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The Examination of Customer's Brand Loyalty Toward Five-Star Hotels in Bangkok

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Abstract

Purpose: In Bangkok's highly competitive hotel industry, hotel operators seek to retain a good relationship with customers by understanding the factors influencing their brand loyalty. This study examines the causal relationship between advanced information and communication technology (ICT), perceived quality (tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy), brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty. **Research design, data, and methodology:** The questionnaire was used as a tool to collect the data from 500 respondents who are local and foreign guests of the top 5 five-star hotel brands located in Bangkok, Thailand. Content validity was applied using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Then, the pilot test was assessed by Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were used to analyze the data. **Results:** The results show that ICT significantly influences perceived quality, brand image, and brand loyalty. Perceived quality significantly influences brand image. However, perceived quality does not have any significant effect on brand awareness and brand loyalty. Furthermore, there is a causal relationship between brand image, brand awareness, and brand loyalty. **Conclusions:** This paper incorporates the factors that regulate brand loyalty in marketing literature and provides competitive strategies for hotel managers to increase brand loyal customers.

Keywords: Hotel Industry, Brand Loyalty, Brand awareness, Brand Image, Advanced Information And Communication Technology

JEL Classification Code: E44, F31, F37, G15

1. Introduction

Thailand is a popular tourist destination worldwide (Zhang et al., 2000). Thailand's hotel industry has benefited from the increase in foreign visitors. In the past few years, it has been found that most tourists prefer staying in hotels during their visit rather than staying in different types of

accommodations, such as hostels or guesthouses. Compared to some other countries in the Asia Pacific, the cost of living in Thailand is relatively low. This gives tourism in Thailand and the hotel industry an advantage for foreign tourists in the aspect of the value of money (Krungsri Research Center, 2021). Since domestic and international demand grows, Thai hospitality businesses' capacity also does the same.

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According to Manakitsomboon (2022), it has been found that the confidence index for hotel operators in Thailand seemed to be better in the third quarter of 2020. This indicated that hospitality firms in Thailand still show a good indication of the tourism and hotel industry compared to the same period in the previous year, even during the pandemic.

Due to travel limitations for international visitors, the epidemic in early 2020 significantly impacted Thailand's tourism. Consequently, the stimulus package that the Thai government launched to encourage local customers to travel domestically has partially offset the loss of the Thai hotel industry due to the decreasing numbers of foreign customers. Currently, many luxury hotels in Thailand need help pursuing fewer new customers from overseas as the global travel restraint causes the international tourist rate in Bangkok to drop nearly to zero. Subsequently, the significant fall in hotel room demands has indicated that the luxury hotel industry in Bangkok relies prominently on overseas customers. Presently, with the only customers being local domestic visitors, many luxury hotels in Bangkok face the tremendous challenge of attracting new customers. Therefore, many are now focusing on lowering costs, conducting promotional programs, and maintaining their current clientele to stay afloat. However, maintaining hotel brand loyalty, on the other hand, is a better strategy in this situation. New customers must be attracted when current customers are lost, but it always comes with a high cost. As a result, brand loyalty is a vital aspect for a Bangkok hotel business to create long-term client relationships and retain good relationships with existing consumers (Richard & Zhang, 2012).

According to Shoemaker and Lewis (1999), creating and maintaining brand loyalty is the hospitality sector's future. It is vital for any hotel business to find a way to differentiate itself from other competitors in such a saturated hotel industry, especially when this industry's products and services share some level of "commodity" (Choi & Chu, 2001). Consequently, branding techniques are now being employed as a source of differentiation (Pappu et al., 2005) and competitive advantage (Kim & Kim, 2005), which made brand image one of the most popular traits in the hotel business (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). Based on O'Neill and Xiao (2006)'s article, A solid brand can increase a property's market value, financial performance (Kim & Kim, 2005), and other key performance indicators like occupancy, revenue, return on investment, and average price (Forgács, 2003). According to Sadat and Zainal (2014), brand loyalty is an important aspect of a corporate strategy for long-term success in the hotel sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Advanced Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

