



## Major Sources of Information used by Tourists in Plateau State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The study focused on the major sources of information used by tourists in Plateau State, Nigeria. Information sources play an important role in influencing tourists' decision-making process. Projected images reflect what the image communicators expect people to see or experience at a destination and they can either be designed deliberately or emerge without conscious planning. The aim of this study is to find out the information sources/materials that potential tourist obtained about Plateau State as a Prime tourist destination. To achieve the objective of the study, survey research design was adopted. The researcher adopted primary data in getting the required information through the use of structured questionnaire. The population of the study is made up of 3060 tourists, while the sample size of the study is 400 thereafter adopting Taro Yamane formula. In analyzing the data, percentage and Chi-square analysis were used. The findings revealed that there is significant relationship between source of information and accessibility of tourist sites in Plateau State. The finding also revealed that tourists obtain information about Plateau State from different sources to include Word of Mouth/Phone Calls/Text, Radio/Television, Newspaper/Magazines, Travel Agents, Brochures/Pamphlets/ Bulletins and Internet. Based on the result, the study recommended the use of electronic word of mouth, eWOM where satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards tourism products and services are expressed is more reliable source and has feedback response that can project not just a sustainable tourism, but also a very vibrant, strong and positive tourism destination image for a booming livelihood in tourism and even many other systems.

**Keywords:** Information sources, Internet, Tourism destination, Image

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is endowed with outstanding and diverse heritage resources product of human processes and activities [1]. According to Adetimirin [2], Emerole & Ogugua [3], Popoola [4] information has been adjudged as a vital tool for the success of any organization. They could be described as living traditions handed through generations and a source of identity which distinguishes one nation or ethnic from another. These resources manifest as tangible and intangible natural and cultural products. The tangible resources are the material cultural expressions of the societies that are living or lived in the area examples include landscape, monuments, traditional buildings, archaeological sites, temples and historic cities [5].

Information sources play an important role in influencing tourists' decision-making process. Projected images are those ideas and impressions originating from various sources which are created about a destination and made available for people's consideration. Projected images reflect what the image communicators expect people to see or experience at a destination and they can either be designed deliberately or emerge without conscious planning. Getting the right information is an important first step in formulating a successful tourism strategy. Knowing who is coming to your area or not coming and why they are coming or not is very essential. It can help to improve the visitor's experience, target your marketing segments and make your destination more successful. Destinations therefore, produce a wide variety of documents that are designed exactly for this purpose. You may want to attract visitors from a particular source market. In either case, understanding why these visitors travel and what they like to do is very crucial [6].

Social media and other sources of information have emerged as a powerful information and communication channel in the Tourism Industry. They have significantly changed the practice

of marketing communication for many companies, including those in the tourism and hospitality industry [6]. The reliability of the content shared on these channels contributes to the power of social media [7]. Such content may provide solid knowledge to travelers about destinations and tourism products [8]. According to Abubakar [9], one important aspect of technological breakthrough globally is the social media. Social media is the relationships that exist between network of people [9]. Under this guise, heritage resources and tourism are indeed complementary. On one hand heritage resources promotes tourism development and tourism on the other showcases and preserves a people's heritage [10]. In view of this, Comer [12] observed that, at tourism site, it can provide both economic and social benefits for local populations and opportunities for understanding past and present cultures for visitors. However, there is a great need for adequate information on how to access tourism sites by tourists for proper utilization.

The study was to explore the major information sources that tourists have used in an attempt to gain an understanding of how the perceived destination image of Plateau State as tourist destination was revealed to the tourists. Garcia-Haro [12] examined the relationship between online sources of information and destination image and to analyze the mediating role of motivation to co-create in that relationship. A research model was developed, and hypotheses were tested on data collected from 394 usable responses about the World Heritage city of Cuenca (Spain). The results show that online commercial sources have a direct positive impact on the conative, affective and cognitive dimensions of the tourist image, in this order. Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil (2017) observed the relationship between destination loyalty and the use of fourteen sources of tourist information, and - among other conclusions - found that, for European tourists, the social networks most used in the trip preparation are Wikipedia, Facebook and YouTube.

Most travelers consult different information sources to help make purchase decisions, form a destination image, enhance trip quality, and plan their journey. Knowledge is disseminated on multiple online platforms, it is difficult to be fully aware of the differences and contributions from the various sources. Most researches on online sources focus on analyzing one specific channel, such as blogs, websites, or social media [13-16]. Despite the importance of different online sources, some scholars have pointed out an important research gap in case studies and comparative analyses of information sources [17]. Contemporary platforms and channels of tourism information sources can use different syntax systems, such as textual, visual, audio, audiovisual, and other sensory stimulus-based platforms [18].

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The information age or technological revolution is at its mature stage and won't be going anywhere but forward. The tourism industry is catalyst by the availability of information about the destination for travelers. In today world of globalization and villagization, incidences are easily communicated and circulated within shortest time span all over the world through the improved information. The benefits of information in the field of tourism are felt in the areas of blogging for destination selection process and online booking are now mundane activities for the ever-increasing tourist population of technocrats. It is important that stakeholders in the industry realize that, online sources and communities are here to stay; contribute to the shaping of the destination image of a place and will get increasingly important.

Presumably, Plateau State has had a battered and distorted tourism destination image due to intermittent ethno religious conflicts since the year, 2001. Information flying about the incessant ethno-religious conflicts is circulated by variety of materials. Getting to know the various sources from which the visiting tourists (in-situ tourists) tap their information about Plateau State is sacrosanct. The tourists' perceived tourism destination image of Plateau State stems from such sources. Therefore, there is great need to examine the sources of information majorly used by tourists in plateau state.

**AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the major sources of information used by tourists in Plateau State. To achieve this aim, the following are the objectives:

- i. To find out sources and types of information about Plateau State tourist sites
- ii. To determine whether the potential tourist to Plateau State are accessing the promotional materials

**RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between source of information and tourist sites.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant relationship between sources of information and tourist sites.

**STUDY AREA**

Plateau State is located in the middle belt zone of Nigeria and lies between latitudes 8°30' North and 10°30' North, and longitudes 7°30' East and 8°37' East. The state shares common boundaries with Bauchi State in the North, Taraba State in the East, Nasarawa State in the South and Kaduna State in the West. The state has an area of landmass covering 26,899 square Kilometers. Plateau state Government 2019.

Presently, Plateau state comprises of 17 Local Government Areas to include Bassa, Jos-North, Jos-East, Jos-South, Riyom, Barkin Ladi, Bokokos, Mangu, Pankshin, Kanke, Kanam, Langtang-North, Langtang-South, Mikang, Wase, Shendam and Qua'an Pan LGAs (Figures 1 & 2).

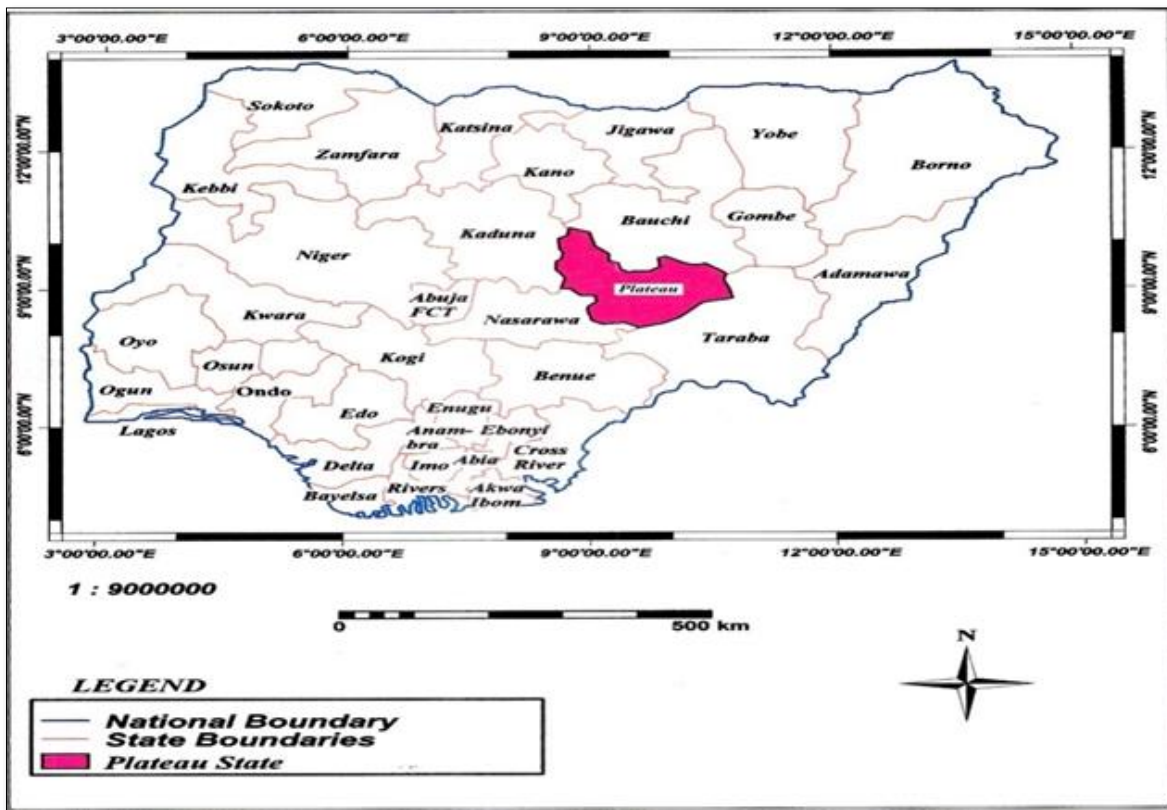


Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing Plateau State.  
 Source: National Centre for Remote Sensing, Jos, 2022.

