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REVIEW

Transforming Roadside Gardens into Responsible Tourist Attractions: A Conceptual Framework

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential of Tanzanian roadside gardens as sustainable tourism assets for urban tourism development. Studies demonstrate that casual roadside gardens enhance urban aesthetics and provide income for casual roadside gardeners. Despite their usefulness, their potential remains largely untapped by urban planners and tourism stakeholders. The research adopted Leiper's attraction system model and responsible tourism principles to conceptualize the transformation of casual roadside gardens as responsible tourist destinations. Six main themes were identified through systematic literature review and thematic content analysis, which included tourist experience, urban infrastructure, responsibility and ethics, digitalization, cultural authenticity, and regional coverage, as the themes demonstrated their links and ability to create both experiential and sustainable tourism. The results show that roadside gardens function as multipurpose areas that support environmental conservation, protection of cultural heritage, and active participation of local communities. The study presents a flexible framework that enables policymakers and urban planners to transform informal green spaces into official sustainable urban development pathways that will empower communities while protecting ecological environments and preserving cultural heritage. The framework provides a roadmap for transformation of roadside gardens into responsible tourist attractions, benefiting roadside gardens socioeconomically and environmentally.

Keywords: Traditional Knowledge; Urban Infrastructure; Garden Tourism; Roadside Gardening; Responsible Tourism; East Africa

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1. Introduction

Urban tourism is changing, and it is moving more toward sustainability, inclusion, and getting locals involved. Roadside gardens are an underexplored and very informal part of many urban resources. As you travel across the major roads and avenues of urban regions in certain administrative regions of Tanzania, there are plenty of garden displays to witness and admire colourful roadside gardens. Casual roadside gardeners own and manage the gardens for income generation and partially for tourism. With limited knowledge and abilities in horticulture and tourism, roadside gardeners grow and sell a variety of native and exotic, ornamental, and fruit plant species to clients. Literature suggests that there is a deliberate flow of people to roadside gardens for appreciation, photography, education, study, and video recording. However, roadside gardens were not created and established with tourism in mind but were built by gardeners to sell flowers and seedlings to passersby. It was only a few years ago that some casual gardeners, travellers, and nature lovers realized their tourist worth. Such roadside gardens are usually established adjacent to roadways where residential or business activities are prohibited by the Road Act No. 13 of 2007. Casual gardeners may cultivate various environmentally unfriendly species, including alien invasive species such as Lantana camara and pest-appealing species. The inclusion of potted plants in the gardens also simplifies the sale of numerous plant types.

Despite the adverse repercussions, gardeners encourage citizens to plant and grow beneficial native and exotic plant species, which is very useful for mitigating the worst impacts of climate change and desertification. In the first place, informal roadside gardeners contribute to the beauty of urban areas with attractive plants. Secondly, roadside gardeners form and encourage visits by resident and international garden tourists to photograph, gaze at, and buy plants. Moreover, roadside gardeners maintain ecosystems through plant nursing and teaching tourists about plant growing and care. Lastly, roadside gardeners contribute to informal employment, as some people are casually hired in the gardens to harvest seedlings and operate nurseries. As one of the fastest-growing categories of cultural tourism internationally, gardens as tourist attractions are becoming increasingly evident as targeted markets for environmentally responsible tourism[1, 2].

This study is important because it brings together urban horticulture, tourism management, and sustainability. Roadside gardens are those small-scale informal gardens that people usually keep up on their own along the major roads, particularly in East African cities, including Dar es Salaam, Mwanza and Arusha. Such gardens should improve the look of cities, support biodiversity, and get people more involved in their communities[3, 4]. Sadly, their value in tourism is not well known. This study explores these spaces through the lens of responsible tourism and shows how they can help people, the environment, and the economy. Ashley[5] and Goodwin[6] stress how using local resources in tourism leads to development that includes everyone and helps people get out of poverty. The proposed framework is likely to address three knowledge gaps in responsible garden tourism and sustainable tourism development.

First, the roadside gardens are placed in the context of responsible tourism, an area mostly focused on formally registered attractions, protected areas, and ecosystems. Second, its socio-economic inputs are considered, particularly in demonstrating how informal gardening practices might be promoted into legitimate tourism activities that address sustainability and poverty alleviation[7, 8]. Third, based on literary analysis of the context, an innovative yet generalized view is presented on how informal green infrastructure interacts with tourism dynamics. The absence of such interactions may further marginalize community-based environmental initiatives, leading to the underuse of these urban green spaces. Increasingly dynamic urban landscapes may see informal inputs like roadside gardens missing from tourism policy deliberations, hence compounding socio-economic disadvantage and further promoting ecologically unsound development[9, 10]. For this reason, the study advances a theoretically rich and practically useful model of linking informal gardening with formal urban tourism.

Accordingly, Leiper's[11] model of tourist attractions-the tourist, the nucleus, and the marker-can be applied theoretically to structure the transformation. Every possible thing for a garden alongside the road to be a responsible attraction for travel must fulfill each of these elements of Leiper's model, according to the ethical guidelines of responsible tourism established by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)[12]. This transformation

is physical improvements and interpretive instruments and community integration that give the space cultural and environmental importance. Accordingly, the study creates an adaptable framework for decision makers, planners, and local communities. This avenue to enrich urban tourism by way of micro-infrastructure empowers informal actors and translates into sustainable development goals. The study also advocates for participatory planning and cultural interpretation as measures that would bring diverse tourism benefits to the local populations.

