

## **The Triple Heterogeneity of Contemporary Chinese Bed & Breakfast -- A Case Study of B&B in Lishui City, Zhejiang Province**

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### **Abstract**

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*As B&B design and production rapidly diversified over the past decade, their space, theme, function, and type also became more complex, resulting in unstable style and elements. The concept of B&B has become increasingly ambiguous over time, which has even affected its ontology. To enable easier analysis and comparison, this paper has reorganized the classification of B&B based on its time and space structure. It has also introduced the concepts of B&B 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 for subsequent analysis and comparison.*

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**Keywords:** B&B; Heterogeneity; Foreign Land; Space; Function

### **Introduction**

Bed & Breakfast (B&B), also known as Homestay, has become the primary residential choice for travelers due to its affordable and amicable living expenses, as well as its living environment that aligns with local culture. Additionally, the diversified yet personalized residential services cater to increasing passenger flow and user demand, requiring B&Bs to focus on their core attractions, consumption behavior rules, management models, business strategies, marketing, planning, design, policy measures, and development effects (Zhang et al., 2019). As globalization progresses, different classification standards emerge for B&B accommodations. Wang et al. (2021) propose a normative interpretation of the spatial dimension of B&B, categorizing them into three main types: 1) location conditions: natural scenic spots and cultural creative round B&B; 2) building types: temporary type, reconstruction type, and new type; and 3) reception objects: individual type, family type, and team type. However, this classification did not consider the time dimension of B&B.

### **The mode of Chinese B&B: 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0**

The concept of bed and breakfast (B&B) originated in Britain after World War II and was imported to other countries such as the United States and Japan. Following the war, Britain's unique island style attracted many American tourists, yet there was a shortage of hotel accommodation available in Britain. To meet the growing demand for tourist accommodation, the UK encouraged the market entry of individual accommodation providers who could offer basic services such as breakfast and lodging. This development gave rise to the B&B model, which became synonymous with homestays in Europe and America.

It is noteworthy that due to the diverse cultural backgrounds around the world, the B&B form is not uniform and displays distinct variations. For instance, Japan has introduced the Minshuku, which differs from European B&Bs and emphasizes comprehensive and high-quality services. In addition to accommodation and breakfast, Minshuku also provides personalized guidance, lunch, and dinner to meet guests' needs.

Moreover, the origin of Japanese B&Bs predates that of Europe, as early as the 1920s, when local farmers in a Japanese ski resort at the foot of Baima Mountain served as guides for mountaineers and skiers and provided them with lodging for a certain fee (Yang et al., 2019). However, the B&B model that we are familiar with today did not fully mature until the 1960s, especially during the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, which witnessed a surge in high-volume and high-quality international tourists. Seeking to immerse themselves in Japanese culture, these tourists showed a preference for B&Bs. As a result, the number of B&Bs in Japan skyrocketed, and the industry became an essential component in Japan's national economy. This model, which features a highly localized culture, upscale boutique style, and service-oriented approach, has since spread to Taiwan, China, and South Korea. With its high return on light capital investment, B&Bs have quickly gained recognition on par with hotels, offering additional options for international and local travelers alike.

The Japanese B&B model appears to be more in line with Eastern culture, and the Chinese B&B model follows a similar approach to Japanese B&Bs, which differs somewhat from Western B&Bs. Taiwan was the first region in China to adopt B&Bs, and the successful implementation of the model quickly spread to surrounding areas such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. Since the 1990s, with the rapid economic development, tourists have become more interested in diverse tourism consumption. In such an era, B&Bs have naturally become one of the options for tourists when customizing personalized travel. However, despite being affordable, limited functions and service orientation remain common problems of self-employed B&Bs, such as "family hotels" that mainly provide accommodation and "farmhouse entertainment" that mainly focuses on food (Jiang et al., 2014). Nevertheless, this model, which is different from the commercial mode of hotels, has quickly gained recognition from the audience and entered the commercial active period of B&Bs, thanks to its own cultural attributes and participatory experience. The B&Bs generated during this period are summarized in this article as the 1.0 period of B&Bs, because the core attraction of B&Bs depends on the outdoor natural ecology or artificial scenic spots to establish their business operation. In other words, during the 1.0 period, B&Bs were limited to the local ecological landscape.

