Corporate Image Effects on Consumers' Evaluation of Brand Trust and Brand Affect[*]

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<Abstract>

This research investigates relationships between a company's corporate image and consumer attitudes toward brands in the company. It also examines the fit between a company and its individual products and consumer-company identification as intervening variables between the relationships.

Data for this research were collected from 347 undergraduate students through a survey. They were asked to provide their perceptions on two brands for each of 8 large Korean companies.

The results indicate that corporate image directly influences brand trust, whereas it does not affect brand trust indirectly, through company-product fit. Also, the results indicate that corporate image does not directly influence brand affect, whereas it does influence brand affect indirectly, through consumer-company identification.

Key Words: corporate image, company-product fit, consumer-company identification, brand trust, brand affect

INTRODUCTION

Many large companies in Korea use corporate names and individual product brands together when branding their products. The corporate names are likely to influence consumers positively as an endorser behind many of their products. "Samsung Anycall," Samsung PAVV," "Samsung Sense," "Samsung ZIPEL," and "Samsung HAUZEN" are the brand names that Samsung Electronic Company uses for its cell phones, TVs, notebook computers, refrigerators, and washers, respectively. Samsung would expect consumers to evaluate their products more favorably by showing their corporate names together with individual product brands.

It has been reported that customers' associations with a company have influences on their product evaluations. That is, consumers' associations with a company's corporate ability and its corporate social responsibility influence product evaluations (Brown and Dacin 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). For example, consumers will evaluate Anycall mobile phones more favorably as their corporate image improves toward Samsung.

There has been research examining effects of corporate associations on individual products. However, little research has been conducted on the effects of corporate associations on product brands. We would like to raise such questions as: Will a change of a company's corporate image influence consumer attitudes toward brands included in the company's brand portfolio? Then, will a corporate image influence brand trust and brand affect similarly? What are critical intervening variables if a company's corporate image indirectly influences consumer attitudes? Both marketers and marketing researchers will be interested in these questions considering that there are a number of different product brands in many large companies like Samsung, LG, Hyundai, General Motors, and P&G and that more companies than ever before are spending money in corporate social responsibility initiatives.

This research attempts to build and test a conceptual model to address the questions raised above. More specifically this research investigates relationships between a company's corporate image and consumer attitudes toward brands in the company. It also examines the fit between a company and its individual products and consumer-company identification as intervening variables between the relationships.

Data for this research were collected from 347 undergraduate students through a survey. They were asked to provide their perceptions on two brands for each of 8 large Korean companies.

In the following sections we review relevant literature and then offer a conceptual model and research hypotheses. We then describe research methods to test the hypotheses and analysis and results. We end with a discussion of our findings' implications and conclusions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Corporate Image and Company-Product Fit

Studies have examined the roles of corporate associations in consumer reactions to products. Brown and Dacin (1997) found that corporate ability (CA) associations influence product attitudes through their influence on the evaluation of specific product attributes as well as through their influence on the overall evaluation of the company. In contrast, corporate social responsibility (CSR) associations influence product attitudes only through their influence on the overall company evaluation. Keller and Aaker (1998) report similar findings.

Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) have examined the conditions in which CA and CSR influence product responses. They find that the type of CSR a company adopts moderates the effect of CSR on product preferences. Madrigal (2000) finds that the perceived fit between the product and the company

positively influences both the effect of CA associations and the effect of CSR associations. The effect of the perceived fit is consistent with findings in consumer evaluations of brand extensions (Czellar 2003; Kwon·Cho·Kang·Kim 2004; Choi·Kim·Park 2005). The literature examines the transfer of CA type associations with a product brand to evaluations of new products that are marketed under the brand name, and it has often reported that perceived fit positively influences this transfer.

Berens et al. (2005) use the accessibility-diagnosticity framework (Feldman and Lynch 1988) to explain the effects of corporate brand dominance and perceived fit on CA and CSR effects. The framework describes that information is more likely to be used for a certain evaluation when it is easily accessible and when the information is perceived as diagnostic, that is, useful for the evaluation. Berens et al. (2005) suggest that as the dominance of the corporate brand decreases CA and CSR associations with the corporate brand become less accessible than associations with the subsidiary brand, and thus the corporate brand associations have less influence on product evaluations.

