

Comparative Assessment Of Coastal Tourism Potentials Of Selected Areas In Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The study examined coastal tourism potentials in Rivers State with emphasis on Opobo, Bonny and Port Harcourt to determine the area that has comparative advantage for tourism development to optimally utilize resources. The study was conducted in Bonny, Opobo and Port Harcourt of River State, Nigeria. The area occupies the land close to the Atlantic Ocean within 60km radius from the coast. A survey design was adopted for the study. The instruments used were observation checklist, and interview schedule. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability using five experts drawn from the field. The data collected were analyzed using ethnographic description method of analysis to answer research questions. The natural attractions found include mangrove forest, sacred forests, sacred rivers, lakes, beaches, fishing rivers, natural sources of drinking water and sanctuary. The cultural heritage resources were historical monument, shrines, museums, different cultural festivals, cultural materials and slave port. The man-made attractions were recreational park, zoological garden and tourism village. It was found that there were more tourism potentials in Port Harcourt study site more than Bonny and Opobo sites and therefore Port Harcourt has comparative advantage over Bonny and Opobo for tourism development. Therefore, efforts should be made and scarce resources utilized towards developing those coastal areas with best potentials and comparative advantage over others.

Keyword: Coastal tourism, Tourism development, Potentials, Natural attractions, Cultural attractions. Rivers State and Coastal area

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Coastal tourism is a tourism around the coastal areas. Coasts are popular destinations because of recreational activities such as swimming, fishing, boating, sunbathing and surfing. Coastal tourism is based on a unique resource combination of land and sea offering amenities such as water, beaches, scenic beauty mangroves, diversified cultural and historical heritage, a diversity of activities that take place in both coastal zone and coastal waters which involves the development of tourism capacities (hotels, resorts, restaurants, etc) and diving shops) (Markovic et al, 2009). Coastal tourism is often considered to be environmentally friendly alternative to more exploitative and diverse livelihood option with the added potential to benefit environmental protection, (-sustainable_coastal.pdf) (Accessed on: 25/02(12). The environment whether natural or artificial is the most fundamental ingredients of the tourism product. As soon as tourism activity takes place, the environment is inevitably changed or modified either to facilitate tourism or through tourism production process (Cooper and Wanhill, 1998).

There are numerous benefits of tourism towards development of nations of the world. Unfortunately Nigeria has not fully embraced this sector in order to take advantage of these benefits to develop other sectors of her economy despite the abundant tourism potentials the country has been endowed with. However, from the standpoint of environmental conservation and sustainability, tourism creates both opportunities and risks on a large scale. Tourism generates an increase in commercial development and economic activity which can increase consumptive pressure on natural resources in general as well as destroying environmental assets through development if not properly managed (Nelson, 2007). This explains the properly managed coasted tourism resources are so fragile which makes it pertinent for the current clamour by some schools of thought for sustainable tourism development. World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism development as development that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes and biological diversity and life (Cooper, Fletcher, Fall, Gilbert' and Wanhill, 2005). Tourism is presently the world's largest and fastest growing industry accounting for about 7% of global capital investment with receipts predicted to reach an estimated US\$1.550 billion by year 2010 (Oyakhilome, 2005 in Meduna, Amusa, Ogunjinma and Ibeun, 2005). Despite progressive downgrades to growth forecasts through 2011, the industry grew by 3% over the course of the year in terms of travel and travel and tourism contribution to GDP. Tourism's direct contribution to GOD in 2011 was US\$2 trillion and the industry generated 98 million jobs (WTTC, 2012a). the World Travel and Tourism Council's latest Economic Impacts Research shows that growth in the World Travel and Tourism (WTT) was robust in 2012 despite many economic challenges. The total contribution from Travel and Tourism to the world GDP grew by 3% in

