International Journal of Computer Information Systems and Industrial Management Applications
ISSN 2150-7988 Volume 18(13s) 2026 pp. 1278-1287
https://doi.org/10.70917/ijcisim-2026-4174
Article

The Impact of Environmental, Social, and Governance Practices on Brand Outcomes in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: - This systematic literature review summarizes existing research on the relationship between Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices and brand outcomes in tourism, hospitality, and related marketing sectors. Specifically, 19 articles have been reviewed, covering the time frame of 2020–2026 and source data from 13 different nations across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and North America. The results indicate that there is a substantial relationship between ESG practices and brand trust (in 11 studies), brand equity and value (in 8 studies), brand loyalty (in 6 studies), brand image (in 6 studies), brand love (in 2 studies), and brand advocacy/word of mouth communication (in 2 studies). Among the three ESG components, environmental practices (17 studies) are the most investigated predictor, followed by social (15 studies) and governance (14 studies). On the subject of mediating constructs, brand trust is the most researched (3 studies), followed by brand image (2 studies). Brand credibility, perceived ethicality, and innovation performance are each represented as mediators in a single study. According to this review, many Asian countries, including China, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Bangladesh, account for around 63% of the total articles examined. Fewer than 26% of the total articles examined are from Europe (the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Italy), while 11% are from the Americas (Brazil and the United States). The higher overall prevalence of quantitative surveys (approximately 47%) compared to the very low prevalence of qualitative, longitudinal, or mixed methodologies was identified as a major issue. Only 21% of the articles reviewed used panel or secondary data as research designs to examine the issues under study. In contrast, the four additional methods (qualitative research, mixed-methods, experimental methods, and literature reviews) collectively account for 32% of the articles reviewed. We propose the following agenda for future research: ESG communications in the age of technology, sustainable reporting practices, and internal ESG culture, among others, which remain contemporary issues warranting further exploration.

Keywords: Environmental, social and governance, brand outcomes, tourism, hospitality, brand trust, brand loyalty, systematic review, sustainability, brand equity.

1. Introduction

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles are fast becoming a revolutionary approach to transforming business strategy and competition in today's world [1]. For the tourism and hospitality industry, whose businesses are defined by their reputation and guest experience, ESG principles have proven highly strategic[2]. More and more tourism enterprises recognize the benefits of implementing these sustainable and responsible principles to meet regulatory requirements and create brand value[3, 4].

Amongst other brand effects such as brand trust, brand loyalty, brand equity, brand image, and brand love, brand outcome is the most direct indicator of consumer reaction to a corporation's ESG principles[5]. It has become increasingly common for consumers to factor in companies' sustainability, social, and governance efforts before making travel and hospitality decisions [6]. This trend has been fueled by generational change, increased transparency, and sustainability concerns following the pandemic [7, 8].

Nevertheless, current research on ESG-related brand outcomes is far from exhaustive. First, ESG and brand dimensions vary considerably across research disciplines, including marketing, strategic management, sustainability science, and tourism, and there is no unified understanding of these variables [9]. Second, the industry-specific factors in tourism and hospitality require more investigation than those in manufacturing or finance [10, 11]. Third, the roles of different mediating and moderating mechanisms remain rather unclear[12]. Fourth, certain geographical and methodological biases exist[13].

To address the aforementioned gaps in the literature on ESG and brand outcomes, this paper will conduct a systematic literature review (SLR). In particular, a comprehensive synthesis of empirical and conceptual contributions on ESG practices and brand results across tourism, hospitality, and marketing sectors will be made, using up-to-date data from 19 articles, published between 2020 and 2026, and coming from 13 different countries (Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, North America).

This is followed by the literature review, which presents a structured review of the literature, methodology, findings, discussion, implications, limitations, and future research directions.

2. Literature Review: Summary of Reviewed Studies

Through an extensive review of the literature, the relationships between ESG actions and brand outcomes have been established across several categories of companies: food and beverage, hotels and accommodations, airlines, financial services, and corporate marketing. Following 2022, research on ESG and Brand actions has seen consistent growth, with the highest number of articles published in 2024 and 2025. Increasing academic interest in the ESG-brand relationship is concurrent with increased government regulation of ESG reporting, increased investor scrutiny of companies based on their ESG performance, and increased consumer demand for Corporate Responsibility.

