

Research on the Development Strategy of Heyuan City's Homestay Industry under the Background of Rural Revitalization

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on the development status of Heyuan B&Bs. It discusses the development of Heyuan B&Bs and tourists' demand in all aspects, and deeply analyzes the problems existing in the B&B industry. Although the homestay industry is developing rapidly under the current economic model in Heyuan, there are still a series of problems, such as the scattered distribution of homestays, imperfect product support, serious homogeneity of homestay products, uneven service quality, and insufficient interaction between guest-host and tourists, etc. Through in-depth analysis, this research summarized the problems in the development path and development model of Heyuan B&B, and put forward countermeasures and suggestions that are beneficial to the development of Heyuan B&B industry, with a view to contributing to the healthy and sustainable development of Heyuan B&B.

Keywords: B&B; development model; countermeasures; rural revitalization; Heyuan

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the rapid economic development and the upgrading of tourists' consumption needs, traditional forms of sightseeing and accommodation have been unable to meet the needs of tourists. Tourists are gradually pursuing highly personalized travel methods, preferring to quickly experience the culture of tourist destinations, local customs, and social interactions. So homestays, especially boutique homestays, have become the "new favorite" of tourists. Relevant data show that, the number of domestic country house houses exceeded 160,000 in 2019, has an increase of nearly 1.3 times over 2018. In 2019, the country house generated more than 550 million yuan in income for rural landlords. At present, domestic homestays are showing a mushrooming development trend. Due to the impact of the new crown epidemic in 2020, the country's homestay industry has been hit hard. However in 2021, when the epidemic prevention and control are normalized, the homestay industry will gradually recover. It has a good performance during the May Day, Mid-Autumn Festival, National Day in 2021.

At present, although the development of homestays has achieved certain results in Heyuan, there are still

some problems in the development of homestays. For example, the uneven service quality of homestays, loose marketing, serious homogeneity, incomplete industry standards, and lack of professional talents, etc. have also restricted the development of the homestay industry to a large extent. Therefore, based on the investigation of Heyuan B&B, this article puts forward certain suggestions on the problems and development direction of Heyuan B&B, in order to provide reference for the healthy and standardized development of Heyuan B&B under the background of rural revitalization.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

2.1. The concept of homestay

Foreign scholars started their research on homestays earlier. The names of homestays abroad vary according to their cultural backgrounds, and they are generally called "B&B", "Inn" or "Home Stay". For example, Clark believes that homestays are a new type of accommodation that allows tourists to experience the local humanities and natural environment in depth^[1]. Timothy et al. pointed out that the homestay is a rural accommodation facility rich in local cultural characteristics, which can provide customers with

accommodation and catering services^[2]. Staley deemed that a homestay is a place that can meet the catering and accommodation needs of tourists, and also provide customers with a rural life experience^[3].

The research on homestays in our country started relatively late. In the past, it appeared under the titles of "farmers", "family hotels", and "residential inns". Taiwanese scholars He Yuru and Tang Qiuling are the first to define homestays in China. They believe that homestays are houses used for accommodation in the tourism service industry without a business license^[4]. Later, many scholars have made different definitions of homestays, but they have not formed a unified view^[5-6]. Until October 2017, the "Basic Requirements and Evaluation of Tourist Homestays" promulgated by the National Tourism Administration determined the concept of homestays. The document pointed out that tourist homestays refer to homestay owners who actively participate in the service process on the basis of local free resources, providing tourists with small accommodation facilities to experience the local nature, culture, production and lifestyle^[7].

2.2. Research on homestays

Foreign scholars started their research on homestays earlier, and their research content is also more extensive. Their research content mainly focuses on the homestay industry^[8], homestay market^[9], homestay customer group^[10], etc. In terms of research methods, it focuses on the combination of qualitative and quantitative research. For example, Kelley C. L et al. discussed the "side business" nature of homestays through specific cases, and believed that homestay owners chose to operate homestays out of interest or hobbies^[8]. Monty studied the buying behavior of homestay tourists and found that the room structure, location and surrounding environment of homestays are important factors that affect customers' wishes^[10]. Wang and Hung pointed out that in the operation of the hotel, the personal contact between tourists and the operator of the hotel and the host's hospitality service skills play an important role^[11].

