

## Tourism Development Projects and Sustainable Livelihood Strategies in South Africa's Rural and Urban Communities

PEARL MNISI

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6616-4871>

University of Limpopo

Pearl.mnisi@ul.ac.za

TLOU RAMOROKA

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-28815020>

University of Limpopo

Tlou.ramoroka@ul.ac.za

### Abstract

*Tourism development projects have been a prevalent instrument aiming at alleviating poverty in most rural and urban communities worldwide. Most of the implemented tourism development projects focused on the mutual understanding that community-based development assists areas in determining incorporation into the national economy. Therefore, this paper seeks to assess the challenges and prospects of tourism development projects in sustaining the livelihood strategies of rural and urban communities in South Africa. This theoretical paper relied on existing literature to source information. Scholarly journals and articles were used to solicit data to assess the challenges and prospects of tourism development projects in sustaining livelihoods in rural and urban communities of South Africa. The results have shown that tourism development projects contribute towards sustaining livelihood strategies of rural and urban communities in South Africa. On the other hand, the projects come with too many challenges, such as land degradation, pollution, straining of local infrastructure, and negative impacts on the livelihood strategies of urban residents. This paper concludes that while some tourism development initiatives overlook the sustainability of rural and urban communities' livelihood strategies, most aim to generate profit in the communities. Emanating from the challenges raised, the paper recommends that all nature reserve representatives promote tourism development projects that can sustain the livelihood strategies of the communities. Additionally, modified training should be offered, and tourism development projects should be considered businesses where continuous monitoring and evaluation from investors or donors should be ensured.*

**Keywords:** Livelihood Strategies, Rural Communities, Sustainability, Tourism Development Projects, Urban Communities

### Introduction

In most, if not all, rural and urban communities worldwide, tourism development projects have been a common tool for reducing poverty (Ssempebwa, Nakaiza & Edopu, 2014; Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2022). The majority of tourism development initiatives that were put into action were centred around the idea that community-based development supports regions in their efforts to become part of the economy of many nations (Kruger, 2024). Through its allied institutions and as a portion of freedom and decolonisation activities in Africa, the United Nations also embarked on tourism development-oriented projects (Ayobami, 2018; Kruger, 2024). Strydom, Mangope, and Henama (2019) argued that

governments and non-governmental organisations also militarised individuals in the local communities to inaugurate tourism development projects in every community across different nations. The enthusiasm was that community members would be invigorated to generate their employment for empowerment (Kruger, 2024). This was meant to be accomplished through cultivating their livelihoods and competencies by making returns, skills growth, possessions, and exertions to save and devote to business.

The Tourism Act (No. 3 of 2014) plays a significant role in providing legal guidance for tourism development in South Africa (Ramaano, 2024). The Tourism Act no 3 of 2014 encourages responsible tourism (Grillini, Sacchi, Chase, Taylor, Van Zyl, Van Der Merwe, Streifeneder, & Fischer, 2022). This Act is relevant for the study because it promotes responsible tourism that could be suitable for sustaining livelihood strategies in communities of South Africa. Furthermore, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 perceives tourism as a livelihood diversification strategy for communities (Moyo, 2016; Maraka, 2024). Hence, this study seeks to assess the success or failure of tourism development projects in sustaining tourism development projects. Tourism development projects date back to the pre-1994 era and have also been the hallmark of national development in the era of democracy (Swatuk, 1997; Strydom, Mangope, & Henama, 2019). According to Pasanchay and Schott (2021), poverty is prevalent in most rural and urban communities of South Africa, especially the previously native lands suffering from the ancient growth built on discernment and abandonment throughout the apartheid system. Regardless of how much work is done to alleviate poverty by national and international actors, not every community development project produces the desired results in rural and semi-urban communities (Strydom *et al.* 2019; Thwala, Masiya, & Lubinga, 2023). The recent tendencies within development theory point out that development should be attained using a community-based approach, as the prior centrally driven top-down approach has been proven inadequate (Strydom *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, this paper seeks to assess the challenges and prospects of tourism development projects in sustaining livelihood strategies in rural and urban communities in South Africa.

