

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Realizing common prosperity: The action logic of social entrepreneurship community mobilization in rural tourism

Yan Zhang¹, Hong Xu^{1*}, Rongrong Jia¹, Hongyan Yang¹, and Caicai Wang²

The effective participation of rural residents in tourism social entrepreneurship can improve their quality of life and promote community transformation. Hence, it is important to understand the strategies and process of community mobilization by social entrepreneurs. This study focuses on the strategy of village cadre, who play the dual roles of an entrepreneur and a policy implementer to mobilize community residents to participate in collective tourism entrepreneurship and the mechanism for changing residents' attitudes in a rural China context, by using the longitudinal research method of nonparticipatory observation and 50 interviews conducted in Yuanjia Village, Shaanxi Province. The results show that the community mobilization of social entrepreneurs has not been accomplished overnight but has undergone a 3-stage dynamic process of change. These results indicate that social enterprises should incorporate indigenous people into their value network in the early stage of tourism development and continue to explore the mechanism of affiliating residents with benefits, so as to further increase residents' in-depth participation. Residents play the dual roles of producer and collaborator in tourism social entrepreneurship and work with social entrepreneurs to promote the sustainable development of rural tourism and achieve common prosperity.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, Persuasion and attitude change model, Common prosperity, Rural tourism in China

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a hybrid business model based on both business and social welfare logic and is often a catalyst for social change (Zahra et al., 2009). Many studies have concluded that tourism provides fertile soil for social entrepreneurship activities (Aquino et al., 2018; Mottiar et al., 2018; Liu and Huang, 2020). Studies have shown that tourism social enterprises acquire and mobilize resources from the external environment by adopting strategies, such as stakeholder participation and collaboration (Peng and Lin, 2016), community empowerment (McCarthy, 2012), and social patchwork (Jørgensen et al., 2021) to overcome wider social challenges. Collective action aimed at residents' benefit and community transformation is seen to generate dual economic and social value (Sloan et al., 2014; Altinay et al., 2016; Jørgensen et al., 2021), especially in rural tourism. Although empirical evidence shows that the positive interaction between entrepreneurs and residents is crucial to promoting the

well-being of rural residents and the sustainable development of the destinations (Altinay et al., 2016; Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016; Su et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2020), scholars have not fully explained the dynamic process of entrepreneurs' successful mobilization of residents. Given this, further research is needed to identify and theorize the processes of effective communication between social entrepreneurs and residents.

China provides an appropriate context for the study of collective social entrepreneurship because it has a traditional ideology of collectivism and a historical tradition of developing a cooperative economy. In October 2020, China proposed the "common prosperity" strategy to solve the challenges of wealth gaps between urban and rural areas and promote social justice. To achieve common prosperity is not simply to redistribute but to improve the rights and opportunities for everyone to participate in co-construction and shared development, especially for those at the bottom of the pyramid. Indigenous participation in rural tourism can increase income (Long et al., 2016), change traditional concepts (Chen, 2017), and enhance community pride (Nilsson, 2002). It is an important way to improve residents' well-being and achieve common prosperity.

Previous studies have revealed that residents in tourist destinations construct a unique local culture and

¹ College of Tourism and Service Management, Nankai University, Tianjin, China

² Business School of Tianjin University of Finance and Economics, Tianjin, China

* Corresponding author:
Email: xuhong@126.com

a nostalgic tourism experience environment (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Guan et al., 2019), thus attracting urban tourists. However, when affected by factors, such as information asymmetry, minimal education, poor work skills, and weak risk-taking ability, it proves to be difficult for residents to participate in entrepreneurial activities (Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016). This leads to the slow development or final failure of rural tourism social entrepreneurship relying on cooperation and alliance due to the lack of effective participation of residents. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the action logic of social entrepreneurs to mobilize community residents. It is only by incorporating residents into the enterprise's value network through a suitable organizational model (Karnani, 2007) that the dual goals of rural social entrepreneurship in tourism can be truly realized.

Given the paucity of research and the importance of residents' effective participation for the stable development of destinations, this study sheds light on rural tourism social entrepreneurship based on collective community participation. In summary, it has identified the following key research questions: How do local tourism social entrepreneurs mobilize residents to participate in tourism entrepreneurship in the context of rural China? Particularly, at different stages of development, what are the community mobilization strategies and the process of changing residents' attitudes? By investigating the above issues through a case study of Yuanjia Village, Shaanxi Province, this research makes 2 important contributions to tourism. First, the different stages and mechanisms of community mobilization by local tourism social entrepreneurs are determined. Although the importance of cooperative relations between social entrepreneurs in tourism and other stakeholders is constantly emphasized (Altinay et al., 2016; Sheldon and Daniele, 2017a), there is limited empirical evidence for the process of collective community participation. Second, this study contributes to the community mobilization of rural governance literature by fostering a better understanding of how social entrepreneurs mobilize residents to collectively participate in tourism operations to promote the development of social entrepreneurship and achieve common prosperity from a psychological perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurs

Contemporary society faces problems, such as poverty, environmental degradation, uneven distribution of resources, and rural depression. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged societies worldwide (Gao and Wu, 2017; Zheng et al., 2021). Faced with contradictions and problems in economic and social life, all strata of society strongly call on enterprises to assume social responsibility. Social entrepreneurship involves the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and address social needs (Mair and Martí, 2006). As a social innovation model, it promotes social transformation. Therefore, it is unsurprising

that academic circles concentrate on social entrepreneurship in less developed areas.

Social entrepreneurship has a significant impact on economic development and social transformation. Moreover, sustainable and inclusive development provides important perspectives for the study of social value creation (Wang et al., 2016; Biddulph, 2018). Social entrepreneurship can help vulnerable groups rebuild their livelihoods (Kline et al., 2014; Sigala, 2019); improve their education, happiness, and cultural identity (Gordin and Dedova, 2015; Dahles et al., 2019); promote the cultural renaissance of tourist destinations in a historically responsible way (Elfving and Lemmetyinen, 2015); and enhance women's decision-making powers and social status in a male-dominated social environment (Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016). Although social entrepreneurship plays a vital role in solving social problems, it still faces multi-dimensional challenges in the entrepreneurship process, including the lack of funding and information (Aquino et al., 2018), difficulty in obtaining resources (Dahles et al., 2019), lack of legitimacy (Mody and Day, 2014), the recruitment and training of empathetic young people (Peredo and Wurzelmann, 2015), and a regulatory environment, changing sociocultural environments, and uncertain resource flows (Aquino et al., 2018).

The emergence and development of social entrepreneurship is affected by many factors at the individual and organizational levels. At the individual level, they include the psychological capital of entrepreneurs (Aksoy et al., 2019), prosocial motivation (Sigala, 2019), and ability resources, such as education and profession (Moriggi, 2020). At the organizational level, they include social entrepreneurship orientation (Liu and Huang, 2020), organizational culture (Weppen and Cochrane, 2012), effective training (Peredo and Wurzelmann, 2015), and stakeholder engagement (Alegre and Berbegal-Mirabent, 2016). Thus, the realization of social value is not only determined by social entrepreneurs or social enterprises but is cocreated by the social system of stakeholders (Altinay et al., 2016). Scholars call for establishing a comprehensive service system with interdisciplinary knowledge, multistakeholder participation, and local resource integration to meet the various needs of stakeholders and ultimately promote the sustainable development of a region (Peng and Lin, 2016).

