

TOURISTS PERCEPTION TOWARDS TOURISM ATTRACTIVENESS OF JOS PLATEAU AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

¹Gonap E. Gobin, ¹Nalkap T. ¹Gagbanyi C. Tebrimam

¹Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management
Federal University Wukari Taraba State Nigeria

*Corresponding Author's email: gonap@fuwukari.edu.ng
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1217-0491>

ABSTRACT

The Jos Plateau region has immense tourism attractions and is widely known as a tourist haven imbued with both natural cultural uniqueness. It is equally known for its friendly weather and very hospitable and peace-loving inhabitants. It has been a preferred destination choice of many tourists. This study aimed at assessing the tourist's perception toward the tourism attractiveness of Jos Plateau. The region has immense tourism potentials but her enormous challenges have bedeviled the region's development as a tourist destination. The study was carried out at 9 sampled tourist sites on the Jos Plateau. 1050 questionnaires were administered at the 9 tourist sites. The study has investigated and established through documentary survey, field observation, survey approach and questionnaires that the Jos Plateau region is very richly endowed with both natural and man-made tourist attractions. The range of the attractions shows that the Jos Plateau in terms of potential tourist attractions may be ranked among the leading tourism endowed regions in Nigeria. It is recommended that Jos Plateau region as a tourist destination should strive to project positively her tourism image through aggressive promotion campaigns.

Keywords: *Tourist perception, Tourism attractiveness, Tourism potentials, Tourist destination, Jos Plateau*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to onetime Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Frangiali (2006), the world is currently witnessing a rapid growth in the tourism industry. In 2005 alone approximately 800 million international tourist arrivals were registered the world over. This has made the tourism industry one of the most important industries of the world, particularly in economic terms. One of the most valuable characteristics of the tourism industry is that while it has grown in numbers, it has also grown in variety of destinations as there has been a continued geographical spread of tourism to all parts of the world which has made it possible for many countries especially developing countries, to develop tourism as a viable engine for socio-economic development. He further stressed that essentially, tourism can have a profound impact on the society, economy and environment of nations. Socially, one of the most immediate benefits of the tourism industry is its ability to create employment and an added benefit is that tourism caters for both skilled and unskilled employment. As a labor-intensive industry, tourism has the potential to create more jobs per unit of investment than any other industry and tourism can be a useful source of employment for women, youth and ethnic minority groups. Tourism also enhances peace between the guests and the hosts. Environmentally, tourism when properly planned, developed and managed, can serve as a

mechanism for protecting natural environments, preserving historical, archeological and religious monuments; and, stimulating the practice of local cultures, folklore, traditions, arts and crafts, and cuisine. And, economically, tourism brings many benefits to the central Government, Local authorities as well as the private sector through the generation of foreign revenue, financial returns on investments, taxation on tourists and tourist products, and, in linkages to other local industries such as agriculture, manufacturing and fisheries (UNWTO, 2016).

Many governments are, therefore, increasingly turning to tourism as a major opportunity for economic development and a tool for creating a better community. The reliance on tourism as a tool for development is based on such evidence as tourism's effectiveness as an engine of employment, a means of wealth generation and redistribution and its potential in restoring blighted areas in a community.

Tourism is very important, and it was recognized in the Manila Declaration on World Tourism of 1980 "as an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations." Tourism brings in large amounts of income in payment for goods and services available, accounting for 30% of the world's exports of services, and 6% of overall exports of goods and services. It also creates opportunities for employment in the service sector of the economy, associated with tourism. These service industries include transportation services, such as airlines, cruise ships and taxicabs among others (WTO, 2012).

Over the years, Jos Plateau region of Plateau State has been widely known and acknowledged as a tourist haven of natural and cultural uniqueness and beauty. The state has been referred to as a land of very beautiful, unique natural sceneries, rich and colorful cultural and historical heritages, clement weather as well as very hospitable and peace-loving inhabitants. The region is therefore frequently described with phrases such as 'tourist haven', 'the land of beauty', 'the temperate region', 'a miniature Nigeria' and 'a home of unity in diversity' among other sobriquets that describe her attractiveness – all as her tourism brand names. For quite a long time, the image of the state had been positive and favorable. It was the preferred destination choice of many tourists, both national and international. For example, in the 2000s, when Nigeria launched a campaign tagged "**Good People Great Nation**" as part of an effort to rebrand the image of Nigeria nationally and internationally, the Assop falls in Plateau State graced the cover of its international presentations and the official website of the campaign. From all over the country (Nigeria), Jos, the capital city of Plateau State which is also located on Jos Plateau region of Plateau State was a preferred venue for national and international conferences, seminars and workshops for both public and private sectors. And for quite a long time, Plateau State lived up to its self-proclaimed sobriquet as the "Home of Peace and Tourism." Unfortunately, this positive and favorable image has been dented by fatal communal crises and conflicts that have overtaken the "peaceful" nature that the state had come to be known for, and marred the tourist attractiveness that the state had been acclaimed for (Gontul et al., 2006).

Between September 2001 and the present 2024, Jos Plateau has been embroiled in a series of communal crises and conflicts that have resulted in the death of thousands of people and destruction of properties worth billions of naira. Associated with this has been the assumed loss of the positive image that the state had blossomed over the years. Many residents have relocated to other preferred destinations and the stream of tourists, visitors and new residents has dwindled. The reputation of the state as a peace and tourist haven has suffered calamitously, nationally and internationally, especially since the colorations of the conflict are religious and ethnic in nature and bordering on the very essence of the Nigerian Constitution and its

nationhood (the question of “Indigene ship”). These incessant conflicts with their deadly outcomes have catapulted Plateau State to international limelight as a flash point of violence and ignited an irrepressible debate in Nigeria on religion, ethnicity and nationhood. Importantly, it has raised and sustained the “Question of Indigene ship” in Nigeria and its place in the Constitution and, therefore, its role in nation building. The fact that these are emotional and sentimental issues has not helped the debate move forward on logical grounds. It has pitched one camp against another and elicited both sympathy and condemnation from across the country, based on general grounds of religion, ethnicity and geographic origin in the country. Needless to say, the infamy has not done Plateau State any favors in terms of its perceived image as a tourist destination. Anecdotal evidence from newspaper and news reports, internet sources and other social media suggest that Plateau State no longer enjoyed the prime status it had as a tourist destination in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch Report, 2005).

