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Post-COVID-19 Community-Based Tourism Sustainable Development in China. Study Case of Hebian Village

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Abstract: China's tourism sector has seen the effects of the worldwide COVID-19 outbreak. Community-based tourism has arisen as a sustainable alternative to mass tourism, benefiting local communities economically while preserving the environment and cultural heritage. Using Hebian Village as a case study, this study investigates the post-COVID-19 sustainable development of CBT in China. The study employs a qualitative methodology, including field observation and semi-structured interviews with community members, tourists, and tourism experts. The findings of this study indicate that Hebian Village has the potential for the sustainable development of CBT, as it possesses unique natural and cultural resources, and its residents are ardent about promoting tourism while maintaining their traditional way of life. Inadequate crisis management, a lack of marketing and managerial skills, and restricted access to funds are all preventing the expansion of CBT in Hebian Village. The study proposes some suggestions for the development of CBT that include the crisis of COVID-19, community participation, market orientation, and government support. CBT has the potential to contribute to the sustainable development of rural regions in China, but it requires a concerted effort on the part of all stakeholders, including the government, local communities, and tourism industry actors.

Keywords: sustainable development; community-based tourism; post-COVID-19.

JEL Classification: Q01; Z32; R11.

Introduction

The global tourism industry has been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism is a vital source of income and employment in numerous regions, particularly in developing nations. One of China's most important industries, tourism eventually drives national and regional development. Even so, the pandemic has revealed the tourism industry's vulnerability, necessitating a reconsideration of the industry's development model. Community-based tourism (CBT) is a type of tourism that is owned and managed by the local community, with travelers participating in the cultural, social, and commercial activities of the community. CBT focuses on the conservation of natural and cultural resources, the promotion of local cultural and traditional practices, and the empowerment of local communities. This study examines the sustainable development of CBT in China after COVID-19, using Hebian Village as a case study. Yunnan Province, renowned for its ethnic diversity, natural attractiveness, and cultural heritage, is the location of Hebian Village. Miao and Yi ethnic minority groups have maintained their traditional manner of life and culture in Hebian Village. Hebian Village possesses unique natural and cultural resources, such as traditional Miao and Yi attire, regional cuisine, and breathtaking natural scenery. As a representative example of CBT, Hebian Village provides guidance for the sustainable growth of rural community tourism in China following the COVID-19 era.

1. Literature Review

1.1 The COVID-19 Crisis and Tourism

There is no denying the importance of tourism throughout the world because of the (in)direct cooperation and development contributions made by the tourist industry to more than 50 different industries. The tourism business will be affected by the pandemic regardless of location or country (Wen *et al.* 2021). According to Zhong, Guo, and Chen (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic first appeared in the last month of 2019 in the Chinese town of Wuhan, Hubei Province, and rapidly spread from individual to individual. Wuhan is a major Chinese transportation hub because the river Yangtze, which runs between Chongqing and Shanghai, and the Beijing-Guangzhou railway intersect there. Despite the Chinese New Year being the most important time for families to get together in China (Bogoch *et al.* 2020), the Chinese government locked down Wuhan on the 24th of January in 2020 in response to the rapid spread of COVID-19 within Hubei Province. Destinations all around the world are competing to attract wealthy Chinese tourists in an effort to boost their economies, and governments and businesses everywhere are keeping their sights on China's booming tourism sector (Wen *et al.* 2021). A loss of US\$22 billion in Chinese outbound expenditure and a decrease of 9 million in incoming visitors are predicted as a result of COVID-19, according to a study. Depending on the severity of the epidemic's effects, 7-25 million decreased Chinese exits are possible by 2020 (Dass and McDermott 2020). The academic community is continually working to undertake appropriate studies on the rehabilitation of the tourism industry after the pandemic in the face of the virus's devastation. According to certain academics, some conditions may exist where an extended tourist season might result in higher economic development. Global crises may aid nations who successfully manage them in evolving and expanding their seasonality, coupled with special actions done by local governments to revive tourism and promote it even more (Beirman 2020; Kyriakakis and Tzirakis 2020). After the outbreak, several academics are worried about how transportation would affect the growth of sustainable tourism (Więckowski 2021). Numerous academics have directed their research towards forecasting the trajectory of the tourism and leisure industries subsequent to the outbreak (Nurbayani and Asyahidda 2021; Tiwari and Sanjeev 2021; Majumdar 2021; Gupta and Sahu 2021; Bharwani and Mathews 2021). Scholars are also interested in how virtual tourism is developing in the post-pandemic age (Permana, Permana, and Wijaya 2021; Chakravarty, Chand, and Singh 2021). The emergence of health tourism and medical tourism in the aftermath of the epidemic has piqued the interest of academic researchers (Hekmat *et al.* 2022; Chhabra *et al.* 2021). Researchers also prioritize the examination of small and medium-sized tourism-related enterprises in the months following the outbreak of the pandemic (Gaffar *et al.* 2022; H.-M. Liu 2021; Zhao *et al.* 2021). Scholars have conducted a comprehensive analysis of literature pertaining to crisis management in the tourism industry spanning from 2008 to 2022 (Qiao *et al.* 2023). In contrast to these researches, this perspective paper aims to investigate the prospects for the long-term growth of CBT in the Chinese village of Hebian following the COVID-19 epidemic. The study also aims to assess the current state of CBT in Hebian Village and the prospects for its future growth. This study concludes by putting up suggestions for the long-term growth of CBT in China's Hebian Village.

