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Assessment of Communication Strategies Used in Tourism Promotion by the Taraba State Tourism Development Board

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Abstract
This study assessed the communication strategies employed by the Taraba State Tourism Development Board in promoting the tourism potential of Taraba State, Nigeria. It examined the communication channels used, the effectiveness of the strategies, and the challenges affecting their implementation. The study was guided by Strategic Communication Theory (SCT). A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining quantitative surveys administered to 136 purposively selected journalists with qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with six key officials of the Tourism Development Board. Findings revealed a predominant reliance on traditional media such as radio, television, brochures, and banners, with minimal use of digital platforms such as social media, websites, and influencer engagement. The study also found that the communication strategies lacked clarity, audience targeting, strategic planning, and appropriate channel selection, indicating low effectiveness. Furthermore, key challenges identified included inadequate funding, limited staff capacity, the absence of a communication plan, and poor digital literacy. The study concludes that the current communication practices of the Board are misaligned with strategic communication principles, thereby undermining their effectiveness in promoting tourism. The researchers recommend the adoption of a multimedia communication approach, increased funding, staff training, and collaboration with the private and media sectors. They further call for the development of a comprehensive communication plan to guide the Board's communication efforts in both the short and long term.

Keywords: Communication Strategy, Tourism, Promotion, Taraba State, Tourism Development

Introduction

Tourism occupies an important position in the economic well-being of both developed and developing nations in modern times, as it offers a channel through which corporate organizations and individuals can explore investment opportunities. The United Nation Tourism (2024) reports that the tourism sector is one of the fastest-growing segments of the global economy. According to Li, Jin and Shi (2018), tourism presents a wide range of opportunities to many countries and has become a key driver of socio-economic progress. As Honey and Gilpin (2009, p. 2) note, "tourism enables communities that are poor in material wealth but rich in history and cultural heritage to leverage their unique assets for economic development."

In such a scenario, tourism provides an avenue for economically disadvantaged communities to benefit by offering goods and services to tourists, thereby expanding market access for both rural and urban populations. Notably, a growing number of countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Kenya, and South Africa have invested significantly in tourism development, transforming the sector into a vital force for socio-economic advancement. Nigeria, too, is richly endowed with tourism potential. The country boasts a wide variety of natural, man-made, and cultural attractions. However, these attractions remain largely underdeveloped due to poor management, inadequate infrastructure, and limited support systems (Ayeni & Ebohon, 2012). According to the World Development Indicators (2002) as cited in Esu, Arrey, Basil, and Eyo (2011), the projected tourism demand growth for Nigeria was estimated at $3.30 million (U.S.), accounting for 7.70 percent of the global market share, with a potential contribution of 6.40 percent to national job creation annually between 2006 and 2015. Nonetheless, the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (2015) reveals that Nigeria's marketing efforts to attract tourists scored only 3.3 on a 7-point scale in the World Economic Forum's Opinion Survey (where 1 represents the lowest and 7 the highest score). Furthermore, Nigeria was ranked 141st on the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index.

In Nigeria, Taraba State is one of the states with enormous tourism potential. Known as *"Nature's Gift to the Nation"*, Taraba State is home to several tourist sites, such as the Gashaka Gumti National Park and the Mambilla Plateau in Sardauna Local Government Area, among many others. These sites have the potential to attract investors to the state and, by extension, boost the economy and overall development of Taraba State. However, the state remains one of the poorest in the country, with a high rate of poverty and minimal social amenities and infrastructure. The inability of the state to fully leverage its tourism potential to stimulate development may not be unconnected with the lack of effective promotion of tourism by the state government—particularly by the agencies and institutions responsible, such as the Taraba State Tourism Development Board. These bodies have not adequately packaged and communicated the state's tourism potentials to the outside world in a manner that would attract both investors and tourists.

Prior research (e.g., Subhani *et al*., 2021; Lestari, 2023; Adesuyan *et al*., 2019) has established the significant role of effective communication in promoting tourism in any country. Communication and promotional strategies in the tourism sector create awareness and disseminate knowledge about tourist destinations. This enables potential visitors and investors to make informed decisions regarding travel and destination choices. Similarly, Esu and Ebitu (2010) note that effective communication in tourism promotion has the capacity to generate interest in a destination, distinguish it from competitors, convey both the physical and emotional benefits of the site, establish and maintain its image and reputation, and ultimately persuade tourists to visit and extend their stay. Despite the recognised importance of communication in promoting tourism, there appears to be a paucity of studies examining the communication techniques employed by

tourism promoters or government agencies in Nigeria. This gap is particularly evident in Taraba State, despite its rich tourism potential. Against this backdrop, the present study evaluates the communication strategies employed by the Taraba State Government in creating awareness of and drawing attention to the state's tourism potentials.

