

# Research on the Quality and Customer Satisfaction of Rural Homestays in Hebei, China

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**Abstract:** *With the fast-paced lifestyle in urban areas, an increasing number of people are seeking to reconnect with nature, seeking solace and relaxation amidst natural surroundings. Rural tourism has emerged as a popular form of tourism, with many opting to stay in rural hotels, particularly rural homestays. Rural homestays are a vital and advantageous resource for the development of rural tourism, contributing positively to the integration of rural resources, promoting employment and entrepreneurship among farmers, cultivating rural service talent, and comprehensively managing rural ecology. They play an active role in promoting the rapid development of the rural economy. To investigate the personal characteristics of tourists and their satisfaction with rural homestay services, a survey was conducted in Hebei Province, including the regions of Xingtai, Zhangjiakou, Qinhuangdao, Baoding, and Shijiazhuang. A survey comprising 500 questionnaires was distributed and face-to-face interviews were held with rural homestay guests. The study analyzed the current development status of rural homestays in Hebei Province, identified problems and shortcomings in their development, and explored ways to promote their positive and vigorous development. The study also presented some constructive recommendations for the development of rural homestays, rural tourism, and the economic growth of Hebei Province, China.*

**Keywords:** *Rural homestay in Hebei Province, Customer satisfaction, Service quality*

## 1. Introduction

The tourism industry was immediately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the homestay industry was affected as well, entering a freezing period in early 2020. However, it is worth noting that homestay industry support and regulation were combined by various provincial and municipal government departments in China, and the homestay industry itself made efforts during the epidemic period to enter a standardized operation stage. A survey conducted in the second half of 2020 showed that there was a stronger demand for leisure vacations in homestays, and tourists had a clearer direction for the quality of homestays, particularly in terms of health and safety. The reassurance of residents became an essential factor in the popularity of homestays, and many homestay owners realized the importance of good linen hygiene and providing safe drinking water in a timely manner.

Guo Jurong mentioned in the Bluebook of Homestays that 76.91% of homestays are in rural areas by 2020<sup>[1]</sup>, and rural homestays can play a transformative role in advancing the progress of national tourism. They have become a new engine for promoting cultural tourism integration and emerging tourism consumption, and rural tourism has become a major driving force in the revitalization of rural regions. The beautiful economy and beautiful China are lit up by Chinese rural homestays. The development of rural homestays is crucial for China's rural tourism and economic growth.

The co-construction and sharing between hosts and guests are where the essence of rural homestays lies. In the context of the experience economy, satisfaction is sought by tourists through the ambiance, interaction, and outcomes of this space<sup>[2]</sup>. The success of homestay owners, as well as rural employment, rural economy, rural society, and rural capabilities, are largely driven by the accommodation experience of homestays. Therefore, the form of accommodation and the development of people mainly rely on the accommodation experience of homestays.

Rural homestays play a positive role in integrating rural resources, promoting farmers' employment

and entrepreneurship, cultivating rural service talents, and comprehensively managing rural ecology while actively promoting the rapid development of rural economy, making them an indispensable and advantageous resource for developing rural tourism.

In this study, Hebei rural homestay customers are taken as the research object, and the evaluation indicators are identified through literature, network evaluation, and other methods. Based on homestay customer satisfaction, the following research is conducted: the Hebei rural homestay customer satisfaction evaluation system is built to investigate customer satisfaction with rural homestay services. The sample characteristics and consumption characteristics of rural homestay customers, such as the type of customer travel and the type of services expected to be provided by homestay, are studied. The service quality of rural homestay in Hebei province is studied through the evaluation of customer service index satisfaction of rural homestay.

By investigating and analyzing, the existing problems of rural homestays in Hebei Province can be identified, and targeted and implementable strategies can be put forward to promote the sustainable development of rural homestays. This study contributes to the revitalization of rural tourism and economic development.

## **2. Review of related literature**

### **2.1. Rural homestay**

Homestays often offer a middle ground for visitors - they are more personal than hotels yet offer a more formal setting than staying with friends and relatives. Homestays can provide visitors with amenities that may not be available with traditional types of accommodation. This could range from having a real cultural experience with the person living in the home to having a full home, with all the amenities [3].

