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Leveraging Tribal Craft Beverage Tourism for Community Capital Enhancement: Examining the Possibilities of Adaptation of the US-Destination Resources Framework

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Abstract: *The study examines the Destination Resource Acceleration Framework (DRAF) and its applicability to the beverage sectors of indigenous communities of Northeast India. This study identifies the framework's limitations within a culturally diverse context.*

Using a qualitative meta-synthesis and secondary evidence-based policy analysis, the study integrates the Community Capital Framework (CCF) with DRAF to develop an indigenous-based tourism model. The findings of the study provide insights into the Western destination framework, which often overlooks indigenous small-beverage economies and community-based cultural assets.

To address these limitations, the study proposes a new framework that focuses on cultural and social capital as foundational input for tourism development in Northeast India. The model shows how traditional brewing knowledge and institutions can be transformed into a politically protected and sustainable form of economic tourism. The study contributes to tourism development literature by offering a way to promote indigenous entrepreneurship, cultural preservation, and community economic sustainability in Northeast India.

Keywords: *Community Capitals Framework; Indigenous Tourism; Craft Beverage Tourism; Northeast India; Sustainable Livelihoods*

I. INTRODUCTION

The integration of indigenous knowledge systems and tourism has become an important avenue for promoting economic development and cultural preservation in the Northeast regions (Dam, 2024). In this context, the Community Capitals Framework provides a useful tool for assessing seven key community assets (Entsminger et al., 2024). Simultaneously, the Destination Resources Framework was mainly developed to transform indigenous resources into valuable tourism products and experiences.

By applying the DRF and CCF models in the context of Northeast India, this approach offers a way to promote indigenous entrepreneurship. This approach goes beyond simply preserving cultural traditions and instead supports their sustainable development and economic value (Jamal et al., 2022). It provides both a practical and conceptual framework for integrating local heritage into formal tourism markets while protecting traditional knowledge and cultural ownership.

A. The Global view

Globally, indigenous and tribal tourism has evolved as an important tool for community empowerment and cultural preservation. Recent studies show that community-managed tourism enterprises can play a significant role in supporting sustainable rural development in both developed and developing regions (Chanteloup, 2021).

B. USA view

In Western countries, including the United States, destination management models rely heavily on market-driven frameworks, such as the Destination Resources Framework. While this model is highly effective in Western economies, this framework frequently overlooks the intangible, relational, and deeply historicized nuances of local communities, creating gaps in cultural and historical alignment when applied outside its aboriginal context (Boglioli et al., 2022).

C. Structural problems in Northeast India

Applying Western-centric destination frameworks to the tribal craft beverage sector of Northeast India reveals critical structural misalignments:

Table 1: DRF–Northeast Mismatches

Dominant DRF Assumptions	Northeast India Realities	Implications for Development Planning
Institutional Capital: Development is driven by strong formal institutions, governance capacity, and regulatory frameworks (Amin, 1999; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013).	Informal and Household-Level Economies: Economic activities are frequently embedded in kinship systems, customary institutions, and informal networks (Baruah, 2005; Karlsson, 2011).	Development interventions should recognise and engage local governance structures and informal institutions rather than relying exclusively on formal administrative frameworks.
Scalable Infrastructure: Regional growth is assumed to depend on integrated transport systems, logistics networks, and built capital that can support economic scaling (Storper, 1997; Pike, Rodríguez-Pose & Tomaney, 2017).	Geographical Isolation and Infrastructural Deficits: Mountainous terrain can hamper supply chains and increase running costs	Infrastructure planning should be spatially differentiated and sensitive to the region's ecological and geographical constraints.
Standardised Branding and Market Integration: Place branding and product standardisation are viewed as mechanisms for enhancing regional competitiveness and integration into global markets (Anholt, 2007; Porter, 1998).	Risks of Cultural Commodification and Uneven Market Incorporation: Market-oriented branding may simplify complex cultural identities and reinforce asymmetric relations between peripheral producers and external markets (Escobar, 2012; Banerjee-Guha, 2013).	Policies should balance market access with cultural autonomy, community participation, and equitable value capture.

