



Influence of environmental sustainability practices on brand image of tourism entrepreneurs in Jos Wildlife Park, Plateau State, Nigeria

Olabosinde Samuel Taiwo

Department of Business Administration
Federal University Wukari- Taraba State, Nigeria +2348034934134.
Email: olabosinde@yahoo.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3324-1674>

Abstract

This paper investigated the impact of environmental sustainability methods on the brand image of tourist entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State, Nigeria. Regression analysis with a sample size of 235 respondents allows the study to investigate the brand image consequences of waste management, biodiversity preservation, pollution control, and sustainable sourcing. While biodiversity conservation ($B = -0.375$, $p = 0.000$), pollution control ($B = -0.277$, $p = 0.000$), and waste management practices have a notable positive impact on brand image ($B = 0.463$, $p = 0.000$). Sustainable sourcing ($B = -0.0167$, $p = 0.003$) negatively impacts brand image. These findings imply that although waste management improves brand image, the other strategies might not fit customer expectations, which would result in a lessened brand awareness. All things considered, the study emphasizes the need to match local consumer expectations with environmental standards. The researcher recommends improving communication plans for pollution management and biodiversity preservation, as well as including sustainable sources in more general marketing campaigns. This study clarifies how best to maximize environmental sustainability measures in underdeveloped nations, particularly Nigeria, to strengthen the brand image of travel companies.

Keywords: Environmental, Sustainability, Brand image, Underdeveloped, Travel companies, Communication plans.

Introduction

Particularly as world's focus moves towards reducing the environmental effects of human

activity, the integration of environmental sustainability within the tourism sector has

grown even more important. One of the biggest and fastest-growing sectors worldwide, tourism significantly influences both the preservation of natural resources and their deterioration (Gössling, 2017; Hall, 2019). This dual position puts extra pressure on tourism businesses, particularly those running in ecologically fragile locations like wildlife parks, where sustainable practices are not only a moral requirement but also a strategic need for commercial survival (Han, Yu & Kim, 2019). Growing global inclination for responsible and environmentally friendly travel is influencing customer behaviour, which is why companies are implementing sustainability practices to improve their brand image along with competitiveness (Font & McCabe, 2017).

Future success in the travel sector depends much on brand image that is, the impression that consumers and stakeholders have of a company (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Keller, 2013). Travel companies that actively adopt sustainable practices can build a positive brand image that appeals to consumers who care about the environment in a time of growing knowledge of it (Han, et al., 2019). Strong environmental credentials help businesses not only draw more visitors but also boost consumer loyalty and trust (Leonidou, Katsikeas & Morgan, 2013; Kharbanda & Singh, 2022). The degree to which environmental sustainability practices directly affect brand image in tourism, especially in poorer countries where the travel sector is still emerging, is still under investigation (Ayeni, 2021). Examining the junction of environmental sustainability and corporate image, one

would find a perfect case study at Jos Wild Life Park on Plateau State, Nigeria. The parks, which are renowned for their exceptional natural beauty as well as ancient significance, serve as the main hub for ecology as well as leisure (Kutzner, 2019). The survival of recreational companies operating inside the park is primarily dependent on the maintenance of its nature reserves; therefore, sustainable practices such as waste management, biodiversity protection, pollution control, and sustainable sourcing are important (Ayodele, Ezenwafor & Esiti, 2021; Çakar, 2023). Despite the importance of these strategies, there hasn't been much research on how they impact the brand image of travel companies (Akinlabi, Adedeji & Adewale, 2020).

As the importance of natural stability continues to grow, tourism companies must implement environmentally friendly operations. Still unknown, though, is the degree to which those events affect corporate impressions, especially at unusual sites like Jos Wild Life Park in Plateau State, Nigeria. Though they are crucial in protecting natural resources and improving travel experiences, studies on how environmental sustainability rules affect the brand image of tourist businesses in this region are still limited. These research gaps necessitate an investigation into how environmentally sustainable procedures impact the brand image of tourist entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of their role in promoting eco-friendly vacations and enhancing their corporate reputation.

