



Virtual World and Television Advertising of Tourism Destinations: Insights from Africa

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the virtual world and television advertising of tourism destinations with insights from Africa. The continent of Africa experienced lock-downs and travel restrictions due to the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) global pandemic which affected the tourism sector of many countries. Tanzania did not have a lock-down during the entire COVID-19 global pandemic hence the advantage over other African countries to the extent of being elevated to a middle-income country. Whilst there were positive effects of the pandemic, the negative effects tremendously reduced tourist numbers in destinations. However, existing technologies in the virtual world that can benefit the tourism industry such as Augmented Reality (AR) have received less attention in the Africa research agenda. To expand the scope of AR, this paper specifically explored AR technologies and television advertising of tourism destinations in the context of Tanzania. A literature review method with content analysis is used as methodology approach. The findings have shown that there are opportunities of AR in relation to television advertising of tourism destinations which include the ability to integrate AR technologies with television advertising of tourism destinations. The practical implication is for tourism stakeholders to consider the use of AR technologies to sustain television advertising of tourism destinations.

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1. Introduction

Television (TV) advertising of tourism destinations is important. [Rabab'ah et al. \(2020\)](#) examined 6 TV advertisements in Algeria as an African country and found that music, celebrity, and brand are among the appeals that are applied in reaching the targeted audience. It is evident that TV remains among the media which is widely viewed by consumers ([Rabab'ah et al., 2020](#)). In Sri Lanka, during the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the TV program called the Guru Gedara was introduced to reach students in rural schools who could not access the internet ([Madhubhashini, 2021](#)).

With TV regarded as old media, [Wayne \(2018\)](#) commented that new media forms do not replace old ones but are interplays of old and new between established and emerging practices. On the other hand, [Blanchet and Fabry \(2020\)](#) noted that platforms are considered as new operators for distribution of TV content and thus influence the attraction of destinations. Furthermore, the World Economic Forum (WEF) suggested that augmented, virtual and mixed reality technologies may be an alternative way to travel in the post-COVID-19 era ([World Economic Forum \(WEF\), 2021](#)).

Additionally, previous studies like [Lo and Cheng \(2020\)](#) have revealed that sense of presence mediates the relationship between virtual reality use and tourism advertising. Existing literature indicate that TV continues to be used as countries re-open tourism after the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic. For example, in Tanzania, the Royal Tour is expected to showcase the beauty and endowments of destinations through TV series in order to attract more visitors internationally and locally ([Tanzania Tourist Board \(TTB\), 2022](#)). Furthermore, the African Tourism Board (ATB) praised the role of the first female President of Tanzania in the documentary of Royal Tour to promote Tanzania by awarding President Samia Suluhu Hassan with the Continental Tourism Award ([Tanzania Tourist Board \(TTB\), 2022](#)).

As countries around the world struggle to attract tourists during the re-opening of tourism, reports such as the UNWTO (2021) advocated the shift towards domestic tourism. [Mkwizu \(2021b\)](#) added that the concept of domestic tourism needs re-defining in order to complement existing virtual technologies that enhance tourists' experiences. The study by [Mkwizu \(2021b\)](#) re-defined domestic tourism in the new normal as "residents visiting attractions physically or virtually within their own country". However, in countries such as Zimbabwe, it has been observed that domestic tourism has both positive and negative contributions to sustainable tourism development ([Kabote, 2020](#)), despite Zimbabweans being active domestic tourists ([Kabote et al., 2019](#)). The positive contributions include destination appreciation while the negative contribution is minimal expenditure ([Kabote, 2020](#)).

[Mkwizu \(2020\)](#) opined that countries within Africa have varying advantages and that each country using its comparative advantage can harness the digital marketing for tourism purposes. In marketing for tourism purposes such as hotels, the virtual world can be made to seem real by the user ([Kameswari et al., 2021](#)). Additionally, the existing technologies that combine the real and virtual worlds and in particular Augmented Reality (AR) using mobile phones in tourism ([Gharaibeh et al., 2021](#); [He et al., 2018](#); [Nhan et al., 2022](#); [Ronaghi and Ronaghi, 2022](#); [Stangl et al., 2020](#)) are advancing and revolutionizing how tourists enhance their experiences of destinations.

The country-wise projection in the importance of AR from 2019 to 2024 is expected to increase globally in the next 5 years with Mexico (94%) as the highest followed by India (87%) while in other countries including Africa is 74% ([Statista, 2021](#)). Subsequently, the market size around the world for AR and virtual reality is expected to reach USD 296.9 billion in 2024 from USD 30.7 billion in 2021 ([Statista, 2022a](#)). These projections signify the importance of AR in the coming years for the world including countries in Africa.

