

Antecedents and Outcomes of Homestay Psychological Ownership Towards Re-staying Intention: A Case of Henan Province, China

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Abstract

As a new form of accommodation in the sharing economy, homestays offer unique living experiences and have become the first choice for consumers. However, they face the challenge of encouraging sustainable behaviors among consumers. Exploring sustainable behaviors in homestay accommodation can not only stabilize customer sources but also provide ideas for the healthy development of the industry. This study draws on the theory of psychological ownership and introduces affective commitment to develop a theoretical model. It conducts an empirical analysis of 436 consumers with homestay experience in Henan Province to explore the antecedents and outcomes of homestay psychological ownership towards re-staying intention and to reveal the psychological mechanism of continuance Intention. The research shows that: 1) perceived control, customer participation, self-consistency, and sense of belonging all significantly promote homestay psychological ownership; 2) homestay psychological ownership has a significant positive impact on re-staying intention and affective commitment; 3) affective commitment has a significant positive impact on re-staying intention and plays a mediating role between homestay psychological ownership and re-staying intention.

Keywords: homestay psychological ownership; re-stay intention; antecedent; outcome

Introduction

In recent years, the homestay industry in the Chinese mainland has shown a development trend of "both quantity and speed increasing". By 2024, the number of registered homestays in mainland China will have exceeded 300,000, an increase of more than 60% from 2020. However, the continuous occupancy rate of the homestay industry (i.e., the proportion of

consumers staying at the same homestay twice or more) in 2023–2024 was below 20%, and the contradiction between "scale growth" and "customer retention" in the homestay industry is becoming increasingly pronounced. Homestay is a new form of accommodation in the background of the sharing economy. Shared products can prompt consumers to make sustainable consumption. Then, how homestays can become a sustainable tourism product is a topic worthy of discussion (Janjua et al., 2021). Traditional marketing theory holds that consumers' attitudes influence their behaviors. However, the existing literature lacks research on the psychological mechanisms underlying consumers' sustainable behaviors in homestays. Therefore, this study applies the concept of psychological ownership to homestays and introduces affective commitment to examine further the antecedents and outcomes of homestay psychological ownership in relation to restay intention. It not only extends the application of psychological ownership theory but also has specific practical significance for the host's service and operations.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the path for homestay psychological ownership.
2. To analyze the impact of homestay psychological ownership on re-staying intention.
3. To explore the mediating role of affective commitment between homestay psychological ownership and re-staying intention.

Literature Review

Perceived control, customer participation, self-consistency, and sense of belonging as antecedents of homestay psychological ownership

Control refers to the power to direct who uses an object, when it is used, and how it is used. Control exercised over a material object can result in the development of feelings toward it (Bagga et al., 2019). The higher the autonomy of the guests in the homestay, the stronger their sense of control over the homestay, which in turn triggers a feeling of "I can use it as I wish, and it is very easy for people to have a psychological perception of 'feeling at home'" (Li, 2022).

Customer participation refers to customers' behavior as co-value creators, investing diverse resources in the production and delivery of products and services (Wang, 2023). Participation in an item involves devoting one's energy or money to the target item. When consumers jointly develop, produce, or customize an item, they can psychologically own it (Kumar & Chandra, 2024).

Self-consistency is the degree of alignment between a given goal and the self (Luo, 2025), and consumers tend to choose products or brands that align with their self-concept. When making decisions, consumers will actively collect information about homestays. When there is no significant difference in infrastructure, consumers tend to choose homestays that suit their own style. After making a decision, consumers will focus on the positive characteristics of the selected homestay and the negative characteristics of the unselected homestay, thereby reducing dissonance and further strengthening the consistency between themselves and the homestay. (Xu et al., 2021), Moreover, this promotes the emergence of psychological ownership.

Belonging refers to the emotional bond that an individual builds through experiences and interactions with a specific place (Zhu, 2021). Research shows that during restaurant consumption, both the accommodation and the dining place may be perceived as a warm home environment. This sense of belonging can promote customers' psychological ownership of the restaurant (Asatryan & Oh, 2008).

