

# Enhancing hotel brand performance through fostering brand relationship orientation in the minds of consumers

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- We investigate the effects of perceived brand relationship orientation (PBRO) on hotel brand performance.
- Consumer-Brand Identification (CBI) and anticipated emotions mediate the effects of PBRO on hotel brand performance.
- The mediating effects of CBI are only significant when consumers have high product category involvement.

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## ABSTRACT

Hotels are becoming increasingly oriented towards developing relationships with their consumers (patrons/guests), giving rise to a heavy focus on consumer-brand relationships in tourism and hospitality research. This study examines the extent to which consumers' perceived relationship orientations of hotel brands (i.e., PBRO) influences their identification with and anticipated emotions towards hotel brands, which in turn drives desirable performance outcomes for hotels such as the share of wallet, consideration set size, and revisit intention. To test our hypotheses, we recruited 376 respondents via Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk). We found that consumer-brand identification and anticipated emotions mediate the relationship between perceived brand relationship orientation and all performance outcome variables. These mediating effects are moderated by consumer involvement with hotel choice. Specifically, consumer involvement positively moderates the link between PBRO and consumer-brand identification and negatively moderates the effects of PBRO on anticipated emotions.

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## 1. Introduction

The growing role of branding is well documented in the tourism and hospitality sector, particularly in the highly competitive hotel industry. According to a recent report, the most valuable hotel brands in 2016 were Hilton, with a brand value of US\$8.4 billion, followed by Marriott, in second place with a brand value of over US\$5 billion, and Hyatt in third place, at over US\$4 billion (BrandFinance, 2017). Managing a hotel brand effectively presents numerous benefits for managers in terms of the ability to obtain a premium price for rooms, grow market share, increase consumer loyalty, and stimulate positive word-of-mouth patron referrals

(Kayaman & Arasli, 2007; Sangster, Wolton, & McKenney, 2001). Premised on these benefits and others, hotels have become increasingly interested in developing relationships between their brands and their customers. Indeed, over the past decade, the topic of consumer-brand relationships has attracted increasing interests in the tourism and hospitality literature (Chen & Phou, 2013; Hudson, Roth, Madden, & Hudson, 2015; Xie & Heung, 2012).

The choice of hotel accommodation is a significant decision for most travelers (hereafter referred to as consumers). For many, it is also a complex decision-making process (Li, Law, Vu, & Rong, 2013; Sohrabi, Vanani, Tahmasebipur, & Fazli, 2012). A strong brand helps to simplify consumers' decision-making process by reducing perceived risks and increasing expectations (Keller, 2008). Moreover, many consumers choose a particular hotel because of their strong relationship with the hotel brand (Mattila, 2007; Scanlan & McPhail, 2000). Indeed, developing a strong relationship with

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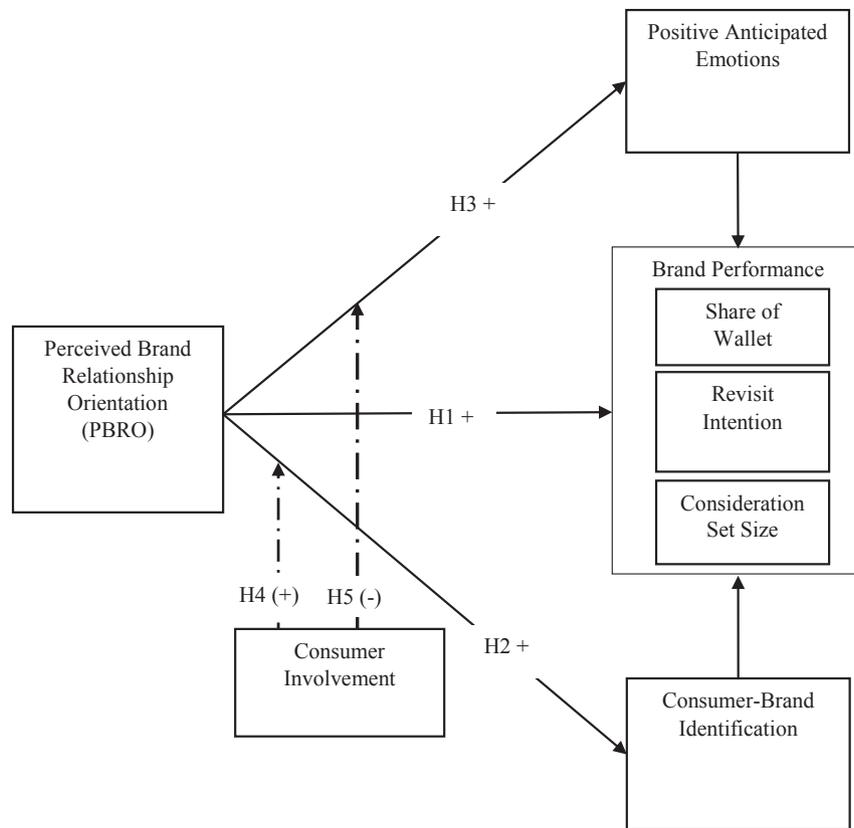


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

consumers “is increasingly emerging as a strategy for organizations that strive to retain loyal and satisfied consumers in today’s highly competitive environment” (Meng & Elliott, 2008, p. 509). Despite the importance of consumer-brand relationships in improving a company’s brand performance, there are notable research gaps in this area. As Papista and Dimitriadis (2012, p. 34) noted, “the literature on brand management and relationship development has so far emerged as two separate streams, despite the possibilities for complementarity between the two fields.” Drawing on relationship marketing and brand management literature, this study examines the role of consumer-perceived brand relationship orientation (hereafter referred to as PBRO) in affecting brand performance.

Relationship marketing theory postulates that consumers’ perceptions of the strength and quality of their relationship with the brand shape their behavior in the relationship (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Verhoef, 2003). Indeed, consumers who believe that they have a strong relationship with a brand are less likely to patronize other brands (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Grounded in relationship marketing theory, we posit that PBRO, defined as consumers’ perceptions of a brand’s genuine interest in developing relationships with them (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012), have positive implications for important hotel performance outcomes such as share of wallet, consideration set size, and revisit intention.

