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Utilizing Key Opinion Leaders in Social Media Marketing: Improving Guest Satisfaction and Influencing Booking Choices

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the role of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and social media marketing in influencing guest satisfaction through stay decisions. This study uses a quantitative approach. The population in this study were guests of 3-star hotels in Jakarta, with a purposive sampling technique, namely, guests who have stayed more than twice. The study included 200 respondents. The results showed that KOL and social media marketing had a significant influence on stay decisions and guest satisfaction, where KOL had a direct and indirect influence. However, the mediation effect of stay decisions on satisfaction was not significant. These findings indicate that hotel marketing strategies through collaboration with KOL and social media marketing increase guest satisfaction because promotional expectations are in accordance with the experience felt by guests.

Keywords. Key Opinion Leader, Social Media Marketing, Satisfaction, Staying decision

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is one of the economic sectors in the service sector, with good prospects in the long term (Sitongan, 2021). The hospitality industry is also referred to as a service industry offering products and services in the form of rooms, food, and beverages, and other facilities, including meeting rooms, swimming pools, gyms, and others depending on the completeness of the hotel's qualifications. The development of digital technology has changed the way consumers search for information and make decisions, including in choosing hotel services.

Social Media Marketing is an active, long-term indirect marketing complemented by short-term direct marketing tactic (Gunelius, 2011). Social media used by hotels in promotions makes it easier for guests to find out information about the hotel before deciding to stay. Interesting information displayed can encourage guests to decide on their choice. This is in line with the results of previous studies that social media marketing directly influences purchasing decisions (Aninda & Roosdhani, 2024) and social media marketing has a direct effect on *perceived value* and *brand equity*, as well as an indirect effect on consumer satisfaction and response (Wahyudi & Parahiyanti, 2021).

On the other hand, a Key Opinion Leader (KOL) is an individual or someone who can attract attention and influence the ideas and behavior of others (Zhao & Kong, 2017). KOL has unique characteristics where an identity or trait that makes it easy for them to identify includes: Familiarity, namely the closeness or familiarity of KOL with their communication audience, Trustworthiness, namely the ability to be trusted. Furthermore, expertise is the knowledge, experience, or skills possessed by KOL (Xiong et al., 2021). On social media, KOLs are considered to have communication skills and their appeal has the power to persuade the public (Zhao & Kong, 2017).

Attractive visual content on Instagram promoted by KOLs can increase customer satisfaction and build trust in the quality of hotel services. Customer satisfaction itself in the hospitality world can be interpreted as one of the relationships between service products that are well-received by customers (Hariyanto & Rukmandiana, 2022). On the other hand, the expectations built from KOL promotions often match the real experiences felt by guests during their stay. Consumers increasingly rely on personal reviews or recommendations from KOLs compared to conventional advertising in deciding to stay at a hotel. The decision to stay is shaped by the belief that the decision taken is the right thing to do (Tapparan et al., 2021)

Many studies have discussed the role of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) in marketing in general, but few have specifically explored how content created by KOLs can influence customer perceptions, interests, and ultimately decisions to choose a hotel. This study aims to analyze the role of KOLs and Social Media Marketing in increasing Customer Satisfaction through Stay Decisions.

2. Literatur Review

KOL is someone who can attract attention and influence the ideas and behavior of others (Zhao & Kong, 2017). Access to data possessed by a KOL is crucial for marketers seeking to connect with their audience, as this data provides significant insights into audience preferences, requirements, and behaviors. KOLs are frequently perceived as impartial in product evaluations, hence augmenting their credibility. Their capacity to deliver captivating information and suggestions establishes them as knowledgeable individuals who stay attuned to current trends and advancements (Novitasari & Tuti, 2025). It can be said that KOL is someone who has the knowledge and ability that makes their opinions heard well by the wider community, where KOL is recognized and appreciated by the community (Tuti, 2025). On social media, KOLs are considered to have communication skills, and their appeal has the power to persuade the public (Zhao & Kong, 2017). KOL indicators are the center of influence on social networks, credibility and expertise in certain fields, influence on consumer behavior, sustainability and consistency in campaigns, and the number and quality of interactions with followers (Tuti, 2025)

The decision to stay is a **consumer's decision about which brands to buy** (Kotler, 2018). KOLs are considered credible figures and experts in a particular field. Recommendations from KOLs are often seen as more trustworthy than traditional advertising, because they are considered more honest and based on personal experience; with this, KOLs influence the decision to stay (Febiana, 2024)

