

FROM TRADITION TO TREND: THE EVOLUTION OF EAST SUMBA IKAT WEAVING IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract. Sumba Island, particularly East Sumba Regency, has recently emerged as a popular tourist destination in NTT Province, Indonesia. The promoted tourist attractions, especially through social media also vary from natural to cultural tourism. Among the cultural products available are traditional ikat textiles. Ikat weaving is a customary art form of the East Sumba people and a sought-after souvenir for tourists in this region. Originally utilized for traditional rituals such as marriage and death ceremonies, ikat weaving has now become a prominent tourist commodity in East Sumba. Therefore, this article aims to examine the existence of ikat weaving in East Sumba tourism promotion from a communication viewpoint in the age of social media. This research was conducted with a qualitative approach and used the case study method. The theory of diffusion of innovation discovered by Everett Rogers is used in this article to analyze the changes that occur in ikat weaving in the context of tourism promotion in East Sumba. The four main elements to be analyzed according to the theory are time, innovation characteristics, communication channels, and social systems related to ikat weaving and tourism in East Sumba.

Keywords: Ikat Weaving, East Sumba, Tourism, Promotion, Social Media.

INTRODUCTION

East Nusa Tenggara is currently a province that is quite famous for its tourism potential. Various parties continue to carry out promotions through multiple events and the media. Promotions are also carried out by the government or the private sector and by promotions that are indirectly made personally through personal social media accounts whose impact is more real-time, individual, and without time limits. One of the areas in NTT that are targeted for tourist visits is East Sumba Regency. Based on BPS NTT data in 2023, East Sumba occupies the fourth-highest position in NTT and first on the island of Sumba regarding domestic and foreign tourist visits (bps.ntt 2023).

In tourism promotions, it is not uncommon for tourist icons to be displayed visually as an attraction or a must-visit list when traveling to a location (Becken 2005). This can also be seen in East Sumba tourism promotions. In this regard, the icon often displayed is East Sumba ikat weaving. This woven cloth with a distinctive pattern and dominant red and blue colors is iconic in terms of its function and value socially, culturally, and economically. The unique patterns of East Sumba ikat weaving have attracted the attention of several researchers long before tourism developed as it is today (Adams 1969; Adams et al. 1999; Forshee 2001; Kartiwa 1989; Ndimba 2007). Functionally, ikat weaving has three main functions for the people of East Sumba: social, cultural, and economic (Ndimba 2007). Social functions where ikat fabric is used as daily clothing and clothing when traveling or worn during ritual events. Cultural functions are seen during marriage or death rituals. In wedding customs, ikat weaving is not only worn as clothing but also needs to be prepared by the bride's family in return for the dowry brought by the groom. Meanwhile, in death customs, ikat weaving is brought to the bereaved family as a sign of condolences. Furthermore, the economic function of woven cloth is equivalent to the price of livestock and jewelry, so it has long been used as an exchangeable item. Research conducted by Hunga even states that due to the development of

globalization, economic functions are increasingly strengthening (Hunga 2021; Ndimma 2007). Ikat weaving has developed and become a varied work, not only as a piece of cloth to wear but also as a form of clothing that can be modified into other shapes (Inocian et al. 2019), which has nothing to do with cultural rituals.

This modification offer is an attractive option if it is related to tourism. This also shows the shift in the function of weaving to suit the times and interests of the community, including tourists. To use ikat weaving, for example, tourists do not need to be involved in cultural rituals but can get it at various tourist locations. Even though the promotions offered visually depict ikat weaving used by the Sumba people in sacred moments, the phenomenon is starting to shift. Even with the use of social media, ikat has changed its function to just being used for the account owner's visualization purposes to be displayed on his social media account. This is seen as usual in the new media era where the principle of popularity, which means visual displays such as photos or videos, is indirectly created to gain social attention (Jansson 2018; Javed, Tučková, and Jibril 2020). The promotion of ikat weaving in the tourism context has also experienced a shift, not only focusing on the ritual activities attached to ikat weaving, but the attractive visual displays displayed by tourists with functions that are very different from the primary function of ikat weaving have finally become commonplace.

