store (marketplace). This suggests that the boundaries between these categories are increasingly fluid in contemporary urban space-sharing practices.

Space-sharing offers a transformative approach to urban resource management, bridging efficiency, affordability and accessibility. However, its evolution from peer-based sharing to commercialised operations presents significant challenges. This study underscores the need for thoughtful regulation and innovation by examining diverse applications. Exploration of

the phenomenon should balance individual benefits with communal welfare to ensure that space-sharing contributes to sustainable urban development. In South Korea, vacant urban properties have been repurposed into multi-use spaces that provide work-related environments and social venues for entertainment, where customers act as hosts by reserving the space and inviting others to join (Gothe, 2016). Despite the rise of innovative space-sharing models, gaps persist within the academic literature on emerging business models in urban space utilisation beyond the provision of accommodation (Lin *et al.*, 2022). This study will address the gap by examining space-sharing practices as socio-cultural and economic phenomena and analysing the individual experiences and benefits derived.

2.2 Basic psychological needs and expectations

Sharing economy platforms have been encouraged to promote customers' social connections and self-improvement to enhance market appeal (Bellotti *et al.*, 2015). Research has debated whether internal or external needs primarily drive customers' engagement in sharing practices. This is evident in the motivational factors influencing customer engagement in sharing practices. This highlighted that customer motivations were predominantly practical and self-serving. For example, Tumer Kabadayi *et al.* (2022) explore visitor experience and emotional factors, such as enjoyment. Guttentag *et al.* (2018) also propose the structured segmentation of users based on distinct motivational drivers. While economic considerations and home-like benefits were important, they remain surface-level factors. This study highlights a deeper analysis of human behaviour, aligning motivations with shifting expectations to predict customer preferences. Understanding these factors will help to link the phenomenon to broader sociocultural and psychological needs.

The three components of basic psychological needs in BPNT provide insights into customer behaviour. The theory suggests that humans can achieve optimal functioning and well-being when the three basic psychological needs are satisfied (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Previous studies on the sharing economy have not been directly linked to this theory; however, they approach similar concepts through a different lens. Firstly, autonomy in BPNT refers to the need for personal control and customisation. Wang *et al.* (2025) showed that the spatial flexibility and service personalisation in peer-to-peer accommodations allow guests to feel they are directing their own experience. Likewise, in space-sharing, customers' ability to choose the type of spaces and time can foster autonomous action.

Secondly, competence allows customers to feel effective; however, prior peer-to-peer studies (e.g. Wang *et al.*, 2025) have focused on comfort and relatedness. Competence is only indirectly noted through activities, leaving the direct role of space in fostering achievement and well-being underexplored. This study can highlight this gap by linking the use of spatial resources to competence and efficacy, building on the fundamental insight. Thirdly, relatedness facilitates social interactions. Zhang *et al.* (2025) found that space-guest interactions generated greater appeal than online interactions, with the effect mediated by surprise and proximity. This process can be interpreted as guests indirectly fulfilling their need for social connectedness through the physical environment. Space-sharing thus becomes a venue for social engagement and community building. Satisfying this need enhances intrinsic motivation, which in turn strengthens customer engagement. Applying BPNT is, therefore, important to capture the space-sharing scenes through three dimensions, as it offers a unified framework to explain how spatial and social dimensions of sharing environments fulfil psychological needs and drive well-being.

As customers' psychological needs are specific and relatively inflexible, adopting a robust theoretical framework to explain how such needs shape expectations and behaviours in space-sharing becomes essential. The BPNT offers such a foundation by addressing the

three core psychological needs, which are known to underlie human motivation across various settings. Needs arise as emotional impulses that develop into motives and drive behaviour (Gnoth, 1997). Expectations, in turn, are shaped by a dynamic interplay of internal desires (such as personal urges and goals) and external conditions (including social context and personal values). In the case of space-sharing, internal desires may reflect the need for physical space to enhance productivity or well-being. Understanding customers' motivations for space-sharing requires an integrated BPNT perspective on autonomy, competence and relatedness, which explains why individuals are drawn to certain behaviours, even before they occur.

