

THE IMPACT OF ECO-BRAND IMAGE AND GREEN SATISFACTION ON HOSPITALITY CUSTOMERS

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to investigate the effect of eco-brand image and green satisfaction on consumer trust and brand equity, with the moderating role of environmental knowledge. The study also examines the effect of consumer trust and brand equity on customer loyalty. For this purpose, data were collected from 301 hotel guests who had stayed at Green Star certified hotels in Antalya within the last six months. The data were analysed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method within the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework, implemented via SmartPLS software. The findings indicate that eco-brand image and green satisfaction have a positive and significant effect on consumer trust and brand equity. In addition, consumer trust and brand equity were found to have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. Regarding the moderating role of environmental knowledge, the results indicate that this variable significantly moderates only the relationships between eco-brand image and green satisfaction, as well as between eco-brand image and brand equity. In contrast, the moderating effect of environmental knowledge was not supported for the relationship between eco-brand image and customer trust, nor for the relationship between green satisfaction and customer trust. These findings suggest that while environmental knowledge enhances certain positive outcomes of eco-brand image, its moderating influence does not extend to relationships involving customer trust. These findings suggest that while environmental knowledge enhances certain positive outcomes of eco-brand image, its moderating influence does not extend to customer trust-related relationships. While previous research has examined environmental initiatives in various tourism sectors, studies focusing specifically on the hotel sector remain limited. Therefore, this research contributes to the literature by partially addressing this gap and reveals an emerging trend among Turkish consumers who increasingly expect hotels to adopt environmentally friendly practices.

Keywords: Eco-brand image, Green satisfaction, Consumer trust, Brand equity, Environmental knowledge

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INTRODUCTION

The urgency shown by governments and industry stakeholders in addressing environmental concerns has led to the belief that a synergy between environmental protection and industrialization is essential (Omidvar et al., 2024). Consequently, in 2015, the “United Nations General Assembly established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, which are founded on an integrated developmental framework consisting of three interrelated dimensions: economic, social, and environmental sustainability. To achieve these objectives and dimensions, a structural economic transformation is necessary to facilitate the shift towards a green and sustainable economy (Omidvar & Lopes, 2025; Rizqiyana & Wahyono, 2020). The hotel sector, in the hospitality industry, contributes significantly to the environment owing to its high exploitation of natural resources and the creation of emissions and waste (Khatter, 2023).

Environment degradation is contributed by hotels through high use of water and energy, creation of waste, and emissions of greenhouse gases from activities including air conditioning, heating, and laundry services (Abeydeera & Karunasena, 2019; Gössling et al., 2012). Moreover, hotel development and building have the tendency to lead to habitat loss and impose further pressure on local ecosystems (Kware & Bena, 2024). Non-renewable resources consumption and reliance on consumable products continue to exacerbate environmental problems (Legrand et al., 2022). With increasing concern regarding such impacts, sustainable practices by hotels are increasingly being demanded to maintain low environmental footprints and promote the development of green tourism (Omidvar & Palazzo, 2024). This is how this paper is organized: A comprehensive overview of the conceptual framework and the associated research hypotheses will be

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provided first. Next, we will outline the methodology employed in our research, detailing our research approach. We will then present and systematically analyse our research findings. After that, we will organize the results for better clarity. Lastly, in the analysis chapter, we will emphasize the key theoretical insights from the research, the significant practical implications for practitioners, as well as limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Eco-Brand Image and Green Satisfaction

Consumer demand for sustainable products and services has surged owing to environmental concerns that are on the rise, particularly in the hospitality industry (Omidvar & Palazzo, 2025; Tasci, 2017). One of the most crucial ideas is the eco-brand image that denotes consumers' understanding of a brand's dedication to sustainability and environmental protection (Rizqiyana & Wahyono, 2020). The reputation of a company is raised by a powerful eco-friendly brand image, which also raises consumer satisfaction and trust, all things that can lead to brand loyalty (Sarath Chandran, 2024; Zulfikar, 2024). This is particularly crucial in the hospitality industry because eco-branding serves as an operational tool that communicates a business's uniqueness in an overcrowded market.

