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Ecotourism Potentials of Plateau State, Nigeria: A Monitoring Survey

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Endowment with natural attractive features is one of the important indicators of a successful development of ecotourism, as simulation of ecotourism potentials can significantly affect patronage by making experience unnatural. This survey was conducted using oral interviews, group discussions, a reconnaissance survey and information obtained from administrative records of ecotourism institutions. The results obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in the form of tables and a graph. The study revealed that Plateau State is endowed with potential packaged in many tourism centres, such as Pandam Wildlife Park, Jos Wildlife Park, Jos National Museum and Zoo, Wase Wildlife Park, Assop Falls, Naraguta Tourist Village, Rayfield Resort, Pai River Game Reserve and Amurun Bird Sanctuary, and these are stocked with different tourism products. Some of the products include viewing game, wilderness tourism, bird watching, fishing, and recreational and cultural tourism. On an annual basis, the Jos National Museum and Zoo recorded the highest number of tourists, about 300,000 in 2003, 2004 and 2007. A cumulative 424,252 tourists visited the surveyed ecotourism destinations of Plateau State in 2004, while 112,648 visited in 1998. December had a relatively high number of tourists throughout the period of the study. There was a progressive increase in the cumulative number of ecotourists from 1998 to 2004. These tourism potentials, if properly and fully harnessed, could make Plateau State and the various tourism centres financially independent.

Key words: ecotourism potential, tourism centre, Plateau State, wildlife

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Introduction

Given tourism's global significance when properly managed, communities throughout the world have welcomed it as an instrument for economic development, and scholars from many disciplinary backgrounds have embraced it as a subject worth studying. Tourism is a complex system of supply and demand wherein destinations provide different products and the travelling public desires diverse experiences (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). One such desired experience is travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objectives of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild biological diversity, as well as any existing cultural manifestations.

Tourism is one of the non-consumptive ways of utilizing wildlife resources. Ecotourism, a wildlife-based aspect of environmental tourism, focuses on protected natural zones that are untouched by human activities, with the aim of enjoying the fauna and flora resources of the area (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1992; Ijeomah, Alarape, & Ogo, 2007). The search for unique, authentic and unspoiled attractions by ecotourists is necessitated by the fact that everyday life is almost saturated with artifice (MacCannell, 1976). In their desire for vivid experiences, ecotourists search for ecodestinations with spectacular potential, and through this many economies have derived huge benefits (Ashley, 2005; Ayodele, 2002; Ijeomah, 2007; Ijeomah, Ayodele, & Alarape, 2005).

Tourism sites are environment-specific, as what attracts people from diverse ecological, social, economic and/or cultural backgrounds differs from one person to another; hence, the value of a tourism site depends on the peculiarity of the tourism features as identified

by the people. According to Drum and More (2002), these diverse attractions may include one or a combination of rare or endemic species of flora and fauna, abundant wildlife, high indices of species diversity, or unusual or unique historic or contemporary cultural manifestations in a natural context.

Nigeria is unarguably one of the richest nations on earth in terms of tourism potential (*Atlas of Nigeria*, 2002; Ayodele, 2002; Marguba, 2006; Partnership for Development, 2002). Edet and Ijeomah (2006) listed Cross River, Bauchi and Plateau States as popular tourism destinations in Nigeria. Close to Cameroon, Cross River State is well endowed with biodiversity. The Obudu Cattle Ranch, the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Cross River National Park and the multi-billion Naira Tinapa Project are good tourism sites. Bauchi State is renowned for the Yankari Game Reserve, where many species of big game including the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) can be viewed roaming in their natural state. The popular Wikki Warm Spring is also one of the wonders of the Yankari Game Reserve (Iduh, 2007). Apart from being well endowed with wildlife, Plateau State has well-organized tourism operations that have existed for decades (Ijeomah et al., 2005), and it is the only state with an organized market for souvenirs, where rural people are involved in international souvenir marketing. Plateau State is closer to Abuja – the federal capital territory – than both Bauchi and Cross River States; hence, it is the most easily accessible.