In this research, "ICT" in the hotel industry refers to all forms of technology devices that are used to create, capture, influence, communicate, exchange, and use information in its various forms, which allow people and organizations to interact in the digital world (Ryssel et al., 2004). Ruiz-Molina et al. (2011) mentioned that implementing various technological applications can potentially increase the perceived quality of hotel procedures and services. It is claimed that hotel managers should be acknowledged to concentrate on enhancing their competence and quality of service by deploying the most visible and easily noticed ICT applications. According to Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000), ICT directly affects a company's brand image. Consequently, when a consumer receives a consistent message across various communication channels, a strong brand image will be perceived (Dewhirst & Davis, 2005; Keller, 2003; Madhavaram et al., 2013). Furthermore, Ham et al. (2005) proposed that hotel owners should encourage installing innovative technological applications to boost client satisfaction and brand loyalty. Therefore, the researcher hypothesizes the followings:

H1: Advanced ICT has a significant influence on perceived quality.

H7: Advanced ICT has a significant influence on brand image.

H8: Advanced ICT has a significant influence on brand loyalty.

2.2 Perceived Quality

Perceived quality in this study is portrayed as consumers' valuations of certain products or services based on the factors consumers use to measure, receive, and identify the products/service's value (Rowley, 1998; Zeithaml, 1988). Mishra and Mishra (2014) stated that brand awareness significantly related to perceived quality. Mourad et al. (2011) discovered that brand loyalty and brand image are influenced by perceived quality. Furthermore, Lee et al. (2009) claimed that the stronger the brand image, the greater the perceived quality in the eyes of buyers. In contrast, Aydin and Özer (2005) indicated that perceived quality does not link strongly to brand loyalty. According to these researchers, perceived quality is a compulsory but insufficient requirement for brand loyalty. According to Jones et al. (2002) research, a positive relationship was discovered between perceived quality and customer brand loyalty and indicated five components of perceived quality: tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy.

Tangibility is considered substantial facilities (personnel, equipment, and communication materials). It is defined as the tangible representation of a service that customers will use to judge its quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985). According to Johnston (1995), service tangibility is measured by two characters. The first is about cleanliness and tidiness, focusing on the cleanliness and neat appearance of the tangible components; the second is about the comfort provided through the service.

Responsiveness refers to employees' desire to immerse themselves in noticing customers' needs with undivided attention, responding to customers' demands, and notifying customers when tasks have been completed. (Parasuraman et al., 1985). According to Aydin and Özer (2005), responsiveness is an important sub-variable in determining brand loyalty since it reflects companies' employee politeness and punctuality, which positively influence brand loyalty.

Reliability means the time of delivering services correctly following the one promised (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Hashim et al. (2018) further extended that reliability is a hotel's physical or intangible product or service capacity to fulfill a necessary function under specified conditions during the guests' stay.

Assurance relates to an employee's civility, knowledge, and ability to instill confidence and trust in clients. It also entails informing and listening to consumers in their original languages, regardless of age, nationality, or educational level (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Assurance reflects the attitudes of hotel employees, behavior, and ability to deliver welcoming, discreet, polite, and proficient services to guests.

Empathy refers to the ability to comprehend customers in various scenarios, caring, paying personal attention, and making customers feel valued by the organization providing services (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Empathy is the ability to transfer the sense that a consumer is unique and special. A hotel would personalize the service and handle all requests of customers promptly.

Consequently, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H2: Perceived quality has a significant influence on brand awareness.

H5: Perceived quality has a significant influence on brand loyalty.

H6: Perceived quality has a significant influence on brand image.

2.3 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is termed as customers' ability to identify a brand's products or memorize certain brands under various settings. It also means building up buyers' impressions of certain brand traits and the ability to

recognize or remember a brand in specific characteristics (Keller, 2003). According to Mishra and Mishra (2014), the authors stated that brand awareness refers to the level of strength in a customer's mind regarding a brand's presence, as it influences consumers' mindsets toward brand loyalty. Furthermore, Aaker (1991) stated that brand awareness is significant in creating brand image since customers normally make a purchase decision based on their awareness, brand knowledge, or experience with a specific brand. Consequently, customers are more likely to purchase from a certain brand since they are confident in its quality. As a result, brand awareness is linked to brand loyalty in the decision-making process regarding customer perceptions. Hence, a hypothesis below is indicated:

H3: Brand awareness has a significant influence on brand loyalty.

