sustainability

MDPI

Article

The Effect of Brand Lovemark on Reusable Cups in Coffee Shops: Machine Use Intention, Willingness to Pay a Deposit, and Green Brand Loyalty

Yooin Noh, Min Jung Kim and Dae-Young Kim *

Department of Hospitality Management, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65201, USA; yn9nf@umsystem.edu (Y.N.); mkim@mail.missouri.edu (M.J.K.)
* Correspondence: kimdae@missouri.edu

Abstract: Despite significant coffee shops' efforts to promote sustainable practices, customers' actual CSR engagement in the coffee shop industry is still low. This is because CSR practices in the hospitality industry often require customer engagement, which can sometimes be inconvenient for customers, and some customers may even be skeptical about green practices themselves. Thus, this study examines the effect of brand lovemark on three customer behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a deposit, and machine use intention) in coffee shops' CSR practices. We used a scenario-based experimental design on CSR practices in two coffee shop brands (i.e., Starbucks and Dunkin'). The study demonstrates that consumers with a high brand lovemark act more positively toward coffee shop CSR practices than customers with a low brand lovemark. In addition, the interactions between brand lovemark and gender appear to be important in all three behavioral outcomes. Specifically, it confirms that men and women show different levels of behavior outcomes depending on their level of brand lovemark. Theoretical and managerial implications are also suggested with the direction for future study.

Keywords: brand lovemark; CSR practices; green brand loyalty; willingness to pay; coffeeshop; gender differences

check for updates

Citation: Noh, Y.; Kim, M.J.; Kim, D.-Y. The Effect of Brand Lovemark on Reusable Cups in Coffee Shops: Machine Use Intention, Willingness to Pay a Deposit, and Green Brand Loyalty. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 1113. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16031113

Academic Editor: Wen-Hsien Tsai

Received: 26 December 2023
Revised: 25 January 2024
Accepted: 25 January 2024
Published: 28 January 2024

Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

Hospitality firms (e.g., restaurants and coffee shops) overuse significant quantities of disposable containers, and their social and environmental costs are enormous [1]. To facilitate sustainable marketing strategies and gain a competitive advantage, hospitality managers try to adopt effective CSR strategies relevant to environmental concerns [2]. The coffee shop industry is also currently receiving much criticism for the overuse of plastic cups, so CSR practices have become essential to improve the sustainability of branded coffee shops [1,3]. For example, some coffee brands (e.g., Peet's and Starbucks) offer beverages at a discount price if customers bring tumblers or reusable cups. In addition, some Starbucks stores have installed cup return machines to reduce disposable cup usage [4]. However, there are still conflicting customer responses to these practices (e.g., attitudes, emotions, and brand loyalty) [5].

Many coffee shops are facing the issue of gaining loyal customers and maintaining a high proportion of brand roamers [6]. Considering the highly competitive coffee shop industry, it is critical to properly understand how CSR practices impact customers' attitudinal or behavioral consequences (e.g., emotions, attitudes, or brand loyalty) [7]. This is because research findings about the relationship between CSR practices and customer reactions are contradictory. Previous studies have demonstrated that CSR practices can positively strengthen brand image and loyalty and revisit intention in the context of hospitality [8–10]. Yet recent studies have also shown that customers are skeptical about pro-environmental practices in the hospitality sector, since customers tend to avoid challenging, inconvenient,

or financially unappealing pro-environmental behaviors [7,11]. In addition, CSR practices that fail to grasp the customers' perception may weaken positive emotions toward the brand or cause repetitive purchases [12].

The inconclusive research findings indicate that the effects of CSR practices on customer loyalty vary depending on other antecedents or mediators between them, such as individual personality, beliefs, social norms, and the like [13]. However, recent branding research suggests that the concept of brand lovemarks can solidify the uncertain relationship between CSR practices and customer behaviors. For brands with a high level of brand lovemark, customers tend to continue using the brand regardless of the change in their marketing strategies, including eco-friendly practices [14]. Starbucks is referred to as an exemplary lovemark brand in terms of brand loyalty and customer retention.

The relationship between CSR practices and customer behavioral outcomes can be affected by several factors relevant to individual demographic characteristics or personal values [15]. Among these, scholars have considered gender a key factor in demonstrating differences in customer behavioral intentions toward CSR practices [16]. Therefore, we examine how gender interacts with the level of brand lovemark in customers' behavioral outcomes in coffee shops. With these realizations, the main purposes of this study are (1) to identify the influence of brand lovemark (i.e., brand love and brand respect) in understanding the relationship between CSR practices and customers' behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention) and (2) to examine the interaction effect between gender and the level of lovemark in customers' behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Lovemarks Theory: Brand Love and Brand Respect

Lovemarks refer to a brand, event, and experience that people love passionately and suggest that the "lovemark brand" scores high in the two lovemark dimensions, "love" and "respect" [17]. Specifically, brand respect emphasizes the functional aspects of a brand and mainly includes the brand's performance, reputation, and trust. Brand love, on the other hand, contains the emotional elements of a brand that consumers use to build emotional relationships with it [18]. Lovemarks theory explains why consumers feel loyalty and attachment to certain brands, and customers' loyalty to a "lovemark" is usually a loyalty that transcends reason [17]. Furthermore, Robert [17] provided a robust mechanism of lovemarks and characteristics to clarify the relationship between certain brands and loyal customers. Lovemark brands can usually boost customers' loyalty and build a more stable relationship between customers and brands in the long term [19].

Previous research has demonstrated that brand lovemark (i.e., brand love and respect) has a significant moderation effect on the relationship between trust and brand loyalty for named coffee shops [14]. Amegbe et al. [20] showed that brand respect significantly moderates the relationship between CSR and trust in the banking industry. However, in the context of hospitality research, few studies have examined the impact of brand lovemark in explaining the relationship between CSR practices and customers' behavioral outcomes. For example, Song et al. [14] investigated the moderating role of brand lovemark (i.e., brand love, and brand respect) on the relationship between trust and brand loyalty in the coffee shop industry. In this paper, we will explore the impact of brand lovemarks on understanding customers' behavioral outcomes on CSR practices in the coffee shop industry. We assume that customers with a high level of brand lovemark have a stronger impact on behavioral outcomes toward CSR practices than those with a low level of brand lovemark.

2.2. CSR Practices on Consumer Behavioral Outcomes in the Coffee Shop Industry

CSR refers to a corporation's consistent commitment to ethical practices, environmental issues, and raising the quality of life of employees and society as a whole [21]. With the coffee shop industry's increasing competitiveness and changing social expectations, CSR

has recently attracted much interest from many scholars. Among CSR dimensions, environmental practices refer to actions, activities, and processes that prioritize environmental protection, as well as products and services created in a way that reduces a company's negative impact on the ecosystem [22]. Environmental practices in coffee shops may include energy and water efficiency, sustainable food, reducing waste, and recycling [23]. Among numerous coffee shop brands, Starbucks is one of the most recognized brands internationally for leading the eco-friendly movement in the hospitality industry. Its environmental practices include avoiding plastic cups, recommending reusable cups, and implementing recycling programs [24].

