Does Green Image of the Franchise Lunchbox Brand Prompt Consumer Loyalty?
: The Serial Mediation Effects of Brand Trust and Attachment

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Abstract

Purpose: As social interest in environmental issues increases, pro-environmental initiatives are becoming more active in many industry sectors. This study explores how a firm's perceived green brand image affects consumer loyalty through brand trust and attachment. **Research design, data, and methodology:** The data of 363 respondents aged 20 to 59 who purchased the franchise lunchbox in the last three months were analyzed using SPSS 25.0 and SmartPLS 4.0. **Result:** Green brand image affects consumer loyalty through cognitive trust, affective trust, and brand attachment. Regarding serial mediations, cognitive trust affects brand attachment only through affective trust and, in turn, consumer loyalty. **Conclusions:** This study employs the hierarchy of effects theory to explore the role of the perceived green image of the franchise lunchbox brand in prompting consumer loyalty through brand trust and attachment. The eco-friendly initiatives are imperative in establishing a green brand image, given their critical roles in generating consumer brand trust and attachment as well as consumer loyalty in the franchise lunchbox industry. The franchise lunchbox firms should implement environmental initiatives and effectively communicate and actively inform these initiatives to raise perceptions of green brand image and build cognitive brand trust.

Keywords : Green Brand Image, Cognitive Trust, Affective Trust, Brand Attachment, Consumer Loyalty

JEL Classification Code E44, F31, F37, G15

1. Introduction

Globally, more people purchase food online and have it delivered to their place, such as home, office, school, etc., as they have begun to get used to life since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the environmental problem caused by the increasing number of single-used packaged food purchases has always been unsolved (Guo, 2021). The situation in Korea is even more serious. According to Kim (2021),

Koreans threw away an average of 44 kg of single-use plastic waste per person in 2019, which is the third-largest worldwide, after Australia (59 kg) and the U.S.A. (53 kg).

Recently, along with this change in consumers' food consumption habits, as prices for dining out have risen sharply, more and more consumers are trying to settle for a meal with store lunch boxes. The domestic lunchbox market, including franchises and convenience stores, is growing to an estimated KRW

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1 trillion (Cho, 2023). Also, with the increase in single-person households, of which single-use plastic waste reached an average of 30 per day, 4.4 times higher than multi-person households (Kang & Lee, 2020), the consumption of single-use packaged food is increasing rapidly because of its convenience. The environmental issues of single-use lunchbox containers and packaging are drawing particular attention with various challenges, including natural ash damage, waste incineration due to low recycling rates, the stability and hygiene security of the container itself, and the effectiveness of eco-friendly materials (Kim, 2020).

As for global consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors, Kachaner et al. (2020) noted that approximately 70% of global consumers responded more seriously to environmental issues after the outbreak of the pandemic, with about 76% saying the environment is an issue that should be considered as important as health issues, drawing from 2020 BCG global consumer survey. According to Lim (2022), 53% of global consumers would purchase eco-friendly products and prefer products using eco-friendly packaging in 2021, which was an increase of about 20% point compared to 2019, before the pandemic, based on the survey results from PwC Global Consumer Insights Surveys in 2019 and 2021. This shows that global consumers tend to be 'Greensumers.'

Regarding Korean consumers, the Korea Green Foundation (2021) revealed that 55.1% of Korean consumers preferred eco-friendly consumption, and 58.8% said they practice eco-friendly consumption. Especially after being provided with eco-friendliness information about products, 9.7% of consumers are willing to purchase those eco-friendly products, and 96.3% of them would buy even if the price were somewhat higher than that of other ordinary products based on the survey conducted by the Korea Consumer Agency in 2023 (Woo, 2023), which shows that consumers' knowledge of a product's eco-friendliness could increase their willingness to purchase and pay a premium price. Lee and Ahn (2022) assert that the consumers' perception of the eco-friendliness of the lunchbox does not affect the functional value but the emotional value. In a similar vein, the eco-friendliness of the lunchbox should be given a higher priority to improve consumers' emotional value. Also, they posit that the consumers show variety-seeking, low-involvement behavior in purchasing the lunchbox.

Meanwhile, as social interest in environmental issues increases, eco-friendly or pro-environmental initiatives are also getting more active in the lunchbox industry sector. To change the consumers' perception of the stereotypical image of an industry that mainly produces environmentally harmful waste, various initiatives, such as developing and using biodegradable containers or packaging, campaigning

to restrict single-use packaged products, replacing container or package materials with hygienically safe ones, and obtaining certification from a third-party environmental institution or agency, are underway. For example, a franchise lunchbox brand, BON, has developed and used biodegradable and multi-use containers, launched an active pro-environmental campaign and consumer promotion, GS25 retail replaced its harmful PET (Positron Emission Tomography) lunchbox container with a PP (Polypropylene) container, and HANSOT not only developed and used pro-environmental materials for its container, tissue, uniform, and label-printing but also won the certifications from the third-party institutions such as UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) Business Index Committee and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) (Choi, 2017; Jung, 2022; Kang, 2023; Moon, 2023; Park, 2021).

