

# Marketing horti-tourism and rural development for leveraging tourism agenda 2030: a perspective article

Iddrisu Mohammed, Mahmoud Abdulai Mahmoud and Robert Ebo Hinson

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to draw the attention of the academic scholars to how marketing of horti-tourism can take action to contribute to tourism agenda 2030.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Reviewing literature on tourism, this paper builds a case for marketing horti-tourism based on the research gaps in literature, and future research directions are proposed to aid in the achievement of tourism agenda 2030.

**Findings** – Scholarly research on horti-tourism remains scarce, and more research attention is suggested on this subject matter. The tourism sector produced varied forms of tourism where horti-tourism is associated with horticulture farms, vegetable gardens and flower gardens which provide direct gains such as employment creation, foreign currency earnings, income generation source, poverty reduction and other gainful commercial activities. Despite the importance attached to this form of tourism in literature, less research has been conducted to market its relevance to nations and businesses. Much academic studies are needed to project this form of tourism.

**Originality/value** – This perspective paper serves as a call for tourism firms, governments and other stakeholders within and outside to make theoretical and practical contributions by marketing horti-tourism destinations to visitors which aid in the UN Tourism Agenda of 2030.

**Keywords** Horti-tourism, Marketing, SDGs

**Paper type** Viewpoint

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营销园艺旅游和农村发展以推动 2030 年旅游议程：一篇观点文章

## 摘要

**目的：**这篇文章提出观点和视角，旨在引起学术界学者对 2030 年旅游议程的关注，通过园艺旅游营销，如何采取行动为推动 2030 年旅游议程做出贡献。

**设计/方法/途径：**本文回顾了旅游业的相关文献，根据文献中的研究空白构建了营销园艺旅游的案例，并提出了未来的研究方向，以帮助实现 2030 年旅游议程。

**发现：**关于园艺旅游的学术研究仍然很少，建议对该主题进行更多的研究关注。旅游业产生了多种旅游形态，其中园艺旅游与园艺农场、菜园和花园相关，提供直接收益：如创造就业、外汇收入、拓展收入来源、减贫和其他有收益的商业活动。尽管在众多文献中都很重视这种旅游形态，但很少研究其与国家和企业的相关性，需要大量的学术研究来预测这种形式的旅游。

**原创性/价值：**这篇观点文章呼吁国内外的旅游公司、政府和其他利益相关者通过向游客营销园艺旅游目的地来进一步取得理论和实践成果，以帮助推动联合国 2030 年旅游议程。

**关键词** 园艺旅游、营销、可持续发展目标

**文章类型** 观点文章

## Marketing horti-turismo y desarrollo rural Para la agenda de turismo 2030: un estudio prospectivo

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** Este documento tiene como meta analizar cómo el marketing de Horti-turismo puede contribuir al desarrollo de la agenda del turismo 2030.

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**Diseño/metodología/enfoque:** *Se ha realizado una revisión de la literatura en bases de datos científicas de impacto a nivel internacional sobre la comercialización del horti-turismo.*

**Los Hallazgos:** *La investigación prospectiva sobre horti-turismo sigue siendo escasa y se sugiere más atención científica sobre este tema. El sector turístico produjo variadas formas de turismo donde el horti-turismo está asociado con granjas de horticultura, jardines vegetales y jardines de flores que proporcionan beneficios directos como la creación de empleo, ganancias en divisas extranjeras, fuente de generación de ingresos, reducción de la pobreza y otras actividades comerciales lucrativas. A pesar de la importancia atribuida a esta forma de turismo en la literatura, se ha prestado menos atención en la comercialización a las naciones y las empresas. Se ha puesto de manifiesto la necesidad de desarrollar más estudios para formentar esta forma de turismo.*

**Originalidad/valor:** *Este artículo exploratorio permite a las empresas de turismo, los gobiernos y otras partes interesadas dentro y fuera realizar contribuciones teóricas y prácticas a fin de comercializar sus productos en destinos de horti-turismo y, con ello, fomentar el desarrollo Agenda de Turismo de las Naciones Unidas de 2030.*

