



EXPLORING THE SYNERGY OF SOCIAL SERVICESCAPE AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IN ENHANCING GUEST REVISITATION IN RURAL B&B ACCOMMODATIONS

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study investigates how the social servicescape and physical environment interact to drive guest loyalty in rural B&Bs, focusing on the heritage-rich context of Lukang, Taiwan. Moving beyond traditional lodging evaluations, the research seeks to clarify how the synergy between human interaction and spatial authenticity sustains the competitive edge of rural hospitality. **Methodology:** Data were gathered from 186 B&B guests using a self-administered survey. To ensure the internal consistency of our adapted scales, Cronbach's alpha was calculated, with all constructs exceeding the 0.70 threshold. Given the unique cultural setting of Lukang, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was performed to validate the underlying dimensions. The study then utilized multiple regression analysis in SPSS to test the predictive power of these factors on revisit intentions. **Findings:** The regression model yielded an R² value of 0.35, indicating that social servicescape and physical environment account for 35% of the variance in revisit intention ($p < 0.001$). While interpersonal interaction ($\beta = 0.52$) and safety-centered design ($\beta = 0.42$) emerged as the primary drivers, secondary factors such as cultural aesthetics and engaging leisure activities also contributed significantly to the model. These results highlight that for rural B&Bs, success is anchored in a blend of "human warmth" and a physically secure, culturally resonant environment. **Conclusion:** This study shifts the analytical focus from standardized urban luxury toward the intimate, community-based scale of rural micro-hospitality. Our findings reveal that competitive advantage in this sector stems from a specialized synergy: the fusion of personal host-guest hospitality with a secure, culturally authentic environment. This reframes revisit intention not as a routine transaction, but as a meaningful gesture of cultural belonging. Practically, the results suggest that B&B operators should prioritize heritage storytelling and spatial integrity over generic luxury. By doing so, they can transform service encounters into lasting emotional bonds, ultimately fostering more resilient and sustainable rural tourism development.

Keywords:

Rural Tourism, B&B, Servicescape, Physical Environment, Revisit Intention, Cultural Hospitality, Community-Based Tourism

Introduction

The global tourism landscape is increasingly shaped by a shift toward cultural immersion, community-based experiences, and place-rooted hospitality—an evolution driven by changing tourist preferences and rural revitalization agendas (Ministry of Transportation and Communications, 2023). Within this context, Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) have evolved beyond their traditional role as lodging providers; they are now recognized as cultural brokers and key catalysts for community resilience and rural revitalization (Sthapit et al., 2023). Specifically, these establishments serve as critical nodes where local traditions are preserved and shared, fostering the accumulation of social capital and economic diversification in heritage-oriented destinations like Lukang (Chien, 2022). By embodying local identity through adaptive heritage architecture, vernacular storytelling, and deep host-guest interactions, B&Bs strengthen cultural linkages and activate grassroots initiatives, serving as dynamic arenas where intangible traditions are interpreted and co-created with modern travelers.

In rural and transitional regions, the concept of social servicescape—the relational environment shaped by interpersonal exchanges—has been shown to promote cultural continuity and enhance visitors' sense of belonging (Line & Hanks, 2019). These social interactions go beyond service satisfaction to foster collective identity and empower small-scale operators to co-create meaningful cultural encounters. In parallel, the physical environment—including heritage architecture, spatial aesthetics, and localized amenities—functions as a tangible expression of authenticity that fosters not only tourist engagement but also long-term community recognition and pride (Nanu, 2022). In Lukang, many B&Bs offer cultural programming such as storytelling workshops, temple tours, and traditional crafts, enabling guests to participate in the town's intangible heritage. These immersive experiences not only enhance satisfaction but also support intergenerational knowledge transfer, youth engagement in heritage labor, and economic diversification within the local community (Sthapit et al., 2023; Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

Lukang's rise as a cultural tourism destination, supported by public-private collaboration, has led to over 60 licensed B&Bs by 2023. However, rapid growth has also brought challenges: market saturation, seasonal demand volatility, and strain on service capacity (Chen, 2021; Lin, 2022). While local authorities have invested in streetscape improvements and cultural events, many B&Bs still face constraints in service recovery, infrastructure renewal, and innovation. Despite growing scholarly attention on B&Bs' role in cultural tourism, few studies examine how social and physical components of the servicescape jointly influence revisit intention—particularly in contexts rich in cultural capital yet limited in service differentiation. Existing research on hospitality and service recovery often adopts customer-centric frameworks rooted in commercial settings, thereby underestimating the communal and emotional dimensions of guest–host interactions in heritage towns (e.g., Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003). Moreover, mainstream service quality models—largely derived from standardized Western hotel sectors—fail to adequately reflect the informal, narrative-driven, and emotionally attuned service logics prevalent in Asian heritage towns such as Lukang (Wang & Zhang, 2023). In

such contexts, guests frequently prioritize trust and safety—signaled through host demeanor and cleanliness—over standardized luxury (Chuang & Ye, 2008). Accordingly, there remains a lack of context-sensitive empirical models that explain how the interaction between social and physical servicescape dimensions reinforces cultural attachment and revisit intention in heritage-oriented B&B settings.

Despite the growing scholarly attention on B&Bs, there remains a critical gap in understanding how the physical aesthetics of heritage buildings—while providing a necessary stage—interact with informal, narrative-driven service logics to cultivate long-term loyalty. Existing customer-centric frameworks, often rooted in standardized commercial settings, remain ill-suited for the communal heart of heritage towns like Lukang. This study, therefore, aims to investigate how Lukang's B&Bs mobilize both social and physical dimensions of the guest experience to reinforce cultural attachment and support revisit intentions. By reframing revisit intention as a proxy for emotional embeddedness and cultural resonance—rather than mere behavioral repetition—this research offers a context-sensitive lens on rural tourism loyalty. Ultimately, it positions B&Bs as dynamic cultural infrastructures where hospitality sustains local identity, strengthens community networks, and deepens place-based belonging.

