Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra1013 | SJIF Impact Factor (2026): 8.748 ISSN: 2347-4378
EPRA International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies (EBMS)
Volume: 13 | Issue: 8 | August 2026 -Peer-Reviewed Journal

RURAL HOSPITALITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND REGIONAL REGENERATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF EVIDENCE FROM KENYA AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Peruce Atingo[1], Prof. Jacqueline Korir[2]
[1]*Alupe University*
[2]*Moi University*

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra31282
DOI No: 10.36713/epra31282

ABSTRACT
Although the African evidence of the effectiveness of rural hospitality entrepreneurship as a means of regeneration of rural areas is widely promoted, there is no systematic mapping of the evidence. The purpose of this review was to summarise the available peer reviewed literature about rural hospitality entrepreneurship and regional revitalisation in Kenya, East Africa and Africa between 2020 and the present. The review is conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 reporting guideline (Page et al., 2021). Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar and African Journals Online are source databases used for records. Studies are reviewed twice, with explicit eligibility criteria, are appraised for quality, and synthesised thematically. Six themes were created through the synthesis. These include issues of economic regeneration, socio-cultural outcomes, community perception and participation, entrepreneur-level success factors, institutional and ecosystem barriers, and the changing paradigm from sustainability to regeneration. There are consistencies found from the findings in relation to rural hospitality enterprise creating jobs, income and community pride. They also reveal damages, such as social disruption and environmental damage. There is a limited and largely survey-based body of evidence, mostly from Kenya and South Africa. The entrepreneurial processes are still not well studied and there is no study on the application of the regenerative tourism framework in Africa. The review thus indicates that there exists a gap in the field of qualitative, entrepreneur centric research in Kenya which is proposed to be filled using multiple case study designs in the future.
KEYWORDS: *Rural Hospitality Entrepreneurship, Regional Regeneration, Systematic Literature Review, Kenya, Sub-Saharan Africa, Regenerative Tourism, Entrepreneurial Processes, Multiple Case Study*

1. INTRODUCTION

The entrepreneurial activities of rural hosts has recently emerged as an important object of academic study internationally. The authors of the landmark study (Madanaguli et al., 2021) analyzed 101 articles from 2000-2020, and found a decade of broad interest in the field. This interest is based on a simple logic. People, services, and income go out, and rural regions go down. The three are within the reach of small hospitality businesses. Lifestyle-motivated rural tourism entrepreneurs have been proven to practice management as a way to foster sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems (Cunha et al., 2020). Data from Portugal has shown that small rural businesses can help to stimulate sustainable tourism and balanced local development (Duarte et al., 2023). There have been similar assertions by African scholars. Community-based tourism has been presented in combination with entrepreneurship as a poverty alleviation and sustainable development model (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022). But the Africa evidence base has not been systematically mapped for period after 2020. The existing reviews are global in scope, and are very European in their coverage (Madanaguli et al., 2021). Hence this review concentrates on the state of Kenya, East Africa and the African continent.

There are three reasons for a systematic review. First, primary studies are building rapidly, but are still disparate and hard to locate. However, current evidence in Kenya ranges from cultural tourism in Bungoma County (Odunga et al., 2024), to agritourism in Kericho County (Kipkorir et al., 2022), and hospitality-related rural transformation in Nyeri County (Muriithi, 2024). Secondly, the current literature fails to address Africa. The benchmark review is limited to 2020, and includes primarily European studies (Madanaguli et al., 2021). The latest systematic review not only mapped rural tourism entrepreneurship resources and challenges on a global scale, but it also did not include a specific mapping of the rural tourism entrepreneurship resources and challenges in Africa (Utami et al., 2023). Third, findings conflict. Others include jobs, income and community pride (Kipkorir et al., 2022; Odunga et al., 2024). Others indicate unexploited potential and a disconnection of stakeholders (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020; Woldu, 2018). This mixed evidence can only be fairly weighed in a systematic synthesis that relies on transparent methods for synthesis that decrease bias and enable replication (Page et al., 2021).

Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra1013 | SJIF Impact Factor (2026): 8.748 ISSN: 2347-4378
EPRA International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies (EBMS)
Volume: 13 | Issue: 8 | August 2026 -Peer-Reviewed Journal

