

**ROLE OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN PORT HARCOURT  
TOURIST BEACH AND IFFOKO BEACH, RIVERS STATE,  
NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

*This study examined the views of tourism stakeholders (management and staff, tourists/visitors and residents/host communities), on the roles of infrastructure in Port Harcourt Tourist Beach and Iffoko Beach, Rivers State, Nigeria. The tourism industry in Nigeria has been confronted with lack of modern infrastructure, which has limited its growth and development for years. The research work aims at examining the adequacy of infrastructure components namely: transport infrastructure, water, electricity, communication, accommodation, waste disposal and security in and around the beaches of study. Also determine the role of infrastructural facilities in attracting tourists, enhancing the tourist's experience, and improvement of residents/host communities living condition. More so, identify the challenges facing the management of the two beaches of study. Data collected were measured on a Likert Scale 1- 5 (that is, very low, low, moderate/average, high and very high) using a research instrument called questionnaire. Statistical method such as Z test was applied to analyze and test the research data. The results showed that adequate infrastructure significantly make beach tourism successful. More so, infrastructures were found to play significant role in attracting tourists to the beaches, enhancing tourists/visitors experience and improving of residents/ host communities living condition in the beaches. The study therefore concluded that it is necessary for the tourism policies to concentrate on improving the quality of infrastructural facilities in and around the beaches and to ensure massive infrastructural facilities development which will create enabling environment for beach tourism to thrive in Nigeria and Rivers State in particular.*

**Keywords:** Tourism, Tourism product, beaches, infrastructural facilities

## **INTRODUCTION**

Infrastructure, both technical and social is basic devices, buildings and service institutions that is crucial to the proper operation of economy and society (Panasiuk, 2007). It determines the investment climate affecting either directly the establishment or operations of business and/or indirectly through increased operation costs compared to regions with better infrastructure (Ikiara, 2006; World Bank 2010).

Researchers have acknowledged the importance of infrastructure in economic growth and tourism development (Smith, 1994; Buharis, 2000; Crouch, and Ritchie, 2000; Prideaux, 2000; Gunn, and Van, 2002; Eagles, and Mccool, 2002; Khadaroo, and Seetanah, 2007; Sahoo, Dash, and Nataraj, 2010; Seetanah, Juwaheer, Lamport, Rojid, Sannasee, Subadar, 2011; Imikan, and Ekpo, 2012; Lone, Rather, and Jain, 2013). But the role of infrastructure in beach resort destination growth and development has not been examined in any detail. Basically, attracting tourists tend to have criteria that require highest levels of infrastructural facilities that are more appropriate for urban/resort beaches. Tourists tend to cluster where these high levels of supporting facilities are located and the enjoyment of the beach experience can be enhanced by good management and provision of basic and necessary infrastructures. Beach tourism can only attract tourists and survive if adequate infrastructural facilities are put in place.

Tourism is said to be capital intensive based on the need to provide infrastructural facilities and superstructures. A good example is the construction of a good road network and airport to facilitate trade and tourism, provision of pipe borne water by the government because they are not investment area which is attractive to private sector. Therefore, tourism planning and development requires the development of infrastructure and other tourism related facilities (HunSen, 2002; Boers, and Contrell, 2007). This is because infrastructure promotes comparative and competitive advantage on destinations. It is fundamental to a tourist overall impression, image of a destination (Crunch and Ritchie, 2000), tourist satisfaction and the degree of a visitor's trip experience (Smith, 1994). Prideaux, (2000) rightly noted that the establishment of high quality tourism resort in any country depends on the availability of a critical mass of public

infrastructure and the absence of it, creates burden on operating cost with attendant negative effect on the competitiveness of a destination . In other words, lack of required modern infrastructure, has serious adverse effect on tourism development and growth. No Nigerian bound tourist may like to be confronted with infrastructural facility inadequacy. Good road network, effective and efficient transport system and communication system, steady power supply, clean potable water, comfortable and affordable accommodation, proper waste management and adequate security, are some of the infrastructural facilities which tourists need for a happy tourism experience.

