



# The Influence Mechanism of Self-Consistency on Tourists' Willingness to Recommend Rural Homestays

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**Abstract.** Self-consistency is the core element of consumer behavior theory and marketing literature, which deeply reveals the harmonious and unified state of consumers' inner self-cognition, that is, the high cognitive matching degree between individual's actual self-image and ideal self. Based on the theoretical framework of "cognitive-emotion-behavior", this study conducted a survey on tourists who had lived in rural homestays. SPSS27.0 and AMOS24.0 were used for empirical analysis of the data to explore the influence mechanism of self-consistency on tourists' willingness to recommend rural homestays. The results show that two dimensions of self-consistency, true self-consistency and ideal self-consistency, have positive effects on satisfaction and recommendation intention. Satisfaction has a positive effect on the recommendation intention of rural homestays; Satisfaction plays a mediating role between true self-consistency and recommendation intention. Satisfaction plays a mediating role between ideal self-consistency and recommendation intention. This study not only deepens the understanding of the application of self-consistency in the field of rural homestays, but also provides valuable practical enlightenment for rural homestays operators.

**Keywords:** Rural Residential Accommodation, Self-consistency, Satisfaction, Recommendation Intention

## 1 Introduction

Homestays first emerged in Europe, as Bed and Breakfast (B&B) type family hotels appeared in the United Kingdom, and later gradually developed in the Americas and Asia and other regions. At first, scholars defined rural homestay as a bed-and-breakfast family hotel, but with the changes of The Times, homestay has gradually transformed into a new mode of accommodation that shows unique customs and provides personalized experience. In 2024, the Central Document No. 1 was released, once again focusing on the development of rural tourism, emphasizing the standardization of the development of rural homestays and improving the quality to meet the personalized and differentiated needs of tourists. As a part of rural tourism, the rapid development of rural homestays is of great significance to the revitalization of rural industry, the inheritance of rural culture and the increase of farmers' income. In recent years, although rural homestays have begun to develop in the direction of individualization and specialization,

they still generally face the problem of low satisfaction and loyalty of tourists, which makes it difficult for tourists to form a positive word-of-mouth recommendation intention for rural homestays. Therefore, based on the above analysis, this paper takes the two dimensions of self-consistency as independent variables, applies the "cognitive-emotion-intention" theory, and takes satisfaction as the intermediary variable to explore the mechanism of self-consistency's influence on tourists' homestay recommendation intention, so as to improve tourists' satisfaction, and further improve the competitive advantage of rural homestays and tourists' word-of-mouth recommendation intention for rural homestays.

## **2 Literature Review and Research Hypothesis**

### **2.1 ABC Attitude Theory**

ABC attitude theoretical model, also known as the "cognitive-emotion-behavior" theory, belongs to the attitude composition model of consumer Behavior. This model consists of Cognition, Affect and behavior, wherein cognition is the perception of the object of attitude, and emotion is the feeling of the object of attitude. Intention is the actual behavior towards the object of the attitude [1].

### **2.2 Self-Consistency and Recommendation Intention**

Self-concept is defined as "the sum total of an individual's thoughts and emotions with the self as the object" [2]. Self-consistency, derived from self-concept, refers to the cognitive matching between consumers' self-concepts [3], which is further conceptually divided into two parts in subsequent studies: real self-consistency and ideal self-consistency. Real self-consistency is the consistency between customers' self-image and their real characteristics in the accommodation experience. Ideal self-consistency refers to the fit between the customer's self-image and his ideal self-image in a particular environment. In this paper, self-consistency is defined as when tourists think that the image of a B&B is highly consistent with their own self-concept, they will have a higher sense of identity for rural B&B.

