



Slow Tourism as a Cultural Safeguard: Ethno Ecotourism–Based Visitor Education in Saba Budaya Baduy

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Abstract:

Mass tourism has generated significant economic benefits but also triggered environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and social pressures on host communities, particularly in indigenous territories. In response to these challenges, this study examines slow tourism as a cultural safeguarding mechanism through an ethno-ecotourism based visitor education model in Saba Budaya Baduy, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative methodology grounded in the Design Thinking framework, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving customary leaders (Puun and Jaro), local guides, government officials, residents, and visitors. The findings show that visitor education transforms awareness, emotional engagement, and behavior in accordance with Baduy customary law (pikukuh). The *saba budaya* concept, regulated by Kanekes Village Regulation No. 1 of 2007, reframes tourism as a respectful cultural visit rather than a commercial activity. The zoning system between Outer and Inner Baduy also supports a structured, community-managed visitation model aligned with slow tourism principles. However, limited visitor awareness and insufficient dissemination of rules remain key challenges. This study concludes that slow tourism based on indigenous governance and ethno-ecotourism principles can strengthen cultural resilience if visitor education is enhanced and community authority is consistently maintained in tourism planning, management, and decision-making.

Keywords: Slow Tourism; Indigenous Tourism; Visitor Education; Cultural Preservation; Baduy Tribe



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Introduction

Mass tourism is a global phenomenon characterized by a high volume of tourist arrivals concentrated in specific destinations within a limited period of time. This model has become the dominant form of tourism development since the post–World War II era, driven by rising disposable incomes, advancements in transportation, and aggressive destination marketing strategies (Kovalev et al., 2024). Although mass tourism generates significant economic benefits, it also produces serious challenges, particularly in relation to environmental sustainability, local cultural degradation, and social pressures on host communities (Koens et al., 2018).

The consequences of poorly managed mass tourism include overtourism, ecosystem degradation, cultural commodification, and declining quality of life among local residents. Several popular destinations such as Venice, Barcelona, and Bali have even experienced resistance movements from local communities due to the negative impacts of excessive tourism development (Seraphin et al., 2018). These conditions highlight the urgent need for alternative tourism models that prioritize sustainability and socio-cultural balance.

In response to these challenges, an alternative approach known as slow tourism has emerged. Slow tourism emphasizes slower, deeper, and more mindful travel experiences aimed at enhancing the quality of visitor engagement while minimizing negative impacts on destinations (Manthiou et

al., 2022). This approach encourages tourists to stay longer in one place, immerse themselves in local life, and build meaningful interactions with host communities. In this context, slow tourism is not merely a travel style but a potential solution for fostering more sustainable, equitable, and value-oriented tourism development.

Furthermore, the post-pandemic shift in global travel behavior demonstrates a growing demand for meaningful and transformative travel experiences. Emerging trends such as slow travel, mindful tourism, and regenerative tourism indicate that contemporary tourists increasingly seek authenticity, tranquility, deeper cultural immersion, and stronger connections with local communities and nature (Warren, 2011). Within this evolving landscape, slow tourism becomes highly relevant for development in Indonesia. It is not simply about reducing travel speed, but about cultivating awareness, appreciation of time and space, and respect for local values in a more intimate and reflective manner.

However, the implementation of slow tourism in Indonesia remains unsystematic. National and regional tourism strategies continue to prioritize visitor numbers and infrastructure expansion (Novian, 2024) rather than focusing on the quality of visitor experience and long-term sustainability. This gap represents a significant deficiency in both the academic literature and tourism management practice. There is still limited research and policy integration that combines slow tourism principles with culturally and ecologically grounded local approaches.

In this context, the development of a slow tourism model grounded in ethno-ecotourism becomes particularly important. Ethno-ecotourism integrates cultural appreciation (ethno) and environmental conservation (eco) into a holistic and meaningful tourism experience. By incorporating traditional values, spirituality, and sustainable local practices into visitor engagement, this approach fosters a more reciprocal and balanced relationship between tourists and host communities (Hehanussa et al., 2023). Slow tourism promotes the “relocalisation of tourism,” which refers to restoring control and decision-making authority to local communities. This principle aligns closely with the governance needs of customary territories such as Baduy, where social order is deeply rooted in cultural values and spirituality (Timms & Conway, 2012). Furthermore Serdane et al. (2020) demonstrate that slow tourists tend to exhibit higher levels of ecological awareness and cultural ethics compared to mass tourists. Accordingly, this approach holds significant potential as an instrument for shaping and educating responsible tourist behavior.