The government is the most important source of finance for infrastructure projects. And they are most times faced with the challenges of insufficient fund or expertise to carry out the project; thereby seeking help from external sources. The tourism sector in Nigeria has experienced low economic growth as a result of lack of modern infrastructure at tourist sites. But authorities in Nigeria have recently tried to invest in basic infrastructures, most especially in the coastal regions of the nation, having recognized the importance of sound infrastructure in promoting tourism development. Equally, the Rivers State government is putting every effort to provide basic infrastructures in order to woo the private sector for the development of tourism sector in the state especially in Port Harcourt and other neighboring villages, where this research is based. Tourist visitation to Port Harcourt tourist sites generates demand on physical infrastructure. Therefore, this study examined the level and adequacy of seven infrastructure components namely; transport, electricity, communication, water, accommodation, waste disposal and security at the study areas. It further investigated the important roles infrastructure play in attracting tourists, enhancing tourist experience and improving the living condition of residents in Port Harcourt Tourist Beach and Iffoko beach, Rivers State, Nigeria. It is anticipated that the lessons derived from the study will help in the generation of tourist inflow to the country; bring satisfaction with memorable experience for tourists and as well encourage the provision and improvement of infrastructure for the tourism industry to thrive in Nigeria. The study will first provide the theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence related to the study. This is followed the background of the study, the methodology, findings and discussion.

### ***THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS***

Medlik (1987); UNWTO (1995); Thomas and Thomas (1992), denote tourism product as an amalgam of various components, ranging from everything the tourist purchase, use, see, experience and feel from the time they leave home until they return. Gunn (1988) also denotes the tourism product as a complex consumptive experience that result from a process when tourists use multiple of services (information related process), transportation, accommodation and alternative services during the course of their visit. Okpoko (2006) asserts that the tourism products differ from industrial products and that the quality of the natural, social and cultural environment determines not only the demand for such products but also the level of patronage. Some other economic, political conditions and structural features are also important factors that shape many tourist experiences and contribute to the nature of the destination product. Murphy, (2000) related this type of product to a supply and demand analysis and described how various components of the destination interact with travelers during their trip. Inskeep, (1991) posited that the attraction and features of a destination provide the basis for developing tourism. Okoli (2001) grouped the five attributes of a tourist destination as attraction, transportation, accommodation, support facilities (shops, banks, restaurants etc) and infrastructure. Pearce (1989) further notes that the tourism potentials of an area is determined by the existing conditions of attractions, access and existing facilities, land tenure and land use. According to Holloway (2002), all destinations share certain characters and their success in attracting tourists will depend upon the quality of three essential benefits that they offer to tourism; they are attractions, amenities or facilities and accessibility. Smith (1994) on his own part was among the first to acknowledge the role of service infrastructure housed with the largest macro-environments or physical plant of the destination. He further emphasized that the level, use or lack of infrastructure and technology in the destination for example transportation, water, power supply, use of computer technology and communication among others, are also visible and determining features that can enhance the visitors trip experience. Other authors like Choy, (1992); Burharis, (2000); Crouch, and Ritchie, (2000) also supported his view. The authors are of the opinion that infrastructural facilities have great role to play in the development of tourist impression and image about a destination. Cooper and Hall (2008) are

of the opinion that if a destination seeks to attract tourists, the following four categories of resources should be available in the form of physical and cultural attraction, facilities and services, infrastructure and services that make the destination accessible as well as the various attraction facilities and services within the destination and information provision so that the consumer actually knows about the destination and its resources. Kaul, (1985) recognized the importance of infrastructure particularly transport as an essential component of successful tourism development in that it reduces the creation of new attractions and growth of existing ones. Lew and Mckercher, (2006) in support of the above, state that good and systematic transportation links are factors attracting tourists to a destination. Molid and Nasir (2006), give the selection of a tourist destination as based on beautiful beaches, easy and commitment for a picnic and a stroll availability of facilities such as accommodation, food stalls, recreation activities etc. All these indicate that besides the nature base of beaches, other supporting factors such as facilities, accommodation and transportation are essential in attracting tourists. Also the tourist infrastructure is an important element to the quality of the tourist experience (Badamuddin and Omar, 2005). The availability of adequate infrastructure facilities is critically required for beach tourism support and determines the reason tourists choose a particular beach.

#### ***EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE***

Infrastructure plays an important role in tourism development and sustainability. Evidence has shown that infrastructure plays critical role in the tourism industry in Singapore (Low and Henry, 1998) and in South East Asia as a whole (Page, 2000). Gearing (1974) studied Turkey as a tourist destination and found that infrastructure (comprising road, water, electricity, safety services, health services, communication, accommodation and public transport services) is a key determinant explaining tourist arrivals to the destination. Tang and Rochanaded (1990) studied Thailand and concluded that infrastructure is an important element in promoting the country as a tourist destination. Also, Kim (2000) in discussing the coast of Sum Lost City, South Africa and McElroy (2003) in discussing small Islands, highlighted the importance of infrastructure particularly government financed infrastructure in the success of a tourist destination.

