Predicting the Potential Effect of Artificial Intelligence's Passenger Application Service to Words of Mouth Mediated by Passenger Satisfaction

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Abstract. This research aims to see the potential influence of customer service applications that use artificial intelligence on passenger satisfaction with word of mouth as mediation. The literature review used the concept of customer satisfaction, word of mouth and perception to describe views on the use of artificial intelligence. This research approach is quantitative, involving 140 respondents, all of whom are bus transportation service passengers in South Sulawesi. The incoming data is processed using the Partial Least Square approach. The results obtained show all hypotheses are supported.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Passenger Satisfaction, Words of Mouth*

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1 Introduction

South Sulawesi, Indonesia's intriguing island, entices visitors with its vibrant cultural tapestry, spectacular terrain, and beautiful beaches. Exploring this varied area may be a rewarding experience, and for the budget-conscious explorer, bus travel is a genuine and cost-effective way to uncover Sulawesi's hidden beauties.

Sulawesi's bus transit network is enormous, linking large cities like Makassar, Manado, Palu, and Kendari to innumerable towns and villages set between vivid rice terraces and towering mountains. Several bus companies operate on the island, catering to a variety of prices and travel preferences. With a total population on Sulawesi Island of 20.34 million people in 2022 [1] allows for large opportunities for bus transportation users. Sulawesi is included in the Eastern Indonesia category and bus transport as a business has potential in Eastern Indonesia that remains quite attractive. Eastern Indonesia has a wide range of potential that depend on natural resource abundance, tourism, and government involvement in infrastructure development [2].

Preliminary research was carried out in early 2024 to explore the potential of transportation bus service companies, which have had several achievements even during the COVID-19 era. During preliminary research, researchers involved a company providing bus services in South Sulawesi. To explore the problem, the researcher refers to a qualitative research approach, wherein the data collection process, conducting interviews, refers to the 5W1H (What, Who, Where, When, Why, and How) interview technique. The resource persons involved are managers of bus transportation services in Sulawesi. From the results of interviews conducted on March 2, 2024, several interesting results were obtained, including 1) bus transportation in Sulawesi is used to help passengers reach areas that are difficult to reach by plane and are very inconvenient if traveling using private vehicles, 2) needs to use the bus for work purposes, this then prompted a transportation bus company in Sulawesi to conduct a study of the possibility of using the latest technology, namely Artificial Intelligence, which is considered to be able to help the company in providing services to its customers who have repeatedly used the company's services. [Note: Need to elaborate on the description of this preliminary research – methodology, specifically how this preliminary research was conducted and the underlying reasons to do it]

Bus transportation thrives on passenger satisfaction. Previous studies have shown that public transportation, such as buses, can increase satisfaction [3]. In today's hyper-connected world, great experiences convert into positive word-of-mouth (WOM), a potent marketing tool that may dramatically affect client behaviour. As positive WOM will lead to people’s willingness to utilize a service Positive word-of-mouth is more effective and has a greater effect on people's willingness to use a service than negative word-of-mouth, with brand equity enhancing positive WOM and acting as a buffer to negative WOM [4]. Moreover, positive or negative word of mouth affects customer satisfaction by promoting or lowering customers' expectations, with varying effects on experience goods and search goods [5]. Conversely, negative experiences can spread just as quickly, damaging a company's reputation and bottom line.

Passenger expectations are constantly evolving. Passenger expectations significantly affect airport service quality, with nonfrequent passengers showing a significant relationship with all service quality dimensions, while frequent passengers show a significant relationship with the "processes" dimension [6]. Passenger-centric innovation in public transport enhances existing core functionality by focusing on the evolving needs, desires, and values of passengers [7].

Passengers, demand several benefits from using transportation, especially bus transportation. The quality of transport services impacts passenger demand for suburban bus transport, which can contribute to the stabilization and improvement of the sector [7]. The traditional bus industry faces challenges in designing and changing routes but applying multi-source data analysis techniques can help reduce expenses and improve efficiency [8]. In the case of bus transportation, optimizing bus feeder services can reduce costs, improve mobility, and reduce air pollution by minimizing headway, vehicle size, and route choice [9] through technology. Artificial intelligence technology in intelligent traffic systems improves vehicle scheduling and communication efficiency, with a success rate of over 95% under different load rates [10].

