

## **Sea Robbery and Its Implication on Tourism Development in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The main thrust of this study was to examine sea robbery and its implication on tourism development in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. In order to achieve this, a multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select respondents from three littoral states in the region. The population of the study comprised maritime business operators in the region, and a sample size of 400 was derived using the Taro Yamane formula. The study adopted the Routine Activity Theory of Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson as its theoretical guide. The research design adopted for the study was survey; while the instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and oral interview. The hypothesis formulated for the study was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) and the result revealed that there is a significant relationship between sea robbery and tourism development in the Niger Delta region. The implication of this finding is that the activities of sea robbers in the region, if left unchecked, will have adverse effect on the number of international and domestic tourists as well as impact negatively on coastal and maritime tourism. Consequent upon this finding, proactive policing of Nigeria territorial waters and tourism destinations is recommended.

**Keywords:** Sea, Robbery, Tourism, Development, Niger Delta.

The crime of sea robbery is detrimental to socio-economic wellbeing of any nation. Preminent scholars noted that in the past, it was more predominant in Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Philippines. These countries were the traditional dangerous hotspots of global piracy (Onuoha, 2012). In recent times, however, there has been a rise in the intensity of sea robbery on African waters, especially, West African shores. Several reasons have contributed to the occurrence, one of which is the increased and extreme impact of globalization and the boom in global trade and commerce (Ben-Ari 2013; Brimah, 2014). Other causes include and not limited to: the end of the cold war, technological advancements, sudden proliferation of small arms, and the failure of states to fulfill their essential and conventional role of security provisions, much of which also extends to the maritime security terrain. Also, socio-economic reasons such as, poverty, unemployment, resource disputes, among others, has contributed to a noteworthy increase in the activities of sea robbers in Africa's maritime environment (Onuoha, 2010; Ahmadu-Suka, 2015; Ben-Ari, 2013).

In Nigeria, noticeable facts in available literature indicate that sea robbery is more directly politically and economically motivated. A classic example is the incessant interruption of critical installations by sea robbers in Niger Delta region of the country for political reasons, and issues bordering on the mismanagement of the country's oil wealth (Barrios, 2013). Additionally, rebel groups continued clamor for the return of oil rich Bakassi from Cameroon. All these political grievances have increasingly taken a criminal proportion, as attacks have also been recorded in the waters spreading from Angola in the south, around Africa's central and western coast, to Guinea in the west (Neethling, 2010). Consequently, sea robbery has colossal implications, especially for the socio-economic sector of the society. As observed by Adongoi, Brown & Udensi (2017), sea robbery on Nigerian waters has posed critical problem to maritime business operation. It has negatively affected water transportation and fishing businesses as well as commercial activities in Niger Delta region of the country. There is also a reduction in the fleet of Nigerian fishing trawlers on these waters, thus leading to immense loss of revenue to the country, affected states, fishermen and traders.

Closely related to the socio-economic implication of sea robbery is the issue of maritime security .Onuoha & Hassan (2009) noted that, the frequency of sea robbers' act of violence on ships within Nigeria's territorial waters has assumed an unparallel measure in recent times. This has engendered other maritime crimes like human /drug trafficking, illegal and unregulated fishing, dumping of toxic waste, and vandalism of critical installations (Adongoi, Brown & Udensi 2017). As a result, these acts have attracted the concern of international organizations. A proof of this is the report by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), which classified Nigeria's maritime zone as perilous and unsafe route for navigation due to the activities of sea robbers. This classification subsequently placed the country as the second most dangerous country in the world (International Maritime Bureau, 2014).

Based on the foregoing observations, it is glaring to discern how this phenomenon has continually impacted negatively on Nigerian tourism sector. Though Brown (2010) highlighted some factors that militate against the tourism sector in Nigeria; besides, there is dearth of studies to unravel the extent of damage done to the tourism sector by sea robbery. Available studies focus more on the effect of sea robbery on the oil and gas industry, as well as its implication on national security (Onuoha & Hassan, 2009; Udensi, Okpara, & Oyinyechi 2014). Indeed, little has been done to unravel the problems caused by sea robbers in the tourism sector. Consequent upon this knowledge gap, this study emerged to examine

the problem of sea robbery and its implication on tourism development in Delta region of Nigeria.