2.1 ESG and Brand Trust

Of the 19 studies reviewed in this research, 11 addressed brand trust as a brand-relevant outcome of ESG, making it the most replicable outcome. [9]Tripopsakul and Puriwat found that all three components of ESG (i.e., environmental, social, and governance) have a positive effect on Thai consumers' trust in brands and their level of engagement with those brands. They also identified brand trust as a significant mediator between ESG and engagement. [14] Bae, Lee, and Luan studied tourists' eating and drinking experiences on Jeju Island in South Korea and found that both environmental and social aspects of ESG positively affect brand trust and, in turn, word-of-mouth intentions. [8] Le et al. claim to have found the same benefits of ESG's social aspects for the development of brand trust and subsequent customer loyalty among Vietnamese food and beverage companies. Finally, [15] Koh, Burnasheva, and Suh identified several mediating variables in the relationship between South Korean consumers' perceptions of ESG and their attitudes toward brands, including brand credibility, brand image, and perceived product quality. According to [16] Cevher & Gülter's study, ESG is positively associated with brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand image. Additionally, brand image and brand trust sequentially mediate the relationship between ESG and brand loyalty. Building on [5] Waites experiments, the researcher measured the effects of all three ESG dimensions on the dependent variables of brand trust and brand loyalty, mediated by perceived ethicality. He additionally found that the mediating effect of perceived authenticity was stronger than that of any of the three ESG dimensions when a social ESG message was used. [17]Amanullah et al.'s study assessed the relationship between ESG disclosures and customer brand perception CBP among Bangladeshi consumers through an empirical analysis of a sample of 450 respondents. The results suggest that social and environmental disclosures have a significant and positive relationship with both CBP and brand image. In addition, their research also included a moderating variable of consumers' sustainability responsiveness, which was found to increase the extent to which governance disclosures influenced brand perception, while decreasing the extent to which environmental and social disclosures impacted brand perception.

2.2 ESG and Brand Loyalty

Examining the valuation aspects of brand loyalty (the third most common outcome) was seen in 6 studies. Evidence of a positive relationship between customer engagement and ESG practices was provided via [9] Tripopsakul and Puriwat in Thailand. Another group of studies confirmed a positive correlation between ESG practices and intentions to engage in word-of-mouth regarding restaurants and/or food and beverage/entertainment venues among food and beverage visitors in South Korea, as reported by [14] Bae, Lee, and Luan. With respect to food and beverage businesses in Vietnam, social responsibility within ESG was found to have the greatest influence on customer loyalty, directly via the mechanism of brand trust, as shown by [8]Le et al. Brand trust was also found to influence loyalty among Turkish brands, as evidenced by[16] Cevher and Gülter. A literature review by [11]Zhang and Deng on how firms can improve their brand image and ultimately build brand loyalty through the use of ESG showed four major drivers of that relationship: improving brand image; enhancing trust in the firm brand; meeting customers' social needs; and reducing customers' perceptions of risk. [13] Chen, Ko, and Lu found that the use of ESG had a positive effect on innovation at Taiwanese airlines, leading to the development of brand loyalty and brand value. Using an in-depth analysis of secondary data, [18] Kulova and Nikolova-Alexieva investigated how an ESG (environmental, social, and governance) strategy plays a major role in building trust with stakeholders and generating customer loyalty in Bulgaria. They found that an effective ESG initiative can create value by increasing customer loyalty, strengthening investor confidence, and enhancing competitiveness in a given market when built on transparency, accountability, and proactive stakeholder engagement.

2.3 ESG in Hotels and Accommodation

The research on the hotel and accommodation industry is contained almost entirely in a single empirical analysis and therefore still represents only a small contribution to sector-specific studies. The focus of this research was on the consumers being part of Generation Z within the Netherlands; [1] Tata, Sharrock, and Westerlaken determined that there is a high degree of brand trust developed with consumers from this cohort when the hotel brand contains values relating to the environment and communities, and that those value alignments were the main actors in hotel choice for these consumers. The researchers concluded that authenticity and personalisation are critical factors to this consumer group and that an ESG-aligned corporate identity must be consistently reflected throughout all branding, marketing, and operational activities. Overall, this cohort is particularly sensitive to ESG indicators when making hospitality choices; however, because the research was restricted to one country and one cohort, the generalizability of the findings to other generations or countries is highly limited.