Conversely, Africa's tourism has the potential to increase its tourists in various destinations that are endowed with historical, cultural, natural and archaeological outstanding values including geoparks that are of great heritage not only for the continent but also the world at large. For instance, Morocco and Tanzania are the countries in Africa with Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) geoparks that have been inscribed and listed in the UNESCO world heritage list ([UNESCO, 2021](#)). A number of studies have covered the virtual world with AR and even virtual reality in relation to cameras, education, sports ([Akaslan, 2021](#); [Chander, 2021](#); [Dolas and Ulukavak, 2021](#); [Ernst et al., 2021](#); [Sharma, 2020](#)).

However, [Moro \(2019\)](#) advocated for more research on AR. Therefore, in expanding the scope of AR, this paper's main objective is to explore virtual world and TV advertising of tourism destinations with insights from Africa and specifically to explore AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations from the Tanzania perspective using the Access, Better, Connect, Dis-intermediate and Educate (ABCDE) theory. The question posed in this paper is that "are there opportunities in AR technologies in relation to TV advertising of tourism destinations in the context of Tanzania? In addition, this study is significant to tourism stakeholders and authorities for purposes of encouraging the use of AR in relation to TV advertising of tourism destinations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Augmented Reality

The definition of Augmented Reality (AR) is referred to as a technology that integrates the digital information with the physical environment, live and in real time ([Statista, 2022a](#)). Past scholars ([Dolas and Ulukavak, 2021](#)) have referred to AR as a technology that can increase interaction with the real world and objects. [Arth et al. \(2015\)](#) defined augmented reality as a technology which enables computer-generated sound and images to be used in the real world. The concept of AR is also termed as a newer technological system in which virtual objects are added to the real world in real-time during the user's experience ([Cipresso et al., 2018](#)). This paper defines AR as the combination of virtual and real worlds using devices such as mobile phones. On the other hand, AR technologies have been defined by [Chen et al. \(2019\)](#) as technologies which combine virtual reality with reality. Examples of AR technologies include AR based mobile technology and AR based on wearable devices like smart glasses ([Moro, 2019](#)). According to [Statista \(2021\)](#), mobile AR users globally are expected to increase from 0.44 billion in 2019 to 1.73 billion in 2024.

2.2 Television (TV) Advertising of Tourism Destinations

Television (TV) advertising is considered as one of the popular means of business advertising that is supported by audio and video content to expose the viewers to promotional messages (Kuyucu, 2020). The concept of TV advertising has been described by Liaukonyte et al. (2014) as valuable in generating awareness, knowledge and interest of new products. Other scholars such as Jeong et al. (2011) have defined TV advertising as on air program promotion shown on TV. Promoting tourism destinations is critical particularly as countries re-open tourism after the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism destination is a concept that has been defined by Goeldner and Ritchie (2003) as a particular geographical region within which the visitor enjoys various types of travel experiences. In tourism, destinations need advertising in order to attract tourists to visit attractions. For example, Mkwizu (2018) defined TV advertising as a tool which informs tourists about national parks. Furthermore, in relating TV advertising to domestic tourism, Mkwizu also referred to TV advertising as an internal tool which provides information about national parks to domestic tourists within a destination. For purposes of this paper, television advertising of tourism destinations is termed as the provision of information about attractions to tourists using television to promote domestic and international tourism in a destination.

2.3 Theory Framing

The theory deployed to guide this paper to explore virtual world and TV advertising of tourism destinations and specifically AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations is the Access, Better, Connect, Dis-intermediate, and Educate (ABCDE) theory. According to Cantoni (2018), the ABCDE theory approach covers five areas in promoting sustainable tourism. The description of each of these five areas are summarized in Table 1.

Other scholars (Shyju and Singh, 2022) in tourism have adopted the ABCDE theory to examine ICT and tourism communication with a particular interest in religious sites in India. The ABCDE theory particularly the better factor aided the study by Shyju and Singh (2022) to contribute a theoretical framework for effectiveness of mobile application usage to communicate tourism features and also better visitor engagement in heritage and religious sites. Likewise, this study applies the ABCDE theory by exploring the virtual worlds and television advertising of tourism destinations.

Adopting the ABCDE theory is relevant for this study in the sense that TV advertising of tourism destinations involves conveying information to tourists and hence exercising the access to information to the targeted audience.

