

Information Needs, Information Sources and Information Search Strategies of International Air Travellers in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the information needs, sources and search strategies of international travellers in Nigeria within the backdrop of unfavourable events in the aviation sector in the past ten years. Accidental sampling technique was used to select 203 willing respondents from an undefined number of travellers found at the departure wings of the fourteen international airlines operating at Nigeria's busiest international airport - the Murtala Muhammad International Airport Lagos, Nigeria during June to September 2010. Data collection was guided by a questionnaire covering demographic characteristics, information needs and information sources of the passengers as well as travel variables. Chi Square analysis was used to reveal statistically significant relationships in the proportions for different groups. The travelers were a little above middle age on the average; mainly women, about one of three being self-employed, about three of ten Christians and a little more than half were married, and nine of every ten reported residing in Nigeria. Travellers required information about fare more than they did about safety. Travel agents were the major sources of information to travellers; less number of travellers used the Internet, and lesser were solely reliant on the strategy. There is a significant difference in all the groups examined. Travellers from Nigeria seemed not to show any apprehension about safety; they prefer sourcing information from travel agencies probably because it takes away from them the troubles of logistic arrangements. This research is useful to travel agencies and airline operators in modelling their marketing management decisions and designing effective marketing communication campaigns and service delivery.

Keywords: Information needs, information search strategies, international air travellers, Nigeria, Murtala Mohammed International Airport

Introduction

Information has the power to guide human itinerant life. People require information when they are moving from one location to another, and the information sources, needs and strategies for meeting these needs vary by many variables including mode of travel - whether by road, water or air. Fewer people move by air compared with those that move by other means of transport. Particularly, travelling by air is more expensive than other modes of travel, and those who travel by air are usually people who are either relatively wealthy or are somewhat opportune. Compared with air travels within the same country, international

flights might be more expensive and more information intensive. Life is a person's most precious wealth. Traveling means that someone is relocating his or her life, or committing his/her life into the hands of a vessel, temporarily or permanently, and information is required to make appropriate decision.

There is evidence of increasing rate of air travel by air in Nigeria. According to Gustafsson (1998), air travel customers' demand and expectations are changing globally, and this may relate to Michael's (2007) finding that there is global increase in travelers' behaviour research. Airlines in Nigeria face the challenges of keeping fare price affordable while maintaining the desirable levels of efficient freight capacity, food and beverages, schedule flexibility and neatness of the cabin. They also need to have very good arrangements in-flight services, improve employee attitudes and upgrade facilities and ticketing procedures. As elsewhere, passengers would love airlines that deliver all checked baggage as quickly as possible. Passengers also want airlines to deliver mishandled bag to the passenger within the shortest possible time after arrival at final destination, free of charge.

Making international trips from Nigeria may present its peculiar information challenges and opportunities. It is a known fact that people from developing countries do not have adequate information they require to perform optimally because of high level of illiteracy, poor right to desired information, epileptic power supply and inability to use different information, among others. Another major challenge may relate to the general poor state of infrastructure which operates at less than expected capacity. For instance, accidents in the aviation industry in the country in the past ten years could be interpreted as an indication that the industry needs to come to terms with the reality of safety needs of passengers (Ayodele, 2010). According to Boland, Morisson and O'Neill (2002), many airline managers think of their services from their own perspectives, focusing on cost reduction and other strategies that indicate that customers are low in their strategic planning priority ranking (Gustafsson *et al* 1998). Customers will therefore often be on the search for information about airlines that could meet their travel needs. Like elsewhere, the opportunities have also increased; air travelers in Nigeria utilize magazines, radio, television, advertisement and newspaper, colleagues, bill boards, handbills and travel agencies to source for travel information.

A cursory observation shows that many travelers in Nigeria still depend heavily on travel agents for air travel information and service procurement. Globally though, the internet is known to constitute a major source of information to travellers (Özturan & Roney, 2003; Laroche, Cleveland & Browne, 2004). The Internet makes it easy for passengers to find tickets and purchase them, and then to customize their ticket by adding meal preferences, self-selected seat numbers and so on. The facility saves time and often money as passengers avoid agent premiums and booking fees. This gives passengers more choice and more power to make their own decisions. An important observation is that travel agents utilise the internet to procure information services for their clients.

There are many factors that may influence travellers' information-seeking approaches and information use. In a very general sense, as in other information seeking and use situations, sources that are available and accessible may be used more by people than those that are not. For instance, in low technology environments where Internet services are very poor, travellers may rely on traditional sources of travel agents and other sources.

Travellers who are Internet literate and have access to the technology may prefer to use the facility while those who do not have the luxury of Internet access and skill may rely on other sources. It is right to assume that all information sources would not be of equal significance in meeting the needs of travellers; sources such as newspapers or handbills might be serving as mere supplementary sources assisting travellers to know where to get further travel services. But sources such as the Internet or the travel agent provide complete services to the traveller, and will definitely be heavily used.

The travellers' social status, whether the traveller is a first timer or a frequent traveller is also a major factor. It is also expected that information search strategy and use of travellers who are accompanied by other persons may be more intense according to the characteristics and needs of those accompanying them. Also, demographic characteristics of respondents and their socio-economic status will relate to travellers' information strategy and use. Individuals travelling for personal purposes may also exhibit different information search characteristics than those who are travelling for corporate or business related purposes.

This study establishes the information need, information sources and information search strategies of air travelers in Nigeria and the factors that influence their choice of information sources. The study further addresses the following questions:

- i. What is the relationship between demographic characteristics of travelers and their information needs?
- ii. What is the relationship between the demographic characteristics and travel information sources?
- iii. What is the relationship between information needs and purpose of travel?
- iv. What is the relationship between information needs and travellers' characteristics?
- v. What is the relationship between information search strategy and purpose of travel?
- vi. Does search strategy relate to travellers' characteristics?

A comprehensive search in both electronic and printed sources did not show any studies focusing on travel information behaviour studies in Nigeria. However, understanding how travelers acquire and use information is important for making marketing management decisions and designing effective marketing communication services and delivery (John and Drivers, 1999; Gursoy and McCleary, 2004).