Fit can be defined as the similarity between a product and a company (Bhat and Reddy 2001). Previous research has shown that the effects of CA and CSR associations on consumer product evaluations are stronger when people perceive a high company-product fit (Madrigal 2000). In terms of the accessibility-diagnosticity framework, perceived fit influences the diagnosticity of corporate associations for the evaluation of a new product and thus the likelihood that the associations will be used.

Corporate Image and Consumer-Company Identification

Social identity theory (Brewer 1991) posits that in articulating their sense of self, people typically go beyond their personal identity to develop a social identity. They do so by identifying with or categorizing themselves as members of various social categories such as ethnic groups, occupation and sports teams.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) have examined the role of organizations in people's social identities, conceptualizing the person-organization relationship as organizational identification. They suggest that organizational identification occurs when a person's beliefs about a relevant organization becomes self-defining.

People need not interact or even feel strong interpersonal ties to perceive themselves as members of a group. Recent organizational identification research suggests that people seek out organizations for identification purposes even when they are not formal organizational members. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) argue that in today's era of unprecedented corporate influence and consumerism, certain companies represent attractive, meaningful social identities

to consumers that help them satisfy important self-definitional needs. As a result, such companies constitute valid targets for identification among relevant consumers, even though they are not formal organizational members.

Most organizational identification research has focused primarily on membership contexts, in which membership in the relevant organization is not only formal but also central to the lives of the identifying individuals. Most research employing membership contexts, such as employees with employer organizations or students with colleges have found a strong, direct connection between identity attractiveness and organizational identification. That is, the greater the attractiveness of the perceived identity of an organization, the stronger is a person's identification with it (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994).

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

People can form images about many different entities, such as products, brands, and organizations. Images help individuals to think about an entity and will influence their subsequent actions towards the object (Dowling 1994).

Many authors have provided a definition of image. Pruyn (1999) concluded after reviewing several definitions that there is no generally accepted definition of image in the academic literature. The definitions vary from very holistic, general impressions to very detailed evaluations of products, brands, stores, or organizations.

This research takes Aaker and Myers' (1982) definition offering that "An image is the set of meanings by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it. This definition shows that image will consist of several factors and that these factors will influence the behavior of individuals towards the object. Following Lemmink et al.'s (2003) review the factors considered in this research involve ability to attract, develop and keep talented people, community and environmental responsibility, financial soundness, marketing and communications, quality of management, and quality of products and services.

There are two aspects of customers' brand evaluations that have often been examined in the literature. They are trust in the brand and feelings or affect elicited by the brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). Brand trust is defined as the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function. Brand affect is defined as a brand's potential to elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its use. It is viewed that brand trust involves a process that is well thought out and carefully considered, whereas

the development of brand affect is more spontaneous, more immediate, and less deliberately reasoned in nature (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001).

Brand trust and brand affect are two outcome variables in the conceptual model shown in Figure 1. Past studies have found that CA associations and/or CSR associations influence product attitudes through their influence on the evaluation of specific product attributes as well as through their influence on the overall evaluation of the company (Brown and Dacin 1997; Keller and Aaker 1998).
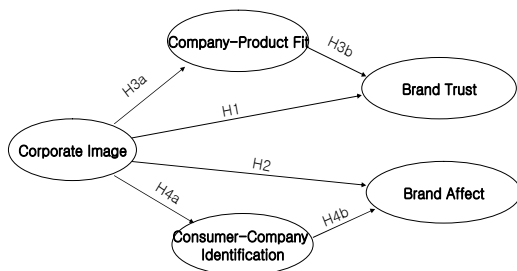

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

We can note by examining the nature of the seven corporate image factors (Lemmink et al. 2003) that corporate image consists of both cognitive and affective dimensions. The conceptual model in Figure 1 suggests that corporate image influences brand trust directly and indirectly, through company-product fit. The model also suggests that corporate image influences brand affect directly and indirectly, through consumer-company identification.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are offered to test a direct effect of corporate image on the

company's brands. We suggest that as a company's corporate image improves, customers' perceptions will be enhanced for the product brands affiliated with the company. The brands are likely to be trusted more and liked more as the company is perceived as a more desirable organization.

