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## The role of hotel image and image congruence and their effects on repeat intention in the hotel industry

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THE ROLE OF HOTEL IMAGE AND IMAGE CONGRUENCE  
AND THEIR EFFECTS ON REPEAT INTENTION  
IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

by

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Bachelor of Arts  
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1995

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration**

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## Thesis Approval

The Graduate College  
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April 23, 20<sup>03</sup>

The Thesis prepared by

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The Role of Hotel Image and Image Congruence and their Effects on Repeat  
Intention in the Hotel Industry

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Hotel Administration

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## ABSTRACT

### **The Role of Hotel Image and Image Congruence and their Effects on Repeat Intentions in the Hotel Industry**

by

Grace Lee

Dr. Billy Bai, Examination Committee Chair  
Assistant Professor of Tourism & Convention Administration  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The primary objective of this study was to empirically determine the relationship between hotel image, image congruence and repeat intention of Las Vegas Hotels. The sample (N=211) included customers of various hotels in Las Vegas. The data was collected on the Las Vegas Strip through self-administered surveys and was analyzed using Correlation, Analysis of Variance, and Regression. As previous research indicated that a favorable image led to repeat patronage, the findings from this study determined a significant effect of hotel image and image congruence on repeat intention. Some other interesting findings included variations in the effects of hotel image and image congruence on repeat intention for three different groups of hotels and gender. The findings from this study not only support the few resources available on hotel image, but can also be a good guide for future studies on image and intention in the hotel, hospitality and services industry.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The increasing growth of the lodging industry has caused intensified competition creating an increased importance in retaining customers. Hotel companies are also faced with increasing competition from other lodging properties such as extended-stay properties, bed-and-breakfasts and campgrounds. Studies have shown that it costs six times more to attract new customers than to retain existing ones (Rosenberg and Czepiel, 1983). Why is it that people choose to purchase one product over another? What makes customers return to a hotel on a return trip? There have been numerous studies on creating customer loyalty and repeat patronage in the service industry and the image of an organization has long been recognized as a strategic variable impacting customer intentions and loyalty (Reynolds, Darden, & Martin, 1974-1975). As image has been proven to be a crucial and major concept in predicting consumer behavior (Bagozzi, 1982; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo, 1973; Scott, Schewe, and Frederick, 1978) and repeat patronage (Hunt, 1975; Mayo, 1973), many organizations are spending time, resources and effort to build strong images for their businesses (Fatt, Wei, and Yuen, 2000).

Literature reveals that research on the concept of corporate image has been devoted largely to goods-producing firms and retail stores. Studies of corporate image have attempted to determine a retail store's ideal image, investigate the relationship between customer perceptions of image and behavior, and test various scales and approaches to

measuring the image construct (Abratt, 1989; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Dowling, 1988; Golden, Albaum, and Zimmer, 1987; Golden, Gray and Smeltzer, 1987; Hildebrandt, 1988; Keaveny and Hunt, 1992; Lindquist, 1974-1975; Marks, 1976; Mazursky and Jacoby, 1986; Oxenfeldt, 1974-1975; Pessemier, 1980; Zimmer and Golden, 1988). There has also been much research on the role of destination image in travel behavior (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Font, 1997; Oppermann, 1997; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000). Although these studies have contributed to the understanding of image as it applies to tangible products and retail stores, and intangible services and destinations, little empirical research has been conducted to measure the effects of image in the hotel industry.

While Arons (1961) and Martineau (1958) proposed that store image consisted of a combination of tangible and intangible, or functional and psychological attributes, image in the hotel industry will also be analyzed through functional and psychological means. Theory and research support the idea that consumers' needs are driven by functional/utilitarian as well as by symbolic/expressive motivations (Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Katz, 1960; Mittal, 1983; Schiffman and Kanuk, 1994).

Due to the intangibility of hospitality services, the functional/utilitarian (performance-related or key benefits) measurement of hotel image will be derived from tangible cues such as physical environment, contact personnel, quality of services, corporate identity, and accessibility (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1996a). Researchers use the term functional congruity, the match between the beliefs of product utilitarian attributes and the audience's referent attributes (criteria used to evaluate the performance characteristics of a product), to measure the utilitarian components of a product (Johar and Sirgy, 1991).

The psychological or symbolic dimension will be looked at using Sirgy's (1985) image congruence theory. It proposes that consumer behavior is determined, in part, by the congruence resulting from a psychological comparison involving the product-user image and the consumer's self-concept (e.g. actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image). The symbolic image strategy involves building a personality for a product or creating an image of the product user (Ogilvy, 1963). Many researchers have conducted research about the effects of image congruence on customers' attitudes toward a brand in terms of behavioral response (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987; Sirgy and Samli, 1985). While these researchers have found that customers prefer products with images congruent with their own self-image, little research has been done to integrate the relationship between self-image and a hotel as a product, therefore, more focused studies on the effects of image congruence in the lodging industry is limited and needed.

There is a need and an importance for researchers and practitioners in the hotel industry to gain strategic insights concerning positioning and advertising research. Such studies may also serve as a basis for market segmentation. The intangibility characteristics of the hotel industry may enhance the important role of image congruence for purchasing and repurchasing a brand because customers rely highly on tangible cues (Back, 2001). Image congruence methods and measures can be used to uncover images of typical hotel customers that are most congruent with self-images of target customers. Image congruence can also be used to segment markets into groups of consumers who perceive congruence with the typical hotel customer versus those who do not (Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg et al., 1997). On the other hand, functional hotel image measures

can help hoteliers determine the type of image the hotel is portraying, what types of people are their customers, and what characteristics are prominent in creating repeat intention.

Research on different aspects of hotel image is vital, for millions of dollars are spent by hotels every year to create and support brand images, which, they hope, are consistent with the consumers' self images (Jamal and Goode, 2001). Retaining customers is economically more advantageous than seeking new customers (Reichheld and Sassar, 1990; Sheth and Parvitiyar, 1995), therefore, it is advantageous for hotels to seek ways in which will build long-term relationships with their guests.

Although theory-based research efforts have advanced marketers' understanding of hospitality consumers' purchase behavior, there are continuing demands for refining the theories and methodologies that are suitable to hospitality consumption situations (Oh and Parks, 1997). One way to refine a theory is to consider new variables that are potentially powerful in explaining as well as predicting consumer behavior (Oh, 1999).

The purpose of my research is to examine the relationships between functional hotel image and repeat intention, and image congruence and repeat intention. The purpose of this study is to seek whether a functional hotel image has a stronger effect on repeat intention or if a consumer's self-congruity is more strongly projected into repeat intention. A destination can be evaluated by focusing on the symbolic (person-like) attributes of the destination (as done in self-congruity); tourists may also evaluate destinations based on functional attributes (Sirgy and Su, 2000). LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a) state that future studies should attempt to better understand how image impacts on purchase intentions and customer loyalty towards service firms. This type of research

should also be applied to the hotel industry and therefore, the need for my study is evident.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A collaboration of LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a), Back (2001), and Sirgy et al. (1997) studies was used to determine the variables and factors shown in Figure 1. An integrative model is developed to show the effect of functional hotel image and image congruence on repeat intention. LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a) determined five significant factors of physical environment, contact personnel, quality of services, corporate identity, and accessibility that determined hotel image. Heung (1996), Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) found hotel image to be an important factor among loyal customers. Back (2001) used social and ideal social self-image congruence to test customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, while Sirgy et al. (1997) tested a new method of measuring actual self-image congruence through six studies. Sirgy (1979) also measured self-image congruence and consumer behavior using four self-concepts, which were actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image. Image-congruence is said to influence preference, purchase intention, ownership, usage, and loyalty to specific products because consumers prefer or search for products which have images compatible with their perceptions of self (Ericksen, 1996; Landon, 1974; Mehta, 1999). As repeat intention was used as the dependent variable, a positive correlation was found between image and intention in previous studies in consumer behavior and tourism (Bagozzi,

1982; Court and Lupton, 1997; Goodrich, 1978; Long and Evans, 1983; Mayo, 1973; Reibstein, Lovelock, and Dobson, 1980; Scott et al., 1978).

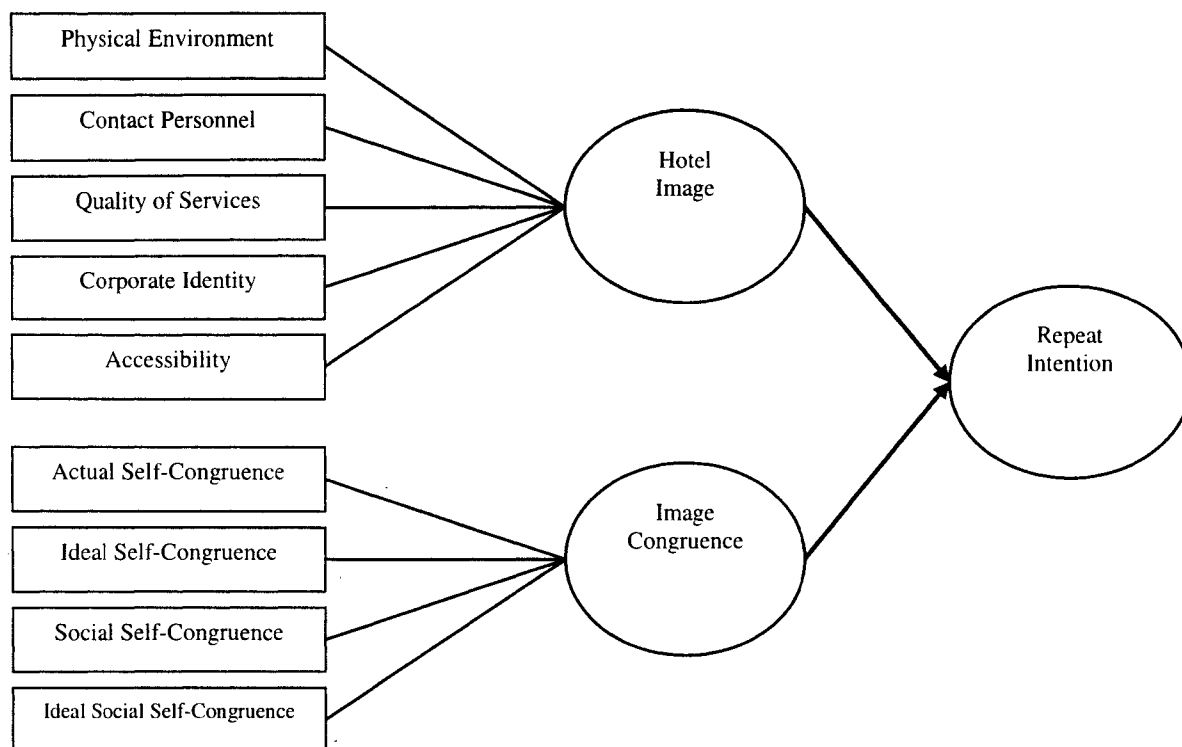


Figure 2-1: The Relationship between Hotel Image, Image Congruence, and Repeat Intention in the Hotel Industry.

*Note, Construct Variables: Independent Variables – Image Congruence, Hotel Image  
Dependent Variable – Repeat Intention*

An adaptation from the works of LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a), Back (2001), and Sirgy et al. (1997).

### Image Definition

The word image can mean different things to different people. Lawson and Baud-Bovy (1977) use image in a broad context, defining it as the expression of ‘all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, and emotional thoughts an individual or group has of a particular object or place.’ Kotler (1991) describes it as the set of beliefs, ideas, and

impressions that an individual has about an entity. Image is also believed to be the net result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings, expectations, and impressions about an object (Chon, 1990). MacInnis and Price (1987), along with Yuille and Catchpole (1977), describe image formation as a procedure by which ideas, feelings, and previous experiences with an organization are stored in memory and transformed into meaning based on stored categories. Salient facts, compatible with the customer's attitudinal structure, are later retrieved to reconstruct image when the service firm is brought to mind. Two key components of image used in this study, functional and emotional, are identified (Kennedy, 1977). The functional component is said to relate to tangible characteristics, while the emotional component is said to be associated with psychological dimensions manifested by feelings and attitudes towards an organization (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2002).

#### Corporate Image Definition

Corporate image is described as the overall impression made on the minds of the public about an organization (Barich and Kotler, 1991). LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a) describe it as the result of an aggregate process by which customers compare and contrast various attributes of companies. This term is used in a more broad sense considering an aggregate image brought forth from many sister companies. The image used in this study considers one hotel at a time and does not take into account the corporate aspect of image.