Statement of the Problem

Tourism remains an underexploited sector in Nigeria despite its significant potential to drive socio-economic development, especially in states endowed with rich natural and cultural attractions such as Taraba State where tourist site like Gashaka Gumti National Park and other tourist sites in the state possess immense potential for attracting both local and international tourists. However, the level of awareness and patronage of these destinations remains relatively low. This situation raises concerns about the effectiveness of communication strategies employed by tourism promoters and the Taraba State Government in publicising the state's tourism offerings.

While communication is a critical tool for bridging the gap between tourism service providers and potential tourists, there is limited empirical evidence on how effectively it has been utilised to market tourism in Taraba State. Most existing studies focus on broader tourism development challenges in Nigeria, leaving a gap in understanding the role of communication strategies specific to states like Taraba. Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests that the state's tourism potential is under-promoted, possibly due to poorly coordinated or inadequately designed communication efforts. Given these concerns, this study seeks to evaluate the communication strategies employed by the Taraba State Government viz-a-viz the Taraba State Tourism Board to promote the state's tourism potential.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the communication strategies used for tourism promotion in Taraba State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the communication strategies employed by the Taraba State Tourism Board in promoting the tourism potentials of the state.
2. To examine the effectiveness of the communication strategies in attracting tourists to Taraba State.
3. To determine the challenges affecting the implementation of communication strategies for tourism promotion in the state.

Literature Review

Communication Strategy

Communication refers to the process by which individuals, groups, organisations, or societies create, share, and interpret information to connect with others and interact with their environment. The term is rooted in the Latin word *communis*, which means "to share" or "to make common." Related expressions such as *communico* and *communicare* all convey the concept of sharing meaning and fostering mutual understanding (Kristina, 2020). Strategy simply means to have a plan toward achievement a goal. Therefore, a communication strategy is a roadmap designed to help organisations achieve specific communication objectives. It includes setting communication goals, identifying target audiences, and developing appropriate methods for message delivery. It encompasses the intentional planning and structured methods adopted by individuals or organisations to effectively convey messages to specific audiences. These strategies serve as guiding frameworks for how messages are crafted, transmitted, and interpreted, with the aim of ensuring clarity, relevance, and impact. A communication strategy plays a pivotal role in determining the success or failure of any communication effort (Chirwa & Boikanyo, 2022).

Organisations use communication strategies to structure the flow of information both internally and externally. These strategies aid in defining key messages, selecting the right audience, and coordinating efforts across teams. A well-developed strategy considers factors such as the timing of communication, content design, language use, and channel selection to enhance message effectiveness. Cultural sensitivity, audience characteristics, and the communication context are also taken into account to reduce potential barriers and maximise engagement (Hyland-Wood, et al, 2022). As noted by Servaes (2008), communication strategies may incorporate a mix of media tools—including newspapers, television, radio, digital platforms—as well as traditional approaches like interpersonal dialogue and community-based announcements. This combination, often described as the promotional mix, allows organisations to tailor messages to different audience segments effectively.

Beyond information sharing, effective communication strategy involves engagement, persuasion, and mechanisms for gathering feedback to promote meaningful interaction (Koilakonda, 2023). For both public and private institutions, having a well-articulated communication strategy is crucial to achieving their aims. Such plans typically outline the goals of communication, define target groups, specify communication channels, and establish methods for evaluating outcomes. In the absence of a coherent communication strategy, organisations risk inefficient use of resources and may struggle to generate awareness, build public trust, or influence stakeholder behaviour.

Tourism Promotion

The term promotion has attracted various interpretations across different disciplines, particularly within the communication field—most notably in advertising and public relations. Several scholars have attempted to clarify the concept. For example, Alexandrescu and Milandru, (2018) define promotion as an activity involving the act of informing, persuading, and influencing consumers to choose a particular product. Promotion is executed through methods such as personal selling, advertising, publicity, and sales promotion. According to Kotler (2002) cited in Ibojo and Akinruwa (2014) asserts that promotion compasses all the tools in the marketing mix whose major role is persuasive communications. Likewise, Rezky, Huam, Amran, Thoo, and Inda (2012) regard promotion as a component of an organisation's marketing mix that informs, persuades, and reminds the market or public about a product, with the aim of influencing recipients' emotions, beliefs, or behaviours. They further explain that promotional elements consist of a combination of tools—commonly referred to as the promotional mix—including advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing. Riaz and Tanveer (2012) also include exhibitions and demonstrations as part of promotional efforts. Drawing from these definitions, promotion can be understood as any method used to raise awareness about the existence of a product or service, persuade customers to make purchases, and sustain healthy customer relationships. It involves a variety of tools or combinations that may be adapted depending on the context, leading to the concept of integrated marketing communication.