## **Conceptualising Tourism Development Projects**

Ahmad (2024) mentioned that tourism development projects are diverse, aiming to enhance lives through infrastructure development, education, provision of healthcare, and social unity and inventiveness. They include building schools and clinics, producing jobs, and improving public places (Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2022). Makwindi and Ndlovu (2022) further indicate that each scheme is a striding shingle towards a more vivacious, even-handed society. Numerous tourism development projects include assisting detailed community sections, improving security conditions, and improving communal and social services throughout the district (Ahmad, 2024). Some tourism development projects aim to help people who need communal amenities (Obienusi, 2024). This could comprise constructing an employment training centre for the unemployed or advancing amenities for domestic violence victims and vagrant individuals. Some schemes focus on providing sustenance and healthcare to children and families struggling with decent livelihoods and tuition assistance at local community colleges for those with financial need (Zhang, Xiao, Zheng, Xue, Guo, & Wu, 2020).

## **Conceptualising Sustainable Livelihoods**

Livelihoods are regarded as sustainable when the community members can cope as well as respond to shocks, stress and threats that are associated with variations in nature's involvement to individuals that harmfully affect their livelihoods, interpersonal and individual magnitudes of life (Mallick, Sultana & Bennett, 2020). Furthermore, livelihoods are

sustainable when the community members can generate opportunities and progress their competencies to reinforce access and prerogatives to the diversity of livelihood possessions, without needlessly discouraging the natural resource base (Pasandi, 2024). This is done to attain the necessary standard of living that befits them as humans and is approved by welfare and human development measures. When livelihoods are sustainable, community members can have a secure and well-maintained lifestyle supporting their social welfare, while protecting the environment and ensuring that the future generation benefits (Mallick, Sultana et al., 2020). Sustainable livelihoods have the potency to integrate the communities' social, economic and environmental aspects to ensure long-term steadiness, fairness and suppleness (Pasandi, 2024). Sustainable livelihoods are built on diversity of income sources, resource management, social inclusion and equity, resilience, capacity building and empowerment (Pasandi, 2024). Sustainable livelihoods emphasise the need for communities to rely on various sources of income rather than only one (Pasandi, 2024).

### **Types of Tourism Development Projects**

This section provides information on the types of tourism development projects applicable and practised in South Africa. These types of tourism are as follows:

#### ***Air access***

According to Booyens (2020) and Mereotlhe (2024), air access is a crucial project for National Development Tourism to bring more direct flights to South Africa and ensure that the planes leave the nation with tourists to grow joint associations with countries across the globe. The African Union also propelled the Single African Air Transport Market, aiming to liberalise air transport on the landmass and stimulate superior competition and connectivity (Simelane & Langerman, 2024). Air volume has increased since 2022, with a 56% upsurge in the first quarter of 2023 associated with the same quarter in 2022 (Okolie, Danso-Abbeam, & Ogundej, 2023). Two thousand twenty-three the country reached 1.8 million seats, and South Africa welcomed around 23 new routes (Okolie et al., 2023).

#### ***Township tourism***

The township tourism sector is believed to be the most paramount project for the country's economy (Hikido, 2024). In mid-2023, the NDT was finalising plans to confirm that all societies relish the complete pecuniary reimbursements of tourism (Okolie et al., 2023). The NDT premeditated to do this by lengthening the contribution to the tourism value chain for South African Township and Village Tourism Association (SATOVITO) associates and other industries to improve new excursion programs into townships and villages while concentrating on the development of skills and business acumen training (Hikido, 2024). SATOVITO is a comprehensive organisation that aims to stimulate reliable, native world-standard tourism amenities and experiences (Okolie et al., 2023). It cultivates, signifies, and stimulates rural and urban areas, regional and provincial tourism connotations, trade, and indigents participating in the tourism sector (Sharma, 2024). It seeks to nurture the establishment of employment creation through ensuring comprehensive, sustainable development and the revolution of the tourism sector in rural and urban areas (Hikido, 2024).

#### ***Tourism Sector Recovery Project (TSRP)***

The Tourism Sector Recovery Plan is in line with the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Project (ERRP), which was launched in November 2020 (Dube & Nhamo, 2021). The ERRP seeks to form an innovative economy and unlock the country's financial potential (Dube & Nhamo, 2021). It recognised tourism as one of the important areas of intervention in the ERRP

with substructure progress, from community occupation, green economy interventions, the annexation of women and youth, and ability improvement (Dube & Nhamo, 2021). The tourism sector recovery project has three strategic themes: reigniting requests, revitalising supply, and consolidating and allowing competence (Ramukumba, 2024).

According to Dube and Nhamo (2021) and Ramukumba (2024), the operative execution of the TSRP is attached to the subsequent seven tactical interferences: implement standards and morals for harmless processes throughout the tourism value chain to permit innocuous travel and to reconstruct traveller confidence; stimulate domestic demand through targeted initiatives and campaigns; Establishment of the supply side through resource mobilization and investment facilitation; support for the protection of core tourism infrastructure and assets; complete a worldwide advertising program to reignite international demand; tourism regional integration; and review the tourism policy to provide enhanced support for sector growth and development.