### **Piracy and Armed Robbery**

According to ICC International Maritime Bureau (2017), piracy is defined in Article 101 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and Armed Robbery defined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in its 26<sup>th</sup> Assembly session as Resolution A.1025 (26). Article 101 of UNCLOS defines Piracy as:

Definition of Piracy consists of any of the following acts:

- (a) any illegal acts of violence or detention or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed -
  - (i) On the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;
  - (ii) Against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;
- (b) Any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft;
- (c) Any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described in subparagraph (a) or (b)

The IMO defines Armed Robbery in Resolution A.1025 (26) “Code of Practice for the Investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships” as: “Armed robbery against ships” means any of the following acts:

1. any illegal act of violence or detention or any act of depredation or threat thereof, other than an act of piracy; committed for private ends and directed against a ship or against persons or property on board such a ship, within a State’s internal waters, archipelagic waters and territorial sea ;
2. any act of inciting or intentionally facilitating an act described above. This study therefore adopts IMO Resolution A.1025 (26) and defines any illegal act of violence or detention or any act of depredation or threat thereof, other than an act of piracy; committed for private ends and directed against a ship or against persons or property on board such a ship, within Nigeria territorial waters as Sea Robbery.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Routine Activity Theory propounded in 1979 by Cohen and Felson in their work entitled “Social Change and Crime Rate Trends” was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. In the “Routine Activity Approach”, Cohen and Felson proposed that crime is the aftermath of combined result of three indispensable elements: First there must be a motivated offender who is competent of committing an offence. Second it is not sufficient for the potential offender to be motivated; he must also be capable to execute his criminal intention. According to Cullen & Agnew (2006), the routine activity approach is based on two rather simple ideas. First, for crime to occur, motivated offenders must meet with suitable targets in the absence of qualified guardians. Secondly, they noted that the likelihood of this situation occurring is influenced by their routine activities including the work, family, leisure, and consumption activities. For example, if we spend more time in public places such as bars and on the street, we increase the likelihood that we will come into contact with motivated offenders in the absence of competent guardians. However, routine activities theory does not explain why an offender is motivated to commit a crime, but instead assumes that motivation is constant (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Morrow, 2015; Wikstromolof, 2009; United States Legal Incorporation, 2015). Igbo (2008), Brown & Okorie (2015a) noted that for a crime to occur,

a motivated offender must also identify and engage a suitable target. Suitable targets can take a number of forms depending on the nature of the crime (i.e. the particular intent of the offender) and the situational context (i.e. the available opportunities). A suitable target might be an object, such as a piece of valuable property to steal or a home to burglarise.

The final element of routine activities theory consists of proficient guardianship, which bears the potential to dissuade or avert crime even in the presence of a motivated offender with a selected suitable target (Brown & Okorie, 2015b). Capable guardianship is an expansive concept that researchers interpret and study in a variety of ways. Formal types of guardianship such as police officers and other types of law enforcement agents, symbolise a well-recognised form of protection from crime and victimisation. Routine activities theory suggests that the existence of these agents might avert a crime from happening. Many potential offenders, despite being motivated to commit a crime, would be hesitant to engage in criminal behaviour with a police officer's presence. The routine activity theory is relevant to this study on sea robbery and tourism development because it assists to explain the existence of the crime in the littoral states of Niger Delta Region. First, unemployed youths in the region are a pool of persons who are ready and capable of committing crime of the nature of sea robbery. Vulnerable targets are in the form of international and domestic tourists, oil tankers, fishing crafts, trawlers, speedboat operators, passengers, and local businessmen and women that ply the waterways. Most of these targets are not always well guarded. The numerous mazes of creeks in the littoral states of Niger Delta provide hiding places for suspects or offenders who usually lay ambush for their targets in waterways that are not well protected. The absence of protection for these targets exposes the latter to incessant attacks by these motivated offenders. Besides, when faced with threat to life, such target usually panic enough to promise their assailants instant wealth reward. Such offers are quite appealing to sea robber and fuel their appetite for maritime criminality. Therefore, the routine activity theory is very useful for concisely explicating the consequences of sea robbery on tourism development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