2. Literature Review

Garden tourism, a form of cultural tourism, includes visits to gardens and participation in garden-related activities[2, 13]. It involves a variety of locations, including botanical gardens, historical estates, museums, city parks, floral displays, garden centers, and private garden tours[14]. The garden tourism industry exists because people visit gardens to enjoy their beauty while learning about horticulture and cultural heritage through these living museums. It has recently gained popularity among travelers, though research in this field remains limited because tourism professionals have studied other tourism sectors more thoroughly, which creates a research gap that needs to be filled to understand how visitors experience garden attractions and how these sites affect local economies. Identifying this research gap is essential for promoting sustainable management practices and improving the experiences of visitors.

Efficient tourism gardens are conveniently located, accessible, and present appealing gardening and landscaping techniques[15–17]. The Royal Botanic Gardens in London demonstrate how a garden design achieves universal access, which attracts millions of visitors each year with its extensive collection of plants and historical value and educational programs. The exceptional beauty and actual attractiveness of the landscape and historical background of the gardens of Versailles in France attract domestic and international visitors to the garden[18]. Many factors determine the attractiveness of gardens, including design, types of species, and maintenance quality. Such dimensions are crucial for creating landscape beauty and accessible pathways for garden tourists[19, 20].

Garden tourism attracts about 150 million tourists annually to admire gardens through sightseeing, recreational, and educational activities[13, 21]. The Chelsea Flower Show in the UK attracts thousands of horticulture enthusiasts who want to see new garden designs and various plant displays[22]. Local and international tourists visiting gardens seek more than the visual beauty of the gardens because the visitors usually expect to experience both peacefulness and stress relief while building stronger bonds with the natural world. Studies demonstrate that gardens provide mental health benefits because they help people build better mental health, and their stress levels decrease. Kaplan and Kaplan[23] suggested that gardens are restorative places that improve the mental and emotional well-being of the visitors. Similarly, Čakovská[2] and Liang and Wu[19] demonstrate that visitors and owners regard gardens as vital spaces for recreation, education, and mental well-being.

The historical significance of gardens as cultural and religious symbols has attracted visitors who seek to experience their sacred and historical values[13, 24]. Islamic paradise gardens represent heavenly beauty, while Christian monasteries created cloister gardens to provide spaces for their priors to meditate and think. The Islamic gardens commemorate the concept of paradise as an ideal place for living and resting. Since the 7th century, Islamic gardens have developed into a distinctive form of garden art, shaped by the cultural and traditional aspects of various societies and influenced by religion, climate, and geography[25]. Hindu people use gardens in their spiritual activities because they believe that gardens help them carry out their religious ceremonies according to Hindu customs. It is believed that different gods and goddesses, in the Hindu tradition, possess specific characteristics and have a preference for various plants based on their color, fragrance, and other attributes[26]. The South African garden Mandela's Gold functions as a national symbol that demonstrates the country's perseverance while attracting visitors who want to see it[3]. The spiritual and cultural dimensions of gardens thus enrich visitors' experiences, making them more than mere recreational spaces.

Despite their infancy and lack of sufficient literature, gardening and landscaping have existed since ancient times but not as a part of tourism activity or attraction, except for botanical gardens, which are primarily constructed as educational and scientific tools in developing countries[27–29]. A mushrooming of roadside gardening in the major towns

and cities provides opportunities for the establishment and development of responsible garden tourism, which, if carefully implemented, will lead to the greening of the cities, the beautification of the cities, the formalization of roadside gardening tourism, and also an increase in employment opportunities [30, 31]. In the meantime, roadside garden tourism appears irresponsible due to its disregard for responsible garden tourism principles [2, 12, 27, 32]. This is evidenced by issues such as the unrecognized efforts of roadside gardeners, lack of horticultural and agroforestry awareness, stressful environments, the planting of exotic species, and gender/education inequality [2, 27]. This study attempted to explore the practicability of transforming roadside gardening into responsible garden attractions by establishing a transformation model that tourism stakeholders may embrace for sustainable garden tourism development [9, 24, 29, 33, 34].

Transforming roadside gardens into responsible tourist attractions can address tourism inconsistencies like gender and employment inequality, education disparities, limited engagement in government initiatives, inadequate wages and working conditions, cultural disrespect, human rights violations, and environmental damage [31, 32, 35]. Responsible tourism offers a framework for achieving global sustainable tourism objectives [31, 32, 36]. Despite the concept of responsibility being relatively new in tourism literature, it has been present for almost two decades. South Africa remains one of its African pioneers due to the timely reformulation of the national tourism policy with particular clauses on responsible tourism to promote responsible tourism implementation in 1996 [31, 36]. The concept has been progressively spreading throughout many countries, particularly in Africa, where tourism contributes heavily to foreign exchange [37]. While aiming to eliminate much of the irresponsibility of conventional tourism, many tourism stakeholders are still uninformed of this concept, as it is always unclear what it means to be responsible. Additionally, responsible tourism was explicitly developed for formal tourist operations by tourism authorities, huge tour firms, travel companies, and organizations exclusively [36, 37].

Gardening is a crucial strategy for environmental conservation and sustainable tourism development [2, 28]. The rise in eco-conscious travelers has transformed many gardens into tourist attractions, allowing owners to profit from sightseeing and selling produce. In Tanzanian towns, land scarcity and costs have forced gardeners to create unauthorized, temporary gardens in road-reserved areas. The potted plants enable the roadside gardeners to cope with any short-notice eviction by road authorities during road expansion or ordinary maintenance. Since they are an important part of a larger tourism economy, small-scale and informal operators of cultural and natural resources, indigenous people, are sadly ignored when policies are being developed and awareness-raising campaigns are being run, leaving them completely ignorant of the rules and significance of responsible tourism. It is important that the literature coverage or theoretical narrations should establish how small-scale and indigenous people are involved in responsible tourism. Casual roadside gardens are often overlooked in local and national tourism planning. This study proposes recognizing them as responsible urban tourism attractions along major city highways, encouraging tourism stakeholders to view them not just as aesthetic or environmental assets, but also as contributors to tourism growth and community improvement.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design and Approach