Plateau State is in the process of rebuilding its image as a tourist haven and a peaceful and hospitable state. To develop a successful marketing framework and strategy that would launder and reconstruct its assumed dented perceived image into a positive and favorable image, it requires important information on several issues: some knowledge about its perceived image – what it was before the crises, how much dent has been created by the unfavorable circumstances, and what the current perceived image is in the present reconstruction efforts, which will guide the direction and magnitude of image projection required; and also, an understanding of the factors that would influence tourists’ perceived image of the state.

Tourism planners have noted that if not properly managed tourism sites can often suffer from instructions caused by misuse, crisis, lack of tourism policy, outright vandalization and spoliation of attraction of the workers which all affect the development and patronage of resorts. Although several studies have addressed different aspect of tourism of the Jos Plateau such as Gonap et al (2017), Gonap et al (2018), Gonap and Gontul (2020), Gonap et al (2020), Gonap et al (2021), Gonap and Makyur (2022), Gonap and Okpoko (2023) and Gonap et al (2023). Critical attention has not been paid to the present state of tourism development in the region which has affected the patronage of resorts.

The aim of this paper is to assess tourists' perception towards the tourism attractiveness of the Jos Plateau, specifically the study should determine perceptions of tourists about Jos Plateau as at the times of their visits to the state, the extent of familiarity of tourists with Jos Plateau, notable natural and cultural attractions for tourists in the Jos Plateau, natural and cultural Tourist sites in the Jos Plateau patronized by tourists and the most appealing tourist attractions in the Jos Plateau to tourists.

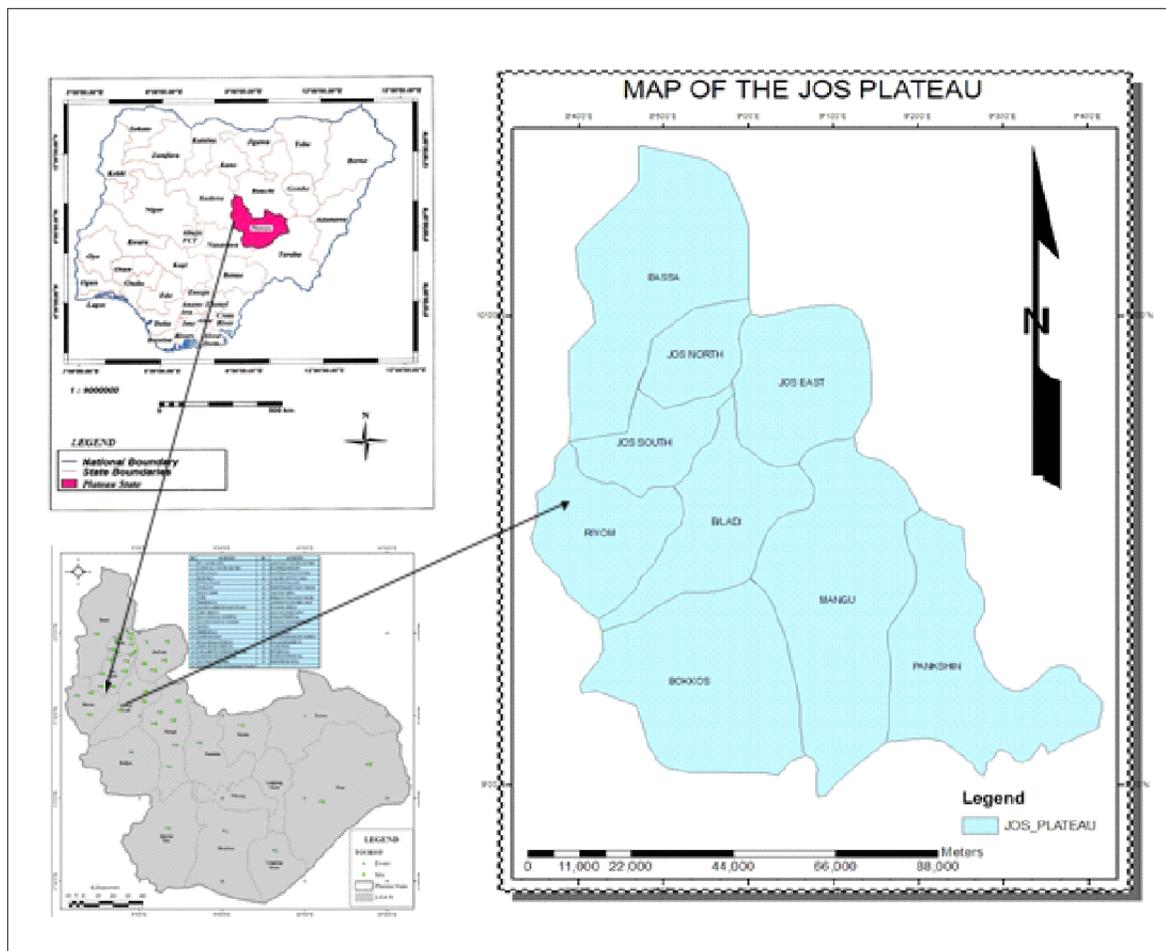


Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing Jos Plateau
 Source: Bureau for land survey and town planning Jos Plateau State (2022): Department of Cartography.