### **Sea Robbery and Tourism**

The proportion to which tourism contributes to the socio-economic and political development of any country is still a subject of debate (Bhatia, 2002). Arguably, tourism invigorates the exchange of educational, recreational, and cultural values in Nigeria. As tourists sail to new destinations, they bring with them their own culture and learn the ways of life of their host communities. Also, as visitors travel to Nigeria to stay, they seek to meet and understand the different cultures and background of the various ethnic groups. As they meet with their host, an exchange of educational and cultural ideas takes place. Hence, the travellers widen their horizon and come to value other people's culture even more. Tourism is a great economic vigour in Nigeria. Scholars like Brown (2003) argue that tourism is a vehicle for economic development and a potential source of income generation especially foreign exchange. The receipts from international tourists are valuable sources of earnings for Nigeria (Okey 2003; Okpolo, Emaka, & Dimlayi, 2008). Explorers or visitors spending can engender further income for both private and public sectors through the income multipliers-effect. It advances the financial flow of funds from developed and developing countries into Nigeria. Another major benefit of tourism is its capacity to stimulate infrastructural development. Perhaps, the benefits from infrastructural development justified the primary reasons for the implementation of several tourism programmes and activities in most states in Nigeria.

Tourism also quickens employment creation in Nigeria (Okey, 2003; Okpolo, Emeka, & Dimlayi, 2008). Worldwide, the tourism industry is an important source of employment (Bhatia, 2002). In the case of Nigeria, the development of new infrastructures provides opportunities for job creation. Indeed, the tourism sector and its sub sector employ a large number of people and provide a wide range of jobs ranging from the unskilled to the highly specialized. The construction of roads, airports or airport maintenance, water supply, electricity, construction and renovation of hotels and other accommodation units create jobs for thousands of workers. It is noteworthy that any discussion on the consequences of security challenges in the Niger Delta cannot be complete without the mention of its adverse effect on the tourism potentials of the region. Niger Delta region possesses more tourism potentials than any other geographical area in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006) In addition, the states that make up this area have resources which if properly exploited can make the region a top tourist destination and tourism a revenue earner for the region in particular, and the country at large. Nevertheless, if the coastal areas remain unsafe, neither foreigners nor the Nigerian government itself will be able to properly harness the tourism potentials of the region. Just as maritime insecurity has affected the tourism industry in other parts of Africa (Randrianantenaina, 2013; VOA, 2010), the activities of maritime criminals in Niger Delta region can negatively affect the Nigerian tourism industry.

### **Methodology**

In this study, the researchers employed the survey design. A survey is a systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purposes of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members (Avedian, 2014). Its choice for this study was informed by the fact that, the survey is concerned with collection of information from a specified target population in whom interest is expressed. The information is collected from a relatively small subset (sample) of the population and the researcher generalizes the results obtained from the sample to the whole population (Taylor, Sinha, & Ghoshal, 2009). Survey design was chosen to enable the researchers gather informed opinion and experiences of sea robbery attack from maritime business operators without any attempt to manipulate or control them.

The population of the study comprised maritime business operators in the region. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to select respondents from three littoral states of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which were; Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Delta States (see figure 1 for details). A sample size of 400 respondents comprising maritime business operators in the region was derived using the Taro Yamane sample size determination technique. The instruments used for data collection in this study were structured questionnaire and interview schedule. A Likert scale type questionnaire consisting 30 closed-ended questions was designed and administered to the respondents in proportion to the size of each stratum. Additionally, since it would have been impracticable to conduct interviews in the three states selected for the study, key stakeholders from each of the states selected were interviewed.

The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as: simple percentages (%), tables and bar chart were adopted for the study. While inferential statistics specifically Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the research hypothesis, in order to make a sound statistical decision. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 ( $r$ ) level of significance was used to determine the relationship existing between the variables being investigated.