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2012. This was faster than growth of the world economy as a whole (2.3%) and also faster than growth of a number of broad industries including manufacturing financial and business services and retail (WTTC, 2012b). Tourism is a major source of income and foreign exchange earner for countries whose potentials have been adequately developed (Adebayo, 2014). International tourism is the World largest export earner. Foreign currency receipt from international tourism has toppled exports of petroleum products or any other products or service, making tourism the World's largest growing industry (WTO, 2002). Tourism is a very strong vehicle for economic growth and employment generation globally. According to WTTC (2010), tourism sector is responsible for 8.8 percent of the world's jobs (258 million), 9.1 percent of the world's GDP (US\$6 trillion); 5.8 percent of the world's exports (US\$1.1 trillion) and 4.5 percent of the world's investment (US\$652billion). Tourism is a catalyst to economic development. It energizes the development of other sectors in a given economy. The identifying and harnessing those tourism potentials in Rivers State Nigeria will boost the economy in all sectors. Because Nigeria is endowed with abundant tourism potentials, and most of these potentials are found in the rural areas. So, identifying these potentials and harnessing them will be effective measure to prevent rural – Urban migration; to empower the youths to avoid restiveness and stop over dependence on petroleum which is not environmentally friendly as a major source of revenue. Tourism is seen as a means of rural and urban development, employment generation at all levels of government in developed nations such as Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, and United States (Hall and Jenkins). It is referred as an instrument to poverty alleviation, sustainable development and attainment of millennium development goals (MDGS) (Olorunfemi and Raheem, 2008) According to Filion, Daniel and Thomson (1994), tourism is said to be one of the fastest growing economic activities in the world and foreign exchange earner. In Nigeria, the contribution to government from levies on hospitality was N1.149 in 2004 while N100m was generated in 2009. In 2011 the industry contributed about N1, 232.2 billion (3.3 percent) to the GDP in Nigeria. In its report, WTTC forecasts that the industry will generate 897, 500 jobs representing 1.4 percent of Nigeria's total workforce in 2012 and that over the next 10 years, the amount is expected to grow by 6.5 percent per annum to N483.4 billion in 2022 (Tunde, 2012). It is an undisputable fact that tourism is neglected as it has not contributed much to the nation's economy considering its contributions and forecast in the coming years. This has become necessary for efforts to be intensified to identify and harness those tourist potentials and revive those neglected sites in Nigeria to open up rural areas as well as boosting nation's economy. The economy of Nigeria is such that has depended so much on the revenue from oil and gas. This has not had much positive impact on majority of Nigerians and the sustainability of the flow of oil and gas cannot be guaranteed for a great country like Nigeria to depend so much on it for revenue generation of the contribution of tourists to the national economy and the problems challenging the development and efficient use of tourism resources around the coastal areas despite the prospects of coastal tourism globally that aroused the researcher's

interest to identify the various coastal tourism potentials in Rivers State with emphasis on Opobo, Bonny and Port Harcourt to determine the area with more potentials for tourism development to avoid waste of resources.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Rivers State is one of the 36 States of Nigeria. It is located at the Niger Delta area of the South-South geopolitical zone and lies at latitudes 4°43'34" North, Longitude 6°55'15" East on the map of Nigeria. Rivers State has an annual mean maximum temperature of 31.7°C and annual mean minimum temperature of 22.6°C. The relative humidity at 1500 GMT averages between 67% and 72% in the study area annually. The annual mean radiation of the study area is between 12.60mm and 16.50mm while the annual mean evaporation ranges between 2.30mm and 7.80mm. Rivers State is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean to the North by Imo, Abia and Anambra States. It also shares boundaries with Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom towards the West. The state is rich in culture, gas, oil and natural resource with a landscape defined by interconnecting creeks around distributaries of the River Niger such as Imo river, Urashi River, Aba River, Bonny River, kwa Ibo River, old Calabar River and Cross River. Rivers State is a home to many ethnic groups including Andoni, Abua, Ekpeye, Engenni, Okirika, Etche, Ikwere, Kalabari, Ogoni, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, etc. Ijaw and Ikwere are the most spoken languages in addition to Pidgin English that is widely spoken and used in radio and television broadcasts. The study was conducted in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, namely, Bonny, Opobo and Port Harcourt. These were randomly selected from the twelve LGAs that occupy the land close to the sea within 60km radius from the coast. They were randomly selected to ensure that each of the LGAs has equal chances of being selected. A survey design was adopted. The choice of these selected areas was due to their homogenous ecological characteristics. The communities occupy the land close to the Atlantic Ocean. The instruments used were observation checklist, and interview schedule. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability using five experts drawn from the field. The data collected were analyzed using ethnographic description method of analysis to answer research questions. This method of analysis was employed in the study to interpret and describe data generated through in-depth interviews, and observation.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed a number of attractions that were identified in the selected sites of the study area. The natural attractions found in Port Harcourt, Bonny and Opobo study sites were shown in table 1.

3.1 Natural Attractions

Mangrove forest: The mangrove forest found in Port Harcourt site was known and called "Oke-ohia Agala". The grove covers large expanse of land which linked various communities within the study area. The communities that bordered the mangrove include Nkpogu, Bundu Ama, Borokiri, Abonema water side, Marine base, Elekahia, Oroada, Orochiri, Eligigi Oroabali, Oromeruezingmbu. The things which have tourism value as found in Oke-ohia Agala

