

การพัฒนาศักยภาพของโฮมสเตย์จิ่วฉวน สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน The Potential Development of Jiuquan Homestay, China

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บทคัดย่อ

สภาพแวดล้อมของเมืองที่เร่งรีบในปัจจุบัน ผู้คนต่างมองหาการพักผ่อนในชนบทมากขึ้นเพื่อบรรเทาความเครียดจากการทำงาน ส่งผลให้การท่องเที่ยวชนบทเติบโตอย่างรวดเร็ว แนวโน้มนี้ได้กระตุ้นการพัฒนาที่พักสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยว โดยเฉพาะโฮมสเตย์ที่กลายเป็นที่นิยมอย่างมากในหมู่นักเดินทาง งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งสำรวจสถานการณ์ปัจจุบันและศึกษาศักยภาพการพัฒนาของโฮมสเตย์ในจิ่วฉวน งานวิจัยนี้คัดเลือกผู้มีส่วนร่วมในงานวิจัย โดยวิธีเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบอย่างเจาะจง ประกอบด้วยเจ้าของโฮมสเตย์ 4 คนและนักท่องเที่ยว 76 คน โดยการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ปัจจัยต่างที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการเลือกโฮมสเตย์ของนักท่องเที่ยว ได้แก่ ประสบการณ์ในชนบท คุณภาพการบริการ การเดินทางที่สะดวก สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกที่ครบครัน ความสะดวกสบายและการมีส่วนร่วม และการบริการที่อบอุ่นและเอาใจใส่ของพนักงาน ภาครัฐควรให้การสนับสนุนและคำแนะนำด้านนโยบาย รวมทั้งเน้นย้ำให้ผู้ประกอบการโฮมสเตย์ให้ความสำคัญกับการเลือกทำเลที่ตั้งที่เหมาะสม สิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกที่เพียงพอ การดำเนินงานและการจัดการที่มีประสิทธิภาพ และบุคลากรที่มีคุณภาพสูงในการให้บริการ

คำสำคัญ: โฮมสเตย์ การพัฒนาศักยภาพ การท่องเที่ยวเมืองจิ่วฉวน การท่องเที่ยวชนบท

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Abstract

In today's fast-paced urban environment, people increasingly seek rural getaways to relieve work-related stress, leading to the rapid growth of rural tourism. This trend has spurred the development of tourist accommodations, with homestays becoming particularly popular among travelers. This research project aimed to explore the current situation and investigate the potential development of Jiuquan Homestay. The research involved purposively selected participants, including 4 homestay owners and 76 tourists, who were interviewed in-depth. The research results found that the various factors influencing tourists' choices of homestays, such as rural experiences, service quality, convenient transportation, comprehensive facilities, comfort and engagement, and warm, attentive staff services. There should be government policy support and guidance for homestay operators to focus on strategic location selection, adequate supporting facilities, effective operation and management, and high-quality service personnel.

Keywords: Homestay, Potential Development, Jiuquan City Tourism, Rural Tourism

Introduction

In today's world, tourism has become a lifestyle trend. With the improvement of living conditions and increased consumer spending, the demand for tourism is steadily rising. Rural tourism is generally favored by people because it allows them to get closer to nature, experience popular and exotic, interesting, and participatory activities. It satisfies people's desire for authentic cultural and ecological experiences and has significant potential for rural development. The modern tourism industry is continuously evolving, and rural tourism has been popular since its inception (Saxena et al., 2007). In China, the city dwellers temporarily escape the hustle and bustle of urban life to return to the countryside, relieve stress, and immerse themselves in the simple and joyful rural lifestyle. Additionally, their souls are enriched by the rural culture. Therefore, rural tourism not only meets the travel needs of tourists but also contributes to the advancement of new rural construction, drawing widespread attention from the government. Concurrently, the government has introduced measures to stimulate consumption, leading to the smooth circulation of the domestic economy and bringing a new dawn to the tourism industry. China's tourism industry is poised for rapid growth soon.