The adoption of sustainable practices plays an important role in attracting environmentally conscious consumers and aligning with their values, which in turn enhances customer-based brand equity (Nguyen-Viet, 2023). The number of consumers who are satisfied with the environmental concerns of a company is a determinant of the brand's positive image (Zulfikar & Shafaat, 2015). Green satisfaction contributes to positive consumer responses, such as increased preference and potential repeat purchase behaviour, thereby enhancing brand equity (Chen, 2010). Moreover, it is the mere customer that decides what the final product of the service will comprise, as well as an ethical and sustainable product (Hashish et al., 2022). Green hotels' eco-leadership and environmental measures, which include energy conservation, water conservation, and the consumption of green foods, increase customers' positive feelings and happiness and make them satisfied with the brand (Merli et al., 2019; Omidvar & Deen, 2024b).

Guests who are of the opinion that the people running the hotel are environmentally responsible are way more likely to be happy with their stay, and more so to draw the brand as they wish (Omidvar & Deen, 2024a). Additionally, brand equity—comprising brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty—can be positively affected by views on environmental brands and green satisfaction (Chen, 2010). Brands that effectively communicate their commitment to environmental responsibility tend to have greater equity, particularly among consumers who are environmentally conscious (Deniz & Onder, 2017). In the Turkish hospitality sector, where there is a growing emphasis on sustainable tourism initiatives, understanding these connections is essential. Nonetheless, there is a lack of empirical study that directly connects eco-brand image and green satisfaction to customer satisfaction and brand equity in this context, pointing to a gap that this research seeks to address. The relationship between eco-brand image and trust is a topic of great interest. Recently, it has been said in the literature that green branding has a great influence on consumer behaviour and corporate strategy, thus outlining the significance of green branding.

Eco-brand trust is labelled as a core aspect of research. Basically, it refers to the emotional connection and the satisfaction consumers feel when a brand is perceived as eco-friendly by green consumers. It is asserted that having a high green brand image will positively influence green trust, which in turn leads to consumer loyalty to eco-friendly products and pro-environmental causes (Ha, 2021; Nguyen-Viet et al., 2024).

Tan et al. (2022) points out that in consumers' minds, brand perception includes both trust and image of a brand so that they are not perceived as different concepts, and his perspective is that one of the major ingredients for creating brand equity is the combination of efficient green marketing strategies with increased brand recognition and customer trust. The researchers also claim that the growth in the degree of brand awareness, the brand's image, and brand trust has a positive influence on brand loyalty (Bernarto et al., 2020). Consequently, these elements play together, supporting the idea that those companies achieving a good internalization can transmit the idea to public and thus apart from mere communication that a company is eco-friendly they can also gain a lot by having the consumer's trust.

In another similar study, it has been established that creating sustainable packaging is another way of improving brand image and building brand trust. The authors present the argument that green packaging not only caters to the needs of green consumers but also aligns with the company's marketing success to strengthen the perception of consumers (Zhang et al., 2024). According to the literature, establishing a strong eco-brand image helps increase customer trust. Integrating green marketing strategies, CSR initiatives, and sustainable practices is critical for brands that aim to enhance green brand equity and strengthen long-term relationships with consumers (Bernarto et al., 2020; Ha, 2021; Nguyen-Viet et al., 2024; Omidvar & Deen, 2023; Tan et al., 2022).

Chen (2010) suggested that green trust, green brand image, and green satisfaction are the determinants of green brand equity, specifically in the information and electronics sector in Taiwan. Kang & Hur (2012) extended the model by incorporating green affect and green brand loyalty to the model, emphasizing the positive inter-relationships among these constructs in the electronics product context in South Korea. Their findings suggest that green satisfaction and trust are critical in fostering brand loyalty, which in turn enhances brand equity. Chahal et al. (2014) further contributed to the discourse by proposing a strategic green marketing orientation that includes green satisfaction, loyalty, trust, and brand equity. This study stresses the need for an approach to green marketing, which indicates that companies must execute their marketing tactics to suit consumer expectations about sustainability so that they can get a high brand equity. Konuk et al. (2015) conducted research with a focus on three countries, which are Pakistan, Finland, and Türkiye, for the purpose of determining the impacts of green satisfaction, brand equity, and trust on each other.

It was revealed that all three constructs were positively correlated in the three countries, suggesting that green satisfaction and trust generally have a positive effect on brand equity, even in the absence of cultural influence. Bekk et al. (2016) have the intention to affirm and carry on with the previous research on green brand equity by finding that green satisfaction and trust are the essential drivers to brand equity in the new research direction.