Literature Review

Information Need, Information Use and Information Seeking Behaviour

Information plays a significant role in human daily professional and personal lives. Information helps to keep someone informed, and reduces uncertainties and improves quality of decision making (Buckland 1999). Studies about information behaviour are now ubiquitous, obviously pointing to increased attention to the need to resolve confusions, remove ignorance and increase the chances of right decisions in decision making - information being practically a decision making necessity. Information needs arise when human beings experience or envisage the occurrence of an anomalous state of knowledge,

and available information is considered inadequate to satisfy a set goal. According to Johnson (2003), information need could be triggered off by desire to gain general knowledge, make specific decisions and collect residual information related to problems, sharing information and improving communication with others. Information seeking is the process or activity of attempting to obtain information in both human and technological contexts in order to meet information needs. Wilson (2000) has identified three types of information behaviour which humans exhibit in the course of seeking out and using information for specific purposes, namely information seeking behavior, information searching behaviour and information use behavior. Information seeking behaviour is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking the information, the individual may interact with various types of information systems and sources, manual and electronic, etc. Information searching behavior is the behaviour exhibited by searching and interacting with all kinds of information systems and sources. Information use behavior consists of the physical and mental acts involved in incorporating the information found into the person's existing knowledge base, or into a current activity.

Travel and Some Issues about Travelling

Travelling involves the dynamics of movement of people and property from one location to another. There are two major issues in travelling: the purpose and type of the travel (and O'Mahony 2007). Gitelson and Crompton (1983) classified purposes of travel into four: business, visiting friends or relatives (VFR), personal purposes and pleasure. According to Chadwick (1987), those travelling for pleasure or to see friends and relatives may not embark on serious information searching because they may have a lead about their journey, whereas business travellers would often be business-minded, most likely focusing on the details and purpose of their trip.

Morrison (1996) recast these four categories of travel purpose into two: business travel and leisure travel, and showed that the information needs and behaviours of people travelling for business purposes differ from those of people travelling for pleasure. Business travellers are believed to place higher value on ticket flexibility and lower value on cost, and the airlines charge this category higher while making their tickets very flexible (Lindstädt & Fauser, 2004). Practically, however, airlines might not really be distinguishing between types of travellers in the course of ticketing; business travellers may purchase tickets directed to leisure travellers, and vice versa. Rubin & Joy (2005) found that demographic, geographic and political trends shape leisure travellers' information strategy more than they do business travellers.

Types of information facilitating travellers' decisions range from pre-trip to at-stop or at-terminal information. Pre-trip information refers to information obtained before making a trip, while at-stop information would refer to the information obtained at arrival to one's destination (Lyons, 2006). There is also on-board information and those relating to return or continuing trips (Lyons, 2006). Pre-trip information is important to advise potential travellers of the choices available for a specific trip, allowing them to make better informed decisions with respect to that journey. En-route or at stop/terminal information is sought, for example, to ascertain the predicted waiting time before arrival of the next

vehicle at that particular location. This type of information is also useful if the journey involves transferring to another service. Moreover, information on potential or occurring disruptions is important to reduce uncertainty with regards to the expected arrival time. On-board information provision is practical for determining when and where to alight before continuing to the final destination. Finally, information on the continuing or return journey will be useful for further trip planning and decision making. Caufield and O'Mahony (2007) discussed the use of information at different stages of trips and they showed that information use was influenced by the knowledge possessed by an individual, access to the Internet and costs of acquiring the information.

Passengers' preference for airlines may be influenced by flight scheduling, ticket prices, in-flight service, employee attitudes, facilities and ticketing procedures (Lu and Tsai, 2002). Individual passengers have various ways of thinking, and this makes the issue of preferences a matter of individual perspectives. Also, individual behaviour in choosing product and services differ and may be motivated by knowledge or acquired information in respect of a given need. The extent to which humans understand the significance of information acquired, among other factors, also influence the way they make decisions, preferences, choices and demands. Customers compare products and services in order to decide which one to patronize (Kotler 1997; Tony, 2001), and the information customers have about an airline will definitely influence their choice of airline.

The primary motivation behind information search is the desire to make better consumption choices (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1995). All the time, purchase decision is measured from the consumer's perception about service quality, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, and positive recommendations to others, and repurchases intentions and brand loyalty (Chadwick 1987; McIntosh and Goeldner 1990; Moutinho 1987). In any case, increasing search for information may increase the cost of travel (Etzel and Wahlers (1985). More extensive information search would be related to higher levels of consumptive behavior.

Travel Information Needs and Sources

Information is key to business in all sectors, including aviation. Destination planners, travel information services providers and aviation managers and policy makers require knowing the information needs of their customers in order to serve them better. This implies that even the airlines themselves need to know how their customers knew about their services and why they choose them. They need to know whether the sources in which they advertise their services, content and incentives as well as their services themselves are adequate for the customers they target. The travel experiences of this researcher show that some airlines conduct surveys to know their clients' opinions about their services. However, primary researches based on surveys carried out on passengers across all possible airlines in Nigeria have not been identified. Yet, this information is most requisite for wider sectoral policies. The realization of airline companies' goal of satisfying their passengers can never be achieved in isolation of the appropriate, adequate and timely information to unfold the needs, wants and preferences of the passengers. These passengers make use of different information sources to obtain information that keeps them informed,

reduce their uncertainties, as well help them in making decisions about the airlines they should fly at a particular time.

Travelling is an information-intensive activity. It is an uncertainty-laden undertaking. Air travellers require information about availability of airlines, cost, flight departure and arrival time, freight/luggage capacity, extra room services and classes of ticket offered by the airlines, whether business, premium or economy class. Air travellers may also consider customer friendliness of services, route selection, flexibility of schedule, efficiency of check-in options; they may want to have information about the neatness of the cabin and availability of bonanza as well as airport pick-up services, hotel accommodation and other conditions about the destination.

To access these information, travellers use various categories of information strategies: electronic - Internet, radio, television; print – handbills, magazines, travel agencies, newspapers, travellers guide, etc; interpersonal - colleagues, indoor or outdoor sources such as bill boards, with each source or class of sources posing different levels of enticement and challenges. Before the advent of the Internet, travel agents were actually the major sources of information for air travellers. But today, the Internet has made it much easier for passengers to find tickets and purchase them ahead of time, and to even customize tickets by adding meal preferences, self-selected seat numbers and so on. Use of the Internet further saves time and often money as passengers could avoid agency and booking fees. Travellers may also rely on information they receive from other travellers who are satisfied or otherwise with the services of the airlines they have used.

Factors Influencing Travel Information Behaviour

Many researchers have investigated the factors that influence travellers' information behaviour. The three major factors are tourists' characteristics, travel party and demographic characteristics of the traveller composition. Tourist's characteristics relate to certain personal factors of the traveller that may influence the travellers' choice of information. Tourists' characteristics have been described by Wilkes (1995) as the series of relatively predictable stages through which the family unit evolves such as whether a traveller is married, has children and so on. In their own study, Kotler and Armstrong (1995) and Morrison (1996) found that social status of a traveller has influence on travellers' information strategy. A person's social class compels him or her to exhibit distinct preferences for a variety of products including leisure activities. However, several studies have shown that the exact measurement and role of social class is a very controversial issue although variables such as occupation, income, accumulated wealth, highest level of income achieved, place of residence and family history aptly describe a person's social standing (Boone and Kurtz 1995). Persons who have lower income would be expected to engage in more information search in a bid to offset the greater perceived risk they are often exposed to (van-Raaij 1986). In the same way, higher income levels, on the other hand, is positively associated with greater level of use of sophisticated and costlier sources (Gitelson and Crompton, 1983). Also, the adoption of a search strategy may be dependent on the traveller's past travel knowledge (Fodness and Murray 1999).