This review seeks to examine how roadside gardens accrue their identity as responsible urban tourism attractions from a conceptual and qualitative standpoint. It relies on thematic analysis and constructs an integrated model that could serve as a bridge between principles of responsible tourism and urban gardening practices using various theoretical frameworks. The purpose of this research is to explore linkages and causal connections between tourism development, sustainability, community engagement, and cultural authenticity. This kind of analysis helps in interpreting the dynamic interactions among diverse stakeholders of roadside gardens and the environmental context, especially in the emerging patterns and unexplored context where data related to roadside gardening are insufficient. Its suitability is for the applicability of results across contexts and not just limited to Africa. Hence, this inductive and interpretative methodology currently adopts an analysis of all existing literature on tourism, sustainability, and urban green spaces. From this basis and key themes that arise, a comprehensive framework develops progressively at the initial insights stage. Such a process allows a clear understanding of evolving re-

lationships between the informal gardening practices and principles of responsible tourism, all guided by economic empowerment, social inclusivity, ecological awareness, and cultural authenticity. Ultimately, this approach may develop a sufficient understanding of how to technically integrate informal roadside gardening practices into sustainable urban tourism models that advocate sustainability and empower local communities.

3.2. Systematic Literature Review

The outcomes from studies were based on a systematic literature review and methodological rigor for the development of evidence-based frameworks for repositioning roadside gardens as responsible urban tourist attractions. This methodological approach was accompanied by a specific research question targeting the role of green urban spaces in sustainable tourism. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were clearly defined to ensure selection of all peer-reviewed literature published only during relevant time periods and within relevant geographical locations. This research was conducted by using the academic databases of Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect, supplemented by the coverage from Google Scholar search and others, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

The methodology for the investigation of garden tourism included a search strategy based on Boolean operators and conjunctive terms such as "Garden Tourism," "Urban Development," "Green Tourism", "Leiper's Attraction Theory", "Responsible Tourism Guidelines" and "responsible tourism". Boolean operators, AND, OR and NOT were used to enhance the search criteria for all literature published between 2015 and 2025. The study excluded all literature that lacked the search keywords. The literature screening was conducted through title, abstract, and full-text screening under the PRISMA protocol. Eligible studies were captured in a spreadsheet with details of publication, methodology, thematic relevance, and major findings. Thematic synthesis categorized studies into clusters on the basis of sustainability, ethics, and infrastructure development. The models repeatedly found in its sources, such as Leiper's attraction theory and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)'s responsible tourism guidelines, have given a basis for strengthening the theoretical underpinning of the proposed framework. Through the demonstrated synergy of roadsides with beauty and agro-ecological responsibility, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) represents a validated and replicable platform for innovative planning of tourism.

3.3. Thematic Content Analysis

The systematic literature review involved thematic synthesis in order to conceptualize clusters in the tourism literature. Qualitative data analysis was performed through editing the data with the help of QDA Miner, coding, and interpreting existing correlations across selected studies, confirming best practices as applied by Blais and Rheault[38]. Thus, relevant articles imported into QDA Miner were reviewed. Retrieved and coded concepts included garden aesthetics, urban gardens, responsible travel, and transformation of public space, among others. Coding was automatically performed by the QDA Miner computer software, which technically employs text-based mining to identify and code based on the provided data or collected literature. This coding phase constituted the foundation for further analysis while ensuring traceability across the literature. Thematic grouping of codes related thematically to each other was performed using the co-occurring tool of proportional and frequency analysis in QDA Miner. Emerging themes included tourists' experience, responsibility and ethical dimensions, urban tourism infrastructure, digitalization of tourism, attractiveness and cultural authenticity, and regional and local coverage.

Before clustering topics, the constituent of each cluster was theorized using theoretical models. For instance, one can say that Tourists' Experience from Urban Tourism used Leiper's Attraction Theory[11], while Attractiveness and Cultural Authenticity were explained using social inclusion and empowerment frameworks. Certainly, geographic tagging introduced spatial analysis, hence leading to a particular Regional Coverage cluster that contained research studies of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Tables also worked in mapping the existing relationships among codes, themes, and regions. The latest expressions of how QDA Miner is being used can be seen in various articles, including Gaborov et al.[39], who used QDA Miner Lite to perform a thematic analysis of agile meeting challenges. Singh[40] examined the induced debt cycles of Trinidad using inductive coding and conceptual clustering. It is indeed the case that all of these studies speak of the analytical power of QDA Miner in those theoretical, qualitatively oriented insights.