Although Nasarawa State is the closest state to Abuja, it does not have a wildlife park. The Nasarawa game reserve, proposed as far back as 1972, is yet to be officially announced let alone developed for ecotourism. The major ecotourism site in Nasarawa that is

attracting foreigners' attention is the Farin Ruwa waterfall. The waterfall is at the boundary of Nasarawa and Plateau States, about 130 km from Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa State. In fact, the Farin Ruwa water is sourced in the Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State, but falls in Nasarawa State. The downgrading of the management of the Yankari Wildlife Park from a national park to a game reserve was done under the administration of a governor who was ambitious for ecotourism improvement and interested in marketing, but at present is out of power. The new management is restructuring and redesigning the lodges, though at a slow rate. This inconsistency in management, from state government in 1956 (under which the Park was opened to the public in 1962) to central government in 1991 and back to state government again on 1 June 2006, is affecting tourism development and projects at the site.

The closest state to Bauchi is still Plateau. Elephants and other herbivores migrate seasonally from the Yankari Wildlife Park to communities in Wase and in the Kanem Local Government Areas of Plateau State to feed on their crops. Yankari Wildlife Park is just 5 miles from the Pai River Game Reserve of Plateau State. In fact, the Plateau State Ministry of Environment proposed a kind of inter-boundary wildlife management scheme to the federal government of Nigeria with a view to boosting tourism through wildlife conservation before Yankari Wildlife Park was handed over to the Bauchi State government. This proposition shows that Plateau State is tourism-conscious. Wildlife can be more easily sited in the parks of Plateau State, being part of the guinea savanna, than the parks in Cross River State, with the thick luxuriant vegetation for which the rain forest regions are known.

Ijeomah and Alao (2007) emphasized that tourism development can hardly be achieved without first having an understanding of the tourism potentials and packages in an ecodestination. This is because both investors' attraction to the tourism sector and tourists' movement to ecodestinations can be hampered by paucity of information. This study therefore surveys the ecotourism potentials of Plateau State, Nigeria, with a view to assessing visitor arrivals in the various parks.

Methodology

The study area, Plateau State, is located in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria and lies between latitudes 8°30' and 10°30' North, longitude 8°30' and 10°45' East (Figure 1), with a land mass covering 53,585 km². It shares boundaries with Nasarawa, Kaduna Bauchi and Taraba States. Information for the study was collected through in-depth interviews, group discussions, from a reconnaissance survey and from the administrative records of various tourism institutions. To identify the tourism potentials of Plateau State, in-depth interviews were conducted with the following officials of tourism bodies: the Director of Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) North Central Zone; the Director (Forestry and Wildlife) of the Plateau State Ministry of Environment (PSME); the Curator of Jos National Museums and Zoo (JNMZ); the Deputy Director of Tourism, at the Plateau State Ministry of Culture and Tourism (PSMTC); the Acting General Manager of the Plateau State Tourism Corporation (PSTC); the Assistant General Manager, Commercials and Tourism Promotions, PSTC; the Assistant General Manager (Wildlife), PSTC; the Project Managers of Jos Wildlife Park (JWLP), Pandam Wildlife Park (PWLP), Assop Falls