### Hotel Image Operational Definition

The association between image and the intangibility of a service company's offering is difficult to pinpoint, therefore, tangible characteristics, such as the five factors used to measure functional hotel image (physical environment, contact personnel, quality of services, corporate identity, and accessibility), are used to make image more concrete and easily perceived (Le Blanc and Nguyen 1996a). The presence of material elements in the advertising of service organizations reflects not only their strategy to make the intangible tangible, but also as an efficient way to create a more concrete and real image (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2002). A hotel in this study can be thought of as a product where customers purchase room nights. Since services are high in credence attributes, hotel image will be an accumulated perception of various experiences at the hotel where the consumer stayed. Therefore, Hotel Image in this study is a product's image formed from the physical environment, contact personnel, quality of service, corporate identity, and accessibility as mentioned above and that which will be further explained below.

### Five Factors of Hotel Image

Many researchers have attempted to investigate the relationship between customer perceptions of image and behavior and test various approaches to measuring the image construct (Abratt, 1989; Donavan and Rossiter, 1982; Dowling, 1988; Golden, Albaum, and Zimmer, 1987; Golden, Gray and Smeltzer, 1987; Hildebrandt, 1988; Keaveny and Hunt, 1992; Lindquist, 1974-1975; Marks, 1976; Mazursky and Jacoby, 1986; Oxenfeldt, 1974-1975; Pessemier, 1980; Zimmer and Golden, 1988). This study will use the five significant factors of physical environment, contact personnel, quality of service,

corporate identity, and accessibility brought forth from the study of LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a) to measure the hotel image construct.

### Physical Environment

The production and consumption of services take place simultaneously in a physical environment created by the service organization (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2002). The physical environment facilitates the performance and the communication of the service (Eiglier and Langeard, 1987). It is considered to play an instrumental role in the customers' assessment of the quality and level of service they expect (Aubert-Gamet, 1996). While design can create an atmosphere in public areas of a hotel that make it attractive to visit, the interior and exterior can add or detract from a property's image (Ransley and Ingram, 2001). Many studies have found that perceptions of the interior influence approach/avoidance behavior, time spent in the environment, and sales (Akhter, Andrews, and Durvasula, 1994; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Donovan, Rossiter, Marcoolyn et al., 1994).

Spangenberg, Crowley, and Henderson (1996) note that environmental psychology draws from the stimulus-organism response paradigm. The atmosphere is said to be the stimulus that creates a consumer's evaluation causing a behavioral response (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Mehrabian and Russell (1974) also indicate that consumers respond to an atmosphere through approach or avoidance behavior. The cues from the physical environment are deemed to influence perceptions of image due to the high credence attributes of services (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1996b). Hence, the capacity of environmental elements to create and communicate image is well

recognized, especially for service organizations (Abratt, 1989; Booms and Bitner, 1982; Kotler, 1973; Schmitt, Simonson, and Marcus, 1995).

Many researchers have categorized the physical environment in different ways. According to Bitner (1992), 'servicescapes' are crucial when communicating the company's purpose and image to customers. The author states that the physical environment is considered to have three components: ambient conditions, spatial layout, and décor. Ambient conditions include elements such as color, light, temperature, noise, music, etc., which may create physiological reactions of comfort or discomfort during a service encounter. This can encourage or discourage service consumption and influence attitudes and behaviors toward the service provider. Research in retailing also suggests that atmospherics influence store image and expectations of service and merchandise (Baker, Grewal, and Parasuraman, 1994). Spatial layout is the design and arrangement of equipment and furniture. These can be quality indicators of a firm's success or service charges. Décor creates an atmosphere for customers. It can elicit an emotional reaction also affecting attitude and behavior. Bitner (1992) supports the view that consumers may utilize external environmental cues either to categorize or to make inferences about the products and services offered.

Berman and Evans (1995) divide atmospheric elements of a store into four categories: the exterior, the general interior, the layout and design variables, and the point-of-purchase and decoration variables. Berman and Evans (1995) attempted to create an organized and logical structure of atmospheric variables thought to influence consumer behavior. This would allow managers to tailor these elements communicating a desired image to a target market. The exterior of the store is thought to be important for it is the

first set of cues seen by the consumer. This would include variables such as the marquee, entrances, building architecture, and the surrounding area. Interior variables would include variables such as flooring, lighting, temperature, cleanliness, wall textures, and colors (Berman and Evans, 1995). Layout and design included fixtures, allocation of floor space, and traffic flow, while point-of-purchase and decoration elements included posters, signs, and wall decorations (Berman and Evans, 1995).

Baker (1987) breaks the physical environment into three basic categories: ambient factors, design factors, and social factors. Ambient factors are said to be background conditions that typically draw attention only when they are absent or unpleasant. Temperature and noise levels are given as examples. Design factors are classified as either aesthetic (e.g. architecture, style, color) or functional (e.g. layout, comfort, signage). Baker (1987) includes social factors in her framework to refer to customers and service personnel. The number, appearance, and behavior of customers and employees in the service environment are said to induce an approach or avoidance behavior, depending on the service expectations of a given customer.

#### Contact Personnel

Contact personnel is composed of all employees located at the hotel's front-line and who have direct contact with customers. Research supports the notion that the interaction between customers and contact personnel influence customer retention (Bove and Johnson, 2000; Clark, 1997; Julian and Ramaseshan, 1994) and purchase intention (Klemz, 1999; Macintosh and Lockshin, 1997). A service offering is composed of two parts: service and process. The service is the result of the social interaction between client, employee, and the physical support system, while the process corresponds to the

manner in which the service is delivered to the client (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2002).

Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990) report that the human interaction component has an important effect on a customer's evaluative process with regard to the service offering.

Contact personnel are an important dimension of a service organization's image because they are generally the first point of contact in the service encounter (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2002). The behavior and attitudes of contact personnel are indicative of the level and quality of services offered by the service firm, and they exert a strong influence on customer satisfaction (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles, 1990). Employees are considered to be a mirror of the organization's values and consequently, this image may improve or negate corporate image (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2002). The contact person often epitomizes and defines the service to the consumer (Booms and Nyquist, 1981) and therefore plays a critical role in the consumption experience (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997; Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987). Poor employee performance has been linked to increased customer complaints and the likelihood of switching to a competing service (Keaveney, 1995; Lewis, 1983).

Much importance has been placed on contact personnel in a variety of industries. A key component of a retailer/customer relationship is that of the contact person (Bitner et al., 1994; Macintosh and Lockshin, 1997). Julian and Ramaseshan (1994) found that the perceptions of culture and image of a retail bank held by its customers were often based on their interactions with bank employees. The customers more often viewed the salesperson as the service itself and believed a customer's impression of the salesperson was very important in the selling of services.

Eiglier and Langeard (1987) state that the performance of contact personnel can be evaluated on three elements: appearance, competence, and behavior. The appearance of the contact personnel is a crucial element during face-to-face encounters with customers because it has a significant effect on a customer's first impression. Appearance is a combination of dress, hairstyle, make-up, and cleanliness. The competence of contact employees is derived from their expertise gained from training, experience, and the ability to communicate with customers according to procedures and standards of service delivery. The behavior of these employees is a result of their individual personality traits and their perception of the social interaction with customers (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2002).

Service can also be assessed through the responsiveness, assurance, and empathy of the contact person (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988). Responsiveness directly influences the interaction between the customer and the contact person through prompt service and the willingness to help (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Assurance influences the customer/contact person relationship through conveying respect and politeness to the customer, through the support of top management (Beatty, Mayer, Coleman et al., 1996). Empathy refers to the provision of caring and providing individualized attention to customers (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Thus, it is through the appearance and performance of contact personnel (Eiglier and Langeard, 1987), and the nature of the customer/employee interactions that take place during the service encounter, that influence the outcome of service evaluations (Gronroos, 1984; Heskett, 1987) and support in the developing of an image for a hotel.

### Quality of Services

A service offering is described as consisting of core and adjunct services (Eiglier and Langeard, 1987). The core service is related to the principal reason why the customer chooses the service firm, while adjunct services add value to the service offering. The variety and quality of service offered to customers has a direct bearing on the service firm's positioning statement and image presented. Customers tend to repurchase a service with a favorable image in the belief that it provides an assurance of high quality goods and services. LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a), as well as Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) use quality of services, as one of the attributes in measuring hotel image.

Service quality is positively related with customer retention and customer loyalty (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). Studies have been conducted showing the effects of service quality on customers' behavioral intentions (Boulding, Kalra, and Staelin, 1993; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). Perceived service quality is related with positive behavioral intentions, which could be viewed as signals of retention (Zeithaml et al., 1996). It has been defined as a global judgment or attitude relating to the superiority of a service (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). When customers' perceptions of service quality are high, the behavioral intentions are favorable, which strengthens their relationship with the organization and vice versa (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Alexandris, Dimitriadis, and Markata (2002) provide evidence that service quality dimensions were directly and positively related with purchase intentions.

The majority of research on service quality has been built around the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) methodology. This model suggests that service quality can be

measured by identifying the gaps between customers' expectations and perceptions of the performance of service. He also suggested that service quality was a multi-dimensional concept consisting of five dimensions: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. However, researchers have questioned the validity and reliability of the gap model, suggesting that measuring perceptions alone might provide a better indication of service quality than measuring the difference between expectations and perceptions (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Teas, 1993). Operational criticism has focused on the difficulties relating to conceptualizing expectations, the limited number of items within each dimension of SERVQUAL, the problems related to the double administration of the instrument (Ekinci and Riley, 1999; Williams, 1998), and the limited proportion of variance extracted by the five factors (Buttle, 1995). Some researchers (Ekinci and Riley, 1999; Williams, 1998) have suggested that the service quality dimensions are not universally applicable.

The general agreement among researchers is that service quality can be viewed at two levels. It can be viewed as an encounter quality at one level while at another level it can be seen as global in nature. The former refers to the quality of a specific transaction and the latter is seen as the accumulated effect of a firm's service over time (Teas, 1993).

#### Corporate Identity

Organizations have become more interested in the benefits that management of corporate identity might bring (van Riel, 1995) and the impact that a strong "corporate brand" might have on stakeholder loyalty (Balmer, 1995). Corporate identity is the organization's presentation of itself to its various stakeholders and the means by which it distinguishes itself from all other organizations. It is the articulation of what the

organization is, what it does, and how it does it, and is linked to the way an organization goes about its business and the strategies it adopts (Olins, 1990; Topalian, 1984).

Bernstein (1984) suggests that identity is one of the components of image in that it is associated with the personality and distinguishing features of a company. Its key elements such as company name, logo, prices charged for services, level and quality of advertising are easily recognizable by customers.

LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996b) showed that corporate identity was significant in affecting customers' evaluations. A firm's identity is considered to be an outcome of a cognitive process experienced by consumers, not only through the goods and services they consume, but also through their overall perception of the organization's philosophy and culture. Although identity and corporate image are often used interchangeably, it is stressed that corporate identity is an index of the physical and behavioral indicators conceived and controlled by a company, while corporate image is a global impression formed in the minds of customers, and is based in part on the elements that constitute corporate image (Abratt, 1989). Therefore, management seeking to influence the images held of their organization can do so through the management of corporate identity (Markwick and Fill, 1997).

#### Accessibility

"Location, location, and location" are said to be the three most important attributes that a hotel can offer (Bull, 1994). LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a) used accessibility as a factor in the measurement of hotel image. They looked at the location of the hotel and the accessibility of the parking.

Managers consider location in marketing and product strategies, for a property is wholly fixed and there may be specific advantages which one location has in access distance to certain attractions or airports. Researchers such as Arbel and Pizam (1977), and Carvell and Herrin (1990) looked at the distance from city centers and specific tourist attractions. Promotional materials often highlight and specify any perceived locational advantages (Bull, 1994).

The location of a lodging property not only includes the distance from, or access to one or more specific attractions, but it also consists of qualities such as quietness, views from rooms, and the nature of the property's surroundings (Bull, 1994). Werczberger and Berechman (1988) also proposed that location consists of accessibility, the characteristics of the property's site itself, and endogenous neighborhood factors. Wind, Green, Shifflet, and Scarbrough (1989) included distance from shops, sightseeing attractions and highways as the sum of location in hotel product feasibility. A number of studies on bank selection also showed convenience of location as a main element (Lewis, 1982a & b; Lewis and Bingham, 1991; Yue and Tom, 1994).