This study aims to close this gap by examining how environmental sustainability practices influence the brand image of tourism agencies operating at Jos Wild Life Park. Four basic elements of sustainability—that is, sustainable sourcing, pollution control, waste management, and biodiversity protection will particularly be under focus in the study. These qualities are essential components of eco-friendly travel options that are required to protect the park's ecosystem and raise the profile of travel agencies. Understanding how these actions influence brand image will help companies link their operations with global sustainability trends and give legislators clear guidance on how to assist in the expansion of sustainable tourism, both in Nigeria and elsewhere.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: Waste management practices have no significant influence on the brand image of tourism entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Biodiversity conservation efforts have no significant influence on the brand image of tourism entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State, Nigeria.

H₀₃: Pollution control measures have no significant influence on the brand image of tourism entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State, Nigeria.

H₀₄: Sustainable sourcing practices have no significant influence on the brand image of tourism entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Literature review

Conceptual Framework

Environmental Sustainability

Worldwide environmental stability is defined as the prudent use of raw assets to preserve ecological harmony for future generations. It addresses strategies aimed at reducing ecological impacts, especially waste control, pollution control, as well as animal preservation (Muszyńska & Oladipo, 2024). The concept emphasises the importance of achieving long-term ecological resilience and health through human endeavours' environmental balance. Using sustainability methods can assist businesses and society in maintaining the proper functioning of ecosystems, reducing carbon emissions, and improving resource utilization. Apart from solving current environmental issues, such a complete strategy advances more general social and economic benefits. Growing universal knowledge of environmental problems guarantees a sustainable and strong future for the earth and humans, so including sustainability in decision-making procedures becomes absolutely necessary.

Brand Image

Humans form perceptions and relationships that ultimately define a trademark based on their interactions and conversations with others. It encompasses the combined perceptions, values, and feelings that a brand generates in consumers' minds as a result of marketing activities, product quality, and customer service (Okatta, Ajayi & Olawale, 2024). A positive brand image shapes consumer preferences, loyalty, and purchase choices. Effective branding techniques, consistent messaging, and positive customer experiences help to define the brand. Maintaining customer confidence

and improving brand equity depends on keeping a positive brand image in the modern market, which eventually helps to position the brand and support long-term corporate success (Okatta et al., 2024).

Tourism Entrepreneurs

Tourism entrepreneurs are people or businesses that innovate, run, and manage projects within the travel industry, aiming to provide distinctive travel experiences. The development of tourist products and services like hotels, attractions, and tour operations depends much on them. Travellers who take advantage of market opportunities and meet consumer needs contribute to sector expansion and economic development. Their efforts include focussing on speciality markets, applying sustainable ideas, and improving destination attractiveness. Good tourism businesspeople combine strategic vision, commercial acumen, and creativity to negotiate challenging environments and promote environmentally friendly travel growth. Their activities significantly affect destination branding, visitor satisfaction, and the general travel industry's condition (Ezenwafor Ayodele & Nwaizugbo, 2021).

Waste Management Practices

Waste management procedures are the methodical collection, treatment, and disposal of waste items intended to reduce their environmental impact and improve public health. Effective waste management consists of strategies including trash reduction, recycling, composting, and safe disposal methods. These techniques seek to lower the produced garbage volume, recover valuable materials, and stop contamination. The basic components of waste management

include public awareness and involvement promotion, waste stream separation, and application of efficient waste processing technologies. Using sustainable waste management practices helps companies and communities' lower negative environmental effects, protect natural resources, and foster a circular economy, thereby aiding sustainable development and enhancing the ecology (Chigwende & Govender 2020).

Biodiversity Conservation

Biodiversity preservation is the conservation, management, and restoration of a variety of life on Earth, including habitats, species, and genetic variation. It aims to maintain the ecological equilibrium and guarantee the resilience of natural systems by safeguarding habitats, preventing species extinction, and promoting sustainable use of biological resources. Establishing protected areas, habitat restoration, and policy execution help to reduce hazards, including wildlife degradation and weather disruption. In addition to safeguarding the inherent value of wildlife and natural systems, effective conservation through diversification provides essential health benefits such as clean air, water, and soil fertility. Maintaining environmental balance and pushing for sustainable development depend upon diversification (Ayeni, 2021).

