

# Expression of Regional Design Elements in the Design of B&B in Southern Anhui, China

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper focuses on the trajectory of the emergence of characteristic lodging in southern Anhui, embedded in the broad scenario of rural revitalisation and the prosperity of rural tourism, and discusses in depth the application of regional culture in the design strategy of lodging in southern Anhui, China. Based on the problems of shallow transformation, uneven quality, lack of regional characteristics and homogenisation that appear in the analysis of the current situation of the B&B industry in South Anhui, China, a multi-dimensional analysis system is constructed through an interdisciplinary perspective integrating a deep understanding of architecture, geography and design to reveal the synergistic mechanism of the essence of regional culture and the personalised design of B&Bs. Through literature research and classic case studies, this paper takes the regional design elements of lodgings in southern Anhui, China, such as the integration of the environment, the application of materials, spatial forms, decorative arts and historical stories as the entry point, and explains the comprehensive application of each element in the design of lodgings in southern Anhui, China, which provides a strong theoretical basis for the optimisation of the design strategy of lodgings in southern Anhui, China.*

**Keywords:** B&B Design; Expression; Regional Design Elements



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of the tourism industry has driven the rapid growth of homestays in Southern Anhui. The number of homestays in Huangshan, Xuancheng, and Chizhou accounts for over 95% of the total in the region (Junhua et al., 2024). With the rapid development of tourism, the transformation and upgrading of consumption structure, the increasing enrichment of holiday travel methods, and the continuous promotion of rural revitalization strategy, rural leisure tourism has been paid more and more attention (Chen, 2021). The architecture of South Anhui, China is a more distinctive style of local traditional architecture, with strong regional cultural characteristics. At present, the transformation of folk lodges in southern Anhui presents a market trend, and the development of folk lodges has been polarised (Lü, 2019). This study takes the application field of regional culture in folk lodging design in South Anhui, China as the scope of research, emphasising the transformation of regional elements and design elements. B&B exploration and research began very early in the last century and there is more research literature for aspects of B&B marketing management, host-guest relationship, evaluation of lodging experience and related legal policies, while relatively little research has been done on design, and new problems, modes, and solutions to B&Bs have emerged over time (Zhou, 2022). A very regional cultural atmosphere of the characteristics of the type of tourism, the

Although the development of B&B in China is not long, but it has a distinctive regional characteristic, is an important carrier to show the culture and characteristics of each place (Wu et al., 2020).

Through this study, it provides an orientation to the integration of Chinese regional culture and B&B design to promote the potential in sustainable tourism, preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. It makes B&B design a bridge connecting history and future, nature and humanity, containing profound cultural wisdom and significance of the times.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The B&B concept can be traced back to World War II in Great Britain (Kelley & Marquette, 1996). There is a debate among domestic and international scholars about the origin of "inns." Two prevalent theories exist: one suggests that "inns" originated from Japan's privately-run inns (Minshuku). During the bubble economy crisis, the Japanese government approved a new type of vacation where individuals could stay in rural homes in farming and fishing villages to resolve the vacation tourism crisis. The other theory posits that "inns" originated in Europe and America, primarily represented by the UK's B&B and the USA's Home Stay. The earliest prototype of the B&B can be traced back to ancient Greece in the 5th century B.C. There were many religious believers who used to go on pilgrimages to religious sites or participate in celebrations. This activity with a certain purposeful long distance is considered to be the most initial tourism. A large number of travellers stayed in local villages or temples to solve the problem of food and lodging. While today's B&Bs are usually private family homes, they usually have four to eleven rooms, with an average of six rooms. Currently, the design strategy of B&Bs is usually based on the subjective concepts of B&B operators or interior designers rather than objective market data, so most of the time, the design strategy of B&Bs has some limitations (Pan & Shen, 2022). The direction of B&B research is mostly the sharing of resources and mutual assistance between families and hosts and guests, and quantitative analysis of the scale, form, core and other elements of the early B&B, B&B consumer customer-oriented satisfaction analysis and research, statistical analysis, combined with the model analysis of the in-depth study of B&B strategy, based on the development of B&B design strategy of big data and artificial intelligence, is an evolutionary approach to future design.