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Hospitality entrepreneurship in rural areas is strongly promoted as an essential force for rejuvenating Africa's regions, eradicating poverty and forging socio-economic change across the continent. But, there is a vast delivery gap and evidence mismatch, as suggested by existing research in Africa after 2020. Firstly, the geographical and methodological focus of existing literature is highly polarised with global work being qualitative and based on process accounts, whilst African research in Kenya and South Africa is mostly survey-based and quantitative and cross sectional. They are quantitative models that capture surface level outcomes (e.g., employment, income, as perceived by the community etc.) without reflecting the qualitative processes that take place at the level of the individual entrepreneur (e.g., motivations, decision making, adaptive management etc.) that drive these outcomes over time. Second, rural hospitality enterprises have a double-edged effect. Enterprises create economic value and build community pride, but they also create significant socio-cultural and environmental damages, such as social disruptions, the loss of farmland and environmental degradation. While there are several emerging international paradigms that encourage a more holistic, 'regenerative' approach to tourism that will involve net positive contributions from nature, community and place, there is a complete lack of African research that is evaluating or applying the framework to local hospitality businesses. As a result, there is no qualitative, entrepreneur-centred, empirical evidence from the Kenyan context that can support researchers, policy makers and stakeholders to develop a mechanistic understanding of how rural hospitality entrepreneurs overcome institutional barriers, deal with trade-offs between economic growth and socio-environmental harm and facilitate genuine regional regeneration.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

i. RQ1: What is the volume, geographical distribution, and methodological profile of research on rural hospitality entrepreneurship and regional regeneration in Africa since 2020?
ii. RQ2: What regenerative outcomes do these studies attribute to rural hospitality and tourism enterprises?
iii. RQ3: What factors facilitate or impede entrepreneurs in achieving these regenerative outcomes?
iv. RQ4: What research gaps currently remain in the literature, particularly regarding Kenya and East Africa?

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Search Strategy

The search strategy targets databases with strong tourism, business, and Africa coverage. The protocol searches Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and African Journals Online. Multi-database searching of this kind is established practice in the field. The benchmark review built its corpus through systematic keyword searches of major indexes (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). A recent systematic review of rural tourism entrepreneurship likewise triangulated five databases, including Scopus, Science Direct, Web of Science, and Taylor and Francis (Utami *et al*., 2023). Each database in the present protocol serves a purpose. Scopus and Web of Science supply indexed, citation-tracked journals. EBSCOhost adds hospitality and business titles. African Journals Online captures regional outlets that global indexes under-cover. This matters because key African findings appear in continental journals. Examples include the African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; Utami *et al*., 2023). Full reporting of sources and search dates is a PRISMA requirement (Page *et al*., 2021).

The search strings combine three concept blocks joined by Boolean operators. Block one covers the activity: rural hospitality, rural tourism, agritourism, community-based tourism, and homestay. Block two covers the actor and process: entrepreneur, enterprise, venture, and small business. Block three covers place and outcome: Kenya, East Africa, Africa, regeneration, regional development, and livelihood. This block design reflects how the literature names the phenomenon. Included studies use terms as varied as agritourism (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022), cultural tourism (Odunga *et al*., 2024), community-based tourism (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022), and rural tourism entrepreneurship (Utami *et al*., 2023). Narrow strings would miss whole strands of this work. The date filter runs from January 2020 to the present. Reference lists of all included studies are then hand-searched. This backward searching captures relevant records that keywords miss. Full search strings for each database are documented in an appendix, supporting the replication that systematic reporting demands (Page *et al*., 2021).

4.2 Eligibility Criteria

Explicit inclusion criteria decide which studies enter the review. Transparent eligibility rules are a core PRISMA requirement (Page *et al*., 2021). Five inclusion rules apply. Studies must be peer-reviewed journal articles. They must be published from January 2020 onward. They must be written in English. They must focus on rural hospitality, tourism, or agritourism enterprise in Kenya, East Africa, or Africa. They must also address at least one regeneration outcome, such as jobs, income, community wellbeing, culture, or environment. These rules operationalise the review questions directly. The enterprise rule follows the field's definition of rural hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship as its object of study (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). Similar filtering criteria, including full text, peer review, and English language, guided the most recent systematic review in this domain (Utami *et al*., 2023). The outcome rule reflects how included studies measure change, from employment and income (Odunga *et al*., 2024) to community dignity and environmental effects (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022).

Exclusion criteria and anchor studies complete the eligibility framework. Studies are excluded if they cover urban settings only, lack an enterprise dimension, or are editorials, book chapters, theses, or grey literature. The peer-review restriction protects the quality floor of the synthesis. Conference abstracts are excluded because they lack full methods. Two studies outside the 2020 window are retained as context anchors, not as included records. The first is the foundational Kenyan study of six community-based enterprises (Manyara & Jones, 2007). The second is the Ethiopian study of stakeholder gaps at Lake Tana (Woldu, 2018). Both are cited across the post-2020 literature and explain where current debates began. Comparative non-African studies are retained only where they supply theory or method the African corpus lacks (Cunha *et al*., 2020; Duarte *et al*., 2023; Price *et al*., 2025; Shao *et al*., 2024). Treating these as reference points, stated openly, keeps the African dataset clean while preserving analytical depth. Every eligibility decision is recorded for audit.