Research in hospitality has examined the role of location as a determinant of consumer choice. Many researchers have recognized location as an important attribute in a consumer's decision set (Cadotte and Turgeon, 1988; Knutson, 1988; Lewis and Nightingale, 1991; Mayo, 1974; McLeary and Weaver, 1992). Saleh and Ryan (1992) found convenient parking to be one of the determining factors of selecting hotels.

### Measurement of Hotel Image

LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a) measured the five factors of hotel image (physical environment, contact personnel, quality of services, corporate identity, and accessibility) on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The midpoints were not labeled. Five similar factors of corporate image: corporate identity, reputation, service offering, physical environment, and contact personnel, were measured in another study (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1996b) using a 7-point Likert-type scale that varied from very unfavorable effect on image (1) to very favorable effect on image (7). Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which each item affected negatively or positively on the image projected by the financial institution. Furthermore, Nguyen and LeBlanc (2002) used only the factors of physical environment, and contact personnel to measure corporate image on a 7-point Likert-type scale with anchors of strongly unfavorable (1) to strongly favorable (7). They found that both variables had a strong influence on image. The more positive the evaluation of contact personnel and physical environment, the more favorable image was found to be.

### Self-Concept/Self-Image

There is much ambiguity in the term self-concept (or self-image) as it is used in consumer behavior. Many scholars denote self-concept to mean the “totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (Rosenberg, 1979, p.7). Self-concept has been treated as a single variable or as the perception of oneself (Birdwell, 1968; Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Grubb and Stern, 1971). As a multidimensional perspective took place, the self-concept variable began to refer to more than one type of self-perspective. Self-concept researchers used four aspects of self-

concept (actual, ideal, social, ideal-social) to explain and predict consumer behavior (Sirgy, 1982). Actual self-image is how consumers see themselves. Ideal self-image (or “expressive self”, “idealized image” or “desired self”) is how consumers would like to see themselves. Social self-image (or “looking-glass self” or “presenting self”) is how consumers believe they are seen by significant others and ideal-social self-image (or “desired social self”) is how consumers would like to be seen by significant others (Sirgy, 1982).

### Image-Congruence

Marketing scholars and researchers have long theorized that a product-user image interacts with a consumer’s self-concept creating self-image congruence (Sirgy et al., 1997). Image congruence in this study will use Sirgy’s (1985) definition as the match between a self-concept (actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image) and an image of the typical customer of a service brand. Gardner and Levy (1955) initiated the image congruence concept, stating that consumers prefer products with images that are congruent with their self-image. As purchase and consumption are good vehicles for self-expression, consumers often buy products or brands that are perceived to be similar to their own self-concept (Graeff, 1996). The perceptions of self are also closely related with the personality in the sense that individuals tend to buy brands whose personalities closely correspond to the individuals’ own self-images (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000). It is said that consumers’ personalities can be inferred from the brands they use, their attitudes towards different brands and the meanings brands have for them (DeChernatony and McDonald, 1997). The consumption

of some products can reveal some significant aspect of a person while other products do not reveal anything significant about the user's personality (Sirgy, 1979).

Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991) stated that buy versus no-buy decisions are influenced by social value in that consumers perceive various product classes as either congruent or incongruent with the norms of the reference groups to which they belong or aspire. The images of products and brands are also thought to have various symbolic meanings. It is the symbolic meanings of the products and brands that are similar to the self-concept, which are thought to maintain or enhance the self (Dolich, 1969). Previous research indicates that self-image congruity affects consumer product preferences and purchase intentions (Ericksen, 1996; Mehta, 1999). The greater the match between self-concept and the product-user image, the greater the likelihood consumers will consume that product (Sirgy et al., 2000).

Researchers have conceptualized image congruence in many different ways. Some have studied the effects of actual and ideal image congruence (Dolich, 1969; Ericksen, 1996; Graeff, 1996; Quester et al., 2000; Ross, 1971; Sirgy, 1985; Stern, Bush, and Hair, 1977), while others have focused their research on social and ideal-social image congruence (Back, 2001; Sirgy and Samli, 1985). There were also those who looked at congruence concepts one at a time (Birdwell, 1968; Jamal and Goode, 2001).

#### Actual Self-Image Congruence

Actual self-image congruence is the match between the actual self-image concept of how consumers see themselves relative to the typical customer of a service brand (Sirgy and Samli, 1985). Actual self-image is part of what psychologists refer to as the private self. The private self involves those images that one has of oneself about which one feels

protective (Sirgy et al., 2000). In the context of consumer goods, many studies have sought to demonstrate that consumers who prefer a product see themselves in ways consistent with the product-user image (Belch and Landon, 1977; Bellenger, Steinberg, and Stanton, 1976; Birdwell, 1968; Martin and Bellizzi, 1982; Ross, 1971).

#### Ideal Self-Image Congruence

Ideal self-image congruence is the match between the ideal self-image concept of how consumers would like to see themselves relative to the typical customer of a service brand (Sirgy and Samli, 1985). Ideal self-image is also part of the private self. A consumer may not like their self-perception and may want to perceive himself or herself in a different way. If an image of a product or brand matches a consumer's ideal self-image, purchasing that product would boost their self-esteem (Sirgy and Su, 2000). Several studies in the context of consumer goods demonstrated consumers expressing preference for particular brands, where the brand users were consistent with how they would like to see themselves (Ericksen and Sirgy, 1989, 1992; Malhotra 1981, 1988).

#### Social Self-Image Congruence

Social self-image congruence is the match between the social self-image concept of how consumers believe others see them, relative to the typical customer of a service brand (Sirgy and Samli, 1985). Social self-image may be consistent or inconsistent with the actual and ideal self. Social self-image is part of the public self, not the private self (Sirgy et al, 2000). Several studies in the consumer goods context have shown that product preference is directly related to the degree of fit between a consumer's social self-image and the product-user image (Ericksen and Sirgy, 1989, 1992; Malhotra, 1981, 1988).

### Ideal Social Self-Image Congruence

Ideal social self-image congruence is the match between the ideal social self-image concept of how consumers would like to be seen by others, relative to the typical customer of a service brand (Sirgy and Samli, 1985). Ideal social self-image is also part of the public self. People are motivated to do things that would earn approval from others (Sirgy et al., 2000). In the context of consumer goods, Ericksen and Sirgy (1989, 1992) have demonstrated that product preference and ownership is related to the degree of fit between the product's user image and a consumer's ideal social self-image.

### Self-Concept Motives Mediating Self-Congruity

Figure 2-1 shows the mediating effects of self-concept motives on self-congruity and retail patronage. Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) showed that as the self-concept is of value to an individual, then behavior is directed towards its protection and enhancement. Actual self-congruity is said to affect purchase motivation through the self-consistency motive. The self-consistency motive is a motivational tendency that drives consumers to act in ways consistent with their actual self-image (Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Sirgy, 1986; Sirgy, 1990; Sirgy, Johar, and Claiborne, 1992). Inconsistency results when a consumer's perceived behavior conflicts with his/her perception of who he/she truly is. For example, a blue-collar worker may feel discomfort at an upscale restaurant due to the inconsistency of patronizing a place that is not reflective of his/her true self.

Ideal congruity is said to affect purchase motivation through the self-esteem motive. The self-esteem motive refers to the inclination one feels to act in ways that are conducive to assert and/or strengthen self-regard. The ideal self motivates behavior

through the need for self-esteem (Evans, 1968; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Sirgy, 1986; Sirgy et al., 1992). A consumer might have a self-perception that is not what he/she wants to be. Patronizing a store or service that has an image consistent with a consumer's ideal self-image helps him/her feel good about himself/herself (Sirgy et al., 2000). One of Greenwald's (1989) strategies to maintain self-esteem directly related to the self had to do with value expressive functions associated with the private self, where self worth was achieved by striving to meet internalized standards.

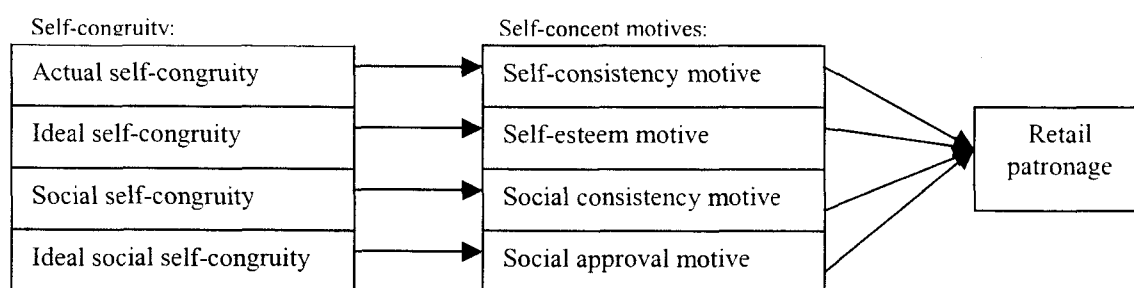


Figure 2-1: The mediating effects of self-concept motives on consumer behavior

Source: Sirgy et al. (2000). Retail environment, self-congruity, and retail patronage: an integrative model and a research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 49, 127-138.

Social self-image influences behavior through the “social consistency motive”(Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Sirgy et al., 1992). People are motivated to maintain an image others have of them. Acting in ways inconsistent with how others see them creates discomfort.

The ideal social self-image affects people's behavior through the “social approval motive”(Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Sirgy et al., 1992). Because ideal social self-image relates to how consumers would like to be seen by others, they are motivated to consume things that will earn approval from others. Actions that are inconsistent with the ideal

social self-image lead to social disapproval. Therefore, people tend to act consistent with their ideal social self-image to gain positive reactions from significant others. For example, imagine a rich, upscale shopper who does not want to be seen in a discount store. This consumer feels that others will think of him/her less if seen in the discount store. Therefore, this upscale shopper only chooses to shop at popular stores where he/she feels, represent his/her ideal social self-image (Sirgy et al., 2000). Self-concept is enhanced by positive responses from significant others reinforcing the behavior (Hogg, Cox, and Keeling, 2000). Social adjustment functions associated with the public self or collective self, seek to achieve self-worth by securing positive evaluations from significant others (Greenwald, 1989).

#### Actual Self-Image Congruity vs. Ideal Self-Image Congruity

Sirgy's (1986) self-congruity theory proposes that the congruence resulting from a psychological comparison involving the product-user image and the consumer's self-concept (e.g., actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, ideal social self-image) determines consumer behavior. This psychological comparison can be categorized as positive or negative self-congruity. Table 2-1 shows four conditions that arise from the relationship between self-image and product image perceptions: positive self-congruity, positive self-incongruity, negative self-congruity, and negative self-incongruity. These different congruity states influence purchase motivation differently (Back, 2001). To act in ways inconsistent with the self would create conflict and avoidance behavior (Sirgy, 1985).

Table 2-1  
The effects of self-esteem and self-consistency motives on purchase motivation

Self-Image	Product Image	Actual /Product Image Congruence	Self-Esteem Motivation	Self-Consistency Motivation	Purchase Motivation
Positive	Positive	Positive self-congruence	Self-Esteem Motivation (Approach)	Self-Consistency Motivation (Approach)	Approach
Negative	Positive	Positive self-incongruence	Self-Esteem Motivation (Approach)	Self-Inconsistency Motivation (Avoidance)	Conflict
Negative	Negative	Negative self-congruence	Self-Abasement Motivation (Avoidance)	Self-Consistency Motivation (Approach)	Conflict
Positive	Negative	Negative self-incongruence	Self-Abasement Motivation	Self-Inconsistency Motivation	Avoidance

Source: Sirgy (1982). Self-concept in consumer behavior: a critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 290.

A positive self-congruity condition arises when a consumer feels motivated to purchase a positively valued product to maintain a positive actual self-image. A positive self-incongruity condition arises when one tries to enhance oneself by approaching an ideal self-image. Negative self-congruity and self-incongruity conditions occur when a consumer will be motivated to avoid purchasing a negatively valued product to avoid self-abasement. Whether image is positive or negative, self-consistency predicts that a consumer will be motivated to purchase a product with an image congruent with himself/herself (positive and negative self-congruity conditions). This enables consistency and avoids dissonance generated from behavior/self-image belief discrepancies (positive and negative self-incongruity conditions) (Sirgy, 1982). The

more similar a consumer's self-image is to the brand's image, the more favorable their evaluations of that brand should be (Graeff, 1996).

#### Social Self-Image Congruity vs. Ideal Social Self-Image Congruity

Sirgy et al. (1985) concluded that store loyalty is a direct function of the linear combination of approach and avoidance tendencies resulting from both social approval and social consistency motivation. Therefore, Table 2-2 shows that positive social congruence predicts high store loyalty and negative social incongruence predicts low store loyalty. Both positive social incongruence and negative social congruence result in moderate store loyalty.

