

The challenges of resilience in tourism – A systematic literature review of cultural tourism to alleviate tourism seasonality in Kenya

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Summary

Cultural tourism is a specialty form of tourism that emphasizes on appreciation, integration and participation of the local communities, while allowing for diversity and an opportunity to experience the traditions, beliefs and the general way of life of people. The potential for cultural tourism in Kenya to enhance tourism resilience against seasonality of tourism jobs however still remains unexploited and barely features as a top investment priority area, despite the ability of cultural tourism to attract domestic and international travel in all tourism seasons. This paper seeks to explore the viability of cultural tourism as a means to eradicating tourism seasonality, through a systematic literature review of existing studies on cultural tourism and seasonality of tourism. A total of 83 articles were obtained from the Scopus database following a rigorous screening through pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

A bibliometric analysis was further conducted on the dataset for keyword co-occurrence, and bibliometric coupling to collate the data into different cluster areas. VOSviewer software was used to provide a graphical representation of the data into different link maps. The six cluster areas identified were, traveler dynamism and feasible development, the adoption of data to examine travel trends, causes of uneven travel distribution at destinations, the impact of tourism seasonality, seasonal volatility and tourism resilience and cultural tourism and job sustainability. This research aims at contributing to the field of sustainable development in tourism by shedding light on previous literature that has examined seasonality in tourism and cultural tourism as a specialty form of tourism. The article provides various suggestions and additional information on ways to fortify resilience in tourism through culture.

Keywords: *cultural tourism, tourism seasonality, Just Transition tourism, international good practices*

JEL Code: *Z32, O1, R11*

Introduction

Tourism is a highly multifaceted industry engaging various professionals and incorporating cross industrial integration (Camilleri, 2017). This has deemed the sector relevant for economic growth not only in developing countries but also in developed economies (Meyer – Meyer, 2015). Travel experiences that Kenya as a destination offers are quite distinct due to the variation in the tourism product as manifested in the expansive 600 km coastline to the wilderness areas coupled with the cultural diversity of the people of Kenya (Irandu, 2004). This underscores the significance of the industry, levelling it to up to be Kenya's second most important economic earner after agriculture for decades on since inception in the early 1940s (Fahnbulleh, 2006). The contribution of tourism to Kenya's GDP for the year 2025 was projected to reach over 7% as indicated by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) injecting about Kenya Shillings 1.2TN. This translates to 1.7 million jobs, a figure reaching towards over 8% of the total workforce in Kenya, which means, 1 in every 12 jobs in Kenya is a tourism related job (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025).

The period before Covid-19 tourism was supporting about 1.08 million people through income, an 8.7% of the total employment in Kenya. In the year 2019 for example, the period when tourism in Kenya was at peak experienced tourist receipts averaging to about 200,000, while the low peak seasons had receipts of almost 100,000 (New Vision for Kenya Tourism Strategy, 2025). This is shown in Figure 1.

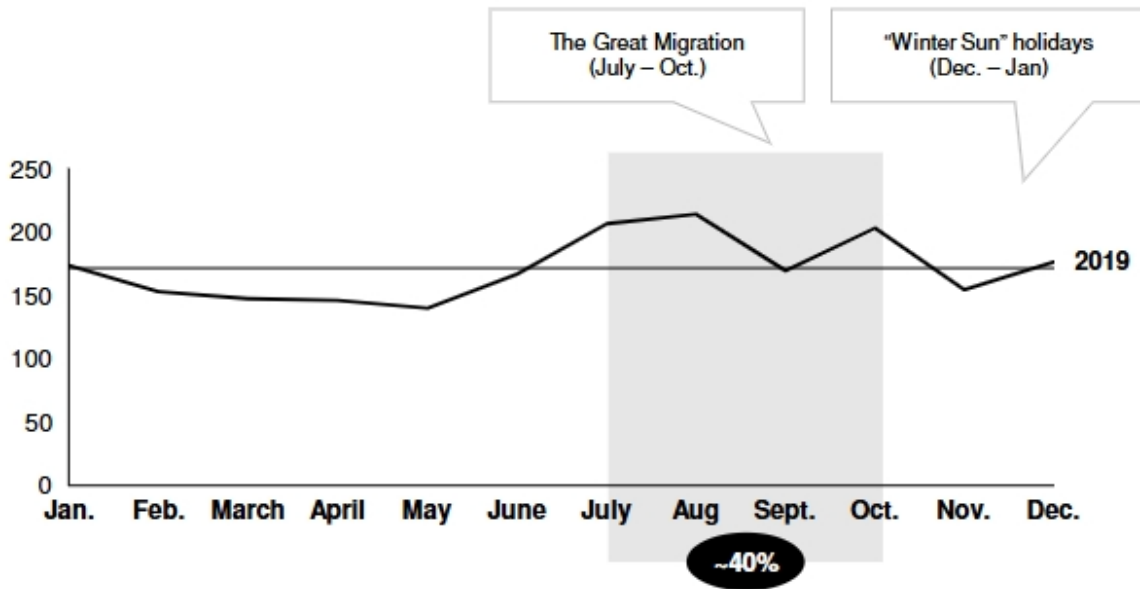


Figure 1 Monthly Number of Inbound Tourists, K persons

Source: Adopted from New Vision for Kenya Tourism Strategy (2025)

This has resulted to job uncertainties and asymmetric travel pattern resulting in unequal regional development of the country (Ćorluka, 2019). This recurrent issue has undercut the resilience perceived and expected of the tourism industry affecting several rural households that rely on tourism businesses for their income (Su et al., 2022). The sustainability of tourism jobs is not assured even when the National Tourism Policy of Kenya highly supports skills development for a stronger labor force. The consistency in international receipts is capricious due to the instantaneous response of tourism to various undetermined factors such as legal issues, political changes, environmental variations, technological changes amongst others, that are bound to arise (Akama, 2002).

Kenya has been registering an increase in international tourism receipts with numbers reaching highs of over 2.3 million visitors as recorded in 2024 by the Tourism Research Institute in the Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report of 2024.

