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The Influencing Factors of Sustainable Agriculture Tourism in the Farmhouses of Hainan, China

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors that affect sustainable tourism practices in rural communities in Hainan Province, China. The theoretical perspective of social exchange theory is typically structured with a well-defined dimension. Previous research has not underlined the importance of investigating new factors influencing sustainable tourism. This study takes a qualitative approach, employing in-depth interview techniques, with 14 Shi Cha Village villagers interviewed in-depth, and the data is analyzed using Nvivo12 software. The model of sustainable development of agricultural community tourism is established based on the qualitative findings. The findings show that Shicha Village, as a rural tourism destination, has abundant natural and profound cultural resources, which are the primary conditions for tourism development. Brand development is an unavoidable option for increasing the community's popularity and ensuring the long-term development of tourism. This study adds three new variables to the Social Exchange Theory: brand, policy, and leadership. The research findings have practical implications for rural tourism decision-makers and managers.

Keywords: Agro-tourism, factors, Social Exchange Theory, sustainable development

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an activity that connects the economy, society, and nature (Siakwah et al., 2020). Towner (1995) researched the

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history of tourism and found that tourism starts with the wealthy, from the leisurely life of the ancient Greeks and Romans (Brata et al., 2018). Tourism flourished during the Renaissance (Aikaterini et al., 2001). In the 17th and 18th centuries, spas and seaside resorts developed rapidly. In the mid-20th century, the development of the aviation industry accelerated tourism development. Hainan province is in the Hainan Island, the second-largest island in China (Alam, 2022; Sumra et al., 2020). It has a land area of 35354 sq. km and a population of 9.2576 million in 2017.

Hainanese community's unique characteristics and culture helped transform Hainan Island into an international free-trade zone and free port (Shuiyu, 2018). Hainan's tourism revenue reached RMB81, it includes 119 billion Yuan, accounting for 18.2% of the province's GDP of RMB446.254 billion Yuan, with year-on-year growth of 20.81% in 2017 (Baochang, 2020). Hainan is rich in natural resources. A survey on the classification of tourism resources found that Hainan has all the main categories of natural tourism resources. This includes a coastline as long as 1528 km, sand banks accounting for about 50%–60%, 81 peaks above 1,000 m above sea level, dozens of rivers, and volcanic hot springs all over the island.

The policy to transform Hainan into an international tourism destination gained traction in 2010 when the growth of international tourists exceeded 20% for two consecutive years compared to none in the previous two years (Adom, 2016). From 2013 to 2015, due to the gradual weakening of the role of policy stimulus, there was a negative growth in international tourist volume. In 2014 it stood at -13.16% (Alam & Bahrein, 2021). In 2017, the number of tourists in Hainan reached 55.9143 million, with foreign tourists accounting for only 2%. The revenue of our international tourists was around USD681 million, which accounted for 5.5% of the total tourism revenue at RMB 81.119 billion (Aquino et al., 2018).

Therefore, there is great potential for developing the international tourism market. Yan (2014) contends that rural tourism is the point of breakthrough for tourism in Hainan (Alam & Kuppusamy, 2023). Although insufficient knowledge exists, tourism has played a leading role in solving the SDGs here. For example, tourism can be an essential tool to achieve SDG 1: poverty eradication (Siakwah et al., 2020); the achievement of zero hunger in SDG 2: good health and well-being; SDG 3: quality education; SDG 4: decent work and economic growth; SDG 8: significant efforts in the industry, innovation, and infrastructure; and SDG 9: tourism as a leading role (Kaitano, 2020).

Hainan tourism development is followed by issues such as too many visitors on weekends, poor service quality, too few visitors at other times, and a low workload of service staff. With fewer repeat customers, some farms have been operating for some time and become unviable, resulting in wasted resources and environmental damage. The paper's specific objectives are to address the issues

of tourism development, which include lack of holistic planning, difficulty in farm operation, and the contradiction between farms and villagers (Dube & Nhamo, 2021). Tourism moves in a sustainable direction, making it a tool for promoting social and economic development and a balance of social, economic, and environmental interests (Baidal, 2004; Park et al., 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism plays a vital role in developing many areas in both developed and developing countries in terms of capacity building (Guaita Martínez et al, 2019). It includes natural, cultural, human and financial elements with the community resources, and community development is interrelated with sustainable agro-tourism for social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability (Sumra et al., 2022). Rural tourism was first identified as a specific tourism activity in 1994, and to a certain extent, it explored the process and challenges of integrating tourism into sustainable rural development (Sharpley & Roberts, 2004). Existing livelihood resources are used to generate additional income without significant other input, and tourism has therefore been identified as an effective catalyst for rural development and revitalization. Hagedorn (2014) points out that tourists, rural tourism operators, enterprises, local communities and various organizations and institutions (including governments) are often significantly distinct.