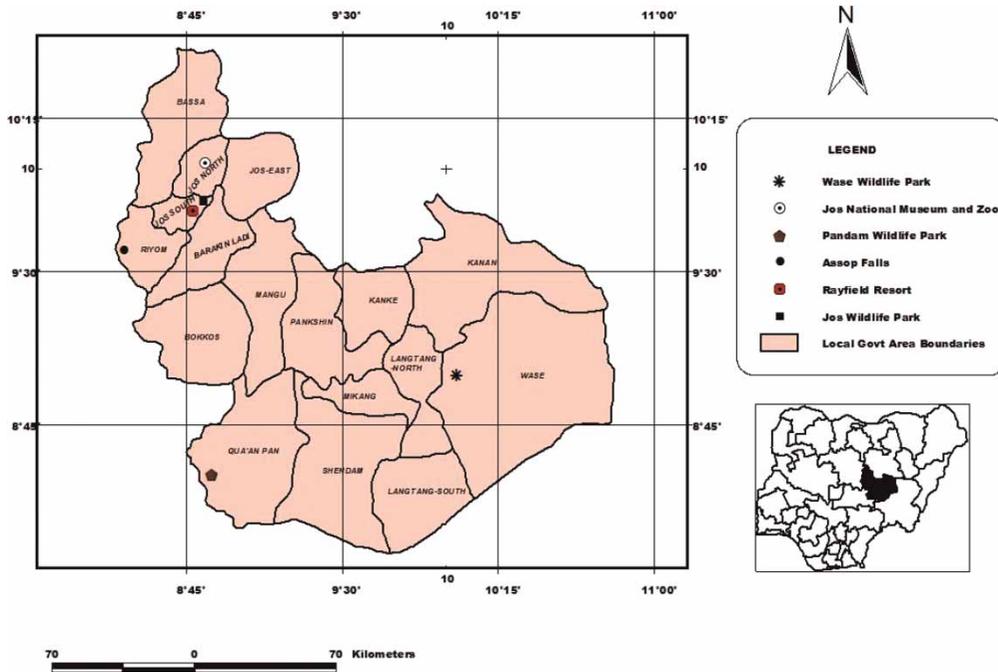


Figure 1 Map of Plateau State Showing Location of Some Tourist Centres.

(AF) and Rayfield Resort (RR), and the former Project Manager of Wase Wildlife Park (WWLP). The in-depth interviews focused on the history of tourism in the state, how tourism sites were located and developed, on the management of tourism, tourism patronage, employment of staff, and the relationships between management and host communities. For confirmation of facts, these topics were also addressed in focused group discussions through personal contacts with selected staff members of NTDC, PSTC, JWLP, PGR and JNMZ, who had a minimum of 10 years' working experience and therefore should have been quite knowledgeable about tourism and conservation matters in Plateau State.

The ecotourism destinations in Plateau State as identified by these tourism officials were visited for verification of information obtained through interview and discussions and also for

a reconnaissance survey. At part of ongoing research that started in 1997, Plateau State has been visited on at least an annual basis, but for the purpose of this work each ecodestination was visited twice in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. However, Pandam Wildlife Park was visited twice during the dry season as accessibility to the park is difficult during the rainy season when most places are flooded. Each of the visits took 5 days and among the research activities were monitoring of primate species, observing the behaviour of primate species between 5.30 and 7.00 a.m., and between 5.00 and 7.30 p.m., patrolling of the park to ascertain the ease of finding a site for games, walking along the ecological trail ways, assessing the condition of the lodges, and interacting with officials of the park.

In Jos Wildlife Park, different animal enclosures were visited to determine the number of

Table 1 Major Tourist Attractions in Plateau State

Landscape of plateau
Temperate weather condition
Shere Hills
Wase Wildlife Park
Kwi Conical Hill
Kahwang Basaltic rock formation
Kerang Volcano Hill
Bal Hill Katui
Riyom Rock
Assop Falls
Kurra Falls/International youth tourism centre, Kurra
Sha Falls
Jos National Museum/Zoo
Jos Wildlife Park
Pandam Wildlife Park
Naraguta Tourist Village
Rayfield Resort
Solomon Lar Amusement Park
Mining ponds/lakes
Amuru Bird Sanctuary
Am-pidong Crater Lake, Ampang West
Foron sand dunes
Jal Bang Rock, Shendam
Artworks
Federal College of Forestry, Jos
National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru
University of Jos
National Veterinary Research Institute, Vom

Source: Field Survey, 2007.

tourists each attracts on a daily basis during the tourism on-season and off-season; the condition of the animals was also observed during the wet and dry seasons. Patronages were assessed in various ecodestinations per season and the facilities in the ecodestinations were also observed. The data collected on tourist statistics were on tourist number on a daily basis. Forty tourists were selected at

random in each ecodestination and interviewed to determine what attracted them to the tourism sites and to Plateau State. Information on tourist statistics was obtained from the administrative records of the respective tourism institutions. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of means and graphs. The numbers of tourists from all the selected destinations

were added on a monthly and annual basis to obtain cumulative figures for tourists' visitation, while average tourist visitations to ecotourism destinations on a monthly basis were calculated by dividing the respective monthly equivalents of tourists (obtained from Table 3, see later) with the number of functioning ecodestinations.