Their study suggests that an environmentally friendly brand will have a strategic advantage in the market because of the increasing awareness of such a brand among customers. Khandelwal et al. (2019) studied the aspects which green brand equity is derived from customer's point of view in countries with economies that are proliferating like India. In this context, the study has the contribution of holding that the local understanding of positive customer reactions toward the question of green satisfaction and trust becomes an imperative for brand equity to be exercised effectively in those markets. Gorska-Warsewicz et al. (2021) as part of a systematic literature review, have drawn a conclusion that the aspects of green brand equity were of a particular significance to their study.

Their research implied that satisfaction and trust linked with protection towards the green environment are desirable characteristics. Hence, the hypothesis below is proposed for this study:

H_{1a}: Eco-brand image has a significant positive impact on customer trust.

H_{2a}: Eco-brand image has a significant positive impact on brand equity.

H_{3a}: Green satisfaction has a significant positive impact on customer trust.

H_{4a}: Green satisfaction as a significant positive impact on brand equity.

The Mediating Role of Environmental Knowledge

Environmental awareness, which can be described as the understanding by consumers of ecological issues, sustainable actions, and the environmental effects of consumption, is crucial in the creation of brand-related images and behaviours. It has become a mediator that reinforces the influence of eco-brand image on customer's outcomes like trust and brand equity (Biswas & Roy, 2016). It is the consumers who possess good environmental knowledge who can better understand the green actions of a brand and consequently make the most appropriate judgment of the brand's credibility and authenticity (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Customer trust in the eco-brand image as the expression of the brand's environmental responsibility is stronger, particularly when customers are conscious of and prefer green activities.

However, in cases where customers are not aware of environmental issues in a broad sense, a possibility arises that the brand's efforts may not be fully understood or valued, thus, weakening the eco-brand image and trust (Chen & Chang, 2013b). In this manner, environmental knowledge takes on the role of a mental filter, therefore increasing the positive influences of eco-brand image on trust, and thus, developing a brand's equity (Nguyen-Viet, 2023).

The studies also show that customers with a more comprehensive grasp of environmental issues tend to give high value to the eco-friendly brand, signifying higher perceived quality, associations, and loyalty—all important aspects of brand equity (Paul et al., 2016). It is important to compensate for the knowledge void and efficiently communicate green values through hotels so that they can connect with the consumers and develop brand equity in the long run, especially when green hotel certifications and practices are at the primary level of adoption. The mediating role of environmental knowledge, although crucial, is quite overlooked in the literature, particularly within the scope of hospitality and tourism research, implying a shortage of empirical investigation on the subject and thus showing the potential to serve as a fruitful field for forthcoming research. Thus, the following hypotheses is proposed by this research:

H_{1b}: Environmental knowledge moderates the relation between eco-brand image and customer trust.

H_{2b}: Environmental knowledge moderates the relation between eco-brand image and brand equity.

H_{3b}: Environmental knowledge moderates the relation between green satisfaction and customer trust.

H_{4b}: Environmental knowledge moderates the relation between green satisfaction and brand equity.

The Impact of Customer Trust and Brand Equity on Customer Loyalty

Consumer trust in the company is founded on their feelings, beliefs, and expectations towards the company and here, the company's reputation is of great importance (Servera-Francés & Piqueras-Tomás, 2019). Ahmed et al. (2014) state that the customer cannot be loyal to one company without trusting a company. Some researchers cite trust as the primary factor of loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Consumer loyalty to a company is raised up by increasing the trust created between the consumer and the company (Kishada & Wahab, 2013).

As a result, when a consumer is loyal to a company, they basically trust it (Gul, 2014). Ghaderi et al. (2024) collected data from restaurant consumers in Tehran, and the outcomes found that there is a positive and strong relationship between consumer trust and customer loyalty. Some research suggest that customer trust is directly related to and predicts consumer loyalty (Martínez & del Bosque, 2013; Barcelos et al., 2015; Leninkumar, 2017; Choi & La, 2013; Park & Kim, 2019). Hence, the hypothesis below is proposed for this research:

H₅: Consumer trust has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty.

Brand equity is the link between a brand and a customer and is an important asset for any company (Akbar & Azhar, 2011). Brand equity is crucial for developing brand loyalty. Restaurants should try to create this value well in the minds of customers (Khadim et al., 2018). Radansyah et al. (2021) reinforced the notion that strong brand equity is positively connected to higher levels of consumer loyalty. Hence, the hypothesis below is proposed for this research:

H₆: Brand equity has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty.