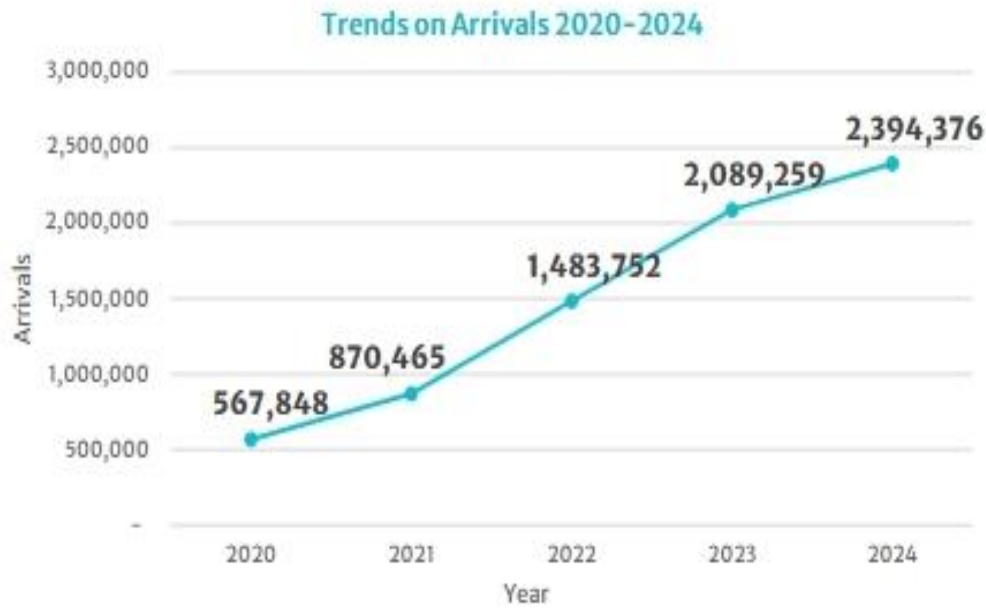


Figure 2 Kenya's International Arrivals for the Years 2020–2024 (number of arrivals)

Source: Adopted from the Annual Tourism Performance Report (2024)

Kenya's tourism growth has been steady and consistent from 2020–2024 with significant increase in travel numbers amounting to about 322% increase from the year 2020. This is a very strong indication of the potential for Kenya's tourism to remain resilient while external and internal factors are held under control (Annual Tourism Research Institute, 2025). This is shown in Figure 2.

These numbers and the upwards trend support the potential for tourism in the Country to create and sustain jobs (Fayzieva et al., 2023). The UNTWO has been propagating for more sustainable development, and in this light, special interest tourism like cultural tourism has been encouraged for new and existing destinations to promote steady incomes (WTO, 2024). The report New Vision for Kenya Tourism Strategy (2025) notes that tourism in Kenya manifests in seasons, where, there is a peak season that falls in the period between June-October, and December-March, and a low season that falls in the months of April and May. The sector is heavily reliant on international tourism, however, domestic tourism also plays a major role in stabilizing the sector. The flow of travel when accounting for domestic tourists is easily influenced by internal factors like weather patterns, holidays and school half-terms. Figure 3. Shows domestic and international tourist flows for the Years 2015–2019.

Despite Kenya's unique standing as a top tourism destination, there is the contentious issue of tourism seasonality depicted in high peak, and low peak tourism seasons. The seasonality of travel inhibits the resilience that tourism and related businesses should exhibit, which is the inverse of what an expansive highly integrated industry that creates direct and indirect jobs with a multiplier effect across the globe should be (Irandu, 2004).

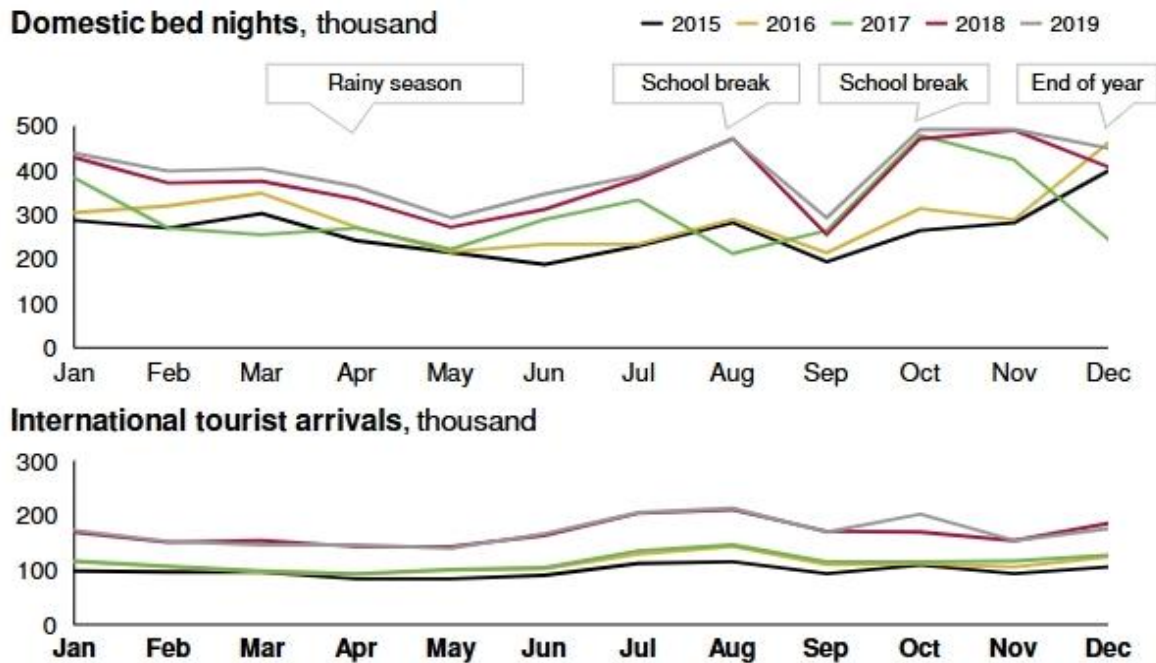


Figure 3 Kenya's Domestic and International Tourist Flows 2015–2019

Source: Adopted from New Vision for Kenya Tourism Strategy (2025)

Traveler dynamism and seasonal volatility are key issues resulting to travel variations in Kenya. The adoption of data to examine travel trends has not been adequately utilized in solving the issue of seasonality, which means that the causes of uneven travel distribution at destinations are not adequately being addressed by destination managers and policy makers. The impact of tourism seasonality on tourist behavior in Kenya has been mostly attributed to weather and calendar days. Tourism is highly volatile and external forces result to cancellation of travel and reduced hotel overnight stays in Kenya. Cultural tourism is a sustainable form of tourism because it deviates from mainstream tourism business, and it also utilizes cultural resources that are more endearing to sustainable use. This study is informed by these issues and seeks to examine the capacity for cultural tourism to enhance tourism resilience through mitigation of tourism seasonality.