The essence of homestay experience includes local characteristic culture, homestay host and tourists, and staying in a local home where guests can interact with hosts is considered to offer a better cultural experience than traditional hotels. Farmhouse and guesthouses are also considered forms of homestay, where farmers use their own courtyards to provide short-term accommodations for profit, with family members serving as the main service personnel and the possibility of employing a small number of helpers. According to the Tourism Bureau of Taiwan Transportation Bureau, Homestay refers to the use of spare rooms in residential homes, enabling guests to immerse themselves in local culture, nature, and other activities such as farming, forestry, fishing, and animal husbandry, while simultaneously boosting family income [4]. Commercial residence is a type of accommodation wherein visitors pay to stay in a private home, interacting and cohabitating with the hosts.

The above-mentioned country house review describes the concept of homestay as described by different scholars in different countries and regions, with significant differences in business model and operators from the rural homestays in northern China recently developed in this study. Rural homestays in Hebei Province refer to for-profit accommodation, where local farmers, homeowners, and their families use their own houses in rural and remote mountainous areas to provide accommodation and food for tourists, unlike traditional hotels and guesthouses.

### **2.2. Customer satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is the extent to which customers are content with a company's products or services and capabilities [5]. Companies can obtain valuable information about customer satisfaction through surveys and ratings, which can be used to improve their products and services. Delivering an exceptional customer experience that exceeds expectations is the key to achieving customer satisfaction. Customers will associate positive emotions with a brand when they are pleasantly surprised. However, satisfying customers goes beyond simply providing basic services; their expectations directly impact their perceived value and satisfaction. Perceived quality and perceived value are two main factors that can significantly and positively impact customer satisfaction. Customers' expectations are positively correlated with their perceived quality, and both perceived quality and the perceived value of a company's products and services has a direct, positive correlation with customer satisfaction. The three dimensions of perceived quality - environmental quality, service quality, and leisure quality - directly and positively impact the final perceived quality [6].

This study's customer satisfaction survey encompasses not only customers' perceptions of service

quality and service value but also the human, natural, and objective market environments of rural homestays. In running rural homestays, placing customer satisfaction first, followed by reducing customer consumption costs and ensuring convenience during the purchase process, is essential. Effective marketing communication should also be implemented to meet the needs of customers and exceed their expectations, with tourists at the center of the strategy. Service quality is the object of customers' perception, and quality is integral to the production and trading process. Every service worker in a country homestay contributes to customers' perceived quality. Homestay external marketing must be integrated with quality management. Customer satisfaction is closely linked to service quality and service cost performance. High-cost experiences do not necessarily equate to greater happiness since the product does not seem worth the high-quality experience's cost. Interactive and interpersonal experiences, sensory experiences (touch, taste, smell, etc.), and amusing, interesting, or thrilling activities and individuals (tour guides, staff) typically contribute to customer happiness<sup>[7]</sup>. Any disagreement or complaint can have a detrimental effect on overall customer satisfaction, so homestay owners should be vigilant for signs of dissatisfaction and address service or product issues promptly. The happiness resulting from a positive travel experience will permeate all aspects of the journey. To investigate customer satisfaction further, this study analyzed the marketing environment of rural villages in Hebei Province, incorporating factors such as culture, natural environment, political policies, customers, economic environment, competitors, technology, and internal management. These factors have a positive correlation with customer satisfaction.

### **2.3. *SERVQUAL theory***

The SERVQUAL theoretical framework was developed by American marketers A. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in the late 1980s, and is based on Total Quality Management (TQM) theory. It is widely used in the service industry to assess its quality. This model is built on the concept of "expectation-perception", where the user's expectations set the foundation of quality service and, thus, the goal is to exceed such expectations. According to this model, the SERVQUAL score is derived by calculating the difference between the user's expected service level and the perceived level. It consists of five dimensions: physical facilities, reliability, responsiveness, security, and emotional engagement, each of which can be further broken<sup>[8]</sup>. Through questionnaires, users are scored on their expectations, actual feelings, and minimum acceptable value for each question.

This study has combined the five dimensions of SERVQUAL with the two dimensions of customer experience perception and the human and natural environment to design a questionnaire that conforms to the quality satisfaction survey of rural homestays. The questionnaire includes 19 indicators covering aspects such as the humanities, natural environment, homestay hygiene, safety, transportation convenience, booking and check-in convenience, and affordability of the owner. By using this questionnaire, the service quality of rural homestays can be investigated and analyzed. Based on customer satisfaction, the service design and innovation of rural homestays can be improved. It is argued that the attitude of proactive service providers towards change, innovation and learning is critical in improving business operations. Therefore, the vision of rural homestay operators is particularly important, and service designers should be actively required to have a high degree of willingness to change, as they are more knowledgeable about the internal factors of service operation and service operation design.