The conceptual model suggested (Figure 1) has been created to meet the objectives of this research.

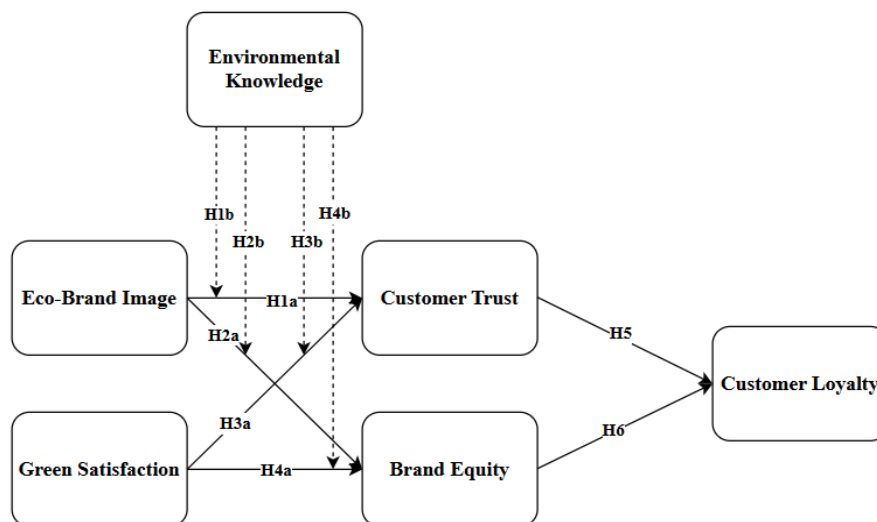


Figure 1. Research Model

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample and Data Collection

This research was conducted with Turkish hotel guests who had stayed at Green Star certified hotels operating in Antalya, Türkiye within the last six months. Within the scope of sustainable tourism, the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism has been awarding the “Green Star” certificate to accommodation facilities that voluntarily apply and meet the required environmental criteria since 1993. The certification aims to promote environmental protection, enhance environmental awareness, and encourage the positive contributions of tourism establishments to the environment (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2025).

A convenience sampling method was employed in the research. Data were obtained online from individuals who met the criterion of having stayed at a Green Star certified hotel in Antalya within the past six months. Participants were reached through social media platforms, and the questionnaire was administered using an online survey form. A thorough review of the relevant literature was used to ensure that the survey was appropriate for the context of environmentally certified hotel experiences. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts.

The first segment focused on basic sociodemographic data, such as gender, age, marital status, and educational background. The second segment analysed 24 important research items using a five-point Likert scale. The scales were initially translated into Turkish using Brislin’s (1970) three-stage back-translation method by four linguists, and a pilot test was conducted with 42 Turkish tourists who had stayed at a Green Star certified hotel in Antalya, yielding satisfactory results. Since no issues were identified during the pilot test, data collection for the main study commenced. The data collection period in 2024 was from December 5 to 31, and a total of 301 participants completed the survey.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency (n = 301)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	134	44,5
	Female	167	55,5
Age	18-25	105	34,9
	26-35	70	23,3
	36-45	99	32,9
	46 +	27	9
Education	High School	116	38,5
	Undergraduate	160	53,2
	Postgraduate	25	8,3
Marital Status	Single	174	57,8
	Married	127	42,2

As shown in Table 1, the sample consists mainly of female participants (55.5%). Participants are predominantly aged 18–25 (34.9%). Over half are at the undergraduate level (53.2%), and the majority are single (57.8%).

Variables, Measurement and Analysis

The measurement items for eco-brand image were adapted from prior studies, particularly Suhartanto et al. (2013) and Chi (2021). The measurement items for green satisfaction were adapted from Chen & Chang (2013b). Customer trust was measured using items adapted from the study by Phung & Huynh (2022). Brand equity was assessed using measures adapted from Yoo & Donthu (2001). Environmental knowledge construct was adapted based on the studies by Wang et al. (2018) and Tan (2023). Ultimately customer loyalty was measured using measures adapted from El-Adly (2019).

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) has been used to evaluate the data. The non-parametric multiple hierarchical regressions are performed simultaneously by the PLS-SEM approach, which does not require a normal distribution. Furthermore, PLS-SEM is suitable for studies with relatively small sample sizes and remains effective even when model constructs are measured using a limited number of indicators (Hair et al., 2017).

