



Batik Giriloyo: The Way of Life on a Sheet of Hand-Painted Fabric

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Abstract. Prior becoming one of renowned tourist sites in Yogyakarta, Giriloyo was a quiet hilly village in which the people were commonly employed as Sultan's tomb keepers. Yet, they were able to make batik using hand-painted method, called *nyanthing*, and fortunately their talent was discovered by the courtiers of Kasultanan Yogyakarta. Since then, people in Giriloyo started to produce hand-painted batik and until today various batik motives have been produced in which eight of them belong to primary motives of Kasultanan Yogyakarta. As one of Yogyakarta batik industries, the ups and down occurred including the attack of massive natural disaster, advanced technology used by factories, and the recent pandemic. There are several issues to be revealed in maintaining consistency of authentic product, dealing with the competitors, and struggling during the pandemic. This paper aims to explore the attempts done by the owners, craftsmen, and the community of Batik Giriloyo in surviving the business and preserving cultural values to support cultural tourism in Yogyakarta. In-depth interview with the head of Batik Giriloyo community, the batik owners, and the batik craftsmen was conducted to obtain primary data. The result revealed that the batik owners took time in introducing new business, applied several strategies in maintaining the business, and made important decisions in crucial time. The role of entrepreneurial figure and possible collaboration with related stakeholders are necessary for the business sustainability of Batik Giriloyo as well.

Keywords: Batik Giriloyo · strategy · business sustainability · MSME

1 Introduction

Batik has been widely known as the intangible cultural heritage of Indonesia. From the motives, the making process, and the way in wearing it on contain philosophical meaning which make batik become a special fabric among the other types [1]. The most distinguished hand-made batik making process is called *nyanting*, in which the melted wax is taken with a special tool named *canting*. That process takes quite longer time compared to which are made in the factory using stamp tool, however, the hand-made process is the one which makes the batik is more valuable [2].

At this time, batik industries spread widely in Indonesia, starting from micro to medium enterprises. Each of them offers their specialties, either from the motives, the

creation process, or the final products. According to [3], the number of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) which bring batik as their venture began to appear rapidly due to public demand and interest as well as batik's popularity. Hence, it becomes one of the reasons why having batik business is getting more competitive. For marketing approaches, most of MSMEs apply creative ways to attract more customers in purchasing their products [4]. They also attempt to bring up their specialties through the packaging design and/or wrapping batik into more attractive commodities. Moreover, some of batik MSMEs combine batik with tourism sector which becomes the preference to market their products and also their brand. It also strengthens the empowerment of the regions which escalates the human resources capability.

One of the noteworthy areas for its hand-made batik is Giriloyo. Located in the southern part of Yogyakarta province, specifically in Imogiri, Bantul Regency, Giriloyo [5] has set itself as a distinctive batik producer in Yogyakarta. Due to its historical relations with the Kasultanan Ngayogyakarta, certain motives of batik Yogyakarta, such as *Motif Awisan* (the rare ones) are only found and made in Giriloyo [2]. Realizing that they were trusted to produce batik for the royal family, most of the residents then employed themselves as the batik makers even opened their own batik shop and passed their ability to the next generations [1]. Soon afterwards, Giriloyo was then developed as the renowned specialty batik centre of Yogyakarta which gained a full success as well.

From the order of royal family in Keraton Yogyakarta, the batik crafting in Giriloyo was then developed into micro small and medium enterprise. The business still employs the locals to be the craftsmen, but the owners are now able to be run by the locals as well [6]. The Keraton has no longer been involved to appoint the individuals to manage the business. It is such a development because the people learn how to organize the enterprise although its scale is not as big as the one handled by greater factory [7]. One of the notable MSMEs in Giriloyo is Batik Sekar Arum. This small enterprise categorized as the independent one due to its capability in making 34 pieces batik cloth in one period of production [2].