Source: Author's synthesis based on Amin (1999), Storper (1997), Rodríguez-Pose (2013), Baruah (2005), Karlsson (2011), Das (2018), and Escobar (2012).

The application of Western-centric destination frameworks to the tribal beverage sector of Northeast India is severely constrained by overlaying structural, geographical, and institutional challenges. First, traditional brewing operations function within informal, household-level economic structures managed almost exclusively by tribal women in the Northeast, which lack commercial access to formal markets (Jamal et al., 2022). Furthermore, an unmodified adoption of Western corporate branding risks the commodification and neo-colonial fetishisation of these beverages, threatening to strip sacred, celebratory, or ethno-medicinal preparations of their meaning and triggering severe cultural alienation (Chakraborty, 2021). Finally, these enterprises face regulatory obstacles, including excise laws and the criminalisation of tribal homemade beverages, rather than measures that make them livelihood- and tourism-friendly for indigenous communities.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Using the USA Destination Resources Framework, along with the Community Capitals Framework, holds theoretical and practical significance for Northeast India by challenging Western-centric tourism and demonstrating that cultural and social capitals can systematically lead and dictate the deployment of financial and built capitals, rather than vice versa. By examining how traditional tribal knowledge generates a sustainable regional competitive advantage, this research offers a substantial option for rural self-reliance and livelihood (Jamal et al., 2022).

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cornelia and Jan Flora developed the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) as a tool for rural sociology; however, it has become an important framework for sustainable tourism development. Researchers have found there are seven key forms of capital: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built capital (Entsminger et al., 2024).

- 1) *The Western Paradigm: The Destination Resources Framework (DRF)*-The Destination Resources Framework (DRF) stands as a foundational model for assessing and accelerating regional competitive advantages. Mainly developed within the Western economic context, such as the USA, the DRF emphasises the optimisation of localised "resource inputs" to create high-value, market-ready tourism products (Kline et al., 2018). In the US, this paradigm relies heavily on highly institutionalised systems:
 - Structured public-private partnerships,
 - Formalised legal and regulatory apparatuses,
 - Sizable initial capital investments, and
 - Strict intellectual property and branding guidelines (e.g., the corporate scaling of craft beverage trails in North Carolina or the Pacific Northwest).

While the DRF is excellent for identifying efficiencies and infrastructure requirements, tourism experts identify its epistemological limitations (Boglioli et al., 2022). It presumes the existence of formal credit markets, universal legal protections, and highly integrated logistics, structural luxury assumptions that are often missing when applied directly to marginalised, indigenous people.

- 2) *The Intersectoral Dynamics of Indigenous Craft Beverage Tourism*- The integration of beverage production and tourism creates a dynamic nexus in which cultural heritage is transformed into economic development. Globally, beverage tourism has evolved beyond a branch of food and drink tourism into a platform for cultural empowerment and economic independence (Dam, 2024). However, when companies or governments operate these things, they can become commercialised and lose their meaning (Jamal et al., 2022).
- 3) *Contextualising the Synthesis: The Northeast India Research Gap*-While other studies have documented the anthropological and ethnomedicinal properties of these brews, there is a lack of literature that models their systematic integration into a sustainable tourism framework (Jamal et al., 2022).

IV. RESEARCH GAP

Despite growing scholarly interest in using craft beverage tourism as a strategy for local development, a distinct conceptual and empirical gap persists at the intersection of Western-centric destination frameworks and indigenous knowledge systems in non-Western, post-colonial environments.

The existing literature on the Destination Resources Acceleration Framework (DRAF), which integrates the Community Capitals Framework with regional asset building, has been almost exclusively developed, tested, and validated within highly formalised Western economies, notably the United States (such as the craft heritage and beverage corridors of North Carolina) (Kline et al., 2018). These models inherently rely on "structural luxury assumptions": the universal existence of formal credit networks, highly scalable built capital, clear administrative guidelines, and robust legal systems.