Rural bed and breakfasts (RB&Bs) transcend mere accommodation and breakfast offerings (Jones & Guan, 2011). They not only provide glimpses into the local culture and daily routines, but also foster opportunities for meaningful interactions between tourists and residents (Wang et al., 2018). B&B's appeal to tourists because the properties are small and personal in nature - "a home away from home"; have a quiet, private atmosphere, allow guests to become acquainted with new people and communities and typically provide extraordinary personal service (Zane, 1997). This concept of providing a few guests with a friendly and interesting atmosphere is the heart of B&B's popularity. B&B's add to the tourism diversity of a region and enhance the appeal of a community to travellers. As the B&B industry continues to grow and more small entrepreneurs enter this market, there is a growing need to develop a better understanding of the B&B industry for strategic planning purposes (Kaufman & Weaver, 1998). Different definitions of the concept of B&B, Jackie Clarke thinks a B&B is a lodging place in a tourist environment (Clarke, 1996). Timothy believes that you can stay in the homes of residents of a tourist area to understand and experience the living culture of residents, so the lodging and catering services in the homes of residents are collectively called B&B. Timothy believes that during tourism, one can stay in the homes of residents in a tourist area to understand and experience the life and culture of the residents, so the accommodation and food services in the homes of residents are collectively called B&B (Timothy D J., 2009).

## 3 METHODOLOGY

It mainly adopts literature research method, empirical research method and case study method. Firstly, this thesis is a layered analysis of materials such as books, academic monographs, dissertations, journal articles, research reports and other related books, academic monographs, dissertations, journal articles, and research reports on the overview of the culture of the southern Anhui region and the sources and development of B&B design. Secondly, field research and analysis is conducted to investigate the current situation of B&B renovation in southern Anhui, through field visits, measurements, interviews with B&B owners and neighbouring tourists, combined with the research process of taking photos and

drawings, to obtain more detailed and comprehensive basic information, summarize the existing renovation cases, This empirical output sorts the design criteria so that the consistency emerges and is part of the design contingency (Chumiran et al., 2020). On the possibilities of identifying user's need during design thinking process by looking at the realms of unconsciousness and embodies human interaction(Kamil et al., 2019). Put forward the innovative research based on the integration of regional cultural elements in southern Anhui into B&B design, which lays down the optimization of B&B design strategy as the research is based on the integration of regional cultural elements into B&B design, which lays the foundation for the optimisation of B&B design strategy. emphasize its values from various multidisciplinary design expert viewpoints(Hassan et al., 2022) .

## 4 CASE EXAMPLE

### 4.1 ANALYSES BASED ON GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

#### 4.1.1 Topographical

The terrain adaptation strategy requires designers to carefully assess the site's geomorphological features, soil mechanical properties and altitude differences, with the aim of achieving a harmonious transition between indoor and outdoor spaces through design. In practice, the design should resonate with the terrain and draw on natural forms, for example, the Xiaoxijia B&B in Fujian echoes the mountainous terrain by simulating wavy roofs, achieving a seamless integration of the building with the natural landscape, as shown in Figure 1, while the case of the B&B in Wuzhen, Zhejiang, demonstrates harmony with the waterfront environment, with a layout that closely follows the contours of the waterfront, retaining the tranquil atmosphere of the town and reflecting the consistency of the region's culture. The Moganshan Yike Town B&B, on the other hand, enhances the three-dimensional level of the space by conforming to the layout of the complex terrain, demonstrating the respect and integration of the natural terrain, and further enhancing the uniqueness of the place.



**Figure 1** Refinement of topographic and geomorphic elements  
(Source: Lü ,2019, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

In summary, embedding regional symbol elements in B&B design not only strengthens the symbiotic relationship between architecture and natural environment, but also effectively conveys the unique flavour of local culture, which is a key design technique to highlight regional characteristics.

#### 4.1.2 Mutual Integration of Architecture and the Environment

Traditional lodgings in southern Anhui are integrated into the countryside scenery, and the essence of their architectural design is reflected in the subtle methods of 'echoing' and 'borrowing' nature, resulting in a harmonious dialogue between the buildings and the surrounding landscape. For example, the 'Hongcun Wenshe-II Dream Huizhou Private Garden B&B' makes use of the greenery in the courtyard, the clear pool and the stone paths to delicately connect the indoor and outdoor spaces, realising smooth spatial transitions and visual harmony, and demonstrating the wisdom of designing in symbiosis with nature, as shown in Figure 2. The Gui Xiang Yuan B&B further interprets this concept by constructing a semi-open enclosed space through the clever layout of traditional decorative elements

such as grass, stones, steps and vines, which reduces the visual impact of the building and facilitates a seamless integration with the natural world.

