

DO THE BRAND IMAGE AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY DETERMINE THE COMPETITIVE STRATEGY OF CHAIN HOTELS

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ABSTRACT

This study purposes to examine the influences of brand image and customer loyalty towards the competitive strategy for chain hotel in Bali. Partial Least Square was used with bootstrap model. The respondents involved were 117 respondents. The results suggest that in conducting its operations, brand image and customer loyalty affect the competitive strategy of chain hotels in Bali, therefore it can run properly. Nevertheless, a thorough interpretation of this implementation will be critical for the success of future hotel strategy. This research is a step toward assessing other hotel competitiveness; by suggesting classified groups of brands/hotels type to enhance long-term hotel sustainability. This is one of the few research studies, to assess brand image and customer loyalty through a management representative's point a view. Further, the results suggest that other indicators of strategies could be well developed.

Key Words: *Brand Image, Customer Loyalty, Competitive Strategy, Chain Hotel*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of brand image is becoming more prominent, both for academics and business practitioners. The theory of the brand has been going on since the 18th century AD in Europe and later evolved as the rapid growth of the advertising industry in the media at that time (Hampf & Repo, 2011). In a way, the new century 20's role and presence of the brand is increasingly becoming a major concern in a business competition (Susanto & Wijanarko, 2004). Post (2008), Kapferer (2008) and Keller (2008) also confirmed the importance of strategic brand for various companies, including hotel. However, branding a hotel is more than just connecting a property with a name and logo. The succesful branding development of chain hotels involves more than simply adding rooms and properties under the chain's name. (Cai, 2004).

As the world is rapidly going global, and also followed by the fast growth of international travel, the global hotel brands become more prevalent internationally. This is also effecting the position of domestic brands to be less competitive. Another fact is, that managing an independent hotel often demands constant involvement, however when it comes to chain hotels, a small issue can quickly get compounded and may go on to affect the chain's brand image – negatively influencing bookings across all units.

While the guest experience is obviously important, the operational strategies establishments are indeed significant for their brand and standardized service levels. Guests have certain expectations that come with the name, and ensuring that they experience the same enriching service at all chains or properties is immutable.

Brand image also gives a positive impact on customer loyalty. Customer loyalty has become one of the major components to create a competitive advantage (Abrudan & Dabija, 2015). In the perspective of behavior, loyalty is indicated as a tendency to re-purchase (repeat purchase) or the next visit to a place to shop (Sullivan & Adcock, 2002; Olsen, 2007; Sainy, 2010). Trust and psychological commitment, the recommendations and the desire to buy back (Russell-Bennett, McColl-Kennedy and Coote, 2007; Ray & Chiagouris, 2009; Wong & Dean, 2009). However, there are still few and limited studies that have been done before in measuring customer loyalty from the management's perspective, including for services sectors such as hotels. (Zentes, Morschetts & Scramm-Klein, 2011).

Branding represents one of the core marketing practices that emphasize the continuity of the company with external environment, including customer. Through branding, companies are able to create, nurture and innovate their market-based asset. By creating market-based asset perceived by customer, companies are able to nurture perceived brand value and consumer brand equity, which in turn create profitability for the companies. Therefore brand represents important determinant of the company to develop its competitive strategy. (Abimbola, 2001)

One of the challenges faced by the current global hotel industry is ensuring good marketing practice in term of developing a clear brand message for hotel. It needs to be a greater attention to study of academics and industry practitioners, otherwise the chains in industry are likely to slide into becoming price-based including for chains hotel in Bali.

This study attempts to identify how far the brand image and customer loyalty effect on competitive strategy to the chain hotels in Bali. This is examined by data collected through questionnaires to 117 respondents of the chain hotels in Bali. Respondents were general managers, marketing managers, from office managers, food and beverage managers. The results of this study shows that in conducting its operations, brand image and customer loyalty affect the competitive strategy of chain hotels in Bali, therefore it can run properly. Therefore, it is important to examine this topic further to assist the chain hotels in Bali facing an aggressive penetration particularly from global chain hotels.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT: 3, 4 AND 5 STARS OF CHAIN HOTELS IN BALI

As the only God Island in Indonesia, Bali becomes the destination where the largest hotel project growth swiftly compared to other potential destinations in Indonesia.