Restaying intention as outcomes of homestay psychological ownership

Restaying intention refers to consumers revisiting a homestay and spreading positive word-of-mouth about it (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2020). Asatryan and Oh (2008) pointed out that consumers' psychological ownership will influence a series of subsequent behaviors. They are not only willing to pay higher prices and engage in positive word-of-mouth promotion, but also exhibit an exclusive tendency and are willing to maintain long-term relationships with them. Meanwhile, Kumar (2019) argues that psychological ownership plays a significant role in explaining loyalty toward a particular object.

The mediating role of affective commitment

Psychological ownership can give rise to emotions of attachment and identification with the target object, increasing affective commitment (Yu, 2022). Meanwhile, affective commitment is regarded as a key factor influencing loyalty. Studies have shown that affective commitment helps maintain long-term relationships between users and services by fostering users' emotional attachment and sense of belonging to the current service. Without a strong affective commitment, users can easily switch to another alternative service (Hlashim & Tan, 2015).

Based on the above analysis, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: Perceived Control can significantly promote Homestay Psychological Ownership
- H2: Customer Participation can significantly promote Homestay Psychological Ownership
- H3: Self-Consistency can significantly promote Homestay Psychological Ownership
- H4: Sense of Belonging can significantly promote Homestay Psychological Ownership
- H5: Homestay Psychological Ownership has a significant positive effect on Affective commitment
- H6: Affective Commitment has a significant positive effect on Re-stay Intention
- H7: Homestay Psychological Ownership has a significant positive effect on the Re-stay Intention
- H8: Affective Commitment plays a mediating role between Homestay Psychological Ownership and Re-stay Intention

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review hypothesis, the framework diagram of this study was constructed, as shown in Figure 1.

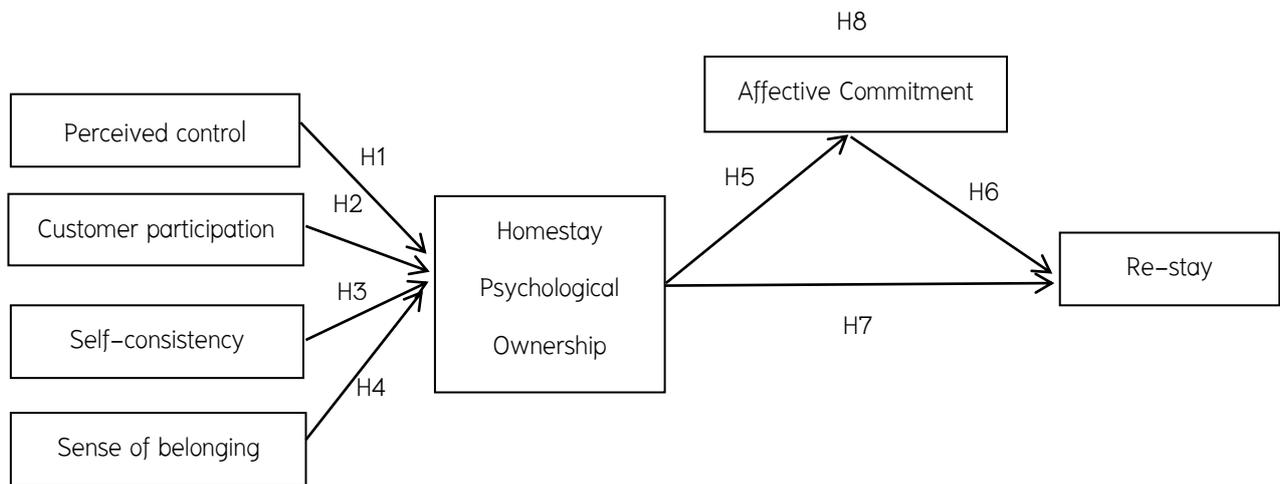


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Sample and data collection

By 2024, the number of homestays in Henan Province had exceeded 2,000, making it a key region for homestay development in China. Therefore, taking it as the research object, the research results have a certain degree of universality. This study included tourists aged 20 or older who had stayed in homestays in Henan Province, China, as research participants.

Questionnaires were edited via the online survey platform Wenjuan Xing and distributed and collected through it. Non-probability convenience sampling was adopted for the distribution. A total of 497 questionnaires were distributed from February to June 2025, among which 436 were valid.

