

# **Empowering Creativity and Disability Inclusion in the Enchantment and Social Innovation of “*Gulijat Textiles*” in Indonesia’s Creative Industries**

## **Empoderamento da Criatividade e Inclusão de Pessoas com Deficiência no Encantamento e Inovação Social dos Tecidos *Gulijat* nas Indústrias Criativas da Indonésia**

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## **Abstract**

*Gulijat* is an innovative textile technique that integrates folding and pinching in its colouring process, producing distinctive patterns. This study, in collaboration with Tiara Handicraft, explores *Gulijat* as a strategy for product diversification and disability inclusion in Indonesia’s creative industries. Tiara Handicraft began as an initiative to employ individuals with disabilities, evolving into a platform that empowers artisans to establish independent businesses while maintaining collaboration. Using a development research methodology, the study examines material processing and product creation at Tiara Handicraft in East Java. The process involves two stages: (1) material preparation, including fabric selection, motif creation, colouring, and finishing; and (2) product manufacturing, covering design, cutting, assembly, and finishing. The analysis follows Alfred Gell’s *Technology of Enchantment* framework, assessing how technical innovations shape consumer perceptions. A survey of 100 respondents in Surabaya, East Java, found that 85% appreciated *Gulijat*’s motifs and innovation, while 38% suggested broader product diversification to attract younger audiences. *Gulijat* holds promise as both an artistic and economic tool, fostering disability empowerment and sustainable creative industry practices. Tiara Handicraft exemplifies an inclusive business model that integrates social impact with artistic innovation.

*Keywords:* *Gulijat*, disability inclusion, creative industries, social empowerment, textile innovation

*JEL Codes:* O31; Z1; J16

## Resumo

*Gulijat* é uma técnica têxtil inovadora que integra a dobragem e o beliscamento em seu processo de coloração, produzindo padrões distintivos. Este estudo, em colaboração com a Tiara Handicraft, explora o *Gulijat* como estratégia de diversificação de produtos e inclusão de pessoas com deficiência nas indústrias criativas da Indonésia. A Tiara Handicraft iniciou-se como uma iniciativa para empregar pessoas com deficiência, evoluindo para uma plataforma que capacita os artesãos a estabelecer negócios independentes, sem abrir mão da colaboração. Utilizando uma metodologia de pesquisa em desenvolvimento, o estudo examina o processamento de materiais e a criação de produtos na Tiara Handicraft, em Java Oriental. O processo envolve duas etapas: (1) preparação dos materiais, incluindo a seleção de tecidos, a criação de motivos, a coloração e o acabamento; e (2) fabricação dos produtos, abrangendo o design, o corte, a montagem e o acabamento. A análise segue o referencial teórico da Tecnologia do Encantamento de Alfred Gell, avaliando como as inovações técnicas moldam as percepções dos consumidores. Uma pesquisa realizada com 100 entrevistados em Surabaya, Java Oriental, revelou que 85% apreciaram os motivos e a inovação do *Gulijat*, enquanto 38% sugeriram uma diversificação mais ampla dos produtos para atrair um público mais jovem. O *Gulijat* apresenta-se como uma ferramenta promissora tanto no âmbito artístico quanto econômico, promovendo o empoderamento das pessoas com deficiência e práticas sustentáveis nas indústrias criativas. A Tiara Handicraft exemplifica um modelo de negócio inclusivo que integra impacto social à inovação artística.

*Palavras-chave:* *Gulijat*, inclusão de pessoas com deficiência, indústrias criativas, empoderamento social, inovação têxtil

*Classificação JEL:* O31; Z1; J16

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The production of craft or handicrafts is a significant absorber of labor for developing countries, including Indonesia (Gandhiadi, 2019; Novani et al., 2015; Suryathi & Gede, 2018). With small initial capital, flexible working hours, the convenience of working from home, and the freedom to manage a business, the main attraction causes the number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the handicraft sector to continue to grow. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many SMEs went out of business due to falling market demand (Agustina & Yosintha, 2021). Therefore, the government, through the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, has collaborated with the National Crafts Council (*Dewan Kerajinan Nasional or Dekranas*) to carry out various funding and coaching efforts to encourage the competitiveness of SMEs. On the other hand, the role of craft production in Indonesia in overall exports has been insignificant. Data from the Central Statistics Agency show that in 2018 Indonesia's exports were still dominated by products from natural resources such as oil and gas fuel, iron and steel, to wood pulp (Handoko et al., 2019). To maintain and improve SMEs, innovations are needed so that they can increase market interest again.

*Gulijat* cloth is a designation for cloth decorated with a combination of folding and pinching. *Gulijat* stands for Javanese Indonesian "*gulung-lipat-jumput-ikat*" (roll-fold-jumput-tie). The *Gulijat* technique begins by folding or rolling the fabric into various geometric forms like diamond, triangle, or fan shapes, then tightly binding it using string, clips, or sticks. These folds are carefully secured to control dye penetration, followed by immersion in synthetic or natural dyes. The result is a complex interplay of color and negative space, with each motif reflecting a unique artistic gesture. This name and technique came about as an effort to develop "*jumput*" cloth, one of the traditional Javanese fabrics, combined with the *Shibori* technique from Japan, whose motifs are made of folds. "*Jumput*" is a tie-dye technique produced by tying tightly on several parts of the cloth using coins, marbles, balls, and others, or sewing several parts of the cloth to form a pattern, then dipping these parts in the clothes dye and untying the knots or stitches (Ratyaningrum & Muwardani, 2005). The motifs produced from this technique are different from *jumput* and *Shibori* fabrics. Seeing the motives generated by the *Gulijat* technique, an idea arose to collaborate with MSMEs as a product variety that can be produced.

