

The Effect of Green Practices on Emotional Attachment and Green Loyalty of Coffee Shop Consumers (Turkey)*

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Abstract

As individuals have recently become more sensitive towards environmental issues, green marketing has emerged as an important strategic tool in order to gain competitive advantage for hospitality and food and beverage enterprises. This study is aimed at determining the effect of green marketing practices on coffee shop customers' loyalty and emotional attachment. For this aim, the customers of 3 Starbucks (coffee shop) operating in Mugla province (Turkey) and having Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certificate (n=404) were included in the scope of this study. The hypotheses determined for this aim were tested via path analysis with latent variables which was one of the structural equation modellings. According to test results, it was concluded that green practices had a positive significant effect on attachment to green businesses; customer attachment to green businesses had a positive significant effect on green loyalty to both green businesses and green products and also loyalty towards green businesses had a negative impact on loyalty towards green products. These results show that it is important for food and beverage businesses to adopt green practices both for raising awareness towards environmental protection and also for creating customer loyalty and emotional attachment. In this way, environmentally friendly practices provide competitive advantage as well as an increase in the number of environmentally friendly customers for businesses.

Keywords: Green practices, LEED, emotional attachment to green business, green loyalty

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Introduction

As transportation of coffee to international companies has become easier and consumers are offered various coffee types almost everywhere, the interest and curiosity of consumers towards coffee as well as coffee consumption have increased recently (Balduke, Süren, 2007). According to the statistics updated by International Coffee Organization, while coffee consumption in Turkey was 595 gr per person in 2012-2013, in 2014 this number rose to 929 gr (ico.com, 2015). The increase in coffee consumption has caused many companies producing and serving coffee to penetrate into food and beverage market and accordingly an intense competitive environment has emerged around the world. Businesses wish to create customer loyalty and emotional attachment by applying different kinds of strategies for turning out to be profitable in this competitive market.

One of the significant methods of creating customer loyalty and attachment is environmentally friendly practices. Gunes (2011) suggests that today many consumers demand eco-friendly products, eco-friendly packaging and green management and prefer environmentally friendly businesses. Customers' being more aware of and sensitive towards ecological issues have an impact upon their purchase decisions and buying behaviors and accordingly their purchase decision process may differ by their level of awareness and concern towards environment (Han et al., 2010; Laroche, et al., 2001; Paco, Rapose, 2009; Ham, Han, 2013).

In parallel with the increase in consumers' awareness towards environmental issues, eco-friendly goods and services have become more preferable in coffee market as in other sectors (Jang et al., 2015). Jang et al. (2015) confirm that the number of Urth Caffè's customers has shown a considerable increase since the business was focused on organic coffee and local food. Green practices provide competitive edge for businesses and can be the reason of preference for eco-friendly customers. Even though there have been a lot of studies on customer loyalty and attachment in various disciplines and fields, it is observed that there is not much discussion about the relationships and effects of these concepts in terms of green marketing (Martinez, 2015).

Many businesses like Marriott which are aware of the increase in the number of eco-friendly consumers utilize LEED certification in order to gain a competitive advantage in the market and contribute to the environmental protection. LEED certification system is a green building rating system used for marking healthier, more environmentally-friendly and more energy-efficient buildings such as hospitals, historical buildings, schools and homes. Many cafes and restaurants also use LEED certification system so as to meet the environmental demands of customers and to authenticate their sensitivity towards environment. Starbucks is one of those companies using this certification system for creating environmentally-friendly shops (Leed certificate, 2019). Therefore, this study is conducted with customers of Starbucks and aimed at determining the impacts of green practices on loyalty and attachment of coffee shops' customers.

Conceptual framework

Green Practices and LEED Certificate

In the face of environmental problems spreading over the Earth like a plague (e.g. global warming, environmental degradation, air pollution, water contamination and lack of resources etc.), consumers have begun adapting green alternatives which are better for the planet into their purchase behaviors (Hsieh, 2012; Jones et al., 2014). As a result of this attitude change, busi-

nesses have also started to take environmental responsibilities and promote their green practices (Chan, 2013). They adopt new strategies guaranteeing customer satisfaction with green options such as green marketing (Chen, 2010; Kang, Hur, 2012) so that they can respond to environmental demands (Martinez, 2015). The relevant studies within the literature confirm that businesses and companies adopt green marketing practices in order to examine their customers' green attitudes and green behavior; to specify green product market, to divide green market into different segments in accordance with customers' needs, to develop green positioning strategies and to produce a mixed green marketing policy (Chen, 2010; Jain, Kaur, 2004).