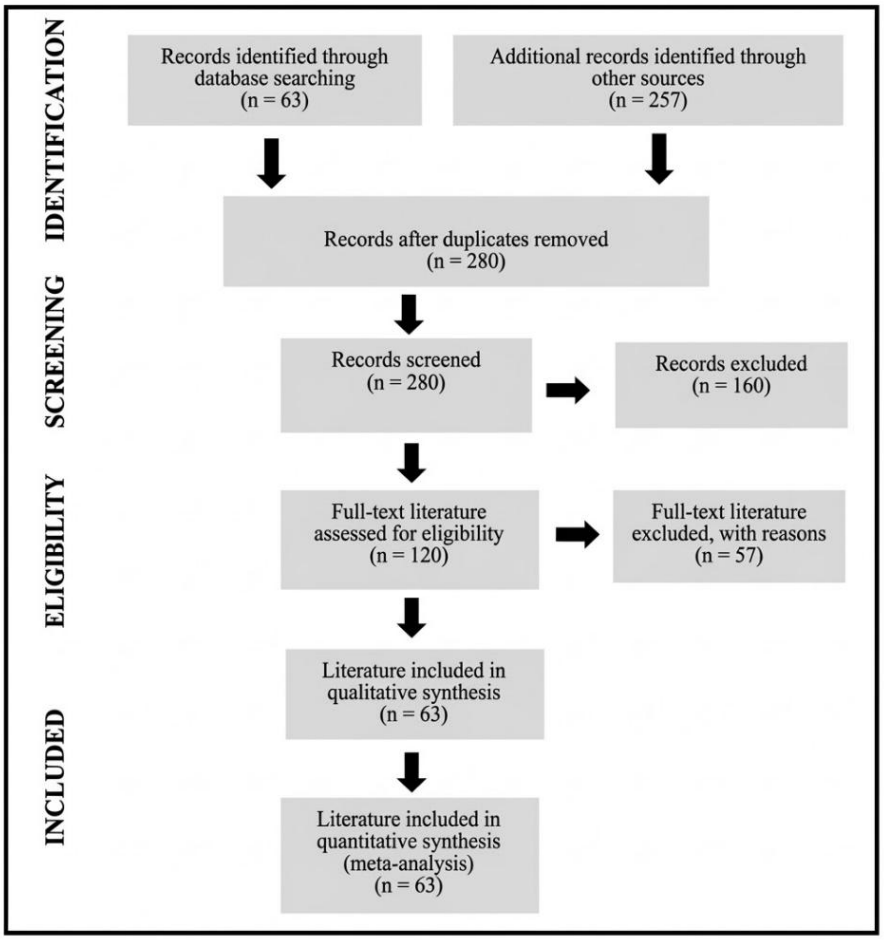

Figure 1. Flowchart of the Systematic Literature Review Process.

4. Results

4.1. Thematic Distribution and Interpretation

As shown in **Table 1**, the thematic analysis of roadside gardens as responsible urban tourist attractions reveals that there are six core themes supported by 63 coded references from multidisciplinary literature. Tourists' Experience from Urban Tourism has been the leading theme, representing 22.22% (14 codes) of the total references. This theme views the growing role of horticultural aesthetics, visitor engagement, and seasonal programming in transforming roadside gardens into leisure destinations [13, 41]. Urban tourism infrastructure follows closely with 20.64% (13 codes), emphasizing how roadside gardens may leverage the concepts of green cities, responsible gardens, and sustainable participatory planning to integrate into urban ecosystems [42, 43].

A few important aspects about the image of roadside gardens as attractions of urban tourism responsibility and sustainability can be conceptualized from their weights: Responsibility and Ethical Dimensions (17.46%). This category reflects socio-cultural values of community empowerment, zero-waste food culture, and farm-to-table networks [50, 55], while Attractiveness and Cultural Authenticity utilizes the attraction theory and place identity (14.29%) in reframing roadside gardens as relatively authentic symbols [11, 69]. Regional and Local Coverage (15.87%) and Digitalization of Tourism (9.52%), among other themes, deal with local adaptations and technological integration. The above proportions present a diversified framework melding both theory and practice that repositions roadside gardens onto the discourses of responsible, sustainable urban tourism.

4.2. Co-Occurrence Matrix of Thematic Codes

The co-occurrence matrix outlines diagnostic and conceptual tools for tracking thematic connectivity within acceptable qualitative data, as illustrated in **Table 2**. Statistically,

urban tourism infrastructure demonstrates the highest frequency of co-occurrence (n = 8) with green infrastructure and horticultural tourism discourse, indicating a point of empirical convergence. Similarly, the relationship between responsibility and ethical dimensions (n = 7) reveals the conceptual interdependence in which sustainable travel ethics are integrated into botanical and leisure-based garden practices. These significant connections correspond to robust thematic saturation and support the internal consistency of the coding framework. Greater co-occurrence enhances the matrix's capacity to reveal latent thematic relationships in multidimensional coding.

Table 1. Thematic and code distribution.

Theme	Subthemes	Code Frequency	Percent (%)	Supporting Literature
Tourists' Experience from Urban Tourism	Attractiveness of horticultural gardens, perceptions of tourists of gardens, experience from international and domestic, seasonal attractions of gardens, natural and man-made gardens, visiting friends and relatives tourism.	14	22.22%	Ahas et al.[44], Benfield[13], Catahan and Woodruffe-Burton[45], Funsten et al.[46], Lawrence[47], LuxuryTravelDiva[41], Safran and Shagin[25], Shapoval et al.[29], Waldek[48], Wang and Chen[49]
Responsibility and Ethical Dimensions	Involvement and empowerment of locals, Principles of responsible tourism, Pillars of sustainability, Responsible travel, Leave no trash behaviour.	11	17.46%	Wang and Chen[49], Goodwin[27], Hall et al.[50], Loureiro et al.[51], Nandasena et al.[52], Lawrence[47], SANS 1162:2010[31], ResponsibleTravel[53], Tichwaa and Samhere[32], TRC Tourism[54], UN-Habitat[4], GreenTourism[55]
Urban Tourism Infrastructure	Green cities, responsible gardens, Responsible urbanisation, Participatory planning.	13	20.64%	American Public Gardens Association (APGA)[1], ArchDaily[56], European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON)[42], UrbanGardeningGuru[57], environmentandsustainability.com[58], Al Masri et al.[59], London's Built Environment Community (NLA)[60], Sarma and Devi[26], Neal[61], Lee[62], Zhang et al.[63]
Digitalisation of Tourism	Digital signs and markers, smart gardens, digital marketing, adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools, modern gardens.	6	9.52%	APGA[1], Benfield[13], Boyd[64], Wu et al.[65], Herget et al.[66], UNWTO[33], UNWTO[12], Lee[62], GreenTourism[55]
Attractiveness and Cultural Authenticity	Attraction theory, Motivations of local culture, Unique identities of gardens, Ecolabeling of gardens.	9	14.29%	Catahan and Benfield[67], Catahan and Woodruffe-Burton[45], Hall et al.[50], Leiper[11], Leiper[68], Richards[69], Rogerson[70], Scheyvens[8], Shapoval et al.[29], BestforTravelers[71], GreenTourism[55]
Regional and Local Coverage	Community-based tourism, festivals, ecotourism, local events, green gardens in Europe, Africa and Asia.	10	15.87%	Aref and Redzuan[72], BobbyTours[73], Glen and Germishuizen[3], BeyondTravel[74], Mgonja et al.[75], Kazungu[30], SababuSafaris[76], StartupsofLondon[77], Neal[61], Gladysz[78], ZaraCharity[79]

Table 2. Co-occurrence matrix.