Due to the increasing environmental concerns from plastic cup overuse in coffee shops, branded coffee shops have recently implemented various CSR strategies to reduce the use of plastic cups [2]. For example, some Starbucks stores are installing cup return machines to reduce the use of disposable cups. Specifically, customers are not provided with disposable cups when purchasing beverages. Instead, they pay a deposit of $1 per reusable cup and then receive $1 back when they return the cup to the store's return machine [4]. However, since research on consumers' behavioral intention toward this practice is very scarce [3], we seek to understand consumers' environmentally friendly behavioral intention in the context of their coffee shop to address this important sustainability issue better. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the framework for customer loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention when a $1 deposit is charged for reusable cups.

Previous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between CSR perception and customers' behavioral outcomes (e.g., brand loyalty, intention to visit or pay a premium price) [8,10]. However, CSR studies' findings in the hospitality industry are inconsistent. Although most previous studies demonstrate the positive effects of CSR practices on customers' positive responses (e.g., trust, satisfaction, and brand loyalty) in the hospitality industry [25,26], some studies showed that CSR practices in the hospitality industry have barriers such as discomfort or skepticism for customers to participate. Furthermore, some research has demonstrated an inconsistency between consumers' exposed attitudes toward the environment and their actual behavior [27]. Based on the previous discussion, this study assumes that the brand lovemark, as an antecedent variable, can solidify the research findings on the irregular association between CSR practices and customer behavioral outcomes.

2.3. Green Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as customers' repetitive purchase behavior with positive emotions and behavioral tendencies for certain brands [28]. Likewise, when customers are loyal to a particular brand, they tend to remain loyal to that brand, regardless of changes in marketing strategies [29]. Relatedly, green brand loyalty refers to the customers' consistent commitment to a green business by repurchasing its products [30]. Accordingly, customers with high brand loyalty are more likely to make repeat purchases or purchase other products and services from the same brand [12]. Furthermore, Song et al. [14] showed that customers' brand love and respect could initiate repeated purchases and word-of-mouth. Thus, customers' strong brand lovemark is expected to generate brand loyalty and promote repurchases from the brand. Previous literature has demonstrated that customers' brand love and respect could strengthen brand loyalty [19]. This study assumes that when customers have a high brand lovemark for the coffee shop, they will be loyal to that specific coffee shop, which improves customers' support for that same brand's environmental practices.

H1: *Compared to customers with a low brand lovemark, CSR practices have a stronger positive impact on behavioral outcomes for those with a high brand lovemark.*

H1a: *Compared to customers with a low brand lovemark, CSR practices have a stronger positive impact on perceived green brand loyalty for those with a high brand lovemark.*

H1b: *Compared to customers with a low-brand lovemark, CSR practices have a stronger positive impact on willingness to pay a $1 deposit for those with a high brand lovemark.*

H1c: *Compared to customers with a low-brand lovemark, CSR practices have a stronger positive impact on machine use intention for those with a high brand lovemark.*

2.4. Gender Effects on CSR Practices

The effect of gender differences on CSR practices has also been investigated within the hospitality literature. Gender is considered a crucial demographic factor for identifying consumers' behaviors to CSR practices [31]. Generally, customers' overall positive responses toward CSR practices are higher in females than males [32]. Hur et al. [15] also demonstrated that the positively perceived CSR practices had a greater impact on female consumers than male consumers. However, from the brand's standpoint, even though both men and women are consumers of certain brands, their attitudes toward certain brands differ as a function of gender [33]. According to social identity theory, a person's self-identity and values are highly correlated to gender [34]. Women's self-identity typically cares about close individual relationships; men tend to extend their self-identity to a broader social group. Thus, it is plausible that men tend to be more loyal to groups such as companies or specific brands than women [35,36]. Hur et al. [15] identified that compared with female consumers, the positive impact of CSR perception on brand equity was higher in male consumers. Accordingly, identifying the interaction between brand lovemark and gender can be a strong indicator in understanding customers' behavioral outcomes toward CSR practices. Based on the previous literature, we assume that:

H2: *There is an interaction effect between brand lovemark (low vs. high) and gender in behavioral outcomes regarding CSR practices.*

H2a: *There is an interaction effect between brand lovemark (low vs. high) and gender in perceived green brand loyalty regarding CSR practices.*

H2b: *There is an interaction effect between brand lovemark (low vs. high) and gender in willingness to pay a $1 deposit regarding CSR practices.*

H2c: *There is an interaction effect between brand lovemark (low vs. high) and gender in machine use intention regarding CSR practices.*

2.5. Proposed Model

We suggested this study's proposed research model in Figure 1, including brand lovemark, gender, perceived green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention. The six hypotheses are presented in the proposed theoretical framework.

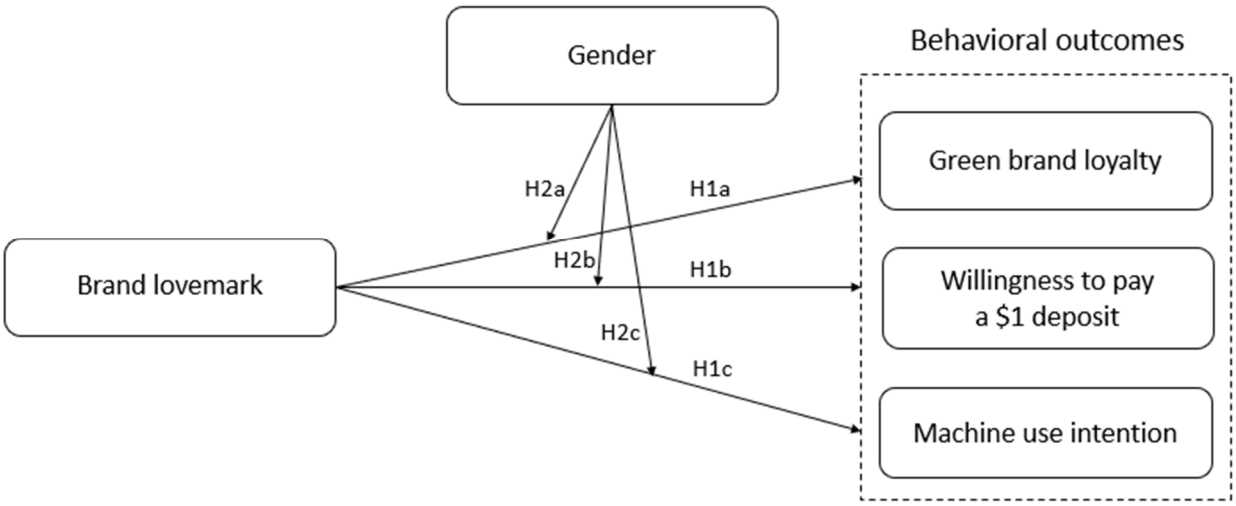


Figure 1. Proposed research model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design and Sample

This study used a scenario-based experimental design on CSR practices in two coffee shop brands (i.e., Starbucks and Dunkin'). We believe that Starbucks and Dunkin' are valid for this survey because they are representative examples of the lovemark brand in the coffee shop industry, dominating a market share of 36.7% and 24.6%, respectively, in the US. They have many loyal customers who frequently buy their brand and do not switch to another brand regardless of the change in marketing strategy [29]. Our target participants were people over 18 years old in the United States who had previously visited Starbucks or Dunkin'. Participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online research platform and consumer panel company. Initially, we collected a total of 296 completed surveys. However, we finally retained 263 usable responses after excluding responses with substantial missing values or unusable data encompassing similar or the same responses.

