



Development of Batak Weaving Tradition as a Creative Economic Product Based on Local Wisdom

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ABSTRACT

Developing the Batak weaving tradition as part of the creative economy is a strategic effort to strengthen cultural values while improving the welfare of local communities. This study aims to analyze the preservation, innovation, and utilization of local wisdom in the Batak weaving production process so that it can be developed as a competitive creative economy product. The research method used a qualitative approach using observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies of ulos artisans in several regions in North Sumatra who still preserve Batak weaving. The results show that the weaving tradition not only functions as a socio-ritual identity and symbol but also has high economic potential when packaged innovatively. Motif development, product diversification, and the use of natural dyes are key strategies to meet the needs of the modern market without abandoning traditional values. Furthermore, the role of indigenous communities and women weaver groups is crucial in maintaining the continuity of local knowledge. The main challenges faced are limited regeneration of young weavers, a lack of support for production technology, and limited market access. This study confirms that the integration of local wisdom, design innovation, and digital marketing strategies can strengthen the position of Batak weaving as a competitive creative economy product. Thus, developing the weaving tradition is not only a means of cultural preservation but also a path to sustainable economic empowerment for the Batak people.

Keywords: Batak weaving tradition, creative economy product, local wisdom

Pengembangan Tradisi Tenun Batak sebagai Produk Ekonomi Kreatif Berbasis Kearifan Lokal

ABSTRAK

Pengembangan tradisi tenun Batak sebagai bagian dari ekonomi kreatif merupakan upaya strategis untuk memperkuat nilai-nilai budaya sekaligus meningkatkan kesejahteraan masyarakat setempat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pelestarian, inovasi, dan pemanfaatan kearifan lokal dalam proses produksi tenun Batak agar dapat dikembangkan sebagai produk ekonomi kreatif yang berdaya saing. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumentasi terhadap perajin ulos di beberapa daerah di Sumatera Utara yang masih melestarikan tenun Batak. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi menenun tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai identitas dan simbol sosio-ritual, tetapi juga memiliki potensi ekonomi yang tinggi jika dikemas secara inovatif. Pengembangan motif, diversifikasi produk, dan penggunaan pewarna alami merupakan strategi kunci untuk memenuhi kebutuhan pasar modern tanpa meninggalkan nilai-nilai tradisional. Lebih lanjut, peran masyarakat adat dan kelompok perempuan penenun sangat krusial dalam menjaga keberlangsungan kearifan lokal. Tantangan utama yang dihadapi adalah terbatasnya regenerasi penenun muda, kurangnya dukungan teknologi produksi, dan terbatasnya akses pasar. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi kearifan lokal, inovasi desain, dan strategi pemasaran digital dapat memperkuat posisi tenun Batak sebagai produk ekonomi kreatif yang berdaya saing. Dengan demikian, pengembangan tradisi tenun bukan hanya sarana pelestarian budaya, tetapi juga sebagai jalan menuju pemberdayaan ekonomi berkelanjutan bagi masyarakat Batak.

Kata kunci: tradisi tenun Batak, produk ekonomi kreatif, kearifan lokal

Submitted
28/11/2025

Accepted
02/12/2025

Published
05/12/2025

Citation	Sinulingga, J., Situmorang, R. T. R., Tifany, T., & Siregar, A. J. (2025). Development of Batak Weaving Tradition as a Creative Economic Product Based on Local Wisdom. <i>Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra, Volume 4, Nomor 6, November 2025</i> , 1521-1534. DOI: https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v4i6.1009
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Publisher
Raja Zulkarnain Education Foundation

INTRODUCTION

The Batak weaving tradition is a cultural heritage with high historical, aesthetic, and spiritual value among the indigenous communities of North Sumatra (Sinaga, 2019). Amidst the development of the national creative economy, Batak weaving has begun to receive attention due to its potential as a cultural product with high economic value. However, globalization, the modernization of manufactured textiles, and changing interests of the younger generation pose significant challenges to the sustainability of the weaving tradition as a cultural identity and economic potential (Simbolon, 2021; Manurung, 2022; Siregar, 2020). A recent issue that has emerged is how to integrate local wisdom values into creative product innovations so that the weaving tradition remains sustainable yet relevant to the needs of the modern market (Hutapea, 2020; Nababan, 2021; Gultom, 2022).

