

Research on Marketing Innovation of Homestay After Joining the Platform

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Abstract. The Internet has driven the in-depth development of the digitalization of the tourism industry. The online tourism platform has changed the traditional tourism marketing strategies and accelerated the transformation and upgrading of the consumption model. This paper takes Beijing A homestay as the research object and uses the case study method to discuss the marketing innovation behavior of homestay after joining the platform. By analyzing its current situation and summarizing the characteristics of the marketing model, the development direction of the future homestay marketing model is discussed, which inspires the development of the homestay industry.

Keywords: homestay, tourism platform, marketing, tourism industry.

1. Introduction

In the context of the current rapid development of tourism and the Internet, social consumption demands and economic development models are undergoing significant changes. Tourism platforms are gradually emerging, and well-known large tourism platforms such as Ctrip and Fliggy have gradually emerged [1]. As a result, more and more tourism merchants in the country have joined these platforms to adapt to consumption patterns and meet increasingly diversified consumption needs. Therefore, related research on the online tourism platform has achieved rich results in the past ten years. However, the existing research pays less systematic attention to tourism merchants, especially the marketing innovation behavior of tourism merchants after joining the platform [2]. The theory of quasi-merchant marketing innovation is not yet clear.

In domestic and foreign tourism geography literature, homestay research began in the 1980s, but academic circles and tourism marketing agencies have not reached a consensus on the definition and form of homestay. In order to reduce information asymmetry and offline search costs, traditional homestays are mainly concentrated near tourist destinations, and the matching efficiency between homestay demand and supply is low [3]. For homestays that have joined the Internet platform, the academic community has put forward the concept of "shared homestays," but a unified definition of shared homestays has not yet been formed. Most foreign researchers regard shared accommodation as an application or practice of the sharing economy in the accommodation industry. Around the "shared" attribute and "accommodation" function, shared accommodation is called shared accommodation, short-term online rental, shared short-term rental, and shared homestay. Different researchers have different definitions of shared accommodation from different perspectives [4].

When studying OTA, foreign scholars have focused on the OTA promotion model and strategy research. The countermeasures of product innovation and development of characteristic food blocks are researched [5]. The OTA price war between Ctrip Tuniu and Tongcheng game models is analyzed [6]. They are all applied research based on the impact of the rapid development of the digitalization of the country's Internet industry on the transformation and upgrading of the digital information of the homestay industry.

Based on the above theory and research background, this paper takes the relatively prosperous and representative homestay industry among the tourism merchants who joined the platform as the research object. The interaction of various elements of consumers, pay attention to and focus on the independent role of tourism merchants in this interaction. At the same time, a typical homestay was selected for in-depth observation and continued to track its performance on different platforms, trying to make a theoretical explanation for the basic problem of marketing innovation after tourism

merchants joined the platform. The answer to this question can improve the overall understanding of the behavior of joining the platform and provide a reference for carrying out relevant case studies.

2. Research Method

Because of the uniqueness of the research question, a case study method is adopted. Beijing A homestay is selected as the research sample because the best practice of this case reflects the following principles for sample selection:

1. The principle of taking into account both importance and representativeness. As a representative business of Beijing homestay, Beijing A homestay can represent the marketing practice of homestay with the same characteristics in the industry after joining the platform.

2. Taking into account the principle of consistency between academic goals and case objects. The performance and praise of Beijing A homestay on the platform have an important relationship with its marketing capabilities. The author was deeply impressed by the research, and the historical data in this regard is also relatively complete.

3. Case Description

The online sales of homestays are based on the "Internet +" platform, which integrates the cultural characteristics, living environment, and standardization and quality services carried by homestays, relying on network information with brand image, fast, convenient, systematic, transparent, and personalized [7]. Present homestay information, services, and products in front of customers are involved, which facilitates information statistics and interaction, quality monitoring, and promotion of homestay pre-sale, in-sale, and after-sale links. The distribution of inns and homestays is concentrated in the areas where the tourism industry is relatively developed. Fig.1 shows the transaction scale of China's online homestay reservation market from 2014 to 2018.