mangrove forest include; Crocodile, crabs, fish, rivers, periwinkles, snakes, trees, birds, monkeys, monitor lizard, etc. This mangrove has also become a source of meat, fish, firewood, sand and wood for building by the local residents of the host communities. The mangrove forest in Bonny Local Government Area is known and called Ngala. The mangrove is so large that it surrounds the whole of the Local Government. The forest links all the Communities in Bonny area. The mangrove is very rich in oyster, periwinkle, fishes, crabs, crocodile, water snake, antelope, birds, monkey, monitor lizard, hippopotamus, etc. Locally, the people have a norm which usually restricts entrance and usage of the forest once in a year to enable it regenerate the sea foods in abundance. This law is passed and sealed in their traditional way (Libation) prohibiting any body entering the mangrove until the stipulated time when the ban will be lifted. Since the people of Bonny depend so much on this mangrove for sea foods and fire woods, they usually have plenty harvest at the lifting of the ban. This ban is a very useful measure to preserve the mangrove. There is also a part of the forest that is used as a shrine. The shrine is not open for everybody. Only those who are worshippers of the shrine can enter it.

Table 1: Natural Attractions identified at the study sites

S/n o	Attractions	Study Sites		
		P/H	Bony	Opobo
1	Mangrove forest	√	√	√
2	Sacred rivers	√	√	√
3	Sacred forests	√	√	√
4	Lake	√	x	x
5	Beaches	√	√	√
6	Fishing rivers	√	√	√
7	Natural sources of good drinking water	√	x	x
	Sub-total	7	5	5

Source: Field survey, 2013

Key: √ = Where a specific attraction was identified

X = Where a specific attraction was not identified

The mangrove forests found in all the Communities in Opobo Local Government Area are popularly known and called Ohia Uwajonjo. The mangrove forest is a habitat for several wildlife species such as leopard, monkeys, coconut trees, palm trees, oysters, periwinkles, crab, fishes, crocodile, chimpanzee, Elephant and several other species of birds, plants, and animals.

Sacred Rivers: The few existing sacred rivers as revealed by the study were found in Port Harcourt and Opobo sites. Those identified in Port Harcourt were Ahia-Okpokoro River, Ahia Kalagbo River and Ohia Mkpa River. These four rivers are located in Nkpogu community. There is abundance of fishes in these rivers. Fishing in these rivers is prohibited. For this reason, different species of fish abounds. The traditional religious worshippers usually offer sacrifices to the river goddess of the rivers four times in a year (quarterly), in which they go for the sacrifice in the day

and come back at night. The name of the sacred rivers found in Opobo study site are "Tolofari" and "Epeleminakanja" located in "Kalibiama" and "Epelema" respectively. It is believed that the river has the power to save somebody when an enemy is after his life. The sacred rivers are believed by the people as a place of safety. It offers protection to people from their enemies. Also, it is believed that evil people do not go to the river. If they do, they will suffer incurable diseases and eventually dies if the gods are not appeased in the traditional way. In the case of "Tolofari creek" a woman that gave birth to twins cannot go to the river. Women who have grown up to the adolescent age must tie a George wrapper before crossing the river. Sacrifices are offered to the goddess of the river once in a year between the months of July and September.

Sacred forests: The sacred forests found in Orochiri community and Amadioha are located in Ogbum-na-abali, Port Harcourt study site. The things that were found there include different species of trees, animals, birds, snakes. Other things found were the deities and the things used for sacrifices by the devotees such as animal skulls, white clothes, bottles of gins, clay pots, kola nuts. The kola nuts and gins were used for libation and poured on a shrine to appease the gods of the land. Nobody is allowed to enter the forests with foot wears. Men who had conjugal relationship with their wives a night before the day of the sacrifice are not permitted to enter the forests. Also, women in their menstrual period are not permitted to enter the forest. One must wash his or her face in the morning before going into the forests. The periods when sacrifices or rituals are performed by the worshippers are between August and September during the new yam festival and new year celebration or when there is emergency. The rituals are usually performed in the morning before 10.00am or in the evening between 4.00pm – 6.00pm in a particular day known traditionally as "Riagbo". Shimmingi is a sacred forest found in Finima Community of Bonny. Shimmingi forest is a sacred forest established for traditional worship in Finima. The people of the Finima Community usually go into the forest at the end of every year to perform sacrifice. Only the people of Finima who worship the gods of the forest are qualified and permitted to enter the forest. Women are not allowed to wear trousers into the forest. Apart from the yearly sacrifices performed at the end of the year, rituals are performed inside the forest when the need arises, for instance during the coronation of the king of the community. This usually takes place at night. Mkpa sacred forest is located in Kalasunju Opobo study site. The head of "Nwotam" masquerade is kept in this forest. Nwotam masquerade is played in the forest. And only members of Nwotam masquerade cult participate in Nwotam festival and also allowed to enter the forest.