A social entrepreneur is defined as one who uses business principles to solve social problems (Sheldon and Daniele, 2017b, p. 5). Bornstein (2007, p. 1) states that social entrepreneurs "combine the savvy, opportunism, optimism and resourcefulness of business entrepreneurs, with the devotion and pursuit of 'social profit', rather than business profit." According to the different types of social problems targeted, the term social entrepreneur was divided into 3 social entrepreneurial types: social bricoleur, social constructionist, and social engineer (Zahra et al., 2009).

In the practice of rural tourism in China, some village cadres try to lead residents to jointly create economic value and promote social transformation (village cadres refer to the staff who are elected through the villagers'

self-government mechanism, provide public service functions for the village, and enjoy certain political and economic benefits). Driven by their political mission and a sense of social responsibility, some village cadres have guided residents to develop tourism to explore various ways for residents to make their sustainable livelihoods rather than establishing companies for their own profit. Yuanjia's cadres built a farmer entrepreneurship platform for villagers, implemented appropriate institutional arrangements to regulate the distribution of benefits, and ultimately realized common prosperity and social transformation. This study examines social entrepreneurship tourism in the context of rural China and explores the process and dynamic evolution mechanism of mobilizing residents to participate in rural tourism development by local village cadres as social entrepreneurs.

2.2. Social entrepreneurship in the context of tourism

With the progress of urbanization, mixed-use communities emerged quickly as industrial, commercial, tourism, and residential communities in rural areas. Socioeconomic transformation and high energy consumption generally lead to low sustainability, and the realization of the sustainable development of the economy, society, and environment has become an important issue facing these mixed-use communities (Zhu et al., 2022). Social entrepreneurship in tourism is “a process of using tourism to create innovative solutions to current social, environmental, and economic problems by mobilizing resources such as ideas and competences available inside and outside the destination” (Sheldon and Daniele, 2017b, p. 7). As the main stakeholders of social entrepreneurship in rural areas, the interaction between entrepreneurs and residents has attracted wide attention from scholars (Altinay et al., 2016; Peng and Lin, 2016). Tourism social entrepreneurship based on community participation has a direct and significant impact on the community and its residents (Dahles et al., 2019). It can increase employment opportunities, promote residents' income and living standards (Quandt, 2017), bring more educational opportunities, develop residents' knowledge and skills (Aquino et al., 2018), improve residents' awareness of environmental protection, enhance residents' decision-making power (Peredo and Wurzelmann, 2015), and improve residents' sense of ownership and happiness in life (Sakata and Pridaux, 2013). Simultaneously, the cultural values and behaviors of residents have also changed with the development of tourism (Sloan et al., 2014). Moreover, continuous community entrepreneurship can enhance the overall cohesion and pride of the community and further enhance the local sustainable development capabilities (Peredo and Wurzelmann, 2015).

Existing studies have attempted to explore the interactive relationship between tourism social enterprises and local communities and proposed some cooperative action strategies (Altinay et al., 2016; Aquino et al., 2018). However, existing research shows that although the development of tourism brings greater economic benefits to local communities and enhances their well-being, most tourist

facilities are controlled by foreign capital. As a result, local capital and residents are excluded from tourism operations, resulting in tourism revenue leakage and tourism enclaves. As pointed out in the literature, the interaction between entrepreneurs and residents also leads to social contradictions, power games, conflicts of interest (Su et al., 2019), uneven distribution of profits (Kayat et al., 2013), the increased sense of relative deprivation of residents (Agarwal et al., 2018), and even residents' protests (Xie, 2019). In addition, even if the tourism social entrepreneurship is controlled by the local community, it does not mean that all residents can fully participate. In this process, conflicts of interest are inevitably faced, and even the capture of elites occurs, which further causes the gap between the rich and the poor to widen. Except for a few (Lettice and Parekh, 2010; Altinay et al., 2016), studies on the process of entrepreneurs' mobilization of residents and dynamic evolution have been neglected. Particularly, it is urgent to open the black box for social entrepreneurs to mobilize residents to participate in collective entrepreneurship to achieve the goal of common prosperity of the region.

Relevant research in the past decade has been dominated by case studies from developing countries in Asia, Africa, and South America, such as China, India, Cambodia, Indonesia, Russia, Brazil, and Mozambique (Weppen and Cochrane, 2012; Sloan et al., 2014; Quandt, 2017; Dahles et al., 2019). Although there are studies in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Ireland, and Greece, developed countries focus on the discussion of less developed areas (McGehee et al., 2014; Mottiar et al., 2018; Sigala, 2019). Specifically, in China, scholars in Taiwan are in the majority (Peng and Lin, 2016), while only a few scholars in mainland China have paid attention to this phenomenon (Wang et al., 2016). Socialist public ownership is the basic economic system of China, and rural collective economic organizations are an important part of this system. Based on the unique cultural context of China's rural collective economic organizations, this study explores the interaction between social entrepreneurs and residents in rural tourism and provides reference for other countries or regions with similar situations.

3. Theoretical framework

Resource mobilization theory originated from sociology and is an important theoretical perspective on organizational mobilization and social resource acquisition strategies. Enterprises need various resources in the process of entrepreneurship and growth, such as material resources, human resources, and organizational resources. The acquisition and mobilization of social entrepreneurship resources are different from traditional business-oriented entrepreneurship, in that the acquisition of resources in the former is more difficult and full of challenges. Rural social entrepreneurship oriented by local residents looking for sustainable means of livelihood needs to pay attention to the attitude of local residents toward industrial development to improve the sustainability of residents' participation.

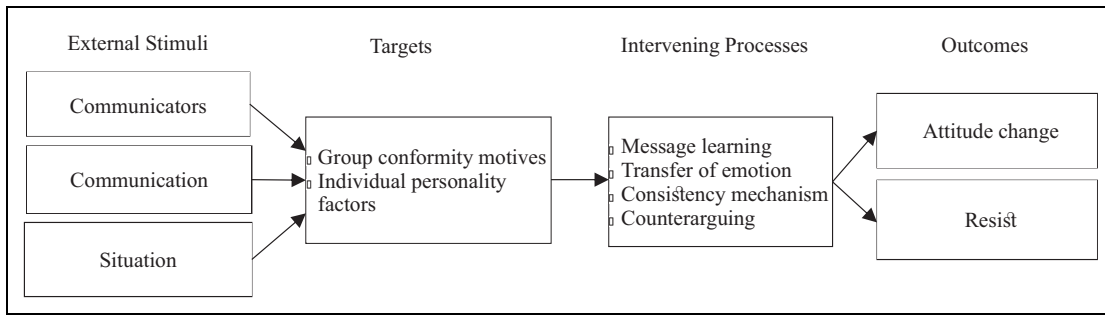


Figure 1. Attitude change-persuasion model.

Rural residents are not always the recipients of help; instead, they are producers with value, resources, and ability. However, due to the constraints of obsolete infrastructure, weak resource endowment of entrepreneurs, and lack of entrepreneurial experience, rural residents are much less likely to participate in industrial development in the early stage. Social entrepreneurs who have identified entrepreneurial opportunities need to mobilize community residents continuously to actively participate in collective entrepreneurship. The process of community mobilization is a process of information interaction, where there is not only dissemination and exchange of information between the giver and the recipient but also changes in the attitude and behavior of both. Persuasion is an intentional effort through communication to influence people’s attitudes (Briñol et al., 2015; Perloff, 2017), and it is an effective way of promoting people’s attitude changes in the process of community mobilization (Jaywarda and Jones, 2020).

