

## ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR OF MILLENNIALS AND Z GENERATION TRAVELING IN JAPAN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### Abstract

*The study aims to analyze the consumer behavior of domestic travelers in Japan, especially the Millennial and Z generation groups during the Covid-19 pandemic. Fears of exposure and the imposition of a state of emergency, making tourists both domestic and foreign cancel their trips. Economic downturn amid the threat of the spread of a pandemic that is not yet known when it will end, it becomes a challenge for Japanese society to adjust to existing conditions. The Japanese government issued the "Go to Travel Campaign" program, a campaign aimed at stimulating the travel of domestic tourists who are down due to the spread of Covid-19. However, strict health protocols are in place to prevent and control the spread of the virus.*

*This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach by sharing questions and conducting interviews with 130 respondents especially millennials and Z groups to analyze their behavior, identifying behaviors that can change the tourism industry to understand its needs. Through an analysis of consumer behavior of millennial and Z generation groups in Japan during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was obtained that they were highly motivated and dared to travel in the pandemic and were not afraid of Covid-19, although in the pandemic the Millennial and Z groups always use masks and all their activities are in the crowd because their style always follows and adheres to health protocols that are followed by the Japanese government. By having an understanding and sensitivity or adjustment of the behavior of consumer travelers, it will make it easier for manufacturers to identify the needs of travelers indicated by purchasing decisions as a mirror of the behavior of travelers.*

**Key Words:** Go to Travel, Covid-19, Millennial and Z generation, Japanese

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### INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced the status of the global pandemic of coronavirus 2019 disease abbreviated as Covid-19 on March 11, 2020. This action is done as a form of worldwide attention to the spread of the virus and its alarming impact and increases the vigilance of all countries to activate emergency response mechanisms because at the same time all the world's citizens have the potential to contract Covid-19 disease. Its massive spread and high mortality rate have paralyzed some of the world's activities, even some countries have locked down their territories and disabled all community activities by prohibiting leaving their homes.

One of the most impactful industries is tourism (Higgins-desbiolles, 2021; Zenker & Kock, 2020). On May 1, 2020, the United Nations World Tourism Organization - UNWTO has released new data showing the dramatic impact of Covid-19 on the tourism sector in 2020. International tourism in all regions saw a major decline in the first four months of 2020. International tourism fell -97% year-on-year in April 2020. This follows a -55% drop in march and international tourist arrivals down -44% during the first four months of 2020, UNWTO estimates a loss of tourism revenue of \$195 billion. This indicates a negative impact with travel restrictions globally although it is considered a good step to reduce the spread of the impact of Covid-19 (unwto.org, 2020)

Tourism is considered a substantial industry that accounts for 10% of the world's PBD, 7% of international trade, and 30% of service operations (unwto.org, 2020). In decades international tourism continues to develop but in 2020 since the Covid-19 pandemic can be said to be "suspended animation" no exception in Japan, as one of the favorite destinations of international tourists also feel the economic impact that requires workers to be housed. The beginning of the pandemic in Japan was confirmed on January 16, 2020, making it the 2nd country to be affected by the coronavirus after Thailand outside China (Johnson, 2020). The first case of the Covid-19 outbreak in Japan began with the exposure of a citizen from Kanagawa who had a history of

travel to Wuhan China and had physical contact with a patient who contracted the coronavirus. On January 24, Japan confirmed the second case of Covid-19 followed by a third case of the day. The number of cases has increased by a total of 17 people until the end of January 2020. In March 2020 at least 814 confirmed cases with a total of 24 people died, the Japanese government declared a national emergency due to Covid-19, Seven Prefectures that have the most Covid-19 cases namely: Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, Saitama, Chiba, Hyogo, and Fukuoka to submit to the act of the state of emergency for 1 month. The governors were asked to temporarily close various public facilities such as schools, facilities, daycare, cinemas, and others. The Japanese government is preparing a 430.8-billion-yen economic package for the handling of Covid-19 (Shinzou Abe San, 2020).

