

# The Agung Paradox: Revisiting Millennials Preference To Bali

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**Abstract.** Mount Agung eruption in Bali in 2017 was projected to significantly drop-down numbers of visitors to the island. Surprisingly; even though BPS recorded a decline of 12.64% in November, the occupancy rate in private housing especially villas and homestays are high. Hence, it becomes a paradox when many countries have put up travel warning, but millennials keep coming to the island. Hence, looking into this phenomenon, the study discusses millennial typologies that engage in tourist activities in Bali after Mount Agung eruption by looking into its level of resilient tourists of issues. By using a qualitative approach, the study indicates that millennials are the most resilient type of traveller of all. Nonetheless, it's nationality, millennials continue their travel plan to a certain destination. They even took the opportunity of lower rates during stay and post pictures on their social media of the Agung eruption.

**Keyword:** Bali Tourism; Volcanic Eruption Effect; Tourist Visit

## 1 Introduction

The eruption of Mount Agung at the end of 2017 inevitably led to a decrease in domestic and foreign tourist arrivals to Bali. In various reports - even tend to dramatize - mentioning Mount Agung has the potential to result in the isolation of the island of Bali for months [1]. The news finally responded to the world by issuing a Travel Warning to visit Bali. When this research was conducted, there were 21 countries that prohibited their citizens from visiting Bali [2]. The impact is of course on the decline in occupancy rates in hotels in Bali. ITDC as an area even recorded the nadir point of room occupancy that reached even below 10% [3]. In the Kuta area, according to the daily local post, the average occupancy is only 18% [4].

Contrary to the decline, villas with prices up to Rp.3,000,000 actually "Sold Out". In online travel agent sites such as Airbnb, Traveloka, Agoda and Expedia, even searching for villas with filter one-bedroom and 2-bedrooms is also sold out. The complete sold out of this type of villa finally requires the owner to add a stay period where the villa is only available for a minimum of 2 nights stay. Looking at it from a different perspective, Mount Agung then transformed into a selfie spot for these millennials. Gunung Agung, who is issuing smoke, has become an attraction for the "celebgram" and "Youtubers" to get "followers".

Millennials resistance is actually giving a positive impact on the return of Bali's image which collapsed due to the eruption. In a slightly different perspective, popular hashtags about Bali since the first eruption of Mount Agung on Instagram have been posted related to #gunungAgung, #BaliisSafe and #BaliAman. What's interesting is that those who post, are not "endorsers" from the government or disparta, but young tourists who are enjoying a holiday in Bali--as if nothing happened. Travel warnings create such "excitement" and challenges for these people. This situation certainly become a paradox where on the one hand, there are warnings to avoid Bali due to the eruption of Mount Agung but on the other hand, there are typologies of tourists who actually "deliberately" visit Bali because of Mount Agung Eruption.

It is even more incomprehensible to reason when the photo or video upload becomes viral so that more tourists are interested in coming closer to the eruption location. Some hotels in the Candi Dasa area such as Candi Beach Resort also did not experience a significant decrease in occupancy rates despite being in the

Karangasem region where the eruption of Mount Agung occurred. Tourists in the Candi Dasa area are still dominated by European tourists who are generally long staying guests. Seeing the impact of Mount Agung eruption, as well as the paradox generated, this article will examine three-pointers as follows: 1) millennial typologies that take pleasure in Bali in the aftermath of Mount Agung eruption, 2) the level of resilient tourists of this type against developing issues and 3) what should be done to anticipate this phenomenon

## 2 Method

This article uses a qualitative approach where the analysis is carried out using the following literature study by conducting in-depth interviews with 1) Area Managers, 2) Villa Associations and 3) Travelers staying at the Villa. The data used are primary data through interviews and secondary data collected from the media, statistical centre bodies, and government

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Millennials Typology Who Travel to Bali After Mount Agung Eruption

As previously mentioned, the millennial generation, also known as Generation Y, is a "digital native" generation because from birth they are familiar with various kinds of electronic devices and the internet with hundreds of television channels and video games. They are trained by circumstances to be sensitive to the social environment and the true value of a product. As a comparison, if Generation X and Baby Boomers are crazy about luxury brands as a symbol of "financial success" like Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Ferrari, Jaguar and Mercedes-Benz, their criteria of success are the late Steve Jobs with his Apples and the social entrepreneurs who can work from anywhere with minimal capital. Like, Mark Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook), Jack Ma (founder of Alibaba) and Nadiem Makarim (founder of Indonesian Go-Jek).

During this research, there were three millennial typologies who were vacationing when phenomena eruption of Mount Agung was being reported in various media, namely:

- a) Short Staying Guest. Millennials who stay overnight are those who stay vulnerable 2-3 days. This is because their typologies tend to move to new destinations, so vacation time can be utilized to the maximum extent possible.
- b) Preference Villa to stay at a Hotel. What's interesting is the amount of interest in this type of tourist typology to stay at the villa. Villas are the main preference because, in addition to being cheaper, privacy and flexibility are relatively loose compared to staying in a hotel room. Millennials also tend to use rented motorcycles rather than hiring drivers while in Bali.
- c) Social Media infused travellers. During vacation, the millennial typology very often updates their vacation experience via the social media they have. Hashtag-hashtag popular along with smoke puffs from the eruption of Mount Agung did not escape the "background" for the photos they uploaded.