Table 1
HOTEL PROJECT IN INDONESIA IN 2013

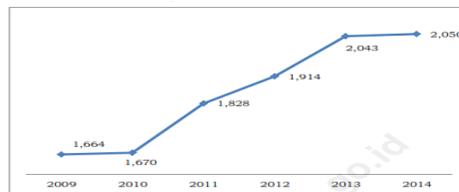
	UNDER CONSTRUCTION	FINAL PLANNING	PLANNING
INDONESIA	150	90	98
BALI	36	22	22
JAKARTA	28	23	19

Source : Howarth HTL, 2013

The above table illustrates the composition of the hotel project in Indonesia. Bali became attractive destinations, where the position of the project is comprised of 36 projects that are still under construction, 22 projects in the planning position and 22 projects in the planning position. In that position, the category showed growth Mid-scale and Midscale Upper class respectively (+28.6%) (+ 31.3%).

Currently the hotel market in Bali leads to a hyper competition. With the high value of traditions and cultural, the hyper competition suspected will disrupt the continuity of the cultural ecosystem. This circumstances strongly growth and followed by the negligence of the balance between real needs and requirements with the current supply (Yasa, 2013). The hyper competition condition can also be seen from the growth in the number of both hotel and non-star in Bali below;

Figure 1
HOTEL GROWTH IN BALI FROM 2009 – 2014



Source: Bali Statistic Bureau (2014)

In 2013 the number of hotels in Bali experienced fairly rapid growth compared to the previous year to 2,050 accommodations or an increase of 0.3% percent over the previous year. In 2014 the number of star hotels reached 277 hotels (increases by 22 hotels) from the previous of 255 hotels. As for her room number is 28 811, 6965 increased from the previous room as much as 21 846 rooms.

The expanding number of hotel rooms is, obviously makes hoteliers concerned at the same time worried. They even asked the provincial government of Bali restrict the supply of new hotels, as occupancy rates continued to show a tendency to decline due to excess supply. The oversupply will have an impact on lowering the level of occupancy, as described in following table.

Table 2
OCCUPANCY GROWTH IN BALI 2015

No	District	Hotel numbers	Occupancy
1.	Jembrana	2	Data is not available
2.	Tabanan	2	(54.84%)
3.	Badung	146	(55.81%)
4.	Gianyar	18	(46,07%)
5.	Klungkung	7	Data is not available
6.	Bangli	0	Data is not available
7.	Karangasem	7	(56,11%)
8.	Buleleng	14	(35,88%)
9.	Denpasar	31	(63,1%)
	Total	277	

Source: Bali Statistic Bureau (2014)

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Bali in 2014 above, it was noted that the room occupancy rate of star hotels in Bali in December 2014 has decreased. TPK in Tabanan, Badung, Gianyar, Karangasem, Buleleng, and Denpasar decreased respectively 54.84 percent, 55.81 percent, 46.07 percent, 56.11 percent, 35.88 percent and 63.1 percent, with an average decrease of 51.95 percent last year until December 2014. Declining pattern in hotel occupancy in Bali until December 2014 is one indication of hotel performance decreasing, including a network of five-star hotels in Bali.

The lack performance of the local chain hotels, shown through the average daily rate, revenue rooms per available (RevPAR) and occupancy rate was allegedly caused by a weakness in the design of competitive strategy, especially with its increasingly competitive environment hospitality industry in Bali. Hotel chain with international brands has been and will continue to erode the market share of national brand hotel chain in the country. Every hotel network of national brand should have a competitive advantage by taking into account the uniqueness and special characteristics that are difficult for hotel imitated other networks, both related to the development of brand image and service that makes guests into loyal and back again the same hotel.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Image

The intense competition makes hotels applying strategies to achieve competitive advantage which brings the impact to increase the guests. Wijaya (2010) states that one way to achieve a competitive advantage in order to maintain the consumer loyalty is to build the brand image in consumers' mind-set. The customer loyalty can be acquired from some facets, such as quality of service and brand image as the ability of the company strengthens its positioning through marketing communications. The research result conducted by Kandampully & Suhartanto (2000) strengthens the above statement that the good image of the hotel will affect the level of customer loyalty.

Hoeffler and Keller (2003) stated that brand image can be measured by a (a) professional impression consist of quality-product and Service, easily recognizable consumer, easy to obtain - strong accessibility, (b) modern impression, which consists of constantly using technology in the activity, having attractive package, following the market trends, (c) all segment services which consists of offer various types of products and services that were mixed offering various consumers , options strategies that vary according to market segment and (d) customer oriented which consists of giving good facilities, attractive promotion program and customer loyalty program.

