Predicting Persistence: An Examination of Two Critical Indicators of Brand Relationship Strength

by

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ABSTRACT

PREDICTING PERSISTENCE: AN EXAMINATION OF TWO CRITICAL INDICATORS OF BRAND RELATIONSHIP STRENGTH

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The current research argues that brand commitment, a multidimensional construct consisting of brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist, is a better indicator of brand relationship strength than brand attachment alone. Brand commitment is a better indicator of brand relationship strength because it is able to predict brand relationship persistence, is influenced by important antecedents of brand relationship strength, and can explain the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence while brand attachment cannot. The current research employs survey methodology, SEM, and a between-subjects experimental design to test this argument. The results indicate that brand commitment predicts relationship persistence and reveal that long-term orientation and intent to persist are important predictors of relationship persistence. These findings contribute to the consumer-brand relationship literature by illustrating the importance of understanding all three of components of brand commitment.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Brand attachment has received a considerable amount of attention in the marketing literature (e.g., Fedorikhin, Park, & Thomson, 2008; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005) and has been recently identified as an important construct for understanding various types of consumer-brand relationships (e.g., human brands, Thomson, 2006, and negative relationships, Johnson, Matear, & Thomson, 2011). Extant research has connected brand attachment with numerous variables that influence the formation and strength of brand relationships (e.g., satisfaction, Thomson et al., 2005, investment, Park et al., 2010) as well as important relationship outcomes (e.g., forgiveness, Fedorikhin et al., 2008, willingness to sacrifice, Park et al., 2010).

Brand attachment has become so closely associated with consumer-brand relationships that it has been suggested that brand attachment be used as a parsimonious indicator of brand relationship strength (Thomson, 2006), a concept originally introduced by Fournier (1998). However, a suitable approximation of brand relationship strength should be able to predict relationship stability, or the likelihood that consumers will persist in the brand relationship. Further, if brand attachment is to be used as a metric of brand relationship strength, it should also be influenced by several marketing variables that are known to affect brand relationship strength and the likelihood that consumers will persist in their brand relationships (e.g., satisfaction, brand trust). In addition, brand attachment should explain the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and brand relationship persistence. The current research predicts that brand attachment will not be a predictor of brand relationship persistence and does not explain the relationship between key antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence. However, the current research argues that brand commitment does.
Drawing from research and theory from the interpersonal relationship literature in psychology (e.g. Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993), the current research conceptualizes brand commitment as a multidimensional construct that consists of psychological attachment to the brand, long-term orientation to the brand relationship, and intent to persist in the brand relationship. Although brand attachment has been linked to numerous relationship-maintaining behaviours in previous research, the current research argues that brand attachment alone is unable to predict persistence in the brand relationship because it is only one aspect of the higher-order brand commitment construct and consequently offers an incomplete perspective. However, when long-term orientation and intent to persist are examined in combination with brand attachment, consistent with the conceptualization of relationship commitment in the psychological literature, brand commitment will predict persistence in the brand relationship.

For the purposes of the current research, brand relationship persistence is estimated by assessing a consumers’ willingness to engage in the following pro-relational behaviours: accommodation when the brand behaves badly (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991; Rusbult, Wieselquist, Foster, & Witcher, 1999; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999), willingness to sacrifice for the sake of maintaining the brand relationship (Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, Witcher, & Cox, 1997; Wieselquist et al., 1999), positively biased brand perceptions (Murray & Holmes, 1993; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995), tendencies to derogate attractive alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1990), and resistance to negative information about the brand (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000; Ahluwalia, Unnava, & Burnkrant, 2001).

The purpose of the current research is to test two competing conceptual models that illustrate the relationships between important antecedents of brand relationship
strength (satisfaction, investment, perceived quality of alternatives, and brand trust) and relationship persistence in order to demonstrate the following: 1) brand attachment and brand commitment are conceptually and empirically distinct constructs, 2) brand commitment predicts brand relationship persistence while brand attachment does not, and 3) brand commitment mediates the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence while brand attachment does not.

The current research demonstrates that when brand attachment is examined alone, it predicts certain relationship-maintaining behaviours but does not predict relationship persistence. However, when it is conceptualized in a way that is consistent with relationship commitment in the interpersonal relationships literature, brand commitment predicts relationship persistence. The current research contributes to the brand relationship literature by empirically demonstrating that brand commitment is a better predictor of relationship persistence than brand attachment alone, illustrating why brand commitment is essential for a more complete understanding of consumer-brand relationships and enhancing our understanding of why consumers persist, or fail to persist, in their relationships with brands.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Brand Relationships

A purely rational, economic view of consumer buying behaviour would predict that consumers choose brands based on a specific set of attributes (e.g., price, quality, expected lifetime, etc.) for the utility of the product. This view interprets consistent repurchase behaviour as a direct result of the ability of a brand to continually satisfy the needs of the consumer. If this were true, consumer purchase behaviour would seem to be relatively easy to predict, as it would
depend primarily on consumer satisfaction with the brand and the tangible attributes of the product itself. However, an examination of actual consumer behaviour reveals that this is not the case.

Previous research reveals that consumers are not indifferent to the brands they purchase, consume, and interact with in their everyday lives (Fournier, 1998). Research in consumer behaviour shows that consumers use brands for a variety of different purposes that extend beyond the functional utility of the brands (e.g., Park, et al., 2010). Some of these purposes include the fulfillment of self-expressive, self-expansive, and relational needs. For example, consumers use brands to express their actual selves, ideal selves, and other aspects of their identities (Aaker, 1997; Belk, 1988; Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011; Swaminathan, Stilley, & Ahluwalia, 2009), to form, alter, enhance, reinforce, or expand their self-concepts (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995; Belk, 1988; Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995; Park et al., 2010), to achieve major life goals and work through prominent life themes (Fournier, 1998), and to signal traits to potential relationship partners (Aaker, 1997; Swaminathan et al. 2009; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988).

Although brands are intangible and inanimate entities, previous research reveals that consumers can use brands for these and other purposes because, through the process of humanizing brands, consumers are able to interact with brands as if they are human-like entities (Fournier, 1998). Previous research reveals that consumers attribute personality traits and characteristics (Aaker, 1997), dispositions, temperaments, and motivations to brands. Further, extant research reveals that consumers form intense emotional attachments to certain brands (Park, et al., 2010; Thomson, et al., 2005), describe experiences of “being in love” with brands (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012), trust brands (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), and develop
complex, dynamic, interdependent relationships with brands (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Fournier, 1998).

The idea that consumers enter into relationships with brands is of particular interest to researchers. It was first introduced by Fournier (1998), who argued for the use of the relationship metaphor to describe how consumers interact with and feel towards the brands in their lives. In her seminal paper, Fournier argues that consumer-brand relationships are interdependent, purposive, complex, dynamic, and exist to add structure and meaning into consumers’ lives. She suggests that consumer-brand relationships can help consumers resolve life themes, deliver on important life projects or tasks, and aid in the everyday activities of daily life. Thus, consumers enter into different types of consumer-brand relationships with various brands for a variety of purposes. In her paper, Fournier identified and described fifteen different forms of consumer-brand relationships (e.g., arranged marriages, casual friends, committed partnerships, and enslavements, etc.) and argued that different kinds of brand relationships serve different needs.

2.2 Brand Relationship Strength

Fournier (1998) developed a theoretical model of Brand Relationship Quality because relationship quality has been linked to many important relational consequences (e.g., relationship stability, satisfaction, accommodation tendencies, attribution biases, etc.) and pro-relationship motivation in the interpersonal relationship literature. Fournier’s model of Brand Relationship Quality identifies six indicators of brand relationship strength - love/passion, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, and brand partner quality - and posits that these indicators jointly predict relationship stability/durability.
Although prior research has not directly tested Fournier’s (1998) model, considerable research has been conducted on the different indicators of brand relationship strength. For example, love and passion have been examined in a consumer brand relationship context (Batra et al., 2012, Yim, Tse, & Chan, 2008), often in conjunction with other, related constructs such as brand attachment (Thomson, et al., 2005). The idea of self-connection has been explored in depth in the self-brand connection literature (e.g., Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Escalas & Bettman, 2005) and the brand attachment literature (Park et al., 2010), along with the concept of interdependence. Additionally, brand commitment (e.g., Aaker, et al., 2004; Coulter, Price, & Feick, 2003), intimacy, and brand partner quality (Aaker et al., 2004) have also been examined, although to a lesser extent than the other indicators.

There is a considerable amount of overlap between Fournier’s (1998) six indicators of brand relationship strength, as evidenced by the finding that many of Fournier’s indicators have been examined simultaneously in prior research (e.g., Batra et al., 2013; Thomson et al., 2005) and conceptualized as aspects of other indicators. For example, research on brand attachment suggests that love/passion, self-connection, and intimacy are all aspects of the brand attachment construct (Thomson et al., 2005; Park et al., 2010). These indicators, along with the concept of interdependence, may also characterize brand commitment. Thus, it is possible that a parsimonious indicator of brand relationship strength exists, one that encapsulates most, if not all, of the indicators described in Fournier’s brand relationship quality model (excluding brand partner quality) and provides a comprehensive yet precise measure of the strength of a brand relationship.

Fournier’s (1998) brand relationship quality model suggests that a parsimonious indicator of brand relationship strength should predict stability in the brand relationship, or the likelihood
that consumers will persist in the brand relationship. In addition, a parsimonious indicator of brand relationship strength should also be influenced by important marketing variables that are known to affect brand relationship strength and relationship persistence (e.g., satisfaction, brand trust). Further, a construct that acts as a substitute for brand relationship strength should be able to explain the relationship between important antecedents of brand relationship strength (e.g., brand trust) and brand relationship persistence as it should both be influenced by these antecedents and closer in proximity to relationship persistence than the antecedents.

2.3 Brand Attachment as a Parsimonious Indicator of Brand Relationship Strength

Brand attachment has received a lot of attention in the marketing literature as studies have shown that brand attachment is a significant predictor of desirable marketing outcomes. Research on the topic has found that brand attachment predicts purchase intentions (Fedorikhin et al., 2008), actual purchase behavior (Park et al., 2010), willingness to pay a price premium (Thomson et al., 2005), word-of-mouth (Fedorikhin et al., 2008), brand purchase share and need share (Park et al., 2010) and brand loyalty (Thomson et al., 2005).

Currently, brand attachment has been gaining recognition as an important variable for understanding consumer-brand relationships. Extant research has connected brand attachment with numerous variables that influence the formation and strength of brand relationships (e.g., satisfaction, Thomson et al., 2005, investment, Park et al., 2010) as well as important relationship outcomes. For example, Park et al. (2010) found that brand attachment predicts consumers’ intentions to perform difficult behaviors that require the investment of the consumers’ resources. They argue that this occurs because consumers with strong attachments have a tendency to incorporate the brand into their self-concept. Another study reveals that
consumers who are strongly attached to a brand are more likely to forgive the brand following a transgression (Fedorikhin et al., 2008), while another study reveals that consumers who are strongly attached to a brand prior to the dissolution of the brand relationship are more likely to engage in anti-brand retaliatory behaviors due to self-conscious emotions experienced in reaction to the loss of the relationship (Johnson et al., 2011).

Brand attachment has become so closely associated with consumer-brand relationships that it has been suggested that brand attachment could be used as a parsimonious indicator of brand relationship strength (Thomson, 2006). However, for brand attachment to be considered a valid approximation of brand relationship strength, it should be influenced by multiple antecedents of brand relationship strength, be a strong predictor of brand relationship persistence, and be a mediator of the relationship between the brand relationship antecedents and persistence in the brand relationship. These three conditions imply a conceptual model that places brand attachment as a mediator of the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and brand relationship persistence. The current research aims to demonstrate that this conceptual model does not hold when empirically tested and offers an alternative conceptual model – one that draws from the interpersonal relationship literature in psychology and assumes that brand commitment, not brand attachment, is the critical variable for understanding brand relationship strength and brand relationship persistence.

2.4 Commitment and Relationship Persistence

In the interpersonal relationship literature, commitment is inextricably linked with relationship persistence to the extent that some researchers have defined commitment in terms of relationship persistence (e.g., Kelley, 1983; Johnson, 1991). Commitment has been defined as a
psychological state that globally represents dependence on a relationship (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993, p. 180) and been described as the casual mechanism by which various other relationship-promoting factors lead to relationship persistence (Johnson, 1973; Rusbult, 1983). In addition, strong commitment has been associated with numerous relationship-maintaining behaviours in the literature.

Drawing from interdependence theory, leading researchers of commitment in close relationships in social psychology (e.g., Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Rusbult, et al., 1991; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Rusbult, et al., 1999; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995; Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist, et al., 1999) argue that commitment is the key differentiating variable that determines whether individuals persist in their relationships. The investment model of commitment (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993), described below, illustrates this theory.

The investment model of commitment (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993) posits that satisfaction, investment, and perceived quality of alternatives influence an individual’s level of commitment, which in turn affects the extent to which individuals engage in relationship-maintaining behaviours. Essentially, the investment model of commitment posits that, to the extent that individuals become dependent on a relationship, they become increasingly committed to that relationship and consequently more likely to persist in the relationship. Extant research in social psychology, elaborated further below, has empirically tested this model.

Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) tested the investment model and demonstrated that individuals are committed to the relationship to the extent that they are satisfied with the relationship, have invested personal resources into the relationship, and perceive available alternatives as poor. Consistent with the conceptualization of relationship commitment in the investment model, Arriaga and Agnew (2001) found that psychological attachment, long-term
orientation, and intent to persist are central components of relationship commitment and these components predicted whether individuals persisted in their romantic relationships. In addition, they found that the three components fully mediated the relationship between the three antecedents of commitment highlighted in the investment model (satisfaction, investment size, and quality of alternatives) and relationship persistence.

Researchers in marketing have also identified the connection between commitment and relationship persistence. Garbarino and Johnson (1999, p. 71) state that “commitment is recognized as an essential ingredient for successful long-term relationships.” More recently, Berry and Parasuraman (1991, p. 139) argue that “relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment.” The idea that commitment is inextricably linked to relationship persistence is pervasive in marketing and is reflected in many of the definitions of commitment throughout the marketing literature. For example, Dwyer et al. (1987, p. 19) defined commitment as “an implicit or explicit pledge of relational continuity between exchange partners,” highlighting the importance of the continuation of the relationship. Morgan and Hunt (1994) describe commitment as “an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely” (p. 23). Moorman et al. (1992, p. 316) described commitment as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship,” and focus on the importance of maintaining the relationship. Lastly, Fournier (1998, p. 365) defined brand commitment as “the intention to behave in a manner supportive of relationship longevity.”

Several studies have also investigated the relationship between commitment and persistence in the relationship in various contexts with mixed results. MacKenzie et al. (1998)
studied the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover but did not find a significant relationship between these two constructs. Similarly, Gruen et al., (2000) examined the relationship between commitment and member retention in a study of commitment to the organization and found that commitment was not significantly related to retention. Conversely, Morgan and Hunt (1994) studied relationship commitment and the propensity to leave in a relationship marketing context and found that relationship commitment was significantly and negatively related to the propensity to leave.

Consistent with the interpersonal relationship literature, the current research proposes an alternative conceptual model to the brand attachment model described in the previous section. In this second conceptual model, brand commitment, rather than brand attachment, is placed at the centre of the model as a mediator of the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and brand relationship persistence.

### 2.5 Two Competing Conceptual Models of Brand Relationship Strength

The purpose of the current research is to test two competing conceptual models that illustrate the relationship between several antecedents of brand relationship strength, brand relationship strength, and relationship persistence. As previously described, the first conceptual model assumes that the antecedents of brand relationship strength influence brand attachment and brand attachment subsequently predicts relationship persistence. It places brand attachment at the focal point and proposes that brand attachment mediates the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and brand relationship persistence. The second conceptual model places brand commitment, consistent with how it has been conceptualized in
the interpersonal relationship literature, at the focal point, and assumes that commitment will mediate the relationship between the marketing variables and relationship persistence.

The following sections expand on the constructs and relationships highlighted in these conceptual models. First, a brief overview of the brand attachment literature is provided with a discussion of how it is conceptualized in the current research. Next, the literature on relationship commitment in marketing is reviewed and an explanation of the conceptualization of brand commitment used in the current research is provided. The following section compares and contrasts the brand attachment and brand commitment constructs. Lastly, the antecedents of brand relationship strength and the relationship persistence constructs are described in detail.

2.6 Brand Attachment

Research in marketing (Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1995) reveals that consumers form attachments to marketplace entities such as gifts (Mick & DeMoss, 1990), special or favourite objects (Ball & Tasaki, 1992; Kleine et al., 1995; Richins, 1994a; Richins, 1994b; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988), places (Hill & Stamey, 1990), celebrities (Thomson, 2006), and product brands (Fournier, 1998; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995).

Although the concept that consumers form attachments to products and brands is certainly not new (e.g., Belk, 1988), only recently have researchers begun to elucidate the components of brand attachment and investigate the antecedents and consequences of this construct. There are two prominent research studies on brand attachment in the brand relationship literature, Thomson et al.’s (2005) research, which introduces a measure of emotional attachment to brands, and Park et al.’s (2010) paper, which develops a different conceptualization and measure of brand attachment.
2.6.1 Thomson et al.’s (2005) Model of Brand Attachment

Thomson et al. (2005) applied attachment theory from social psychology (Bowlby, 1979; Bowlby, 1980; Hazan & Shaver, 1994) to consumer behaviour to develop a conceptualization and measure of consumers’ emotional attachment to brands. They developed a 10-item scale to measure emotional attachment to a brand and found that emotional attachment is a multidimensional construct consisting of three first-order factors labeled affection, passion, and connection. Thomson et al. (2005) found that emotional attachment is positively related to proximity maintenance, seeking a secure base, finding a safe haven, and separation distress, four behaviours that are theoretically linked to strong attachments according to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979; Bowlby, 1980; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). In addition, they demonstrated that emotional attachment is distinct from brand favourability, satisfaction, and involvement and demonstrated that emotional attachment is positively related to brand loyalty and willingness to pay a price premium. Thomson et al. (2005) also found that emotional attachment predicted brand loyalty and willingness to pay a price premium even after the effects of brand favourability, satisfaction, and involvement were accounted for.

2.6.2 Criticisms of Thomson et al.’s (2005) Model of Brand Attachment

Although Thomson et al. (2005) demonstrated that their measure of emotional attachment is consistent with behaviours that are associated with strong emotional attachments and predicts favourable marketing outcomes, it is not without its criticisms. Three major concerns related to Thomson et al.’s emotional attachment model have been identified in the literature and are as follows: brand attachment should be described in terms of the brand-self connection, not specific
emotions, brand attachment should accommodate emotions beyond that which are identified in Thomson et al.'s model, and brand attachment consists of more than just emotions.

The name of Thomson et al.'s (2005) model of brand attachment (emotional attachment), and the components in the model, two of which are emotional in nature (affection and passion), imply that brand attachment is a predominantly emotional construct. However, Park et al. (2010) argue that brand-self connection, not specific emotions, is central to the conceptualization of brand attachment. Thus, the connection component, not the emotional aspects of brand attachment, should be the focus of the conceptualization of brand attachment.

Researchers have also pointed out that the many different emotions that may characterize attachments are not captured in Thomson et al.'s (2005) model of emotional attachment. Although Thomson et al.'s model implies that brand attachment consists of affection and passion, there are many other emotions that individuals may experience in their brand relationships (e.g., joy, excitement, pride, nostalgia, relief, etc.) that are not present in Thomson et al.'s model. There is also the possibility that specific emotions may be “idiosyncratically linked to specific individuals,” (Park et al., 2010, p. 3), meaning that different individuals may experience different emotions in their brand relationships. It has also been argued that the emotions captured in Thomson et al.'s model may reflect emotions experienced in the early stages of a brand relationship (comparable to the “honeymoon” phase in interpersonal romantic relationships). Although passion may be present in the beginning of a brand relationship, there is evidence to suggest that passion for a brand wanes as the brand relationship progresses (Ahuvia, Batra, & Bagozzi, 2009) and could be substituted by other emotions (e.g., contentment) in more mature relationships. Thus, Thomson et al.'s model does not accommodate the range of emotional experiences that characterize strong attachments.
In addition, while researchers agree that brand attachment is an inherently emotional construct, it has been argued that viewing attachment solely in terms of emotions is misleading because brand attachment consists of more than emotions. For example, Park et al. (2010) explain that brand attachment also has a cognitive component to it, in that it involves rich cognitive schema that include brand-self cognitions, thoughts, and memories, in addition to associated emotions. Park et al. developed a different model of brand attachment that addresses these concerns.

2.6.3 Park et al.’s (2010) Model of Brand Attachment

Park et al. (2010) developed a scale of brand attachment based on attachment theory in adulthood in social psychology (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). They define brand attachment as “the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self” (Park et al., 2010, p. 2) and describe it in terms of its two conceptual properties: brand self-connection, which is the cognitive and affective connection between the brand and the self, and brand prominence, which describes the salience of this connection. The authors developed a 4-item scale to measure brand attachment. They found, consistent with Thomson et al. (2005), that brand attachment is positively related to separation distress. In addition, they found that brand attachment was a better predictor than brand attitude strength of intentions to engage in difficult and moderately difficult behaviours (e.g., willingness to pay a price premium, waiting to buy a product instead of buying a competing product immediately), actual purchase behaviour, brand share (the share of a brand among directly competing brands), and need share (the brand’s share use among substitute alternatives).
2.6.4 Conceptualization of Brand Attachment in the Current Research

Thomson et al.’s (2005) and Park et al.’s (2010) conceptualizations of brand attachment are similar in that they both agree that brand attachment is an inherently emotional construct that includes a brand-self connection component. However, in contrast to Thomson et al., who describe emotional attachment to a brand mostly in terms of emotional feelings toward the brand, Park et al. argue that brand-self connection is the central and most important component of brand attachment. Park et al.’s conceptualization of brand attachment encapsulates Thomson et al.’s conceptualization and is able to account for a wider range of emotional experiences than Thomson et al.’s model. In addition, Park et al.’s measure incorporates a brand prominence component to assess levels of brand attachment. For these reasons, the current study adopts Park et al.’s definition and conceptualization of the brand attachment construct.

The current research adopts Park et al.’s (2010) definition of brand attachment as “the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self…exemplified by a rich and accessible memory network…that involves thoughts and feelings about the brand the brand’s relationship to the self” (p. 2) and conceptualizes brand commitment in terms of its two distinct components: self-brand connection and brand prominence.

2.7 Brand Commitment

Brand commitment has been examined in a sociohistorical context (e.g., Coulter et al., 2003), a marketing communications context (Agrawal & Maheswaran, 2005; Ahluwalia and colleagues) and a brand-relationship context (Aaker et al., 2004; Fournier, 1998). However, different conceptualizations of brand commitment abound and more research on brand
commitment is needed to fully understand the construct (see Table 1 for a summary of the conceptualizations of the commitment construct in marketing).
<table>
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2.7.1 Previous Conceptualizations of Brand Commitment

In the brand commitment literature, there are two existing perspectives on the conceptual basis of brand commitment. First, there is the stream of thought that brand commitment is one of many dimensions of attitude strength (e.g., Agrawal & Maheswaran, 2005; Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Raju et al., 2009). The other stream of thought stems from interpersonal relationship theory and posits that brand commitment is an indicator of brand relationship strength (Aaker et al., 2004; Fournier, 1998). Since the current research aims to enhance our understanding of consumer-brand relationships, the latter conceptualization of brand commitment is adopted for the current research.

The brand commitment construct first appeared in Fournier’s (1998) foundational paper on consumer-brand relationships. Fournier defined brand commitment as “the intention to behave in a manner supportive of relationship longevity” (p. 365). Fournier differentiated “emotional commitments” from “investment-related commitments”, treating brand commitment as a multidimensional construct and suggesting that brand commitment can occur for a variety of reasons and motivations (p. 365). Fournier claimed that the different types of brand commitment foster relationship stability by implicating the self in relationship outcomes.

More recently, researchers have used various definitions and measures of the brand commitment construct. For example, Coulter, et al. (2003) used a measure of brand commitment that assessed consumers’ levels of attachment to the brand and satisfaction with the brand. Aaker, et al. (2004) defined brand commitment as “an enduring desire to continue the relationship combined with a willingness to make efforts toward that end” and used items that assessed brand loyalty, willingness to sacrifice for the brand relationship, forgiveness, satisfaction and exclusivity, and long-term orientation toward the brand relationship. Lastly,
Johnson et al. (2011) adopted Fournier’s (1998) definition of brand commitment and added that could also be defined in terms of the “extent to which a person has a long-term perspective in the relationship”. Interestingly, they argued that brand commitment is devoid of self-relevance, that is, it does not involve or implicate an important aspect of the consumer’s self concept or image. They measured commitment using a 3-item measure that assessed how “dedicated”, “committed”, and “devoted” individuals were to the brand relationship.

Some of these conceptualizations of brand commitment stem from research in the interpersonal relationship commitment literature (e.g., Johnson et al., 2011) while others are largely based on previous research on commitment in a relationship marketing context (e.g., Aaker, et al., 2004). The current research takes a different approach to conceptualizing and measuring the brand commitment construct, drawing heavily on the relationship commitment construct in the interpersonal relationship literature as it has been studied in the context of the investment model of commitment (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

2.7.2 Conceptualization of Brand Commitment in the Current Research

Drawing on relationship commitment theory in social psychology, the current research defines brand commitment as a subjective psychological state that globally represents the experience of dependence in a relationship between a consumer and a brand. It is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct composed of three distinct constructs: brand attachment, long-term orientation toward the brand relationship, and intent to persist in the brand relationship. These three dimensions are described in more detail in the following sections.