2.4 Brand Image

Brand image is described as a consumer's view and sense of a brand associated with how consumers memorize and store it in their minds (Keller, 2003). Brand image is not only attached with the physical products but also generated by marketing activities such as advertising, sales promotion, etc. (Wonggotwarin & Kim, 2017). According to Ahmed (2014), a consumer's repurchase intention is considered a good outcome for a company's brand image, which can ultimately increase brand loyalty. Moreover, the researcher believes that a brand with a higher image can motivate consumers' brand loyalty. Similar results have been found by Esch et al. (2006) and Alhaddad (2015) that brand image has significant influence on brand loyalty. In the light of this, to construct a successful brand, marketing managers should devote time and resources to developing brand image and brand loyalty as part of their branding strategy since this will positively position the brand in consumers' minds. Based on previous discussions, this study states a hypothesis:

H4: Brand image has a significant influence on brand loyalty.

2.5 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is described as psychological loyalty from consumers to purchase a selected product or service from a specific brand repetitively in the future consistently. The repetitive purchase behavior from the consumer group results in a commitment to the same brand regardless of situational affections from other brands or marketing influences that aim to change customers' purchasing behavior (Oliver, 1999). Odin et al. (2001) acknowledged that brand loyalty is repeated purchasing behavior under high sensitivity. For instance, A 5-star hotel guest puts the same hotel on the top of the preference and continuously visits the same hotel would reflect that customer saw a high value in

this hotel brand, which the hotel staying decision becomes highly connected with this same hotel, showed brand loyal of this customer. Bowen and Shoemaker (1998), the authors indicated that there are lesser possibilities for loyal customers to switch to other hotel brands because of the cost, and loyal customers would make more repurchases than non-loyal customers. Tweepphoncharoen and Vongurai (2020) indicated that loyal customers express an intentional behavior related to the product and services of the company.

3. Research Methods and Materials

3.1 Research Framework

The researcher applied three major previous research frameworks to support and develop a conceptual framework for this study, as shown in Figure 1. First, Šeric et al. (2016), provided an empirical test of the influence of perceived information and communication technology (ICT) on brand equity within upscale hotels. The relationship between ICT and three brand equity dimensions in terms of perceived quality, brand image, and brand awareness was explicated. Second, Kayaman and Arasli (2007) conducted the interconnections of the four brand equity factors: brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand image. The researchers classified perceived quality into five sub-constructs; perceived quality in tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. Hsu et al. (2011) constructed an interrelation of five brand equity components: perceived quality, brand awareness, brand image, management trust, and brand reliability in upscale hotel brands in major cities in China.

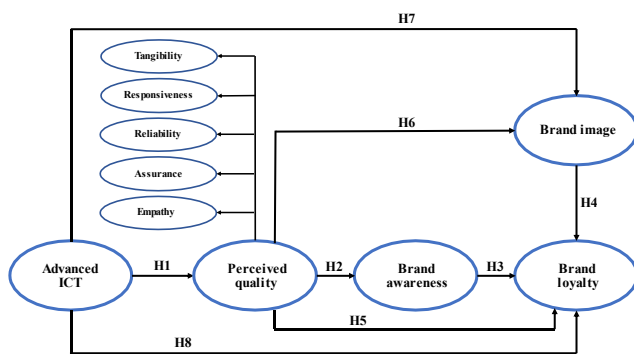


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

H1: Advanced ICT has a significant influence on perceived quality.

H2: Perceived quality has a significant influence on brand awareness.

H3: Brand awareness has a significant influence on brand loyalty.

H4: Brand image has a significant influence on brand loyalty.

H5: Perceived quality has a significant influence on brand loyalty.

H6: Perceived quality has a significant influence on brand image.

H7: Advanced ICT has a significant influence on brand image.

H8: Advanced ICT has a significant influence on brand loyalty.

