

NAVIGATING GOVERNANCE, PRODUCTION ECOLOGY AND CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TRIBAL CRAFT TOURISM: INSIGHTS FROM BLACK POTTERY ARTISANS OF MEGHALAYA, INDIA

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Abstract

This study examines Jaintia black pottery (Khiew-Ranei) in Larnai village, Meghalaya, as a governance-mediated craft tourism system rather than merely a cultural product. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through field observation and semi-structured interviews with potters, elders, youth, and members of the Dorbar Shnong (customary village council). The analysis focuses on production ecology, ritual obligation, livelihood dynamics, and institutional regulation.

Findings show that black pottery operates within structurally bounded production conditions shaped by climate dependency, extraction depth, and labour intensity. The craft functions simultaneously as a ritual obligation and a livelihood source, with artisans reporting average annual earnings of approximately ₹1 lakh, though income remains variable due to rising input costs and seasonal demand. The Dorbar Shnong mediates tourism participation through pricing norms, visitor limits, conflict resolution, and collective fund management, translating sustainability principles into enforceable practice. Authenticity is actively regulated through institutionally defined visitor pathways rather than left to market negotiation.

Building on these findings, the study proposes the CPLS-E framework, which conceptualizes craft tourism as an integrated system linking Community, Production, Livelihood, Sustainability, and Enterprise under customary governance. By positioning enterprise as institutionally conditioned rather than growth-driven, the study contributes a governance-centered perspective to tribal tourism, cultural entrepreneurship, and sustainable development debates in ecologically fragile mountain contexts.

Keywords: Tribal tourism; Cultural entrepreneurship; Production ecology; Governance; Sustainable livelihoods; Craft tourism; Meghalaya

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1. Introduction

Tourism development in tribal regions has increasingly shifted from growth-oriented models toward governance-centered and culturally grounded approaches. Contemporary sustainable tourism emphasises that long-term viability depends less on visitor volume and more on institutional capacity, ecological limits, and community-defined development pathways (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). In this perspective, sustainability is not a market outcome but an institutional achievement shaped by regulatory authority and governance arrangements (Bramwell, 2011).

Indigenous tourism research demonstrates that when tourism is community-led and aligned with local values, it can contribute to cultural continuity and livelihood diversification (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2016). However, participation alone does not guarantee equitable or sustainable outcomes. Without strong governance mechanisms, tourism may intensify commodification pressures, distort cultural practice, and generate uneven benefit distribution (Tosun, 2000). This highlights the importance of examining how institutions operationalize sustainability within specific production systems. Craft-based tourism provides a particularly relevant context for such analysis. Traditional crafts embody collective memory, ritual meaning, and environmental knowledge. The rise of creative and experiential tourism has strengthened demand for participatory craft experiences, including workshops and demonstrations (Richards, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2006). While these formats create new income opportunities, they also introduce tensions between commercialization and authenticity. Classic theory argues that tourism can produce staged authenticity, reorganising cultural practices to meet visitor expectations (MacCannell, 1973). Subsequent authenticity is not fixed but negotiated and shaped by social interactions between hosts and tourists (Wang, 1999).

In ecologically fragile mountain regions, craft production systems are further shaped by material constraints, including seasonal conditions, labour intensity, and resource-extraction limits. Research on carrying capacity indicates that sustainability thresholds are multidimensional, determined not only by visitor numbers but also by ecological and management conditions (Li et al., 2021). A political ecology perspective reinforces that environmental outcomes in tourism are mediated by institutional authority and power relations (Mostafanezhad et al., 2016).

Against this backdrop, the black pottery (Khiew-Ranei) of Larnai village in West Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya, offers an analytically significant case. The craft is produced through hand-moulding and open firing using locally extracted clay,

and production cycles are shaped by ecological and customary norms. The pottery holds ritual significance while contributing to household income through market exchange. This case provides an opportunity to examine how governance, production ecology, authenticity regulation, and livelihood generation intersect within a tribal tourism context.

2. Literature Review

Governance and Indigenous Tourism

Governance has emerged as a central concept in sustainable tourism research. Rather than viewing sustainability as a balance between economic and environmental goals, governance focuses on the institutional mechanisms that coordinate actors, enforce rules, and manage trade-offs (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Bramwell, 2011). In other words, sustainable tourism depends on effective policies, regulations, and management system that guide tourism development. In Indigenous tourism, governance is especially important because tourism activities are closely connected to local land, cultural traditions, and community resources. Research shows that tourism outcomes are better when local communities have control over their land, cultural knowledge, and how tourism benefits are shared (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2016). When indigenous people have authority in decision-making, tourism is more likely to support cultural preservation and community well-being.

