

How Brand Trust is Influenced by Perceived Value and Service Quality: Mediated by Hotel Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract

This paper examines the effect of perceived value and service quality on brand trust directly and indirectly through customer satisfaction. Brand trust can be defined as the relationship between consumers and the corporate that is based on trust and reliability of its performance. Questionnaires were given to guests of three-star hotels in Malang, Indonesia, with 158 surveys returned and 114 valid responses were analyzed. Reliability and validity were examined first, and partial least squares (PLS-SEM) analysis was performed to evaluate the determinant coefficient (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and effect size (f^2). Results showed customer satisfaction partially mediates perceived value on brand trust, and fully mediates the relationship between service quality and brand trust. Future research in other developing countries, against different hotel class, with international guests, is recommended. Managerial implications were discussed.

Keywords

Perceived Value, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Brand Trust, Three-Star Hotels

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Introduction

The hotel industry has become very competitive and is considered to be in the mature stage of its lifecycle (Daun & Klinger, 2006; Kandampully & Hu, 2007; Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). In the wake of weak of the global economy recently,

hospitality business opportunities in Indonesia are facing rapid growth and competition. Each hotel has general characteristics that may distinguish itself from the market segment, whether it caters to the middle to upper class, or to lower middle class. Over the last few years, the number of hotels has grown

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rapidly in some cities in Indonesia. With more than accommodation and dining services provided, sometimes customers visit a hotel to seek for a cozy experience to enjoy the facilities and services that meet their expectations.

According to previous research on the roles of attitudes toward the hotel, overall image, gender, and age have an impact on hotel customers' decision-making process. Customers who have positive attitudes toward specific hotels are willing to stay at these hotels, recommend to others, and pay more to patronize (Han, Hsu, & Lee, 2009). An individual experience with a hotel may be strongly associated with intentions to revisit, recommend to others, and pay more to stay. However, there are some consumers who are willing to pay more for a service on the brand as they saw a very good value for money - worth what you pay for it (Jacoby, Jacob, & Chestnut, 1978).

In the tourism literature, Oh (2000) proposed that by offering new insights into consumer behavior surroundings price-quality tradeoffs, customer value may unveil deep-seated driving forces of the purchase decision. The most universally accepted definition of perceived value is conceptual proposal by Zeithaml (1988), which is the overall assessment of the utility of a product based on the perception on what is received and what is given. Dube and Renaghan (1999) tried to find out which hotel attributes are the most important for creating value. They found that functional areas that generate high loyalty scores are: the quality of the various on-site hotel services, the quality of personnel, the quality of guest

room design and amenities, a strong brand name and positive reputation, and perceived value.

Besides the value concept in the hotel industry, the understanding of the concept of quality is also very important. Service quality was first stated by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) as an extrinsically perceived attribution based on the customer's experience about the service perceived through each service encounter. It can be defined as how far the difference between reality taken (perceived service) and guest expectations (expected service) over the services they receive or earn. If the guests received more than they expected, the service can be said to be of quality, whereas if what the guests perceived is less than expected, then the service is said to be not qualified.

Customer satisfaction is fundamental to the marketing concept as the notion of satisfying the needs and desires of consumers (Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). Satisfaction is very important in the hospitality industry because it can be used as a reference in assessing the quality of service provided by the hotel. The satisfaction of each guest is obviously different from other guests, due to different satisfaction and quality standards.

The brand has become a valuable, strategic, and critical asset of a company and receives considerable attention, for growing competences environment (Martin et al., 2005 in Kabadayi & Alan, 2012). It is one of the main tools for marketers to alleviate consumers' price sensitivity in market competition (Helmig, Huber, & Leeflang, 2007).

Consumers are prone to pay more for a brand because they perceive excellent value in the brand that no competitor can provide (Jacoby et al., 1978).

Brand trust has been described as a relationship between consumers and the corporate that is based on trust and reliability of its performance (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The important level of trust regarding a specific brand is more significant when the customer already consumed the product or received the service. The assumption about brand trust is derived from social psychology, where the relationship between the consumer and the brand has similarity to relations between individuals (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2000). Consumer confidence in the brand is an important target to achieve, and the survival of the company or product is highly dependent on consumer confidence (Rao, 2011).