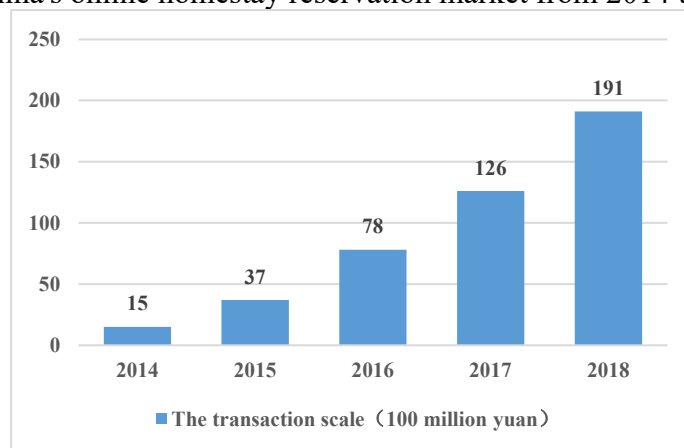


Figure 1 The transaction scale of China's online homestay reservation market from 2014 to 2018.

According to the "2021 China homestay industry market analysis report", there are 11 cities with more than 1,000 homestays in China's key cities, 5 regions with more than 2,000 homestays, and more than 3,000 homestays in Beijing and Lijiang. Among them, the number of inns and homestays in Beijing ranks first, with 3587 homestays.

In the "2016-2035 Beijing urban master plan", Huairou district has been designated as an ecological health preservation area due to its good ecological environment, the environmental base for building the cultural tourism industry, and rich tourism environment. The district has developed 563 homestays, accounting for half of the city's total, including 700 courtyards and 3,416 rooms, which can accommodate up to 9,328 people. A group of homestays in the area, represented by old carpenters, Cen She, and Nut Art Farm, have formed particular popularity and influence. In this paper, we will take Beijing A homestay located in Huaishui town, Huairou district, as an example to discuss the innovation of homestay after joining the platform.

Since the opening of Beijing A homestay in 2018, it has ranked among the top in the industry regarding booking volume. The positive rate in the online order evaluation is as high as 98%, and the overall average score is full. The occupancy rate in the year of opening in 2018 reached 66%. Regardless of special periods, the occupancy rate is as high as 90% from May to October each year, and the room can be fully booked during holidays. A homestay is close to the tourist attractions of Yanqi lake, Luotuo mountain, Yunmeng mountain scenic area, and Xiangshui lake great wall scenic area. The convenient transportation and location also make this homestay the first choice for most passers-by [8].

A homestay has 7 rooms and can accommodate 16 people, including a standard room, double room, senior family room, parent-child room. It can meet the needs of all kinds of tourists, and the enthusiastic owner also provides catering, customized tours, vehicle transfers, KTV, chess and card gatherings, and regular guoan fan gatherings. These meticulous services have ushered in a high reputation and a stable source of tourists for the homestay.

Beijing A homestay is a typical "mom and pop shop," which is also a common business type for most homestays. At the beginning of 2018, the shop owner came to Huairou due to a work transfer. They rented a courtyard house in the local area for his living. Later, it was found that there is still much space left unused in addition to the housing price of the yard. As a result, the owner and family began to renovate and decorate those idle rooms, and finally, in October 2018, Beijing A homestay was officially established.

In 2018, the Huairou district formulated and promulgated the "Huairou district's incentive measures for promoting rural tourism improvement and upgrade (Try Huairou district tour)." The introduction of this measure has greatly promoted the development of the local homestay industry in Huairou. By the end of 2021, the whole district will develop. There are 53 rural tourism villages and more than 2,900 rural tourism reception households, including 46 star-rated villages and 1,412 star-rated households. 89 new rural tourism formats include rural hotels, health mountain bars, and leisure farms. It has formed a characteristic brand area dominated by Yanqi "never night valley," Ye Bohai sea, and Liuli temple "white river bay."

The owner said that the main way is to rely on cooperation with online platforms in terms of marketing promotion. Since 2018, A homestay has joined platforms such as Ctrip, Fliggy, Tuniu, Meituan, and ELong. At present, the proportion of each company in the entire homestay booking market is shown in Fig. 2.

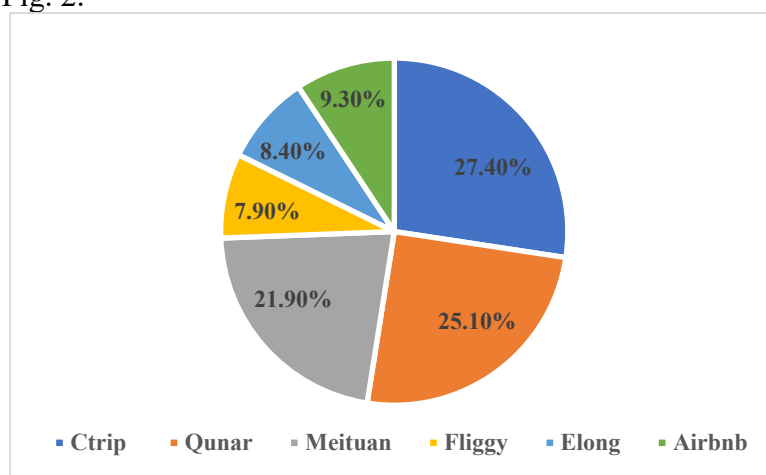


Figure 2 Competitive landscape of homestay reservation market.