Hovland (1953) put forward the “attitude change-persuasion model” based on the information transmission theory and the social judgment theory. Freedman (1985) refined the model of explaining the effective mechanism of persuasion in the process of information dissemination (Figure 1). The model includes 4 relevant parts that explain the entire process of attitude change: external stimuli, goals, intervention processes, and outcomes. The communicator, communication, and situation are external stimuli, and all external stimuli act on the goal. The second part is the influence of the audience’s personal factors. The audience is a reactive information activist, and there are many variables that will affect the attitude change. The third part is the influence of the mediation process, which refers to the psychological mechanism of the target’s attitude change process under the interaction of external persuasion stimuli and internal factors. The fourth part is the outcome, which is divided into successful persuasion or resistance to current persuasion. This model has been widely adopted in social psychology, communication, consumer research, and other disciplines (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Clementi et al., 2015; Khantimirov and Karande, 2018).

This research aims to explore the process and persuasion mechanism of Yuanjia social entrepreneurs mobilizing residents to participate in tourism collective entrepreneurship. The attitude change-persuasion model, as a classic persuasion model for researching attitude and

behavior change, has a strong explanatory power in the current research. This framework can provide a deeper understanding of the efforts of social entrepreneurial actors in the process of mobilizing community participation and help understand the different stages of residents’ attitude changes.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research context

The Yuanjia Village in the hinterland of the Guanzhong Plain in Shaanxi, China (Figure 2), only half an hour’s drive from the provincial capital Xi’an, covers an area of 0.33 km and comprises 286 people in 62 households. Yuanjia is now a very popular rural tourist destination in Shaanxi Province. Since the beginning of the 21st century, with the decline of village-run enterprises and rapid urbanization in China, many rural laborers had been migrating to cities, and Yuanjia faced the threat of abandonment. In 2007, the new village cadre, Guo, transformed the tourism industry and established the “Guanzhong Impression Experience Place” tourism company to encourage villagers to conduct rural tourism activities. Under the leadership of the village cadres represented by the social entrepreneur Guo, 11 cooperatives including the production of tofu, yogurt, chili, and street snacks were established, each of which is a small company. The cooperatives use a shareholding and profit-sharing business model that ties social enterprise and the residents together. Driven by the concept of “common prosperity,” village cadres continue to mobilize residents to participate in tourism entrepreneurship and work hard to develop collective tourism social entrepreneurship. Driven by social entrepreneurship, the per capita income of Yuanjia residents has risen from US\$1,250 to more than US\$15,000 each year. Since the development of rural tourism, profound changes have occurred in Yuanjia. Table 1 lists the number of tourists in Yuanjia each year over the past 14 years.

Yuanjia was chosen for this case study because it represents social entrepreneurship in the Chinese rural context. Specifically, Yuanjia is a typical representative of rural social entrepreneurship. The 62 households in the village set up *Nongjiale* (farm tourism), and over 5,000 locals from surrounding villages currently work and conduct their business under the cooperative. Residents have found other sustainable livelihoods besides agriculture, and their income levels have greatly improved.

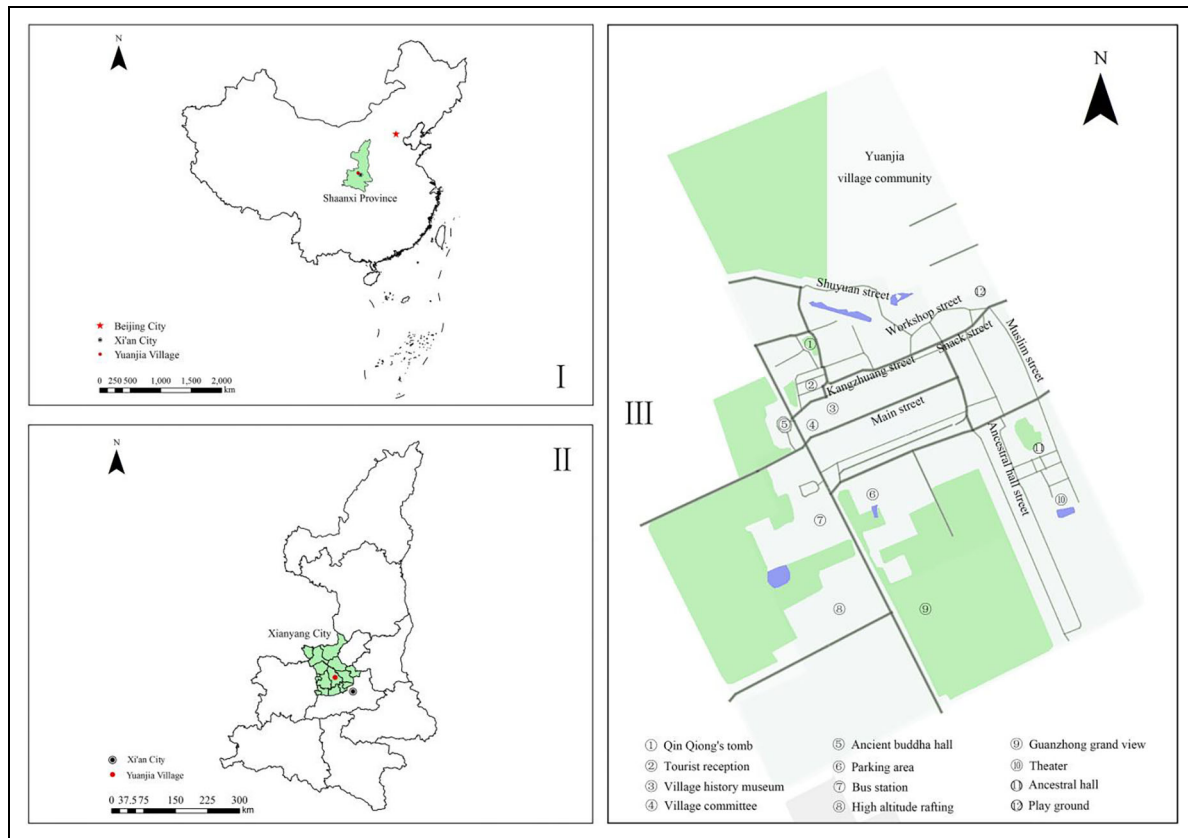


Figure 2. Location of Yuanjia Village, Xianyang City, Shaanxi Province.

Table 1. Annual tourism numbers for the last 14 years

Year	Number of Tourists (Million)	Year	Number of Tourists (Million)
2007	0.03	2014	3.5
2008	0.1	2015	4.5
2009	0.5	2016	5
2010	0.8	2017	5
2011	1.2	2018	5.8
2012	1.8	2019	6
2013	2.6	2020	6

The income from rural tourism in Yuanjia belongs to all the villagers, not the village cadres. Simultaneously, Yuanjia is a typical village in China that achieves common prosperity. Yuanjia adopts the business model of shares and dividends, which narrows the income gap between residents and truly realizes common prosperity. Common prosperity is not the prosperity of a few people, but the prosperity of all people. Furthermore, Yuanjia’s social entrepreneurship model can be imitated. In developing rural tourism, Yuanjia continues to attract more tourists to indulge in rural activities, with local folk culture, food, health, and safety as the main attractions. Yuanjia’s rural tourism has experienced the process of starting from nothing, and other places can also

rely on their own characteristic industries to develop collective entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study considers Yuanjia as an example to discuss how social entrepreneurs represented by village cadres can mobilize community residents to participate in tourism entrepreneurship to achieve the goal of common prosperity.