However, the assumption that relationship orientation is relevant to all consumers may not be completely true. For instance, the relationship orientation of a hotel brand such as Hilton or Sheraton may not necessarily lead directly to stronger revisit intention for all hotel consumers, as this intention may vary between consumers

depending on their level of involvement (Hochgraeffe, Faulk, & Vieregge, 2012). Indeed, consumer involvement has been found to influence the consumer decision-making process in the tourism sector (Chen & Tsai, 2008; Hochgraeffe et al., 2012). We rely on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM - Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983) to guide our understanding of these relationships, such as the role of consumer involvement as a moderator of the relationship between PBRO and its outcomes.

The existing literature has recognized that consumers’ emotions and cognitions have distinct effects on behavior (Millar & Tesser, 1986). Therefore, for a hotel brand to attain strong performance outcomes, it needs to connect with customers through emotional and cognitive routes (Nyffenegger, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Malaer, 2015). The emotional route relates to how consumers feel in relation to consuming or experiencing the brand (i.e., anticipated emotions) (Bagozzi, Dholakia, & Basuroy, 2003), whereas the cognitive route relates to how consumers *think* about themselves in relation to a brand (i.e., consumer-brand identification) (Wolter, Brach, Cronin, & Bonn, 2016). We believe that examining the specific emotional and cognitive mechanisms of how PBRO affects brand performance outcomes has important theoretical and practical implications. Moreover, while prior studies have examined involvement as a moderator of consumer-brand identification and its drivers (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012; Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013), no research has explored the role of involvement as a moderator within the PBRO–brand performance setting, especially in tourism and hospitality services. Identification of both the mechanisms and the boundary conditions of such a relationship helps theorists and practitioners to better understand the

effectiveness of consumers' cognitive and emotional routes to brand-related outcomes under varying degrees of consumer involvement.

## 2. Theoretical development and hypotheses

The central component of our theoretical framework (see Fig. 1) is consumers' perception of a brand's willingness and ability to develop and maintain relationships with them (i.e. PBRO) (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012). According to relationship marketing theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), consumers consider both the functional and relational benefits associated with a brand when making purchase decisions. Indeed, consumers “not only care about a brand's features and benefits, but also about a relational aspect of brand perception” (Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012, p. 166). When consumers regard a brand as a relationship partner, they may develop attachments (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011), demand commitment, and care more about the satisfaction derived from their favored brands (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012). PBRO is an indicator of consumers' perceptions of the brand's concern and desire to have a relationship with its consumers, which in turn influences consumers' trust and commitment (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012).

The mediator variables in this study, consumer-brand identification and anticipated emotions, reflect the cognitive and emotional route through which PBRO affects brand performance outcomes. According to relationship marketing theory (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012), PBRO has positive effects on consumer attitudes and intentions toward the brand. However, such relationships may not be consistent across all customers. According to the ELM, individuals process information through the peripheral or central route depending on their level of involvement (Petty et al., 1983). We expect that the relationships between PBRO and brand performance outcomes vary depending on customers' involvement with the product category. On this basis, we propose that the effects of PBRO on consumer-brand identification and anticipated emotions are moderated by consumer involvement.

The outcome variables in the present study—share of wallet, consideration set size, and revisit intention—were selected because they reflect important performance measures in the service sector (Nyffenegger et al., 2015) that significantly affect revenue generation (Cooil, Keiningham, Aksoy, & Hsu, 2007). Within the hotel industry, these brand performance outcomes reflect an internal growth path whereby hotels can increase revenue from their existing consumers (Tanford, 2013). In the present study, share of wallet refers to the proportion of a hotel patron's spending on a target hotel brand compared to total spending on all hotels (total category spending). Consideration set size refers to the number of hotel brands that a consumer evaluates when making a purchase decision. Revisit intention refers to a hotel patron's desire to select a target hotel brand as a future accommodation choice.

### 2.1. Perceived brand relationship orientation and its impact on share of wallet, revisit intention, and consideration set size

The tourism literature reveals a growing interest in the role of relationship marketing in a firm's brand strategy and performance (Oromendía, Paz, & Rufin, 2015; Rahimi & Kozak, 2017; Ryu & Lee, 2017). From a profitability perspective, the impact of relationship marketing strategies on brand performance outcomes is important, as it helps firms to develop brand relationship strategies based on what truly matters to consumers. The central tenet of brand relationship theory assumes that the consumers personify a brand so that they can treat it as a relationship partner (Fournier, 1998).

Relationship orientation depicts “a set of informal promises for future benefits stemming from the relationship” (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012, p. 109).

Relationship orientation has been frequently cited as a key precursor to consumer loyalty (Day, 2000; De Wulf & Odekerken-Schroder, 2001; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006). In exploring loyalty, researchers have used various indicators, including repeat visit, share of wallet, and consideration set size (Baloglu, Zhong, & Tanford, 2017; Mattila, 2006; Meyer-Waarden & Benavent, 2009). Relationship marketing theory posits that consumers who have a strong relationship with a firm are likely to engage in repeat purchase behavior, increasing a brand's share of wallet (Verhoef, 2003). From a branding perspective, it has been shown that consumers' positive evaluation of a firm's PBRO leads to stronger loyalty and affective commitment (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012). Grounded in the relationship marketing paradigm, PBRO signifies a brand's desire and commitment to a relationship with its consumers beyond a transactional exchange. When consumers perceive that a hotel is committed to maintaining and developing relationships with them, they develop a stronger bond with the hotel. This, in turn, forges more favorable responses to the hotel in terms of a stronger intention to revisit the hotel over time and to spend more money patronizing the hotel. It is also expected that as the level of PBRO of a hotel increases, consumers' commitment to the hotel is strengthened (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012), and manifested by a higher share of wallet and stronger revisit intention. Therefore,

**H1a.** PBRO is positively related to share of wallet, such that the greater the level of PBRO of the hotel, the larger the share of wallet is for the hotel.

**H1b.** PBRO is positively related to revisit intention, such that the greater the level of PBRO of the hotel, the stronger the intention is to revisit the hotel.

