Factors Affecting Millennials Consumers in Choosing Airlines to Travel during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to figure out the factors that influenced the decision of millennial consumers to choose airlines for traveling during the pandemic. Transportation plays an important role for many people in Indonesia, especially young people or millennials, one of which is air transportation. About the Covid-19 pandemic conditions, it is important to know the factors that affected consumers, especially millennials, in choosing an airline to travel. This could help airline companies to survive the pandemic conditions. This study uses a qualitative method in which data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. Semi-structured interviews with ten key informants collected the data: four students categorized as millennials, five private sector employees, and one law firm employee. This study showed that price factor influences millennial consumers the most in choosing Airlines for traveling during the pandemic, while environmental factor influences the least.

Keywords: Airlines, Travel, Millennial Consumers, Pandemic

A. Introduction

Transportation's roles in everyday life have always been very important. Apart from being a means of transporting goods and people from the place of origin to the place of destination, transportation is also an activity that involves all human needs, such as goods with a changed geographical location so that a transaction can occur in it (Aristana et al., 2022). One of the phenomena in today's world is the increase in the transportation of goods and people (Cristina et al., 2022). The movement of transporting people and goods is a natural thing, or it can also be called an economic law which is usually called the interaction of demand and supply (Setiani, 2018).

People in Indonesia, especially young people or millennials, use air transportation for traveling (Salsabila, 2019). Based on the Topdeck Travel survey, 31,000 people from 134 countries have visited foreign countries, and as much as 88% of them could travel abroad three times, and 94% of them are millennials with an age range of 18-30 years. Millennials are said to be more likely to travel abroad by air transportation than older people (Azman & Elsandra, 2020).

In choosing an airline, several factors influence millennials: service quality, psychological, brand, environmental, reference, price, and motivational factors (Lastriani, 2014). As it was reported, the world was being shaken by the coronavirus. Coronavirus was a large family of viruses that were the cause of diseases like the common cold to diseases similar to MERS or SARS (Dhama et al., 2020). The virus had very rapid transmission, so the government warned people to keep up the practice of washing hands, wearing masks, and avoiding crowds. Therefore, this study was conducted to find out what factors could influence millennials to choose airlines to travel during the pandemic (Bielecki et al., 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was the worst impacted sector compared to the others. Meanwhile, based on data released by the UN World Tourism Organization or UNWTO, the losses felt due to the COVID-19 pandemic reached USD 300-400 billion (Rikumahu, 2020). This economic loss is due to a 20 to 30% reduction in international travel. Therefore, the government is now trying to rebuild Indonesian tourism by promoting tourist destinations. Prime destination choices for potential tourists are those that can guarantee the safety, health, and comfort of tourists (Budayana & Adi, 2021). In terms of health, cleanliness and hygiene are often sought in terms of the destination environment, accommodation, and availability of food and drinks (Saraswati & Afifi, 2022).

An airline company needs an analysis of the factors that influence consumers as one of its marketing strategies (Lastriani, 2014). In this case, this study will analyze seven factors influencing consumers' choice of airlines using Berkowitz's theory: price, brand, service quality, psychological, reference, environment, and motivation, as shown by Lastriani (2014).

B. Literature Review

Some studies have been conducted to investigate the factors that affect people's choice of airline when traveling. Kerdpitak (2022) investigated the decision of travelers to choose low-cost carriers. The findings indicate that factors concerning passengers as major issues in choosing low-cost airlines were quadripartite: security, economic traveling expenses; punctuality; and comfort, respectively.

A choice of an airline can be conceptualized as a passenger's selection of one from several alternatives. Various factors determine the selection, including different comparative attributes of the airlines. The travelers would choose the airline that provides the highest utility level (Ukpere et al., 2012).

