

A review of reactive marketing on national parks and astro-tourism in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Astro-tourism has potential globally including Tanzania. For example, the skyline over Tanzania is filled with abundant astronomical objects like stars at night whereas on land, there is the famous Kimondo meteorite in Mbozi area. However, there is still challenge in tourism development particularly product diversification and marketing in the post-pandemic. Additionally, there are limited studies that connect visiting national parks and astro-tourism as co-activities that tourists can enjoy in protected areas. Therefore, the motive for this paper on astro-tourism is specifically to explore advertising of national parks and astro-tourism activities in Tanzania with a reactive marketing overview. An integrative literature review as a methodology approach is deployed in this study. Content analysis assisted to provide themes. The findings reveal that there are efforts made by the government and the private sector in advertising tourism including national parks. Also, the Royal Tour Film is one example of reactive marketing in the context of Tanzania as a way of advertising national parks. Findings also show that there is less advertising which connects national parks and astro-tourism within spaces of protected areas. The practical implication from this study is that the Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and tourism stakeholders to engage more advertising that links national park activities and astro-tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Astro-tourism is traceable in various countries like India and Tanzania. The potential of astro-tourism is noted by several past scholars. For example, India's astro-tourism potential lies in the country's vastness, population, emergence of dark sky parks and luxury resorts that include astro experience services (Khan & Guleria, 2021). On the other hand, the astro-tourism potential for Tanzania lies in its strategic location close to the equator and abundant dark skies (Jiwaji, 2016). However, Herrero (2019) have commonly noted that astro tourism is understudied. Apart from astro-tourism being understudied, there is also the challenge of exclusion from travel packages. For instance, the study by Jacobs et al. (2020) mentioned that

the travel packages are a necessity and should include both astro-tourism and non-astro-tourism activities as a way to lure visitors to stay longer in destinations.

On the other hand, Saleh & Farahbak (2014) noted that advertising plays a vital role in tourism while (Mkwizu, 2018, 2023) advocated for advertising of national parks to boost domestic tourism. In fact, Tanzania's skyline is endowed with many stars at night but also the famous Kimondo meteorite in Mbozi area within Songwe region (Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority [NCAA], 2023). Despite the abundance of astronomy resources, there are challenges in the tourism industry particularly product diversification and marketing in the post-COVID-19 pandemic including sustainability of national parks. For instance, Kimeto and Mkwizu (2023) mentioned the need for sustainability of national parks in the post-pandemic recovery phase.

Additionally, there are limited studies that connect visiting national parks and astro-tourism as co-activities that tourists can enjoy in protected areas. Equally, Mkwizu (2024) advocated for more research in the tourism industry. Therefore, the motive for this paper is to explore astro-tourism guided by Mkwizu's theoretical framework of television advertising on domestic tourism. The main objective of this paper is to explore national parks and astro-tourism but specifically to explore advertising of national parks and astro-tourism activities in Tanzania with a reactive marketing overview. The significance of this paper is practical implying that the outcome can assist the tourism stakeholders to encourage advertising of national parks that incorporates astro-tourism activities.

Astro-Tourism

Astro-tourism has been defined in various ways by different scholars. According to Khan & Guleria (2021), it involves the practice of going outdoors to observe stars and other celestial events. Expanding on this concept, they also describe astro-tourism as organizing trips to experience unique astronomical phenomena unavailable in one's home area. Fayos-Solé et al. (2014) define astro-tourism as a form of tourism that utilizes natural resources like unpolluted night skies and incorporates scientific knowledge for activities related to astronomy, culture, and the environment. In this paper, astro-tourism refers to any tourist activities involving astronomical objects, such as visiting the Mbozi meteorite, star gazing, moon gazing, or observing a solar eclipse.

Advertising of National Parks

The concept of advertising is not new in the field of tourism. Hiekal (2022) refers to advertising as publishing information about goods and services. The advertising of tourism products such as national parks is inevitable in order to attract tourists. For instance, Tanzania

is endowed with many national parks such as Kilimanjaro National Park, Kitulo National Park, Mkomazi National Park and Udzungwa National Park (Tanzania National Parks [TANAPA], 2023, 2024) which need continuous advertising to tourists and potential visitors. Advertising in tourism is also defined as the dissemination of information or messages to tourists about national parks via Television (TV) channels showing programs on national parks (Mkwizu, 2018). In this paper, advertising of national parks refers to disseminating of information or messages about national parks through media such as TV, radio and social media.

