

## DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED RURAL TOURISM MODEL FOR STAKEHOLDERS IN YUANJIA VILLAGE, CHINA

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### Abstract

This research aims to propose an Integrated Rural Tourism (IRT) development model for stakeholders in Yuanjia village, China. Although IRT has been widely discussed, research rarely details effective approaches to developing IRT. Therefore, this study utilizes Yuanjia village as a research site to develop an IRT model, conducting a mixed methods approach. The research firstly explores well-designed CSR initiatives for tourism enterprises to promote IRT. Additionally, as successful IRT development requires stakeholders to develop shared institutional logic to take collaborative actions, the research explores the institutional logic guiding the behaviors of stakeholders in China's rural tourism and further examines its relationship with IRT development. The findings show that stakeholders can promote IRT through implementing the proposed CSR initiatives and developing the identified institutional logic. Theoretically, this study contributes to the localization of the IRT concept in the context of China in accordance with its unique institutional features. Practically, the proposed model provides stakeholders with effective guidance to develop IRT successfully.

**Keywords:** IRT development, Institutional logics, Stakeholders, CSR, Yuanjia village

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Rural areas provide tourists with increasingly popular tourist resources and environments. China has developed rural tourism since the early 1980s. Although the country is a relatively late player in this sector, rural tourism has played multifunctional and essential roles in China, including alleviating poverty, revitalizing villages, preserving rural cultures, and building beautiful countryside (Gao, Huang & Huang, 2009; Liu, Dou, Li & Cai, 2020).

However, some significant problems still

hamper the success of China's rural tourism development (Yang & Wall, 2014; Wang & Yotsumoto, 2019; Ma, Dai & Fan, 2020). To meet the needs of the mass market, some investors have promoted the massive commercialization of local cultures, providing tourists with homogenous products, which leads to the decreased uniqueness of rural destinations (Gao, Huang & Huang, 2009). Additionally, due to a lack of power, skills and capital, local residents suffer disempowerment in several aspects, including access to information, tourism participation, and benefit distribution (Ma, Dai & Fan, 2020).

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Moreover, increasing conflicts between stakeholders have also been a significant issue. Different stakeholders may have incompatible values in rural tourism development, presenting challenges in establishing collaborative stakeholder relationships (Ma, Dai & Fan, 2020).

To address the identified problems, an approach that integrates local resources, empowers local residents, and links multiple stakeholders, is necessary for China. IRT is defined as tourism linked to the economic, social, cultural, and human resources, of the localities in which the tourism occurs. Therefore, IRT is suitable for China's context. It should be noted that while existing studies mainly focus on analyzing IRT development in different contexts, the approach to developing IRT calls for further inquiry. According to the implications of previous research, IRT development requires effective governance by developing shared institutional logic among stakeholders. Additionally, tourism enterprises are encouraged to implement well-designed CSR initiatives to promote IRT. Therefore, this study takes Yuanjia village as the research site in proposing an IRT development model to effectively address the existing gap in the literature by achieving the following research objectives:

1. To explore the institutional logic guiding the behavior of stakeholders in China's rural tourism development;
2. To identify CSR initiatives for tourism enterprises to promote IRT development in China;
3. To examine the IRT development level in Yuanjia village, China;
4. To critically analyze the relationship between institutional logic and IRT development in Yuanjia village, China;
5. To develop an IRT development model for stakeholders in Yuanjia village, China.

Theoretically, this research applies the concept of IRT in the context of China in accordance with the country's political, social, and cultural systems. Such localization helps to enrich the concept by exploring a different context. Meanwhile, the unique experience and practice of China's rural tourism will also provide new insights in the concept of IRT, contributing to the further application of IRT in different destinations. Moreover, this study applies multiple theories by theoretically exploring an appropriate approach to successfully promote IRT. Practically, the proposed model provides guidance for each type of stakeholder to prepare themselves for effectively promoting IRT development in practice.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Integrated Rural Tourism

IRT is defined as tourism sustained by networks explicitly linking multiple stakeholders to jointly promote a locality's resources (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). Previous studies have identified five dimensions determining IRT development, including networks, embeddedness, endogeneity, complementarity, and empowerment (Oliver & Jenkins, 2003; Marzo-Navarro, Pedraja-Iglesias & Vinzon, 2017). The networks dimension can be understood as relational ties that connect stakeholders in working together (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). Such collaborative relationships have been considered the key to successful IRT development. Another significant dimension of IRT is embeddedness that refers to tourism products directly related to where tourism occurs (Oliver & Jenkins, 2003; Saxena & Ilbery, 2008).

Additionally, to avoid the high levels of economic leakage from local communities, IRT development should also be endogenous (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). The endogeneity

dimension implies that tourism should be developed for maximum profit in the locality through utilizing and adding value to local resources (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). Considering the interlinked features of endogeneity and embeddedness, a necessary characteristic of IRT is empowering the local people. The empowerment dimension encourages local people to exercise their powers, build their capacity to manage their resources, and be further involved in decision-making processes (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). Moreover, another necessary dimension of IRT is complementarity, which emphasizes the shared utilization of local resources between tourists and local people (Marzo-Navarro, Pedraja-Iglesias & Vinzon, 2017).

