

Airportscape And Its Effects On Emotions And Satisfaction: The Moderating Roles Of Sense Of Place And Environmental Responsiveness

Pantelitsa Yerimou, Christos Themistocleous

Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus

Summary Statement

This study delves into travellers' experiences, including an in-depth evaluation of both physical and human-related aspects that contribute to the airport environment. Specifically, the study investigates the impact of the airport environment on the emotions evoked, observing these emotional reactions and the environment as preceding factors to airport satisfaction. Notably, the study digs into the effects of two key moderators, sense of place and environmental responsiveness, reviewing their significant impact in this academic context.

Competitive Short Paper

In recent decades, there has been a shift in airports, propelling the industry towards new marketing-oriented strategies. Several studies have determined airport experience using environmental stimuli such as layout, signage, and ambience, focusing primarily on physical dimensions. Nevertheless, employees and the human factor in general are stated as an important element in a servicescape (Roy et al., 2019). Even though "emotions are core to tourism experiences" (Hosany et al., 2021, p. 1391), their exact effect remains a significant lacuna in the tourism literature (Ali et al., 2016).

Echoing earlier inquiries for expanding research on travellers' behaviour, research calls for additional examinations of the way the airport environment affects visitors' emotions and perceptions, such as satisfaction. From previous measurements, satisfaction is considered to be a reliable indicator of future behaviour intentions (Yerimou & Themistocleous, 2023). Besides, currently, it is thought that there is a necessity to portray local values and symbols (Aritin et al., 2015), however, the effect of communicating a sense of place remains ambiguous (Van Oel & Van den Berkhof, 2013). Similarly, travellers' environmental responsiveness has been stated to have significant effects (Eroglu et al., 2003) yet it has not been explored in this context.

In this study, we examine how the broader categories of ambience, space, signs, employees, and safety affect travellers' emotions and satisfaction. We explore in this process the moderating effects

of sense of place and environmental responsiveness. Using an integrated-immersive approach, we employed a concurrent mixed-method study of 25 interviews (n=25) and 384 researcher-administered questionnaires (n=384) to international travellers from over 20 countries. Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data, while structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to assess the study's hypotheses and proposed model.

Our findings revealed that the airport environment has considerable effects on travellers' emotions (Pleasure and Arousal). Findings identify emotions and airport environment as significant and direct predictors of travellers' satisfaction. Notably, the analysis of the hypotheses indicated two significant moderating factors. Environmental responsiveness appeared as an important moderator in the interaction between airports and emotions, while sense of place significantly moderated the association between airport environment and satisfaction.

Our study sheds light on the integration of cognitive and emotional responses towards the airport environment. Findings from both interview and questionnaire data help us understand the interplay between various environmental stimuli and their influential roles on travellers' emotions and perceptions. Through these findings, airports can customise methods to improve the physical environment and consequently emotional reactions and satisfaction respectively – a major gap in the context of travel (Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2020). Complementing this, the identification of environmental responsiveness and sense of place as key modifiers provides useful information for airport marketing managers and destination marketers looking to improve the overall travel experience and communicate their country brand within airport servicescapes.