However, existing sharing economy literature has not adopted a pre-behavioural perspective. They focused on distinct psychological states, including psychological empowerment (Morrongiello *et al.*, 2017), self-efficacy (Zhu *et al.*, 2017) and psychological engagement (An and Han, 2020). However, these concepts describe states that emerge as outcomes of experience. For example, how customers feel or what perceptions they develop after using a particular sharing service depend on the specific context. This outcome-focused approach can overlook the motivational forces that drive initial participation. Focusing on post-experience outcomes restricts the understanding of the psychological drivers that motivate customers to engage with sharing services. Consequently, it offers limited insight into the fundamental drivers behind the use of novel services such as space-sharing. Applying BPNT clarifies why individuals participate in space-sharing, leading to an explanation of customer behaviour in urban spatial resource utilisation.

2.3 Perceived service performance

Perceived sharing economy service performance highlights the need for context-specific frameworks that balance platform functionality, peer interaction and overall customer satisfaction. As customer expectations evolve with emerging sharing economy models, studying service quality is important to understand how it differs from the traditional field. Since 2006, sharing economy research measuring service quality has increased (Shyju *et al.*, 2023), reflecting the hospitality industry's focus on standards that drive competitive advantage. Since the late 2010s, studies have investigated various aspects of service quality in the sharing economy, focusing on customer experiences. As shown in Table S1 in the supplementary material, previous research has suggested that it encompasses diverse business models that influence perceptions of service quality. Stakeholder networks range from simple customer-platform interactions to complex webs including vendors and co-sharers, reflecting the diversity of factors that shape service quality perceptions in sharing economy models.

However, these evaluations are meaningful when considering customers' expectations, as satisfaction depends on how perceived performance aligns with what was anticipated before participation. Positive reviews can raise expectations, causing disappointment if unmet, while misleading descriptions lead to perceptions of false advertising and service failure (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). Applying Oliver's (1980) ECT, positive customer experience outcomes can be measured by confirming that actual performance equals or exceeds prior expectations. Expectations can be potential barriers to customer satisfaction, as they often fail to meet customers' needs and desires (Panniello *et al.*, 2024). Discrepancy theory by Joseph Sirgy and Tyagi (1986)'s similarly emphasises gaps between expected and perceived outcomes, with satisfaction arising when alignment is achieved.

Self-determination theory proposes that customer satisfaction arises from the fulfilment of psychological needs (Deci and Ryan, 2000), with satisfaction mediating the link between motivation and gap confirmation (Lin *et al.*, 2009). Motivation also shapes pre-participation

decisions and expectations, though most studies focus on post-service satisfaction. In an era of rapidly changing technology, customer expectations and market conditions, loyalty strategies must evolve, as long-term loyalty is becoming less stable (Nurhilalia and Saleh, 2024). Companies must prioritise understanding customer motivations in the pre-participation phase to unlock the potential for innovative service models and improve customer engagement.

Figure 1 draws on the literature review and proposes the rationale for a customer space-sharing experience process. This process is divided into two phases: pre-participation and post-participation. BPNT serves as a foundational framework to explain how psychological needs originate and motivate the decision to participate. ECT is employed to evaluate expectations, perceptions of quality and a gap assessment, which leads to an understanding of the outcome. This two-phase process links different psychological need profiles to patterns of service evaluation.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, viewing reality as constructed through individuals’ experiences and social context (Tracy, 2013). Thus, customers’ psychological backgrounds and socio-cultural context were considered in this study. In-depth interviews were conducted and analysed using an interpretive approach to capture the psychological and social meanings of space use. Open and axial coding were used to organise motivations and perceptions, with theme comparisons across expectation and performance phases informing a customer typology. This typology categorises customers based on their dominant psychological drivers and service evaluation patterns. Validity was ensured through a systematic bilingual approach following Yardley’s (2000) criteria (Figure 2).

3.1 Study site and sampling technique

An empirical study was conducted in South Korea, an internationally recognised leader in its “sharing city” initiative, which exemplifies how urban centres can harness the sharing economy to address challenges and build resilient communities (Bernardi and Diamantini, 2018). Kim and Cho (2021) reported strong growth potential, with nearly 70% of surveyed respondents expecting expansion within five years, particularly in shared spaces such as accommodation, kitchens, offices and parking. This study followed Robinson’s (2014) four-point sampling approach. The criteria targeted individuals over 18 with prior experience in shared space. The goal was to conduct more than 16 in-depth interviews; ultimately, 20