In the 21st century, B&Bs have been infused with capital and market forces, attracting individuals who previously resided solely in the countryside. Commercialization, personalized design, and professional management have refined B&Bs, transitioning them into branded establishments. B&B 2.0 emphasizes capital flow and commercial operation, while still focusing on the aesthetic appeal of internal spaces and natural outdoor landscapes, making them indispensable in the tourism industry. Unlike hotels, B&Bs are integrated into local ecologies, scenic spots, and villages, creating a residential and scenic integration model that has become the core drainage means of the region. The volume of B&B 2.0 has expanded rapidly since 2010; however, the replicability of its commercial attributes has led to the gradual homogenization of architectural style, themes, and structures among middle- to high-end buildings, resulting in a loss of novelty for passengers. This change in user demand has forced B&S to evolve, leading to the emergence of B&B 3.0, which features ecologization and independent field construction that distinguishes them from the countryside and city. B&Bs are returning to their original relationship of "I serve the ecology" and "ecology serves me," creating a post-modern deconstructed and desexualized atmosphere that is both mysterious and unique.

Although B&B is constantly self-renewing and iterating, the evolution from 1.0 to 3.0 does not signal the death of the former. Instead, it creates an environment with ecological, cultural, commercial, and artistic attributes. The diversity of forms calls for deep reflection on the impact of such heterogeneity on the home stay industry.

Against the backdrop of three decades of economic development, China's tourism industry has experienced rapid growth. Zhejiang, a province with economic priority, occupies a dominant position in the Yangtze River Delta, with a unique position in China, both economically and formally. Lishui City, located in the southeast of Zhejiang Province, boasts beautiful scenery, with more territory covered by mountains and abundant tourism resources, particularly in the development of B&B in recent years. This paper will conduct a detailed comparative study of three representative home stay projects in Lishui: Persimmon Red, Chenjiapuzi, and Sky City.

### **Old scenery and foreign land -- the spatial heterogeneity of contemporary B&B**

The spatial characteristics of B&B accommodations are primarily comprised of their ecological, public, and private spaces. The spatial diversity between B&Bs is predominantly reflected in the varying emphasis placed on ecological, public, and private spaces in the tourism experience, which significantly influences the spatial planning and design of B&Bs.

During the B&B 1.0 era, accommodations were typically constructed around original ecological village residential spaces, with the natural environment, scenic locations, seasonal rural customs, and other similar elements serving as the primary attractions for visitors. During this early development stage, individual proprietors were only able to satisfy tourists' fundamental accommodation and dining requirements, but were unable to cater to other needs.

*Persimmon is Red* located in Songyang, Lishui, represents the B&B 1.0 type. Situated at the end of a road, 65 kilometers away from the county seat and at the head of Yankeng, Pingxiang Town, the village is nestled in the mountains and due to its remote location and scarcity of resources, it could not support the production of cities and towns. Thus, the village retained its rare original ecological village environment. However, the village faced the fate of relocation due to the backward economy. The village's 108 ancient persimmon trees became the key to the village's "resurrection" as rural tourism gradually rose. Local leaders integrated various resources and made use of the unique landscape to position the village as a painter village, and an ideal sketch base and creative base for art students, teachers, and even artists. As a result, the village gradually became vibrant, and some young people who started businesses outside found business opportunities. Although the transformation of 50 beds only met the needs of simple accommodation, the continuous income made the villagers envious, and they began to follow suit one after another, resulting in the proliferation of B&Bs in the village.

