

Consumers' attitudinal and behavioural ties with brands: an integrative approach to build a consumer-brand relationship model

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ABSTRACT:

Despite a plethora of research on consumer-brand relationships (CBR) spanning over the past one and half decades, the extant research failed to identify and integrate the attitudinal and behavioural components of CBR in their conceptualization and subsequent operationalization. However, to sustain long term CBR, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the antecedents and consequences of CBR both from the attitudinal and behavioural perspectives. To address the research gap, two studies were conducted. First, the CBR constructs were explored, refined, and integrated through a conceptual model following a grounded theory approach. Second, the conceptual model was tested and validated using a survey method. The major contribution of this study lies in its enhanced understanding and development of a robust model of CBR, which in turn would benefit CBR theory and provide an actionable model for practitioners.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer-brand relationships, attitudinal relationship, behavioural relationships, brand loyalty.

Introduction

In a severely competitive marketing environment, marketers strive to get, keep and maintain existing customers by understanding their decision making process and post-purchase behavior (Ladhari et al., 2007). In this aspect, a long term relation of a consumer and a brand would generate higher market share and profits and a host of other benefits for the marketer (Blackston, 1992; Sweeney and Chew, 2002). To quote Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) *“The success of a brand in the long term is not based on the number of consumers that buy it once, but on the number of consumers who become regular buyers of the brand”* (page. 1). In this quest to augment their existing customer base, companies try to develop a long-term relationship with customers, satisfying their various needs and wants (Han and Back, 2008).

Reflecting the critical role of relationships in branding, and marketing in general, the study of consumer-brand relationships has been represented in the literature for more than two and half decades since Blackston’s (1992) approach to build brand equity through brand relationships. Even though consumer-brand relationships reflects a strong cognitive, affective and behavioural ties with the brand (Blackston, 1992; Nebel and Blattberg, 2000) early research was primarily given over emphasis to interpersonal metaphoric transfer and considered only limited aspects either from attitudinal or behavioural perspectives, namely socio-motive and affective attachments(e.g., self-connection and love/passion), behavioural ties(e.g.brand commitment and interdependence), and cognitive beliefs(e.g. satisfaction and brand partner quality)(Fournier, 1994, 1998). To the authors’ knowledge, till date no

attempt has been made to integrate the attitudinal (cognitive, affective and conative) and behavioural elements in the consumer-brand relationship paradigm, even though researchers have pointed out the need that combining all these elements yields strong and durable consumer-brand relationships (Kim et al., 2013). As a result of this lack of explication in existing literature, there is a lack of clear operationalization and problems in systematic and integrated theory building in CBR (Tsai, 2011).

Addressing the research gap, the present study uses a mixed methods approach to (a) modify and broaden earlier conceptualization of CBR by integrating attitudinal and behavioural perspectives at each consumer-brand relationship phase in CBR theory, and (b) to test the proposed conceptual model empirically to understand how attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of CBR work as an integrative mechanism. By doing so, the study responds to Kim et al. (2013) and Tsai's (2011) concern through imparting proper conceptualization of and subsequent operationalization of CBR. For academicians the explicated conceptualization is a prerequisite for identifying relevant constructs useful for positing and testing theory (Huntley, 2006). For marketers the understanding in CBR would help to foster customer interactions with the brand through designing marketing programs in those attitudinal and behavioural areas of CBR.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. We begin with literature review which provides a brief summarization of the CBR literature. We then presented Study 1, wherein the exploration, integration of attitudinal and behavioural constructs and the conceptual model is elaborated. Followed by the development of a set of hypotheses based on the

conceptual model and existing literature. Study 2 is next described, wherein the conceptual model is tested and validated empirically. Final section elaborate the implications, limitations, and scope for future research.

Literature Review

There has been considerable research in CBR (beginning from Fournier, 1998 to Park et al., 2013) in the last fifteen years. CBR researchers have used different methodological approaches in their studies such as quantitative (Monga, 2002; Aaker et al., 2004); qualitative (Olson, 1999; Kates, 2000; Ji 2002); or conceptual (Fournier, 1998). Fournier (1998) used several interpersonal theories to introduce the *Brand Relationship Quality Model* (BRQ model). The BRQ model aimed to measure the strength and depth of consumer relationship with brands, and conceptualized BRQ in terms of six dimensions: partner quality, intimacy, behavioural interdependence, personal commitment, self-concept connection and love/passion. Studies following Fournier's BRQ have investigated various facets of CBR such as: influence of CBR on consumer experience (Kaltcheva and Weitz, 1999); role of brand attachment on satisfaction out of CBR (Thomson and Johnson, 2002); scale to measure brand relationship quality (Kim et al., 2005), applicability of Fournier's (1998) model for homosexual consumers (Zayer and Neier, 2011) etc. Hess and Story (2005) even proposed a model called trust based relationship commitment model incorporating a new CBR construct called relationship commitment.

The marketing concepts studied in unison to CBR were: relation between self-concept connection and country-of-origin and their joint influence on CBR (Swaminathan et al., 2007); role of brand reputation and tribalism on the strength of CBR (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009); and connection between brand personality and brand relationships (Smit et al., 2007; Zhou et al., 2012). Since a brand is considered to be an identity, Papista and Dimitriadis (2012) examined the link between relationship quality and consumer brand identification. Park et al. (2013) proposed and empirically tested a new model of consumer-brand relationships, called attachment-aversion (AA) model. According to this model, the consumer would be attached and feel close to a brand when the brand is perceived as a means for self-expansion, called brand attachment and vice versa when he/she perceived the brand as a threat of self-contraction.

There are several contexts specific studies in CBR literature such as cross cultural variations in CBR (Chang and Chang, 2006), CBR for women consumers (Olson, 1999); dynamics of CBR for gay consumers (Kates, 2000); development of CBR for child consumers (Ji, 2002) or for younger audience (Hwang and Kandampully, 2012). Recently, Sahay et al. (2012) examined the role of gender difference in consumer brand relationships with respect to affect and cognition.