AI offers a transformative approach to passenger service. Artificial Intelligence can improve transportation by reducing congestion, increasing customer travel time reliability, and enhancing productivity and economy, but successful applications require detailed knowledge of AI connections and transportation specifications [11].

Furthermore, AI's ability to analyze vast amounts of data presents exciting possibilities. AI and big data analytics enable efficient intelligent transportation in smart cities, reducing travel time and energy consumption while improving customer satisfaction [12], also there are some advantages of using AI in bus transportation. AI in transportation can collect traffic data to alleviate traffic congestion and improve public transport scheduling [13].

Exploring the potential implications of AI in passenger service requires a focus on how to effectively combine AI with human knowledge, finding a balance between efficiency and personalisation while retaining the human touch that customers love. This article will be structured with the first part being the introduction, the second part being a literature review, the third part being the method, and the fourth part being the findings, and it will end with a conclusion.

2. Literature review

To explain variables in this research, we use The Service-Dominant Logic (SDL). SDL is a paradigm for viewing customers as value producers in their relationships with product and service suppliers. Service-dominant logic (SDL) has evolved and can enhance value creation in service ecosystems when integrated with midrange theories and strategic frameworks [14]. A service logic is the most effective marketing approach for most goods-producing businesses, as it fits better with their current context and adapts to changing marketing contexts [15]. Key principles of SDL include product-centric manufacturing companies can enhance value through four value logics, bridging the gap between theory and practice [16]. Service-dominant logic service systems are superior to goods-dominant logic systems in that they facilitate the co-creation of value-in-context, improve customer satisfaction, and enhance user experience [17].

Passenger satisfaction is a complex construct influenced by various factors. Factors influencing passenger satisfaction with public city transport include service

continuity, frequency, information rate, station proximity, and vehicle cleanliness [18]. Service quality, perceived value, and emotional experience all contribute to overall satisfaction and behavioral intention in the visitor attraction context [19]. AI can positively impact these factors. For example, AI-enabled chatbots deliver better personalization, quality of service, and hassle-free service to achieve better customer experience [20]. Highly personalized recommendations are useful for recommending simple technology products for experienced customers, while partially personalized one-to-many recommendations are more useful for recommending complicated technology products [21]. Personalized recommendations can increase perceived value by ensuring services cater to individual needs. AI can predict stress levels in real-time using physiological signals during long journeys, potentially reducing passenger stress and contributing to positive emotional experiences [22].

Hypothesis 1: AI application in passenger service will affect passenger satisfaction positively

Consistently, existing research shows a link between satisfaction and word-of-mouth intentions, and this also occurs in the transportation sector, as found from previous study [24] research that raised the issue of satisfaction with word-of-mouth in the transportation sector showed consistency over time, as found from previous study [25]. Satisfaction has a stronger relationship with positive word-of-mouth than loyalty [16]. For instance, research focusing on airport experience, found components like service fairness, servicescape, encounter, and self-service technologies significantly impact passengers' satisfaction and intentions to revisit and spread positive word-of-mouth [17]. Passenger satisfaction is positively associated with their revisit intention and word of mouth [18].

Hypothesis 2: Passenger satisfaction will affect words-of-mouth positively

WOM is a powerful marketing tool influencing consumer decisions. Word-of-mouth (WOM) is a powerful marketing tool influencing consumer decisions, expressing satisfaction and distastes about products and services [26]. AI and IoT-driven sustainable practices in airlines can enhance passenger confidence, satisfaction, and positive word of mouth by providing better quality services [27]. WOM is a crucial factor influencing passenger behaviour. Positive WOM drives brand loyalty, attracts new customers, and increases revenue [28].

Hypothesis 3: Passenger satisfaction mediates the relationship between AI applications in passenger service and word-of-mouth.