Location and Size of the Jos Plateau Region

The Jos-Plateau zone has a total area landmass of about 9,400 sq. km with an average rise of about 1250 meters above mean sea level. The highest peak in the Jos Plateau attains an elevation of 1829 meters above sea level around the Shere Hills. The Jos-Plateau Region comprises 9 LGAs covering about 9,400km² as shown in figure1 above (Bureau for Land, Survey and Town Planning Jos. Plateau State, 2022).

Climate of the Jos Plateau

The climate of Jos Plateau 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 26⁰C while the mean minimum temperature is about 18⁰C and the average temperature is 22⁰C. 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 and in July and August at the peak of the rainy 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

coldness is a special tourism ecotourism asset/attraction of the region (Plateau State Government, 2019).

Drainage of the Jos Plateau

The Jos – Plateau is noted for its unique drainage networks, which are made up of streams that constitute the sources of major rivers draining the northern part of Nigeria. For this reason, the Jos – Plateau has been regarded as the hydrological centre of Northern Nigeria. This is owing to the fact that the watersheds of some river systems come together at a point near Rayfield in Jos town: with Delimi river draining to lake Chad; the Gongola, Wase, Shemankar, Ankwe and Mada rivers draining into river Benue while Kaduna River drains into the river Niger (Gontul, et al., 2006). Some of the rivers and streams have formed the spectacular waterfalls which are part of the breathtaking tourist attractions of Plateau state. For instance, the Sha Falls, Assop Falls, Kwooll Falls, and Kura Falls are among the most interesting tourist sites of Plateau State which can give her a good image if properly developed (Gontul et al, 2006).

Relief of the Jos Plateau

Generally, Plateau State comprises a geographical entity known as the Jos – Plateau in the northwestern part of the state and the adjoining lowlands (Benue trough) in the southeastern part of the state. The Jos – Plateau zone has a total area landmass of about 9,400 sq km with an average rise of about 1250 meters above mean sea level. The highest peak in the Jos Plateau attains an elevation of 1829 meters above sea level around the Shere Hills. The Jos – Plateau zone comprises nine local government areas to include Jos - North, Jos - South, Jos - East, Riyom, BarkinLadi, Pankshin, Mangu, Bokkos and Bassa Plateau State Government, 2019).

The Jos Plateau massif descends into the adjoining lowlands in precipitous steps and escarpments. Due to steep escarpments of the Jos – Plateau there are a number of waterfalls as the river valleys are traversed by hard resistant rock outcrops at the escarpments. These numerous waterfalls serve as potentials for hydroelectric power generation and development of tourism resorts (Gonap & Okpoko, 2023).

Vegetation of the Jos plateau

Nigeria has two broad belts of vegetation types, namely, the forest and savannah types. There is, however, also the mountain vegetation of the isolated high plateau regions in the central and far eastern parts of the country. The mountain vegetation of the isolated high mountains and plateaus of the central and eastern part of Nigeria is not well developed because of the great influence and interference by man and animals. For instance, the Jos plateau, which is one of the highest points in Nigeria, is in a grassland zone, but its vegetation depicts grassland at the top and base of the Plateau, while the slopes, favored by moisture-laden wind, are covered by forests (Plateau State Government, 2019).

Fauna: The Plateau is home to West Africa's only population of klipspringer (*Oreotragus Oreotragus*), as well as several endemic birds and mammals, including Nigerian mole-rat (*Cryptomys foxi*) and Fox's shaggy rat (*Dasymys foxi*) the rock firefinch (*Lagonostictasanguinodorsalis*) and the Jos Plateau indigobird (*Viduamaryae*). (Plateau State Government 2019).

Threats and preservation: The Jos Plateau is a heavily populated area with loss of native savanna and woodland to farmland conversion and firewood collection; remaining native fauna is predominantly limited to small areas in the more remote areas and river embankments. There is currently no conservation program for this eco-region (Gontul et al., 2006).

History, Language and Culture

The Jos Plateau is home to the ancient Nok culture, known for its remarkable terracotta artwork. After the British colonization of Nigeria, Jos Plateau became a mining region and one of the most important tourist destinations in Nigeria, but touristic activity was impeded in early 21st century by a new conflict between Christians and Muslims as a result of tribal and political differences between the inhabitants of the Jos Plateau (PIDAN, 2013).

The Jos Plateau lies in the Nigeria Middle Belt, and even in this region known for cultural diversity, it is unusually diverse. (Barbour et al., 1982) show over 60 ethno-linguistic groups on the plateau. Most of the plateau's languages are in the Chadic family (Isichei, 1982), which is part of the Afro-Asiatic family. Two of the Plateau's largest ethnic groups are the Berom, in the northern Plateau, and the Angas in the southeast. Smaller groups include the Mwaghavul, Pyem, Ron, Afizere, Anaguta, Aten, Irigwe, Chokfem, and Kofyar.

The Economy of the Jos Plateau

Agriculture is the mainstay of the region's economy, with about 80% of the population actively engaged in farming and almost all living in the rural areas. More than 70% of the region'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 such crops as wheat, strawberry, apples, Irish potato, acha, maize, tomato, green beans, onions, spinach, lettuce, cabbage, carrot, watermelon, etc. Plateau is the largest Irish potato producing region with over 300,000 tons annually. 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, we have the Jos International Breweries, NASCO Group of Companies, Jos Steel Rolling Mill (Plateau State Government, 2019).

Jos – Plateau region is also endowed with mineral resources which are in commercial quantities including Tin, Columbite, Kaolin, Feldspar, Tantalite, 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 Gontul et al, 2006).