Theme	Tourists' Experience from Urban Tourism	Responsibility and Ethical Dimensions	Urban Tourism Infrastructure	Digitalization of Tourism	Attractiveness and Cultural Authenticity	Regional and Local Coverage
Tourists' Experience from Urban Tourism	—	7	8	4	6	5
Responsibility and Ethical Dimensions	7	—	6	3	4	6
Urban Tourism Infrastructure	8	6	—	2	5	7
Digitalization of Tourism	4	3	2	—	2	2
Attractiveness and Cultural Authenticity	6	4	5	2	—	3
Regional and Local Coverage	5	6	7	2	3	—

The stronger the co-occurrence, the more these lend credence to the matrix for unveiling latent thematic relations as regards multidimensional coding approaches. Conversely, low co-occurrence scores (n = 2–4) for the digitaliza-

tion of tourism may indicate either emerging or underrepresented themes in the literature, thus opening distinct avenues for future research. Structural visualization, therefore, assists in refining the coding architecture by highlighting well-considered bridging themes (for example, tech-enabled green space), guiding efforts toward creating a more integrative synthesis framework in garden tourism studies.

4.3. Statistical Evaluation of Thematic Representation

The results from descriptive analysis shown in **Table 3** demonstrate that different themes receive different levels of coverage in the existing literature. The reference distribution shows that "Tourists' Experience from Urban Tourism" represents 22.2% of total references, which falls within the range of 95% confidence interval between 11.8% and 32.6%. The literature contains this theme as one of its more important topics. The reference distribution for "Digitalization of Tourism" shows that it represents 9.5% of total references, while its confidence interval extends from 2.5% to 16.5%, indicating that studies have investigated this topic less frequently. The moderate variability, as endorsed by standard errors of ±0.036 to ±0.053, evidently tends to establish the frequencies that relate to these thematic importance assessments but can be increased with more data. Therefore, the confidence intervals show a clear demarcation between the well-developed themes, such as garden aesthetics and urban planning, and the less worked ones, such as ICT integration in garden tourism. Thus, these findings may be relied upon as a platform for further developing some of the less populated areas while ensuring that some of the well-established concepts require validation in the broader context of responsible tourism.

The chi-square test conducted across the six themes yielded a value of 3.953, which had 5 degrees of freedom, and it was below the critical threshold, which measured around 11.07 at the 0.05 significance level. The result indicates that references in the study exhibit uniform distribution across themes, resulting in equal representation of themes throughout the literature. However, it is safe to clarify that the presented statistical test evaluates how counts distribute across different categories, but it does not validate the coding process or the significance of each theme. In short, the statistical test results demonstrate that the dataset contains an even distribution of references across its multiple themes. The statistical data presented in this description show how different themes exist in the current literature. The existing areas of knowledge that researchers have established, such as urban tourism infrastructure and aesthetic considerations, are combined with the emerging theme that includes ICT integration in garden tourism.

4.4. SLR-Based Conceptual Framework

By following the suggested conceptual framework (**Figure 2**), urban authorities can redefine roadside gardens as multifunctional assets for the city, viewing them as integration points for conservation, cultural heritage, and inclusive economic development. The conceptual framework for transforming roadside gardens into responsible tourist attractions provides a well-structured path for policymakers, urban planners, and tourism stakeholders to put into operational perspectives sustainable garden tourism. This framework includes six interdisciplinary themes, which are tourists' experience, urban infrastructure, responsibility and ethics, digitalization, cultural authenticity, and regional coverage, from thematic analysis and validated through statistical and co-occurrence mapping. At bottom, Tourists' Experience in Urban Tourism stands for what these roadside gardens have great potential for: transformation into experiential and leisure destinations.

Table 3. Statistical and thematic representation.

Theme	Frequency	Proportion (*p*)	Standard Error (SE)	95% CI (±1.96 SE)
Tourists' Experience from Urban Tourism	14	0.222	0.053	[0.118, 0.326]
Responsibility and Ethical Dimensions	11	0.175	0.048	[0.081, 0.269]
Urban Tourism Infrastructure	13	0.206	0.052	[0.104, 0.308]
Digitalisation of Tourism	6	0.095	0.036	[0.025, 0.165]
Attractiveness and Cultural Authenticity	9	0.143	0.044	[0.057, 0.229]
Regional and Local Coverage	10	0.159	0.046	[0.070, 0.248]