1.2 The Philosophy of Community-Based Tourism

Community-based tourism (CBT) was first advocated by the United Nations and the World Bank, among other multinational donors. To that end, CBT was envisaged as a complement to both mass tourism and rural tourism in underdeveloped and developed countries, respectively (Zielinski *et al.* 2020). CBT was viewed as a viable technique for reducing poverty in the developing countries (Dangi and Jamal 2016), and it would help with conservation efforts and the expansion of rural businesses. Many nations have adopted community-based tourism (CBT) due to its proven economic benefits to local communities. Thus, communities with a history of subsistence agriculture, fishing, or as an indigenous people might benefit from implementing CBT to boost their economies (Teh and Cabanban 2007; Lepp 2007; Lee 2013; Thompson, Johnson, and Hanes 2016; Reggers *et al.* 2016; Wang, Cater, and Low 2016; Dodds, Ali, and Galaski 2018). Mtapuri and Giampiccoli (2016) argued that beneficial environmental and societal effects have been facilitated through CBT programs. As a result, several development organizations have adopted this strategy as a tool for community development, especially in areas with few options for economic growth. Economic effect on families, social and economic advancements, and sustainable lifestyle diversity are the most obvious advantages of CBT (López-Guzmán, Sánchez-Cañizares, and Pavón 2011). Moreover, it improves the standard living within neighborhoods by increasing the number of utilities, roadways, green spaces, and leisure and cultural venues. Natural resource use, scenic locations, and rare species of wildlife and plants all play a role in raising people's and tourists' consciousness about the need of protecting the natural environment (Brunt and Courtney 1999; Lee and Jan 2019). Employment opportunities,

stakeholder revenue, community empowerment, conservation promotion, and poverty alleviation are just some of the positive impacts that CBT has on the tourist sector (Eom and Han 2019). There are a lot of people living in rural areas in China. China's rural regions are home to a sizable population. In 2021, China assisted more over 100 million people out of poverty (Office 2021). This marked the beginning of a new age of rural development. Therefore, the development of community-based tourism will play a positive role in consolidating the achievements of poverty alleviation, revitalizing the rural economy, and increasing the income of local people in China.