In the tourism sector, promotion entails creating and disseminating information to help tourists make informed decisions about their purchases and consumption. Promotional efforts in tourism must correspond with tourists' needs and harmonise with other elements of the marketing mix. As noted by Dujmović and Vitasović (2014), information is essential in positioning, marketing, and selling destinations effectively. Promotional strategies serve as a bridge, linking potential tourists with the experiences they seek. Since tourists often arrive with expectations, these should form the foundation of any destination's promotional strategy. Crafting effective strategies requires more than a working knowledge of promotional tools; the unique complexities of

emerging tourism destinations necessitate customised approaches to address their specific challenges.

According to Czech-Tourism (2004), cited in Esu and Ebitu (2010), tourism promotion should establish a strong, singular association that visitors can identify with the destination. This perspective assumes that perception is more important than reality, and that success lies not in the physical attributes of the product, but in the minds of consumers. This implies that regardless of a destination's inherent potential, without persuasive communication and a compelling brand image, it may struggle to attract visitors. The Tourism Recreation Research and Education Centre (2004) recommends that effective tourism promotion requires a clear articulation of promotional objectives and an understanding of the VICE Model. VICE stands for Visitor, Industry, Communities, and Environment—key stakeholder groups whose expectations promotional strategies should address: welcoming and satisfying visitors, ensuring industry prosperity, involving and benefiting local communities, and preserving and enhancing the environment.

Once destination drivers and promotional goals are clearly defined, destination managers can design targeted activities aimed at attracting specific customer segments. This approach aligns with the principle in integrated marketing communication that every customer interaction communicates something about the brand or organisation. Therefore, well-planned promotional activities can stimulate tourist interest and fulfil promotional objectives. Strategy development should include crafting unique destination associations and brand personalities that together form the destination's overall image. The message conveyed should connect the tourist's needs and motivations with the destination's offerings, clearly outlining what should be communicated to achieve promotional aims (Esu & Ebitu, 2010).

Review of Empirical Studies

A number of studies on communication and tourism exist globally. Outside Nigeria, Amin and Priansah (2019) conducted a qualitative descriptive study to examine the marketing communication strategies employed by the Office of Youth, Sports, and Tourism of Curug Putri Palutungan in Kuningan Regency to enhance the tourism potential. The findings indicate a multimedia approach, which includes a combination of banners, print and online media, radio broadcasts, direct marketing, travel dialogues, workshops, and tour guide training, were deployed to foster tourism development in Kuningan Regency. Similarly, Subhani, Arifin, and Alfiady (2021) conducted a qualitative descriptive study to explore public communication efforts in the tourism sector within Central Aceh District, Aceh Province. Through interviews and observations, findings also highlight the multi-channel approach adopted to enhance public awareness and engagement with tourism opportunities in the region. Supporting, Lestari, Sunra, and Abdullah (2023) conducted a qualitative descriptive study to examine communication strategies employed by the tourism industry, focusing on the use of brochures. The findings revealed that the tourism industry frequently used brochure messaging. While the studies above contribute to the understanding of government-led tourism communication strategies, it offers limited analysis of the effectiveness and audience reception of these efforts.

Some studies focus on the use of public relations in promoting tourism. For instance, Kihoro (2024) investigated the impact of public relations efforts on the growth of the tourism industry in developing countries, employing a desk study methodology that relied on analyzing existing secondary data from published reports and journal articles. The findings indicate that strategic communication and media engagement have significantly improved the visibility and attractiveness of tourism destinations. Similarly, Bhandari and Kshetri (2018) examined the effectiveness of public relations (PR) campaigns in promoting tourism in Nepal, using a mixed-

method approach that combined surveys of 600 tourists with interviews of local tourism stakeholders. The study found that well-targeted PR strategies significantly boosted tourist arrivals and positively influenced perceptions of Nepal, particularly by emphasizing its rich cultural heritage and adventure tourism experiences. In the same vein, Mensah and Boakye (2021) examined the public relations strategies employed by Ghana's tourism ministry to promote cultural tourism. Using qualitative interviews with 30 tourism professionals, the findings revealed that effective storytelling as PR strategy, centred on Ghana's rich cultural heritage and historical legacy, and significantly boosted tourist participation and local pride.