Because PLS allows for the analysis of complex interactions between multiple variables and can manage small sample sizes and non-normal data distributions, it was used in this study. In PLS-SEM, the determination of an adequate sample size is often guided by the “10-times rule,” which recommends that the minimum sample size should be at least ten times the largest number of structural paths directed at any latent variable in the model (Hair et al., 2017).

In this study, the measurement model consisted of 24 observed indicators, and the collected dataset included 301 valid responses, which exceeds the minimum threshold suggested by methodological guidelines and therefore ensures sufficient statistical power for PLS-SEM analysis. As an initial step, multicollinearity among the predictor variables was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) analysis. The VIF scores were found to range from 1.016 to 1.287 after the structural relationships were analysed. These values are significantly lower than the recommended threshold of 3.3, demonstrating that multicollinearity is not a concern in this model (Kock, 2015).

RESULTS

The Measurement Model

Table 2 shows the validity and reliability statistics for the measurement model. The results indicated that the factor loadings for all constructs were statistically significant, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Kusuma et al., 2025). Moreover, sufficient convergent validity was confirmed, as the Cronbach’s alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values for each construct exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values surpassed the minimum criterion of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2019; Chae, 2026).

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Constructs and Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Eco-Brand Image (EBI)		0.730	0.844	0.644
EBI_1	0.851			
EBI_2	0.757			
EBI_3	0.797			
Green Satisfaction (GS)		0.808	0.874	0.635
GS_1	0.731			
GS_2	0.863			
GS_3	0.847			
GS_4	0.738			
Environmental Knowledge (EK)		0.951	0.960	0.774
EK_1	0.828			
EK_2	0.880			
EK_3	0.907			
EK_4	0.902			
EK_5	0.896			
EK_6	0.846			
EK_7	0.898			
Customer Trust (CT)		0.892	0.933	0.823
CT_1	0.884			
CT_2	0.914			
CT_3	0.923			
Brand Equity (BE)		0.851	0.874	0.691
BE_1	0.875			
BE_2	0.857			
BE_3	0.853			
BE_4	0.732			
Customer Loyalty (CL)		0.747	0.855	0.663
CL_1	0.758			
CL_2	0.878			
CL_3	0.803			

So as to evaluate discriminant validity, the present research utilized both the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Discriminant validity is considered acceptable when HTMT values remain below the commonly accepted thresholds of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). The outcomes of this research demonstrate the existence of discriminant validity by showing that all HTMT values satisfy these requirements (see Table 3). Moreover, in accordance with Fornell & Larcker (1981) guideline, the results reveal that the square roots of the AVEs for each construct crossed their corresponding inter-construct correlations, offering additional support for the confirmation of discriminant validity (Table 3).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

(Note: EBI: Eco-Brand Image, GS: Green Satisfaction, EK: Environmental Knowledge, CT: Customer Trust, BE: Brand Equity, CL: Customer Loyalty)

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)						
	BE	CL	CT	EBI	EK	GS
BE						
CL	0.457					
CT	0.150	0.370				
EBI	0.199	0.308	0.343			
EK	0.045	0.284	0.735	0.230		
GS	0.212	0.297	0.349	0.367	0.368	
Fornell-Larcker Criterion						
BE	0.831					
CL	0.373	0.814				
CT	0.124	0.310	0.907			
EBI	0.174	0.240	0.285	0.802		
EK	0.010	0.251	0.679	0.182	0.880	
GS	0.183	0.226	0.303	0.283	0.327	0.797

The Structural Model

A number of analytical procedures were used to evaluate the structural model. The standardized root means square residual (SRMR), which should be kept below the 0.10 threshold, was first used to assess the model fit (Yeh et al., 2021; Yılmaz & Kinaş, 2020). For this research, the SRMR value was 0.069, indicating an adequate model fit. Subsequently, the R² values were examined to assess the model’s explanatory power, while the Q² values were evaluated to determine its predictive relevance. Upon examining the R² values, all were found to exceed the threshold of 0.10, as recommended Falk & Miller (1992). Specifically, the R² scores for brand equity (0.144), customer trust (0.499) and customer loyalty (0.210) indicate a significant level of explained variance. Additionally, when considering the Q² values derived from Stone-Geisser’s criterion for the internal constructs, brand equity (0.086), customer trust (0.400) and customer loyalty (0.130), it is evident that the model demonstrates adequate predictive relevance for all constructs. These results further affirm the model’s predictive validity, as put forward by Hair et al. (2011). The outcomes shown in Table 4 demonstrate the outcomes of hypothesis testing regarding the relationships between eco-brand image (EBI), green satisfaction (GS), environmental knowledge (EK), customer trust (CT), brand equity (BE), and customer loyalty (CL). Hypotheses H_{1a}, H_{2a}, H_{3a}, H_{4a}, H₅, and H₆ were supported, demonstrating statistically notable relationships with p-values below 0.05.