Satisfaction is an emotional response of pleasure or disappointment that occurs upon evaluating the performance of a product against one's expectations (**Hariyanto & Rukmandiana, 2022**). KOLs often share their experiences when staying at hotels or visiting certain destinations, and provide positive reviews. **Guest satisfaction is obtained when what**

the KOL conveys is in accordance with their expectation (Chandra & Christian, 2024).
From this description, the hypothesis proposed in this study is:

- H1: The Influence of Key Opinion Leaders on Decisions
- H2: The Influence of Key Opinion Leaders on Satisfaction
- H3: The Influence of Key Opinion Leaders through Decisions on Satisfaction

Social Media Marketing is an active, long-term, indirect marketing complemented by short-term direct marketing tactics (Gunelius, 2011). Social Media Marketing is characterised as a digital marketing strategy that utilises social media platforms to advertise products, services, or brands. It entails the creation and dissemination of content on social networks to accomplish marketing and branding objectives. The objective is to enhance brand recognition, draw in new clientele, cultivate relationships with audiences, and finally, augment sales (Tuti, 2025). Social media marketing is online marketing that utilizes social media as a means of communicating with consumers (Tuten, 2008). Social media marketing can be measured through content creation, content sharing, connecting, and community building (Gunelius, 2011).

Social Media Marketing Social media provides visual information, reviews, promotions, and recommendations that help consumers evaluate hotels so that they can encourage consumers to make decisions in determining their choices. Previous research shows that Social Media Marketing has a positive influence on purchasing decisions (Azhar et al., 2023)

Social visuals on attractive media. Clear and transparent information reduces uncertainty, so that the results issued will create consumer trust and will lead to satisfaction. This is supported by previous research which states that social media marketing has a positive influence on satisfaction (Bilgin, 2018). The hypothesis proposed is:

- H4: The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Decisions
- H5: The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Satisfaction
- H6: The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Decisions on Satisfaction

The decision to stay means that a person's behavior is based on belief or self-confidence in deciding to purchase a product or service, and believes that the decision taken is the right thing (Tapparan et al., 2021). On the other hand, it can also be said that the decision to stay is **a guest's decision in choosing one of many options (Kotler et al., 2018)**. Furthermore, Karimi (2015) stated that there are several steps that guests go through before making a choice, including: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior.

Customer satisfaction is **the difference between pre-visit expectations and post-visit perceptions**, with a focus on the guest's overall experience (Pizam et al., 2016) **Rational purchasing decisions and based on sufficient information**, will tend to produce **higher satisfaction**, because **the better the consumer decision-making process, the more likely they are to feel satisfied**. towards the product or service purchased. Therefore, companies need to help consumers in making the right decisions through clear information, accurate promotions, and good service. Decisions have a positive influence on satisfaction (Khana et al., 2014). From this explanation, the hypothesis proposed is as follows:

H7: The decision to stay affects satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction that mentions two theories, namely *Disconfirmation* explains how customers compare experiences with expectations, and also Expectancy-Value shows that satisfaction is influenced by the assessment of utility and service benefits (Mill, 1990). **Satisfaction in the context of hospitality services** (including hotels) is greatly influenced by the perception of quality involving functional and emotional dimensions such as comfort, security, and tranquility (Namkung & Jang, 2008). Guest satisfaction reflects **the overall evaluation of hotel services**, where dimensions such as staff friendliness, room cleanliness, and speed of service greatly influence the level of satisfaction (Ladhari, 2009). In measuring satisfaction, several factors can be seen, including product quality, service quality, emotional factors, price, and convenience (Irawan, 2003). The framework of thinking in this study can be described as follows:

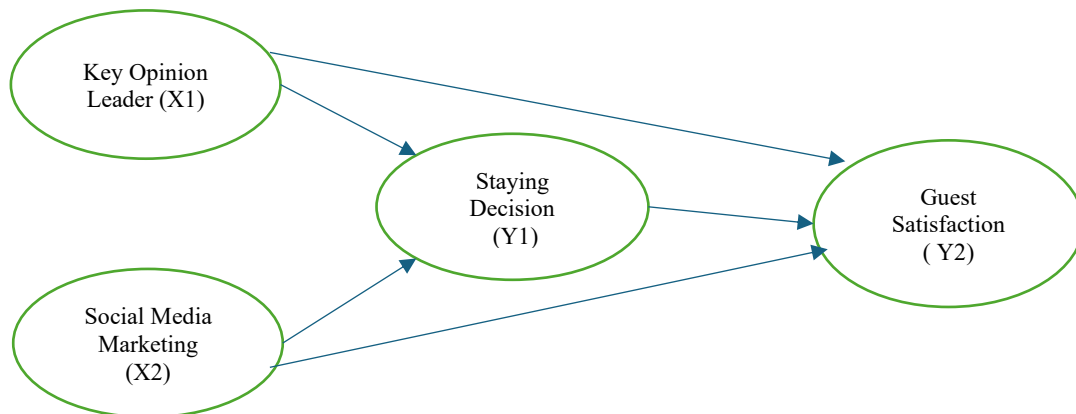


Figure 1: Thinking Framework

Methodology

The population in this study was guests in November–December 2024. By using a purposive sampling technique, namely 3-star guests in Jakarta who had visited at least twice, 200 respondents were obtained. Data collection was carried out using Google Forms. Measurements were carried out using a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with details: 5 (strongly agree), 4 (agree), 3 (neutral), 2 (disagree), and 1 (strongly disagree).

By using SEM techniques, it is possible to test the influence of several exogenous variables on several endogenous variables. The input used in SEM is a covariance matrix or correlation matrix. The stages in SEM analysis (Wijayanto, 2007) are: Performing Model specifications, Identifying Models, Estimating Models, Conducting Model Evaluations (Measurement Model Validity Test, Model Reliability Test, Suitability Test, Overall Model Test), Measurement model suitability test, Structural model test.

Results

Table 1. Respondent's Profile

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Men	100	50.0
Women	100	50.0
Age		

< 20 years	3	1.4
21 - 30 years	125	66.2
31 - 40 years	62	27.9
> 41 years	10	4.5
Occupation		
Students	4	1.8
Civil Employee	14	6.3
Private Employee	113	60.8
Entrepreneur	37	16.7
Campus student	32	14,4
Domicile		
Greater Jakarta Area	77	44.6
Jakarta	110	49.5
Out of Jabodetabek	13	5.9
Frequency of Stay		
< 2 times	145	75.2
3 – 5 times	55	24.8
Have social media IG		
Yes	194	97.3
No	6	2.7
Key Opinion Leader		
Cassandra	82	50.7
Baas Saputra	46	22.4
Adim Miftah	28	13.7
Chandra Jaya P	27	13.2
City of stay		
Jakarta	131	69.9
Bandung	36	16.4
Yogyakarta	23	10.5
Bali	7	3.2
Total	200	100

Based on the data above, it can be explained that it turns out that guests staying at the ibis Jakarta Raden Saleh hotel between male and female genders are the same with a total of 100 respondents each with a percentage of 50% each, with 125 respondents (66.2%) for the age of 21 - 30 years, and the most private employee jobs with a total of 113 respondents (60.8%), with a total of 110 respondents (49.5%) domiciled in Jakarta the most, with a visit 2 times the most 145 respondents (75.2%), with the development of digital technology 97.3% 194 respondents have social media, and from the key opinion leaders who have been used 82 respondents (50.7%) know and are familiar with Cassandra, and 131 respondents (69.9%) guests stay more often for units in Jakarta.

Measurement Model

A measurement model is a model that shows the relationship between latent variables (constructs) and indicators or observed variables used to measure the latent variables. This model is also used to assess the validity and reliability of the measurements taken.

Table 2. Measurement Model Evaluation

Variable	Indicator	Item	Loading factor	Reliability	AVE
Key Opinion Leader	1. Center of influence on social networks	X1.1	0.782	0.854	0.594
		X1.2	0.750		
		X1.3	0.777		
		X1.4	0.773		

	2.	Credibility and expertise in a particular field				
	3.	Influence on consumer behavior				
	4.	Continuity and consistency in campaigns				
	5.	The number and quality of interactions with followers				
		(Tuti, 2025)				
Social Media Marketing	1.	Content Creation	X2.1	0.808	0.867	0.621
			X2.2	0.790		
	2.	Content Sharing	X2.3	0.719		
			X2.4	0.830		
	3.	Connecting				
	4.	Community building				
		(Gunelius, 2011)				
Buying decision	1.	Need recognition	Z1.1	0.882	0.825	0.611
			Z1.3	0.720		
	2.	Information search	Z1.4	0.800		
	3.	Evaluation of alternatives				
	4.	purchase decision				
	5.	Post-purchase behavior				
		(Karimi et al., 2015)				
Stay Satisfaction	1.	Product Quality	Y1.1	0.873	0.889	0.668
			Y1.2	0.833		
	2.	Quality of Service	Y1.3	0.784		
			Y1.4	0.777		
	3.	Emotional Factors	Y1.5			
	4.	Price				
	5.	Convenience				
		(Irawan, 2002)				