In the same light, Sibiya and Akinboade (2023) investigated the influence of public relations on eco-tourism in Botswana. Utilizing surveys with 400 tourists alongside qualitative interviews with sector stakeholders, the study found that PR campaigns emphasizing eco-friendly practices significantly shaped tourist perceptions and decision-making. The research highlighted that effective communication of sustainability initiatives not only attracted environmentally conscious travelers but also strengthened Botswana's image as a premier eco-tourism destination. Similarly, Adongo and Tandoh (2022) assessed the effectiveness of public relations strategies in Uganda's tourism sector by employing a mixed-method approach involving surveys and interviews with various industry stakeholders. Their study found that integrated PR initiatives significantly contributed to increased tourist arrivals and enhanced local community engagement.

Furthermore, Ahmed and Jafri (2019) investigated the impact of social media public relations in attracting international tourists to Pakistan, a destination often under-visited due to security concerns despite its rich tourism assets. Using a quantitative methodology, the researchers analysed social media engagement metrics and survey responses from 800 participants. Their findings revealed that active, strategic social media engagement significantly improved perceptions of safety and hospitality, increasing tourists' intention to visit. The study notably demonstrated how digital PR—especially via influencer partnerships and user-generated content—can reshape a country's global image and counteract negative stereotypes. Also, Mwangi and Kihoro (2022) examined how destination branding influences tourism growth in Kenya through surveys of 500 local and international tourists. Their findings demonstrated that strong public relations campaigns played a crucial role in shaping positive perceptions of Kenya as a travel destination, which in turn increased tourist arrivals. The study highlighted that branding efforts focused on Kenya's renowned wildlife safaris, diverse landscapes, and rich cultural heritage resonated effectively with potential visitors, positively affecting their travel intentions.

In Nigeria, few related studies also exist. For instance. Adesuyan et al. (2019) explored marketing communication practices at selected ecotourism destinations in Southwest Nigeria, focusing on their perceived effectiveness. Findings indicated statistically significant variations in the marketing communication approaches used by different destinations, as well as in how effective these strategies were perceived to be. The study highlights the diversity of communication tactics within the ecotourism sector and underscores the need for tailored marketing strategies to enhance outreach and visitor engagement. Another study was carried out by Olasupo, Adebayo, and Orimaye (2024) in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study investigated the role of the Internet in marketing Nigeria's tourism sector, focusing on Ikogosi Warm Spring. Surveying 100 participants, including tourists and stakeholders, the findings revealed that 70% believed digital marketing strongly affects tourist decision-making. However, over half of the respondents highlighted limited internet access and poor infrastructure in rural areas as significant barriers to effective online promotion. Furthermore, inadequate online content about Ikogosi was identified as a major obstacle to attracting visitors. The study also found strong support for dedicated

websites and social media channels, with 65% recognising social media campaigns as the most effective promotional tool, and 72% favouring visual content such as photos and videos to showcase local attractions.

The reviewed empirical studies above reveal significant geographical and conceptual gaps that justify the need for the current study. Geographically, while a wide array of studies exists across various countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Nepal, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, and Botswana, and a few within Nigeria—particularly in the Southwest and Ekiti State—there is a noticeable lack of research focused on North-Eastern Nigeria, especially Taraba State, which is rich in untapped tourism potential. Conceptually, many of the reviewed studies adopt qualitative descriptive or mixed methods but often lack a critical evaluation of the effectiveness and audience reception of the communication strategies used. Moreover, most existing literature narrowly focuses on specific tools such as brochures, the Internet, social media, or public relations, without integrating broader strategic communication approaches or examining barriers such as infrastructure and digital access, which are crucial in underdeveloped countries including Nigeria. These gaps highlight the importance of the current study, which not only addresses an under-researched location but also aims to evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of current communication strategies in promoting tourism in Taraba State.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is guided by the principles of Strategic Communication Theory. According to Hallahan *et al.* (2007), strategic communication refers to the purposeful use of communication to achieve organisational goals. It assumes that, without effective communication, organisations cannot realise their set objectives, and that such communication must be planned, consistent, targeted, and aligned with organisational or societal aims. It encompasses both message design and channel selection, based on audience analysis and feedback mechanisms (Shadrach, 2023). Strategic Communication Theory originated from the fields of the military, politics, international relations, and diplomacy. Its roots can be traced back to the era of the Roman Emperor Augustus, who utilised art, language, architecture, and religion to articulate and disseminate his political ideals. However, strategic communication as a recognised body of knowledge and theory gained prominence in the 21st century, driven by the increasing need for organisations and governments not merely to communicate, but to do so strategically in order to reach specific target audiences (Shadrach, 2023).

