

GLOBAL TOURISM RESILIENCE AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT CENTRE - EASTERN AFRICA (GTRCMC- EA) - KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

Strategic Tourism Product Innovation

Concept Note

(<https://explore-kenya-kuniversity.hub.arcgis.com/>)

Upscaling "Tour Kenya: Search, Explore and Discover Project" through Ground-truthing and Market Integration

Background

Since 2020, the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre – Eastern Africa (GTRCMC-EA), based at Kenyatta University, has been leading a groundbreaking initiative to consolidate and digitize Kenya's tourism products and experiences. To date, thousands of geo-referenced records across 11 thematic areas have been collected from all 47 counties, ranging from accommodation and attractions to cultural events, tour operators, and ecotourism experiences.

The resulting platform, *Tour Kenya: Search, Explore and Discover*, provides an interactive, GIS-enabled hub that makes Kenya's diverse tourism offerings visible and accessible. This work has already gained international recognition, with the project being shortlisted as a Finalist in the CIO100 Africa Awards 2025 for digital innovation.

Rationale

While the project has successfully built a robust digital inventory, the current dataset includes products at varying levels of quality, readiness, and market appeal. To ensure the database directly supports Kenya's tourism growth and marketing efforts, there is an urgent need to:

1. Ground-truth the collected data—verifying products through field visits and stakeholder engagement.
2. Filter for market-ready products—identifying those that meet international, regional, and domestic market standards.
3. Integrate with marketing platforms—transferring verified content into *Magical Kenya* (KTB's official marketing platform) and other digital channels to enhance global visibility.

This next phase is essential for positioning Kenya as a diverse, authentic, and resilient destination, while directly linking research to economic value through improved product packaging and promotion.

Objectives

1. Conduct ground-truthing of geo-referenced tourism products and experiences across the 47 counties.
2. Filter, classify, and validate market-ready tourism products for domestic, regional, and international markets.
3. Integrate the validated content into Magical Kenya and partner marketing platforms.
4. Enhance tourism packaging by linking products to thematic areas, circuits, and year-round experiences.
5. Build the capacity of students and county stakeholders in field validation, product development, and digital marketing.

Expected Outcomes

- A verified, market-ready digital inventory of Kenya's tourism products and experiences.
- Seamless integration of the database into Magical Kenya and other global marketing platforms.
- Increased visibility and competitiveness of diverse tourism offerings beyond safari and beach tourism.
- Strengthened partnerships between academia, government, private sector, and counties.
- Enhanced student skills in applied tourism research, ICT, and industry engagement.

Budget Overview (Indicative)

1. Ground-truthing and Field Verification: Transport, logistics, and allowances for field teams across 47 counties.
2. Data Validation and Product Filtering: Expert consultations, workshops with county stakeholders, and quality assurance.
3. Platform Integration: Technical support for data migration into Magical Kenya and other portals.
4. Capacity Building: Training sessions for students, county officers, and private-sector partners.
5. Communication & Promotion: Development of story maps, videos, and marketing assets from the validated products.

Research Partners

- GTRCMC-EA
- Kenyatta University and other academia
- Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife
- Kenya Tourism Board (KTB)
- National Museums of Kenya (NMK)
- Council of Governors (CoG)
- County Governments
- Private-sector tourism associations

Conclusion

The *Tour Kenya: Search, Explore and Discover* project has laid a strong foundation by creating Kenya's first comprehensive geo-referenced tourism inventory. With targeted funding, this initiative will be upscaled to deliver market-ready products, seamlessly integrated into *Magical Kenya* and other platforms, positioning Kenya as a globally competitive, resilient, and culturally rich destination.

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