2.4 ESG in Airlines and Tourism Destinations

The ESG research in the airline sector shows the importance of employee-led efforts towards brand outcomes. [13] Chen, Ko, and Lu discovered that Taiwanese airline employees' perceptions of ESG practices positively affect innovation performance, which, in turn, has a substantial positive impact on brand loyalty, brand value, and brand love. The study illustrates that an innovative organisational climate is a major positive moderator of the impact of ESG practices on innovation performance, enabling greater value from their investment in brand loyalty, brand value, and brand love. Human capital did not significantly moderate the relationship between ESG and innovation performance. This is significant as this study adopts an internal stakeholder perspective (employees rather than consumers) and uses innovation performance as a mediating mechanism between ESG and brand outcomes.

2.5 ESG and Brand Equity

There has been an increase in academic research examining the relationship between brand equity and value from an ESG perspective, as evidenced by 8 of the 19 studies reviewed. The study by Wang, Cao, and Cai utilized 10 years of panel data on 126 brands across China and found a U-shaped relationship between ESG performance and brand value, with the level of digitalisation negatively moderating this relationship, indicating that the translation of ESG into brand equity is contextual and situational. The study by [4]Çam, Kocaman, and Özer used data from firms listed on Borsa Istanbul in Turkey and showed that improvement in ESG performance is one of the primary drivers of brand value, with social categories, specifically labor management, human rights, and community involvement, having a stronger influence than the environmental and governance categories. Research by [3]Mingione et al., a study on the world's leading brands, found that the corporate value of brands was positively associated with 'social' (S) performance of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria, but (E) environmental performance and (G) governance criteria were found not to have a significant impact on corporate value. [19] Ma et al., who published research on the impact of corporate carbon disclosure on analyst ratings of corporate brand value and on consumers' attitudes toward brands, concluded that corporate carbon disclosures had a positive effect on brand value when the carbon disclosure approaches incorporated both quantitative and diverse methods. Using data collected from a ski resort in South Korea, [7] Zhou and Zhang concluded that the three dimensions of corporate brand equity, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations all positively influenced the four characteristics of love and respect for corporate brands.

2.6 Digital ESG and Emerging Themes

Communication on ESG and sustainability is emerging as a key area for brands. The rapidly growing digital channels for communicating ESG and sustainable practices represent an important and relevant space for brands to operate in. However, this emerging area has not yet received much research attention from the studies reviewed in this paper. The work of [2] Al-Kenane and Alqathami's (2022) found via the use of Google Trends data, a comparison of sustainable brand search interest in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the UK from 2015-2025, that although the KSA has experienced a significant increase in the number of sustainable searches since implementation of the Vision 2030 reforms in 2018, the UK has exhibited significantly more consistent and sustained public interest in sustainability-related topics. This finding illustrates how the policy context and cultural environment of each country can shape consumers' awareness and engagement with brands active in the ESG space. Further, the work of [10] Fossati et al, who conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with executives from some of Brazil's largest organizations, found that a growing number of managers view the aggregation of ESG as an increasingly important value driver for their brands through trust, transparency, social responsibility and competitive advantage; therefore, the strategic significance of ESG will continue to increase from a practitioner standpoint.

3. Methodology

The systematic literature review (SLR) approach was used in this research to promote rigor, transparency, and replicability by adhering to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines[20]. The methodology of SLR included five steps: formulating research questions and protocols; conducting a systematic literature search; applying inclusion and exclusion criteria; extracting and synthesizing data; and conducting thematic analysis to identify patterns, mediators, moderators, and gaps in the research.

The research was conducted using two research questions: (1) How does ESG affect brand outcomes in tourism and hospitality? (2) What are the mediators, moderators, and contextual variables of ESG-brand relationships in these industries? A protocol was implemented at each stage of the research to avoid selection bias[21].