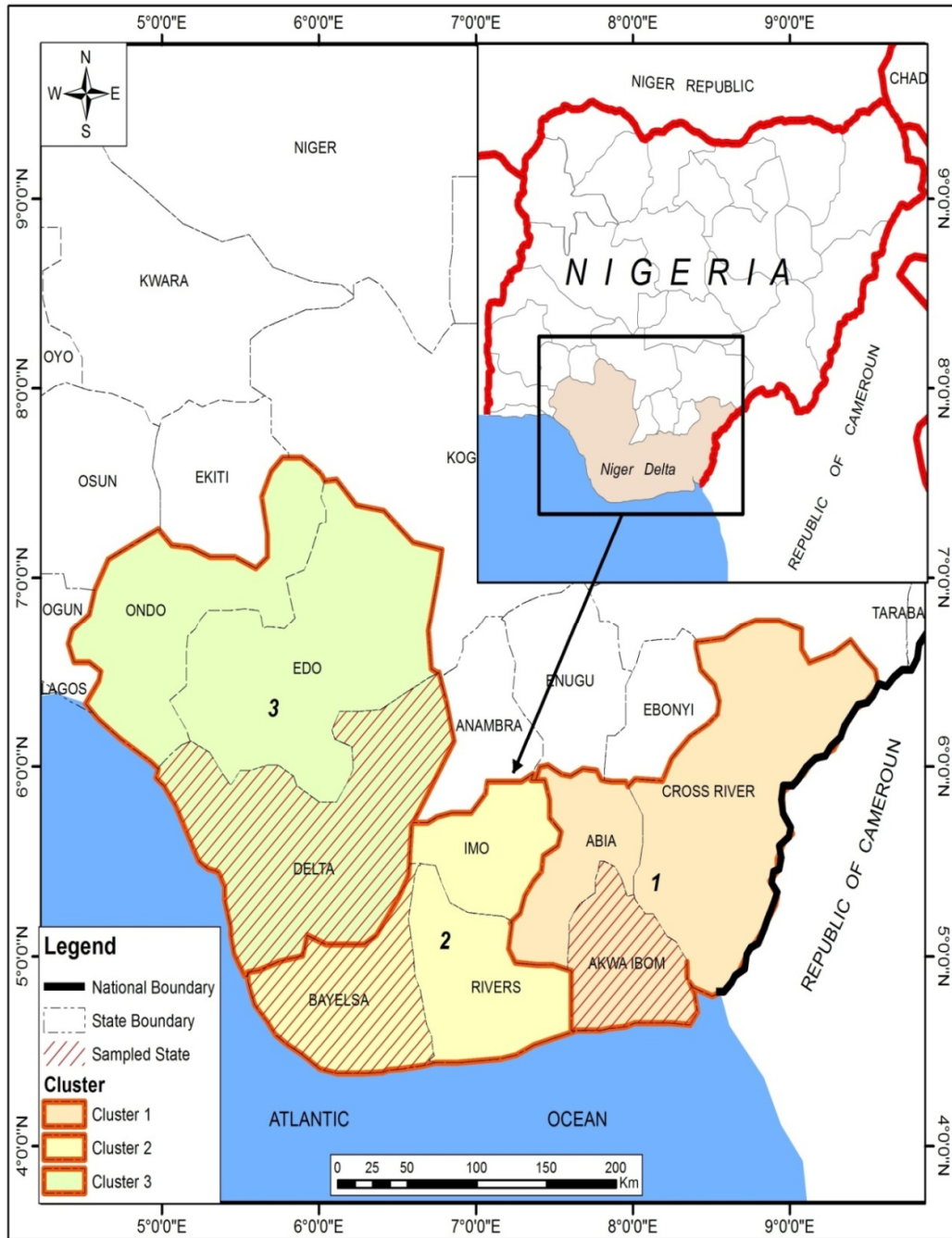


Figure 1: Map of the study Area.  
Source: Field Survey (2016).