Based on the reasons, the purpose of this research is to investigate leisure experience of customers after staying at a three-star hotel. Specifically, first, it seeks to explore the linkage between customers perception and feeling about perceived value and service quality to their trust of the three-star hotel brand. Secondly, the research aims to reveal the impact of customers' perceived value and service quality on their trust at the three-star hotel brand through customers' satisfaction as a mediator.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 shows the theoretical background and hypotheses development. Section 3 describes the methodology. Section 4 investigates the results of relation among variables. Section 5 discusses the relationship

between variables. Section 6 is the conclusion. Therefore, this study findings will contribute to the existing edge of consumer behavior in hospitality marketing field, and provide insights which can improve the service provider (hotel) ability to assess customer hotel behavior in the middle scale classification.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Brand trust

Studies elaborated that trust plays an important role in customer commitment to a brand. Brand trust is a consumer would like to trust or believe in his/her own initiative or perception and trust the product that brand provides (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Referring to the definition, we can state that brand trust is something the consumer would like to believe, confident and trust based on his/her own initiative or perception, and make an expectation to the reliability of products/services. It is the emotional commitment of the customer to the brand (Kiyani, Niazi, Rizvi, & Khan, 2012). Organizations that are customer oriented must learn how to create and develop customer values, and then prepare a bid that exceeds them. Meyer and Jill (2005) state there are three factors establishing a person's trust to another, that are: ability, benevolence, and integrity.

Perceived value

The value is also based on the personal feeling of selecting goods or services (Anderson & Vincze, 2000). Perceived value is defined as the result of the comparison between perceived benefit and sacrifice by the customer (McDougall

& Leverque, 2000). Perceived value is understood as a construct configured by two parts, one of the benefits received (economic, social and relationship) and another of sacrifices made (price, time, effort, risk and convenience) by the customer. The present research will focus on perceived value in the service context. Perceived value is simply as a trade-off between quality and price.

Since the customer can create an image or perception of the product in their own mind, the perceived value of what is provided to them can influence their satisfaction from that product or service (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Hu, Kandampully, & Juwaheer, 2009; Pirzad & Karmi, 2015; Tam, 2000). The value of the product would be high if the customer gets more satisfaction from the specific brand of product. Therefore, this research hypothesizes that:

H₁: Perceived value has a direct positive effect on customer satisfaction

If a customer received the good value from the product, it could improve the trust of the brand (Shirin & Puth, 2011). Pirzad and Karmi (2015) also found there is a positive relationship between perceived value and trust since the high level of perceived value can increase the post-purchase confidence of the product. Therefore, this research hypothesizes that:

H₂: Perceived value has a direct positive effect on brand trust.

Service quality

Service quality is a term which describes a comparison of expectations with

performance (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). In order to meet customer expectation, the company provides highly consistent service in comparison with competitors. Thus, some defined service quality as the result of customer comparison between their expectations and their perception about the service being performed (A. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). If the service received exceed the expectations of consumers, the quality of service is considered excellent.

Service quality has been identified as an agent that is able to affect directly on customer satisfaction, repetition of purchase behavior, and guarantee organization's long-term profitability (Wilkins, Merrilees, & Herington, 2007). When customer received good quality of service, it will enhance their perception of the benefit gained from the service company. The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Caruana, 2000; Cronin et al., 2000; Hu et al., 2009; Oh, 1999; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Tam, 2000) has been the focus of several studies in the service industry. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H₃: Service quality has a direct positive effect on customer satisfaction

Numerous researchers have provided conceptual and empirical evidence to support a positive relationship between service quality and brand trust. Sultan and Mooraj (2001) and Pirzad and Karmi (2015) found a positive linkage between a number of service quality factors and trust. When the customer gets the good quality from the service provider, trust

from the customer would gradually emerge, and the assumption that useful service will be provided by the hotel will be made. Soon the trustworthy relationship from the customer would appear for a longer period of time. Hence, this research states the hypotheses as follows:

H₄: Service quality has a direct positive effect on brand trust

Customer satisfaction

Kotler and Armstrong (2014) defined satisfaction as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations. According to Hansemark and Albinsson (2004), satisfaction is an overall customer attitude towards a service provider or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfillment of some need, goal, or desire.