4.3 Screening Procedure
Screening proceeds in two documented stages. All retrieved records are first exported to reference management software and de-duplicated. Titles and abstracts are then screened against the eligibility criteria. Records that clearly fail any rule are removed at this stage. Records that pass, or that cannot be judged from the abstract, move to full-text screening. Full texts are read in whole and assessed rule by rule. This two-stage design is standard practice under PRISMA 2020, which requires reviews to state how many records were screened, assessed, and included (Page *et al*., 2021). The staged funnel has clear precedent in this field. The most recent systematic review in the domain began with 7,379 identified articles, reduced them to 532 after filtering, to 78 after de-duplication, and to 47 eligible articles after full-text assessment (Utami *et al*., 2023). A flow diagram records the numbers at every stage of the present review. Reasons for every full-text exclusion are logged in a table. This audit trail allows any reader to reconstruct the corpus.

Screening reliability receives specific safeguards. Single-reviewer screening risks inconsistent judgements, so the protocol builds in checks. A sample of records is screened twice, with decisions compared for agreement. Disagreements are resolved by discussion with supervisors and by returning to the written criteria. Borderline cases receive special care. The hardest boundary in this field is between community-level tourism studies and enterprise-level studies. Some community studies qualify because they measure enterprise-linked outcomes, such as tourism employment and income (Odunga *et al*., 2024). Rural transformation studies also qualify where hospitality enterprise features in their findings, as in the Nyeri County case where recreation and leisure ventures created markets for local produce (Muriithi, 2024). Others fail because no venture or entrepreneur appears in the design. Decision notes for such cases are kept and reported. The screening stage also flags each study's country, sector, and method for later charting. Screening thus guards the corpus boundary and prepares the data for synthesis.

4.4 Quality Appraisal
Included studies are appraised for methodological quality before synthesis. Appraisal matters because the field contains studies of very different scales. One included Kenyan study drew on a sample of only forty respondents (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). Another modelled data from 320 respondents in a single county (Odunga *et al*., 2024). A South African study sampled 310 tourism ventures through systematic random sampling (Mxunyelwa, 2025). Findings from such varied designs cannot carry equal weight. The appraisal covers four dimensions. These are clarity of research aim, fit between method and aim, sampling transparency, and completeness of reporting. Quantitative studies are additionally checked for stated analysis techniques, such as the structural equation modelling reported in Bungoma (Odunga *et al*., 2024) and the correlation analysis reported on the Wild Coast (Mxunyelwa, 2025). Qualitative studies are checked for case selection and triangulation logic, as modelled by the Nyeri County study's use of transect walks and key informant interviews (Muriithi, 2024). Each study receives a structured quality record.

Quality ratings inform confidence, not exclusion. No study is removed on quality grounds alone. The African evidence base is too small to discard weak but relevant records. Excluding them would empty the corpus and hide the very gaps this review exists to expose. Instead, quality shapes the language of the synthesis. Findings supported by larger or better-reported studies are stated with more confidence. Findings resting on small descriptive samples are flagged as tentative. The Kericho findings on social harms, for example, come from forty questionnaires and are treated as indicative rather than definitive (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). Desk-based studies receive matching caution. The Kenyan SWOT analysis of rural tourism potential relied on secondary sources such as research articles and government reports (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020). Its conclusions are treated as contextual rather than empirical. This graded approach follows PRISMA 2020, which requires reviews to assess and report risk of bias in included studies (Page *et al*., 2021).

4.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis
Data extraction converts each included study into a structured record. A standard extraction form captures author, year, country, rural setting, sector, method, sample, theoretical frame, and key findings. The form also records each study's stated limitations and

recommendations. Charting these fields answers RQ1 on the volume, geography, and methods of the field. The approach follows the benchmark review, which catalogued its 101 articles before synthesising them (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). Extraction is piloted on a small set of studies first. Piloting exposes unclear fields and forces early refinement of the form. Extracted records are then checked against the original texts for accuracy. This step matters most for numerical details. Sample sizes, such as 320 respondents in Bungoma (Odunga *et al*., 2024), forty in Kericho (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022), and 310 ventures on the Wild Coast (Mxunyelwa, 2025), must be transcribed exactly. The completed extraction table becomes an appendix of the review.

Synthesis then proceeds thematically in three steps. First, findings from each study are coded line by line. Second, codes are grouped into descriptive themes. Third, themes are compared across countries, sectors, and methods to build analytical claims. This mirrors established synthesis practice in the field. The benchmark review used content analysis to construct its thematic areas (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). The most recent domain review used software-assisted content analysis, coding studies into resource and challenge nodes (Utami *et al*., 2023). Thematic synthesis suits this evidence base for two reasons. The included studies are too varied in design for statistical meta-analysis. They span structural equation models (Odunga *et al*., 2024), descriptive surveys (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022), inferential venture surveys (Mxunyelwa, 2025), qualitative rapid rural appraisal (Muriithi, 2024), desk-based SWOT analysis (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020), and conceptual papers (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022). Thematic methods hold such variety together without forcing false comparability. The six themes below emerged from this process.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Profile of the Evidence Base

The post-2020 African evidence base is small, scattered, and dominated by surveys. Kenyan studies illustrate the pattern. The Bungoma County study surveyed 320 respondents and used structural equation modelling (Odunga *et al*., 2024). The Kericho County study used a descriptive design with questionnaires (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). An earlier desk-based study assessed Kenya's rural tourism potential through SWOT analysis of secondary sources (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020). South African work leans the same way. One study statistically modelled internal success factors among tourism entrepreneurs in Mtubatuba (Ntshangase *et al*., 2024). Another surveyed 310 rural tourism ventures on the Wild Coast (Mxunyelwa, 2025). A third gathered community perspectives near Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (Ezeuduji & Mgabhi, 2023), and a fourth examined community participation at Mnqesha Great Place (Matyile & Ramukumba, 2025). Historical and conceptual papers add depth (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). Qualitative Kenyan work exists but centres rural transformation, not hospitality entrepreneurs (Muriithi, 2024). This profile answers RQ1.