*Brand Attachment.* In the interpersonal relationship commitment literature, one of the three important components of relationship commitment is psychological attachment to the
relationship, a construct that is characterized by an affective connection that is developed between committed relationship partners (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). Arriaga and Agnew describe psychological attachment as strong emotional experiences and a tendency to become closely linked to the partner, such that one’s emotions are affected by the partner’s positive and negative experiences. This emotional bond often leads to the experience of being “in sync” with the partner, such that emotional experiences are shared and identities become blurred.

In the brand relationship literature, Park et al. (2010) describes this bond as a mental representation that involves thoughts and feelings about the brand and the brand’s relationships to the self. Importantly, this bond includes the brand as part of the self. This conceptualization of brand attachment is theoretically consistent with the idea of psychological attachment discussed in the interpersonal relationship literature and appropriate for use in brand relationship research.

Brand attachment epitomizes the emotional aspect of brand commitment as it describes the emotional and psychological bond that is formed through identification with the brand that links the brand with one’s self-concept.

Identifying attachment as one dimension of brand commitment is also consistent with other conceptualizations of relationship commitment in previous research in marketing. For example, some researchers have defined commitment as psychological or emotional attachment (e.g., Gruen et al., 2000; Gupta & Zeithaml, 2006) or included attachment as an important component of commitment (e.g., Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Gruen et al. (2000, p. 37) stated that member commitment is “the degree of the membership’s psychological attachment to the association.” Gundlach et al. (1995) described an attitudinal dimension of relationship commitment that is likened to psychological attachment, affective commitment, affiliation, value-cogruence, and identification while Garbarino and Johnson (1999) identified
psychological attachment and personal identification with the organization as two facets of organizational commitment. As previously discussed, Coulter et al. (2003) used a measure of brand commitment that assessed the extent to which consumers felt attached to the brand.

Other researchers have also used identification, an important aspect of psychological attachment, to characterize commitment. Moorman et al. (1992) designed a measure of commitment to the research relationship that assessed the extent to which users considered the researcher as part of their department and MacKenzie et al. (1998) directly assessed an employee’s identification with the organization in a scale designed to measure organizational commitment.

**Long-Term Orientation.** Long-term orientation is another important component of brand commitment. Prior research on interpersonal relationships has demonstrated that increased interdependence leads individuals to adopt a broader perspective of the relationship (Clark, Mills, & Powell, 1986). Research by Miller and Boster (1988) suggests that that stable relationships are characterized by communication that implicitly suggests that the relationship will remain intact well into the future. Further, individuals in interdependent relationships have a tendency to exhibit a general cognitive tendency to adopt a joint identity (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Stanley & Markman, 1992) and maintain cognitive representations that are linked to long-term relationship persistence (Murray & Holmes, 1993). Individuals who are strongly committed to a brand have a tendency to adopt a long-term orientation toward their relationship with the brand.

Long-term orientation is described as the assumption that in the distant future the brand relationship will remain intact; it involves envisioning oneself as involved with the brand into the distant future (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). Long-term orientation encapsulates the attitudinal
aspect of brand commitment as it involves thoughts and plans regarding the future of the relationship, concern for the future welfare of the brand, and continuity in terms of how consumers think about the brand relationship in the future.

Researchers in marketing have also considered orientation toward the long-term of the relationship as an important aspect of commitment. For example, Moorman et al. (1992) used a measure of commitment to assess the extent to which the user is concerned about the future of the research relationship and Morgan and Hunt (1994) commented on how relationship commitment involves thinking of the relationship enduring indefinitely in the future. Gundlach et al. (1995) described a temporal dimension of commitment as well, explaining that “commitment means something only over the long term” (p. 79). Garbarino and Johnson (1999) identified concern for the future welfare of the organization as a facet of organizational commitment and Aaker et al. (2004) included an item that tapped into long-term orientation in their measure of brand commitment.

**Intent to Persist.** Intention to persist in the brand relationship is the third and most intuitive dimension of brand commitment. It reflects a deliberate intention to continue the brand relationship and closely corresponds to prominent social psychological models of behaviour (e.g., the theory of planned behaviour put forth by Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980, which distinguishes between behavioural intentions and actual behaviour). The current research defines intention to persist in the brand relationship as a consumers’ intrinsic motivation to continue the brand relationship beyond the present time (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). Intent to persist reflects the motivational component inherent in brand commitment that distinguishes brand commitment from other constructs that reflect emotional responses to a brand (e.g., brand love, Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012).
Prior research in marketing has also conceptualized commitment as an intention, desire, or motivation to continue the relationship (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Moorman et al., 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994, Pomertanz et al., 1995). For example, Gundlach et al. (1995) describes relationship commitment as “an enduring intention by the parties to develop and maintain a stable long-term relationship” (p. 79). Similarly, Dwyer et al. (1987) claims that durability, the extent to which the relationship endures over time, is a measureable criterion of commitment.

2.7.3 Emotional, Attitudinal, and Motivational Components of Brand Commitment

Although it has been argued that brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist describe as the emotional, cognitive, and motivational components (respectively) of brand commitment, it should be noted that this is not intended to mean that these components are purely emotional, attitudinal, or motivational, respectively. That is, it is recognized that brand attachment, for example, is not solely affective in nature, as Park et al. (2010) argue that brand attachment also involves brand-self cognitions such as memories, thoughts, and schemas. Similarly, long-term orientation also has an affective aspect to it as cognitions related to imagining the self with the brand in the future are likely to elicit positive emotions. Thus, these descriptions are not meant to define the different components of brand commitment as solely emotional, attitudinal, or motivational; rather, the intention is to elucidate how brand commitment has emotional, attitudinal, and motivational dimensions to it, and these elements closely correspond with the general nature of the brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist components.
2.8 Differentiating Brand Attachment and Brand Commitment

It is important to note that brand commitment and brand attachment are not mutually exclusive. Since brand attachment is a core component of brand commitment, it is not surprising that these constructs have been associated with similar antecedents and consequences in the literature, and it is expected that there will be shared variance in certain outcomes. However, brand attachment is not the only component of brand commitment and thus is not the sole determinant of brand commitment. For example, since a consumers’ levels of brand commitment can be conceptualized as the sum of their levels of brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist, it is possible for consumers to be high in brand commitment without being high in brand attachment (if they endorse long-term orientation and/or strong intentions to persist in the brand relationship). This, as well as the fact that brand attachment and brand commitment have different conceptual bases, has implications for the antecedents and consequences of these two constructs.

Brand attachment and brand commitment have different conceptual bases as they originate from different theories and unique areas of literature. For example, brand attachment stems from attachment theory in social psychology (Bowlby, 1979; Bowlby, 1980; Hazan & Shaver, 1994) whereas brand commitment draws heavily on existing theories of commitment in close relationships from the interpersonal domain in social psychology (e.g., Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Rusbult et al., 1991; Rusbult et al., 1999; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995; Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist et al., 1999). The attachment construct originated in observations of interactions between infants and their caregivers and was developed to explain how the basic human need for security is expressed through the patterns of behavior (i.e., attachment styles) that characterize how individuals act toward their attachment object (i.e., caregiver or
relationship partner) in childhood and continuing on into adulthood (Ainsworth, Blehar, & Waters, 1978; Bowlby, 1980; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). The relationship commitment construct, on the other hand, was originally developed to explain why individuals persist in romantic relationships and describes interdependence processes in close relationships (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992; Rusbult et al., 1991; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Rusbult et al., 1999; Wieselquist, et al., 1999). These divergent origins explain why the antecedents and the outcomes of brand commitment and brand attachment may differ.

Although brand attachment and brand commitment share some antecedents, they are, for the most part, predicted by different variables. For example, Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011)’s qualitative investigation to determine the antecedents of emotional attachment found five primary antecedents: sentimentality/emotional memory, socialization, traditional marketing outcomes, superior marketing characteristics, and user-derived benefits. Although researchers in marketing have only begun to determine the antecedents of brand commitment (e.g., Coulter, et al., 2003 found that involvement is an antecedent of brand commitment), the antecedents of interpersonal relationship commitment from the psychology literature have been explored in depth. It is well established that three important antecedents of relationship commitment are satisfaction, investment size, and perceived quality of alternatives (e.g., Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Rusbult et al., 1991; Van Lange et al., 1997). While it is logical that investment and brand trust would be antecedents of both brand attachment and brand commitment, satisfaction and quality of alternatives should only predict brand commitment, further illustrating the conceptual differences between these two constructs.

Since brand attachment and brand commitment are based on different social psychological theories, they are also able to predict very different behaviors. For example, brand
attachment has been found to predict separation distress, emotional security, safe haven, and proximity maintenance. These four behaviors were originally used to reveal the existence of strong attachments (Bowlby, 1980; Hazan & Shaver, 1994) and are specific to brand attachment. While individuals who are highly committed to a brand may also exhibit some of these behaviors, it is presumably because they are very attached to the brand, since long-term orientation and intent to persist should not predict these behaviors. Similarly, relationship commitment, as studied in the interpersonal relationships literature, primarily predicts relationship-maintaining behaviors, such as accommodation when a relationship partner behaves badly (Rusbult, et al., 1991; Rusbult et al., 1999; Wieselquist, et al., 1999), derogation of attractive or tempting alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Simpson, et al., 1990), biased partner perceptions and relationship enhancing illusions (Murray & Holmes, 1993; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995), and willingness to sacrifice for the good of the relationship (Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist et al., 1999). In addition, research in marketing has found that brand commitment predicts resistance to negative information about the brand (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia, et al., 2000; Ahluwalia, et al., 2001). Although brand attachment has been found to predict some of these behaviors, such as accommodation (i.e., forgiveness, Fedorikhin et al., 2008) and willingness to sacrifice for the brand (Park et al., 2010), it should not predict all of them (e.g., derogation of alternatives).

Although brand attachment has been linked to numerous relationship-maintaining behaviors in previous research, the current research argues that brand attachment alone is unable to predict persistence in the brand relationship because it is only one aspect of the higher-order brand commitment construct and consequently provides an incomplete perspective of the situation. However, when the other two components of brand commitment – long-term
orientation and intent to persist – are examined in combination with brand attachment, consistent with the conceptualization of relationship commitment in psychology, brand commitment predicts persistence in the brand relationship.

2.9 Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength

Research and theory from the interpersonal relationships literature and marketing literature have revealed three important variables that influence brand relationship persistence and brand relationship strength: satisfaction, investment size, and the perceived quality of alternatives. Previous research in psychology found that individuals are more likely to persist in their relationships to the extent that they are satisfied with the relationship, have invested a great deal in the relationship (in the form of emotional, social, financial, and/or time resources), and perceive other available alternatives to the relationship as relatively poor (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Rusbult et al., 1998). Trust is another construct that has been repeatedly linked to relationship persistence throughout the marketing literature (e.g., Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) as it is generally regarded as another important factor for successful relationships (Dwyer et al., 1987, Moorman, et al. 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Therefore, the current research argues that an indicator of brand relationship strength should be directly influenced by the following antecedents of brand relationship persistence: satisfaction, investment, perceived quality of alternatives, and brand trust.

2.9.1 Satisfaction

Researchers in marketing have identified the relationship between satisfaction, brand relationship strength, and brand relationship persistence. Dwyer et al. (1987) stated that
committed buyers are highly satisfied with the buyer-seller relationship and Moorman et al. (1992) argued that commitment reflects a positive evaluation of the relationship. Similarly, Gruen et al. (2000) described affective commitment as positive emotional attachment that arises out of favourable evaluations of the organization, an idea consistent with Fournier’s (1998) description of “emotional commitments” and Coulter et al. (2003) measured commitment in part by assessing the extent to which individuals believed the brand offered the best benefits for them.

2.9.2 Investment

Researching in marketing has also identified investment as a variable that affects brand relationship strength and the likelihood of persisting the relationship. Dwyer et al. (1987) was the first to suggest that inputs (investments that are put into the relationship) are measurable criteria of commitment and Gundlach et al. (1995, p. 79), drawing on Dwyer et al.’s work, describe investment as “an affirmative active taken by one party that creates a self-interest stake in the relationship and demonstrates something, more than a promise.” Aaker et al. (2004) used a measure intended to capture the instrumental investments discussed by Gundlach et al. to estimate brand relationship strength. Additionally, Gruen et al. (2000) described a psychological bond between the member and the organization that results out of investments put into the relationship, an idea consistent with Fournier’s (1998, p. 365) description of “investment-related commitments.”

2.9.3 Perceived Quality of Alternatives

The third antecedent present in the investment model of commitment from social psychology, perceived quality of alternatives, has been studied extensively in the interpersonal
relationship literature and has been touched on in research in marketing. For example, Dwyer et al. (1987) stated that committed buyers are not concerned with the performance of competing alternatives and Aaker et al. (2004) included an item that assessed the extent to which consumers pay attention to alternatives in the market in their measure of brand relationship strength.

2.9.4 Brand Trust

Trust is another construct that has been repeatedly linked to relationship strength and relationship persistence throughout the marketing literature (e.g., Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) as it is generally regarded as another important factor for successful relationships (Dwyer et al., 1987, Moorman, et al. 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Morgan and Hunt and Garbarino and Johnson (1999) found that trust and commitment mediate the relationship between satisfaction and future intentions and also found, along with Moorman et al. and Chaudhuri and Holbrook, that trust is a critical antecedent of commitment.

2.10 Relationship Persistence

Previous research in the interpersonal relationship domain has extensively studied factors that lead to persistence in the relationship (e.g., Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Rusbult, 1983; Rusbult, et al. 1998). In addition to examining relationship persistence directly, the interpersonal relationship literature has identified numerous variables that lead to relationship persistence, termed pro-relationship behaviours, relationship-promoting factors, relationship maintenance mechanisms, and relationship maintaining behaviours. For the sake of simplicity,
the following pro-relationship motivations, processes, mechanisms, and behaviours will be referred to as relationship-maintaining behaviours.

Previous research in social psychology has identified the following relationship-maintaining behaviours: adaptive social comparison and perceived relationship superiority, tendencies toward relationship-enhancing illusion, or inclinations to perceive one’s relationship as both better than and not as bad as other relationships (Murray & Holmes, 1993; Rusbult, Van Lange, Yovetich, Wildschut, & Verette, 1998; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995), derogation of attractive and threatening alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Simpson et al., 1990), effective management of jealousy and extrarelationship involvements, willingness to the sacrifice for the good of the relationship (Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist et al., 1999), and tendencies to accommodate rather than retaliate when a partner behaves poorly (Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga, & Cox, 1998; Rusbult et al., 1991; Rusbult et al., 1999; Wieselquist et al., 1999; see Rusbult & Buunk, 1983 for a comprehensive review).

Drawing on social psychological research, Fournier (1998) also identifies attribution biases (Bradbury and Fincham 1990), positively biased partner perceptions (Murray & Holmes, 1993; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995), protective feelings of uniqueness and dependency (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992), encouragement of tolerance in the face of adverse circumstance (Lydon & Zanna, 1990), and sustained saliency of the partner over time as relationship-maintenance behaviours that lead to relationship stability. In the Brand Relationship Quality model, Fournier outlines accommodation, tolerance/forgiveness, biased partner perceptions, devaluation of alternatives, and attribution biases as intermediate process outcomes between brand relationship strength and relationship stability.
Since these variables have been studied extensively in the interpersonal relationship literature, the following relationship-maintenance behaviours were chosen to represent relationship persistence in the current research: accommodation when a relationship partner behaves badly, willingness to sacrifice for the good of the relationship, biased partner perceptions, and derogation of attractive or tempting alternatives. In addition, resistance to negative information about the brand was included as an additional relationship-maintaining behaviour because research in marketing has found that high levels of brand commitment lead to resistance of negative information about the brand (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001). These relationship-maintaining behaviours are expanded on in the following sections.

2.10.1 Accommodation

Accommodation refers to “an individual’s willingness, when a partner has engaged in potentially destructive behaviour, to inhibit tendencies to react destructively in turn and instead engage in constructive reactions” (Rusbult et al., 1991, p. 53).

Research on interpersonal commitment in psychology reveals that highly committed individuals are more likely to forgive a romantic partner for a transgression as well as react to the transgression with pro-relational type behaviours (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). In addition to exhibiting more positive behaviours toward a partner following a transgression, highly committed individuals also report positive emotions toward their partner, possess empathy for their partner, and attribute more benign intentions to their partner following a transgression (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002). All of these reactions (behaviours, thoughts, feelings, etc.) reflect accommodative tendencies.
Although it has been studied largely in the interpersonal commitment literature (Rusbult et al., 1991; Rusbult et al., 1999; Wieselquist et al., 1999) research has only started to examine accommodation in a consumer-brand relationship context (i.e., Aaker et al., 2004). For example, Aaker et al. examined how different brand personalities influence the formation of different types of brand relationships (e.g., consumers developed a relationship more similar to a romantic fling with a brand that had an exciting personality while a relationship similar to friendship was developed with a brand that had a sincere personality) and how the strength of these relationships is affected by a transgression by the brand. However, Aaker et al. did not examine how the consumers reacted to the brand’s transgression, that is, they did not determine whether consumers exhibited accommodative or destructive tendencies; they only examined the strength of the relationship following the transgression.

The current research examines how consumers react to a transgression by the brand and uses consumers’ levels of attachment and commitment to the brand to predict whether consumers will exhibit accommodative or destructive tendencies following a transgression.

2.10.2 Willingness to Sacrifice

Willingness to sacrifice is defined as a consumers’ willingness to “forsake personal resources to maintain an ongoing relationship with that brand” (Park et al., 2010, p. 14). These resources can be social (e.g., defending the brand, derogating alternatives, Johnson & Rusbult, 1989), financial (e.g., willingness to pay a price premium, Thomson et al., 2005; willingness to devote a greater share of expenditures to the brand rather than other brands or product categories, Park et al, 2010), or time (e.g., involvement in brand communities, Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, and brand promotion, Muñiz & O’Guinn 2001).
Previous research in commitment in close relationships (Van Lange et al., 1997) has found that commitment leads to willingness to sacrifice for the sake of maintaining the relationship. This has been discussed and demonstrated in research in interpersonal relationships from social psychology (Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist et al., 1999) as well as in research in relationship marketing (Dwyer et al., 1987) and research in brand relationships in the brand attachment literature (Park et al., 2010).

2.10.3 Biased Brand Perceptions

Research in social psychology (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Murray & Holmes, 1993; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995) shows that highly committed individuals tend to hold relationship-enhancing illusions and biased perceptions of their partner. For example, Murray and Holmes found that individuals tend to portray their partners’ faults in the most positive light possible and in some cases refute the possibility that their partners have any faults at all. Van Lange and Rusbult found that, when comparing their own relationships to other relationships, individuals tend to hold more positive beliefs and fewer negative beliefs about their own relationships. In addition, individuals’ beliefs about their own relationships were predominantly composed of mostly positive aspects whereas other relationships were dominated by more negative elements.

Although biased perceptions of a brand have not been directly examined in the marketing literature, research conducted by Ahluwalia and colleagues (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Raju et al., 2009) suggests that consumers high in brand commitment are more likely to have biased brand perceptions than consumers low in brand commitment.
2.10.4 Derogation of Alternatives

Commitment has also been found to lead to a tendency to derogate alternatives, especially when these alternatives are particularly attractive or threatening. Derogation of a directly competing brand is described as discounting, devaluing, or in any way negatively evaluating a competing product or brand so that it is not compared favourably to the target brand.

Although the inclusion of this construct as a relationship-maintaining behaviour is based on findings from the interpersonal commitment literature in social psychology (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Simpson et al., 1990), there is evidence from a recent study in consumer behaviour (Raju et al., 2009) that consumers look for differences between the target brand and a competitive brand and consequently evaluate the competitive brand unfavourably.

2.10.5 Resistance to Negative Information

Research on brand commitment (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia, et al., 2000; Ahluwalia, et al., 2001) has demonstrated that consumers who are highly committed to a brand are more likely to resist negative information about the brand. In addition, Batra et al. (2012) found that brand love, a construct conceptually similar to brand commitment, predicts questioning of negative information. Research in social psychology has not directly studied the relationship between interpersonal relationship commitment and resistance to negative information about one’s partner, suggesting that resistance to negative information about the relationship partner may be a consequence of commitment that is unique to brand relationships.
Chapter 3: Hypotheses

The purpose of the current research is to compare two competing conceptual models that illustrate the relationship between several antecedents of brand relationship strength (satisfaction, investment, perceived quality of alternatives, and brand trust), two indicators of brand relationship strength (brand commitment and brand attachment), and persistence in the brand relationship in order to demonstrate the following: 1) brand attachment and brand commitment are conceptually and empirically distinct constructs, 2) brand commitment predicts brand relationship persistence while brand attachment does not, and 3) brand commitment mediates the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence while brand attachment does not.

One conceptual model assumes that the antecedents of brand relationship strength influence brand attachment and brand attachment predicts relationship persistence. It places brand attachment at the focal point and proposes that brand attachment mediates the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and brand relationship persistence. The other conceptual model places brand commitment, as it has been conceptualized in the interpersonal relationship literature, at the focal point and assumes that brand commitment mediates the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence. Figure 1. illustrates the proposed relationships between the key constructs in the two competing conceptual models. The hypothesized relationships between the latent constructs are explained subsequently.
Figure 1. Competing Conceptual Models of Brand Relationship Strength, Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength, and Relationship Persistence

a) Brand Commitment Model

b) Brand Attachment Model
3.1 Structure of Brand Commitment

The current research predicts that brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist are related but distinct constructs that jointly make up the multidimensional brand commitment construct. It is expected that brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist will be highly correlated yet distinct latent constructs.

3.2 Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength

Research and theory from the interpersonal relationship literature has revealed three important variables directly related to brand relationship strength and brand relationship persistence: satisfaction, investment, and perceived quality of alternatives. Trust is another construct that has been repeatedly linked to relationship persistence throughout the marketing literature (e.g., Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) as it is generally regarded as another important factor for successful relationships (Dwyer et al., 1987, Moorman et al., 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Therefore, the current research argues that an indicator of brand relationship strength should be directly influenced by the following antecedents of brand relationship persistence: satisfaction, investment, perceived quality of alternatives, and brand trust.

Previous research in the interpersonal relationship literature (Rusbult et al., 1998; Arriaga & Agnew, 2001) and marketing literature (Dwyer et al., 1987; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994) reveals that satisfaction influences commitment to the relationship. Although previous research in marketing has shown that satisfaction is correlated with brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005), there is currently no evidence to suggest that satisfaction predicts brand attachment.
H1: Satisfaction positively predicts brand commitment, such that brand commitment increases as satisfaction increases.

Previous research has also shown that investment in the relationship is a strong predictor of commitment (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Dwyer et al., 1987; Rusbult et al., 1998). In addition, researchers from the brand attachment literature argue that consumers who are strongly attached to a brand actively invest their own resources in the brand (Park et al., 2010).

H2a: Investment size positively predicts brand commitment, such that brand commitment increases as investment increases.

H2b: Investment size positively predicts brand attachment, such that brand attachment increases as investment increases.

Prior research in the interpersonal relationship domain reveals that the perceived quality of alternatives also influences commitment because it affects an individual’s level of dependence on the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1998; Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). Although research in marketing has not yet examined this variable in relation to brand attachment, perceived quality of alternatives should not have any effect on a consumer’s level of attachment to a brand.

H3: Perceived quality of alternatives negatively predicts brand commitment, such that brand commitment increases as perceived quality of alternatives decreases.
Research in marketing reveals that brand trust is strongly linked to commitment (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Moorman et al., 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In addition, the idea of trust is closely related to the idea of emotional and psychological attachment, both in interpersonal relationships and brand relationships. For example, drawing from the work of Bowlby (1980) and Hazan and Zeifman (1999) from psychology, Thomson et al. (2005) hypothesized and found that emotional attachment predicted four behaviours that reveal the existence of strong attachments: proximity maintenance, emotional security, safe haven, and separation distress. These behaviours are directly related to the level of trust an individual has in the attachment object. Thus, brand trust should affect brand attachment.

H4a: Brand trust positively predicts brand commitment, such that brand commitment increases as brand trust increases.

H4b: Brand trust positively predicts brand attachment, such that brand attachment increases as brand trust increases.

3.3 Relationship Persistence

Brand relationship persistence is estimated by assessing consumers’ willingness to engage in the following pro-relational behaviours: accommodation, willingness to sacrifice, positively biased brand perceptions, tendencies to derogate attractive alternatives, and resistance to negative information about the brand.
Since brand commitment describes dependence on a brand relationship, consumers who are strongly committed to a brand are also dependent on the brand and are consequently motivated to exhibit accommodative tendencies when the brand behaves badly. Previous research on interpersonal relationships reveals that highly committed individuals are more likely to act in pro-relational ways (to accommodate) rather than destructive ways when a partner behaves badly (Rusbult, et al. 1991; Rusbult, Wieselquist et al., 1999; Wieselquist et al., 1999). Similarly, research in the brand attachment literature shows those who are emotionally attached to a brand are more likely to forgive the brand when the brand fails to meet their expectations (Fedorikhin et al., 2008).

H5a: Brand commitment positively predicts accommodation, such that the tendency to accommodate increases as brand commitment increases.

H5b: Brand attachment positively predicts accommodation, such that the tendency to accommodate increases as brand attachment increases.

Previous research also reveals that highly committed individuals are willing to sacrifice their own resources for the sake of continuing the relationship (Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist et al., 1999). Similarly, research in marketing reveals that individuals with strong attachments to brands exhibit willingness to sacrifice financial, social, and time resources to maintain the brand relationship (Park et al., 2010).
H6a: Brand commitment positively predicts willingness to sacrifice, such that willingness to sacrifice increases as brand commitment increases.