The extant studies exploring consumer attitudes and behaviors toward green brands have paid scant attention to the franchise lunchbox industry sector, where eco-friendly responses may be most urgent and green initiatives are actively underway. The literature review related to green brand image and brand or consumer loyalty from 2010 to 2022 by Watson et al. (2023) reveals that studies on the lunchbox industry sector have been silent compared to other industry sectors, such as hotels, restaurants, electronics, cosmetics, tourism, and coffee shop.

Against the backdrop of the situation above, this study seeks to answer the question, "Can the green image of the franchise lunch box brand prompt consumer loyalty within the context of consumers' variety-seeking low-involvement purchases for the franchise lunchbox brands?"

To address the research question, a survey was conducted with the purpose of examining how consumers' perceptions of the green image of the franchise lunchbox brand affect brand trust and attachment and, in turn, how this affects their loyalty toward the brand, incorporating the hierarchy of effects theory.

This study also aims to present differentiated strategic directions to marketing managers and practitioners to strengthen the business competitiveness of franchise lunchbox brands in the Korean market, where fierce competition is underway, drawing upon the research results.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Research Framework: Hierarch of Effects Theory

This study builds the conceptual research framework drawing from the hierarch of effects theory.

This approach posits that a consumer does not easily convert into a convinced purchaser in one immediate step from a disinterested individual (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961).

Instead, consumers purchase through a multiple-stage process, which are cognitive, affective, and conative stages in sequence, to reach the final purchase stage. The cognitive stage relates to consumers' thoughts. The affective stage relates to the consumers' feelings and emotions. The conative stage relates to consumers' behavioral intentions and actions. Recently, more and more firms in the domestic lunchbox industry sector have communicated their pro-environmental initiatives, focusing on generating consumers' feelings and attitudes to build their green image (Choi, 2017; Jung, 2022; Kang, 2023; Moon, 2023; Park, 2021). In these three sequential stages, this green image becomes an aggregation of beliefs that constitute the firm's image. In turn, these beliefs determine consumers' affective responses. The affective responses impact consumers' conative outcomes: repurchase behaviors, recommendations, and willingness to pay a premium price (Liu, 2018; Martinez, 2015; Salhieh, 2019).

Along this line, previous research examining the direct effect of green issues on consumer behavior has drawn mixed findings (Martinez, 2015). However, it has been shown that mediating affective variables, such as perceived green value, affect, trust, etc., in the study always impact consumer behavioral responses (Chen & Chang, 2013; Ng et al., 2014). Therefore, the hierarchy of effects model is more applicable to grasping the idea of the effects of the green image on consumer response than the research of direct connections between the cognitive and behavior stages of the model. Previous research in the franchise lunchbox industry did not pay expanded attention to consumer loyalty by integrating the consequences of firms' green brand image. This study employs the hierarch of effects model to explore the role of consumers' perceived green image of the franchise lunchbox brand in prompting consumer loyalty through brand trust and attachment, as in Figure 1.
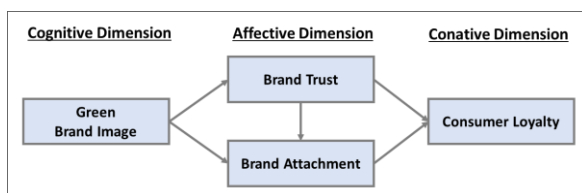

Figure 1: Conceptual Research Framework

2.2. Green Brand Image

Brand image is the pivotal element of brand value or benefit (Aaker, 1991), shaping consumers' concepts and associations with the brand (Keller, 1993; Morrin,

1999). Brand image is the aggregation of brand associations evoked in the consumers' memory, which leads consumers to generate brand awareness and associations with the brand attributes and attitudes (Keller, 1993) and is the amalgamation of consumers' perceptions and evaluations on and association with a brand's traits and properties, and their psychological responses to the brand's key element (Huang et al., 2020). A strong brand image will forge a superior brand message to its competitors (Hsieh & Li, 2008). Lee et al. (2019) suggest that brand image plays a vital role in competition when it is difficult to differentiate products or services by their tangible qualities or characteristics.

The green brand image refers to what consumers perceive as environmentally sustainable and eco-friendly (Chen, 2010). "Green brand image is a set of perceptions of a brand is linked to both environmental commitments and environmental concerns" Chen (2010, p. 309). A firm's green image is crucial because it raises green awareness (Rahmi et al., 2017), positively influences green brand preference (Norouzi, 2022), affects green brand loyalty (Chen et al., 2020), and contributes to green competitive advantages (Alam & Islam, 2021). The green brand image also influences consumers' attitudes (Salehzadeh et al., 2023), green satisfaction, and brand trust (Deniz & Onder, 2017).

