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Research article

A systematic review of bleisure tourism scholarship in Africa: Scope and trends

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ABSTRACT
Bleisure tourism has experienced steady attention in global scholarship as destinations reposition themselves within the competitive business-travel markets. Yet, bleisure scholarship in the African context remains dispersed, sporadic, uneven in methodological depth and limited theorisation. This study presents a PRISMA-guided systematic review of bleisure tourism research in Africa to map its scope, identify dominant trends, and highlight persistent gaps. A structured search and screening process yielded a modest corpus of studies, with scholarly attention geographically concentrated in urban contexts in South Africa. The thematic synthesis emphasised traveller experiences and motivations, relying predominantly on descriptive, qualitative and survey-based designs, exhibiting limited theoretical integration. The review established that issues related to governance, destination planning, labour mobility, informality, and development policy remain marginal. With findings indicating that bleisure tourism scholarship in Africa is emergent and exploratory rather than consolidated, the review provides the first structured overview of this field in an African context and outlines priorities for future research aimed at strengthening conceptual grounding, methodological diversity, and comparative insight.

KEYWORDS
Africa; bleisure tourism; business travel; informality, PRISMA

Introduction

Business tourism has increasingly gained recognition as a critical dimension of tourism development (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). Zhang et al. (2025) postulate that business events such as conferences, conventions, and incentive trips play a pivotal role in the global economy, significantly contributing to job creation and direct spending. Accordingly, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), contends that business travel spending in 2024 exceeded pre-pandemic levels, indicating this sector's sustained importance (WTTC, 2024). Recently, some scholars, as well as the Event Industry Council estimated the global business events industry to be worth US$1.6 trillion (Event Industry Council, 2023; Rittichainuwat et al., 2025). According to Zhang et al. (2025), the American Hotel & Lodging Association in 2022 reported that almost 90% of business travellers expressed interest in extending their trips for personal leisure. Within this context, bleisure travel is identified as a growing trend which integrates business and leisure components within a single trip (Choe et al., 2025; Koll et al., 2025). Furthermore, the family travel segment has also expanded in the post-pandemic context, with many bleisure travellers combining conferences with family vacations (Hollander, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). Contemporary scholarship asserts that the travel and tourism market environment increasingly experiences demand from people who prefer combining work and leisure or tourism experiences like exploring new places; consequently, evolving to the emergent phenomenon of bleisure travel (Boeri et al., 2020; Caicedo-Barreth et al., 2020; Chung et al., 2020; Ezeuduji, 2024; Tsaur & Tsai, 2023; Walia et al, 2023). According to Chung et al (2020) bleisure (a portmanteau of 'business travel'

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and 'leisure travel') tourism refers to the phenomenon of combining business travel and leisure travel into one trip. Batala & Slevitch (2024) contend that bleisure travel has emerged as a transformative trend reshaping the landscape of tourism and corporate travel, with growing technological developments and an increase in remote work culture aiding interest and steady growth. Park et al. (2025) assert that the contemporary work environment, characterised by flexible work conditions, has had an immense influence on the desire for work-life balance through bleisure travel. Bleisure travel, as such, has seen an exponential growth across global tourism markets. Bleisure travel therefore stems from a travel niche trend of combining leisure and business commitments when traveling (Lichy & Mc Leay, 2018; Sood & Juneja, 2024).

Extant scholarship attributes the growth of bleisure travel to a range of factors, one being the cumulative desire by business travellers to escape the norm and seek new leisure opportunities while traveling (Makoni & Rogerson, 2024; Pinho & Marques, 2021). Such developments provide a blend of opportunities and challenges for tourism destination marketing organisation (DMO) globally (Petrenko et al. 2023). Predeepa et al. (2025) contend that the expanding bleisure markets compels the DMO's to reassess their strategies and embrace comprehensive approaches to meet the dynamic expectations of bleisure travellers. Pinho and Marques (2021) argue that the bleisure market requires the availability of business tourism assets like business convention centres, accommodation facilities, transportation, a range of leisure activities and an improved destination image. Makoni & Rogerson (2024), and Davidson (2019) contend that after many years of under-representation and probable neglect in tourism scholarship there is an observable increase in the focus and an observable upturn in the volume of international literature devoted to business tourism, albeit with a pronounced leaning in favour of scholarship from the Global North. For the Global South, particularly within the African context, business tourism literature is relatively emergent, despite the growing importance and evolving nature of the sector (Matiza, 2020; Tichaawa, 2017). According to Matiza (2020), there is a recognised dearth of business tourism literature, particularly in consideration of their motivations to visiting African destinations. This trend coincides with the observable lacunae in bleisure research from this context. Consequently, given that the contemporary era has witnessed a paradigm shift primarily driven by evolving tourist preferences, trends and the tourism market environment (Patiño et al., 2016), a heightened focus on scholarship in bleisure travel within the African context is critical; especially when considered in the backdrop of the increasing flow of business events towards the continent (Makoni & Rogerson, 2023; Matiza, 2020; Rogerson, 2015; Tichaawa, 2017; 2021).

