

Determinants of Tourists' Willingness to Pay for Tenun Ikat NTT: Uniqueness, Credibility, and Authenticity

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study examines the effects of perceived uniqueness and perceived credibility of geographical indication label on tourists' willingness to pay for tenun ikat NTT, with perceived authenticity as a mediating variable. The study grounded in Signaling Theory to explain the mechanism of consumer behavior in the purchase decision-making process for cultural product.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative explanatory design was employed using a cross-sectional survey of 235 tourists' selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0 software to test both direct and indirect relationships among the constructs.

Finding/Results – The results indicate that perceived credibility of GI label has a direct significant positive effect on willingness to pay and perceived authenticity. Perceived uniqueness and perceived credibility of GI label has a direct significant positive effect on perceived authenticity. Perceived uniqueness and perceived authenticity does not directly affect willingness to pay, and mediation analysis shows that perceived authenticity does not mediate the relationships between perceived uniqueness, perceived credibility of GI label, and willingness to pay. The findings indicate that GI label credibility is the only significant direct predictor of willingness to pay, suggesting that institutional trust signals may be more influential than symbolic cultural attributes in shaping tourists' valuation of cultural heritage products.

Originality/Value – This study is also conducted to fill the research gap, where studies examining the role of geographical indication labels are still very limited, especially in the cultural craft industry in Indonesia. This study contributes to signaling theory by demonstrating that consumer perceived authenticity as consumers' perception of purchasing behaviour is developed through trust in the GI label's credibility.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Perceived Uniqueness,
Perceived Credibility,
Perceived
Authenticity,
Willingness to Pay,
Geographical
Indication Label,

Article Information:

Received: 30/04/2026

Revised: 30/06/2026

Accepted: 10/07/2026

ISSN:

2985-3168 (Online)

2985-3222 (Print)

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1. Introduction

Indonesia has a lot of resources, yet its creative industry based on culture is one area where their potential lies. In particular, crafts, fashion, and food-related businesses add substantial amounts of economic value to the overall economy; these three aspects stand out among all the other sectors of business for having provided such immense amount of resources to the local economy (Kemenparekraf, 2024). The textile industry alone is projected to grow to USD 22.4 billion by 2023 (IMARC Group, 2024), thereby showing that there are ample business opportunities for the culture-based textile crafts of this region and country. Today's consumers no longer simply buy products because they offer functional benefits; today, they also focus on the intrinsic values associated with the product. Consumers are becoming more attracted to buying local cultural products because they are seen as ways to enhance their local identity and give resistance to the homogenisation of the world's cultures (Steenkamp, 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). As such, this trend will be key to making cultural crafts high-value commodities.

Tenun Ikat Nusa Tenggara Timur (ikat weaving from East Nusa Tenggara) in Indonesia is a cultural-based textilecraft that can position itself as a high-value product. Tenun Ikat NTT has great aesthetic, historical and symbolic value and is not only a commodity, but also a heritage of cultural identity (UNESCO, 2013). The development potential of tenun ikat NTT as a regional creative economic activity is further underpinned by the rapid expansion of the tourism sector in East Nusa Tenggara. The designation of East Nusa Tenggara as a priority area developed within the National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN), encourages local government to actively respond and develop regional tourism development programs, including local creative industries such as tenun ikat NTT Ikat (Dinas Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2025). Evidence of the success of efforts to develop regional tourism in East Nusa Tenggara can also be seen in high tourist arrivals in East Nusa Tenggara, with data from Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS), showing a significant increase in total tourists arriving in East Nusa Tenggara which reached 7,983,247 visitors in 2024 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). High levels of visitation present an opportunity to realise the full potential of the region's culture-based creative economy and will help to establish tenun ikat NTT as a high-value cultural product.

Many challenges and the high potential of this market are accompanied by the wide distribution of mass-produced counterfeit products that disregard quality and cultural values (Harris, 2014). Due to this situation, consumers experience information asymmetry when shopping for a cultural product. Specifically, they are unable to discern between authentic and imitation products due to the combination of these factors impacting their perception of genuine products. Although consumers are increasingly interested in cultural products, they have limited willingness to pay because of the uncertainty surrounding the perceived risks involved with purchasing cultural products. Thus, there is a need to examine willingness to pay as a variable representing the consumer decision-making process regarding cultural products marketed at relatively high prices.

According to signaling theory, consumers' purchasing decisions can be affected by the signals that they receive related to a product (Connelly et al., 2011; Erdem & Swait, 1998). Regarding several types of cultural products, uniqueness is one of intrinsic signal that can impact consumers' willingness to pay (Suzianti et al., 2023). Perceived uniqueness describes consumer perception associated with the degree to which a product is unique, rare, or otherwise unlike anything else, or inimitable to other products (Tian et al., 2001). Therefore, consumers'

evaluations of the perceived uniqueness of tenun ikat NTT will determine the amount of their willingness to pay.

