Backpackers' travel decision across generations and countries of origin: An empirical study in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: In the past few decades, backpacking tourism has become more popular not only among young travelers but also among adults and elderly. Taking the trend into account, this study aims to investigate the variance of consideration of international backpackers across generational cohorts and origin countries when they backpack to Indonesia. In this study, travel perceived risk was analyzed as a covariate variable. In addition, the study had surveyed 156 international backpackers who have never traveled to Indonesia. This study employed descriptive statistics analysis, ANOVA, linear regression, and MANCOVA tests to examine the primary data. The results reveal a significant difference between baby boomers and generation Y backpackers during the pre-trip phase, especially in evaluating alternatives. In addition, the study also found a significant difference between Asian and non-Asian backpackers during the pre-travel phase, especially during the travel necessity introduction. Further study also reveals that travel perceived risk negatively influenced backpackers' consideration when deciding to visit Indonesia.

1   INTRODUCTION

Traveling has evolved into a must-do activity, representing a modern lifestyle followed across the globe to seek leisure and recreation. Indonesia has experienced significant growth in its tourism industry, with 15.81 million international travelers visiting the country, which is a 12.58% increase compared with 2017 (BPS, 2019). To attract more international visitors, the Ministry of Tourism in its strategic planning has prioritized the development of 10 tourism spots called "the new Balis" (Kemenpar, 2018). Most of these ten new developed Balis have the characteristics of natural tourist attractions closely related to adventure tourism. These adventure tourism destinations are expected to attract more international backpackers to visit Indonesia.

Several studies concerning backpacking have been done with various focuses. However, not a single study focused on backpackers' demographic factors that could influence their travel decision. In addition, it is still rare to find an empirical study that analyzes international backpackers' behaviors who visit Indonesia. Several studies show that baby boomers and X and Y generations have different perspectives and behavior in seeking information and making decisions (Williams & Page, 2011; Agosi & Pakdeejirakul, 2013; Rahulan, Troynikov & Watson, 2014; Paakkari, 2016). Before deciding their destination and activities, travelers will assess several possible risks. Travel perceived risk can affect the choice of destination (Garg, 2015). Therefore, this study examined the role of demographic factors, in particular generational cohorts and countries of origin, as a differentiator of backpacker's travel decisions by incorporating travel perceived risk as a covariate variable.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies revealed that age and generation groups can influence the decision-making process (Williams & Page, 2011; Agosi & Pakdeejirakul, 2013; Rahulan et al., 2014; Paakkari, 2016).

It was found that age and generation differences would influence behavioral change, perspective, and methods to reach a decision. In general, baby boomers are inclined to be more courageous in making decisions with careful considerations. On the other hand, generation Y generally tends to follow the trend and secondary information source in deciding a purchase, such as from social media (Rahulan et al., 2014). This finding indicates that each generation is influenced by different marketing approaches that cater to the needs of each generation. Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There are differences in the travel decision consideration among backpackers across generations in Indonesia during the pre-travel and the mid-travel phases.

Demographic factors indirectly influence a person's travel decision. Pizam and Sussmann (1995) found that tourism behavior is closely related to the country of origin and cultural background. Meanwhile, McCleary, Weaver, and Hsu (2006) revealed a significant difference related to the perceived value of travel services experienced by international tourists from seven different countries in Hong Kong that influenced their willingness to revisit the country. Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: There are differences in the travel decision consideration among backpackers from various countries of origin in Indonesia during the pre-travel and mid-travel phases.

Traveling to a new destination outside travelers' daily environment could entail risks that have to be considered (Leep & Gibson, 2003). In this case, travelers are gathering information as much they could to minimize risks, and information on alternative destinations will be evaluated based on several criteria (Garg, 2015). After they evaluated the alternative destinations, the perceived risk will be the basis of the evaluation that will be considered. Moreover, it may even be possible for an alternative destination to be eliminated during the evaluation (Garg, 2015). Based on the discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated: H_3: Travel perceived risk negatively influences the travel decision consideration among backpackers in Indonesia during the pre-travel and mid-travel phases.

