

Trends and Patterns in Shared Accommodation in Europe and Serbia: What Do We Know So Far?

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Abstract

Background: Sharing economy is a socio-economic paradigm characterised by the collaborative utilisation of resources and services among individuals, facilitated through digital platforms. Shared accommodation attracts the attention of various stakeholders due to its impact on societal shifts towards collaborative living models and housing policies. **Objectives:** This paper explores trends and patterns of the use of shared accommodation in Europe and Serbia. **Methods/Approach:** Data on the European level was collected from Eurostat, while in Serbia, a survey was conducted among the student population. **Results:** The results on the European level show that participation in shared accommodation is increasing and that socio-demographic background impacts the level of participation. In the Serbian context, results indicate that socio-demographic factors do not influence the participation of students in shared accommodation practices. The main obstacle indicated was the lack of trust in the provider. The most important aspects that individuals considered when choosing shared accommodation were lower prices and better location. **Conclusions:** There is a positive trend in Europe regarding the usage of shared accommodation. In Serbia, the student population uses shared accommodation; however, physical and performance risks are seen as obstacles to participation.

Keywords: Sharing economy; Shared accommodation; Trend analysis; Consumer behaviour; Europe; Serbia

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Introduction

With the development of society, new forms of goods and resource usage emerged (Hira & Reilly, 2017). People's evolving awareness of resource limitations and the necessity of sustainable development has led to new ways of using resources that are not based solely on ownership. Joint use has become an imperative for sustainable development, allowing existing resources to be used more efficiently by enabling many individuals to access assets that another individual they do not know owns (Boar et al., 2020). The sharing economy is a collaborative method of asset utilisation that emerged with the advancement of information technologies.

A sharing economy is an economic model in which individuals and groups share goods and resources for a defined period at a predefined price (Codagnone & Martens, 2016). So far, different definitions of the sharing economy have been proposed. One of them is that the sharing economy is "collaborative consumption made by the activities of sharing, exchanging, and rental of resources without owning the goods" (Puschmann & Alt, 2016, p.93). Based on a detailed literature review by Schlagwein et al. (2020) defined the sharing economy as an IT-facilitated peer-to-peer model for commercial or non-commercial sharing of underutilised goods and service capacity through an intermediary without a transfer of ownership. Within each definition, two commonalities exist in these sharing and collaborative consumption practices: 1) their use of temporary access, non-ownership models for consumption of consumer goods and services, and 2) their reliance on the Internet (Belk, 2014). Since the concept of sharing has existed for thousands of years, we can conclude that the main engines for the sharing economy are modern technologies, especially ICT platforms, Web 3.0, the Internet, blockchain technology, and social networks (Roblek et al., 2016). ICT platforms facilitate the transaction between the provider and the customer. Platforms enable many users to interact simultaneously using an understandable user interface with low transaction costs. These platforms allow the sharing of accommodation, mobility, skills, money, and other goods/services. Trust is critical for the success of the sharing economy (Ter Huurne et al., 2017). For any form of sharing, the provider and customer must trust each other and the platform. That is why exploring factors determining people's willingness to participate in the sharing economy is necessary.

Sharing platforms function in many areas, including accommodation, transport, finance, human resources, and the sharing of consumer durables (Bojković et al., 2022). Results of a European study indicate that shared accommodation is the form of sharing economy in which individuals participate the most (Eurobarometer, 2018). Peer-to-peer (P2P) or shared accommodation allows hosts to rent parts of their property – or the property itself – to others for a short time, mainly through ICT platforms (Belk, 2014). This sharing economy model is projected to grow six times more than its more traditional counterparts (World Bank, 2018). As such, it significantly affects the profitability and structure of tourist accommodation. Therefore, it is important to understand consumer behaviour related to the usage of shared accommodation.

From the tourist's perspective, the primary motivation behind opting for shared accommodation is the economic benefit, as shared accommodation is usually lower priced than other types of accommodation (Kuhzady et al., 2020). Next, the other main reason why shared accommodation is attractive to tourists is more intrinsic, and it is rooted in the tourist's desire to experience a more authentic, more profound, and even home-like environment (Young et al., 2017) when travelling to a foreign place.

Research shows that in 2019, around 21% of people in Europe (EU-27) used a website or an application for booking accommodation, and that there were significant differences between countries, while in Serbia, that percentage was lower,

around 15% (Živojinović et al., 2022). The mentioned research shows us only the involvement of people in shared accommodation. However, there is a research gap related to understanding the behaviour of the users and non-users of shared accommodation. This question has been raised by several authors so far (e.g. Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Lutz & Newlands, 2018). To fill the research gap, we explore the trends and patterns in the usage of shared accommodation in Europe. We strive to analyse whether there was a change in the level of participation on the European level, and if there was a change, how the behaviour of individuals changed in the last couple of years, and whether there are some differences in the behaviour of individuals based on socio-demographic characteristics regarding the use of shared accommodation. The other direction of our study is related to analysing the attitudes and experiences related to shared accommodation among the youth population in Serbia. Based on the empirical data gathered, we observed how socio-demographic characteristics impact participation in shared accommodation practices. Also, we more closely analysed the behaviour patterns of shared accommodation users and non-users. Parts of this paper have been published at the 17th International Symposium on Operations Research in Slovenia (Maričić et al., 2023c).

This study aims to examine individuals' behaviour regarding the usage of shared accommodation in Europe and determine which factors significantly influence the attitudes of Serbian university students towards utilising shared accommodation.

The structure of the research is as follows. After the introduction, we provide a literature review on the factors impacting participation in shared accommodation. The research hypothesis development chapter follows this. In the next section, we present the research methodology and the data collection procedures for European and Serbian contexts. Then, the results of the study for both levels of analysis are outlined in the next section. We finish our study with a discussion, concluding remarks, and a discussion of the study's limitations.

Participation in shared accommodation

The motivation and factors impacting participation in the sharing and collaborative economy have puzzled researchers for some time. The literature goes into several streams: exploring the factors impacting the participation in the sharing economy as a user, as a provider, in general, or in a particular form of sharing economy (shared accommodation, ride-sharing, crowdfunding, and others). In the literature review presented here, we focused on the literature related to participation in the sharing economy as a user in general and in shared accommodation.

Böcker and Meelen (2017) analysed the relationship between respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and various motivations for participating in the sharing economy. They showed that middle and higher-income respondents are less economically motivated to participate in the sharing economy than groups with lower incomes. They also indicate that groups with middle and high incomes are less socially motivated to participate. Finally, they state that the type of household does not significantly impact the motivation to participate in the sharing economy.

In a more recent study, Davlembayeva et al. (2021) found that participants' age, income level, and previous experience with the sharing economy all significantly influence their future participation in this type of economy. Conversely, Angelovska et al. (2020) showed that demographic factors like gender and age are statistically significant predictors of provider participation in the sharing economy, while income level and education level are not. A study by Kowalczyk-Anioł et al. (2021) focused on participants in the sharing economy in Poland. Their results indicated that younger people participate more than older people.

