




Article

Are Customers Willing to Pay More for Eco-Friendly Edible Insect Restaurants? Focusing on the Internal Environmental Locus of Control

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Abstract: This study examines the effect of the internal environmental locus of control, which includes green consumers, environmental activists, environmental advocates, and recyclers, in regard to the green image of edible insect restaurants. This study additionally investigates how the green image of edible insect restaurants affects the willingness to pay more. Lastly, this study explores the differences of the internal environmental locus of control, which were based on the demographic characteristics. A total of 448 samples were used for the final statistical analysis. The results of the data analysis indicate that two dimensions of the internal environmental locus of control, which include recyclers and environmental activists, have a positive influence on the green image of edible insect restaurants, and they in turn positively affect the willingness to pay more. In terms of difference analysis, all four concepts of INELOC indicated statistical differences according to age. In addition, significant differences of the mean value of recyclers and environmental advocates were found in age. There were also significant differences in the education level for the groups of green consumers. There were significant differences in green consumers, environmental advocates, and environmental activists based on marital status. Lastly, there were significant differences of the mean values of environmental advocates in monthly income.

Keywords: edible insect restaurants; internal environmental locus of control; green image; willingness to pay more; demographic differences



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1. Introduction

The global population is predicted to increase to 9.8 billion by 2050 and to 11.2 billion by 2100 [1]. In addition to the growing population, global warming, water insecurity, a decrease in the number of farmers, and an increase in pollution are all contributors to the global food insecurity crisis [2]. Furthermore, the production of animal-source foods leaves a substantial carbon footprint that may not be easily accessed by people in need due to their costs [3]. Lastly, the emergence of COVID-19 has significantly impacted food insecurity by disrupting the production, transportation, and distribution of food [4,5]. To address the issues that surround food insecurity, world hunger, and sustainable food systems, the United Nations developed 17 sustainable development goals. Goal number 2 aims to eradicate world hunger, and goal number 12 promotes sustainable consumption and production [6]. Edible insects have been promoted as one solution for the food insecurity crisis, which is due to their high nutritional value, by offering a healthy source of fat, protein, vitamins, fiber, and minerals when consumed [7]. Edible insects are a possible solution to world hunger, and they are also considered to be an eco-friendly protein source, which can help protect the environment [8]. Thus, consuming edible insects can help improve the environment, nutrition, health, and the livelihood of society [7].

Human entomophagy, which is insect consumption by humans, is practiced in many countries around the world, but it is still uncommon in numerous countries [9]. Entomophagy is rejected by many societies, but around 2000 species of insects are considered

edible, which are offered in several countries [10,11]. Eating insects is viewed as repulsive by many developing countries, particularly in the west. However, 72% of Americans and 74% of Indians were willing to try edible insects according to the study by Ruby et al. [12]. The market for edible insects is projected to reach approximately 522 million USD in 2023 [13]. The research surrounding the edible insect restaurants is very valuable to researchers and practitioners considering the nature of the environmental benefits that edible insects offer.

As consumers become more aware of the importance of environmental protection, they are choosing to incorporate sustainable practices into their daily lives, which include the choices of food [14]. Hu et al. [15] discovered that consumers who participate in ecological behaviors, which include recycling, energy saving, and environmental purchasing, were more inclined to visit eco-friendly restaurants. Restaurants that offer edible insects appeal to consumers' instincts of wanting to participate in protecting the environment. Prior studies researched the psychological factors that affect the participation in pro-environmental behaviors. In most models of consumer behavior, it is assumed that consumers purchase a product/service based on the benefits that are directly related to the consumer. However, the benefits are almost never recognized in regard to pro-environmental products and services, or they are recognized in the long-term future. Therefore, the consumers' natural tendency to participate in pro-environment behavior is relative to their internal environmental locus of control [16]. In other words, an individual's attitude with respect to their own control over the environment influences their capabilities [17].

Previous studies acknowledged that the internal environmental locus of control is the most significant factor psychologically in reference to predicting whether individuals engage in green behaviors [18,19]. Moreover, the concept of image has also been studied in the green industry. Han et al. [20] discovered that the overall image in the context of green hotels significantly impacted word-of-mouth and the revisit intention. Hwang et al. [21] discovered the interrelationships between the internal environmental locus of control, the overall image, and the behavioral intentions in the field of edible insect restaurants. The present study further deepens the previous studies by analyzing the impact of the differences with the demographic characteristics on the internal environmental locus of control.