Lake: The "Ogodomini" is the name of the lake found in Port Harcourt site. This was the only existing lake found in the three study areas. The lake is a home for different species of fish, crab, duck and snake. There is a part of the lake at Nkpogu community where nobody is permitted to go in. This part of the lake is called "IDU". It is called "Idu" because the lake is too deep.

Beaches: Among the beaches found in Port Harcourt site were Port Harcourt Tourist beach, sand beach and “Elechi beach”. Port Harcourt Tourist beach, though not fully developed was established in 1986. It was privately owned by Chief Mike Amachree from Buguma community in Asari-Toru Local Government Area and with staff strength of four people. The beach is a destination for tourists and people who wish to go out for site-seeing. The basic attractions that are of value to visitors in the place include, fish pond, mini zoo, museum, restaurant and guest house, foot ball pitch, basket ball court, boat for cruising, clear water, clean sand, mangrove, fresh cool air, etc. The speed/cruise boats available in the beach are of different sizes and capacities. The sizes of boats with their capacities include; passport 19 carries 8 passengers, W21 carries 10 passengers, W23 carries 13 passenger and water bus with a capacity of 15 passengers. According to the researcher’s respondent, the beach usually witnesses high tide and wave in the month of October. A number of beaches were identified in bonny study site. The list of the beaches mentioned by the researcher’s respondents are NLNG/ Finima beach, Agaja beach, Borokiri beach, River seven beach and sand field beach. The beaches are composed of shells, clear water, fishes, crabs, well polished white sand and water turtle. These beaches can be developed to attract tourists and resorts built for the comfort of the tourists. This attraction would need to be developed and managed very carefully as nesting turtles are easily disturbed by unfamiliar light and sound. There are number of beaches in Opobo but only Opobo beach is clear with white polished clean sand. The names of other beaches found in Opobo study site include Ntugbu beach, Jojo beach, Onu mini beach, Downbelow beach, Abazibie beach, Opobo beach and Miningala beach.

Fishing Rivers: Port Harcourt is endowed with so many rivers. This is why fishing is a major activity among the local population of this study site. Sport fishing is in no doubt another activity that could attract tourists to the area. Excellent big game fishing can be found at various rivers within the study site. Among the rivers found within this site include; Waja River (creek), Okpokatoru River, Ahialagbor (Ahiaogologo) River, Okpokoro River, Borokiri River Mbuogba River, Ntawogba River, Marine Base River, Onumiriedu River, Woduonunu River, Bundu River, Minijiri River and miniwachara River. The fishing rivers are the same rivers that formed the beaches in Bonny – Finima River, Agaja River, River seven River, and sand field River. The combination of the beach attractions with the sport fishing activity is great resource that investors can take advantage of in order to attract tourists. Some of the fishing rivers identified in Opobo study site are the cookey creeks, Main river, Ehene river, Ebezi river, Imo river, Atlantic Ocean, Oil river, Byth of Bar, Nkoturo river, Kalabiyama creek, Kalama creek, Queenstown creek, Ekere Borokiri creek, Kalasunji creek, etc. Fishing in these rivers is prohibited between July and September every year to enable the fishes to regenerate for plenty catch. Other fishing rivers include Adum river, Okolo creek, Mininnu river and Bonny river.

Natural sources of good drinking water: According to the survey the study site generally has no natural sources of good drinking water. Generally, the sources of drinking

water for the people are borehole or well for those living in the rural areas and pipe-borne water for those in the cities.

Sanctuary: Finima forest has been set aside as sanctuary for animals, birds, fish and plant species of kinds. Both the Community and the Federal Government through its agency Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) jointly established law to conserve the forest. Also, found in this forest is the remains of whale which include eyes of the whale and ribs bone of the whale show-cased on a beautiful well maintained greenish carpet grass. This conservation law prohibits anybody entering the forest. The forest has been reserved by both the government and Finima Community and is out of bound for anybody. The forest is protected and so any bird, animal or fish that crosses the boundary into the forest is safe and protected by the law even if the bird, animal or fish is from a neighboring forest or river respectively. Coastal tourism is strongly dependent upon natural (climate, landscape, ecosystems) and cultural (historic and cultural heritage, arts and crafts, traditions, etc) resources (Markovic et al, 2009). The table 1 shows the various natural attractions found at the three different study sites – Port Harcourt, Bonny and Opobo. The study revealed the attractions identified in Port Harcourt as mangrove forest, sacred rivers, lakes, beaches, fishing rivers and natural sources of good drinking water. The natural attractions found in Bonny are mangrove forest, sacred rivers, sacred forest, beaches, fishing rivers, and sanctuary, while Opobo is endowed with mangrove forest, sacred forest, sacred rivers, beaches and fishing rivers, etc. The study showed that Port Harcourt was more endowed with natural attractions than Opobo and Bonny, and therefore has comparative advantage to be developed than Opobo and Bonny.

