

Urban Peoples' Awareness and Perception of Wildlife Conservation and Coastal Tourism in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Urban people's awareness and perceptions of coastal tourism and conservation of wildlife resources in Port Harcourt metropolis of Rivers State was studied. Two urban communities were randomly selected from each of the three Local Government Areas of Port Harcourt metropolis. Data for the study were collected using questionnaire and in-depth interviews. A set of questionnaire was randomly administered to 50 individuals in each selected urban community. Data collected were presented in forms of frequencies, percentage, pie charts and bar charts. Results showed that coastal destinations aware by respondents were Bonny Island (47.9%) and Buguma (19.8%). Top on the list of tourism activities in coastal destinations of Rivers were relaxation and research (22.8%) followed by boat ride (20.9%) and enjoyment of sea breeze (18.0%). Respondents' visitation to coastal areas for pleasure is higher in Eagle Island (80.0%) and lower in Igwuruta community (30.0%). Majority of the respondents are unaware (53.0%) of the possibility of edible coastal wildlife resources becoming extinct. A greater percentage of the respondents (28.8%) perceived coastal tourism to be good; 18.7% and 16.91% considered it as fun and interesting respectively. Majority of the respondents (87.6%) perceived conservation of edible coastal wildlife resources as a good idea. Governmental support in terms of improved security, rural development, and massive publicity coupled with proper management and renovation of existing tourist destinations will attract tourists to coastal destinations, improve people's perception and awareness of coastal tourism and wildlife management, increase popularity of destinations, hence make visitation to coastal areas economically beneficial to rural inhabitants.

Keywords: Coastal tourism, Port Harcourt metropolis, urban awareness, perception, rural development

INTRODUCTION

Human mindsets or views concerning both renewable and non renewable natural resources affect the use the resources are put to, and also affect how these resources are valued. For instance the fruits of Breadfruit (*Treculia africana*) are well cherished in

eastern part of Nigeria as inhabitants of the region use it for food and medicinal value. Because of this high use value and increased demand, the species is very expensive in the region and most cities within and outside Nigeria where easterners live. The same well cherished, expensive, highly demanded and

valued fruits of *Treculia africana* is neither consumed nor utilized in any form by the indigenous people of Guyaka in Quaana Pan Local Government Area of Plateau State, whereas the species is common in the area (Ijeomah, 2007). The indigenous people of Guyaka remain poor in the midst of wasting resources due to the prevailing perception in the area. Similar situation happens in the use of snail and other environmental resources in many areas.

The success of local conservation practice amongst indigenous people in most areas is anchored on prevailing perception of the inhabitants concerning the importance of the practice. No matter how 'outdated', superstitious or irrelevant the conservation practice could seem among people from other areas, those involved in the local conservation practice persistently continues with it. This shows that peoples' view or perception concerning value, use or demand of a product or resources is seriously affected by their knowledge or awareness level. Most inhabitants of Calabar (Sotolu *et al.*, 2017) and Jos the capitals of Cross River and Plateau States respectively are aware of the colossal tourism attractions and facilities in the cities and that reflects in their perception concerning treatment of visitors and conservation of the resources which attract tourists. Simply put people respond not only to physical attribute of the environment but amongst others, the psychological and sociological variables when taking decisions on where to visit, how to operate or utilize natural resources. It is therefore the knowledge of the special features imbedded in a practice, product or resources that brings out its value and enhances the demand (Borst *et al.*, 2008; Lee *et al.*, 2010) among potential users. Importance of coastal (and other wildlife) resources as viewed by users and the perceived knowledge (Arowosafe and

Agbelusi, 2017) of the level of exploitation of these resources among potential buyers (urban users) is very vital in determining the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation policies in coastal areas.