Table 1. Description of main areas of the ABCDE approach (Compiled from Permatasari et al. (2020))

Main Areas	Description	Source
Access	Widen access and raise awareness. That is broaden access of information to stakeholders.	Cantoni (2018)
Better	Enrich visitors' experiences onsite with digital communications devices such as mobile access and AR.	Cantoni (2018)
Connect	Connect local stakeholders to heritage	Cantoni (2018)
Dis-intermediate	Information distribution, communication support and promotional activities	David and Cantoni (2015)
Educate	Training and education activities to relevant stakeholders using e-learning platforms, digital archives and MOOCs.	Cantoni (2018)

The information can be made better through enriching the tourists' experiences using AR technologies thus allowing to connect local stakeholders like tour operators to heritage attractions. Equally, the distribution of information and promotional activities provides the dis-intermediate while the educate facilitates the local stakeholders with relevant training via e-learning platforms and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

2.4 Augmented reality and television advertising of tourism destinations

Tourism destinations globally including Africa advertise their destinations. Statista (2022b) recorded a projection revenue for TV advertising to increase from USD 151 billion in 2021 to USD 159 billion around the world in 2022. Zipin (2021) stated that television advertising is one of the most effective ways to create product or brand awareness. Zipin added that TV advertisers turn to second-screen advertising so that advert viewers are driven to their mobile devices as the second screens that engages the viewers with the company's website during the live programmes. In fact, Isenbart (2016) in Etayo et al. (2021) commented that nearly all digital device is also a TV screen today. In 2020, Kuyucu opined that TV advertising will continue to be strong in media with changes in technology. Hence, these are examples of how TV advertising is remaining relevant to the modern times. Importantly is the concluding remark by Kuyucu (2020) that the future of TV advertising could actually make use of 3D and virtual reality technologies for purposes of increasing engagement of TV adverts.

Subsequently, [Das and Madhusudan \(2021\)](#) stated that the application of AR in education is to make education fruitful and fun whereas in tourism, [Han et al. \(2021\)](#) noted that AR can assist to reduce negative experiences due to restrictions. Other benefits of AR usage in tourism are compiled from [Kounavis et al. \(2012\)](#) as follows:

- Accessibility of information by tourists.
- Improve tourists' knowledge of attractions / destinations.
- Personalized content and services.
- Allows for connectivity and sharing of experiences by tourists.
- Reduce information overload by allowing users to request information based on their desire and expectations.

Various destinations can apply AR in tourism. For example, AR can be used in museums, water tourism, cultural/heritage tourism and creation of new attractions ([Han et al., 2021](#); [Hassan and Ramkissoon, 2021](#); [Kazmierczak et al., 2021](#); [Ozkul and Kumlu, 2019](#)). In addition, [Cipresso et al. \(2018\)](#) observed that AR is a more recent technology than Virtual Reality (VR) with AR applications such as Google glass and Google hololens. The observation by [Cipresso et al. \(2018\)](#) explains the absence of AR in the concluding remarks in the study by [Kuyucu \(2020\)](#) which centered on recommending future TV advertising studies to use 3D and virtual reality for purposes of increasing TV advertising engagements by the viewers. To expand the scope of television advertising in tourism, this paper specifically explored AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations. Africa has tourism destinations that are endowed with various attractions which need advertising to attract both local and international tourists.

For instance, in Tanzania, there are different types of attractions from the highest mountain in Africa called Mt. Kilimanjaro in Kilimanjaro National Park to wildflowers in Kitulo National Park ([Tanzania National Parks \(TANAPA\), 2022a,b](#)). Furthermore, past studies show that in Tanzania, there are various types of tourism from safari tourism, sports tourism, rural tourism, wildflower tourism to walking safaris ([Mkwizu, 2016, 2021a, 2020](#); [Ngaruko et al., 2020](#)). The tourism products of Tanzania include walking safaris, cycling, mountain climbing, boat excursions, paragliding, canoeing, night game drives and hot air balloon ([Tanzania National Parks \(TANAPA\), 2022c](#)). Furthermore, in Tanzania, there was no lock-down during the entire COVID-19 global pandemic ([Kideghesho et al., 2021](#); [Mfinanga et al., 2021](#)) and this means that businesses were running as usual hence the advantage over other African countries in terms of income country status.

In fact, Tanzania was elevated from a low-income country to lower middle-income country during the global COVID-19 pandemic ([The World Bank, 2021](#)). Whilst there were positive effects within the pandemic period, the negative effects have tremendously reduced the tourist numbers in various destinations worldwide including Africa. However, the existing AR technologies that can benefit the tourism industry have received less attention in the Africa research agenda. The majority of studies on virtual world and tourism in Africa such as [Jude and Chike \(2020\)](#); [Lekgau et al. \(2021\)](#); [Mofokeng and Matima \(2018\)](#) have focused on virtual tourism with virtual reality in Nigeria and South Africa. Hence, more studies are needed in other African countries. In efforts to increase research for Africa and expand the literature on TV advertising, therefore, this paper connects the virtual world and TV advertising of tourism destinations with insights from Africa. Hence, this paper's specific objective is to explore AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations in the context of Tanzania.