Critique of CBR

Even the concept of CBR has gained growth and momentum, it's not free from criticisms. Researchers (e.g., Hibbard and Iacobucci, 1999) claimed that the uncritical acceptance and

the unwarranted growth of relationship constructs within marketing was alarming and needed introspection. Papista and Dimitriadis (2012) challenged Fournier's (1998) model because of the lack of empirical support even though it seemed to be the most inclusive CBR conceptualization. The existing CBR models/theories failed to integrate important constructs in branding literature such as brand satisfaction and brand attachment. Research in branding post Fournier (1998) has emphasized the importance of these as relationship building/influencing constructs (e.g. Aaker et al., 2004; Thomson et al., 2005; Park et al., 2010). Research on CBR also was not clear on the exact dimensions of consumer-brand relationships as most studies applied Fournier's (1998) conceptualization (Aaker et al., 2004; Kressmann et al., 2006; Smit et al., 2007) which was more from an interpersonal perspective. Bengtsson (2003) questioned the extensive use of interpersonal theories in branding to build CBR theories and stated that in most of the cases, the dimensions proposed by previous literature were directly analogous to interpersonal literature. Patterson and O' Malley (2006) raised questions with regard to the adequacy and acceptance of interpersonal relationship metaphors from person-to-person relationships to brand relationships. According to Breivik and Thorbjørnsen (2008) *"the transfer of interpersonal relationship concepts to marketing might be problematic if the content and meaning of these concepts in the source domain deviate too much from the target context"*.

To summarize, there were three critical issues associated with the existing theories of CBR. They were: (a) consideration of brand relationships as equivalent to interpersonal relationship (Bengtsson, 2003), (b) failure to provide a clear plan for model specification and

subsequent empirical testing (Breivik and Thorbjørnsen, 2008), and (c) lack of studies for the measurement and operationalization of consumer-brand relationships, which integrates attitudinal and behavioural constructs (Kim et al., 2013). The present study thus approached the problems in two stages. The researchers applied qualitative research to understand the dimensions of CBR from a grounded theory perspective. The model thus developed was corroborated with existing literature to develop the study hypotheses. The hypotheses were then empirically tested using a survey research in the second phase of the study.

Study 1: Conceptual Model Development

The objective of Study 1 was to refine, verify and develop a conceptual model of CBR. Study 1 adopted a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1994) for data collection, analysis and inference since in this phase understanding of the CBR process was the objective.

Process and Domain

The process of interest in this study was the process of brand relationship development by the consumers. Thus, the cases of interest were those consumers who have strong and deep rooted relationship with brands. The relationships were not stipulated a priori and each respondent was allowed to discuss the relationship with a brand of their choice. The researcher was careful to include both major and minor consumer-brand relationship process.

Study Participants

The study participants were recruited from five different shopping malls located in a metropolitan city (Hyderabad, India) by the researchers themselves. Of the 55 approached, 40 of them were willing to participate in the study. The selected participants were further screened based on considerations specific to the purposive criteria decided by the researcher, such as years of relationship with brands (those consumers who have relationship with brands atleast last one year), household income(annual income between one Lakhs to ten Lakhs),demographic status(consumers from different parts of the country), and age(consumers belongs to the age group of 20-50 years of old).

Once the respondent was found to satisfy the study consideration he/she was formally recruited for the study. The screening process generated a list of 20 respondents who were asked to meet the reseracher for the interview at a time and place as per their convenience. Among the 20 participants 11 were males and the rest were females. All participants were the consumers of major brands, with ages ranging from 20 to 50, who had been buying the brand since last one year. The selected participants belonged to different regions of the country, which was purposefully done to avoid culture bias in brand purchase and the relationships. The participant's educational level ranged from graduation/equivalent degree to having a PhD. The selected respondent's purchase frequency with the brand varied from regular purchaser (more than four times a month) to once a month. The time since the participants first purchased the brand ranged from 1 year to more than 10 years.

Data Collection

Data was collected through a series of in-depth interviews. The duration of these interviews ranged from 60-90 minutes. These semi structured in-depth interviews aimed at the exploring and understanding the attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of consumer brand relationships, as well as the linkage between the same.

Data Analysis

The interview data was collected and analyzed simultaneously as per procedures suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss (1987), Strauss and Corbin (1994), and Glaser (1992). The transcribed data was broken down into different concepts of incidents, ideas, events and acts and then assigned a code. Related concepts were combined to form dense and well developed categories. The data were coded for relevance to specific phenomenon or incidents within a specific category for conditions, intervening conditions, strategies and tactics, and consequences (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The categories were refined, modified and integrated to form new or core level categories with the constant comparison to new data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The coding process and subsequent category formation generated the action diagram or the conceptual model of CBR (Figure 1).