Measures

This study collected data through questionnaire surveys. All the variables in the questionnaire were measured using the 5-point Likert scale. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, all measurement scales are derived from mature scales used in previous studies, among which perceived control (Wang, 2023), customer participation (Taheri et al., 2017), self-consistency (Su et al., 2015), homestay psychological ownership (Kumar & Chandra, 2024), sense of belonging (Asatryan & Oh, 2008), affective commitment (Sun et al., 2019), re-stay intention (Kumar & Chandra, 2024). In addition, the questionnaire was designed using a scale and has undergone ethical review and certification by the Stamford International University Human Research Ethics Committee (STIU-HREC066/2025).

Data Analysis Method

SPSS 26.0 and Amos 28.0 were used for data analysis in this study. Through statistical analysis of the collected data, the study's proposed hypotheses were verified. The statistical methods employed included descriptive statistics, reliability and validity analyses, structural equation modeling, and related techniques.

Research Results

Sample Characteristics

From Table 1, Consumers staying in homestays in Henan Province show a balanced gender ratio (51.1% female and 48.9% male), with their ages mainly concentrated between 26 and 45 years old (accounting for 66%). The majority have a bachelor's degree (46.8%), and their occupations are mainly government agency staff, enterprise employees, and professional technicians (accounting for 58.9% in total). This indicates that homestay consumers exhibit characteristics of concentrated age groups, higher educational attainment, stable occupational profiles, and balanced gender ratios.

Table 1 Descriptive statistical analysis

Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
Age	20–25 years old	121	27.8
	26 to 35 years old	147	33.7
	36 to 45 years old	141	32.3
	46 to 55 years old	21	4.8
	above 56 years old	6	1.4
Gender	Male	213	48.9
	Female	223	51.1
Educational Background	High School and below	8	1.8
	Junior college	121	27.8
	Undergraduate course	204	46.8
	Master	95	21.8
	Doctor	8	1.8
Occupation	Students	81	18.6
	Government organizations	46	10.6
	Employees of enterprises and companies	143	32.8
	Self-employed	19	4.4
	Professionals and technicians	68	15.6
	Retirees	12	2.8
	Farmers	1	0.2
	Freelance	42	9.6
Total		436	100

Measurement model

The data skewness range is from -1.039 to 0.139 , and the kurtosis range is from -0.731 to 0.829 , which conforms to $|skewness| < 2$; $|kurtosis| < 7$, indicating that the sample data pass the normality test (Kline, 2016), and the structural equation model test can be conducted. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on all latent variables to test the measurement model. Among them, the fitting index (X^2/df value was 2.085 , less than 3 ; RMSEA and SRMR values were 0.050 and 0.044 respectively, both less than 0.08 ; The values of IFI, TLI and CFI were 0.928 , 0.920 and 0.928 respectively, all greater than 0.9 , indicating that the measurement model had an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 2 Reliability and convergent validity

Variable	Items	Mean	S.D.	Standardized factor loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach'α
PC	PC1	3.90	0.973	0.696	0.863	0.557	0.863
	PC2	3.83	1.015	0.715			
	PC3	3.59	0.994	0.765			
	PC4	3.19	1.000	0.773			
	PC5	3.23	1.004	0.780			
CP	CP1	3.67	0.900	0.708	0.859	0.550	0.860
	CP2	3.74	0.950	0.729			
	CP3	3.59	0.953	0.752			
	CP4	3.61	0.935	0.760			
	CP5	3.54	0.952	0.758			
SC	SC1	3.58	0.890	0.754	0.867	0.567	0.867
	SC2	3.61	0.910	0.739			
	SC3	3.61	0.932	0.759			
	SC4	3.37	0.984	0.784			
	SC5	3.25	0.988	0.728			
SOB	SOB1	3.45	0.905	0.768	0.878	0.590	0.878
	SOB2	3.28	0.950	0.821			
	SOB3	3.67	0.837	0.719			
	SOB4	3.42	0.877	0.787			
	SOB5	3.51	0.938	0.742			
HPO	HPO1	3.32	1.002	0.708	0.878	0.589	0.877
	HPO2	3.26	1.030	0.774			
	HPO3	3.20	1.014	0.810			
	HPO4	3.27	1.004	0.774			
	HPO5	3.40	0.997	0.769			
AC	AC1	3.23	1.049	0.675	0.852	0.536	0.851
	AC2	3.23	1.053	0.756			
	AC3	3.31	1.009	0.744			
	AC4	3.22	1.040	0.730			
	AC5	3.54	0.964	0.752			
RI	RI1	3.68	0.870	0.756	0.865	0.562	0.865
	RI2	3.60	0.864	0.760			
	RI3	3.66	0.872	0.714			
	RI4	3.75	0.820	0.733			
	RI5	3.71	0.865	0.782			