Wang et al. (2008) and Kunasekaran et al. (2011) argue that developing cultural heritage tourism, or agro-tourism in rural areas, can bring huge social, economic, and environmental impacts. It includes rural communities and surrounding areas, regardless of the quality of features, attractions, products, and services. Lee and Jan (2019) show that although previous studies have suggested that community-based tourism is widely believed to have the ability to boost local economies (Kunasekaran et al., 2012), many countries and regions have adopted it. Woosnam et al.'s (2018) reflections on the tourism experience of Galveston residents found that those with a history of tourism support and contribute more to community tourism development. Made et al. (2018a) used quantitative research to examine the perceived positive impact of local residents' support for coastal tourism development and planning.

Muresan et al. (2016) studied a rural area of Romania where the support for sustainable tourism development is excellent as it is subjected to the policymakers and tourists paying attention to residents' concerns and beliefs. The adverse effects of tourism on the community cause a lower societal inclination to participate in tourism development programs (Franzidis., 2019). The positive outcomes increase the support and reach projects' goals for similar tourism-related outcomes. Agricultural tourism has been considered an essential part of rural tourism (Bachok et al., 2019).

Tourism elements promote regional and local economic development by creating area jobs and increasing community tourism spending (Chang et al., 2018). Empowering local communities is one of the fundamental goals of sustainable tourism, based on involving local communities in planning

and decision-making, in consultation with stakeholders, for the management and future development of tourism in the region (Mustafa & Tayeh, 2011). The interests of individuals or groups increase, so does the support of community residents for tourism, and vice versa. It suggests that local tourism is still developing and that the local population is making tourism economically important in the future (in addition to traditional agricultural production) (Petrovic et al., 2016). Chen (2014) studied the influence of tourism development on the local social culture in Xi Shuang ban na, Yunnan, China. The results showed that spiritual culture remains relatively unchanged from generation to generation. Fan et al. (2015) discussed the impacts of different types of operators operating pastoral tourism in China on local society, economy, perception, and grassland ecosystem are discussed. Li et al. (2019) reflect on the Furong village, a typical ancient village in Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province, China. It is unfolding that tourism development in historical villages is due to authenticity and the quality of experience that affects the tourists' value perception and willingness to travel (Alam, 2022; Sumra et al., 2022). In 2016, the number of rural tourists in China reached 1.36 billion, the income from rural tourism reached 400 billion Yuan, and the number of households engaged in rural tourism reached 2 million.

Driven by the demand, social capital investment is active (Sumra et al., 2020). In 2003, the investment in leisure agriculture and rural tourism in China reached 96 billion Yuan, which increased to 160 billion Yuan in 2014, 260 billion Yuan in 2015, and 300 billion Yuan in 2016, with an average annual growth rate of 47% (Zhang et al., 2017). A large number of famous village scenes have sprung up in recent years, such as Wuyuan in Jiangxi, Anji in Zhejiang, Longsheng Terrace in Guilin and Yuanyang Terrace in Yunnan. The integration of tourism and agriculture, as provided in Figure 1, is the significant promoting effect of agricultural tourism on the economic development of poor areas and is conducive to the economic development of rural areas (Lu & Li, 2021).

Theoretical Perspective

Social exchange theory (SET) is justified as an appropriate framework for understanding residents' views on tourism. Homans (1958) introduced the theory of social exchange. It provides the belief that egoism, seeking advantages, and avoiding disadvantages are the basic principles of human behavior. The exchange behavior itself becomes a relative gain and loss because everyone wants to get the maximum benefit in exchange (Wang et al., 2022). The size of the investment and the benefits are roughly equally distributed for individuals. Emerson (1976) developed the social exchange theory. Emerson (1976) agreed that social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations. Thus, in this study, SET is used as the anchor to explore the extent of sustainable development of agro-tourism in Hainan, China. The three main dimensions measured are economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Table 1).