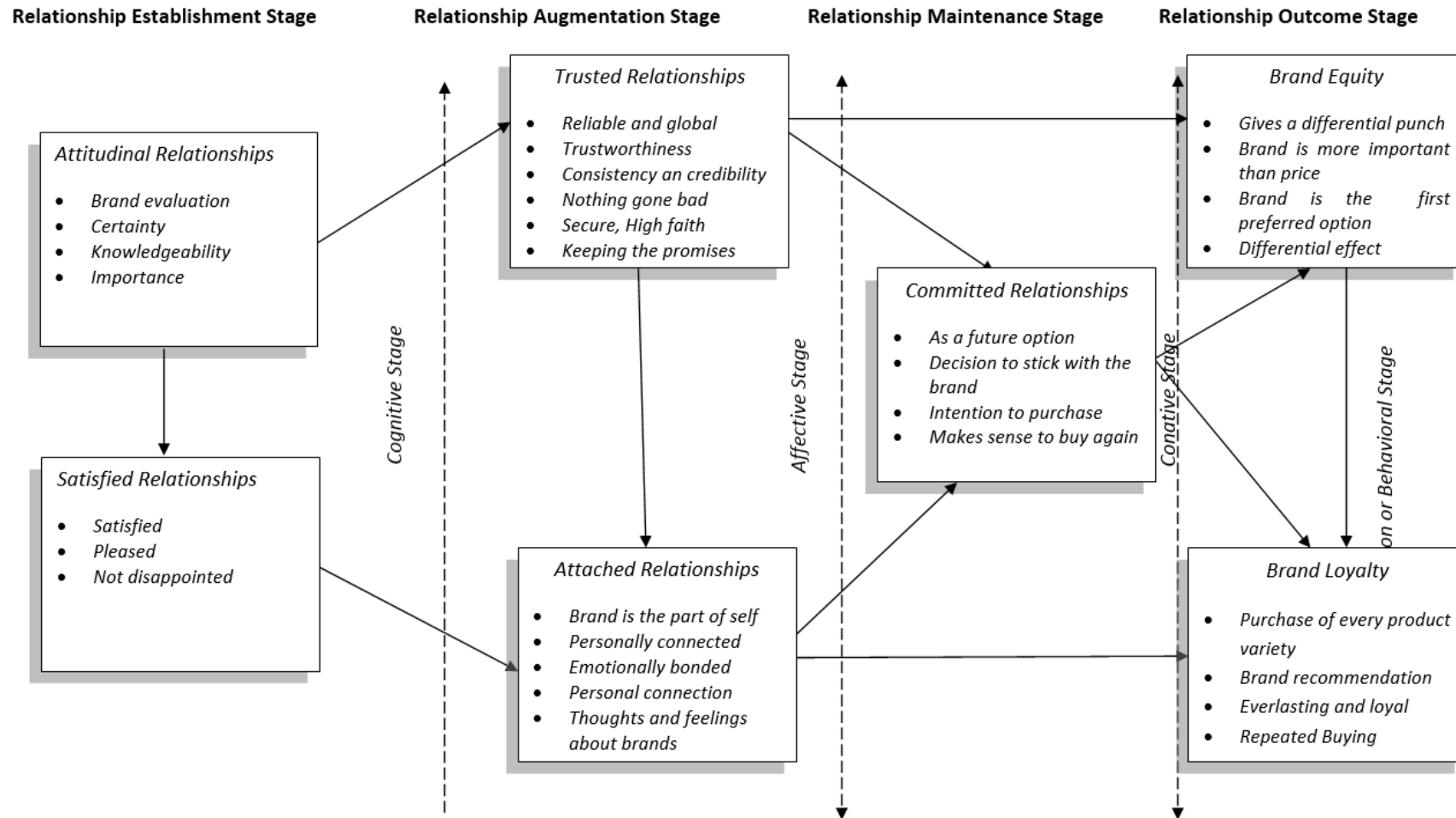


Figure 1: Theoretical model of consumer-brand relationships

Interpretation of the Findings from Study 1

Relationship phases emerged during the qualitative exploration was in support of extant literature. Attitudinal and behavioural aspects were both found to interplay in relationship formation between brand and consumers (Blackston, 1992). The attitudinal phase of CBR had three key stages, namely cognitive, affective and conative (Oliver, 1997, 1999).

Relationship on cognitive stage form strong and positive brand attitudes. Consumers at this stage develop attitude strength through comparing the brand and its alternatives based on past experiences and or/vicarious knowledge related to the offering, brand attributes, performance of the brand or current experience based information about the brand (Oliver, 1997, 1999). Such attitudes may become strong when they are based on thoughtful processing. Strong attitude development is the starting point of brand relationships (Fullerton, 2005). When the performance of the brand meets customers' expectation, cognitive evaluations result in brand satisfaction. Brand satisfaction is the outcome of the subjective evaluation that the chosen alternative (the brand) meets or exceeds the expectations (Engel et al., 1990). The second stage of CBR is the affective relationship, which provides a deeper sense of relationships. CBR in this stage develops from strong favourable attitudes towards the brand and its overall evaluation (Oliver, 1997). It helps the customer to augment the relationship. This stage will occur when the brand offers resources in the service of self-expansion, which develops through brand trust or consistency in the performance of the brand. Customers may subsequently develop strong connections between the brand and the self as well as mental models of the brand and the self (Park et

al., 2010). In this stage, the brand-related thoughts and feelings are easily and frequently accessed and brand attitudes develop into brand attachments. This affective relationship phase is very essential in the attitudinal CBR formation (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007; Oliver, 1997, 1999). During the relationship augmentation stage, CBR is subjected various deteriorations, particularly due to the attractiveness of competitive brands (Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006). Therefore, for the relationship to continue, it is essential for the consumers to move into the conative phase of CBR. In this stage, the brand's prominence and its linkage to the self may incline consumers' to invest resources to maintain the relationship.

However, even if the consumer passes through cognitive, affective and conative stages, the CBR would be accomplished in its fullness at the behavioural/action phase (Oliver, 1997, 1999). To summarize study 1, customers first form cognitive CBR through attitude strength and brand satisfaction, then affective CBR through trusted and attached relationships, thirdly conative CBR with deeply held brand commitment, which finally results in a behavioural/action relationship. Thus, as defined by current research, CBR is *“an integrated approach to establish, augment and maintain relationships between the brand and its customers and to continually strengthen these relationships through the attitudinal and behavioural components aimed to generate relationship outcomes which extended over a long period of time”*.

Hypotheses Development

The hypotheses to the study were developed based on the findings from study 1 and also with support from the extant literature. The first hypothesis connected brand attitude to satisfaction. Brand satisfaction is defined as “*the outcome of subjective evaluation that the chosen alternative (the brand) meets or exceeds the expectations*” (Engel et al., 1990, p. 22). This supports Oliver’s (1980) expectation-disconfirmation (E-D) paradigm which states that the degree of satisfaction is derived from confirmation or disconfirmation of previous expectations and found that satisfaction is derived from past experience and influences post purchase attitudes. In similar lines, Bolton and Drew (1991) argued that attitude works as an antecedent of satisfaction. Bloomer and Kasper (1995) have also found brand satisfaction to result from strong subjective evaluations (or brand attitudes). Thus, the first hypothesis is stated as:

H₁: Brand attitude strength will have a positive effect on brand satisfaction.

Park et al. (2006a) defines brand trust as “*the expectation that the brand can be relied upon to behave in benevolent manner and to be responsive to one’s needs (p. 2)*”. The extent to which customer develops attachment to a brand depends on the brand’s ability to perform and to do so consistently (Park et al., 2006b). Thus, it could be inferred that strong brand attitudes would develop into an attachment when consumers believe that the brand could be relied or trusted. Thus, the next hypothesis is stated as:

H₂: Consumer brand trust mediates the relationship between brand attitude strength and brand attachment.