Based on observations and interviews conducted on Monday, 11 April 2022, it is known that Tiara Handicraft used *jumput* as a product raw material but only to fulfill orders. Seeing the motifs produced from the *Gulijat* technique, an idea arose to use this cloth for various products that could be produced at Tiara Handicraft. *Gulijat* fabrics (the name for textile products from the *Gulijat* technique) will add to the diversity of textile materials used to manufacture products and add to the theme of the product series so that there is a differentiating value to be used as promotion for certain activities.

In addition, handicrafts, which are one of Indonesia's superior products, are produced by skilled and diligent hands that require concentration and peace of mind in the process, such as Titik Winarti, owner of Tiara Handicraft. Furthermore, when Tiara Handicraft was almost closed in 1999 when Indonesia was experiencing a financial crisis, a disabled person named Sardoyo, a friend of Titik Winarti, suggested that the business not be closed and continue working with the disability community. Furthermore, recruitment was carried out again until 2006 the number of employees had reached 63 people. Seeing the ongoing developments, the focus of "hire" has shifted to "empowering." The products made at Tiara Handicraft use patchwork sewing, contrast sewing, embroidery, and embroidery techniques. Various cotton motifs include plaid, polka dots, *batik* motifs, and flowers. Therefore, *Gulijat* cloth is also used as an empowerment activity for disabilities in Tiara Handicraft.

The phenomenon of disability inclusion in social work and creative industries highlights an urgent need for systemic change (Gur & Klein, 2024; Tören & Acan, 2024). People with disabilities often face discrimination, social stigma, and limited access to economic opportunities due to negative perceptions of the job market (Bruce Tsui & Tavitiyaman, 2024). Many industries hesitate to employ individuals with disabilities, citing misconceptions about productivity and capability (Bruce Tsui & Tavitiyaman, 2024). Such exclusion perpetuates cycles of poverty and dependency within disabled communities. Organizations like Tiara Handicraft play a pivotal role in breaking these barriers through inclusive work environments that recognize and cultivate the talents of people with disabilities.

Urgency arises in expanding this empowerment model within creative industries to promote economic independence and social inclusion for people with disabilities. Integrating disability-focused social work with creative industries fosters individual growth, enhances cultural diversity, and enriches products like *Gulijat* textiles. Empowerment through creativity supports the development of disabled individuals as entrepreneurs, artisans, and agents of social change, addressing economic and social dimensions of disability inclusion. The primary objective of this study is to examine how the *Gulijat* technique is used as a form of social innovation in the *batik* industry to empower artisans with disabilities within the framework of inclusive creative economies. Then, this research explores how traditional textiles at Tiara Handicraft practices are reimagined as tools for cultural sustainability and economic inclusion. The *batik* textile sector contributes more than IDR 4.7 trillion annually to the national economy and involves over 200,000 artisans across Java (Bhwana, 2021; Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary, 2018). However, inclusive participation remains limited. Simultaneously, nearly 14.2% of people with disabilities are employed, with most engaged in informal sectors (Bhwana, 2021; Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary, 2018). This research addresses the intersection of heritage craftsmanship and social inclusion through an ethnographic case study.

Indonesia's creative industries are experiencing a renaissance through the revalorization of traditional textile arts, integrating sustainability, innovation, and inclusive development. Within this national transformation, the unique and symbolic potential of *Gulijat* textiles emerges as a compelling medium to address issues of creativity, cultural continuity, and social empowerment, especially concerning disability inclusion. Existing scholarship provides a multilayered discourse on the traditional and contemporary development of textile arts such as *Shibori* and *Batik*, offering a fertile landscape for contextualizing *Gulijat*.

The convergence of sustainability, culture, and innovation is exemplified in Firmansyah et al. (2025), who demonstrated how natural-dyed *Shibori* contributes to visionary fashion while reducing environmental footprints. This is echoed in Sholikhah & Nurmasitah (2024), who explored mangrove-derived dyes, enhancing the organic quality of motifs. These studies signal a strong commitment to eco-friendly innovation, yet often overlook social dimensions such as disability inclusion. In contrast, Amri et al. (2023) uniquely position *Shibori* as a therapeutic and empowering

tool for individuals with psychological disorders, highlighting its potential for emotional rehabilitation and creativity.

The notion of inclusive creativity is further emphasized in educational settings. Suliyanthini (2023) integrates STEAM learning with *Shibori*, revealing that traditional techniques foster cognitive and imaginative skills. The pedagogical insight aligns with Jamouchi (2023), who repositions *Shibori* within environmental and existential art discourses, thus reframing textile-making as a form of reflective, ecological engagement. Then, empowerment via textile is also apparent in Savana & Ardianto (2024), where *Shibori* workshops uplift Indonesian Muslim women in Japan through skill-building and entrepreneurship. This effort at cultural migration and localized adaptation mirrors the ethos of *Gulijat* textiles, which seeks to empower marginal groups by reviving culturally embedded motifs. Similarly, Geminiani et al. (2024) provide a technical view through spectroscopic analysis of Japanese *Shibori*, contextualizing its materiality and cultural transitions as a valuable model for conserving *Gulijat* techniques.