Specifically, EBI positively influences CT (H_{1a}) and BE (H_{2a}), while GS positively impacts both CT (H_{3a}) and BE (H_{4a}). Additionally, CT and BE show significant positive effects on CL (H₅ and H₆). However, hypotheses involving interaction effects (H_{1b}, H_{3b}) related to EK as a moderator were not supported, as their p-values exceeded the threshold for significance. Conversely, EK positively moderates the relationship between EBI and BE (H_{2b}) and between GS and BE (H_{4b}), as these paths are statistically significant. These findings underline the central roles of eco-brand image, green satisfaction, and their interactions with environmental knowledge in shaping customer trust, brand equity, and customer loyalty.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results (Note: EBI: Eco-Brand Image, GS: Green Satisfaction, EK: Environmental Knowledge, CT: Customer Trust, BE: Brand Equity, CL: Customer Loyalty)

Hypothesis	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	t value	p values	Remarks
Direct effect						
H _{1a} : EBI → CT	0.216	0.220	0.061	3.570	0.000	Supported
H _{2a} : EBI → BE	0.133	0.136	0.065	2.035	0.042	Supported
H _{3a} : GS → CT	0.244	0.247	0.062	3.931	0.000	Supported
H _{4a} : GS → BE	0.145	0.148	0.070	2.082	0.037	Supported
H ₅ : CT → CL	0.268	0.270	0.062	4.294	0.000	Supported
H ₆ : BE → CL	0.339	0.344	0.061	5.569	0.000	Supported
Moderating effect						
H _{1b} : EK x EBI → CT	0.040	0.040	0.046	0.869	0.385	Not Supported
H _{2b} : EK x EBI → BE	0.148	0.146	0.056	2.644	0.008	Supported
H _{3b} : EK x GS → CT	0.076	0.074	0.053	1.414	0.157	Not Supported
H _{4b} : EK x GS → BE	0.218	0.218	0.060	3.616	0.000	Supported

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the influence of eco-brand image and green satisfaction on consumer trust, brand equity, and ultimately consumer loyalty. Our outcomes revealed that eco-brand image has a considerable positive influence on customer trust. This repetitively opens up the research path (Bernarto et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2024) and accents the significance of environmental branding in the hospitality industry. Notably, when clients notice an environmental-friendly hotel brand, they start to trust the brand’s values, promises, and overall integrity more often. The provided result shows that eco-branding is essential not only for promoting a brand but also for building trust (Chen & Chang, 2013a). In particular, hotel industry, the eco-brand image is being pursued with passion, and the availability of

implemented sustainable practices makes it easier for the marketing managers to realize their green marketing, avoiding greenwash. Consequently, this kind of trust can be applied to contribute to the reinforcement of the existing relationships between the firm and the end-users as, usually, trust is the forerunner of brand loyalty and advocacy. Thus, hotel managers are advised to communicate their eco-friendly and genuine environment-friendly activities with transparency to inspire trust socially and to be seen as uncontested green brands.

In addition, the outcomes of this research demonstrates that eco-brand image has a substantial positive impact on brand equity. The very important influence of the eco-brand image on brand equity is proof of the brand's strategic environmental responsibility in the hotel industry. This specific result is an explicit illustration of how, if customers view a particular brand as environmentally friendly, they tend to regard it as socially responsible and better in quality, product performance, and reliability, thereby increasing brand equity. For the hotels in the Turkish market that are experiencing a transition to sustainable tourism, a solid eco-brand image can be a major driver of brand equity, consumer satisfaction, and the perception of customer value. This outcome aligns with previous study that argued that green positioning has a positive influence on brand image, brand loyalty and advocacy, which are the pillars of brand equity (Tran, 2023). Thus, hotels that invest in green technology and promote their projects to the guests are expected to succeed in their brand strategies and grow their brand values faster than their competitors.