Chan (2013) states that green marketing has become one of the most significant marketing concepts. By developing green marketing strategies, businesses can operate with eliminating their customers' environmental concerns (Polonsky, 1994). Promoting the application of environmental/ green practices and regulating them on behalf of consumers can give competitive advantage to businesses (Russo, Fouts 1997; D'Souza, et al., 2006). In this study, green practices are defined as customer perceptions towards coffee shops' applying eco-friendly practices (Jeong, Jang, 2010; Jang et al., 2015).

LEED certification system created by United States Green Building Council (USGBC) is the most commonly used certification system all over the world. The principal purpose of LEED certification system which marks buildings that are sensitive to nature and human health, is to ensure the environment to be healthier and more habitable. LEED certification system is applied in many areas such as urban transformation, school buildings, storehouses and distribution centers, hospitality facilities, hospitals, banks, company headquarters, factories, shops and stores. With LEED certification system's different rating methods, LEED certificate can be received by all kinds of buildings. According to the facilities and qualities a building has, the building can receive a LEED certification among 4 certification levels such as certified, silver, gold and platinum as a result of rating made by LEED AP (Accredited Professional). Since 2016, there has been 9 LEED system criteria under this certification system named as "*sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, integrative process, location and transportation, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, innovation and regional priority*" (Leed certificate, 2019). LEED certification system began to be used in Turkey in 2009.

Applied in many fields in accordance with the increasing number of conscious consumers, LEED certification system is also implemented in food and beverage sector. There is an exemplary statement regarding LEED certification system on the webpage of Starbucks coffee company which is known worldwide and operating also in Turkey. On this page, Starbucks claims that they are working for creating green shops by using environmentally friendly materials and systems that decrease carbon emission; they use eco-friendly construction materials and furniture in their stores and apply green practices that can provide energy and water saving. For the purpose of leading their efforts, they have adopted LEED® certification system by U.S. Green Building Council as benchmark for their success (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2019).

Green Practices and Emotional Attachment

Attachment is a push factor of loyalty and commitment (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Previous studies show that the customers who are emotionally attached to a brand or a business are more committed to that brand or business with which they also develop a more sustainable relationship (Carroll, Ahuvia, 2006; Thomson et al., 2005). An individual who is becoming more attached to a specific object is tend and willing to keep interacting with that object

(Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Emotional attachment, on the other hand, is an attachment standard based solely on emotions (Sajjad et al., 2015).

A lot of studies prove that customer perceptions towards green practices of a food and beverage enterprise are related to their perceptions towards green brand image and their green behavior (Hu et al., 2010; Jeong, Jang, 2010; Namkung, Jang, 2013). However, the effect of green practices of food and beverage facilities on customers' emotional responses (e.g. emotional attachment) has not been studied in detail.

The studies on green practices of businesses and their attitudes towards social responsibility confirm that these practices and attitudes improve customers' emotional attachment to the businesses. McEwen (2010) admits that customers meet their needs by being committed to businesses that take social responsibility and reflect their own values and image and accordingly, they become more emotionally attached to those businesses by strengthening their bonds. Bhattacharya et al. (2009) claim that as customers support green businesses and brands, they experience personal satisfaction by contributing to the green efforts of those businesses and brands. Vlachos (2012) reveals that customers' positive perceptions towards social activities of a business lead to a stronger emotional attachment. Tumanan, Lansangan (2012) add an environmental variable among factors affecting customers' emotional attachment to a place and find a significant difference between these factors in their study.

Attachment to a business can cause customers to establish intimacy with that place and hence positive emotional bonds between customers and that place influence customer loyalty towards that business (Alexandris, et al., 2006; Lopez-Mosquera, Sanchez, 2013; Yuksel et al., 2010). Yuksel et al. (2010) state that emotional bonds with a place developed through experiences have a positive impact upon an individual's evaluation regarding that place and his/her behavioral intentions. Kim et al. (2013) put an emphasis on the importance of emotions to the understanding of customers' environmental behaviors. They also claim that emotions affect customers' revisit intentions and emotions are among the important factors influencing customer loyalty in eco-friendly food and beverage enterprises.