At the beginning of the research, we formulated the following research questions: Based on international experience, to what extent can cultural tourism contribute to reducing the seasonality of tourism? What factors can help or hinder cultural tourism from meeting this important policy objective? How can the models and clusters identified in the literature be applied to promote sustainable and resilient development of tourism in Kenya?

Cultural tourism – seasonality – good practices

Tourism remains labor intensive, employing various professionals, however, there is deterrence to skills development and creation of a strong labor force due to the volatility of the sector (Stacey, 2015). Tourism stakeholders therefore have been on the pursuit of strategies to enhance the resilience of the tourism industry, deviating from the contemporary unsustainable practices towards

more admissible tourism activities that ultimately address local concerns especially, securing a durable means to earn an income (Chen, 2014). In the recent past, cultural tourism has been re-introduced as a specialty form of tourism that could address the issue of tourism seasonality (Zhang et al., 2022).

Cultural tourism emphasizes on appreciation, integration and participation of the local communities, while allowing for diversity and an opportunity to experience the traditions, beliefs and the general way of life of people (Surata et al., 2024). The potential for cultural tourism to enhance tourism resilience against seasonality of tourism jobs however still remains unexploited and barely features as a top investment priority area, despite the ability of cultural tourism to attract domestic and international travel in all seasons. This paper seeks to explore the viability of cultural tourism as a means to eradicating tourism seasonality, through a systematic literature review of existing studies on cultural tourism and seasonality of tourism. The approach will be domain-based review so as to scrutinize the subject in detail (Paul – Criado, 2020).

Traveler dynamism and feasible development are cognizant of tourism sensitivity, especially when travel is demand oriented, for tourism products relying on natural features like snow. Deviations in demand have been observed at ski destinations with variation arising from different levels of snow precipitation. The focus on seasonality at these destinations has been on the supply side, which poses a challenge on significant identification of the causative issues of low travel. at tourism destinations where seasonality affects tourism (Erdogan – Galip, 2007). Travel dynamism is affected by various aspects of the tourism product. In a study of simulating the impacts of climate change on winter tourism demand, (Steiger et al., 2023) found that destinations where tourism had adopted the community models where the entire locality can bear operational costs when tourism is unprofitable should be adopted for feasible mutual development of not only key tourism players but also the indirect businesses that complement the key tourism elements of destinations.

The adoption of data to examine travel trends has been acknowledged as a management strategy aimed at ensuring that development decisions align to the industry needs so as to direct destination resources in designing products that correspond to travelers in different seasons (Kozak et al., 2008). The examination of travel trends and patterns has been addressing tourism seasonality from the supply side, focusing on employer needs, and the service requirements to handle tourism seasonality (Terry, 2016). Policy formulation has been utilized as a measure to reduce tourism seasonality in rural destinations, where the approach has taken various features of seasonality recognizing that tourism seasonality appears different for each destination (Martín et al., 2019). There are several patterns that can be defined from the study of data on tourism seasonality, as seen from the study of seasonality on Asia, however, the applicability of the findings on tropical areas would be improper since it was focused on trends in the cold climates where there is occurrence of the four seasons and the approach was also supply oriented (Chen – Pearce, 2012).

The causes of uneven travel distribution at destinations are extremely variant depending on season, space, traveler and reason for travel. Vacation tourism is more seasonal than specialized forms of tourism case in point VFR (visiting friends and relatives). The specialized forms of tourism are uneven across destinations and is basically an urban activity as seen in Scotland in a study of seasonality of overseas tourism demand (Coshall et al., 2015). Seasonality in tourism has often been measured based on commonality of travel patterns in countries or destinations, and the discovery has been that spatial features influence travel seasonality from a study of demand across Europe (Mauro et al., 2018).

The closest research on seasonality that has been demand oriented deviated from tourism flows, focusing more on service prices. In a study on Spanish hotels, data on night stays and hotel prices

was correlated and the findings showed that pricing significantly influenced overnight stays, and variable that has rarely been considered in previous research (Lozano et al., 2020).

In a study carried out on how surfers report in Costa Rica, both the skilled and unskilled surfers booked travel in advance based on climatic changes that would be forecasted. The findings revealed that there was need to evaluate other factors like the destination and hospitality services at the destination so as to determine the satisfaction that surfers would get at the destination (Mach et al., 2020)

There are several inter-season and intra-season factors that can be identified as the casual factors of seasonality in tourism, and these can be filtered through categorization of the drivers of seasonality in tourism demand (Ridderstaat – Croes, 2020). A theoretical perspective has also been adopted in efforts to unearth causes of tourism seasonality. The examination of approach-avoidance and regulatory focus theories reveals possibility of developing a dualistic model to enhance interpretation of factors such as fruition-based, structural, unforeseen, and climate-based factors, especially amongst policy makers, to impact on tourism resulting to seasonality (Senbeto – Hon, 2019).

The impact of tourism seasonality as seen from a study of the Balearic Islands of Spain indicate that the seasonal variations have been observed in weekly and monthly air travel in, and the strategy for reduction of this variation has been formulation of more appropriate policies that can be implemented by industry stakeholders (Jaume – Andreu, 2017). The seasonality of tourism has reduced the economic gains expected at destinations, particularly the hotel sector, where most face the risk of total exit from business. This is attributed to changes in demand from the market segments, and calls to implementation of marketing strategies that fill the sought purpose of travel at different times to mitigate lessened travel (Zhang – Xie, 2021). The impacts of tourism seasonality from a study of Southern Italy shows that resource use at destination becomes problematic with local administration facing the immediate blow. This is highly associated with the resultant crippled development, which can be solved through forecasting for tourism demand (Vergori, 2012). The competitiveness of a destination has also been linked to tourism seasonality, with an orientation that utilizes tourism competitiveness index, and this approach recognizes the global impacts of tourism seasonality encouraging development of management tools and regional policies (Krabokoukis – Polyzos, 2022).

Seasonal volatility and tourism resilience are often influenced by the consistent erratic variations in demand over different time spans. In a tourism time-series study of Spanish tourism, seasonality in tourism can only be addressed through a holistic process, so as to inform creation of relevant models and policies that address these seasonal changes (Cunado et al., 2005).