### **2.4. *Rural tourism***

Rural tourism emerged in Europe in the early 19th century. Initially, it referred to the practice of urban residents visiting their relatives in rural areas and engaging in occasional vacation sightseeing activities. However, in modern times, rural tourism has evolved into a new form of tourism, which first appeared in the 1980s in rural areas with abundant sightseeing and leisure resources, as well as folk festival-themed activities. This form of tourism has developed rapidly after the 1990s, with sightseeing and leisure vacation becoming the primary purpose<sup>[9]</sup>. People's travel time has become more flexible, and their motivations and time to travel have changed significantly.

Rural tourism not only increases the income of local farmers but also creates employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. It is an effective way to revitalize rural economies. On China's fifth Tourism Day in 2015, Vice Premier Wang Yang emphasized the importance of rural tourism and its potential for poverty alleviation. Rural tourism in China has evolved from sightseeing to vacation experiences. Rural lifestyle hotels now offer safe, quiet, and beautiful environments, colorful entertainment, recreation facilities, and high-quality services that improve physical and mental health.

Hebei Province in China has rich tourism resources, including 12 national-level historical and cultural villages, 8 national-level historical and cultural towns, 13 national-level natural reserves, and 4 World cultural Heritage sites. From the shore of the Bohai Sea to the plain countryside, from Bashang grassland to Yanshan and Taihang, Hebei has a profound history and culture, and an extensive transportation network. It is the only place in China with coastal areas, plains, lakes, hills, mountains, and plateaus. These resources provide ample opportunities for the development of rural homestays in the area. However, the tourism season in Hebei is relatively short, and homestays are often vacant for extended periods, leading to an overflow of customers during the peak season.

### 2.5. Synthesis Table on rural homestay and tourism (Table 1)

Table 1: Literature synthesis on rural homestay and tourism

Subject Field	Viewpoint	Source	Focus
Rural homestay	Farmers use their empty houses to receive visitors and their families as service workers <sup>[10]</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tian Xizhou, 2002</li> <li>• Zhang Jingyu, 2008</li> <li>• Peng Qing, Zeng Guojun, 2010</li> </ul>	Emphasizes the contribution of homestay to the re-employment of rural farmers
	Tourists visiting rural sites have the possibility of lodging in established residential properties and experiencing a more intimate connection with the local culture and environment by engaging in various activities such as discovering native environmental resources, farming, forestry, angling, and animal husbandry operations. At the same time, it presents a viable source of income for rural households.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureau of Taiwan Transportation Bureau</li> </ul>	The combination of rural homestay and rural tourism projects is very good, which emphasizes the advantages of rural homestay+ model
	Home Based Business Business Home Business <sup>[11]</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Di Domenico &amp; Lynch, 2007, p. 321</li> <li>• McIntosh, Lynch, &amp; Sweeney, 2011, p. 511</li> </ul>	Frameworks and models of approach for analysis and comparison
	One of commercial residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynch (2005) <sup>[11]</sup></li> </ul>	A business model that emphasizes crossing personal, commercial, and socializing
Customer satisfaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This study</li> </ul>	The customer's perception of service quality and service value, as well as the human and natural environment of the homestay, are integrated into the research of customer satisfaction.
SERVQUAL theory	Five dimensions: physical facilities, reliability, responsiveness, security, and emotional engagement <sup>[12]</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A.Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, in the late 1980s.</li> </ul>	The assessment of customer satisfaction on rural homestays is not meticulous enough
Rural tourism	Tourism in rural areas is a result of the collective effort of locals and the general population, providing an effective way to alleviate poverty in impoverished regions and presenting an invaluable route of escape for those struggling with poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On May 19, 2015, the fifth China Tourism Day, Vice Premier Wang Yang of The State Council</li> </ul>	Strengthen the importance of rural tourism to rural economic development
	Rural tourism in China has gradually transformed from sightseeing experience to vacation experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chen Miaoqiang, president of Hangzhou New Century Hotel Group</li> </ul>	Illustrate the evolution and trend of rural tourism

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study reviews the dimensions of service quality evaluation and the satisfaction theory of customer perception of service quality and service value. These theories are applied to the study of different businesses and customer satisfaction. This study attempts to construct this theoretical framework and try to find that these theories is suitable for the study of the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in rural homestay by following the theoretical framework Figure 1.