The previous studies explored edible insect restaurants, but further research is necessary to develop a strong and meaningful understanding of edible insect restaurant consumers. Therefore, the objectives of this study were to (1) assess the sub-domains of the internal environmental locus of control in the formation of a green image, (2) explore the influence of a green image on the willingness to pay more, and (3) analyze the differences with the demographic characteristics and the impacts on the internal environmental locus of control.

Edible insect restaurants are not common in South Korea, where the study took place. It is important to study consumer behavior of prospective future customers of edible insect restaurants. First, based on the objectives of the study, the results of this study are predicted to contribute to research by supplying new information on the role of the internal environmental locus of control in edible insect restaurants with an analysis of differences in demographic characteristics. Second, this study expects to contribute to academia by deepening the understanding of the concept and role of green image in edible insect restaurants. Third, the present study contributes to providing practitioners with strategies for commercializing edible insect restaurants.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Relevant Theories

The concept of the locus of control is defined as the degree that people feel they can impact outcomes as a result of their own behavior, which was developed from the social learning theory [22,23]. Rotter [22] developed the social learning theory, which is a personality theory that describes how individuals acquire and change their behavior based

on differences in individual dimensions [22]. From the social learning theory, the theory of locus of control was developed. Rotter's [23] study formed the theory of locus of control and states that a person with strong beliefs can control one's destiny through their behavior [23]. Cleveland et al. [17] proposed that the internal environmental locus of control (hereafter INELOC) is an individual's multidimensional attitude regarding his/her capability to impact environmental issues, which makes INELOC the strongest psychological variable that influences whether people partake in green behavior. Individuals with strong levels of concern for the environment are more likely to conduct eco-friendly behaviors. Thus, this theory helped form the framework for this study.

This study also examined the differences in demographic characteristics. The social theory states that women and men socialize differently, so they therefore act differently in society based on the different roles that they play [24]. The differences in gender based on the social theory have also been studied in consumer behavior. As a result, in general, women care more about others' welfare [25], and are more concerned about the environment compared to men [26].

2.2. Internal Environmental Locus of Control

The locus of control is measured by the internal and external scale, by dividing the locus of control into two groups [23,27]. People with an internal locus of control are individuals who believe they control the outcomes themselves, and people with an external locus of control are people who believe that the events are controlled by outer factors [28]. Several research studies discovered that individuals with an internal locus of control feel that they have more control [29,30]. The locus of control has been used in scholarly research by explaining behavior in the context of academic achievement, depression and anxiety, and outcomes in the workplace [31–34]. The locus of control is also known for being studied in pro-environment fields, in addition to a variety of other fields [16,35].

Cleveland et al. [17] stressed the importance of studying INELOC in the four sub-domains, which include green consumers, activists, advocates, and recyclers, to understand the multi-faceted aspect. Green consumers are defined as “exemplary citizens who tirelessly but with a relatively low profile works towards sustainable development by doing small but momentous good deeds that guided and motivated by a rigid personal ethic and a firm confidence in his/her ability to make a difference” [36] (pp. 332–333). Environmental activists on the other hand are people who take part in public actions for the sake of environmental policies, to influence the political system and the general population [37]. Public actions may include demonstrations or partaking in movements for the environment [17]. The third sub-group of INELOC are environmental advocates. Advocates participate in activities that are not as public and do not require a lot of commitment [38]. Advocates do not influence the general public. However, they attempt to influence his or her inner circle, which contrasts with activists. Finally, recyclers are people who participate regularly with recycling. Recyclers participate in ecological activities that are easy to execute and do not require a large monetary commitment [39]. The sub-domains of INELOC are crucial to further understand ecological behaviors, because they represent different types/levels of internal control in regard to environmental issues [17]. As a result, the four sub-categories of INELOC were employed in this research.

2.3. The Effect of INELOC on Green Image

An organization's image refers to how a consumer perceives an organization or the mental picture of the organization [40]. Image includes the individuals' beliefs about the organization's attributes [41]. The image of an organization separates it from other organizations, and a positive image directly impacts the organizations' relationships with its consumers [42]. Moreover, the green image of a brand is described as “a set of perceptions of a brand in a consumer's mind that is linked to environmental commitments and environmental concerns” [43] (p. 309). Therefore, the green image in the field of edible insect restaurants refers to the perceptions regarding how a restaurant represents its concerns for

the environment and the sustainable measures [42]. Namkung and Jang [44] asserted that green practices have a significant impact on the green image in the restaurant industry.