Literature Review

The Emergence of B&Bs as Cultural Tourism Hubs

Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) have evolved from basic lodging providers into pivotal agents of cultural preservation and place-based tourism. Defined as hybrid spaces integrating private residences with hospitality services (Chen, 2003; Tourism Bureau, 2019), B&Bs operationalize authenticity through three interconnected mechanisms: (1) co-creation of localized experiences through host-guest interaction, where narratives and traditions are collaboratively interpreted (Schänzel & Smith, 2007); (2) architectural embodiment of vernacular heritage, with designs reflecting regional history (Wu, 2003); and (3) community embeddedness, positioning B&Bs as nodes within broader socio-cultural ecosystems (Ministry of Transportation, 2019). Collectively, these mechanisms transform B&Bs into “living museums” that curate immersive encounters beyond the scope of standardized hotels (Campos et al., 2018), reinforcing cultural heritage and community-based tourism.

Lukang, a heritage-rich township in Taiwan, exemplifies this evolution. Its 50–70 registered B&Bs cluster around landmarks such as Old Street and Longshan Temple, offering tiered pricing (NT\$1,500–5,000; USD 50–160) and curated activities like lantern-making workshops and temple tours (Lukang Township Office, 2022). Annual visitation exceeds 1.2 million (Tourism Bureau, 2023), with occupancy peaking at 80–90% during major festivals but falling below 40% in the off-season (Chen, 2021). Post-2015 domestic tourism policies spurred a 35% increase in B&B numbers (Lukang Township Office, 2022), intensifying overcapacity in non-heritage zones, while heritage-adjacent establishments sustain demand through cultural differentiation.

The market is dominated by domestic visitors—over 90% of whom are families and cultural enthusiasts (Tourism Bureau, 2023). While proximity to heritage sites fosters cross-promotion, it also homogenizes offerings, diluting competitive differentiation in a saturated market. Newer entrants often prioritize cost efficiency over authenticity, adopting generic designs and standardized services (Lin, 2022). This commodification contrasts with emerging post-

pandemic demands for hybrid experiences, which only 30% of B&Bs currently provide (Lukang Township Office, 2022).

Chen (2021) identifies a critical gap: while existing research emphasizes B&Bs' role as cultural mediators (Campos et al., 2018), few studies examine how the social servicescape and physical environment interact to mitigate service failures and sustain guest loyalty. This omission is particularly relevant in Lukang, where seasonal volatility and market saturation heighten operational fragility. Heritage-adjacent B&Bs often leverage spatial advantages (e.g., proximity to temples) to offset service lapses—an option less feasible for suburban counterparts lacking cultural capital. Such dynamics suggest untapped synergies between social servicescape (e.g., host storytelling) and physical environment (e.g., architectural authenticity) in fostering cultural resilience, defined as the capacity to buffer disruptions through culturally rooted recovery (Folke et al., 2010).

This review underscores the need to reconceptualize B&Bs not merely as experience providers but as community-embedded cultural strongholds, where social and physical elements converge to transform service failures into loyalty-building opportunities. Addressing this gap advances rural tourism scholarship by offering a framework for heritage destinations to convert cultural capital into sustainable competitive advantage through community development and preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Service Recovery in B&Bs: Reconceptualizing the Purchase Occasion

Traditional service recovery models in hospitality research prioritize social interactions (e.g., host empathy) over environmental factors (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003). However, in the context of rural B&Bs, the “purchase occasion”—the spatiotemporal context in which services are consumed—can actively mediate recovery outcomes through two mechanisms: (1) Cognitive anchoring, whereby physical environment cues (e.g., heritage-inspired décor, spatial privacy) reduce post-failure stress by reinforcing place identity (Wang & Zhang, 2023); and (2) Behavioral affordances, in which flexible spatial layouts enable tailored compensation strategies (e.g., complimentary cultural tours) that align with distinct tourist personas (Liu et al., 2022).

In Lukang's saturated B&B market, service failures such as booking errors and maintenance issues are increasingly common, yet only 12% of operators maintain formal recovery protocols (Chen, 2021). Heritage-adjacent B&Bs frequently mitigate these failures by leveraging proximity to cultural landmarks—such as Longshan Temple—to offer spontaneous guided tours or craft workshops. Such tactics convert potential dissatisfaction into opportunities for cultural immersion, strengthening emotional attachment to both the host and destination.

This practice challenges conventional service recovery frameworks that treat the physical environment as a static backdrop (Rogers, 2008). Instead, the small-scale and flexible nature of B&B operations enables dynamic linkages between social servicescape and physical environment. Lin's (2022) study of Lukang B&Bs illustrates how a “homely atmosphere” can buffer minor lapses, while heritage-aligned physical settings reinforce recovery messages through culturally resonant cues.

Despite these insights, no empirical study has examined how the interaction between social servicescape and physical environment directly influences revisit intention in rural B&B settings. This gap is particularly salient in heritage destinations, where physical context and cultural capital are integral to service delivery.

By reconceptualizing the purchase occasion as an active recovery platform, this study emphasizes the capacity of heritage B&Bs to transform service failures into loyalty-building opportunities. This process not only enhances visitor satisfaction and emotional embeddedness but also strengthens cultural transmission, host capacity-building, and the long-term sustainability of local tourism economies.