As an important tourist route in Western China, the Silk Road Tourism Circle has attracted a large number of tourists with its rich history, culture, and unique natural scenery. As a core node city on the Silk Road, Jiuquan has received more and more attention. This city has conscientiously implemented various national, provincial, and municipal arrangements for the development of rural tourism. Focusing on the goals of "cultural prosperity, ecological beauty, and people's prosperity", Jiuquan City has continued to promote

cultural tourism to revitalize and empower rural areas. It has focused on creating rural tourism demonstration brands and strives to develop a high-quality rural revitalization "tourism version." By constructing characteristic tourist towns and homestays, Jiuquan City organizes rural leisure activities such as picking characteristic agricultural products, agricultural tourism, summer vacations, and fishing.

Jiuquan City insists on taking rural tourism as an important starting point to implement the rural revitalization strategy and promote tourism poverty alleviation, and actively strives for preferential policies at all levels to promote the continued development of rural tourism. Over the years, Jiuquan City has continuously improved rural tourism infrastructure, and has successively implemented infrastructure construction projects such as rural tourism beautification, roads, parking lots, tourist signs, tourist toilets, etc.

With the changes in the tourism market and the upgrading of consumer demands, more and more tourists have begun to pursue more personalized and in-depth travel experiences (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015). Against this background, more and more tourists choose to stay in homestays in Jiuquan. They are no longer satisfied with traditional hotel accommodation, but they are more inclined to look for personalized and distinctive accommodation experiences. By choosing homestays, tourists gain a deeper understanding of the local culture and lifestyle. They can experience local customs, taste authentic food, purchase specialty products, and interact with local people (Chitrakar, 2022). This opportunity to engage closely with the local culture makes the travel experience richer and more meaningful for tourists. In addition to cultural experiences, homestays often offer great locations and beautiful natural surroundings (Ma, 2020).

Jiuquan Homestay is of paramount importance as it not only caters to the increasing demand for rural tourism but also holds the potential to contribute significantly to the socio-economic growth of the region. Unfortunately, there are few of homestays in Jiquan which have enough quality, A lot of homestays still lack of professional required included; the homogeneity of tourism products, inadequate infrastructure and parking lots, and poor sanitary condition toilets (Li, 2019). Thus, the study from the best practice homestays will be advantage and useful to the other homestays' improvement. To delve deeper into this subject, this research project aims to explore the current situation and investigate the potential development of Jiuquan Homestay from homestay owner and tourist perspectives. This research study provides valuable information for homestay owners and government agencies to formulate more realistic and scientific policies and plans, thereby promoting the prosperity of the local tourism industry. Furthermore, doing research on Jiuquan Homestay potential is not only helps residents better inherit and carry forward their cultural traditions, but also allows tourists to have a deeper understanding of local characteristics and lifestyle as promoting the long-term sustainable development of the economy and society.

Objective

1. To explore the current situation of Jaquan Homestay, China
2. To investigate the potential development of Jiuquan Homestay, China

Literature Review

1. Rural tourism and sustainable Development

The World Conservation Program initially proposed the idea of sustainable development in 1968, and the International Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) formally used the concept of sustainable development for the first time. In 1987, Brundtland published (McCormick, 1986) After the "Our Common Future" report, sustainable development has aroused widespread international attention and has become a policy that affects the world's environment and development. Brundtland proposed that sustainable development refers to the development that meets the needs of the present generation as much as possible without compromising the ability of future generations to meet the needs.

The theory of sustainable development requires grasping the four principles of fairness, coordination, quality, and development. Among them, the principle of development is the core of the theory of sustainable development, emphasizing the long-term vision, and the principle of fairness emphasizes the intergenerational and intragenerational resource utilization and opportunities. The principle of equality and coordination emphasizes the importance of carrying capacity of resources and the environment, and the principle of quality is to improve people's quality of life and economic operation efficiency at the lowest cost of resources (Basiago, 1998).