The outcome of this research also shows that green satisfaction has a substantial positive influence on customer trust. The positive relationship between green satisfaction and customer trust supports the notion that environmentally conscious service delivery can strengthen emotional and psychological connections between customers and brands. When guests see that a hotel is committed to green practices—like saving energy, reducing waste, and using eco-friendly products—they start to feel a sense of trust towards the brand. They realize the hotel shares their values and cares about the planet, making them more inclined to support it (Berezan et al., 2014). This research's findings are notably significant for the hotel sector, where ecotourists seek genuine experiences and clarity in sustainable practices amidst increasing awareness of sustainability. Research shows that green satisfaction aligns with customer expectations, forming a basis for trust (Chahal et al., 2014). These results suggest that hotels need to prioritize customer satisfaction through green practices, fostering trust and building stronger, more durable customer-brand relationships in the long term.

The outcome of this research also shows that green satisfaction has a substantial positive influence on brand equity. The positive influence of green satisfaction on brand equity proves that when consumers are satisfied with a hotel's green practices, they will have a higher overall brand value of the hotel. This outcome is in alignment with prior work showing that green satisfaction, which originates from customer satisfaction with green practices, is a crucial factor influencing brand associations, perceived quality, and loyalty, all of which are important components of brand equity (Román-Augusto et al., 2023). Hotel industry is recognizing the benefit of using green practices and understanding that customer satisfaction with the change will enhance brand equity can help them become more competitive. Guests satisfied with a hotel's green efforts are now going to be more likely to view the hotel's brand as responsible, progressive, and a high-quality hotel; all of which will influence brand equity (Paul et al., 2016). These findings among the growing awareness of sustainable tourism highlight the importance for hotel industry to not just engage in sustainability options, but to perform those actions in a visible and meaningful way and aligned with customer expectations if it wants to actualize brand value.

Environmental knowledge significantly moderates the relationship between eco-brand image and brand equity, as well as the connection between green satisfaction and brand equity, underscoring how customers' awareness of ecological concerns boosts their perceived value of a brand. Studies suggest that customers with environmental understanding can better assess an eco-brand image concerning its brand equity.

Consumers tend to have a more favourable view of brands that show real ecological responsibility, which improves their perception of brand equity (Benoit-Moreau & Parguel, 2011). This underscores the need to focus on environmentally aware audiences and to tailor communication strategies that emphasize genuine green qualities.

Likewise, evidence that a consumer's environmental knowledge positively moderates the green satisfaction–brand equity relationship suggests satisfaction with a brand's green behaviour has a greater influence on improving brand equity when the consumer has relatively high environmental knowledge. Informed consumers are much better equipped to evaluate the legitimacy and effectiveness of green behaviour (Kumar et al., 2021), thus rendering any resulting satisfaction more valuable in terms of consumer evaluations related to a brand. The outcomes of this research illustrate the essential role that their provision of environmental education and clear sustainability-formed communication can have in enhancing the impact of green branding. These results reflect that hotels need to not only implement effective green practices but also ensure they educate and involve guests in environmental awareness as a mechanism for increasing the equity of their brand. The realization that consumer trust and brand equity significantly affect customer loyalty aligns with the current understanding that a strong emotional and cognitive connection with brand results in loyalty over an extended period. To illustrate, when consumers trust that a hotel brand is not only reliable but also honest and capable of fulfilling its promises, these elements of trust increase the likelihood that customers will demonstrate loyalty to these hotels, even when they have alternative options.

Meanwhile, brand equity—which can be understood in terms of perceived quality, brand association, and loyalty—also serves as a strong predictor of continued customer patronage. In the context of Turkish hotels where many hotels are in a competitive environment, and differentiation is critical to success, these findings demonstrate values of building a trustworthy brand with a high level of equity through consistent service quality and honest environmental practices. In conclusion, consumer trust and brand equity come together within a virtuous circle that connects guest relationships with the sustainable competitive advantage it creates.

Theoretical Contribution

This study adds to the body of work in the areas of green marketing and branding management by providing an integrated model of eco-brand image, green satisfaction, customer trust, brand equity and brand loyalty in the Turkish context. Overall, this research adds a theoretical dimension to the role of eco-brand image and green satisfaction – as antecedents of trust and brand equity. To date, studies have explored eco-brand image, green satisfaction and their relationship with either trust or brand equity separately. This research offers a broader perspective that encompasses eco-brand image and satisfaction as two aspects that positively and significantly enhance trust and brand equity from an environmentally responsible brand image and satisfaction with environmentally sustainable initiatives. Second, this study advances literature by suggesting environmental knowledge as a moderating variable. The findings reveal that environmental knowledge strengthens the favourable influences of eco-brand image and green satisfaction on brand equity, thus validating the influence of consumer cognition on green branding performance. This result reinforces the theoretical analysis of consumer awareness and learning in consumer behaviour motivated by sustainability.