These design concepts are rooted in the philosophy of ‘Taoism and the Law of Nature’, which emphasises conformity to nature and the beauty of simplicity, reflecting the cosmology of harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature, and requiring the designers to respect and integrate the ecological environment in their creations. In this way, South Anhui B&B has not only become a distinctive symbol of regional cultural characteristics, but also a carrier for in-depth exploration of rural emotions and natural aesthetics, creating a transcendent, back-to-basics living experience for travellers, crossing the boundaries of time and space, and returning to the essence of nature.



**Figure 2** Hongcun Wenshe B&B

(Source: Photo by the Author, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

## 4.2 ANALYSES BASED ON THE MATERIAL

In Southern Anhui, China, the core essence of the regionalised B&B design concept lies in the exploration and artistic use of indigenous building materials such as stone, bamboo and wood, a strategy that not only optimises the economics and environmental footprint of the supply chain - effectively reducing logistics costs and carbon emissions (Figure 3) - but also reinforces the harmonious coexistence of the building with the surrounding natural landscape through the indigenous properties of the building materials. This strategy not only optimises the economic and environmental footprint of the supply chain - effectively reducing logistics costs and carbon emissions (see Figure 2 - but also reinforces the harmonious symbiosis between the building and the surrounding natural landscape by using the original properties of the building materials, preserving the traditional purity and historical authenticity of the architectural landscape, and deeply mapping out the unique geographical and cultural identity of the region. On this basis, the designers have ingeniously and skilfully incorporated time-honoured construction techniques, including wood carving, stone carving and clay sculpture, which are not only an artistic sublimation of the application of materials, but also carry the heavy mission of cultural inheritance, and have become the distinctive symbols of the living display of regional cultural lineage.







Wood carvings are exquisite, not only decorating the key structures such as portals, beams and pillars, but also its auspicious pattern design, which deeply interprets the essence of local culture; stone carvings are embellished on the lintels, courtyards and around the water features by the skilful craftsmanship, and each chisel mark tells the historical legends and folk customs of Huizhou and even southern Anhui, which adds a touch of rich cultural heritage for the space of the lodging; even the relatively rare application of clay sculpture. Even the relatively rare application of clay sculpture shows a unique local charm in specific scenes, conveying the unique flavour of regional culture in a kind and simple way.

To sum up, the preference of local materials and the integration of traditional crafts in the design of lodging in southern Anhui is not only a manifestation of ecological wisdom, but also an affectionate look back to the roots of regional culture and modern expression, which provides travellers with a kind of immersive experience, enabling them to enjoy the beautiful residence intertwined with nature and humanities and at the same time, to deeply perceive and participate in the inheritance and development of the regional culture, thus exploring a fascinating way for the sustainability of cultural tourism. sustainability, thus exploring a charming path for cultural tourism. Based on this homestay design,



based on the understanding of local culture and customs, a series of surveys were conducted on some homestays with heritage cultural elements (Zhu, 2020).

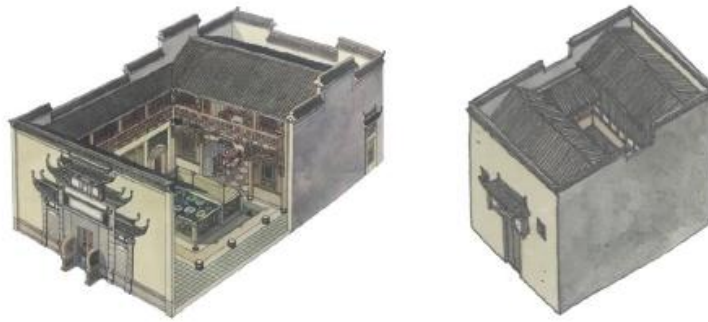
**Table 1** Use of old local materials  
(Source: Author's own drawing,2024)

Material	Methods of application	Construction process	Effects
Stone	Stone from old buildings for new buildings		
Bamboo	Traditional weaving using local bamboo for building renovation		
Tile	Using old tiles to express wall texture		