In addition to uniqueness, label credibility plays an integral role in increasing consumer's WTP (Pretner et al., 2021). In this manner, the Geographical Indication (GI) label serves as an external cue to consumers as a reference point for verifying product authenticity and origin. The purpose of having a Geographical Indication label is to secure and protect the intellectual property rights associated with cultural products (JDIH DGIP, 2016; WIPO, 2021). Perceived Credibility assesses consumer perceptions regarding credibility and truthfulness of information; thus, it illustrates how consumers evaluate the credibility of the GI label and how it influences their WTP (Moussa & Touzani, 2008).

This study will also introduce perceived authenticity as a mediating variable in addition to these two signals. As defined by Napoli et al. (2014), perceived authenticity illustrates the extent to which a consumer perceives a product to be "authentic" is based on both physical and symbolic attributes of the product. The addition of a mediating variable will enable a consumer to process incoming signals into their respective WTP. Perceived signals can increase perceived authenticity, which will then lead to increased WTP (Ho et al., 2024; G. Lee & Kim, 2024). The purpose for including these variable mediating stems from the findings' inconsistencies in each signal's ability to affect WTP. Specifically, certain previous findings support the impact not only of uniqueness signals, but also of the GI label on WTP, but some recent findings suggest the opposite (Abdrabbo et al., 2025; Rossi & Rivetti, 2020; Török et al., 2020). Beside the inconsistency of the findings, this study is also conducted to fill the research gap, where studies examining the role of geographical indication labels are still very limited, especially in the cultural craft industry in Indonesia.

Although previous studies generally view uniqueness, authenticity, and certification as complementary determinants in consumer evaluation, attention to the relative influence of these signals on cultural heritage products remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to provide a better understanding of which types of signals have the greatest influence on shaping tourists' perceptions of cultural products. This study examines whether extrinsic signals in the form of institutional certification, represented by the credibility of the Geographical Indication (GI) label, have a stronger influence on willingness to pay compared to intrinsic cultural attributes such as uniqueness and authenticity, or whether the opposite is true.

This study aims to analyze the effect of uniqueness, credibility of geographical indication labels, and authenticity on tourists' willingness to pay, and also to identify and analyze which of these factors has a greater impact on shaping tourists' purchasing decisions regarding cultural products. Using PLS-SEM (partial least squares structural equation modeling), the Study will use direct and indirect relationships to quantify the relationships found in the study. These findings are intended to provide a theoretical contribution to marketing management and be of benefit to both tenun ikat NTT business owners and the corresponding government agencies in improving the market value of Ikat and protections against regional cultural intellectual property.

2. Literature Review & Hypothesis Development

2.1 Signaling Theory in Consumer Decision Making

The purpose of signaling theory is to explain how parties with superior knowledge will communicate their knowledge using credible signals to reduce the level of asymmetry

between themselves and other party (Connelly et al., 2011; Erdem & Swait, 1998). Types of signals include, but are not limited to, price, patterns or motifs, uniqueness, label or brand, and design, which provide a sense of identity, quality and overall value of a product. Signals provide consumers with information to assist them in making purchasing decisions. According to Richardson et al. (1994), there are two categories of information that will impact consumers' perception and therefore, their decision in making a purchase: intrinsic cues (i.e. product characteristics) and extrinsic cues (i.e. product attributes). Netemeyer et al. (2004) demonstrate how intrinsic cues will influence the decision of consumers regarding payment, and Wells et al. (2011) provide further evidence of how extrinsic cues have an impact on the consumer's perception and decision-making process.

In the context of cultural products, consumers often rely on certain signals to assess a product's quality and value. The use of signals is critical to determining the authenticity of the product. Uniqueness provides an intrinsic signal and the credibility of a GI label acts as an extrinsic signal. Perceived authenticity refers to the process by which a consumer interprets the signals they receive and their willingness to pay refers to the action or behaviour that results from the interpretation of the signals received.

The definition and sources of the two signal types: Intrinsic signals are those that are intrinsic or inherent to a cultural product; they describe the cultural product's uniqueness and authenticity in some way. Authenticity, while being described as one signal interpretation mechanism in this research-model framework, will be more closely related to the inherent nature of cultural products than to their so-called extrinsic signalling characteristics. Extrinsic signals, then, are those that originate from outside the cultural product, for example, through geographical indication labels. These labels show that the cultural product is authentic because of where it originated.

