

Perspective on the acceptability and readiness for community-based ecotourism development: An empirical study of Anhui Province, China

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Abstract

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the global tourism industry and is regarded as an effective way to promote environmental protection, sustainable development and "greening" tourism practices. This study aims to assess the community-based ecotourism acceptability and readiness in Anhui province, China. Specifically, it will determine the status of community in terms of social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects; assess the potentials of community-based ecotourism (CBET) in the context of community organization, resources and management; determine the acceptability and readiness of the province with regards to CBET; test the significant relationship between CBET status and potentials, status and acceptability & readiness, potentials and acceptability & readiness of CBET; and proposed a framework for CBET. The study used a descriptive method of research with 385 residents near the ecotourism sites as respondents of the study. Frequency, percentage, weighted mean, ranking, Shapiro-Wilk Test, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis test, Spearman rho were the statistical test used. Based on the result, community-based ecotourism in Anhui mostly lies on the very powerful sense of cultural identity that the residents of the destination identify themselves with. The potentiality of community-based ecotourism in Anhui, China is strongest in terms of its community organization which may be attributed to the structure of tourism governance itself. CBET is acceptable to the residents because it can improve the quality of life the province and the residents are ready for further development due to the profits it can contribute to the destination. It was also found out that significant relationship exists between status and potentials of CBET, potentials of CBET and CBET Acceptability & Readiness and status of CBET and CBET Acceptability & Readiness.

Keywords: community based ecotourism, acceptability, readiness, Anhui Province

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1. Introduction

With the continuous improvement of people's living standards, more and more people will choose tourism as their leisure method, and the tourism industry has developed rapidly. Rural areas are rich in communities and natural ecological resources, and the development of community eco-tourism is also a potential investment by the government. Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the global tourism industry and is regarded as an effective way to promote environmental protection, sustainable development, and "greening" tourism practices. According to Ceballos-Lascurain (1987), who was a special advisor to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), first proposed "ecotourism". Ecotourism is defined by the International Ecotourism Association as "traveling to a natural area that preserves the environment and ensures the well-being of local residents." (He & Sang, 2021), which makes ecotourism different from natural tourism. Natural tourism includes visiting natural attractions, but it does not clearly realize environmental or social protection Goals; therefore, eco-tourism can also be defined as "natural tourism that promotes conservation and sustainable development".

Community based eco-tourism refers to the development of a community as a tourist object and build it into a tourist form of tourist attraction. Specifically, community based eco-tourism refers to the use of the community as a carrier and development target, scientific use of its natural resources, customs, and culture, etc., to build it into a personalized and characteristic scenic area for tourists to visit and experience and provide a strong spiritual impact to them. Logically speaking, it is a one-way interactive ecotourism upgraded to a two-way interactive ecotourism, which is different from the previous tourism development model (Chen, 2016). All eco-tourism methods have three basic criteria: First, scenic spots should be based on nature; second, tourism behavior should be dedicated to promoting socio-economic and environmental sustainability and third, tourist experience should focus on learning and education. Based on these three principles, community eco-tourism should include: local participation in, control or ownership of eco-tourism initiatives; focus on environmental protection and local livelihood interests, committed to promoting traditional culture and local culture; and conducive to the promotion of community human rights and social justice. That is, community eco-tourism is not only to protect the wild natural environment, but also to protect the sustainable development of local culture and local livelihoods, so as to promote the community to share the benefits of tourism development (He & Sang, 2021).

Obviously, proper design and planning are essential to promote the development of community eco-tourism. Unreasonable design will have many negative effects. A major problem is the insufficient participation of residents. Community-based ecotourism has always faced the dilemma of weak involvement of local communities in practice (Browder, 2008). On the other hand, a poor design will further exacerbate other issues. For example, it can affect even damage the environment and natural resources by causing permanent changes. Additionally, it increases the population in tourist areas, which could lead to traffic jams and overcrowding as a result. This poses the risk of pollution as well (Wijaya, et al, 2020). Because of these negative effects, it is vital to develop sustainable tourism based on democracy, efforts to improve the lives of local communities, and protection of culture and the environment.