This phenomenon can be analyzed using Everett Rogers' thoughts on diffusion and innovation theory. Rogers defines diffusion as social change, the process by which an innovation or new idea is communicated through specific channels in a social system over time. Meanwhile, innovation is defined as an idea, practice, or object considered new by an individual or other unit of adoption (Rogers 2003). Ikat woven fabric, closely associated with ritual moments, has now economically developed into a fabric that can be used in various situations. Likewise, with the introduction of communication technology, personal and virtual change interventions also occur. Tourism is increasingly growing and is now being promoted by visually displaying ikat weaving.



Fig 1. East Sumba Ikat Weaving
(Source: Author's documentation)



Fig 2. An artist wears ikat weaving
(Source: Instagram @kiranalarasati)

With this description, the author sees that the existence of ikat weaving in tourism promotion in this technological era has significantly changed its function. Therefore, the author wants to explore this communication phenomenon in more detail. This article aims to understand the process of diffusion of ikat weaving innovation through tourism promotion by analyzing the main elements of diffusion according to Rogers, namely innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems.

Effective communication through promotion plays an essential role in tourism, and cultural heritage attracts tourists (Hiranyakit 1985). As an artistic work of East Sumba artisans, Ikat weaving is a tourist attraction often featured in tourism promotions. To understand the position of ikat weaving in tourism promotion, we will explain this section by explaining the concept of tourism promotion, ikat weaving, relevant previous research, and the basic concepts in the diffusion of innovation theory that Everett Rogers coined.

Various media, both traditional and modern, such as social media, can be used for tourism promotion purposes (Govers, Go, and Kumar 2007; Hasan and Jobaid 2014). The term promotion refers to all incentives manufacturers use to encourage trade or attract customers to buy a particular brand (Shimp 2007). Promotion, a common term in marketing, has also become essential for tourism marketing (Hasan and Jobaid 2014). The ease of access that exists now even allows tourists to choose their promotional materials directly without marketing intervention. Changes in access to tourism promotion with technology integration occur in travel agents, travel operations, hotels, and even the government (Horner and Swarbrooke 2005). One of the resources that can be promoted in tourism is historical and cultural objects, which are essential assets in a region (Ismagilova, Safiullin, and Gafurov 2015). Ismagilova et al. further explained that cultural objects are important, among other things, because they provide branding, which can be a differentiator (Chang and Chuang 2021) while benefiting the image of the region, bringing a sense of pride to residents and the opportunity to share with tourists.

One of the typical areas with tourism that carries cultural objects is the East Sumba Regency. This district is located on the island of Sumba, which is part of NTT Province. East Sumba is famous as a unique area with remains from the Stone Age or megalithic era. One of the cultural objects that has become an icon in promoting tourism in the East Sumba region is the ikat weaving tradition. The process of weaving, which goes through dozens of stages and uses unique weaving in various traditional rituals, makes ikat weaving synonymous with the island of Sumba. Compared to ikat weaving in other regions, the woven motifs produced from East Sumba are also very varied, and the patterns are quite artistic and have a profound meaning. This uniqueness makes weaving often appear in various East Sumba tourism promotions.

The authors view the concept of thought in the theory of diffusion of innovation put forward by Rogers as relevant for analyzing this social situation. The four elements in this theory are as follows (Rogers 2003): 1) Innovation occurs if someone considers an idea new. Novelty in innovation can be expressed through knowledge, persuasion, or the decision to adopt. An idea objectively regarded as new is not always measured by its first use or discovery but can be seen by someone's reaction to the idea. Rogers added that most new ideas for social change are currently technological innovations. Innovation and technology are even referred to as synonyms. 2) Communication channels connect two units where messages from one individual are passed on to another. Apart from individuals, mass media also plays a role in spreading innovation more quickly and efficiently to audiences who have the potential to adopt an innovation. Although media has advantages, interpersonal channels also have advantages in persuading individuals to accept new ideas (Rogers and Beal 1958), especially if the targeted individuals have similarities such as socioeconomic status and education. Apart from these two types of channels, communication is interactive (Mahler and Rogers 1999) via the Internet and is now also effective in contributing to social change with new ideas. The challenge in communication channels is when the interacting audiences have different views or certain attitudes. 3) Time is the third element in the diffusion process. The time dimension is taken into account in diffusion in three components, namely the innovation-decision process from the moment the innovation appears until the innovation is accepted/rejected, the novelty of the individual or other unit during the adoption period, and the level of adoption of the innovation in a system. 4) Social system, defined as a set of units that are interrelated in solving problems to achieve common goals. Members of a social system can be individuals, informal groups, organizations, or subsystems. Diffusion occurs in social systems by influencing social structures, norm systems, opinion leaders and change agents, types of innovation decisions, and the consequences of innovation.