However, there are some challenges coming ahead after the magnifque era due to economy issue, the advancement of technology, natural disaster, and the most recent one is covid-19 pandemic. The presence of batik factories in the region nearby as well as the availability of inexpensive low-quality batik make the competition even tighter [4]. The use of stamp *canting* in making batik enhances the number of fabrics produced and eases the process by eliminating the number of workers, and safes much time as well as the funding [8]. Happened to experience the massive natural disaster in 2006 also caused the batik production to stop for several months [9]. Yet, in the following year, it became their flip back point in which the local agreed to recover their economy and social circumstance. By exploring their capability in producing batik and familiarizing the philosophy behind the motives and creation process, people in Giriloyo started to get trained in arranging educational tourism package for their promotion.

But success does not come in easy way, since the challenges keep coming during their recovery process and in the following years. From the economy issue and other uncontrollable occurrence took turns beating the business in Giriloyo. Most of them even caused the collapse of the small industry in that village even made the people doubtful whether batik could still be depended to support their daily life [1]. It was due to the

hard time they faced a lot and the local regulation that was not so supporting either to guarantee that small industry of hand-made batik was able to be continued sustainably [8].

Although the heavy challenges come straight away when the business was running well, it did not stop those people in Giriloyo to operate their business. Several ways were taken to prepare themselves in restarting their business and adjusting with the current and the upcoming trend. This paper aims to investigate the strategies in maintaining the MSME's batik business in post covid-19 pandemic taken by batik owners in Giriloyo. Therefore, several suggestions for continuing the business sustainably can be offered.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Batik Giriloyo

Batik Giriloyo is actually not a specific type of Batik motive, yet it is named after the village where the people worked as the tomb keeper and it happened during the reign of Sultan Agung in 1654 [10]. According to Anisa, Izzaty, Saragih, Suhairi (2022), Batik Giriloyo has distinguished factor from other batik motives, that is the rare motif which are only owned by the royal family of Kasultanan Yogyakarta, named *motif awisan*, such as *Sido Asih*, *Sido Mukti*, *Sekar Jagad*, *Lung Atas Angin*, and *Wahyu Tumuruan* [11]. Based on the research conducted by Hasanah [12], the authenticity of batik giriloyo differs it from the common batik that is made in more modern ways. The hand-painted methods applied becomes one of their prominent selling points aside from the batik product itself.

2.2 Micro Small Medium Enterprise (MSME)

According to Rachmawati (2021) micro small medium enterprise plays important role in Indonesian economy since it contributed to the growth of creative industry of 61.04% in 2018 [7]. Moreover, this type of enterprise is considered vital to large countries for job provision, revenue increase, poverty reduction, enhance manufacture development, rural economy improvement, and entrepreneurship initiation specifically for the youths and women [13]. However, this sector is by any chance having the retention towards policies, funding, skilled human resources, advancement technology, procuring raw materials, and marketing [13]. Thus, it is necessary for MSME's business owner as well as the employees to update themselves with the recent trends and demand from the market, so they can catch up with the rapid and complex changing in the industry [14]. From the government side, it is important to provide MSME sector with firmer regulation which can guarantee the continuance of the business itself [15].

2.3 Business Sustainability

According to Sofyan (2019) [16], business sustainability was affected by social and economic factors, such as educational background, the production and marketing of the product. Furthermore, according to Purwaningsih, Romdiati, and Latifa (2022) [17],

sustainability of a business relies on the ability of the individual who can cope with the recent technology and the flexibility work. The advancement of digitalization increases rapidly that it can be a source of help during difficult time such as in the covid-19 pandemic. Based on a research conducted by Redjeki and Affandi (2021) [18], it was found that digitalization maintained the sustainability of a business because MSME actor could easily reach global community without any border to sell and purchase the goods. Therefore, the market would be still alive despite the restriction of mobilization to do direct buying and selling. Both the buyer and seller are still benefited through a digital medium.

3 Method

The research applied qualitative approach, using in-depth interview with the chairman of batik entrepreneur association in Giriloyo as and the craftsmen, also direct observation to collect the primary data. The key informant is the chairman of batik entrepreneur association named *Batik Sekar Arum* who has been running the business since 2007 and obtained the capability from his ancestors. There are 2 craftsmen who were interviewed, the senior and the younger one, to represent two perspectives from different batik craftsman generations. Furthermore, the secondary data was obtained through the literature study from scientific articles as well as the electronic newspaper regarding to Batik Giriloyo and the people who had visited and bought the product of the batik. The primary data was then triangulated with the secondary data and direct observation in the village.

