

ANALYSIS OF HOTEL BRANDING STRATEGY IN ENHANCING CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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Abstract: The increasing competition in the hospitality industry has encouraged hotels to develop strong branding strategies to attract and retain customers. This study aims to examine the effect of hotel branding strategy on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. Drawing upon branding theory and consumer behavior theory, this research proposes that a strong brand identity and image serve as important factors influencing customers' perceptions and long-term relationships with the hotel. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data collected from hotel guests who have experienced hotel services. The data were analyzed using SPSS to test both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The findings indicate that hotel branding strategy has a significant effect on customer loyalty, both directly and indirectly through customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is found to partially mediate the relationship, suggesting that customers are more likely to become loyal when branding strategies enhance their overall experience and satisfaction. This study contributes to the hospitality marketing literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of branding in shaping customer loyalty and offers managerial implications for hotel management in developing effective branding strategies to sustain competitive advantage.

Keywords: Branding Strategy, Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, Hospitality Industry

Abstrak: Meningkatnya persaingan dalam industri perhotelan mendorong hotel untuk mengembangkan strategi branding yang kuat guna menarik dan mempertahankan pelanggan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh strategi branding hotel terhadap loyalitas pelanggan, dengan kepuasan pelanggan sebagai variabel mediasi. Berdasarkan teori branding dan teori perilaku konsumen, penelitian ini mengusulkan bahwa identitas dan citra merek yang kuat merupakan faktor penting yang memengaruhi persepsi serta hubungan jangka panjang pelanggan dengan hotel. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei melalui penyebaran kuesioner kepada tamu hotel yang telah menggunakan layanan hotel. Data dianalisis menggunakan SPSS untuk menguji hubungan langsung dan tidak langsung antar variabel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi branding hotel berpengaruh signifikan terhadap loyalitas pelanggan, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung melalui kepuasan pelanggan. Kepuasan pelanggan ditemukan memediasi secara parsial hubungan tersebut, yang menunjukkan bahwa pelanggan cenderung menjadi loyal ketika strategi branding mampu meningkatkan pengalaman dan kepuasan mereka secara keseluruhan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap literatur pemasaran perhotelan dengan menyajikan bukti empiris mengenai peran branding dalam membentuk loyalitas pelanggan serta memberikan implikasi manajerial bagi pihak manajemen hotel dalam merancang strategi branding yang efektif guna mempertahankan keunggulan kompetitif.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Branding, Loyalitas Pelanggan, Kepuasan Pelanggan, Industri Perhotelan

Introduction

The hospitality industry has experienced rapid growth and transformation in recent years, driven by increasing competition, technological advancements, and changing customer expectations. Hotels are no longer competing solely on service quality and pricing but are also required to establish strong branding strategies to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive market. In this context, branding has emerged as a critical strategic tool for creating sustainable competitive advantage and fostering long-term relationships with customers (Górska-Warsewicz & Kulykovets, 2020¹; Dwivedi, 2021²). Branding in the hospitality industry refers to the process of creating a unique identity and image that distinguishes a hotel from its competitors. A strong brand enables hotels to communicate their value propositions effectively, influence customer perceptions, and build emotional connections. According to Kim and Lee (2020)³, brand trust plays a significant role in shaping customer perceptions and encouraging repeat behavior. Similarly, Confente (2020)⁴ highlights that brand experience significantly affects customer attitudes and contributes to long-term loyalty. Therefore, an effective branding strategy not only enhances brand recognition but also strengthens customer relationships.

Customer loyalty is a crucial determinant of long-term business success in the hotel industry. Loyal customers tend to engage in repeat purchases, provide positive word-of-mouth, and contribute to stable revenue growth. Previous studies indicate that customer loyalty is influenced by various factors, including customer satisfaction, service quality, and overall experience (Ali et al., 2021⁵; Yoo et al., 2022⁶). Moreover, Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh (2019)⁷ emphasize that customer experience plays a vital role in shaping loyalty, particularly in service-based industries such as hospitality. In recent years, the role of branding has evolved beyond traditional approaches to incorporate customer engagement and experiential marketing. Customer engagement has been identified as a key factor influencing brand loyalty, as it enhances customers' emotional attachment and involvement with the brand (Rather & Sharma, 2019⁸; Iglesias et al., 2020⁹). Furthermore, Rather (2021)¹⁰ argues that engaged customers are more likely to develop strong relationships with brands, leading to increased loyalty and advocacy behaviors. This suggests that branding strategies should focus not only on visual identity but also on creating meaningful and memorable customer experiences.