Tourism is known as a spinner of benefits; sustains local inhabitants, creates various employment opportunities and contributes towards conservation of biodiversity. It is the visitation of tourists that brings about these colossal benefits. Tourists' attractions are always in rural areas especially coastal sites as in the case of Rivers State. However, the potential visitors are the rich persons in the city who can afford to pay for recreational services in coastal areas. Visitation of the urban inhabitants to coastal areas in Rivers state depends on their awareness of the attractions in destinations, and the perception of potential tourists concerning the coastal areas., awareness of attractive coastal resources and the importance of coastal resources are very important for success of any ecotourism project in coastal areas of Rivers state. The study therefore evaluates people's awareness of wildlife conservation and coastal tourism in the study area, assesses the visitation of tourists to coastal areas, and assesses people's perception of wildlife conservation and coastal tourism in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study area, Port Harcourt metropolis consists of three Local Government Areas: Port Harcourt, Ikwerre and Obio-Akpor local governments. Port Harcourt Metropolis and environment is in Rivers state of Nigeria located within Latitudes 4°05'30''N and 5°14'25''N and Longitudes 5°40'30''E and 7°11'01''E of the Greenwich Meridian (Figure 1).

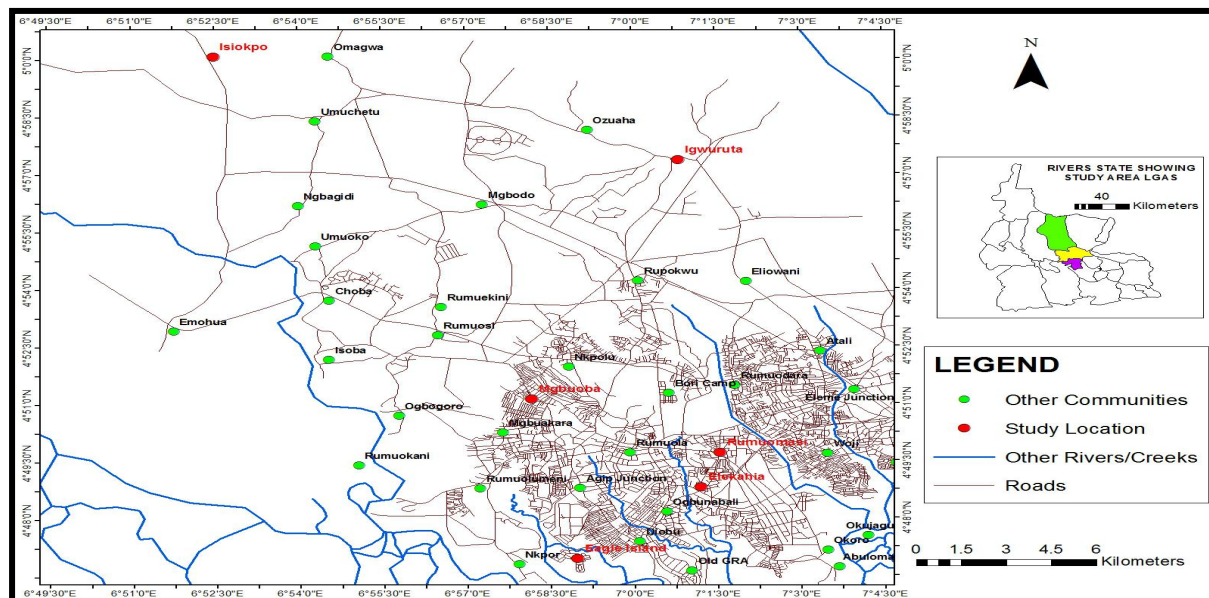


Figure 1: Map of Port Harcourt metropolis showing the study sites

Method of data collection and analysis

Data for the study were collected using one set of questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Two urban communities were randomly selected from each of the three local government areas that make up Port Harcourt metropolis: Obia Akpor Local Government area, Port Harcourt City Local Government area (PHALGA) and Ikwerre Local Government area. A set of questionnaires was administered to 50 individuals (who reside) in each selected urban community, and in all 300 respondents were sampled (Table 1). In-depth interviews were conducted in 2018 with randomly selected persons, who have resided in the area for a minimum period of three years. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics in forms of frequencies, percentage, pie charts and bar charts.

Table 1: Proportional allocation of questionnaires to respondents

Local Government Area	Community	Number retrieved	Total used
Obia Akpor	Rumuomasi	50	100
	Mgbouba	50	
PHALGA	Eagle Island	50	100
	Elekahia	50	
Ikwerre	Isiokpo	50	100
	Igwuruta	50	
	Total	300	300

RESULTS

Respondents' Awareness of Coastal Tourism

Results of awareness of coastal tourism are presented in Tables, 2, 3 and 4. Table 2 shows that with exception of Mgbouba, most respondents from other communities in the study area were aware of tourist visitations to coastal areas. The respondents' means of awareness of coastal tourism were mostly through personal communication with others (44.7%), personal experience (26.6%) and social media (8.0%).