1.3. Crisis Management and Community-Based Tourism Sustainable Development

Mikušová and Horváthová (2019) mentioned that managing crises effectively requires anticipating potential problems before they arise. Efficient crisis and catastrophe management is essential for mitigating losses and speeding up recoveries on both the local and global scales. Risk management and preparedness for natural disasters also have a role in determining a destination's attractiveness to tourists (Y. Liu, Cheng, and OuYang 2019). To add complexity, crisis management is a continuous process encompassing a wide range of stakeholders whose responses to risks are influenced by variables that involve their location and their ties to others in the industry (Miguel *et al.* 2022). Scheduling and preparation efforts beforehand a disaster or crisis hits, coping techniques in the event of a crisis or disaster, and assessment and enhancement following a crisis or disaster are the three pillars of successful crisis and disaster management, as proposed by Ritchie (2009). Healthy tourist growth is intrinsically linked to effective crisis management (Qiao *et al.* 2023). Research from Roe, Hrymak, and Dimanche (2014) devised a framework for risk assessment consisting of three phases—assessment, evaluation, and management—to examine the tourist industry's impact on the environment. Economic, social-cultural, environmental, and life-satisfaction sustainability issues have all been tackled in attempts to determine the long-term viability of CBT. Distribution of economic advantages to citizens should be equitable (Lee and Jan 2019; Woo, Kim, and Uysal 2015; Choi and Sirakaya 2006). Economic growth that benefits locals and conserves natural resources is a goal of CBT. In addition, the CBT administrators could offer educational opportunities and agricultural activities that will boost visitor pleasure and develop new revenue streams in certain rural areas, so promoting sustainability in the economy (Lee 2013; Ohe 2008; Ohe and Ohe 2020; Ohe and Kurihara 2013; Lee and Jan 2019). Choi and Sirakaya (2006) stated that community-based tourism (CBT) allows locals to strengthen their social or traditional cultural identities while also improving social cohesion in the neighborhood. CBT will increase awareness, appreciation, and protection of the planet's natural resources. Woo, Kim, and Uysal (2015) proposed that the provision of material well-being, communal wellness, psychological wellness, and physical and mental wellness to locals is essential to the long-term success of CBT. The sustainability of CBT may be improved by the use of life satisfaction surveys to get insight into locals' views on how tourism has affected their lives in terms of their material, social, emotional, and physical security (Kim, Uysal, and Sirgy 2013). Environmental conservation, cultural preservation, fairness, revenue generation, and satisfying human needs are all goals of sustainable tourism. Both the economic and social benefits of tourism, as well as the conservation of natural resources, are emphasized (C.-H. Liu *et al.* 2013; Qiao *et al.* 2023). A key obstacle for CBT sustainable development in the post-COVID-19 age is striking a balance between community economic development and tourist growth.

2. Methodology

Multi-method, interpretative, and naturalistic approaches characterize qualitative research. This implies that qualitative researchers look at occurrences from the perspective of the meanings that individuals give them in their everyday lives. The researcher may acquire empirical materials in a number of ways, including via interviews, direct observation, document and artifact analysis, visual materials, and first-hand experience (Pathak, Jena, and Kalra 2013; Sandelowski 2004; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Based on Rosenthal (2016), when applied to big qualitative data sets, these methodologies may provide light on the "why" behind people's behaviors. In order to get relevant and usable findings from this analysis, it must be carried out in a thorough and systematic approach. Cause and effect are not the focus of qualitative research. Instead, it investigates how people interpret and respond to events (Attride-Stirling 2001). According to Atkinson (2007), the data collection method of field observation is employed to comprehend the interactions and behaviors of groups of individuals within a specific context.

2.1 Research Sample

Within the context of qualitative research, the significance of sample size is deemed to be relatively diminished, as the comprehensive and intricate nature of the research can be effectively captured through the examination of a limited number of sample size traits that are typical of the qualitative category (Alam 2021; Wolor *et al.* 2023). Notwithstanding, there have been proposed general guidelines regarding the sample size in qualitative research that are distinguished by particular frameworks. The aforementioned sources (Njie and Asimiran 2014; Palinkas *et al.* 2015) identify the presence of at least one participant in the case study. Moser and Korstjens (2018) argued that the qualitative research typically employs a limited sample size, which is contingent upon various factors such as the extent of data depth, participant variety, scope of research inquiries, data collection techniques, and sampling approach. The process of picking respondents is contingent upon the researcher's evaluation of which prospective participants possess the most instructive and comprehensive insights that align with the researcher's research objectives.

The unit of analysis in this particular research was the sustainable development of CBT (Community-Based Tourism) in Hebian Village, China. The sample size for this investigation comprised 12 individuals. The process of determining the location was conducted with a deliberate purpose of assessing the potential of the CBT to contribute to sustainable development in the post-COVID-19 era. The investigation was conducted during the period spanning from September to November of the year 2022.