Social Servicescape at B&Bs: Cultural Transmission Through Host-Guest Exchange

The social servicescape model (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003) emphasizes service quality, hospitality, and social atmosphere as key drivers of guest perceptions. B&Bs, particularly in rural heritage destinations, have evolved into cultural intermediaries, offering personalized and intimate experiences through host-guest interactions, local storytelling, and place-based activities (Stutt & Wortman, 2005). Campos et al. (2018) argue that B&Bs' cultural immersion fosters loyalty, while Liu et al. (2022) demonstrate that positive emotions mediate the relationship between social servicescape and satisfaction.

In Lukang, B&B operators curate activities tailored to domestic tourists' nostalgia for traditional culture, including retro tea ceremonies and storytelling sessions on Qing-dynasty merchant history. These offerings align with the dominant guest demographic—domestic travelers aged 30–55—and distinguish heritage-based B&Bs from suburban counterparts, which often target budget-conscious visitors and lack socially immersive services. This disparity contributes to significant occupancy gaps between the two segments.

From this perspective, the social servicescape functions not only as a determinant of loyalty but also as a vehicle for rural tourism development, cultural heritage preservation, and community revitalization. Many Lukang B&Bs host craft workshops, temple fairs, and local festivals that aim to educate guests on region-specific cultural practices. These engagements facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer, foster youth participation in cultural labor, and enhance hosts' narrative, intercultural, and empathetic communication skills—competencies essential for sustaining rural cultural economies.

Thus, B&Bs in rural heritage contexts operate as experiential learning platforms and participatory spaces, enabling hosts and guests to co-create meaning, reinforce cultural identity, and cultivate emotional ties to place.

H1: Social servicescape positively influences revisit intention, not merely by fulfilling service expectations but by transforming guest experiences into acts of cultural advocacy and informal education.

Through this mechanism, rural B&Bs serve as cultural mediators and community anchors, advancing the dual objectives of rural tourism sustainability and community development.

Physical Environment of B&Bs: Anchoring Cultural Space and Enhancing Community Connectivity

The physical environment of a B&B should no longer be dismissed as a mere passive backdrop to service delivery. Instead, it must be reimagined as a dynamic interface that actively drives rural tourism and anchors community identity. While heritage sites in Malaysia have successfully formalized street arts and cultural districts into rigid branding toolkits, Lukang follows a more organic path. Here, the "art" is woven into the very fabric of the town. Street arts—ranging from weathered murals to vernacular visual motifs—act as an extension of the physical servicescape, sharpening the cultural legibility of the space for every visitor (Wang & Zhang, 2023). In Lukang, elements like material aesthetics and architectural authenticity are not just visual lures; they are semiotic engines for cultural transmission. The red-brick geometry and traditional spatial layouts do more than house guests—they empower the local community by turning heritage into a lived, profitable reality. By prioritizing spatial storytelling over standardized luxury, these B&Bs transform the physical setting into a vehicle for localized empowerment, ensuring that the guest experience is rooted in the town's historical pulse rather than a generic tourism template.

The cultural embodiment of space yields benefits beyond guest satisfaction. First, it stimulates demand for local artisans and traditional builders, sustaining rural craft economies. Second, it reclaims aging residential stock, contributing to neighborhood revitalization and heritage zone cohesion. Third, it provides a pedagogical function by educating visitors on rural Taiwanese aesthetics and values through sensory immersion. Guided spatial storytelling—explaining architectural motifs—has emerged as a distinct cultural service.

In service recovery contexts, the physical environment also mitigates dissatisfaction. Spatial privacy, aesthetic coherence, and the familiarity of traditional design can buffer minor lapses. When issues arise, such as delayed check-ins or equipment malfunctions, hosts often redirect attention to distinctive spatial features or offer compensatory cultural activities (e.g., visiting a local studio). These strategies reframe service interruptions as opportunities for deeper place engagement. Heritage-zone B&Bs—particularly those featuring Ming-Qing architectural styles—command price premiums of 20–30% over suburban counterparts (Tourism Bureau, 2023), underscoring the market value of cultural authenticity.

Recognized "Hospitality B&Bs" (Tourism Bureau, 2019) in Lukang exemplify this model by integrating cleanliness, safety, and vernacular design. Such physical and cultural standards differentiate operators in saturated markets, while newer suburban B&Bs often adopt generic architecture, weakening cultural identity and alignment with community goals.

Despite its importance, prior studies have predominantly treated the physical environment as a static backdrop (Rogers, 2008), overlooking its dynamic role in community-building. This study instead positions B&B design as a dynamic infrastructure that: (1) communicates cultural values to guests, (2) reinforces community identity, (3) activates local participation in tourism economies, and (4) serves as a spatial buffer in service recovery. Accordingly, this study hypothesizes that the physical environment of a lodging establishment positively influences guests' revisit intentions (H2). In Lukang's context, this implies that the physical preservation of the 'Old Street' aesthetic is not just heritage work, but a direct investment in visitor loyalty.

Intentions to Return: Fostering Local Belonging and Community Embeddedness

In B&B research, revisit intention is traditionally framed through guest satisfaction and loyalty. However, in heritage towns like Lukang, repeat visits often arise from more than transactional satisfaction—they reflect cultivated place attachment and cultural resonance, embedded within rural tourism and community development. B&Bs that integrate hospitality with local storytelling, cultural heritage engagement, and spatial authenticity become not merely temporary accommodations but catalysts for sustained cultural participation and socio-spatial continuity.

Revisit intentions are shaped by satisfaction with environmental education, facilities, and cultural immersion (Zhuang & Ye, 2009). While prior studies link cultural authenticity to loyalty (Campos et al., 2018) and social servicescape to satisfaction (Liu et al., 2022), few examine how social servicescape and physical environment jointly influence revisit intention. This gap is critical in Lukang, where market saturation demands actionable insights into loyalty drivers and the mechanisms through which B&Bs foster cultural cohesion.

