TAMPERE UNIVERSITY
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An Analysis of Young Chinese Customer Preferences for B&B Services

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Bachelor's Thesis
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Marketing Management & Green Supply Chain Management

ABSTRACT

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With the development of the sharing economy, the sharing accommodation concept has entered the Chinese market. In conjunction with this, the bed and breakfast (B&B) service has also emerged. Although initially a novel concept for the Chinese, the recent development period of two years has witnessed the rise of B&Bs as a prominent market force. As such, they cannot be ignored in the Chinese accommodation market. Nevertheless, despite the publication of numerous articles and periodicals addressing the sharing accommodation concept, a notable gap exists in the literature regarding a detailed discussion of the Chinese B&B service.

Therefore, the immediate objective of this thesis is to discuss B&B accommodation in the Chinese context. In this thesis' theoretical framework section, the author describes the decision-making process that characterizes consumer buying behavior in contemporary society, and the potential influencers of this process are outlined. This exploration is aided by the distribution of a questionnaire to identify the true opinions of Chinese service users towards B&Bs in China. The questionnaire comprises 13 questions (a mixture of multiple choice, ranking questions, and open-ended questions), and it will ultimately aid this thesis' attempt to explore the preferences and habits of young Chinese customers. Furthermore, it will illuminate the decision-making drivers which affect these customers' final decisions when selecting accommodation for their trips.

The results reveal that the level of acceptability of the B&B concept in mainland China is normal. Compared to the elderly, the '90s generation is characterized by a significantly greater likelihood of choosing this accommodation type. One of the reasons for this is that it allows them to experience local life, local food, and local culture in an active and in-depth manner. The average cost range per night for a B&B in China is between RMB 200 and RMB 500, and it is often the case that young people travel with their friends and family rather than travelling alone. Notably, this thesis' results also take into account the questionnaire responses to the items addressing add-on services and the importance ranking of the element when customers select accommodation.

Finally, the author summarizes the findings and proposes several recommendations to help B&B hosts in the successful operation of their businesses.

Keywords: B&B, Chinese B&B, Consumer Buying Behavior, Sharing Economy

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

App	Application
B&B	Bed and Breakfast
P2P	Peer-to-Peer

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter first presents the research rationale, after which the author will clarify the purpose of the overall thesis by outlining the research aims and objectives. In turn, the structure of the thesis will be presented with a flow chart and, finally, a discussion of the methodology will be given.

1.1 Research Background

From the perspective of the Chinese domestic tourism market, China already has the largest number of domestic tourists. In the first half of the year of 2016, the number of tourists amounted to 2.236 billion, and this number has displayed year-on-year growth of more than 10.47%. According to the prediction of the Mafengwo Data Centre, the total number of tourists in 2016 will reach 4.416 billion (Global Independent Travel Report, 2016). With the development of domestic transportation and the improvement of tourism products and services, the travel demand among residents is diversified and individualized, with the chief implication of this being that traditional travel packages cannot meet the growing diversity of travellers' needs. In view of this, the independent travel trend, as a fashionable mode of travelling, is growing rapidly in mainland China, and it is gradually supplanting the previously dominant trend of group travel. The Chinese online travel market structure in 2016 changed slightly when compared to the data in 2015, where the independent travel demand accounted for 56.2%. Importantly, this represented an increase by 0.7% compared with the previous year. In addition to this, online package tours accounted for 43.8%, which represented a decrease by 0.7% over the previous year (China's Online Travel Industry Research Report, 2017). These figures are indicative of the fact that in contemporary Chinese society, tourists are increasingly paying attention to the quality and depth of their travel experiences.

Apart from the selection of a tourist's mode of travel, the most important dimension of a trip is the question of destination. With the increasing requirement for in-depth travel evidenced by the abovementioned statistics, Airbnb, as a major representative of the sharing accommodation concept, has gradually attracted a growing proportion of tourists' attention. Furthermore, the emergence of Airbnb has resulted in the bourgeoning of entrepreneurial enthusiasm among relevant businesses. At the same time, it has improved the interactive intention between guest and host such that each party is free to choose who constitutes the other. As a result, the sharing accommodation concept has started to dominate as a novel form of accommodation, and this significantly facilitated the emergence of the term 'B&B' as one of the top words associated with independent travel in 2016. As indicated by the Global Independent Travel Report (2016), travellers paid considerable attention to B&B accommodation in 2016, with the demand growth rate as high as 500%.

One of the primary reasons why tourists have started to choose B&Bs over traditional accommodation options (e.g. hotels and hostels) is because they have grown tired of the clinical nature of the latter. As such, evidence suggests that tourists prefer more human ways in which to live when they vacation around the world. This kind of human accommodation is mainly reflected in the warmth of the house layout and the hospitality of the host, with each of these dimensions serving to ensure that guests feel at home when they journey to unfamiliar destinations.

Another reason for the growing prominence of B&Bs as a form of tourist accommodation relates to cost performance. Evidence indicates that, for the most part, travellers consider that spending their time in a B&B is less costly than spending their time in a hotel. Furthermore, many travellers consider that the traffic can be more convenient. A considerable number of B&Bs only offer those rooms in a host's home which are unused, so they are consistently offered at a relatively low price. In addition to this, since most rooms are contained within private housing estates, the locations tend to be more convenient than traditional hotels.

In addition, B&Bs provide guests with the possibility of making new friends. If travellers choose to live inside the same house as their host, they will have more time to communicate and, in many cases, become friends with one another.

To summarize, the B&B service is a highly effective choice for travellers for several reasons. Nevertheless, although extensive investigations have been conducted into sharing accommodation and Airbnb in the European countries, knowledge about he Chinese context is limited. This is an important concern because, in contemporary society, China serves as one of the largest economies in the world. Furthermore, owing to its status, China brings significant profits to each industry. In view of these considerations, the author intends to create a new research direction for B&Bs by targeting the Chinese market. The background location of this thesis topic is mainland China, and the target group is young Chinese people (in the 18 to 35 age group). The thesis will provide detailed information addressing the travel habits and preferences of Chinese customers, and it will also analyze the phenomenon of B&B usage in China from the perspective of consumer buying behavior.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

Although the phenomenon of the B&B has already emerged as a widespread and popular trend in western countries, thereby meaning that a wealth of analysis and research has centred on the topic, literature pertaining to B&Bs in the Chinese context is not yet extensive. Most of the literature pays attention to customers' buying behavior with respect to traditional forms of accommodation (e.g. hotels and hostels).

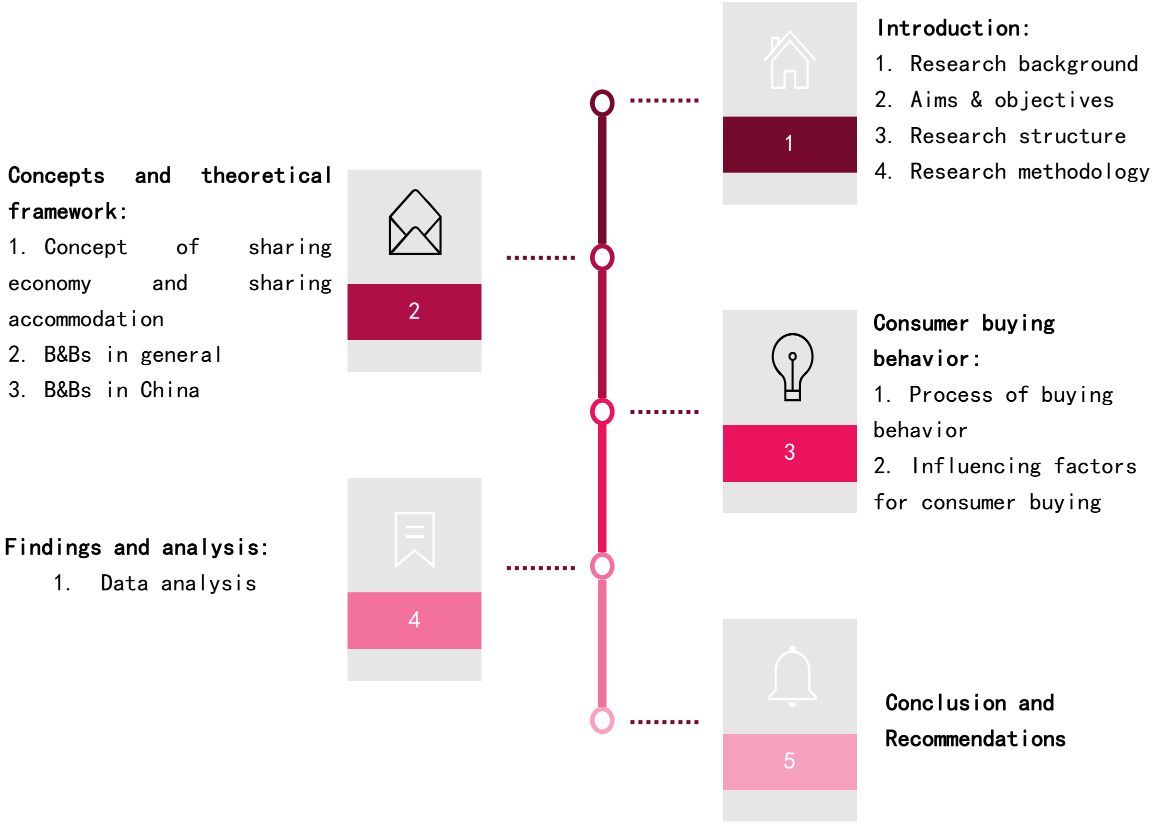
Therefore, the author is conducting this thesis to illuminate the perceptions and preferences of young consumers in China when choosing the B&B option. In addition to this, it is the intention of the author to identify the nature of the relationship between travellers' B&B accommodation preferences and their buying behavior. The final purpose of this thesis is to draw attention to the various ways in which Chinese B&B hosts can improve their service and get to know customer preferences. This will allow them to provide more intimate services, thereby facilitating the attraction of a greater number of guests. Ultimately, the author hopes that the recommendations contained in the final section of this thesis will maximize the Chinese B&B service, thereby helping the sector to become a better choice for Chinese customers during their trips.

For purpose of achieving these research aims and objectives, the following research questions will be used to guide the investigation:

- What is the current situation and what are the market segments for B&Bs in China?
- Why have young Chinese tourists become the target customers for Chinese B&Bs?
- What are the attitudes and preferences of young Chinese tourists towards B&B services?
- How can B&B hosts improve their services in order to attract more guests?

1.3 Research Structure

This thesis consists of five main segments: an introduction, an outline of the key concepts and theoretical framework, a discussion of the concept of consumer buying behavior, a presentation of the findings and analysis, and a conclusion section (outlining key recommendations for hosts). The specific content of each section is presented in the timeline shown below:



Introduction:

1. Research background
2. Aims & objectives
3. Research structure
4. Research methodology

Concepts and theoretical framework:

1. Concept of sharing economy and sharing accommodation
2. B&Bs in general
3. B&Bs in China

Consumer buying behavior:

1. Process of buying behavior
2. Influencing factors for consumer buying

Findings and analysis:

1. Data analysis

Conclusion and Recommendations

1.4 Research Methodology

Researchers can choose from three different methodologies when conducting a research project: the quantitative, the qualitative, and the mixed-methods approaches. Depending on the research needs and research content, different methods are suitable for ensuring that the research purpose is satisfied with the production of reliable and valid results.

1.4.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a research method that pays more attention to individuals than groups, and this is engaged in to reveal the scope of the target audience’s behavior and, furthermore, to determine the purpose of particular subjects or issues. To build a solid hypothesis, small groups of the target audience are used in an in-depth study, and it is important to recognize that the results of a qualitative study are descriptive rather than predictive (Qualitative Research Association, 2014).

The research data derived from qualitative research designs are usually textual, and they always provide a richer audience perspective. This is because they facilitate in-depth insight into people’s feelings, experiences, and attitudes towards the research topic (Altinay et al., 2016, 93) Generally speaking, effective qualitative research can be conducted in the following ways: in-depth interviews with individuals, focus group discussions (with number of attendees usually ranging from two to ten), diary and journal exercises, and contextual observations (Dennett and Linda, 2015).

1.4.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is markedly different to qualitative research in several ways. To be more specific, quantitative research is an objective, deductive, and generalisable method which primarily uses number-based data. Contrastingly, qualitative research is inductive, based on textual data, and rarely generalisable (Altinay et al., 2016, 93). Additionally, quantification not only exists in the data collection process, but it also arises in the data analysis component of quantitative research design. Ultimately, quantitative studies employ research methods characterized by the employment of mathematically-based techniques to analyze the collected data (e.g. relative frequencies and the difference between means and correlation coefficients), thereby illuminating the ways in which one variable affects another within a particular study range (Altinay et al., 2016, 93).

The data collection methods of quantitative research are diverse, including questionnaires, surveys, and statistics. There are several ways to conduct a questionnaire, for instance, online questionnaires, paper-based variants, mobile-based, mail-based, and kiosk surveys. Surveys can also be processed via face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, and systematic observation (Jandagh, 2010).