Satisfaction with hotel or lodging service is important because it is a generating factor of expectation in the future encounter. This is evident by S. M. C. Loureiro and González (2008) study that discussed satisfaction and trust in the tourism and hospitality field, especially in rural tourist. They said that satisfaction is a reasonable variable to use as a measurement despite it is the singularity, to extend the relationships between customer and their trust to the field of tourism. According to previous research (Ha & Perks, 2005; Hess & Story, 2005; S. M. C. Loureiro & González, 2008; Shirin & Puth, 2011), customer satisfaction has a positive

impact on brand trust. More specifically, such finding indicates that when customers experience the high level of satisfaction, they decide to stay and trust with the existing service provider. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed for empirical testing:

H₅: Customer satisfaction has a direct positive effect on brand trust

Customer satisfaction and brand trust

Satisfaction is considered to be closely related to perceived value and service quality, an overall service evaluation. How about if the antecedents of customer satisfaction are linked to brand trust directly and indirectly? Although we proposed that perceived value and service quality have an indirect impact on brand trust through customer satisfaction, the causality relationship between trust and satisfaction seems no to be very clear in the literature. Even though several studies advocate that customer satisfaction is important for developing customer trust (Kantsperger & Kunz, 2010), Zanzo (2003) in Osman (2014) found that satisfaction acts as an antecedent to trust. Thus, customer satisfaction is considered as a mediating variable between perceived value, service quality, and brand trust. More recently, the literature accords attention to integrating the roles of constructs: such as perceived value, satisfaction, and trust (S. Loureiro, Miranda, & Breazeale, 2014). In the service field, service quality has an indirect impact on the customer's satisfaction along with their trust. However, some researchers disputed the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction (Butt & Aftab, 2013; Moreira & Silva, 2015). Thus, it

is worth exploring the existence of such relationship and it is proposed that:

H_6 : *Perceived value has a positive effect on brand trust through customer satisfaction*

H_7 : *Service quality has a positive effect on brand trust through customer satisfaction*

Research framework

The literature indicates that the effect of perceived value and service quality on brand trust can be built directly and indirectly through customer satisfaction. Thus, the proposed research model is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Research Framework

Methodology

Participants in the study were customers of three-star domestic and international hotels in Malang. The focus is on three-star hotels for two reasons. Firstly, Malang has more three star hotels than other categories, thus easier to collect data and more applicable to the largest percentage of hotels. The second reason was customers of the middle-class hotels tend to give more weight to the symbolic benefits from services (Back & Parks, 2003)

Questionnaires were given to guests of three-star hotels in Malang, Indonesia.

The strategy of distributing the questionnaire was through personally approaching hotel guests during checked-out hours. A total of 158 surveys were returned, and 114 valid responses were analyzed.

Using a self-administered questionnaire enables the researcher to distribute numerous questionnaires to many respondents in different places simultaneously. The questionnaire utilizes 7-point Likert scale that requires the respondent to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement about the stimulus objects (Bartholomew & Smith, 2006).

Table 1. Inter-Construct Correlations (Reliability, Validity, and Correlation Matrix)

Construct	Reliability		Convergent Validity	Correlation and Discriminant Validity			
	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	AVE	Brand Trust	Customer Satisfaction	Perceived Value	Service Quality
Brand Trust	0.950	0.941	0.653	0.808			
Customer Satisfaction	0.951	0.942	0.648	0.803	0.827		
Perceived Value	0.869	0.774	0.689	0.759	0.709	0.830	
Service Quality	0.911	0.886	0.593	0.608	0.613	0.654	0.770

Results

The sample consists of 114 respondents with 60 females, 54 males. The largest age group falls between 21 to 30 years old, with 76 respondents, followed by between 31 to 40 years old. Most of them hold a bachelor degree, with 77 respondents. A variety of occupation is also reported by the respondents, with most of them working for military or government ($n = 36$), followed by the private sector ($n = 29$). Regarding the respondents' frequency of travel purpose, the majority of the respondent stayed at a hotel for leisure ($n = 62$). The majority visited the hotel for one day or one night ($n = 66$). The largest group of participants ($n = 40$) have monthly income between 4,000,000 to 5,000,000 Rupiah (Indonesian currency). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the overall sample composition, also to understand the sample background. Following the brand trust, respondents completed a filler measure to the link between the brand trust and the other measures. Given the 7-point Likert scale, all variables had to mean above 4 and standard deviation of less than 1. Respondent completed the measures of brand trust ($M = 5.01$,