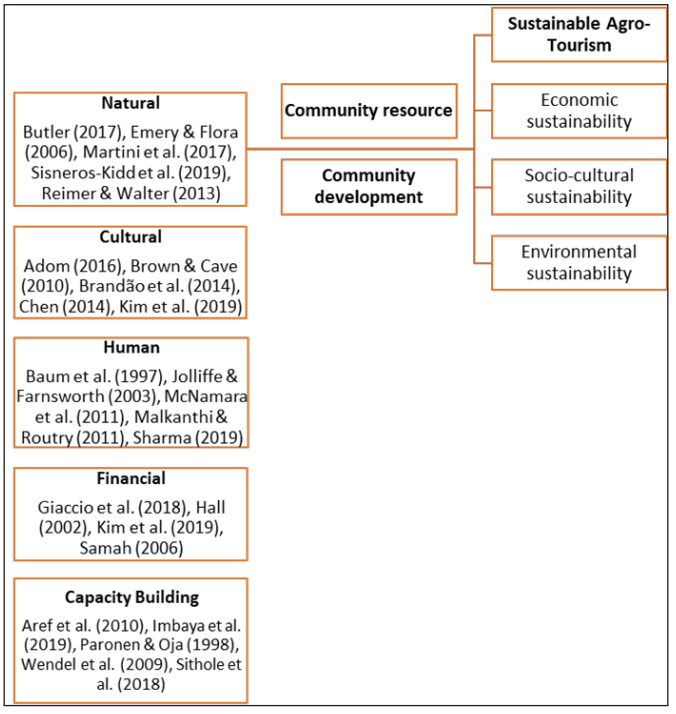


Figure 1. Conceptual framework
Source: Authors' work

Table 1
Application of social exchange theory in agri-tourism research

Author	Research topics
Andereck et al. (2005); Wang & Pfister (2008)	Residents' attitudes toward tourism
Ap (1992); Bachok et al. (2019); Baochang, 2020; Dube & Nhamo (2021); Lee & Jan (2019); Wardana et al. (2018b)	Residents' perceptions of tourism
Andereck et al. (2005); Brida et al. (2011); Franzidis (2019); Saunders et al. (2019)	Residents' perceptions of community tourism impacts

Source: Authors' work

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the framework of agri-tourism community development research and business and management research, seven theoretical elements are used in a constructivist approach. In this study, interpretation is the most appropriate paradigm to understand the factors affecting the sustainable development of rural tourism destinations. The inductive research approach explores the impact of resource dimensions such as nature, culture, human resources, finance, infrastructure, and community development dimensions such as community participation, empowerment, and government support on sustainable agri-tourism. It is also an exploratory study to understand the factors influencing the development of sustainable agricultural tourism in rural areas of Hainan province, China. Through an in-depth

analysis of selected villages with a high degree of tourism development, we can understand residents' awareness of tourism development, as well as their feelings and thoughts on specific situations. In this study, the villagers of Shicha village were considered major stakeholders in the local tourism industry. This research is inductive in nature to carry out the issues for practical problems, followed by a statistical procedure.

This research adopts the case study method to explore the factors that affect the sustainable development of agricultural tourism in Hainan. It is to influence the sustainable development of tourism destinations conducted from stakeholders' perspectives (Noorhayati et al., 2016). The villagers conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews to obtain rich information and profound views and perceptions on the key attributes affecting tourism development in Hainan. The interview took more than three months, from December 2020 to April 2021. Before each interview, the interviewees would be provided with a confidentiality statement to describe the purpose of the research. If the interviewee agrees, each interview will last about 1 hour. Qualitative data analysis techniques include thematic analysis, template analysis, interpretation construction and testing, grounded theory method, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, data display and analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). Subject analysis provides a systematic, flexible, and accessible way to analyze qualitative data. It systematically provides an orderly and logical way to analyze qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data collected during the interview were coded and analyzed using Nvivo12, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software considered an essential tool for qualitative data analysis. Shicha village tourism development characteristics, including their culture and industry, are also explored in detail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Shicha village has 652 households and a population of 3116 people. The villagers have lived here for generations and have the Chinese people's diligence, kindness, and charity virtues. Under the government's leadership, the eight communities created the "One Village, One Product" project, which means that each community has its unique tourism project (Table 2).