The literature on this topic includes developing and testing conceptual models that explore the interdependencies between factors such as perceived economic benefits, perceived social benefits, perceived environmental benefits, provider reputation, platform trust, provider trust, and participation in the sharing economy (e.g., Sung et al. (2018) and Yang et al. (2019)).

Chiappa et al. (2020) conducted an interesting study in Italy where they segmented Airbnb users based on Emotional-based pathos, Authenticity and sustainability, Novelty, Home benefits, and Convenience. After performing factor analysis and k-means clustering, three clusters (segments) emerged: Enthusiastic Airbnb lovers, Pragmatic Airbnb users, and Pragmatic authenticity seekers. Looking at the structure of the segments, statistically significant socio-demographic differences have been observed. There were different structures regarding marital status, education, and employment. Those engaged were more pragmatic authenticity seekers, while those with a master's degree were pragmatic users. Lastly, those unemployed were Enthusiastic Airbnb lovers. Although this study did not observe the impact of socio-demographic factors on participation in shared accommodation per se, it provides evidence that these factors impact the behaviour and motivation of shared accommodation users.

Pezenka et al. (2017) studied the differences in personality dimensions between Airbnb users and non-users. They used the Big Five model (NEO-FFI), its shortened version, and compared the values between the two groups. The study was conducted worldwide; however, European participants dominated the sample. Statistically significant differences were noted. Airbnb users scored higher on openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, while differences in neuroticism were not found. This study shows that there are behavioural differences between Airbnb users and non-users.

Min and Lu (2017) proposed a conceptual model modelling behaviour intention related to the usage of Airbnb. They observed performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, hedonic motivation, price value, trust, cross-cultural experience, extraversion, and change-seeking as predictors. The additional value of their analysis is that they created a model on the overall sample and the subsamples of users and non-users of Airbnb services. In the model of Airbnb users, significant predictors were performance expectancy, price value, and hedonic motivation. On the other hand, in the model of non-users of Airbnb services, the significant predictors were performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, and social influence. The results of this paper indicate that there should be different communication strategies towards those with and without prior experience in using shared accommodation.

The presented literature review can indicate several findings. First, socio-demographic characteristics impact the participation in different forms of the sharing economy. However, the impact differs by country and region. Therefore, no straightforward conclusions can be made. Recognising these complexities and the distinct characteristics of user segments is highly important as it will pave the way for effective communication strategies, ultimately fostering a thriving and inclusive sharing economy landscape.

Hypothesis development

European-level analysis

Having in mind the data availability and the conducted literature review, we formulated two research hypotheses at the European level.

As mentioned before, the sharing economy market is on the rise, and the projections are more than positive. Therefore, it is of interest to observe the trend in Europe towards participation in shared accommodation as it could reflect changing preferences or economic conditions among the consumers. Knowing the trend would also be valuable as increased participation in shared accommodation could impact traditional hospitality sectors and local housing markets (Zervas et al., 2017) and indicate shifting attitudes towards ownership, community living, or resource sharing (Prieto et al., 2019), which was a motivation for:

- H₁: The level of participation in shared accommodation in Europe increased in the period 2017-2019

Within hypothesis H₂, we focus on the impact of three socio-demographic factors: an individual's income, residence and educational attainment, starting with the main hypothesis:

- H₂: Socio-demographic factors have an impact on participation in shared accommodation (European-level)

When it comes to the impact of an individual's income on participation in the sharing economy and shared accommodation, the results are not straightforward. For example, Gazzola et al. (2020) did not find yearly income to be a statistically significant factor in participation in sharing economy practices. Hellwig et al. (2015) found statistically significant differences in only one observed country (Switzerland) and between two income groups. Böcker and Meelen (2017) showed that low-income groups seem more economically motivated to participate in the sharing economy than middle- or high-income groups, respectively. Therefore, we hypothesise that:

- H_{2a}: The participation rate in the shared accommodation differs based on the individual's income

We also wanted to explore whether an individual's residence (urban or rural) impacts the usage of shared accommodation. Previous studies have raised the same question. Authors Leland et al. (2023) found that respondents who live in urban areas are more likely to use car sharing, bicycle sharing, couch surfing, and household goods applications. Pew Research Center (2016) states that urban and suburban residents use home-sharing at higher rates than rural residents. A study in the UK showed that urban residents were 64 % more likely to frequently engage in active travel than rural residents (Hutchinson et al., 2014). Our formulated hypothesis is:

H_{2b}: The participation rate in the shared accommodation differs based on the individual's residence

Finally, at the European level, we were interested in determining whether an individual's educational attainment (low, medium, high) impacts the usage of shared accommodation. Andreotti et al. (2017), in their report, state that those not aware of the home-sharing feature have lower levels of education and Internet skills. Artero et al. (2020) found that education has a clear positive effect on the usage of digital platforms. Chiappa et al. (2020), in their study conducted in Italy, found that respondents with higher educational attainment used shared accommodation Airbnb more. Our formulated hypothesis is:

- H_{2c}: The participation rate in the shared accommodation differs based on the individual's educational attainment

Analysis in the Serbian context

The research on the topic of the sharing economy in Serbia is on the rise. In a recent study among the student population, Maričić et al. (2023a) showed that those with higher amounts of money they spend independently participate more in the sharing economy. Also, the authors found that those who participated in the sharing

economy are aware that there is a lack of insurance for people and goods in this economic model and that they believe that the possibility of misuse of personal data is minimal. The research by Krstić et al. (2023) showed that among respondents with prior experience in the sharing economy, adoption was driven by curiosity and positive social influence rather than pre-existing familiarity with the concept. Conversely, their respondents with no prior involvement in the sharing economy exhibited a preference for traditional business models and providers. While hesitant to assume the risks associated with the sharing economy, these individuals expressed an openness to future participation. Ćirić and Ilić (2020) conducted a quantitative study and provided insight into the extent to which consumers in Serbia participate in the sharing economy in tourism, which factors influence their satisfaction with using collaborative platforms and what the opportunities and challenges of participating in the sharing economy in tourism are. Ćirić et al. (2021), based on the survey conducted in Belgrade and Novi Sad, showed that the main motivations for Serbian respondents to participate in the sharing economy are saving money, earning extra money, as well as protecting the environment. They also observed the reasons for not participating and found that the respondents preferred to own rather than rent, as well as the fact that they lack confidence in the platform and have a fear of online transactions. Kalinić and Novaković (2019) pointed out that among Serbian travellers, there are gender differences regarding the attitudes towards online payments and using online bookings, including shared accommodation platforms. These studies signal that extensive research on the topic of the sharing economy in Serbia is being conducted on survey samples so far.

Having in mind the conducted literature review, the research hypotheses on the Serbian level are:

- H₃: Socio-demographic factors influence the participation of young Serbian individuals in shared accommodation

Sub-hypotheses are as follows:

- H_{3a}: Gender influences the participation of young Serbian individuals in shared accommodation
- H_{3b}: The size of the city in which the young Serbian individual grew up influences the participation in shared accommodation
- H_{3c}: The amount of money the young Serbian individual has at their personal disposal influences the participation in shared accommodation

Besides the research hypothesis on the Serbian level, we devise a research question based on the research of Ćirić et al. (2021):

- RQ₁: How do behaviour patterns of the respondents who used and did not use shared accommodation differ?

