

# MILLENNIALS' TRAVEL BEHAVIOR IN SMALL ISLAND DESTINATION: THE OVERVIEW OF GILI TRAWANGAN, INDONESIA

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** The purpose of this study is to examine the travel behavior of millennial generation tourists in Gili Trawangan at the pre-, during-, and post-travel stages. This research also looks into the viability of Gili Trawangan as a small island destination.

**Methodology:** This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data gathered through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and literary techniques. The questionnaire was distributed in May and June, with 100 millennial generation tourists on Gili Trawangan, both international and domestic, serving as respondents.

**Result:** According to the findings of this study, Gili Trawangan is one of the small island destinations that offers tourism-related products such as water tourism attraction, accessibility, ancillary service, and tourist activity. On the demand side, millennial tourists who visit this island are productive generations who come from various large cities in Indonesia or abroad. They are considered a digital generation due to their reliance on smartphones and social media in all aspects of daily life, including work, entertainment, and travel. As a result, millennial tourists' travel decisions are heavily influenced by digital information such as social media status and digital advertisements. Although there is almost no significant difference in the travel behavior of the two types of tourists in general. However, there are some basic differences caused by socio-cultural differences and economic conditions.

**Implication/Applications:** This research is useful as a reference for tourism industry stakeholders on the island of Gili Trawangan to comprehensively understand the characteristics of millennial generation tourists. Theoretically, the results of this study can also enrich the existing information related to the behavior of millennial tourists, especially those who visit small island destinations.

**The originality of the study:** The small sample size and short questionnaire distribution period were two of the study's limitations. As a result, future research will be able to examine other island tourist destinations with better numbers and an even distribution of vacation sessions.

*Keyword: small island, millennial tourist, travel behavior, tourist destination, overview*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Millennials are the preferred segment among industry marketers, and they are the generation that prioritizes tourism and hospitality on their list of must-do activities (1). Apart from having a large population (representing 31.5 percent of the world's population), they are also known to have high purchasing power (estimated at up to \$200 billion) and the ability to influence others (2,3). As a result, it is not surprising that various tourism stakeholders are attempting to attract this generation by providing a variety of appealing products and services (4). As a generation with a heavy work schedule, they prefer to spend their free time relaxing or having fun. Small islands are popular vacation spots for this generation (5–7).

Small islands have piqued the interest of tourism academics, owing to their importance as popular tourist destinations. This phenomenon is paradoxical because small islands are frequently regarded as geographically and economically marginalized areas, despite having distinct cultural, environmental, and local products (8–11). The Maldives, Bora-bora (French Polynesia), Palawan (Philippines), Seychelles (Kenya), Santorini (Greece), The Cock Island (South Pacific), and Bali are just a few of the world's most popular islands (Indonesia).

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country, has one of the world's largest island-based tourist sites. These topographical features encourage Indonesia to grow as an archipelago-based destination. Pahawang Island, Derawan Island, Karimunjawa Islands, Saumlaki Island, Mentawai Island, Weh Island, Nusa Penida Island, Komodo Island, Wakatobi Islands, Raja Ampat Islands, and a Marine Tourism Park (MTP) comprised of Gili Meno, Gili Air Air, and Gili Trawangan are among Indonesia's small island destinations (12).

Gili Trawangan is one of Indonesia's most popular archipelagic tourist destinations, second only to Bali, for both domestic and international visitors (13,14). This island is well-known for providing supporting infrastructure facilities that are in high demand by a variety of tourist groups, ranging from families to millennials (15,16). The younger generation enjoys not only a variety of water tourism activities, but also the nightlife, which is provided by a variety of bars and restaurants. This service is not widely available on other Indonesian tourist islands. One of the issues considered in the selection of this research location was the massive development of Gili Trawangan.

The pressures of commercialization of tourism (17) on small islands have posed a serious threat to the sustainability of the environmental and socio-cultural aspects of the community (9). According to the United Nations, Small Island Developing States (SIDS, 2015) share common vulnerabilities and characteristics, such as remoteness, limited resources, vulnerability to natural disasters, vulnerability to external shocks, over-reliance on international trade, and a fragile environment (18).