$SD = 0.75$), customer satisfaction ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 0.72$), perceived value ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 0.78$), and service quality ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 0.71$). Reliability was first examined using Cronbach's alpha to test the consistency of items where equal indicator loadings were assumed. Most scholars suggest that Cronbach's alpha should be greater than 0.70 ($> 0.70 =$ acceptable and $> 0.90 =$ higher), and all four variables had good Cronbach's alpha, ranged from 0.774 to 0.942. A different measure of reliability, composite reliability, does not assume equal indicator loadings. Following Nunally and Bernstein (2004), composite reliability greater than 0.70 can be regarded as satisfactory. The composite reliability of all four variables ranged from 0.869 to 0.951, indicating good reliability.

Model evaluation: structural model

Following Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014), the measurement of convergent validity is through average variance extracted (AVE) and outer loading. AVE values for all four variables ranged from 0.593 to 0.689, indicating good convergent validity. Following Fornell (1982) by comparing

the square root of the AVE with the correlations among constructs, where the diagonal elements (shown bold in Table 1) should be greater than the correlation coefficients between the construct and another construct in the model (off-diagonal). Results shown in Table 1 indicates good discriminant validity.

Model evaluation: structural model

The structural model in this research was recursive, meaning only one direction of causality is allowed and does not contain a direction of loop feedback on the construct (Chin, 2010).

Based on Hair et al. (2014), determinant coefficient (R^2) value of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 is described as a rough rule of thumb for substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. The $R^2 = 0.720$ for brand trust indicates perceived value and service quality can explain the variance of brand trust substantiality. In terms of the mediator customer satisfaction, $R^2 = 0.541$ shows perceived value and service quality moderately explains brand trust. The effect size f^2 is used to assess the relative impact of a predictor construct on an endogenous construct, calculated as follows:

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2 \text{ include} - R^2 \text{ exclude}}{1 - R^2 \text{ include}}$$

Based on the criteria rule of thumb for f^2 , perceived value as an exogenous has a medium effect size to brand trust (0.189), and large effect size to customer satisfaction (0.361). As for the service quality as an exogenous, it has a small effect to brand trust (0.007) and customer satisfaction (0.085). Also for customer satisfaction to brand trust, the effect size was large (0.433).

Criteria for q^2 is the same as with f^2 , and the formula as follows:

$$q^2 = \frac{Q^2 \text{ include} - Q^2 \text{ exclude}}{1 - Q^2 \text{ include}}$$

Following the criteria rule of thumb, perceived value as an exogenous has a small effect on brand trust (0.061), and a medium effect on customer satisfaction (0.174). As for the service quality as an exogenous, it has a small effect to brand trust (0.020) and customer satisfaction (0.040). Furthermore, for customer satisfaction to brand trust, the effect size was small as well (0.144).

Discussions

Direct effect

Summary of research findings is shown in Table 2. The results revealed that perceived value has significant positive impact on customer satisfaction directly, and Hypothesis 1 was supported. This is consistent with the findings from Cronin et al. (2000); Hu et al. (2009); Pirzad and Karmi (2015); Tam (2000) that a significant relationship was found between perceived value and customer satisfaction. The value of the product in the eyes of the customer would be high if the customer gets more satisfaction from the specific brand. In the world of intense competition, satisfying customers may not be sufficient. Management should not just focus on improving customer satisfaction, but also on improving the perceived value. The results also showed that perceived value has a significant positive impact on brand trust directly, and Hypothesis 2 was supported. The result is in line with the findings from Shirin and Puth (2011) & Pirzad and Karmi (2015) that if a

customer perceived good value from the product after purchase, the trust toward the brand will be increased.

In terms of service quality, it has a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction, and Hypothesis 3 was supported. The result is consistent with the findings of several studies, such as Caruana (2000); Cronin et al. (2000); Hu et al. (2009); Oh (1999); Parasuraman et al. (1988); Tam (2000). It can be suggested that when the customer receives good quality of service, exceeding their expectations, in particular, their perception of the benefit received from the service company will be enhanced. However, the result showed that there is no significance directly impact on service quality to brand trust. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported. In other words, service quality offered by these three-star hotels cannot affect brand trust, which is in contrast with numerous evidence to support a positive relationship between service quality and brand trust, such as Sultan and Mooraj (2001) & Pirzad and Karmi (2015). Nevertheless, it is consistent with Harris and Goode (2004) study that there is no significant direct impact

of service quality on brand trust. This demonstrated that no direct influence of service quality on brand trust in our study. The key reason appears to be the unique characteristics of Indonesia consumers, where occasionally people trust more in the story or words they heard from other people directly or online (e.g., social media and website browser review), as compared to what they actually feel about the experience. Such word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004), can be more influential than oral person-to-person communication between a receiver and a sender which involves a product, service, or brand.

