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Marketing strategy, customer relationship management (CRM), and service quality on brand loyalty of Four-Star Hotels in Thailand

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Abstract---Now a days, in a competitive hotel market, brand loyalty is the major concern of hotels. Because the brand loyalty has vital importance for hotel industry to achieve higher performance. Hotel management and other practitioners are trying to identify and promote factors effecting the brand loyalty. Therefore, this study is attempted to examine the role of marketing strategy, service quality and customer relationship management (CRM) in brand loyalty among four-star hotels. Primary data collected from the four-star hotels of Thailand is used to examine the relationship between marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty. Data is collected through questionnaire and analyzed through Partial Least Square (PLS). Results of the study proved the important contribution of marketing strategy, service quality and CRM in brand loyalty. The combination between marketing strategy, service quality and CRM can promote brand loyalty among four-star hotels of Thailand. Therefore, management of four-star hotels should promote marketing strategy, service quality and CRM to enhance brand loyalty.

Keywords---marketing strategy, service quality, customer relationship management, brand loyalty.

Introduction

Hotel industry is major service industry having significant importance for the nations (Úbeda-García et al., 2021). It has key role to promote hospitality industry which has several benefits to the nations at national and international level. This industry is generating high revenue for most of the countries and contribute to the economic development activities. Therefore, it has key role to enhance economic development among the countries. This industry strengthening the economy globally through different ways. As this industry attracting tourists from various countries (Lozano, Rey-Maqueira, & Sastre, 2020) and generate revenue which is important for economic development. Furthermore, it has significant role

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1524

to enhance gross-domestic product (GDP) by providing several job opportunities for the people. The employment opportunities for the people enhance the GDP collectively which has important role to strengthen the economy. Furthermore, by providing job opportunities, this industry playing their role for the welfare of communities locally. Therefore, this is most important industry globally which has several benefits to the nations.

Hotel industry of Thailand is also one of leading industry globally (Saruno, 2021; Teanpitthayamas, Suttipun, & Lakkanwanit, 2021). After the completion of 2019, 784,000 hotel rooms were available in national market, which is 5.1% higher than 2018. Supply of rooms was significant in the South, including 226,000 rooms (increase with 6.7%) was home to 29% of all rooms of hotels in Thailand. Furthermore, 20% of rooms in the Thai hotels were in Bangkok with 160,000 rooms (increase with 4.6%). The Thai hotel industry is increasing volume along with the better performance. This is important for Thailand because Thailand is one of the leading countries in tourism. Therefore, quality hotels are needed for the tourism along with the high-quality services. However, this industry started facing issues which lead to the low performance in 2020. The performance of hotel industry in Thailand decreased in 2020 as compared to the 2019. The revenue from this industry in Thailand is shown in Figure 1. It shows that; the revenue in 2020 is decreased significantly which is even lower than 2016. From last five years, the revenue of Thai hotel industry is lowest in 2020 which is threatening.

