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The Impact of Brand Image on Guest Stay Decisions at The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry is currently facing intense competition. Guests' decisions to stay are influenced not only by price and location, but also by intangible factors such as brand image. The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne, despite its global reputation, has experienced fluctuating occupancy. This situation indicates the need to evaluate the effectiveness of the brand image strategy applied. This study is novel in examining how brand image influences guests' decisions to stay at The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne, a relatively new luxury hotel. A quantitative approach was applied, employing classical assumption tests and simple linear regression. The research sample consisted of guests who had previously stayed at the hotel. The results of the analysis indicate that brand image has a significant effect on the decision to stay, as shown by a t-value of 11.204 > 1.657 with a beta coefficient of 0.665. This means that an increase in brand image leads to a higher likelihood of guests deciding to stay. Brand image contributes 55.7% to the decision-making process, while the remaining 44.3% is influenced by other factors outside this study. The study concludes that strengthening brand image is essential to encourage stay decisions and to maintain the competitiveness of luxury hotels in the market.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hotels are an essential part of the global economy, serving not only as providers of accommodation but also as key drivers of employment and national revenue. The development of modern lifestyles and the increased mobility of society are driving the demand for accommodation that is not only functional, but also offers a comfortable and quality stay experience. Hotels today no longer function as a place to rest, but as a comprehensive service provider that responds to guests' needs with a holistic and guest-centred approach. The American Hotel and Lodging Association states that a hotel is a place prepared for lodging, dining, drinking, and other facilities. Irwansyah (2017) added that hotels are companies that provide food, beverage, and bed services to travellers who can afford to pay reasonably without special agreements. Understanding the changing preferences and expectations of guests is essential for hotels to compete in an increasingly competitive industry.

The development of the hotel industry in various major cities around the world also shows similar dynamics. Melbourne, Australia, is one of the international destinations that has experienced a surge in tourism activity. The city's architectural appeal, vibrant nightlife, and culinary diversity make Melbourne a magnet for domestic and foreign tourists. The growth of the tourism sector in this city has a direct impact on the increasing need for high-end accommodation. Five-star hotels are here to meet this demand by offering an exclusive quality of service. Tourists not only consider the location and price, but also pay attention to the reputation and image of the hotel they will choose.

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The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne is one of the luxury hotels that has its own charm amid intense market competition. The global reputation it has as part of the Marriott International network, as well as its focus on personalised service and premium amenities, makes it a symbol of exclusivity and convenience. However, success in shaping an image does not necessarily guarantee the achievement of optimal operational performance. Based on occupancy data from April 2023 to March 2024, The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne's occupancy rate was recorded at 57.21 per cent, below Crown Melbourne and Sofitel Melbourne on Collins. The monthly fluctuations in occupancy rates indicate that there are factors that need to be evaluated more deeply for hotels to maintain competitiveness sustainably.

One of the aspects that needs to be studied in this context is the guest's decision in choosing a place to stay. The decision is influenced not only by price and location, but also by psychological and emotional factors related to guests' perception of a hotel. Indriyanti (2023) stated that the decision of a guest to stay is an action that is carefully taken to determine whether to use a place to stay based on the information available. This decision is influenced by various elements such as the quality of service, previous experience, and the perception of the hotel's reputation and reliability. Understanding these decision-making patterns is important in developing a more targeted marketing strategy.

Among the various elements affecting stay decisions, brand image has been shown to play an influential role. Arianty & Andira (2021) stated that brand image is an image that appears in the minds of consumers when remembering a brand. In the context of hospitality, a strong brand image can create certain expectations of the quality of service and comfort that will be received. When these expectations are met, even exceeded, then guests tend to feel satisfied and loyal to the hotel. This level of satisfaction encourages the dissemination of positive information, both in person and through online reviews on various platforms. Thus, a positive brand image has an important contribution to the continuity of the hotel business (Azzahra & Nainggolan, 2022; Yulianthi & Sadguna, 2020).

Several previous studies have explored the link between brand image and stay decisions. Azzahra & Nainggolan (2022) found that brand image has a direct effect on hotel customer satisfaction. Ariawan et al. (2019) show that brand image has a positive effect on guests' decisions in choosing a place to stay. Research by Lubis et al. (2023) also confirms that brand image plays an important role in shaping consumer preferences. A positive brand image serves as a quality guarantee for customers, which then becomes an important factor in their decision-making process (Darmajaya & Sukawati, 2018).