Consumers generally restrict the number of brands they consider purchasing into a smaller set (i.e., consideration set) to help them simplify their decision-making process (Hauser, 2014). The reduction of consumers' consideration set size is the core objective of relationship marketing (Leung, Bougoure, & Miller, 2014). Importantly, for hotels, a consumer's consideration set is likely influenced by the strength of the PBRO that consumers have for a specific hotel brand. This is critical because consumers tend to develop strong bonds only with a small number of brands (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Our belief is that the influence of PBRO on desired marketing outcomes for a hotel brand occurs because consumers' evaluations exceed their basic expectations of the hotel brand attributes. Hence, the nature of the consumer-brand relationship exceeds the anticipated transaction costs of the exchange. In these situations, hotels that demonstrate to consumers their commitment to fostering relationships are likely to be favorably positioned in those consumers' consideration set.

Although not clearly established in the literature, there is evidence that a positive perception of a firm's relationship orientation reduces consideration set size. Relationship marketing theory posits that customers who have strong relationships with a firm are likely to be loyal to the firm (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Nyffenegger et al. (2015, p. 6) found that “brand relationship creates an inhibitory effect on the recall of other brands ... leading to a smaller consideration set size”. Further, Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012 found that PBRO has positive effects on consumers' attitudinal loyalty. The size of a consumer's consideration set size is indicative of his or her loyalty to a particular firm. For example, in the hotel

context, those who are loyal to Sheraton are less likely to consider other hotel brands when booking their next trip. As such, we contend that a higher level of PBRO leads to a smaller consideration set size. As consumers' perceptions of the hotel brand's relationship orientation are enhanced, their consideration set size for hotel brands is reduced. Therefore,

**H1c.** PBRO is negatively related to consideration set size, such that the greater the PBRO of the hotel, the smaller the consideration set size is for hotels.

## 2.2. *The mediating role of consumer-brand identification in the relationships between PBRO and share of wallet, revisit intention, and consideration set size*

While we have outlined the potential of PBRO to influence desirable outcomes for hotels, there are alternate pathways through which PBRO influences brand performance outcomes. A critical path is through the role of consumer-brand identification. The notion of consumer-brand identification is grounded in social identity theory, which holds that “individuals derive their self-concept from knowledge of their membership in a group (or groups)” (Greene, 1999, p. 393). Consumers have ideal images of themselves, and give these images concrete form by identifying with brands that can enhance their self-image (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008). This identification generates important psychological bonds and connections between individuals and target brands. Brand identification creates a resistance to brand switching (Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010) and leads to a positive attitude towards and intent to purchase the brand (Escalas, 2004; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008). Within the tourism literature, scholars have argued that consumers' identification with a hotel brand is an effective indicator of future behavior (So, King, Hudson, & Meng, 2017; So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2013; Zenker, Braun, & Petersen, 2017).

In our theoretical framework, consumer-brand identification is positioned as a cognitive construct that mediates the relationship between PBRO and brand performance outcomes. In the literature, researchers focus on different parts of consumer-brand relationships when defining consumer-brand identification (Wolter et al., 2016). For example, Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012, p. 407) define consumer-brand identification as “consumer's perceived state of oneness with a brand,” whereas Lam et al. (2010, p. 130) define the construct as “a customer's psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with a brand”. In the present study, we regard consumer-brand identification as a cognitive representation, which is consistent with that of Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) and Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012), who argue that the emotional element of consumer-brand connections must be kept separate from consumer identification with the brand.

Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) assert that organizations cannot develop brand identification with all consumers. Rather, for consumers to form identification with a brand, a meaningful relationship must first be established. Indeed, a strong reciprocal relationship is a critical element of social identity theory (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004; Stets & Burke, 2000). In our conceptual framework, PBRO signals to consumers the brand's willingness “to develop a long lasting relationship ... that implies a perceived reciprocity of the given and received benefits for the partner” (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012, p. 1609). Therefore, consumers who perceive a hotel brand to be highly relationship oriented are more likely to identify with that brand.

Prior studies show that consumers' identification with a brand positively affects their revisit intentions (So et al., 2013) and share

of wallet (Kang, Alejandro, & Groza, 2015). While the literature does not provide direct evidence of the link between consumer-brand identification and consideration set size, prior studies have examined the positive effects of consumer-brand identification and loyalty (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010; Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013). Since small consideration set size is indicative of consumer loyalty (Sambandam & Lord, 1995), we contend that consumers who identify with a particular hotel brand are more likely to have a smaller consideration set size when engaging in hotel selection. As consumer-brand identification is proposed as a mediator in our theoretical framework, we predict that consumers' perception of a firm's brand relationship orientation leads to a stronger sense of identification, which in turn influences their share of wallet for the hotel brand, consideration set size when choosing a hotel stay, and intention to revisit a specific hotel. Therefore,

**H2.** Consumer-brand identification with a hotel mediates the relationships between the PBRO of the hotel and its (a) share of wallet, (b) revisit intention, and (c) consideration set size.

## 2.3. *The mediating role of anticipated emotions in the relationships between PBRO and share of wallet, revisit intention, and consideration set size*

The importance of consumers' emotions has been emphasized in previous tourism and hospitality research (Hudson et al., 2015; Io, 2016; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016). Prior research across a range of settings demonstrates that an effortful decision-making process engages individuals' emotional processes and provokes forward-looking affective responses (e.g., Han, Hwang, Kim, & Jung, 2015; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). The concept of anticipated emotions in this study refers to “a favorable aspect of prospect-based anticipated emotional responses” (Han et al., 2015, p. 99). The role of anticipated emotions in influencing consumer behavior has been well-acknowledged in the tourism literature (Han et al., 2015; Song, Lee, Kang, & Boo, 2012). For example, in the hotel context consumers may anticipate positive emotional responses (e.g., ‘excited’, ‘happy’, ‘glad’, and ‘satisfied’) when thinking about their next stay with a hotel which influences their revisit intentions (Han et al., 2015).

In our view, anticipated emotions act as an intervening factor that links PBRO to brand performance outcomes. Our contention is premised on the work of Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012, who found a positive link between PBRO and affective commitment. In the organizational behavior literature, affective commitment is often conceptualized as emotional attachment between individuals and organizations (Carmeli, 2005; Shore & Wayne, 1993). As such, we contend that consumers who perceive a brand to be committed in developing and maintaining relationships with them (i.e., high level of PBRO) are likely to have positive anticipated emotions associated with consuming or experiencing the brand.