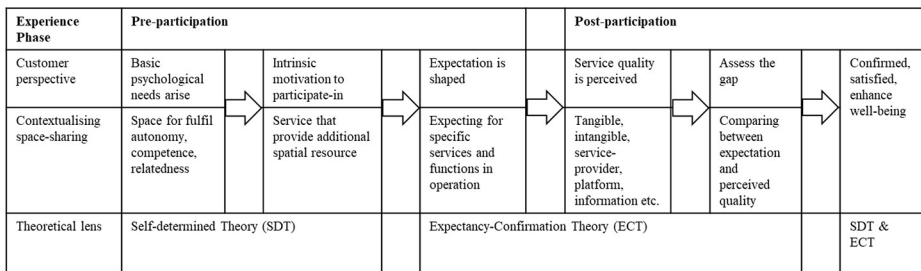


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model

Source: Developed by authors

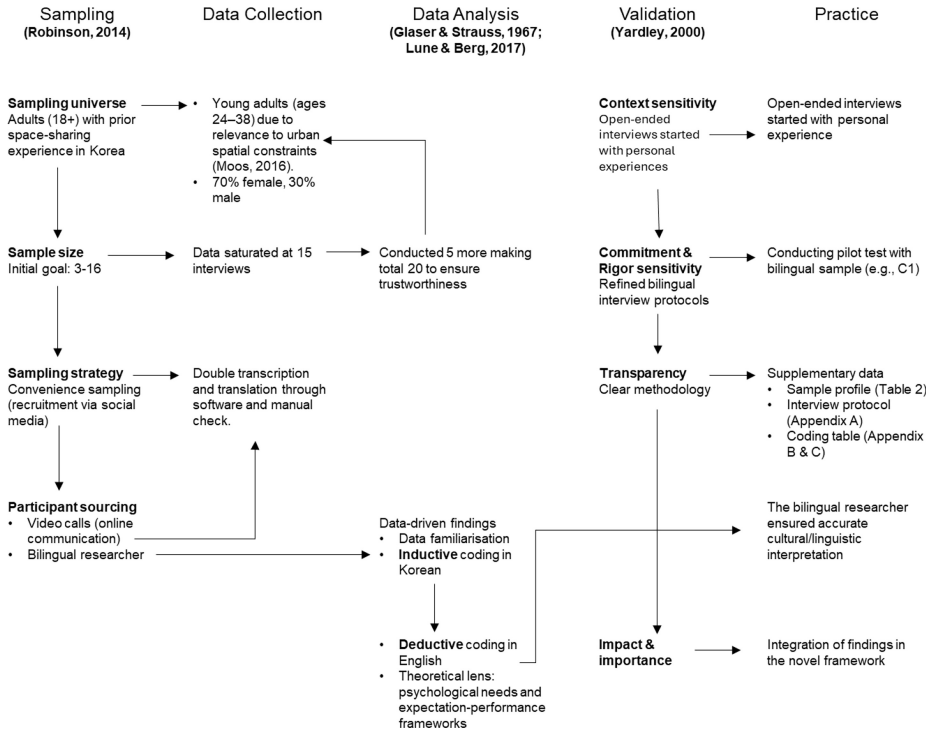


Figure 2. Research process
Source: Developed by authors

participants were recruited through convenience sampling via targeted social media advertisements and online community posts. Video call interviews enabled geographic reach while reducing costs.

3.2 Participant profile

Table 1 summarises participants' profiles and experiences with various space-sharing types. This study does not analyse specific platform-providers but uses them to illustrate the broader conceptual framework of space-sharing in a digital urban context. The sample consisted of 70% females and 30% males, reflecting broader trends in Korea, where such platform-providers are especially popular among women in their 20s (Jang, 2022). Participants were aged 24–38, with 9 in their mid-20s and 11 in their late 20s to 30s, representing young adults concentrated in dense urban areas where limited living space drives demand for flexible venues (Moos, 2016). They engaged in three main types of space-sharing: self-development (e.g. practice sessions and group study), business purposes (e.g. meetings and seminars) and social-building activities (e.g. parties and community gatherings).