Note: PC=Perceived Control; CP=Customer Participation; SC=Self-Consistency; SOB=Sense of Belonging; HPO=Homestay Psychological Ownership; AC=Affective Commitment; RI=Re-stay Intention

From Table 2, the Cronbach coefficients of PC, CP, SC, SOB, HOP, AC, and RI are 0.863, 0.860, 0.867, 0.878, 0.877, 0.851, and 0.865. All were greater than 0.7, indicating that the selected scale had good reliability (Fornell & Larcker,1981); In addition, the standardized factor loading value exceeds 0.6(Anderson & Gerbing,1988); The composite reliability (CR) is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally,1978); Average variance extracted Scale (AVE) is greater than 0.5(Fornell & Larcker,1981), indicating that all scales have good convergent validity.

In addition, from Table 3, the arithmetic square roots of the AVE values of each latent variable (0.746, 0.742, 0.753, 0.768, 0.767, 0.732, 0.750) are all higher than their correlation coefficients with other latent variables. It indicates that all scales exhibit good discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3 Discriminant Validity

	PC	CP	SC	SOB	HPO	AC	RI
PC	0.746						
CP	0.543	0.742					
SC	0.569	0.575	0.753				
SOB	0.422	0.490	0.504	0.768			
HPO	0.519	0.529	0.536	0.588	0.767		
AC	0.381	0.393	0.469	0.506	0.606	0.732	
RI	0.375	0.454	0.489	0.490	0.419	0.549	0.750

Note: The text on the diagonal is the square root of AVE, and below the diagonal are the correlation coefficients between potential variables

Structural model

Use the structural equation model to test the structural model. Among them, the goodness-of-fit index (χ^2/df) is 2.180, which is less than 3. The RMSEA and SRMR values are 0.052 and 0.044, respectively, both below 0.08. The values of IFI, TLI, and CFI are 0.921, 0.913, and 0.920, respectively, all greater than 0.9. Overall, the index adaptation of the model is ideal (Hu and Bentler,1999).

As shown in Table 4, the path coefficient estimates indicate that PC has a significant positive impact on HPO ($\beta = 0.189, P < 0.01$), supporting hypothesis H1. CP has a significant positive effect on HPO ($\beta = 0.164, P < 0.01$), supporting hypothesis H2. SC has a significant positive effect on HPO ($\beta = 0.174, P < 0.01$), supporting hypothesis H3. SOB has a significant positive effect on HPO ($\beta = 0.364, P < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis H4. HPO has a significant

positive effect on AC ($\beta = 0.629, P < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis H5. AC has a significant positive effect on RI ($\beta = 0.426, P < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis H6. HPO has a significant positive effect on RI ($\beta = 0.196, P < 0.01$), supporting hypothesis H7.

Table 4 Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Path	β	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
H1	HPO <--- PC	0.189	0.062	3.216	0.001	Supported
H2	HPO <--- CP	0.164	0.068	2.704	0.007	Supported
H3	HPO <--- SC	0.174	0.066	2.800	0.005	Supported
H4	HPO <--- SOB	0.364	0.058	6.392	***	Supported
H5	AC <--- HPO	0.629	0.065	9.751	***	Supported
H6	RI <--- AC	0.426	0.067	5.815	***	Supported
H7	RI <--- HPO	0.196	0.062	2.917	0.004	Supported

Note: *** represents $P < 0.001$

From Table 5, the total effect of HPO on RI is 0.464, with a confidence interval of [0.338, 0.575], which does not include 0, indicating the existence of the total effect. The direct effect is 0.196, with a confidence interval of [0.016, 0.368], excluding 0, indicating the existence of the direct effect. The proportion of the direct effect is 42.24%. The indirect effect is 0.268 (confidence interval [0.167, 0.405]), which does not include 0, indicating an indirect effect. Among them, the proportion of the indirect effect is 57.76%. Therefore, AC partially mediates the relationship between HPO and RI, supporting hypothesis H8.