1.4.3 Selected Research Method

As previously mentioned, the purpose of the present study is to determine the preferences and perceptions of young Chinese tourists when choosing their B&B accommodation, so it will be necessary to draw on a sizeable sample group to complete the research process. Given the mass data required for this investigation, the quantitative research method has been selected for this thesis.

In view of this, the author designed a 13-item questionnaire. This was translated into two different languages (English and Chinese), and the Chinese version was posted on the "Tencent Questionnaire System", a Chinese online questionnaire platform, on 22.04.2017. The reader will note that two versions of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix. An important consideration is that the sampling of this questionnaire must fulfil the following criteria: approximately 100 to 150 respondents in the age range of 18 to 35, all of whom are Chinese and who have had B&B experience. The occupation and current residence address of the prospective participants is not relevant to the present research.

The online questionnaire link was shared on the author's personal social network page, and it was been re-posted by several of the author's friends on different occasions to recruit more participants. As previously noted, the questionnaire was posted on the Tencent Questionnaire System on 22.04.2017, and the data collection took place in the period from 22.04.2017 to 24.04.2017 (after 24.04.2017, participants were not able to submit their results). As a result of this distribution process, 165 respondents submitted valid replies (exceeding the initial intention).

The first three questionnaire items centre on respondent demographic data, including gender, age group, and social role. Questions 4-7 examine the travel habits of the target group, for instance, whether they travel with companions, how often they visit

B&Bs per year, how they pay on average for B&Bs per night, and what travel information search platforms they use. The next five questions, which are ranking questions, multiple choice questions, and rating questions (with a scale of 0 to 5), are targeted at B&B services to gain insight into the preferences of young Chinese tourists. For the rating questions, respondents were expected to choose the number corresponding to their attitude (where 1 = not important, 3 = neutral, and 5 = very important). The questionnaire ends with an open-ended question relating to guest preferences to collect more detailed comments from the respondents.

2 CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to present a picture of the entire market condition of Chinese sharing accommodation. In addition to this, the author will illustrate what the sharing economy is by outlining the features of the sharing accommodation concept. Following this, the author will examine the Chinese context by classifying various features of the Chinese B&B accommodation sector, and these features will be considered in relation to those of other countries.

2.1 Sharing Economy and Sharing Accommodation

At present, the sharing lifestyle is becoming increasingly popular among the younger generations. Coupled with the popularity of information technology and all-round coverage, it provides a technical basis to solve the information asymmetry problem between supply and demand. At the same time, production efficiency has recently increased substantially, thereby meaning that communities worldwide – and especially certain demographic groups within Chinese society – have more time and idle assets. With the ripening of these conditions over time, the emergence of the sharing economy in recent years can be viewed as a natural consequence (FTChinese, 2016).

2.1.1 Defining the Sharing Economy

The sharing economy can be defined more precisely as one centring on collaborative consumption and the peer-to-peer (P2P) economy. Importantly, it is a new market concept that allows individuals and groups to earn money from their unused assets. Under this circumstance, idle assets can be regarded as goods or services. For instance, a car owner may allow someone to rent out their vehicle when they are not using it, or a homeowner can rent their spare rooms or vacant home to an unfamiliar person (PWC, 2015).

By building a framework of efficient information intermediary platforms, the sharing economy provides services and goods in a collaborative way. This business model has been greatly successful, and it has also underscored the attractions by the capital market. Juniper Research (Tnooz, 2016) identifies six core industries and several sub-sectors of the sharing economy which are likely to drive the revenue hikes. As Figure 1 indicates, the six core sectors are transport, goods, services, music and video, space, and money, with the sub-sectors being learning, municipal, health, logistics, and food (Tnooz, 2016).

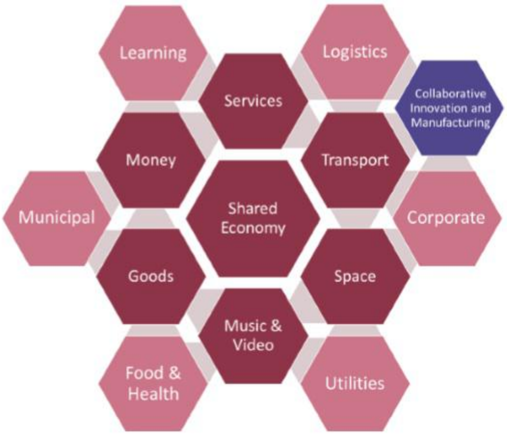
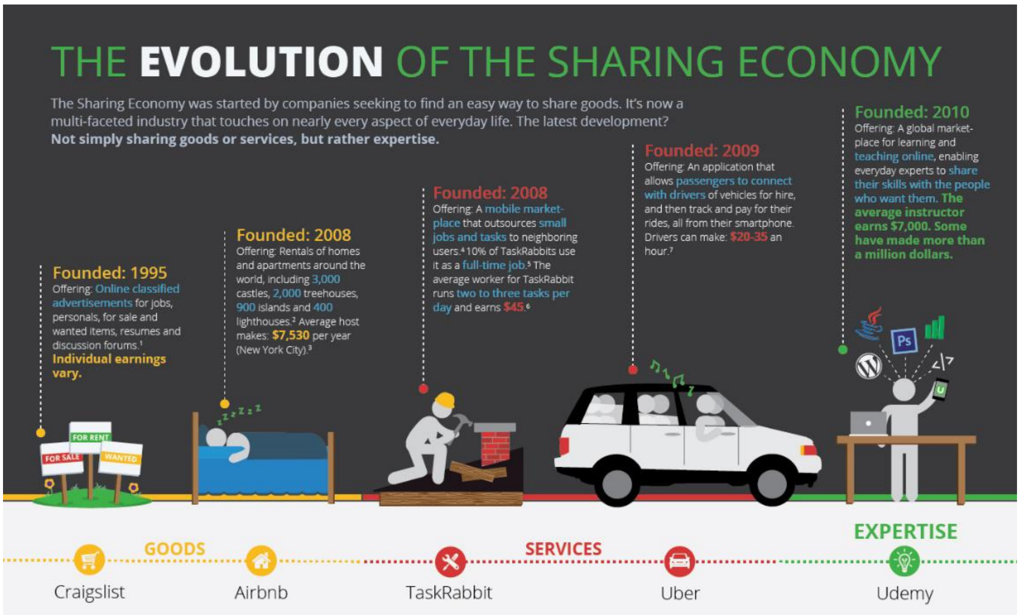

Learning
Logistics
Services
Collaborative Innovation and Manufacturing
Money
Transport
Municipal
Shared Economy
Corporate
Goods
Space
Music & Video
Food & Health
Utilities

Figure 1: Sharing economy to triple by 2020 (Tnooz, 2016)

The sharing economy emerged as a novel business concept at the turn of the new millennium, but it has always existed in one form or another. Nevertheless, the new businesses model is significant not only because it reduces transaction costs, but also because it lowers the cost of information searching. This has facilitated its entry into many industries successfully and rapidly (ECORL, 2016). The evolution timeline of the sharing economy in each aspect of everyday life (e.g. goods, services, and expertise) can be seen in Figure 2.



The Sharing Economy was started by companies seeking to find an easy way to share goods. It's now a multi-faceted industry that touches on nearly every aspect of everyday life. The latest development? **Not simply sharing goods or services, but rather expertise.**

Founded: 1995
Offering: Online classified advertisements for jobs, personals, for sale and wanted items, resumes and discussion forums.[1] **Individual earnings vary.**

Founded: 2008
Offering: Rentals of homes and apartments around the world, including 3,000 castles, 2,000 treehouses, 900 islands and 400 lighthouses.[2] Average host makes: **$7,530** per year (New York City).[3]

Founded: 2008
Offering: A mobile market-place that outsources small jobs and tasks to neighboring users.[4] 10% of TaskRabbits use it as a full-time job.[5] The average worker for TaskRabbit runs two to three tasks per day and earns $45.[6]

Founded: 2009
Offering: An application that allows passengers to connect with drivers of vehicles for hire, and then track and pay for their rides, all from their smartphone. Drivers can make: $20-35 an hour.[7]

Founded: 2010
Offering: A global market-place for learning and teaching online, enabling everyday experts to share their skills with the people who want them. **The average instructor earns $7,000. Some have made more than a million dollars.**

Figure 2: The evolution of the sharing economy (Udemy family, 2014)

2.1.2 Defining the Sharing Accommodation Concept

The sharing economy has inadvertently occupied an increasing proportion of the aspects of people's lives. It is particularly notable that the transformation from ownership to access has taken place in most industries, yet it should be acknowledged that the travel industry and hospitality industry are the most dramatically affected (Skift Report, 2013, 6). It is also worthwhile to note that in the tourism industry, the sharing accommodation concept has emerged as a new, attractive, and highly popular idea.

The core idea of the sharing accommodation concept is to identify people's underutilized assets and, following this, to try to leverage and optimize them (PWC, 2015). In this field, Airbnb can be regarded as the market leader. The company offers a platform for people to rent their unused rooms or spaces by posting the room information on online, where advertisements are responded to by other users. As Evan Frank (PWC, 2015) stated, people can earn more money from their underutilized assets via online platforms, with Airbnb serving as a highly notable example in this respect. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that people may need to devote extra time and energy to run small businesses of this kind, and it is sometimes the case that participants must make efforts regarding social ability. Most notably, hosts are drawn into the affairs of people they do not know, but the economic and financial advantages gained from addressing often-trivial considerations can be compelling (PWC, 2015).

In addition to Airbnb, many other online platforms and apps which offer the same function, including Couchsurfing, Flipkey, and HomeAway. These all constitute useful choices when customers are searching for B&B accommodation. However, these applications have not been applied effectively in the Chinese market, and even companies like Airbnb have only just started to gain traction in Chinese this year. Accordingly, with the emergence of sharing accommodation as a hot topic in tourism industry, several local apps have emerged concurrently, including Tujia.com, Xiaozhu.com, and Onehome.me. Each of these online platforms are solely focused around the short-term rent business.

2.2 A General Overview of B&B Accommodation

In the peak tourist season, hotel space is frequently insufficient. Consequently, to satisfy this demand while increasing local income, individual homeowners in high-demand destinations commonly offer their vacant rooms to visitors, thereby profiting while the visitors win the opportunity to experience local life. It is also worth noting that the B&B concept centres around the idea not only of providing a place for visitors to stay (i.e. lodging and accommodation), but also breakfast. Typically, such ventures are operated by ordinary people as a way to earn extra income.

2.2.1 What is B&B Accommodation?

Two typical modes of B&B accommodation exist: (i) whole apartment or home rentals; and (ii) single room rentals. Regarding (ii), some rooms have private bathrooms and private kitchens, while others require that the guests share these facilities with the host. For the most part, breakfast is provided by the host (with this cost being included into the price of the room).

This business concept has existed for several years, and it is only in recent years that it has developed into different forms. Numerous B&B accommodation operators are still ordinary people who prepare breakfast, clean the room, and serve their customers themselves. In contrast, for those potential hosts who are too busy to attend to these affairs, they outsource the cleaning and cooking to conserve time. Another form is where unused house resources are registered in a list of relevant agencies, with the agencies serving as professional managers who help the host manage their properties effectively.

2.2.2 B&B Accommodation in Different Countries

Although the B&B concept is popular worldwide, the details differ from country to country. In almost all cases, the concrete details of B&B services in each country depend on the nature of the local environment.

In Taiwan, France, and the United Kingdom, B&B operation occurs as a subsidiary business. In contrast to this, B&Bs in Japan function more like hotels, so the Japanese situation is unique in that it does not suffer from room and area limitations (Renyu Hong, 2015). In certain foreign industries, a component of the overall B&B accommodation field is operated by professional management teams, where B&Bs serve as the subsidiary businesses of a farmer owing to the major work that the central figure must engage with. However, irrespective of the operating method chosen by the participant, the main selling point is consistent and uniform.

British B&B operators tend to be satisfied with a number of guests amounting to less than 6 people. This is because a small number of tourists staying in one's home releases considerable operating pressures and, moreover, lowers the tax obligation. The French government has placed limitations on the B&B sector such that the number of guest rooms in an individual's home cannot exceed 5. In contrast, since the Japanese B&B sector operates as does the wider hotel industry, no limitations are placed on the number of rooms in hosts' homes. Finally, in the Taiwanese context, the general rule is that B&B forms of accommodation can provide no more than 5 rooms, but the number of featured B&B rooms must be less than 15 (Renyu Hong, 2015).

2.3 B&B Accommodation in China

B&B accommodation in China is a broad concept in that it not only refers to the bed and breakfast service, but it also includes several business patterns. Speaking in general terms, the difference between most B&Bs arises in the form of business model, decoration style, and the location of the accommodation.

2.3.1 Classification of B&Bs in China

B&B accommodation in China can be divided into three different categories based on the location factors: B&Bs in urban areas, B&Bs in rural areas, and B&Bs in scenic spots. Furthermore, in the Chinese market, B&Bs have different operation patterns, such as private family homes, rustic boutique hotels with minimal amenities (having been remodelled from traditional building structures), inns, and happy farmhouses.