Relying on the OTA online platform, the core competitiveness of products is fully presented to most tourists. In the whole process of OTA platform marketing, we will build information such as housing information, pictures, regular activities, and surrounding attractions into the exclusive brand of A homestay and strive to expand its popularity for customized marketing. In the transitional stage of the development of A homestay and the growth stage, strengthen the brand and expand its popularity to expand the market [9] further. The owner has increased the popularity and

characteristics of A homestay by holding activities such as the Beijing Guoan fan club, and has also attracted many stable fans.

It sets product prices according to target market customers and conducts targeted marketing. For individual and family guests, A homestay has launched the private courtyard and family room service. The very humane service concept makes repeat customers account for most of its customers. The concept of A homestay is to visit other people's homes and enjoy a different home environment. It is necessary to return to the essence of the homestay and return to the original intention.

4. Case Study

4.1 Product Strategy

Compared with many homestays on the market, A homestay will focus on the post-70s and post-80s generation, and groups mainly focus on tourism experience. A homestay product will bring convenient, affordable accommodation needs and a friendly and high-quality travel experience to guests.

A Homestay is located in the Huairou district. In recent years, the Huairou district has strengthened the innovation of the development model of country homestays in four aspects. One is to adopt the "company + cooperative + farmer" investment innovation model. The second is to adopt the unified management model by professional companies to improve service quality. The third is to use the joint investment model of farmers and professional operation companies, and the income is divided according to the proportion of investment. The fourth is implementing the development trend of "farm + restaurant + homestay + e-commerce," which forms a rural complex integrating primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. It creates a supply model for the entire production chain, life, ecology, and life value, and realizes co-construction, co-governance, and sharing, a win-win situation, and becomes a vital cell for rural revitalization. With the development support of the policy background, A condenses the vitality of the homestay in the rural, regional culture and humanistic feelings. The use of "host culture" and "local culture" differentiates A homestay from other homestays.

As the trend of younger country homestay consumer groups becomes more and more prominent, A Homestay also provides a variety of homestay-type products for its personalized and diversified experience needs. Relying on the scenic scenery, the homestay has its characteristics in decoration and supporting services. On the basis of combining regional cultural characteristics, it provides a variety of accommodation types such as rural pastoral style, retro style, and simple style to deepen the differentiated experience of tourists.

In the operation of homestays, a homestay emphasizes the development of cultural creativity and experience projects suitable for sharing hosts and guests from the scenes of daily life and life itself, which can improve the satisfaction and reputation of the homestay. At the beginning of the establishment of the homestay, the landlord of the homestay set the concept of making friends, facilitating you and me, and being considerate and comfortable, but not excessively pursuing profits, focusing on the customer's experience, returning to the characteristics of homestays that are different from hotels or restaurants. It is different from A traditional hotel that does not care whether there are high-end and luxurious facilities, but it can make people experience the local style, feel the enthusiasm and service of the homestay owner, and experience the essence of life different from the past.

4.2 Price Strategy

Price marketing helps tourists overcome the limitations of location factors and traffic conditions and promotes the satisfaction of tourists' needs and the achievement of tourism trips. At the same time, price differentiation can also further segment the market. The product price setting finds out the current market demand for accommodation consumption in Huairou, formulates product prices according to the target market and different types of customers, and conducts targeted marketing. A homestay is characterized by comfort and convenience, high quality, and low price for customers,

and the post-70s and 80s are mainly young. Under the influence of the new crown epidemic, the homestay industry in Beijing has generally adopted the form of rent reduction and exemption by landlords and dynamic price reductions for homestays [10]. A homestay has also adjusted prices within a reasonable range. Meanwhile, after joining the platform, with the support of the platform, different types of preferential activities under different platforms have been formulated through coordination and communication.