Pollution Control Measures

Pollution control systems are strategies and tools designed to reduce and stop the release of pollutants into the environment, thereby preserving both people's welfare and nature's ecological balance. These initiatives include outstanding plans for reducing air, water, and

soil pollution, technological advancements, regulatory systems, and intellectual changes. Important regulations, including exhaust regulations, address acceptance of greener manufacturing innovations and garbage handling practices. Regularly monitoring pollution levels and enforcing environmental rules, including supporting ecologically friendly corporate policies, are critical for effective contamination control. These projects aim not only to reduce pollution sources and their consequences, thereby improving natural quality, but also to contribute to public health and long-term ecological preservation. Incorporating pollution reduction into business activities and policies will help to create a harmonious and sustainable environment (Cheung & Li, 2019).

Sustainable Sourcing

An appropriate purchase encompasses the entire process of purchasing goods, including associated activities, with a constant focus on the social, financial, and environmental impacts across the entire logistics network. Consequently, it entails selecting commodities and vendors that adhere to natural responsibility, ethical labour standards, and natural economics principles. Responsible sources encourage fair trade, ensure future supply accessibility, and seek to reduce natural impact. Important habits include assessing suppliers for their environmental performance, giving recycled and renewable resources top priority, and encouraging openness and responsibility. Organisations can reduce negative environmental effects, increase social responsibility, and help achieve sustainable

development goals by incorporating sustainability into procurement decisions, thereby strengthening their overall brand reputation and operational resilience (Zhang, Xie & Sikveland 2020).

Theoretical Framework

In his classic work "Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach (1984)," R. Edward Freeman first put out the concept of stakeholders. According to its theoretical terms, the sustainability of every enterprise depends on its capability to properly handle its contacts with a wide spectrum of all parties involved, including customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the surroundings, not only on its potential to create earnings for its shareholders. Freeman's thesis claims that companies must consider the interests and influences of all of these stakeholders in their decision-making process, since their support and involvement determine long-term sustainability and success.

The theory offers a framework for appreciating how the environmental sustainability practices of tourism entrepreneurs, including waste management, biodiversity preservation, pollution control, and sustainable sourcing, impact several stakeholders, including customers, local communities, and the natural environment. Stakeholder theory helps the research show how these policies not only satisfy the needs of several stakeholder groups, but also help to improve travel agency brand image. Customers who respect environmental responsibility, for example, would perceive the brand more favourably, resulting in

increased loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.

According to stakeholder theory, the way a business manages its contacts with its employees defines its brand's condition. Within the scope of Jos Wild Life Park, tourism companies that effectively communicate with stakeholders using ecologically friendly approaches are most likely going to build a better and more positive brand image. This is because local populations, especially environmentally conscious tourists, are more willing to support and promote companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability.

The theory emphasises the need for strategic decision-making that takes long-term consequences for all stakeholders into account instead of concentrating just on immediate financial benefits. For those in the travel industry, this entails incorporating environmental sustainability into their main business plans, thereby strengthening their company model. Travelling business people in Jos Wild Life Park may improve their brand image, draw more guests, and guarantee the long-term survival of both their companies and the park's natural resources by matching corporate practices with the interests of stakeholders.

The stakeholder theory provides a useful theoretical framework for this study because it emphasises the interdependent interactions between companies and their employees. Applying this theory will help the study to better grasp how environmental sustainability practices affect the brand image of tourist

entrepreneurs, especially in the ecologically sensitive and culturally important setting of Jos Wild Life Park. Practically speaking, the knowledge acquired from this study can support more general debates on brand management and sustainable tourism, therefore benefiting practitioners as well as legislators.

