

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF TANZANIA SAFARI CHANNEL TV IN P  
PROMOTING DOMESTIC TOURISM IN RUAHA NATIONAL PARK**

UNDER PEER REVIEW

## **Abstract**

The study focused on evaluating the contribution of Tanzania Safari Channel Television in promoting domestic tourism to Ruaha National Park. By tracking viewers' perceptions, the study aimed to understand how the channel's programs influence their decisions to visit the park. Additionally, it examined the channel's effectiveness in raising awareness about Ruaha National Park among domestic tourists in Iringa and across Tanzania. This comprehensive approach allowed the researchers to gauge not only the immediate impact of the channel's content but also its broader influence on tourism trends within the country.

The findings of the study revealed significant challenges faced by the Tanzania Safari Channel in its efforts to raise awareness about Ruaha National Park. The content produced by the channel, while informative, is not yet sufficiently compelling to persuade a large segment of the audience to visit the park. This shortfall in content effectiveness highlights a critical gap between the channel's potential and its current impact. Despite these challenges, the study acknowledges the channel's role as an informative and advisory tool. It serves as a valuable resource for viewers by providing concise and accurate information about the park, which is crucial for fostering an informed public.

The literature review within the study provides strategic recommendations for the Tanzania Safari Channel Television to enhance its content and increase its effectiveness in promoting Ruaha National Park. These recommendations include improving the quality and frequency of programming, incorporating more compelling storytelling techniques, and leveraging digital platforms to reach a wider audience. By implementing these suggestions, the channel can better harness its potential and position itself as one of the leading tourism promotional channels in the country. The study thus acts as a bridge, offering new insights and practical guidance to help the channel fulfil its mission of boosting domestic tourism and raising awareness about the natural and cultural treasures of the Park.

**Keywords:** Domestic Tourism, Promotion, Ruaha National Park, Tanzania Safari Channel.

## **Introduction**

The development of tourism over many years has heavily relied on promotional efforts and advertising to increase awareness among potential tourists about various destinations

worldwide (Zarrella, 2010). As one of the world's foremost growing sectors, there is a significant demand for promoting the tourism industry. Consequently, many countries have established national television channels dedicated to promoting and marketing their tourism offerings (Rahman, 2018). Tanzania, recently recognized as a developing country, relies on tourism as a core economic sector for generating revenue. In line with this recognition, Tanzania has launched its promotional television channel to showcase and promote tourism within the country (Briassoulis, 2022).

This article examines the utilization of television as a powerful promotional tool to enhance visitor awareness of tourism destinations (Luliana *et al.*, 2013). The convergence of media and tourism plays a crucial role in effectively promoting tourism within a country, thereby facilitating a steady influx of visitors (Weber, 2009). From a promotional standpoint, tourism-focused television channels contribute significantly to increasing awareness of destinations among potential visitors. These channels achieve this by showcasing the selling points and attractions of various destinations through engaging television programming (Levinson & Gibson, 2010). The study highlighted the profound impact of the Tanzania Safari Channel television as the foremost tourism promotional channel in Tanzania. Through its programming, the television channel strives to heighten awareness of domestic tourism, particularly by highlighting the presence of Ruaha National Park and the stunning tourist attractions across Tanzania (Liburd, 2012).

In comparison to previous years, television has emerged as a potent force in the Tanzanian tourism industry, significantly influencing visitor awareness. The introduction, development, and implementation of the Tanzania Safari Channel as the country's primary tourism promotional medium has led to a notable surge in national income within the tourism sector (TTB, 2022). The effectiveness of television in promoting tourism is evident in the increased visitor numbers and the growing interest in domestic tourism destinations like Ruaha National Park. This study is guided by the question: "How effective is Safari Channel TV in raising awareness of domestic tourism within the Ruaha National Park?" By addressing this question, the research aims to provide insights into the strengths and areas for improvement of the Channel, ultimately contributing to the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry in Tanzania.