2.3. Brand Trust

Trust is vital to establishing and maintaining long-term relationships (Jahangir et al., 2009). Trust embraces three fundamental viewpoints: integrity, ability, and benevolence (Chen, 2010). From a marketing perspective, trust influences consumers' behavior (Gefen & Straub, 2004). It reduces customers' perception of risk. Eventually, it promotes purchasing behavior (Pappas, 2016). Trust encourages consumers' positive attitudes (Park, 2013) and creates relationships with the sellers (Zboja & Voorhees, 2006).

Brand trust refers to consumers' willingness to turn to a brand with their confidence in the integrity and reliability of the brand (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Brand trust is vital in forming a consumer's attitude toward a firm; therefore, managers should acknowledge it as an essential driver in successful business relationships (Toufaily et al., 2013). Brand trust is classified into two dimensions: cognitive trust, formed by a rational evaluation and affective trust by consumer-brand interaction (Johnson & Grayson, 2005), although Han et al. (2015) conceptualize and operationalize it as a global unidimensional construct. This study adopts the bi-dimensional representation of brand trust: cognitive and affective trust.

2.3.1. Cognitive Brand Trust

Cognitive brand trust is knowledge-driven, in

which consumers' trust draws on reasonable comprehension of the use of a brand (Srivastava et al., 2015). It is a consumer's willingness to confidently engage in a firm's competence and reliability (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). It entails careful thought to discern whether the brand is trustworthy (Morrow et al., 2004). Thus, consumers' evaluations of the expertise or performance of a brand with respect to competence, credentials, and reliability result in cognitive brand trust (Johnson & Grayson, 2005).

2.3.2. Affective Brand Trust

Affective brand trust refers to a consumer's belief in the level of concern or care exhibited by a brand (Srivastava et al., 2015). It is reliance on an emotional bond between the customer and the brand (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). As the emotional bond deepens, it could be beyond objective knowledge. Affective brand trust constitutes an emotional bond with customers and then influences customers' attitudes toward the brand (Kim et al., 2019).

Cognitive trust exists before affective trust develops because it is the basis of affective trust (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). However, reverse causation, which is affective trust before cognitive trust, increases as affective trust matures (McAllister, 1995). Although attitude theory researchers asserted that the sequence of cognitive stage and affective stage in forming attitude is bidirectional, this study adopts extant theorization and empirical research by Jonson & Grayson (2005) and McAllister (1995). Thus, this study models cognitive brand trust as an antecedent of affective brand trust.

2.4. Brand Attachment

Malär et al. (2011) refer to brand Attachment as the strong emotional connection between a consumer and a brand by which the consumer regards the brand as a part of his or her self-concept. Consumers commit to the brand (Dennis et al., 2016), maintain a long-term customer-brand relationship (Gómez-Suárez, 2019), spread positive word-of-mouth (Rajaobelina et al., 2021), and are willing to pay a premium price for the brand (Fu & Chen, 2023). To put it all together, brand attachment positively impacts consumers' brand loyalty, consumer life value, brand equity, and, ultimately, a firm's profitability (Shimul, 2022). Thus, it is imperative for brand managers to construct a solid emotional connection with consumers.

2.5. Consumer Loyalty

Loyalty refers to a non-random purchase made at any time by consumers and is a manifestation of humans' fundamental needs to possess, commit, get a sense of security, build attachment, and develop emotional attachment (Kartajaya, 2007). Loyalty is a biased response and the consistent purchase pattern of an individual, a household, a firm, or any purchasing unit toward a product or brand expressed over a period of time (Mellens et al., 1996). Thus, loyal consumers commit to sticking to a product or brand in depth by repurchasing the product or brand consistently despite the influences of marketing stimuli and situations that can potentially bring about the consumer's behavioral change (Saulina & Syah, 2018). A brand-loyal consumer is less price-sensitive (Gómez et al., 2018). A brand with strong consumer loyalty maintains premium prices, bargaining power with distribution channels, cost reduction, and barriers to potential new entrants (Reichfeld, 1996).

Loyalty behavior can be measured in three dimensions: repeated patronage, recommendations (word-of-mouth), and switching behavior (Ling & Ding, 2006). According to the above extant research, brand-loyal consumers are more likely to purchase a brand continuously, make recommendations to other people, be willing to pay a premium price, and resist other brands' offers.

3. Research Method

3.1. Hypothesis Development

This research establishes the following hypotheses to explore the influence of the perceived green image of the franchise lunchbox brand on consumer loyalty through brand trust and attachment in sequence.

3.1.1. Relationship between Green Brand Image and Brand Trust

Consumers' favorable brand image positively affects brand trust (Alhaddad, 2015; Fianto, 2014). From the perspective of the favorable pro-environmental image of a brand, a green brand image positively affects brand trust. This study adopts the bi-dimensional representation of brand trust, cognitive and affective trust, suggested by Johnson & Grayson (2005), and cognitive trust is the positive antecedent of affective trust. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses.

H1: Green brand image positively affects cognitive brand trust.

H2: Green brand image positively affects affective brand trust.

H3: Cognitive brand trust positively affects affective brand trust.