Heritage-zone B&Bs in Lukang demonstrate strong synergies between social servicescape and physical environment. Rich in interpersonal warmth and cultural cues, these spaces act as narrative vessels—inviting guests to return not for amenities alone, but to reinhabit a familiar cultural story. According to the 2023 Lukang Tourism Survey, 68% of repeat guests reported a willingness to overlook minor service lapses if the B&B delivered “cultural coherence”—defined as the alignment between host narratives, architectural heritage, and community integration. Repeat visitors, who make up 25% of clientele (Lin, 2022), often cite this alignment as central to their loyalty.

These dynamics challenge the conventional expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1999). In saturated heritage markets, revisit intention increasingly reflects perceived cultural coherence rather than standardized service performance. This redefines loyalty as a function of emotional, spatial, and communal belonging, positioning revisit intention as an indicator of localized cultural integration and participatory rural development.

Return guests frequently evolve into informal cultural ambassadors, promoting the destination via word-of-mouth and supporting community-based tourism initiatives. This feedback loop—where experience fosters loyalty and loyalty fosters advocacy—links individual satisfaction with collective place-making. As such, B&B revisit intentions in rural heritage contexts should be interpreted not only as markers of customer retention but also as expressions of community attachment, cultural continuity, and grassroots development.

By examining revisit intentions through the dual lens of social servicescape and physical environment, this study positions B&Bs as both economic actors and cultural mediators—platforms that sustain place identity, strengthen community networks, and enhance rural resilience.

Methodology***Research Design and Instrument***

This study adopted a quantitative research design using a self-administered questionnaire to examine the relationships among social servicescape, physical environment, and revisit

intention in rural B&B accommodations. Data were collected from guests at a well-known bed-and-breakfast (B&B) in Lukang, Changhua, Taiwan, over a three-month period between early January and early April 2024. Questionnaires were distributed immediately after guests completed their payment, ensuring that responses reflected post-stay evaluations rather than pre-service expectations. This post-consumption approach aligns with the SERVPERF model (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), which emphasizes perceived service performance rather than expectation–perception gaps.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections: (1) demographic information (gender, age, occupation, and income); (2) social servicescape; (3) physical environment; and (4) revisit intention. Items measuring social servicescape were adapted from Cronin and Taylor (1992), physical environment items were adapted from Chuang and Ye (2008), and revisit intention items were adapted from Singh and Singh (2019). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Sample and Study Site

The survey site was selected due to its popularity, high visitor volume, and reputation as a representative mid-tier B&B in the Lukang area. Lukang is a historic town known for cultural tourism, attracting diverse visitor segments and providing a suitable context for examining heritage-oriented hospitality experiences. While the single-site design offers in-depth contextual insights, it limits the generalizability of the findings. Accordingly, this study is positioned as a case-based empirical analysis, and future research is encouraged to adopt multi-site sampling to enhance external validity.

Data Collection

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to guests during the data collection period. After excluding incomplete or invalid responses, 186 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis, yielding a valid response rate of 93%. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test involving 30 participants was conducted to assess clarity and reliability. Feedback from the pilot test indicated that all questionnaire items were clearly understood.

Data Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation was conducted to validate the underlying dimensions of the adapted scales before testing the hypotheses. The internal consistency of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, all of which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. To determine the predictive power of these dimensions, multiple regression analysis was employed, specifically testing the following hypothesized relationships:

H1: The social servicescape of a lodging establishment positively influences guests' revisit intention.

H2: The physical environment of a lodging establishment positively influences guests' revisit intention.

Results

Sample profile

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 186 valid respondents. A slight majority were male (52.7%), most commonly aged 31–40 years (31.7%), and predominantly employed in the service industry (37.1%). The largest income group reported monthly earnings of NT\$25,001–35,000 (approximately USD 780–1,090) (23.7%). Overall, the demographic composition closely mirrors the documented visitor profile of Lukang (Lukang Township Office, 2022), thereby supporting the representativeness of the sample for the study context.

Table 1: Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	98	52.7
Female	88	47.3
Total	186	100.0
Age		
-20	23	12.4
21-30	54	29.0
31-40	59	31.7
41-50	34	18.3
51+	16	7.7
Total	186	100.0
Occupation		
Student	27	14.5
Service Industry	69	37.1
Industry	45	24.2
Government officer	4	2.2
Homemaker	17	9.1
Retired Personnel	2	1.1
Others	3	1.6
Total	186	100.0
Monthly Income (NTD)		
Less than 25,000	38	20.4
25,001–35,000	44	23.7
35,001–45,000	43	23.1
45,001–55,000	33	17.7
Above 55,001	10	5.4
Others	18	9.7
Total	186	100.0

Measures of Validity and Reliability

Both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses demonstrated satisfactory construct validity. All standardized factor loadings exceeded the conservative threshold of 0.40 (Hair et al., 2019), with 83% surpassing 0.60—well above the 0.50 benchmark for strong validity (Kline, 2016). This confirms strong alignment between indicators and their respective latent constructs.

Reliability testing showed excellent internal consistency. The social-servicescape scale (12 items) yielded Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$, the physical environment scale (10 items) $\alpha = 0.91$, and the revisit intentions scale (5 items) $\alpha = 0.95$. All values exceed the 0.70 acceptability criterion (Nunnally, 1978) and approach the 0.90 threshold associated with clinical-scale precision (Streiner, 2003). These results affirm the measurement rigor and provide a solid foundation for subsequent hypothesis testing.

Factor Analysis of Social Servicescape in B&Bs

Pre-analysis diagnostics confirmed suitability for factor extraction: the overall KMO value was 0.89 ("meritorious" per Kaiser, 1974), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < .001$), indicating sufficient inter-item correlations. Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was applied to maximize variance explanation and obtain uncorrelated factors.