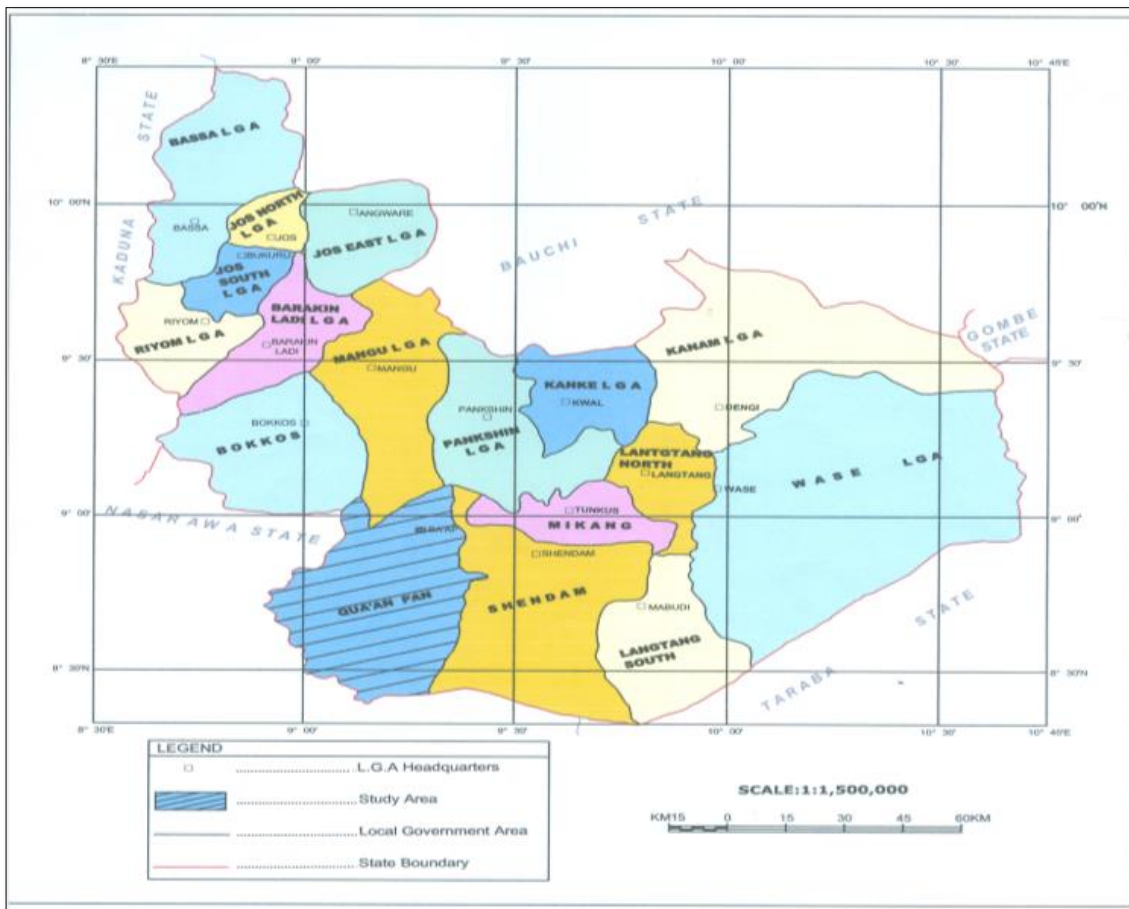


Figure 2. Map of Plateau State Showing 17 Local Government Areas.  
 Source: Bureau for Land, Survey and Town Planning, Jos, (2021)

### Climate

The climate of Plateau state is dominantly influenced by its relief and position along the passage of the inter-tropical convergence zone (ITCZ). The high altitude of the Jos-Plateau area has so much moderated its temperature, which has been described as “temperate-like”. The approximate maximum temperature is about 26°C while the mean minimum temperature is about 18°C and the average temperature is 22°C. The weather on the Jos-Plateau is therefore generally cold especially between December and February as a result of the harmattan (North East trade winds) winds and in July and August at the peak of the raining/wet season. Generally, Jos-Plateau has been claimed to be the coldest area in Nigeria and Jos town is the coldest State capital in Nigeria. This cold condition is a special tourism asset/attraction of the State, especially to domestic tourists.

The adjoining lowland area of Plateau state however has a contrasting climate from that of upland Plateau. The lowland areas are marked by relatively hot temperatures with mean maximum of 28°C and minimum of 22°C while the average temperature in this region is 25°C. Plateau state enjoys two types of climate conditions in the year - the dry season and the wet season. These two climates are mainly influenced by the movement of the ITCZ. From April, when the ITCZ moves northward, the state is dominated by the wet southwest trade winds, which bring rains, till October. From November to March however, the ITCZ moves southward and the dry Northeast trade (harmattan) winds, characterized by dryness and dust, dominate the state. Generally, the mean annual rainfall varies from 131.75 cm in the southern part of the state (leeward side of Jos Plateau) to 146 cm on the Jos-Plateau [19].

### The Economy

Agriculture is the mainstay of the state's economy, with about 80% of the population actively engaged in farming and living in the rural areas. More than 70% of the state's landmass is under cultivation with various crops and livestock development depending on soil, topography and climate. Weather conditions in the upper plateau (Jos-Plateau) are suitable for livestock, poultry and fishing as well as crops such as wheat, strawberry, apples, Irish potato, acha, maize, tomato, green beans, onions, spinach, lettuce, cabbage, carrot, watermelon, etc. Plateau is the largest potato producing state with over 300,000 tons annually [20].

The remaining southern lowland parts of the state record bountiful harvest of root crops like yams, cassava as well as tree crops. They also produce rice, groundnut, guinea corn, millet, maize, beans, and cotton and while the farmers dominate the rural areas, towns like Jos-Bukuru and a few local government headquarters engage in commercial and industrial activities as well as administration and educational training. There are large and small scale private and public industrial enterprises which offer jobs to the urban populace. For instance, there are the Jos International Breweries, NASCO Group of Companies, Jos Steel Rolling Mill, Coca-Cola Depot, NNPC Depot, etc.

Plateau State is also endowed with mineral resources, which are being mined. These include Tin, Columbite, Kaolin, Feldspar, Tantalite, and Clay among others. Jos town, the state capital, owes its origin and growth to tin mining. Quite a number of tourists visit the tin mined sites.

### Tourism Attributes of Plateau State

From a cognitive point of view, tourist destination image is assessed on a set of attributes that correspond to the resources or attractions that a tourist destination offers. However, many and varied other activities and facilities make their own contribution to a comprehensive service required by the tourists. In this study, the industry is treated as a combination of 'core' attractions and 'support' amenities, which are the main image projector of a destination.

The 'core' attractions are the natural and cultural features that pull tourists to the state, while the 'support' amenities are those facilities and services rendered to make the travel and stay of tourists in the state very convenient and a worthwhile venture. Plateau state, as a tourist destination, possesses its share of both core attractions and support amenities.