## 4.3 ANALYSES BASED ON SPATIAL PATTERNS

### 4.3.1 Residential Architecture of the Southern Anhui Province

The traditional residential architecture culture in the southern Anhui region of China combines the characteristics of Huizhou Shan-Yue architecture and the architecture of the Central Plains. In order to adapt to the hot and humid climate of the mountainous and hilly areas, the architectural form of the mountainous and hilly areas is the "nesting house " and the "dry-end type" of wooden buildings. The architecture of the Central Plains has formed a highly developed courtyard form, which has influenced the southern Anhui area, and is expressed as a new type of building-type residence with the integration of "high beds" and "wells", as shown in Figure 3. The Huizhou school of architecture pays attention to the sense of hierarchy and symmetry in space, and the designers will continue this tradition in the design of lodgings, for example, in the courtyard and the courtyard. In the design of B&Bs, designers will continue this tradition, such as in the layout of courtyards, the common layout of triple or quadrangle courtyards, and the arrangement of houses in a symmetrical way on the central axis. This layout not only helps to create a private and quiet living atmosphere, but also conveys a strong cultural heritage. This fully embodies the fusion of heritage and innovation, with greater emphasis on functional diversity and comfort.



**Figure 3** Folk Houses in South Anhui Province  
(Source: Lü ,2019, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

#### 4.3.2 Functional Space Remodelling to Meet the Needs of B&Bs.

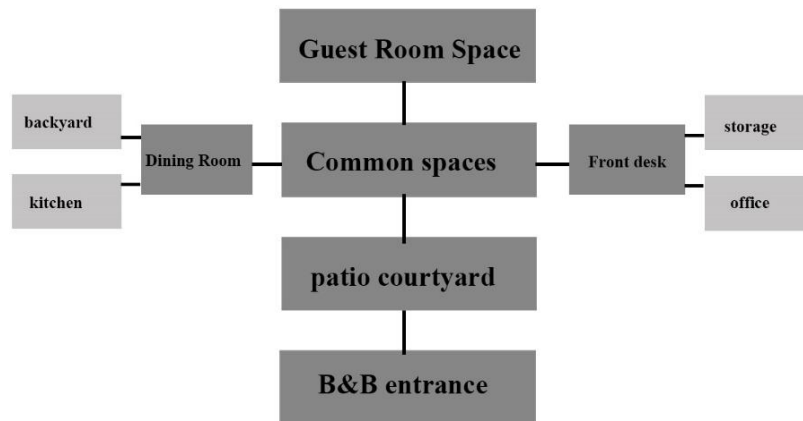
The spatial organisation of lodges in Southern Anhui is often based on the principle of a courtyard layout, with the patio courtyard as the core hub, as shown in Figure 4. The external spatial planning carefully sets up a welcoming front area and a private courtyard space, aiming to create a sense of transition and enclosure. Inside, the functional zoning cleverly integrates sitting areas, accommodation units and dining areas, each with its own role to play.



**Figure 4** Wen She B&B in South Anhui Province  
(Source: Photo by the Author, 2024, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

The living space is strategically positioned in the central parlour area of the residence, reinforcing the cohesiveness of the space as well as the traditional hospitality. The dining area, including the dining room and kitchen, is intelligently located in the first-floor wings to ensure a smooth flow of activities and service efficiency. Accommodation spaces are located on both sides of the wing on the first floor to ensure privacy and tranquillity, and are complemented by appropriate storage facilities to enhance practicality and convenience.

This spatial strategy provides an efficient separation of the static and dynamic zones, ensuring a clear flow and minimising interruptions to optimise the living experience. The public areas, such as spacious gathering halls, open cooking spaces and diverse recreational areas, are carefully planned to promote natural interaction and social integration among residents, creating a warm, intimate and home-like emotional link, as shown in Figure 5.



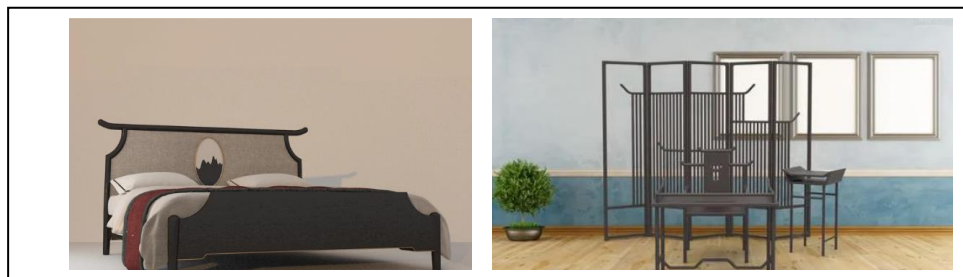
**Figure 5** Functional space of the B&B

