



# Analysis of brand equity in enhancing repeat visitation rates in the hospitality industry

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## ABSTRACT

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The hospitality industry is a highly competitive industry, where each hotel competes to attract customers and increase repeat visitation rates. One important factor that can help hotels achieve these goals is brand equity. This research aims to explore the role of brand equity in increasing repeat visitation rates in the hospitality industry. The study uses a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews and a case study at HARRIS Hotel Sentraland Semarang. The research concludes that brand equity plays a crucial role in increasing repeat visitation rates in the hospitality industry. By building strong brand equity through strategies focusing on brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, hotels can enhance their appeal to customers and encourage them to return for future stays.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As stated by Efendi et al., (2023), it is essential to have a solid understanding of the role that brand equity plays as one of the most valuable assets for a firm in the context of a business environment that is becoming increasingly competitive. According to Pratiwi et al., (2023), brand equity is defined as the significant additional value that is delivered by a product or service as a result of the existence of its brand. When it comes to the hospitality business, having a strong brand equity can be an important difference that serves to provide the hotel an advantage over its competitors. Increased brand awareness, higher consumer loyalty, improved competitiveness, and increased rates of repeat visits are the means by which this objective is accomplished (Saputri, 2020)

In accordance with Lukmana et al., (2023), brand equity is comprised of four main dimensions that are interconnected with one another. According to Pham et al., (2016), the first definition of brand awareness is the capacity of consumers to immediately recognize and recall the brand. Following that, brand associations encompass everything that is associated with the memories that customers have of the brand (Bian & Liu, 2011). Perceived quality is an additional component of brand equity that focuses on the perceptions that consumers have regarding the quality of the goods or services that are provided by the brand. Lastly, according to Angela & Adisasmito (2019), the term "brand

loyalty" describes the degree to which customers have an emotional tie to a certain brand and the frequency with which they make subsequent purchases of that brand (Javornik, 2021).

Located in the center of Semarang city, the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang is a hotel that has been awarded four stars (Thorisdottir, 2020). A contemporary and fashionable ambiance is provided by the hotel, making it an ideal choice for both visitors and business travelers (Hao, 2022). Several sites, such as Simpang Lima and Lawang Sewu, are within walking distance of its strategic location, which allows for easy access to the area. The Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang is consistently found to have received favorable feedback from its customers. Guests have expressed their appreciation for the hotel's pristine condition, welcoming personnel, cutting-edge amenities, and advantageous location (Ishaq, 2020). Additionally, a few of customers have mentioned that the variety of the breakfast menu might be enhanced. The Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang is, all things considered, an excellent option for tourists who are looking for a hotel that is both comfortable and fashionable in the heart of the city.

The Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang, on the other hand, does not yet have a high brand awareness in comparison to other hotels in Semarang, particularly in comparison to competitors who have bigger networks (Han, 2021). As evidence of this, the majority of the visits that were made were made by institutions rather than by individuals or families. In addition, the Harris Sentraland Semarang has not sufficiently established a strong reputation for its quality as a contemporary four-star hotel that offers comprehensive amenities. There is just one distinct market that the hotel caters to, and that is business travelers. However, business activities are not necessarily repetitious. As a consequence of this, the public's perception of the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang may be less favorable, which may result in a lower level of client loyalty for the hospitality establishment.

Increasing brand recognition and developing a more favorable image in the eyes of customers are two things that hotels need to do in order to maximize their brand equity (Destiana, 2022). According to Yulianto et al., (2022), marketing techniques that are both targeted and innovative have the potential to help enhance brand recognition and build enjoyable brand connections. Also, according to Nugroho et al., (2024), providing customers with experiences that are consistent and of high quality would reinforce their perception of the quality of the product and drive long-term brand loyalty. It is therefore necessary to do additional study in order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which brand equity may be managed and optimized in order to have a major impact on the rates of repeat visits in the hotel business. In this study, the questions that are being asked pertain to the function that brand equity plays in boosting the number of repeat visits to the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang, as well as the techniques that are being utilized in the process of establishing brand equity (Valeri, 2021).