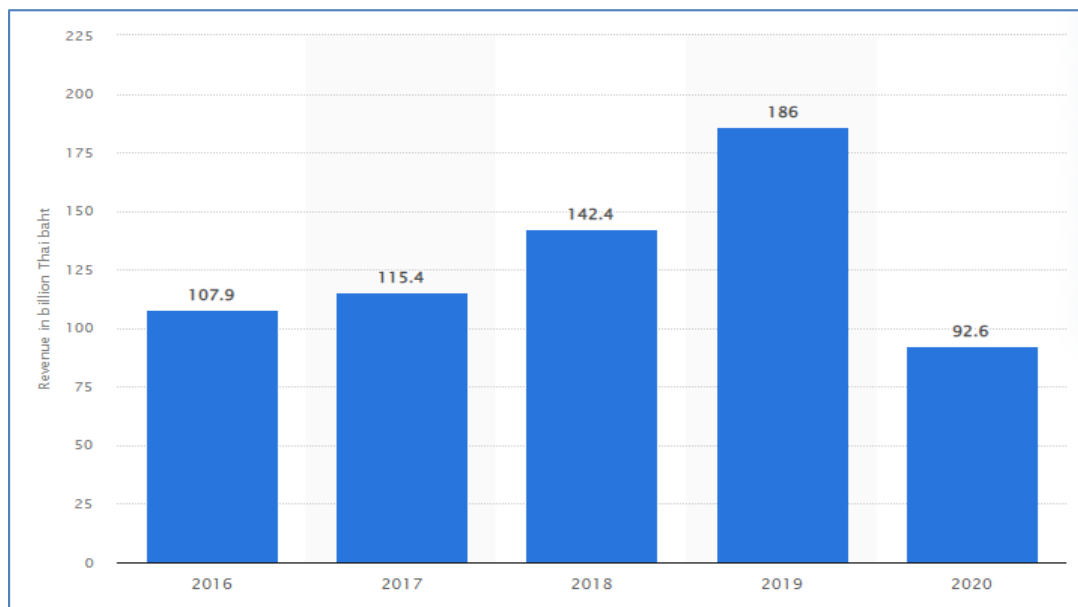


Figure 1. Hotel Industry Revenue in Thailand from 2016 to 2020

Source: Statista 2021

However, the decreasing performance of Thai hotel industry can be promoted through the promotion of brand loyalty. This study proposed that brand loyalty has the potential to enhance the performance (Liu, Hu, Lin, Tsai, & Xiao, 2020). On the other hand, the promotion of brand loyalty is a major challenge. This

study proposed that, brand loyalty can be enhanced through marketing strategy. The better implementation of marketing strategy can enhance brand loyalty among hotels. Additionally, service quality also has significant importance for brand loyalty (Ashraf, Ilyas, Imtiaz, & Ahmad, 2018; Reich, McCleary, Tepanon, & Weaver, 2006). Service quality is key to achieve higher brand loyalty in hotels. Both the marketing efforts and service quality has key role to enhance customer relationship management (CRM) which can lead to the brand loyalty.

Consequently, this study is attempted to examine the role of marketing strategy, service quality and CRM in brand loyalty among four-star hotels. Mediating role of CRM is also examined between marketing strategy, service quality and brand loyalty. Marketing strategy and service quality is considered by several previous studies (Liat, Mansori, Chuan, & Imrie, 2017; Maddinsyah, Sudaryana, & Sugiyanto, 2021), however, it is not addressed with the mediating role of CRM in relation to the hotel brand loyalty. Hence, this is very first study which examined the mediating role of CRM in relation to the hotel industry.

Hypotheses Development

Brand loyalty is the positive connection in which customers stick to a particular product or brand. Consumers who establish brand loyalty are devoted to a product as well as service use instead of others, which is determined by their repeat purchases in spite of competitors' attempts to lure them away. It has vital importance for business activities as it effect the business activities and lead to the increase or decrease in performance. Especially, brand loyalty in the hotel industry has major importance (Nuseir, 2020). Brand loyalty is associated with the several other factors which are focused on the current study. For instance, marketing strategy has key importance for brand loyalty. Furthermore, along with the marketing strategy, service quality is another important factor having major importance for brand loyalty. Both the factors have major role to enhance customer brand loyalty. Additionally, CRM is another important element having major importance for the brand loyalty. Marketing strategy and service quality foster the CRM which lead to the customer brand loyalty. Therefore, this study attempts to inspect the association between marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty which is shown in Figure 1.

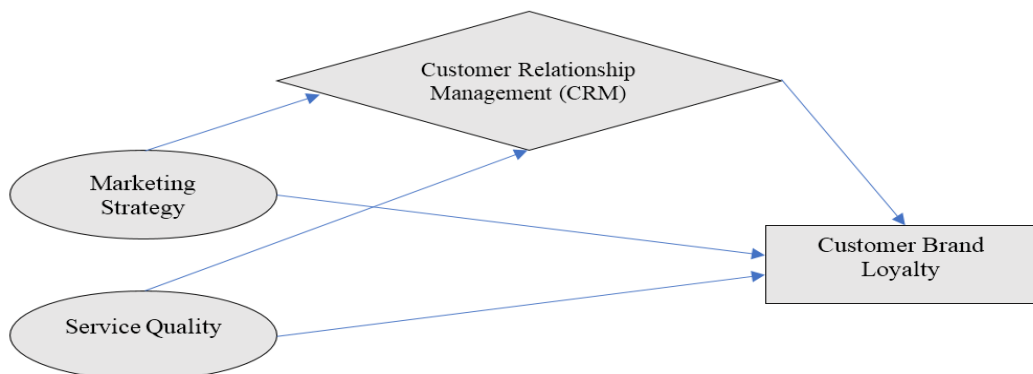


Figure 2. Framework of the study showing the relationship between marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty

Marketing Strategy and Customer Brand Loyalty

A marketing strategy implies to a business's complete game plan for reaching potential customer as well as turning them into long term customers of different products as well as services. The marketing strategy of a company includes the value proposition, strategic brand messaging, data on different target customer including demographics, and various other high-level elements. Marketing is the major element of companies (Concibido, 2021) and companies dependent majorly on the marketing activities. Because marketing activities increases the level of awareness among the customers related to the features of the product and services. It is important because most of the times people do not has idea about the latest product and services of a specific company or they do not have idea regarding the characteristics of products. Hence, in this condition, marketing activities play vital importance to enhance the awareness level among customers to enhance people awareness. Thus, marketing strategy has key importance for the companies which is linked with brand loyalty.

Brand loyalty is majorly depending on the marketing efforts of the company. Better marketing efforts has the ability to enhance customer loyalty. Marketing is a tool to attract customers towards the company. Therefore, earlier studies also reported that marketing strategy has positive role to build brand loyalty (Ismail, Nguyen, Chen, Melewar, & Mohamad, 2020; Nikhashemi, Tarofder, Gaur, & Haque, 2016). Thus, there is a key relationship between branding and marketing activities (Martin, Stewart, & Matta, 2005). Similar with the other organizations, marketing strategy has key role among hotels. For the hotel's, marketing plan is based on to capture and retain the customers through various strategies. The retention of the customers with a same hotel is the major part of brand loyalty (Keiningham, Cooil, Aksoy, Andreassen, & Weiner, 2007). Hence, it is proposed that;

Hypothesis 1. Marketing strategy has positive effect on brand loyalty.

Service Quality and Customer Brand Loyalty

Service quality is the major element among the service organizations. Particularly, services are the key to get success in business activities. Better quality to the hotel customers causes to increase the customer loyalty. Because customer loyalty is based on the retention of customers and services quality is the element in hotel which can increase the customer retention and causes to capture new customers. Therefore, service quality is the key concern of all the hotels (Cheng & Rashid, 2013; Sampaio, Hernández-Mogollón, & Rodrigues, 2019). Service quality include various elements. Most importantly it includes the time of services or delivery of the order, setting environment in the hotel, availability of other facilities, availability of better payment method etc. Better feedback of customers on services of the hotels can lead to promote brand loyalty. As it is addressed by Ashraf et al. (2018); Geovani, Ronald, and Amelia (2021), service quality has positive role to enhance brand loyalty. Therefore, following hypothesis is proposed;

Hypothesis 2. Service quality has positive effect on brand loyalty.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Customer Brand Loyalty

CRM is the mixture of various practices, strategies as well as latest technologies that businesses utilize to handle and analyze the way of customer interactions along with the data during the customer lifecycle. The aim is to enhance customer relationships and help in customer retaining and drive sales growth. It is one of the most important practices among the organizations which has valuable contribution to the customers retention. CRM has important role to promote brand loyalty. Several previous studies identified the important role of CRM in brand loyalty (Ibrahim, Abbas, & Kamal, 2021; Shokouhyar, Shokoohyar, Raja, & Gupta, 2021). CRM is based on various factors. Corresponding to the current study, it is based on marketing strategy and services quality. Better marketing strategy and services quality lead to the CRM. Therefore, CRM has relationship with the marketing strategy and services quality which is addressed in following hypothesis along with mediating role of CRM.

Hypothesis 3. Marketing strategy has positive effect on CRM.

Hypothesis 4. Service quality has positive effect on CRM.

Hypothesis 5. CRM has positive effect on brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 6. CRM mediates the relationship between marketing strategy and brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 7. CRM mediates the relationship between service quality and brand loyalty.

Methodology

The current study designed a survey questionnaire for data collection. Primary data were used to examine the relationship between marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty. Marketing strategy is used to examine the overall plan of the hotel towards improvement of hotel business in relation to the services of hotels. Service quality is considered to examine the overall quality provided by the concerned hotel in terms of services. CRM is measured by considering the improvement in relationship of company with the customers to enhance hotel business. Brand loyalty is measured by considering the customers feeling or attachment with the specific hotel services. All these variables are measured through Likert scale which is most appropriate to examine the opinion and views of people. The questionnaire is designed by using various sections which include the general information about the respondents and scale items. The first part of the questionnaire was developed to collect the general information of the respondents, not related to the marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty. Second part of the questionnaire was developed to collected data related to the dependent variable; customer loyalty. The third part of the questionnaire is developed to collect data related to the other independent variables; marketing strategy and service quality. Finally, the fourth part was developed to collect data for mediating variable; CRM.