It is reasonable to believe that the emotions one anticipates attaining from a specific brand-related experience may influence brand performance outcomes. When making choices, consumers often anticipate the emotions they expect to experience. Positive anticipated emotions act as a motivator influencing choice (Mellers & McGraw, 2001; Mellers, Schwartz, & Ritov, 1999). For example, Onwezen, Antonides, & Bartels, 2013 and Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) show that anticipated emotions influence behavioral intentions, which includes consumer loyalty. In the tourism literature, consumers' positive emotions have been found to have a significant influence on revisit intentions (Han & Back, 2007; Han, Back, & Barrett, 2009; Hwang & Hyun, 2013). Overall, anticipated emotions are said to influence consumer choice (Han et al., 2015).

Building on the existing literature, we expect PBRO to significantly influence positive anticipated emotions, while positive anticipated emotions are expected to influence revisit intentions and share of wallet, as well as decrease consideration set size. Therefore,

**H3.** Anticipated positive emotions of a hotel stay mediates the relationships between the PBRO of the hotel and its (a) share of wallet, (b) revisit intention, and (c) consideration set size.

#### 2.4. The moderating role of involvement in the relationships between PBRO, consumer-brand identification, and anticipated emotions

Product involvement is the perceived relevance of a product category to an individual on an ongoing basis (Quester & Lim, 2003). Prior studies have examined the moderating role of product involvement in affecting consumer interactions with brand-related stimuli such as perceived relationship benefits (Dagger & David, 2012), and consumer-brand identification (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012).

Within the involvement domain, a body of research has seen the application of the ELM and applied cue processing as a means of understanding the influence of involvement on consumer decision making (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006; Hur, Kim, Karatepe, & Lee, 2017). According to the ELM (Petty, Haugtvedt, & Smith, 1995), consumers process information depending on their level of involvement with a product category. One route is the cognitive or central route, where under conditions of high involvement, responses to marketing stimuli are the result of a thorough (cognitive) consideration of the stimuli. The second route is the affective or peripheral route, where under conditions of low involvement, responses to marketing stimuli are the result of emotional reactions to stimuli (Petty et al., 1983). Under conditions of higher involvement, the consumer is motivated to utilize greater cognitive effort to carefully consider the information in the marketing stimuli. In low-involvement situations, the consumer expends less effort in attending to and processing information in the marketing stimuli and is thus more heavily influenced by peripheral cues in these stimuli. The greater message elaboration inherent in the central route leads to greater message persuasion (Petty et al., 1983).

Product and consumption-related activities constitute an important aspect of life for most people. High involvement implies a positive and relatively complete engagement of core aspects of the self in the focal object, whereas low involvement implies a separation from the focal object (O’Cass, 2000). Prior research shows that high involvement is associated with central route processing, whereas low involvement is associated with peripheral route processing (Andrews & Shimp, 1990; Park, Lee, & Han, 2007). For example, Park, et al. (2007) show that consumers with low involvement were more influenced by the number of reviews, whereas higher-involvement consumers were more influenced by the quality of reviews when making a purchase decision. Therefore, as involvement increases, consumers are more thoughtful in processing information, giving greater cognitive elaboration via the central route, and consequently are less influenced by anticipated emotions.

Petty et al. (1983) have discussed the mechanism through which involvement moderates the cognitive and peripheral routes to persuasion. Based on their findings, we could conclude that when both high and low-involvement consumers receive the same stimuli, more highly involved consumers are more likely to engage in greater elaboration, whereas less involved consumers rely more on peripheral cues to make choices. The moderating effect of

**Table 1**  
Sample profile.

Respondent Characteristics (n = 376)	
<i>Age</i>	
21–30	37%
31–40	37%
41–50	14%
51–60	9%
60–65	3%
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	51%
Female	49%
<i>Combined annual household income</i>	
Less than 30,000	17%
30,000–39,999	14%
40,000–49,999	15%
50,000–59,999	11%
60,000–69,999	10%
70,000–79,999	11%
80,000–89,999	4%
90,000–99,999	5%
100,000 or more	12%

involvement in the dual-route communication process has also been demonstrated in previous studies. Hawkins and Hoch (1992) associated involvement with qualitatively distinct forms (levels) of cognitive activity that require different amounts of capacity for attention and produce different effects in terms of decisions. Harrington, Lane, Donohew, & Zimmerman, 2006 also suggest that high and low-involvement individuals generally expend different levels of cognitive effort in processing stimuli.

Acknowledging the importance of involvement in consumer decision-making process, we apply the ELM concept to understand the moderating effect of involvement. In the context of hotels, while PBRO promotes both CBI and anticipated emotions, we believe that the level of consumer involvement has differential effects in moderating these paths. Specifically, we posit that the effects of PBRO on consumer-brand identification are enhanced when consumer involvement is high. This is likely to occur because the path from PBRO to brand performance outcomes via consumer-brand identification is cognitively oriented and consistent with the central route domain. On the other hand, we posit that the effects of PBRO on anticipated emotion is reduced when consumer involvement is high because the relationship between PBRO and anticipated emotion is more affective in nature, consistent with the peripheral route to persuasion. Therefore,

**H4.** The positive relationship between PBRO and consumer-brand identification is stronger when consumer involvement is high compared to when it is low.

**H5.** The positive relationship between PBRO and anticipated positive emotions is weaker when consumer involvement is high compared to when it is low.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research setting

We recruited respondents from the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) panel. To participate in our study, respondents had to be at least 21 years old and reside in the United States. After eliminating 24 respondents who did not pass attention check items, we obtained a total of 376 usable responses for this study. Consistent with

**Table 2**  
Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

		Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Consumer-Brand Identification	3.51	1.48	<i>0.86</i>						
2	Positive Anticipated Emotions	5.63	1.12	0.41	<i>0.90</i>					
3	Involvement	4.35	1.36	0.78	0.42	<i>0.81</i>				
4	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	5.55	0.81	0.50	0.67	0.57	<i>0.76</i>			
5	Revisit Intention	5.27	1.13	0.60	0.64	0.62	0.76	<i>0.81</i>		
6	Share of Wallet <sup>a</sup>	7.54	1.96	0.24	0.14	0.21	0.19	0.39	BI	
7	Consideration Set Size	2.28	0.95	-0.33	-0.36	-0.34	-0.34	-0.50	-0.31	SI

All correlations are significant at 0.01 level. S.D = Standard Deviations; BI=Binary Variable; SI=Single Item Construct. Italicized entries represent square root of average variance extracted.