3.2 Cultural Heritage Resources

The categories of cultural heritage resources identified in Port Harcourt, Bonny and Opobo sites as revealed by the study were described as follows and presented in table 2.

Historical Monument

In Port Harcourt study site the historical monument identified were named after Isaac Boro, Ahialagbor and Wuchem.

Isaac Boro Monument: A park was named after this famous nationalist of Ijaw extraction in Port Harcourt Rivers State. Major Isaac Jasper Adaku Boro was born in September 10 1938 and he died in May 16 1968 during the Nigerian civil War. He was born to a Kalama family in the present day Bayelsa State Nigeria. Shortly after the January 1966 coup, Isaac Boro declared the first republic within Nigeria known as Niger Delta Republic which lasted for 12 days.

Ahialagbor Monument: This monument is over 100 years old in existence. This place was the final resting place of Rebisi and the four founders of Rebisi Kingdom known as Nbokwu, Igwe, Dede and Agbagbuo. The monument is located at Nkpogu Community.

Woluchem Monument: The final resting place of the Royal Majesty, Chief Woluchem of Orochiri Community.

The monumental tomb was beautifully designed with Chief Woluchem sculpture. In Bonny area it was only King Perekule the Great Monument and Manila Pepple Monument were found in the study.

King Perekule the Great Monument: Perekule 1 known as Captain Pepple reigned from 1760-1830. Chief Edanye Pepple monument and King Asimiri Dappa Pepple were other historical monuments found in Bonny Kingdom. These two Kings reigned at different times in Bonny kingdom and were all descendants of William Dappa Pepple. While the monument of King Asimiri Dappa Pepple was built in King Asimiri's compound in Bonny main town, Chief Edanye Pepple monument was raised at Pepple's Palace at Otobie Community. These are historical monuments of the descendants of King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny Kingdom who was deposed by the British government during colonial era and deported to Britain in 1854. The British brought King William Dappa back and restored him to the throne in August 1861 when there was serious tension for power struggles between Manilla Pepple faction led by Chief Oko Jumbo and Annie Pepple faction led by Chief Jubo Jubogha (known as Jaja to the British and popularly known today as King Jaja of Opobo). Being restored in 1861, King William Dappa Pepple reigned until his death in September, 1866.

Table 2: Cultural Heritages Resources Identified at the study sites

S/No	Attractions	P/H	Bonny	Opobo
1	Historical monument	√	√	√
2	Shrines	√	√	√
3	Museums	√	√	X
4	Cultural festivals	√	√	√
5	Cultural materials	√	√	√
6	Slave port	√	√	√
	Total	6	6	5

Source: Field survey, 2013

Key: √ = Where a specific attraction was identified

X = Where a specific attraction was not identified

P/H = Port Harcourt

Manila Pepple Monument: Chief Manilla Pepple was appointed with other three Chiefs (Anne Pepple, Ada Allison and Captain Hart) by the British Consul –J.W.B. Lynslager in the Bight of Biafra. The British Consul signed their appointment document on 11th September 1855, following the death of King Dapu Fubara II Pepple on 13th August 1855 as regency required.

King Jaja's monument and his bell: King Jaja (plate 16) was a former Igbo slave called Jubo Jubogha (known by the Europeans as Ja-ja. Who led the faction of Annie, Pepple family of Bonny kingdom. In 1870, Jaja arrived Opobo from Bonny, moving due to power dispute with Chief Oko Jumbo, the leader of the rival faction Manilla Pepple family. Jaja was accommodated by the Andoni leader King Kpokpo and formed what is called kingdom of Opobo. Being a palm oil merchant, King Jaja involved in palm oil trading with Europeans. In 1887 he was deceived when he was told to go and negotiate with the Queen of England by

the British and ended up sending him on an exile in the West Indies. His exile was necessitated by the war (known as Ikot Udo Obong War) between him and the Anang and Ibuno people when he declared himself the middle man in palm oil trading with the Europeans, thus asking them (Ngwa Ibos, Annang and Ibibios) to stop trading directly with the Europeans. He reigned between 1870 and 1887.

Shrines

In Port Harcourt study site three shrines were identified and known as Ruhueli-Rebisi, Ojukwu-Diobu, Ntawogba and Nwominirenwu.