The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne has successfully established a luxury brand image through high service quality, comfort, and a unique guest experience. However, fluctuations in occupancy data and variations in customer loyalty indicate that the success of brand image does not fully guarantee the stability of hotel performance. Marriott Bonvoy's loyalty data shows that membership registration success fluctuates, for example, only 7.8 per cent in April 2023, but increased to more than 73 per cent in August and September 2023. This phenomenon shows that image management strategies need to be continuously adjusted to market conditions and diverse guest characteristics.

Additionally, The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne's guest profile reflects diverse backgrounds. The majority of guests are from Australia, followed by the United States and China, from 2023 to 2024. The surge in the number of foreign guests in a given period suggests that perceptions of brand image can vary based on each country's cultural background and expectations (Nguyen et al., 2015). This opens up opportunities to take a more personalised and adaptive approach in conveying brand value to the global market.

The majority of previous studies used quantitative approaches that tended not to touch the symbolic and emotional aspects in depth. Kotler (2016) emphasises that emotional elements play an important role in the formation of consumer loyalty and decisions. Therefore, the exploration of elements such as service reputation, hotel ambience, and brand values needs to be developed in order to create a stronger emotional attachment. This approach will provide a more solid foundation for designing a luxury hotel marketing strategy.

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Understanding the role of brand image in influencing guests' stay decisions is critical to hotel management. The strategy built needs to include improving service quality, product innovation, and brand communication that are in line with the preferences of the target market. In a competitive climate, brand image is not only a tool to attract consumer interest but also a foundation for building long-term loyalty. The outcomes of this study are intended to assist in shaping more effective hospitality marketing strategies, especially in the context of The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne, in order to maintain excellence in the midst of changing market dynamics.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Method

This study employs a quantitative approach to examine the influence of the independent variable, Brand Image (X), on the dependent variable, Guest Stay Decision (Y). The research targets guests who stayed at The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne between October 2023 and March 2024. The research was conducted at The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne, 650 Lonsdale St, Melbourne VIC 3000, Australia.

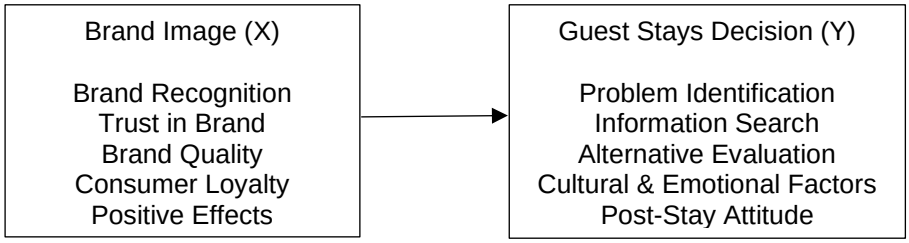


Fig 1. Conceptual Framework

The population in this study consisted of 7,893 guests who stayed at the hotel during March 2024. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique, with the number of respondents determined based on the Slovin formula at a 10% margin of error, resulting in a total of 100 research participants. The study utilised both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure a comprehensive analysis. Quantitative data were collected through guest questionnaires, while qualitative insights were obtained from interviews with the Director of Rooms. In terms of data sources, the research employed both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly from respondents via questionnaires and interviews Fiantika et al. (2022), whereas secondary data were derived from internal hotel documents and relevant literature sources (Sugiyono, 2016). Before data analysis, the research instruments underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure accuracy. Validity was assessed by correlating the calculated r-value with the r-table at a significance level. level 5% (0.05), and the instrument was considered valid when the calculated r-value surpassed the critical value from the r-table. Reliability was tested using the Cronbach Alpha formula, with an alpha coefficient greater than 0.60 considered indicative of reliable results (Sugiyono, 2016).