#### a) The Core Tourist Attractions of Plateau State

The core tourism attractions of Plateau State can be categorized into three types: general attractions, site attractions and event attractions.

##### i. The Site Attractions

###### Tangibles: Natural Sceneries

The site attractions are the immovable attractions, which are found at particular locations. They are either gift of nature or man-made monuments, which are static and are always there for the tourists to visit. Examples of the site attractions include rock formations such as volcanic domes, inselbergs, castle kopjes and mesas. Others are hydrological features such as springs, lakes, dams and waterfalls. Also, in this category are parks and gardens, museums, sport centers, historical sites, architecture and sculptures, among others.

The distinctive characteristic of the site attractions is that they are always there at all times of the year for the tourists to visit. Plateau state is very rich in these site attractions which are distributed all over the state. The site attractions are very crucial in the image making of a destination (**Figure 3**).



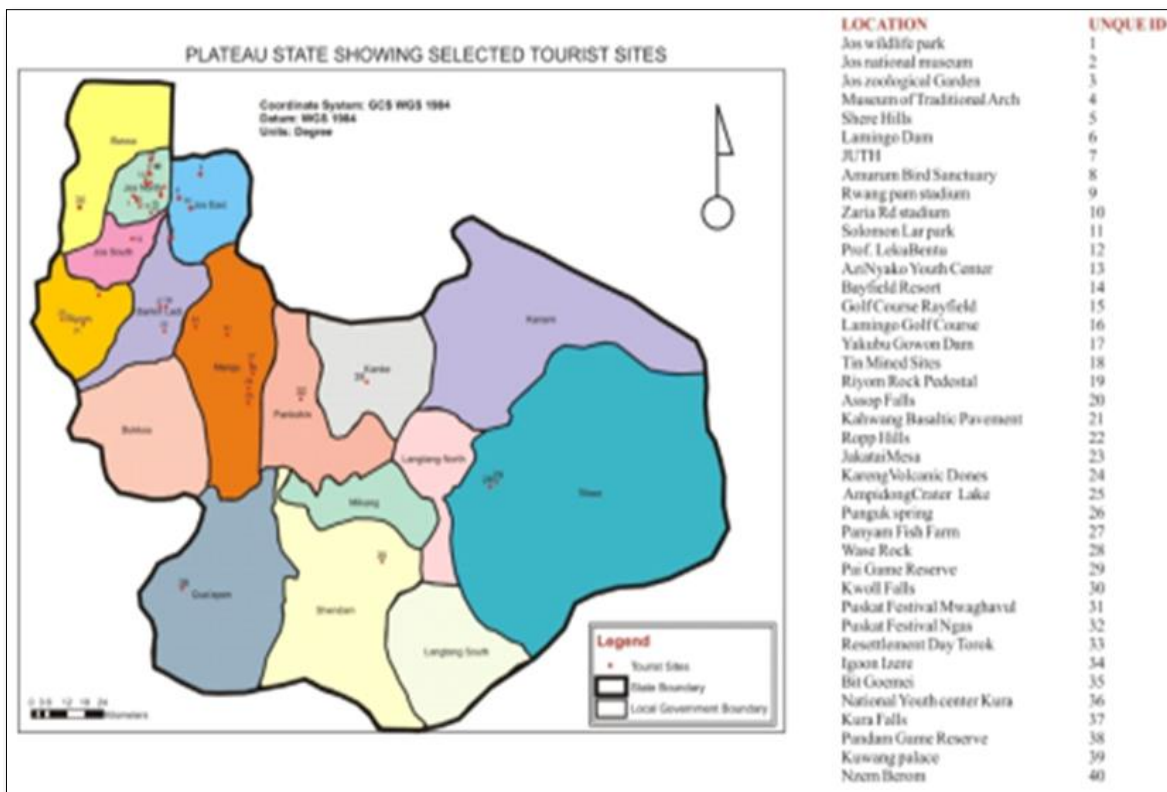


Figure 3. Map of the Study Area Showing the Location of the Selected Tourist sites  
 Source: Plateau State Tourism Corporation (2021)

**ii. General Attractions**

These are attractions that are not site specific, but are rather general environmental situations, which could be an attraction to visitors. A good example is the climate of a place.

**Intangible: Climatic Uniqueness and Attractiveness of Plateau State**

Physiographically, Plateau State is dominated by a plateau known as the Jos-Plateau (from which the state derives its name). This Plateau attains an average height of 1250 meters above mean sea level with the highest peak reaching 1829 meters above mean sea level. This height has significantly moderated the weather and climate of the Jos-Plateau region in the state due to temperature inversion. The Jos-Plateau region thus enjoys what has been, severally, described as “temperate-like” climate with an average annual temperature of 22°C. The Jos-Plateau region is one of the coldest areas in Nigeria, alongside the Mambila Hills and the Obudu Plateau. The temperate-like climate experienced on the Jos-plateau is one of the attractive attributes of the state. Most international tourists who come from temperate regions find the Jos region as their second home because it is similar to their home-origin climate type [19]. Strategically, therefore, the unique weather and climate of Jos-Plateau is featured prominently as positive image promoter to lure tourists to the state.

Other general attractions are security and hospitality. A destination that is peaceful and accommodating will surely lure more tourist than a less peaceful environment. No matter how rich a destination is with tourist attractions, if the local people are not peaceful and accommodating, visitors will be scared away. The inhabitants of Plateau State are generally very peaceful, accommodating and hospitable. This is what has earned the state the slogan, ‘home of peace and tourism’.