The geographic and methodological profile carries an important irony. Globally, the field shows the opposite methodological bias. The benchmark review found a predominance of qualitative studies with limited theory-grounded, generalisable empirical work (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). The African subset since 2020 leans the other way, toward surveys and statistical models (Mxunyelwa, 2025; Ntshangase *et al*., 2024; Odunga *et al*., 2024). The two weaknesses are mirror images. Europe has rich process accounts with weak generalisation. Africa has measured outcomes with weak process understanding. Geography compounds the problem. The benchmark review found studies concentrated in European countries (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). Within Africa, this review finds concentration in Kenya and South Africa. East African neighbours are nearly absent apart from anchor material on Ethiopia (Woldu, 2018). One notable exception softens but does not remove the Kenyan method skew. A qualitative rapid rural appraisal in Nyeri County shows such methods are feasible in Kenya, though its focus was rural transformation broadly (Muriithi, 2024). Both skews shape every theme that follows.

5.2 Economic Regeneration

The strongest and most consistent theme is economic regeneration through enterprise. Every included empirical study reports some economic gain. In Kericho County, agritourism reduced poverty levels through the creation of employment (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). In Bungoma County, tourism was linked to employment opportunities and income generation for rural households (Odunga *et al*., 2024). In Nyeri County, recreation and leisure ventures created significant non-farm opportunities and a market for locally produced eggs, vegetables, and milk (Muriithi, 2024). South African evidence points the same way. Communities near Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park saw rural tourism as a real development opportunity (Ezeuduji & Mgabhi, 2023). Rural entrepreneurship is recognised as a crucial contributor to the tourism sector and overall economic development of the Wild Coast (Mxunyelwa, 2025). Conceptual work frames these gains as a route out of poverty when communities hold enterprise stakes (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022). The mechanism is diversification into non-farm income. The economic theme is well supported but shallow on mechanism.

The economic theme also carries a finance, policy, and potential subtext. Wider framework research ranks economic factors as the most powerful drivers of sustainable rural entrepreneurship. A four-dimensional evaluation found financial backing, economic value, and favourable policy frameworks among the pivotal indicators (Shao *et al*., 2024). The African evidence echoes this ranking. Kenya's rural tourism potential remains underexploited partly because national strategy has favoured traditional wildlife and beach products (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020). Kenyan recommendations call for enhanced infrastructure and collaborative stakeholder strategies to diversify rural economies (Odunga *et al*., 2024). Kericho stakeholders were urged to build policy frameworks for holistic, sustainable agritourism growth (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). The implication is clear. Economic regeneration does not flow automatically from rural assets or tourist arrivals. It flows from ventures that can access finance, infrastructure, and supportive policy. Where those conditions are missing, gains stay small and fragile. This links the economic theme forward to the institutional theme, and explains why similar rural assets produce different outcomes across counties.

5.3 Socio-Cultural Outcomes

The second theme covers socio-cultural change, and its evidence cuts both ways. Positive findings are clear. Agritourism raised community dignity in Kericho and won the area recognition as a leading tea zone nationally and internationally (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). Cultural tourism in Western Kenya strengthened community engagement alongside income (Odunga *et al*., 2024). These outcomes matter for regeneration. Pride and identity keep young people in place. Negative findings are equally clear. The Kericho study reported harmful new lifestyles, including drug abuse and sexual assaults, linked to visitor influence (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). It also recorded worsened human–wildlife conflict from tourist facility construction near forests (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). Rapid rural change adds a further tension. In Nyeri County, urbanising rural growth brought non-farm opportunity but also land fragmentation that threatens farm livelihoods (Muriithi, 2024). The same growth can therefore regenerate and damage at once. This duality answers part of RQ2. Regeneration is a balance of gains and harms that entrepreneurs and communities must actively manage.

The socio-cultural theme also reveals how thinly these outcomes are theorised. The African studies report social change as survey items, not as explained processes. The Kericho study associate's visitor influence with new behaviours but cannot show how the influence travels (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). Comparative evidence suggests entrepreneurs themselves are the missing explanatory link. Lifestyle-motivated rural tourism entrepreneurs adopt management practices that support sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems (Cunha *et al*., 2020). Portuguese case evidence likewise showed owners deliberately balancing economic goals with social and environmental commitments (Duarte *et al*., 2023). Ventures run by such owners manage cultural exposure differently from purely commercial operations. No included African study examines whether Kenyan hospitality owners make similar balancing choices. The conceptual literature assumes they can, framing community-embedded enterprise as a vehicle for sustainable development (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022). The assumption remains untested. The socio-cultural theme is therefore rich in outcomes and poor in explanation. Entrepreneur-centred research would supply the missing mechanism.