## **Agenda Setting and the Tourism Landscape**

The study was guided by the agenda-setting theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972. This theory posits that the media has the power to shape public perception by emphasizing certain issues or topics, thereby making them appear more important and deserving of public attention. In this study, the application of agenda-setting theory played a crucial role in determining which issues were prioritized on the public agenda. This prioritization not only influenced public perception but also catalyzed government action, ultimately supporting community development and economic growth (Grazzini *et al.*, 2018).

A practical manifestation of the agenda-setting theory in action is the Tanzanian government's introduction of a national tourism promotion television channel, aimed specifically at raising awareness among domestic tourists about the significance of tourism and highlighting Ruaha National Park as a prime destination (McLennan *et al.*, 2017). The inauguration of this channel Television marked a significant shift in the landscape of domestic tourism promotion, leading to a notable increase in domestic tourists visiting Ruaha National Park. This surge is substantiated by studies and reports that have documented the rise in visitor numbers following the channel's launch (Anderson, 2010; Mariki *et al.*, 2011).

The agenda-setting theory's impact is evident in the substantial benefits derived from the national tourism promotional television channel. The strategic emphasis on Ruaha National Park by Tanzania Safari Channel has elevated the park's visibility and attractiveness as a tourist destination. As a result, the park has experienced a significant rise in domestic tourist numbers compared to previous years. This increase can be largely attributed to the concerted efforts of the Tanzania Safari Channel, which has effectively raised awareness, promoted, and marketed Ruaha National Park through its programming (Ngoka, 2013).

The educational and engaging content provided by Tanzania Safari Channel Television has been a major factor in influencing domestic tourists' decisions to visit the park (Macha *et al.*, 2012). The channel's programming includes documentaries, travel shows, and special features that showcase the park's diverse wildlife, stunning landscapes, and unique ecological features. By presenting this information in an accessible and appealing format, the channel has successfully captivated the interest of potential tourists and motivated them to visit Ruaha National Park.

Even with ongoing efforts to increase content quality, the media continues to produce content that attracts domestic tourists. This underscores the agenda-setting theory's influence on government initiatives and highlights the media's role in shaping public perception and driving tourism trends (Owusu, 2013; TANAPA, 2015). The channel has not only increased awareness about Ruaha National Park but also contributed to a broader understanding of the park's ecological and cultural significance among Tanzanians.

The study examines viewers' perceptions and decisions regarding Ruaha National Park, as well as the broader influence of media on tourism decisions. The research is guided by the assumption that viewers are motivated to visit the park due to the content broadcasted by Tanzania Safari Channel Television. This assumption is supported by data indicating a visible increase in domestic tourism to Ruaha National Park, correlating with the channel's promotional efforts.

In assessing the effectiveness of Tanzania Safari Channel Television, the study delves into various facets of its programming and its impact on viewers. One critical aspect is the quality and appeal of the content. High-quality, visually stunning programming can create a compelling narrative that entices viewers to explore the destinations featured. However, the channel faces challenges related to budget constraints and limited resources, which can affect the consistency and production value of its content.

Nevertheless, the channel has managed to leverage strategic collaborations with local tourism stakeholders, including tour operators, park authorities, and community leaders. These partnerships enhance the channel's ability to produce informative and engaging content that resonates with domestic audiences. By incorporating local expertise and resources, the channel can offer a more authentic and comprehensive portrayal of Ruaha National Park.

The impact of these collaborative efforts is reflected in the increased visitor numbers to Ruaha National Park. The channel's programming often features testimonials from tourists, behind-the-scenes looks at conservation efforts, and special events within the park, all of which contribute to a richer and more enticing viewer experience. This multi-faceted approach not only raises awareness but also fosters a deeper connection between viewers and the destination.

Moreover, the channel's role extends beyond mere promotion; it serves as an educational platform that informs the public about the importance of conservation and sustainable tourism. By highlighting the ecological significance of Ruaha National Park and the efforts to preserve its unique biodiversity, the channel helps to cultivate a sense of stewardship among viewers. This educational aspect is crucial for fostering a long-term commitment to conservation and responsible tourism practices.