**iii. Event Attractions**

The event attractions are the attractions that are featured occasionally. They are not permanently located, but rather exhibited from time to time and are dynamic: their time, scope, content and venue can change. Examples of event attractions are cultural and religious festivals, ceremonies and sporting activities. By their nature, they may be hosted or featured in a particular location at a particular time, but their locations and timings can be changed at will. Except in well-planned and organized circumstances where the events are packaged for year-round exhibitions at a destination, the tourists may not enjoy the event attractions at any time they wish to see it as in site or general attractions.

All the over 50 indigenous ethnic groups together with other ethnic nationalities that have come to settle in Plateau State (the non-indigenes) exhibit varied, colorful and rich cultural events which can capture the interest of a wide segment of tourists. And to give these event attractions more impetus, almost all the ethnic nationalities found in Plateau State have repackaged and/or reinvented various cultural festivals, which are exhibited as 'umbrella festivals' or 'festival of festivals,' which may be referred to as 'mock festivals' since they are generally of the actual cultural rituals associated with them. They are a form of cultural renaissance that partially came with the motive of cultural reawakening, preservation and commercialization with the intention to attract tourists. Some of the festivals which are very popular and are being published to create a unique cultural tourism image of Plateau State include the Ngas Pusedung festival, the Beroms' Nzem Berom festival, Igbo, Yoruba, Idoma, Tiv Days etc. All the festivals are usually featured/hosted in the dry season (December to April), with the probability that several of them may be held on the same day at different venues.

However, a well-planned calendar for the festivals is being canvassed to guarantee an all year round spread of the festivals. This is the unique thing about event attractions. Their timing and venue can be changed based on convenience and strategy to ensure high marketability and patronage/consumption. The state is well known for hosting a number of sporting activities such as the golf tournament every January, national football league matches, friendly matches, Governor's Football Cup Competition and a lot more of local sporting competitions.

Plateau State is also a home for different religious activities which have touristic values: religious seminars, conferences, fellowships, (re)citations etc.

#### **b) Support Facilities and Services in Plateau State**

A functional tourist destination must provide some basic amenities and services which are needed by the tourists. These include transportation and communication, convenience and souvenir shops, banking services, security, electricity, health services, hotels, restaurants, water supply, parks and gardens, travel agents/tour operators and worship places.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Below is a brief discussion of the approaches used in the study for data collection.

Primary and secondary sources are used for data collection. Publication, Articles, New papers, Books, Tourism pamphlet, Journal etc. Are used as secondary sources while questionnaire and interview are primary sources. The questionnaire has different type of question both open-ended and close-ended.

#### **Research Design**

In this study the researcher opted for the use of descriptive survey through questionnaire and interview.

#### **Population of the Study**

The target population identify in this study includes: the tourist at the nine tourist sites, the resort managers, Staff of Plateau State Tourism Cooperation and the Nigeria Tourism Development Cooperation. Since they are the one who have direct contact with the research area. The name of the nine (9) tourist sites selected for this study are: Assop Falls, Jos National Museum, Wase Rock Resort, Museum of Traditional Nigeria Architecture (MOTNA), Pandam

Game Reserve, Rayfield Resort Jos, Zoological Garden and Jos Wildlife Park. The average total population of tourist visit per month to the tourist sites is Forty Thousand (40,000) as at the time of this study. Jos wildlife park have the highest patronage.

### Sample Size and Sampling Method

The probability sampling techniques was used by applying the Taro Yamane's (1973) statistical formula to select the 400 respondents from the total population.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

Where: n=sample; N=Total population=3,060; e=error term (0.05); 1=constant

However, from the sampling estimate, the sample of 400 was estimated.

### Method of Data Collection

The researchers, with the advice of the staff of the Plateau State Tourism Corporation purposely identified and selected the most physically developed and patronized resorts for questionnaire administration. Nine (9) tourist resorts selected for the exercise include Assop Falls, Jos National Museum, Hill Station Hotel, Museum of Traditional Nigeria Architecture (MOTNA), Pandam Game Reserve, Rayfield Resort, Jos; Zoological Garden and Jos Wildlife Park (**Figure 3**).

The methods used by the researchers in conducting this study include questionnaire, interview and personal observation. The distribution of questionnaire was based on the sample size which is based on the number of patronages in each of the tourist sites. Therefore, a set 400 questionnaire was distributed to the 9 tourist sites using simple random sampling. 44 questionnaires were administered to 8 tourist sites each, while 48 to one of the tourist sites.

### Method of Data Analysis

The simple frequency distribution, simple percentage and chi-square methods were adopted in the data analysis for this study. The frequency distribution and simple percentage method were used in analyzing the data obtained and chi-square formula was used in testing the hypotheses.

The formula for the chi-square is:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(O-e)^2}{e} \quad (2)$$

Where:  $\chi^2$ =Chi-square; O=Observed frequency; e=Expected frequency

### Decision Criterion

Reject null hypothesis (H0) if calculated Chi-square is greater than (>) the critical value and accept the alternate hypotheses (H1) and vice versa.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The 400 tourists sampled were asked to disclose their various sources of information about Plateau State, out of which 385 questionnaires were retrieved, while 15 questionnaires were not returned. **Table 1** is the responses. Word of mouth (31.9%) and electronic media (Radio/Television) (19.7%) are the main sources of information to the sampled tourists. Also, more than one-third of the sampled tourists have obtained information about events in Plateau State from newspapers and magazines. These findings mean that both conventional and non-conventional sources of information are effectively used to obtain information about places by tourists.