Table 2-2  
Effects of social congruence and ideal social congruence on store loyalty

Social congruence	Ideal-social congruence	Affective social congruence	Social approval motivation	Social consistency motivation	Store loyalty
High	High	Positive social congruence	High	High	High
Low	High	Positive social incongruence	High	Low	Moderate
High	Low	Negative social congruence	Low	High	Moderate
Low	Low	Negative social incongruence	Low	Low	Low

Source: Sirgy, M.J., Samli, A.C., Bahn, K. & Vrvoglís, T. (1985). Affective social congruity and store patronage. In N. Malhotra (Eds.) *Developments in Marketing Science*, 9, 292. Atlanta, GA: Academy of Marketing Science.

### Measurement of Image-Congruence

The traditional method of measuring self-image congruence asked subjects their perception of the product user image and the subject's perception of his or her self-image given image attributes such as friendly, modern, youthful, etc. Self and product-user image dimensions were measured separately using semantic differential scales or Likert-type scales (Ericksen and Sirgy, 1989; Sirgy and Samli, 1985).

The traditional measure of self-image congruence has been subject to questionable validity and a number of limitations. Therefore, Sirgy et al. (1997) compare the predictive validity of the traditional method with a new method of measuring image congruence. The three key problems with the traditional method were: (1) the use of discrepancy scores, (2) the possible use of irrelevant images, and (3) the use of the compensatory decision rule.

A discrepancy or ratio score is mathematically computed for each image dimension and then summed altogether. But a number of researchers criticize discrepancy scores as being unreliable, having systematic correlations with their components, having questionable construct validity, and restricting variance (Johns, 1981; Peter, Churchill, and Brown, 1993). The traditional method combines two psychological constructs mathematically when a more direct measure should be taken. Another pertinent problem with the traditional method is the use of predetermined images. Using the traditional method forces subjects to indicate congruence or incongruence with images that they may not associate with the product. Subjects should be able to conjure up their own images that are most relevant to him or her. The last stated problem refers to the compensatory decision rule and the questionable validity of integrating self-congruity scores across all

image dimensions additively to form a judgment. It is said that the overall predictiveness of self-image congruence measures can be increased using global instead of dimension based-cues, as was proved in six studies involving different independent and dependent variables (Sirgy et al., 1997).

The new method takes into account the shortcomings mentioned above. It measures the self-congruity experience directly, not by combining product-user image and self-image ratings using a ratio index. The new method allows subjects to conjure up their own product-user images, rather than giving a predetermined set of image dimensions. The new method also guides subjects to rate their self-congruity experience holistically (Sirgy et al., 1997).

The new method of self-image congruence was applied in the tourism and product brand context (Sirgy et al., 1997) and modified to the hotel context (Back, 2001) using four statements to measure image congruence with a 7-point Likert-type scale. The use of the new method allowed consumers to conjure up their own image of the hotel and guided them to indicate their global perception of degree of match, or mismatch, between how they saw themselves compared to the typical hotel patron (Sirgy et al., 2000). Jamal and Goode (2001) also adopted the new method in measuring image congruence in their study on brand preference and satisfaction in the jewelry market using a five-point Likert type scale.

### Intention

Repeat or purchase intention is one dimension of behavioral intention (Zeithaml et al., 1996), that when properly measured, could to a large degree, predict actual behavior

(Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Although there is often a substantial gap between people's intentions and their subsequent behavior (Bagozzi, 1992; Orbell and Sheeran, 1998), evidence supports intention to be a reliable predictor of behavior (Sheeran, 2002). According to Ajzen (1991), "Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform a behavior" (p. 181). Intentions can be thought of as currently planned actions to be taken at some future point (Malhotra, 1993). Repurchase intentions are the consumers' stated belief that they will/will not repurchase a particular type of service, or a particular brand (Boulding et al., 1993).

An understanding of the concepts of hotel image and image congruence is essential to identify the critical elements affecting customer's purchase experience as well as post-purchase behavior. A favorable corporate image is considered essential as the prime contributor to repeat patronage (Hunt, 1975). Hoteliers, need to understand fully what hotel attributes are most likely to influence customers' choice intentions (Richard and Sundaram, 1993). Failure to pay attention to hotel attributes considered most influential in choice intention by customers may lead to negative evaluation of the hotel, eventually reducing the chance of repeat patronage by the customers to the same hotel (Choi and Chu, 2001). As a predictor of subsequent purchase, a number of studies have supported store image as an important component of store patronage (Nevin and Houston, 1980). More specifically, Buckley (1991) found a link between store image and intention to purchase a product. Service quality, satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, and loyal employees are some of the other ways through which retention and behavior intention

have been studied (Reichheld, 1996; Turnball and Wilson, 1989; Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996).

Self-image congruence has also been used to explain and predict consumer behavior such as product use, product ownership, brand attitude, purchase motivation, purchase intention, brand choice, store preference, store loyalty, etc. (Back, 2001; Birdwell, 1968; Claiborne and Sirgy, 1990; Jamal and Goode, 2001; Ross, 1971; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy, 1985). Landon (1974) hypothesized self-image to be significantly correlated with purchase intentions and sought to clarify the relative importance of self and ideal self-image to consumers' purchase intentions. Individuals with different levels of self-image congruence are likely to exhibit differences in the way they choose a brand or make purchase intentions (Mehta, 1999). Eriksen (1996) also confirmed that a relationship existed between self-image congruity and intention to purchase.

#### Measurement of Repeat Intention

Chan (1998) and Tam (2000) measured guests' relevant behavioral intentions with a seven-point Likert scale. An empirical investigation on service quality dimensions and behavioral intentions used a seven point Likert-type scale, ranking from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1) (Alexandris et al., 2002). Zeithaml et al. (1996) also used a seven point Likert-type scale, ranking from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1) to measure purchase intention.

### Summary

As consumers' needs are driven by functional and psychological means (Martineau, 1958; Arons, 1961), an integrative model was developed to show the effects of hotel image and image congruence on repeat intention. The factors of hotel image, which comprised of physical environment, contact personnel, quality of services, corporate identity, and accessibility, were found to play an important role in the formation of hotel image. Studies also showed that consumers purchase products and services with images that are congruent with self-images they have (actual, social image) or those that they desire to have (ideal, ideal social image). This was reflected through different motives, such as self and social consistency, self-esteem, and the social approval motive. These motives are thought to mediate the effects of image congruence on repeat intention. As a full understanding of functional and symbolic hotel attributes are needed to see what hotel attributes are most likely to influence customers' choice intentions (Richard and Sundaram, 1993), the methods used to study these variables are also very worthy of discussion.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods used in this study to test the following hypothesis listed below. An explanation of the sampling, questionnaire design, instrument development, and data analysis is given in this chapter. The primary objective of this study was to test the relationship between hotel image and image congruence measures on repeat intention.

#### Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between hotel image and repeat intention.

H2: There is a significant relationship between image congruence and repeat intention.

#### Sampling

Tinsley and Tinsley (1987) suggested a ratio of about five to ten subjects per item, therefore, this study collected data from a total of 230 customers who were currently staying at a hotel in Las Vegas. Of the 230 participants, 211 of the questionnaires collected were usable. 19 questionnaires were removed due to incompleteness. Data was collected during a four-day span in mid-March 2003. The questionnaire was distributed on the Las Vegas Strip sidewalk, in front of the Bellagio fountains. People who waited to see the fountain show were asked to participate in the survey.

### Questionnaire Design

The primary means of data collection was by self-administered surveys. The surveys were accompanied by a cover letter explaining the nature of the study, their need for participation and their right to decline in the participation at any time. Las Vegas key chains and decks of cards were used as incentives providing potential subjects with additional motivation to participate.

### Instrument Development

A self-administered questionnaire (see Appendix A) was developed from previous studies (Back, 2001; LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1996a; Sirgy et al., 1997) with similar objectives. The questionnaire was composed of 36 questions in total including demographics. The first couple of questions asked about the customer's hotel and length of stay. The next part consisted of questions regarding actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self-image congruence. The third part was designed to measure hotel image using four factors of physical environment, contact personnel, quality of services, and accessibility. The survey then went on to ask respondents the likelihood of returning to the hotel, and finally, demographic information was gathered to describe the sample of respondents. To minimize order bias, the questions were arranged in two different ways. Half of the surveys began with image congruence questions and the other half began with hotel image questions. The items used to measure the relationships between hotel image, image congruence, and repeat intention will be described in more detail.

### Hotel Image

Hotel Image was measured using 18 items brought forth from a previous study by LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a). Hotel Image is the overall impression made on the minds of customers through the emotional component manifested by feelings and attitudes towards the hotel. These feelings and attitudes were derived from individual experiences with the hotel from the four attributes below, which constitute functional indicators of hotel image. A 7-point Likert type scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” was used for all questions in this section. (Refer to Appendix A for survey).

### Physical Environment

As mentioned above, Nguyen and LeBlanc (2002) had stated that the production and consumption of services took place in a physical environment created and controlled by a service organization. The physical environment had three components: ambient conditions, spatial layout, and décor and orientation signals (Bitner, 1992). Questions such as “The hotel permits me to relax during my stay” (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1996a) were asked.

### Contact Personnel

The performance of contact personnel can be evaluated on appearance, competence, and behavior (Eiglier and Langeard, 1987). Questions such as “Employees appear to be well trained for their positions” (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1996a) were asked.

### Quality of services

Service quality and service values are two forms of service evaluation having an impact on corporate image (Barich and Kotler, 1991). The greater the value thought to be received from a purchase, the stronger the image of the firm. Questions such as “The

food in the hotel restaurants is of good quality” and “The service in the hotel restaurants is good” (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1996a) were asked to measure image.

#### Accessibility

Accessibility was used to measure hotel image through questions such as “the parking at the hotel is easily accessible” and “the hotel is well located” (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1996a).

#### Image Congruence

Image congruence is the match or mismatch of one or more self-concepts with an image of the typical customer of a service brand. There are four types of congruence: actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self-congruence (Sirgy and Su, 2000). Image congruence was subjective in that it was measured by directly asking respondents questions regarding their perception of the match or mismatch between their self-concept and the typical customer of the hotel where they stayed, rather than using the old method, which asked about the image of the typical customer of the hotel and their self concept separately. All image congruence questions were measured using a 7-point Likert type scale.

#### Repeat Intention

A 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “not very likely” to “very likely” was used to measure the likelihood that the customer would return to the hotel in the next two years. A short-term time frame was given to more accurately measure the likeliness of returning to the hotel.

### Demographic Information

The final section of the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions such as, gender, age, travel party, purpose of stay, number of times in Las Vegas, ethnicity, and household income. The answer choices were mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive.

### Test for Content Validity

The most basic form of content validity is face validity and refers to how the instrument appears to measure the concepts. If the measurement instrument adequately covers the most important aspects of the construct that is being measured, it has content validity (Churchill, 1996). Sixteen graduate students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and five faculty members considered experts in the study's research field, provided assistance in modifying and organizing the survey instrument. Wording, layout, and comprehensibility were revised on the questionnaire. Questions having to do with corporate identity were removed due to the fact that most customers of the Las Vegas hotel industry would not know the corporate standing for each hotel due to magnitude and pervasiveness of the industry.

### Pilot Study

Before the questionnaire was finalized, it was pre-tested on a small sub-sample of the population (N=30). The questionnaire was pre-tested on the Las Vegas strip in the same fashion that the actual questionnaire would be administered. It was circulated to 30 people who were staying or had recently stayed at a Las Vegas Hotel. Revisions having

to do with efficacy and clarity of the questionnaire were made based on the recommendations of the pilot testers.

### Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 10.0 was used in the data analysis. Appropriate descriptive analyses were performed on all the factors of hotel image, image congruence, and repeat intention to understand the characteristics of the sample and to compare means (M) and standard deviations (SD).

Without evidence of reliability, interpretation of results is highly suspect (Cronbach, 1951). Therefore, reliability tests were conducted to assess the quality of the data and cronbach's alpha was computed to measure internal consistency and the consistency of the responses to all the items in the survey.