Population of this study was the four-star hotels working in Thailand. Therefore, working manager in four-star hotels of Thailand was considered as the respondents of the study. Questionnaires were distributed among the employees in four-start hotels after explaining the objective of the study. This study considered 480 sample size for data collection which is appropriate. Finally, after

the distribution of questionnaire, this study received 450 questionnaires. However, all the questionnaires were not useable. Few respondents have not filled the questionnaire with full intention and significant part of questionnaire was missing. Total 440 questionnaire were used in data analysis. Furthermore, before data analysis, this study considered preliminary data analysis which is important to remove the errors in the data (Ahmad et al., 2018). Errors in the data may be form the respondents and it may possible during data entry. To fix the errors, this study carried out data screening which is given in Table 1. It shows that data has no error as the data is free from missing value and outlier.

Table 1
Missing Value, Outlier and Normality of the Data

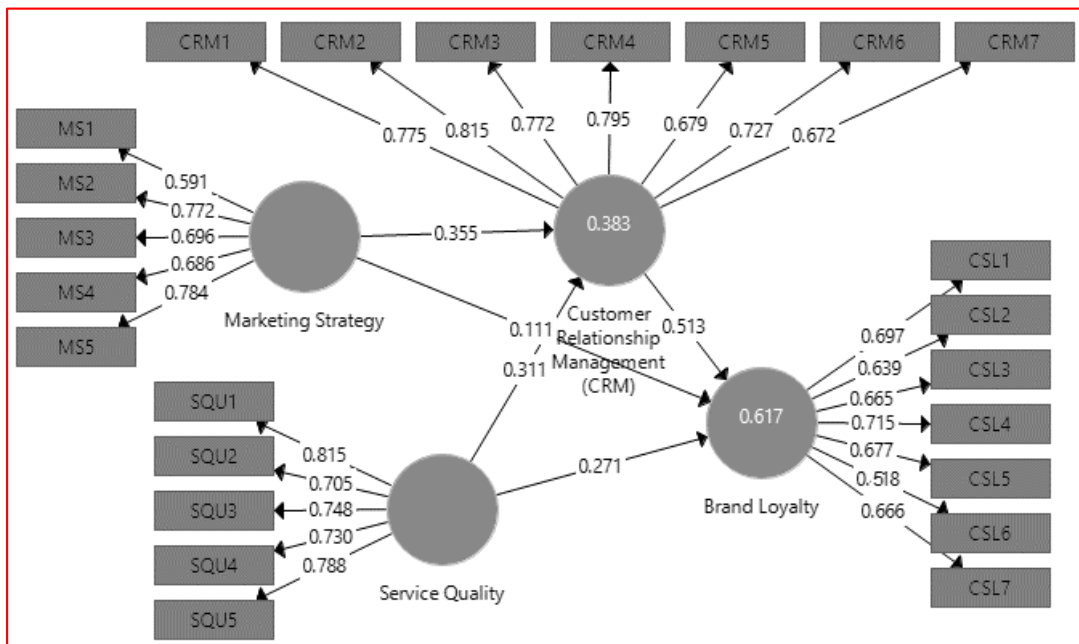
	No.	Missing	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
MS1	1	0	2.084	2	1	5	1.064	1.793	2.094
MS2	2	0	1.856	2	1	5	0.973	2.368	2.037
MS3	3	0	2.012	2	1	5	0.793	1.275	1.313
MS4	4	0	1.644	2	1	5	1.092	1.743	2.084
MS5	5	0	1.932	2	1	5	2.083	2.16	1.575
SQU1	6	0	1.884	2	1	5	1.024	2.548	1.591
SQU2	7	0	2.026	2	1	5	1.024	4.37	2.039
SQU3	8	0	1.726	2	1	5	0.895	3.427	1.67
SQU4	9	0	2.097	2	1	5	0.897	3.214	1.528
SQU5	10	0	1.836	2	1	5	1.066	2.305	1.635
CRM1	11	0	1.979	2	1	5	1.236	0.993	1.404
CRM2	12	0	1.911	2	1	5	1.053	1.255	1.283
CRM3	13	0	1.842	2	1	5	1.005	1.235	1.264
CRM4	14	0	1.918	2	1	5	0.99	1.895	1.409
CRM5	15	0	1.808	2	1	5	0.878	1.643	1.306
CRM6	16	0	1.938	2	1	5	0.995	1.696	1.348
CRM7	17	0	1.76	2	1	5	0.967	1.978	1.508
CSL1	18	0	1.829	2	1	5	1.023	2.344	1.554
CSL2	19	0	1.637	1	1	5	0.851	5.153	1.989
CSL3	20	0	1.822	2	1	5	0.934	1.927	1.383
CSL4	21	0	2.075	2	1	5	1.047	0.646	1.076
CSL5	22	0	1.671	2	1	5	0.777	5.36	1.801
CSL6	23	0	1.932	2	1	5	1.038	1.771	1.401
CSL7	24	0	1.904	2	1	5	0.995	2.149	1.458