Brand image represents "the reasoned or emotional perceptions consumers attach to specific brands" (Low and Lamb, 2000) a set of beliefs held by customers about a particular brand, based upon some intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of a market offering resulting to perceived quality, and customer satisfaction (Garcia Rodriguez and Bergantinos, 2001). While customer satisfaction although subject to debate as there are dichotomies to its definition, can be likened to customer feeling of pleasure or disappointment as a result of experience or the act of comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to a customer's expectations (Ogba and Tand, 2009). Corporate image and Brand image also positively affects customer loyalty and customer satisfaction (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998; Javalgi and Moberg, 1997).

Customer Loyalty

A loyal customer is not measured by how much he bought, but of how often he has done the re-purchase, including giving recommendation to purchase to others. Swastha (2009) emphasized that customer loyalty willing to continue to use the same product from a company. In recent years, customer loyalty has emerged as a major focus of marketing strategy due to its key role in retaining the customers (Boora and Singh, 2011).

In a competitive marketplace where corporations and forms compete for customers; customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are seen as a key differentiator. Businesses who succeed in these cut-throat environments are the ones that make customer satisfaction and loyalty as key element of their business strategy. According to Griffin (2005), loyalty refers to a form of behavior and decision-making units to continuously purchase of goods or services of a company that is selected, which include some of the following indicators: a) Making a purchase on a regular basis, b) Buying outside the line of products or services, c) Recommend the product, d) Indicates immunity of appeal similar products from competitors. Duffy (1998) asserts that building customer loyalty is a business strategy, not just a marketing program and that all businesses should seek to boost loyalty and maximize share of customer.

Competitive Strategy

Barney (2010) states that a company achieve competitive advantage when companies implement value creating strategy that is at the same time not used by other companies. This statement leads to the understanding that the business managers should be creatively taking along their company to attain superior performance as their goal. Cathoth and Olsen (2007) assert that strategy formulation and implementation are the key factors in accomplishing the goal. Recently, many hotel managers develop their competitive strategies that aim to secure a strong market position and achieve high revenue. Enz (2008) argued that a single resource cannot create competitive advantage. It was strengthened by Olsen et al. (2008), that the combination of competitive resources – branding, human resources, information and technology, innovation, computer reservation system, niche marketing and advertising, and pricing tactics – that can increase a hotel's capabilities and improve performance. It means, only hotel with strong capabilities could distinct it from competitors in the global environment.

In this study, the approach of the strategies used are low cost and differentiation. Both approaches have been widely used by companies consistently (Lucyanda and Rahmayanti, 2012). This is also stressed by Agyapong and Boamah (2013) that the price leadership (cost leadership) and the uniqueness or difference (differentiation) are the two factors of competitive advantage that can improve the performance of the hotel.

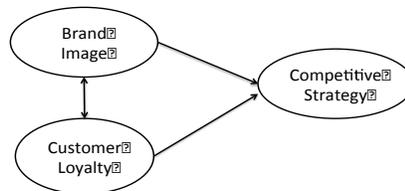
Branding is one of a hotel firm's most valuable assets (Keller and Lehmann, 2003). Competitive branding enables hotels to distinguish themselves from their competitors, to create customer loyalty, to exert greater control and to demand a price premium over their competitors (Holverson and Revaz, 2006). However, it does not describe in many researches yet that the brand and the customer loyalty are directly effect the competitive strategy of the hotel.

Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework for the current study. As can be seen, that brand image and customer loyalty investigated here, all have a direct influence on the hotel's competitive strategy. The conceptual model and hypothesis guiding this study are as follows;

- H1 The brand image influences the competitive strategy of 3,4 and 5 stars chain hotels in Bali

- H2 The customer loyalty influences the competitive strategy of 3,4 and 5 stars chain hotels in Bali.
- H3 The brand image and customer loyalty simultaneously influence the competitive strategy of 3,4 and 5 stars chain hotels in Bali.