H6b: Brand attachment positively predicts willingness to sacrifice, such that willingness to sacrifice increases as brand attachment increases.

Previous research in the interpersonal relationship domain reveals that highly committed individuals tend to view their partner positively and to have biased perceptions of their partner (Murray & Holmes, 1993; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995). Since strong attachments to a brand reflect a personal connection with the brand that often involves one’s identity, strongly attached consumers are also likely to hold positively biased perceptions of the brand.

H7a: Brand commitment positively predicts biased brand perceptions, such that the tendency to hold positively biased brand perceptions of the brand increases as brand commitment increases.

H7b: Brand attachment positively predicts biased brand perceptions, such that the tendency to hold positively biased brand perceptions of the brand increases as brand attachment increases.

Previous research has identified the tendency to derogate attractive or tempting alternatives as a mechanism used by highly committed individuals to remain committed to the relationship (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Simpson et al., 1990). Thus, consumers high in brand
commitment should also exhibit a tendency to derogate directly competing brands in order to maintain commitment to the brand relationship. Consumers who are strongly attached to a particular brand, on the other hand, are not motivated to derogate competing brands and are not likely to exhibit this tendency.

H8: Brand commitment positively predicts derogation of a directly competing brand, such that the tendency to derogate directly competing brands increases as brand commitment increases.

Previous research in marketing also reveals that highly committed consumers are able to resist negative information about the brand (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia, et al., 2000; Ahluwalia, et al., 2001). Highly committed consumers are motivated to hold positive perceptions of the brand and they are consequently also motivated to resist negative information about the brand. Since strong attachments to brands are often based on incorporating the brand in one’s identity, consumers with strong attachments to brands are also motivated to resist negative information about the brand.

H9a: Brand commitment positively predicts resistance to negative information about the brand, such that resistance to negative information about the brand increases as brand commitment increases.
H9b: Brand attachment positively predicts resistance to negative information about the brand, such that resistance to negative information about the brand increases as brand attachment increases.

Hypotheses 5-9 specify the direct relationships between brand commitment, brand attachment, and the individual relationship-maintaining behaviours. However, the purpose of the current research is to test whether brand commitment is a better predictor of relationship persistence than brand attachment. Thus, the following hypothesis refers to relationship persistence as a whole.

H10a: Brand commitment positively predicts relationship persistence.

H10b: Brand attachment positively predicts relationship persistence.

To provide further support for the hypothesized conceptualization of brand commitment and the argument that brand commitment is central for understanding why consumers persist in their brand relationships, the current research also predicts that brand commitment mediates the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence. As brand attachment is only one component of the three dimensions of brand commitment, brand attachment is not expected to mediate this relationship.
H11: Brand commitment mediates the relationship between satisfaction and relationship persistence.

H12: Brand commitment mediates the relationship between investment and relationship persistence.

H13: Brand commitment mediates the relationship between perceived quality of alternatives and relationship persistence.

H14: Brand commitment mediates the relationship between brand trust and relationship persistence.

The current research employed two studies designed for slightly different purposes. The purpose of Study 1 was to empirically validate the proposed conceptualization of the brand commitment construct and compare it to brand attachment. Study 1 tested the hypotheses related to the antecedents of brand relationship strength, the two indicators of brand relationship strength, and persistence in the brand relationship. The purpose of Study 2 was to replicate the findings of Study 1 using a different sample, brand, and product category and manipulating rather than measuring brand commitment to avoid confounds associated with measured variables.
Chapter 4: Study 1 Method

4.1 Participants and Design

Study 1 consisted of an online survey containing scales that measured all of the constructs of interest. Participants were recruited using a convenience sample from the Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies Research Subject Pool and from class visits at the University of Guelph. Participants were also recruited using a snowball sampling method where the online survey was sent to individuals the researcher personally knew and was passed on. In addition, the researcher recruited individuals using an intercept method at the University Centre and a café on campus at the University of Guelph. Students recruited through the Research Subject Pool were compensated with course credit. All other participants were entered into a draw to win one (1) of two (2) $50 gift certificates to Chapters. When data collection was completed, an SPSS data file was created that contained the e-mail addresses from every individual who participated in the survey (85 participants in total). SPSS was used to randomly select two e-mail addresses from this list. These individuals were contacted using the selected e-mail address and informed that they had won the draw. Gift certificates were mailed to the winners of the draw.

Three hundred and seventeen individuals participated in Study 1. Two hundred and four participants were recruited from the Research Subject Pool, 92 were recruited from the snowball sampling method, and 21 were recruited on campus. Of the 317 individuals that participated in the study, 297 completed the entire survey (93.7%). Those that did not complete the entire survey were dropped from the analysis. One participant was removed because they did not indicate their gender. In addition, three participants under the age of 19 years and four
participants over the age of 60 were also dropped from the analysis. Data from these participants was removed to increase homogeneity of the sample and reduce unnecessary noise in the data.

The remaining sample consisted of 289 individuals (53% female) between the ages of 19 and 57 years old ($M = 23.44$, $SD = 8.61$). Ninety percent of the sample was between 19 and 30 years old. The results of several one way ANOVAS reveal that participants between the ages of 31 and 60 did not significantly differ from participants between the ages of 19 and 30 in brand familiarity, brand knowledge, brand attitudes, brand-self connection, brand prominence, long-term orientation, intent to persist, or brand commitment. In addition, 84.5% of participants were undergraduate students with 46.4% in their 1st year, 17.9% in their 2nd year, 7.5% in their 3rd year, 10.4% in their 4th year, and 2.5% in their 5th year. The results of several additional one way ANOVAS reveal that participants in the different education categories (1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year, and 5th year students and non-students) did not differ in brand familiarity, brand knowledge, brand attitudes, brand-self connection, long-term orientation, intent to persist, or brand commitment. Thus, the data from all remaining participants was combined for analysis.

4.2 Stimuli

The following criteria were used to select an appropriate product brand for Study 1: the brand needed to be gender neutral, appropriate for a wide range of age groups, reasonably affordable, frequently used, familiar, able to support different types of brand relationships, and able to engender a wide range of commitment levels. Since a large sample was required for Study 1, it was important that the questions regarding the brand were applicable to as many individuals as possible. It was necessary for participants to be familiar with the brand so they could answer the questions appropriately. A product brand consumers interact with frequently
was ideal so that thoughts about the brand would be easily accessible. It was also important that the brand could support various types of brand relationships (marriages, flings, enmities, etc.) and that consumers their would be variability in existing levels of commitment to the brand.

Coffee was chosen as the target product category for Study 1 because all consumers, regardless of gender, age (within reason), and socioeconomic status are able to purchase coffee. Coffee is a relatively low-investment (low cost) product that consumers interact with on a regular basis and is deeply engrained in North American culture. Previous research asserts that “coffee is emotional, human, deeply and personally relevant” (Kozinets, 2002, p. 69) and consumers can have strong feelings toward specific coffee brands. Starbucks was selected as the target brand because it is one of the most recognizable coffee brands in the world, operating in 55 countries, with 11,131 locations in North America, and holds approximately 42% of the coffeehouse market. Lastly, as previous research (Kozinets, 2002) has established, Starbucks has engendered many different kinds of brand relationships and a wide range of commitment levels to the brand.

The results of Study 1 reveal that 87.2% of participants had purchased Starbucks products before, although they did not report being very familiar ($M = 3.76, SD = 2.21$) or knowledgeable ($M = 4.20, SD = 2.21$) about the Starbucks brand. Of the 97 participants who answered this question, participants had purchased Starbucks for an average of 3.03 years ($SD = 3.40$). Participants reported generally unfavourable attitudes toward Starbucks ($M = 3.06, SD = 1.37$) but were relatively committed to the brand ($M = 5.87, SD = 1.09$).

4.3 Procedure

Participants were provided with a link to the online survey and were permitted to participate at their convenience. Participants recruited through the Research Subject Pool
completed the survey in the computer lab while participants recruited through the intercept method completed the survey at the specific location they were recruited. Participants were provided with a general overview of the study and were required to provide electronic informed consent before continuing with the survey.

The survey was designed so questions most relevant to the hypotheses were presented first and questions less relevant were placed at the end of the survey. Participants completed the measures for the components of brand commitment first (brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist, in this order), followed by measures of the antecedents of brand relationship strength (satisfaction, investment, quality of alternatives, and brand trust). Participants then completed measures of the relationship persistence behaviours (accommodation, willingness to sacrifice, biased brand behaviours, derogation of alternatives, and resistance to negative information about the brand). The order in which these measures were presented remained constant for all participants; however, the order of the items within each scale was randomized for every participant to rule out order effects. Participants then completed another measure of brand commitment and measures of brand knowledge, brand attitudes, brand familiarity, brand ownership, and brand relationship length. Lastly, participants answered demographic questions (gender, age, year of school) and a hypothesis-guessing question. The order of these measures and the presentation of the items within these measures was the same for all participants.

After participants completed the survey, they were debriefed and redirected to another online survey that collected their contact information. The second survey was completely independent of the first and was created to ensure that the personal participant information obtained was not connected in any way to their responses to the research questions. Participants
were asked to indicate what year of their undergraduate program they were in (there was a “I am not a student” option). If they selected 1st year – 5th year, they were directed to another set of questions that asked them for their name, student ID number, and the course code and the section number of the course they needed to get credit in. If they selected the “I am not a student option”, they were directed to another question that asked them to enter their e-mail address to be included in the draw for the gift card. This information was collected to ensure that all participants would be compensated for their participation and was used only for this purpose.

4.4 Measures

Components of Brand Commitment

Brand Commitment. The current research proposes that brand commitment is a higher-order latent construct comprised of the following three lower-order latent constructs: brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist. Each lower-order latent construct was measured by its own specific indicators and are described below.

Brand Attachment. Brand attachment was measured using Park et al.’s (2010) 4-item scale. This scale is divided into two subscales of brand attachment: brand-self connection, the cognitive and emotional connection between the brand and the self, and brand prominence, the salience of this bond. The first two items of the scale were designed to represent the identity and instrumentality bases of brand-self connection. These items were “Starbucks is part of me and who I am” and “I feel I am personally connected to Starbucks” \((r = 0.91)\). The second set of items was designed to tap into the ease and frequency with which brand-relevant thoughts and feelings are activated, assessing the brand prominence aspect of brand attachment. The items used to measure brand prominence were “My thoughts and feelings toward Starbucks come to
me naturally and instantly” and “My thoughts and feelings toward Starbucks are often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own” (r = 0.71). Participants were instructed to respond to each item using an 11-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (10). This scale was originally tested using five different product brands (Quaker Oats Oatmeal, Apple iPod, a local university, Nike shoes, and a large European retail bank) in previous research and exhibited acceptable levels of reliability.

**Long-Term Orientation.** Three items were adapted from Arriaga and Agnew’s (2001) 4-item long-term orientation scale to reflect long-term orientation toward the brand relationship. These items were “I am oriented toward the long-term future regarding my relationship with Starbucks (e.g., I imagine purchasing Starbucks coffee several years from now)”, “I find it difficult to imagine myself with Starbucks in the distant future” (reverse-scored), and “When I make plans about future events in my life, I think about purchasing Starbucks products”. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8). Cronbach’s alpha for Arriaga and Agnew’s original scale was 0.88.

**Intent To Persist.** Three items were adapted from Arriaga and Agnew’s (2001) 4-item intent to persist scale to reflect intent to persist in the brand relationship. These items were “I intend to continue purchasing Starbucks products”, “I want to maintain my use of Starbucks products”, and “I want my relationship with Starbucks to keep going”. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8). Cronbach’s alpha for Arriaga and Agnew’s original scale was 0.84.
Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength

Satisfaction. In the interpersonal relationship literature and previous research in marketing, satisfaction has been found to be an important variable related to relationship persistence. Although prior research in marketing has studied satisfaction with the brand or satisfaction with the organization (e.g., Coulter et al., 2003; Gruen et al., 1992), marketing research on relationships has studied satisfaction with the relationship. For example, Dwyer et al. (1987) examined satisfaction with the buyer-seller relationship and Moorman et al. (1992) discussed positive evaluations of the relationship. As the current research is concerned with variables that affect relationship persistence, satisfaction with the brand relationship, rather than satisfaction with the brand, was measured.

A 3-item measure of satisfaction with the brand was adapted from Thomson’s (2006) satisfaction with the relationship scale. This scale was adapted from the perceived relationship quality scale (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000) from psychology and had not previously been used in marketing. The three items were “How happy are you with your relationship with Starbucks?”, “How satisfied are you with your relationship with Starbucks”, and “How content are you with your relationship with Starbucks?”. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 7-point scale anchored by “not at all” (1) and “very much” (7). Cronbach’s alpha for the original scale was 0.97.

Investment. Similar to satisfaction, investment in the relationship is another variable that has been linked to relationship persistence in the interpersonal relationship literature and marketing literature. Dwyer et al. (1987) was the first to suggest that inputs (investments that are put into the relationship) are important for establishing continuing relationships. Drawing from Dwyer et al., Gundlach et al. (1995) describe investment in terms of “an affirmative active taken
by one party that creates a self-interest stake in the relationship and demonstrates something, more than a promise” (p. 79). Additionally, Gruen et al. (2000) described a psychological bond between the member and the organization that results out of investments put into the relationship. In social psychology, investment size, or the extent to which one has invested personal resources into the relationship, has been consistently linked to relationship persistence (e.g., Arriaga & Agnew, 2001).

Three items were adapted from Arriaga and Agnew’s (2001) 5-item investment size scale was used. The items were “I have put a great deal into Starbucks that I would lose if I no longer had access to Starbucks”, “Many aspects of my life have become linked to Starbucks (social activities, etc.), and I would lose all of this if I no longer had access to Starbucks”, and “Compared to other people I know, I have invested a great deal in terms of purchasing Starbucks products”. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8). Cronbach’s alpha for Arriaga and Agnew’s original scale was 0.83.

**Perceived Quality of Alternatives.** Although perceived quality of alternatives has not been studied in the marketing literature, this is another variable that affects relationship persistence in the interpersonal relationship literature.

Five items were adapted from Arriaga and Agnew’s (2001) 5-item quality of alternatives scale to reflect the perceived quality of alternatives to the product brand. These items were “Products from brands other than Starbucks (e.g., Second Cup, Williams, etc.) are very appealing” (reverse-scored), “My alternatives to Starbucks are close to ideal (using a directly competing brand such as Second Cup, using other products for some of the same uses, doing something else entirely, etc.)” (reverse-scored), “If I didn’t purchase Starbucks products, I would
do fine - I would find another appealing brand’s product to purchase” (reverse-scored), “My alternatives are attractive to me (using another directly competing brand, using other products for some of the same uses, doing something else entirely, etc.)” (reverse-scored), and “My needs (for caffeine, hot beverages, a place to socialize with my friends, etc.) could easily be fulfilled by another brand” (reverse-scored). Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8). Cronbach’s alpha for Arriaga and Agnew’s original scale was 0.87.

Brand Trust. A 3-item measure of brand trust was adapted from Thomson (2006). These items were “How much do you trust Starbucks?” , “How much can you count on Starbucks?” , and “How dependable is Starbucks?” . Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 7-point scale anchored by “not at all” (1) and “very much” (7). Cronbach’s alpha of Thomson’s scale was 0.92.

Relation Persistence

Relationship persistence was estimated by assessing the extent to which consumers were willing to engage in or exhibit the following relationship-maintaining behaviours: accommodation when the brand behaves badly, willingness to sacrifice for the sake of continuing the brand relationship, positively biased brand perceptions, derogation of attractive alternatives, and resistance to negative information about the brand.

Accommodation. Accommodation refers to “an individual’s willingness, when a partner has engaged in potentially destructive behaviour, to inhibit tendencies to react destructively in turn and instead engage in constructive reactions” (Rusbult et al., 1991, p. 53). According to Rusbult et al., when a relationship partner behaves poorly, an individuals’ responses can be
characterized by the following four types of reactions: exit (actively destroying the relationship), voice (actively and constructively attempting to improve conditions), loyalty (passively but optimistically waiting for conditions to improve), and neglect (passively allowing one’s relationship to deteriorate). Accommodative behaviours are those that fall under the voice and loyalty categories. For the purpose of the current research, accommodation was operationalized as consumers’ willingness to respond to a transgression by the brand with voice and/or loyalty, but not exit and/or neglect.

Rusbult et al. (1991) created a 24-item scale that measured tendencies toward accommodation. They developed six statements describing a partner’s negative or destructive act and designed four reaction statements for each act. Each item asked whether the subject reacted in a specific way (with exit, voice, loyalty, or neglect). This produced six measures of each construct (exit, voice, loyalty, or neglect). This method was adopted to create a measure of accommodation for the current research.

Two scenarios were developed to describe situations in which the brand violated consumers’ expectations (transgressed). The first situation was described as follows: “You go to Starbucks to buy a hot beverage. As you are leaving the store, you check your receipt and discover that Starbucks has charged you an extra $5. When you return to the store and ask for your money back, you are told that they can’t give you your money back – they can only make you another drink”. In a pretest, participants indicated that if this happened to them, they would be upset, angry, and disappointed with Starbucks and would feel that Starbucks had violated their expectations. Participants were asked to indicate on a 9-point scale anchored by 0 “very unlikely” to 8 “very likely” how likely they would engage in the following behaviours.
The four items were designed to describe behaviours that reflected one of the four types of reactions to a transgression. The first item was “contact the manager and threaten to stop being a customer of Starbucks if you don’t get your money back” (reverse-scored). This response was characterized by exit as exit responses are reflected by the following behaviours: separating from the relationship partner, actively abusing the relationship partner, threatening to leave, or screaming at the relationship partner. The second item was “contact the manager and ask if they can give you a gift card for the balance instead”. This response was characterized by voice as voice responses are reflected by the following behaviours: discussing problems, suggesting solutions, changing oneself, or urging the relationship partner to change. The third item was “leave the store (without your money or another drink)” (reverse-scored). This response was characterized by neglect as neglect responses are reflected by the following behaviours: ignoring the relationship partner or spending less time (or other resources) on it, avoiding discussing problems, treating the relationship partner poorly, or just letting things fall apart. The last item was “get another drink”. This response was characterized by loyalty (not to be interpreted as brand loyalty, this refers to loyalty within the exit-voice-loyalty-neglect reaction framework) as loyalty responses are reflected by the following behaviours: waiting and hoping that things will improve, supporting the relationship partner in the face of criticism, or praying for improvement.

The second situation was described as follows: “You are a member of Starbucks’ loyalty program and were informed that they are going to increase the number of loyalty points it will take to obtain the benefits you are used to”. The four items were “start buying another brand’s products (ie. Second Cup, Williams, etc.)” (exit, reverse-scored), “write a letter to Starbucks asking them to bring back the old program” (voice), “continue buying Starbucks products even though it takes longer to get the benefits from the loyalty points” (loyalty), and “buy Starbucks
less often than usual” (neglect, reverse-scored). A pretest revealed that participants’ reactions to this situation were very similar to those in the first scenario, reporting that they would be upset, angry, and disappointed with Starbucks.

Although accommodative tendencies can be revealed by numerous different behaviours, one of the most common operationalizations of accommodations is forgiveness. In addition to the two scenarios described above, a scenario was included using Fedorikhin et al.’s (2008) 4-item willingness to forgive the brand scale. Participants were given the following scenario, “You buy a beverage from Starbucks and find it to be unacceptable in some way (cold, stale, does not taste right, not how you ordered it, etc.)” and were asked to indicate the likelihood that they would “give Starbucks another chance”, “buy Starbucks products again despite the experience”, “be less likely to try Starbucks again” (reverse-scored), and “forgive Starbucks and buy it again”. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 9-point scale anchored by “very unlikely” (0) and “very likely” (8). Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was 0.78.

The two accommodation scenarios described above were included in the survey to get a better indication of the kind of responses (exit, voice, loyalty, or neglect) participants would typically exhibit across different situations. Participants’ responses to the exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect items were averaged across the two situations to create composites of the four variables. However, reliability analyses revealed that the Cronbach’s alpha’s for these constructs were very low (0.19, 0.33, 0.36, and 0.29 for exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect, respectively), so these measures were not used in the analyses. Cronbach’s alpha of the willingness to forgive the brand scale was 0.85 and was the only scale used to measure the accommodation construct.

*Willingness to Sacrifice.* Willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the brand was measured using Park et al.’s (2010) hierarchy of difficult to enact behaviours scale. Park et al. developed
the hierarchy of difficult to enact behaviours scale to measure consumers’ willingness to sacrifice personal (financial, social, and time) resources for the sole purpose of ensuring the brand relationship continues. The scale describes ten different brand-related behaviours that vary according to their level of difficulty, with behaviours on the higher end of the scale requiring the use of more of the consumer’s own resources. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using an 11-point scale anchored by “not at all likely” (0) and “very likely” (10).

In Park et al.’s (2010) Study 3, 141 undergraduate marketing students completed a survey that required them to assess the perceived difficulty of performing each of ten behaviours (on an 11-point scale anchored by 0 “not at all” and 10 “extremely”). Based on the results, Park et al. grouped these behaviours according to their perceived level of difficulty, creating the following three categories: most difficult behaviours, moderately difficult behaviours, and least difficult behaviours. The most difficult behaviours were “always buy the new varieties of Starbucks products when they become available” (level of difficulty = 5.87), “spend money, time, and energy to participate in activities to promote Starbucks” (5.65), and “wait for several weeks to buy Starbucks products rather than buying non-Starbucks products right now” (5.39). The moderately difficult behaviours were “defend Starbucks when others speak poorly about it” (4.93) and “pay more for Starbucks products than for non-Starbucks products” (4.44). The least difficult behaviours were “buy Starbucks products” (3.80), “frequently use products with a Starbucks logo” (3.53), “switch from Starbucks products to non-Starbucks products” (3.52) (reverse-scored), “recommend Starbucks products to other people” (3.51), and “buy Starbucks products for friends or family” (3.21). These results revealed that the three categories were significantly different from each other (p < 0.05) in their perceived level of difficulty.
**Positively Biased Brand Perceptions.** To measure whether consumers hold positively biased perceptions of the brand, participants were provided with a set of statements that described different attributes of the product and were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed to five statements according to a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8). The five items were “Starbucks products taste good”, “Starbucks products are always fresh”, “Starbucks products are presented nicely”, “Starbucks offers a lot of variety in their products”, and “Starbucks products are reasonably priced”. These five attributes were chosen because a pretest revealed they were the top five most common attributes listed (out of a total of 13 attributes: quality, price, consistency, atmosphere, taste, service, aroma, freshness, variety, presentation, luxury, innovation, and loyalty rewards) when individuals were asked to list five attributes they think are important for coffeehouse products.

**Derogation of Attractive Alternatives.** To measure tendencies to derogation attractive alternatives, a similar method to that of Johnson and Rusbult (1989, Study 2) was used. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed to five evaluations of a directly competing product brand according to a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8). Second Cup was determined to be a directly competing brand because it competes in the same category as Starbucks, offers similar products at similar prices, and also emphasizes specialty products, variety, and atmosphere in their locations.

The competing product brand (Second Cup) was evaluated on five attributes that a pretest revealed are important for the product category. The five items were “Second Cup products taste good”, “Second Cup products are always fresh”, “Second Cup products are presented nicely”, “Second Cup offers a lot of variety in their products”, and “Second Cup products are reasonably priced”. Second Cup was determined to be a directly competing brand because it competes in the same category as Starbucks, offers similar products at similar prices, and also emphasizes specialty products, variety, and atmosphere in their locations.
priced”. These items were identical to the items used to measure biased band perceptions except that they referred to a directly competing brand. All items for this scale were reverse-scored.

Resistance to Negative Information about the Brand. Considerable research in marketing has extensively studied resistance to negative information about a brand (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Raju et al., 2009) and has revealed that there are three main strategies individuals use to resist negative information about a brand. Research by Ahluwalia (2000) found that the three modes of resistance to negative information about the brand are biased assimilation, minimizing impact, and attribute weighting. Biased assimilation refers to message acceptance processes that “determine the extent to which the perceiver accepts or denies the target message” (Ahluwalia, 2000, p. 217). Some examples of biased assimilation are source derogation, argument scrutiny, and biased memory search. Minimizing impact refers to resisting negative information by isolating its impact to the target attribute. That is, if an individual accepts negative information related to one particular attribute (price, for example), they can minimize the impact of that negative information by not allowing it to affect other related attributes. Attribute weighting refers to decreasing the weight given to the attribute that has been tainted by the negative information while increasing the relative importance of other attributes.

To measure resistance to negative information about the brand, a new scale was designed to assess the extent consumers display biased assimilation, minimizing impact, and attribute weighting to resist negative information about the brand.

Participants were presented with the following scenario, “You found out that Starbucks moved its manufacturing plants to a developing country and illegally employed child workers to cut costs. If I heard this information...” A pretest revealed that individuals would be likely to find
this information upsetting, take this information seriously, think this information would negatively affect their views of the brand, and think this information would be damaging for the brand. Participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statements provided.

The following three statements were developed to reflect biased assimilation, “I would assume the information is not true”, “I would question the credibility of the source of the information” (source derogation), and “I would look for more information to explain this” (argument scrutiny). The next three statements were designed to reflect minimizing impact: “I would disregard the information because it is not important to me”, “It would not bother me because that is not why I like this brand”, and “I would not care because it does not affect the taste of Starbucks coffee”. The last three statements were designed to reflect attribute weighting, “It would not affect me because I highly value the quality of Starbucks coffee”, “I would continue to purchase Starbucks coffee because it fulfills my needs”, and “I would still think highly of Starbucks because of other important attributes of Starbucks’ products”.