**Palabras clave** – *Horti-turismo, marketing, SDGs*

**Tipo de papel** *Punto de vista*

## Horti-tourism in literature

Agri-tourism and eco-tourism, which are segments of rural tourism (Guan and Huang, 2023; Xu *et al.*, 2022), have been guiding research within the agriculture sector over the past decades. Though agri-tourism and ecotourism can be linked to horti-tourism, they are not the same. Eco-tourism is characterised with travel to natural areas and conservation of natural resources (Ramaano, 2021), while agri-tourism is concerned with any activity developed on a working farm to attract tourists (Zhou and Chen, 2023). Until now, the concept of horti-tourism has emerged as one of newest niches of agri-tourism (Gyawali *et al.*, 2022), which is considered in various parts of the world where agriculture is a significant industry. For instance, in India, horti-tourism was developed to promote rural farmers' economy during "the COVID-19 pandemic", which had a significant impact on the travel sector. This concept was an indication of how horti-tourism became a potential panacea in reviving the tourism and hospitality sector in India. Horti-tourism is defined as visits to "horticulture farms, vegetable gardens, and flower gardens for relaxation, research, enjoyment, and/or participation in cultivational activities including harvesting, planting, and other agricultural activities" (Kuchi *et al.*, 2017, p. 793). Mainly, horti-tourism is purposeful to "develop orchards, nurseries, pocket areas, and farms to a new touristic destination with a dual aim of increasing economic benefits from horticulture and tourism from the same work field" (Gyawali *et al.*, 2022, p. 1).

This form of tourism, if well marketed, could have a transformative effect on the livelihood of rural communities. This might lead to the achievement of UN tourism agenda 2030, goal 1, that is, elimination of poverty. Poverty can be classified as one of the key issues in rural areas, therefore, the marketing of horti-tourism could create entrepreneurship opportunities, employment creation and income generation for the farmers and other people living within the community due to domestic and international tourist arrivals. In turn, this can curtail the unemployment issues bedevilling rural communities within emerging countries (Nhiwatiwa and Matanzima, 2022).

Again, the issue of partnership could emerge, leading to goal 17 (i.e. partnership), as active collaboration among all stakeholders within the tourism industry is indispensable [United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2018]. Partnership between government, private stakeholders (Fichter and Román, 2023) and the communities can be anchored around community-based resource management such as land and water (Ramaano, 2022), as these resources could serve as key drivers to horti-tourism sustainability. This can empower the people within the communities in a form of collaboration in tourism operations, planning and decision-making, which in turn could lead to preservation of community resources (i.e. nature reserves and parks) to improve the livelihood of people living around

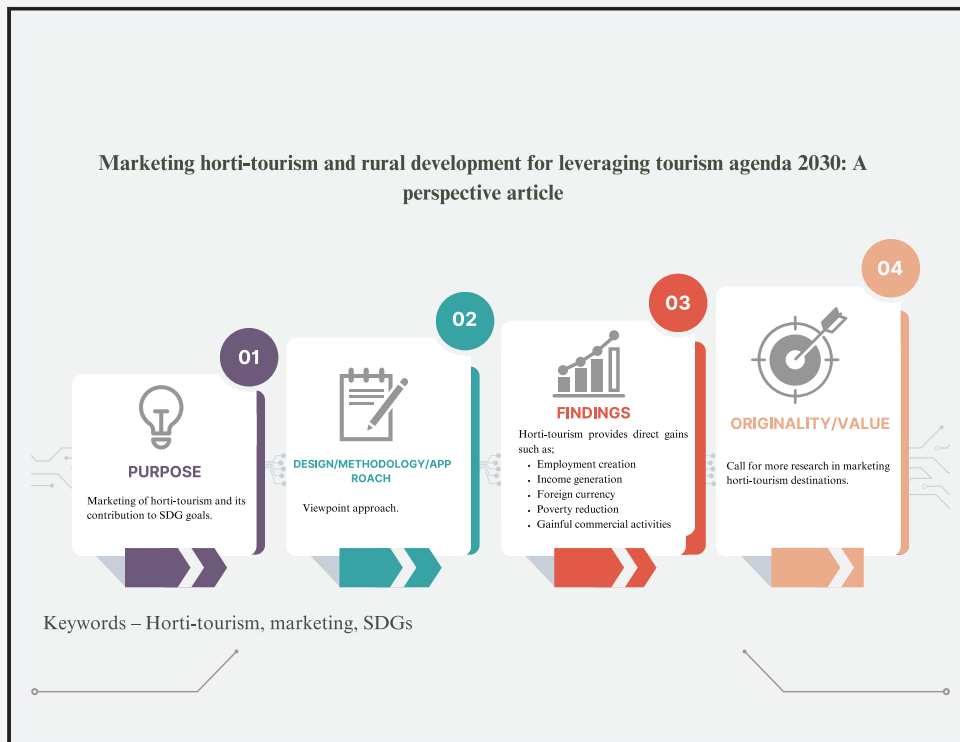
the resources (Jia *et al.*, 2023; Ramaano, 2023). This can complement other tourism activities that are closely related to horti-tourism. Hence, the marketing of horti-tourism can generate the demand for its complement. Moreover, marketing of horti-tourism should not be considered sustainable or eco-tourism as it can lead to green wash.