The data was analyzed using Correlation, ANOVA, and Regression. Correlation was used to find the relationships between the variables determined. ANOVA was used to investigate any differences between identified groups. The hypotheses were tested for significance using multiple regressions. Multiple regressions were used with repeat intention as the dependent variable and hotel image and image congruence as the independent variables. R-square showed how much of the variance was explained by the regression model. The closer the R-square value was to 1, the better the model explained the behavior. The beta coefficients were used to compare the effects of the variables on repeat intention. All data was edited for omission, legibility, and consistency and coded for the transfer of data to the SPSS program.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

The study's research findings are presented in this chapter along with an analysis of the data. Comparisons and support is also given through major research studies provided in the literature review. First, a descriptive analysis and profile of participants is presented. Second, results of the factor analysis and reliability tests are reported to assure overall data quality. Correlation, analysis of variance, and multiple regressions are then used to analyze the data and last, a summary of the major findings from this study is presented.

#### Data Description

The demographic data collected from the survey is presented in Table 4-1. It shows that approximately half the respondents were male (43.1%) and half were female (56.9%). The major age group was 20-29 years of age (53.1%), followed by 30-39 years of age (17.5%). The majority of the respondents were Caucasian (74.4%). The most frequent level of household income was \$80,001 and above (33.6%), while 20% had levels below \$20,000.

Table 4-2 shows the travel characteristics of the participants, such as the type of hotel that was stayed at in Las Vegas. The majority of respondents lodged at hotels with a two or three diamond rating (66.4%), while about 23% stayed at four or five diamond rated

Table 4-1  
Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Number	Percent
Gender:		
Male	91	43.1
Female	120	56.9
Total	211	100.0
Age:		
Below 20	12	5.7
20-29	112	53.1
30-39	37	17.5
40-49	29	13.7
50-59	16	7.6
60 and above	5	2.4
Total	211	100.0
Ethnicity:		
Caucasian	157	74.4
African American	5	2.4
Native American	3	1.4
Hispanic	18	8.5
Asian Pacific	16	7.6
European	7	3.3
Canadian	1	.5
Other	2	.9
Missing	2	.9
Total	211	100.0
Income:		
\$20,000 and under	43	20.4
\$20,001-\$35,000	19	9.0
\$35,001-\$50,000	29	13.7
\$50,001-\$65,000	23	10.9
\$65,001-\$80,000	22	10.4
\$80,001 and over	71	33.6
Missing	4	1.9
Total	211	100.0

Table 4-2  
Travel Characteristics of Respondents

	Number	Percent
Hotel of stay by AAA rating:		
0-1 ◇	22	10.4
2-3 ◇	140	66.4
4-5 ◇	49	23.2
Total	211	100.0
Number of nights:		
1 night	15	7.1
2 nights	45	21.3
3 nights	56	26.5
4 nights	62	29.4
5 nights	15	7.1
6 nights	8	3.8
7 nights	7	3.3
10 nights	2	.9
Missing	1	.5
Total	210	100.0
Number of People in Travel Party:		
alone	0	0
1-2 people	85	40.3
3-4 people	71	33.6
5 or more people	55	26.1
Total	211	100.0
Purpose of visit:		
Business	7	3.3
Vacation	191	90.5
Other	12	5.7
Missing	1	.5
Total	211	100.0
Number of times in Vegas for past 2 yrs:		
First time	81	38.4
Once before	40	19.0
Twice	40	19.0
Three times	13	6.2
Four times	9	4.3
Five times	6	2.8
Six times	6	2.8
Ten or more times	5	2.4
Missing	11	5.2
Total	211	100.0

hotels (see Appendix B for hotel quality rating criteria, see Appendix C for all hotels tested). The respondents' average stay was about 3 nights. About 40% had 1-2 travel companions while about 26% had over 5 people travel with them. The main purpose of visit was for vacation (90.5%) and the majority of the respondents had come to Las Vegas for the first time (38.4%).

### Factor Analysis

Utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 10.0, a principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation was performed on all factors for hotel image and image congruence. Factor analysis was used to condense the information contained in these attributes and to confirm the notion that distinct dimensions existed for each factor. The factor loadings and eigenvalues for each component, are shown in Table 4-3 and Table 4-4. Overall, about 72% of the total variance was explained for the five components. Most variables loaded heavily on one factor reflecting minimal overlap and independently structured factors, except for one item in accessibility. This item (.545) loaded with the physical environment factor. Because of this, and due to the low reliability (.334) of the accessibility variable shown below, the accessibility items were removed in the analysis. This is relevant due to the nature of the hotel industry in Las Vegas. It was shown through the survey that most customers who visited Las Vegas flew and did not drive. A car is not really needed on the Las Vegas strip due to the proximity of all the hotels and the availability of transportation. Therefore the item measuring the accessibility of parking was not relevant. Also, because most hotels identified in the study were located on the strip and were in walking distance of each other, the item measuring the location of the hotel was not an important factor in the measurement of

Table 4-3  
Factor Analysis of Hotel Image

Factor Name	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Percent of Variance	Cronbach Alpha
Contact Personnel		4.081	16.326	.9045
Employees are courteous.	.773			
Employees are neat in appearance	.623			
Employees offer prompt service.	.750			
Employees are always will to help guests.	.803			
Employees appear to be well trained for their positions.	.815			
Employees are capable of satisfying my needs.	.785			
The hotel's reservation system is efficient.	.555			
Physical Environment		1.677	6.709	.8832
The rooms are well furnished.	.704			
The interior of the hotel is well decorated.	.739			
The rooms are comfortable.	.826			
The interior of the hotel well represents its class.	.710			
The hotel permits me to relax during my stay.	.695			
Quality of Service		1.107	4.426	.8447
The food in the hotel restaurants is of good quality.	.836			
The service in the hotel restaurants if good.	.737			
The hotel offers high quality services.	.533			
Accessibility		1.063	4.254	.3338
The parking at the hotel is easily accessible.	.870			
The hotel is well located.	.545			

Table 4-4  
Factor Analysis of Image Congruence

Factor Name	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Percent of Variance	Cronbach Alpha
Image Congruence		9.988	39.953	.9521
The typical guest of this hotel has a similar image with how I see myself.	.767			
The typical guest of this hotel has similar personality characteristics as I have.	.840			
The typical guest of this hotel has a similar image with how I would like to see myself.	.857			
The typical guest of this hotel has similar personality characteristics as I would like to have.	.892			
The typical guest of this hotel has a similar image with how other people see me.	.858			
The typical guest of this hotel has similar personality characteristics that other people see me as having.	.872			
The typical guest of this hotel has a similar image with how I would like other people to see me.	.837			
The typical guest of this hotel is the kind of person I would like others to see me as.	.854			

repeat intention. In addition, all eight items of image congruence loaded on one factor, therefore, all eight items were used to measure one factor of image congruence.

### Reliability Test

A reliability test was used to measure the consistency through a coefficient alpha. A coefficient alpha tests the internal consistency of the items in relation to a single trait within the instrument (Nunnally, 1978). The closer the coefficient is to 1.00, the more internally consistent and reliable the measure (Vogt, 1999). The alpha coefficients are summarized in Table 4-3 and Table 4-4. Contact personnel registered seven items yielding an alpha coefficient of .9045, while physical environment with five items delivered an alpha of .8832, quality of service dispersed an alpha of .8447 with three items and accessibility produced an alpha of .3338 with two items. All alpha coefficients for the data exceeded the minimum standard for reliability of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), except for accessibility. The coefficient alpha of accessibility (.3338) was very low and thus, as said above, the accessibility variable was removed. All other results indicated that the measures were highly reliable for measuring each construct.

### Correlation

The correlation between intention, image congruence, contact personnel, physical environment, and quality of services was assessed for the entire sample in Table 4-5. A correlation coefficient of .30 or higher was used as a criterion for selecting the predictor variables to be included in the statistical analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996).

Correlations ranging from a minimum of .346 to a maximum of .643 were revealed. All the variables were significantly correlated, as indicated by p-values less than .001.

Image congruence, physical environment, contact personnel, and quality of services of hotels were all positively correlated with repeat intention in descending order. Quality of service was highly correlated with physical environment ( $\gamma = .643$ ) along with physical environment and contact personnel ( $\gamma = .621$ ). These findings indicated that an increased likelihood of repeat intention was associated with higher values of image congruence and positive experiences with physical environment, contact personnel, and quality of services.

Table 4-5  
Correlations

	INTEN	IC	CP	PE	QS
INTEN	1.000				
IC	.506***	1.000			
CP	.381***	.346***	1.000		
PE	.572***	.386***	.621***	1.000	
QS	.449***	.337***	.617***	.643***	1.000
Mean	4.84	4.017	5.439	5.658	5.276

Note. INTEN: Repeat Intention IC: Image Congruence CP: Contact Personnel PE: Physical Environment  
QS: Quality of Services

\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was conducted to see the differences in hotel image factors and image congruence between Group 1 (0-1 diamond-rated hotels), Group 2 (2-3 diamond-rated hotels), and Group 3 (4-5 diamond-rated hotels). The hotels were categorized in this manner because respondents had stayed at 36 different hotels (see Appendix C) in Las Vegas and to analyze the differences of each hotel would be a tedious process. The assumptions for ANOVA, such as independence, normality, and equality of variance, were met.

Given the significant F-ratios, tests were performed to evaluate the differences between three categories of diamond rated hotels. All factor items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). As shown in Table 4-6, the means for all four factors of image congruence, contact personnel, physical environment, and quality of services were significantly different across the three groups of hotels. A significant difference was shown between the factors of hotel image and the factors of image congruence. Image congruence showed significance at the .05 level, while contact personnel, physical environment, and quality of services showed significance at the .001 level.

To assess which groups of diamond-rated hotels showed significant differences, Scheffe's post-hoc test was conducted for each significant factor. The Scheffe test is considered the most conservative post hoc test statistic (Cramer, 1994). Group one in self-image congruence not only had the lowest mean rating, but was also statistically different from group three's mean ratings. Physical environment showed significant differences across all Groups 1, 2, and 3. Contact personnel and quality of service factors

Table 4-6  
Comparison of diamond rated hotels across study area using ANOVA

Hotel type Factors	1	2	3	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Image Congruence	3.48 (1.28) <sup>a</sup>	4.03 (1.38)	4.31 (1.25) <sup>a</sup>	3.588*	.029
Contact Personnel	4.71 (1.26) <sup>a</sup>	5.50 (.97) <sup>a</sup>	5.74 (1.09) <sup>a</sup>	9.706***	.000
Physical Environment	5.01 (1.18) <sup>a</sup>	5.65 (1.06) <sup>a</sup>	6.09 (1.03) <sup>a</sup>	9.550***	.000
Quality of Services	4.40 (1.35) <sup>a</sup>	5.30 (1.09) <sup>a</sup>	5.76 (1.10) <sup>a</sup>	13.321***	.000

Note. Mean (Std. Deviation)

<sup>a</sup> Significant differences were found between groups

1: 0-1 AAA diamond rated hotels 2: 2-3 diamond rated hotels 3: 4-5 diamond rated hotels

\**p* < .05 \*\* *p* < .01 \*\*\**p* < .001

showed statistically significant differences between Groups 1 and 2, and 1 and 3, but not Groups 2 and 3.

The respondents showed a more positive experience with the physical environment of Group 1 (M=5.01), Group 2 (M=5.65), and Group 3 (M=6.09); the means were the greatest in each category. Being that most hotels in Las Vegas are casino hotels, we can assume that the hotels have been designed to enhance customer experience and so that customers can stay in one facility for an extended period of time. As stated above, many studies had found that perceptions of the interior influence approach/avoidance behavior, time spent in the environment, and sales (Akhter et al., 1994; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Donovan et al., 1994). The spatial layout and functionality, the thematic appeal of

each hotel, the design, ambience, and upkeep are all environmental factors (Bitner, 1992), which were made to entertain, satisfy, and cater to its guests. Previous research (Mano and Oliver, 1993; Russell and Pratt, 1980) also indicates that the degree of arousal or excitement which customers experience while consuming a leisure service may be a major determinant of their subsequent pleasure or satisfaction with the service experience. As foot traffic is also an importance in profitability, hotels were designed to serve a wide variety of people. Therefore, there is reason to believe that Las Vegas hotels put a lot of thought and effort into the design of the physical environment, also shown through the enhanced emotions of the respondents.

Contact personnel was determined as the second most positive factor for Group 1 ( $M=4.71$ ) and Group 2 ( $M=5.50$ ), while quality of services was the second most positive factor for Group 3 ( $M=5.76$ ). Contact personnel and quality of service are crucial determinants in a customer's level of satisfaction. The high contact service industry of hotels makes the interaction between customers and service workers vital and influential in the development of customer loyalty (Beatty et al., 1996; Crosby et al., 1990). Hotels recognize the important role of their contact personnel, training them so that their attitude, language, and skills represent good service. The experiences with contact personnel and the quality of services of Group 3 were very similar. As Group 3 represents 4-5 diamond hotels, one should expect an exceptional degree of hospitality, service and attention and no less (see Appendix B).

