

The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Location on the Decision to Stay at a Five-Star Hotel in Medan City Through Brand Image as an Intervening Variable

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Abstract. This research is motivated by the fluctuation of occupancy rates in five-star hotels in Medan. This study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing and Location variables on Staying Decisions. Specifically, this study also examines the strategic role of Brand Image as a mediating variable that bridges the relationship between these marketing factors and consumers' final decisions in choosing a five-star hotel in Medan. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method for data collection. Primary data was obtained through an online questionnaire distributed to 205 respondents selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria of having stayed at one of the five-star hotels in Medan and being over 18 years old. The collected data were then analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares techniques with the help of SmartPLS software. The results of the data analysis show that Social Media Marketing and Location each have a positive and significant direct influence on Brand Image and Staying Decisions. The main findings reveal that Brand Image is the variable with the strongest influence on Staying Decisions and is proven to significantly mediate the relationship between the three marketing variables and Staying Decisions.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Location, Brand Image, Stay Decision.

1. Introduction

Hotels need a competitive advantage that differentiates them from other hotels. This advantage will give consumers greater confidence in choosing available services. The development of the tourism sector in Medan has also driven improvements in service quality to attract tourists to stay. Furthermore, intense competition among star-rated hotels in Medan demands that management be more innovative in creating a unique guest experience. Therefore, hotels must not only offer affordable prices and strategic locations but also build a strong brand image through marketing strategies that are relevant to technological developments and the needs of modern travelers.

Consumers' choice of a hotel is often influenced by its strategic location, which is easily accessible from various directions. The success of a service is often determined by the chosen location, given that location is closely linked to the company's potential market (Tjiptono, 2019). A strategically located hotel can create a barrier to market access for competitors (Tjiptono, 2019). Location is typically a key element in service marketing, as it determines the target market and is a key consideration when selecting a hotel. Furthermore, purchasing decisions are simultaneously influenced by brand image. Therefore, brand image has a positive influence on purchasing decisions (Arianty & Andira, 2021). These findings provide evidence that the better the brand image embedded in consumers' minds, the more likely they are to improve purchasing decisions.

Few studies have used an integrated quantitative approach to examine the simultaneous relationship between external factors (social media marketing and location) and internal factors (brand image) on stay decisions. The aforementioned gaps provide an important basis for this study to re-examine the influence of social media marketing and location and rooms on stay decisions, and then integrate brand image as an intervening variable, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the indirect influence mechanisms between the variables. Furthermore, it also provides local and theoretical contributions in the context of five-star hotel marketing strategies in Medan.

The main research gap in this study lies in the lack of a comprehensive study in the context of five-star hotels in Medan that examines the influence of external variables (social media and location) on stay decisions through brand image mediation. Five-star hotels, however, have unique consumer characteristics and marketing strategies. Furthermore, there is a lack of integration of brand image as an intervening variable. Previous studies generally only directly examine the influence of social media marketing and room location on purchase decisions. Not many have integrated brand image as a mediating/intervening variable in this relationship. Therefore, further research is important to confirm the influence of social media marketing and location on stay decisions at five-star hotels in Medan through brand image.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Purchasing Decision

Purchasing decision theory is an important part of the study of consumer behavior. Initially, this theory developed through an economic approach that views consumers as rational actors who always seek to maximize their utility in every purchasing decision (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009). Purchasing decision theory is also influenced by the principles of behavioral economics, which show that consumers are often irrational and influenced by biases and errors in decision-making (Thaler, 1980). The emergence of influencer marketing has also had a significant impact on purchasing decision theory, where recommendations from figures deemed credible can influence consumer decisions (Freberg et al., 2011). Purchasing decisions are now also influenced by sustainability and social responsibility. Consumers are increasingly choosing products that align with their environmental and ethical values (Gershoff & Frels, 2015).

According to recent research, modern consumers are highly influenced by digital engagement, such as brand interactions on social media, which can strengthen emotional bonds with brands and drive

purchases (Hudson et al., 2016). Consumer experience is becoming more important in purchasing decisions, with companies that offer positive experiences more likely to earn consumer loyalty (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Finally, modern purchasing decision theory emphasizes the importance of personalization, where companies are able to provide product recommendations tailored to individual consumer preferences through data analysis (Kotler et al., 2017). In conclusion, the development of purchasing decision theory reflects a complex evolution from simple rational models to a more holistic and integrated understanding of consumers as dynamic entities influenced by a variety of factors.

2.2. Brand Image

Brands play a key role in shaping consumer perceptions, creating loyalty, and differentiating products or services from competitors. According to Aaker (2017), brand image refers to the perception and image consumers have of a brand. This encompasses several aspects, such as physical attributes, product characteristics, brand values, and consumer experience. Brand image is crucial in building relationships between brands and consumers, as well as differentiating brands from competitors. According to Firmansyah (2019), brand image is characterized as the sharpness formed in a customer's personality when a brand is remembered for a particular product. Organizations can benefit from a good brand image, as consumers can tell their choices about an organization.

Brand image is defined as the perception of a brand associated with brand associations embedded in consumers' memories (Rangkuti, 2019). Furthermore, brand image can be interpreted as brand insight related to brand affiliations that are intrinsically embedded in buyers' memories (Rangkuti, 2009). Meanwhile, according to Susanto and Wijarnako (2014), brand image is seen as a summary of consumer insights. Companies must actively manage and shape their brand image through marketing strategies, product or service quality, and interactions with consumers. A strong brand image can increase brand appeal, build consumer loyalty, and provide a competitive advantage in the market. Brand image is the perception of a brand embedded in the minds of consumers. In this study, brand image is the perception in the minds of consumers regarding a five-star hotel in Medan.

2.3 Social Media Marketing

The concept of Social Media Marketing in this study refers to the definition put forward by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who stated that social media is "a group of internet-based applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. In addition, Aryanto & Wismantoro (2020) also emphasized that social media marketing is a tool to simplify and expand the reach of online marketing communications. Gunelius (2011) is also mentioned as one of the figures who highlighted the importance of social media marketing in influencing purchasing decisions through content, engagement, and algorithms.