IRT has been practiced in both developed and developing countries because an integrated approach to promoting rural tourism has great potential in linking tourism with local resources (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008; Panyik, Costa & Ratz, 2011; Lenao & Saarinen, 2015). Previous studies have identified a series of issues in IRT development. The majority of these problems are attributed to the difficulties in developing collaborative stakeholder relationships (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008; Panyik, Costa & Ratz, 2011; Lenao & Saarinen, 2015). As IRT development is mainly sustained by networks that connect stakeholders in jointly promoting tourism development, the basis for network establishment is to develop shared institutional logic among stakeholders. Additionally, the previous experience indicates that successful IRT development requires stakeholders to take responsibility for their practices (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008).

Although IRT has been widely discussed in different contexts, there is a significant lack of research detailing a practical approach for stakeholders to successfully develop IRT, especially in China, where rural tourism has

been moving forward in a new stage of flourishing development. To address the identified gaps in the literature, this research aims to develop an IRT development model for stakeholders in Yuanjia village, China. The study provides a local application of the IRT concept within the context of Yuanjia village, exploring an approach to promote the five dimensions of IRT from two aspects, namely institutional logic and CSR.

## **2.2 Institutional Logic**

The institutional logic perspective has been applied as a useful analytical framework to understand the behavior of various stakeholders in the tourism field. Thornton and Ocasio (2008) define institutional logic as “the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences.” Based on the perspectives of institutional logic, each stakeholder in an organizational context has the central logic that is the basis of taken-for-granted rules governing their behaviors (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012).

The relevant references were systematically reviewed to explore the institutional logic guiding the behavior of stakeholders in China’s rural tourism development as shown in Table 1.

From the results, nine major categories of institutional logic can be identified in China’s rural tourism development. Exploring institutional logic generates a better understanding of stakeholders’ behavior, contributing to effective stakeholder governance. As the networks of stakeholders form a crucial basis for IRT development, the development of shared

**Table 1** The Institutional Logic Guiding the Behavior of Stakeholders in China’s Rural Tourism Development

<b>Institutional Logic Guiding The Behavior Of Stakeholders In China’s Rural Tourism Development</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>References</b>
Increase the income of local residents (logic 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism has been promoted and developed by the Chinese government as an effective tool to increase the incomes of rural residents.</li> <li>• As most rural tourism enterprises are run by local people, they tend to hire local residents, increasing their income.</li> </ul>	<p>Ying &amp; Zhou, (2007). Su, (2012). Weng &amp; Peng, (2014). Chen, Huang &amp; Bao, (2016). Xue, Kerstetter &amp; Hunt, (2017).</p>
Increase local employment (logic 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese government has promoted rural tourism as an essential way to increase employment for the rural labor force and launched policies to encourage rural residents to be involved in rural tourism.</li> <li>• Tourism is vital for most Chinese rural residents as it generates employment opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p>Ying &amp; Zhou, (2007). Su, (2012). Su, Wang &amp; Wen, (2013). Weng &amp; Peng, (2014). Wang &amp; Yotsumoto, (2019). Ma, Dai &amp; Fan, (2020).</p>
Increase the incomes of entrepreneurs (logic 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The logic of making a profit by adding customer value guides the practices of tourism enterprises.</li> <li>• To encourage more enterprises to be involved in and promote rural tourism development, the local government has introduced beneficial policies to increase the profits of entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>	<p>Zhao, (2009). Han, Wu, Huang &amp; Yang (2014). Ying, Jiang &amp; Zhou, (2015). Zhou, Chan &amp; Song, (2017).</p>
Integrate tourism with local industries (logic 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese government emphasizes that industry integration is significant to rural development and suggests that tourism should be closely integrated with local industries.</li> <li>• Guided by the government’s policies, an increasing number of rural tourism enterprises integrate their business with local industries to enrich tourists’ experiences.</li> <li>• Followed by the government’s encouragement, local residents have realized that integrating tourism and local industries is an effective approach to improving livelihoods.</li> </ul>	<p>Su, Wang &amp; Wen, (2013). Chen, Huang &amp; Bao, (2016). Ma, Dai &amp; Fan, (2020). Liu, Dou, Li &amp; Cai (2020)</p>