Note: MS = Marketing Strategy; SQU = Service Quality; "Customer Relationship Management" = CRM; CSL = Customer Brand Loyalty

Findings

Figure 3 shows the Partial Least Square (PLS) measurement model. The measurement model is also known as outer model which is grounded on reliability as well as validity. Data analysis through PLS required the consideration of reliability and validity though confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which is important before to examine the relationship between variables. Therefore, this study addressed the values of factor loading, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The factor loading must be above 0.5,

CR must be above 0.7 and AVE must be above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2012). Results are given in Table 2 which shows that factor loadings are higher than minimum level. Marketing strategy is addressed through five items having factor loadings between 0.591 to 0.784. Service quality has factor loading between 0.705 to 0.815 which is measured through five items. Furthermore, CRM also achieved the minimum criteria of factor loadings (0.672 to 0.815) which is measured through seven items. Finally, brand loyalty is measured through seven items with factor loadings between 0.518 to 0.715. Furthermore, previous studies suggested that convergent validity can be achieved by examining the CR above 0.7 and AVE above 0.5 (J. Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2016). All the value for of marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty have CR above 0.7 and AVE above 0.5 which achieved the convergent validity. Additionally, discriminant validity is achieved by using heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)_{0.9} which is given in Table 3.



Note: MS = Marketing Strategy; SQU = Service Quality; “Customer Relationship Management” = CRM; CSL = Customer Brand Loyalty

Figure 3. Measurement Model

Table 2
Factor Loadings

Variables	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	CRM1	0.775	0.87	0.899	0.562
	CRM2	0.815			
	CRM3	0.772			
	CRM4	0.795			
	CRM5	0.679			
	CRM6	0.727			
	CRM7	0.672			
Customer Brand Loyalty	CSL1	0.697	0.761	0.831	0.501
	CSL2	0.639			
	CSL3	0.665			
	CSL4	0.715			
	CSL5	0.677			
	CSL6	0.418			
	CSL7	0.666			
Marketing Strategy	MS1	0.591	0.752	0.833	0.503
	MS2	0.772			
	MS3	0.696			
	MS4	0.686			
	MS5	0.784			
Service Quality	SQU1	0.815	0.816	0.871	0.575
	SQU2	0.705			
	SQU3	0.748			
	SQU4	0.73			
	SQU5	0.788			

