

Market Rationality or Cultural Nostalgia? A Study on the Entrepreneurial Motives and Influencing Factors of Rural Homestay Owners in Chizhou City

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Abstract: The core of rural revitalization lies in industrial revitalization, and the key link of industrial revitalization is rural entrepreneurship. As an emerging business form under the background of rural revitalization, rural homestays have attracted a large number of entrepreneurs who go to or return to rural areas to engage in this field. This study takes rural homestay owners in Chizhou City as the research object, adopts a combination of in-depth interviews and field investigations, and explores the entrepreneurial motives and influencing factors of homestay owners from the dual perspectives of "market rationality" and "cultural nostalgia". The research finds that the entrepreneurial motives of homestay owners in Chizhou City can be divided into three types: market rationality - dominated type, cultural nostalgia - dominated type, and type with both rationality and social responsibility. Meanwhile, the key factors affecting the entrepreneurial decisions of homestay owners are extracted. Based on the research conclusions, countermeasures and suggestions to promote the high - quality development of homestays in Chizhou City are put forward from four dimensions: market, management, feelings, and marketing, providing practical references for standardizing the homestay market order and promoting the revitalization of rural industries.

Keywords: Market Rationality; Cultural Nostalgia; Rural Homestay Owners; Entrepreneurial Motives; Influencing Factors.

1. Introduction

Rural homestays are important practical carriers for implementing the rural revitalization strategy. As a new form of rural accommodation and a new paradigm of rural

life, they not only enrich the supply of rural tourism but also attract a large number of entrepreneurs to participate in investment and operation. Exploring the entrepreneurial motives and influencing factors of homestay owners is of great theoretical value and practical significance for promoting the revitalization of rural industries. In recent years, the research topics on rural homestays in the academic circle have become increasingly rich, but the special research focusing on the entrepreneurial motives of homestay owners is still relatively weak. This study can further expand the research boundary in the field of rural homestays [1].

The subsequent entrepreneurial behaviors and business models of the homestay industry are directly affected by the entrepreneurial motives of the management subject. Clarifying the internal mechanism of rural homestay owners' entrepreneurship can provide important references for the government and relevant departments to guide the practice of homestay entrepreneurship and formulate targeted support policies. As a typical tourist city in the Yangtze River Delta region, Chizhou City attaches great importance to the development of the tourism industry, and rural homestays have become an important part of the local tourism market. Promoting the prosperity and development of the homestay market and paying attention to the emotional demands and investment mentality of homestay owners have high practical value for standardizing and promoting independent entrepreneurship in rural areas of Chizhou City.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Rural Homestays

The research on rural homestays presents three characteristics: Firstly, the research has a significant policy orientation, focusing on the high - quality enabling role of rural homestays in alleviating poverty and promoting rural

revitalization [2], and the number of theoretical research results continues to increase with the increase of government policy support [3]. Secondly, the research content focuses on the application level. Most literatures focus on the development status, difficulties and countermeasures of rural homestays, and a few involve basic issues such as the definition of homestay concepts, functional positioning, development models, space design, development, operation and management [4]. Thirdly, the depth and breadth of research are constantly expanding. From the initial macro - explanatory research, it gradually turns to operability discussions, and integrates with multiple disciplines such as sociology, economics and psychology [5]. As the core subject of the development of rural homestays, the behavioral logic of homestay owners has a key impact on the industrial development. However, the current special research on homestay owners is still relatively scarce and needs to be further deepened.

2.2 Entrepreneurial Motives and Influencing Factors of Rural Homestay Owners

Rural homestay owners are often called "homestay managers" or "homestay makers" and are the core group of rural entrepreneurship [6]. Existing studies have explored homestay owners and their business models from both macro and micro levels: Ahmad and others studied the entrepreneurial motives of homestay owners in Malaysia based on the push-pull theory and found that their "push" and "pull" factors are different from those in other industries [7]. Cunha and others' research on rural homestay owners in Portugal also verified this conclusion and pointed out that "the pursuit of lifestyle" is the core motive that distinguishes homestay owners from other entrepreneurs [8]. In addition, Liu and others deeply discussed the influence mechanism of entrepreneurial motives on the business performance of homestays [9]. In terms of domestic research, Wu Lin and others divided homestay makers into three types through questionnaire surveys and revealed the impact of the motivation differences of different types of makers on their business satisfaction [10]. Pi Changling pointed out that the values of homestay operators have a significant impact on the sense of entrepreneurial gain [11]. On the whole, existing studies pay more

