

Lacquer Painting Art, Rural Aesthetic Economy, and Cultural Tourism Consumption Upgrading

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Abstract: Lacquer painting is a traditional craft art with strong regional and cultural identity, and it has gradually become an important resource for rural revitalization in lacquer-producing regions. However, the artistic, cultural, and symbolic value embedded in lacquer painting often remains latent, fragmented, and difficult to convert into stable income for rural artisans and lacquer-art villages. Taking lacquer-painting-related rural communities as the research context, this study explores how lacquer painting art can be transformed into rural aesthetic economy value through craft recognition, aesthetic accounting, market participation, industrial integration, and benefit-sharing mechanisms. The study develops a conceptual framework linking craft value identification, aesthetic product transformation, market-based realization, and governance support. The findings suggest that the value realization of lacquer-painting-based rural aesthetic economy depends not only on artistic and cultural endowments, but also on intellectual-property clarification, craft inheritance support, cultural-tourism integration, digital branding, and community participation. This study contributes to the literature on cultural heritage valuation and rural aesthetic economy by explaining the practical pathway through which traditional craft advantages can be transformed into cultural tourism consumption upgrading.

Keywords: Lacquer Painting Art, Rural Aesthetic Economy, Cultural Tourism, Consumption Upgrading, Craft Heritage, Value Realization Mechanism.

1. Introduction

Lacquer painting is among the most distinctive and culturally rich traditional crafts [1]. It combines mineral pigments, lacquer-based materials, and layered handcraft techniques to produce works with strong visual texture, regional identity, and symbolic meaning. In lacquer-producing regions, this craft is closely connected with rural handicraft industries, cultural tourism, intangible heritage protection, and local aesthetic identity. However, the economic value of lacquer painting art is often underestimated because much of its artistic and cultural value is intangible, experience-based, and difficult to price within conventional commodity markets.

This creates a practical contradiction. On the one hand, lacquer painting generates important artistic, cultural, and social benefits for rural communities. On the other hand, these benefits are not always converted into direct economic incentives for local artisans, cooperatives, cultural enterprises, and rural residents. When aesthetic value cannot be effectively measured, branded, marketed, or shared, lacquer-painting villages may face pressure from craft talent outflow, market homogenization, and the gradual erosion of traditional skills.

The concept of rural aesthetic economy provides a possible solution to this contradiction [2]. Rural aesthetic economy refers to the economic activities that transform rural cultural resources, craft heritage, and aesthetic experiences into goods and services that satisfy people's needs for cultural identity, artistic appreciation, and lifestyle upgrading. Value realization means transforming craft resources and aesthetic experiences into economic, social, and cultural value through institutional arrangements, market mechanisms, public support, industrial integration, and community participation.

Lacquer-painting-related rural regions provide a meaningful setting for this study. As communities with rich

craft heritage and growing cultural tourism demand, these regions face the dual task of heritage protection and rural economic development. Their lacquer painting resources have the potential to support craft inheritance, creative-product development, immersive cultural tourism, art education, and rural brand building. Therefore, exploring the value realization mechanism of lacquer-painting-based rural aesthetic economy is important for both cultural heritage preservation and high-quality rural development.

This study aims to answer three questions:

- What types of artistic and cultural value are embedded in lacquer painting art in rural communities?
- How can this artistic and cultural value be transformed into rural aesthetic economy value?
- What institutional, market, industrial, and community mechanisms are needed to realize and sustain such value through cultural tourism consumption upgrading?

This paper contributes in three ways. First, it links the concept of intangible cultural heritage value with the practical framework of rural aesthetic economy. Second, it develops a mechanism framework for converting lacquer painting craft value into cultural tourism consumption upgrading. Third, it provides policy implications for lacquer-art village governance, rural creative industry development, and craft inheritance support systems.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Lacquer Painting Art and Rural Craft Heritage

Lacquer painting art refers to the artistic practice of using natural or synthetic lacquer, combined with eggshell inlay, gold foil, mineral pigments, and other materials, to produce layered and texturally rich visual works. Existing studies commonly classify the value of traditional craft art into artistic value, cultural value, economic value, and social value.