Ruhueli Rebisi: This shrine is located at "Orochiri". The "offor" holders of the Community at Rebisi clan are the judges of the shrine. The traditional sacrifice (pouring of libation) is done on a day called "Riagbo" in the morning hours. Women who appear before the shrine must cover their hair. Goats and cows are usually sacrificed once in 7 years to appease the gods for protection and prosperity which is usually done in the day time. Dumping of refuse, defecating and urinating are prohibited around the shrine. Women who are in their menstrual period cannot visit the shrine. It is usually used to settle or judge matters during disputes. Lying is forbidden before the shrine. Only those people wearing traditional dresses are allowed to appear before the shrine. It is only the priest who can enter the shrine, while the king of the Community can enter the shrine in the company of the priest. Every other person stands outside before the shrine. The things used for sacrifices include, hot drink bottles, money, cup, cloths of all kinds, fowl, goat, ram, tortoise. Dog is a forbidden animal at the shrine.

Ojukwu Diobu and Nwominirenwu shrines: These two shrines are sited at Nkpogu and Orochiri Communities respectively. Evil men and women don't go to the shrine. Murderers, adulterers, and women that are in their menstrual period do not go to the shrine. People that go to the shrine only wear singlet and tie wrapper; and without any foot wears. "Nwominirehu shrine has male and female goddess. The male is sited in Orochiri and the female is in Abuloama. "Ojukwu shrine" prohibits noise from people. If any person passes by the place with an animal, the fellow will leave the animal there and go away. It was the belief of the people that "Ojukwu" (the gods) protected them during the war. At the beginning of the year- January the elders of the Community led by the priest will offer sacrifices to the gods to invoke their yearly protection. The following materials are found – hot drink bottles (gins), palm fronds, red and white clothes, clay pots, cowries, tortoise, animals for sacrifice (cows, goats, rams, chickens), money (old and new denominations) and a big-age-long tree that provides shade for the shrine. In Bonny site, more shrines were identified in the study than in Port Harcourt and Opobo. These are known as Bonny kingdom shrine, Manila Pepple Monument, Shimingi Shrine, Nwotam Shrine and Igbansi Shrine.

Bonny kingdom shrine: The shrine is located at Elesu square at the centre of Bonny. Sacrifices are performed once in a year during December period. One can only enter the Bonny central shrine by backing the shrine. The

common things that were found there are palm fronds, bottles of hot drinks, native eggs and chalks, cowries and items of red colour.

Manila Pepple kingdom Shrine: This shrine is located at Manilla Pepple's palace. Rituals are performed at this shrine during coronation. Ladies must tie wrapper before entering the place, while ladies menstruating do not go there. One must knock before entering the place.

Shimingsi Shrine: The chief priest usually performs sacrifices when necessary either by 4.00 am in the morning or mid-night. Necklaces are not worn into the place. People must be in their traditional attire without putting on shoes before entering the shrine. The shrine is located at Tolofari village. Any material decorated with beads should not be worn to the place.

Nwoitam Shrine: Worshippers of this shrine wear black cloths and tie wrapper before entering the shrine.

Igbansisi Shrine: At this shrine, sacrifices must be performed once either at the beginning or at the end of the year and any other time in the night when the need arises. Men must wear George and "etibo" cloth or white singlet and without shoes. Women don't wear trousers and don't put on foot wears into the place. Strangers and ladies who are menstruating are permitted to go to the shrine. If there is any sacrifice to be performed, those concerned will abstain from sex for at least a week. The major shrines in Opobo are Tolofari shrine and Asimiri shrine located at Kalibiam and Opobo main town respectively. Only the chief priest and community elders are allowed to enter the shrine. The two places are out of bound for women and evil men. Abstinence from sex on the day of sacrifice is among the taboos. Sacrifices are done in the day time in the month of December. The shrines do not condone people who hinder the progress of others. Some of the things found at the shrines are the old currency introduced by the Portuguese (called manila), sculptures of animals and birds and hot drink bottles (gins).

Museums: River State museum at the state secretariat and University of Port Harcourt museums: Both museums are museums of arts and culture and are located in Port Harcourt. There is a museum along King Dappa William Road in main Bonny town. This equally is a museum of art and culture. This museum contains things that are associated with the culture and history of Bonny kingdom.

Cultural festivals:

In Port Harcourt study site, cultural festivals were identified. These festivals include wrestling (July/September), Eregbu festival (January). New Yam Festival (July/August). Masquerade festival (any time of the year). Ojiji festival, prengala festival, Okolokwuru festival (July or October); Ogele (music) festival, Oriiri (feast) festival, and age grade (monthly). Some of these festivals are quite unique to some communities. For instance, "Oriiri" (feast) festival is a festival that showcases the spices of different dishes that are prepared in Orochiri community. This usually takes place yearly on 26th December. In the case of "Ojiji" (marriage right festival) the bride is set apart in a room where others bathe her, feed her and take care of her in a