5.4 Community Perception and Participation

The third theme shows that community perception is the gate through which regeneration passes. The Bungoma County study found that support for tourism was strongly influenced by favourable community perception (Odunga *et al*., 2024). Where residents saw benefits, they backed enterprise growth. South African evidence adds the participation dimension from two settings. Communities near Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park wanted stronger local involvement in tourism development (Ezeuduji & Mgabhi, 2023). Community participation was likewise central to rural tourism development initiatives at Mnqesha Great Place (Matyile & Ramukumba, 2025). East African context studies reinforce the point. Community-based tourism at Lake Tana in Ethiopia suffered because key stakeholders were never properly linked (Woldu, 2018). The Kenyan anchor study reached a similar conclusion much earlier, finding serious development challenges in community enterprises (Manyara & Jones, 2007). The pattern is stable across two decades and several countries. Ventures embedded in supportive; participating communities regenerate. Ventures imposed on passive community's stall. Perception and participation therefore function as preconditions, not by-products, of regeneration.

The perception theme has direct practical consequences for enterprise design. The included studies converge on participation as a manageable variable, not a fixed condition. The Kericho study recommended increasing local participation through education campaigns to reduce the harms linked to agritourism (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). The Bungoma study recommended collaborative efforts between stakeholders as part of tailored socioeconomic strategies (Odunga *et al*., 2024). Both prescriptions treat perception as something ventures can build. This reframes the entrepreneur's role. A rural hospitality owner is not only a service provider. The owner is also a broker of community consent. Conceptual work supports this reading, placing community stakes at the centre of viable tourism enterprise models (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022). South African participation cases show the same logic from the community side (Matyile & Ramukumba, 2025). Yet no included study observes brokering in action. Surveys record perception levels after the fact. How Kenyan entrepreneurs earn, lose, and rebuild community support remains undocumented. This process question flows into the gap analysis.

5.5 Entrepreneur-Level Success Factors

The fourth theme concerns the entrepreneurs themselves, and here the African evidence is thin but growing. Two South African studies lead. One modelled internal factor, such as entrepreneur profiles, that predict tourism business success in Mtubatuba (Ntshangase *et al*., 2024). The other surveyed 310 Wild Coast ventures and found significant correlations among skills development, entrepreneurial motivation, business challenges, and strategic and management knowledge as critical success factors (Mxunyelwa, 2025). Wider

Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra1013 | SJIF Impact Factor (2026): 8.748 ISSN: 2347-4378
EPRA International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies (EBMS)
Volume: 13 | Issue: 8 | August 2026 -Peer-Reviewed Journal

framework research identifies finance, policy support, and entrepreneurial motivation as key drivers of sustainable rural enterprise (Shao *et al*., 2024). Outside Africa, lifestyle motivations have been linked to management practices that strengthen sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems (Cunha *et al*., 2020), and comparative cases show owners balancing profit with social and environmental goals (Duarte *et al*., 2023). No included Kenyan study profiles hospitality entrepreneurs in this depth. Kenyan studies measure community outcomes, not entrepreneurial processes (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022; Odunga *et al*., 2024). Regeneration claims rest on entrepreneurs whose motivations and strategies remain unstudied in Kenya. This exposes the review's central gap.

The thin entrepreneur evidence also limits what theory can currently explain. The framework literature distinguishes driving factors from dependent ones. Type of enterprise, financial support, economic value, and favourable policies emerged as propelling factors, while entrepreneurial motivation and the business environment appeared as dependent factors in the causal system (Shao *et al*., 2024). This distinction is analytically powerful. It suggests policy and finance shape motivation, not the reverse. The South African success-factor studies offer the closest African tests, but both are quantitative and sub-national (Mxunyelwa, 2025; Ntshangase *et al*., 2024). Correlations identify which factors matter. They cannot show how entrepreneurs actually acquire skills, sustain motivation, or navigate challenges over time. The lifestyle entrepreneurship literature shows what richer evidence looks like, tracing how motivations translate into concrete management practices (Cunha *et al*., 2020; Duarte *et al*., 2023). African research has no equivalent account, and Kenya has none at all. Until it does, entrepreneur-level theory in this field rests on borrowed and untested foundations.