Turning to *Batik*, Winarno et al. (2024) and Tejawati et al. (2023) applied machine learning and decision trees to classify *batik* motifs, proving that traditional design is compatible with digital intelligence that open avenues for digitizing *Gulijat* patterns, ensuring accessibility for disabled users through assistive design tools. Moreover, Nan et al. (2025) employed frieze group analysis to unpack Miao *Batik*, a mathematical approach that could enhance *Gulijat*'s motif design and pattern reproducibility. It related to socio-cultural interpretations are addressed by Octavia & Sriayudha (2024) and Banindro et al. (2024), who explore artisans' strategic decisions and iconographic transformations, respectively. These discussions of resilience and identity politics resonate with the goals of *Gulijat* to maintain heritage while catalyzing innovation. Syahid et al. (2024) underscore sustainability practices, while Handayani et al. (2025) focus on environmental degradation due to *batik*, warning of challenges *Gulijat* must avoid.

Technological advancement meets sustainability in Hendrawan & Suhaily (2025), who explore marbling with eco-dyes, and Mulyaningtyas et al. (2024), who tested cassava-based dyes. These are promising for reducing *Gulijat*'s ecological footprint. Sugiarto et al. (2023) demonstrate the interior application of *batik*, proposing expanded commercial potential for *Gulijat* beyond apparel. Ciptandi & Bastaman (2025) and Pusparisa & Saputra (2024) discuss preserving traditional artifacts amidst modern shifts, emphasizing the importance of methodological frameworks like the pyramid innovation model in navigating cultural transitions. The state of the art in sustainable textiles centers on heritage revival, ecological practices, digitization, and social impact. However, a distinct research gap lies in the intersection of these themes with disability empowerment, particularly within Indonesia's localized contexts like *Gulijat*. A comprehensive framework integrating creative production, social innovation, and inclusive design remains absent. Additionally, no known study has explored *Gulijat* textiles explicitly, making this research pioneering in positioning *Gulijat* as a vector of eco-cultural innovation and social transformation.

## 2. METHODS

This research is conducted at Tiara Handicraft, utilizing a development research base that focuses on processing materials into products, rather than processing fabrics into materials (Branch, 2009; Glăveanu, 2016), because of given the study's dual focus on product innovation and social inclusion, both of which require a practice-based and iterative design approach. The research involves several planning steps, including methods for preparing materials and methods for making products, as presented in Table 1. The development research method enables direct engagement with artisanal processes and facilitates the integration of social objectives into product creation. To support this, qualitative field observations and interviews were conducted with artisans at Tiara Handicraft to document techniques, adaptations, and social habit in the workspace.

**Table 1. Step-by-Step Process of Material Preparation and Product Creation at Tiara Handicraft**

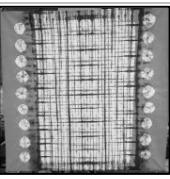
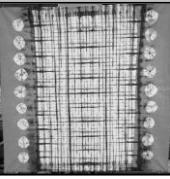
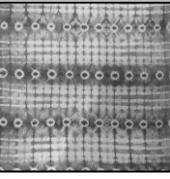
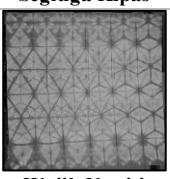
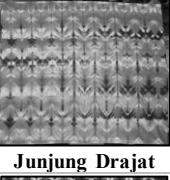
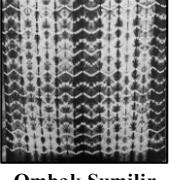
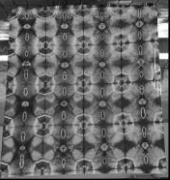
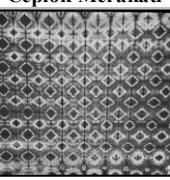
Step	Methods	Materials	Description
1.	Material Preparation	Cotton and calico fabrics	The first step involves preparing the materials, which include selecting cotton and calico fabrics known for their ease of processing and good color absorption properties. The fabrics are then used to create motifs using the <i>Gulijat</i> technique, involving folding, shaving, picking, or a combination of these methods. Subsequently, synthetic dyes for <i>batik</i> are carefully applied to the tightly bound fabric to achieve the desired colors. Finally, the patterned fabric is finished by ironing it to ensure neatness.
2.	Product Creation	<i>Gulijat</i> cloth, other fabrics, zipper buttons	The second step focuses on product creation. It begins with determining the shape of the product by considering the motifs on the <i>Gulijat</i> cloth. The cloth is then cut to the desired size, taking care to preserve the intricate <i>Gulijat</i> motifs. Next, the cut <i>Gulijat</i> cloth is sewn according to the pre-designed shape, which may involve combining it with other fabrics or using it as an accent. The finishing touches include installing zipper buttons, thoroughly checking the stitches, and packaging the final product.