### Result and Discussion

This section presents results of data analyses to examine the effect of sea robbery on tourism development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

**Consequences of Sea Robbery Activities on Tourism Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria**

The continuous activities of sea robbery in Niger Delta region have several implications on tourism business as clearly indicated in Table 1 below.

**Table1: Opinion of Respondents on the Consequences of Sea Robbery Activities on Tourism Development**

<b>Parameters</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>% of Agreement</b>
Reduced revenue generation.	64 (16.5)	242 (52.2)	73 (28.8)	10 (2.6)	68.7%
Reduced tourist attraction to beaches	162 (41.6)	195 (50.1)	24 (6.2)	8 (2.1)	91.7%
Diminished infrastructural development	53 (13.6)	178 (45.8)	141 (36.2)	17 (4.4)	59.4%
Reduced influx of foreign tourists	45 (11.6)	280 (72.0)	54 (13.9)	10 (2.6)	83.6%
Heightened youth unemployment	105 (27.0)	201 (51.7)	75 (19.3)	8 (2.1)	78.7%

**Source: Field Survey (2016)**

**NB: Figures in parenthesis are percentages**

In Table 1, respondents identified the consequences of protracted activities of sea robbers on the development of tourism business in Niger Delta. As observed, about 91.8% of respondents stated that the previous influx of tourists into the study area has dropped drastically owing to the risk posed by sea robbers. Similarly, 78.7% were of the opinion that with sea robbery, tourists’ interest in and attraction to available beaches and tourist destinations in the region has declined and weakened. This view was shared by 83.5% of respondents who agreed that sea robbery has heightened the rate of youth unemployment, which in turn may have resulted to the widespread criminal attacks in the study area in recent times .Also, it is indicated in the Table that sea robbery leads to a reduction in revenue generation (68.7%) for tourism business, and the decline of the latter was linked to infrastructural decay (59.4%). Overall, respondents were unanimous in their argument that sea robbery is a phenomenon with adverse effects on tourism development in Niger Delta region. Indeed, the activities of sea robbers have a ripple effect on tourism development in the region.

A careful examination of the results in Table 1, which analysed the parameter used in measuring the relationship between sea robbery and tourism development in Niger Delta region of Nigeria, indicates that the greatest harm sea robbery portends for tourism business was felt on three major indices: (a) reduction of tourists’ attraction to beaches as 91.7% of respondents affirmed, (b) declining influx of foreign tourists (83.6%), and (c) widespread youth unemployment (78.7%). To buttress these findings, it became crucial to understand the distribution of data among different categories of respondents on the three key indices as highlighted above. This is shown in Figure 1 below.

