Article

The Impact of ESG on Brand Trust and Word of Mouth in Food and Beverage Companies: Focusing on Jeju Island Tourists

Gum-Kwang Bae 1, Sang-Mook Lee 2,*, and Bui-Kim Luan 3

1 Department of Foodservice Management, Dong-Eui University, Busan 47340, Republic of Korea
2 Department of Tourism Management, Jeju National University, Jeonju 63243, Republic of Korea
3 Hospitality & Tourism Institute, Duy Tan University, Da Nang 550000, Vietnam
* Correspondence: leepro@jejunu.ac.kr

Abstract: This study conducted to verify the structural causal relationship between the ESG attributes of food and beverage companies, trust, and word of mouth (WOM) as perceived by consumers visiting Jeju Island. The present study used respondents who understand ESG management and selected a representative ESG management company in the food service business (e.g., Starbucks Reusable Cup or Samdasoo Unlabeled, etc.). A survey was requested from an online survey company, and total 521 participants were selected for the data analysis. The IBM 24.0 program and AMOS 22.0 program was employed to conduct statistic analysis. Present study demonstrated as follows. First, as a result of the hypothesis testing of the relationship between the three attributes of ESG and brand trust, the environmental factor (E) and the social factor (S) have a significant positive (+) effect on brand trust. Second, hypothesis testing on the relationship between the three attributes of ESG and the influence of WOM showed that environmental factors and social factors were critical antecedents of WOM. Next, verifying the hypothesis between brand trust and WOM, brand trust had a significant positive (+) effect on WOM. By verifying the hypotheses, the current study identified a critical relationship between the ESG management attributes of food and beverage companies and customers’ brand trust and WOM. These founding showed differences in the variables that directly affect brand trust and WOM among the ESG attributes recognized by tourists in Jeju Island about Jeju-based food and beverage companies practicing ESG management. Furthermore, it was confirmed that the value formed by these food and beverage companies’ ESG management activities could directly affect consumers’ brand trust and WOM intentions. Hence, the study intends to expand the range of ESG-related academic views and suggest meaningful marketing implications for various food and beverage companies that want to practice ESG management.

Keywords: ESG; brand trust; word of mouth; food & beverage company; Jeju Island

1. Introduction

ESG is a word derived from the first letters of environmental, social, and governance. It is receiving significant attention as an essential criterion for evaluating corporate sustainability. In the past, the value of a company was mainly determined by short-term and quantitative indicators, such as financial statements. However, the importance of non-financial values, such as ESG, is increasing because of the global climate change crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic [1]. Therefore, previous studies related to ESG have verified that companies following ESG management can increase efficiency and positively affect asset returns [2]. In addition, Laurence Douglas Fink (CEO of BlackRock, the largest asset management company in the world) delivered a letter to companies subject to asset management in 2021 titled “Corporate ESG management is no longer an option,” and ESG has emerged as the most critical issue for companies globally. [3]. The evaluation of ESG factors is emerging as a major criterion for ensuring a company’s long-term value and sustainability when a company’s financial performance and profits, Accordingly, ESG management
in various fields is considered an essential management strategy for companies that want to achieve sustainability in terms of environment, society, and governance [4]. Therefore, various industry have more focused on ESG (environmental, social, and governance) management because ESG has become an important evaluation criterion for corporate ethical management. [5,6]. However, previous studies related ESG theory have paid attention to determine financial performance and stock value of the companies [5,7], and a few study that concentrated on consumer behavior and perception have rarely conducted in foodservice sector. To apply the ESG framework to consumer research, present study try to extant literature has rarely explored how tourists’ ESG perception affects consumers’ assessment of the beverage business field.