Social media marketing is software created to facilitate and reach a wider audience, allowing everyone to use it easily, using applications and connecting to an internet device. These interactions can take the form of text, audio, images, videos, and various other media, either individually or in combination with the aforementioned (Aryanto & Wismantoro, 2020). Social media marketing is a medium for socializing with one another online, allowing people to interact without being limited by space and time (Aryanto & Wismantoro, 2020). Furthermore, social media is a real-time communication tool that offers us the ability to communicate without regard to space and time, and can also be a fast marketing business opportunity in providing anything (Gunelius, 2011). In this study, social media marketing is defined as a tool that can connect brands with their consumers and offer relationships and social interactions.

2.4 Location

Location is a place to serve consumers, and can also be interpreted as a place to display merchandise. Location is related to how products are delivered to consumers and where strategic locations are. A strategic location that can be chosen when establishing a service company is one that is accessible to

potential consumers. In addition, a strategic location also means easy access by means of transportation. According to Kotler (2009), place is understood as all aspects that indicate the location where business activities are carried out so that products can be easily obtained by customers and are always available to them. In business conditions faced with intense competition, the location selection factor is seen as a key component that determines the effectiveness of a business's competition. Therefore, determining a strategic business location that is easily accessible to consumers is very important.

A suitable business location is expected to meet the entrepreneur's expectations to attract consumers and generate profits. Harding (2008) identified several factors that influence business location selection, namely the community environment, natural resources, labor, proximity to markets, transportation facilities and costs, land for expansion, and power generation. This theory emphasizes the importance of strategic location selection in the hospitality business to increase accessibility, reduce costs, and meet desired market preferences. Location is one of the situational factors that influence purchasing decisions. In this marketing mix, business location can also be referred to as the company's distribution channel because the location also directly connects with buyers or consumers. In other words, the location is also where the producer distributes its products to consumers.

3. Research Method

A quantitative approach is highly suitable for measuring causal relationships between variables because it allows the collection of numerical data that can be analyzed statistically. The research focus on the decision to stay at a five-star hotel is relevant in the study of service marketing, especially in the context of the influence of social media and location. The population in the study were consumers who had stayed in several rooms at five-star hotels in Medan City. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. In this study, 250 questionnaires were distributed to consumers of five-star hotel rooms. Data collection techniques were through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were compiled using a Likert scale measurement. In this study, the data analysis method used was structural equation modeling-partial least squares (SEM-PLS).

Instrument testing through validity testing. The validity analysis used was the product-moment correlation test. Next, a reliability test was conducted to demonstrate the level of trustworthiness and reliability of a measuring instrument. Reliability is often defined as consistency. Reliability testing was conducted using the Cronbach's alpha technique (Arikunto and Suharsimi, 2006). The next step was to describe the relationship between variables (hypothesis testing). Here are some hypotheses that can be formulated:

H1: Social media marketing has a positive effect on the brand image of five-star hotels in Medan.

H2: Hotel location has a positive effect on the brand image of five-star hotels in Medan.

H3: Social media marketing has a positive effect on the decision to stay at five-star hotels in Medan.

H4: Hotel location has a positive effect on the decision to stay at five-star hotels in Medan.

H5: Brand image has a positive effect on the decision to stay at five-star hotels in Medan.

H6: Brand image mediates the effect of social media marketing on the decision to stay at five-star hotels in Medan.

H7: Brand image mediates the effect of location on the decision to stay at five-star hotels in Medan.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Questionnaire Answer Results

After going through the evaluation stage of the measurement model (outer model), which demonstrated good instrument validity and reliability, the next step was to analyze the results of the questionnaire responses from respondents. This section will present in detail the respondents' perceptions of the Social Media Marketing variables. This analysis provides a direct overview of the effectiveness of the hotel's

social media strategy.

Table 1. Questionnaire Answer Results for Social Media Marketing Variables

No	Social Media Marketing Statement Items	Frequency				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I want to check out the hotel's social media for information.	0	1	24	84	96
2	I'm interested in comments from the hotel's social media followers.	0	1	23	83	98
3	The hotel's social media advertisements really caught my attention.	0	2	24	83	96
4	The hotel's message or tagline on social media is memorable and engaging.	0	2	26	85	92
5	The hotel displays the room conditions simply and without exaggeration.	0	2	25	82	96
6	The hotel displays the condition of its facilities simply and without exaggeration.	0	1	26	84	94
7	The hotel displays a certificate of suitability for its facilities on its social media.	0	1	24	86	94
8	The hotel offers food and beverages made from high-quality ingredients.	0	1	26	82	96
9	The hotel displays the room conditions in detail and transparently on social media.	0	1	25	83	96
10	The hotel displays supporting facilities clearly and comprehensively.	0	1	23	87	94

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

The first question, "I want to look at the hotel's social media to find information." The answers to this statement indicate that social media has become the main gateway for potential guests to find information. The questionnaire results reinforce this dominantly. Strongly Agree was answered by 96 respondents (46.8%), Agree was answered by 84 respondents (41.0%), Neutral was answered by 24 respondents (11.7%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). Cumulatively, as many as 87.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that consumers use hotel social media as a source of information. This confirms that an informative hotel presence on social media platforms is a must for reaching the audience.

The second question, "I am interested in comments from the hotel's social media followers," reveals the power of social proof in digital marketing. The majority of respondents acknowledged that hotel management is interested in reviews and comments from other guests. 98 respondents (47.8%) strongly agreed, 83 respondents (40.5%) agreed, 23 respondents (11.2%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. With 88.3% of respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing, this data demonstrates that user-generated content (such as comments and reviews) is a valuable asset that can influence the interest of potential guests.

The third question "Hotel advertisements displayed on social media really caught my attention." The visual appeal and promotion of hotel advertisements on social media were considered very effective. Respondents felt that the advertisements presented were successful in capturing consumers' attention. Strongly Agree was answered by 96 respondents (46.8%), Agree was answered by 83 respondents (40.5%), Neutral was answered by 24 respondents (11.7%), Disagree was answered by 2 respondents (1.0%), Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 87.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that the advertising materials used by the hotel have a strong appeal and managed to stand out amidst the flow of social media information.