The advancement of digital technology has further transformed branding strategies in the hospitality industry. The integration of digital platforms, social media, and online reviews has significantly influenced how customers perceive hotel brands and make decisions (Anam, B. S., & Mauliansyah, H. 2025)¹¹. Omnichannel strategies enable hotels to interact with customers

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- 1 Górska-Warsewicz, H., & Kulykovets, O. (2020). Hotel brand loyalty—A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 12(12), 4810.
 - 2 Dwivedi, A. (2021). Branding and consumer behavior. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*
 - 3 Kim, J., & Lee, J. (2020). The impact of brand trust on hotel loyalty. *Sustainability*.
 - 4 Confente, I. (2020). Brand experience and customer loyalty. *British Food Journal*.
 - 5 Ali, F., et al. (2021). Hotel service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. *Tourism Review*
 - 6 Yoo, M., Bai, B., & Singh, A. (2022). Customer satisfaction and loyalty in hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*.
 - 7 Nyadzayo, M. W., & Khajehzadeh, S. (2019). The role of customer experience in loyalty formation. *Journal of Business Research*
 - 8 Rather, R. A., & Sharma, J. (2019). Customer engagement, brand loyalty, and satisfaction. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.
 - 9 Iglesias, O., et al. (2020). Customer engagement in branding. *Journal of Business Research*
 - 10 Rather, R. A. (2020). Customer brand identification and loyalty. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*.
 - 11 Anam, B. S., & Mauliansyah, H. (2025). *Digital Marketing Strategies For Culinary Msmes Through Tiktok And Instagram*. *Global Research in Economics and Advanced Theory (GREAT)*, 2(2), 44-55.

across multiple touchpoints, thereby enhancing trust and engagement (Othman et al., 2025¹², Mauliansyah, 2025)¹³. In addition, Zhang et al. (2021)¹⁴ found that customer engagement through digital channels significantly impacts brand loyalty, highlighting the importance of integrating digital elements into branding strategies. Despite the growing importance of branding, there remain gaps in understanding how hotel branding strategies directly influence customer loyalty, particularly with the inclusion of mediating variables such as customer satisfaction. While previous studies have examined the relationships between service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty, limited research has specifically focused on branding as a primary driver of customer loyalty in the hospitality context (Rather, 2020¹⁵; Kumar & Kaushik, 2020¹⁶). Therefore, it is important to further investigate how branding strategies contribute to customer loyalty through customer satisfaction.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the effect of hotel branding strategy on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction acting as a mediating variable. This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the hospitality marketing literature by offering empirical evidence on the role of branding in shaping customer loyalty. Practically, the findings are expected to assist hotel managers in designing effective branding strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and maintain long-term competitive advantage

Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey design to examine the relationships among hotel branding strategy, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The population consisted of hotel customers who had experience staying at a hotel within the last 12 months. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that respondents were familiar with the hotel brand and had sufficient experience to evaluate the services provided. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire measured using a five-point Likert scale. The measurement items were adapted from prior validated studies related to branding strategy, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (Rather & Sharma, 2019¹⁷). Branding strategy was measured through indicators such as brand image, brand identity, and brand communication. Customer satisfaction was measured based on overall satisfaction and service experience, while customer loyalty was measured through revisit intention, recommendation, and commitment. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, while validity was examined through item-total correlation. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the direct effects of branding strategy on customer loyalty. Furthermore, mediation analysis was performed using PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to examine the indirect effect of customer satisfaction on the relationship between branding strategy and customer loyalty. A mediation effect was

¹² Othman, N. A., et al. (2025). Omnichannel strategy and branding in hospitality. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*

¹³ Mauliansyah, H. (2024). *Analysis Of Msme Competitive Strategies In Facing Digital Competition*. *Global Research in Economics and Advanced Theory (GREAT)*, 1(1), 1-14.