**Table 1. Major sources of information accessed by tourists in Plateau State.**

Source	Number of Tourists N=385	%
Word of Mouth/Phone Calls/Text	123	31.9
Radio/Television	76	19.7
Newspaper/Magazines	56	14.5
Travel Agents	52	13.5
Brochures/Pamphlets/Bulletins	43	11.2
Internet	35	9.0

Source: Authors field work, 2022

Perhaps why non-conventional source (word of mouth) is important here is because of the improved communication technology such as introduction of the Global System of mobile telecommunication (GSM) which is a mobile phone. This allows for proxy contact for the spread of information through the word of mouth. Currently, the use of mobile devices is probably the easiest and fastest way to pass information from one person to another. Information is passed using the GSM such as calls, text messages, images and chats via Facebook and WhatsApp. Kang [19] from a survey of 248 users, conclude that the use of mobile phones allows tourists to make travel more flexible, since they can make decisions once at the destination thanks to the ease of obtaining information anytime, anywhere. In their study, however, they asked only about the use of the smart phone before and during the trip, but not afterwards, for instance, to share content and experiences on social networks.

The Internet, which is the most widely used by tourists to choose their destination in the developed parts of the world, is not effectively utilized by the Nigerian domestic tourists due to poor internet connectivity and inadequate of information on the internet. Plateau State has some websites showcasing her rich attractions, but by the finding of this study, not many people access the websites to see what the state offers. If the internet is properly developed and widely utilized; it could be a very important source for tourists to browse and select their destinations.

On **Table 1**, 31.9% of the respondents indicate Word of mouth/ phone cell/ text, 19.7% of the respondents indicate Radio/ television, 14.5% of the respondents indicate Newspaper/ magazines, 13.5% of the respondents indicate Travel agents, 11.2% of the respondents indicate Brochures/pamphlets/Bulletins, while 9.0% of the respondents indicate internet. This implies that significant percent of the respondents revealed that the major source of information accessed by tourists in Plateau State is through Word of mouth/Phone calls/text. This could be because it is cheaper, more flexible, affordable, always available and most popular than other sources of information. This result has corroborated the study of Gonap [20], which stated that, the main source of tourist information on Jos Plateau is words of mouth.

Mass media which rank 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in **Table 1** as major sources of tourist information about Plateau State are made up of both electronic and print. They consist of national and international mass media which include the Nigeria television Authority (NTA), Ray Power TV and FM stations, Channels Television, Plateau Radio Television Corporation (FM, Am and TV Stations), Newspapers (Assorted), Magazines (Assorted), Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), BBC, VOA, CNN, Aljazeera (foreign), Silver Bird Television, African Independent Television (AIT) and Television Continental (TVC). These have wider coverage and can address large crowd at the same time within a limited time frame. However, it is not cost effective and depends largely on electricity which is still epileptic in Nigeria. According to Adu [21], man's activities are connected to electricity both directly and indirectly due to the irregularity of electricity, all businesses that depend on it have to use alternative power source which eventually leads to high cost of living. All this print and electronic media report news about events in Plateau State. Some of them, especially PRTV Stations: FM, AM and TV Stations play jingles at certain time intervals informing the general public about some of the major tourist attractions. The jingles often carry the peace connotation in conjunction with "Plateau the beautiful", "the land bestowed with good climate and scenic features", "the home

of unity in diversity” Plateau the beautiful-fall in love with nature, all aimed at attracting tourists and investors. It may be important to indicate that the PRTVC stations (FM, AM, TV) have limited spatial reach, generally, hardly beyond the neighboring states.

Tourism Brochures, pamphlets, bulletins, charts and maps are compendia of tourists’ information on Jos Plateau. They are produced to serve as inventory of tourism attractions, support facilities and guide. They contain pictures and descriptions of major tourists’ guide and attractions in the state. Copies are sold at affordable prices at designated tourist centers and tourism Information Posts (TIPs). They include Jos Metropolis Business Directory, Jos-Yankari Tourist Guide, Plateau State Tourism Brochure; Plateau State, The Beautiful Diary; Tourist Map of Nigeria, Business Directory, Tourist Map of Plateau State, Brochure of Tourist Attractions in Abuja, Nigeria and nearby destinations; Nigeria, Beauty in Diversity, Plateau State of Nigeria, Home of Peace and Tourism as well as the Famous Jos Wildlife Park. They contain list of commercial centers, business opportunities in Jos metropolis and the entire Plateau State, tourist attractions as well as investment opportunities. It projects clearly the tourism image and richness of Plateau State as one of the leading states in tourism in Nigeria. The business directory is produced by Entrepreneurs Resources and Advisory Center-ERAC which is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

State Tourism Websites (Internet Promotion) are used by many travelers to acquire information via the internet which offers abundant information on tourism opportunities. This new information technology supersedes information about destinations through books, brochures, promotional videos, word of mouth, travel agents or tourist offices. The development of destination image through on-line services is the most effective way of tourism promotion and marketing. It is therefore interesting that quite a number of websites have been created showing the rich tourist attractions of Plateau State. Such on-line information contains the pictures and descriptions of the attractions for an easy assessment by the on-line users (prospective tourists). According to Gursoy [22], the online/personal information sources category is found to be the most important for domestic travelers with low destination familiarity, while the personal information sources category is the most important information source category for international travelers with low destination familiarity.

**Hypothesis Testing**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between source of information and accessibility of tourist sites in Plateau State.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant relationship between source of information and accessibility of tourist sites in Plateau State.

See **Table 2** below for the computation of the Chi-square Analysis.

