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The Influence of Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Brand Trust on Guest Loyalty at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Brand Trust on Guest Loyalty at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian, a hotel property located in one of Bali's most competitive tourism areas. The background of this study is grounded in the fluctuating trend of repeater guests at the hotel despite its relatively favorable brand ratings across several Online Travel Agent (OTA) platforms, which raises the question of whether social media activity, brand perception, and guest trust are sufficient to sustain guest loyalty. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed, involving 197 repeater guests selected through purposive sampling and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The analysis covered measurement model evaluation, structural model evaluation, and hypothesis testing through a bootstrapping procedure. The results indicate that Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty (β = 0.103; t = 2.141; p = 0.032), Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty (β = 0.519; t = 6.426; p = 0.000), and Brand Trust has a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty (β = 0.332; t = 4.111; p = 0.000). The R-square value of 0.774 indicates that the three variables jointly explain 77.4% of the variance in Guest Loyalty. Brand Image was identified as the most dominant predictor, followed by Brand Trust, while Social Media Marketing plays a supporting role in reinforcing the two. These findings suggest that hotel management should prioritize brand image consistency and trust-building while positioning social media marketing as a channel that reinforces, rather than replaces, brand experience.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, Brand Trust, Guest Loyalty, Hospitality Industry.

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INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a service sector that relies heavily on guest experience, trust, and loyalty. Amid intensifying competition among hotels, guest loyalty has become critical because loyal guests are not only more likely to return, but also to recommend the hotel to others. Hotels are therefore required to build strategies that focus not only on attracting new guests but also on retaining those who have previously stayed. The advancement of digital technology has transformed the way hotels communicate with guests. Social media no longer functions merely as a promotional channel; it has become a means of building relationships, delivering information, showcasing stay experiences, and responding to guest inquiries and complaints more quickly. In the hospitality context, Social Media Marketing helps hotels strengthen closeness with guests through visual content, promotional information, testimonials, and two-way interaction. Manyanga et al. (2024) found that social media marketing influences brand loyalty in the hospitality industry, while Gouda and Halim (2025) explained that well-managed social media content can enhance customer loyalty in the hospitality industry.

Beyond Social Media Marketing, Brand Image is also an important factor in shaping guest loyalty. Brand Image reflects guests' perception of a hotel's quality, reputation, and character, which is formed not only by the hotel's name or logo, but also by guests' experience with service, facilities, location, comfort, and communication. A positive brand image can make guests feel more confident about returning because the hotel is perceived as capable of delivering an experience that matches their expectations. Budiasa et al. (2024) demonstrated that brand image plays an important role in strengthening customer loyalty in the context of a Bali hotel, indicating that a positive brand image can help hotels retain customers and increase the likelihood of guests returning. Another factor contributing to guest loyalty is Brand Trust, defined as the belief that a hotel is able to provide consistent, honest, and reliable service. In hotel services, trust can be formed through the guest's stay experience, transparent information, service consistency with promises made, and responsiveness to guest needs. Sinaga et al. (2024) showed that Brand Trust has a positive and significant effect on hotel customer loyalty.

Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian is located in the Kuta tourism area of Bali, a strategic position that provides significant opportunities to attract both domestic and international travelers. However, competition among hotels in the Kuta-Legian area remains high, requiring the hotel to retain previous guests to prevent them from switching to competitors. One indicator that can be used to assess guest loyalty is the level of repeater guest visits.

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Table 1. Data on Returning Guests at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian

Month	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Rep	Occ	Rep	Occ	Rep	Occ	Rep	Occ	Rep	Occ	Rep	Occ
Jan	3,87%	80,34%	4,83%	56,24%	5,30%	60,66%	7,83%	74,27%	7,86%	77,14%	7,96%	78,27%
Feb	2,11%	88,62%	5,01%	58,90%	6,29%	64,10%	8,01%	76,91%	7,12%	76,70%	7,43%	77,11%
Mar	3,91%	40,76%	4,23%	54,93%	6,51%	66,83%	8,23%	77,91%	8,21%	78,83%	8,87%	79,51%
Apr	1,52%	38,17%	4,62%	56,93%	5,56%	61,17%	7,62%	87,95%	6,54%	74,13%	7,54%	89,35%
May	1,96%	15,60%	4,94%	57,79%	6,92%	68,60%	6,94%	73,75%	5,70%	71,59%	6,70%	74,85%
Jun	1,17%	14,72%	6,34%	70,30%	5,27%	60,22%	7,34%	78,34%	6,38%	83,38%	7,30%	84,34%
Jul	1,14%	12,93%	5,50%	63,20%	6,77%	67,93%	8,50%	82,23%	7,32%	87,10%	8,30%	89,23%
Aug	1,07%	11,83%	4,70%	56,90%	5,27%	60,13%	8,70%	97,80%	7,70%	89,87%	7,85%	97,76%
Sep	0,82%	10,17%	6,30%	70,10%	6,81%	68,17%	7,30%	84,20%	5,32%	73,16%	6,47%	74,26%
Oct	1,02%	10,97%	6,58%	66,60%	7,07%	70,87%	6,58%	86,50%	4,52%	72,68%	5,75%	74,53%
Nov	0,44%	10,41%	5,80%	59,86%	6,73%	70,41%	7,80%	87,76%	4,81%	79,96%	6,81%	80,98%
Dec	1,33%	11,80%	6,68%	67,22%	7,22%	71,80%	8,68%	91,32%	6,94%	90,84%	7,34%	91,32%
Average	**1,70%**	**28,86%**	**5,46%**	**61,58%**	**6,31%**	**65,91%**	**7,79%**	**83,25%**	**6,54%**	**79,62%**	**7,36%**	**82,63%**

This fluctuating repeater trend indicates that guests' tendency to return has not been entirely stable. The 2025 increase is a positive development, yet the hotel still needs to strengthen the factors that can retain guests, particularly Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Brand Trust. Based on this background, the research problem can be formulated as follows: (1) Does Social Media Marketing significantly affect Guest Loyalty? (2) Does Brand Image significantly affect Guest Loyalty? (3) Does Brand Trust significantly affect Guest Loyalty? Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Brand Trust on Guest Loyalty at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian.

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LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Social Media Marketing refers to marketing activities carried out through social media to convey information, build interaction, introduce hotel facilities, and create closer relationships with guests. Gunelius (2011) conceptualized Social Media Marketing through the indicators of content creation, content sharing, connecting, and community building. Well-managed Social Media Marketing activities can help hotels increase guest engagement and encourage loyalty (Gunelius, 2011; Yudha et al., 2025). Yudha et al. (2025) demonstrated that hotel Social Media Marketing activity can influence customer engagement, Brand Trust, and brand loyalty, while Azhar et al. (2023) found that Social Media Marketing plays a role in shaping Brand Trust and brand loyalty in the context of online travel services.

H1: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian.

Brand Image represents guests' perception of a hotel formed through their stay experience, service quality, facilities, location, reputation, and communication. Keller (2013) explained that brand image is built through associations that are strong, favorable, and unique in consumers' memory. Tahir et al. (2024) explained that Brand Image plays an important role in shaping Guest Loyalty in the tourism sector, while Mustofa and Nuvriasari (2024) showed that Brand Image influences brand loyalty in a hotel context.

H2: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian.

Brand Trust reflects guests' confidence that a hotel is capable of delivering consistent, honest, and reliable service. Guests with high trust in a hotel tend to feel safer and more comfortable returning to use the hotel's services (Delgado and Munuera, 2005; Mayer et al., 1995). Sohaib and Han (2023) showed that Brand Trust has a positive effect on brand loyalty, a finding reinforced by Mustofa and Nuvriasari (2024), who stated that Brand Trust is one of the factors influencing hotel Guest Loyalty.

H3: Brand Trust has a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian.

Guest Loyalty refers to guests' willingness to stay again, recommend the hotel to others, and continue choosing the same hotel despite offers from competitors (Griffin, 2005; Oliver, 1999). Based on the theoretical review above, the following conceptual framework is proposed.

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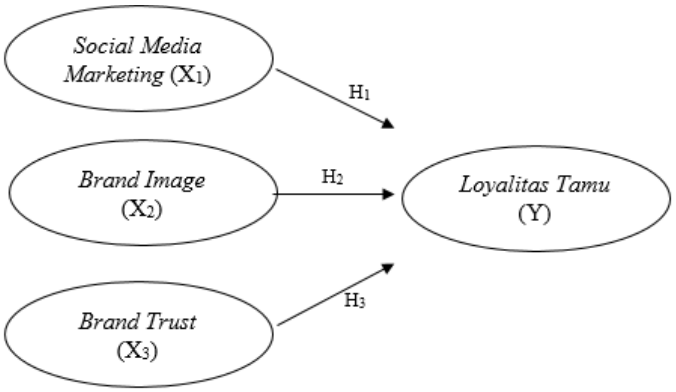


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Influence of Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Brand Trust on Guest Loyalty

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, intended to test the relationships among variables based on numerical data collected through a questionnaire (Sugiyono, 2020). Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) with the aid of SmartPLS software, which enables the simultaneous analysis of relationships among latent variables through both a measurement model and a structural model (Hair et al., 2022). Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Brand Trust were positioned as exogenous variables, while Guest Loyalty was positioned as the endogenous variable.