Stochastic approaches have been identified as more appropriate in handling the seasonality of travel, as depicted from SARIMA (forecasting model that incorporates a stochastic nonstationary seasonality) and MARINA (the intervention component) modelling conducted in Hong-Kong, where, the key factors mapped out to lead to volatility of tourism were financial resources, disease and epidemics as well as changes in laws governing travel at the destination. The study recognized that, not only are destinations affected by the internal factors, but even external factors are equally detrimental (Carey – Rob, 2002). The use of appropriate models forecasting tourism demand is important to enhance destination resilience, since, previous literature notes that tourism series has demonstrated a mix of deterministic and stochastic seasonality (Kulendran – Wong, 2005). There is no one-fits-all model when handling tourism seasonality and destination resilience, however, different situations basing on the cause, impact and policies determine the model fitness for use (Shen et al., 2009).

Cultural tourism and job sustainability have been issues of concern in several tourism-led economies. Seasonality in travel has resulted to various effects like wastage of resources from under-exploitation, reduced pro-activeness in cases of external influencers, and reduction of the economy from GDP. The strategies applicable to tourism seasonality should stem from updated concerns that are affecting the destination in a more holistic approach (Stojčić et al., 2022). Cultural tourism and job sustainability correlate across global tourism destinations, where, the ideal situation should be a perfectly positive correlation. Transport is a key element of tourism, and when there is a deterrence to movement, the result has been reduction in cultural tourism and subsequent job sustainability (Vergori– Arima, (2020).

Planning for stable travel to cultural destinations and more reliable jobs in tourism is often a challenge due to seasonality of tourism. The combination of demand-supply factors in formulation of strategic measures to curb seasonality enables policy makers to create reduce regional variations in cultural tourism and employment in the sector (Martín et al., 2020). There is heightened emphasis on use of more advance time series econometrics to develop models that can mitigate seasonality in tourism, through more transparent and informative analysis of tourism demand. Cultural tourism and job sustainability requires a clear comprehension of the cycles that exist at the destination (Vatsa, 2021). Seasonal decomposition was used in Wales, in the UK, to aid assess seasonal differences. The idea is to acknowledge how seasonality can affect job stability and travel and develop methodologies that can secure stable travel. This study circles back to the policies that are formulated and implemented to curb seasonality (Koenig – Bischoff, 2003).

One possible solution could be to strengthen the *Just Transition*. This research seeks to explore the viability of cultural tourism as a means to eradicating tourism seasonality for tourism resilience, and is based on developments in just sustainability transition in tourism (Rastegar, 2022). The concept of *Just Transition* originated in labor and environmental justice movements in the 1980s and was first articulated in the early 1990s by Tony Mazzocchi. Its application to tourism is relatively recent, gaining prominence from the late 2010s onwards (Stevies et al., 2020) particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, as justice-oriented sustainability transitions have increasingly shaped tourism and cultural tourism development. A closer examination of the concept reveals strong conceptual links with cultural tourism development; therefore, the following sections explore the emergence of the *Just Transition* framework and its key dimensions in relation to cultural tourism development pathways.

The concept of *Just Transition* originally emphasizes social fairness in the shift toward a low-carbon economy, but it is becoming increasingly relevant in the field of cultural tourism as well. Cultural tourism often involves regions such as areas with an industrial past or peripheral locations where economic transformation is accompanied by job losses and social vulnerability. The *Just Transition* framework helps ensure that tourism development generates not only economic growth but also fair participation of local communities, while preserving their cultural heritage and identity (European Commission, 2020).

In cultural tourism, one of the key roles of *Just Transition* is to ensure the active involvement of local residents in decision-making and value creation processes. According to the principles of a *Just Transition*, cultural resources such as traditions, crafts, industrial heritage, or intangible cultural assets should not become purely market-driven products from which local communities are excluded. Instead, strengthening community-based tourism and co-creation contributes to social cohesion and cultural sustainability (UNWTO, 2018).

Just Transition also links cultural tourism to sustainable job creation and skills development. In transitioning regions, cultural and creative industries such as museums, cultural festivals, and heritage

tourism can offer alternative employment opportunities for workers displaced from traditional industries. The *Just Transition* approach emphasizes the importance of reskilling, lifelong learning, and decent working conditions, without which cultural tourism cannot be inclusive or resilient in the long term (OECD, 2020).

Finally, *Just Transition* contributes to positioning cultural tourism as part of the response to climate change rather than as a contributor to it. Sustainable transport solutions, energy-efficient cultural infrastructure, and the promotion of “slow tourism” help reduce environmental pressure while maintaining the quality of cultural experiences. In this sense, *Just Transition* provides an integrated framework that simultaneously addresses environmental, social, and cultural challenges and offers new directions for the development of responsible cultural tourism (UNESCO, 2019).

Material and method

The study utilized SLR (Systematic Literature Review) methodology to review existing studies on cultural tourism and seasonality of tourism. The study was conducted in three stages that entailed, planning (defining research objectives, research questions and methodological framework), conducting the review and finally publishing the results. The data utilized was obtained from Scopus database. The Scopus database was chosen because it provides content of global coverage, content that has high visibility in the academic ecosystem with superior citation metrics. First, the research was conducted on a topic-based search of the Scopus database without limitations, but using keywords.

The selection of the keywords “tourism” OR “cultural tourism” OR “tourism seasonality” was based on the objectives guiding the study. By using the OR operator, any publication containing the keyword could be included in the primary results. This represents a broad search strategy to ensure that relevant articles were not missed. The data was further refined to entail English only, open access, final, journal articles, within the field of social sciences. These criteria ensured quality, comparability, and consistency of analysis. This screening yielded 83 articles. PRISMA Guideline (Page et al., 2021) was the research protocol followed to obtain the 83 articles.

A bibliometric analysis was further conducted on the dataset for keyword co-occurrence, and bibliometric coupling to collate the data into different cluster areas. VOSviewer software was used to provide a graphical representation of the data into different link maps. The strength of the methodology is that it is structured, transparent, reproducible, and combines qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Results

This section presents a brief and precise account of the results, their interpretation, and the conclusion. Figure 1 summarizes the PRISMA Guideline (Page et al., 2021) that the study applied for the systematic literature review. Thorough inclusion and exclusion criteria yielded 83 articles. Figure 2 summarizes entire evolution of citation of the publications from the late 1980s to 2025. The peak was 2007, with 443 citations. The keyword co-occurrence analysis enhanced identification of the critical issues in cultural tourism and tourism seasonality. Figure 3 shows the graphical representation of the keyword co-occurrence of the data from the use of VOSviewer software. The six main keywords used in the articles were “seasonality” (61 occurrences), “tourist destination” (22 occurrences), “tourism economics” (11 occurrences), “seasonal variation” (7 occurrences), “tourism development” (12 occurrences), and “tourism seasonality” (14 occurrences).