4.2. Research design, data collection, and analysis

Most rural tourism studies have applied qualitative approaches to obtain deep insights of the cases (Frochot, 2005). We adopted an exploratory case study because case studies help gain insight into complex societies based on detailed data collection (Baxter and Jack, 2008). This research method can thoroughly explore many aspects of the problem and provide a clear understanding of the development of the case. Due to rapid urbanization, many young people migrate to cities in pursuit of a better quality of life and seek better educational resources for the next generation, while the middle-aged and elderly stay in the countryside. Residents in remote areas tend to be more conservative in thinking and have a lower level of education. Hence, the use of overly detailed scales or questionnaires is unhelpful in determining the true process of community mobilization and real attitudes of residents (Ma et al., 2020). For social entrepreneurship studies, the qualitative method is well-suited to the study of social process over time (Babbie, 2001). This study explores the dynamic process of the community mobilization of Yuanjia’s collective tourism social entrepreneurship, and the case study method is well suited to this purpose.

Table 2. Interviewee profiles

Role		Gender	Age	Identity		Gender	Age	Identity
Social entrepreneur	1	Male	30–39	The leader of community	4	Male	50–59	Town government staff
	2	Female	20–29	College student village officer	5	Male	60–69	Retired cadre
	3	Male	30–39	Deputy director	6	Female	30–39	Head of incubation base
Residents from Yuanjia and nearby villages	7	Male	20–29	President of cooperative association	16	Male	50–59	The toy store owner
	8	Female	40–49	Innkeeper	17	Male	40–49	Nongjiale operators
	9	Male	20–29	Son of the innkeeper	18	Female	50–59	Snack operator
	10	Male	70–79	President of tofu cooperative	19	Male	50–59	President of snack cooperative
	11	Male	70–79	Senior herbalist doctor	20	Female	60–69	Snack bar worker
	12	Male	40–49	Nongjiale operators	21	Female	60–69	Chili picking worker
	13	Female	30–39	Inn workers	22	Female	50–59	Stall owner
	14	Male	40–49	Head of ancestral street	23	Female	40–49	Innkeeper
	15	Male	40–49	Head of college street	24	Male	20–29	Snack operator
	Nonlocal investors	25	Male	30–39	Ancestral Hall Street manager	26	Male	40–49
The total number of the interviewees		26						

In June 2019 and December 2020, a total of 40 days of nonparticipatory observation and 50 semistructured interviews were conducted to obtain first-hand information. The first involved a month in the study area for in-depth observation, collection of relevant documents, and establishment of good contact with village cadres and residents. The second field investigation lasted for 10 days and concentrated on key actor interviews and in-house resident surveys. Primary data collection included 3 stages of interviews. In the first stage, 6 social entrepreneurs were selected for the semistructured interviews, including current cadres, retired cadres, and government officials, who led Yuanjia to develop rural tourism. The selection of social entrepreneurs in this study followed these criteria: those whose entrepreneurial purpose is not just business but creating more social value for society, and in some cases, those who consider social goals as the only motivation for their entrepreneurship. The total length of interviews at this stage was 500 min, and the average interview time was 83 min per person. The second stage included the investigation of 5 businesses in the initial stage of tourism development. In the third stage, interviews were conducted with other residents and stakeholders. The total length of the second and third stages of the interview was 1,459 min, and the average interview time was 73 min per person. Specific interviewee information is presented in **Table 2**. To ensure the accuracy of subsequent studies, the

researchers transcribed the audio verbatim after the recording was completed. This was accomplished by 5 graduates and 7 undergraduate students, who translated a total of approximately 250,000 words.

Based on the triangulation method described by Miles (1994), this study analyzed cases from multiple sources of information to ensure that the case data could be complemented and cross-verified. Furthermore, to understand the development process of Yuanjia's social entrepreneurship in tourism and grasp its development dynamics in a timely manner, second-hand information, such as Yuanjia's news reports, WeChat tweets, published papers, books, and community leader Guo's special interviews and public speeches, were widely collected.

The interviews centered on the progression of social entrepreneurship, the difficulties encountered in entrepreneurship, and the ways to solve these difficulties. What actions have the entrepreneurs taken to incorporate residents into the value chain and the strategies for regulating collective dividends? Interviews with participants focused on perceptions of entrepreneurial efforts. The raw data underwent thematic analysis, which is a systematic technique for identifying, analyzing, and construing patterns of data, classifying them into themes (Clarke and Braum, 2014). Quotes in the findings were labeled with the resident number, gender, and interview time (year and month).

5. Findings

5.1. The preparatory stage of rural tourism development (June 2007–September 2007)

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Chinese government adjusted industrial policies and eliminated outdated production capacity, which led to the closure of small and highly polluting village-run enterprises in Yuanjia. With the decline in income, many residents went out to make a living, and Yuanjia gradually withered and declined. The cadres of Yuanjia tried to increase the residents' economic income and realize the revitalization of the village through the development of tourism entrepreneurship with collective participation of residents. However, during this period, rural tourism was mainly distributed in the economically developed areas of eastern China, and the western region developed slowly. In Northwest China, due to the lack of a good natural ecological environment and creative tourism development, rural destinations are an uncertain market for the tourism industry. According to Ap (1992), in the early stage of tourism development, residents' attitudes toward rural tourism are complicated due to the high uncertainty of expected costs and benefits. Cadres spread the news about the development of rural collective tourism, but no residents really wanted to participate.

A participant expressed, "After the village's high-energy, high-polluting collective factory closed down, young people went out to make a living, and only the elderly and children remained in the village. Cadres could not bear to watch the struggling village disband. Under these circumstances, we had to find a way out for the whole village, convince people, and keep them in the village. After many inspections, we decided to develop rural collective tourism and entrepreneurship and continue to take the road of common prosperity. However, the residents did not understand and were unwilling to work together. We took all the residents out to investigate and study and changed their thinking and attitude. However, the residents were very realistic; they were not willing to invest capital under uncertain circumstances. Therefore, we had a focused communication with party members. In this critical moment, party members and village cadres developed a guide and demonstration effect. If the residents were not willing to participate in tourism development, and neither were the party members and cadres, the development of our village would have stagnated" (Participant 5, Male, 202012).

Another participant said, "Yuanjia is located in the north of China, unlike the green mountains and rivers and historical sites in the south. Our village did not have the advantage of developing rural tourism, and the residents' willingness to participate was low. Cadres took us around studying and learning from other cities in Shaanxi province for free. At that time, we met every evening to obtain everyone's advice. I am a Party member, and I took the lead. In addition, Guo and I worked all day together; therefore, the relationship is better. Since the leader had this idea, I supported it" (Participant 8, Female, 201906).

Financial subsidies to individual collaborators are another form of social mobilization by social entrepreneurs. For residents who open restaurants, a fixed monthly salary is paid to ensure a sustainable income. Simultaneously, residents are provided with free food and beverages, raw materials, and facilities to reduce the cost of their participation in tourism. Furthermore, villagers who actively open *Nongjiales* receive US\$4,600–US\$7,800 in housing decoration fees. One participant said, "I did not make money when I started making tofu, so I did not want to do it. At that time, the village finance department gave me \$180 per month. The village gave me a shop for free, no charge, and equipped me with all that I needed" (Participant 10, Male, 201906).