<sup>a</sup> A square root transformation was applied to this variable to be closer to a univariate normal distribution. The transformation was successful in accomplishing this goal.

previous studies that examined consumer-brand relationships (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Wolter & Cronin, 2016), the survey asked respondents to state a hotel brand name that they liked based on their travel experiences. The stated hotel brand was then dynamically inserted into every question. There were no missing data, as respondents needed to answer all items to complete the survey. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of respondents.

### 3.2. Measurement

The measures in our study were drawn from the literature and were adapted to suit a hotel brand context (see Appendix A). All of the scale items, apart from share of wallet and consideration set size, were measured using 7-point Likert-type scales (strongly disagree – strongly agree). We measured PBRO using items from Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012. The consumer-brand identification construct was adapted from the Wolter & Cronin, 2016 cognitive consumer-brand identification construct. Anticipated emotions were measured using four items from Song et al. (2012). Our moderator, product category involvement, was measured using two items adapted from Steenkamp, Van Heerde, and Geyskens (2010). We also adopted existing measures for our outcome variables: share of wallet (Nyffenegger et al., 2015), revisit intention (Su, Swanson, & Chen, 2016), and consideration set size (Nyffenegger et al., 2015).

## 4. Data analysis and results

### 4.1. Measurement model

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses using Mplus 7.0 to assess the reliability and validity of our construct measures. Appendix A outlines the psychometric properties of all constructs. The KMO test statistic of 0.905 suggested sampling adequacy to perform a factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974).

Composite reliability, factor loadings, and average variance extracted (AVE) for all scale items support good reliability and convergent validities of all construct measures. The fit indices of the final measurement model:  $\chi^2(100) = 266.649$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.067, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.963, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.949 indicate that the model had good fit with the data. As shown in Table 2, there is an evidence of discriminant validity as the square root of average variance extracted for each construct exceeds the correlations between constructs.

### 4.2. Common method bias

As we relied on cross-sectional data, we attempted to minimize the issue of common method bias before and after data collection. In preparing the survey, similar questions were spread across different sections of the survey to refresh respondents' memories in each section (Richey & Autry, 2009). We assessed the threat of common method bias using statistical techniques recommended by Homburg, Klarmann, and Schmitt (2010). First, we adopted the 'marker variable' approach of Lindell and Whitney (2001) by employing a theoretically unrelated construct (i.e., highest education level of respondents) in the analysis as a proxy for common method variance. The lowest positive correlation of this marker variable with a focal construct (i.e. consideration set size) ( $r = 0.094$ ) was used to calculate the CMV-adjusted correlations for the variables under examination (Malhotra, Kim, & Patil, 2006). After partialing out the variance due to the marker variable, the mean difference between the original associations and the partialled associations was very low ( $r = 0.079$ ), and the correlation between the model constructs remained significant. Secondly, we adopted the common latent factor technique (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) by comparing the measurement model with and without the common methods variance (CMV) factor. We examined whether the inclusion of a common latent factor would affect our results by allowing all items to correlate with one common factor (Homburg et al., 2010). Since an examination of the path coefficients revealed no significant changes in the strength and significance of the effects, it was concluded that CMV had a minimum impact on the study findings (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

### 4.3. Tests of main effect hypotheses

We used the bootstrapping method, based on 1000 bootstraps resamples, in Mplus 7.3 to test our hypotheses. The fit indices ( $\chi^2(78) = 228.836$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.962; TLI = 0.949; RMSEA = 0.072) suggest that the model had a good fit with the data. Consistent with Baron and Kenny's (1986) guidelines for testing mediation effects, we examined the relationship between the independent construct (i.e., PBRO), mediator constructs (i.e., consumer-brand identification and anticipated emotions), and outcome constructs (i.e., share of wallet, revisit intention, and consideration set size) prior to examining the mediation hypotheses.

PBRO had significant positive effects on both mediators: consumer-brand identification ( $\beta = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and anticipated emotions ( $\beta = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The cognitive mediator, consumer-brand identification, had significant effects on all outcome variables: share of wallet ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), revisit intention ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,

**Table 3**  
Structural model results.

Path					$\beta$	s.e.	t	
<i>Direct effects</i>								
H1a	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Share of Wallet		0.101	0.32	0.936	
H1b	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Revisit Intention	0.496**	0.15	5.432		
H1c	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Consideration set size		-0.098	0.163	-0.865	
	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Consumer-Brand Identification		0.526**	0.134	7.89	
	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Positive Anticipated Emotions	0.679**	0.117	9.506		
	Positive Anticipated Emotions	→	Share of Wallet		0.003	0.162	0.032	
	Positive Anticipated Emotions	→	Revisit Intention	0.199**	0.072	2.765		
	Positive Anticipated Emotions	→	Consideration set size		-0.222*	0.089	-2.198	
	Consumer-Brand Identification	→	Share of Wallet		0.182**	0.104	2.59	
	Consumer-Brand Identification	→	Revisit Intention	0.259**	0.054	3.927		
	Consumer-Brand Identification	→	Consideration set size		-0.186**	0.044	-2.977	
<i>Indirect Effects</i>								
H2a	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Consumer-Brand Identification	→	Share of Wallet	0.096*	0.115	2.475
H2b	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Consumer-Brand Identification	→	Revisit Intention	0.136**	0.061	3.682
H2c	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Consumer-Brand Identification	→	Consideration set size	-0.098**	0.049	-2.845
H3a	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Positive Anticipated Emotions	→	Share of Wallet	0.002	0.184	0.031
H3b	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Positive Anticipated Emotions	→	Revisit Intention	0.135**	0.083	2.672
H3c	Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation	→	Positive Anticipated Emotions	→	Consideration set size	-0.151*	0.107	-2.02

\*\*significant at 0.01 level \*0.05 level. Standardized coefficients displayed; s.e. = standard errors.  $R^2 = 0.659$ .