Empirical Review

Using a 415 hotels customer sample, Gao & Mattila (2014), investigated how environmental commitment influences brand impression in the United States. Their findings showed that hotels with favourable environmental policies significantly increased customer happiness and loyalty, thereby strengthening their overall brand reputation. This study revealed that patrons of hotels with obvious sustainability projects preferred them because it affected their impression and return frequency.

In relation to environmental policies, Han, Yu & Kim (2019), investigated consumer responses and brand equity in the South Korean hotel industry in 2019. Analysing a sample of 512 hotel guests, the researchers found that extensive environmental projects raised consumer brand equity and confidence. According to the poll, visitors of hotels with strong environmental policies felt greater value and had a better brand impression.

Leonidou et. al., (2013), looked at the United Kingdom using a 600-person sample. Their study focused on how green marketing might influence brand reputation. Businesses that implemented eco-friendly marketing strategies experienced significant enhancements in their brand reputation.

These environmentally friendly projects thrilled consumers, thereby increasing corporate trust along with commitment.

Chan (2013), conducted a 350 hotel guest survey in China to investigate the link between brand image and corporate ecology. The study revealed that individuals who appreciated hotels with robust environmental practices derived significant satisfaction from their services. Visitors' dedication to natural preservation enhanced the positive corporate impression of the vacation destinations, thereby influencing their overall impression.

In 2017, Yadav & Pathak investigated why greener promotion affects Indian consumer behaviour and brand perception. After conducting 250 client surveys, the research revealed that green marketing approaches significantly enhanced corporate recognition. Excellent ecological attributes allow customers to demonstrate corporate allegiance and selection, thereby enhancing the overall brand perception.

Adeola & Ezenwafor (2016), looked at how environmental management policies affected brand image in South Africa using a sample of two hundred hotel guests. According to a poll, those who learnt about a hotel's environmental policies thought the brand was more significant. This positive outlook led to higher customer loyalty and satisfaction.

With a sample of 150 travellers, Akinlabi et al. (2020) looked at how environmental sustainability rules affected the brand image of travel agents in Nigeria. According to the study, waste management and biodiversity

protection measures improved the brand reputation of travel agencies. Strong environmental policies enhanced the overall brand image, as guests perceived them as more dependable and trustworthy.

Methodology

Research Design investigates the relationship between the independent variables (environmental sustainability practices) and the dependent variable (brand image).

The study's population includes tourism entrepreneurs and tourists interacting with tourism enterprises at Jos Wild Life Park. The researcher interviews entrepreneurs involved in tourism-related activities (such as accommodations, tours, and attractions) as well as tourists, who provide feedback on the brand image based on observed sustainability practices. The study used the stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation from diverse tourism businesses and visitors. This approach ensures that the sample reflects the diversity within the tourism ecosystem.

The research relied on expert review to establish content validity. Professionals and academics familiar with environmental sustainability and tourism evaluated the questionnaires to ensure they comprehensively covered all relevant aspects of the study. The researcher used their feedback to refine the questions, making sure each item accurately reflects the constructs of waste management practices, biodiversity conservation, pollution control measures, sustainable sourcing, and brand image.

The study conducted a reliability test using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure the consistency and stability of the questionnaire

over time. This test assessed the internal consistency of the questionnaire, ensuring that all items related to each construct (such as sustainability practices and brand image) reliably measure the same underlying concept. A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.7 or above was considered acceptable, indicating that the questionnaire items are sufficiently reliable.

The methodology for this study focusses on applying regression analysis to explore the influence of environmental sustainability

practices on the brand image of tourism entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State, Nigeria. The sample size is 235 respondents, which includes both tourism entrepreneurs (85 respondents) and tourists (150 respondents). The study employs regression analysis to measure the strength and direction of these relationships. The researcher conducted hypothesis testing at a significance level of 0.05 to identify the variables that significantly influence the brand image.