Interest in ESG is continuously increasing in various domestic industries. For example, domestic global companies, such as Samsung, SK, Hyundai, Kia, Hanwha, and POSCO, are actively considering ESG management as a survival strategy, focusing on new and renewable energy development, and expansion of the use of electric vehicles [4]. ESG directly impacts corporate value, and ESG is recognized as a core value directly related to companies’ long-term survival and prosperity. In particular, the government of Jeju Island, which is the only island in the world to have won three crowns in the UNESCO natural science field, is showing significant interest in ESG management related to environmental preservation. According to data from the Korea Tourism Data Lab, furthermore, out of the expenses spent by tourists who visited Jeju this year, food and beverage consumption accounted for the highest portion at 41.3%, making food and beverage tourism a very important industry for the Jeju tourism industry.

The importance of corporate ESG management is continuously reported in industry and academia. Jones [8] argued that a company’s ethical behavior increases its competitiveness by establishing a positive and sustainable relationship with its stakeholders. Rezaee [9] argued that a company could increase its sustainability by considering financial value and non-financial characteristics, such as ESG. In addition, Kang & Jung [10] emphasized that ESG activities can significantly affect companies with good transparency. Studies on ESG management centered on Jeju have also been reported. For example, Shin & Hong [11] studied the impact of social responsibility activities of lodging companies on Jeju Island on business performance, and Ha [12] demonstrated the importance of mid-priced hotel ESG management on revisit intention among customers using mid-price hotels in Jeju Island.

Although various studies have been conducted on the use of ESG across diverse fields, studies have primarily focused on the relationship between ESG and corporate financial performance, ESG performance indicators for investment decision-making, and the perspective of ESG management and marketing. In particular, research on food and beverage companies practicing ESG management is minimal, and such research with Jeju Island tourists as study subjects has not yet been reported. Therefore, the main research question of this study is to find out how the elements of ESG management for food and beverage companies mainly used by tourists visiting Jeju Island affect the brand trust as well as word of mouth intention. Hence, this study aims to verify the structural causal relationship between the ESG attributes of food and beverage companies, trust, and word of mouth (WOM) as perceived by consumers visiting Jeju Island.

Therefore, the originality of this study is as follows. Current study not only examine the effect of ESG management on beverage customers’ reaction but also identify critical elements that influence perceptions of brand trust and word of mouth about the companies. In addition, present study is able to contribute to the literature by ensuring the explanatory power of ESG theory in the food service field especially in beverage industry as perceived by Jeju Island tourists.

In scope of the above mentioned, these research questions have been set:

(1) Is ESG appropriate for the consumer perception in the beverage business context?
(2) Can this study contribute to develop business guideline by applying ESG concept according to examine tourists perception?
In sum, the study intends to expand the range of ESG-related academic views and suggest meaningful marketing implications for various food and beverage companies that want to practice ESG management. A review of literature on ESG management, and hypotheses among constructs (ESG, brand trust, and Word of mouth) will be presented in the literature review.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. ESG

ESG was first reported in “Who Cares Wins—Connecting Financial Markets to a Changing World,” published by the 2004 UN Global Compact. This report emphasized that a systematic response to non-financial factors is also essential for a company to achieve sustainable growth. In 2006, the United Nations Environment Program Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), an organization affiliated with the United Nations, reported that corporate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues affect investment performance, and the ESG factors must be considered essential when selecting a company. After this, the ISO (International Standardization Organization) developed “ISO 26000:2010—Guidance on social responsibility” and emphasized ESG management as an international standard for social responsibility.

