

# Capacity Building of Community-based Ecotourism in Developing Nations: A Case of Mei Zhou, China

Shuyi Tang

Xijing University, Shaanxi 710123, China.

suzie\_tsy@163.com

**Abstract.** Tourism has become the most rapidly growing industry worldwide and ecotourism is considered as the fastest growing tourism segment. Ecotourism is a method to conserve the environment while stimulating local economy. However, it ignores one key element of sustainable development, the local community. Community-based ecotourism (CBET) is a kind of ecotourism that pays more attention on community's benefits, community participation and empower communities. However, the lack of community capacity is the major barrier to effective and sustainable tourism development. Capacity building (CB) is defined based on the concept of six capitals: intrinsic, political, financial, physical, human and social capital. This study illustrates the current situation of CB and CBET in less developed areas and discusses whether CBET development is reality or rhetoric in these sites based on a case study conducted in Qiaoxi Village of Meizhou, China. It finds that financial capital, infrastructure, particularly interpretation system, as well as skills and education of labors are limited. In addition, local community has restricted access to decision-making due to the government-dominated development model. There is a gap between theoretical and practical community-based ecotourism in this place.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism; Community-based ecotourism; Capacity building; Community participation.

## 1. Introduction

With comparatively advantageous effects in income and employment generation, tourism has become an attractive tool for stimulating economy, enhancing rural lifestyles and inducing positive changes in the distribution of income in the developing world (Vaugeois. N., 2000; Liu, 2006) [1, 2]. Especially, with increasing concern for environment, ecotourism is believed to be the fastest growing tourism segment (Campbell, 1999; LIU & XU, 2004) [3, 4]. Since "China Ecotourism Year" established by China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) in 1999, the past years have witnessed its vital role in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and anti-poverty programs. However, the host communities, a key factor of sustainability, are neglected. Community-based ecotourism is a new topic aiming at resources conservation but it is also centered on local communities. Nowadays, it has been regarded as a driving force for economic development of rural communities that would otherwise have limited opportunities to alleviate poverty.

Mei County, located in Guangdong Province, China, is one target of being propped up focally to develop ecotourism by government. It is the place that enjoys exceptional advantage of natural and cultural resources, known as "the Hometown of Hakka Culture". Guided by the development strategy of "fostering green industry, constructing livable homestead and creating a Hakka pearl", it highlights the development of ecotourism and cultural tourism. By now, it owns fourteen famous tourism destinations, such as the most beautiful and plentiful tea fields - Yearning Tea Plantation Tourist Attraction (the National 5A-level Tourism Destination) and the Cultural Heritage Protection Unit – Qiaoxi (a Hakka Folk Village which has achieved the reputation "the National Top 10 Most Beautiful Tourism Town" in 2013). Government intends to develop it as an ecotourism destination based on local Hakka communities to take community involvement into greater consideration and optimize the benefits of economic growth.

However, literature shows that there are several problems while developing CBET in China (WANG, 2010; SUN 2014)[5, 6]. For instance, the power to make profit is usually held by government, tourism industries that do not treat local people as equal partners. In other words, local communities are used as workforce or product. They rarely have chances to participate in decision-making.

According to the results of literature review, there are limited researches on the CB of CBET, especially in developing nations. However, the community capacity is the key to develop successful ecotourism. This study intended to address this gap in the literature by exploring the issues and suggestions of CB in rural communities located in Meizhou.

The outcomes of this study can be of use to Qiaoxi in two ways. First, it will provide information related to its intrinsic, political, financial, physical, social and human capital, including both strengths and weaknesses, for managers and developers to identify the current situation of CBET development. Secondly, suggestions given in this research can help them to plan future action and development strategy, so that the relevance and efficacy of CBET development can be enhanced. Additionally, the results may also be of interests to other developing nations that promote CBET. The case study provides an evaluation of the project which may help them identify their own weaknesses while developing and improving their methods of development strategies.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Community-based Ecotourism

#### 2.1.1 Ecotourism

According to the latest UNWTO (2014), receipts in destinations worldwide on tourism related behaviors, such as accommodation and shopping, reached approximately 1,159 billion (US\$) in 2013. It is widely considered as the most rapidly growing global industry. Tourism is divided into mass tourism and alternative tourism based on sustainable concept.

Based on Hill & Gale' (2011) analysis about diverse types of tourism (Fig 1), tourism is divided into "mass tourism" and "alternative tourism" based on scale and sustainable point (Cater, 1994b) [7, 8]. The former type is more traditional of tourism which puts the maximization of income first (Kiper, 2013) [9]. In contrast, alternative tourism, including nature-based tourism, wildlife tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism, stresses sustainable development. Wildlife tourism and adventure tourism focus on wildlife and adventure activities respectively, while ecotourism is seen as the specific part of broad concept of nature-based tourism (Weaver, 2001; Kiper, 2013) [9,10].

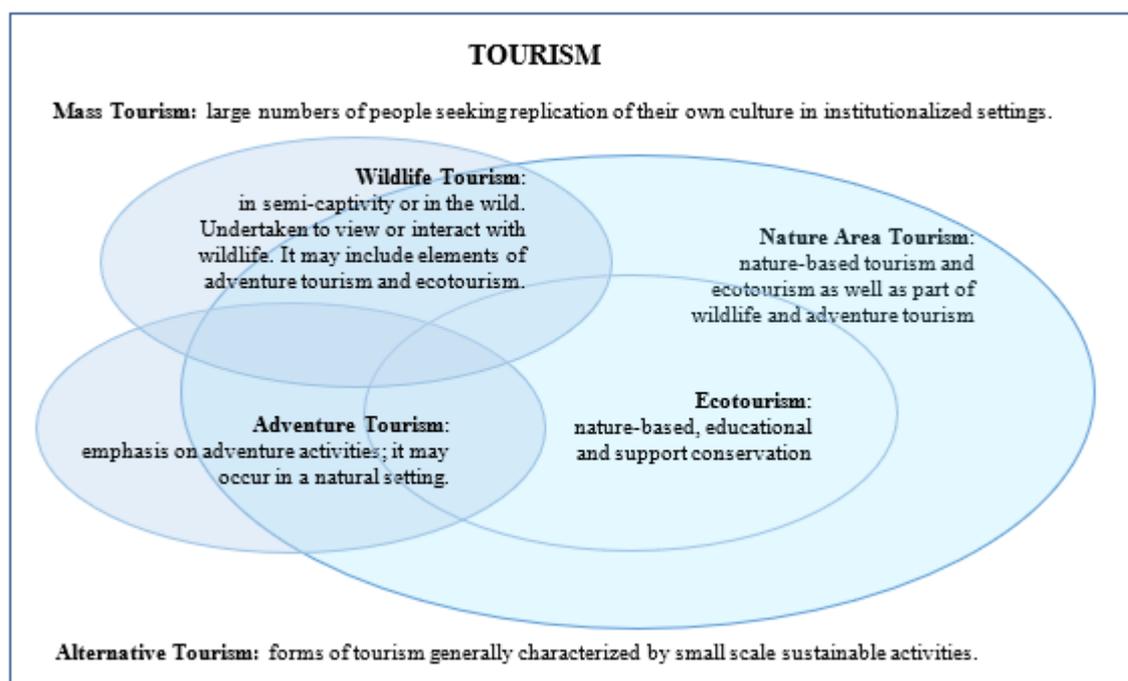


Fig 1. Relationship of Ecotourism to other forms of tourism

The term of “ecotourism” can be traced to the late 1980s. Since its introduction, it has become the fastest growing tourism segment (Buckley, 1994; Hill & Gale, 2009) [8, 11]. In contrast, it came relatively late to China. The China Ecotourism Association (CETA) was established as late as 1996 when the first National Ecotourism Academic Seminar was held. In 1999 the concept of ecotourism has captured the attention of the government, academics and industries due to launching of “China Ecotourism Year 1999” by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) (SU, 2011) [12].

During the past decades, different definitions and terminologies have appeared in the literature. Fennell (2001) conducts a study about ecotourism definitions, analyzing 85 different ecotourism definitions after the first one proposed a decade ago [13]. In 2009, according to incomplete statistics by two Chinese scholars, KANG & YUAN, there are more than 140 definitions worldwide and over 100 ones in China regarding to ecotourism [14].

Table 1 summarizes several mainstream definitions broached by both foreign and Chinese scholars. It shows that all authors state that ecotourism reflects a nature-orientation and natural conservation-orientation ethic, while Ceballos-Lascurain (1993) also emphasizes cultural conservation. In other words, it is a kind of environmentally responsible tourism to natural areas that conserves natural and cultural resources, as well as ecological system [15]. Additionally, TIES pay attention to impacts of local community, indicating that it is also an accompanying focus on community participation, seeking the well-being of local residents [16].

Table 1. Major definitions of ecotourism

Definition	Source
Ecotourism refers to travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objectives of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas’.	(Ceballos – Lascuráin, 1993), (Boo,1990)
Ecotourism is a responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improves the well-being of local people.	TIES, 1990
Ecotourism can be defined either narrowly or broadly: broad definition is that ecotourism promotes the conservation of an area as a positive option to other alternative land-uses that could have more serious environmental impacts... if it is defined strictly, then relatively few experiences can be said to fit the category legitimately.	(Mercer, 1996)
Ecotourism means where many places and people independently responded to the need for more nature travel opportunities in line with society’s efforts to become more ecologically minded.	(Fennell, 1998)
Ecotourism is the result of increasing interest amongst consumers in developed countries in exploring the natural world as an alternative to more conventional holidays, along with a desire to reduce the environmental and cultural impact of their activities.	(Weaver D. B., 1998)
Ecotourism is a type of sustainable tourism and nature-based tourism and that stresses on tourists’ involvement, high quality of spiritual experience, as well as public education.	(GUO, 1997)

According to the literature review, essential elements of ecotourism defined by both western and Chinese scholars can be included:

- a) minimum impacts on natural environment and local culture;
- b) maximum tourists’ participation and satisfaction of experience;

- c) maximum economic benefits to local community;
- d) and maximum understanding and respect to the host culture.