In general, academics conduct studies from a supply or product perspective, focusing on tourism potential and activities, to identify the vulnerability of small island destinations. However, in this study, the researcher examines the behavior of millennial tourists from a demand or market standpoint (10). This tourist segment was chosen due to their known characteristics of being very tolerant, caring about socially responsible campaigns, participating in humanitarian actions, and having a strong desire to travel frequently (2). Despite the fact that tourist behavior has been extensively researched (19–22), millennial preferences are still regarded as the industry's most recent demographic due to limited information availability (2,20,23,24). As a result, the purpose of this research is to examine the travel habits of millennial generation tourists visiting Gili Trawangan, particularly during the pre-, during-, and post-trip stages. Furthermore, this study investigates Gili Trawangan's potential as a small island destination.

This study can be used as a resource by tourism stakeholders on the island of Gili Trawangan to better understand the characteristics of millennial tourists. In theory, the findings of this study can contribute to a better understanding of the behavior of millennial tourists, particularly those who visit small island destinations. The small sample size and the distribution of the questionnaire during a single holiday session are two of the study's limitations. As a result, future research will be able to examine other island tourist destinations with larger sample sizes and an even distribution of vacation sessions.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Millennial's traveler**

Many researchers, including (25,26), and most recently, have investigated generational typology (27). They use a different classification to divide the time span of each generation. One of them is how Reeves and Oh divide generations into four groups, including the Mature Generation (1924-1945), Boom Generation (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennial Generation (1981-2000), and Generation Z (2001-present), which are then used to determine the millennial generation in this study.

In their book "Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation," William Strauss and Neil Howe (26) noted that this generation uses a variety of digital communication technologies such as email, SMS, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The millennial generation was born and raised in the digital age and with cutting-edge technology (24,28–30). This phenomenon undoubtedly has a significant impact on the development of their behavior and personality. The fluency in digital technology is one of the positive influences of this generation's characteristics (31–33). Bill Gates refers to this generation as Generation I, or the Information Generation.

### **2.2 Small Island destination**

When compared to other destinations, small island destinations frequently suffer more harmful than beneficial effects from the tourism industry. Islands have been used as tourism commodities since the mid-twentieth century (11), either as island-states (Barbados, Fiji), island dependencies (Guadeloupe, Jersey), or state islands (Okinawa, Cozumel). This phenomenon expands in tandem with the rise of tourism as a strategic commercial sector and mass industry (8,9).

Academics from various disciplines are still debating the definition and concept of "island" destinations in theory. One of the challenges is that the islands' characteristics differ from one another, and not all of them are tourist destinations. Climate, fauna, and vegetation, as well as different geopolitical, socio-cultural, economic, and environmental developments, distinguish islands. As a result, many researchers define the term "in their own terms." However, in this review, an island destination is defined broadly, as a piece of land surrounded by water with a land area of less than 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> that becomes a tourist destination (Sharpley, 2012) (34).

### 2.3 Tourist behavior

Tourist behavior, according to experts, can be assumed as a variety of tourist activities when beginning and ending their journey. The tourist demand can then be studied from a variety of perspectives, one of which is economics, to better understand a person's ability to travel, including the factors that influence their travels. While the psychological perspective investigates the motivation and behavior of tourists. One method divides travel behavior into three stages: pre-, during-, and post-travel (35–37). The presence of stimulation and the introduction to motivation during the pre-trip period is characterized by the presence of stimulation and the introduction to motivation, which is continued in planning and organizing. The following phase is the during-trip phase, in which tourists enjoy the trip, followed by the post-trip phase, in which tourists return to their original location with the experiences they brought and begin to readjust to their normal lives (38–40). (29), added that this process can also be divided into two phases, namely decision making and travel, or more specifically into the Initiation phase, information search, assessment, final decision, during travel, and post-travel. Currently, social media and electronic word of mouth have a strong influence on the travel behavior of the millennial generation (e-WOM). This phenomenon enables them to share their travel experiences on social media and has a significant impact on tourists' awareness, expectations, perceptions, attitudes, and behavior (20,41).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study takes a qualitative descriptive approach to data collection by distributing questionnaires, conducting in-depth interviews, and reviewing reference documents (42). The questionnaires were distributed to millennial tourists on Gili Trawangan for two weeks (May and June). Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were initiated by purposefully determining the number of informants by considering their competencies in relation to data needs (43–45). The required documents are examined using both official documents owned by official government institutions and informal documents owned privately by certain community members. The documents used in this study are records pertaining to millennial tourist data.