4 Discussion

4.1 The Initial Business

From the in-depth interview conducted, it was found that actually the people in Giriloyo accidentally created batik business. Previously, they were the Sultan's tomb keeper, referred to the name of the village in which *Giri* (mountain) and *Loyo* (graveyard), who were asked by courtier to make hand-paint batik for funeral ceremony of the royal family [19]. After getting used to receiving the order from royal family of Kraton Yogyakarta, they made it as their job and passed on to the following generations. The pattern gradually repeated and soon after, several families initiated to accepted order from outside the family of Kraton Yogyakarta. Sure thing, there were some requested from those commoners which could not be fulfilled since some batik motives were only allowed to be worn by royal family of Kraton Yogyakarta, named *Parang Barong*.

“Sebenarnya motif itu kan macem-macem. Tapi yang enggak boleh, untuk apa, dipakai selain dari Kraton itu motif Parang. Nah, motif parang sendiri juga banyak, yang dipakai oleh Keraton itu Parang Barong. Karena itu kan yang sering dipakai oleh Raja. Kalau yang lain, boleh dipakai umum. Tapi seiring dengan perkembangan, Keraton nggih enggak terlalu ketat. Masyarakat boleh pakai kain batik motif Parag Barong, tetapi kalau pas masuk Keraton, ya jangan pakai kain itu. Karena itu kan kain yang memang khusus dipakai oleh keluarga dari Keraton.”/(Actually, there are many

motives. Yet, the one which is not allowed to, umm what is that, wear except those who are from royal family is *Parang* motive. Parang itself has various types, but the one worn by royal family is *Parang Barong*. Because it is often worn by the King. For other types, commoners are allowed to wear. However, as the era changed, royal family is now not that strict about batik rules. People now are able to wear *Parang Barong* motive, but when they enter *Keraton*, it is forbidden for them to wear it since the cloth with that motive only belongs to royal family).

According to the key informant, the business remained to be well although geographically the village was located in quite barren hills. Its location was actually used as the tomb of Sultan's family and it was quiet since the main activities was centralised in the downtown of the province. However, people in Giriloyo succeed to bring out a job which introduces the meaningful cultural art work. Soon after, the quiet area turned into the central of the authentic handmade batik of Yogyakarta. Even the batik production was utilized as the main employment to fulfil the locals' daily needs and passed it from generations to generations. It also caused the number of batik craftsmen gradually increased.

"Kalau dibilang pusatnya, dulu itu ya bukan Mbak, disini hanya pengepul saja. Pemborong-pemborong nya ya di kota. Karena dulu itu kami pegawean utamanya njaga makam keluarga Keraton. Tapi karena kebutuhan kain batik di Keraton itu sangat banyak, misalnya untuk upacara dan untuk ketika ada yang meninggal, jadi kami ditugasi untuk mbuat kain batik itu tadi."/(If we were told as the central, it was not. Here, we only the collectors of the batik. The purveyors were in the city. Because our main occupation was keeping the royal family's graveyard. However, due to high demand of batik cloth in *Keraton*, for example for the ceremony and or funerals, so we were assigned to create batik cloth).

4.2 Business Resilience

The attainment of Batik Giriloyo was tested through various incidents from years to years, such as national monetary crisis from 1996 to 1999, massive earthquake and volcano eruption, and the most recent one in Covid-19 pandemic. Out of the occurrence mentioned were monetary crisis and Covid-19 pandemic which took long time for people in Giriloyo to recover. It is due to the unstable condition and uncertain prediction on when the event will surely end that made them took unexpected decision.