A contingency that has been found regularly to influence information search of travellers is the presence or absence of other people in the company of a traveller

(McIntosh and Goeldner 1990). According to Fodness and Murray (1999), travelling parties can be composed of single individuals, persons from different households travelling together, and persons from the same household travelling together. Persons from the same household could imply families travelling with children and couples travelling without children, and the travel-related behaviours of the two groups differ significantly. If one is travelling with children, then such a person would require greater planning to coordinate schedules and meet differential needs. Even couples travelling together have been categorised as younger, middle-aged, and retired couples and these also pose different information search strategies to the traveller. Seniors have also been categorised as active, experienced travellers and tend to engage in less information search than do younger or middle-aged couples (Bieger and Laesser 2000).

The demographic characteristics of travellers are expected to show various degrees of relationship with travellers' information search and needs. Fodness and Murray (1999) suggested that a difference exists in the information strategies of younger, middle-aged, and retired couples. In a number of cases, retirees could be considered active and experienced travelers without schedule conflicts and may tend to engage in less information search than do younger or middle-aged one. In their study, Kim, Lehto & Morrison (2007) have shown that information search strategies show differences based on gender; Laroche, Cleveland & Browne (2004) show that differences exist in information strategy with age, business versus leisure travelers (Lo, Cheung, & Law 2002) and culture (Gursoy & Umbreit, 2004; Laroche, Saad, Kim, & Browne 2000; Lee, Soutar & Daly 2007). Studying seniors' use of travel information sources, Cleaver (2000) showed that seniors take more holidays than any other age group and outspend the young on leisure. In their own study, Murphy and Olaru (2007) have shown that men were more likely than women to prefer the Web, and women were more likely to prefer friends/relatives. Income showed a positive relationship with use of the Web as a preferred source and a negative relationship with friends and relatives. Murphy and Olaru did not find any significant differences in information preferences based on respondents' age, education or occupation.

The outcome of an information search is the facilitation of purchase decision-making process, an assumption that is based on the observation that air travellers feel safer to decide on airline they would use. Search outcome could, however, be better seen more broadly from the perspective of the primary motivation of making better consumption choices (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard 1995). Even the precaution of safety can be located within this fact (Maute and Forrester 1991; Srinivasan and Ratchford 1991). The literature frequently cites decreased perceived risk as a major desired outcome of information search by travellers (Murray 1991), but Bloch, Sherrell, and Ridgway (1986) suggest that desired outcomes could be a function of the environment of the traveller: culture, social class and family. The quality of purchase decisions is measured from the consumer's perspective in terms of service quality, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, and positive recommendations to others. Several studies have shown that the more activities and opportunities one is aware of at the intended destination, the more information one is likely to use (Chadwick, 1987; McIntosh and Goeldner, 1990). In any case, increasing search for information may increase the cost of travel (Etzel and Wahlers, 1985); more extensive information search was related to higher levels of consumptive behaviour.

The literature reviewed has shown that there has been some attention paid to the

issue of travel information in various parts of the world, and that similar studies have not been found on Nigeria. Although it could be established that some variables recur in the various studies on the subject matter, peculiar environmental reality may lead to different result in respect of these variables.

Methodology

This study is designed to examine the information needs and search strategies of international travellers who were found at the Lagos international airport during June – August 2010. There are not many international airports in Nigeria and many travellers transverse long distances from both urban and semi-urban and rural areas to Lagos to make international trips. But the Lagos international airport– the Murtala Muhammad International Airport (MMIA), is the busiest airport. In 2010, the airport was ranked ninth among the top 20 busiest airports in Africa by Airport Council International with passenger traffic of 4,450,000 per annum (Aviation News 2008). The airport also ranked sixth in Africa in terms of its annual percentage growth rate of 15.8%. The airport is the major international exit point in Nigeria. The population for the study consists of infinite number of passengers found at the airport during the period of study namely during June to September 2010. Practically, this population could be considered undefined as it is difficult to construct a sampling frame of travellers.

The study adopted a sample survey design, a design good for obtaining information from a large population by selecting and measuring a sample of that population. A sample survey is based on the assumption that the researcher could make inferences about the population based on data collected from a well selected few. This design fits this study given the challenges of defining the population and constructing a sample frame. Moreover, beyond giving the researchers permission to carry out the study, none of both the airport and any of the fourteen airlines operating at the airport was willing to participate in the study, thus making it practically impossible to draw a sample frame of the airlines' passengers at the airport. Furthermore, staff of the airlines refused assisting in the administration of the data collection instruments to the travellers on-board and many of the passengers met at the airport were not willing to participate in the study. Given these challenges, a sample size of 250 passengers was arbitrarily decided. Accidental sampling was therefore adopted to select respondents found at the departure wings of the fourteen international airlines operating at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), Lagos, Nigeria.

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The challenges earlier mentioned were anticipated, and this led to the adoption of closed-ended questions in the questionnaire to facilitate ease of data collection and data analysis. Based on a synthesis of the literature and interaction with academic members of staff of the University of Ibadan many of whom are travellers, the following variables guided the data questionnaire design: (1) information sources (2) information needs, (3) purpose of trip, (4) travelling party composition, (5) stage of family life cycle, (6) socio-economic status, and (7) travel history.

Information sources were listed based on personal observations, but they included some of the sources listed by Snepenger, Meged, Snelling, and Worrall (1990) and Fodness

and Murray (1999). These authors also used heuristic approach in identifying the sources used in their study. Apart from being dominant in information use studies (Nwagwu 2012), heuristic approaches allow researchers to create variables that reflect their environmental conditions and specific research need. In addition to supplying yes or no responses to the use of 13 information sources listed, respondents were also asked to indicate whether they used the sources alone, or along with one or two other sources. To create variables on information needs, an information sheet was distributed to 16 members of the university community met at different times in the course of designing the study, asking them to list the information needs they expect travellers to have. Based on this activity, sixteen information need items were listed and the travellers were asked to rate each of the needs as high, average or low. The variables on purpose of trip, travel party composition, stage of family life cycle and travel history have been used in the studies of Fodness and Murray (1999), and they made references to many other studies of theirs and others which utilised the same variables.

