

EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATION-PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS
AND PRODUCT-RELATED ATTRIBUTE BELIEFS ON
BRAND ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE INTENTION:
USING RELATIONSHIP THEORY AND EXPECTANCY-VALUE MODEL

By

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by

Jeesun Kim

For all that I have become and all that I have accomplished, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. Without their support, both emotionally and financially, I would not have made it to where I am today.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Considering the importance of relationship building as a new paradigm in the field of public relations, it is significant to evaluate the value of public relations. Successful relationships generally lead to outcomes that contribute to the organization's goals. Because today's marketplace puts a high value on brand equity, it appears important to investigate brand management concepts in the context of public relations. As such, the present study added to the existing theory and literature on organization-public relationships using attitudinal and behavioral approaches.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the effects of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention via brand attitude; and the effects of product-related attributes on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention via the brand attitude. The present study also examined the different explanatory power of OPRs and product-related attributes on attitude toward the brand.

A survey was conducted with 178 students at the University of Florida. Results of this survey showed that (1) organization-public relationships were significantly related to attitude toward the brand, (2) product-related attributes beliefs were also significantly related to attitude toward the brand, and (3) attitude toward the brand was a strong mediator between independent variables (OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs) and purchase intention.

Among the dimensions of OPRs, only satisfaction was a significant indicator in predicting attitude toward the brand. This result suggests that satisfaction could be separated from the other dimensions of OPRs, confirming previous studies that showed that satisfaction could be an overall evaluation of relationship quality. In addition, the explanatory power of OPRs was found to be weaker than that of product-related attribute beliefs in predicting attitude toward the brand. However, considering that the present study only used a laptop computer as a product category, there is a possibility that different product categories will generate different results.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Deciding how to evaluate the effectiveness of public relations is crucial, given the importance of relationship building as a new paradigm in the field of public relations. Recently, examination of the relationships that exist between an organization and its key publics has emerged as a fertile area of public relations scholarship (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). As many scholars agree that the ultimate goal of public relations is to build mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics, measuring such relationships and their effectiveness becomes a significant matter to public relations practitioners and top management as well (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Lindenmann, 1999; Huang, 2001).

Recently, scholars have focused their interest on relationship management as a public relations function—the management of relationships between an organization and its key publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). According to Ehling (1992), the relationship management perspective shifts the goal of public relations away from the manipulation of public opinion, and puts emphasis on building, nurturing, and maintaining organization-public relationships. This shift is important because the programs are no longer evaluated in terms of communication of messages, but rather by determining the influence that organizational activities have on key publics' perceptions of the organization-public relationship, as well as looking at the impact that organizational activities have on key publics' behaviors (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000).

Ledingham and Bruning (2000) argue that organizations must engage in communication and activities that facilitate a sense of trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment. Such approaches are likely to build both the symbolic and behavioral relationships with key publics (Grunig, 2001).

To build a successful relationship, it is necessary to demonstrate the value of relationship building to outcomes that contribute to the organizational goals. In contrast to businesses in the past, today's marketplace puts a much higher value on intangible assets. For example, companies such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Microsoft, and Nike enjoy high brand equity. Having strong brand equity, these organizations can build valuable and intangible assets that influence customer preference toward them and ultimately strengthen the organization's bottom line. Therefore, demonstrating the link between the organization-public relationship and the OPR's contribution to brand associations adds to the practical application of relationship-building theory.

A. Ries and L. Ries (2002) asserted that public relations has quietly become the most powerful marketing discipline, and that public relations, specifically publicity and the resulting word of mouth, is what builds new brands. Marken (2001) explained what public relations can and should do for a brand. Also, Markem (2001) contended the importance of branding, which is how customers feel about the organization, the relationship, and its products.

Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) demonstrated the significant effects of corporate credibility and celebrity credibility on customers' attitude toward the advertising, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention. Using path analysis, Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000) also found that endorser credibility had the strongest impact on attitude

toward advertising, while corporate credibility had the strongest impact on attitude toward the brand.

The literature is rich in studies that have assessed the effect of attitude toward advertising on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. However, to date no study has examined the impact of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention via the brand attitude. So far, probably the most widely used approach in dealing with brand attitude formation is based on a multi-attribute model, where brand attitudes are seen as a function of attributes and benefits associated with the brand (Keller, 1998).

Earlier, Aaker (1991) stated that developing brand associations with a product attribute or characteristic is effective because the association can directly translate into reasons to buy a brand or not. Therefore, in the present study, the effect of product-related attribute beliefs about the product using the expectancy-value model were also used to predict attitude toward the brand.

The purpose of the present study was to explore (1) the effects of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention via brand attitude, and (2) the effects of product-related attribute beliefs on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention via the brand attitude. The present study also investigated how the dimensions of organization-public relationships (trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction) and product-related attribute beliefs are related to brand attitude formation and purchase intention via brand attitude. Furthermore, the present study examined the differences between the impact of organization-public relationships and product-related attribute beliefs on attitudes toward the brand.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship Literature

Relationship Management in Public Relations

The origin of the relationship management perspective can be traced back in 1984, when Ferguson called for increased attention to relationships within the scholarship and practice of public relations. In a 1990 study, Broom and Dozier suggested a co-orientational approach to measure organization-public relationships, rather than communication efficiencies as a function of public relations evaluation.

In 1992, J. E. Grunig defined the purpose of public relations as “building relationships with publics that constrain or enhance the ability of the organization to meet its mission” (p. 20). L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, and Ehling (1992) went so far as to suggest that relationships are the center of public relations. “Building relationships—managing interdependence—is the substance of public relations. Good relationships, in turn, make organizations more effective because they allow organizations more freedom—more autonomy—to achieve their missions than they would with bad relationships” (p. 69).

Later, Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1994) defined public relations as “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.” (p. 2).

The notion that public relations is the management of organization-public relationships (OPRs) is reflected in Center and Jackson’s (1995) observation that “the

proper term for the desired outcomes of public relations practice is public relationships. An organization with effective public relations will attain positive public relationships” (p. 2). Moreover, the relational perspective explains the function of public relations within an organizational structure (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), and provides methods to determine the impact of public relations on organizational objectives (Ledingham & Bruning, 1997).

Hutton (1999) noted that “relationship management refers to the practice of public relations as an exercise in identifying mutual interests, values and benefit between a client-organization and its publics” (p. 208). According to Hutton (1999), mutual trust, compromise, cooperation, and win-win situations are essential for successful relationship management.

The keystone of relationship management perspective is its focus on managing OPRs to produce benefits not only for organizations, but also for publics (Ledingham, 2001). Furthermore, relationship management theory provides a paradigm for scholarly inquiry, serves as a direction for public relations education, equips practitioners with an outcome-based means of accounting for the cost of program initiatives, and requires public relations experts to be conversant with management concepts and practices.

Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs)

Scholarship concerning the management of OPRs has increased significantly in recent years. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) offered the following definition of OPR based on interpersonal relationship principles: “an organization-public relationship is the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political well being of the other” (p. 62).

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000) pointed out little research has focused on explicating and measuring the definition of organization-public relationships. Without an explication of the term “relationship,” theory building in public relations will continue to be difficult (Broom et al., 2000).

Public relations scholars agree on the importance of relationships, but there is no one common definition for relationship. For example, Kreps (1986) defined public relations as “the ongoing management of communication relationships among organizations that share an interorganizational field” (p. 244). This definition focuses on relationships between organizations, but it does not explain what a relationship is and does not even consider how publics are a part of communication. Dozier, L. A. Grunig, and J. E. Grunig (1995) suggested that “the strategic or failure of communication program is determined by relationships between organizations and key publics” (p. 32). Huang (1997) offered a more detailed definition that stressed on the importance of relationships in public relations: “The goal of public relations not only includes the dissemination of information, but also involves facilitating mutual understanding and resolving conflicts between an organization and its publics” (p. 7).

With regard to relationships, L. A. Grunig et al. (1992) suggested that the quality of OPRs might be measured through the dimensions of reciprocity, trust, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding (p. 136). On the same note, Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, and Lesko (1997) conducted a multi-discipline review of relationship literature and identified 17 dimensions that scholars have held to be central to interpersonal relationships, marketing relationships, and other relationships. Those dimensions were the following: investment, commitment, trust, comfort with relational dialectics, cooperation, mutual goals, interdependence/power

imbalance, performance satisfaction, comparison level of the alternatives, adaptation, non-retrievable investment, shared technology, summative constructs, structural bonds, social bonds, intimacy, and passion. This initial list was later reduced to five dimensions (trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment) and operationalized through research with key publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) then examined the link between the five operationalized dimensions and attitudes toward an organization.

Based upon their findings, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) advanced a “Theory of Loyalty” holding that “organizational involvement in and support of the community in which it operates can engender loyalty toward an organization among key publics when that involvement/support is known by key publics” (p. 63). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) further asserted that “what emerges is a process in which organizations must (1) focus on the relationships with their key publics, and (2) communicate involvement of those activities/programs that build the organization-public relationship to members of their key publics” (p. 63). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) also suggested, “to be effective and sustaining, relationships need to be seen as mutually beneficial, based on mutual interest between an organization and its significant publics” and concluded that “the key to managing successful relationships is to understand what must be done in order to initiate, develop, and maintain that relationship” (p. 27).

In subsequent research, Bruning and Ledingham (1998) found that the relationship dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment predicted customer satisfaction in a competitive environment. Bruning and Ledingham (1998) noted that “the relationship between an organization and its key publics should be considered when developing customer satisfaction initiatives and should be included in

future models of satisfaction research” (p. 199). In 1999, Bruning and Ledingham grouped together indicators of relationship quality suggested by other scholars into the three following relationships types: interpersonal, professional, and community. Those types developed into a multi-item, multi-dimensional scale to measure the quality of OPRs.

Another study by Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) found that OPRs can and do change over time, and in some cases, it may require decades to solidify an OPR. As a result, Ledingham et al. emphasized the need to maintain attention to an OPR throughout its life cycle, not only when the OPR is initiated or when it is declining.

Research thus far has linked OPR perceptions and loyalty toward an organization within the context of utilities industry, local government, insurance industry, banking, and higher education.

Hon and J. E. Grunig (1999) looked at psychology literature in order to identify characteristics of interpersonal relationships. Hon and J. E. Grunig (1999) concluded that control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship are good indicators of successful interpersonal relationships. Public relations research shows that those six elements can be applied equally well to organization-public relationship settings (Huang, 1997).

Continuing this line of research, J. E. Grunig and Huang (2000) identified trust, control mutuality, relationship commitment, and relationship satisfaction as the most important outcome factors in an organization-public relationship. These four dimensions were thought of as being most significant because they appeared consistently in both organizational and interpersonal communication literature (J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000).

J. E. Grunig and Huang (2000) argued that many other factors identified by scholars are components of trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment.

Based on conceptual foundations, as well as empirical data, Huang (1998) defined an OPR as “the degree that the organization and its publics trust one another, agree on that one has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another” (p. 12). Huang (1998) further explored the causal relationships between public relations strategies and an OPR. Also, Huang (2001) demonstrated that OPRs were key mediating variables in the effect of an organization’s public relations strategies on resolving the conflicts between the organization and its publics.

Kim (2001) collected and factor-analyzed all available items from interpersonal, relationship marketing, and public relations literature, in order to devise a valid and reliable instrument to measure the organization-public relationship. Kim’s (2001) study developed a valid and reliable four-dimension scale with 16 items for measuring the organization-public relationship through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The four dimensions included trust, commitment, local or community involvement, and reputation. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients were .78 for trust, .84 for commitment, .85 for local or community involvement, and .83 for reputation, respectively.

Table 2-1 summarizes measures and instruments used by scholars to evaluate the organization-public relationship in public relations.

Table 2-1. Frameworks for the organization-public relationship measurement

Study	OPR Dimensions	Sample & Survey Instruments
Ferguson, 1984	Dynamic vs. static, open vs. closed, mutual satisfaction, distribution of power, mutual understanding, mutual agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The origin of the relationship management perspective
L. A. Grunig et al, 1992	Reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researchers suggested that the quality of OPRs might be measured through these dimensions.
Huang, 1997	Trust, control mutuality, relational commitment, relational satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 311 legislative members and their assistants; 16 items (1997)
Ledingham and Bruning, 1998	Openness, trust, involvement, investment, commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 384 residential telephone subscribers; 91 items (1998)
Bruning and Ledingham, 1999	Personal relationship professional relationship community relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study was an attempt to design a multiple-item, multiple-dimension organization-public relationship scale. • The OPR provided an instrument that can be used to measure the influence that perceptions of the OPR have on consumer attitudes, predispositions, and behavior, as well as an opportunity to track changes in OPR perceptions over time. • Bank officials provided the researchers with a list of 2100 randomly selected customers and their telephone numbers. • Data were gathered by 17 students enrolled in an undergraduate public relations research course. • Each student completed about 11 telephone interviews. • 183 surveys of bank customers were collected; 51 items (1999)

Table 2-1. Continued

Study	OPR Dimensions	Sample & Survey Instruments
Hon and J. E. Grunig, 1999	Trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationships, exchange relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pilot survey to see how respondents evaluated their relationships with five organizations chosen to represent different types of public and private organizations with both good and bad reputations • The researchers conducted the survey by placing a questionnaire on the Internet and inviting people from randomly chosen e-mail addresses to respond. • 200 online users; 52 items (1999)
J. E. Grunig and Huang, 2000	Trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 311 legislative members and their assistants; 16 items (1997)
Bruning and Ralston, 2001	Personal relationship professional relationship community relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 164 students were surveyed to determine whether student-university relationship attitudes differentiated those who indicated they were planning on returning to the institution from those who were not or were undecided. • Also, focus groups used to define student-university relationships.
Huang, 2001	Trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, face and favor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cross-cultural, multiple-item scale for measuring organization-public relationships was developed not only to fulfill the standards of reliability and validity in measurement but also to acquire cross-cultural comparability. • 1st stage: 311 legislative members and their assistants; 16 items (1997) • 2nd stage: 235 public relations practitioners from Executive Yuan in Taiwan; 21 items (1999)
Kim, 2001	Trust, commitment, local and community involvement, reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st stage: 160 undergraduate students, 58 items • 2nd stage: 102 community residents, 16 item • 3rd stage: 157 customers of online company, 16 items

Table 2-1. Continued

Study	OPR Dimensions	Sample & Survey Instruments
Bruning, 2002	Personal relationship professional relationship community relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 122 students (enrolled in an introductory communication course at a small, private mid-western university) were surveyed to determine whether student-university relationship attitudes and satisfaction evaluations distinguished those who returned to the university from those who did not.

Conceptualizations of relationship management and organization-public relationships in the public relations literature mirror concepts from marketing literature. Hutton (1999) noted that while there are substantial differences between marketing and public relations, there are also many characteristics these professions have in common. According to Hutton (1999), marketing and public relations both deal with external constituencies, messages, media, public opinion, and audience segmentation. Key factors in both professions are communication, persuasion, and relationships (Hutton, 1999).

Early marketing literature conceptualized relationship quality as a higher-order construct consisting of several distinct, though related, dimensions (Dorsch, Swanson, & Kelley, 1998; Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995). Later, relationship quality was considered as an overall assessment of the strength of that relationship (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Smith, 1998). Although there still is discussion about what dimensions make up relationship quality, scholars thus far have emphasized the importance of relationship satisfaction, trust, and commitment as valid indicators of relationship quality (Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder, & Lacobucci, 2001).

Based on previous literature, the present study adopts trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction as the dimensions on which to measure organization-public

relationships. Characteristics of these four dimensions of organization-public relations are summarized below.

Trust

Trust is widely accepted as an important component of interpersonal, organizational, and organization-public relationships (J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000), and is generally viewed as an essential element for successful relationships (Berry 1995; Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). From a marketing perspective, Moorman, Deshpandé, and Zaltman (1993) define trust as “a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence.” (p. 82). Moorman et al. asserted that confidence and trustworthiness result from the ability to perform (expertise), reliability, and intentionality. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), trust represents the perception of “confidence in the exchange partner’s reliability and integrity.” (p. 23). Both definitions highlight the importance of confidence and reliability in the conception of trust.