Results and Discussion

Tourist Attractions

The results from the study (Table 1) show that Plateau State is endowed with diverse tourism potential, including core and supporting attractions, with the advantage of being located close to Abuja, the federal capital territory of Nigeria. Due to the upland landscape, many houses were built on top of rocks, whereas others were built either in depressions or on flat land. Communities such as Fudawa, Gondola, Tina and Eto-baba close to the old Lamingo Road in Jos North Local Government Area appear to be surrounded by hills of approximately uniform shape and size. Very low temperature is experienced in most parts of the state because of the high altitude, rising from 1,200 m above sea level at the lowland to a peak of 1,829 m above sea level. This agrees with the report of Ijeomah (2007), that some foreigners are attracted to Plateau State because it is a temperate region in a tropical country. The months of November, December, January and February are particularly cold due to the harmattan, and the PSTC (2005) reported that temperatures below 10°C had been recorded. This agrees with a news broadcast in December 1997 where the Plateau State Radio and Television (PRTV) (1997, as cited in Ijeomah et al., 2005) implicated low temperature in the

death of five people in the Pankshin Local Government Area of the state. On the contrary, the months of March and April are exceptionally dry and warm in preparation for the setting in of the rainy season. The rain is heaviest between the months of May and September.

Among the major attractions are hills and rocks of different shapes, colours and sizes; and unique landscape, waterfalls, cultural festivals, artworks, wildlife species, historical relics and artefacts, as shown in Table 1. The hills and rock formations include Shere Hills, Kerang Volcanic Hills, Jal Bang rock formation Wase Rock, etc. The Shere Hills are a range of hills and rocks rising to 1,829 m above sea level, which is the highest point in Plateau State. Tourism activities on Shere Hills include mountaineering, picnicking and military-type training. However, the range played host to the first all-African Scouts' Jamboree in the year 1976. Riyom Rock has a natural shape quite similar to the geographical boundaries of Plateau State carved on a rock. Another wonder is the Kahwang Bassalt rock formation, which assumes the posture of rocks cut out into different shapes (on the banks and floor of a river) and carefully arranged by nature. Ijeomah (2007) reported that a similar arrangement, "Giant's Causeway", has been found off the coast of Northern Ireland.

Two hundred and sixteen km south-east of Jos in Wase town is a massive dome-shaped inselberg, Wase Rock, which stands alone on a vast plain at a height of 350 m. According to Hopkins, a bird-watcher in PSTC (2005), Wase Rock is one of only five permanent breeding places for the Rossy (white) Pelican birds (*Pelicanus rosus*) in Africa. Confirming its touristic value Ijeomah, Alarape, and Imran (2006) stated that the Wase Rock has attracted several bird-watchers, naturalists,

Table 2 Tourist Products at Tourist Centres in Plateau State

Tourist centres	Tourist Products
1. Pandam Wildlife Park	Boating, bird watching, sport fishing, fishing festival, cultural tourism, wildlife tourism and wilderness tourism, recreational tourism
2. Jos Wildlife Park	Cultural tourism, wildlife tourism, wilderness tourism, mountaineering and horse riding
3. Jos National Museum/ Zoo	Wildlife tourism, recreational tourism, cultural tourism, historical tourism, conference tourism and heritage tourism
4. Wase Game Reserve	Mountaineering, heritage tourism, wildlife tourism, bird watching and recreational tourism
5. Assop Falls	Waterfalls and recreational tourism
6. Naraguta Tourist Village	Handicraft (souvenirs) and cultural tourism
7. Rayfield Resort	Boating, sport fishing, recreational tourism and swimming
8. Pai River Game Reserve	Wilderness tourism and wildlife tourism
9. Amurun Bird Sanctuary	Bird watching
10. Solomon Lar Amusement Park	Recreational tourism and indoor games

Source: Field Survey, 2007.

geographers, rock climbers and tourists from far and wide. PSTC, in conjunction with the mountaineering club, organizes an annual rock-climbing expedition to the top of the rock between August and September. Kwi Conical Hill and Kerang Volcanic Hill are other scenic landscapes in Plateau State (Table 1). The Nigerian Environmental Study Action/Team (NEST, 1991) has reported similar fascinating scenic landscapes in Obudu, Cross River State.