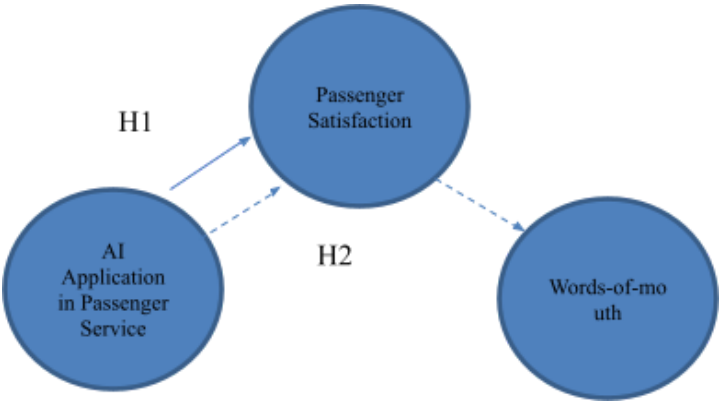

Fig. 1. Model (as visualised from hypothesis)

3. Method

This research will adopt a survey-based research design, by collecting data from bus transportation customers operated by PO. Borlindo, is known as a young but expansive bus service provider in the current innovation of transportation services in South Sulawesi, among other things because of the novelty of the types of vehicles used (Scania, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo) and also because it is known as the first company in Indonesia which provides an experience of using inter-city – inter-provincial bus transportation with triple-decker buses. For current ticket purchasing services, this company provides convenience by purchasing online tickets which are integrated with electronic mail and short messaging service [29].

The population for this study comes from passengers who use PO bus transportation services. Borlindo, and to determine the sample using non-random sampling or purposive sampling technique. In this case, the research sample is PO bus transportation users. Borlindo has become a consistent customer more than 3 times a week throughout 2024. For the sample size, the researcher adopted the view that the number of statement items can be used as a basis for calculating [30], where in this study there were 12 items, so referring to a ratio of 20:1, it is assumed that the ideal sample for this study is 240 people.

Data collection for this research was carried out by distributing questionnaires online to passengers who were waiting for departure, using a structured interview technique approach [31]. Although this technique is better known in research with a qualitative approach, can be implemented in a quantitative approach, especially when there is concern that the respondent does not have an interest in self-administering.

To measure passenger satisfaction, four measurement items are used, one of which is the statement "I feel satisfied with the level of safety provided by using bus transportation". Then, to measure AI applications in passenger service, five measurement items were used, one of which was the statement "I feel the presence of artificial intelligence is a good thing for humans" and to measure word-of-mouth, "I would advise other people to use bus transportation services". All items were adopted from previous study, for passenger satisfaction and words of mouth we adopt [35]; for AI application for passenger service we developed the instruments based on findings from expert interview.

To analyze the data obtained from distributing questionnaires, a PLS-SEM analysis approach was used. For this analysis, there will be two stages of analysis, namely measurement model assessment and structural model assessment. For the measurement model assessment, a threshold of 0.7 is used, then for the structural model assessment, the threshold P-Values < 0.05 is used, while for R-Square it refers to the low, medium and high effect explanation parameters. [32].

4. Findings

Survey data collection was carried out over two months, namely between April and May 2024, starting on April 19 2024. The number of responses received was 140 people, and this was considered sufficient because this research refers to sample calculation based on the sample-to-variable ratio approach. From the results of data collection, an overview of the respondents who filled out the survey is shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Respondents Profile

Characteristics	Count
Gender	
Male	107
Female	33
Age (Years)	
21 — 30	78
31 — 40	33
< 20	18
41 — 50	11
Profession	
Employee	
Employers	
Self-employed	
Reasons of Using Bus Transportation	
Work purpose	80
Other than work purpose	60
TOTAL	140

After getting an overview of the respondent's profile, the next step taken by the researcher was to carry out data measurements referring to the PLS-SEM analysis stage, where the first step was to carry out a measurement model assessment. The results are shown in Tables, below.

Table 2. Outer Loadings

	AI Application in Passenger Service	Passenger Satisfaction	Words-of-Mouth
AI1	0,886		
AI2	0,872		
AI3	0,885		
AI4	0,885		
AI5	0,844		

PS1		0,797	
PS2		0,887	
PS3		0,847	
PS4		0,813	
WOM1			0,927
WOM2			0,917
WOM3			0,915

In Table 2, above, the results of outer loadings are presented, which shows that the relationship between latent variables and indicators is > 0.7 or in other words, outer loadings meet the criteria that have been previously determined and can be continued to the next stage, namely for Construct. Reliability and Validity then Cronbachs Alpha/Composite Reliability, rho_A, AVE, discriminant validity.

Table 3. Reflective – Robustness Checks (1)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
AI Application in Passenger Service	0,923	0,926	0,765
Passenger Satisfaction	0,857	0,857	0,700
Words-of-Mouth	0,909	0,911	0,846

From Table 3, above, it can be seen that all the values in the test are > 0.7, or in other words this measurement meets the criteria.