The transformation of a small mountain village into a bustling rural tourist resort, particularly during the period when the persimmons are red from October to December, has led to a surge in demand for accommodation. Despite the lack of new houses and renovations, the village has managed to preserve its characteristic mountainous features of southern Zhejiang. The quiet and enigmatic location, nestled deep in the mountains, is even more alluring. The winding mud-rock roads, haphazard housing layout, and earthy exterior decoration of the houses all contribute to a sense of space that is distinct from the regular, structured, and orderly modern city. This "natural" village space is designed in harmony with the ecological environment, and the design and construction of B&Bs effectively align with the aesthetic orientation of ecological space, restoring some of the "ecological" attributes in the sense of space, which provides a solid foundation for B&Bs.

The persimmon is red B&B, the most notable example in the village, is designed to blend in with the local ecology. The exterior facade, made of local rammed earth walls and wooden windows, is no different from other buildings in the village. The persimmon tree across the road and the rest area built with logs are all designed to "camouflage" the B&B within the local environment. The internal public area also employs original ecological woodwork, and functional redistribution, building materials, storey height, spatial characteristics, and other elements on the plane of the original building are based on the primary sources of farmhouses and local mountain villages. The interior decoration, together with the architecture, is also based on local materials and traditional techniques to enhance the ambiance. This simple life scenario appealed to the first generation of migrant workers who were nostalgic for their hometown and sought to reconnect with a rural environment. At the same time, this kind of return is not just nostalgia in the sense of geographical space, but a kind of reaction to the rapid, noisy and indifferent industrial urban life (Zhang, 2016).



During the era of B&B 2.0, modern space styles were added to the original ecological concept. This approach placed emphasis on preserving local cultural, natural landscapes, ecology, and environmental resources, creating symbolic ecological spaces.

At the same time, B&Bs accommodated the modern living habits of urban tourists by providing more commercial services such as bookstores, coffee bars, and handicraft workshop experiences that were not traditionally found in the original ecological villages. This allowed visitors to experience the unique characteristics of the countryside while meeting their daily life needs and integrating both experiences seamlessly.

Chenjiapuzi, located only three kilometers from Songyang County, is a prime example of B&B 2.0. Nestled in a valley with excellent ecological advantages, the operators retained the overall construction of the village while challenging traditional forms and formats. They incorporated modern industrial materials, large-area French windows, metal fences, landscape stones from different regions, sunshades, and other elements into the public space to produce a mechanical yet natural ambiance. The internal space discarded local characteristics in favor of popular urban elements. The public and private spaces of the B&B were independent of the ecological space in which they were located, yet they could connect at any time, creating a unique spatial relationship.

The business form utilized collision by juxtaposing urban business styles such as boutique coffee shops, chain bookstores, and manual workshop experiences with the traditional cattle pen and market life scene in the village. The scenery of the ridge on the back, blue skies, dense green plants, dirt, mud, and scattered hills, all showcasing the unique characteristics of ecological elements, declared the strength of the ecological space. The avant-garde bookstore and coffee bar with an artistic style inside the B&B contrasted with the sense of ecological dilapidation created by wind and rain, resulting in a stunning scene at the Chen's shop split between the field of coffee players and the farmhouse restaurant.



By the conclusion of B&B 3.0, the reliance on ecological space for B&Bs has been eliminated. In terms of site selection, B&B 3.0 is no longer limited by the quality of ecological space, as it emphasizes the structure of the space itself rather than the content provided by the ecological space. Two reasons account for this change. Firstly, the land area of B&B 3.0 has expanded qualitatively, enabling it to be built in areas without potential drainage elements such as villages or scenic spots, but instead relying on the ecological structure for new construction. Secondly, B&B 3.0 shifts the ecological space to public space, where most of the original ecological content is reset or covered. The artificial transformation of the ecological space results in the overall space lacking natural elements. Even if an area looks like an ecological space, it is bound to be eroded by public space. The artificial design creates a distinct separation between the public space and the ecological space, resulting in an independent self-space.