This study applies technical developments in textiles and analyzes the outcomes through the lens of Alfred Gell's technology of enchantment (Gell, 2006). In addition, it aims to investigate consumer perceptions of *Gulijat* textiles following product diversification efforts. A questionnaire survey was conducted with 100 respondents using a random sampling technique. However, respondents were limited to the Surabaya area of East Java, Indonesia, to ensure geographic focus and specificity (Glăveanu, 2016; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2008). The questionnaire instrument was carefully designed to capture relevant information about the respondents' perceptions of *Gulijat* textiles, including their level of satisfaction, willingness to purchase, and overall perception of the brand. The survey included Likert-scale and open-ended questions, capturing both quantitative evaluations and qualitative insights into public perception, preference, and socio-cultural resonance of the *Gulijat* technique and to get insights into the effectiveness of product diversification strategies in the textiles industry and can inform future efforts to enhance consumer engagement and satisfaction.

### 3. RESULT

*Batik*, a well-known work of art in Indonesia, is a long cloth adorned with various motifs and serves many purposes (Steelyana, 2012). It is not limited to being used solely as clothing. However, it has also become an iconic symbol of Indonesian culture, with *batik* motifs now found in various applications, such as bus and book cover motifs. The use of *batik* motifs in these diverse contexts is rooted in the aesthetic appeal and beauty of *batik* motifs. The application of *Gulijat* fabric in the products produced at Tiara Handicraft begins with creating motifs using the *Gulijat* technique, which combines folding, tying, and knotting techniques. The *Gulijat*-patterned fabric is then used to create textile products, primarily wallets, and bags (Table 2).

**Table 2. Below are some textile product designs using *Gulijat* fabric that have been developed**

Motif Name	Folding & Tying Techniques	Dyeing Process	Colors Used	Product Applications
 <b>Bang Biru Kotak</b>	Diamond folds, back-and-forth pattern, edge tying	Dip-dyeing in 2 rounds	Red & Blue	Wallets, Bags
 <b>Bang Biru Wajik</b>	Lengthwise & triangular folds, pleating at edges	Immersion dyeing in 2 rounds	Red & Blue	Wallets, Bags
 <b>Bang Seling Moto Deron</b>	Lengthwise folds, small sections, clamped with popsicle sticks	Dipping technique	Red & Brown	Wallets, Bags
 <b>Segitiga Kipas</b>	Folded into fan shape, midpoint marking, tight tying	Dipping technique	Brown	Wallets, Bags
 <b>Wajik Nastiti</b>	Medium folds, small triangle shapes, tight tying	Dipping technique	Brown	Wallets, Bags
 <b>Junjung Drajat</b>	Diamond-shaped folds with sharp ends, tight tying	Dipping technique	Green	Wallets, Bags
 <b>Ombak Sumilir</b>	Diamond folds, clamped with popsicle sticks, repeated pattern	Dipping technique	Green	Wallets, Bags
 <b>Ceplok Merakati</b>	Triangular folds, clamped with sticks, pleats at triangle tips	Dipping technique	Brown	Wallets, Bags
 <b>Wajik Biru</b>	Square folds, clamped at corners with popsicle sticks	Dipping technique	Blue	Wallets, Bags

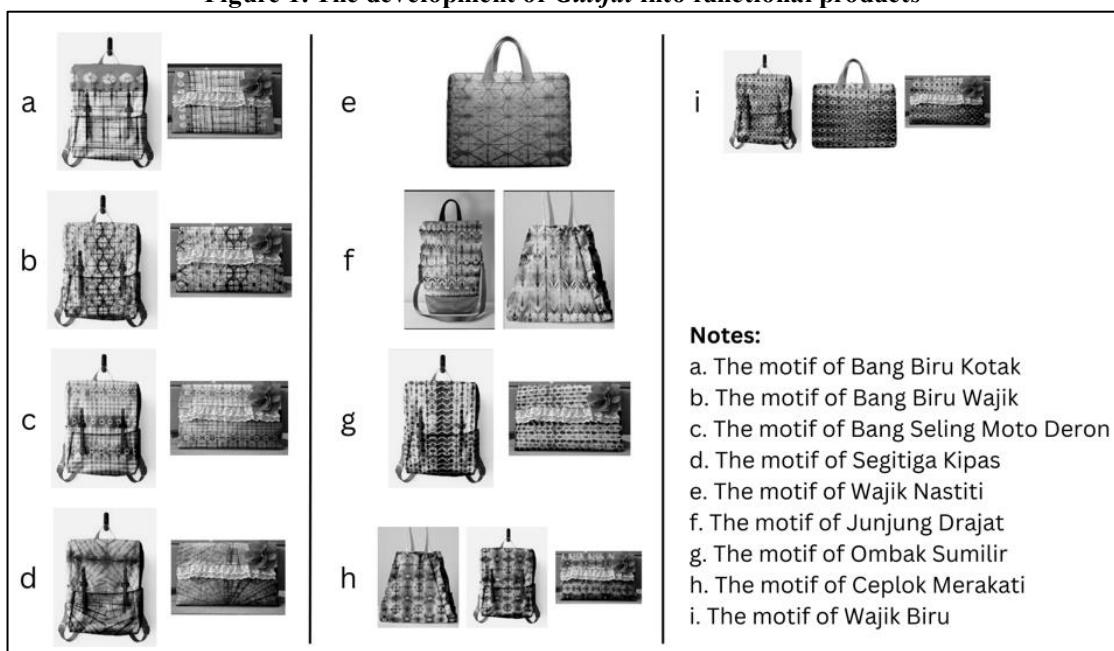
The art of creating *batik* is widely accessible, allowing individuals to create these motifs freely. *Batik* competitions, *batik* coloring competitions, and competitions to create *batik* cloth are common, reflecting the popularity of *batik* and its cultural significance. The intricate process of making *batik*—particularly in the written or conventional *batik* process, which utilizes the *Gulijat* technique—requires specialized skills to achieve optimal results in beauty and quality. The beauty of *batik* motifs also holds potential for utilization in the creative economy (Mayangsari et al., 2015).