3.2. Procedures and Stimuli

All respondents were first instructed to answer questions about their coffee shop-related characteristics of the respondents before being assigned to one of two scenarios. Then, participants were randomly assigned to view one of two hypothetical scenario-experimental designs (i.e., Starbucks or Dunkin'). They were asked to answer a screening question about their previous coffee shop experience. For example, "Have you ever visited Starbucks before?". Participants who answered "No" were excluded from the analysis. Second, they were asked to answer the extent of their brand lovemark for Starbucks or Dunkin'. Next, we asked participants to read a hypothetical announcement that the coffee shop (i.e., Starbucks or Dunkin') would install a new cup-return machine at the store to eliminate disposable cups in the US and promote the use of reusable cups (see Appendix A) [37]. This announcement also included the content that a one-dollar ($1) deposit would be charged for each cup, which would be refunded when customers returned them to a machine at the store (see Appendix B). We also included a manipulation check question to ensure that the manipulation for the announcement worked as expected. In both scenarios, they were asked to answer, "How much deposit will be charged for each cup when you use a reusable cup at the store?". They were also excluded from the analysis if they did not answer the question correctly. After they completed the manipulation check for the scenario question, the participants answered the remaining questions, including willingness to pay a $1 deposit, machine use intention, and green brand loyalty. Lastly, respondents answered questions about their demographic characteristics. The survey lasted 10–15 min.

3.3. Measures

We adopted survey measurement items based on previous studies and modified them to match our research. The manipulation check of the research scenario about each coffee shop was: "According to the announcement you read on the previous page, how much deposit will be charged for each cup when you use a reusable cup at the store?". All measurement items were assessed on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) except for coffee shop visit-related characteristics and demographic information. In particular, the measurement items were evaluated through a review of the literature related to brand lovemark [14,20], machine use intention [38], green brand loyalty [13], and willingness to pay a $1 deposit [39].

4. Result

4.1. The Profile of Participants

The respondents' demographic characteristics are provided in Table 1. A balanced gender distribution was confirmed: 52.9% of respondents were males, the remaining 47.1% were females. Most respondents were between 31–40 (44.9%) years of age, followed by 18–30 (35.4%) years of age. Almost half the survey respondents graduated from college, accounting for 49.4% of the total responses, and 31.6% of respondents had a household income between $40,000 to $59,999.

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics.

Demographic Characteristics	Descriptive	Frequency (n = 263)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	139	52.9
	Female	124	47.1
Age	18–30	93	35.4
	31–40	118	44.9
	41–50	33	12.5
	51–60	12	4.6
	60 or order	7	2.7
Highest Education Level	High school or less	49	18.6
	Some college	45	17.1
	College	130	49.4
	Graduate School	69	14.8
Household Income	Less than $20,000	19	7.2
	$20,000 to $39,000	52	19.8
	$40,000 to $59,999	83	31.6
	$60,000 to $79,999	61	23.2
	$80,000 to $99,999	30	11.4
	$100,000 and above	18	6.8

4.2. Coffee Shop Visit-Related Characteristics of the Respondents

A summary of coffee shop-visit-related characteristics of 263 respondents is reported in Table 2. The visit frequency of coffee shops is 3–4 times a week (36.5%), followed by every day (31.2%). Most respondents preferred national/regional chain coffee shops (75.7%). Their main purpose for visiting coffee shops is to relax and enjoy the ambiance (56.3%), and a primary factor affecting visiting coffee shops is coffee quality (73.0%).

Table 2. Coffee shop-related characteristics of the respondents.

Variables	Descriptive	Frequency (n = 263)	Percentage (%)
The visit frequency of coffee shop	Everyday	82	31.2
	3~4 a week	96	36.5
	1~2 a week	65	24.7
	1~2 a month	16	6.1
	Less than once a month	4	1.5
The type of the preferred coffee shop	National/regional chain (e.g., Starbucks, Peet's Ccoffee, Caribou Coffee, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Dunkin', etc.)	199	75.7
	Local chain (e.g., Think Coffee, Urth Caffe, Tea Lounge, etc.)	64	24.3
The main purpose of visiting coffee shops	Relax and enjoy the ambiance	148	56.3
	Hang out with people	40	15.2
	Work or Study	46	17.5
	Use free Wi-Fi	10	3.8
	Earn membership benefits (e.g., membership points)	6	2.3
	No other reasons. I only take out coffee	13	4.9
A primary factor affecting visiting coffee shops	Coffee quality	192	73.0
	Atmosphere	30	11.4
	Service	13	4.9
	Green image	11	4.2
	Location	8	3.0
	Price	6	2.3
	Others	3	1.1

4.3. Validity and Reliability

Confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS v.21.0 was conducted to assess the constructs for convergent validity and discriminant validity. To examine the model's goodness-of-fit, we used various model fit indices such as chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) [40]. χ^2/df values less than 3 and RMSEA values less than 0.08 indicate an acceptable fit, respectively. NFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI values greater than 0.9 are a good fit [41]. The model fit indices were as follows: χ^2/df = 2.606, NFI = 0.914, IFI = 0.946, TLI = 0.932, CFI = 0.945, and RMSEA = 0.078. As shown in Table 3, factor loadings were above 0.6. The values for composite reliability were higher than the recommended threshold of 0.7, and the values for average variance extracted (AVE) also exceeded the recommended 0.5, providing robust support for the convergent validity [41].

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis.

Dimensions/Items	Standardized Factor Loadings	AVE	CR
Lovemark		0.886	0.979
I love Starbucks.	0.630		
Starbucks is a joy to me.	0.835		
Starbucks is really awesome.	0.843		
I respect Starbucks.	0.704		
I am hooked on Starbucks.	0.796		
Starbucks leads the development of coffee shops.	0.655		

Table 3. *Cont.*

Dimensions/Items	Standardized Factor Loadings	AVE	CR
Green brand loyalty		0.906	0.974
I would recommend this coffee shop to my friends or others because it is environmentally friendly.	0.601		
I would like to come back to this coffee shop in the near future because it is environmentally friendly.	0.815		
This coffee shop would be my first choice over other coffee shops because it is environmentally friendly.	0.797		
I will say positive things about this coffee shop because it implements an environmentally friendly policy.	0.769		
Willingness to pay a $1 deposit		0.891	0.961
I would be prepared to pay a deposit ($1) to be able to use Starbucks again.	0.808		
I would be a customer of Starbucks even if it received the deposit ($1) for its coffee cups, as long as it was reasonable.	0.756		
I would accept the policy of paying a deposit ($1) because Starbucks matches my expectations.	0.655		
Machine use intention		0.903	0.974
I would like to use the return machine at Starbucks.	0.641		
It would be a pleasure for me to use the return machine at Starbucks.	0.857		
It would be desirable for me to learn how to use the return machine at Starbucks.	0.795		
Assuming that I have access to this return machine at Starbucks, I intend to use it.	0.810		

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to see the correlation among four variables in the data set. The data set consisted of one antecedent variable (i.e., lovemark) and three dependent variables (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention). Table 4 presents the correlation matrix constructed to summarize the correlational data. The correlation among the four variables was significant at a 0.05 level. As shown in Table 4, the values of the square root AVE (in bold) were higher than the values of construct correlation, supporting the discriminant validity [41]. Cronbach's α was between 0.787 and 0.884, supporting internal consistency [42].

Table 4. Correlation matrix results.