As shown in **Figure 3**, in the preparation stage of rural tourism development, cadres, homestay, and catering operators from other counties and cities acted as communicators. At this stage, the village cadres of Yuanjia spread the news of rural tourism development by leading the residents of the village to go out to study, motivating them, convening a collective village meeting, and committing to economic compensation. Due to the closure of village-run enterprises and the loss of population, residents were skeptical about tourism development in resource-poor villages. At this stage, village cadres used economic and political mobilization to stimulate residents' interest in tourism. Party members with higher political sentiments choose to open *Nongjiale*. There were also a small number of active residents who learned from information and were passionate, and their thoughts and concepts are constantly updated. On October 1, 2007, Yuanjia rural tourism was opened with only 5 households participating.

This study demonstrates a unique intervention mechanism, with political, emotional identity, and passion calling playing an important role in the initial stages of community mobilization. Emotions are the primary basis for direct and indirect social communication (Gross, 2002), and they help potentiate cooperation between entrepreneurs and residents. Leaders can manipulate followers' emotions to overcome collective action challenges to maximize prospects for group survival (McDermott, 2020). Political derives from identification with a group, but it is highly important to individual behavior (Hinshelwood, 2005; Brown and Ibarra, 2018). Thus, political identities and passion calling serve as proximate mechanisms, by which social entrepreneurs can sustain cohesive cooperation among residents.

5.2. Early stage of rural tourism development (October 2007–May 2010)

Due to the scarcity of rural tourism in Northwest China, tourism in Yuanjia made a good start. However, the residents' low level of education and lack of business experience made the operation of homestays unsustainable. Village cadres have taken residents out to study many times and set up farmer training schools in the village to constantly update residents' knowledge and way of thinking. In addition, cadres walked into every household to give specific guidance on the operation and management of shops.

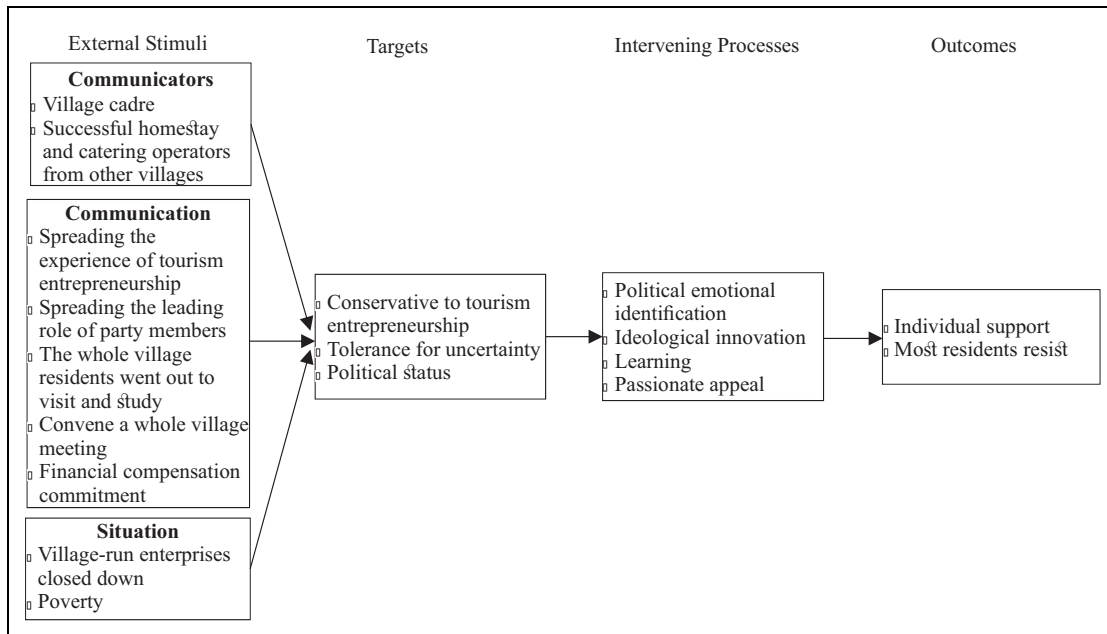


Figure 3. Community mobilization process in the preparation stage of rural tourism development.

As opined by a participant, “To develop rural tourism, we must continue to learn. In addition to Shaanxi Province, we took the villagers to many provinces in China, such as Sichuan province, Yunnan province, and Shanxi province. At that time, what they did was very typical. Go outside to learn about other’s management and see how far they have developed. Do not dare to stop (learning); if you stop, you will fall behind” (Participant 5, Male, 202012).

Another participant said, “We have a farmer training school to let outsiders share their entrepreneurial experience and tourism management experience with villagers in the lecture hall. Cadres called you, not to lie to you, but to teach you to make money” (Participant 16, Male, 201906). Yet another participant said, “The farmer training school used a projector to show practices from other advanced places for us to study. In addition, the quality of my food was not very good, so we would discuss how to solve the problem in the evening class. People gave ideas on how to do it better. The cadres taught us to separate wet and dry boards” (Participant 8, Female, 201906).

The Guanzhong cuisine in Yuanjia can be prepared and eaten on the spot, which enables visitors to witness the entire process from the preparation (noodles, oils, vinegars, and other workshops) to the selling of handmade foods (snack street shops) that satisfy the tourist’s gaze. The quality of delicacies made with traditional tools and without any preservatives is welcomed by tourists. With the expansion of tourism scale, cadres continue to improve tourism infrastructure and build entrepreneurial platforms for farmers. Social entrepreneurs used crowd funding to build an old street dominated by traditional workshops in Guanzhong to develop new tourism products and services. The village has improved sewage treatment, power capacity, gas supplies, environmental governance, and other infrastructure, opening a new space

for the development of rural tourism. As a participant states, “The supporting facilities in rural areas were not up to date, and neither was education and health care. To retain these businesses, we built community buildings on the east side and provided accommodation facilities” (Participant 2, Female, 202012).

Many residents voluntarily renovated their houses to receive tourists under the inducement of economic interests. A participant explained, “Everyone is in the same village. A few *Nongjiales* have already started and done well, so I started to follow suit. My uncle, cousins had all opened guest houses to receive tourists. I first went to see the *Nongjiales* in the village, and then imitated them, such as layout and decoration. If I do not understand, I will ask the village cadres because they have good ideas. The villagers will also chat and discuss with each other, imitating and learning from each other” (Participant 17, Male, 202012).

In pursuit of income increase, surrounding villagers also came to Yuanjia to participate in tourism management. As more residents participate in tourism, some conflicts of interest have gradually emerged. For instance, a participant disclosed, “My classmate is from Yuanjia. At that time, I found 4 friends to start a *Nongjiale*. Yuanjia was close to my home, and I rode the tram for 10 minutes, so I decided to do it here. After running it for 2 years, my classmate’s mother felt that she wanted to make money and run her own business. We were disbanded because we are all classmates and we did not sign the contract. It was an oral agreement. At that time, if there is a new suggestion, we have to communicate, which is more troublesome. I am alone now. It is relatively free to open a *Nongjiale*. For example, if I want to give a certain guest free accommodation, I can decide by myself” (Participant 12, Male, 202012).