Strategic communication, therefore, provides a robust framework for understanding how deliberate, goal-oriented communication can influence audience perception, behaviour, and decision-making in favour of organisational objectives. In the context of this study, Strategic Communication Theory is highly relevant. It offers a basis for evaluating whether the communication strategies employed by the Taraba State Tourism Development Board are effective in promoting the state's tourism potential by creating tourist awareness, interest, and visitation. Furthermore, the theory serves as a lens through which to analyse how tourism messages are crafted, the media channels utilised, the segmentation of target audiences, and the feedback mechanisms established to monitor and refine communication strategies.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining a quantitative survey and qualitative in-depth interviews. The population of the study is divided into two groups. The first group is the audience particularly journalists registered with the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Taraba State, comprising a population of 221 individuals. Journalists were selected due to their specialised knowledge of communication principles, active involvement in media practice,

and frequent interaction with both public and private institutions. Their roles as communicators, information disseminators, and agenda setters make them uniquely positioned to assess the communication strategies used in promoting tourism. They also serve as critical observers and interpreters of government policies and public campaigns, providing valuable perspectives on the design, implementation, and impact of tourism-related communication. The second target population is the staff memebers of the Taraba State Tourism Development Board. The selection of the staff is hinge on the fact that they are responsible for statutory responsible in promoting Tourisms on behalf of the state, hence, they in the position to provide insight regarding the challenges they Board faces in implementing effective communication toward promoting tourisms.

The sample for 136 journalists was drawn from the initial population of 221 registered journalists using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only journalists with formal communication training and have at least five years working experience within Taraba State were included, thereby guaranteeing relevant professional expertise and experience. The respondents were administered quantitative survey through online questionnaire to measure their opinion about the communication strategies employed by Taraba State Tourism Development Board as well as the effectiveness of the strategies. In the other hand, six key officials from the Taraba State Tourism Development Board were purposively selected to provide in-depth insights into the challenges of the implementation of communication strategies by the board. Only staff members directly involve in content creation and media activities were selected. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) while the qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis to extract recurring themes and insights related to challenges undermining effective implementation of communication strategies in promoting tourisms by the Taraba State Tourism Development Board.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 136)

Item	*Responses*	*Frequency (n)*	*Percentage (%)*
Sex	Male	96	70.6%
	Female	40	29.4%
Age Group (Years)	20–29	18	13.2%
	30–39	52	38.2%
	40–49	41	30.1%
	50 and above	25	18.4%
Educational Qualification	Diploma	15	11.0%
	Bachelor's Degree	87	63.9%
	Postgraduate Degree	34	25.0%
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	24	17.6%
	5–10 years	58	42.6%
	11–15 years	33	24.3%
	Above 15 years	21	15.5%
Type of Media	Print Journalism	48	35.3%
	Broadcast Journalism	56	41.2%
	Online/Digital Media	32	23.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 above present demographic data of the respondents. The result reveals a gender imbalance, with a higher proportion of male journalists (70.6%) compared to females (29.4%). Most respondents fall within the 30–39 age range (38.2%), followed by those aged 40–49 (30.1%),

indicating that a majority are in their mid-career stages and likely possess substantial field experience. In terms of educational qualifications, a significant number hold at least a bachelor's degree (63.9%), with an additional 25% possessing postgraduate degrees, reflecting a relatively high level of academic training that supports their ability to critically assess communication strategies. The respondents also have varied years of experience, with the majority (42.6%) having between 5–10 years, followed by 24.3% with 11–15 years of experience, suggesting that the sample is composed largely of seasoned professionals. Media type distribution shows that respondents are fairly spread across print (35.3%), broadcast (41.2%), and online/digital media (23.5%), which could provide a diverse perspective on the communication channels utilised in tourism promotion.

