



## **Impact of Marine Tourism in the Riverine Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria**

by

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined tourism and its impact on the livelihood of the inhabitants of the riverine areas of Akwa Ibom State. It was designed to investigate the level of tourism development as well as the income it generates for the host communities. It adopted a survey design approach and purposively selected seven Local Government Areas (Itu, Uruan, Ibeno, Okobo, Oron, Udung Uko and Mbo) representing 50% of the target population of the study. Findings from the study showed a strong and positive Pearson correlation coefficient with a significant value which implied that there is a significant relationship between tourism and livelihood development in the study area. It concluded that security was the major factors that determine development of tourism in the riverine areas. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that public awareness on the availability of hospitality tourism centres within the riverine areas of Akwa Ibom State should be inculcated as this will attract more tourists to the study area. Hospitality staff should also be well trained on how to accommodate and interact with high profile personalities, Effective security should be sustained at all times so as to fight against crime rate and also to encourage foreign and local investors and tourists to stay and invest in the riverine area of Akwa Ibom State.*

**Key words:** Tourism, Livelihood, Inhabitants, Riverine.

### **1.1 Introduction**

Tourism is an activity that involves people otherwise known as tourists visiting places (tourist centres) outside their usual abode for leisure. However, the past decades have shown that people do not only visit places of interest for leisure only, but for other purposes. Hence, terms such as medical tourism, religious tourism are among other types of tourism. Whichever perspective tourism is viewed; it is considered by World Tourism Organization (WTO 2014) as one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Tourism development is a source of foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, infrastructural development, income distribution through economic multiplier as well as

environmental and socio cultural consequences (Geethika and Gnanapala, 2015). Tourism is a constantly growing and economically important sector on a global and local level. It is of vital economic, social, and cultural importance and offers real prospects for sustainable and inclusive development. Rasoolimanesh, Ramakrishna, Hall, Esfandiari and Seyfi (2020) acknowledged that the number of tourist trips made each year before the arrival of COVID-19 in 2019 came to surpass the world population with International tourist arrivals exceeding 1.5 billion globally in 2019, representing an increase of 3.8% year-on-year.

Tourism is a very unique sector that influences other social and economic activities that contribute positively to man's development. With tourism, many aspects of man's occupation and environment (accommodation and business, catering, transportation, education, religion, telecommunication and amongst others.) can be vibrant and marketable. Many countries have discovered the importance of tourism in sustaining economic growth and development and proceeded to adopt tourism as not just a means for revenue generation (Naluba, 2020) but as a sector that can foster sustained growth and development. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2014) one out of ten jobs worldwide depends on tourism, and international tourism arrivals reached 1.5 billion in 2019 (UNWTO, 2019). Tourism has grown to become the major component of economic strategies for development (Williams and Show, 1991 cited in Naluba 2020) as such, Imikan, Ekong and Okoroji (2022) acknowledged that community-based tourism if well managed and restructured is a functional tool to driving sustainable tourism development.

The coastal environment is a rich and diverse ecosystem with natural resources, vegetation, and large human agglomerations. Despite this, misinterpretation on the value and use of tourist attractions in an eco-destination can affect its maintenance and sustainable utilization. In the absence of proper management of tourist attractions and infrastructural facilities, eco-destinations can be dilapidated; which limits the development of sustainable tourism in the area. Absence of tourist attractions in an eco-destination can affect tourist satisfaction; reduce tourists' period of stay, level of visitation and spending. Poor infrastructural facilities constitute a serious barrier to sustainable tourism development in tourist destinations.