Figure 1. Sketch Map of Hebian Village



2.2 Data Collection Process

The current investigation employed field observation and interviews as the primary data collection methods. The process of gathering data by means of the active involvement and observation of individuals or groups is known as field observation. Interviews are a data collection technique where the interviewer presents inquiries to participants either in person, over the phone, or via the internet. The objective of the qualitative research interview was to elucidate the significance of the central theme within the world of life of the participants. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), the primary objective during an interview is to comprehend the significance of the responses provided by the participants.

In order to present a comprehensive analysis of the present circumstances, obstacles encountered by the village, and recommendations for sustainable development through Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Hebian village in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the investigators employed observational techniques and conducted interviews utilizing semi-structured questioning, with an emphasis on allowing participants to offer unrestricted responses.

The inquiry posed the following research queries:

- a) What is the potential for the sustainable development of CBT in Hebian Village?
 b) What are the challenges of CBT-sustainable development that the Hebian village faces?
 c) What are the barriers must be overcome for Hebian Village's CBT sustainable development after the COVID-19 era?

The participants were twelve people who are tourism stakeholders in Hebian village.

Table 1. Details on Participants, Length of Interviews, and Survey Remarks

Materials	Types	Interviewee Characterization	Length of Interview (mins)/no. of reports
Interviewee A	Community Members	Head of Village	65 mins
Interviewee B	Community Members	Village Committee Member	55 mins
Interviewee C	Community Members	Village Committee Member	57 mins
Interviewee D	Community Members	Farmer	61 mins
Interviewee E	Community Members	Farmer	66 mins
Interviewee F	Community Members	Housewife	40 mins
Interviewee G	Community Members	Homestay Owner	60 mins
Interviewee H	Community Members	Tea House Owner	58 mins
Interviewee I	Community Members	Grocery Store Owner	59 mins
Interviewee J	Tourists	Visitor	38 mins
Interviewee K	Tourists	Visitor	33 mins
Interviewee L	Tourism Expert	Professor of University	62 mins
Field Observation Reports	Researcher		31 reports

In September 2022, the initial visit was occurred, and the conversation with head of village and village committee member was also conducted. The researcher was given an hour-long community tour by a village committee member. Locational specifics, facilities, historical and cultural landmarks, and alternative lifestyles were presented. The gathering in the Hebian Village Administration Office eventually included unofficial discussions with community officials, committees, and a few locals. During the interview, we spoke about the prospects for CBT growth in the village, the major difficulties locals had encountered and overcome during the pandemic, and the locals' attitudes and opinions on the topic of CBT's sustainable growth in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic.

The follow-up visit happened at the beginning of November. The study employed field observations that spanned a duration of 15 days, specifically from November 12th to November 27th. During this period, 31 substantial notes were generated. The aforementioned reports focused on three primary themes, including potential, challenges associated with the development of CBT throughout the pandemic, and recommendations to mitigate the identified deficiencies for the sustainable development of CBT post-COVID-19. Conversely, a total of 12 interviews were done with the community members, tourists, and tourism experts. The community members include the village head, village committee members, homestay owners, teahouse owners, grocery store owners, and local resident representatives. The tourists include domestic tourists who have visited Hebian Village. The tourism experts include academics and professionals in the tourism industry who have experience in community-based tourism development.