The questionnaire was generously distributed to passengers; administration of the instruments ceased when a total of 250 correctly completed copies had been returned. This size of sample was purposively determined considering the difficulty of administering a questionnaire to people who either are waiting for the arrival of their flight or are processing their journey at various check points. Beside frequency distribution, a cross-examination of the information needs and information sources respectively with purposes of trip, travelling party composition, stage of family life cycle, socio-economic status, travel history and local events as dependent variables was carried out. Further statistical analysis was carried out using Chi Square analysis, a non-parametric method to reveal if there is a statistically significant difference (P is less or equal to 0.05) in the proportions for different groups. Based on the literature, the Internet is the latest and globally fastest growing among all the sources we identified and logistic regression was used to establish how the demographic characteristics of the respondents explain use or non use of the Internet.

Results

Demographic Variables

Only 203 of the 250 copies of the questionnaire were usable on account of mainly incomplete responses. Table 1 shows that most of the respondents (28%) were in the age group 31-40 years while the least percentage (16%) was aged 20 years or less. Respondents within the age groups of 41- 50 years, 21-30 years and above 50 years constituted 21%, 18% and 18% respectively. Overall, the mean age of the respondents was 35.92 years.

Table 1: Demographic variables

	Measurement	Frequency	Percentage
Age group	20 years	32	15.8
	21-30 years	36	17.7
	31-40 years	57	28.1
	41-50 years	42	20.7
	> 50 years	36	17.7
	Total	203	100
Gender	Male	78	38.4
	Female	125	61.6
	Total	203	100
Occupation	Student	45	22.2
	Self employed	65	32.0
	Private Sector	61	30.0
	Public Sector	32	15.8
	Total	203	100
Marital Status	Married	105	51.72
	Single	76	37.44
	Divorced	12	5.92
	Separated	10	4.92
	Total	203	100
Residence	Nigeria	158	77.8
	Outside Nigeria	45	22.2
Nationality	Nigerian	182	89.71
	Others	21	10.31
	Total	203	100

The table also shows that about three-fifth (62.0%) of the respondents were females while males constituted less than two-fifth (38.0%). Married respondents accounted for 52% of the respondents while the single constituted about 37%. Many of the respondents were resident in Nigeria (78%) while those that were resident outside Nigeria constituted only 22%. Next, passengers of Nigeria nationality had the highest percentage (90%); those that were of other nationality had the least (10%).

Purpose of Travel

Business was the reason for which the largest number of respondents (66.7%) embarked on their trips, followed by 48.6% who were going for holidays and 42.3% visiting their friends and relations (VFR). The least number of respondents were going for health, education and job related purposes.

Travellers’ Characteristics

The survey also made an inquiry about the characteristics of the travellers other than their demographics. Table 2 shows that about half of the travellers (48%) reported that they have children; the same number who has children reported having spouses also while a very few (3.78%) have spouses but have no children.

Table 2: Other travelers’ characteristics

	Yes	
	#	%
Family life cycle		
Has no spouse, has children	98	48.11
Has a spouse, has no children	7	3.78
Has a spouse, has children	98	48.11
Socio-economic status		
Low	61	29.9
High	142	70.1
Travel history		
Frequent flier	117	57.64
Non frequent flier	86	42.36
Travelling party		
Accompanied	34	16.7
Not accompanied	169	83.3

In respect of other characteristics of the travellers, table 5 shows that only 29.9% fell into the low socio-economic status. The travel history of the travellers shows that 57.7% were frequent fliers. Only 16.7% of the respondents were accompanied while the rest were travelling alone.

Information Needs of Passengers

In a multiple response question format, the information needs of the passengers were collected as shown in Table 3. As might be expected, the information need that has the highest mean value is fare (4.19), while the need with the least mean value is availability of bonanza.

What does one make out of this response pattern?

Table 3: Information Needs of Air Travellers in Nigeria

	Mean	SD
Fare	4.19	2.09
Customer friendliness of service	3.74	0.09
Luggage capacity	3.74	2.22
Food and Drink	3.20	1.01
Safety	3.05	0.19
Availability of seat	2.86	1.11
Schedule flexibility	2.46	0.62
Neatness of cabin	2.22	0.27
Class	1.97	0.19
Check-in type	1.72	0.17
Availability of bonanza	0.44	0.17

The order of these information needs reflect what could be deduced heuristically. Besides fare, travelers want to be treated with some sense dignity; it would appear that Nigerians move with heavy luggage, an observation whose explanation is beyond the scope of this study. Safety is a general concern for every traveller, but the result of the survey does not suggest that it is a particularly a serious issue. Practically, many of the airlines that lift passengers out of Nigeria are owned and managed by foreign airlines who only have business kiosks at the airport. This might be a confidence booster for the travelers.

Information Sources of the Passengers

Table 4 presents the information strategies of the passengers. Travel agents remain the source used by most of the respondents (77.4%) and most of those who used the source did not consider the use of any other source very necessary (76.9%). Only about 15% of those who used travel agents cared to seek for information from one more source, and the least number of sources used by the travellers (1.3) was recorded by those using travel agents. The same pattern is followed by those who used Internet (61.7%), many of them (47.8) did not use any other source while 37.9% of them consulted one more source. The low mean number of sources used (1.4) suggests that those who used the Internet are less likely to consult other sources. Use of colleagues and personal experiences share the same characteristics although those who use colleagues appear less likely to use only that source (43.5%) than those relying on their experiences (56.8%). Radio, television and handbills are the least used by the respondents (7.3%, 7.14% and 2.3%) and very few respondents (1.6%, 0.9% and 1.7%) used only these sources. As would be expected, a very large number of the respondents who used these sources also sought for information from one other source (79.5%, 87.7 % and 68.9%). The mean numbers of sources used by those who used radio, television and handbill are also the highest (6.8, 5.8 and 5.5) respectively.

Table 4: Information sources used by airline passengers in Nigeria

	Total sample N=203			Used a source only N=102			Used a source and one other source, N=122			Average number of sources used by those using...	
	#	%	<i>Rank</i>	#	%	<i>Rank</i>	#	%	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Radio	15	7.3	11	3	1.6	9	161	79.5	4	6.8	1
Internet	125	61.7	4	97	47.8	4	77	37.9	12	1.3	11
Magazine	43	21.4	12	2	0.8	10	181	89.4	2	5.6	5
Travel agents	157	77.4	1	156	76.9	1	31	15.4	11	1.4	12
Television	14	7.14	9	2	0.9	11	178	87.7	3	5.8	4
Handbill	5	2.3	0	4	1.8	8	140	68.9	5	5.5	6
Colleagues	104	51.1	2	88	43.5	2	111	54.8	10	4.3	8
Family	69	33.8	6	57	27.9	3	113	55.5	9	3.4	9
Brochures	37	18.4	8	6	2.9	7	115	56.7	8	6.5	3
Friends or relatives	75	37.1	5	71	34.8	6	116	57.1	7	4.9	7
Newspapers	61	29.9	7	1	0.7	12	182	89.9	1	6.7	2
Personal experience	115	56.7	3	115	56.8	5	130	63.9	6	2.9	10

Reasons for Choosing a Source of Information

Why did the travellers choose the information sources they used? Table 5 shows that most of the travellers (67.8%) would use a source that is accessible, while availability was the reason why

Table 5: Why did you choose the information source?