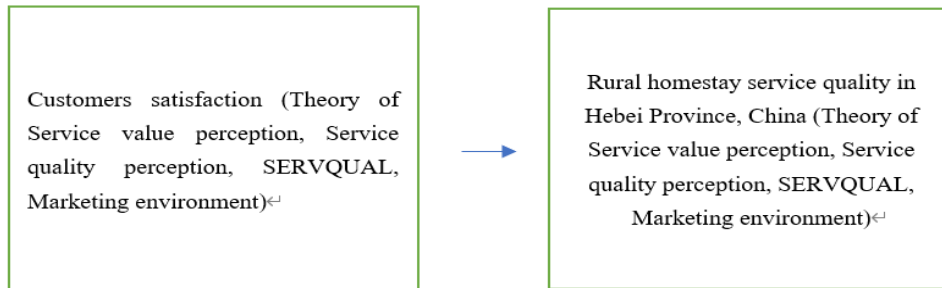


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

### 4. Research Design

The researchers chose descriptive and relevant research designs to measure variables and describe the relationship between variables. This study used quantitative methods to determine the positive relationship between rural home stay and customer satisfaction in Hebei Province, China.

### 5. Background of the homestay of Hebei

The development of rural homestay in China began relatively late, from the late 1980s to the present, and it has evolved from explosive growth into a slow growth period. Traditional farmhouse and scenic spots no longer satisfy people's needs, and they now prefer exquisite and high-end homestay leisure tourism [13]. However, compared with South and Southwest China, the village homestay in Hebei started late and developed slowly. The tourism season in Hebei is distinct, with only 4-5 months of peak season in a year. As a result, homestays remain vacant for a long time, but demand exceeds supply during the peak season, resulting in an overflow of customers. The customer base is geographically limited, with low attraction to tourists from outside the province, and the tourist season is weak with an obvious peak season, resulting in insufficient tourist carrying capacity during the peak season. Moreover, the relative lag of economic development in the north compared to the south of China also poses a challenge to the current development.

Currently, village homestay operation in Hebei province is characterized by small scale, limited number of bedrooms, direct participation of family members in the reception of tourists, and low labor costs. To promote village homestay, the Hebei Provincial government has revitalized the rural economy, vigorously developed rural tourism, and introduced policies to encourage village homestay. In recent years, the province has organized various activities to promote rural tourism, such as the Hebei Province Rural Tourism and Village Homestay Development and Taihang Mountain Tourism Poverty Alleviation Promotion activity, which was held in Yi County, Baoding City in September 2020. This event aimed to help revitalize the rural economy, promote Hebei's time-honored rural tourism resources, and alleviate poverty.

To further develop village homestay, Fengning County of Hebei Province launched and built 11 demonstration villages of homestays in 2021. By 2025, the county plans to build 30 homestay villages, forming a homestay industrial structure featuring high, medium, high-end, and strong competitiveness. Similarly, Chengde City planned to build a total of 103 residential economy demonstration villages, develop 1451 various types of residential accommodations, and construct 13622 rooms by 2022. This initiative is expected to drive more than 15000 villagers to share prosperity and achieve an annual per capita income increase of 7000 yuan, creating a new path for rural revitalization.

As of the end of September 2022, the number of homestay enterprises registered in Hebei Province had reached over 6200, with more than 1600 added in the past year, according to the data from Tianyan

Survey. To cultivate homestays as a new highlight and growth point in the cultural and tourism industry of the province, the Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism plans to focus on cultivating and supporting 100 high-quality homestays every year, cultivating 300 high-quality homestays for three consecutive years, launching a few demonstration benchmarks for the development of homestays, and constructing the brand of "Jiyi Rural Residence." As shown in Figures 2 and 3, it is a popular rural homestay in Xingtai, Hebei, China.

In October 2022, the Hebei Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism held an online activity to cultivate, improve, share, and exchange high-quality rural homestays in the whole province. It is proposed that to further improve the quality, agglomeration, branding, and industrialization of rural homestays in Hebei province, the provincial Culture and Tourism Department should carry out a special action to upgrade the rural homestays, integrate experts in planning and design, management and operation, cultural inheritance, cultural innovation and development, product planning, and marketing promotion of well-known homestays inside and outside the province and set up a team of homestays assistance experts who will implement precise matching to "bring wisdom to our door" [14].