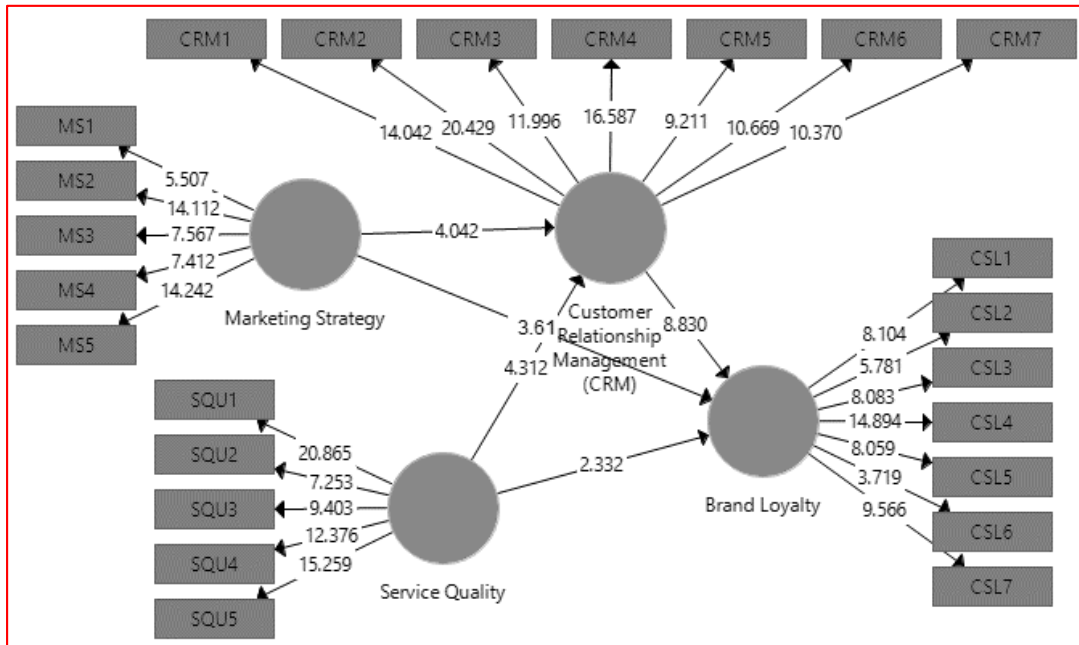
Note: MS = Marketing Strategy; SQU = Service Quality; "Customer Relationship Management" = CRM; CSL = Customer Brand Loyalty

Table 3
HTMT_{0.9}

	Customer Brand Loyalty	Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	Marketing Strategy	Service Quality
Customer Brand Loyalty				
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	0.881			
Marketing Strategy	0.79	0.685		
Service Quality	0.797	0.647	0.713	

While examining the effect of marketing strategy, service quality and CRM on brand loyalty, PLS structural model which is most appropriate is recommend is to use (Hair et al., 2014; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). In this step of PLS, the effect of marketing strategy is examined on brand loyalty. The effect of marketing strategy on brand loyalty is significant with t-value 3.61. The effect of service

quality is examined on brand loyalty which is significant with t-value 2.332. Furthermore, the effect of marketing brand is considered in relations to the CRM. This relationship is significant with t-value 4.042. The effect of service quality is examined in relation to CRM which is significant having t-value 4.312. Finally, while examining direct effect, the effect of CRM is examined in relation to the brand loyalty. The relationship between CRM and brand loyalty found significant and positive with t-value 8.830. The model is highlighted in Figure 4. Results of direct effect are given in Table 4.



Note: MS = Marketing Strategy; SQU = Service Quality; “Customer Relationship Management” = CRM; CSL = Customer Brand Loyalty

Figure 4. Structural Model

Table 4
Direct Effect Results

	Beta	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values
CRM -> Customer Brand Loyalty	0.513	0.516	0.058	8.83	0
Marketing Strategy -> Customer Brand Loyalty	0.111	0.11	0.03	3.61	0
Marketing Strategy -> CRM	0.355	0.349	0.088	4.042	0
Service Quality -> Customer Brand Loyalty	0.271	0.272	0.116	2.332	0.02
Service Quality -> CRM	0.311	0.323	0.072	4.312	0

All the indirect effects are reported in Table 5. The indirect effect of CRM is examined between marketing strategy and brand loyalty. Furthermore, the indirect effect of CRM is examined between service quality and brand loyalty. The indirect effect between marketing strategy and brand loyalty is significant with t-value 3.841. Furthermore, the indirect effect of CRM is examined between service

quality and brand loyalty which is significant with t-value 3.867. Finally, the indirect effect histogram is given in Figure 5 and Figure 6. The predictive relevance is given in Table 6. The predictive relevance value is above zero for brand loyalty and CRM which shows the certain level of quality.