The South China and the Sulu- Celebes Seas have large marine ecosystems (LME's) and exhibits extraordinary levels of diversity in terms of habitats, marine and coastal species, cultural diversity of coastal inhabitants and resource users. Eight nations (Cambodia, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) surround the South China Sea and the Sulu-Celebes sea, all at different stages of development with rapid industrialization (Feizizadeh and Ghorbanzadeh, 2017) as a result of tourist flow in the countries. Effective governance of marine and coastal resources in the region is inhibited by socio-political factors at play in the region including widespread poverty, transmigration, separatism, illegal fishing and corruption. Globally, activities that result in the degradation and physical alterations to coastal and marine ecosystems deserve priority action. These issues cannot however be addressed in isolation from the broader objectives of sustainable economic development.

Riverine areas provide quality of life in terms of economic activity, diverse biodiversity, protection of people and property from extreme weather events, and the provision of ecosystem services through the presence of marsh and wetland landscapes (Ebi, Meehl, Bachelete, Twilley and Boesch, 2007). Coastal recreational sites have the

potential to generate significant natural resource based revenue if they were managed to attract increasing numbers of visitors for activities such as fishing, surfing, boating, beach recreation, and wildlife viewing. The demand for these attractions is influenced by the site characteristics and the individuals' preferences. Marine tourists travel to places where the coastal scenery is beautiful; however, the coastal tourist facilities developed around them have an adverse effect on the coastal environment (Kubo *et al.*, 2020). Thus, understanding the factors that influence recreational visitation choices are a primary concern when developing and managing coastal areas for nature based coastal tourism. In addition, the process of determining factors that affect individual trip taking behavior can provide useful insight on the economic value of a specific recreational area.

Tourist destination can be defined as any travel destination that appeals to a large number of tourists. People visit these destinations either to see natural wonders, historical sites, or buildings. Some tourist destinations have activities such as games and rides that attract visitors. Historical sites are commonly considered tourist destinations because some things of historical significance happened in those places. Some of the things that can be considered as historical tourist attractions were battlegrounds and monuments. Apart from historical sites, there are beautiful natural creations that are considered tourist attractions. Those who visit such areas are able to see beautiful natural wonders such as canyons and waterfalls. A good example is how many people visit Niagara Falls (one of the seven natural wonders of the world) yearly. It is essential to consider the spatial characteristics of tourist attractions and coastal tourism visitation (Zefiniban 2021). A tourist destination can only promote the products and services that it has. As a result of this, the destination development needs to be a continuous process of development and coordination of facilities, amenities, services and products that can help the host communities to offer quality services and experiences for the tourists and enhance their personal well-being.

At present, tourism has evolved into a contemporary model which is diverse, dynamic, fast-growing and economically attractive. Moreover, tourism is widely regarded as the main driver of economic progress and social development (Ong and Smith, 2014). In addition, the busy maritime trade and tourism industry also make the coastal society and culture unique. As a result, the impact of coastal tourism on coastal cities is multiple. Tourism offers good opportunities for new entrants to the labour market but the work is often temporary, seasonal and poorly paid. This is why the primary objectives of the European Commission's 2014 *Strategy for Coastal and Marine Tourism* alongside reducing the sectors environmental footprint was to minimize the precariousness and increase the number of high value jobs (ESPON 2020)

Tourism activities bring not only economic benefits but also economic costs, including the direct costs of tourism enterprises, the cost of building infrastructure from the government aimed to provide better services to tourists, as well as community personal congestion and related costs (Taks, Kesenne and Green, 2011). The economic benefits and costs of tourism can almost reach everyone in the region. It can be seen that the economic impact of tourism does not always make contribution, but also needs to be paid by the government, community, business and individual. Therefore, the economic impact of marine tourism is an important factor that governments and communities need to consider in the development and planning of tourism. Good decision-making and planning depend on the balance of economic benefits and costs and objective assessment. Thus, researching the economic impact of tourism is critically important to achieving the

healthy development of local tourism. The majority of economic impact models are concerned with tracing the flow of tourist spending throughout the broader economy based on the principle of sectoral linkages and multipliers (Comerio *et al.*, 2019).