Develop community eco-tourism through the development of reasonable tourist villages can not only better protect the ecological environment, but also improve the quality of life and cultural level of the people (Li, 2020). For example, it can form a tourist area in a rural environment and then evolve into a tourist attraction center. Although most people in China are relatively wealthy, it is undeniable that in some areas, especially in mountainous and rural areas, there are still some people who are living in difficulties and poverty. It is particularly important to improve their quality of life and improve the financial level of the local government. On

the other hand, with the development of modern culture and the cultural shock caused by globalization, some local cultures have gradually disappeared. According to Liu (2019), the development of community-based ecotourism can strengthen the propaganda of national culture and promote local culture. As the country gradually attaches importance to traditional culture, the protection of local culture is also an important task that local governments need to consider. The government can promote the development of rural eco-tourism, and then realize the balanced development of rural areas through the economic benefits brought by the tourism industry.

Moreover, the development of community eco-tourism can not only accelerate the development of rural economy, but it can also promote economic growth, create more job opportunities for local people, reduce rural and urban migration, repair infrastructure and public services, and promote the revitalization of handicraft and cultural identity. All those things have important meanings for the local cultures and economy. Although there have been many cases of scholars studying this field, the results obtained will be more in line with local conditions. The actual situation has important reference significance for local government agencies and other relevant institutions.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the community based eco-tourism acceptability and readiness in Anhui province. Specifically it determined the status of community in terms of social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects; assess the potentials of community-based eco-tourism (CBT) in the context of community organization, resources and management; determine the acceptability and readiness of the province with regards to community based tourism; test the significant relationship between status of tourism and potentials, status and acceptability readiness, potentials and acceptability readiness of CBT; and proposed a framework for community based ecotourism.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study used a descriptive method of research to assess the Community Based Eco-tourism- Acceptability and Readiness of Anhui, Province of China. Descriptive research is a type of research that seeks to describe the current status of an identified variable. This type of research is used to answer the question “what exists?”. These research projects are designed to describe that characteristic of a population and provide systematic information about a phenomenon. Descriptive data are typically collected through questionnaire survey, interviews, or observation (Almeida, et al., 2016).

2.2 Participants of the Study

In order to obtain accurate and true questionnaire data, the method of distributing the formal questionnaire in this article is to randomly distribute the formal questionnaire to people in Anhui province. Famous ecosites in Anhui Province with a total population of 2.15 million people (Anhui Provincial Statistics Bureau, 2020). The sample of the study consists of 385 residents near the ecotourism sites. The sample was computed using Rao soft Calculator with the margin of error of 5% and confidence level of 95%.

2.3 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was adopted from the study of Felicen (2014) titled Community Based Tourism in Mount Banoi. Input to Tourism Strategic Development Plan in CALABARZON Region. The instrument undergone validation by experts in Community Based Ecotourism in China. The questionnaire has over-all reliability test result of 0.7863 using Cronbach Alpha.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

To be able to obtain the data, the researchers prepared a set of questions in the form of a survey questionnaire. The researcher sent to community people randomly with a questionnaire or via online questionnaire tool-WJW to them using a stratified-random sampling technique. After retrieving the questionnaires, the said data gathering instruments were treated with appropriate statistical tools.

2.5 Data Analysis

To perform data analysis, the following statistical tools were used. Frequency distribution and percentage weighted mean, ranking, Shapiro-Wilk Test, Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis test and Spearman rho. The following Likert Scale was used in assessing the variables: 3.50-4.00 –Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49 –Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 –Disagree; and 1.00 – 1.49 –Strongly Disagree. In addition, all data were treated using a statistical software known as PASW version 26 to further interpret the result of the study using an alpha level of 0.05.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Some moral problems are a challenge to the research. As referred to earlier, all participants submitted a written confirmation of their participation in the study via a signed letter. Participants fully understand the goals of the research and at the same time be confident that their answers will be treated as confidential and used only for academic purposes and subtle research purposes. And the questionnaire here was derived from a previously published article. The author made certain modifications to it and already obtained the consent of the author of the questionnaire.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1

Assessment on the Status of Community based ecotourism

Indicators	Composite Mean	SD (\pm)	VI	Rank
Economic	3.33	0.63	Agree	4
Social	3.37	0.59	Agree	3
Cultural	3.42	0.58	Agree	1
Environmental	3.38	0.59	Agree	2
Over-all Mean	3.38	0.60	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 –Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 – Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 –Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 – Strongly Disagree

Table 1 summarizes the assessment on the status of community-based ecotourism. It is shown that the respondents generally agreed on the status of community-based ecotourism as indicated by the over-all mean of 3.38. The status of community-based ecotourism in terms of cultural aspect had the highest assessment at 3.42, followed by the environmental aspects at 3.38.