3.3 Data collection

This study was approved by the authors' university (Ref No: 2023/638). Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were provided with

Table 1. Profile of interviewees

ID	Occupation	Age	Gender	Social	Meeting	Study	Practice	Conference	Office	Kitchen
C1	Researcher (post-doc)	29	Female	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
C2	Student (master)	25	Female	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
C3	Freelancer athlete instructor	30	Female	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
C4	Student (master)	24	Female	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
C5	Student (master)	25	Female	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
C6	IT marketer	29	Female	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
C7	Researcher (post-doc) in law	33	Female	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
C8	Researcher (post-doc) in the education department.	38	Female	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
C9	Student (master)	24	Male	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
C10	Academy teacher (mathematics)	31	Female	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
C11	Student (PhD) in art and music	36	Female	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
C12	Governmental researcher (education)	30	Female	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
C13	Engineer	30	Male	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
C14	Student (bachelor)	26	Female	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
C15	Nurse	28	Female	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
C16	English instructor	26	Male	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
C17	Student (bachelor)	24	Male	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
C18	Governmental researcher	30	Male	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
C19	High school teacher	31	Female	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
C20	Student (master) in law	28	Male	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
			11	11	11	5	4	1	1	1

Note(s): Above information is collected during the interview process; space-sharing experience: 1 = previously experienced, 0 = not experienced
Source(s): Compiled by authors

information regarding the purpose of the study, the procedures involved and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

Qualitative methods were employed to explore how individuals perceive and attribute meaning to their daily lives (Lune and Berg, 2017). The researcher, experienced in South Korea's space-sharing sector, conducted semi-structured interviews in Korean from January to March 2024. All 20 participants were recruited in two stages to ensure theoretical saturation (Tracy, 2013). Interviews lasted 50–60 min, were audio-recorded, automatically transcribed, translated and manually re-checked for accuracy. Semi-structured interviews employed core questions for comparability, while also allowing for flexibility to pursue topics raised by the interviewees (Lune and Berg, 2017). Probing questions, such as following "Could you describe your experience with space-sharing services?" with "At what stage in your life did you begin using space-sharing services?" encouraged richer responses. The protocol (see Table S2 in supplementary materials) examined motivational factors and perceptions of service performance, linking motivations to psychological needs and identifying gaps between expectations and performance. Responses were rephrased for confirmation, enhancing accuracy and fostering deeper conversation (Lune and Berg, 2017).

3.4 Data analysis and trustworthiness

Thematic analysis was conducted using MAXQDA 24 to identify recurring themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Data familiarisation was undertaken twice to verify transcription and translation accuracy. Following Lune and Berg (2017), a grounded theory approach blended inductive and deductive reasoning. Open coding in Korean preserved the contextual meaning before translating it into English for collaborative analysis. Two inductive coding rounds developed categories on customer motivation and experience, while axial coding applied a theoretical lens to organise themes.

Motivational factors aligned with psychological needs shaped expectations and narratives reflected perceived performance and confirmation gaps. Themes emerged around autonomy (flexible, independent use), competence (efficient, focused environments) and relatedness (emotionally and socially engaging spaces). Analysis proceeded in two phases:

- (1) identifying need-driven expectations before participation (see Table S3 in supplementary materials); and
- (2) examining experiences after participation (see Table S4 in supplementary materials).

Matching pre- and post-participation narratives determined whether needs were confirmed or disconfirmed, leading to an emergent typology of customers. Validation followed Yardley's (2000) criteria through a structured process: clarifying the research context at the start of the interview, refining questions in English and Korean, documenting sampling procedures and providing participants with project information. This ensured methodological rigour and qualitative validity (Robinson, 2014).

4. Findings and discussion

This study adopts a four-stage analytical framework. Firstly, it identifies customers' psychological needs in the pre-participation phase. Secondly, it assesses service performance in the post-participation phase. Thirdly, it develops a customer typology based on dominant needs and behaviours. Finally, it examines how unmet expectations lead to service gaps that affect satisfaction and well-being, as illustrated in the framework (Figure 3). This structure

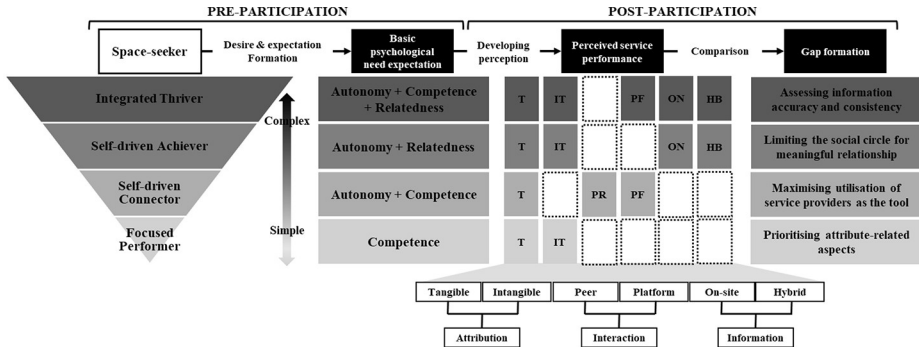


Figure 3. Research framework: process of gap formation based on psychological need expectation
Source: Developed by authors

reflects a narrowing of customer intent into critical evaluation points, where service gaps are interpreted in relation to psychological need fulfilment.