ESG is composed of three elements, the first of which, the environment (E), is the most important [13]. Environmental factors refer to activities that benefit the natural ecological environment surrounding the company and are related to climate change and carbon emissions, environmental pollution, environmental regulation, ecosystems and biodiversity, resource and waste management, energy efficiency, responsible purchasing and procurement, etc. [1,14]. In particular, the rapid progress of environmental pollution and global warming after industrialization has gained attention, so many companies are carrying out various activities to reduce carbon emissions from business [15,16]. Kim, Kim, & Huh [17] empirically demonstrated the structural relationship between ESG management, customer satisfaction, and financial performance by focusing on the mediating effect of customer satisfaction between ESG management and financial performance. The study found that environment (E) and social responsibility (S) have a direct impact on customer satisfaction, and environment (E) has the most significant impact on customer satisfaction. Second, society (S) refers to activities that benefit society or people [14]. Specifically, this includes social factors related to customer satisfaction, data protection and privacy, community relations, supply chain management, worker safety, and so on. Therefore, these factors are referred to as the activities performed to meet social obligations as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Most CSR-related studies investigate activities carried out by organizations and companies out of concern for the community and shareholders [2], that is, responsibility to society beyond profit maximization [18]. Previous studies verified that these social activities of companies positively affect performance improvement by enhancing the company’s image, which can positively impact society [19]. The last element of ESG is governance (G), which consists of items related to internal decision-making, not external activities [14]. In various industries, including academia, governance (G) has been also estimated as a key element of ESG management as well as environmental factors (E) and social factors (S).

Prior research on ESG in the hospitality industry demonstrated that ESG and corporate value are closely related, and a company’s ESG activities can directly impact corporate value. For example, Lee [20] verified that ESG management activities of domestic golf course companies have a positive (+) and direct effect on corporate image. In addition, Ha [12] confirmed that ESG activities from mid- to low-priced hotels had a positive (+) effect on revisit intentions in South Korea. Furthermore, Moon, Tang, & Lee [21] confirmed that ESG factors could directly or indirectly affect brand trust and repurchase intention for Starbucks. Food and beverage companies also have a significant interest in ESG management, and previous studies have verified the influence relationships among ESG factors, corporate values, trust, and behavioral intentions. However, studies on visitors to specific tourist
areas centering on food and beverage companies are still very lacking. Hence, this study tries to identify the relationship between ESG factors, brand trust, and WOM as perceived by food and beverage equipment companies targeting Jeju Island visitors.

2.2. Brand Trust

Trust has consistently received much attention from scholars in many fields, such as psychology, sociology, economics, and management or marketing. Although this ongoing interest has added structural richness to the concept of trust, it has made it difficult to find consensus about the nature of the concept. A careful review of the literature shows that the most important definitions of trust are confident expectations and risk factors [22]. In other words, trust is defined not as fear of something but as the conviction that you will find what you want from another person [23].

According to Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh [24], trust refers to the expectation that people want to cooperate and fulfill their duties and obligations in relationships. Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp [25] defined trust as the belief in mutual benefit among consumers. Tseng & Fogg [26] defined trust as “believability.” Based on various scholars’ definitions of trust, trust can generally be referred to as “belief,” which is beneficial when any goods or services are exchanged by the company [27].

Trusting a brand is based on experiencing it [28]. Therefore, brand trust is influenced by consumer evaluation based on direct contact with the brand (e.g., trial, use, consumer satisfaction) and indirect contact (advertising, WOM, brand reputation) [29,30]. In particular, consumption experience is more relevant and important for trust than other contacts with brands [28]. According to Dwyer et al. [24] and Krishnan [30], consumption experiences are more self-related and create associations and emotions that are more reliably linked to brands because brand trust evolves steadily from past experiences or previous interactions [31].