2.2 Perceived Uniqueness: Direct and Indirect Effects

Perceived uniqueness is how a consumer views the distinctiveness of a product compared to other products (Tian et al., 2001), or how different a product is from similar products (Franke & Schreier, 2008; Krause et al., 2023). Therefore, perceived uniqueness directly impacts willingness to pay by influencing consumers' perceptions of the value of unique products, particularly cultural crafts such as tenun ikat NTT. For example, empirical research by Suzianti et al. (2023) dan Wang et al. (2024) indicate that increased perceptions of uniqueness result in greater willingness to pay for an item. In addition to being a direct influence on willingness to pay, consumers also consider perceived uniqueness to be an important contributor to their perception of authenticity. There is a strong relationship between the perceived uniqueness of an item and its perceived authenticity. Previous study have shown that items considered unique are also considered authentic (S. Lee et al., 2017). Thus, hypothesis 1 and 4 stated as follows:

H1: Perceived uniqueness has a significant and positive effect on tourists' willingness to pay

H4: Perceived uniqueness has a significant and positive effect on tourists' perceived authenticity

2.3 Perceived Credibility of Geographical Indication Label: Direct and Indirect Effects

Credibility refers to the belief that what you are being told (via your evaluations) is true (Moussa & Touzani, 2008), therefore, the credibility of a label (or the label's credibility) could be viewed as a measurement of how much the individual believes that the label accurately represents the characteristics of a product, and the label is supported by an established credible

source (Brach et al., 2018). The GI label functions as a boundary object that can help the customer to differentiate between the legitimate products and those that are not; furthermore, the GI label helps connect customers with producers through trust (E. Lee & Zhao, 2024). The perceived credibility of the GI label in regard to tenun ikat NTT is an important element influencing tourists' willingness to pay. In empirical studies conducted by Prathap & C.C. (2022) and Pretner et al. (2021) the perceived credibility of the GI label was found to increase tourists' willingness to pay. Additionally, the credibility of the label is a contributor to the development of perceived authenticity; therefore, labels with a high level of credibility encourage premium pricing (Ho et al., 2024). Thus, hypothesis 2 and 5 stated as follows:

H2: Perceived credibility of GI label has a significant and positive effect on tourists' willingness to pay

H5: Perceived credibility of GI label has a significant and positive effect on tourists' perceived authenticity

2.4 Perceived Authenticity as a Driver of Willingness to Pay

Perceived authenticity represents the way consumers determine the genuine character of a product based on its physical and symbolic characteristics (Napoli et al., 2014), and the perceived overall authenticity of an experience (Ahn et al., 2022). For cultural products such as tenun ikat NTT, perceived authenticity is how consumers evaluate the authenticity of the value associated with that form of tenun, thereby informing their purchasing decisions; therefore, empirical studies indicate that perceived authenticity influences willingness to pay (Ahn et al., 2022) and willingness to pay significantly more than average for those types of products with perceived authentic value (Sun et al., 2024). Hypothesis 3 stated as follows:

H3: Perceived authenticity has a significant and positive effect on tourists' willingness to pay

2.5 The Mediating Role of Perceived Authenticity

While prior studies have confirmed a direct relationship between perceived uniqueness and GI label credibility with perceived authenticity and willingness to pay, how perceived authenticity mediates the two needs further exploration. Based on the signaling theory propounded by Connelly et al. (2011), following receipt of a signal (the product information) the consumer goes through an interpretive process, and the result of that process leads them to make a purchase decision. In the research framework presented in this study, perceived authenticity is an element of the interpretive process that occurs when interpreting both perceived uniqueness and GI label credibility signals, and therefore ultimately influence willingness to pay. Intrinsic uniqueness and GI label credibility would only influence the willingness of tourist consumers to pay for tenun ikat NTT if they perceive value in the authenticity of the tenun ikat. Additionally, empirical research is corroborated by findings from Ho et al., (2024) where perceived authenticity is positively related to GI labels and will result in consumers' willingness to pay premium prices. G. Lee & Kim (2024) have also demonstrated that perceived authenticity acts as a mediator between the relationship of intrinsic cues and willingness to pay, with other empirical studies corroborating their findings such as Ahn et al. (2022) and Bai & Zhang (2021). Hypothesis 6 and 7 stated as follows:

H6: Perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between perceived uniqueness and tourists' willingness to pay

H7: Perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between perceived credibility of GI label and tourists' willingness to pay

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach, Samples, and Data Collection

This research adopted the explanatory approach through the quantitative research method to explain the position of the variables studied and their relationship with one another (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The population of the study includes both international and domestic tourists who visited East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) or are currently visiting NTT. However, exact numbers are unknown, so a non-probability sampling approach is used, using a purposive sampling technique. Thus, purposive sampling limits the respondent sample to a sample that meets certain criteria set forth by the researcher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Utilizing the Inverse Square Root method (Cohen, 1988), based on Cohen's calculation of the minimum sample size needed for the Type I error rate (α), Type II error rate (β) and detection of an effect size, provides for a minimum sample size of 196. To account for respondents providing inattentive responses often inherent when using purposive samples, an additional 20% was added to the minimum sample size, resulting in an actual sample size of 235 respondents.