3.1.2. Relationship between Green Brand Image and Brand Attachment

Much extant research argues that brand image positively influences brand attachment (Hwang & Lee, 2019; Manyiwa et al., 2018; Takamatsu, 2021). Also, in the context of green branding, previous studies reveal that green brand image positively impacts brand attachment (Chen et al., 2017; Hussain & Waheed, 2016; Ögel, 2021). Therefore, these lead to the following hypothesis.

H4: Green brand image positively affects brand attachment.

3.1.3. Relationship between Brand Trust and Brand Attachment

A plethora of research asserts that brand trust is a positive antecedent of brand attachment (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015; Barijan et al., 2021; Chinomona & Maziriri, 2017; Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019; Levy & Hino, 2016; Wen et al., 2019). As for brand attachment, this study follows the Connection-Prominence Attachment Model (CPAM) suggested by Park et al. (2010).

CPAM refers to brand attachment as the strength of the link connecting the consumer's perceived self with a brand. It describes that brand attachment has two aspects: (1) the link between the self-concept and the brand. (2) the link between the salience of the brand-relevant thoughts and feelings. The former is a consumer's sense of oneness with a brand. The latter refers to the perceived frequency and articulacy of memories and feelings of a brand. Therefore, these two factors increase the consumer's brand attachment. As aforementioned, this study employs the bi-dimensional representation of brand trust suggested by McAllister (1995), and Johnson and Grayson (2005). Taken all together, this study proposes the following hypotheses.

H5: Cognitive brand trust positively affects brand attachment.

H6: Affective brand trust positively affects brand attachment.

3.1.4. Relationship between Brand Trust and Consumer Loyalty

Several studies in various industry areas suggest that a consumer's brand trust positively generates consumer loyalty (Djamaludin & Fahira, 2023; Henao et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2023; Purnamabroto et al., 2022; Rudzewicz & Strychalska-Rudzewicz, 2021). As trust building involves reasoning and emotional involvement or feeling, this study employs the concept of trust via the cognitive and affective factors (Johnson & Grayson, 2005; Komiak & Benbasat, 2006). If consumers positively experience a brand and hold accrued knowledge and emotional exchanges, they develop cognitive brand and affective brand trust.

In turn, they ultimately intensify their loyalty to the brand (Ozdemir et al., 2020; Sahin et al., 2012). Thus, this study proposes the following hypotheses.

H7: Cognitive brand trust positively affects consumer loyalty.

H8: Affective brand trust positively affects consumer loyalty.

3.1.5. Relationship between Brand Attachment and Consumer Loyalty

Many extant studies reveal that an eventual outcome of brand attachment is consumer loyalty to the brand (Lin et al., 2021; Loh et al., 2021; Tsai, 2014). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis based on the above extant suggestions.

H9: Brand Attachment positively affects consumer loyalty.

3.2. Measurement

This study adapted research items from the extant research, modified them in the context of the franchise lunch box, and measured them on a seven-point Likert scale from "1 = strongly disagree" to "7 = strongly agree."

Green brand image was measured with three items adapted from Cho et al. (2023). Brand trust consists of two sub-dimensions, such as cognitive and affective trust (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). Based on Kim et al. (2019) and Srivastava (2015), cognitive and affective trust are measured using four items. The brand attachment was borrowed from Lee et al. (2019) and Cheng et al. (2013) and modified for the study, which was measured with three items. Consumer loyalty was adapted and modified based on the suggestions from Ling and Ding (2006), Mellens et al. (1996), Malik (2014), and Jiang et al. (2023) and was measured using five items.

A list of measurement items for each construct is shown in Appendix 2.

3.3. Data Collection

The study focused on consumers aged 20 to 59 who had purchased a franchise lunch box in the last three months before the date of the survey to test the hypothesized research model. An online specialized research firm conducted the survey. This study selected the sample from the panel list of the research firm using convenience sampling. The respondents answered the questions based on their perceptions and evaluations of the most recently purchased brand of the franchise lunch box if they had purchased more than one brand in the last three months.

The online questionnaire was distributed to 1,048 panels of the research firm, and 644 questionnaires

were collected. A total of 281 responses were deleted from the analysis, as 252 were on the convenience store lunch box brand, and the other 29 were incomplete. A final valid sample of 363 was obtained, more than five times per variable, which is sufficient for the proposed structural model (Black et al., 2010).

3.4. Data Analysis

This study verifies the data and tests the research model using SPSS 25.0 and SmartPLS 4.0 statistical packages. The respondents' demographic characteristics are analyzed using SPSS 25. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) has been increasingly used in consumer behavioral studies (Hair et al., 2022). The PLS-SEM approach estimates complicated research models with many variables and structural pathways, not necessarily assuming data distribution. Also, it can predict the causal relationships of structural equation models in behavioral research (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

4. Results

4.1. Respondents' Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of respondents are shown in Table 1. 56.2% of respondents were females, more than males (43.8%). The age group of 20 to 29 years old was the largest (35.8%), followed by the group of 30 to 39 (35.0%) years old. It suggests that more than 70% of the respondents were relatively younger generations, between 20 and 39 years old, and more were single (55.6%). Most respondents attended university (62.5%) and college (16.0%). For monthly income, the 2.0 - less than 3.0 million Won group was the largest (27.0%), followed by the 3.0 - 4.0 million Won group (22.9%).