In the business realm, entrepreneurs must always consider profits and losses. Maintaining consumer confidence in the quality of products is crucial to ensure continued consumer loyalty and repeat purchases (Rahman & Gong, 2016). Tiara Handicraft, a production base for *batik* products, has faced challenges in production. However, persons with disabilities who are part of Tiara Handicraft demonstrate high diligence and care and are committed to producing high-quality products. Nevertheless, the need to constantly innovate with new products and materials to cater to market demands and trends remains.

The introduction of new products requires influential publication and promotion to generate awareness among the public. Therefore, well-prepared and strategic promotional tools are essential, as introducing new products requires concerted effort. Market education is also vital to educate consumers about the unique characteristics of the new products. The uniqueness of applying the *Gulijat* technique lies in the motifs resulting from combinations of jump technique, roll technique, and folding technique, combined with pinch-fold, jump-fold-bundle, jump-roll-bundle, or fold-roll-bundle, along with one or more processes of coloring (Muhajir et al., 2020; Ratyaningrum et al., 2022; Ratyaningrum & Muwardani, 2005). Diversification, which involves offering various products, is a strategic approach to avoid over-reliance on a single product and to increase profitability while mitigating risks.

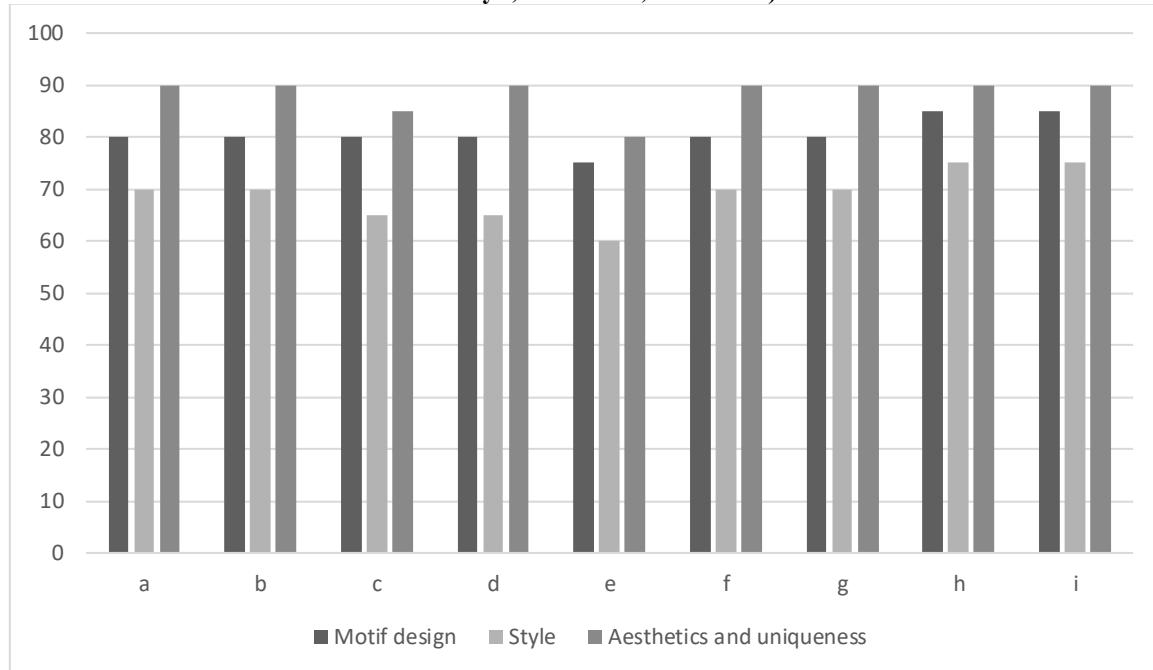
The *Gulijat* technique presents a unique opportunity for diversification and innovation in Indonesia's *batik* industry. With its intricate technical processes and inherent enchantment, *Gulijat* has the potential to become a flagship product of Indonesia's creative industry. However, seizing this opportunity requires investment in product development, innovation, marketing, and support from various stakeholders. By leveraging the enchantment of *Gulijat* and exploring new markets and collaborations, the *batik* industry in Indonesia can continue to thrive and contribute to the country's cultural heritage and economic growth. The resulting designs are then developed into functional products that are commonly used on a daily basis (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. The development of *Gulijat* into functional products**