Figure 2
THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL



METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Survey Instruments

This study applies causal and descriptive research design to determine the cause-and-effect relationships among brand image, customer loyalty and competitive strategy of 3, 4 and 5 stars of chain hotels in Bali. It is based on the theoretical foundation provided by the studies of Hoeffler and Keller (2003), Griffin (2005) and Agyapong and Boamah (2013). A structural questionnaire was developed to serve as the main data collection tool in study. These questionnaires comprised 32 closed-ended questions. The first section of questionnaires sought relevant demographic information from the respondent hotels such as stars category, length of operation, location of the hotel and job position. This demographic information was necessary as they constitute the main independent variables in the study. In term of the dependent variables, a popular measure was used to capture various aspects of a brand image based on Hoeffler and Keller (2003), customer loyalty based on Griffin (2005) and competitive strategy based on Agyapong and Boamah (2013). These areas were operationalized in the second section of the instrument, using Likert-scale items, with response option ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher score on each scale indicated higher importance attached to a particular variable observed.

The analysis used to test hypotheses and determine the relationship between the variables is by using analytical tools PLS (Partial Least Square) using SmartPLS version 2.0 M3. Partial Least Square (PLS) was first developed by Herman Wold (1982).

Sample and Data-Collection Procedures

Given the small size of the sample in Bali, almost all chain hotels from 3, 4 and 5 stars represented in this study. Questionnaires were distributed to capable person understood on the management area; general managers, front office manager, human resources manager, sales and marketing manager, food and beverage manager. All respondents were informed about the nature and purpose of the study. They were also informed that their answered were kept confidential.

Data obtained from 39 of 75 local chain hotels in Bali, indicating around 52 per cent response rate.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities

Validity Test results obtained by means SmartPLS loading factor values above 0.5 to established construct. Furthermore, the results presented in the table outer validity loading as follows;

Table 3
VALIDITY TEST RESULT

	Brand Image	Customer Loyalty	Competitive Strategy
X11	0.717		
X12	0.793		
X13	0.759		
X14	0.723		
X21		0.778	
X22		0.683	
X23		0.671	
X24		0.561	
Z11			0.827
Z12			0.835
Z13			0.743

In the above table it appears that loading factors provide a value above the recommended value that is equal to 0.5. means indicators employed in this study is valid or has met the convergent validity. More reflective indicators also need to be tested discriminant validity by looking at the value of square root of average variance extracted (AVE). With a recommended value is above 0.5.

Table 3
VALIDITY TEST RESULT

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Image	0.560
Customer loyalty	0.591
Competitive strategy	0.644

The above table manunjukkan AVE value above 0.5 for all constructs contained in the research model. It is confirmed that all research indicators valid. As for the reliability test, the results are found to reliably remember all composite reliability values on demonstrated above 0.7. The following data in the table below.

Table 4
REALIBILITY TEST RESULT

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Image	0.836
Customer loyalty	0.770
Competitive strategy	0.844

DISCUSSION

The study pursued to determine whether the brand image influences the competitive strategy of 3, 4 and 5 stars chain hotels in Bali. The model test was required before the hypothesis test conducted. Test model of research in Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling can be done through the outer and inner models models.

Outer Measurement Model or Models

This is to test an indicator of latent variables, or in other words an indicator measuring the extent it can explain the latent variables. Indicators in this study are reflective indicators.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity of this study was measured through the outer loading where the size of individual reflective said to be high if more than 0.70 correlated with the variables to be measured. Values outer loading on all indicators are at above the above criteria. Based on the calculation, the outer loadings of all indicators of research have met the criteria, where all the value is above 0.5. It means that convergent validity has been qualified.

Composite Reliability

Composite reliability is one measure of the discriminant validity, which indicates whether the measured variable has a high reliability if it has composite reliability is above 0.7.

Average variance extracted (AVE)

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is one measure of discriminant validity. AVE should be greater than 0.5. AVE variable has a value above 0.5 with the highest AVE obtained competitive strategy variables (0.844) and variables owned by the lowest AVE brand image (0.560).

Cronbach Alpha

Cronbach Alpha is used to measure of discriminant validity which suggested having a value above 0.7. As can be seen Cronbach Alpha value calculation results as follows;

Table 5
CRONBACH ALPHA

	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Image	0.739
Customer loyalty	0.615
Competitive strategy	0.722

Based on the above table it can be shown that each variable has a Cronbach alpha values above 0.7. The highest Cronbach alpha values obtained brand image variable, while the variables obtained the lowest Cronbach alpha was customer loyalty variable. Therefore, it can be concluded that outer model complied with the criteria established.

The following testing is the inner structural model or test the influence / hypothesis by looking at the coefficient of determination R square, T-statistics and coefficient parameters. The coefficient determination test or tests R-square aims to determine how well the inner models (structural model) were formed. According Ghazali (2011), when the R square value of 0.67; 0.33; and 0.19 indicate that the model "Good", "Moderate" and "Weak" for latel endogenous variables in the model inner. The test results from the outer inner weight models indicate that the results of each indicator are significant to the latent variable for t statistic > 1.96.