With characteristics of environmentally friendly and effective development, ecotourism is regarded as popular tool for poverty alleviation in less developed nations (Cater & Lowman, 1994) [18]. As a hot topic of research, however, problems have emerged when taking ecotourism development into practice. “The notion of ecotourism as a harmonious solution to both poverty and environmental degradation has been considerably problematized” (Boo, 1990) [19]. There is no tourism that is truly sustainable (Cater E., Introduction, 1994a) [20].

One of main problems is that ecotourism has become a marketing weapon when promoting a tourism destination even though it may not be the real ecotourism (Sandmeyer, 2005) [21]. In fact, this phenomenon is what China is facing (HU, ZHONG, & CHEN, 2006; KANG & YUAN, 2009)[14]. ‘Fake’ ecotourism, similar to mass tourism, always focuses on short-term benefits instead of sustainability. Without strictly following the principles of “ture” ecotourism, negative impacts of tourism are not minimized. For instance, 22% of nature reserve areas have been under environmental destruction by this kind of ecotourism (KANG & YUAN, 2009). The resulting gap between theory and practice is a major source of dissatisfaction within the academic world (Cater 2004) [23] and within communities and non-governmental organizations (World Ecotourism Summit FINAL REPORT, 2002) [24].

Another problem attracts attention is the negative impacts of ecotourism itself. Apart from impacts on ecological environment, economic and social-cultural impacts are always explored based on local communities. Ecotourism may cause a rise in the cost of living and damage the local environment; creates adverse impacts on social culture (Belsky, 1999) [25] and in some ways, it has more socio-cultural impacts than other tourism forms (Cater E, 1994b) [8]. This phenomenon is particularly evident in less developed countries. Due to limited dollars, government-directed financing, foreign visitation, foreign ownership of hotels and other facilities, and non-existent land use planning, negative impacts on local communities are more obvious. Despite investments by governments, agencies and even residents, the benefits of tourism cannot always be easily demonstrated (Moscardo, 2008) [26]. It is because ecotourism neglects one of the key factors of sustainable tourism today, the host communities (Fiorello & Bo, 2012) [27].

Notwithstanding the aforementioned problems, some scholars support that successful ecotourism depends on clear understanding of the concept and the way in which ecotourism is planned and managed (Drakopoulou, 2011) [28]. Cater (2004) asserts that community involvement (local communities should participate in ecotourism planning, development and operations) is important to conservation and cultural sustainability [23]. This seems to be the best way to minimize its adverse elements and maximize its values (Pieterse, 2010; Duffy, 2013) [29, 30].

### **2.1.2 Community-based Ecotourism: a Means to a More Sustainable Ecotourism**

As noted above, deriving the maximum benefit of ecotourism must take the local community into consideration. Community-based approach is believed to be an effective way in the development of ecotourism in a host community. According to Bujold’s definition, it is “the process by which the efforts of people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve economic, social, and cultural conditions of communities through the principles of economic self-reliance, ecological sustainability, community control, meeting individual needs, and building a community culture” [31].

Tourism is used as a key community development tool, while community-based approach is the way to successful ecotourism. Since the 1980s, tourism literature has called for the participation of local communities in tourism. Local residents are seen as a key resource in sustaining tourism products (Hardy, Beeton, & Pearson, 2002; Sebele, 2010) [32, 33]. Holding a similar view, Christensen (1995) describes that “the host community is the economic, social, cultural, and infrastructural resource base for most tourism activity, and resident quality of life is a measure of the condition of the resource” [34].

CBET refers to develop ecotourism through community-based approach. Mackinnon (1995) believes CBET lends itself to being environmentally sustainable. She chooses several examples of

communities in Mexico which have adopted or been identified to develop ecotourism in the country. She finds that local people are the first to recognize the benefits of conserving their resources more than developers who do not live there. These benefits should be more widespread and the perception of ownership should be given to the community; CBET initiatives have answered the question: where ecotourism should go in the future [35].

The concept of sustainable development widely adapted by scholars is anchored on the three elements: namely economic efficiency, ecological sustainability, and social equity, which is given by World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. Based on this concept, for example, Mbaiwa (2004) discusses the success and sustainability of Community-based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) in the Okavango Delta [36], while Fiorello & Bo (2012) study CBET through six case studies [27]. Economic efficiency targets to stimulate economy on the basis of ecological sustainability. It should make optimal use of resources, benefiting the well-being of local community within the carrying capacity [36].

From a social standpoint, Okazaki (2008) finds that there are three essential features of successful CBET projects: participation, empowerment, and collaboration [37]. It is significant to recognize that entire community should be involved in tourism development to some extent. Apart from government authorities and developers, local communities should be empowered in decision-making as well. It is one of the rationales behind community development, which provides better opportunities for local people to gain benefits from tourism taking place in their locality (Tosun, 2000) [38]. Besides, it also impacts positively on resource conservation.

Collaboration of different stakeholders is a vital element that leads to successful CBET. Fiorello & Bo (2012) point out that tourists and local community have a reciprocal relationship [27]. While tourists' activities affect the environment of the destination, the host community influences tourists' experience as well. Tourism is starting to be recognized as a community development tool, so that development must be sensitive to the requirements of different stakeholders. These actors need to work together to secure benefits and solve problems and tensions among them.

Since the fast growth of tourism in China after the 1990s, many problems, related to rural economy, resources, relationships between local community, tourists and developers, have surfaced. Thus, the role of local communities is gradually recognized. Although the concept of CBET is first used in developing tourism in western countries, it is widely adopted by developing countries to stimulate investment in infrastructure, employment and economy of rural communities.

In China, community-based approach is used in rural development and has improved the living standards of some host communities. Local communities should be emphasized when developing tourism, making them feel and achieve benefits. Otherwise, local people may go to developed cities to make a living by abandoning their rural communities. The cultural and natural resources may not be sustainable. A number of rural communities, which have adopted or identified to develop CBET, are analyzed in different studies. Guo, Qin & Ma (2010) summarize the basic mode of CBET in the western part of Hubei Province and analyze its economic, social, and ecological benefits. They suggest that it is a new pattern of ecotourism development which regards local community as an essential element and the largest beneficial group [39].

Tourism has become the pillar industry in Meizhou and attracted scholars' attention. QIU & XIE (2010) explore the ecological protection and tourism development of Hakka Culture in Meizhou, suggesting that ecotourism is an effective way to meet the objectives of both conservation and development [40]. Strategies of tourism development in Meizhou should give priority to "ecology" and "Hakka culture" features to form the brand of "Hakka city in the world" [41, 42].

LIU (2008) studies ecotourism development in Meizhou and the leading role of government. She mentions that ecotourism development is dominated by political officials. In her study, she also finds that ecotourism development is limited by its planning, financial support, management system and human resource [43]. Holding a similar view, YE & CHEN (2011) analyze the rural tourism development model of Meizhou, adding that the current transport condition is too poor to meet tourists' demand; its promotion strategies are insufficient; and there are few tourism activities to get an in-depth understanding of Hakka culture [44].

Li (2011) studies tourism development in Yinna Mountain, a very remote area of Meizhou, stating that community participation is encouraged when developing agricultural tourism and ecotourism. He suggests that community-based ecotourism should be the main model of tourism development in rural areas. Sustainable development only occurs in places where local communities participate in tourism with enthusiasm [45].

According to literature review, features CBET and ecotourism studies in China can be concluded:

Rural communities are more likely chosen in CBET studies, particularly communities with unique culture characteristics, such as Dong nationality of Guizhou Province, Dai nationality of Yunnan Province and Hakka communities.

These studies can be broadly divided into the following aspects: current development of ecotourism or CBET, CBET development model, impacts of ecotourism, and eco-museum, as well as community participation model.

CBET development is always hindered by top-down approaches which only occurred at the beginning of CBET development in western countries. BAO & WEN (2012) state that due to the special situation of China, development strategies are mostly planned by local government and tourism industries [46]. Local communities are still in a passive situation, who rarely have opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. In addition, there is no effective coordination of stakeholders (Sun, 2008) [47]. Local community lack tourism knowledge, business skills and management skills, which directly limits local people's tourism leadership and decision-making ability (LI & CHEN, 2004; WU, 2013) [48, 49]. And poor infrastructure (like roads), the lack of promotion and high-quality employees as well as limited financial investment hamper its successful development as well.

## **2.2 Capacity Building**

Community capacity is the degree to which a community can develop, implement and sustain actions for strengthening community health (Smith *et al.*, 2001) [50]. It is the levels of competence, ability and skills necessary to set and achieve relevant goals. It includes the assets and attributes that a community is able to draw upon in order to improve their livelihood.