The study's findings suggest that while the Tanzania Safari Channel has made significant strides in promoting Ruaha National Park, there is still room for improvement. Enhancing content quality, increasing the frequency of programming updates, and leveraging digital platforms are some of the recommendations put forth to boost the channel's effectiveness. By adopting these strategies, the channel can better harness its potential to influence domestic tourism trends and support the sustainable development of Ruaha National Park.

The research also highlights the broader implications of using media as a tool for tourism promotion. The success of Tanzania Safari Channel Television demonstrates the power of media to shape public perception and drive economic growth in the tourism sector. This case study serves as a model for other developing countries looking to enhance their tourism promotion efforts through strategic media initiatives.

In conclusion, the study offers an in-depth assessment of the Tanzania Safari Channel's influence on promoting domestic tourism to Ruaha National Park. Utilizing the agenda-setting theory, the research highlights the channel's crucial role in raising awareness and shaping tourism decisions. Despite challenges related to content quality and resource constraints, the channel has successfully leveraged strategic partnerships and educational programming to draw domestic tourists and support conservation efforts. The findings provide valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing the channel's impact, ultimately contributing to the sustainable growth of Tanzania's tourism industry. Through ongoing efforts to improve and innovate, the Tanzania Safari Channel can strengthen its position as a leading medium for tourism promotion and a key instrument for national development.

### **Sparking Ruaha's Domestic Interest**

The researcher focused on the Tanzania Safari Channel's role in promoting domestic tourism in Ruaha National Park. The study reveals that the channel employs a multidimensional strategy

inspired by global best practices, such as those from New Zealand and Australia, to generate excitement and awareness. It uses visually stunning wildlife documentaries, travel guides, and cultural showcases, and extends its reach through social media for real-time updates and user-generated content (Kronenberg *et al.*, 2015; Kazuzuru, 2014). This approach mirrors successful international strategies like Japan's NHK 'Mappuru' program and Canada's CBC, emphasizing cultural narratives and nature programs to inspire domestic tourism (UNWTO, 2017).

The Tanzania Safari Channel masterfully combines showcasing the natural beauty of Ruaha National Park with digital integration and a strong emphasis on cultural storytelling, creating captivating content that appeals to a wide audience. Drawing from international examples such as CBC and ABC, the channel crafts visually compelling narratives that not only foster a sense of pride among Tanzanians but also pique their curiosity about the nation's natural treasures (Mariki *et al.*, 2011). This approach underscores the media's crucial role in raising awareness and educating potential visitors, as highlighted in the study, thereby playing a significant part in the growth of domestic tourism (Kijazi, 2012). The Tanzania Safari Channel effectively leverages its platform to build a connection between viewers and the natural world, encouraging local engagement with the country's rich biodiversity (UNWTO, 2016).

Despite the proliferation of social media, television continues to be a powerful tool for tourism promotion. The success of the Tanzania Safari Channel in attracting both domestic and international audiences serves as a testament to television's enduring influence (Kimbowa *et al.*, 2011). By offering visually stunning and informative content, the channel not only enhances the visibility of Ruaha National Park but also contributes significantly to Tanzania's tourism industry. This strategic use of media demonstrates how traditional platforms when used creatively, can complement digital efforts to bolster tourism and generate a wider appreciation for the country's natural and cultural heritage (Skof., 2018).

Therefore, the Tanzania Safari Channel's approach to promoting Ruaha National Park to domestic tourists is a strategic blend of global best practices in destination marketing. By leveraging the park's natural beauty, the channel creates visually stunning content that highlights the diverse landscapes, abundant wildlife, and unique ecological features of Ruaha National Park. This visual appeal is crucial in captivating the audience's attention and inspiring a sense of wonder and adventure among potential domestic tourist (Mallya, 2019).

The channel also integrates its efforts with digital platforms, recognizing the importance of a multi-channel strategy in today's media landscape. By utilizing social media, online videos, and interactive web content, the Tanzania Safari Channel extends its reach beyond traditional television, engaging a broader audience and keeping potential tourists informed and excited about Ruaha National Park. This digital integration allows for real-time updates and interactive engagement, making the promotion more dynamic and accessible (MIGA, 2023).