Image congruence showed to be significant for all the hotels ( $p < .05$ ), but had the lowest means out of all the factors. This was as expected because self-image congruence is not only a personal type of question to ask, but when consuming a hotel service,

especially in Las Vegas, one might be more affected by the surreal environment and the factors that comprise of hotel image rather than self-image congruence.

It was also seen that as the mean of each factor (image congruence, contact personnel, physical environment, quality of services) increased, the hotel rating (AAA diamond rating) also increased. This was also as expected and the way it should be. The more diamonds a hotel has, the more exemplary it should be, offering many extra amenities and exceeding guests expectations through impeccable standards of excellence (see appendix b).

### Regression

Multiple linear regression techniques were employed to provide information on the relative contributions of the significant variables (image congruence and hotel image) in predicting values of the dependent variable (repeat intention). A significance level of  $p = .05$  was selected as sufficient for this analysis. Table 4-7 shows that the overall regression model was significant, with an F-statistic of 64.215 on 2 degrees of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). Image congruence and hotel image variables were both significant with p-values of .000. This supports the stated hypotheses, that there are positive relationships between hotel image and repeat intention, and image congruence and repeat intention. Table 4-7 shows that the predictive ability of the model was decent, with a coefficient of variation (R-square) value of .389. This finding indicates that 38.9% of the variation of repeat intention could be explained through the regression model.

Hypothesis 1 had stated that there was a significant relationship between hotel image and repeat intention. This type of research can be supported by studies proving image to be a major concept in predicting repeat patronage (Hunt, 1975; Mayo, 1973), consumer

behavior (Bagozzi, 1982; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo, 1973; Scott et al., 1978), and customer intention and loyalty (Court and Lupton, 1997; Heung, 1996; Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000; Long and Evans, 1983; Nevin and Houston, 1980; Reynolds et al., 1974-1975; Reibstein et al., 1980).

Hypothesis 2 had stated that there was a significant relationship between image congruence and repeat intention. A number of studies can support these findings, for image congruence affects consumer product preferences, purchase intentions (Ericksen, 1996; Jamal and Goode, 2001; Mehta, 1999), and store patronage (Sirgy et al., 1985; Stern et al., 1977).

Table 4-7  
Regression

		<i>B</i>	<i>beta</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Total	IC	.484	.342***	.623	.389	64.215	.000
	HI	.791	.400***				.000

Note. IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image  
\**p* < .05 \*\* *p* < .01 \*\*\**p* < .001

The significance of both variables is relevant, for in certain situations, high self-congruity and high functional/utilitarian congruity may be involved (Johar and Sirgy, 1991). Bhat and Reddy (1998) suggested that it is possible to have brands that have both functional and symbolic meanings for consumers. They state that people buy Nike shoes because they are associated with Michael Jordan or Tiger Woods, but they also want comfort and performance from the shoe. The same can happen for hotels. For instance,

customers will stay at five-star hotels not only for the quality of service that is assured, but also because of the pride, status, and prestige that follows as a customer of the hotel.

Functional hotel image has a slightly greater *beta*-value for predicting repeat intention. This is shown in the path diagram of Figure 4-1. When functional congruity or functional hotel image is high, a consumer's attitude is likely to be influenced by the utilitarian characteristics of the product (Johar and Sirgy, 1991). A greater *beta* for hotel image seems to be normal because customers base satisfaction levels on whether experiences with services are at least as good as they are supposed to be (Hunt, 1975); these experiences can be based on functional aspects of a hotel. Previous research shows that hotel image constitutes important factors in determining customer loyalty (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000; Ostrowsky et al., 1993). The greater *beta* of hotel image could also have been due to the fact that more than 65% of the respondents stayed at 2-3 diamond hotels. Two diamonds are said to target the needs of the budget-oriented traveler while hotels with three diamonds are supposed to offer some additional amenities, services, and facilities. Therefore, 2-3 diamond hotels might take on a more functional appeal. To look into this more deeply, a regression analysis was run for the different groups of hotels.

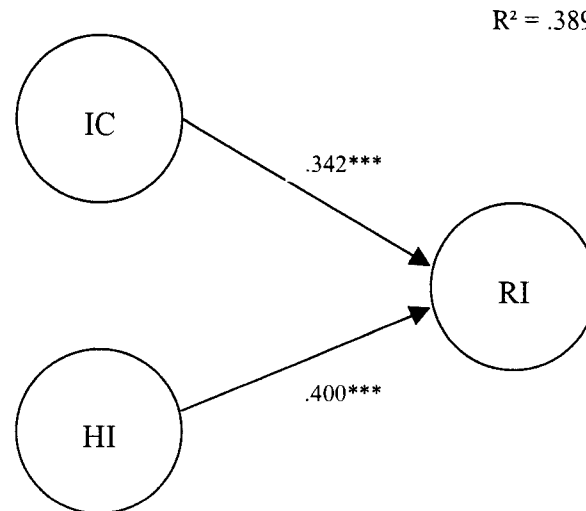


Figure 4-1: Path Diagram of Image Congruence, Hotel Image, and Repeat Intention for the Total Sample.  
IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image RI: Repeat Intention

Group 1 indicated participants who stayed at 0-1 diamond rated hotels by AAA. Group 2 indicated participants who stayed at 2-3 diamond hotels and the Group 3 indicated participants who stayed at 4-5 diamond hotels. Table 4-8 shows that the regression model for all three groups was significant. Group 1 showed an F-statistic of 13.946 on 2 degrees of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). The image congruence variable ( $p < .01$ ) and the hotel image variable ( $p < .05$ ) for Group 1 were both significant. The predictive ability of the model was decent, with a coefficient of variation (R-square) value of .518 shown in Table 4-8. This finding indicates that 51.8% of the variation (Group 1) of repeat intention could be explained through the regression model. The path diagram is shown in Figure 4-2.

Table 4-8  
Regression of AAA Rated Hotels

			<i>B</i>	<i>beta</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
AAA Rated Hotels	1	IC	.970	.541**	.719	.518	13.946	.001
		HI	.672	.308*				.048
	2	IC	.380	.285***	.564	.318	29.120	.000
		HI	.854	.396***				.000
	3	IC	.509	.396**	.601	.361	12.730	.004
		HI	.514	.314*				.021

Note. IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image

1: 0-1 AAA diamond rated hotels 2: 2-3 diamond rated hotels 3: 4-5 diamond rated hotels

\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

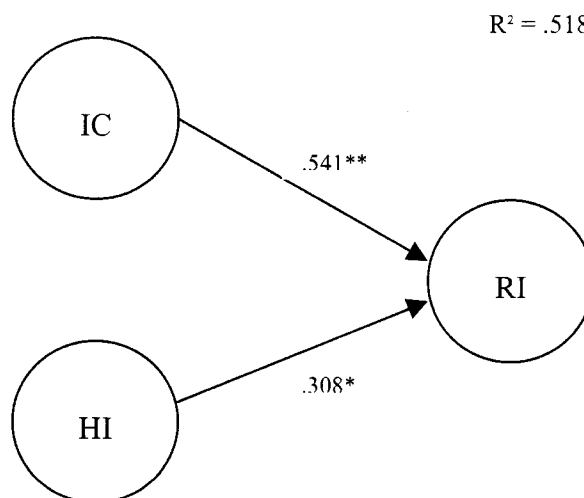


Figure 4-2: Path Diagram of Image Congruence,  
Hotel Image, and Repeat Intention for Group 1 Sample  
IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image RI: Repeat Intention

Group 2 showed an F-statistic of 29.120 on 2 degrees of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). The image congruence and hotel image variables for Group 2 were both significant with  $p$ -values  $< .001$ . The predictive ability of the model was decent, with a coefficient of variation (R-square) value of .318 shown in Table 4-8. This finding indicates that 31.8% of the variation (Group 2) of repeat intention could be explained through the regression model. The path diagram is shown in Figure 4-3.

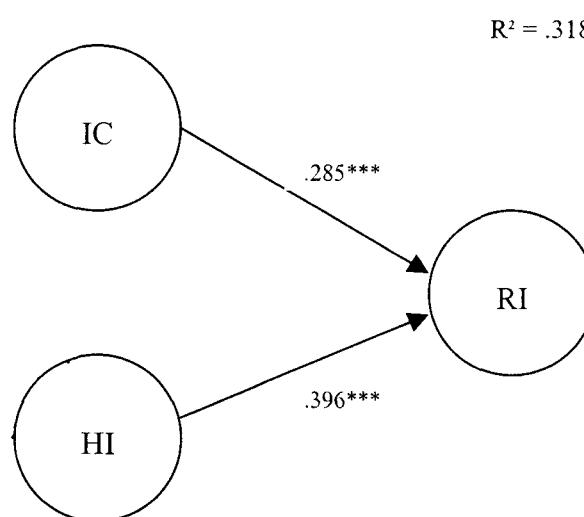


Figure 4-3: Path Diagram of Image Congruence, Hotel Image, and Repeat Intention for Group 2 Sample  
IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image RI: Repeat Intention

Group 3 showed an F-statistic of 12.730 on 2 degrees of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). The image congruence variable ( $p < .01$ ) and hotel image variable ( $p < .05$ ) for Group 3 were both significant. The predictive ability of the model was decent, with a coefficient of variation (R-square) value of .361 shown in Table 4-8. This finding indicates that 36.1% of the variation (Group 3) of repeat intention could be explained through the regression model. The path diagram is shown in Figure 4-4.

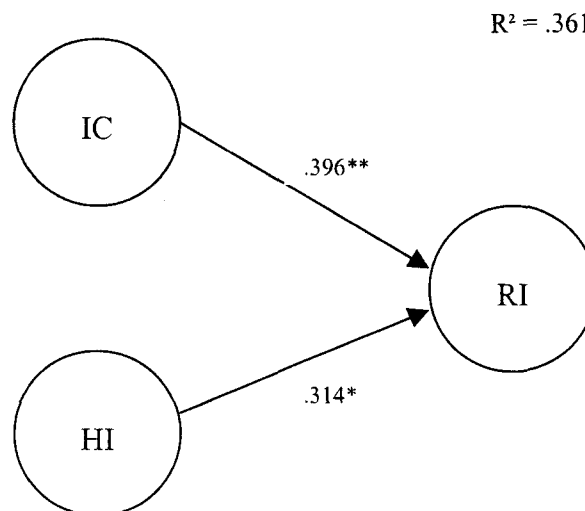


Figure 4-4: Path Diagram of Image Congruence,  
Hotel Image, and Repeat Intention for Group 3 Sample  
IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image RI: Repeat Intention

Whether it be the utilitarian attributes of hotel image or the psychological impact of image congruence, the significance of both the variables show an effect on repeat intention for all three groups of hotels. But when examining the *beta* values of the variables, a difference can be seen within the groups. It was very interesting to see that the *beta* for 0-1 diamond hotels was greater for image congruence (*beta* = .541) than for hotel image (*beta* = .308). A similar situation is seen for 4-5 diamond hotels. Image congruence has a higher *beta* of .396 while hotel image has a *beta* of .314. 2-3 diamond hotels show a higher *beta* for hotel image (*beta* = .396) than for image congruence (*beta* = .285).

We had mentioned before that the greater *beta* value for hotel image for 2-3 diamond hotels seemed obvious because customers base their satisfaction on whether their needs, wants, and expectations of a service have been met or exceeded (Anton, 1996) and to do this the functional/utilitarian aspects of hotel image, which include physical environment,

contact personnel, and quality of service, would be used to predict repurchase. As the physical environment influences approach/avoidance behavior (Akhter et al., 1994; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Donovan et al., 1994), the quality of goods and services, and employee performance (Keaveney, 1995; Lewis, 1983) can also encourage or discourage service consumption (Alexandris et al., 2002; Boulding et al., 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

It was astonishing to see that for 0-1 diamond and 4-5 diamond hotels, the *beta* values were greater for image congruence. Although it was somewhat expected for 4-5 diamond hotels due to the pride, status, and prestige that comes along with staying at a 4-5 diamond hotel, it was somewhat of a surprise to see that image congruence would be high for 0-1 diamond hotels. One would think 0-1 diamonds would be a more economy type hotel creating a more functional appeal. Back (2000) had used mid-upscale hotel customers in his study sample for image congruence because he viewed lower rated or economy hotels as more functional.