(Source: Author's own drawing, 2024, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

## 4.4 DECORATIVE ARTS AND CULTURAL ELEMENTS

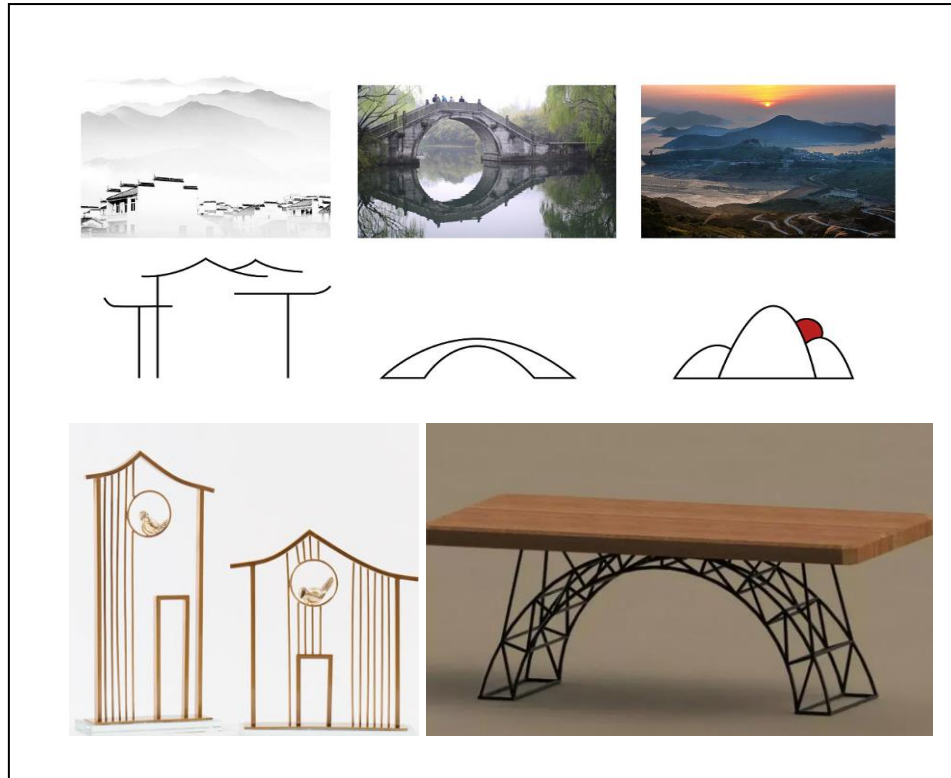
### 4.4.1 Territoriality of Furnishings

Homestays should reflect the cultural characteristics of different countries. Each region has different cultures. Therefore, host families in each region can have different designs. The design of that integrates environmental factors, folk customs, lifestyles, and architectural forms. This also promotes the need for professionalization of homestay design. The direction of specialization (Dimitropoulos et al., 2018). The choice of furnishings has a certain relationship with the local regional culture, which is a form of expression of the regional culture, and the designer should fully understand the local traditional culture, folk crafts and so on, in order to present the design ideas and creative inspiration with the help of furniture and ornaments. Regional characteristics of furnishings can reflect a certain history, region, ethnicity, so the choice of reasonable furnishings is also a respect for nature, history and traditional spatial culture. As shown in Figure 6, the elements of the horse head wall in Huizhou architecture are extracted and applied to the B&B furniture.



**Figure 6** Furniture for Huizhou B&B

(Source: Photo by the Author, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)



**Figure 7** Elemental extraction and application  
(Source: Author's own drawing,2024, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

#### 4.4.2 Application of Regional Cultural Elements in Soft Decoration Design

Decoration generally contains soft decoration and hard decoration of two parts, B&B space design should be reasonable choice and match the type of decoration, to ensure that the interior space has a high degree of consistency and match. Decorative art is an important way of integrating the regional culture of southern Anhui into the design of lodging. In general, the regional culture and the homestay design of a region are interrelated. The lack of in-depth exploration of heritage cultural elements will inevitably make the entire homestay design look hollow

In the design strategy of showing the regional characteristics of the B&B, the use of symbolic meaning and metaphorical furnishings has become an elegant means, which profoundly explores and refines the essence of regional culture. For example, as shown in Figure8, the B&B in Wuyuan, using the iconic status of the local golden chrysanthemum, ingeniously integrates chrysanthemum elements into the design of lamps and lanterns, which cleverly reconciles the traditional Chinese aesthetics with the modern artistic expression, and highlights the uniqueness and attractiveness of the regional culture. Such furnishings not only beautify the space, but also, at a deeper level, carry the deep heritage of regional culture and reflect the shaping power of local cultural values on the residents' philosophy of life. In the case of the Huizhou B&B, the combination of bottles, mirrors and clocks in the hall transcends the purely decorative function; they are the materialised symbols of the ideal of "a lifetime of peace", which profoundly reflects the inner spirit of the regional culture and the residents' vision of life.