Table 4. Reflective – Robustness Checks (2)

	AI Application in Passenger Service	Passenger Satisfaction	Words-of-Mouth
AI Application in Passenger Service	0,875		
Passenger Satisfaction	0,813	0,837	
Words-of-Mouth	0,881	0,844	0,920

Meanwhile, Table 4 displays the discriminant validity results, which refer to Fornell-Larcker; these results suggest that the majority of outer loadings in this study are > 0.85, and from this calculation, it is known that the results obtained meet the specified criteria. After all measurement model assessments have been completed, to aid visualization, Figure 2 is presented below.

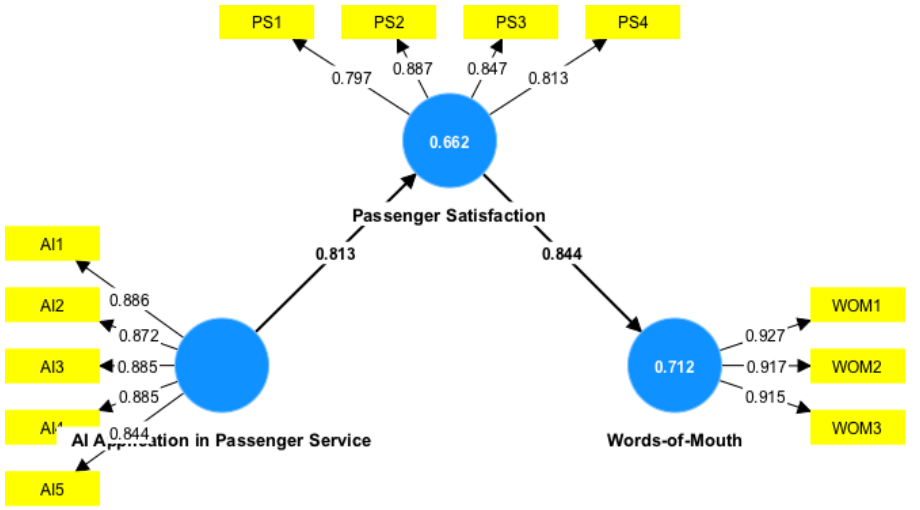

Fig. 2. Measurement Model

Based on Table 5., below all results are < 4, or there is no indication that multicollinearity is occurring. Based on the VIF concept, measurement results below number 4 do not require further investigation and do not require corrections to the items.

Table 5. Variance Inflation Factor

	VIF
AI1	3,231
AI2	2,906
AI3	3,178
AI4	3,560
AI5	2,989
PS1	1,785
PS2	2,774
PS3	2,431
PS4	1,835
WOM1	3,134
WOM2	2,963

WOM3	2,969

Based on Table 6, below, the R-squared value has a value between 0-1 or can be explained as follows. For passenger satisfaction, it can be explained by 66.2% of the observed variability. Meanwhile, Words-of-Mouth can be explained by 71.2% of the observed variability.

Table 6. Explanatory Power and Out-of-Sample Predictive Power (R-Square)

	R-square	**R-square adjusted**
Passenger Satisfaction	0,662	0,659
Words-of-Mouth	0,712	0,710

Based on the bootstrapping test, the results obtained, as shown in Table 5 below, show that all hypotheses are supported because the P-Values < 0.05. For visualization of the structural assessment model, Figure 3 is presented below.

Table 7. Bootstrapping

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
AI Application in Passenger Service -> Passenger Satisfaction	0,813	0,816	0,069	11,722	0,000
Passenger Satisfaction -> Words-of-Mouth	0,844	0,845	0,067	12,556	0,000
AI Application in Passenger Service -> Passenger Satisfaction -> Words-of-Mouth	0,686	0,694	0,108	6,328	0,000

Furthermore, after the PLS-SEM testing has been carried out, in the next stage, a discussion of the results of statistical testing will be presented, along with the phenomena and literature review discussed in the previous section.