The research subjects in this study were members of the Millennial Generation who visited Gili Trawangan and were born between 1981 and 2000. Since the population size is unknown, the sample size is calculated using the Rao Purba formula (42) as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z^2}{4(\text{Moe})^2}$$

Where:

$n$  = Sample size

$Z$  = 1.96 score at a certain level of significance (degree of confidence determined 95%)

Moe = Margin of error, maximum error rate is 10%

By using the above formula, the following calculation is obtained:

$$n = \frac{(1,96)^2}{4(0,1)^2} \quad n = \frac{3,8416}{0,04} \quad n = 96,04 \quad n = 100 \text{ (integration)}$$

As a result, the sample size is 100 people, including both foreign and domestic tourists. The triangulation technique was used to analyze data from interviews, questionnaires, secondary data, or literature. In addition, both qualitative and quantitative data are interpreted descriptively.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Gili Trawangan as a small island destination

With a total area of 2,954 hectares, Marine Tourism Park (MTP) encompasses Gili Meno, Gili Air, and Gili Trawangan. Gili Trawangan is the largest of the three islands, covering an area of 3.4 km<sup>2</sup>. The island of Gili Trawangan is located in Gili Indah village, Pemenang sub-district, North Lombok district, West Nusa Tenggara province. This tourist island is the best in the North Lombok district for water tourism activities like swimming, water sports, cycling, sunbathing, snorkeling, kayaking, fishing, sub-winging, and diving. Because this is a small island, modern transportation is not available. Cidomo is the only mode of transportation used by the general public and tourists (a traditional horse-drawn carriage typical of Gili Trawangan). Nonetheless, this island is one of the islands with the most comprehensive tourism support facilities, including lodging, ancillary services, tourist activities, and tourism organizations.

### 4.2 Profile of respondents

According to the survey, the majority of millennial tourists who visit Gili Trawangan come from Indonesia's major cities, such as Jakarta, Bogor, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Bekasi, and Tangerang. Meanwhile, international visitors arrive from Australia, the United States, Europe, Malaysia, Japan, and India. The following are some of the characteristics discovered in this study.

**Table 1: Respondent characteristics**

Description	Option	Percentage (%)	Description	Option	Percentage (%)	
<b>Gender</b>	Female	51	<b>Origin</b>	Jakarta	24	
	Male	49		West Java	28	
<b>Year of birth</b>	1982-1987	26		Central Java	5	
	1988-1993	25		East Java	5	
	1994-2000	49		Bali	5	
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	71		Foreigner	18	
	Married	29	Others	15		
<b>Educational background</b>	Senior high school	43	<b>Occupation</b>	Students	23	
	Bachelor's degree	30		Employee	40	
	Diploma	23		Professional	9	
	Master's degree	3		Manager	5	
	Others	1		Others	23	
<b>Travel frequency</b>	Once a month	18		<b>Expenditure</b>	< IDR 500K	11
	Once a year	47			IDR 500K- 1.000K	20
	Every 6 months	5			IDR 1.000K- 2.500K	21
	Once a week	4			IDR 2.500K - 5.000K	24
	Uncertain	26			< IDR 5.000K	24
<b>Holidays member</b>	Friends and relatives	50	<b>Financial sources</b>	Saving	74	
	Families	40		Fulltime job	38	
	Alone	6		Part-time job	16	
	Others	4		Parents	19	
				Incentive	14	

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

According to Table 1, the majority of millennial tourists who visit Gili Trawangan are productive groups comprised of students and workers, both professionals, entrepreneurs, employees, and managers. Their vacation patterns are influenced by their job profile, as they typically only take advantage of national holidays or company leave opportunities. They are also more at ease organizing their own trips (88%) and vacationing with family or friends. Their purchasing power is also quite high, which corresponds to the average price offered on Gili Trawangan. Their vacation budget is also primarily funded by work and savings, with only a small portion supported by their parents. The

majority of millennial tourists (99 percent) are also active users of social media and smartphones, indicating that they belong to the digital generation (29). Instagram (90 percent), WhatsApp (89 percent), Facebook (77 percent), Line (53 percent), and Twitter (38 percent) are among the social media platforms they use.