This study directly addresses these theoretical errors by recalibrating the Destination Resources Framework through an asset-first, indigenous-led community capitals approach, showing how peripheral, informal economies can organically build competitive advantages while safeguarding their cultural identity and intellectual property.

V. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) To assess whether the Destination Resources Acceleration Framework (DRAF) reflects the socio-economic and institutional realities of Northeast India's indigenous craft beverage sector.
- 2) To propose an indigenous asset-based adaptation of DRAF that balances tourism-led economic development.

VI. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative meta-synthesis and secondary evidence-based policy analysis design to consolidate fragmented regional data (Entsminger et al., 2024).

- 1) Search Protocol: Searches will be executed across Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using strings such as: (DRAF OR "Community Capitals") AND ("craft beverage" OR "rice beer") AND ("Northeast India" OR "Assam") AND ("GI tag" OR "excise policy").
- 2) Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: Inclusion of peer-reviewed studies (2010–2026), official state excise acts, gazette notifications, and registered GI specifications from Northeast India. Non-peer-reviewed works and studies on mass-produced industrial alcohol are excluded.
- 3) Data Triangulation Matrix: The data gathered splits into three analytical streams: Theoretical Core and Legal/Regulatory Apparatus.
- 4) Analytical framework:
 - Comparative audit: The Comparative Audit does a detailed check of the information. It analyses the data and uses a system to identify the key parts. This system is based on Western DRAF metrics. The goal of the Comparative Audit is to identify areas where things are not working properly.
 - Meta-Synthesis: The study will structurally re-engineer the DRAF hierarchy, frontloading cultural capital (ancestral brewing) and social capital (women's collectives) to demonstrate how informal assets can be systematically converted into political capital (regulatory exemptions) and financial capital (GI-tagged tourism commerce).

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A comparative meta-synthesis of the data streams reveals distinct operational differences between Western-centric destination frameworks and the socio-economic, political, and cultural realities of Northeast India. The results are structured around the systematic remapping of the Destination Resources Acceleration Framework (DRAF) to better suit an indigenous context.

A. The Capital Contradiction

The framework assumes that financial capital is the baseline requirement for tourism development. However, administrative data indicate that traditional brewing, such as the production of 'Judima' among the Dimasa or 'Apong' among the Mising, occurs almost exclusively informally (Jamal et al., 2022). These micro-level enterprises are excluded from commercial markets.

B. The Recalibrated Indigenous DRAF Model

To resolve these structural conflicts, this study proposes a re-engineered DRAF model. Instead of relying on a top-down, infrastructure-first approach, this model adopts an endogenous, asset-first acceleration pathway. This pathway places intangible community assets at the foundation of destination development.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of community capital



Source: Author's conceptualisation

- 1) *Level 1: Frontloading Intangible Assets*-For sustainable growth in indigenous and local tourism, the baseline should be grounded in cultural and social capital inputs. The current approach draws on Western model standards to ensure community identity, and other materials are being developed to bring it to the mainstream market (Bennett et al., 2012).
- 2) *Level 2 to Level 3: Converting Social Capital into Political Protection*- The model provides a pathway for transforming informal social networks into formal ones by primarily organising informal brewing practices into a structured system. Through this, local indigenous people can build human capital to engage with the government's administrative system. A collective organisation is essential for confirming political capital, as data indicate, including applying for Geographical Indication tags and discussing specific excise exemptions with state authorities. With this legal protection, people can protect ancestral property, protect local lands from outsiders and make them available for tourism (Chakraborty, 2021).
- 3) *Level 4: Achieving Endogenous Economic Autonomy*- Once the state's legal recognition protects communities and their livelihoods, they can invite external built and financial capital into their tourism model. This structured sequence ensures that tourism revenue returns directly to the host community rather than being extracted by outside commercial interests. From the beginning, by prioritising cultural and social assets, this framework provides a scientific pathway to transforming traditional brewing practices into a self-reliant economic livelihood. This model reflects successful precedents such as the Endogenous Tourism Project in Assam, by making local traditions a systematic cultural experience that supports communities' economic sustainability (Kalita, 2010).