In the beach award ratings, findings showed that award rating systems that focus on attracting tourists tend to have criteria that require higher levels of infrastructure that are for urban resort beaches (Cagilaba and Rennie, 2005). Popular coastal tourism destinations were facing not only environmental problem but also quality problems in accommodation facilities, provision of water, sports, shopping and auxiliary facilities, maintenance of existing facilities, provision of catering services etc. due to high population movements, congestion and overcrowding in peak seasonal period (Lickorish and Jenkins, 1997). Burton (1995) is of the opinion that the coastal tourist seeks first and foremost a clean, sandy beach on the coast, comfortable for sunbathing and safe for swimming. Seetanah, Juwaheer, Lamport, Rojid, Sannessee, and Subadar, (2011) investigating the significance of infrastructure as a factor in destination development, used panel data analysis in their research. The findings show that tourists are sensitive to the infrastructure of the Island (Mauritius which has to date been essentially a beach resort par excellence), particularly those from Europe/America and Asia. Jimnez (2011) in discussing Mass beach tourism in Tunisia stated that the mass beach tourism approach required the establishment of an elaborate infrastructure through relatively short period.

Studies carried out by Othman, and Khairi, (2012) in Malaysia showed that the three factors that drive tourists to choose Pantai Cahaya Bulan Beach in Keta Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia are safety and comfort, facilities available and reasonable cost. Imikan and Ekpo (2012) in examining the relationship between infrastructure and tourism development in Rivers State, Nigeria, used multiple correlation and stepwise regression analysis. The findings showed high significant relationship between the sets of infrastructure components (water, electricity, transport, communication and accommodation) and tourism development. Exploring the coastal tourism potentials of Lagos, Uduma-Olugu and Onukwube (2012) surveyed four coastal tourist destinations and found that these tourist destinations experience lack of infrastructure and suggested that these infrastructures when provided, will definitely improve the current state of coastal tourism in Lagos.

A few studies in Nigeria have addressed the possibility of establishing the important role infrastructure play in beach tourism. Imikan and Ekpo reviewed the relationship between infrastructure and tourism

development, but the outcome of this work is limited to several tourism resources without focusing on one specific tourism product. Hence this study intends to examine the role of infrastructural facilities on the two beaches in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Rivers State is one of the oil-rich states of the Niger Delta in Nigeria, created in 1967. The state is located between latitudes  $40^{\circ} 20'$  and  $50^{\circ} 45'$  north of the equator and longitudes  $60^{\circ} 20'$  and  $70^{\circ} 33'$  east of Greenwich. It occupies a land mass of approximately 10,261 km<sup>2</sup> with a typical maritime climate and well developed vegetation. The state has 23 Local Government areas with a population of 5,198,716 drawn from various ethnic groups, namely, Abua, Andoni, Ekpaje, Engenmi, Etche, Ibani, Okirika, Ikwerre, Ogoni, Kalabbarri, Ogba/Egbema, and Ekehe. The people are predominantly fishermen known to be hospitable, generous and warm-hearted.

Available history traces tourism development in Rivers State to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Imikan, and Ekpo, 2012). Cultural and economic tourism was highly practiced during the activities of King Jaja of Opobo and King of Igala. Their activities in the state domestically and internationally attracted people from different clans and countries to the state. (Bell – Ham, 2011). Cultural relationship was established and the local trade in palm oil attracted the Portuguese, the French and the British. These tourists were attracted to Nigeria and the coastal regions as a result of excellence of goods, culture and hospitality of the people. Other activities of great cultural and tourist values included, new yam festivals, chieftaincy installation ceremonies, introduction into woman hood, blood oath ceremonies, and so on (Karibo, 1991). These ceremonies united people internally and externally and remind us of the baptism of cultural tourism in Nigeria. It is from these two traditional industries for demand of culture that Nigeria's modern tourism evolved. Tourism gained a conceptual and institutional perspective in 1976 when Nigeria tourism Board was created. Today tourism has become a viable economic sub-sector.