It has been stated that brand satisfaction is the starting point of CBR which could affect brand commitment and re-purchase intentions (Fullerton, 2005). Subsequently, when the relationship is prolonged, brand satisfaction results in brand trust (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). Brand trust enables the customers to know the brand and perceived risk associated with the purchase and consumption (Berry, 2000). Customer with high levels of are loyal, willing to pay premium, prefer extensions of the present brand and are ready to share information (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Thus the third hypothesis is related to the mediating role of trust between satisfaction and commitment and is stated as:

H₃: Consumer brand trust mediates the relationship between brand satisfaction and brand commitment.

Contrary to some literature, Park et al. (2010) argued that relationship establishment starts with brand purchase and at this stage the customer develops positive brand attitudes. A brand facilitating consumers' self-expansion would generate consumer attachment to the brand (Park et al., 2010). This attachment may lead to brand commitment in turn (Lacoeuilhe and Belaid, 2007). Thus, the fourth hypothesis is stated as:

H₄: Brand attachment will mediate the relationship between brand attitude strength and brand commitment.

Berry et al. (1988) found consumers' psychological attachment to a brand to be higher if a brand offered symbolic or hedonic. The attachment through feelings and thoughts derived from satisfaction would generate a sense of commitment (Rusbult, 1983) and facilitate relationship building. Thus, the fifth hypothesis is stated as:

H₅: Brand attachment will mediate the relationship between brand satisfaction and brand commitment.

Literature on marketing considers brand equity as a market-based relational constructs (e.g., Srivastava et al., 1998, 2001). This is because brand equity is derived from the brand's relationship with external members of the value chain (Delgado et al., 2005). Ambler (1997) argued for brand equity as a function of CBR where brand trust is a major determinant of equity (Delgado et al., 2005). Similar views were raised by Lassar et al. (1995) and Erdem and Swait (1998) who suggested brand trust as a driving force behind brand equity. Thus, the sixth hypothesis is stated as:

H₆: Consumer brand trust mediates the relationship between brand attitude strength and brand equity.

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and Morgan and Hunt (1994) stated that consumer's trust towards a brand would lead to higher levels of loyalty. Brand loyalty was also found to be higher when positive mood and affect of a consumer is higher (Dick and Basu, 1994).

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) stated that brands that make consumers happier, joyful or affectionate would elicit more purchase. This would mean that brand trust would create a sense of attachment in the consumer's mind which in turn would lead to loyalty. Thus, the next hypothesis of the study is stated as:

H₇: Consumer brand attachment mediates the relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty.

Feelings toward a brand that comes from attachment may be a determining force behind brand equity (Lassar et al., 1995). Ahluwalia et al. (2000) extended this argument by studying the relation between commitment and attachment and found their combined effect to influence consumer information processing. Thus, it would be fair to argue that commitment towards a brand would influence the equity of the same. Thus, the next hypothesis is stated as:

H₈: Consumer brand commitment has a positive impact on brand equity.

Marketing researchers considered brand commitment as a necessary and sufficient antecedent to behavioural loyalty (e.g., Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007; Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006). Kim et al. (2008) empirically demonstrated the direct impact of attitudinal loyalty manifested through brand commitment to behavioural loyalty. Thus, the next hypothesis is stated as:

H₉: Consumer brand commitment has a positive impact on behavioural loyalty.

Brand equity has been defined “*as the added value endowed to a product as a result of past investments in the marketing of the brand*” (Keller, 1998). Brand equity could be considered as the major determinant of brand loyalty (Keller, 1993, 1998) and loyalty has been considered to be an important outcome of brand equity (Van Riel et al., 2005). According to Erdem and Swait (1998) the clarity and credibility of brands act as signals of product positions, that increase perceived quality, reduce perceived risk and information costs, and hence increase consumer expected utility. The same argument has also been supported by Menictas et al. (2012). Strong behavioural loyalty is the consequence of strong customer

based brand equity and change in the equity could lead to change in loyalty (Kaynak et al., 2008; Leone et al., 2006). Therefore, that the last hypothesis of the study is stated as:

H₁₀: Consumer brand equity has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

Study 2: Hypotheses Testing and Model Validation

Study 2 extends Study 1 by testing and validating the conceptual model and the hypotheses generated in the course using a quantitative approach.

Measurement

The survey questions were developed based on the extant literature supported by findings from Study 1. All items were measured on 11-point Likert-type scales from existing literature (Table 1 first column).

Sampling

The target population of the study consisted of buyers of established brands for more than a year. The study context was Hyderabad, as the city has been well recognized for its financial, commercial and industrial activities and was the fourth most populous city in India in 2013. Data was collected from the top five shopping malls through mall-intercept survey. The study applied a random selection procedure to approach a shopper as and when he/she exited the mall (Sudman, 1980). The survey was conducted from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. over a three-week period of time, including two weekends. Respondents were first asked to choose their favourite brand from any of the three selected product categories (apparel,

laptop and automobile). Once the respondent confirmed to be a regular user of the particular brand, he/she was asked to fill the questionnaire with respect to his/her favorite brand. A total of 475 usable questionnaires were obtained and used for the analysis.

Model Estimation Overview

The empirical validity of the conceptual model was examined in five stages. First, the measurement models related to each construct was tested through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Second, the tests of unidimensionality, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs were examined. Third, comparison of the alternative models were conducted to identify the best theoretically plausible and parsimonious model. Fourth, on determining the best-fit-model to the combined data, the model was tested using a sub-section of the sample aimed to test the proposed set of hypotheses. Fifth, the model was validated using a validation sample (other sub-set of the sample) and examined the possibility to replicate the model in other samples.

Phase 1: Measurement Models

The goodness of fit indices for the measurement models related to each construct were found to be within the generally accepted thresholds (Diamantopolous and Sigauw, 2000) and supported good fit to the data. The standardized factor loadings for each item loading to their respective construct were also found to be reasonably high (See Table 1). Thus, the CFA results for the measurement models were satisfactory.