Regarding occupation, more than half of the respondents were office workers (54.0%). As for the most recently purchased franchise lunch box brand, HANSOT was shown dominant (56.7%), followed by BON (23.7%).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	159	43.8
	Female	204	56.2
Age	20-29	130	35.8
	30-39	127	35.0
	40-49	75	2.7
	50-59	31	8.5

Marital Status	Single	202	55.6
	Married	148	4.8
	Others	13	3.6
Education	High School or less	39	1.7
	College	58	16.0
	University	227	62.5
	Graduate School or more	39	1.7
Monthly Income (Korean Million Won)	<2	68	18.7
	2.0 – <3	98	27.0
	3.0 – <4	83	22.9
	4.0 – <5	44	12.1
	5.0 – <6	39	1.7
	6≥	31	8.5
Occupation	Office worker	196	54.0
	Sales / Service	21	5.8
	Manufacturing	35	9.6
	Self-Employed	11	3.0
	Civil Service	18	5.0
	Homemaker	22	6.1
	Student	35	9.6
Recently Purchased Franchise Lunch Box Brand	Hansot	206	56.7
	BON	86	23.7
	Tomato	10	2.8
	Obong	3	.8
	Chaesundang	10	4.4
	Bobby box	3	.8
	Others	39	10.8

4.2. Common Method Bias (CMB)

The CMB was tested using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for all the items in the research model. If a VIF is less than 3.3, it indicates no problematic issues with pathological collinearity and the contamination of the model by CMB (Koch, 2015). The result shows that all the VIFs ranged from 1.720 to 2.934. Thus, the results confirmed that the data could be judged free of CMB.

4.3. Measurement Model Assessment

4.3.1. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (C.R.) were used to evaluate internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's alpha and C.R. vary between 0 and 1. The higher values indicate higher reliability. Values between .70 and .95 are satisfactory to a good level of reliability (Hair et al., 2022). As in Appendix 1, all the Cronbach alpha and C.R. values are between .856 and .933, indicating that the internal consistency reliability is satisfactory. Convergent validity was examined by the value of the average variance extracted (AVE). Hair et al. (2022) state that an AVE value of .5 or higher is an acceptable threshold. As

shown in Appendix 1, the AVE values are between .700 and .823. Thus, the convergent validity of the constructs is to be judged satisfactory.

4.3.2. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity was examined by the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) for all constructs, as Henseler et al. (2015) suggested. The HTMT indicates to what extent a construct is distinct from other constructs. It reveals how distinctly the indicators of a construct represent this single construct and how much a construct correlates with other constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Henseler et al. (2015) suggested a threshold value of .9 for HTMT. As shown in Appendix 2, the values of HTMT were between .616 and .890, smaller than .9. Thus, the results confirmed the discriminant validity.

4.4. Structural Model Assessment

4.4.1. Assessment of Collinearity Issues

The VIF values of the predictor constructs should be below the value of 5 to ascertain that collinearity has no critical issue in estimating the structural model (Hair et al., 2022).

As seen in Appendix 3, the results show that all VIF values are between 1.000 and 3.234, below the threshold of 5, confirming that the collinearity between each set of the predictor constructs in the structural model is not a substantial issue.

4.4.2. Hypotheses Testing

Firstly, H1, H2, H3, and H4 regarding the effects of GBI on CBT, ABT, and BAT, respectively, were tested. The results revealed that GBI significantly positively affects CBT (β = .631, t = 18.303, p < .001, BCCI [.573, .687]), ABT (β = .563, t = 11.589, p < .001, BCCI [.483, .642]), and BAT (β = .337, t = 5.883, p < .001, BCCI [.244, .431]). Moreover, CBT is shown to significantly positively affect ABT (β = .329, t = 6.397, p < .001, BCCI [.243, .414]). Thus, H1, H2, H3, and H4 were supported.

Secondly, H5 and H6 regarding the effects of CBT and ABT on BAT were tested. The results revealed that ABT significantly positively affects BAT (β = .609, t = 8.976, p < .001, BCCI [.426, .614]). However, the effect of CBT on BAT is not significant (β = -.010, t = .193, p = .424 > .05, BCCI [-.095, .070]). Therefore, H6 was supported, but H5 was not supported.

Lastly, H7, H8, and H9 regarding the effects of CBT, ABT, and BAT on CLT were tested. The results revealed that CBT (β = .521, t = 12.269, p < .001, BCCI [.523, .687]), ABT (β = .152, t = 2.475, p < .01, BCCI [.054, .255]), and BAT (β = .090, t = 1.833, p < .05, BCCI [.009, .172]) significantly positively affect CLT. Thus, H7, H8, and H9 were supported.