¹⁴ Zhang, T., et al. (2021). Customer engagement and brand loyalty. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*.

¹⁵ Rather, R. A. (2020). Customer brand identification and loyalty. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*.

¹⁶ Kumar, V., & Kaushik, A. K. (2020). Building customer loyalty through brand experience. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*.

¹⁷ Rather, R. A., & Sharma, J. (2019). Customer engagement, brand loyalty, and satisfaction. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

considered significant when the confidence interval did not include zero (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)¹⁸

Research Data and Respondents

The data used in this study were primary data collected through an online survey distributed to individuals who had experience staying at hotels prior to evaluating their perceptions of the hotel brand. The target population consisted of hotel customers who had stayed or intended to stay in hotels within the last 12 months. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents were familiar with the hotel brand and had sufficient experience to evaluate branding strategies, satisfaction, and loyalty. The questionnaire was distributed through social media networks and travel-related online communities. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed, and 105 responses were returned. After data screening for completeness and consistency, 100 valid responses were retained and analyzed.

The demographic profile indicates that 55% of respondents were female and 45% were male. In terms of age distribution, the majority (50%) were between 21–30 years old, followed by 31–40 years (28%), 41–50 years (14%), and above 50 years (8%). Regarding educational background, 60% held a bachelor's degree, 25% had a diploma qualification, and 15% possessed postgraduate degrees. Most respondents reported staying at hotels at least two times per year, indicating sufficient experience in evaluating hotel branding, satisfaction, and loyalty. These characteristics suggest that the sample adequately represents hotel customers relevant to the study's objectives. The questionnaire was developed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Likert scale was selected because it enables the measurement of attitudes and perceptions quantitatively and allows the data to be treated as interval data for regression analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016)¹⁹. The measurement items were adapted from prior validated studies related to branding strategy, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. All responses were coded numerically and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. SPSS was utilized to conduct descriptive statistical analysis, validity and reliability testing, classical assumption testing, and multiple linear regression analysis. Furthermore, mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to examine the indirect effect of customer satisfaction on the relationship between branding strategy and customer loyalty.

Data Processing and Analysis

The data processing and analysis in this study were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. After collecting the questionnaires from respondents, the data were subjected to editing, coding, and tabulation. Editing ensured completeness and consistency of responses, while coding involved assigning numerical values to each response based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The coded data were then entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistical analysis was first performed to present the characteristics of respondents and to describe the distribution of responses for each research variable. The descriptive statistics included mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, and frequency distributions. This analysis provided an overview of the level of microcredit utilization and the development performance of small-scale industries.

To ensure the accuracy of the measurement instrument, validity and reliability tests were conducted. The validity test used the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation technique, where

¹⁸ Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

¹⁹ Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2019). *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach* (8th ed.). Wiley

an item was considered valid if the significance value was less than 0.05 and the correlation coefficient exceeded the r-table value (Ghozali, 2021). Reliability testing employed Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, where a value greater than 0.70 indicated that the instrument was reliable (Hair et al., 2022).

Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis, classical assumption tests were carried out to ensure that the regression model met statistical requirements. These tests included:

1. Normality Test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, where a significance value greater than 0.05 indicates normally distributed data.
2. Multicollinearity Test using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, where Tolerance > 0.10 and VIF < 10 indicate no multicollinearity.
3. Heteroscedasticity Test using the Glejser test, where a significance value greater than 0.05 indicates homoscedasticity.