The data from 235 respondents were collected using a cross-sectional method. Online surveys were distributed via Google Forms online survey tool. Offline surveys were completed using printed questionnaires that were distributed directly to eligible respondents. The eligibility criteria include individuals who are (1) are visitors or have previously visited NTT (specifically, Kupang, Labuan Bajo and Ende); (2) have interacted with tenun ikat NTT; (3) are aware of or have heard of geographical indication label; (4) are at least 18 years old (to meet the criteria to make purchasing decisions). For the analysis of responses from respondents, the measurement of all research variables used a 5-point Likert scale and relied on the methods established by Sekaran & Bougie (2016).

3.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out with Structural Equation Modeling and Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) via SmartPLS 4.0. This analysis technique was chosen because it offers the ability to test complex models using small to medium sized sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019). The two parts of the data analysis process included the measurement model (outer model) and structural model (inner model) stages. During the measurement model stage, convergent validity was assessed using the following measures: outer loadings (> 0.70), average variance extracted (AVE > 0.50), discriminant validity through Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT < 0.90), and construct reliability via Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.70) and composite reliability (> 0.70). After verification of the measurement model, the structural model stage was engaged to assess fit (SRMR < 0.08 = good fit), the coefficient of determination (R^2), and path coefficients by assessing the statistical significance of relationships between the variables replicating the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Respondent Profile

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	83	35.3
	Female	151	64.3
	N/A	1	0.4
Age	19-25 years	53	22.6
	26-32 years	110	46.8

	33-39 years	60	25.5
	40-46 years	11	4.7
	>46 years	1	0.4
Educational Attainment	High School Graduate	50	21.3
	Diploma	31	13.2
	Bachelor's Degree	126	53.6
Employment Status/ Occupation	Master's Degree	28	11.9
	Student	36	15.3
	Civil Servant	38	16.2
	Private Sector	82	34.9
	Entrepreneur	67	28.5
	Others	12	5.1
Monthly Expenditure (IDR)	<5,000,000	60	25.5
	5,000,000-8,000,000	80	34.0
	>8,000,000-10,000,000	57	24.3
	>10,000,000-13,000,000	27	11.5
	>13,000,000	11	4.7

Notes: n = total respondents per category; percentage calculated from total sample (N=235)

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Demographic data shows that the most visitors to NTT are women (64.3%), which may suggest a distinct readiness among women to purchase cultural products (Loureiro & Lotade, 2005). Additionally, respondents were primarily in the age group of 26 or older — indicating that these individuals are likely working, traveling for business, and value local goods. Further, most respondents (65.5%) have completed higher education. This indicates that respondents with higher education levels have greater awareness of culture and cultural products through their academic training compared to individuals with lower education levels (H. Liu et al., 2021). In terms of occupation, the largest group of respondents are those who are employed in the private sector (34.9%) and entrepreneurs (63.4%); this indicates that respondents are likely economically stable and present a large opportunity for developing markets in these sectors. The demographic data also suggests that the majority of respondents spend a considerable amount of money each month, with 34% reporting monthly spending of between IDR 5,000,000 and IDR 8,000,000, thus indicating that respondents have a high degree of purchasing power.

4.2. Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

4.2.1 Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

Table 2. Outer Loading

Indicator	Perceived Authenticity	Perceived Credibility of GI Label	Perceived Uniqueness	Willingness to Pay	Result
PU_1			0.733		Valid
PU_2			0.844		Valid
PU_3			0.744		Valid
PU_4			0.732		Valid
PU_5			0.732		Valid
PU_6			0.760		Valid
PU_7			0.744		Valid

PC_1	0.763	Valid
PC_2	0.725	Valid
PC_3	0.718	Valid
PC_4	0.723	Valid
PC_5	0.739	Valid
PC_6	0.731	Valid
PC_7	0.743	Valid
PC_8	0.701	Valid
WTP_1		0.716 Valid
WTP_2		0.800 Valid
WTP_3		0.657 Valid
WTP_4		0.753 Valid
WTP_5		0.746 Valid
WTP_6		0.812 Valid
Z_1	0.866	Valid
Z_2	0.715	Valid
Z_3	0.712	Valid
Z_4	0.849	Valid
Z_5	0.775	Valid
Z_6	0.746	Valid

Notes: Validity threshold; outer loading > 0.70; outer loading > 0.40 - 0.70 are acceptable

Source: SmartPLS 4.0 Output, 2026

Table 3. Composite Reliability & Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Perceived Authenticity	0.870	0.878	0.902	0.608
Perceived Credibility of GI Label	0.876	0.880	0.901	0.534
Perceived Uniqueness	0.875	0.879	0.903	0.572
Willingness to Pay	0.847	0.872	0.884	0.561

Notes: AVE threshold > 0.50; Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70; CR (rho_c) threshold > 0.70

Source: SmartPLS 4.0 Output, 2026

Based on the examination findings, the loading value for the outer item WTP_3 is less than the 0.70 cut-off point; however, because it still lies within the acceptable range it is kept (Hair et al., 2021). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value achieved was also higher than the 0.50 cut-off and demonstrates validity through the convergent validity method. Both Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (rho_c) demonstrate that the indicators are reliable, indicating that the data can be used to represent the construct variables and to provide further analysis.