However, research on community-based tourism also indicates that participation alone does not guarantee successful outcomes. In some cases, community involvement may be symbolic of governance systems that are weak or poorly implemented. Power imbalances and elite control may lead to unequal benefit distribution, where only certain individuals or groups gain from tourism development (Tosun, 2000). Recent studies also emphasise that effective governance requires clear institutional frameworks, transparency, and collaboration between stakeholders to ensure fair and sustainable tourism development (Hall, 2020; Bichler, 2021).

These findings suggest that sustainable tribal tourism depends not only on community participation but also on strong governance mechanisms that regulate tourism activities and ensure equitable benefit-sharing.

Cultural entrepreneurship and craft economies

Cultural entrepreneurship in tourism involves transforming cultural assets into livelihood opportunities while maintaining symbolic meaning. The growth of creative tourism has positioned craft producers as experience facilitators rather than solely product suppliers (Richards, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2006). This shift has transformed many craft producers from simply selling products to facilitating experiences for tourists. By engaging tourists in the craft-making process, communities can generate additional income and promote cultural understanding. However, craft production systems often face limitations because they are labour-intensive and dependent on natural resources, which restricts their ability to expand rapidly.

Research on craft and local development highlights that value-chain structure strongly influences income retention. Direct marketing, cooperative models, and institutional support mechanisms affect whether benefits remain within communities or leak to intermediaries (Fernández Bellver et al., 2023). Successful cultural entrepreneurship requires institutional support. Training, market access, and policy assistance to strengthen local craft industries (UNWTO, 2022; Duxbury & Richards, 2023).

Therefore, the development of craft-based tourism should be examined within the broader context of governance structures, resource limitations, and market systems, rather than assuming that tourism automatically improves livelihoods.

Authenticity and Institutional Regulation

Authenticity is a key concept in tourism studies, especially in relation to cultural and heritage tourism. MacCannell (1973) argued that tourism settings often generate staged authenticity, where cultural traditions are modified or performed in ways that meet tourist's expectations. Later studies challenged this view and suggested that authenticity is not fixed but socially constructed and negotiated between tourists and host communities. Wang (1999) extended this debate by distinguishing between objective and existential authenticity, emphasizing that authenticity is socially negotiated.

These debates suggest that authenticity in tribal tourism is shaped not only by cultural practices but also by institutional regulation and governance systems. Governance structures can help protect cultural knowledge by setting boundaries on how traditions are shared with tourist, regulating tourist behaviour, and ensuring that cultural practices are respected. Recent research also highlights that community-led cultural management is essential to prevent excessive commercialization and maintain cultural integrity (Chhabra, 2021; Salazar & Graburn, 2014)

Production ecology and carrying capacity

Tourism carrying capacity refers to the maximum level of tourism activity that an area can sustain without causing environmental, social, or cultural damage. Tourism carrying capacity research demonstrates that sustainability is shaped by ecological conditions, management systems, and resource availability (Li et al., 2021).

In craft-based tourism, production ecology imposes structural limits: extraction depth, seasonal drying conditions, water availability, and labour cycles influence the production capacity of traditional crafts. These ecological and production constraints limit how much output can be generated and therefore affect the scale of tourism-related craft enterprises.

Political ecology perspectives emphasize that environmental pressures in tourism are mediated by institutional arrangements and power dynamics (Mostafanezhad et al., 2016). In mountain and tribal regions, such constraints underscore the importance of governance mechanisms that align enterprise with ecological limits. Recent research also highlights the importance of integrating traditional ecological knowledge with sustainable resource management practices to ensure that tourism activities remain environmentally responsible (Nepal & Saarinen, 2022; Gossling et al., 2023). Overall, these perspectives emphasise that sustainable tourism development requires a governance mechanism that aligns tourism enterprises with ecological limits, cultural values, and community livelihoods.

3. Research Gap

Although research on tribal tourism, authenticity, and sustainable livelihoods is well developed, few empirical studies examine craft-based tourism as an integrated governance-mediated production system within a single community context. Existing literature underscores the importance of institutional capacity in tourism governance (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Tosun, 2000), the negotiated character of authenticity in tourism encounters (MacCannell, 1973; Wang, 1999), and the value of Indigenous-led development pathways (Scheyvens et al., 2021; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2016). However, these strands are typically treated separately rather than synthesized within a unified analytical framework.