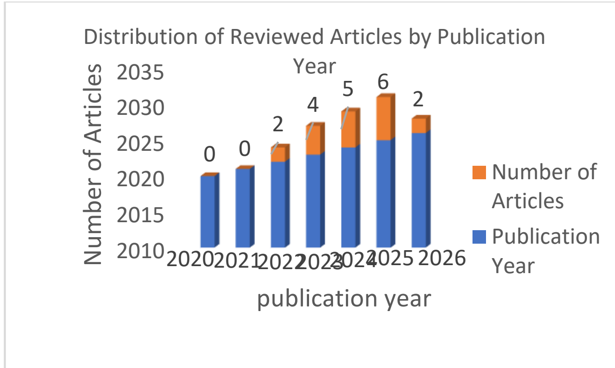
The review searched Scopus and Google Scholar databases using Boolean operators (AND/OR) combining keywords: "ESG" AND "brand" AND "tourism" OR "corporate" OR "hospitality" OR "hotel" OR "travel" OR "environmental social and governance" OR "corporate sustainability" OR "brand" OR "brand equity" OR "brand trust" OR "reputation". Searches were limited to peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2026, capturing the most contemporary research period while encompassing post-pandemic ESG developments. The preliminary search returned 95 records from Google Scholar. There were 112 documents in the Scopus database. Titles and abstracts were evaluated for relevancy. Included were those (a) investigating empirically or theoretically environmental, social, and governance practices as they impact brand performance, (b) performed in the tourism, hospitality, or similar marketing fields, and (c) published in English-language journals or conference proceedings that have undergone peer-review. Publications lacking peer review, those irrelevant to brand performance outcomes, or those that failed to meet the minimum criteria according to the CASP checklist [22] were excluded from further analysis. A total of 19 documents were included in the review.

Quality assessment was conducted using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist [22]. Objectives, sampling, measurement validity, and bias were evaluated. An independent reviewer coded 20% of the items. Data were extracted using a standardized template that included the author and year of publication, geographical setting, industry sub-sector, ESG areas analyzed, brand outcomes considered, theoretical perspective, moderating/mediating variables, samples, and conclusions.

4. Findings

4.1 Descriptive Information of Articles

The 19 articles analyzed within the selected period range from 2020 to 2026. Despite the inclusion of 2020 and 2021 in this review, no publications appeared during this period. A considerable increase is observed in ESG-brand literature during the analyzed period. It demonstrates a growing research and practical interest in ESG-related branding, driven by regulatory demands, sustainability concerns, and consumer concerns about corporate behavior. The year 2025 had the highest number of papers published (6), accounting for about 32% of the total. The next fewest number of studies were published in 2024 (5 studies, 26%) and 2023 (4 studies, 21%). There were two studies published in each of the years 2026 and 2022, accounting for approximately 11% of the total number of studies. This data suggests a substantial increase in the number of studies on ESG & brand over time, with 2024 and 2025 combined accounting for over 50% of the total number of studies reviewed to date. Geographically, approximately 63% of the studies selected were conducted in Asian locations including China (4), South Korea (1), Taiwan (1), Thailand (1), Vietnam (1), Bangladesh (1), and Kuwait (1); whereas 26% of the total amount of studies were conducted in European locations including Netherlands (1), Bulgaria (1), Turkey (2), and Italy (1); while 11% were conducted in America with only two studies from Brazil (1) and one study from the United States (1).



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In related methodologies, roughly 47% of studies have used survey-based approaches, either SEM or PLS-SEM, which correlates well with existing consumer behaviour studies. Secondary and panel data studies comprise about 32% of reviewed studies, while literature reviews and conceptual studies represent around 11%. Qualitative methodologies such as in-depth interviews, mixed-methods studies, and experimental methodologies appear only once across the remaining 10% of studies, thus demonstrating a significant methodological imbalance. The number of participants surveyed in each study ranges from 151 to 631.

With respect to sub-sectors, the majority (approximately 74%) of studies reviewed have focused on marketing in both cross-sector and general contexts, while only a limited number have been conducted within the hospitality and tourism sectors. Food and beverage studies account for approximately 11% of all studies conducted in these two industries, whereas hotel and accommodation, airline, and ski studies account for approximately 5% each. No studies have been identified on mega-events or destination images; therefore, there is a complete lack of potential commercial relevance to ESG-brand studies at this point.

4.2 Important Factors Affecting Brand Outcomes

From a review of 19 studies, we identified a hierarchy of predictors, mediators, and moderators in the context of ESG and brand performance across multiple sectors (e.g., tourism, hospitality, food and beverage, financial markets, and general marketing). Some of the most frequently cited predictors of positive brand outcomes can be categorized into shared themes based on their relevance to ESG reporting (e.g., ESG disclosure) and overall brand performance metrics (e.g., digital/behavioral).