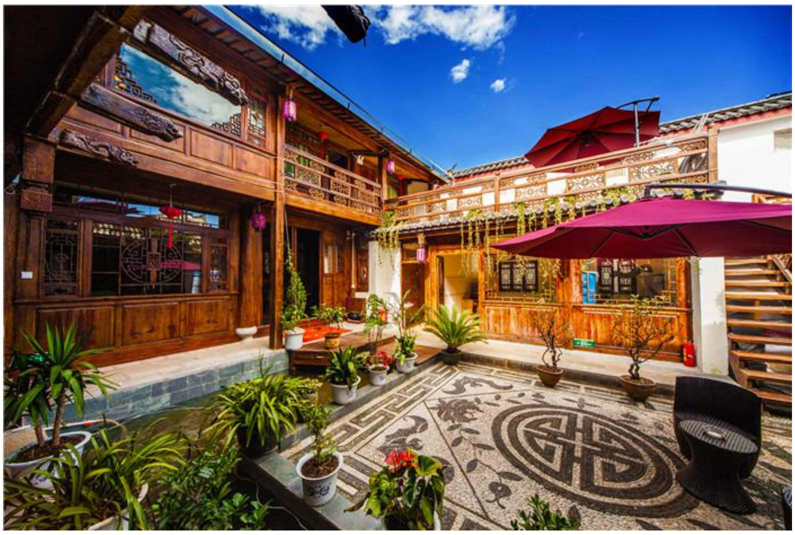


Figure 3 Featured inn in Lijiang, Yunnan province

2.3.2 The Market Condition of B&Bs in China

Based on the statistics from the China Industry Research website, agritainment (i.e. farm-based tourism) has been popular and broadly embraced for several years now. At the beginning of 2016, the number of village households amounted to more than 1.9 million, the total number of B&B accommodations rose to more than 40,000, and the relevant works in this industry is reached nearly 100 million people. China's B&B service revenue now amounts to RMB 20bn, and it is expected that by 2020, the operating income of the Chinese B&B industry will reach RMB 36.28bn (kknews, 2016).

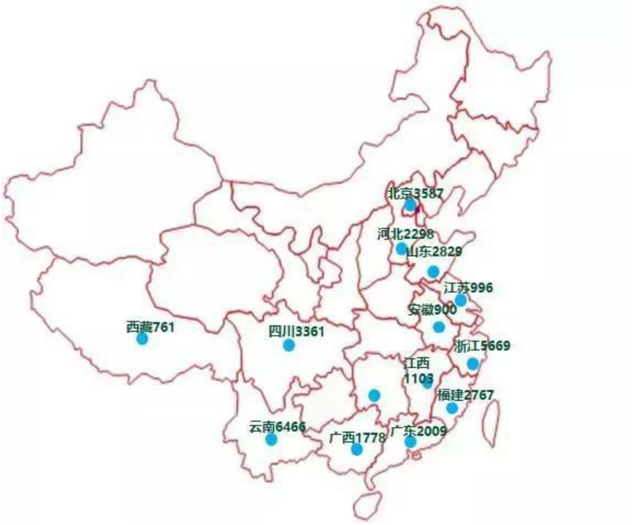


Figure 4: The location map of B&Bs in China (kknews, 2016)

The total number of B&Bs was above 40,000 by the end of 2015, with a large proportion of these accommodations located in the southwest and southeast regions of China. Notably, these data are consistent with the overall development situation of the Chinese tourism industry.

At present, the total number of mainland Chinese B&B accommodations is 42,658, and Yunnan province ranks at the top of the list with 6,466 B&B accommodations. From Figure 4, the reader will note that second position is occupied by Zhejiang province, with this being followed by Beijing with 3,587 accommodations. It is unsurprising to note that the distribution of B&B accommodation is concentrated in the areas where tourism is more developed.

Currently, due to the government policies' support and capital concerns, an increasing number of B&B companies are beginning to pay attention to the issue of brand development. However, entrepreneurship cannot always ensure the final success, so it is imperative for B&B managers and hosts to position their brand and assets accurately by upgrading and self-developing. Ultimately, this is the key way in which these stakeholders can achieve the goal of diversification, standardization, and chain-orientation.

3 CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the concept of buying behavior. This will involve a description of the consumer buying behavior process, an exploration of those factors which can influence buying decisions, and an identification of the most important motivations for travel and buying in the context of travel.

3.1 Process of Buying Behavior

The consumer buying behavior process includes five main steps. These are indicated in Figure 5.

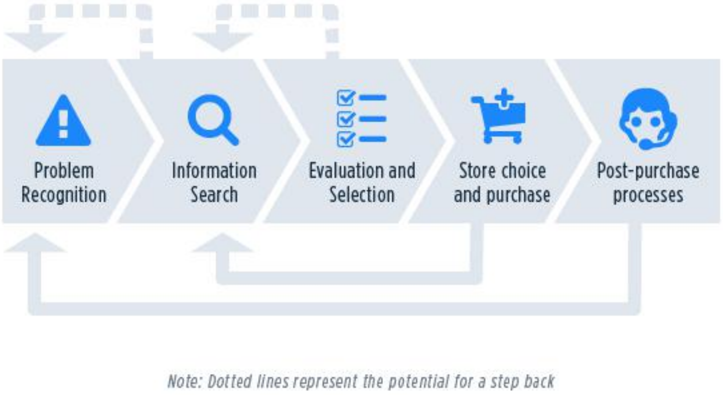

Problem Recognition
Information Search
Evaluation and Selection
Store choice and purchase
Post-purchase processes
Note: Dotted lines represent the potential for a step back

Figure 5: Consumer buying behavior process

It should be noted that Blythe's study (2005, 45-51) supplemented this model by adding a step to the process after the post-purchase component: namely, "divestment". This will be explained in due course (see Section 3.1.6).

3.1.1 Problem Recognition

This comprises perhaps the most crucial step in the process of a customer's buying decision. One realizes this when one considers that it is only when one realizes one needs something that one's buying motivation emerges. The feeling of "needing something" is always triggered by internal stimuli (e.g. hunger or thirst) or external stimuli (e.g. advertisements, promotional flyers, or word of mouth). Such needs can be recognized in any time: when your bowl is broken, you need to buy a new one; when you see a beautiful dress in the mall, you are eager to buy it. Thus, purchase decisions cannot take place without the recognition of requirements of this kind.

3.1.2 Information Search

After having a clear idea of what you need to buy or what kind of problem you need to solve, the next thing is to search for the relevant goods or services information. This underlies the attempt to find out what the best solution is. Blythe (2005, 46-47) devised two ways in which the information search step is carried out:

- ✓ The *internal search*: This involves recollecting previous experiences about a certain product, or trying to recall a previous opinion about the product. Hence, the internal search is characterized by reflecting on what you have learned about the same good or other goods in the same category.

- ✓ The *external search:* The central example of this is when an individual visits a shopping, engages in window shopping, reads related literature from the product manufacturer or service provider, or surveys promotional booklets. Hence, the external search involves collecting information from various places, including advertisements and friends, to find what you are looking for.

3.1.3 Evaluation of Alternatives

In this stage, customers will have a list of alternative products that they need to evaluate before engaging in the final purchase. These alternatives may have a different price range, a different color, or a different brand when compared to the product you are going to buy. Under this circumstance, the decision-making process may be interrupted by the following four factors (Blythe 2005, 47- 48):

- ✓ Environmental stimuli (in-store promotions for another alternative product);
- ✓ Affective states (e.g. physiological needs, such as the sudden need to go to the toilet or to have a coffee);
- ✓ Unexpected information (e.g. the layout has been changed in the shop);
- ✓ Conflicts (when the consumer wants to change the original decision-making plan, or a new alternative plan appears).

3.1.4 Purchase

The fourth stage of the purchasing process is paying for the product; this is the only thing an individual needs to do in this step. Pertinently, Kotler (2009) states that the final purchase decision may be 'disrupted' by two factors:

- ✓ Negative feedback from other customers;
- ✓ The level of motivation to accept the feedback.

For example, consider a consumer who intends to buy a new lipstick. After proceeding through each of the previous stages, the consumer has decided on the brand, the color number, and other relevant product features. Nevertheless, the consumer's best friend is provided with negative feedback about the product she intended to buy, so the consumer changes their opinion towards the product and returns to the first step.

3.1.5 Post-Purchase Evaluation

It is common that after customers buy a product, they will compare it with their previous expectations. Importantly, this produces either satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and this attitude is crucial in determining the issue of whether a brand will retain its customer. It will affect the decision process greatly for similar purchases from the same company in the future, having a knock-on effect at the information search step and evaluation of alternatives step (Euan, 2016).

If the customer is satisfied with the purchased products, it will increase the probability of their buying from the same brand in the future. On the contrary, if customer is not satisfied with the products, they will no longer purchase products from the same brand. In particularly severe cases, they are likely to spread negative word of mouth to their friends or post their unfavorable experience on social network pages. Ultimately, such courses of action can damage the brand awareness and brand image of the product in question.

3.1.6 Divestment

Finally, the divestment stage relates to the way in which the consumer disposes of the product after use. This is the final step of the whole consumer buying decision process. Here, there are several ways for customer to deal with the products (Blythe 2005, 52):

- ✓ Dispose of them along with their garbage;

- ✓ Sell the equipment second-hand;

- ✓ Recycle;

- ✓ Give it to a friend.

3.2 Factors that Influence Consumer Buying Behavior

Four main factors have a strong effect on a consumer's buying decision, namely, cultural factors, social factors, personal factors, and psychological factors. A detailed illustration of each factor is presented in Figure 6.

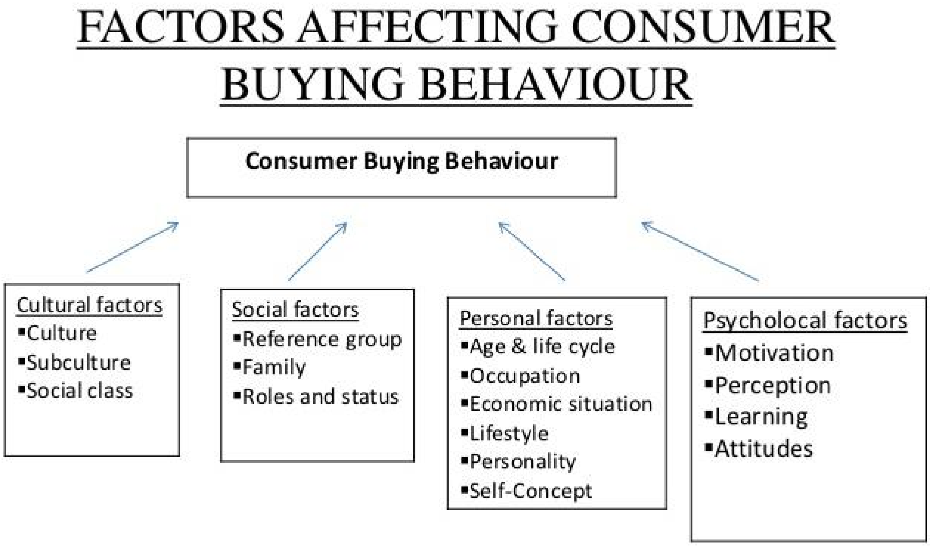

FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR
Consumer Buying Behaviour
Cultural factors
▪Culture
▪Subculture
▪Social class
Social factors
▪Reference group
▪Family
▪Roles and status
Personal factors
▪Age & life cycle
▪Occupation
▪Economic situation
▪Lifestyle
▪Personality
▪Self-Concept
Psycholocal factors
▪Motivation
▪Perception
▪Learning
▪Attitudes

Figure 6: Factors affecting consumer buying behavior

3.2.1 Psychological Factors

Psychological factors include motivations, perceptions, learning beliefs, and attitudes. In this case, the author has chosen the reference group concept to explain how the psychological factors influence the consumer buying decision. Reference groups are related to a group of people who are "psychologically significant for one's attitudes and behavior" (Turner, 1991, p. 5), and consumers can be divided into three groups according to reference group:

- ➢ Aspiration reference group;

- Dissociative reference group;
- Neutral reference group.

For the purposes of the present thesis, the relevant reference group is the aspiration reference group. In this context, the group refers to one that an individual does not belong to but that they are very interested in and eager to enter. This group can be very effective in influencing consumer behavior, mainly because many people will imitate the behavior of people who belong to an aspiration reference group in an attempt to imitate those individuals (Jiaoshou Li, 2016).

Applying this concept in tourism industry, and specifically to the demographic group of travellers, the local people can be identified as their aspiration reference group. As Airbnb states, to “act as a local” is something that travellers aim for when modelling themselves as local people during their trip (Jiaoshou Li, 2016). Under this circumstance, B&B accommodation constitutes the best choice for consumer because they can experience the local life, local food, and communicate with local people by living in a local family.