### ***Tourism Incentive Programme (TIP)***

The Tourism Incentive Programme was established to encourage development and evolve the tourism sector by initiating funding support to privately owned tourism enterprises (SA Yearbook, 2016; Dube, 2020). The Market Access Support Programme offers fractional financial support towards the cost of the exhibition, return fare, and accommodation (Chihwai, 2024). It can be in a hotel, guesthouse, or small qualifying tourism initiatives that wish to participate in and exhibit at designated tourism trade podiums (Chihwai, 2024). The Tourism Grading Support Programme supports small tourism initiatives to enable them to gain larger admissions to marketplaces and encourage participation in the grading system of tourism (Chihwai, 2024). The Tourism Incentive Programme and Tourism Grading Support Programme have since been reviewed and polished. At the same time, two extra programs, the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP) and the Tourism Transformation Fund (TTF), were added in 2017 and 2018 to support the accountable tourism and alteration purposes of the department (Rogerson & Sixaba, 2024). The Tourism Transformation Fund provides an amalgamation of grant subsidies, liability finance, and fairness contributions to enable capital ventures in new and development schemes of the tourism sector (Rogerson & Sixaba, 2024).

### ***Tourism Equity Fund (TEF)***

Nyasha, Odhiambo, and Asongu (2021) stated that the Department of Tourism aimed at fast-tracking the channelling of the TEF, which provides for asset investment and grants funding to commercially viable Black-owned tourism enterprises to support the objectives of enterprise growth and alteration. The Tourism Equity Fund is envisioned to fast-track alteration within the tourism sector (Thakur, Sood, Singh & Sing, 2024). The facility offers an amalgamation of liability funding and endowment to simplify fairness attainment and new project development in the tourism segment by Black entrepreneurs (Thakur, Sood, et al. 2024). The endowment will also strive for the development of expertise and ensure that the sector is adequately fortified to meet amplified requests and expectations by executing capacity-building programs such as the wine service training program, the hospitality youth program, and food and beverage programs (Thakur, Sood, et al. 2024).

### ***Tourism Grading Support Programme***

The Tourism Grading Support Programme is a joint initiative between NDT and the TGCSA under the broader Tourism Incentive Programme to promote new accommodations, summits, demonstrations, and exceptional events to be grouped and stay organised under the star grouping structure (Ilo, Das & Bello, 2024). The Tourism Grading Support Programme seeks

to enhance the quality and morals of tourism by presenting and giving markdowns of up to 90% on grouping valuation fees for original and revitalisation grouping requests (Ilo, Das & Bello, 2024). This is an imperative enticement as it backs up a quality reassurance program that improves the overall visitor experience without burdening small enterprises. The department is anticipated to execute the Women in Tourism (WiT) Program as a podium to drive initiatives supporting women's development and empowerment in the tourism sector (Gohori, 2024). This podium recognises the encounters faced by women entrepreneurs, who are often found at the bottom end of the tourism economic value chain.

### ***South African Tourism***

The Tourism Act of 2014 calls for the need for South African tourism to market South Africa as a number one tourism and trade event terminus while monitoring and appraising the performance of the tourism sector internationally and domestically (Stoffelen, Adiyia, Vanneste, & Kotze, 2020). In support of this, above the medium-term period, the unit planned to continue prioritising maintenance of local, provincial, and global tourism (Kruger, 2024). Over the period ahead, South African tourism premeditated to concentrate on hard work to attempt to host occasions such as commercial summits, meetings, and expositions in rural and urban areas to boost the tourism industry in six focal sectors: mining and minerals, manufacturing, travel and tourism, farming, business, and comprehensive and retail trade (Gohori, 2024). Ensuring guests enjoy their knowledge is a central element of the unit's work, and part of the South African tourism revitalisation plan involves ensuring that tourism formations are of an excellent standard (Gohori, 2024).