Of the three types of ESG-related predictors of brand performance, environment-based predictors were the most frequently studied, appearing in 17 of the 19 studies. These predictors fell into the categories of policies related to green business operations, energy efficiency, carbon reduction, and "green" certifications. The second type of ESG-related predictor was social, encompassing how the interests of employees and communities are represented — 16 of the studies contained social-related ESG brand predictors. Thirdly, the remaining ESG-related predictors of brand performance are governance-related; governance, relative to topics such as corporate transparency, ethics, and accountability, was measured in 14 of the studies reviewed.

Outcome variables for brands that were studied in the academic literature include brand trust (5 studies), brand loyalty (4 studies), brand value/equity (5 studies), brand image (2 studies), and brand love (2 studies). This indicates the central role of brand trust as the key variable through which ESG policies are thought to influence consumer behavior, leading to other variables such as brand loyalty and equity. The findings on predictors of brand outcomes are presented in Table 1 below, where (F) represents frequency.

Table 1. Predictors of Brand Outcomes and Their

Theme	Sub-factors	F
ESG Practices	Environmental practices (green operations, carbon reduction, eco-certification, energy efficiency)	17
	Social practices (employee welfare, community engagement, diversity, health & safety)	16

	Governance practices (transparency, ethical leadership, board accountability)	14
Brand Trust	Perceived brand credibility, brand authenticity, consumer confidence, trustworthiness	11
Brand Equity / Value	Brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, overall brand value, brand premium	8
Brand Loyalty	Repurchase intention, attitudinal loyalty, behavioural loyalty, green brand loyalty	6
Brand Image	Corporate image, perceived CSR image, green brand image, brand identity alignment	6
Brand Love	Emotional attachment, brand passion, brand intimacy, brand affinity	2
Brand Advocacy / WOM	Word-of-mouth, customer engagement, brand advocacy	2

Source: created by the authors

As shown in Table 2 below, the distribution of ESG predictors and brand outcomes across emerging (developing) and developed (industrialized) countries has been examined. A comparison is made using 19 articles to identify possible differences based on both the themes and the geographical locations of the studies. The majority of research conducted within emerging countries is focused on Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, with 15 (79%) of the studies being conducted in these regions; while only 4 (21%) studies of developed country brands were done (in Europe and North America), suggesting that this is an area with potential for additional research.

Table 2. Distribution of ESG Predictors Across Economy Types

ESG Predictor	Emerging Economies (Asia, Middle East, Latin America)	Developed Economies (Europe, N. America)
Environmental Practices	14 studies (China, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand, Bangladesh, Turkey, Brazil, Kuwait)	4 studies (USA, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Italy)
Social Practices	13 studies (Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, China, Taiwan, Turkey, Brazil)	4 studies (USA, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Italy)
Governance Practices	13 studies (South Korea, Bangladesh, Turkey, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Brazil)	4 studies (USA, Italy, Bulgaria, Netherlands)
Brand Trust	8 studies (Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, Turkey, China, Brazil)	3 studies (Netherlands, Bulgaria, USA)
Brand Equity / Value	7 studies (China, South Korea, Turkey, Taiwan, Brazil)	1 study (Italy)
Brand Loyalty	5 studies (Vietnam, South Korea, China, Turkey, Taiwan)	1 study (Bulgaria)
Brand Image	4 studies (China, Turkey, South Korea, Bangladesh)	2 studies (Netherlands, Bulgaria)
Brand Love	2 studies (South Korea, Taiwan)	0 studies
Brand Advocacy / WOM	2 studies (Thailand, South Korea)	0 studies

Source: created by the authors

The analysis of Mediators and Moderators offers additional insights about the relationship between ESG practices and brand outcomes. The most commonly found Mediating Variable is Brand Trust which was formally tested in four studies as a Mediator through which ESG Practices indirectly affect final brand outcome variables such as Customer Loyalty, Engagement, and Word of Mouth. Brand Image and Brand Credibility/Perceived Quality were each found to serve as Mediators in two studies, respectively, whereas individual studies used Perceived Ethicality, Perceived Authenticity, Brand Equity, Innovation Performance, and Customer Attitude as Mediating Variables. As such, there is little evidence that ESG practices directly cause consumers to develop loyalty or advocacy toward brands; rather, they affect these outcomes through consumers' evaluations of a brand's credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness.

