



The Influence of Airport Image and Facility Functionality on Travel Intentions Through Positive Emotions and Word of Mouth

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the direct and indirect effects of airport image and facility functionality on travelers' emotions, intentions, and word-of-mouth recommendations. The findings reveal that a positive airport image directly influences positive emotions and travel intentions while well-functioning airport facilities significantly impact both positive emotions and word-of-mouth recommendations. Positive emotions mediate the relationships between both airport image and facility functionality with travel intentions and word-of-mouth. Notably, positive emotions strengthen travelers' future travel intentions and their likelihood of recommending the airport to others. The study also finds that airport image and facility functionality exert indirect effects on travel intention and word-of-mouth through positive emotions. These results highlight the critical role of emotional responses in shaping travel behaviors and reinforcing the impact of airport image and facilities

Keywords: *Facility functionality; Travel Intention; Word of Mouth*

INTRODUCTION

The increase in global mobility has caused a significant rise in air travel, making airports key players in transportation infrastructure (Graham, 2023; Spijkerboer, 2018). Airports today are not just transit points but also service hubs offering a variety of amenities, which significantly impact passengers' experiences. As competition grows in the aviation sector, elements like airport image and facility quality are becoming more critical in shaping passenger decisions and spreading recommendations (Hung & Khoa, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial for airport managers and other industry stakeholders to fully grasp how these factors influence passenger behavior.

The effectiveness of airport facilities involves several factors that contribute to passenger comfort and operational efficiency, such as accessibility, cleanliness, security, and the quality of lounge spaces. Previous studies have shown that well-maintained and efficient facilities increase passenger satisfaction and loyalty, making it more likely that passengers will

choose to return to the airport (Ma et al., 2022). Moreover, the airport's image, shaped by passengers' perceptions of its reputation and service quality, plays an essential role. A positive image builds passenger trust and raises the likelihood of recommendations to others.

While substantial research has been conducted on how facility quality and airport image influence passenger satisfaction and loyalty, there is still limited understanding of how these factors affect travel intentions and word-of-mouth communication, particularly through the mediation of positive emotions. Many studies have mainly focused on passenger satisfaction without examining the emotional factors that influence passenger behavior and decisions. For example, Antwi et al. (2022) found that affective image and satisfaction are important mediators between airport staff assistance and passenger loyalty (Antwi et al., 2020). Similarly, Ma et al. (2022) emphasized that well-functioning facilities, clear layout, and cleanliness enhance passenger satisfaction, which in turn increases travel intentions. These studies highlight the role of mediators like satisfaction, affective image, and relationship quality in shaping passenger loyalty and behavior. However, the influence of positive emotions as a mediator between facility functionality, airport image, travel intentions, and word-of-mouth remains underexplored (Saut & Song, 2022). Additionally, research by Usman et al. (2023) indicates that passenger satisfaction and relationship quality mediate the relationship between airport image and loyalty (Giao & Vuong, 2021).

To address this gap, the current study aims to explore the mediating role of positive emotions in the relationship between airport facilities, airport image, travel intentions, and word-of-mouth communication. This study will provide deeper insights into how these factors influence passenger behavior. Specifically focusing on Haluoleo Kendari Airport, the research seeks to offer a more refined understanding of how positive emotions shape passenger behavior, which can assist airport managers in enhancing services and marketing strategies. Moreover, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on airport management and passenger behavior in the expanding aviation industry.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing a survey method to gather data from airport passengers. A quantitative approach was selected because it allows for systematic, objective measurement of the variables being studied and facilitates statistical analysis to test the proposed hypotheses. Data was collected through customized questionnaires designed to assess variables such as airport image, airport facilities, positive emotions, travel intentions, and word-of-mouth communication. The sample included 220 passengers, chosen using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that only passengers with adequate experience at the studied airport were included. This method was employed to ensure the respondents' relevance to the research objectives. Data collection took place at Halu Oleo Kendari Airport, where questionnaires were distributed to passengers either waiting for their flights or who had just arrived. The questionnaire was divided into several sections, each dedicated to a different variable. The measurement of airport image was adapted from Saut & Song (2022), positive emotions from Pantouvakis & Gerou (2023), and travel intention, facility functionality, and word of mouth from Batouei et al. (2020). The indicators for each variable were drawn from previous studies and tested for validity and reliability. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The gathered data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). SEM-PLS

was chosen due to its ability to manage complex models involving multiple latent variables and indicators, and because it does not require strict data distribution assumptions, making it more adaptable for survey data. The results of the SEM-PLS analysis were used to evaluate the significance and strength of the relationships between airport image, airport facilities, positive emotions, travel intentions, and word-of-mouth communication

