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Andam Jamal
Business Administration,
Cyprus International
University, Cyprus

The antecedents and outcomes of brand relationship quality and customer engagement

Andam Jamal

Abstract
Nowadays, hotels need further efforts to grow new streams of income as rivalry is penetrating and new visitors are difficult to confirm at a mature phrase. It is vital for hotel managers to recognize additional customer engagement with brand, to recognize what the antecedents of these kind of engagements are, and to distinguish what consequences they are able to achieve from customer engagement. The study aimed to investigate the background and result of brand relationship quality and customer engagement at hotels industry in the Northern of Iraq. Quantitative Research is used in the current study. Quantitative Research is conclusive in its purpose as it tries to quantify the problem and understand how prevalent it is by looking for projectable results to a larger population. According to the ministry of tourism, 3 million people visited Erbil on 2018. The authors have used online sample calculator to measure sample size, according to that 400 questionnaires were distributed, but the author received 353 valid questionnaires. The authors applied a simple regression analysis to measure research hypotheses. The findings revealed Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence Brand relationship quality. In contrast, the lowest value was for second hypothesis which stated that Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence customer engagement.

Keywords: Service quality, brand, customer engagement, loyalty, hotels

Introduction

Hospitality and tourism industry have understood development in economies over the past decade. Hospitality and tourism industry have become the main economic persuader in generating occupations and investment chances.

Service marketing experts and service brands have lately revealed concentration in Brand relationship quality, particularly in hotel industry (Seetanah *et al*. 2020). Service marketing experts have come to understand that recognizing how hotel visitors contribute and engage with brands is significant when emerging combined brand relationship quality and customer engagement for the purpose of creating sensitive promises, for instance excellent brand involvements, brand loyalty, and brand satisfaction (Xiao *et al*. 2019).

BRQ could be established in various methods. Service hotels could concentrate on emerging satisfaction and trust as key features of relationship quality-two extremely significant concepts provided a service brand's danger for unpredictable outcome and the connected high stage of supposed uncertainty by hotel visitors (Zhang and Cobanoglu, 2019). Yet, hotels could correspondingly shape an effective emotional link with visitors. According to Qiu *et al*. (2019) ''the achievement of hotels determines the detail that hotels shaped and created an emotional link with their visitors. Since, on the daily basis hotels deal with visitors directly. Hotels' products are not the same as other industries, customers can see and touch the product then decide and make a judgment, in contrast; hotels need to build an emotional and feeling attachment with their visitors. The significance of visitors' feeling has been revealed in studies on service encounters, service marketing, and replies to service disappointments (Koc, 2019) [8]. Therefore, on top of the well-organized key features of connection quality (for instance, trust, positive feeling, engagement and satisfaction), feelings can have a main role in creating an effective and deep visitors-brand relationships.

The perception of customer engagement (CE) developed early 2006 as a part of the engagement that required to examine the buyers' attitudes and behavior toward the connections/contribution with brands (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017). Buyers could create value to businesses by several methods beside the transaction process (Woo *et al*. 2018). Lately, non-transactional buyer behavior has become a main thought (Su *et al*. 2018).

Corresponding Author:
Andam Jamal
Business Administration,
Cyprus International
University, Cyprus

Though, engaging visitors dependably and properly is an ongoing challenge for hotels that provide an excellent service to its visitors (Joseph, 2019) [7]. In the hospitality industry, many studies concentrate on the effect of brand relationship quality on visitors' engagement. The hospitality and tourism studies broadly nourish the possible advantage of CE. For instance, visitors' review on their certain stay at a hotel will have a positive and significant influence on the perception of visitors' engagement and attracting more visitors, eventually gaining competitive advantage over other hotels in the industry, additional visitors' acknowledgements of service quality (Peters *et al*. 2019). Furthermore, leveraging CE emotion can permit hotels to sustain and attract additional visitors/travelers (Xiong and King, 2019). Current study proposes that engaging traveler's post trip can enable travelers become supporters and promoters for the journey by using word of mouth with other protential visitors (Aluri *et al*. 2019) [2].