$\rho < 0.01$ ), and consideration set size ( $\beta = -0.19$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ). On the other hand, the affective mediator, anticipated emotions, had significant effects on revisit intention ( $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ) and consideration set size ( $\beta = -0.22$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ) but no significant effects on share of wallet ( $\beta = 0.003$ ,  $\rho > 0.05$ ). Thus, no support was found for H3a, as the relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable was not significant.

We examined the direct effects of PBRO on all brand performance indicators prior to and subsequent to the inclusion of the mediating effects. Our results found that PBRO had significant effects on share of wallet ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ), revisit intention ( $\beta = 0.76$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ), and consideration set size ( $\beta = -0.34$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ) prior to taking into account the mediation effects, thereby supporting H1a, H1b, and H1c, respectively. When consumer-brand identification and anticipated emotions were included as mediators, the relationships between PBRO and share of wallet ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $\rho > 0.05$ ) and between PBRO and consideration set size ( $\beta = -0.10$ ,  $\rho > 0.05$ ) became non-significant, indicating full mediation effects, whereas the relationship between PBRO and revisit intention was reduced but remained significant ( $\beta = 0.50$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ), indicating partial mediation. Our mediation analysis confirmed our prediction that PBRO has indirect effects on share of wallet ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = 0.10$ ,  $\rho < 0.05$ ), revisit intention ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = 0.14$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ), and consideration set size ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = -0.10$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ) via consumer-brand identification, thereby confirming H2a, H2b, and H2c, respectively. Our results also demonstrated support for the indirect effects of PBRO on revisit intention ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = 0.13$ ,  $\rho < 0.01$ ) and consideration set size ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = -0.15$ ,  $\rho < 0.05$ ) via positive anticipated emotions, thereby confirming H3b and H3c, respectively. Table 3 outlines the results of our hypothesis testing.

#### 4.4. Test for moderation effects

To test our moderation hypotheses (H4 and H5), we employed the random effects latent moderated structural equations (LMS) with maximum likelihood estimation method in Mplus 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Using this technique, the hypothesized moderated model is compared against the linear model

based on Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) value and log likelihood (LL) value (Dakanalis et al., 2014). Our LMS analysis reveals that the AIC values of the moderation model (17309.4) were lower than the linear model (17327.2), which suggests that the moderation model was the preferred model. Moreover, based on the LL values, the hypothesized model was found to be a significant improvement over the linear model ( $\Delta -2LL = 21.82$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, there is an evidence of moderation effects in the inter-construct relationship and we proceeded with further analysis.

Using a procedure recommended by Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991, we plotted the significant interaction between involvement and PBRO with information from the hypothesized model. The results suggested that involvement significantly moderates the relationship between PBRO and consumer-brand identification ( $\beta_{\text{interaction}} = 0.162$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), thereby supporting H4. The significant interaction implies that as the extent of involvement increase, the effects of PBRO on consumer-brand identification increases (Fig. 2).

The results suggest that the relationship between PBRO and consumer-brand identification was not significant when consumers' involvement with the product category was low. We also found supporting evidence for H5. Our analysis reveals that involvement significantly moderates the relationship between PBRO and anticipated emotions ( $\beta_{\text{interaction}} = -0.220$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Fig. 3 illustrates these interaction effects. The relationship between PBRO and anticipated emotions remained significant at various moderation levels. However, as involvement increased, the effects of PBRO on anticipated emotions diminished.

#### 4.5. Further analysis for moderated mediation

As product category involvement moderates the relationship between the antecedent and mediator constructs in the framework, we performed a further moderated mediation analysis to examine whether the indirect effects of PBRO on the brand performance outcome variables via anticipated emotions and consumer-brand identification are moderated by involvement. The index of moderated mediation effects was calculated in Mplus based on a 95% confidence interval (CI) (Cheung & Lau, 2017). Our

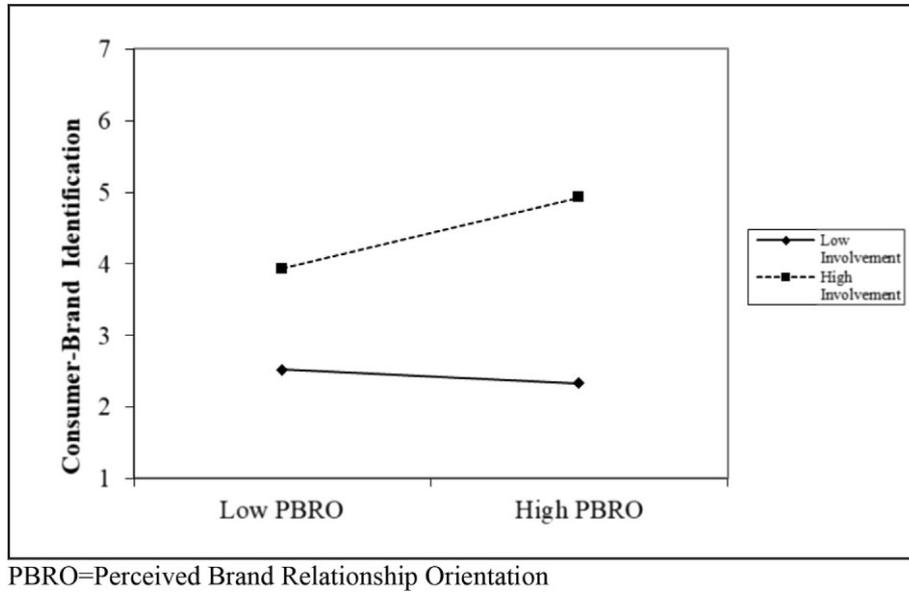


Fig. 2. Moderating effects of Involvement on Perceived Brand Orientation - Consumer Brand Identification relationship PBRO = Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation.

results provide evidence of moderated mediation effects in the model. Specifically, when product category involvement was lower, PBRO had no significant indirect effects on share of wallet, revisit intention, and consideration set size. In other words, the indirect effects of PBRO on the outcome variables via consumer-brand identification were significant only when consumers were highly involved with the product category. On the other hand, our results demonstrated that the indirect effects of PBRO on revisit intention and consideration set size via anticipated emotions diminished but remained significant when consumers' involvement with the product category was high. Table 4 summarizes the results of our moderated mediation analysis.