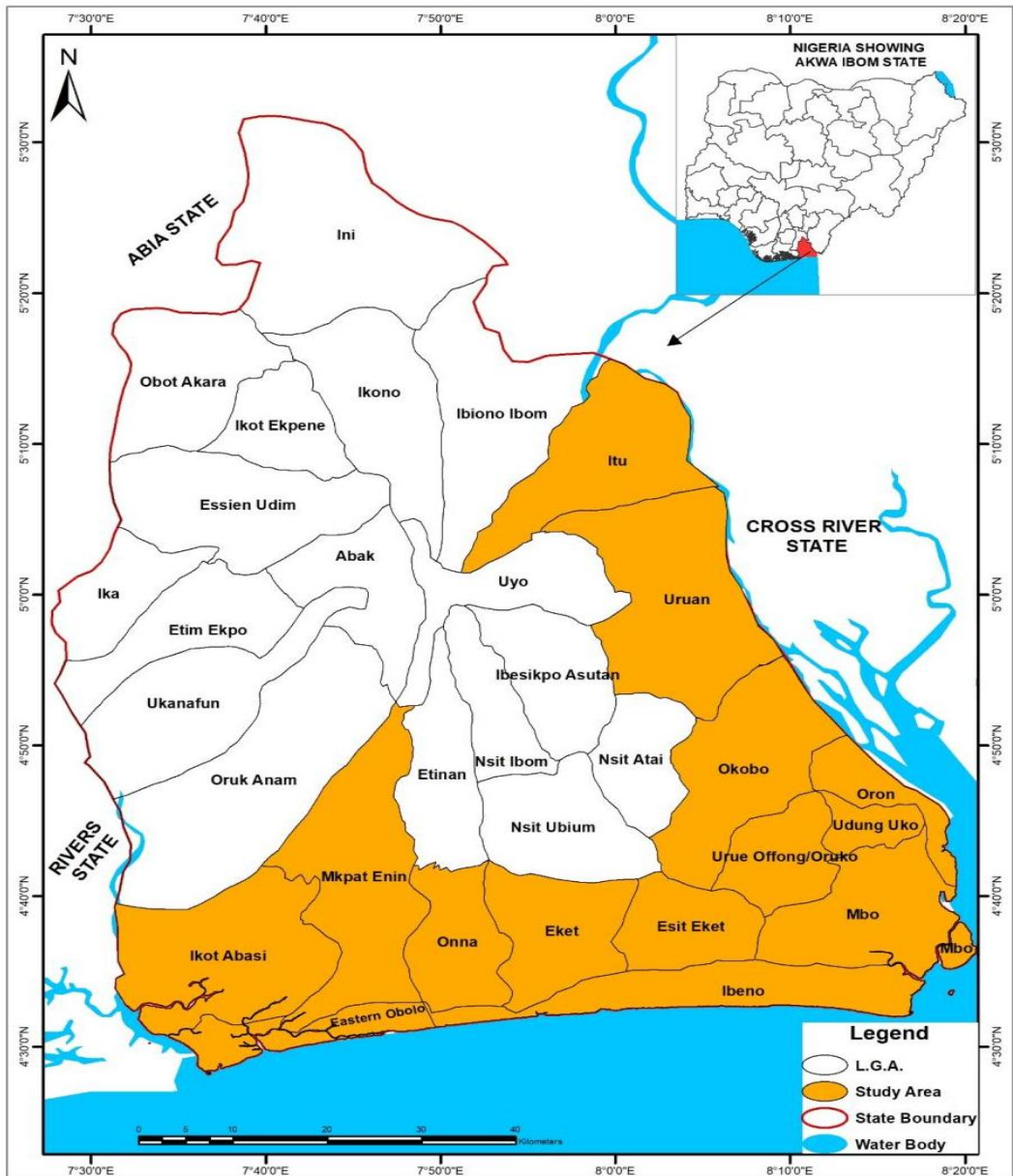
The general aim of the study is to assess tourism and its impact on the livelihood of the inhabitant of the riverine areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. To achieve the above aim, the following objectives were taken into consideration to ascertain the factors that determine the development of tourism in the study area and to examine the impact of tourism on livelihood of the study area

