

Assessing the Tourists' Environmentally Responsible Behaviour (ERB) Selected Tourists' Destinations in Nigeria

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Abstract

Environmental Responsible Behaviour (ERB) are set of behaviour or actions that individuals decide to make to minimize negative impact of activities on the environment. These set of actions remains significant to the contemporary sustainable tourism development goal. This study examined highlights the environmental responsible behaviour exhibited by tourists, investigate the socio-economic factors influencing ERB and the influence of tourists' environmentally responsible behaviour on tourism development in Nigeria. The selected destinations were in Ekiti State (Fajuyi Park, Arinta Waterfall and Ikogosi Warm Water Springs). The descriptive research design was employed using the quantitative research method. A total of 390 participants were selected in all; 300 community residents and 90 tourists using the multistage sampling technique. Data obtained were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Results revealed that the major environmental responsible behaviours exhibited by tourist were; support of local products and services, respecting local communities, caring for wildlife and natural resources and responsible transportation to minimize the adverse effect their activities could have on environmental resources. Only age ($F=1.958, p<.05$) and ethnicity ($F=4.869, p<.05$) influences ERB among the tourists while other socio-economic variables like gender, income and religion do not. Also, ERB significantly influence destination image of the tourist attractions ($t=11.17, p<.05$) and economic outlook ($F=5.23, p<.05$) of the local community through the support they receive from the visitors. Hence, tourism stakeholders and policymakers should encourage tourists to develop environmental responsible behaviours for sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Environmental Responsible Behaviour (Erb), Tourism Development, Sustainable Tourism

Introduction

Tourism, as a dynamic and rapidly growing global industry, plays a significant role in economic development, cultural exchange, and environmental impact of nations that sustainably

exploit it (Sunlu, 2003; Gazta, 2018). The contemporary environment, the issue surrounding tourism development is increasingly emphasizing on the need for sustainability so as to ensure the long-term viability of destinations while also minimize adverse effects on local ecosystems (Puspita et al., 2023; Aziz & Niazi, 2023). Attention of researchers have continued to be drawn to the issue of sustainability in tourism development, which has birthed many topics on tourism development one of which is environmental responsible behaviour. Environmental responsible behaviour or pro-environmental behaviour is often used to describe set of behaviour, actions and decisions that are made by individuals, organizations, or communities which focuses on efforts to minimize negative impacts of activities on the environment. Weaver (2021) highlighted that engaging in environmentally responsible behavior involves making decisions and taking actions that mitigate adverse effects on the environment while fostering the sustainability of destinations. This commitment is evident in a range of behaviors, including opting for eco-friendly lodging, minimizing resource usage, showing respect for local cultures, and actively backing conservation initiatives .

Tourist travel to various destinations and their activities can significantly impact destinations, their activities can have significant impact on the environment, including pollution, habitat destruction, and depletion of natural resources (Steg & Vle, 2009). As destinations become increasingly popular, the strain on natural resources and infrastructure can lead to environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. To achieve sustainable tourism development practicing responsible behaviour such as reducing waste, conserving water and energy, and respecting local wildlife and ecosystem, tourists can minimize their ecological footprint and contribute to the conservation of fragile environments. As adopting sustainable practices, such as supporting eco-friendly accommodations, participating in community-based tourism initiatives and choosing low-impact recreational activities, tourists can help ensure that destinations remain attractive and accessible for future generations to enjoy (Musova et al., 2021).

Many factors have been identified to influence environmentally responsible behaviour of individuals such as age, gender (Mostafa, 2007; Musova, 2013; Widodo et al., 2016), intent (Caringthon et al., 2014), affect (Elvan *et al.*, 2006). ERB are also influenced by environmental knowledge, participation motivation and opportunity (Tang *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, Pan et al., (2018) emphasized the essential role of sustainable tourism in tourism sector development, underscoring the significance of promoting environmentally responsible practices within the tourism industry. Studies have also revealed the importance of sustainability principles in every aspect of tourism which is important in enhancing environmentally responsible behaviour of tourists (Gao, et al., 2019; Belas et al., 2019). The rapid growth of the tourism industry, while generating economic benefits, has also led to significant environmental concerns. Tourists' environmentally responsible behaviour (ERB) can play a crucial role in mitigating these concerns and ensuring sustainable tourism development. However, the understanding of how tourists' ERB influences tourism development remains limited. Understanding the relationship between tourists' ERB and tourism development is crucial for designing and implementing effective strategies that ensure the industry's long-term sustainability and contribute to the well-being of both tourists and host communities. In addition to this, it has been discovered that there is critical knowledge gap on the ERB of tourists in the Nigerian soil most especially among tourists in Southwest Nigeria.