Methodology

The research methodology employs a dual-level analysis framework, examining the European landscape and the Serbian context. Given each level's distinct data collection techniques and data types, we have organised our methodological approach into two separate sections. In the following segments, we outline the specific data-gathering processes and the nature of information collected for both the broader European study and the focused Serbian investigation. This structured approach thoroughly explores our research objectives while accommodating the unique aspects and data sources relevant to each analytical level.

European-level analysis

Collecting data on the sharing economy is not easy for several reasons. The main obstacle is that transactions are made on platforms that are not obliged to share their data with official statistical offices. Therefore, most of the available data is related to reports of consulting agencies, platforms, or academic research results (Bojković et al., 2022). Another obstacle is its decentralised nature and rapid evolution. However, platforms are slowly but surely starting to share their data with official statistics (Airbnb, 2021).

Being aware of the sharing economy's importance for the overall economy, the European Commission made additional efforts to collect data related to the sharing economy. Among the different data currently available on the European level, the data we turned to is from the Eurostat survey on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in households and by individuals (Eurostat, 2023a). Within this survey is a set of indicators related to the use of the sharing economy. The National Statistical Institutes collect the responses yearly, using on Eurostat's annual model questionnaire. The primary survey respondents are individuals aged 16 to 74, whereas, in some countries, there is data for participants younger than 16 and older than 74. The annual ICT survey is conducted in all EU-27 member states, the United Kingdom (UK), Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, candidate countries and potential candidate countries. The data collected for this study encompassed 36 European countries for which the data were available. Namely, Türkiye and Kosovo were removed from the study due to a severe lack of data.

The data provided by Eurostat presents the percentage of individuals who used shared accommodation. Besides, it is possible to generate categorised data as the percentage of individuals who used shared accommodation per gender, educational attainment, income group, other socio-demographic characteristics and their combinations. What additionally needs to be mentioned are the methodological changes imposed on the data related to the sharing economy. In the period from 2017 to 2019, the collected data was related to the percentage of individuals who used any website or app to arrange accommodation from another individual, while from 2020 onwards, the available indicator is the percentage of individuals who, in the last three months, purchased rented accommodation online from a private person (Eurostat, 2023a, 2023b). Considering that the newly available indicators consider only the shared economy realised between individuals without the mediation of the platform, we chose to observe the data from 2017-2019, which covers both sharing economy models.

Analysis in the Serbian context

Being led by the examples of previous studies on understanding participation in the sharing economy and its variants, we decided to conduct a quantitative study in the context of Serbia. During May 2023, surveys on participation in sharing economy activities among young individuals were conducted at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Organizational Sciences in Belgrade, Serbia. The Faculty enrolls around 1000 students per year at the undergraduate level. Our target population segments were second and third-year students; therefore, our population is around 2000.

The online surveys were anonymous, and the students received extra points for participation. Participation in the study was voluntary, ensuring ethical considerations were met and reducing potential bias from forced responses. The chosen software for survey dissemination was Microsoft Forms, which was selected for its user-friendly interface and robust data collection capabilities. This platform allowed for the efficient distribution and collection of responses while maintaining participant privacy.

The study was cross-sectional, as we captured a population snapshot simultaneously (Mann, 2003). This approach enabled us to gather data on current attitudes, behaviours, and experiences in the sharing economy without the time and resource constraints associated with longitudinal studies. While cross-sectional studies have limitations in tracking changes over time, they provide valuable insights into prevailing trends and associations within the population during data collection.

The survey comprised several sections: demographic information, questions concerning prior involvement in the shared accommodation activities, attitudes toward the shared accommodation, and a specific set of questions for participants and non-participants regarding the reasons behind their behaviours. Modified questions from Hamari et al.'s research (2016) were utilised. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 1. After the survey was closed, the data was downloaded, prepared, and analysed. The statistical analysis was done using the SPSS 25 software.

Research results

European-level analysis results

Trend analysis

The first hypothesis presumed that the number of users of shared accommodation increased in Europe from 2017 to 2019. We used the paired samples t-test and conducted pair-wise comparisons (Maričić et al., 2022). The results are presented in Table 1. The mean difference compares the average usage in 2017 with that in 2018, and 2018 with that in 2019. A negative mean difference indicates that usage was higher in 2018 than 2017. For a more straightforward interpretation and visualisation, we graphically present the mean participation in shared accommodation in Europe per observed year (Figure 1).

Table 1

Pair-wise comparisons of the usage of shared accommodation in Europe, 2017-2019

Pairs	Descriptive statistics		Paired-samples t-test	
	Absolute mean difference	Std of the difference	Statistics	p-value
2017-2018	-2.931	4.802	-3.343	0.002
2018-2019	-2.509	2.194	-6.669	0.000

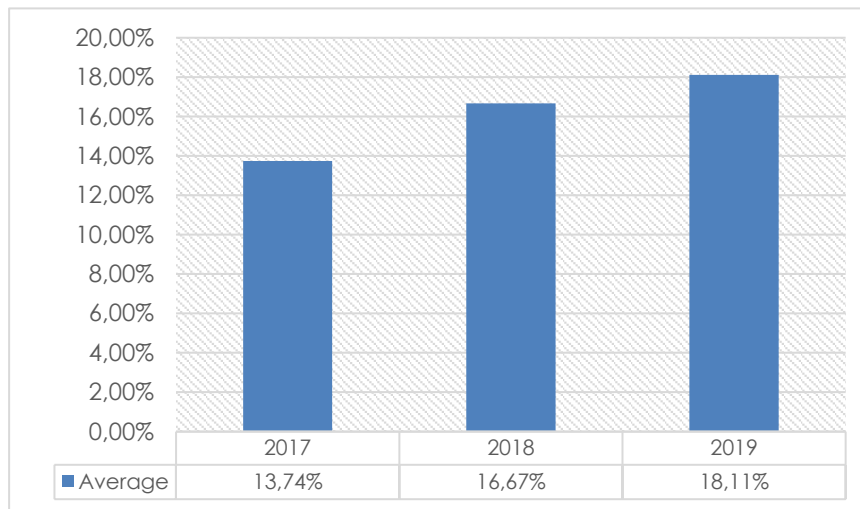
Source: Authors' work

The results indicate that there has been a statistically significant increase in usage of shared accommodation between 2017, when it was 13.74% on average and 2018, when it was 16.67% on average ($t=-3.343$, $p=0.002$). The mean difference indicates that, on average, the usage of shared accommodation between 2017 and 2018 increased by 2.931 percentage points. The same pattern was observed between 2018 and 2019 when the average usage improved from 16.67% to 18.11% ($t=-6.669$, $p=0.000$). The mean difference indicates that, on average, the usage of shared accommodation between 2018 and 2019 increased by 2.509 percentage points.