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative methodology is utilized in this research project, which includes conducting in-depth interviews and doing case studies (Hamzah, 2021). Through the utilization of this methodology, researchers are able to get a profound and comprehensive comprehension of the management of brand equity and the tactics that are done to improve the rates of repeat visits in the hotel business (Widiasworo, 2018). Interviews with the marketing manager and the operational director of the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang were carried out in great detail. The selection of responses was based on the substantial knowledge and expertise that they possessed in the management of hotel operations and marketing. Researchers were able to explore in detail their perspectives and experiences on brand equity management methods and efforts to boost repeat visitor rates by conducting in-depth interviews with the participants (Buhalis, 2023). The Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang

was the location of a case study that was carried out in addition to in-depth investigations. Researchers had the opportunity to personally witness the methods and practices that the hotel utilized in order to establish brand equity and increase the number of repeat visits through the use of this case study. Direct observations of operational operations, promotions, and interactions with customers provided significant insights into the elements leading to the success of brand equity and efforts to increase the number of customers who return to the establishment (Pranata & Sinaga, 2023). The purpose of this research is to get a complete understanding of the function that brand equity plays in boosting the number of repeat visits in the hotel business by integrating both techniques. It is anticipated that practitioners and stakeholders in the hotel industry will be able to discover valuable insights and findings through the in-depth analysis of interviews and case studies. These findings and insights will be used to develop effective strategies for enhancing brand equity and achieving success in retaining and increasing repeat visitation rates (Lv, 2022).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the hospitality industry, the findings of the research prove that brand equity plays a crucial role in increasing the number of customers who return to the establishment. It was revealed that the hotel in question had implemented a number of different techniques in order to enhance brand equity. Each of these strategies was designed to improve the four primary aspects of brand equity.

**Brand Awareness.** For the purpose of increasing their brand awareness, the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang performed a number of different measures. Integrated marketing campaigns were planned by them (Ali, 2020). These campaigns included offline methods such as print advertisements, billboards, and brochure distribution at strategic areas, as well as online strategies such as search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and digital advertising. Through the utilization of social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, they actively shared content that was visually appealing and informative regarding the hotel, its amenities, and the deals that were available (Fitrianiingsih et al., 2023; Sivarethinamohan, 2023). In addition, they arranged special events such as culinary exhibitions, music parties, and charity activities in order to raise the visibility of their brand among the population they were trying to reach (Ibrahim, 2021).

**A connection to the brand.** Possessing strong brand connections contributes to the formation of a favorable perception of the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang in the eyes of guests (Luo, 2021). By placing an emphasis on sophisticated interior design, compelling lighting, and contemporary architecture, the hotel was able to build a reputation for being a contemporary and fashionable place that is suited for passengers traveling for both business and pleasure. Also, they focused on providing distinct premium amenities, such as complimentary cocktails upon arrival, concierge services that are available around the clock, and access to exclusive executive lounges (Novirsari & Ponten Pranata, 2021).

**Quality that is perceived.** With the goal of preserving high-quality standards, the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang endeavored to provide guests with experiences that they will never forget (Sobaih, 2020). Through the recruitment and training of staff members who were both skilled and kind, as well as the establishment of stringent operational standards concerning cleanliness, tidiness, and comfort, they were able to guarantee outstanding service. In addition, the hotel's facilities and interior design were subjected to comprehensive upkeep on a consistent basis in order to guarantee that everything remained in excellent shape. The visitors' view of the quality that the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang brand provides was strengthened as a result of their consistent delivery of high-quality services.

**Commitment to a particular brand.** In order to strengthen customer loyalty to the Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang brand, the hotel created a customer loyalty program that provides frequent guests with opportunities to receive exclusive advantages and

rewards (Arcese, 2021). This program provided members with access to exclusive facilities such as executive lounges, as well as discounts, opportunity to accumulate points that could be redeemed for free stays or room upgrades, and other benefits (Lei, 2020). The Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang aimed to cultivate more intimate ties with its clientele by providing them with enticing deals in experiences that were tailored to their specific preferences. Consistent contact through email, social media, and special offer programs, as well as service personalization such as birthday greetings and familiarity with staff, were essential in the process of cultivating strong customer loyalty (Camilleri, 2022).

Therefore, the findings of this study highlight the significance of holistic brand equity management in the hotel business as a means of increasing the number of instances in which guests return. These hotels are able to enhance their positions in a market that is becoming increasingly competitive and extend their market share by utilizing the power of brand equity. This may be accomplished through the use of focused approaches and measured techniques in the process of building brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that in the hospitality industry, brand equity plays a crucial role in increasing the number of returning customers to an accommodation establishment. The Harris Hotel Sentraland Semarang successfully enhanced their brand equity through various strategies, including integrated marketing campaigns to boost brand awareness, emphasis on sophisticated interior design and quality service to build strong brand connections, and the implementation of customer loyalty programs to strengthen customer commitment to the brand. These findings underscore the importance of holistic brand equity management in the hotel business to improve customer return rates and expand market share in an increasingly competitive market.

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