Table 2
Communities' tourism development characteristics

Community	Feature
Meishe	Homestay
Ruhuang	Volcanic hot springs
Chuncang	Leisure cycling
Wuhong	Dendrobium planting and visiting
Bofu	Volcano food
Meifu	Family precepts
Guoqun	Dendrobium planting and visiting
Guanliang	Root carving

Source: Authors' work

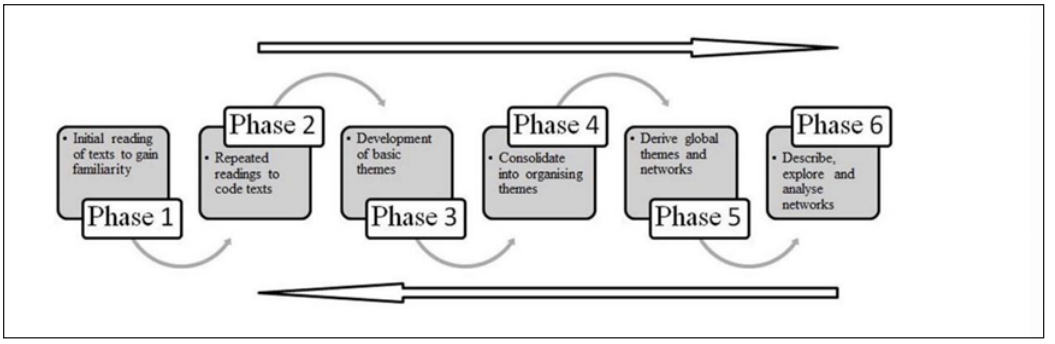


Figure 2. Iterative Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2016)

As shown in Figure 2, the visualization of the topic of development status. A total of 14 respondents were interviewed using theoretical and snowball sampling. Theoretical saturation was noted at Respondent 14, and the interview process ended. Two topics emerged from the data analysis. The themes identified by the interviewees are (1) the advantages of developing agro-tourism, (2) the fact that the development of agricultural tourism has a positive effect on rural development, and (3) the problems in the process of developing agricultural tourism. These themes are also consistent with the research results and the development of the framework, as provided in Figure 4. The study found that the analysis of these current topics resulted from relevant interviews and past research.

As shown in Figure 3, Theme 1 is developing agricultural tourism advantage, which follows selling agricultural products at higher prices, constructing modern agricultural and industrial parks, and reducing labor hours by adopting a broader system. As provided by respondent 1: *"Now that tourism has developed in the village, I don't need to work very hard outside every day. I can work in a homestay and do hygiene. I can go home and sleep at noon. I think my friends can easily find jobs in the village and have more opportunities to make*

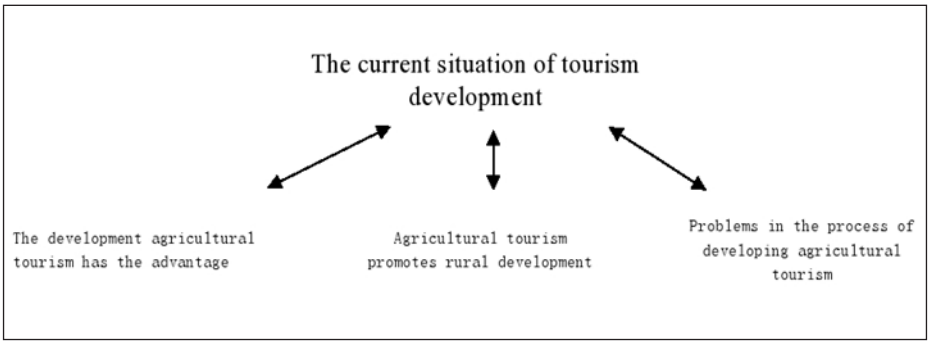


Figure 3. Agricultural tourism development in Shicha Village
Source: Authors' work

money. In a word, they are much better than before and enjoy their current life more."

Themes	Memo (Personal Reflections)
Selling agricultural products at higher prices	Respondents 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 12 mentioned that local characteristic agricultural products are very popular among consumers and are not sold through ordinary channels.
Construction of modern agricultural industrial parks started	Almost all the interviewees knew about the local characteristic industry, the Dendrobium Nobile Lindl industry, the leading industry introduced by the local government at a considerable cost and a local banner.
Reduce labor hours by adopting a broader system.	Because of tourism development, intensive management has been produced, making the farmers who used to be busy in the land from farming.