Domestic scholars started their research on homestays late. Before 2006, scholars studied homestays in a broad range, mainly focusing on the basic theories of homestays, including the definition of homestays^[12], type division^[13], market positioning, and development

conditions, the development status of the homestay industry^[14], existing problems and counter-measures^[15], most of which are basic research. Since 2007, domestic scholars' research on homestays has entered the stage of quantitative research, mainly from the perspective of stakeholders, studying homestay business strategies^[16], homestay tourism behavior, and the development models, etc. It is also richer in the use of research methods, and began to focus on the combination of quantitative research and qualitative research. For example, Hou Fengya took the ancient town of Zhouzhuang as an example, and proposed a series of strategies to improve the service quality of the ancient town's homestays^[16]. Li Yanqin and Yu Wenhao compared the development of Beijing and Taipei as homestays, and put forward suggestions for the development of Beijing homestays, such as the comprehensive convenience of site selection and the improvement of the quality of housing from multiple angles^[17]. Through grounded theoretical research, Yan Yushuang and Lai Qifu put forward five factors that affect the soft power of homestays: homestay environment, cultural atmosphere, service quality, homestay management and host characteristics^[18].

3. ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOMESTAYS IN HEYUAN CITY

3.1 Overview of the development of Heyuan Homestay

In recent years, with the rise of rural tourism, the homestay industry in Heyuan City has ushered in unprecedented opportunities. In 2019, the Heyuan Municipal Government actively issued relevant documents to provide policy guarantees for the development of rural tourism, including homestay businesses. As of 2021, Heyuan has about 100 homestays, about 500 guest rooms, and more than 1,000 beds. There are more than 2,000 employees in the homestay industry. Some areas have already had the embryonic form of the development of homestay clusters. For example, Wanlv Hakka Inn, Echo B&B, To · Jisu, Dashuijing, Yang's Courtyard, Shuangjiang Pear Flower House, Xiangmengyuan homestay, etc., have been gradually built into boutique B&Bs in Heyuan City.

Table 1 Operation of some homestays during the May 1st period in 2021

Index/Name of B&B	Pear Flower B&B	Echo B&B	Zhuliguan Homestay	To · Jisu	Wanlv Hakka Inn	Wine Shop Homestay	Xiangmengyuan
Overnight tourists (person times)	350	80	272	106	480	107	210
Non-overnight tourists (person times)	400	100	800	352	1000	450	2500

Operating income (ten thousand yuan)	11.3	4.7	17.1	3.07	13.8	4.2	3.7 (no food and beverage income)
Average open rate (%)	90	89	90	68	90	73	84
Average house price (yuan)	623	630	430	446	363	380	348

It can be seen from the above table that the prices of some homestays have exceeded five-star hotels in the city, reaching more than 600 yuan, and the average price of some homestays in scenic spots has exceeded 1,000 yuan. Even in the normalization stage of epidemic prevention and control, Heyuan B&B performed well. During the May Day holiday in 2021, 7 homestays received about 5,000 people during the May Day holiday, and the total number of May Day holiday receptions of more than 100 homestays in Heyuan was about 13,000-20,000 person-times. Some homestays "non-overnight tourists" have surpassed overnight visitors, indicating that these homestays have gradually become tourism "destinations" or bases for research and parent-child activities, rather than simply lodging places. Ancient post roads, orchards, fields, farming experience, hand-made, rural customs and fresh rural air have become the selling points of homestays attracting tourists. This also shows that the tourist market of Heyuan is undergoing obvious and rapid changes. Some homestay products have been changed from the beginning. The farmhouse has developed into today's mid-to-high-end rural tourism and vacation products.

3.2 Problems in the B&B industry in Heyuan City

As we all know, homestays have different development stages such as the 1.0 sentiment era, the 2.0 vacation era, and the 3.0 industry era. After decades of rapid development, our country's homestays have started from the original "returning to nature", providing tourists with a 1.0 era of enjoying the mountains and rivers and obtaining temporary escape, and upgrading to a 2.0 era that meets the needs of tourists for travel and vacation and allows tourists to experience the local culture and culture. Even some areas with rapid development of homestays have successfully entered the 3.0 era. In recent years, Heyuan Homestay has developed rapidly, but from a national perspective, it is still in its infancy. There are still many problems in its development and management. For example, insufficient market influence and brand effects have not yet formed, service quality issues in homestays, marketing and customer source issues, all of which have affected the healthy development of homestays in Heyuan City to a certain extent.

(1) The distribution of homestays is relatively scattered, and the clustering effect is not obvious. From

the city's point of view, the distribution of Heyuan B&Bs is relatively scattered, the volume is limited, and the clustering effect has not yet formed. Most of the well-known homestays are scattered in the countryside. For example, Dongyuan Pear Flower House, Echo B&B, Zhuliguan B&B, Wanlv Hakka Inn, Jiufang B&B, Xiangmengyuan B&B, and To Jisu are all scattered in the countryside. The distance between each homestay is relatively long, and a cluster effect cannot be formed. Moreover, single-unit homestays lack competitiveness. Most homestays have only a dozen guest rooms and cannot accommodate large-scale group tourists. Moreover, it is difficult for single-unit homestays to generate value with brand effects during the profitability process, which greatly reduces the profitability. In addition, although some well-known homestays can play a certain role in driving the local economy and employment, the driving effect on the development of the homestay industry is not obvious.

