

**THE INFLUENCE OF PRICE ON THE DECISION TO STAY THROUGH
BRAND IMAGE AT 4 STAR HOTELS IN MADIUN:
A LITERATURE REVIEW**

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ABSTRAK

This study aims to analyze the influence of price on decision to stay through brand image at Mercure Hotel Madiun. The research focuses on four main relationships: the effect of price on brand image, price on decision to stay, brand image on decision to stay, and the indirect effect of price on decision to stay through brand image. A quantitative approach was applied using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as the data analysis technique. A total of 200 respondents were selected as the sample.

The findings reveal that price has a positive and significant effect on both brand image and decision to stay. Furthermore, brand image significantly affects the decision to stay. These results indicate that a favorable price perception can build a strong brand image, which in turn enhances customers' intention to return.

Keywords: Price, Brand Image, Decision To Stay

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is one of the important sources of state revenue which is marked by the development of the number of foreign and domestic tourists who come to a place and continues to increase from year to year. The hotel industry plays a very important role. The hotel industry has a significant influence not only on tourism competitiveness but also on general development in a city or country (Attila, 2016). In Indonesia, industrial competition is not much different from conditions in various countries in the world. One of the impacts of an unstable economy is the decline in the rupiah exchange rate against foreign currencies, inflation that tends to increase, interest rates that are still high, declining economic conditions that have an impact on decreasing tourist trips for both foreign and domestic tourists which are very closely related to accommodation facilities such as hotels. The increasing level of travel, both in the form of business interests and tourism, also determines the hotel occupancy rate.

Price

Price is the amount of money charged for a product or service, or the amount of value that customers exchange for the benefits of having or using the product or service (Kotler and Armstrong, 2019:345). Many consumers use price as a quality cue, reflecting the conventional wisdom that “you get what you pay for” (Barnes, 2020).

Hotel room rates refer to the price of a room sold for one night. Room rates vary depending on the type and size of the room, the location of the room, the direction it faces, and the amenities available. When determining the selling or renting price of a room, hotels consider several factors, including the class of the hotel, the amenities offered, the quality of service, and the costs incurred. Hotels weigh carefully so that the rates set do not harm business. Hotels today face the difficult task of providing quality to more quality-conscious customers, but also charging a fair price at a time when travelers are more price-conscious (Gani et al., 2022).

Price is something that customers consider before making a purchase decision. Price can attract potential buyers to buy the products offered (Utami et al., 2024). If the price offered by the provider is reasonable, then consumers will agree to it. There are several hotel attributes that can affect hotel room rates, namely reputation attributes as star ratings which are quality signals that create premium prices (Nadia et al., 2021). Online ratings can be seen as the quality perceived by consumers for hotel services or attributes and tend to affect hotel room rates (El-Said, 2020).

Price plays an important role in marketing. Prices that are too expensive will not be affordable for the target, which will ultimately stagnate sales. Conversely, prices that are too low will make it difficult for the company to cover costs or make a profit. Low prices are sometimes considered poor quality. For most marketers, price is an issue that requires careful and thorough consideration.

Like other elements of the marketing mix (product, distribution, and promotion), if used properly, price can be a strategic weapon to compete effectively. Prices can be adjusted or changed drastically depending on what the company wants to achieve. For companies, when compared to other marketing mixes (production, distribution, and promotion) that require large expenditures, price is the only element of the marketing mix that generates revenue. Product price is the main determinant of market demand for the product in question. Price affects the company's competitive position and market share. In short, companies make money through the prices they set. For consumers, room rates are an important factor to consider when choosing a hotel. And for hotel operators, room rates are a key strategic element of revenue expansion (Zhang et al., 2011). Hotel room rates are determined by a combination of certain properties, such as: location, facilities, etiquette, service quality, class, and atmosphere. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2019:314) explain that: The measures that characterize prices are: price affordability, price suitability with quality, price suitability with benefits, and price according to ability or purchasing power.