Despite increasing demand for local woven products, particularly through digital promotion and cultural tourism, Batak weaving production still faces various obstacles, such as minimal weaver regeneration, limited equipment, and suboptimal marketing strategies (Saragih, 2022). This situation raises a major problem: the lack of a Batak weaving development model that combines local wisdom preservation with creative economic innovation in a sustainable manner (Siahaan, 2023). Based on this context, the research problem formulation focuses on three main focuses: how to preserve the weaving tradition that is still practiced today, how creative economic innovation can be developed without eliminating cultural values, and how artisan empowerment strategies can be enhanced through a local wisdom-based approach.

The purpose of this research is to identify practices for preserving Batak weaving traditions, analyze applicable forms of creative economic innovation, and formulate a local wisdom-based development model oriented toward community economic empowerment. Furthermore, this research aims to uncover the extent to which the

use of technology, design, and marketing networks can support the sustainability of the Batak weaving industry amidst global market competition. These objectives were formulated to address the urgent need for a holistic strategy that not only increases economic value but also ensures the continued function of weaving culture within Batak society. Several previous studies have examined Batak weaving from cultural, economic, and social perspectives. For example, research by Naibaho (2018) emphasized the symbolic aspect of ulos within the Batak social structure. Another study by Manurung (2020) addressed the challenges of weaver regeneration in the modern era, while Tobing (2021) highlighted the opportunities for digital marketing as a means of expanding the reach of traditional woven products. On the other hand, Hutagalung's (2019) research focused on analyzing ulos motifs and their philosophical meanings. While these studies contribute significantly, their primary focus remains separated between cultural, social, and economic aspects, thus failing to provide an integrative model for the development of Batak weaving within a creative economy based on local wisdom (Sembiring, 2022).

This research's contributions extend beyond theoretical to practical ones. Theoretically, this research enriches studies of the culture-based creative economy by providing an integrated model for local wisdom and innovation strategies. Practically, this research provides operational guidance for local governments, artisan communities, and creative industry players to design Batak weaving development programs oriented toward economic and cultural sustainability. Therefore, the results of this research are expected to strengthen Batak weaving's position as a superior creative product that maintains traditional values and improves community welfare.

The research gap arises from the lack of comprehensive research that simultaneously integrates three dimensions: cultural value preservation, creative product innovation, and economic empowerment of weaving communities



(Tambunan, 2021). Some studies only discuss the cultural value of ulos without linking it to creative economy strategies, while others focus solely on product innovation without considering the traditional values inherent in the weaving process (Situmeang, 2020). This gap demonstrates the need for a research approach that views the weaving tradition not only as a cultural heritage but also as a creative asset with high economic potential if developed appropriately (Sidabalok, 2022). Therefore, this study fills this gap through an integrative mapping that connects aspects of culture, economy, and local wisdom.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to cultural preservation efforts and the development of the creative economy in Indonesia. Nationally, the government has positioned the creative economy as one of the pillars of local culture-based development (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2022). Therefore, research on the development of Batak weaving can provide practical recommendations for developing strategies for empowering artisans, improving production quality, and promoting digital-based marketing (Hutapea, 2020). At the local level, this research is important because it can map the roles of indigenous communities, women's weaving groups, and cultural preservation institutions in maintaining the sustainability of weaving traditions (Marpaung, 2021).

Ultimately, this research contributes to the understanding that the Batak weaving tradition is not merely a cultural practice but also an economic resource with significant potential in the modern creative market (Siahaan, 2023). By highlighting this potential within the framework of a local wisdom-based creative economy, this research provides a foundation for more innovative and sustainable cultural preservation policies (Hutauruk, 2021). The integration of preservation, innovation, and empowerment strategies is the main key in facing the challenges of modernization and maintaining the existence of weaving traditions as the cultural identity of the Batak people (Sinaga, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Batak Weaving Tradition: History, Meaning, and Social Role

The Batak weaving tradition is one of the oldest cultural heritages still preserved in North Sumatra. Ulos, as the primary product of this tradition, serves more than just aesthetic functions, but is also rich in symbolic, spiritual, and social values (Naibaho, 2018). Each ulos motif contains philosophical meanings that reflect the kinship structure, moral values, and life cycle of the Batak people. According to Hutagalung (2019), the traditional ulos-making process involves lengthy stages such as spinning, natural dyeing, and weaving, each of which has its own specific customary rules. Therefore, weaving is not only material production but also a representation of local wisdom passed down across generations as part of the collective identity of the Batak people. Ulos also plays an important social role in Batak traditional rituals, such as weddings, births, deaths, and religious ceremonies (Sianipar, 2020). The use of ulos at every stage of the ritual serves as a medium of cultural communication and a symbol of blessing. However, modernization and commercialization of culture have shifted the meaning of ulos from a sacred object to an economic commodity (Simbolon, 2021). This shift demands a new understanding of how cultural values are maintained while ulos is developed as a creative economy product.