For national monetary crisis, according to the key informant, it caused almost each resident decided to leave the village and aim better paid job such as becoming foreign workers in other countries. It only left the elderly who still believed that crafting batik was the best option for them instead of being employed in other countries. Such condition caused a loss of productive residents to keep running the batik business in Giriloyo. Instead of rearranging business strategy, they chose to leave and stop producing batik. The informant said that he was persuaded to go to the other island (Batam island), or the nearest country (Malaysia) as the factory worker, yet he was still staying in the village to figure out the way to get out from that condition.

"Masyarakat Giriloyo, pemuda-pemudanya terutama waktu tahun 98 itu malah banyak yang keluar. Kebanyakan mereka meninggalkan desa terus pergi ke Batam kerja di Batam. Ada juga yang ke Malaysia. Mereka itu melihat kalau batik saat itu

tidak terlalu bagus untuk dijadikan pekerjaan. Makannya mereka milih pergi untuk jadi karyawan pabrik. Ya termasuk juga saya ditawari. Itu terjadi waktu ada krisis moneter yang pas pada pergi. Nah tap ikan karyawan pabrik itu kan ada, apa, masa berlakunya ya Mbak. Jadi pas sudah selesai kontrak dan mendengar batik mulai bagus, mereka pulang."/(People in Giriloyo, mostly the youths, at that time was in 1998 left the village in abuzz. Most of them left to Batam and worked there. Some went to Malaysia. They thought at that time batik was no longer promising for the livelihood. Therefore, they preferred to leave and become factory worker. I was also offered that job. It happened in the monetary crisis period. However, there was a certain time of contract for a factory worker. So, when their contract had finished, and they heard that batik started to be in a good position, they came home).

As for massive earthquake and volcano eruption, key informant said that everyone in Giriloyo was indeed helpless and had no idea to restart the business. However, various stakeholders, such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), academicians, and regional communities, regional government, took action to aid the people as well as the village. Therefore, they were easily recovered even they were enriched to expand the business through tourism field. It was by a help of the NGOs and academicians that enabled people in Giriloyo finding out their potentials in tourism field.

"Di 2007 itu kami kan ada kena gempa jogja. Kemudian di 2007 dan 2008 kami ada pendampingan yang awalnya untuk recovery gempa. Tapi dari situ muncul pemetaan dan pendataan. Bahwa ternyata di Giriloyo yang bisa mbatik ada lebih dari 500 orang. Ini adalah peluang atau potensi. Dari situ kami mulai untuk ikut pendampingan dan pelatihan. 2 tahun kami didampingi, muncul itu tadi pemetaan potensi dan sumber daya. Atas dari pendampingan itu kami memutuskan untuk memulai mengembangkan potensi batik kami."/(In 2007 we got the impact from the earthquake of Jogja. And in 2007 and 2008, we got the accompaniment program in which initially for the recovery. But from the program, there was a mapping and data collection. It was shown that in Giriloyo there were more than 500 hundred people who could do batik making process. It was the opportunity and potential of our village. From that point, we initiated to enrolled in mentoring and training programs. 2 years we were mentored and there was the mapping of potential and resources. After from the mentoring program, we started to develop the batik potential).

It did not take long time for people in Giriloyo to learn how to figure out their potentials aside from the batik making process, arrange tour package for educational tourism, and offer the attraction towards the tourists who were interested in cultural tourism and in experiencing batik making. From the academicians, people in Giriloyo were shared the knowledge in hospitality which initiated them to give a trial on preparing food and beverage, providing accommodations, guiding, and giving front desk service. It was indeed taking some time for them to understand the core of tourism and hospitality service, even persuading others was another challenge for those who had acquainted towards tourism.

Those who already grasped the knowledge and were eager to do the trial of tourism sector, including the key informant, were then forming a team to socialize others on combining batik with tourism businesses. However, people in Giriloyo tended to be sceptical on tourism, since this new business needed more time to show them its benefits.

Based on the key informant's experience, many of his neighbours doubted him and the team because they thought the new business was too slow in generating more income. The hesitance of the people in adding more business but they wanted the fast result, caused some frictions among them.