Brand Image

Brand image is a comprehensive picture of the views and impressions that people create towards a company and its services. A good brand image will always be in the minds and remembered by consumers (Kotler & Keller, (2019:213). Brand image is a determining factor that influences subjective perceptions and consumer behavior and is an extrinsic cue when consumers evaluate a product/service before purchasing (Zhang, 2015). Kotler & Keller (2019:253) define brand image as the perception of a brand as reflected by brand associations stored in consumers' memories. Brand associations have a level of strength, and the relationship with the brand will be stronger if the relationship is based on consumer experience or exposure to communication. Brand associations are classified into three categories, namely attributes, benefits, and attitudes. These associations can vary based on advantages, strengths, and uniqueness (Kotler & Keller, 2019:257). Brand image helps consumers recognize their needs and wants related to the brand and differentiates the brand from other competitors.

Service quality is an action or activity that can be offered by one party to another party that is essentially intangible and does not result in ownership. Kotler (2012) defines service quality as an action or activity that can be offered by one party to another party. Gronroos (1990) argues that service quality is a series of invisible activities that occur as a result of interactions between consumers and employees or other elements provided by service providers with the aim of solving customer problems. Lupiyoadi (2001) defines service quality as an action or activity that is essentially intangible and does not result in ownership. Zeithaml & Bitner (2000) state that service quality is a series of intangible activities that occur as a result of interactions between consumers and employees or other elements provided by service providers with the aim of solving customer problems.

Service quality in this context refers to the ability of institutions to provide services that meet student expectations. Parasuraman et al. (1988) proposed five main dimensions to measure service quality, including: physical evidence (facilities and staff appearance), reliability (ability to provide promised services accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help students), assurance (competence of lecturers and staff to instill trust), and empathy (personal attention to students). In higher education, factors such as curriculum relevance, lecturer responsiveness, and campus facilities greatly influence the perception of service quality (Widikusyanto, 2020). An institution with a higher level of quality will produce a higher level of customer satisfaction, which in turn, supports a higher institutional image in the perception of its students. This is supported by research conducted by Alves et al., (2022) which shows that service quality has a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, brand image has a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction.

Brand image refers to how customers feel and think about a company or product based on their knowledge and interactions with the brand (Susanti, 2020). Brand image refers to consumers' overall perception of a company or product based on their experiences (Pratama, 2019). High-quality products, reasonable prices, and reliable service are the foundations of any successful brand (Fitriana, 2020). Because customers' initial impressions of a brand often last a long time, companies realize the importance of cultivating a good corporate image as a competitive strategy (Falahih, 2021). Companies must provide a positive impression so that the product's brand image is good, which will directly impact consumer purchasing decisions (Nurdin, 2021).

According to Kotler and Keller (2019:268), corporate image is a general impression that is imagined in the mind of an organization. The two authors explain that corporate image is a consumer response to the company's offerings and is interpreted as the value of trust, confidence, and public impression of an organization (Kotler and Keller, 2019:271). Kotler and Keller (2019:272) put forward four elements in corporate image. First, personality refers to the overall characteristics of a company that are understood by consumers, such as a trustworthy company or a responsible company. Second, reputation, namely the rights that have been developed by the company and believed by consumers based on their own experiences and those of others. Third, core values are the values held by a company or in other words, corporate culture, such as management's attitude towards consumers. Finally, corporate identity is a component and facility aimed at public recognition of the company, such as logos, colors, and slogans. Therefore, companies must create and maintain their brand image as much as possible regarding products, services, and other things (Tanady, 2020). This is intended so that the quality of the company's brand can continue to increase to have an impact, where the company can compete with its competitors (Gupta, 2021). The better the hotel's image in the eyes of the public, the more people will want to stay at the hotel. A good corporate image is certainly created from the services and facilities offered by the hotel. Hotel brand image can increase the good perception of the hotel in the eyes of tourists which ultimately increases the length of stay (Hamidi et al, 2022; Budiarto, 2022).