5.6 Institutional and Ecosystem Barriers

The fifth theme gathers the institutional conditions that constrain rural hospitality enterprise. The benchmark review proposed an ecosystem framework linking entrepreneurs to institutions, resources, and communities (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). The recent domain review sharpened this picture, mapping eight resource types and five external challenge categories, with political, governmental, and legal challenges the most cited (Utami *et al*., 2023). African evidence shows this ecosystem working poorly. Kenya's own tourism strategy has concentrated on wildlife and beach products, leaving rural tourism potential underexploited (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020). Historical analysis of South Africa documents decades of policy attention with uneven rural results (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). Ethiopian evidence shows tourism weakened by missing stakeholder linkages (Woldu, 2018). Kenyan community enterprises historically faced serious governance and capacity challenges (Manyara & Jones, 2007). Framework studies rank finance and favourable policy among the most powerful drivers of sustainable rural entrepreneurship (Shao *et al*., 2024). By implication, their absence is a leading barrier. Poor infrastructure, thin finance, and fragmented institutions recur across countries.

The institutional theme also explains the persistence of the delivery gap. African rural tourism shows a repeated cycle of promise followed by underperformance. Kenya's rural products remained underexploited even as national blueprints promised diversification (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020). South Africa's historical record shows rural tourism evolving through successive policy phases without resolving rural disadvantage (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). Community perspectives near protected areas still describe unrealised potential decades into that history (Ezeuduji & Mgabhi, 2023). The Ethiopian anchor case names the mechanism plainly: stakeholders operating without connection to one another (Woldu, 2018). Recent Kenyan recommendations repeat the same remedy, urging stakeholder collaboration and infrastructure investment (Odunga *et al*., 2024). Rural challenge mapping confirms that political, governmental, and legal constraints dominate the external environment of rural tourism ventures (Utami *et al*., 2023). When independent studies across countries and decades prescribe the same fix, the barrier is structural, not incidental. Ecosystem fragmentation is that structural barrier. Weakness at any level can stall regeneration.

5.7 From Sustainability to Regeneration

The sixth theme captures a conceptual shift now reaching the field. Regeneration is emerging as a distinct paradigm beyond sustainability. Recent empirical work on community enterprises in Ireland and Scotland identified four marks of regenerative tourism practice: nature positive, community positive, place positive, and visitor positive activity (Price *et al*., 2025). That study also showed social enterprises driving sustainable local development through visitor experiences (Price *et al*., 2025). The concept fits the African evidence surprisingly well. Kenyan cultural tourism strengthened community engagement and local identity, not just income (Odunga *et al*., 2024). Kericho's agritourism raised collective dignity alongside employment (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). Community-based enterprise models on the continent already centre community benefit as the purpose of tourism business (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022). These African outcomes read as regenerative outcomes, even though the studies never use the term. The regenerative lens therefore offers the field a sharper vocabulary. It names what African rural hospitality enterprise is already partly doing.

The regeneration lens also sets a higher evidential bar that African research has not yet met. Regenerative claims require showing net-positive change in nature, community, and place, not just venture survival (Price *et al*., 2025). Current African evidence cannot support such claims. The Kericho case documents environmental damage alongside economic gain (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). The Nyeri case documents livelihood diversification alongside farmland loss (Muriithi, 2024). Whether these trade-offs net out as regeneration is unknown, because no study measures them together at venture level. Lifestyle entrepreneurship research shows the connective tissue that is missing. Owner motivations shape management practices, and management practices shape ecosystem outcomes (Cunha *et al*., 2020). Tracing that chain in African hospitality ventures would let researchers test regenerative claims properly. The theme therefore ends where the review's agenda begins. Africa's rural hospitality literature has regenerative outcomes without a regenerative framework, and regenerative frameworks exist without African evidence (Price *et al*., 2025). Joining the two is a clear research task.

6. DISCUSSION

The synthesis shows a field rich in promise and poor in process evidence. Across themes, enterprise clearly moves economic and social indicators (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022; Muriithi, 2024; Odunga *et al*., 2024). Yet the causal chain from entrepreneur to regional change is asserted more than shown. This mirrors the global diagnosis. The benchmark review criticised the field for limited theory-grounded empirical work (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). Africa adds a second problem: method concentration. Post-2020 African studies favour surveys and models (Mxunyelwa, 2025; Ntshangase *et al*., 2024; Odunga *et al*., 2024). Surveys measure outcomes at one point in time. They cannot capture how ventures are built, adapted, and sustained. The strongest process studies in the synthesis are European (Cunha *et al*., 2020; Duarte *et al*., 2023; Price *et al*., 2025). Their findings on lifestyle motivation and regenerative practice may not transfer to resource-constrained Kenyan settings. The one Kenyan qualitative study proves such methods work locally, but it centred rural transformation rather than hospitality entrepreneurs (Muriithi, 2024). The next research step is qualitative, entrepreneur-centred, and Kenyan.

