

## An Utilization Of Vacant Areas in Railink Buildings to Support Non Aeronautical Revenue at Kualanamu International Airport

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### ABSTRACT

Kualanamu International Airport still relies on aeronautical revenue of 80%, while non-aeronautical contributions are only 20%. This condition requires diversification of revenue sources, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. This research aims to analyze strategies for utilizing vacant areas in Railink buildings to increase non-aeronautical revenue. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach through observation, interviews with commercial unit managers and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the value proposition canvas business model. The results showed that the vacant area is feasible to develop as a Commercial Lifestyle Hub that includes a children's playground and event spaces. The potential contribution from this development is estimated to increase non-aeronautical revenue by 35-40% in five years. Key strategies include digital promotion, local collaboration and direct marketing. This optimization of non-productive assets not only strengthens the airport's financial stability, but also supports local economic growth and long-term competitiveness.

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## INTRODUCTION

Air transportation is one of the most efficient and effective modes of transportation in supporting connectivity between regions, especially in archipelagic countries such as Indonesia. Compared to land and sea modes, air transportation offers a wide range and shorter travel time, so it has an important role in supporting community mobility and economic activity[7]. Along with the development of technology and the increasing needs of society, the national aviation industry continues to grow, which requires more innovative and business-oriented airport management approaches [1]



**Figure 1** Passenger Movement Chart of Kualanamu International Airport

(Source: Author Documentation, 2025)

Airports, as key nodes within the air transportation system, no longer function solely as centers for flight operations but have evolved into hubs of economic activity through the development of non-aeronautical services and facilities [2], [3]. Kualanamu International Airport, as one of Indonesia's major international gateways, faces similar challenges. Based on passenger movement data from 2022 to 2024, fluctuations in passenger growth are observed, indicating potential vulnerability in airport revenue streams that remain heavily dependent on aeronautical services [7]. On the other hand, the post-pandemic recovery of the aviation industry is still slow, influenced by various factors such as fuel price volatility, changes in travel behavior, and global economic dynamics.

Furthermore, the post-pandemic recovery of the aviation industry remains gradual and uneven, influenced by factors such as fuel price volatility, shifts in passenger travel behavior, and global economic uncertainty [3]. These conditions highlight the importance of strengthening non-aeronautical revenue as a more stable and sustainable source of airport income. The key issue addressed in this study is how strategies can be implemented to optimize non-aeronautical revenue at Kualanamu International Airport through the utilization of vacant areas, particularly within the Railink building. Currently, the contribution of non-aeronautical revenue at Kualanamu is relatively low compared to other international airports that have successfully adopted the commercial airport hub concept [2], [8].

The Railink building on the terminal side of the airport represents a strategic yet underutilized asset. Its role as a connection point between airport rail services and other transportation modes, such as buses and taxis, provides high potential for passenger traffic and commercial activity. However, to date, there has been no comprehensive analysis of commercial development strategies for this area that could support sustainable growth in non-aeronautical revenue [6].

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the potential and strategic utilization of vacant spaces within the Railink building at Kualanamu International Airport as part of efforts to diversify and strengthen non-aeronautical revenue streams. The findings are expected to contribute to airport management decision-making processes related to commercial area development that is adaptive to changes in the modern aviation industry [2], [9]. Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the potential and strategies for utilizing vacant areas in the Kualanamu International Airport Railink building as part of efforts to diversify and strengthen non-aeronautical revenue. It is expected that the

results of this study can make a real contribution to airport management decision making to develop commercial areas that are adaptive to changes in the modern aviation industry.

## **METHODS**

### **1.1 Research Design**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research approach aimed at understanding in depth the phenomenon of suboptimal utilization of vacant areas within the Railink building at Kualanamu International Airport. The research focuses on identifying development potential and formulating strategies to enhance non-aeronautical revenue. Initial activities included direct site observation, followed by data collection through interviews and documentation, consistent with qualitative research methodology principles [5].

### **1.2 Research Object**

The object of this research is a vacant area located within the Railink building on the terminal side of Kualanamu International Airport. This area serves as a convergence point for airport rail services, taxis, and intercity buses, making it a strategic location for commercial development. The scope of the study is limited to this area to allow for focused and in-depth analysis of spaces with the highest development potential [6].