Ahluwalia (2000) found that biased assimilation was exhibited most often when the information was easy to refute whereas attribute weighting was exhibited when the information was difficult to refute. They also found that minimizing impact was used regardless of the refutability of the information. However, the ease with which the negative information could be refuted was not a variable examined in the current research. Thus, the three scales were developed to measure each mode of resistance to negative information about the brand because specific predictions concerning when individuals would engage in each strategy over others were not made.
Participants’ responses to the biased assimilation, minimizing impact, and attribute weighting items were averaged to create composites of the three variables. However, reliability analyses revealed that the Cronbach’s alpha’s for biased assimilation was low ($\alpha = 0.56$) so this scale was dropped from the analyses. Cronbach’s alpha of the minimizing impact and attribute weighting scales were acceptable ($\alpha = 0.87$ and $\alpha = 0.88$, respectively) and were both retained as measures of the resistance to negative information about the brand construct.

**Related Variables**

*Brand Commitment.* Another measure of brand commitment (Beatty, Homer, & Kahle, 1988) was included because it had been used in numerous other studies in marketing (Agrawal & Mahesawaran, 2005; Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Raju et al., 2009) and is particularly useful for comparison in Study 2. The three items were “If Starbucks was not nearby, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another coffee brand” (reverse-scored), “I can see myself as being loyal to Starbucks”, and “I will more likely purchase a brand that is cheaper than Starbucks” (reverse-scored). Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.87 (Agrawal & Mahesawaran, 2005).

*Brand Familiarity.* Raju et al.’s (2009) 3-item semantic-differential brand familiarity scale was used to assess participants’ level of familiarity with the Starbucks brand. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 9-point scale anchored by “familiar/unfamiliar”, “well known/unknown”, and “not recognizable/easily recognizable”. However, when this scale was entered into a CFA with the other constructs, the second and third items exhibited very low factor loadings ($\lambda = 0.68$ and $\lambda = 0.33$, respectively) and Cronbach’s alpha was below the
acceptable level (0.64). An exploratory factor analysis revealed that the second and third items loaded onto a completely different factor than the first item. Examining the content of the items reveals that the first item appears to assess personal familiarity with the brand, whereas the second two items seem to measure the likelihood that others would be familiar with the brand. Thus, only the first item was used in the analysis as it appears to be a better measure of the construct of interest.

*Brand Knowledge.* A 2-item measure of brand trust was adapted from Raju et al. (2009). The items were “I consider myself knowledgeable about Starbucks” and “I consider myself informed about Starbucks”. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8).

*Brand Attitudes.* Raju et al.’s (2009) 5-item semantic-differential brand attitudes scale was used to assess attitudes toward the Starbucks brand. Participants were instructed to respond to each item using a 7-point scale anchored by “good/bad,” “positive/negative,” “favourable/unfavourable,” “nice/awful,” and “desirable/undesirable”.

*Other Variables*

Data was also collected on several control variables to account for factors that have been known to influence outcomes in previous research. Gender and relationship length were included as previous research reveals that gender has a significant effect on brand choice (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991) and relationship length can be used a proxy for customer inertia (Colgate & Lang, 2001).

*Brand Ownership.* One yes/no question was used to determine whether participants own or had ever owned (in this case, purchased) the product brand. The question was “Do you
currently purchase, or have you previously purchased, Starbucks products?".

*Brand Relationship Length*. To determine that approximate length of the brand relationship, participants were asked to indicate how long they had been purchasing Starbucks products in years, months, and/or days.

*Demographic Variables*. Gender, age, and education level (year in the undergraduate program or other/not a student) were also collected.

*Hypothesis Guessing Question*. One final question was asked to determine what participants thought the purpose of the study was to probe for suspicion and hypothesis guessing.

### 4.5 Analysis

Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypotheses. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a statistical technique used for testing causal relationships. It can be used for both theory testing and theory development. SEM is different from other multivariate techniques (e.g., regression, ANOVA, etc.) because it is able to construct latent variables (variables that are estimated from the model based on several measured variables). In addition, unlike other multivariate methods, SEM is able to account for measurement error. This is important because the strength of the relationship between two or more constructs is attenuated when measurement error is left unaccounted for. Additional benefits of SEM are that it can handle both observed and latent variables and can accommodate continuous and dichotomous data.

Structural equation modeling allows for a more stringent test of the hypotheses than regression analyses and is useful when multiple items are used to measure a construct, which is the case in the current research. It is also an advanced method that is capable of handling advanced research questions, such as those that involve mediation and moderation. For example,
structural equation modeling provides a straightforward and sophisticated way to test mediation hypotheses as it can estimate direct and indirect effects simultaneously. Thus, SEM is appropriate technique for testing the hypotheses in the current research.

**Chapter 5: Study 1 Results**

5.1 **Validation of the Measurement Model**

The measurement model was assessed by simultaneously estimating a single confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) that included the measures of the dimensions of brand attachment – brand-self connection (BSC) and brand prominence (BP), long-term orientation toward the relationship (LTO), intent to persist in the relationship (ITP), satisfaction (S), investment (I), perceived quality of alternatives (QOA), brand trust (BT), accommodation (A), the three subsets of willingness to sacrifice (WTS) – least difficult behaviours (LDB), moderately difficult behaviours (MDB), and most difficult behaviours (MSB), positively biased brand perceptions (BBP), derogation of attractive alternatives (DOA), the measures of resistance to negative information about the brand (RNI) – minimizing impact (MI) and attribute weighting (AW), brand knowledge (BK), and brand attitudes (BA).

The results of the measurement model indicate that the model fit the data well ($\chi^2_{(1616)} = 2498.58, p < 0.001$; $\text{CFI} = 0.93$; $\text{TLI} = 0.92$; $\text{RMSEA} = 0.04$; $\text{SRMR} = 0.055$). The final measurement results for each of the items are reported in Table 2.
Table 2. Measurement Results of all Items and Scales

Components of Brand Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Construct</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Standardized Factor Loading (Standard Error)</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand Attachment</td>
<td>Brand-Self Connection</td>
<td>BSC1</td>
<td>.865 (.020)</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BSC2</td>
<td>.866 (.020)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Prominence</td>
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<td>BP2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LTO2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LTO3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Latent Construct</td>
<td>Items</td>
<td>Standardized Factor Loading (Standard Error)</td>
<td>α</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>AVE</td>
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<td>Satisfaction</td>
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<td>S3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I3</td>
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<td>CR</td>
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<td>QOA5</td>
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<td>BT3</td>
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**Relationship Persistence Variables – Relationship-Maintaining Behaviours**

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<td>A3</td>
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<td>A4</td>
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**Willingness to Sacrifice**

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<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
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<td>LDB3</td>
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<td>LDB4</td>
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<td>LDB5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latent Construct</td>
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<td><strong>Biased Brand Perceptions</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>BBP4</td>
<td>.620 (.041)</td>
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<td>BBP5</td>
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<td><strong>Derogation of Alternatives</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>DOA2</td>
<td>.854 (.021)</td>
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<td>DOA3</td>
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<td>DOA5</td>
<td>.340 (.055)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MI3</td>
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<td>AW3</td>
<td>.835 (.022)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attribute Weighting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Other Variables</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Knowledge</strong></td>
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<td>.94</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BK2</td>
<td>.976 (.031)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>BA1</td>
<td>.863 (.018)</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.72</td>
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</table>
Unidimensionality of the scales was achieved as the model fit the data reasonably well and because all items loaded only onto their respective constructs. Internal consistency of the scales was also achieved as Cronbach’s alpha exceeded 0.65 for all scales except for long-term orientation ($\alpha = 0.61$) (Nunnally & Berstein, 1994), ranging from 0.61 to 0.95. In addition, all but two scales (long-term orientation and most difficult behaviours, $\alpha = 0.68$) exceeded the more stringent cutoff of 0.707. Composite reliability (Raykov, 1997), another measure of internal consistency is able to provide a more accurate estimate of the reliability of larger scales because it is not influenced by the number of items in the scale, whereas Cronbach’s alpha increases as the number of items increases. Composite reliability estimates ranged from 0.69 (most difficult behaviours) to 0.95.

Using the traditional criteria of 0.707 for Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (CR), the long-term orientation scale and the two-item scale for most difficult behaviours (a subset of the willingness to sacrifice construct) did not exhibit acceptable levels of construct reliability. A Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability estimate of 0.707 indicates that at least 50% of the variance in the scale can be accounted for by the latent construct. An estimate lower than 0.707 indicates that the latent construct explains less than half of the variance in the scale and the scale is consequently not a good measure of the latent construct. Since construct reliability indicates that the items are all measuring one underlying construct, these results indicate that not all the items of the long-term orientation scale and most difficult behaviours scale are measuring the same construct.

Although the long-term orientation scale did not exhibit acceptable levels of reliability, it was retained because the scale was directly adapted from a scale used in previous research in social psychology and the other scale items exhibited high factor loadings. It is likely that the
low factor loading for LT02, discussed in the following paragraph, explains the low reliability estimates. The least difficult behaviours scale and willingness to sacrifice scale is discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs on convergent validity.

Convergent validity was achieved as all items loaded significantly ($p < 0.001$) onto their respective constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). This means that the measures of the construct that should theoretically be related to each other were related to each other and that each indicator was measuring the same construct. In addition, most of the standardized factor loadings exceeded 0.707 (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Table 2 displays the factor loadings and their respective standard errors for each item.

One item from the long-term orientation scale (LTO2, $\lambda = 0.33$), one item from the quality of alternatives scale (QOA1, $\lambda = 0.67$), and one item from the accommodation scale (A3, $\lambda = 0.67$) failed to exceed 0.707, indicating that the respective latent constructs explained less than 50% of the variance in these items. However, because the scales for long-term orientation, perceived quality of alternatives, and accommodation had been established in previous literature, and all other items in the scales loaded above $\lambda = 0.707$, these items were retained.

Two of the five items from the least difficult behaviours scale (LDB2, $\lambda = 0.26$, LDB3, $\lambda = 0.64$) and two of the three items from the most difficult behaviours scale (MSB1, $\lambda = 0.54$, MSB2, $\lambda = 0.66$) also failed to exceed 0.707. An examination of these items explains this finding. The willingness to sacrifice scale (adapted from Park et al.’s, 2010, hierarchy of difficult behaviours scale) describes ten different behaviours that vary according to how difficult they are to enact. This scale is divided into three subcategories (least difficult behaviours, moderately difficult behaviors, and most difficult behaviours) that indicate the perceived level of difficulty for each behaviour. Although the items (different behaviours) in each category are similar to
each other in terms of their perceived level of difficulty, these items do not necessarily reflect one underlying latent construct. The decision to model the behaviours as if each category was a latent variable was based on how they were modeled by Park et al. in the paper that created the measure.

Three of the five items for the biased brand perceptions scale (BBP3, $\lambda = 0.68$, BBP4, $\lambda = 0.62$, BBP5, $\lambda = 0.36$) and one of the items from the derogation of alternatives scale (DOA5, $\lambda = 0.34$) also failed to exceed 0.707. These scales were designed, much like the willingness to sacrifice scale, to assess perceptions of the product brand by asking participants to rate the brand on a set of product attributes (taste, freshness, appearance, etc.). The items for these scales were similar to each other in that they tapped into different aspects of the same product. However, the items were expected to produce an overall assessment of how individuals perceive the brand and were not necessarily intended to reflect one underlying construct (in the same way that a scale with items that assess one attribute of the product brand would). Thus, low factor loadings of these items was not considered to be detrimental to overall measure. The decision to model these items as a latent variable was based on the similarity of the design of the scale to the willingness to sacrifice scale.

All but three (long-term orientation AVE = 0.47, most difficult behaviours AVE = 0.69, and biased brand perceptions AVE = 0.46) estimates of average variance extracted (AVE) for the latent constructs exceeded 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). An estimate of AVE that is below 0.50 indicates that less than 50% of the variance in the items is explained by the latent factor. These results are consistent with the results of the reliability estimates and reveal that the long-term orientation, most difficult behaviours, and biased brand perceptions scales do not exhibit convergent validity.
Discriminant validity was achieved for brand prominence, satisfaction, quality of alternatives, brand trust, accommodation, derogation of alternatives, and brand knowledge as the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct was greater than their off-diagonal correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; see Table 3 for the latent variable correlation matrix).
Table 3. Latent Variable Construct Correlation Matrix with the Square Root of the AVE on the Diagonals

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BSC</th>
<th>BP</th>
<th>LTO</th>
<th>ITP</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>QOA</th>
<th>BT</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>LDB</th>
<th>MDB</th>
<th>MSB</th>
<th>BBP</th>
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*The square root of the AVE is in bold.
**The off diagonals display the correlation between the latent constructs
***Problems with discriminant validity are indicated by parentheses [()]
Discriminant validity was not achieved for least difficult behaviours, moderately difficult behaviours, and most difficult behaviours as the correlations between these constructs was greater than the square root of the average variance extracted for each of the latent constructs. The square root of average variance extracted (AVE) can be regarded as empirical correlations of each construct with itself. If the square root of the AVE estimate is greater than the correlations between the construct and other constructs, the latent construct explains the variance in its items better than it explains the variance in other constructs. Since the correlations between least difficult behaviours, moderately difficult behaviours, and most difficult behaviours were larger than the square roots of the AVEs for these three constructs, it can be concluded that these construct are not empirically distinct from each other. This was not considered to be a problem as least difficult behaviours, moderately difficult behaviours, and most difficult behaviours are categories within the same willingness to sacrifice scale. Since Park et al. (2010) found that the three categories representing the different levels in the difficult to enact behaviours hierarchy were significantly different from each other in their level of difficulty ($p < 0.05$), modeling them separately in the first set of models was justified. The high correlations between these three constructs justified collapsing them into one latent variable termed willingness to sacrifice in the second set of models.

The same result was found for the two measures of the resistance to negative information about the brand construct (minimizing impact and attribute weighting). Discriminant validity between these constructs was not supported, as the correlation between these constructs was greater than the square root of the average variance extracted for each of the latent constructs. This means that empirically, there is no difference between these constructs. This result was
expected and justifies collapsing them into one latent variable termed resistance to negative information about the brand.

Divergent validity was also not supported for brand attitudes and biased brand perceptions. This was expected as brand attitudes describe overall perceptions of the brand, measured by positively and negatively valenced words (e.g., good, bad, favourable, unfavourable, etc.), while the positively biased brand perceptions scale assessed specific perceptions of the product brand (e.g., products are fresh, products taste good, etc.). Both the brand attitudes scale and the positively biased brand perceptions scale were designed to capture attitudes toward the brand. The results support that they are measuring the same underlying construct. This was not problematic as only the biased perceptions of the brand scale was included in the main analyses.

Although the results described above were expected because the constructs that did not exhibit discriminant validity were designed to measure the same construct, the following issues with discriminant validity were not expected. First, the correlations between long-term orientation and all three willingness to sacrifice constructs was greater than the square root of the average variance extracted, suggesting that long-term orientation is not empirically distinct from willingness to sacrifice. It was expected that these constructs would be strongly correlated, however, theory suggests that these are different constructs. Long-term orientation involves a cognitive representation of the brand relationship and envisioning oneself in a relationship with the brand in the future. Willingness to sacrifice, on the other hand, refers to behaviours individuals would be willing to enact to ensure the relationship survives into the future.

This finding was repeated with two of the willingness to sacrifice constructs (least difficult behaviours and most difficult behaviours) and intent to persist, which theoretically
describes the motivation and intention to continue in the brand relationship, as opposed to the
behaviours that are undertaken to ensure the relationship’s continuation.

Discriminant validity was not supported for investment and most difficult behaviours as
the difference between the two constructs is subtle, conceptually and practically. Investment size
refers to how much an individual has already invested in the brand relationship whereas
willingness to sacrifice assesses the likelihood that a consumer will invest more (sacrifice their
own resources) into the brand relationship in the future. Although they both assess investment,
investment size refers to past behaviour whereas willingness to sacrifice measures intentions for
future behaviour.

Discriminant validity was also not supported for least difficult behaviours, biased brand
perceptions, and brand attitudes. As the least difficult behaviours scale describes behaviours that
are not very difficult to enact, it is not surprising that they are highly correlated with positive
perceptions and attitudes toward the brand. However, previous research examining these
constructs suggests that brand attitudes and least difficult behaviors are distinct (Park et al, 2010)
although this distinction was not empirically tested.

Lastly, discriminant validity was not supported for brand-self connection and investment
size, although theory suggests that these are also distinct constructs. Brand self-connection refers
to the strength of the bond between the brand and the self and represents the extent to which the
brand is part of the self. Investment, on the other hand, assesses the amount of personal resources
that have been invested into the brand relationship. Although certainly related, these are
theoretically distinct constructs.

Although the lack of support for the discriminant validity of these constructs is
problematic, the decision to proceed with these scales was based on the understanding that these
constructs should be highly correlated and are in some cases very similar to each other, but are still inherently different constructs. The finding that these constructs are not empirically distinct may an indication of issues of multicollinearity in the model. This issue is discussed further in the general discussion.

There were also issues with discriminant validity of the constructs that represent the three brand commitment components. Discriminant validity was not supported for brand-self connection and long-term orientation or for long-term orientation and intent to persist. These results imply that the three components are not empirically distinct constructs, although previous research examining these constructs suggests that they are different (e.g., Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). This result is not considered to be problematic because the three scales were designed to measure one overall underlying latent construct (brand commitment), and a high correlation between these variables was expected. The following analysis was run to provide more insight into this issue.

5.2 Validation of the Measurement Model of Brand Commitment

Interpersonal relationship commitment theory suggests that relationship commitment is a second-order construct that consists of the three first-order factors psychological attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). To test whether brand commitment is a higher-order, multidimensional construct that consists of these three constructs and to justify the higher-order model, three different brand commitment models were estimated and compared (see Figure 2).
Figure 2. Three Competing Solutions for the Brand Commitment Construct

a) One Factor Solution*

*All items load onto one single latent factor

b) Two Factor Solution**

**The brand attachment items load onto one factor (F1) and the long-term orientation and intent to persist items load onto a second factor (F2)

b) Three Factor Solution***

***The brand attachment items load onto the first factor, the long-term orientation items load onto the second factor, and the intent to persist items load onto the third factor.
The first model was a single-factor solution where the items for brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist all loaded onto a single higher-order factor. The second model was a two-factor solution that consisted of brand attachment as the first factor and long-term orientation combined with intent to persist as the second factor. This structure was chosen because discriminant validity between these components was not empirically supported and the theoretical distinction between long-term orientation and intent to persist is conceptually subtle. The third model was a three-factor solution where brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist were three separate latent factors that loaded onto the higher-order brand commitment construct.

The two-factor solution fit the data significantly better ($p < 0.001$) than the one factor solution with a difference in chi-square of 21.58 with two degrees of freedom. The three-factor solution provided a significantly better fit ($p < 0.001$) than the two-factor solution with a difference in chi-square of 82.01 with one degree of freedom. Of note, the one- and two-factor solutions fit the data poorly while the fit of the three-factor solution to the data was excellent ($\chi^2 (30) = 71.29, p < 0.05; \text{CFI} = 0.98; \text{TLI} = 0.97; \text{RMSEA} = 0.07; \text{SRMR} = 0.03$).

After establishing that brand attachment (BA), long-term orientation (LTO), and intent to persist (ITP) are three separate factors, the correlations between the components were examined. The results reveal that the three factors were highly correlated with the correlations ranging from 0.71 to 0.83 (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>LTO</th>
<th>ITP</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>ITP</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.82</td>
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</table>
Although the three first-order factors were not empirically distinct, since the purpose of a second-order factor is to account for the high correlation between the first-order factors (Chen et al., 2005) and because the three-factor model fit the data significantly better than the other models, modeling brand commitment this way was justified.

5.3 Validation of the Structural Model

Hypotheses 1-14 were tested by specifying structural equation models using Mplus that included the relevant latent variables (brand knowledge and brand attitudes were not included in the models) and the hypothesized paths (see Figure 3 for an illustration of the structural model combined with the measurement models). First, two structural equation models were estimated that included only the direct paths between the antecedents of brand relationship strength [satisfaction (S), investment (I), quality of alternatives (QOA), and brand trust (BT)], the indicator of brand relationship strength [brand commitment (BC) in the first model and brand attachment (BA) in the second], and the separate relationship persistence variables [accommodation (A), the three subsets of the willingness to sacrifice (WTS) measure – least difficult behaviours (LDB), moderately difficult behaviours (MDB), and most difficult behaviours (MSB), biased brand perceptions (BBP), derogation of alternatives (DOA), and resistance to negative information (RNI)].
Figure 3. Structural Equation Models of the Brand Relationship Strength, Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength, and Relationship Persistence

a) Brand Commitment Model
b) Brand Attachment Model
The brand commitment model did not fit the data well as most of the goodness of fit statistics did not fall within the acceptable range ($\chi^2_{(1332)} = 2254.90, p < 0.05; \text{CFI} = 0.91; \text{TLI} = 0.91; \text{RMSEA} = 0.05; \text{SRMR} = 0.07$). For incremental fit indices, which provide a measure of the ability to improve fit, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1980) and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973) should fall above 0.95 (Hu & Bentler, 1992). The low CFI and TLI indices for the brand commitment model indicate that there is considerable room for improvement in the model. For absolute fit indices, which assess how well the model replicates the data, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RSMEA; Steiger & Lind, 1980) should be lower than 0.08 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) should fall below 0.05 (Hair et al., 2006). These indices estimate the residual covariance matrix (the amount of variance that is not accounted for by the model). The high SRMR statistic for the brand commitment model indicates that there is a considerable amount of variance not explained by the model. The chi-square statistic, another absolute fit index, should be non-significant. However, the chi-square is sensitive to sample size such that it tends to be significant for larger sample sizes ($> 200$) and is therefore not very robust. The sample size of the current research is 289, so a significant chi-square is not considered to be an issue in terms of model fit. The model fit for the brand attachment model was similar to that of the brand commitment model ($\chi^2_{(1038)} = 1795.21, p < 0.05; \text{CFI} = 0.92; \text{TLI} = 0.91; \text{RMSEA} = 0.05; \text{SRMR} = 0.08$).

The model fit indices indicate that the hypothesized brand commitment model and brand attachment model do not fit the data, implying that the theory does not explain the observations. Although the model results for specific hypotheses should not be interpreted when the model fit indices indicate poor model fit, the following sections describe and interpret the results as if the
model fit was acceptable for illustrative purposes. In the following discussion, the standardized coefficients, t-values, and significance levels are reported. Table 5 provides an overview of the structural model results.

Table 5. Results of the Competing Brand Relationship Strength Models Examining the Direct Relationships Between the Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength and the Individual Relationship Persistence Variables

**Brand Commitment Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Standardized Path Coefficient</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>S → BC</td>
<td>β = 0.099</td>
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<td>H2a</td>
<td>I → BC</td>
<td>β = 0.587</td>
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<td>H3</td>
<td>QOA → BC</td>
<td>β = 0.053</td>
<td>p = 0.316</td>
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<td>H4a</td>
<td>BT → BC</td>
<td>β = 0.346</td>
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<td>BC → A</td>
<td>β = 0.551</td>
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<td>H8</td>
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<td>H9a</td>
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**Brand Attachment Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Standardized Path Coefficient</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
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<tr>
<td>S → BA</td>
<td>β = 0.018</td>
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<td>H2b</td>
<td>I → BA</td>
<td>β = 0.752</td>
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<td>QOA → BA</td>
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<tr>
<td>H4b</td>
<td>BT → BA</td>
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<td>H5b</td>
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Hypotheses 1-4 predicted that all the antecedents of brand relationship strength predict brand commitment while only investment and brand trust predict brand attachment. All the brand relationship strength antecedent hypotheses were supported except for one. The results reveal that satisfaction ($\beta = 0.10$, $t = 1.97$, $p < 0.05$), investment ($\beta = 0.59$, $t = 10.63$, $p < 0.001$), and brand trust ($\beta = 0.35$, $t = 6.67$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predicted brand commitment. These results supported Hypotheses 1, 2a, and 4a and reveal that brand commitment increases as satisfaction, investment, and brand trust increase. Hypothesis 3 was not supported as the relationship between perceived quality of alternatives and brand commitment was not significant ($\beta = 0.05$, $t = 1.00$, $ns$). Figure 4 displays the results of the competing models.
Figure 4. Results of the Competing Brand Relationship Strength Models Examining the Direct Relationships Between the Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength and the Individual Relationship Persistence Variables

a) Conceptual Brand Commitment Model
a) Structural Brand Commitment Model
b) Conceptual Brand Attachment Model
b) Structural Brand Attachment Model
The brand attachment hypotheses were supported as well. Consistent with Hypotheses 2b and 4b, investment ($\beta = 0.75$, $t = 14.12$, $p < 0.001$) and brand trust ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 4.93$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predicted brand attachment, revealing that consumers are more attached to brands when they have invested in the brand relationship and trust the brand. As expected, there was no relationship between satisfaction ($\beta = 0.05$, $t = 0.98$, $ns$) or perceived quality of alternatives ($\beta = 0.05$, $t = 0.98$, $ns$) and brand attachment.

Hypotheses 5-9 stated that brand commitment predicts all individual relationship-maintaining behaviours while brand attachment predicts all but one of the relationship-maintaining behaviours. All relationship persistence hypotheses were supported. The results revealed that brand commitment predicts accommodation ($\beta = 0.55$, $t = 11.31$, $p < 0.001$), willingness to sacrifice (least difficult behaviours, $\beta = 0.90$, $t = 42.97$, $p < 0.001$; moderately difficult behaviours, $\beta = 0.92$, $t = 36.68$, $p < 0.001$; most difficult behaviours, $\beta = 0.85$, $t = 24.00$, $p < 0.001$), biased brand perceptions ($\beta = 0.62$, $t = 13.28$, $p < 0.001$), derogation of alternatives ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = -2.72$, $p < 0.01$), and resistance to negative information ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 3.13$, $p < 0.01$). These results reveal that consumers who are highly committed to a brand are more likely to forgive the brand when it fails to meet their expectations, are willing to sacrifice their own resources for the sake of maintaining the brand relationship, think more positively about the brand, think less of directly competing brands, and resist negative information about the brand.