The fourth question is "The hotel's message or tagline on social media is memorable and engaging." The effectiveness of verbal communication, such as the tagline, also received a positive assessment.

Respondents felt that the hotel's message in its campaign was memorable and engaging. Strongly Agree: 92 respondents (44.9%), Agree: 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral: 26 respondents (12.7%), Disagree: 2 respondents (1.0%), and Strongly Disagree: 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 86.4% of respondents agreed, indicating that the hotel successfully created a marketing message that stuck in the minds of its audience.

The fifth question "Hotels display room conditions simply and not exaggerated." Honesty and authenticity in visual presentation are highly valued. Respondents expressed positive sentiments regarding the way hotels display rooms, which they perceived as realistic and not exaggerated. Strongly Agree was answered by 96 respondents (46.8%), Agree was answered by 82 respondents (40.0%), Neutral was answered by 25 respondents (12.2%), Disagree was answered by 2 respondents (1.0%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). With 86.8% of respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing, this indicates that consumers prefer honest depictions to overly polished and potentially misleading visuals.

The sixth question "The hotel displays the condition of its facilities simply and not excessively." Similar to the presentation of the rooms, the presentation of hotel facilities was also considered positive because it was considered not exaggerated, which builds audience trust. Strongly Agree was answered by 94 respondents (45.9%), Agree was answered by 84 respondents (41.0%), Neutral was answered by 26 respondents (12.7%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 86.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This reaffirms that transparency in displaying facilities is an appreciated strategy.

Question seven. "Hotels display certificates of eligibility for their facilities on their social media." The hotel's move to display proof of quality, such as certificates of eligibility, on social media was seen as a very positive move and successful in building trust. 94 respondents (45.9%) strongly agreed, 86 respondents (42.0%) agreed, 24 respondents (11.7%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. 87.9% of respondents supported this move, indicating that publicly displayed third-party validation is a powerful tool for strengthening brand image.

The eighth question, "The hotel offers food and beverages with high-quality ingredients." Social media marketing has proven successful in communicating the quality of the hotel's culinary offerings. Respondents believe the hotel uses premium ingredients. 96 respondents (46.8%) strongly agree, 82 respondents (40.0%) agree, 26 respondents (12.7%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagree, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagree. With 86.8% of respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing, the hotel is considered successful in using social media to build a perception of quality in its F&B offerings.

The ninth question "Hotels display detailed and transparent room conditions on social media." This statement emphasizes the importance of complete information. Respondents felt that hotels had provided detailed and transparent information regarding room conditions. Strongly Agree was answered by 96 respondents (46.8%), Agree was answered by 83 respondents (40.5%), Neutral was answered by 25 respondents (12.2%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 87.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, which means that transparency and detailed information are key factors valued by the audience in the consumer decision-making process.

The tenth question, "The hotel displays supporting facilities clearly and comprehensively." The completeness of information regarding supporting facilities also received a very good rating, indicating that the hotel successfully provides a comprehensive picture of what the hotel management offers. 94 respondents (45.9%) strongly agree, 87 respondents (42.4%) agree, 23 respondents (11.2%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagree, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagree. With a total agreement of 88.3%, respondents felt very informed about the facilities available, which helps hotel management in comprehensively evaluating the hotel's offerings.

Table 2. Questionnaire Answer Results for Location Variables

No	Location Variable	Frequency				
	Statement Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	The hotel is easily accessible by public transportation.	0	1	26	82	96
2	The hotel is easily found on Google Maps.	0	1	28	83	93
3	The road to the hotel is in good condition and ensures smooth travel.	0	1	29	87	88
4	The route to the hotel is safe and free from crime.	0	5	23	91	86
5	The hotel is close to the central business district.	0	3	25	87	90
6	The hotel is close to shopping centers.	0	3	24	88	90

In the Location variable, the first question "The hotel location is easy to reach by public transportation." This first statement illustrates the very positive perception of respondents regarding the hotel's accessibility using public transportation. The data shows that the majority of respondents feel the hotel location is easy to reach. Strongly Agree was answered by 96 respondents (46.8%), Agree was answered by 82 respondents (40.0%), Neutral was answered by 26 respondents (12.7%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). In total, 86.8% of respondents gave answers that agreed or strongly agreed. This indicates that easy access via public transportation is one of the location advantages perceived by guests.

In the second question "Hotel location is easy to find via Google Maps". This statement highlights the ease of finding hotels in the digital age. Respondents showed high confidence that hotel locations can be easily found via digital map applications such as Google Maps. Strongly Agree was answered by 93 respondents (45.4%), Agree was answered by 83 respondents (40.5%), Neutral was answered by 28 respondents (13.7%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 85.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This confirms that hotels have a good and easily tracked digital footprint, which is very important for modern travelers.

The third question "The road to the hotel is in good condition and supports a smooth journey." The quality of the road infrastructure to the hotel also received a positive assessment from respondents. This shows that good road conditions are an important supporting factor for guest travel comfort. Strongly Agree was answered by 88 respondents (42.9%), Agree was answered by 87 respondents (42.4%), Neutral was answered by 29 respondents (14.1%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). With a total of 85.3% of respondents stating that they agree or strongly agree, it can be concluded that the physical condition of the road to the hotel location is considered adequate and does not pose an obstacle.

Question four: "The route to the hotel is safe and free from crime risk." The safety aspect of the travel route is a significant concern, and respondents felt the route to the hotel was safe. This is a crucial factor that adds to the strategic value of a location. Strongly Agree was answered by 86 respondents (42.0%), Agree was answered by 91 respondents (44.4%), Neutral was answered by 23 respondents (11.2%), Disagree was answered by 5 respondents (2.4%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). The vast majority of respondents (86.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that the route to the hotel was safe. Although there was a small number who disagreed, the overall sentiment was very positive, indicating that the hotel is located in a neighborhood that is considered safe.