2. Homestay requirements and standards

To promote rural tourism and support the economy of local entrepreneurs, the Chinese government also controls the quality of homestays. Guobiao or GB: the China government standards (2022) determines the requirements and classification standards for tourist homestays, including inns, villas, and similar accommodations. This document covers grades and signs, general requirements, public environment and supporting facilities, buildings and facilities, sanitation and services, as well as operation and management. For public environment and supporting facilities, the prerequisites include good accessibility and a well-preserved ecological environment. Select criteria include a homestay guidance system, convenient parking, medical facilities, dining and shopping spots, scenic areas, and a smooth mobile network. Building and facilities standards demand aesthetically coordinated appearances, properly marked guest rooms, necessary furnishings, clean bedding, sufficient lighting, and adequate sanitation facilities. Guest rooms also need to have proper heating, cooling, and ventilation. Kitchens must have disinfection and refrigeration facilities, and public spaces should be well-planned and equipped. Hygiene and service standards require cleanliness across all

areas, regular changing and disinfecting of guest room items, and pest control measures. Staff are required to be hospitable, knowledgeable, and familiar with local tourism resources, offering multilingual services and comprehensive guest support. Operational and management standards emphasize the establishment of business records, participation in industry associations, effective complaint handling, and regular maintenance. Staff training, marketing efforts, and community relations have been essential. Additionally, the ASEAN Homestay Standard (2016) sets criteria for both homestay providers and organizations, focusing on host qualifications, accommodation quality, activities, management, location, hygiene, safety, marketing, and sustainability principles. Feedback is gathered from both providers and organizations to ensure comprehensive assessment and continuous improvement in the homestay sector.

To achieve the research objective, the researcher will mix both standards from GB standard (2022) and The ASEAN Secretariat Jakarta (2016) to study the potential development of Jiuquan Homestay. The homestay factors include public environment and supporting facilities, accommodation (building and facilities), activities, operation and management, location, sanitation and services, safety and security, Marketing and sustainability principles.

Methodology

1. Research design

To ensure the objectivity of the research, the researcher employed qualitative methodology, utilizing on-site interviews as a research method. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher gains a comprehensive understanding of the development status of Jaquan’s homestay tourism, thereby providing detailed data support for subsequent analysis and research.

2. Participants

This research participants included homestay owners and Chinese tourists. To collect in-depth data, the researchers chose to use the purposive selection method to select 4 homestays in Jiuquan as research participants. The criteria for selecting homestay participants were as follows: The homestays had operated for more than 5 years. The homestays were located in different areas within the city and suburbs of Jiuquan City and the homestay designs encompassed various unique styles with diverse tourism activities. Based on these criteria, the following 4 representative homestays were included: Jiuquan Suyun Xiangzhuang, located in Suzhou District, Jiuquan City. Jinta Huyang Farmers Homestay, situated in Jinta Country, Jiuquan City. Suzhou District Huangnibao Yugu, found in Suzhou District, Jiuquan City. And Suzhou District Silk Road Flower Travel Homestay, located in Jinfosi Town, Suzhou District, Jiuquan City. Furthermore, utilizing the purposive selection method, 4 homestay owners and 76 tourists who had stayed overnight in these homestays were interviewed between April 2, 2024 to May 4, 2024 as research participants.

Table 1 The criterion of homestay owner participants

Name of homestay	Criteria			
	Year Established	Location	Style	Activities
1) Jiuquan Suyun Xiangzhuang Homestay	2016	Suzhou District	Chinese style with the traditional Northwest folk houses	Accommodation Cuisine
2) Jinta Huyang Farmers Homestay	2017	Jinta Country	Chinese style with Populus Euphratica forest ecology	Accommodation Photography
3) Suzhou District Huangnibao Yugur Style Homestay	2016	Huangnibao Yugur Township, Suzhou District	Yugur ethnic style house	Accommodation Ethnic minority Cuisine
4) Suzhou District Silk Road Flower Travel Homestay	2019	Jinfosi Town, Suzhou District	Chinese rural style	Accommodation Countryside Cuisine

After completing data collection, the researchers analyzed interview content to extract and provide in-depth interpretation for understanding qualitative data. To ensure the trustworthiness of data analysis, data triangulation was employed, confirming information obtained from multiple sources for credibility and reliability. Cross-verifying data across various times, locations, and individuals aimed to validate the consistency of the gathered information.