This study lies in the integration of slow tourism and ethno-ecotourism principles within the context of indigenous governance as a strategic framework for visitor education and cultural preservation in the Saba Budaya Baduy customary area. Unlike previous studies that generally examine slow tourism from the perspectives of sustainability, tourist experience, or environmental awareness, this research specifically positions slow tourism as a mechanism for shaping responsible tourist behaviour through community-based cultural education and customary regulations.

In the customary area of Saba Budaya Baduy, visitors frequently fail to understand prohibitions related to the use of electronic devices, photography in the Inner Baduy territory, and appropriate verbal conduct. This lack of awareness stems from the absence of an effective visitor education system and weak supervisory mechanisms (Pribadi, 2025). Consequently, tourism activities have contributed to cultural degradation within the Baduy community (Pradana et al., 2024). Observed violations include the use of mobile phones in restricted areas, the use of soap and chemical products in environmentally sensitive zones, and excessive visitor numbers that disrupt residents’ daily activities.

Research on tourists’ sustainable behaviour (TSB) emphasizes that pro-environmental and culturally responsible actions are shaped by moral norms, environmental awareness, place

attachment, and perceived behavioural control (Piazza et al., 2026). Through a slow tourism approach grounded in ethno-ecotourism principles, visits to culturally sensitive areas such as Baduy can be designed in a more structured manner. This may include pre-visit cultural orientation, daily visitor quotas, community-based guiding systems, and traditional homestay experiences that actively transmit local values.

Beyond serving as a tourism strategy, this approach functions as an effective instrument for cultural and environmental preservation. It promotes the active involvement of local communities in designing and managing tourism activities, positioning them not as passive objects but as decision-making actors. In the long term, slow tourism based on ethno-ecotourism principles can strengthen the existing tourism framework within the Baduy customary territory. The current village tourism concept implemented in Baduy requires critical evaluation and strategic improvement to better align with cultural preservation objectives (Pradana, et al., 2025).

Therefore, this approach not only addresses contemporary tourism challenges but also provides a culturally sensitive framework for strengthening tourism management practices in the Baduy customary area through the preservation of local values, community authority, and ecological balance. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How can a slow tourism approach grounded in ethno-ecotourism effectively educate visitors in the Saba Budaya Baduy customary area?

Method

This research adopts a qualitative methodology that employs the Design Thinking framework as its core analytical and developmental structure. Design Thinking is recognized as a human-centered approach to problem solving that is widely utilized in innovation and development studies. In this study, the framework is used to systematically guide the research process through its iterative stages empathizing with stakeholders, defining key problems, ideating solutions, prototyping strategies, and testing insights thereby ensuring that the analysis of slow tourism and ethno-ecotourism in the Baduy context is both structured and grounded in user-centered and community-based perspectives (Tung, 2021). Given that cultural tourism research requires an in-depth understanding of local traditions, belief systems, and social interactions, a qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate method to capture these contextual complexities (Ithlauw et al., 2023). Through the Design Thinking process, this study aims to formulate a tourism concept model that aligns more closely with the cultural characteristics and values of the Baduy community.

To achieve this objective, the researcher assembled a research team to conduct field observations and in-depth interviews with carefully selected informants who met predetermined criteria. The primary informants include: (1) the Puun, as the supreme customary leader of the Baduy community; (2) the Jaro, who represents traditional authority in governance and policy matters; (3) officials from the Lebak Regency Tourism Office in Banten, serving as regional tourism regulators; (4) Baduy tour guides who have direct interaction with visitors; (5) tourists visiting the Baduy area; and (6) local Baduy residents who frequently engage with tourists. Data collection will be conducted in both the Inner Baduy (*Baduy Dalam*) and Outer Baduy (*Baduy Luar*) customary areas from August to December 2025 to capture a comprehensive understanding of tourism practices, visitor behaviour, and community perspectives within different socio-cultural contexts of the Baduy territory.