In addition, there are seven factors that influence consumers' choice of airlines when traveling (Lastriani, 2014) as follows: (1) Price Factor, price is a value expressed in rupiah for exchange / transactions or an amount of money that must be paid by consumers to get goods and services; (2) Brand association is a node of brand-related information in memory and includes the meaning of the brand for customers, these associations come in many forms and reflect various product characteristics; (3) Service quality factor is an effort made to meet the needs and desires of customers and the accuracy of delivery in balancing customer expectations; (4) Psychological factor is an analytical process in understanding the mental and memory possessed by human being in knowing human behavior; (5) Reference factor, suggests that references are used by someone to strengthen the theory that will be used in a written work; (6) Environmental factor, the environment as an area in which social interaction takes place from various groups of people and their culture with values and symbols; (7) Motivation iactor is a collection of psychological processes possessed by humans that cause direction, movement, and persistence towards a goal.

According to the Demographer Solnet & Hood (2008), millennial consumers are a group of people born and grew up surrounded by the same sociocultural, political and economic context factors. In addition, Leask et al. (2013) discuss that millennial consumers have general values, behaviors, and attitudes toward various aspects of life, such as work, family, recreation, and traveling. According to Salsabila (2019), it is revealed that the millennial generation has the same point of view in traveling to digital destinations according to their experience.

Pravina et al. (2019) stated that airlines are organizations or transportation services that the community needs to move from one city to another or from one country to another quickly. An airline is a company owned by the government or privately owned that provides air transportation services for prospective passengers who will use both scheduled (scheduled service / regular flights) and

non-scheduled (non-scheduled service). Airlines are airline companies that make passenger flight documents to travel, transport passenger goods or baggage, shipments or cargo, and so on by plane (Pravina et al., 2019).

C. Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach in which the data presented are in the form of sentences, words, schemes, and pictures (Ahmad et al., 2019). It focuses on the factors that influenced the selection of airlines during the pandemic, that is, the needs and intentions of millennials. It was conducted in Badung Regency, Bali. The data were obtained directly through interviews and questionnaires to millennials.

This study used a qualitative method in which data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The selection of informants in this qualitative research is based on those who traveled during the pandemic and were willing to provide complete information. The criteria referred to here are millennial consumers who are domiciled in Badung Regency and have a history of traveling by airplane during the pandemic within one year, starting from May 2020, when the news about the coronavirus was reported. In order to determine suitable informants, the snowball technique was used. Snowball sampling technique is a technique that initially takes a small number of data sources and then becomes wider; in this case, if the few data sources cannot maximize the results of the study, then another informant is needed as the next data source to fulfill the facts that will strengthen the results (Mamangkey, 2018).

The interview technique used is the semi-structured interview. It was conducted on ten people who traveled using aviation services during the pandemic. Data were collected from key informants comprising millennials, four students, five private sector employees, and one law firm employee.

According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research data are data obtained from several sources using various data collection techniques so that the data is saturated. The steps of data analysis for this research were data reduction, summarizing or selecting things that, according to researchers, were important to focus on, presenting data that described or explained the research results and concluding.

D. Result and Discussion

The results are obtained through semi-structured interviews regarding what factors influence millennial consumers'consumers' choices in choosing airlines for tourist destinations during the pandemic. A total of ten informants have outlined their opinions regarding seven factors according to the results of Lastriani's (2014) research on factors affecting customers to choose airlines, namely price factors, brand factors, service quality factors, psychological factors,

reference factors, environmental factors, and motivational factors. All the interviewed informants gave quite different responses from one another.

Price Factor

In the interview conducted with the informants, many said that the Price factor is very influential. For example, Diva, a private sector worker, stated that the price factor is very influential to her. According to Diva, in a pandemic situation like today, finding low-budget expenses for traveling purposes is far more intriguing. Another informant, a private sector worker, Raymundo, stated that he previously used Citilink Airline because Citilink offered the cheapest transportation services out of all the operating Airlines. Several other informants also stated almost the same thing. Hence it can be concluded that the price factor is very influential in choosing airlines for traveling during the pandemic.