Table 2: Respondents' Opinions on Communication Strategies Used by Taraba State Tourism Development Board (N = 136)

S/n	Comm. Strategy	Very Frequent	Frequent	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at all	Mean Score	Decision
1.	Radio	20 (14.7%)	35 (25.7%)	40 (29.4%)	25 (18.4%)	16 (11.8%)	3.13	Significant
2.	TV	18 (13.2%)	30 (22.1%)	45 (33.1%)	28 (20.6%)	15 (11.0%)	3.06	Significant
3.	Newspaper	10 (7.4%)	25 (18.4%)	40 (29.4%)	35 (25.7%)	26 (19.1%)	2.69	Insignificant
4.	Magazine	5 (3.7%)	10 (7.4%)	25 (18.4%)	50 (36.8%)	46 (33.8%)	2.10	Insignificant
5.	Social Media	22 (16.2%)	30 (22.1%)	35 (25.7%)	28 (20.6%)	21 (15.4%)	2.92	Insignificant
6.	Website	15 (11.0%)	30 (22.1%)	35 (25.7%)	30 (22.1%)	26 (19.1%)	2.84	Insignificant
7.	Brochures	20 (14.7%)	40 (29.4%)	35 (25.7%)	25 (18.4%)	16 (11.8%)	3.17	Significant
8.	Flyers	15 (11.0%)	28 (20.6%)	36 (26.5%)	32 (23.5%)	25 (18.4%)	2.82	Insignificant
9.	Posters	18 (13.2%)	30 (22.1%)	40 (29.4%)	28 (20.6%)	20 (14.7%)	2.89	Insignificant
10.	Stickers	10 (7.4%)	20 (14.7%)	30 (22.1%)	40 (29.4%)	36 (26.5%)	2.46	Insignificant
11.	Banners	22 (16.2%)	42 (30.9%)	36 (26.5%)	20 (14.7%)	16 (11.8%)	3.25	Significant
12.	Influencers /Celebrities	8 (5.9%)	18 (13.2%)	28 (20.6%)	42 (30.9%)	40 (29.4%)	2.35	Insignificant
13.	Special Events	30 (22.1%)	40 (29.4%)	35 (25.7%)	20 (14.7%)	11 (8.1%)	3.42	Significant
14.	Hotels	12 (8.8%)	25 (18.4%)	38 (27.9%)	35 (25.7%)	26 (19.1%)	2.72	Insignificant

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Decision Rule: Mean score ≥ 3.00 → Significant (Communication strategy is being used reasonably well) while Mean score < 3.00 → Insignificant (Poor or low adoption)

Table 2 reveals that several communication strategies used by the Taraba State Tourism Development Board are perceived to be significantly adopted, with mean scores above 3.0. These include radio (3.13), TV (3.06), brochures (3.17), banners (3.25), and special events (3.42), indicating these are the most frequently used channels. However, strategies such as newspapers

(2.69), magazines (2.10), social media (2.92), websites (2.84), flyers (2.82), posters (2.89), stickers (2.46), influencers/celebrities (2.35), and hotels (2.72) scored below the threshold, suggesting these methods are underutilised. The data imply that traditional mass media and event-based strategies remain the core communication tools for promoting tourism in the state, while digital and promotional materials show poor adoption.

Table 3: Respondents' Opinions on the Effectiveness of Communication Strategies in Attracting Tourists to Taraba State (N = 136)

S/N	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score	Decision
1	The Board develops messages clearly aligned with tourism attraction goals.	20 (14.7%)	25 (18.4%)	30 (22.1%)	35 (25.7%)	26 (19.1%)	2.82	Low Effective
2	Tourism promotional messages by the Board are appealing	15 (11.0%)	22 (16.2%)	35 (25.7%)	40 (29.4%)	24 (17.6%)	2.74	Low Effective
3	Communication channels used by the Board are carefully selected based on target audience reach.	18 (13.2%)	24 (17.6%)	30 (22.1%)	36 (26.5%)	28 (20.6%)	2.74	Low Effective
4	Messages shared by the Board across media are consistent and reinforce the tourism brand.	12 (8.8%)	20 (14.7%)	28 (20.6%)	45 (33.1%)	31 (22.8%)	2.54	Low Effective
5	The Board collect feedback and used to improve communication.	10 (7.4%)	15 (11.0%)	26 (19.1%)	42 (30.9%)	43 (31.6%)	2.33	Low Effective
8	Messages influence tourists' perceptions and intentions to visit.	13 (9.6%)	25 (18.4%)	26 (19.1%)	42 (30.9%)	30 (22.1%)	2.62	Low Effective
9	Communication addresses tourists' concerns or misconceptions about the state.	12 (8.8%)	20 (14.7%)	30 (22.1%)	40 (29.4%)	34 (25.0%)	2.52	Low Effective
10	Communication strategies have led to more inquiries or visits to Taraba State.	10 (7.4%)	18 (13.2%)	28 (20.6%)	44 (32.4%)	36 (26.5%)	2.42	Low Effective

