

## Influence of Digital Service Quality and Brand Image on Stay Decisions Through Consumer Satisfaction of Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze and examine the effect of e-service quality and brand image on staying decisions, both directly and through customer satisfaction as a mediating variable, at chain hotels in Gorontalo City. This research employed an explanatory quantitative approach (causal research), with data collected through a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to 160 respondents selected using a stratified purposive sampling technique (proportional quota) from guests who had stayed and interacted with digital service platforms at four major chain hotels in Gorontalo City (ASTON, FOX, Amaris, and Yulia Hotel) within the past year. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software, encompassing outer model evaluation, inner model evaluation, and hypothesis testing of direct and indirect effects through bootstrapping. The results of the study prove that digital service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, and brand image has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. In contrast, digital service quality has a positive but not significant direct effect on staying decisions. Meanwhile, brand image has a positive and significant direct effect on staying decisions, and customer satisfaction also has a positive and significant effect on staying decisions. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is proven to significantly mediate the effect of digital service quality on staying decisions (full mediation), as well as mediating the effect of brand image on staying decisions (partial mediation) at chain hotels in Gorontalo City.*

**Keywords:** E-Service Quality, Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, Staying Decision, Chain Hotel.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of the hotel industry in Indonesia shows consistent growth. According to the 2024 Statistics on Hotels and Other Accommodation in Indonesia published by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of star-rated and non-star-rated hotels continues to grow, with total available rooms reaching thousands across all provinces (BPS, 2024). This rapid growth creates an increasingly competitive climate, requiring every industry player to strengthen their service and marketing strategies through the use of digital technology to maintain market share.

One important phenomenon in the shift in market behavior is the increasing use of mobile devices for accommodation bookings. This situation places digital service quality, often identified as e-service quality, as a strategic instrument that comprehensively influences consumer decisions. E-service quality in the hospitality industry reflects the ability of a hotel's online platforms, such as official websites, mobile applications, and integrated booking systems, to meet consumer expectations efficiently, conveniently, securely, and satisfactorily. Key components include system reliability, ease of access and navigation, service speed, data security, and personalized interactive experiences for each guest (Ighomereho et al., 2022). This aligns with the findings of Asthiti et al. (2024), who emphasized that digital service quality is a key determinant in building digital trust (e-trust), which ultimately directly drives the intensity of consumer intention to make reservations through digital platforms (Asthiti et al., 2024).

Various empirical data shows that modern consumers are now much more inclined to utilize online booking methods, whether through internal hotel applications or online travel agent (OTA) platforms (GuestCentric Systems, 2024). Furthermore, the implementation of contactless check-in and check-out systems, as well as easy access to online customer reviews and ratings, have become new distinguishing standards in the modern hospitality industry landscape (Hotelier Magazine, 2024).

On the other hand, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI)-based programs, such as chatbot features, is also increasingly widespread, strengthening the digital responsiveness dimension of hotels. Chatbots can interact with users automatically via text or voice to answer guest questions, provide service information, or assist with the booking process without the need for direct interaction with hotel staff. According to the 2025 HotelTechReport, 70% of guests found chatbots very useful for resolving simple questions, while another 39% used them practically for operational matters such as requesting Wi-Fi passwords. This data reflects increasing consumer acceptance of the quality of AI-based digital services and high market expectations for instant responses (Alfiansyah et al., 2025).

At the local level, this accelerated technology adoption is evident in the hotel industry in Gorontalo City, which has experienced significant growth in recent years.

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Stable regional economic growth, coupled with increasing business activity, tourism, and government agendas, have driven the accelerated expansion of national and international hotel chains. The presence of these major operators marks a market transition from the era of local, independent hotel management to a more standardized industry ecosystem that meets the demands of consistent customer service quality.

The synergy of these two BPS data points confirms that the majority of guests today rely heavily on easy virtual access. This situation underscores the point that for hotel chains like ASTON, FOX, Amaris, and Yulia, the quality of digital services is no longer just an additional amenity, but a vital instrument in gaining consumer trust. Hotels that are able to manage digital services, from informative website displays and easy bookings to secure online payments (e-payments), in a professional and innovative manner, will have a much greater opportunity to capture market share.