Table 6
PATH COEFICIENT

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics(O /STDEV)	P Values
Brand Image-> Competitive Strategy	0.366	0.379	0.109	3.353	0.001
Customer Loyalty → competitive strategy	0.491	0.482	0.111	4.408	0.000

In view of the above table between variables test results showed that the relationship between variables by testing the variables are significant. Thus we can conclude all hypotheses can be accepted.

Inner Structural Model Or a Models

This is to test the influence of a latent variable with other latent variables either exogenous or endogenous. It can be said also test the hypothesis of a latent variable with each other. Tests conducted by the percentage of variance explained namely R² for the dependent latent variable that is modelled to get the influence of the independent latent variables to use and see the magnitude coefficient of track structure. To see the ability of exogenous variables in explaining endogenous variables we used R-square test results and how well the inner workings of the model established. The following table below describes the test results R square. Then the ability of competitive strategy variables was 63.2% and the rest was explained by other variables.

From the measurement results R-square test can be declared a model structure can be considered good.

Hyphothesis Result

To confirm the results of the study hypothesis test conducted as follow;

Tabel 7
HYPHOTHESIS TEST RESULT (T-TEST)

Variable	T	Sig.
Brand Image	3.35	.000
Customer Loyalty	4.40	.000

Hypothesis 1

H0: ≠ 0 Brand not significantly affect Competitive Strategy at Star 3, 4 and 5 at Bali.

Ha: = 0 Brand image significantly affect Competitive Strategy at Star 3, 4 and 5 at Bali.

Hypothesis 2

H0: ≠ 0 Customer Loyalty does not significantly affect Competitive Strategy at Star 3, 4 and 5 at Bali.

Ha: = 0 Customer Loyalty significantly affect Competitive Strategy at Star 3, 4 and 5 at Bali.

In the first statistical testing using statistical tests partially with the testing criteria of departure if $t \text{ count} > t \text{ table}$ at significance level α with $= 1.96$. Based on the results in table 7 of hypothesis test result, it appears that value of $t \text{ count} > t \text{ table}$. It means that the brand image and customer loyalty partially both with significant influence on competitive strategy. Brand image is reflected in the various attributes of quality products and services, the existence of modern technology, ease of access, luxurious amenities Balinese flavour can influence competitive strategy developed by the hotel. The hotel uses these conditions to improve its competitive strategy through a variety of approaches and channels for the sake of winning the competition. Similarly, the role of customer loyalty are also significantly affect strategic compete, continue to be a guideline for the hotel management to enhance its uniqueness and value in the minds and thoughts of the guests.

The following hypothesis was to examine whether the brand image and customer loyalty are partially or simultaneously influence the competitive strategy, described in hypothesis testing below;

Hypothesis 3

H0: ≠ 0 Brand image and customer loyalty simultaneously not significantly affect Competitive Strategy at Star 3, 4, & 5 in Bali.

Ha : = 0 Brand image and customer loyalty simultaneously significantly influence Competitive Strategy at Star 3, 4, & 5 in Bali.

In the hypothesis test approach used to see the significance of the influence between variables simultaneously, based on the influence of structural equations simultaneously obtained by $R^2 = 0.362$, following the results of the statistical test using the formula;

$$F_{hitung} = \frac{(n - k - 1)R^2(i, j)}{k(1 - R^2(i, j))}$$

The test criteria are H_0 is rejected if $F_{count} > F_{table}$ at α significant level in the degrees of freedom $\nu_1 = k$ and $\nu_2 = n - k - 1$. Processing results which amounted to F_{count} was 8,597 and F_{table} was 2.13 or $F_{count} > F_{table}$ ($8597 > 2.13$). Based on that results it confirms that simultaneously brand image and customer loyalty could influence the competitive strategy.

The study revealed that in conducting its operations, brand image and customer loyalty affect the competitive strategy of chain hotels in Bali, therefore it can run properly. Nevertheless, a thorough interpretation of this implementation will be critical for the success of future hotel strategy. This research is a step toward assessing other hotel competitiveness, by suggesting classified groups of brands/hotels type to enhance long-term hotel sustainability. This is one of the few research studies, to assess brand image and customer loyalty through a management representative's point a view. Further, the results suggest that other indicators of strategies could be well developed.

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