special way to prepare her to look good for her groom to take her. Ojiji festival takes place whenever a girl who has reached the age of marriage is getting married. It is important to note that these festivals serve as a means of recreation, as well serving as a symbol of peace and unity amongst the people. It offers opportunity to meet with people of different works of life, both home and abroad, local and non-locals. The festivals common in Bonny include, iriah festival (Marriage), music festival, Nwaotam festival, Gigi festival (boat regatta in December time), match out festival (24th December), Beach party (26th December) Bonny carnival (20th December), and masquerade festivals. Special emphasis was made by the respondents during the in-depth interview. The person that wears the Nwaotam regalia sleeps in the cemetery for seven days before the day of the festival. The carrier of the Nwaotam must not be exposed. Before the festival begins, doves and fowls are sacrificed to the gods at the cemetery. The carrier of Nwaotam spends seven days in the cemetery to get himself purified. During this period, he will neither sleep with a woman nor eat anything prepared by a woman until the festival comes to an end. At the end of the festival, the person that wore the mask goes to the cemetery to take off the regalia during the display. In the case of Iriah/Bibite festival, because it is marriage ceremony, where women that are getting married will be confined for 14 days before the day of the festival. The person getting married will be relieved from any form of domestic activities. She will be well fed and bathed by others to enable her look good and robust before the husband. Then, the would-be-husband will pay her dowry before seeing her. This is a festival of lady moving from adolescence to womanhood. The festivals that usually take place in Opobo are Opobo International Boat Regatta (first week of January), Opobo beach carnival, masquerade (ekpe) festival (plate 24), dancing festival, wrestling festival, Mgbede festival, Nwaotam festival, Uke festival and Iriah festival. It is important to note that "Mgbede" festival is used to showcase girls who are of the age of marriage.

Cultural materials:

Cultural materials of different kinds are found in Port Harcourt study site. Such materials include local mats and baskets, assorted beads, clay water port, ekere, 'ngele' (wooden masks), usher; 'ajah', 'ndudu', 'nkparagbeke', iwo-ogwe' (masquerade attire), animal skin, local drum made of wood and animal skin and 'Ebele'. Bonny has a rich collection of cultural materials such as mats, baskets, assorted beads, igbiri (tied during cultural dances) 'urede', (painting used in cultural performance) masks for masquerade, net, 'azuebule' (hairy materials used by chiefs and masquerades), raffia, 'aluu' (women wrapper with reddish background), george (native wrapper), 'popo' (native wrapper) 'nnso' (native wrapper), shakashaka, (worn by women during Iriah festival) local dye, 'nkwa' (local drums), 'ekere' 'ikpatakpa', 'etibo', 'odudu', platforms for fish drying, cap wearing, cowry etc. The cultural materials identified in Opobo study site include local basket, brooms, beads, 'ngelenge' (xylophone), 'nkwa' (drum), 'Odudu', 'nkpankpa', 'ekere', local dye, 'Igbiri', 'Ishi-owu', (mask), 'akisi', 'ogene', 'enwere', 'ebesara', 'ikitico (wooden gong), 'agwu', 'akoro', dye, native ceiling with raffia palm, native cloth known as 'popo' weaved by the locals, wooden

guns, masquerade heads (wood works); local boats construction, local mortar and pestle (wood works), fish rackets, native george material (tie and dye), etc.

Slave ports:

The slave port identified in Port Harcourt was known as a Ahiammakara near Waja River at the boundary between Orogbum and Nkpogu. At the slave port, there are trees where slaves were tied during slave trade called "edegelekoikoi". It is now used as a market. The slave port has been there for more than a century. Another slave port was found in Bonny study site. The place is now called "Igonipolo" (land of strangers). The place has been converted into a play ground. A royal house where the chiefs hold meetings has been built there. The Opobo slave port which was called "Igwenga" is now known as cookey creek. Because culture of people motivates the movement of tourists to visiting those places, developing these areas in Rivers State will attract both foreign and local visitors who have developed enthusiasms into culture thereby improving the economic benefits of the local communities and the government. World Tourism organization (WTO, 1995) asserts that cultural tourism has been assessed as a veritable means of boosting a nation's economy.

3.3 Man-made/Built Attractions

The study revealed the man-made/ built attractions as presented in table 3 were recreational park, zoological garden, and tourism village.

Recreation Park:

Port Harcourt: Isaac Boro Park is a beautiful park with serene environment covered with a green carpet grass. It is beautified with trees that provide shade and wind check. The park is a good place for relaxation and for social gathering and activities.