This paper aims to fill this critical gap in knowledge by highlighting the major environmentally responsible behaviour exhibited by tourists, assessing the socio-economic factors influencing environmentally responsible behaviour among tourists, and investigating the perceived impact of tourists' environmental responsible behaviour on destination image and economic outlook of the local communities.

Tourist Environmental Responsible Behaviour (TEBR) and Influencing Factors

The concept of environmental responsible behaviour stems from activities related to environmental sustainability (Zdenka et al., 2021). Some authors noted that the understanding of the concept ERB is highly subjective and mainly depends on knowledge of environmental science of ecology which are labelled friendly (Krajhanzl, 2010) or unfriendly (Bell, 2001). Environmental responsible behaviour refers directly to the activities exhibited by individuals, business or organizations to protect the environment (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). On the concept of tourists' environmental responsible behaviour (TEBR), translating this to Tourist Environmental Responsible Behaviour (TEBR), it refers to actions and decisions made by travelers that minimize negative impacts on the environment, promote sustainability, and preserve natural and cultural resources. It encompasses a range of practices, including reducing waste and pollution, conserving water and energy, supporting local conservation efforts, and respecting wildlife and ecosystems (Saribas, 2014). Such behaviors are essential for the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations, as they help minimize environmental degradation, preserve biodiversity, and protect fragile ecosystems from overexploitation and destruction. This definition provides a comprehensive idea on the concept of tourist environmental responsible behaviour

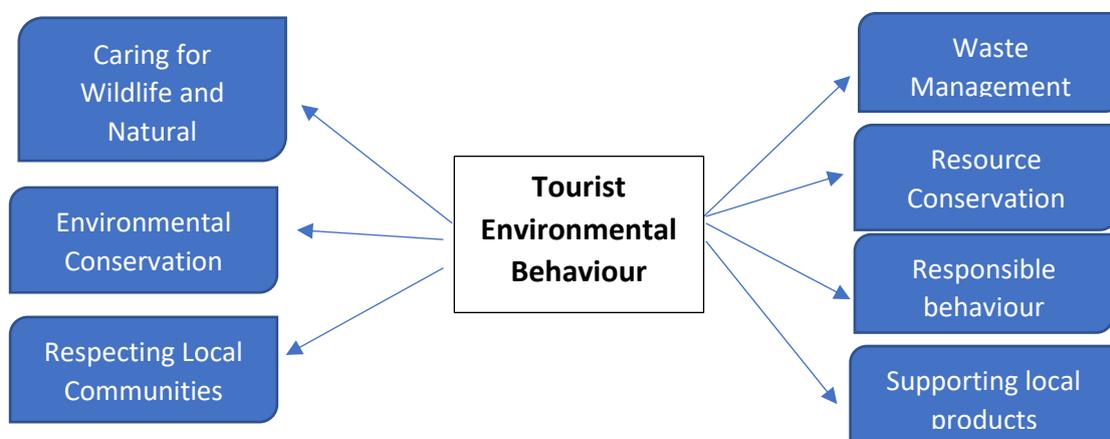


Figure 1: Tourists Environmental Behaviour

Source: Adapted from Saribas, 2014

Factors Influencing Tourists Environmental Behaviour

There are many variables that comes to play when explaining the concept of environmental responsible behaviour. For instance, Nadiroh et al., (2019) provides a comprehensive conceptualization of the term environmental responsible behaviour and factors which was adapted from a combination of some past scholars (Hines et al., 1987; Sivek & Hungerford, 1990). They conceptualize the influencing factors as socio-demographic characteristics and general environmental variables. Some of the identified socio-demographic variables include income, age, education, and stand on political issues while environmental variables include environmental concern, verbal commitment, and knowledge of environmental issues.