In particular, there is limited evidence that simultaneously integrates production ecology (resource extraction limits, seasonal constraints, labour intensity), authenticity regulation (institutional control over cultural knowledge and visitor engagement), livelihood vulnerability and equity, and customary governance mechanisms that condition tourism enterprise under ecological constraints. Sustainable tourism research often advances participation and cultural preservation as normative goals, yet provides fewer micro-level analyses of how governance structures operationalise visitor regulation, pricing norms, production ceilings, and benefit-sharing at the village scale (Bramwell, 2011; Tosun, 2000). Likewise, authenticity debates critique commodification but rarely demonstrate how local institutions enforce cultural safeguards in practice (Wang, 1999). Craft and creative tourism research highlights experiential value creation, but it tends to give limited theoretical attention to production constraints and ecological carrying capacity in small-scale, resource-dependent contexts (Richards, 2011; Li et al., 2021).

This omission is especially consequential in mountain and tribal regions, where ecological fragility and customary authority significantly shape development paths. There remains insufficient micro-level analysis of how tribal craft communities regulate tourism as a bounded system in which enterprise is institutionally conditioned by ecological limits, ritual obligations, and collective norms rather than driven solely by market demand.

Accordingly, this study positions Jaintia black pottery in Larnai Village as an analytically strategic case to examine how tribal craft tourism operates under governance constraints. It conceptualises craft tourism as a regulated system in which customary institutions mediate production ecology, authenticity safeguards, and livelihood equity. By integrating governance theory, authenticity debates, and production ecology within a single empirical framework, the study moves beyond normative participation discourse and demonstrates how sustainability can be structurally enacted at the village scale. In doing so, it advances a governance-centered perspective on tribal craft tourism, showing how enterprise may function as an institutionally conditioned mechanism rather than a growth-driven imperative in fragile mountain contexts. The study seeks to address these gaps by proposing five research questions that focus on craft distinctiveness and knowledge transmission (RQ1), livelihood contributions and constraints (RQ2), customary governance mechanisms (RQ3), viable community-approved visitor experience models (RQ4), and safeguards for sustainable and equitable tourism development (RQ5).

RQ1. What makes Larnai's black pottery culturally and technically distinctive, and how is knowledge transmitted?

RQ2. How does the craft contribute to livelihoods, and what constraints shape income, costs, and participation (women/youth)?

RQ3. How do customary governance institutions regulate tourism and craft-related collective decisions?

RQ4. What visitor experience model is acceptable to the community and viable for sustainable income generation?

RQ5. What safeguards are required for authenticity, equity, resources/waste, and carrying capacity in mountain contexts?

4. Research Objectives

- i. To examine the cultural and production characteristics of Jaintia black pottery in Larnai.
- ii. To assess the contribution of black pottery to household livelihoods and identify the constraints affecting income and participation.
- iii. To analyze the role of the Dorbar Shnong in regulating tourism and craft-related decisions.
- iv. To explore how authenticity and cultural values are safeguarded in craft-based tourism.
- v. To propose an integrated framework for sustainable and governance-led craft tourism development.

5. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to examine the interrelationships between craft production, livelihood systems, and tourism management in Larnai village, located in the West Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya, India. The case study method is particularly appropriate for investigating complex social, cultural, and institutional processes within their real-life contexts, allowing for a deeper understanding of how traditional craft practices meet with local governance structures and emerging tourism activities.

A total of 24 participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation from key stakeholder groups involved in the pottery tradition and village governance. The participants included 12 potters (2 men and 10 women) actively engaged in pottery production, four elderly knowledge holders who preserve traditional knowledge and oversee ritual practices associated with the craft, five youth participants representing varying degrees of engagement with pottery production, and three members of the Dorbar Shnong, the traditional village council responsible for community governance and the regulation of visitor activities. This sampling strategy enabled the study to capture diverse perspectives on craft production, cultural practices, and tourism management within the community.

Fieldwork involved direct and sustained observation of the entire pottery production process, including clay extraction, hand-moulding and shaping, drying, open firing, and finishing. Observational data allowed the researcher to document the technical stages of production as well as the environmental conditions and labour practices that shape the craft system. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants using tailored interview guides designed for each stakeholder group. This flexible interview format allowed participants to share their experiences, knowledge, and perspectives in their own words while ensuring that key themes related to governance, production practices, and tourism were systematically explored.

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring patterns and meanings across participants narratives. Codes were developed inductively from the data and subsequently organized into broader analytical themes, including production ecology, livelihood challenges, governance practices, and tourism regulation. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through data triangulation, where insights from interview narratives were systematically compared with field observations of production practices and village activities.

Interpretation relied on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DFID, 1999), community-based tourism empowerment theory (Scheyvens, 1999), and discussions on authenticity in tourism studies (MacCannell, 1973; Wang, 1999). Ethical guidelines included obtaining informed consent, following local governance processes, and getting community approval for documenting and sharing findings.