The last direct impact was customer satisfaction and brand trust. The result revealed that customer satisfaction has a significant positive impact on brand trust, and the finding is consistent with Ha and Perks (2005); Hess and Story (2005); S. M. C. Loureiro and González (2008); Shirin and Puth (2011). More specifically, such findings indicate that when customers experience a high level of satisfaction, they decide to stay and trust with the existing service provider.

Table 2. Summary of Research Findings

Statement	Result	Remark
H1: Perceived value has a positive effect on customer satisfaction	4.759	Supported
H2: Perceived Value has a positive effect on brand trust	4.267	Supported
H3: Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction	2.236	Supported
H4: Service quality has a positive effect on brand trust	.734	Not Supported
H5: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on brand trust	5.464	Supported
H6: Perceived value has a positive effect on brand trust through customer satisfaction	3.601	Supported
H7: Service quality has a positive effect on brand trust through customer satisfaction	2.233	Supported

Mediation effect

This study tested the mediation effect of customer satisfaction on brand trust, and the result was significant. Hypothesis 6 and Hypothesis 7 were supported. Consistent with prior study, perceived value has the significant positive impact on brand trust through customer satisfaction (S. Loureiro *et al.*, 2014). Customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between perceived value and brand trust, as can be seen in the results that the value is decreased than the direct result. The finding also revealed the second mediation effect that service quality has the significant positive impact on brand trust through customer satisfaction, also consistent from prior studies (Butt & Aftab, 2013; Moreira & Silva, 2015) brand trust, as the direct effect between service quality and brand trust was not significant. Thus, for the hospitality industry to gain brand trust, service quality should be improved with intangibles to meet customer satisfaction first.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between perceived value, service quality, and customer satisfaction on brand trust. Most of the research hypotheses were supported. Perceived value is found to influence brand trust directly, and indirectly through customer satisfaction. If the customer has a good perception of the value of the product or service received, their satisfaction may be improved, and better brand trust. In terms of service quality and brand trust, customer satisfaction fully mediates the relationship. In other words, when the

customer receives good quality service, it is not necessarily mean brand trust will be developed. They need to feel satisfied first before gaining brand trust. Finally, customer satisfaction can be considered as a good exogenous variable or mediator for brand trust. Both perceived value and service quality can influence customer satisfaction, and then in turn on brand trust.

The implication for managerial, hotel managers needs to focus on the perceived value they can provide to customers, as well as service quality that can make them satisfied. They can take strategic or innovative decisions that offer service quality and value features in terms of perceptions and customer expectation. For instance, they can provide a safe hotel environment, staff who are capable of developing guest trust, performing service right the first time, in a timely manner, and understand each customer's needs. It is believed that customer trust will lead to profitability, as they will recommend the brand hotel to their friends about good value and service.

The limitations and directions for future research are, the first limitation is the focus was on three-star hotels in Malang, Indonesia. The second limitation is the small respondent sample, due to one month permission time limit to collect data from the hotels. The third limitation is non-probability sampling (purposive sampling), thus the sample did not fully represent Indonesian three-star hotels. The fourth limitation relates to respondent feedback. Some of the questionnaires had missing data because the respondent was in a hurry to leave after checking out from the hotel. The

last limitation is focusing on local guests only.

For future research, this research can be replicated in other developing countries, not just in Indonesia. Moreover, the research can be used for larger scopes, such as comparing three-star and four-star hotels, economy class hotels (one-star and two-star), or luxury hotels (such as five-star hotels). In the future, researchers could cooperate with the hotels better by spreading the questionnaire during breakfast, because guests are more likely to be unhurried and more willing to fill out the questionnaire. Future research can also look into the possibility of targeting more respondents through longitudinal data, qualitative approaches, or experimental design. Furthermore, investigating international guests, or even cross-country study, is also possible.

Notes on Contributors

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