However, when it comes to the issue of tourist ERB, the destination characteristics, visit objective and most especially the destination sustainability policies (Glyptou, 2024). Destination sustainability policies are objectives in destination management. It encompasses guidelines, regulations and sustainable development in tourism destinations (Ashton et al., 2020). For the most part they include economic, social and environmental considerations and are made to preserve local natural and cultural resources, support local community growth and minimize negative impacts on the environment. For the purpose of this study, the factors influencing tourists environmental behaviour is conceptualized by including destination sustainability policies in Nadiroh et al. (2019) factors influencing ERB.

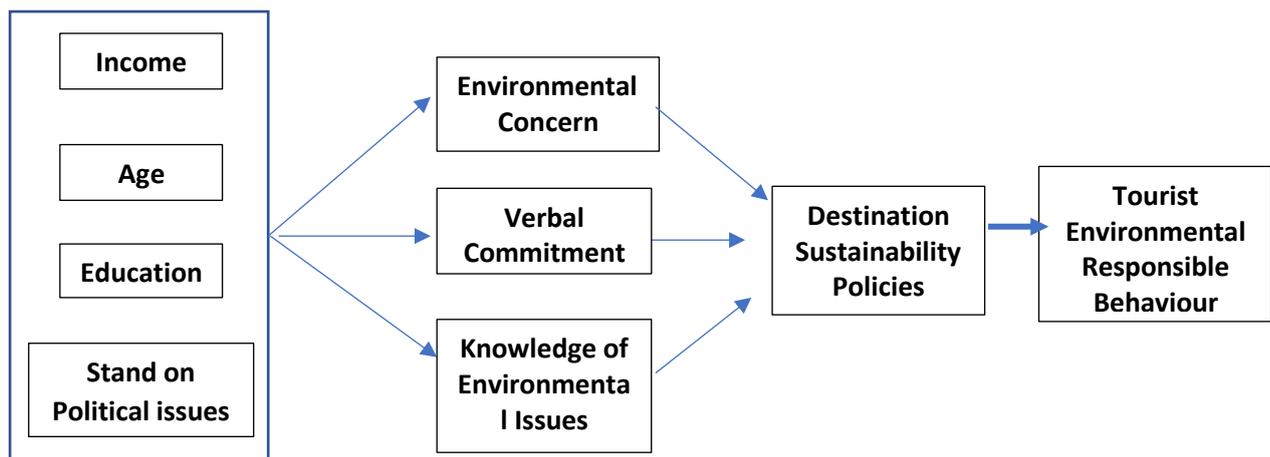


Figure 1: Factors Influencing Environmental Responsible Behaviour

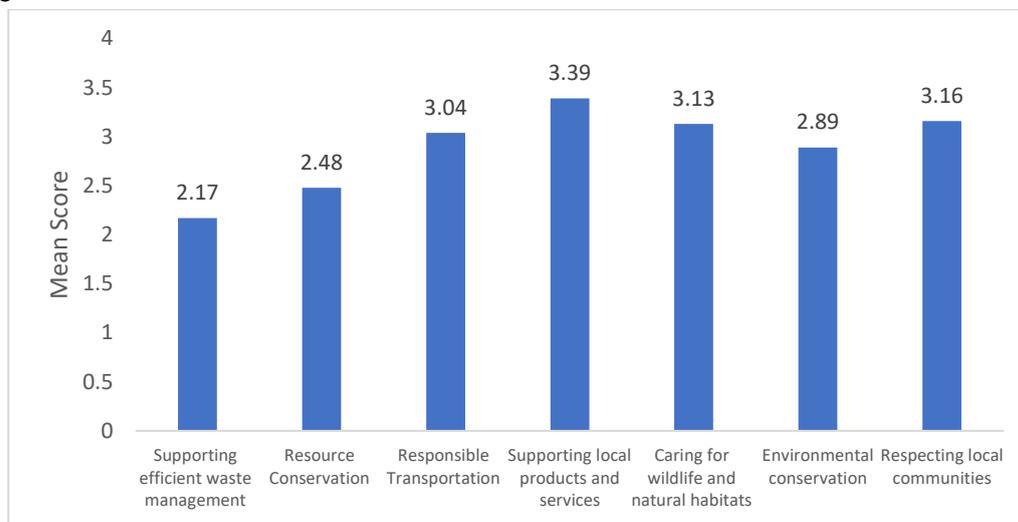
Source: Nadiroh et al., (2019)