Based on the presented results, we can observe a steady, statistically significant increase in the usage of shared accommodation in Europe, based on the available Eurostat data, thus confirming the first hypothesis (H_1).

Figure 1

Average participation in shared accommodation in Europe per observed year



Source: Authors' work

Impact of socio-economic factors on participation in shared accommodation at the European level

The hypothesis H_2 explored whether there are differences in the usage of shared accommodation based on the individuals' socio-economic background. The analyses presented below have been conducted on the most recent available data for 2019.

Income

Eurostat categorises respondents based on household income in four quartiles. Q1 refers to the group of individuals who have the lowest 25% of incomes, Q2 to the next 25% (25th to 50th percentile), Q3 to the next 25% (50th to 75th percentile) and Q4 to the last 25% (highest 25% of incomes).

The analysis of variance was used to compare the level of usage of shared accommodation between the four income groups. The same approach was taken in the study of Hellwig et al. (2015) and in the sharing-economy data. The obtained means plot is presented in Figure 2, while the detailed analysis results are in Table 2.

The results indicate statistically significant differences ($F=13.170$, $p<0.001$). The homogeneity of variances test was performed first to detect statistically significant differences between the pairs, followed by the adequate post-hoc test. The value of Levene's statistics was 2.001 ($p<0.05$), indicating that the variances are equal. Therefore, in the next step, we conducted the LSD test.

The results indicate that the usage level is the same among those with income in Q1 and Q2 ($p>0.05$), as well as those in Q2 and Q3 ($p>0.05$). There is a statistically significant difference in the usage between Q1 and Q3 ($p<0.05$), whereas the individuals with higher income use the shared accommodation more. Interestingly, those with income in Q4 use shared accommodation more than individuals in Q1 ($p<0.001$), Q2 ($p<0.001$), and Q3 ($p<0.001$). The results indicate that those with higher incomes use shared accommodation more, thus confirming the hypothesis H_{2a} .

Table 2

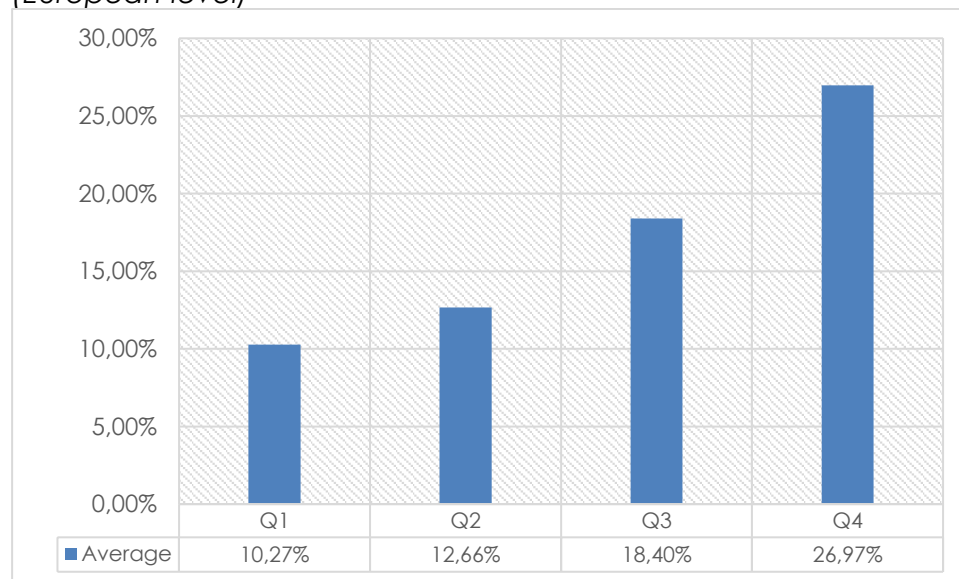
Detailed comparison results regarding the participation in shared accommodation between income quartiles (European-level)

Income quartile	Mean	Std	Levene's	F
Q1	10.271	7.309	2.001	13.170
Q2	12.662	8.551	($p > 0.05$)	($p < 0.001$)
Q3	18.399	12.060		
Q4	26.966	12.777		

Source: Authors' work

Figure 2

Average usage of shared accommodation based on the individual's income group (European-level)



Source: Authors' work

Residence

The research hypothesis H_{2b} explored whether there are differences in the usage of shared accommodation based on the individual's residence. Eurostat categorises respondents regarding residence into three categories: people living in cities, towns and suburbs, and rural areas. Again, analysis of variance was used to explore the differences between the three categories.

The results indicate statistically significant differences ($F=6.218$, $p < 0.001$). The homogeneity of variances test was performed first to detect statistically significant differences between the pairs, followed by the adequate post-hoc test. The value of Levene's statistics was 0.024 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the variances are equal. Therefore, in the next step, we conducted the LSD test.

The results show that the usage level is the same among those from rural areas, towns, and suburbs ($p > 0.05$). Interestingly, those from cities use shared accommodation significantly more than individuals from rural areas ($p < 0.001$) and from towns and suburbs ($p < 0.05$). Based on the presented results, we can conclude that those from urban areas use shared accommodation more than those from rural areas.

Table 3

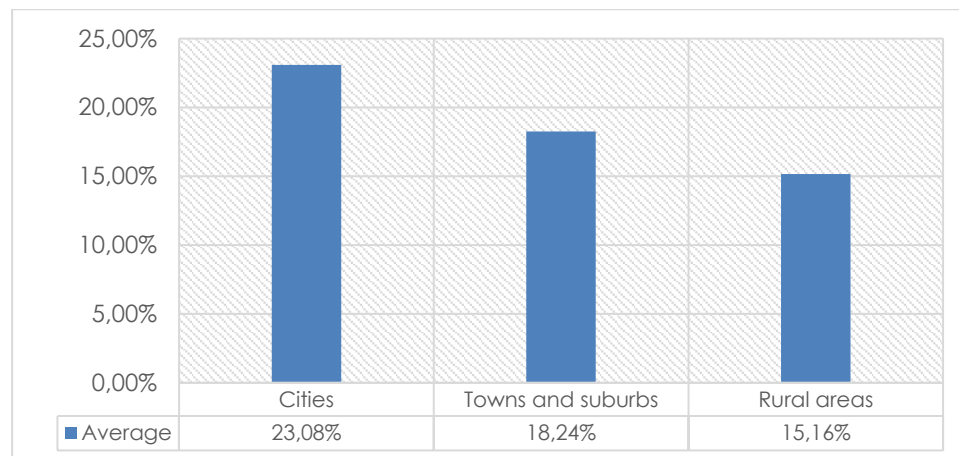
Detailed comparison results regarding the participation in shared accommodation based on the respondent's residence (European level)

Residence	Mean	Std	Levene's	F
Cities	23.084	9.341	0.024	6.218
Towns and suburbs	18.243	8.883	($p > 0.05$)	($p < 0.001$)
Rural areas	15.156	8.969		

Source: Authors' work

Figure 3

Average usage of shared accommodation based on the individual's residence (European-level)



Source: Authors' work

Educational attainment

The hypothesis H_{2c} explored whether there are differences in the usage of shared accommodation based on the individual's educational attainment. Eurostat provides a slightly different categorisation of respondents regarding educational attainment. Namely, the data is provided per gender per educational attainment. Therefore, the impact of educational attainment on participation in shared accommodation was examined for males and females separately. The three categories of educational attainment recognised by Eurostat are low education, medium formal education, and high formal education. Again, analysis of variance was used to explore the differences between the three categories. The detailed analysis results are given in Table 4.