**Table 2. Computation of Chi-square Analysis.**

O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
123	64	59	3481	54.39
76	64	12	144	2.25
56	64	-8	64	1
52	64	-12	144	2.25
43	64	-21	441	6.89
35	64	-29	841	13.14
				∑(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E=79.92

*Source: Authors’ computation, 2022*

Degree of freedom (df) = (R-1) (C-1) = (2-1) (4-1) = 1x3 =3

Level of significance = 0.05; Critical X<sup>2</sup> value = 9.488

**Note:** Expected =  $\frac{\text{Summation of observed}}{\text{No of observed}}$

$385/6 = 64$ ; Expected (E) = 64

### **Decision**

The calculated chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value of 79.92 is greater than the critical table value of 9.488, when tested at 0.05 level of significance and 3 degree of freedom. The study therefore rejects  $H_0$  and concludes there is significant relationship between source of information and accessibility of tourist sites in Plateau State.

### **Conventional Sources of Information Used in Featuring Plateau State as a Tourist Destination**

Apart from the foregoing documentary sources of information which are used to publicize Plateau State as a tourist destination, a lot of more conventional media were identified by the researchers to be in use to project Plateau State as a unique and outstanding tourist destination in Nigeria. They include:

- Nigeria television Authority (NTA)
- Ray Power TV and FM stations (AIT)
- Channel Television
- Plateau Radio Television Corporation: FM, Am and TV Stations
- Newspapers (Assorted)
- Magazines (Assorted)
- Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN)
- BBC, VOA, CNN, Aljazeera and
- Silver Bird Television
- African Independent Television, AIT
- Television Continental, TVC

All this print and electronic media report news about events in Plateau State. Some of them, especially PRTV Stations: FM, AM and TV Stations play jingles at certain time intervals informing the general public about some of the major tourist attractions in Plateau State. The jingles often carry the peace connotation in conjunction with "Plateau the beautiful", "the land bestowed with good climate and scenic features", "the home of unity in diversity" Plateau the beautiful-fall in love with nature, all aimed at attracting tourists and investors. It may be important to indicate that the PRTVC stations (FM, AM, TV) have limited spatial reach, generally, hardly beyond the neighboring states.

Both the electronic and print media may feature the attractions in the state or carry news report about events in the state. The news report about any state has much bearing on her image projection and image conception. For instance, if the news reports carry so much weight on negative happenings such as crises, insecurity, conflicts and pandemic then the recipients of such news, who include potential tourists will form negative image of the place. On the other hand, if the news reported gives good qualities and characteristics of the place, then the recipients of the news will form a good image of the place with the likelihood to visit the place. This means that the news report about any area has strong correlation with its image. This is why any destination wishing to attract visitors and investors must projects a good image that can be attractive to both the tourists and investors.

### **Print Information Sources for Promotion and Projecting the Tourism Image of Plateau State**

Tourism marketing plays a fundamental role in creating images of a destination and influencing the expectations of potential tourists. In the marketing strategy certain images of

the products and services are featured in tourism advertising, and publicity. The promotional images are usually market-driven and as such reflect the needs, desires and fantasies of the consumers. In tourism marketing, a selected set of destination attributes, are used to stimulate and lure the attention of potential tourists and investors. As such, promotional images serve to frame tourist's expectations by representing typical tourism products available at the destination. A summary of the different promotion materials/tools used in projecting Plateau State as a tourist destination is as follows:

**Plateau State Tourism Brochure:** This is a compendium of tourist attractions produced by the Plateau State Tourism Corporation in 2001 to serve as inventory of tourism attractions and support facilities. It also serves as tourists' guide. It contains pictures and descriptions of major tourists' guide. It contains pictures and descriptions of major tourist attractions in the state. Copies are sold at affordable prices at designated tourist centers and Tourism Information Posts, TIPs.

**Jos Metropolis Business Directory:** This is a business directory containing list of commercial centers and business opportunities in Jos metropolis and the entire Plateau State. It also contains tourist attractions and investment opportunities. It projects clearly the tourism image and richness of Plateau State as one of the leading states in tourism in Nigeria. The business directory is produced by Entrepreneurs Resources and Advisory Center-ERAC. This is an NGO.

**State Tourism Websites (Internet Promotion):** Today many travelers acquire information via the Internet, which offers abundant information on tourism opportunities. This new information technology supersedes the previous information about destinations through books, brochures, promotional videos, word of mouth, travel agents or tourist offices. The development of destination image through on-line services is the most effective way of tourism promotion and marketing. It is therefore interesting that quite a number of websites have been created showing the rich tourist attractions of Plateau State. Such on-line information contains the pictures and descriptions of the attractions for an easy assessment by the on-line users (prospective tourists).

**Plateau State the Beautiful Diary:** The diary is produced by the state government annually and distributed to government officials and individuals including tourists. The diary contains mainly the description of major tourist attractions and events with colorful pictures of some of the prominent attractions. It is a portable tourist material that any tourists coming to Plateau State will appreciate.

**Tourism Pamphlet:** This is a take-away material produced by Plateau State Tourism Corporation (PSTC) for distribution to tourists. It is portable and contains few leaflets which contain colorful pictures and descriptions of some important tourist attractions of the state. The uniqueness of this promotion material is that it contains important comments of what the visitors (tourists) say about Plateau State while on their visits (excerpts from visitors' comments books).

**Tourist Map of Nigeria:** This an official tourist guide produced by Nigeria tourism Development Corporation (NTDC). It projects clearly Plateau State as one of the leading tourist destinations in Nigeria. It contains colorful pictures of selected attractions all over Nigeria, list of standard hotels in the various states and the distance chart of inter-state capital and other important cities with a detailed map of Nigeria showing transportation routes and tourist centers.