6. Results

6.1 Craft System: Production Ecology and Cultural Embedding

Black pottery in Larnai, locally referred to as Khiew-Ranei, operates within a materially constrained production system. Field observation indicates that the craft relies on black clay extracted from the Sung Valley at a depth of roughly 20 feet. Potters also use serpentine stone found nearby the Sung Valley are collected separately, crushed by hand, and mixed with the clay to give the pottery its characteristic density and durability. After clay extraction, the sites are refilled by the tribal communities, reflecting local environmental management practices that are guided by customary norms. The production process involves hand-moulding followed by open firing, while the drying and firing stages depend heavily on sunlight and humidity. Potters explained that producing a single pot typically takes about seven days, highlighting the labour-intensive nature of the craft as well as its sensitivity to climatic conditions.

These ecological and temporal conditions function as structural constraints on production rather than factors that can be easily adjusted. During interviews, several potters noted that production cannot be rapidly increased even when demand rises, particularly during tourist visits or market periods. The depth of clay extraction, dependence on favourable weather for drying, and the reliance on manual labour collectively determine the pace and scale of production. In this sense, the production ecology of Khiew-Ranei pottery effectively sets a material limit on how much the enterprise can expand.

At the same time, pottery production in Larnai is closely tied to ritual and cultural obligations within the community. Participants described the annual practice known locally as “40 Khiew (Pot)”, during which pottery holds ceremonial importance beyond its commercial value. This practice reflects the dual role of the craft: while it contributes to household income through market exchange, it also carries symbolic and ritual significance. As a result, pottery production operates within both an economic and a cultural framework, limiting the extent to which it can be fully commercialised.

The transmission of pottery knowledge largely occurs through oral and intergenerational learning. Elder potters pass on techniques, skills, and cultural meanings to younger members of the community through observation and practice. However, youth participation appears to depend on several factors. Interviews with younger participants suggest that their involvement in pottery making is influenced not only by access to training but also by perceptions of income potential, the social recognition associated with craft work, and opportunities connected to tourism activities. Consequently, the continuity of Khiew-Ranei is shaped by the interaction between cultural knowledge transmission and the economic opportunities available to younger generations.

Table 1: Craft Production Characteristics and Cost Pressures

Features	Explanation
Raw materials	Black clay (Sung Valley), serpentine stone
Extraction depth	~20 feet (pit refilled after use)
Production time	~7 days per pot
Fuel source	Firewood (locally sourced)
Water dependency	High (clay preparation, finishing)
Cost pressures	Deeper digging, transport, fuelwood, water
Knowledge transmission	Oral, intergenerational