The population comprised 860 repeater guests of Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian recorded during the 2020–2024 period. Using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, the sample size was calculated at 197.24, rounded to 197 respondents, selected through purposive sampling with the criterion of having stayed at the hotel at least twice during 2020–2024.

Social Media Marketing was measured through the indicators of content creation, content sharing, connecting, and community building (Gunelius, 2011). Brand Image was measured through strength of brand association, favorability of brand association, and uniqueness of brand association (Keller, 2013). Brand Trust was measured through reliability, integrity, and benevolence, adapted from Delgado and Munuera (2005), Lau and Lee (1999), and Mayer et al. (1995). Guest Loyalty was measured through repeat purchase, referral, and resistance to competitor offers (Griffin, 2005; Oliver, 1999).

Data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistical analysis followed by inferential analysis using PLS-SEM, which included measurement model (outer model) evaluationm convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability and structural model (inner model) evaluation, comprising R-square, collinearity statistics

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(VIF), effect size (f-square), and hypothesis testing through a bootstrapping procedure at a 5% significance level (Hair et al., 2022; Solimun et al., 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The 197 respondents were predominantly repeat guests with substantial prior exposure to the hotel: the majority had stayed at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian three to five times, reflecting a sample well-positioned to evaluate guest loyalty based on accumulated experience rather than a single visit.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics Based on Visits to NEO+ Kuta Legian

Visits to NEO+ Kuta Legian	Count	Percentage (%)
1 time	0	0.00
2 times	14	7.11
3-5 times	148	75.13
More than 5 times	35	17.77

Measurement Model (Outer Model) Evaluation

All indicators exhibited outer loading values above 0.70, ranging from 0.747–0.829 for Social Media Marketing, 0.837–0.905 for Brand Image, 0.889–0.902 for Brand Trust, and 0.919–0.939 for Guest Loyalty, confirming that each indicator meets the convergent validity criterion.

Table 3. Outer Loading Results

Variable	Code	Indicator	Outer Loading	Description
Social Media Marketing	X1.1	Content Creation	0.829	Valid
Social Media Marketing	X1.2	Content Sharing	0.747	Valid
Social Media Marketing	X1.3	Connecting	0.748	Valid
Social Media Marketing	X1.4	Community Building	0.799	Valid
Brand Image	X2.1	Strength of Brand Association	0.837	Valid
Brand Image	X2.2	Favorability of Brand Association	0.905	Valid

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Brand Image	X2.3	Uniqueness of Brand Association	0.890	Valid
Brand Trust	X3.1	Reliability	0.889	Valid
Brand Trust	X3.2	Integrity	0.902	Valid
Brand Trust	X3.3	Benevolence	0.898	Valid
Guest Loyalty	Y1.1	Repeat Purchase	0.933	Valid
Guest Loyalty	Y1.2	Referral	0.939	Valid
Guest Loyalty	Y1.3	Resistance to Competitor Offers	0.919	Valid

Construct reliability and convergent validity were further confirmed, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.788 to 0.922 and AVE values ranging from 0.611 to 0.866, both exceeding the recommended thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively.

Table 4. Construct Reliability and Validity Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_a	rho_c	AVE	Description
Brand Image	0.851	0.857	0.910	0.771	Reliable/Valid
Brand Trust	0.878	0.878	0.925	0.803	Reliable/Valid
Guest Loyalty	0.922	0.925	0.951	0.866	Reliable/Valid
Social Media Marketing	0.788	0.792	0.862	0.611	Reliable/Valid

Structural Model (Inner Model) Evaluation

The R-square value for Guest Loyalty was 0.774 (adjusted R-square = 0.771), indicating that Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Brand Trust jointly explain 77.4% of the variance in Guest Loyalty, while the remaining 22.6% is explained by factors outside the model.

Table 5. R-squared results

Endogenous Variable	R-square	R-square Adjusted	Description
Guest Loyalty	0.774	0.771	Strong

Collinearity statistics indicated no multicollinearity problems (VIF values below 5 for all exogenous variables), and effect size analysis showed that Brand Image had a large effect, Brand Trust a medium effect, and Social Media Marketing a small effect on Guest Loyalty.