With the ever-increasing adoption of technology, investing in digital service quality has become a strategic imperative for hotels. Reliable, responsive, and accessible digital services not only directly increase customer satisfaction but also play a significant role in strengthening an institution's brand image. Hotels that are able to present a professional digital platform tend to be perceived by the public as more modern, trustworthy, and credible. Brand image itself reflects the accumulation of customer perceptions and beliefs about a hotel's quality, reputation, and reliability, which then becomes a key consideration in the decision-making process for staying, especially when consumers are faced with the choice of several hotels with relatively comparable physical facilities and room rates.

The first very interesting unique phenomenon is demonstrated by Yulia Hotel Managed by HIG. As a modern boutique hotel with the most limited space capacity, Yulia Hotel is recorded as having a Total Available Rooms of 15,695 room-nights. However, this hotel actually managed to lead the market in terms of the highest occupancy rate percentage in Gorontalo City, reaching 71.16% with a Total Room Sold of 11,168 room-nights throughout 2025. This high actual occupancy rate goes hand in hand with their solid Google Rating score of 4.6/5.0. This indicates that in the characteristics of boutique hotels, the quality of responsive digital services and the consistency of physical services are effectively able to be converted into optimal stay decisions by local consumers.

ASTON Gorontalo Hotel & Convention Center also achieved comparable success. As an international hotel chain, ASTON demonstrates remarkably stable market dominance by achieving the highest, almost perfect Google Rating score of 4.9/5.0 from a massive accumulation of reviews exceeding 10,410. This digital credibility is evident in the field, where ASTON was able to record the largest physical sales volume in Gorontalo City, with a Total Room Sold of 25,289 room-nights from 37,230 available capacities, thus securing an occupancy rate of 69.38%. This phenomenon reflects the cutting-edge

synergy between the strength of a giant brand image and the quality of reliable digital services in massively influencing consumer stay decisions.

Amaris Hotel Gorontalo also presents a contrasting picture. As a smart-budget hotel, Amaris managed to rank second in terms of physical room sales volume by recording a Total Room Sold of 20,166 room-nights out of 44,135 Total Rooms Available, resulting in an occupancy rate of 45.69%. The high volume of digital interactions reaching 2,136 reviews proves that public attention to choosing to stay at this hotel is very large, which is often associated with competitive pricing factors. The contradictory side is that the high intensity of the decision to stay is accompanied by the lowest Google Rating among its competitors, which is only 4.2/5.0. Further exploration on online review platforms shows that this low satisfaction score is triggered by repeated complaints about technical problems with the virtual reservation system and a mismatch in expectations of physical service upon guest arrival.

This practical inconsistency essentially coincides with a theoretical gap that remains a topic of debate in the marketing management literature. Long before this research was conducted, various previous studies had shown mixed results regarding the extent to which digital service quality and brand image linearly influence consumers' final decisions. For example, a study by Limsawaddiwong et al. (2025) strongly confirmed that the superiority of the reliability and assurance dimensions in the digital hospitality ecosystem can directly drive positive consumer responses. This alignment is further reinforced by the findings of Azzahra and Nainggolan (2022), who demonstrated that the strength of a brand image embedded in the public mind has a significant direct contribution to shaping consumer decision-making behavior. However, on the other hand, the literature also shows inconclusive findings, as reflected in the study by Praptiningrum and Talumantak (2022), where the variables of service quality and brand image were partially found to have no significant influence on consumers' final decisions.

The data dynamics of this research object prove that the direct influence of digital stimuli and brand reputation has certain limitations in the field, thus requiring an intervening variable to clarify the relationship mechanism. Based on these conceptual limitations and the contradictory results of previous studies, this study integrates consumer satisfaction as a mediating variable (intervening variable). Consumer satisfaction is positioned as a psychological bridge that explains how stimuli in the form of reliable virtual services and the perception of a credible brand image can merge completely in encouraging a firm and repeat stay commitment at a Chain Hotel in Gorontalo City.

The existence of a real gap in the field and the need to clarify the conceptual relationship mechanism is the main impetus for researchers to conduct a more in-depth

study through the title: "The Influence of Digital Service Quality and Brand Image on Stay Decisions through Consumer Satisfaction of Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City".