2. Creative Economy and Culture-Based Product Development

The creative economy is a sector that relies on creativity, innovation, and the utilization of cultural values as economic resources (Howkins, 2013). In Indonesia, the creative economy is a national development strategy due to its potential to create jobs, increase added value, and encourage socio-cultural growth (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2022). Cultural products such as traditional weaving fall into the craft subsector, which offers significant opportunities through product diversification and design innovation.

According to Suryana (2019), the development of culture-based craft products requires three dimensions: preservation of tradition, aesthetic value, and commercial innovation. Development cannot be separated from indigenous cultural values, as local wisdom is the primary strength that distinguishes traditional products from mass-produced products. In the Batak context, this means that ulos product innovation must respect the symbolic meaning, traditional motifs, and distinctive weaving techniques that form the basis of its identity (Sembiring, 2020).

Strengthening the culture-based creative economy also requires branding strategies, digital marketing, improving production quality, and strengthening human resource capacity. Purba (2021) emphasized that the competitiveness of cultural products is greatly influenced by the ability of producers to respond to the global market, including adapting to fashion trends, using social media, and creative industry collaboration.

3. *Local Wisdom in Creative Economy Development*

Local wisdom refers to traditional values, norms, and practices that develop from a community's long experience and become a guideline for life (Geertz, 1983). In the context of the cultural industry, local wisdom is a crucial foundation for creating creative products that are not only beautiful but also meaningful. According to Rahayu (2020), utilizing local wisdom provides authenticity that increases product marketability and strengthens cultural identity amidst globalization.

The local wisdom of the Batak people is evident in natural dyeing techniques, material selection, motif philosophy, and the work structure of the weaving community (Manurung, 2020). This gives ulos a strong differentiation from modern textiles. Developing a creative economy based on local wisdom must ensure that innovations do not diminish its cultural essence. As stated by Samekto (2021), strengthening local wisdom is the

foundation for the sustainability of the cultural industry, as preserving traditional knowledge will ensure the regeneration and continuity of production.

However, local wisdom also faces threats, such as declining interest in traditional crafts by the younger generation, changing lifestyles, and the influx of cheaper imitation products made from synthetic materials (Marbun, 2022). Therefore, integrating local wisdom with modern innovation is urgently needed to ensure the sustainability of the Batak weaving tradition.

4. *Innovation, Product Diversification, and Creative Design in the Batak Weaving Industry*

Innovation is a key element in the development of a culture-based creative economy. According to Florida (2014), creativity is at the heart of the innovation process, resulting in new products with economic value. In the Batak weaving industry, innovation is achieved through motif development, modern color selection, variations in fabric textures, and product diversification, including bags, clothing, accessories, and interior decoration (Sitorus, 2021). In the Batak weaving industry, innovation is often achieved through motif development, color modifications, and fabric experimentation, a trend also highlighted by Howkins (2013) and Santosa (2020), who emphasize that cultural industries thrive when traditional arts are adapted to contemporary markets.

Product diversification has been proven to increase the added value of ulos and expand market segments without losing its cultural identity. As explained by Silalahi (2019), ulos derivative products are now in high demand in urban and tourist markets due to the uniqueness of traditional motifs packaged in modern forms. The combination of traditional motifs and contemporary design trends creates competitive creative products.

In addition to design, innovations in production technology, such as the use of modern non-machine looms (ATBM), have also increased



product efficiency and quality (Tobing, 2020). Technology does not replace traditional techniques, but rather strengthens weavers' productivity. Digitalization is also a crucial element, particularly in marketing. Social media and marketplaces make it easier for craftsmen to reach the global market without intermediaries (Saragih, 2022).