Fascinating waterfalls in Plateau State include Kurra Falls and Sha Falls, which provide locations for boating, swimming, camping, rock climbing and picnicking. With the exception of boating, Assop Falls provides locations for the other activities mentioned (Table 2). At Assop Falls, water, after gushing out, falls on heavy rocks and splashes

continuously, thereby making the scene wondrous and exciting.

Unlike what has happened in Indonesia (Wall, 1996), Sri Lanka (Ashley, 2005), Nepal (Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies [CREST], 1995) and Senegal (*Atlas of Nigeria*, 2002) there are, however, numerous wildlife resources, cultural treasures and potential sites for ecotourism that have not been fully harnessed for economic benefits. Pai River, a game reserve that covers about 831.0 km² and is quite rich in rare, abundant and endangered species of wildlife, and to which elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) occasionally migrate from the Yankari Wildlife Park, suffers neglect. Mado tourist village is shut down, with facilities and rare potential such as Mado cave lying waste. Rayfield Resort, a trench converted into a beautiful

lake for siteseeing, picnicking, recreation and boating (Table 2), which is a cherished location for many tourists, is not functioning at full capacity.

Pandam Wildlife Park is another tourist hotspot. Though it is not officially opened to the public for tourism, it has tourism properties, such as a self-guided nature trail, wilderness tourism, boating, game viewing, and fishing for sport, while round houses reflect the culture and rural lives in the tourist village (Table 2). Pandam Lake is 22 km in length. At the lakeside are numerous species of bird. Bird watching at the park is either done on water or on land, unlike at Wase Game Reserve. Beside the lake, when entering the park through the administrative buildings, is the site for activities – an open space without facilities, but serving as a venue for the Pandam fishing festival, which was last held in 1986. Between this area and Pandam Lake are numerous footprints of *Hippopotamus amphibius*, conspicuously displayed on the ground. In the Pandam fishing festival limited groups are allowed to register in the competitions as the site is a protected area. This is in contrast to what happens at Arugungun fishing festival (NTDC, 2004).

Olive baboons (*Papio anubis*) are the most conspicuous species of wildlife in Pandam Wildlife Park. They move in their hundreds between 6.00 and 7.30 in the morning, and between and 6.00 and 7.20 in the evening in different sizes and age classes, always congregating around the administrative building, exhibiting a series of social behaviours: barking, playing and carrying their young on their backs (unlike monkeys, which often carry theirs on the belly). During this period they continuously climb and pluck mangos (*Mangifera indica*) and other forest fruits (depending on the season), particularly the younger ones, as baboons observe a pecking

order (Alarape & Ayodele, 2003). Watching older baboons punishing younger ones for eating mango fruits on top of the tree when the older ones have not eaten or are still busy on the ground packing the plucked mango fruits is an interesting experience for privileged tourists. While moving through the nature trails in the evening, mature olive baboons bark continuously as warning signals to tourists not to trespass, thereby making the environment look quite natural. Meanwhile, the self-guided nature trail shows differences in ecological settings as trees are labelled to depict their characteristics and ecological zones. Provisions were made for arrows/signs indicating directions to guide tourists while inside the forest. Some natural springs where the animals congregate to drink water, especially during the dry season, can also be observed as tourists move greater distances. Similar springs in Jos Wildlife Park form the “Hippo pool”, and have been documented by Kamuro (1996) in Ngorongoro National Park. Other animal species in the park, including the hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*), the roan antelope (*Hippotragus equinus*), the warthog (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus*) and many antelopes, can be seen only by chance. Most of the species hide under cover during the day, though some operate in the morning and evenings. The African manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis*) is rarely seen by visitors.

Watching the endangered species pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) at the Hippo pool of Jos Wildlife Park is a fascinating experience for tourists. The Hippo pool is a natural flowing stream. The pygmy hippopotamus occasionally comes out of the pool and basks in the sun, its skin secreting a fluid that glitters like a diamond. The Nile crocodile (*Crocodyllus niloticus*) also basks nearby; in its case it tends to exhibit a harmless posture

and camouflages itself. This agrees with the findings of Wildlife Explorer (1996).