There will be varying occasions that a company can enhance its corporate image. Higher product quality ratings or reliability indices may be one of such occasions that a corporate image improves. Dacin and Smith (1994) have shown that if the perceived quality levels of different members of a brand portfolio are more uniform, then consumers tend to make higher, more confident evaluations of a proposed new extension. They also showed that a firm that had demonstrated little variance in quality across a diverse set of product categories was better able to overcome perceptions of lack of extension fit.

Similarly, better performance in corporate image dimensions such as employment, community support, financial health, or management will let a company to achieve a more favorable corporate image. Companies improving in their perceived images will be trusted more and liked more by individuals.

Therefore, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 are offered as follows:

H1: A company's corporate image will positively influence customers' perceived trust toward brands affiliated with the company.

H2: A company's corporate image will positively influence customers' perceived affect toward brands affiliated with the company.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b are offered to test corporate image's indirect influence on brand trust through company-product fit. Large companies today have hundreds of products in their product portfolio. Some products represent the company better while the others do worse. We posit that the company-product fit will be judged across different occasions and be updated as consumers obtain additional information about the company. For example, as consumers are exposed to more favorable information regarding Samsung's global performance each of Samsung's product brands will become a better match for the company.

This argument is based on the findings of brand extension studies that a successful brand extension can enable a brand to be extended even farther. Keller and Aaker (1998) suggest that if an extension changes the image and meaning of the brand, then subsequent brand extensions that otherwise might not have seemed appropriate to consumers may make more sense and be seen as a better fit. Boush and Loken (1991) found that far extensions from a broad brand were evaluated more favorably than from a narrow brand. This finding implies that it is as if consumers in this case think "whatever the company does, it tends to do well." That is, consumers will

perceive a higher fit between a company and its new product brand as the corporate image improves.

Therefore, hypothesis 3a is offered as follows:

H3a: A company's corporate image will positively influence the perceived fit between the company and product brands affiliated with the company.

Fabrigar and Petty (1999) found that the informational basis of the previous judgment strongly influences the subsequent judgment. The authors indicate that the amount of attitude revision produced by new information that is either cognitive or affective depends on the informational basis of the original attitude. That is, attitudes that are cognition based are more sensitive to new information that is cognitive, whereas attitudes that are affect based are more sensitive to new information that is affective.

Company-product fit indicates the perceived fit between a certain product category and a company. It is consumers' cognitive evaluation and thus will influence consumers' evaluation of the brand trust, which is also cognition based evaluation. As a product brand-company fit improves the product brand will be trusted more by individuals. The higher fit will deliver a more diagnostic signal that the brand can be relied on.

Therefore, hypothesis 3b is offered as follows:

H3b: The company-product fit will positively influence customers' perceived trust toward brands affiliated with the company.

It has been proposed that some companies represent attractive, meaningful social identities to consumers because those companies help them satisfy important self-definitional needs (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). Individuals are likely to feel strong interpersonal ties to such companies as targets for identification. It has been found in most organizational identification research that the greater the attractiveness of the perceived identity of an organization, the stronger is a person's identification with it (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994).

Social responsibility has been a key dimension in inducing consumer identification with the company. Brown and Dacin (1997) suggest that a strong record of CSR creates a favorable context that positively boosts consumer attitude toward the firm. Thus CSR initiatives constitute a key element of corporate identity that can induce customers to identify with the companies (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003).

Therefore, hypothesis 4a is offered as follows:

H4a: A company's corporate image will positively influence the consumer-company identification.

Much research attests to the positive effects of individuals' organizational identification on their organization-related preferences and actions (Shin · Kong 2005; Lee · Kim · Ock 2005). Identification causes people to become psychologically attached to and care about the organization, which motivates them to commit to the achievement of its goals, expend more voluntary effort on its behalf, and interact cooperatively with organizational members. For example, Kristof (1996) offers evidence from a range of organizational settings of the positive effects of identification on organizational preferences, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

Because consumption is the primary currency of consumer-company relationships, consumers' identification-based commitment is likely to be expressed through a sustained, long-term preference for the target company's products over those of its competitors (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). That is, company loyalty is a key consequence of consumer-company identification. Because the consumer identifies with the company rather than its products, this loyalty is likely to extend to all the products produced by the company.