5. Challenges in Developing Batak Weaving Traditions in the Creative Industry

Despite its significant potential, the development of Batak weaving faces various challenges. First, there is the low rate of regeneration of young weavers. Young people are more attracted to formal sector jobs and rarely see weaving as a profitable profession (Manik, 2021). Second, limited access to capital and production facilities makes it difficult for many craftspeople to improve the quality and quantity of production (Siahaan, 2022).

Third, the influx of counterfeit products and printed textiles with ulos motifs has led to a decline in the market price of authentic ulos (Hutapea, 2023). These imitations threaten the sustainability of the traditional industry, as consumers prefer cheaper, visually similar products. Fourth, suboptimal marketing and branding strategies focused on cultural narratives have resulted in ulos products being less well-known in the global market (Simanjuntak, 2020).

Fifth, the lack of policy and institutional support, such as design training, equipment assistance, and the integration of weavers into the creative industry ecosystem, also hampers the development of this sector (Sembiring, 2022). Therefore, the development of Batak weaving requires a multi-sectoral approach involving the government, academics, indigenous communities, and creative industry players.

6. Framework for Developing a Creative Economy Based on Local Wisdom

The framework for developing a creative economy based on local wisdom refers to the principles of cultural preservation, design innovation, economic empowerment, and technology utilization (UNESCO, 2018). In the context of Batak weaving, this framework includes preserving traditional weaving techniques, strengthening the capacity of weavers, using design innovations that respect traditional values, and utilizing digital marketing as a marketing strategy.

According to Setiawan (2021), a holistic approach is needed to maintain cultural values while products remain relevant to modern market needs. This approach involves cultural education for the younger generation, entrepreneurship training for weavers, collaboration with designers, and strengthening branding based on Batak cultural narratives.

By integrating local wisdom into the creative economy, the Batak weaving tradition can develop not only as a cultural asset but also as a sustainable economic resource. This development framework aligns with the principle that cultural preservation and the creative economy are not mutually exclusive but can reinforce each other (Rahayu, 2020).

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach because it aims to understand social phenomena, cultural values, and creative economic practices in the context of the Batak weaving tradition in depth and holistically. This approach was chosen so that researchers could interpret the meaning behind cultural activities and creative processes that cannot be measured quantitatively. According to Creswell (2018), a qualitative approach is relevant when research focuses on complex social meanings, experiences, and interpretations. This view is also supported by Denzin & Lincoln (2011), who emphasize that qualitative research is the most suitable method for studying culture, symbolic practices, and community identity.

Similarly, Flick (2014) argues that qualitative inquiry allows researchers to uncover contextual meanings embedded in social practices and traditional craftsmanship. In this context, researchers seek to explore the values of local wisdom that underlie the development of the weaving tradition and how these practices are adapted in the context of the modern creative economy.

The research method used is qualitative ethnography, because this method allows researchers to understand the culture of a community group through direct observation, participation, and in-depth interaction with research subjects. Ethnography provides researchers with the opportunity to study the lives of weavers naturally within their social and cultural environment. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2017), the ethnographic method serves to describe and interpret patterns of behavior, values, and beliefs of a community. Spradley (2016) also emphasizes that ethnography enables researchers to uncover cultural meanings from the perspective of the participants themselves through long-term engagement. Likewise, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) explain that ethnography is crucial for examining cultural practices and social interactions in their natural settings. In this research, this method is applied to comprehensively understand the process of making Batak weaving, its social function, adaptation strategies to the modern economy, and the values of local wisdom that are still maintained by the weavers and indigenous communities.

The research data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and field documentation in several Batak weaving-producing areas in North Sumatra. Key informants included traditional weavers, ulos-based creative entrepreneurs, and cultural institution managers and local governments involved in creative economy development. Through semi-structured interviews, researchers explored weaving practices, the symbolic meaning

of ulos motifs, product innovation, and strategies for developing a culturally valuable creative economy. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, government reports, cultural articles, product catalogs, and visual documentation relevant to the Batak weaving tradition.

The objects of study in this research encompass all aspects related to Batak weaving practices, from production techniques and motif symbolism to cultural value inheritance systems to creative economy development models incorporating elements of local wisdom. This research also examines how weavers and creative economy actors integrate tradition and innovation to produce products that respect traditional values yet are competitive in the modern marketplace. Thus, the focus of the research lies not only on cultural aspects, but also on the intertwined economic and social dimensions.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation involved researchers directly engaging with the weavers' daily activities to observe the production process, social interactions, and community work patterns. The researchers' presence in the field was intended to contextually understand the values embedded in weaving activities. In-depth interviews were used to gain insight from the perspectives of cultural actors regarding changes in tradition, design innovation, obstacles to regeneration, and the challenges of developing weaving businesses amidst changing times. Documentation was used to supplement field data in the form of photographs, videos, notes on the ulos-making process, distinctive motifs, and archives of weaving community activities that are part of the Batak cultural identity.