Households living around Pandam Game Reserve are not involved in souvenir production but are farmers and fishermen, unlike at the Naraguta Tourist Village, which is known internationally for traditional leather works and cultural tourism (Table 2). Nonetheless, Pandam and Naraguta tourist villages are unique places for tourists because of their natural environment. This conforms with the report of Dash and Mishra (2003) which argues that, despite poverty and infrastructure inadequacy, rural areas witness pleasing weather, unpolluted air, natural and scenic beauty and unique culture, which are of attraction to city people. The cultural lives of Naraguta and Pandam differ but are fascinating in their own ways. Unlike the indigenes of Pandam, the villagers at Naraguta are very knowledgeable in traditional leather works, produced since 1945. Their craft-making has attracted many tourists to Naraguta. Maduegbuna (2005, as cited in Ijeomah, 2007) gave a similar report, noting that the whole of Nanka in New Heaven, Enugu State, has been known for hair-weaving (even in Europe) since 1976. On the same note, Ijeomah (2007) observed that most families in Obioku, Odumara Orod community in Mbaitolu Local Government Area of Imo State are well known for their expertise in traditional orthopaedic work.

Jos National Museum comprises the zoological garden and galleries where cultural and historical artefacts are preserved. It has tourism products such as wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, conference and heritage tourism (Table 2). The artefacts in the galleries display Nok culture, local currencies, and different ancient materials used before the civilization of Nigeria: terracotta from 500 BC, Igbo Ukwu culture from the 9th

century, Ife culture from the 12th century, Tada bronze culture from the 13th century, and Berom culture from the 16th century; royal costumes – cultural material used by kings across Nigeria; traditional weapons, including bows and arrows; mask and statue, masquerades; musical instruments; traditional communication instruments; iron-smelting gadgets; local textile industrial facilities; traditional agricultural tools; traditional household utensils, wooden and iron local doors and gates; different pots from various ethnic groups across the country ranging from 300 years ago; vehicles used in the olden days; mineralogies that were dug out in different arrears of the country, including precious stones; preserved dead animals and plants. Alarape (2002) did a similar study on Old Oyo National Park of Nigeria, where he listed touristic cultural artefacts that had historical links with the defunct Old Oyo (Oyo-Ife) Empire. Wildlife species in the zoological garden include lions (*Panthera leo*), chimpanzees (*Pan tryglodytes*) and baboons (*Papio anubis*).

Tourist Trends in Ecotourism Destinations

Results on tourism patronage are presented, showing variations according to ecotourism destination (Figure 2), year (Table 3) and mean annual number of tourists on a monthly basis (MANOTOMB) (Table 4). Among the destinations, JNMZ took the lead because of its location at the heart of Jos City coupled with the combination of zoo and museum in a destination. Its many attractions in the form of artefacts and wildlife meant it recorded close to 300,000 tourists in both 2003 and 2004. JWLP, also being located within Jos City, is easily accessible and has many products, including viewing game. This can attribute for its second position

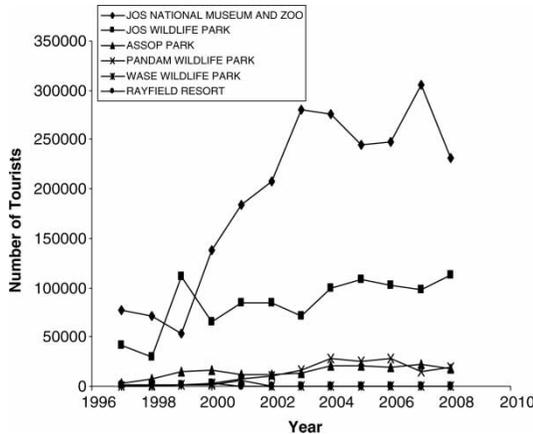


Figure 2 Graphical Representation of Tourist Trends in Various Tourist Centres.

in Figure 2, with close to 100,000 tourists in 2004. Other destinations had lesser patronage owing to the desirability of the tourism products, their locations or management. The major product in Assop Fall is recreation. Wase Wildlife Park was destroyed during the Wase crisis, while Rayfield Resort has only skeletal services owing to management problems. Pandam Wildlife Park is located outside Jos City in Quaan Pan Local Government Area (close to Nasarawa State), a rural area.