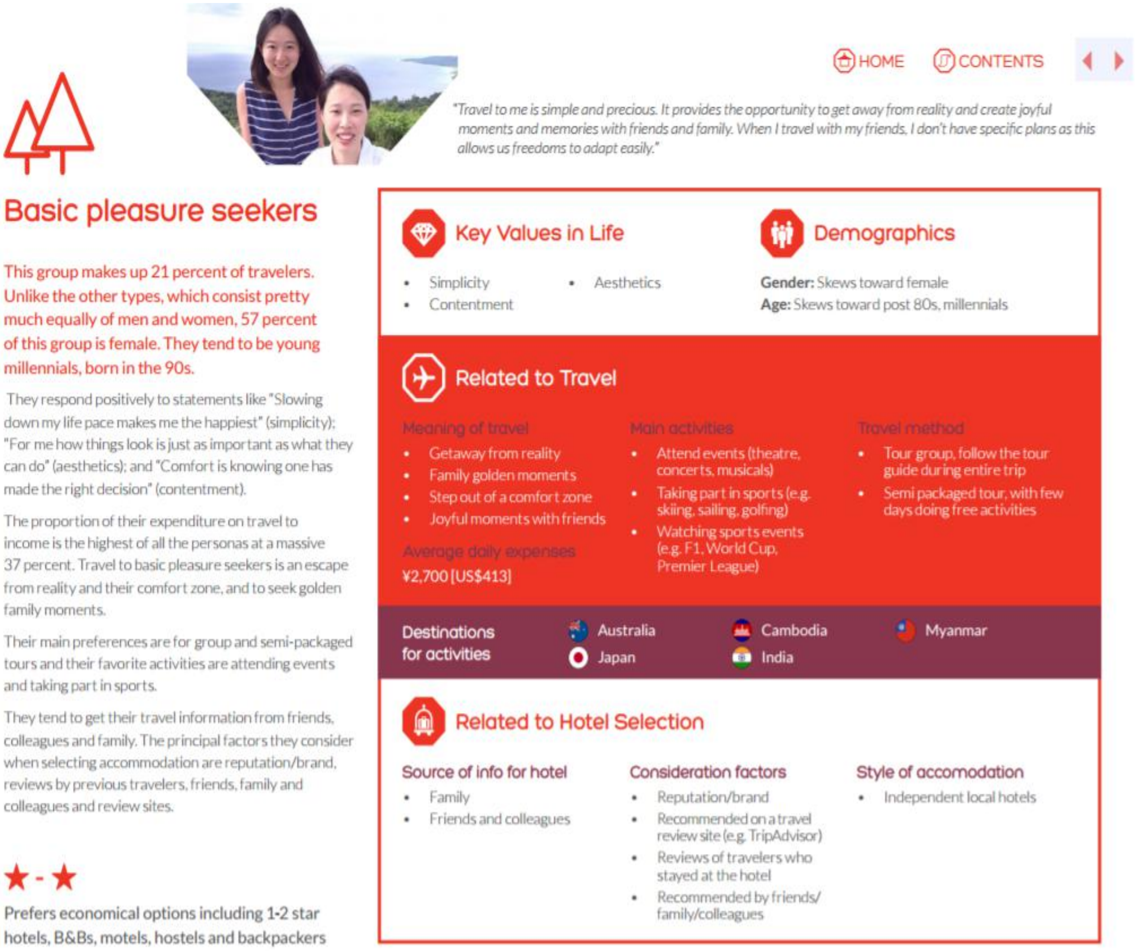
3.2.2 Personal Factors

Personal factors can be reflected in several aspects, including age, way of life, occupation, economic situation, gender, personality, and self-concept, and travel decisions are always influenced by these elements. In the Chinese International Travel Monitor 2016 report, hotels.com divided Chinese tourists into five distinct personas depending on their background, travel attitudes, preferences, and behaviors:

- Detailed explorers;
- Cautious connectors;
- Experience seekers;
- Indulgers;

- Basic pleasure seekers.

Here, the basic pleasure seeker persona is the most suitable with respect to the issue of who is most likely to choose B&B accommodation.


HOME
CONTENTS

"Travel to me is simple and precious. It provides the opportunity to get away from reality and create joyful moments and memories with friends and family. When I travel with my friends, I don't have specific plans as this allows us freedoms to adapt easily."

Basic pleasure seekers

This group makes up 21 percent of travelers. Unlike the other types, which consist pretty much equally of men and women, 57 percent of this group is female. They tend to be young millennials, born in the 90s.

They respond positively to statements like "Slowing down my life pace makes me the happiest" (simplicity); "For me how things look is just as important as what they can do" (aesthetics); and "Comfort is knowing one has made the right decision" (contentment).

The proportion of their expenditure on travel to income is the highest of all the personas at a massive 37 percent. Travel to basic pleasure seekers is an escape from reality and their comfort zone, and to seek golden family moments.

Their main preferences are for group and semi-packaged tours and their favorite activities are attending events and taking part in sports.

They tend to get their travel information from friends, colleagues and family. The principal factors they consider when selecting accommodation are reputation/brand, reviews by previous travelers, friends, family and colleagues and review sites.

★ - ★

Prefers economical options including 1-2 star hotels, B&Bs, motels, hostels and backpackers

Key Values in Life

- Simplicity
- Contentment
- Aesthetics

Demographics

Gender: Skews toward female
Age: Skews toward post 80s, millennials

Related to Travel

Meaning of travel
- Getaway from reality
- Family golden moments
- Step out of a comfort zone
- Joyful moments with friends

Average daily expenses
¥2,700 [US$413]

Main activities
- Attend events (theatre, concerts, musicals)
- Taking part in sports (e.g. skiing, sailing, golfing)
- Watching sports events (e.g. F1, World Cup, Premier League)

Travel method
- Tour group, follow the tour guide during entire trip
- Semi packaged tour, with few days doing free activities

Destinations for activities
Australia
Japan
Cambodia
India
Myanmar

Related to Hotel Selection

Source of info for hotel
- Family
- Friends and colleagues

Consideration factors
- Reputation/brand
- Recommended on a travel review site (e.g. TripAdvisor)
- Reviews of travelers who stayed at the hotel
- Recommended by friends/ family/colleagues

Style of accomodation
- Independent local hotels

Figure 7: The basic pleasure seeker persona

Basic pleasure seekers always acquire travelling information from their friends, and they often surf online travel platforms to find out which accommodation is suitable for them based on previous customer evaluations. Surprisingly, the meaning of travel from the perspective of basic pleasure seekers is to share beautiful pictures and locations on social media apps. Consequently, they will receive numerous "likes" from which they derive a sense of achievement.

The research data from the Mafengwo Data Centre shows that posting pictures during vacation time is becoming the most attractive thing for the ‘90s generation. WeChat is a chat tools like WhatsApp, but it has the same function as Facebook, where users can post about their feelings, present pictures of “moments”, and receive comments and “likes” from other users.

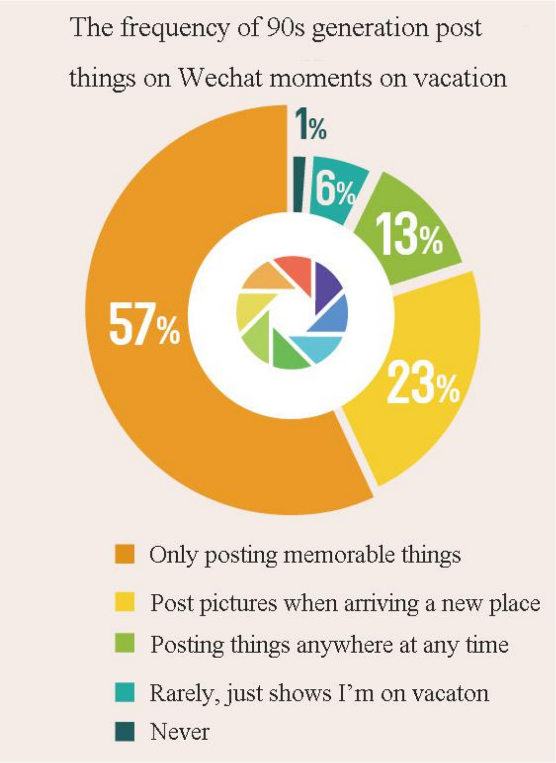


Figure 8 The frequency of the ‘90s generation’s posts regarding WeChat moments during vacation

57% of the ‘90s generation prefers to post memorable things on their social media page; they always edit their photos to make them more attractive, and posts are frequently accompanied by reasonable words. In addition, 23% of the ‘90s generation publish posts on their page when they arrive in a new place in order to share their current location. Finally, 13% of the demographic group reports that they are “addicted” to picture and feeling sharing using WeChat moments.

When tourists spend time in B&B accommodation, they are often enthusiastic about posting beautiful pictures on social media platforms to show room decorations, friendly hosts, and local foods. This kind of behavior not only satisfies the traveller’s sense of achievement, but also it promotes the B&B accommodation to many other people in a free manner. In view of this, it is clear that decor and customer service within B&B accommodations must be carefully presented to attract potential customers.

4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is based on the author's questionnaire (see Appendices), an analysis of the responses, and a presentation of the preferences of young Chinese tourists towards B&B services. As mentioned in the Section 1.4.3, 165 respondents submitted valid replies.

4.1 Data Analysis

- ➢ The first three questions of the survey addressed gender, age group, and social roles. From the total sample of 165 individuals, 46 (27.9%) were men while 119 (72.1%) were women. Moreover, 110 (66.7%) were aged between 18 and 24, 36 (21.8%) between 25 and 30, and 19 (11.5%) between 31 and 35. Additionally, four types of social role were included in this questionnaire: namely, 68 students (41.2%), 73 employees (44.2%), 11 unemployed people (6.7%), and 13 people not belonging to any of these categories (7.9%). In order to facilitate an intuitive appreciation of the relationship between age and accommodation type selection, the fifth question is added here to cross tabulate against age data sources.

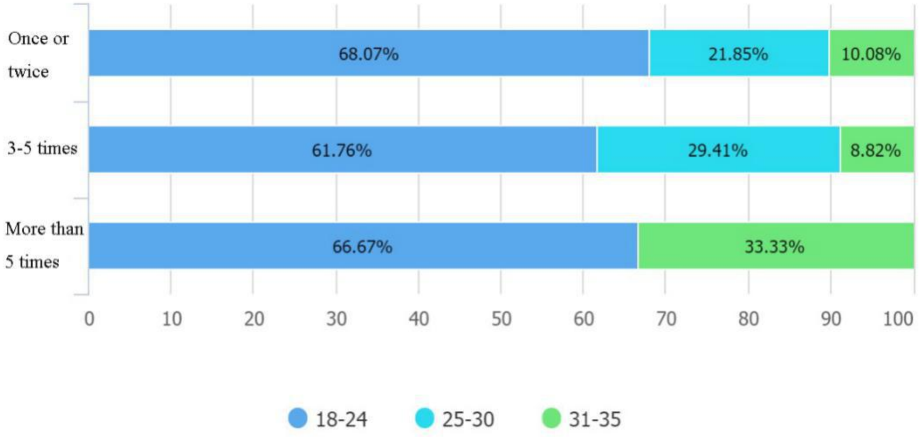


Figure 9: Correlation between age group and B&B experience (annually)

As is evident, the youngest age group is the biggest group in this research. Furthermore, the older people's B&B accommodation experience is less common when considered in relation to the young people. Respondents in the 25 to 30 age group have tried B&B accommodation around 1 to 5 times, with none experiencing B&Bs more than 5 times per year. This may be due to the fact that most in this demographic group are employees, so they do not have plenty of time to travel. The data suggest that the young generation are much more open to B&B accommodation because that they are more willing to engage with new things than people in the 31 to 35 age group. In addition to this, a pertinent consideration is that students have more time in which to travel. Furthermore, most B&B accommodation is not highly-priced, thereby meaning that the high cost performance means it is the better choice for young people.

- 90 participants (54.4%) always travel with their friends, 60 participants (36.4%) usually travel with family members, and only 15 participants (9.1%) choose to travel alone.

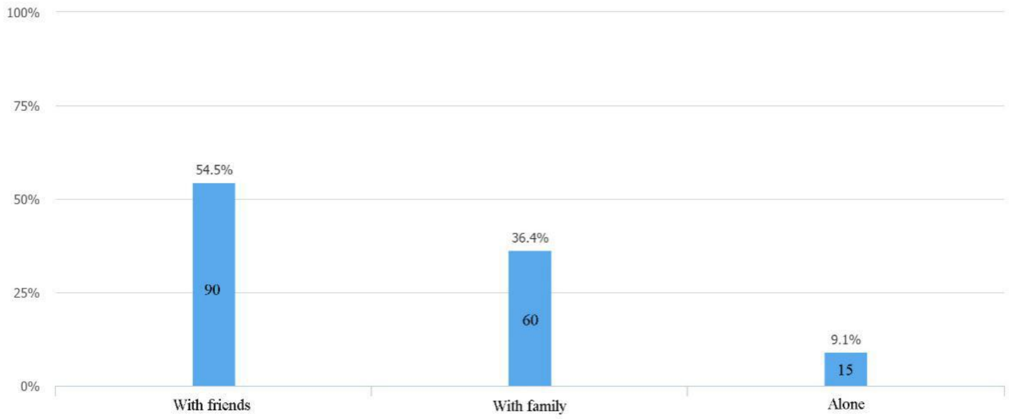


Figure 10: Types of travelling

Figure 10 shows that although some people (especially those born in the 90s) always report that they prefer travelling alone and having "spur of the moment" trips, it is in fact the case that the better part of them (54.5%) tend to travel with their partners and friends. Relatively few of this demographic group were found to travel with family members. A curious result is that only 9.1% of the participants prefer to travel alone. This is indicative of the fact that irrespective of the kind of relationship travel companions have, having an intimate travelling companion with whom feelings can be shared during a trip is important for the participants.