Three items were removed due to cross-loading, leaving nine items and yielding two distinct factors with eigenvalues above 1. Factor 1 ("Interpersonal Interactions") explained 33.16% of the variance (mean = 4.07, $\alpha = 0.83$) and captured the warmth, empathy, and personalized attention of host-guest engagement. Factor 2 ("Engaging Leisure Activities") accounted for 8.05% of the variance (mean = 3.97, $\alpha = 0.85$) and reflected B&Bs' facilitation of cultural interpretation, local events, and hands-on activities. The two-factor solution achieved a cumulative variance explanation of 54.07%, meeting the $\geq 50\%$ acceptability benchmark (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Detailed measurement items and factor loadings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Social Servicescape in B&Bs

Factors	Measurement Items	Mean	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α
Interpersonal Interactions	Providing local specialty snacks and guided tours	3.96	0.71	0.91
	Rapid response to customer complaints by B&B operators	3.99	0.7	
	Convenient online promotion and booking	3.97	0.66	
	Reasonable accommodation and dining prices	3.33	0.66	
	Friendly and welcoming host attitude	4.03	-	
	Active interaction between hosts and tourists	4.14	-	
Engaging Leisure Activities	Offering information and consultation services for nearby tourist and recreational areas	3.84	0.6	0.85
	Assisting in arranging local industry activities (such as ecological, cultural, amusements)	4.08	0.77	

Organizing local leisure and recreational activities (e.g., religious activities, water sports)	4.01	0.73
Providing interpretation services for local natural or cultural resources	4.12	0.7
Teaching tourists DIY crafts (e.g., glove puppets, painted lion heads, fans)	3.82	0.63
Arranging passive activities (e.g., tea tasting, stargazing, sharing collections)	3.82	0.6

Factor Analysis of Physical Environments in B&Bs

Data suitability for factor extraction was confirmed with a KMO value of 0.87 (“meritorious” per Kaiser, 1974) and a significant Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ($p < .001$), indicating adequate inter-item correlations. Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was applied to maximize variance explanation and ensure factor independence.

Four items with cross-loading issues were removed, leaving six items and yielding two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. Factor 1 (“The Tangible Setting”) comprised seven items, explained 49.27% of the variance (mean = 4.14, $\alpha = 0.87$), and captured the architectural identity, spatial layout, and material authenticity of B&B properties. Factor 2 (“Coziness and Solace”) included three items, accounted for 10.49% of the variance (mean = 4.17, $\alpha = 0.76$), and reflected psychological comfort, warmth, and a home-like ambience.

The two-factor solution explained a cumulative 59.76% of the total variance, exceeding the $\geq 50\%$ benchmark for acceptable construct representation (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Detailed measurement items and factor loadings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Physical Environments in B&Bs

Factors	Measurement Items	Mean	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α
The Tangible Setting	The lobby and common areas feature a social lounge and entertainment amenities.	4.13	0.81	0.87
	High quality and comfort of bedding and furniture.	4.00	0.75	
	Rooms are decorated in a traditional and antique style.	4.14	0.69	
	Fire safety equipment and fire protection facilities meet regulations.	3.98	0.67	
	Providing additional amenities like Wi-Fi.	4.25	0.67	

	The architectural and decorative design of the B&B showcases historic styles.	4.33	0.67	
	Proper planning for movement and appropriate spatial arrangements.	4.11	0.64	
Coziness and Solace	En-suite bathrooms are fully equipped in guest rooms.	4.11	0.87	0.76
	The overall atmosphere of the dining area is excellent.	4.08	0.75	
	The environment is relaxed with a leisurely ambiance.	4.31	0.69	

Factor Analysis of Revisit Intentions in B&Bs

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was confirmed by a KMO value of 0.83 (“meritorious” per Kaiser, 1974) and a significant Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ($p < .001$), indicating sufficient inter-item correlations. Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was employed, and all five measurement items demonstrated factor loadings above 0.30, meeting the recommended threshold for construct validity (Hair et al., 2019).

A single factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 2.65, accounting for 53.0% of the total variance—exceeding the $\geq 50\%$ benchmark for adequate construct representation (Costello & Osborne, 2005). This factor, labelled “Revisit Intentions”, encompassed items reflecting overall satisfaction, willingness to revisit, and the likelihood of recommending the B&B to others. The scale achieved an average score of 4.13 and demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.82$), confirming internal consistency. Detailed measurement items and factor loadings are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Revisit Intentions in B&Bs

Factors	Measurement Items	Mean	Factor Cronbach’s α	Loading
Revisit Intentions	I would recommend this B&B to relatives and friends.	4.05	0.82	0.82
	Given the chance, I would stay at this B&B again.	4.09	0.81	
	Next time, I would like to bring my family to stay at this B&B.	3.84	0.79	
	Overall, I am satisfied with this bed and breakfast.	4.17	0.79	
	In the short term, I would like to stay at this B&B again.	4.19	0.60	

Hypotheses Testing

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships among the study variables. Both social servicescape and physical environment dimensions were positively and significantly associated with revisit intentions, providing initial empirical support for H1 and H2.

Evaluating the Interplay Between B&Bs Social Servicescape Dimensions and Revisit Intentions

To further assess the effects of social servicescape components on revisit intentions, Pearson's correlation analysis revealed that Interpersonal Interactions exhibited a strong positive correlation with revisit intentions ($r = 0.59, p < 0.05$), while Engaging Leisure Activities demonstrated a moderate but significant correlation ($r = 0.47, p < 0.05$).

Subsequently, the multiple regression analysis was performed to test the model's strength. The regression model yielded an R^2 value of 0.35, indicating that social servicescape and physical environment account for 35% of the variance in revisit intention ($p < 0.001$). The overall model was statistically significant ($F = 50.91, p < 0.001$), confirming its robustness in predicting guest behavior. Within the model, Interpersonal Interactions emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.52, t = 6.17, p < 0.05$), whereas Engaging Leisure Activities, though statistically significant, had a comparatively smaller effect ($\beta = 0.10, t = 1.97, p < 0.05$).