The current study specifies emotional attachment to a green business as emotional bonds established with a business (Yuksel et al., 2010; Jang et al., 2015). Therefore, it is reasonable to estimate that green practices of a business increase customers' emotional attachment. Based on this, the hypothesis below is developed:

H₁: Green practices of coffee stores significantly affect customers' emotional attachment.

Green Loyalty

Loyalty is a notion presenting the level of consistent commitment to repurchase a preferred product in future (Oliver, 1996). Dick, Basu (1994) define loyalty as the strength of the relationship between customers' attitude and their repeated purchases. Based on these definitions, Chen (2013) describes green loyalty as the level of repurchase intentions emerged with sustainable attachment and a strong environmental attitude towards a product, a service or a similar object and also he clearly states that green satisfaction of customers positively affect green loyalty.

Environmental protection is an important management function for every business because it is considered as one of the most significant tools for a positive image and the success of the business (D'Souza et al., 2006). Environmental responsibility helps businesses increase consumer loyalty (D'Souza et al., 2006) as well as their competitive capacity and market share (Chan, 2001; Fitzgerald, 1993; Porter, Van der Linde, 1995). Based on Dick, Bassu (1994), Martin-

ez (2015) defines green loyalty as customer commitment to sustain repurchasing a green brand or using the product. Customer satisfaction is recognized as a requirement for developing customer loyalty by many researchers (Oliver, 1996; Martinez, 2015). Indeed, customer satisfaction which is the antecedent of loyalty is redefined on the basis of Mai, Ness (1999) with regard to green marketing (Martinez, 2015; Chen 2010). Green satisfaction is defined as the level of satisfaction related to consumption for meeting green needs, sustainable expectations and environmental demands of customers. Also, Martinez (2015) states that green satisfaction affects green loyalty in a positive way.

Admitting that there is a positive relationship between green satisfaction and green loyalty, Chang, Fong (2010) also claim that green product quality and green business image have a positive relationship with green satisfaction and green loyalty. Jang et al. (2015) assert that emotional attachment increases loyalty towards green businesses and products because customers feel a strong connection with green businesses (Ailawadi et al., 2001; Ehrenberg, 1988). Whenever customers feel emotional attachment to a green business, they will be loyal to that green brand. And accordingly the business continues to produce and sell its green products with the same brand (Ailawadi et al., 2001; Yi, Jeon, 2003; Yim et al., 2008).

According to Bowen, Shoemaker (1998), customers' emotional attachment causes not only to repurchase but also to encourage others to buy from that business. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to think that strong attachment to a business creates product loyalty and increases repurchase intentions. Customers who are loyal to a business tend to repeat purchases or buy different new products (Sui, Baloglu, 2003). Strong attachment to a business enables positive consumer evaluations of products and increases the potential of loyalty level in future.

In this study, customer loyalty towards green businesses is defined as having brand commitment enough to be a patron of a green coffee shop (Ailawadi et al., 2001; Yi, Jeon, 2003; Jang et al., 2015); loyalty towards green product is defined as commitment to repurchase a preferred green product consistently (Michaelidou, Hassan, 2008; Namkung, Jang, 2013; Jang et al., 2015) and these hypotheses are developed:

- H₂: Customers' attachment to a green coffee store significantly affects their loyalty towards green store.
- H₃: Customers' attachment to a green coffee store significantly affects their loyalty towards green product.
- H₄: Customers' loyalty towards green coffee store significantly affects their loyalty towards green product.

Methodology

Conducted for determining the effect of green practices on coffee shop customers' emotional attachment and loyalty, this study is a positivist one in terms of selected methodology and a survey research in terms of data collection technique. The population of the study consists of the customers of three Starbucks coffee shops operating in Marmaris and Bodrum. The reason why the study is limited to Starbucks customers is that only Starbucks coffee shops have applied LEED certification system in Mugla. The sample of the study is comprised of 404 Starbucks customers who have voluntarily accepted to participate in this survey study.

After an extensive literature review for the required survey (Jang et al., 2015; Çatı, Koçoğlu, 2008; Jones, Sasser, 1995), research model is set as on Figure 1.