Table 5
Indirect Effect Results

	Beta	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values
Marketing Strategy -> CRM -> Customer Brand Loyalty	0.182	0.179	0.047	3.841	0
Service Quality -> CRM -> Customer Brand Loyalty	0.159	0.167	0.041	3.867	0

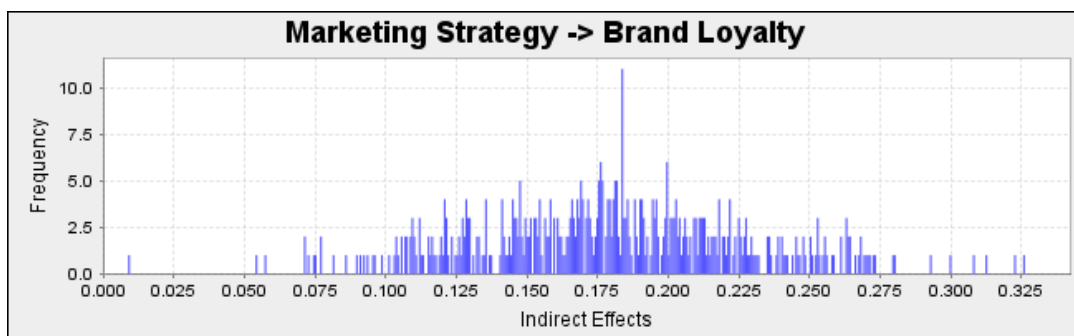


Figure 5. Indirect Effect Histogram between Marketing Strategy and Brand Loyalty

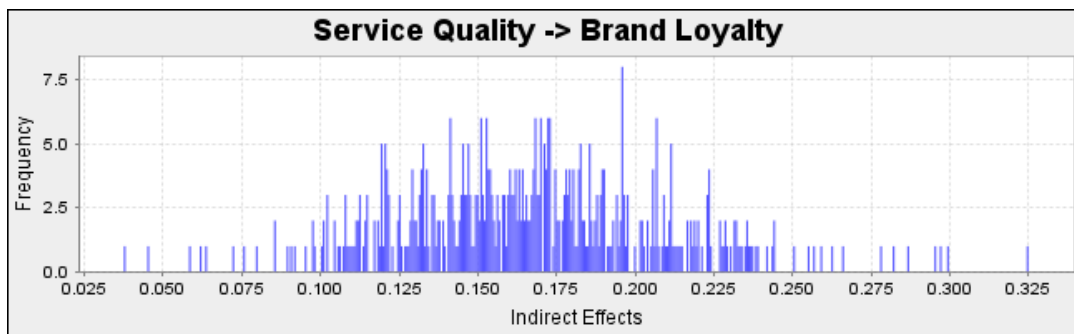


Figure 6. Indirect Effect Histogram between Service Quality and Brand Loyalty

Table 6
Predictive Relevance (Q²)

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Brand Loyalty	1,022.00	804.152	0.213
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	1,022.00	840.207	0.178
Marketing Strategy	730	730	
Service Quality	730	730	

Discussion and Conclusion

This study is attempted to examine the role of marketing strategy, service quality and CRM in brand loyalty among four-star hotels. Both the direct and indirect effect is examined. The direct effect of marketing strategy and service quality is examined on brand loyalty and CRM. Furthermore, the mediation effect of CRM is also examined. Four-star hotels are considered in this study to examine brand loyalty. Four-star hotels are considered because several previous studies conducted research on hotel industry, but the relationship between marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty is not focused among the four-star hotels of Thailand. Thus, to fill this gap, this study proposed five hypotheses to examine direct effect and two hypotheses to examine indirect effect.

The hypothesis 1 of this study examined the effect of marketing strategy on brand loyalty. This hypothesis shows the significant relationship between marketing strategy and brand loyalty. The positive connection is found between marketing strategy and brand loyalty. Results shows that marketing strategy can increase the brand loyalty among four-start hotels. These results are similar with the previous studies because the literature also shows positive role of marketing strategies on brand loyalty (Ismail et al., 2020). Hypothesis 2 reported the relationship between service quality and brand loyalty. The positive effect of service quality is found in relation to the brand loyalty. The increase in service quality among the four-star hotels can foster the brand loyalty which has positive influence to enhance business. Therefore, the service quality is most important which is needed to enhance among the hotels. This is also consistent with the previous studies (Ashraf et al., 2018; Widjaja, Widnyana, & Sapta, 2021). Hypothesis 3 shows the relationship between marketing strategy and CRM. Statistical analysis demonstrates that marketing strategy has positive effect on CRM. Better implementation of marketing strategy can produce better results in terms of CRM. Therefore, the relationship of employees with the customers can be promoted by implementing better marketing strategy. Previous studies to examine the relationship between marketing strategies and CRM also proved the same results (Rodhiah et al., 2021). Hypothesis 4 identified the effect of service quality of CRM. The results proved that better service quality provided to the customers of four-star hotels can promote better relationship between the hotel and customers which has key importance for better performance of brand. Therefore, increase in quality of services can increase the CRM. Previous research papers also found the relationship between service quality and CRM (Aldaihani & Ali, 2018). Hypothesis 5 is grounded on the relationship between CRM and brand loyalty. CRM is the important factor which has influence on brand loyalty.