These findings confirm H1, demonstrating that the quality of host–guest relational dynamics plays a decisive role in driving guests' emotional attachment and willingness to return. In Lukang's cultural tourism context, such interactions often involve personalized storytelling, insider guidance, and co-created experiences, positioning B&Bs as cultural anchors and community engagement platforms. Detailed regression coefficients are reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Social Servicescape Dimensions on Revisit Intentions in B&Bs

Path	β	t -value	p -value	R^2
Interpersonal Interactions→Revisit Intentions	.52	6.17	.00	.36
Engaging Leisure Activities→Revisit Intentions	.10	1.97	.00	

Evaluating the Impact of Physical Environments on Revisit Intentions

The physical environment was operationalized via two dimensions: Tangible Setting (e.g., cleanliness, safety, and functionality) and Coziness and Solace (e.g., ambiance and traditional aesthetics). Pearson's correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations with revisit intentions ($r = 0.50$ and $r = 0.39$, respectively; $p < 0.05$).

A subsequent multiple regression analysis confirmed the predictive validity of these dimensions. The model was statistically significant ($F = 32.48, p < 0.05$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.25, indicating that 25% of the variance in revisit intentions was explained. Tangible Setting emerged as the stronger predictor ($\beta = 0.42, t = 5.28, p < 0.05$), while Coziness and Solace also exerted a smaller but significant effect ($\beta = 0.13, t = 1.98, p < 0.05$).

These findings provide empirical support for H2, demonstrating that in heritage-rich destinations such as Lukang, the physical environment serves a dual role: it enhances comfort and functions as a cultural interface that mitigates perceived risks while fostering emotional anchoring. Moreover, the results suggest a sequential mechanism—functional reliability is a prerequisite for emotional engagement—thereby extending conventional servicescape models into culturally embedded hospitality contexts. For B&B operators, investment in cleanliness, safety, and culturally resonant design is not only a matter of service quality compliance but also foundational to sustaining guest loyalty and local cultural pride. Detailed regression coefficients are reported in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Analysis of Physical Environment Dimensions on Revisit Intentions in B&Bs

Path	β	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>R</i> ²
The Tangible Setting→Revisit Intentions	.42	5.28	.00	.25
Coziness and Solace→Revisit Intentions	.13	1.98	.00	

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This study reveals how both social servicescape and physical environment dimensions significantly influence revisit intentions in Lukang's competitive B&B market, while highlighting the transformative role of B&Bs as cultural anchors embedded in community life and as catalysts for rural tourism development.

The internal consistency of the constructs was verified using Cronbach's alpha, with all values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, ensuring high reliability for all measurement scales. To examine the underlying structure of the modified scales, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. This procedure identified two distinct social servicescape factors—interpersonal interactions and engaging leisure activities—after removing three cross-loading items to ensure construct purity. These factors jointly explained 54.07% of the variance (eigenvalues = 6.48 and 1.63). The physical environment construct also yielded two factors—tangible setting (e.g., safety, cleanliness, functional amenities) and coziness and solace (e.g., ambiance, traditional aesthetics)—accounting for 59.76% of the variance (eigenvalues = 4.93 and 1.05). The revisit intention construct formed a single coherent factor with an eigenvalue of 2.65.

Regression analysis further underscored the primacy of the social servicescape. Interpersonal interactions emerged as the strongest predictor of revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$), reflecting how narrative-rich host engagement deepens emotional bonds, enhances heritage learning, and strengthens place attachment. Within the physical environment, tangible setting ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$) was also a significant driver, suggesting that perceptions of safety, cleanliness, and architectural authenticity foster guest trust in culturally rooted settings.

These findings extend the social servicescape concept beyond hospitality performance to encompass cultural transmission and community vitality. In Lukang's heritage context—where over-commercialization risks diluting authenticity—B&Bs that integrate aesthetic integrity

with social intimacy become resilient platforms for preserving local traditions. By combining personalized service with vernacular spatial design, they operate as immersive cultural environments that reinforce a shared sense of identity and belonging.

From a theoretical perspective, the results position revisit intention as more than a measure of customer loyalty; it functions as a proxy for localized cultural integration, rural sustainability, and grassroots empowerment. Practically, the study suggests that operators should invest in both social engagement skills and culturally resonant physical designs to strengthen emotional anchoring and repeat visitation.

Social Servicescape: Dominance of Interpersonal Interactions

The analysis confirmed Hypothesis 1, indicating that interpersonal interactions were significantly and positively associated with revisit intentions ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.05$), with regression analysis revealing a strong predictive effect ($\beta = 0.52$, $t = 6.17$, $p < 0.05$). Personalized engagement—such as cultural storytelling, sincere hospitality, and tailored recommendations—not only enhanced guest satisfaction but also strengthened the emotional bond between visitors and place. In heritage-rich destinations like Lukang, such host–guest exchanges operate as key channels of cultural transmission, with hosts serving as interpreters of local identity.

While engaging leisure activities also showed a moderate positive correlation with revisit intentions ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.05$), their predictive strength was comparatively weaker ($\beta = 0.10$, $t = 1.97$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that although cultural or industrial events add value to the B&B experience, they may not cultivate the same emotional resonance as interpersonal engagement. These results align with prior hospitality research emphasizing the role of guest–staff interaction in fostering satisfaction and loyalty (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003) but extend this understanding in the B&B context. Here, personalized encounters embed social interactions within heritage narratives, shifting guests from passive observers to embedded participants in the community's rhythm.