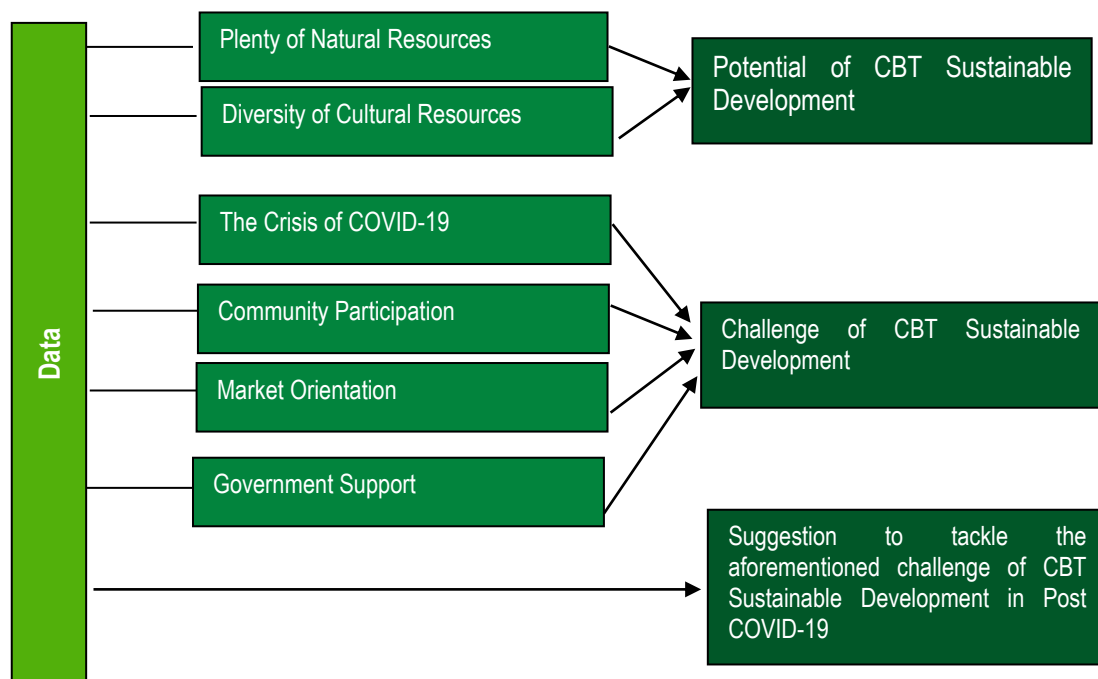
As noted in Table 1, the informants' occupations are varied and include a head of village, two members of the village committee, two farmers, a housewife, an owner of a homestay, a tea house, an owner of a grocery shop, two tourists, and a university professor. Prior to interviews, the interviewee was told of the objective of the interview and the topic the researcher had developed that would be covered (both of which were often the same). Participants were contacted and requested for their consent to be voice recorded during an open interview in order to be transcribed and analyzed. The vast majority of interviewees were approached at their own homes or places of work, in which they seemed most cozy answering questions and providing helpful feedback to the

researcher. The interviews ranged among 30 minutes to 1 hour, and since Chinese is a language that is often used in everyday life, the interviewees opted to talk in that language. A 312-page discourse in Chinese was taken down from the interviews and converted into English. The interviews took a total of 10 hours and 54 minutes.

2.3 Data Analysis

The present investigation employs the thematic analysis approach, which consists of six distinct phases, to examine the unprocessed data and transform it into meaningful outcomes. Because of its evolution and the seamless transitions between its stages, the six-stage process is best described as gradual and suggestive. The mentioned methodology entails a process of reviewing previously gathered data, creating codes, identifying themes, re-evaluating themes, defining stated themes, coding, and ultimately, presenting the findings (Braun and Clarke 2006). The findings of this study provide guidelines for applying CBT to the process of achieving sustainable growth. These suggestions are based on a thorough review of the relevant literature, as well as interviews and field observations conducted by the researcher. The target of these recommendations is to effectively address the challenges that have been identified in this area.

Figure 1. Thematic Network



Source: Author

3. Research Finding and Discussion

As represented in Figure 1, interviews and field observation revealed three prominent themes in Hebian Village and indicated that the village have obstacles related to tourism sustainable development need to face in the post COVID-19 era. These include Potentials, Challenges, and Suggestions. Undoubtedly, Hebian Village with the aid of the targeted poverty alleviation policy proposed by the central government of China, Hebian Village has overcome extreme poverty. Rural tourism is developing rapidly in the area, and how to utilize its own advantages to increase the income of local people and achieve sustainable development of tourism and economy has become a focus of attention. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic, it has become a big challenge for tourism sustainable development of Hebian Village. Despite the limited scope of this study, the data sources delivered a diverse and intriguing range of results. These findings are related to the research question.