Tourism in the Jos Plateau

Jos Plateau is a land of beautiful sceneries, rich cultural and historical heritage and excellent weather. The people of the region are very hospitable and accommodating. These explain why Jos Plateau has come to be identified as the “Home of Peace and Tourism (Gontul et al., 2006). The list of the tourist attractions is endless, but an attempt was made by (Gonap & Gontul 2018) to identify and classify them as: General Attractions, Site Attractions and Event Attractions.

a) 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. The climate of an area is the general average weather condition, which can be inviting or repulsive. Plateau state in this context has generally a very cooled temperate-like climate, which has been noted as her unique attraction to many tourists (both domestic and international). Most tourists are thus attracted to Jos – Plateau region mainly for its weather/climate among other things.

Other general attractions are security and hospitality. An environment that is peaceful, secure and accommodating will surely lure tourists to come. No matter how rich a destination with tourist attractions is, if the local people are not peaceful and accommodating, visitors will be scared to

come. The serenity of a place must, therefore, be seen as an attribute of attractions and good image-maker Gonap & Gontul, 2018).

b) The Site Attractions: The site attractions are the immovable attractions which are found at particular locations. They are either gifts 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, mesas etc. Others are hydrological features such as springs, lakes, dams and waterfalls. We also have in this category 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 Gonap & Gontul, 2018).

c) Event Attractions: These are attractions that are exhibited occasionally. They include mainly the man-made activities, which are hosted from time to time as in festivals and sports. By their nature they may be hosted in particular locations at particular times, but their locations and timing can be changed based on convenience. Thus, except in well-developed destinations where the activities, which attract tourists, are well planned and organized for a year-round exhibition, the tourist may not at all times enjoy them at his will. He will have to wait for the time and location of the event. The event attractions can therefore be said to be mobile and dynamic. Their mobility is in the context of their location and timing, which can change unlike the other attractions that are always there anytime, any day, any time (Gonap & Gontul, 2018).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism, according to Keyser (2004), is "a temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work, and their activities during their stay at these destinations, as well as the facilities and services created to cater to their needs.". Keyser (2004) emphasizes once more that this definition encompasses not only the travel aspect of tourism but also the activities that take place while a person is visiting a particular location.

According to Bennett et al. (2005), tourism is a temporary movement of people away from their regular lives of work and family. This movement involves information, journeys, and destinations. Tourism is defined as "a composite of activities, services, and industries that deliver a travel experience; transportation; lodging; eating and drinking establishments; shops; entertainment; activity facilities; and other hospitality services available for individuals or groups that are traveling away from home" by McIntosh and Goeldner (1990). These activities' diversity adds to the industry's diversity, which is tourism.

Various factors affect sustainable tourism industry development worldwide. Philip (2017) states that factors affecting tourism industry development may be either internal or external. External factors such as weather, safety, access to amenities, peace, and security may affect development of the tourism industry (Becken, 2010). On the other hand, internal factors like inadequate infrastructure, weak human resources, low marketing and promotion strategies (Mekonen, 2016; Selemon & Chiranjib, 2018), and weak linkage with international organizations can hinder the development of tourism industry in a given place (Tadesse, 2015; Yimer, 2016). According to Rachel and Richard (2009), management decisions are not worth the paper they have been written on and decisions have not been implemented. Dodds (2007) Telfer and Sharpley (2008) state that lack of integration and recognition of tourism as a political agenda have also contributed to the weak development of the tourism industry. In the view of Ardahaey (2011), WTTC (2012) and Yimer (2016), lack of coordination and commitment between government

bodies, and absence of stakeholders' involvement, weak communication between authorities have been hindering the sound development of the tourism industry.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design of the Study

The researcher opted for the use of more detailed descriptive surveys through questionnaires and direct observation. I used this approach because it assisted me in obtaining information from the tourists in the sample population.

Population of the Study

The target population identified in this study includes: The tourists at the nine (9) tourist sites, the resort manager and the staff of Plateau State Tourism Corporation and NTDC. The name of the nine (9) tourist sites selected for this study are: Jos Wildlife Park, Assop Fall, Museum of Traditional Nigeria Architecture (MOTNA), Rayfield Resort, Hill Station Hotel, Jos Zoological Garden, National Museum, Shere Hills and Solomon Lar Amusement Park.

The study population consists mainly of the nine (9) tourist resorts in the Jos Plateau region. The names of the tourist resorts/sites with the corresponding average total population of tourists visiting per months are: Jos Wildlife Park (13,757), Assop Fall (2,749), Museum of Traditional Nigeria Architecture (MOTNA) (11,089), Rayfield Resort, (3,116), Hill Station Hotel (3,224), Jos Zoological Garden (12,804), National Museum (12,498), Shere Hills (4,560) and Solomon Lar Amusement Park (3,713). The total population according to the data collected from the nine tourist sites is 67,510, which is the population of this study.

Sampling techniques

Different sampling methods were used at various stages in order to elicit the required data that meet the aim and objectives of the study. The sampling techniques include purposive sampling, simple random sampling and convenience sampling. At the first stage, the researcher used the purposive sampling technique to identify the tourist attractions in the Jos Plateau region which are unique and are being used to project the image of Jos plateau as a tourist destination. The second stage involves simple random sampling which was used to select managers, staff and tourists of these tourism centers. The third stage involves a convenient sample which was used to select staff and tourists that were convenient. The selection of staff and tourists was strictly by convenience. Most staff and tourists were not attended to because they were not available

Sample size

The researcher could not interview the entire plateau population but the tourists at the nine (9) selected tourist resorts/sites. The sample size of this study is the selected managers, staff and tourists of the tourism centers. Therefore, the sample size of 1050 was determined based on purposive sampling techniques. 1050 copies of questionnaires were administered to respondents based on simple random sampling techniques. The 1050 questionnaires were administered to the nine-tourist resorts/sites. 1014 of the questionnaires were validly filled and returned leaving us with an outstanding of 36 questionnaires not returned. The remaining 36 questionnaires not returned are either badly filled or taken away by tourists who are expected to fill and return them. The study was carried out with 1014 completed questionnaires where 116 questionnaires were administered each to 8 tourist resorts while 122 questionnaires were administered to one of the tourist resorts/sites - Jos Wildlife Park - because it has the highest patronage. With respect to the interviewed components of the study, the target audience was 20 respondents but eventually only 15 respondents were interviewed. This consisted of 9 tourists (one from each of the nine sample tourist sites), three staff of the Plateau State Tourism Corporation including the Commissioner of

Tourism and Hospitality and Three General Managers of the resorts were purposely chosen and interviewed orally.