3.2 Research Methodology

The questionnaire was used to collect the data from 500 respondents who are local and foreign guests of the top 5 five-star hotel brands in Bangkok, Thailand. The questionnaire consists of screening questions (2), measuring items on a five-point Likert scale (37), and demographic information (5). Content validity was applied using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) by three experts who are Ph.D. and hotel managers, resulting in all scale items being reserved to have proceeded at a score of 0.5 or over. Pasunon (2015) states that if each item has a value of more than 0.5, it is considered acceptable. Then, the pilot test (n=50) was assessed by Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. According to Sekaran (1992), the alpha coefficient value of each construct should be equal to or above 0.60, and all construct was in an acceptable value. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were used to analyze the data.

3.3 Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study is respondents who are 18 years old and above and are local and foreign guests of the top 5 five-star hotel brands in Bangkok, Thailand. Anderson and Gerbing (1984) indicated that the minimum sample size requirement must be 200 participants. Hence, the researcher aimed to collect 500 samples from local and foreign customers for effective statistical results.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study accounts for judgmental and convenience sampling techniques. For the judgmental sampling, the researcher selects respondents who are 18 years old and above and have stayed at least one night with the selected top five five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand. Convenience sampling collects data via an online platform such as emails, chat applications, and social media channels. The researcher expected to ask guests from each hotel location to complete the questionnaire as soon as they checked out. However, since

the researcher cannot control and anticipate the number of participants because the occupancy rate in each hotel varies from place to place, the total number of questionnaires received from each location will be different.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Information

The demographic profile of 500 respondents is demonstrated in Table 1. Males are 50.8 percent, whereas females are 49.2 percent. The largest age group is between 41 and 50, accounting for 30.4 percent, while the smallest is between 18 and 30 years old, 13.4 percent. For education level, most respondents are Bachelor's degrees of 65.6 percent. Most respondents have earned monthly between THB 100,001 to THB 150,000 (36 percent). Self-employed is the major group, representing 22.2 percent.

Table 1: Demographic Results

Demographic and General Data (N=500)		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	254	50.8
	Female	246	49.2
Age	18-30 years old	67	13.4
	31-40 years old	89	17.8
	41-50 years old	152	30.4
	51-60 years old	111	22.2
	61 years old and above	81	16.2
Educational Level	Below Bachelor's Degree	43	8.6
	Bachelor's Degree	328	65.6
	Master's Degree	102	20.4
	Doctoral Degree	27	5.4

Monthly Income	THB 50,000 or less	77	15.4
	THB 50,001 – 100,000	112	22.4
	THB 100,001 – 150,000	180	36.0
	THB 150,001 – 200,000	71	14.2
	THB 200,000 and above	60	12.0
Occupation	Student	62	12.4
	Government Officer	103	20.6
	Self-Employed	111	22.2
	Private Company Employee	94	18.8
	State Enterprise Officer	25	5.0
	Others	105	21.0

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

According to Table 2, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to measure the reliability and validity of the data by factor loadings (> 0.5), Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.6), Composite reliability (> 0.7), and AVE (> 0.5). Additionally, Fornell and Larcker (1981) indicated that if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is less than 0.5. However, if Composite Reliability (CR) is higher than 0.6, the convergent validity of the construct is still sufficient (Hair et al., 2006). The results show that all results are within the acceptable criteria. This study firstly measures secondary order in the CFA, involving latent variables of perceived quality: tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha of perceived quality as observed variables shows in latent variables. The results show that the second order was approved to have convergent and discriminant validity. Consequently, the model proceeded to the overall model test.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Result, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	Source of Questionnaire (Measurement Indicator)	No. of Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Factors Loading	CR	AVE
Advanced Information and Communication Technology (AI)	Serić et al. (2016)	3	0.893	0.833-0.876	0.893	0.736
Perceived Quality (PQ)	Kayaman and Arasli (2007)	5	-	0.594-0.869	0.837	0.513
-Tangibility (TA)		4	0.795	0.656-0.729	0.795	0.492
-Responsiveness (RES)		3	0.885	0.821-0.934	0.885	0.719
-Reliability (REL)		3	0.890	0.842-0.877	0.890	0.729
-Assurance (AS)		7	0.856	0.637-0.705	0.856	0.460
-Empathy (EM)		5	0.823	0.601-0.784	0.827	0.491
Brand Image (BI)	Hsu et al. (2011)	4	0.780	0.630-0.735	0.781	0.472
Brand Awareness (BA)	Hsu et al. (2011)	4	0.770	0.571-0.746	0.777	0.468
Brand Loyalty (BL)	Hsu et al. (2011)	4	0.877	0.626-0.890	0.880	0.651