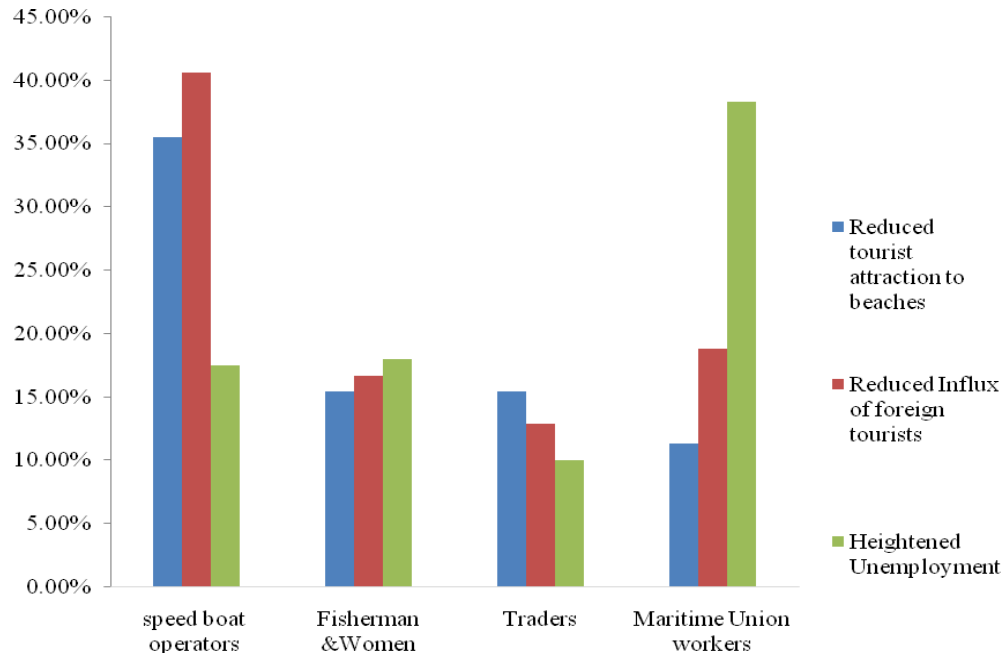


Figure 1: Sea robbery on beach attraction, influx of foreign tourists, and youth unemployment categorized by respondents' occupation

Source: Field Survey (2016).

It can be observed from Figure .1 that 35.5% of speedboat operators had the highest percentage of response supporting the assertion that sea robbery reduces tourists' attraction to the beaches. It is understood that by nature of their occupation, the respondents are knowledgeable with activities surrounding the tourism and the maritime industry and are no doubt in a good position to offer useful responses. Again, 40.6% of speedboat operators noted that sea robbery reduces influx of both international and domestic tourists into Niger Delta region. On the other hand, 38.3% members of maritime workers union of Nigeria were of the opinion that sea robbery activity has increased unemployment level in Niger Delta region. This was confirmed by fishermen and women (18.0%), as well as traders (17.5%). The foregoing result corroborates the response of the subjects during the interview session in the study area. According to one respondent, a director in Ministry of Culture and Tourism:

“Sea robbery has negatively impacted on the tourism sector because most of the tourist sites/destinations are situated at the bank of rivers/sea shores. As such, no economic activity can thrive in an unsafe/unsecure environment. This is because adequate security encourages investment and guarantees protection of assets. Thus, sea robbery has seriously discouraged investors in the region, especially at tourist destinations.”

In a similar view, (President Dry Fish Beach Market Association Oron) in an interview conducted on 9/8/2016, explained that things are different now due to increased sea robbery activities. She narrated that during the days of Donald Duke the then Governor of Cross River State usually come to Oron with sport boat and spent some time relaxing around the National Museum waterfront. The movement of the then Governor's sport boat provided some form of entertainment to those who were at the waterfront. These days however, everybody is afraid of kidnappers who usually ferry their victims through the waterways. This has led to reduced



revenue generation in addition to scaring leisure seekers away. Validating this position a respondent who is a speedboat operator in Swali waterfront of Yenagoa noted that before the escalation of militancy in Niger Delta region of Nigeria, foreigners and other holidaymakers used to patronize them by hiring their speedboats. He further stated that tourists used to visit this waterfront for leisure with camera mostly at weekends and sometimes hired speedboats to the Oxbow lake, take photographs for hours and pay the speedboat operators for the use of their boats. Today, the foreigners are hardly seen around without military escorts.

Another respondent, a staff of Delta State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, during an interview session on 17/3/16 at Asaba stated that:

“The activities of sea robbers and militants have painted the image of the State as an unsafe tourist destination”. He noted that another contributory factor that has discouraged the influx of domestic and international tourists to the state was a warning issued by the US government to her citizens against travelling to 20 states in Nigeria, including Delta State. Tourist attractions play a decisive role in tourism development. Tourist destinations cannot develop without the domestic and international tourists who visit the site, which in turn attracts development.

Furthermore, during an interview session on 4/4/16 at Yenagoa, Bayelsa State at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, a director in the ministry enumerated the consequences of sea robbery on tourism development in the state. According to him, the activities of sea robbers have negative impact on the internal revenue generation of the state. Apart from the maritime business operations that suffer the primary effect of the attack, tourists are discouraged from travelling to the state. Domestic and international tourists were usually attracted to the beach to be entertained by the various cultural displays by troupes such as Egbelegbele dance troupe and Seigben display. Now, tourists no longer come in their numbers to fishing festivals for fear of being kidnapped. This situation has affected the revenue of persons who earn a living from transporting people to tourist destinations who usually pay tax from their profit to the state government.