Conceptual framework
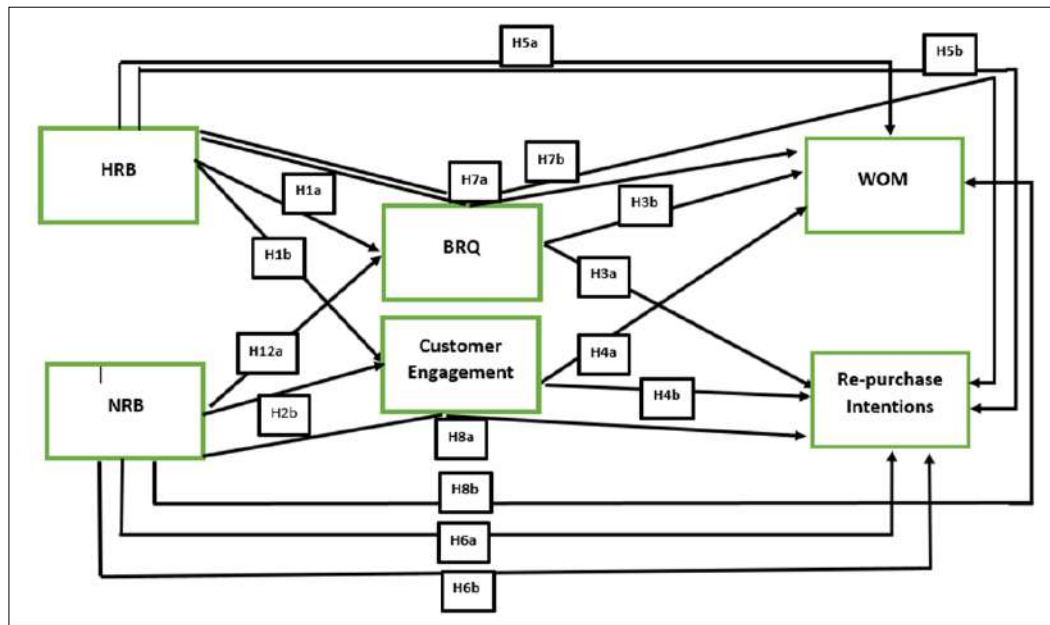
H1a: Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence Brand relationship quality.

H1b: Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence customer engagement.

H2a: Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence Brand relationship quality.

H2b: Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence customer engagement.

H3a: Brand relationship quality is positively related to re-purchase intention.

H3b: Brand relationship quality is positively related to word of mouth.

H4a: Customer engagement is positively related to word of mouth.

H4b: Customer engagement is positively related to Re-purchase intention.

H5a: Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence word of mouth.

H5b: Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence re-purchase intention.

H6a: Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence re-purchase intention.

H6b: Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence word of mouth.

H7a: BRQ mediates HRB and word of mouth.

H7b: BRQ mediates HRB and re-purchase intentions

H8a: Customer engagement mediates HRB and word of mouth.

H8a: Customer engagement mediates HRB and re-purchase intention

Literature review

The concept of quality

Nowadays quality is the consequence of developing and gradually varied requirements of the customers, along with an extremely growing rivalry and the growth of contemporary technology. Managing quality means continuously following excellence: confirm that the business suits the aim, and not just remain at the same level, but rather aiming in enhancement and development (Sürücü *et al*. 2019).

Service quality

Service quality is of the greatest successful factors of buyers' needs and requirements. It aids organizations for instance hotels to grow their market and create vast buyers" section. Additionally, it empowers hotels to enhance their reputation and image. Service quality is the chief pointer of income and buyers' gratification (Martínez and Nishiyama, 2019). Moreover, it is essential that hotels should take into their consideration that service quality is an important method of maintainable competitive advantage, as it influences the continuous enhancement of service outcome by growing market share and income development.