The goodness of fit for the measurement model is presented in Table 3. The statistical values in CFA are present in the second-order group and overall model. The acceptable criteria to confirm the measurement model fit include CMIN/DF, GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI, TLI, RMR, and RMSEA. Therefore, the measurement model was not required for the adjustment. In conclusion, the secondary order and overall model present the model fit in this study.

Table 3: Goodness of Fit for Measurement Model

Index	Acceptable Values	Statistical Values (2 nd Order)	Statistical Values (Overall)
CMIN/DF	< 3.00 (Hair et al., 2006)	$414.500/204 = 2.032$	$346.537/160 = 2.166$
GFI	≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.929	0.935

AGFI	≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.911	0.914
NFI	≥ 0.90 (Arbuckle, 1995)	0.926	0.931
CFI	≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.961	0.961
TLI	≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.956	0.954
RMR	< 0.05 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.025	0.012
RMSEA	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 1998)	0.045	0.048
Model summary		In harmony with empirical data	In harmony with empirical data

Remark: CMIN/DF = The ratio of the chi-square value to degree of freedom, GFI = goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index, NFI = normalized fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMR = root mean square residual and RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) pointed out that the square root of each AVE can compute the discriminant validity test. The results show that the discriminant validity value is larger than all inter-construct/factor correlations. Therefore, the convergent and discriminant validity were confirmed. Studenmund (1992) indicated that multicollinearity's problem could be examined through the correlation coefficient. In Table 4, the factor correlations did not surpass 0.80, so the problem of multicollinearity is not issued.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

	BI	AI	PQ	BA	BL
BI	0.687				
AI	0.503	0.858			
PQ	0.148	0.109	0.716		
BA	0.651	0.634	0.099	0.684	
BL	0.528	0.763	0.128	0.606	0.807

Note: The diagonally listed value is the AVE square roots of the variables

Source: Created by the author.

4.3 Structural Equation Model (SEM)

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is applied to determine the correlation between observable and latent variables. The statistical results of the structural model in Table 5 were not within the goodness of fit criteria. Therefore, the adjustment model is required. The structural model fit is acceptable after the adjustment, including CMIN/DF = 2.802, GFI = 0.928, AGFI = 0.905, NFI = 0.910, CFI = 0.940, TLI = 0.929, RMR = 0.049, and RMSEA = 0.060.

Table 5: Goodness of Fit for Structural Model

Index	Acceptable Values	Statistical Values Before Adjustment	Statistical Values After Adjustment
CMIN/DF	< 3.00 (Hair et al., 2006)	581.579/162 = 3.590	448.374/160 = 2.802

GFI	≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.906	0.928
AGFI	≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.878	0.905
NFI	≥ 0.90 (Arbuckle, 1995)	0.884	0.910
CFI	≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.913	0.940
TLI	≥ 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.898	0.929
RMR	< 0.05 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.057	0.049
RMSEA	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 1998)	0.072	0.060
Model summary		Not in harmony with empirical data	In harmony with empirical data

Remark: CMIN/DF = The ratio of the chi-square value to degree of freedom, GFI = goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index, NFI = normalized fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMR = root mean square residual and RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

4.4 Research Hypothesis Testing Result

Hypothesis results of the structural equation modeling are demonstrated in Table 6, showing the standardized path coefficient (β) and t-value. The level of significance can be approved with $p < 0.05$. Accordingly, H1, H3, H4, H6, H7 and H8 are supported, whereas H2 and H5 are not.