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The data analysis from this study revealed the demographic characteristics of the respondents, with a total sample of 385 individuals. In terms of gender, the majority were male (62.34%), while females made up 37.66%. Regarding age, most respondents were between 31-37 years old (63.64%), followed by those aged 24-30 years (22.6%), 45-51 years old (8.05%), and 38-44 years old (5.71%). As for education, the largest group held a Bachelor's degree (69.35%), followed by high school graduates (13.25%), those with a postgraduate degree (11.69%), and those with a DIII (5.71%). In terms of employment, the most common occupations were traders/self-employed and civil servants (37.14% each), followed by private employees (14.55%) and students (11.17%). Concerning income, the majority of respondents earned less than 5 million rupiah (63.12%), followed by those earning 6-10 million rupiah (14.55%), 11-15 million rupiah (8.57%), 16-20 million rupiah (8.31%), and more than 20 million rupiah (5.45%). The demographic profile of respondents is based on gender, age, and income. Most respondents were male, representing 63.64% of the sample, while females accounted for 36.36%. Regarding age, the largest group was in the 38-44 age range, with 40.45% of respondents. The next largest age groups were 24-30 years (23.64%), 31-37 years (15.45%), and 45-51 years (20.45%). As for income, the majority of respondents earned between 11-15 million rupiah (30.45%), while only 9.55% earned more than 20 million rupiah. Respondents earning less than 5 million rupiah numbered 19.09%, and those with incomes between 6-10 million rupiah made up 24.09%.

Table 1. Results of the Measurement Model

Variables	Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Facility functionality	X1_1	0,945	0,803	0,811	0,628
	X1_2	0,936			
Airport image	X2_1	0,733	0,870	0,873	0,885
	X2_2	0,781			
	X2_3	0,838			
	X2_4	0,814			
Positive Emotions	Y1_1	0,936	0,924	0,925	0,868
	Y1_2	0,929			
	Y1_3	0,930			
Word of Mouth	Y2_1	0,925	0,774	0,788	0,687
	Y2_2	0,910			
	Y2_3	0,894			
Travel intention	Y3_1	0,846	0,896	0,896	0,828
	Y3_2	0,781			
	Y3_3	0,858			

Table 1 displays the results of the measurement model analysis for the five key variables: Facility Functionality, Airport Image, Positive Emotions, Word of Mouth, and Travel Intention. Each variable was assessed using several items, and the evaluation was based on factors such as loading values, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). The loading values reflect how effectively each item represents the variable being measured. For instance, Facility Functionality was assessed using two items, both of which had very high loading values (0.945 and 0.936), indicating that these items are highly effective at measuring facility functionality. With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.803 and composite reliability of 0.811, this variable meets the necessary reliability standards.

The variable Positive Emotions also showed excellent results, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.924 and composite reliability of 0.925, indicating outstanding consistency in measuring respondents' positive emotions. Both Airport Image and Travel Intention demonstrated strong reliability, with AVE values exceeding 0.8, meaning that most of the construct variance is accounted for by the measurement items. On the other hand, the Word of Mouth variable had a slightly lower Cronbach's alpha (0.774), but it still surpassed the acceptable threshold of 0.7, meaning it remains valid for this model. Overall, the results confirm that the measurements for all variables in this model are consistent and reliable.

Table 2. Hypotheses relationship testing

Direct Effect	Original sample	P values
Airport image on Positive Emotions	0,211	0,006
Airport image on Travel Intention	0,245	0,005
Facility functionality on Positive Emotions	0,487	0,000
Facility functionality Word of Mouth	0,442	0,000
Positive Emotions Travel Intention	0,437	0,000
Positive Emotions Word of Mouth	0,354	0,000
Indirect Effect		
Airport _image -> Positive _Emotions -> Travel _Intention	0,092	0,019
Airport _image -> Positive _Emotions -> Word of _Mouth	0,075	0,083
Facility _functionality -> Positive _Emotions -> Travel _Intention	0,213	0,003
Facility _functionality -> Positive _Emotions -> Word of _Mouth	0,172	0,004

Table 2 displays the results of hypothesis testing, offering important insights into the relationships between the study variables, as well as analyzing both direct and indirect effects. The table presents the Original Sample values (representing coefficient estimates) along with the corresponding P-Values, which indicate the statistical significance of the relationships being tested. This data is vital for understanding the strength and reliability of the observed effects between variables.

Looking at the direct effects, it is evident that Airport Image has a significant direct effect on Positive Emotions, with a coefficient of 0.211 and a p-value of 0.006. This suggests that a favorable perception of the airport directly enhances travelers' positive emotional responses. Likewise, Airport Image significantly influences Travel Intention, with a coefficient of 0.245 and a p-value of 0.005, implying that a positive airport image can motivate travelers to plan future trips.