At this stage, cadres empowered residents who participated in tourism entrepreneurship by leading them to study out of the province, opening farmer training

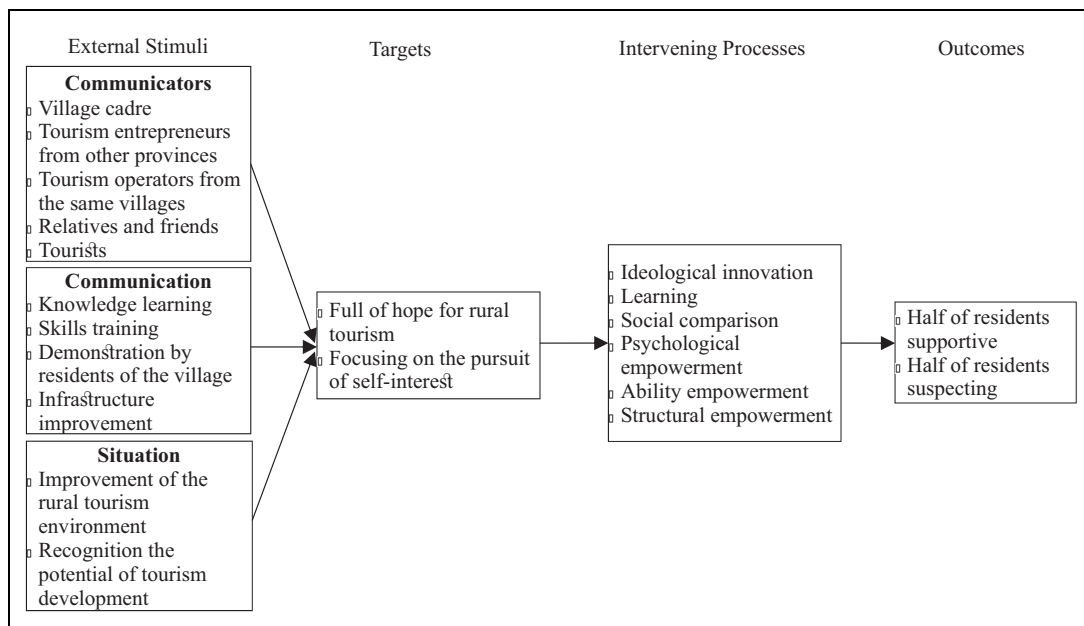


Figure 4. Community mobilization process in the early stage of rural tourism development.

schools, conducting knowledge and skills training, and improving tourism infrastructure. In the learning process, social entrepreneurs changed the residents' traditional cognition and beliefs and enhanced residents' initiative by introducing new culture, beliefs, and thinking. At the same time, the *Nongjiale* operator who successfully opened and operated his business became another major communicator, a social entrepreneur collaborator. Chinese villages have a traditional Confucian culture that believes that people are interdependent individuals (Hwang, 2000). Social capital, such as family clan, kinship, and neighborhoods' mutual assistance, plays an important role in the construction of social relations among Chinese rural acquaintances. The villagers have lived together for a long time and established a relationship of mutual understanding and trust. Some residents have made social comparisons and imitated residents who have successfully opened *Nongjiales*, gradually changing their attitudes toward tourism development. Through different intervention processes, such as thought update, information learning, social comparison, and empowerment, half of the residents' attitudes changed from firm opposition to support and participation. However, at this stage, residents began to realize the potential of Yuanjia's tourism development and tried to participate in tourism development through various forms and maximize their own interests, resulting in a disorderly competition in the market. The gap between the rich and the poor widened, which went against the original intention of social entrepreneurs to prosper together and revitalize the countryside. Village cadres began to think about a new round of mobilization strategies and business model innovation (Figure 4).

5.3. Rural tourism transformation and upgrading stage (June 2010–May 2014)

Yuanjia's business philosophy of "farmers defend food safety" has attracted tourists from home and abroad. This

has led to the formation of vicious competition among residents and the shortage of some tourism products. In order to regulate the market order and solve the problem of income equity, in June 2010, the cadres decided to increase capital, expand shares, and set up the first farmer cooperative. Residents of Yuanjia buy shares with land, while those in nearby villages buy shares with cash, and the villagers enjoy dividend income on the shares they hold. Yuanjia transformed workshops and profitable shops into farmers' cooperatives, continuously refined the equity system, forming the joint-stock system management model, such as basic stocks, mixed stocks, cross stocks, regulatory stocks, and restricted stocks, so that the local and the surrounding villagers achieve common prosperity. The establishment of farmer cooperatives guarantees the villagers' rights to share their interests and reflects the dominant position of the people in the process of rural tourism resource development and income distribution. According to public information, Yuanjia currently has 21 joint-stock cooperatives, and cross-shareholding involves 460 homestays, restaurants, and other shops.

However, in the process of increasing capital and expanding shares to advantageous projects, there is the phenomenon that such project operators do not want to cooperate. A participant explained, "In the beginning, I made my own money selling tofu, earning hundreds of dollars a day. Now, to set up a cooperative, to give money to everyone, my thinking must have changed. First, I was not satisfied. The cadres explained the ideologies for me, and my son also did the same. Finally, after doing my ideological work, I thought: Earning money means that everyone earns money together. To be rich means that everyone gets rich. You cannot be rich alone" (Participant 10, Male, 202012).

Another participant opined, "I do not want to set up a farmer cooperative. Before the establishment of the

cooperative, the village cadres convened a meeting with everyone. Every shop or *Nongjiale* operator was talking about the changes before and after coming to Yuanjia. Some people were crying. If you do not agree to set up a cooperative, you can only close the shop and go home to farm, and you will not be able to make any money" (Participant 19, Male, 202012).

In rural China, trust is established by the consanguinity and kinship derived from identity, mutual living background, and common values among consanguinity members. When there are difficulties in establishing cooperative relationships, cadres adhere to the principle of "pattern of difference" in Chinese rural areas, taking advantage of the close blood relationships, kinship, and interpersonal trust formed with a high degree of dependence to coordinate the behaviors of cooperators and reduce transaction costs.

Simultaneously, social entrepreneurs strengthen management by formulating institutional incentives and constraints. Institutional incentives also reflect two aspects in the material and spiritual civilization rewards. The cooperative association encourages farmers to work efficiently by providing monetary incentives, such as overtime pay and regulated tariffs. At the same time, regular health inspection and evaluation activities are held for *Nongjiales* and merchants, to a certain extent, to ensure the quality of individual merchants of rural tourism. Chinese rural people love the concept of "face," which is similar to "reputation," and the spiritual civilization evaluation makes them feel that they have face. A participant expressed, "Yuanjia selects 5 advanced individuals every year to receive the award, and I am one of them. Walking down the street, I feel proud and have a good face" (Participant 12, Male, 202012). For institutional constraints, to avoid homogenous competition, a skill competition is held for newly joined projects. As a participant explains, "When multiple people are competing for a tour, there is a skill competition. Village officials conduct on-site reviews and even bring in visitors to vote on the spot to maintain fairness" (Participant 2, Female, 202012). Furthermore, the enterprise signs contracts with cooperators to supervise the operation and management of the *Nongjiale* and food shops. A participant says, "To ensure the quality of food, all food shops in Yuanjia must use raw materials such as noodles and oil produced in here. The shops that violate the regulations are fined. At night, the lanterns in front of the *Nongjiale* must be lit to convenience tourists. If after persuasion, the cooperator does not listen, the shop is closed, until rectification" (Participant 1, Male, 201906).