We first analyse the differences in participation among males regarding their educational attainment. The results indicate statistically significant differences ($F=66.084$, $p < 0.001$). The homogeneity of variances test was performed first to detect statistically significant differences between the pairs, followed by the adequate post-hoc test. The value of Levene's statistics was 3.919 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the variances are not equal. Therefore, in the next step, we conducted Tamhane's T2 test.

The results indicate that the usage level differs between those with low and medium education, where those with medium formal education participate more ($p < 0.001$). The same difference is detected between low and high formal education ($p < 0.001$). Those with higher education participate more than those with medium formal education ($p < 0.001$). The results show that males with higher formal education use shared accommodation more than males with lower formal education.

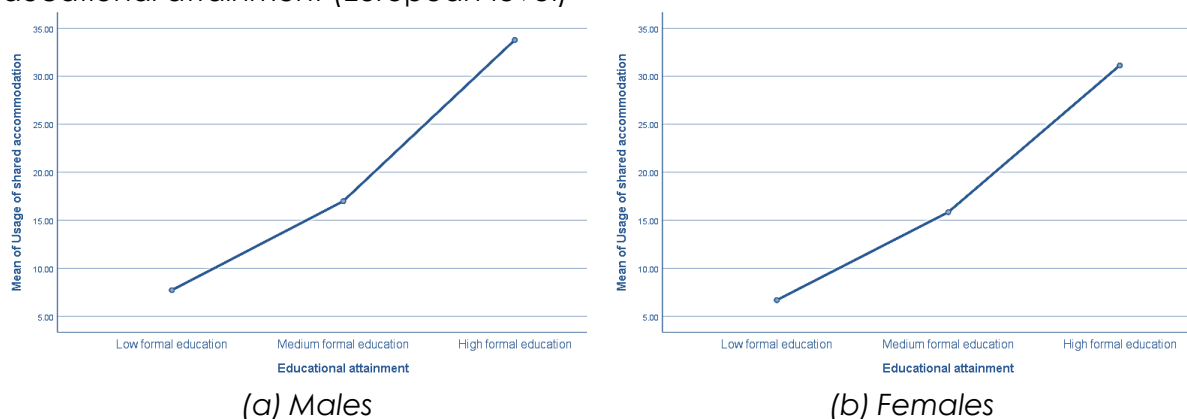
Finally, we analyse the differences in participation among females regarding their educational attainment. Again, statistically significant differences have been

detected ($F=53.799$, $p<0.001$). The value of Levene's statistics was 6.679 ($p<0.05$), indicating that the variances are not equal. Therefore, in the next step, we conducted Tamhane's T2 test.

Further analysis shows that the usage level differs between females with low and medium education, where those with medium formal education participate more ($p<0.001$). The same difference is detected between low and high formal education ($p<0.001$). Females with higher education participate more than those with medium formal education ($p<0.001$). The conclusion is the same among males: females with higher formal education use shared accommodation more than those with lower education. The above-presented results have been visualised in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Average of shared accommodation based on the individual's gender and educational attainment (European-level)



Source: Authors' work

Table 4

Detailed comparison results regarding the participation in shared accommodation based on the respondent's residence (European-level)

Gender	Formal education	Mean	Std	Levene's	F	Tamhane's T2
Male	Low	7.712	6.549	3.919 ($p<0.05$)	66.084 ($p<0.001$)	Low < Medium
	Medium	16.987	9.137			Low < High
	High	33.783	12.611			Medium < High
Female	Low	6.677	6.103	6.679 ($p<0.05$)	53.799 ($p<0.001$)	Low < Medium
	Medium	15.844	9.830			Low < High
	High	31.132	13.135			Medium < High

Source: Authors' work

The presented results indicate that hypothesis two can be accepted and that socio-demographic factors impact participation in shared accommodation.

Results in the Serbian context

Sample characteristics

After conducting the survey, 435 respondents participated in the research, of which 285 were female (65.5%) and 134 were male (30.8%), as presented in Table 5. The remaining 3.7% did not answer this question. The detected gender disproportion was expected for two reasons and was not perceived as an issue. First, females are more prone to entering higher education than men in Serbia (University of Belgrade, 2020), and second, females are more open to participating in online surveys (Smith, 2008).

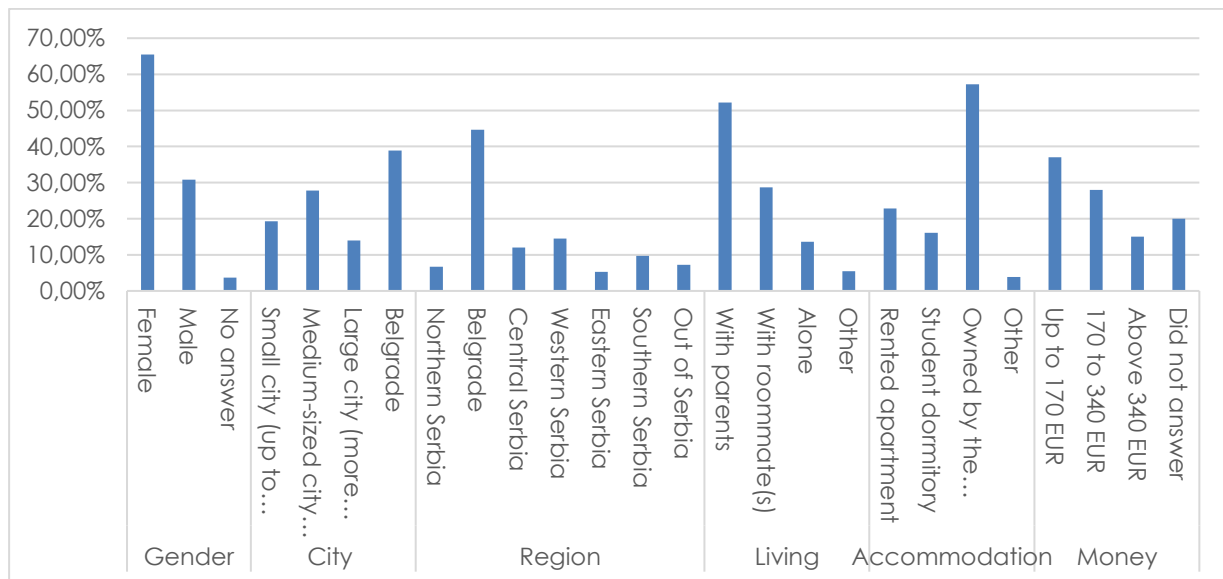
The age range of the respondents is between 20 and 30 years, with the average age being 21.28 years, with a standard deviation of 0.947. A low standard deviation indicates a relatively homogeneous age structure of the sample. The respondents' age range is expected because some students renewed a school year and thus extended their studies a little. Most respondents grew up in Belgrade (38.9%) and in a medium-sized city (20,000-100,000 inhabitants) (27.8%). On the other hand, according to the region where the respondents grew up, the most significant percentage of respondents comes from the region of Belgrade (44.6%), followed by the region of Western Serbia (14.5%) and Central Serbia (12.0%). According to the type of household in which they live, respondents most often live with their parents (52.2%) or with a roommate/roommate (28.7%). A significant percentage of respondents live alone, 13.6% of them. Respondents most often live in an accommodation they own, or a family member owns (57.2%). An important question that we included in the survey is related to the amount of money the respondents have at their disposal monthly. The most significant number of them stated that they have an amount of up to 170 EUR (37.0%) and 170 to 340 EUR (28.0%). A certain number of respondents did not want to answer this personal question, as many as 20.0% of the respondents. Based on the presented description of the sample, it can be concluded that the sample includes students primarily from Belgrade, who live with their parents in accommodation they own and who have up to 170 EUR per month at their disposal. Table 5 and Figure 5 present the detailed data.