Hence, brand trust is crucial for successful marketing. Dwyer et al. [24] said that brand trust can reduce consumers’ perception of risk or uncertainty about products or services provided by companies and that it affects future purchase intentions. Moreover, Swan & Nolan [32] emphasized that brand trust is important in maintaining long-term consumer relationships in corporate marketing. After all, brand trust serves as a kind of glue that successfully maintains the relationship between a company and customers [33], and it is an important element that can develop customer loyalty [34]. Several studies have recently reported that a company’s ESG activities can directly impact corporate value. For example, Baek [35] focused on corporate social contribution activities and verified the impact of these social contribution activities on corporate trust and brand image. According to the research results, corporate social contribution activities positively affected trust, and trust significantly affected brand image and intention to pay more. In addition, Huo, Hameed, Zhang, Bin Mohd Ali, & Amri Nik Hashim [36] identified the relationships among CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), brand trust, and brand loyalty by demonstrating the mediating role of brand trust. The study found that corporate social responsibility significantly affects consumers’ long-term purchase intention, and brand trust and loyalty effectively mediate between CSR and sustainable purchase intention and between CSR and green innovation performance. Furthermore, Lim & Kim [37] identified the airline’s eco-friendly management and social responsibility as a measurement dimension from the ESG perspective—which is emerging as an essential element of corporate management worldwide—to determine the causal relationship between the airline’s brand attitude and trust level perceived by consumers. Lee [20] reported that ESG management activities of domestic golf course companies positively (+) affect corporate image. Ha [12] reported that hotels’ ESG activities positively (+) affect consumers’ revisit intentions. Tran Van Anh [38] studied the impact of ESG on consumers’ purchase and recommendation intentions and identified that the company’s positive and negative ESG information increases and decreases, respectively, consumers’ purchase intentions and recommendation intentions.
Although previous studies identified the relationship between ESG or CSR concept and brand and behavioral intention, a few study that conducted the relationship between customer-based brand equity and sustainable purchase intentions as regards ESG management attributes of food and beverage companies has barely been reported [39–41]. For example, Majerova et al. [39] and Lăzăroiu et al. [41] identified the phenomenon of brand loyalty which are relevant to sustainable brand management of alimentary goods. Hence, the study confirmed that components of brand value sources do not vary when comparing brands and those without loyal consumers, and suggested that the theory and practice of sustainable brand management need to formulate for alimentary goods. In addition, Lăzăroiu et al. [41] verified that trust and purchase intention are significantly linked each other when customers make a decision on social commerce platform.

In sum, previous studies related to ESG verify the potential utility of ESG in the analysis from the consumer’s point of view, which scholars have not thoroughly reviewed in the past. In addition, previous studies have identified that companies’ ESG, CSR, and eco-friendly management are directly related to their brand trust. Therefore, this study established the following hypotheses, focusing on the causal relationship between ESG management and brand trust in food and beverage companies.

**Hypothesis 1.** ESG management will have a positive impact on brand trust.

**Hypothesis 1-1.** Environmental element will significantly impact brand trust.

**Hypothesis 1-2.** Social element will significantly impact brand trust.

**Hypothesis 1-3.** Governance element will significantly impact brand trust.

### 2.3. Word of Mouth

There is a difference between oral WOM and eWOM (electronic word of mouth): oral WOM usually occurs between two people or small groups. Although the strength of the relationship between sender and receiver may be weaker for eWOM, it can span multiple senders and receivers [42]. In addition, research has shown that information is delivered in a less biased way to the recipient because eWOM involves different opinions together on the same web page [43]. In the 1990s, technological innovations changed people’s daily lives, leading to the implementation of the World Wide Web and the birth of Google. These tools became a stepping-stone for eWOM [44]. Goldsmith & Horowitz [45] and Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler [46] reported that eWOM is communication via the internet. As such, the concept of WOM is continuously expanding in response to technological changes.

Previous studies researched the effect of perceived suitability for ESG on WOM intention. For example, Lim et al. [37] studied the impact of travelers’ evaluations of golf resort eco-friendly service quality on satisfaction, WOM intention, and revisit intention, and the eco-friendly service quality positively affected the image of travelers and word-of-mouth and revisit intention. Kim, Choi, & Kim [47] identified the mediating effects of motivation and authenticity between perceived compatibility of CSR and WOM. This study reported that if a company’s CSR activities are appropriate, customers’ positive WOM intention increases. Park, Lee, Yoo, & Hyun [48] demonstrated the impact of word-of-mouth and purchase intentions for public interest marketing products through consumers’ trust in companies. The study reported that consumers’ positive perceptions could be improved through the company’s actual public interest activities, and consumer trust could also be developed according to social contribution marketing. Similarly, Park [49] identified the influence of the suitability of CSR activities and business contents of companies on attitudes toward companies and WOM intentions based on the persuasion knowledge model. In addition, Kim, Jeong, & Park [50] evaluated the ESG activities of companies. They found that among the elements of ESG, the more positive the evaluation of environment (E) and society (S), the more positive the effect on WOM and continued use intention among people.
who experienced regular food delivery through a subscription service. In this way, the following hypotheses were established according to previous findings that ESG, CSR, and eco-friendly management of companies can positively affect consumers’ WOM intention.