Therefore, hypothesis 4b is offered as follows:

H4b: The consumer-company identification will positively influence customers' perceived affect toward brands affiliated with the company.

RESEARCH METHODS

Measures

Multi-item scales were used to measure the 5 constructs being investigated in this study. The measurement scale for corporate image is adapted from Lemmink et al.'s (2003) operational definition. The authors have suggested that corporate image involves 7 factors, that is, ability to attract, develop and keep talented people, community and environmental responsibility, financial soundness, marketing and communications, quality of management, and quality of products

and services. The seven scale items include: (1)This company employs talented people, (2)This company actively supports local communities, (3)This company is financially sound, (4)This company often introduces new products, (5)This company has a strong marketing capability, (6)This company is well managed, and (7)This company offers high quality products. The items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Company-product fit scale was developed on the basis of transferability concept employed in brand extension research (Aaker and Keller 1990). The three scale items include: (1)I

Table 1. Measures

Corporate Image	• This company employs talented people • This company actively supports local communities • This company is financially sound • This company often introduces new products • This company has a strong marketing capability • This company is well managed • This company offers high quality products
Company- Product Fit	• I think that this is a logical product for company X in terms of production capability • I think that this is a logical product for company X in terms of R&D capability • I think that this is a logical product for company X in terms of marketing capability
Consumer- Company Identification	• Please indicate to what degree your self image overlaps with company X's image • Please indicate which case A, B, C, D, E, F, G or H) best describes the level of overlap between your own and company X's identities (Visual diagram shown below)
Brand Trust	• I trust this brand • I rely on this brand • This is an honest brand
Brand Affect	• I feel good when I use this brand • This brand makes me happy • This brand gives me pleasure

think that this is a logical product for company X in terms of production capability, (2)I think that this is a logical product for company X in terms of R&D capability, and (3)I think that this is a logical product for company X in terms of marketing capability. The items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Bergami and Bagozzi's (2000) scale was used to measure consumer-company identification. The scale consists of two items; one 7-point Likert scale item asks "to what degree your self-image overlaps with company X's image" and the other visual diagram scale asks "which case best describes the level of overlap between your own and company X's identities (See Figure 2).

Brand trust and brand affect used the scales in Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Brand

trust used three 7-point Likert scale items: (1)I trust this brand, (2)I rely on this brand, and (3)This is an honest brand. Brand affect used three 7-point Likert scale items: (1)I feel good when I use this brand, (2)This brand makes me happy, and (3)This brand gives me pleasure.

Data Collection

This research investigated perceptions individuals have on companies and product brands affiliated with the companies. Eight large Korean companies were selected and two product brands were selected from each of the companies (See Table 2). Companies and brands were selected on the basis of three criteria. First, eight large companies marketing consumer brands were selected considering consumer awareness levels.
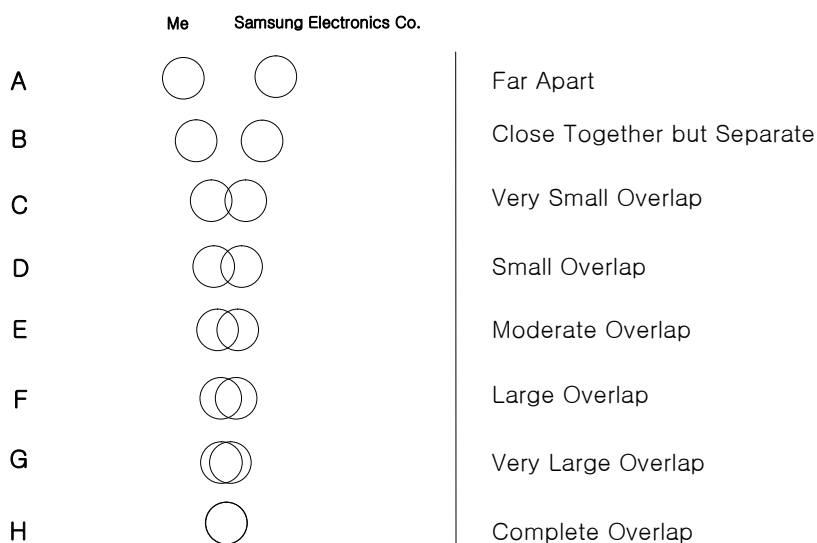

Figure 2. Visual Diagram Scale

Second, through a pretest two product categories were selected for each of the 8 companies; one product which very well represents and the other product which moderately well represents the company, respectively. Two different products were selected for each of the 8 companies to provide a variance in company-product fit across the products. For example, passenger car indicates a product which represents very well while minivan represents Hyundai Motor Company moderately well. Means and variances of perceived company-product fit were computed for the products using a pretest data of 45 student respondents (See Table 2). There was a significant difference at p<.01 between the two products for each of eight companies.