Hypothesis Testing

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Bootstrapping results confirmed that all three hypotheses were supported at the 5% significance level (t-statistics > 1.96; p-values < 0.05).

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path of Influence	Coefficient	T-statistics	P-values	Description	Decision
H1	Social Media Marketing → Guest Loyalty	0.103	2.141	0.032	Significant	Accepted
H2	Brand Image → Guest Loyalty	0.519	6.426	0.000	Significant	Accepted
H3	Brand Trust → Guest Loyalty	0.332	4.111	0.000	Significant	Accepted

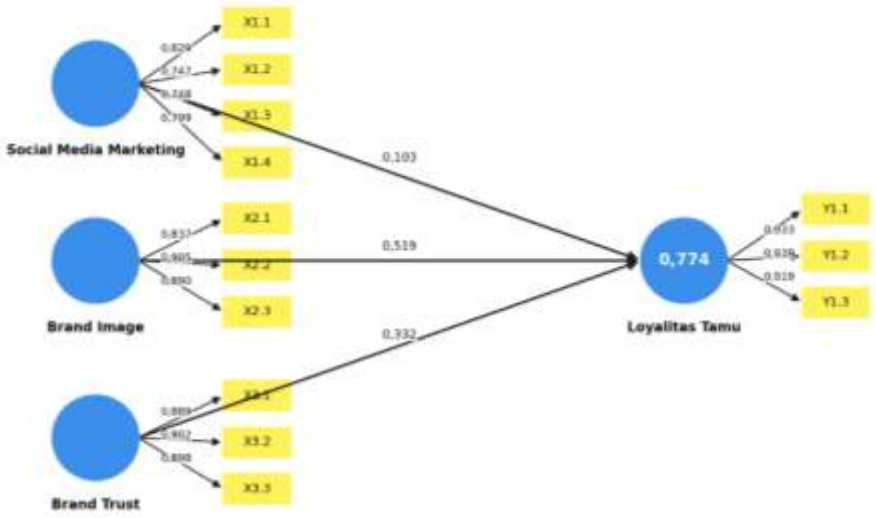


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Path Diagram of Results

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DISCUSSION

Social Media Marketing was found to have a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty (β = 0.103; t = 2.141; p = 0.032), consistent with Manyanga et al. (2024), Yudha et al. (2025), and Alrwashdeh et al. (2025), who found that social media marketing activity is associated with loyalty formation mechanisms in the hospitality context. However, its relatively small coefficient compared with Brand Image and Brand Trust suggests that, for this experienced repeater-guest sample, social media functions more as a relationship reinforcer and brand-experience communicator than as a primary loyalty driver.

Brand Image emerged as the most dominant predictor of Guest Loyalty (β = 0.519; t = 6.426; p = 0.000), consistent with Keller's (2013) view that a strong, favorable, and unique brand association drives customer loyalty, and in line with Budiasa et al. (2024), Mustofa and Nuvriasari (2024), and Tahir et al. (2024), who positioned Brand Image as a key determinant of loyalty. This finding indicates that the hotel's overall image is strong, though its point of differentiation from competitors merits further reinforcement.

Brand Trust also showed a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty (β = 0.332; t = 4.111; p = 0.000), aligned with Delgado and Munuera (2005) and Mayer et al. (1995), and consistent with Sinaga et al. (2024) and Mustofa and Nuvriasari (2024). This underscores that honesty, transparency, and consistency between promised and delivered service are central to how guests build trust in the hotel.

Overall, the model demonstrates that guest loyalty in this competitive tourism setting is shaped primarily by brand perception and trust, with social media marketing serving a complementary, reinforcing role implying that Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian should prioritize brand-image consistency and trust-building initiatives while directing social media content to authentically reflect and support those two pillars.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Brand Trust each have a positive and significant effect on Guest Loyalty at Hotel NEO+ Kuta Legian, jointly explaining 77.4% of its variance. Brand Image is the most dominant factor, followed by Brand Trust, while Social Media Marketing—though significant—plays a comparatively smaller, supporting role. Hotel management is advised to prioritize brand-image consistency across digital and physical touchpoints, strengthen brand trust through transparent and personalized service, and position social media marketing as a channel that reinforces authentic brand experience rather than functioning as a standalone driver of loyalty. Future research is encouraged to incorporate additional variables such as service quality, customer satisfaction, or customer engagement, and to explore mediating

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or moderating mechanisms to further explain the process by which guest loyalty is formed.

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