**Hypothesis 2.** *ESG management will play a positive influence on WOM intention.*

**Hypothesis 2-1.** *Environmental element will significantly impact WOM intention.*

**Hypothesis 2-2.** *Social element will significantly impact WOM intention.*

**Hypothesis 2-3.** *Governance element will significantly impact WOM intention.*

Lee [51] studied the effects of brand emotion and brand trust on brand WOM brand loyalty in the mobile SNS environment. This study verified that brand trust and brand emotion had a significant effect on brand WOM. In addition, Lee & Min [52] conducted a study to verify the mediating effect of effort saving and brand trust on the relationship between brand authenticity, WOM, and purchase intention. The results found that brand trust can be formed when consumers consider a brand highly authentic, which increased WOM and purchase intention. Lee, Kim, & Kim [53] examined the relationships among airline brand evidence, brand value, brand trust, brand attitude, and WOM intention. The study demonstrated that brand trust significantly influenced brand attitude and WOM intention. Furthermore, Bae [54] conducted a study to identify the effects of perceived risk of online restaurants on brand trust, value, and WOM effect. The results showed that perceived risk of online restaurants had a negative effect on brand trust, and brand trust had a significant effect on WOM. Yu [55] studied the relationship between perceived brand authenticity, brand trust, customer satisfaction, and WOM intention as perceived by coffee shop consumers. This study also found that brand trust was a critical antecedent of customer satisfaction and WOM. Therefore, this study established the following hypotheses based on the previous research (Figure 1).

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**Figure 1.** Research Model.
Hypothesis 3. Brand trust will play a positive influence on WOM intention.

3. Methodology
3.1. Measurement Items

A self-administrated questionnaire consisting of six sections was designed for this study. All questionnaires in Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 measure responses with a 7-point Likert-type scale for estimating the major elements (ESG, brand trust, and WOM). To evaluate ESG factors, the current study adopted 13 items (four items from environmental, four items from social, and five items from governance) from Chang, Yeh, & Li [56], Güner [16], Gillan et al. [2], and Ha [12]. In Section 3, the estimation of brand trust adapts and modifies three items from Dywer et al. [24] and Krishnan [30]. In Section 4, WOM is measured based on Court, Elzinga, Mulder, & Vetvik [57] and Kim et al. [50]. The final section of the questionnaire accesses relevant demographic information of survey participants.

3.2. Data Collection

The present study used respondents who understand ESG management and selected a representative ESG management company in the food service business (e.g., Starbucks Reusable Cup or Samdasoo Unlabeled, etc.). A pilot test conducted to identify the adequacy of the measurement by using the data after verifying the constructs of the questionnaires. A survey was requested from Micro Embrain, which is an online survey company. The survey was conducted for about a month, beginning in June 2022; 600 responses were distributed, and 521 participants were selected for the data analysis.

This study conducted frequency analysis of the respondent to identify demographic characteristics and correlation analysis to assess the strength of the linear relationship between two variables and compute their association using the IBM 24.0 program. In addition, the AMOS 22.0 program was employed to conduct confirmatory factor analysis and verify model fit of the proposed hypotheses.

The current study employed Cronbach’s alpha to estimate the reliability of all measurements using recommended cut-off point of 0.70, indicating internal consistency [58]. After confirming the internal consistency of the measurements, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to ensure whether the observed variables reflected the hypothesized latent constructs using a covariance matrix because the calculation of composite reliability means the measurements’ reliability. In addition, this study verified the convergent and discriminate validity according to factor loading and average variance extracted (AVE) scores. After checking the developed research model for measurement, structural equation modeling (SEM) tested the overall fit of the proposed model and hypotheses.