Tourism is also a pillar of the growth strategy and a key regional revility for Japan and is also important in international investment, especially as Japan has entered an era of population decline. The existence of a national lockdown due to Covid-19, the number of international tourists visiting Japan decreased dramatically. Nationally, as of April 20, 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a 99.9% decrease of only 2,900 international tourists. This is the smallest number of international tourist arrivals below 10,000 in a single month for the first time since 1964. Tourism transactions fell sharply due to Covid-19. The pandemic has also resulted in Japan's domestic tourism industry also weakening due to travel restrictions and demand not to go outdoors to avoid Covid-19. Another impact is workers in the tourism sector who lose their jobs. The types of businesses that are most affected and suffer very large losses are hospitality accommodation or ryokan (traditional Japanese style lodging), restaurants, transportation, and others. (JNTO, 2020)

The Japanese government quickly realized that there were economic demands and slowing consumption behavior of the people who were weakening with the paralysis of various sectors of the economy. Restrictions on the world of work cannot be carried out continuously and the wheels of the economy must still run. Through the "Go To Campaign" program since July 22, 2020, a campaign initiated by the Japanese government with the aim to stimulate domestic tourist travel that is down due to the spread of Covid-19. A strong desire also arises from the local community to return to travel activities as well as human nature as a social creature that needs others (Shinzou Abe San, 2020)

Although easing activities have been issued, Japanese domestic tourists are still very worried about being infected with Covid-19 while traveling including the transfer process in and out during the trip to and from other prefectures. This pandemic has changed consumer behaviour in determining the purchase of tourism products and services in Japan, tourists now need more security, cleanliness and safety from the infection of Covid-19 in tourism. Market demands that must be understood by all stakeholders of the tourism industry

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Tourism

Tourism (Indonesia: Pariwisata) is a tourist trip from one place to another and is only temporary, done individually or in groups, in an effort to seek balance or harmony or happiness with the environment in the social and cultural dimensions. According to Kodhyat H (2014), Tourism is a temporary and short-term movement of people outside where they used to live and work, as well as their activities during their stay at a destination. Tourism is identic with "a trip" done for holidays or recreation and also everything that is prepared to do this activity. The United Nations World Tourism Organization-UNWTO, "Tourism" means to relax, business or with other intentions and purposes, traveling or away from a normal living environment for less than a year, said to be the "activity of the person who does it" (UNWTO, 1993). In the final few years, the term "tourism" is increasingly being used because the term "tourism" may have a spectacle-like and commercial feel. While according to Suryadana (2015), Tourism is a trip that is done temporarily from one place to another with the aim not to try or make a living in the place visited but just enjoy the trip to meet the needs and desires. Tourism cannot be separated from two things, namely tourists as people or actors who do tourist activities, while tourism products in the form of goods and services that will be enjoyed by these tourists, which can be found in tourist destinations or called tourist destinations. In Japan, tourism is now one of the strategic growth pillars and key to regional revitalization and contributed significantly to Japan's economic recovery after major earthquakes in Eastern Japan and Kumamoto. The Japanese government along with the public and private sectors continue to work hard to restore their tourism sector. "Tourism" or in Japanese "Kankou Ryouko".

### Japanese Government Efforts

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) as an official organization under the Japanese government spearheaded the Promotion of Tourism about the condition of Japanese tourism during the pandemic and has the main task of attracting as many foreign tourists to Japan as possible. JNTO cooperates with various local governments, companies, and organizations related to travel in the country, conducting overseas promotions,

as a tourist information center for foreign tourists including domestic tourists throughout Japan. The various JNTO activities are based on Japan's "Tourism Law" enacted in 1963, which was revised in 2008 with the establishment of an external bureau of the ministry of defense, infrastructure, transportation, and tourism. Japan also recognizes that tourism is a key pillar of Japanese government policy in the 21st century, as it is considered one of the sectors that are very important for economic growth, in addition to the manufacturing industry that is in place.