**Table 1** (Continued)

<b>Institutional logic guiding the behavior of stakeholders in China's rural tourism development</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>References</b>
Protect local cultures (logic 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese government has developed rural tourism as a vital approach for preserving rural culture and traditions.</li> <li>• Rural tourism enterprises are not blindly committed to the logic of profit-making; the moral norms also influence them to protect local cultures by developing rural tourism.</li> <li>• Local residents have recognized the importance of protecting cultures and traditions through the arrival of tourists who show great interest in rural cultures.</li> </ul>	Su, Wang & Wen, (2013). Gao & Wu, (2017). Liu <i>et al.</i> , (2020)
Protect the local environment (logic 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese government highlights the importance of preserving the environment in developing rural tourism.</li> <li>• Guided by the government's policy, rural tourism enterprises must consider the impacts of their business on the local natural environment.</li> <li>• As the natural landscape of rural areas attracts most tourists, local residents have recognized the importance of environmental protection in rural tourism development.</li> </ul>	Su, (2012). Chen, Huang & Bao, (2016). Xue, Kerstetter & Hunt, (2017). Ma, Dai & Fan, (2020). Liu <i>et al.</i> , (2020)
Improve local infrastructure (logic 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese government introduced beneficial policies on lands, capital, and personnel to facilitate the construction of infrastructure of rural areas.</li> <li>• Tourism enterprises tend to invest in essential facilities to improve tourist services.</li> </ul>	Chen, Huang & Bao, (2016). Xue, Kerstetter & Hunt, (2017). Ma, Dai & Fan, (2020). Liu <i>et al.</i> , (2020)
Increase local fiscal revenue (logic 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As tourism has been perceived as a sector for increasing fiscal revenue and the local government needs to administrate local affairs through fiscal revenues, maximizing fiscal income has been a major logic behind the behavior of local government in rural tourism development.</li> </ul>	Chen, Huang & Bao, (2016). Ma, Dai & Fan, (2020)

**Table 1** (Continued)

<b>Institutional logic guiding the behavior of stakeholders in China’s rural tourism development</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>References</b>
Promote stakeholder cooperation (logic 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese government mobilizes the enthusiasm of all stakeholders involved in rural tourism and further promotes the Public-Private-Partnership model to facilitate the cooperation of stakeholders.</li> <li>• In many rural destinations in China, local residents and tourism enterprises develop a profit-sharing mechanism to balance the interests and promote stakeholder collaboration.</li> </ul>	Liu <i>et al.</i> , (2020). Deng, Lu & Zhao (2020)

*Note* Data collected by author.

institutional logic among stakeholders has been perceived as extremely important and necessary. Accordingly, this research further examines the relationship between the identified institutional logic and IRT development. Such examination helps stakeholders to identify the logic positively affecting IRT development.

### 2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR has gradually become the concern of many tourism enterprises who have been expected to advance economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability (Horng, Hsu & Tsai, 2018). Previous experience indicates that CSR has great potential in promoting IRT (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). As an important stakeholder, tourism enterprises can facilitate each dimension of IRT by conducting effective CSR initiatives. For example, tourism enterprises can promote the network dimension by sharing tourism-related information with other stakeholders and employing more local people (Oliver &

Jenkins, 2003). Additionally, if entrepreneurs consider the interests of local communities through CSR initiatives, it promotes the empowerment dimension. Moreover, the homogenization of tourism products in China strongly suggests that tourism enterprises should take responsibility in embedding local resources during tourism development, further facilitating the embeddedness and endogeneity dimensions of IRT (Oliver & Jenkins, 2003; Navarro, Iglesias & Vinzon, 2017).

Although the significance of CSR in IRT has been widely recognized, rarely have studies explored which CSR initiatives tourism enterprises should conduct to promote IRT successfully. Having experienced fast economic development over more than 30 years, tourism enterprises in China should take on more social responsibility. It should be noted that entrepreneurs can give back through a range of benefits, not only providing economic, but also cultural, environmental, and social benefits for communities. Accordingly, this research explores the CSR

initiatives of tourism enterprises which promote IRT development in China.

for stakeholders to promote IRT development are identified.

## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework, as shown in Table 2, presents and explains the theories applied in this research. IRT includes five dimensions: networks, embeddedness, endogeneity, complementarity, and empowerment. This research aims to propose an IRT development model for stakeholders in Yuanjia village, China. First, stakeholder theory was utilized to identify the three major supply-side stakeholders in China’s rural tourism development, namely local government, tourism enterprises, and local residents. An institutional logic perspective was then employed to identify the logic governing each stakeholder’s behavior in China’s rural tourism development and further examines its relationship with IRT development. Finally, guided by CSR, the CSR initiatives necessary

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Site

Yuanjia village, located in Liquan Country of Shaanxi province, is 60 km from the provincial capital Xi’an City. In 2007, Yuanjia village began to develop rural tourism, gradually becoming a popular rural tourism destination in China, serving more than 6 million tourists annually (Deng, Lu & Zhao, 2020). On the one hand, Yuanjia village demonstrates great attempts towards IRT development, including uniting multiple stakeholders, embedding local culture with tourism products, and involving local residents in tourism development. On the other hand, the village still faces challenges in further developing IRT.