From a Global North perspective, extant enquiry appraises bleisure travel's economic impacts on local tourism and its potential to develop destinations (Chung et al. 2020; Kumar & Gupta, 2025; Petrenko et al. 2023; Sood & Juneja, 2024). Sood & Juneja (2024) highlights that bleisure travel contributes to higher revenue for accommodation, meetings and conferences venues, attractions as well as food and beverage, as bleisure travellers tend to extend their stay beyond business function to indulge in various leisure activities. Furthermore, such studies have examined bleisure travellers' motivations and benefits, such as novelty seeking, sociocultural engagement, psychological and interpersonal benefits and tensions arising from professional obligations, and professional development (Lichy & McLeay, 2018; Liu et al., 2024; Mehlomakhulu & Buschke, 2023; Rittichainuwat et al., 2025; Sood & Juneja, 2024; Tsaur & Tsai, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). Despite the noticeable growth in interest in bleisure travel, there is a distinct lacuna, with literature evidence on Bleisure from the Global South. Moreso, such evidence suggests potential benefits for African cities and economies (Makoni & Rogerson, 2024; Rogerson, 2015). Nonetheless, scholarship attention on bleisure tourism in the Global South remains limited and fragmented. Consequently, this study seeks to address these shortfalls, through a synthesis of existing literature on bleisure travel within the African context. This literature synthesis, therefore, aims to highlight the current scope and trends of bleisure scholarship in Africa, with the aim of establishing an empirical basis for subsequent research on the development of a corpus of African bleisure scholarship. Additionally, it is anticipated that this study will foreground efforts for identification of integrative frameworks that combine ecological, motivational, and managerial perspectives, on bleisure tourism travel, aligned with current priorities for the development and promotion of bleisure travel within the Global South context, with specific focus on Africa.

Literature review

Overview and conceptual foundations of global bleisure research

Tala et al. (2011) traces the origins of bleisure to The Future Laboratory, one of Europe's leading trend, brand and future consultancies, which in 2009 proposed the concept, to capture the blurred boundaries between business and leisure travel. Commonly considered and understood to be a hybrid form of travel in which business trips are combined with leisure through either extending the length of stay or integrating leisure pursuits into the business itinerary, bleisure tourism is conceptualised at the intersection of business tourism, lifestyle mobility, and experiential travel (Lichy & McLeay, 2018; Zhang et al., 2025). Current scholarship suggests a progressive blurring of the boundaries between work and non-work domains, mostly influenced by alterations in organisational practices, flexible work arrangements, and the growing importance of experience-oriented consumption in tourism; which in a sense points to the fact that bleisure doesn't just emerge as a new form of tourism mobility, but also represents a reconfiguration of established business travel practices in which leisure assumes a more central role (Batala & Slevitch, 2024; Chung et al., 2020; Lash et al., 1993; Pizam et al., 2000). Early understandings of bleisure framed it as an extension of corporate travel, emphasising its commercial potential of destinations and service providers while more contemporary considerations has shifted attention towards the behavioural and experiential dimensions of bleisure, viewing travellers as actively negotiating time, space, and identity across professional and personal roles; a shift which has broadened or extended the analytical scope of the concept, moving it beyond a narrow industry category towards a wider understanding of hybrid mobility practices (Lichy & McLeay, 2018; Liu et al., 2024; Makoni & Rogerson, 2024; Mehlomakhulu & Buschke, 2023; Rittichainuwat et al., 2025; Sohaili et al., 2022; Sood & Juneja, 2024; Tala et el., 2011; Tsaur & Tsai, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025).