The above result attests to the assumption that the community-based ecotourism in Anhui mostly lies on the very powerful sense of cultural identity that the residents of the destination identify themselves with. The presence of remarkable heritage sites, notable folklore, performing arts and unique cuisine are cultural expressions that the people of Anhui take much pride in. These, along with other elements, contribute to a better understanding and positive outcome of community-based tourism development.

According to De Jong (2019), people who are proud of their local culture are more likely to be “strong, resilient, and extremely willing to show tourists their culture.” Likewise, Giampiccoli and Hayward (2012) place

local culture at the forefront of community development, and as a resource upon which community-based tourism is built. As such, it could be interpreted that the residents' local cultural pride and involvement are factors contributing to their general agreement in the cultural aspect of community-based ecotourism development.

Meanwhile, the social aspect ranked third at 3.37 composite mean, and the economic aspect getting the last spot with a composite mean of 3.33. While these aspects still garnered a general agreement among the respondents, several underlying factors could be seen as reason why these aspects ranked the least.

One probable reason for this is the peoples' perspective on the ownership and centralized planning of economic resources – a system that the Chinese has followed for many years already. While this allows for more efficient allocation of resources, at times, it could be criticized for limiting the people in their participation in the decision-making process and coming with efforts that are sometimes inflexible and inefficient to local application (Zhang and Yin, 2014; Zheng and Cao, 2015). In the recent years, government reforms such as that of land ownership, brought positive results to the locals of Anhui. Although the locals still do not technically 'own' the land that they are residing in, the reforms seem to have given them a greater sense of empowerment and involvement in the decision-making process.

According to Xu et al. (2017), community participation empowers local residents, ensures their control over tourism resources, raises their voice in the decision-making process, and provides them with equitable economic benefits. Both the works of De Jong (2019) and Khalid et al. (2019) likewise cite community empowerment and their sense of ownership and leadership as crucial considerations in establishing a successful community-based sustainable tourism development. This can only be achieved through the local people's support of tourism. Having an independent association of community members will make them responsible of their community-based tourism project and their own tourism product and will ensure fair development and decision-making process.

Table 2

Assessment on the Potentials of Community Based Ecotourism

Indicators	Composite Mean	SD (±)	VI	Rank
Community Organizations	3.37	0.58	Agree	1
Resources	3.36	0.60	Agree	2
Management	2.76	1.01	Agree	3
Over-all Mean	3.17	0.73	Agree	

Table 2 presents the summary of assessment on the potentials of community-based tourism. It can be readily gleaned that the respondents generally agreed to the potentials of community-based tourism as indicated by an overall mean of 3.17. Respondents had the highest assessment on the potentials of community-based tourism in terms of community organizations as shown by the composite mean of 3.37. The assessment of the respondents on the potentials of community-based tourism in terms of resources came after with a composite mean of 3.36.

The results indicate that the potential for community-based tourism in Anhui, China is strongest in terms of its community organization which may be attributed to the structure of tourism governance itself. The previous discussions have already established that tourism development in China has always been 'government-led' (Zhou, 2009 cited in Wang et al., 2013). One advantage of this structure is the premise and guarantee for the sustainable and healthy development of rural tourism. To this, Wang et al. (2013) further note that all levels of the government are involved in tourism development especially in the areas of macro-guidance, public promotion and marketing, policy guidance and financial support, etc. Meanwhile, Li et al. (2020) comment that while the centralized governance approach makes it difficult to let residents fully take the responsibility of the

decision-making process, it is still observed to be ‘working well.’

Interestingly, the lowest assessment was accounted to management with a weighted mean of 2.76. While the community organization highlighted the advantages of centralized planning – i.e., the efficient and smooth flow of development, the management aspect, on the other hand, seem to indicate its weaker sides.

Centralized governance brings about a high level of tokenism where local people can listen and be heard but do not have the real power to ensure that their opinions are taken into account in crafting any plans (Arnstein, 1975 cited in Cruz, 2019). As attested by both the studies of Wang et al. (2013) and Xu et al. (2019), the development led primarily by investors who “attach great importance to the construction of facilities and man-made landscape, ignoring the protection of traditional rural cultures” limits the decision-making powers of the local community. If the potential for community-based tourism in Anhui is to be fully realized, the high degree of tokenism prevalent in community organizations must be addressed to fully mobilize the enthusiasm of all the participating subjects, balance their respective interests, and clarify their individual roles and functions. In China, this could mean a government-led multi-stakeholder involvement (Wang et al., 2013).