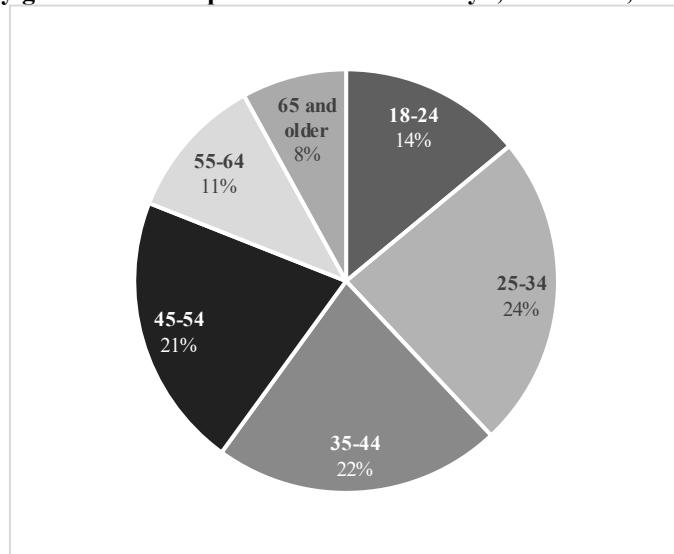
Product diversification is evident in applying the *Gulijat* motif technique as a strategy by Tiara Handicraft to expand its product offerings and introduce distinct characteristics compared to its previous products. This strategy aims to cater to different customer needs and preferences.

**Figure 2. Graphic of consumer interest in *Gulijat* products (Survey given to 100 respondents from Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia)**



Consumer perception of product attractiveness is highlighted through the statement's mention that consumers agree that *Gulijat* has attractive motif variations (Figure 2). This emphasizes the importance of subjective evaluation of product attributes, such as design, style, and aesthetics, in influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions (Figure 2). Innovation in textile technique is also a relevant perspective, as the statement mentions that consumers agree that *Gulijat* can be a new model for textile innovation. This suggests that the *Gulijat* motif technique is innovative in textile production, offering unique features that differentiate it from traditional techniques.

**Figure 3. Graph of perceptions between motifs and *Gulijat* products on consumer age segmentation (Survey given to 100 respondents from Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia)**



The statement emphasizes the importance of consumer segmentation, consumers feel that *Gulijat* needs to target young consumers' preferences for product innovation (Figure 3). This suggests that understanding and catering to the preferences and needs of specific consumer segments, in this case, young consumers is essential in product development efforts. The theoretical perspective underlying

the statement incorporates concepts of product diversification, consumer perception of product attractiveness, innovation in textile technique, and consumer segmentation, which collectively contribute to understanding Tiara Handicraft's efforts in introducing the *Gulijat* motif technique as a new product diversification strategy.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Over the years, *batik* production in Indonesia has faced various challenges due to the changing cultural and local societal landscape influenced by global trends (Maryunani, 2019; Novani et al., 2015; Wahono & Hara, 2019). Nevertheless, textile production did not decline suddenly due to rapid industrialization or the late arrival of deindustrialization caused by mechanized job concentration. The spinning of yarn with wheels and cotton disappeared relatively quickly. At the same time, weaving survived longer by utilizing imported European yarns, where textile production for the local market disappeared in the early 20th century and continued on a small scale in certain regions (Hoogenboom et al., 2010). One of the threats to local *batik* artisans also comes from the influx of cap *batik* textiles into the domestic market. Cap *batik* textiles are cheaper and have caused a gradual decline in demand for local *batik* yearly.

If we look back several decades, the textile industry in Indonesia began to attract Chinese entrepreneurs, and in 1936 the first factory was established, followed by other factories in the following years. The entry of China into this business shifted production from rural to urban areas and from household factories to more giant factories (Weeren-Griek, 1949). Therefore, when positioning the current *batik* industry, product development becomes necessary to anticipate the decline in *batik* activities due to various factors. Apart from the shift from handwritten to stamped *batik* and the emergence of *batik* printing, the rapid decline in textile production activities is due to the failure of the government to provide protection and assistance to small-scale businesses. When the production center has shifted to modernized and export-quality concentrated industries, there is still a tiny space for traditional textiles in the domestic market. Although the traditional textile market only survives on a small scale in certain regions, the textile industry, especially *batik*, can survive amid modernization due to its quality human resources and support from the tourism sector (Hochstrasser, 2011; Novani et al., 2015). Therefore, business owners should seize this opportunity by developing various attractive and diversified textile products. Like the Central Java Textile Association (API) that aims to make Yogyakarta the center of national creative textile innovation, the *Gulijat* technique and fabric can become a new flagship product of Indonesia's textile industry.

The competition in the *batik* market in Indonesia has become more interesting with the implementation of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) in 2007 (Novani et al., 2015). A comparative study on the impact of ACFTA revealed that the average import value reached 10 million USD per year before the policy was implemented. After implementation, the import value increased dramatically to 30 million USD in 2013 due to reduced import duties. Indirectly, this has stimulated the development of artisans in the *batik* industry who are elaborating on the technological issues of *batik* production. *Gulijat* act as an innovative *batik* technique providing a unique and unparalleled impression. Therefore, *Gulijat* is trying to position itself as a diversified textile product in Indonesia's creative industry through Tiara Handicraft as its agent.

Furthermore, regarding enchantment, as Alfred Gell has stated, the power of art objects comes from the technical processes that they objectively manifest through the technology of enchantment constructed upon technological enchantment (Gell, 2006). Technological enchantment is the power in technical processes to give strength to *batik* to reveal the natural world in an enchantment form. The enchantment is inherent in all types of technical activities. In other words, Gell states that the enchantment of *batik* lies in the intricate and meticulous technical processes that bring forth its aesthetic appeal, making it an enchanting form of textile art (2006).