Based on the focus and sub-focus of the research, the objectives of the research are to analyze the influence of digital service quality on consumer satisfaction at Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City, to analyze the influence of brand image on consumer satisfaction at Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City, to analyze the influence of digital service quality on the decision to stay at Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City, to analyze the influence of brand image on the decision to stay at Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City, to analyze the influence of consumer satisfaction on the decision to stay at Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City, to prove and analyze the role of consumer satisfaction in mediating the influence of digital service quality on the decision to stay at Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City, to prove and analyze the role of consumer satisfaction in mediating the influence of brand image on the decision to stay at Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City.

## **METHOD**

The approach used in this study is the Quantitative Approach, which emphasizes numerical measurements and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and causal relationships between variables (Sugiyono, 2019).

The type of research used in this study is Quantitative Descriptive with Associative Causality design (Explanatory Research). This design was chosen to test and explain the causal relationship between the independent variables (X1: Digital Service Quality and X2: Brand Image) on the dependent variable (Y: Stay Decision), through the mediating variable (M: Consumer Satisfaction), (Ghozali & Latan, 2020).

This research was conducted in Gorontalo City, focusing on chain hotels: ASTON Gorontalo Hotel, FOX Hotel, Yulia Hotel, and Amaris Hotel. These locations were selected purposively, considering that these hotels have standardized operational systems, including the implementation of digital services. This was deemed relevant for measuring the influence of research variables on consumer satisfaction and stay decisions.

This research is planned to last approximately two months, from May to July 2026, starting from the issuance of official permission by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of Bina Mandiri University, Gorontalo. The time allocation is systematically structured to ensure that each stage of the research, from instrument preparation and field data collection to data processing, can proceed effectively and on time (Sugiyono, 2019).

The research population is the entire subject or object that has certain characteristics and becomes the target of generalization of research results (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the population is not defined based on the number of physical

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individuals due to the lack of access to the master list of guest data (sampling frame), which is internally confidential. Therefore, the population in this study is positioned at the entire consumer stay decision unit, which is manifested in the form of the accumulation of actual room sales volume (room nights sold) at hotel chains in Gorontalo City that provide digital service facilities.

The sampling technique used in this study was Non-Probability Sampling with a Stratified Purposive Sampling approach (which operationally in the field uses a proportional quota or Stratified Quota). This combination was chosen because the researcher did not have access to the master list of data on the entire guest population (sampling frame) from internal hotel management. The nature of sampling in this study was based on certain criteria (non-random), where the certainty of objectivity and data representation were guaranteed through a two-stage systematic procedure.

The research instrument is a tool used to systematically collect numerical data to measure the variables being studied. The main instrument is a questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (Sugiyono, 2019): 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Fair 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree .

Data collection techniques are the methods or procedures used to obtain information relevant to the research objectives. The technique used is a survey with a questionnaire instrument distributed online (online/hybrid), namely distributing the questionnaire digitally via Google Forms to communities/guests who meet the criteria and offline in the hotel area with management's permission.

The data analysis technique used in this study was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) using SmartPLS software. This method was chosen based on its ability to simultaneously test complex relationship models and its flexibility regarding data distribution and sample size (Hair et al., 2021; Ghazali & Latan, 2020).

## **Results**

### **Reservation Media**

Table 1. Reservation Media

| Reservation Media | n   | %    |
|-------------------|-----|------|
| Agoda             | 42  | 26.3 |
| Booking.com       | 19  | 11.9 |
| Tiket.com         | 15  | 9.4  |
| Traveloka         | 71  | 44.4 |
| Website           | 13  | 8.1  |
| Total             | 160 | 100% |



Based on the reservation medium used, the majority of respondents made room reservations through the Online Travel Agent (OTA) Traveloka, namely 71 respondents (44.4%). Furthermore, 42 respondents (26.3%) used Agoda, 19 respondents (11.9%) used Booking.com, 15 respondents (9.4%) used Tiket.com, while 13 respondents (8.1%) made reservations directly through the hotel's official website.

### **Gender**

Table 2. Gender

| Gender | n   | %    |
|--------|-----|------|
| Man    | 70  | 43.8 |
| Woman  | 90  | 56.3 |
| Total  | 160 | 100% |

Based on gender, 90 respondents (56.3%) were female, while 70 respondents (43.8%) were male. This composition indicates that women had a higher level of participation in this study.