The results reveal that brand attachment also predicts accommodation ($\beta = 0.44$, $t = 7.60$, $p < 0.001$), willingness to sacrifice for the brand relationship (least difficult behaviours, $\beta = 0.77$, $t = 21.44$, $p < 0.001$; moderately difficult behaviours, $\beta = 0.84$, $t = 25.16$, $p < 0.001$; most difficult behaviours, $\beta = 0.82$, $t = 20.69$, $p < 0.001$), biased brand perceptions ($\beta = 0.55$, $t = 10.01$, $p < 0.001$) and resistance to negative information ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 3.13$, $p < 0.01$). As
expected, there was no relationship between brand attachment and derogation of alternatives ($\beta = -0.09$, $t = -1.30$, $ns$).

### 5.4 Relationship Persistence Analyses

Although the current research posited several hypotheses related to the specific behaviours that would be predicted by brand commitment and brand attachment, the purpose of the current research was to determine whether brand commitment is a better predictor of relationship persistence overall. To address this objective, another set of structural models was run with relationship persistence (RP) as a higher-order latent factor consisting of the five first-order relationship-persistence factors (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Results of the Competing Brand Relationship Strength Models Examining the Direct Relationships Between the Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength and Relationship Persistence as a Latent Factor**

![Diagram of the relationship model](image)

a) Conceptual Brand Commitment Model
a) Conceptual Brand Attachment Model

b) Structural Brand Commitment Model
b) Structural Brand Attachment Model

The model fit of the brand commitment model with relationship persistence as a latent factor was the same as when the relationship persistence variables were modeled separately ($\chi^2_{(1351)} = 2352.23, p < 0.05; \text{CFI} = 0.91; \text{TLI} = 0.90; \text{RMSEA} = 0.05; \text{SRMR} = 0.07$) whereas the model of the brand attachment model with relationship persistence as a latent factor fit the data worse than when the relationship persistence variables were modeled separately ($\chi^2_{(1057)} = 1914.70, p < 0.05; \text{CFI} = 0.91; \text{TLI} = 0.90; \text{RMSEA} = 0.05; \text{SRMR} = 0.09$). As was the case with the previous set of models, the model fit indices reveal that the model did not fit data well. The results of the models are interpreted below, but the interpretations are not valid as the model fit was poor. The results of these models mirror the results of the models previously discussed and are summarized in Table 6. In the following discussion, the standardized coefficients, t-values, and significance levels are reported.
### Table 6. Results of the Competing Brand Relationship Strength Models Examining the Direct Relationships Between the Antecedents of Brand Relationship Strength and Relationship Persistence as a Latent Variable

#### Brand Commitment Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Standardized Path Coefficient</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>S → BC</td>
<td>β = 0.109</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.05</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a</td>
<td>I → BC</td>
<td>β = 0.565</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>QOA → BC</td>
<td>β = 0.041</td>
<td>p = 0.446</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a</td>
<td>BT → BC</td>
<td>β = 0.362</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11a</td>
<td>BC → RP</td>
<td>β = 0.911</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Brand Attachment Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Standardized Path Coefficient</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>S → BA</td>
<td>β = 0.032</td>
<td>p = 0.545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b</td>
<td>I → BA</td>
<td>β = 0.728</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>QOA → BA</td>
<td>β = 0.027</td>
<td>p = 0.493</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b</td>
<td>BT → BA</td>
<td>β = 0.318</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11b</td>
<td>BA → RP</td>
<td>β = 0.818</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consistent with the results of the first set of models, all hypotheses were supported except for one. Satisfaction (β = 0.11, t = 2.14, p < 0.05), investment (β = 0.57, t = 10.11, p < 0.001), and brand trust (β = 0.36, t = 6.93, p < 0.001) significantly predicted brand commitment but the relationship between quality of alternatives and brand commitment was not significant (β = 0.04, t = 0.76, ns). Investment (β = 0.73, t = 13.03, p < 0.001) and brand trust (β = 0.32, t = 5.19, p < 0.001) predicted brand attachment, and as with the previous brand attachment model, there was no relationship between satisfaction (β = 0.03, t = 0.61, ns) or quality of alternatives (β = 0.05, t = 0.49, ns) and brand attachment. Consistent with Hypothesis 11, both brand commitment and brand attachment were strong predictors of relationship persistence (β = 0.911, t = 47.73, p < 0.001 and β = 0.82, t = 25.03, p < 0.001, respectively).
5.5 Mediation Analyses

To test Hypothesis 11-14, two separate mediation models were run that included all the antecedents of brand relationship strength, brand commitment and brand attachment as the mediating factor, and relationship persistence as a higher-order latent factor consisting of the five lower-order relationship persistence variables (see Figure 6). For both models, MacKinnon et al.’s (2004) method was used to test the mediation effects of brand commitment and brand attachment by estimating the direct and indirect effects and the standard error of the indirect effects using a bias-corrected bootstrapped standard error with 1000 draws (Efron & Tibshirani, 1985). Bias corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals of the indirect effects were also examined. In the following discussion, the unstandardized coefficients, t-values, and significance levels are reported.

**Figure 6. Results of the Competing Brand Relationship Strength Mediation Models**

![Diagram of mediation models](image)

a) Conceptual Brand Commitment Model
b) Structural Brand Commitment Model

a) Conceptual Brand Attachment Model
b) Structural Brand Attachment Model

The fit of the brand commitment mediation model to the data was comparable to the previous two brand commitment models ($\chi^2_{(1347)} = 2326.23, p < 0.001; \text{CFI} = 0.91; \text{TLI} = 0.90; \text{RMSEA} = 0.05; \text{SRMR} = 0.08$) whereas the fit of the brand attachment mediation model to the data was slightly better than the previous brand attachment model with relationship persistence as a latent variable. ($\chi^2_{(1050)} = 1838.32, p < 0.01; \text{CFI} = 0.92; \text{TLI} = 0.91; \text{RMSEA} = 0.05; \text{SRMR} = 0.08$). Consistent with the results of the previous models, the model fit indices reveal that the model did not fit data well. The results of the models are summarized in Table 7 and Table 8 and described below, but these results should be interpreted with caution.
Table 7. Results of the Brand Commitment Mediation Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Type of Effect</th>
<th>Unstandardized Path Coefficient (SE)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>S → BC</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.111 (0.06)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a</td>
<td>I → BC</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.785 (0.16)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>QOA → BC</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.058 (0.08)</td>
<td>p = 0.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a</td>
<td>BT → BC</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.280 (0.06)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5a</td>
<td>BC → RP</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.654 (0.13)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I → RP</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.126 (0.15)</td>
<td>p = 0.391</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOA → RP</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = -0.023 (0.05)</td>
<td>p = 0.633</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11</td>
<td>S → BC → RP</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>B = 0.072 (0.04)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H12</td>
<td>I → BC → RP</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>B = 0.513 (0.17)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H13</td>
<td>QOA → BC → RP</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>B = 0.038 (0.06)</td>
<td>p = 0.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H14</td>
<td>BT → BC → RP</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>B = 0.183 (0.05)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Results of the Brand Attachment Mediation Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Type of Effect</th>
<th>Unstandardized Path Coefficient (SE)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>S → BA</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.008 (0.06)</td>
<td>p = 0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b</td>
<td>I → BA</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 1.188 (0.18)</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>QOA → BA</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.038 (0.10)</td>
<td>p = 0.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b</td>
<td>BT → BA</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.170 (0.08)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA → RP</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.155 (0.09)</td>
<td>p = 0.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S → RP</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.065 (0.07)</td>
<td>p = 0.125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I → RP</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.181 (0.13)</td>
<td>p = 0.164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOA → RP</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.002 (0.06)</td>
<td>p = 0.967</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT → RP</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>B = 0.360 (0.07)</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S → BA → RP</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>B = 0.001 (0.01)</td>
<td>p = 0.903</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I → BA → RP</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>B = 0.184 (0.11)</td>
<td>p = 0.098</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOA → BA → RP</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>B = 0.006 (0.02)</td>
<td>p = 0.759</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT → BA → RP</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>B = 0.026 (0.02)</td>
<td>p = 0.185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses 11-14 posit that brand commitment mediates the relationship between all antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence. Two of the four hypotheses were supported. The results reveal that brand commitment did not mediate the
relationship between satisfaction and relationship persistence. Although the indirect effect of satisfaction on relationship persistence was significant \( (B = 0.07, SE = 0.04, t = 1.95, p < 0.05) \), the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect included a 0 (-0.00 to 0.15). This means that in the population, the indirect effect could actually be 0 and therefore does not exist. The direct effect was also not significant \( (B = -0.02, SE = 0.03, t = -0.53, ns) \), so H11 was not supported.

Brand commitment partially mediated the relationship between brand trust and relationship persistence, as both the indirect effect \( (B = 0.18, SE = 0.05, t = 3.67, p < 0.001) \) and the direct effect \( (B = 0.16, SE = 0.06, t = 2.89, p < 0.005) \) were significant and the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect did not include a 0 (0.10 to 0.31). Also, brand commitment fully mediated the relationship between investment and relationship persistence, as the indirect effect of investment on relationship persistence was significant \( (B = 0.51, SE = 0.17, t = 3.11, p < 0.005) \) while the direct effect was not \( (B = -0.13, SE = 0.15, t = -0.86, ns) \) and the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect did not include a 0 (0.30 to 0.95).

The direct paths between quality of alternatives and brand commitment, the direct path between quality of alternatives and relationship persistence, and the indirect path between quality of alternatives and relationship persistence were all nonsignificant, so Hypothesis 13 was not supported.

The results reveal that brand attachment did not mediate the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence. Brand attachment did not mediate the relationship between investment and relationship persistence, as both the indirect effect \( (B = 0.18, SE = 0.11, t = 1.22, ns) \) and the direct effect \( (B = 0.18, SE = 0.13, t = 1.65, ns) \) were nonsignificant. Similarly, brand attachment did not mediate the relationship between brand trust and relationship persistence, as the indirect effect was not significant \( (B = 0.03, SE = 0.02, t \)
= 1.33, \( ns \)), although the direct effect was (\( B = 0.36, SE = 0.07, t = 5.40, p < 0.001 \)), revealing that the likelihood of relationship persistence increased as brand trust increased. In addition, there were no significant direct (\( B = 0.07, SE = 0.07, t = 1.53, ns \) for satisfaction and \( B = 0.00, SE = 0.06, t = 0.04, ns \) for quality of alternatives) or indirect effects (\( B = 0.00, SE = 0.01, t = 0.12, ns \) for satisfaction and \( B = 0.00, SE = 0.02, t = 0.31, ns \) for quality of alternatives) of satisfaction or quality of alternatives on relationship persistence.

Further, the results indicate that, when all the direct and indirect effects are taken into account, the relationship between brand attachment and relationship persistence becomes nonsignificant (\( B = 0.16, SE = 0.09, t = 1.79, ns \)). This result should be interpreted with caution, as this finding could be the result of the size of the model with many latent factors and numerous paths modeled simultaneously. However, it is interesting to note that the path between brand attachment and relationship persistence became nonsignificant when all of the direct and indirect were calculated, but the path between brand commitment and relationship persistence did not.

### 5.6 Brand Commitment Components Analyses

One final structural equation model was estimated that consisted of the higher-order brand commitment construct and the higher-order relationship persistence constructs (Figure 7). This model included the higher-order brand commitment factor to account for the high correlation between the three lower-order components of brand commitment. In this model, however, the three brand commitment components were regressed directly onto the higher-order relationship persistence construct (Figure 7).
The model fit the data relatively well ($\chi^2_{(722)} = 1240.644, p < 0.001; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.07$) as the CFI and TLI statistics were higher for this model than in the previous three sets of models, suggesting an improved model fit. In the following discussion, the standardized coefficients, t-values, and significance levels are reported.

The results reveal that when all three brand commitment components are estimated simultaneously, the path between brand attachment and relationship persistence becomes nonsignificant ($\beta = 0.01, t = 0.10, ns$), while long-term orientation ($\beta = 0.62, t = 3.92, p < 0.001$) and intent to persist ($\beta = 0.28, t = 3.92, p < 0.005$) remain significant predictors of relationship persistence. An examination of the standardized coefficients reveals that long-term orientation is the most influential component for predicting relationship persistence.
To determine whether the path coefficients of the three brand commitment components were significantly different from one another, three Wald Tests of Parameter Constraints were conducted. The results of these tests reveal that the standardized coefficient for brand attachment was not significantly different from the coefficient for intent to persist (Wald test value = 2.98, df = 1, ns) and the intent to persist coefficient was not significantly different from the long-term orientation coefficient (Wald test value = 2.05, df = 1, ns). However, the long-term orientation coefficient was significantly different from the brand attachment coefficient (Wald test value = 3.95, df = 1, \( p < 0.05 \)). These results further support that there is no significant relationship between brand attachment and relationship persistence when the other brand commitment components are not included and also reveal that long-term orientation is the most important component for predicting relationship persistence. These results should be interpreted with caution, however, as the finding that the three components were not empirically distinct means that there may be a problem with multicollinearity that may explain these effects.

Chapter 6: Study 2 Method

For Study 2, an experimental design was designed to replicate the findings from Study 1 and rule out alternatives explanations by manipulating, rather than measuring, brand commitment. The procedure through which brand commitment was manipulated was identical to the procedure used in previous research in marketing (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Raju et al., 2009) and is described below.
6.1 Participants and Design

Study 2 utilized a main-effect experimental design (one factor, two conditions). Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental condition (the high brand commitment condition) or the control condition (the low brand commitment condition).

Seventy-six undergraduate marketing students (66% male) between the ages of 19 and 32 years old ($M = 20.61$ years old) were recruited through through the Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies Research Subject Pool and through class visits at the University of Guelph. Of the 76 participants, 47% were in their 1st year, 33% were in their 2nd year, 5% were in their 3rd year, 12% were in their 4th year, and 2% were in their 5th year. The results of several one way ANOVAS reveal that participants in the different years did not differ in brand familiarity, brand knowledge, brand attitudes, brand-self connection, brand prominence, long-term orientation, intent to persist, or brand commitment. Thus, data from all years was combined for analysis.

6.2 Stimuli

Similar criteria for selecting a brand in Study 1 were applied for the selection of the target product brand used in Study 2. The product brand needed to be gender neutral, appropriate for a wide range of age groups, relatively affordable, and something consumers interacted with frequently. However, it was important that the brand used in Study 2 was not one that consumers were very familiar with or had strong pre-existing levels of commitment to so that their levels of brand commitment could be manipulated.

Athletic shoes were chosen to be the product category for Study 2 because students in the Research Subject Pool (undergraduate marketing students) were familiar with this product category and it has been used extensively in previous research (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al.)
Previous research (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al. 2000; Ahluwalia et al. 2001) conducted a pretest with 391 students and found that Mizuno was a low share brand in the athletic shoe category that students were relatively unfamiliar with \( M = 3.07 \) it, had low levels of prior commitment \( M = 2.18 \) to it, and had moderately positively attitudes \( M = 5.13 \) toward it.

6.3 Procedures

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: the high commitment condition or the low commitment condition. Participants were told upon arrival that they would be participating in a consumer survey being conducted by a market research firm in collaboration with the College of Management and Economics at the University of Guelph. Participants were told that the study concerns two products that would likely be introduced in the local area in the near future.

Participants were told that the study consisted of two tasks. For the first task, participants were given a folder containing materials related to two products. The folder contained information about the Mizuno Wave Rider 15 athletic shoe (the target product) and the Olympus Tough TG-1 iHS digital camera (the filler product). The information about the Mizuno athletic shoes was presented first and was followed by the information about the Olympus digital camera. The folder contained the following information for each product (in the specific order presented): background information about the company and brand (Mizuno/Olympus), background information about the specific product (Wave Rider 15/Tough TG-1 his), several full colour advertisements for the product, a press release about the product, and an online review of
the product. Participants were instructed to review the materials and verbally point out all of the positive qualities or attributes of the products. They were also asked to think of slogans or taglines for each product and state them as they came to mind. Participants were informed that their thoughts and comments would be digitally recorded.

Following completion of the first task, participants in the high commitment condition were asked whether they would allow Mizuno to use their written thoughts about the product brand and photograph in future advertising and publicity campaigns. Participants who consented were photographed and asked to sign a release statement to that effect. Participants in the low commitment condition underwent the exact same procedure, however, they were asked whether they would allow Olympus to use their recorded thoughts and photograph in future advertising and publicity campaigns.

This manipulation of brand commitment is consistent with the adopted definition of commitment originally put forth by Kiesler (1971) who stated that commitment is “the pledging or binding of the individual to behavioural acts.” It was based on previous research on commitment that showed that publicly attaching oneself to the target (here target brand) increases personal commitment to that brand (e.g., Halverson & Pallak, 1978; Kiesler, 1971). This procedure stems from an application of cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), which posits that individuals strive to maintain consistency between their thoughts and behaviours. When thoughts and behaviours are not congruent, individuals experience discomfort. As numerous studies in social psychology have shown (e.g., Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959), individuals who are instructed to behave in a specific manner tend to align their attitudes to be congruent with their behaviour, especially when the behaviour is public. This manipulation was adopted from previous research in marketing (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000;
Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Raju et al., 2009) that used this procedure to effectively manipulate participants’ levels of brand commitment.

After participants’ photographs were taken, participants were informed about the second task which consisted of completing an online survey. The design and content of the online survey was similar to that of the survey used in Study 1 and is discussed further in the following section. After participants completed the survey, they were debriefed and thanked.

6.4 Measures

The online survey was designed similar to the survey used in Study 1. However, participants completed the measures for the relationship persistence behaviours (accommodation, willingness to sacrifice, biased brand behaviours, derogation of alternatives, and resistance to negative information) first to ensure that their responses followed directly from the manipulation and not from their reports of their commitment levels. The measures of the components of brand commitment (brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist, in this order) were presented next, followed by Beatty et al.’s (1998) measure of brand commitment, the brand knowledge, brand attitudes, and brand familiarity scales and the brand ownership and brand relationship length questions. Lastly, participants answered demographic questions (gender, age, year of school) and a hypothesis-guessing question. Consistent with the survey from Study 1, the order in which the measures were presented remained constant for all participants; however, the order of the items within the measures was randomized for every participant. The measures of the brand relationship strength antecedents (satisfaction, investment, quality of alternatives, and brand trust) were not included in this survey.
The same measures used in Study 1 were used in Study 2, with minor changes ensuring the items were appropriate for use with a different product category. The following paragraphs outline the notable changes.

*Accommodation.* Accommodation was measured the same way it was in Study 1 except the two scenarios and corresponding reaction items were changed. The first situation was described as follows: “You order a pair of Mizuno athletic shoes online. Afterwards when you check your bank account, you discover that you have been charged an extra $30. When you attempt to call Mizuno to bring it to their attention, you are told that only a supervisor can correct the mistake. They tell you that you have to call back at a later time when the supervisor is available.” In a pretest, participants indicated that they would be upset, angry, and disappointed with Mizuno and would feel that Mizuno had violated their expectations. Participants were asked to indicate on a 9-point scale anchored by 0 “very unlikely” to 8 “very likely” how likely they would engage in the following behaviours: “contact Mizuno’s head office and threaten to stop being a customer of Mizuno if the situation is not resolved” (exit, reverse-scored), “contact Mizuno’s head office and ask if they can refund your money without you having to call back another time” (voice), “call Mizuno back when the supervisor is available to get the refund” (loyalty), and “not call Mizuno back” (neglect, reverse-scored).

The second situation was described as follows: “You had pre-ordered the new model of Mizuno athletic shoes and were supposed to get them the day they became commercially available. However, you were told that there had been a mistake and you will have to wait until the next set of orders arrives in a month.” Participants were asked to indicate on a 9-point scale anchored by 0 “very unlikely” to 8 “very likely” how likely they would engage in the following behaviours: “ask for your money back and look at new shoes from other brands” (exit, reverse-
scored), “tell the salesperson you are willing to wait if they reduce the price” (voice), “agree to wait for the next order” (loyalty), and “wait for the next order but start using other products for things you use Mizuno shoes for (e.g., sandals)” (neglect, reverse-scored).

Consistent with the findings of Study 1, reliability analyses revealed that the Cronbach’s alpha’s for each construct was very low and in some cases negative, indicating problems with the items (0.33, 0.44, -0.01, and -0.67 for exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect, respectively). These measures were not used in the analyses. The willingness to forgive the brand scale was the only scale used in the analysis to measure the accommodation construct.

*Positively Biased Brand Perceptions.* To measure whether consumers hold positively biased perceptions of the brand, participants were provided with a set of statements that described different attributes of the product brand and were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed to five statements according to a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8). The five items were “Mizuno athletic shoes are stylish,” “Mizuno athletic shoes fit well,” “Mizuno athletic shoes are comfortable,” “Mizuno athletic shoes are reasonably priced,” and “Mizuno athletic shoes are durable”.

These five attributes were chosen because a pretest revealed they were the top five most common attributes listed (out of a total of 16 attributes: comfort, brand, durability, cushioning, quality, price, fit, aesthetics, colour, shock absorption, weight, arch support, place, ankle support, healthy, and easy to clean) when individuals were asked to list five attributes they think are important for athletic shoes. These results are also consistent with the results of a pretest from previous research (Ahluwalia et al., 2001) that found that comfort, durability, flexibility, support, stability, and style are important attributes for athletic shoes.
Derogation of Attractive Alternatives. To measure tendencies to derogation attractive alternatives, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed to five evaluations of a directly competing product brand according to a 9-point scale anchored by “do not agree at all” (0) and “agree completely” (8) on the same five attributes as in the biased brand perceptions measure. The five items were “Adidas athletic shoes are stylish,” “Adidas athletic shoes fit well,” “Adidas athletic shoes are comfortable,” “Adidas athletic shoes are reasonably priced,” and “Adidas athletic shoes are durable”. All items for this scale were reverse-scored.

Adidas was determined to be a directly competing brand because it competes in the same category as Mizuno, offers similar products at comparative prices, and is a relatively well known brand in the athletic shoe category.

Resistance to Negative Information About the Brand. The same scenario and items were used to measure resistance to negative information about the brand as in Study 1, except with Mizuno instead of Starbucks. Participants’ responses to the biased assimilation, minimizing impact, and attribute weighting, items were averaged to create composites of the three variables. Consistent with the findings in Study 1, reliability analyses revealed that the Cronbach’s alpha’s for biased assimilation was low (α = 0.32) so this scale was not used in the analyses. Cronbach’s alpha of the minimizing impact and attribute weighting scales were acceptable (α = 0.92 and α = 0.90, respectively) and were retained as measures of the resistance to negative information about the brand construct.
Chapter 7: Study 2 Results

7.1 Data Cleaning

Two participants were dropped from the analysis because the first (male, low commitment condition) completed the second task without completing the first task and the second (male, low commitment condition) did not provide consent at all. Eleven participants (six male in the low commitment condition, two female in the low commitment condition, one male in the high commitment condition, and two female in the high commitment condition) provided consent to use their thoughts about the brand but did not consent to the use of their photograph and were also dropped from the analysis. Two participants (one female in the low commitment condition and one male in the high commitment condition) were hesitant about allowing the use of their photograph, asked numerous questions about how and where it would be used, and only consented after seeing their photographs. They were also dropped from the analysis because their consent was not offered freely. Another participant (female, low commitment condition) said that she did not feel she knew enough about the product and brand to “be an ambassador” for the brand and was also excluded from the analysis. Finally, one participant (male, high commitment condition) admitted to knowing his photograph would not actually be used for anything and was also dropped from the analysis. In total, 17 participants were not included in the analysis due to issues with the brand commitment manipulation.

The data was also cleaned on the manipulation (brand commitment) to reduce noise in the dataset. Although previous research used Beatty et al.’s (1988) measure of brand commitment for the manipulation check, the current research did not use this measure because it was found to be unreliable ($\alpha = 0.35$). Thus, the current research used the intent to persist component of brand commitment to determine whether the brand commitment manipulation was successful. Intent to
persist was chosen out of the three brand commitment components because it was expected that the manipulation would affect this component rather than brand attachment or long-term orientation.

The means and standard deviations for intent to persist were calculated for the high commitment condition and the low commitment condition. Participants that fell two standard deviations above or below the means were considered outliers and were removed. Two female participants from the low commitment condition and one female participant from the high commitment condition were subsequently dropped from the analysis.

The remaining sample consisted of 56 individuals (68% male) between the ages of 19 and 32 years old ($M = 20.68, SD = 2.47$). Of the 56 individuals retained for analysis, 96% were between 19 and 24 years old, with 48% in their 1st year, 29% in their 2nd year, 5% in their 3rd year, 14% in their 4th year, and 4% in their 5th year of their undergraduate program in university. Thirty-two participants remained in the high commitment condition and 24 participants remained in the low commitment condition.