Data analysis was conducted interactively using the Miles and Huberman (2014) model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction began early in the research, where researchers selected, categorized, and simplified



data based on key themes such as cultural preservation, creative economic innovation, the role of the community, and the integration of local wisdom. The data is then presented in the form of descriptive narratives, a matrix of relationships between concepts, and direct quotes from interviews to clarify the context of the findings. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verifying them, where researchers interpret the meaning emerging from the data and verify the consistency of the findings with the research objectives. The analysis process is carried out simultaneously and iteratively to ensure the integrity of the interpretation and the validity of the findings.

To ensure data validity, this study employed four main strategies: source triangulation, technical triangulation, member checking, and diligent observation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various informants, such as weavers and creative economy actors. Technical triangulation was used by combining observations, interviews, and documentation to enhance data objectivity. Member checking was conducted by confirming interview results and data interpretation with informants to ensure that the researcher's understanding aligned with the reality on the ground. Furthermore, diligent observation was conducted by the researcher spending sufficient time at the research location to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural context, symbolic values, and social dynamics (Moleong, 2019).

This research comprised four phases: pre-fieldwork, data collection, data analysis, and report preparation. The pre-fieldwork phase included literature review, determining the research location, developing interview guidelines, and obtaining permits from the community and relevant agencies. The data collection phase involved direct observation at the weaving location, interviews with key informants, and documentation of the production process and activities of the weaving community. The data analysis phase is conducted concurrently with the data collection process to

identify patterns and relationships between cultural and economic variables. Finally, the report preparation phase includes presenting research results, drawing conclusions, and developing strategic recommendations related to the development of a creative economy based on local wisdom.

Using this method, the research is expected to yield a comprehensive understanding of how the Batak weaving tradition can be developed into part of a sustainable creative economy. A qualitative approach using ethnographic methods provides researchers with the opportunity to deeply explore the cultural values that underpin the sustainability of Batak weaving, while simultaneously examining the potential for innovation that can strengthen product competitiveness in the global market. Through this combination of cultural understanding and economic analysis, this research not only contributes academically to the study of culture and the creative economy but also generates practical recommendations for local governments, indigenous communities, and creative entrepreneurs in designing strategies for preserving and developing Batak weaving traditions based on local wisdom.

RESULTS

The results of this study are compiled based on observations, in-depth interviews, and field documentation in several Batak weaving artisan areas, including Toba, Simalungun, Karo, and Mandailing. This section presents key findings related to the current state of the weaving tradition, creative economic potential, product innovation patterns, the social dynamics of weaving communities, and the integration of local wisdom into ulos product development. All results are presented as is, based on field data, without theoretical interpretation, as this section serves solely as an empirical report prior to the discussion stage. The research findings are then summarized in several tables to facilitate the reader's

understanding of the emerging patterns systematically.

In general, the research results indicate that the Batak weaving tradition remains active in several indigenous communities, despite facing threats of regeneration and social change. Weaving remains a symbol of cultural identity and a practice with customary functions, but at the same time, it has evolved into an economic activity through the production of modern ulos, ulos-based fashion, and

other creative products. Creative economy development has not been evenly distributed, but some regions have seen the emergence of interesting initiatives such as design innovation, collaboration with young designers, the use of social media, and capacity building through community training. The following tables present field findings in a more structured manner, organized around the following themes: preserving tradition, creative economy innovation, the role of local wisdom, challenges faced, and future development opportunities.

Table 1
Findings Related to the Preservation of Batak Weaving Traditions

Conservation Aspects	Field Finding	Forms of Sustainability
Traditional techniques	The use of traditional weaving tools is still dominant, especially ATBM (Non-Machine Weaving Tools) and gedogan.	The technique of intergenerational inheritance still continues through the mother weavers.
Inheritance of cultural values	The philosophical meaning of ulos is still taught orally	Strengthening cultural identity in customary practices.
Use of natural dyes	Some communities still use natural materials such as tree bark and roots.	Conservation of environmentally friendly techniques.
The role of traditional figures	Traditional figures still play a role in regulating the use of ulos for rituals.	Strengthening the legitimacy of using ulos according to custom.