All in all, through careful planning and implantation of regional symbolic furnishings, B&Bs around the world not only enhance the aesthetic level of the space, but also build a bridge connecting history and modernity, so that each traveller can deeply appreciate the unique flavour and deep spirit of the regional culture, realizing a double immersion experience in both the physical and psychological aspects, and sublimating travelling into a touch of the heart and a deep baptism of culture.

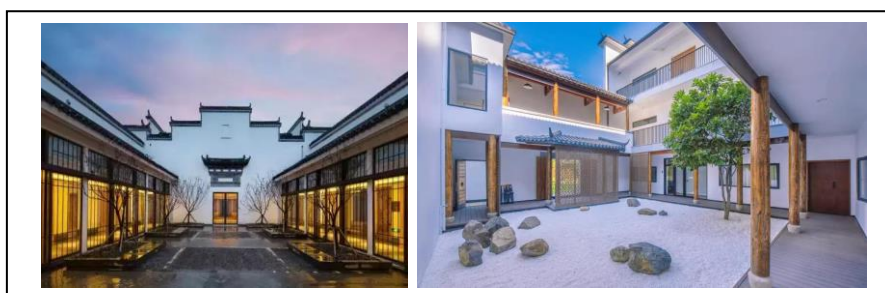




**Figure 8** Lamps & Furnishings (Source: network,  
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### 4.4.3 Regional Colours

As a treasure of Chinese colour culture, the aesthetic depth of the Huizhou colour system shows its extraordinary value in modern B&B design. Derived from the ancient architecture of Huizhou, the colour system is based on black, white, grey and wood, reflecting the calm and introverted culture of the Huizhou School and the philosophy of unity of mankind, as shown in Figure 9. The designers have cleverly integrated these colours into the lodging space, through the black and white contrast of the horse head wall, the lightness of the ink background, and the warmth of the wooden elements, to build a living space with both traditional charm and modernity. The clever use of light and shadow enhances the sense of spatial hierarchy, and the infinite mood in the limited, so that the travellers are immersed in the quietness and elegance of the regional culture, and experience the depth of culture and the temperature of life. This design approach is not only a tribute to traditional culture, but also an innovative interpretation of traditional aesthetics with modern design vocabulary, achieving a harmonious unity of cultural heritage and design innovation, and profoundly enriching the cultural heritage and emotional expression of the B&B.



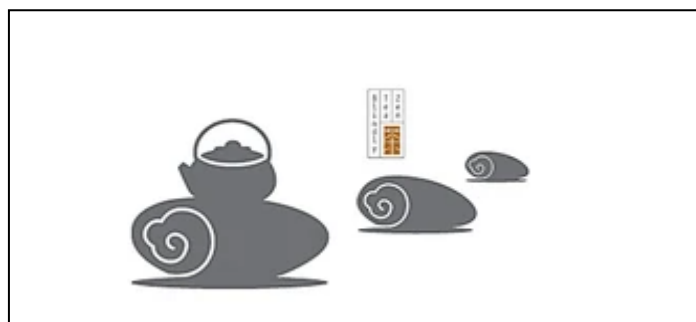
**Figure 9** B&B with Huizhou colours  
(Source: network, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

## 4.5 BASED ON HISTORICAL STORIES

### 4.5.1 Extraction of Folk Culture Elements

As valuable cultural assets, the integration of intangible cultural heritage and local characteristics with B&Bs not only enhances each other's colours, but also creates a new path for promoting the essence of Chinese culture. With their unique local cultural flavour, B&Bs have shown stronger competitiveness in the market. In southern Anhui, the deep cultural heritage has long shaped the region's architectural style, village structure and natural landscape, and now, this integration in the development of lodging can be vividly demonstrated, not only enriching the connotation of the cultural heritage, but also activate the vitality of the regional veins, to achieve a win-win situation for both culture and economy.