Table 5
Sample characteristics (Serbian sample)

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	65.50%
	Male	30.80%
	No answer	3.70%
Size of the city in which the respondent grew up	Small city (up to 20,000 inhabitants)	19.30%
	Medium-sized city (20,000-100,000 inhabitants)	27.80%
	Large city (more than 100,000 inhabitants)	14.00%
	Belgrade	38.90%
The region in which the respondent grew up	Northern Serbia	6.70%
	Belgrade	44.60%
	Central Serbia	12.00%
	Western Serbia	14.50%
	Eastern Serbia	5.30%
	Southern Serbia	9.70%
	Out of Serbia	7.20%
Living situation	With parents	52.20%
	With roommate(s)	28.70%
	Alone	13.60%
	Other	5.50%
Accommodation type	Rented apartment	22.80%
	Student dormitory	16.10%
	Owned by the respondent or a family member	57.20%
	Other	3.90%
Amount of money at personal disposal	Up to 170 EUR	37.00%
	170 to 340 EUR	28.00%
	Above 340 EUR	15.00%
	Did not answer	20.00%

Source: Authors' work

Figure 5
Sample characteristics



Source: Authors' work

Impact of socio-demographic characteristics on participation in shared accommodation

The important question in the survey was related to previous behaviour and whether the respondents had previously used any web platforms or sharing services. Interestingly, as much as 42.8% of the surveyed students indicated that they had used at least one web platform or service that offered shared accommodation, while the remaining 57.2% did not.

The third research hypothesis was related to analysing the impact of socio-demographic factors on using shared accommodation. The contingency table test was used to examine the influence and dependence (Maričić et al., 2022). The result indicates no statistically significant difference in participation in the sharing economy depending on gender (Chi square=0.130, $p>0.05$), which suggests that male and female students participate equally in shared accommodation, thus not confirming the hypothesis H_{3a}. The size of the city where the respondents grew up has a marginal effect on participation in the shared accommodation (Chi square=6.779, $p=0.079$). Respondents who grew up in larger cities participated more in the shared accommodation business model, not confirming hypothesis H_{3b}. However, the amount of money students have at their disposal marginally affects whether they will participate in the shared accommodation (Chi square=9.227, $p=0.056$), also not confirming the hypothesis H_{3c}. The results indicate that respondents with higher personal monthly funds participate more in the sharing economy. In the group of those with more than 340 EUR at their disposal per month, as many as 58.1% of them stated that they had used one of the web platforms offering shared accommodation. Based on the presented results, it can be concluded that certain socio-demographic factors have a marginal influence on participation in shared accommodation. However, if we follow the 5% acceptance threshold, none of the three socio-demographic factors has an impact. The results of the statistical tests that were conducted are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Results of the Chi-square tests exploring the impact of socio-demographic factors on participation in shared accommodation (Serbian sample)

Socio-demographic factor	Chi-square	P-value	Conclusion
Gender	0.130	$p > 0.05$	No effect
The size of the city where the respondent grew up	6.779	$p = 0.079$	No effect
Amount of money at personal disposal	9.227	$p = 0.056$	No effect

Source: Authors' work

The question related to previous participation in shared accommodation was a branching question. Based on their prior experience and behaviour, each group of participants was provided with a particular set of questions.

Descriptive analyses of two groups of respondents were performed to answer the question raised in research question one. The in-depth analysis of those respondents who did not previously participate in shared accommodation showed that after being presented with explanations on how shared accommodation works, as many as 70.7% of respondents stated that they would consider using it in the future. We were interested in finding out the reason for the respondent's decision not to use shared accommodation. Therefore, six possible reasons that might have stopped them from using shared accommodation were listed, and the respondents were asked to express how much each affected them. The answers were on a five-point Likert scale. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics of the reasons why respondents did not use shared accommodation

Reason	Mean	Std	Median
I did not trust the owner of the shared accommodation	3.211	1.381	4.00
I always think that I will be scammed and that what is offered on the platform will not match what I will receive	3.155	1.428	4.00
I had no confidence in the platform for finding and booking shared accommodation	3.037	1.331	4.00
I was not informed about the possibilities of using shared accommodation	2.923	1.428	2.00
I did not have enough information about how to book shared accommodation through the platform	2.852	1.447	2.00
Because my family and friends do not think favourably of using shared accommodation	2.300	1.359	2.00

Source: Authors' work

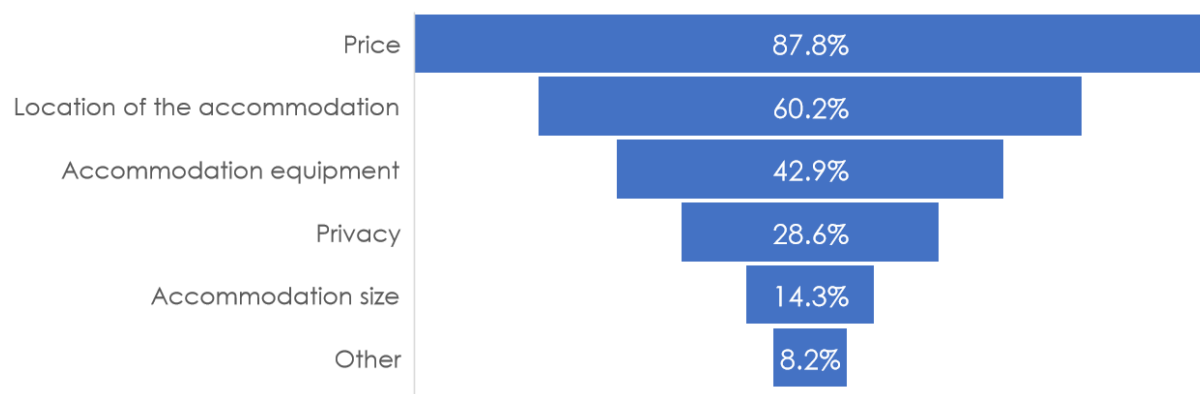
The surveyed students have not used shared accommodation so far because they do not trust the owner or host of the shared accommodation. The mean agreement with this statement is as much as 3.211, with a low standard deviation indicating that the answers are coherent. The median agreement with this aspect is also high, 4.00. This indicates that more than 50% of the non-participating respondents agree or highly agree with this statement. The second obstacle to using shared accommodation is the fear that once they arrive in the accommodation, it will be completely different from what was promised to them. There is a fear of performance risk, as the mean agreement with this statement is 3.155, with a high median and coherent answers. Another reason students did not use shared accommodation was low trust in the

platform (mean=3.037). Interestingly, the results show that the opinion of friends and family was not such an important factor in their decision not to use shared accommodation. Considering the presented results, we can conclude that performance and physical risks primarily prevented students from using shared accommodation.