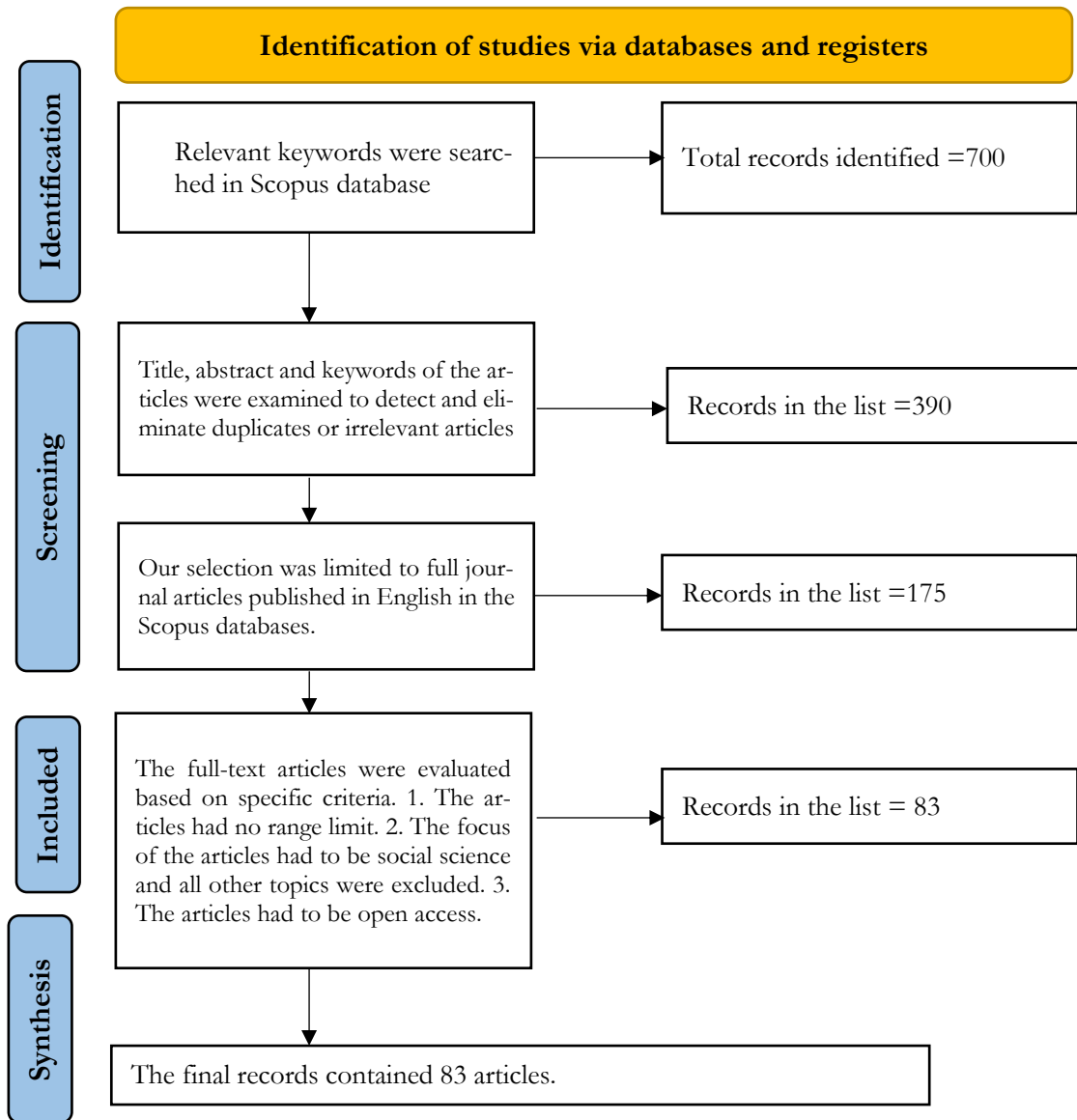


Figure 4 Flow diagram showing PRISMA Guidelines (Page.et.al, 2021)

Source: Based on Scopus Dataset and Page et al. (2021) PRISMA Guidelines

The inventiveness of the theme was further reinforced by existence of unique key words that appeared between 2012 and 2022. This is shown in Figure 5 where, the keyword that appeared between 2012–2014 was “tourist behavior”, between 2014-2016 was “seasonality”, between 2016-2018 was “tourism economics”, between 2018-2020 was “sustainability” and between 2020–2022 was “tourism seasonality”. This indicates recent interest in tourism seasonality, the theme that guides this research.

A bibliometric coupling was also conducted at document level on the 83 articles. This yielded 41 papers categorized into nine clusters as shown in Figure 6. Cluster 5 and 6 were combined to create cluster 5, cluster 7, 8 and 9 had each 2 items which were combined into cluster 6. Descriptive names were assigned to each cluster, cluster 1 was named, traveler dynamism and feasible development,

cluster 2, the adoption of data to examine travel trends, cluster 3, causes of uneven travel distribution at destinations, cluster 4, the impact of tourism seasonality, cluster 5, seasonal volatility and tourism resilience and cluster 6, cultural tourism and job sustainability.