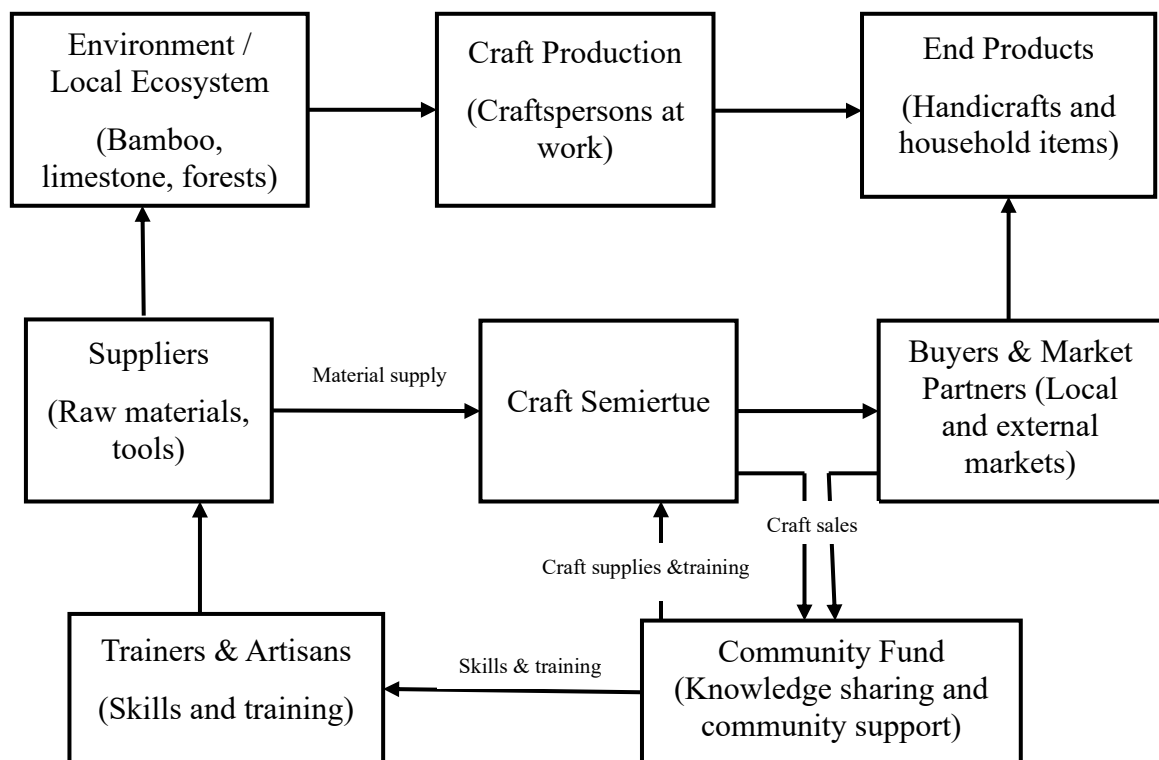


Figure 1: Illustrates the craft Production Ecology and Resource Flow in Larnai Village, demonstrating how natural resources, artisan labour, and market exchanges interact within a community- based system.

Figure 1 represents a craft value chain in which local natural resources provide materials to skilled artisans for the production of crafts. The final products are then sold in the markets through an enterprise system. Throughout the whole process, the sales, material support, and skills training contribute to a community fund that facilitates knowledge transfer and local development.

6.2 Livelihood Dynamics and Governance Mediation

Artisan households estimated annual earnings from pottery at approximately ₹1 lakh, although income levels vary depending on production volume, seasonal demand, and input costs. These figures are based on self-reported estimates triangulated across multiple potter interviews rather than formal financial records. Participants emphasized that earnings fluctuate due to weather-dependent production cycles, variations in tourist arrivals, and rising costs associated with clay extraction, transport, fuelwood, and water use.

Respondents distinguished between gross sales and net returns, noting that increasing input costs have narrowed margins in recent years. Income variability was therefore described not only as a function of market demand but also as a consequence of ecological and logistical constraints embedded within the production system. Livelihood vulnerability emerges from the interaction between climate sensitivity, rising resource costs, and limited bargaining power in value chains.

Within this context, the Dorbar Shnong functions as an institutional mediator between market pressures and community norms. Rather than allowing unregulated price competition, the Dorbar Shnong establishes pricing norms to reduce undercutting and protect artisan earnings. Visitor numbers are monitored to minimize disruption to daily life and to prevent production overload beyond ecological limits.

Governance practices also extend to conflict resolution and collective priority-setting. Revenues allocated to a community fund support signage, minor infrastructure, and waste management. Through these mechanisms, governance institutionalizes equity and social accountability. Enterprise is therefore conditioned by customary authority rather than driven solely by external demand.

This mediation illustrates how governance capacity translates sustainability principles into enforceable practice. The Dorbar Shnong does not merely administer tourism; it structures the terms under which economic participation is permitted.

Table 2: Livelihood Contribution and Benefit Distribution

Features	Evidence from Field Study	Esplanation
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Average annual income	~₹1 lakh per artisan household	Pottery provides a significant supplementary livelihood for artisan households.
Income variability	Seasonal demand, tourism flow	Earnings are unstable and depend on tourism flow and favourable weather conditions for production.
Primary beneficiaries	Potters/artisan households	Craft producers retain the main share of income from pottery-related activities
Risk of leakage	Intermediaries, transporters	Part of the income leaves the local economy through market intermediaries and logistical costs
Preferred income model	Potter-first revenue sharing	Artisans prioritise income distribution that protects producer livelihoods before other actors in the value chain.
Community fund use	Waste management, signage, and minor infrastructure	Tourism-related income contributes to collective community development and maintenance of the village environment.

6.3 Visitor Engagement and Regulated Authenticity

Community members expressed a preference for small-scale, learning-oriented tourism structured around cultural respect and direct artisan benefit. The proposed tourist pathway includes guided explanation of clay sourcing (where environmentally appropriate), hands-on shaping workshops, seasonal firing demonstrations, shared meals in designated spaces, and direct purchase under transparent pricing systems. Revenue distribution follows a potter-first model, with a proportion allocated to a community fund. Transparency in benefit-sharing was identified as essential to maintaining internal trust and preventing inequitable capture of tourism benefits.

Participants articulated concerns regarding production strain, resource depletion, cultural dilution through performative staging, and inappropriate visitor behaviour. In response to these concerns, community members proposed several regulatory measures, including advance booking systems, limits on tourist numbers, and the establishment of tourist codes of conduct.

These safeguards represent institutionalized authenticity regulation. Authenticity is not treated as an inherent property of the craft but as a relational process structured through governance-defined boundaries. Tourist interaction is therefore permitted within culturally sanctioned limits, preserving ritual meaning while enabling controlled economic participation. In this way, tourism engagement in Larnai Village is regulated by the tribal communities rather than market-determined.