Green practices in the restaurant industry, according to Jeong and Jang [45], are when the restaurant participates in recycling and composting, utilizes energy and water-efficient equipment, uses eco-friendly cleaning supplies, sustainable packaging, and offers sustainable menu items. Edible insects are established as having a high nutritional value [7], and they are also known for their eco-friendly attributes. Edible insects more specifically assist with global warming, by reducing greenhouse emissions and reducing the costs of farming compared to animal-source products [7]. Offering edible insects would influence the green image because this practice reflects a sustainable menu. The following hypotheses were proposed, which considered the pro-environment characteristics of edible insect restaurants and were based upon the literature review of INELOC.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Green consumers positively affect the green image of edible insect restaurants.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Environmental activists positively affect the green image of edible insect restaurants.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Environmental advocates positively affect the green image of edible insect restaurants.*

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Recyclers positively affect the green image of edible insect restaurants.*

2.4. The Effect of Green Image on Willingness to Pay More

The maximum price a customer is willing to pay for products/services is referred to as the willingness to pay more [46]. This is a construct that has been studied to understand how consumer behavior is developed. Bower et al. [47] discovered that consumers were willing to pay more for new, spreadable margarine with health benefits. Homburg et al. [48] discovered that satisfaction significantly affects the willingness to pay more. Prior studies also confirmed the relationship between image and the willingness to pay more. For example, Anselmsson et al. [49] showed that social image impacts the consumers' willingness to pay a price premium for consumer-packaged food products. Willingness to pay more is also meaningful for research in the eco-friendly industry. Considering the green attributes of edible insect restaurants and a thorough review of the existing literature, the following hypothesis was postulated.

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *The green image of an edible insect restaurant positively affects the willingness to pay more.*

2.5. The Effect of the Demographic Characteristics on INELOC

Do gender, age, or education impact consumer behavior? Previous studies illustrated how demographic characteristics play a role regarding the development of consumer behavior. Gender, age, education, and income are recognized as the indicators of consumer behavior among the demographic characteristics [50,51]. Demographics are also considered to be more important variables in the context of green industries. According to Roberts [52], research that does not acknowledge demographic characteristics cannot successfully assess the environmental issues properly, so the demographic characteristics are an essential factor in reference to understanding consumers' pro-environmental behavior.

First, gender has been proven to impact consumer behavior in green fields [53,54]. Gender also plays a role in consumption, and the behavioral standards based on the social theory previously mentioned [20]. According to the results of the previous research, women are more aware of environmental issues [25,26]. Age is also an important indicator of consumer behavior to research. Age has also been observed in eco-friendly purchasing processes. Some studies revealed that younger-aged people are more willing to buy green products [13,55]. In contrast, some research discovered that older consumers are more active in pro-environmental consumer behavior. For example, Shahsavar et al. [54] discovered that younger consumers were not willing to pay more for eco-friendly furniture

compared to older consumers. Education and income levels were also studied as predicting factors in consumer behavior, and previous studies discovered that education and income levels influence the formation of behavioral intentions [56]. With respect to green products/services, consumers who have higher education and income levels were more likely to participate in pro-environment behaviors [52]. Considering the significant role of the demographic characteristics in eco-friendly consumer behavior, studying the effect of demographic characteristics on INELOC contributes to green research. Furthermore, the present study examined the differences in the demographic characteristics and the effect on INELOC in the edible insect restaurant industry, which makes this study even more meaningful. The final hypothesis was developed based on the extant literature.

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *There are differences in the INELOC based on the demographic characteristics.*

2.6. Proposed Research Model

Based on these seven hypotheses, the research model is suggested (Figure 1).