To examine the relationships among variables, multiple regression analysis was employed. The mediation effect of customer satisfaction (M) was tested using PROCESS Macro Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples. The regression equations used in this study are formulated as follows:

$$M1 = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 X + \epsilon_1 \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 M1 + \beta_5 M2 + \epsilon_3 \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

Where:

- X = Branding Strategy
- M1 = Customer Satisfaction
- Y = Customer Loyalty
- α = Constant
- β = Regression Coefficients
- ε = Error Term

A mediation effect is considered significant if the 95% bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero. If the direct effect of branding strategy on customer loyalty (β_1) remains significant after including the mediator (customer satisfaction), partial mediation is indicated. However, if the direct effect becomes non-significant after the inclusion of the mediator, full mediation is suggested.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in full compliance with ethical research principles to ensure the protection and rights of all participants. Before participating, respondents were informed about the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study, and informed consent was obtained from each participant. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw from the survey at any time without any penalty. To maintain confidentiality and privacy, all collected data were anonymized, and no personal identifiers, such as names or contact information, were recorded. Data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. The study also ensured that the questions in the questionnaire did not cause psychological or emotional harm, and respondents were encouraged to answer honestly based on their own experiences related to hotel stays, branding perceptions, and service satisfaction. Furthermore, this study adhered to the ethical guidelines established by international standards for human research in social sciences, including respect for participants, beneficence, and justice. Findings are presented in aggregate form only, and individual responses are reported in a way that ensures anonymity.

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the university’s research ethics committee to confirm compliance with ethical standards for studies involving human participants.

Results And Discussions

The multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using SPSS to examine the effect of branding strategy on customer loyalty and to assess the mediating role of customer satisfaction. The analysis aims to identify both the direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The results are presented in the following tables.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Variables (n = 100)

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Branding Strategy (X)	100	2.10	4.85	3.75	0.58
Customer Satisfaction (M)	100	2.30	4.90	3.82	0.55
Customer Loyalty (Y)	100	2.00	4.80	3.70	0.60

Source: Processed primary data using SPSS (2026)

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the main variables in this study, namely branding strategy, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, based on 100 respondents. The results show that the mean value of branding strategy is 3.75, indicating that respondents generally perceive the hotel’s branding strategy to be good and positively implemented. The standard deviation of 0.58 suggests a relatively moderate variation in respondents’ perceptions. Customer satisfaction has a mean value of 3.82, which is the highest among the variables. This indicates that respondents tend to feel satisfied with their overall experience at the hotel. The standard deviation of 0.55 shows that the responses are relatively consistent across participants. Meanwhile, customer loyalty has a mean value of 3.70, indicating that respondents demonstrate a relatively high level of loyalty, such as intention to revisit and recommend the hotel to others. The standard deviation of 0.60 reflects a moderate level of variability in responses. Overall, the mean values of all variables are above 3.00, which indicates that respondents tend to have positive perceptions of branding strategy, satisfaction, and loyalty. These findings suggest that the hotel’s branding strategy is perceived as effective and may contribute to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 2
Reliability and Validity of Constructs

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Conclusion
Branding Strategy (X)	5	0.87	0.52 – 0.76	Reliable & Valid
Customer Satisfaction (M)	4	0.85	0.50 – 0.74	Reliable & Valid
Customer Loyalty (Y)	4	0.88	0.55 – 0.79	Reliable & Valid

Source: Processed primary data using SPSS (2026)

Table 2 presents the results of reliability and validity testing for all constructs used in this study, including branding strategy, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, while validity was evaluated using corrected item-total correlation. The results show that all variables have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, indicating that the measurement instruments are reliable and have good internal consistency. Specifically, branding strategy has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, customer satisfaction 0.85, and customer loyalty 0.88. These values suggest that all items within each construct consistently measure the intended variables. In terms of validity, all items have corrected item-total correlation values above 0.30, which indicates that each item is valid and significantly correlated with its respective construct. The range of correlation values for all variables falls between 0.50 and 0.79, further confirming that the measurement items are appropriate and valid. Overall, these results demonstrate that the research instruments used in this study are both reliable and valid, and therefore suitable for further statistical analysis.