Coastal destinations in Rivers state that are known to respondents is mostly Bonny Island (47.9) followed by Port Harcourt tourist beach (21.9%) and Buguma (19.7%) amongst others (Table 3). Top on the list of tourism activities in coastal destinations of Rivers state (known to respondents) were relaxation and research (22.8%) followed by boat ride (20.9%) and enjoyment of sea breeze (18.0%) (Table 4). Only 15.3% of respondents indicated swimming as an activity in coastal destinations (Table 4).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on awareness of tourists visitation to coastal areas

Community	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rumuomasi	Aware	44	88.0
	Not aware	6	12.0
Eagle Island	Aware	40	80.0
	Not aware	10	20.0
Elekahia	Aware	39	78.0
	Not aware	11	22.0
Igwuruta	Aware	30	60.0
	Not aware	20	40.0
Isiokpo	Aware	30	60.0
	Not aware	20	40.0
Mgbouba	Aware	20	40.0
	Not aware	30	60.0

Source : Field Survey, 2018.

Table 3: Coastal destinations in Rivers state

Destination	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bonny Island	83	47.9
Port Harcourt tourist beach	38	21.9
Buguma	34	19.7
Opobo beach	9	5.2
Ikuru beach Abonema	8	4.6
Ndele beach	1	0.6

Table 4: Tourism activities in coastal destinations of rivers state based on respondents' awareness

Tourism activities	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Research	70	22.8	4
Relaxation	70	22.8	4
Boat ride	64	20.8	3
Enjoyment of sea Breeze	56	18.2	2
Swimming	47	15.3	1

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Key: 4 represents the most experienced activity while 1 represents the least experienced activity.

Visitation to coastal areas

Results on visitation to coastal areas are presented in Tables 5, 6 and 7. Table 5 shows that visitation to coastal areas for pleasure is higher in Eagle Island (80.0%) and lower in Igwuruta community (30.0%). According to Table 6 the reason why people in Eagle Island do not visit coastal areas for pleasure is as a result of financial constraint (38.0%), while

respondents from other communities, indicated far distance from coastal area, security issues and time constraints. The strategies suggested for enhancing tourists' visitation to coastal areas include; improvement in security, governmental intervention and infrastructural development (Table 7).

Table 5: Respondents' visitation of coastal areas for pleasure on community basis

Community	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Eagle Island	Visited	40	80.0
	Not visited	10	20.0
Rumuomasi	Visited	26	52.0
	Not visited	24	48.0
Elekahia	Visited	20	40.0
	Not visited	30	60.0
Isiokpo	Visited	20	40.0
	Not visited	30	60.0
Mgbouba	Visited	20	40.0
	Not visited	30	60.0
Igwuruta	Visited	15	30.0
	Not visited	35	70.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 6: Reasons Why Respondents Do Not Visit Coastal Areas for Pleasure

Community	Reasons	Frequency	Percentage%
Eagle Island	Lack of Money	19	38.0
	Scared of transportation by water	9	18.0
	Security Issues	6	12.0
	Time constraint	6	12.0
	Not aware of any coastal areas	5	10.0
	Dirty Nature of Coastal	3	6.0
	No attractions in the area	1	2.0
	Far distance from coastal areas	1	2.0
	Far distance from coastal area	16	32.0
	Lack of money	7	14.0
Isiokpo	Time constraint	5	10.0
	Accessibility challenge	5	10.0
	Scared of transportation by water	4	8.0
	Not aware of any coastal areas	3	6.0
	Traffic jam	2	4.0
	No lodges/hotels	1	2.0
	No attractions in the area	1	2.0
	Dirty Nature of coastal area	1	2.0
	Security issues	10	20.0
	Lack of Money	12	24.0
Igwuruta	Time constraint	9	18.0
	Accessibility challenge	7	14.0
	Dirty Nature of coastal	5	10.0
	Scared of Transportation by water	4	8.0
	No response	3	6.0
	For distance from coastal areas	2	4.0
	Not aware of any coastal areas	1	2.0
	Time constraint	16	32.0
	Scared of Transportation by water	7	14.0
	Not aware of any coastal	7	14.0
Elekahia			