Looking at those who used shared accommodation, we were interested to know where they used it, for what type of travel, and whether they considered booking a hotel before they turned to a shared accommodation platform. Of those who used shared accommodation, 46.2% used a sharing accommodation platform to book accommodation in Serbia. In foreign countries, 29.6% booked accommodation in Serbia, while the rest booked accommodation in foreign countries. This result is promising as it indicates that sharing platforms are also used in Serbia, not just from the perspective of users but also from the perspective of providers. Most shared accommodation was used for travel with another person (friend, partner, family member), 47.3%, followed by a group trip with several other people, 40.3%. As many as 52.2% of respondents first tried finding a hotel accommodation before turning to a shared accommodation platform. We also strived to find out what made individuals book shared accommodation even if they initially tried to book hotel accommodation. The question was formulated as multiple-choice, indicating that the respondents could have marked several reasons. The results are graphically presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6

List of reasons why individuals turned to shared accommodation after trying to find a hotel accommodation



Source: Authors' work

The main reason respondents turned to shared accommodation is the price, as much as 87.8% of respondents indicated that this was why they decided to turn to shared accommodation. Location was also important, as 60.2% of the respondents indicated this accommodation feature. Accommodation equipment (coffee machine, washing machine, etc) was more valued than privacy. For 42.9% of respondents, having well-equipped accommodation was more important than privacy (28.6%). Reasons such as accommodation size, sustainability, and support for the local economy have been marked in a smaller percentage.

Discussion

The sharing economy market is expected to grow in the upcoming period (Forbes, 2019). Predictions are favourable for both shared accommodation and mobility and

the gig economy. Therefore, consumer behaviour studies should be conducted to understand the market better. This is especially important in developing markets, such as Serbia, if one aims to understand and increase the number of people willing to participate in the sharing economy. For increased usage and participation, it is crucial to understand the characteristics of people using sharing economy platforms and, even more importantly, factors that discourage participation in the sharing economy.

Herein, we strived to tackle the change in consumer behaviour from 2017 to 2019 in Europe and 2023 in Serbia, focusing on the usage of shared accommodation. Due to the difference in available data, the analysis differed for Europe and Serbia, so we could not perform a comparative analysis. Nevertheless, the results are valid on both levels. Table 8 shows the research summary results and the tested set of research hypotheses.

In Europe, participation in shared accommodation, as expected, differs based on the individuals' income, residence, and educational attainment. Therefore, hypothesis H_1 , H_{2a} , H_{2b} , and H_{2c} are accepted. Analysis showed that people with higher incomes who reside in cities and have higher education use shared accommodation more. These results are not surprising if we consider some facts. People with higher incomes probably travel more than those with lower incomes because they have higher disposable income (Dolnicar et al., 2008). Then, people residing in cities might be more aware of the possibilities that shared accommodation platforms provide, which probably could have influenced the obtained result. Lastly, people with higher education are more prone to using Internet-based platforms because their education influences their higher trust in system functioning (Taipale, 2013). These results suggest that shared accommodation should be promoted more in rural areas and among those with lower incomes and education. They align with the study of Davlembayeva et al. (2021). However, it differs from the results of Angelovska et al. (2020).

Analysing differences in socio-demographic characteristics of users of shared accommodation is just one part of the analysis. Additional surveys should be conducted in Europe to find barriers that discourage people belonging to these groups from participating in the sharing economy. Meanwhile, demonstrations and tutorials on using and participating in shared accommodation could be organised to inform individuals about the ways and advantages of using shared accommodation. This would surely raise people's awareness about the existence and possibility of using platforms to find accommodation and increase their trust in platforms that provide accommodation.

In Serbia, analysis of collected data shows that none of the three socio-demographic factors impact the usage of shared accommodation. The amount of money students have at their disposal has a marginally statistically significant effect on participation in shared accommodation, accounting for the size of the city where the respondents grew up. Finally, gender proved not to be a statistically significant factor regarding the usage of shared accommodation. Therefore, hypothesis H_3 is rejected. When we compare results for Europe and Serbia, the analysis shows that socio-demographic factors have a greater impact on the decision to participate in shared accommodation in Europe than in Serbia. Although the results seem unexpected, the explanation for the results at the Serbian level can be attributed to the sample. Namely, we observed a small and coherent cohort of participants that behaves similarly.

Table 8

Aggregated results of the conducted hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Status
H₁: The level of participation in shared accommodation in Europe increased in the period 2017-2019	Accepted at 1%
H_{2a}: The participation rate in the shared accommodation differs based on the individual's income	Accepted at 1%
H_{2b}: The participation rate in the shared accommodation differs based on the individual's residence	Accepted at 1%
H_{2c}: The participation rate in the shared accommodation differs based on the individual's educational attainment	Accepted at 1%
H_{3a}: Gender influences the participation of young Serbian individuals in shared accommodation	Rejected
H_{3b}: The size of the city in which the young Serbian individual grew up influences the participation in shared accommodation	Rejected
H_{3c}: The amount of money the young Serbian individual has at their personal disposal influences the participation in shared accommodation	Rejected

Source: Authors' work

Additional surveys should be conducted to draw additional conclusions about the usage of shared accommodation in Serbia, mainly by including participants from other age groups. This analysis included only the younger population (20-30 years old), which is generally more likely to use sharing economy platforms because they are more technologically educated than members of higher age groups (Bojković et al., 2022). Previous research in Serbia showed that younger people use shared accommodation more than older ones (Živojinović et al., 2022), so including other age groups could yield additional knowledge, especially about barriers to using shared accommodation. Also, analysis of groups with different levels of education, like those in Europe, would be helpful. It would provide interesting insights to see if there are differences between these groups in Serbia.