Truly, the Rivers State government is making effort to provide infrastructural facilities in order to woo the private sector into the development of tourism in the state, especially in Port Harcourt and other neighboring villages, where this research is based. Ugiomoh Frank (Bibor <http://www.thetidenewsonline.com>) noted that the city of

Port Harcourt is a mine awaiting exploitation as far as tourism is concerned. Tourist visitation to Port Harcourt tourist sites generates demand on physical infrastructure.

Port Harcourt Tourist Beach is in Port Harcourt Local government area, Rivers State, Nigeria. Port Harcourt is referred to as the garden city, a coastal city of Nigeria and the capital city of Rivers State. Inclusively, the city is very rich with tourist attractions, being endowed with long expanse of beautiful coastal white sandy beaches to Koluama, numerous long and winding creeks, streams and rivers as well as forests with their associated shrines and wildlife. The tourism potentials of Rivers State are yet to be fully tapped, though the white sand in Port Harcourt are considered some of the most beautiful and well maintained shorelines in Africa. The city has become one of the most exciting cities in Nigeria because during the summer vacations, tourists especially Europeans are attracted, who come to enjoy the city's pictures and tranquil sites. Golfers and beach lovers find the city very entertaining. Expatriates from all over the world are influencing the leisure activities in this city. This is because its array of natural and tourist sites such as the beaches and the city's allure are ever inviting.

Port Harcourt Tourist Beach is not only a tourist but also a popular one in the city. It is actually a man-made attraction, created in 1988 along the Kolabi creek line. Serene environment for tourists created by the designers of the beach made the beach very attractive. Visitors to the beach enjoy the white-sand and take a walk through the hiking trails. The local government ensures the preservation of the area as an increasing number of visitors come to the beach each year. The location of the beach being at the right on the edge of Port Harcourt city makes it very attractive. Different restaurants that offer traditional dishes are well established in the beach as well as a zoo.

Iffoko beach is another popular spot by Port Harcourt. It is a natural beach and one of the best beaches in the area. The beach is well maintained by the local residents and the local fishermen depend on the sea for livelihood. The rain forest borders the shoreline. Tourists enjoy freshly caught sea food from any of the local restaurants. After a pleasant lunch, the visitor can take a walk along the shore and enjoy the exotic scenery. Visitors can also take advantage of the nature of the trails to see the wild life living in the rain forest.

## **METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS**

This research is exploratory as well as descriptive in. The research population comprised all selected tourism stakeholders from the two beaches. The sampling unit chosen for this research include: the management and staff, tourists/visitors and residents/host community from Port Harcourt Tourist Beach and Iffoko Beach. Proper consideration of all the elements was adopted in this research. These are persons between the ages 18-75 years. Obviously, the researcher cannot study the whole population of study; hence the sample size of 513 respondents was determined statistically using a scientific model of measurement as formulated by Taro Yamane given in Alugbuo, (2005) to determine the sample size of management and staff while Freud and Williams (1975) given by Anyanwu, (2000) was used to determine the sample size of tourists/visitors and residents/host community. The opinion and perception of these respondents were observed which was not restricted to reality finding alone but rather formulation of significant source of knowledge and solution to the problem. The sampling technique used here is based on non probability sampling which has no statistical inference. Purposive (Judgmental) sampling was applied for the management and staff while convenience sampling was applied for the tourists/visitors and residents/host community stakeholders based on accessibility. These methods gave the researcher the privilege of control over the selection of the sample. The respondents were approached personally at their places of work, in the beaches and at their residents by the researcher. Primary and secondary sources of information were used. Primary sources of data included questionnaires, interview and observations schedules while secondary sources of data included published literature on tourism, beaches and infrastructural facilities. Questionnaires were issued to collect information from the tourism stakeholders of the selected beaches. The questionnaires sought to establish information regarding the level of infrastructural facilities needed to make the beaches successful/flourish; the capacity of infrastructural facilities to attract and enhance tourists/visitors experience, the level of improvement in living conditions of residents/host community as a result of infrastructure presence and the challenges faced by the management of the beaches. The questions formulated contained primarily questions based on Likert- scale of 1-5

with 5 (five) representing the highest value for the criterion question. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a Likert scale of (1) very low, (2) low, (3) moderate/average (4) high, (5) very high. Efforts were made to develop questions that are clear and direct (one way meaning or interpretation), so as to increase the possibility of accurate answers. The observation schedule was used to observe the adequacy of infrastructural facilities components namely: transport infrastructure, water, electricity, communication, accommodation, waste disposal and security in and around the beaches.