### **Consumer Behavior**

Suprihanti (2020) define consumer behavior as the act of directly engaging in the acquisition, consuming, and exhausting of products and services. While Schiffman and Kanuk (2020) It describes consumer behavior as a study of the behaviors that consumers show to seek, buy, use, evaluate and spend products and services that can satisfy their needs. Kotler's details (2020) describes consumer behavior as a tool of study of purchasing units both individually, organizationally, and group units. Consumer behavior is an action or behavior carried out by consumers that starts from feeling the need and desire then trying to get the product you want to have by making a purchase and ends with post-purchase actions, namely feeling satisfied and dissatisfied. Consumer behavior is influenced by motivation, which is a behavior that is directed to achieve satisfaction goals (Sangadji, 2013). According to Pitana (2009) One aspect of consumer behavior related to the decision to buy tourism products is a factor of the product itself, prospective tourists will cancel the purchase of tourist products when they know the goods and services offered threaten their safety and comfort.

### **Millennials and Z Generation**

The world's attention is now increasing to "Generation Z", as a new group of consumers who are very instrumental. There are various theories about the definition of generation Z groups, but most define it as a generation born between 1990 and 2019. The number reaches about 18 million in Japan and 2 billion worldwide (Japan Deloitte, 2019). Generation Z is often referred to as the digital native generation because it grew up in an environment where the internet and social media as well as smartphones and PCs from birth and have different tastes to previous generations. Millennials are adults born between the 1980s and early 2000s. Millennials in general can be interpreted as digital natives first tend to be generally superior in information literacy than previous generations and in a few years ended up information using SNS, including working using IT products and searching for information on the internet. It is a generation that has a high affinity for advanced technologies, such as active transmission and information sharing (Tapscott, D, 2009). N-Generations is often the designation for these two groups of generations, N stands for (net) or (internet) in generation Z and Millennials who emphasize the nature of technology that has seeped into their lives. In recent years, the Millennial and Z generation groups have created new businesses and created consumption trends in Japan.

### **Previous Research**

There are several relevant studies related to behavior changes as a result of Covid-19 that underlie this study including there are several relevant studies related to group behavior that underlie this study. Kadek Wiweka (2019) In his research identifying the travel behavior of millennial tourists, especially in the era of revolution 4.0 related to the habits of millennials in traveling, it is now so important for the tourism industry to determine the right marketing strategy. Hasunuma (2020) In his research shows that in Japan the birth rate is decreasing instead the population is getting older. In Japan tourism can be key to regional revitalization and growth strategies. Tourism is positioned as a very important pillar, target that is recorded is to increase the number of tourist visits to Japan until 2020. As well as the impact of new coronavirus infections on Japanese tourism and government efforts where there are many indicators to increase the number of inbounds in quantity such as "40 million people a year, 60 million people in 2030" it is difficult to find attitudes that alleviate the quality and also the continued equality that leads to the revitalize of the local economy. As well as creating a system that can immediately activate a limited "safety net" and tourism-related industries that support the mechanism of "recovery power" in each prefecture. Other research conducted by the Dewi (2020) Younger generations in travel tend to do in groups and prefer to travel with friends rather than alone. In theory, research that examines generations from various periods has been done by several studies, such as Stillman (2002) Which divides tourists into 4 different generation groups, namely Mature Generation born in 1924-1945: Boom Generation (1945-1964) X Generation (1965-1980): Millennial Generations (1981-2000) and Generation Z (2001-Present). Each generation has characteristics and interesting behaviors, when viewed from how many factors are the level of trust, about what they like, career goals, family life, loyalty to the company, education (Reeves, 2008).

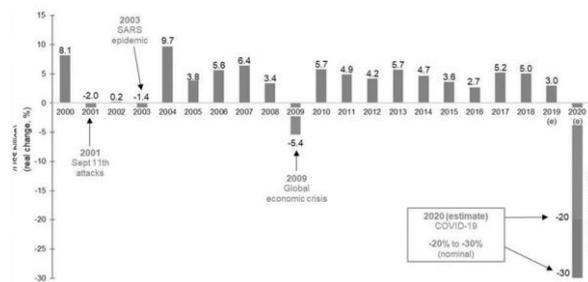
**RESEARCH METHODS**

The methodology is to show how to obtain truth through tracing in a certain manner in accordance with the reality under study. This research that focuses more on consumers (Millennials & Z) is done by collecting, recording, and analyzing data systematically about consumers. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach by sharing questions and conducting interviews with 130 respondents especially millennials and Z groups in Japan whose results are descriptive so as to describe what influences their behavior in traveling in the pandemic. In this study, secondary data is obtained by conducting literature studies using literature and information relevant to the topic or problem that is the object of the research. In the end, it is expected to get to know the number of the Japanese population, as well as describe and explain the behavior of domestic tourists in Japan when traveling during the pandemic, especially in Japan.