	Yes		No		Non response	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Accessibility	138	67.8	63	31.1	2	1.1
Availability	121	59.6	84	41.5	2	0.9
Proximity	119	58.5	64	31.5	0	0.0
Ease of use	101	49.9	102	50.1	0	0.0
Cost	116	57.0	87	43.0	0	0.0
Self use	95	46.9	105	51.9	2	1.2
Credibility	108	53.12	74	36.48	2	0.4
Timeliness	79	38.9	83	40.7	2	0.4
Convenience	99	48.7	103	50.7	1	0.6

59.6% used a source. Less than this figure (58.5%) was influenced by proximity while 57.0% was influenced by cost. Timeliness of the sources influenced the least number of travellers (38.9%), while sources that travellers would use by themselves influenced 46.9% of the travellers.

Further Statistical Analysis

In a similar study, Fodness and Murray (1998) and Bieger and Laessar (2007) used multidimensional scaling and cluster analyses respectively to explore underlying dimensions of leisure travelers’ perceptions of information sources. An attempt to deploy any of these methods in this present analysis did not yield any useful result, probably because of the smallness of the sample. However, a physical examination of the data shows that the twelve sources could be reduced into six categories by heuristics. For instance, radio and television were categorised as electronic sources. Internet was not included in this category because of the very high number of travelers who reported using the source in comparison with radio and television. Magazines, newspapers, handbills and brochures were categorised as print sources while friends and relatives, family and colleagues came under interpersonal sources. Like the Internet, travel agents appeared very prominent a source in the study and sufficiently constituted a distinct category.

In the same way the information needs variables were categorised into six; check in; food and drink, availability of seat and neatness of cabin were categorised as comfort variables. The next category of variables was class, while incentive was used to describe schedule flexibility, availability of bonanza, luggage capacity and customer friendliness of

service. Fare and safety remained as different variables.

Demographic Characteristics and Travel Information Needs

Relationships between the demographic variables and the information needs were examined using Chi Square analysis. A significant relationship between age and fare is supported ($\chi^2=40.912$, $df=16$, $p=0.001$), as with safety ($\chi^2=41.388$, $df=12$, $p=0.000$), comfort ($\chi^2=36.00$, $df=8$, $p=0.001$) and incentive ($\chi^2=78.238$, $df=12$, $p=0.001$); but not with check in ($\chi^2=31.198$, $df=9$, $p=0.231$) and class ($\chi^2=1.003$, $df=10$, $p=0.200$). For gender, there is also no support for any significant relationship with fare ($\chi^2=1.697$, $df=4$, $p=0.791$) as well as with safety ($\chi^2=1.729$, $df=3$, $p=0.631$), class ($\chi^2=9.918$, $df=10$, $p=0.070$) and check in ($\chi^2=4.77$, $df=6$, $p=0.090$). But a significant relationship exists between gender and comfort ($\chi^2=14.27$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$) and incentive ($\chi^2=17.70$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$).

Occupation has a significant relationship with safety ($\chi^2=23.94$, $df=12$, $p=0.02$) as well as with fare ($\chi^2=20.594$, $df=9$, $p=0.015$), check in ($\chi^2=3.907$, $df=8$, $p=0.002$), comfort ($\chi^2=3.37$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$) and class ($\chi^2=1.03$, $df=8$, $p=0.000$). But there is no significant relationship between occupation and incentive ($\chi^2=103.007$, $df=12$, $p=0.201$). comfort, on its own part, supported a relationship with fare ($\chi^2=0.007$, $df=8$, $p=0.006$) and class ($\chi^2=.119$, $df=6$, $p=0.008$) but not with safety ($\chi^2=9.093$, $df=6$, $p=0.44$), check in ($\chi^2=1.101$, $df=8$, $p=0.60$) and incentive ($\chi^2=0.009$, $df=8$, $p=0.16$).

Marital status has a significant relationship with fare ($\chi^2=21.85$, $df=12$, $p=0.039$), safety ($\chi^2=17.392$, $df=9$, $p=0.043$), class ($\chi^2=1.702$, $df=8$, $p=0.003$) and check in ($\chi^2=2.008$, $df=6$, $p=0.002$). But marital status has no significant relationship with incentive ($\chi^2=0.098$, $df=8$, $p=0.49$) and comfort ($\chi^2=92$, $df=8$, $p=0.67$). Residence type has no significant relationship with either safety ($\chi^2=1.785$, $df=4$, $p=0.775$), fare ($\chi^2=2.827$, $df=3$, $p=0.419$), check in ($\chi^2=0.912$, $df=4$, $p=0.600$) and class ($\chi^2=5.556$, $df=3$, $p=0.310$) has significant relationship with incentive ($\chi^2=1.009$, $df=3$, $p=0.019$) and comfort ($\chi^2=7.007$, $df=3$, $p=0.090$). Nationality has no significant relationship with fare ($\chi^2=7.761$, $df=4$, $p=0.101$), safety ($\chi^2=1.842$, $df=3$, $p=0.606$), class ($\chi^2=8.112$, $df=3$, $p=0.550$), check in ($\chi^2=1.118$, $df=3$, $p=0.006$); but is significantly related to incentive ($\chi^2=1.402$, $df=3$, $p=0.000$) and comfort ($\chi^2=1.111$, $df=3$, $p=0.006$).

Demographic Characteristics and Travel Information Sources Use

Using Chi Square analysis further, the relationship between demographic characteristics of the travellers and the information sources used was examined. Age is significantly related to use of Internet ($\chi^2=0.003$, $df=8$, $p=0.000$), but not with use of travel agents ($\chi^2=17.216$, $df=12$, $p=0.142$) and personal sources ($\chi^2=13.98$, $df=12$, $p=0.302$). There is also no significant relationship between age and use of electronic, print and personal experiences. There is no significant relationship between gender and any of the information sources.

