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Research on the Optimization of Collective Operation Models and Brand Enhancement of Rural Homestays in Tongzhou District, Beijing

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ABSTRACT

The 14th Five-Year Plan clearly proposes to "vigorously develop boutique homestays and promote rural tourism upgrades." Based on current conditions, relying on the spillover of Universal Studios visitor traffic and the advantages of the Grand Canal cultural belt, rural homestays in Tongzhou District can grow rapidly. However, most homestays are currently operated independently by individual owners, facing insufficient operational coordination, strong brand homogenization, weak cultural intellectual property transformation capabilities, and compliance risks in housing rental and intellectual property rights. The visitor flow dividend has not been converted into brand value. Therefore, the project focuses on rural homestays around Universal Studios and along the Grand Canal in Tongzhou District. To solve development challenges, this project learns from the collective operation experience of cluster homestays in places like Moganshan and Yanqing Hawthorn Court, combined with laws and regulations such as the Intellectual Property Law, aiming to build a plan of "Universal Studios transportation attraction—Grand Canal cultural empowerment—brand intellectual property construction—intellectual property protection—compliant operation." Research shows that Tongzhou District homestays do not lack tourist traffic; their drawbacks are the lack of collective coordination and operation mechanisms, failure to transform local canal culture into products that attract consumers, and many risks in lease contracts and intellectual property authorization. Therefore, the focus of this project is to propose methods and strategies for establishing a unified regional collective homestay operation coordination system, building a common brand, achieving cultural intellectual property assets through trademark and copyright registration, improving legal risk prevention and control mechanisms for rental, fire safety, and intellectual property authorization, and promoting the transformation of rural homestays in Tongzhou from large-scale traffic management to law-based, cluster-based, and brand-oriented development

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KEYWORDS: *Tongzhou District; Rural homestays; Collective operation; Grand Canal culture; Intellectual property; Integration of culture and tourism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Research on rural homestays has continuously expanded alongside rural revitalization and the advancement of policies integrating culture and tourism.

1.1. Current Status of Research at Home and Abroad

Currently, domestic research mainly focuses on policy interpretation, operational models, economic benefits, and spatial aggregation. Based on case study comparative methods, Cheng Jinyan uses the Yanqing "Hawthorn Courtyard" and the Moganshan Xianfang cluster as samples to confirm that collective management involving village collectives and enterprises can solve the fragmentation of individual homestay resources, improve industrial quality and efficiency [1][2], and form a collective operation model

Foreign homestay research has a long history, focusing on community participation, property rights arrangements, sustainable operations, and intellectual

property development in cultural tourism. European countries and other regions emphasize sustainable marketing and the use of online platforms to strengthen governance, as well as immersive project experiences designed with local characteristics to attract tourists. For example, the Harry Potter Experience Center invites the main characters to record videos to provide visitors with the most authentic experience. While attracting tourists, foreign countries are continuously formulating and improving industry certification standards. For example, Japan has established a strict entry system under its unique "Residential Commercial Act," which not only protects traditional residences but also treats folk life as a carrier of folk culture, achieving mutual benefits between cultural heritage and commercial operations

1.2. Practical pain points

Based on offline visits and experiences from homestays in many places during travel, we found that homestays in Tongzhou's "global accommodation tourism" area face four major challenges

First, Tongzhou homestays have weak operational coordination. Most are operated independently, lacking sharing and price coordination mechanisms, leading to off-season price competition and excessive price hikes during peak seasons, damaging regional reputation and wasting Universal Studios' visitor dividends[6]. What impressed me most during tourism was the living experience of Zunyi homestays. We found that most homestay owners provide substantial funds to village chiefs and offer jobs for villagers. Everyone works together to offer accommodation at reasonable prices while also selling local specialty teas and offering free specialty activities such as tea picking. This stands in stark contrast to Tongzhou's lone and eager economic model

Secondly, because Tongzhou relies on Universal Studios to attract tourists, its patterns and decoration styles are similar, mostly copying decorations themed from movies and TV, lacking localized Grand Canal grain transport and folk craft cultural elements. Differentiated competition is hard to form