It provides the development of agricultural tourism with a specific driving effect on the economy. It includes the rural development from a simple primary industry to the second and third industry push. The respondents 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 12 mentioned that local characteristic agricultural products are very popular among consumers and are not sold through ordinary channels. It shows the local characteristic industry, the Dendrobium Nobile Lindl industry, the leading industry introduced by the local government at a considerable cost. Respondent 5 indicates, *"I sell local agricultural produce in my restaurant, such as fresh vegetables, ginger, cassava, whole grain, and local fruits."*

Themes	Memo (Personal Reflections)
Create communication and entertainment spaces for residents and visitors	Respondents 1 and 3 said they had established a friendly relationships with tourists. Interviewees 10 and 11 were often invited to perform.
Protection of farmland	Respondent 8 proved that farmland was protected from a negative perspective.
Diversification of household income	The development of tourism can provide people with income in addition to their primary job.
Environmental governance has been improved.	The improvement of environmental improvement was evident, highlighted by respondents 3, 4, 5, and 8.

Respondent 8 thinks that people are getting lazier and lazier and do not like agriculture, leading to the abandonment of many primitive farmlands. He says young people today cannot even plant rice or weed. But respondent 5 said, *"There are five people in my family: my wife, my brother and his wife, and my sister don't do other jobs. The jobs of the five of us are all here, and our income comes from here, and the income from here can support our families. It is more than the income from farming before."*

The analysis is further supported by Respondent 12's observation: *"I had stopped doing farm work for a long time, but*

my family still had farmland, but it was my parents who planted the land and only grew vegetables." The vegetables at restaurants are grown by respondents because of their fresh, organic character, and they are now one of the hallmarks of tourism restaurants. She earns about 500,000 Yuan a year from running a restaurant, far more than farming.

Themes	Memo (Personal Reflections)
Villager' living resources have been squeezed	Many interviewees mentioned the problem of crowding out tourism development resources, and interviewees 1, 4, and 12 were more specific.
Tourist facilities are not complete	Almost no one mentions that the village has almost no facilities for visitors
The problem of land ownership has restricted the development of tourism	Respondents 9 and 13 mentioned this question, as did Ms. Zhong Jingjing

The new factors influencing community development and tourism support are the role of branding and the dimensions of capacity building. Sithole et al. (2018) believe that community capacity building is necessary for tourism development to improve the benefits of tourism to local communities. The responses and themes are developed using qualitative research to develop a sustainable agro-tourism model.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the interviews aim to answer the study's research objectives. At this stage, the data analysis outcome and theoretical triangulation show the importance of research. Triangulation provides cross-validation of findings by allowing the strengths of one approach to address the limitations. Detailed analysis of these stages helps to improve the rigor of qualitative research. Based on the narration of Shicha

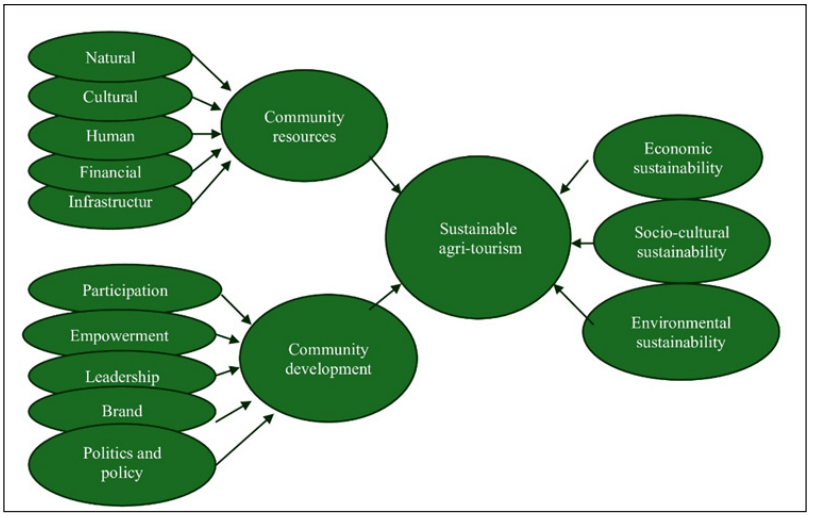


Figure 4. Sustainable agriculture tourism model
Source: Authors' work

village residents' experience, they are the witnesses and builders of the sustainable tourism development process of Shicha village. The qualitative techniques used in this study attempted to understand the complexity of factors affecting sustainable tourism in Shicha village. The developed and featured agricultural products are supported by local products such as Shishan goat, black bean curd, dendrobium and cat beard grass, which the outside world has recognized because of tourism development. Yang (2021) supported the idea that with the continuous efforts of rural operations and service personnel across the country, we have gradually explored a road of characteristic rural industry integrating agricultural planting, product processing, tourism, and leisure experience.