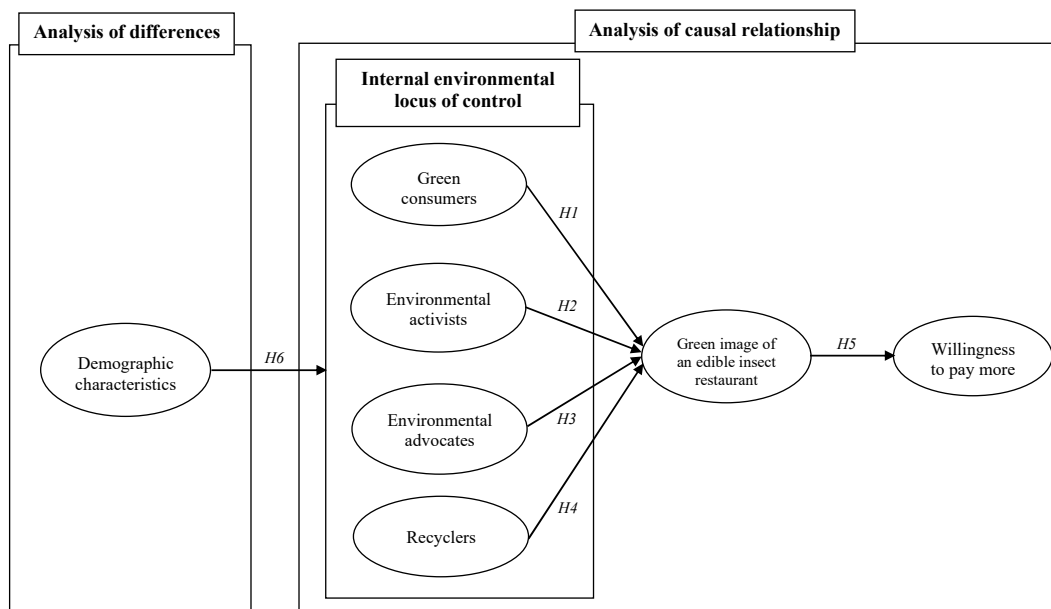


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement

The items that were used in this study to measure the variables were adopted from prior studies. The four sub-dimensions of INELOC, which include green consumers, environmental activists, environmental advocates, and recyclers, were measured using the 16 measurement scales that were adapted from Cleveland et al. [17] and Cleveland et al. [57]. The three items that were used to measure the green image were borrowed from Hwang and Kim [58] and Martinez [59]. Finally, the three measurement items that were used to measure the willingness to pay more were borrowed from Hwang and Kim [58]. All measurements are shown in Appendix A. The constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert's scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

3.2. Data Collection

The present study collected data via an online survey. A surveying company in South Korea was used to distribute the questionnaires to 6479 panels. Edible insect restaurants are not currently abundant in South Korea, so the respondents were provided with two news articles and an informative video to better inform them about edible insect restaurants prior to the survey. A total of 450 surveys were collected and two samples were removed after

evaluating the multicollinearity. Therefore, a total of 448 samples were used for the final statistical analysis. In addition, this study used the SPSS program, including the frequency analysis, principal components analysis, regression analysis, *t*-tests, and one-way ANOVA.

3.3. Profile of the Sample

Table 1 illustrates that 50.7% of the respondents were females, and 49.3% were males. The highest proportions, which included 34.1% ($n = 150$), of the respondents were in their thirties, which was followed by 23.9% ($n = 105$) of the respondents in their twenties. A total of 248 respondents (56.4%) held a bachelor's degree. In regard to marital status, slightly over half of the respondents, which totaled 52.3% ($n = 230$), reported being married. A total of 29.3% ($n = 129$) of the respondents reported earning a monthly income between 1.01 million and 2 million Korean won (KRW), which was the largest group.

Table 1. Respondent profiles ($n = 440$).

Variables	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Gender		
Male	217	49.3
Female	223	50.7
Age		
20s	105	23.9
30s	150	34.1
40s	103	23.4
50s	82	18.6
Education Level		
High school diploma	62	14.1
Associate's degree	78	17.7
Bachelor's degree	248	56.4
Graduate degree	52	11.8
Marital Status		
Single	205	46.6
Married	230	52.3
Other (divorced or widow/widower)	5	1.1
Monthly income (Korean won)		
More than 4.01 million	85	18.6
3.01 million~4 million	60	13.6
2.01 million~3 million	125	28.4
1.01 million~2 million	129	29.3
Less than 1 million	44	10.0

4. Results

4.1. Principal Components Analysis

A principal components analysis was conducted to evaluate the underlying dimensions of INELOC (see Table 2). The results of the analysis revealed a model with four factors that were unidimensional, and the eigenvalue for each factor was greater than 1.0. The validity of the factor model was confirmed with a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value of 0.871, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was found to be statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. The factor loading values were all found to be above 0.744. The factor model clarified 85.757% of the variance, which was composed of 23.055% in the first domain, 21.273% in the second domain, 20.732% in the third domain, and 20.697% in the fourth domain. Cronbach's alpha value for the individual domains were all above 0.70, which resulted in an appropriate level for the internal consistency [60]. The factor loadings for the factors were all greater than 0.745. Lastly, the domains that resulted from the analysis were categorized according to the corresponding measurement items, which included domain 1 = recyclers, domain 2 = green consumers, domain 3 = environmental advocates, and domain 4 = environmental activists.