3.1 What is the Potential for the Sustainable Development of Community-Based Tourism in Hebian Village?

Hebian Village shown the potentials it acquired toward own plenty of natural resources and also possess diversity of cultural resources, including the following:

- 1) Plenty of Natural Resources

The data gathered from interviews conducted between researchers and participants suggests that the prosperous growth of tourism in the region is predominantly dependent on the availability of sufficient natural resources such as tropical rainforests, rivers, and the like. For example, *"The main reason we come here for tourism is to be deeply attracted by the natural scenery here. We feel very relaxed here, which is a pleasant feeling that is difficult to describe."* (Interviewees J and K)

On top of that, all respondents are convinced that the local population has developed a strong awareness of the need of environmental protection. For example, *"Our community not only lifted itself out of poverty through the government's targeted poverty alleviation policies but also helped local people establish a strong environmental awareness."* (Interviewees A, B, and C)

2) Diversity of Cultural Resources

All respondents, by means of interviews and field observations, confirmed the researchers' conclusions that the local culture is diverse. For example, *"My homestay's ability to consistently draw visitors stems from its distinctive architectural design and the incorporation of genuine ethnic minority culture. Our whole neighborhood has done a wonderful job of keeping our local minority culture alive and strong."* (Interviewee G)

Lee (2013) noted that tourists may see demonstrations of the local customs and culture that have been revitalized in indigenous communities. The specific situation of Hebian Village clearly confirms this point. Moreover, locals' increased awareness of environmental issues is a direct result of the region's abundance of natural assets, diverse topography, stunning landscapes, and endemic biodiversity (Lee 2013; Lee and Jan 2019). Since CBT promotes in community development and therefore helps ensure the long-term sustainability of communities, it plays a crucial role in poverty reduction (Lee and Jan 2019). Based on the above viewpoints, combined with interview and field observation in Hebian Village, it can be seen that the village is located in a beautiful natural setting, with lush forests, rice paddies, and tea plantations. The village also possesses unique cultural resources, such as the Miao and Yi traditional costumes, the local food, and the handicrafts. The community members are aware of the importance of resource conservation and are taking measures to protect the environment and cultural heritage. The findings show that the residents of Hebian Village have developed a keen understanding of their responsibility for preserving their environment, and that the area is blessed with a wealth of natural resources and cultural diversity. The potential for growth and sustainability in community-based tourism is substantial in Hebian Village.

3.2 What are the Challenges of Community-Based Tourism Sustainable Development that the Hebian Village Faces?

Hebian Village is an excellent instance of rural tourism growth in the region, although it has various issues related to CBT sustainable development.

1) The Crisis of COVID-19

Researchers have found through on-the-ground observations that the effects of the epidemic have had a catastrophic impact on tourism in the entire riverside village. Very few domestic tourists now visit, and most tourism-related facilities, such as restaurants and homestays, are either closed or operating at lower levels. For example, *"Since the beginning of the pandemic, the number of visitors visiting our town has dropped dramatically. I truly wish the outbreak will end soon because business at my tea house has dried up."* (Interviewee H)

It was pointed out in the interview that since the outbreak, locals have lost their main source of income from tourism and must now depend on traditional agricultural revenue and government assistance to sustain their livelihoods. For example, *"The epidemic has completely changed my life, without tourism income. Traditional farming and livestock raising provide the majority of our income. We hope that the epidemic will end soon."* (Interviewees D, E and F)

According to Qiao *et al.* (2023), the tourist industry's crisis management literature was analyzed in depth from 2008 to 2022. As can be seen, the tourist sector worldwide has taken a major hit, and Hebian Village is definitely no exception. The Hebian Village pandemic is a microcosm of much larger societal issues, and they merit contemplation. Ritchie (2009) argued that the three pillars of effective crisis and disaster management are planning and preparation before a crisis or disaster happens, using response strategies during a crisis or disaster, and reviewing and strengthening after a crisis or catastrophe. To ensure a speedy recovery, decrease the impact of catastrophes, and maintain long-term growth in the community tourism industry, preventative steps are essential.