Trust appears to be the cornerstone of successful relationships, which can only be built in time (Davidson & Kapelianis, 1996; Dumoulin & Boyd, 1997). In fact, Vercic and J. E. Grunig (1995) went so far as to state that trust is the characteristic that allows an organization to exist (J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000). Trust, however, is a multidimensional concept (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). Its secondary components are integrity, dependability, and competence (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). If an organization has integrity, then publics believe that it is fair in its interactions (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). Dependability means that publics can rely on the organization to do what it says (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). Competence means that the organization has the resources and ability to follow through with its commitments (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). Putting

all together, Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder, and Lacobucci (2001) defined trust in marketing as a consumer's confidence in an organization's reliability and integrity.

Because trust is so critical, an organization should not compromise it for a short-term benefit. The long-term reputation that the organization acquires by being trustworthy will make the relationship between that organization and its publics better and stronger (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). Referring to the retail business, Berry (1993) stresses that "trust is the basis for loyalty" (p. 1). Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman (1993) said that trust is the behavioral intention of "willingness." Moorman et al. also argued that this behavioral intention is a critical facet of trust's conceptualization because "if one believes that a partner is trustworthy without being willing to rely on that partner, trust is limited" (p. 315).

Control mutuality

According to Huang (2001), the concept of control mutuality is similar to other concepts scholars suggested as being significant to relationships: Bruning and Ledingham's (1999) concept of mutual legitimacy, Aldrich's (1975, 1979) concept of reciprocity, Ferguson's (1984) idea of distribution of power in the relationship, Millar and Rogers's (1976) construct of power, and Moore's (1986) notion of empowerment. Huang also noted that in essence, the sense of control mutuality between the opposing parties in a relationship is critical to interdependence and relational stability.

Hon and J. E. Grunig (1999) defined control mutuality as "the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another" (p. 13). J. E. Grunig and Huang (2000) stated that some imbalance of power is inevitable in many relationships and that control mutuality takes this asymmetry into account. However, if one party attempts to have sole control over the relationship, the other outcome factors—

trust, satisfaction and commitment—will suffer (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). Therefore, it is beneficial for parties to agree on the level of control mutuality in a relationship.

Commitment

Commitment examines the degree to which “one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote” (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999, p. 14). The literature reveals that commitment has long been a central notion in the social exchange approach (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Bruning and Ledingham (1999) included this concept into their nine-dimension scale. Cook and Emerson (1978) used the concept of commitment to distinguish between social and economic exchanges.

Commitment is examined as an effective indicator of internal relationships in an organizational setting. For example, commitment has been associated closely with increased organizational citizenship, recruiting and training practices, and organizational support (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In service relationships, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) held that relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment.

From the perspective of relationship marketing, Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined relationship commitment as an exchange partner. If the committed party believes the relationship is worth promoting then they will put forth maximum effort in order to maintain the relationship. Morgan and Hunt also viewed brand loyalty as a form of commitment. Similarly, the four components contributing to organizational relationships identified by Aldrich (1975, 1979)—formalization, intensity, reciprocity, and standardization—can be viewed as forms of commitment in OPRs. Morgan and Hunt (1994) concluded that commitment is vital to the relationship of the organization and its various partners.

Commitment is generally regarded to be a significant result of good relational interactions (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Gundlach, Achrol, and Mentzer (1995) argued that commitment has the three following components: an instrumental component of some form of investment, an attitudinal component that may be described as affective commitment or psychological attachment, and a temporal dimension indicating that the relationship exists over time.

Satisfaction

Having satisfaction means that the organization and its publics feel positive toward each other. Hon and J. E. Grunig (1999) defined relationship satisfaction as “the extent to which one party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced” (p. 14). Hecht (1978) conceptualized satisfaction as the favorable affective response to the reinforcement of positive expectations in a certain kind of situation.

Stafford and Canary (1991) held that from a social exchange perspective, a satisfying relationship is one in which “the distribution of rewards is equitable and the relational rewards outweigh costs” (p. 225). Stafford and Canary (1991) also indicated that perceptions of partners’ constructive maintenance behaviors increase one’s satisfaction with the relationship, and they thus concluded that relational satisfaction probably is the hallmark of effective relational maintenance.

The importance of satisfaction as a crucial attribute of relational quality has been acknowledged widely (Ferguson, 1984; Miller & Rogers, 1976; Stafford & Canary, 1991). Ferguson (1984) held that the degree to which both an organization and its public are satisfied with their relationship is one of the significant indicators for gauging organizational relationships. Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder, and Lacobucci (2001) defined

relationship satisfaction as a consumer's affective state resulting from an overall evaluation of his or her relationship with an organization.

Given the lack of attitudinal and behavioral research in public relations, it is very important to understand how consumers' association with an organization affects their attitude toward the brand and purchase intention.

Several studies have demonstrated that corporate image affects consumer product judgments and responses in a positive manner (Belch & Belch, 1987; Carlson, 1963, Cohen, 1963; Keller & Aaker, 1994; Wansink, 1989). For example, Keller and Aaker (1992) showed that corporate credibility had a positive impact on consumer product responses.

However, much of the early empirical research on corporate associations focuses on creating measures of various constructs, such as corporate image, rather than on developing theoretical links to other important constructs, such as consumer responses (Bolger, 1959; Clevenger, Lazier, & Clark, 1965; Cohen, 1967; Hill, 1962; Spector, 1961; Tucker, 1961). Brown and Dacin (1997) noted that when a consumer identifies a product with a company, her or his overall evaluation of the company is likely to influence the evaluation of the product.

In 1998, Hon called for research to explore causal relationships between public relations activities and specific outcomes. Later, Ledingham and Bruning (2000) showed that when an organization engages in action and communication that promote a sense of openness, trust, commitment, involvement, and investment, it builds symbolic and behavioral relationships with its key publics. Ledingham and Bruning's (2000) research proved that when a managed communication program centered on the relationship

dimensions was implemented, there was a 10% increase in the number of customers who said they would stay with their current local telephone service provider.

An organization should listen to the publics' voices, and as a result bring about changes in publics' awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. To measure the overall effectiveness of organization-public relationships, it becomes important to evaluate publics' attitude toward brands as a possible outcome. Brand attitude is a major component and indicator of brand equity.

Brands are significant to organizations because they contribute to the building of intangible assets, which lead to customer loyalty, which in turn contributes to the organization's bottom line. Thus, exploring the relationship between the OPR and the OPR's contribution to brand attitude formation can be a valuable addition to the relationship theory in public relations. The present study looks at the dimensions of organization-public relationship as independent variables contributing to the formation of attitudes toward a brand.

Although no previous research has shown that each dimension of the OPRs directly influences brand attitude, the present study attempts to explore the effect of each of the four dimensions of the OPRs (trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction) on brand attitude formation. If these relationships hold, our study can propose a model for measuring attitudes toward the brand as an outcome of organization-public relationships. Based on the existing literature, the following research question was investigated:

***RQ1:** How are the four dimensions of organization-public relationships—trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment—related to attitudes toward a brand?*

Attitude and Brand Literature

Attitude

Attitude has been defined as a construct combining belief, affect, and conation intervening between stimulus and response. Allport (1935) considered it as one of the most unique and essential concepts in modern social psychology. Conceptually, an attitude is “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Eagly and Chaiken (1993) defined *psychological tendency* as a state that is internal to the person and *evaluating* as all classes of evaluative responding, whether overt or covert, cognitive, affective, or behavioral.

Research suggests that six of the strongest marketing-related variables indicative of the attitude formation process a consumer follows are: familiarity, acceptability, preference, purchase intent, satisfaction, and usage (Haley & Case, 1979; Haley, 1985). These variables resonate with the Hierarchy of Effects model, which suggests that consumers exposed to an advertising campaign are taken from unawareness to awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, and conviction to purchase the product (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961).

Mitchell and Olson (1981) defined attitude as “an individual’s internal evaluation of an object such as a branded product” (p. 318). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), attitude is “a function of his/her salient beliefs at a given point in time” (p. 222). Beliefs are the subjective associations between any two differentiable concepts and salient beliefs are those activated from memory and considered by the person in a given situation (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Research shows that the correlation between attitudes and actions can be strong under certain conditions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Fazio & Zanna, 1981). Attitudes play a key role in predicting purchase behavior for particular brands. For this reason, much study has concentrated on the cognitive and affective determinants of attitudes in hopes of predicting the conative factor. The affective link has become the main player in today's marketplace (Batra, Myers, & Aaker, 1996).

Assessing individuals' opinions, attitudes, and preferences becomes extremely important when seeking to measure the overall impact or effectiveness of a particular public relations program or activity. Lindenmann (2002) asserted that attitude research measures not only what people say about something, but also what they know and think (their mental or cognitive predispositions), what they feel (their emotions), and how they are inclined to act (their motivational or drive tendencies). Given the importance of attitude research in measuring public relations outcomes, the organization-public relationships can be used to predict consumers' attitudes toward brands.

Attitude toward the Brand (Ab)

Brand attitudes are considered important phenomena in consumer behavior, marketing, and advertising (Mitchell & Olsen, 1981; Gardner, 1985). Brand attitudes are defined in terms of consumers' overall evaluations of a brand (Wilkie, 1990).

Attitude toward the ad (Aad), attitude toward the brand (Ab), and purchase intention (PI) represent the main outcome variables in many studies of advertising effectiveness (Heath & Gaeth, 1994; Kalwani & Silk, 1982; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). While substantial effort has been devoted to measuring attitude toward the brand and purchase intention as the effect of attitude toward advertising, no empirical research has looked at the effect of organization-public relationships on brand attitude.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined attitude toward the brand as a predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular brand. Mitchell and Olson (1981) defined attitude toward the brand as consumers' overall evaluation of good or bad. Such evaluations are important to researchers because they often are the basis for consumer behaviors, such as brand choice. Semantic differential scales measuring brand attitude are frequent in marketing and advertising literature. Bruner and Hensel (1996) reported 66 published studies which measured brand attitude, typically as the dependent variable in research on product line extensions or advertising effects.

Many studies in advertising have focused on understanding how advertisements affect consumers' attitude toward advertised brands (Gardner, 1985). Many studies have shown that consumers' brand-related beliefs affect brand attitude formation (Mitchell & Olson, 1981) and change (Lutz, 1975). Understanding the roles of brand-related beliefs and attitudes toward the advertisement in the formation of brand attitudes has significant implications for theoretical conceptualizations of the attitude formation process. In the present study, organization-public relationships are used to explain brand attitudes.

According to Olins (2000), "Brands are the device we use to differentiate between otherwise almost indistinguishable competitors. Without clear branding, in some fields, we literally could not tell one product or service from another" (p. 61). Olins (2000) also suggested that people can have a relationship with a brand: "they have an immense emotional content and inspire loyalty beyond reason" (p. 63). Olins's (2000) discussion suggests that brands could consist of the following three factors: the behavior of an organization—often defined as a component of organizational identity, communications/messages to define differentiating attributes of an organization or

product, or relationships with an organization as people conceptualize that organization (Van Riel, 1995).

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) found a link between relationships and public loyalty toward an organization. Ledingham and Bruning's (1998) research showed that consumers who ranked the organization high with regard to the dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment said they would stay with that company in the face of competition. In other words, the research showed that building effective relationships can center evaluation of public relations activities on attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Bruning, 2002).

Difference between a Brand and Product

It is important to differentiate between a brand and a product. A brand is something that comes from the consumers' perceptions and ideas regarding the product. (Blackston, 1992). The product is the actual good or service with functional purpose. Therefore, the brand offers something in addition to this functional purpose. "Products are what the company makes; what the customer buys is a brand" (Kapferer, 1992, p. 2).

According to Kotler (1980), a product is defined as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that may satisfy a need or want. A brand is a product, but one that adds other dimensions to differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need (Keller, 1998). Achenbaum (1993) differentiated a brand from a product. Achenbaum said that what distinguishes a brand from its unbranded commodity counterpart is the sum of consumers' perceptions and feelings about the product's attributes and how it performs, about the brand name and what it stands for, and about the company associated with the brand.

Because the brand offers more than a product, it can be viewed as a product that provides functional benefits plus added values that consumers value enough to buy (Jones, 1986). The crucial part of this definition is that the brand offers “added value,” which is something invisible, intangible, and non-functional. The goal of most companies is to develop brands that gratify consumers with consistent added values, as well as to create, maintain, protect, and enhance its brand names. A strong brand is considered to be an asset for a company. The organization-public relationships can lead consumers to have a positive brand attitude and purchase the brand by associating these added values with the product itself.

Product-Related Attribute Beliefs

In the present study, product-related attribute beliefs were used to examine the effect on brand attitude and purchase intention via the brand attitude, compared to the effect of organization-public relationships on brand attitude and purchase intention via the brand attitude.

Keller (1998) asserted that brand associations could be classified into three major categories: attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Attributes are those descriptive features that characterize a product or service, what consumers think the product or service is or has, and what is involved with its purchase or consumption. Attributes can be product-related, and non-product-related such as price, user and usage imagery, and brand personality. According to Keller (1998), product-related attributes are “the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers” (p. 93). Product-related attributes refer to a product’s physical composition or a service’s requirements and are what determine the nature and level of product performance (Keller, 1998). Product-related attributes can be further characterized according to important and

optional features, either necessary for a product to work, or for allowing customization and more versatile, personalized usage (Keller, 1998).

Keller (1998) defined non-product-related attributes as external aspects of the product or service that often relate to its purchase or consumption in some way. Keller (1998) said that non-product-related attributes might affect the purchase or consumption procedure, but do not directly influence the product performance. Examples of non-product-related attributes that do not relate directly to product performance can be the company or person that makes the product and the country in which it is made, the type of store in which it is sold, the events for which the brand is a sponsor and the people who endorse the brand, and so on (Keller, 1998). Compared to product-related attributes, the present study assumes that organization-public relationships can be non-product-related attributes used to predict the brand attitude and purchase intention via the brand attitude.

Biel (1992) argued that brand association could be the result of corporate image, product image, and user image. Each of these three images can be divided into two types of associations. One is the perception of functional attributes, like speed or ease to use. The other is related to emotional attributes, like being exciting, innovative, or trustworthy. Farquhar and Herr (1993) suggested that the types of brand association include product category, usage situation, product attribute, and customer benefits.

Attitude is understood as an intricate set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes between an attitude object and a consumer. Several different models of attitude have been posited for consideration. The most widely accepted approach to modeling attitudes is a multi-attribute conceptualization in which attitudes are a function of the associated attributes and benefits that are salient for the attitude object itself.

The expectancy-value approach as a general framework for understanding attitudes was created by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) proposed that attitudes are a function of (a) beliefs about the attitude object (cognitive-based nature), defined as the subjective probability that the attitude object has each attribute, and (b) the evaluative aspect of these beliefs, defined as the evaluation of each attribute (affect-based nature). Fishbein and his collaborators have focused on beliefs as causes of attitudes and thereby assumed that attitudes derive from beliefs about attitude objects. As applied to marketing or advertising, this expectancy-value model sees brand attitudes as a multiplicative function of the salient beliefs that a consumer has about the brand and the evaluation of those beliefs (Keller, 1998). Based on the attitude literature, the following hypothesis was investigated:

***H1:** Product-related attribute beliefs are related to attitude toward the brand.*

To compare the effects of the organization-public relationships and product-related attribute beliefs on brand attitude as corporate associations and consumer product associations, respectively, the following research question was investigated:

***RQ2:** Are there any significant differences between the impact of organization-public relationships and product-related attribute beliefs on attitude toward the brand?*

Purchase Intention (PI)

Purchase intention (PI) is the consumers' tendency to act toward an object, and is generally measured in terms of intention to buy. Advertising managers often test the elements of the marketing mix—alternative product concepts, ads, packaging, or brand names—to determine what is most likely to influence purchase behavior (Assael, 1995). In the absence of actual buying behavior, management uses the closest substitute, intention to buy, to determine the effectiveness of the components of the marketing mix.

For any communication-based concepts to exist, it has been shown that there are multiple related theories and conceptualizations of the relationships between attitude toward the brand and most specifically purchase intention. Advertising effectiveness is widely studied by both academicians and practitioners. From a public relations perspective, the organization-public relationships may provide the opportunity for attitudinal development through influencing intention to buy.