7.2 Manipulation Check

Five separate t-tests were run to test the effectiveness of the brand commitment manipulation. Since the brand commitment manipulation was used in previous research, the same brand commitment scale used in previous studies was used for the first t-test. Although Cronbach’s alpha for the three-item measure was very low ($\alpha = 0.35$), the scale was retained because it was used for the manipulation checks in conjunction with the brand commitment manipulation in prior research (Agrawal & Maheswaran, 2005; Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Raju et al., 2009). Consistent with previous research, the three items were averaged to create a composite score.
The results reveal that the high brand commitment condition \((M = 3.38, SD = 1.47)\) did not significantly differ from the low brand commitment condition \((M = 2.83, SD = 1.22)\) on this measure of brand commitment \((t = -1.47, p = 0.15)\), suggesting that the manipulation did not manipulate brand commitment as intended. One possible explanation for this finding is that these results are unreliable because this scale exhibited an extremely low level of construct reliability. Another possible reason that the current research did not find significant results using this measure is because the observed power of the manipulation check using the original adopted measure of brand commitment was 0.30 (it is generally desirable to have power of 0.80). Thus, there may not have been enough power to detect significant differences. Although it is typically inappropriate to proceed with hypothesis testing if the manipulation check does not yield significant results, the current research describes and interprets the results in the following section for illustrative purposes.

Although significant differences between the two conditions were not found using the adopted measure of brand commitment, the current research tested whether there was a significant difference between the two conditions in any of the brand commitment components (brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist) as it was suspected that the brand commitment manipulation used in the current research may have affected one aspect of brand commitment.

Four additional t-tests were run to test if the two conditions differed in brand-self connection \((\alpha = 0.85)\), brand prominence \((\alpha = 0.90)\), long-term orientation \((\alpha = 0.82)\), or intent to persist \((\alpha = 0.94)\). Since the reliabilities of the measures were acceptable (Cronbach’s alpha exceeded 0.65, Nunnally & Berstein, 1994) a single averaged measure of each construct was formed.
The results of the t-tests reveal that participants in the high commitment condition did not differ in their levels of brand self-connection (\(M = 2.80, SD = 2.00\)) from participants in the low commitment condition (\(M = 2.13, SD = 1.99, t = -1.25, ns\)) and reported only marginally higher levels of brand prominence (\(M = 4.42, SD = 2.94\)) than participants in the low commitment condition (\(M = 3.15, SD = 2.36, t = -1.75, p = 0.09\)). Similarly, participants in the high (\(M = 2.61, SD = 1.83\)) and low (\(M = 2.06, SD = 1.45\)) commitment conditions did not differ in their levels of long-term orientation (\(t = -1.21, ns\)). However, participants in the high commitment condition did report significantly higher levels of intent to persist (\(M = 3.70, SD = 2.00\)) than those in the low commitment condition (\(M = 2.49, SD = 1.71, t = -2.38, p < 0.05\)) indicating that the brand commitment manipulation effectively manipulated one dimension of brand commitment.

To provide further evidence that the procedure manipulated one aspect of brand commitment and not other related constructs, three additional t-tests were run to test whether the two conditions differed in brand familiarity (one-item measure), brand knowledge (\(\alpha = 0.93\)), or brand attitudes (\(\alpha = 0.89\)). Since the reliabilities of the measures were acceptable, a single averaged measure of each construct was formed. As expected, participants in the high and low commitment conditions did not differ in their levels of brand familiarity (\(M = 4.38\) and \(M = 4.21\), respectively, \(t = -2.60, ns\)), brand knowledge (\(M = 4.70\) and \(M = 4.71\), respectively, \(t = 0.01, ns\)), or brand attitudes (\(M = 5.07\) and \(M = 5.07\), respectively, \(t = -0.01, ns\)).

Although the results reveal that the brand commitment manipulation effectively manipulated intent to persist in the brand relationship and not other, related variables, using only intent to persist to characterize brand commitment is problematic as the current research argues
that all three components of brand commitment are important, especially as it pertains to relationship persistence.

This finding is likely the result of the particular way brand commitment was manipulated. Although previous research has demonstrated that requiring individuals to publicly advocate or otherwise attach themselves to a target increases commitment to the target, the question arises regarding whether this type of commitment is conceptually the same as commitment to a brand that arises gradually and results from repeated personal interactions with the brand over a period of time. It could be argued that the experimental manipulation used in the current research induces a kind of brand commitment that is superficial and transient in nature. That is, while this type of manipulation may produce increased levels of brand commitment immediately (measured using items that tap into brand loyalty), it may not produce a lasting, deeply rooted, and emotional sense of commitment that can influence interactions with brand in the near and distant future. Thus, it is questionable whether this type of brand commitment (that which is externally imposed on an individual) reflects the complexity of and holds the same implications for brand commitment that is internally generated within the individual and develops concurrently with the development of the brand relationship. The results confirm that the type of commitment created by this manipulation is not reflective of the multidimensional brand commitment construct proposed in the current research.

An examination of the means and standard deviations reported above reveals that a discussion of the data is warranted. Many of the standard deviations reported above are very large, so much so that some are nearly as large as the means themselves (e.g., $SD = 2.94$ for brand prominence, $SD = 2.00$ for brand self-connection) revealing that there is a lot of noise in the data. This could be because the collection, the design, or both had too much noise in them.
Since the procedure for manipulating brand commitment was conducted exactly as had been done in previous research, it is possible that there may be an unmeasured moderator acting on the high commitment condition, such that the high commitment condition is actually made up of two subgroups where one group was affected by the manipulation while the other was not.

### 7.3 Hypothesis Testing

Since some of the relationship-maintaining behaviours used to estimate relationship persistence were moderately correlated with one another (correlations ranged between 0.01, *ns* and 0.55, *p* < 0.01), a one-way MANOVA was conducted with the brand commitment condition as the independent variable and composites of the relationship persistence behaviours as the dependent variables. The assumption of homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices across groups was met as Box’s M was nonsignificant (Box’s M = 23.10, *ns*), indicating that there were no significant differences between the variance-covariance matrices in the two conditions.

Internal reliability for the scales of the relationship persistence behaviours was achieved as Cronbach’s alpha exceeded 0.65 (Nunnally & Berstein, 1994) for all scales. Since the reliabilities of the measures were acceptable, a single averaged measure of each construct was formed.

The results indicate that the high brand commitment condition (*M* = 4.18, *SD* = 1.60) exhibited the tendency to accommodate (*α* = 0.85) more than the low commitment condition ([*M* = 2.96, *SD* = 1.06, *F*(1,54) = 10.52, *p* < 0.05], and provide support for Hypothesis 5. However, the high commitment condition did not differ from the low commitment condition in willingness to sacrifice (*α* = 0.82) ([*M* = 4.69, *SD* = 1.64 and *M* = 4.20, *SD* = 1.16, respectively, *F*(1,54) = 1.59, *ns*]. The high commitment condition also did not differ from the low commitment
condition in positively biased brand perceptions ($\alpha = 0.72$) [$M = 6.44$, $SD = 1.15$ and $M = 6.48$, $SD = 1.29$, respectively, $F(1,54) = 0.02$, $ns$] or derogation of attractive alternatives ($\alpha = 0.83$) [$M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.14$ and $M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.31$, respectively, $F(1,54) = 0$, $ns$]. Lastly, the difference between the high commitment condition ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 2.18$) and the low commitment condition ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.47$) in resistance to negative information about the brand ($\alpha = 0.94$) was only marginally significant [$F(1,54) = 2.97$, $p = 0.09$]. Thus, Hypotheses 6-9 were not supported.

Although the hypotheses related to the high commitment condition and the low commitment condition were not supported, several regression analyses were conducted to determine whether there was any relationship between the brand commitment components and the remaining relationship-maintaining behaviours. The results reveal that intent to persist significantly predicted willingness to sacrifice ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 4.79$, $p < 0.001$) and biased brand perceptions ($\beta = 0.35$, $t = 3.93$, $p < 0.001$). None of the brand commitment components were significantly related to derogation of alternatives or resistance to negative alternatives.

**Chapter 8: General Discussion**

The following section provides a summary of the key findings from the current research. This is followed by a discussion of how the results contribute to the consumer brand relationship literature. The limitations of the current research and how these limitations could be addressed by future research are outlined, followed by opportunities for future research. The paper concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and substantive implications of the current research.
8.1 Summary of Key Findings

The results of Study 1 support the proposed conceptualization of brand commitment as a multidimensional construct composed of brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist. The results also reveal that the three components of brand commitment predict persistence in the brand relationship. The results indicate that long-term orientation is the strongest predictor of relationship persistence and that intent to persist is another important driver of relationship persistence. Lastly, the results of the current research reveal that brand attachment is not a significant predictor of relationship persistence.

8.1.1 Conceptualization of Brand Commitment

The results of Study 1 support the proposed conceptualization of brand commitment as a multidimensional construct composed of brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist as the results of three competing CFAs reveal that the three-factor model fit was excellent and fit the data significantly better than the one- and two-factor models (Figure 2). Although the results of the current research did not find these three variables to be empirically distinct, the finding that the model fit of the three factor model was excellent, coupled with the finding that brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist did not predict relationship persistence equally in a different model (Figure 7), offers further support for this conceptualization and highlights the importance of all three components for understanding the brand commitment construct.

These results are consistent with research in the interpersonal relationship domain that focused on the three components of relationship commitment and tested the structure of the commitment construct (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). In two longitudinal studies of undergraduate
students in heterosexual dating relationships, Arriaga and Agnew found that the three components of relationship commitment were highly correlated ($r = 0.55-0.68$) and a three-factor model of relationship commitment, in which each of the items were only allowed to load onto their hypothesized component, fit the data better than the one- and two-factor models.

The results of the current research are also consistent with interpersonal relationship commitment theory and the investment model of commitment, that argues that relationship commitment is a psychological state that “represents long-term orientation, including feelings of attachment to a partner and desire to maintain the relationship” (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993, p. 180). The results of the current research reveal that the three central components that characterize interpersonal relationship commitment are also important for understanding consumer’s levels of commitment to a brand and offer further support that consumer-brand relationships operate analogously to human relationships.

Although previous research in marketing has conceptualized commitment in terms of one of these components (e.g., Coulter et al., 2003 conceptualized commitment as brand attachment), or combinations of these components (e.g., Johnson et al. 2011 conceptualized commitment in terms of intent to persist and long-term orientation) in prior conceptualizations and measures of the commitment construct, the current research is the first to propose that brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist are three core components of brand commitment and empirically examine all three components simultaneously in one study.

### 8.1.2 Brand Commitment and Relationship Persistence

The results also support the hypothesized relationship between brand commitment and persistence in the brand relationship, conceptualized in terms of consumers’ willingness to
exhibit the following relationship-maintaining behaviours: tendencies to accommodate (forgive the brand), willingness to sacrifice to ensure the brand relationship continues, positively biased perceptions of the brand, tendencies to derogate directly competing brands, and resistance to negative information about the brand. Although the specific hypotheses regarding the individual relationship-maintaining behaviours were not supported, the results of the final structural equation model (Figure 7) reveal that the components of brand commitment predict relationship persistence when these five variables are collapsed into a latent factor (relationship persistence).

The finding that brand commitment predicts persistence in the relationship is consistent with previous research in social psychology. In the interpersonal relationship literature, numerous studies have shown that commitment to the relationship is an important predictor of relationship persistence (e.g., Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Rusbult et al., 1998). Although there have been mixed results in the marketing literature concerning the relationship between commitment and relationship persistence (i.e., MacKenzie et al., 1998, and Gruen et al., 2000, found that commitment was not related to turnover or retention, respectively, while Morgan & Hunt, 1994 found commitment predicted propensity to leave), the current research reveals that brand commitment predicts persistence in the brand relationship.

This finding is also consistent with Fournier’s (1998) model of brand relationship quality (BRQ). The BRQ model posits that the six indicators of brand relationship strength (love/passion, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, and brand partner quality) lead to accommodation, tolerance/forgiveness, biased partner perceptions, devaluation of alternatives, and attribution biases and subsequently influence relationship stability/durability. Thus, the current research builds on Fournier’s foundational work by validating the basic assumptions of the BRQ model, conceptualizes a parsimonious indicator of brand relationship
strength that encapsulates the various aspects that characterize strong relationships (brand commitment), and empirically demonstrates the relationship between this parsimonious indicator of brand relationship strength and persistence in the brand relationship.

### 8.1.3 Brand Commitment Components and Relationship Persistence

As previously discussed, the results of Study 1 demonstrate that all three components of brand commitment are important for understanding brand commitment. However, the results reveal that two of these components are particularly important for understanding key drivers of brand relationship persistence. Although previous research in marketing has examined these different variables separately or in various combinations, the current research examined these three components simultaneously and was able to compare the relative importance of each component in terms of their ability to predict persistence in the brand relationship.

The current research reveals that long-term orientation is the strongest predictor of relationship persistence as the path coefficient for long-term orientation was highly significant and was larger than the path coefficients for intent to persist and brand attachment (Figure 7). This finding is consistent with the results of Arriaga and Agnew’s (2001) research on interpersonal relationship commitment. Arriaga and Agnew found that greater levels of all three components of relationship commitment were significantly related to enduring relationships (versus breakups), but when the three components were regressed onto breakup status simultaneously (when the effects of all other components were controlled for), only long-term orientation remained significant. In other words, although all three variables were important predictors of relationship persistence, only long-term orientation predicted unique variance in relationship persistence. They also found that long-term orientation was more important than
couple functioning in predicting relationship persistence and these patterns held for both of their longitudinal studies.

This is an important finding for numerous reasons. First, the current research reveals that long-term orientation is the single most important driver of persistence in the brand relationship. However, this is also the least studied variable in the relationship commitment literature in marketing. Although some researchers in marketing have included some form of long-term orientation in their conceptualization of relationship commitment (e.g., Garbrino & Johnson, 1999; Gundlach et al., 1995; Johnson et al., 2011; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), this construct has been largely overlooked and previous research in the area of consumer-brand relationships has not directly studied this construct. The current research provides initial evidence for the need to better understand the role that long-term orientation plays in consumer brand relationships and relationship persistence.

Although intent to persist was not as strong a predictor of relationship persistence as long-term orientation, the results of the current research show that intent to persist is another important driver of relationship persistence. This finding is also important for our understanding of the drivers of relationship persistence and is consistent with theory from the interpersonal commitment domain. The current research provides support for the argument that there is a motivational element to brand commitment and this motivation is essential for the continuation of the brand relationship.

Lastly, the results of the current research reveal that brand attachment is not a significant predictor of relationship persistence. This means that consumers with strong attachments to a brand are not necessarily more likely to continue in their relationship with that brand compared to consumers with weak attachments to the brand if they don’t also have the intent to persist in
the brand relationship, long-term orientation toward the relationship, or both. This finding is important because it demonstrates that brand attachment predicts specific relationship-maintaining behaviours but only leads to relationship persistence when it is combined with the other two components of brand commitment. This finding also supports the argument that brand attachment is not a suitable indicator of brand relationship strength because it cannot predict relationship persistence on its own.

8.2 Contributions of the Current Research

The current research provides a conceptualization and measure of brand commitment that is theoretically consistent with the relationship commitment construct in the interpersonal relationships literature. As previous research found that consumers tend to interact with brands as if they are human-like entities (Fournier, 1998) and develop complex, dynamic, interdependent relationships with brands (e.g., Aaker et al., 2004; Fournier, 1998), the current research provides initial support for conceptualizing brand commitment as the collection of three core components: brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist.

Consistent with previous research in the interpersonal relationship literature and the relationship literature in marking, the results of the current research reveal that brand commitment is an important predictor of persistence in the brand relationship, highlighting the importance of the brand commitment construct for a more complete understanding of consumer-brand relationships. The current research is also the first to empirically examine the link between brand commitment and the relationship persistence construct in a brand relationship context.

The current research is also the first to combine many of the different variables studied in the marketing literature (e.g., forgiveness, derogation of alternatives, resistance to negative
information about the brand) into a higher-order latent variable (relationship persistence) that explains the high correlations between these behaviours and reveals how they can be used to estimate the likelihood that consumers will persist in their brand relationships. Although these relationship-maintaining behaviours have been examined separately in previous research, the current research is the first to argue that these behaviours hold meaning beyond acting as interesting dependent variables because they are mechanisms through which committed consumers are able to maintain their relationships with their brands.

The current research is also the first to examine the three brand commitment components simultaneously and determine each component’s relative influence in predicting desirable marketing outcomes and brand relationship persistence. The results of the current research reveal that long-term orientation, a variable that has not yet been the focus of consumer-brand relationship research, is the most important variable for understanding why consumers persist or fail to persist in their brand relationships. The results also highlight the important role that intent to persist plays and indicates that brand attachment is not a predictor of persistence in the brand relationship. The current research suggests a need to re-examine these components in more depth and illustrates the importance of studying all three of the brand commitment components in future research.

8.3 Limitations of the Current Research

8.3.1 Model Fit

One of the major limitations of the current research is that the hypothesized models of brand commitment and brand attachment (Figures 4-6) did not adequately fit the data. Although it was expected that the brand attachment model would not fit the data well, it was expected that
the brand commitment model would be a good fit for the data. The fact that both models resulted in poor fit is problematic because it indicates the theory does not explain the observations. However, some of the models fit the data better than others. The test of the measurement model of the brand commitment construct (Figure 2) revealed that the model fit of the data was excellent and supported the conceptualized structure of brand commitment. The fact that the core of the conceptual brand commitment model was supported by the data reveals that there were issues with the antecedents of brand relationship strength, the relationship persistence constructs, or both. The model fit of the final model (Figure 7), which tested the influence of each separate component of brand commitment on relationship persistence, was better than the previous sets of models, suggests that there may be issues with one or more of the antecedents of brand relationship strength. However, the model fit for this model was not perfect either, indicating that there is room for improvement with the relationship persistence variables as well.

One possible explanation for why the models did not fit the data could be because there was unobserved error in the data that resulted from the use of an online survey for data collection. Although every effort was made to ensure that as many participants as possible completed the survey in a distraction-free environment under the supervision of a researcher or research assistant, this was not the case for all participants. It was therefore impossible to determine whether the amount of attention and diligence participants devoted to responding to the survey items was sufficient for the task or equal across participants.

There are a few patterns in the data that suggest that participants may not have been giving their full attention to the questions in the survey. For example, the factor loadings of items LTO2, ACC3, and LDB2 were very low, especially compared to the factor loadings of the other items in their respective scales ($\lambda = 0.34$, $\lambda = 0.67$, and $\lambda = 0.26$, respectively). All these items
were reverse coded (negatively worded) while the other items in the scale were simply worded (positively framed). The low loadings of the reverse-coded items onto their respective latent factors suggests that participants may not have been paying full attention when answering these items because their responses should have been similar (but opposite) to their responses to the other items in the scales. The items of the quality of alternatives scale were also reverse-coded, but because all the items in the scale were negatively worded, participants did not seem to have any difficulty responding to these items consistently. Participants only seemed to respond differently to a reverse-coded item if it was the only negatively worded item in a scale and surrounded by positively worded items.

In addition, it was strange that participants reported very low familiarity with the Starbucks brand (M = 3.76, SD = 2.21, where 1 represented “unfamiliar” and 5 indicated “neither familiar or unfamiliar”) and generally unfavourable attitudes toward Starbucks (M = 3.06, SD = 1.37, where 1 represented “do not agree at all” and 5 indicated “neither agree nor disagree”) while the results indicated that 87.2% of participants had purchased Starbucks products before and were, on average, somewhat committed to the brand (M = 5.87, SD = 1.09, where 5 represented “neither agree nor disagree” and 9 indicated “agree completely). It is possible that some individuals were extremely committed to the Starbucks brand and positively influenced the average level of brand commitment to Starbucks; however, if this were the case, these same individuals should have also raised the average familiarity levels and valence of brand attitudes. These inconsistencies suggest that participants may not have been diligent in responding to the items of the survey.

Future research could address this limitation by changing the way in which the data is collected. First, to avoid confusion sometimes created by negatively worded items (especially
negations), future research could ensure that, if negatively worded items are included in the survey, participants are alerted to the presence of reversed items, the items in the scales are balanced (there are an equal number of regular and reversed items), and negatively worded items are equally dispersed throughout the questionnaire. Weijters and Baumgartner (2012) suggest that these recommendations help to reduce problems with negatively worded items that result from careless responding and biased retrieval due to item positioning. Another way to ensure that participants give their full attention to the task is to ensure that all participants complete the survey in a supervised environment that is free of distractions. In addition, an IMC (instructional manipulation check, Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009) could be included in the survey. Oppenheimer et al. (2009) suggest that use of an IMC combined with supervision can be an effective way of increasing participant diligence.

Another potential explanation for why the brand commitment and brand attachment models did not fit the data as expected has to do with the size of the structural equation models themselves. It is possible that the model fit was poor because so many latent variables and paths were estimated and the models were so large and complex. Future research could determine if a model that is simplified in a way still consistent with theory fits the data better than the one investigated in current research.

8.3.2 Discriminant Validity

Another explanation for why the hypothesized models fit the data poorly is because there were very high correlations between many of constructs in the model and numerous constructs did not exhibit discriminant validity. One possible explanation for this finding is, although these constructs are theoretically distinct concepts, they are so highly correlated in reality that it is
impossible to statistically distinguish them. For example, the concept of long-term orientation toward the brand relationship is theoretically distinct from willingness to sacrifice to maintain the brand relationship, however, the results of the measurement model suggest that they cannot be discriminated from each other. The current research argues that these constructs are highly correlated because long-term orientation toward the relationship leads to willingness to maintain the brand relationship, not that they are the same construct. This could be a limitation of structural equation modeling, as SEM specifically relies on correlation and covariance matrices and is highly susceptible to problems with multicollinearity.

Alternatively, this finding could represent the fact that the distinctions between these highly correlated constructs are theoretically meaningful but are too subtle to detect in reality; that is, we do not see these distinctions manifest themselves in the data. One way that future research could address this issue is to manipulate the different antecedents or components of brand commitment. By manipulating, rather than measuring, influential constructs, the problems with discriminant validity and multicollinearity could be avoided without affecting the correlations between the constructs.

Multicollinearity between the constructs may account for the observed problems with discriminant validity of the willingness to sacrifice scale in particular. The results of the measurement model reveal that one or more of the three subcategories of the willingness to sacrifice scale (least difficult behaviours, moderately difficult behaviours, and most difficult behaviours) were not empirically distinct from long-term orientation and intent to persist (components of brand commitment), investment (an antecedent of brand commitment), and biased brand perceptions (one of the relationship-maintaining behaviours used to estimate relationship persistence). There are a few possible reasons for these results.
The behaviours that compose the willingness to sacrifice scale may be too similar to those that are indicative of other latent constructs (e.g., behavioural intentions, brand attitudes, WOM, etc.) and the scale may tap into constructs beyond willingness to sacrifice for the brand. An examination of the face validity of the items in the scale reveals that only the moderately difficult behaviours and some of the most difficult behaviours tap into willingness to sacrifice for the brand. Future research could address this limitation by reducing the items of the scale and pilot testing it to ensure that all the items load onto one underlying latent factor and are only reflective of willingness to sacrifice for the brand. Alternatively, another scale or method of assessing willingness to sacrifice for the brand could be used.

8.3.3 Intent to Persist and Relationship Persistence are not Distinct

Another possible explanation for the poor model fit and issues with discriminant validity is that the intent to persist component of brand commitment is not empirically distinct from the relationship persistence construct. This would explain why brand commitment, which includes the intent to persist component, is a better predictor of relationship persistence than brand attachment alone; brand commitment shares the majority of the variance in the relationship persistence construct. The finding that the standardized path between brand commitment and relationship persistence is 0.91 in Figure 5 (Hypothesis 10) means that the shared variance between brand commitment and relationship persistence is 83%, indicating that these constructs are not distinct. The standardized path between brand attachment and relationship persistence (Figure 5), in contrast, is 0.67, revealing that only 68% of the variance is shared between these two constructs.
The argument that the brand commitment and relationship persistence constructs are not distinct could explain why brand commitment is a better predictor of relationship persistence than brand attachment as well as why brand commitment mediates the relationship between the antecedents of brand relationship strength and relationship persistence while brand attachment does not. It would explain why the path between brand attachment and relationship persistence became nonsignificant when all of the direct and indirect were calculated in the mediation analyses, but the path between brand commitment and relationship persistence did not.

This would also explain why the path between brand attachment and relationship persistence was not significant in Figure 7. This analysis is based on the assumption that brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist are independent constructs. However, since the high correlations between these constructs and the test of discriminant validity reveal that the three components are not distinct from each other, the results are likely due to multicollinearity which affects the standard errors and can wash out effects. Since the three brand commitment components are not distinct, and intent to persist and relationship persistence are not distinct, the intent to persist and long-term orientation components likely accounted for all of the variance in the relationship persistence construct leaving nothing left for brand attachment to explain.

Although conceptually behavioural intentions (intent to persist) and actual behaviour (relationship persistence) are distinct, it is likely that measures of the relationship persistence behaviours actually assessed intention to perform the behaviours instead of the behaviours themselves. This means that the current research measured intentions to persist in the brand relationship and intentions to engage in pro-relational behaviours that lead to relationship persistence (intentions in both cases), rather than intent to persist in the relationship and actual
relationship persistence (intention in one case and behaviour in the other). Thus, the use of a self-report questionnaire to measure relationship persistence in place of a behavioural measure of relationship persistence is a limitation of the current research.

Future research could address this limitation through the use of a longitudinal design with a behavioural measure of brand relationship persistence. This type of design has been used in the interpersonal relationship commitment domain in social psychology (e.g., Arriaga & Agnew, 2001) and could be adopted for use in a brand relationship context.

8.3.4 Unobserved Error

Another limitation of the current research is that only one of the give hypotheses (H5) was supported in Study 2 when brand commitment was manipulated rather than measured. The results of Study 2 reveal that the high brand commitment condition did not significantly differ from the low commitment condition in willingness to sacrifice, biased brand perceptions, derogation of alternatives, or resistance to negative information. This last finding is particularly interesting since previous research that used this manipulation found that brand commitment leads to resistance to negative information about the brand (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia, et al., 2000; Ahluwalia, et al., 2001).