A valuable contribution of this research is the part that analyses the data related to perceived barriers to participating in shared accommodation based on the viewpoints of those who did not participate in the business model. These are essential inputs for promoting this type of accommodation in Serbia. If the target population is university students and younger generations, new marketing and communication approaches, such as influencer marketing, can be considered (Sesar et al., 2023). Survey results show that trust in different forms (in the owner, platform, and quality of accommodation) is the main barrier to using shared accommodation. This result is in line with Čavalić (2017) whose conclusion is that lack of social capital, whose key element is the general level of trust in society, is one of the factors why the sharing economy in the Western Balkans is still in its initial stages. Interestingly, our results indicate that trust was the main barrier to using shared accommodation. However, this study included only the younger population, which should be more oriented and open to sharing economy business models. If the older generation had been included in the study, trust would have been an even more significant factor in not using shared accommodation.

Trust issues in the sharing economy are a consequence of information asymmetry. This is the case for most forms of peer-to-peer exchange, where different forms of information asymmetry can lead to fewer transactions than are socially optimal (Cohen & Sundararajan, 2015). The relevance of the problem of trust in the sharing economy is also indicated by the existence of studies exploring ways of building trust in the sharing economy (Akhmedova et al., 2021; Räisänen et al., 2021). The findings

of such studies can be used to increase the usage of shared accommodation by building trust so that more people can enjoy its benefits. One of the mechanisms for shared accommodation used for reducing information asymmetry and building trust is having users grade owners and the quality of accommodation. Those grades will give new users more information to lower their trust issues.

Explaining how to use platforms and determine the quality of accommodation would decrease distrust and increase individuals' usage of shared accommodation in Serbia. This confirms that, based on the survey results, 70.7% of respondents stated that they would consider using shared accommodation in the future after they were presented with explanations on how it works.

Also, an important part of the analysis for understanding the patterns of usage of shared accommodation in Serbia was the one that explored reasons why people who used this kind of accommodation decided to use it. When analysing why people opted for this type of accommodation, although they first tried to book a hotel, we see that traditional factors (such as price, location and accommodation equipment) are the main reasons. While some more modern reasons, such as sustainability, support for the local economy, etc., had a more negligible influence. This is because people are unaware of all the benefits the sharing economy can bring. Some workshops, presentations and other ways of informing people should be conducted in Serbia. Their main goal should be to inform people of all the benefits this type of accommodation provides, not solely for individuals but for society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights significant socio-demographic influences on shared accommodation use in Europe. In Europe, higher income, urban residence, and higher education levels increase participation in shared accommodation, confirming hypotheses H_{2a}, H_{2b}, and H_{2c}. We can conclude that the European-level analysis indicates a consistent and significant increase in shared accommodation usage from 2017 to 2019, confirming H₁. Socio-economic factors strongly influence participation, with higher income, urban residence, and higher educational attainment related to increased usage.

The Serbian analysis reveals that disposable income, the size of the respondent's hometown and gender are not critical factors, rejecting hypothesis H₃. Trust emerged as a significant barrier to using shared accommodation in Serbia, even among the younger population, aligning with findings from previous studies in the Western Balkans. Notably, many respondents who had not previously engaged in shared accommodation express openness to future use, dispelling concerns around trust and information gaps. These findings provide valuable insights into evolving shared accommodation trends and individual decision factors in European and Serbian contexts. Promoting shared accommodation in rural areas and among those with lower incomes and education levels could help address these disparities. Future research should extend to older age groups and different educational backgrounds to further understand the barriers and motivations. Educating people about the benefits and functioning of shared accommodation platforms could also increase trust and participation.

Several issues emerge from the research conducted on the European level. One that stands out is the data. Although the data comes from an official and reputable source, Eurostat, the data is outdated and might not provide timely insights. As the newest available data is for 2019, the data and the analysis cannot capture the impact of COVID-19, regulatory changes, technological advancements, environmental awareness, economic conditions, and others that have impacted the

sharing economy and shared accommodation platforms and practices. The second aspect that should be mentioned is that the data provided is at the national level and not at the individual level. Even though analysis on the country level can provide important conclusions, the possibility of analysing and comparing individual data between countries could have provided insights into cultural acceptance (Zhang & Srite, 2021).

The conducted research in the Serbian context has its limitations as well. First is the sample. The segment of the population covered by the survey relates to the student population of Belgrade studying at one faculty. Therefore, to make more generalisable results, a large-scale study is required. The future direction of the study is to survey the representative sample in Serbia on participation in shared accommodation. The results of this study could be helpful in the questionnaire design process as they point out specific behaviour patterns and factors that should be considered. Besides the mentioned future direction of the study related to the sample and sample size, future directions of the study related to the research methodology used can also be proposed. One could be conducting agent-based simulations to observe how and when a particular individual starts to use or stops using shared accommodation. A similar study was done in the sphere of shared mobility (Živojinović & Zornić, 2022). Also, conducting a conjoint analysis of the individual's preferences regarding shared accommodation would be interesting to better understand their actual needs. The idea for such a study came from the work of Bojković et al. (2019) who analysed the preferences for car-sharing service attributes among university students. Also, segmentation analysis of users, or even countries, can be done using clustering methods (Maričić et al., 2023b; Nikolić et al., 2022).

Even with certain limitations, we believe that the study could initiate further research on the impact of socio-demographic factors on participation in shared accommodation.

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Appendix. Conducted a survey (Without the socio-demographic questions)

1. Have you ever used shared accommodation services?

a) Yes; b) No

(Branching question)

List of questions for those participants who did not use shared accommodation

2. Now that you are familiar with the concept of the sharing economy and the possibility of using shared accommodation, would you consider using shared accommodation when planning your next trip?

a) Yes; b) No

3. Which of the above, and to what extent, demotivated you to use shared accommodation services? (1 – Not at all demotivating, 5 – Extremely demotivating)

a) I did not trust the owner of the shared accommodation

b) I always think that I will be scammed and that what is offered on the platform will not match what I will receive

c) I had no confidence in the platform for finding and booking shared accommodation

d) I was not informed about the possibilities of using shared accommodation

e) I did not have enough information about how to book shared accommodation through the platform

f) Because my family and friends do not think favourably of using shared accommodation

List of questions for those participants who used shared accommodation

7. Within the last six months, have you used a website or an application to purchase accommodation services from another individual (Airbnb, Couchsurfing, Stan na dan)?

a) No, I have not used

b) Yes, through a specific website or application that enables purchasing accommodation services from others

c) Yes, through any website or application that enables purchasing accommodation services from others (e.g., social networks)

8. Where did you use shared accommodation?

a) Just in Serbia; b) Just abroad (outside Serbia); c) Both in Serbia and abroad

9. For what type of trip have you used/most often used shared accommodation services?

a) Solo trip; b) Trip with another person (family member, partner, friend, colleague); c)

Trip with a group of friends; d) All above listed

10. Before deciding to look for and possibly use shared accommodation, did you try to find hotel accommodation?

a) Yes; b) No

11. If the answer to the previous question was yes, what are the reasons why you decided to use shared accommodation? (Multiple-choice)

a) Price; b) Location of the accommodation; c) Accommodation size; d) Accommodation equipment (e.g. washing machine, kitchen, coffee machine, ...); e) Privacy; f) Sustainability; g) Strengthening the local economy; h) I did not try to find hotel accommodation; i) Other

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