As shown in Table 3, 2004 recorded the highest cumulative annual total number of tourists (CATNOT) (424,252) in Plateau State, while 1998 had the smallest number, 112,648, being the peak of the military dictatorship in Nigeria. The number of ecotourists increased progressively from 1998 to 2004. This cannot be unconnected to an increased level of awareness created by the tourism institutions in the State during the democratic political dispensation. The fact that the progressive growth trend was sustained between 2001 and 2004 (a period of political crisis in Plateau State) implies that many people visited in the crisis-free period either side,

which therefore cushioned the deficiencies of the crisis period. It can also be ascribed to the fact that tourism growth in the State is resilient as most local tourists and resident non-Nigerians in Plateau State have understood that, historically, crises rarely affect the entire State at the same time. Ijeomah and Adetoro (2008) had a similar observation on the historic trend of crises in Plateau State.

The 424,252 tourists to ecotourism destinations (Table 3) exclude visitors to airports, hotels and other tourism destinations that are not environment based. Through the various tourism products, these sites could attract a total of 2,059,637 tourists within the period of the study. This shows that tourism is a major activity in Plateau State. If it were not for the frequent political crises in the State, the number of visitors would have been more – the Government would have focused more on tourist industry development instead of being distracted.

Table 4 shows that the month of December recorded a relatively high number of tourists across the 8 years. This can be related to the fact that December is a festive month with fixed dates for celebrations – Christmas Day, Boxing Day (a public holiday) and end-of-year celebrations. Between 2001 and 2004, MANOTOMB for December was above 15,000 per ecodestination (Table 4), and over 600,000 ecotourist arrivals (Table 3) were recorded in functional ecodestinations. This implies that Plateau State is a popular destination for festive activities, particularly December celebrations. Similarly, the Ibo-speaking areas of eastern Nigeria are popular destinations during December when the Ibos travel *en masse* to their various home states and communities for festivities. On the contrary, major streets in Port Harcourt of Rivers State look deserted between December 22 and 31, this being when visitors to the city have travelled elsewhere for celebrations.

Table 3 Highlight of Tourist Visitation to Ecotourism Destinations in Plateau State between 1997 and 2004

Month	Year										
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
January	10,950	10,756	15,795	43,476	15,986	19,881	19,061	25,184	97,578	53,473	66,425
February	10,514	5,332	5,098	7,552	14,308	34,063	34,134	78,845	15,108	16,432	8,851
March	8,181	5,115	38,265	23,882	52,797	20,762	16,415	19,228	23,564	18,495	14,030
April	8,241	9,918	37,674	20,570	27,368	19,700	21,125	43,714	12,078	16,933	14,935
May	5,662	3,867	6,235	9,545	13,318	10,827	14,504	17,406	20,863	15,690	10,476
June	11,535	5,781	6,614	13,351	20,568	19,266	18,997	21,475	26,572	24,429	15,885
July	7,867	8,882	7,956	20,513	32,190	22,418	17,106	24,085	23,957	32,417	20,256
August	12,559	9,745	10,020	11,561	17,851	21,757	12,918	13,212	24,694	17,972	14,912
September	8,268	7,170	9,135	12,871	4,110	11,757	13,165	12,662	19,244	17,900	13,616
October	9,191	8,847	8,784	9,965	6,523	12,898	16,721	21,622	18,705	91,587	51,263
November	8,850	9,106	9,020	12,487	11,315	35,429	133,710	83,967	57,276	19,544	12,722
December	24,060	28,129	30,325	41,868	76,941	87,336	63,964	62,852	65,669	83,775	202,731
Total	125,878	112,648	184,921	227,641	293,275	316,094	374,816	424,252	405,308	408,647	446,102
Total of totals:						3,319,582					