Table 3

Acceptability of the Province in Community Based Ecotourism

Acceptability	WM	SD(±)	VI	Rank
1. CBT can improve the quality of life of the community here in Anhui Province	3.40	0.62	Agree	1
2. CBT emerges from a community development strategy, using tourism as a tool to strengthen the ability of rural community organizations that manage tourism resources with the participation of the local people	3.39	0.64	Agree	2
3. CBT will recognize, support and promote community ownership of tourism	3.31	0.66	Agree	5
4. CBT will distribute benefits fairly among community members	3.38	0.66	Agree	3
5. CBT will promote community pride	3.37	0.68	Agree	4
Composite Mean	3.37	0.65	Agree	

Table 3 provides data on the acceptability of the province in community-based tourism. It can be observed that the respondents generally find community-based eco-tourism to be acceptable as expressed in the composite mean of 3.37.

The highest weighted mean is recorded on the statement CBT can improve the quality of life of the community here in Anhui Province. The second in rank is that CBT emerges from a community development strategy, using tourism as a tool to strengthen the ability of rural community organizations that manage tourism resources with the participation of the local people, and third is that CBT will distribute benefits fairly among community members.

In other words, the local residents on Anhui are most accepting of the perception that community-based tourism can improve their quality of life. The most recent reports on Anhui highlights the contribution of rural tourism to local residents not only in terms of increased income but more so in improved living standards (CGTN, 2021).

This positive acceptance of community-based tourism is also found to be similar to virtually all other studies on the subject. The works of Baniya et al. (2018) and Han et al. (2019) explicitly state that tourism has the positive effect on quality of life (well-being) of local residents, and even has transformative effects on their individual wellbeing, life satisfaction and sense of belonging to the community. In the same manner, the study of Li et al. (2020) also suggests that the residents’ perception of tourism, mediated by their sense of identity of the

place makes local farmers more willing to participate in the development of rural tourism. Finally, Nopiyani and Wirawan (2021) also specifically cite the improvement of the economy, employment opportunities, community pride, cultural exchanges, and increased facilities availability as the most pronounced improvements in the local communities' living conditions brought about by tourism.

At the fourth spot is that CBT will promote community pride, while at the last is CBT will recognize, support and promote community ownership of tourism. This result echoes, yet again, the political structure upon which community-based ecotourism could be implemented in China. With the statement still being generally agreed upon by the respondents, it could be that their orientation to local tourism governance has not yet explored the opportunity for the ownership of tourism resources.

According to Arnstein (1975, cited in Cruz, 2019) a pillar of community-based tourism is citizen power, which only occurs when people secure decision-making powers and full management controls over the tourism resources. This includes partnership, delegated power and citizen control. As already discussed in the previous sections, such is not the case in China as rural development is mostly initiated by local authorities, outside investors, or village despots to whom local residents often lose their control over the decision-making process (Xu et al., 2017).

Table 4

Readiness of the Province in Community Based Ecotourism

Readiness	WM	SD(±)	VI	Rank
1. Open in fostering cross cultural learning to cope with the visitors or tourist	3.34	0.67	Agree	4.5
2. The local community will participate in the process of CBT implementation	3.37	0.67	Agree	2
3. Community management organization will take the responsibility of giving information about CBT	3.34	0.63	Agree	4.5
4. Profits from CBT will contribute to the development of the destination	3.46	0.65	Agree	1
5. The community opens possibilities of venturing a more diverse tourism through CBT	3.35	0.64	Agree	3
Composite Mean	3.37	0.65	Agree	

Table 4 shows the readiness of the province in community-based tourism. It can be observed that the respondents overall agreed on the readiness of the province for community-based tourism as indicated by the composite mean of 3.37. Profits from CBT will contribute to the development of the destination was at the top of the list. At the 2nd rank was that the local community will participate in the process of CBT implementation. Drawing from the firsthand experiences in rural tourism by the residents, the above results indicate their readiness to embrace the concept of community-based tourism mainly for economic reasons.

