



# Brand Resilience of Local Tourism in the Pandemic Era

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**Abstract.** The outbreak of global pandemic in 2019–2021 has affected the survival of brands in business and tourism due to the social restrictions. One of the most impacted brand is local brand, including the Kampoeng Batik Jetis, a tourist village located in the city of Sidoarjo, one major city in East Java, Indonesia, known for its iconic batik pattern as the local tourism attraction. This tourist village has served as a shopping centre, education site, and preservation community of local batik in Sidoarjo. This study aims to find out how Kampoeng Batik Jetis as a brand manages its existence and resilience in responding to changes in the socio-economic environment due to the pandemic. This research employed descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. The results show that Kampoeng Batik Jetis have undergone several changes and adjustments, especially in terms of the production process, management, sales, and sustainable strategies in response to the pandemic. Brand adaptation not only has an impact on increasing the scale of existence, but also the public reception to the innovation in times of pandemic changes, also affecting the brand awareness of Kampoeng Batik Jetis in the future after the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Brand resilience · brand existence · Kampoeng Batik · pandemic

## 1 Introduction

As one of the national heritage, batik has gained recognition from UNESCO for Indonesian batik as a human heritage for oral and non-material culture due to its very high value and Batik in Indonesian consists of several and diverse motifs in addition to the popular motifs such as batik from Yogyakarta, Central Java (Pekalongan and Solo), and Cirebon; according to a study, there have been 5,849 batik motifs documented [1]. Such recognition from the international body, batik has been gaining more popularity among international community.

As a tradition, batik has been inherited from one generation to the more recent with regards to the traditional identity and philosophical values contained in its visuals which are different between one region with other region and within ethnicity. The visualization of the local the identity is as the result of regional cultural creations and history from

each place, especially hand-drawn batik [2]. In the context of identity, batik is a form of expression of art through unique patterns and features that become the cultural identity for either local or national identity [3] Traditionally, the hand-made batik has been created based on the lives of Indonesian people who love diversity and symbols of respective regional culture which are beautifully-depicted on a piece of cloth. Not only is it a philosophical symbolism, but in the process of making batik, batik is a form of cultural journey that is still maintained as a beautiful local wisdom in Indonesia.

Various regions in Indonesia, especially those that have historical links with the process of batik development, have many ways to further preserve batik culture and the process of making batik. Many cities and even villages with specific features/patterns of batik perceive them as cultural assets and need to be preserved which in turn brings more benefits, such as economic benefits through batik business centres and also as a means of education and tourism facilities. The presence of many batik villages contributes to the iconization of an area or city and increases economic growth of the economy. One area that is well-developed is Kampoeng Batik Jetis, a batik village located in an urban area in the city of Sidoarjo, one major city in East Java, Indonesia.

In terms of the history, city of Sidoarjo is not a city whose cultural roots were born and raised through the traditional batik. However, along with the times and many cultural influences that came in, the batik that initially developed in the batik village was the jumputan type of batik, a type of cloth that is processed with a tie-dye technique to create colour gradations. Beginning with batik jumputan, the craftsmen in the batik in the slowly began to develop their own local icons which could be translated into visual batik so that many types of written batik were developed in the area.

The concept of a batik village by definition is a harmonious integration of residential, production, and gallery areas. Kampoeng Batik Jetis located in Jetis village is one of the largest batik centers in Sidoarjo, in which within the area there are houses and workshops for associations of batik craftsmen, batik production sites, as well as exhibition galleries and sales rooms. As a batik village, Kampoeng Batik Jetis produces many types of hand-made batik that are specifically-characteristic align with the local identity in Sidoarjo and becomes one of popular tourism destination in this city.

During the pandemic, the existence of the Kampoeng Batik Jetis was significantly affected. The process of developing works and business ventures in that location was hampered due to the lack of activities from the people who visited due to social restrictions. As a brand, Kampoeng Batik Jetis has difficulty developing and maintaining its brand, especially when previously Kampoeng Batik Jetis was known as one of the tourist destinations for batik education in East Java.