Instruments for Data Collection

The main instruments used for data collection were interviews, extracting the archival/documentary reports, review of crises events, pandemic episodes, field observation and questionnaire which is a combination of closed-ended (structured) and open-ended (unstructured) questions. A well-structured question guide was designed and administered to the respondents. The researcher administered the questions with the help of two research assistants to enable him carry out the research effectively. It took fourteen days to administer the instruments since the tourism sites are located differently.

Data Collection Method

In this study, qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used. The use of the qualitative method was convenient because its emphasis is on examining and clarifying situations plus experiences of the tourist, while the quantitative method addresses the statistical aspects of the topic. The methods used for data collection in this research are both primary and secondary sources. The primary data sources focused more on interviews, observations and questionnaires to obtain information from respondents. Under the secondary sources, the researcher used documents such as government publication, previous research, tourism pamphlets and journal articles. Furthermore, quantitative techniques through questionnaires were also used. This assisted in identifying the number of respondents with similar responses. The two methods of data collection were used to complement each other.

Data Analysis Techniques

As a wide range of data were gathered for this study, the researcher employed also a wide range of techniques to handle the presentation and analyses of the resulting data. The presentation involved summarization of information using chart, frequency distribution tables and other descriptive statistical manipulation such as percentages. Each mode of presentation captured the brief highlights of the main features.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceptions of Tourists About Jos Plateau as at the Times of Their Visits to the State

The image formed of any tourist destination is the consequence of two closely interrelated components: Perceptive/cognitive evaluations, which refer to an individual's knowledge and beliefs about an object or a place, and affective appraisals, which refer to the individual's feelings towards the object or a place attribute. The sampled tourists were asked to disclose their general feelings about Jos Plateau at the times of their visits to the state.

Table 1, shows that at the time of their visits to the state, over 36.3% had the feeling that Jos Plateau was peaceful and rich in tourism potential including clement weather/climate. Only about 19.8% of the tourists felt that Plateau State was a crisis-torn State.

The 1014 sampled tourists at various tourist sites in the Jos Plateau were interviewed on a wide range of issues regarding their knowledge of visits to and perception of the image of Jos Plateau as a tourist destination in Nigeria. Findings are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Perceptions of Tourists about Jos Plateau at the Times of their Visits to the State

Feelings	Number of Respondents N=1014	%
Rich tourism attractions	368	36.3
Good weather/climate	231	22.8
Peaceful and hospitable people	214	21.1
Crisis prone area	201	19.8
Total	1014	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2023

Outstanding Characteristics of Jos Plateau as Adjudged by Tourists

Furthermore, the sampled tourists to Jos Plateau were asked to identify what they felt were the outstanding characteristics of Jos Plateau. According to Table 2, over four-fifths of the sampled tourists said that the most outstanding characteristic of the Jos Plateau is the cool climate/weather, which is pleasant and friendly/clement. About one-half of the tourists rated the natural/cultural scenic attractions and general hospitality of the inhabitants of the state as outstanding characteristics of the State.

Table 2: Outstanding Characteristics of Jos Plateau as Adjudged by Tourists

Outstanding Characteristics	Number of Respondents(N=1014)	%
Weather/Climate	231	22.8
Natural Scenic features	223	22.0
Hospitality	197	19.4
Cultural diversity/features	105	10.3
Harmony and Peace	170	16.8
Do not know	88	8.7
Total	1014	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2023

Notable Natural and Cultural Attractions for Tourists in the Jos Plateau

The tourists were asked to list all the natural and cultural tourist attractions in the Jos Plateau that they knew about before their visits Table 3. Their responses show that two natural tourists' attractions in the State were popularly known to the tourists including the clement weather/climate in the Jos Plateau region of the State (about 9.2%) and the Shere Hills (8.3%) before they visited the State. Others that were fairly known were the Kura Falls and Riyom rock. On the other hand, the popularly heard about man-made attractions that the tourists knew about were Jos Wildlife Park, Jos National Museum, Jos Zoological Garden, Museum of Traditional Nigerian Architecture (MOTNA), Mado Tourist Village and the Tin mine features (mine ponds and dumps) in descending order. Surprisingly, only three festivals were mentioned by the tourists despite the numerous colourful cultural festivals hosted by the over 50 indigenous ethnic groups at different times of each year. From the list, it is clear that some of the natural tourist attractions in the State such as Kahwang Basaltic Rock, Kwoll fall were not known to the tourists. The most popularly known tourist attractions of the State are the most often referenced in the tourism promotion materials of the State and Nigeria at large, which serve as her image projectors. The least known attractions, on the other hand, are often not well captured in the promotion tools. All

things being equal, tourists may visit or patronize mainly the attractions they have known or heard about.

Furthermore, the weather/climate is the most popular natural tourist attraction of the State, the friendly weather/climate is only confined to the Jos Plateau region of the State. The Jos Plateau region enjoys cool and friendly temperatures as a result of its high altitude which is on an average of 1,250 meters above mean sea level. This climate/weather of the region is a very important tourist asset to Plateau State. A good number of tourists thus always choose the Jos-Plateau region of the State as their most preferred destination mainly due to her clement weather/climate. The lower Plateau region of the State is, however, hot and its weather/climate is not that all friendly.