One of the most commonly accepted theories used in marketing today, the Dual Mediation Hypothesis (Brown & Stayman, 1992; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986), addresses the many attitudinal-behavioral patterns and relationships in advertising. The DMH was developed in research studies dealing with attitude toward the brand and affective motivation. Results represented accurately the interrelationships among brand and ad cognitions, and purchase intention (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). These affective and cognitive-based attitudes toward the brand have a direct effect on purchase intentions (Homer & Yoon, 1992). This causal sequence of attitudes leading to purchase intention may be an important measure of the attitude toward the brand.

Attitudes are the most abstract and highest-level type of brand associations. Keller (1998) pointed out that consumers' brand attitudes generally depend on specific considerations concerning the attributes and benefits of the brand. The Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) expectancy-value model suggests that overall brand attitudes depend on the strength of association between the salient attributes associated with the brand and the evaluation of those attribute beliefs. It is important to consider two different bases of brand attitudes formation: (1) beliefs about product-related attributes and functional benefits and/or (2) beliefs about non-product-related attributes and symbolic and

experiential benefits (Keller, 1998). Based on theoretical background about causal relationships of attitude-purchase intention, it was hypothesized that:

H2: Attitude toward the brand will be positively related to purchase intention.

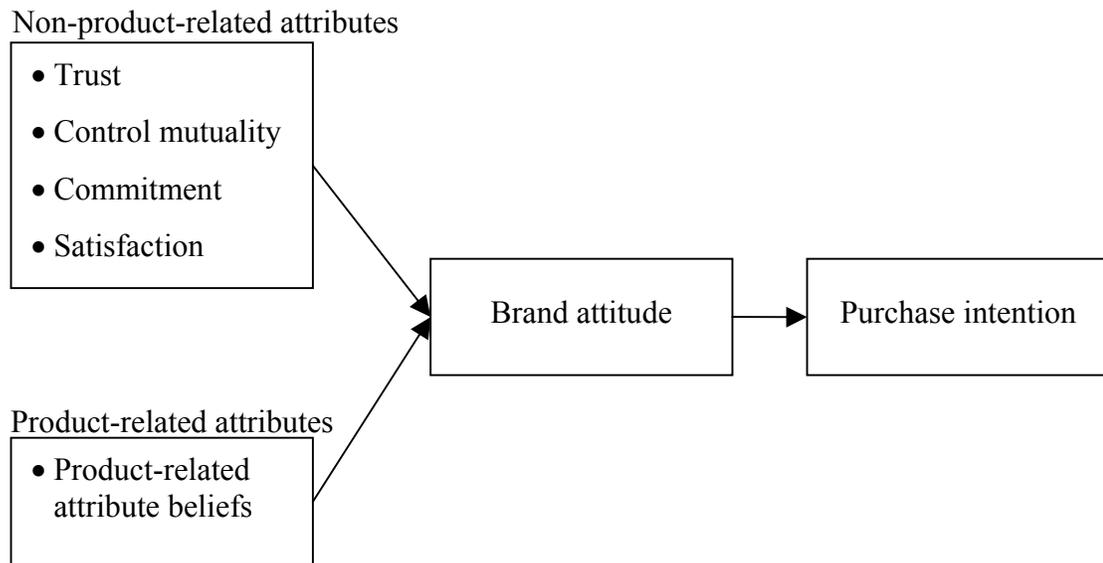


Figure 2-1. Conceptual model of the relationships among OPRs, product-related attribute beliefs, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The present study investigates empirically the effects of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention via the brand attitude. Based on the proposition that product-related attribute beliefs affect brand attitude, the present study also measures product-related attribute beliefs to compare the effects of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs on brand attitude and purchase intention via the brand attitude.

For the present study, Sony and its brand of personal computers, VAIO, were selected. Sony has always had very strong brand equity, particularly related to its electronic appliances such as television sets, camcorders, and the portable cassette player Walkman. The reason for choosing a personal computer as a product is that a computer is very relevant to students, the participants of this empirical study. In the near future, students are likely to purchase computers, which require cognitive effort (H. Lee, J. Lee, & Harrell, 2001). In addition, since a computer has product-related attributes, the present study is able to measure the relationship between computer-related attribute beliefs and brand attitude.

By using sophisticated measurement tools that demonstrate the fundamental role of relationships in public relations, the present study adds to the body of knowledge in the public relations field. In particular, the present study advances the existing theory and literature on organization-public relationships using attitudinal and behavioral approaches. In addition, the present study is the first to examine both the link between organization-

public relationships and brand attitude and the link between OPRs and purchase intention via the brand attitude. This innovative approach is based on the growing trend of evaluating public relations in the context of relationship management.

The present study uses an intercept survey of students. All previous studies on OPRs used surveys to measure relationships between an organization and publics. To allow for generalizations among college students, the present study assumes that an intercept survey is better than a class survey. In addition, survey research is the most frequently used research method in public relations (Pavlik, 1987). A content analysis done by Pavlik and Summerall (1986) found that about 67% of the published studies in public relations journals used the survey method.

Surveys are used to gather information from a sample of individuals and are probably the best method available in social sciences because it allows for data collection from a large population (Babbie, 2001). Surveys are popular research methods because they offer many advantages. For example, surveys are versatile in that they enable statistical analysis of data, can be cost-efficient, and can be administered in various ways (Babbie, 2001). However, survey research has the weaknesses of being somewhat artificial, potentially superficial, and difficult to gain a full sense of social processes in their natural settings (Babbie, 2001).

However, given the purpose of the current study, survey methodology was used to develop a measure of the perceptions that publics have of their relationships with an organization. The results of the survey will provide data to test the effects of organization-public relationships on attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) suggested that in order to evaluate the quality of an organization's service, a good approach is to measure the publics' perception of it.

Similarly, the present study uses survey methodology to measure the dimensions of OPRs from the perspective of the public's perception of their relationship with a company and brand attitude and purchase intention. Since the survey findings can provide quantifiable evidence of the perceptions that publics have of their relationships with an organization, the results of the present study will contribute to the public relations management and demonstrate the value of the effect of organization-public relationships on brand attitude.

The present study used a survey instrument developed by J. E. Grunig and Huang (summarized in Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999) from the University of Maryland to measure organization-public relationships. The instrument represents a shorter version of an earlier six-dimension scale (trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationships, and exchange relationships) created by the same researchers. J. E. Grunig and Huang (2000) argued that trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction represent the essence of OPRs mentioning that these factors occur consistently in the literature regarding interpersonal and organizational relationships. Therefore, the present study uses the four most important dimensions (trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction) out of the six original dimensions of relationship measurement scales.

Pretests

Before conducting the actual survey, two different pretests were conducted. This preliminary step, less expensive and time consuming than the actual research, is necessary to uncover item ambiguities and other sources of bias and error (Garson, 2003). According to Converse and Presser (1986), a minimum of two pretests is necessary, with 25-75 participants similar to those in the final sample. The two pretests conducted in the present study are described below.

Pretest 1

Pretest 1 was conducted to decide the salient attributes of Sony VAIO computers that could measure product-related attribute beliefs. Thirty students at the University of Florida participated in Pretest 1. Fifteen students were undergraduate students taking Advertising Strategy (ADV 3001) and 15 students were graduate students taking Public Relations Management (PUR 6607). The salient attributes of Sony computers were determined by a free-elicitation technique as recommended by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). When eliciting the salient beliefs that determine attitudes toward behaviors, it is essential to ensure correspondence in action, target, context, and time elements (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) propose that when we elicit salient beliefs about a consumer buying something in the next six months, we should ask the consumer the following questions: (1) What do you believe are the advantages and disadvantages of your buying something in the next six months? (2) What else do you associate with your buying something in the next six months? However, attempting to understand the reasons for purchasing one brand over another, market researchers have often asked questions such as, "In thinking about buying an automobile, what characteristics are important to you?" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Therefore, to elicit salient attributes, respondents in the pretest were given a few minutes to list their thoughts in response to the following question: "In thinking about buying a laptop computer, what characteristics are important to you?" Clearly, the perceived consequences of buying a Sony VAIO laptop computer may be very different from those of buying a laptop computer in general. As the present study assumed that VAIO was not a brand well known among all college students, respondents were asked to write down the attributes important to them if they were buying any laptop computer instead of a Sony VAIO laptop computer.

Table 3-1 shows the five most frequent salient attributes that the respondents considered important.

Table 3-1. Salient attributes of Sony VAIO computers

Sony VAIO computer	Frequency	Percent of responses
Better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)	27	28.72
Longer/Better warranty (including technical service)	22	23.40
More portable	19	20.21
Better customer service (not including technical service)	10	10.64
Nicer looking design/appearance	9	9.57
Others (customized computer, bundled software, operating platform, etc)	7	7.45
Total	94	100

N=30

Better quality of components (28.72%) such as CD-ROM and DVD drive was regarded as the most important attribute when they consider buying a laptop computer, followed closely by longer/better warranty including technical service (23.40%). Other attributes mentioned by respondents were more portable (20.21%), better customer service not including technical service (10.64%), and nicer looking design/appearance (9.57). Attributes such as customization, bundled software, an operating platform, and others (7.45%) were grouped in a separate category. When selecting the five most mentioned important attributes, brand reputation (12) and price (14) were excluded from the Sony VAIO computer's salient attribute list because they are non-product-related attributes.

In conclusion, better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive), longer/better warranty (including technical service), more portable, better customer

service (not including technical service), and nicer looking design/appearance were selected as five most salient attributes in the present study.

Pretest 2

The second pretest was conducted with 37 University of Florida students to check if college students were qualified as consumers who have established relationships with Sony, and to help identify whether there were any problems with the survey instrument or survey instructions. Participants were 16 graduate students enrolled in Public Relations Management (PUR 6607) course and 21 undergraduate students enrolled in Introduction to Public Speaking (SPC 2600) who completed a self-administered questionnaire.

To make sure that college students are suitable for the present study, the students in this pretest were asked how familiar they were with the company Sony, Sony's products in general, and whether they have ever purchased Sony products. Also, this pretest checked how familiar college students were with Sony VAIO desktop or laptop computers. The present study assumed that the company and given product category should be well known among college students, even though they do not know about the brand. In addition, this pretest also included questions about their ownership of a computer and a Sony VAIO computer.

The pretest results showed that everyone in the sample had some degree of familiarity with the company Sony. Fourteen students (37.8%) answered "somewhat familiar", 15 students (40.5%) answered "familiar", and 8 students (21.6%) answered "very familiar" to the question "How familiar are you with the company Sony?". Regarding the familiarity with the Sony's products in general, only one student (2.7%) answered "not familiar at all", 13 students (35.1%) answered "somewhat familiar", 17 students (45.9%) answered "familiar", and 6 students (16.2%) answered "very familiar".

Of all 37 students, only two of them had never purchased any Sony products before. In terms of ownership of computers, 35 students had personal computers and two students did not. Of the 35 students who had computers, five students (14.3%) had a Sony VAIO desktop or laptop computer. As the present study assumed, most students were not familiar with Sony VAIO computers. Eighteen students (48.6%) answered “not familiar at all”, 13 students (35.1%) answered “somewhat familiar,” two students answered “familiar”, and four students (10.8%) answered “very familiar” to the question, “How familiar are you with “Sony VAIO desktop or laptop computers?”. Of those four students who answered “very familiar”, three students already had Sony VAIO computers.

In regards to the wording of relationship questionnaire items, the respondents’ answers seemed to indicate that the questions asked were relevant to students as consumers of Sony. In the instructions at the beginning of the relationship questionnaire, the explicit sentence, “When answering each question, think about your relationship with Sony as a customer” made respondents answer the questions thinking of themselves as customers of Sony. To avoid confusion, certain items used by previous studies were slightly modified in the present study. Specifically, the statement “people like me,” which was present in several items, was changed to “me as a customer.” For example, a question borrowed from previous public relations instruments, “Whenever Sony makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me,” was reworded to “Whenever Sony makes an important decision, I know they will be concerned about me as a customer.” In addition, one item with negative meaning was changed into a positive meaning as to not confuse respondents. The original question, “In dealing with people like me, Sony has a tendency to throw its weight around” was reworded as “In

dealing with customers like me, Sony does not have a tendency to throw its weight around.” Also, the original wording of the question, “This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say” was changed to “Sony and I pay attention to what each other communicated.” Table 3-2 indicates the means of familiarity with Sony, Sony products in general, and Sony VAIO computers in particular.

Table 3-2. The means of familiarity with Sony, Sony products and Sony VAIO computers

	Mean	SD
Familiarity with the company Sony	2.84	.76
Familiarity with Sony products general	2.76	.76
Familiarity with Sony VAIO desktop or laptop computers	1.78	.98

Note: Each item was measured on a 4-point Likert scale.

In conclusion, the results of the first pretest provided the five most salient attributes for measuring product-related attribute beliefs based on the expectancy-value model. Better quality of components (27%) was the most important attribute, followed by longer/better warranty (22%), more portable (19%), better customer service (10%), and nicer looking design/appearance. The second pretest confirmed that college students fit the present study as customers of Sony based on their familiarity with the company, its products, and prior buying experience of Sony products. The degree of familiarity with the company Sony and Sony products in general served as the prerequisite that college students are likely to have relationships with Sony. In addition, reworded relationship questionnaire items proved to be appropriate to college students as customers of Sony.

Survey

Sample and Procedure

College students are heavy users and buyers of computers, and therefore are relevant respondents for the present study. Two hundred thirty-three students at the University of Florida voluntarily agreed to complete the survey. Data collection took place in the Plaza of the Americas, a public area and forum on the university campus, on two days from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Respondents who completed the survey received pizza as an incentive for their participation.

Before beginning the analysis, the present study had to eliminate responses that did not qualify for the study, as explained below. Because this survey questionnaire was designed for a student sample, four non-student respondents were excluded from the present study. Twenty-eight people who already had Sony VAIO computers were also excluded because they were not qualified to answer the question about the intent to buy a Sony VAIO computer in the near future. People who answered “not familiar at all” to either question of familiarity with the company Sony or with Sony’s products in general were excluded. Also, seven people who had never purchased Sony’s products before were excluded because the present study assumed that they have no relationship with Sony. Eleven incomplete questionnaires were also eliminated, because the respondents skipped a significant number of items. One participant that answered “7” to all 7-point Likert scale questions was excluded from the present study as well. Therefore, out of 233 completed questionnaires, a total of 52 questionnaires were excluded. As a result, the final sample contained 178 valid cases.

Measures

J. E. Grunig, Huang , and other graduate students in public relations at the University of Maryland have developed reliable indicators of public perceptions of organization-public relationships. The initial scale was composed of six relationship indicators: trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, commitment, communal relationships, and exchange relationships. A pilot survey using the instrument was conducted to see how respondents perceived their relationships with five well-known organizations (General Electric, the National Rifle Association, the Social Security Administration, Microsoft, and the American Red Cross). Based upon the pilot's low response rate, the researchers developed a shortened version of the instrument with only four indicators: trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. The study proved that the scales used for all four relationship indicators were highly reliable.

All reliability coefficients were above .80 and many approached .90. Table 3-3 shows the values of Cronbach's alpha for these four indicators of relationships with five organizations.

Table 3-3. Cronbach's alpha for four indicators of relationships with five organizations

Relationship indicator	General Electric	National Rifle Assoc.	Social Security	Microsoft	Red Cross	Mean alpha value
Trust						
6-item scale	.86	.81	.89	.86	.86	.86
Control Mutuality						
4-item scale	.85	.85	.86	.86	.84	.85
Commitment						
4-item scale	.81	.89	.83	.82	.84	.84
Satisfaction						
4-item scale	.86	.89	.89	.88	.86	.88

*Source: Hon, L. C., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations*. Gainesville, FL: The Institute for Public Relations.