For Moderators, no single variable consistently appeared across studies as high-frequency, indicating a considerable lack of knowledge about the boundary conditions under which ESG practices relate to brand outcomes. Digitalisation Level, Sustainability Response Level, Company Characteristics, and the Social Dimensions of ESG were each only found in one study. Therefore, many of the boundary conditions that shape the relationship between ESG practices and brand outcomes remain underexamined, creating a critical gap in the literature.

Table 3. Mediators and Moderators in ESG-Brand Relationships

Category	Type	Variables Included	F
Brand Trust	Mediator	Brand trust, consumer confidence, trustworthiness	4
Brand Image	Mediator	Corporate image, green brand image, brand identity alignment	2
Brand Credibility & Perceived Quality	Mediator	Brand credibility, perceived quality, brand signal quality	1
Perceived Ethicality & Authenticity	Mediator	Perceived ethicality, perceived authenticity, ESG message credibility	1
Brand Equity	Mediator	Brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty	1
Innovation Performance	Mediator	Innovation performance, organisational innovation, brand-building capacity	1
Digitalisation Level	Moderator	Digitalisation level, digital platform integration, digital transparency	1
Sustainability Responsiveness	Moderator	Consumer sustainability responsiveness, eco-awareness, green attitudes	1
Company Characteristics	Moderator	Firm size, profitability, leverage, liquidity, company age	1
Innovative Organisational Climate	Moderator	Organisational climate, human capital, innovation culture	1
Social ESG Dimension	Moderator	Social dimension strength, ESG controversy moderation	1

Source: created by the authors

Given the considerable diversity in research designs, methods, and research environments, a meta-analysis could not be performed on a formal statistical basis. Future review studies with sufficient methodological similarity must consider effect-size aggregation to enable quantitative comparisons of ESG brand effects.

5. Discussion and Implications

The analysis of the ESG-brand research shows several global patterns. The majority of ESG-brand studies are from Asia, where most research on ESG brands (China, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh) is published, and from Europe, where most ESG brands are found (Bulgaria, Italy, the Netherlands). This may indicate the growing demand for ESGs in emerging economies in Asia and the growing importance placed on ESGs in Europe. Additionally, publications on ESGs have been authored by authors in Kuwait (Middle East) and Brazil (Latin America). Turkey is causing ESG branding to straddle the boundary between emerging continents and Europe, and was the site of two studies in this review.

The Brand trust is frequently the most influential variable modulating consumer behaviour and ESG outcomes in the studies of consumer loyalty and advocacy reviewed here, with 11 of the 19 studies utilizing it as a mediating variable. Other constructs (e.g., brand love or advocacy; word-of-mouth) often receive less attention (only 2 studies each in the literature); this is surprising given their growing importance in recent marketing research. Brand equity or value (8 studies total) and brand image and loyalty (6 studies each) appear to be intermediate-range constructs between the two extremes. Therefore, one area of future research may focus on governance transparency, management ethics, anti-corruption measures, and stakeholder accountability because these aspects are critical to trust in service industries (particularly hospitality, food & entertainment, and airlines).

The outcome of the studies also serves as useful information for practitioners, as it indicates that businesses across sectors (i.e., hotels, food & beverage, airlines, and other marketing sectors) are expected to do so in a genuine way that can be measured, reported to the marketplace using a variety of communication channels (such as: digital media, employee actions, and environmental initiatives), and using distinct branding strategies that clearly establish trust with consumers. Based on the finding that brand trust emerged as the most important relationship variable across all 11 studies, practitioners should emphasize the use of ESG communication strategies that develop consumer trust through: (1) transparent business actions, (2) authentic communication, and (3) credible business practices. Given that governance practices were synthesized from 14 studies and consistently associated with positive branding outcomes, it is recommended that corporate transparency, ethical leadership, and accountability be treated as strategic priorities for businesses rather than as peripheral areas of compliance.