Data were gathered through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure their relevance to the research

objectives. The criteria for selection include cultural authority figures (Puun and Jaro), institutional stakeholders (Lebak Regency Tourism Office), tourism practitioners (Baduy tour guides), and visitors (tourists traveling to Baduy). The collected data will then be analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to produce well-grounded findings and practical recommendations.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, data triangulation was conducted by comparing and cross-verifying information obtained through different data collection techniques, including interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 empirically illustrates several key factors contributing to cultural disturbances, including unauthorized documentation of the Inner Baduy area, insufficient understanding of local norms and traditions, and the absence of a formal visitor education system. Moreover, the lack of integrated supervision allows violations such as the use of electronic devices and chemical products to persist without effective control. Within the sustainable tourism and community development literature, residents' perceptions are consistently identified as a decisive factor in balancing tourism growth with the preservation of socio-cultural traditions (Qorib et al., 2026).

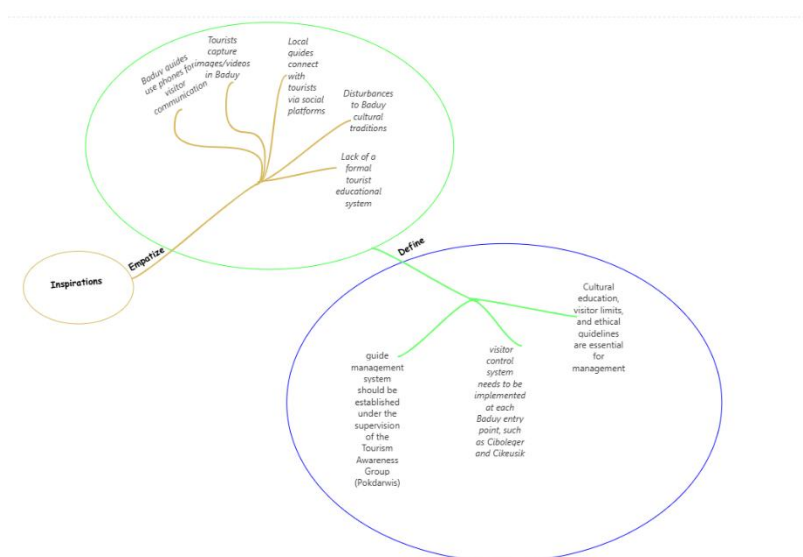


Figure 1. Design Thinking framework for identifying tourism management challenges and developing visitor education strategies in Saba Budaya Baduy

Source: Pradana, et al. (2025)

Visitor Education Components and Behavioural Outcomes

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that visitor education within Saba Budaya Baduy functions as a transformative mechanism that shapes both cognitive awareness and observable behavioural change. Pre-visit briefings and oral explanations delivered by local guides significantly enhance visitors' understanding of pikukuh (customary law), spatial restrictions, and cultural taboos. This cognitive awareness translates into higher levels of rule compliance, particularly regarding dress codes, photography prohibitions, and respect for sacred zones. Moreover, interpretive storytelling and environmental explanations deepen visitors' emotional engagement, fostering empathy toward the Baduy community's philosophy of simplicity and ecological

harmony. These findings suggest that education in slow ethno-ecotourism is not merely informational but experiential, facilitating reflective learning and ethical sensitivity.

Table 1. Visitor Education Components and Behavioural Outcomes

Visitor Education Strategy	Delivery Method	Cognitive Impact	Behavioural Change	Sustainability Implication
Pre-visit briefing	Oral explanation by local guide	Awareness of adat rules	Increased rule compliance	Cultural integrity maintained
Interpretive storytelling	Narrative explanation of Pikukuh	Emotional connection	Respectful conduct	Strengthened cultural respect
Environmental interpretation	Forest & farming explanation	Understanding ecological balance	Reduced littering	Ecosystem protection
Host–guest dialogue	Informal interaction	Empathy & place attachment	Long-term pro-cultural advocacy	Community resilience

Source: Processed Data by Authors (2025)

In line with [Pradana, et al. \(2025\)](#) the findings reinforce that the absence of structured visitor education often leads to norm violations. However, in Saba Budaya Baduy, the presence of community-based guiding systems effectively fills this gap by providing informal yet highly meaningful educational experiences. This also corroborates [Plesa \(2024\)](#) who highlights that inadequate cultural interpretation increases the risk of misunderstanding local norms. Here, the Baduy guiding system minimizes such risks by ensuring that knowledge transmission is both culturally authentic and ethically grounded. Therefore, education within slow ethno-ecotourism in Baduy transcends mere information delivery; it becomes an experiential learning process that cultivates ethical awareness and reflective behavior. This demonstrates that community-based interpretation is central to fostering learning and ethical sensitivity, ultimately supporting more respectful and sustainable tourist conduct.