Moscardo (2008) adds that community capacity requires resources and infrastructure as well as equitable partnerships with external organization. Since community capacity is the precondition for any other tourism activities, community capacity building becomes a popular topic in tourism studies. It is a means to improve the process of tourism development and enhance its benefits for destinations in less developed areas. Mascado advocates that improving community capacity before tourism planning is the way to successful ecotourism development. In other words, capacity should be built and to respond to tourism development before such development runs out of control. Mascado also gives out the model of tourism development which takes capacity building into consideration[26].

In 2007, UNDP defines CB "as investments in social, human, physical, and financial capital and is the outcome of the interaction between the following interests: individuals, businesses, networks, organizations, and policy institutions, at both the national and supra-national levels".

The concept of capitals is usually used to evaluate the situation of ecotourism development and community development.

Social capital is the element that keeps together the inherent networks found in institutions, along with the trusts and norms that encourage cooperation and coordination between individuals, as well as assist collective action for reciprocal benefit (Coleman, 1990; Fukuyama, 2001) [51, 52]. It is linked to encouraging and facilitating community participation to work with institutions to achieve development objectives. Besides, it is the resources an individual can access and use based upon the relationships they have with others (Woodhouse, 2006) [53]. Specifically, social capital can be measured by the following indicators: the degree to which residents trust one another and the way they perceive the availability of mutual aid (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993) [54].

Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills and competence and other attributes embodied in individuals that are relevant to economic activity (OECD, 1998) [55]. As mentioned before, the lack of knowledge and skills related to tourism of local residents is critical to successful CBET

development. Human capital building is a way to remove that barrier. However, it is a big concern in developing countries because a portion of the population is deprived of the right to institutional education which impacts their behavior and chances in the labor market (Koutra & Edwards, 2012) [56].

Physical capital is any non-human asset used in tourism that is set by people. It includes both the infrastructure, like water supply and transport system, which benefits the local communities and sector-related infrastructure. Also, it should include facilities used to educating tourists (Koutra & Edwards, 2012) [56].

Financial capital refers to the capacity to access funds from investment, bank deposits, government support, etc. It is an essential factor to support other capitals.

In the study of eco-tourist resources in coastal area of Guangdong Province, LIU & XU (2004) suggest that public education and ecotourism management need to be improved [57]. Other researches, focusing on effective community development, examine following assets in CB studies: financial capital (or economic capital), social capital, psychological and political capital (SUN, 2008) [47]. This is a little different from the capitals mentioned before.

There are much fewer studies on CB in China than in overseas countries. Many studies explore the way to ensure community participation and community empowerment (WU Y. , 2007; YU, 2010)[58, 59]. The lack of awareness and insufficient community funding cannot ensure the establishment of infrastructure, engagement of labor and nature conservation. That means community development cannot achieve the long-term sustainability of resources.

According to literature review of CBET development and CB in China, although issues related to resource analysis, political context, financial support, infrastructure, human resources, community participation and community empowerment have captured the attention, while the concept of capacity building has received less attention. As the precondition for any other tourism activities, community capacity is rarely considered in tourism planning and evaluation in China.

### **2.3 Summary**

The review of literature above illustrates that CBET is an effective type of ecotourism while CB is an effective means to develop this activity. However, the adoption of community-based approach in developing ecotourism is still in its infancy stage of development. Developers do not have a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the concept of CBET and the range of impacts on community development. In addition, community capacity, a significant contributor to successful ecotourism, has not received enough attention. Literature related to capacity building is hardly to found.

## **3. Study Area and Methodology**

### **3.1 Study Area**

This study is carried out in Meizhou, located in northeastern of Guangdong Province, People's Republic of China. It has an area of 15,925km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 4.31 million. It has been divided into 8 parts, namely Meijiang District, Xingning City, Meixian District, Dabu County, Fengshun County, Wuhua County, Pingyuan County and Jiaoling County. The specific village named Qiaoxi, or Qiaoxi Quaint Village Attraction, is located in Yanyang Town of Meixian District which lies in northeast part of Meizhou and almost completely surrounds its central urban Meijiang District (Fig 2).

It is selected for the present study due to three reasons. First, it is the place that has abundant natural and cultural resources. With a majority of Hakka population, Mei County is known as the Home of Standard Hakka and Overseas Chinese. The Hakkas who live in Guangdong Province comprise about 60% of the total Hakka population. More than 95% of the overseas Hakka people came from this region, particularly in Xingning and Mei County. Qiaoxi, with over 400years of history, was established by two Hakka Clans, Chen Clan and Zhu Clan, between 1573 and 1619 during the Ming Dynasty (Meizhou Government, 2006). Dozens of ancient Hakka buildings were

erected with unique Hakka features. Besides, it is also an old revolutionary base area. Even some relics of the Cultural Revolution are still found. Therefore, it has already been designated as a Guangdong Province Cultural Heritage Protection Unit in 2002 (Meizhou Government, 2006).

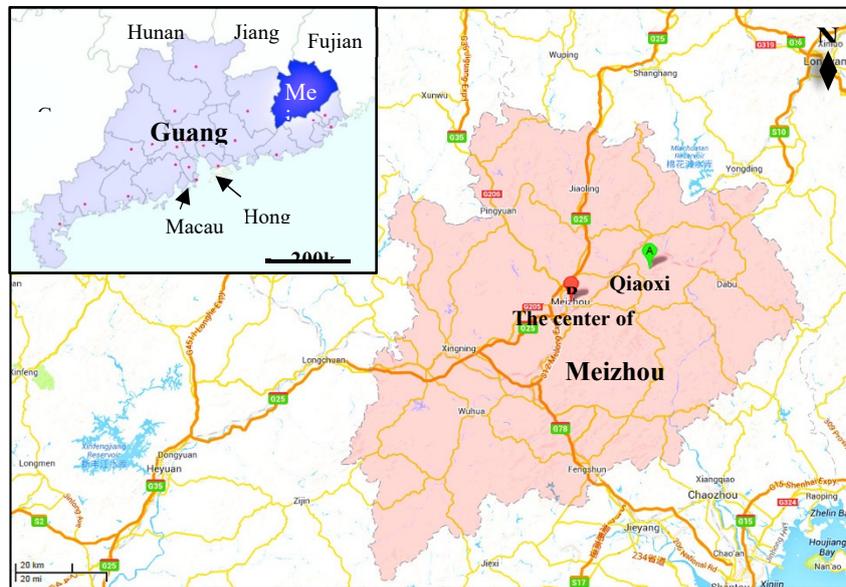


Fig 2. Location of the study area

Apart from its profound cultural heritages, natural resources are very rich as well. It is located on the foot hill of Wuzhi Peak (or Five-finger Peak) of Yinna Mountain Nature Reserve and near Yearning (Yananfei) Tea Field, a National 5A-level tourism destination. As fengshui culture is an important and common characteristic among the Hakka people, buildings are erected along the mountain or water. Surrounded by trees and waters, it has formed a paradise.

Second, it is part of the CBET project in Meizhou. Guided by the development strategy of "fostering green industry, constructing livable homestead and creating a Hakka pearl", Meizhou focuses on ecotourism and cultural tourism. In this regard, Qiaoxi is the home of 216 people and less than 30 permanent residents live here. It is an "ecomuseum" where visitors can easily access not only its natural beauties, but also its unique cultures, customs and life style. The local government intends to improve local people's living standards and economic income and conserve its resources through CBET development.

Third, as a new tourism destination, opened on August 28, 2012, Qiaoxi has already been named one of the "Ten Best Tourism Villages (Towns)" of "Beautiful China" in 2013. It is the only one selected from Guangdong (Meizhou Government, 2014). It is managed by an experienced enterprise, Guangdong Baolihua CO., LTD, which has successfully developed Yearning Tea Field into a National 5A-level tourism destination. In order to be a successful CBET destination, there is still room for improvement, yet there is no research on this subject. Therefore, Qiaoxi is chosen as the study area.

### 3.2 Methodology

It begins with a review of literature which provides theoretic and necessary background to the case study. Then, qualitative and quantitative approaches are used to collect primary source of data. Qualitative approach, like field observation or in-depth interview, generally does not emphasize on numbers. These methods have been found by Walle (1997) to be an appropriate way when exploring personal feelings, attitudes and perception, particularly studying tourism impacts on host communities [60]. On the contrary, the quantitative method relies on numerical evidence to test hypotheses or make conclusions. Quantitative methods, such as questionnaire survey and statistical analysis, are employed for the collection and analysis of primary source of data.

In this study, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Statistics, a software package, works with Excel for statistical analysis. Data gathered by questionnaires is analyzed in both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive research is very common in tourism field which is used to find out things and describe what it is. Measures of central tendency, such as mean, median and mode, and measures of variability, including standard deviation or variance and the minimum and maximum values, are commonly used to describe a data set. The results are illustrated by curve chart, bar chart, pie chart, or tables. Inferential statistical method is distinguished from descriptive statistics. It is “the process of drawing conclusion from data that are subject to random variation and used to test hypotheses and make estimations using sample data”, while the latter one is “just a straightforward presentation of facts”. ANOVA and correlation are main methods used to undertake inferential statistics.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Intrinsic Capital

Guangdong Province is located on the South China Sea coast, which is one of the southernmost provinces of China. Apart from its close neighbors, like Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangxi and Fujian Province, Guangdong is also in the immediate vicinity of Hong Kong and Macau (Figure 3). In addition, the sea separates it from Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. It is interesting to see that all these neighbors have a relatively high population of Hakka people.