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Cronbach's α	1	2	3	4
1. Lovemark	5.49	1.04	0.884	**0.941**			
2. Green brand loyalty	5.50	1.00	0.826	0.820 **	**0.952**		
3. Willingness to pay a $1 deposit	5.60	1.05	0.787	0.756 **	0.852 **	**0.944**	
4. Machine use intention	5.44	1.09	0.854	0.767 **	0.863 **	0.814 **	**0.950**

Note: ** $p < 0.05$. Note: Items on the diagonal (in bold) represent square root AVE.

4.4. Mean Difference between the Levels of Brand Lovemark (Low vs. High) on Behavioral Outcomes toward CSR Practices

We conducted an independent t-test to prove a mean difference in behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention) depending on the levels of brand lovemark (low vs. high) toward CSR practices (see Table 5). The results demonstrated that there is a significant mean difference in green brand loyalty ($M_{low\text{-}brand\ lovemark} = 4.58$, $M_{high\text{-}brand\ lovemark} = 5.99$; $t = -12.192$, $p < 0.001$), willingness to pay a $1 deposit ($M_{low\text{-}brand\ lovemark} = 4.71$, $M_{high\text{-}brand\ lovemark} = 6.08$; $t = -10.444$, $p < 0.001$), and machine use intention ($M_{low\text{-}brand\ lovemark} = 4.51$, $M_{high\text{-}brand\ lovemark} = 5.94$; $t = -10.940$, $p < 0.001$) in two levels of brand lovemark. This result demonstrated that

customers in the high-brand lovemark group's three behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention) were significantly higher than those of the low lovemark brand group. Hence, H1 (H1a, H1b, and H1c) were statistically supported.

Table 5. Means for customers' behavioral outcomes toward CSR practices by brand lovemark.

Dependent Variable	The Level of Brand Lovemark	Mean	N	S.D.	t	Sig
Green brand loyalty	Low	4.58	92	1.05	−12.192	0.000 ***
	High	5.99	171	0.50		
Willingness to pay a $1 deposit	Low	4.71	92	1.19	−10.444	0.000 ***
	High	6.08	171	0.54		
Machine use intention	Low	4.51	92	1.18	−10.940	0.000 ***
	High	5.94	171	0.60		

Note: S.D. = Standard deviation; *** $p < 0.001$.

4.5. Mean Difference between Gender (Male vs. Female) on Behavioral Outcomes toward CSR Practices

We conducted the independent t-test to see a mean difference of gender (male vs. female) in behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention) toward CSR practices (see Table 6). The results showed a significant mean difference in green brand loyalty ($M_{male} = 5.49$, $M_{female} = 5.51$; $t = -0.155$, $p < 0.05$), willingness to pay a $1 deposit ($M_{male} = 5.54$, $M_{female} = 5.66$; $t = -0.922$, $p < 0.001$), and machine use intention ($M_{male} = 5.43$, $M_{female} = 5.44$; $t = -0.034$, $p < 0.05$) by gender. This result demonstrated that females were found to be higher in all three behavioral outcomes on CSR practices than males.

Table 6. Means for customers' behavioral outcomes toward CSR practices by gender.

Dependent Variables	Gender	Mean	N	S.D.	t	Sig
Green brand loyalty	Male	5.49	139	1.13	−0.155	0.042 **
	Female	5.51	124	0.82		
Willingness to pay a $1 deposit	Male	5.54	139	1.23	−0.922	0.001 ***
	Female	5.66	124	0.79		
Machine use intention	Male	5.43	139	1.19	−0.034	0.005 **
	Female	5.44	124	0.95		

Note: S.D. = Standard Deviation; ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

4.6. The Interaction Effect of the Levels of Brand Lovemark and Gender on Behavioral Outcomes

To test the main effect of lovemark and the moderating role of gender on the relationship between lovemark and customers' behavioral outcomes, this study employed PROCESS v.4.0 macro Model 1 developed by Hayes [43], using bootstrap procedures with 5000 samples. Lovemark was found to have a positive significant effect on green brand loyalty ($\beta = 1.727$, $p < 0.001$), willingness to pay a $1 deposit ($\beta = 1.787$, $p < 0.001$), and machine use intention ($\beta = 1.896$, $p < 0.001$). The interaction terms of lovemark and gender were statistically significant on green brand loyalty ($\beta = -0.609$, $p < 0.01$), willingness to pay a $1 deposit ($\beta = -0.806$, $p < 0.001$), and machine use intention ($\beta = -0.904$, $p < 0.001$). The amount of change in R^2 by the interaction terms was significant on green brand loyalty ($\Delta R^2 = 0.021$, $p < 0.01$), willingness to pay a $1 deposit ($\Delta R^2 = 0.033$, $p < 0.001$), and machine use intention ($\Delta R^2 = 0.039$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Moderating effect of gender.

	Green Brand Loyalty							
	β	**SE**	**t**	***p***	**F**	**R^2**	**Δ R^2**	**Δ F**
(Constant)	4.297	0.110	38.993	0.000	80.232 ***	0.482	0.021	10.523 **
Lovemark	1.727	0.133	13.025	0.000				
Gender	0.535	0.151	3.544	0.000				
Lovemark × Gender	−0.609	0.188	−3.244	0.001				
	Willingness to pay a $1 deposit							
	β	**SE**	**t**	***p***	**F**	**R^2**	**ΔR^2**	**ΔF**
(Constant)	4.310	0.122	35.399	0.000	64.975 ***	0.429	0.033	15.127 ***
Lovemark	1.787	0.147	12.198	0.000				
Gender	0.758	0.167	4.543	0.000				
Lovemark × Gender	−0.806	0.207	−3.889	0.000				
	Machine use intention							
	β	**SE**	**t**	***p***	**F**	**R^2**	**ΔR^2**	**ΔF**
(Constant)	4.128	0.125	33.043	0.000	67.474 ***	0.439	0.039	18.065 ***
Lovemark	1.896	0.150	12.610	0.000				
Gender	0.714	0.171	4.171	0.000				
Lovemark × Gender	−0.904	0.213	−4.250	0.000				

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The conditional effects were checked, as shown in Table 8. For males, lovemark was positively and strongly related to green brand loyalty (β = 1.727, 95% CI = 1.466 to 1.988), willingness to pay a $1 deposit ($\beta$ = 1.787, 95% CI = 1.499 to 2.076), and machine use intention (β = 1.896, 95% CI = 1.600 to 2.192). For females, the positive relationships were weaker between lovemark and green brand loyalty (β = 1.118, 95% CI = 0.857 to 1.380), willingness to pay a $1 deposit ($\beta$ = 0.981, 95% CI = 0.692 to 1.270), and machine use intention (β = 0.991, 95% CI = 0.695 to 1.288), respectively (see Figures 2–4); thus, H2 (H2a, H2b, and H2c) were all supported.

Table 8. Conditional effects of lovemark at levels of gender.