Ultimately, B&Bs function as cultural stages where interpersonal interactions serve as narrative scripts, transmitting local knowledge through lived experience. In this context, hosts act not merely as service providers but as cultural stewards, guiding guests through immersive encounters that deepen place attachment. Revisit intention thus becomes an indicator not only of customer loyalty but also of cultural integration and community engagement.

Physical Environment: Safety as a Non-Negotiable Priority

The analysis confirmed Hypothesis 2, showing that the tangible setting of B&Bs was significantly and positively associated with revisit intentions ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.05$), with regression analysis validating its strong predictive effect ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 5.28$, $p < 0.05$). Core features such as building safety, cleanliness, and well-maintained amenities emerged as foundational to establishing guest trust. In heritage-rich rural destinations like Lukang, these elements ensure that the promise of cultural authenticity is firmly anchored in operational reliability.

The second dimension, coziness and solace, also exhibited a significant yet weaker relationship with revisit intentions ($r = 0.39$; $\beta = 0.13$, $t = 1.98$, $p < 0.05$). Aesthetic attributes—ambient lighting, vernacular décor, and architectural coherence—evoke a sense of cultural continuity,

enabling emotional resonance and sensory immersion. While interpersonal interactions showed the strongest impact, cultural aesthetics and ambience (e.g., traditional décor) play a critical 'supportive' role, creating the necessary spatial context for social engagement to thrive. In Lukang, where traditional aesthetics are embedded in spatial narratives, such features reinforce place identity and facilitate heritage interpretation.

These environmental elements function as more than decorative or functional features; they serve as symbolic cues that foster emotional security and cultural orientation. Tangible settings provide the psychological safety necessary for guests to relax and engage with local storytelling, while cozy, culturally infused spaces—incorporating temple iconography, ancestral imagery, and red-brick architecture—anchor visitor experiences within a broader historical and cultural framework.

Consistent with Tombs and McColl-Kennedy's (2003) conceptualization of environmental cues, the findings highlight the broader role of the physical environment in shaping emotions and behavior. While coziness and solace have a less direct effect than tangible settings, they remain crucial in shaping affective responses and fostering a sense of belonging.

Together, these two dimensions enable B&Bs to operate as cultural vessels and community anchors. Safety and functionality establish the trust necessary for guest engagement, while traditional design and atmospheric warmth sustain continuity with local heritage narratives. Revisit intention thus transcends a standard loyalty metric, serving as an index of cultural anchoring, emotional attachment, and participatory community integration. Guests return not merely for comfort but to inhabit spaces that evoke shared cultural memory and reinforce community identity.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to hospitality and rural tourism scholarship by integrating social servicescape and physical environment constructs within the cultural context of bed-and-breakfasts (B&Bs). It extends Tombs and McColl-Kennedy's (2003) conceptualization of environmental and social cues by demonstrating how these dimensions jointly shape guest satisfaction, emotional connection, and revisit intentions in heritage-based rural settings. The findings reveal that B&Bs function not merely as providers of accommodation but as cultural infrastructures that facilitate heritage transmission, reinforce local identity, and advance place-based development.

Social Interactions: The Differentiation Advantage of B&Bs

In the social domain, B&Bs deliver personalized, relationship-oriented hospitality that contrasts with the standardized and transactional service models of hotels and the informal, peer-centric culture of hostels. Interpersonal interactions—characterized by cultural storytelling, emotional engagement, and localized mediation—constitute an active component of the social servicescape. Hosts frequently act as cultural ambassadors, guiding guests through locally embedded narratives that foster affective bonds and deepen their sense of place.

The study further extends Tombs and McColl-Kennedy's (2003) framework by showing that cultural familiarity moderates host–guest dynamics. First-time visitors often seek narrative-rich encounters to decode heritage settings, valuing storytelling as a bridge to trust and understanding. In contrast, repeat visitors demonstrate a shift toward pragmatic exchanges and

relational continuity, reflecting a transition from cultural curiosity to social integration. This shift underscores the B&B's role as a relational gateway to rural communities.

By integrating personalized service with immersive cultural engagement, B&Bs occupy a unique position in the accommodation spectrum. Unlike hotels, which prioritize operational efficiency, or hostels, which emphasize communal peer interaction, B&Bs operate as emotional tourism platforms—spaces where hospitality is inseparable from cultural communication. The social servicescape thus emerges not as a passive backdrop but as an active medium through which hosts and guests co-create culturally meaningful and enduring experiences.

Physical Environment: Spatial Representation of Local Authenticity

The physical environment of B&Bs serves as a critical anchor for authenticity, trust, and guest loyalty. Unlike the homogenized design of hotel chains or the utilitarian focus of hostels, B&Bs foreground architectural heritage, vernacular aesthetics, and sustainable spatial practices that embody the cultural and ecological narratives of their locations. In Lukang, many B&Bs are housed in historically preserved structures, allowing guests to physically and emotionally engage with the town's tangible heritage.

Building on Tombs and McColl-Kennedy's (2003) insights into environmental cues, this study demonstrates that spatial design and sensory elements operate as both functional and symbolic drivers of guest experience. The tangible setting—encompassing safety, cleanliness, and architectural coherence—provides a secure and reliable foundation for hospitality encounters, while also signaling cultural legitimacy. Coziness and traditional design elements extend beyond mere decoration, acting as spatial markers of identity and belonging that foster emotional comfort and cultural continuity.

This spatial dimension differentiates B&Bs from other accommodation forms by offering a layered experience in which physical comfort is inseparable from cultural significance. While hotels may deliver standardized luxury and hostels emphasize budget-friendly communal living, B&Bs create immersive environments where space is actively interpreted, emotionally internalized, and culturally situated. The physical environment thus becomes a conduit for place attachment, cultural interpretation, and heritage learning.