**Table 2** Theoretical Framework

<b>Integrated Rural Tourism</b>	<b>Stakeholder Theory</b>	<b>Institutional Logic Perspective</b>	<b>Corporate Social Responsibility</b>
Integrated rural tourism is defined as tourism mainly sustained by networks explicitly linking stakeholders to jointly promote the economic, social, cultural, natural, and human resources of the localities in which it takes place (Navarro, Iglesias & Vinzon, 2017).	Stakeholders refer to individuals or groups that can affect or are affected by the achievement of an organization’s goals (Saito & Ruhanen, 2017).	Institutional logic refers to the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).	CSR refers to the voluntary undertaking of actions by enterprises which provide support for social, economic, and environmental issues as well as the mediation of stakeholder relations (Hornig, Hsu & Tsai, 2018).

*Note.* Data collected by author.

With the expansion of tourism development, more stakeholders have become engaged in local tourism, leading to complex stakeholder relationships (Gao & Wu, 2017). Such complicated relationships can trigger conflicts among stakeholders, challenging the establishment and maintenance of networks for further IRT development. Additionally, almost 70 villages have developed a specialty food as a leading tourism product to attract tourists nearby Yuanjia village. This has led to the homogenization of tourism products and meaningless competition among villages in the region (Deng, Lu & Zhao, 2020). Therefore, stakeholders in Yuanjia village urgently require an effective approach to consolidate each dimension of IRT and address the identified issues.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This research conducted a mixed method approach to achieve the research objectives. In the qualitative section, the research applied a systematic literature review to explore the logic guiding the behavior of stakeholders in China's rural tourism. Meanwhile, the CSR initiatives necessary for stakeholders to promote IRT development in China were identified through interviews with experts. Subsequently, in the quantitative section, a questionnaire survey was applied to examine the levels of IRT development and the relationship between stakeholder logic and IRT development in Yuanjia village. Finally, an IRT development model for stakeholders in Yuanjia village was developed based on integrating qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

### **3.3 Interview with Experts**

During these research field experts were interviewed to explore the CSR initiatives

promoting IRT development. According to Hagaman and Wuitich (2016), saturation of themes usually occurs within 15-20 interviews. Therefore, purposeful sampling was used to select fifteen experts who had conducted the related research or had other relevant academic experience in CSR and China's rural tourism development, as the representative informants. With their extensive knowledge and insightful views on the research questions, the experts could provide valuable information in respect of the research questions.

The interview questions were first sent to the selected experts by email, with responses being received around the middle of April 2022. The interview transcripts were then translated into English and analyzed through collaborative content analysis by three coders with tourism study backgrounds who were familiar with Chinese and English. Initially, the coders organized a meeting to discuss the research overview and plan for data analysis. Based on the plan, each coder coded two different transcripts into generative categories, and all coders discussed the development of a preliminary codebook. Then, the initial codebook was tested against data not previously coded. Subsequently, the coders applied the revised codebook to code all data and discussed discrepancies until a consensus was reached. Finally, the process and the results of data analysis were finalized and approved by all coders in the team.

### **3.4 Questionnaire Survey**

Subsequently, a questionnaire survey was conducted to detect the IRT development level and examine the relationship between the identified institutional logic and IRT development in Yuanjia village, China. The proposed questionnaire included three sections. The first section was designed to collect

demographic information from the respondents. Meanwhile, the second section was designed to measure the IRT development level. The validated measurement scale developed by Marzo-Navarro, Pedraja-Lglesias, and Vinzon (2013) was applied. The third section was designed to identify the institutional logic. The items in this section were derived from the results of a systematic literature review. A 5-point Likert Scale was used to measure the respondents' perceptions for each question in the questionnaire.

The target population for this research encompassed all stakeholders involved in the rural tourism development of Yuanjia village. Specifically, there were three major types of stakeholders from the supply side, namely local government, tourism enterprises, and local residents. To make a precise statistical inference about the population, the research conducted simple random sampling to select the respondents from the targeted population. In terms of sample size, Cochran's (1963) formula was applied:

$$N_0 = (Z^2 * P * Q) / E^2 = (1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5) / (0.05)^2 = 385$$

Accordingly, the Yuanjia village committee were contacted to acquire official permission. 400 questionnaires were then randomly distributed to stakeholders (local government, tourism enterprises, and local residents) in Yuanjia village during May 2022. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. A descriptive analysis was employed to examine the IRT development level through calculation of the means and standard deviation. Multiple linear regression was then applied to examine the relationships between each identified institutional logic and IRT development. Finally, the qualitative and quantitative data analysis results were integrated to propose an IRT development

model for stakeholders in Yuanjia village.

### **3.5 Research Ethics**

This research followed ethical standards as follows:

**Voluntary and harmless.** Before the interview, every informant received and signed an informed consent that officially introduced the research's purposes and clearly described their rights not to accept or to withdraw from the interview. In addition, before conducting the survey, the Yuanjia village committee were contacted to obtain official permission for questionnaire distribution in the village.

**Confidentiality and anonymity.** This research promises that all respondents did not need to provide their identity or privacy information and all collected data are only to be used for academic purposes.