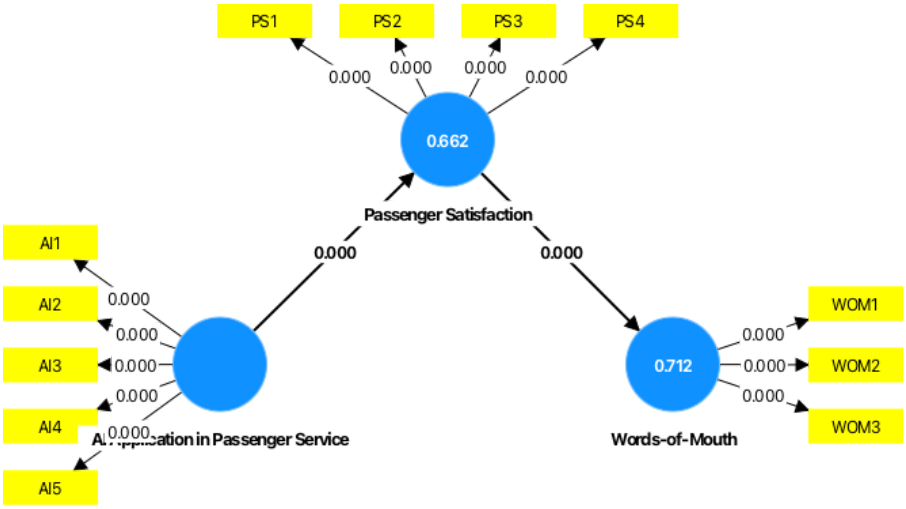

Fig. 3. Structural Model

5. Discussions

The phenomenon of bus transportation in South Sulawesi was a motivating factor for conducting this research. In the previous section, namely in the introduction, the urgency and objectives of this research were presented, which focused on the word-of-mouth of the bus transportation business which was considered to be influenced by AI applications and the involvement of satisfaction from transportation customers. This research was conducted in South Sulawesi, by taking one of the Bus Transportation POs, namely Borlindo, which is considered to represent the phenomenon of this research. The sample obtained was 140 people, which was actually below the target number of 240 people. However, due to the principle of bootstrapping data analysis at the structural model assessment stage, the results of this research are believed to be relevant to the target respondents sampled.

The first hypothesis, that AI application in passenger service will affect passenger satisfaction positively is supported. In many studies, it has been found that the use of AI in services can increase consumer satisfaction. One of the study results stated that during the pandemic, AI customer service was statistically significant and had an impact on passenger satisfaction [33]. The majority of respondents involved in this research are frequent users of PO Borlindo, therefore for frequent users of transportation services, there is a possibility that implementing the passenger service application can increase service user satisfaction. Currently, existing studies still show the existence of AI, especially in air transportation services [34] [35], however, AI is a form of technology that can be applied in all segments and needs, therefore the implementation of AI applications in passenger service, which in this case is bus transportation.

The second hypothesis, that passenger satisfaction will affect word-of-mouth positively is supported. As previous studies show passengers' satisfaction is

associated with their intentions to revisit and positive word-of-mouth [24]. Satisfaction with transportation, safety, and prices strongly influences satisfaction with the destination, which positively influences word-of-mouth recommendations [36]. The results of the research, it encourages urgency to maintain consumer satisfaction, in this case, passengers, so it is hoped that the effect obtained is the desire of consumers to convey information related to business, namely bus transportation services offered by PO Borlindo to colleagues or co-workers and even their families.

The third hypothesis, passenger satisfaction mediates the relationship between AI application in passenger service and word-of-mouth is supported. Therefore, the implementation of AI applications, which is one of the technologies, can influence the word-of-mouth of consumers using PO bus transportation. Borlindo, whenever there is satisfaction. Many things can be taken into consideration, including the consumer's desire to pass on their experience to others, supported by the perception that the presence of AI can help consumers realize their expectations when using bus transportation services, in this case, transportation operated by PO. Borlindo.

6. Conclusions

The conclusion that can be obtained from the results of this research is the word-of-mouth factor in the bus transportation business, in this case, the sample comes from PO. Borlindo, one of the companies in South Sulawesi, shows the factors that are considered influences, one of which is AI application in passenger service. Among those who use bus transportation in South Sulawesi, they have the view that passenger satisfaction can influence their desire to share their experiences with other parties.

Furthermore, further study is needed to identify the particular aspects that impact passengers' impressions of AI-powered services. In this environment, investigating the possible implications of artificial intelligence (AI) applications in passenger services becomes increasingly relevant.

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