

# POVERTY AND PROSPERITY

# BRIDGING TOURISM THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Recognizing the increasing gap between what is researched in academic community and what is practiced in industry, this series aims to bring together academic and industry leaders in their respective fields to discuss, exchange, and debate issues critical to the advancement of tourism. The book series intends to not only create a platform for academics and practitioners to share theories and practices with each other, but more importantly, to serve as a collaborative venue for meaningful synthesis.

Each volume will feature a distinct theme by focusing on a current or upcoming niche or “hot” topic. It shows how theories and practices inform each other; how both have evolved, advanced, and been applied; and how industry best practices have benefited from, and contributed to, theoretical developments. Volume editors have both strong academic credentials and significant consulting or other industry engagement experiences. Chapter contributors will be identified through professional conferences and trade conventions. In general, the book series seeks a synergy of how concepts can inform actions, and vice versa. The book series will inspire a new generation of researchers who can translate academic discoveries to deliverable results valuable to practitioners.

BRIDGING TOURISM THEORY AND PRACTICE  
Volume 13

# POVERTY AND PROSPERITY: TOURISM IN RURAL CHINA

BY

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And

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## PREFACE

This book tells a story, along with reflections, of poverty alleviation through tourism in a rural village in South China. Situated within the discourse and a context of knowledge theoretically informed by poverty and rural community development, the 40-year evolution of tourism in Shuiji Village of Taining County in Northwest Fujian Province serves as an illustrative case. It relates to, often lends support of, and occasionally interrogates contemporary discussions on poverty alleviations through tourism in rural community development in terms of production and subsistence, economic and social structure, ecological environment, and lifestyles and livelihood.

As natives of Fujian Province, the village for this ethnographic field research is felt, in a way, as the “home” to both authors due to geographical and cultural proximities, interactions and iterations of insider–outsider views, and prolonged engagement in the study site for this undertaking in particular. The case study found that, over the years, elite groups such as village leaders and administrators, tourism business pioneers and owners, active and cooperative villagers, and tourism entrepreneurs have been the dominant force in fostering rural community development. In the meantime, they are also seen as major hindrances to initiatives or decisions in implementing rural tourism. In this process, government interventions often act as a stabilizer of rural community development in balancing tangible and intangible resources, easing structural differentiations, and overseeing the allocation of benefits from tourism for the disadvantaged/underprivileged groups.

As reflected in the discussion chapters, tourism development has brought positive impacts on villagers’ material life, their lifestyles and capabilities for better living, as well as their attachment to and emotional connections with their homeplace. The study also reveals generational differences in their perceptions of lifestyles or satisfaction with their life in the rural village. Moreover, the differences between the advantaged and the disadvantaged groups have reflected varying levels of alleviation in the rural community, where tourism-induced development may have unknowingly accelerated a stratification of social class in the village. As a synthesis of this qualitative case study, a collaborative development model was generated to account for villagers’ motivations for self-development, the establishment of a rural community system in the village, the intervention from the government for market regulations and conflict resolutions, and stakeholder collaborations aiming at sustainable livelihood through tourism.

Notwithstanding, in the wisdom of Taoism, “having and non-having [could] produce each other” (有无相生). While tourism development over the years has

helped in the elimination of absolute poverty in the study village, the return of poverty or relative poverty could continue to be an issue for future stakeholder collaborations and rural community governance. Young people tend to leave their home village as a result of a growing disparity of power and a lack of opportunity for personal or career development in their homeplace. In a comparative lens and in search for sustainable livelihood in the rural community, while the myth of poverty alleviation through tourism is often eulogized or narrated in different localities, its inability or lack of potential in preventing a rural village from getting “empty” with only aged villagers staying behind will be issues for future inquiries in rural community development studies.

Finally, in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of “end[ing] poverty in all its forms everywhere” by 2030, this study offers a tourism context from a developing economy for readers to compare and contrast with instances of poverty alleviation in rural communities from other jurisdictions. Thus, questions such as to what extent this book could engage dialogues from outside tourism or from beyond the case study society will be happily left to the readers. Moreover, while the peculiarities or particularities of an ethnographic undertaking could often lie beyond the power of language to describe or beyond the intellectual capacity of the researchers to synthesize, the delight for the authors, along with vexations and challenges, is to make the story open to interpretation and criticism. Nonetheless, any errors are those of the authors.

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