The higher image congruence score for 0-1 diamond hotels could have been due to the fact that whether an image is positive or negative, self-consistency predicts that consumers will be motivated to purchase a product with an image congruent with himself/herself (Sirgy, 1982). This is shown in Table 2-1. Therefore, in the case above where the *beta*-values were higher for image congruence, respondents of 0-1 diamond hotels showed consistency in their decisions to stay at hotels with 0-1 diamonds and respondents of 4-5 diamond hotels showed consistency in their decisions to stay at hotels with 4-5 diamonds. 0-1 diamond and 4-5 diamond hotel respondents felt that their self-image matched the typical customer of the hotel at which they stayed enabling

consistency, avoiding dissonance, and in turn creating comfort for themselves. Thus, image congruence had a greater effect on repeat intention for these two groups.

Previous research supports theories that individuals prefer brands and product class that relate to their own self concepts (Back, 2001; Birdwell, 1968; Chon, 1990; Dolich, 1969; Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Ross, 1971) and it is this congruence, which affects product preference, purchase intention, store patronage, and store loyalty (Bellenger et al., 1976; Ericksen, 1996; Sirgy, 1980; Sirgy, 1985; Sirgy, Samli, Bahn et al., 1985). Some examples of image congruity can be seen in products such as Seagram's advertisements, suggesting that drinking V.O. brand Canadian Whiskey can be a means to impress friends, or how Mont Blanc pens are advertised as the pen "for people who aspire to the finer things of life" (Graeff, 1996, pg. 6). Congruity not only forms for products of status but also for products that just want to convey a type of image to a certain market segment. High-tar cigarettes such as Winston and Camel avoid intellectual types and attempt to attract rural smokers. The Merit brand projected a flamboyant, young-in-spirit image (Okvisit and Shaw, 1987). The Volkswagen Beetle marketed to those who were not into materialism and status symbols, but rather to those who were independent and irreverent for convention and possessed a practical mind, driving an ugly, funky car (Aaker, 1992). Thus, image congruence can be used for many types of products and services of different caliber.

It was also interesting to look at the regression analysis using only male and only female participants to determine if the model predicted return intent differently than looking at the entire group. Table 4-9 shows that the male regression model was significant, with an F-statistic of 34.347 on 2 degrees of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). Image

Table 4-9  
Regression of Male and Females Samples

			<i>B</i>	<i>beta</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	Male	IC	.585	.401***	.666	.444	34.347	.000
		HI	.756	.388***				.000
	Female	IC	.431	.309***	.600	.359	31.709	.000
		HI	.813	.405***				.000

Note. IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image

\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

congruence and hotel image variables were both significant with p-values of .000. The predictive ability of the model was decent, with a coefficient of variation (R-square) value of .444 shown in Table 4-9. This finding indicates that 44.4% of the variation (male) of repeat intention could be explained through the regression model. The path diagram is shown in Figure 4-5.

Table 4-9 also shows that the female regression model was significant, with an F-statistic of 31.709 on 2 degrees of freedom ( $p < .001$ ). Image congruence and hotel image variables were both significant with p-values of .000. The predictive ability of the model was decent, with a coefficient of variation (R-square) value of .359 shown in Table 4-9. This finding indicates that 35.9% of the variation (female) of repeat intention could be explained through the regression model. Although both variables of image congruence and hotel image were significant, the higher *beta*-value of hotel image for

females showed that hotel image had a greater effect on repeat intention than image congruence. The path diagram is shown in Figure 4-6.

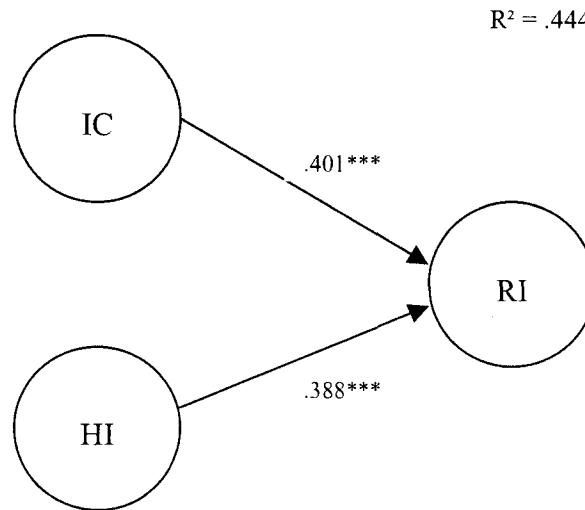


Figure 4-5: Path Diagram of Image Congruence, Hotel Image, and Repeat Intention for Male Sample  
IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image RI: Repeat Intention

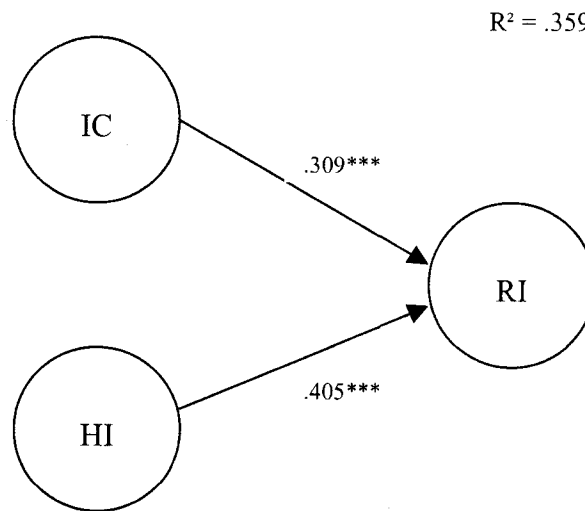


Figure 4-6: Path Diagram of Image Congruence, Hotel Image, and Repeat Intention for Female Sample  
IC: Image Congruence HI: Hotel Image RI: Repeat Intention

As the above findings show, the *beta* for image congruence was greater than the *beta* for hotel image in respect to repeat intention for the male sample. The opposite was shown in the female sample as the *beta* value (.405) for hotel image was greater than the *beta* value for (.309) image congruence. This can be explained by the differences of gender in information processing. Pogun (2001) states that “the differences between males and females transcend reproductive functions, are evident in the structural and functional organization of the brain, and are reflected in cognitive abilities and behavior” (pg. 205). Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1991) also found gender differences in levels of cognitive elaboration. Males were said to limit the cognitive effort they expend, and thus use heuristic/peripheral processing, whereas females preferred more detailed processing (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

The ELM model also provides two different mechanisms (central and peripheral routes) by which persuasion occurs (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). There is evidence for the distinction between image congruence and functional image types of message processing. An image congruence route to persuasion can be viewed as a form of peripheral processing due to source-related cues. A functional image route is a form of central processing due to the involvement of actual message claims and the quality of the argument itself, encompassing the functional attributes of a product. The heuristic or peripheral processing of males is the persuasion based on an assessment of symbolic cues (Chaiken, 1980), such as hotel patron image. Based on this argument, the greater effect of image congruence on repeat intention by the male sample can be explained.

As mentioned above, the greater *beta* value (.405) for hotel image in the female sample can be explained in the preference for more detailed processing. Studies have

shown women to be more detailed in their evaluation of services than men (Ndhlovu and Senguder, 2002), they also take active roles in the decision making of leisure travel (Bartos, 1984). It was in the study of Ward and Sturrock (1998) where females managed purchase decisions rather than the male partner, to ensure that the outcome of the decision was one in which she desired. This particularness of the female gender in consumption decisions can be related with females being found to be more sensitive to the level of product risk than males (FitzGerald and Arnott, 1996). It is these characteristics that cause women to look at hotel image more than image congruence when considering repeat intention. Additional explanations as to why hotel image had a higher effect on repeat intention for the female gender, would be that the females are found to have higher expectations for service and are more opinionated than males (Webster, 1989) creating more of a regard for the factors of hotel image.

In summary, significant differences were found between all four factors of image congruence, contact personnel, physical environment, and quality of services across three groups of hotels using analysis of variance. Multiple regression analysis determined that hotel image and image congruence were significant predictors of repeat intention confirming the hypotheses. The regression model also showed that 38.9% of the variation of repeat intention was explained. Whether examining the sample as a whole, looking at gender, or only looking at groups of hotels divided by AAA rating, significance was found between hotel image and image congruence on repeat intention. Although each variable was significant to the degree indicated, the *beta*-values of hotel image showed a more positive effect on repeat intention when looking at the whole sample, the female sample, and the Group 2 sample. The *beta*-value of image

congruence showed a more positive effect on repeat intention for the male, Group 1, and Group 3 samples.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

While Chapter IV showed that the models used in the study were decent predictors of intention and discussed the significant findings of the study, this chapter begins by summarizing those results. The implications of the research findings and contributions are discussed, followed by the limitations and recommendations for future study.

The purpose of this study was to test the relationship between functional hotel image (derived from three factors of physical environment, contact personnel, and quality of services), image congruence, and repeat intention. The major findings of the study showed that: (1) hotel image had a significant positive effect on repeat intention; (2) image congruence had a significant positive effect on repeat intention. Although significance was found for both variables, a functional hotel image was shown to have a greater effect on repeat intention. Hotels with a 0-1 diamond rating and 4-5 diamond rating showed that image congruence had a slightly higher effect on repeat intention, while hotel image was found to have a higher effect on repeat intention for hotels with a 2-3 diamond rating. Some other findings of the study were that there were significant differences in repeat intention when considering gender. The male sample showed more of an importance on image congruence, while the female sample saw hotel image to be more important in repeat intention.

### Theoretical Implications

Little empirical research has been conducted to measure the effects of image in the hotel industry and this study has provided strong empirical evidence to show the effects that hotel image and image congruence can have on repeat intention. It was shown that a positive evaluation of hotel image increased the likelihood of repeat intention and that as a customer perceived a similar image between his/her self and the typical customer of a hotel, repeat intention was also increased. This empirical evidence has provided support for the studies of LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996a), Back (2001), and Sirgy et al. (1997), which measure hotel image and image congruence, and also for the studies that prove image to be a major concept in predicting consumer behavior (Bagozzi, 1982; Goodrich, 1978; Hunt, 1975; Mayo, 1973; Scott et al., 1978). The new modified method to measure self-image congruence in hotels (Back, 2001) brought from Sirgy et al. (1997) was also used in this study and proved to be efficient. The self-consistency motive (Sirgy, 1982) was used to support the findings that image congruence had a greater effect on repeat intention for 0-1 diamond hotels and 4-5 diamond hotels. Ultimately, this study emphasized the importance of measuring both functional hotel image and image congruence to better understand repeat intention in the hotel industry.

### Practical Implications

The results of this study provide several important marketing and strategic implications for the hotel industry. This study suggests that a positive hotel image and a positive self-congruence relationship lead to repeat intention, therefore, hotel marketers should develop tools to continuously monitor customers' perceptions of image.

Depending on the rating and type of hotel, marketers should maintain an overall image for their target market. The decision to choose a utilitarian or a symbolic appeal is a key strategic decision in marketing communication. The decision to use either appeal leads to an entirely different set of tactical communication decisions (Johar and Sirgy, 1991).

The regression analysis of the different hotel samples shows 4-5 diamond hotels to have a weighted importance on image congruence. A consistent image focusing on the symbols of luxury, pride, and status should be projected to the upscale market segment. Brand managers can develop advertising messages that could encourage consumers to think about their self-images (Jamal and Goode, 2001). A communication campaign can be developed and directed to the target market having a self-concept profile that matches the product image. This is because advertising appeals that are congruent with viewers' self-concept are likely to be superior to incongruent appeals in terms of enhancing advertising effectiveness (Zinkham and Hong, 1991). As a result, the significance of developing promotional messages that could tempt or persuade consumers to think about the fit between their self-images and brand's images should not be underestimated (Jamal and Goode, 2001).

As 2-3 diamond hotels show a greater effect of hotel image factors on repeat intention, attributes that comprise of the physical environment, contact personnel, and quality of services might be more emphasized. Communicating the benefits offered by the hotel would be a good way to project the functional aspects of hotel image. Advertising messages can communicate a utilitarian appeal by choosing one or more functional attributes to highlight the product's unique selling proposition (Johar and Sirgy, 1991). The results indicate that hotel image has a positive effect on repeat

intention, therefore, hotels should set standards that help to create a positive hotel image. Given that contact personnel, service quality, and physical environment are an important part of hotel image, marketing and managerial efforts should be directed in these areas to convince customers of the utilitarian and experiential benefits derived from service consumption.