4.1 Pre-participation phase: psychological needs and expectation formation

The study classifies customers based on the three psychological needs: relatedness, competence and autonomy, which underpin four distinct customer types.

4.1.1 Relatedness. This is the most sought-after need, which involves forming meaningful relationships and a sense of community. Participant C19 described space-sharing as a “comfortable and enjoyable setting for socialising” compared to traditional restaurants. This statement reflects a desire for spaces that enhance social experiences and facilitate engagement and it was coded as “social engagement and emotional comfort”. Another desire under this need was coded as “safe belonging”. He also feels a sense of safety and belonging, particularly in the context of health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The participant remarked that social gatherings had shifted since the pandemic, stating that “there is an atmosphere where people feel reluctant to go to places with many people (C19)”. The participant further added that space-sharing services “help a lot” as they support the desire for social interaction, fostering “empathy” and improving “personal relationships” (C19). The ultimate goal was to create environments that provided personal privacy and secure interactions, coded as “private connection”. Participant C16 explained a desire to socialise with friends without being overheard: “as more people pursue a level of privacy and individualistic tendencies develop, (space-sharing services) seem to apply as an advantage”. This indicates that meaningful social interactions of relatedness have been redefined beyond socialising, reflecting a desire to engage within close networks in spaces offering emotional comfort, safety and privacy.

4.1.2 Competence. This refers to the ability to perform tasks and achieve desired outcomes efficiently and effectively. Space-sharing supports this need by enabling concentration, efficiency and exclusiveness. Concentration reflects a desire for an environment that allows one to achieve a deep level of focus, leading to enhanced productivity. Participant C18 compared traditional hospitality fields such as a “cafe or restaurant” and explained that “other people use together, so it is a little difficult” to “enjoy an independent space” with friends. Their motivation for using space-sharing was to “spend a little more time concentrating”. Efficiency, the desire to maximise output with minimal effort was reflected by participant C7 “I frequently needed a reliable Wi-Fi for online lectures

and meetings, but Wi-Fi environment at home was not satisfied". They added, "since crowded cafes were unsuitable, I preferred small, affordable study rooms for 1–2 people at space-sharing a place", highlighting how space-sharing can improve performance. Exclusiveness refers to having a private, though not necessarily personal, space to minimise disturbances and enhance concentration. Participant C10 stated, "I want to have private discussions and work in a space outside my home...Cafes lack privacy, and my home is too personal and noisy for others. Renting a quiet space has been more convenient for business and study". These responses suggest that space-sharing supports competence by providing environments that enhance focus, minimise distractions and offer tools and flexibility to achieve goals. Spaces enable individuals to stay fully engaged, completing tasks efficiently and fostering a sense of competence.

4.1.3 Autonomy. This concerns the ability to make independent choices over one's environment and actions, fostering self-fulfilment, confidence and reduced stress. Participant C6 discussed the psychological impact of living in densely populated urban areas: "In Korea, noise from around the neighbourhood often leads to conflict. Small houses like mine can more possibly cause such issues, in addition to damage by guests and lingering food odours". They emphasised the importance of maintaining freedom, defined in this study as the desire to escape the limitations imposed by conventional environments. The lack of limitations allows for a relaxed and stress-free experience. Participant C7 reflected a sense of achievement and confidence, where individuals could make decisions that resulted in enjoyable and rewarding experiences. They suggested that "there was a variety of menu choices", but noted that "the food has strong personal preferences and opinions are not unified when more than 10 people gather". This illustrates a desire to control their environment to match personal needs with diverse options available. Flexibility, the ability to switch environments effortlessly, ensures individuals can find the right setting for productivity, relaxation or social interaction. Participant C11 stated, "Sometimes, I go back and forth to one or two study rooms. If I only use it in one place, it is hard to change the atmosphere", highlighting the need for adaptable environments that suit various moods, tasks, or locations.