Table 6: Hypothesis Results of the Structural Equation Modeling

Hypothesis	Standardized path coefficient (β)	t-value	Result
H1: AI $\rightarrow$ PQ	0.114	2.236*	Supported
H2: PQ $\rightarrow$ BA	0.106	1.946	Not Supported
H3: BA $\rightarrow$ BL	0.186	3.373*	Supported
H4: BI $\rightarrow$ BL	0.127	2.194*	Supported
H5: PQ $\rightarrow$ BL	0.022	0.563	Not Supported
H6: PQ $\rightarrow$ BI	0.133	2.432*	Supported
H7: AI $\rightarrow$ BI	0.258	5.091*	Supported
H8: AI $\rightarrow$ BL	0.656	10.999*	Supported

Note: * $p < 0.05$

The following discussions are interpreted based on the hypothesis results of the structural equation modeling as of Table 6:

H1 supports the significant relationship between advanced information and communication technology and perceived quality. The results show that the standardized path coefficient (β) = 0.114 and t-value = 2.236. The results are aligned with another scholar that various technological applications can drive the customer's perceived quality of hotel procedures and services (Ruiz-Molina et al., 2011).

H2 denies that perceived quality has a significant influence on brand awareness. The results demonstrate the standardized path coefficient (β) = 0.106 and t-value = 1.946.

Aydin and Özer (2005) indicated that perceived quality does not link strongly to brand awareness because perceived quality is essential but insufficient to enhance how customers recall the hotel brand.

H3 supports the significant relationship between brand awareness and brand loyalty with the standardized path coefficient (β) = 0.186 and t-value = 3.373. Mishra and Mishra (2014) stated that brand awareness is the strength in a customer's mind regarding a brand's presence, which can influence consumers' brand loyalty.

H4 approves that brand image significantly influences brand loyalty, demonstrated by the standardized path coefficient (β) = 0.127 and t-value = 2.194. Alhaddad (2015) highlighted that brand image affects brand loyalty, and developing brand image and brand loyalty should be in the branding strategy.

In H5, perceived quality has no significant influence on brand loyalty, as evidenced by the standardized path coefficient (β) = 0.022 and t-value = 0.563. Aydin and Özer (2005) had similar results: perceived quality was not significantly related to brand loyalty.

For H6, the results show that the standardized path coefficient (β) = 0.133 and t-value = 2.432. Thus, perceived quality has a significant influence on brand image. Scholars agree that brand image is influenced by perceived quality, determining that the stronger the brand image, the greater the perceived quality among hotel guests (Lee et al., 2009; Mourad et al., 2011).

H7 approves that perceived quality has a significant influence on brand image per the results of the standardized path coefficient (β) = 0.258 and t-value = 5.091. The results align with Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) that ICT directly affects a company's brand image, which explains that when a consumer receives a consistent message across various communication channels, a strong brand image will be perceived (Dewhirst & Davis, 2005; Keller, 2003; Madhavaram et al., 2013).

H8 results that advanced ICT strongly and significantly influences brand loyalty, reflecting the standardized path coefficient (β) = 0.656 and t-value = 10.999. Ham et al. (2005) addressed that encouraging installing innovative technological applications can enhance guests' satisfaction and brand loyalty.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion and Discussion

Over the recent decade, hotel operators have engaged in making and maintaining a good relationship with their customers. They consider brand loyalty as their main goal in improving business methods attributable to the increasing

market competition. However, consumer expectation is evolving and cause in declining of customer brand loyalty. This research aims to extend the current understanding of hotel brand loyalty by investigating the relationship between the key factors that impact brand loyalty, specifically for the five-star hotel business in Bangkok. The data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to 500 respondents who are 18 years old and above and are local and foreign guests of the top 5 five-star hotel brands in Bangkok, Thailand. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were used to analyze the data. The results show that advanced ICT significantly influences perceived quality, brand image, and brand loyalty. Perceived quality significantly influences brand image. However, perceived quality does not have any significant effect on brand awareness and brand loyalty. Furthermore, there is a causal relationship between brand image, brand awareness, and brand loyalty.

The discussions are based on the findings of this research. First, Ruiz-Molina et al. (2011) discussed that technological applications could increase the perceived quality of hotel guests. This study provides similar results that hotel managers should enhance competence and quality of service by deploying ICT applications to ensure perceived quality. Second, Mishra and Mishra (2014) stated that brand awareness is significantly related to perceived quality. It can be elaborated that hotel guests expect spotless service to recall the brand on their next stay. However, the results provide the opposite view that brand awareness directly affects perceived quality, but not significantly.