Table 2. Results of the principal components analysis for the internal environmental locus of control.

Variables (Mean and Standard Deviation)	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance	Cronbach's α
Internal environmental locus of control		2.767	23.055	0.951
Recyclers (5.44 and 0.99)				
By recycling, I am doing my part to help the state of the environment.	0.898			
By recycling, I am helping to reduce pollution.	0.869			
By recycling, I am saving valuable natural resources.	0.855			
Green consumers (5.46 and 0.97)		2.553	21.273	0.909
The sooner consumers start buying greener products, the sooner companies will transform to respond to their demands.	0.876			
The more I buy 'green' products, the more I help persuade companies to become 'friendlier' to the environment.	0.866			
By buying greener products, I can make a difference in helping the environment.	0.745			
Environmental advocates (4.42 and 1.06)		2.488	20.732	0.879
I am able to convince some of my friends to take some kind of action with regard to environmental challenges.	0.891			
If willing, people can generally influence their friends' transportation habits.	0.842			
I am able to convince a friend to change his/her conservation habits.	0.84			
Environmental activists (4.98 and 1.05)		2.484	20.697	0.903
The efforts deployed by environmental groups have an impact on the end result of many ecological challenges.	0.897			
By making donations to pro-environmental groups, I can help make a positive difference on the state of the environment.	0.855			
Any donation to environmental groups helps it attain its goals.	0.783			

KMO measure of sampling adequacy = 0.871, Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$), and Total explained variance = 85.757%.

Next, the PCA was performed to check the dimensions of the green image (see Table 3). The eigenvalue for the construct was greater than 1.0, and the adequateness of the PCA was confirmed with the KMO value being equal to 0.756. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was revealed to be significant at the ($p < 0.001$) level. The explained variance of the model was 84.308%. The factor loadings were robust and exceeded 0.911. The internal consistency was found to be satisfactory, because the Cronbach's alpha value was greater than the suggested 0.70 thresholds [60].

Table 3. Results of the principal components analysis for green image.

Variables (Mean and Standard Deviation)	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance	Cronbach's α
Green image (4.56 and 1.06)		2.529	84.308	0.907
An edible insect restaurant is more likely to have a strong environmental reputation.	0.922			
An edible insect restaurant is more likely to solve environmental problems.	0.921			
An edible insect restaurant is more likely to be successful about its environmental protection.	0.912			

KMO measure of sampling adequacy = 0.756 and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$).

Lastly, the validity and reliability of the constructs of the willingness to pay more were assessed according to the PCA. The eigenvalue exceeded 1.0, and the KMO value was 0.781, which revealed that the factor model was valid (see Table 4). According to the results of the Bartlett's test of sphericity, the model is statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. The total explained variance was 94.869%, and the factor loadings were all greater than 0.967. Lastly,

the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.973 confirmed the internal consistency, because it exceeded the 0.70 threshold [60].

Table 4. Results of the principal components analysis for willingness to pay more.

Variables (Mean and Standard Deviation)	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance	Cronbach's α
Willingness to pay more (3.16 and 1.29)		2.846	94.869	0.973
It is acceptable to pay more for dining at an edible insect restaurant.	0.977			
I am likely to spend extra in order to dine at an edible insect restaurant.	0.976			
I am likely to pay more for dining at an edible insect restaurant.	0.968			

KMO measure of sampling adequacy = 0.781, Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$).

4.2. Result of Regression

Hypotheses 1–5 were evaluated using a regression analysis, which is displayed in Table 5. The green image of the edible insect restaurant had a significantly positive relationship with the recyclers ($\beta = 0.171$, $t = 2.740$, and $p < 0.05$) and the environmental activists ($\beta = 0.198$, $t = 3.219$, and $p < 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 4 were supported. However, the results reveal that green consumers ($\beta = 0.059$, $t = 1.105$, and $p < 0.05$) and environmental advocates ($\beta = 0.059$, $t = 1.105$, and $p < 0.05$) did not have any influences on the green image. Thus, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 were not supported. Lastly, the results of the regression analysis show that the green image had a significantly positive relationship with the willingness to pay more ($\beta = 0.348$, $t = 7.777$, and $p < 0.05$, Table 6). Hence, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Table 5. Results of regression: Effect of internal environmental locus of control on green image.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Beta	t-Value	Hypothesis
H1 Recyclers →	Green image	0.171	2.740 *	Supported
H2 Green consumers →		0.021	0.374	Not supported
H3 Environmental advocates →		0.059	1.105	Not supported
H4 Environmental activists →		0.198	3.219 *	Supported

Note 1: * $p < 0.05$., Note 2: F -value = 17.737, $R^2 = 0.140$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.132$.