- Question 6 focused on the cost range per night of the B&B accommodations that people are willing to pay. The author divided the price range into six parts: > RMB 2000, RMB 1500-2000, RMB 1000-1500, RMB 500-1000, RMB 200-500, and < RMB 200. As Figure 11 shows, the most acceptable price range for B&B accommodation is mainly between 200 and 500 RMB, which accounts for 49.7%. additionally, 23.6% of the participants prefer the lower priced B&B accommodation (namely, cheaper than RMB 200). Meanwhile, out of 165 samples, 29 participants (17.6%) preferred to pay RMB 500-1000 RMB per night for B&B accommodation. Contrastingly, relatively few were willing to pay more than RMB 1000 per night.

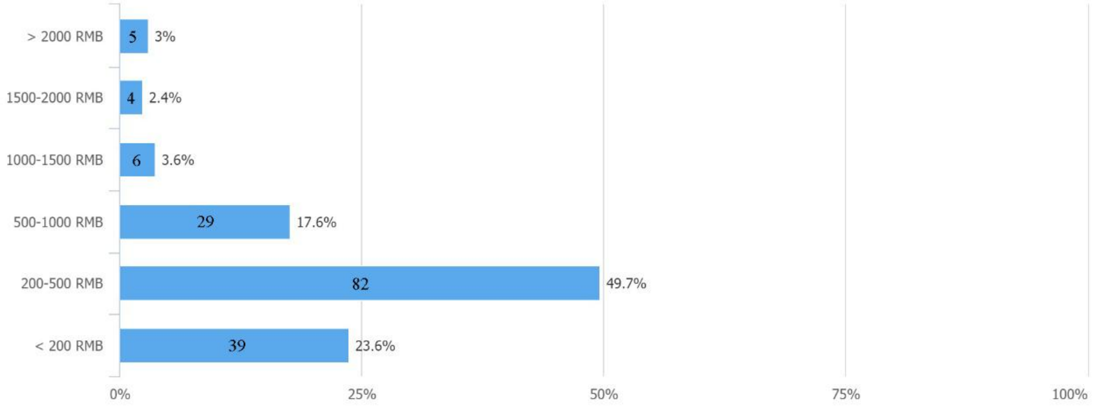


Figure 11: Cost range per night for B&B accommodation

As the major force in the consumer group for B&B accommodation, young people, with the gradual increase in their working income, are likely to experience a prominent rise in their purchasing power in the coming year. As a consequence, the expected expenses for one night of B&B accommodation is expected to switch from the price range between RMB 200-500 to RMB 500-1000.

- Question 7 in the questionnaire was conducted in order to identify which application customers prefer to use when searching for B&B accommodations. The author provided nine fixed selections: Booking.com, Airbnb.com, Ctrip.com, Qunar.com, eLong.com, Alitrip.com, Tujia.com, Xiaozhu.com, and Onehome.me. Each of these online travel applications has a good mass base, which means that many of the customers use those apps in China. An "other" choice was provided for those participants who wanted to specify a different platform.

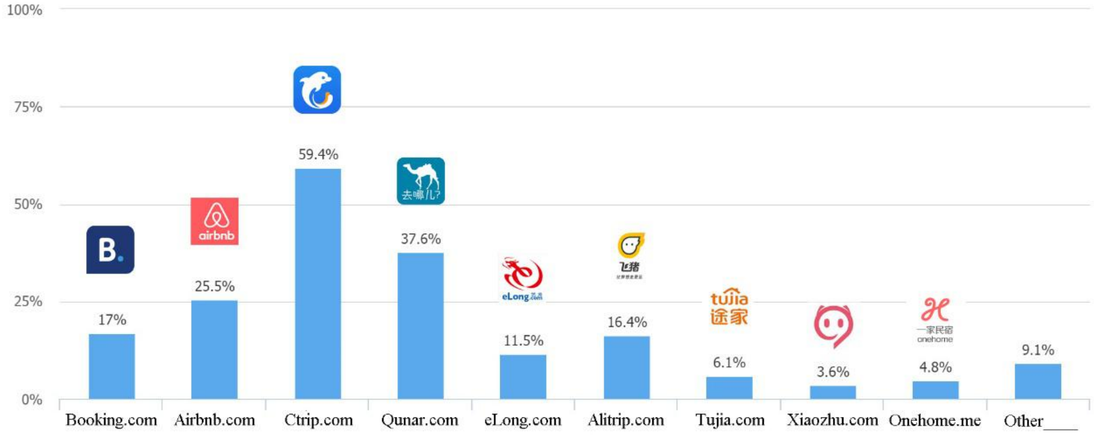


Figure 12: Search applications for B&B accommodation information

According to the questionnaire responses, it is clear that Ctrip.com is the most popular travel app from the perspective of young Chinese tourists. In terms of the top three apps, these were as follows: Ctrip.com (59.4%), Qunar.com (37.6%), and Airbnb.com (25.5%), respectively. What is interesting is that in the top three list, Ctrip.com and Qunar.com are the Chinese tourism applications that provide users with various kinds of travel service (e.g. accommodation reservations, airline bookings, car rentals, cruises, package tours, high-speed rail ticket reservations, and other integrated tourism services). In contrast, Airbnb.com is an online booking site which only provides B&B accommodation reservations, and which does not offer any other services. Turning to other apps that we mentioned in the questionnaire, several participants chose booking.com, eLong.com, and Alitrip.com for their B&B accommodation reservation. Among them, eLong.com and Alitrip.com have the same business model when compared with Ctrip.com. However, Tujia.com, Xiaozhu.com and Onehome.me, as the professional apps for B&B accommodation booking, did not gain the same number of responses when compared to Ctrip.com and Airbnb.com did. This is indicative of the fact that these three apps only dominate tiny market niches.

Furthermore, in the "other____" selection, participants mentioned that they also use Meituan.com and Fishtrip.cn when they book the travel accommodation. Due to fact that the number of users is not as high as Ctrip.com, these two apps are not discussed further in the thesis.

- Question 8 asked the respondents about the importance of each factors in influencing their buying decisions when they choose B&B accommodation for their trip. The ranking question type (using a scale of 1 to 9) illustrates the importance ranking of the relevant factors in the customer's mind. In this case, 1 is the most important and 9 is the least important. The factors in question are as follows: price, location, reputation on social platform, customer evaluation and feedback, traffic convenience and accessibility, security, acquaintance's recommendation, host service, and decoration style and room condition.

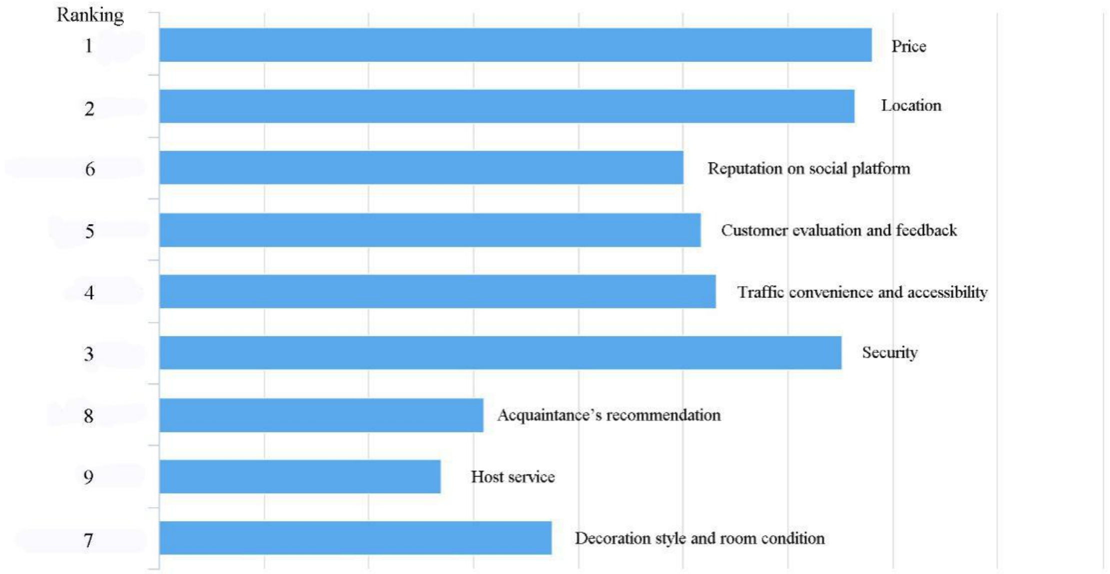


Figure 13: The importance ranking list for each factor when choosing B&B accommodation

In effect, Figure 13 outlines the factors as follows:

1. Price;
2. Location;
3. Security;
4. Traffic convenience and accessibility;
5. Customer evaluation and feedback;
6. Reputation on social platform;
7. Decoration style and room condition;
8. Acquaintance's recommendation;
9. Host service.

It is doubtless that the most important factor for guests to choose B&B accommodation is price. Other than the price factor, guests are also concerned about the location and the security of the accommodation. When people choose accommodation, they always refer to the surrounding traffic environment and consider whether there is a nearby business district, with another pertinent consideration being proximity to desirable spots. In view of this, excellent geographical location with convenient public transportation links is a major factor that attracts individual travellers. Since travellers are unfamiliar with the local environment and customs, a good location becomes centrally important in helping them feel at ease in a strange place.

The security factor cannot be ignored, and one of the most important considerations for B&B hosts is to build trust with their guests. Only when the customer can acquire all the precise information about the B&B accommodation through travel booking apps, by checking the pictures, information description, and previous customer's feedback, can they easily understand the quality of B&B accommodation. Furthermore, if the B&B accommodation receives a high mark from a previous customer, then it is likely to receive greater demand from future guests. In this case, hosts should refrain from submitting false information and, moreover, they should be honest with guests. Ultimately, this serves as the cornerstone of establishing trust with customers. In view of this, one of the most important things for hosts to do is to ensure the security of the room. Hence, hosts should avoid all possibilities of insecurity, thereby offering a perfect living experience to the customer.

Finally, one of the chief concerns of customers who choose to stay in B&B accommodation is that they aim to experience what living like a local is like. In this way, it is important for hosts to note that decoration style and service should be consistent with the local lifestyle.

- Question 9 focused on the add-on services of B&B accommodation by rating the importance of which kinds of service the customer needs. In this question, participants used a 1 to 5 scale to evaluate each service, where 1 = not important, 3 = neutral, and 5 = very important.