Finally, by confirming that both customer trust and brand equity significantly influence customer loyalty, this research reinforces existing theories of relationship marketing and brand loyalty, while providing new empirical evidence in a developing market context. As such, this study not only supports existing theoretical models but also adapts them to a green hotel setting, offering a localized contribution that fills a gap in hospitality and sustainability research in emerging economies like Türkiye.

Managerial Implications

The outcomes obtained in this paper present a number of concrete suggestions that can be used by hotel managers and marketers to enhance brand performance through environmentally sustainable strategies. First of all, it is of the greatest importance to have a really "green" eco-identity. This is because such an identity has a substantial positive effect on brand equity and customer trust and building an authentic green brand identity is thus of utmost importance. Hotel managers should take care to inform their customers about their sustainable initiatives formally. Sustainable practices in this context may include energy-saving technologies, waste-reduction systems or environmental-friendly amenities. In addition, they ought to engage in activities that not only improve or at least maintain their brand's position in the market but also help them break into new green areas. Moreover, they should partake in initiatives that enhance or preserve their brand's market position while also facilitating entry into new green sectors.

Moreover, they should also take measures to ensure the quality and visibility of their eco-initiatives. This will help them to be more noticeable, easy to be experienced, and more beneficial and thus; stably and positively received. These outcomes also reflect the fact that informing customers is a key factor, which in turn means that educating them is a necessity if the slightest hope of success through eco-branding is even to be considered. Online promotion, room messages and last but not least, nature walks should be used as the main methods of consumer education.

Finding the best innovative ways such as engaging in nature walks, online promotions, and in-room notices to enforce guests' environmental awareness and their perceived satisfaction of the brand is one of the top managements' puzzles. Lastly, as loyalty is primarily driven by trust and equity and it is also the core principle of relationship marketing, hence, it should be viewed not as a single exchange between the two parties but as the starting point for a long-term relationship.

Long-term strategic assets directing these goals should be investing in consistent service quality, an authentic green brand, and transparent communication, which in turn lead to more repetition of the green journey the customer will have, more positive words of mouth being spoken about the hotel, and above all, an enhanced competitive position in the green market. These strategic plans are of utmost necessity for hotels to attract the green segment besides the fact that they are tailored in such a way that they can use them to compete internationally and attract the local tourists who are conscious of the environment in the current world situation of a very highly competitive and sustainable tourism landscape.

Limitations of the Study and Directions of Future Research

The study discusses the connection between eco-brand image, green satisfaction, customer trust, brand equity, and loyalty however, the study also suffers from certain barriers. To be specific, the research was done in the area of hotels in Antalya, Türkiye, a traditionally popular destination for tourists which has recently started to focus on ecological tourism. This surveying area enables more thorough research of a particular sector, but the outcomes may not be applicable to the regions with the different nature of tourism as we cite an example of varying environmental profiles. In the future, researchers can duplicate this study in numerous other areas to get clear results across various cultural, regulatory, or environmental frames of reference.

Most importantly, the study was conducted through a cross-sectional research design, which provides a snapshot of the relationships between variables but cannot capture changes in customer perceptions or transactions over time. Gathering similar information in a series of studies would help trace how eco-branding strategies develop and how customer knowledge influences brand equity and loyalty in the long run. Third, data were self-reported, which may involve social desirability bias due to societal pressure for environmental responsibility. Even if participants remained anonymous, future research could enhance data reliability by using actual behaviours, such as booking or online reviewing activities. Fourth, the research included Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as a powerful method for testing the proposed relationships. SEM is useful for complex models but requires assumptions about data distribution and model fit. Future studies could use multi-group SEM or PLS-SEM to examine differences across customer segments (e.g., domestic vs. international, eco-friendly vs. mainstream) or with smaller samples and/or non-normal distributions. Lastly, although this research

incorporated environmental knowledge as a moderating variable, future study may explore additional psychological or contextual variables, such as perceived greenwashing, environmental concern, or hotel class (luxury vs. economy), to offer deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying customer reactions to green branding in hospitality.

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