Facility Functionality, which reflects the operational efficiency and quality of airport services, also has a significant impact on Positive Emotions, with a high coefficient of 0.487 and an extremely significant p-value of 0.000. This emphasizes the importance of well-maintained facilities in shaping travelers' emotional experiences. Additionally, Facility Functionality strongly affects Word of Mouth, with a coefficient of 0.442 and a p-value of 0.000, suggesting that satisfied travelers are more likely to recommend the airport. Positive Emotions also play an essential role in influencing other outcomes. The analysis reveals that Positive Emotions significantly affect Travel Intention, with a coefficient of 0.437 and a p-value of 0.000, highlighting that travelers who experience positive emotions at the airport are more likely to have future travel intentions. Furthermore, Positive Emotions significantly influence Word of Mouth, with a coefficient of 0.354 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that emotionally satisfied travelers are more likely to share positive feedback and recommend the airport. All these direct relationships are statistically significant, with p-values well below the 0.05 threshold, supporting the proposed hypotheses.

Regarding the indirect effects, the analysis shows that Airport Image indirectly impacts Travel Intention through Positive Emotions. The coefficient for this indirect effect is 0.092, with a p-value of 0.019, demonstrating that Positive Emotions serve as a vital mediator in the relationship between airport image and travelers' intentions to travel. Airport Image also has an indirect effect on Word of Mouth, although it is close to the significance threshold, with a coefficient of 0.075 and a p-value of 0.083. While not as strong as other effects, this result suggests that Positive Emotions still mediate the relationship between airport image and travelers' willingness to recommend the airport.

Facility Functionality also has notable indirect effects on both Travel Intention and Word of Mouth through Positive Emotions. The coefficient for Travel Intention is 0.213, with a p-value of 0.003, indicating that Positive Emotions play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between facility functionality and travelers' future intentions. For Word of Mouth, the coefficient is 0.172, with a p-value of 0.004, reinforcing the idea that Positive Emotions help translate satisfaction with airport facilities into positive recommendations to others.

Discussion

The results indicate that a positive perception of an airport's image directly boosts travelers' emotional responses, making them feel more positive during their experience. This emotional boost also motivates them to plan future trips, demonstrating the impact of a well-regarded airport image on travel intentions. Furthermore, the functionality of the airport, especially the efficiency of its facilities, plays a key role in shaping travelers' emotions. When the airport's facilities are well-managed and easy to use, travelers are more likely to have positive and satisfying experiences. This emotional satisfaction not only increases their intention to travel again but also encourages them to share positive feedback with others, spreading word of mouth.

Emotions serve as a vital connection between the quality of the airport's image, the functionality of its facilities, and the behaviors of travelers. Positive emotions directly affect whether travelers will plan future trips and recommend the airport to others. The study highlights that travelers who have a positive emotional experience are more likely to recommend the airport, emphasizing the role of customer satisfaction in fostering word-of-mouth promotion. Additionally, both the airport's image and the functionality of its facilities exert indirect effects on travel intentions and word-of-mouth recommendations through the positive emotions experienced by travelers. For instance, even if a positive airport image does

not directly lead to recommendations, the emotions triggered by that image can act as a mediator, encouraging travelers to recommend the airport. Similarly, the smooth operation of airport facilities generates positive emotional responses, which, in turn, increase the likelihood of future travel plans and recommendations. Overall, the study highlights the importance of both the airport's image and the effectiveness of its facilities in creating positive emotional experiences. These emotions are crucial in driving travel intentions and word-of-mouth recommendations, suggesting that airports focused on improving customer satisfaction should prioritize enhancing both their image and operational efficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that efficient airport facilities and a positive airport image have a significant impact on travelers' intentions to travel and their likelihood of recommending the airport to others. Positive emotions act as a key mediator, enhancing the connection between the quality of airport facilities and image with travel intentions and word-of-mouth recommendations. The findings reveal that positive emotions strongly influence future travel intentions and word of mouth, underscoring the importance of a positive emotional experience at the airport in increasing passengers' willingness to return and recommend the airport. However, there are some limitations to the study. First, it was conducted at a single airport, meaning the findings may not be applicable to all airports or locations. Second, the study employed a quantitative approach, which may not capture the more complex elements of passengers' experiences. Additionally, factors like customer service, cleanliness, and security, which could also influence positive emotions, were not specifically explored. For future research, it is suggested to expand the study to include other airports or regions to determine whether similar results are observed. Qualitative methods could also be used to gain deeper insights into additional factors, such as customer service and interactions with airport staff, that may shape passengers' emotional experiences. Moreover, incorporating other variables such as cleanliness, comfort, and safety could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting travel intentions and word of mouth among airport passengers.

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