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## **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 The Results of Interview with Experts**

According to the results of the content analysis, four CSR activities were found to promote the network dimension. The first was to develop shared value with other stakeholders. As most enterprises in China's rural tourism are local residents, they play a significant role in promoting stakeholder collaboration. Additionally, this suggests that tourism enterprises should promote the establishment of tourism cooperatives to connect stakeholders effectively. Moreover, tourism enterprises are encouraged to participate in social welfare activities and

maintain positive communication with local communities. Therefore, CSR activities which facilitate the network dimension include:

- Development of shared value and common objectives with other stakeholders;
- Development of a “collective tourism cooperative”;
- Building a communication platform to connect with other stakeholders;
- Actively participation in the social welfare activities of local communities.

Three CSR initiatives were found to promote the embeddedness dimension. The first was to provide more employment opportunities for local people thereby promoting the embeddedness of tourism development through local human resources. Additionally, tourism enterprises are encouraged to design tourism products which link to local resources. Moreover, as rural revitalization is a significant goal for all rural villages in China, this suggests that tourism enterprises can embed their business goals with the revitalization of the whole community. Therefore, tourism enterprises can conduct the following CSR initiatives to promote the embeddedness dimension:

- Increase local employment;
- Design tourism products and activities with local characteristics;
- Link enterprise goals with the objectives of rural revitalization.

Two CSR initiatives were identified for the endogeneity dimension. As local resources in most Chinese villages have been less explored, tourism enterprises are expected to actively utilize local resources to develop rural tourism. Additionally, informants strongly suggest that tourism enterprises should promote local involvement in the designing of tourism products as local people usually have a better understanding of local resources. Consequently, enterprises can

implement the following CSR initiatives to promote the endogeneity dimension:

- Actively explore local tourism resources;
- Encourage the local community to participate in the design of tourism products and activities

As the majority of villages in China lack necessary infrastructure, tourism enterprises are encouraged to promote the construction of local facilities for rural tourism development. In addition, informants suggest that enterprises should consider the demands of both local residents and tourists when developing rural tourism. Furthermore, tourism enterprises should protect the local ecosystem and maintain public security thereby providing a beautiful environment for both tourists and local people. Accordingly, CSR initiatives for the complementarity dimension include:

- Protect the local environment;
- Promote the construction of public infrastructure;
- Maintain a public secure environment;
- Consider the needs of both tourists and local residents when developing tourism activities.

Fifth, according to the suggestions of informants, tourism enterprises should provide local residents with more training opportunities to increase their skills. In addition, as most rural residents in China lack cultural confidence, tourism enterprises can organize well-designed activities to explore local traditions thereby psychologically empowering the local community. Meanwhile, tourism enterprises should develop an equal benefit distribution system to guarantee the benefits of local people. Therefore, tourism enterprises can take the following CSR initiatives to contribute to the empowerment dimension:

- Provide local residents with more training and education opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge;

- Hold various activities to explore local culture, thereby enhancing the confidence of local residents;
- Develop an equal benefit distribution system.

Notably, the research proposes CSR initiatives for tourism enterprises to promote each dimension of IRT, indicating that well-designed CSR initiatives have great potential in promoting IRT. Additionally, the findings demonstrate that the design of CSR initiatives should be located within a specific context. The exploration of CSR initiatives in this research fully considers the challenges facing China’s IRT development and critically assesses the potential of tourism enterprises in addressing these issues. The results suggest that tourism enterprises should take on multiple social responsibilities, not only poverty alleviation, but also social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, to promote successful IRT development.

#### **4.2 The Results of the Questionnaire Survey**

To examine the development level of IRT, 400 questionnaires were randomly distributed to stakeholders in Yuanjia village with 400 valid responses being received. A descriptive analysis was employed to analyze the collected data (mean and standard deviation).

The levels of IRT development were categorized as follows:

- 1.00 to 1.79: very low;
- 1.80 to 2.59: low;
- 2.60 to 3.39: neutral;
- 3.40 to 4.19: high;
- 4.20 to 5.00: very high

The Table 3 presents the level of each dimension of IRT and the total level of IRT development in Yuanjia village. According to the results, the level of development for the complementarity dimension is ‘very high’ (Mean=4.24, Std. Deviation=0.47); the level of development for the embeddedness dimension is ‘very high’ (Mean=4.20, Std. Deviation=0.50); the level of development for the empowerment dimension is ‘high’ (Mean=4.17, Std. Deviation=0.52); the level of development for the network dimension is ‘high’ (Mean=4.09, Std. Deviation=0.50); the level of development for endogeneity is ‘high’ (Mean=4.02, Std. Deviation=0.47); and the total level of IRT development is ‘high’ (Mean=4.15, Std. Deviation=0.39).