Table 3
Mediation Analysis: Direct and Indirect Effects

Path	Effect (β)	t-value	Sig.	95% CI (Lower-Upper)	Result
Branding Strategy \rightarrow Customer Loyalty	0.32	3.45	0.001	—	Significant
Branding Strategy \rightarrow Customer Satisfaction	0.55	6.20	0.000	—	Significant
Customer Satisfaction \rightarrow Customer Loyalty	0.40	4.10	0.000	—	Significant
Indirect Effect (X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y)	0.22	—	—	0.12 – 0.35	Significant

Source: Processed primary data using SPSS (2026)

Table 3 presents the results of the mediation analysis examining both direct and indirect effects among the variables. The findings indicate that branding strategy has a significant direct effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that better branding strategies lead to higher levels of customer loyalty. In addition, branding strategy significantly affects customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that effective branding enhances customers' overall satisfaction. Customer satisfaction also shows a significant effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$), which means that satisfied customers are more likely to become loyal. The indirect effect of branding strategy on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction is 0.22, with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval ranging from 0.12 to 0.35. Since the confidence interval does not include zero, the mediation effect is considered significant. Furthermore, the direct effect of branding strategy on customer loyalty remains significant even after including customer satisfaction as a mediator. This indicates that customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between branding strategy and customer loyalty. Overall, these results suggest that branding strategy influences customer loyalty both directly and indirectly through customer satisfaction.

Discussions

The results of this study demonstrate that branding strategy has a significant positive effect on customer loyalty. This finding indicates that a strong and well-implemented branding strategy plays an important role in shaping customers' long-term relationships with hotels. When customers perceive a hotel brand as unique, trustworthy, and consistent, they are more likely to develop loyalty, including repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. This result is consistent

with previous studies which emphasize that branding is a key driver of customer loyalty in the hospitality industry (Dwivedi, 2021; Rather, 2020). Furthermore, the findings reveal that branding strategy significantly influences customer satisfaction. This suggests that effective branding not only creates awareness but also enhances customers' overall experience. A well-established brand sets clear expectations and delivers consistent service quality, which leads to higher satisfaction levels. This result supports the findings of Ali et al. (2021) and Yoo et al. (2022), who found that perceived service quality and brand-related factors contribute significantly to customer satisfaction in hotels.

In addition, customer satisfaction is found to have a significant positive effect on customer loyalty. This indicates that satisfied customers are more likely to return, recommend the hotel to others, and maintain a long-term relationship with the brand. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting that customer satisfaction is a key determinant of loyalty in service industries (Rather & Sharma, 2019; Nyadzayo & Khajezadeh, 2019). Importantly, this study also confirms the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between branding strategy and customer loyalty. The mediation analysis shows that branding strategy influences customer loyalty both directly and indirectly through customer satisfaction. Since the direct effect remains significant after including the mediator, the mediation is classified as partial mediation. This implies that while branding strategy directly affects loyalty, a significant portion of its impact is channeled through customer satisfaction.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating branding strategies with customer experience management. Hotels should not only focus on visual identity and brand communication but also ensure that the service delivery aligns with the brand promise. By enhancing customer satisfaction, hotels can strengthen the effectiveness of their branding strategies in building long-term customer loyalty. From a managerial perspective, hotel managers are encouraged to invest in branding activities that emphasize consistency, emotional engagement, and service quality. Strengthening brand image, improving customer experience, and maintaining service excellence are essential strategies to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, leveraging digital platforms and customer feedback can further enhance brand perception and customer engagement. Overall, this study contributes to the hospitality marketing literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of branding strategy in influencing customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. The findings reinforce the importance of adopting a holistic approach that combines branding and customer experience to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the hotel industry.

Conclusion

This study aims to examine the effect of branding strategy on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable in the hospitality industry. The findings reveal that branding strategy has a significant positive effect on customer loyalty, indicating that a strong brand plays a crucial role in fostering long-term customer relationships. The results also show that branding strategy significantly influences customer satisfaction, suggesting that effective branding enhances customers' perceptions and overall experience. In turn, customer satisfaction is found to have a significant positive effect on customer loyalty, confirming that satisfied customers are more likely to revisit and recommend the hotel. Furthermore, the mediation analysis indicates that customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between branding strategy and customer loyalty. This implies that branding strategy not only directly affects loyalty but also indirectly influences it through enhancing customer satisfaction. Overall, this study highlights the importance of integrating branding strategies with customer satisfaction efforts to strengthen customer loyalty. From a practical perspective, hotel managers are encouraged to develop consistent and experience-driven branding strategies that align with customer expectations. By doing so, hotels can enhance customer satisfaction and maintain long-term competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive hospitality industry.

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