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Professor Cai is the author and co-author of more than 200 refereed papers published in scholarly journals and proceedings of international conferences. His research expertise includes destination and hotel branding, rural tourism development and marketing, and behavioral and psychographic profiling of tourism consumers. In the last 12 years, he has conducted over 30 funded projects for tourism agencies and hospitality businesses. He serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Travel Research, the Journal of Hospitality Marketing Management, Tourism Management, Tourism Analysis, and Journal of Vacation Marketing. He is North America regional editor for the Journal of China Tourism Research. He is also a reviewer for several other journals including Annals of Tourism Research. He also holds several honorary faculty appointments at the School of Hospitality Business of Michigan State University, and two universities in China.

Professor Cai served on the board of International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators (2002-2006), and as Travel and Tourism Industry Expert to the World Economic Forum (2005). He received Purdue University's designation of University Faculty Scholar in 2003. Professor Cai was a former tour operator and destination sales manager in China.

Native of Jiangsu, China, Dr. Cai graduated from China's first tourism program - Nanjing Institute of Tourism and Hospitality in 1980. He received his MBA from Michigan State University in 1993 and Ph.D. from Purdue University in 1996.