Results and Discussion

1. Current situation and the Potential development of homestays in Jiuquan

Suzhou District in Jiuquan City has earned renowned for its picturesque rural homestays, underscoring its rich historical significance, burgeoning tourism potential, abundant economic resources, attractive investment opportunities, and its identity as an open and inclusive city. Initially, Suzhou District pioneered the development of homestays, contributing to its emergence as a weekend leisure tourism destination. Various accommodations, including farmhouses, have flourished, with specific homestays like

Jiuquan Suyun Xiangzhuang and Jinta Huyang being highlighted. Situated in Gansu Province's Hexi Corridor, Jiuquan City is strategically located as a pivotal hub linking east to west and north to south. Suzhou District, the city's political, economic, and cultural center, boasts a rich history dating back over 2100 years. It played a significant role during the Western Han Dynasty, particularly in battles against the Xiongnu, leading to the naming of Jiuquan. The area serves as a confluence of agricultural, Western Regions, and Chinese cultures, earning recognition for its cultural heritage and tourist attractions.

Suzhou's tourism appeal lies in its diverse offerings, from historical relics and desert landscapes to unique folk scenery. It has been acknowledged internationally as a high-quality tourism destination along the Silk Road. The district's economic prosperity stems from its semi-arid climate and superior natural environment, making it conducive to modern agriculture and renewable energy development. Suzhou is renowned for its modern agriculture practices, particularly in seed production, and has become a hub for new energy industries like solar and wind power. With its proximity to key attractions like the Mogao Grottoes and the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, Suzhou is positioned as a significant investment destination within the Silk Road Economic Belt. Its status as a regional central city further enhances its appeal for development and investment, with a focus on building a robust industrial base and fostering a favorable business environment. Suzhou's openness and inclusiveness have contributed to its vibrancy, attracting diverse cultures and fostering commercial activities. It serves as a crucial transportation hub, facilitating trade and commerce across various provinces and regions. The district's commitment to innovation and improving its business environment has earned accolades, positioning it as a model city for business development.

Since 2008, the local government of Suzhou District has officially started guiding the development of homestays, including project introduction, infrastructure construction, sewage treatment, rural renovation, greening engineering, etc., and has innovated in land policies, homestay fire protection and management. With the support and guidance of the government, homestays in Suzhou District have developed rapidly. As of 2023, there were about 30 homestays in Suzhou District, Jiuquan City. Among these more than 30 homestays, the operators were mainly locals. Homestays have initially formed a clustering effect, and with more and more good projects, the concept of villagers is also changing. Many residents have renovated their houses, reduced the number of rooms, and made them into boutique homestays. Government policies and guidance should support homestay operators in prioritizing strategic location selection, sufficient supporting facilities, efficient operation and management, and maintaining high-quality service personnel. To promote local economic development, strategic location selection ensures homestays are situated in areas that attract tourists, boosting local economies and creating job opportunities. Pay attention to enterprise location selection and planning and optimize the entrepreneurial environment. First of all, small and medium-sized enterprises such as homestays should focus on screening objective environmental conditions such as transportation location, infrastructure, and business systems based on the principles of

resource scarcity, facility convenience, and market consumption power (Yang & Haoming, 2019). Secondly, examine the relevant policies of local governments to ensure that their supportive attitudes and supervision are reasonable. Finally, with local residents, employees, investors and other stakeholders actively communicate and cooperate with each other to create harmonious social network relationships. There should be supported for the following:

- 1) Infrastructure Improvement: Adequate supporting facilities such as transportation, utilities, and healthcare services enhance the overall tourist experience, encouraging repeat visits and positive reviews.
- 2) Operational Efficiency: Effective operation and management practices help homestays run smoothly, ensuring that resources are used optimally and that guest needs are met promptly.
- 3) Service Quality: High-quality service personnel ensure that guests have a pleasant and memorable experience, which is essential for word-of-mouth marketing and long-term success.
- 4) Sustainable Tourism: Government support can help homestay operators adopt sustainable practices, balancing economic benefits with environmental protection and cultural preservation.

In summary, Suzhou District in Jiuquan City has earned renowned for its picturesque rural homestays, underscoring its rich historical significance, burgeoning tourism potential, abundant economic resources, attractive investment opportunities, and its identity as an open and inclusive city.

2. Tourists' Sociodemographic

Among 76 valid questionnaires, 33 male tourists and 43 female tourists, the proportion is 43.4% and 56.5% respectively. The mainly respondents concentrate in the age group of 20-35 years old, accounting for 82.86% and more than half of the respondents, accounting for 67.3% graduated with a bachelor's or degree exceeds and 65.79% work as civil servants in public institutions. More than half of respondents had a monthly household income of 5000 to 10000yuan, accounting for 59.2%.

Through investigation, the proportion of tourists from other provinces has reached 55%, and tourists from outside the province are mainly concentrated in Zhejiang Province and Jiangsu Province. It was found that 45% of local tourists from Jiuquan come to experience homestays. Most of them made reservations through Weibo, WeChat, and mobile app software, accounting for 68.4% and 80% of them can accept the price of homestay rooms (standard rooms) below 599 yuan. The main factors considered by tourists when booking homestays are whether the price is affordable, whether the transportation is convenient, whether the infrastructure is complete, whether there are scenic spots in the surrounding area, whether the homestay environment is warm like home, and the reputation of the homestay, which account for 63.8%, 46.2%, 44.4%, 40.2%, and 39.6% of the total survey respondents, respectively. Furthermore, nearly half (45.77%) chose scenic vacation-type homestays, which was consistent with the earlier analysis indicating that tourists considered the presence of scenic spots when booking homestays. The next most popular type was the artistic experience oriented, accounting for 20.77%. This type of homestay also entailed specific

requirements for tourists themselves, predominantly attracting painters or art sketching groups. Following this was the rural experiential type, chosen by 15% of respondents.

Furthermore, the results of tourist interviews revealed that the characteristics which left a deep impression on tourists regarding Jiuquan homestays were the unique architecture and the beautiful, tranquil environment. Tourists sought warmth, comfort, and freedom, thus opting to stay overnight at homestays, perceiving them as offering a homelike ambiance and freedom. Moreover, the most satisfying factors for tourists were the strong cultural ambiance and excellent service attitude. As for the expected supporting services provided by homestays, the majority of tourists preferred amenities such as coffee and tea rooms, book bars, and small bars. This finding aligns with the earlier analysis of basic population characteristics, indicating that the majority of tourists fell within the 18 to 35 age range. During this stage, tourists tended to favor a stylish atmosphere and environment. The emphasis on "cultural flavor" as the most satisfying factor among tourists for homestays highlights that this new form of accommodation experience in mainland China not only offers novelty in architectural style and ambiance but also modernizes various services. According to homestay tourism is a personalized project that is upgraded and formed by the masses based on the personalized and characteristic hotel industry after the economic and cultural development reaches a certain stage. It makes full use of local natural landscape, residential buildings, farming culture and other resources to develop intensively. A complex integrating bars, coffee houses, folk museums, farming experience and other business formats, it not only satisfies urban residents' yearning for rural life, but also forms an advanced development model for rural tourism. Through transformation and upgrading, B&B tourism operators allow tourists to experience local rural resources, experience leisure tourism with special catering, entertainment and other services. Generally speaking, in the development process of homestay tourism, through the development of local characteristic resources, tourists can get up and experience the local natural environment and humanistic customs (Chen, 2016).