The validity and reliability of these processes are based on the outcomes of discussions with the tourism stakeholders. The questionnaire was subjected to thorough scrutiny for its validity by 5 representatives of the tourism stakeholders. One among whom is the supervisor who made some corrections, criticisms and suggestions to make the questionnaire valid. The reliability of the instrument was tested with a test- retest procedure based on the responses of the 10 tourism stakeholders from the two beaches of study. An interval of two weeks was given for the test-retest of the instrument. The data collected from the test-retest was analyzed statistically using Cronbach's alpha to determine if the responses were significantly correlated. The reliability test showed the alpha value (Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient) that equal 0.79, 0.81 and 0.86 respectively, which is still positive and above the Standard Alpha (0.7000).

Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used for mean achievement score analysis while inferential statistics such as Z-test was used to test relevant hypothesis on the adequacy of infrastructural facilities in attracting tourists, enhancing tourist experience and improving the living conditions of residents/ host community.

### ***Results and Discussions***

#### ***Infrastructural facilities in Port Harcourt Tourist Beach and Iffoko Beach***

This study considered seven infrastructural facilities components which include: transport, water, electricity, communication, accommodation, waste disposal and security. A number of variables were considered in assessing each component. Based on observations and stakeholders responses, there is need for adequate infrastructural facilities in and around the beaches which was rated 53% as very high in affirmation. This shows that the beaches of study need adequate infrastructural facilities for its sustainability.

***Transportation:*** Prideaux (2000) acknowledges the importance of transport infrastructure as an essential component of successful tourism in that it provides inducement for the growth of existing tourist destinations and the creation of new attractions. Findings in this study revealed that the nature of transportation infrastructure in terms of means of transport, quality, density and its availability in and around the beaches is rated very high in Port Harcourt Tourist Beach which is in urban area compared to Iffoko Beach, located in the rural area which is rated low. The urban area has good road network making it easily accessible. Public service vehicles, taxis and buses are available in the city, but not as much in the rural areas.

There is railway network which help in both passenger and goods transport in the urban area and not in the rural area. Though this is not very reliable due to poor management. The Port Harcourt International Airport has been expanded to meet international standards. This has facilitated international flights as well as domestic flights into Port Harcourt. Transport to islands was however a challenge due to poor nature of the water vessels and the remoteness of these creek areas rich in tourist attractions.

Transportation remains singly the most important infrastructure for rural tourism development. This is because where destinations are lacking in the other basic infrastructure such as guesthouses, tourist can commune from urban centres to such destinations provided the destinations are linked by quality roads and available transport service.

Essentially, the implication of this model is that stakeholders in the tourism industry should evolve a policy that treats rural road construction and improvement as a main concern. Furthermore, in most developed countries where beach tourism has become a key economic activity, models such as the ones generated from this study have been adopted long before the new millennium to improve the competitiveness of their destinations. At the moment, some developed and developing countries like America, Canada, Brazil, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Mauritius, Kenya, Malaysia, Tunisia, Tanzania, Ghana, South Africa, to mention but a few are at the forefront of tourism promotion through an aggressive programme on infrastructure provision. If the UN millennium development targets including environmental sustainability are to be achieved in Nigeria, the service sector (tourism) remains a viable alternative.

***Water Supply:*** Stakeholders were asked to rate their opinion with regards to reliability and accessibility of potable water for good health, cleanliness and sustainability of the beach areas. They rated water supply very low, their sources of drinking water is sachet water (pure water), and the source is borehole. Unavailability of potable and reliable water undermines development, growth and sustainability of beach as clean water is one of the most important requirements for beach activities. An adequate and continuous supply of safe water is needed for drinking purposes as well as domestic and recreational use.

***Electricity Supply:*** The reliability and availability of electricity in the beach areas was rated low, though the management in Port Harcourt Tourist Beach rated it moderate because of frequent rationing but rated high in Iffoko Beach because of supply from oil companies around the area but that is not enough as there are some lapses and more need to be done to ensure constant power in and around the area. Poor supply of electricity in Nigeria is instrumental to slow pace of growth and development of tourism. Hence, the epileptic power supply is detrimental to the tourism sector. The reform in the Nigeria power sector if well implemented will act as catalyst to urban and rural tourism. High speed communication network is crucial to the economic well-being of many business owners, including tourism operators. Development of broadband capabilities in rural areas can

help create new opportunities for economic development in these regions.