4.2.2 Discriminant Validity

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	PA	PC	PU	WTP
Perceived Authenticity				
Perceived Credibility of GI Label	0.658			
Perceived Uniqueness	0.435	0.498		
Willingness to Pay	0.186	0.267	0.185	

Notes: HTMT threshold < 0.90; all values below threshold indicate adequate discriminant validity

Source: SmartPLS 4.0 Output, 2026

Every single one of the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) amounts falls below the acceptable parameter for estimation (0.90). The largest of the HTMTs is found between Perceived Credibility of Geographical Indication Label and Perceived Authenticity, with a score of 0.658, thereby demonstrating that all measured constructs have satisfied the required standard of discriminant validity according to the HTMT approach to estimation.

4.3. Structural Model Evaluation and Hypothesis Testing (Inner Model)

4.3.1 Model Fit

Table 5. Model Fit Summary

Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.057	0.057
d_ULS	1.240	1.240
d_G	0.342	0.342
Chi-square	452.392	452.392
NFI	0.849	0.849

Notes: SRMR < 0.08 indicates good fit; NFI > 0.70 indicates acceptable fit for complex structural models

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output, 2026

Upon testing the goodness-of-fit of the original research model with the application of the SRMR method, the value achieved was 0.057, resulting in a successful conclusion, having met the threshold of being less than 0.080.

4.3.2 Model Evaluation – Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Index	R-square	R-square adjusted
Perceived Authenticity	0.363	0.358
Willingness to Pay	0.068	0.055

Notes: R² ≥ 0.75 indicates strong; R² ≈ 0.50 indicates moderate ; R² ≤ 0.25 indicates weak

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output, 2026

In evaluating the Coefficient of Determination (R²) of Perceived Authenticity variables, there was recorded to be a value of comparative moderate level (0.363) which indicates that independent variables had accounted for 36.3% of variance in these variables, while the balance 63.7% could potentially be explained through other variables not under investigation in this study. In comparison, the R² for Willingness to Pay variable was recorded to be below low (0.068), whereby independent variables could only account for 6.8% of variance, with the majority of variance being derived from other variables external to this model of research.

4.3.3 Hypothesis Testing Direct Effects

Table 7. Direct Effects

	O	M	STDEV	T-Stat	P-Val	Decision
Perceived Authenticity -> Willingness to Pay	0.022	0.017	0.090	0.248	0.804	Rejected
Perceived Credibility of GI Label -> Perceived Authenticity	0.518	0.522	0.063	8.195	0.000	Supported

Perceived Credibility of GI Label - > Willingness to Pay	0.218	0.230	0.088	2.484	0.013	Supported
Perceived Uniqueness -> Perceived Authenticity	0.154	0.158	0.063	2.429	0.015	Supported
Perceived Uniqueness -> Willingness to Pay	0.053	0.057	0.084	0.638	0.524	Rejected

Notes: O: Original sample; M: Sample mean; Bootstrapping with 5.000 subsamples; significance at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Source: SmartPLS 4.0 Output, 2026

H1: Perceived Uniqueness and Willingness to Pay (Rejected)

Hypothesis testing results showed that the perceived uniqueness of products does not have a significant effect on how much tourists are willing to pay for tenun ikat NTT ($\beta=0.053$; $p=0.524$). Therefore, H1 is not supported. Perceived uniqueness does not directly influence a tourist's willingness to pay for tenun ikat NTT, even though uniqueness is deeply tied to a product's aesthetic, symbolic and emotional value; these three types of value are not always linked to a clear functional benefit. The findings of this study support the research of Sweeney & Soutar (2001), where it was concluded that the emotional value alone is not sufficient for driving decision-making when purchasing something without corresponding clear functional value. Also, Abdrabbo et al. (2025), as well as Franke & Schreier (2008) have established that uniqueness does not directly create a willingness to pay for tourists, in that uniqueness only influences a person's willingness to pay when purchasing something or experiencing a product and the person is directly engaged with the product.

Although tourists may appreciate the uniqueness of tenun ikat NTT, this factor alone may not be enough to justified the higher price. Tourists are often faced with limited information, short decision-making times, and tight budgets, leading them to prioritize other factors—such as tangible value and credible certifications, or perceived benefits, their travel budget, and whether the price matches the value received—over symbolic cultural characteristics.