As the finding shows, the total level of IRT development in Yuanjia village is relatively high, demonstrating the great efforts made by stakeholders for IRT development. In terms of each dimension, the levels of development for the complementarity and embeddedness dimensions are very high, reflecting the profound link between tourism

**Table 3** The Level of IRT Development

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>Complementarity</b>	400	4.2404	.47335	Very high
<b>Embeddedness</b>	400	4.2081	.50897	Very high
<b>Empowerment</b>	400	4.1781	.52146	High
<b>Networks</b>	400	4.0961	.50470	High
<b>Endogeneity</b>	400	4.0275	.47575	High
<b>Total level of IRT development</b>	400	4.1500	.39214	High
<b>Valid N</b>	400			

*Note.* Data collected by author.

development and local resources. In addition, the high level of the complementarity dimension indicates that tourists and local people share the local resources and facilities well.

However, as the scale of rural tourism has expanded, more external capital has been engaged in local tourism development, leading to tourism benefits being exported from the village. Therefore, the level of endogeneity is relatively low. Meanwhile, the relationship and interaction among stakeholders has become increasingly complicated, which also challenges the level of the networks dimension. Moreover, although local residents actively participate in tourism development, there are still few opportunities for them to become involved in decision-making processes. Therefore, the level of development for the empowerment dimension is also comparatively low.

Subsequently, multiple linear regression was applied to examine the relationship between each identified institutional logic and IRT development. Table 4 shows the results of

the multiple linear regression.

In Table 4, it shows that there are five categories of institutional logic that have significant effects on the networks dimension of IRT, including logic 1 (P = .000); logic 2 (P = .001); logic 5 (P = .003); logic 6 (P = .032); and logic 9 (P = .000). According to the results, logic 9 is subject to the strongest affect (B = .396), followed by logic 1 (B = .150), logic 2 (B = .131), logic 5 (B = .125), and logic 6 (B = .076).

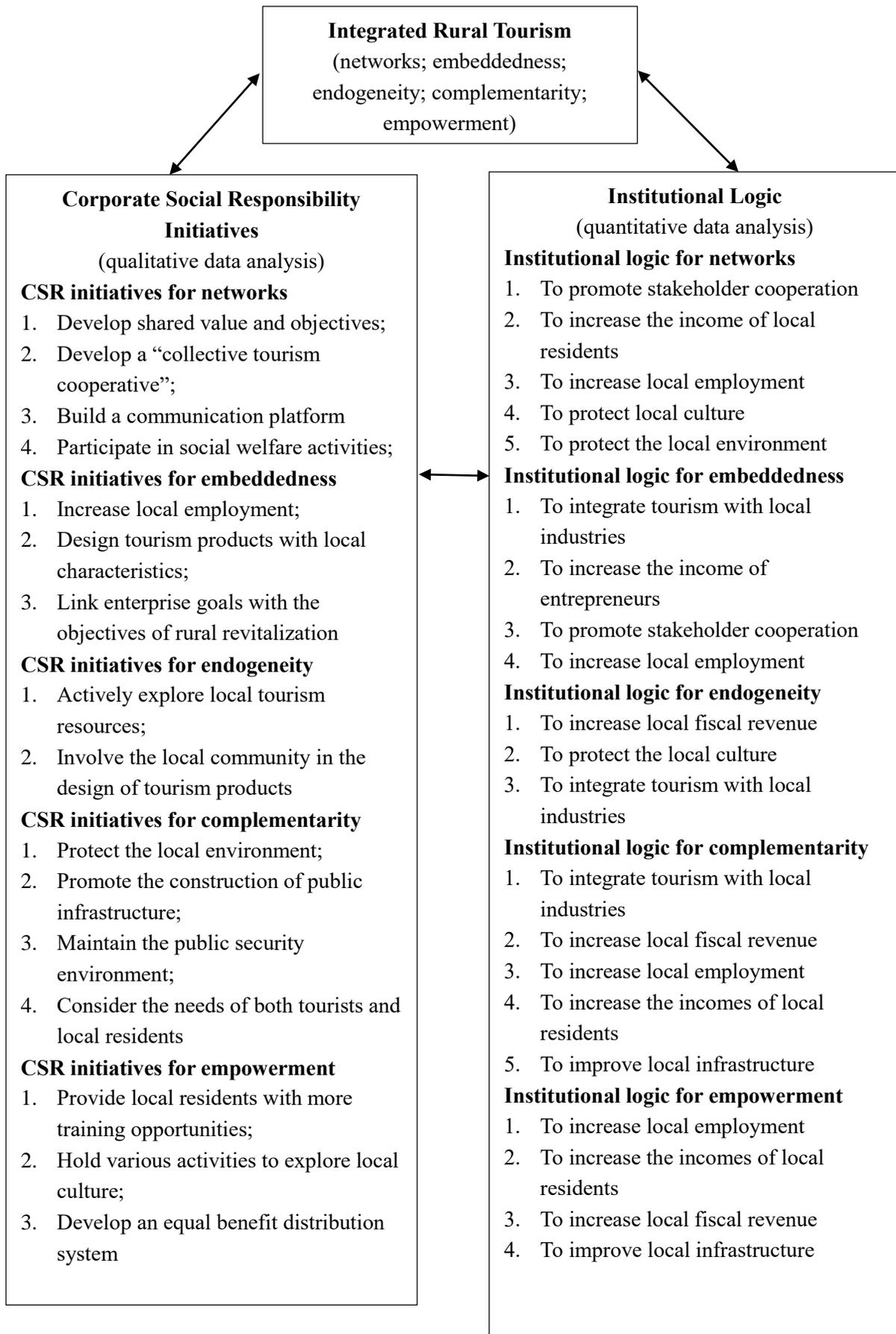
In terms of the embeddedness dimension, four types of institutional logic have a positive effect, including logic 2 (P = .049); logic 3 (P = .010); logic 4 (P = .000); and logic 9 (P = .018). The results show that logic 4 is subject to the strongest effect (B = .453), followed by logic 3 (B = .113), logic 9 (B = .109), and logic 2 (B = .094).