A dominant focus within the conceptual evolution of bleisure travel is premised on individual travel motivations, experiences, and behavioural patterns, particularly in relation to work-life balance and the pursuit of meaningful and restorative experiences during business travel (Batala & Slevitch, 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Makoni et al., 2023; Makoni & Rogerson, 2024). Lichy & McLeay (2018) allude that concurrently, a smaller body of the emerging work addresses destination and industry perspectives, including the adaptation of tourism infrastructure, services, and marketing strategies to accommodate travellers who occupy dual roles as workers and tourists. Additionally, more recent contributions situate bleisure within wider discussions of work-leisure boundary blurring and hybrid mobilities linked to digitalisation and flexible working arrangements (Pradeepa et al., 2025; Tala et al., 2011; Tsaur & Tsai, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). Despite the broadening of the scope of bleisure travel, the conceptual foundations of bleisure tourism remain relatively diffuse. Much of the literature draws implicitly on perspectives related to the experience economy, work-life balance, and travel motivation, yet these are rarely integrated into a coherent or clearly articulated framework specific to bleisure travel. As a result, bleisure tourism is often treated as a descriptive label for observed practices rather than as a fully theorised form of tourism mobility, contributing to an empirically active but conceptually fragmented field.

Bleisure is the nexus between work and tourism, with the bleisure traveller switching between the roles of worker and tourist and is considered as a novel type of travel in which individuals incorporate leisure activities into their business trips (Calitz & Cullen, 2025; Chung et al., 2020; Tsaur & Tsai, 2023). In a world of rapidly evolving tourism landscape, bleisure travel has emerged as a transformative trend where business travellers are able to balance their professional responsibilities and their personal desires while travelling (Sharma et al., 2024). While business tourism and leisure tourism have long existed as separate segments of tourism interest, the rapid growth in technology, flexible working conditions, including remote working, has had a strong impact on the rapid expansion of bleisure tourism globally (Sood & Juneja, 2024; Tsaur & Tsai, 2023). For instance, according to the Business Research Company (2026), the bleisure travel market size has grown strongly in recent years and is currently projected to grow from $469.45 billion in 2025 to $513.62 billion in 2026 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.4%. Such growth in the historic period can be attributed to growth of corporate travel, increase in international business trips, rise of global conferences, flexible work cultures, expansion of airline connectivity. It is further contended that bleisure travel market

size is expected to see strong growth in the next few years, increasing to $732.79 billion in 2030 at a CAGR of 9.3% (Business Research Company, 2026). Such sharp increases in demand for bleisure experience bares testament to the changing traveller motivations, where business travellers seek to combine leisure experiences, to pursue a change of scenery or engage in activities that stimulate their physical and mental well-being while on business travel (Tsaur & Tsai, 2023). Cautious postulations warn that these rapid developments of bleisure travel come with developmental implications for host destinations, particularly for hotels. As a result, cities in the Global North, and Asia, are investing in resources such as hotel rooms with sufficient working space, Wi-Fi connectivity and a range of amenities to accommodate the needs of bleisure travellers (Boros et al., 2025; Pradeepa et al., 2025). Consequently, bleisure tourism is examined as a practical or market-oriented phenomenon rather than as a theoretically grounded form of hybrid mobility, limiting deeper engagement with organisational, institutional, and structural dimensions of business-leisure travel.

Bleisure tourism in African contexts

Bleisure travel is still embryonic and largely centred in the Global North, with contemporary outputs dominated by themes such as bleisure travellers' motivations, destination attributes, bleisure sustainability, as well as policy and governance issues (Pinho & Marques, 2021). Evidence of business and leisure tourism as individual tourism segments is well documented within various regions of the African continent (Acha-Anyi, 2020; Makoni & Rogerson, 2023; Marias et al., 2017; Meyer & Meyer, 2017; Rogerson, 2015; 2023; Tichaawa, 2017). However, empirical inquiry on, specifically, bleisure travel is still faint and largely fragmented within the two domains that encompass bleisure travel. Contrary to the expanding global literature, research on bleisure tourism in African contexts remains limited in both volume and scope. Extant studies are focused on a smaller number of urban destinations, most notably in South Africa, and are predominantly case-based and exploratory in nature (Makoni et al., 2023; Makoni & Rogerson, 2024; Walia et al., 2023). Such a narrow geographic and empirical focus means that current understandings of bleisure travel in Africa are shaped by limited set of institutional, economic, and spatial contexts, leaving large parts of the continent underrepresented in scholarly debate around the phenomenon. Where such cases are examined, attention is focused primarily on traveller experiences, leisure activities undertaken during business trips, and the everyday practices through which work and leisure are combined (Ezeuduji, 2024; Makoni & Rogerson, 2024).