H2: Perceived Credibility of GI Label and Willingness to Pay (Supported)

The findings from the hypothesis testing revealed a significant relationship between the perceived credibility of Geographic Indication (GI) label and willingness to pay ($\beta = 0.218$; $p = 0.013$), leading to acceptance of H2 as a valid hypothesis. This result indicates that the perceived credibility of the GI label has an influence on the willingness of tourists to pay for tenun ikat NTT. It appears that consumers are willing to pay more for products with the expectation of authenticity and quality. This result is also consistent with Pretner et al. (2021) findings, who discusses the impact of credibility of GI labels having an impact on the consumer's willingness to pay for the product, further demonstrating that trust in third-party certification will positively impact and shape a consumer's willingness to pay for a product. This finding is aligned with previous studies by Dwivedi et al. (2018) dan Liu & Wang (2025). This shows that tourists tend to rely on signals of credibility derived from formal certification when evaluating cultural products.

H3: Perceived Authenticity and Willingness to Pay (Rejected)

A significant relationship was not found between willingness to pay and perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.022$; $p = 0.804$), and as such, H3 is rejected. This means that whilst consumers may perceive a product to be authentic, this does not encourage tourists to be willing to pay for the product. Based on demographic data, the average tourist is likely to fall into the productive age group and professional category; therefore, when making purchase decisions,

the average tourist will likely be more rational in the decision-making process based on the functionality of the product. Authenticity was shown to be significant in the study completed by Napoli et al. (2014). Adhianto & Halim (2025) also found that authenticity does not affect someone's purchase intention.

The authenticity of tenun ikat NTT as a cultural product might be seen as an expected attribute for tourists when purchasing traditional products. Although tourists may recognize the authenticity of Tenun Ikat NTT. This attribute alone may not be enough to increase their willingness to pay.

H4: Perceived Uniqueness and Perceived Authenticity (Supported)

The quantitative data suggests that perceived distinctiveness positively impacts perceived authenticity ($\beta_1=0.154$; $p\text{-value}_1=0.015$), thus resulting in acceptance of H4. This finding indicates that the degree of distinctiveness associated with tenun ikat NTT creates an environment whereby customers perceive those products as more authentic than products without such distinctiveness. Theoretically, this suggests that customers' perceived authenticity of cultural products can be influenced by their perceived uniqueness of the products themselves (i.e., a cultural product's value is derived from its uniqueness). This result is also consistent with S. Lee et al. (2017), who found that perceived uniqueness has a positive and significant effect on willingness to pay. Kolar & Zabkar (2010) also emphasizes the contribution of uniqueness in creating an authentic experience for consumers.

H5: Perceived Credibility of GI Label and Perceived Authenticity (Supported)

The quantitative data demonstrates that customers' perceived credibility of the GI label has a positive relationship with customers' perceived authenticity because an increase in perceived credibility results in an increased level of perceived authenticity ($\beta_5=0.518$; $p\text{-value}_5=0.000$), therefore, H5 is accepted. Customers who perceive the GI label to be credible perceive tenun ikat NTT as an authentic product. In the context of this research, the GI label acts as an assurance of authenticity and origin of tenun ikat NTT, providing customers with confidence that they are purchasing an authentic product. This finding corresponds with the studies conducted by Ho et al. (2024) and Prathap & C.C. (2022), which both support the notion that customers' perceived authenticity is influenced by the customers' perception of credibility of the GI label.

Overall, these findings indicate a distinction between intrinsic cultural signals and extrinsic certification signals. Uniqueness and authenticity are intrinsic signals embedded within the product (tenun ikat NTT) itself, whereas the credibility of the Geographical Indication (GI) label serves as an external institutional signal. The research results indicate that tourists rely more on credible certification mechanisms than on symbolic cultural attributes when assessing their willingness to pay for cultural heritage products. (1) This result emphasizes that, in the context of cultural products, tourists do not always translate their appreciation for uniqueness and authenticity into a willingness to pay a higher price. Rather, the decision to pay a higher price is more heavily influenced by tourists' trust in the credibility of external labels that can reduce uncertainty regarding the quality and origin of the product. (2) This implies that the mechanisms of trust-building and risk reduction play a greater role than an appreciation of cultural attributes alone in the process of cultural product evaluation.