This perspective paper assesses how horti-tourism could be used as yardstick in achieving these UN tourism agenda 2030 goals (i.e. SDGs 1 and 17) and to point to future research directions that will ensure leveraging horti-tourism to enhance the economy of farmers and other stakeholders within the rural and urban–rural communities. Also, it could be the panacea to ensure we have our foot on the accelerator of over tourism. While all SDGs are interconnected and contribute to the overall sustainability agenda, SDGs 1 and 17 stand out in the context of marketing horti-tourism due to their direct alignment with poverty alleviation and global partnership. This paper used Google Scholar approach using the combination of words such as horti-tourism or agri-tourism or entertainment farming. This led to 14 articles that were found to the known publishers (Emerald Insight, Taylor and Francis, Science Direct). The authors read through the articles and found 10 of the papers to be closer to what we were looking for. The papers were read over and over for the authors to appreciate the better understanding of how horti-tourism was used. This strengthens the arguments and paves the way for studies to be conducted in this neglected domain.

### UN tourism agenda 2030 and horti-tourism

Already, tourism researchers have contributed significantly by developing and empirically tested practical measures that can be deployed to enhance the achievement of the SDGs. While initially these took the form of other tourism activities such as heritage tourism (Hosseini *et al.*, 2021), more recent efforts could be focused on the concept of horti-tourism, an open concept that leverages farming activities specifically within remote communities to

**Figure 1** Graphical abstract by authors



improve the economy of farmers and economic growth of the community at large. The SDG number 17 highlights partnership. For instance, farmers can partner with tourism businesses and governmental agencies in charge of tourism to showcase their farms as well as their gardens in the promotion of tourism. This activity could convert to currency and mileage that will benefit both the farms and other stakeholders in alleviating poverty, leading to the achievement of goal 1 (see [Figure 1](#)).

Horti-tourism and its effects on local farmers can be related to national poverty eradication objectives, such as those connected with entrepreneurship ([Guo et al., 2023](#)) and the empowerment of underprivileged groups like women and young people. These entrepreneurship activities can take the form of training the people on how to present horti-tourism products and services to potential tourists who might visit the farms. These services could involve planting of vegetables, nursing seeds, how to harvest, educating tourists about the duration of planting and the time of harvesting. This could be an innovative way of providing jobs within the rural and urban rural farming communities.

Marketing activities can leverage the emergence of technology and the digital economy through social media marketing. Thus, the concept of TikTok short video narratives can be used as a strategic digital marketing tool to enhance the presence of the destination, as this could give the potential tourist the opportunity to have a pictorial overview of the destination, and the comments and reviews provided could serve as an additional advantage for both the tourist and the destination at large. These short video narratives can also be shared on other social media platforms to heighten the presence of the destination.

### Future research direction

The distractions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the issues of climate change, rural livelihood, over reliance on heritage destinations and other form tourism activities re-echoed the concept of horti-tourism. These have affected and continue to play a role in the sustainability of tourism destinations. Thus, the tourism industry must urgently consider the marketing or promoting horti-tourism to ensure sustainable tourism into the future, in line with SDGs 1 and 17. This perspective article provided the contributions that could be achieved if horti-tourism is implemented. Research on horti-tourism remains underexplored; therefore, this study provides a gateway for academic scholars to contribute to the literature in understanding the concept of horti-tourism, which may draw the attention of destination managers and marketers. If well marketed, horti-tourism can gain attention and attraction of tourists globally. This might lead to destination patronage, and the livelihood of the rural and urban rural communities may be improved.

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