Table 1

Model Summary on Influence of Environmental Sustainability Practices on Brand Image of Tourism Entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State Nigeria										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.406 ^a	.164	.150	.851	.164	11.319	4	230	.000	1.432
a. Predictors: (Constant), Sustainable Sourcing, Pollution Control, Biodiversity Conservation, Waste Management Practices										
b. Dependent Variable: Brand Image										

Source: Field work, 2025

The study of environmental sustainability strategies at Jos Wild Life Park examines how they impact tourism operators' brand image. With an R-value of 0.406, the variables show a rather positive association. According to the R-score of 0.164, sustainability practices explain 16.4% of the variance in brand image; the modified R-score of 0.150 points to a

stable model. With an F-statistic of 11.319 and a p-value of 0.000, sustainability policies clearly have statistical significance and thereby influence brand perception. The Durbin-Watson score of 1.432 points to no appreciable residual autocorrelation. Sustainable activities significantly shape the brand image.

Table 2						
ANOVA on Influence of Environmental Sustainability Practices on Brand Image of Tourism Entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State Nigeria						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.759	4	8.190	11.319	.000 ^b
	Residual	166.415	230	.724		

	Total	199.174	234			
a. Dependent Variable: Brand.Image						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Sustainable Sourcing, Pollution Control, Biodiversity Conservation, Waste Management Practices						

Source: Field work, 2025

The ANOVA findings evaluate the relevance of the regression model investigating the effect of environmental sustainability practices on the brand image of tourism entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park. The model, with an F-value of 11.319 and a p-value of 0.000, demonstrates statistical significance, confirming the significant impact of variables such as waste management, biodiversity protection, pollution control, and sustainable sourcing on brand image. While the residual

sum of squares (166.415) shows an inexplicable variance, the sum of squares for regression (32.509) shows the model's explained variance. The residual mean squares (0.724) and regression mean squares (8.190) further emphasise the model's fit. Since the model's significance level is less than 0.05, it confirms the denial of the theory that environmental sustainability initiatives do not affect brand image.

Table 3

Coefficients on Influence of Environmental Sustainability Practices on Brand Image of Tourism Entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State Nigeria

Model		Unstandardize d Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Boun d	Upper Boun d	Zero - orde r	Partia l	Par t
1	(Constant)	5.151	.548		9.39 6	.00 0	4.071	6.231			
	Waste Managemen t Practices	.463	.109	.305	4.26 4	.00 0	.249	.677	.095	.271	.25 7
	Biodiversity Conservatio n	-.375	.091	-.291	- 4.14 2	.00 0	-.553	-.197	-.204	-.263	- .25 0
	Pollution Control	-.277	.071	-.242	- 3.90 2	.00 0	-.416	-.137	-.215	-.249	- .23 5
	Sustainable Sourcing	-.167	.056	-.196	- 2.96 6	.00 3	-.278	-.056	-.124	-.192	- .17 9

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Image

Source: Field work, 2025

The coefficient table examines how environmental sustainability policies affect Jos Wild Life Park's tourism brand image. The constant value (5.151) indicates that the baseline brand image is zero for all predictors. Waste management techniques positively and significantly alter brand image ($B = 0.563$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that improving waste management enhances brand image. On the other hand, biodiversity protection has a negative influence ($B = -0.375$, $p = 0.000$), meaning that brand image may drop as these initiatives grow, possibly due to poor execution. Likewise, sustainable sourcing ($B = -0.167$, $p = 0.003$) and pollution control ($B = -0.277$, $p = 0.000$) also negatively affect brand image, implying that although these policies are important, their implementation may not fit customer expectations, therefore producing a weaker brand image. While the beta coefficients show that waste management (Beta = 0.305) has the biggest beneficial impact, the t-values corroborate the relevance of every factor. The negative consequences of sustainable sourcing, pollution management, and biodiversity preservation draw attention to possible areas where these methods need improvement to help enhance brand image.

Discussion of Findings

Our findings on how environmental sustainability strategies affect brand image fit contradict previous studies in a variety of ways.

Unlike Gao & Mattila (2014) in the United States, where environmental initiatives improve brand impression, our study reveals a more complicated link. Although waste management strategies improve brand image

($B = 0.463$, $p = 0.000$), other activities such as sustainable sourcing, pollution control, and preservation of biodiversity have a negative effect. This is not consistent with the results of Gao & Mattila (2014), where clear sustainability initiatives generally raised consumer loyalty and satisfaction.