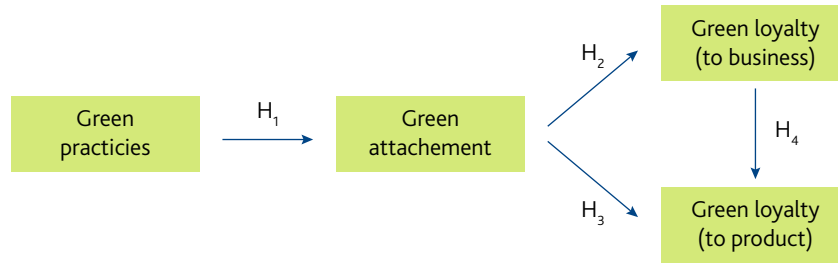


Figure 1. Research Model

For the measurement of these variables in the model, an adopted scale was used after a comprehensive literature review (Jang et al., 2015; Çatı, Koçoğlu, 2008; Jones, Sasser, 1995). The survey had 5 sections. In the first part, there were 3 items regarding green practices implemented in the shop; in the second part, there were 7 items related to emotional attachment to green coffee shop; in the third part there were 4 items for measuring loyalty towards green coffee shop; in the fourth part, there were 2 items regarding loyalty towards green product. These items were measured with 5-likert-scale (1= absolutely disagree and 5= absolutely agree). In the last section of the form, there were questions about the demographics of the participants and their motivations for visiting that coffee shop (reasons for preference). Before conducting face-to-face survey research, three academics were consulted for content validity of the scale and according to recommendations, it was revised. A confirmatory factor analysis was applied in order to test construct validity of the scale. The consistence within measurement model was examined via chi square test (χ^2/sd); goodness of fit index (GFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). In the first analysis, goodness of fit index values was not found to be between the determined criteria, therefore the analysis was remade after some minor modifications. As a result of the second analysis, it was found that $\chi^2/sd=4$; GFI=0,90; RMSEA=0,08. As the number of the variables was few in confirmatory factor analysis, the lowest level for factor load was determined as 0,30 (Büyüköztürk, 2011). These results proved that the model was consistent with the data and it could be acceptable. The reliability of the scale was determined via Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient (See Table 1). The data were collected face-to-face with customers at the coffee shops during November- December in 2017.

Table.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Factor load	Goodness of fit index
Green Practices ($\alpha = 0,702$)		$\chi^2/sd=4$ GFI=0,90 RMSEA=0,08
This coffee shop offers responsibly eco-friendly products.	,892	
This coffee shop offers recycling bins for plastic and paper cups in the store.	,720	
This coffee shop uses eco-friendly materials.	,425	
Emotional Attachment ($\alpha = 0,877$)		
I frequently visit this coffee shop.	,719	
I trust the products served in this coffee shop.	,722	
I feel safe in this coffee shop.	,743	
I feel peaceful in this coffee shop.	,754	
I feel this coffee shop is a part of me.	,624	
This coffee shop says a lot about who I am.	,682	
I enjoy drinking coffee in this coffee shop a lot.	,671	
Green Loyalty (to business/store/shop) ($\alpha = 0,771$)		
When I want to drink coffee outside, my first choice is this coffee shop because it is environmentally friendly.	,699	
I positively advertise and promote this coffee shop to my friends and family because it is environmentally friendly.	,874	
I recommend this coffee shop to my friends and family because it is environmentally friendly.	,903	
I consent to pay more for a cup of coffee to this coffee shop because it is environmentally friendly.	,361	
Green Loyalty (to product) ($\alpha = 0,846$)		
I would like to repurchase the eco-friendly products in this shop.	,866	
I would recommend the eco-friendly products of this shop to my friends or others.	,846	

Before further data analysis, normality was tested. With Skewness and Kurtosis, it was determined by using ± 2.0 equating value that all of the sub-variables were within this range (Gravetter, Wallnau, 2014). According to this result, the data fulfilled the normality assumption for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). For testing hypotheses, path analysis with latent variables and absolute and percentage values were applied. Test results were analyzed with AMOS 21.0 and SPSS software.