## **2. Study Area**

The study area is the Riverine Area of Akwa Ibom State which comprises of Mbo, Uruan, Ibeno, Udung Uko, Oron, Eket, Esit Eket, Ikot Abasi, Okobo, UrukOffon/Oruko, Mkpato Enin, Itu and Eastern Obolo, situated at the Southern part of Akwa Ibom State and lies between latitude 4°30' and 4°42' N and longitude 7°35' and 8°15' E, with a total land area of 3,378 kilometer square located in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The delta generates the greatest proportion of foreign exchange and internal revenue earnings of the country as the crude oil sector accounts for 90 to 95% of the export revenues. The area experiences a mean annual rainfall that decreases from the coastal area to the north with the figures ranging from about 2100mm to about 4050mm.

The area is influenced mostly by the air masses, sea breezes, topography, altitude and cloud cover. The prevailing winds are mostly the maritime south westerly monsoon and the dry continental northern eastern winds. The area is known for a long rainy season that starts from March to October and at time early November with a short less dry season. The study area (Akwa Ibom riverine area) has higher amount of rainfall more than any other parts of the southern Nigeria. The annual rainfall varies from over 4000mm along the coast to 2000mm inland, also heavy rainstorm makes up over 80% of the total annual rainfall along the coastal towns (Udosen, 2012) the temperature is uniformly high all the year round the mean yearly temperature stands at 27°C and relative humidity between 70% - 80%, in tropical region (Usoro and Akpan, 2010).

Geologically, the study area is underlain by coastal Sands Plains of tertiary and quaternary rocks of sedimentary origin which are not older than the quaternary age; the creeks have younger alluvial covers. The physical relief of the area is basically flat. There are in some areas, valleys, creeks and swamps due to the influence of the Atlantic Ocean, and the Qua Iboe river with some marshy river washed soils. It falls within the tropical zone where in its dominant vegetation is the green foliage of trees/shrubs and the oil palm tree belt. The soil structure of the study area varies from the alluvial of the fishing ports and coastal area in the east and south to the sandy and loamy soil of the interior. The soil enhances the natural growth of mangrove swamp forest, tropical rain forest and palms bushes of inter-lands (Inyang, 2000).



**Figure 1: Map of Akwa Ibom State showing the Study Area**

Source: *Ministry of lands and Town planning, Uyo (2022)*

The study area has a mangrove swamp forest the zone is washed by salt (brackish) water and is mainly dominated by mangrove trees which develop aerial roots above the water. *Raffia* palms and climbing plant can also be found here. Advance upland in the fresh water which is dominated by *raffia*, oil palm trees and with some rain forest trees. In the main rain forest zone, they have some overlapping tall evergreen trees like Mahogany, Iroko, Red Iron Wood, etc. are found there. The forest also consists of many types of epiphytes, creepers, parasitic plants, shrubs and ferns. The vegetation provides wood for

timber which can be used for the construction of canoes (Usoro and Akpan, 2010). Unfortunately, the native vegetation has been almost completely replaced by secondary forests of predominantly wild oil palms, woody shrubs and various grasses undergrowth.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

The study is descriptive in nature and uses survey research design. The researcher incorporated both qualitative and quantitative statistical methods of data collection and analysis. The study employed purposive sampling method to select seven local Government Areas (Itu, Uruan, Okobo, Oron, Udung-Ukor, Mbo and Ibeno). Data-set on factors that determine tourism development in the study area includes Historical Factor, Natural Factor, Security, Levels of infrastructure and were obtained through Questionnaire, In-Depth Interview, Published Journals, Police Station and Field Observations. Data-set on impact of livelihood on the study area include Small Business Development, Tour Guides Employment Opportunities, Infrastructural Donations or Philanthropic Benefits and were obtained through Questionnaire, In-Depth Interview and Field Observations.