Likewise, Han et al., 2019 in South Korea observed a positive correlation between overall sustainability measures and brand equity; our findings demonstrate that simply waste management has a positive effect. This discrepancy implies that whereas in developed settings sustainability strategies usually enhance brand image, their implementation in our Nigerian environment may encounter difficulties that result in negative impressions.

Our results on the preservation of biodiversity contrast with those of Leonidou et al., (2013) in the UK, where green marketing techniques improved brand image. In our study, biodiversity preservation had a negative effect ($B = -0.375$, $p = 0.000$), maybe resulting from poor implementation or mismatch with consumer expectations.

Consistent with Adeola & Ezenwafor (2016) in South Africa and Akinlabi et al., (2020) in Nigeria, our study underlines once more how trash management enhances brand image. But unlike Akinlabi et al., (2020), our analysis shows different contextual dynamics in the Nigerian tourism industry; hence, biodiversity protection negatively affects brand image.

These contradictory results highlight the

importance of customising sustainable strategies to fit local market expectations and ensuring their efficient application to improve business image.

Contribution To Knowledge

This study, particularly in a developing nation like Nigeria, greatly contributes to the body of knowledge on environmental sustainability practices and their impact on tourist businesses' brand image. Although earlier research in wealthy nations mostly showed favourable links between sustainability activities and brand image, this study emphasises the complex and occasionally contradictory consequences of these policies in developing nations. The investigation particularly shows that while waste management strategies enhance brand image, other practices, including biodiversity preservation, pollution control, and sustainable sourcing, may negatively affect brand perception when not properly executed or matched with local consumer expectations.

Through providing actual data from an African environment where the dynamics of sustainability practices and brand image diverge from those in more developed nations, this study plugs a knowledge vacuum by concentrating on Jos Wild Life Park in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Moreover, this study demonstrates how tourism firms in impoverished regions should enhance current environmental regulations to maintain competitiveness in global trade and improve their company image. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of culturally defined ecological management approaches, which encourage more academic discussion

with practical applications within the overall tourism sector.

Conclusion And Recommendations

This article critically examines the impact of environmental sustainability practices on the brand image of tourist entrepreneurs in Jos Wild Life Park, Plateau State, Nigeria. The data reveal a complicated connection between environmental projects and brand impression. More specifically, we find that initiatives including sustainable sourcing, pollution control, and biodiversity preservation have negative effects, while waste management strategies enhance brand image. These data reveal a complex link between sustainability projects and consumer sentiments in a developing context, contrasting with typically positive outcomes documented in industrialised nations.

The paper expands the existing corpus of information by providing empirical data from an African environment, thus filling a significant gap in the literature. It helps one to appreciate the challenges and opportunities that tourism business owners have in putting reasonable environmental regulations into effect that follow regional criteria and enhance brand recognition.

The following recommendations are offered:

- 1) Tourism companies should prioritise waste management systems as they immediately enhance their brand image. Establishing comprehensive trash reduction and recycling programs would help to further confirm this favourable outcome.
- 2) Examine closely and link initiatives at biodiversity protection with consumer expectations to increase efforts in this regard. To avoid negative impressions,

entrepreneurs should focus on open communication and specific outcomes from environmental projects.

- 3) Companies should ensure that their pollution management techniques are both visible to consumers and successful in counteracting the negative impact of their policies on their brand image. Better reporting and sharing of pollution-reducing achievements may lead to improved brand impressions.
- 4) Incorporate sustainable procurement concepts into broader brand-building and marketing campaigns. Stressing the benefits of sustainable sources and their fit with overall brand values will help to minimise any negative effects on brand image.
- 5) Considering Nigeria's diverse consumer perspectives, travel companies should implement environmentally friendly practices that are relevant both contextually and culturally. Customising sustainable projects and enhancing brand image will depend on an awareness of and interaction with the expectations of surrounding communities.

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