Brand relationship quality

RQ is the consumer-perceived ability of a brand to consistently develop the consumer-brand relationship according to the consumer's individual needs. BRQ thus reflects the intensity and viability of the enduring

association between a. consumer and a brand (Rather, 2020). In a service framework, the brand is caused from purchaser involvements and knowledge during the service come across (Lei *et al*. 2020). This brand message procedure includes one-way and two-way means functioning at the business, advertising and marketing announcement stages. A buyer-brand association is a concept that distinguishes the interactivity between a brand and its customers (Tsai *et al*. 2020). Workers' behaviors, customer contribution and their communications in a service are significant fundamentals for customer satisfaction (Chen *et al*. 2020) [3]. The regular communications between customers and their service providers generate unique brand knowledge that distinguish it from rival firms (Gruss *et al*. 2020) [4]. Furthermore, it is recognized as brand communication, which is the association that customers feel, think and have with a certain service or product brand. Brand academics usually evaluate the way that customers observe and assess brands investigating brand behavior, brand assessments, or supposed brand excellence (Prentice *et al*. 2020). Lately, scholars state that customers vary not just in brand awareness, nonetheless similarly the way that customers link to brands (Nambirajan and Prabhu 2010; Albayrak *et al*. 2020) [1].

Loyalty program
Loyalty is somewhat that all businesses would seek to merely by asset of their being. Loyalty programs inspire customers to repurchase from the same place. Several of the inducements can comprise advanced entree to modern service or products, further promotions or occasionally free product. Consumers characteristically enroll their individual info with the business and are provided different promotions and loyalty programs, for instance, membership, telephone number or ID number and utilize that identity at the time they are purchasing product or service from the same business (Martínez and Nishiyama, 2019).

Customer engagement
The perception of the customer engagement covers in "extended area of association marketing." (Su *et al*. 2018). Correspondingly, Joseph (2019) [7] proposes that to study customer engagement, wider perception of association marketing philosophy is suitable. During this extend area of association marketing, business's concentrate on emerging association with both potential and current purchasers, also business value formation systems and customer societies. As such, precisely communicating customer experiences defines the chief centric idea of customer engagement. According to the above-mentioned investigations and studies, Peters *et al*. (2019) assume that inside marketing scheme customer engagement is a significant thought. Perception of engagement is defined by Xiong and King,

(2019) as psychological and emotional act of communication of customers with business, brand, further customers and societies. Prentice *et al*. (2020) similarly propose that performance of "engaging" aid purchasers is to generate value by their collaborating involvements with businesses and other buyers.

Methodology
Quantitative Research was used in the current study. Quantitative Research is conclusive in its purpose as it tries to quantify the problem and understand how prevalent it is by looking for projectable results to a larger population. According to the ministry of tourism, 3 million people visited Erbil on 2018. The authors have used online sample calculator to measure the sample size, according to which 400 questionnaires were distributed, but the authors received 353 valid questionnaires.

Analysis
Demographic analysis

Table 1: Demographic analysis

No	Items	Scales	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender	Male	228	64.6
		Female	125	35.4
2	Age	20-29	44	12.5
		30-39	86	24.4
		40-49	100	28.3
		50-59	96	27.2
		60-69	27	7.6
3	Education	High school	10	2.8
		Diploma	38	10.8
		Bachelor	168	47.6
		Master	93	26.3
		PhD	32	9.1
		Other	12	3.4
4	Purpose of visit	Leisure	168	47.6
		Business	185	52.4

Table (1) demonstrates the visitors' background information contributed in the current study, the findings revealed that 228 male visitors contributed in the current study on the other hand 125 female visitors, however the results showed that the majority of male visitors contributed in this study. Concerning visitors' education, the findings showed that 10 visitors had high school certificate, 38 visitors had Diploma certificate, 168 visitors had bachelor's degree, 93 visitors had master's degree, 32 visitors had PhD degree and 12 visitors had other degree than listed above. As for the purpose of visitors'' visiting hotels; it was found that 168 visitors' purpose of their visit was leisure and 185 visitors' purpose of their visit was business.