Findings and discussion

Findings related to Demographics of the Participants

Almost half of the participants were male (51,7%) and three out of four were single (75,5%) in terms of their marital status. As for age distribution of the participants, almost half of them were 24 or under the age of 24 (51,7%), 25,5% of them were between the ages of 25-34, 14% of them were between the ages of 35-44; 5% were between 45-54 and the rest were 55 or above. In terms of educational status of the participants, 3% were elementary school graduate, 19,1% were high school graduate, 33,7% had an associate degree; 35% had bachelor's degree and the rest were postgraduates. Considering their occupations, 4,5% were unemployed; 53% were stu-

dent; 21,5% had jobs in private sector and 12,6% were public employees and 8% were retired or self-employed. The ratio of the participants who had an average income under 1600 TL (Turkish Lira) was 50%; almost 20% had an income between 1601-2800 TL; 18% had an average income between 2801-4000 TL; 7,2% had an income of 4001-5200 TL and the rest had an average income more than 5200 TL. That more than half of the participants were at the age of 24 or under and had an income of 1600 TL or under showed the fact that significant number of Starbucks customers were students, hence young people. These demographic data show similarities with sociodemographic information revealed by market research on Starbucks. Moon, Quelch (2003) claim that Starbucks customers are now younger and have lower incomes than old customers.

Findings related to The Effect of Green Practices on Emotional Attachment and Green Loyalty

The participant customers were also asked what the most important factor affecting their preference to visit this coffee shop was. According to the results, the most important factor affecting the customers' preference of these coffee shops was found as coffee quality (46,2%). The second important factor was atmosphere of the store (28,4%); it was followed by location (18,3%) and service quality (3,9%). However, green practices implemented in the stores were found important by only 3,2% of the participants. Revealing similar results in their study on green hotels with this current study, Lee et al. (2010) claim that especially value and quality which are among the components of cognitive image have a positive impact upon emotional and overall image of a green hotel and quality attributes are stronger than value attributes.

The results of path analysis conducted for testing the hypotheses are presented at Figure 2. The goodness of fit index values obtained as a result of path analysis were found as χ^2/sd 3,71 and RMSEA was found as 0,80; GFI as 0,89; CFI as 0,91. These results showed that the model

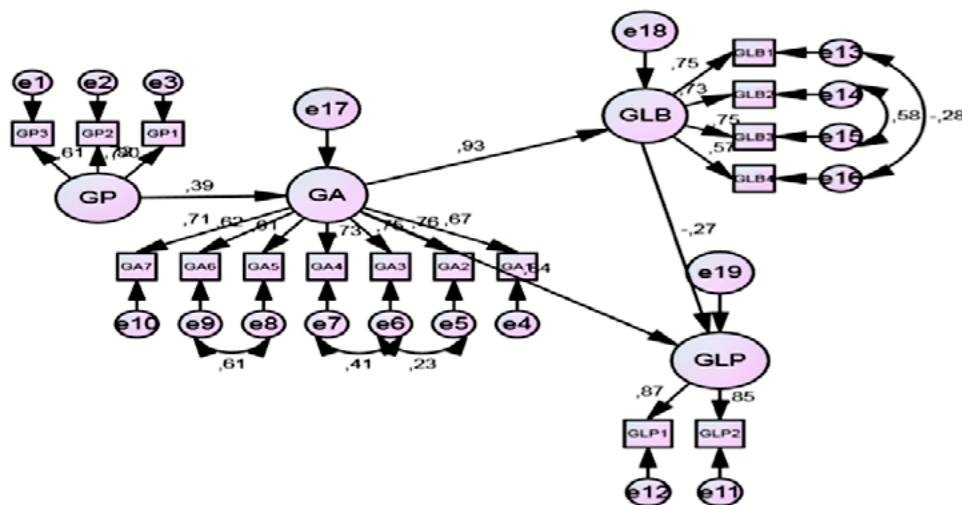


Figure 2. Path Analysis Results

GP: Green Practices; GA: Green Attachment; GLB: Green loyalty (towards business); GLP: Green loyalty (towards product)

was consistent with the data and accordingly claimed as admissible (Kline, 2011). Considering the results in the figure below, it was determined that green practices' effect on green attachment ($H_1: \beta=0,39, p<0,001$) was positively significant; green attachment's effect on green loyalty to the store ($H_2: \beta=0,93, p<0,001$) was positively significant; green attachment's effect on green loyalty to the product ($H_3: \beta=0,84, p<0,01$) was positively significant. On the other hand, the effect of green loyalty to the store on green loyalty to the product was found negative and insignificant ($H_4: \beta=-0,27, p>0,05$).