For rural lacquerpainting communities, artistic value includes visual composition, material technique, and stylistic innovation. Cultural value includes regional identity, intangible heritage narrative, and intergenerational skill transmission [3, 4]. Economic value includes craft product sales, cultural tourism revenue, and creative licensing. Social value includes community cohesion, artisan livelihoods, and rural cultural confidence.

Compared with mass-produced cultural goods, lacquer painting has stronger ties to local material ecosystems, traditional workshops, and apprenticeship-based skill transmission. It functions as a cultural bridge between historical craft tradition and contemporary aesthetic consumption, helping rural communities maintain distinctive identity while engaging with broader cultural markets. However, because much of the craft's artistic and cultural meaning is experiential and tacit, its economic value is often invisible in conventional market transactions. This leads to a mismatch between artistic contribution and economic return for rural artisans.

2.2. From Aesthetic Value Recognition to Rural Aesthetic Economy

Aesthetic value recognition focuses on identifying, interpreting, and communicating the artistic and cultural meaning of craft works. Common approaches include craft authentication, master-artisan certification, design-pattern documentation, cultural-narrative interpretation, and brand storytelling [5]. These approaches help make aesthetic value visible and comparable in cultural and economic decision-making.

However, recognition alone does not equal value realization. A lacquer painting craft tradition may have high cultural and artistic significance, but if there is no branding mechanism, distribution channel, tourism integration, or industrial pathway [6,7], this value remains latent. Therefore, rural aesthetic economy realization goes beyond recognition. It asks how aesthetic value can be transformed into real income, public benefits, brand assets, or sustainable development capacity for rural communities.

In this sense, rural aesthetic economy value realization includes three steps: first, identifying and interpreting craft and cultural value; second, transforming craft heritage into aesthetic and cultural products; third, realizing value through markets, cultural tourism, creative industries, and social participation.

2.3. Cultural Tourism Consumption Upgrading and Aesthetic Economy

Under the framework of cultural tourism consumption upgrading, rural cultural resources are no longer treated only as objects of preservation, but also as sources of experiential and aesthetic consumption value. The core logic is that traditional crafts, rural landscapes, artisan workshops, and intangible cultural heritage can generate long-term public and economic value if appropriate institutions and mechanisms are established.

For lacquer painting villages, aesthetic economy realization requires a balance between heritage protection and commercial development. Excessive commercialization may dilute craft authenticity and artistic integrity, while purely protective preservation may weaken artisan incentives and market exposure. Therefore, a sustainable mechanism should integrate craft preservation, aesthetic transformation,

cultural-tourism integration, public support, and long-term governance.

2.4. Research Gap

Existing studies have provided rich discussions on intangible cultural heritage valuation and rural creative industry development. However, three gaps remain.

First, many studies focus on documenting or preserving craft heritage, but pay less attention to how this value can be realized through institutional and market mechanisms [8,9]. Second, existing research often treats traditional craft art as a general cultural resource, while the specific characteristics of lacquer painting and its rural embeddedness are insufficiently discussed. Third, few studies build an integrated framework linking craft value identification, aesthetic product transformation, value realization pathways, and governance safeguards within the context of cultural tourism consumption upgrading.

To address these gaps, this study develops a mechanism framework for lacquer-painting-based rural aesthetic economy.

3. Research Framework and Methodology

3.1. Research Framework

The first stage identifies the artistic and cultural value embedded in lacquer painting craft heritage. The second stage transforms this value into aesthetic economy products, such as lacquer art collectibles, lacquer-themed cultural-creative goods, immersive lacquer experience tourism, lacquer craft education programs, lacquer-inspired interior and lifestyle products, and regional lacquer art brands [10]. The third stage explores how these products realize value through market transactions, cultural-tourism integration, digital branding, creative licensing, and brand building. The fourth stage examines the governance mechanisms needed to ensure sustainability, including intellectual property protection, craft inheritance support, benefit sharing, quality standards, and community participation. The corresponding mapping relationship is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Lacquer Painting Craft Value and Potential Rural Aesthetic Economy Products