From a product or service, a brand can be born if the product according to consumer perception has functional advantages (available brand), creates associations and images desired by consumers (brand image), and evokes certain experiences when consumers interact with it (experiential brand). Consumer relationships with a brand will be stronger if they are based on many experiences or appearances to communicate it so that a brand image will be formed. A good brand image will encourage increased sales volume and company image. According to Kotler and Keller (2019:266), Brand Image is the perception and belief held by consumers, as reflected in the associations stored and embedded in the consumer's memory, which always remembers the first time they hear the slogan and is embedded in the consumer's mind. In other words, brand image is a perception of a brand that is associated with market attitudes, including the level of preference (brand preference:

preference compared to other products/services) and the benefits felt when using it later. Amitay et al., (2020) stated that purchase interest is a type of decision making that studies the reasons for purchasing a particular brand by customers. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the definition of brand image is a collection of various brands that are formed and remembered by consumers. In order for brand image to function, brand image must be conveyed through every available means of communication and brand contact.

Decision to Stay

Decision to stay refers to a purchase decision which is the likelihood that a customer will purchase a particular product/service (Ali, 2020). Purchase decision is an important predictor of actual purchase behavior and this relationship has been empirically studied in the hospitality and tourism industry (Boonsiritomachai, 2020). Purchase decision refers to a consumer's desire to purchase a product or service in the future. Purchase decision as the possibility of consumers to plan or be willing to purchase a particular product or service in the future (Sandi, 2023).

This decision is one of the forces for the emergence of certain behaviors which are interpreted as a person's desire to stay again at a hotel (Sun & Kim, 2013). This decision has dimensions of positive or negative news dissemination, willingness or reluctance to pay a premium price, and plans to revisit or move to another hotel. In short, the decision to visit a hotel is a bond of positive communication attitudes, and the desire to stay.

In this study, the booking decision is defined as the consumer's decision to make a room reservation (Zhao, 2015). Therefore, it can be seen that purchasing decisions generally depend on and are always influenced by several factors. Hotel booking refers to the purchasing decision of consumers who make hotel room reservations through various information provided or listed. A purchasing decision is a condition in which the seller and customer are in a state to make an agreement with each other. Individuals tend to use their current knowledge and external information when making hotel reservations.

This is one of the reasons this study mainly focuses on external factors that influence consumer booking decisions, namely price and hotel brand image. If the perceived price is considered reasonable and affordable, it will result in a greater perceived value and also increase the chances of consumer decisions to make reservations (Agustine & Adnan, 2020).

Behavioral decision is an individual's subjective assessment that reflects the individual's decision and willingness to engage in certain behaviors (Becheur, 2017). The decision to stay is considered a prospective customer's decision to engage during their stay at the hotel (Han et al., 2018). The decision to stay is an important factor that can explain prospective customers' decision making when choosing a hotel. When the decision to stay can be measured correctly, the data obtained will be close to actual behavior (Shieh et al., 2018). The decision to stay indicates the likelihood that potential customers will change their current behavior and choose a hotel to stay

in the future. The decision to stay can be a decision-making process in which potential customers will collect various data related to the hotel, make evaluations, and finally decide to stay at the hotel (Shieh et al., 2018). In the hospitality industry, the decision to stay indicates the plan and desire of potential customers to stay and recommend the hotel to others, so encouraging positive decisions is the goal of every hotel (Makanyeza, 2021). This positive decision is formed from the hotel's decision to provide benefits, which are then observed by potential customers and influence their behavioral decisions (Bashir, 2019). In line with this concept, the need for hotels is increasing, so understanding the decision to stay is needed to develop effective marketing strategies and encourage positive decisions from potential customers to stay at hotels (Choi, 2015).

DISCUSSION

In hospitality management, customer orientation is related to two fundamental factors, namely price and brand image (Vives et al., 2018). Price, service quality expectations, and emotions have been recognized as playing a key role in customer evaluation of offerings (Pelegrín-Borondo et al., 2017). However, the level of guest satisfaction does not only depend on the price offered, but can also be influenced by other aspects, such as product quality, service quality, prestige, and so on.