	Green Brand Loyalty				
	Effect	**SE**	**t**	**95% CI**	
				LL	**UL**
Male	1.727	0.133	13.025 ***	1.466	1.988
Female	1.118	0.133	8.426 ***	0.857	1.380
	Willingness to pay a $1 deposit				
	Effect	**SE**	**t**	**95% CI**	
				LL	**UL**
Male	1.787	0.147	12.198 ***	1.499	2.076
Female	0.981	0.147	6.688 ***	0.692	1.270
	Machine use intention				
	Effect	**SE**	**t**	**95% CI**	
				LL	**UL**
Male	1.896	0.150	12.610 ***	1.600	2.192
Female	0.991	0.150	6.589 ***	0.695	1.288

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

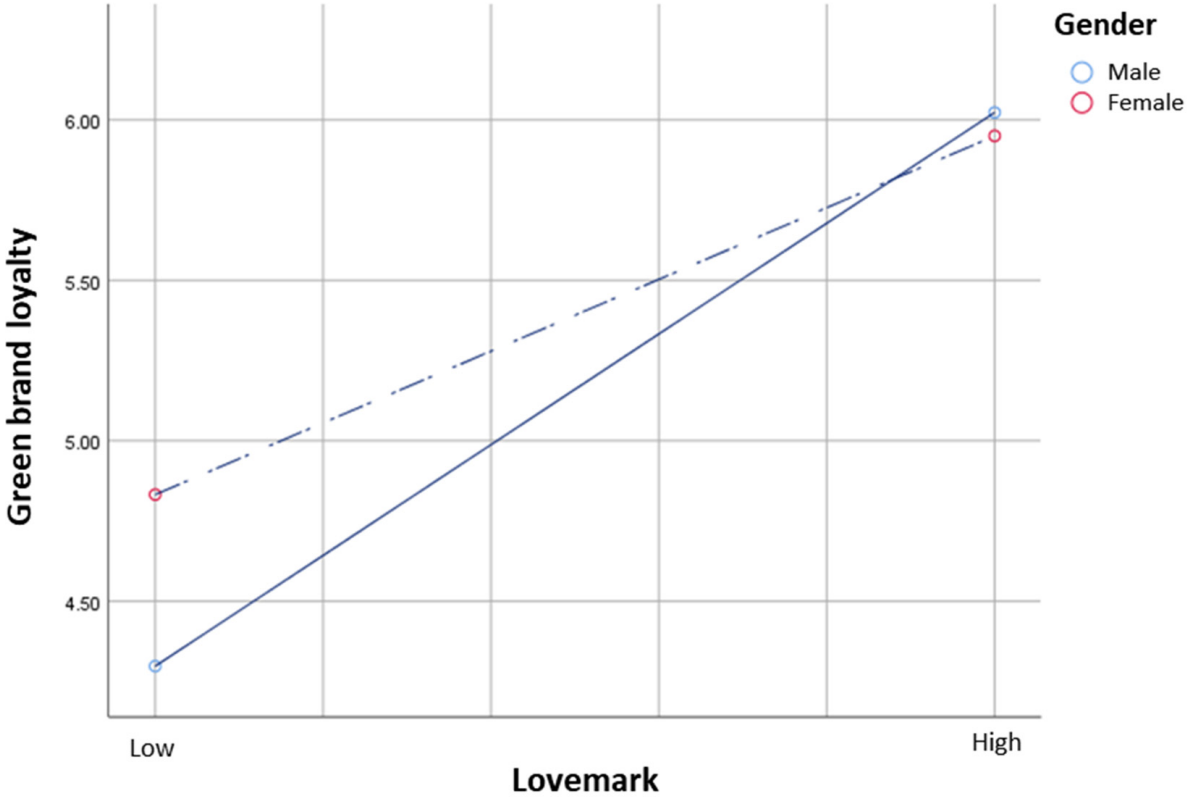


Figure 2. The Interaction Effect of the Levels of Brand Lovemark and Gender on Green Brand Loyalty.

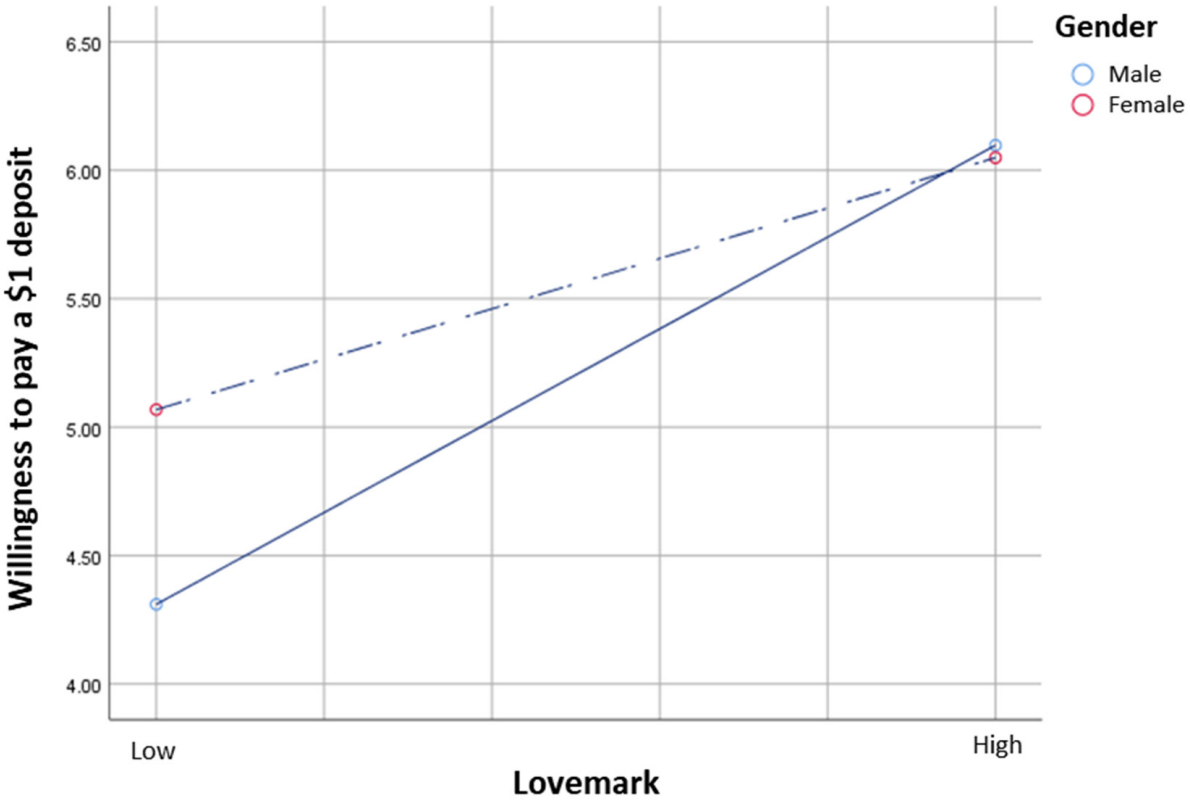


Figure 3. The Interaction Effect of the Levels of Brand Lovemark and Gender on Willingness to Pay a $1 Deposit.