To seize the opportunity for diversification, business owners in the *batik* industry must invest in product development, innovation, and marketing. Collaborations with other creative industries, such as fashion, interior design, and tourism, can also be explored to create new markets and expand the reach of *Gulijat*. Moreover, support from the government and other stakeholders is crucial to protect and assisting small-scale businesses in the *batik* industry. This can include policies that promote local *batik* production, safeguard traditional techniques, and provide incentives for innovation and

creativity (Grierson, 2011). Additionally, capacity-building programs, access to finance, and market access can help artisans and entrepreneurs in the textile industry thrive.

The intersection of disability and social work within Indonesia's creative industries reveals multi-layered dynamics rooted in cultural traditions, socio-economic structures, and evolving concepts of inclusion (Sampurno, 2023; Sampurno et al., 2024). Tiara Handicraft's journey with *Gulijat* textile production exemplifies how creative enterprises can become transformative spaces for marginalized communities, particularly for people with disabilities. The shift from traditional employment models to empowerment-focused frameworks reflects broader changes in how disability is understood in both global and Indonesian contexts. In Indonesia, societal perceptions of disability have historically been influenced by cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social stigmas. Disability was often viewed through a lens of pity or dependency, with limited recognition of the potential contributions that individuals with disabilities could make to society (Combs et al., 2025). This perspective aligns with charity model of disability, where people with disabilities are seen as passive recipients of aid rather than active participants in social and economic life (Nóra Menich & Tausz, 2024). Tiara Handicraft's evolution disrupts this narrative from being established initially to "employing" individuals with disabilities who faced systemic exclusion from mainstream industries. Tiara Handicraft transitioned toward an empowerment model that fosters entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and agency.

Disability arises from societal barriers rather than individual impairments, which, in Tiara Handicraft's context, barriers include physical inaccessibility, deep-rooted cultural stigmas, and economic structures that limit opportunities. Centering its business around *Gulijat*—a textile that blends Indonesian traditional techniques with Japanese Shibori—Tiara Handicraft challenges these barriers. It makes artisans involved no longer defined by their disabilities but recognized for their skills, creativity, and cultural contributions. In the broader landscape of Indonesian social work, this transformation signals a shift from protective and rehabilitative approaches to those emphasizing self-determination, capacity building, and social participation (Anderson et al., 2024; Levy et al., 2025). Historically, Indonesian social work focused on providing support services aimed at "helping" individuals with disabilities adapt to society. However, emerging practices advocate for inclusive models that position individuals with disabilities as active agents of change and the importance of enabling environments where marginalized groups can define their roles and identities on their terms (Kulbok-Lattik et al., 2024).

Tiara Handicraft's *Gulijat* production embodies these principles in practice. Creating *Gulijat* textiles involves intricate folding, pinching, dyeing, and stitching techniques—skills that demand creativity, precision, and innovation. The artisans engaged in this work, many of whom have disabilities, are not passive laborers. They are designers, creators, and cultural bearers, contributing to Indonesia's rich textile heritage while redefining societal perceptions of disability. Their work challenges the aesthetic norms of the textile industry, which often marginalizes artisans with disabilities or limits their roles to low-skilled tasks.

Cultural citizenship in the practice of *Gulijat* refers to the right to participate in creating and expressing cultural identities within a society (Hadley et al., 2024; Pfeifere, 2022). Through *Gulijat*, artisans with disabilities claim their space in Indonesia's cultural landscape. Their artistic expressions reflect personal narratives, community histories, and national identities, challenging the dominant cultural narratives that often exclude disabled voices. This participation goes beyond economic inclusion; it reshapes how society views disability, shifting from narratives of deficit to ones of creativity, resilience, and contribution (Chang et al., 2024; Jiang, 2024). Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage plays a significant role in shaping these dynamics. Traditional Indonesian textiles such as *batik* carry deep cultural significance, often associated with regional identities, spiritual beliefs, and social status (Jayawinangun et al., 2024). *Gulijat* emerges as a contemporary interpretation of these traditions, blending local craftsmanship with global influences. The fact that artisans with disabilities are at the forefront of this innovation challenges the assumption that traditional cultural practices are static or exclusive. Instead, *Gulijat* illustrates how culture can be dynamic, inclusive, and transformative, reflecting the diversity of those who create it.

The role of social work in this context extends beyond traditional boundaries. Social workers involved with Tiara Handicraft do not merely provide support services; they engage in capacity building, advocacy, and organizational development, especially in emphasizing collaborative partnerships between researchers, practitioners, and community members. At Tiara Handicraft, these principles manifest in practices that involve artisans with disabilities in business planning,

product design, and strategic decision-making, ensuring that their voices are integral to the enterprise's direction. Integrating social work within creative industries reflects a broader trend toward recognizing social enterprises as vehicles for inclusive development (Tören & Acan, 2024). Social enterprises like Tiara Handicraft do not measure success solely in financial terms. Their impact is also evaluated based on social outcomes, such as increased economic independence for marginalized groups, shifts in public attitudes toward disability, and the promotion of cultural diversity. In this model, *Gulijat* is not just a product but a symbol of empowerment, resilience, and cultural pride. However, despite these advancements, significant challenges remain. People with disabilities in Indonesia continue to face systemic barriers, including limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Cultural stigmas persist, particularly in rural areas, where disability is sometimes viewed as a source of shame or misfortune. Economic inequalities and a lack of comprehensive disability policies at the national level compound these challenges.