As a destination developed for tourism, batik villages have emerged and developed not only as a sign of change and economic demands, but actually batik villages are a cultural existence that is still very identical with local nuances. In the batik village, batik is not only made in a cloth, but also a reference for education and development for batik itself, both in terms of textile works and as a branding of a certain area [4]. In general, a brand will have a goal to achieve: brand awareness; during a pandemic, however, brand resilience is an ability needed by a brand if it wants to survive through environmental changes. In a changing environment, social, economic, and cultural, brands that want to survive should be able to respond to these changes.

Brand resilience is a strategy that is applied in an effort to create a brand that is able to maintain its image and bounce back even though it is affected by a negative image as well as environmental, economic, social and cultural changes [5]. The brand resilience strategy is not only responsive but more directed at how prevention is done every day to deal with potential threats that are ready to attack the brand. Not only the concrete action forms are the same for each situation and condition, but in this strategy it is more directed at how the form and response steps should be taken, such as the consistency maintaining the imagery through digital ads to keep the consumer's loyalty because, during a pandemic, consumers almost forget their brand, so communication through digital advertising was the only way to be believed to increase brand awareness again [6].

The pandemic period is a difficult time for a brand to survive and still have a chance to bounce back, especially in a brand that is in the form of a destination. Batik village in its function is more directed to brand destinations, in which there are complex activities from the brand itself in the form of education, buying and selling, and more importantly developing batik as the main cultural value. This study aims to see how the brand resilience of the Kampong Batik Jetis in response to the changes due to the pandemic.

## 2 Methods

This study aims to describe the brand resilience of a local tourism of Kampong Batik Jetis during the pandemic. This is a qualitative descriptive study with a case study of a batik village in Sidoarjo which specifically observes various phenomena that occurred in the community with certain conditions, situations, or phenomena. The case study was conducted in Jetis village, one batik village located in an urban community in Sidoarjo, East Java. The location is specifically set by the local government through Department of Youth and Tourism as the tourist village of Kampong Batik Jetis as its brand due to mainly its unique characteristic and historical reasons.

Observations were carried out in several stages to collect the data of brand resilience in response to the pandemic. The first primary data mining which were carried out through on-site observation at the batik village and in-depth interviews. The in-depth interview aimed to explore data about the branding process and brand activation efforts that have been carried. The data were analysed through thematic coding approach, which was to map the data related to the forms and efforts made by community in the batik village in maintaining its existence amid changes in the social, economic, cultural environment due to the pandemic.

## 3 Findings and Discussion

This section discusses six main aspects of the observation to the batik village of Kampong Batik Jetis, including the creative neighbourhood of batik village, the social life of the local people, social activities, social reception, the production process, and the dynamics of the environment in particular during the pandemic that affected the brand of Kampong Batik Jetis.



**Fig. 1.** The gates to the batik village

### 3.1 Creative Ecosystem of Kampoeng Batik Jetis

As a village where there are residents living, Kampoeng Batik Jetis is arguably both social and cultural ecosystem. The patterns of daily life carried out by the villagers –but they are likely citizens because the village is located in the city center –are not only batik craftsmens but also have other livelihoods with various activities such as businessmen, officers, and other normal urban professions. As is known, in the creative economy ecosystem, an area should be able to carry out creative economic forms which is ultimately to support the improvement of the local economy in the region [7]. At the beginning of the creation of Kampoeng Batik Jetis as a village that produces batik on a large scale, ideally it can be expected that the economic would grow and the income of the community will be much more independent (Fig. 1).