4.3.4 Hypothesis Testing Indirect Effects

Table 8. Indirect Effects

$(\beta=0.03; p=0.823)$	O	M	STDEV	T-Stat	P-Val	Decision
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Perceived Credibility of GI Label -

> Perceived Authenticity -> Willingness to Pay	0.012	0.009	0.048	0.241	0.809	Rejected
Perceived Uniqueness -> Willingness to Pay	0.003	0.003	0.015	0.224	0.823	Rejected

Notes: O: Original sample; M: Sample mean; Bootstrapping with 5.000 subsamples; significance at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed); no mediation (no effect) confirmed given all direct effect rejected; no mediation (direct only) confirmed given direct effect supported

Source: SmartPLS 4.0 Output, 2026

H6: Perceived Uniqueness on Willingness to Pay through Perceived Authenticity (Rejected – no mediator, no effect)

The evidence reveals that perceived uniqueness does not influence the willingness to pay through perceived authenticity, with a β value of 0.003 and a p value of 0.823; thus, H6 is not supported. This mediation has been classified as "no mediation (no effect)" since the direct relationship between the two constructs (H1) was also rejected. The lack of effect found in H6 strengthens the argument that the uniqueness of a product (as it relates to both symbolic and emotional value) cannot drive purchasing behaviour when functional benefits are not present (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Many tourists may have trouble developing an understanding of how they can effectively utilize the product, but this will often result in a lesser willingness to pay, even though they place a great deal of value on the uniqueness and authenticity of Indonesian woven fabric or tenun ikat. In general, consumers perceive the authentic value of a cultural good as an innate characteristic; not a motivating factor in their willingness to pay a cultural good. Therefore, although the uniqueness of a product can create a greater level of perceived authenticity, this increase cannot be converted into willingness to pay.

H7: Perceived Credibility of GI Label on Willingness to Pay through Perceived Authenticity (Rejected – no mediation, direct only)

There was no statistical significance for the perceived credibility of the GI label to influence willingness to pay ($\beta=0.012$; $p=0.809$) through perceived authenticity via the indirect effect testing on H2, therefore H7 is rejected. This has resulted in no mediation through H7 since H2 found a direct relation between perceived credibility and willingness to pay while the indirect relation has been rejected through perceived authenticity. Napoli et al. (2014) found that authentic products increase brand attachment, but don't directly affect decisional willingness to pay. Therefore, while the perceived credibility of a GI label on a cultural product may improve the perception of authenticity, the increase in perceived authenticity will not be great enough to be reflected as an increase in willingness to pay. Thus, these results would suggest that consumers view authenticity as an expected fundamental value in the context of culturally produced handicraft products, and that this fundamental value of authenticity does not serve to motivate consumer purchasing decision-making. Therefore, in the case of this study, authenticity will not serve as a motivator for tourist's willingness to pay for tenun ikat NTT.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The objective of this research is to explore the influence of two signals on tourists' intention to pay for cultural products. The two signals are uniqueness and Geographical Indication (GI) label. The findings from this research indicate that the credibility of the GI label is the largest single signal influencing consumer behaviour. This has an impact on tourists' willingness to

pay and perceived authenticity. While there is a direct link between perceived uniqueness and perceived authenticity, as well as between perceived credibility of the GI label and perceived authenticity, there is no direct link between perceived uniqueness and/or perceived authenticity and willingness to pay. In addition, it was determined that perceived authenticity does not act as a mediator between perceived uniqueness or perceived credibility of the GI label and willingness to pay. This suggests that consumers' perception of purchasing behaviour in this context is not developed through symbolic perception, but rather through direct trust in the GI label's credibility.

Tourists depend on credible geographical indication labels over product symbolic attributes in deciding what they are willing to pay according to the results from this study. Tourists tend to acquire trust in the labels, as a result of them being certified by governments (DJKI), which give their geographical investigations authentication and validates the heritage and birth place of cultural goods. Formal label credibility also serves to help eliminate the asymmetrical information and uncertainty associated with woven products, by providing a level of authentic experience to the buyers of woven products, unlike symbolic attributes like originality. This result provides new insight on how the economic value of cultural products is shaped not only by the cultural value attached to the products, but also by the level of trust built through formal certification system.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on cultural product marketing and consumer behavior by showing that intrinsic cultural and institutional trust signals are not equally influencing the willingness to pay. These findings are in line with signaling theory, as evidenced by the role of credibility signals of the geographic indicator label acts as a strong signal to influence consumer behaviours related to their willingness to pay for cultural products, while none of the other signal attributes (i.e. uniqueness or authenticity) have as strong of an influence on consumer purchasing decisions. Furthermore, the findings suggest that for geographical craft symbols produced in cultural crafts that are rooted in regional value systems/cultures, consumers will perceive the authenticity of these products as being an expected value as opposed to an added value when making their purchases. Although we have seen previous indications that intrinsic uniqueness signal and extrinsic label credibility can shape tourists' perceived authenticity, these two elements of authenticity value will not result in a tourist's willingness to pay. Therefore, in this study, tourist's willingness to pay is primarily determined by a formal credible externally received signal (geographical indication labels). Overall, these findings contribute to the marketing literature and indicate that the role of authenticity as a mediator in shaping willingness to pay for cultural handicraft products is limited. Furthermore, this research suggests that third-party (government) certification of authenticity (e.g., geographical indication labels) is more influential on purchase behavior than either symbolic value or appreciation of culture. In addition, consumer confidence (in terms of knowing the origin of the product, legitimacy of product, guaranteed authenticity, and quality of the weaver/tenun ikat) has a greater impact on their purchasing decisions than either symbolic value or appreciation of culture. Hence, this study expands our understanding of how various types of signals influence consumer evaluation processes in the context of cultural heritage products.