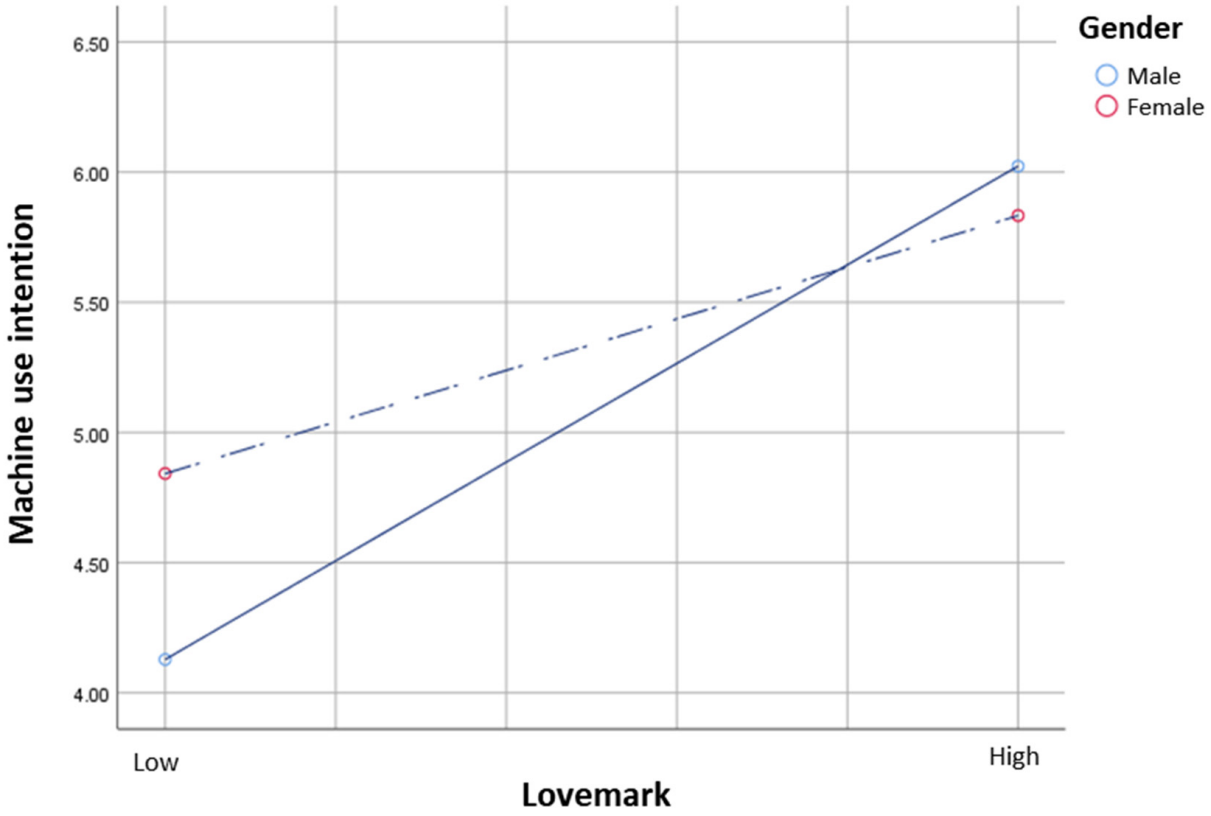


Figure 4. The Interaction Effect of the Levels of Brand Lovemark and Gender on Machine Use Intention.

5. Conclusions and Implications

5.1. Conclusions

Due to the increasing importance of environmental concerns in coffee shops, many businesses actively engage in CSR practices. However, customers' emotional or behavioral responses to CSR practices are not consistent because CSR practices sometimes entail their sacrifice or discomfort. Therefore, this study explored the impact of brand lovemark on three customer behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a deposit, and machine use intention) on CSR practices in coffee shops based on a scenario-based experimental design. This study's findings are expected to provide a better understanding of consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward CSR practices in the coffee industry, depending on customers' level of brand lovemark. The current study highlights the importance of brand lovemark and gender in CSR practices in the coffee shop industry.

The results of this study demonstrated that all the suggested hypotheses were supported. To be specific, compared to customers with a low brand lovemark, CSR practices have a stronger positive impact on behavioral outcomes (i.e., perceived green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention) for those with a high brand lovemark, supporting hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c. Furthermore, we confirmed that there is an interaction effect between brand lovemark (low vs. high) and gender in behavioral outcomes (i.e., perceived green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention) regarding CSR practices, supporting hypotheses H2a, H2b, and H2c. Specifically, men and women showed different levels of all three behavioral outcomes toward CSR practices.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This research makes a theoretical contribution to the literature by using the lovemark theory to fill in knowledge gaps regarding the fluctuating relationship between CSR practices and customers' behavioral responses in the coffee shop industry. First, this study extends the hospitality CSR strategies by adopting the lovemark theory on customers' behavioral responses in the coffee shop industry. We examine whether consumers with a high level of brand lovemark respond more positively to new CSR practices than do customers with a low level of brand lovemark. Overall, the results of this study showed that the brand lovemark had stronger effects on customers' behavioral responses toward CSR practices. The result of this study is similar to Li et al.'s [44] research that confirmed the moderating role of coffee shops' brand reputation (low vs. high) in the relationship between CSR renewal and customer loyalty. However, since no previous studies have explored brand lovemark theory in the relationship between CSR practices and customers behavioral intentions in the hospitality industry, this study could embark on empirical research to identify how customers' brand lovemark positively influences customers' behavioral responses to CSR practices. Furthermore, applying the lovemark theory to CSR studies in the coffee shop industry can contribute to the body of knowledge regarding CSR research in that area.

Second, this study adds to the hospitality literature by confirming the interaction effect between two levels of brand lovemark (low vs. high) and gender (male vs. female) on behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention). we identified differences in how men and women perceive differently depending on brand lovemark. Specifically, our findings indicated that in customers with a low-brand lovemark, all three behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention) are significantly lower in males than females. Yet, in customers with a high-level brand lovemark, males have a higher level of behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention) than females. This study's findings are similar to Hur et al.'s [15], which confirmed that the positive impact of CSR perception on brand equity was higher in female consumers than male consumers. Based on the previous literature, this study's result in the hospitality CSR marketing area suggests further empirical evidence to emphasize the importance of different CSR strategies depending on gender and the different levels of the lovemark groups to increase customer engagement. Extending this stream of research, our findings contribute to this type of research in the coffee shop industry.

5.3. Managerial Implications

The current research provides several implications for marketing practices. First, this study provided foundational work by adopting the lovemark theory in the coffee shop industry context. This study suggests, then, a great opportunity for coffee shop managers to develop a brand lovemark by confirming the relationship between CSR practices and behavioral outcomes (i.e., green brand loyalty, willingness to pay a $1 deposit, and machine use intention). Furthermore, it is highly beneficial for hospitality organizations to understand the impact of brand lovemark that enhance their effectiveness. Specifically, hospitality marketers should be aware that CSR practices' effectiveness can differ depending on customers' level of brand lovemark. Likewise, given the increasing attention to sustainable marketing strategies, hospitality marketers should be more concerned about their CSR practices, develop them, and commit to them as the starting point for building a customer loyalty roadmap. Although it is well known that CSR practices are effective in increasing customer loyalty, hospitality marketers seem to neglect the importance of brand love and respect in eliciting customer engagement. As such, there is room for hospitality corporations to increase their CSR marketing effectiveness by using customers' brand lovemark.