### **1.3 Data collection technique**

#### **a. Observation**

Direct observation was conducted to assess the physical condition of the vacant area, passenger flow patterns, and potential commercial opportunities.

#### **Documentation**

Supporting documents, including field photographs, promotional materials, and airport commercial planning documents, were collected to strengthen the contextual analysis.

#### **b. Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Commercial Unit Manager of PT Angkasa Pura Aviation, who is directly responsible for non-aeronautical business management, tenant leasing strategies, and asset utilization planning. Although only one interviewee was involved, the informant's role and authority make the data obtained relevant and representative for addressing the research objectives [8].

### **1.4 Data Validity**

Data validity was ensured through triangulation by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation to enhance the credibility and reliability of the research results [5].

### **1.5 Data Analysis Techniques**

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis, in which findings from observations, interviews, and documentation were systematically organized and presented in narrative form to identify patterns, draw conclusions, and address the research questions [5].

### **1.6 Place and Time of Research**

This research was conducted at Kualanamu International Airport, which is the location of the author undergoing On The Job Training (OJT), specifically at the railink building on the terminal side. This research took place from October 2024 to February 2025 which went through the stages of observation, data collection, data processing, and preparation of the final project.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 2.1 Utilization of Vacant Land Area at Kualanamu International Airport

The observation shows that the empty area in the Kualanamu International Airport Railink building is a space that was previously used for commercial activities, but is now unproductive after the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, in terms of location, this area is very strategic because it is directly connected to the arrival terminal and is an important traffic point for airport train passengers, carriers, and public transportation users such as buses and taxis. The non-utilization of this area is a loss in terms of non-aeronautical revenue because the space basically has a commercial installation, and if it is maximally utilized, it can generate revenue from tenant leases, advertisements, and other economic activities. This condition shows a stagnation in innovation in the utilization of non-aeronautical space, which is an indicator that the airport's business transformation has not run optimally.



**Figure 2** Vacant Area in Railink Building  
(Source: Author Documentation 2025)

In terms of operations, the frequency of travel and flight routes continues to increase. Infrastructure also continues to be improved, in addition to the addition of airport rail services that have been connected so as to provide wider access for people in the North Sumatra region to go directly to the airport without the need to change modes of transportation. The lack of innovation in the utilization of non-aeronautical space is an indicator that the airport business transformation has not gone smoothly. For this reason, an ambitious strategy is needed in developing the potential of commercial areas to support non-aeronautical revenue so that it will support the competitiveness of Kualanamu International Airport as a modern international airport.

Based on an interview with the Commercial Team Manager of PT Angkasa Pura Aviation, Kualanamu International Airport's revenue is generated from the aeronautical side by 80%, while from the non-aeronautical side by 20%. This shows that Kualanamu International Airport is still dependent on the aeronautical sector as their main revenue. The high dependence on flight traffic makes airport revenue vulnerable to fluctuations in passenger volumes, the global situation, and the changing dynamics of the aviation industry.

The existence of vacant areas that can be utilized will be focused on in its utilization because the existence of these areas is unproductive even though it holds potential that can be maximized its utilization. The existence of this unproductive vacant area is a strategic opportunity that can be maximized to increase revenue contributions. It is attempted to focus through non-aeronautical revenue so that the airport does not only depend on the aeronautical sector. The position of the railink building which is located at the traffic point of passengers, deliverymen, and users of public transportation such as airport trains, taxis, and buses makes its existence very potential to be developed into a multifunctional commercial space that can meet the needs of airport visitors.

An innovative solution that can be done to optimize the area is to build a commercial lifestyle hub concept that includes a children's playground, retail, and event spaces: Commercial lifestyle hub is a concept of commercial activities designed to fulfill people's lifestyle needs in one place. This area not only provides shopping, but also dining, entertainment, and social spaces that encourage community

interaction. The effort is a strategic step in reducing dependence on aeronautical revenue and improving the airport's financial stability.