***Communication facilities:*** Stakeholders were asked to rate the effectiveness, quick and cheap communication network available in the beaches. Communication services were found to be available and reliable in the beach areas because of the new technology in communication network and services by MTN, GLO Network, Airtel, etisalat and others.

***Accommodation facilities:*** Good and cheap accommodation always gives a boost to tourism in any place (Bhatia, A. 1971). In terms of accommodation facilities, they are rated very low; the ones available are non rated hotels and guest houses. This scenario may be attributed to the unwillingness of investors to risk investing in the area due to uncertainty and doubt about the sustainability of the destination's tourism. Local investment should therefore be encouraged. The critical role of power and hotel/guest houses to the development of any service industry cannot be overstressed (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008). Viewed in this light, therefore, it can be said that without accommodation, tourism may not flourish. There is need to provide standard guest houses in rural destinations with high tourism potentials. The stakeholders in the two beach sites rated the waste disposal system low. They are experiencing poor waste disposal and the sewage system is not well maintained. The total opinion of stakeholders with regards to security is rated 27% as moderate. It is a well appreciated fact that tourists are highly sensitive to their personal safety and security. So apart from developing the physical tourism infrastructure in and around the beaches, environmental safety and security of lives and properties should be ensured.

After the deep analysis of the infrastructural facilities in and around Port Harcourt Tourist Beach and Iffoko Beach, strong relationships have been identified between some variables of tourist infrastructure and the important role they play. Based on the stakeholders' responses, the beaches were not functioning properly but will definitely succeed if adequate infrastructures are put in place. The research found out that tourism requires high level of infrastructural facilities which holds the key to sustained growth in the tourism sector. The absence of some

types of infrastructure such as roads, is a stumbling block to beach tourism, but makes achieving and maintaining service standards more difficult and expensive.

The implication of this is that lack of adequate infrastructural facilities has destabilized the appropriate operations of beach activities in Port Harcourt Tourist Beach and Iffoko Beach, Rivers State, Nigeria. This implies that in Nigeria, most rural localities are characterized by slow pace of development compared to their urban counterparts. The beaches need strong network of tourism infrastructure and superstructure which require to be designed according to sustainable tourism development requirements.

***The role of infrastructural facilities to attract tourists who patronize beach tourism***

The infrastructure base of a country may be a determinant of the attractiveness of a tourism destination (Inskeep, E. 1991). Stakeholders were asked to rate their opinion on the importance of providing infrastructural facilities to attract tourists/visitors to the beach. The assumption was rated 38% as very high and 45% as high. In other words, attracting tourist to the beach require high level of infrastructural facilities, therefore it is important that they are well provided at the beaches. This result agrees with the Z-test conducted on this sub-head.

The test shows a calculated Z value of 2.5 while the critical Z value is 1.96 at 0.05 probability level. This conducted test confirmed that  $Z_{cal}$  is greater than  $Z_{critical}$  value (ie Test  $Z_{cal} 2.5 > Theoretical Z_{critical} 1.96$ ), which shows that infrastructural facilities play significant role in attracting tourists to the beach.

The study found out from the responses of the stakeholders that besides the nature base of the beach, the facilities provided in the beach play an important role in attracting tourists to the beach. Tourists are attracted to the destinations not only because of the natural resources or natural beauty of the place, but because of the returns they get on the expenditure they do in the tourist place. The findings are in accordance with Holloway's (2002) view that all destinations share certain characters and their success in attracting

tourists will depend upon the quality of three essential benefits that they offer to tourism, namely attractions, amenities or facilities and accessibility. Therefore, successful growth of beach tourism in Nigeria relies on the provision and development of appropriate infrastructure which both services a tourist's need and encourages investment by private sector in competitive tourism product.

***The role of infrastructural facilities in enhancement of tourists/visitors experience in the beaches***

Tourist infrastructure is an important element to the quality of the tourist experience (Badaruddin and Omar, 2005). Stakeholders' responses on the expectations of tourists fully agree that infrastructural facilities play important role in the enhancement of tourist demand for beach tourism which was rated 51% as very high.

The Z- test above showed a calculated Z value of 3.0 as against 1.96 criterion Z value at 0.05 probability level. This shows that availability of basic infrastructural facilities in the beaches significantly enhance tourists experience. The findings are related to the perceptions of the stakeholders whose responses point to the fact that infrastructural facilities enhance tourist demand for beach tourism. Data obtained also indicate that infrastructural facilities have great role to play in the development of tourist impression and image about a beach resort. In other words, availability of basic infrastructural facilities in and around the beach is an important element in understanding the quality of the tourist experience.