Table 2
Findings Related to Product Innovation and the Creative Economy

Forms of Innovation	Examples of Field Findings	Impact on the Economy
Product diversification	Bags, dresses, vests, tablecloths, home decorations made from ulos.	Increase market demand.
Motif innovation	Motifs are the result of collaboration with young designers.	Expanding the urban consumer segment.
Utilization of digital marketing	Use of Instagram, TikTok, and marketplace.	Increase cross-regional sales.
Collaboration with UMKM	Collaboration between craftsmen and boutiques and the fashion industry	Opening up business networking opportunities

Table 3
Integration of Local Wisdom in Product Development

Forms of Innovation	Examples of Field Findings	Impact on the Economy
The Meaning of Motifs	Traditional motifs are maintained even though the products are modified.	Motifs such as Sibolang, Ragidup, and Pinunsaan remain dominant.
Coloring	Use of typical ulos colors such as red, black, and white.	Modern color variations maintain traditional color symbols.
Production Ethics	Weavers adhere to certain customary rules (for example, sacred motifs).	Some motifs may not be used indiscriminately.
Community Structure	Women-based work patterns.	Weaving groups remain the center of cultural production

Table 4
Main Challenges Faced by Weaver Communities

Challenge	Description of Findings
Regeneration of weavers	The interest of the younger generation is very low, preferring non-traditional jobs
Use of typical ulos colors such as red, black, and white.	Modern color variations maintain traditional color symbols.
Technological limitations	The looms are not updated, the production process is slow.
Competition of imitation products	Factory-made products with ulos motifs lower the price of genuine ulos on the market.
Marketing access	Uneven distribution, only a few areas are connected to the digital market.
Venture capital	Craftsmen have difficulty purchasing quality materials and modern equipment.

Table 5
Opportunities for Developing Batak Weaving in the Creative Economy

Opportunity	Supporting Findings
Ethnic Fashion Trends	Many local designers use ulos as the main material.
Growing tourism market	Tourists seek authentic cultural products from North Sumatra.
Government support	There are training programs for MSMEs and the creative economy.

Export potential	Increasing demand for ethnic fabrics in the international market.
Creative collaboration	Young designers are interested in developing ulos-based products.

Research findings indicate that the Batak weaving tradition remains strong in several areas with a concentration of weavers, particularly in Toba and Simalungun. Weavers are generally women aged 35 and over, while youth recruitment is very limited. Field observations revealed that the ulos-making process still operates traditionally using non-machine looms, although some communities have begun to introduce more efficient looms. Natural dyeing techniques are still common, especially in communities committed to maintaining traditional processes, although most have adopted synthetic dyes for efficiency reasons. Findings also indicate that traditional motifs are maintained as cultural identities. The Ragidup, Sibolang, and Bintang Maratur motifs remain key motifs, considered to have high symbolic value. However, in some communities, innovative new motifs have emerged through collaborations between local weavers and young fashion designers. These innovations generally aim to appeal to the modern market without losing traditional elements.

From a creative economy perspective, research has found that product diversification is a key strategy for increasing weavers' income. Products such as bags, scarves, jackets, wallets, tablecloths, and even home decor made from ulos are now widely produced to meet the urban market. Several artisans who have utilized social media have seen significant sales increases, particularly through platforms like Instagram and marketplaces. The use of digital marketing provides new opportunities for weaving communities to reach a wider market without relying on intermediaries.

However, several challenges still hamper the development of a Batak weaving-based creative economy. The biggest challenges are the limited regeneration of young weavers and limited business capital. Artisans report difficulty

purchasing quality yarn due to the high cost of raw materials. Furthermore, imitation products, such as fabrics with manufactured ulos motifs, have also reduced the selling price of genuine ulos. Price competition is a major problem because many consumers cannot distinguish between genuine and counterfeit ulos.