In addition to the potential neighbourhood, it is undeniable that the availability of supporting infrastructure plays an important role in determining the success of an area. In the context of the creative economy district, namely in this case the batik village, infrastructure support of accessibility is vital. In terms of Kampoeng Batik Jetis, the accessibility infrastructure has actually been well-developed as it is located in the middle of the city where the transportation access and bus stops are available nearby. In terms of the expansion and development of the area, it is still not optimal as the condition of the village area cannot be changed and expanded geographically as well as other factor such as land ownership. The village is in between of two big shopping centres and major provincial roads. However, in terms of convenience, the existence of Kampoeng Batik Jetis is considered to be quite comfortable as the location of the batik area that can be visited by tourists, even though the number is not too crowd in one visit; yet, it is an iconic destination of the city.

### 3.2 The Availability of Human Resources

At the beginning of the establishment of Kampoeng Batik Jetis, the workforce as batik craftsmen was of course very large. Each house has at least one batik craftsman, and often other workers perform the production of batik activities both material and clothing

communally in several places or workshops in the village. However, over time, especially when the global pandemic of covid-19 emerged in the early 2020s, the activities plummeted, which in turn affected the the number of craftsmen who had to change their activities for living as the pandemic hit the tourism sector as well as other secondary or tertiary commodities, such as hand-made batik clothing and materials.

Currently, the number of activities related to the production of batik has decreased and been carried by a few people of the community; there are people who linger with the production of batik, but many have changed their professions. During the observation, the production of batik was as plentiful as it used to be. One villager who has been engaged with the activities concluded that the production pattern has changed to adjust with the condition.

*“There’re still batiks we’ve produced before (pandemic) and that’s not absorbed by the market yet. Therefore, the production is made slower so that it’s not mounted in the warehouse. But today we produce on demand (pre-order) and that’s when the craftsmen work again (to fill the order).” [V1]*

The statement indicates that the activities involving the batik craftsmen have changed as to adjust with the condition, from mass production means mass workforce to on-demand production means limited workforce.

### **3.3 Activities at the Community**

Kampoeng Batik Jetis is a dense community located in the city centre of Sidoarjo. The access they have to get to the village is very easy as the bus stops are available near the location. The condition of Kampoeng Batik Jetis has changed a lot, especially in terms of physical appearance. In terms of environmental arrangement, there have also been many changes that have to be adapted to post-pandemic conditions. The main key for the area of batik is in addition to trading batik, namely by carrying out batik activities as part of the regional branding element (Fig. 2).

In Kampoeng Batik Jetis, the activities are likely to decrease considerably, so that in the end the management of the area is also not optimal. Many locations that were previously used as batik workshops turned out to be closed or used for other purposes. Some branding icon spots from the village area also experienced a decrease in quality. Such condition affected the brand awareness as the batik village; the image of the icons of the village as the brand significantly influences brand awareness and brand attitude [8]. Without serious maintenance and preservation in the future, it is possible that the batik village may experience decrease in terms popularity which in turn lower the economic values.

### **3.4 Social Reception**

A good regional branding is when all elements in the area apply branding principles well. As a village whose activities are not only as a batik village but also as a village with various daily urban community activities, there are also various types of acceptance that occur in the community of Kampoeng Batik Jetis.



**Fig. 2.** The nuance of the community has changed drastically since the pandemic

Based on the site observation, Kampoeng Batik Jetis brand is actually very representative as part of the daily lives of its citizens, but because the atmosphere of the area was not as conducive as before, many village residents as the brand representatives were somewhat indifferent to the existence of the Kampoeng Batik Jetis brand. As a regional brand, the community are its representatives, so ideally they should be able to provide brand knowledgeable figures who are able to provide information for the visitors.

In terms social reception, the residents of the batik village tend to be more indifferent to the village brand itself. This can be seen from the way residents interact when meeting with visitors. As a village that names its location as a batik-making village, there are not significant activities in the village related to batik; almost no batik-related activities were carried out massively as usual, something contradictory with the icon of the village. As the branding activity of a batik village, batik-related activities are not only carried out as to meet production standards, but can also be used as a destination that offers an experience for the visitors. In this case, visitors will not only see the final product of batik, but also observe the process of making batik, and the experience becomes the strength of batik village tourism; the process of creating batik can be enjoyed and experienced from the beginning to the final products.