2.2. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS software to support the quantitative analysis, which was aligned with the research objective of examining the influence of brand image on the guests' decision to stay. The analysis consisted of several stages, starting with classical assumption tests, including normality, heteroscedasticity, and linearity tests. This was followed by a simple linear regression analysis to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables. Furthermore, hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test to assess the significance of the relationship, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Result

Validity Test. Validity testing is conducted to determine whether an instrument can be considered valid in measuring a research variable, such as in questionnaires (Slamet & Wahyuningsih, 2022). According to Ahrens et al. (2020) Pearson's correlation coefficient is commonly used to assess construct validity, as it measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between variables, with higher values indicating stronger validity. Based on Table 1, the results of the validity test indicate that the lowest correlation coefficient among the variable indicators is 0.241, while the highest is 0.820. Since all 20 statement items have a coefficient value greater than the critical value of 0.1654, they are considered valid. This validity confirms that the questionnaire used in this study is appropriate for its intended measurement purpose and that each statement item accurately reflects the indicators being examined.

Table 1. Result of Validity Test

Variable	Indicator	Pearson Correlation	R-Table	Conclusion
Brand Image	X1	.744	0.1654	Valid
	X2	.692		
	X3	.724		
	X4	.650		
	X5	.774		
	X6	.766		
	X7	.820		
	X8	.775		
	X9	.775		
	X10	.795		
Guest Stay Decision	Y1	.531	0.1654	Valid
	Y2	.241		
	Y3	.469		
	Y4	.362		
	Y5	.433		
	Y6	.525		
	Y7	.554		
	Y8	.665		
	Y9	.673		
	Y10	.632		

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Reliability Test. A questionnaire is considered reliable if a respondent's answers to the statements remain consistent over time, producing relatively similar results (Slamet & Wahyuningsih, 2022). The instrument's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which measures the correlation between each item and the total score, with its value varying depending on the characteristics of the population in which it is applied (Ahrens et al., 2020). Based on Table 2, all items under the variables Brand Image and Guest Stay Decision have average values exceeding the Cronbach's alpha threshold. The average Cronbach's alpha value for the Brand Image variable (X) is 0.913, while for the Guest Stay Decision it is 0.675. Since both values are above 0.60, the results confirm that the measurement items for all variables are statistically reliable.

Table 2. Result of Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision Requirements	Conclusion
Brand Image	.913	0.60	Reliabel
Guest Stay Decision	.675	0.60	Reliabel

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Respondent Characteristics based on Gender. As shown in Table 3, the survey included individuals of both male and female genders. The male gender is more than the female with a total of 53 people (53%), while the female gender is 47 people (47%). Reporting the gender distribution of participants is important in survey research, as demographic composition can influence response patterns and the interpretation of results (Harris & Windt, 2023). However, previous research found no significant difference between male and female participants in relation to brand image (Candra & Nurwidawati, 2024). Based on this distribution and supporting evidence, it can be concluded that, although the respondents in this study are predominantly male, gender differences are unlikely to affect perceptions of brand image.

Table 3. Gender-Based Distribution of Respondent

Gender	Respondent	
	Frequency	Percentage
Male	53	53
Female	47	47
Total	100	100

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Respondent Characteristics Based on Nationality. As shown in Table 4, the respondents in this study were predominantly Australian, accounting for 47 individuals (47%), followed by 38 from the United States (38%) and 15 from China (15%). These figures indicate that the majority of participants were Australian nationals. Prior research shows that perceptions of a brand's globalness or localness contribute differently to brand value and can influence consumer attitudes and behavior (Bourdin et al., 2021). These perceptions are also shaped by both brand attributes and cultural background, with individuals who have higher levels of acculturation showing stronger purchase intentions toward certain brands (Li et al., 2024). Therefore, the predominance of Australian participants may influence how brand perceptions are formed and interpreted within the findings.

Table 4. Nationality-Based Distribution of Respondents

Nationality	Respondent	
	Frequency	Percentage
Australia	47	47
USA	38	38
China	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Respondent Characteristics Based on Age. Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents by age group. The majority of respondents were aged 20–30 years, totalling 48 people (48%). This was followed by 32 respondents (32%) aged 31–40 years, 18 respondents (18%) aged 41–50 years, and finally, 2 respondents (2%) were under 20 years old. This finding aligns with previous research showing that most guests at star-rated city hotels are from the productive adult age group. In addition, Generation Z, known for their staycation habits and frequent weekend hotel stays, tend to make purchasing decisions influenced by factors such as price perception, product quality, social media advertising, e-wom, brand image, brand awareness, lifestyle, service quality, and promotional offers (Triatmojo et al., 2023).