Figure 2: Xingtai County Stone House Homestay (source: 360 image)

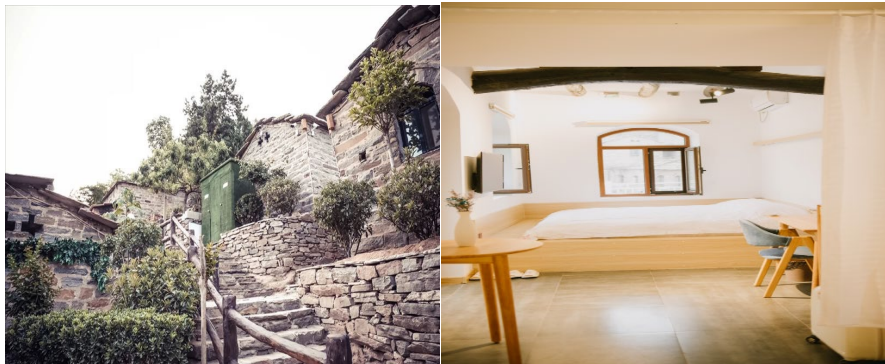


Figure 3: Xiaogeliao Village Homestay (source: 360 image)

## 6. Influence of service quality of rural homestay on customer satisfaction

Service quality refers to the perception of customers and cannot be separated from the production and trading process. Quality can only be achieved during the moments of interaction between buyers and sellers [15]. The contribution of every service worker in a country homestay is crucial to the perceived quality of the customers. To effectively market homestays, external marketing efforts must be integrated with quality management. The level of customer satisfaction is closely tied to service quality and the cost performance of the service. High-cost experiences do not always equate to greater happiness as the value of an experience is determined by its interactive and interpersonal facets, sensory stimulations (touch, taste, smell), and entertaining, intriguing, or thrilling activities and personnel (tour guides, staff) [16]. Any dissatisfaction or complaint can have a negative effect, and homestay owners should monitor disappointment and take measures to identify and address any problems with the service or product. A pleasant travel experience leads to overall happiness, affecting all aspects of the journey.

To better understand customer satisfaction, a study was conducted on the marketing environment of villagers in Hebei Province. The advantages of rural homestay development include the cultural and natural environment, while political policies and customers are opportunities. The economic environment

and competitors pose threats, and technology and internal management represent weaknesses of rural homestay marketing. These factors are positively correlated with customer satisfaction. The vision of rural homestay operators is essential, and service designers should be proactive in embracing change as they are familiar with the internal factors of service operation and design. This approach will positively impact the improvement of rural homestay services.

**6.1. Characteristics of rural homestay customers**

This study uses the methods of field visits and questionnaires to interview and investigate the satisfaction of rural homestays in Hebei Province. On weekends and holidays, the author went to Zhangbei Bashang Grassland, Zhangjiakou, Tianhe Scenic Spot, Xingtai City, Hebei Province, Luluo Town, Qinhuangdao Shanhaiguan and other rural homestays to interview and survey the customers of local rural homestays. A total of 50 customers were interviewed face to face, and the WeChat widget distributed questionnaires, and 487 valid questionnaires were collected. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is composed of the basic information of customers, including their gender, age, income and occupation. The main purpose of the design of the scale is to understand the basic information of customers through this part of content and find the correlation between the basic information of customers and the home stay products in the data analysis. The first part obtains the sample data of customer characteristics of rural homestays, as shown in Figure 4. The difference in sex ratio is not large, with males slightly higher than females, as shown in Table 2.