Phase 2: Reliability, Validity and Unidimensionality

The examination of both standardized residuals and modification indices showed no potentially problematic cases (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) and supported construct unidimensionality. The Cronbach's alphas for the hypothesized constructs were above Nunnally's (1970) 0.70 threshold, suggesting adequate reliability. The composite reliability for each construct exceeded Bagozzi and Yi's (1988) 0.60 threshold, providing further support for the constructs reliability.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics, reliability and validity.

Construct (Author)	Item (Summary)	Mean (S.D.)	CFA Lod.	CR*	AVE	Inter Construct Correlations									
						1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
<i>Attitude Strength(1)</i> (Kim et al., 2008)	Attitude towards the brand.	6.8(1.3)	0.71	0.83 (0.83)	0.56										
	How certain to the brand.	6.7(1.5)	0.80												
	How important is the brand.	7.0(1.4)	0.76												
	How knowledgeable is the brand.	6.8(1.4)	0.72												
<i>Brand Satisfaction(2)</i> (Anderson et al., 1994)	Satisfied.	7.0(1.3)	0.73	0.85 (0.85)	0.65	0.65									
	Pleased.	7.0(1.3)	0.89												
	Disappointed.	6.8(1.5)	0.81												
<i>Brand Trust(3)</i> (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001)	Trust this brand.	6.8(1.3)	0.79	0.90 (0.89)	0.69	0.77	0.76								
	Relay on this brand.	6.7(1.5)	0.83												
	Honest brand.	7.0(1.4)	0.91												
	Brand is safe.	6.8(1.4)	0.81												
<i>Brand Attachment(4)</i> (Park et al., 2010)	Part of you and who you are.	6.8(1.5)	0.81	0.87 (0.87)	0.63	0.73	0.52	0.70							
	Personally connected.	7.3(1.4)	0.71												
	Emotionally bonded.	7.3(1.4)	0.80												
	Thoughts and feelings.	7.1(1.5)	0.86												
<i>Brand Commitment(5)</i> (Tsai, 2011)	Sense to continue.	5.4(1.5)	0.95	0.97 (0.97)	0.90	0.42	0.52	0.46	0.54						
	Committed to the brand.	5.4(1.4)	0.95												
	Emotional gratification.	5.3(1.5)	0.95												
	Very reasonable choice.	5.4(1.4)	0.95												
<i>Brand Equity(6)</i> (Yoo and Donthu, 2001)	Sense to buy instead of other brand.	6.9(1.4)	0.80	0.90 (0.90)	0.71	0.69	0.81	0.75	0.80	0.58					
	Prefer to buy over other brands.	6.9(1.5)	0.84												
	Buy over others in terms of features.	6.7(1.6)	0.87												
	Buy over others even if it's not different.	6.7(1.6)	0.87												
<i>Brand Loyalty(7)</i> (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995)	Considered to be loyal.	6.8(1.7)	0.92	0.95 (0.95)	0.83	0.53	0.66	0.56	0.67	0.73	0.70				
	Consideration of other brands only extreme circumstances.	6.6(1.9)	0.93												
	Somewhere else to go to buy the same brand.	6.7(1.7)	0.88												
	Another brand is on sale, prefer the loyal brand.	6.7(1.7)	0.93												

Note: *CR=Composite reliability (shows Cronbach alpha values), AVE= average variance extracted. All correlations are found to significant at 0.01 levels, CFA lod.= standardized CFA factor loadings.

Convergent validity of the constructs was evaluated by assessing the magnitude and significance of the indicators or observed variables. All the loadings were between 0.71 and 0.95 and exceeded the cutoff of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2006). Steenkamp and Van Trijp (1991) stated that a good overall fit of the model also gives enough evidence of convergent validity, as this is the case in this study. The discriminant validity of the measured constructs was performed following the procedure suggested by Joreskog's (1971). Results of discriminant validity checks (Table 2) indicated discriminant validity for all study constructs.

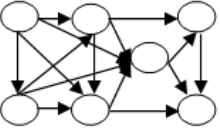
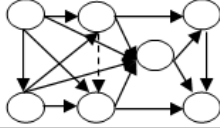
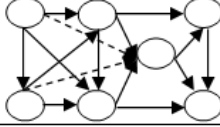

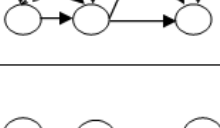
Table 2: Discriminant Validity Checks

Constructs	Unconstrained $X^2(df, p \text{ values})$ (1)	Constrained $X^2(df, p \text{ values})$ (2)	$\Delta X^2(\Delta df)$ (2-1)	P values
Attitude Strength with Other Constructs				
Brand Satisfaction	19.33(13,p=.000)	225.75(14,p=.000)	206.42 (1)	0.000
Brand Attachment	47.95(19,p=.000)	209.14(20,p=.000)	161.19 (1)	0.000
Brand Trust	67.14(19,p=.000)	206.77(20,p=.000)	139.63 (1)	0.000
Brand Commitment	49.60(19,p=.000)	430.90(20,p=.000)	381.3 (1)	0.000
Brand Equity	71.04(19,p=.000)	292.27(20,p=.000)	221.23(1)	0.000
Brand Loyalty	19.04(19,p=.000)	363.96(20,p=.000)	344.92(1)	0.000
Satisfaction with Other Constructs				
Brand Attachment	11.64(13,p=.000)	37.41(14,p=.000)	25.77(1)	0.000
Brand Trust	36.84(13,p=.000)	181.68(14,p=.000)	144.84(1)	0.000
Brand Commitment	27.27(13,p=.000)	281.07(14,p=.000)	351.8(1)	0.000
Brand Equity	72.41(13, p=.000)	144.62(14,p=.000)	72.21(1)	0.000
Brand Loyalty	20.62(13,p=.000)	231.62(14,p=.000)	211(1)	0.000
Brand Attachment with Other Constructs				
Brand Trust	53.21(19,p=.000)	222.63(20,p=.000)	169.42(1)	0.000
Brand Commitment	31.36(19,p=.036)	487.02(20,p=.000)	455.66(1)	0.000
Brand Equity	54.54(19,p=.000)	101.78(20,p=.000)	47.24(1)	0.000
Brand Loyalty	28.76(19,p=.000)	293.56(20,p=.000)	264.8(1)	0.000
Brand Trust with Other Constructs				
Brand Commitment	72.35(19,p=.000)	2830.31(20,p=.000)	2757.96(1)	0.000
Brand Equity	62.88(19,p=.000)	382.99(20,p=.000)	320.11(1)	0.000
Brand Loyalty	29.75(19,p=.000)	582.34(20,p=.000)	552.59(1)	0.000
Brand Commitment with Other constructs				
Brand Equity	69.82(19,p=.000)	634.98(20,p=.000)	565.16(1)	0.000
Brand Loyalty	45.69(19,p=.000)	838.13(20,p=.000)	792.44(1)	0.000
Brand Equity with Loyalty				
Brand Loyalty	52.38(19,p=.000)	507.66(20,p=.000)	455.28(1)	0.000