Reactive Marketing

There are limited scholarly studies that have provided the definition of reactive marketing. For example, Gatignon & Xuereb (1997) mentioned that reactive marketing is the action of reacting to past competitor actions. On the other hand, Shankar (2006) looked at reactive marketing from a reactive product line strategy. A good example of reactive marketing is mentioned by Tapp (2002) when referring to how amazon.com lets the customer tell them via their website when the customer is ready to enter the market for books. According to Cambridge University Press and Assessment (2023), reactive marketing is defined as a method of marketing goods and services whereby information about a product is provided to someone who has already asked for such information. For purposes of this paper, reactive marketing refers to marketing of tourism products to tourists or visitors. The tourism products may be national parks or even attractions such as meteorite sites as the case of Tanzania which hosts the Mbozi meteorite in Songwe region.

Theoretical Frame

Past scholars have used various theories to understand advertising in tourism. For example, Segota (2024) conducted research in Croatian Island of Pag by examining online advertising messages using the self-congruity theory which focuses on destination advertising. The findings from the quantitative results showed that there was positive attitude towards advertising. Further findings also indicated that the hypothesis on user-imagery picture than destination-attribute-based picture was not supported. However, the self-congruity theory is based on a destination as a whole as opposed to national park advertising.

Therefore, this paper adopts Mkwizu's theoretical framework of television advertising on domestic tourism to explore advertising of national parks and astro-tourism activities with a reactive marketing. Due to scant theories that embrace Africa research situation context, this paper considered Mkwizu's theory as ideal for this study since it hinges on advertising and is based on a previous study by Mkwizu (2018) that was conducted within an African setting. Furthermore, Mkwizu's theory assumes that the concepts of quality of message,

demographics and knowledge of national parks in television advertising are significant in relation to domestic tourists visiting national parks (Mkwizu, 2018). Therefore, in this paper, the assumption is that knowledge of national parks should also consider information about astro-tourism as an activity that can co-exist with other national park activities.

Advertising of national parks can be through television, radio or social media depending on the media the destination marketers wishes to use when promoting attractions to visitors. In Tanzania, there is the Royal Tour Film displaying various attractions including national parks as indicated in Tanzania Tourist Board [TTB], 2022), and Tanzania Investment Centre [TIC] (2022) but also via Tanzania Safari Channel (2018). Embracing astro-tourism activities is possible particularly because Jiwaji (2016) commented that Tanzania is strategically located close to the equator with abundant dark skies. Tourists visiting national parks can partake in activities that combine national park experiences with astro-tourism as complementary activities. Thus, Mkwizu's theory is applied to examine the advertising of national parks and astro-tourism offerings.

Advertising of National Parks and Astro-Tourism Activities with a Reactive Marketing Overview

Astro-tourism is still considered as a niche type of tourism. The study by Matos (2017) revealed that in the 21st century, astro-tourism can include activities ranging from simple stargazing at a nearby site, organized trips at specific locations, observing eclipses or auroras, visiting space centers to space station travels. Other scholars have also added other astro-tourism activities which include stargazing, space tourism, and celestial observations that involves the activity of mega skies viewing of cloud formation, glowing sunsets and sunrises, star-filled skies, comets and sky gazing (Gerasimova, 2021). Despite the existence of astro-tourism activities, the marketing aspect is less studied. The existing studies have focused on exploring products and services related to astro-tourism. In addition, the marketing research is very important for the Karoo, so that tourism products and services are able to provide for the explicit travel requirements of travellers and accommodate the behavioral needs of those who visit the region as astro-tourists (Jacobs et al., 2020). Equally, national parks as part of tourism products need marketing particularly advertising of national parks.

Advertising of national parks is crucial for the tourism industry. Saleh & Farahbak (2014) commented that successful promotion of tourism is based on the professional understanding of advertising and its values. Furthermore, the study by Saleh & Farahbak (2014) was conducted in Iran with findings showing that the most effective advertising is through handbook, internet advertising, TV, brochures and newspapers. In America, Gallup (2021) used a quantitative method and mentioned that advertising of national parks in the USA have

funds constraints and suggested for social media advertising as an alternative for the case of Congaree National Park. On the other hand, Africa as a continent has expenditure on advertising and according to Statista (2023), Africa spends 5.1 billion USD on advertising. Furthermore, Statista (2023) reported that African countries like Ghana spent 39 million USD on television advertising, while Tanzania allocated 26 million USD for television advertising.

In Tanzania, Mkwizu (2018) applied a mixed methods approach to investigate television advertising influence on domestic tourism and found that majority of domestic tourists (92%) watched TV programs on national parks and these findings were particularly for four national parks in Tanzania namely, Mikumi, Udzungwa, Ruaha and Kitulo. The study by Mkwizu (2023) also narrated that in advertising of national parks, the government has made efforts including the Royal Tour Film in order to attract more tourists within and outside Tanzania. This is an example of reactive marketing especially when the nation faced the COVID-19 effects which required marketing in order to lure visitors to Tanzania. For instance, in the Netherlands, the reactive marketing or rather reactive strategies were deployed as way of addressing criticisms from the stakeholders in reference to quality and societal relevance of teacher training programs (Mampaey & Lambrechts, 2022). Although reactive strategies were mentioned in investigating teacher training programs, Mampaey & Lambrechts (2022) stated that reactive strategies are underexplored. This paper is also of the view that reactive marketing is less explored in the context of Tanzania.