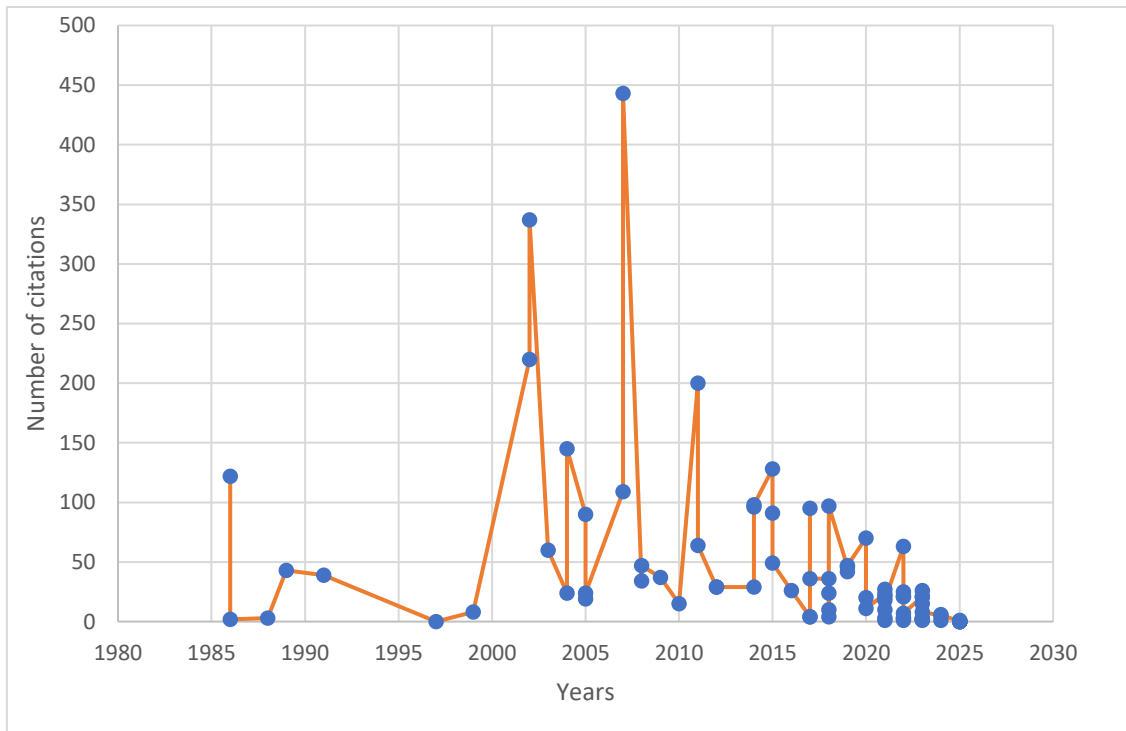


Figure 5 Evolution of citations through the years

Source: Based on Scopus Dataset

Cluster 1 highlighted in color Red in Figure 6. is composed of 11 articles. This Cluster addresses the issues of traveler dynamism and feasible development. Literature supports that tourism seasonality is addressed from the supply side instead of the demand approach (Erdogan & Galip, 2007). Steignr et.al. (2023) recommend the participation of local community members and their current status to develop models and measures that address seasonality for more feasible development.

Cluster 2 is highlighted in color Green in Figure 6. The Cluster is composed of eight articles. This Cluster addresses the issues of adoption of data to examine travel trends. The results emphasize that seasonality requires the use of current trends occurring at the destination (Kozak et al., 2008). There is further indication of data previously being used to enhance management decisions pertaining number of employees required at a destination, limiting the effectiveness of this data as it supply-oriented (Terry, 2016). The use of travel data has to be specific to a destination since the issue of seasonality cannot be generalized (Martín, 2019). Chen – Pearce (2012) demonstrate this where the study of travel data from cold climates could not be utilized for tropical climate areas.

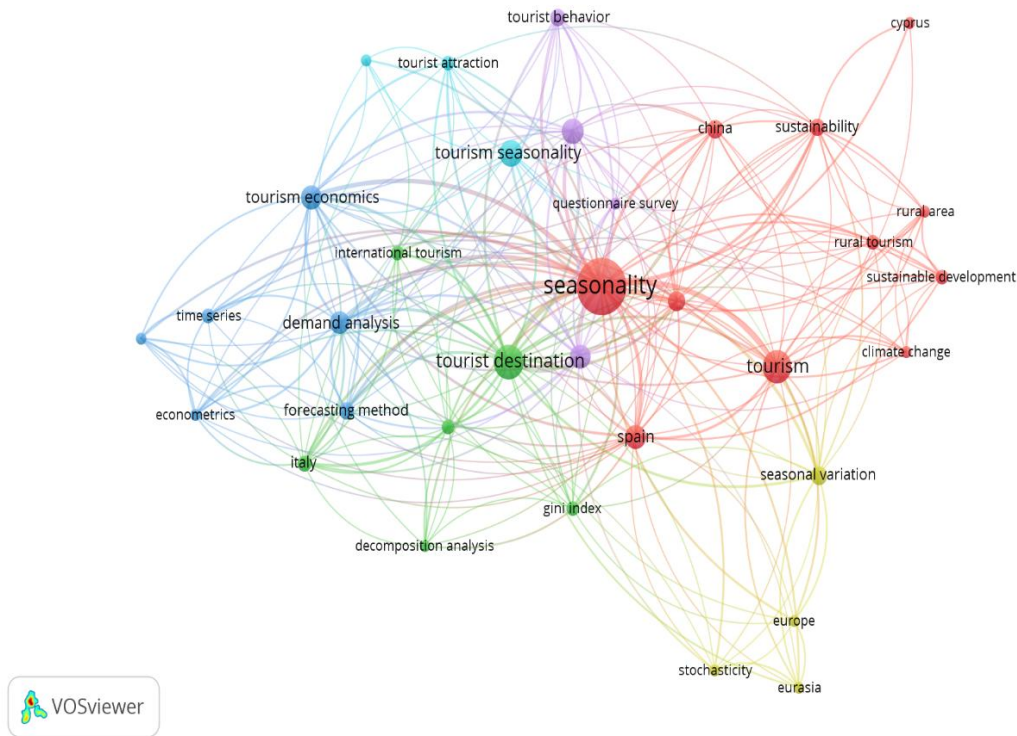


Figure 6 Keyword Co-occurrence Network
Source: Based on Scopus Database. VOSviewer 1.6.20.0