The fifth question is "Hotel location is close to the business center." Proximity to the business center is one of the main advantages of a hotel's location. Respondents strongly agreed with this advantage, which is especially relevant for business travelers. Strongly Agree was answered by 90 respondents (43.9%), Agree was answered by 87 respondents (42.4%), Neutral was answered by 25 respondents (12.2%), Disagree was answered by 3 respondents (1.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 86.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. This indicates that the

hotel's location close to commercial and business areas is a strong attraction.

The sixth question is "Hotel location is close to shopping centers." In addition to business centers, proximity to shopping centers is also considered a significant advantage. This is attractive to travelers who want to combine their stay with shopping or recreational activities. Strongly Agree was answered by 90 respondents (43.9%), Agree was answered by 88 respondents (42.9%), Neutral was answered by 24 respondents (11.7%), Disagree was answered by 3 respondents (1.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). With a total agreement reaching 86.8%, respondents clearly see proximity to malls or shopping centers as an important added value of a hotel location.

Table 3. Questionnaire Answer Results for the Brand Image Variable

No	Brand Image Variable	Frequency				
	Statement Item	1	2	3	4	5
1	This hotel offers luxurious amenities.	0	1	24	85	95
2	The hotel's interior design is aesthetic.	0	2	26	84	93
3	This hotel has complete room amenities.	0	1	23	86	95
4	The room amenities are from a quality brand.	0	1	25	85	94
5	This hotel serves top-quality food.	0	1	25	85	94
6	This hotel's bedrooms are comfortable for a good night's rest.	0	2	25	85	93
7	This hotel is a well-known brand.	0	4	24	85	92
8	This hotel guarantees the best service.	0	2	27	87	89
9	This hotel's brand frequently receives positive reviews.	0	3	26	85	91
10	This hotel brand is highly rated on hotel-related apps.	0	2	27	87	89

In the Brand Image variable, the first question was "This hotel has luxurious facilities." This statement confirms the respondents' strong perception that the hotel has luxurious facilities. This luxury attribute is a core element of the five-star hotel's successfully cultivated brand image. Strongly Agree was answered by 95 respondents (46.3%), Agree was answered by 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral was answered by 24 respondents (11.7%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). Cumulatively, 87.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that the image of luxury hotel facilities is deeply embedded in the minds of customers.

The second question is "The hotel interior design is aesthetic (beautiful and visually appealing)". This statement highlights the visual and aesthetic aspects of the hotel interior. Respondents widely agreed that the hotel interior design is very attractive and beautiful, which contributes significantly to the premium brand image. Strongly Agree was answered by 93 respondents (45.4%), Agree was answered by 84 respondents (41.0%), Neutral was answered by 26 respondents (12.7%), Disagree was answered by 2 respondents (1.0%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). With a total of 86.4% of respondents giving a positive assessment, it can be concluded that interior design is one of the pillars of the hotel brand image strength.

The third question "This hotel has complete room facilities". The completeness of the facilities in the room is the focus of this statement. The results show that respondents feel that the facilities provided in the room are very complete and meet the expectations of hotel management. Strongly Agree was answered by 95 respondents (46.3%), Agree was answered by 86 respondents (42.0%), Neutral was answered by 23 respondents (11.2%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 88.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that the completeness of the room facilities successfully strengthens the hotel's image as a provider of high-quality accommodation.

The fourth question "Room amenities from quality brands" This statement more specifically measures the perception of brand quality of the amenities in the room. Respondents believe that the hotel uses products from quality brands. Strongly Agree was answered by 94 respondents (45.9%),

Agree was answered by 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral was answered by 25 respondents (12.2%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). With 87.4% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, it is clear that the use of branded amenities successfully increases the perception of quality and luxury of the hotel.

The fifth question, "This hotel provides the highest quality food." The quality of the culinary offerings is highlighted in this statement. Respondents widely believe that the hotel serves the highest quality food. Strongly Agree: 94 respondents (45.9%), Agree: 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral: 25 respondents (12.2%), Disagree: 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree: 0 respondents (0.0%). 87.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that the hotel's brand image is also strongly supported by its reputation for culinary quality.

The sixth question "This hotel's bedroom is comfortable for resting. Comfort as the core function of a hotel room is the focus here. Respondents feel that the bedroom provided is very comfortable for resting. Strongly Agree: 93 respondents (45.4%), Agree: 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral: 25 respondents (12.2%), Disagree: 2 respondents (1.0%), and Strongly Disagree: 0 respondents (0.0%). With a total agreement reaching 86.9%, this confirms that the hotel has succeeded in fulfilling its main promise, which is to provide a comfortable and quality place to rest.

The seventh question "This hotel is a well-known brand." This statement measures the level of popularity or familiarity of the hotel brand. Respondents acknowledged that the hotel brand is indeed well-known among the public. Strongly Agree was answered by 92 respondents (44.9%), Agree was answered by 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral was answered by 24 respondents (11.7%), Disagree was answered by 4 respondents (2.0%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 86.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, which indicates that the hotel has high brand awareness in the market.

The eighth question is "This hotel guarantees the best service." The guarantee of service quality is at the heart of this statement. Respondents have a strong perception that the hotel is committed to providing the best service to its guests. 89 respondents (43.4%) strongly agree, 87 respondents (42.4%) agree, 27 respondents (13.2%) neutral, 2 respondents (1.0%) disagree, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagree. With 85.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, the hotel's brand image is successfully associated with the promise of excellent service.

The ninth question asked, "This hotel brand frequently receives positive reviews." Online reputation, particularly positive reviews, was the focus here. Respondents agreed that this hotel brand frequently receives positive reviews from its guests. 91 respondents (44.4%) strongly agreed, 85 respondents (41.5%) agreed, 26 respondents (12.7%) neutral, 3 respondents (1.5%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. 85.9% of respondents agreed, confirming that a good digital reputation is a crucial component of a hotel brand's image today.

The tenth question, "This hotel brand is highly rated on hotel-related apps," reiterates the importance of digital reputation, specifically ratings on hotel booking apps. Respondents confirmed that the hotel has a high rating. 89 respondents (43.4%) strongly agreed, 87 respondents (42.4%) agreed, 27 respondents (13.2%) neutral, 2 respondents (1.0%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. With a total agreement of 85.8%, this is strong evidence that the hotel's positive brand image is consistently reflected across the various digital platforms used by travelers.