Usakli et al. found that self-consistency is an important antecedent variable for tourists to generate recommendation intention [4]. Zhang Yuangang et al. made an in-depth analysis from the perspective of self-consistency and found that the most critical factor affecting tourists' recreational behavior intention was individual self-consistency [5]. According to self-consistency theory, tourists' self-consistency affects their choice of rural homestays, and tourists are more willing to choose rural homestays consistent with their self-image. To sum up, this paper puts forward the following hypothesis:

H1a: True self-consistency has a significant positive impact on recommendation intention

H1b: Ideal self-consistency has a significant positive impact on recommendation intention

### 2.3 Self-Consistency and Satisfaction

In the hotel industry, customer satisfaction is the psychological difference between the actual experience and the previous expectation. The measurement standard of customer satisfaction is mainly the quality of accommodation products and services. In a study on residents' willingness to word of mouth, scholars such as Boheme et al. found that both the true and ideal self-consistency had an impact on local satisfaction [6]. Cifici explored the relationship between self-consistency and tourists' satisfaction and re-visit intention, and found that both true and ideal self-consistency had a positive impact on satisfaction [7]. To sum up, this paper puts forward the following hypothesis:

H2a: True self-consistency has a significant positive effect on satisfaction

H2b: Ideal self-consistency has a significant positive effect on satisfaction

### 2.4 Satisfaction and Recommendation Intention

Tourist satisfaction can directly affect their choice and decision-making behavior, that is, satisfaction has an important impact on the future behavior intention of tourists. In the context of cultural tourism destinations, Altunel et al. found that tourists' satisfaction has a positive impact on recommendation intention [8]. Kim et al believe that tourist satisfaction is an important determinant of behavioral intention and find that tourist satisfaction can effectively predict behavioral intention [9]. To sum up, this paper puts forward the following hypothesis:

H3: Satisfaction has a significant positive impact on recommendation intention

### 2.5 The Mediating Role of Satisfaction

The self-consistency of tourists is the basis of satisfaction, and the formation of satisfaction will stimulate tourists to have a positive word-of-mouth recommendation. Therefore, satisfaction may play a mediating role in the influence of self-consistency on recommendation intention. Albaity et al. found that tourist satisfaction has a positive mediating effect on the relationship between destination image, novelty seeking and loyalty [10]. To sum up, this paper puts forward the following hypothesis:

H4a: Satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between true self-consistency and recommendation intention

H4b: Satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between ideal self-consistency and recommendation intention

## 3 Research Design

### 3.1 Theoretical Model

Under the guidance of "cognitive-emotion-intention" theory, self-consistency, satisfaction and recommendation intention of homestay tourists were incorporated into the same relationship framework to build a theoretical model (see Fig. 1.).

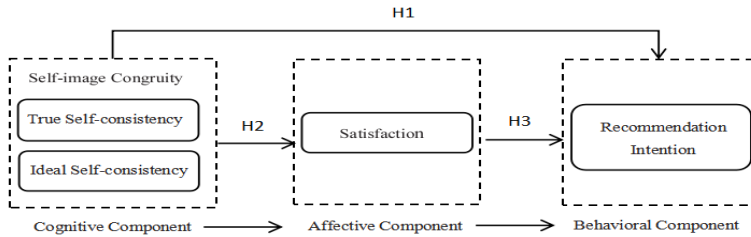


Fig. 1. Theoretical model

### 3.2 Questionnaire Design

The study was conducted online through the questionnaire star platform. A total of 330 questionnaires were collected, of which 303 were valid, with an effective recovery ratio of 91.81%.