Within the bleisure tourism context, these studies provide valuable insight into how bleisure tourism is enacted in specific urban settings, including contexts characterised by informality and distinctive business travel patterns; nonetheless, the studies rarely extend their analysis to broader structural issues such as policy frameworks, destination governance, labour mobility systems, or the role of bleisure tourism within wider development strategies (Ezeuduji, 2024; Makoni & Rogerson, 2024; Walia et al., 2023). Consequently, African bleisure tourism scholarship remains predominantly descriptive, with limited conceptual consolidation or comparative ambition. The current patterns mirror the broader methodological and theoretical tendencies highlighted in the global literature; nonetheless, their efforts are amplified in the African context by the small size and fragmentation of the evidence base. As such, in the absence of systematic synthesis, individual studies remain analytically isolated, making it difficult to assess cumulative trends, dominant themes, and persistent gaps; thereby providing a clear rationale for the current study, which seeks to consolidate existing bleisure tourism scholarship in Africa, map its scope and trends, and establish a coherent foundation for future empirical and conceptual work within the bleisure nexus.

Research methodology

Adopting an exploratory approach, this study pursues an analysis of secondary sources through a systematic literature review (SLR). To identify eligible articles for inclusion in the systematic review, the study followed the PRISMA flowchart and guidelines, a procedure commonly applied in marketing and consumer research in organising relevant literature (Moher et al., 2010; Rehman et al., 2020). Foregrounded by the PRISMA-

2020 framework (Abrahams & Bama, 2023; Tugwell & Tovey, 2021), the guidelines provided the guiding structure for data collection, screening, and synthesis; an approach that was adopted as it guaranteed transparency, replicability, and methodological rigour in identifying and analysing scholarly evidence (Page et al., 2021). The steps involved developing relevant search terms or keywords, searching databases, screening titles and abstracts, reviewing the full text publications, quality assessment and data extraction, and reporting of findings. Before performing all the steps, the researchers relied on various relevant databases. Subsequent to the establishment of the keywords or search terms [bleisure tourism in Africa, bleisure travel, business leisure travel in Africa] the review commenced with the identification of relevant studies from databases and open access repositories. Particularly, the keywords were applied in Boolean combination (and/or) across major databases and publishers including ScienceDirect, Springer, Taylor and Francis, Emerald, Emerald Insights, Sage, and Wiley. Additionally, Google Scholar was consulted to capture whatever relevant literature might have been missed during the search of the databases. From the search process, a combined total of 4576 (Figure 1) records were obtained. Before the formal screening process, exclusion of duplicates was undertaken; followed by the preliminary title and abstract screening which yielded a further 4555 record exclusions (Abrahams & Bama, 2023; Idris et al., 2026; Page et al., 2021; Tugwell & Tovey, 2021). The remaining 21 records were then subjected to the final full-text screening process. Of these, 1 record appeared without full-text items and was also excluded, leaving 20 records which met the eligibility criteria. The 20 records then underwent the final selection based on the established inclusion criteria, of which 16 records did not meet the inclusion criteria, and, therefore, 4 records were retained for final analysis.