	areas		
	Security issues	7	14.0
	Lack of Money	6	12.0
	No attractions in the area	4	8.0
	Traffic Jam	1	2.0
	Accessibility Challenge	1	2.0
	Far distance from coastal	1	2.0
	areas		
Mgbouba	Security Issues	12	24.0
	Lack of Money	10	20.0
	Time constraint	10	20.0
	Scared of transportation	10	20.0
	by water		
	Dirty nature of coastal	4	8.0
	area		
	No Lodges/hotels	2	4.0
	Far distance from coastal	2	4.0
	area		
Rumuomasi	Time constraint	17	34.0
	Security Issues	8	16.0
	Lack of money	8	16.0
	Traffic jam	6	12.0
	Accessibility challenge	6	12.0
	No attractions in the area	2	4.0
	Scared of transportation	1	2.0
	by water		
	Far distance from coastal	1	2.0
	area		
	Dirty Nature of coastal	1	2.0
	areas		

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 7: Strategies for enhancing tourists' visitation to coastal areas

Community	Visitation Enhancement Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Elekahia	Improved security	10	20.0
	Hospitality development	6	12.0
	Massive publicity	4	8.0
	Sanitation of rural areas	3	6.0
	Encouraging youths to practice vocation related to tourism	1	2.0
	Availability of ships for transport	1	2.0
	Employment	1	2.0
	Rural Development	1	2.0

Eagle Island	Security improvement	4	8.0
	Tourism Development	4	8.0
	Reduced transportation cost	3	6.0
	Hospitality Development	3	6.0
	Massive awareness	1	2.0
Rumuomasi	Security improvement	10	20.0
	Developmental schemes	4	8.0
	Improved Attractions	4	8.0
	Massive awareness	3	6.0
	Rural Development	3	6.0
	Infrastructural development	3	6.0
	Governmental Intervention	2	4.0
	Proper Management	1	2.0
Isiokpo	Governmental intervention	30	60.0
	Creating awareness	20	40.0
Mgbouba	Developmental schemes	13	26.0
	Creating awareness	6	12.0
	Improved security	4	8.0
	Refurbishment/renovation of central area	3	6.0
	Improved lifestyle	1	2.0
	Provision of transportation facilities	1	2.0
	Research	1	2.0
	Secondary School Excursion	1	2.0
	Setting up business in the area	1	2.0
	Making tourism Cheap/affordable	1	2.0
Igwuruta	Infrastructural development	5	10.0
	Improved security measure	3	6.0
	Building bridges	3	6.0
	Creating awareness	2	4.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Awareness of Conservation of Edible Coastal Resources

Results on awareness of conservation of coastal resources are presented in Tables 8 and 9. Table 8 shows that most respondents in all the communities studied are unaware that edible coastal wildlife resources such as crayfish, oysters and periwinkle are over

exploited. Results in Table 9 shows that with exception of Rumuomasi most respondents from other communities are unaware of existing programmes for conservation of edible coastal wildlife resources in the study area. Apart from Eagle Island most respondents from the communities claimed ignorant of over exploitation of coastal resources in the study area.

Table 8: Awareness of over exploitation of edible coastal resources by respondents

Community	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Eagle Island	Aware	15	30.0
	Not aware	35	70.0
Rumuomasi	Aware	11	22.0
	Not aware	39	78.0
Isiokpo	Aware	11	22.0
	Not aware	39	78.0
Elekahia	Aware	11	22.0
	Not aware	39	78.0
Igwuruta	Aware	6	12.0
	Not aware	34	68.0
Mgbouba	Aware	3	6.0
	Not aware	47	94.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 9: Respondents' awareness of existing programmes for conservation of edible coastal resources in the study area

Community	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rumuomasi	Aware	42	84.0
	Not aware	18	36.0
Mgbouba	Aware	18	36.0
	Not aware	32	64.0
Eagle Island	Aware	5	10.0
	Not aware	45	90.0
Igwuruta	Aware	4	8.0
	Not aware	32	64.0
Isiokpo	Aware	2	4.0
	Not aware	48	96.0
Elekahia	Aware	2	4.0
	Not aware	48	96.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Perception of Coastal Tourism

As presented in Table 10, a greater percentage of the respondents (28.8%) perceived coastal tourism to be good; 18.7% and 16.9% view it

to be fun and interesting respectively. About 9% of the respondents perceived coastal tourism as a way of improving lives in rural areas while 7.1% and 7.7% perceived it as educating and risky respectively.