Second, our findings will show marketers in coffee shops how to effectively target certain segmentations of the population and provide better insights into formulating more effective marketing strategies from the gender difference standpoint. Specifically, our

study suggests that marketers should use the interaction between gender and the level of brand lovemark as critical factors for CSR engagement. Since coffee shops have limited CSR-related marketing resources, the CSR marketing effects can be productively achieved using specific interactions between gender and brand lovemark. Specifically, this finding shows that in a high-level brand lovemark group, male consumers are more likely to engage in the CSR practices of the coffee shop than female consumers. In the case of a low-level brand lovemark group, female consumers have a much higher behavioral intention toward CSR activities than male consumers. Thus, marketers can benefit from providing female consumers with detailed information about their CSR activities and emphasizing the importance of engagement in them. On the other hand, for male consumers, focusing on improving their brand lovemark for the coffee shop itself will automatically increase their support level for the coffee shop's CSR activities.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this research provides theoretical contributions and managerial practices, a series of limitations should be acknowledged to provide future research directions. First, this study used a scenario-based approach and investigated how respondents would react in that given situation. Due to the nature of the experimental design, its generalizability is limited. Future studies should test the proposed effects in the context of real settings to identify the actual responses. Second, this research concentrates only on two different coffee shop chains (i.e., Starbucks and Dunkin') for the research design. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine the customer responses about their CSR practices in other coffee shop chains (e.g., Caribou Coffee, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf) or comparatively unknown coffee shops to generalize this study's findings. Third, current research has not studied the attributes related to customers' responses to a new cup-return machine. Further investigations should include customers' perceptions or attitudes on adopting the cup return machine to understand this study further. Fourth, this research is limited to coffee shops. Future research can be extended to various settings to explore brand lovemark in various hospitality industry segments (e.g., hotels or restaurants).

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Y.N. and D.-Y.K.; methodology, Y.N.; formal analysis, M.J.K.; investigation, Y.N.; writing-original draft preparation, Y.N.; writing-review and editing, Y.N., M.J.K. and D.-Y.K.; visualization, M.J.K.; supervision, D.-Y.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Scenario 1

Now, you'll read an imaginary announcement about Starbucks coffee's new policy.

Imagine that Starbucks announced their new policies to eliminate single-use plastic and paper cups in the US and encourage reusable mugs starting March. 2023.

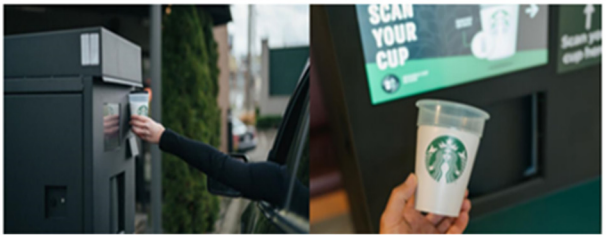
They have a broader goal to cut its waste and carbon emissions from direct operations in half by 2030 as it aims to become "resource positive" one day. Disposable cups and lids make up 40% of the company's packaging waste.

All stores will only serve drinks in coffee mugs, tumblers brought by customers, or the café's reusable plastic cups. The reusable cups are plastic but sturdier than single-use cups and can be used 70 to 100 times when washed.

A dollar ($1) deposit will be charged for each cup, which is refunded when customers return them to the store's return machine. Customers can choose to get a refund in cash or Starbucks loyalty points.

The reusable cups need to be rinsed before being returned, and the few options for customers are the cafe's water fountain, a nearby bathroom, or cleaning it at home and bringing it back later.

Starbucks will soon have a cup-washing station in the cafe to make the process easier, but a specific date wasn't given.



Scenario 2

Now, you'll read an imaginary announcement about Dunkin' new policy.

Imagine that Dunkin' announced their new policies to eliminate single-use plastic and paper cups in the US and encourage reusable mugs starting March 2023.

They have a broader goal to cut its waste and carbon emissions from direct operations in half by 2030 as it aims to become "resource positive" one day. Disposable cups and lids make up 40% of the company's packaging waste.

All stores will only serve drinks in coffee mugs, tumblers brought by customers, or the café's reusable plastic cups. The reusable cups are plastic but sturdier than single-use cups and can be used 70 to 100 times when washed.

A dollar ($1) deposit will be charged for each cup, which is refunded when customers return them to the store's return machine. Customers can choose to get a refund in cash or Dunkin' loyalty points.

The reusable cups need to be rinsed before being returned, and the few options for customers are the cafe's water fountain, a nearby bathroom, or cleaning it at home and bringing it back later.

Dunkin' will soon have a cup-washing station in the cafe to make the process easier, but a specific date wasn't given.



Figure A1. Examples of research scenarios used in this study.

Appendix B

Box A1. CSR research scenario.

Now, you will read an imaginary announcement about Starbucks coffee's new policy. Imagine that Starbucks announced its new policies to eliminate single-use plastic and paper cups in the US and encourage reusable mugs starting in March. 2023. They have a broader goal to cut its waste and carbon emissions from direct operations in half by 2030 as it aims to become "resource positive" one day. Disposable cups and lids comprise 40% of the company's packaging waste. All stores will only serve drinks in coffee mugs, tumblers brought by customers, or the café's reusable plastic cups. The reusable cups are plastic but sturdier than single-use cups and can be used 70 to 100 times when washed. A dollar ($1) deposit will be charged for each cup, which is refunded when customers return them to the store's return machine. Customers can choose to get a refund in cash or Starbucks loyalty points. The reusable cups need to be rinsed before being returned, and the few options for customers are the cafe's water fountain, a nearby bathroom, or cleaning it at home and bringing it back later. Starbucks will soon have a cup-washing station in the cafe to make the process easier, but a specific date was not given.

References

1. Raza, A.; Farrukh, M.; Wang, G.; Iqbal, M.K.; Farhan, M. Effects of hotels' corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on green consumer behavior: Investigating the roles of consumer engagement, positive emotions, and altruistic values. *J. Hosp. Mark. Manag.* **2023**, *32*, 870–892. [CrossRef]
2. Ekasari, A. In-store communication of reusable bag: Application of goal-framing theory. *J. Manaj. Pemasar. Jasa* **2021**, *14*, 123–134. [CrossRef]
3. Nicolau, J.L.; Stadlthanner, K.A.; Andreu, L.; Font, X. Explaining the willingness of consumers to bring their own reusable coffee cups under the condition of monetary incentives. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2022**, *66*, 102908. [CrossRef]