Sky City, located in Jingning, Lishui, is a new type of B&B that has emerged in the original ecological environment. Covering an area of 68000 square meters, Sky City is a man-made scenic spot+resort model that stands out from traditional folk customs while sharing the same market. The floating sensation of the entire project standing on a cliff creates a feeling of integration with the sky. By integrating various fashion elements into an abandoned iron ore mine, the project transforms decay into magic, creating the first immersive mine cave landscape community in Asia, which includes the mine cave sleeping room, the mine cave concert hall, the mine cave wine cellar, the mine cave museum, and the Yunmu Hot Spring Center, Cloud Mirror Sky Swimming Pool and Cloud Cliff Western Restaurant, situated at a height of more than 300 meters from the ground (Xiaokangzazhishe, 2022). By making the boundary between the City of Sky and the ecological space more defined, the City of Sky within the ecological space becomes an "external" space independent of other spaces.



### **Splendid and indifferent -- The theme heterogeneity of contemporary B&B**

With the continuous development of B&Bs, rural B&Bs are no longer just accommodation facilities in rural tourism destinations, but are gradually becoming independent destinations with their own unique characteristics (Qiu & Jiang, 2022). The theme style of B&Bs plays a crucial role in this evolution, as it is constantly adapting to changes in aesthetic preferences and the needs of different groups of tourists. In this context, the theme heterogeneity of B&Bs at different stages can be explained based on the concept of space.

At the initial stage, known as B&B 1.0, traditional B&Bs mostly focus on contemporary regional culture as their theme. They showcase the natural and cultural landscape of traditional settlements (Yun, 2021). For example, the Persimmon Red B&B combines the symbolic expression of local culture and regional characteristics in its design (Fang, 2022). This type of B&B is more suited for urban tourists as it reflects the living mode of urban residents. Guest rooms are designed to preserve the architectural pattern of the mountain village, while upgrading the bathroom, bed cabinet, and other furniture. The overall aim is to maintain the characteristics and charm of the mountain villages in a simple and natural way.

The tour experience in B&B 1.0 typically involves exploring rural alleys, hiking along high and low footpaths, and enjoying different views from various angles and times. The tour scope covers the entire village, the surrounding natural landscape, and the working scenes of local villagers. The overall level of the village is relatively high, and language may be polished to cater to the needs of tourists.