Third, most homestays lack sufficient intellectual property knowledge. The global logo used lacks legitimacy, and the rich intangible heritage and folk resources of the Grand Canal remain at the conceptual stage, not developed into cultural and creative goods or activities, making it difficult to attract copyright holders to grant trademark and copyright protection and achieve commercial transformation

Fourth, high compliance risks in contracts. Disputes over housing rental and commercial contracts occur frequently. According to inquiries, the main issues include contract invalidity due to illegal land and residential attributes, conversion from residential to commercial without stakeholder consent, and ambiguous housing usage terms. This project believes that administrative compliance and qualification certification risks cannot be ignored [4][5] and should be addressed in the first step

1.3. Research Objectives

To address the practical difficulties faced by homestays under the influence of Tongzhou (Beijing Branch) Universal Studios, this study sets three goals: First, identify real issues in collective operation, brand intellectual property construction, and legal compliance of Tongzhou homestays through field investigation; Second, draw on mature domestic cluster cases to build a dual-driven model of 'Universal Studios transportation attraction + Grand Canal visitor retention,' proposing comprehensive solutions covering cluster operation, intellectual property branding, intellectual property protection, and contract risk prevention; Third, explore high-quality development paths for suburban homestays overlapping with theme parks and cultural heritage, promote the transformation of Tongzhou homestays from transportation dividends to brand dividends, and provide references for similar suburban homestay development nationwide. According to our survey data, middle-aged and young people in China generally accept homestays, are willing to experience local cultural innovation activities and purchase cultural and creative products there. This project research was relatively effective.

2. Research findings

2.1. Questionnaire Research Methods

This study mainly employs multiple empirical methods including literature policy analysis, field investigations and in-depth interviews, and comparative case studies. We mainly collected documents issued by multiple levels of government regarding rural homestays, the construction of the Grand Canal Cultural Belt, and rural revitalization, as well as documents related to the operation of homestay clusters and regional public brand building [3]. Our questionnaires and interviews mainly targeted four groups: homestay operators, landlords, tourists, as well as staff from village committees and township cultural tourism departments

2.2. Overview of Questionnaire Results

Based on all the information gathered, we created our own targeted questionnaire, with operator questionnaires focusing on business models and

willingness to coordinate cooperation, and landlord surveys on their awareness of lease rights and obligations

We collected multiple valid questionnaires from the surrounding areas of Tongzhou. The respondents were mainly Beijing residents aged 18 to 35, with a small number of people from outside Beijing, earning a monthly income between 5,000 and 10,000 RMB, which fits the core consumer and store owners of Universal Beijing Resort

Most tourists currently prefer chain hotels near Universal Studios or at home, with low penetration in the rural homestay market. According to interviews, most residents believe affordable prices and local cultural experiences are the reasons they choose homestays. Hygiene, reasonable prices, and convenient transportation are the top three factors when booking. Most respondents accept nightly prices between 200 and 400 RMB, which matches the current price level of Tongzhou homestays. More than half of respondents are willing to pay extra for a unique cultural experience

After arriving at the guesthouse, tourists found that local cuisine, intangible heritage handicraft experiences, and the natural scenery of the Grand Canal were the most attractive cultural attractions. Everyone preferred hands-on activities and experiencing the unique features. Passive, lecture-style sightseeing was almost nonexistent

The suggestion for this project is to increase the promotion of the Grand Canal Cultural Belt in homestays, so that everyone can experience it more immersively. According to the data, although most respondents are familiar with this culture, very few truly understand it

Finally, we should implement a unified regional brand to increase awareness and build trust. Over 80% of participants agreed that a unified regional brand would increase their willingness to choose Tongzhou rural homestays

2.3. Field research findings

From April to May 2026, Universal Studios in Tongzhou District and the homestay clusters around the Grand Canal conducted on-site inspections and conducted semi-structured interviews with operators, village committee members, and township cultural tourism supervisors. Based on the questionnaire statistics, the main findings are as follows:

First, transportation is currently a bottleneck in the homestay structure. Most homestays are 5-10 kilometers from Universal Resort and lack unified transportation services. Tourists mainly rely on self-driving or online taxi hailing. Unlike self-driving-oriented Moganshan homestays, most Tongzhou tourists use the "subway + short-distance transfer" approach. Inconvenient transportation limits the willingness of homestay consumers. Moreover, homestays have not formed cooperation with Universal Resort and have no convenient projects