Additionally, the findings reveal that three types of institutional logic have significant effects on the endogeneity dimension, including logic 4 (P = .006); logic 5 (P = .008); and logic 8 (P = .000). As the results show,

**Table 4** The Results of Multiple Linear Regression

		Logic 1	Logic 2	Logic 3	Logic 4	Logic 5	Logic 6	Logic 7	Logic 8	Logic 9
<b>Networks</b>	<b>B</b>	.150	.131	.053	.061	.125	.076	.026	-.034	.396
	<b>Sig.</b>	.000	.001	.134	.090	.003	.032	.326	.218	.000
<b>Embeddedness</b>	<b>B</b>	.023	.094	.113	.453	.001	.056	.034	.043	.109
	<b>Sig.</b>	.642	.049	.010	.000	.981	.206	.303	.212	.018
<b>Endogeneity</b>	<b>B</b>	-.022	.100	.022	.143	.158	-.003	.051	.186	.016
	<b>Sig.</b>	.695	.072	.669	.006	.008	.958	.183	.000	.759
<b>Complementarity</b>	<b>B</b>	.119	.163	-.003	.188	.068	-.011	.076	.179	.071
	<b>Sig.</b>	.015	.001	.954	.000	.185	.801	.023	.000	.119
<b>Empowerment</b>	<b>B</b>	.187	.335	.081	.029	.069	.045	.112	.173	-.055
	<b>Sig.</b>	.000	.000	.072	.533	.198	.326	.001	.000	.249
<b>The total level of IRT development</b>	<b>B</b>	.091	.165	.053	.175	.084	.033	.060	.110	.108
	<b>Sig.</b>	.002	.000	.045	.000	.007	.222	.003	.000	.000

Note. Data collected by author.



**Figure 1** The IRT development Model for Stakeholders in Yuanjia Village, China

logic 8 is subject to the strongest effect ( $B = .186$ ), followed by logic 5 ( $B = .158$ ), and logic 4 ( $B = .143$ ).

Regarding the complementarity dimension, five types of institutional logic were shown to have a positive effect, including logic 1 ( $P = .015$ ); logic 2 ( $P = .001$ ); logic 4 ( $P = .000$ ); logic 7 ( $P = .023$ ); and logic 8 ( $P = .000$ ). The results show that logic 4 has the strongest effect ( $B = .188$ ), followed by logic 8 ( $B = .179$ ), logic 2 ( $B = .163$ ), logic 1 ( $B = .119$ ), and logic 7 ( $B = .076$ ).

The results also detected four types of institutional logic that have a significant effect on the empowerment dimension, namely logic 1 ( $P = .000$ ); logic 2 ( $P = .000$ ); logic 7 ( $P = .001$ ); and logic 8 ( $P = .000$ ). According to the findings, logic 2 had the strongest effect ( $B = .335$ ), followed by logic 1 ( $B = .187$ ), logic 8 ( $B = .173$ ), logic 7 ( $B = .112$ ).

Moreover, there were eight types of institutional logic that had a positive effect on the total level of IRT, including logic 1 ( $P = .002$ ); logic 2 ( $P = .000$ ); logic 3 ( $P = .045$ ); logic 4 ( $P = .000$ ); logic 5 ( $P = .007$ ); logic 7 ( $P = .003$ ); logic 8 ( $P = .000$ ); and logic 9 ( $P = .000$ ). As the results demonstrate, logic 4 has the strongest overall effect ( $B = .175$ ), followed by logic 2 ( $B = .165$ ), logic 8 ( $B = .110$ ), logic 9 ( $B = .108$ ), logic 1 ( $B = .091$ ), logic 5 ( $B = .084$ ), logic 7 ( $B = .060$ ), and logic 3 ( $B = .053$ ). Therefore, the results suggest that stakeholders in Yuanjia village should develop the identified logic categories to successfully promote IRT. Finally, the results of both the qualitative and quantitative data analysis were integrated to propose an IRT development model. It is implied that stakeholders can promote IRT by conducting the proposed CSR initiatives and developing the identified institutional logic areas as shown in Figure 1.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

This research proposes an IRT development model by conducting a mixed methods approach. Although previous studies have conceptualized IRT in different contexts, research gaps still exist in the literature. First, IRT has been widely promoted as an effective framework to guide rural tourism development in many European countries. However, seldom has research localized the concept of IRT within Asian countries, especially in China. This research contextualizes IRT in China, deepening and enriching the understanding of IRT in different cultural contexts.