The development of rural tourism in Yuanjia has become a typical case of common prosperity in Chinese villages, which has aroused widespread recognition by residents, consumers, and the government. A participant explains, "The government fully supports Yuanjia in terms of overall leadership, project integration, fund preference, simplification of procedures, and preferential policies. In terms of construction land, Liquan County prioritizes the land construction index of key towns every year to the

construction project of Yuanjia, Guanzhong Impression Experience Site. In terms of publicity and promotion, every holiday, the county government sends 200 people to provide logistical support, such as traffic police, public security, medical support, food inspection, and other departments on duty, while Yuanjia residents do the duty of the propagandists and promoters" (Participant 4, Male, 202012).

Another participant stated, "Before I came to Yuanjia, my family was very poor. After coming to Yuanjia to work, life is good, and my house is built. Tourists come, I chat with tourists, and the mood is better" (Participant 21, Female, 202012). A third participant stated, "We have a big appetite for raw food, and we buy the best raw materials. Suppliers and planting bases are very happy to cooperate with us. Otherwise, they may sell their good stuff at low prices" (Participant 7, Male, 202012).

Stimulated by excess interests and shareholder dividends, as of May 2014, all 62 households in Yuanjia had opened *Nongjiales*. With Yuanjia's rural tourism gaining market legitimacy and social legitimacy, social entrepreneurs had an absolute advantage in the game of mobilizing residents to participate in rural tourism. Fear arousal is a unique manifestation of the intervention process in this research context and is complementary to the attitude change persuasion model. Social entrepreneurs used certain political power to evoke residents' fear and used institution design to strengthen management. The government, tourists, and tourism suppliers became important communicators at this stage due to their recognition of Yuanjia tourism, which had an important impact on the change of residents' attitudes toward tourism. Under the influence of mechanisms, such as value recognition, imitation learning, social comparison, evoking fear, and emotional transfer, residents formed an attitude of supporting collective tourism entrepreneurship (Figure 5).

6. Residents' attitudinal change mechanism in the community mobilization of rural tourism social entrepreneurship

In the preparatory stage of rural tourism collective social entrepreneurship, due to lack of business experience and conservative thinking, residents are unwilling to participate in tourism. Village officials tried to maximize residents' interest in participation through passionate speeches and financial compensation promises. In the initial stage of tourism in Yuanjia, social entrepreneurs used a variety of strategies to empower residents and promote the sustainable development of rural tourism. At the same time, village officials put forward the business philosophy of "farmers defend food safety," and restaurants use uniform food raw materials to create a brand effect, which is conducive to increasing the added value of agricultural products. As the scale of rural tourism continues to expand, village cadres have implemented a shareholding business model through land purchasing and storage and the establishment of cooperatives. Residents participate in the pipeline of the cooperative and enjoy the right to distribute the cooperative's surplus, which

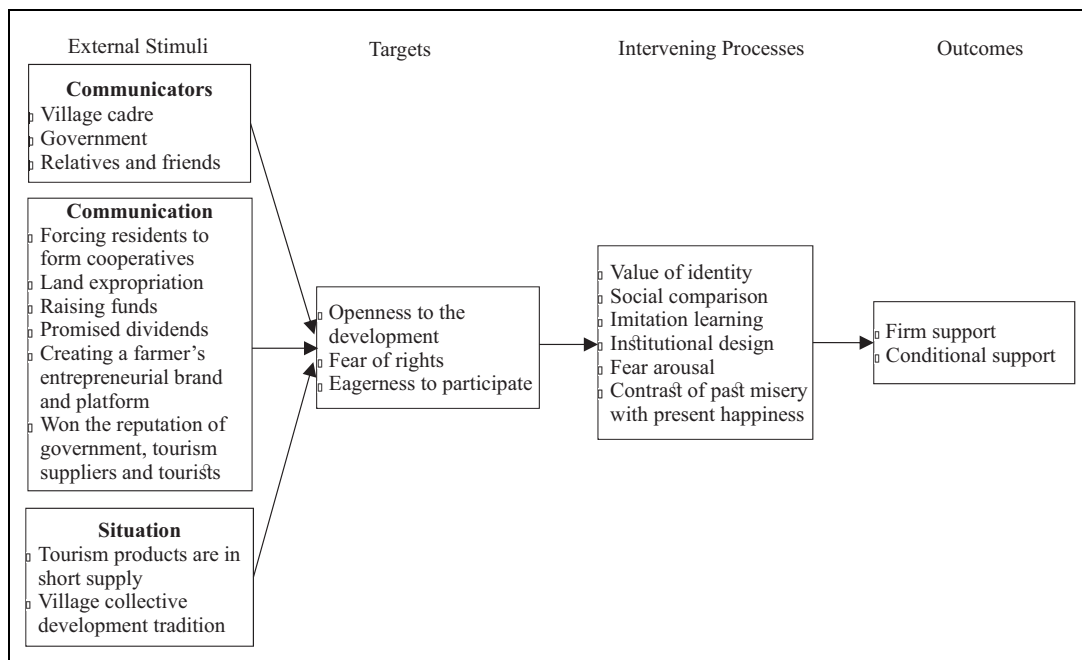


Figure 5. Community mobilization process in the transformation stage of rural tourism development.

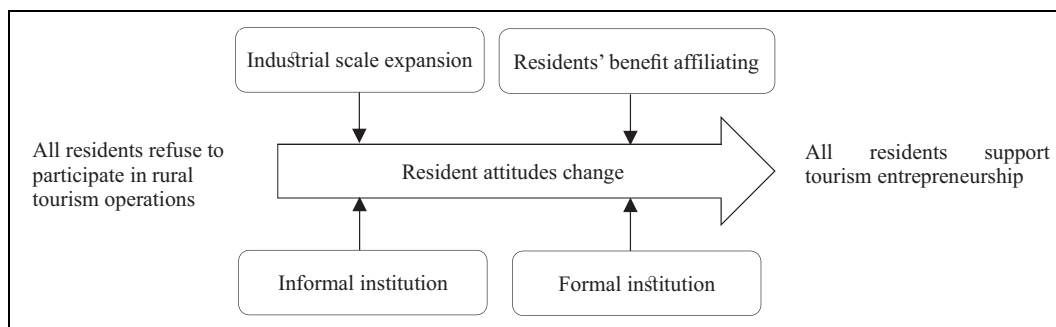


Figure 6. Changes in residents' attitudes toward participation in the community mobilization of rural tourism social entrepreneurship.

ultimately forms a close bond of interest. The degree of residents' benefit affiliating plays a key role in the process of mobilizing community residents by village cadres.

With the implementation of more mobilization strategies, including going out to study, knowledge dissemination, skills training, passionate appeal, compensatory commitment, improvement of tourism infrastructure, establishment of cooperatives, and so on, residents have reacted accordingly, forming a change from collective opposition, individual differentiation to a 3-stage process of attitude change with collective support. At the same time, informal institution such as trust, spiritual civilization rewards, and formal institution such as equity systems and material punishments play a key role in the transformation of residents' attitudes toward participation in tourism. **Figure 6** describes the behavioral changes of residents in the mobilization process of the rural tourism collective social entrepreneurship community under the influence of the degree of resident interest connection and the institution.