Based on the results of the studies by Baniya et al. (2018) and Lo and Janta (2020), the local population express a 'more than average' affirmative response to the influence of community-based tourism on their financial well-being and general quality of life, specifically in the aspects of employment generation, educational cost and quality and health services provision. Their willingness and participation are seen to obtain more benefits from tourism development.

In the experience of Makuleke Contractual Park in South Africa investigated by Matiku, et al (2020), the community-based tourism project brought a ripple effect from the economic capital contribution to other community capitals (physical, human, social and natural). These were mainly brought about by partnerships with private investors on tourism physical capital development projects, e.g., B&B facilities and markets, which significantly contributed to employment and the sale of traditional Makuleke artifacts. Finally, the authors

comment that well-managed community-driven tourism projects can transform community capital resources to economic multipliers that will not only benefit the individual households but the entire community as a whole.

These possibilities for growth are opportunities that the local population of Anhui would like to take hold of in expressing their readiness for community-based tourism.

Ranking 3rd was that the community opens possibilities of venturing a more diverse tourism through CBT. At the last rank are two items with equal weighted means of 3.34. These are that community management organization will take the responsibility of giving information about CBT, and open in fostering cross cultural learning to cope with the visitors or tourist. These last two items post two very different challenges which underly issues on their readiness for community-based tourism: the structure of tourism governance, and orientation towards cultural identity.

Li et al. (2020) recognizes the challenge of achieving community collaboration in a very centralized environment, where their participation relies more on planning and permission-approval than on active grassroots activities. As expressed by Xu et al. (2017) initiatives and information by local authorities, outside investors, or village despots to whom local residents often lose their control over the decision-making process. At times, these stakeholders “attach great importance to the construction of facilities and man-made landscape, ignoring the protection of traditional rural cultures” (Wang et al., 2013). This lack of traditional cultural atmosphere often goes against the community’s desire for more cross-cultural experiences.

Table 5

Relationship between community based ecotourism and acceptability and readiness in community tourism

Indicators	P	Acceptance		p	Readiness	
		Interpretation	Decision		Interpretation	Decision
Economic	<0.001	Significant	Reject	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Social	<0.001	Significant	Reject	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Cultural	<0.001	Significant	Reject	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Environmenta l	<0.001	Significant	Reject	<0.001	Significant	Reject

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows the Relationship between the assessment in the status of community-based ecotourism and acceptability and readiness of the province. It is observed that there is a significant relationship between assessment in status of community-based ecotourism in terms of economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects and assessment in the acceptability and readiness of the province in community tourism since the computed p values are less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the assessment in the status of community-based ecotourism affects the assessment in acceptability and readiness of the province for community-based ecotourism.

In the case of Anhui, these results suggest there is a general acceptance on the status of tourism which the people consider to be enough to make their locality ready for further community-based tourism development.

This result is very apparent especially when viewed from an economic perspective. In the recent years, community-based tourism has been seen to contribute significantly only to the financial well-being of local farmers and craftsmen but in their general quality of life as well (CGTN, 2021). As previous studies also report how community-based tourism creates earning opportunities and stimulates economic activities (Manzoor et al., 2019; Yehia, 2019; Nopiyan & Wirawan, 2021), the locals’ personal experiences on the improved living

conditions could be regarded as the main driving factor to their acceptance of such approach to tourism. Similar results were also observed by Baniya et al. (2018) and Lo and Janta (2020) where the residents gave generally affirmatively responses to the positive economic influence of tourism in their communities. Seeing this as an opportunity to have a ‘ripple effect’ (Matiku, et al. 2020) to other community capitals, the local population of Anhui must have also expressed their readiness for the further development of community-based tourism in their area.

Meanwhile, the social and cultural milieu of Chinese communities such as those in Anhui place great emphasis on pride for local culture, maintaining harmonious relationships with and a sense of belongingness to a community (Hong, 2019; Zhang, 2013). Such sense of belonging is among the positive effects identified by the works of Baniya et al. (2018) and Han et al. (2019) brought about by community-based tourism development. By extension, this sense of community and place identity, can make them more likely to engage in community affairs (Yang et al., 2019). Seeing the benefits of tourism not only to their personal quality of life but also in the better conditions in their areas could be the reason why the locals have the most accepting perception of community-based tourism. As supported by the study of Li et al. (2020), this sense of identity mediates the residents’ willingness and participation to rural tourism development.