Table 3: Man-Made (Built Attraction)

S/No	Man-Made Resources	P/H	Bonny	Opobo
1	Recreation Park	√	X	X
2	Zoological Garden	√	X	X
3	Tourism Village	X	√	X
	Total	2	1	0

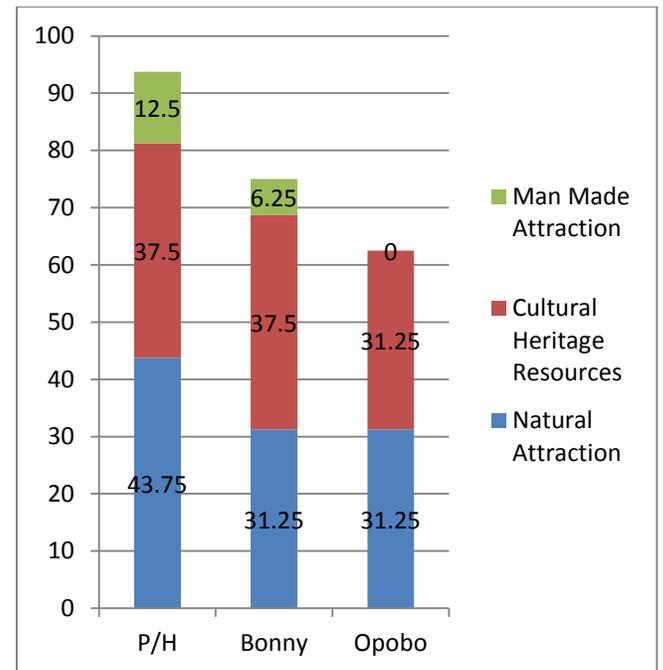
Source: Field Survey 2013

Key: (√) Where a specific attraction was identified
 (X) = Where a specific attraction was not identified
 P/H= Port Harcourt

Zoological garden: The zoological garden in Port Harcourt is along Trans Amadi Road and contains some wild animals for tourists to see and admire.

Tourism village: The tourism village in Bonny is known as Bonny carnival village along hospital road opposite Government House. The findings of the study from the data collected through observation and oral interview with the researcher's respondents revealed a number of cultural attractions identified in the three study sites which can be offered to potential tourists if properly harnessed. However, the results as presented in table 2 shows that Port Harcourt and Bonny Local Government Areas have equal number of

Cultural heritage resources more than Opobo LGA. See figure 1 the distribution of natural, cultural heritages resources and man-made attractions.



Level of natural, cultural heritage resources and man-made attractions

Figure 1: Natural, cultural heritage resources and man-made attractions

Source: Field survey, 2013

The natural attractions found include mangrove forest, sacred forests, sacred rivers, lakes, beaches, fishing rivers, natural sources of drinking water and sanctuary. The cultural heritage resources are historical monument, shrines, museums, cultural festivals, cultural materials and slave port. While man-made attractions were recreational park, zoological garden and tourism village. The results showed that Port Harcourt had more attractions (93.75%) than Bonny (75.0%), and Opobo (62.50%). The presence of more natural attraction, cultural heritage resources man-made attractions in Port Harcourt study site means that Port Harcourt has comparative advantage for tourism development over Bonny and Opobo study sites considering tourism potential endowment. This is seconded by Bonny study site.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed both the natural and cultural attractions identified in the three selected sites – Port Harcourt, Opobo and Bonny areas of Rivers State. The natural attractions found include mangrove forest, sacred forests, sacred rivers, lakes, beaches, fishing rivers, natural sources of drinking water and sanctuary. The cultural heritage resources revealed were historical monument, shrines, museums, different cultural festivals, cultural materials and slave port. The man-made attractions were recreational park, zoological garden and tourism village. It was found that there are more tourism potentials in Port Harcourt study site and therefore it has comparative advantage over Bonny and Opobo study sites. This is seconded by Bonny

study site. It was discovered that, though the local residents are dependent on the local natural resources, they still have protected forests which have not been tampered with through the communities' local norms and sanctions. Also the study showed certain wildlife species which have received protection from the communities concerned through their local legislation. The protected forests include Rehueli forest, finima forest, amadioha forest, thunders forest, nwominirehu forest, and Tolofari forest. While some of the protected wildlife species are owl, white egret, hyppopotamus, water horse, kiwi, 'nkelu', 'asiri' etc. The study revealed that Port Harcourt had more protected forest areas and wildlife species than Bonny and Opobo. The study revealed that the communities generally have local legislations that they apply to protect certain wildlife species and some habitat areas which help to avoid extinction of those protected species. The study revealed that the communities generally have local norms and sanctions that they apply to protect certain wildlife species and some habitat areas to avoid extinction of those protected species and destruction of the habitat. Those local sanctions include poaching sanctions, deforestation sanctions, bush burning sanctions and illegal grazing sanction. The punishment of violations of the local norms include, offering sacrifices to the gods to appease them. Others were death, diseases or mysterious circumstances. Considering the fact that coastal areas have the potential to become attractive destinations for tourist and given the limited resources available, it is essential to put efforts and available recourse towards developing those coastal areas with best potentials.

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