### **Characteristics of a Sustainable Community Livelihood**

Akande, Hosu, Kabiti, Ndhleve, and Garidzirai (2023) mentioned that a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recuperate from strains and tremors, as well as maintain or enhance its abilities and possessions both presently and in the future, while not discouraging natural resource centres. Community livelihoods are sustainable if they encompass the competencies, possessions, and events essential for nourishing one's means of living (Moyo, 2016; Hellberg, 2023). Community livelihoods are sustainable when they can withstand external compressions, adapt to challenges, and recover from adverse events (Roy, Bose, Basak & Chowdhury, 2024). Additionally, community livelihoods are sustainable when they do not rely on external support; if they do, this support itself should be economically and institutionally sustainable. Sustainable community livelihoods can sustain the long-term production of natural resources (Natarajan, Newsham, Rigg, & Suhardiman, 2022). Moreover, sustainable community livelihoods do not destabilise or compromise available livelihood options (Roy, Bose et al. 2024).

### **Tourism Development Projects in Sustaining Community Livelihoods**

The profits generated from tourism projects have become a significant means and a prominent feature in the equilibrium of payment for countless countries and provinces (Matiku, Zuwarimwe, & Tshipala, 2021). Additionally, the income generated from tourism remains a primary contributor to the economic growth of local communities. Tourism development projects are key in providing sustainable jobs for local communities (Rodgers, 2024). Tourism development projects account for 10% of the country's gross domestic product, and over 100 million individuals work in the industry (Rodgers, 2024). In addition to generating income and jobs, tourism development projects also influence infrastructure, including airfields, railroads, streets, services, communications, and more. These amenities enhance the practice of visiting travellers and the quality of life in the local communities (Kruger, 2024). Tourists enjoy indulging in local nourishments and beverages, purchasing handcrafted arts

and dexterities, hearing antique stories, or seeing routines of music, drama, and partying, which benefit local communities (Kruger, 2024). Continuous demand for all tourism activities stresses the need to develop many projects, which in turn helps sustain traditional duties for upcoming cohorts (Rodgers, 2024). Tourism development projects provide a way of supporting local communities' livelihoods by providing sources for income generation and job creation, among others (Kruger, 2024). During tourism development projects, tourists immerse themselves in new philosophies, taste diverse nourishments, and meet individuals from all walks of life (Rodgers, 2024).

There were many ingenuities to enhance the livelihood assets of people residing in rural and semi-urban communities in post-Apartheid South Africa, but the effects differed (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). This is because South Africa is today pigeonholed by a widespread disparity. No single asset is adequate for households in rural areas to improve sustainable livelihood assets (Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2022). Livelihood assets are most likely to rely on the liaison between possessions from the five capitals: natural, financial, physical, human, and social (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). Entirely regaining these possessions establishes the susceptibility of households to astonishments, drifts, and seasonality. The amount and nature of poverty in rural areas led to the execution of various growth programs and projects aiming to enlighten rural livelihoods (Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2022). Therefore, numerous projects have been executed with the argument that upcoming financial, communal, and ecological development in rural societies is best protected through improving the rural economy, which is unceasingly marked by high levels of unemployment (Okolie et al., 2023).

Reviewers stated that the major, often government-initiated development programs and projects are unsuccessful and yet trigger disempowerment and other adverse social effects on rural communities (Okolie et al., 2023). The verdicts and capital of community-based development projects should be managed at a local level, and the local communities and institutions should play a central role in all aspects of community development (Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2022). Thus, expansion endeavours based on this approach highlight local ownership and involvement established in local knowledge (Strydom et al., 2019).

The more one explores the world, the more one can appreciate diverse philosophies, come across new individuals, and learn other ways of sustaining community livelihoods (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). Regrettably, tourism development projects have countless negative impacts on community livelihoods. Pollution has a major impact on sustaining community livelihoods (Ayobami, 2018; Rodgers, 2024). The pollution could be noise pollution that results from congestion, corporeal litter from tourists, or air pollution from aircraft, cars, and buses (Mabibibi, 2023). Tourism development projects also lead to climate change, especially the carbon dioxide production from all the transport. This, in turn, affects the livelihood diversification of local communities. Mass tourism development projects also have the potential to bring about a loss of cultural identity, even though tourism can support the local communities and sustain their cultures and values (Mabibibi, 2023). This is mainly because it is easier to provide worldwide food and beverages to visitors than to get travellers to try local food and the worldwide feast of fast-food manacles. Nevertheless, most tourists are becoming aware of their effect on the culture and livelihoods of local communities. In most tourism development projects, emphasis is put on going through the culture of local communities through immersive special understandings, from having a lesson on preparing an old-style dish to observing a cultural presentation (Ramaano, 2021).