The design of the questionnaire is based on the questionnaires with good reliability and validity in relevant researches of domestic and foreign scholars. Among them, the real self-consistency and ideal self-consistency refer to the scales of Zhang et al. [11] and Tran et al. [12], including 8 items: The image of the homestay is consistent with the image of me, the image of the homestay is consistent with the image of others, the image of the homestay expresses the image of me, the image of the homestay is consistent with the image of myself, the image of the homestay reflects the person I want to be, the image of the homestay is consistent with the image of me I want to be seen by others, the image of the homestay is consistent with the image of myself I want to see. Satisfaction refers to the scales of Albaity et al.<sup>[10]</sup> and boheme et al.<sup>[6]</sup>, which consist of four items: I am satisfied with the experience of the hostel, I am satisfied with the decision to stay in the hostel, I have a good impression on the hostel, and the hostel meets my needs well. Recommendation intention Refer to the scale of Xu et al. [13], which consists of three items: I will recommend this hostel to others, I will convey positive information about this hostel to others, and I will encourage relatives and friends to stay in this hostel when traveling. The scales involved in this study were all using Likert five-point scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, corresponding to the evaluation scale of 1-5 points.

## 4 Data Analysis and Research Results

### 4.1 Analysis of Sample Demographic Characteristics

Among the valid questionnaires collected, 52.81% were males and 47.19% were females. In terms of age, the proportion of 25-40 years old is 39.60%; In the field of employment, enterprises and institutions accounted for more, 31.35%; In terms of academic qualifications, bachelor or college accounted for more, 42.25%; In terms of monthly income, the number of people accounting for 5001-10,000 yuan is more, accounting for 36.31% (see Table. 1).

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the sample object

	Option	Frequency	Ratio (%)
Gender	Male	160	52.81
	Female	143	47.19
Age	Under 18 years of age	19	6.27
	18-25	76	25.08
	25-40	120	39.60
	Over 40 years old	88	29.05
Occupation	Student	88	29.04
	employees of enterprises and institutions	95	31.35
	Company staff	90	29.7
	Retired employee	19	6.28
	Other	11	3.63
Education	Junior high school and below	23	7.59
	High school or technical secondary school	98	32.34
	Bachelor or college degree	128	42.25
	Postgraduate and above	54	17.82
Monthly income	Within 3000 yuan	58	19.14
	3001-5000 yuan	66	21.78
	5001-10000yuan	110	36.31
	More than 10,001 yuan	69	22.77

**4.2 Structural Equation Model Analysis**

**Reliability and Validity Analysis.** The reliability analysis of each variable was carried out through SPSS27.0. The reliability and validity of real self-consistency, ideal self-consistency, satisfaction, recommendation intention and overall scale were as follows: 0.853, 0.814, 0.846, 0.788, 0.911, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of each scale were all greater than 0.70, indicating that the reliability of each variable was relatively reliable.

When testing the converging validity of the scale, it is necessary to test the standardized factor load of the item, and then calculate the mean variance extraction (AVE) and combined reliability (CR) of the latent variable according to the standardized factor load of each item of each latent variable is greater than 0.6, and the AVE of each latent variable is greater than 0.5, and the combined reliability is greater than 0.7. It shows that the convergent validity is good (see Table. 2).

**Table 2.** Convergent validity

Variable	serial number	Estimate	AVE	CR
True Self-consistency	TS	0.732	0.594	0.854
		0.788		
		0.777		
Ideal Self-consistency	IS	0.784	0.527	0.816
		0.763		

		0.789		
		0.693		
		0.651		
		0.793		
Satisfaction	CS	0.700	0.582	0.847
		0.776		
		0.778		
Recommendation Intention	RI	0.715	0.556	0.789
		0.737		
		0.783		

According to the results of the discrimination validity test, there is a significant positive correlation between true self-consistency, ideal self-consistency, satisfaction and recommendation intention. The arithmetic square root of each latent variable AVE is greater than the correlation coefficient between this latent variable and other latent variables, indicating that the discrimination validity is good (see Table. 3).

**Table 3.** Discriminative validity test

	RI	CS	IS	TS
RI	0.771			
CS	0.692**	0.726		
IS	0.635**	0.573**	0.763	
TS	0.681**	0.642**	0.701**	0.746
AVE	0.594	0.527	0.582	0.556

Note: The bold number located on the diagonal is the arithmetic square root of the latent variable AVE; \*\* At level 0.01 (two-tailed), the correlation was significant.