Table 5 Mediation Effect Test

	Effect Value	SE	95% Confidence Interval (math.)		Effect proportion
			LLCI	ULCI	
Overall effect	0.464	0.06	0.338	0.575	—
Direct effect	0.196	0.09	0.016	0.368	42.24%
Indirect effect	0.268	0.06	0.167	0.405	57.76%

Discussion

Firstly, perceived control, Customer participation, Self-consistency, and sense of Belonging can significantly promote Homestay Psychological Ownership. This is consistent with the findings of scholars such as Kumar and Chandra (2024), Xu et al. (2023), Peck et al. (2021), and Joo et al. (2020). The cognitive-emotional state of psychological ownership stems from travelers' sense of

control over the homestay. Through participatory interactions, consumers can connect with others and gain local travel insights, enhancing their sense of efficacy in the accommodation experience. For homestays, the greater the alignment between the property and the tenant's self-image, the closer the homestay comes to embodying the tenant's vision of "home" or "ideal dwelling". Among them, sense of belonging is the strongest antecedent, which says a lot about homestays as "home away from home". Based on this, homestay operators attach great importance to consumers' sense of participation and control over the homestay, and promote it realistically. At the same time, they need to enhance consumers' sense of belonging by providing personalized services and emotional interactions.

Secondly, Homestay Psychological Ownership has a significant positive effect on Affective commitment and Re-stay intention. This is consistent with the research results of scholars such as Morewedge et al. (2021) and Li (2022). Psychological ownership of homestays can foster strong commitment among consumers. To support their preference for homestays, they may even resist competing products or services. When customers develop psychological ownership of a homestay, they are more likely to intend to revisit it, particularly in an external environment with high uncertainty.

Finally, Affective commitment mediates the relationship between Homestay Psychological Ownership and Restay intention. This is consistent with the research perspectives of scholars such as Sun et al. (2019). If there is no emotional commitment, the psychological ownership of a homestay may only be a short-term recognition of the space, making it challenging to develop a Long-term willingness to stay again. Only after it is transformed into an emotional commitment will this psychological identification be solidified by "emotion, ultimately driving the willingness to stay again. For homestays, fostering guests' emotional commitment is far more effective in stabilizing their willingness to stay again than merely optimizing hardware or lowering prices. This is also the core competitiveness that distinguishes homestays from standardized hotels and enables them to achieve a "breakthrough in repurchase rate".

New Knowledge from Research

This study extends psychological ownership theory to homestay re-stay intention and identifies the pathways for homestay psychological ownership: perceived control, customer participation, self-consistency, and sense of belonging. Furthermore, affective commitment and

re-stay intention mediate the effect of homestay psychological ownership. While homestay psychological ownership serves as a driving factor for Re-stay intention, when this ownership transforms into affective commitment, the psychological identification becomes “emotionally” solidified, thereby driving the emergence of re-stay intention. This offers a new perspective on sustainable behavior in homestays and broadens existing knowledge of the antecedents and outcomes of psychological ownership.

Conclusions

Through empirical analysis, this study concludes that perceived control, customer participation, self-consistency, and sense of belonging have significant positive influences on the homestay psychological ownership. Homestay Psychological Ownership has a significant positive effect on re-stay intention; meanwhile, affective commitment mediates the relationship between homestay psychological ownership and re-stay intention. This conclusion not only extends the applicability of psychological ownership theory in tourism literature but also holds practical significance for the service and management of homestays.

Suggestions

The sample for this study comprises Chinese homestay consumers, and the findings may apply only to the Chinese context. Future research could expand the sample to include customers with diverse geographic and ethnic backgrounds to re-examine the research model. Additionally, future studies adopt more rigorous sampling methods, such as probability sampling, to improve the precision of the findings. Meanwhile, this study is cross-sectional, and cross-sectional data used to test the proposed model limit the ability to rule out alternative causal inferences (James et al., 1982). Despite this limitation, the study provides preliminary and compelling evidence for the relationships among the constructions. Future longitudinal data collection could yield more precise causal relationships. Finally, applied research on psychological ownership in tourism remains nascent, warranting continued attention and expansion of its antecedent-consequential studies from additional perspectives.

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