### 4.3 The way millennials prepare their pre-travel

According to data collected, millennials who visit this island are more interested in visiting places they have never visited before (90 percent). Furthermore, digital information such as social media status and digital advertisement have a strong influence on this type of tourist's travel decision-making, though other factors such as curiosity and a destination's image remain dominant. Respondents are given the option of selecting more than one option in this section, after which they are sorted by percentage on average. Other factors influencing millennial tourists as they plan their trip are listed in the table below.

**Table 2: Millennial's pre-travel characteristic**

Description	Option	Percentage (%)	Description	Option	Percentage (%)	
<b>Travel motivation</b>	Out of routine	93	<b>Pull factor</b>	Curiosity	86	
	Relaxing	53		Destination image	57	
	Visiting friend or relative	22		E-WOM (family, friend, relative)	47	
	Healthiness	9		Social media	26	
<b>Information sources</b>	Social media	89	<b>Type of travel</b>	Digital Advertisement	18	
	Website	78		Film	12	
	Experience of others	37		Individual (small group)	84	
	Travel blog	23		Group	16	
	Travel magazine	20		<b>Comparison factor</b>	Price	89
	Tourism official website	18			Quality	69
<b>Reservation method</b>	Online channel	95	Promotion	49		
	Travel agent	5	Positive comment	35		

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

According to Table 2, the primary motivation for millennial travel is to refresh and restore their enthusiasm for work. This motivation is associated with their daily activities or work, particularly high-intensity routines (93 percent). As a result, they value flexibility and prefer to travel in small groups or alone (84 percent). In addition to promotions or discounts and positive feedback or comments, price and quality are still important factors that they frequently consider. Location (76 percent), facilities (70 percent), attractions (59 percent), access (52 percent), amenities (restaurants, gift shops, religious facilities, health facilities) as much as 33 percent, and services (32 percent) are some of the determining factors from a destination.

Most respondents (95 percent) prefer online media to make reservations for lodging, transportation, and tourist activities, as do most digital generations. Traveloka (78 percent) is the most commonly used online media or online travel agent, followed by Tiket.com (22 percent), Pegipegi (18 percent), Agoda (14 percent), and Trivago (13 percent). Most of them also plan vacations from one week (32 percent) to more than one month (31 percent) ahead of time. Payment methods chosen include e-banking transfers (72 percent), cash (6 percent), credit cards (30 percent), and vouchers (7 percent).

### 4.4 International vs. domestic tourist behavior during travel

The characteristics of millennial tourists during their trip will be compared in this section between domestic and international tourists. The purpose of this study is to better understand the differences in behavior patterns between the two types of tourists on Gili Trawangan. Some of the identified factors include the type and preferred tourist activity, length of stay, type of accommodation used, and media used to find tourist references. The following table illustrates the comparison.

**Table 3: Millennial's on-travel characteristic comparison**

Description	Option	Percentage (%)	
		Domestic	International
Type of transportation	Fast boat	56	89
	Slow boat	44	11
Tourist activity	Water sport (Snorkeling, Diving, etc.)	87	100
	Taking picture	64	100
	Culinary tourism (Food & beverage)	35	93
	Bicycling	33	100
	Cidomo (local transportation) tour	30	56
	Interaction with locals	24	28
	Sunbathing	7	100
Type of accommodation	Homestay	72	11
	Non-star hotel	33	-
	Villa	21	33
	Star hotel	14	56
	Hostel	14	-
	Air B&B	6	-
Type of restaurant	Traditional food seller	73	-
	Restaurant	32	100
	Fast food	26	28
	Café or bar	24	100

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

Table 3 confirms that the majority of international tourists prefer fast boats to slow boats when it comes to mode of transportation. Mileage and price are two factors that influence the decision. In the Gili Indah MTP area, two types of fast boats operate: charter boats and direct fast boats from Padang Bai (Bali), with ticket prices ranging from IDR 100K to IDR 350K per person and a travel time of approximately 1 hour 30 minutes. Meanwhile, traditional ships with a capacity of more than 30 people depart from the port of Bangsal (North Lombok). At the same time, these ships usually transport raw materials required by locals on the island for commercial purposes or personal consumption. The trip can be completed in 35 minutes for a much fairly low-ticket price of around IDR 15K.