Although studies in advertising of national parks exist in Tanzania, there is scant literature that connects advertising of national parks and astro-tourism with reactive marketing. In fact, the Royal Tour Film is one example of reactive marketing in the context of Tanzania. Jiwaji (2016) did highlight the need to include astro-tourism in national parks but more research is needed to expand literature in astro-tourism in Tanzania particularly with a reactive marketing overview which this paper addresses. Hence, the primary objective of this paper is to examine the advertising of national parks and astro-tourism activities, with a focus on reactive marketing strategies.

2. METHODOLOGY

An integrative literature review with content analysis is deployed in this paper to explore national parks and astro-tourism with a reactive marketing overview. According to Torraco (2016), the integrative literature review allows for reviewing, criticizing and synthesizing representative literature on a topic in such a way that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated. Torraco added that the integrative literature review is a way for using the past and present to explore the future (Torraco, 2016). Lubbe et al. (2020) stated that the integrative literature review allows for the inclusion of both primary research studies and other

documents involving opinions, discussion papers and policy documents that cannot be included in a formal systematic literature review. This paper follows the five steps of conducting an integrative literature review by Torraco (2016) and Oktavio et al. (2024) which are: step 1 - problem formulation, step 2 - data collection (or literature search), step 3 - evaluation of data, step 4 - data analysis, and step 5 - interpretation and presentation of results.

In addressing the problem or rather challenge of promoting astro-tourism in Tanzania, this paper explores national parks and astro-tourism and specifically explores advertising of national parks and astro-tourism activities from a reactive marketing overview. Furthermore, the integrative literature review allows this paper to integrate information from the reviewed literature. In conducting the literature review, this paper uses books, conference papers, journal articles, documents and reports. In evaluating the literature review, only relevant information related to advertising of national parks and astro-tourism activities with reactive marketing is included.

This paper also utilizes content analysis for purposes of obtaining emerging themes from the integrated reviewed literature that guide the interpretation and presentation of results. Past scholars in tourism have also applied integrative literature review and content analysis methods in tourism research including Mkwizu (2022). Mkwizu (2022) applied the methods of integrative literature view and content analysis and recommended for the African continent to use artificial intelligence technologies to advance television advertising of tourist attractions as a resilient strategy in the post pandemic given the projection of the growth in the television market trends in Africa.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The summary of the literature on advertising of national parks and astro-tourism in Tanzania is indicated in Table 1. The findings show that efforts from the government and the private sector in advertising tourism include national parks via media such as television and social media but also showcasing attractions like national parks through the Royal Tour Film as supported in studies by (Mkwizu, 2018, 2022, 2023), TIC (2022), (TTB (2022) and Statista (2023). The Royal Tour Film is an example of reactive marketing in the context of Tanzania in the post pandemic to lure tourists especially after the effects of COVID-19 where international tourists could not visit due to travel bans. The use of social media to advertise national parks is also in line with the study by Gallup (2021) in the USA. Although there are astro-tourism activities like viewing stars at night, sunsets at Nyerere National Park, solar eclipse and trips to Mbozi meteorite evident in studies of (Jiwaji, 2016; Mkwizu, 2023; NCAA, 2023), the findings show that there is less advertising which connects national parks and astro tourism within

spaces of protected areas. The findings of this paper vary with Gerasimova (2021) and Jacobs et al. (2020) since there are no space tourism activities in Tanzania.

Table 1. Advertising of National Parks and Astro-Tourism Activities in Tanzania

Author	Title	Findings
Jiwaji (2016)	Astro-tourism as a high potential alternative tourist attraction in Tanzania	Night time <i>star gazing</i> , annular <i>solar eclipse</i> passed across southern Tanzania in September 2016. Recommendations for fixed or mobile observatories with good quality telescopes; astro-tour guides be trained locally; monthly night sky updates to highlight local delights.
Mkwizu (2018)	The influence of television advertising on domestic tourism: A case study of southern tourist attractions in Tanzania	TV advertising influences domestic tourism in terms of quality of message, demographics and knowledge. Majority of domestic tourists use TV (44.5%) to know about national parks compared to <i>social media</i> (21.2%). Also, most domestic tourists (92.2%) watched TV programs on national parks.
Mkwizu (2022)	Advertising Dynamics and Destination Evolution in Tourism Promotion for Africa.	The use of <i>Royal Tour Film</i> to lure tourists.
Mkwizu (2023)	Experiences and enjoyment of national parks: Study of Nyerere National Park in Tanzania	Responds revealed having enjoyed viewing the <i>beautiful sunset</i> at Nyerere National Park.
Mkwizu et al. (2023)	New Media and Source Markets for Domestic Tourism in Tanzania: A Case of Southern National Parks	There is a statistically significant relationship between <i>social media</i> usage as a source of information and domestic tourists visiting Udzungwa National Park.
Statista (2023)	Africa advertising industry	TV advertising spending for Tanzania is 26 million USD.
NCAA (2023)	Mbozi Meteorite	A trip to the <i>Meteorite Site</i> is always exciting. This allows interaction with the locals who are always willing to share their perspectives with visitors.
TTB (2022)	Royal Tour Film	<i>Royal Tour Film</i> to lure tourists.
TIC (2022)	Royal Tour Film	<i>Royal Tour Film</i> to lure tourists.
TANAPA (2023)	History	There are 22 <i>national parks</i> in Tanzania