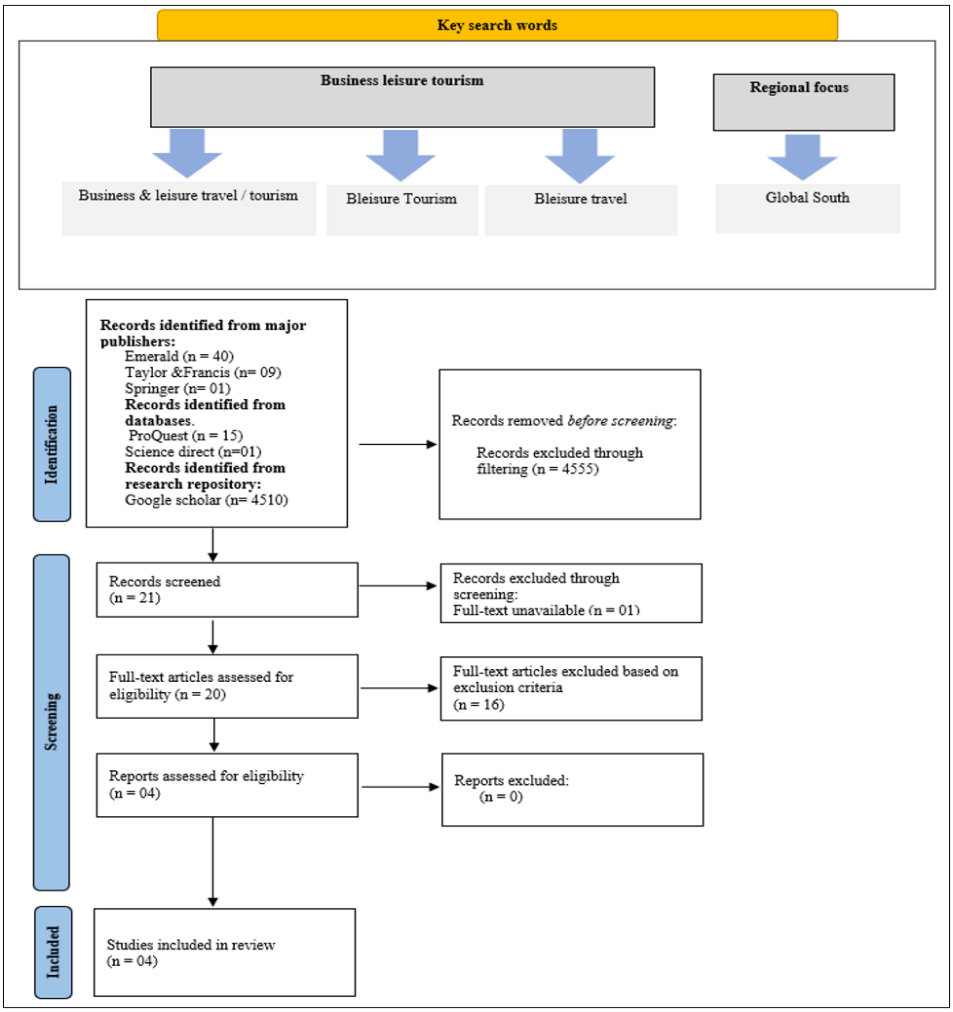

Figure 1: PRISMA flow chart of the article selection process

Source: Adapted from Abrahams & Bama (2023) and Hollebeek et al. (2023)

For the exclusion criteria, studies were excluded if they did not address bleisure tourism in Africa, were non-English publications or lacked full-text availability or if they focused on unrelated tourism niches. Conversely, studies that were included focused on bleisure tourism and/or bleisure travel in Africa, and provided empirical, conceptual or theoretical insights relevant to motivations, behavioural patterns, management strategies, or sustainability in bleisure travel. Data from each included study was extracted into an Excel sheet capturing variables such as authors, publication year, study focus, methods, geographical scope, and major findings. Subsequently, a thematic approach was adopted and applied to identify recurring patterns within the selected records relating to bleisure travel. The data were categorised into emerging themes including the conceptualisation and scope of bleisure tourism, traveller experiences and motivations, contextual specificities and disruption, as well as the methodological orientation of the literature. Adhering to the PRISMA guidelines, all stages of the process were documented to enhance replicability and reduce selection bias. Figure 1 illustrates the PRISMA flow chart of the article selection process.

Results

Characteristics of the reviewed literature

In accordance with the parameters established in the PRISMA-2020 declaration, this SLR presents an overview of articles that were included in the study by way of a thematic approach. The findings presented are synthesised into four consolidated thematic domains that reflect recurring patterns across the reviewed bleisure tourism literature in the African context. The temporal distribution of the literature reflects an uneven growth in scholarly attention, consistent with the relatively recent recognition of bleisure tourism as a distinct field of enquiry within tourism studies (Walia et al., 2023). Rather than reporting on individual studies in isolation, the analysis adopts a thematic synthesis approach to identify dominant conceptual emphases, areas of convergence, and persistent gaps within African bleisure tourism scholarship. Accordingly, the publication trends (Table 1) highlight a rather non-existent trend of bleisure scholarship in Africa before 2023, pointing to a largely peripheral focus on bleisure travel until this period. From 2023 onwards, a modest increase in publications becomes apparent, coinciding with emergent academic interest in business tourism diversification, urban tourism dynamics, and evolving work-leisure arrangements. This growth remains nascent rather than exponential, underscoring the niche status of bleisure tourism scholarship in Africa when compared to more established tourism subfields.