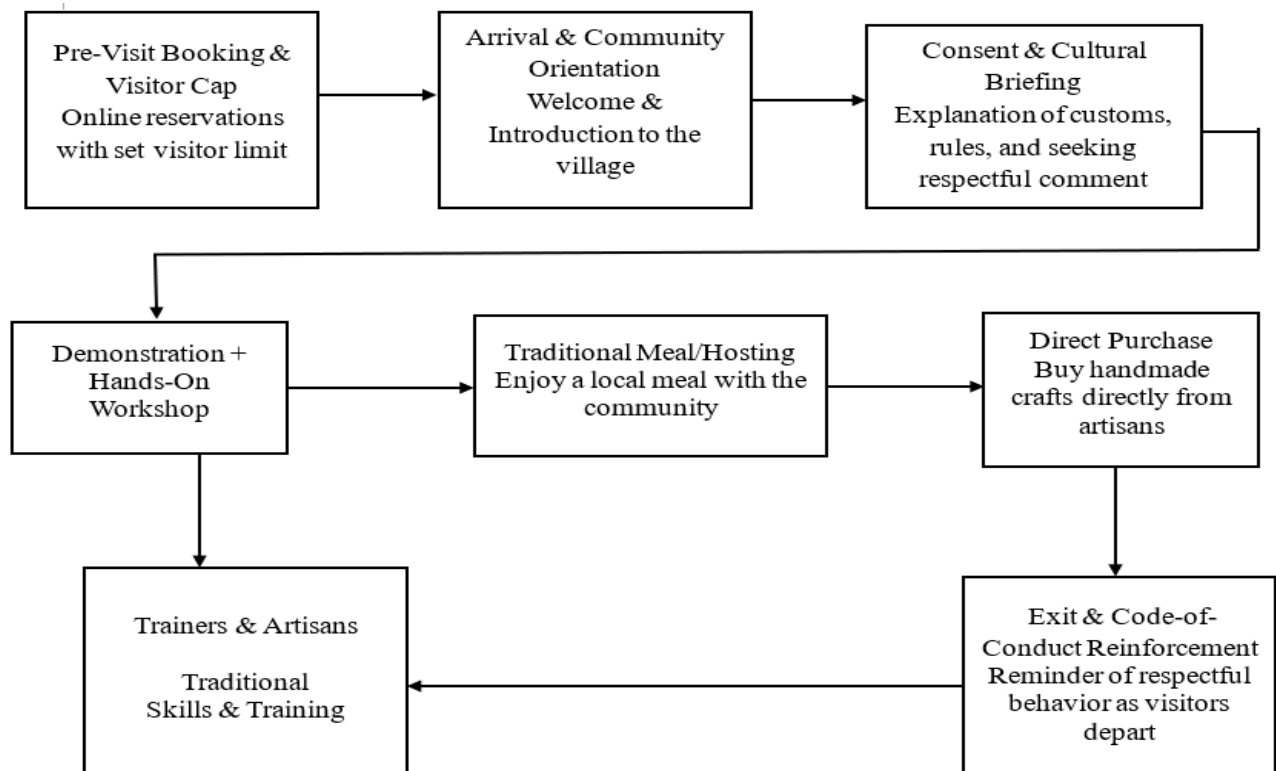


Figure 2: Visitor Journey Map for Regulated Craft Tourism

Figure 2 presents a systematic visitor route for regulated craft tourism that begins with pre-visit reservation and tourist limitations. It leads the tourist across the community orientation, cultural consent, craft demonstrations, participation in workshops, sharing meals, and buying directly from artisans. The path of visits concludes with code-of-conduct enforcement, ensuring respectful interactions, skill transfer, cultural sensitivity, and benefits for the tribal community from tourism.

7. Discussion

This study reframes sustainable tribal tourism by examining craft tourism as a governance-mediated production system rather than a participation-driven development model. The findings demonstrate that sustainability in Larnai emerges from the interaction between production ecology, ritual obligation, livelihood vulnerability, and customary governance.

First, production ecology operates as a structural constraint. Clay extraction depth, climate-dependent drying cycles, and labour intensity limit the pace and scale of output. Tourism capacity is therefore materially bounded by ecological and temporal conditions, challenging growth-oriented assumptions within cultural entrepreneurship.

Second, Khiew-Ranei functions within a ritual economy. The annual gifting obligation embeds pottery within ceremonial duty, reinforcing that economic exchange coexists with cultural responsibility. Community legitimacy thus precedes enterprise expansion.

Third, the Dorbar Shnong performs active institutional mediation. Through pricing norms, visitor regulation, conflict resolution, and community fund management, governance translates sustainability principles into enforceable practice. Livelihood stability is shaped not solely by market demand but by institutional protection mechanisms.