A total of three hundred and eighty-four (384) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the inhabitants of the riverine areas among the selected (7) local government areas. The questionnaire forms were administered to various communities using simple random sampling method. However, the total questionnaire forms distributed were properly filled and collected. To ascertain factors that determine the development of tourism in the study area, Factor analysis was used to summarize factors that determine the development of tourism in the study area, while Pearson's product moment correlation was used to evaluate the relationship of tourism with the livelihood of the inhabitants of the of the area.

#### ***Statement of the Hypotheses***

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between tourism and the livelihood of the inhabitant of the riverine area of Akwa Ibom State.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### ***Factors that Determine Development of Tourism in the Study Area***

The result of the factor analysis in table 1 shows that 4 component has eigenvalues exceeding 1. Component 1 accounted 21.56% variation in the distribution. Component 2 accounted for 15.14% while component 3 and 4 accounted for 12.36% and 11.47% respectively.

In the rotated component matrix (table 2), factor 1 which accounted for 21.56% of the total variance and is the most important factor. Out of the 10 variables, 3 of them loaded positively and significantly on this factor. These include: communal clashes, government visitation and insecurity. This factor can be renamed as Security Factor. Factor 2 accounted for 15.14% of total variance. Associated with this variable include: uniqueness of site, historical development and serene environment. This factor is called Environmental Factor. Factor 3 accounted for 12.36% of total variation. These variables loaded highly on cultural heritage and serene environment and can be renamed as Cultural/Traditional Factor while factor 4 which accounted for 11.47% and loaded high on powers supply, health care facilities and road network and is refers to as the infrastructural factor. This clearly shows that security is the major factors that determine

development of tourism in the riverine area. This is followed by environmental factor, cultural/traditional factor and infrastructural factor respectively.

**Table 1: Factor Analysis showing Factors that Determine Development of Tourism in the Study Area**

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.156	21.564	21.564	2.156	21.564	21.564	1.597	15.972	15.972
2	1.514	15.142	36.705	1.514	15.142	36.705	1.558	15.581	31.553
3	1.236	12.364	49.069	1.236	12.364	49.069	1.459	14.591	46.145
4	1.147	11.470	60.539	1.147	11.470	60.539	1.439	14.394	60.539
5	0.978	9.777	70.316						
6	0.905	9.047	79.363						
7	0.681	6.814	86.176						
8	0.569	5.686	91.862						
9	0.512	5.120	96.982						
10	0.302	3.018	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>			
	1	2	3	4
communal clashes	0.842			
Government visitation	0.716			
Insecurity	0.555			
uniqueness of site		0.778		
Historical development		0.771		
Cultural heritage			0.919	
Serene Environment		0.512	0.700	
Powers supply				0.807
Health care facilities				0.796
Road network				0.319

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
 a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between tourism and the livelihood of the inhabitant of the riverine area of Akwa Ibom State.

**Table 3: Pearson Product Analysis of Hypothesis One**

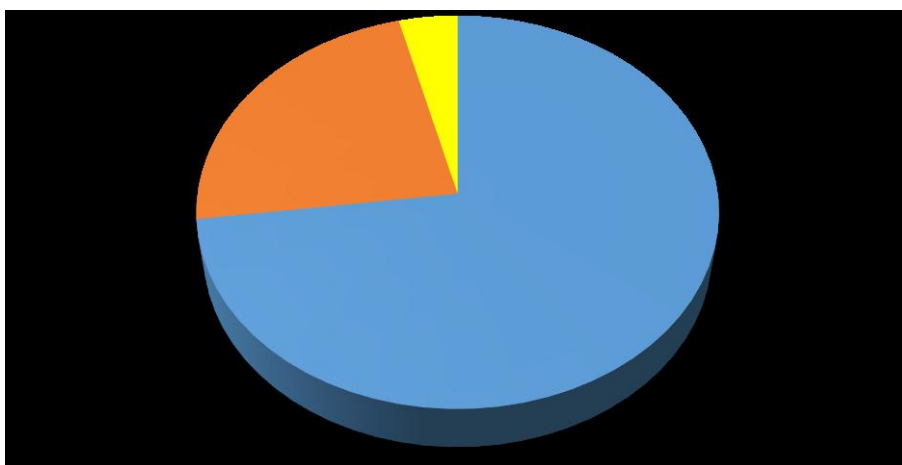
Correlations			
Tourism_impact		Tourism_impact	livelihood_development
	Pearson	1	.824**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	377	377
livelihood_development	Pearson	.824**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	377	377

