SYNOPSIS
Consumer researchers have shown significant interest in identifying the drivers of strong consumer-brand relationships. In the past, researchers have uncovered various drivers of consumer-brand relationships, 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), which impact profitability, price insensitivity and referrals. However, to sustain long term and durable consumer-brand relationships, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the antecedents and consequences, both from the attitudinal and behavioural perspectives. In particular, Blackston (1992), Nabel and Blattberg (2000) were very precise in suggesting that attitude should be included along with behaviour to define consumer-brand relationships. Despite this understanding, limited research has been conducted to identify and integrate the attitudinal and behavioural components of consumer-brand relationships in their conceptualization and subsequent operationalization. After a review of the past literature, gaps are identified and the objectives of the study are formulated. The objectives are:

1. To modify and broaden earlier conceptualization of consumer-brand relationships by integrating attitudinal and behavioral perspectives for each consumer-brand relationship phase into the original framework of the theory to better comprehend consumers’ brand relationship formation.

2. To propose a conceptually clear and operationally meaningful model of consumer-brand relationships through the exploration and integration of attitudinal and behavioral aspects of consumer-brand relationships, and
3. To test the proposed conceptual model empirically and to examine how attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of consumer-brand relationships work as an integrative mechanism to build consumer-brand relationships.

Followed by a mixed research design approach two studies were conducted. In the first study, through a series of in-depth interviews (N = 20) and subsequent textual analysis of the transcripts backed by grounded theory approach the consumer-brand relationship constructs were explored, refined, and integrated into a conceptual model. The qualitative analysis supports that customers first form cognitive form of consumer-brand relationship through attitude strength and brand satisfaction, then affective form through trusted and attached relationships, followed by conative consumer-brand relationships with deeply held brand commitment, which finally results in a behavioral/action relationship through brand equity and brand loyalty.

In the second study, to further demonstrate this conceptual model’s value for marketing practice, following a survey method (N = 475) and consequent analysis of the data through SEM, the conceptual model was tested and validated empirically. The results of the SEM supported empirical validity and predictability of the conceptual model and the interdependency among the relationship dimensions identified during the qualitative phase of this study. This further validates Study 1 findings.

Overall, from the results of analysis, it is concluded that consumers’ attitudinal and behavioural perspectives play a vital role, and it works as an integrative mechanism to develop, augment and maintain strong and deep rooted consumer-brand relationships. The foremost contribution of this study lies in its enhanced understanding and development of a robust model of consumer-brand relationships, which in turn would benefit consumer-brand relationships
theory and provide an actionable model for practitioners. Moreover, the study also helps firms in developing brands which would be accepted by consumers and thereby augmenting marketing activities.