### **Respondent Age**

Table 3. Respondents' Age

| Age         | n   | %    |
|-------------|-----|------|
| <30 Years   | 77  | 48.1 |
| 30-35 Years | 45  | 28.1 |
| 35-45 Years | 27  | 16.9 |
| > 45 Years  | 11  | 6.9  |
| Total       | 160 | 100% |

In terms of age, the majority of respondents were under 30 years old, amounting to 77 respondents (48.1%). Furthermore, respondents aged 30–35 years old were 45 respondents (28.1%), those aged 35–45 years old were 27 respondents (16.9%), and those aged over 45 years old were 11 respondents (6.9%).



**Respondent's Occupation**

Table 4. Respondents' Occupations

| Work                                | N   | %    |
|-------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Civil<br>Servants/TNI/POLRI         | 21  | 13.1 |
| Student                             | 46  | 28.7 |
| Private/State-<br>Owned Enterprises | 53  | 33.1 |
| Self-employed                       | 28  | 17.5 |
| Etc                                 | 12  | 7.5  |
| Total                               | 160 | 100% |

Based on occupation, most of the respondents were private/state-owned enterprise employees, as many as 53 respondents (33.1%), followed by students/pupils as many as 46 respondents (28.7%), self-employed/entrepreneurs as many as 28 respondents (17.5%), ASN/TNI/POLRI as many as 21 respondents (13.1%), and others as many as 12 respondents (7.5%).

**Level of education**

Table 5. Education Level

| Education | n   | %    |
|-----------|-----|------|
| D3        | 17  | 10.6 |
| S1        | 106 | 66.3 |
| S2        | 32  | 20   |
| S3        | 2   | 1.3  |
| Etc       | 3   | 1.9  |
| Total     | 160 | 100% |

In terms of education level, the majority of respondents had a Bachelor's degree (S1) (106 respondents (66.3%), followed by 32 respondents (20%) with a Master's degree, 17 respondents (10.6%), 3 respondents (1.9%) with a Diploma (D3) , and 2 respondents (1.3%) with a Doctorate (S3).



**Frequency of Stay**

Table 6. Frequency of Stay

| Frequency of Stay | n   | %    |
|-------------------|-----|------|
| 1 time            | 64  | 40   |
| 2 times           | 47  | 29.4 |
| 3 times           | 29  | 18.1 |
| > 3 times         | 20  | 12.5 |
| Total             | 160 | 100% |

Based on the frequency of visits, the majority of respondents stayed once, namely 64 people (40.0%), respondents who had stayed twice were 47 people (29.4%), 3 times were 29 people (18.1%), while those who had stayed more than 3 times were 20 people (12.5%).

**Purpose of Stay**

Table 7. Purpose of stay

| Rated Hotels | n   | %    |
|--------------|-----|------|
| ASTON        | 50  | 31.3 |
| FOX          | 48  | 30   |
| Amaris       | 40  | 25   |
| Yulia        | 22  | 13.8 |
| Total        | 160 | 100% |

Judging from the main purpose of staying, most respondents stayed for business or work/official purposes, as many as 60 respondents (37.5%), followed by family events, personal interests, or staycations as many as 51 respondents (31.9%), and holidays/tourism as many as 49 respondents (30.6%).

**Hotel Rating Reference**

Table 8. Name of Hotel Assessed

| Purpose of Stay | n  | %    |
|-----------------|----|------|
| Business        | 60 | 37.5 |
| Holiday         | 49 | 30.6 |

|            |     |      |
|------------|-----|------|
| Staycation | 51  | 31.9 |
| Total      | 160 | 100% |

Some respondents had experience staying at more than one hotel, allowing them to compare the quality of service between hotels. However, at the end of the questionnaire, each respondent was required to select one main hotel that was the most recent or most memorable as a single reference in assessing all research indicators. Based on the data collection results, 50 respondents (31.3%) chose ASTON Gorontalo Hotel & Villas, 48 respondents (30%) chose FOX Hotel Gorontalo, 40 respondents (25%) chose Amaris Hotel Gorontalo, and 22 respondents (13.8%) chose Yulia Hotel Gorontalo.

## DISCUSSION

### The Influence of Digital Service Quality on Consumer Satisfaction

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, the Digital Service Quality variable is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction. This is indicated by the Original Sample ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.476, the T-statistics value of 6.768 which is greater than the critical value of 1.96, and the P-value of 0.000 which is below the 0.05 significance level. The Effect Size ( $f^2$ ) value of 0.268 indicates that digital service quality contributes or influences in the moderate category towards the formation of consumer satisfaction.