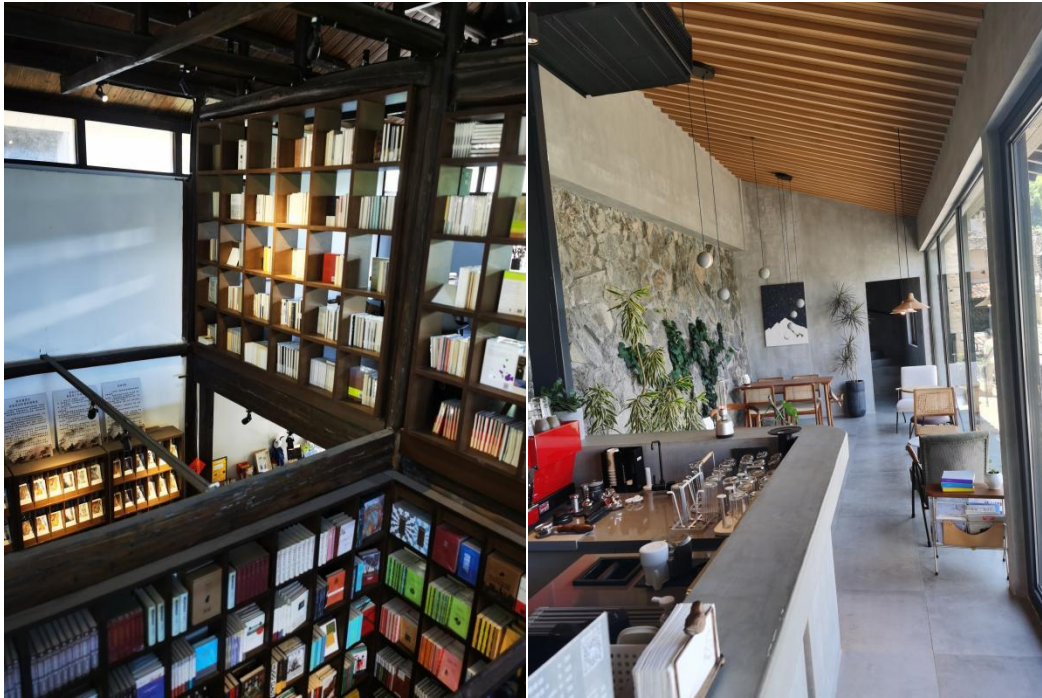


We will now focus on Chenjiapuzi, a village that was built in 2010 as part of China's B&B 2.0 movement. At this time, the B&B market in China had been developing for nearly a decade and demand was rapidly expanding. However, most of the products on the market were still at the level of farmhouse entertainment, making it urgent to upgrade. Meanwhile, the real estate industry in China had passed its golden age of development, and the demand for architectural design services had shrunk accordingly. In this context, many architects and designers from cities such as Shanghai and Hangzhou began to explore the B&B market, either by participating directly or by switching their focus.

During this period, many chain B&Bs emerged, such as Xipo, Huajiantang, and Baima. Compared with the first generation of B&Bs, such as Persimmon Red, the new B&Bs had several distinct characteristics. Firstly, the location was more thematic and focused on natural landscapes such as mountains, water, clouds, and forests. The interior decoration style began to move away from the rural flavor and instead aimed to combine the inner part of urban life with the outer part of rural nature while paying attention to human needs.

Secondly, the building structure was boldly enriched in terms of the plane layout of the original rural life, the building surface materials, and formal language. However, emphasis was placed on integrating the relationship with the surrounding buildings, color mechanism, and other factors. Additionally, projects that were not easy to experience in the city. On the opposite end of the spectrum from fast-paced work, there are serene experiences to be found such as a cozy fireplace, a terrace overlooking a lush forest, or a floating window that reveals breathtaking views of the clouds above the sea. In our village, we will implement a precise, point-based layout that offers a diverse range of businesses. These will include accommodations, a pioneering bookstore, handicraft workshops, gourmet restaurants, and coffee shops. Each of these independent ventures will complement one another, providing services and decorations that cater to the daily habits and spiritual needs of our guests.





Compared to B&B 1.0, B&B 2.0 has undergone significant changes in both its architectural form and tourist content. While it is in the countryside, it utilizes the natural environment while separating itself from typical rural characteristics. The living habits, interior decorations, and utensils are more like those found in cities. The focus is on meeting the fast-paced demands of urban users, but the retention of rural elements allows tourists to slow down and enjoy their surroundings. B&B 2.0 also offers living conditions that are more suitable for foreign tourists than typical rural family transformations. The internal public and private spaces are designed with ecological principles in mind and are integrated with the ecological space outside of the B&B.

The theme of B&B 3.0 departs from earlier designs and sheds natural, cultural, and other additional attributes. The ecological space is also minimized, leading to a greater deviation from the original regional theme. In addition, creators' self-consciousness and personalized aesthetics are emphasized, resulting in diverse and unique theme designs. This distinctiveness is achieved through complex structural modeling, simple and minimalist tones, and desexualized and fashionable features. The desexualization of aesthetics creates a "sexless" or neutral beauty, providing the theme with flexibility. For example, the Sky City B&B uses the theme color white, which embodies creation and infinite possibilities. The absence of sharp edges and corners in the building design creates a soft and clean space, further enhanced by the white theme color.

This distinctive feature is lost in the complex structural modeling and the simple and minimalist tone, and is further implanted with the features of desexualization and fashion. It needs to be emphasized that the desexualization here does not emphasize the particularity of a certain gender in terms of biological attributes, but a kind of "sexless" or neutral beauty in terms of aesthetics. Such a design, while eliminating the tendency of theme feeling, also endows it with the flexibility of theme. For example, Sky City uses "white" in its theme design, because the essence of "white" is creation. It can mix all colors in the spectrum or remove all other colors. Yuan Yanzai believes that "white" contains "empty", which contains a lot of energy and is destined to be filled (Ding, 2014). "White" is the infinite possibility we feel. It is like a kind of empty space or edge, gestating time and space... It carries the essence of life out of the silence, and life is born in the "white", but from that moment on, real and externalized life will set foot on the earth and get color. "(Lian, 2018) The concept of white, on the one hand, explains the color of clouds in the sky, on the other hand, it more points to the audience's asexual imagination. The removal of edges and corners in the building makes the whole space very soft, and together with the white theme color, gives passengers a soft and clean feeling.