VIII. IMPLICATIONS

In Northeast India, implementing the revised DRAF framework requires a systematic process. This process will transform tribal assets into marketable tourism products (Gil Arroyo et al., 2021).

Table 2: Three-phase Implementation

Phase 1 Asset making and collective formation	Phase 2 Legal conversion and political mobilisation	Phase 3 Market Corridor and sustained scaling
Inventory Indigenous methods (Bérard & Marchenay, 2006)	Secure GI tags for Intellectual Property (Joshi & Bhatt, 2016)	Launched community-owned tourism trails (Scheyvens, 1999)
Organising the community into self-help groups (Kabeer, 2012)	Lobby for state-level excise exemptions	Standardise quality via clean micro-herbs (World Bank, 2020)

Source: Adapted from Bérard and Marchenay (2006), Kabeer (2001), Scheyvens (1999), and the World Bank (2019).

- 1) *Phase 1: Asset Mapping and Collective Formation*-The first phase focuses on auditing and organising local assets in the tribal communities using Rapid Rural Appraisal methods (Entsminger et al., 2024). The informal groups organised into registered self-help groups or cooperative societies to transform informal social capital into structured administrative units (Knollenberg et al., 2021).
- 2) *Phase 2: Legal Conversion and Political Mobilisation*- The groups use their resources and social capital to gain protection from the Authority after being formally established. The process mainly involves registering the traditional beverage under the Geographical Indications (GI) system to protect ethnic brews legally, as successfully demonstrated by the Dimasa community for *Judima* (Jamal et al., 2022). At the same time, these groups push local government departments to change alcohol-related laws so that small-scale tribal brewing is not treated like commercial alcohol production. This would allow tribal communities to legally serve their traditional drinks at homestays and small community centres as part of tourism.
- 3) *Phase 3: Market Corridor Integration and Sustained Scaling*- The final phase includes built and financial capital under the community supervision, preventing other external corporate exploitation (Chakraborty, 2021). The model integrates craft beverages into ethno-tourism. The income generated is managed through a community trust with two purposes. One part is distributed among households to increase their income and financial well-being. In contrast, the other part is invested in village development, including infrastructure, clean water facilities, and healthcare services, thereby improving community resources and living conditions (Bennett et al., 2012).

IX. STRATEGIC OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Despite a structured implementation design, developers and community organisers face several critical challenges:

- 1) *Legal & Regulatory Obstacles*: Old laws dating back to British rule for factory-made alcohol are still in effect. These outdated laws create problems for indigenous tribal communities. Taking legal permission to sell products to tourists is also a time-consuming process (Jamal et al., 2022).
- 2) *Biochemical Quality Control*: Traditional drinks are left to ferment after bottling, leading to spoilage, uneven quality, and safety concerns. To fix this, simple techniques such as low-temperature microfiltration can be used to preserve traditional taste and GI status without change (Bamforth, 2009).
- 3) *Geographical and Built Deficits*: The Northeast's mountainous terrain and severe monsoon conditions can disrupt supply chains. This may create high transit costs and blockages for international and national travellers (Umdor & Panda, 2007).

X. CONCLUSION

The study shows that the USA's destination development framework has not been directly applied to Northeast India's Indigenous beverage sector. However, through a qualitative meta-synthesis, this study proposes a framework that integrates the community capital framework with the destination resources acceleration framework, putting cultural and social capital at the foundation of tourism development in Northeast India.

The findings of the study suggest that the brewing knowledge of these communities and the indigenous governance system can serve as a strategic basis for building sustainable tourism destinations by focusing on community-led development, legal protection, and equitable benefit sharing. The proposed model provides a way to transform traditional knowledge into a sustainable livelihood. The study contributes to the literature on tourism and development by offering an asset-based alternative model for infrastructure development. The study also provides practical insights for policymakers to develop tourism and cultural preservation policies and promote sustainable, self-reliant livelihoods in Northeast India. Future research should empirically test this framework through field studies across all tribal communities and for their beverage traditions.

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