Value type	Specific craft value	Possible aesthetic economy product
Artistic value	Visual composition, layered texture, material technique	Lacquer art collectibles, gallery editions
Cultural value	Regional identity, intangible heritage narrative, skill transmission	Lacquer-themed cultural-creative goods, heritage storytelling
Experiential value	Workshop atmosphere, hands-on craft process, artisan interaction	Immersive lacquer experience tourism, craft education programs
Lifestyle value	Aesthetic texture, decorative pattern, contemporary adaptation	Lacquer-inspired interior and lifestyle products
Integrated value	Village landscape and craft-community identity	Regional lacquer art brand

3.2. Case Context: Lacquer-Painting-Related Rural Communities

Lacquer-painting-related rural communities are typically located in regions where traditional craft workshops, rural landscapes, agricultural livelihoods, and cultural tourism interact closely. These communities support cultural functions such as craft inheritance, artisan livelihood, and regional cultural identity creation. At the same time, they face pressures from craft talent outflow, market homogenization, insufficient brand recognition, and uneven distribution of tourism-related benefits.

This makes lacquer-painting villages an appropriate case for examining how traditional craft resources can be converted into rural aesthetic economy value without undermining craft authenticity and cultural integrity.

3.3. Analytical Method

This paper adopts a conceptual and mechanism-based case analysis. The analysis proceeds in three steps.

First, it classifies the main artistic and cultural value of lacquer painting craft heritage. Second, it identifies the possible aesthetic economy products derived from this value. Third, it analyzes the institutional, market, industrial, and community mechanisms through which rural aesthetic economy value can be realized.

If empirical data are available, future research can further use questionnaire surveys, expert scoring, contingent valuation of craft heritage, case comparison, or fsQCA to test the proposed framework.

4. Mechanisms of Rural Aesthetic Economy Value Realization

4.1. Value Identification Mechanism

The first mechanism is value identification. Lacquer painting craft resources must be clearly identified, classified, and evaluated before value realization can occur. This includes mapping artisan resources, documenting craft techniques and stylistic lineages, building cultural-asset inventories, and identifying which artistic elements can be transformed into aesthetic economy products.

For example, distinctive lacquer texture and pattern can be linked with collectible art editions; craft-making process and artisan workshops can be linked with immersive cultural tourism; regional craft narrative can be linked with heritage branding and cultural education.

Without value identification, craft heritage remains a preservation cost rather than an asset. Therefore, cultural-asset accounting is the foundation of value realization.

4.2. Institutional Recognition Mechanism

The second mechanism is institutional recognition. Craft art becomes a tradable aesthetic economy product only when it is institutionally recognized, protected, and governed. This requires clear rules regarding intellectual property, master-artisan certification, craft authenticity standards, compensation arrangements, and revenue distribution.

For lacquer painting communities, unclear intellectual-property protection and fragmented cultural management can weaken value realization. Therefore, local governments need to clarify the responsibilities of culture, tourism, intangible-heritage, education, and rural-development departments. A cross-departmental governance mechanism is necessary

because lacquer-art value crosses cultural, educational, and industrial boundaries.

4.3. Market Transformation Mechanism

The third mechanism is market transformation. Some lacquer-painting aesthetic products can enter markets directly or indirectly. For example, collectible artworks, cultural-creative merchandise, immersive workshop experiences, and certified craft-education programs can generate market revenue. Digital platforms, livestream sales, and online craft storytelling may also create new value channels.

However, marketization must be carefully controlled. If craft products are over-commercialized or mass-produced without quality oversight, lacquer painting villages may suffer from artistic dilution, counterfeit products, or loss of cultural authenticity. Therefore, market transformation should follow the principle of craft-authenticity priority.

4.4. Industrial Integration Mechanism

The fourth mechanism is industrial integration. Lacquer painting aesthetic value can be realized more effectively when it is connected with related industries, such as cultural tourism, creative-product design, art education, digital media, and rural homestay development.

For lacquer-art rural communities, possible pathways include lacquer craft tourism routes, rural craft education bases, lacquer-themed cultural-creative brands, digital content and livestream marketing, and lacquer-inspired rural homestay experiences. Industrial integration helps transform craft resources into diversified income sources.

4.5. Benefit-Sharing Mechanism

The fifth mechanism is benefit sharing. Local artisans and rural residents are important stakeholders in lacquer-painting heritage. If artisans bear the cost of skill preservation but cannot share the economic benefits of aesthetic-economy development, inheritance incentives may be weak. Therefore, rural aesthetic economy value realization should include artisan income support, cooperative-based production, craft apprenticeship subsidies, and public service improvement.