5. Discussions

This study examined the impact of PBRO on hotel brand performance, measured by consumers' share of wallet, revisit intentions, and consideration set size. Specifically, it was proposed that hotels' PBRO has direct and indirect effects on brand performance through the mediating role of consumer-brand identification (i.e., cognitive/central route of persuasion) and positive anticipated emotions (i.e., emotional/peripheral route of persuasion). A moderated mediation analysis was also employed to understand the facilitating role of involvement in our conceptual model. This study demonstrated that a hotel's PBRO has significant

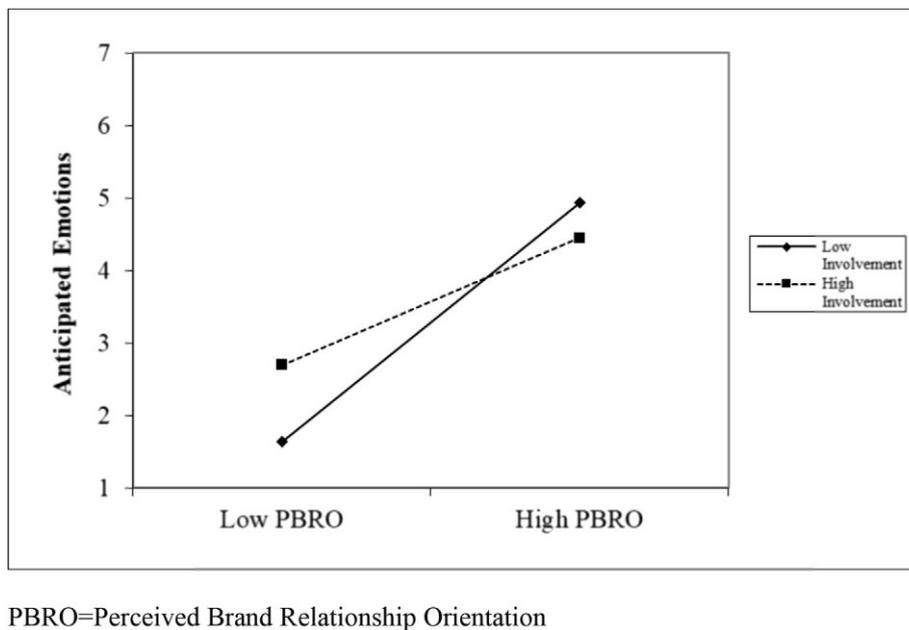


Fig. 3. Moderating effects of Involvement on Perceived Brand Orientation – Positive Anticipated Emotions relationship PBRO = Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation.

**Table 4**  
Moderated mediation analysis.

	$\beta$	t
PBRO → consumer-brand identification → share of wallet		
Indirect effects when Involvement is lower (−1 SD)	−0.002	−0.078
Indirect effects when Involvement is higher (+1 SD)	0.11*	2.126
PBRO → consumer-brand identification → revisit intention		
Indirect effects when Involvement is lower (−1 SD)	−0.002	−0.078
Indirect effects when Involvement is higher (+1 SD)	0.085**	2.841
PBRO → consumer-brand identification → consideration set size		
Indirect effects when Involvement is lower (−1 SD)	0.001	0.078
Indirect effects when Involvement is higher (+1 SD)	−0.054**	−2.58
PBRO → anticipated emotions → share of wallet		
Indirect effects when Involvement is lower (−1 SD)	−0.013	−0.059
Indirect effects when Involvement is higher (+1 SD)	−0.008	−0.059
PBRO → anticipated emotions → revisit intention		
Indirect effects when Involvement is lower (−1 SD)	0.247**	2.684
Indirect effects when Involvement is higher (+1 SD)	0.149**	2.601
PBRO → anticipated emotions → consideration set size		
Indirect effects when Involvement is lower (−1 SD)	−0.272*	−2.018
Indirect effects when Involvement is higher (+1 SD)	−0.164*	−2.235

Significant at \*.05 \*\*.01 level; SD=Standard Deviations; PBRO=Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation All coefficients are non-standardized.

direct and indirect effects on hotel brand performance. Such effects are mediated by consumer-brand identification and anticipated emotions, and moderated by product category involvement. Next, we discuss the research and managerial implications of our findings.

### 5.1. Theoretical contributions

This study makes at least three contributions to the tourism and hospitality literature. First, it empirically confirms the appropriateness of relationship marketing theory in the context of hotel brands by evaluating the hotel's brand relationship-building approaches from consumers' perspectives. This study is the first to empirically examine how consumer perceptions of a hotel brand's relationship orientation affects the brand's performance. The findings of direct and indirect effects of PBRO on all brand performance indicators in this study advance knowledge regarding important outcomes that are influenced by a hotel brand's relationship marketing strategy.

Second, the significant mediating effects of cognitive (i.e., consumer-brand identification) and emotional (i.e., anticipated emotions) constructs demonstrated in this study provide additional insights into the psychological mechanisms through which relationship marketing strategy influences brand performance beyond the mediating role of trust and commitment (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012). Moreover, the important role of anticipated emotions in hotel brand performance that was reported in this study advances our knowledge not only in the tourism and hospitality literature but also in the service literature, in which the role of emotions has already been studied in other contexts, such as its influence on consumer loyalty (e.g. Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005), consumer responses to advertising (e.g. Prayag & Soscia, 2016), service failure (e.g. Smith & Bolton, 2002), and service recovery (e.g. del Río-Lanza, Vázquez-Casielles, & Díaz-Martín, 2009). However, the role of anticipated emotions in affecting brand performance has received little attention in the literature (Nyffenegger et al., 2015). Our study demonstrates that for a certain service brand performance indicator (i.e., share of wallet), the cognitive mediator (i.e., consumer-brand identification) plays a more important role than the emotional mediator. Further, the findings are consistent with the argument of Millar and Tesser (1986) that some behaviors are more cognitively

driven, whereas others are more driven by emotions.