J. E. Grunig and Huang (summarized in Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999) proved that these scales, given their high reliability, were good measures of organization-public relationships and that they could be used to measure strength of relationships in either quantitative or qualitative research. J. E. Grunig and Huang suggested that the number of instrument items chosen depends upon a researcher's needs. However, J. E. Grunig and Huang advised that using the shorter index is likely to increase the completion rate. Hence, our study adopts the shortest scales comprised of four relationship indicators. J. E. Grunig and Huang (2000) have identified trust, control mutuality, relationship commitment, and relationship satisfaction as the most important outcome factors in organization-public relationships because they appear consistently in both organizational and interpersonal communication literature. All of the relationship items used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

In regards to predict brand attitude, probably the most widely used approach is based on a multi-attribute formulation, in which brand attitudes are seen as a function of the associated attributes and benefits that are salient for the brand (Keller, 1998). The present study adopts Fishbein and Ajzen's expectancy-value model ($A_0 = \sum_{i=1}^n b_i e_i$) as a framework for predicting brand attitudes.

To measure brand attitude, the most frequently used multi-dimensional scale (unfavorable-favorable, bad-good, dislike-like, and negative-positive) in the 1990s *Journal of Advertising* was adopted (Woo, 2001). Studies in the 1990s using that multi-dimensional scale reported high reliability coefficients of items, ranging from .84 to .97.

In regard to purchase intention, a three-item scale (unlikely/likely, impossible/possible, and improbable/probable) was adapted from Mackenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986). Cronbach's alpha for these items was over .88. Machleit, Allen, and Madden (1993) also used this scale and their coefficient alpha values were above .95.

The survey ended with a section of demographic questions such as gender, age, and year in school.

Table 3-4 presents the operational definitions of all variables used in the present study.

Table 3-4. Operationalization of variables

Variable	Operational Definition
Trust	One party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999)
Control mutuality	The degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999)
Commitment	The extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999)
Satisfaction	The extent to which one party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationships are reinforced (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999)
Product-related attribute beliefs	A function of (1) beliefs about the attitude object, defined as the subjective assumption that the attitude object has particular attributes, and (2) the importance of these beliefs, defined as the importance of each attribute (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975)
Attitude toward the brand	Consumers' overall evaluations of a brand (Wilkie, 1990) Multi-item scales (unfavorable-favorable, bad-good, dislike-like, and negative-positive) were used (Holbrook & Batra, 1987)
Purchase intention	Consumers' tendency to act toward an object. Multi-item scales (unlikely-likely, impossible-possible, and improbable-probable) were used (Mackenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986)

Independent Variables

Trust. The present study adopted Hon and J. E. Grunig's (1999) definition of trust as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (p. 14). Respondents were asked to indicate the degree of trust they had in Sony

on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A total of six items, as used in Hon and J. E. Grunig's (1999) study, were employed to measure trust (see Table 3-5).

Control mutuality. The present study adopted Hon and J. E. Grunig's (1999) definition of control mutuality as "the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another" (p. 13). Control mutuality was measured with a four-item sub-scale from Hon and J. E. Grunig's scale (1999). However, in the present study, one reverse item was changed to the opposite meaning as to not confuse respondents (see Table 3-5). Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Commitment. The present study adopted Hon and J. E. Grunig's (1999) definition of commitment as "the extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote" (p. 14). Hon and J. E. Grunig (1999) used a four-item scale to measure the commitment of the public to the organization. To provide consistency, the present study measured commitment on the same 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Satisfaction. The present study adopted Hon and J. E. Grunig's (1999) definition of satisfaction as "the extent to which one party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationships are reinforced" (p. 14). Again, Hon and J. E. Grunig (1999) used a four-item sub-scale to measure satisfaction. Accordingly, the present study measured satisfaction using the same 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) on four items.

Product-related Attribute Beliefs. The present study adopted Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) expectancy-value model as a tool for predicting brand attitude. According to Fishbein and Ajzen's expectancy-value model, beliefs, as causes of

attitudes are a function of (a) beliefs about the attitude object, defined as the subjective probability that the attitude object has each attribute, and (b) the evaluative aspect of these beliefs, defined as the evaluation of each attribute (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Expectancy-value formulation is expressed algebraically as follows:

$$A_o = \sum_{i=1}^n b_i e_i$$

where A_o is the attitude toward the object, action, or event, o ; b_i is the belief i about o (expressed as the subjective probability that o has the attribute i); e_i is the evaluation of the attribute i ; and n is the number of salient attributes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

For example, if a person believes that a new car is visually appealing but lacks safety features, these attributes will be represented by the subjective evaluation that the car has those attributes (i.e., high probability of visual appeal and low probability of safety features), as well as by the evaluation of each attribute (i.e., the positive evaluation of visual appeal and safety features). In this example, a person may rate the above attributes as follows: 5 for visual appeal and 3 for safety features on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely unlikely*) to 7 (*extremely likely*). Also, the person may evaluate the above attributes as follows: 2 for visual appeal and 6 for safety features on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely bad*) to 7 (*extremely good*). Thus, the person's attitude toward the car can be predicted by multiplying his or her evaluation of each of the attributes by the strength of his or her belief ($5 \times 2 = 10$; $3 \times 6 = 18$) and then summing the all salient beliefs for the total set of beliefs ($10 + 18 = 28$). In conclusion, it can be said that the person's attitude toward the car is predicted to be slightly positive (in this example, 2 would be the lowest possible score, and 98 would be the highest).

However, unlike Fishbein's (1963) evaluative component of the expectancy-value model, in the present study attribute evaluation was measured in terms of importance borrowed from Galloway and Meek's (1981) research. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) found that the addition of the importance factor in the expectancy-value model did not improve, but sometimes even attenuated the prediction of attitudes. That may be partially due to the closeness of salient belief items included in the expectancy-value model and important belief items (Cai, 2001). The present study measures laptop-related attributes, which will vary by user preference and purpose of usage. Hence, some attributes may be salient to certain users, but not at all to others. Therefore, the importance factor can be more valuable than the good-bad factor in predicting brand attitude in the present study.

The salient attributes of Sony computers were determined by a free-elicitation technique recommended by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), and a pretest was conducted for that purpose. Product-related attribute beliefs were measured by asking respondents how likely they will have certain attributes in a Sony VAIO laptop computer on a 7-point measurement scale ranged from 1 (*extremely unlikely*) to 7 (*extremely likely*). The importance of the attributes was measured by asking respondents to evaluate each of them. While Fishbein's evaluation scale ranges from -4 (*bad*) to 4 (*good*), the present study used the importance scale from 1 (*extremely unimportant*) to 7 (*extremely important*). Finally, to predict brand attitude, product-related attribute beliefs were multiplied by the importance of each of the salient attributes, and these values were summed.

Table 3-5. Items measuring independent variables

Trust (6-item scale)

Sony treats me fairly and justly as a customer.

Whenever Sony makes an important decision, I know they will be concerned about me as a customer.

Sony can be relied on to keep its promises to me as a customer.

I believe that Sony takes my opinions into account as a customer when making decisions.

I feel very confident about Sony's skills.

Sony has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Control mutuality (4-item scale)

Sony and I pay attention to what each other communicate.

Sony believes my opinions as a customer are legitimate.

In dealing with customers like me, Sony does not have a tendency to throw its weight around.

Sony really listens to what I have to say as a customer.

Commitment (4-item scale)

I feel that Sony is trying to maintain a long-term commitment with me as a customer.

Sony wants to maintain a relationship with me as a customer.

There is a long-term bond between Sony and me as a customer.

Compared to other companies, I value my relationship with Sony more.

Satisfaction (4-item scale)

I am happy with Sony.

Both Sony and I benefit from our relationship.

I am happy with my interactions with Sony.

Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship Sony has established with me.

Beliefs of the Salient Attributes

Longer/Better warranty (including technical service)

Better customer service (not including technical service)

Nicer looking design/appearance

Better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)

More portable

Importance of the salient attributes

Longer/Better warranty (including technical service)

Better customer service (not including technical service)

Nicer looking design/appearance

Better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)

More portable

Dependent Variables

Attitude toward the brand (Ab). Brand attitude has been one of the most widely examined constructs in consumer behavior (Berger & Mitchell, 1989). The present study adopts Wilkie's (1990) conceptualization and defines attitude toward the brand as consumers' overall evaluations of a brand. In the present study, attitude toward the brand

was measured by four-items using a 7-point scale (see Table 3-6). The scales (unfavorable-favorable, bad-good, dislike-like, and negative-positive) were borrowed from prior research by Holbrook and Batra (1987). Their reliability coefficient alpha for these items was .98, suggesting the brand attitude measure had extremely high internal consistency. In addition, thirteen advertising studies that used the same multi-item scales reported Cronbach's alphas ranging from .84 to .97 (Woo, 2001).

Table 3-6. Items measuring dependent variables

Attitude toward the brand (4-item scale)

Unfavorable/Favorable
Bad/Good
Dislike/Like
Negative/Positive

Purchase intention (3-item scale)

Unlikely/Likely
Impossible/Possible
Improbable/Probable

Purchase intention (PI). In the present study, purchase intention is defined as consumers' tendency to act toward an object. Purchase intention was measured with a three-item scale adapted from Mackenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986) (see Table 3-6). They suggested that a Dual Mediation Hypothesis (DMH), which postulates that attitude toward the advertising influences brand attitude both directly and indirectly through its effect on brand cognitions, is superior to other three models under particular conditions in the pretest stage. The DMH was developed in research dealing with attitude toward the brand and affective motivation. The results represented accurately the interrelationships among brand and ad cognitions and purchase intention (Mackenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986).

Respondents were asked, “What is the probability that you will try this brand when it becomes available in your area?” In each case, they chose from the following responses: unlikely/likely, impossible/possible, and improbable/probable. Mackenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986) obtained a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of over .88 for these items.

In conclusion, the present study adopts the shortest scales for the four most important dimensions of Hon and J. E. Grunig (1999)’s relationship measurement scales. All relationship items were measured on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In addition to relationship theory, the present study uses the expectancy-value model to measure the effects of product-related attribute beliefs on brand attitude. However, instead of Fishbien’s (1963) evaluative component of the expectancy-value model, the importance component of the salient attributes was used. In addition, reliable multi-item scales of brand attitude and purchase intention were used.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Pearson’s correlations, multiple regression analysis, and path analysis.

Pearson’s correlations were run before conducting multiple regression analysis in order to determine any significant relationships among the variables in this study. Multiple regression analysis was used to measure the effect of each indicator of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs on attitude toward the brand. The general purpose of multiple regression is to learn more about the relationship between several independent or predictor variables and a dependent or criterion variable. Multiple regression procedures are widely used in social science research, because they allow the researcher to answer the question, “What is the best predictor of ...?” Using multiple regression, the present

study investigates whether the dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs are significantly related to brand attitude and purchase intention via the brand attitude, and whether brand attitude determines purchase intention.

In addition, using path analysis, the present study measures the causal relationships between (1) each indicator of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs and (2) purchase intention via brand attitude. Path analysis is an extension of the regression model, used to test the fit of the correlation matrix against two or more causal models which are being compared by the researcher (Garson, 2003). Path analysis utilizes as many regression models as necessary to include all hypothesized relationships in the theoretical explanation.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

Overview of the Statistical Analysis

In order to analyze the data collected for the present study, the SPSS program was used. The data set contained a total of 178 cases. This chapter consists of three sections. First, descriptive statistics about the present study respondents are discussed. Second, the research questions and hypotheses are addressed, using Pearson correlation and regression analyses (simple regression, multiple regression, and hierarchical regression). Finally, the results of the path analysis, performed to measure the causal relationships between (1) each indicator of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs and (2) purchase intention via brand attitude, are presented.

Profile of the Sample

All respondents used for analysis in the present study were college students at the University of Florida. Of the 178 total respondents, 95 (53.4%) were males and 83 (46.6%) were females (see Table 4-1). Most of them were undergraduate students (81.5%), and the remainder were graduate students. In terms of academic classification, 16 respondents (9.0%) were freshmen, 34 (19.1%) were sophomores, 40 (22.5%) were juniors, 55 (30.9%) were seniors, and 33 (18.5%) were graduate students. Respondents' age ranged from 18 to 40. However, over 90% of respondents were in the 18-25 age group. The mean age was 21.76 years old.%

Table 4-1. Demographic profile of the respondents

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender		
Males	95	53.4
Females	83	46.6
Total	178	100
Age		
18 – 25	162	91.0
26 – 35	14	7.87
Over 35	2	1.12
Total	178	100
Education Level		
Freshmen	16	9.0
Sophomores	34	19.1
Juniors	40	22.5
Seniors	55	30.9
Graduate students	33	18.5
Total	178	100

Relationship Assessment-Familiarity

In the survey, respondents were asked how familiar they were with the company Sony, Sony's products in general, and Sony VAIO desktop or laptop computers. To make sure that they are customers of, and had established relationships with Sony, the respondents should be at least somewhat familiar with the company and its products.

The results showed that the students in the sample fit the present study as customers of Sony. Table 4-2 presents the respondents' familiarity with Sony, Sony's products and Sony VAIO computers. In terms of familiarity with the company Sony, 46 students (25.8%) were somewhat familiar, 66 students (37.1%) were familiar, and 66 students (37.1%) were very familiar (see Table 4-2). When it came to familiarity with Sony products in general, 53 students (29.8%) were somewhat familiar, 80 students (44.9%) were familiar, and 45 students (25.3%) were very familiar (see Table 4-2). Familiarity with the company Sony and Sony's products in general indicates the existence of a relationship with Sony.

Respondents were also asked whether they had purchased Sony products before to see if they were customers of Sony. All respondents had purchased Sony products before.

Regarding familiarity with Sony VAIO computers, 79 students (44.4%) were not familiar at all, 54 students (30.3%) were somewhat familiar, 34 students (19.1%) were familiar, and 11 students (6.2%) were very familiar (see Table 4-2).

In terms of computer ownership, 149 students (83.7%) had computers, while 29 students (16.3%) did not own a computer. Since no respondent in the sample had a Sony VAIO computer, the present study assumed that the respondents did not have prior attitudes toward Sony VAIO laptop computers

Table 4-2. Responses indicating familiarity with Sony, Sony's products and Sony VAIO computers

	Familiarity with the company Sony	Familiarity with the Sony's products in general	Familiarity with Sony VAIO desktop or laptop computers
M	3.11	2.96	1.87
SD	.79	.74	.93
Not familiar at all	-----	-----	79 (44.4%)
Somewhat familiar	46 (25.8%)	53 (29.8%)	54 (30.3%)
Familiar	66 (37.1%)	80 (44.9%)	34 (19.1%)
Very familiar	66 (37.1%)	45 (25.3%)	11 (6.2)
Total	178 (100%)	178 (100%)	178 (100%)

Note: Each item was measured on 4-point Likert-scales.

Descriptions of the Variables

A summary of the general findings of the variables in the present study is shown in Table 4-3. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all the items in the present study were 7-point, semantic differential scales.

Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs)

Eighteen items were used to measure organization-public relationships, of which six were measures of trust, four were measures of control mutuality, four were measures of commitment, and four were measures of satisfaction. The mean score for trust in Sony was 4.70, for control mutuality 4.22, for commitment 4.24, and for satisfaction 4.68. Trust received the highest mean score while control mutuality received the lowest (see Table 4-3).

Beliefs and Importance of Salient Attributes

The mean score of beliefs about salient attributes was 5.22 (see Table 4-3). Of the five salient attributes, the respondents rated “more portable” as the attribute most likely to find in a Sony laptop computer, and “nicer looking design/appearance” as the attribute least likely to find in a Sony laptop computer. In terms of importance of the salient attributes, the respondents rated “better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)” as the most important attribute, and “nicer looking design/appearance” as the least important attribute. The mean score of the five items of importance of the salient attributes was 5.65, which was higher than the mean score of the beliefs about the salient attributes (see Table 4-3).

Attitude toward the Brand

The respondents were asked, “What is your attitude toward the Sony VAIO laptop computer?” They answered on four semantic differential scales regarding the following items: unfavorable/favorable, bad/good, dislike/like, and negative/positive. The mean score of the four items measuring attitude toward the brand was 4.82 (see Table 4-3).

Purchase Intention

The respondents rated their intent to buy a Sony VAIO laptop computer the lowest of all variables measured in the present study. The mean score of the three items of purchase intention was 3.62 on a 7-point semantic differential scale.