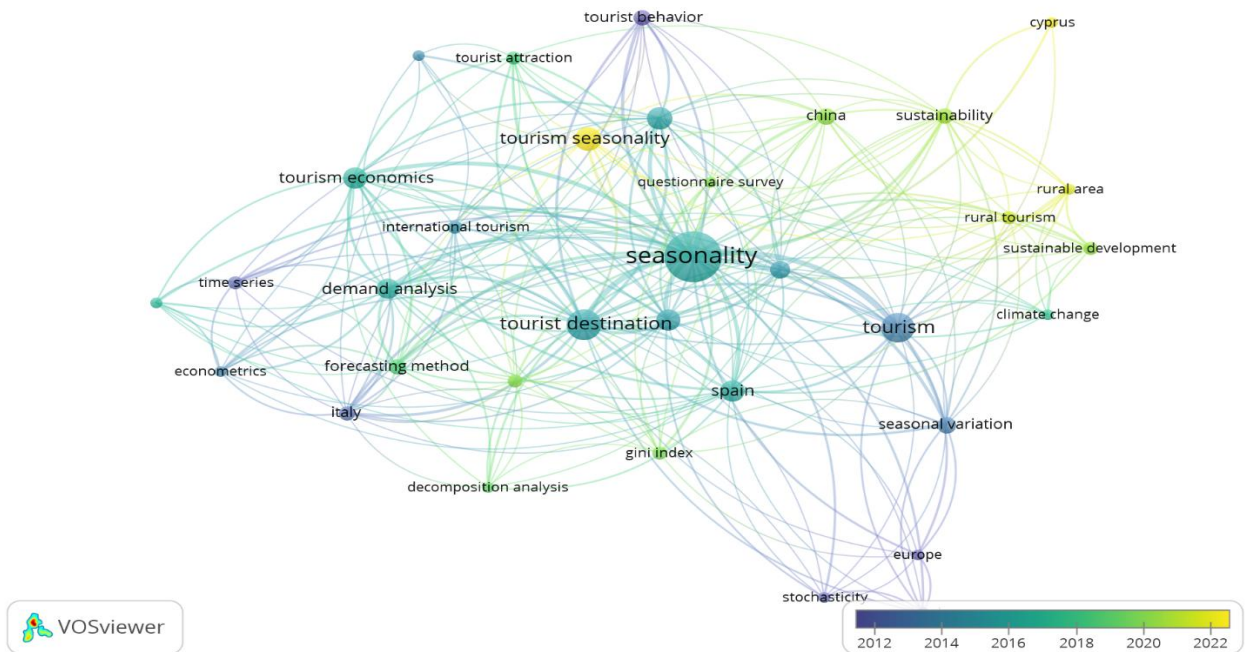


Figure 7 Evolution of Keywords
Source: Based on Scopus Database. VOSviewer 1.6.20.0

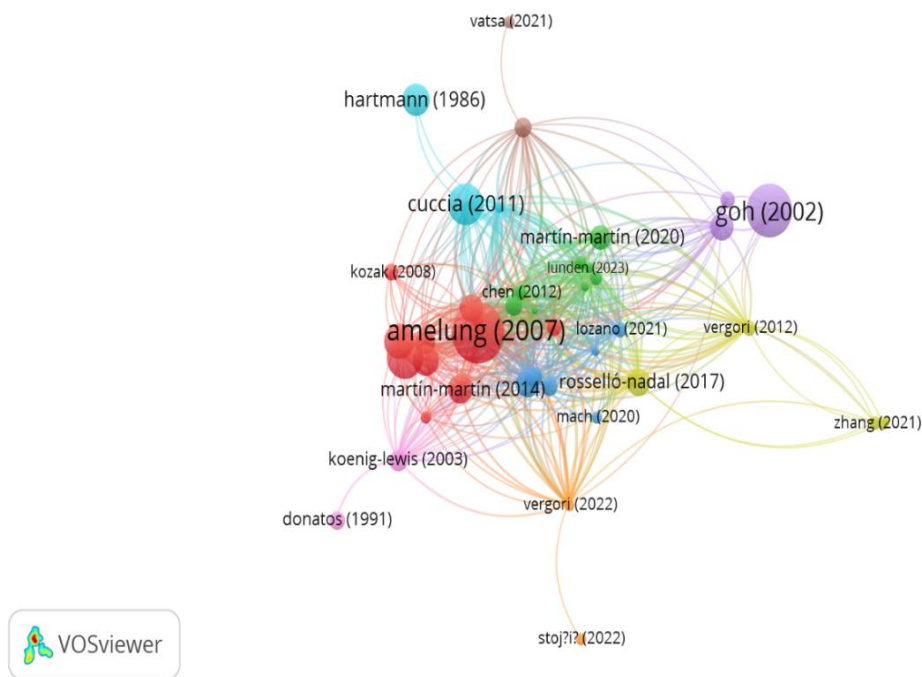


Figure 8 Bibliometric Coupling

Source: Based on Scopus Database. VOSviewer 1.6.20.0

Cluster 3 is highlighted in color Blue in Figure 5. The Cluster is composed of six articles. This Cluster addresses the issues of causes of uneven travel distribution at destinations. Seasonality of tourism is highly visible from vacation tourism rather than specialized tourism, of which cultural tourism falls into (Coshall et al., 2015). The variations at destinations, whether regional or national can significantly result to uneven travel topped with traveler preference (Mauro et al., 2018). The assessment of internal factors that touch on demand like price is more effective when handling travel unevenness rather than number of tourist facilities (Lozano et al., 2020). Several studies thus advocate for a theoretical approach and the use of inter and intra seasonal factors to address uneven travel distribution (Ridderstaat – Croes, 2020; Senbeto – Hon, 2019; Mach et al., 2020).

Cluster 4 is highlighted in Golden color in Figure 5. This Cluster is composed of five articles. This Cluster addresses the concept impact of tourism seasonality. The most notable impacts of tourism seasonality are economic and operational impacts at the destination especially challenging the administration of a destination (Jaume, 2017). The risk of business exit is heightened by seasonality, as demonstrated in the hotel sector. Market segments differ, therefore, there is need to devise marketing strategies that are specific to different segments (Zhang – Xie, 2021). Some destinations have resulted to formulation of policies that steer sustainable development (Vergori, 2012; Krabokoukis – Polyzos, 2022).

Cluster 5 is highlighted in color Purple in Figure 5. The Cluster is composed of six articles, after combining three separate articles in Cluster six. This Cluster focusses on seasonal volatility and tourism resilience. The volatility of tourism is highly attributed to the erratic nature of the industry. A holistic approach through integration is more composite of mitigation strategies, coupled with models and policies that deduced from this volatility (Cunado et al., 2005). To remain resilient, stochastic and deterministic models inclusively can reduce tourism seasonality while strengthening tourism resilience (Carey – Rob, 2002; Kulendran – Wong, 2005; Shen et al., 2009).