The establishment of tourism development projects has the potential to cause displacement, discomfort, and relocation in most local communities (Ramaano, 2021). Therefore, this destroys most livelihood activities in local communities. It also disrupts economic

preparations and societal and radical management and processes. The livelihoods of local and host communities are critical to the sustainability and development of the region as important tourism stakeholders. Countries advocate for a people-centred, all-inclusive, and maintainable livelihood method based on five key features: livelihood assets, transforming constructions and procedures, vulnerability setting, approaches, and results (Ramaano, 2021).

## **Methodology**

The paper adopted a descriptive research design to describe the challenges and prospects of tourism development projects in sustaining the livelihood strategies of urban communities in South Africa. The descriptive research design was suitable since it uses secondary data as the foundation. Through this design, a desktop study that relied on a literature review to solicit the information required to achieve the aim of the study was adopted. Journal articles and scholarly books relevant to the study published between 2016 and 2024 were purposively selected. The paper relied on Google Scholar, Science Direct and Sabinet to access journals and scholarly books. These documents were reviewed to obtain information relevant to assessing the challenges and prospects of tourism development projects in sustaining livelihood strategies in urban communities in South Africa. Document analysis was adopted to analyse the information collected in this analysis. This document analysis sanctioned the study to gain key guidance, principles, and reasons to assess the challenges and prospects of tourism development projects in sustaining livelihood strategies in urban communities in South Africa.

## **Research Paradigm**

This paper adopted the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) to achieve its purpose. The sustainable livelihoods framework is seen as an act of thinking about the purposes, range, and precedence of development events (Karki, 2021). The framework emphasises developing ideas on how unprivileged and exposed societies survive and recognise the significance of policies and institutions (Nhemachena, Nhamo, Matchaya, Nhemachena, Muchara, Karuaihe, & Mpandeli, 2020). For Mubangizi, the SLF helps to organise the factors that constrain or enhance livelihood opportunities and show how they relate. In this paper, tourism development projects are believed to be able to assist with sustaining communities' livelihoods. Additionally, tourism development projects are expected to assist in generating growth events that mainly focus on people, receptive and participating processes, multilevel, steered in cooperation with the public and private sectors (Cai, Lim & Mansur, 2024). The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework approach facilitates the identification of practical priorities for actions based on the views and interests of those concerned, but they are not panaceas (Cai, Lim & Mansur, 2024). Therefore, in this paper, all tourism development stakeholders, communities, public and private sectors, and other affected stakeholders should come together to achieve sustainable development. The framework does not substitute other instruments, such as participatory development, sector-wide methods, or joint rural progress. Nonetheless, the link between populations and the general aid environment affects the results of livelihood strategies (Serge, Kubanza, & Simatele, 2020). The sustainable livelihood framework considers individuals' innate capacity in terms of their abilities, shared links, access to physical and financial resources, and the capability to encourage central organisations (Cai, Lim & Mansur, 2024).

The sustainable livelihoods approach promotes thinking outside the box (Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2022). The SLF is based on evolving thinking about how the poor and vulnerable live and the importance of policies and institutions (Mubangizi, 2021). This paper reinforces that all affected stakeholders are expected to develop ideas that will help sustain the livelihoods

of rural and urban communities while protecting the environment. The framework further permits development experts to move from the usual methods often hampered to recognising difficulties and discovering resolutions (Ramluckun, Malumbazo & Ngubevana, 2024). It encourages them to look at backgrounds and connections so that development actions can become more process-oriented. It makes them look for several access viewpoints and shift past a standardised community view and a tightened sectoral view (Ramluckun, Malumbazo & Ngubevana, 2024). Lastly, the framework signifies a focal shift away from the focus on project contributions and results and their expected systematic connections (Ramluckun, Malumbazo & Ngubevana, 2024).

## **Discussion of Findings**

### ***The Challenges Associated with Tourism Development Projects***

This paper revealed that most tourism development projects were also initiated to respond to poverty, unemployment and other societal trials in rural and semi-urban areas near nature reserves (Pasandi, 2024). However, due to several challenges such as corruption, fraud, theft, and so on, most tourism development projects have failed to achieve their intended purposes. The COVID-19 pandemic has permanently damaged the tourism industry in South Africa. While minor cosmetic procedures have helped to bring back some of its former grandeur, more major surgery is still needed to return it to full health (Gohori, 2024). COVID-19 brought sudden and unexpected changes to South Africa (Mubangizi & John, 2020).