One possible explanation for this result is that the process of cleaning the data may have significantly reduced the power of the design such that significant differences between the two conditions could not be detected. Data was originally collected from 76 participants and this was considered a reasonable number because previous research has found significant differences between the two conditions with a sample size as small as 71 (Ahluwalia et al., 2000). However, data from 17 participants was removed from the analysis due to issues with the execution of the
brand commitment manipulation. In addition, data from three additional participants was removed when the data was cleaned on the manipulation check. In total, the data from 20 out of 76 participants (26%) was dropped from the analysis. This reduction in sample size likely resulted in reduced power of the experimental design.

Another issue arose with data cleaning that may have impacted the results. When data from participants was removed, an unequal number of participants were dropped from the two conditions. More participants were removed from the low commitment condition (14 participants were removed) than the high commitment condition (only six participants were removed). Although it was not expected for there to be more issues with participants in one condition than the other, participants were randomly assigned to each condition before they began the first task and data was removed only if the participant did not follow the instructions or provide consent, so this was not considered to represent bias in the selection of participants to be excluded. However, the fact that the remaining samples for each condition were no longer equal in size (there were more participants in the high commitment condition than the low commitment condition) may have affected the results.

The most likely explanation for why four of the five hypotheses were not supported in Study 2 is because there was a lot of unobserved error in the data which means that the differences in means would have to be extremely large to be statistically significant. An examination of the standard deviations of the brand commitment components in both conditions reveals that the standard deviations are unusually high (e.g., $SD = 2.94$ for brand prominence in the high commitment condition and $SD = 2.36$ for brand prominence in the low commitment condition), indicating that there was a lot of residual error in the data. These high standard deviations likely explain why the current research did not find a significant difference between
the two groups on the brand commitment scale used in previous research, while previous research has found significant differences (Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Agrawal & Mahesawaran, 2005; Raju et al., 2009). A similar pattern was found with the standard deviations of the dependent variables. Since regression analyses revealed that intent to persist (the component that was manipulated by the brand commitment manipulation) is a significant predictor of willingness to sacrifice and biased brand perceptions, the results support that the hypothesized relationships exist although the large amount of unobserved error may have masked the effects.

One of the reasons why there may have been so much error in the data may be because many of the participants seemed to have difficulty following the instructions for the first task. For example, a lot of participants pointed out all the things they did not like about the product and had to be repeatedly reminded to point out the positive aspects of the products and things they did like about the products. Numerous participants began the task by saying things like “I would never wear this” or expressing their disinterest in the product category (athletic shoes, or athletic activity in general). Many of the participants needed to be reminded to focus on the attributes and features of the products themselves, not the features of the materials they were looking at (they would comment on the colours in the ad or the amount of text on the webpage, for example). Some participants did not understand that they needed to share their opinions out loud and simply thought about them. These participants completed the entire first task without saying anything and were asked to go back and point out the features out loud so their thoughts could be recorded. Almost all participants needed to be reminded of the instructions at some point. In addition, some participants did not make many comments about the products. For example, one participant only pointed out two things they liked about the athletic shoes and
would not say more when prompted. In addition, some participants completed the entire task very quickly (under 10 minutes) while others took considerably longer (more than 30 minutes). Most participants did not try or were not able to think of a slogan or tagline, and numerous participants hesitated about allowing their photograph to be taken before consenting. Thus, there was a large amount of variability in the extent to which participants followed the instructions of the task and this likely resulted in very noisy data.

Alternatively, there may have been an unseen moderator affecting the manipulation that created two subsets of groups within the high commitment condition, causing one group to be affected by the brand commitment condition and not the other. This would explain why the standard deviations are so high and could potentially explain why only one of the hypotheses was supported.

### 8.3.5 Brand Commitment Manipulation

As previously discussed, the findings from Study 2 could also be a result of the particular way brand commitment was manipulated. The brand commitment manipulation only affected one component of brand commitment, intent to persist, although the current research argues that all three components are important for understanding the brand commitment construct and its relationship with brand relationship persistence. In addition, the results of Study 1 suggest that long-term orientation is the strongest predictor of relationship persistence while intent to persist is another influential variable that drives relationship persistence. Therefore, another reason Hypotheses 6-9 were not supported may be because the brand commitment manipulation increased intent to persist in the brand relationship but did not increase levels of long-term orientation to the brand.
It is clear that procedure used to manipulate brand commitment was not ideal for the purpose of the current research. Future research could address these issues by selecting a different method of manipulating the brand commitment construct. To avoid difficulty that could arise from attempting to manipulate each of the three brand commitment components directly, future research could manipulate brand commitment by individually manipulating the antecedents of brand relationship strength (satisfaction, investment, perceived quality of alternatives, and brand trust) which would subsequently manipulate brand commitment. For example, a high commitment condition could be created by ensuring participants feel satisfied with the brand relationship, have invested financial, social, and time resources into the brand relationship, perceive the quality of alternatives brands to be poor, and trust the brand. Participants in the low commitment relationship would not be satisfied with the brand relationship, will have invested relatively little of their own resources into the brand relationship, perceive directly competing brands as attractive, and do not trust the brand. One way to accomplish this could be to expose participants to vignettes that require them to imagine themselves in the situation described in a scenario and answer questions according to that perspective. This type of procedure was successfully used by Van Lange et al. (1997) to manipulate satisfaction, investment, and quality of alternatives (Study 3) in the interpersonal relationship domain.

8.4 Opportunities for Future Research

As previously discussed, future research could address the limitations of the current research by manipulating the antecedents of brand commitment to create high and low levels of commitment to the brand. This would allow for a stronger test of the relationships between the
brand relationship strength antecedents, brand commitment, brand attachment, and relationship persistence. Future research could also utilize a behavioural measure of relationship persistence to avoid problems with the distinction between intent to persist in the brand relationship and actual relationship persistence. However, the theoretical framework presented in the current research provides numerous other opportunities for future research that could further enhance our understanding of the brand commitment construct and the complexity of consumer-brand relationships.

For example, rather than manipulating all four antecedents of brand relationship strength to create high or low levels of brand commitment, future research could manipulate each individual antecedent (satisfaction, investment, perceived quality of alternatives, and brand trust) separately and in combination with the others to determine the specific influence of each antecedent on each component of brand commitment as well as how different combinations of the antecedents affect the different components. This information would elucidate our understanding of the drivers of brand attachment, long-term orientation, and intent to persist and could also shed light on how the different levels of brand commitment created by the various combinations of the antecedents affect relationship persistence.

Future research could also utilize longitudinal research designs to examine how the three different components of brand commitment change over time and how this subsequently affects relationship persistence. This type of design would allow researchers to better understand how and why consumer brand relationships are initiated, develop, grow, wane, and dissipate over time.

The brand commitment-relationship persistence framework introduced in the current research can also provide a way of quantitatively diagnosing the type of brand relationships
consumers are engaged in based on Fournier’s (1998) typology consumer-brand relationship forms. For example, Fournier describes arranged marriages as brand relationships characterized by high levels of long-term orientation and low levels of brand attachment, flings characterized by high levels of attachment and low levels of long-term orientation and intent to persist, and committed partnerships characterized by high levels of all three components (these descriptions are based on her descriptions of the types of relationships and are interpreted according to the framework introduced in the current research). However, these and the other types of brand relationships have not been empirically examined in terms of their overall levels of commitment and little is known about relationships that are characterized by high levels of one component and low levels of another. Future research could use the brand commitment model to determine how the various levels of the three brand commitment components produce different types of consumer brand relationships and use the model to predict the likelihood that each type of relationship will persist over time.

Lastly, the current research provides a new framework with which researchers can study betrayals by the brand, brand crises, increased competition, and other similar phenomena as the interpersonal relationship literature suggests that commitment to the relationship predicts how individuals will respond to problems or obstacles in the relationship. Although previous research in the brand attachment literature has touched upon this topic (Johnson et al., 2011), the current research provides new opportunities to examine the various factors that threaten brand relationships.
8.5 Theoretical Implications

Although brand attachment has been linked to numerous relationship-maintaining behaviors in previous research, the current research illustrates that brand attachment alone is unable to predict persistence in the brand relationship because it is only one aspect of the higher-order brand commitment construct and consequently provides an incomplete perspective of the strength and stability of consumer-brand relationships. However, when the other two components of brand commitment – long-term orientation and intent to persist – are examined in combination with brand attachment, consistent with the conceptualization of relationship commitment in psychology, brand commitment acts as a parsimonious indicator of brand relationship strength and predicts persistence in the brand relationship.

The current research also has implications for brand attachment literature, suggesting the need to revisit how brand attachment has been previously studied and conceptualized. At its core, strong attachment in the interpersonal relationships literature has been based on feelings of safety and security. This is why the four behaviours that reveal the existence of strong attachments (proximity maintenance, emotional security, safe haven, and separation distress) outlined by Bowlby (1980) and Hazan and Zeifman (1999) are so important for this construct. Although previous research has examined the relationship between brand attachment and these behaviours, the underlying construct that is reflected by these behaviours is very different from the ways that brand attachment has been conceptualized in the brand relationship literature. Thomson et al. (2005) and Park et al. (2010) conceptualize brand attachment in terms of identification with the brand (brand-self connection) and positive emotions toward the brand. This conceptualization is not consistent with attachment theory in the social psychological literature; however, it is
consistent with how psychological attachment, as one of the three core components of brand commitment has been conceptualized, in the social psychological literature.

The current research provides initial evidence that brand attachment is only one part of a more comprehensive construct, and the other parts are equally, if not more, important for our understanding of consumer brand relationships. Although the three components of brand commitment are independent and can vary individually, the fact that the three components all represent different dimensions of brand commitment means they are always going to be highly correlated. Thus, it is more likely for a consumer to be high in all three components than high in one component and low in the others (a situation described by Johnson et al. 2011). Brand attachment and brand commitment are inextricably tied to each other and both need to be studied in greater depth for researchers to arrive at a more complete understanding of consumer brand relationships.

8.6 Managerial Implications

The current research demonstrates that long-term and intent to are strong predictors of the likelihood that consumers will continue in their brand relationships over time. These findings have important implications for marketing managers and practitioners because they provide two additional aspects of brand relationships (the two components of brand commitment) that can be utilized to promote brand relationship persistence and increasing levels of commitment to a brand.

Marketing managers can apply the findings of the current research by attempting to increase attachment to the brand, long-term orientation toward the brand relationship, and/or intent to persist in the brand relationship directly or indirectly through satisfaction with the brand.
relationship, investment in the brand relationship, perceived quality of directly competing brands or other attractive alternatives, and brand trust. Since the benefits of eliciting satisfaction with the brand, performing better than directly competing brands, and developing brand trust are strategies that are well known to practitioners, the current research focuses on the implications of increasing commitment to the brand by increasing one or more of the three components of brand commitment.

Marketing managers seem to understand the benefits of encouraging consumers to form strong attachments to brands. Park et al. (2010) argue that consumers form strong attachments to brands because the brand is part of a consumer’s self-concept and therefore becomes tied to their identity or the brand has instrumental value, that is, the brand is meaningful in terms of its relevance to consumers’ goals, personal concerns, or life projects. Marketers have already capitalized on these ideas. For example, one way marketers have encouraged consumers to form strong attachment to brands is by creating brands with strong personalities that are congruent with consumers actual or aspirational selves so that consumers will incorporate the brand into their self-concepts. Marketers have also done an exceptional job of emphasizing the utility that certain brands bring to the lives of consumers, emphasizing the instrumental value of the brands. These methods are widely popular with marketers and are consistent with brand attachment theory. However, the current research argues that if marketers want consumers to develop lasting, committed relationships with their brands, they should focus on increasing the other two components of brand commitment – long-term orientation and intent to persist, as these components are better predictors of relationship persistence over time than brand attachment.

Rather than focusing exclusively on trying to get consumers to like the brand via attraction or congruence, marketing managers could focus on increasing dependence on the
brand relationship by increasing brand commitment and consequently increasing consumer’s intentions to persist in their brand relationships. The motivational element of brand commitment is important for relationship longevity and although practitioners understand on some level that they need to motivate consumers to enter into a relationship with their brand, marketers need to motivate consumers to want to stay in the brand relationship. Increasing this intention can be achieved many different ways, the most intuitive of which are to increase satisfaction with the brand and make the brand so superior to competing brands that the alternatives appear poor in comparison. However, the results of the current research and prior research in the interpersonal relationship literature suggest that investment is the strongest predictor of brand commitment (when compared to satisfaction, perceived quality of alternatives, and brand trust), so practitioners should explore how increasing investment in the brand relationship affects consumers’ intentions to persist in the brand relationship.

Marketing managers could also focus on increasing long-term orientation toward the brand, either directly or via the antecedents of brand relationship strength, as the current research reveals that this component is the most likely to lead to persistence in the brand relationship. One example of how marketers could increase long-term orientation to the brand is to create advertisements and marketing campaigns that depict happy consumers interacting with the brand in a variety of locations, situations, major life events, and over periods of time. Since long-term orientation is essentially envisioning oneself in the relationship in the future, advertisements that depict individuals in the brand relationship at different points in time can prime consumers to think about themselves with the brand in the future and make these visions easily accessible to consumers.
In conclusion, it is not enough for consumers to simply feel attached to a brand. Marketers should focus their efforts on deepening consumers’ levels of commitment to the brand to ensure relationship stability and continuity over time.
References


Appendix A – Informed Consent Form Study 1

Title of Research: Consumer Evaluations of Popular Brands

You are asked to participate in a research study being conducted by a consumer goods firm in association with the University of Guelph Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Rebecca Shabaga or the Faculty Supervisor Dr. Tanya Mark.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to determine how consumers evaluate a popular brand in the marketplace. We are interested in how you think and feel about specific brands.

PROCEDURE

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we will ask you to complete an online survey questionnaire that is designed to assess your thoughts and feelings toward a popular brand.

It will take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete this study.

If you are interested in the results of this research, you can contact Rebecca Shabaga. A summary of the results will be available in August 2013.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential physical or psychological risks associated with the procedures used in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The results of this study will help researchers understand how consumers evaluate, think about, and feel toward brands.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Students:

In exchange for your participation in this study, you will receive a 3% course credit following the completion of the study and the course-required follow-up report. If you choose to withdraw
from the study before completion, you can still receive course credit by submitting the course-required follow-up report.

Others:

In exchange for your participation in this study, you will automatically be entered in a draw to win 1 of 2 $50 gift certificates for Chapters/Indigo. In order to contact you if you win, please ensure that you provide your e-mail address at the end of the survey.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed since the laws in some countries may permit access to the data collected through SurveyMonkey and this data is subject to US privacy laws. However, every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

You can help to ensure confidentiality by taking the following precautions to clear all private data from the computer you are using to respond to the survey:

1. Clear the browsing history
2. Clear the cache
3. Clear the cookies
4. Clear the authenticated session
5. LOG OFF

If you are using Internet Explorer, the first 4 steps can be accomplished by going to Tools and selecting Delete Browsing History. Your application may have a similar system.

You will not be asked to indicate your name, student ID number or any identifying information once the research session starts. All participants are pre-assigned a 3-digit participant number and use this number to complete the online survey. This number will not be connected to any identifying information (name, student ID, etc). Therefore, your identity will remain confidential. Your responses will not be released to any person. All data collected from this study will be stored in a secure, password-encrypted file on a likewise encrypted hard drive. This data will be stored for three years following the completion of the study. After that time, the encrypted hard drive will be erased and reformatted, effectively deleting all information.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You will need to remember your 3-digit participant number if you wish to withdraw so the experimenter can locate and delete your survey responses using this number. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.
RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read the information provided for the study “Consumer Evaluations of Popular Brands” as described herein.

By clicking “I Agree” at the end of this form and completing the survey, I agree to participate in the study.

If you agree to participate in this survey, click "I Agree" to continue.

- I Agree
Appendix B – Debriefing Form Study 1

DEBRIEFING INFORMATION

Thank you for your participation in this research. The study you participated is titled “Conceptualizing Commitment: A Nomological Network Explicating the Core Components and Critical Consequences of Brand Commitment” and was conducted as part of the researcher’s Master’s Thesis.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research was to measure your level of commitment to a specific brand. It is expected that your satisfaction with the brand, the amount you have invested in the brand, how you perceive alternative brands, and how much you trust the brand will predict your level of brand commitment. Also, it is expected that your commitment to the brand will predict how likely you are to continue your relationship with the brand.

It should be noted that the actual purpose of this study differs from the explanation provided in the consent form and that there was some deception involved. However, this deception was a necessary component of this research in order to obtain an unbiased representation of your attitudes and intentions regarding the Starbucks brand. Please do not share this information with others who may be participating in this study in the future. Now that you have been given complete information about the study, you may choose to withdraw at this time and have your responses destroyed. If you wish to do this, please e-mail the experimenter at rshabaga@uoguelph.ca.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

This research contributes to marketing researchers' understanding of consumer-brand relationships and consumer behaviour by identifying how popular constructs in marketing, such as satisfaction and brand trust, lead to brand commitment and how brand commitment leads to other behaviours. This information will also provide marketers with a greater understanding of consumer buying behaviour, switching behaviour, willingness to pay a price premium, and other behaviours that are associated with high levels of commitment.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All data collected will be held strictly confidential, and your name will be in no way linked to any of the responses that you have provided. Please feel free to contact Rebecca Shabaga if you have any questions regarding this research. Results from the study will be available as of August 2013.

Thank you for your participation.
Appendix C – Informed Consent Form Study 2

You are asked to participate in a consumer survey conducted by a market research company in collaboration with the University of Guelph Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Rebecca Shabaga or the Faculty Supervisor Dr. Tanya Mark.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to get your thoughts about two products that will be introduced in your local area. We are interested in what you think and how you feel about these products.

PROCEDURE

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we will ask you to view some materials about two different products (background information, advertisements, etc.) and record your thoughts and feelings related to these products.

You will then be asked to complete a computer-based survey questionnaire that is designed to assess your thoughts and feelings toward these products.

It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete this study.

If you are interested in the results of this research, you can contact Rebecca Shabaga. A summary of the results will be available in August 2013.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential physical or psychological risks associated with the procedures used in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The results of this study will help the market research firm’s client understand how consumers will respond to the introduction of these products in your area.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

In exchange for your participation in this study, you will receive a 3% course credit following the completion of the study and the course-required follow-up report. If you choose to withdraw from the study before completion, you can still receive course credit by submitting the course-required follow-up report.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed since the laws in some countries may permit access to the data collected through SurveyMonkey and this data is subject to US privacy laws. However, every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

You can help to ensure confidentiality by taking the following precautions to clear all private data from the computer you are using to respond to the survey:

1. Clear the browsing history
2. Clear the cache
3. Clear the cookies
4. Clear the authenticated session
5. LOG OFF

If you are using Internet Explorer, the first 4 steps can be accomplished by going to Tools and selecting Delete Browsing History. Your application may have a similar system.

You will not be asked to indicate your name, student ID number or any identifying information once the research session starts. Your responses will not be released to any person. All data collected from this study will be stored in a secure, password-encrypted file on a likewise encrypted hard drive. This data will be stored for three years following the completion of the study. After that time, the encrypted hard drive will be erased and reformatted, effectively deleting all information.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
University of Guelph E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
437 University Centre Fax: (519) 821-5236
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read the information provided for the study “Consumer Perceptions Survey” as described herein.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I have been given a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

_________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)  Signature of Participant

Date

_________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)  Signature of Witness

Date
ABOUT MIZUNO

ABOUT US

ABOUT MIZUNO CANADA

Mizuno Canada Ltd.’s roots stem from its parent company Mizuno Corporation. Mizuno Corporation was established in Osaka, Japan in 1886 by Ricchi Mizuno. Today, Mizuno Canada is located in Mississauga, ON and continues to manufacture and distribute high-quality golf, baseball, softball, running, track & field and volleyball equipment, apparel, and footwear.

Since our founding, we have taken special pride and pleasure in being able to participate in the exciting world of sports and providing sports equipment of the highest quality. Each and every one of us is guided by the ideal of true sportsmanship. That was true over 100 years ago and is still true today. It is evident in our corporate philosophy which, simply stated, is “Contributing to society through the advancement of sporting goods and the promotion of sports.”

Our product development strategy is to create products with features that enhance athlete performance and are unique to only Mizuno. These technological advancements make our sporting equipment and apparel go the extra mile and keep you in tip top playing form no matter the sport or the conditions. We believe in making products that work in harmony with your body, helping you to be the best athlete you can be.

PHILOSOPHY

Never Settle™ is more than just a tagline. It’s our calling. Our way of seeing the world. And the rallying cry for our entire company.

Learn more about our philosophy >>
INNOVATION

Breakthroughs come by leadership and discovery, not by following others. Our R&D teams will stop at nothing to give athletes the gear they need to perform their best.

Learn more about our innovations ›

LEADERSHIP

At Mizuno, we challenge ourselves each day to innovate and constantly improve. And our leaders not only are seasoned in their respective sports but also inspire us to make the world a better place through participation in sports.

Learn more about our team ›

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that sports make the world a better place.

It started in 1906, this love of sport. From the pitcher’s mound to the pro tour to the backyard, it’s not just a game. It’s your game. It’s our game. We believe that sports are for everyone. Not just the elite. Not just the naturally gifted. Everyone. And we’re here to unleash the athlete within us all. After all, a society that plays hard together is healthier, more successful, and way more fun.

As an athlete, you’re driven to be better. As the most trusted sports equipment maker in the world, we’re here to make “better” happen—every day. As you work on your game, we’re developing technologies that help you play like, well, you. Only better. And we’ll stop at nothing to give you what you need to have the game of your life, every time.

MIZUNOFESTO

How far can you go? How high can you reach? How long can you endure? How much more can you push yourself before you accept your limitations? Or believe you don’t have any?

You have as much doubt as you have drive. As much fear as you have confidence. Yet you still get up every morning with the same objectives:

- To pass the ones in front of you.
- Eclipse the ones behind you.
- Impress the one inside you.

Inside each of us is a better us trying to get out. Trying to make the most of what we’ve got. Trying to be more than we think we can be.

Our victories are personal. Our devotion is perpetual. And our potential is limitless.

Sport is our passion. Technology is our partner. Technology is our partner. And being the best isn’t nearly as important as doing our best.

Every day you make promises to yourself. Be tough, only tougher. Be strong, only stronger.

Be yourself, only better.

And, above all, never waver. Never quit.

NEVER SETTLE™
Mizuno Men's Wave Rider 15 Limited Edition

Regular Price: $114.99

Details:

Made for:

- Normal pronation

Technology:

Moderate Neutral

Learn about support

Product Features:

Special 15th Anniversary Edition Wave Rider 15

The Wave Rider has served as the pinnacle of the Mizuno footwear line and put our patented Wave® Technology on the map. We are commemorating the Wave Rider 15 by providing a Limited 15th Anniversary edition in rich Ruby and Crystal colors, available in the month of November 2011. Join us in celebrating a milestone anniversary for the Wave Rider.
What makes Wave Rider 15 different?

By combining the best qualities of every Wave Rider that came before it, Mizuno has created its masterpiece with the Wave Rider 15. While the pendulum in running may swing from one extreme to another, the genius of the Wave Rider 15 is found through its harmonious balance of a lightweight feel, wrapped-to-foot fit and exquisitely smooth ride, ultimately producing a brilliant running experience.

Albert Einstein believed that everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler. Perhaps he had a vision of the Wave Rider 15 – simple in form, yet based on the innovative technologies that elevate Mizuno products above the rest.

Mizuno Wave®

The leading footwear technology that combines cushioning and stability, two distinctly different, yet necessary elements in running shoes.

While the running world labors over the pros and cons of lightweight, cushioning and stability, Mizuno labors to strike the perfect balance...a harmonious marriage of all three, achieved through Mizuno Wave Technology®.

SmoothRide™

Minimizes the rapid acceleration and deceleration of the foot during transition, creating the smoothest ride possible.

Mizuno has taken SmoothRide Engineering™ a step further with the Wave Rider 15. Forefoot Flex Controllers allow optimal flex at toe-off and by moving the heel contact point a bit further forward on the sole it smooths out heel contact producing a more fluid ride.

Dynamotion Fit™

Relieves the stress the foot naturally places on footwear, eliminating distortion for the perfect fit.

A running shoe should work with the foot, not against it. Dynamotion Fit™ achieves this by allowing the upper to move in harmony with the foot through the entire running gait - from heel strike through toe-off. With Dynamotion Fit™ a runner and shoe literally become one.
FEEL THE RUN

Parallel Wave Technology transitions with ease, for a smoother natural ride – so you can feel the run, while the shoe does the rest.

EXPLORE WAVE RIDER 15
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Eric Hills
Mizuno USA, Inc.
770-453-7853
eric.hills@mizunousa.com

MIZUNO LAUNCHES NEW WAVE® RIDER™ 15 RUNNING SHOES
Milestone 15th Anniversary Celebrated through Limited Edition Model

Norcross, GA (October 19, 2011) – Mizuno USA, Inc., one of the leading running shoe and apparel manufacturers in the world, today announced the launch of the new Wave Rider 15. The fit, feel and performance of this latest edition will take the Wave Rider to new heights. To honor the 15th anniversary of one of the original running shoes that put Mizuno’s patented award-winning Wave Technology on the map, Mizuno is offering a limited 15th Anniversary Edition Wave Rider.

The Wave Rider 15 features new and improved SmoothRide™ Engineering, developed by Mizuno’s legendary Sozo™ Studios research and development teams. By introducing larger flex grooves and new flex controllers, Mizuno’s SmoothRide™ Engineering mimics the natural movements of the foot in motion, resulting in a harmonic running experience. Larger flex grooves maximize energy efficiency during the initial toe-off stages, whereas flex controllers maximize efficiency during final stages of toe-off. Additionally, the heel bevel has been moved forward, which will translate to a more natural and smoother landing for neutral runners.