Cluster 6 is highlighted in Teal in Figure 5. The Cluster is composed on six articles combined from cluster seven, eight and nine, which had two articles each. This Cluster delves into cultural tourism and job sustainability. The literature identified emphasizes that cultural tourism and job sustainability are positively correlated and seasonality contributes to economically detrimental outcomes like resource wastage from under-use, susceptibility to external forces and less income and revenue (Stojčić et al., 2022). Transport, a key element of tourism enhances access at destinations, which denotes, the importance of focusing and building on tourism core elements for sustainable job creation (Vergori – Arima, 2020). Tourism time series econometric methods coupled with seasonal decomposition have been applicable in expounding on tourism cycles and their effects at a destination. These have been proposed effective towards upholding tourism and tourism jobs (Martín et al., 2019; Puneet, 2021; Koenig – Bischoff, 2003).

The concept of “just transition” is not explicitly discussed in the context of cultural tourism in the articles included in the Scopus database. However, some articles address topics that align with the principles of a just transition, such as inclusivity, sustainability, and equity in tourism development. Borin et al.'s (2022) research points to the need for sustainable development models for cultural tourism, highlighting the role of cultural organizations in promoting inclusive and sustainable practices in a period of profound transformation. Rastegar's (2022) study addresses issues of equity in tourism, including the exclusion of marginalized groups and the need for a “just transition to sustainability” in tourism research, policy, and practice. Vidickiene et al. (2020) present transformative tourism as a key element of the transition from industrial to post-industrial systems, applying innovative approaches to the development of cultural tourism. Although this article does not directly mention the definition of a just transition, it nevertheless clearly reflects the role of the shift toward more sustainable and inclusive tourism practices.

The presented bibliometric analysis can be used in several ways for Kenyan tourism, but a context-sensitive approach is important during adaptation. The relationships revealed by the clusters are relevant for Kenya, especially given the strong seasonality and regional inequality of tourism, which is determined by safari and beach tourism. Emphasizing the demand side is particularly important, as in Kenya's special tourist preferences fundamentally determine travel patterns, such as seeing the “Big Five” (the five big game are the symbol of safari tourism). Seasonality poses a significant challenge for accommodation providers and service providers during the low season; however, the experiences of developed countries can only be adapted to a limited extent, as institutional and infrastructure capacity is more limited in Kenya, meaning that management and policy responses may vary in effectiveness.

The use of stochastic and deterministic models can theoretically support the balancing of tourism, but their practical implementation requires a more advanced database and analytical capacity. The findings in Cluster 6 are particularly relevant to Kenya in terms of the links between cultural tourism and employment, as tourism is a significant job-creating sector in the country. The structure of tourism in Kenya differs significantly from many destinations in the literature reviewed, therefore direct adoption of individual models is not possible in all cases. Integrated, data-driven and sustainability-focused approaches, with detailed consideration of local conditions, can provide a strong foundation for the strategic development of Kenyan tourism.

Implications and recommendations

Tourism seasonality is a key issue across the globe. Vacation tourism which is more mainstream is often influenced by seasonality, however, the more sustainable specialized forms of tourism are

resilient against seasonality of travel. Studies depict the use of supply-sided approach to mitigating tourism seasonality, whereas, the most applicable approach would be demand-based approach. Policy makes and seasonal analysts must also incorporate a holistic approach in handling tourism seasonality. This enhances integration, as tourism is highly dynamic. Deterministic and stochastic models should be combined, as these have previously been utilized in isolation, to further heighten the applicability mitigation methodologies. Literature shows explicitly the need for policies coupled with applicable models that are destination specific. Spatial difference should not be isolated as these have been seen to highly contribute to tourism seasonality.

Cultural tourism is sustainable tourism because, it encourages the engagement of local communities while also creating a platform where jobs can be sustained across seasons. There need to acknowledge both intra and inter seasonal factors that may interplay at a destination. Market segmentation while applying the marketing mix for each segment also is recommended for destination. Based on these implications, this study recommends destination planning to use a demand-oriented approach. There is need to combine deterministic and stochastic models instead of generalizing individual models to a one-size-fits-all methodology while solving seasonality issues. Policy formulation and interpretation is crucial especially when these policies specifically address governance of specialized forms of tourism like cultural tourism. Tourism core elements can be the drivers of heightened traffic at destinations.

The Kenya National Tourism Policy (2021) stresses the need for stakeholder collaboration in tourism development. Incorporation of more specialized policies is important, but is lacking in the management of tourism in Kenya. Traveler dynamism, seasonal volatility, inadequate travel data, regional development imbalance and poor marketing should be addressed for tourism destination in Kenya so as to ensure that the industry does not remain susceptible to internal and external forces causing seasonality. This way, resilience of tourism can be reinforced.

Kenya's tourism policy would do well to place greater emphasis on demand-side interventions, such as targeted marketing during off-peak periods or pricing incentives. In addition, the development of specialized forms of tourism – such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, or community-based tourism – could help reduce seasonal fluctuations. A holistic approach is particularly important in Kenya, where tourism is closely linked to nature conservation, the livelihoods of local communities, and regional inequalities. Integrating deterministic and stochastic models can improve the flexibility of tourism planning. The application of destination-specific policies is also crucial, as safari tourism and beach resort tourism have different seasonal dynamics. Taking spatial differences into account allows even less-visited regions to participate in tourism, which helps alleviate overcrowding at major destinations while ensuring a more even distribution of visitor traffic throughout the year at the national level.

In Kenya's coastal and rural regions, community-based tourism has been shown to contribute to environmental protection and local economic development. Cultural tourism creates opportunities for permanent employment, directly supports Kenya's fight against poverty, and promotes the self-determination of local communities. (Jackson, 2025; Otundo Ricard, 2024). For Kenya, it is particularly important to adopt a supply-driven approach so that, alongside mass tourism, cultural segments can play a more significant role, which represent higher added value. This helps position the country as a unique, irreplaceable destination (Juma – Khademi-Vidra, 2019).

The impact of tourism seasonality on tourist behavior in Kenya has been mostly attributed to weather and calendar days. Tourism is highly volatile and external forces result to cancellation of travel and reduced hotel overnight stays in Kenya. Cultural tourism is a sustainable form of tourism because it deviates from mainstream tourism business, and it also utilizes cultural resources that are more endearing to sustainable use. This study is informed by these issues and seeks to examine

the capacity for cultural tourism to enhance tourism resilience through mitigation of tourism seasonality. *Just Transition tourism* approach for tourism resilience when promoting cultural tourism is fundamental when seeking to further feasible tourism development. This is attributed to the stance on a wider beneficial drive to not just the traditional economic growth, but also the incorporation contemporary issues in the tourism landscape especially social-natural rifts.

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