The results of the testing path coefficient with a 5,000 resample are summarized in Appendix 4.

4.4.3. Explanatory Power, Predictive Power, and Effect Size

As shown in Appendix 4, the R^2 values of CBT, ABT, BAT, and CLT are .398, .639, .644, and .612, respectively, over .1. Thus, the explanatory power was satisfactory.

Appendix 4 also shows that the $Q^2_{predict}$ values of CBT, ABT, BAT, and CLT are .393, .591, .534, and .360, respectively, above zero. Thus, all four endogenous constructs possessed predictive power.

In addition to the R^2, the f^2 effect size is also used to quantify the strength of the model relationship. As in Appendix 4, the results showed that relatively large f^2 effect sizes occurred for the relationships GBI → CBT (.660), GBI → ABT (.558), and ABT → BAT (.507). Relatively medium f^2 effect sizes were shown for the relationships CBT → ABT (.191) and CBT → CLT (.261). However, small and negligible f^2 effect size occurred for the relationship GBI → BAT (.123), CBT → BAT (.000), ABT → CLT (.018), and BAT → CLT (.008).
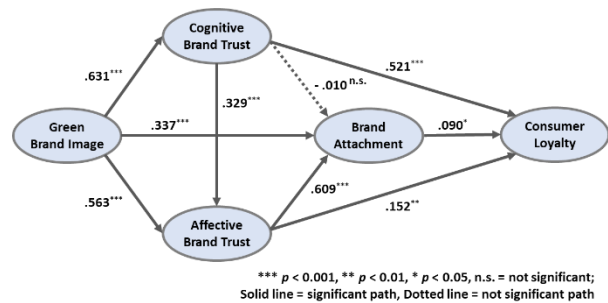
Figure 2. Estimates of the Structural Model

4.4.4. Indirect Effects

Regarding the indirect effects of GBI on CLT, mediation analysis was conducted to examine the mediating roles of CBT, ABT, and BAT. The results revealed the significant indirect effects of GBI on CLT through CBT (β = .384, t = .907, p < .001, BCCI [.320, .449]), ABT (β = .086, t = 2.386, p < .01, BCCI [.030, .150]), and BAT (β = .030, t = 1.677, p < .05, BCCI [.003, .062]).

As for the serial mediations, the results showed that the serial mediating effect of CBT and ABT on the relationship between GBI and CLT (β = .032, t = 2.267, p < .05, BCCI [.011, .056]), that of CBT and BAT (β = -.001, t = .171, p = .432 > .05, BCCI [-.006, .005]), that of ABT and BAT (β = .027, t = 1.810, p < .05, BCCI [.003, .051]), and that of CBT and ABT, ABT and BAT were significant. In contrast, the serial mediating effect of CBT and BAT was not significant.

Finally, as for the triple serial mediating effect of CBT, ABT, and BAT on the relationship between GBI

and CLT, the result showed a significant triple mediating effect of CBI, ABI, and BAT (β = .010, t = 1.754, p < .05, BCCI [.001, .019]). The results are in Appendix 5.

5. Conclusion

The ultimate aspiration of firms, including franchise lunchbox companies, is to gain and sustain consumer loyalty, as loyal consumers (re)buy more, recommend the brand to others, tend to be less price-sensitive (Ling & Ding, 2006; Mellens et al., 1996; Williams & Naumann, 2011). Considering the variety-seeking behavior in purchasing the lunchbox (Lee & Ahn, 2022), gaining and sustaining consumer loyalty could be an imperative issue to address, especially in this lunchbox industry sector. With the ongoing trends of active, eco-friendly initiatives deployed in the lunchbox industry sector, this study relates these green marketing initiatives to consumer loyalty because eco-friendly initiatives have become a feasible marketing tool for consumers (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001). The eco-friendliness of the lunchbox is given a higher priority to improve consumers' emotional value (Lee & Ahn, 2022).

Scarce extant research has provided the marketing practitioners in the franchise lunchbox industry sector with a comprehensive framework to address the connections between green brand image, affective consequences, and consumer behavioral responses. Drawing from the hierarch of effects theory, this study designs a research model by presenting the relevance of the green brand image to developing brand trust and attachment to consumer loyalty.

Therefore, this study aims to present differentiated strategic directions to marketing managers and practitioners in the franchise industry sector to strengthen their brand competitiveness by identifying the impact of consumers' perceived green image of the franchise lunchbox brand on brand trust, attachment, and, eventually, consumer loyalty.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Firstly, the study supports the validity of the hierarchy of effects model to address the structure that cognitive associations of the green brand image affect consumer loyalty through their affective responses to the brand. The first path consists of the beliefs and thoughts produced by the perception of the firm's eco-friendly initiatives, while the second path comprises the emotions and feelings engendered by cognitive perception. These are in accordance with previous studies using this cognitive-affective-conative approach to explore consumers' responses to the firm's eco-friendly initiatives in the context of green marketing activities (Chang & Fong, 2010; Ha, 2021;

Martinez, 2015; Pahlevi & Suhartanto, 2020; Salehzadeh et al., 2023)

Secondly, extant research rarely explores the relationship between green brand image and consumer loyalty in the franchise lunchbox industry. This research shows that the green brand image positively affects brand trust, which is in accordance with the extant research (Alhaddad, 2015; Esch et al., 2006; Tan et al., 2011; Flavian et al., 2005), in both cognitive and affective ways and positively affects consumers' brand attachment, consistent with the previous research on green branding by Chen et al. (2017), Hussain and Waheed (2016), and Ögel (2021).