Fourth, authenticity is regulated rather than assumed. Structured visitor pathways, booking controls, and codes of conduct illustrate how cultural engagement is bounded by governance-defined limits. Authenticity becomes a managed relational process rather than a fragile cultural artefact.

Together, these findings support the CPLS-E framework, where Community legitimacy, Production constraints, Livelihood equity, Sustainability safeguards, and Enterprise mechanisms operate as interdependent domains within a governance-embedded system. Craft tourism in Larnai, therefore, represents a regulated development pathway suited to ecologically fragile mountain contexts.

8. Emergence of the CPLS-E Framework from Empirical Findings

The findings collectively reveal that craft tourism in Larnai operates as a governance-mediated system structured by five interdependent domains: Community, Production, Livelihood, Sustainability, and Enterprise. These domains form the empirical foundation of the CPLS-E framework.

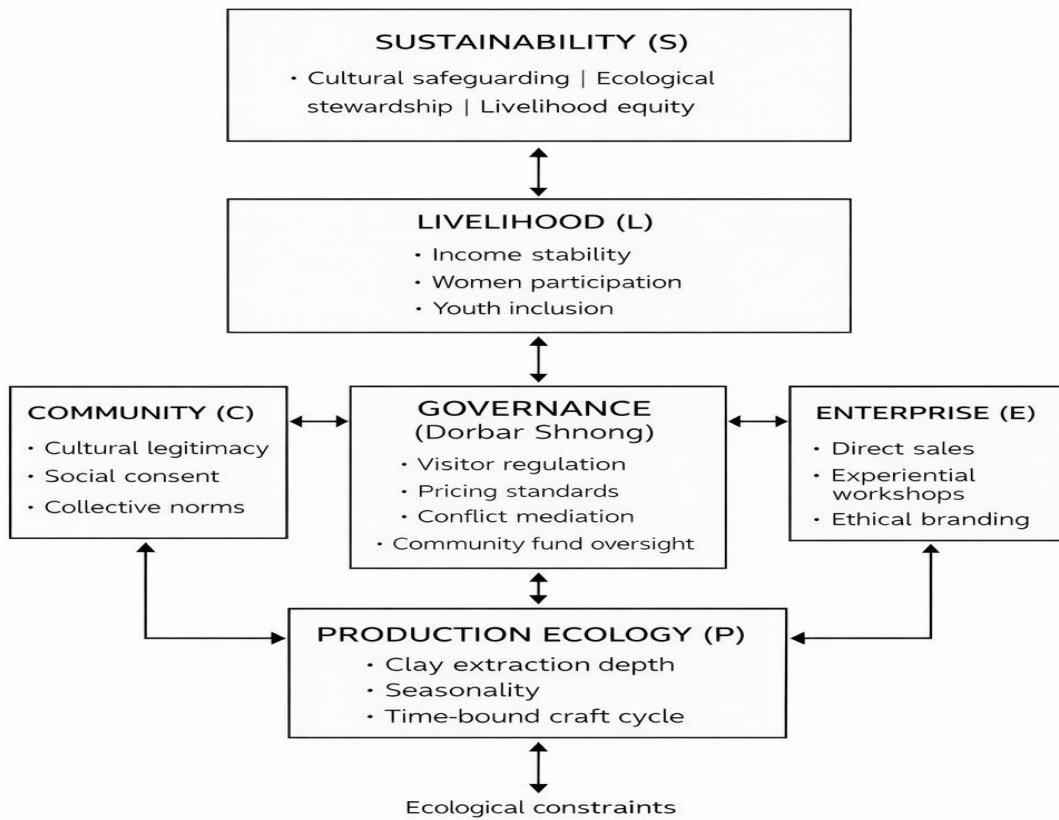


Figure 3: CPLES-E circular ecosystem model illustrating community-governed craft-based tourism systems linking Community legitimacy, Production ecology, Livelihood equity, Sustainability safeguards, and Enterprise mechanisms under customary governance.

This framework addresses gaps in sustainable tourism, cultural entrepreneurship, and livelihood studies by bringing together production ecology and institutional authority in tourism design. This study enhances tourism governance theory by combining authenticity, cultural entrepreneurship, sustainable livelihoods, and production ecology within one framework. While earlier research has focused on community participation in abstract terms, this study shows how customary governance supports sustainability through enforceable visitor regulations, pricing norms, and production limits. By seeing enterprise as a governance-embedded process instead of a growth driver, the CPLES-E model questions the dominance of market-focused tourism ideas. The framework also adds to discussions on authenticity by showing how ritual economies can work alongside regulated visitor engagement. Finally, it expands sustainable livelihoods research by integrating vulnerability analysis into craft production systems. Together, these contributions redefine indigenous tourism as a system shaped by governance rather than one focused solely on growth.