The author posits that the four concepts presented in this theory will facilitate an understanding of the social changes occurring in East Sumba concerning the promotion of ikat weaving.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses an interpretive paradigm with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is characterized by the use of soft data such as symbols, words, observations, and personal interpretations, which are then analyzed by presenting a picture that is coherent and consistent with personal interpretations (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Neuman 2014). The method used is a case study. The case study method is a social science research method, generally used to investigate contemporary phenomena in depth in a real-world context, with the main question being how and why these phenomena occur (Yin 2018). Therefore, various relevant sources are used to analyze the phenomenon.

1. Result and analysis

In his study on East Sumba ikat weaving, Ndima elucidated that East Sumba ikat weaving has three primary social, cultural, and economic roles. (Ndima 2007). These three functions are still applied in everyday life, but in the increasingly developing tourism era, the third function is becoming more dominant (Hunga 2021). The reason is that technological developments support it. Ikat weaving, originally only promoted on a limited basis by the government and certain institutions directly related to tourism, such as tourist and hotel agents, can now be promoted by anyone with the help of technology and new media.

1.1 Innovation

In the context of innovation, Rogers identifies technological innovation, information, and uncertainty as the primary focus areas. He posited that technological innovation benefits those who adopt it, although the advantages are not always evident to the intended adopters. This phase of adoption emphasizes the importance of clear communication and evidence-based persuasion to help early adopters recognize the value of the innovation over time (Rogers, 2003). The practice of ikat weaving, which initially played a central role in the rituals of the Sumbanese people, has diversified over time and now appears in various forms at different moments. Previously, woven items were worn; now, they can be modified into other models, including jackets, clothes, bags, and other forms suitable for tourists to purchase as souvenirs (Ndima 2007). Ikat weaving is no longer solely promoted in a cultural context; it has been transformed into a product that can be accepted by tourists from outside East Sumba, including the people of East Sumba themselves. The cultural context includes cultural objects that are considered challenging in the context of tourism promotion (Egberts & Bosma, 2014). It has been demonstrated that the technique of ikat weaving is readily adaptable.

In information technology integration, Rogers also discusses technology clusters, namely the concept of determining boundaries around technological innovation. The issue is how to determine when one innovation ends and another begins. If an innovation is defined as an idea that is considered new, then the question of the limits of newness must be answered by the potential adopters who provide that assumption. Rogers gave an example of when rice planting innovations led to the green revolution, followed by other innovations, namely fertilizer varieties, which, if farmers followed, could crop yields triple (Rogers 2003). If this analogy is brought to the context of East Sumba ikat weaving, the innovation is that weaving has moved from being just an object used in ritual events but has also been modified to meet the needs of tourists. Another innovation that has emerged is the promotion of ikat weaving, not only in conjunction with the ritual moment but also in various tourism promotions, which will undoubtedly attract weaving users, not only East Sumbanese themselves as domestic tourists but also tourists from outside East Sumba. The use of social media is one of the innovative technology clusters. Of course, these clusters cannot be seen as separate innovations; they simultaneously depend on one innovation and another.

The third point that Rogers bears in mind in innovation is the perceived attributes of innovation. There are five innovation attributes: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. Relative advantage is the extent to which an innovation is considered better than the old idea. Profits can not only be measured from an economic perspective but also by factors of social