attention to the group characteristics of homestay owners, and the discussion on the process and results of homestay entrepreneurship is still relatively weak [12]. The mechanism of action of homestay owners' entrepreneurial motives and the internal logic of influencing factors need to be further clarified. Based on this, this study adopts qualitative research methods, analyzes the entrepreneurial motives and influencing factors of rural homestay owners from the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, constructs a theoretical framework of "entrepreneurial motives - influencing factors-business models" [13], and explores the driving mechanism of the characteristics of homestay entrepreneurs on the entrepreneurial process and results under the background of rural revitalization, so as to provide theoretical support and practical references for the development of the rural homestay industry.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Methods

This study takes qualitative research as the core method, obtains original data through in-depth interviews, and conducts text analysis combined with grounded theory:

Design of interview outline: Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, a semi-structured interview outline is designed around the three core topics of "entrepreneurial motives", "influencing factors" and "sense of business gain", focusing on exploring the motivational logic of homestay owners at the spiritual and cultural levels.

3.2 Data Sources and Analysis

The research team conducted field investigations in Chizhou City in two batches in November 2023 and August 2024, with a total investigation duration of two weeks. For homestay owners who were inconvenient for on - site interviews, online interviews were used to supplement the data. During the investigation, a total of 12 homestay owners and a number of homestay employees were interviewed. The interview duration for each homestay owner was no less than 30 minutes. The interview process was fully recorded and transcribed into text, forming a total of more than 60,000 words of interview materials. Content analysis method was used to process the interview text.

4. Result Analysis

Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and combined with the theoretical frameworks of economics and psychology to code the interview text, Table 1 shows the encoding process, the results show that the

entrepreneurial motives of rural homestay owners in Chizhou City present multi-dimensional characteristics and can be divided into three types: market rationality-dominated type, cultural nostalgia - dominated type, and type with both rationality and social responsibility.

Table 1. Entrepreneurial Motives and Influencing Factors of Rural Homestay Owners

First-level Nodes	Second-level Nodes	Free Nodes	Reference Source Materials
Market Rationality	Economic Motives	Employment	"I just want to work back in my hometown" (C5)"It's great to work and earn money near home" (C7)
		Investment	"Homestays have been very popular in recent years. I had contact with them when I was in other places before, and just happened to learn that there were suitable houses in my hometown, so I invested money to start this business." (C3)
		ReturningHometown for Entrepreneurship	"After graduating from college, I Worked outside for a long time, and later I wanted to go back to my hometown to do something." (C2)
Cultural Nostalgia	Feelings-driven Motives	Repaying Hometown	"It can just drive the economic development in my hometown" (C1)"When I was a child, I hoped that I could do something for my hometown when I grew up." (C9)
	Emotional	Realizing	"I have long had a vision of a 'paradise'—living in a quiet house and decorating it in the way I like." (C10)
	Demands	Dreams	"Working outside is too tiring; I want to come back to adjust my pace of life." (C11)
		Returning to a "Leisurely Life"	"I still want to go back to my hometown, no matter what I do." (C6)
	Rural Attachment	Loving Rural Life	"We used to work in other industries, but we wanted to make use of what we learned in those previous industries, so we switched to running homestays." (C8)
Combining Rationality and Social Responsibility	Dedication and Responsibility	Driven by Professional Experience	"I majored in architecture before, so I have been looking for a place where I can develop my personal interests." (C1)
		Personal Interests	"There is a lot of support from the county." (C2)
	Market Demand	Policy Support	"At that time, it was also because the scenic spots in my hometown were going to be developed, and I felt that there might be a need for places for tourists to stay around." (C4)
		Scenic Spot Development	"My family just had an idle old house, so I renovated it and started running a homestay." (C12)
		Idle Capital	

4.1 Market Rationality-dominated Type: Investment Demand Driven by the Market

The popularity of the homestay industry and the rise of the homestay economy have attracted a group of entrepreneurs to return to their hometowns to develop new businesses, making rural homestays a core highlight of "industrial prosperity" in rural revitalization. From the perspective of market demand, economic motives are the most basic and common driving factors for homestay owners' entrepreneurship, which are specifically manifested in three types of demands:

Employment demand: Some homestay owners said, "I just want to work back in my hometown" (C5) and "It's a good thing to make money and work near home" (C7), regarding homestay entrepreneurship as an important way to solve the problem of returning to hometown

for employment.