Table 10: Respondents perception of visitation to coastal area for tourism

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good	97	28.8
Fun	63	18.7
Interesting	57	16.9
Is a way of improving Rural areas	28	8.3
Risky	26	7.7
Educating	24	7.1
Time wastage	19	5.6
Luxury	18	5.3
Its money wastage	3	0.9
Very poor	1	0.3
Relaxing	1	0.3

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Perception of coastal resources conservation

Results on perception of coastal resources conservation are presented in Tables 11 and 12. Table 11 shows that majority of respondents (87.6%) in the study area viewed conservation of edible coastal wildlife

resources as a good idea. Most respondents in Isiokpo (70.0%), Elekahia (50.0%), Eagle Island (50.0%), Igwuruta (50.0%) and Rumuomasi (49.0%) perceived controlled wildlife harvesting method as a way to prevent over exploitation of edible coastal wildlife resources (Table12). In the case of Mgbouba prohibition of harvesting (46.0%)

took a lead. This was, however, followed by controlled harvesting (44.0%). Creating awareness for edible wild coastal resources conservation was perceived by many respondents from Eagle Island (30.0%), Isiokpo (30.0%), Igwuruta (26.0%) and Rumuomasi (28.0%) as a conservation strategy.

Table 11: Distribution of respondents based on perception of conservation of edible coastal resources (such as periwinkle, oysters, and crayfish) in the study area

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A good one	232	87.6
A waste of time	12	4.5
Waste of resources	11	4.2
Irrelevant	10	3.8

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 12: Ways to prevent over exploitation of wildlife resources in coastal areas

Community	Perceived ways to prevent extinction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Eagle Island	Using controlled fishing methods	25	50.0
	Creating awareness for wildlife protection	15	30.0
	Stopping people from fishing	10	20.0
Elekahia	Using controlled fishing methods	25	50.0
	Stopping people from fishing	14	28.0
	Creating awareness for wildlife protection	9	18.0
	Investing in farming by both government and individuals	1	2.0
	Reduction of oil spillage	1	2.0
Mgbouba	Stopping people from fishing	23	46.0
	Using controlled fishing methods	22	44.0
	Creating awareness for wildlife protection	7	14.0
Isiokpo	Using controlled fishing methods	35	70.0
	Creating awareness for wildlife	15	30.0

	protection		
Rumuomasi	Using controlled fishing methods	26	49.1
	Creating awareness for wildlife protection	15	28.3
	Stopping people from fishing	11	20.8
	Effective reproduction	1	1.9
Igwuruta	Using controlled fishing methods	28	56.0
	Stopping people from fishing	13	26.0
	Creating awareness for wildlife protection	9	18.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

DISCUSSION

The awareness of tourists' visitation to coastal areas by most respondents in all the communities (with exception of Mgbouba) can be attributed to the fact that most inhabitants of Rivers state are aware that the state has many coastal areas which have some attractive and recreational sites. Awareness of Bonny Island by many respondents as a recreational site can be attributed to the location of Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) in the area. The presence of NLNG in the environment has really popularized the Island as many persons visit to and fro the Island on daily basis. The fact that NLNG provides many modern boats with security that operates Port Harcourt-Bonny waterways at no financial costs facilitates movement, thus improving awareness of the destination in the area (including beaches and Finima Nature Park). This is in line with the findings of Ijeomah and Duke (2016) concerning visitation to Finima Nature Park. The awareness of Port Harcourt beach by many respondents cannot be unconnected with the fact that it has been in existence for many decades. This agrees with the report of Odunlami and Ijeomah (2016) that Port Harcourt beach was formerly very popular but negligence of management reduced its popularity. The fact that it is being revitalized