Empirically, these findings explain that the higher the quality, convenience, reliability, and neatness of digital platform integration provided by hotel chains in Gorontalo City (such as ASTON Gorontalo Hotel & Villas, FOX Hotel Gorontalo, Amaris Hotel Gorontalo, and Yulia Hotel Gorontalo), the more significantly the level of satisfaction felt by guests. Today's hotel consumers, especially the productive-age population who dominate this study's sample (76.26% under 35 years old), rely heavily on digital accessibility for their comfort. The speed of the online reservation system, the clarity of pricing and facility information on the website/OTA page, instant booking confirmation, and the convenience of supporting digital facilities in the hotel area (high-speed Wi-Fi, cashless payments/QRIS) directly reduce guest administrative effort or fatigue when traveling for business or vacation.

These findings reinforce the research on e-service quality in the modern hospitality industry (Ighomereho et al., 2022; Kim & Kim, 2024), which asserts that the reliability, security, and responsiveness of digital platforms are key determinants of customer satisfaction. This research aligns with the findings of Limsawaddiwong et al. (2025) that the reliability and assurance of digital systems are directly proportional to customer satisfaction.



For hotel chain management in Gorontalo City, these results provide strategic implications: investing in digital infrastructure maintenance and optimization is a highly effective way to maintain guest satisfaction. Hotels need to ensure that their digital platforms (websites/apps) and OTA channels are integrated in real time with the hotel's Property Management System (PMS) to avoid the risk of overbooking or reservation data input errors that can trigger customer dissatisfaction.

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Consumer Satisfaction**

The results of the hypothesis testing prove that Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction. This is indicated by the Original Sample ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.360, T-statistics of 4.629 ( $> 1.96$ ), and P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). The direct contribution of this variable to consumer satisfaction is emphasized by the f-square value of 0.153, which is included in the moderate influence category.

These results indicate that a hotel chain's reputation, brand image, and positive perception directly impact guest satisfaction. Hotel chains in Gorontalo City, such as ASTON, FOX, Amaris, and Yulia Hotel, have established brand awareness and established operational standards that are trusted by the public. When guests choose to stay at a leading hotel brand, they bring with them expectations associated with professionalism, cleanliness, and high safety standards. When these brand promises are consistently fulfilled throughout their stay, these positive perceptions are confirmed and lead to deep satisfaction.

Theoretically, these findings support Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) and the concept of Extrinsic Cues (Zeithaml, 1988; Karta et al., 2023). A strong brand image serves as a quality guarantee that forms positive initial expectations. These findings align with research by Azzahra & Nainggolan (2022) and Puspitarini (2025), which confirms that brand reputation and image significantly enhance customer satisfaction.

Hotel management in Gorontalo City is required not only to conduct persuasive marketing promotions but also to maintain consistent service standards (brand consistency) across all operational lines. A mismatch between the luxurious or professional image portrayed in digital advertising and the reality of on-site service (front office, housekeeping, food & beverage) can erode brand equity and lead to customer disappointment.

### **The Influence of Digital Service Quality on Stay Decisions**

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing, the Digital Service Quality variable was proven to have a positive but not directly significant effect on the decision to stay. This is indicated by the Original Sample ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.071, the T-statistics of 1.003, which

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is far below the critical value of 1.96, and the P-value of 0.316 ( $> 0.05$ ). The f-square value of 0.005 ( $< 0.02$ ) confirms that digital service quality does not contribute a substantial direct impact on consumer stay decisions.

These findings provide compelling empirical insights into the behavior of hotel consumers in Gorontalo City. While the majority of respondents frequently utilize digital platforms (such as Traveloka, Agoda, and Booking.com) to search for rooms, the availability or sophistication of digital services alone is not the sole determining factor that prompts guests to tap the "book" button. Consumers don't choose a hotel simply because of its attractive website or responsive app. Digital services act more as information providers (a hygiene factor/enabler). Consumers' final decision to spend money and choose to stay remains based on substantive criteria such as the hotel's location, price, brand reputation, and satisfaction reviews from previous guests.