By integrating the social and physical dimensions into a cohesive theoretical model, this study repositions B&Bs as hybrid spaces—simultaneously sites of service, cultural performance, and community participation. Revisit intention, therefore, emerges not merely as a metric of customer retention, but as an indicator of successful cultural anchoring and emotional investment. This reconceptualization offers a theoretical lens for understanding B&Bs as strategic actors in rural cultural sustainability and experiential tourism development.

Practical Implications

The convergence of personalized social interactions and culturally embedded physical environments in B&Bs offers substantial strategic potential for enhancing revisit intentions and advancing sustainable rural development. These interactions operate not only as mechanisms for guest satisfaction, but also as relational conduits for transmitting local narratives, fostering deeper cultural anchoring, and supporting the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage. In contrast, mainstream hotels and resorts often privilege operational efficiency and

standardization, while hostels—despite their social orientation—tend to lack curated cultural storytelling and symbolic spatial representation.

This study affirms that the B&B model—particularly within heritage-rich contexts such as Lukang—functions as a dynamic cultural servicescape in which people and places collaboratively co-produce meaningful tourism experiences. In such settings, revisit intention transcends its commercial function, signaling participatory cultural connection and community solidarity. These findings align with earlier scholarship on narrative-based tourism (Prayag et al., 2017) and emotional bonding, reinforcing the importance of social and affective dimensions in rural tourism.

Drawing from these insights, three strategic recommendations emerge for B&B operators seeking to enhance guest experiences and strengthen sustainable cultural tourism:

1. Enhance Host Training in Narrative Hospitality – Equip hosts with storytelling skills and deep cultural knowledge to foster trust-based interactions that reflect and promote local identity.
2. Invest in Safety Infrastructure and Symbolic Architectural Features – Integrate visible safety measures with vernacular aesthetics and historical motifs to ensure both functional reliability and cultural resonance.
3. Design Community-Engaged Leisure Activities – Move beyond standardized entertainment by offering immersive, place-based experiences rooted in local crafts, rituals, and traditions, thereby promoting co-creation between guests and the community.

By adopting these strategies, B&Bs can position themselves not merely as accommodation providers, but as active cultural mediators and agents of rural revitalization. Conceptualizing B&Bs as dynamic cultural arenas—rather than conventional lodging units—can cultivate community pride, reinforce cultural resilience, and secure long-term guest loyalty grounded in mutual recognition and emotional investment. This approach not only differentiates B&Bs in increasingly competitive tourism markets, but also solidifies their role in cultural preservation, community development, and sustainable tourism futures.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the relatively small sample size ($n = 186$) may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Although adequate for exploratory analysis, a larger and more heterogeneous sample would enhance statistical robustness and strengthen confidence in the applicability of the results across broader populations. Future studies should consider expanding the sampling frame to encompass diverse demographic and geographic profiles, thereby improving representativeness.

Second, the use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and multiple regression provided valuable preliminary insights into the relationships among the key constructs. However, these methods may not fully capture the complexity of latent structures or the interplay of interrelated variables. Future research is encouraged to employ structural equation modeling (SEM) to validate the measurement model, test causal pathways, and investigate potential mediating or moderating effects that influence revisit intentions in heritage-based B&B contexts.

Third, this research is geographically and culturally bounded, focusing exclusively on B&Bs in Lukang—a destination characterized by unique historical, socio-cultural, and spatial attributes. While this localized lens offers in-depth contextual understanding, it may limit the external validity of the findings. The dynamics identified here may not be directly transferable to other rural or heritage destinations with differing levels of tourism development, cultural commodification, or community involvement. Future investigations should explore whether the dual-role framework of B&Bs—as cultural infrastructures and relational platforms—applies in other settings, particularly those with distinct institutional, economic, or socio-cultural contexts.

In sum, future studies would benefit from adopting comparative research designs, mixed-method approaches, and longitudinal perspectives to deepen understanding of how B&Bs operate as culturally embedded servicescapes. Such extensions would not only test the generalizability of the conceptual model developed in this study but also generate broader insights into the evolving role of B&Bs in rural tourism, cultural preservation, and sustainable community development.

Conclusion

This research investigated how the social servicescape and physical environment collectively drive revisit intentions within Lukang's heritage B&B sector. Grounded in the conceptual framework of Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003), our results confirm that both dimensions are critical to the visitor experience, successfully addressing the study's core objectives. The findings illustrate that Lukang's B&Bs transcend mere accommodation; they serve as living cultural conduits where host narratives, historic architecture, and guest emotions converge to create a profound sense of place.

A central takeaway of this study is the primacy of 'human warmth'—the shared storytelling that elevates a standard stay into a deep cultural encounter. Unlike urban hospitality contexts where physical luxury often dictates satisfaction, our results show that in rural B&Bs, social intimacy and heritage narratives are the primary engines of loyalty. At the same time, the physical environment—defined by traditional red-brick geometry and Ming-Qing motifs—acts as an essential spatial anchor. These social and spatial elements function as a seamless, integrated servicescape that builds the emotional attachment necessary for repeat visitation.

This study offers three primary contributions. First, it extends servicescape theory from commercial, efficiency-driven hotel lobbies into the intimate, heritage-rich spaces of rural lodging. Second, it reframes revisit intention as an expression of cultural belonging rather than simple repeat purchasing. Finally, it positions the B&B as vital community infrastructure—a symbolic bridge connecting modern travellers to local traditions.

For practitioners, the message is clear: in saturated markets like Lukang, the competitive edge lies in narrative authenticity and spatial preservation, not standardized luxury. For policymakers, supporting these establishments is an essential strategy for cultural heritage conservation. Ultimately, this research affirms that the resilience of rural tourism depends on these unique spaces where commerce and culture breathe as one.

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