Despite this, the potential for developing Batak weaving is significant. Ethnic fashion trends are gaining popularity, and the emergence of local designers who use ulos as inspiration for their collections is paving the way for increasing the added value of ulos. Cultural tourism at Lake Toba also provides direct sales opportunities to tourists seeking authentic products. Furthermore, the government, through its creative economy program, offers training in design, digital marketing, and MSME management, which are highly relevant to the weaving community.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the development of Batak weaving traditions as a creative economy product has been ongoing, but has not been optimally integrated. Cultural values remain a key strength, but innovation, marketing, and technology need to be strengthened to keep this tradition alive and a sustainable source of income for the Batak people.

DISCUSSION

Research findings on the development of the Batak weaving tradition as a creative economy product based on local wisdom demonstrate the interconnected cultural, economic, and social dynamics involved in the preservation and revitalization of ulos crafts (Sibarani, 2018). Based on the research findings, it is clear that the weaving tradition not only serves as a marker of identity and a socio-ritual symbol, but also has strategic potential for improving community welfare



through a creative economy model (Howkins, 2013; UNCTAD, 2010). The initial conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that the sustainability of the Batak weaving tradition depends heavily on the craftspeople's ability to integrate local wisdom with modern market demands without losing the philosophical values inherent in each weaving motif and technique (Simanjuntak, 2020). These findings emphasize the importance of a cultural approach as a foundation for developing a regional creative economy (Florida, 2014).

These findings position the academic discourse at the intersection of cultural studies, the creative economy, and community empowerment. The research findings position the Batak weaving tradition as an adaptive cultural entity capable of developing through motif innovation, product diversification, and the use of digital technology to expand marketing reach (Sitorus, 2021; Sitompul, 2018). These findings reinforce the view that the creative economy is not simply about producing aesthetically valuable goods, but also a social process involving the reinterpretation of local culture as a source of economic inspiration (Hesmondhalgh, 2012). In this context, the research confirms that the successful development of Batak weaving is heavily influenced by collaboration between weavers, indigenous communities, local governments, and creative industry players in the fashion, crafts, and tourism sectors (UNESCO, 2019).

When compared with previous research, the results of this study reveal both similarities and important differences. Several previous studies highlighted that the sustainability of traditional weaving in Indonesia is hampered by factors such as weaver regeneration, limited market access, and a lack of design innovation (Siahaan, 2020; Hutapea, 2019; Suryani, 2018). The findings of this study confirm these issues, particularly the lack of interest among younger generations in learning to weave, as the process is perceived as complicated and less economically promising (Tambunan, 2020). However, this study also identified a new factor not highlighted in previous

studies: the increasing opportunities in the digital market, which have opened up opportunities for weavers to access consumers directly without intermediaries (Nugroho, 2021). This indicates a shift in market structure that can be leveraged to improve the welfare of ulos artisans.

Furthermore, previous research has generally focused more on the cultural preservation and symbolic value of ulos. Few studies have comprehensively examined the integration of local wisdom into contemporary creative economy models (Sibarani, 2018). This study offers a new perspective by demonstrating that the development of Batak weaving requires not only motif innovation or improved production quality but also cultural awareness in determining marketing strategies, promotions, and creating product narratives (Purba, 2022). Thus, this research produces novelty in understanding how traditional values can be synergized with modern business models to produce competitive cultural products in national and global markets (Howkins, 2013; UNCTAD, 2010).

The novelty of the research findings is also evident in the identification of development strategies based on three main pillars: product innovation that remains grounded in cultural values, strengthening weavers' capacity through digital training, and utilizing technology-based marketing networks (Nugroho & Surya, 2021). These three strategies not only provide new economic opportunities for artisans but also strengthen the sustainability of the weaving tradition as a cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2019). Unlike previous research that only highlighted technical issues in the production process, this study positions culture as a valuable economic resource that can be integrated with a market orientation (Bendix, 2010).

The uniqueness of the research results lies in its approach, which emphasizes the integration of local wisdom and creative economy principles. This approach demonstrates that weaving traditions are not static entities, but rather cultural systems that continue to evolve and can be modified to meet the needs of the times (Geertz,

1973; Turner, 1967). This research highlights how local values, such as the philosophy of motifs, the use of natural dyes, and the social structure of weaving communities, can provide competitive advantages lacking in modern textile products (Sihombing, 2019). Another unique aspect is the discovery of new collaboration patterns between local weavers and young designers, capable of producing contemporary fashion products without abandoning the cultural identity of ulos (Sinaga, 2021).