Furthermore, the timid growth could potentially be explained in relation to the contextual, rather than chronological factors. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted renewed scholarly interest in business travel, mobility disruption, and the blurring of work and leisure boundaries creating conditions under which bleisure travel attracted greater analytical attention (Zhang et al., 2025). Studies emerging during this period frequently situate bleisure within discussions of travel uncertainty, behavioural change, and adaptive tourism practices, rather than presenting it as a stable or institutionalised tourism segment (Walia et al., 2023). Importantly, the literature currently doesn't yet signal a consolidated or theoretically grounded research stream, but rather, an early-stage field shaped by external shocks, urban business travel dynamics, and shifting work practices, with considerable scope for deeper empirical and conceptual development (Ezeuduji, 2024; Kimbu et al., 2025; Makoni & Rogerson, 2024; Tsaur & Tsai, 2023). The thematic synthesis reveals four dominant themes: conceptualisation and scope of bleisure tourism, traveller experiences and motivations, contextual specificities and disruption, and the methodological orientation of the literature. Together, these themes capture how bleisure tourism in African contexts is primarily understood through experiential and behavioural lenses, shaped by distinctive urban and socio-economic conditions, and examined using predominantly exploratory research designs. Collectively, the themes reflect an emergent field that foregrounds individual travel practices while offering more limited engagement with structural, institutional, and policy-related dimensions of hybrid business-leisure mobility. Table 1 summarises the thematic domains identified across the included studies, illustrating the scope and orientation of existing research despite the limited size of the evidence base.

Table 1: Research themes covered by the reviewed studies

Theme	Subthemes	Representative study	Key insights
Conceptualisation and scope of bleisure tourism	Definitions of bleisure; hybrid business-leisure travel; experiential framing	Ezeuduji (2024)	Bleisure is conceptualised as the blending of business and leisure travel, with emphasis on experiential dimensions rather than context-specific theorisation in African settings.
Traveller experiences and motivations	Leisure activities during business trips; work–life balance; experiential outcomes	Tsaur and Tsai (2023); Makoni and Rogerson (2024)	Bleisure participation is shaped by experiential and motivational drivers, with activities structured around business obligations and local urban contexts.
Contextual specificities and disruption	Informal business tourism; urban informality; COVID-19 impacts	Makoni and Rogerson (2024); Walia et al. (2023)	African bleisure practices reflect everyday urban realities and are sensitive to external shocks, highlighting contextual variability and uncertainty.
Methodological orientation of the literature	Qualitative dominance; descriptive designs; limited theoretical integration	Across reviewed studies	Bleisure tourism research in Africa remains exploratory, relying largely on descriptive qualitative approaches with limited conceptual consolidation.

Conceptualisation and scope of bleisure tourism

The reviewed studies conceptualise bleisure travel as the act of blending business commitments with leisure activities while travelling in Africa. Ezeuduji (2024), contends that the bleisure travel refers to a type of travel that blends aspects of leisure with business travel. Equally, Walia et al (2023), concurs that the concept "bleisure travel" is used to define travel that involves components of both business and leisure activities. This conceptual position aligns with the perspectives from the Global North scholars, who contend that, bleisure travel is hybridisation between business tourism and leisure tourism (Mercan & Sandikci, 2024; Ozdemir & Celebi, 2023; Walia et al., 2023). Sood and Juneja (2024) provides a much simpler definition, asserting that bleisure travel is the combination of business and leisure into one trip. This hybridisation could be pre-planned, where the business travellers pre-arrange leisure activities in their itinerary or it could be a spontaneous decision by the business traveller to participate in leisure activities while on business travel or post-their business travel commitments (Sthapit & Vaiya, 2025; Tsaur & Tsai, 2023). The reviewed literature suggests no ambiguity or contradictions on the conceptual basis and scope of bleisure travel in the African bleisure research versus the global scholarship on bleisure travel. However, literature evidence on African bleisure travel currently illustrates an emerging field of interest, where conceptual basis of bleisure travel is anchored to the Global North perspectives, rather than a region-specific contextualisation and conceptualisation. Given the embryotic nature of bleisure travel within the African context, conceptual and theoretical gaps emerge. Future empirical pursuits on bleisure travel within the African context should focus on addressing these lacunae and in developing an Africa-centric conceptual basis of the bleisure travel phenomenon.

