

# A Study on The Positive Impact of Tourism on the Poverty Alleviation

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**Abstract :** *As residents are more and more yearning for higher life quality and enjoying beautiful natural wonders like spending a day picking berries, watching rice grow, fishing by the sea, and eating local-grown food, tourism is increasingly booming globally. Tourism, is defined as a commercial activity linked to the entertainment services for people who are visiting a place for pleasure. Poverty, a chronic concern and a common challenge faced by the global human society, is a severe obstacle for people to pursue a prosperous life, thus poverty eradication has always been a desire to be realized. Especially as the economic growth strategy, tourism is one of the major strategies in the regional development agenda. Tourism development is conducive to rural leisure agriculture, making rural tourism increasingly popular to alleviate poverty, an essential national strategy to promote social development and maintain social stability. This paper analyses the development of tourism and discusses tourism's positive influence on rural economic situation based on previous studies to explore the effects of tourism on rural poverty reduction. The improvement of life diversity in rural areas is due to the fact that most residents use local tourism resources to develop tourism, so as to improve the living standards of local residents. Furthermore, this paper also examines its significance in promoting the sustainable development of tourism and the economy of relatively poor areas.*

**Keywords:** *Poverty, rural economic situation, relatively poor areas, sustainable development, tourism.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the biggest and most profitable industries affecting peoples' well-being and prosperity, including employment opportunities, economic growth, and infrastructure construction. In addition, tourism is regarded as an effective tool for rural modernization and an important means of economic development in rural areas, which is expected to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. In 2014, the tourism total revenue achieved almost 8 trillion US dollars. In this regard, Ionelaa G. P., Constantinb B.M. & Dogaru L. noted that over the past decade, the tourism industry has created more than 300 million jobs, which ranked in the first place in the service industry in 2014. Therefore, tourism has become a solid foundation for revitalizing the rural economy and reducing poverty. Besides, this is usually because, in addition to the agriculture industry and small-scale family businesses with low barriers to entry, there is no more effective alternative with the aim of economic growth in rural areas. Therefore, a number of policy-makers believe that rural tourism is a valuable and appropriate way of development. This paper examines the evolution of tourism and its beneficial impact on the rural economy by considering previous research, with the aim of understanding how tourism can help reduce rural poverty. The increased variety of life in rural areas can be attributed to the locals utilizing their tourism resources to boost tourism and enhance their living standards. Additionally, this paper also explores the importance of tourism in promoting sustainable development and economic growth in impoverished regions.

## II. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Over the past few years, tourists have flocked to the small village, to listen to locals telling stories about their history, experience local folk activities, and appreciate the natural scenery. Rural tourism, as a valuable instrument of economic rise, contributes significantly to rural development, gaining several economic

opportunities and increasing the income of the rural family. In the beginning, job opportunities in the rural tourism industry are mainly generated in amenities and transport services projects. Then, tourism progress allows residents of different genders, ages, training, or work capacities to participate in full-time or part-time work. Many workers include security guards, cashiers, tour guides, etc.



Folk song performances captured against picturesque scenery in Zhongli village, Sanya city, in Hainan province, China. [Photo/Chinaculture.org]

Furthermore, other flexible tourism-related self-employed trades have also become more popular among local residents, such as catering, agricultural-related tourism programs, running rural-styled hotels, selling local specialties, etc. Especially in this era of science and technology, economic effects are not limited to the duration of visitors' on-site trips. Although tourists may not come to the countryside tour for a long time, as time goes on, many of them continue to order local products online with the convenience of mobile devices, internet, and electronic commerce.

The progress of rural tourism also promotes the industry's growth, including agriculture, fishery, forestry, animal husbandry, food, handicraft industries, and so on, all contributing to improving the rural population's welfare (Muresan et al., 2016). Tourism is no longer a substitute for traditional rural economic activities, but an effective tool to reduce poverty. Using the existing natural resources or agricultural products makes it easier for people experiencing poverty to get more income with more pride in living in rural areas, thus improving social stability. Besides, it is also a productive policy for rural development and economic revitalization. It is supposed to handle some existing problems, like conserving traditional cultural heritage, depletion of natural resources, and losing the rural labor force (Kheiri and Nasihatkon, 2016). In addition, knowledge and skills accumulated

from the traditional livelihoods of rural participants who engage in tourism, can be successfully put into practice in their new career to provide tourists with a more authentic rural experience and increase their attachment to the destination (Su, 2017).

Determining the positive effects of rural tourism on poverty reduction, will supply a foundation for further exploring the unique benefits brought by tourism development. For instance, rural tourism promotes the organic combination of agriculture and tourism and attracts a large number of tourists. Using the agricultural landscape and special tourism resources of the rustic natural environment to promote rural tourism development, participants also adjust to the agrarian structure, improve the quality of farms, and thereby narrow the gap between urban and rural areas. The unique advantage of developing rural tourism lies in protecting the cultural and rural environment, promoting new rural basic construction, social harmony, and stability. More importantly, the development of tourism is in line with the reality of rural areas, and has brought many economic benefits and ensured the rural economy's sustainable progress. Rural tourism policy is widely publicized and regarded as an essential means of poverty alleviation, especially in developing countries (Muresan, 2016).