Table 4-3. Descriptive statistics of each variable

	Number of items	N	M	SD
<u>Trust</u>	6			
Sony treats me fairly and justly as a customer.		178	4.57	1.11
Whenever Sony makes an important decision, I know they will be concerned about me as a customer.		178	4.18	1.21
Sony can be relied on to keep its promises to me as a customer.		178	4.56	1.26
I believe that Sony takes my opinions into account as a customer when making decisions.		176	4.51	1.25
I feel very confident about Sony's skills.		178	5.31	1.24
Sony has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.		178	5.17	1.16
Category mean			4.70	.97
<u>Control mutuality</u>	4			
Sony and I pay attention to what each other communicate.		176	4.02	1.47
Sony believes my opinions as a customer are legitimate.		176	4.39	1.23
In dealing with customers like me, Sony does not have a tendency to throw its weight around.		174	4.26	1.21
Sony really listens to what I have to say as a customer.		175	4.21	1.26
Category mean			4.22	1.10
<u>Commitment</u>	4			
I feel that Sony is trying to maintain a long-term commitment with me as a customer.		175	4.45	1.47
Sony wants to maintain a relationship with me as a customer.		175	4.69	1.41
There is a long-term bond between Sony and me as a customer.		176	3.97	1.61
Compared to other companies, I value my relationship with Sony more.		177	3.88	1.70
Category mean			4.24	1.34
<u>Satisfaction</u>	4			
I am happy with Sony.		177	4.90	1.37
Both Sony and I benefit from our relationship.		176	4.55	1.40

Table 4-3. Continued

	Number of items	N	M	SD
I am happy with my interactions with Sony.		176	4.69	1.20
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship Sony has established with me.		176	4.61	1.27
Category mean			4.68	1.20
<u>Beliefs about salient attributes</u>	5			
Longer/Better warranty (including technical service)		178	5.08	1.36
Better customer service (not including technical service)		178	4.92	1.31
Nicer looking design/appearance		177	5.29	1.32
Better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)		177	5.40	1.33
More portable		177	5.41	1.32
Category mean			5.22	1.07
<u>Importance of the attributes</u>	5			
Longer/Better warranty (including technical service)		178	5.83	1.36
Better customer service (not including technical service)		178	5.63	1.38
Nicer looking design/appearance		178	4.98	1.49
Better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)		178	6.12	1.17
More portable		178	5.67	1.31
Category mean			5.65	.95
<u>Attitude toward the brand</u>	4			
Unfavorable/Favorable		176	4.82	1.36
Bad/Good		174	4.75	1.32
Dislike/Like		173	4.83	1.25
Negative/Positive		175	4.88	1.26
Category mean			4.82	1.18
<u>Purchase intention</u>	3			
Unlikely/Likely		176	3.20	1.90
Impossible/Possible		175	4.06	1.69
Improbably/Probable		175	3.62	1.79
Category mean			3.62	1.67

Reliability Checks

For the integration of items, the present study averaged the value of all items for each variable. As a prerequisite for averaging, the items within each variable should have a high internal reliability; thus, Cronbach's alpha was computed. Alpha is a coefficient that indicates how well the items measuring the same characteristic correlate with one

another (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). Generally, reliability coefficients over .90 are considered “excellent,” over .80 “very good,” and values over .70 are “adequate” (Kline, 1998). Table 4-4 shows that Cronbach’s alpha of each scale exceeded .75, which means that all scales can be used statistically in the present study.

Table 4-4. Cronbach’s alpha of variables

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha
Trust	.90
Control mutuality	.87
Commitment	.89
Satisfaction	.93
Beliefs of the salient attributes	.86
Importance of the salient attribute	.75
Attitude toward the brand	.93
Purchase intention	.92

Particularly, the reliability coefficients obtained were higher than those found in J. E. Grunig and Huang’s (summarized in Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999) research that originated the scales used here. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Maryland study produced highly reliable scales for all the relationship indicators. The reliability coefficient of trust was .90, which was higher than .86 of the Maryland research. The reliability coefficient of control mutuality was .87, which was higher than .85 of the Maryland research. Regarding commitment, its reliability coefficient was .89, which was higher than .84 of the Maryland research. The reliability coefficient of satisfaction was .93, which was also higher than .88 of the Maryland research. In terms of attitude toward the brand, its reliability coefficient was .93, which could fall into the range from .84 to .97 of the same multi-item scale for brand attitude in the 1990’s *Journal of Advertising*.

The reliability coefficient of purchase intention was .92, which was higher than Mackenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986)'s Cronbach's alpha of the same multi-items.

Based on these results, the present study averaged the values of items for each variable. However, based on expectancy-value model, product-related attribute beliefs were multiplied by the importance of each of the salient attributes, and these values were summed.

Research Questions and Hypotheses Testing

Test of Research Question 1

RQ1: How are the four dimensions of organization-public relationships—trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction—related to attitude toward the brand?

Before conducting a multiple regression analysis, Pearson correlations were run in order to determine any significant relationships between each of the dimensions of organization-public relations with attitude toward the brand. Pearson's r is a measure of association which varies from -1 to +1, with 0 indicating no linear relationship and $-/+1$ indicating a perfect negative/positive linear relationship (Garson, 2003). Table 4-5 shows that all variables measuring dimensions of OPRs correlated with brand attitude. All correlations were statistically significant at the level of 0.01. The resulting Pearson's r ranged from .251 to .803 (see Table 4-5).

Trust correlated most strongly with control mutuality ($r=.775, p<.001$) and the least with brand attitude, although r was still significant ($r=.251, p<.001$). Control mutuality correlated most strongly with commitment ($r=.784, p<.001$), while commitment correlated most strongly with satisfaction ($r=.803, p<.001$). Satisfaction correlated most strongly with trust ($r=.706, p=.001$). Of all variables, brand attitude as

the dependent variable generated the weakest correlations, yet still significant, with its predictor variables (see Table 4-5).

In brief, these correlation results showed that (1) the four dimensions of OPRs were significantly related to attitude toward the brand, partially confirming the theoretical assumption of the relationship between OPRs and attitude toward the brand, and (2) the four dimensions of OPR were strongly associated with one another, indicating that there might be high multicollinearity among the four dimensions of OPRs in explaining the variance of attitude toward the brand.

Table 4-5. Correlations of the dimensions of OPRs and attitude toward the brand

	Trust	Control mutuality	Commitment	Satisfaction	Brand attitude
Trust	1.00				
Control mutuality	.775**	1.00			
Commitment	.731**	.784**	1.00		
Satisfaction	.706**	.709**	.803**	1.00	
Brand attitude	.251**	.302**	.300**	.367**	1.00

Note: **. $P < .01$ (2-tailed).

A multiple regression of brand attitude including all four dimensions of organization-public relationship was performed. As shown in Table 4-6, the equation is statistically significant ($F=6.274$, $p<.001$), and 13.6% of the variance in brand attitude is explained statistically by the four dimensions of OPRs. Of the four independent variables, only satisfaction predicted significantly the attitude toward the brand ($\beta=.358$, $p<.05$). This result implied that there were possible multicollinearity problems. Such problems occur when any single independent variable is highly correlated with a set of other independent variables (Hair et al. 1998).

To assess multivariate multicollinearity, partial correlations were tested in the present study. The partial correlation relates directly to the bivariate Pearson correlations between each pair of variables controlling for the rest of variables (Agresti & Finlay, 1997). As shown in Table 4-6, compared to Pearson correlation values, partial correlations of trust, control mutuality, and commitment with attitude toward the brand showed very different values except for satisfaction. Particularly, both trust and commitment had negative partial correlation values. Therefore, multicollinearity possibly caused the result of this multiple regression model.

Table 4-6. Multiple regression analysis of attitude toward the brand with trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction as independent variables

Dependent variable: Attitude toward the brand							
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations	
	B	SE	Beta			zero-order	partial
Trust	-.129	.152	-.108	-.849	.397	.239	-.067
Control mutuality	.166	.144	.160	1.158	.248	.297	.091
Commitment	-4.072E-02	.125	-.047	-.327	.744	.289	-.026
Satisfaction	.347	.129	.358	2.702	.008	.358	.210
R ² = .136							
Adjusted R ² = .115							
F-ratio= 6.274 (p<.001)							

Note: *p<.05

In conclusion, the results showed that generally OPRs were significantly related to attitude toward the brand. However, high correlations among the four dimensions of OPRs do not allow for more exact interpretations regarding the effects of individual dimensions on attitude toward the brand.

Test of Hypothesis 1

H1: Product-related attribute beliefs are related to attitude toward the brand.

Before conducting regression analysis, Pearson's correlations were run to determine if significant relationships existed between each of the product-related attribute beliefs and brand attitude. As shown in Table 4-7, all product-related attribute beliefs correlated with attitude toward the brand and the correlations were statistically significant at the level of 0.01. The resulting Pearson's r ranged from .293 to .733. The correlation between longer/better warranty (including technical service) and better customer service (not including technical service) was the highest ($r=.733, p<.001$). In terms of the correlations between each of the product-related attribute beliefs and brand attitude, "nicer looking design/appearance" had the highest Pearson's r ($r=.339, p<.001$), "better quality of components" had the second highest Pearson's r ($r=.333, p<.001$), "longer/better warranty (including technical service)" ranked third ($r=.323, p<.001$), "more portable" ranked fourth ($r=.293, p<.001$), and "better customer service (not including technical service)" had the lowest Pearson's r ($r=.310, p<.001$).

In addition to the regression analysis of attitude toward brand with each of the five product-related attribute beliefs as independent variables, a regression analysis of attitude toward the brand with the sum of product-related attribute beliefs as one independent variable was conducted. As shown in Table 4-7, the correlations between each of the product-related attribute beliefs and attitude toward the brand were relatively high, yet statistically significant.

Table 4-7. Correlations between product-related attribute beliefs and attitude toward the brand

	Attribute1	Attribute2	Attribute3	Attribute4	Attribute5	Brand attitude
Attribute1	1.00					
Attribute2	.733**	1.00				
Attribute3	.545**	.555**	1.00			
Attribute4	.616**	.574**	.554**	1.00		
Attribute5	.395**	.388**	.444**	.661**	1.00	
Brand attitude	.323**	.310**	.339**	.333**	.293**	1.00

Note:

Attribute1: Longer/Better warranty (including technical service)

Attribute2: Better customer service (not including technical service)

Attribute3: Nicer looking design/appearance

Attribute4: Better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)

Attribute5: More portable

**P < 0.01

Table 4-8. Multiple regression analysis of attitude toward the brand with each of the product-related attribute beliefs

Dependent variable: Attitude toward the brand					
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
Attribute1	1.013E-02	.011	.101	.909	.364
Attribute2	6.731E-03	.011	.065	.591	.556
Attribute3	1.533E-02	.009	.160	1.740	.084
Attribute4	7.796E-03	.012	.072	.638	.525
Attribute5	1.136E-02	.010	.111	1.168	.244
R ² = .164					
Adjusted R ² = .139					
F-ratio = 6.537 (p < .001)					

Note:

Attribute1: Longer/Better warranty (including technical service)

Attribute2: Better customer service (not including technical service)

Attribute3: Nicer looking design/appearance

Attribute4: Better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)

Attribute5: More portable

The results of multiple regression analysis presented in Table 4-8 suggests that none of the product-related attribute beliefs were significant predictors of brand attitude. Only “nicer looking design/appearance” somewhat approached the significance level ($p<.084$).

Based on the fact that all of the product-related attribute beliefs were highly correlated with one another, the present study summed them up, thus creating an overall measure of product-related attribute beliefs. According to the expectancy-valued model, a person’s attitude toward an object can be predicted by multiplying the evaluation of each of the attributes by beliefs about the object, and then summing each of the attribute beliefs for the total set of beliefs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Therefore, summing up all of the product-related attribute beliefs was justified by Ajzen and Fishbein’s theory. Table 4-9 indicates that product-related attribute beliefs correlated relatively strongly and significantly with attitude toward the brand ($r=.402, p<.001$).

Table 4-9. Correlations between product-related attribute beliefs and attitude toward the brand

	Product-related attributes beliefs	Attitude toward the brand
Product-related attribute beliefs	1.00	
Attitude toward the brand	.402**	1.00

Note: ** $p<.01$

The results in Table 4-10 confirmed that product-related attribute beliefs explained statistically 16.2% of variance in attitude toward the brand.

Table 4-10. Regression analysis of attitude toward the brand with product-related attribute beliefs

Dependent variable: Attitude toward the brand					
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	SE	Beta		
Product-related attribute beliefs	1.029E-02	.002	.402	5.741	.000
$R^2 = .162$ Adjusted $R^2 = .157$ F-ratio = 32.960 ($p < .001$)					

When the two regression equations using individual product-related attribute beliefs and the integrated product-related attribute beliefs are compared with each other, it can be noticed that the adjusted R^2 was improved in the second case from .139 to .157, while R^2 stayed almost the same. Considering the high correlations among individual product-related attribute beliefs, it appears more appropriate to use the total product-related attribute beliefs to predict brand attitude.

Test of Research Question 2

***RQ2:** Are there any significant differences between the impact of organization-public relationships and product-related attribute beliefs on attitude toward the brand?*

Based on the results to research question 1, of the four dimensions of OPRs, satisfaction was the only significant predictor. Concerning hypothesis 1, product-related attribute beliefs significantly predicted attitude toward the brand. In order to examine the relative importance of all possible independent variables for predicting attitude toward the brand, a multiple analysis of attitude toward the brand including all independent variables was conducted.

Table 4-11. Multiple regression analysis of attitude toward the brand with the dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs

Dependent variable: Attitude toward the brand					
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
Trust	-.144	.147	-.120	-.980	.329
Control mutuality	8.531E-02	.140	.082	.608	.544
Commitment	-2.337E-02	.120	-.027	-.194	.846
Satisfaction	.267	.126	.275*	2.118	.036
Product-related attribute beliefs	7.297E-03	.002	.295**	3.637	.000
R ² = .203					
Adjusted R ² = .178					
F-ratio= 8.050 (p<.001)					

Note: *p<.05, **p< 0.01

Table 4-11 demonstrates that this equation was significant ($F=8.050, p<.001$), with 20.3% of the variance in attitude toward the brand explained statistically by the dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs. Of all independent variables, only satisfaction ($\beta=.275, p<.05$) and product-related attribute beliefs ($\beta=.295, p<.001$) significantly predicted attitude toward the brand.

However, the results of multiple regression analysis of attitude toward the brand with independent variables were insufficient to answer research question 2. To ascertain the predictive power of two different sets of independent variables (the dimensions of OPRs on one hand, and product-related attribute beliefs on the other) on attitude toward the brand, a hierarchical regression analysis was needed.

When using a hierarchical regression, the researcher, not the computer, determines the order of entry of the variables. F -tests are used to compute the significance of each added variable or set of variables to the explanation reflected in R^2 (Garson, 2003). The F -test is used to test the significance of the regression model as a whole, with F being a function of R^2 , the number of independent variables, and the number of cases (Garson,

2003). This hierarchical procedure is an alternative to comparing betas for the purpose of examining the importance of different independent variables (Garson, 2003).

Hence, two hierarchical regressions were conducted to examine whether the dimensions of OPRs or product-related attribute beliefs better explained attitude toward the brand. In other words, hierarchical regressions were performed to investigate whether or not the effect of OPRs on brand attitude as an exploratory attempt and the expectancy-value model worked.

In the first regression model, which represents a test of the variance in brand attitude explained by OPRs, product-related attribute beliefs were entered in Step 1 of the analysis, and the dimensions of OPRs were entered in Step 2.

As indicated in Table 4-12, product-related attribute beliefs explained 15.7% of variance in attitude toward the brand ($\beta=.396, p<.001$). When the dimensions of OPRs were entered in Step 2 of the analysis, an additional 4.6 % of variance was explained. However, the increase in R^2 by adding the dimensions of OPRs in Step 2 was not statistically significant at the .05 level.

Table 4-12. Hierarchical regression analysis predicting attitude toward the brand to examine the predictive power of OPRs

Model	R^2	R^2 Change	F change	Sig of F
1	.157	.157	30.075	.000
2	.203	.046	2.302	.061

Note: Model 1: Independent variable: Product-related attribute beliefs

Model 2: Independent variables: Product-related attribute beliefs and OPRs

In a second hierarchical analysis, the dimensions of OPRs were entered in Step 1 of the regression analysis, and product-related attribute beliefs were entered in Step 2 to check for the predictive power of product-related attribute beliefs on brand attitude. After Step 1 of the regression analysis, the dimensions of OPRs explained 13.6% of variance in

attitude toward the brand (see Table 4-13). Step 2 of the regression analysis produced an increase in the variance by 6.7% showing a significance of association with attitude toward the brand at the .01 level.