and that some state government occasions use the destination as a venue is increasing its awareness among respondents. Similarly, Ijeomah *et al.* (2007) reported that the use of Farin Ruwa waterfall in Nasarawa for occasions (including the World Tourism Day celebration) by the Nasarawa state government in 2006 increased the awareness of the site. The awareness by many respondents can as well be related to its advertisement on television by the Rivers State Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Opobo, Ikuru and Ndele beaches are not developed and therefore unpopular. Relaxation and research ranked highest as activities known to respondents because respondents are aware that every form of tourism has aspects of relaxation - the main purpose for tourism is relaxation or recreation. Respondents are aware of frequent visitation of researchers to coastal areas for collection of specimen for analysis due to the operation of many petroleum companies in Rivers State, and the pollution associated with their operations. Awareness of boat ride by many respondents cannot be unconnected with the fact that boat cruise is a common recreational activity in most coastal areas. This agrees with Ijeomah and Aiyeloja (2010), and the findings of Ijeomah *et al.* (2015) in Oguta lake where boating is one of the major activities. Even

respondents who cannot swim can embark on boat ride. Enjoyment of sea breeze is a common practice in areas close to the Atlantic Ocean. This can be done while on a boat, on a beach or close to the ocean. It is to enjoy sea breeze that make many tourists have picnics in beaches. Enjoyment of sea breeze interests tourists especially during sunny days when the intense heat from the sun becomes the justification for the activity. Awareness of sea breeze as an activity is high among respondents. This agrees with the findings of Ijeomah *et al.* (2019) on tourists' visitation in Lagos state. Swimming is a common activity in coastal areas although many tourists (especially those from upland areas) are afraid of swimming in eco-destinations.

Notwithstanding the awareness of coastal areas for pleasure by most respondents in the study area only about 50% of respondents from two communities have been to coastal areas for pleasure. This is different from the report of Rivera-Monroy (2004) in Dominican Republic where coastal tourism is booming. Respondents' none visitation to coastal areas cannot be unconnected with the high level of poverty, time constraint and distance from coastal areas, and security issue. The prevailing high level of poverty in Nigeria, River state inclusive is discouraging many people from embarking on recreational activities that involve spending money, as most financial resources are spent on basic requirements for survival. This is in line with the theory of Maslow (1970) on hierarchy of human needs. Most inhabitants of urban areas are economically engaged and therefore very busy and time conscious.- the only free time for recreation is during weekends. The heavy traffic in Port Harcourt causes a lot of delays for motorists and therefore waste time of tourists. The fact that many coastal areas are at the outskirts of Port Harcourt, and the fear of attendant traffic jam hinder many urban dwellers from visiting the areas. This is worse

for inhabitants of communities that are relatively far from coastal areas (example Isiopko). Respondents who would have been willing to visit may look for alternative recreational sites to save time and even money for those who consider it expensive to visit coastal areas. Travelling to Bonny Island requires a tourist being financially ready due to the far distance. Besides, transportation by water is more expensive than by road. This corroborates the report of National Bureau of Statistics (Undated) as cited by Oseghale (2018) that Rivers State has the highest passenger fare for water transportation in Nigeria.

Non visitation to coastal areas can also be attributed to fear or insecurity. The level of insecurity is high in coastal areas, operation of pirate is rampant and sometimes causes capsizing of boats. Also, many hoodlums live in the creeks, and respondents may be afraid of falling victims. Fear or insecurity has affected the social lives of people in many areas. This agrees with the travel advisory of U.S. Department of State (2019); which discouraged visitations to coastal areas of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, and Rivers states (though with the exception of Port Harcourt) by classifying them as high risk areas.

Some respondents consider coastal areas dirty due to poor economic level of most inhabitants. Many inhabitants of the area defecate inside water where fishing takes place, and the area is devoid of basic facilities. This agrees with the report of Honey and Krantz (2007) and Scott (2019) that coastal tourism is unsustainable in many areas.

None visitation to coastal areas can be ascribed to the fact that many respondents, especially non indigenes of coastal communities, are scared of travelling by water. The means of transportation to most coastal

communities is water. Travelling to an Island called Bonny takes about 2 hours by water from a speed boat.- the fear of traveling such a relatively long distance and eventual case of boat mishaps discourages respondents from travelling. The perception that respondents who cannot swim would be disadvantaged in a boat mishap worsens the case of water phobia.