Investment demand: For example, C3 mentioned, "Homestays have been very popular in recent years. I have been in contact with them in other places before, and just learned that there are suitable houses in my hometown, so I invested money to start this business", regarding homestays as high - quality targets for cross - industry investment.

Returning home for entrepreneurship demand: A typical statement is "After graduating from college, I worked outside for a long time, and later I wanted to go back to my hometown to do something" (C2), taking homestays as a carrier to realize self-value when returning to hometown.

4.2 Cultural Nostalgia-dominated Type: Emotional Demands Driven by Culture

Nostalgia refers to the special emotional

connection that individuals have with their native land or hometown. Cultural nostalgia can be defined as the natural sense of closeness of urban people to "rural elements". Most groups have cultural nostalgia deep in their hearts, which is also the core driving force for the rise of "beautiful villages" and "homestay agglomeration areas" around large cities. In the context of homestay entrepreneurship, cultural nostalgia is manifested as the emotional demands of homestay owners, which are above economic motives, and specifically include four types of demands:

Feelings-driven motive: Some homestay owners believe that "establishing a homestay allows me to return to my hometown and just drive the economic development of my hometown" (C1) and "When I was a child, I hoped that I could do something for my hometown when I grew up" (C9), taking homestays as a carrier to repay their hometowns.

Ideal realization motive: For example, C10 mentioned, "I have always had a vision of a 'paradise', living in a quiet house and decorating it in the way I like", taking homestays as a platform to realize personal ideals.

Lifestyle pursuit motive: A typical statement is "Working outside is too tiring, and I want to come back to adjust my pace of life" (C11), hoping to return to a "leisurely life" through homestay entrepreneurship and improve the quality of life.

Rural attachment motive: For example, C6 said, "I still want to go back to my hometown, no matter what I do", which reflects the sense of belonging and attachment of migrant workers outside to the countryside, and takes homestays as a link to return to rural life.

4.3 Type with Both Rationality and Social Responsibility: Comprehensive Choice Driven by Dual Factors

As the "local force" in the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, the psychological state of homestay makers is affected by the interweaving of "market rationality" and "cultural nostalgia" under the framework of "social responsibility", which is specifically manifested in three types of demands:

Career and interest-driven: For example, C8 mentioned, "We used to be in other industries, but we wanted to make use of what we learned in the previous industries, so we switched to

running homestays", and C1 said, "I majored in architecture before, so I have been looking for a place where I can develop my personal interests", taking homestays as a carrier to integrate professional experience and realize the value of interests.

Social responsibility-driven: Most entrepreneurs engaged in rural homestays have a strong spirit of dedication and sense of responsibility, hoping to contribute to rural revitalization through homestay entrepreneurship.

Market and resource-driven: External conditions such as policy support (e.g., "There is a lot of support from the county" (C2)), scenic spot development (e.g., "At that time, it was also because the scenic spots in my hometown were going to be developed, and I felt that there might be a need for places for tourists to stay around" (C4)), and idle capital (e.g., "I just had an idle old house at home, so I renovated it and ran a homestay" (C12)) provide homestay owners with market choices.

To sum up, the entrepreneurial behavior of this type of homestay owners is a comprehensive result of market rationality, cultural nostalgia and social responsibility. It not only reflects the grasp of market opportunities but also contains the emotion for local culture and the responsibility for rural development.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Research Conclusions

The development of rural tourism requires the coordinated participation of multiple subjects, and the contribution of entrepreneurs in the rural context is indispensable. The entrepreneurial motives of homestay owners and related influencing factors are the core initial driving forces for the development of rural homestays. Based on the in-depth investigation of 12 rural homestay owners in Chizhou City, this study draws the following conclusions:

The development prospect of the homestay market in Chizhou City is optimistic: Relying on rich tourism resources and policy support, the local homestay industry has formed a cluster development trend, with diversified sales channels, and there is still broad room for improvement in the future. The entrepreneurial motives of homestay owners present three dominant types:

Market rationality - dominated type: Entrepreneurial behavior is driven by economic factors, focusing on demands such as employment, investment, and returning home for entrepreneurship. Among them, returning home for entrepreneurship accounts for the highest proportion, reflecting the important role of homestays in attracting talents to return to their hometowns and promoting rural revitalization.