Second, it has severe seasonality. Beijing's Tongzhou District is not a region that relies solely on natural landscapes for development; it is a place where culture and natural landscapes are combined. However, according to current operator reports, we find that weekend and holiday check-ins differ greatly from weekday stays. Compared to Yunnan's homestays and similar areas, it lacks the ability to retain guests long-term. Moreover, it lacks a price coordination mechanism; price wars during off-season and arbitrary price increases during peak seasons damage regional reputation and operational stability

Third, Tongzhou homestay cultural experiences remain superficial. Although tourists show strong interest in local intangible cultural heritage, they still resist being limited to wall decorations due to price and elements, preferring to participate in on-site festivals and hands-on crafts. For example, the Torch Festival held by the Yi ethnic group or the well-known Water Splashing Festival

Fourth, homestay operators lack the capability to design sustainable experience products and do not comply with intellectual property regulations. Operators change rapidly, posing some hidden risks to leasing and fire protection

3. Analysis and discussion

3.1. Comparative Analysis of Mature Homestay Clusters

Based on our research, we found that the Moganshan brand operation model is to achieve unified acquisition of idle farmhouses under government guidance, and introduce professional operating enterprises to build a high-end homestay brand system. They integrate resources, exaggerate quality supervision, and brand building. These are all valuable references for Tongzhou to establish unified standards and a joint marketing system. However, based on implementation, the customer groups in the two regions differ greatly: Moganshan serves travelers during long holidays, while Tongzhou welcomes short-distance leisure tourists. Therefore, Tongzhou's product positioning will emphasize convenience and a light cultural experience.

Next is Wuzhen, which mainly adopts a cultural empowerment model and integrates homestays into

scenic areas for unified management. From adopting booking platforms to establishing unified service experience standards and brand image, a complete industrial chain has been formed. In contrast, although Tongzhou has the dual advantages of the Grand Canal Cultural Belt and Universal Studios, the two are disconnected, and Universal Studios' traffic has not been linked and converted with traditional canal culture. This shows that a unified brand and operation platform is the key infrastructure for converting cultural intellectual property into commercial value[11].

Applicability of Yanqing's "Hawthorn Garden" model, which treats farmers' houses as equity shares, achieving unified management and profit distribution of cooperatives. This model can be replicated in Beijing's suburbs with high villager participation [7]. Self-employed villagers and external leasing investors should be combined to design a more complete equity distribution system

3.2. SWOT of Tongzhou Homestays

According to data and field investigations, Tongzhou's advantage is that the Universal Beijing Resort attracts over ten million tourists annually, creating lasting accommodation demand and possessing huge market potential. Moreover, the Grand Canal Cultural Belt has reached a national strategic level, and tourists' willingness to consume cultural products provides a market foundation for cultural empowerment [11]. With Beijing's "14th Five-Year Plan" encouraging the development of boutique homestays, Tongzhou (the capital's sub-center) enjoys pilot preferential policies [10]. However, there are also disadvantages, such as insufficient cluster effect and a lack of reasonable and compliant construction and development policies

There are still many opportunities for homestays in Tongzhou, benefiting from its superior location and strong policy support. If a unified compliant brand can be established in the future, short video platforms can be used to promote and attract tourists from inside and outside Beijing for long-term vacations, experiencing local characteristics and innovative global youth culture.

Overall, Tongzhou homestays should transform from customer flow dividends to brand dividends. Address major threats from nearby hotels such as Universal Studios official hotels and ensure tourists' peace of mind about homestay hygiene, transportation, and pricing.

3.3. Discussion

This study explores the township homestays in Tongzhou in terms of transportation, seasonality, cultural empowerment, and various compliance risks. Based on relevant legal foundations, this study proposes a framework for collective operation of homestays based on "Universal Studios diversion + Grand Canal cultural empowerment," while integrating intellectual property protection and standardized contract risk control into its development. It is hoped that in the future, small-scale pilot projects can be conducted first to verify feasibility, and then, through multidimensional indicators, the economic and social benefits of these projects can be evaluated.

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