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Decision: Mean score ≥ 3.00 = Effective*; Mean score < 3.00* = Not Effective

The data presented in Table 3 shows that respondents generally perceived the communication strategies employed by the Taraba State Tourism Development Board as ineffective by different indicators including attracting tourists to the state. All the items recorded mean scores below 3.00, indicating low effectiveness across various aspects of strategic communication. For instance, the statement regarding the clarity of message alignment with tourism goals had the highest mean score of 2.82, while the lowest was 2.33, which reflected poor feedback utilisation. Other critical elements, such as the appeal of promotional messages (2.74),

the careful selection of communication channels (2.74), and message consistency (2.54), also fell below the threshold. These results suggest that the Board's communication efforts lack strategic coherence and audience-centred execution.

Table 4: Themes from the KPIs on the Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Effective Communication Strategies for Tourism Promotion in the State

S/n	Emergent Theme	Description	Supporting Quotes
1.	Inadequate Funding	Insufficient budget allocation limits the Board's capacity to execute consistent and impactful communication activities.	- *"We often rely on free traditional channels like the public TV and radio stations because there is no steady funding for communication activities." KPI 1* - *"Funds are not released regularly, so we can't plan ahead." KPI 3* - *"There's no budget for advertising beyond the free airtime by State Government onwed local radio and TV which are made once in a while especially when there is a special event." KPI 4*
2.	Lack of Expert or Trained Communication Personnel	The absence of professionals trained in strategic or tourism-focused communication weakens the quality and reach of messages.	- *"Most of our staff members are not trained in tourism communication...and we don't have a communication plan to guide our activities" KPI 2* - *"We need people who understand branding and digital promotion." KPI 3* - *"We are short on skilled communication experts, especially for new media." KPI 1*
3.	Poor Media Infrastructure	Limited or unreliable access to media infrastructure (e.g., internet and modern gadgets).	- *"We don't have modern computer gadget and software for editing and modern digital cameras to facilitate quality production of our contents". KPI 4* - *"We lack Internet connectivity to help us constantly upload videos and engage online tourisms promotion." KPI 6*
4.	Low Stakeholder Engagement	Minimal involvement of tourism stakeholders (e.g., hotels, influencers, community leaders) reduces collaboration and message amplification.	- *"Tourism communication shouldn't be government alone; we need partnerships but here it is difficult because hotels are not showing interest and we don't have significant travel agencies." KPI 4* - *"We rarely get non-governmental groups coming to us for collaboration toward promoting tourism in the state." KPI 2*
5.	Limited Use of Digital Platforms	Underutilisation of online and social media tools reduces visibility among tech-savvy audiences.	- *"We have a website but it's rarely updated; our social media pages are not effectively managed either." KPI 1* - *"Our online engagement is very poor." KPI 5* - *"Our Facebook page exists, but there is no active engagement. We do not leverage on Instagram, Youtube and Tiktok" KPI 3*

Source: IDI, Interviews, 2024

Discussion of Findings

The study generally assessed the communication strategies used by the Taraba State Tourism Development Board in promoting the tourism potential of the state. The first objective

assessed the communication channels used by the Board. The result indicates a dominant used of mainstream media channels particularly radio, TV, brochures, banners and special events while strategies like the use of social media, websites, flyers, posters, stickers, influencers/celebrities and hotels were underutilised. This findings mirrors prior findings from Amin and Priansah (2019) and Subhani *et al.* (2021), who similarly observed that local tourism offices often default to familiar outlets (brochures, print, radio) while failing to critically assess newer channels' reach and effectiveness. However, other studies, especially those from outside Nigeria, such as Ahmed and Jafri (2019), report more proactive communication environments, where tourism agencies deploy multi-platform campaigns and leverage digital technologies to reshape perceptions and attract tourists. The difference lies in the resource availability, staff capacity, and strategic prioritisation of communication observed in those contexts. From a Strategic Communication Theory perspective (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007; Shadrach, 2020), it can be argue that the Board's overreliance on one-way push media reflect a breakdown in the strategic process of audience analysis, message design, and channel selection which can undermine the reach and effectiveness of the communication for Tourism promotion in Taraba State.