Occupation has a significant relationship with Internet ($\chi^2=12.30$, $df=12$, $p=0.001$) and travel agents ($\chi^2=30.30$, $df=12$, $p=0.031$), but no significant relationship was established with other sources. A significant relationship was established with interpersonal ($\chi^2=4.73$, $df=8$, $p=0.014$) and personal sources ($\chi^2=1.109$, $df=8$, $p=0.026$). For marital

status, there is a significant relationship with Internet ($\chi^2 = 1.50$, $df=12$, $p=0.009$), interpersonal ($\chi^2 = 7.32$, $df=8$, $p=0.023$), personal ($\chi^2=4.72$, $df=8$, $p=0.013$) and print ($\chi^2=12.12$, $df=6$, $p=0.002$). But marital status has no significant relationship with travel agents ($\chi^2=22.09$, $df =8$, $p=0.19$) and comfort ($\chi^2=12$, $df=8$, $p=0.17$).

Type of residence has no significant relationship with personal, print, and interpersonal sources, but significant relationship exists with travel agents ($\chi^2=7.75$, $df=4$, $p=0.005$) and Internet ($\chi^2=10.12$, $df=6$, $p=0.021$). Nationality has significant relationship with Internet ($\chi^2 = 1.61$, $df=4$, $p=0.011$), interpersonal ($\chi^2=0.412$, $df=3$, $p=0.036$), personal ($\chi^2=1.112$, $df=3$, $p=0.005$), and print ($\chi^2=1.110$, $df=3$, $p=0.026$), but no significant relationship exists with travel agent ($\chi^2 = 3.302$, $df=3$, $p=0.101$).

Use or Non-Use of the Internet

Given the preference of the Internet as an information source in many studies in the recent years (Fodness and Murray, 1999) and the relative low ranking of the source (fourth) in this study, the research examined how demographic characteristics of the respondents influenced the respondents’ use or non use of the source. Since the data set is nonparametric, logistic regression analysis technique was considered very suitable for this undertaking.

Table 6: Demographic factors associated with seeking travel information from the internet

		Odds ratio	95% confidence interval	p-value
Age group	20 years or less	1	(0.45, 1.22)	0.340
	21-30 years	0.56	(5.48, 9.21)	0.001
	31-40 years	2.98	(3.09, 7.99)	0.002
	41-50 years	6.78	(1.09, 2.89)	0.187
	> 50 years	5.09	(1.23, 2.67)	0.26
Gender	Male	1		
	Female	3.09	(2.13, 6.11)	0.145
Occupation	None	1		
	Student	2.22	(2.19, 5.89)	0.039
	Self employed	1.67	(0.21, 0.19)	0.210
	Private Sector	1.88	(0.33, 1.77)	0.023
	Public Sector	1.02	(0.63, 2.61)	0.331
Marital Status	Separated	1		
	Married	3.22	(1.01, 2.11)	0.031
	Single	2.11	(2.23, 3.87)	0.021
	Divorced	1.29	(1.61, 3.67)	0.001
Residence	Outside Nigeria	1		
	Nigeria	12.19	(6.68,12.89)	0.003
Income	Low	1		
	High	1.009	(12.45, 23.90)	0.203

Independent variables that predicted whether or not the traveler would use the Internet were

middle age (21-31 and 31-40), student or private sector employment status, all the marital statuses and residence in Nigeria. Younger respondents less than 20 years, respondents older than 50 years, gender, low income, self and public sector employment type.

Information Needs and Purpose of Travel

Chi Square analysis in Table 7 shows that information needs of travelers has a significant relationship with the purpose of travel ($\chi^2=298.80$, $p=0.000$). Table 7 further suggests that when people go on holiday, they are most likely to be seeking for information about the incentive they would get from the airline as suggested by 19.9% of passengers that fall into this category. They might also be seeking for information about check-in and fare as suggested by 18.9% and 18.2% of the respondents respectively. Visiting friends and relations requires seeking for information about comfort (25.08%) and not necessarily class (6.2%); many passengers would rather be seeking for information about incentive (22.07%) and check in (20.61%). Those going on business trip, on their own part, pay less attention to information about comfort (7.02%) and fare (10.2%), but they would rather seek for information about incentive (20.28%), check in (22.22%) and class (16.21%).

Table 7: Information needs and purpose of travel

	$\chi^2=28.80, p=0.000$						
	Holiday %	VFR%	Business %	Conference %	Health %	Education %	Other %
Check in	18.9	20.61	21.22	21.34	29.09	2.01	8.09
Fare	18.21	19.02	16.2	12.2	10.05	29.55	24.51
Comfort	21.62	25.08	7.02	17.02	15.09	11.01	10.7
Class	9.2	6.21	16.21	16.2	8.08	2.08	14.01
Safety	12.2	7.02	19.08	23.35	34.56	32.22	23.93
Incentive	19.91	22.07	20.28	9.89	3.13	23.13	18.76

As would be expected, only a few of those whose trips are for conference purposes showed interest in information about fare (12.20%) and incentive (9.89%), but rather they sought for information about safety the most (23.35%) and check-in (21.34%) next. Many of those traveling for education related purposes sought safety information (32.22%), 29.55% sought for information about fare while the least number of respondents in this category sought for information about check in (2.01%) and class (2.08%).

Information Needs and Travellers' Characteristics

The relationship between family cycle and information need is significant ($\chi^2=112.02$, $p=0.001$). Many of the travelers that have no children and spouse reported safety (33.9%) and comfort (24.90%) as information need items while information was sought about class and fare by the least number of respondents. Many travelers that have children but no spouse sought for information about safety (34.90%) and fare (29.09%) while the least number sought for information about class (0.90%), incentive (0.90%). The information needs of travelers that have no children but have spouses is similar with the foregoing in terms of need for safety information (44.02%) and comfort (22.00%). Travelers that reported having wives and children reported needing safety information (39.44%) and fare information (32.12%) more than they needed incentive (0.18%), check in (5.8%) and class (5.9%). Socioeconomic status of the travelers also has a significant relationship with travelers information needs ($\chi^2=19.07$, $p=0.002$). More people in higher socioeconomic status (29.09%) sought for safety information than those in the lower class (9.09%), but those in the lower class sought for information about fare and incentive (25.52%) and (31.9%) than their higher class counterpart (19.45% and 11.19%) respectively. Also, there is a significant relationship between travel history and information need ($\chi^2=149.12$, $p=0.001$). More frequent fliers (22.12%) are likely to need information about comfort than infrequent fliers (16.9%); they also seek for incentive and class information than infrequent fliers. But more infrequent fliers (29.93%) need safety information than frequent fliers (19.03%); they also need check in and fare information than frequent fliers.