**RESULT & DISCUSSION**

**Overview of Japanese Tourism**

Tourism characteristics that tend to be sensitive, making pariwisata easy to go down due to Covid-19. That's happening globally right now. Referring to data conducted by UNWTO that there are 4 events that cause the fall of world tourism, such as the following data:



Source: UNWTO 2020

From the table data, it appears that there are four major events over the 20 years that eventually led to the decline of the world tourism industry. The four events are 1. Attack of terrorist in 2001, 2. SARS outbreak in 2004, 3. The economic crisis in 2009 and 4. Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 (UNWTO, 2020).



Source: Japan's Tourism Accommodation Agency

Based on the graph above by Japan's tourism accommodation agency there was a decrease in the number of domestic tourist visits with the number of 47.1% from the same month and the previous year to 26.74 million in March 2020, in April the number reached 9.71 million tourists decreased by 80.9% from the same month and the previous year, in May as many as 7.79 million people experienced a decrease of 84.9% in June after the state of emergency was lifted decreased by 68.9% to 14.24 million people and in 14.24 million people and in 14.24 million people and in 2020. In July to 22.58 million domestic tourists' interest in travel in the pandemic period began to increase (JNTO, 2020). The total number of Japanese domestic tourists from January to March 2020 was 93.81 million. (compared to the previous year decreased by 22.3%) with 52.82 million people down 17.5% and daily travel amounting to 52.82 million people down 17.5% and daily travel amounting to 40.98 million (down 27.7%) from the same period in the previous year. Japan's total national population as of October 1, 2018 decreased by 430,000, both the total population and the population of Japan decreased for 8 consecutive years,

the population of 126,433.00 according to Taposcott, (2009) 263,000 (0.21%) from the previous year, and Japan's population of 124,218,000 year 430,000 (0.35%) from the previous year (Communications, 2018). The population aged between 15-35 years is 75,450,971 decreased by 511,971 from the previous year and the ratio of 59.7%, natural increases and decreases are natural declines for 12 consecutive years and the rate of decline continues to increase. Based on male sex decreased for 14 years for women 10 years in a row judging by the number of population by male sex as much as 61,655,000 (-0.18% of the population) compared to the previous year, the number of women decreased -1.16% for the female type as much as 65,051,000 people.

According to 130 respondents from Generation Z from 1992 to 1999 or aged 15 years to 27 years, from the population of Japan it is known that the Millennial Gene aged 25-35 years and generation Z >15-24 years. Japan's population, especially the Millennial and Z generation groups aged >15-35 years as many as 24.977 million people the lowest number ever because of a decrease of 2,511 people from the previous year. Population aged 15-24 years or Generation Z as many as 12,079 people

### **Behavioral Characteristics of Millennial and Z groups**

Questioner and observations made to ... during this study are Japanese domestic tourists, especially millennials and Z who were born in 1981-2006. Some of the findings include that cheap, close and short tourist attractions have become the main consideration in traveling. Another answer is that travel is safe; close tourist destinations; with close friends; using a private vehicle/car; tourist attractions close to the surrounding area; stay in a hotel one day or 1 night 2 days; Young men and women in their 20s are more willing to continue the tour, and they dare to travel in times of pandemic and they are highly motivated. Another fact revealed that the millennial and Z generation group has been actively doing tourism during the pandemic, as many as 23% stated that they want to do tourist activities, which are dominated by men (have high motivation). The majority of respondents, mostly in their 20 years old, are in a feisty period and tend to like to seek new and challenging experiences. During the tour in the time of the pandemic they dared to take quick decisions to travel and in doing activities they tend to be in groups, not least in visiting tourist attractions.