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 2 reveals that the Loading Factor is more than 0.700. This means that all variables utilised in this study met the validity and reliability criteria. Additionally, Composite Reliability (CR) measures the consistency among components by utilising Cronbach's Alpha value in Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis. If the data value (CR) exceeds 0.7, the condition is deemed acceptable. A CR value exceeding 0.700 signifies strong consistency among constructs. The values range from 0.825 to 0.889. The AVE values for all variables range from 0.594 to 0.621, demonstrating compliance with AVE standards.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity-Fornell Lacker

Variable	Key Opinion Leader (KOL)	Purchase	Satisfaction	Social Media Marketing
Key Opinion Leader (KOL)	0.770			
Purchase	0.665	0.782		
Satisfaction	0.602	0.573	0.818	
Social Media Marketing	0.719	0.657	0.632	0.788

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 3 shows the values of Key Opinion Leader (0.770), Purchase (0.782), Satisfaction (0.818), and Social Media Marketing (0.788). According to these findings, each indicator statement exhibits the highest AVE for its respective component. This criterion must be fulfilled for discriminant validity to be regarded as valid. The square root of the AVE of each component is more important than any association, which establishes discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test

Variable	Purchase	Satisfaction
Key Opinion Leader	2,070	2,391
Purchase		2,034
Satisfaction		
Social Media Marketing	2,070	2,350

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 4 presents the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values utilised to assess multicollinearity. The VIF values in this study (Table 4) range from 2.034 to 2.350, indicating values below the threshold of 5.0. This finding suggests that problematic multicollinearity is absent, allowing for the continuation of further research.

Table 5. Determination Coefficient Test (R²)

Variable	R square	R-squared adjusted
Purchase	0.508	0.503
Satisfaction	0.464	0.456

Source: Authors, 2025

To ascertain the extent to which the independent factors affect the dependent variable, the coefficient of determination test is implemented. It is possible to compare the SmartPLS coefficient of determination (R²) to the SmartPLS coefficient of determination using multiple regression. The strength of the relationship between independent factors and the dependent variable is indicated by R² values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.75, representing weak, moderate, and high relationships, respectively. Table 5 reveals that the independent variables have a modest influence on the dependent variable, as indicated by a decision R² value of 0.508 and a satisfaction of 0.464. According to these findings, Key Opinion Leaders and Social Media Marketing exert an influence of 50.8% on decision-making and 46.4% on satisfaction regarding retention.

Table 6. Prediction Accuracy Test (Q2)

Variable	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Key Opinion Leader	800,000	800,000	
Purchase	600,000	421,474	0.298
Satisfaction	800,000	565,273	0.293
Social Media Marketing	800,000	800,000	

Source: Authors, 2025

The Q2 value serves as a metric for assessing prediction accuracy. If Q2 exceeds 0, the model demonstrates strong predictive accuracy; conversely, if Q2 is below 0, the model exhibits poor predictive accuracy. Table 6 indicates that the model demonstrates a high level of predictive accuracy for variables with Q2 values greater than 0, specifically ranging from 0.293 to 0.298.

Table 7. F Test

Variable	F square
Key Opinion Leader (X1) -> Purchase (Y1)	0.155
Key Opinion Leader (X1) -> Satisfaction(Y2)	0.040
Social Media Marketing (X2) -> Purchase(Y1)	0.135
Social Media Marketing (X2) -> Satisfaction (Y2)	0.090
Purchase(Y1)-> Satisfaction (Y2)	0.037

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 7 shows that the model built has a moderate influence for the Key Opinion Leader variable on decisions with a value of $f^2 = 0.155$ and its influence on satisfaction with a value of $f^2 = 0.040$, a moderate influence for the Social Media Marketing variable on satisfaction with a value of $f^2 = 0.090$ and on decisions with values of $f^2 = 0.135$ and $f^2 = 0.037$ for the decision to stay on satisfaction.