Table 4-13. Hierarchical regression analysis predicting attitude toward the brand to examine the predictive power of product-related attribute beliefs

Model	R ²	R ² Change	F change	Sig of F
1	.136	.136	6.274	.000
2	.203	.067	13.226	.000

Note: Model 1: Independent variable: OPRs

Model 2: Independent variables: OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs

In brief, when the dimensions of OPRs were entered in Step 2 of the first hierarchical regression analysis, an additional 4.6% of variance was explained, but the result was not significant. On the other hand, when the product-related attribute beliefs were entered in Step 2 of the second hierarchical regression analysis, the percent of variance increased by 6.7, significant at the .01 level. Therefore, it appears that beliefs about product-related attributes are a better predictor of attitude toward the brand than the dimensions of OPRs.

Test of Hypothesis 2

H2: Attitude toward the brand is positively related to purchase intention.

Table 4-14 indicates that attitude toward the brand correlated strongly and significantly with purchase intention ($r=.510$, $p<.001$).

Table 4-14. Correlation between attitude toward the brand and purchase intention

	Attitude toward the brand	Purchase intention
Attitude toward the brand	1.00	
Purchase intention	.510**	1.00

Note: ** $p<.01$

A regression analysis was conducted for the purchase intention predicted by attitude toward the brand. According to Table 4-15, 26.1% of variance in purchase intention was explained by attitude toward the brand.

Table 4-15. Regression analysis of purchase intention with attitude toward the brand
Dependent variable: Purchase intention

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
Attitude toward the brand	.720	.093	.510	7.739	.000
$R^2 = .261$ Adjusted $R^2 = .256$ F-ratio: 59.892 ($p < .001$)					

Path Analysis

As J. E. Grunig (1993) argued, for public relations to be valued in organizations, public relations practitioners have to demonstrate that their efforts contribute to organizational goals by building long-term behavioral relationships with publics. Also, Ledingham and Bruning (2000) concluded that relationship dimension ratings could be used to predict the behavior of public members. Based on the notion that organizations must involve in behavioral initiatives to manage the organization-public relationships, the present study attempts to explore the causal relationships between each dimension of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs and purchase intention via brand attitude using path analysis.

Path analysis is a statistical procedure consisting of a series of regression analyses. However, there are advantages to using the path analysis approach. The key advantage is that the researcher can demonstrate causal relationships between variables,

and this in turn clarifies and strengthens theories of relationships among variables (Agresti & Finlay, 1997).

Figure 4-1 proposes a model with two dependent variables: attitude toward the brand; and purchase intention. The present study does not assume that the four dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs have a direct effect on purchase intention. Rather, the present study suggested that attitude toward the brand would be a mediating variable for predicting purchase intention.

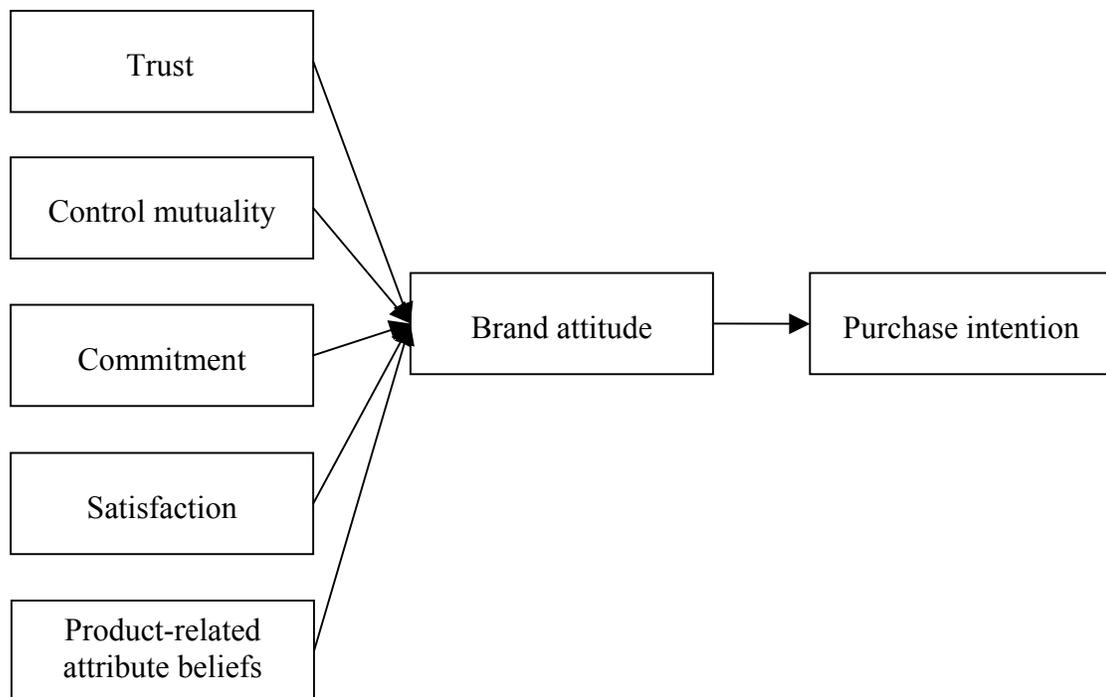


Figure 4-1. Target path model

Therefore, path analysis was performed to measure the causal relationships between each dimension of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs, and purchase intention via brand attitude. A path coefficient is a standardized regression coefficient (beta) showing the direct effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable in the path model. Thus, when the model contains two or more causal variables, path coefficients are partial regression coefficients which measure the effect of one variable on

another in the path model controlling for all other variables, using standardized data or a correlation matrix as input (Garson, 2003).

For path analysis, as shown in Table 4-16 two multiple regression analyses were conducted to generate path coefficients.

Table 4-16. Regressions to generate path coefficients

Dependent variables	Independent variables	Regression coefficients		R ²
		Unstandardized ^a	Standardized	
1. Brand attitude	Trust	-.144 (.147)	-.120	.203**
	Control mutuality	8.531E-02 (.140)	.082	
	Commitment	-2.337E-02 (.120)	-.027	
	Satisfaction	.267 (.126)*	.275	
	Product	7.297E-03 (.002)**	.295	
2. Purchase intention	Trust	-8.850E-03 (.202)	-.005	.297**
	Control mutuality	.200 (.193)	.132	
	Commitment	9.690E-02 (.165)	.077	
	Satisfaction	-6.441E-02 (.175)	-.046	
	Product	3.277E-03 (.003)	.091	
	Brand attitude	.620**	.428	

^aThe values in parentheses are standard errors.

*p<.05; **p<.01.

A total of two multiple regressions were conducted to generate estimates of direct effects. The first regression model included the dimensions of OPRs and product-related attributes beliefs as independent variables and brand attitude as the dependent variable. Here brand attitude was predicted to improve by .275 standard deviations given a change in satisfaction of one standard deviation, all other variables held constant. Similarly, brand attitude was expected to improve by .295 standard deviations if product-related attribute beliefs increased by one standard deviation, and controlling for other independent variables included in the model.

The second regression analysis was performed with the dimensions of OPRs, product-related attribute beliefs, and attitude toward the brand as independent variables and purchase intention as a dependent variable. The standardized path coefficient for the direct effect of brand attitude on purchase intention was .428. This means that purchase intention could improve by .428 standard deviations given a change in brand attitude of one standard deviation. Figure 4-2 shows the path diagram of relationships and coefficients between the independent and dependent variables.

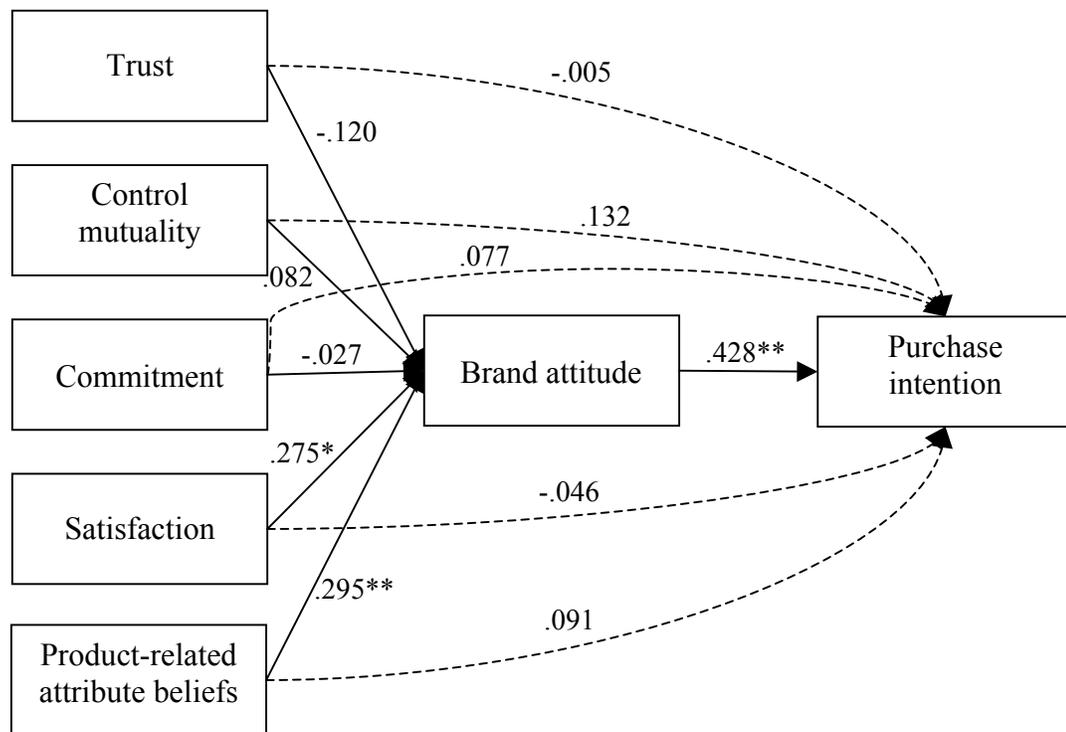


Figure 4-2. Path diagram of relationships between independent and dependent variables

Figure 4-2 practically supports the suggested target model. The satisfaction dimension of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs were significantly related to brand attitude. Also, brand attitude was significantly related to purchase intention. In addition, all direct relationships between the independent variables (OPRs and product-

related attributes beliefs) and purchase intention as a dependent variable were proven to be statistically insignificant.

Table 4-17 summarizes the direct, indirect, and total causal effects of independent variables on the dependent variables. Only three paths, all direct, are statistically significant: from satisfaction to attitude toward the brand (.275), from product-related attribute beliefs to brand attitude (.295), and from brand attitude to purchase intention (.428).

Table 4-17. Summary of standardized effects of the path model

Independent variable	Dependent variables	
	Brand attitude (Ab)	Purchase intention (PI)
<u>Trust</u>		
Direct effect	-.120	-.005
Indirect effect via Brand attitude	-----	-.051
Total effect	-.120	-.056
<u>Control mutuality</u>		
Direct effect	.082	.132
Indirect effect via Brand attitude	-----	.035
Total effect	.082	.167
<u>Commitment</u>		
Direct effect	-.027	.077
Indirect effect via Brand attitude	-----	-.012
Total effect	-.027	.065
<u>Satisfaction</u>		
Direct effect	.275*	-.046
Indirect effect via Brand attitude	-----	.118
Total effect	.275*	.072
<u>Product-related attributes beliefs</u>		
Direct effect	.295**	.091
Indirect effect via Brand attitude	-----	.126
Total effect	.295**	.217
<u>Brand attitude</u>		
Direct effect	-----	.428**
Indirect effect via Brand attitude	-----	-----
Total effect	-----	.428**

Therefore, as shown in Figure 4-3 below, the final model proposed in the present study has two independent variables, satisfaction and product-related attribute beliefs.

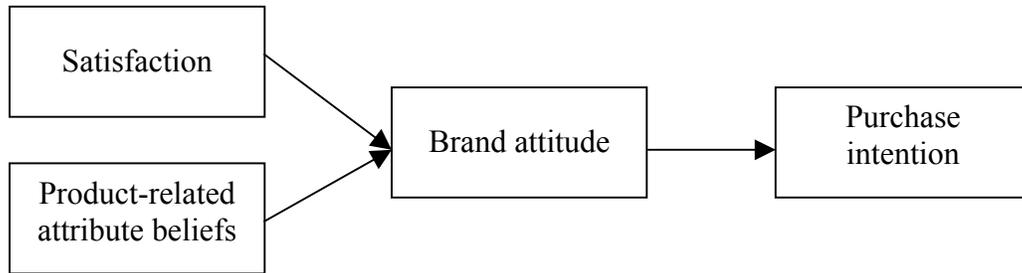


Figure 4-3. The final parsimonious model

Based upon path analysis results, the present study eliminated insignificant paths from the diagram and again performed the appropriate analyses to re-estimate the path coefficients (see Figure 4-3). In order to confirm the final parsimonious model, another two multiple regressions were performed to generate estimates of direct effects. The first analysis used satisfaction and product-related attribute beliefs as independent variables and brand attitude as the dependent variable. Table 4-18 indicates that brand attitude was predicted to improve by .232 standard deviations for every one standard deviation change in the level of satisfaction, product-related attribute beliefs being held constant. Also, brand attitude was expected to improve by .301 standard deviations given a change in product-related attribute beliefs of one standard deviation, and controlling for satisfaction.

Table 4-18. Regressions to generate path coefficients

Dependent variables	Independent variables	Regression coefficients		R ²
		Unstandardized ^a	Standardized	
1. Brand attitude	Satisfaction	.229 (.076)*	.232	.207**
	Product	7.622E-03 (.002)**	.301	
2. Purchase intention	Satisfaction	.132 (.106)	.094	.290**
	Product	4.309E-03 (.003)	.003	
	Brand attitude	.612 (.105)**	.105	

^aThe values in parentheses are standard errors.

*p<.05; **p<.01.

The second regression analysis contained satisfaction, product-related attribute beliefs, and brand attitude as independent variables and purchase intention as dependent variable. The standardized path coefficient for the direct effect of brand attitude upon purchase intention was .105. Figure 4-4 shows the path diagram of relationships between satisfaction, product-related attribute beliefs, brand attitude, and purchase intention. This parsimonious model with three paths yields significant path coefficients.

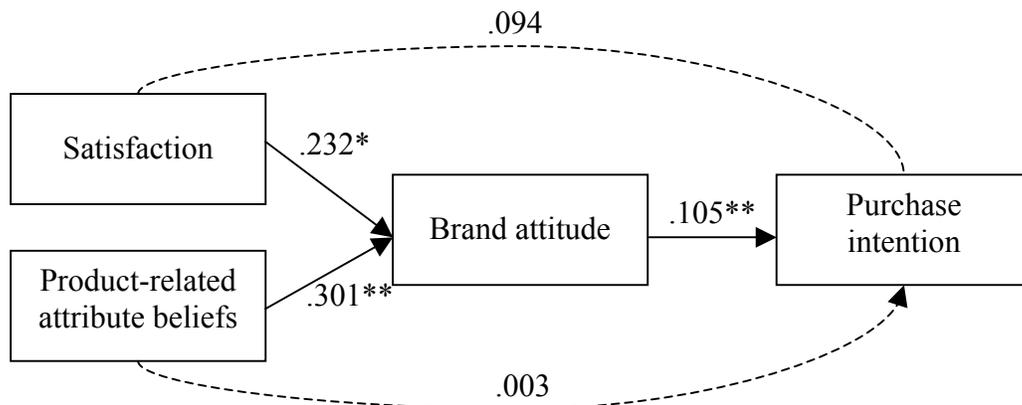


Figure 4-4. Path diagram of relationships among satisfaction, product-related attribute beliefs, brand attitude, and purchase intention

This parsimonious model suggests that relational satisfaction is a critical factor for predicting attitude toward the brand. In other words, publics are expected to be positive toward the brand offered by an organization when they feel satisfaction with that organization. Also, this parsimonious model confirms that attitude toward the brand is influenced by the total set of beliefs about salient attributes of a product. Finally, this model verified the causal relationship of attitudinal-behavioral patterns proven by much research in advertising.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The present study represents an innovative empirical examination of the effects of organization-public relationships and product-related attribute beliefs on brand attitude and purchase intention via brand attitude.