(2) The product supporting system is not perfect, and the tourist experience is single. Homestay tourism is a process in which homestay owners share artistic pursuits and joys of life with tourists, as well as a process to showcase local characteristic folk culture. Tourists choose to stay at homestays, largely for a better travel experience. Although these B&Bs are convenient for tourists to experience local folk customs and appreciate the natural scenery, the transportation facilities are not perfect, the accessibility of the B&Bs is poor, and some accommodations have poor conditions, substandard sanitary conditions, and lack of high-quality services. All these will cause many tourists to give up staying at homestays or have a low willingness to stay again. In addition, the public facilities such as fire safety facilities, parking lots, shopping venues, leisure and entertainment venues in most B&Bs are obviously insufficient. Therefore, imperfect supporting facilities and ancillary products have become an important reason for the slow or backward development of homestays.

(3) The homogeneity of homestay products is serious and lacks cultural connotation. First, to the whole region, the proportion of special homestays is low, the number of boutique homestays accounts for only about one-tenth of the total number of homestays in the city; secondly, due to the lack of guidance and overall planning for the development of homestays, the phenomenon of homogeneous operation is prominent. In addition to a few boutique homestays, for example, to

Jisu promotes parent-child research activities such as soy milk grinding and glutinous rice cakes; Zhuliguan Homestay offers camping, beach parent-child, and color painting activities; Lihua House Homestay hosts launch ancient post road exploration activities and fishing and other activities. Some homestays reflect Hakka culture in their decoration and layout, creating a good Hakka cultural atmosphere. However, most of the remaining 80% of the B&Bs only provide simple accommodation and meals, without in-depth exploration of Hakka culture and folk customs, tourists cannot feel the cultural atmosphere, and the experience is poor, which is greatly reduced the attractiveness of homestays, the tourist accommodation rate and re-stay rate are generally low.

(4) Product growth is too fast, and the quality of homestay services is uneven. Except for a small number of boutique homestays, most of the homestays are operated by themselves. Most of the homestay owners and service staff are generally not well educated and have not experienced professional service quality and management training, which leads to the inability to guarantee the service quality of the homestay. It particularly evidents in the tourist season. In the peak tourist season, some homestays are discharged randomly, the sanitation of accommodation is not up to standard, and the catering services cannot keep up. In addition, due to the lack of standardization awareness of the hotel service staff and the low level of business, many items such as bedding, tables and chairs are not up to standard, the sanitation of the accommodation is not up to standard, and the service attitude is loose, which also seriously affects the service quality of the hotel.

(5) Insufficient interaction between the host and guest of the homestay. With the change of people's consumption concept and the upgrading of tourism demand, tourists travel not only to see the scenery, but also to pursue a sense of comfort, and feel the local cultural characteristics and customs in comfort, and the homestay can just meet This mentality of tourists is also the biggest difference between a B&B and a hotel. In recent years, the number of homestays in Heyuan has risen rapidly, and the homestay industry has developed rapidly, but the entire homestay industry has not entered the track of healthy development. The interaction between the host and the guest can make the guests feel that they are respected and valued, but it is less interaction between the host and the guest. Especially in the peak tourist season, when there are many guests, it is more difficult for homestay owners to provide humanistic care and personal emotions to customers. As a result, tourists' psychological needs are not met, and tourists' experience and satisfaction will be reduced.

4. STRATEGIES AND SUGGESTIONS

(1) Give full play to the government's top-level

design role to create a "Hakka culture" homestay brand. For the long-term Heyuan homestay industry, the government must first complete the overall planning and design, and actively integrate rural culture, agriculture, tourism and other resources to develop characteristic homestay brands. Heyuan is the residential center of Hakka culture in the Dongjiang River Basin. Hakka enclosures, Hakka cuisine, and Hakka folk customs are the humanistic roots and blood sources of Hakka culture, such as Huachao Opera, Heping Muji, and Tuocheng Culture are all important to Hakka culture. The symbolic carriers of Heyuan, even the Hakka people's emotional memory, aesthetic sustenance and value pursuit. Therefore, the development of Heyuan's homestays can actively integrate Hakka culture, and realize the rapid, healthy and concentrated development of homestays by building a "Hakka culture" homestay brand. For example, in the architectural style, it fully reflects the characteristics of Hakka architecture, and incorporates elements such as smart technology and creative IP. In the catering of the homestay, it introduces Hakka specialties, and combines the local tea culture and farming culture for in-depth excavation, and develops products that meet the public Hakka cuisine in demand. Under the guidance of the "Hakka culture" homestay brand, adopt the development model of boutique homestays to drive the entire homestay industry chain, realize the effective integration of agriculture, tourism and cultural industries, and maximize social benefits.