3 METHOD

The sample was purposively selected, considering the following: (1) travelers aged between 23 and 71 years at the time of the survey and (2) international travelers who have backpacked to Indonesia at least twice or those who were backpacking in Indonesia during the survey. The primary data collection was done using online and offline surveys that employed questionnaires. In this case, the offline survey was conducted in various tourist spots in Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Malang, and Bali. On the other hand, the online survey was conducted on backpacker's communities on Facebook. This study employed descriptive statistics analysis, ANOVA, linear regression, and MANCOVA tests to analyze the primary data.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 194 respondents participated in the survey, but only 156 questionnaires matched the criteria. Therefore, the response rate is 80.41%. It was found that balanced participation was received from both male and female respondents. In terms of age, the respondents were mostly 23–37 years old, which is a part of generation Y. It was also revealed that the majority of the respondents came from non-Asian countries and were currently working as employees. Half of them had the estimated travel costs of less than USD$ 1,000 and preferred to stay at a backpacker hostel/hotel. Additionally, most of them were traveling alone. It was also revealed that they have backpacked three times in the last 3 years and stayed for at least 1 month.

Table 1 illustrates that no significant differences can be found in the travel decision consideration among the international backpackers across generations during pre-travel. On the other hand,

significant differences can be found in their travel decision consideration, specifically concerning alternatives during pre-travel. Furthermore, post-hoc ANOVA analysis revealed significant differences between the two generations' travel decision considerations when they visited Indonesia. They were generation Y and baby boomers (significance rate of 10%). It was also found that significant differences can be seen in alternative evaluation during pre-travel.

Table 1. ANOVA test of travel decision across generational cohorts.

Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
NEED Between Groups	.059	2	.030	.038	.963
RECOGNITION Within Groups	120.172	153	.785		
INFORMATION Between Groups	.681	2	.340	.249	.780
SEARCH Within Groups	208.928	153	1.366		
EVALUATION OF Between Groups	4.718	2	2.359 .828	2.848	.061
ALTERNATIVES Within Groups	126.718	153			

Concerning hypothesis 1, it can be seen that there were differences in the international backpackers' travel decision consideration across generations in Indonesia during the pre-travel and mid-travel phases. At the "*Need of Recognition*" phase, most Generation Y respondents stated that they want to travel because of the desire or motivation for experiencing something new. Most of them also admitted that they were backpacking to answer their curiosity about Indonesia. On the other hand, respondents aged 38–52 years (gen X), like the average people in the productive age, revealed that they were backpacking to spend their free time.

With regard to hypothesis 2, differences can be found regarding travel decision consideration of international backpackers from various countries of origin in Indonesia during the pre-travel and mid-travel. In the "*Need for Recognition*" phase, respondents from non-Asian countries travel to satisfy their needs of exploring something new. It may be influenced by differences between Indonesia and other non-Asian countries, especially their natural resources, culture, and weather. Therefore, non-Asian travelers preferred to visit Indonesia for a longer period. This tendency is supported by the official website of the Ministry of Tourism (2018), which shows that the average stay time of international tourists from non-Asian countries when they are visiting Indonesia is 12–14 days.

With regard to hypothesis 3, it was revealed that travel perceived risk negatively influenced the travel decision consideration of the international backpackers in Indonesia during pre-travel and mid-travel. It shows travel risks had a negative influence on their travel decision. However, due to the insignificance of its value, this influence did not affect respondents' travel decision consideration. Furthermore, it was also revealed that the covariate variable significantly and negatively influenced the travel decision consideration in the evaluation of alternatives. It may be caused by a travel risk indicator that has no direct relationship with the other two steps. It means that even if the respondents sense a risk, their pattern of needs or information source choice will not be considerably influenced.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main findings of the study can be summarized in several parts. First, a significant difference in travel decision consideration between generation Y and baby boomer backpackers in Indonesia during the pre-travel phase was found, especially on the evaluation of alternatives. Second, a significant difference in the travel decision consideration of non-Asian and ASEAN backpackers during pre-travel, especially in the "*Need Recognition*" phase, can also be found. Third, travel perceived risk negatively influenced travel decision consideration of the international backpackers in Indonesia during the pre-travel phase, especially in the evaluation of alternatives. It means that the higher the travel risk perceived by the international backpackers, the lower the probability of

these groups to choose Indonesia as their preferred destination. In addition, it could also influence the "*Evaluation of the Alternatives*" phase.

These findings have several managerial implications. First, the local and national destination management organizations must develop adventure tourism events that could expose the natural and cultural diversity of Indonesia. It is suggested to develop a campaign that could work well with backpackers and independent traveler communities by making videos showing fun backpacker activities that blend well with Indonesia's nature potential. It also needs to show that it can be enjoyed at a relatively affordable cost for backpackers. Considering the findings, it would be valuable to attract more international backpackers to visit Indonesia. It is suggested that further studies apply the variables examined in this study to investigate other aspects such as cultural, religious, or sports tourism to enhance the understanding of tourist behavior from a more diverse perspective.

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