4.2 Post-participation phase: perceived service performance

The key challenges related to space-sharing service quality were also investigated, focusing on attribute, information and interaction-related issues. Tangible attributes, such as poor accessibility, outdated facilities and inadequate maintenance, along with intangible concerns like noise control and cleanliness, hindered satisfaction. Information-related problems included discrepancies between online descriptions and actual conditions, insufficient facility details and overlooked on-site factors like odours and lighting. Interaction issues involved unprofessional peer-provider behaviour, delayed responses and limited platform-providers intervention in resolving disputes or enforcing regulations.

4.2.1 Attribute-related: tangible. Issues such as poor accessibility and location, inadequate parking and poor transport connections were often cited for spaces in less desirable areas. Participant C1 noted difficulties in finding spaces near transit due to cost. Outdated or malfunctioning equipment, insufficient supplies and poorly maintained facilities, including restrooms, also detract from usability. Participant C20 observed that "using the equipment that was equipped" made the space-sharing experience "very comfortable to share the thoughts".

4.2.2 Attribute-related: intangible. Noise control was a recurring issue, especially in residential areas, where insufficient soundproofing led to disturbances. Participant C3 suggested that "the host should construct the interior in advance to prevent noise from

leaking out". Cleanliness and hygiene, especially post-COVID-19, also gained importance, as regular maintenance is often overlooked.

4.2.3 Information-related: hybrid. Discrepancies between online descriptions and reality hinder trust. Participant C6 stated, "I hope there will be some realistic information close to the facts and transparency of the information". Low-resolution images and insufficient facility detail also affect decision-making. Participant C16 stressed the importance of effective marketing: "Hosts have to explain to us something well so that we can see the characteristics of this space".

4.2.4 Information-related: on-site. Missing online Information such as odours, room temperature, or lighting, also negatively impacts perceptions. Participant C1 shared, "The place felt a bit outdated and had a funky smell". Regulatory information, including unclear deposit and fee policies, was also frustrating. Participant C6 highlighted, "It is frustrating when you want to use the space longer but have to stop because of booking constraints". Unclear or missing price details also contributed to users' frustration.

4.2.5 Interaction-related: peer-provider. Unprofessional peer behaviour, including delayed responses, affected satisfaction. Participant C17 recounted, "I asked, 'How can I use this?' and he got annoyed". Prompt communication was critical.

4.2.6 Interaction-related: platform-provider. Customers desire standardised service recovery and stronger platform-provider accountability. Participant C6 asserted, "The platform should set clear refund policies and hold hosts accountable for providing a satisfactory experience". There is also the perception that platform-providers need to enforce rules: "They just connect people, collect their commissions, and then wash their hands of any issues" (C18). Fraudulent reservations and other issues could be mitigated through stricter regulation and oversight by platform-providers.

4.3 Customer typology

This typology was derived inductively from participants' narratives and refined deductively using BPNT. The four types reflect dominant patterns from performance-focused autonomy to system-level trust. By shifting attention from providers to customer psychology, the typology challenges the view that peer-to-peer users mainly seek social interaction, showing that many value emotional distance and self-directed control. Space-sharing provides physical solutions, as well as autonomy, control and psychological relief, in dense urban contexts, serving as a strategy to manage domestic limitations and reduce social friction.

4.3.1 Focused performer. This is the most basic space seeker type, prioritising tangible and intangible attributes, focusing on how this supports their sense of competence. They emphasise operational performance and efficiency, benefiting most from undisturbed environments where high-quality spaces and facilities are available. The study findings shed light on the life circumstances of urban residents and how these circumstances influence the utilisation of peer-to-peer space-sharing. Participants' experiences reveal that commercial spaces facilitate economic and class integration while offering alternative urban solutions (Choe *et al.*, 2016). Unlike individual space in the previous studies, space-sharing encompasses a broader scope of multipurpose uses, with active peer involvement.

4.3.2 Self-driven achiever. This type values high performance and control and often faces challenges when peer-providers demonstrate a lack of professionalism, which hinders the ability to meet expectations. Service failures are often aggravated by the nature of peer-to-peer services, particularly due to the absence of standardised service practices stemming from the non-professional delivery by peer-providers (Chen and Tussyadiah, 2021). Customers may tolerate some unprofessionalism for economic benefits; however, those seeking performance and control prefer contactless, efficient services. Peer- and platform-

providers are regarded as tools to enhance personal performance and exercise greater control over their environments.