A deeper analysis of Tiara Handicraft's socio-economic impact reveals that its efforts extend beyond craft production to foster tangible empowerment and inclusion. In Indonesia, about 8.5% of the population live with disabilities, yet most face barriers to formal employment and financial independence (Pusparisa & Saputra, 2024). Programs like Tiara Handicraft help bridge this divide by offering income-generating opportunities tailored to people with disabilities. However, challenges persist in market access, financial management, and sustaining motivation among beneficiaries (Pusparisa & Saputra, 2024). At the macro level, Indonesia's creative economy contributes approximately 8% of GDP and employs over 20 million workers, accounting for 13% of the national workforce. Handicrafts and fashion are the leading sub-sectors. The inclusion of disabled artisans within this creative ecosystem can therefore contribute to both economic growth and social equity. Research indicates that economic exclusion of persons with disabilities can impose a cost equivalent to 3–7% of a country's GDP, underscoring the economic benefit of inclusive models (Sabharwal, 2024). The combination of *Gulijat* and Tiara Handicraft models a socially entrepreneurial venture that aligns heritage craft with inclusion and sustainability and offers replicable insights about how culturally rooted creative enterprises can uplift marginalized communities while reinforcing Indonesia's competitive position in sustainable fashion and craft markets.

While this study provides rich insights into the intersection of creative industry, cultural heritage, and disability inclusion through the *Gulijat* technique, several limitations should be acknowledged. *First*, the data collection was geographically limited to Surabaya, East Java, which may not capture broader consumer perceptions across Indonesia or in international markets. *Second*, the study focused on one social enterprise (Tiara Handicraft), thus limiting generalizability. Future research could expand by comparing multiple inclusive creative enterprises and exploring cross-regional adoption of *Gulijat*. Longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of empowerment-based models on artisan livelihoods are also recommended.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The evolution of *batik* in Indonesia reflects a rich tapestry of cultural heritage interwoven with globalization, economic transformation, and social change. Renowned for its intricate motifs and profound symbolic value, *batik* transcends traditional boundaries, finding expression in diverse contemporary applications. Its aesthetic appeal and cultural resonance have facilitated widespread adoption beyond conventional textiles, signifying Indonesia's identity on a global scale. Within this broader cultural framework, the *Gulijat* technique emerges as a distinctive innovation, combining traditional *batik* artistry with experimental methods involving folding, tying, and dyeing. These processes result in unique, vibrant patterns that embody both creative expression and technical mastery.

Tiara Handicraft is pivotal in advancing *Gulijat* as an innovative textile product while navigating complex challenges within the *batik* industry. Market competition, globalization, and shifts in industrial practices have necessitated adaptive strategies to sustain cultural enterprises. The diversification of *Gulijat* products, including wallets, bags, and other functional textiles, reflects a strategic response to evolving consumer demands. This approach integrates cultural preservation with contemporary market trends, ensuring relevance in domestic and international markets.

The involvement of artisans with disabilities in *Gulijat* production signifies a transformative shift in Indonesia's creative industries. Moving beyond traditional employment models, Tiara Handicraft fosters an empowerment-based framework emphasizing agency, creativity, and inclusion. Artisans are recognized as skilled contributors to Indonesia's cultural heritage, challenging conventional perceptions of disability and redefining narratives rooted in dependency or social marginalization. This inclusive model embodies principles of cultural citizenship, where individuals actively participate in shaping collective cultural identities and narratives.

Social work principles are embedded within Tiara Handicraft's operational framework, extending beyond conventional support services to encompass capacity building, advocacy, and participatory decision-making. Artisans engage in business planning, product development, and strategic initiatives, reinforcing their role as active agents in the enterprise's growth. This integration of social and economic objectives positions Tiara Handicraft as a model for inclusive development, where cultural production serves artistic and transformative social functions.

Economic dynamics, particularly implementing the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), have intensified competition within Indonesia's *batik* market. The influx of mass-produced textiles has posed significant challenges to traditional artisans. However, these conditions have also created opportunities for differentiation through product innovation and cultural branding. *Gulijat's* distinctive characteristics, derived from meticulous craftsmanship and unique design techniques, offer a competitive advantage. Aligning with global trends that value authenticity and ethical production, *Gulijat* products resonate with diverse consumer segments seeking meaningful cultural artifacts.

Strategic marketing and consumer education are critical in enhancing *Gulijat's* market presence. Collaborative ventures with fashion designers, interior decorators, and tourism sectors can create new avenues for cultural expression and economic growth. These partnerships facilitate the integration of traditional artistry into contemporary lifestyles, expanding the reach and impact of Indonesian textile heritage.

Persistent systemic barriers continue to affect individuals with disabilities in Indonesia, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Tiara Handicraft's inclusive practices address these disparities, offering a model of how creative industries can foster empowerment and social participation. The enterprise demonstrates that cultural production can function as a transformative space, promoting self-reliance and challenging societal stigmas associated with disability.

*Gulijat's* development reflects the dynamic interplay between cultural heritage, social inclusion, and economic innovation. The technique represents a fusion of traditional craftsmanship and contemporary creativity, highlighting the potential of Indonesia's *batik* industry to adapt and thrive amid changing global landscapes. Investment in product diversification, inclusive business practices, and strategic collaborations remains essential for sustaining this growth.

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