Table 4. Questionnaire Response Results for the Stay Decision Variable

No	Brand Image Variable	Frequency				
	Statement Item	1	2	3	4	5
1	I felt comfortable with the condition of this hotel room.	0	1	24	84	96
2	I stayed because this hotel offers luxurious amenities.	0	1	23	86	95
3	I chose this hotel because I had stayed there before.	0	1	24	84	96
4	I chose this hotel because I was familiar with the facilities offered.	0	2	23	87	93
5	I stayed at this hotel to show social prestige.	0	1	24	86	94
6	I stayed at this hotel because I have a relatively high income.	0	1	25	86	93
7	If I have the opportunity, I will stay at this hotel again.	0	1	23	85	96
8	I want to bring my family to stay at this hotel.	0	1	24	85	95
9	I stayed at this hotel for business or official purposes.	0	1	23	85	96
10	I chose this hotel because the facilities meet my needs.	0	1	23	83	98
11	I stayed at this hotel because the facilities offered are very comprehensive.	0	1	23	85	96
12	I stayed at this hotel because of its strategic location.	0	1	22	82	100
13	I stayed at this hotel based on a recommendation from the hotel staff.	0	1	23	85	96
14	I stayed at this hotel because of the influence of someone who has stayed there before.	0	1	24	83	97

In the decision variable to stay, the first question is "I feel comfortable with the condition of this hotel room." This statement shows that room comfort is a fundamental factor that is fulfilled and drives the decision to stay. The majority of respondents felt very comfortable with the condition of the room provided. Strongly Agree was answered by 96 respondents (46.8%), Agree was answered by 84 respondents (41.0%), Neutral was answered by 24 respondents (11.7%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). With a total of 87.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, the physical comfort of the room is proven to be one of the main drivers in the hotel management's decision to stay.

The second question "I stayed because this hotel offers luxury facilities." This statement highlights the luxury of the facilities as the main attraction. Respondents acknowledged that the luxury facilities offered were an important reason behind the hotel management's decision to choose this hotel. Strongly Agree was answered by 95 respondents (46.3%), Agree was answered by 86 respondents (42.0%), Neutral was answered by 23 respondents (11.2%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 88.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, which confirms that the luxury attributes of the facilities directly influence customer purchasing decisions.

The third question, "I chose this hotel because I have stayed there before." Past experiences and customer loyalty are the focus of this statement. The results show that previous experiences are a strong reason for respondents to return. 96 respondents (46.8%) strongly agreed, 84 respondents (41.0%) agreed, 24 respondents (11.7%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. With 87.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, this data highlights the importance of first-time customer satisfaction in driving repeat business.

The fourth question was "I chose this hotel because I already knew about the facilities offered." This statement emphasizes the importance of prior knowledge about the facilities. Respondents stated that hotel management's understanding of the facilities contributed to consumer decisions. 93 respondents (45.4%) strongly agreed, 87 respondents (42.4%) agreed, 23 respondents (11.2%) neutral, 2 respondents (1.0%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. 87.8% of respondents

agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that effective communication and marketing regarding hotel facilities play a crucial role in convincing potential guests.

The fifth question, "I stayed at this hotel to show social prestige." Psychological motivations, such as social prestige, are at the heart of this statement. Respondents acknowledged that staying at this hotel was a way to show social status or prestige. 94 respondents (45.9%) strongly agreed, 86 respondents (42.0%) agreed, 24 respondents (11.7%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. With 87.9% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, this indicates that the hotel's luxury brand image successfully attracts a market segment motivated by social status.

The sixth question "I stayed at this hotel because I have a high enough income." This statement links the decision to stay with the perception of financial ability. Respondents felt that the high income level of hotel management allowed the hotel management to choose this hotel. Strongly Agree was answered by 93 respondents (45.4%), Agree was answered by 86 respondents (42.0%), Neutral was answered by 25 respondents (12.2%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 87.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, which indirectly confirmed that the hotel was successful in targeting the customer segment with high purchasing power.

The seventh question is "If I have the opportunity, I will stay at this hotel again." The intention to revisit (repurchase intention) is measured in this statement. The results show a very strong intention from respondents to stay again in the future. Strongly Agree was answered by 96 respondents (46.8%), Agree was answered by 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral was answered by 23 respondents (11.2%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by no respondents (0.0%). With 88.3% of respondents stating that they agree or strongly agree, this is a strong indicator of customer satisfaction and potential future loyalty.

The eighth question "I would like to bring my family to stay at this hotel." This statement measures the potential for advocacy or recommendation in the immediate circle. Respondents indicated a desire to share positive experiences of hotel management by bringing their families. Strongly Agree was answered by 95 respondents (46.3%), Agree was answered by 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral was answered by 24 respondents (11.7%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 87.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, which indicates that the hotel is also considered suitable and desirable for the family segment.

The ninth question was "I stayed at this hotel for business or official purposes." The purpose of the trip, specifically for business, was the focus of this statement. The data showed that business or official purposes were a significant reason for respondents to stay. 96 respondents (46.8%) strongly agreed, 85 respondents (41.5%) agreed, 23 respondents (11.2%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. With 88.3% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, this confirms the hotel's strong position in the business traveler market.

The tenth question is "I chose this hotel because the facilities meet my needs." The suitability of the facilities to personal needs is the core of this statement. Respondents felt that the facilities offered by the hotel were very relevant and answered the specific needs of hotel management. Strongly Agree was answered by 98 respondents (47.8%), Agree was answered by 83 respondents (40.5%), Neutral was answered by 23 respondents (11.2%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). A total of 88.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. This shows that the hotel not only offers luxurious facilities, but these facilities are also functional and relevant to its guests.

Question eleven "I stayed at this hotel because the facilities offered were very complete." This statement emphasizes the completeness of the facilities as a motivating factor. Respondents chose the hotel because the variety of facilities offered was considered very complete. Strongly Agree was answered by 96 respondents (46.8%), Agree was answered by 85 respondents (41.5%), Neutral was

answered by 23 respondents (11.2%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). With a total agreement of 88.3%, the completeness of the facilities proved to be one of the main reasons that solidified the guest's decision to stay.