Folk culture refers to different customs and habits formed in different geographical locations and social conditions, such as language, food, clothing, wedding and festival culture, etc. The refinement of humanistic symbols can be simplified and abstracted by selecting representative elements from them. In the design of lodging in southern Anhui Province, by extracting the form of tea culture and simplifying and integrating it, as shown in Figure 10, we can create a quiet atmosphere of tea culture by designing wall materials and colours for the whole space of the building, and we can also apply it to the interior soft furnishings, artistic screen patterns, and the shapes of indoor furniture and ornaments.



**Figure 10** Tea Culture Elements  
(Source: network, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

#### 4.5.2 Humanitarian Exchanges to Disseminate Regional Culture

The uniqueness of the B&B, a warm and welcoming accommodation option, is that it has its own soul - a warm and hospitable host. In a B&B, the delicate 'host-guest friendship' not only allows travellers to enjoy exquisite services beyond expectations, but also bathes them in a warm atmosphere as if they were on a 'homecoming trip', so that even when they travel far away, they can still feel the warmth of home.

The clever integration of space and context can weave a colourful B&B life experience for travellers, which profoundly enriches the humanistic heritage and unique value of B&Bs. Especially in the context of rural lodging, its unique regional cultural advantages provide a natural design treasury for lodging. Through the clever integration and design of various elements, the B&B not only tells its own story, but also uses design as a pen to tell this story in every space, shaping a vivid and pure regional cultural atmosphere, allowing travellers to immerse themselves in the experience.

The key strategy to achieve this goal can be summarised in two points: firstly, to create an immersive living atmosphere, and secondly, to innovate the perceptual experience. Firstly, creating a living atmosphere means integrating the warmth of daily life with regional characteristics, so that guests can feel the charm of local culture in their daily dribs and drabs; secondly, creating a perceptual experience focuses on designing interactive and inspiring activities or installations to stimulate tourists' sensory enjoyment, so that they can deepen their understanding and memories of the regional culture in their participation. In this way, rural B&B is not only a choice of accommodation, but also a journey of in-depth cultural experience, making every stay an unforgettable spiritual touch.

## 5 DISCUSSION

Focusing on the design of B&Bs with characteristics in southern Anhui, this study comprehensively applies a variety of research methods to analyse the current situation and challenges of B&B development in the region, revealing the loss of originality caused by the replication of ancient villages in the B&B boom, and emphasising the key role of regional cultural excavation in maintaining the characteristics of B&Bs. Taking Yixian County and Huizhou District as examples, the B&Bs in South Anhui are changing to a high standard, but face limitations such as a single model, and need to promote sustainable development with the help of in-depth integration of regional culture and design innovation. As an entity that expresses regional culture, the design of lodging should skillfully integrate multiple elements such as natural environment, building materials, spatial layout, decorative arts and

history and humanities, so as to transcend the superficial imitation and realise the harmonious symbiosis between traditional culture and modern design. The current study provides preliminary strategies to cope with homogenisation through typical case analysis, acknowledges the limitations of the study, especially the shortcomings in the comprehensive understanding and classification of regional culture, and points out that this is the direction to be deepened in the future research.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Under the promotion of rural revitalisation strategy, rural tourism and B&B industry are flourishing, and B&B, as a bridge between tradition and modernity, carries the desire for original and sincere life and the pursuit of individuality and freedom, which allows travellers to experience the local life and deep humanistic emotions. For the characteristic B&Bs in southern Anhui, this study finds that: the rise of B&B industry is accompanied by the challenge of originality, which highlights the importance of integrating regional culture into the design; B&Bs in southern Anhui, especially around Yixian County and Huizhou District, are undergoing the transformation from Nongjiaolu to high-quality, but still need to strengthen the long-term planning of regional characteristics and emotional connection; B&Bs, as a material embodiment of regional culture, are capable of transforming the abstract culture into concrete design language, which demonstrates the uniqueness of the place; B&Bs in design are the material manifestation of regional culture. As a material embodiment of regional culture, B&Bs are able to transform abstract culture into concrete design language, demonstrating the uniqueness of the place; and the design should deeply integrate the elements of environment, material, space, decoration, and history and culture, rather than shallowly stacking them up. The study has some limitations, limited by the non-comprehensive nature of the case studies and the in-depth analysis of regional culture, and future research will tend to be more comprehensive and in-depth exploration.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors shared the same contribution in the production of this paper.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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