The final theoretical contribution relates to the moderating role of involvement in the relationship between PBRO and its outcome constructs. By examining the moderating effects of product category involvement, this study provides a more coherent understanding of the boundary conditions of the relationship among our focal constructs. Specifically, the significant moderated mediation effects found in this study provide insights into the boundary conditions of the mediating role of consumer-brand identification and anticipated emotions in the relationship between PBRO and our brand performance outcomes. The findings of this study advance our knowledge by explaining the conditions under which a relationship marketing strategy can be effective in influencing favorable brand performance outcomes.

### 5.2. Managerial implications

The existing literature asserted that relationship-oriented firms are less susceptible to price competition because they compete on the basis of building strong consumer relationships and loyalty (Fyall, Callod, & Edwards, 2003; Peppers & Rogers, 1995). From a branding perspective, past studies have found that a firm's PBRO is positively related to consumer trust, commitment and loyalty (Aurier & N'Goala, 2010; Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012). However, our study demonstrated that PBRO is a necessary but insufficient driver of brand performance. PBRO has no direct influence on share of wallet because its influence is fully mediated by consumer-brand identification. Further, PBRO also has no direct influence on consideration set size because its impact is fully mediated by consumer-brand identification and anticipated emotions.

Firms wishing to enhance their brand performance may consider their level of investment in communications directed at signaling PBRO and, thereby, influencing brand identification and anticipated positive emotions. To enhance consumers' sense of identification, hotels can implement various approaches, such as organizing special events (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005), creating and fostering brand communities (Millán & Díaz, 2014), and facilitating co-creation activities (Russo Spina, Caridà, Colurcio, & Melia, 2012); all of which can enhance consumers' brand identification. To evoke positive anticipated emotions, marketers can highlight the emotional appeal of the

hotel brand in their overall positioning, reminding consumers of the positive emotions associated with their past experiences with the brand. As consumers recall their brand experiences, they will recall the positive emotions associated with the brand, which influences their revisit intentions and reduces their consideration set size when making choices about future accommodations.

The moderating effect of product category involvement on the relationships between PBRO, consumer-brand identification, and anticipated emotions indicates that consumers' perceptions of a brand as a relationship partner would have a stronger effect on consumer-brand identification but a weaker effect on positive anticipated emotions among highly involved consumers. Consumers assess the willingness and ability of an organization to develop and maintain consumer relationships based on their encounter with the firms, including personal (e.g., interactions with firm employees) and impersonal encounters (e.g., store atmosphere, newsletters). Although consumers may be exposed to the same stimuli in their brand encounters, the level of identification varies between individuals. One must have a high involvement with the product category to develop a sense of identification with the brand. For highly involved consumers, a hotel's relationship-building efforts have weaker (but significant) effects on their positive anticipated emotions associated in experiencing the brand. Thus, for low-involvement consumers, the most effective pathway to enhanced revisit intentions and lower consideration set size is through strengthening consumers' perception of the hotel brand's relationship orientation by creating and communicating with consumers via stronger emotional appeals. On the other hand, rational appeals used as a means of enhancing consumer-brand identification should be directed mainly towards highly involved consumers.

## 6. Limitations and future research directions

While this study makes a significant contribution to the knowledge regarding the influence of PBRO on brand performance, it has several limitations that can be addressed in future research.

First, to test the conceptual framework, we deduced causal relationships from cross-sectional survey data. Future research can examine the relationships presented in the present study using other methodologies, including experiments, to extend our understanding of the dynamic relationship between the constructs in this study.

Secondly, respondents' dynamic choice of brands in our data may limit the generalizability of this study's findings. In the survey instruction, we asked respondents in the survey to state their favorite brand, which was then dynamically inserted into every section of the survey. Although this method has been used by other scholars in leading consumer-brand relationship works (Batra et al., 2012; Wolter et al., 2016), the results are specific to the case of a strong brand towards which respondents have a favorable attitude. Research is needed to replicate the present study in the context of smaller, less popular brands with potentially lower PBRO scores.

Finally, since research on PBRO is still in its infancy, the antecedents of PBRO need to be better understood. What are some of the strategies that marketers can use to enhance consumers' perception of a brand's relationship orientation? How do consumer characteristics such as personality and values influence their response to a firm's brand relationship-building effort? In addition to the performance outcomes examined in this study, future research could focus on how PBRO affects other indicators of brand performance, such as loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price, and word-of-mouth behavior.

## Statement of contribution

Riza Casidy is the lead author of this paper. Walter Wymer and Aron O'Casey made equal contributions to the paper.

## Appendix A. Measurement properties

Scale Item	SFL	CR	AVE
<i>Positive Anticipated Emotions (Bagozzi &amp; Dholakia, 2006)</i>			
If I am able to stay at [X] for my next holiday, I will feel			
Excited	0.80	0.95	0.81
Happy	0.96		
Glad	0.95		
Satisfied	0.89		
<i>Involvement (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012)</i>			
Choosing which hotel to stay at is an important part of my life.	0.84	0.79	0.66
Choosing a hotel to stay at means a lot to me.	0.78		
<i>Perceived Brand Relationship Orientation (Aurier and Séré de Lanauze, 2012)</i>			
Consumers enjoy genuine care from [X]	0.71	0.81	0.58
[X] maintains strong relations with its customers	0.73		
[X] pays attention to its customers	0.85		
<i>Consumer-Brand Identification (Wolter &amp; Cronin, 2016)</i>			
My sense of self overlaps with the identity of [X]	0.83	0.92	0.73
Being associated with [X] helps me express my identity	0.87		
[X] is part of my sense of who I am.	0.90		
My identity is based in part on my relationship with [X]	0.82		
<i>Revisit Intention (Su et al., 2016)</i>			
[X] would always be my first choice	0.83	0.79	0.65
I intend to revisit [X] for my next trip	0.78		
<i>Share of Wallet (Nyffenegger et al., 2015)</i>			
Considering all your hotel stays in the last 3 years, what percentage have you spent on [X]	BI	BI	
<i>Consideration Set Size (Nyffenegger et al., 2015)</i>			
How many other hotels would you consider booking for your next trip?	SI	SI	

SFL = Standardized Factor Loading CR = Composite Reliability AVE = Average of Variance Extracted.  
BI=Binary Variable SI=Single Item Construct.

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