Luckily, key informant and the team preferred to do it slowly and patiently in which less than a year they were able to provide new perspective towards the residents. People in Giriloyo were shown that batik making process was attractive towards the tourists, especially foreign tourists, because they had never seen such process before. The exposure opened their insight that their daily activity actually was able to be a commodity and was appealing to those who had never known about it. Soon after, the members of *Pokdarwis* (*kelompok sadar wisata*/travel awareness group) were growing as well as the service that they offered.

The group were trained by the academicians whose background were tourism and hospitality to develop the service, started from batik education tour, food and beverages service, accommodation service, and creating mini show room for displaying the result of batik making process. The tour packaged was developed to be half day, full day, and several days following the set of batik creation. From doing trial in tourism, people in Giriloyo realized that providing the service itself was not enough. They should have been able to speak to great number of audiences in both Indonesian and English in order to give clear explanation to the tourists. Thus, they initiated to ask for the mentoring and training, so they could be ready in welcoming tourists, either domestic or international.

4.3 Entrepreneurship Through Tourism

The business seemed to be more promising although the struggles could not be avoided since only few people in the village realized that they had more values aside from producing the batik cloth only. Promoting the educational tour (edu-tour) on batik making and its whole processes in appropriate ways became another challenge in which they could overcome in around two years. More people in Giriloyo started to involve themselves in tourism activities, especially the youths who had creative ideas in marketing and running the business. They were quickly familiarized with the recent technology for marketing both the batik and the edu-tour of Batik Giriloyo. Yet, the slow regeneration becomes the thread for the management since the business is now hit by Covid-19 pandemic.

Even though the obstacles repeatedly come, the management also try their best to maintain the business. Being initiative in following the updated information from central government and willing to join any trainings offered by regional government become one of their strategies to manage the tourism village. Adjusting their business to the demand of the tourists and the regulation applied was quite problematic in the beginning. It is due to their perspective for flipping their profit back which was similar to common enterprises upon the travel laxness as soon as the vaccination program was being conducted.

In response to initial and post pandemic situations, people in Giriloyo considered various possible ways to overcome the immediate, mid, and post impacts. Referring to key informants, after the management of tourism village of Giriloyo yielded the information regarding corona virus prior the national announcement was made, they decided to close the operational of the village, including the mass batik production. It is due to prevention for tourists visits that could cause large crowd in the village. Furthermore,

they prepared the sanitation tools, such as wash basin and/or hand sanitation, disinfectant, and tracing notes to minimize the spread of the virus. It proves that the function of local resident meeting worked well for the immediate prevention, even it was one step ahead before the national government declared the full restriction within the country.

The arduous matter for mid and post impact was the management of both tourism village and batik production in Giriloyo. For tourism village, according to key informant was unable to be run thoroughly since traveling was completely restricted prior vaccination program was conducted. While for batik production, key informant said that it could still be run since most of Giriloyo's residents were batik craftsmen who also ran their own small batik showroom. Nonetheless, the number of purchased product decreased rapidly as the usual buyers could not make the visit to take the order. It was the hardest time after the national monetary crisis due to the sharp decline of their profits up to 73%. In less than a year.

Another challenging issue for Batik Giriloyo was manning in their board of management. The number of youths who were willing to voluntarily involve themselves in tourism village management was very low. It is due to their doubt during the pandemic that the inability to provide the income from tourism activities. Previously, said the key informant, the youths contributed their ideas related to technology, by running social media of Giriloyo tourism village and batik Giriloyo. They were also active in assisting the management team for running and updating the website of batik Giriloyo as well as the tourism village. With the less update of digital marketing for both businesses, it delayed the promotion and recovery process from the pandemic. It also caused personal fidgetiness of management team if the similar thing during national monetary crisis happened again, in which the number of youths gave up for their village.

Faced with such condition did not despair Pokdarwis of Giriloyo tourism village and the association of micro and small batik enterprise of batik Giriloyo. The management team enrolling themselves into various recovery programs provided by regional and central government regarding to tourism and tourism village. They were eager to update themselves then socialized things obtained through the programs for the other residents. They also reminded each other about the importance of health protocol and began to open their village for the tourists. Furthermore, the management team who mostly belong to the senior by age, keep trying to invite the youths of the village for taking part in the marketing of tourism village and batik Giriloyo. It was not easy, yet, it would be beneficial if the youth was also involving for quite long time to help the management in promoting batik Giriloyo as well as the tourism village. Yet, some of those youth were still willing to promote due to the reward given if they were able to bring guests to the village.