3. Materials and Methods

Literature review is the method deployed in this paper. The literature review in this paper involved an integrative literature review approach. Relevant information on AR and TV advertising of tourism destinations was obtained by reviewing books, journals, reports and conference papers for purposes of providing a new perspective of connecting the virtual world and TV advertising of tourism destinations and, specifically AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations in the context of Tanzania. Integrative literature review is referred to as the use of existing literature to create new knowledge ([Torraco, 2016](#)). For instance, there are several studies in tourism that have applied the literature review method with an integrative literature review approach and these include [Cristina et al. \(2021\)](#); [Mkwizu \(2020\)](#). This paper also used content analysis to obtain themes in exploring AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations. Past studies have applied content analysis in tourism studies. For instance, [Law et al. \(2021\)](#) used content analysis for themes from the perspective of customers, suppliers, technology, and policymakers in examining smart tourism. The findings from [Law et al. \(2021\)](#) revealed that there were more studies on customers than in suppliers, technology and policymakers. Therefore, the methodology approach for this paper uses an integrative literature review and content analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

The literature review revealed that there are limited studies on the virtual world particularly AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations with insights from Africa, whilst the majority of studies such as [Lekgau et al.](#)

(2021); Mofokeng and Matima (2018) have been conducted in South Africa and covered mainly virtual tourism and virtual reality. The projection on the importance of AR has an upward trend worldwide as indicated by Statista (2021). Hence, AR is important and has the potential to combine the virtual and real world for various sectors including the tourism sector for its tourism destinations. In tourism destinations, the AR technologies can be used in water tourism, museum tourism, cultural tourism and heritage tourism as indicated by Ozkul and Kumlu (2019); Kazmierczak et al. (2021). Besides, there are benefits of AR in tourism as indicated by Kounavis et al. (2012) and these are “accessibility of information by tourists”, “improve tourists’ knowledge of attractions/destinations”, “personalized content and services”, “allows for connectivity and sharing of experiences by tourists”, and “reduce information overload by allowing users to request information based on their desires and expectations”.

Cantoni (2018) indicated that elements of access and better in the ABCDE approach have the ability to enhance tourists’ experiences. In addition, Tanzania can integrate AR technologies to make TV advertising of tourism destinations interactive. Although Kuyucu (2020) limited the scope of TV advertising to 3D and virtual reality, this paper suggests that existing literature on importance for AR and its benefits can serve as opportunities for AR technologies in TV advertising of tourism destinations in the context of Tanzania.

The opportunities can range from “access to information”, “better information distribution”, “improve tourists’ knowledge of attractions”, “connecting and sharing of experiences”. Another opportunity is the integration of AR technologies in TV advertising of tourism destinations that may assist to improve tourists’ knowledge of the destination. Integration of AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations will also avail training of local stakeholders on AR technologies according to Cipresso et al. (2018), AR is the current technology compared to virtual reality.

5. Conclusion

This paper explored the virtual world and TV advertising of tourism destinations with insights from Africa; and specifically, augmented reality technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations in the context of Tanzania. The findings show that there are opportunities in AR technologies in relation to TV advertising of tourism destinations and these are “access to information”, “better information distribution”, and “connecting and sharing of experiences”. In addition, there is the opportunity for integration of AR technologies in TV advertising of tourism destinations that may assist to improve tourists’ knowledge of the destination.

Furthermore, the integration of AR technologies and TV advertising of tourism destinations can provide an opportunity to train local stakeholders on augmented reality technologies in relation to TV advertising of tourism destinations. Guided by the ABCDE approach, these opportunities can provide access, better, connect, disintermediate, and educate to sustain tourism in the post-COVID-19.

The implication of this study is practical for tourism stakeholders and the authorities to consider augmented reality usage to sustain tourism for destinations in Africa, particularly Tanzania. Conversely, the identified opportunities can assist stakeholders in the tourism industry to advance TV advertising of tourism destinations by integrating augmented reality technologies in TV adverts for better experiences by tourists.

The limitations of this paper are in the use of a literature review approach and content analysis. Therefore, future studies can use the quantitative approach to provide theoretical development contributions. A mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative may be applied by future researchers. In addition, future research can be conducted in other countries within Africa to analyse the effects of augmented reality in relation to TV advertising of tourism destinations.

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