Table 8: Information needs and travellers’ characteristics

	<i>Family cycle</i> $\chi^2=112.02, p=0.001$				<i>Socioeconomic status</i> $\chi^2=19.07, p=0.002$		<i>Travel history</i> $\chi^2=149.12, p=0.001$	
	No spouse no children	Has children no spouse	Has spouse no children	Has spouse has children	Low	High	Frequent	Infrequent
Check in	16.7	12.18	8.18	5.8	5.12	2.11	19.09	22.01
Fare	7.1	29.08	19	16.56	25.52	19.45	10.45	18.41
Comfort	24.9	22.04	22	32.12	22.12	22.12	22.12	16.9
Class	5.3	0.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	16.11	14.12	10.56
Safety	33.9	34.9	44.02	39.44	9.44	29.02	19.03	29.93
Incentive	12.1	0.9	0.9	0.18	31.9	11.19	15.19	2.19

Information Search Strategy and Purpose of Travel

The Chi Square analysis of the relationship between search strategy and purpose of travel is significant ($\chi^2=17.89$, $p=0.003$); travellers going on holiday rely mainly on travel agents (60.41%) and personal experiences (20.20%), and very few of them sought for information from print and electronic media. In addition to travel agents (43.35%), those visiting friends and relations relied on interpersonal experiences (33.23%), and less on personal experiences and the electronic media.

Table 9: Search strategy and purpose of travel

	$\chi^2=17.89$, $p=0.003$						
	Holiday	VFR	Business	Conference	Health	Education	Other
Internet	8.08	10.10	5.03	11.07	42.17	10.52	1.14
Electronic	7.22	8.10	3.20	0.01	2.02	14.22	44.70
Interpersonal	4.00	33.23	5.51	13.14	12.50	23.80	30.21
Print	0.09	3.00	2.09	14.40	15.01	6.20	5.90
Travel agents	60.41	43.35	62.1	45.16	16.18	36.1	6.84
Personal experience	20.20	2.22	22.07	16.22	12.12	9.16	11.21

Except for the other category and those travelling for health purposes, the travel agent is the major source of information for various categories of travellers, with almost half the number of respondents in each category reporting that they use the source. Those travelling for business as well as those travelling for conferences or education purposes do not seem to use any other source of information except the travel agent. But those travelling for health related purposes seem to use a wider spectrum of search strategies, using the Internet the heaviest (42.17%) as well as travel agents (16.18%) and print media (15.01%).

Search Strategy and Travellers’ Characteristics

The Pearson Chi Square test of the relationship between individual characteristics and search strategy is significant ($\chi^2=17.90$, $p=0.001$). When the traveller has no children and no spouse, they tend to rely more on travel agency as indicated by 35.90% of the respondents in this category more than they would interpersonal sources. Furthermore, the number of travellers that has no children and no spouse and used other than Internet electronic sources, 9.8%, is relatively low.

Table 10: Search strategy and travellers' characteristics

	<i>Family cycle</i> $\chi^2=17.90, p=0.001$				<i>Socioeconomic status</i> $\chi^2=29.17, p=0.000$		<i>Travel history</i> $\chi^2=19.12, p=0.001$	
	No spouse no children	Has children no spouse	Has spouse no children	Has spouse has children	Low	High	Frequent	Infrequent
Internet	35.90	31.08	19.17	32.72	29.79	10.55	29.79	10.55
Electronic	9.80	3.02	15.12	7.02	1.72	7.17	1.72	7.17
Interpersonal	0.62	6.10	9.10	10.79	4.25	21.18	4.25	21.18
Print	15.90	10.21	3.50	5.05	15.90	5.19	15.9	5.19
Travel agents	35.90	37.47	33.03	32.08	26.18	46.70	26.18	46.7
Personal experience	7.70	12.12	20.08	12.34	22.16	9.21	22.16	9.21

Table 10 shows further that many travellers (37.47%) that have children but have no spouses seem to rely on travel agents but so much on electronic sources. Also, the travellers who have spouses but have no children present a different pattern of information sourcing. Most of them (32.72%) appear to choose personal experience more than they would print and electronic sources other than the Internet. A more interesting pattern of responses was reported by those travelers who have both spouses and children who appear to use the Internet (32.72%) and travel agents (32.08%) more than they used other sources.

There is also a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and information sources used by travelers ($\chi^2=29.17$, $p=0.000$). The Internet is a source of travel information to travelers – to 10.55% of the travelers who belong to the high socioeconomic status compared with 29.79% in the low status. Travelers from low status (15.9%) reported using print sources more than those from high status (5.19%). Travelers from both statuses also used travel agents but those from low status (26.18%) used the source more than those from high status (46.71%). There is also a significant relationship between travel history and sources of information used by the travelers ($\chi^2=29.12$, $p=0.001$). About one third of frequent fliers use the Internet (29.79%) and travel agent (26.18%) as sources of travel information, but the infrequent travelers use travel agents (46.7%) and interpersonal sources (21.18%) more than frequent fliers (26.18% and 4.25%) respectively.

Discussion

Our results show that travelers met at the MMIA during the period of the study were mainly people a little above middle age. Suggesting that few non Nigerians use the MMIA, eight of every ten of the travelers were Nigerians, while nine of every ten reported residing in Nigeria. In tune with the general report about Nigeria's economic situation, three of every five travelers assessed themselves low in social status.

Contrary to what would have been expected, safety information did not rank high in the list of information highly needed by the travellers. Rather, travellers seemed to give so much attention to air fare about which they sought information the most. It would appear then that international travellers in Nigeria do not necessarily consider airlines operating from Nigeria as unsafe. Practically, one could explain this result by the fact all the air events in Nigeria mentioned in this study were mainly about airlines operating locally, some of which were reported by the Press as having political or other dubious motives. Furthermore, most of the international airlines operating in Nigeria do not belong to Nigeria or Nigerians, neither are they necessarily operated or managed by Nigerians. It could also be speculated that travellers landing in Nigerian airports might be more apprehensive about safety issues rather than those taking off from Nigeria.

Regarding information sources, travel agents remain the major sources of information to travellers in Nigeria, and users appear very confident about the strategy. Contrarily, less number of travellers used the Internet alone, and lesser were solely reliant on the strategy. This result possibly underpins the general observation about low penetration of the Internet in Nigeria; the Internet dominates travel information sources in many studies (Laroche, Cleveland, & Browne, (2004). Moreover, there is high likelihood that travellers found at the airport originated from various parts of the country both rural and urban, with varied levels of Internet access and use skill. In comparison with the

Internet and the travel agents, those who used the sources we regarded as supplementary such as print, television, radio, etc, also used much higher average number of other sources than those who used the Internet or travel agents. The low sole reliance on supplementary sources by travellers does not in any way reduce their significance in travel information seeking and use, because travellers might obtain first hand information about airlines from these sources, and then fulfil their information service need through the travel agents or the Internet which have the advantage of carrying the travel transaction through to conclusion.