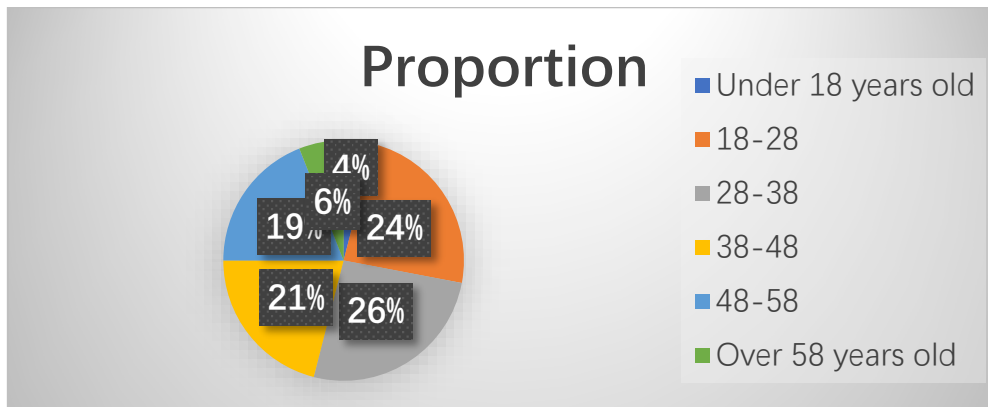


Figure 4: The age distribution of sample customers

Table 2: The gender ratio of sample customers

Customers	Ratio
Male	53.2%
Female	45.8%

**6.2. Analysis of sample data results**

The study found that the highest proportion of consumers of rural homestays belong to the age group of 28-38, followed by 18-28 and 38-48 age groups, while other age groups have fewer customers. The author's interviews suggest that the concentration of customers in these age groups is due to several reasons. Firstly, these groups are relatively young and enjoy weekend activities such as hiking and mountain climbing to alleviate work-related stress. Secondly, they tend to have higher overall incomes and prefer to take their families to rural areas to enjoy fresh air and nature's beauty on weekends.

**6.3. A survey of customers' satisfaction with the service quality of rural homestays**

The second part of this research questionnaire is based on the five dimensions of customer perceived service quality: reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness. It includes 19 relevant indicators from four dimensions: the unique characteristics of rural homestays, the hardware and software service quality of homestays, the natural and cultural environment of homestays, and customer experience perception. These indicators include cultural and natural environment, historical and cultural heritage, decoration style, online reviews, transportation accessibility, safety and security, pricing transparency, ease of booking and check-in, staff service attitude, guest room amenities, guest complaints resolution, food quality, guest room cleanliness, hardware facilities, and transparency of billing.

Respondents are asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each indicator on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 stands for "very dissatisfied" and 5 for "very satisfied". This study calculates the average, median scores, and standard deviation for each indicator to understand the current state of service quality for rural homestays in Hebei Province. See Table 3.

Table 3: Customer satisfaction survey

Indicators	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
Cultural environment	15.2	32.6	43.5	4.3	4.3	3.5	3	15.6654269
natural environment	19.6	43.5	34.8	2.2	0	3.9	4	17.2527563
Historical background	13	26.1	45.7	8.7	6.5	3.3	3	14.53712489
Style of Decoration	10.9	32.6	47.8	4.3	4.3	3.4	3	17.36311032
word of mouth	13	37	43.5	4.3	2.2	3.5	3.5	17.05039589
Accessibility of traffic	10.7	34.8	41.3	34.8	10.9	3.4	3	13.0370242
Safety of life and property	8.7	39.1	39.1	8.7	4.3	3.4	3	15.69387142
Accommodation Experience	13	21.7	47.8	15.2	2.2	3.3	3	15.26176923
Convenience of booking and check-in	13	32.6	41.3	8.7	4.3	3.4	3	14.39185881
Attitude of staff service	13	26.1	54.3	2.2	4.3	3.4	3	21.08571708
Accommodation cost ratio	8.7	41.3	39.1	8.7	2.2	3.5	3.5	16.67764971
Feedback to guest complaints	10.9	17.4	52.2	17.4	2.2	3.2	3	17.02943334
Taste of food	13	26.1	50	8.7	2.2	3.4	3	16.91590967
Safety of food	6.5	26.1	56.5	6.5	4.3	3.2	3	19.9019999
Comfort of Guest Room	10.9	26.1	47.8	10.9	4.3	3.3	3	15.63432122
Cleanliness of guest room	6.5	32.6	47.8	8.7	4.3	3.3	3	18.41001347
Usability of hardware facilities	8.7	23.9	52.2	13	2.2	3.2	3	17.58169503
Usability of software facilities	15.2	23.9	56.5	2.2	2.2	3.5	3	20.02088909
Transparency of consumption accounts	10.9	26.1	52.2	4.3	6.5	3.3	3	17.80786343