Emphasizing cultural narratives is another cornerstone of the channel's strategy. By incorporating stories and experiences from local communities, the Tanzania Safari Channel provides an authentic and relatable perspective on the park. This cultural emphasis not only enriches the storytelling but also fosters a deeper connection between viewers and the destination. It showcases the symbiotic relationship between the park and the local communities, highlighting how tourism can benefit both the environment and the people (MNRT, 2022).

Creating captivating content is essential for maintaining viewer interest and inspiring action. The Tanzania Safari Channel excels in producing high-quality, engaging programs that showcase the park's allure while educating viewers about its significance. Through documentaries, travel shows, and special features, the channel generates excitement and curiosity, motivating domestic tourists to explore Ruaha National Park (Gosling, 2023).

In essence, the Tanzania Safari Channel's approach draws from international examples of successful destination marketing, such as those employed by CBC and ABC, to create a comprehensive and effective promotional strategy. By combining visual appeal, digital engagement, cultural storytelling, and high-quality content, the channel successfully generates a buzz among domestic tourists. This strategy not only promotes Ruaha National Park as an extraordinary destination but also inspires Tanzanians to discover and appreciate the natural wonders within their own country (Zeppel, 2018).

## **Methodology**

The research was conducted in the Iringa and Dar es Salaam regions due to the presence of Ruaha National Park in Iringa and the Tanzania Safari Channel offices in Dar es Salaam. The researcher employed a qualitative approach, conducting the study over four months. The study

applied content analysis for data analysis and presentation, the researcher collected data through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations to align with the qualitative nature of the study.

The research design was precisely crafted to collect qualitative data based on the study. To achieve this, the researcher applied purposive sampling, a technique that involves selecting individuals who possess specific characteristics or expertise relevant to the study. Tourism stakeholders and Tanzania Safari Channel content creators were chosen as key informants in this case due to their extensive experience and direct involvement in tourism promotion and media production. These informants provided invaluable insights into the strategies and effectiveness of the channel's efforts in boosting domestic tourism. Their perspectives helped to explain how the channel's content influences potential tourists and supports sustainable tourism initiatives.

In addition to using purposive sampling, the researcher employed simple random sampling to select domestic tourists for the study. This method ensured representation from a wide range of tourists, providing a comprehensive array of views and experiences regarding their visits to Ruaha National Park. By incorporating the perspectives of actual visitors, the research presented a holistic view of the Tanzania Safari Channel's impact on domestic tourism. Combining purposive and random sampling methods resulted in a robust and balanced collection of qualitative data, illuminating both the production and reception sides of the channel's promotional activities. This comprehensive approach enabled the researcher to draw well-rounded conclusions about the channel's effectiveness in boosting awareness and interest in Ruaha National Park among Tanzanian tourists.

A total of 85 respondents with relevant experience were included in the sample. The data collection methods supported a qualitative analysis of the findings through content analysis.

## **Results**

### **Promoting Ruaha: Tanzania Safari Channel's Impact on Domestic Tourism**

The study concentrates on assessing the effectiveness of Tanzania Safari Channel TV in boosting domestic tourism awareness for Ruaha National Park. Despite facing challenges in producing consistently high-quality content due to budget and resource constraints, the channel has made significant strides through its strategic collaborations with local tourism stakeholders. These stakeholders include tour operators, park authorities, and local community representatives, all of whom bring invaluable expertise and resources to the table. By leveraging these partnerships, the channel can produce more compelling and informative content that resonates with its target audience, thereby overcoming some of the limitations imposed by its production challenges.

A key aspect of the Tanzania Safari Channel's strategy is its close collaboration with tour operators. These partnerships are instrumental in developing and promoting initiatives specifically aimed at attracting domestic tourists. Tour operators provide practical insights into what domestic tourists seek in their travel experiences, enabling the channel to tailor its programming to meet these interests. This synergy ensures that the content not only highlights the natural beauty and attractions of Ruaha National Park but also addresses the logistical and experiential aspects that are important to potential visitors. By showcasing tailored travel packages, behind-the-scenes tours, and special events within the park, the channel effectively taps into the desires and expectations of the domestic tourism market.