The above findings confirm Hagata's (2020) findings that The group of Millennials and Z has a high motivation to travel and start returning to travel even in the pandemic period. Thus, the group of Millennials and Z who travel will be able to stabilize the Japanese economy, as well as support Japanese tourism. Based on the results of the interview, they dare to do tourism in the pandemic period, because they feel healthy and do not have a history of severe disease (comorbid) and confidence in antibodies owned is good enough so as not to worry about the Covid-19 coronavirus.

Bloom (2020) Millennials and Z dare to take risks in pandemic times because they have controlled viruses and remain part of human life, viruses are almost gone and healing methods have been obtained and viruses have completely disappeared and life is back to normal. Questioner results showed that 57.8% answered they wanted to go on a trip, only 22.9% answered that they did not want to go on a trip before the pandemic ended.

### **Changes in Millennial and Z tourism groups in doing tourism and destinations in the pandemic period**

The change in tourist destinations of Millennials and Z generation is dominated by wanting to do regional tourism in Japan; They prefer tourist attractions that are not crowded (32.4%) by using affordable accommodation (27.1%). This is in line with a campaign by the Japanese government which in recent years promoted new tourist destinations such as lifestyles and local cultural experiences and tourist facilities and infrastructure in areas (prefectures) that have not been famous tourist destinations. Motivation to travel domestically during the Covid-19 pandemic is still very high; But still want to travel safely and safely in times of pandemic. Although in the pandemic period of millennials and Z groups are always in crowded places that are likely to be exposed to Covid-19 is very large, but they (68.5%) said they are not afraid of Covid-19 because it always adheres to health protocols implemented by the government. The average traveler of the Millennial and Z generation groups is not too affected by the pandemic, in carrying out tourist activities, which is very influential is when ticket prices are affordable and when access to travel is opened.

### **Characteristics of millennial and Z generation groups in Japan**

Millennials and Z (82.2%) use Instagram and Twitter more often. Hasegawa (2018) He said that the number of social media users in Japan had exceeded 29 million (as of September). The number has increased by 9 million over the past year. The distance between users and businesses is very close, especially for millennials and Z groups, this causes many companies to prefer to advertise on Instagram. The survey results show that the Millennial and Z groups will learn and follow the latest information about tourist destinations, attractions and travel destination information before making a final decision about their trip via Instagram. Millennials and Gen Z chose the Internet

and the web to be the most used medium for viewing selected suggestions (41.6%), then choosing television (39.3%) the rest through newspapers (10.1%).

This result is in line with Tokuchan's (2020) statement that The lives of Japanese Millennials and Gen Z have drastically changed and the digitization of life has grown rapidly. In purchasing behavior or the media used by them usually collect information always using the internet or the web. Based on the results of interviews Millennial Groups in particular tend to look for a more ideal and luxurious "experience" While Generation Z is more about "practicality". But both Millennials and Z agree that it's easier; Practical and cost-effective is the main consideration in this day and era.

## CONCLUSION

The population decline in Japan is becoming a very concerning social problem and the most worrying thing today. The population of Japan's Millennial and Z generation groups hit a record low after falling for years. According to Japanese government data, the population is only 28,155,000 people out of the total population of Japan which includes millennials and about 12.079 million which includes generation Z of the total population. Characteristics and behaviour of Millennial and Z groups in traveling in Japan during the pandemic, they are very motivated and dare to travel in the pandemic period and are not afraid of Covid-19, although in the pandemic the Millennial generation and Z always use masks and all their activities are in the crowd because of their style of always wearing masks and spying on health protocols from the centre of government of Japan.

The results of this study are very useful for tourism managers to further improve the comfort of traveling in the pandemic period and create unique innovations so as not to create fear for tourists. The momentum of the Covid-19 pandemic is the most appropriate time to compete in innovation in verification certification about cleanliness and comfort for tourists and as a reference for health prtokol in the pandemic period. For the Japanese government is expected to find a solution so that there is no more precise and good decline in Japanese penduduk by using demographic time bombs limiting working hours or reducing high lifestyles and providing a boost of motivation to the Japanese people so that they get a greater number of offspring.

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