This supports the statement that hotel guests not only consider the economic value of staying at a hotel (eg price and quality) but also seek more affective values, such as self-satisfaction, aesthetic pleasure, prestige, transactions, and hedonism (El-Adly, 2003). 2019). Chen et al (2015) stated that the relationship between room rates and brand image can be influenced by the moderating effect of room occupancy rates. For this reason, a strategy is needed to determine room price variations. Each type of segmentation refers to different types of price management or different price thresholds (Vives et al., 2018). Thus, having a tailor-made pricing system would be a better strategy (Bayoumi et al., 2013).

In the hospitality industry, fair prices result in greater customer perceived value (Lee, 2012) and enhance consumer purchase decisions (Chiang & Jang, 2007). Duman and Mattila (2005) identified price as an important antecedent of perceived value of tourism services. Therefore, within an acceptable price range, a lower price for a given quality (i.e., perceived fair price) leads to higher perceived value and consequently to a greater decision to purchase (Dodds et al., 1991).

Faryabi et al., (2012) study on online shopping showed that price discounts (fair prices) have a positive effect on consumer purchase decisions. These findings provide a theoretical basis for the hypothesis of the direct and mediating effects of perceived price on perceived value and purchase decisions.

The concept of brand image (hotel image) in the hospitality industry plays a significant role in shaping guest perceptions and has been the subject of comprehensive exploration in various settings. In Macau, Lai (2018) investigated the factors influencing hotel image. The study revealed that hotel image is the precursor to hotel reputation, indicating that organizational image can significantly influence

perceived value (Ryu et al., 2008). In addition, the notion of destination image, widely used in marketing and behavioral science research, underlines its relevance in explaining the beliefs, feelings, and impressions that individuals have about a product, object, behavior, or event (Stylos et al., 2016). In Vietnam, Nguyen et al., (2020) comprehensively analyzed the factors influencing stay decisions and the results proved the direct influence of hotel attractiveness and service level on stay decisions.

In the study of Aghekyan-Simonian et al., (2012) the results showed that brand image positively influences purchasing decisions through reducing perceived risk. Brand image is an extrinsic cue for evaluating product/service prices and a better brand image results in higher perceived prices (Grewal et al., 1998). Ryu et al., (2008) reported that a good image positively influences consumers' perceived value and their intention to purchase. The study of Chen et al., (2014) showed that image has a positive impact on consumption decisions. Reasonable product/service prices, satisfactory value, and trust in the brand will make consumers have a greater decision to buy the product/service (Dodds et al., 1991; Kim et al., 2013). Based on the discussion above, although the direct influence of brand image on trust, perceived value, and price has been widely discussed in the hospitality/marketing literature, few empirical studies have investigated both the direct and mediating influences of brand image on hotel booking decisions. Thus, it can be concluded that brand image has a mediating influence on the relationship between price and purchase intention.

CONCLUSION

Discussion on the influence of price on the decision to stay through brand image in order to answer the formulation of the problem and research hypothesis regarding the role of brand image that can mediate between price and decision to stay. The price variable is described in eight indicators, the brand image variable is described in ten indicators and the decision to stay variable in thirteen indicators. Findings in the field show that respondents perceive the brand image of Mercure Madiun through the price offered which ultimately influences the respondent's decision to stay at Mercure Madiun.

Thus, the results of this study indicate an interrelated relationship between price perception, brand image, and decision to stay. This strengthens the understanding that a reasonable pricing strategy that is in accordance with service quality can improve the brand image in the minds of consumers, which then has an impact on purchasing decision making. The results of this study are in line with the results of research by Aghekyan-Simonian et al., (2012), Grewal et al., (1998), Ryu et al., (2008), Chen et al., (2014), Dodds et al., (1991), and Kim et al., (2013), Goeltom et al., (2019).

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