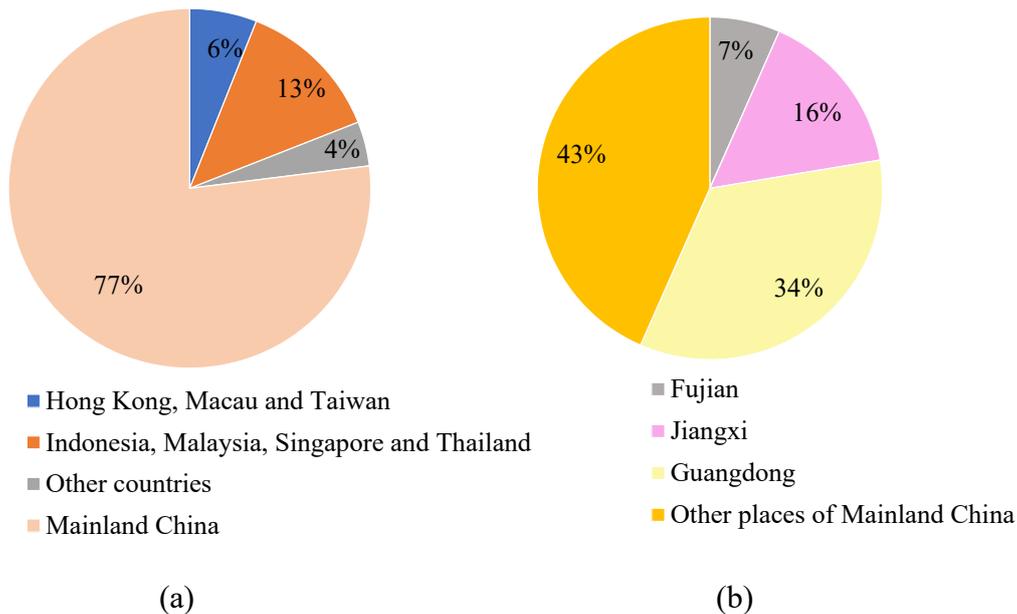


Fig 3. Hakka population distributions in the world (a) and in Mainland China (b)

As can be seen from Figure 3, pie chart (a) illustrates that the Hakka population of Greater China, including the Mainland China and HKMT, occupies more than four in five, respectively 77% and 6%, of the total population. Over one tenth (13 per cent) of them live in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. Pie chart (b), the Hakka population distribution in Mainland China, shows that Guangdong is the most populous province of Hakka people, making up 26% of the total population. The number of Hakka people living in Jiangxi and Fujian accounts for 18%. Located in northeastern Guangdong Province, Meizhou is adjacent to southern Jiangxi Province and Fujian Province. The reputation of “Hometown of the Overseas Hakka Chinese” and the geographical advantage enable Meizhou to attract tourists.

Qiaoxi focuses on Hakka people around the world market. According to the geographical location, this market is divided into three segments, domestic market, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan Market

(HMT Market), as well as overseas market. The domestic market is divided into four small sub-groups based on its importance, namely level 1, level 2, level 3, and potential market (Table 2).

Table 2. The Market segmentation of Qiaoxi

Market	Importance	Place
Domestic Market	• Level 1	Meizhou, and nearby cities
	• Level 2	Hakka people from Pearl River Delta region
	• Level 3	Hakka people from South Yangtze Delta Region
	• Potential Tourists	Other main area of Hakka people in the south of China , like Guangxi, Yunnan, Sichuan, and the birthplaces of Hakka, namely Shaanxi and Henan
HMT Market	• Primary Market	Hakka people from HK, Macau and Taiwan
Overseas Market	• Primary Market	Hakka people from Southeast Asia
	• Potential Tourists	Hakka people from other countries

Advertising of Qiaoxi mainly aims at Guangdong, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan markets. Before the opening of Qiaoxi, there was a propaganda shown on TVS (Southern Television Guangdong) which is based in Guangzhou but covers mainly Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau. This propaganda is available on many video websites. In addition, promoted by newspaper and magazines is also adopted. The other potential markets, such as Shannxi and Henan Provinces, lack of advertising. Although Qiaoxi Village has got the reputation of “Ten Best Tourism Villages (Towns)”, it is still a new tourism destination that needs to be further promoted. During the field survey, it is found that the government will cooperate with CCTV to shoot promotion videos, which is a good opportunity for publicity.

Qiaoxi is located in the core area of “Guangdong Meizhou Special Cultural and Tourism Zone”. It is surrounded by the national 5A scenic spot of Yearning, 4A scenic spot of Ye Jianying’s Memorial, Yanming Lake, and Lingguang Temple, which each of these attractions has its own characteristics, together they can form a tourism cluster.

As a “Hakka City”, there are many tourism destinations which focus on Hakka culture. For instance, Tai Polocated in the east of Meizhou is rich in Hakka cutural heritages and natural resources. In addition, Fujian and Jiangxi provinces also develop tourism based on Hakka culture. So, for Qiaoxi Village, these are serious competitors.

Based on the resources and target groups of Qiaoxi, it introduces diversified products strategy to meet their demands. These products can be classified into four kinds.

Table 3. Tourist products of Qiaoxi

Kind of products	Representative products or activities
Cultural Experience	Traditional Hakka buildings, relics of the Cultural Revolution; local folk performances; tourist participation experience in making tofu or bean sprouts, grinding rice into powder, beekeeping, picking tea-leaves, etc.
Leisure activities	Hiking; playing with Water
Rural holiday	Living in traditional Weilong house and farm-based experience
Ecological tourism	Reconnect tourist to nature

According to Figure 4, the most popular attraction is Hakka people’s lifestyle chosen by nearly three quarters of respondents. On the whole, tourists prefer cultural resources to natural resources in this destination.

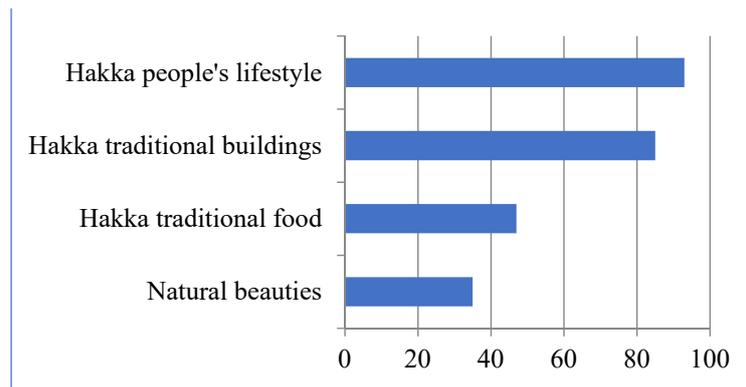


Fig 4. Tourists' preference on resources (Choose two answer by each respondent)

#### 4.2 Tourism Policy Context

“Promoting green economy and building a rich, beautiful, happy and new Meizhou” is the core task and development goal of Meizhou government. The government focuses on economic improvement, people's well-being and traffic improvement through tourism development. In particular, culture tourism and ecotourism are emphasized in coordination of rural and urban development. Becoming a more influential metropolis of Hakka around the world is its strategy.

Meixian is set as the core of tourism development zone while Yanyang County is the center of Meixian. Government intends to develop Yanyang County as a leading ecotourism area. Among the sites located in Yanyang County, Qiaoxi is a significant CBET project. Government cherishes the tourism development in Qiaoxi and regards it as a tool of poverty alleviation. Its development model needs to collaboration between government and enterprises, and village participation. The government is responsible for policy support and financial support.

Additionally, Meizhou has the opportunity to become an international tourism destination. In September 22, 2013, World Hakka Business Conference was held in Meizhou. It provided the opportunity to promote Meizhou as a welcoming place for Hakka people to visit and do business.

### 4.3 Financial Capital

As mentioned before, tourism development in Qiaoxi is supported by Meizhou government which has provided 20 million yuan of financial support by now. Provincial government provides Poverty Alleviation Fund with 3 million for this project. Baolihua Company, as the developer, is responsible for funding of the project. It invested 40.2 million at the beginning of the development and now, totally, has invested 1300 million for physical capital and human capital development. Ticket (30 yuan per person) revenue is another source of funding. However, the manager interviewed mentions the lack of financial capital is a big problem for promotion, better service and further development.

### 4.4 Physical Capital

Meizhou is regarded as the communication hub for Guangdong, Jiangxi and Fujian. The roads which connect southern part of Jiangxi and Fujian as well as other parts of Guangdong with Meizhou are well built. State Highways 205 and 206 runs across the city. Qiaoxi is near to provincial highway S224. In order to develop tourism, provincial highway S223, a road for sight-seeing from the center of Meizhou to Yanyang County, has been built to connect with S224. In addition, the mountain road Y360, starting from Qiaoxi to the town center, was rebuilt by Baolihua Company in 2012, costing RMB 20 million yuan.

The convenient highway attracts thousands of self-driving tourists to have a leisurely drive and enjoy the beauty of Qiaoxi. In fact, this is the most popular type of travelling to Qiaoxi Village. Apart from the highways, there are four railway stations in Meizhou, one of which is located in Meixian District. Generally, it takes nearly six hours to travel from Meixian to Shenzhen, approximately the same length of time by bus. In addition, Meixian Airline, built in 1987, is available for visitors. It provides flights between Meizhou and Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Hong Kong and Taiwan. More international flights are under construction. A special bus from Meixian Airline to Qiaoxi is provided. The city is also served by water transport. Mei River and Han River can reach Chaozhou and Shantou, two cities of Guangdong Province. In short, there are many choices of transportation types for visitors.