The results of path analysis presented at Figure 2 were summarized at Table 2. Considering the hypotheses, H_1 (Green practices of stores significantly affect customers' emotional attachment), H_2 (Customers' attachment to a green store significantly affects their loyalty towards green store) and H_3 (Customers' attachment to a green store significantly affects their loyalty towards green product) were accepted. However, H_4 (Customers' loyalty towards green store significantly affects their loyalty towards green product) was rejected.

Table 2. *The Results of Path Analysis*

Hypotheses	Effects	t value	Result
H_1	Green practices → Green Attachment (F1→F2)	6,68***	Accepted
H_2	Green Attachment → Green loyalty (to business) (F2→F4)	22,02***	Accepted
H_3	Green Attachment → Green loyalty (to product) (F2→F3)	3,04**	Accepted
H_4	Green loyalty (to business) → Green loyalty (to product) (F4→F3)	-0,96*	Rejected

* $p>0,05$ ** $p<0,01$ *** $p<0,001$

Jang et al. (2015) also assert that green practices implemented in a cafe have a substantial influence upon consumer attachment. This result is consistent with the claim of Vlachos (2012) who state that green or social responsibility attitudes of businesses are correlated with customers' relationships with those businesses. Also, businesses, which communicate with consumers in a better way than their competitors, can hold their competitive advantage by offering their green products and practices with socially responsible attitudes (Çelik et al., 2016). The results of the current study support the results of previous similar studies. Today as environmental awareness is increasing, a business' implementation of green practices can be a preference reason for many consumers.

Conclusion and suggestions

For businesses, which offer coffee and coffee-related products to gain a sustainable competitive advantage, it is important to create customer loyalty and customer attachment. On the other hand, with the increase in environmental consciousness, many customers seek the criterion of being eco-friendly in various businesses. In this regard, LEED certification system is one of those eco-friendly markings for rating healthier, more environmentally responsible and energy saver buildings. Starbucks Company is one of the businesses guaranteeing its environmental responsibility with LEED certification system applied for its coffee stores. This study aims to determine the effect of green practices on loyalty and emotional attachment of coffee shop customers. The data is collected with survey form from the customers of 3 Starbucks store located in Mugla province, Turkey.

Considering the demographics of the participants, more than half of them are male, single, at the age of 24 or under and have an average income level of 1600 TL or below. This suggests that they are mostly students and hence, Starbucks is now a company that appeals to mostly young students. The most important factors affecting the customer preference of Starbucks are found as coffee quality, atmosphere, location; service quality and green practices respectively.

After extensive literature review, research hypotheses are specified and these hypotheses are tested with path analysis with latent variables, which was one of the structural equation modeling. As a result of this analysis, it is determined that green practices implemented in Starbucks stores have a positive impact upon customers' emotional attachment which has a positive impact on their green loyalty to the stores and products. However, it is also deduced that customers' green loyalty towards the coffee shops does not have an influence on their green loyalty towards the products.

Based on these results, it can be suggested that the businesses, shops or stores adopting green practices can appeal to consumers who have a higher level of environmental awareness. As Chen (2013) claims, if these companies want to increase their customers' green loyalty, they need to invest in resources addressing customers' green perceptions, green satisfaction and green loyalty.

Under the light of the findings of this study, some suggestions can be made for future research and service industry:

- The importance of green practices in supporting sustainable consumption is undeniable. In the presence of conscious consumers, businesses' support for green practices both gain a competitive advantage to these businesses and play a role in environmental protection.
- Green practices can be a significant step towards decreasing business expenses in a long term. For example, usage of faucets and light bulbs that provide water and energy saving might be useful in decreasing expenditure.
- This study is conducted with the customers of Starbucks, which has LEED certificate and offers coffee and coffee products. A similar study can be done in different cafes and restaurants operating in food and beverage industry and the evaluation and comparison of results can contribute to the body of knowledge.
- In this study, green practices implemented in stores are measured with a 3-item scale. However, there are various green practices such as offering coffee grounds to customers for using them as fertilizers for plant nutrition, using systems that provide water and energy saving, using furniture that is made of eco-friendly materials. In future research, these kinds of applications should be taken into account because they can present more different results.

It is deduced during data collection process that some of the customers have no information regarding green practices. It is very important to inform consumers about environmental protection and green practices for increasing their awareness level. Companies and businesses may take responsibility in informing their customers. For example, they can specify green products on a menu card, put info cards on their tables or have recycling boxes.

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