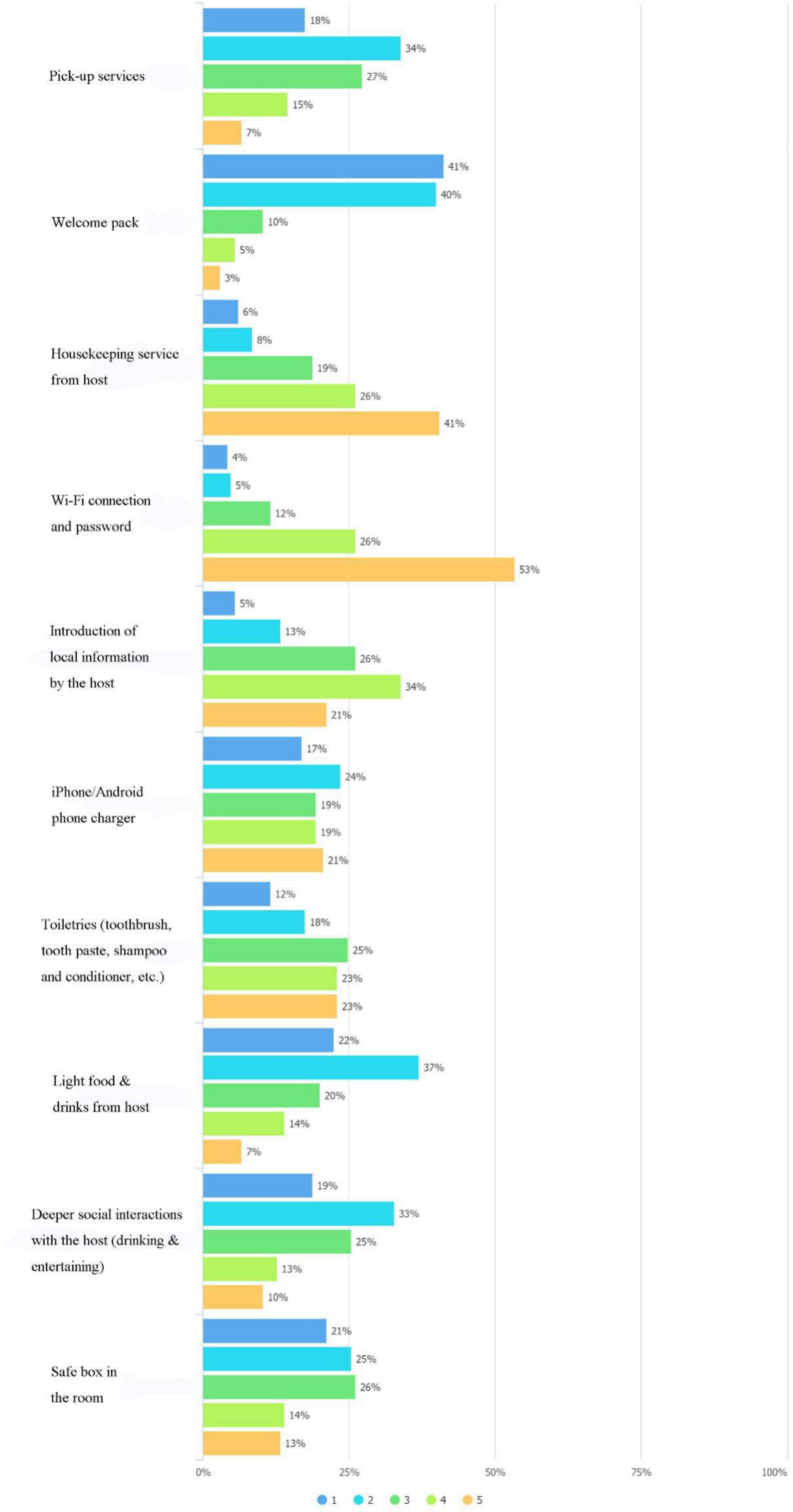

Pick-up services
18%
34%
27%
15%
7%
Welcome pack
41%
40%
10%
5%
3%
Housekeeping service from host
6%
8%
19%
26%
41%
Wi-Fi connection and password
4%
5%
12%
26%
53%
Introduction of local information by the host
5%
13%
26%
34%
21%
iPhone/Android phone charger
17%
24%
19%
19%
21%
Toiletries (toothbrush, tooth paste, shampoo and conditioner, etc.)
12%
18%
25%
23%
23%
Light food & drinks from host
22%
37%
20%
14%
7%
Deeper social interactions with the host (drinking & entertaining)
19%
33%
25%
13%
10%
Safe box in the room
21%
25%
26%
14%
13%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
● 1
● 2
● 3
● 4
● 5

Figure 14: Rate the add-on services of B&B accommodation

10 add-on services have been included in this question, namely, pick-up services, welcome pack, housekeeping service from host, Wi-Fi connection and password, introduction of local information by the host, iPhone/Android phone charger, toiletries (toothbrush, tooth paste, shampoo, and conditioner, etc.), light food and drinks from host, deeper social interactions with the host (drinking, entertaining, etc.), and a safe box in the room.

According to Figure 14, the result of the ranking lists can be summarized as follows:

1 = not important:
welcome pack > light food and drinks > safe box > interactions with the host > pick-up services > phone charger > toiletries > housekeeping service > introduction of local information > Wi-Fi.

5 = very important:
Wi-Fi > housekeeping service > toiletries > introduction of local information = phone charger > safe box > interactions with the host > pick-up services = light food and drinks > welcome pack.

Out of 165 samples, 53% respondents chose Wi-Fi connection as the most important add-on service during their accommodation experience. It is followed by the housekeeping service, which accounts for 41%. In addition, 23% of the respondents thought that the provision of toiletries is convenient in allowing them to avoid packing personal toiletries and, thereby, pack light.

Interestingly, add-on services such as a welcome pack (41%), light food and drinks (22%), and a safe box (21%) appear like unimportant when compared to other selections.

- Question 10 discussed respondent opinions about the way in which room keys are handed over. Nowadays, certain hosts are busy with work, which means that they may not have enough to time stay at home to wait for the arrival of their guests. Hence, some hosts have started to leave keys in a nearby store or café, after which they inform guests about the assigned place to pick up their key. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this behavior is causing controversy; some people agree with it, while others cannot understand it. Therefore, this question is intended to give a clear understanding about which handover method is most appropriate for guests.

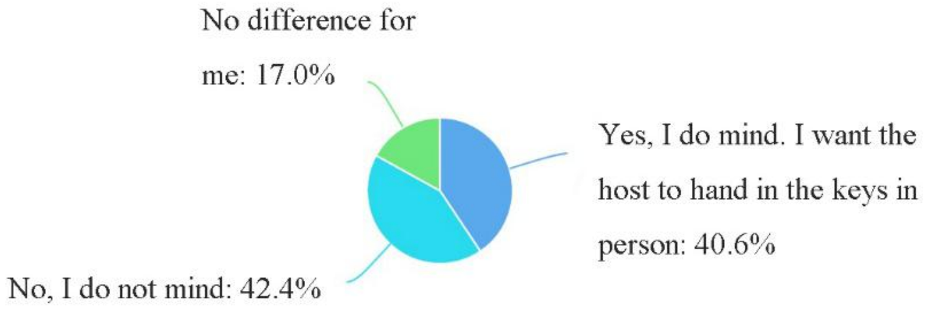


Figure 15: Handover method preferences

According to the participant responses, it can be found that there is no significant difference for participants in terms of key handover preference. 42.4% of the participants do not mind picking up their keys in a nearby store, whereas 40.6% would prefer to pick up their keys directly from the host. In view of this, it is possible to conclude that preference really depends on personal habit, so it is necessary for hosts to discuss this topic with guests further.

- Question 11 enquired about the participants' dining preferences by asking them to evaluate the following choices: eating with the host and the host's family, cooking alone, or eating out.

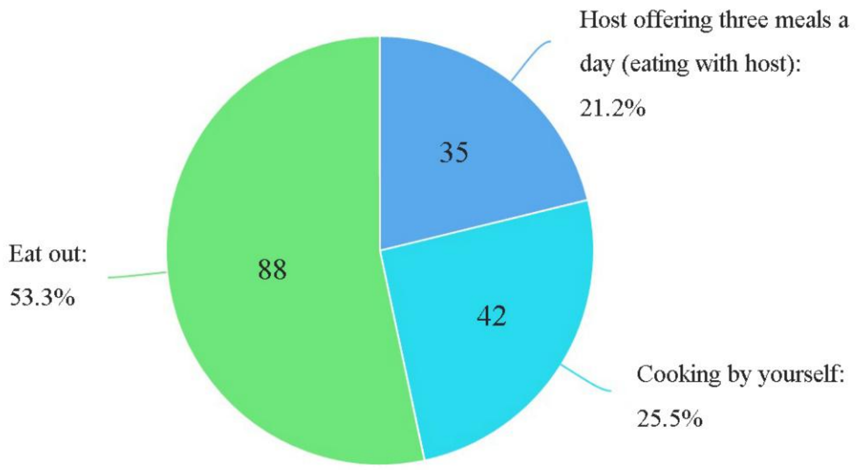


Figure 16 Guest dining preferences

88 participants (53.3%) preferred to eat out during their travel time, while 42 participants (25.5%) stated that they would prefer to cook by themselves. Unexpectedly, only 35 participants (21.1%) stated that they prefer to eat with the host and the host's family. Thus, it is possible to conclude that most young Chinese travellers would rather eat food in a local restaurant than the host's family. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this is consistent with the psychological culture of most Chinese citizens; for instance, shyness and reservation are common characteristics, so the prospect of eating with unfamiliar people in a new environment would create undesirable cause for embarrassment.

- Question 12 focused on a hot topic in the B&B accommodation sector, namely, the relationship between a host's personal image and the likelihood of the customer choosing accommodation. Today, an increasing number of B&B accommodation booking apps put efforts into shaping their hosts with a mysterious and interesting image in order to attract guests to choose their accommodation. The question addressed to the respondents here was as follows:

"Does a host with rich life experience increase your willingness to spend time in their B&B? Moreover, does this influence your final choice?"

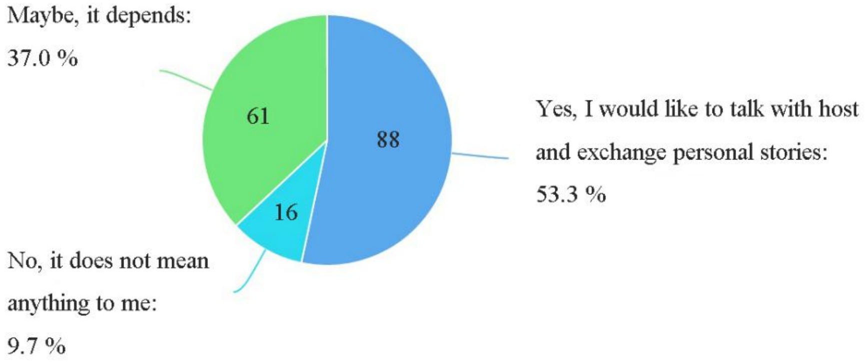


Figure 17: Relationship between host's personal image and the likelihood of customer choosing the accommodation

53.3% stated that they would like to talk with the host and exchange personal stories, while 37.0% stated that this depends on the host (namely, if the host is friendly and easy to get along with). At the same time, it was highlighted that guests also need to have the time and a good mood, paired with effective communication skills (with these factors also applying to the host). Notably, 16 respondents (9.7%) expressed no willingness to talk to their host, stating that it meant nothing to them to do so.

- The last question was an open-ended question aimed to gain insight into the tourists' needs along with other pertinent comments regarding B&B services. Since the question was optional, only 135 respondents completed it (with a response rate of 81.8%). After making well-organized notes, the comments presented below are the ones that appeared most commonly:

  - ✓ Ensure the security of the accommodation;
  - ✓ The room must be neat and clean;

- ✓ Special decoration style (consistent with local characteristics);
- ✓ Make guests feel at home.

One respondent offered a notable opinion in that the government should introduce policies to protect the right of the guest. She reported a terrible Airbnb experience that took place in Helsinki, where the host had not checked the facilities before they rented the room to a guest and this resulted in the guest having to pay for a broken window they had not cause. In view of this, it is possible to conclude that a certain level of policy protection should be afforded to guests to prevent situations like this occurring. Another notable point raised by a respondent touched on the issue of racial discrimination. To be more specific, the respondent reported that they had been subjected to racial discrimination when they journeyed to the UK and stayed in a B&B. Hence, an enthusiastic host who is respectable, agreeable, and easy to get along with is imperative in bringing a comfortable experience to the guests.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The immediate purpose of this thesis has been to investigate young Chinese tourists' preferences towards B&B services, with the main objective of determining what 18-23-year-olds look for when they choose B&B accommodation. The author has analyzed consumer buying behavior through several perspectives, explained the process of consumer buying decisions, and outlined the factors that may influence buying decisions. In addition, to offer a clear industry picture of B&B services, background information has been presented along with the driving forces of the B&B sector. Furthermore, the sharing economy and the sharing accommodation concept has been outlined.

One of the purposes of this research has also been to derive some practicable recommendations that Chinese B&B managers and hosts can use to operate their businesses successfully. The following recommendations have been derived from the questionnaire findings outlined in the previous chapter:

- The major customer group for B&B accommodation is '90s generation. Furthermore, the individuals aged between 18 and 30 are more likely to choose B&B services when compared to individuals aged between 31 and 35.

- Young customers (aged between 18 and 24) have more personal time to travel, so the likelihood of their using B&B services is greater than the other two age groups.

- Rather than travelling alone, young Chinese tourists prefer to have a stable travelling companion during the trip. The partner may be lover, a friend, or a family member, or a combination of these options.

- The most acceptable price of B&B per night is RMB 200-500. As the purchasing power of younger generation individuals increases in the coming years, this price range is expected to switch to RMB 500-1000.

- Ctrip.com is the most popular travel application for young Chinese tourists, and although certain domestic application focus solely on B&Bs, the majority use Ctrip.com as their first choice. However, as Airbnb's presence in the Chinese market increases in the future, it is expected that the total number of users on this platform will increase.

- The ranking list for the importance of factors that may influence consumer buying decisions shows the following:

  Price > Location > Security > Traffic convenience and accessibility > Customer convenience and accessibility > Customer evaluation and feedback > Reputation on social platform > Decoration style and room condition > Acquaintance's recommendation > Host service.

  The top 3 elements people are always concerned about are price, location, and security, respectively. Price is the decisive factor for people in choosing accommodation, while effective transportation and a secure environment are likely to increase the probability of a user choosing the accommodation.

- The top 3 add-on services are Wi-Fi connection, housekeeping, and toiletries, respectively. The unimportant services for guests are welcome packs and light drinks and foods.

- No significant divergence is observed with respect to the issue of key handover method. As such, half of the respondents in this study stated their preference as meeting personally with the host, while another sizeable group considered that picking up the keys by themselves is also acceptable. In view of this result, the recommendation for hosts is that they establish contact with each customer on a situational basis to determine their preference.

- Most people prefer to eat out when they travel and stay in B&Bs, but breakfast ought to be provided by the host.

- A significant proportion of the participants stated that they like to talk with the hosts, communicate with local people, and make friends when they travel to a new destination. However, this sometimes depends on the personality of the hosts, where an interesting, agreeable, and friendly host is more likely to encourage interaction. Hosts in China should also note that some young Chinese tourists are unwilling to engage in interaction.