The twelfth question "I stayed at this hotel because of its strategic location.". Location is a very strong determining factor. This statement confirms that the hotel's strategic location is the main reason for respondents in making decisions. Strongly Agree was answered by 100 respondents (48.8%), Agree was answered by 82 respondents (40.0%), Neutral was answered by 22 respondents (10.7%), Disagree was answered by 1 respondent (0.5%), and Strongly Disagree was answered by 0 respondents (0.0%). This statement received the highest percentage of "Strongly Agree" and the total agreement reached 88.8%, which underscores the crucial role of location in the decision to stay.

The thirteenth question asked, "I stayed at this hotel based on a recommendation from the hotel." This statement measures the influence of direct communication or recommendations from the hotel itself (e.g., through sales or reservations staff). 96 respondents (46.8%) strongly agreed, 85 respondents (41.5%) agreed, 23 respondents (11.2%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. 88.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that marketing efforts and direct recommendations from the hotel team are also effective in attracting guests.

Question fourteen: "I stayed at this hotel because of the influence of someone who had stayed there before." The influence of word-of-mouth or recommendations from others was the focus of the final statement. Respondents acknowledged that hotel management decisions were influenced by others who had stayed there before. 97 respondents (47.3%) strongly agreed, 83 respondents (40.5%) agreed, 24 respondents (11.7%) neutral, 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, and 0 respondents (0.0%) strongly disagreed. With 87.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, this response confirms the power of personal recommendations as one of the most significant decision-making factors.

4.2 Results of Measurement Model Testing or Outer Model

4.2.1 Outer Model Evaluation (Measurement Model)

Convergent validity is part of the measurement model, which in SEM-PLS is usually referred to as the outer model, while in covariance-based SEM it is called confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). There are two criteria for assessing whether the outer model meets the requirements for convergent validity for reflective constructs: (1) the loading must be above 0.7 and (2) the p-value is significant (<0.05). Indicators with loadings below 0.40 must be removed from the model. However, for indicators with loadings between 0.40 and 0.70, we should analyze the impact of the decision to remove the indicator on the average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability. The cutoff value for AVE is 0.50 and for composite reliability is 0.7. Indicators with small loadings are sometimes retained because they contribute to the content validity of the construct. Table 5 presents the loading values for each indicator.

Table 5. Validity Testing based on Outer Loading

	Brand Image (Y)	Decision to Stay (Z)	Location (X2)	Social Media Marketing (X1)
X1.1				0.989
X1.10				0.976
X1.2				0.973
X1.3				0.965
X1.4				0.950
X1.5				0.966
X1.6				0.975
X1.7				0.982
X1.8				0.973

X1.9				0.972
X2.1			0.956	
X2.2			0.971	
X2.3			0.960	
X2.4			0.907	
X2.5			0.960	
X2.6			0.964	
Y1	0.984			
Y10	0.963			
Y2	0.937			
Y3	0.971			
Y4	0.983			
Y5	0.976			
Y6	0.966			
Y7	0.962			
Y8	0.959			
Y9	0.945			
Z1		0.991		
Z10		0.985		
Z11		0.992		
Z12		0.964		
Z13		0.986		
Z14		0.981		
Z2		0.986		
Z3		0.991		
Z4		0.956		
Z5		0.989		
Z6		0.972		
Z7		0.996		
Z8		0.988		
Z9		0.992		

Based on the outer loading validity test in Table 5, all outer loading values were found to be >0.7 , which means they met the validity requirements based on the outer loading value. Next, validity testing was conducted based on the average variance extracted (AVE) value.

4.2.2 Evaluation of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Value

AVE literally stands for "Average Variance Extracted." This value represents the average percentage of variance in a group of indicators (question items) that is successfully explained by its latent construct (the abstract concept being measured). The AVE value is calculated as the average value of the squared outer loadings of all indicators that form a construct. Table 6 describes the AVE results.

Table 6. Validity Testing based on Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Image (Y)	0.931
Decision to Stay (Z)	0.967
Location (X2)	0.908

Social Media Marketing (X1)	0.945
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The recommended AVE value is above 0.5. It is known that all AVE values are > 0.5 , which means they have met the validity requirements based on AVE..

4.2.3 Evaluation of Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) Values

After the validity test, a reliability test was conducted based on the composite reliability (CR) value.

The results are shown in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. Reliability Testing based on Composite Reliability (CR)

	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Brand Image (Y)	0.993
Decision to Stay (Z)	0.998
Location (X2)	0.983
Social Media Marketing (X1)	0.994

The recommended CR value is above 0.7. All CR values are > 0.7 , which means they meet the reliability requirements based on CR. Next, reliability testing is conducted based on Cronbach's alpha (CA) values.

Table 8. Reliability Testing based on Cronbach's Alpha (CA)

	Cronbach's alpha
Brand Image (Y)	0.992
Decision to Stay (Z)	0.997
Location (X2)	0.980
Social Media Marketing (X1)	0.994

The recommended CA value is above 0.7. It is known that all CA values are > 0.7 , which means they meet the reliability requirements based on Cronbach's alpha.

4.2.4 Evaluation of Discriminant Validity

Next, discriminant validity testing was conducted using the Fornell-Larcker approach. The main objective of the Fornell-Larcker Discriminant Validity Evaluation is to ensure that each concept in the study is truly distinct and does not overlap with other concepts. Table 9 presents the results of the discriminant validity testing.

Table 9. Fornell & Larcker Discriminant Validity Test

	Brand Image	Decision to Stay	Location	Social Media Marketing
Brand Image (Y)	(0.965)			
Decision to Stay (Z)	0.808	(0.984)		
Location (X2)	0.483	0.596	(0.953)	
Social Media Marketing (X1)	0.469	0.615	0.368	(0.972)

Note: The values between “()” are the square roots of AVE.

In discriminant validity testing, the square root of the AVE of a latent variable is compared with the correlation between that latent variable and other latent variables. The square root of the AVE for each latent variable is greater than the correlation between that latent variable and other latent variables. Therefore, it is concluded that the discriminant validity requirements have been met.