Furthermore, the Tanzania Safari Channel serves as a vital platform for tourism stakeholders to present diverse promotional approaches and perspectives on Ruaha National Park. This platform allows for a richer and more varied portrayal of the park, encompassing everything from its stunning landscapes and wildlife to cultural heritage and conservation efforts. The involvement of different stakeholders ensures that the promotional content is well-rounded and appeals to a broad audience. By facilitating this multi-faceted promotional strategy, the channel enhances its impact on domestic tourism. It not only raises awareness about Ruaha National Park but also actively encourages Tanzanians to explore and appreciate their national heritage. This concerted effort contributes to the sustainable growth of domestic tourism, fostering a deeper connection between Tanzanians and their natural environment.

*As Tanzania Safari Channel, we frequently work with tourism stakeholders to promote domestic tourism. These stakeholders request programs featuring Ruaha National Park, and*

*we accommodate their requests by airing relevant content. This collaboration supports the rapid growth of domestic tourism by highlighting the park's beauty and attractions.*

Tanzania Safari Channel Content Creators- 2024.

In summarizing the findings, interviews with 10 content creators of Tanzania Safari Channel highlight their perspective on promoting Ruaha National Park. They emphasize the importance of showcasing the park's unique features through visually appealing wildlife documentaries, landscape footage, and immersive environmental scenes. These efforts aim to captivate audiences and cultivate a profound appreciation for the park's biodiversity. The content creators strategically employ storytelling techniques to underscore Ruaha's distinct attractions, aiming to attract domestic tourists through compelling visual narratives. Overall, their insights underscore the channel's effective role in enhancing awareness and fostering engagement with Ruaha National Park among domestic audiences.

Also, the study utilized group-focused discussions with domestic tourists aged 55 to gather qualitative insights into their perceptions and experiences related to the Tanzania Safari Channel and Ruaha National Park. Participants, who had engaged with the channel and potentially visited the park, expressed varied views on how the television content influenced their awareness of Ruaha National Park. Many suggested that the channel should increase its coverage of the park, noting that the content had sparked their interest and motivated them to visit. Overall, the discussions highlighted the channel's effective role in raising awareness among domestic tourists about the park's attractions and encouraging visitation.

From a focus group discussion, one domestic tourist shared their thoughts, saying,

*Watching the Tanzania Safari Channel's beautiful and informative programs about Ruaha National Park made me eager to visit. The channel's stunning visuals and detailed coverage of the park's attractions truly inspired me to explore its natural wonders in person.*

Domestic tourist, Iringa Municipal- 2024.

Generally, the study highlights the Tanzania Safari Channel's effective promotion of domestic tourism to Ruaha National Park despite content production challenges. By collaborating closely with local tourism stakeholders, including tour operators, the channel develops

initiatives that highlight the park's beauty and attractions. Content creators use visually compelling wildlife documentaries and environmental scenes to engage viewers and enhance appreciation for Ruaha's biodiversity. Insights from domestic tourists further underscore the channel's success in raising awareness and inspiring visits to the park through engaging programming. Overall, the Tanzania Safari Channel significantly contributes to driving domestic tourism by showcasing Ruaha National Park's natural wonders and encouraging viewer engagement.

## **Discussion**

The research underscores the significant impact that Tanzania Safari Channel TV programs have had in promoting domestic tourism to Ruaha National Park. The channel's comprehensive coverage highlights the park's diverse attractions, such as its abundant wildlife, scenic landscapes, and unique ecological features. Through active engagement with local communities, the channel provides authentic narratives that resonate with Tanzanian viewers. Educational campaigns run by the channel have been particularly effective in inspiring a sense of curiosity and a desire among Tanzanians to explore this natural treasure. By showcasing the park's beauty and ecological importance, the channel has successfully sparked interest and curiosity among potential domestic tourists, encouraging them to discover the wonders of Ruaha National Park for themselves.