Comparative Analysis: Conventional Tourism vs. Slow Ethno-Ecotourism in Baduy

The findings from [Table 2](#) can be effectively bridged with the concept of ethno-ecotourism as a unified socio-ecological system by highlighting how the structural characteristics of slow ethno-ecotourism in Baduy reflect an inseparable integration between ecological conservation and cultural preservation.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis: Conventional Tourism vs. Slow Ethno-Ecotourism in Baduy

Aspect	Conventional Tourism	Slow Ethno-ecotourism	Cultural Impact
Length Of Stay	Short	Longer Immersion	Deeper Cultural Understanding
Visitor Motivation	Consumption-Oriented	Learning-Oriented	Reduced Commodification
Host Interaction	Transactional	Relational	Stronger Social Cohesion
Environmental Impact	Higher Footprint	Low Impact	Ecological Sustainability
Governance	Market-Driven	Adat-Controlled	Cultural Sovereignty Maintained

Source: Processed Data by Authors (2025)

The contrast identified between conventional tourism and slow ethno-ecotourism demonstrates that the latter is not simply a different mode of travel, but a system inherently aligned with the Baduy community's socio-cultural and environmental values. In conventional tourism, the dominance of short-term, consumption-oriented visits and transactional interactions often fragments the relationship between humans, culture, and nature. This fragmentation increases the risk of environmental degradation and cultural commodification, as ecological and cultural elements are treated as separate resources to be consumed.

In contrast, slow ethno-ecotourism in Baduy embodies the theoretical premise proposed by Mukatova et al. (2022), where ecological and cultural dimensions operate as a unified socio-ecological system. The emphasis on longer stays, trekking-based access, and immersive interaction with local households facilitates not only cultural understanding but also ecological awareness. Visitors are not positioned as consumers, but as participants within a living system governed by *pikukuh* (customary law).

Importantly, the Baduy context illustrates that environmental practices such as prohibitions on modern technology, restrictions on resource exploitation, and the avoidance of chemical substances are not merely technical conservation strategies. Instead, they are deeply embedded within the community's spiritual cosmology and belief system. This reflects a holistic governance model in which environmental ethics and cultural norms are mutually reinforcing, rather than independently regulated.

Thus, the findings confirm that slow ethno-ecotourism in Baduy operationalizes the core idea of ethno-ecotourism as an integrated socio-ecological framework. It functions as a governance-compatible model where tourism activities are naturally regulated through customary law, ensuring that both ecological integrity and cultural authenticity are sustained simultaneously.

The Baduy Zoning Area for Visitor Educations

The spatial structure of the Baduy customary area (Kaneke Village) is distinctly divided into Inner Baduy and Outer Baduy zones, each characterized by different settlement patterns and levels of accessibility. The Inner Baduy area, marked by a cross-hatched pattern on the map, encompasses key hamlets such as Cibeo, Cikartawana, and Cikeusik, which serve as the cultural and spiritual core of the community. This zone is geographically centralized and surrounded by rivers and hilly terrain, reflecting a natural boundary that reinforces its sacred status and restricted access. In contrast, the Outer Baduy area surrounds the inner core and consists of more dispersed hamlets connected by footpaths.

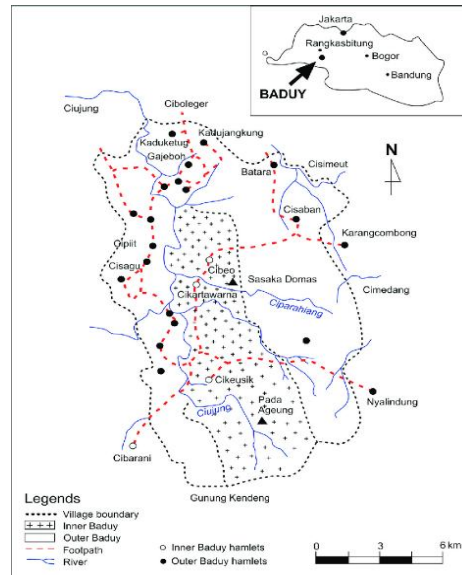


Figure 2. Spatial distribution of the Baduy customary territory in Kanekes Village, Lebak Regency, Banten Province, Indonesia.