These findings support the consumer decision-making process framework in Society 5.0 (Sударsono et al., 2024), where digital tools act more as enablers or data providers during the information search stage. Consistent with the findings of Praptiningrum & Talumantak (2022), the availability of digital service features does not automatically result in immediate transaction decisions if not supported by a holistic, satisfying evaluation of the product and experience.

Hotel management should not be overly speculative, relying solely on digital system upgrades or social media presence to boost room occupancy. Investments in digitalization must be balanced with improvements in the quality of core products, such as bed comfort, bathroom cleanliness, breakfast variety, and staff friendliness.

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Stay Decisions**

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that brand image has a positive and significant direct effect on the decision to stay. This is evident from the Original Sample ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.409, the T-statistics value of 5.352 ( $> 1.96$ ), and the P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). The f-square value of 0.194 indicates that brand image has a medium effect size that directly determines consumers' decision to stay.

These results demonstrate that brand image is the most dominant direct driver for consumers in choosing a hotel chain in Gorontalo City. As the center of economic growth and government in the Tomini Bay region, Gorontalo City receives many business travelers (37.50%) and leisure travelers (30.63%) from outside the region. For guests visiting a relatively new area, the reputation of a well-known hotel brand (such as ASTON, FOX, or Amaris) serves as a quality signal. A positive brand image automatically reduces consumer doubt, accelerates decision-making, and minimizes the perceived risk of financial loss or comfort.



These results demonstrate that brand image is a key direct driver of hotel selection. Referring to the Extrinsic Cues theory (Zeithaml, 1988) and the study by Karta et al. (2023), a well-known brand reputation acts as a quality signal that reduces consumer hesitation when making a reservation. This research reinforces the findings of Indriyati et al. (2022) that brand image has a strong direct driving force on purchasing decisions.

Hotel chain management in Gorontalo City is required to maintain and strengthen its brand identity. Marketing communications should focus on strengthening the brand's superior attributes, such as a reputation for cleanliness, reliable business facilities, and warm, local-style service, to maintain its market leadership position against threats from local competitors and non-hotel accommodations.

### **The Influence of Consumer Satisfaction on Stay Decisions**

The results of the hypothesis testing prove that consumer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on the decision to stay. This is indicated by the Original Sample ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.401, the T-statistic of 6.228 ( $> 1.96$ ), and the P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). This influence is also supported by the f-square value of 0.181, which falls into the moderate category.

These findings reinforce the fact that satisfaction is a crucial prerequisite for generating repeat bookings and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. The majority of respondents in this study regularly stay and return to Gorontalo City. If a previous stay yields a positive impression—from a fast check-in process, a quiet and clean room, to friendly staff—consumers will confidently choose the same hotel for their next visit without needing to explore alternative accommodations.

Academically, the results of this study confirm Oliver's (1980) customer satisfaction theory as well as the views of Modding (2017) and Asonar et al. (2025), where post-service satisfaction is the main determinant that shapes repeat transaction decisions and consumer behavioral intentions.

Hotel management is compelled to implement a responsive customer feedback mechanism. Prompt handling of customer complaints (service recovery) within hotel operations is crucial, as effective recovery from service failures has the potential to maintain customer satisfaction and maintain their willingness to return in the future .

### **The Influence of Digital Service Quality on Stay Decisions through Consumer Satisfaction**

The results of the indirect effect test (mediation test) prove that Consumer Satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between Digital Service Quality and Stay Decisions. This is indicated by the Original Sample ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.191, T-statistics of

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4.783 ( $> 1.96$ ), and P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). As revealed in H3, the direct effect of Digital Service Quality on Stay Decisions is proven to be insignificant ( $p = 0.316$ ), but its indirect effect through Consumer Satisfaction is proven to be significant ( $p = 0.000$ ), so the Consumer Satisfaction variable in this model acts as Full Mediation.

This full mediation finding is one of the most crucial key findings in this study. It means that digital service quality cannot stand alone in driving consumer stay decisions at chain hotels in Gorontalo City. New digital services will trigger stay transaction decisions if and only if they successfully provide consumers with a sense of satisfaction and convenience. An easy, responsive, and secure online booking platform creates a sense of pleasure and convenience (satisfaction). This satisfaction with convenience is what then motivates consumers to complete their reservations and stay at the hotel.