From a practical perspective, the results of this research have shown that credibility in a geographic indication is the most important determination of how willing tourists are to pay for a particular geographic indication as compared to perceived uniqueness or authenticity. In order to enhance the value and competitiveness of NTT's tenun ikat (i.e. woven fabric) within

the tourism market, business actors, weavers, local government officials in NTT, and geographical indication management organizations should implement strategies to enhance consumer trust and confidence in the geographic indication label prior to developing or marketing tenun. Thus, all relevant parties should collectively emphasize the credibility of the geographic indication label before moving forward with the development and marketing of tenun; thus, geographic indication credibility should take priority over the promotion of uniqueness and cultural value as the main reasons to buy tenun. To put this into practice, strict supervision of the use of GI labels will be implemented by the Directorate General of Intellectual Property (DJKI) of NTT in conjunction with the Regional National Crafts Council (Dekranasda NTT), the Department of Tourism and Creative Economy and the Cultural Preservation Centre (BPK), as these are the most direct linkages to artisans and cultural craft products. Business actors and weavers will also be able to share information about the origin and production of the tenun transparently. This can be done using digital media as a verification system (e.g., QR codes that will provide information about the meaning of the weave, history, region, manufacturing method and artisan's profile), which will hopefully reinforce the credibility of the GI label on tenun in the eyes of tourists or buyers in general. In addition, business actors/producers can implement performances through maximum marketing communication functions that illustrate the GI label as proof of product authenticity, product origin, and product quality through cultural stories and demonstrations of weaving as a product being made. Furthermore, local governments can implement maximized education/socialization programs for promoting the advantages of geographical indications by educating both tourists and business owners/weavers on how the use of geographical indications labels will add to the cultural value of tenun ikat. This can be accomplished using websites or other platform for social media marketing to promote both geographical indications labels and tenun ikat cultural events/festivals; and through partnerships with local ministries of commerce and other business organisations; as well as sponsorship programs. The greater the understanding consumers have of the definition and benefits of the GI label, the stronger the consumer's confidence in the GI label will be; and the greater the resultant impact will be on the continuing success of the NTT cultural crafts industry.

Stakeholders, as part of improving the product's credibility, must also clearly communicate the cultural value of tenun ikat NTT to potential tourists. As uniqueness and authenticity of product do not directly affect tourists' (visitors) willingness to pay for a product, it is essential to communicate the cultural value of tenun ikat NTT explicitly through methods such as storytelling, socialization, cultural festivals, weaving demonstrations, and providing information on the origins of and how products are made. By clearly identifying and communicating the cultural significance associated with tenun ikat NTT, will give future tourists the assurance required to evaluate the quality and authenticity of the tenun ikat prior to making a purchase. These methods shall provide both tourists with clearer perception of cultural value associated with tenun ikat NTT and confidence in the tenun ikat's quality and authenticity. The stakeholders will enhance the tourists' cultural value of the product (cultural value) and provide a higher likelihood of translating their experiences into a greater level of economic value and willingness to pay.

6. Limitations and Future Research

There are various limitations to this research study that should be considered. First, the sample size for visitor tourists was only (n=235) from only three geographic tourist regions within the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) (Kupang City, Labuan Bajo, and Ende). Therefore, since these results were limited to those three areas and there were no other areas sampled to provide a means of generalising to the tourist population who visit other areas in NTT, future research should attempt to increase the sample area outside of NTT and include additional locations across the country of Indonesia including tourist destinations such as Bali, Jakarta, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, etc. In addition to providing a basis for generalising to additional regions, expanding the sample area would also provide a more accurate and comprehensive representation of consumer behaviours, particularly for those travellers who make purchases via online shopping.

Secondly, the study is limited in its analysis of the willingness to pay for a product based on only three independent variables: (1) Perceived uniqueness; (2) Perceived credibility of the geographical indication (GI) label; and (3) Perceived authenticity. Therefore, the continuation of this research should also include the analysis of many other factors that affect consumer perceptions regarding both the symbolic value and the functional value of the product—e.g.; perceived quality, perceived value, price, and all other related variables.

Finally, this research used a cross-sectional design for its data collection; therefore, all the data were collected at one time over a short period. Future researchers should consider using other types of designs, e.g., longitudinal studies, to gather more representative data over an extended period.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all respondents who participated in this study, both through online and offline questionnaires. The authors also extend their appreciation to the various supporting parties who facilitated data collection, including local businesses in Nusa Tenggara Timur; such as souvenir shops, tenun ikat stores, and hotels that kindly assisted in distributing the survey through QR code posters.

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