Thirdly, as noted earlier, brand trust is a positive antecedent of attachment. Considering brand attachment with two cognitive and affective factors, this study expands the extant study on brand image and consumer loyalty by including a bi-dimensional brand trust representation, cognitive and affective trust, and brand attachment as serial mediating variables. This study indicates that this bi-dimensional conceptualization of brand trust is meaningful for exploring the theoretical and managerial implications of green marketing. Regarding relationships among cognitive trust, affective trust, and attachment, affective trust directly influences brand attachment, while cognitive trust indirectly influences brand attachment only through affective trust. The positive influence of cognitive trust on affective trust is consistent with previous studies by Johnson and Grayson (2005), and McAllister (1995). Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence that cognitive trust mediates the relationship between green brand image and consumer loyalty and the relationship through affective trust and brand attachment in serial.

5.2. Managerial Implications

This study presents the following managerial implications for marketing practitioners in the franchise lunchbox industry.

Firstly, increasing green brand image, cognitive trust, affective trust, and brand attachment can enhance consumer loyalty for eco-friendly marketing activities and initiatives in the franchise lunchbox industry. This study shows the pro-environmental relevance in recent industry contexts and the necessity for lunchbox firms to embrace those issues in their business strategies. The findings reveal that eco-friendly initiatives to establish a green brand image are strategically imperative, given their critical roles in generating consumer brand trust and attachment and eventually developing consumer loyalty.

Secondly, the results show that cognitive trust affects consumer loyalty more than affective trust. Thus, it is recommended to give priority to building cognitive brand trust. Marketing managers in franchise lunchbox firms should not only implement environmental

initiatives but also effectively communicate and actively inform these initiatives to raise consumers' perceptions of the green image of the brand and build cognitive brand trust, which supports the findings by the Korea Consumer Agency in 2023 that more consumers are willing to buy the eco-friendly product and are even willing to pay a premium price after being provided with eco-friendliness information about the products and brands (Woo, 2023). In addition, winning the environmental certification from third-party institutions helps to authenticate these initiatives and the firm's eco-friendly claims (Martinez, 2015) and, in turn, enhances consumers' perceptions of green brand image and trust cognitively.

Thirdly, although affective brand trust modestly mediates the relationship directly or in serial between green brand image and consumer loyalty, this study reveals that cognitive brand trust influences brand attachment only through affective brand trust. Much research notes that brand attachment, a consumer's strong emotional connection with self-concept, positively impacts consumers' brand loyalty, life value, a firm's profitability, and ultimately, the firm's brand equity (Chang et al., 2020; Dennis et al., 2016; Heinberg et al., 2020; Kaufmann et al., 2016; Thomson et al., 2005; Li et al., 2019; Magnoni et al., 2021). Thus, it is recommended that marketing managers in franchise lunchbox firms educate customers about why the firms' eco-friendly initiatives and their pro-environmental behaviors matter, as well as actively deliver information about the firms' eco-friendly activities to construct a solid emotional connection with consumers. For example, the franchise lunchbox marketing managers could launch the "You are what you waste" campaign or promotional activities to emphasize the importance of their pro-environmental behaviors, give them an opportunity to participate in pro-environmental programs and express their eco-friendly self-concepts.

Last but not least, the firms' pro-environmental initiatives and activities should be genuine and transparent because greenwashing is generally asserted to affect green brand image negatively (Akturan, 2018; Ha et al., 2022). Firms should alleviate consumers' skepticism about greenwashing to gain brand loyalty through a green brand image. Therefore, the firms must exercise drastic transparency to overcome consumers' skepticism about greenwashing and disclose information in a comprehensive, comparable, and credible way (Ha et al., 2022). Also, the franchise lunchbox firms should educate not only customers but also employees because they are essential practitioners and mediators (Martinez, 2014). Employees' knowledge of environmental issues and the firms' eco-friendly initiatives is vital to developing the green brand image.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

This research has several limitations beyond the scope of the study. The proposed research framework of the study is restricted to the relationships between the variables of interest within its objectives. Incorporating other antecedents and consequences is worthy of future research.

Firstly, future research could explore the antecedents of the perceptions of the green image of a brand, such as the components of the green marketing mix, the three Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle) characteristics of product design, green campaign, etc.