Source: [Muntaha & Arthur \(2020\)](#)

Figure 2 demonstrates that accessibility to the Inner Baduy requires traversing specific routes through Outer Baduy settlements, indicating a gradual spatial transition from more open to more restricted customary spaces. [Muntaha & Arthur \(2020\)](#) Furthermore, the presence of multiple rivers such as the Cijung and Ciparahyang illustrates the strong ecological foundation of the Baduy community's spatial organization. Settlements are closely aligned with river systems, emphasizing the community's dependence on natural water sources for daily life and agriculture. The dominance of footpaths rather than vehicular roads highlights the community's commitment to traditional mobility systems and environmental preservation. From a tourism perspective, this spatial arrangement explains why visitor movement is concentrated along particular corridors, potentially creating pressure points in certain Outer Baduy hamlets before reaching the Inner Baduy area. The absence of modern infrastructure within the Inner Baduy zone reinforces the cultural prohibition against technology and modernization, which often becomes a challenge when tourists fail to comply with customary rules.

According to Jaro Oom, "Visitors coming to Baduy must be given information about which areas are allowed to be visited and which are not. All of this is based on customary rules" (2025). In the discussion context, the map reveals that the geographical configuration of the Baduy territory inherently supports a zonation-based tourism management approach aligned with slow tourism and ethno-ecotourism principles. The layered structure from outer reception areas to the sacred inner core provides a natural framework for implementing visitor education, quota systems, and guided access control. Outer Baduy settlements can function as transitional learning spaces where tourists receive cultural briefings before entering more restricted areas. Therefore, the spatial characteristics shown in the figure not only reflect traditional cosmological and ecological values but also offer a strategic foundation for designing a structured, community-controlled tourism model that prioritizes cultural preservation and environmental sustainability.

This is consistent with the research conducted by [Susetyo et al. \(2022\)](#) on the Minangkabau community in Nagari Batuhampar, which revealed that indigenous communities often organize space hierarchically, from more open areas to restricted sacred zones. Their study identified the spatial concepts of darek (highland areas), pasisia (coastal areas), and rantau (overseas areas) that

serve as the foundation for regional development, including tourism. This concept demonstrates how cultural and customary identities are embedded in spatial organization.

The Concept of Saba Budaya as the Foundation of Slow Tourism

Jaro Oom, as a representative of the Baduy indigenous community, rejects the term "tourism" and prefers the term *saba budaya*, which means gathering or visiting to learn about culture. This rejection does not imply anti-visitor sentiment but rather serves as a form of protection for the sacred customary values of "*pikukuh*". This finding serves as the primary foundation for redefining tourism in Baduy. The concept of *saba budaya* is inherently aligned with the principles of slow tourism, which emphasizes deep, authentic, and respectful experiences rather than the mass consumption of destinations. This also reinforces the argument that tourism must be community-managed, rather than the community being managed by tourism.

Furthermore, the regulations governing *saba budaya* are formally codified in Kanekes Village Regulation No. 1 of 2007 concerning *Saba Budaya* and the Protection of the Indigenous People of Tatar Kanekes (Baduy). This regulation classifies visits into three distinct types: first, *silaturahmi budaya* (cultural friendship visits); second, *ziarah budaya* (cultural pilgrimage); and third, *penelitian* (research). This legal framework institutionalizes the shift from conventional tourism to a culturally respectful visiting model, emphasizing that visitors come not as tourists but as guests who must adhere to customary rules.

The formal regulations regarding the cultural customs of the Baduy are set forth in the Kanekes Village Regulation No. 1 of 2007, which was formulated by the village government and traditional institutions to regulate the systematic procedures for visits to the Baduy community. In addition to managing visits, this regulation also serves as a form of protection for the indigenous community and their territorial rights, known in their traditional language as "*ulayat*." This regulation was established in response to the increasing number of visits to the Baduy, which has led to direct interactions between visitors and the indigenous Baduy community a situation that has the potential to affect the purity of their culture and the traditional way of life of the community.