4.3.3 Self-driven connector. This type tends to satisfy their social needs primarily through close companions, seeking to minimise interaction with peer-providers. They favour contactless services that offer safety, convenience and high-quality delivery without direct engagement. This behaviour aligns with the notion of *social energy* (Overland *et al.*, 2024). This challenges assumptions that peer-to-peer services always foster relational benefits (Furunes and Mkono, 2019). Thus, technology should enhance rather than replace human service, with hybrid models offering the most sustainable approach (Nanu, 2025).

4.3.4 Integrated thriver. This is the most complex type, emphasising the importance of accurate, high-quality information and regulatory compliance and viewing service quality through the lens of fairness and consistency. Discrepancies between online information and actual delivery create dissatisfaction, underscoring the need for consistent information and active involvement from platform-providers. According to Zhang *et al.* (2021), when discrepancies arise from the main property description, customers tend to attribute the fault to the peer- or platform-providers, thereby implying that the platform-providers also bear a certain degree of responsibility. Furthermore, our findings suggest that customers expect platform-providers to actively ensure service quality, including protection, dispute resolution and deposit management, addressing trust gaps.

4.4 Service gap formation

The inverted pyramid (Figure 3) categorises four types based on the complexity of their psychological needs, which shape expectations and evaluations of service quality. The framework encompasses phases that address distinct aspects of the service experience. In the pre-participation phase, customers develop a desire for physical spaces and establish expectations that align with the principles of autonomy, competence and relatedness. In the post-participation phase, they evaluate service quality across attribution, interaction and information, comparing actual performance with prior expectations.

Information-related service gaps function as barriers to fulfilling autonomy and relatedness. When customers cannot inspect or validate a space beforehand, they lose control over their decision-making (autonomy) and struggle to plan social engagements (relatedness). This often leads to cognitive burden, emotional disengagement and dissatisfaction, particularly for individuals who use shared spaces for group activities or social bonding. In such cases, information incongruence directly obstructs customers' attempts to foster comfort, cohesion and relational intimacy. Preliminary inspections support functionality and emotional readiness.

Contrary to prior literature that emphasised host responsiveness as key to peer-to-peer satisfaction, our findings suggest a shift in peer-customers' expectations. Rather than valuing personal interaction with peer-providers, many participants increasingly viewed peer- and platform-providers as functional tools to facilitate their goals. The expectation for interactive attributes was relatively lower, with participants prioritising structured, customer-friendly systems over human engagement. What emerges is a desire for functional intimacy with space itself, rather than with the service intermediary. This re-conceptualisation of the relational dynamics of the sharing economy challenges the notion of peer-to-peer interaction as inherently communal. To meet evolving customer preferences, service models should aim to reduce social friction while preserving quality, designing systems that enable autonomy, emotional efficiency and seamless customer experience.

Trust in platform-providers extends beyond the reliability of functionality to perceptions of fairness, consistency and emotional safety. One participant referred to this expectation as

the platform's "awareness of leading the market" (C18), pointing to a desire for active stewardship rather than passive facilitation. This redefines platform-providers' responsibility as maintaining a trust-based ecosystem where customers feel protected and empowered, in addition to resolving service failures (Chen and Tussyadiah, 2021). These expectations are psychological. Customers rely on platform-providers to uphold a sense of procedural justice, protect their autonomy and create emotionally secure participation. Accountability, in this context, becomes less about control and more about relational governance. Platform-providers must move beyond transactional logic and embrace customer-centred responsibility models tailored to the dynamics of peer-to-peer urban services.

5. Conclusion

Space-sharing is reshaping hospitality experience for customers, yet little is known about why customers choose it over traditional options such as restaurants and cafés (Zhu *et al.*, 2017). This study attempts to explore how urban residents' psychological needs are addressed through the experience of space-sharing. Four customer types were identified: the focused performer, the self-driven achiever, the self-driven connector and the integrated thriver. Based on this typology, this study develops a service experience framework that explains the process of service gap formation between jointly shaped expectations based on psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness) and perceived service performances (attributes, information and interactions). These have been explained with three highlights:

- (1) information discrepancy;
- (2) low desire for peer-provider contact; and
- (3) lack of platform-providers' trust and accountability.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study offers three key theoretical contributions to the field of hospitality research. Firstly, by identifying and reframing the service quality evaluation process of customer experience through key elements of BPNT and ECT, this study extends existing knowledge in building customer satisfaction. It highlights the central role of information accuracy, shifting the focus away from interpersonal and humanistic factors such as host responsiveness (Chen and Tussyadiah, 2021) and social bonds (Wang *et al.*, 2025). This reframing suggests that the determinants of customer experience underscore the importance of connecting pre- and post-participation phases. This perspective resonates with Lee *et al.* (2023), who emphasise that clear and accurate information reduces pre-use anxiety, aligns expectations with actual experiences and strengthens loyalty in peer-to-peer settings. Taken together, these insights reconceptualise service quality by positioning information accuracy as central to customer experience.