The findings regarding the role of indigenous communities and women weaver groups also provide an important contribution to understanding the socio-cultural dynamics in the development of Batak weaving. This research demonstrates that women weavers hold a strategic position as guardians of traditional knowledge and agents of the family economy (Hutagalung, 2020; Sihombing, 2020). This demonstrates not only the cultural dimension but also the empowerment of women in the context of the creative industry (UN Women, 2018). The significance of these findings is evident in how women's roles in the weaving industry directly impact household economic growth and strengthen their position within the Batak social structure.

More broadly, these research findings have significant implications for the development of a creative economy based on local wisdom in Indonesia. This research provides evidence that local traditions can be a source of sustainable innovation when developed through a participatory approach involving indigenous communities (UNESCO, 2019). Another significance of this research lies in its contribution to enriching theory on the culture-based creative economy. The findings demonstrate that the successful development of local creative industries depends not only on technological innovation but also on the reinterpretation of cultural values that have been passed down through generations (Bendix, 2010; Florida, 2014).

The contributions of this research can be seen from theoretical, methodological, and practical aspects. Theoretically, this study contributes by

broadening the understanding of the integration of local wisdom in the development of the creative economy (Howkins, 2013). Methodologically, this study provides an analytical approach that can be replicated in other cultural research, particularly through its emphasis on field observations and interviews with cultural practitioners as primary data sources (Spradley, 2016). Meanwhile, the practical contribution of this research is evident in the strategic recommendations for local governments, creative industry players, and weaving communities in developing highly competitive woven products (UNCTAD, 2010).

This research also provides a new direction for the development of cultural tourism in the Batak region. By making the weaving process a cultural attraction accessible to tourists, the community can generate additional income and directly expand market networks (World Tourism Organization, 2019). This not only impacts the local economy but also strengthens the promotion of Batak culture at the national and international levels. These findings demonstrate the potential for cross-sectoral collaboration between the tourism industry, cultural education, and the creative economy, which has not been widely explored in previous research (Richards, 2018). Ultimately, this discussion demonstrates that developing the Batak weaving tradition as a creative economy product is a complex endeavor that requires synergy between cultural preservation and economic innovation (Bendix, 2010). Tradition is not a burden of the past, but rather cultural capital that can be ethically capitalized on to improve community well-being (Bourdieu, 1986). By integrating local wisdom, strengthening community organizations, and utilizing technology, the Batak weaving tradition has a significant opportunity to develop into a highly competitive creative product and contribute to strengthening Indonesia's cultural identity (UNESCO, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Research on the development of the Batak weaving tradition as a creative economy product



based on local wisdom shows that the ulos craft has strategic potential for sustainable development while maintaining its inherent cultural values. Based on the overall findings, it can be concluded that the weaving tradition is not only a cultural heritage rich in symbolic meaning, but also an economic resource capable of significantly impacting the welfare of weaving communities. As the creative economy market develops and interest in culture-based products increases, ulos has a significant opportunity to be positioned as a high-value creative commodity, both in the national and global markets.

The study found that preserving the Batak weaving tradition requires an approach that integrates cultural, social, and economic aspects simultaneously. Ulos artisans have proven capable of combining traditional motifs with contemporary design innovations to meet the needs of the modern market without abandoning the philosophical values that define ulos. These innovations include product diversification into modern fashion, accessories, and interior design, as well as the use of environmentally friendly natural dyes. In addition, the increasing role of digital marketing and e-commerce platforms has opened up new opportunities for weavers to expand their market reach and gain better economic value compared to traditional distribution patterns.

From a socio-cultural perspective, research shows that indigenous communities and women weaver groups continue to play a central role in maintaining and transmitting traditional knowledge. They are the primary actors ensuring the sustainability of cultural values in weaving practices. However, the main challenges identified are the weak regeneration of young weavers, limited production-supporting technology, and unequal market access. Therefore, the sustainability of the weaving tradition requires more systematic support from local governments, cultural education institutions, creative industry players, and indigenous communities. This research emphasizes that the strategy for developing the Batak weaving tradition must be grounded in local wisdom as its core value, while

innovation and technology are used as tools to strengthen product competitiveness. Synergy between cultural and creative economy actors is key to creating a weaving industry development model that not only has high economic value but also serves as a means of cultural preservation. Overall, this research makes an important contribution to enriching understanding of the culture-based creative economy and provides a foundation for policy planning that better supports the preservation and sustainability of Batak culture.

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