### **III. DIFFERENT VOICES ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT'S IMPACT**

Tourism development often simultaneously induces positive and negative influences on the economy and society. Some argue that many rural tourism projects are mainly designed and constructed by the operators themselves, and thus, many resources have not been effectively utilized, leading to disordered development, and vicious competition taking place in different degrees. But it is also noticeable that the income gap has been narrowed down gradually among the other areas with tourism development. A study by Su (2019) found that most people (96.9%) support the development of tourism whether they participated in tourism or not themselves and hold a positive attitude toward a better future of tourism (87.7%). This is a recognition of the positive impact of tourism on rural economic conditions. Her paper also reports there's a significant increase in rural household income (68.9%). These data show that tourism development obtained the people's highly joint acceptance and approval.

At the same time, as a measure to promote rural economic growth and reduce poverty, the arguments for encouraging tourism are always contradictory. For example, opponents claim that, although tourism is regarded as a valuable tool to increase the employment rate and income of the local population to reduce the "brain drain" in rural areas, this is also opposed to the seasonal instability of employment conditions and the lack of services for the most needed target groups. People with different opinions also think that tourism reduces the value and number of natural resources.

Actually, such risks, as mentioned above, have been pondered by many local governments and are already reflected in many local policies. For one thing, as research shows, the peak tourism season is mainly during the summer months, which is not the busy season working for agriculture. Therefore, the person in charge should pay attention to the fact that there is less contradiction between these two activities. In the peak season of tourism, tourism participants have another excellent choice: to hire labor to help them engage in agricultural practice. In this way, the problem of the conflict of both tourism and agriculture development is dealt with, ensuring the maximization of both major activities' economic effects. As the natural resources depletion problem, governments adopt the policy of promoting natural resource management and ecological balance, thereby ensuring long-term sustainable economic development. The key to its harmonious development is to improve people's understanding of the effective allocation of resources, scientific planning, and the development of civil society.

All in all, generally speaking, when considerable economic benefits are involved and satisfactory results are achieved, the sustainable development of rural tourism should be considered seriously by practitioners. Such a boom in rural tourism has been supported by the government's concrete plans, as laid down in a draft of China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), calling for further strengthening "leisure agriculture, agricultural tourism, and the home-stay economy." Rural sightseeing is only just beginning to take off. In the future, it will pay more attention to China's sustainable economic development, CNN quoted personnel with the tourism industry spokespeople. They also strive to make the tourism industry to be more eco-friendly. As one farmer in China once said in a news report, "Villagers have also formed a cooperative for cultivating various

fruits, vegetables, and selenium-enriched rice, which ensures visitors can enjoy healthy food and also helps increase locals' incomes.”



Farmers at Aobei village in Jiangxi province, China, harvesting on their familiar ground  
ZHU HAIPENG/FOR CHINA DAILY

#### **IV. IMPLICATIONS**

First, relatively low investments gain more robust returns embodied in the higher income compared to the agricultural sector and household-centered small businesses. Second, the labor cost of the rural intensive agriculture field is meager. Due to their long distance and limited skills, these workers are usually less competitive in a larger market. Therefore, the benefits of rural tourism to farm labor are noticeable. Otherwise, the alternative option is to face the unemployment dilemma.

More importantly, what has been seriously ignored by the majority of people is the fact that much employment created at low cost is female employment (Fleischer et al., 1993). This practice has been further strengthened by a social welfare standpoint to reduce the income gap between men and women. As the following picture shows, people's enthusiasm to visit sites linked to the revolution and their desire to learn about different traditions has boosted poverty alleviation and rural vitalization efforts in East China's Jiangxi province. The agricultural tourism industry generally encourages women to participate in the labor force. In other cases, many of these women cannot go out to work and are always regarded as dependents of their families. This study shows that supporting small tourism enterprises can produce social and economic benefits. Such effects are conducive to rural tourism development to enhance local livelihoods, rejuvenate rural economies, and, more importantly, support people experiencing poverty (Sharpley, 2002).



Xie Zhengxiu (left) makes straw sandals with another villager in Gutian village in Jinggangshan, Jiangxi province, China. Sales of sandals and other handicrafts to visitors help lift villagers' incomes. [Photo by Wang Jian/China Daily]

## V. CONCLUSION

Different cultural experiences, along with various relaxing practices, serve as the leading tourism attraction, particularly for urban residents. As mentioned above, with the tourism industry growing, many local enterprises that rely on tourism, such as expanding the sales of agricultural products, raising publicize of local handicrafts, as well as creating more employment opportunities for more local workers. Moreover, when consumers recognize their products, tourists can buy them online in the long run. Rural residents then also can provide more services to support the development of local tourism, which is reflected in the accommodation and other facilities to meet tourists' use.

Essentially, tourism is a fountain of wealth for the poor regions, except for more employment opportunities. Rural tourism development arouses many other related businesses, thus bringing considerable local employment opportunities, for example, construction and renovation, bringing additional benefits to rural communities. The prime example is the increasing number of infrastructure enhancement projects, such as trains, highways, other public transport, and more modern facilities. Since 2018, Jinggangshan Tourism and Culture Company has invested over 10 million yuan in renovating houses, the village's infrastructure, and public facilities, based on its revolutionary legacies and natural scenery. In this context, the development of rural tourism has also contributed to the decline of the labor force movement, which benefits to retain the youngsters in the countryside. Many rural couples have decided to stay in their home village by conducting their own tourism activity, at the same time, they can care for their children and elderly parents, thereby improving family ties and, above all, social stability. As a result, with rural tourism development, local living standards are boosted and will continue to boom.

Poverty is not predestined, nor is it unconquerable. Tourism, mainly rural tourism, has contributed significantly to people's battle against poverty. With firm will, determination, and right practical actions, tourism can help the poor move forward confidently on the road of poverty alleviation.

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