The six themes also connect into a single explanatory structure. Economic regeneration sits at the surface as the outcome most often measured (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022; Odunga *et al*., 2024). Beneath it, socio-cultural outcomes and community perception act as conditions that amplify or erode economic gains (Ezeuduji & Mgabhi, 2023; Matyile & Ramukumba, 2025; Odunga *et al*., 2024). Beneath those, entrepreneur capabilities and institutional support supply the generative forces (Mxunyelwa, 2025; Ntshangase *et al*., 2024; Shao *et al*., 2024). The regenerative paradigm then names the whole system's intended direction (Price *et al*., 2025). This layered reading matches the ecosystem framework proposed for the field (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021) and the resource-and-challenge mapping that followed it (Utami *et al*., 2023). It also explains the mixed African record. Where all layers align, studies report jobs, pride, and engagement. Where a layer fails, studies report stalled potential and disconnection (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020; Woldu, 2018). The layers are interdependent, so single-layer interventions underperform. Regeneration is a whole-system outcome, and research and policy should treat it as one.

The discussion must also weigh what the double methodological skew means for knowledge claims. The global field over-supplies qualitative description and under-supplies generalisable tests (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021). The African subset over-supplies outcome measurement and under-supplies process description (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022; Mxunyelwa, 2025; Odunga *et al*., 2024). Neither half can answer the other's questions. European process findings, such as how lifestyle owners convert motivation into sustainable practice (Cunha *et al*., 2020; Duarte *et al*., 2023), lack African tests. African outcome findings, such as perception-driven support in Bungoma (Odunga *et al*., 2024), lack process explanations. Theory-building needs both halves in one place. A qualitative Kenyan study of hospitality entrepreneurs would supply the missing half for Africa. It would also carry unusual leverage. Because the ecosystem, resource, and regenerative frameworks were all built elsewhere (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021; Price *et al*., 2025; Shao *et al*., 2024; Utami *et al*., 2023), Kenyan case evidence can confirm, refine, or challenge each of them. Every result would be a genuine contribution to knowledge.

7. RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE STUDIES

This review identifies four gaps that together define a future agenda. First, there is a geographic gap. Global research clusters in Europe (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021), and African research clusters in South Africa and Kenya, leaving most of East Africa unstudied. Second, there is a methodological gap. Qualitative methods have proven feasible in rural Kenya (Muriithi, 2024), yet no identified Kenyan study since 2020 applies them to hospitality entrepreneurs, despite their proven value elsewhere (Cunha *et al*., 2020; Duarte *et al*., 2023; Manyara & Jones, 2007). Third, there is a conceptual gap. Regeneration is measured as community impact, not theorised as an entrepreneurial process, and the emerging regenerative framework has no African application (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022; Odunga *et al*., 2024; Price *et al*., 2025). Fourth, there is a framework gap. Ecosystem, resource, and sustainability models remain untested on African hospitality data (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021; Shao *et al*., 2024; Utami *et al*., 2023). Future work should run qualitative multiple case studies of Kenyan rural hospitality entrepreneurs. Such work would fill all four gaps at once.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

This review has limits arising from its own protocol choices. First, the English-language criterion may exclude relevant French, Portuguese, or Swahili publications. Language restrictions are a recognised source of review bias (Page *et al*., 2021). African tourism research appears in Francophone and Lusophone outlets that this review cannot see. Second, the peer-review restriction excludes grey literature. Government evaluations, NGO reports, and theses on Kenyan rural enterprise therefore sit outside the corpus. Some regeneration evidence certainly lives in those documents. Third, the field's unstable vocabulary threatens search completeness. The definition of rural tourism entrepreneurship itself remains unclear in the literature (Utami *et al*., 2023). Studies label the same phenomenon as agritourism (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022), cultural tourism (Odunga *et al*., 2024), or community-based tourism (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2022). Search strings can never anticipate every label. Hand-searching reference lists reduces this risk but cannot remove it. Each protocol choice was made for defensible reasons. Each still narrows the evidence the review can claim to represent.

The review also carries limits arising from the evidence base itself. The African corpus is small, so single studies dominate single themes. The socio-cultural harms theme rests heavily on one Kericho study of forty respondents (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022). The perception theme rests heavily on one Bungoma survey (Odunga *et al*., 2024). Conclusions built on such narrow bases are provisional by nature. Method concentration deepens the problem. Because most included studies are cross-sectional, the synthesis cannot make causal claims about regeneration over time (Mxunyelwa, 2025; Ntshangase *et al*., 2024; Odunga *et al*., 2024). Desk-based contributions add another caution, since SWOT conclusions from secondary sources carry less evidential weight than primary fieldwork (Agayi & Gunduz, 2020). The synthesis method adds a final layer. Thematic grouping involves interpretive judgement, and different reviewers might cut the themes differently. Earlier reviews faced the same interpretive challenge in building their thematic and resource categories (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021; Utami *et al*., 2023). Transparent coding records limit but cannot erase this subjectivity. These limits bound the review's claims honestly.