Finally, environmental awareness appears to be a value inherent to the local residents. In rural communities in China, it was observed that the collective thinking of local populations bound by geography and/or blood seeks to balance human-nature relations in regulating resource use and benefit sharing (He et al., 2020). For community-based tourism, the environment is an indispensable resource, both as an attraction and a supporting facility (Alhadi, 2018). As such, Nugroho and Numata (2020) highlight that local communities being stakeholders of ecotourism development also places to them a responsibility to preserve their collective natural and cultural heritage. Therefore, they must take action in building awareness around environmental issues such as waste reduction and proper disposal and waste infrastructure improvements. The current practice in China along with the local population’s cooperation is a good example of the move towards a more sustainable environmental management.

Considering all the benefits that the people are already gaining from their engagement in tourism activities, they then have a tendency to see community-based tourism in a more favorable light. Even more so if the local population would be asked to be more involved and participative of any decisions that will be made.

The ‘transformative effects’ Baniya et al., (2018), i.e., individual wellbeing, life satisfaction and sense of belonging, etc., of tourism to the local population could be seen as the primary reason why they will be more affirmative to the idea of community-based ecotourism. As what has been proven by several studies (Baniya et al., 2018; Han et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020; Lo and Janta, 2020; CGTN, 2021; Nopiyani and Wirawan, 2021), the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental gains the people obtain from tourism could affect their level of willingness and participation to its development.

Another point of relationship is the need for more citizen power – of people secure decision-making powers and full management controls over the tourism resources (Arnstein, 1975, cited in Cruz, 2019). In societies like China where rural development is run by local authorities, outside investors, or village despots, there is a tendency that power local residents be lost to the more dominant stakeholders. Their involvement and empowerment are important to fully realize the benefits of community-based ecotourism. As pointed out by Matiku and Tshipala (2020), well-managed community-driven tourism projects can transform community capital resources to economic multipliers that will not only benefit the individual households but the entire community as a whole.

Table 6*Relationship between community based ecotourism and acceptability and readiness of ecotourism*

Indicators	Acceptance			Readiness		
	p	Interpretation	Decision	p	Interpretation	Decision
Community Organizations	<0.001	Significant	Reject	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Resources	<0.001	Significant	Reject	<0.001	Significant	Reject
Management	<0.001	Significant	Reject	<0.001	Significant	Reject

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05; R – Rejected; FR – Failed to Reject; S – Significant; NS – Not Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 presents the relationship between the assessment on the potentials of community-based ecotourism and acceptability and readiness of the province in community tourism.

There is a significant relationship between the assessment in the potentials of community-based tourism in terms of community organization, resources and management and assessment in acceptability and readiness of the province in community tourism since the computed p-values are less than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the higher the assessment in the potentials of community-based tourism, the higher also is the assessment in acceptability and readiness of the province in community tourism. In other words, the favorable potentials that the local residents see from community-based tourism affect both their acceptance and readiness for community tourism in Anhui.

For both community organization and resources, the inherent patriotic and nurturing trait of the local communities can be investigated to explain this result. According to Li et al. (2020) suggests that the residents' perception of tourism, mediated by their sense of identity of the place makes locals more willing to participate in the development of rural tourism.

In terms of community organization, the results reveal that the residents of Anhui become more accepting of and ready to participate in community-based ecotourism as they become more aware of their roles and contributions in it. Despite the somewhat 'tokenistic' approach (Arnstein, 1975 cited in Cruz, 2019; Xu et al., 2019) which also has its fair share of criticisms, the government-led initiatives to community organization still allows for a sustainable and healthy development of rural tourism (Wang et al., 2013). This centralized planning identifies the role of the local community in terms of information and consultation mediated by local based organizations. As previously discussed, this approach proves to be quite effective in that the local community recognizes tourism's contribution not only in terms of increased income but also in improved living standards (CGTN, 2021).

In terms of resources, when tourism activities prove to reinforce the local community's idea of the protection of their place, then they could be assumed to be more accepting and ready for it. Sustainable Travel International (2020), recognizes that tourism has the tendency to produce waste and pollution. He et al. (2020) comment's that geography and/or blood in Chinese communities form social norms and regulations in managing their resources collectively. Conservation then becomes the key to balancing human-nature relations and regulating resource use and benefit sharing. In her recent article, Marsh (2022) comments that locals better understand the value and delicate balance their local ecosystems, they are then more likely to be involved in providing a sustainable experience for guests without upsetting this balance.