“Kalok yang muda memang agak susah mengajak mereka mbak. Karena biasane yang muda niku rada angel artinya belum kelihatan itu agak susah. Lha ya namanya pariwisata itu kadang ya kalau ada tamu lagi oleh duit nek ora yo ra. Biasanya anak muda itu tertariknya nek kerjo yo ning mall. Tapi banyak juga yang tertarik untuk mengembangkan pariwisata. Jadi kami itu memberikan nganu mbak apa namanya, sopo sing iso ngedolke atau membawa tamu ke Giriloyo, kami kasih 10% untuk mereka. Jadi sing semangat untuk promosi wonten sosmed, IG, FB itu ya mereka. Jadi kalau mereka semangat, yo kita jadinya kerja juga semangat. Kami memberi kebebasan untuk mereka untuk promosi, walaupun kita nggih kagungan website, tapi kita bebaskan mawon.

Kadang wonten sing kagungan keluarga luar pulau, terus pengen ajar mbatik, nggih monggo silakan mawon ngaten./The youth is rather more difficult to be involved in, Mbak. Because usually the youth are quite difficult in terms of the output, if the benefit is not yet seen or received. Well, in tourism, it is more seasonal, when there was a guest, the money will come. If there is no guest, we have no money at all. Usually, those youth are more interested in certain places, such as a mall, to work in. However, some of them are still willing to develop and promote tourism. So, we gave them like, whoever were able to sell (the package) or brought guests to Giriloyo, we gave 10% (from the revenue) for them. So, they were eager to be involved. If they are fervent, our enthusiasm also increases. The ones who are more enthusiastic to promote through social media, like IG or FB are them. We are open if they want to promote the village although we have already got our own website. But they are freely to promote, even sometimes there are some youths whose extended family live in outside Java are interested in learning batik, then feel free to bring them to the village”).

People in Giriloyo have sufficient commitment towards the business run in the village. The main problem was on the regeneration in management team and willingness from the youths to continue operating the business. They are actually aware of the business sustainability since it is able to make additional income through the presence of tourism activity in the village. However, there is an absence of entrepreneurial figure to increase their interest in business and develop the village.

The strategy they have applied was also appropriate enough. Knowing that tourism village was unable to be operated, they kept doing their batik production although it could only be made in minimum number. In marketing the product was also taking time, since the mobility was restricted due to pandemic circumstance and the covid case in the region was quite high. It is also another proof that people in Giriloyo are conscious that complementary activity is one of the ways to survive the business during the tough unpredictable time.

Another important thing that actually missed in Giriloyo is that the presence of entrepreneurial figure as exemplification on how running the business. It is common that in certain community there should be a person who can be a role model to deal with a quite new thing, especially in starting the business. The figure was only functioned as an example on how to achieving a goal, but also someone whom they can share the thoughts with. Moreover, the figure should be able to represent and influence any parties and/or generations in contributing to the villages.

5 Conclusion

Batik Giriloyo is not only traditional fabric produced using the hand-made method, but it could also be commodified to afford additional benefits for the people in the village. By merging it with tourism sector, it creates new values which can be offered as an attraction and experience towards to visitors and/or usual buyers. Within tourism village that provides the full steps of batik making process, visitors are exposed with the reason behind the pricey fabric that cannot be equated to the easy printed batik.

Furthermore, running small enterprise in which the locals and mostly elderly are employed is indeed challenging. From the past events and current circumstance, they

significantly affect batik Giriloyo as well as its tourism village business. Especially during pandemic, the capricious regulation regarding travel restriction, causes the residents to be doubtful in running community-based business. There is also a need for entrepreneurial figure in order to open the people's insight and perspective towards running business and taking substantial decisions regarding the obstacles faced.

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