Third, the significant relationship between brand awareness and brand loyalty is proven and supported by previous studies. Jones et al. (2002) posted a causal relationship between perceived quality and customer brand loyalty and indicated five components of perceived quality: tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. Fourth, the approved relationship between brand image and brand loyalty is demonstrated. The results of Ahmed (2014) also signify that a consumer's repurchase intention is considered with a company's brand image and can substantially increase a customer's brand loyalty. Fifth, perceived quality does not significantly influence brand loyalty, as evidenced by statistical value. The outcome also contradicts numerous scholars that perceived quality as consumers' valuations of certain products or services that can determine their brand loyalty (Rowley, 1998; Zeithaml, 1988). Though, Aydin and Özer (2005) indicated that perceived quality does not link strongly to brand loyalty.

Sixth, perceived quality significantly influences brand image, as agreed by many researchers who believe that brand image can be measured by perceived quality (Lee et al., 2009; Mourad et al., 2011). Next, perceived quality has a significant influence on brand image. Mourad et al. (2011)

confirmed that brand image is influenced by perceived quality. Besides, Lee et al. (2009) extended that the stronger the brand image, the greater the perceived quality. Last, advanced ICT strongly and significantly influences brand loyalty. Ham et al. (2005) supported the results that innovative technological applications boost client satisfaction and brand loyalty.

5.2 Recommendation

This paper incorporates the factors that regulate brand loyalty in marketing literature and provides competitive strategies for hotel managers to increase brand-loyal customers. The study also emphasizes the following factors of brand loyalty: advanced information and communication technology (ICT), perceived quality (tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy), brand awareness, and brand image. Nevertheless, the findings found that significant and insignificant factors influence brand loyalty. Therefore, the recommendations are elaborated based on the findings.

First, advanced ICT significantly influences perceived quality, brand image, and brand loyalty. Applying advanced ICT in the hospitality industry can provide various benefits, such as customer insights, cost savings, and uplifting facilities. These aspects can significantly enhance service quality, brand image, and customer loyalty. In the digital era, most travelers usually engage impulsive bookings in hotels that pursue higher ratings and good online reviews. ICT, such as data analytics, AI tools, and machine learning software, can help hotel operators to retrieve traveler-intent insights such as purchase, search history, location, and much more and facilitate an individual to gain the traveler's information from anywhere at any time. ICT is a wise way to retain and attract customers by enhancing the guest experience.

Next, perceived quality significantly influences brand image rather than brand awareness and loyalty. Due to service quality, as hotel guests' stay experience is a core value proposition of hospitality businesses, hotel operators need to ensure brand image through positive word-of-mouth, minimize complaints and maintain a high rate of customer satisfaction. Even though perceived quality does not significantly influence brand awareness and loyalty, these relationships still have direct effects. This study also suggests that future scholars extend the explorative research in qualitative to find insights and deeper interpretations.

Last, despite brand image and awareness influencing brand loyalty, hotel operators and marketers are recommended to strategize the branding to sustain customer choice and avoid switching easily. Brand image and awareness can be built through various communication tools such as own, paid, and earned media. In the active use of

the mobile era, the website and social media or own media should be professional, easy to use, and respond to the necessary inquiries of customers. Paid media should be efficient and strategized for the right target group. Earned media made through the customer review through a booking site, travel apps, and google reviews must be closely monitored to gather customers' points of view to improve overall service and satisfaction further.

5.3 Limitation and Further Study

Some limitations are elaborated for future study. First, the sample group in this study is scoped to respondents who have stayed at least one night with the selected top five five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand. The results can differ in other regions and countries because they have different economic contexts and consumer behavior. Next, the comprehensive conceptual framework is suggested to examine other potential factors such as attitude, trust, word-of-mouth, and satisfaction. Finally, the future researcher should consider conducting a qualitative mixed-method study to compare results and provide more implications of factors that significantly impact brand loyalty.

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