### **Structure and Deconstruction -- The Functional Heterogeneity of Contemporary Home Accommodation**

The home stay industry exhibits significant heterogeneity in spatial structure, aesthetic theme, and functional use. This heterogeneity can be attributed to the varied basic needs of urban and rural guests, as well as their changing requirements for immersive environments. However, as urbanization and modernization continue to advance rapidly, the demand basis and user preferences are also evolving quickly.

For instance, the internet function was a concrete example of changing demand during the early stages of the B&B industry. Today, people heavily rely on mobile devices and wireless networks, making it challenging for them to disconnect from modern equipment and urbanization. Thus, the loss of wireless function, even when a wired network is available, can be a nightmare for contemporary guests.

During the B&B 1.0 and 2.0 eras, the habits and dependence of urbanization indeed shaped guests' requirements for B&Bs. This remains a challenge for rural B&Bs today. However, this does not mean that B&Bs need to conform to the process of urbanization and forsake their own strengths. There should be a "singularity" in the functional proportion of rural home entertainment, which can be understood as the "upper limit of urban attributes" in this domain. Once this singularity is exceeded, the essence of rural home entertainment changes, and the most successful transformations result in upgrading from 1.0 to 2.0.

Design and demand for B&Bs must correspond to the aforementioned spatial and thematic considerations. This structuralism should be characterized by "integrity, conversion, and self-coordination" (Piaget, 1968) while also returning to the B&B's essence rather than blindly destroying its spatial and aesthetic characteristics to meet tourists' demands. Emphasizing urbanization too much in rural areas can make the original charm ambiguous and lead to the loss of the B&B's unique identity.

In the 1.0 era, B&Bs were similar to those found in Europe, America, and Japan. They were primarily focused on providing accommodation and catering, and some offered limited assistance with navigating nearby attractions. Tourists were drawn to the rural setting, experiencing village life and observing the farming scene. Sightseeing was also popular, with visitors admiring the village and lane landscapes or enjoying scenic spots in different weather conditions. Most tourists who stayed in Shizihong were interested in the mature persimmon orchards and the process of producing persimmons. This theme was a major draw for visitors, along with natural landscapes like mountain climbing, bamboo forests, and valleys.

In the 2.0 era, B&Bs expanded their facilities and incorporated urban elements, creating a more diverse, comprehensive, and fashionable experience. Modern coffee shops, bars, pioneer bookstores, and balconies were added to cater to city dwellers or those with high expectations for accommodations. Despite these changes, B&Bs in 1.0 and 2.0 eras shared similarities in their fixed and conservative functional layouts due to limited space.



However, B&B 3.0, like Sky City, broke free from these limitations by incorporating a massive volume of space and offering a decentralized functional layout. This enabled the B&B to cover nearly one kilometer of space while providing a wide range of services, including hotel rooms, restaurants, swimming pools, hot springs, rafting, concert halls, conference rooms, electronic auction rooms, bars, craft bars, cigar bars, and more. Sky City is a postmodernist example of fragmentation, collage, and self-reformation that allows for ongoing industrial upgrading. This new approach to B&Bs reflects contemporary internet and social conditions, moving away from a more integrated and self-adjustable model towards one of decentralization and adaptability. In doing so, Sky City provides ample space to expand and grow, while offering clear self-boundaries and an abundance of individual space.



A super-sized volume that offers a larger floor area and a richer spatial experience is more suitable for group construction and the nature of tourism. It is similar to the concept of mobile tourism, taking with it all the conveniences and richness of the city, combined with the slow pace, open vision, and fresh air of vacation. This kind of concept is especially popular in B&Bs, which differ from traditional hotel guest services. The continuous evolution and upgrading of B&Bs to meet the ever-changing needs of holiday consumers is what drives their development.

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