“The Wave Rider 15 is truly the manifestation of all the best attributes from the previous 14 generations of our franchise model,” said Rod Foley, Director of Marketing for Athletic Footwear, Mizuno USA. “We have reason to believe that our loyal Mizuno fans will find that this is the best Rider we’ve ever created, for its lightweight, flexibility, breathability, and desired fit. For those who have yet to experience the Wave Rider, they are in for a real treat.”

Mizuno’s Wave Rider 15 will be available in stores beginning on December 5th, 2011. Mizuno is offering three color options for both men’s and women’s models. The Limited Edition Ruby color, which commemorates 15th anniversaries, will be available November 5th, 2011 at select retail locations. The suggested retail price for the Wave Rider 15 is $114.99.

Mizuno USA, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mizuno Corporation, one of the largest specialty sporting goods manufacturers in the world. Mizuno USA, Inc. manufactures and distributes golf, baseball, softball, running, track & field, and volleyball equipment, apparel, and footwear for North America. Mizuno USA, Inc. is based in Norcross, Georgia.

# # #
High mileage runners and weekend warriors alike have gravitated towards the Mizuno Wave Rider as a lightweight but durable shoe with a smooth ride. The Wave Rider 13 was widely considered the benchmark of perfection in the Mizuno neutral cushioning line and many runners have high expectations for the Wave Rider 15. The Wave Rider 14 left many runners disappointed due to poor flexibility and a slightly different fit, and many were hoping for return to the feel of the Wave Rider 13. Weighing in at 11.1 oz (men’s size 9) and with a heel drop of 12 mm Mizuno seems to be sticking with what has worked in the past.

For those runners unfamiliar with Mizuno’s running shoes it can be quite easy to become a convert. Mizuno lovers speak of great fitting shoes with a smooth natural feeling transition through the gait cycle.
Mizuno Wave Rider 15 First Impressions

The 15th edition of the popular Wave Rider features an improved fit with a lower heel collar after many runners complained of abrasions on the too high heel collar of the last edition. The first thing I noticed about the fit of the Wave Rider 15 is that it runs true to size and the fit feels excellent. An ample toe box is supported by a snug fit throughout the mid foot and heel, and the overlays throughout the upper of the shoe give a nice locked down feel. The cushioning feels firm, consistent with Mizuno's wave technology, and initially the Wave Rider 15 felt a bit stiff and inflexible. I needed to put the shoe through the paces to truly assess performance.

Mizuno Wave Rider 15 Upper

The Wave Rider 15 upper features a breathable mesh and lightweight construction. The lacing system is straightforward with standard oval laces and the tongue is adequately cushioned. What I liked most about the interior of the shoe was the fairly thin and minimalist feeling and open mesh. The upper is pliable and there aren’t any overlays which feel extraneous. Mizuno uses a durable micro-mesh to reinforce areas on the lateral side of the upper where runners often wear holes, like the pinky toe area.

The fit is pure Mizuno with a snug heel and forefoot giving way to a roomier toe box. The length is true to size and I was impressed with how locked down my foot feels on downhills and even trails in the Wave Rider 15. This is a shoe which most runners will be able to wear right out of the box without having to spend an annoying break-in period. Overall, the Wave Rider 15 has a durable but lightweight upper with a fantastic fit.

Mizuno Wave Rider 15 Midsole

The Wave Rider 15 features Wave Technology which provides a very smooth transition from heel to toe. The Wave Rider 15 also features an extended wave plate through the mid foot and almost up to the metatarsals of the foot. While this improves the ride of the shoe it does add some rigidity in the mid foot. The toe box of the shoe past where the wave plate ends is flexible which gives a nice toe-off for mid foot and forefoot strikers.

The Wave Rider 15's cushioning feels soft on top with the firmer wave plates on the bottom creating a pleasantly firm yet responsive cushioning. Mizuno uses its AP+ EVA foam on top of the wave plates and the AP+ feels has maintained its feel and seems to perform well in temperature variations from 20°F to 75°F. The wave plate in the heel is reinforced with more cushioning courtesy of Mizuno's VS-1 material.

Mizuno also uses Smooth Ride technology which is a gender specific series of grooves that minimize acceleration and deceleration of the foot to even out the ride. Honestly, I didn’t notice this feature in any way but as stated earlier the Wave Rider 15 is a smooth ride.

Mizuno Wave Rider 15 Outsole

The Wave Rider outsole features a large cutout in the heel of the shoe, presumably to save weight, and durably carbon rubber lines the entire outsole of the shoe. The wave plate is exposed in the mid foot area of the shoe which did get fairly beat up after 20-30 miles of dirt/gravely running. Nothing too avant garde in the lug pattern of the Wave Rider 15 and I’m happy to report that the sole does not pick up rocks while running.
Mizuno Wave Rider 15 Performance and Overall Impressions

Mizuno advertises the new Wave Rider as an amalgam of all of the positive aspects of past Wave Riders molded into one shoe. While they manage to hit the mark in fit, cushioning, and support they missed in the flexibility department for me. Lovers of the Wave Rider 13 will be disappointed with this shoe. Instead of feeling like a built up responsive racing flat (like the 13) the Wave Rider 15 feels and functions more like a lightweight stability trainer. This lack of flexibility throughout the heel and forefoot was especially noticed on trails where the shoe had difficulty negotiating cambered surfaces and rocks, and I even rolled my ankle twice. To be fair, this shoe is not a trail shoe but it really did give me an indication of the rigidity of this shoe.

Now, for those who aren’t looking for Mizuno to remake a previous model, the Wave Rider 15 is a fantastic shoe. This is a great all-in-one shoe for those looking to run long, do tempo work, and have a race day shoe in one package. Many runners will like the stiffer mid-foot as it does seem to propel the wearer forward when feet are tired. With a near perfect fit, lightweight and lower profile feel, and great cushioning the Wave Rider 15 is definitely worth a try on!

Please comment with your own suggestions regarding the Mizuno Wave Rider 15. We are always open to differing opinions!

We thank the nice people at Mizuno for sending us this shoe for testing. This did not influence our review of the shoes, written after running 60 miles in it.

PRICE COMPARISON

- **Men’s Mizuno Wave Rider 15 Running Shoe - White/blue** $86.95
  - **RoadRunnerSports** Free shipping, 60-day perfect fit guarantee; possible to exchange shoes after using them for two months.

- **Mizuno Wave Rider 15 ( Fallonizarak's Iona ) - Footwear** $103.45
  - **Zappos** Free shipping both ways (free return shipping), 365 days returns

WRITTEN BY THOMAS CAUGHLAN

Tom Cauglan has been running since age 11 and ran competitively in college. Tom has six years of experience at running specialty stores and continues to test products for running shoe companies. Over the past year, Tom has been testing shoes on the roads and trails of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado.
Olympus Innovation

At Olympus, we are focused on improving people's lives every day. We do this through innovation. As a precision technology leader, we design and deliver innovative solutions in our core business areas: Medical and Surgical Products, Life Science Imaging Systems, Industrial Measurement and Imaging Instruments and Cameras and Audio Products.

Our products are used to capture images of our world from the microscopic to the panoramic. They are instrumental in furthering scientific research, travel inside the human body to help diagnose, treat and prevent illness, and document your life with artistic freedom.

Most of all, we are dedicated to helping people enjoy the continuum of life. Since 1919, Olympus has developed innovative technology solutions that contribute positively to society. Our commitment to customers and our social responsibility are the cornerstones of everything we do.

Thank you for your interest in Olympus. Please be sure to download our corporate video and brochure.

Sincerely,

Hidenao Tsuchiya
President
Olympus Corporation of the Americas

Group Companies

Camera and Audio Business

Olympus supplies imaging products that defy preconceptions about digital single-lens reflex cameras to open up new possibilities, such as the compact and lightweight PEN series of interchangeable lens cameras and the OM-D interchangeal lens camera that utilizes new technology in the form of mirrorless optics and an electronic viewfinder. Olympus is devoted to offering consumers a wide range of ways to capture and enjoy life's most precious moments, particularly through our digital cameras and IC recorders.

Business Lines

Digital cameras: Interchangeable lens system digital cameras, compact digital cameras, digital camera products

Optical components: Lens barrels for digital cameras, optical materials

Audio: IC recorders

Binoculars: Binoculars
PRO IMAGE QUALITY FROM A WHOLE NEW PERSPECTIVE

WORLD'S FIRST F2.0 HIGH SPEED LENS ON A TOUGH CAMERA

The newest Tough model draws on Olympus' extensive history of creating rugged, durable cameras that take the worry out of life-on-the-go shooting. This revolutionary TOUGH model introduces the World's First Ultra-Bright, High-Speed 12.0 lens on a Tough camera allowing you to capture dramatically better images in low-light and fast action situations than any other rugged model currently on the market. The combination of durability and outstanding image quality makes it possible to shoot in even the harshest of conditions. Just imagine: capture beautiful underwater scenes and aquatic life, snap photos of triumphant arrivals to dusk-lit peaks, record your ride down the rapids in dazzling 1080p Full HD Video. The possibilities are truly endless.
POPULAR ACCESSORIES FOR THE TOUGH TG-1 IHS

SUPERIOR OPTICS
HIGH-SPEED, ULTRA-BRIGHT F2.0 LENS
The TG-1 IHS is the world’s first rugged camera on the market* to include an ultra-bright, high-speed F2.0 lens so you can capture scenes that were previously “impossible” with a point & shoot. This new lens strengthens the camera’s shooting capabilities making high-quality images and blazing fast shutter speeds possible even when a flash cannot be used or when shooting fast action or in low light.

3.0” OLED MONITOR
This 3.0”, high-resolution OLED display (610K dots) provides excellent visibility outdoors enabling you to compose the perfect shot even in direct sunlight. And several protective coatings help to prevent scratches and cut down on reflective glare from bright lights and sun. Awesome optics, both in camera and on screen.

LIFEPROOF
WATERPROOF TO 40FT.
The TG-1 IHS crushes the notion that cameras are easily damaged by water and humidity. The Olympus’ original complete sealing system and double lock construction borrowed from Olympus’ long history of manufacturing underwater housings ensures that the TG-1 IHS is completely waterproof down to a new depth of 40ft. Even on land, the TG-1 IHS ensures that you’ll never miss an awesome shot just because of heavy rain or snow.

SHOCKPROOF TO 6.6FT.
The shockproof structure of the TG-1 IHS ensures that your investment is protected. Carefully sandwiched between two protective frames, the lens and camera unit remain untouched by bumps, drops, falls and other impacts. Even after repeated drops, critical camera components and functions like the lens, shutter, aperture and auto-focus remain safe. Drop, pick up, and keep on shooting.

CRUSHPROOF TO 220LBF.
The TG-1 IHS uses a double-layer construction, consisting of a tough yet lightweight polycarbonate resin and a metal frame. The crushproof construction ensures that your camera – and screen! – won’t break, even under 220lbs of pressure. No more cracked screens because you’ve left your camera in your back pocket or suitcase.

FREEZEPROOF TO 14°F
Keep shooting outdoors even in the winter. The TG-1 IHS is designed to keep operating at below freezing temperatures, safe from the two most common problems when shooting in cold weather; lens condensation and auto zoom malfunction. Hit the slopes, fire up your snowmobile, or break out the skates, because with the TG-820 IHS by your side, you’ll never miss those awesome wipe out moments.

DUSTPROOF
Life gets dirty. Between dusty fields and muddy trails, sometimes your camera doesn’t stay as pristine as you’d like it to. But even in less-than-spotless environments, the fine protective sealing of the TG-820 IHS helps keep out dirt and debris allowing you to capture shot after shot even in the harshest environments.
WATER-REPELLENT LENS COATING
Splash after splash, never worry about water droplets obstructing your images thanks to the water-repellent lens coating that prevents water from remaining on the lens surface. And because it’s applied to the OLED monitor as well, composing shots in the rain or while riding the waves will be a breeze.

DOUBLE-LOCK DURABILITY
With all the care that is put in to protecting the inner workings of your camera, it would be a shame for the system to fail because the battery door opens unintentionally. Thanks to the multi-directional, double-lock mechanism, your camera is protected from accidental openings under water.

OUTSTANDING IMAGE QUALITY

iHS
A high-sensitivity, high-speed 12-megapixel backlit CMOS sensor combines with a blazing fast, DSLR-quality TruePic™ VII image processor resulting in high-speed autofocus, enhanced Intelligent Auto for spectacular scene and subject recognition, and 2x Super-Resolution Zoom to produce jaw-dropping images in locations that make even the most seasoned photographers cringe. This family of technologies conquers challenging shooting conditions with improved light condensing efficiency, less noise and quick response time – twice as fast as traditional cameras – for definitively unmatched image quality.

SUPER SPORT MODE
Designed specifically to keep up with life-on-the-go photography, the new Super Sport Mode combines high-speed autofocus with extra fast shutter speeds – up to 1/2000 – to freeze the action. Conveniently located on the dial, this mode captures 5 shots in a high-speed burst to ensure crisp shots of even the most extreme action sport settings.

LOW LIGHT MODE
Low Light Mode is perfect for capturing the mood of low-light indoor scenes, beautiful sunsets, or late night outdoor festivities without ruining the ambiance with a bright flash. Forget about subject blurring or camera shake ruining the shot – Low Light Mode has you covered.

FULL HD VIDEO WITH HDMI OUTPUT & CONTROL
With the TG-1 iHS, you can shoot 1080p Full HD videos (1920x1080 pixels) at the touch of a button, allowing for slow-motion playback. Thanks to iHS Technology, your videos will get the VIP treatment with excellent color reproduction and faster processing speeds, while Multi-Motion IS compensates for user movement creating smoother videos. Linear PCM Recording, an audio technology pioneered by Olympus for professional voice recorders, records your videos with high-definition audio for optimal playback results. HDMI output and control makes viewing back videos on your HDTV a breeze.

HIGH-SPEED SEQUENTIAL SHOOTING
Shoot like a pro! With 10fps high-speed burst shooting, nail the perfect shot by taking a quick sequence of images at the touch of a button. Still afraid you’ll miss a moment? At 3MP, the frame rate increases to an astounding 60 shots per second. You’ll have so many great shots, you won’t be able to share just one!

ENHANCED iAUTO (INTELLIGENT AUTO)
In iAuto mode, the camera automatically detects the subject, lighting and situation to identify the scene you’re shooting – up to 30 different scenes including Night, Sport, Beach and Snow, Underwater Snapshot and Backlight HDR – and adjusts the settings for ideal results. Leave it up to the TG-1 iHS to choose optimum settings so you can focus on capturing that amazing shot.
TG-1
For more adventurous photographers

2m
SHOCK PROOF
&
100kgf
CRUSH PROOF

12m
WATER PROOF
Olympus Wins EISA Awards for "OLYMPUS Tough TG-1" Compact Digital Camera and "OLYMPUS OM-D E-M5" a new style of interchangeable-lens digital camera

Olympus Imaging Corporation (President: Haruo Ogawa) is pleased to announce that two Olympus’ digital cameras have received 2012-2013 EISA Awards. The "OLYMPUS Tough TG-1" Compact Digital Camera cited as the best "European All Weather Camera 2012-2013", and the "OLYMPUS OM-D E-M5" a new style of interchangeable-lens digital camera also won the "European Compact System Camera 2012-2013" award.

The European Imaging & Sound Association (EISA) is an organization representing 50 leading camera, imaging and audio magazines in 20 European countries. Each year it selects outstanding products and technologies from a wide spectrum of audiovisual product categories.

"OLYMPUS Tough TG-1" Compact Digital Camera
Winner of the European All Weather Camera 2012-2013 award

The Tough series is a camera equipped with the three tough qualities, waterproof/dust proof, shockproof, and freezeproof, for worry-free shooting under harsh environments that other cameras could not endure. As the OLYMPUS Tough flagship model, the Tough TG-1 boasts excellent high-speed performance along with the series’ toughest features.

In the words of the EISA jury, “The Olympus TG-1 TOUGH is an outstanding outdoor camera ... guaranteed to be shockproof (to 2m), waterproof (to 12m), crushproof (to 100kg) and freezeproof (down to -10°C) ... The 12-Megapixel backlit CMOS sensor, together with the TruePic VI processor and fast 25-100mm f2.4-9 zoom lens, delivered excellent-quality pictures and low levels of noise.”

* Waterproof according to IEC standard publication 529 IPX8. Shockproof figure equivalent to MIL Standard. According to Olympus test conditions.
** 35mm camera equivalent.
Olympus Tough TG-1 Review

by Daniel Grotta, Mike Tomkins and Shawn Barnett, with Roger Stovens
Review posted: November 8, 2012

Olympus is something of a pioneer in the lifestyle camera market. For the last half-decade or more, the company’s lineup has included rugged models with impressive waterproofing, coldproofing, and resistance to both drops and crushing. It’s a niche that’s really come into its own of late, with increasing competition as camera manufacturers seek ways to differentiate their products. (Smartphones aren’t known for their ability to take punishment, after all.)

No matter the manufacturer, the marketing message for these solidly-built cameras has been much the same. Perhaps understandably, it’s tended to focus on the ability to hammer tent pegs into frozen tundra with your camera, then lever them back out again, catching snapshots all the while. (OK, we’re exaggerating just slightly, but you get the point.) Many models have rammed the message home with aggressive, angular styling that makes it clear: these are cameras for someone not afraid to get out and live life.

Overview. The Olympus Tough TG-1 iHS takes a new tack. While Olympus still makes it clear that this is a very rugged camera -- indeed, it has actually improved the water resistance significantly -- it is also emphasizing the imaging capabilities of its new model. Gone is the suggestion that you must trade off image quality and camera-like handling to achieve a truly solid build. The Olympus TG-1 looks more like a traditional compact camera, down to the inclusion of a Mode dial, and its front panel sports a bright f/2.0 lens. The body is now said to be waterproof to 40 feet (seven feet deeper than previous Olympus models), shockproof to 6.6 feet, crushproof to 220 pounds, and freezeproof to 14°F / -10°C.

Inside, Olympus uses the same pairing of a 12-megapixel, backside-illuminated CMOS image sensor and TruePic VI image processor that we saw previously in the TG-820 iHS, but the sensor sits behind a new 4x zoom lens that’s much brighter than that of its predecessor, at least at the wide-angle position. A little zoom range and a fair bit of telephoto reach have been sacrificed to achieve the new f/2.0 maximum aperture at the more generous 25mm-equivalent wide angle. The maximum aperture still falls rather quickly to f/4.9 at the 100mm-equivalent telephoto, unfortunately. The front element has a water-repellent coating, and focusing is possible to just ten centimeters in Macro mode, or one centimeter in Super Macro.

Although the processor is the same as that in the TG-820 iHS, Olympus shows confidence in the autofocus speed of the new TG-1, giving it the same “Frequency Acceleration Sensor Technology” (aka “FAST”) autofocus branding as on recent PEN-series compact system cameras. The TG-1 also offers five frames-per-second burst shooting at full-resolution, for up to 25 frames. Like the TG-820, there’s also a 60fps burst mode at reduced resolution of three megapixels.

Interestingly, the Olympus TG-1 accepts 40.5mm threaded accessories, and Olympus offers two conversion lenses. One is a fisheye converter (CON-T01), although we don’t have precise specs on this item yet. The other is a 1.7x teleconverter (TCON-T01), yielding an effective 6.8x zoom from the 25mm wide angle position (i.e.: a 170mm telephoto.) Both sell for about US$100 each, and a CLA-T01 adapter is needed (US$20) to mount them. Both accessory lenses are said to be waterproof to the same level as the camera body itself.
On the rear panel, the TG-1 now uses an Organic LED display, rather than the standard LCD of the TG-820. While OLED displays are typically more vivid, with better viewing angles and deeper blacks than standard LCDs, resolution of the TG-1's display is quite a bit lower than that of the previous model, at some 610,000 dots. (The TG-820 offered an unusually high 1,030,000 dots of resolution.)

Shutter speeds still top out at 1/2,000 second, with the slowest shutter speed of four seconds available in the Night Scene mode. For shooting nearby subjects in low light, there's both a built-in flash rated as good to 5.6 meters (ISO 800; wide angle), and an LED lamp that doubles as a macro/video light. Incidentally, the TG-1's built-in flash supports Olympus' Wireless RC Flash System, which allows compatible remote slave flashes to be controlled from the camera, a rather advanced and unique feature for a waterproof compact.

The Olympus TG-1 iHS Intelligent Auto mode can now recognize thirty different scene types, and configures the camera appropriately. As with the TG-820, four different underwater shooting modes are available, including an underwater macro. (And if you really want to take advantage of the underwater capabilities, you can pick up a PT-053 underwater housing, which will allow the TG-1 to work down to depths of 45 meters or 147 feet!)

Some other features inherited from the earlier TG-810 model include a built-in GPS receiver, electronic compass, and manometer. Together, these can be used to geotag images with information regarding the location and direction from which they were captured, as well as an approximation of the altitude above (or depth below) sea level from the atmospheric or water pressure. The latter function can also be used to warn you when you're approaching the camera's maximum safe shooting depth. Additionally, you can record GPS track logs.

As with the earlier model, the Olympus Tough TG-1 also offers Full HD video capture. Videos are saved with H.264 compression in a .MOV container, with a maximum resolution of 1,920 x 1,080 pixels, and for movie mode only, the TG-1 offers a Multi-Motion IS mode that can better stabilize motion, allowing you to shoot while walking for example.

A few other changes from previous models include a new LI-90B lithium-ion battery pack CIPA-rated at 350 shots per charge which is much improved from 220, a significant reduction in available memory to just seven megabytes, and an increase in size and weight. Storage and connectivity are unchanged: Secure Digital cards including SDHC/SDXC types, combined USB/AV/DC input port, and a Type-D Micro HDMI port.

The Olympus Tough TG-1 iHS went on sale in silver only in June 2012, priced at around US$400. It currently can be found as low as US$300 at certain outlets.
Appendix E – Property Release Forms Study 2

Photograph and Intellectual Property Release Form

I, the undersigned, do hereby consent and agree that Mizuno, its employees, or agents have the right to use the photograph of me and the intellectual property I produced in any and all media, now or hereafter known, and exclusively for the purpose of advertising and publicity campaigns.

I do hereby release to Mizuno, its agents, and employees all rights to exhibit this work in print and electronic form publicly or privately and to market and sell copies.

I understand that there will be no financial or other remuneration for recording me, either for initial or subsequent transmission or playback.

I represent that I have read and understand the foregoing statement, and am competent to execute this agreement.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Signature: ___________________________

Witness for the undersigned: ___________________________
I, the undersigned, do hereby consent and agree that Olympus, its employees, or agents have the right to use the photograph of me and the intellectual property I produced in any and all media, now or hereafter known, and exclusively for the purpose of advertising and publicity campaigns.

I do hereby release to Olympus, its agents, and employees all rights to exhibit this work in print and electronic form publicly or privately and to market and sell copies.

I understand that there will be no financial or other remuneration for recording me, either for initial or subsequent transmission or playback.

I represent that I have read and understand the foregoing statement, and am competent to execute this agreement.

Name: __________________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature: __________________________________________

Witness for the undersigned: ____________________________
Thank you for your participation in this research. The study you participated is titled “Conceptualizing Commitment: A Nomological Network Explicating the Core Components and Critical Consequences of Brand Commitment” and was conducted as part of the researcher’s Master’s Thesis.

The purpose of this research was to manipulate your level of commitment to a specific brand. It is expected that your commitment to the brand will predict how likely you are to continue your relationship with the brand, measured in terms of how accommodating you are when the band behaves poorly, your willingness to sacrifice for the brand, what you think of the brand and directly competing brands, and how resistant you are to negative information about the brand.

This research contributes to marketing researchers' understanding of consumer-brand relationships and consumer behaviour by identifying how popular constructs in marketing, such as brand attachment and brand commitment lead to behaviours that desirable to marketers. This information will provide marketers with a greater understanding of consumer buying behaviour, switching behaviour, willingness to pay a price premium, and other behaviours that are associated with high levels of commitment.

In order to test the hypotheses, it was necessary to manipulate your level of brand commitment. There were two conditions in this study – a high brand commitment condition (the experimental condition) and the low brand commitment condition (the control condition). The experimenter instructed participants in both conditions to look through a folder of materials concerning two products (Mizuno shoes and Olympic camera) and write down their thoughts and feelings about these products. In the high brand commitment condition, participants were told that Mizuno wants to use participants’ thoughts and photographs in future advertisements. In the low brand commitment condition, participants were told that Olympus wants to use their thoughts and photographs. Participants who provided consent signed the release form were expected to become committed to that particular brand. This is because previous research in marketing shows that publicly attaching oneself to a brand increases personal commitment to that brand (e.g., Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Ahluwalia et al., 2001; Raju et al., 2009). Your photograph, thoughts and release form were collected only to manipulate your level of brand commitment. They will not actually be released to anyone or used in the analysis of this research. They will be deleted immediately and no record of any of it will be kept.

It should be noted that the actual purpose of this study differs from the explanation provided in the consent form and that there was some deception involved. However, this deception was a necessary component of this research in order to manipulate your level of brand commitment. Please do not share this information with others who may be participating in this study in the future. Now that you have been given complete information about the study, you may choose to withdraw at this time and have your responses destroyed. If you wish to do this, please notify the experimenter immediately.

All data collected will be held strictly confidential, and your name will be in no way linked to any of the responses that you have provided. Please feel free to contact Rebecca Shabaga if you have any questions regarding this research. Results from the study will be available as of August 2013.

Thank you for your participation,

Rebecca Shabaga
M.Sc Candidate | University of Guelph
Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies
Macdonald Institute 210