These results align with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework as implemented by Asonar et al. (2025) and Indriyati et al. (2022), as well as the E-Service Quality framework (Ighomereho et al., 2022; Kim & Kim, 2024). Digital Service Quality acts as the Stimulus (S), Consumer Satisfaction acts as the internal perception/affective evaluation of the Organism (O), and the Stay Decision is the Response (R) or actual consumer behavior. Without a satisfaction fulfillment process at the Organism stage, the digital Stimulus will not result in a purchase Response. This research strengthens the findings of Limsawaddiwong et al. (2025) and Praptiningrum & Talumantak (2022) which state that satisfaction variables fully mediate the effect of e-service on customer decision behavior.

Hotel management is advised to measure the effectiveness of digitalization not just by the number of app downloads or website visitors, but also by the level of user satisfaction when interacting with the system. The hotel digital platform's user interface (UI/UX) design should be as simple and user-friendly as possible to create an immediate sense of satisfaction during transactions.

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Stay Decisions through Consumer Satisfaction**

The results of the indirect effect test prove that Consumer Satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Image and Stay Decision. This is indicated by the Original Sample ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.144, T-statistics of 3.571 ( $> 1.96$ ), and P-value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). Because the direct effect of Brand Image on Stay Decision is proven to be significant (H4 is accepted;  $p = 0.000$ ) and its indirect effect through Consumer Satisfaction is also proven to be significant (H7 is accepted;  $p = 0.000$ ), the mediating nature of Consumer Satisfaction in this relationship is classified as Partial Mediation.

These partial mediation findings indicate that brand image has a dual path in influencing guest stay decisions at chain hotels in Gorontalo City. First, a well-known and trusted brand image directly encourages consumers to make stay decisions. Second, the

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brand image also works indirectly, where expectations of a well-known hotel brand generate satisfaction when guests experience tangible service, which in turn further strengthens and multiplies consumers' decisions to stay again in the future.

These findings enrich the integration of Extrinsic Cues Theory (Zeithaml, 1988; Karta et al., 2023) and Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980; Modding, 2017). Initial brand image acts as a quality guarantee that attracts consumer purchase interest, but the continuation of the transaction decision is highly dependent on confirmation of satisfaction felt during the stay. These results align with research by Azzahra & Nainggolan (2022) and Puspitarini (2025), which confirms the partial mediation role of satisfaction in strengthening the impact of corporate image on final customer decisions.

A hotel chain's marketing strategy in Gorontalo City must integrate brand reputation communication with proof of service performance. A strong brand serves to attract new customers (acquisition), while the satisfaction created in the field serves to seal their decision to stay again in the future (retention).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, data analysis, and discussion presented in the previous chapter regarding the Influence of Digital Service Quality and Brand Image on Stay Decisions through Consumer Satisfaction at Chain Hotels in Gorontalo City, it can be concluded that Digital Service Quality has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction at chain hotels in Gorontalo City. The reliability and ease of digital service features provided by hotels are proven to be able to meet customer expectations, thereby increasing their level of satisfaction. Then, Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction at chain hotels in Gorontalo City. A positive reputation and brand name act as a signal of quality assurance that creates a good initial perception and increases consumer satisfaction when enjoying hotel services.

Digital Service Quality does not significantly influence the Decision to Stay at a chain hotel in Gorontalo City. This finding indicates that the availability of digital services is not yet a primary determinant that directly drives stay transactions. Consumers require a stage of experience evaluation and satisfaction before making a final transaction decision. Brand Image has a positive and significant influence on the Decision to Stay at a chain hotel in Gorontalo City. A strong brand image directly increases consumer trust and certainty in making choices to stay at a chain hotel.

Consumer Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Stay at a hotel chain in Gorontalo City. Positive evaluation of hotel services is the main driver that convinces consumers to execute the decision to stay and triggers repeat purchase

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intentions in the future. The empirical role of Consumer Satisfaction Mediating in this research model Full Mediation: Consumer Satisfaction fully mediates the effect of Digital Service Quality on the Decision to Stay. New digital services will trigger a decision to stay if they succeed in providing a sense of satisfaction and comfort to consumers first. Partial Mediation: Consumer Satisfaction partially mediates the effect of Brand Image on the Decision to Stay. Brand image can directly influence the decision to stay, but its impact becomes much stronger when supported by confirmation of satisfaction from consumers.

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