**Analysis of the Overall Fit Degree of the Model.** All the fitting criteria meet the standards, and the goodness of fit of the structural model passes the test. Therefore, the assumed model is regarded as the final structural equation model (see Table. 4).

**Table 4.** Model fitting degree analysis

Fitness test indicators	X2/df	GFI	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
Critical value	<3	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08
Model result	2.131	0.925	0.956	0.945	0.956	0.061

**Path analysis and Hypothesis Testing.** The significance of the model path is interpreted according to the T-value and P-value. When the T-value is greater than 1.96 and the P-value is less than 0.05, it indicates that there is a significant influence relationship between the two latent variables, and the path coefficient and significance of the model standardization and the relevant research hypothesis testing (see Table. 5).

**Table 5.** Path analysis and hypothesis testing

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
CS <--- TS	0.483	0.097	4.992	***
CS <--- IS	0.297	0.113	2.626	0.009
RI <--- CS	0.368	0.076	4.811	***
RI <--- TS	0.250	0.104	2.418	0.004
RI <--- IS	0.270	0.093	2.908	0.018

Note: \*\*\* means  $p < 0.001$

Hypothesis 1a, hypothesis 1b, hypothesis 2, hypothesis 3a, and hypothesis 3b have significant p-values, so accept the above five hypotheses. In other words, two dimensions of self-consistency, real self-consistency and ideal self-consistency, positively and significantly affect satisfaction and recommendation intention. Satisfaction is positively correlated with recommendation intention.

**Mediation Effect Analysis.** In this paper, the Bootstrap test method was applied to conduct 5000 repeated samples on the data. The mediating effect value of true self-consistency→satisfaction→ recommendation intention was 0.178, and the 95%Bootstrap confidence interval was [0.081, 0.319], excluding 0 interval. Therefore, the mediating effect of satisfaction existed. Suppose that H4a is true; The mediating effect value of ideal self-consistency →satisfaction→recommendation intention is 0.109, and the 95% Bootstrap confidence interval is [0.025, 0.250], excluding the 0 interval. Therefore, the mediating effect of satisfaction exists. Hypothesis H4b is valid.

## 5 Conclusion and Discussion

### 5.1 Research Conclusions

Tourists' self-consistency has a direct effect on recommendation intention, which confirms the relationship between self-consistency and recommendation intention. It shows that when tourists choose rural homestays, they are not only looking for a place to stay, but also looking for a space that can resonate with their own inner world. When the image, atmosphere or experience provided by rural homestays is highly consistent with the self-concept of tourists, it can stimulate the deep emotional connection between tourists and rural homestays, thus enhancing the willingness of tourists to recommend by word of mouth.

The self-consistency of tourists can produce satisfaction through rural homestay, and then affect the recommendation intention. This shows that when the style, service and experience of rural homestays are consistent with the personal preferences of tourists, tourists will feel satisfied, and this satisfactory experience will stimulate the desire of tourists to share, and they are willing to recommend homestays to relatives and friends, thus further enhancing the reputation and influence of homestays.

## 5.2 Management Enlightenment

Rural guesthouse operators should understand the self-concept of the target group of tourists, including their values, interests, preferences, lifestyles and psychological needs. Through precise market research, we design accommodation environment, cultural experience and service details that are highly compatible with tourists' self-concept. At the same time, through social media, online evaluation and other channels to collect feedback from tourists, and constantly optimize and adjust business strategies to better meet the needs of tourists.

The satisfaction of tourists is the key to the success of country homestays. In order to improve tourist satisfaction, operators need to pay attention to the whole process of service from booking, check-in, experience to check-out. First of all, we must ensure that the hardware facilities of rural homestays meet or exceed the expectations of tourists; Secondly, we should pay attention to the improvement of service quality, including warm and thoughtful reception, professional and meticulous service attitude and timely and effective problem solving ability.

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