prestige, comfort, and satisfaction. Changes in the function and modification of the form of ikat weaving certainly benefit the community economically. On the other hand, tourists who use ikat weaving or who visually show it via social media have indirectly promoted the cultural symbols of East Sumba and given prestige to the people of East Sumba, where the weaving originates. Rogers added that the greater the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the faster the adoption rate. The advantage of shifting the function of weaving as an innovation is that it is not rejected by society, so there are no obstacles to adopting it. Next is compatibility, which is the extent to which an innovation is considered consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters. As a social function, Ikat weaving is used as clothing for the wearer's appearance. The author sees that the generally occurring modifications still carry out this function but in a different form. For example, in the past, ikat weaving was worn in its entirety as clothing, but nowadays, many ikat weavings are worn by cutting them according to specific patterns, so they are no longer worn intact like in the past. Apart from that, for visual purposes, for example, not wearing it like a sarong but using it like a blanket, this seems acceptable to adopters because it does not eliminate its function as a body covering. Furthermore, in terms of complexity, namely the extent to which an innovation is considered difficult to understand and use. East Sumba ikat weaving still functions as a body covering and other functions related to artistic appearance, so anyone can use it easily. People more readily adopt ideas that they can test, even through simple experiments, than ideas that have never been tried. East Sumba ikat weaving is a cultural work, and although it has been used chiefly for economic purposes, it has proven not to interfere with its primary socio-cultural use. The final attribute is observability, namely the extent to which the results of an innovation are visible to other people. The easier it is for individuals to see the results of an innovation, the more likely they are to adopt it. According to the author, the observability side of the diffusion of ikat weaving is most clearly visible in tourism promotion due to new technology and media. Ikat weaving, which was initially only produced and used on the island of Sumba, can now be seen and owned by many people, including tourists, with easy access to communication technology.

The final aspect related to innovation pertains to reinvention. Reinvention is how users alter or adapt an innovation during the adoption and implementation process. Innovations diffuse more quickly when they can be reinvented, and their adoption is more likely to be sustained. Adopters actively modify new ideas when they implement innovations, which is why the topic of invention reappears. This is likely to happen in the case of ikat weaving because adopters do not necessarily understand the value contained in ikat weaving or know in detail about ikat weaving. They may only know about ikat weaving briefly from media promotions or other sources of information, so ikat fabrics that previously had high value may be considered ordinary by adopters.

1.2 Communication Channels

The second element of the diffusion of innovation theory is communication channels. To better understand this element, looking again at its relationship to diffusion is helpful. From a communication point of view, diffusion involves exchanging messages that focus on a new idea. The diffusion process is essentially an exchange of information in which one individual communicates a new concept to one or more other people. Communication channels are a means of conveying messages from one person to another. The nature of the information exchange relationship between individuals determines the conditions under which the source is willing or unwilling to transmit the innovation to the recipient, which will influence the communication effect. Rogers stated that there are two communication channels for the diffusion of innovation: mass media and interpersonal channels. Mass media is an effective means of creating awareness of knowledge about innovation and an effective interpersonal channel for persuading or persuading someone to accept a new idea. In technological developments, Rogers said that interactive channels via the Internet will play a role in accelerating the spread of innovation.

The promotion of ikat weaving in tourism initially relied on the use of mass media, but in its development, personal communication mediated by the Internet has become a vital channel today. If mass media focuses on knowledge about ikat weaving and individual channels are persuasive, the author sees that interactive media can do both knowledge and persuasion. Therefore, mass media is transformed through convergence to function interactively and can play a broader role in spreading innovations. Because the authors notice that this section has received little exploration in Rogers'

book (Rogers 2003), we believe that more study should be undertaken. Regarding ikat weaving and tourism, the author sees that the role of interactive channels is very significant because promotions can be done directly, there is reciprocal communication, and there are no time limits.

The choice of communication channels is further associated with communication effects. Rogers underlined that the transfer of innovation will be easy if the individuals involved in communication are homophilous or similar in terms of education, beliefs, attitudes, socio-economics, etc. Homophily can occur in people who live close to each other, work in the same place, and have other physical and social closeness. When both parties share an ordinary meaning and language context, communicating new ideas significantly affects knowledge acquisition, formation, and change in attitudes and behavior. On the other hand, heterophily, which is the opposite of homophily, can hinder the diffusion of innovation. Heteropia is a typical problem in the diffusion of innovations. Innovations in promoting ikat weaving in tourism will certainly face heterophilous conditions, especially when using mass media and the Internet, which tourists from various circles can access. In addition, unlike other products, ikat weaving has a high value for the Sumba people, but this value is not necessarily understood by foreign tourists even if they own the product. In this case, socio-cultural differences emerge as one of the attributes of heterophily. Therefore, the heterophily gap must be narrowed to make communication more effective, including by providing variability in weaving forms and promoting them to answer the needs of tourists better or promoting them to potential groups such as the ikat weaving lover community.

1.3 Time

Time is the third element in the diffusion process. We explain this element from three points of view: the innovation-decision process, the categories of innovation and adopters, and the level of adoption within a system.