***The role of infrastructural facilities in the improvement of residents/host communities lives.***

Accommodations do not only create jobs but also new business opportunities such as laundry services and supply of basic food produce (Adejumo, 2010). The opinion of stakeholders was assessed on their agreement or disagreement that lack of infrastructural facilities help to improve the lives of the residents. The stakeholders hold the view that the provision of infrastructural facilities is essential in the making of beach resort of high quality, improving the lives of residents by providing job opportunity, good health and good living condition. In agreement they rated 45% very high to the statement.

The Z-test shows a calculated Z value of 2.96 against 1.96 criterion Z value at 0.05 significant level. Since  $Z_{cal}$  is greater than  $Z_{critical}$  value (i.e Test  $Z_{cal}$  2.96 > Theoretical  $Z_{critical}$  1.96), this confirms that provision of Infrastructural facilities significantly improve the living condition of residents / host communities at beaches.

The researcher discovered that beach tourism is an economic venture, especially in terms of its capacity to create wealth and provide job opportunities. It requires adequate infrastructural facilities to thrive and to serve the need of residents and visitors. The infrastructures in Port Harcourt Tourist Beach and Iffoko Beach affect a wide range of economic activities, having a direct impact on firms, production capabilities and consumer consumption possibilities. Their availability and adequacy will improve the standard of living for beach residents and satisfies the experience of tourists.

### ***Challenges faced by the beaches***

Respondents' impressions as well indicated that the beaches are facing significant challenges, and these are constantly decreasing beach operations and management.

Z-test reveals a calculated Z value of 3.0 against 1.96 criterion Z value at 0.05 significant levels. This statistical test result shows that  $Z_{cal}$  values of 3.0 is greater than  $Z_{critical}$  1.96, hence the management of the beaches are significantly facing challenges. The identified challenges are a mixture of constraints which impinge on the quest to build a thriving nature-based tourism resource for tourism and hospitality industry in Nigeria. These problems are interdependent and can be attributed to lack of stakeholders' commitment.

Appropriate government agencies responsible for tourism promotion and development, should establish and maintain close liaison with other government agencies responsible for the provision of the infrastructure.

## **CONCLUSION**

Nigeria has huge potential for beach tourism development in the coastal states, especially Port Harcourt Tourist Beach and Iffoko Beach in Rivers State despite the weaknesses in terms of poor infrastructural facilities and numerous challenges confronting the areas. Most

stakeholders in the beaches were positive on the need for adequate infrastructures in and around the beaches in order to make beach tourism successful, provide comfort and satisfying experience for the tourists and improve the standard of living for benefiting communities. The various infrastructure components: transport, water, electricity, communication, accommodation, waste disposal and security in the two beaches, more especially Iffoko Beach in the rural area, were found to be inadequate when compared to other beach destinations in the world. Various beach tourism destinations in the world have taken advantage of the competitive environment to upgrade their infrastructure so as to meet the market demand. The destinations include America, Canada, Brazil, Germany, Japan, Spain, United Kingdom, Egypt, Mauritius, Singapore, Morocco, Lebanon, Dubai, Syria, Israel, South Africa, Turkey, Tunisia, etc. Infrastructural facilities, both social and economic, are of major determinants of economic growth, particularly in developing countries.

Therefore, for sustainable tourism development to take place in and around the beaches, there is need to ensure that infrastructure and its challenges are addressed by all stakeholders especially the federal and state governments. This development should take place in a way that the present needs of the tourists/visitors and residents/host communities are met while maintaining the cultural integrity, ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.

The researchers conclude that it is necessary for the tourism policies to concentrate on improving the quality and to ensure massive infrastructure development which will create enabling environment for beach tourism to thrive in Nigeria and Rivers State in particular. Many believe that Nigeria is the land of pleasures, discoveries and tourism treasure of Africa with potentials to please any class of tourists. But Nigeria is yet to harness the potentials of beach tourism and the necessity for adequate infrastructure. This must be addressed in time before the bubble of boost in tourism catches up with the nation. Research should be carried out on tourism policy strategies and implementation on infrastructure development. Beach tourism development and support facilities in coastal regions of Nigeria, is another important research area that require further research.

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