Table 6. Results of regression: Effect of green image on willingness to pay more.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Beta	t-Value	Hypothesis
H5 Green image →	Willingness to pay more	0.348	7.777 *	Supported

Note 1: * $p < 0.05$., Note 2: F -value = 60.480, $R^2 = 0.121$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.119$.

4.3. Results of the t-Tests and One-Way ANOVA: Effects of the Demographic Characteristics on INELOC

The t -tests and one-way ANOVA were performed to evaluate the differences in INELOC according to the demographic characteristics of the consumers (see Table 7). The results of the t -tests in the gender category show significant differences for all four sub-dimensions of INELOC. The results of the one-way ANOVA show significant differences in the age groups for the recyclers and the environmental advocates. In regard to education level, the one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences with the green consumers. In reference to marital status, significant differences were discovered in three of the four sub-dimensions of INELOC, which included green consumers, environmental advocates, and environmental activists. Finally, significant differences were found in the dimension of environmental advocates with respect to income level.

Table 7. Results of *t*-tests and one-way ANOVA: Internal environmental locus of control on respondents' demographic factors.

Gender	Male		Female		<i>t</i> -Value	<i>p</i> -Value	
Recyclers	5.31		5.57		2.688	0.007 ***	
Green consumers	5.27		5.66		4.296	0.001 ***	
Environmental advocates	4.30		4.54		2.384	0.018 **	
Environmental activists	4.79		5.17		3.785	0.001 ***	
Age	20 s	30 s	40 s	50 s	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	
Recyclers	5.31	5.36	5.50	5.70	3.019	0.030 **	
Green consumers	5.35	5.41	5.56	5.58	1.365	0.253	
Environmental advocates	4.34	4.28	4.49	4.70	3.048	0.029 **	
Environmental activists	4.88	4.90	5.10	5.12	1.555	0.200	
Education	High school diploma	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate degree	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	
Recyclers	5.60	5.23	5.44	5.58	2.076	0.103	
Green consumers	5.60	5.20	5.51	5.50	2.574	0.054 *	
Environmental advocates	4.53	4.35	4.38	4.64	1.164	0.323	
Environmental activists	5.03	4.79	5.04	4.94	1.193	0.312	
Marital status	Single	Married		Other	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	
Recyclers	5.34	5.54		5.40	2.189	0.113	
Green consumers	5.37	5.56		4.86	3.168	0.043 **	
Environmental advocates	4.20	4.63		4.13	9.527	0.001 ***	
Environmental activists	4.81	5.15		4.46	6.326	0.002 ***	
Monthly income (Korean won)	Less than 1 million	1.01~2 million	2.01~3 million	3.01~4 million	More than 4.01 million	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Recyclers	5.45	0.540	5.36	5.53	5.56	0.681	0.605
Green consumers	5.42	5.43	5.41	5.60	5.53	0.525	0.717
Environmental advocates	4.17	4.36	4.29	4.70	4.67	3.358	0.010 **
Environmental activists	4.99	4.87	4.89	5.25	5.11	1.874	0.114

Note: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$.

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical Implications

First, the present study proved the causal relationship between INELOC and green image for the first time. The four sub-dimensions of INELOC, which include recyclers, green consumers, environmental advocates, and environmental activists, were adapted in order to investigate the predictors of the green image. The result of the regression analysis reveals that environmental activists and recyclers positively affect the green image. Previous studies already identified the effect of INELOC on outcome variables, such as anticipated emotions and attitudes [61,62], so this paper presents different implications. Whereas previous research investigated the effect of INELOC on the overall image of edible insect restaurants [21], this paper focused on the concept of the green image as its outcome. In particular, prior studies indicated that the recyclers were not a significant predictor of overall image. These past findings can be interpreted as recyclers not being an important element in the context of edible insect restaurants. However, this study revealed that the concept of recyclers is also a crucial element in forming green image. In addition, the past literature studied the green image of edible insect restaurants [63], but only identified

its outcome variables. While previous studies had only identified outcome variables of green image, the present study investigated its predictors in the context of edible insect restaurants for the first time.