Methodology

The selected study area is Ekiti State is Located between latitudes 7°15' and 8°51' North of the Equator, and longitudes 4°51' and 5°54' East of Greenwich Meridian. Ekiti state is one of the states in the Southwestern part of Nigeria bordered by Kogi, Kwara and Osun state in the North, and Ondo in the East and West. Some of its well-known tourists' destinations include; Ikogosi Warm Springs, Fajuyi Memorial Park, Erin Ayonigba Fish River, Esa Cave, Arinta Waterfall, Olosunta and Orele Hills etc. The descriptive research design was employed in this study and using the quantitative research method. The population for this study are tourists and community residents in Ekiti State. A total of 390 samples were selected for this study by applying the Yamane (1967) sample size calculator and using the multistage sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select 3 tourist destinations (Fajuyi park, Ado-Ekiti, Ikogosi Warm Springs, Ikogosi-Ekiti, and Arinta Waterfall, Ipole-Iloro Ekiti), while at the second stage simple random sampling was employed to select 30 tourists and 100 community residents from each of the tourist destinations. This makes a total of 90 tourists and 300 community residents. Data used for this were obtained with the use of a self-designed questionnaire that was structured to cover the objectives of the study. The items were subject to instrument validity was ascertained by experts in tourism studies, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti. Usingest-retest method was also employed to determine the instrument reliability and using the Cronbach alpha, a reliability co-efficient of 0.79 was obtained. The data was collected with the help of three research assistants for the period of 2 weeks and collated for analysis. The data collected was inputted, formatted appropriately and treated

before analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to achieve the objectives of the study.

Results



Grand Mean = 2.89, SD = 0.59

Figure 1: Environmental Responsible Behaviour Exhibited by Tourists

The result showed that the major ERB among tourists are; supporting local products and services (\bar{x} =3.39), respecting local communities (\bar{x} =3.16), caring for wildlife and natural resources (\bar{x} =3.13), and responsible transportation (\bar{x} =3.04). It was also revealed that they also fairly exhibited other ERB such as environmental conservation (\bar{x} =2.89). However, resource conservation (\bar{x} =2.48) and supporting effective waste management (\bar{x} =2.17) were not well exhibited by the tourists.

Table 1

Gender Difference influence on Environmental Responsible Behaviour among Tourists

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	T	p
Gender	Male	53	2.82	0.552	88	.649	>.05
	Female	37	2.95	0.644			

The difference in the Environmental Responsible Behaviour among male and female tourist is not significant ($t(88)=.649, p>.05$). However, the female tourists exhibited slightly better ERB (\bar{x} =2.95) compared to male tourists (\bar{x} =2.82).

Table 2

Influence of Age, Income, Ethnicity and Religion on Environmental Responsible Behaviour among Tourists

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1713.10 ^a	5	236.736	.631	.676
Intercept	2422.126	1	2422.126	6.226	.000
Age	2285.911	3	761.970	1.958	.031
Income	369.253	3	213.084	.316	.722
Ethnicity	3788.404	2	1894.202	4.869	.001
Religion	788.404	2	394.202	1.013	.251
Error	8524.076	374	22.791		
Total	19,891.274	390			
Corrected Total	8,707.756	389			

Table 2 showed that age ($F=1.958$, $p<.05$) and ethnicity ($F=4.869$, $p<.05$) significantly influence Environmental Responsible Behaviour among the tourists while income ($F=.316$, $p>.05$) and religion ($F=1.013$, $p>.05$) do not have significant influence.

Table 3

Influence of ERB of Tourist of Tourism Development

Independent Variable	Dependent Variables	beta	R	R ²	t	p
ERB	Destination Image	.213	.315	.273	11.17	.017
	Economic Outlook	.208	.246	.118	5.23	.039

Table 3 on the influence of ERB on tourism development in the study area using destination image and economic outlook of the communities reveals that environmental responsible behaviour significantly influence destination image of tourist attractions ($t=11.17$, $p<.05$) and economic outlook ($F=5.23$, $p<.05$) of the adjacent communities.

Discussion

Findings obtained on the ERB exhibited tourists who visited the selected destinations in Ekiti state revealed that among the ERB identified, supporting local products and services were the most prominent among the tourists which indicates their preference for contributing to the local economy and community (Puspita, 2023) This was closely followed by behaviours such as respecting local communities, caring for wildlife and natural resources, and practicing responsible transportation. In essence, this highlights areas where tourists were less inclined to exhibit ERB, notably in resource conservation and supporting effective waste management. The implication of this the destination environmental policies reveals that for most of this destinations, there are no impressive sustainability policies that are put in place and well implemented for proper waste management and resource conservation.