As public relations scholars have emphasized, demonstrating the value of OPRs is of great significance given the importance of building a successful relationship between an organization and its publics (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Lindenmann, 1999; Huang, 2001). In today's highly competitive marketplace, branding is considered a crucial tool to attract and keep customers by promoting value, image, prestige, or lifestyle. Marken (2001) stressed the importance of branding as an indicator of how customers feel about an organization, the relationship with it, and the organization's products. A. Ries and L. Ries (2002) suggested that public relations can create new brands through publicity and the resulting word of mouth. However, no previous research has examined the link between organization-public relationships and branding from a public relations perspective.

As such, the main objective of the present study was to explore whether attitude toward the brand can be explained by organization-public relationships compared to product-related attribute beliefs. Also, the present study tested whether OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs can affect purchase intention via brand attitude. In addition, the present study verified for causal relations between attitude toward the brand

and purchase intention. As a theoretical framework, the relationship theory and the expectancy-value model were used.

One important finding of the present study is the empirical validation of the relationship between OPRs and attitude toward the brand. That is, the customer's perception of their relationship with a company can greatly influence his or her attitude toward the brand offered by that company. Even when customers are unfamiliar with specific attributes of a product, they are likely to form an attitude toward that brand based upon their relationships with the company producing the brand. In particular, our study found that of four dimensions of OPRs, the perception of satisfaction with the company had a significant impact on attitude toward the brand.

In addition, the present study verified the effect of product-related attribute beliefs on attitude toward the brand, testing Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory that an individual's attitude toward an object is based on his or her beliefs about the object's attributes and his or her evaluation of those attributes. Even though the present study adopted the relative importance component instead of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) evaluative component of the expectancy-valued model, the sum of beliefs of salient attributes ultimately determined the attitude.

Moreover, the finding that the importance component worked in terms of its predictive power is consistent with Galloway and Meek's (1981) research. Galloway and Meek's (1981) noted that the inclination to use a particular medium is a function of the strength of expectancy associated with gratifications, combined with use and the value or attractiveness of the gratification. In Galloway and Meek's (1981) research, expectancy (E) was operationalized as the expectations of possible outcomes (gratifications) from viewing a certain television program. Expectation value (V) was measured as the

perceived importance of having certain gratifications ($\text{Exposure} = \sum \text{Expectancy} * \text{Value}$).

Galloway and Meek (1981) found strong relationships between expectancy (E)*value (V) and television exposure levels. Therefore, the importance component instead of the evaluative component appeared to be a valuable factor for predicting attitude toward the brand.

The present study also showed the different degrees of explanatory power of two groups of independent variables. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted on the four dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs. The result revealed that product-related attributes beliefs better predicted attitude toward the brand than the set of OPR dimensions. As expected, the present study confirmed that attitude toward the brand has a direct impact on purchase intention.

Finally, this study measured the relationships between each dimension of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs, and purchase intention via brand attitude using path analysis, and found that the satisfaction dimension of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs predicted attitude toward the brand. Also, attitude toward the brand proved to be a significant predictor of purchase intention. More detailed interpretations regarding each finding are discussed in the following overview of research questions and hypotheses of the present study.

Overview of the Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this section, each of the two research questions and two research hypotheses is evaluated based on the results of the survey.

***RQ1:** How are the four dimensions of organization-public relationships—trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment—related to attitude toward the brand?*

The first research question investigated the relation between four dimensions of organization-public relationships (OPRs) and attitude toward the brand. To answer the question, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis were performed. Pearson's correlation coefficients showed that all dimensions of OPRs and attitude toward the brand are highly correlated with each other.

In order to test the significance of individual dimensions of OPRs as predictors of brand attitude, multiple regression analysis was performed. The results showed that in terms of a total model fit (*F*-test), OPRs were significantly related to attitude toward the brand. However, of all four dimensions of OPRs, only satisfaction was a significant predictor of attitude toward the brand.

One statistical explanation of the results is that the four dimensions of OPRs are closely related with one another, and therefore one single dimension (except for satisfaction) could not have a significant effect on a dependent variable. This explanation is supported by the fact that the four dimensions were highly correlated with one another in terms of Pearson correlations, but the partial correlations between trust, control mutuality, and commitment, and attitude toward the brand changed significantly except for satisfaction.

The result implies that satisfaction is the one dimension of OPRs that needs to be emphasized. Indeed, relational satisfaction has long been acknowledged as an important aspect of the relationship quality (Ferguson, 1984; Millar & Rogers, 1976; Stafford & Canary, 1991). According to Ferguson (1984), the degree to which both the organization and the public are satisfied with their relationship is a significant indicator of the quality of the relationship.

In addition, from a social exchange perspective, Stafford and Canary (1991) stated that one's satisfaction with the relationship increases as one perceives the partner as working effectively toward the maintenance of that relationship. Bruning and Ledingham (1998) argued that the organization-public relationship is closely related to consumer satisfaction, and the level of satisfaction is influenced by the relationship quality. Even though they viewed relational satisfaction as the outcome of the organization-public relationship, not as a dimension of it, but as a crucial attribute of the quality of a relationship.

In conclusion, the results to research question 1 showed that (1) the general effects of OPRs on attitude toward the brand were significant, and (2) due to multicollinearity among the four dimensions of OPRs, only satisfaction significantly predicted attitude toward the brand. Based on these findings, it can be suggested that (1) the scales used to measure OPRs need to be refined to reflect the theoretical differences between the four dimensions, or (2) satisfaction be separated from the other dimensions of OPRs and used as the overall evaluation of OPRs.

***H1:** Product-related attribute beliefs are related to attitude toward the brand.*

Hypothesis 1 predicted that attitude toward the brand would be affected by product-related attribute beliefs. According to Keller (1998), product-related attributes is one of the brand associations. As expected, there were significant causal relations between product-related attribute beliefs and attitude toward the brand. Because the five product-related attribute beliefs were highly correlated, the present study used the overall product-related attribute beliefs as an independent variable. Summing up all of the product-related attribute belief was consistent with the expectancy-valued model, which posits that a person's attitude toward an object can be predicted by multiplying the

evaluation of object attributes by beliefs about the object, and then summing all of the attribute beliefs to obtain a total set of beliefs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

A regression analysis tested whether product-related attribute beliefs had significantly positive effects on attitude toward the brand, as concluded in previous studies. Although the present study adopted a “relative importance” component instead of the “evaluative” component of the expectancy-value model, the sum of beliefs of salient attributes successfully predicted attitudes. Thus, the present study suggests that an importance component can have its explanatory power of attitudes and might improve prediction of attitudes, which was consistent with Galloway and Meek’s (1981) research.

The product used in the present study was a laptop computer, which called for functional attributes and benefits, respondents’ beliefs about product-related attributes played a significant role in predicting attitude toward the brand. As Keller (1998) noted, the consumer’s perception of differences between brands are closely related to attributes or benefits of the product itself.

However, when there is little real functional difference between competing products, the critical determinant of brand attitude will depend upon other aspects of the brand’s identity (Meenaghan, 1995). For example, the attitude toward a soft drink brand is probably based not as much on product-related attributes or benefits, but on images associated with the product due to its brand name. Thus, the differentiation of competing soft drink products is based on the symbols, images, and feelings associated with the brand name rather than the attributes of products themselves.

In addition, the notion of product meanings are reflected by the construct of product involvement which has been described as “one of the most important variables in consumer research” (Antil, 1984, p. 203). Involvement has been viewed in terms of

product meaning and consumer-product relationships (Martin, 1998). According to Martin (1998), involvement is the degree of psychological identification and affective, emotional ties the consumer has with a stimulus or stimuli being the product category or specific brand. Therefore, the characteristics of the products/brands themselves or their usage contexts may play a role stimulating consumers' involvement.

In conclusion, the present study confirmed previous studies that demonstrated a relationship between product-related attribute beliefs and attitude toward the brand. The finding makes intuitive sense particularly in the present study, because the product chosen for research, a laptop computer, requires customers to consider functional attributes in their purchasing decisions. However, to test for the proposed model's reliability, future research should apply the model to different product categories with different types of attributes.

***RQ2:** Are there any significant differences between the impact of organization-public relationships and product-related attribute beliefs on attitude toward the brand?*

Our study investigated the association between OPRs and attitude toward the brand in three stages. In the first stage, the researcher examined the relationship between OPRs and attitude toward the brand excluding the effects of product-related attribute beliefs. In the second stage, the association between OPRs and attitude toward the brand was measured including product-related attribute beliefs in the model. Finally, the third stage, the relative explanatory power of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs on attitude toward the brand were compared.

Research question 1 analyzed the first stage, namely the effect of OPRs on attitude toward the brand excluding the effects of product-related attribute beliefs. The results showed that OPRs were generally significant in predicting attitude toward the

brand. In turn, research question 2 examined the other two possible levels: (1) the effects of OPRs on attitude toward the brand including the effects of product-related attribute beliefs, and (2) the relative explanatory power of OPRs on attitude toward the brand compared to the explanatory power of product-related attribute beliefs.

First, a multiple regression analysis of attitude toward the brand with the dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs was performed. The results demonstrated that customers who felt satisfied with their relationship with a company and held strong product-related attribute beliefs, had an overall positive attitude toward the brand. Even considering the competing effects of product-related attribute beliefs, the effect of OPRs was found to be significant. However, due to the multicollinearity of independent variables, only one dimension of OPRs, satisfaction, was statistically significant.

A multiple regression analysis of attitude toward the brand with all five independent variables (four dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs) was, however, inadequate in order to examine the different predictive powers of dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs on attitude toward the brand. As a result, two hierarchical regressions analyses were conducted to compare the relative importance of the four dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs on brand attitude. The aim of these hierarchical regression analyses was to assess whether or not OPRs affected brand attitude, and whether the expectancy-value model could be applied to the relationship between product-related attribute beliefs and brand attitude.

The results of those two regressions suggest that product-related attribute beliefs could better explain attitude toward the brand than the dimensions of OPRs. Keller (1998) defined that product-related attributes as “the ingredients necessary for performing

the product or service function sought by consumers” (p. 93). Thus, it appears that customers are likely to evaluate the brand based on the product’s physical composition and functional attributes, which in turn determine the level of product performance.

Considering that the present study used as product a laptop computer which has functional-based attributes, the participants’ overall evaluation of the brand may be less influenced by their relationships with Sony, but rather by their product-related attribute beliefs.

Research suggests that consumers can evaluate brands differently depending on the type of product analyzed. For example, it is not easy to differentiate a brand of gasoline from another brand of the same product. However, if a certain oil company supports environmental causes, consumers are likely to hold positive attitudes toward that brand due to corporate social responsibility, rather than product-related attributes.

In a similar example, the ice cream maker Ben & Jerry is “known as much for sharing its wealth with the poor as for its use of natural ingredients to produce incredibly rich ice cream” (Smith, 1994, p.42). As a result, Ben & Jerry’s ice cream has good brand value based on the company’s social responsibility, rather than product-related attributes. These examples imply that attitude toward the brand is influenced by the different product types, and how these products are associated with corporate behaviors.

Summarizing, hierarchical regression analyses demonstrated that OPRs had less explanatory power on attitude toward brand than product-related attribute beliefs. This result, however, is not to say that OPRs were not useful in explaining attitude toward the brand. The effect of OPRs on attitude toward the brand proved to be statistically significant in both regression models, first excluding and then including the effect of product-related attributes. The results to research question 2 only showed that OPRs are

relatively less powerful than product-related attribute beliefs in predicting attitude toward the brand.

Though as mentioned before, the only product used in the present study was a laptop computer. Since laptop computers have highly explicit product-related attributes based on functional features, there is no guarantee that the results of the present study can be extended to other products categories with different product-related attributes.

***H2:** Attitude toward the brand is positively related to purchase intention.*

In the present study, attitude toward the brand had a significant direct effect on purchase intention. This result is consistent with previous advertising research, as well as with the findings of the Dual Mediation Hypothesis (Brown & Stayman, 1992; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986) that looked at attitudinal-behavioral patterns and relationships in advertising. The present study reinforced that a key role of consumer attitudes is to predict purchase behavior. Considering that attitudes are relatively stable predispositions to behavior, an individual's attitude toward the brand plays an important role in predicting his or her intention to purchase a product.

The present study also hypothesized that attitude toward the brand could be a mediating variable for predicting purchase intention. Using path analysis, the researcher examined the effects that each of the four dimensions of OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs (as independent variables) had on purchase intention via brand attitude. As expected, the analysis showed that all direct (not mediated by brand attitude) relationships between the five independent variables and purchase intention were statistically insignificant.

Path analysis confirmed three paths: satisfaction had a direct effect on attitude toward the brand, product-related attribute beliefs also had a direct impact on attitude toward the brand, and attitude toward the brand had a direct effect on purchase intention. Consistent with the results of previous regression analyses, only one dimension of OPRs, satisfaction, was significantly related to attitude toward the brand. Consequently, the present study proposed a parsimonious model of the relationships between satisfaction, product-related attribute beliefs, brand attitude, and purchase intention as the final model. This parsimonious model posited that satisfaction and product-related attribute beliefs were determinants of brand attitude, which in turn influenced purchase intention.

In conclusion, in the present study the researcher demonstrated that (1) OPRs were significantly related to attitude toward brand, (2) product-related attribute beliefs were also significantly related to attitude toward the brand, and (3) attitude toward the brand was a strong mediator between independent variables (four OPR dimensions and product-related attribute beliefs) and purchase intention.

Although the results were generally consistent with initial expectations, some discrepancies were found. First, conducting regression models, only the satisfaction dimension of OPRs was significantly related to attitude toward the brand. On the contrary, simple correlation coefficients indicated that all four OPR dimensions were significantly related to attitude toward the brand. This difference in findings was due to multicollinearity among the dimensions of OPRs. In order to overcome this problem in future research, the present study proposes two possible solutions. One solution is that items measuring the dimensions of OPRs need to be refined, so that the convergent validity of each dimension can be secured. The second proposition is that satisfaction be separated from the other dimensions of OPRs because the effect of satisfaction by far

outweighed the effects of the other three dimensions. Furthermore, previous research demonstrated that satisfaction could function as a dependent variable rather than independent variable.

Second, the explanatory power of OPRs was found to be less significant than that of product-related attribute beliefs in predicting attitude toward the brand. The present study used only one product category, a laptop computer, which has functional-based attributes. However, consumers' evaluation of brands can differ depending upon the type of product categories. For example, if a product category without explicit product-related attributes is tested, the predictive effect of OPRs may prove stronger.

Despite these unexpected results, the present study generally supports the proposition that OPRs can function as an important predictor of attitude toward the brand. Two regression analyses that first excluded competing effects of product-related attribute beliefs, and then included such, both showed that OPRs were significantly related to attitude toward the brand. Finally, considering the demonstrated direct relationship between attitude toward the brand and purchase intention, the present study concludes that OPRs can indirectly influence purchase intention.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The ways in which public relations contributes to organizational goals have been a crucial topic in public relations research. Recently, examination of the relationship that exists between an organization and its key publics has emerged as a significant paradigm for public relations scholarship and practice (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

According to Ehling (1992), the relationship management perspective shifts the public relations practice away from the manipulation of public opinion toward building, nurturing, and maintaining organization-public relationships. Scholars have emphasized that the existence of positive relationships between an organization and its publics is one of the major contributions of public relations to organizational effectiveness (Dozier, L. A. Grunig, & J. E. Grunig, 1995; Huang, 2001).

As markets change rapidly and products' lives shorten, the one element that gives customers confidence is brand value. By using a particular brand, consumers can strengthen a positive image. Brands can also reduce the risk consumers face when buying something that they know little about (Montgomery & Wernerfelt, 1992). An organization's strong brand equity represents its intangible assets that bring about customer loyalty and ultimately contribute to the organization's bottom line. However, despite brands' great importance, little research has investigated brand management concepts in the context of public relations.

To overcome such a gap, we explored empirically the effects of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention via brand

attitude. Four dimensions of organization-public relationships were used in the present study, but only the dimension of satisfaction successfully predicted attitude toward the brand. Using the expectancy-value model as a theoretical framework, the present study also examined the causal link between product-related attribute beliefs and brand attitude.