Table 3: Natural and Cultural Tourist Attractions in the Jos Plateau which Tourists Knew About before Visiting

Name of Attraction	Number of Respondents	
	N=1014	%
Climate/Weather	93	9.2
Shere Hills	84	8.3
Assop Falls	70	6.9
Riyom Rock	65	6.4
Mado Tourist Village	62	6.2
Kura Falls	57	5.6
Amurum Bird Sanctuary	54	5.3
Ampidong Crater Lake	50	4.9
Kerang Volcano	43	4.2
Punguk Spring	40	3.9
Jos National Museum	97	9.7
Jos Wildlife Park	90	8.8
Museum of Traditional Nigeria Architecture (MOTNA)	81	7.9
Mining Landscape	21	2.2
Naraguta Leather works	20	1.9
Ray Field Resort	17	1.8
Solomon Lar Amusement Park	13	1.2
Hill Station Hotel	12	1.2
Cultural Festivals (IgoonAfizere, NzemBerom, Pusdung)	13	1.3
Lamingo Golf Course	15	1.5
Jos Stadium	10	0.9
Crest Hotel	7	0.7
Total	1014	100.0

Source: Field work, 2023

Natural and Cultural Tourist Sites in the Jos Plateau Patronized by Tourists

The tourists were further asked to list the natural and cultural tourist sites in the Jos Plateau, which they had personally visited or patronized. Their responses show that Shere Hills was the most visited natural tourist attraction in the Jos Plateau Table 5. This was followed in descending order by Assop Falls, Riyom Rock and Kura Falls. The least patronized sites on the other hand are the Amurum bird sanctuary and Kerang Volcanic Formations (Volcanic Dome, Punguk Spring and the Ampidong Crater Lake). All of these least visited sites are relatively far away from the State capital, Jos.

Conversely, the most patronized man - made tourist attraction in the Jos Plateau was Jos Wildlife Park, mentioned by nine out of every ten respondents. It was followed in descending order by the Jos National Museum, Jos Zoological Garden and Museum of Traditional Nigerian Architecture (MOTNA) and Mado Tourist Village, each patronized by eight out of every ten respondents Table 5. All these highly patronized cultural attractions are located within Jos town, the State headquarters. The least patronized man - made resort is Rayfield Resort, which is under a serious condition of disrepair as at the time of study.

Comparatively, the findings show that the man –made attractions are patronized more than the natural attractions. This is probably because the cultural attractions, which are mostly in Jos town, the State capital, are more accessible than many of the natural ones which are found in the more remote rural locations. Only three festivals Nzem Berom, Pusedung and IgoonIzere had been patronized by the sampled tourists. The numerous festivals in the Jos Plateau could have witnessed low patronage because they are less popular, farther away from Jos with attendant accessibility problems, inauspicious timing of the event or for some other reasons such as insecurity and bad road Table 5.

The findings on the patronage of tourist attractions in Plateau concur with the concept of distance decay in geography which explains the friction of distance on spatial interaction between places (nodes). The distance decay effect states that the interaction between two locales declines as the distance between them increases. However, with the breakthrough in travel technology, distance has less effect than it did in the past, except in places where previously well-connected routes have been disconnected. In this case, it appears that tourist attractions farther away from Jos, the state capital, are less patronized than those in or near the city.

Table 5: Natural and Cultural Tourist Sites in the Jos Plateau Visited by Tourists:

Name of Tourist site	Number of Respondents	
	N=1014	%
Shere Hills	64	6.3
Riyom Rock	33	3.2
Assop Falls	32	3.1
Mado Tourist Village	30	2.9
Kura Falls	27	2.5
Ampidong Crater Lake	12	1.1
Kerang Volcano	12	1.1
Punguk Spring	108	10.6
Amurum Bird Sanctuary	107	10.5
Museum of Traditional Nigeria Architecture (MOTNA).	96	9.5
Jos National Museum	97	9.6
Jos Zoological Garden	96	9.5
Jos Wildlife Park	86	8.3
Tin Mined Features	27	2.6
Solomon Lar Amusement Park	39	3.6
Hill Station Hotel	23	2.3
Naraguta Leather works	13	1.3
Jos Stadium	12	1.2
NASCO	27	2.6
NzemBerom	30	2.7
PusdungNgas Festival	29	2.6
IgoonIzere	44	4.2
Total	1014	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The Most Appealing Tourist Attractions in the Jos Plateau to Tourists

The sampled tourists in the Jos Plateau were further asked to mention one outstanding/most appealing tourist attraction to them Table 6. Their responses show that the most appealing tourist attraction of the Jos Plateau is the friendly climate/weather, followed by Jos WildLife Park, Assop Falls, Jos National Museum and Jos Zoological Garden in descending order. The most appealing attractions are not usually the most patronized due to some other reasons, for instance, distance and accessibility issues but may serve as symbols for good image projection in marketing and promotion advertorials for the state.

Table 6: The Most Appealing Tourist Attractions to Tourists in the Jos Plateau

Name of Attraction	Number of Respondents N = 1014	%
Weather and Climate	206	35.7
Jos WildLife Park	102	10.7
Ampidong Crater Lake	68	9.6
Jos National Museum	123	11.1
Assop Falls	68	10.4
MOTNA	44	5.2
Mado Tourist Village	68	6.6
Jos Zoo	173	10.1
Shere Hills	30	2.9
Kura Falls	19	1.8
Jarawa Dance (Asharuwa) at IgoonIzere festival	12	1.2
Solomon Lar Amusement Park	11	1.1
Total	1014	100.0

Source: Field work, 2023

On the richness of the attractions, this study has revealed that the Jos Plateau region is very richly endowed with both natural and man-made tourist attractions. The range of the attractions shows that the Jos Plateau, in terms of potential tourist attractions, may be ranked among the leading tourism endowed regions in Nigeria. However, most of the attractions have not been fully exploited or developed. If truly the tourism attractions of the region are fully harnessed (i.e, planned, developed, well managed and intensively promoted), then the region could be a leading tourist destination in Plateau State and Nigeria at large.