The current situation of farmers in Shicha Village is consistent with the above research. Many young and strong farmers are no longer engaged in agricultural production. Instead, they are engaged in catering, homestay, hand carving, waiters, staff, and other occupations. The investigation found no people in absolute poverty in the village; that is, the population whose annual per capita net income of farmers is less than 865 Yuan (2020 standard).

The architectural culture and the local opera and music culture of Shicha Village are well preserved. Respondent 10 said they cannot play many tunes in the current 8-tune. However, with tourism development in Shicha Village, more and more villagers are confident in their culture. Modern civilization has not completely banned local wedding customs and funeral customs. Natural capital is the basic resource for the long-term development of tourism. Although Shicha village has a naturally formed volcanic landform and a large area of forest, it must be protected and stabilized. At present, the village has prohibited logging, garbage management, and other measures so that it maintains a beautiful environment.

For theoretical implications, Government empowerment and community participation are necessary to ensure the sustainable development of tourism. It is worth mentioning that we found the influence of brand, policy, and leadership in this study. Leadership and policy are the social conditions for realizing sustainable tourism development. Brand development is the inevitable choice to improve community visibility and ensure sustainable tourism development in this region. The establishment of this model makes up for the lack of measuring the sustainable development of rural tourism in sustainable development. Therefore, this study established a model composed of multiple models: the Ladder Participation Model (Arnstein, 1969), The Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 2000), The Community Capital Model (Flora et al., 2018), The Brand Equity Model (Burmann et al., 2009) and The Leadership Model (Vroom & Jago, 2007). They are integrated to form a model affecting the sustainable development of agricultural tourism. The outcome is also clearly in line with Social Exchange Theory, stating that the villagers in Sicha involved in tourism support tourism development as it has positive economic, social and environmental impacts.

IVS	This study, YES	This study, NO	Emerging Variable
Participation Jannah et al. (2018); Moser (1989); Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar (2016); Saufi et al. (2014)	✓		
Empowerment Ahmad & Abu Talib (2015); Cole (2006); Khalid et al. (2019); Sutawa (2012); Timothy & Tosun (2003)	✓		
Capacity building Aref et al. (2010); Imbaya et al. (2019); Paronen &Oja (1998); Sithole et al. (2018); Wendel et al. (2009)		✓	
Culture Adom (2016); Brandão et al. (2014); Brown & Cave (2010); Chen (2014); Kim et al. (2019)	✓		
Infrastructure Bennett et al. (2012); Muresan et al. (2016); Singh (2013); Wardana et al. (2018a)	✓		
Nature Butler (2017); Emery & Flora (2006); Martini et al. (2017) Reimer & Walter (2013); Sisneros-Kidd et al. (2019)	✓		
Financial Giaccio et al. (2018); Hall (2002) Kim et al. (2019); Samah (2006)	✓		
Human Baum et al. (1997); Jolliffe & Farnsworth (2003); McNamara et al. (2011); Malkanthi et al. (2011); Sharma (2019)	✓		
Policies Ap (1992); Khalid et al. (2019); Shen et al. (2019); Valente et al. (2015)			✓
Brand Chen & Wu (2019); Liu et al. (2018); Pike (2005) Gartner (2014)**;** Murphy et al. (2007)			✓
Leadership Fang et al. (2020); Valente et al. (2015); Law et al. (2010) McGehee et al. (2015); Trudeau Poskas & Messer (2015)			

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

For practical implications, the government actively supports the formulation of policies, such as expanding residents' business scope, standardizing land use, formulating tourism development plans, and providing sufficient capital investment. Establishing a private brand is very important for the sustainable development of village tourism. The bank and financial departments are

introducing practical financial policies, and the government's financial subsidies are also an important guarantee to support the rapid development of tourism enterprises in Sicha.

The corresponding management and financial knowledge are also necessary. Many farmers' homestay and catering industries are developing swiftly because of the development of tourism. Hainan Provincial government has to formulate the corresponding tourism development policies with certain guiding significance for the work of the village committee and town government. The degree of community empowerment directly affects the degree of community participation. The government should further empower communities to give residents a sense of ownership.

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