4. Analysis and Results

Measurement Model

Table 1 shows the demographic information of participants. A total of 600 surveys were distributed online, and 521 respondents were collected after removing incomplete responses. The results of demographic characteristics were as follows. The sample was 50.3\% (n = 262) male and 49.7\% (n = 259) female. Married consumers were in the majority (63.7\%), followed by single (35.5\%), etc. (0.8\%). In addition, age groups were similarly investigated (20s: 20.3\%, 30s: 20\%, 40s: 19.2\%, 50s: 19.8\%, over 60: 20.7\%). The majority of participants were officers (33.4\%), followed by homemakers (15.5\%), public officials (14.4\%), administrators (9.2\%), service workers (8.1\%), students (6.3\%), unemployed (5.4\%), and personal business owners (3.6\%).
Table 1. Result of Demographic Characteristics (N = 521).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characters</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–29</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service worker</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Official</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Business</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measurement Model and Discriminant Validity Analysis.

Table 2 shows the measurement items and factor loading. All factor loadings for the items are equal to or greater than 0.781 and are all significant at the 0.001 level. Cronbach’s alpha was employed to assess the reliability of the measurements before performing hierarchical regression. All values exceeded the suggested cut-off of 0.70 (Environmental: 0.900; Social: 0.888; Governance: 0.921; Brand Trust: 0.862; Word of Mouth: 0.894), demonstrating that internal homogeneity existed among the factors in the present study [59].

Table 3 shows the measurement model and discriminant validity analysis for all constructs. The results show that the AVE is greater than 0.50 for all constructs (Environmental: 0.693; Social: 0.663; Governance: 0.708; Brand Trust: 0.682; Word of Mouth: 0.744), and its estimates ensure adequate convergent validity for the items [60,61]. Fornell & Larcker [61] reported that discriminant validity can be confirmed when each squared correlation ($R^2$) between a pair of constructs is less than the AVE score for each corresponding construct. Table 3 shows that all AVE scores (0.663–0.744) were greater than the squared correlation (0.127–0.658), so the discriminant validity was confirmed. Thus, environmental, social, governance, brand trust, and WOM represent five unique constructs. Last, the verification of the research model fit index was performed. The absolute and incremental fit index verification was performed for the suitability verification. First, the CMIN value was 279.605, the df value was 142, and the CMIN/df value was 1.969, indicating that it was a very suitable criterion. The GFI value was 0.948, and the AGFI value was 0.930, which was investigated as a very suitable standard, and the RMSEA value was also derived as 0.043. Hence, the absolute suitability index for this study model was excellent. Second, the incremental fit index was verified, and all criteria met a very suitable criterion (NFI = 0.964; RFI = 0.957; IFI = 0.982; TLI = 0.978; CFI = 0.982).
Table 2. Results of Factor Analysis and Validity (N = 521).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Measured Variable</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Providing eco-friendly products</td>
<td>0.822</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>Gillan et al. [2], Ha [12], Güner [16], and Chang et al. [56].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effort to save energy</td>
<td>0.847</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>22.91</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effort for Recycling</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>20.676</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concern about environmental protection</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>1.069</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>22.998</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Compliance with the employment law</td>
<td>0.819</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair trade with partners</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>23.063</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.888</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Return</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>0.982</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>21.886</td>
<td>***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community contribution</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>0.952</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>20.522</td>
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<td>Governance</td>
<td>Compliance with ethical guidelines</td>
<td>0.893</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Compliance with the law</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>25.377</td>
<td>***</td>
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<td>Ethical management</td>
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<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>28.228</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliance with ethical standards</td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>23.476</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management in accordance with legal</td>
<td>0.874</td>
<td>0.985</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>29.33</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Trust</td>
<td>Trust Brand</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety Brand</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>20.545</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>Dywer et al. [24] and Krishnan [30]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honest Brand</td>
<td>0.817</td>
<td>1.019</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>21.408</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>0.812</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spoke about this brand more frequently</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>1.109</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>24.589</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>Kim et al. [30] and Court et al. [57]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing positive things about this brand</td>
<td>0.846</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>22.222</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < 0.001.