Traveller experiences and motivations

The literature evidence suggests that, while the primary motive for travel is business, leisure is integrated into the itinerary for psychological renewal purposes, to escape the business norm, to experience local cultures and more (Tsaur & Tsai, 2023). Correspondingly, Ezeuduji (2024) avers that destinations' attractions including beaches, cultural festivals, concerts and sporting events, are some of the motivating factors for business travellers to engage in leisure activities. These empirical assertions by Global South Scholars are consistent with some of the existing theoretical underpinnings on bleisure travel, particularly Iso-Ahola's escaping and seeking theory that global north scholar have frequently underpinned in bleisure traveller motivation studies. Iso-Ahola's theoretical position asserts that people are motivated to travel due to an internal desire to leave the personal, or interpersonal environment behind (Escape) and the desire to pursue personal or interpersonal rewards through leisure or other tourism activities (Iso-Ahola & Baumeister, 2023; Iso-Ahola, 1982). In the context of African bleisure travel, literature sources suggests that travellers often seek to engage in novel experiences outside of the business commitments (Ezeuduji, 2024). These leisure experiences could range from visiting friends and relatives, shopping experience, participating in religious activities, sightseeing as well as nightlife experiences (Makoni & Rogerson, 2024). The choice of leisure activities by bleisure travellers is, at times, coupled by an extension itinerary beyond business commitments and an increase in financial spending, which positively impacts on local economies (Ezeuduji, 2024; Sthapit & Vaidya, 2025). However, Ezeuduji (2024), warns that more studies are needed in the future to identify the specific needs, motivations and other variables affecting bleisure travellers' choices and buying behaviour. The current bleisure scholarship within the African context, poses epistemological challenges for scoping of bleisure travellers within the African context. Ezeuduji further avers that bleisure

travel is a new tourism segment with its own unique characteristics and therefore requires insight on bleisure travel experiences and motives, can be better achieved through bleisure travel specific empirical evidence as opposed to assessing the trait of business travellers and leisure travellers in their individual domains.

Contextual specificities and disruption

The synthesised literature suggests that the bleisure tourism landscape in the Global South is largely characterised by informal business tourists, whose leisure activities reflects their everyday life experiences, like visiting friends and relatives, engaging in sporting activities and shopping (Makoni & Rogerson, 2024). Interestingly, the available data on bleisure tourists in the Global South appears to be primarily derived from university academics attending conferences (business) and thereby engage on leisure activities while conferencing, as well as healthcare travellers (medical tourism), IT specialists and general tourists. This approach provides a narrow lens to evaluate the contextual specifications of bleisure travel, considering that it lacks perspectives from the broader tourism formal and informal business including the events sector, retails, and hospitality. Ezeuduji (2024) further concurs that bleisure sampling focuses solely on academics as bleisure travellers and is not sufficient to broadly conceptualise the nature and motives behind Bleisure travel as the behaviours of academic travellers is different from other forms of tourists. Moreover, Walia et al. (2023) noted that bleisure travel is sensitive to global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore the future of bleisure tourism post-pandemic is quite bleak. Walia et al, (2023) further elucidated that the uncertainty surrounding the future of bleisure travel may be related to psychological and interpersonal traveller insecurities related to safety, demotivation and anxiousness, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, according to Expedia (2025), there appears to be a steady increase in global bleisure tourism demand, predicting an 11% increase in global bleisure tourism demand, rising to an anticipated 42% in 2026. This growing bleisure tourism demand has enormous implications for academics, government entities and tourism industry practitioners in the Global South. Scholars should begin to grow bleisure tourism scholarship to derive relevant theoretical positions and frameworks that can guide development by industry players and governments.

Methodological orientation of the literature

Bleisure tourism research in the Global South reflects patterns of novice scoping, with limited theoretical integration. Reviewed literature sources reflect dominance of qualitative research designs, particularly descriptive research designs. At a closer look, the limitation in theoretical integration is not a matter peculiar to African bleisure tourism discourse. Lichy and McLeay (2018) had earlier warned that bleisure studies, generally lack a focused theoretical underpinning. Prominent patterns in synthesised data suggests that bleisure research in Africa is embryonic and exploratory. These developments denote great opportunities for future bleisure research, particularly as the current discourse posits gaps in quantitative bleisure inquiry. Integrated methodological approached in African bleisure travel inquiry could further assist in developing focused theoretical underpinnings that will aid further inquiry on African bleisure travellers' motives, emerging themes and bleisure tourism development for Africa.