**Business Diary: Focus on Plateau Tourism:** This is another business directory which specifically focuses on tourism investment opportunities. It contains colorful pictures and descriptions of some prominent attractions in Plateau State. It was produced by the state government and distributed to potential tourism investors.

**Tourist Map of Plateau State:** This is a travel guide to designated tourist sites in Plateau State. It shows the spatial distribution and location of the major tourist sites in Plateau State

including the route connectivity of the various sites. It is produced by Plateau State Tourism Corporation (PSTC) and distributed to tourists and potential investors.

**Jos-Yankari Tourist Guide:** This is another brochure containing the tourism attractions of Jos (Plateau State) - Yankari (Bauchi State) tourism attractions. The region is described as one of the rich tourism zones in Nigeria. The brochure is produced by Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) and kept at various tourism centers for distribution to tourists. It contains beautiful pictures of some tourist features within the zone. Tourists visiting Jos-Yankari axis reserve can find this promotion material very useful. It is in English and French languages.

**Brochure of Tourist Attractions in Abuja, Nigeria and Nearby Destinations:** This is a very colorful tourist brochure showing some popular tourist attractions in Abuja FCT, and its neighborhood including Plateau State. The brochure is produced by NTDC, and distributed at designated tourist sites for tourists to use. The brochure captures and projects Plateau State as having a good share of tourism attractions. It is written both in English and French languages.

**Nigeria: Beauty in Diversity:** It is another very colorful tourism brochure which views (in pictures) some of the attractions of Plateau State as outstanding in Nigeria. It is a document produced by Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation and sold at various tourist centers. It gives description of the various tourist attractions therein.

**Plateau State of Nigeria: Home of Peace and Tourism:** This is a brochure of tourist attractions produced by Tourism Consultants. It contains the rich natural and cultural attractions of Plateau State including the present Nasarawa State. Each picture presented is followed by a description of the feature.

**The famous Jos Wildlife Park: Nigeria's Foremost Zoo Park:** This is a take-away pamphlet containing the details of the park resources. It is produced by the Plateau State Tourism Corporation and distributed free to visiting tourists. The pamphlet projects the Jos wildlife park as the most developed man-made wildlife park in Nigeria comprising zoological gardens, open vegetation and research area.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Base on the findings, there is significant relationship between source of information and accessibility of tourist sites in Plateau State. The finding corroborates Govers & Go (2005) who reported that, social networks on the internet can play an important role as a source of information for potential tourists, whether through images, interaction and/or multimedia on the web; make it possible to configure a stronger and lighter image of a destination.

The study on the major information sources used by tourists in Plateau State from the sampled tourists to the state show that Plateau State has had different tourism destination images depending on the prevailing situations in the state. The tourism destination image perceived depend on quite a number of factors and the perceived image can vary from positive to negative through mixed/neutral types of image. The good tourism destination image that the state enjoys during peaceful time profile can easily shift to a negative image during and shortly after a cycle of a bloody communal clashes/terrorists' attack as revealed by the study.

Generally, incidences such as communal crises and terrorism/insurgency usually receive negative reportage through the improved communication technology. The word of mouth (WOM), the print and electronic media would paint instantly awash Plateau State with negative or mixed images at a supersonic speed all over the world during and after any incident of communal conflicts as has happened to Plateau State in the finding of this study.

Whatever information about a destination that needs to be passed requires appropriate channels of communication. These may include mass media, brochures and adverts, word of mouth (WOM), news outlets or social media. Some information may require more time to be received, processed and acted upon than others. This may also be influenced by the characteristics of the information recipient and the social system within which the information is passed and received.



As a consequence, many of the seemingly mundane actions which are recorded and archived are for the first time widely made accessible to both the generators and curators of this information. From this fire hose of digital breadcrumbs, we can learn an enormous amount about ourselves as individuals and the societies. Simple questions such as what we are doing, where we go, who we are meeting, and how we interact, etc. can be explored with incredibly high resolution and richness. The new communication technology is thus fast eroding the friction of distance on spatial spread of information from an origin. Hence a further location from a source/origin of a new information/incidence may tap into the new information/incidence faster, more aright, more detailed and more reliable than physical geographical locations, which are at closer range to the source/origin, mainly due to technological deficiency/handicap that has impeded and slowed down the access to the new information/incidences to the immediate neighborhood. This development has therefore cautioned against a rush-conclusion on the relationship between distance and image projection/perception. A further research on the influence of improvement in communication technology on the information spread over distance is necessary to understand the relationship between distance and image projection/perception.

### CONCLUSION

The study has concluded that there is significant relationship between source of information and tourist sites, information sources are materials that potential tourists encounter in relation to destination selection process and the researchers have discovered that variety and types of information sources actually flood the societies or systems. They play an important role in influencing tourists' decision-making process. The information originated from various sources, projecting images which are cognitively attribute-based (beliefs), ideas and affective (feelings and impressions) about a destination. Destinations therefore produce a wide variety of documents that project images reflecting what the image communicators expect people to see or experience at a destination and the documents can either be designed deliberately or emerge without conscious planning. Of all the media frequently sourced, Word of mouth (WOM), is a powerful medium that attracts potential tourism buyers to Plateau States a tourist destination.

This research recommends the use of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) where satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards tourism products and services are expressed is more reliable source and has feedback response that can project not just a sustainable tourism, but also a very vibrant, strong and positive tourism destination image for a booming livelihood in tourism and even many other systems. The researchers also recommend religious tolerance, political understanding, ethnic integration and unity, provision of adequate security, sustainable peace restoration programme, good planning and development objective and truthful news reportage about incidence in the state as well as sustainable marketing and promotion strategies which will all boost and sustain a good tourism image of Plateau State.

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