First, the innovation-decision process is when an individual (or other decision-making unit) moves from initial knowledge about an innovation to forming an attitude towards the innovation, the decision to adopt or reject, implementation and use of the new idea, and confirmation of the decision. In this section, at the personal level, there is undoubtedly a difference in adopting a shift in ikat weaving. For people used to using ikat weaving for ritual purposes, seeing the transformation of weaving into another form will require an adaptation process. This means that initial knowledge becomes the basis for behavior in responding to innovation. Meanwhile, in the context of tourists who do not understand the sacred function of weaving, it may not take long to decide whether to use ikat weaving.

The second category pertains to innovations and adopters. This section describes the extent to which individuals or other adopting units are relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other system members. Adopter categories based on innovation include: (1) innovator/brave/adventurer, (2) early adopter/pioneer, (3) early majority/early follower, (4) late majority/late follower, and (5) laggard/traditional group. In the case of ikat weaving, the use of which has shifted from its original function, has different adapters than other innovations. The innovators are weaving artisans and business people, and the pioneers are business people or public figures. The early majority are the weaving community, the late majority are the general public, including tourists, and the laggard group are people far from access to information. Nevertheless, the incorporation of technology renders this classification somewhat relative. For example, those who engage in creative tourism may also become innovators, residents who have acquired considerable knowledge may also become innovators, and so forth.

Third, the time involved in the diffusion process is related to the level of adoption. The adoption rate is the relative speed with which social system members adopt an innovation. The adoption rate is determined by the time required for a specified percentage of system members to adopt an innovation. Adoption rates are estimated for innovations within a system, not for individuals. Most innovations have an S-shaped adoption rate. However, there is variation in the slope of the "S" from innovation to innovation; some new ideas spread relatively quickly, and the S-curve is quite steep. Other innovations have slower adoption rates, and the S-curve is getting steeper.

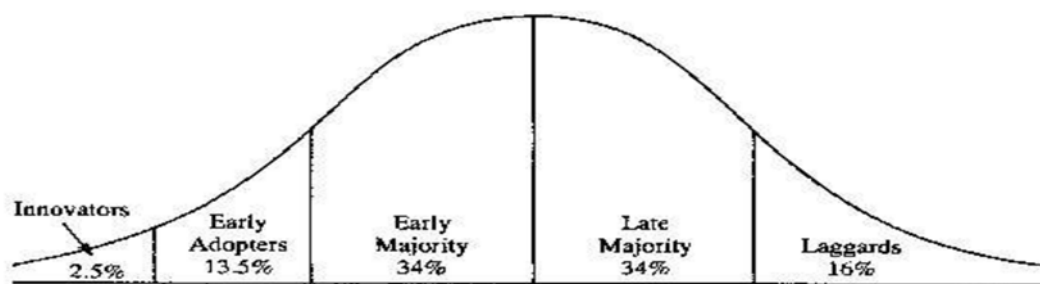


Fig 3. Innovation adopter S-curve (Rogers 2003)

If we look at the relationship with other indicators in the diffusion of innovation, such as the perceived attribute, namely the social function of weaving, which is still maintained and includes the concept of exposure to new media, the relevant curve, according to the author, is a steep S-curve. This is because the government's policy regarding internet access in villages has only been around for the past few years, as well as the policy on using regional clothing in NTT, in particular, has only been implemented in the past five years or so, the issuance of a decree on the motifs and meaning of East Sumba ikat weaving in 2018 (SK Bupati Sumba Timur no. 505 2018) as an effort to preserve the intellectual property of East Sumba's ikat weaving, supported by the high tourism activity in Sumba due to the increase in transportation fleets.