Yearning Tea Plantation Tourist Attraction is about 10-minute drive from Qiaoxi. The sightseeing vehicle from Yearning Tea Fields to Qiaoxi has started service. Inside the village, free buses from the entrance to main sites, operated by Baolihua Company, are provided for visitors. Additionally, there is a small car park near the entrance of Qiaoxi, with an accommodating capacity of 30 cars.

When it comes to the accommodation, the nearest hotel is Weilongwu Hotel which is an upscale and expensive hotel located in Yearning Tea Field. Home-stay business is not allowed within Qiaoxi Village. More choices are available in downtown area.

Near the entrance of Qiaoxi Village, there is a Visitor Centre that provides tourist information, such as trail maps, restrooms, staff contact, etc. In addition, in-depth educational exhibits, including books and a media that display about Hakka culture or Qiaoxi Village, and souvenirs are also available. A lot of seats are set in front of the big screen.

The free buses inside the destination are equipped with electronic interpretation system, which introduces the background of this village and information about specific sites along the route. Booklets are not available to introduce each scenic spot and the Hakka culture to tourists. At each heritage building, there is only an information board with brief introduction of the place. Furthermore, information about biodiversity is rarely found except a few names of tea trees or old trees along the route.

Totally, there are four public toilets located in different sites within the village. During the field observation, there are no long queues outside the restrooms. However, the general cleanliness of toilets is poor. Every 50-100 meter, there is a recycle bin. There are altogether 20 dustbins along the trail. However, littering is still a problem.

As illustrated in Table 4, tourists' attitudes towards transport, accommodation and interpretation system are diverse according to residence (sig.<0.05). On the contrary, attitudes towards the rest show little difference.

Table 4. Visitor's attitude towards physical capital

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Transport	Between Groups	92.296	3	30.765	44.492	.000
	Within Groups	87.127	126	.691		
	Total	179.423	129			
Accommodation	Between Groups	38.413	3	12.804	8.904	.000
	Within Groups	140.930	98	1.438		
	Total	179.343	101			
Catering	Between Groups	.870	3	.290	.227	.877
	Within Groups	160.700	126	1.275		
	Total	161.569	129			
Facilities	Between Groups	6.553	3	2.184	1.520	.212
	Within Groups	181.024	126	1.437		
	Total	187.577	129			
Service	Between Groups	4.530	3	1.510	1.457	.230
	Within Groups	130.578	126	1.036		
	Total	135.108	129			
Interpretation	Between Groups	13.104	3	4.368	2.921	.037
	Within Groups	188.403	126	1.495		
	Total	201.508	129			

Notes: Response range is 1(extremely disagree) to 6 (extremely agree)

Based on Table 5, it demonstrates that long-haul passengers are less satisfied with the transport and accommodation provided in the present area. In particular, the transport is not perceived to be convenient by tourists from other places in Mainland. Although diverse transport is available and the highways are well developed, public transportation offers poor quality of service. In particular, the bus service from the central bus station and airport are too slow, overcrowded, and without air conditioning. Its frequency also needs to be increased to satisfy tourists' needs, especially during high season.

Travelers out of Meizhou, who are likely to stay at least one night, are not satisfied with the accommodation. In fact, there are fewer choices for long haul visitors.

Table 5. Visitor's perspective on transport and accommodation

		Meizhou	Guangdong	Mainland	HKMT	Total
Transport	n	70	38	18	4	130
	Mean	5.04	3.95	2.72	3.25	4.35
	Std. Deviation	.67	.98	1.02	.96	1.18
Accommodation	n	42	38	18	4	102
	Mean	4.57	3.55	3.16	2.75	3.87
	Std. Deviation	1.09	1.22	1.34	1.5	1.44

Notes: Response range is 1(extremely disagree) to 6 (extremely agree)

Table 6 illustrates that approximately all the visitors from diversity places strongly agree that interpretation system is important. However, the average score of their satisfaction on the interpretation system of Qiaoxi is only 3.06, which is much less than 5.03 recorded for the importance of interpretation system. In specific, people who live out of Guangdong give a lower score for this item. That is because these people know less about Qiaoxi than residents of Guangdong.

Table 6. Visitor’s perspective on interpretation

		Meizhou	Guangdong	Mainland	HKMT	Total
Interpretation	n	70	38	18	4	130
	Mean	3.33	2.82	2.5	3.25	3.06
	Std. Deviation	1.25	1.25	1.04	1.26	1.25
Importance of Interpretation	n	70	38	18	4	130
	Mean	4.9	4.87	5.78	5.50	5.03
	Std. Deviation	1.17	1.32	0.43	0.58	1.16

Notes: Response range is 1(extremely disagree) to 6 (extremely agree)

Interpretation system plays an important role in achieving the objective of education. As can be seen from Table 7, interpretation system influences the tourists’ response to learning. Especially, it plays a key role in getting information related to culture (sig.=0.04). However, with poor interpretation facilities, tourists do not agree that they have learnt a lot during the trip, especially information about ecological conservation, the average score is only 3.05. In addition, the present interpretation system is mainly given in Chinese version.

Table 7. Visitor’s perspective relation between education and interpretation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I have learnt Hakka Culture	Between Groups	19.767	5	3.953	3.664	.004
	Within Groups	133.810	124	1.079		
	Total	153.577	129			
I have learnt ecological conservation.	Between Groups	14.536	5	2.907	2.024	.080
	Within Groups	178.087	124	1.436		
	Total	192.623	129			

Notes: Response range is 1(extremely disagree) to 6 (extremely agree)

#### 4.5 Human Capital

Guangdong Baolihua CO., Ltd, a large comprehensive private enterprise, is responsible for the development and management of Qiaoxi Village. Since 1995, it has already successfully developed Yearning Tea Plantation Tourist Attraction as a National 5A-level Tourism Destination. When planning this area, the firm cooperates with professionals, scholars under the principle of community-based, ecological and sustainable development.

The aim of Qiaoxi Village is to become an international resort of Hakka culture and contribute financially to the wellbeing of Qiaoxi and even Meizhou. To be a natural, quaint, and sustainable tourism destination is the development direction of Qiaoxi Village. Developers intend to make wise use of its natural and cultural resources in order to unfold its own characteristics. It is divided into five functions, namely sightseeing function, culture experience function, vacation function, recreation function and learning function, based on the three objectives of recreation, education and conservation.

Developers work hard to transform Qiaoxi to a sustainable ecotourism destination. First is the protection of forests, including forest fire prevention, forest pest management and forest resources protection (Table 8).

Table 8. The protection of forest

Item	Measure
Forest fire prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop systems and rules to prevent the concurrently fire;</li> <li>• Strengthen education and training to prevent fire; Be equipped with fireproofing materials;</li> <li>• Set special section to supervise and inspect the fire prevention of forests.</li> </ul>
Forest pest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use environmentally friendly pesticide formulation;</li> <li>• A dynamic prediction model is established to make the forecast more accurate, effective and scientific.</li> </ul>
Forest resources protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking samples, wild plants or medicine must be agreed by the management department;</li> <li>• Protect rare animals and plants as well as ancient and rare trees</li> </ul>

Secondly, landscape resources including mountains and hills, heritage buildings, and waters are protected. Changes of use should conform to the related requirement. The number of tourists ought to be controlled within the carrying capacity of the place. In addition, new houses or man-made attractions must comply with the integrated development rules.

The last aspect is to protect ecological environment by preventing and controlling pollution, implementing ecological environment, and safeguarding (Table 9).

Table 9. Ecological environmental protection of Qiaoxi

Item	Measure
Prevention and control of pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep air clean: only allow green vehicle, rubbish incineration is strictly prohibited, and use of clean energy is encouraged.</li> <li>• Protection of water and treasuring water resources: discharge of waste material and waste water into rivers strictly prohibited; environmentally friendly toilet; methane fermentation is used to treat the waste which is then used as fertilizer.</li> <li>• Keep the destination clean: provide enough recycle bins and employ full-time cleaning staff.</li> <li>• Control noise pollution.</li> <li>• Set environment testing point and cooperate with experts.</li> </ul>
Ecological environment improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logging bans and growing more trees.</li> <li>• Encourage ecological development of village.</li> </ul>
Safety protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety barrier and warning signs should be erected to prevent accidents.</li> <li>• Clinic for tourists.</li> </ul>

Managers intend to protect the authenticity and integrity of this historical village. Apart from the physical and material associations, developers also stress intangible elements, like original use and social environment. Unlike other cases in China, the local community is retained instead of being force to move out by developers. In fact, the local community is the treasure of this ancient village. According to the data collected, 67% of the visitors indicate the life style of local community is their favorite attraction. In addition, 95% of visitors agree that they are interested in interpretation offered by local residents than tour guides, particularly with a staggering seven in ten are strongly agree(Fig 5).