Phase 3: Two Step Sequential Chi-square Difference Test Procedure

The study followed two step chi-square difference test procedure proposed by Anderson and Garbing (1988) to identify the best theoretically plausible and parsimonious model. First, the null model (Mn: no relationship exists between study constructs) was compared against the saturated model (Ms: measurement model) to examine whether the measurement model is theoretically meaningful. The chi-square difference ($\Delta\chi^2=18766$, $df=51$, $p<0.01$) was statistically significant. This result supports that the proposed model is theoretically meaningful to continue with the second step. Second, the researchers considered two most unconstrained (Mu) and two constrained (Mc) models based on theory and compared these models with the most theoretical or substantive model of interest (Mt). We selected the hypothesized model as the most theoretical model (Mt), because this is considered to be the most theoretically sound model compared to other models. The structural sub-models to be compared in this study are nested in a sequence such that $Mn < Mc < Mt < Mu < Ms$. As part of comparing these models a sequential chi-square difference tests (SCDT's) were employed.

Table 3: Competing Models and Goodness of Fit indices

Model	Paths Excluded from the Full Model	Competing Models	χ^2/df	GFI	ECVI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC	NNFI
Mu2	None		2.29	0.83	3.38	0.97	0.98	0.072	0.054	841.51	0.98
Mu1	1. Brand Trust=> Brand Attachment		2.25	0.83	3.35	0.97	0.98	0.071	0.055	840.69	0.98
Mt	1. Brand Attitude Strength=> Brand Commitment 2. Brand Satisfaction=> Brand Attachment		2.26	0.83	3.36	0.97	0.98	0.071	0.054	837.14	0.98
Mc1	1. Brand Attitude Strength=> Brand Commitment 2. Brand Satisfaction=> Brand Attachment 3. 1. Brand Attitude Strength=> Brand Attachment 4. Brand Satisfaction=> Brand Trust		2.37	0.82	3.50	0.97	0.98	0.074	0.071	872.15	0.98
Mc2	1. Brand Attitude Strength=> Brand Commitment 2. Brand Satisfaction=> Brand Attachment 3. 1. Brand Attitude Strength=> Brand Attachment 4. Brand Satisfaction=> Brand Trust 5. Brand Trust=> Brand Attachment		2.46	0.82	3.51	0.97	0.98	0.074	0.075	874.97	0.98

*dotted line shows the omitted relationships

Table 3 shows the goodness of fit indices of competing models with the most theoretical model. The goodness of fit indices support that Mt model provides a good fit to data in-comparison with other models. First, the comparison with the most unconstrained model (Mu2), which is very comparable to most theoretical model (Mt), except two additional paths from attitude strength and satisfaction of commitment (Attitude strength of commitment; Satisfaction to commit) shown that Mt is a better model (χ^2/df for Mt = 2.26 and for Mu2 = 2.29). Next, compare Mu1 with Mt which are non-nested, we followed the AIC criterion. The AIC for Mu1 is 840, for Mt the value is 837. The lowest AIC value for Mt suggests better fit for the model (William and Holahan, 1994).

The study also analysed model's (Mt) suitability or fit with other two constrained models (Mc1 and Mc2). In Mc1, the study constrained four path coefficients from the full model, these paths are; (a) brand attitude strength to brand commitment; (b) brand satisfaction to brand attachment; (c) brand attitude strength to brand attachment and (d) brand satisfaction to brand trust. In Mc2 the most constrained models, in which the study constrained the paths which are already constrained in Mc1 and an additional path (brand trust to brand attachment). The fit indices such as AIC, EVCI and PNFI are used for the comparison of Mc1 and Mc2 with Mt. AIC for Mc1 is 872 and for Mc2 the value is 874, higher than the Mt's AIC value of 837. The EVCI indices for Mc1, Mc2 and Mt are 3.50, 3.51 and 3.36 respectively. The PNFI value for both Mc1 and Mt is 0.86 and 0.87 for Mc2. The comparison of all the indices has shown substantial evidence that Mt is a better model in

comparison with other two constrained models (Mc1 and Mc2). This further supports the hypothesized model.

Phase 4: Test of Hypotheses

On determining the best model through the SCDT's procedure, the hypotheses were tested by checking the statistical significance of coefficients for each hypothesized path using a sub-section of the sample ($n = 250$)¹. First, the examination of the model fit indices indicated adequate Goodness-of-fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.25$ GFI = 0.83; RMSEA = 0.07; RMR = 0.12; NFI = 0.97, and CFI = 0.83). Second, the hypotheses test results (See Table 4) found support ($p < 0.01$) for all the hypothesized paths except the one corresponding to the relationship between satisfaction and commitment (H3). Brand attitude strength had a positive influence on brand satisfaction ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) in support of H1. H2 proposed a moderating relationship of brand trust between brand attitude strength brand attachment and found statistical support ($\beta = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$). Brand attitude strength and brand commitment relationship was moderated by brand attachment and this relationship is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$) supporting H4. It was also proposed that brand satisfaction would lead to brand commitment and this relationship is moderated by brand attachment, the results showed that the relationship is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$), and explained an overall variance of 30 percent on brand commitment, in support of H5. H6

¹ Called as calibration sample, which is used to develop the model (and undertake any modifications deemed necessary). The other sub-section of the sample was used for validation purpose and the validation sample is used to test the derived model.

proposed that brand trust was mediating the relationship between brand attitude strength and brand equity, and the results supported its statistical significance ($\beta = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$). In H7 it was proposed that brand trust will have an indirect effect on brand loyalty through brand attachment, which was found to be statistically significant ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$). Brand commitment was found to have a direct effect on both brand equity and brand loyalty, in support of H8 and H9 ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$ and $\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$) respectively. We also found support for H10, because brand equity having a positive influence on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4: Structural Model Assessment: Calibration Sample.