To realize this, the author proposes the creation of children's playground designed as a family entertainment facility with an indoor playground concept. In addition, the vacant area can be maximized by renting the area into an Event Space that provides a flexible area for exhibitions, bazaars, and cultural arts performances. The flexibility of this space can increase the commercial appeal of a location. By combining the concepts of an indoor playground and event space, the empty area in the railink building can be transformed into an activity center that not only provides entertainment but also strengthens the airport's positions as a commercial and recreational destination. The best marketing strategy to be carried out in order to successfully utilize the vacant land area is marketing communication, promotion and branding, marketing collaboration, and direct marketing to potential partners is the right way of commercial business development while strengthening the competitiveness of the airport.

## **2.2 Relevance of Lifestyle Hub Strategy in the Context of Kualanamu Airport**

The Commercial Lifestyle Hub development strategy is considered appropriate to be applied at Kualanamu International Airport because it can create added value from previously unproductive physical space. The lifestyle hub concept is an approach that combines elements of retail, co working space, entertainment, and social interaction in one integrated area. In contrast to traditional commercial area models that are only transaction-oriented, lifestyle hubs prioritize user experience, which is in line with modern consumer trends that seek comfort, entertainment, and emotional value in one place.

This strategy is considered more adaptive than simply leasing space to conventional commercial tenants without adjusting the concept. Experiences from other airports support the effectiveness of this strategy. For example, Soekarno-Hatta Airport through Terminal 3 developed an "airport mall" themed commercial area containing local F&B tenants, performing arts areas, and merchandise stores, which proved to be able to increase non-aeronautical revenue by 30% within 3 years (Angkasa Pura II, 2021). Meanwhile, Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) developed a lifestyle zone called Gateway@KLIA2 which is integrated with the train station, proving effective in attracting non-passenger visitors and expanding the airport's market potential.

## **2.3 Marketing Strategies carried out by the Airport**

To optimize the potential revenue from organizing culinary tenants and event spaces, Kualanamu International Airport must implement the right marketing strategy. This strategy not only attracts tenants, but also increases visits from passengers and airport visitors (non pax). Marketing strategies that can be done so that the utilization of vacant areas can run optimally is marketing communication, in a study conducted by Surti Wardani entitled "Strategic Analysis of Marketing Communication in Improving the Company's Economic Performance" an effective marketing communication strategy that includes the use of technology and digital media to maximize interactions that can be carried out with consumers. Digital content marketing provides opportunities for companies to create and disseminate valuable, appropriate, and consistent content to drive profitable consumer action. The digital strategy carried out by the airport manager in this case is content marketing which focuses on introducing a children's playground and disseminating information about ongoing events.

Promotions and branding need to be done to inform, persuade, and influence the public to visit the railink building area. Promotional activities such as soft launching can be done to attract the masses to experience first-hand the experience offered. Meanwhile, branding can be done by shaping the identity of the area. For example, interior design and space atmosphere that presents local culture combined with modern architectural design, gives an impression to visitors so as to make the area not just a transit place but a mini destination oriented to customer experience. In addition, marketing collaboration can be carried out by collaborating with potential partners to sponsor children's playground area, events, and other supporting facilities. And last, direct marketing is a marketing strategy that is carried out by communicating directly to consumers with the aim of encouraging them to make purchases. Kualanamu International Airport carries out this strategy by conducting direct approaches or appointments with

potential partners by offering the potential that exists at Kualanamu International Airport such as the number of passenger movements.

## CONCLUSION

This research confirms that optimizing vacant areas in the Kualanamu International Airport Railink building is a strategic opportunity in an effort to strengthen non-aeronautical revenues and reduce dependence on the aeronautical sector. With a descriptive qualitative approach supported by field observations, interviews with commercial management, and documentation, a thorough understanding of the commercial potential that has not been maximized is obtained.

The analysis shows that there is room for innovation in developing non-productive space functions into multifunctional commercial zones based on the lifestyle hub concept. This concept is considered in line with the transformation of modern airports that not only serve air traffic, but also become centers of public interaction and economic activity. The implementation of an integrated marketing strategy and local collaboration are considered key to the successful implementation of the plan.

However, this research has limitations in the scope of the study which only focuses on one location, the Railink building at Kualanamu Airport. The findings and recommendations do not cover technical aspects of implementation such as investment planning, architectural design, or quantitative financial evaluation. Therefore, further studies that are comparative between airports or based on economic feasibility analysis are recommended to broaden the perspective and support more comprehensive decision making.

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