(2) Extend the consumer group to meet the consumer needs of different groups. The function of the homestay is not only to provide tourists with a unique cultural accommodation experience, but the guest group has a stronger demand for humanities, feelings, interaction and special activities. In the development of homestays in Heyuan, we can create homestay products with different cultural themes for high-end customers, casual tourists, technology, art, originality, and other objects that pursue individuality, and provide a unique accommodation experience based on the traditional Hakka culture. The soft brands of, tea culture, and folk culture enrich the ecological appeal and increase the sense of substitution and experience of tourists. For example, according to the resource characteristics and development advantages around the homestay, we can launch different tourism projects for youth, families, parent-children, conferences, vacations, research, etc., to attract high, medium, and low consumption levels.

(3) Enrich the local cultural connotation of homestays and develop distinctive and personalized homestays. Whether a region's homestays can attract tourists depends mainly on its geographic location, cultural environment and natural environment. B&B is not only a place to provide accommodation, but also a window to spread characteristic culture and provide personalized service. According to big data statistics

such as Airbnb and Ctrip, the post-80s, post-90s and post-00s generations have become the main consumers of homestay accommodation, and these groups account for more than 70% of the total number of people. Especially for the post-00s people, they have unique emotions and interpretations of homestay culture, and they prefer to choose personalized and characteristic homestays, pursuing novel and unique accommodation experiences. Therefore, the design of homestays should not only pay attention to the quality of accommodation, but also reflect the local characteristic culture, and fully meet the needs of tourists in the design of guest room products and services. For example, in the design process of Heyuan B&B, the Hakka culture is fully integrated, the carrier role of the B&B is brought into play, the connotation of the Hakka culture is displayed reasonably, and the activities and projects that allow tourists to experience the Hakka culture are increased. Experience Hakka folk customs and customs at a fast speed, and get a better emotional experience.

(4) Give full play to the cluster effect of homestays and realize the development of homestay branding. The rapid development of the homestay market has driven the competitiveness of homestays to rise, and the development of homestay clusters can well enhance the local tourism competitiveness and create its own tourism IP. However, homestays in the same cluster should have their own characteristics and avoid similarities in the process of construction and design. Carry out dislocation development according to its own business situation and cultural characteristics, and design special products suitable for itself. In addition, individual homestays in the cluster must be able to independently form attractiveness, shift the focus of tourists from surrounding resources to the homestay itself, weaken the influence of surrounding scenic spots on the homestay, and solve the problems of tourists' low and peak seasons and popularity dependence. For example, the study tour to Jisu attracts a large number of families and students from inside and outside the city to participate in study activities such as grinding soybean milk, brewing wine, and growing mushrooms; Lihua House relies on ancient post roads to attract a large number of tourists; Heyuan Ketianxia Xiyuezhuang attracts provinces with its characteristic hot springs. This also shows that Heyuan B&B is gradually realizing the development of "micro-scenic area". Therefore, through reasonable layout and unified planning, the Heyuan B&B cluster can achieve the effects of professional division of labor, business complementarity, collaborative operation, overall marketing, and business sharing.

(5) Regulate the industry standards of homestays and improve the overall service quality of homestays. One of the most important reasons for the current development of B&Bs in Heyuan City is the lack of relevant industry standards for guidance. In particular,

the outbreak of the new crown epidemic in 2020 has put forward higher requirements for the hygiene and safety of homestays. As the supervision and guidance department for the development of homestays, government departments should actively formulate relevant government and regulations to ensure the healthy and orderly development of homestays. On the one hand, it is possible to formulate homestay management methods and management rules, establish homestay industry development standards, standardize homestay access mechanisms and operating standards, and conduct comprehensive supervision of public safety, food hygiene, standardized operation, and environmental protection. On the other hand, relevant government departments should strengthen support for homestays and the training of homestay employees. Led by government departments, actively organize some related knowledge, skills, and service trainings for homestay service personnel to provide the overall quality and professionalism of homestay staff, thereby improving the service quality of the entire homestay industry.

5. CONCLUSION

Although Heyuan B&B still has certain problems in its development process, the Heyuan B&B market cannot be underestimated, and the future development situation is still expected. Moreover, under the current social background of escalating tourist demand, the development of homestays is becoming more high-quality, experience-oriented, and standardized. If Heyuan B&B wants to gain a place in the industry, it must increase its own attractiveness and competitiveness, tap the local Hakka cultural resources to the greatest extent, comprehensively improve the quality of tourism services, and provide tourists with a better accommodation experience. In addition, the cluster development of country houses is also an important means to increase the income of local residents and promote other industries. Heyuan B&B can also increase the revisit rate and satisfaction of tourists by adopting intelligent means and deriving other industrial chains, and contribute to increasing farmers' income and revitalizing the countryside.

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