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.824 with a significant value (2-tailed) of 0.000 (table 3). However, since the P-value is less than 0.5 (level of significant), it therefore means that there is a significant relationship between tourism and livelihood development in the study area. Hence, the null hypothesis rejected.

**Impact of Tourism on the livelihood of the Study Area**

Figure 2 shows that 73% of the respondents are aware of the tourism potential of their communities. While 23% were not aware of such potentiality, 4% were undecided in their opinion. In addition, 87% of the respondents accepted to be fully involved in tourism development services in their respective communities.



**Figure 2: Awareness of Tourism Potential**

Source: *Field Survey, 2022*

As shown in figure 3, 27.6% of the respondents agrees to the fact that tourist attraction mostly happens on weekly basis especially during weekends. In the same vein, 24.1% accepted that it only occurs once in a month especially on month end, 16.4% accepted that it is a daily experience while 13.7% and 13.2% agrees that it occurs twice a year and annually respectively.





**Figure 3: Frequency of Visitation to the Tourism Site**

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey*

This study was on tourism and its impact on the livelihood of the inhabitants of the riverine area of Akwa Ibom State through the following objectives: The study revealed Security Factor, Environmental Factor, Cultural/Traditional Factor and Infrastructural Factor plays a major role in the development of tourism. The research is in line with Alexoxa (2019) and affirmed that the development of tourism largely depends on the involvement of the public sector, as this business is predominantly integrated with other public services. The presence or absence of projects supporting the tourist infrastructure in a certain area is essential for the accessibility and competitiveness of tourism, so the policy of municipal authorities and their attitude to the problems of the sector are among the key factors for the development of a tourist destination. Through questionnaire and in-depth interviews with the inhabitants of the study area factors that determine the development of tourism in the study area was properly identified. The study identified non-availability of good road as the major challenges that hindered the sustainability of tourism in the riverine areas in Akwa Ibom State. Lack of access road hindered many tourists from visiting the riverine areas. Insecurity was also identified as another major challenge facing tourism development in the riverine area. Dessislava *et al* (2021) opined that unacceptable discomfort and difficulties are created by the failures of power supply and drinking water regimes. The electricity, water and sewerage systems are designed to perform their functions at a load many times exceeded by the redevelopment.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined tourism and its impact on the inhabitants of the riverine area of Akwa Ibom State. Tourism is the main stay of most the economies of some countries around the world. The riverine area of Akwa Ibom State holds great potentials for socioeconomic development showcasing several fascinating tourism sites. Tourism is the main stay of most the economies of some countries around the world. Akwa Ibom State tourism holds great potentials for socioeconomic development showcasing several fascinating tourism sites. Therefore, an increase in infrastructures, reduction in crime rate

can create more opportunities for more investments in hospitality tourism in the study area. This is evidenced from findings of this study that persons in the study area have gainfully participated in socio economic activities that contribute to a raise of their standard of living, thereby, encouraging socio-economic development of the area.

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that public awareness on the availability and benefits of tourism sites and their resources within the riverine areas of Akwa Ibom State should be inculcated as this will attract more tourists as they visit the study area. Also, human capacity building should be conducted to the tourism stakeholders in the area on their relations to foreign investors and visitors so as to boost the image of the tourism industry in the area.

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