Secondly, this study did not incorporate variables that could induce consumers' different pro-environmental behaviors, such as demographic and psychological variables, which could test for differences between consumers. For example, age, gender, and socio-economic class are considered for demographic variables, and attitudes, beliefs, and environmental concerns for psychological variables. Those variables might show different consumer loyalty levels toward green products. Therefore, considering segments of the franchise lunchbox consumers by pro-environmental attitude and behavior to design an effective marketing strategy is another essential line for future research.

Thirdly, this study incorporated five consumer behavior-related items into one variable: consumer loyalty. Future research needs to explore specific consumer behavioral factors as the consequences of consumers' perceptions of green brand image, trust, and attachment to draw more actionable managerial implications, such as the (re)purchase intention, willingness to pay a premium price, and willingness to recommend others.

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Appendix 1: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct & Items	Standardized factor loadings	α	C.R	AVE
Green Brand Image (GBI)		.893	.933	.823
This brand behaves in a socially conscious way.	.906			
I have the impression that this brand is very responsive to the environmental issues.	.907			
I feel that this brand is concerned about not only profit but also the environment and other customers.	.908			
Cognitive Brand Trust (CBT)		.869	.910	.717
I can confidently depend on this brand since it does not make harmful products or services to the environment.	.835			
Most people, even those not unusual customers of this brand, trust and respect it.	.863			
Other people who regularly use this brand consider it pro-environmental and trustworthy.	.851			
If people knew more about this brand and its background, they would be more concerned and closely monitor the quality of its products and services.	.837			
Affective Brand Trust (ABT)		.856	.903	.700
I would feel a sense of loss if I could no longer use this brand.	.801			
I feel this brand responds caringly if I face a product problem.	.847			
This brand is not only interested in selling products but also in customer emotions.	.900			
This brand displays a caring attitude toward the environment and the customers.	.793			
Brand Attachment (BAT)		.878	.925	.804
I am very attached to this brand.	.885			
Using this brand says a lot about who I am.	.898			
I identify strongly with this brand.	.908			
Consumer Loyalty (CLT)		.899	.925	.713
I will continue to use this brand.	.841			
I will choose this brand before other brands.	.856			
I will purchase this brand in the near future.	.794			
I will recommend this brand to others.	.885			
I am willing to pay more money to buy this brand.	.844			

Appendix 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	1. GBI	2. CBT	3. ABT	4. BAT	5. CLT
1. Green Brand Image (GBI)					
2. Cognitive Brand Trust (CBT)	.712				
3. Affective Brand Trust (ABT)	.880	.791			
4. Brand Attachment (BAT)	.826	.635	.890		
5. Consumer Loyalty (CLT)	.672	.864	.727	.616	

Appendix 3: Collinearity Statistics: Inner VIF Values

	1. GBI	**2. CBT**	**3. ABT**	**4. BAT**	**5. CLT**
1. Green Brand Image (GBI)		1.000	1.660	2.587	
2. Cognitive Brand Trust (CBT)			1.660	1.978	1.888
3. Affective Brand Trust (ABT)				2.929	3.234
4. Brand Attachment (BAT)					2.503
5. Consumer Loyalty (CLT)					

Appendix 4: Results of Testing Path Coefficients

	Path	β	S.E.	t	*p*	BCCI 5.0%	BCCI 95.0%	f^2
H1	GBI → CBT	.631	.034	18.303	.000***	.573	.687	.660
H2	GBI → ABT	.563	.049	11.589	.000***	.483	.642	.558
H3	CBT → ABT	.329	.051	6.397	.000***	.243	.414	.191
H4	GBI → BAT	.337	.057	5.883	.000***	.244	.431	.123
H5	CBT → BAT	-.010	.050	.193	.424[n.s.]	-.095	.070	.000
H6	ABT → BAT	.609	.058	8.976	.000***	.426	.614	.507
H7	CBT → CLT	.521	.050	12.269	.000***	.523	.687	.261
H8	ABT → CLT	.152	.061	2.475	.007**	.054	.255	.018
H9	BAT → CLT	.090	.049	1.833	.033*	.009	.172	.008

	R^2	$Q^2_{Predict}$
CBT	.398	.393
ABT	.659	.591
BAT	.644	.534
CLT	.612	.360

Note: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, n.s. = not significant; BCCI = Bias Corrected Confidence Interval

Appendix 5: Indirect Effects

Path	β	S.E.	t	*p*	BCCI 5.0%	BCCI 95.0%
GBI → CBT → CLT	.384	.040	9.709	.000***	.320	.449
GBI → ABT → CLT	.086	.036	2.386	.009**	.030	.150
GBI → BAT → CLT	.030	.018	1.677	.047*	.003	.062
GBI → CBT → ABT → CLT	.032	.014	2.267	.012*	.011	.056
GBI → CBT → BAT → CLT	-.001	.003	.171	.432[n.s.]	-.006	.005
GBI → ABT → BAT → CLT	.027	.015	1.810	.035*	.003	.051
GBI → CBT → ABT → BAT → CLT	.010	.006	1.754	.040*	.001	.019

Note: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, n.s. = not significant; BCCI = Bias Corrected Confidence Interval