Second, the existing literature implies that developing shared institutional logic among stakeholders is the key to effectively promoting IRT. Meanwhile successful IRT development also requires stakeholders to take social responsibility for their practices. However, few studies have detailed any practical or effective approaches for stakeholders to develop IRT. To address the identified gaps in the literature, this research explored an IRT development model for stakeholders in Yuanjia village from two aspects, namely institutional logic and CSR.

Theoretically, this research applies several theories to propose an IRT model, contributing to the knowledge in approaches to developing IRT and addressing the theoretical gaps in IRT studies. Additionally, the proposed model also provides theoretical implications for future studies that aim to explore practical ways to successfully promote IRT in other Asian countries. Practically, the proposed model provides stakeholders in Yuanjia village with guidance to effectively address the identified problems and promote each dimension of IRT thereby moving

forward to the next developmental stage. Furthermore, the model also offers significant implications for stakeholders in other rural destinations of China to introduce and promote IRT successfully.

As with the majority of studies, this research is subject to limitations. First, the research takes Yuanjia village as the research site for collection of data, which may limit the generalizability of the research results. Therefore, researchers or practitioners who apply the results of this research should cautiously consider the context. Additionally, as the research conducted simple random sampling, the number of each type of stakeholder was different. Future studies could increase the sample size for each group of stakeholders, extending the research scale. Second, this research included interviews with 15 field experts to explore appropriate CSR initiatives. Although the field experts contributed deep insights into CSR adoption in China's rural tourism development, the CSR understanding would be more comprehensive if the perspectives of tourism enterprises were also incorporated. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies conduct interviews with tourism enterprises as this may provide more significant practical implications.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

The proposed model implies that successful IRT development requires joint efforts from stakeholders. Therefore, there are several practical implications for each type of stakeholder to prepare themselves to pilot the IRT development model successfully at Yuanjia village, China.

**Local government:** in China, the local government is mainly responsible for directing local tourism development and coordinating stakeholders. As the significant basis for successful IRT development is

stakeholder cooperation, the local government must effectively connect multiple stakeholders to develop shared objectives and take collaborative actions. The proposed model detects the institutional logic types that positively affect each dimension of IRT. Accordingly, the local government in Yuanjia village should coordinate all stakeholders to discuss how they can collectively develop the identified logic types and take certain actions under the guidance of each logic thereby jointly promoting IRT development. Additionally, the research explores the CSR initiatives to promote each dimension of IRT. The local government should improve the CSR awareness of stakeholders and provide coordination to successfully conduct the proposed CSR activities. Specifically, the local government can provide tourism enterprises with financial and policy support to encourage active engagement in CSR adoption.

**Tourism enterprises:** Playing an essential role in China's rural tourism development, tourism enterprises usually have more resources and better skills than local residents. Although making profit is a significant logic guiding the behavior of tourism enterprises, they should develop more comprehensive objectives in rural tourism development. Particularly, tourism enterprises can provide more employment and training opportunities to local residents, thereby closely connecting with the local community and jointly promoting IRT in the village. Additionally, most tourism enterprises in rural tourism development have a deep attachment to local culture and the community, leading to their attempts to balance making profit and taking responsibility. Therefore, it is suggested that tourism enterprises in Yuanjia village should recognize the significance of their social responsibilities and actively implement the proposed CSR initiatives to promote IRT

development.

**Local residents:** Although local residents have less resources than local government and tourism enterprises, they play a crucial role in China's rural tourism development. Since the initial stage of China's rural tourism development, increasing incomes has been perceived as a dominant objective for most local residents. Gradually, with changes in the institutional environment and the improvement of livelihoods in China, local residents have recognized that economic benefits should not be the only purposes for rural tourism development. Only when tourism develops sustainably and successfully can residents benefit from the industry. Therefore, it is recommended that local residents should develop more comprehensive objectives in rural tourism development, including social, cultural, and environmental aspects. Yuanjia village has numerous cultural and historical resources, but most have not yet been fully explored. As local residents have a deeper and better understanding of local cultures, they are expected to actively embed local customs with tourism development, thereby ensuring the inheritance of local cultures and avoiding the homogenization of tourism products. Additionally, local people must establish a collaborative relationship with tourism enterprises. At Yuanjia village, there have been some effective platforms for stakeholders to communicate and cooperate with each other, such as Farmers' Night School and a Collective Tourism Cooperative. Residents are encouraged to express their considerations relating to local tourism development and build deep connections with other stakeholders via these platforms.

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