INELOC had a significantly positive relationship on attitude in reference to recycling in the study by McCarty and Shrum [16]. Hwang et al. [61] confirmed that INELOC and anticipated emotions had a significant relationship in the field of drone food delivery services. Patel, Trivedi, and Yagnik [19] showed that INELOC has an impact on the eco-friendly purchase behavior for both individualistic and collectivist cultures. Hwang and Choi [63] proved that the three sub-groups of INELOC had a significant influence on attitude in the field of eco-friendly airlines.

Second, this study identified the positive effect of the green image of edible insect restaurants on the willingness to pay more for the first time. The previous literature emphasized the importance of the willingness to pay more in eco-friendly industries [49–51]. For example, Amendah and Park [64] discovered that consumers who care about the environment are more willing to pay more for eco-friendly travel destinations. Sörqvist et al. [65] discovered that consumers were not only willing to pay more for eco-friendly labeled coffee, but they were willing to pay more when they liked the taste of a non-green labeled coffee brand. Gonzalez-Rodriguez et al. [66] proved there was a significantly positive relationship between a hotel's environmental practices and the willingness to pay a price premium. This means that when consumers had positive perceptions about the hotel's sustainable practices, they were willing to pay a premium to use that hotel. In addition, edible insect restaurants are full-service restaurants with high prices, which are approximately USD 25 per menu item, and they are not like the street food-type restaurants that are illustrated in prior studies [67]. Accordingly, the previous researchers investigated the predictors of the willingness to pay more in the context of edible insect restaurants [10,68]. While their research had already found the positive effect of either a favorable image or attitude toward edible insect restaurants on the willingness to pay more [10,68], this paper discovered the significant effect of the green image on the willingness to pay more, unlike previous research. In other words, when consumers perceive how a restaurant represents its concerns for the environment and sustainable measures, they are also willing to pay more to eat at that restaurant. This finding supports past studies investigating the willingness to pay more in the eco-friendly industry [64–66]. This study discovered a new predictor of the willingness to pay more for edible insect restaurants from an eco-friendly perspective.

Third, this paper enhanced the previous studies by analyzing the demographic differences in INELOC. The concept of INELOC is an individual's multidimensional attitude regarding his/her capability of impacting environmental issues [17]; previous studies regarded it as a crucial predictor of consumer behavior [19,63]. Nevertheless, there are currently no studies that researched the factors that impact INELOC. Saad and Gill's [24] social theory supports that gender impacts consumer behavior in green fields. Previous literature revealed that younger-aged people are more willing to buy green products [13,55]. Numerous empirical studies proved the moderating role of demographic factors in green purchases, e.g., [56,69]. For example, Hwang and Choi [68] discovered that women were more likely to fly on an eco-friendly airline when they perceived a positive overall image of using the airline. Han et al. [69] also showed that gender moderated the consumers' decision-making process in regard to green hotels. In reference to educational backgrounds, the results from the study by Kwon and Ahn [70] indicate differences in the influences of the positive anticipated emotion and the subjective norm on desire between high and low educational groups in the context of green hotels.

Thus, this study developed a hypothesis that states that the differences in the demographic characteristics impact INELOC. The result of the *t*-test reveals differences in all four sub-dimensions of INELOC regarding gender. In the results from the one-way ANOVA, a difference in the recyclers was discovered according to age, a difference in the environmental activists was discovered according to marital status, differences in the green consumers were discovered according to education level and marital status, and

differences in environmental advocates were discovered according to three of the four demographic factors, excluding the education level. These findings generally support past literature discussed above. As a result, this paper presents the first finding of the significant differences in INELOC according to the demographic factors, which included gender, age, education level, marital status, and monthly income.

5.2. Managerial Implications

First, recyclers were the most crucial variable in forming the green image of edible insect restaurants. The emergence of COVID-19 has significantly impacted environmental pollution, and concern about using disposable items is increasing [71]. Edible insect restaurants contribute to environmental protection, but their responsibility for disposable items should not be overlooked. The managers at edible insect restaurants should provide reusable containers when delivery food or to-go orders are served for true environmental protection. It is also proposed that edible insect restaurants should implement an incentive promotion to encourage the return of reusable containers.

Second, environmental activists positively affected the green image of edible insect restaurants. Environmental activists tend to be willing to donate to pro-environmental groups [17]. Consuming edible insects can help improve environmental protection [7,8], so it can be considered that dining out at edible insect restaurants is similar to donating to environmental protection. Accordingly, marketing managers should plan advertisements by considering these characteristics. For instance, managers can plan an advertisement that includes messages, such as *purchasing one menu at an edible insect restaurant is equivalent to donating \$1 to environmental protection*.