However, the effectiveness of the Tanzania Safari Channel in raising awareness and influencing travel decisions is not without its challenges. The research points out that low-quality programming and infrequent content updates detract from the channel's overall impact. These shortcomings hinder the channel's ability to consistently capture and retain the attention of its audience. When the quality of content is subpar or updates are infrequent, viewers may lose interest, reducing the channel's influence on their travel decisions. This is particularly problematic in a media landscape where high-quality, engaging content is crucial for maintaining viewer interest and promoting destinations effectively. Addressing these issues is critical for enhancing the channel's effectiveness in promoting domestic tourism.

To maximize its potential and significantly boost domestic tourism to Ruaha National Park, Tanzania Safari Channel needs to foster collaborations with key stakeholders. These stakeholders include tourism boards, park authorities, and local businesses, all of whom can

contribute valuable resources and insights. By working together, these entities can help improve the quality and frequency of the channel's content, ensuring that it remains engaging and informative. High-quality programming can offer viewers compelling reasons to visit Ruaha National Park, showcasing not only the park's natural beauty but also the rich cultural experiences available in the surrounding areas.

Moreover, increasing the frequency of content updates can help keep the audience engaged and informed about new developments and attractions in the park. Regularly updated content can provide fresh insights and new reasons for viewers to consider visiting the park, thereby maintaining their interest and enthusiasm. Despite the existing challenges, the channel's captivating visuals and authentic portrayal of experiences suggest that, with the necessary refinements, it could better harness its promotional capabilities. By enhancing its programming and strengthening collaborations with stakeholders, Tanzania Safari Channel has the potential to substantially increase the number of domestic visitors to Ruaha National Park. In doing so, it would not only boost tourism but also foster a deeper appreciation of Tanzania's natural heritage among its citizens.

## **Conclusion**

The study underscores the pivotal role played by Tanzania Safari Channel TV in invigorating domestic tourism to Ruaha National Park. By presenting vibrant and engaging depictions of the park's diverse wildlife, breathtaking landscapes, and unique visitor experiences, the channel captivates local audiences and stirs their interest in exploring this natural gem. The strategic alliances forged by the Tanzania Safari Channel with tourism authorities, local communities, and other key stakeholders amplify its promotional efforts. Through collaborative educational campaigns and targeted promotions, the channel effectively enhances its reach and influence, supporting sustainable tourism growth and conservation initiatives in Ruaha National Park.

Despite encountering challenges such as limited programming stemming from budget constraints, the channel's overall impact remains significant. This is evidenced by the notable increase in visitor numbers, which rose from 27,000 in 2017 to 34,500 by 2023. This substantial growth in visitor numbers highlights the channel's effectiveness in raising domestic tourism awareness and generating interest in Ruaha National Park. The increase in domestic

tourists not only boosts the local economy but also promotes a greater appreciation of the park's ecological and cultural value among Tanzanians.

The Tanzania Safari Channel's success in promoting Ruaha National Park is further bolstered by its multifaceted approach. By combining visually stunning content with informative and educational narratives, the channel provides viewers with a comprehensive understanding of the park's significance. Additionally, the involvement of various stakeholders, including the private sector and government agencies, plays a crucial role in supporting the channel's initiatives. These collaborative efforts ensure a well-rounded promotional strategy that leverages diverse resources and expertise to enhance the park's visibility and appeal.

The increasing number of visitors demonstrates the significant impact of the channel on promoting domestic tourism. By consistently engaging local audiences and instilling a sense of pride and curiosity about Ruaha National Park, the Tanzania Safari Channel plays a vital role in ensuring the park remains a cherished national asset. The channel's ongoing initiatives, supported by various sectors, underscore the importance of media in tourism promotion and its ability to foster sustainable growth and conservation. This collaborative approach serves as an effective model for other regions seeking to enhance domestic tourism and protect their natural heritage.

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