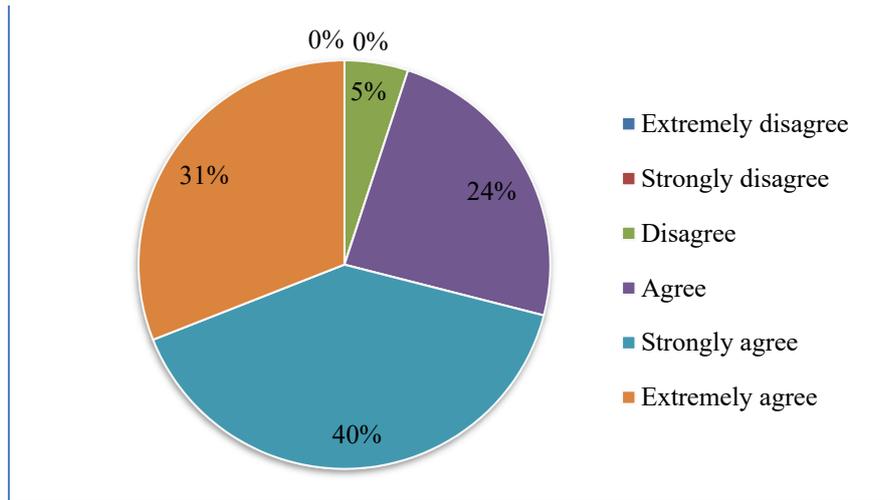


Fig 5. Tourists’ response to interpretation offered by local residents

Scarcity of human resources is a weakness in Qiaoxi village as there is lack of education among tourism service providers. Besides, due to urbanization, many young people leave their village to work in major cities. That is why the population of permanent residents accounts for less than 15% of the total population. Among these permanent residents, nearly half of them are over 60 years old. Jiaying University located in Meizhou has already set tourism and business related majors. The manager mentions that students from this college usually practiced in their company but few of whom leave for permanent work.

#### 4.6 Social Capital

Social capital stresses sharing norms, trust, and reciprocity for mutual benefits, which plays an important role in fostering cooperation to achieve common ends. Tourists and local community have a reciprocal relationship. While tourists’ activities affect the environment of the destination, the host community influences tourists’ experience as well (Fiorello & Bo, 2012)[26]. If the local community does not welcome tourists, tourism development would be an impossible project. As shown in Fig 6, up to 95% of tourists interviewed agree that local residents are friendly towards guests. In particular, over three quarters (76%) of them strongly agree with this point.

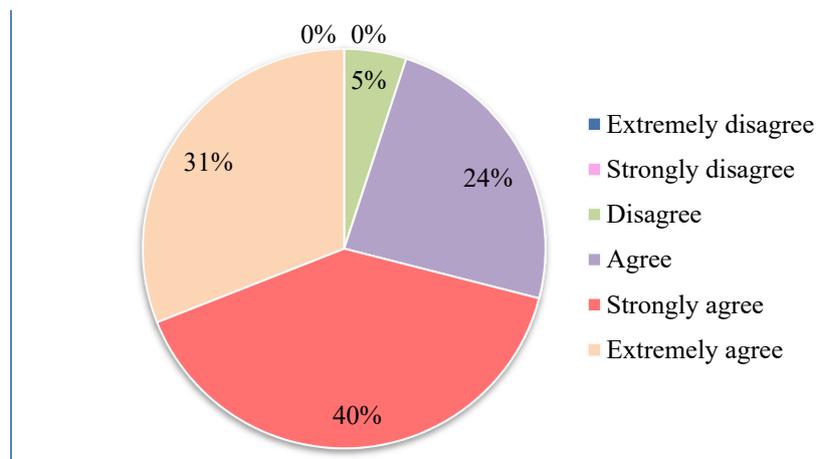


Fig 6. Tourists’ perspective on hospitality of the local community

Residents are also interviewed to seek their views on community involvement. According to Table 10, nearly all respondents are engaged in tourism related jobs. More than half of them are employed by Baolihua Company, mainly working as waiter/waitress or clean lady. The rest starts their business within the destination. Selling beverage and local food is the most common business. There are three

families selling souvenirs, such as Mui-Choy, dried bamboo shoots and honey to tourists. Home-stay business is only found in a family near the gate entrance. In fact, it is not allowed within this area.

Apart from employment opportunities, residents can participate in tourism related trainings. The proportion, however, is very small, only accounting for 26% of the total sampled. In addition, those people who have participated in training program are employees of Baolihua Company. And the training aims to improve their basic knowledge of tourism industry. It is also found that that more than half of the residents interviewed hope to be trained. Some of them even wish to partake in fee-based workshop to improve their tourism knowledge and business skills.

Community empowerment is also a kind of participation, which emphasizes the power of the local community. The results in Table 10 clearly show that nearly half (44.44%) of the respondents are unaware of the progress of tourism development. Although over 60% of them have submitted comments and suggestions during tourism development, their opinions are never taken seriously and accepted. Interviewees indicate that they make comments at a meeting held by the company and village committee. But, their comments are rarely deposited. Three of the respondents launched a strong protest against the unequal distribution of interests but in vain.

Table 10. Perception on community involvement in CBET development

	n	%
Community participation		
Involved in tourism business	17	94.44
▪ Be employed by the company (Directly)	9	50.00
▪ Own business (Indirectly)	8	44.44
- Souvenir	3	37.50
- Food & beverage	6	75.00
- Home-stay	1	12.50
- Others	0	0.00
Participate in trainings	5	27.78
Community Empowerment		
Be informed of the progress of tourism development	10	55.56
Make comments and suggestions	11	61.11
Feedback from authority in time	0	0.00

Note: The total number of respondents is 18.

As to collaboration, the manager says they have made a lot of efforts in improving the relationship between villagers and developers. In response to local community's support of this project, he recalled that the villagers were against tourism development tourism at the beginning.

The major worry was damage to their interests. Until 2018, Meizhou Municipal Party Committee Secretary visited the village and noticed that some heritage buildings had been damaged by urbanization. At the same, the streams were heavily polluted. He realized it was high time that measures of conservation need to be taken to protect these cultural and natural heritages which were the irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. Therefore, CBET was selected as a development and conservation tool. After improvement in physical capital, villagers benefit from tourism development and start to support it. Our boss is a native, who has paid a lot of attention on local residents' well-being. First, local workers must be given priority in filling job vacancies. Second, the company has bought social pension insurance for people older than 65 years. Villagers who pass the university entrance exam will get cash bonuses from the company. Last but not least, children of villagers or its employees have the priority to attend college owned by the company. In addition, we hire a local resident to manage the project of Qiaoxi. This is one of our approaches to improve the relationship

between the local community and the company. ” (Interview with Mr. Wang, a manager of Baolihua Company, April 2018)

## 5. Summary

### 5.1 Summary of Major Findings

According to the case study, the emergency of CBET projects in local Meizhou communities mainly stems from three internal factors. First, the local community is rich in natural and cultural resources, which has potential for tourism development. Second, it is generally located in remote area with poor economy and infrastructures. Last but not least, local residents’ lack the awareness of protection. Destruction of the historic buildings, water pollution, littering, deforestation, etc. pose a threat to resources and sustainable livelihood. With goals of protecting resources, promoting local economy and lifting people out of poverty, CBET is selected as a development tool.

Community capacity, an outcome of capacity building, has been central to the development of CBET projects. First of all, abundant tourism resources, such as natural attractions, heritage sites, cultural performance, local lifestyle, tourist participation activities and other man-made resources, are the key factors for successful tourism operation. This can be concluded as the intrinsic capital of the site. The present study found that the most popular in this destination is the Hakka people’s lifestyle. Tourists are more interested in Hakka culture rather than natural beauties.

Secondly, political capital can benefit tourism development a lot, particularly in centralized and less developed areas, which plays a leading role to develop tourism. The study finds that government officials provide guidelines and financial support for development and supervises companies to safeguard local community’s benefits. Government intends to improve local people’s living standards and stimulate local economy by tourism development. However, the funds provided are very limited.

Expect government financial support, In Meizhou, companies who operate this business also provide investment. Economic growth depends on the level and the quality of investment. Without sufficient financial capital, infrastructure, high quality labors and effective management system cannot be sustained. Even though the tourism planning is perfect, it is hardly carried out. For instance, when being asked the question about interpretation system, the manager says they wish to improve it but suffers from a shortage of funds.

An adequate infrastructural base is also a key element for CBET development and environment sustainability. Physical capital plays a significant role on tourists’ satisfaction. In addition, the improvement of infrastructure also benefits local residents a lot. According to data gathered, it is the infrastructural problems are identified by poor quality public transport, inadequate accommodations, particularly for long-haul tourist, poor interpretation system, lack of direction signs and unclear public toilets.

An experienced management team is vital for sustainable and successful development. It will be constrained by insufficient tourism management skills and inappropriate education. This study finds the operation company in the present area is experienced in planning and management. They carry out the project under the principle of sustainability instead of short-term financial benefits.

In addition, lacking of high quality of human capital limits the implement of tourism development. Education is an importance element to build human capital. However, a large number of people are deprived of the right to be educated, which affects their opportunities in labor market in poor rural area. In fact, this is the case of the study area. The company needs high quality labors but the local community is not able to provide. As a result, the majority of local employees are only responsible for very basic work.

Community support is another factor of successful development. During their visit on Qiaoxi, 95% of tourists interviewed mention that the local residents are of hospitality. It demonstrates that the local community support for tourism development. Besides, incentives are required to get local community to participate in order to succeed in CBET development. Even though social benefits are given special attention to improve the relationship between local communities and developers, benefits are not distributed equally and economic incentives are inadequate in less developed areas. In this study, it

finds that local residents have rare opportunities to participate in decision-making. The most common type of local participation is to be involved in employment related to tourism industry. Even though a local resident is responsible for managing Qiaoxi project, he is employed by Baolihua Company. Hiring local employee as manager is the way to improve relationships between local community and developers. Incentives is provided for enhance local community’s warfare to support for tourism development instead but not for local empowerment. Furthermore, collaboration among stakeholders is hampered due to lack of sharing information. Local residents are not informed of the progress of tourism development in time. This has led to dissatisfaction of residents.