Meanwhile, the observed relationship of the management potential and the acceptance and readiness of the local communities in Anhui in community-based ecotourism may reflect their sense of corporate community involvement, especially as seen from the local authorities, investors and village despots. These groups have

already been identified to exercise greater controls in the decision-making processes in the community, including tourism development. The study of Yang et al. (2019) posits that the more a local enterprise earns from tourism, the more likely it is to be engaged and contribute to the development of the community. For the rest of the local population, what they seem to experience are the ripple effects of these developments. Seeing their community capital resources transform to economic multipliers could be reason enough for them to view tourism in a more positive light and be more accepting of its development (Matiku and Tshipala, 2020).

In summary, it could be assumed that the local residents' belief on their strong community organization can help them bring about more economic and social benefits as well as an improved quality of life from community-based ecotourism. It has already been established that greater involvement and participation from the local population has a big role in improving the quality of life of the residents of the destination. Consequently, the potential for strong community organizations as observed in this study could help achieve this cause. While this remains as a challenge in centrally governed societies like China (Xu et al., 2017; Li et al., 2020), a government-led multi stakeholder approach (Wang, et al., 2013) could be formulated so that the state's areas of macro-guidance, public promotion and marketing, policy guidance and financial support, etc. could be paired with the community organizations mobility and active participation in the grassroots.

The **proposed framework** is about community based ecotourism and it is divided into three parts: status of community based ecotourism, acceptability readiness and potentials of community based ecotourism. Ecotourism can be defined as traveling to unexplored natural destinations to appreciate the natural environment by acquiring knowledge about it, enjoying the culture, and protecting the authentic environment (Kim et al., 2019). The practice also involves the conservation of the environment and the destinations. The main advantage of ecotourism is the ability to gain enrichment from interacting with different cultures, which is a great way to promote different traditions, cultures and lifestyles to attract visitors to a particular area (Waylen et al., 2010). There are four small parts in status of community based ecotourism on the left side, There are 4 sub-variables. They are economic, social, cultural, and environmental. The status of community-based ecotourism is defined as the ability of the community to have an ecotourism environment (Gurung & Scholz, 2008). The potentials of community based ecotourism on the right has three parts, which are community organizations, management, and resources.

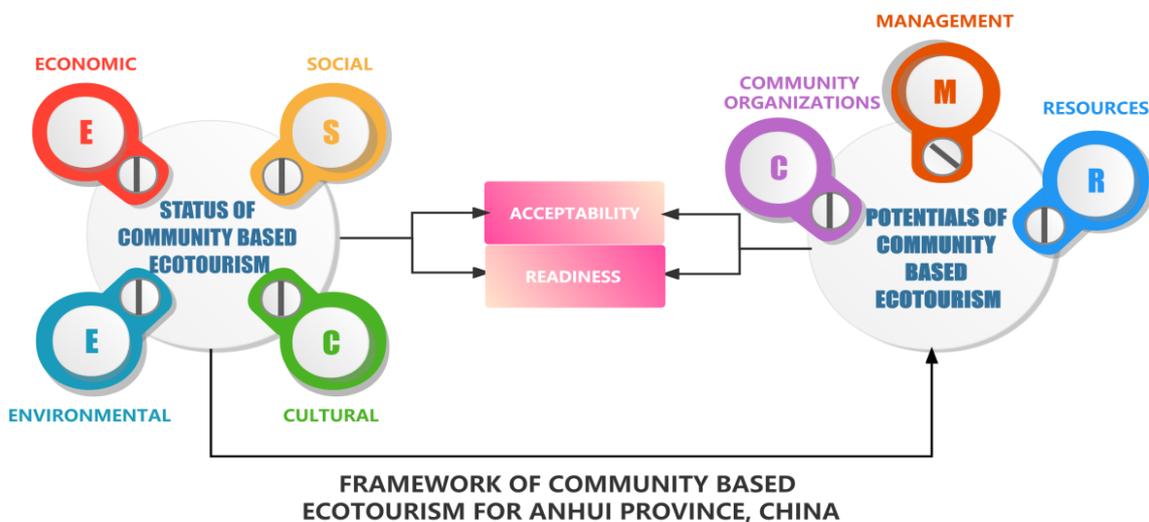


Figure 1. Bin Deng Framework of Community Based Ecotourism for Anhui Province, China

The one-way arrows in the framework represent the predictors of each component. Predictors are also called

independent variables. Predictors provide information about dependent variables for a particular outcome. Fields that typically apply related content use probability theory to estimate the future occurrence of events based on collected quantitative evidence. Predictors are used only to explain or predict the value of the response variable (Salkind, 2010).