Reflecting on the ideal conditions of a batik village, the activities in Kampoeng Batik Jetis are not dominant and are even rarely seen. In the case of visitors expect to experience of the process of batik, then they need to check one by one into the house of the residents. The batik workshops that were held previously did not appear to be dominantly carried out as the main economic activity. Batik is now only done as a side



**Fig. 3.** The only batik activities left in the village carried out by few elderlies

activity that may only be done if there are orders or certain visits that require a batik display.

Such condition is considered worrying for the brand development of Kampoeng Batik Jetis in the future. As the main capital activity offered as the main advantage of the brand, the batik village, like other craft villages, should be able to support the self-resilience of its citizens to carry batik activities, and at least create a sustainable batik nuance so that it will further strengthen the brand's image to the wider community.

### **3.5 The Production Batik as the Primary Commodity**

As a textile craft activity, batik is considered to have iconic characteristics that are not easily found in other types of crafts. As a work of textile art, batik has a long manufacturing process because it is made by hand. In Jetis batik village, the manufacturing process has been much reduced. During and after pandemic, moreover, batik-related activities are no longer a priority. Most of the villagers used to be batik makers who engaged in several home workshops to produce hand-written batik, either made to order or batik to be used as production stock.

Based on the observation, this process is no longer widely carried out due to reduced market demand and sales. Therefore, the process of batik is also only done by a few and with minimum frequency. This is in addition to being more efficient in terms of production costs and also due to the declining market demand for the traditional batik of Sidoarjo (Fig. 3).

### **3.6 Environmental Changes**

As a batik product which is a local handicraft product, several craftsmen and owners of the Jetis batik brand have made several product branding efforts, including the modification of packaging and naming each batik brand. In terms of brand product development, brand owners have been able to represent their products even at a simple level. This potential can be easily developed further. These batik brands will be easy to apply in the future to develop a more comprehensive brand to provide better value and increase of sales (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4.** Some environment images representing the batik village in Kampong Batik Jetis

In the context of environmental brand design, a regional brand should also fulfill some aspects related to graphic elements, such as typography, color, and texture to organize and enhance the experience one has while in a place. It is believed that successful visual brands during the pandemic are that are easy to remember, contextually-relevant, and educated the public about the current pandemic [9]. In the sense that environmental brands are architectural elements such as colors, typography, and textures that create an atmosphere so that a message in a physical space can be understood by users and visitors.

In terms of the environmental aspect, Kampong Batik Jetis still has some icons of its brand, especially in the main part of the location in front of the main access to the village –that might be the only prominent icon left in the area. The brand environment displayed in the main access becomes much different when you enter the village. Graphic pointers that should be a tool to make it easier for the visitors and visual graphic elements that are tools to strengthen the Kampong Batik Jetis brand are no longer attractive [10]. The existence of signage, which should be able to informatively present the strength of a brand, is not easy to find. Such condition may cause confusion if there are visitors who come and want to visit a certain location. The village seems slowly fading, and the atmosphere and ambience of the environment of Kampong Batik Jetis brand does not feel the dominance of the brand.



## 4 Conclusion

Strengthening the brand of an area cannot be separated from its contribution to the development of a city. Kampoeng Batik Jetis as a regional branding has at least had the power of cultural heritage from generation to generation, especially in the development of the art of batik. It is just that the roles and contributions of related parties have not been able to make the Kampoeng Batik Jetis brand known deeper and sustainable. There are branding narratives and discourses but not to be implemented properly and continuously. The role of the citizens as brand representatives is still considered to be less than optimal, moreover related to the main value of the batik village is batik-related activities and production. For a regional branding, the main activity of the brand should be emphasized more as a force to attract tourists and provide a better experience when visiting. As a batik village, Jetis village needs a development pattern that is more consistent and more in line with the level of needs of both its citizens and the needs of the city of Sidoarjo in improving its city branding.

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