Table 5. Age-Based Distribution of Respondents

Age (Years Old)	Respondent	
	Frequency	Percentage
< 20	2	2
20 – 30	48	48
31 – 40	32	32
41 – 50	18	18
Total	100	100

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Respondent Characteristics based on Occupation. Table 6 presents the characteristics of respondents based on their occupation. The largest group of respondents were corporate workers, totalling 32 people (32%), followed by entrepreneurs with 27 respondents (27%), government workers with 21 respondents (21%), housewives with 13 respondents (13%), and students with 7 respondents (7%). It can be concluded that the majority of participants were corporate workers, indicating that the sample was largely composed of individuals with professional backgrounds in formal employment sectors. This aligns with the statement of Silalahi et al. (2023) that purchasing decisions are influenced by personal characteristics, such as income, occupational background, and lifestyle. Furthermore, the better the occupation or the higher the amount of money a person has, the easier it is for them to spend money for life satisfaction purposes (Adiati, 2021).

Table 6. Occupation-Based Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Respondent	
	Frequency	Percentage
Corporate Worker	32	32
Enterpreneur	27	27
Student	7	7
Government Worker	21	21
Housewife	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Questionnaire Results Recapitulation. Table 7 shows that the highest average score on the brand image (X) variable is found in the 2nd statement, "*I can easily identify The Ritz-Carlton by its logo or slogan*", with a value of 4.56. These findings indicate that brand visual elements such as logos and slogans have been firmly embedded in guests' minds, reflecting a high level of brand awareness. This result is in line with the theory of Aaker's Brand Equity Model, which identifies brand awareness as an essential component that contributes to the formation of a positive brand image (Karunia et al., 2025). In contrast, the lowest average is found in the 7 th statement, "*I frequently choose to use services from The Ritz-Carlton*", with a value of 3.29. This shows that while brand image is well-judged, it hasn't fully encouraged guests to make consistent repeat purchases. Factors such as price, location, and personal needs are likely to be other considerations in making a stay decision. In addition, the limited brand visibility in Melbourne shows that The Ritz-Carlton's communication strategy has not reached audiences optimally. The overall average brand image variable of 3.89 falls into the good category (interval 3.41–4.20), which reflects the hotel's success in building brand recognition and trust in service, but still requires strengthening strategies to increase the conversion of positive perceptions into tangible actions in the form of loyalty and repeat use of services.

Table 7. Respondents' Answers to Brand Image Statements

Indicator Item Code	Average Score	Category
X1	3.55	Good
X2	4.56	Very Good
X3	3.58	Good
X4	4.50	Very Good
X5	3.49	Good
X6	3.85	Good
X7	3.29	Fair
X8	4.13	Good
X9	3.87	Good
X10	4.11	Good
Mean	**3.89**	**Good**

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Table 8. Respondents' Answers to the Guest Decision to Stay Statements

Indicator Item Code	Average Score	Category
X1	3.17	Fair
X2	3.12	Fair
X3	3.80	Good
X4	3.53	Good
X5	3.78	Good
X6	3.23	Good
X7	3.13	Fair
X8	3.27	Fair
X9	3.26	Fair
X10	3.22	Fair
Mean	**3.35**	**Fair**

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Table 8 shows that the lowest average score on the guest stay decision variable (Y) is found in the 2nd statement, "*I was dissatisfied with my previous accommodation, which was not associated with The Ritz-Carlton*", with a value of 3.12. These findings indicate that decisions to stay at The Ritz-Carlton were not influenced by guests' negative experiences of previous accommodations, but rather by neutral or positive reasons. This aligns with Kotler & Keller (2016), who explain that customer decisions are more strongly driven

by positive brand associations than by dissatisfaction with competitors. This confirms that the brand reputation and quality of service of competitors remain strong, so The Ritz-Carlton needs to maintain the excellence of its products and brand image in order to remain the top choice (Dimitrakaki, 2023). Meanwhile, the highest average was found in the 3rd statement, "*I seek online reviews and recommendations before selecting accommodation*", with a score of 3.8. This statement emphasises the importance of information seeking as part of the decision-making process, especially online reviews and price comparisons as the main reference in shaping the perception of quality and trust. The overall average of the guest decision to stay variable of 3.35 was in the fairly good category, which indicates that while the decision to choose The Ritz-Carlton was positive.