Parameter	Estimate	Std-error	t-value	R ²	Hyp.	Result
ATT=>SAT	0.68	0.09	7.80		H ₁	Sig
				0.42		
ATT=> TR =>ATTH	0.73	0.11	6.66		H ₂	Sig
				0.89		
SAT=> TR=> COM	0.012	0.001	0.13		H ₃	NS
ATT=> ATTH=> COM	0.59	0.09	6.57		H ₄	Sig
SAT=> ATTH=>COM	0.59	0.09	6.57		H ₅	Sig
				0.30		
ATT=> TR=>EQ	0.76	0.09	8.78		H ₆	Sig
COM => EQ	0.21	0.04	5.04		H ₈	Sig
				0.70		
TR=> ATTH => LOY	0.34	0.12	2.93		H ₇	Sig
COM => LOY	0.55	0.06	8.51		H ₉	Sig
EQ=> LOY	0.33	0.11	3.09		H ₁₀	Sig
				0.64		

Note: ATT=Brand attitude strength, SAT=Brand satisfaction, TR=Brand Trust, ATTH= Brand attachment, COM=Brand Commitment, EQ=Brand Equity, LOY=Brand Loyalty and NS= non-significant.

Phase 5: Model Validation

The model validation was conducted on a sample of 225 respondents. The results suggested a satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.02$; GFI=0.83; RMSEA=0.064; RMR = 0.12; NFI= 0.97, and CFI = 0.83).

Table 5: Structural Model Assessment: Validation Sample.

Parameter	Estimate	Std-error	t-value	R ²	Hyp.	Result
ATT=> SAT	0.68	0.09	7.40		H ₁	Sig
				0.42		
ATT=> TR=>ATTH	0.73	0.12	6.32		H ₂	Sig
				0.89		
SAT=> TR=>COM	0.01	0.001	0.13		H ₃	NS
ATT=> ATTH=>COM	0.59	0.09	6.42		H ₄	Sig
SAT ATTH COM	0.50	0.15	3.42		H ₅	Sig
				0.30		
ATT=> TR=>EQ	0.76	0.09	8.33		H ₆	Sig
COM=> EQ	0.21	0.04	4.78		H ₈	Sig
				0.70		
TR=> ATTH=> LOY	0.34	0.12	2.78		H ₇	Sig
COM=> LOY	0.55	0.07	8.07		H ₉	Sig
EQ=> LOY	0.33	0.11	2.93		H ₁₀	Sig
				0.64		

Note: ATT=Brand attitude strength, SAT=Brand satisfaction, TR=Brand Trust, ATTH= Brand attachment, COM=Brand Commitment, EQ=Brand Equity, LOY=Brand Loyalty, NS= non-significant and Sig=significant.

Similar to the calibration sample, estimated coefficients of the validation sample support all the hypotheses, except H3. The results corroborated mostly with the calibration sample in terms of the magnitude and the strength of the relationship between the study constructs.

The model fit of the calibration model was also assessed after removing the non-significant link (H3) as per the recommendation by Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000). The results suggested a relatively poor fit in comparison with the initial model ($\chi^2/df = 2.36$; RMSEA=0.074; GFI=0.82; AGFI=0.78; NFI=0.97, and CFI=0.98). Therefore, the hypothesized model was found to be more realistic.

Theoretical Implications

The current understandings of the study extend and complement several theoretical frameworks and models that can be used to further enrich the CBR literature. First, the CBA model extends the Fazio model (Fazio, 1986) of attitude behaviour relationships. According to the model, previously developed attitude would influence behaviour only if these attitudes were retrieved from memory during the behavioural situation. These activated or retrieved attitudes are the basic component which helps to filter or bias the consumer's immediate perceptions of the brand, which in turn helps to create the consumer's definition of the event and ultimately influences subsequent behaviour with respect to the brand. Attitude accessibility or the strength of the association would help to activate the previously formed attitude to activate from memory during the behavioural situation. More accessible attitudes have the ability and power to activate faster in a behavioural situation, and ability to influence perceptions and ultimately behaviour.

Second, consumers were found to possess an inherent motivation for self-expansion, or a desire to incorporate others' (here the brand) into their conception of self. This is agreement with self-expansion theory (Aron et al., 2005). The more an entity (brand) is included in the self, the closer is the bond that connects them (Park et al., 2010). When the brand starts offering resources in the service of self-expansion, consumers may start developing a strong connection between the brand and the self, which would lead to the development of frequent brand related thoughts and feelings or brand attachment. The consumers also develop a type of confidence expectation that he/she can rely on the trusted brand when the need arises. These affective or emotional elements (attachment and trust) are the key to interpersonal relationships. The study also found support that the customer's affective or emotional responses towards a brand is maintained, amplified or altered depending on how the cognitive phase or the experience is interpreted and explained (Collins and Read, 1994). Once the cognitive phase is positively interpreted and motivated it would lead to an affective phase of attachment and trust. As the relationship forms, the attachment object makes its resources (hedonic, social, knowledge etc.) available to the self. Finally it would lead to a cognitive re-organization that makes the attachment object's resources seem as if they were one's own.