Brand Factor

In the interview conducted with the informants, the brand factor is one determinant factor in choosing airlines for traveling during the pandemic. One of the informants, Monica, stated her opinion on which Brand factor works as a company representative or what the image is. She also said that she would choose Garuda Indonesia because the Airline is very well known for the performance given to its passengers. According to Monica, Garuda Indonesia is very well-versed in giving the best safety and on-time performance, and the fact that Garuda Indonesia is very well-known national wide to give good services. Meanwhile, another informant, Taufan, a university student, stated his opinion regarding Brand Factor, in which he said he would prefer to use Citilink over Lion. This is because, according to him, Citilink has better prestige than Lion. Hence it would make a millennial like him feel prouder to use the service of Citilink.

Service Quality Factor

Service Quality factor is also included as one of the determinant factors in choosing Airlines for Traveling during the pandemic. In an interview with Winda, a university student, her opinion regarding the service quality factor is that she is very sensitive to services. Thus it is common for her to have problems with the staff, so for her, a worker who provides quality services is a priority. Another informant'sinformant's statement can support Winda'swife's statement; Debby, a private sector worker, stated that receiving a quality service would make her more comfortable and vice versa.

Psychological Factor

The psychological factor is also considered one of the determinant factors in choosing Airlines for Traveling during the pandemic. Several factors support

psychological factors, such as motivation, perception, and experience. According to Raymundo, if he ever had bad experiences repeatedly, he wouldn'twouldn't want to use a particular airline service again. Another informant, Lukita, also acknowledged that psychological played a part in choosing an airline for traveling during the pandemic. She stated that once an airline had a bad reputation, it would make the potential passengers unattracted. To her, the psychological factor would influence her. On the contrary, if she should ever be treated well, she would be more than happy to use the airline service again.

Reference Factor

Another factor considered in choosing airlines for traveling during the pandemic is the Reference Factor. This is because a good reference or recommendation can help consumers choose airlines for traveling during the pandemic. Diva stated that she would get recommendations from various media channels, such as friends. If she received good service, Diva would gladly use the airline service. Although, this factor is up for debate because another Informant stated contrary beliefs. Tauhid said that it depends on whether he should receive external encouragement; it wouldn'twouldn't have much influence on him in choosing the particular Airline.

Environment Factor

According to the data, the environmental factor is the least influential out of all seven factors. Raymundo stated that there is no correlation between culture and choosing an Airliner. Lukita, another informant of this study, agrees with Raymundo'sRaymundo's statement. According to Lukita, the environment does not necessarily play a part in choosing an airline. To her personal belief, she occasionally listens to her family. Hence there is little reason she would listen to someone else. She would do what suits her economy.

Motivation Factor

The last factor influencing millennial consumers in choosing airlines for traveling during the pandemic is motivation. Based on the ten informants' statements, two stated that this factor holds the most influence. Ribka stated that choosing an airline is up to her aspirations. Fortunately, based on her experiences, Batik Air and Citilink have always been pleasant experiences. Hence, she would rather use the services from either Airline. Another informant, Monica, talked about her experience in which she wanted to use Garuda Indonesia. This is because that particular Airline is famous for its image, on-time performance, comfort, and safety. The service provided motivated her to use the services provided by Garuda Indonesia.

E. Conclusion

Based on the results above, the price factor was the main factor that influenced the millennial consumers under study of the most in choosing airlines for tourist destinations during the pandemic. Most of the informants chose the price factor as the most important factor because the current economy trends tend to decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Service quality factors can influence millennial consumers in choosing airlines during the pandemic because good service can increase consumer comfort and satisfaction when using an airline, especially during a pandemic that requires extra services related to hygiene. Brand factors can influence millennial consumers in because brand factor usually guarantee better service. A brand that has a positive image can certainly increase the brand trust of the company itself so that it becomes a consideration for millennial consumers. Motivational factors, reference factors, psychological factors and environmental factors were also used as consideration for the millennials however they are not the main factor that were considered by the millennials customers.

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