#### 6.4. Analysis of customer satisfaction with the service quality of rural homestay

Based on the quantitative results of the 19 indicators in the four aspects, the natural environment of homestays received the highest median score of 4, followed by word of mouth and price performance ratio, both with a median score of 3.5. Most of the standard deviations are below 21, showing that all the data are less spread out and the individual data points are closer to the means. The median score for the other 14 indicators is only 3, indicating that the service quality in terms of homestay operation, staff service, and hardware and software is still at a low level of development. Therefore, the following problems exist in the service quality of rural homestays in Hebei:

- 1) The staff lack service awareness and have weak emergency handling abilities.
- 2) The overall sanitary environment is poor, and the hardware facilities are incomplete and inconvenient.
- 3) While the rural food has farmhouse characteristics, the sanitary conditions are not up to standard, leading to customer dissatisfaction.
- 4) There is no clear billing system for some transactions, leading to customer mistrust.
- 5) The decoration of some homestays does not highlight the rural cultural characteristics and appears homogenous.
- 6) The vicious competition among rural homestays is of low quality and not conducive to the sound development of the industry.



## **7. Strategies to improve customer satisfaction of rural homestay**

Based on the survey and research data presented above, this study suggests the following strategies to improve the service quality of rural homestays, meet or even surpass customer expectations, and enhance customer satisfaction:

### ***7.1. Enhance the professional service awareness of homestay owners and staff, provide professional training, and improve service quality***

Currently, most rural tourism homestays in Hebei are operated by owners and their family members, resulting in service staff who may lack a professional attitude towards service. This can lead to customer homestay experiences that fall short of expectations. For instance, rural tourism homestays serve as an important channel for introducing customers to local culture, customs, and traditions. Through professional training, homestay staff can learn about the unique features of the local culture, provide personalized services to customers during their rural trips, anticipate customer needs during the service process, and provide effective services accordingly. Additionally, staff should respond promptly to customer feedback, such as offering breakfast and a free guide to resolve minor conflicts encountered by customers.

### ***7.2. Improve service quality by optimizing homestay hardware and software supporting facilities***

Many of Hebei's rural tourism homestays are formed by transforming idle rural houses with a sense of historical charm, like the Yingtian Stone Ancient Village, Stone House, and Stone Village Road in the Taihang Mountains. However, the indoor hardware facilities are often outdated due to their long history. Transforming these homestays requires not only material and financial investment but also the involvement of professional designers and the integration of technological products to improve comfort and safety.

### ***7.3. Utilize rural collective power to plan for coordinated development of rural homestays, adopt the "Enterprise+Village Collective Cooperative" model, and create a homestay+ model to improve service quality***

Village committees can plan for rural development based on the unique natural environment of each village. For example, in Luluo Town, Xingtai City, Hebei, rivers pass through the villages, and rural collective investment has established a tourist town integrating homestays, characteristic fish feasts, fishing, children's playgrounds, parks, and picking gardens, achieving good results. In Guojiatun Town, Longhua County, Hebei, the focus is on developing the "Rural homestay integrate characteristic agricultural product planting project" with a comprehensive development direction of three industries: forest hot spring tourism, ecological sightseeing agriculture, and characteristic aquaculture<sup>[17]</sup>. The town plans to transform and replace 40 idle rural residential areas through independent management, cooperative management, and entrusted management to develop the rural tourism homestay economy.

### ***7.4. The government can provide subsidies for the transformation of rural homestays through preferential policies to support farmers' entrepreneurship and promote rural economic development***

Financial support, tax relief, and free training for homestay service personnel can be implemented to encourage the positive development of homestays, boost rural tourism, increase villagers' economic income, and revitalize the rural economy.

## **8. Conclusion**

As the tourism industry continues to grow, personalized tourism consumption is becoming increasingly popular. Homestay culture satisfies the inherent needs of these personalized tourists, providing a good opportunity for the development of rural homestays. In Hebei province, the development trend of the rural homestay industry will inevitably move in four directions in the future.

1) The quality and service of rural homestays will continue to improve as owners explore business methods, adapt to customer needs, and receive strong support from national policies for rural development.

2) The personalized service characteristics of rural homestays will become increasingly prominent, as they can cater to the diverse needs of different customer groups and create unique products based on their own advantages.

3) Brand chain operation of rural homestays will focus on exploring the cultural connotations of different regions, highlighting the unique characteristics of each village, and enhancing the brand charm.

4) Clustering of rural homestays will become more prevalent as they integrate with relevant industries, partners, financial institutions, and even competitors, forming unique competitive advantage economies with distinctive characteristics in various regions.

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