2) Community Participation

It has been determined via interviews that all the residents questioned feel some responsibility for contributing to the growth of community tourism. One of the interviewees mentioned that *"Since our village began*

to develop tourism, the entire village has been involved. Young people can serve as tour guides and sometimes take tourists on foot to the forest. Elder people, some of whom operate homestays and others operate restaurants, can say that after developing tourism, our income has increased and our living standards have greatly improved." (Interviewee F)

While locals increase their income through tourism development, respondents also raise some of their concerns. For example, *"We feel that the current development of community tourism is very fragile, especially after the outbreak of the epidemic, and we have lost our tourism income. We are concerned that even if the epidemic ends, tourism will find it difficult to recover from before."* (Interviewees B and C) The interviewed tourism experts also expressed their views on this, *"believing that villagers have a high enthusiasm for tourism development but lack professional knowledge such as tourism-related skills, an understanding of the tourism market, and the promotion of tourism products."* (Interviewee L)

The research results show that the community members have strong attachment to their cultural heritage and natural environment and are enthusiastic about developing tourism while preserving their traditional way of life. Also, the community members are involved in various aspects of tourism development, such as providing homestay accommodation, guiding tours, and selling local products. However, the community members face challenges in terms of skills and capacity building, marketing and promotion. These challenges contradict line with López-Guzmán, Sánchez-Cañizares, and Pavón (2011) claim that the most obvious advantage of CBT is its economic impact on family, social, and economic progress, as well as sustainable lifestyle diversity.

3) Market Orientation

The findings of interviews between interviewees and researchers indicated that the village offers a unique cultural and natural experience for tourists, but the tourism products and services need to meet the expectations and preferences of the target market. For example, *"Nearly all the prerequisites are established in our hometown for the growth of tourism, but we are unsure about the market's demands—especially once the epidemic has gone and consumer habits and behavior have undoubtedly changed. Regarding the future growth of tourism, we are quite concerned."* (Interviewees D, E, F, and I) Additionally, the visitors who were questioned said that *"We came here for tourism since it was one of the few gorgeous areas that had remained open during the pandemic, and the local natural environment is quite stunning. After the pandemic, we are uncertain if we will return for tourism."* (Interviewees J and K)

The research findings reveal that there is a need for market research and analysis, product and service innovation, and quality control and assurance. The community members face challenges in terms of accessing market information, meeting the standards and expectations of the target market, and competing with other destinations. Lee (2013), Ohe (2008), Ohe and Ohe (2020), Ohe and Kurihara (2013), Lee and Jan (2019), and others have argued that by providing educational opportunities and agricultural activities, CBT executives can increase visitor satisfaction and develop novel sources of income in particular rural areas, thus encouraging economic sustainability. This shows that local communities, in order to keep their tourist industries thriving, need to be aware of consumer preferences. In order to stay competitive, tourist businesses must respond to changing consumer preferences and demands.

4) Government Support

The research findings evident that government support is necessary for the development of CBT in Hebian Village. The government plays a crucial role in providing policy, regulatory, and financial support for tourism development. For example, *"We need government assistance to continue living here. We were able to get out of poverty with the aid of the government a few years ago, and they have since helped us expand our rural tourist industry. Our level of life has risen dramatically."* (Interviewees C, D, E, F, and I) Alterations to community facilities were cited by other responders as well. He said that *"the government's efforts to alleviate poverty in certain areas had resulted in new asphalt roads, upgraded water infrastructure, and updated public restrooms. All of these have helped pave the way for the growth of the tourist industry."* (Interviewee B) Some respondents expressed their thoughts on the government's actions, of course. For instance, *"Our household contributes to the growth of community tourism, but our earnings from this endeavor are modest because of our restricted means. It does not seem that the government's current initiatives will address our concerns."* (Interviewee F) Some have even hypothesized that *"we lost all tourist revenue while the outbreak was going on. I'm concerned that, despite the government's subsidies, we won't have enough to see us through the pandemic."* (Interviewee E)

The research findings promote that the government has recognized the potential of CBT in Hebian Village and has provided policy and financial support for tourism development. The government has also provided infrastructure and facilities, such as roads, water supply, and public toilets, to support tourism development. It is perfect match with Brunt and Courtney (1999) stated, the CBT improves the quality of life in communities by

bolstering infrastructure including public services, transportation, landscaping, and entertainment options. Local people and visitors become more aware of the need of maintaining the natural environment as a result of the exploitation of natural resources, the presence of scenic areas, and the presence of rare species of animals and flora. Woo, Kim, and Uysal (2015), and Choi and Sirakaya (2006) state that they have examined at economic, social-cultural, environmental, and life-satisfaction sustainability to determine whether or not CBT will be there in the future. There has to be fairness in the distribution of the country's economic benefits (Lee and Jan 2019). However, the government faces challenges in terms of balancing tourism development with promoting sustainable tourism and ensuring the equitable distribution of benefits among the community members.