Third, the most well known brand was selected from each product category.

A total of 347 undergraduate students participated in the study; they responded to a questionnaire that was administered in class. About 65 percent (225) of them are males. About 4 percent (15) of them are freshmen, while the remaining respondents are distributed evenly across sophomores, juniors and seniors.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Measurement Model Results

The five multi-item scales were subjected to item analysis and purification following guidelines outlined by Gerbing and Anderson (1987). First, unidimensionality of the measures was assessed by item-to-total correlation and a confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL. On

Table 2. Companies and Brands Surveyed

Company	Product Category (Brand)	Company-Product Fit	
		Mean	Variance
Samsung Electronics Company	Mobile phone (Anycall)	6.0	1.1
	Digital camera (Kenox)	3.3	1.4
Hyundai Motor Company	Passenger car (Sonata)	6.2	0.9
	Minivan (Starex)	4.2	1.2
CJ Corporation	Seasoning (Dashida)	6.2	1.0
	Noodles (Katsuo Udong)	3.8	1.4
AMOREPACIFIC	Cosmetics (LANEIGE)	5.9	1.2
	Green Tea (Sulloc Cha)	2.8	1.2
NONGSHIM	Ramyeon Noodles (Shinramyun)	6.8	0.4
	Soft Drink (Capri Sun)	2.9	1.5
Orion	Pastries (Choco Pie)	6.3	0.9
	Chocolate (Toyou)	4.5	1.2
LOTTE CHILSUNG	Soft Drink (CHILSUNG CIDER)	6.7	0.7
	Instant Coffee (Let's Be)	3.2	1.4
OTTOGI	Curry (Ottogi Curry)	5.3	1.2
	Ramyeon Noodles (Jin Ramen)	4.6	1.5

the basis of the results one item was deleted from the company-product fit scale and brand trust scale, respectively (Table 1 shows remaining scale items).

We then performed confirmatory factor analysis on the remaining items. The model fit indexes and factor loadings for all measurement items are shown in Table 3. The chi-square is significant (χ^2=259.63, p<.001) and the root mean square residual is a little larger than .05, which is the commonly recommended level. However, the other overall fit indexes, involving GFI, AGFI, NFI and CFI show satisfactory levels. Table 3 shows that factor loadings for all indicators are significant and construct reliability and variance extracted show satisfactory levels, providing evidence of internal consistency of the scale items used in this study.

Discriminant validity is assessed by comparing the fit of the correlated two factor models with that of one-factor models for each of 10 possible pairs of the five scales (Anderson and

Table 3. Measurement Model Results

Scale items	Factor Loadings (t-value)	Construct Reliability	Variance Extracted
Corporate Image • employs talented people (CI1) • supports local communities (CI2) • financially sound (CI3) • often introduces new products (CI4) • strong marketing capability (CI5) • well managed (CI6) • offers high-quality products (CI7)	 .82 (13.66) .67 (8.99) .84 (13.53) .84 (11.52) .95 (14.80) 1.00 .77 (13.57)	.95	.67
Company Product Fit • in terms of production capability (FT1) • in terms of R&D capability (FT2) • in terms of marketing capability (FT3)	 1.00 (64.69) 1.00 0.67 (23.85)	.93	.82
Consumer-Company Identification • your self-image overlaps with company X's image (ID1) • the level of overlap between your own and company X's identities (ID2)	 .57(4.14) 1.00	.91	.66
Brand Trust • I trust this brand (TR1) • I rely on this brand (TR2) • This is an honest brand (TR3)	 1.00 .99(5.61) .86(5.22)	.97	.90
Brand Affect • feel good when I use this brand (AF1) • makes me happy (AF2) • gives me pleasure (AF3)	 .97(6.80) 1.00 .45(6.88)	.87	.71

*Mdel Fit Indexes: χ^2=259.63, p<.001, GFI=.93, AGFI=.91, NFI=.93, CFI=.97, RMR=.07

Gerbing 1988). In each comparison, discrimination is evidenced by obtaining a statistically significant chi-square difference (p<.05) between the one-factor and two factor models. The measure validation tests demonstrate adequate unidimensionality, reliability, and discriminant validity for the measures employed in this study.