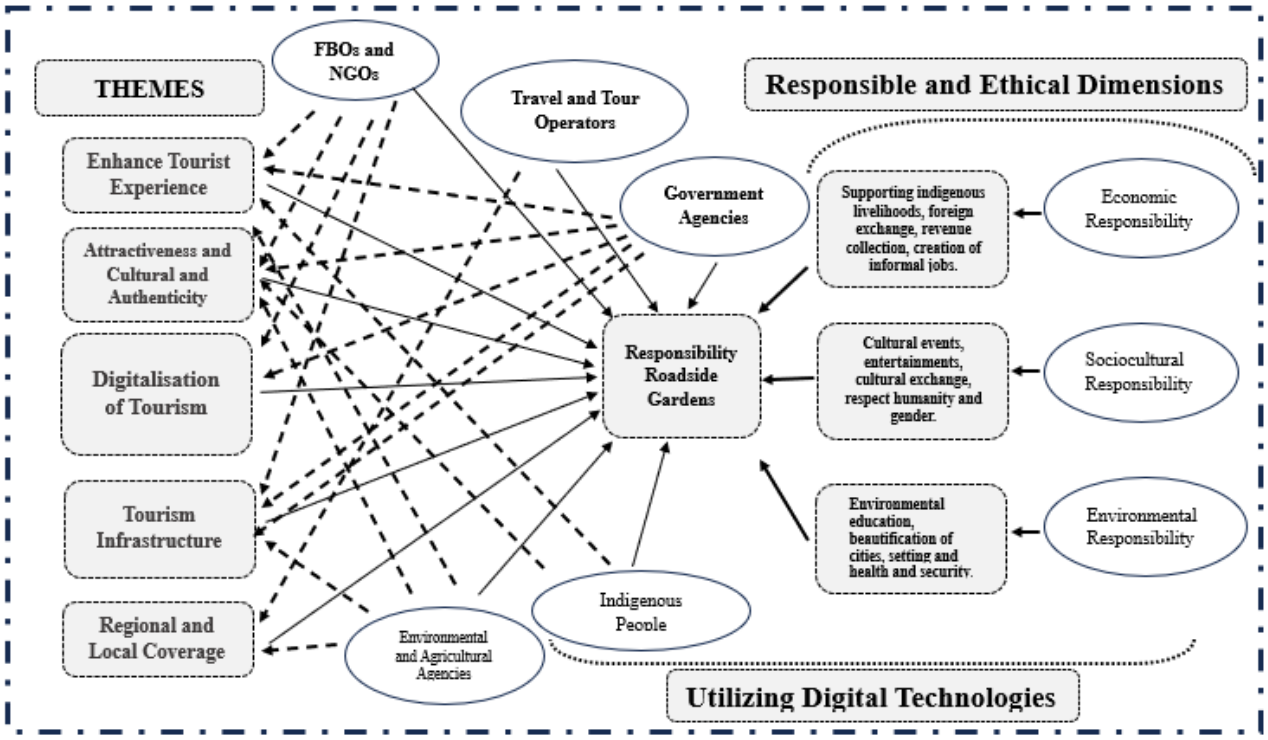

Figure 2. A Conceptual Framework for Responsible Tourism in Urban Gardens.

Such aspects include horticultural aesthetics, seasonal programming, and movements of domestic and international visitors. Urban Tourism Infrastructure, the second most interconnected of these by a network of co-occurrences (n = 8), advocates for green corridors combined with participatory planning and a greater integration into urban development agendas. Responsibility and Ethical Dimensions (17.46%) are related to such notions as community empowerment, sustainability, and zero-waste practices, in connection with the responsible tourism paradigm of UNWTO. The digitalization of tourism, while perhaps not as well represented as the other themes, offers enormous potential for strategic innovation through smart signage, advanced ICT tools, and access to digital marketing platforms to create immersive, green-tech tourism experiences. Attractiveness and cultural authenticity of place through ecolabels and cultural narratives. Such regional and local coverage ensures context and inclusiveness through localized festivals, ecotourism, and examples from Africa, Europe, and Asia.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to represent roadside gardens as responsible tourist attractions rather than casual and spatially misallocated green urban spaces, as in the case of rapid urbanization. The research question driving the analysis focused on how thematic and structural elements could significantly influence this transformation within the scope of urban tourism that is ethical and sustainable. A systematic literature review suggests six dominant thematic clusters: garden tourism, responsible tourism, urban regeneration, digital tourism, attraction systems, and regional framing. They were thus synthesized using thematic analysis, co-occurrence networking, and chi-square statistical modelling to evaluate balance, integration, and conceptual linkages.

The main question of this review was whether casual roadside gardens could be reconceptualized as responsible urban tourism attractions. The 21% prominence of the garden tourism theme supports the claim that roadside gardens already possess tourist-friendly characteristics: aestheticism, seasonal value, and cultural value. Aspects of visitor experience [29], horticultural heritage [41], and tourism seasonality [49] present these places as having intrinsic qualities relevant to experiential and leisure tourism. Thus, roadside gardens could effectively serve not only local ecological functions but also as platforms for meaningful tourist engagement. Of equal importance was a 20% representation of urban infrastructure development. The strong co-occurrence of this

theme with garden tourism (n = 8) indicates a structural and spatial relationship, suggesting that the transformation of roadside gardens into tourist spots will be contingent on the larger urban planning agenda. Studies connecting guerrilla gardening, adaptive reuse, and green infrastructure validate the notion that urban gardens are not isolated artifacts but integrated components of the city ecosystem [58, 59].

Within the socio-cultural framework, responsible and ethical dimensions (17.46%) connect quite deeply with regional framing (15%): the transformation of roadside gardens must, ethically, be an embedded place narrative. Emphasis on community empowerment and involvement [55], farm-to-table situations [47], and Tanzanian sustainability perspective [75] in literature technically demonstrate the intersection of casual roadside gardens toward achieving sustainable development goals, enhancing local livelihoods and prosperity, and cultural storytelling. The results from the cited studies emphasize that some ethical engagement with and participation from the tourism stakeholders is at the very heart of legitimizing roadside gardens as sites of responsible attraction.