4.3. Structural Model Results

4.3.1. Determinant Coefficient (R-Square)

The purpose of knowing the R-Square (R^2) value, or coefficient of determination, is to measure the extent to which an independent variable explains the variation in the dependent variable. R-Square indicates the percentage of variation in the dependent variable that can be explained by all the

independent variables used in the model. As shown in the following table.

Table 10. R-Square Results

	R-square
Brand Image (Y)	0.398
Decision to Stay (Z)	0.790

It is known that the R-Square value of Brand Image (Y) is 0.398, which means that Social Media Marketing (X1), Location (X2), is able to explain or influence Brand Image (Y) by 39.8%, the remaining 60.2% is influenced by other factors. It is known that the R-Square value of the Staying Decision (Z) is 0.790, which means that Social Media Marketing (X1), Location (X2), Brand Image (Y) is able to explain or influence the Staying Decision (Z) by 79%, the remaining 21% is influenced by other factors. This underscores how important the role of Brand Image as an intervening variable is. A strong brand image, built by social media marketing and location, is a very dominant determining factor in convincing customers to stay.

4.3.2 Hypothesis Testing Results

The primary purpose of the Bootstrapping Influence Significance Test (Bootstrapping) on the Inner Model is to test the hypothesis. Simply put, this test aims to determine whether the influence (relationship) between variables in your research model is truly real (statistically significant) or simply due to chance in the data sample you collected. Table 11 presents the results of the Bootstrapping Influence Significance Test.

Table 11. Path Coefficient Test and Significance of Influence

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Brand Image (Y) -> Stay Decision (Z)	0.509	0.509	0.141	3.601	0.000
Location (X2) -> Brand Image (Y)	0.262	0.261	0.093	2.825	0.005
Location (X2) -> Stay Decision (Z)	0.176	0.173	0.075	2.358	0.018
Social Media Marketing (X1) -> Brand Image (Y)	0.249	0.245	0.087	2.854	0.004
Social Media Marketing (X1) -> Stay Decision (Z)	0.224	0.222	0.074	3.022	0.003
Location (X2) -> Brand Image (Y) -> Stay Decision (Z)	0.133	0.134	0.065	2.066	0.039
Social Media Marketing (X1) -> Brand Image (Y) -> Stay Decision (Z)	0.127	0.127	0.063	2.013	0.044

Based on the results in Table 11, the results obtained:

1. Brand Image (Y) has a positive effect on the Stay Decision (Z), with a coefficient value (Original Sample column) = 0.509, and is significant, with T-Statistics = 3.601 > 1.96 and P-Values = 0.000 < 0.05 (Hypothesis Accepted). A positive sign (+) indicates that the relationship between the two variables is unidirectional. The better or more positive a hotel's brand image in the eyes of consumers, the higher the likelihood of consumers making a decision to stay at that hotel.

2. Location (X2) has a positive effect on Brand Image (Y), with a coefficient value (Original Sample column) = 0.262, and is significant, with T-Statistics = 2.825 > 1.96 and P-Values = 0.005 < 0.05 (Hypothesis Accepted). A positive sign indicates that the relationship between the two variables is unidirectional. The more strategic or better a hotel's location (e.g., easily accessible, close to tourist

attractions, safe, or with beautiful views), the more it will enhance its brand image.

3. Location (X2) has a positive effect on the decision to stay (Z), with a coefficient value (Original Sample column) of 0.176 and a significant T-statistic of $2.358 > 1.96$ and a P-value of $0.018 < 0.05$ (Hypothesis Accepted). The positive sign indicates that the relationship between location and the decision to stay moves in the same direction. The more strategic and better a hotel's location, the more likely customers are to make a decision to stay.

4. Social Media Marketing (X1) has a positive effect on Brand Image (Y), with a coefficient value (Original Sample column) of 0.249 and a significant T-statistic of $2.854 > 1.96$ and a P-value of $0.004 < 0.05$ (Hypothesis Accepted). A positive sign indicates a unidirectional relationship. The more effective and aggressive a hotel's social media marketing (e.g., through engaging content, interaction with followers, or positive reviews), the stronger its brand image will be.

5. Social Media Marketing (X1) has a positive effect on the Decision to Stay (Z), with a coefficient value (Original Sample column) of 0.224 and a significant effect, with a T-Statistic of $3.022 > 1.96$ and a P-Value of $0.003 < 0.05$ (Hypothesis Accepted). A positive sign indicates a unidirectional relationship. The better and more engaging social media marketing activities (such as content, promotions, and reviews), the more likely consumers will be to stay at the hotel.

6. Brand Image (Y) significantly mediates the relationship between Location (X2) and Staying Decision (Z), with T-Statistics = $2.066 > 1.96$ and P-Values = $0.039 < 0.05$ (Mediation Hypothesis Accepted). These results indicate that Brand Image (Y) acts as a bridge or important connecting mechanism in the relationship between Location and Staying Decision. Simply put, the influence of location on staying decisions occurs not only directly, but also indirectly through the formation of brand image.

7. Brand Image (Y) significantly mediates the relationship between Social Media Marketing (X1) and Staying Decision (Z), with T-Statistics = $2.013 > 1.96$ and P-Values = $0.044 < 0.05$ (Mediation Hypothesis Accepted). These results indicate that Brand Image (Y) acts as an important connecting mechanism (mediator) in the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Staying Decision. The influence of social media marketing activities on guests' final decisions not only occurs directly, but also indirectly through the development of a positive brand image.

5. Discussion

The analysis results show that Social Media Marketing (X1) has a positive and significant influence on Brand Image (Y) with a path coefficient value of 0.249 and a T-Statistics value of 2.854 (P-Values = 0.004). This means that the more effective the social media marketing strategy implemented by the hotel, the more positive the brand image formed in the eyes of consumers. This finding is very consistent with various previous literature and research. Gunelius (2011) stated that social media marketing utilizes the cultural context of social communities to achieve communication goals, including forming a unique brand identity and strengthening interactions with the brand also supports that companies view social media as an effective means of communication and enabling customers to form a unique brand identity. Furthermore, Feitosa & Mosconi (2022) highlight how social media algorithms greatly influence brand visibility and customer engagement, where relevant content strategies can increase the appearance of hotel content in user feeds. The implementation of strategies by five-star hotels in Medan, such as JW Marriott, Grand Mercure, and Cambridge Hotel, which focus on high-quality visual content, selection of relevant platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn), active engagement, and collaboration with influencers, has proven effective in building an aspirational and credible brand image.