Among the rich tourist attractions of the region, is her clement, friendly and very inviting weather/climate. Of all the tourist attractions of the region the most outstanding is the friendly and temperate-like weather/climate of Jos- Plateau region (Gontul, Oche and Daloeng 2007). The Jos town, which is the state capital, is located on the Jos-Plateau is the coldest state capital in Nigeria. The weather/climatic image of Jos Plateau region is therefore very inviting and friendly and it is actually being projected and perceived as a very attractive tourism attribute of the Jos-Plateau region (Gontul et al., 2007). Jos town, with its clement weather/climate, is the most preferred tourist destination for international tourists from temperate regions (Gontul et al., 2007). This single reason saw the development of the Hill Station Hotel (a resort) as a first of its kind for the colonial masters in Jos town in the colonial days in Nigeria (could it be because of the tin mining going on then, and the fact that the owners of the tin mines were White nationals, who also attracted their friends(Gontul et al., 2007)).The other outstanding tourism resources, which are noted in this survey as unique in the Jos Plateau region are: Museum of Traditional Nigerian Architecture (MOTNA) the only kind in Africa, South of the Sahara, the Ampidong Crater Lake- the only kind in West Africa, Jos National Museum- the biggest in Nigeria, Jos Wildlife Park –the first and the biggest man-made conservation reservoir in Nigeria, the Kahwang Basaltic Pavement - the only kind in Africa. The researcher also established that

Plateau State is the second state with diverse ethnic nationalities with over 50 indigenous ethnic groups after Adamawa State in Nigeria (Dung-Gwom et al., 2009). These diverse cultural groups in the state all exhibit very rich and colourful cultures, arts and crafts among others, which are all representing the rich cultural tourism wealth of Plateau State.

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 region is well known for hosting a number of sporting activities such as the golf tournament every December/January, national football league matches, friendly matches, Governor's Football Cup Competition and a lot more of local sporting competitions. Jos Plateau region is also a home for different religious activities which have touristic values: religious seminars, conferences, fellowships, (re)citations etc.

The diverse people of the Jos Plateau region have very rich cultural heritage which they uphold religiously, resulting in the festivals which provide entertainment to the people and visitors all year round. The art treasures and artifacts of the state occupy significant places of honour in galleries the world over. The numerous ethnic groups also provide some of the important and leading cultural traits of the nation's rich cultural heritage. Some of the traditional dances and songs have won distinction at international festivals.

One interesting thing is that the cultural traits of the numerous indigenous ethnic groups of the state are interrelated and tend to blend into one another, depending on the proximity of one to the other and or ancestral linkages. Indeed, the cultural factors that bind the people are more than those that divide them.

Indeed, the list of the tourist attractions is long and endless and if richness of attractions were the only factor in image projection/perception, then Jos Plateau region would have sustainably been projected/portrayed as having a very good tourism destination image in Nigeria. But this would only happen if the tourism assets of the region were effectively harnessed (planned, developed, managed and well promoted). Efficient utilization of the rich tourism potentials of the state would have impacted very positively on the perceived tourism image of the state (Gontul et al., 2007). The Ministry of Tourism and Culture has even as a mark of giving impetus to the sector, drew up a comprehensive strategic tourism development plan of the region in 2019 awaiting implementation. The plan is to accomplish new tourism projects, complete all abandoned tourism projects and renovate/upgrade tourism resorts to international standards among others strategies. Some of these developments are being undertaken as at the time of this survey.

6. CONCLUSION

Jos Plateau region is richly endowed with both natural and man-made tourist attractions which if adequately planned, developed, managed and promoted will boost a very positive tourism destination image for the region, a good number of the tourist attractions in the region have not been fully exploited or given a befitting planning, development, management and promotion. Such attractions are just lying fallow and in some instances are being outrightly abused, misused and wasted by local people. The study established that the perceived tourism destination image of Jos Plateau region is highly dynamic and is influenced by one or a combination of the following factors namely: richness, attractiveness and uniqueness of tourist attractions in the region.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings underscored that today tourists are now prone to travel to destinations based on the image perceived of the chosen destination. They amass information about a destination they are about to visit and may even conceive images of other different destinations before finally selecting the one they prefer is most appealing to them. This finding implies that Jos Plateau as a tourist destination should strive to project positively her tourism image through aggressive promotion campaigns. Destinations with unique, positive, alluring and inviting images are usually in the forefront of being first to be considered. Destinations that were not listed in the travel plans are now gaining more popularity. Overall investment in the tourism industry in Jos Plateau region is paltry and inconsistent. A sustained substantial investment in tourism by both private and public bodies to develop it to world class tourist attraction in the region is very pivotal and highly recommended. While the government invests in infrastructural developments, the private may invest in the superstructures.