This research adds genuinely new understanding to garden and urban tourism by trying to interconnect inconsistent areas. Previous studies have primarily studied green infrastructure with viewpoints on its environmental or public health benefits [46, 47], excluding what it can have for tourism potential. Interestingly, literature concerning garden tourism has almost always placed its focal point on large botanical gardens [13] or rural festivals [78] while neglecting interventions of small roadside nature. This present framework is meant to blend these perspectives into themselves, showing how even the simplest kinds of urban gardens, when carefully integrated into ethical and regenerative design, can be cultural ecological micro-attractions. This very novelty surfaces in the co-occurrence data, where codes from varying themes interlink (e.g., garden tourism with responsible tourism and urban regeneration), indicating interdisciplinary evolution. Theoretically, the results indicate that Leiper's model of attraction systems applies to garden tourism [11, 68]. The co-occurrence network revealed strong thematic linkages between garden tourism, urban regeneration, and responsible tourism, creating a conceptual triad presiding over urban transformation narratives.

The data shows that smart technologies, such as augmented reality, geotagging, or interactive storytelling, are weakly developed in the context of garden tourism. The co-occurrence measure is only between 2 and 4, receiving only 9% thematic weight, a contrast to the increasing digital infrastructure in the larger context of urban tourism [12, 65], revealing an innovation lag in terms of garden-based destination development. Theoretically, this study expands on attraction systems [11, 69] by applying the theory to micro-urban spaces. Roadside gardens, rather than traditional landmarks or heritage sites, are framed as symbolic and place-anchored attractions. This extension, in turn, will help broaden the applicability of tourism theory to more ephemeral and distributed urban features.

These findings contribute significantly to tourism scholarship as well as urban policy formulations and implementation. First, they challenge dominant spatial paradigms, holding marginal roadside zones as viable tourist spaces, thus adding nuance to the discussion on land use, accessibility, and democratization of aesthetics. With cities becoming more dense and green spaces scarcer, recognizing the latent tourism value in roadside gardens can turn planning toward low-cost, community-driven innovation. Secondly, the findings present an essential framework for tourism. Tourism, which focuses on sustainable practices and community empowerment through eco-friendly methods and cultural preservation, needs to address the increasing demand for equitable and accessible travel experiences. The method challenges existing top-down approaches [27, 50]. Roadside gardens serve as local horticultural spaces that communities maintain to protect their identity from commercial exploitation while promoting tourism that connects people to local traditions.

The third benefit of the network thematic structures is that they facilitate further methodological innovations. Co-occurrence mapping and chi-square modeling add supporting statistical strength to thematic synthesis when qualitative insights are tested against balance and saturation conceptualization. The result is a strong validity and reproduction of thematic research in tourism studies. On the policy aspect, this framework gives actionable indications to municipalities, tourism boards, and landscape architects, particularly in identifying priority thematic intersections, including regeneration, ethics, and regional storytelling, for targeted, transformative interventions that can reconceptualize roadside gardens into multifunctional attractions. Such gardens can

serve as entry points for ecotourism, community education, and even wellness initiatives.

Notwithstanding the integrative strength of this study, it has to be acknowledged that there are limitations. Given that the coding of the data is based on the literature, together with the best possible thematic and statistical tools, could not replace fieldwork. What would add to the richness of the framework as lived experience and user perspectives would be direct observations, interviews with stakeholders, and feedback from tourists. This is especially salient in the emotional or sensory components of visiting gardens. There are data limitations as well in the geographical scope of sources, as most literature on African case studies is based on European or North American contexts, which cannot necessarily be generalized to cities in the Global South. The framework must be adapted to other contexts because cultural preferences, resources, and planning systems vary widely.

6. Conclusions

The study demonstrates how roadside gardens can sufficiently function as sustainable urban tourism resources or attractions by transforming urban spaces through the principles of sustainable development and inclusive urban planning. The East African cities of Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, and Arusha view their roadside gardens as informal green spaces that need recognition because these spaces exist as hidden resources that can support responsible tourism activities. The gardens have been primarily established to generate revenue and serve decorative functions, yet they already attract visitors who come to photograph, learn, and relax at the site, which proves the gardens possess inherent tourist value. The formal recognition of their urban tourism role enables cities to create urban beauty, enhance biodiversity protection, and foster community interactions, which lead to sustainable development through participatory urban design methods.

It highlights how informal roadside gardens can be integrated into responsible tourism models through sustainable practices. The study used thematic and statistical analysis of existing literature to find key themes, which include visitor experience and urban infrastructure and community empowerment and cultural authenticity and digital innovation as essential elements of transformation. The suggested framework underscores that casual roadside gardens need to attract tourists and function as primary attractions. However, the casual roadside gardens require proper signage to meet UNWTO ethical standards. It further suggests that improvements of physical structures along with interpretive signage and community engagement should be implemented to transform roadside gardens into responsible multifunctional tourism entities that deliver social benefits, cultural benefits, economic benefits, and environmental sustainability.

The study demonstrates that roadside gardens have valuable potential, yet they remain underutilized through urban planning and tourism planning because of ongoing urban growth and limited land availability. The literature indicates that these gardens can function as micro-ecosystems and cultural symbols and community centers that support local economic growth and environmental protection and cultural heritage preservation. The thematic analysis demonstrates that development needs ethical dimensions to be included, which include community empowerment and protection of cultural identity and implementation of sustainable environmental methods. The current underutilization of digital technologies creates potential pathways that can improve visitor experiences and educational programs and marketing efforts that will help the gardens reach more urban tourists in contemporary city environments.