Scholars have identified several critical issues stemming from the lack of geographical and methodological diversity, resulting from the concentration of research settings and methodologies. The majority of the current literature focuses on emerging markets in Asia, while developed economies (primarily North America and Western Europe) are represented by only a few studies each. The gaps noted in qualitative and longitudinal research are also significant, as the overwhelming majority of studies (~47%) use a quantitative, survey-based method that does not adequately capture the subjective nature of consumer ESG-brand evaluation. In addition, mixed-methods, experimental, and longitudinal studies are very rare (only 1 study currently), suggesting a considerable methodological gap that future research can address.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations pertain to this review. The first limitation is that the search is limited to English-language journals, which may omit important works published in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Arabic, and other languages, given that most tourism ESG studies were conducted in non-English-language journals. The second limitation involves the omission of other search engines, such as Web of Science and various industry journals. Thirdly, the selected time frame, between 2020 and 2026, covers post-pandemic ESG-related changes but overlooks early studies that laid the foundations for understanding ESG brand theories. Fourthly, the classification of mediating and moderating variables is likely to be based, to some extent, on personal interpretation. Finally, since cross-sectional quantitative research designs are prevalent in the reviewed studies, it is difficult to establish causal relationships between the variables studied.

There are some research areas that need attention for future study. For example, there is a need to conduct longitudinal research on ESG-brand associations to provide empirical evidence of the causal effects of ESG on brand equity. Secondly, conducting research using cross-national perspectives by examining how collectivism vs individualism, high vs low power distance, and high vs low uncertainty avoidance play a moderating role in ESG brand relationships would produce some contextual insights for theorists and practitioners. Finally, qualitative approaches are necessary to complement existing quantitative insights.

Fourth, governance-related ESG issues require specific attention, namely, brand aspects related to ethical supply chain management, the company’s anti-human trafficking policies, its labor practices, and sustainability governance within the board.

Methodologically, there is a dire need for psychometrically valid ESG measurement scales specifically for the tourism and hospitality sector. The reason is that current studies use ESG measurement scales developed in finance, manufacturing, and consumer behavior more broadly. The creation of ESG indices that reflect factors such as managing overtourism, preserving cultural heritage, sharing local benefits, and environmental stewardship of destinations would go a long way toward comparative analysis. Meta-analysis can be considered when sample homogeneity allows.

7. Conclusion

This systematic review provides a wide-ranging exploration of current research published between 2020 and 2026 on ESG-related practices and their effects on brand image. Based on an analysis of 19 articles from 13 unique markets, it is determined that ESG-related practices (mainly environmental and social) positively influence brand trust, brand equity/value, brand loyalty, and brand image across the hotel, airline, food/beverage, and overall marketing sectors. Of the 4 constructs tested as mediating variables between ESG-related practices & brand image, brand trust is the leading variable (4 studies), followed by brand image (3 studies) and brand credibility (2 studies). Four boundary conditions were identified: digitalisation level, sustainability responsiveness, company characteristics, and an innovative organisational climate, each defined in a separate study.

While this review supports the use of ESG practices to establish strong brands over the last few years, it also highlights gaps that warrant further investigation by the academic community. For example, most of these studies focused on Asia, where the body of work is predominantly quantitative, survey-based research; fewer than half of the studies have used qualitative methods, and even fewer have utilized longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches. Further, most of this research focuses on how strong brands are built through the environmental and social dimensions of ESG rather than the governance aspect. There is also a lack of representation from developed economies such as Europe, Australia, and North America, where only 4 studies have been conducted; therefore, it is important to expand future research beyond just emerging markets.

This literature review also found that brand value can be created by developing ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) related initiatives to create visibility within the travel and tourism industry. The brand value that can be created through ESG will vary depending on the organization's communication capabilities and on the agencies that support ESG initiatives through government support. Additionally, as traveler demand for sustainability continues to grow, especially among millennials, ESG integration will become more than just risk mitigation and an important brand differentiator. The importance of this literature review is that it provides the framework and evidence base for this assumptive area of the ESG.

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23. Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process
24. The authors wrote, reviewed, and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for its publication.
25. Contribution of Individual Authors to the Creation of a Scientific Article (Ghostwriting Policy)
26. The authors contributed equally to the present research at all stages, from the formulation of the problem to the final findings and solution.
27. Sources of Funding for Research Presented in a Scientific Article or Scientific Article Itself
28. No funding was received for conducting this study.
29. Conflict of Interest
30. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.