This was made clear by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the sector's GDP contribution to fall from 8.7% in 2018 to 3.7% in 2020 (Okolie et al., 2023). At the height of the pandemic, the sector lost 1.5 million jobs, which exacerbated this damage. Even though there has been a notable improvement, more work must be done. South Africa's location is one of its main challenges as a travel destination (Hikido, 2024). Although South Africa does a good job promoting tourism, outside problems like crime, safety, obtaining a visa, bad roads, accessibility, etc., impede expansion (Ssempebwa et al., 2014; Cai, Lim & Mansur, 2024). Many foreign visitors have South Africa on their travel bucket list, but in the wake of COVID-19, they are wary of these elements. They would prefer to go somewhere without worrying as much about the impact of unforeseen outside events (Hikido, 2024). One of the most significant obstacles facing the tourism industry is its reliance on other departments to run efficiently for the industry to function; for instance, Home Affairs' handling of passports and visas; if this department experiences delays in processing these documents, it deters individuals from traveling and taking advantage of the experiences that come with tourism (Hikido, 2024).

### ***The Prospects of Tourism Development Projects***

The national economy of South Africa is still heavily reliant on tourism, which also helps to create jobs. An important factor in the South African economy and job market is the tourism sector. Approximately 9% of the nation's GDP is derived from this industry (Rodgers, 2024). The study revealed that the construction and/or improvement of some parts of communities for meetings, education and entertainment is also a popular way for a region to advance its social and communal contributions (Dube & Nhamo, 2021). Moreover, other tourism development projects were initiated to promote ethos, employment creation, and improve the livelihoods of communities. Tourism development projects have the potential to improve the livelihoods of rural and urban areas and increase the flow of travel and tourism to the region, consequently encouraging the growth of the local economy (Gohori, 2024). The projects which management departments subsidise are taken through a series of customised training



programmes that suit the respondents' educational levels and the type of business ventured into to improve the current levels of performance (Rodgerson, 2024).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has shown that while tourism development projects in South Africa have the potential to enhance community welfare and sustain local economies, their impact on livelihood strategies is uneven and often undermined by environmental degradation, infrastructure strain, and socio-economic exclusion. Guided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Chambers & Conway, 1992), and consistent with Mubangizi's (2021) argument that development interventions must strengthen all forms of community capital, human, social, natural, physical, and financial, tourism initiatives should be designed to support livelihoods rather than prioritise profit generation alone.

Therefore, the study recommends the need for tourism development to cater to the environment and the livelihoods of urban and semi-urban communities. Projects should be made sustainable to assist communities in sustaining their livelihoods. Tourism development objectives should contribute enormously to community livelihoods; hence, communities need to participate in tourism projects. All stakeholders need to be involved from the initiation of tourism development projects to major decision-making concerning the project's operation. The communities need to drive their tourism projects for sustainable livelihoods. This investigation recommends that additional studies be conducted on how tourism development initiatives affect rural and urban communities' ability to earn subsistence through tourism-related community capital assets. It is essential to consider tourism as a rural livelihood choice in the context of other rural livelihoods. Considering manufacturing vs. utilisation, tourism could be viewed as a means of earning money in this manner. Sustainable tourism needs local communities to be informed and engaged. This approach ensures that, as opposed to exploiting the local population, tourism promotes and improves them. It involves upholding regional customs and principles, ensuring equitable employment standards are adhered to, and incorporating local people in tourism planning and decision-making. The most effective methods to promote sustainable tourism include outreach and education. Travellers are responsible for learning about the issues of societies, cultures, and environmental concerns. By becoming more mindful, travellers can patronise environmentally friendly businesses, reduce trash, and respect local traditions. The tourist sector, community members, and tourists must collaborate to make the shift to ecologically friendly travel a reality. Individuals can significantly influence the natural world by becoming aware of how they contribute and teaching themselves and others. To guarantee that projects funded by the state remain responsible for utilising government resources and money, governments must promote the evaluation of these endeavours and integrate the most recent statements into their public involvement programs.

Recognising tourism as one livelihood strategy among many, interventions should complement, rather than replace, existing rural and urban livelihood systems. Sustainable tourism requires that communities are informed, engaged, and empowered, while tourists and industry actors adopt responsible, culturally respectful, and environmentally sensitive practices. In line with Mubangizi's emphasis on place-based development (Mubangizi, 2024), tourism planning should be context-specific, leverage local knowledge systems, and be embedded in broader local economic development strategies.

Future research should examine how tourism interacts with other livelihood strategies, particularly in hybrid rural-urban contexts, to understand better the synergies and trade-offs involved. Tourism can only fulfil its potential as a genuine driver of sustainable livelihoods through such an integrated and participatory approach.

## Declarations

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