Table 4 Average Tourist Visitation to Ecotourism Destinations in Plateau State on Monthly Basis

Month	Year										
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
January	1,825	1,793	2,633	7,246	3,197	4,970	4,765	6,296	24,395	13,368	16,613
February	1,752	889	850	1,259	2,862	8,516	8,534	19,711	3,777	4,108	2,213
March	1,364	853	6,378	3,980	10,559	5,191	4,104	4,807	5,891	4,624	3,508
April	1,374	1,653	6,279	3,428	5,474	4,925	5,281	10,929	3,020	4,233	3,734
May	944	645	1,039	1,591	2,664	2,707	3,626	4,352	5,216	3,923	2,619
June	1,923	964	1,102	2,225	4,114	4,817	4,749	5,369	6,643	6,107	3,971
July	1,311	1,480	1,326	3,419	6,438	5,605	4,277	6,021	5,989	8,104	5,064
August	2,093	1,625	1,670	1,927	3,570	5,439	3,230	3,303	6,174	4,493	3,728
September	1,378	1,195	1,523	2,145	822	2,940	3,291	3,166	4,811	4,475	3,404
October	1,532	1,475	1,464	1,661	1,305	3,225	4,180	5,406	4,676	22,897	12,816
November	1,475	1,518	1,503	2,081	2,263	8,857	3,3428	20,992	14,319	4,886	3,181
December	4,010	4,689	5,054	6,978	15,388	21,834	15,991	15,713	16,417	20,944	50,683

Visits in the month of January are also high because of New Year celebrations. Visitation to tourism destinations in January is a function of the amount of money remaining from December celebrations. Nevertheless, after surviving major crises, celebrations could be extended from December to even February. September 2001 had the lowest MANOTOMB as a result of the September crises in Jos during that period. The effects of the crises are reflected in the October visitation figure for 2001, which is lower than the October values for other years. After the crises, celebrations continued from December to March and April, which were periods of religious festivities for both Christians and Muslims. The religious crises of May 2004 had a lesser effect (than the 2001) on visitation as there was good awareness of the areas affected by the crises. The months of November, March, April and sometimes October and February are festive periods for religious groups. The dates of these celebrations are not permanent, unlike December 25 for Christmas. Sometimes both Islamic and Christian festivities can coincide in the same month, leading to a tremendous increase in visits to tourist centres.

The months of June and July are periods of rainy season, when visitation is low. However, it has become part of the educational culture in Plateau State that schools embark on excursions to ecotourism destinations in the month of July before their long vacations. This agrees with the work of Ijeomah et al. (2006). October 1 is national Independence Celebration, which also attracts visitors to ecotourism destinations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Plateau State is stocked with lots of tourism features such as rich and outstanding

landscapes, spectacular hills, fascinating waterfalls and springs, museums rich in archeological exhibits and relics of historical significance and unique wildlife parks, in addition to clement weather conditions that support the breeding of many rare and endangered wildlife species. Tourism is a major activity in Plateau State. Without the frequent religious crises in Plateau State the number of annual tourist arrivals at the Jos National Museum and Zoo, and the Jos Wildlife Park would have increased to 500,000 and 200,000, respectively. Many natives of Plateau State who reside outside the State, together with non-natives, patronize these ecodestinations mostly during December and other festive periods. Improvements in swimming, boating and fishing in both Pandam Wildlife Park and Rayfield Resort will increase patronage if the public is made aware of the improvements. Jos National Museum/Zoo and Jos Wildlife Park can increase their gate fees by 100% during weekends and festive periods. This will encourage tourists to visit during weekdays, thereby reducing overcrowding. More attractive wildlife species based on tourists' interests should be procured for Jos National Museum/Zoo and the Jos Wildlife Park. This will facilitate revenue generation. Plateau State can stimulate its economy by promoting the State as the destination of choice among prospective travellers. Through this means, it will increase its market share against aggressively competing states and hence become a tourism model for the nation. The management of tourism organizations in Plateau State should develop more tourism facilities based on tourists' interests, maintain a peaceful environment and create more awareness, to increase patronage, utilization of ecotourism products and benefits to the people.

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