The result shows that accessibility influenced source use, and that availability and proximity of sources do not necessarily translate to use skill or even usability. This finding is in line with the opinions of Johnson (2003) who suggested that perceived quality of information is not as important as perceived accessibility of the information. Household appliances such as radio and television are often accessible and give information which are considered useful to people, and not necessarily the information required by the users. Apart from cost and credibility, ease of use, self use, timeliness and convenience influenced information sources used by less than 50% of the travellers. This could be because travellers utilised mainly travel agents, a source that reduces self service by the travellers. Although more than half of the individuals who use the Internet for travel transactions are satisfied with their search results, human agents are still a vital source of information in many countries particularly when other information sources are not available or accessible. Agents offer personalised services such as facilitating certain services like hotel booking, among others.

The likelihood of using the Internet may understandably be higher among people 21-40 years, being active lifetime age categories in line with the findings of Capella, & Greco (1987) and Laroche, Cleveland, & Browne, (2004). Previous studies in Nigeria (Nwagwu, 2007) have shown that the most Internet people are found among people in these age categories in comparison with younger and older ones. Travel information from the Internet may also be available mainly for a few privileged students who have access and skill to use the Internet. The study did not investigate the exact employment type engaged in by the respondents in all sectors; but employees of private organizations are more Internet compliant than those in the public and other sectors. Student travelers are likely to seek information from the Internet, understandable due to their high level of Internet use. The finding of the significance of travelers of Nigerian origin using the Internet may not be very useful given the relative higher number of Nigerian residents in the study. The indication of a higher tendency for the divorced to use the Internet, followed by single and then married might find an explanation in an ongoing study by Ogunnika (upcoming) which is investigating the intervening role of marital status, among others on the influence of home-computing on family cohesion, communication and flexibility. In line with the finding of Wilder-Smith (2004) who investigated travel health information seeking; but unlike Kim, Lehto, & Morrison (2007), use of Internet for seeking travel health information was not differentiated by gender. In their study on the influence of involvement, familiarity, and constraints on the search for information about destinations in Portugal, Carneiro and Crompton (2009) showed that financial constraints encouraged people to engage in more extensive information search but this present study tends to suggest that their search strategies might exclude the Internet. Kim, Lehto and Morrison (2007) studied gender differences in online travel information search and showed that there were substantial

gender differences both in terms of attitudes to information channels and travel Website functionality preferences.

Travel holidays are high-risk purchase activities because their costs are usually high, with large differences in product alternatives (Capella & Greco, 1987), and high likelihood of these travelers seeking for incentive, check in and fare information as found in this study might be connected to this understanding. Although visiting friends and relations should have taken the question of comfort off travelers, this appears not to be the case for Nigerian travelers in this study, and an explanation is difficult to proffer; but the heavy seeking of safety information might be because friends and relations cannot take away the need for safety while on a trip. Those going on business trip are people that might afford the air fare, their fares might even be footed by their organizations, but they would also wish to have information related to their safety. In the same way, many conference travelers as well as those traveling for education purposes might have their fare either paid for by the conference organizers, their institutions or by any funding agency, but also have reasons to be bordered about safety of the trip, a factor beyond the funders of the trip.

For all the family cycles considered, safety was a common denominator. In line with previous studies, the rich and affluent express more apprehension about their safety while travelling, while the poor show more concern about the cost of the travel. People in high socio economic class are more likely to have higher socio-economic stakes, and probably more enemies than those in lower status. Frequent fliers seem to have overcome fear of air travel but are more concerned with comfort and benefits that might accrue to them because of their advantage of frequency of flying.

There may be several reasons why those travelling for holiday should rely on travel agencies. First agencies do more than flight booking. They arrange for lodgings and stops and also organise site seeing events, if needed. These information cannot be obtained from print sources which only may give someone information about airlines, travel agency, among others. Although the Internet now performs the functions of the travel agency even better, other electronic sources such as radio and television are one way systems which provide little or no opportunity for any form of feedback or interaction with service consumers. On the other hand those visiting friends and relations would be expected to augment their information search strategies or even rely wholly on their host abroad for travel information. Except for the other category and those travelling for health purposes, the travel agent is the major source of information for various categories of travellers, with almost half the number of respondents in each category reporting that they use the source. Those travelling for business as well as those travelling for conferences or education purposes do not seem to use any other source of information except the travel agent.

Travel agencies also dominate the search strategy of many of the travellers. Cleaver (2000) found that marketer-dominated travel information sources were sought by more experienced travelers, but that general media was favored by those who had less travel experience. Travellers probably seem to prefer a strategy that takes away from them the troubles of logistic arrangement. But in addition to using this strategy, those that have their spouses and children appear to require a combination of travel agency sources that is very reliable and the Internet that offers a wider range of information. The Internet serves both the poor and the rich; the source is becoming cheaper and more accessible to everyone, but print sources just as travel agency also serves people in both statuses. Print sources serve

initial information to travellers and they are sometimes cheap, and those in the lower social economic status might rely on such sources to obtain lead information before they patronise the Internet or the travel agency. More frequent fliers appear to have more confidence in air travel, and combine their personal experience with Internet to arrange their trips. More than information about flight booking, the infrequent flier might need more information, and might require the travel agency who might provide counselling and other assistance related to travelling.

This research has some weaknesses which could, however, be a springboard for further research. For instance, this research neglects completely issues about individual level information processing and how this task influences information search outcomes. Furthermore, given the multiple source nature of information strategies of travellers, it could be very informative to understand how decision about travel choices is influenced by each of the strategies adopted by the travellers. Also, all deductions made about why the travellers either chose or did not choose travel agency or the Internet, or any other strategies, were based on either mere heuristic or on other studies, and not on any empirical evidence from this study. Furthermore, the study neglected other sources of information such as tourist centres, hotels and other sources in Fodness and Murray's (1999) study were not examined in this study. Finally, the smallness of the sample size prevented a more serious statistical analysis that would have unravelled latent information about relationship and variation among the variables on the study.

This result has some implications for travel information service providers and airlines. Airlines regularly review their marketing and management decision strategies in order to design effective communication services and delivery. This study highlights that travel agencies still play very important roles in the marketing of airline services, irrespective of the increasing role of the internet. The finding of high level of use of multiple sources implies that airlines should advertise their services in traditional media such as radio, television and newspapers, among others. These sources probably give intending travelers initial information, but the travellers finalise action about their travel through the travel agencies.

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