Table 8. Path Coefficient

Variable	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Results
Key Opinion Leader -> Purchase	0.398	5,038	0.000	Accepted
Key Opinion Leader -> Satisfaction	0.227	2.605	0.009	Accepted
Social Media Marketing-> Purchase	0.371	3,742	0.000	Accepted
Social Media Marketing -> Satisfaction	0.337	3.189	0.002	Accepted
Purchase -> Satisfaction	0.201	1,588	0.113	Not Accepted
Key Opinion Leader-> Purchase-> Satisfaction	0.080	1,601	0.110	Not Accepted
Social Media Marketing -> Purchase -> Satisfaction	0.075	1.198	0.232	Not Accepted

Source: Authors, 2025

Hypothesis testing was performed in SmartPLS utilising the bootstrapping approach to examine hypotheses that were either accepted or rejected. The hypothesis is accepted when the path coefficient t value exceeds 1.96 and the p -value is less than 0.05. Table 8 indicates acceptance of the hypothesis, as the t -value exceeds 1.96 and the p -value is less than 0.05. The proposed hypotheses are as follows: Key Opinion Leader \rightarrow Decision (t -value = 5.038 and p -value = 0.000), Key Opinion Leader \rightarrow Satisfaction (t -value = 2.605 and p -value = 0.009), Social Media Marketing \rightarrow Decision (t -value = 3.742 and p -value = 0.000), Social Media Marketing \rightarrow Satisfaction (t -value = 3.189 and p -value 0.002), and Decision \rightarrow Satisfaction (t -value = 1.588 and p -value = 0.0113).

Discussion

Key opinion leaders have a direct and significant influence on the decision to stay and guest satisfaction. This means that the presence of a well-known and trusted public figure on social media can shape a positive perception of potential guests towards the hotel, thus encouraging them to decide to stay. This is in line with the theory that personal recommendations are more trusted than conventional advertising. And this shows that well-known public figures (KOLs) are able to build trust and influence consumer purchasing intentions, supported by the literature that KOLs act as trusted references because they have *trustworthiness* and *expertise*. (Zhao & Kong, 2017) and KOLs have a positive influence on purchasing decisions due to psychological and social closeness with the audience (Febiana, 2024). Guest expectations are formed from the content and experiences shared by KOLs. When these expectations are met during a stay, satisfaction increases, and this is supported by literature that states KOLs positively influence consumer satisfaction due to their credibility in conveying information (Chandra & Christian, 2024).

Social Media Marketing also has a significant positive influence on the decision to stay and guest satisfaction. With attractive visuals, creative content, and ease of interaction on platforms such as Instagram, it encourages consumers to make reservations and feel satisfied with hotel services. This is in line with the literature, which states that social media marketing can increase purchase intentions because it conveys value visually and emotionally (Azhar et al., 2023) and *content creation* and *community building* are important in shaping customer decisions (Gunelius, 2011). Direct interaction, clarity of information, and the appearance of social media content affect consumer satisfaction. In line with the literature that states that visual marketing and transparency of information through social media increase positive perceptions of the brand (Bilgin, 2018)

The decision to stay does not act as a significant mediating variable between KOL and SMM on satisfaction. This means that although the decision to stay is important, the main influence on satisfaction is stronger from the perception of KOL and the quality of SMM itself. Mediation models in consumer behavior are often not strong when the experience does not match expectations (Hair et al., 2024)

Overall, this discussion reinforced the understanding that in the digital era, **collaborative strategies between hotels and KOLs**, as well as **Good social media content management** is an important factors in attracting consumers and building long-term customer satisfaction. Promotions carried out through KOLs not only influence initial perceptions but also strengthen loyalty through real experiences that match expectations. And the findings of this study provide important implications for hotel management, namely the need for a collaborative digital marketing strategy between hotels and KOLs and optimization of content management on social media. The main focus is not only on initial promotions, but also

ensuring that the guest experience during their stay is in accordance with previously built expectations. This strategy is important to increase customer loyalty and encourage positive word-of-mouth on digital platforms

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that Key Opinion Leaders have a direct and indirect impact on Stay Satisfaction and the impact on deciding to stay. Social Media Marketing influences someone to feel satisfied with what they decide to stay because it is in accordance with their expectations. This shows that there are additional elements that influence the willingness to buy again besides taste.

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