On the factors influencing environmental responsible behaviour among tourists in the selected destinations, it was revealed that no significant difference exists in ERB between male and female tourists. However, female tourists tended to exhibit slightly better ERB overall. This obviously contradicts the findings of Musova et al (2021) who found gender to be a factor influencing environmental responsible behaviour among tourists. It slightly supported by the findings of Hojnik et al. (2019), who discovered that women behave in more environmentally friendly way and with more consciousness than male. Although this study does not find this difference to be significant. Furthermore, the study revealed that age and ethnicity were found to significantly influence ERB, indicating that these variables play a role in shaping tourists' attitudes and behaviors towards environmental sustainability (Mostafa, 2007; Widodo et al., 2016; Musova et al. 2021).

Moreover, the study investigated the influence of ERB on tourism development, focusing on destination image and the economic outlook of adjacent communities (Weaver, 2021; Elvan et al., 2006). The results indicated that ERB significantly influences both destination image and the economic outlook of communities surrounding tourist attractions. This suggests that tourists' perceptions of a destination's environmental sustainability practices can impact their overall impression of the destination and, consequently, its attractiveness as a tourism destination. Additionally, the study highlights the potential economic benefits of promoting

ERB, as positive environmental practices can enhance the economic viability of local communities and contribute to their long-term prosperity.

The potential implications of the findings for the field of tourism and practical applications include:

1. Enhancing Sustainable Tourism Development

The study highlights the role of environmentally responsible behavior (ERB) in preserving tourist destinations, which is critical for achieving long-term sustainability in the tourism industry.

By identifying the major ERB practices—such as supporting local products, respecting communities, and conserving wildlife—the findings provide actionable insights for tourism operators and policymakers to promote sustainable tourism.

2. Policy and Stakeholder Engagement

The influence of age and ethnicity on ERB suggests that customized awareness campaigns targeting different demographic groups could be more effective.

Government agencies, NGOs, and tourism boards can use these findings to develop educational programs that encourage responsible tourism.

3. Destination Image and Economic Impact

The significant relationship between ERB and destination image suggests that promoting sustainable practices among tourists can improve perceptions of tourist destinations, making them more attractive.

The positive effect on the economic outlook of host communities implies that sustainable tourism can generate income through local business support, leading to economic empowerment.

4. Tourism Business Strategies

Hospitality businesses and tour operators can incorporate eco-friendly practices (e.g., offering sustainable accommodation and transportation options) to attract responsible tourists.

The study provides data-driven justification for investing in sustainable infrastructure in tourism hotspots.

5. Bridging Knowledge Gaps in Nigerian Tourism

Given the limited research on ERB in Nigeria, this study contributes valuable insights that can guide future research, policy formulation, and tourism development strategies in Southwest Nigeria and beyond.

Conclusion

This study explores the confines of environmental responsible behaviour among tourists in selected destinations in Ekiti state, Nigeria. It provides clear information on the environmental responsible behaviour exhibited by tourist which were mostly; support of local products and services, respecting local communities, caring for wildlife and natural resources and responsible transportation to minimize the adverse effect their activities could have on the natural resources of the destinations and surrounding environment. It was also revealed that the socio-economic factors influencing environmentally responsible behaviour of tourists were their age and ethnicity while other variables like gender, income and religion do not influence ERB among tourists. It was also evident that ERB significantly influenced its destination image through resource preservation and conservation and also economic outlook through support for local products and services. It therefore recommended that tourism stakeholders and policymakers should leverage this information to encourage and

reinforce environmentally responsible behaviour within the tourism sector particularly in developing viable destinations sustainability policies and sensitization of tourists to achieve the sustainable tourism development.

Study Limitation And Suggestion For Future Research

This study explored some aspects of ERB, influencing socio-economic factors and influence on tourism development. However, there was no deep dive into some of these factors while some socio-economic variables were left out. Similarly, on the variables used for tourism development were destination image and economic outlook of the adjacent communities. More research could be carried out to explore deeply into other tourism development and socio-economic variables to get a clear picture of the influence of ERB among tourists.

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