After summarizing the questionnaire findings, several details are presented below that may help hosts to improve their B&B service:

- Provide local maps in the room, give some suggestions and directions to guests, tell them which restaurants offer authentic local food, and inform guests about the cheapest and most convenient ways to reach scenic spots.

- Keep the house clean at all times, change bedding in a timely manner, and disinfect it.

- Ensure that decor reflects local characteristics, maintain the personality of the accommodation, and try not to imitate others.

- Be nice, be easy-going, warmly, sincere, homely, and provide an intimate service. It is very important for the host to reply to messages in time and to solve problem quickly and efficiently.

- Prepare breakfast for guests. Although B&B services are meant to include breakfast, not every host does this. Consider that when breakfast is not prepared for a guest, they must get up early and search around on the street to find a place to eat.

- Ensure the security of the accommodation to guarantee that the guest will be safe during their stay. In addition, try to verify the identity of guests, and check their ID card in order to avoid risk. Furthermore, ensure that guests can lock the door of their rooms.

- Prepare some seasoner, kitchenware, and tableware in the shared kitchen.

- Prepare the basic household appliances, and note that the most important electric appliance for Chinese tourists is the electric kettle. Chinese people like to drink hot water, so this underlines the necessity of ready availability with respect to this appliance.

- Make sure all the electrical appliances (e.g. refrigerators, air conditioning, and water heaters) are in serviceable condition before guests check-in.

- Provide a high-speed Wi-Fi connection and make sure it covers every corner of the room.

- Purchase a full-length mirror to place in the guest’s room.

- Make sure all the information posted on the travel platform is correct, and provide accurate and detailed information.

- Do not trespass into the guest’s private space.

- Carefully consider the customer’s potential needs and provide relevant services. For example, if your B&B accommodation is located in a seaside tourism city, the customer is likely to want to go the beach. As such, many may forget to bring the necessary swimming equipment, and this is something hosts can prepare for in case of the guest’s need. In these situations, the host can rent this equipment to the guests.

- Ask the guest whether they need a pick-up service before they arrive. If they need this, try to arrange a person to deal with it in a timely manner.

For people who would like to join the sharing economy by operating their own B&B accommodation business, the following are some useful recommendations:

- The first thing to do is to choose a house or an apartment which has suitable location, easy access, a green environment, and effective sound insulation effect.

- Trendy interior decoration combined with local characteristics can be an effective way to put the guest in touch with a new culture.

- Prices should be based on adequate market research. Avoid setting a price that is too high, and do not let the price exceed the customer experience. “Buy” and “sell” need to be equal.

- Promote and market your B&B business. After the decorations are finished, do not forget to upload your accommodation information to an online tourism platform. Hire a professional photographer to take high-quality pictures of your room or house, and post these photos on several apps with detailed descriptions. Do not post the accommodation information only on one app, as if it is posted on several travel platforms you can increase the exposure rate.

As previously mentioned, an increasing number of travel apps are trying to shape their hosts with an interesting image to attract more guests to book their accommodation. Hence, it might be worthwhile for the host to write about their background, life experience, and interests, thereby attracting guests who are interested both in the accommodation and the personality of the host. In such a situation, a host can gain not only a potential customer but also a friend.

- Since the average acceptable accommodation price for one night is RMB 200-500, hosts should keep their prices within this range where possible.

- The most popular online travel app for the Chinese market is Ctrip.com, and it is notable that Airbnb.com is trying to expand their Chinese market share. Hence, hosts should pay close attention to these applications. Furthermore, because Xiaozhu.com and Tujia.com mainly focusing on B&B accommodation, they should also should be considered when a host engages in marketing promotion.

- The top 3 add-on services for B&B accommodation are Wi-Fi connection, housekeeping service, and toiletries, respectively, while the unimportant services for guests are welcome packs and light drinks and foods. Hence, hosts should prepare toiletries for those eventualities where guests forget to bring them or aim to pack light. Furthermore, hosts should communicate with their guests, know their habits, and organize daily housekeeping services around this. However, there are some guests who would rather not be disturbed, so hosts should respect all types of living habits.

- Key handover preferences are not dominated by a single perspective, with half preferring to meet personally with their host and the remainder considering that picking up keys in an authorized location is not an issue. Hence, hosts should find out about the customer’s preference before they arrive.

If each of these relevant aspects of the B&B business is considered, along with improvements to the add-on services and the overall service quality, it is undoubtable that the Chinese B&B service will be the first choice for travellers when they are choosing accommodation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire:

Attitude of Chinese young generation towards B&B service

(English version)

Dear all,

My name is Suo Yifang, I am an international business student of Tampere University of Applied Sciences and now I am conducting a research for my Bachelor thesis. The aim of this research is to understand the Chinese young customer's appetites for B&B service in Chinese market. Would you mind taking some time to participate my research and answer this questionnaire?

B&B in Chinese market is a quite different concept which compared to other countries. It is not only a place which offers overnight accommodation and breakfast, but also provides an invisible information platform that allows guests to experience the local life at close range. In Chinese content, B&B can be a private family home, a rustic boutique hotels with minimum amenities which remodeled from the traditional building structure, inn and happy farmhouse.

Please give your own answers below.
Thank you so much for taking your valuable time to give your opinion!

Best regards,
Suo Yifang

1. Please choose your gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. Please choose your age group:

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-30

☐ 31-35

3. Please choose your social roles:

☐ Student

☐ Employee

☐ Unemployed

☐ Other (self-employed, etc.):____

4. Who do you usually travel with?

☐ With friends

☐ With family

☐ Alone

5. How many B&B experience do you have per year?

☐ Once or twice

☐ 3-5 times

☐ More than 5 times

6. What is the typical cost range per night of the B&B accommodation you usually chosen?

☐ > 2000 CNY

☐ 1500 CNY - 2000 CNY

☐ 1000 CNY - 1500 CNY

☐ 500 CNY - 1000 CNY

☐ 200 CNY - 500 CNY

☐ < 200 CNY

7. Where did you get the information of this B&B accommodation unit?

☐ Booking.com

☐ Airbnb.com

☐ Ctrip.com

☐ Qunar.com

☐ eLong.com

☐ Alitrip.com

☐ Tujia.com

☐ Xiaozhu.com

☐ Onehome.me

☐ Other (Please specify):_____

8. How important are the following factors when you choose the B&B accommodation for your trip?
(Please rank the following in order of importance from 1 to 9 where 1 is the most important to you and 9 is least important to you)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Price									
Location									
Reputation on social platform									
Customer evaluation and feedback									
Traffic convenience and accessibility									
Security									
Acquaintance’s recommendation									
Host service									
Decoration style and room condition									

9. Please rate the following add-on services of B&B in your point of view.
(Using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = not important, 3 = neutral and 5 = very important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Pick-up services					
Welcome pack					
Housekeeping service from host					
Wi-Fi connection and password					
Introduction of local information by the host					
iPhone/Android phone charger					
Toiletries (toothbrush, tooth paste, shampoo and conditioner, etc.)					
Light food & drinks from host					
Deeper social interactions with the host (drinking & entertaining)					
Safe box in the room					

10. Would you mind if the host handled your arrival/departure logistics by directing you to a nearby business that would check you in and out with the keys to the accommodation at your convenience (like a hotel reception)?
☐ Yes, I do mind. I want the host to hand in the keys in person
☐ No, I do not mind
☐ No difference for me

11. What type of dining way do you prefer?
☐ Host offering three meals a day (eating with host)
☐ Cooking by yourself
☐ Eat out

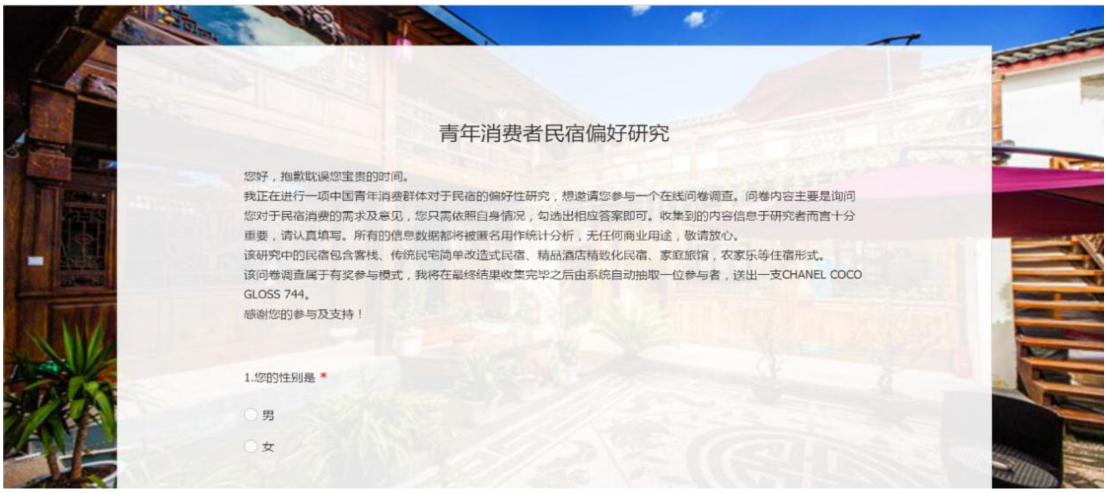
12. Dose a host with rich life experiences will increase your attention on their B&B accommodation? And also influence your final choice?
(There is a new marketing trend is that to shape the host with a mysterious and interesting image in order to attract guest to choose their accommodation)
☐ Yes, I would like to talk with host and exchange personal stories
☐ No, it does not mean anything to me
☐ Maybe, it depends

13. Do you have any comments on what services B&B could add to improve the guest experience?

Appendix 2. Questionnaire:

Attitude of Chinese young generation towards B&B service

(Chinese version)

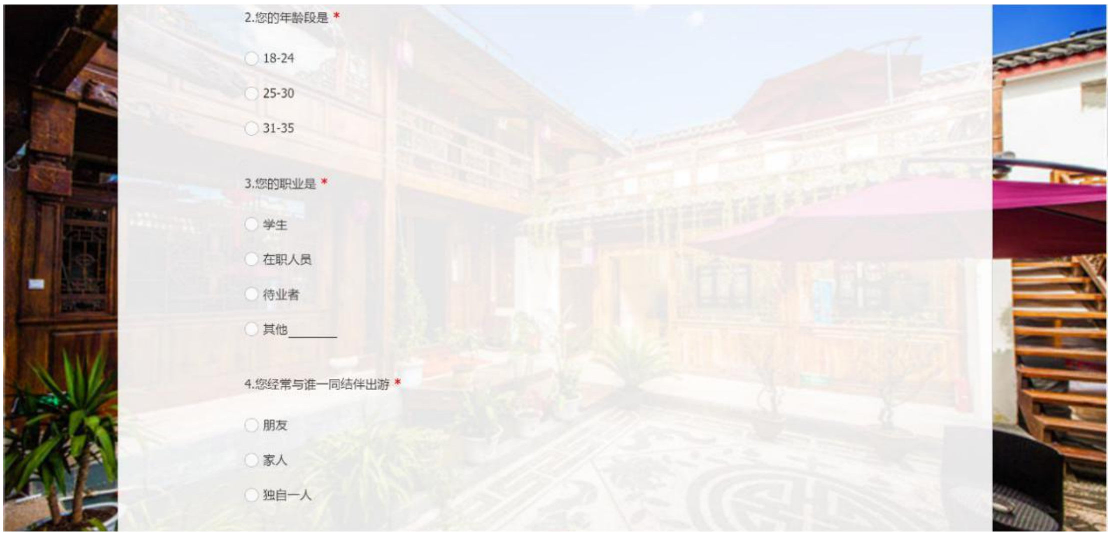


青年消费者民宿偏好研究

您好，抱歉耽误您宝贵的时间。
我正在进行一项中国青年消费群体对于民宿的偏好性研究，想邀请您参与一个在线问卷调查。问卷内容主要是询问您对于民宿消费的需求及意见，您只需依照自身情况，勾选出相应答案即可。收集到的内容信息于研究者而言十分重要，请认真填写。所有的信息数据都将被匿名用作统计分析，无任何商业用途，敬请放心。
该研究中的民宿包含客栈、传统民宅简单改造式民宿、精品酒店精致化民宿、家庭旅馆，农家乐等住宿形式。
该问卷调查属于有奖参与模式，我将在最终结果收集完毕之后由系统自动抽取一位参与者，送出一支CHANEL COCO GLOSS 744。
感谢您的参与及支持！