Table 3. Result of Discriminant Validity (N = 521).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Brand Trust</th>
<th>Word of Mouth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.693</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>0.708</td>
<td>0.682</td>
<td>0.744</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 279.605, d.f. = 142, CMIN/DF = 1.969, GFI = 0.948, AGFI = 0.930, NFI = 0.964, RFI = 0.957, IFI = 0.982, TLI = 0.978, CFI = 0.982, RMSEA = 0.043

Note. AVE is bolded and italicized. Squares of paired constructs are on the off-diagonal.

Table 3 shows the main effects of perceived value and service quality on attitudinal loyalty (AL) and behavioral loyalty (BL) and the moderating effect of service quality (SQ) on the relationship between perceived value (PV) and AL and BL. This process tested Hypothesis 1a and 1b. As a result of the first step of hierarchical regression analyses, PV and SQ were identified as direct influences on both loyalties: AL and BL. In the second step, the results revealed that the service quality at the water park played a moderating role only in the relationship between perceived value and AT, thereby only supporting H1a (p < 0.05) (Table 4 and Figure 2).
Table 4. Result of Structural Parameter Estimates (N = 521).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paths</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H 1-1: Environmental → Brand Trust</td>
<td>0.211</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>2.099</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 1-2: Environmental → Word of Mouth</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>2.063</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 2-1: Social → Brand Trust</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>1.974</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 2-2: Social → Word of Mouth</td>
<td>0.623</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>2.099</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 3-1: Governance → Brand Trust</td>
<td>−0.279</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td>−1.355</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>Non Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 3-2: Governance → Word of Mouth</td>
<td>−0.163</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>−0.708</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td>Non Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 4: Brand Trust → Word of Mouth</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>12.649</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 267.095, d.f. = 141, CMIN/DF = 1.894, GFI = 0.950, AGFI = 0.932, NFI = 0.966, RFI = 0.959, IFI = 0.984, TLI = 0.980, CFI = 0.984, RMSEA = 0.041. * p < 0.05, *** p < 0.001.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

There is a growing interest in ESG in response to global environmental issues, with ESG issues being criticized and supported by industry managers, politicians, and academics. Several studies related to ESG management have been reported in various sectors, such as the hospitality industry. However, previous research on ESG management has been focused on the economy [62,63], hotels [64], and airlines [65]. Therefore, the present study is unique in focusing on food service production sectors, which have scarcely been explored in previous research.

A summary of this study’s research hypothesis verification results is as follows.

First, as a result of the hypothesis testing of the relationship between the three attributes of ESG and brand trust, the environmental factor (E) (t = 2.099, p < 0.05) and the social factor (S) (t = 1.974, p < 0.05) have a significant positive (+) effect on brand trust. Prior research have supported the impact of corporate ESG on brand reliability [66,67], and current study also demonstrated the relationships between ESG elements and brand trust.

Second, hypothesis testing on the relationship between the three attributes of ESG and the influence of WOM showed that environmental factors (t = 2.063, p < 0.05) and social
factors ($t = 2.098, p < 0.05$) were critical antecedents of WOM. These founding have verified the ESG elements can be critical antecedent WOM [44,68].

Next, verifying the hypothesis between brand trust and WOM, brand trust had a significant positive (+) effect on WOM ($t = 12.649, p < 0.001$). These research results are consistent with the study of Im [66], who reported that eco-friendly management has a significant positive (+) effect on brand attitude, and Baek [35], who reported that corporate social contribution activities positively affected trust in the company. These results showed differences in the variables that directly affect brand trust and WOM among the ESG attributes recognized by tourists in Jeju Island about Jeju-based food and beverage companies practicing ESG management. Furthermore, it was confirmed that the value formed by these food and beverage companies’ ESG management activities could directly affect consumers’ brand trust and WOM intentions.