Looking into these three typologies, this is in accordance with the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which was first coined by Ajzen in his article entitled "The theory of planned behaviour" in 1991. In TRA it is said that a person's intention to conduct a behaviour determines whether or not the behaviour will be carried out [5]. Furthermore, the intention to do or not to do certain behaviours is influenced by two considerations, which are related to attitude (attitude towards behaviour) and related to social influence, namely subjective norms (subjective norms). In an effort to express the influence of attitudes and subjective norms on the intention to do or not to do a behaviour, but with beliefs. It is stated that attitudes originate from behavioural beliefs while subjective norms originate from normative beliefs [6].

Ajzen emphasizes the three main things in the background factors, namely personal, social, and information. Personal factors are characterized by a person's general attitude toward something, personality traits, life values, emotions, and the intelligence possessed. Social factors include age, gender, ethnicity, education, income, and religion. And the last is the information factor which consists of experience, knowledge and media exposure [6].

With these factors, millennials are a market that can carry out tourist trips to Bali because they make the Mount Agung vacation experience a "once in a lifetime" experience for them. The world is changing and so does the way people travel. The success of any destination is now highly dependent on ensuring that the different stakeholders interests and perceptions of a destination are harmonized [7].

### 3.2 Millennial's Resilient Level to The Developing Issues

Broadly speaking, tourists of this typology are very resilient to the news that appears. On average they run around because they have planned a previous trip. In-depth interviews conducted with the Front Office Manager in the Candi Dasa area stated that what made them afraid was the uncertainty of returning to their home countries (closed airports, poor handling).

Consumer Perceived Value can be considered as the overall assessment of consumers for the use of a product and service based on the perception of what has been received and given [8]. Based on further research it can be seen that there are 4 dimensions of values that arise to determine what consumption values drive attitudes and buying behavior. These four dimensions are emotional, social, quality/performance, price/value for money. In other words, the division of customer value according to is emotional, social, functional, and price or sacrifice [9].

**Table 1.** Dimensions in Customer Value

Values	Description
Emotional Value	The utility derived from the feelings or affective states that a product generates
Social Value (enhancement of social self-concept)	The utility derived from the product's ability to enhance social self-concept
Functional Value (price/value for money)	The utility derived from the product due to the reduction of its perceived short term and longer term costs
Functional Value (performance/quality)	The utility derived from the perceived quality and expected performance of the product

If it is true that consumers are driven by the value they feel, then producers must understand the value of these consumers and where they must emphasize attention to gain profits in the market [9]. The measurements used by them describe how consumers value a product, not only in the functional aspects of a performance, value for money, but also in terms of pleasure or excitement arising from a product (emotional value) and also consequences social for what the product reflects to others (social value). The value of each product or service brand is a valuable asset for producers to increase consumer loyalty and gain greater profits.

On a different perspective, the paradox also happens in the culinary business in Bali. Balinese food, which was once, had its bad image due to "Bali Belly" (food borne in the early nineties that creates trauma to travellers to try and taste the local food). Flexibility in the culinary world is made of three main points. Adopting explains how the industry absorbs the elements of traditional methods and style of cooking; adapting demonstrates a big slice of commodification of the cuisine and adept (a Balinese word which means selling) describes and shows examples of how the Balinese cuisine can succeed and make a mark in the industry [10].

Understanding of the value perceived by consumers on the brand of a product or service will certainly be a very useful consideration because producers are better able to determine the company's strategy and other marketing activities to fit the expectations of consumers on the products they use.

### 3.3 Addressing the Government and Media to the Implications for Millennials

From the above explanation on millennialial typology and the creation of value for a destination for millennials, one example that can be used as the basis for this paper is the attitude of the government and the media when the Mount Agung eruption occurred on November 2017. When the eruption occurred Ngurah Rai airport was closed during 5 days which has implications for passenger accumulation in the airport area. The government took action quite quickly by issuing a circular letter from the Governor of Bali on 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2017 where there were 3 important pointers, namely (1) urging hotels and other accommodation to remain cooperative to provide free one night and discounts during airport operations (2) provision of lines alternative for tourists who will leave Bali (via land and sea) and (3) provide a help desk that is distributed at vulnerable points so that access to information can be obtained easily.

Regarding the third point, the Provincial Government has also collaborated with BMKG (The Indonesian Agency for Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics) through Magma which can be downloaded for free via Google Playstore. This application can provide accurate information on the condition of Mount Agung in real time.

What's interesting is that there are quite a number of millennials who actually give a positive endorsement during an eruption. One of them is Laura Whitmore who's currently in Bali for a vacation. The Irish presenter and model could not go home on schedule because volcanic ash spurting from the crater blocked the plane's path, forcing the authorities to close I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport. To the anxious fans, the celebrity revealed what she experienced was not as horrifying as the news that blew to the corners of the world, which gave the impression that the entire island of God was in a serious condition.

*"All parties handle the situation very well. The atmosphere in Bali is also calm. If there is no obligation to force him to go home, I will gladly continue my stay on the island nicknamed the Nusa Dewata. Irish Mirror, Tuesday (11/28/2017)*

Despite positive comments, the transfer of large numbers of tourists out of Bali certainly has not ideal conditions. The magnitude of the number versus the lack of transportation and the exhausting path that must be taken is not necessarily stressful for tourists who then share their "sad experience" to the social media sites they have.

In the recovery discourse, several meetings of stakeholders in the tourism industry. In addition to starting with travel advisories and deteriorating occupancy rates, there are quite a number of foreign media reporting on the lack of handling of tourists after the eruption.

## 4 Conclusion

Millennials resistance to Agung's eruption is indeed a paradox. While many countries has flag up a travel warning to their citizen, these group is still willing and "brave" enough to travel to the island while at the same time giving a positive impact on the return of Bali's image. Hence, the Agung eruption has a positive implications for the creation of a strong brand for Bali as a resistant tourism destination towards developing issues.

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