4. Global Environmental and Social Impact Report. Available online: https://stories.starbucks.com/uploads/2022/04/Starbucks-2021-Global-Environmental-and-Social-Impact-Report-1.pdf (accessed on 28 November 2023).
5. Ferreira, J.; Ferreira, C. From bean to cup and beyond: Exploring ethical consumption and coffee shops. *J. Consum. Ethics* **2018**, *2*, 20834.
6. Han, H.; Nguyen, H.N.; Song, H.; Chua, B.L.; Lee, S.; Kim, W. Drivers of brand loyalty in the chain coffee shop industry. *Int. J. Hosp. Manag.* **2018**, *72*, 86–97. [CrossRef]
7. Baker, M.A.; Davis, E.A.; Weaver, P.A. Eco-friendly attitudes, barriers to participation, and differences in behavior at green hotels. *Cornell Hosp. Q.* **2014**, *55*, 89–99. [CrossRef]
8. Akbari, M.; Nazarian, A.; Foroudi, P.; Seyyed Amiri, N.; Ezatabadipoor, E. How corporate social responsibility contributes to strengthening brand loyalty, hotel positioning and intention to revisit? *Curr. Issues. Tour.* **2021**, *24*, 1897–1917. [CrossRef]
9. Martínez, P.; Pérez, A.; Del Bosque, I.R. CSR influence on hotel brand image and loyalty. *Acad. Rev. Latinoam. Adm.* **2014**, *27*, 267–283. [CrossRef]
10. Simakhajornboon, P.; Sirichodnisakorn, C. The effect of customer perception of CSR initiative on customer loyalty in the hotel industry. *Hum. Arts Soc. Sci. Stud.* **2022**, *22*, 384–396.
11. Jeong, E.; Jang, S. Effects of restaurant green practices: Which practices are important and effective? *Caesars Hosp. Res. Summit* **2010**, *13*. Available online: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/hhrc/2010/june2010/13 (accessed on 28 November 2023).
12. Sui, J.J.; Baloglu, S. The role of emotional commitment in relationship marketing: An empirical investigation of a loyalty model for casinos. *J. Hosp. Tour. Res.* **2003**, *27*, 470–489. [CrossRef]
13. Jang, Y.J.; Kim, W.G.; Lee, H.Y. Coffee shop consumers' emotional attachment and loyalty to green stores: The moderating role of green consciousness. *Int. J. Hosp. Manag.* **2015**, *44*, 146–156. [CrossRef]
14. Song, H.; Wang, J.; Han, H. Effect of image, satisfaction, trust, love, and respect on loyalty formation for name-brand coffee shops. *Int. J. Hosp. Manag.* **2019**, *79*, 50–59. [CrossRef]
15. Hur, W.M.; Kim, H.; Jang, J.H. The role of gender differences in the impact of CSR perceptions on corporate marketing outcomes. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2016**, *23*, 345–357. [CrossRef]
16. Jones, R.J.; Reilly, T.M.; Cox, M.Z.; Cole, B.M. Gender makes a difference: Investigating consumer purchasing behavior and attitudes toward corporate social responsibility policies. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2017**, *24*, 133–144. [CrossRef]
17. Roberts, K. *Lovemarks: The Future Beyond Brands*; Powerhouse Books: New York, NY, USA, 2005; ISBN 978-1576872703.
18. Pawle, J.; Cooper, P. Measuring emotion—Lovemarks, the future beyond brands. *J. Advert. Res.* **2006**, *46*, 38–48. [CrossRef]
19. Carroll, B.A.; Ahuvia, A.C. Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Market. Lett.* **2006**, *17*, 79–89. [CrossRef]
20. Amegbe, H.; Dzandu, M.D.; Hanu, C. The role of brand love on bank customers' perceptions of corporate social responsibility. *Int. J. Bank Mark.* **2021**, *39*, 189–208. [CrossRef]
21. Kim, M.; Yin, X.; Lee, G. The effect of CSR on corporate image, customer citizenship behaviors, and customers' long-term relationship orientation. *Int. J. Hosp. Manag.* **2020**, *88*, 102520. [CrossRef]
22. Atzori, R.; Shapoval, V.; Murphy, K.S. Measuring Generation Y consumers' perceptions of green practices at Starbucks: An IPA analysis. *J. Foodserv. Bus. Res.* **2018**, *21*, 1–21. [CrossRef]
23. Hu, H.H.; Parsa, H.G.; Self, J. The dynamics of green restaurant patronage. *Cornell Hosp. Q.* **2010**, *51*, 344–362. [CrossRef]
24. Tsai, P.H.; Lin, G.Y.; Zheng, Y.L.; Chen, Y.C.; Chen, P.Z.; Su, Z.C. Exploring the effect of Starbucks' green marketing on consumers' purchase decisions from consumers' perspective. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2020**, *56*, 102162. [CrossRef]
25. Carrigan, M.; Attalla, A. The myth of the ethical consumer—Do ethics matter in purchase behaviour? *J. Consum. Mark.* **2001**, *18*, 560–578. [CrossRef]
26. Creyer, E.H. The influence of firm behavior on purchase intention: Do consumers really care about business ethics? *J. Consum. Mark.* **1997**, *14*, 421–432. [CrossRef]
27. Barber, N. Consumers' intention to purchase environmentally friendly wines: A segmentation approach. *Int. J. Hosp. Tour. Adm.* **2012**, *13*, 26–47. [CrossRef]
28. Oliver, R.L. Whence consumer loyalty? *J. Mark.* **1999**, *63*, 33–44. [CrossRef]
29. Palazon, M.; Delgado, E. The moderating role of price consciousness on the effectiveness of price discounts and premium promotions. *J. Prod. Brand Manag.* **2009**, *18*, 306–312. [CrossRef]
30. ÇavuÇoğlu, S.; Demirağ, B.; Jusuf, E.; Gunardi, A. The effect of attitudes toward green behaviors on green image, green customer satisfaction and green customer loyalty. *Geoj. Tour. Geosites* **2020**, *33*, 1513–1519.
31. Patino, A.; Kaltcheva, V.D.; Pitta, D.; Sriram, V.; Winsor, R.D. How important are different socially responsible marketing practices? An exploratory study of gender, race, and income differences. *J. Consum. Mark.* **2014**, *31*, 2–12. [CrossRef]
32. Kim, S.B.; Kim, D.Y. The influence of corporate social responsibility, ability, reputation, and transparency on hotel customer loyalty in the US: A gender-based approach. *SpringerPlus* **2016**, *5*, 1–13. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
33. Seeley, E.A.; Gardner, W.L.; Pennington, G.; Gabriel, S. Circle of friends or members of a group? Sex differences in relational and collective attachment to groups. *Group Process. Intergroup Relat.* **2003**, *6*, 251–263. [CrossRef]
34. Tajfel, H.E. *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*; Academic Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1978; ISBN 978-0126825503.
35. Kim, D.-Y.; Lehto, X.; Morrison, A.M. Gender differences in online travel information search: Implications for marketing communications on the internet. *Tour. Manag.* **2007**, *28*, 423–433. [CrossRef]

36. Melnyk, V.; Van Osselaer, S.M.; Bijmolt, T.H. Are women more loyal customers than men? Gender differences in loyalty to firms and individual service providers. *J. Mark.* **2009**, *73*, 82–96. [CrossRef]
37. Lee, T.H. Starbucks Creates a Mess and a Hassle as It Tries to Go Green. Available online: https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2021/11/09/business/industry/Starbucks-StarbucksCoffeeKorea-plastic/20211109184029473.html (accessed on 1 December 2023).
38. Park, J.S.; Ha, S.; Jeong, S.W. Consumer acceptance of self-service technologies in fashion retail stores. *J. Fash. Mark. Manag.* **2021**, *25*, 371–388. [CrossRef]
39. Giovanis, A.; Athanasopoulou, P. Understanding lovemark brands: Dimensions and effect on Brand loyalty in high-technology products. *Span. J. Mark. ESIC* **2018**, *22*, 272–294. [CrossRef]
40. Afthanorhan, A.; Awang, Z.; Rashid, N.; Foziah, H.; Ghazali, P. Assessing the effects of service quality on customer satisfaction. *Manag. Sci. Lett.* **2019**, *9*, 13–24. [CrossRef]
41. Hair, J.F.; Black, W.C.; Babin, B.J.; Anderson, R.E. *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 8th ed.; Cengage Learning: Boston, MA, USA, 2018; ISBN 978-1473756540.
42. Nunnally, J.C. *Psychometric Theory*, 2nd ed.; McGraw Hill: New York, NY, USA, 1978; ISBN 978-0070474659.
43. Hayes, A.F. *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*; Guilford Publications: New York, NY, USA, 2017; ISBN 978-1462534661.
44. Li, Y.; Liu, B.; Huan, T.C.T. Renewal or not? Consumer response to a renewed corporate social responsibility strategy: Evidence from the coffee shop industry. *Tour. Manag.* **2019**, *72*, 170–179. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.