3. Tourists' Suggestions for the development of homestays

In their responses, the participants indicated that homestays could provide tourists with a sense of home, imbued with warmth, comfort, and freedom. This observation aligned with the considerations made by tourists when selecting homestay accommodations and their anticipated unique experiences during their stays. Furthermore, throughout the investigative process, tourists consistently reflected on these aspects, identifying them as the primary distinctions between homestays and other forms of lodging. Their discernment encompassed various facets, including the provision of thoughtful and distinctive services, architectural elements boasting unique features, comprehensive infrastructure, and the incorporation of advanced amenities. Additionally, homestay hosts were noted for their efforts in offering curated travel itineraries and recommendations for local cuisine, further enhancing the overall guest experience according to Pine and James (2008) described an experience as “an enterprise that uses services as the stage, commodities as props,

and consumers as the center, creating experiences that motivate consumers to participate and are worthy of their memories”. There were some examples of tourist interview transcripts as follows:

“The interior decoration of the homestay has its own characteristics, with a northwest style, but the facilities and equipment in the rooms lack local characteristics. Most of them are purchased online and do not have self-designed unique decorations. We should add some unique and artistic items!”

(Tourist interview from Jiuquan Suyun Xiangzhuang Homestay)

“It is going to be better if the homestay pay more attention to the research and development and inheritance of the Northwest's special cuisine, arrange some intangible cultural heritage performances, add some important traditional festival activities, and add more activities to interact with tourists.”

(Tourist interview from Jiuquan Suyun Xiangzhuang Homestay)

“Jiuquan homestay tourism should explore more local rural cuisine, and the ingredients should be pollution-free vegetables grown by oneself. Do not make dishes that can be eaten in star rated hotels.”

(Tourist interview from Suzhou Silk Road Flower Homestay)

“Homestays with ethnic minority characteristics should hire local ethnic minorities as service personnel. Some service etiquette should also have ethnic characteristics, such as toasting songs, and the plates for delicious food should also be ethnic. Do not use popular and non-distinctive tableware!”

(Tourist interview from Suzhou District Huangnibao Yugur Style Homestay)

Conclusions

The development of homestays in Suzhou District, Jiuquan City, highlights the area's rich historical significance, flourishing tourism potential, and attractive investment opportunities. With the pioneering efforts of Suzhou District in establishing homestays, the region has emerged as a sought-after destination for weekend leisure tourism. Situated strategically in Gansu Province's Hexi Corridor, Jiuquan City serves as a pivotal hub connecting diverse cultures and landscapes, contributing to its appeal as a high-quality tourism destination along the Silk Road. The district's economic prosperity, fueled by modern agriculture and renewable energy development, further enhances its allure for investment. With government support and innovation in policies and management, homestays in Suzhou District have flourished, attracting tourists from diverse demographics and preferences. The emphasis on providing a warm, comfortable, and culturally rich experience underscores the district's commitment to fostering an inclusive and vibrant tourism environment. After the end of the epidemic, with the rise of tourism in Northwest China, Jiuquan City not only provides traditional sightseeing tours, but also actively develops experiential tourism projects, such as desert

adventures, cultural relics tours, rural experiences, etc., enriching tourists' choices; Jiuquan has become a popular tourist destination in Gansu Province. Jiuquan City attracts a large number of domestic and foreign tourists every year, and the stable flow of tourists provides a reliable source of customers for the development of the homestay industry (Li et al, 2020).

Suggestion for further research

- 1) To study how to market and promote homestays to foreigners in order to expand benefits to secondary destinations and local entrepreneurs.
- 2) To study how to create a homestay tourism network to enable the participation of tourism stakeholders at the local, regional, and national levels for sustainable tourism

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