3.3 What are the Barriers Must be Overcome for Hebian Village's Community-Based Tourism Sustainable Development after the COVID-19 Era?

Answering this question, it should be collaborating research question 1 and 2. The research recommends several suggestions to tackle the challenge of CBT sustainable development in Post COVID-19 in Hebian Village and other rural communities in China. These suggestions include:

- 1) Establishing and improving crisis handling and management mechanisms, so that when a crisis occurs, it can be safely overcome and quickly recovered after the crisis.
- 2) Strengthening community capacity building, including skills training, leadership development, and networking and collaboration. Give the locals the chance to keep learning new things so that they can understand the latest changes in the market. Especially in the post-pandemic period, staying ahead of the competition requires pooling individual strengths to produce tourist products that customers desire.
- 3) Improving marketing and promotion, including market research and analysis, product and service innovation, and quality control and assurance. Changes in consumer behavior and habits are inevitable in the wake of an epidemic. The locals may be fearful of tourist growth due to their lack of tourism knowledge and vulnerability. Expertise from the tourist sector and support from the government will be crucial.
- 4) Providing equitable and effective government support, including policy and regulatory support, financial support, and infrastructure and facilities development. The administration has obviously put forth a lot of effort into boosting tourism and the local economy, with positive results. However, advantages are still not equally distributed. To guarantee a somewhat transparent and equal distribution of benefits in the post-pandemic period, the government should increase regulatory efforts while giving financial assistance. Government efforts should be redirected from post-epidemic rehabilitation to ideological work for locals to calm their fears about the outbreak.
- 5) Fostering partnership and collaboration among stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, NGOs, and the community, to promote sustainable and inclusive CBT development.

Conclusion

The research concludes that CBT can be a sustainable and inclusive development approach for rural communities in China, particularly in the post COVID-19 era. With its COVID-19 crisis, community involvement, market orientation, and government assistance, Hebian Village is a model of effective CBT development. The research findings suggest that CBT development in Hebian Village has brought economic benefits, improved infrastructure, and enhanced cultural preservation and environmental protection. However, the research also identifies challenges and limitations in terms of crisis management, skills and capacity building, marketing and promotion, and government support. The research has several limitations, which provide opportunities for future research. First, the research is based on a case study of Hebian Village, which may not be representative of other rural communities in China. Further research is needed to compare and generalize the findings to other contexts. Second, the research uses qualitative methods, which may be subject to researcher bias and limited generalizability. Further research is needed to use quantitative methods to validate the findings and enhance the reliability and validity of the research. Third, the research focuses on the domestic tourists, without considering the perspective of international visitors. Further research is needed to include the perspectives of both international and national tourists to assess their satisfaction and impact on the community and the environment.

In conclusion, the research contributes to the literature on CBT sustainable development in China, especially in the post COVID-19 era. The research provides insights into the key elements of sustainable CBT development and the challenges and potentials of tourism development in rural communities. The study recommends suggestions to promote sustainable and inclusive CBT development and identifies limitations and opportunities for future research.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Mingjing Qu: As the corresponding author, Mr. Qu, played a pivotal role in the research and drafting of the manuscript. His contributions included Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Data curation, and Writing – original draft. He also contributed to the Validation, Visualization, and Writing – review and editing processes, ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

Wong Ming Wong: He actively shared thoughts and refined the Methodology to achieve strong trial design. He selected and optimized project software for exact data analysis using his knowledge. Mr. Wong was passionate about Data curation, ensuring high-quality, well-organized data. He engaged himself in Validation, ensuring the study's legitimacy and replicability.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors of this work declare possible conflicts of interest: **Financial Interests:** None of the authors have financial interests that potentially conflict with this study. **Personal Relationships:** None of the authors have personal ties or affiliations that might bias this paper's conclusions. Accordingly, we confirm that no known conflicting financial interests or personal relationships might have influenced this paper's work.

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