Figure 3. Rules Information Board
Source: Author Documentation (2025)

Figure 3 shows that *saba budaya* regulations are socialized to visitors through information boards containing the rules. These information boards are located at every entrance to Baduy, including the Ciboleger entrance and the Cijahe entrance. However, based on direct observation conducted by the researcher, it was found that many visitors still do not read these regulations. Therefore, a more effective mechanism for socializing the rules needs to be developed.

Low Levels of Visitor Awareness and Compliance with Saba Budaya Regulations

Based on field observations and an analysis of the implementation of Kanekes Village Regulation No. 1 of 2007 concerning *Saba Budaya* and the Protection of the Indigenous People of Tatar Kanekes, it was found that a significant proportion of visitors to the Baduy territory lack adequate understanding of the *saba budaya* regulations. Although the regulation has been formally disseminated through information boards installed at the main entry points, such as Ciboleger and Cijahe, not all visitors read or comprehend the content of these rules prior to entering the customary area. This condition indicates that the mere physical presence of informational media has not been fully effective in fostering legal and cultural awareness among visitors.

This limited level of knowledge has direct implications for compliance with customary norms that have been formalized within the village regulation. Many visitors continue to interpret their arrival within the framework of conventional tourism, rather than as *saba budaya*, which positions them as guests who are obliged to respect and adhere to the values of *pikukuh* (customary principles). Consequently, recurring and conventional violations are still observed in practice. For instance, some visitors continue to use or carry electronic devices in areas where their use is traditionally restricted, take photographs or videos without fully understanding the applicable limitations, and wear clothing that does not entirely conform to local standards of propriety.

Additionally, certain visitors fail to follow the established administrative procedures corresponding to the officially recognized categories of visits, namely *silaturahmi budaya* (cultural friendship visits), *ziarah budaya* (cultural pilgrimage), and *penelitian* (research).

This phenomenon reveals a gap between the regulatory framework designed as an instrument for the protection of indigenous communities and the actual practices of visitation on the ground. Normatively, Kanekes Village Regulation No. 1 of 2007 institutionalizes a paradigmatic shift from conventional tourism toward a culturally respectful visitation model. However, in the absence of adequate visitor understanding, these regulations have not been fully internalized in behavioral practices. Therefore, the primary challenge in implementing *saba budaya* does not lie in the absence of formal regulation, but rather in the domains of socialization, literacy, and the cultivation of collective awareness that visiting Baduy is not an ordinary touristic activity, but a cultural encounter requiring respect and adherence to customary law.

Conclusion

This study confirms that slow tourism in Saba Budaya Baduy operates as a culturally embedded safeguarding mechanism rather than merely an alternative tourism product. Grounded in *pikukuh* (customary law), mobility restrictions, technological limitations, and community-controlled governance, the Baduy model reflects the normative foundations of slow tourism—low-impact engagement, ethical travel, and experiential depth. Unlike conventional ecotourism models that often rely on interpretive mediation, visitor education in Saba Budaya Baduy occurs through lived interaction, observation, and embodied participation in everyday practices. This finding reinforces arguments in Indigenous tourism scholarship that culturally driven governance structures are central to maintaining authenticity and preventing externally imposed tourism paradigms.

The results further indicate that ethno-ecotourism, when fully controlled by Indigenous institutions, can contribute to cultural resilience by strengthening collective identity, enhancing external recognition, and promoting reflexive awareness among visitors. In contrast to cases where tourism has led to planning failures or cultural degradation, the Baduy case demonstrates how strong customary authority mitigates risks of over-commercialization. Nevertheless, the potential for gradual commodification and economic dependency remains a structural concern, particularly as slow tourism gains wider recognition. Therefore, cultural safeguarding must be understood as a dynamic and negotiated process rather than a fixed outcome.

Indigenous governance must remain the primary regulatory framework in tourism management. External stakeholders, including government agencies and tourism operators should adopt facilitative rather than interventionist roles, ensuring that policy frameworks align with customary authority and do not disrupt socio-cultural equilibrium. structured but culturally sensitive visitor orientation mechanisms should be strengthened. Pre-visit ethical briefings, clear behavioral guidelines, and interpretive narratives rooted in Indigenous epistemology can enhance transformative learning outcomes while respecting sacred boundaries.

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