The present study found different degrees of explanatory power of organization-public relationships and product-related attribute beliefs in predicting attitudes toward the brand. The analysis indicated that product-related attribute beliefs had better predictive power toward brand attitude than the dimensions of organization-public relationships.

As proven in other fields of communication, the causal relationship between attitude toward the brand as an attitudinal aspect and purchase intention as a behavioral outcome was supported in this public relations context.

Our study concluded by proposing a parsimonious model for explaining causal relationships among variables using path analysis. The analysis yielded three paths. Brand attitude was strongly explained by both the perceptions of satisfaction and product-related attribute beliefs, which implies that brand attitude is a combination of emotional bond with a company and functional benefits derived from product attributes. Also, in the present study, the direct relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention was statistically significant. Consistent with other studies that indicated brand attitude as a mediating variable, the statistical effects of OPR dimensions and product-related attribute beliefs on purchase intention, mediated by brand attitude, were significant.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, the present study is an exploratory attempt to apply the effects of organization-public relationships to attitude toward the brand. A. Ries and L. Ries (2002) stressed that public relations can and should play a powerful marketing role, particularly in building and maintaining brands. As Olins (2000) noted, the value of brands can depend on the quality of relationships that publics have with an organization. With this in mind, the present study examined the causal effect of the dimensions of organization-public relationships on brand attitude. The research suggests that satisfaction as a dimension of OPRs can play a positive role in predicting attitude toward the brand. Given the limited studies available in attitudinal and behavioral research in public relations, the present study may help explain how customers' association with an organization affects their attitude toward the organization's brands.

Most of the previous empirical studies on corporate associations focused on developing measures of corporate image, rather than on developing theoretical links between perceptions of relationships with a company and other outcome variables such as customers' attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. As Brown and Dacin (1997) noted, when a customer identifies a product with a company, there is a chance that the overall assessment of that company will affect the evaluation of the product. Hence, our study may be a starting point for public relations scholars to analyze the effects of perceptions of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the brand.

In addition, using the expectancy-value model, the present study supports the assumption that product-related attribute beliefs can predict attitude toward the brand. The research applied Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) proposition, "attitudes derive from

beliefs about attitude objects” to product-related attributes, in order to compare the effect of organization-public relationships on brand attitude. Although the present study adopted an “importance” component instead of the “evaluative” component of the expectancy-value model, the sum of product-related attribute beliefs successfully affected attitudes. Therefore, the use of an importance component as suggested by Galloway and Meek (1981) was fully justified.

The present study indicated that product-related attributes could better explain attitude toward the brand than OPRs. However, this result may be due to the type of product used in the present study, a laptop computer. In general, product attributes and benefits to the user are important for the overall brand image or attitude. However, when products have little functional advantage over similar competing products, or when customers associate the product with the company’s social behaviors, brand attitude can be the result of non-product-related attributes, particularly OPRs. Therefore, it is necessary to explore consumer-product relationships separately for different product types.

Finally, the present study analyzed the causal relationship of attitudinal-behavioral patterns as suggested by the Dual Mediation Hypothesis and other research (Brown & Stayman, 1992; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). Consistent with earlier findings of causal sequence of attitudes leading to purchase intention, the present study proves that attitude toward the brand has a significant effect on purchase intention. Another interesting finding is that all the direct associations between independent variables (OPR dimensions and product-related attribute beliefs) and purchase intention were not significant when including attitude toward the brand in the model as mediating variable. That indicates that all the direct paths between independent variables and

purchase intention were mediated by attitude toward the brand. Even though there might exist more mediating variables, it is certain that attitude toward the brand is a strong mediator between OPRs and purchase intention.

Practical Implications

From the standpoint of business practice, the main contribution of the present study is to provide empirical evidence that positive relations between an organization and its publics can strongly influence brand attitude. As Pierach (2002) argued, public relations should explain its role to get its place in branding, the present study suggests the important role of organization-public relationships in branding process. The present study found that customers satisfied with the company were likely to hold favorable attitudes toward a brand offered by the company. The results also suggest that while product-related attributes are usually central to the brand attitude, consumers' evaluations of the brand can sometimes be explained better by non-product-related attributes such as perceptions of OPRs or corporate social behaviors.

Marketers recognize that products carry multiple meanings (Martin, 1998), the perception of which can vary depending upon individuals (Friedmann, 1986; Levy, 1963), situations (Bransford & McCarrell, 1974; Kleine & Kernan, 1991; Olson, 1986), and time periods (Blumer, 1969; Hirschman, 1986). For example, when people consider buying an automobile, some put a high value on functional attributes, whereas others are interested in the brand's reputation and so forth. However, product-related attributes that have a relational nature such as good warranty and customer service are regarded as valuable attributes, regardless of individuals' different evaluations of the product. The present study implies that customers consider the association with a company even when they evaluate product-related attribute benefits. Given this, companies should aim not

only to differentiate themselves from competition in terms of technical and functional attributes, but also to develop customer service associated with the company's performance or goodwill.

The present study also contributes to the practice of public relations, especially from a relationship management perspective. Relationship management provides a basis for evaluating the contribution of public relations to organizational goals. The present study suggests that good quality of relationships between an organization and its publics can contribute to the formation of intangible assets such as strong brand equity and customer loyalty. The benefits of a successful relationship are mutual: consumers become knowledgeable of the brand and develop certain expectations, while in turn the company gains consumers loyal toward itself and its brands. Therefore, it is suggested that today's public relations practitioners consider the management of relationships as a necessary part of their skills.

Finally, the results of the present study indicate that one way to increase the probability of obtaining a favorable attitude toward the brand is by making customers feel satisfied with the brand's company. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) noted that the strongest consumer-company relationships are formed when consumers identify with the companies that help them satisfy one or more key self-definitional needs. Recently, scholars of customer relationship management (CRM) have analyzed and proposed ways for companies to build deeper, more committed relationships with customers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Rust, Zeithaml, and Lemon (2000) distinguished three drivers of customer equity which is the aim of CRM: value equity, brand equity, and relationship equity. Satisfaction can be an excellent measure of a company's brand value, which ultimately can produce high brand equity and relationship equity.

Limitations

There are several limitations in the present study. A first limitation is related to the sample used to collect data. The respondents in the present study were chosen conveniently using an intercept sampling method, and all were students at the University of Florida. Although a university intercept survey is likely to generate a relatively diverse sample of students, the results of the present study cannot be generalized beyond this specific population. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of respondents ranged in age from 18 to 25, skewing the sample on this demographic variable.

Second, the researcher discovered a multicollinearity problem among the four dimensions of OPRs. Multicollinearity refers to strong correlations between independent variables (Hair et al, 1998), which considerably reduces the predictive power of individual independent variable. Indeed, of all four OPR dimensions used in the present study, only the dimension of satisfaction proved to be a significant predictor of brand attitude.

Third, the present study focused on consumer attitude toward the brand and purchase intention based on perceptions of organization-public relationships. However, other company publics such as employees, community members, investors etc. could also be analyzed, to test whether the same relationships hold true.

Fourth, the present study tested only one organization (Sony), one product category (laptop computer), and one brand (VAIO). A comparison between brands based on relationships with different organizations would make the results much stronger.

Fifth, the present study did not consider the length of relationship between customers and an organization. Relationships take years to develop, and generally they

strengthen over time. However, the present study measured relationships at one time regardless of consumers' relationship history with the company. It is likely that the relative importance of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction in predicting brand attitude and purchase intention varies according to the length of the relationship. It could be assumed that the longer a relationship exists, the stronger the relative impact of the dimensions of OPRs on brand attitude and purchase intention.

Finally, the sample included people who were very familiar and familiar with Sony VAIO computers, which means that familiarity with the brand was not controlled for. Even though no respondent in the final sample owned a Sony VAIO computer, attitude toward the brand might be influenced by familiarity with Sony VAIO computers. If so, the relationships between OPRs and product-related attribute beliefs; and brand attitude might have been different controlling for brand familiarity.

Suggestions for Future Research

This type of study should be replicated with other organizations and brands or with advanced analysis techniques, in order to generalize the above conclusions. To increase the applicability of the suggested model, future research should consider diverse organizations, product categories, and brands. Iacobucci and Ostrom (1996) suggested that consumers view their relationships with large Fortune 500 companies as distant and purely transactional, while relationships with smaller firms are seen as closer and more supportive. Therefore, it appears important to examine different perceptions of relationships with different types of organizations, such as profit, nonprofit, small, large, etc.

Public relations literature suggests the importance of relationships, but the concept of relationship has yet to be agreed upon by scholars. Without a clear definition

of the concept, researchers cannot derive valid and reliable measures that are useful for positing and testing public relations theory (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000). Thus, future research should work toward finding a common definition for relationships in public relations. Also, because much of the current knowledge about relationships in public relations comes from interpersonal communication literature, future research should test whether relationships based on interpersonal communication can be extended to organizations.

The present study focused on cognitive-based attitude using Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) expectancy-value model for measuring attitude toward the brand. Considering that affect is clearly one component of attitude and a powerful predictor of intentions, future research must examine both cognitive-based attitudes and affective-based attitudes in order to measure attitude toward the brand. Morris, Woo, Geason, & Kim (2002) found that affective attitude as measured by emotional response played a significant role in predicting brand attitude and intention.

As mentioned in the discussion section of the present study, as products/brands mean different things to different people, consumers can have different attitudes toward the products/brands they purchase. Since the present study used a functional-based product, laptop computer, consumers are more likely to base their overall attitude upon physical attributes and benefits of the computer, and less upon their evaluation of relationships with the company. Therefore, to explore different types of consumer-product relationships, future researchers could replicate the present study using a variety of brands and product categories with different levels of consumer involvement.

In addition to attitude toward the brand, attitude toward the organization can be added to examine its interactions with organization-public relationships. As an outcome

variable of organization-public relationships, attitude toward the organization can explain the effect of OPRs. Kim (2003) found that OPRs can affect attitude toward the brand through attitude toward the organization. Future researchers might want to investigate whether attitude toward the organization can be another mediating variable between OPRs and purchase intention.

The present study examined only the four most important dimensions of Hon and J. E. Grunig's (1999) relationship measurement scale. Future researchers need to move forward and suggest new measurement models by combining other variables that might affect publics' attitudes and behaviors. Since the present study found a multicollinearity problem among the four dimensions of OPRs that was not addressed in previous research, the scales of relationship measurement should be refined more robustly.

Also, it would be fruitful to expand the sample away from a student population, and to conduct longitudinal or cross-cultural research to further test the final path model suggested in the present study.

The multi-attribute attitude model derived from Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) expectancy-value model, needs further investigation. More research is needed to validate the replacement of the evaluative component of the Fishbein model with the relative importance component of attributes. Future research should attempt to clarify the relationship between the evaluative component and the relative importance component in order to legitimize their use in the process of predicting attitudes.

Finally, future researchers might want to investigate organization-public relationships as both independent and dependent variables, as well as mediating variables in building the theory of organization-public relationships. Huang (1999) demonstrated that relationships were key mediating variables of the effect of an organization's public

relations strategies on solving conflicts between the organization and its publics. Future research dealing with antecedents of organization-public relationships and outcomes would contribute to relationship theory building.

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

My name is Jeesun Kim, a master's student at the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida. This survey is supervised by Dr. Sylvia Chan-Olmsted at the Department of Telecommunication in the College of Journalism and Communications.

The purpose of this survey is to assess the impact of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. I would like you to participate in a survey that will help me understand the effect of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this study. There are no right or wrong answers in describing your perception and attitude.

This survey will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes. On the following pages, you will be asked to answer several questions as part of a questionnaire. Please read each question carefully and respond to the questions as thoughtfully and honestly as you can. All of your answers and your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to. You may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. There is no anticipated risk or direct benefit to the participants in this study.

If you have any question, Please contact Jeesun Kim at (352) 846-5001 or jsun1225@ufl.edu, or the supervisor, Dr. Sylvia Chan-Olmsted at (352) 392-0954 or chanolmsted@jou.ufl.edu. Also, if you have questions or concerns about the research participants' rights, you can contact the UF Institutional Review Board at (352) 392-0433. The address is PO Box 112250, the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

“I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure, and I have received a copy of this description.”

Participant's Signature

Principal Investigator's Signature

Date

APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions in this survey. I am studying people's perceptions of and interactions with Sony. Please circle the number that best describes your thoughts or feelings. Your answers will be used only for statistical purposes and will remain strictly confidential to the extent provided by law. Please read the instructions and questions carefully. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time.

Section 1.

Q1-1. How familiar are you with the company Sony?

Not familiar at all	Somewhat familiar	Familiar	Very familiar
[]	[]	[]	[]

Q1-2. How familiar are you with the Sony's products in general?

Not familiar at all	Somewhat familiar	Familiar	Very familiar
[]	[]	[]	[]

Q1-3. Have you ever purchased Sony products before?

Yes []	No []
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Q1-4. Do you already own a desktop or laptop computer?

No []

Yes [] → Is it a Sony VAIO® desktop or laptop computer?

No []

Yes []

Q1-5. How familiar are you with Sony VAIO® desktop or laptop computers?

Not familiar at all	Somewhat familiar	Familiar	Very familiar
[]	[]	[]	[]

Section 2.

Please circle the number that you believe best indicates your agreement with each item and how it describes the relationship you have with Sony. **When answering each question, think about your relationship with Sony as a customer.** If you strongly disagree with the provided statement, please circle “1” in the box. If you strongly agree with the provided statement, please circle “7” in the box.

Q2-1. “When I think about my relationship with Sony...”	Strongly Disagree	-----					Strongly Agree
1) Sony treats me fairly and justly as a customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2) Whenever Sony makes an important decision, I know they will be concerned about me as a customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3) Sony can be relied on to keep its promises to me as a customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4) I believe that Sony takes my opinions into account as a customer when making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5) I feel very confident about Sony’s skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6) Sony has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7) Sony and I pay attention to what each other communicate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8) Sony believes my opinions as a customer are legitimate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9) In dealing with customers like me, Sony does <i>not</i> have a tendency to throw its weight around.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10) Sony really listens to what I have to say as a customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11) I feel that Sony is trying to maintain a long-term commitment with me as a customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12) Sony wants to maintain a relationship with me as a customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13) There is a long-term bond between Sony and me as a customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14) Compared to other companies, I value my relationship with Sony more.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15) I am happy with Sony.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16) Both Sony and I benefit from our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17) I am happy with my interactions with Sony.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18) Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship Sony has established with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 3.

Q3-1. Assume that you are going to buy a laptop computer, how important would each of the following attributes be to you? (Please circle one number between 1 and 7 for EACH of the five answers)							
Attributes	Extremely Unimportant-----Extremely Important						
1) Longer/Better warranty (including technical service) is	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2) Better customer service (not including technical service) is	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3) Nicer looking design/appearance is	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4) Better quality of components is (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5) More portable is	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q3-2. Assume that you are going to purchase a Sony VAIO® laptop computer in the next 6 months. Compared to other laptop computers, how likely do you believe you will find the following attributes in a Sony VAIO® laptop computer? (Please circle one number between 1 and 7 for EACH of the five answers)							
Attributes	Extremely Unimportant-----Extremely Important						
1) Longer/Better warranty (including technical service)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2) Better customer service (not including technical service)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3) Nicer looking design/appearance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4) Better quality of components (e.g. CD-ROM and DVD drive)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5) More portable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 4.

Q4-1. What is your <i>attitude</i> toward the Sony VAIO® laptop computers? (Please circle one number between 1 and 7 for EACH of the four answers)								
1) Unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Favorable
2) Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
3) Dislike	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Like
4) Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive

Section 5.

Q5-1. What is the <i>probability that you will buy</i> a Sony VAIO® laptop computer? (Please circle one number between 1 and 7 for EACH of the three answers)								
1) Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
2) Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible
3) Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable

Section 6. Demographics

Q6-1. Gender Male [] Female []

Q6-2. Age _____

Q6-3. What is your current level of education?

[] Freshman

[] Sophomore

[] Junior

[] Senior or post-baccalaureate

[] Graduate Student

[] Other: _____ (please specify)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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