Furthermore, Social Media Marketing (X1) was also proven to have a positive and significant direct influence on the Stay Decision (Z) with a path coefficient of 0.224 and T-Statistics of 3.022 (P-Values = 0.003). This confirms that marketing strategies on social media not only shape brand image but also directly encourage consumers to decide to stay at the hotel. This research is in line with the findings of

Pertiwi & Sulistyowati (2021), and Nursiti & Giovanna (2022) which stated that social media marketing has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions and also supports that marketing through social media plays an important role in the decision-making process of tourists in choosing a hotel by providing complete information. Hotels in Medan, such as JW Marriott, Grand Mercure, and Cambridge Hotel, have optimized social media not only as a promotional tool, but also as an integrated platform with booking systems and loyalty programs.

Location (X2) was also shown to have a positive and significant effect on Brand Image (Y) with a path coefficient of 0.262 and a T-Statistic of 2.825 (P-Values = 0.005). This indicates that a strategic and advantageous location significantly improves a hotel's brand image. This finding aligns with the service marketing theory proposed by Tjiptono (2019), which states that location is a key element in service marketing because it determines the target market concept and is an important consideration when choosing a hotel. A strategic location can be a barrier to competitors and demonstrates accessibility, comfort, and environmental appeal. Krystaliss and Chrysochou (2014) also stated that brands create customer value and appeal for hotel companies. Five-star hotels in Medan strongly emphasize the superiority of hotel management locations in their marketing strategies. The Influence of Location on Stay Decisions (Z)

Location (X2) also has a direct positive and significant influence on the Stay Decision (Z) with a path coefficient of 0.176 and a T-Statistic of 2.358 (P-Value = 0.018). This means that a strategic location directly increases the likelihood of customers deciding to stay. This finding is consistent with previous research by Ali & Khuzaini (2017) and Nurlina & Indah (2019), which showed that service usage decisions are positively and significantly influenced by location. Tjiptono (2019) also emphasized that customer purchasing decisions to purchase or use a product are influenced by strategic location. This inconsistency reaffirms the importance of a premium location connected to activity centers as a significant attraction for the target market segment.

Furthermore, Brand Image (Y) has a positive and significant effect on Stay Decision (Z) with a path coefficient of 0.509 and a T-Statistic of 3.601 (P-Values = 0.000). This is the strongest influence among all direct relationships, indicating that brand image is a very dominant determinant in consumers' decisions to stay at five-star hotels. This finding is very consistent with various literature. Labesi (2019) found that purchasing decisions are simultaneously influenced by brand image. Arianty & Andira (2021) also showed a positive influence of brand image on purchasing decisions. Soeswoyo and Widodo (2021) specifically stated that brand image provides a competitive advantage for hotels, especially in attracting guests by offering trust, professionalism, and reputation. Five-star hotels in Medan actively build a strong brand image through luxurious design, premium facilities, culinary quality, and impeccable service. This underscores that building and maintaining a positive brand image is the most effective and statistically proven strategy to increase guest stays.

In the indirect variable, Brand Image (Y) significantly mediates the relationship between Social Media Marketing (X1) and Staying Decision (Z) with a T-Statistic of 2.013 (P-Values = 0.044). This means that effective social media marketing activities not only directly influence staying decisions, but also indirectly through building a positive brand image. The social media marketing carried out by these hotels (engaging content, active interaction, review management) successfully builds and strengthens Brand Image. This strong brand image is what then becomes the main driver for consumers to make Staying Decisions. This confirms that the ultimate goal of social media marketing is not just superficial metrics ("likes" or "shares"), but rather to build a very valuable intangible asset, namely a strong brand image that ultimately leads to conversion. Hotel social media marketing strategies must focus on storytelling and building a brand image, because this image is one of the most powerful determining factors in convincing customers to make a booking.

Brand Image (Y) also significantly mediates the relationship between Location (X2) and Stay Decision (Z) with a T-Statistic of 2.066 (P-Values = 0.039). This indicates that the influence of location

on stay decisions occurs not only directly, but also indirectly through the formation of brand image. A strategic location strengthens the hotel's Brand Image, and this strong brand image significantly encourages customers to make Stay Decisions. In other words, location advantages alone are not enough; hotel management must actively use these location advantages in marketing communications to build and strengthen a positive brand image. A strong brand image becomes a "bridge" that connects location advantages with consumers' final decisions.

6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion, it is concluded that social media marketing has a significant effect on brand image at five-star hotels in Medan. This means that the more effective the social media marketing strategy implemented, the stronger and more positive the hotel's brand image will be. Location also has a significant effect on brand image at five-star hotels in Medan. This shows that a strategic location, easy access, and proximity to the center of activity significantly increase positive perceptions of the hotel brand. Furthermore, social media marketing has a significant effect on the decision to stay at five-star hotels in Medan. This means that marketing activities on social media directly encourage consumers to make stay decisions.

Likewise, location significantly influences the decision to stay at a five-star hotel in Medan. Strategic location is a significant direct driving factor for consumers in choosing a hotel. Furthermore, brand image also significantly influences the decision to stay at a five-star hotel in Medan. This finding confirms that a positive brand image is the most dominant determinant that drives consumer decisions to stay. For the indirect variable conclusion, brand image is proven to significantly mediate the influence of social media marketing on the decision to stay. This means that the influence of social media marketing on the decision to stay occurs not only directly, but also indirectly through its ability to build a strong brand image. Likewise, brand image is proven to significantly mediate the influence of location on the decision to stay. This means that the advantage of a location can maximally encourage the decision to stay when this advantage is successfully translated into a positive brand image in the minds of consumers.

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