Cultural nostalgia - dominated type: Entrepreneurial behavior is driven by emotional factors, centering on demands such as rural attachment, ideal realization, and lifestyle pursuit. Among them, rural attachment and feelings - driven motives account for a higher proportion. Homestays have become a link connecting nostalgia and rural development, and also provide a "leisurely life" choice for groups tired of urban life.

Type with both rationality and social responsibility: Entrepreneurial behavior is driven by both market demand and social responsibility. It not only relies on external conditions such as policy support, scenic spot development, and idle capital but also combines internal demands such as professional experience and personal interests. This type of motive accounts for the highest proportion and will become the mainstream driving mode of homestay entrepreneurship in the future.

5.2 Countermeasures and Recommendations

5.2.1 Market dimension: accurate positioning and adapting to trends

Market segmentation and accurate positioning: Formulate differentiated strategies according to the differences in the entrepreneurial motives of homestay owners. For homestay owners dominated by cultural nostalgia, it is recommended to focus on the development of cultural experience products and target customer groups such as literary and artistic youth and cultural researchers. For homestay owners dominated by market rationality, if they focus on leisure and vacation, they can target customer groups such as urban families and office workers, and fully integrate regional resources to strengthen their characteristics.

Dynamic research and judgment of market trends: Guide homestay owners to pay attention to the seasonal changes of the tourism market and emerging tourism methods (such as micro - vacation and health tourism), and adjust their

business strategies in a timely manner. For example, for homestay owners oriented towards employment and entrepreneurship, a market information sharing mechanism can be established to help them quickly respond to market demands.

5.2.2 Management dimension: optimizing resources and improving efficiency

Optimization of fund management: Since funds are the core influencing factor for entrepreneurship, it is recommended that homestay owners expand financing channels in a diversified way (such as connecting with government support funds, introducing private capital, and joint investment). In the operation process, strengthen cost control, and focus on optimizing the capital use efficiency in links such as procurement, human resources, and marketing.

Upgrading of human resource management: Allocate professional talents according to the business model. For example, homestays that provide characteristic catering need to recruit chefs with local food production skills; homestays that focus on customer experience should strengthen the training of employees' service awareness. At the same time, establish an incentive mechanism (such as performance bonuses and career development channels) to improve employees' enthusiasm and loyalty.

5.2.3 Feelings dimension: inheriting culture and integrating with the community

In-depth excavation of cultural connotation: For homestay owners driven by feelings, it is recommended to integrate local culture into links such as architectural design, interior decoration, and service experience. For example, adopt the traditional Huizhou architectural style, display intangible cultural heritage handicrafts such as Chizhou bamboo weaving, and organize folk activities such as Qingming Festival ancestor worship and Dragon Boat Festival zongzi making, so that tourists can deeply perceive the charm of local culture.

Strengthening community collaborative development: Encourage homestay owners to participate in community construction and build a "homestay - community" symbiotic mechanism. For example, purchase local agricultural products for catering, employ local residents for employment, and organize tourists to participate in community public welfare activities (such as rural environmental improvement), so as to enhance tourists'

emotional identification with the local area and realize a win - win situation between homestays and the community.

5.2.4 Marketing dimension: integrating channels and building brands

Integrated online and offline marketing: Online, strengthen cooperation with OTA platforms (such as Ctrip and Meituan), optimize the display page to increase the exposure frequency; use social media such as WeChat official accounts and Douyin to share the characteristics of homestays, customer reviews, and Chizhou tourism guides to attract potential customer groups. Offline, establish a mutual promotion mechanism with surrounding scenic spots and travel agencies; set up promotional booths in tourism exhibitions and cultural festivals to expand brand influence.

Brand building and word-of-mouth marketing: Pay attention to the shaping of brand differentiation, and highlight the "ecology + culture" characteristics of Chizhou homestays from the aspects of name, logo, promotional slogan, and service experience. Improve customer satisfaction through personalized services (such as arranging romantic scenes for honeymoon tourists and providing local toys for child tourists), encourage customers to leave positive reviews on the platform, and respond to customer complaints in a timely manner to establish a good reputation and promote the brand - oriented and large-scale development of Chizhou homestays.

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