7. Discussion and conclusion

Entrepreneurship in collective tourism can promote the in-depth participation of residents and is an important way for the tourism industry to achieve common prosperity and promote the transformation of communities. However, the collective participation of the community is not achieved overnight, and social entrepreneurs need to adopt various mobilization strategies over time. By introducing social entrepreneurship activities in tourism in a rural China context, this study complements the debate on the interaction between social entrepreneurs and rural residents in tourism research. Specifically, this study analyzed Yuanjia, a village in China as a case study, and conducted nonparticipatory observation and approximately 50 interviews using the single-case study method. This research identified 3 stages in the process of social entrepreneurs mobilizing community residents to participate in tourism entrepreneurship and described the mobilization strategies at each stage and the reasons for the changes in residents' attitudes to outline the process by which social

entrepreneurs and residents jointly create social and economic value.

The results show the strategy of village cadres who play the dual roles of an entrepreneur and a policy implementer to mobilize community residents to participate in tourism entrepreneurship and the mechanism for changing residents' attitudes. This study adopts the attitude change-persuasion model to explain the action logic of community mobilization by following the mechanism of "external stimulus-target-intervention process-outcomes." The study not only discovered the 3-stage strategy differences in the community mobilization process of the tourism collective social entrepreneurship but also determined the reason of the residents' attitude changes at different stages. Generally speaking, the level of education and information accessibility of rural residents is generally low. When faced with a sudden new innovative development project, inexperienced residents will largely resist participation. Social entrepreneurs first need to use their own social influence and social capital to mobilize and empower some political and economic elites. Second, they need to take the successfully mobilized residents as a reference group to further mobilize other residents. Furthermore, there should be improved infrastructure and obtaining of legitimacy to attract the interest of residents who have not participated in tourism. Finally, the sustainability of collective entrepreneurship should be ensured through institutional design. In the process of community mobilization, the residents' interest connection degree has been continuously strengthened, and their attitudes have gradually changed.

First, this study is a pioneer in adopting the attitude change-persuasion model from the general social psychology field to social entrepreneurship studies. Compared with previous studies (Ma et al., 2020), this study found new variables in the intervention process part of the model, such as political emotional identity, passion calling, and fear arousal, which enriched the attitude change-persuasion model. The study discovered strategy and attitudinal differences in each of the 3 stages in the community mobilization process. This study supports the conclusion of previous studies that rural elites are an important intermediary in encouraging lay residents to participate in tourism development and an important force for rural revitalization (Gao and Wu, 2017). Furthermore, this study extends a previous research conclusion that rural residents, as the main beneficiary of rural social entrepreneurship, are not only under the control of leadership and have a marginalized position but act in dual roles as social entrepreneurship "collaborators" and "producers." Thus, the role of rural residents in rural tourism development is worth further consideration. This action logic is not unique to collective social entrepreneurship in the field of rural tourism but also to the mobilization of collective entrepreneurial communities in rural areas in other fields. This study, thus, serves as a cornerstone for and provides essential insights into the future community mobilization of rural collective social entrepreneurship.

Second, this research analyzed a new rural social entrepreneurship model, that is, village cadres, as social entrepreneurs, lead residents to carry out collective social entrepreneurship. This research shows that social enterprise from local villages in China is different from that of those conducted in a western context, which emphasizes the central role of foreign capital investment or non-profit organizations in social entrepreneurship (Sloan et al., 2014; Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016). China's rural areas are traditional rural societies with the basic characteristics of consanguinity, acquaintance, and differential order patterns and have social capital with high trust and identification formed by the ties of consanguinity, kinship, and geography (Zhou et al., 2017). The residents have similar cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, social relations, and values and share a set of interest coordination mechanisms and norms recognized by all. Based on the case of Chinese rural local social entrepreneurship, it is shown that social entrepreneurs in Yuanjia have strong local legitimacy and social capital and have a greater uniqueness and advantage in establishing organizations and platforms to utilize and integrate residents' resources and abilities. This study not only contributes novel content to the cooperative research of social entrepreneurs and residents but also provides a reference for developing local tourism and social entrepreneurship practices around the world.

Third, this research explored the logic of action between social entrepreneurship and common prosperity, contributing to community mobilization in rural governance. Village cadres play the dual roles of being entrepreneurs and a policy implementer, revealing the typical characteristics of local social entrepreneurship in rural China. Through collective social entrepreneurship, residents' incomes have been increased, the gap has been narrowed, sustainable livelihoods have been realized, and rural customs and civilization have also been improved. This model has become a feasible path for promoting common prosperity. The results of this study enhance the understanding of the value of cooperation between cadres and residents, which can be used to improve collective entrepreneurial efficiency and reduce transaction costs. The results suggest that social entrepreneurs should bring community residents into the value network at the early stage of tourism development and improve their knowledge and ability through mobilization and empowerment. This way, social conflicts can be reduced, and social value can be created to the greatest extent. Simultaneously, the construction of a community of interests helps stakeholders to play their roles in the social network actively to make corporate social entrepreneurship more efficient and effective.

Moreover, it is noted that rural tourism development can be achieved not only by social entrepreneurs cooperating with rural residents but also by forming a network with multisubject stakeholders, such as the government, tourists, intermediary organizations, and scientific research institutions, to interact with each other and help realize rural revitalization. For example, the government provides important support for social entrepreneurship,

but the cooperation mechanism between the government and social entrepreneurs has not been discussed in detail. Although its role in the core of social entrepreneurship in tourism has been determined, the government is a key and complex organization, especially in countries such as China (Wang et al., 2016). Future research can explore the mechanisms of collaboration between social entrepreneurs and other stakeholders and propose an ecosystem of social entrepreneurship collaboration networks. This study lays a foundation and provides important insights for future collaborative research on stakeholder value co-creation.

China adheres to collective ownership of rural land and has developed a collective economy. The experience of Yuanjia can be applied to other rural areas of China. Residents participate in tourism in the form of shares, so that disadvantaged groups can share the dividends of collective economic development. Meanwhile, the interaction between entrepreneurs and residents develops dynamically. The 3 stages of the mobilization process between Chinese social entrepreneurs and residents and the interaction strategies can be used for reference by other countries in the world. As rural tourism continues to mature, tourism destinations need to apply Yuanjia's tourism supply development model to react to increasing tourism demand and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

Finally, an exploratory single case study method was adopted in this study, which limits the generalizability of the results. Future research should collect more cases for comparison and verification to supplement these results. Simultaneously, the cases in this study are from local enterprises in China's rural market, and the formation of a stakeholder cooperation network has great advantages and convenience. Future research can explore the process and mechanism of nonnative tourism social entrepreneurship community mobilization derived from external investment and further form a comparative study of local and nonnative social entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, social capital is ubiquitous in rural areas of China, while social capital in urban communities is significantly different from that in rural areas. The evolutionary process of cooperation between entrepreneurs and residents in an urban tourism society is worth further exploration. This study highlighted the importance of collective action oriented toward common prosperity in tourism development, so that social and economic transformation can occur in previously disadvantaged sectors of the community.

Data accessibility statement

There is no data set generated that needs to be listed and made publicly available. A total of 40 days of nonparticipatory observation and 50 semistructured interviews were conducted to obtain first-hand information. The raw data required to reproduce these findings cannot be shared at this time as the data also form part of an ongoing study.

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Competing interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

Author contributions

Contributed to the whole framework of this article and the writing of introduction, literature review, the theoretical framework, and the finding: YZ.

Worked on the whole framework and outlined the research design of the study: HX.

Collected data at the study site and composed the methodology: RJ.

Contributed to data analysis: HY.

Contributed to the paper's coherence and logic of the whole article: CW.

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