Third, differences in INELOC were discovered in the demographic factors, such as gender, age, education level, marital status, and monthly income. This finding maximizes the effectiveness and the economics of marketing. The crucial point of marketing is the targeting of consumer segments by the availing of the demographic information according to different promotional activity [72]. The findings of this paper assist in executing targeted marketing when planning online advertisements. In addition, females have a higher level of INELOC than males do, so edible insect restaurants' products and locations should be targeted towards women. For instance, managers should develop dessert and beverage menus for female consumers, in addition to meals. In addition, managers can plan a strategy to enter a commercial area with more females than males. According to the examples above, it is proposed that, in order to improve the marketing efficiency for edible insect restaurants, demographic information must be considered.

6. Conclusions

This study focused on the concept of INELOC in order to investigate customers' willingness to pay more. It used 448 samples for testing statistical analysis. The result of regression analysis indicates that recyclers and environmental activists influence the green image, which in turn has positive impacts on the willingness to pay more. Moreover, the *t*-test and one-way ANOVA results show statistical differences in the mean value for all sub-categories of the INELOC, which was based on demographic characteristics. The findings of this paper provide crucial contributions for academia and industry. First, this paper identified the positive effect of the two sub-categories of INELOC (i.e., recyclers and environmental activists) on green image for the first time. Second, it also first proved the causal relationship between green image and willingness to pay more. Third, this study has a theoretical extension by analyzing the demographic differences in INELOC. Furthermore, this paper provides managerial contributions to the commercialization of edible insect restaurants. Managers should highlight specific ways edible insect restaurants contribute to the environment's protection for recyclers and environmental activists. It is necessary to provide reusable containers for delivery food and to-go orders for true environmental protection, and to implement an incentive promotion to encourage consumers to return the reusable containers. It should also plan advertisements, including the message that dining

out at edible insect restaurants is similar to donating to environmental protection. Lastly, it was proposed that, in order to improve the marketing efficiency of edible insect restaurants, demographic information must be considered.

Nevertheless, this paper has the following limitations. First, edible insect restaurants have not yet been fully commercialized, so this study fully explained an edible insect restaurant and its eco-friendly role. Collecting samples from real visitors after edible insect restaurants are commercialized will be meaningful for the future studies. Second, this investigation only collected samples from South Korea, so the results are somewhat difficult to generalize. Third, this study only adapted the willingness to pay more as an outcome variable of the green image. The previous literature adopted the behavioral intentions, which included the intentions to use, word-of-mouth, and the willingness to pay more [73–75]. It is recommended that the effect of the green image on intentions to use and word-of-mouth should be investigated in future research.

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Appendix A. Research Questionnaire

1. Recyclers
 - 1.1. By recycling, I am doing my part to help the state of the environment.
 - 1.2. By recycling, I am helping to reduce pollution.
 - 1.3. By recycling, I am saving valuable natural resources.
2. Green consumers
 - 2.1. The sooner consumers start buying greener products, the sooner companies will transform to respond to their demands.
 - 2.2. The more I buy 'green' products, the more I help persuade companies to become 'friendlier' to the environment.
 - 2.3. By buying greener products, I can make a difference in helping the environment.
3. Environmental advocates
 - 3.1. I am able to convince some of my friends to take some kind of action with regards to environmental challenges.
 - 3.2. If willing, people can generally influence their friends' transportation habits.
 - 3.3. I am able to convince a friend to change his/her conservation habits.
4. Environmental activists
 - 4.1. The efforts deployed by environmental groups have an impact on the end result of many ecological challenges.
 - 4.2. By making donations to pro-environmental groups, I can help make a positive difference on the state of the environment.
 - 4.3. Any donation to environmental groups helps it attain its goals.
5. Green image
 - 5.1. An edible insect restaurant is more likely to have a strong environmental reputation.
 - 5.2. An edible insect restaurant is more likely to solve environmental problems.
 - 5.3. An edible insect restaurant is more likely to be successful about its environmental protection.

6. Willingness to pay more
 - 6.1. It is acceptable to pay more for dining at an edible insect restaurant.
 - 6.2. I am likely to spend extra in order to dine at an edible insect restaurant.
 - 6.3. I am likely to pay more for dining at an edible insect restaurant.

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