9. CONCLUSION

This systematic review set out to map African research on rural hospitality entrepreneurship and regional regeneration. The answer to RQ1 is a small, survey-dominated evidence base centred on Kenya and South Africa, with one qualitative Kenyan exception focused on rural transformation (Muriithi, 2024; Mxunyelwa, 2025; Odunga *et al*., 2024). The answer to RQ2 is genuine but double-edged regeneration, with jobs, markets, and pride alongside social and environmental harms (Kipkorir *et al*., 2022; Muriithi, 2024). The answer to RQ3 is that community perception, participation, skills, finance, and policy govern success (Matyile & Ramukumba, 2025; Mxunyelwa, 2025; Odunga *et al*., 2024; Shao *et al*., 2024). The answer to RQ4 is a clear absence of qualitative, entrepreneur-centred Kenyan research and of any African application of the regenerative tourism framework (Price *et al*., 2025). This gap is the review's core contribution. A qualitative multiple case study of Kenyan rural hospitality entrepreneurs would extend global frameworks (Madanaguli *et al*., 2021; Utami *et al*., 2023) and give African regeneration research the process evidence it lacks.

REFERENCES

1. *Agayi, C. O., & Gunduz, E. (2020). An evaluation of rural tourism potential for rural development in Kenya. International Journal of African and Asian Studies, 63, 35–46. https://doi.org/10.7176/JAAS/63-05*
2. *Cunha, C., Kastenholz, E., & Carneiro, M. J. (2020). Entrepreneurs in rural tourism: Do lifestyle motivations contribute to management practices that enhance sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems? Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 44, 215–226.*
3. *Duarte, M., Dias, Á., Sousa, B., & Pereira, L. (2023). Lifestyle entrepreneurship as a vehicle for leisure and sustainable tourism. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 20(4), 3241. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20043241*
4. *Ezeuduji, I. O., & Mgabhi, N. Z. (2023). Potential for rural tourism development around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, South Africa: A local community perspective. African Journal of Development Studies, 13(1), 89–113. https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2023/v13n1a5*
5. *Giampiccoli, A., & Mtapuri, O. (2022). Community-based tourism and entrepreneurship: Towards a model for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Journal of Tourism & Development, 39, 439–449. https://doi.org/10.34624/rtd.v39i0.30360*
6. *Kipkorir, N., Twili, N. S., & Gogo, A. (2022). Effects of agritourism development on the local community in Kericho County, Kenya. Journal of Tourism, Culinary, and Entrepreneurship, 2(1), 34–53. https://doi.org/10.37715/jtce.v2i1.2254*
7. *Madanaguli, A. T., Kaur, P., Bresciani, S., & Dhir, A. (2021). Entrepreneurship in rural hospitality and tourism. A systematic literature review of past achievements and future promises. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 33(8), 2521–2558. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2020-1121*
8. *Manyara, G., & Jones, E. (2007). Community-based tourism enterprises development in Kenya: An exploration of their potential as avenues of poverty reduction. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 15(6), 628–644. https://doi.org/10.2167/jost723.0*
9. *Matyile, N., & Ramukumba, T. (2025). The community participation in rural tourism development initiatives: The case of Mnqesha Great Place, South Africa. Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies, 7(2). https://pubs.ufs.ac.za/index.php/ijrcs*
10. *Muriithi, J. K. (2024). Dynamics shaping rural transformation in rapidly urbanising rural areas in Central Kenya. People, Place and Policy, 18(1), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.3351/ppp.2024.1541056304*
11. *Mxunyelwa, S. (2025). Rural entrepreneurship success factors for sustainable tourism ventures: Evidence from the Wild Coast. International Journal of Business Ecosystem & Strategy, 7(6), 467–477. https://doi.org/10.36096/ijbes.v7i6.1052*
12. *Ntshangase, S. D., Ezeuduji, I. O., & Ayanwale, M. A. (2024). Modelling selected internal factors influencing tourism-related entrepreneurship business success in South Africa. African Journal of Business and Economic Research, 19(2), 431–455.*
13. *Odunga, S., Szente, V., & Szabó, K. (2024). Community support and socioeconomic impacts of cultural tourism development in Western Kenya. Tourism and Hospitality, 5(4), 1510–1524. https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp5040084*

14. *Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., ... Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ, 372, n71. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71*
15. *Price, S., Taylor, S., Turnbull, K., & Stafford, M. R. (2025). A regenerative approach to tourism: Learnings from community enterprises. Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, 51.*
16. *Rogerson, C. M., & Rogerson, J. M. (2021). The evolution of rural tourism in South Africa: An historical lens. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 10(6), 1728–1740. https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.190*
17. *Shao, Q., Jiang, C., Li, G., & Xie, G. (2024). Influencing factors of sustainable rural entrepreneurship: A four-dimensional evaluation system encompassing entrepreneurs, economy, society, and environment. Systems, 12(10), 387. https://doi.org/10.3390/systems12100387*
18. *Utami, D. D., Dhewanto, W., & Lestari, Y. D. (2023). Rural tourism entrepreneurship: A systematic literature review on resources and challenges. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 12(4), 1322–1344. https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.434*
19. *Woldu, M. G. (2018). Community-based tourism in Lake Tana growth corridor of the Amhara region of Ethiopia: The missing link among stakeholders and implications to the tourism industry. Cogent Social Sciences, 4(1), 1450335. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2018.1450335*