Source: Compiled by Authors

The findings also imply that tourism stakeholders should aim at advertising of national parks with mega skies viewing activities such as cloud formation or glowing sunsets and sunrises. Mega skies viewing indicated by Gerasimova (2021) and Jacobs et al. (2020) are celestial observations which are considered as astronomical phenomena. Integrating mega skies viewing co-activities in national parks is a way of promoting and diversifying astro-tourism activities as a reactive marketing approach. Guided by Mkwizu's theory of television advertising on domestic tourism, this paper shows that there is television advertising of national parks via Tanzania Safari Channel also via the Royal Tour Film which support Statista (2023) as evidence of TV advertising spending for Tanzania. The study by Mkwizu (2023) reveals a celestial experience by domestic tourists visiting Nyerere National Park who enjoyed

viewing “beautiful sunset”. This implies that the celestial experience of beautiful sunsets should be maintained at Nyerere National Park and advertised as a co-activity to be enjoyed by tourists but also encouraged in other national parks.

However, the studies are still very few and Figure 1 indicates that most of the reviewed literature is by single authors (90%) as opposed to co-authors which is rated at 10%. This finding suggests that there is need for collaborative research when studying astro-tourism. The findings of low co-authorship of reviewed literature from this study supports Mkwizu (2024) that there is need for multidisciplinary collaborative research in tourism.

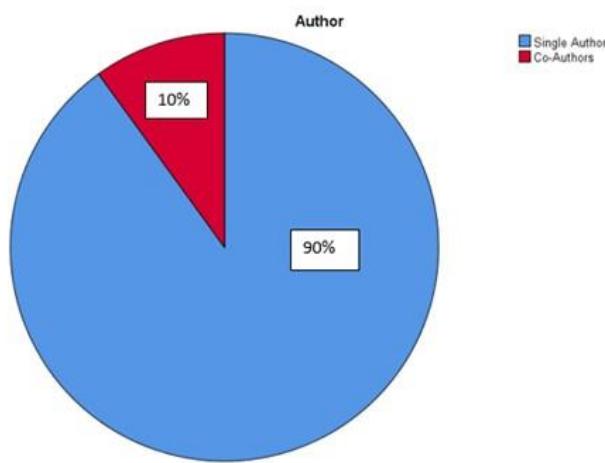


Figure 1. Most of the Reviewed Literature

In addition, the findings show that there is less advertising of national parks in terms of astro-tourism activities. This implies that in advertising, and particularly with the guidance of Mkwizu's theory on advertising for domestic tourism to domestic tourists there should be aspects of quality of message and knowledge of national parks in relation to astro-tourism activities as a reactive marketing strategy.

4. CONCLUSION

In exploring national parks and astro-tourism, this paper found that there are limited studies on advertising of national parks and astro-tourism activities. The existing literature which is mostly by single authors reveals that advertising of national parks include television and social media but also the Royal Tour Film serves as a reactive marketing in the post pandemic to boost tourism. The findings further show that there is less advertising of national parks in relation to astro-tourism activities like “star gazing”, “beautiful sunset”, “solar eclipse”, and “Mbozi meteorite” in promoting the destination through astro-tourism. Hence, the implications from the outcome of this paper are provided.

Implications

The practical implication is for destination marketing organizations and tourism stakeholders to engage more advertising that links national park tourism and astro-tourism. The theoretical implication is that guided by Mkwizu's theory where the findings of this study have shown there is less advertising of national parks in connection to astro-tourism is a signal that advertising of messages and knowledge of national parks to tourists or potential visitors should aim at incorporating astro-tourism activities in national parks.

Recommendations

Tourism stakeholders should establish sky viewing parks within protected areas. Also, consideration for mega skies viewing co-activities in national parks is a way of promoting and diversifying astro-tourism activities as a reactive marketing approach.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The limitations of this study are attributed to the use of integrative literature review and content analysis. Further studies may dwell on the use of mixed methods as well as explore advertising of national parks and astro-tourism activities from a proactive or interactive marketing point of view.

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