The survey also discovered that the majority of millennial tourists on Gili Trawangan island stayed between 3-7 days, as many as 58 percent of respondents, 1-2 days, as many as 33 percent, and only 9 percent chose a one-day trip (without overnight). In contrast to domestic tourists who prefer homestays, international tourists prefer secure and comfortable accommodations such as five-star hotels and villas. Similarly, while most domestic tourists prefer traditional food vendors, international tourists prefer modern restaurants, bars and cafes, or even fast food. One of the reasons domestic tourists prefer traditional food over others is the low cost. However, there isn't much of a difference between the tourism activities chosen by the two types of tourists. However, one of the differences is that while international tourists enjoy sunbathing and bicycling, domestic tourists do not. They are concerned that the sun will cause their skin to burn or brown.

Given the small size of Gili Trawangan, some tourists (66 percent) rely solely on Google Maps or local residents for information about the location of hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions. Meanwhile, the millennial generation's interest in souvenirs is high, with 61 percent planning to buy something, 22 percent considering buying something, and only 17 percent saying they are not interested.

#### 4.5 Millennial's post-travel characteristic

This study discovered that after traveling, millennials frequently share their experiences on social media and tell stories to their friends and relatives. This behavior makes millennials appealing to tourism stakeholders, particularly because they can be a highly effective marketing "tool" for businesses.

**Table 4: Millennial's post-travel characteristic**

Description	Option	Percentage (%)	Description	Option	Percentage (%)
What to do after travel	Posting on social media	85	Type of social	Instagram	92

Share the story (WOM)	81	<b>media</b>	Facebook	60
Planning another trip	29		Twitter	19

**Source:** The author's own study, 2021

Table 4 confirms that this generation prefers to share their experiences via audio-visual media, particularly social media platforms that support this feature. They also frequently provide feedback or rewards (90%) for their experiences with products and services obtained through online websites (88 percent). Feedback can be given in the form of comments (48%), ratings (44%), or monetary tipping (8 percent).

## 5. CONCLUSION

According to the findings of this study, Gili Trawangan is one of the small island destinations with tourism supporting products such as water tourism attraction, accessibility, ancillary service, and tourist activity. On the demand side, millennial tourists who visit this island are productive people who work as students or workers and come from a variety of major cities in Indonesia and abroad. They have a lot of money, but they only have so much free time because of their hectic work schedule. Because of their reliance on smartphones and social media in all aspects of daily life, including work, entertainment, and travel, this group can also be classified as a digital generation. As a result, millennial tourists' travel decisions are heavily influenced by digital information such as social media status and digital advertisements, though other factors such as curiosity and a destination's image remain dominant. Their motivations for traveling are mostly aimed at revitalizing and reviving their enthusiasm for work. Their proclivity for flexibility, even when on vacation, stems from the hectic pace of city life. They usually plan their own trips and travel in small groups or even alone. They actively seek information and make reservations for lodging, transportation, and tourism activities via electronic media, particularly social media and online travel agencies.

Although, in general, there is little difference between the travel habits of international and domestic tourists. However, there are some fundamental differences that are the result of socio-cultural differences and economic conditions. Some of these distinctions can be seen in how international tourists select transportation, lodging, and restaurants that can provide quality, security, and comfort. Domestic tourists, on the other hand, prioritize affordability over all other considerations. This is understandable given that the average price of products and services offered on the island of Gili Trawangan is quite high. Meanwhile, in terms of tourism activities, international tourists enjoy sunbathing and bicycling while ignoring the effect of sunlight on their skin, whereas domestic tourists do not. Following a trip, millennials frequently share their experiences on social media and tell stories to their friends and family. This behavior also makes millennials appealing to tourism stakeholders, particularly because they can be used as a very effective and low-cost marketing "tool."

## 6. LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

The findings of this study could be beneficial to tourism stakeholders on Gili Trawangan. These findings can be used by entrepreneurs to gain a better understanding of the behavior of millennial tourists. So that they can create more accurate marketing strategies based on the millennial market segment's profile. Furthermore, small island destination managers can understand the potential impact of the type of millennial tourists based on their behavioral data. As a result, they are expected to be able to educate millennial tourists, particularly in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of natural and socio-cultural resources. This study still has a number of flaws, particularly in terms of the sample size and the island's location. As a result, additional research is expected to fill the gap left by this study and take a more comprehensive methodological approach.

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