Third, the extant research in relationship marketing has shown that consumers' brand trust is one of the cornerstones of strategic partnership, because trust between two parties would lead to commitment (Hrebiniak, 1974). Morgan & Hunt (1994) used McDonald's (1981) Social Exchange Theory to explain the relationship between trust and

commitment, "*mistrust breeds mistrust and as such would also serve to decrease commitment in the relationship and shift the transaction to one of more direct short-term exchanges*". Trust is the major factor that determines relationship commitment. Once the consumer is committed towards the brand, he/she intends to remain loyal to and hence maintain a relationship with the brand in future. This means that committed consumers behave in a manner that supportive of relationship longevity. Strong commitment is derived from attachment to the brand is revealed by a set of commitment related behaviours that promote relationship maintenance acts. The behaviours of such commitment include brand loyalty (Ahluwalia et al., 2000), forgiveness of mishaps and brand advocating behaviours such as positive word-of mouth and the derogation of alternatives (Fournier, 1994).

Fourth, adding to the interpersonal attachment theory and findings of Park et al. (2010), the study results support that consumers' who are attached to the brand are not just simply the beneficiary of brand's resources, instead they also actively invest their own resources to the brand to maintain the brand relationship. Such resources include (a) buying extended brands (b) sacrificing resources such as time and money (c) social resources such as defending the brand to others and derogating its alternatives etc. (Park et al., 2010).

Managerial Implications

The well-grounded and the integrative CBR model provides relevant information to the brand managers, also offers a wide spectrum of information to solve their managerial

uncertainty and policy making in strategic brand management process. In the following section, we provide discussions on three focal areas of brand management and operations that could benefit by employing the insights from this research.

To analyse brand's relationship strength

The model introduced in this study provides insights into the antecedents of behavioural loyalty. In particular, study offers managers potentially important information for analysing the brand's strength in terms of its competitors in the product category. For example, if the major antecedent explaining the brand loyalty to the brand is found in the absence of brand equity, explains that the brand might not have a differential knowledge structure in consumers' mind in terms of its competitors. Conversely, if the commitment to the brand is the major antecedent source, the strength of the brand lies in its ability to create affective and conative (intentional) elements not in its differentiated knowledge structure of the consumer's mind. Based on this explanation, brand managers should devise appropriate strategic actions. Brands that are competing in those product categories wherein differentiated brand knowledge structure matters, could focus on strong, unique and favourable brand equity development in their strategic marketing actions to build strong relationships. Conversely, brands that are able to frame a strong competitive frame of reference, point of parity and point of difference would be better off focusing on the aspects that facilitate differential comparisons. Similarly, if the brand is competing in those product categories wherein the brand knowledge differentiation is not too much essential, the brand managers should devise marketing programs to develop brand commitment or

devise strategies to curb brand switching. The mediating role played by the affective components, namely brand trust and brand attachment provide additional insights into the creation of brand commitment, equity and behavioural loyalty. For example, if the main source explaining brand loyalty is found in the absence of brand equity, the brand managers might target more to build brand attachment and therefore, brand commitment that resulted in brand loyalty. Conversely, if consumers' brand commitment and attachments are mainly responsible for explaining loyalty to the brand, the equity element is lagging because of the under consideration of the trust element in brand building efforts. This understanding help brand managers to improves brand's relationship strength in terms of its competitors and thereby build brands role in consumers' everyday life.

Customer welfare management

The companies intend to manage their brands with focused customer welfare and strong customer brand relationships can consider the model for greater understanding about when, where and how to invest in the establishment of customer welfare and thereby strong bond with the brand. For example, they may consider the process through which the development of bond with a brand could be executed. The identification of attitudinal and behavioural constructs and its integration proposed by this study would also more directly answer the call from the marketing practitioner community for more precision in terms of relationship establishment and decision making. To summarize, the consumer-brand relationship model developed in this study would help marketers realize the strategic management of customer welfare management, and consequent development of

relationships establishment, augmentation, maintenance and execution. Therefore, it is recommended that brand managers develop and manage consumer brand relationships from the perspective of the multi-dimensional integrative facet of consumer relationship and not merely based on traditional assessment and understanding of either attitudinal or behavioural perspective.

Customer benefit assessment and strategic brand relationship management

From the model developed in this study, the consumer brand marketers may clearly manage the benefits the customers seek during the brand relationship building process. It has been well recognized from the model that the strategic management of consumer-brand relationships starts with establishing the cognitive components of the relationship: brand attitude strength and brand satisfaction. Therefore, during relationship establishment, companies should focus more on value driven functional aspects to establish the relationship, as it is the major source of cognitive relationship formation. The next step focuses more on the pursuit of augmenting consumer brand relationships through the brand elements such as: brand trust and brand attachment, which function as the key mediators of in the whole process of consumer-brand relationships. In this stage, companies try to provide symbolic aspects while they signal brand's benefits. Once the augmentation has achieved, marketers should concentrate on how to maintain consumer brand relationships. It could be achieved through a connotative component, such as brand commitment, which functions as a key component of relationship maintenance. This shows the importance of reliability while they signal functional and symbolic elements.

Overall, the specific indicators for each latent construct as well as its relationship established by the model may help the consumer-brand marketer to establish a benefit evaluation mechanism, which would monitor and keep consumer-brand relationships building efforts. Here in this research, the researcher would like to show the power that the concept of consumer-brand relationship plays in the context of consumer-branding. Strategic management of such relationship dimensions established in this study characterizes as an interrelated sequential process, starting from establishing relationships through cognitive aspects, to augment the same using affective aspects, maintenance through conative aspects and generating its outcomes. Therefore, the brand managers are advised to keep updating on each stage and develop strategies accordingly to have real benefit from their relationship building efforts.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study established a CBR model through the integration of attitudinal and behavioural components across four components of: (a) cognitive; (b) affective; (c) conative; and (d) behavioural. The CBR model introduced in this study is generalizable across different product categories and consumer segments, but it must be acknowledged that the scope of the SEM phase was limited to three product categories and a single population group. Therefore, any attempt to replicate the study in other product categories and population group is encouraged to test generalizability. Second, the study failed to consider all the external variables, particularly other than the one from the consumers' point of view, which may have influenced the results. Third, one of the recognizable limitations of the current

study is that the research was not designed as a longitudinal study. To have more confidence and understanding, the model should be tested using longitudinal data. Future studies should look into the above mentioned limitations and explore the avenues by considering the same as their research gaps. Nevertheless, the current study advances CBR knowledge through a novel model that integrates attitudinal and behavioural components that ultimately leads to behavioural outcomes.

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