Community as Foundational Legitimacy

At the heart of the CPLES-E model is the community, which provides cultural legitimacy, social consent, and boundaries for economic activity. In indigenous contexts, economic activities are tied to ritual obligations, oral traditions, and collective identities. As such, tourism cannot be imposed from the outside but must be approved through community discussions. In Larnai, the Dorbar Shnong acts as the authority that ensures visitor engagement aligns with cultural values and social priorities. By placing the community at the center instead of the edge of enterprise, the model changes traditional tourism hierarchies.

Production Ecology as Structural Constraint

Unlike typical tourism models that focus on scaling and efficiency, the CPLS-E framework emphasizes production ecology. Craft production in Larnai depends on factors like clay extraction depth, seasonal drying conditions, water availability, and fuelwood use. These natural and temporal factors limit the potential for increasing output. Production ecology thus serves as a boundary that prevents overexploitation driven by market forces. By incorporating ecological norms into tourism planning, the model ensures that the enterprise adjusts to production realities instead of speeding them up.

Livelihood Equity and Inclusion

The third element, livelihood, focuses on fair income distribution and inclusive participation. While black pottery can provide substantial annual income, variability in earnings and leaks in the value chain create vulnerability for producers. The model includes principles that prioritize potters' earnings, structures led by women, pathways for youth engagement, and clear pricing norms. Drawing from sustainable livelihoods theory, livelihood sustainability is measured not just by income levels but also by resilience, diversification, and protection against the capture of benefits by elites. Therefore, livelihood equity becomes a key regulatory goal rather than just a side benefit.

Enterprise as Regulated Conversion Mechanism

In the CPLS-E framework, enterprise functions as a controlled interface between the community production system and external markets. It supports branding, direct sales, experiential workshops, and premium positioning based on geographical indications. However, enterprise remains constrained by community approval, ecological limits, and oversight from governance. This shift challenges growth-focused entrepreneurship models by defining enterprise as a controlled mechanism that translates culturally rooted production into structured livelihood opportunities. By situating the enterprise within governance instead of letting it dictate production intensity, the model reduces the risks of commodification, loss of authenticity, and resource strain.

Sustainability as Integrative Principle

In the CPLS-E framework, sustainability is not just an external goal but an essential principle that runs through all components. Cultural safeguarding involves documenting traditions, passing on knowledge, and obtaining social consent for storytelling. Ecological stewardship includes setting norms for clay extraction, considering alternative energy sources, and planning production according to seasons. Social sustainability is achieved through clear benefit-sharing and conflict resolution systems. Thus, sustainability integrates community, production, livelihood, and enterprise into a unified long-term system.

Governance as Mediating Core

At the center of the model is customary governance, represented by the Dorbar Shnong. Governance manages visitor limits, pricing standards, conflict resolution, and collective fund management. It serves as the stabilizing institution that ensures a balance between economic opportunities, cultural integrity, and ecological limits. Rather than depending solely on external regulations or market forces, the CPLS-E model shows how tribal communities governance systems enforce sustainability at the local level.

In summary, the CPLS-E framework presents an understanding of craft tourism that is embedded in governance. It sees enterprise as necessary but conditioned, production as ecologically limited, livelihoods as focused on equity, and sustainability as integrated throughout. The model provides a replicable approach to culturally grounded tourism development in sensitive mountain and indigenous areas.

9. Limitations and Future Research

This study is based on qualitative fieldwork conducted in a single village context with a purposive sample of twenty- four participants. While the case study provides rich insights into governance- mediated craft tourism systems, the findings cannot be generalized across all tribal tourism contexts. Future research could extend the CPLS- E framework through comparative studies across multiple craft communities in Northeast India or other mountain regions. Qualitative livelihood assessments and longitudinal research could also further examine how governance mechanisms influence the long- term sustainability of craft- based tourism systems.

10. Conclusion

This study shows that Jaintia black pottery in Larnai constitutes a culturally embedded and ecologically constrained craft system whose tourism potential is mediated by customary governance. While pottery contributes meaningfully to household income, livelihood stability is shaped by input costs, seasonal production limits, and institutional regulation.

The CPLS-E framework synthesizes these dynamics by positioning governance as the mediating core linking Community, Production, Livelihood, Sustainability, and Enterprise. Production ecology establishes material ceilings; ritual obligations confer cultural legitimacy; governance conditions enterprise; and sustainability is operationalized through enforceable safeguards.

Rather than promoting growth-driven craft tourism, the findings demonstrate how Indigenous tourism development can be structured around regulation, equity, and ecological limits. This governance-centred approach provides a replicable analytical lens for culturally sensitive, resource-dependent tourism systems.

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