1.4 Social Systems

Diffusion occurs in social systems, where the structure of the social system influences diffusion in five ways: the way social structure influences diffusion, the effect of the norm system on diffusion, the role of opinion leaders and change agents, the type of innovation-decision, and the consequences of innovation. 1) Social structure in diffusion, where the structure itself is a patterned arrangement of units in one system. The system provides regularity to human behavior and allows a person to predict behavior and represent certain types of information, including when they adopt an innovation. Social structures can support or hinder the diffusion of innovation (Rogers 2003; Rogers and Kincaid 1981). The people of East Sumba, including traditional leaders, do not resist when ikat weaving is displayed differently, perpetuating the ongoing shift. 2) Norm system in diffusion. Norms are patterns of behavior established for members of a social system. Norms are guidelines or standards of behavior for members of a social system. Norms in a system tell individuals what behaviors they are expected to perform. System norms can be a barrier to a new idea. When related to changes in the direction of promotion of ikat weaving in the tourism context, social norms do not become a significant obstacle because the social function continues to be carried out and does not eliminate other functions. Ikat weaving can still be used both for rituals and commercial purposes and to fulfill the appearance needs of tourists when traveling. 3) The role of opinion leader and change agent. Opinion leaders provide information and advice about innovation to many other individuals in the social system, while change agents influence clients' innovation decisions in the direction that the change agent deems desirable. Opinion leaders are members of the social system in which they exercise their influence. Change agents are usually professionals with college degrees in technical fields and often collaborate with opinion leaders in diffusion activities. Judging from this explanation, opinion leaders and change agents in this topic are the same as opinion leaders and change agents in other programs. Community leaders, traditional leaders, and the government can be said to represent opinion leaders in innovation in ikat weaving, while young figures, the ikat weaving community, tourism experts, and celebrities are examples of agents of change. 4) Type of innovation decision. Innovations can be accepted or rejected by both individuals and entire social systems. Innovation decisions consist of optional innovation decisions, namely choices to adopt or reject innovations made by individuals that are independent of the decisions of other members of the system; collective innovation decisions are choices to adopt or reject innovations made by consensus among the members of a system, and; Authority innovation decisions are choices to adopt or reject innovations made by relatively few individuals in a system who have power, status, or technical expertise. The authority's decision is the fastest, and the slowest is the collective decision. In this explanation, adopting ikat weaving in tourism progressed through three stages. It began as an optional decision by a small group, followed by an authority decision supported by regulations

legitimizing its role. Eventually, it became a collective decision as society widely accepted and normalized these changes. 5) Consequences of innovation: consequences are changes that occur in individuals or social systems due to adopting or rejecting an innovation. There are three consequences of innovation, namely desirable versus undesirable consequences, depending on whether the effects of innovation in a social system are functional or dysfunctional; direct versus indirect consequences, depending on whether changes in individuals or social systems occur as a direct response to innovation or as a second-order result of the direct consequences of an innovation. Anticipated versus unanticipated consequences depend on whether social system members recognize and intend the change. Innovation in ikat weaving in the context of tourism promotion is, in fact, in line with the needs of tourists, and ikat weaving centers are increasingly expanding with product variability whose use was previously very limited.

By looking at the overall concept of the diffusion of innovation, the author finds that the existence of ikat weaving as one of the identities of the Sumbanese people, which has developed in line with the tourism promotion of East Sumba has experienced innovation in terms of the function of the weaving itself. This phenomenon seems to confirm Cole's research, which stated that today's society has a positive attitude towards tourism. They believe that tourism can strengthen cultural values and that they believe in the importance of maintaining cultural traditions and values because, in the end, tourists from far away will come to them to see this uniqueness (Cole 2014).

CONCLUSION

The issue raised in this article concerns the promotion of ikat weaving as a tourist attraction, resulting in a shift in the original function of ikat weaving. Furthermore, the shift is reinforced by using social media accounts for promotional purposes. In light of this observation, the author posits that the theory of diffusion of innovation, as postulated by Everett Rogers, may offer a framework for understanding this phenomenon. This article aims to gain insight into the diffusion process of ikat weaving innovation through tourism promotion. The main elements of the innovation diffusion process studied are innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems. Concerning the innovation element, it would appear that technology integration has primarily resulted in changes to the weaving function. This condition is because it is no longer promoted solely in a cultural context but has been transformed into another product that can be accepted by tourists from outside East Sumba, including the people of East Sumba themselves. It is possible to modify weaving into alternative visually appealing forms to tourists. Moreover, the significance of ikat weaving and tourism in the communication channel element demonstrates the pivotal role of interactive channels in targeting tourists with promotions and facilitating reciprocal communication without time constraints. The third element is time. For East Sumba residents accustomed to utilizing ikat weaving for ritual purposes, observing the evolution of weaving into a different form will necessitate an adaptation process. In the context of tourists unfamiliar with the sacred function of weaving, it may not take long for them to decide to use ikat weaving. The final element is the social system, in which the diffusion of ikat weaving innovations is not considered to significantly disrupt the order of life in society or to conflict with existing norms. Furthermore, key societal figures support this shift, indicating that the social system also supports and promotes the change occurring in ikat weaving.

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