1.您的性别是 *

○ 男
○ 女



2.您的年龄段是 *

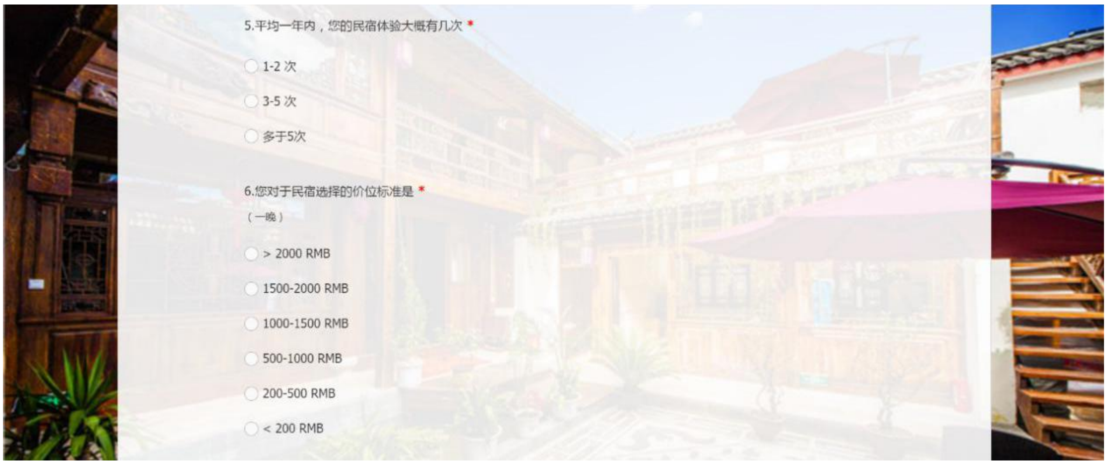
○ 18-24
○ 25-30
○ 31-35

3.您的职业是 *

○ 学生
○ 在职人员
○ 待业者
○ 其他______

4.您经常与谁一同结伴出游 *

○ 朋友
○ 家人
○ 独自一人

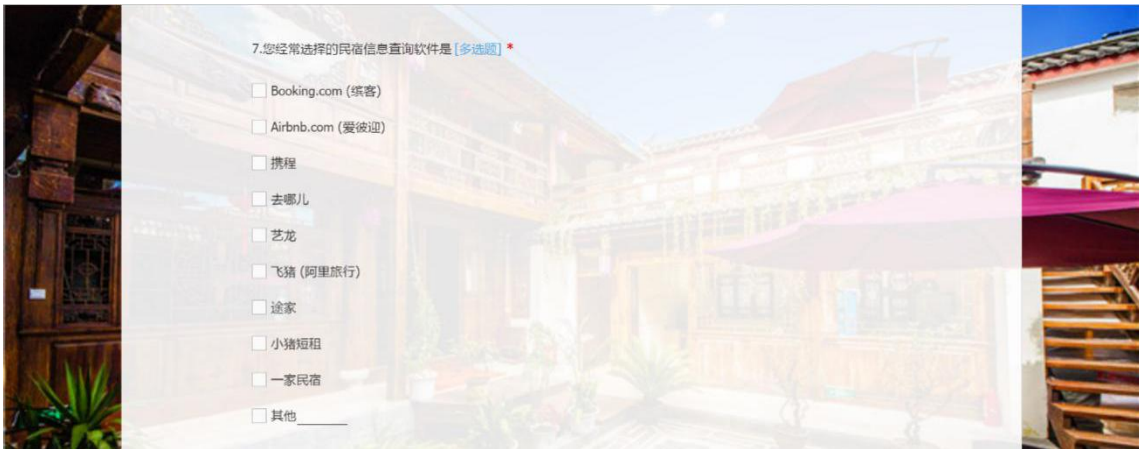


5.平均一年内，您的民宿体验大概有几次 *

○ 1-2 次
○ 3-5 次
○ 多于5次

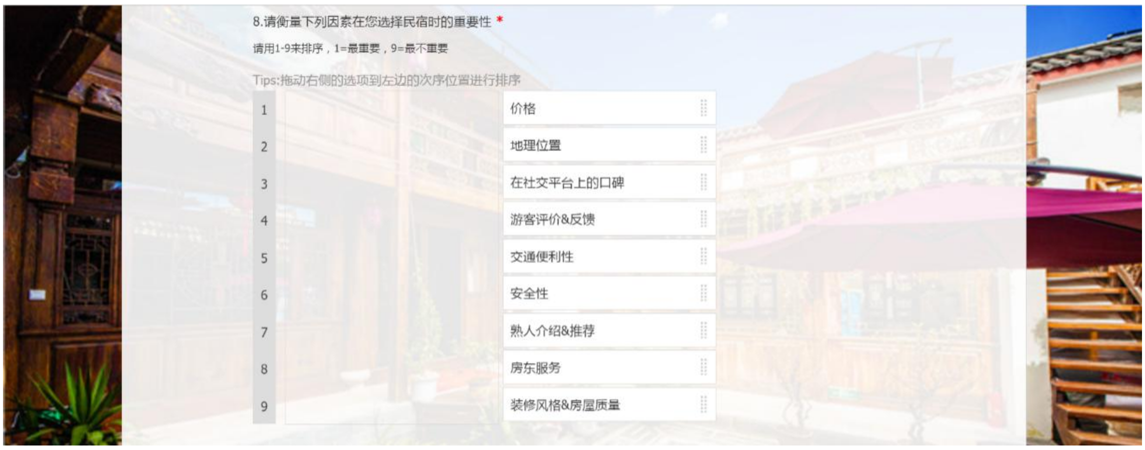
6.您对于民宿选择的价位标准是 *
（一晚）

○ > 2000 RMB
○ 1500-2000 RMB
○ 1000-1500 RMB
○ 500-1000 RMB
○ 200-500 RMB
○ < 200 RMB



7.您经常选择的民宿信息查询软件是 [多选题] *

- ☐ Booking.com (缤客)
- ☐ Airbnb.com (爱彼迎)
- ☐ 携程
- ☐ 去哪儿
- ☐ 艺龙
- ☐ 飞猪 (阿里旅行)
- ☐ 途家
- ☐ 小猪短租
- ☐ 一家民宿
- ☐ 其他______

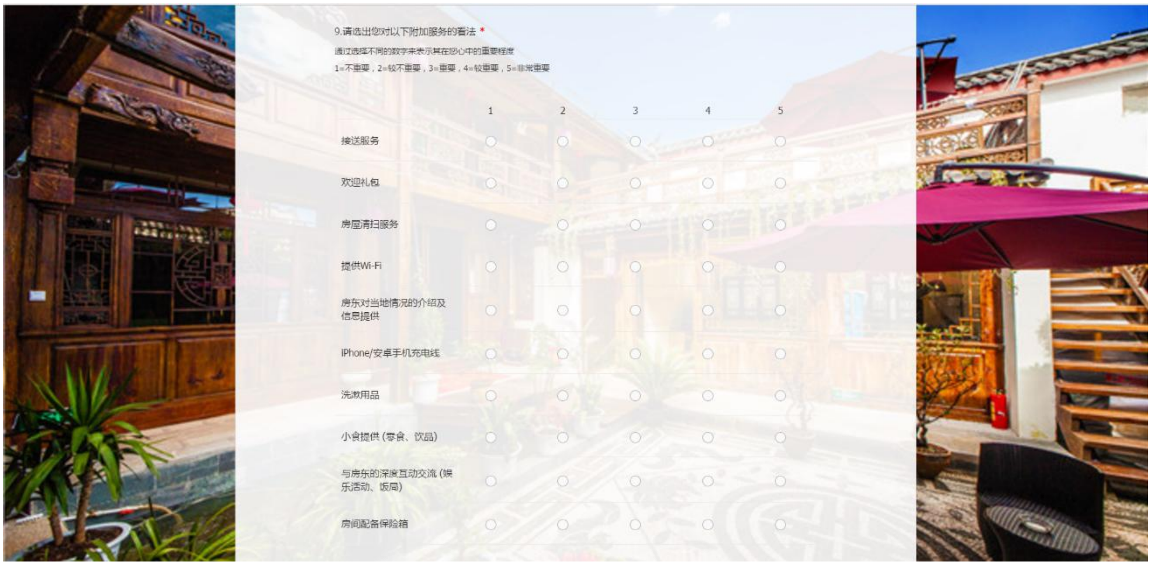


8.请衡量下列因素在您选择民宿时的重要性 *

请用1-9来排序，1=最重要，9=最不重要

Tips:拖动右侧的选项到左边的次序位置进行排序

1	价格
2	地理位置
3	在社交平台上的口碑
4	游客评价&反馈
5	交通便利性
6	安全性
7	熟人介绍&推荐
8	房东服务
9	装修风格&房屋质量

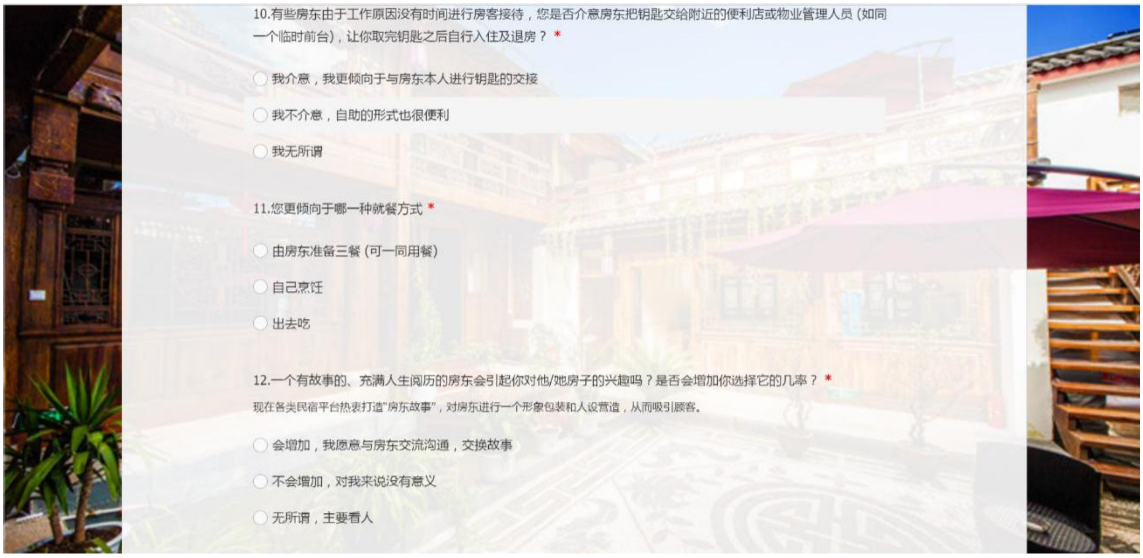


9.请选出您对以下附加服务的看法 *

通过选择不同的数字来表示其在您心中的重要程度

1=不重要，2=较不重要，3=重要，4=较重要，5=非常重要

	1	2	3	4	5
接送服务	○	○	○	○	○
欢迎礼包	○	○	○	○	○
房屋清扫服务	○	○	○	○	○
提供Wi-Fi	○	○	○	○	○
房东对当地情况的介绍及信息提供	○	○	○	○	○
IPhone/安卓手机充电线	○	○	○	○	○
洗漱用品	○	○	○	○	○
小食提供 (零食、饮品)	○	○	○	○	○
与房东的深度互动交流 (娱乐活动、饭局)	○	○	○	○	○
房间配备保险箱	○	○	○	○	○



10.有些房东由于工作原因没有时间进行房客接待，您是否介意房东把钥匙交给附近的便利店或物业管理人员（如同一个临时前台），让你取完钥匙之后自行入住及退房？ *

○ 我介意，我更倾向于与房东本人进行钥匙的交接

○ 我不介意，自助的形式也很便利

○ 我无所谓

11.您更倾向于哪一种就餐方式 *

○ 由房东准备三餐（可一同用餐）

○ 自己烹饪

○ 出去吃

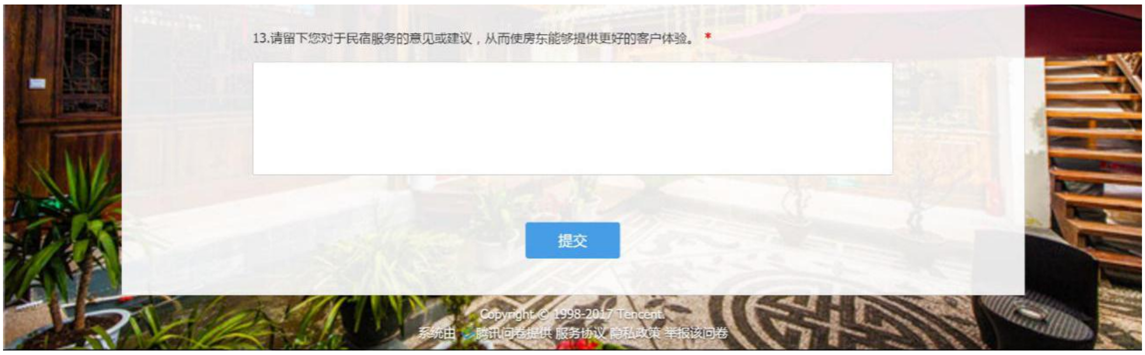
12.一个有故事的、充满人生阅历的房东会引起你对他/她房子的兴趣吗？是否会增加你选择它的几率？ *

现在各类民宿平台热衷打造"房东故事"，对房东进行一个形象包装和人设营造，从而吸引顾客。

○ 会增加，我愿意与房东交流沟通，交换故事

○ 不会增加，对我来说没有意义

○ 无所谓，主要看人



13.请留下您对于民宿服务的意见或建议，从而使房东能够提供更好的客户体验。 *

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