REFERENCES

- Ardahaey, F.T. (2011). Economic impacts of the tourism industry. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6(8), 206–215.
- Barbour, K.M., Cooke, M., Geary, W.J. & Oyenuga, A. (Eds.) (1982). *Nigeria in maps*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Becken, S. (2010). *The importance of climate and weather for tourism: A literature review*. New Zealand: Lincoln University-Land, Environment and People Series.
- Berneth, A., Jooste C. & Strydom, L. (2005). *Managing Tourism Services* 3rd eds. Pretoria Van Schaalk Publishers.
- Bureau for land Survey and town planning Jos Plateau State (2022). *Department of Cartography*.
- Dodds, R. (2007a). Sustainable tourism & policy implementation: Lessons from the Case of Calviá, Spain. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(1), 46-66.
- Dung-Gwom, J. Y., Baklit, G., Gontul, T. G., Gyang, J. D. & Galadima, J. S. (2009). *The Field Guide of Plateau State*. Department of Geography and Planning, University of Jos, Jos
- Frangialli, F., and World Tourism Organization (WTO), (2006). The TSA's relevance for policy-makers. Tourism Satellite Account (TSA)–Implementation project *Enzo Paci papers on measuring the economic significance of tourism*, 5, 103-108.
- Gonap, E. G., Dante A.B., Chuma V., & Gontul T.K. (2017). SWOT Analysis of plateau State as a prime Tourist Destination in Nigeria. *International Journal of Current Research*, 9(12), 63390 – 63398.
- Gonap, E. G., Gontul T. K. & Iirmdu, T. O. (2018). Awareness of the Tourism Brand Name of Plateau State among Tourists. *Journal of Tourism and Heritage Studies*, 7(2) 63-74.
- Gonap E. G., Chuma V. Dante A.B & Gontul T. (2017). Tourists Motivations to Plateau State. *International Journal Development Research*, 7 (12), 18024 – 18029.

- Gonap, E.G & Gontul, T.K (2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic and patronage Of Tourist Resorts in the Jos plateau, Nigeria. *Journal of Tourism and Heritage Studies* Vol 9(2) 85-101
- Gonap, E.G. & Gontul, T.K and Makyur, O.A (2020). COVID-19 and Pandemic Restriction: Implication for the tourism industry on the Jos plateau region, Nigeria *Tourist Today Journal of the Collage of Tourist and Hotel management Ball state University USA* Vol 19 179-196
- Gonap, E.G. & Gontul, T.K. (2018). *Measuring the perceived destination image of Plateau State Nigeria*. Published 12th February 2018 by LAP LAMBERT Academic publisher member of omniscryptum publishing group, 17 Meldrum Street Beau Basin 71504 Mauritius. ISBN 978-613-7-37802-1
- Gonap, E.G. & Okpoko, P.U. (2023). Symbiotic relationship between peace and tourism as reflected in the patronage of resorts in the Jos Plateau. *Journal of Archaeology and Tourism Research*, 3(1) 124-135.
- Gonap, E.G., Madaki, K. & Ahmad, Y. A. (2023). Major sources of information used by tourists in Plateau State. *Journal of Tourism Sport Management and Marketing* 2(1), 1-15
- Gonap, E.G., Makyur, O.A. & Gagbanyi, C.T. (2021). Jos National Museum and cultural tourism development in Plateau State. *Journal of Tourism and Heritage Studies*, 10(2), 65-87.
- Gonap, E.G. & Makyur, O.A. (2022). *Sustainable tourism and conflict resolution in Plateau State*. In E.A. Nwankwo, N.S. Mbaigbo and V.C. Ozoigbo (eds): *Tourism and National Reformation in the 21st century. Perspectives and Direction*, K, and B printing press. 98-115.
- Gontul, K. T., Allu, E., & Daloeng, H. M. (2006). Effects of ethno-religious crisis on patronage of Jos National Museum. *Journal of Research in tourism*, 1,61-71.
- Gontul, T. K., Oche, C. Y., & Daloeng, H. M. (2007). An investigation of climatic attractiveness of Jos town as a tourist destination in Nigeria. *Journal of Geography and Planning Sciences*, 2(1), 24-32.
- Isichei, E. (1982). Introduction. In: Isichei, E. (Ed.) *Studies in the history of Plateau State, Nigeria*, (pp 1–57). London: Macmillan
- Keyser, A. (2004). *Developing Tourism in South Africa toward a competitive destination*. Oxford University press (2nd eds).
- McIntosh, R.W., & Goeldner, C.R. (1990). *Tourism: Principles, Practices, Philosophies*, New York, Wiley.
- Mekonen, T.A (2016). The role of media in tourism promotion: A case study in Ethiopia. *Journal of Hospitality Management and Tourism*, 7(5), 50-56.

- Pasquini, M. W., & Alexander, M. J. (2005). Soil fertility management strategies In the Jos Plateau: the need for integrating 'empirical and scientific' knowledge in agricultural development. *Geographical Journal*, 171(2), 112-124.
- Philip, S. K. (2017). Factors that inhibit the development of tourism in Sierra Leone after the rebel war. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 7(1), 38-43.
- Plateau Initiatives for Development and Advancement of the Natives, PIDAN (2013). Effects of Jos/Plateau Conflicts and crises, and Implications on Nigeria National Security. *Geographical Journal*, 2(1), 34-41.
- Plateau State Government (2019). Available at <http://www.plateaustate.gov.ng> (accessed May, 2020.)
- Rachel, D. & RichardThlama, B. (2009). Barriers to implementing sustainable tourism policy in mass tourism destinations. *Tourismos: An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism*, 5(1), 35-53.
- Selemon, T.F. & Chiranjib, K (2018). Status of tourism marketing and promotion: Gambella people's national regional state, Gambella, south west Ethiopia. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 7(5), 1-11.
- Tadesse, K-M. (2015). Ethiopia: Opportunities and challenges of tourism development in the Addis Ababa - upper Rift Valley Corridor. Department of Geography, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Edinboro, USA. 18.
- Telfer, J. D. & Sharpley, R. (2008). *Tourism and development in the developing world*. New York and London: Routledge.
- The Human Right Watch Report 2005.
- United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), (2016). UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (English version). *UNWTO World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex*, 14(2), 55-120.
- World Tourism Organization, WTO (2012). *International tourism hits one billion*. Retrieved from <http://media.unwto.org/en/press-release/2012-12-12/international-tourism-hits-one-billion> (15th April, 2014).
- Yimer, A. (2016). Challenge and prospect of Ethiopian tourism policy. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 16(1), 19-27.