Normality Test. According to Isnaini et al. (2025) the normality test aims to ensure that statistical analyses using parametric methods are not biased or invalid. Sahir (2022) states that if the significance value or probability is greater than 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted because the data are normally distributed. Table 9 shows that the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) value is 0.089 > 0.05. Referring to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test threshold, the result suggests that the dataset meets the assumption of normality.

Table 9. Normality Test Results

		Unstandardized Residual
N		100
Normal Parameters	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	2.76867792
Test Statistic		.083
Asym Sig. (2-tailed)		.089

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Heteroskedasticity Test. According to Sahir (2022), The heteroscedasticity test is conducted to determine whether there is an inequality in the residual variances from one observation to another. Based on the results presented in Table 10, the significance value (Sig.) for the Brand Image variable is 0.086, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the data does not show symptoms of heteroskedasticity. Therefore, it meets the assumptions of the heteroskedasticity test, confirming that the regression model used in this study is free from heteroskedasticity issues and that the variance of the residuals is constant.

Table 10. Heterokedasticity Test Results

Model	**t**	**Sig.**
(Constant)	-.228	.820
Brand Image	1.734	.086
Dependent Variabel: ABS_RES		

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Linearity Test. Referring to Table 11, the significance value (Sig.) for Deviation from Linearity is 0.161, which exceeds 0.05. According to Lestari & Permatasari (2023)The linearity test aims to determine whether two or more variables have a significant linear relationship. Furthermore, Awalia & Sihombing (2022) state that if the significance value of deviation from linearity is greater than 0.05, the regression model follows a linear pattern, whereas if it is less than 0.05, a nonlinear regression model is more appropriate. Based on this, the result indicates no significant deviation from linearity, meaning the relationship between the variables is linear. Therefore, the assumption of linearity is fulfilled, and it is appropriate to proceed with linear regression analysis to examine the influence of variables.

Table 11. Linearity Test Results

		F	**Sig.**
Guest Stay Decision	(Combined)	10.201	.000
Between Groups	Linearity	133.105	.000
Brand Image	Deviation from Linearity	1.422	.161

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Linear Regression Analysis. Simple linear regression analysis is used to determine changes in the dependent variable (Y), namely the Guest Stay Decision, which is influenced by the independent variable (X), namely Brand image Sahir (2022). The results of linear regression analysis can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12. Output of Linear Regression Model

Model	B	t	Sig.
(Constant)	7.635	3.282	.001
Brand Image	.665	11.204	.000
Dependent Variable: Guest Stay Decisions			

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Based on Table 12, the constant value is 7.635, while the coefficient for Brand image (X) is 0.665. Thus, the linear regression expression can be written as:

$$Y = 7.635 + 0.665\ X$$

The explanation is outlined as follows:

a. Constanta (a) = 7.635. Indicates that if the variable Brand Image (X) is absent or set to zero, the Guest Stay Decision (Y) will still have a baseline value of 7.635.
b. Brand Image (X) = 0.665. When Brand Image increases by a single unit and all other variables are kept constant, the Guest Stay Decision is expected to rise by 0.665 units

Hypothesis Test (t-test). Table 13 shows that the t-value for the Brand Image variable (X) is 11.204, which exceeds the critical value of 1.657, with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05. Hypothesis testing is a statistical analysis technique used to accept or reject a hypothesis and draw conclusions (Amelia et al., 2023). This test indicates the extent to which an independent variable partially influences the dependent variable (Sahir, 2022). Based on these results, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the findings suggest that the Brand Image (X) has a statistically significant influence on Guest Decision to stay at The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne, with a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, and 99% degrees of freedom.