The research identifies diversity forms of benefits for local community from CBET activities in Qiaoxi. Based on the analysis of tourism impacts, local residents hold a positive attitude towards tourism development. They have already got benefit from tourism industry in terms of local economy, employment, infrastructure, and living standards.

Overall, the number of respondents, including both residents and tourists, who are satisfied with the current situation of tourism development occupies a large proportion, respectively 100% and 89.9% (Figure 7). The mean of satisfaction on tourism development of the local residents interviewed (4.28), however, is nearly 0.4 lower that it of tourists interviewed (Table 11).

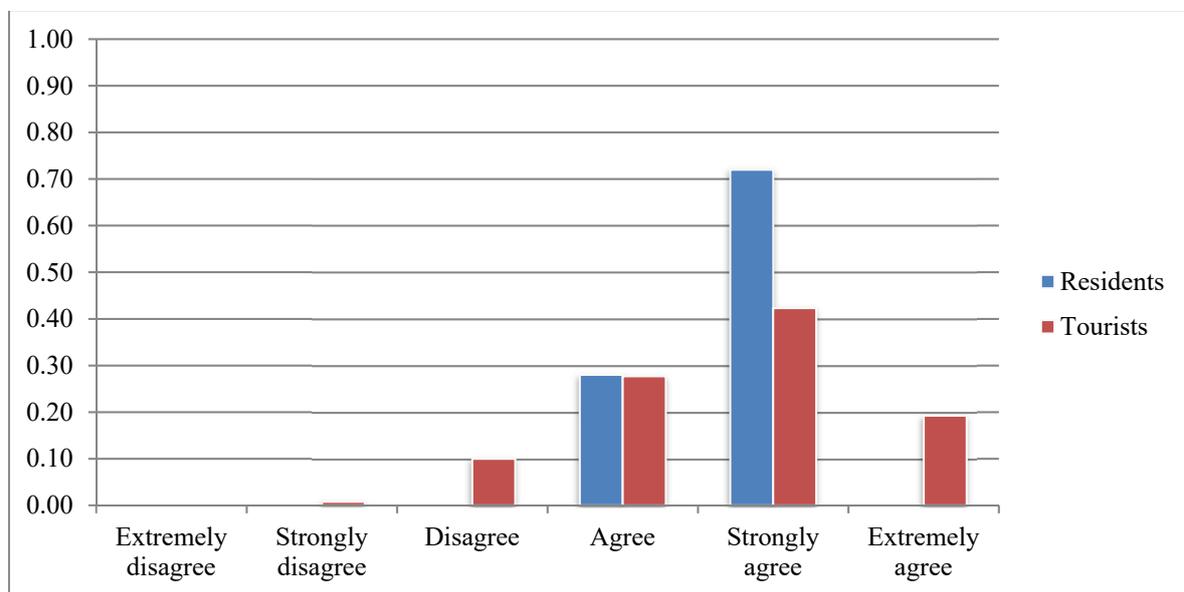


Fig 7. Residents’ and tourists’ perspective on tourism development of Qiaoxi

Table 11. Respondents’ perspective on tourism development of Qiaoxi

Respondent	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
Residents	4.28	5	0.46
Tourists	4.69	5	0.92

Notes: Response range is 1(extremely disagree) to 6 (extremely agree)

## 5.2 Community-based Ecotourism: Reality or Rhetoric in Less Developed Areas?

Compared with mass tourism, ecotourism is encouraged as creating local employment and fostering sustainable development (Jones, 2005) [61]. Focusing on the well-being and involvement of local community, CBET is created by scholars to ensure local communities to get maximum benefits from the ecotourism industry. It is seen to be an effective development approach to strike a balance between economic development and resources conservation. Not only local participation, but also local empowerment is regarded as essential features of real CBET development. It is characterized by a high degree of community control of tourism business. Bottom-up model is the ideal operation approach of CBET development.

Based on the political context and social capital in this study, CBET in Meizhou is not initiated by villagers but dominated by government officials and operated by companies. It is a typical top-down model of community development. Generally, government provides policy support and partial financial support. Following the government policy, company is responsible for tourism planning and management. The main way of community participation is employment, including both direct and indirect ways, in tourism industry. As to indirect employment, the selection of business types is limited by developers. Even though this restriction is for preventing this old village being overly commercialized, the host community has been put in a passive position to share benefits and participate in CBET development.

Local residents barely have any opportunities to be actively involved in tourism planning and management. Heritage conservation, forests protection, ecological protection, environmental protection and pollution prevention are all managed and operated by developers instead of local community itself. That means local people even have been passive participants in protecting their own livelihood. That is the drawback of the top-down model.

Can this government-dominated tourism development based on Qiaoxi village be considered as community-based ecotourism? In terms of community empowerment, it is not a true CBET project. However, unlike mass tourism or uninhabited nature-based tourism, it emphasizes on improving local community's living standards and increasing local economy. A lot of attention is also paid to protect ecological environment, natural resources and cultural resources. In addition, tourism development strategies should be under sustainable development rules. More significantly, local warfare is highly valued in Qiaoxi Village and priorities of openings are provided to local people. Top-down model is decided by the national political condition of China. Thus, this study considers it as a community-based ecotourism project with typical Chinese characteristics but is still in its infant phase regarding to community participation.

Community empowerment does not conflict with government's powers. The host community should be given more opportunities to participate in planning and management to enable them to appreciate and protect resources that lies in their living surroundings. This also can contribute to equitable distribution of benefits which can form a sense of ownership in CBET development in this area.

However, without tourism knowledge, business background or other basic skills, how can local residents participate in decision-making progress? The education level of local community is not only a barrier for building human capital but also a weakness for strengthening social capital. Lacking tourism knowledge, business skills, leadership and management skills, they have no opportunities to participate in planning or management. Failing to protect their own rights, the villagers do not have a sense of ownership in tourism development. As a result, local residents are not active owners of tourism development; instead, they end up as workers of tourism business.

Besides, education, setting as an objective of ecotourism, is also an important factor for resource and environment conservation. Interpretation system, usually, is a tool to educate tourists and local residents to improve tourism concern. If tourists understand the historical value of the place they visit as well as the importance and rarity of resources, they are likely to manage their own behavior to reduce negative impacts. All these interpretation facilities are also available to local community. However, in Qiaoxi, interpretation system is too poor to provide adequate information. Awareness of conservation is hardly to be improved.

The conclusion of major findings and discussions is that there is a gap between theoretical and practical community-based ecotourism. Community-based ecotourism has made a positive but limited contribution to local community and environment conservation in Qiaoxi. Community capacity is considered pivotal in the process in order to achieve sustainable development. However, the host community does not participate in managing tourism development directly. Local residents are not treated as equal partners in CBET project. In addition, education objective is hardly to be achieved due to limited interpretation facilities. Although local residents have achieved benefit from tourism development and resources conservation has been emphasized, CBET in Qiaoxi Village is more rhetoric than reality.

### 5.3 Limitations

There are quite a number of limitations. First, due to the volume of diverse variables to consider in the analysis of community capacity and community-based ecotourism, and the small scale and limited resources of this study, there is limited ability to gather data for a more accurate research of a specific issue. For instance, there is only one manager from tourism company is interviewed in the in-depth interview. In addition, only 18 residents and 130 tourists are involved in questionnaire surveys.

Second, questionnaire surveys are conducted in the off-season of tourism, which has impacts on the results of study. One primary advantage is that residents and visitors are more available to be interviewed. And it is possible to communicate with interviewees to get more information. However, in the in-season of tourism, responders may have different answers towards these questions.

Third, statistics skills are limited to analyze data for a more in-depth study and English capability is a weakness for a more academic dissertation.

Last but not the least, this dissertation focuses on the capacity building of CBET development particularly in less developed areas. However, there is only one case study in this research. Since the six capitals are different from diverse regions, the result should not provide the overall image of CBET development in developing nations.

### 5.4 Recommendation for Further Studies

Three key suggestions are given for further studies. Since collaboration of different stakeholders is a main characteristic of CBET projects, government officials and scholars should be involved in in-depth interviews. In addition, attitudes towards physical capacity and social capacity should be explored in detail in order to discover ways to improve their satisfaction.

## References

- [1]. Vaugeois, Nicole. "Tourism in developing countries: refining a useful tool for economic development." 6th World Leisure Congress Proceedings. 2000.
- [2]. Liu, Abby. "Tourism in rural areas: Kedah, Malaysia." *Tourism management* 27.5 (2006), p. 878-889.
- [3]. Campbell, M. L. Ecotourism in rural developing communities. *Annals of tourism research*, 26.3(1999), p.534-553.
- [4]. LIU, S., & XU, S. An initial thought on development of eco-tourist resources in coastal are of Guangdong Province. *Ecological Science*, 23(1) (2004), p. 80-84.
- [5]. WANG, C. C. The Distortion and Reflection of Community Participation in Tourism Development in Our Country. *Journal of Hainan Normal University (Natural Science)*, 23.5 (2010).
- [6]. Sun, Zhao Hui. "Strategy on the Development of Ecotourism in Underdeveloped Regions——An example from suqian jiangsu." *Journal of Shandong Agricultural University*. 45.1 (2014), p. 144-147.
- [7]. Hill, Edited by Jennifer, and T. Gale. "Ecotourism and Environmental Sustainability." *Tourism Management* 32.1(2011), p. 196-197.
- [8]. Cater, Erlet. "Ecotourism in the Third World: problems and prospects for sustainability." *Ecotourism: a sustainable option?*. (1994b), p.69-86.
- [9]. Kiper, T. Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development. In *Advances in Landscape Architecture* (2013).
- [10]. Weaver, D. B. *Ecotourism*. John Wiley & Sons: Milton (2001).