Secondly, our findings indicate that contactless service encounters, which were previously valued primarily for enhancing operational efficiency (e.g. Hao *et al.*, 2023), are now increasingly recognised as a core component of service quality in urban hospitality. It challenges earlier work (e.g. Wang *et al.*, 2025), which identifies social interaction as the primary mechanism for well-being in peer-to-peer contexts. Our findings, however, suggest that allowing greater personal space itself can enhance well-being, highlighting the importance of balancing social engagement with individual autonomy. Customers tend to conserve their limited cognitive and emotional resources (e.g. Overland *et al.*, 2024) by reallocating them towards self-selected relationships, reflecting a pursuit of autonomy and

emotional efficiency. This further suggests that customers may prefer to establish comfort with the physical space itself rather than with intermediaries, such as peers and platform-providers, supporting the importance of space–guest interaction (Zhang *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, space itself can foster self-achievement, assist competence fulfilment and enhance customer well-being.

Finally, rather than viewing platform-provider responsibility as purely transactional, our findings suggest that customers now expect platforms to be actively integrated into the service delivery process. This is particularly significant in dispute resolution within triadic relationships (Benoit *et al.*, 2017), which highlights the limitations of traditional two-way host-guest relationships, where customers may have to confront peer-providers directly when addressing serious complaints or service failures that require resolution. While acknowledging the various roles that platform-providers can play as enablers, our findings suggest that limited engagement by platform-providers in the current peer-to-peer context has a negative impact on service quality. This insight builds on Song *et al.* (2023), who demonstrate that platform-providers' failure in establishing trust mechanisms around health, safety and fairness undermines customer confidence. It also resonates with Laczko *et al.* (2019), who argue that platform-providers enable the orchestration of stakeholder interactions, creating value and fostering adaptability. Accordingly, this study advances the view that platform-providers play a role in maintaining fairness, consistency and emotional security for customer well-being in peer-to-peer services.

5.2 Practical implications

The study provides practical insights for peer-providers by advocating segment-based operational strategies that address diverse psychological needs. To serve customers across varying levels, peer-providers should ensure accurate technologies like 3D virtual tours and metaverse-based spatial previews (e.g. metaverse platform called ZEP; Park and Lee, 2023) can restore control, reduce uncertainty and facilitate meaningful co-presence. This aligns with Buhalis *et al.* (2023)'s view of the metaverse as a strategic tool that integrates across service design, operations and marketing to transform customer experiences and enable value co-creation. These tools also provide cost-effective, accessible solutions for micro-entrepreneurs, guiding expectations and optimising user experiences and default to contactless flows to reduce social friction for self-driven users. They are encouraged to display key facts (layout, noise rules, equipment and fees) across listings (online) and signage (offline) to support psychological needs and narrow users' expectation–performance gaps.

Platform-providers should develop standard kits for peer-providers (e.g. Internet of Things (IoT), automatic systems, refund/fee templates). This can be shared within peer-provider communities to standardise information quality and support contactless operations. Such peer tooling elevates non-professional peer-providers towards consistent delivery while remaining low-cost for micro-entrepreneurs. This practice can also foster a sense of belonging to the platform, strengthening peer-provider loyalty even in the event of platform decentralisation.

Beyond operational measures, a tripartite co-governance framework involving platform-providers, peer-providers and public institutions can address heightened post-pandemic concerns regarding safety, hygiene and trust. Transparent roles, enforceable regulations and reputation systems ensure adaptive oversight, bridging policy, research and practice.

5.3 Limitations and directions for future studies

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. Firstly, it does not differentiate types of space-sharing. The typology, developed from interviews in high-density urban South Korea, may not be generalisable. Future research could test and expand this model across diverse cultural, socio-economic and spatial contexts. Secondly, online interviews and recruitment might have limited participation compared to face-to-face methods, potentially excluding those without digital access. Thirdly, the study focused only on internal stimuli to examine expectations. Future research could include external factors such as environmental conditions and customer traits to better understand expectation-experience gaps.

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Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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