For status of community based ecotourism, combined economic, social, cultural, environmental are revealed to be the predictors of acceptability readiness and community organizations, management, resources. The status of the community-based eco-tourism talks about the different aspects, including the economic, cultural, environmental, and social aspects that affect the readiness of a community to enable eco-tourism (Kibria et al., 2021). About the readiness of community-based ecotourism, it can be defined as the preparedness of the community in handling a project in ecotourism identified as one of the significant challenges (Tesfaye, 2017). Ecotourism needs a society committed to ensuring its environmental security and the security of specific ecosystems. Community is one of the decisive characteristics of ecotourism success (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). Communities that establish ecosystems should be prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities related to community ecotourism. (Kibria et al., 2021). Meanwhile, combined economic, social, cultural, environmental are the predictors of community organizations, management.

As for potentials of community based ecotourism combined community organizations, management, resources are the observed predictors of acceptability and readiness as well. The potential of community-based ecotourism in ecotourism includes the status of community in management, community and organizational capacity, that is, the ability or potential of community to hold ecotourism (Atanga, 2019). The potential of the community includes the ability of the community in organization, resource quantity and management (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

1. In terms of economic status of the community, the respondents agreed that the community has income in local products. As to social aspect, community has positive attitudes towards each other, The community has unique customs and culture that which can be promoted, and the community adheres in the waste management policy of the city government when it comes to environmental aspects. There is no doubt that the development of community-based ecotourism will help improve the income level of community residents and promote local indigenous culture.
2. In terms of the potentiality of Community Based Ecotourism, as to community organization, the residents participate in the planning process that is significant for the success of community projects, in terms of resources, the community is aware on the need for conservation of natural resources. As to management, a percentage of profits from tourism is contributed to a community fund for economic and social development of the community.
3. The community-based ecotourism is acceptable to the residents because it can improve the quality of life the province and the residents are ready for further development due to the profits it can contribute to the destination.
4. Significant relationship exist between Status of Community based ecotourism and Potentials of Community Based Tourism, Community based ecotourism and Acceptability and Readiness of the Province in Community Tourism. Significant relationship exists between potentials of Community Based Ecotourism and acceptability and Readiness of the Province in Community Based Ecotourism.
5. Community Based Ecotourism framework was proposed as guide for the further implementation of the project in Anhui province, China.

4.2 Recommendations

1. The communities and local governments should establish relevant environmental, cultural and tourism management rules and regulations that are more in line with rural backgrounds to ensure that the rules and regulations formulated can be truly implemented. For example, establish a local management system,

focus on the development of Hui culture in terms of culture, and establish a simplified version of the recycling and non-recyclable garbage classification system in terms of environmental protection.

2. The community and local related institutions should establish an open, transparent, and acceptable distribution system of community economic benefits, so that the community can obtain the due returns fairly and justly. Establish a scientific and sound distribution compensation system to protect the interests of residents. To distribute the total income to households, to disclose various income data on time every month, and to supervise from the community election delegation.
3. Further enhance the sense of acquisition of residents in eco-tourism communities. Including political participation in decision-making, such as the idea of empowering communities and getting them to participate more in decision-making. Establish a citizen representative system. Every year, the community votes for relevant decisions by electing representatives.
4. Further enrich the ecological environment construction experience activities in the eco-tourism area. That is to give full play to the status and role of community residents, through the development of garbage sorting, community forums, voluntary services, public welfare evaluations, etc., especially the construction of beautiful courtyards, the creation of modern families, etc., to truly stimulate the motivation of residents in each community.
5. The community and local related institutions should establish continuing education centers to regularly train residents of each community then establish an education plan to further strengthen the training of residents in the ecotourism community, including not only training in development concepts, development awareness, development models, development capabilities, but also how to carry out operations and management, improvement of the ecological environment and maintenance, multicultural learning and understanding.

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