- [11]. Buckley, R. A framework for ecotourism. *Annals of tourism research*, 21.3 (1994), p. 629-642.
- [12]. Su, Baoren. "Rural tourism in China." *Tourism Management* 32.6 (2011), p. 1438-1441.
- [13]. Fennell, D. (2001). A content analysis of ecotourism definitions. *Current Issues in Tourism*. 4(5), 403-421.
- [14]. KANG, Kai, and Wen-zhen YUAN. "Looks at China Eco-tourism Development Existence Question from Chinese and Foreign Contrast [J]." *Resource Development & Market* 25.4 (2009).
- [15]. Ceballos – Lascuráin. (1993). Ecotourism as a Worldwide Phenomenon. In K. Lindberg, & D. Hawkins (Eds.), *Ecotourism – A Guide for Planners and Managers Vermont: The Ecotourism Society*. Vol. 1, pp. 12-14.
- [16]. TIES. Information on: <http://www.ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism>.
- [17]. Laixi, Guo. "CHINESE ECOTOURISM—THE FOUNDATION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM." *Progress In Geography* 16.4 (1997): 1-10.
- [18]. Cater, Erlet. "Ecotourism in the Third World: problems and prospects for sustainability. " *Ecotourism: a sustainable option?*. (1994), p.69-86.
- [19]. Boo, Elizabeth. *Ecotourism: the potentials and pitfalls: country case studies*. WWF, 1990.
- [20]. Cater, Erlet. Introduction. In E. Cater, & G. Lowman, *Ecotourism: A Sustainable Option?* (1994a), p. 3-18.
- [21]. Sandmeyer, Allison Elizabeth. "Community-based ecotourism and sustainable community development: Exploring the relationship." (2006), p. 0119-0119.
- [22]. HU, P., ZHONG, W., & CHEN, S. The SWOT Analysis and Strategies of the Eco-tourism Development in Guangdong Province. *Forest Inventory and Planning*, 31(4) (2006), p. 47-50.
- [23]. Cater, E. *Ecotourism: Theory and practice*. In A. A. Lew, C. M. Hall, & A. M. Williams (Eds.), *A Companion to Tourism* (2004), p. 484-497. Oxford: Blackwell.
- [24]. World Ecotourism Summit FINAL REPORT. (2002, 5). (The World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme) Information on: <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/Final-Report-WES-Eng.pdf>.
- [25]. Belsky, JiU M. "Misrepresenting Communities: The Politics of Community-Based Rural Ecotourism in Gales Point Manatee, Belize 1." *Rural Sociology* 64.4 (1999), p. 641-666.
- [26]. Moscardo Gianna. *Building community capacity for tourism development*. Wallingford, UK: Cambridge, Mass: CABI (2008).
- [27]. Fiorello, Amélie, and Damien Bo. "Community-based ecotourism to meet the new tourist's expectations: An exploratory study." *Journal of Hospitality marketing & management* 21.7 (2012):, p. 758-778.
- [28]. Drakopoulou, A. (2011). *Tourism Certification and Community-based Ecotourism as Tools for Promoting Sustainability in the Greek Tourism Sector - the example of Zagori*. Doctoral dissertation, Lund University, Master in Environmental Sciences Degree, Lund University, Sweden. Information on: [http://www.lumes.lu.se/database/alumni/03.04/theses/drakopoulou\\_nancy.pdf](http://www.lumes.lu.se/database/alumni/03.04/theses/drakopoulou_nancy.pdf).
- [29]. Nederveen Pieterse, Jan Paul. "Development theory: deconstructions/reconstructions." (2010).
- [30]. Duffy, Rosaleen. *A trip too far: Ecotourism, politics and exploitation*. Routledge, 2013.

- [31]. Bujold, P. Community development - making a better home. (1995), p. 5-8: Voluntary Action News.
- [32]. Hardy, Anne, Robert JS Beeton, and Leonie Pearson. "Sustainable tourism: An overview of the concept and its position in relation to conceptualisations of tourism." *Journal of sustainable tourism* 10.6 (2002), p.475-496.
- [33]. Sebele, Lesego S. "Community-based tourism ventures, benefits and challenges: Khama rhino sanctuary trust, central district, Botswana." *Tourism management* 31.1 (2010), p. 136-146.
- [34]. Christensen, Neal A. "Sustainable community-based tourism and host quality of life." *Sustainable community-based tourism and host quality of life. INT-323* (1995), p. 63-68.
- [35]. MacKinnon, B. "Beauty and beasts of ecotourism." *Business Mexico* 5.4 (1995), p. 44-47.
- [36]. Mbaiwa, J. E. "The success and sustainability of community-based natural resource management in the Okavango Delta, Botswana." *South African Geographical Journal* 86.1 (2004), p. 44-53.
- [37]. Okazaki, E. A community-based tourism model: Its conception and use. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16.5 (2008), p. 511-529.
- [38]. Tosun, C. Limits to community participation in the tourism development process in developing. *Tourism Management*, 21 (2000), p. 613-633.
- [39]. GUO, Qing-xia, Zhang-ping QIN, and Yong MA. "The Research of the Community-based Ecotourism's Development in Western Hubei Eco-cultural Circle [J]." *Economic Geography* 9 (2010), p.29.
- [40]. QIU, G., & XIE, L. Research on The Ecological Protection and Tourism Development of Hakka Culture - With "World Hakka city" of Meizhou as an example. *JOURNAL OF JIAYING UNIVERSITY (Natural Science)*, 29.2 (2011).
- [41]. XIE, L. On the ecotourism and to promote tourism sustainable development of Meizhou. *Territory & Natural Resources Study*, 3 (2007), p. 044.
- [42]. XIE, L. The Thought on Developing the Construction of Tourism Industry in the Mountainous area of Northern Guangdong Province - A Case Study of Meizhou. 9.1 (2008), p. 42-44.
- [43]. LIU, C. R. The Development of Ecotourism in Meizhou and the Leading Role of the Government. *North Economy and Trade*, (2008) p. 126-128.
- [44]. YE, L., & CHEN, S. H. The Analysis of New Style Country Tourism of Meizhou. *Journal of Tourism Development*, (2011), p. 71-77.
- [45]. LI, B. Cultivation of Theme Tourism Industry Cluster in Yinna Mountain of Meizhou City. *Journal of Subtropical Resources and Environment*, 1(014) (2011).
- [46]. BAO, J., & WEN, T. Summary of Community Tourism Research. *Journal of Gullin Institute of Tourism*, 13.4 (2012), p. 14-17.
- [47]. SUN J. X. Empowerment Theory and the Construction of Community Capability in the Development of Tourism. *Tourism Tribune*, 9 (2008), p. 012.
- [48]. LI, H. M., & CHEN, H. Z. ECOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF SCENIC RESOURCE FOR MEI COUNTRY IN GUANGDONG. *JOURNAL OF SOUTH CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY (NATURAL SCIENCE EDITION)*, 4(2004), p. 106-111.

- [49]. WU, B. Community participation ecological agriculture tourism mode's research in the underdeveloped areas. *TERRITORY & NATURAL RESOURCES STUDY*, 6(2013), p. 59-61.
- [50]. Smith, N., Littlejohns, L. B., & Thompson, D. Shaking out the cobwebs: insights into community capacity and its relation to health outcomes. *Community development journal*, 36.1(2001), p 30-41.
- [51]. Coleman, J. C. *Foundations of Social Theory* (1990).
- [52]. Fukuyama, F. "Social Capital, Civil Society and Development.". *Third World Quarterly*, February, 22.1(2001), p. 7-22.
- [53]. Woodhouse A. Social capital and economic development in regional Australia: A case study. *Journal of rural studies*, 22.1 (2006), p. 83-94.
- [54]. Putnam D. R., LeonardiR., & NanettiY.R. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (1993).
- [55]. OECD. (1998). *Human Capital Investment: an International Comparison*. Paris: OECD.
- [56]. Koutra, C., & Edwards, J. Capacity Building through Socially Responsible Tourism Development a Ghanaian Case Study. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51.6 (2012), p. 779-792.
- [57]. LIU, S., & XU, S. An initial thought on development of eco-tourist resources in coastal are of Guangdong Province. *Ecological Science*, 23.1 (2004), p. 80-84.
- [58]. WU, Y. Research on Operation Framework of Community Participation in Tourism Development. *Resource Development & Market*, 23.11 (2007), p. 1049-1050.
- [59]. YU Ping. Analysis of Sustainable Development of Rural Tourism Based on Community Empowerment. *Journal of Harbin University of Commerce (Social Science Edition)* (2010). 2, 023.
- [60]. WalleH. Alf. Quantitative versus Qualitative Tourism Research. *Quantitative versus Qualitative Tourism Research. Annals of Tourism Research*, 24.3 (1997), p. 524-536.
- [61]. JonesS. Community-based ecotourism: The significance of social capital. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 32.2 (2005), p. 303-324.