Structural Model Results

Covariance structure analysis was performed to test the structural model. Table 4 shows the covariance matrix among variables used in the model estimation.

The overall fit of the model was determined by examining the chi-square statistic, fit indexes, and the root mean square residual. The chi square is significant ($\chi 2$=252.33, df=129, p<.01) and the root mean square residual (.06) is a little larger than .05. However, the other overall fit indexes exceed the .90 threshold commonly recommended for adequate fit: the goodness of fit index (GFI)=.93, the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)=.91, the normed fit index (NFI)=.93, and the comparative fit index (CFI)=.97.

The standardized estimates for the model paths are used to test the hypotheses. These estimates are provided in Table 5 and Figure 3. The results show that the direct path from corporate image to brand trust hypothesized in H1 is significant (t=4.39). Therefore, the direct

Table 4. Covariance Matrix

Trust 1	15.1																	
Trust 2	2.3	5.6																
Trust 3	1.7	1.7	2.2															
Affect 1	1.6	1.6	1.5	15.3														
Affect 2	1.4	1.5	1.4	5.2	9.3													
Affect 3	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.9												
Fit 1	1.7	1.2	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.7	80.6											
Fit 2	1.7	1.2	0.6	1.0	0.6	0.7	76.9	77.3										
Fit 3	1.4	1.2	0.7	1.1	0.6	0.5	51.5	51.6	55.5									
Identity 1	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.7	1.2	1.2	0.6	2.5								
Identity 2	0.8	0.7	1.1	0.9	1.3	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.3	2.4	35.6							
Image 1	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	1.2	1.2	0.6	2.5						
Image 2	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	1.6	0.5	2.1					
Image 3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.7	1.1	0.6	1.3	0.8	0.6	1.6				
Image 4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.7	2.2			
Image 5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.6	1.2	0.8	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.8		
Image 6	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4	1.0	1.1	1.3	0.8	1.2	0.9	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.7	
Image 7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.3	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.4

and positive relationship between corporate image and brand trust is supported. However, unlike H3a and H3b the relationship between corporate image and company-product fit (t=1.90) and that between company-product fit and brand trust (t=.45) are not supported.

The direct path from corporate image to brand affect hypothesized in H2 was not significant. However, consistent with H4a and H4b the relationship between corporate image and consumer-company identification (t=4.16) and that between consumer-company identification and brand affect (2.15) are supported.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This research empirically examined the relationships among corporate image, company-

Table 5. Structure Model Results

Path (hypothesis)	Coefficient	T
Corporate Image → Brand Trust (H1)	.41	4.39*
Corporate Image → Company-Product Fit (H3a)	.11	1.90
Company-Product Fit → Brand Trust (H3b)	.03	.45
Corporate Image → Brand Affect (H2)	.05	.41
Corporate Image → Consumer-Company Identification (H4a)	.66	4.16*
Consumer-Company Identification → Brand Affect (H4b)	.34	2.15*