4.3 Channel Strategy

As a business model different from hotels and guesthouses, homestays can make people experience local customs, feel the enthusiasm and service of homestay owners, and experience life different from the past. The operation and promotion of homestays are very dependent on the strength of the inn operators themselves. The sales of A homestay adhere to the dual-line strategy of online + offline. In the early stage of development, relying on scenic spots' radiation, grouping with scenic spots, and cooperating with travel agencies, we obtained customer sources through traditional overall marketing and coupon discounts. In the later period of the rapid development of the Internet, we will use the advantages of Internet+ to formulate diversified marketing strategies.

The in-depth development of Internet+ has deepened the cooperation between most homestay owners and several major OTA platforms such as Ctrip and Tuniu. A homestay has reached cooperation with multiple platforms such as Ctrip, Fliggy, Tuniu Travel, ELong, Tongcheng travel, and Meituan. The homestay information is released on these platforms to realize online booking of rooms and expand the source of homestay customers. The generational change of OTA marketing is accelerating, and the success of technology upgrades has also continued to help tourism companies drain traffic. Travel consumers pay attention to OTA online, which will help explore the real needs and travel trends of tourists deeply, and further strengthen the construction and perfection of the core competitiveness of homestays and good sensory presentation.

In terms of marketing, A homestay has also been transferred to new Internet media platforms such as Douyin, making full use of Douyin's own diversified special effects functions and simple production process to display the homestay from a multi-dimensional perspective, with the help of self-media, the exposure traffic and platform hotspots of the company increased the exposure of its homestay through the broadcast of the video, which attracted many tourists to experience it in a short period of time. By establishing official Weibo and WeChat public platforms, we can actively show homestays' characteristics and development history to tourists and answer relevant questions of consumers. Diversified marketing methods can create a more personalized and intelligent service atmosphere for developing smart homestays in the future. The operation of these WeChat public accounts, official Weibo, official websites, and other platforms greatly facilitates booking, management, maintenance, and promotion, while taking into account the functions of social media promotion and marketing, effectively controlling costs and facilitating market occupation. On such a platform, a community of interests that can meet the needs of multiple parties has been established: platforms, homestay companies, video shooters, and audiences, all of which can find their requirements and values through the platform.

The State information center released "China shared accommodation development 2021". The report data shows that the main user group of homestays is the post-00s, and the landlords participating in shared homestays are all young and highly educated. Through the data analysis, it can be clearly seen that the current guest source of homestay presents the characteristics of youth. At the same time, homestay companies and self-media platforms use this group of people as their main consumers. Therefore, homestay companies use these platforms and the huge customer base behind them to carry out marketing campaigns so that more young people pay attention to homestays and influence potential homestay consumers to expand market capacity. Excavate and mobilize all target users, create issues, cooperate with publicity, and create publicity hotspots. Let tourists learn about homestays through social platforms.

4.4 Promotion Strategy

After joining the platform, A homestay adopts the traditional membership discount system and holiday promotions and offers particular room and suite discounts during valentine's day, golden week, mid-autumn festival, dragon boat festival, and other holidays. At the same time, it also develops jointly with surrounding scenic spots such as Huaibei international ski resort and Qinglong Gorge scenic area to create a new development model. With the help of the Internet to hold lottery activities on new media platforms, winners can get free orders or discounts according to their rankings, which can promote consumption and play a role in publicity. In addition, A homestay also conducts promotions on different OTA platforms with the help of the platform's promotions. Under the normalization of epidemic prevention and control, we provide consumers with the thoughtful service of "book in advance and withdraw at any time" so that tourists can "cost-effective travel" after the epidemic has stabilized. A homestay has realized new thinking under the old way of discount promotion: to achieve a win-win situation for the platform, homestay owners, and users: through community incentives to divert private domain, through the integration of ecological chain, to issue product combination coupons of accommodation+ takeaway+ tickets. Without departing from the original intention of user convenience, it gives users more freshness and experience.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we take Beijing A homestay as the case study object and use the 4P marketing strategy to discuss the marketing innovation behavior of homestay after joining the platform. In terms of product strategy, activate cultural capital, highlight regional characteristics, enrich homestay products, create warm homestays, and return to the original intention. In terms of price strategy, with the support of the platform, different types of preferential activities under different platforms have been formulated through coordination and communication. In terms of channel strategy, OTA platforms expand marketing channels and use new media tools to publicize widely. In terms of a promotion strategy, the traditional membership discount system and holiday promotions are adopted, and promotions are carried out on different OTA platforms with the help of the platform's promotions. Further, we discuss the development direction of the future homestay marketing model, which has significant theoretical value and practical significance for the innovation and performance improvement of traditional homestay marketing.

Acknowledgements

College Students' Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program of Beijing Jiaotong University, No. 202210004142

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