The interesting findings of 0-1 diamond hotels should also be taken into account because customers may feel a congruent relationship with the typical customer of their hotel. Although customers indicated an importance in the purchase of the room, the environment, and the quality of service, the findings of the study showed that the consistency of image and the comfort of being around similar people had a greater effect on repeat intention. This type of research can be used in the differentiation of competitors, segmentation and analysis of the customer base, and also to save valuable financial resources by targeting those customers likely to visit and return to the hotel.

Marketers should also carefully choose the type of advertisements to use in their communication to guests as the regression study also suggests males to prefer hotels that have images compatible with perceptions of self, while females prefer hotels based on a functional hotel image and the factors that comprise it (e.g. décor, service, appearance, and helpfulness of contact personnel). The differences of gender in information processing shows males to use heuristic/peripheral processing, while females prefer more detailed processing (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). As heuristic or peripheral processing is the persuasion based on an assessment of symbolic cues (Chaiken, 1980), the hotel patron image can be used to lure the male customer. The particularness and higher expectations for service of women should be taken into consideration, highlighting functional aspects

of a hotel in marketing communications towards women. But hotels cannot market to just one gender. The significant findings of image congruence and hotel image for males and females suggest that a combination of both measures would be a preferred approach to communicate with the target audience. “In order to be successful, images, and symbols must relate to, and indeed, exploit, the needs, values and life-styles of consumers in such a way that the meanings involved give added values, and differentiate the brand from other brands” (Broadbent and Cooper, 1987, p.3).

#### Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Several limitations exist in this study. First, the study focused on only two dimensions (hotel image and image congruence) that affect repeat intention. As hotel image and image congruence may not be sufficient to generate repeat intention alone, future studies can include different types of variables, such as price and prior experience, that may cause repeat patronage in the hotel industry. Additional items measuring each construct might also be incorporated for further study. Future research should also see the effects of each factor that comprise of hotel image (contact personnel, physical environment, quality of services) and image congruence (actual, ideal, social, ideal social image congruence) on repeat intention. This can give managers and marketing analysts greater insight on their customer base and what specific areas are in need of improvement.

Second, although repeat intention is the first step in understanding the basis of customer loyalty and is a reliable predictor of behavior (Sheeran, 2002), future studies might attempt to better understand how image impacts a wider spectrum, including post

purchase behaviors and customer loyalty. Future research might also want to consider the use of more demographic information for analysis of findings.

Third, data from this study was collected from customers of many different types of hotels. It might be more meaningful to concentrate on one type of hotel or one rating of hotels to more deeply understand the relationships of the variables.

Fourth, this study did not take into account the effect of the casinos on hotel image and image congruence. It is recommended that future research consider the casino dimension and its effect on hotel image and image congruence.

Fifth, because the hotels used in this study were casino hotels in Las Vegas, this information cannot be generalized to all hotels, different industries, or different locations. Therefore, studies such as ours should be repeated in other service contexts and in different areas. Conducting this type of research will allow marketers to understand the importance of functional and symbolic image and assist in their marketing strategies. Different locations might also create the need for different factors to be included, such as the accessibility and corporate identity factors. The low reliability score of the accessibility factor may prove different in other areas. Control variables such as asking if the customer drove or flew might also be considered.

Last, the data was collected in an environment that might have been distracting and it is possible that the study findings may be biased in that the sample was taken on the sidewalk in front of the Bellagio fountains. The area or time in which the sample was taken may also have created a non-representative sample of a typical Las Vegas visitor. Given the limited resources available, self-administered surveys were used to collect the data. For future research, it may be more effective to hand out surveys at check-in or

leave them in the hotel rooms for respondents to fill out. One can also check with local Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) to confirm if the sample represents the type of people visiting the area.

Retaining customers in the lodging industry and finding out what factors contribute to repeat intention is imperative in the success of a hotel. Although there are many factors which may cause repeat intention in the hotel industry, this study chose a functional/utilitarian and a symbolic/psychological approach of image to measure repeat intention. Addressing the issues mentioned above and broadening customers' assessments of image and intention can lead to a better understanding of consumer behavior.

APPENDIX A  
SURVEY COVER PAGE & QUESTIONNAIRE

**UNLV**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA-LAS VEGAS**

**Department of Hotel Administration**

**Informed Consent**

I, Grace Lee, am the principal investigator of this study. I am a graduate student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the study in which you are participating is a critical part of my master's thesis. It is intended to help researchers and practitioners in the hotel industry determine the type of image a hotel is portraying, what types of people are their customers, and what characteristics are influential in creating repeat intention. The findings of this study will not only support the scarce literature available on image in the hotel industry, but it will also be a good guide for future studies in the hospitality and services industry.

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to answer a variety of survey questions regarding the hotel of your stay. It will take about 10-15 minutes of your time. Your participation is greatly needed and will be very much appreciated. Research risks are very minimal; however, participants might feel a little uncomfortable answering some of the questions asked.

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. All information you provide will remain completely confidential and no reference will be made in written or oral materials to link you to this study. All data collected will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least three years and will be destroyed after completion of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please feel free to contact the principal investigator, Grace Lee, at 702) 321-0546 or the faculty advisor, Dr. Billy Bai, at 702) 895-4844. For questions about the rights of research subjects, please contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702) 895-2794.

Grace Lee  
Graduate Student  
Department of Hotel Administration  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this informed consent has been given to me.**

### Image Survey

No. \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in the blanks.

1. Please indicate the hotel that you are staying at during your visit to Las Vegas: \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many night(s) are you staying at this hotel? \_\_\_\_\_ night(s)
3. Could you please estimate how many time(s) you have stayed at this hotel in the past two years? \_\_\_\_\_ time(s)

Take a moment to think about the hotel you are currently staying at. Consider the kind of person who typically stays at this hotel. Imagine this person in your mind and then think of this person using personal adjectives, such as stylish, classy, modern, fun, or whatever personal adjectives you would like to use.

Keeping this in mind, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

4. The typical guest of this hotel has a similar image with how I see myself.

Strongly  
disagree

①

②

③

Neither Agree  
nor Disagree

④

⑤

⑥

Strongly  
Agree

⑦

5. The typical guest of this hotel has similar personality characteristics as I have.

Strongly  
disagree

①

②

③

Neither Agree  
nor Disagree

④

⑤

⑥

Strongly  
Agree

⑦

6. The typical guest of this hotel has a similar image with how I would like to see myself.

Strongly  
disagree

①

②

③

Neither Agree  
nor Disagree

④

⑤

⑥

Strongly  
Agree

⑦

7. The typical guest of this hotel has similar personality characteristics as I would like to have.

Strongly  
disagree

①

②

③

Neither Agree  
nor Disagree

④

⑤

⑥

Strongly  
Agree

⑦

8. The typical guest of this hotel has a similar image with how other people see me. (e.g. friends, business associates)

Strongly  
disagree

①

②

③

Neither Agree  
nor Disagree

④

⑤

⑥

Strongly  
Agree

⑦

9. The typical guest of this hotel has similar personality characteristics that other people see me as having.

Strongly disagree                      Neither Agree nor Disagree                      Strongly Agree  
 ①                      ②                      ③                      ④                      ⑤                      ⑥                      ⑦

10. The typical guest of this hotel has a similar image with how I would like other people (e.g. friends, business associates) to see me.

Strongly disagree                      Neither Agree nor Disagree                      Strongly Agree  
 ①                      ②                      ③                      ④                      ⑤                      ⑥                      ⑦

11. The typical guest of this hotel is the kind of person I would like others to see me as.

Strongly disagree                      Neither Agree nor Disagree                      Strongly Agree  
 ①                      ②                      ③                      ④                      ⑤                      ⑥                      ⑦

**Think about the hotel you are staying at and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:**

12. Employees are courteous.

Strongly disagree                      Neither Agree nor Disagree                      Strongly Agree  
 ①                      ②                      ③                      ④                      ⑤                      ⑥                      ⑦

13. Employees are neat in appearance.

Strongly disagree                      Neither Agree nor Disagree                      Strongly Agree  
 ①                      ②                      ③                      ④                      ⑤                      ⑥                      ⑦

14. Employees offer prompt service.

Strongly disagree                      Neither Agree nor Disagree                      Strongly Agree  
 ①                      ②                      ③                      ④                      ⑤                      ⑥                      ⑦

15. Employees are always willing to help guests.

Strongly disagree                      Neither Agree nor Disagree                      Strongly Agree  
 ①                      ②                      ③                      ④                      ⑤                      ⑥                      ⑦

16. Employees appear to be well trained for their positions.

Strongly disagree                      Neither Agree nor Disagree                      Strongly Agree  
 ①                      ②                      ③                      ④                      ⑤                      ⑥                      ⑦

17. Employees are capable of satisfying my needs.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

18. The hotel's reservation system is efficient.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

19. The rooms are well furnished.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

20. The interior of the hotel is well decorated.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

21. The rooms are comfortable.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

22. The interior of the hotel well represents its class.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

23. The hotel permits me to relax during my stay.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

24. The food in the hotel restaurants is of good quality.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

25. The service in the hotel restaurants is good.

Strongly disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦



APPENDIX B  
AAA HOTEL RATING CRITERIA

### **Lodging Evaluation Criteria**

Regardless of the diamond rating, properties listed by AAA are required to provide clean and well-maintained facilities throughout, a hospitable staff and a well-kept appearance. Regardless of the rating, each guest room is required to have comfortable beds and good quality bedding, locks on all doors and windows, comfortable furnishings and pleasant decor, smoke detectors, adequate towels and supplies, at least one chair and adequate illumination at each task area.

### **Understanding AAA's Diamond Rating**

Before we allow a property to be listed by AAA, it must satisfy a set of minimum standards that reflect the basic lodging needs AAA members have identified. If a property meets those requirements, it is assigned a diamond rating reflecting the overall quality of the establishment. The ratings range from one to five diamonds and reflect the physical and service standards typically found at each diamond level. Ratings are assigned to the property classification. The classification represents the physical design and level of services provided by the property. For example, a motel offers limited services and recreational facilities. A resort hotel offers extensive guest services and recreational facilities. By assigning ratings according to classification, AAA compares properties to like properties. Although one diamond is AAA's minimum rating, a one diamond property is still better than one-third of the lodgings in operation, since the majority of unlisted properties do not meet AAA's minimum standards.

Electronic reference formats recommended by AAA (2003, April 2). Retrieved April 2, 2003, from [http://www.aaa-texas.com/travel/agency/tb\\_faq2.asp](http://www.aaa-texas.com/travel/agency/tb_faq2.asp)

### AAA Ratings

Five Diamonds: ♦♦♦♦♦Facilities and operations exemplify an impeccable standard of excellence while exceeding guest expectations in hospitality and service. These renowned properties are both striking and luxurious, offering many extra amenities. (0.2% of hotels, 11 in California, 69 in US)

Four Diamonds: ♦♦♦♦Properties reflect an exceptional degree of hospitality, service and attention to detail, while offering upscale facilities and a variety of amenities (3% of hotels)

Three Diamonds: ♦♦♦Properties show a marked upgrade in physical attributes, services and comfort. Additional amenities, services and facilities may be offered (53% of hotels)

Two Diamonds: ♦♦Properties maintain the attributes offered at the one diamond level while showing noticeable enhancements in room decor and quality of furnishings. They target the needs of the budget-oriented traveler (34% of hotels)

One Diamond: ♦Properties offer good but modest accommodations that meet all Listing Requirements. They are clean, safe and well maintained (7% of hotels)

Electronic reference formats recommended by Calhotels.US (2003, April 2). Retrieved April 2, 2003, from <http://calhotels.us/ratings.php?madera>

APPENDIX C  
HOTEL AND AAA RANKING USED IN STUDY

Bellagio 5

Aladdin 4

Caesars Palace 4

Mandalay Bay 4

Mirage 4

Paris 4

Treasure Island 4

Boardwalk 3

Candlewood Suites 3

Circus Circus 3

Excalibur 3

Flamingo Hilton 3

Hard Rock 3

Holiday Inn 3

Imperial Palace 3

Luxor 3

MGM 3

Monte Carlo 3

New York New York 3

Rio 3

Riviera 3

Stardust 3

Stratosphere 3

Silverton 2

Tropicana 2

Club de Soleil 0

Frontier 0

Jockey Club 0

Lady Luck 0

Leisure Resorts 0

Sahara 0

San Remos 0

Westward Ho 0

Whiskey Pete's 0

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