Increasing attention has been given to historically and culturally significant traditional villages in China in the past five years. Two key themes have been protection and usage. Rural tourism has been recognized as a key approach to rural development and poverty alleviation. Through a systematic knowledge review, this paper proposes an integrative and sustainable Rural Tourism-based Traditional Village Revitalization model to better understand the relationship between rural tourism and village revitalization. Integrated Rural Tourism and Sustainable Livelihood theory and ideology are integrated in this model. A case study of the village of Yuanjia reveals that the model's three levels (material, social and spiritual) are effective pathways for successful village revitalization. Village leader-led or elite-led development realizes endogenous and bottom-up development rather than a top-down arrangement. Farmer Cooperative is a relatively equitable means of benefit distribution and community participation in China.

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collective ownership of land, and a binary urban-rural household register. Citizens and farmers have no power to engage in private land transactions, resulting in restrictions on changes of land ownership. The question of how to revitalize traditional villages has become a major academic and practical topic in China. Several Chinese villages have developed a rural tourism industry for years, whether due to external or endogenous forces. What kind of rural tourism is effective for village revitalization? This paper explores an ideal approach and constructs a sustainable tourism-based traditional village revitalization model. This model offers a better understanding of the relationship between local residents and village revitalization within a rural tourism context. It provides a unified framework for guiding work from an interdisciplinary perspective. To test the model, this paper uses Yuanjia Village in Shaanxi Province as a case study.

2. Literature review

2.1. Rural tourism as an effective approach to traditional village revitalization

The worldwide recession of rural areas is a general phenomenon resulting from industrial civilization. However, in the postmodern world, rural areas have more functions than just agricultural commodity production: they are sites of recreation, tourism, leisure, specialty food production, consumption and e-commerce (Saxena et al., 2007). Among their most important functions, they are a destination for rural tourism. As Lane and Kastenholz (2015) indicated, rural tourism existed since the late nineteenth century on the European and American continents, but the 1970s and 1980s saw “a new type of rural tourism which was driven by markets, by rural people and communities, and by governments no matter their status as scenic or protected areas.” Combining rurality with tourism is a relatively effective global development path. Rural tourism brings economic revenue and jobs; governments and researchers credit it with slowing down the population loss in rural areas (Augustyn, 1998; Fisher & Felsenstein, 2000). Although it has been defined in many different ways, rural tourism has two basic features: it employs rural inhabitants, and involves recycling and revalorizing existing rural infrastructure and heritage resources as tourist accommodations and attractions (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). Although Barbieri (2013) questions “the link between rural tourism and a sustainable valorized traditional countryside,” on the whole, rural tourism is still a vigorous trend throughout the world. It should not be understood merely as a type of tourism, but also as a tool for the conservation and regeneration of rural society and rural culture. In practice, the key issues are how to balance the needs and perspectives of different stakeholders and manage them equitably and efficiently.

Extensive research concerning tourism and villages, especially rural tourism already exists. By measuring the attitudes of local residents and their perceptions and involvement, tourism's effects on local communities can be analyzed (Lindberg, Dellaert, & Rassing, 1999; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Williams & Lawson, 2001). Visitor satisfaction with the tourism experience has also been measured in many different ways, rural tourism has two basic features: it employs rural inhabitants, and involves recycling and revalorizing existing rural infrastructure and heritage resources as tourist accommodations and attractions (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). Although Barbieri (2013) questions “the link between rural tourism and a sustainable valorized traditional countryside,” on the whole, rural tourism is still a vigorous trend throughout the world. It should not be understood merely as a type of tourism, but also as a tool for the conservation and regeneration of rural society and rural culture. In practice, the key issues are how to balance the needs and perspectives of different stakeholders and manage them equitably and efficiently.

As both a theory and an approach, IRT leads to more sustainable tourism than other forms of tourism because it can create powerful network connections between social, cultural, economic and environmental resources. IRT builds practical ways of thinking about improving linkages between tourism and local and regional resources, activities, products and communities in light of changing trends in tourism demands (Saxena et al., 2007). To conceptualize this notion, seven dimensions of integration have been identified: scale, sustainability, networking, endogeneity, embeddedness,
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