Correlation analysis

Table 2: Reliability analysis

Correlations		HRB	NONHRB	BRQ	CE	WOM	RP
HRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.164**	.709**	.470**	.409**	.533**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	352	352	352	352	352	352
NONHRB	Pearson Correlation	.164**	1	.217**	.175**	.517**	.502**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		.000	.001	.000	.000
	N	352	353	353	353	353	353
BRQ	Pearson Correlation	.709**	.217**	1	.397**	.476**	.589**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	352	353	353	353	353	353
CE	Pearson Correlation	.470**	.175**	.397**	1	.623**	.730**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000		.000	.000
	N	352	353	353	353	353	353
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.409**	.517**	.476**	.623**	1	.557**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	352	353	353	353	353	353
RP	Pearson Correlation	.533**	.502**	.589**	.730**	.557**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	352	353	353	353	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above table demonstrates the correlation among all variables, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .709** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and BRQ. The value of correlation is .470** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and CE. The value of correlation is .217** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between NHRB and BRQ. The value of correlation is .175** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between NHRB and CE. The value of correlation is .589** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between BRQ and REI. The value of correlation is .476** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between BRQ and WOM. The value of correlation is .623** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between CE and WOM. The of correlation is .730** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between CE and REI. The value of correlation is .409** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and WOM. The value of correlation is .533** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and REI. The value of correlation is .502** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between NHRB and REI. The value of correlation is .517** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between NHRB and WOM.

Results

The analysis shown below consists of two sections; first section consists of six research hypotheses measurement by applying a simple regression analysis, and the second section consists of two last research hypotheses (7 & 8) by applying Sobel test to measure the mediation analysis between variables.
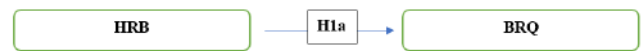
H1a: Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence Brand relationship quality.

Table 3: Correlations-hypothesis 1a-(HRB & BRQ)

Correlations		HRB	BRQ
HRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	352	352
BRQ	Pearson Correlation	.709**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	352	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above table demonstrates the correlation between HRB and BRQ, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .709** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and BRQ.

H1b: Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence customer engagement.

Table 4: Correlation-hypothesis 1b-(HRB & CE)

Correlations		HRB	CE
HRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.470**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	352	352
CE	Pearson Correlation	.470**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	352	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above table demonstrates the correlation between HRB and CE, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .470** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and CE.

H2a: Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence Brand relationship quality.

Table 5: Correlation-hypothesis 2a-(NHRB & CE)

Correlations		NONHRB	BRQ
NONHRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.217**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	353	353
BRQ	Pearson Correlation	.217**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between NHRB and BRQ, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .217** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between NHRB and BRQ.

H2b: Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence customer engagement.

Table 6: Correlation-hypothesis 2b-(NHRB & CE)

Correlations		NONHRB	CE
NONHRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.175**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	353	353
CE	Pearson Correlation	.175**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above table demonstrates the correlation between NHRB and CE, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .175** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between NHRB and CE.

H3a: Brand relationship quality is positively related to re-purchase intention.

Table 7: Correlation-hypothesis 3a-(BRQ & REI)

Correlations		BRQ	REI
BRQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	353	353
REI	Pearson Correlation	.589**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between BRQ and REI, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .589** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between BRQ and REI.

H3b: Brand relationship quality is positively related to word of mouth.

Table 8: Correlation-hypothesis 3b-(BRQ & WOM)

Correlations		BRQ	WOM
BRQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	353	353
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.476**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between BRQ and WOM, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .476** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between BRQ and WOM.

H4a: Customer engagement is positively related to word of mouth.

Table 9: Correlation-hypothesis 4a-(CE & WOM)

Correlations		CE	WOM
CE	Pearson Correlation	1	.623**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	353	353
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.623**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between CE and WOM, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .623** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between CE and WOM.

H4b: Customer engagement is positively related to Re-purchase intention.

Table 10: Correlation-hypothesis 4b-(CE & REP)

Correlations		CE	REI
CE	Pearson Correlation	1	.730**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	353	353
REI	Pearson Correlation	.730**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between CE and REI, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .730** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between CE and REI.

H5a: Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence word of mouth.

Table 11: Correlation-hypothesis 5a-(HRB & WOM)

Correlations		HRB	WOM
HRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.409**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	352	352
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.409**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	352	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between HRB and WOM, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .409** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and WOM.