Confirming this position, one respondent, a director of tourism in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State during an interview session on the 2/8/16, observed that:

*“Sea robbery has had an adverse effect on tourism development in the State and the region at large. The effect is noticed in coastal and maritime tourism. On coastal tourism, the influx of domestic and international tourists has drastically reduced. This has a multiple effect on transporters, tourist destinations and the hospitality industry. On maritime tourism, Niger Delta region has the destinations to attract tourists for nautical sporting and fishing festival, but these have not been fully developed owing to insecurity in the maritime environment. Investors are not willing to invest in an unsafe business environment”.*

These data are significant to the extent that they were collected from appropriate sets of respondents, pointing to the authenticity of information gathered on the magnitude of the effects of sea robbery on tourism development. A further test of the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between sea robbery and tourism development in the Niger Delta region was done and the results presented in Table 2 below.

**Test of Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between sea robbery and decline in tourism development in Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

**Table 2: Correlation analysis of relationship between sea robbery and tourism development**

		Sea Robbery	Tourism Development
Sea Robbery	Pearson Correlation	1	.409**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	389	389
Tourism Development	Pearson Correlation	.409**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	389	389

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

Result in Table 2 indicates that there is a significant relationship between sea robbery and tourism development ( $r=0.409$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), given low p-value at 0.05 level of significance, which leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that the more sea robbers operate in Niger Delta areas, the more the adverse effect on tourism and the hospitality industry in the region. The above finding is in tandem with (Mbekeana, & Ncube, 2011), who concluded that tourism is a catalyst for economic development with high potentials for income generation. This affirms the fact that tourism stimulates employment creation or better still, remains a valuable source of employment (Bhatia, 2002). These findings suggest that proper management of infrastructures in the existing tourist destinations in the study area and the provision of adequate and effective security strategies will ensure that the waterways and environment is safe for coastal and maritime tourism.

**Conclusion and Policy Implications**

The tourism and hospitality industry is a great economic force. It is a channel to economic development. It is a potential source of revenue generation next to Oil and Gas industry if properly harnessed. It is worthy to note, that the region possesses more tourism potentials than any other geo-political zone in the country. In addition, the states that make up this area have the resources that can transform Niger Delta region to a top tourist destination and revenue earner for the region in particular and the country at large. Nevertheless, if the coastal areas remain unsafe for both international and domestic tourists, the Nigerian government cannot properly harness the tourism potentials of the region. Consequently, the study recommends that proactive policing of Niger Delta waterways by concerned security operatives is recommended as this will guarantee safety of lives and properties of both domestic and international tourists. Secondly, better administration and superintendence of the Region’s Maritime domain and waterways by NIMASA and NIWA will engender development. Thirdly, law making bodies should evolve legal regimes that stipulate severe punishment for sea related crimes to serve as deterrence. As a fourth measure the Ministry of Niger Delta and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) should as a matter of urgency revive the viable tourism destinations in the region. This will provide the platform for revenue generation for sustainable projects in the region. Lastly, the problem of unemployment in Nigeria should be tackled through the provision of skill acquisition programmes. This platform will reduce the number of idle youths who usually see sea robbery as a means of earning quick income. If these recommendations are judiciously implemented, Niger Delta will be a safe haven for tourism and other maritime activities.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study of Sea robbery and its implication on Tourism Development in Niger Delta region of Nigeria is a sensitive one as some of the respondents were initially skeptical about the study. But later, the respondents cooperated when they were convinced that the information sought for was strictly for academic purposes and would be treated with utmost confidentiality. Larger data would have been gathered by the researcher if the respondents had allowed the use of tape recorder by the researcher during the fieldwork for this research. The study was delayed on most occasions at the fishing camps, till the village head/president returned from the river before respondents could give the desired attention. At Ufok Esuk village in Okobo LGA, the village head, though not a fisherman, delayed the research till he got approval from the Clan Head. Apart from the above, retrieving the questionnaire was a challenge. The researcher had to travel to the different locations severally to honour appointments.

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