The findings technically facilitate the development of a flexible and detailed urban planning policy and implementation frameworks. It urges urban authorities and tourism stakeholders to recognize roadside gardens as valuable tourism assets rather than neglected or misplaced tourism assets in urban spaces. The proposed framework calls for participatory initiatives employing community participation and environmentally friendly practices as a way of adhering to responsible tourism guidelines. The framework proposed comprehensive empirical fieldwork and stakeholder participation, together with adaptations for different cultural and geographical environments to enable the development of sustainable tourism attractions from informal urban green areas. The casual roadside gardens may improve the aesthetic values of urban spaces by establishing formal social spaces while supporting sustainable urban growth due to the provision of community access to nature, which helps both environmental and economic development in areas with

rapid urban growth.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that urban tourism perspectives may change because roadside gardens serve as sustainable attractions, enabling communities to develop underdeveloped urban spaces. Urban authorities may achieve economic growth and cultural heritage protection and environmental sustainability through an integration of informal horticultural methods within official tourism systems. The proposed framework provides actionable strategies for policymakers, urban planners, and local communities to establish sustainable green spaces, which will create lively urban environments. The upcoming work should focus on three main areas: empirical validation, stakeholder participation, and technological developments to achieve complete roadside garden potential. The creation of these projects will make cities more resilient while creating fair access to nature and improving environmental protection for urban tourism systems, which use informal spaces to create valuable resources for sustainable city development and community health.

6.1. Practical, Theoretical and Policy Implications

This framework thus would highlight and establish the future of urban tourism policy, landscape design, and community engagement concerning the strong implications in this study. Most importantly, viewing roadside gardens as attractions in all those senses could enable city planners and tourism stakeholders to expand the offer of communities without deep investments in capital into new places within the city. In addition, these gardens can serve a plethora of uses in some of the most crowded areas of the city or within sparsely populated areas, such as green breathing spaces and informal learning environments, with responsible tourists as well as local residents enjoying the space for ecotourism purposes. The first is the connection responsible tourism might have for regional framing and, therefore, more than adequate support cases for co-creating roadside garden experiences with communities, co-producing with communities the roadside gardens. Empowering the local stakeholders through stewardship programs, farm-to-table initiatives, or regional culture narratives ensures authenticity and sustainability. In this perspective, do-it-yourself citizens and residents act as large constituencies not only in hosting tourists but also in determining meaning within their space [54, 55]. The theme addresses the potential of roadside gardens to act as catalysts for the continuous renewal of society and infrastructure. The studies demonstrate the transformation and reclamation of underused urban edges into vibrant social corridors that enhance biodiversity, walkability, and mental well-being [43, 49]. These upgraded areas also lie along tourist routes and serve as meeting spaces in everyday life, thereby promoting harmony between tourism and livability.

The future of urban garden tourism lies in the increased understanding of its theoretical underpinnings, which this research does through examination of the holistic framework of themes concerned with responsible tourism, cultural authenticity, infrastructure development, and digital innovations. It thereby recognizes that the experiential, ethical, and infrastructural dimensions are interconnected, leading to a multidimensional approach in the transformation of roadside gardens into sustainable tourist attractions. From this research, it is clear that innovative theoretical constructs are needed for the consideration of synergistic community involvement, cultural identity, and technology as important variables in green-space management in cities, so that they will provoke further investigations in the paradigm of responsible tourism in urban ecology and social sustainability. At the policy level, this research suggests developing integrated urban development policies oriented toward greening infrastructure, community engagement, and cultural conservation. Policymakers should also promote responsible tourism practices that benefit local empowerment, environmental stewardship, and cultural authenticity. Integrating digital technologies with casual roadside tourism to engage roadside garden tourists and enhance the management and marketing of roadside gardens. Regulatory frameworks should support eco-friendly landscaping, responsible refuse disposal, and participatory inclusion that ensures roadside gardens develop sustainably while enriching tourist experiences. This research advocates for policymakers to adopt a responsible, holistic approach concerning balances in urban green space development on ecological, social, and economic fronts.

6.2. Limitations of SLR Framework and Future Studies

The main technical limitation of this SLR framework lies in its massive dependence on existing academic studies

and theoretical models, which fail to present the actual gardening methods used in various urban areas. The analysis relies heavily on secondary data primarily drawn from European and North American studies, which are not sufficiently relevant to the context of East Africa or the broader African region. Such a technical gap hinders its applicability because different cultural, socio-economic, and environmental dimensions determine the feasibility of transforming roadside gardens into responsible tourism sites. Additionally, casual gardening practices lack standardized technical skill deficiencies, which makes it hard to maintain ecological sustainability because gardeners tend to use invasive alien species like Lantana camara and plants that attract pests. Casual roadside gardeners lack the essential training, policy, legal, and technical support necessary for implementing and promoting responsible gardening practices, as well as for developing roadside garden tourism.

The inclusion of digital technologies in roadside gardening could serve as an effective strategy for improving visitor management and visitor engagement. Certain areas in East Africa, particularly where roadside gardening is prominent, lack adequate technological infrastructure. As a result, the majority of casual roadside gardeners have limited access to both internet services and electricity, leading to digital illiteracy. The existing digital gap hinders the adoption and usage of digitalization in roadside gardening, leading to uneven benefits and the potential exclusion of roadside gardeners. Transforming informal roadside gardens into tourism assets is hindered by a lack of formal policies, regulatory support, and institutional capacity. Without policy, legal recognition, incentives, and enforcement, efforts to expand and legalize roadside gardens will fail, leading to either noncompliance or harmful ecological effects such as invasive species and environmental damage from uncontrolled growth.

Future studies should conduct comprehensive empirical research in specific roadside destinations to study how roadside gardens operate socially, ecologically, and economically. Through longitudinal case studies, researchers can study how transformation initiatives impact local communities while evaluating their sustainability. The casual roadside community and urban planners, together with garden tourists, will use participatory action research to create community-based guidelines, which will assess the social and ecological impacts of proposed projects. The research needs to combine ecological assessments with social and technological innovations to study how digitalization becomes usable in low-resource environments and how to solve the digital gap. The future studies must examine which policy and institutional frameworks need to exist so that roadside gardens can receive official recognition and financial and educational support through legal and financial and capacity-building systems. The research gaps should be addressed by future studies, which will help improve the framework by demonstrating its real-world applications and helping cities develop sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban tourism systems that use informal green spaces properly.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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