Although this study shows that corporate governance (G) factors in corporate ESG management do not directly affect brand trust and WOM intentions, previous studies have shown that corporate governance (G) promotion strategies and implementation plans are important to develop the profit and management strategy [69]. By verifying the hypotheses, therefore, the current study identified a critical relationship between the ESG management attributes of food and beverage companies and customers’ brand trust and WOM.

5.2. Conclusions

5.2.1. Theoretical Implications

The implications of the results of this study are as follows. First, the study verified the relationship between brand trust and WOM based on a systematic and logical analysis of the ESG activities of Jeju-based food and beverage companies that practiced ESG management. Prior research has already verified the relationships among ESG elements, brand trust and WOM. Hence, this study has academic originality because it focused on ESG attributes from the perspective of visitors to tourist areas that value eco-friendliness. In addition, this study has academic significance in that the ESG management attributes of regional-based food and beverage companies reaffirmed the value of brand trust and WOM intention perceived by visitors. In addition, this study verified the causal relationship between ESG management attributes and brand value. Therefore, the present study theoretically reconfirmed that the ESG attributes of local food and beverage companies recognized by tourists visiting areas that value environmental protection are important attributes that can enhance the value of the corresponding brand.

5.2.2. Managerial Implications

The practical implications of this study are as follows. First, this study confirmed that environmental factors (E) and social factors (S) among the attributes (Environmental, Social, Governance) of ESG management performed by companies are variables that directly affect brand trust and WOM. In this study, environment (E) was measured by active attitude toward environmental protection, provision of eco-friendly products, energy saving, recycling efforts, and interest in environmental protection. In other words, positive brand trust and WOM are positively associated with consumers feeling the company is active in environmental protection, makes eco-friendly products, and puts effort into energy saving, recycling, and environmental protection. Therefore, visitors are expected to build trust and positive WOM intention when a food service company considers environmental protection and ethical standards for the development of the local community.

In this study, governance (G) factors included the following: compliance with ethical codes of conduct, compliance with relevant laws, transparent management, compliance with ethical standards, and management in compliance with relevant laws based on previous studies. However, these standards are not easy for consumers to recognize ethical management or standards for a specific company, such as compliance with ethical guidelines or ethical management. Therefore, even if a company operates its business with ethical standards, it is difficult for consumers to easily recognize this. Accordingly, companies
should make efforts to raise consumer awareness of the ethical management that companies are practicing and pursuing through various promotional activities to raise consumers’ awareness of ethical management. In sum, food and beverage companies are expected to achieve customer satisfaction and brand recommendation by disclosing their business management process according to legal and ethical norms.

Recently, after the COVID-19 was eased, the number of tourists to Jeju Island has increased rapidly. A survey reported that tourists who visited Jeju Island about their travel plans, 74.2% of tourists who preferred food and beverage were the highest. Consumers who are interest in the food and beverage industry and companies in Jeju Island is continuously increasing and consumers who are also interested in ESG when they chose a product or service. Therefore, this study can contribute to provide academic and practical significance in verifying how companies that practice ESG management in the Jeju region according to perceived the value and word of mouth of the company.

5.2.3. Limitations and Future Research

In this study, the following research limitations were not overcome. First, the study was conducted with people who had visited Jeju Island and were aware of the ESG management of Samdasoo and Starbucks, which are representative companies trying to practice ESG management in Jeju Island. Therefore, our findings may not generalize to other food and beverage companies practicing ESG management. In addition, detailed verification that can be used for marketing, such as verification of differences between groups based on demographic variables or ESG-related perceived attributes of visitors, was not performed. Therefore, more diverse studies on the value of ESG management should be conducted.

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