Table 13. t-Test Result

Model	t	Sig.	Conclusion
(Constant)	3.282	.001	
Brand Image	11.204	.000	H1 accepted
Dependent Variable: Guest Stay Decisions			

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Coefficient of Determination. As shown in Table 14, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.557 suggests that brand image contributes to 55.7% of the decision-making process regarding guest stays. Meanwhile, the remaining 44.3% may be attributed to additional factors not explored in this research, such as rates, advertising strategies, digital reviews, service performance, cleanliness, accessibility, and brand awareness (Sukamdani et al., 2024); (Johnson et al., 2024); (Vanka & Ervina, 2024). This value falls into the medium category, suggesting that brand image has a moderately strong influence on guests' decisions to stay at The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne. These findings indicate that brand identity and a sense of security from the services offered have succeeded in forming positive perceptions among guests. However, brand image alone has not consistently driven repeat usage. This implies that while brand image plays a strategic role in building trust and attracting interest, it must be supported by other complementary factors to effectively influence guests' final decision to stay.

Table 14. Determination Coefficient Results

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
.749	.562	.557

Source: Processed Data (2025).

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3.2. Discussion

Brand Image. The brand image variable (X) shows consumer perception of the image of The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne, with an average score of 3.89, which is in the "Good" category. The highest score is found in the statement "*I can easily identify The Ritz-Carlton by its logo or slogan*" (4.56), which reflects the strong visual identity and brand recognition. This result is in line with the theory of Aaker's Brand Equity Model, which identifies brand awareness as an essential component that contributes to the formation of a positive brand image (Karunia et al., 2025). In addition, business competition has encouraged brands to differentiate themselves through distinctive elements such as logos, symbols, and unique names that serve as identifiers to strengthen consumer perceptions Bernarto et al. (2020). A strong brand image also contributes significantly to customer satisfaction, as it enhances perceived quality and value, ultimately shaping positive experiences Tahir et al. (2024). However, the statement "*I frequently choose to use services from The Ritz-Carlton*" received a low score of 3.29, indicating that positive perceptions have not fully encouraged real actions in the form of repeat use. Previous studies also emphasise that purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by price and product quality, meaning that image alone is not enough to drive loyalty Sihombing et al. (2023). This means that while The Ritz-Carlton has managed to build a brand identity and trust, the transformation of perception into loyalty still needs to be improved.

Stay Decision. Guest decisions to stay (Y) have an average score of 3.35 and are in the "Pretty Good" category. The highest score is found in the statement "*I seek online reviews and recommendations before selecting accommodation*" (3.80), which indicates the importance of digital reviews and online information in the decision-making process. This finding is consistent with the theory of Kotler & Keller (2016) and also supported by Hidayat et al. (2016), who emphasised the growing role of online information in consumer decision-making. On the other hand, the lowest score is found in the statement "*I was dissatisfied with my previous accommodation...*", having the lowest score (3.12). This means guest stay decisions are not based on dissatisfaction with competitors but rather on positive aspects such as reputation and comfort. According to Ali et al. (2021) when hotel service does not meet expectations, it can reduce guest satisfaction, lower demand, and make guests less likely to return. Therefore, hotel marketing strategies need to be directed at strengthening digital presence and service quality in order to compete with other premium hotels and improve stay decisions consistently.

The Influence of Brand Image on Guest Stay Decisions. The findings indicate that brand image exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on guests' choice to stay at The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne, with a score of 11.204 > table of 1.657 and a significance of 0.000 < 0.05. A β value of 0.665 indicates that an increase in brand image will be followed by an increase in staying decisions. The coefficient of determination revealed that brand image contributed 55.7% to the decision to stay. The rest was influenced by factors such as price, location, service, and reviews. These findings are supported by research by Chairani & Wulansari (2023) and Kirani (2024) which affirms the positive influence of brand image. However, brand image is not strong enough to drive consistent usage decisions, so advanced strategies are needed in the form of strengthening brand communication, customer experience management, and synergy with external factors to convert perception into real loyalty.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis confirms that guests' perception of brand image plays a significant role in their decision to stay at The Ritz-Carlton Melbourne. A strong brand creates positive impressions, builds trust, and makes the hotel more attractive as a choice. These results highlight the importance of focusing on brand image as a key strategy to increase guest interest and influence their accommodation decisions, especially in the luxury hotel segment. To enhance guest loyalty, The Ritz-Carlton should focus on clear and consistent brand communication, the delivery of excellent service, and the creation of memorable experiences. Leveraging digital platforms to engage with guests and highlight the brand can further promote repeat visits and long-term loyalty.

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