*: statistically significant at p< 0.01
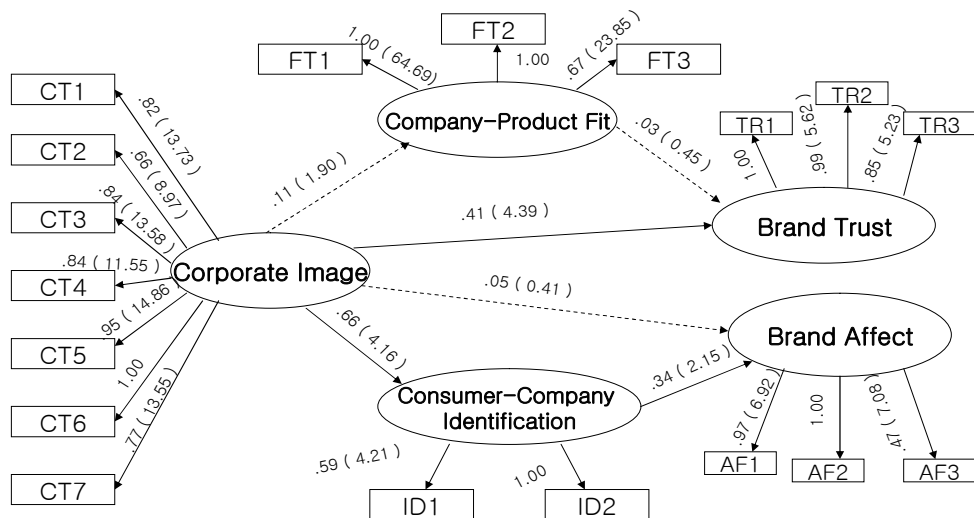
* Numbers in parentheses indicate t values.

* Real line indicates statistically significant paths, dotted line indicates nonsignificant paths.

Figure 3. Structural Model Resulte

product fit, consumer-company identification, brand trust and brand affect. The results indicate that corporate image directly influences brand trust, whereas it does not affect brand trust indirectly, through company-product fit. Also, the results indicate that corporate image does not directly influence brand affect, whereas it does influence brand affect indirectly, through consumer-company identification.

The results of this research generally support the importance of corporate image argued in the literature. Corporate image exercises both direct and indirect effect through different routes. The results are generally consistent with the studies suggesting that corporate associations affect product evaluations (Aaker and Keller 1998; Brown and Dacin 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). We postulate that evaluation of individual products may highly co-vary with evaluation of product brands, although they are not equal. For example, a consumer evaluating a certain Anycall model very favorably is likely to evaluate the product brand, Anycall quite favorably. This research extends previous research in that it shows effects of corporate image on product brands, the unit of analysis not investigated as yet.

An important theoretical contribution of this research is that it simultaneously investigates effects of corporate image on brand trust and brand affect, which are two important aspects of customer loyalty to the brand. Brand trust was found to be influenced directly from corporate image. Company-product fit had a significant role in explaining corporate image effect on product evaluations (Berens et al. 2005; Madrigal 2000) and in describing parent brand image on brand extensions (Czellar 2003; Keller and Aaker 1998). However, it was not a significant intervening variable between corporate image and brand trust. It seems that corporate image itself signals the level of brand trust, regardless of the company-product fit. We may interpret that the fit does not provide consumers much information which is highly diagnostic of the brand trust.

Brand affect was found to be influenced only indirectly through consumer-company identification. It was not influenced directly from corporate image. We may interpret that consumer-company identification is a very important intervening variable between corporate image and brand affect. This result is consistent with social identity theory in general and with the previous finding that the greater the attractiveness of the perceived identity of an organization, the stronger is a person's identification with it (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). It seems that companies are appropriate targets for identification among consumers, although consumers are not members of the companies.

Companies need to decide target markets when they take CSR actions. Consumers are likely to be positively influenced by its CSR actions when the company image closely

reflects their own images. Similarly, Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) reported that consumers' perceptions of congruence between their own characters and that of the company affect consumers' reactions to the company's CSR initiatives.

The data for this research were collected from university students. Given that the concept of corporate image is relevant for most age groups, our results may be generalizable to different age groups as far as appropriate companies and brands are considered. Nonetheless, future research should investigate the relationships between corporate image and consumers' brand responses across different companies, brands, and samples.

Two product brands were surveyed for each of the eight companies employed in this research. Samsung Kenox was used as Samsung's digital camera product brand, because it was presumed to moderately well represent Samsung Electronics Company. However, Kenox is actually affiliated with Samsung Techwin, not Samsung Electronics Company. Covariance structure analysis was performed again with excluding participants' responses on Samsung. There was no notable difference between results of this analysis and all data based results provided in Table 5.

Corporate image was operationalized and measured to involve 7 different dimensions. The measure is quite comprehensive compared to general impression based measures often used in previous studies (Pruyn 1999). However,

future research needs to try other measurement approaches to more fruitfully investigate corporate image effects.

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