Table 12: Correlation-hypothesis 5b-(HRB & REI)

Correlations		HRB	REI
HRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.533**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	352	352
REI	Pearson Correlation	.533**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	352	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between HRB and REI, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .533** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and REI.

H6a: Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence re-purchase intention.

Table 13: Correlation-hypothesis 6a-(NHRB & REI)

Correlations		NONHRB	REI
NONHRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.502**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	353	353
REI	Pearson Correlation	.502**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between NHRB and REI, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .502** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between NHRB and REI.

H6b: Non-hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence word of mouth.

Table 14: Correlation-hypothesis 6b-(NHRB & WOM)

Correlations		NONHRB	WOM
NONHRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.517**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	353	353
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.517**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between NHRB and WOM, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .517** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between NHRB and WOM.

H7a: BRQ mediates HRB and word of mouth

Table 15: Correlation-hypothesis 7a- (HRB, BRQ, WOM)

Correlations		WOM	HRB	BRQ
WOM	Pearson Correlation	1	.409**	.476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	353	352	353
HRB	Pearson Correlation	.409**	1	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	352	352	352
BRQ	Pearson Correlation	.476**	.709**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	353	352	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between WOM and HRB, WOM and BRQ, BRQ and HRB, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .409** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between WOM and HRB. Moreover, the value of correlation is .476** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between WOM and BRQ, and the value of correlation is .709** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between BRQ and HRB.

H7b: BRQ mediates HRB and re-purchase intentions

Table 16: Correlation-hypothesis 7b-(HRB, BRQ, REI)

Correlations		HRB	BRQ	REI
HRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.709**	.533**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	352	352	352
BRQ	Pearson Correlation	.709**	1	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	352	353	353
REI	Pearson Correlation	.533**	.589**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	352	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between HRB and BRQ, HRB and REI, REI and BRQ, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .709** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and BRQ. Moreover, the value of correlation is .533** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and REI, and the value of correlation is .589** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between REI and BRQ.

H8a: Customer engagement mediates HRB and word of mouth.

Table 17: Correlation-hypothesis 8a-(HRB, CE, WOM)

Correlations		HRB	CE	WOM
HRB	Pearson Correlation	1	.470**	.409**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	352	352	352
CE	Pearson Correlation	.470**	1	.623**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	352	353	353
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.409**	.623**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	352	353	353

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table demonstrates the correlation between HRB and CE, HRB and WOM, CE and WOM, as it can be seen that the value of correlation is .470** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and CE. Moreover, the value of correlation is .409** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between HRB and WOM, and the value of correlation is .623** this proves that there is a positive and significant correlation between CE and WOM.

Conclusion

Hotels' service quality in the contemporary hotel business is influenced by an extensive variety of influences, nonetheless the utmost significant features are inspired and happy individuals. Inadequately expert and dissatisfied hotel staffs could have long run negative influence on the hotels' service quality. The hotel should be directed by a mission to gain more effective human resource, for instance, employee's educational background, customer service, customer satisfaction, customer engagement and brand quality offered by hotel. The study aimed to investigate the background and result of brand relationship quality and customer engagement at hotels industry in the Northern of Iraq. The findings revealed that the highest value and most effective concerning measure the background and result of brand relationship quality and customer engagement at hotels industry in the Northern of Iraq, was first hypothesis which stated that Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence Brand relationship quality. In contrast, the lowest value was for second hypothesis (b) which stated that Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence customer engagement. Moreover, the study found that Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence customer engagement, Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence Brand relationship quality, Brand relationship

quality is positively related to re-purchase intention, Brand relationship quality is positively related to word of mouth, Customer engagement is positively related to word of mouth, Customer engagement is positively related to Re-purchase intention, Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence word of mouth, Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence re-purchase intention, Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence re-purchase intention, Non-Hotel stay related membership benefits of loyalty program positively influence word of mouth, BRQ mediates HRB and word of mouth, BRQ mediates HRB and re-purchase intentions, Customer engagement mediates HRB and word of mouth, and finally Customer engagement mediates HRB and re-purchase intention

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