Most respondents from all the communities in the study area were not aware that edible coastal resources are being over exploited. This can be attributed to the fact that many people in different parts of Nigeria believe that wildlife resources are gift of nature and so abundant that they are inexhaustible. It is on this basis that many indigenous people embark on unregulated hunting and fishing for consumption and sales. The fact that bushmeat is always available indicates to them that wildlife is abundant. This agrees with the findings Onu and Ijeomah (2010) on bushmeat consumption and trade in Omagwa. The awareness of possible extinction of coastal resources by respondents in Rumuomasi can be attributed to their knowledge of conservation due to the dangers of environmental pollution caused by the operation of Shell British Company in the area. The operations of shell British Petroleum and other petroleum companies in Nigeria bring about a lot of pollution of the environment, which instigates advocacy and creation of awareness for conservation of environmental resources.

Respondents have different views about visitation to coastal areas. Greater percentage of the respondents perceived it good. This view could be from some who have visited the area for tourism and enjoyed the environment. Many viewed coastal tourism as interesting and fun due to the fact that beaches serve as sites for many celebrations and

events, besides the respondents may have participated in many activities such as enjoyment of sea breeze, boating, boat regatta etc. This agrees with Odunlami and Ijeomah (2016) and Ijeomah *et al* (2014). Some viewed it as a way of empowering rural areas- these respondents may have bought some items from the rural sellers when they visited coastal destinations. Those who viewed coastal tourism as luxury were those who may be willing to visit but were hindered by lack of money. The few who viewed it as time and money wastage may be those who were not interested in exploring new areas. The fear of insecurity in coastal areas may have made some respondents to view coastal tourism as being risky. The 7.12% of respondents that perceived coastal tourism educating may have visited coastal destinations and learnt some new things from their tour. This perception can also be attributed to the fact that traveling is generally perceived to be educating. The only respondent who viewed visitation to coastal areas as being very poor and wasting of money may have visited coastal areas and did not enjoy the trip.

Respondents have different views about conservation of edible coastal resources. This concurs with the findings of both Mutanga *et al.*, (2013) and Mutanga *et al.* (2015) in Zimbabwe where views on conservation differed. Majority viewed the idea of coastal resources conservation as a good one. This view can be attributed to the fact that many of the respondents have been enjoying some edible wildlife resources from coastal areas and would want their supplies to remain sustainable. It can also be attributed to the fact that some of the respondents may have knowledge of indigenous conservation strategies in their respective communities. It can also be attributed to the fact that some may have heard of “decreasing harvest of resources” from sellers of the resources and experienced the consequential increase in

price of the products. Onu and Ijeomah (2010) obtained a similar result in Omagwa bushmeat market. Few respondents who viewed it as a waste of time, waste of resources and irrelevant may be those who strongly believe that coastal resources are inexhaustible.

Most respondents from the study area are of the view that using controlled fishing method can be effective in preventing over exploitation of edible coastal resources. This view can be attributed to the fact that many residents of Niger delta environment are aware of the existence of destructive fishing methods used in many areas. This agrees with Ijeomah *et al.* (2011). Many respondents in the study area viewed creation of awareness for conservation as an effective way to check over exploitation. This may be those who became aware of the danger of over exploitation and therefore changed their perception to support conservation. These respondents felt that the knowledge of conservation will also influence the attitude of many people to support conservation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Awareness of coastal tourism is very high but visitation to coastal areas for recreation is very low in the study area due to poverty, security issues and time constraint amongst other factors. Most respondents are unaware that edible coastal wildlife resources are over exploited. Respondents have different views about coastal tourism but most perceived it to be good, fun, interesting, a way of improving rural areas, educating and risky. Effective conservation of coastal resources, provision of infrastructure and security in coastal areas will improve urban peoples' visitation to coastal areas. Government support in terms of employment, improved security, rural development and massive publicity coupled with proper management, improved

infrastructure and maintenance of existing tourist sites will attract tourists to coastal destinations, improve people's perception and awareness of coastal tourism and wildlife conservation, increase popularity of the destinations, hence make coastal tourism more economically beneficial to residents of destination host communities. Adequate and effective security measures should be provided in coastal areas. Awareness should be created concerning programs for the conservation of wildlife resources.

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