A fair benefit-sharing mechanism can transform artisans from passive heritage holders into active cultural entrepreneurs. The specific composition of each mechanism is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Mechanisms of Value Realization

Mechanism	Core function
Value identification	Make craft and aesthetic value visible
Institutional recognition	Turn craft resources into governable cultural assets
Market transformation	Convert aesthetic value into revenue
Industrial integration	Link lacquer craft with cultural tourism and creative industries
Benefit sharing	Improve artisan and community incentives

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study provides a bridge between craft heritage theory and rural aesthetic economy realization. Craft heritage theory explains what artistic and cultural value lacquer painting embodies, while rural aesthetic economy realization explains

how this value can be transformed into economic and social value through cultural tourism consumption upgrading.

The study also extends rural cultural governance research by shifting the focus from passive heritage preservation to active value transformation. Lacquer painting villages should not be understood only as sites of cultural protection, but also as cultural assets capable of supporting sustainable rural development when governed properly.

5.2. Practical Implications for Lacquer-Art Rural Communities

For lacquer-painting-related rural communities, aesthetic economy value realization should focus on five priorities.

First, rural communities should build a craft-heritage asset accounting system to identify the artistic, cultural, and educational value of lacquer painting traditions. Second, communities should develop lacquer-themed immersive cultural tourism and craft education programs while controlling visitor capacity and protecting artisan working conditions. Third, cultural-creative branding and design innovation can be used to increase the market premium of authentic lacquer craft products. Fourth, digital platforms and livestream marketing should be explored carefully based on quality certification and credible craft-authenticity standards. Fifth, artisan participation and benefit sharing should be embedded in all value realization mechanisms. The detailed policy pathways are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Policy Pathways for Lacquer-Painting-Based Rural Aesthetic Economy Value Realization

Policy pathway	Main action	Risk to avoid
Craft-heritage asset accounting	Build lacquer craft cultural-asset inventories	Documentation without market linkage
Cultural tourism development	Create controlled lacquer craft tourism and education products	Over-commercialization
Creative branding and design	Certify authentic lacquer craft and support design innovation	Counterfeiting and quality dilution
Digital marketing exploration	Develop livestream sales and online craft storytelling	Unverified authenticity claims
Artisan benefit sharing	Provide income support, apprenticeship subsidy, and cooperative revenue	Excluding local artisans
Digital craft archiving	Use digital documentation platforms for craft governance	Data without enforcement

5.3. Risks and Constraints

Although rural aesthetic economy value realization is promising, it faces several risks.

First, craft value may be exaggerated if accounting and certification lack rigorous standards. Second, marketization may lead to overdevelopment and artistic dilution if production capacity and authenticity oversight are ignored. Third, benefit distribution may become unequal if local artisans are excluded from cultural-tourism revenue. Fourth, fragmented governance may reduce policy effectiveness because lacquer craft value crosses cultural, educational, and industrial departments. Fifth, some artistic and cultural value, such as intangible skill transmission and community identity,

is difficult to monetize directly.

Therefore, value realization should not be understood as simply “selling craft products.” Instead, it should be a governance process that transforms aesthetic value into sustainable public and economic benefits while maintaining craft authenticity and cultural integrity.

6. Conclusion

This study examines how lacquer painting art can be transformed into rural aesthetic economy value through cultural tourism consumption upgrading. The analysis shows that lacquer painting craft heritage provides multiple forms of value, including artistic, cultural, experiential, and lifestyle value. However, this value can generate sustainable rural economic benefits only when it is supported by value identification, institutional recognition, market transformation, industrial integration, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

The study argues that rural aesthetic economy value realization is not merely a heritage documentation exercise. It is a systematic process that connects cultural-asset accounting, intellectual-property arrangements, market channels, industrial development, public support, and artisan participation. For lacquer-painting-related rural communities, the key is to transform traditional craft advantages into sustainable cultural tourism consumption upgrading without damaging craft authenticity and cultural integrity.

Future research can further test this framework using field survey data, contingent valuation of craft heritage, case comparison, or quantitative evaluation of lacquer-painting-based rural aesthetic economy value.

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