Although, all the businesses always try to develop good relationship with the customers, however, it is most important in service sector. As hotels are majorly based on the services, therefore, better relationship between hotels and customers can foster the brand loyalty. Thus, the increase in CRM increases the brand loyalty among the customers. The positive connection between CRM and brand loyalty is also reported by previous studies (Eelen, Özturan, & Verlegh, 2017). Hence, it is most vital for the management of four-star hotels to enhance better relationship with the customers because the better relationship attract the customers to avail the hotel services again and again.

Finally, while examining the indirect effect, this study developed two hypotheses. Hypotheses 6 shows the indirect effect of CRM between marketing strategy and brand loyalty. This indirect effect is significant showing that, CRM reflect the positive effect of marketing strategy on brand loyalty. Therefore, CRM transferring the effect of marketing strategy on brand loyalty. Similarly, hypothesis 7 shows the indirect effect of CRM between service quality and brand loyalty. In this case, CRM also reflect the positive effect of service quality on brand loyalty. Therefore, in both cases, CRM has the potential to promote brand loyalty through marketing strategy and service quality.

Finally, results of the study reported that; the relationship between marketing strategy, service quality and CRM has key importance to promote brand loyalty. Strong the relationship between marketing strategy, service quality and CRM, better will be the brand loyalty. Although, CRM has positive role to promote brand loyalty, it also requires marketing efforts and better quality to build relationship with the customers. Both the marketing strategy and service quality has important contribution to promote CRM. Therefore, marketing strategy and service quality promote CRM which lead to the brand loyalty among four-star hotels in Thailand.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, the current study has rich contribution to the literature in the current filed. This study addressed the connection between marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty. This relationship is not hilighted by other studies conducted by the previous researchers. Specifically, this unique relationship is not addressed by literature in relation to the four-star hotels. Studies demonstrated the brand loyalty of hotel industry, however, brand loyalty among the four-star hotels is less addressed by the literature. Most importantly, this relationship is missing among the hotel industry of Thailand. The combination between marketing strategy and service quality is important to promote brand loyalty among the four-star hotels which is not addressed by the previous studies. Numerous studies conducted research on hotel industry, but the relationship between marketing strategy, service quality, CRM and brand loyalty is not focused on Thailand. Additionally, this study also has theoretical implications because this study explored the mediating role of CRM. First mediation effect is found between marketing strategy and brand loyalty which is not proved in previous studies. Second mediation effect of CRM is found between

service quality and brand loyalty. Finally, this study reported the important relationship which has major theoretical implications.

Practical Implications

Practically, the current study is most beneficial for the management of hospitality industry. Especially, this study is crucial for the management of four-star hotels. Therefore, the rich theoretical contribution of this research lead to the vital practical implications for the management of four-star hotels. For the results of this study, management of hotels can make better marketing strategies. Furthermore, management can make various important strategies to promote brand loyalty by reviewing the results of this study. Results of this study demonstrates that marketing strategy is important to promote brand loyalty. Therefore, practitioners should enhance marketing strategy. Moreover, this study reported the positive effect of service quality in brand loyalty. The management of hotels can enhance brand loyalty through service quality. Because it is the most influential element in service industry to promote business activities through the promotion of brand loyalty. Similarly, CRM has key importance to enhance brand loyalty which is proved in this study. Hence, management should enhance relationship with the customers to promote brand loyalty. Additionally, it is suggested to the employees of four-star hotel to develop various strategies to enhance better relationship with the customers. In this direction, the current study suggested to the employees to develop better marketing strategies. As the quality of marketing activities can active higher marketing performance which may lead to the better development of relationship between the employees of hotels and customers. Therefore, the implementation of better strategies related to the marketing can promote brand loyalty among hotels. It is also suggested to the management of four-star hotels to promote CRM with the help of better service quality. Service quality is always proved to be the key to better relationships management between employees and customers.

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