Discussion

Synthesised data denotes bleisure travel is rather emerging area of research within the African context. The emphasis on experiential conceptualisation, unsurprisingly, reflects dominant trends in Global North bleisure literature. Africa-based bleisure literature is immersed with discussions on business tourism as well as leisure tourism as standalone domains of interests. Ezeuduji (2024) contends that, bleisure travel as a distinct area of tourism inquiry with its own unique attributes requires careful and systemic investigation. Despite the documented business tourism and leisure tourism scholarship, such enquiry from an African perspective, when compared to the Global North, falls behind in bleisure tourism inquiry. Notable challenges include a narrow scope of inquiry in Global South bleisure research, as the available data is largely drawn from limited bleisure travel segments including academic conferencing, medical tourists, and IT technicians. However,

the limited development of context-sensitive conceptual frameworks suggests that African bleisure tourism is largely interpreted through imported lenses, with insufficient engagement with local institutional and socio-economic conditions. Consequently, this literature synthesis suggests that greater opportunities abound for bleisure-focused scholars on the continent to shape their own discourse, theoretical underpinnings and traveller typologies and motivations. The overall synthesis accentuates bleisure travel as an emergent area of research in the African context, with conceptual and methodological limitations, yet significant potential. These developments highlight the need for African tourism academics to engage on bleisure inquiry by testing various methodologies, to grow the current literature scope. Moreover, these inquiries could assist in deriving African centric bleisure travel typologies, and relevant theories that can be leveraged for future bleisure inquiries in Africa.

Furthermore, the focus on motivations and experiences reinforces the positioning of bleisure tourism as an individual-level phenomenon. For instance, existing studies largely overlook travellers whose tourism motivations are initiated by business travel but incorporate non-business activities. Such travellers according to Lichy and McLeay (2018) argue for combining tourism with professional obligations, reflecting the blurring of boundaries between business travel and leisure activities undertaken during a business trip. This perspective provides insight into traveller behaviour, constraining understandings of organisational, regulatory, and destination-level dynamics that influence bleisure practices in African urban environments. Again, a small number of contributions gesture towards hybrid mobilities or work-leisure blurring, yet these are referenced descriptively rather than developed analytically; with no study yet deploying a dedicated bleisure-specific framework, nor is there sustained engagement with organisational theory, labour mobility, governance, or development frameworks relevant to African contexts. Findings related to informal business tourism and pandemic disruption point to the distinctive conditions under which bleisure tourism unfolds in Africa. These contextual specificities challenge assumptions derived from formal business travel models and underline the sensitivity of bleisure tourism to broader economic and social shocks. In addition, motivation-oriented papers echo push-pull thinking, but without formal operationalisation or theoretical testing. Some studies also draw loosely on experiential perspectives, particularly the experience economy logic, to frame bleisure as an experiential extension of business travel, with not consistently applied conceptual or theoretical framework underpinning the reviewed African bleisure studies, thereby signalling a suggestion for the adoption, development and validation of focused theoretical underpinnings for African-focused bleisure scholarship.

Conclusion

This study consolidated and critically appraised bleisure tourism scholarship in Africa through a PRISMA-guided systematic review, with the aim of mapping its scope, identifying dominant trends, and clarifying persistent lacunae. The review established that bleisure is gaining increased recognition within business travel research, nonetheless, evidence from Africa remains small, geographically concentrated, and largely exploratory. Extant studies mainly concentrate on the experiences of travellers and their motivations in a limited number of urban contexts, with far less attention afforded to institutional, policy, and structural dimensions of bleisure tourism. Furthermore, the findings indicate that bleisure tourism scholarship in Africa mirrors global patterns in its methodological and theoretical orientation. A dominant approach of the explored studies is descriptive, qualitative and survey-based designs, with limited theory-driven or comparative approaches. Although experience-based and motivation-oriented perspectives are frequently invoked, they are rarely integrated into explicit or cumulative conceptual frameworks. As a result, bleisure tourism in Africa is more often documented as a set of practices than analysed as a theoretically grounded form of hybrid mobility embedded in wider economic and organisational systems. By synthesising this fragmented literature, the review makes two main contributions. First, it provides a structured overview of the scope and trends of bleisure tourism scholarship in Africa, offering a baseline against which future research can be positioned. Second, it highlights the need to move beyond predominantly descriptive accounts toward more analytically robust, theoretically informed, and context-sensitive studies. Future

research should engage with issues of governance, destination planning, labour mobility, informality, and development policy, as well as from comparative work that situates African cases within wider international debates. The review suggests that bleisure tourism represents a promising but still under-theorised field within African tourism studies. As business travel, flexible work practices, and urban tourism systems continue to evolve, bleisure tourism is likely to assume greater strategic importance for destinations across the continent. Advancing understanding of this phenomenon will require broader empirical coverage, stronger conceptual anchoring, and greater methodological diversity. In this respect, the present review provides both a synthesis of current knowledge and a framework for guiding the next phase of research on bleisure tourism in Africa.

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