The second objective of this study sought to determine the effectiveness of the communication strategies employed by the Taraba State Tourisms Development Board to promote tourism in the state. The overall result indicate a low effectiveness of the strategies. This is evidenced by deficiencies in message clarity, appeal, channel selection, and the overall strength of communication efforts to attract tourists. These findings suggest that while strategies may have been implemented, they lack the critical elements of strategic communication—namely, purposeful design, consistency, audience targeting, and effective channel use. This outcome is best interpreted through the lens of Strategic Communication Theory, which underscores the necessity for communication to be intentional, goal-driven, and responsive to audience needs in order to yield tangible results. The Strategic communication as articulated by Hallahan *et al.* (2007), argues that communication without strategic intent and proper execution cannot effectively drive organisational goals. Thus, the observed ineffectiveness in the Board's communication efforts directly reflects a misalignment with the principles of strategic communication, especially in areas like audience analysis, and message design.

The third objective explored the challenges faced by the Tourism Development Board in implementing effective communication strategies. Key obstacles identified include inadequate funding, the absence of a formal communication plan, a shortage of trained communication personnel, and the limited adoption of new media technologies owing to poor digital literacy among staff. These challenges point to systemic and structural issues that hinder the effectiveness of communication efforts. The findings partially align with and diverge from earlier studies. For instance, Olasupo, Adebayo, and Orimaye (2024) also identified infrastructural limitations and digital gaps—such as poor internet access and inadequate online content—as barriers to effective digital tourism promotion in Nigeria, echoing the present study's findings. Similarly, the study reemphasis the earlier submission by Adesuyan et al. (2019) that tourists' promoters in Nigeria are dearth in their knowledge and skills for effective development of tailored tourism promotion messages capable of attract attention of global and local destination visitors and investors.

Conclusion

This study assessed the communication strategies employed by the Taraba State Tourism Development Board in promoting the tourism potential of Taraba State. The findings revealed significant gaps in strategic communication planning and implementation. Specifically, the study indicated a predominant reliance on traditional media channels such as radio, television, brochures,

and banners, with limited adoption of digital platforms such as social media and websites. This situation has resulted in largely ineffective communication efforts, lacking essential elements of strategic communication—such as message clarity, audience targeting, channel suitability, and the overall capacity to create sufficient awareness and education about the tourism potential of Taraba State to external audiences. Consequently, this has hindered the increase in tourist visits and investment in the state. The poor communication strategies of the Taraba State Tourism Development Board have implications for the overall development of the state. This is particularly concerning given that tourism remains one of the state's most valuable assets for driving economic growth and gaining global recognition. Therefore, there is a pressing need to restructure and strengthen the Board to enhance its effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. The Taraba State Tourism Development Board is also encouraged to adopt a multimedia approach in promoting tourism. This should involve the use of a combination of traditional and digital media platforms—including radio, television, social media, websites, video documentaries, and virtual tours—to reach diverse audiences and engage them more effectively.
2. The Taraba State Government should increase funding for the Board. Additionally, the government should provide modern communication equipment such as cameras, computers, internet connectivity, and related devices to address the infrastructural challenges currently hindering effective communication for tourism promotion in the state.
3. There is also a need for staff training in strategic communication, digital marketing, content creation, and tourism branding. The management of the Board can collaborate with communication departments in tertiary institutions to facilitate such training, as well as partner with expert private organisations and individuals to train their staff members, thereby bridging the knowledge and skill gaps prevalent within the Board.
4. Furthermore, collaboration with the private sector, groups, and individuals is essential. Specifically, the Board should work with tourism influencers, travel bloggers, media houses, and international tourism bodies to enhance visibility and credibility. Partnerships with airlines, hotels within and outside the state, as well as local artisans, can also contribute to improved promotional outcomes. In doing that, there is a need for a unique and appealing brand identity for Taraba State as a tourism destination. This should include a consistent logo, slogan, visual theme, and messaging that communicate the state's tourism uniqueness and value to visitors and investors.
5. Above all, the board should design and adopt a communication plan that clearly defines its objectives, target audiences, key messages, appropriate channels, and feedback mechanisms. This is essential in guiding the Board towards more coordinated and result-oriented communication for tourism promotion. The board can hired expert in communication and Tourism to help them in designing the communication plan document.

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