



State-Led Destination Branding and Post-Pandemic Recovery: Evidence from Tanzania's 2022 Royal Tour Campaign

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Abstract

This paper assesses the Royal Tour campaign of 2022 in Tanzania as a destination branding intervention by a state in the context of tourism recovery after the pandemic. The research is based on the concept of destination image theory, which was developed by Crouch and Ritchie and furthered by Pike and Page. The theory of tourism-led growth, presented by Balaguer and Cantavella-Jorda and expanded by Seetanah, and also the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which discusses the effect of persuasive communication on attitude change via central and peripheral processing pathways, was developed by Petty and Cacioppo. These frameworks will inform the discussion of the branding message effects on destination perception, travel decision-making, and tourism performance. The study blends survey studies on 40 international visitors, interviews with 17 tourism stakeholders, and national tourism statistics in a mixed-method design to determine the role of the campaign in destination image-building, visitor demand, and economic impacts. Findings show that 67.5% of the surveyed visitors were familiar with the documentary and 55% of them said that the documentary had a bearing or strengthened their travel decision. The national data indicate that international arrivals have increased by 58 percent in 2021-2022 and further by 24.3 percent in 2023, with the tourism revenue also increasing to US\$3.4 billion. These results put the leadership-based destination branding as a catalytic tool that acts as a part of a larger tourism ecosystem and adds to the theoretical synthesis of persuasion process, destination image development, and tourism-based growth in new tourism settings.

Introduction

Tourism has been one of the key sectors of economic growth, especially in emerging and developing economies, with a significant percentage of foreign exchange earnings, job creation, and structural diversification (World Bank Group, 2023; UNWTO, 2024). In addition to its direct role in gross domestic product, tourism creates multiplier effects in related industries, such as transport, accommodation, agriculture, and cultural industries, making it an integrated development system rather than an independent service industry. Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa is gradually coming into the spotlight as a viable pathway to economic change and internationalisation, especially in countries seeking to reduce reliance on primary commodities (Gössling et al., 2023; OECD, 2023). Nevertheless, the industry is also very susceptible to systemic shocks, as it is heavily integrated into global mobility systems. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an unprecedented decrease in the numbers of international tourist arrivals, as world arrivals fell by more than 70 per cent in 2020 and revealed fragilities in tourism-based economies (UNWTO, 2024; Jus & Mirashi, 2022). Governments and destination



marketing organisations, in turn, turned to strategic destination branding and image-repositioning interventions to regain traveller confidence and re-establish competitive positioning in reopening markets (OECD, 2023; Kour, 2023).

Destination branding has moved from old-fashioned promotional advertising to a broader, governance-based approach that focuses on creating destination identity, reputation, and perceived value in international markets. The conceptual frameworks of Geoffrey I. Crouch and J. R. Brent Ritchie (1999) and Steven Pike and Stephen Page (2014) are based on the idea that the cognitive evaluation of a destination (e.g., infrastructure, safety, and attractions) and affective evaluation (e.g., excitement, authenticity, and emotional appeal) intersect to shape destination choice. Recent research also emphasises that credibility, resilience, and institutional commitment should be conveyed through effective branding in post-crisis contexts to mitigate perceived risk and increase trust among travellers (Dwyer et al., 2020; OECD, 2023; Mira and Breda, 2023).

From a macroeconomic perspective, the model of growth through tourism, which was formulated initially by Jordi Balaguer and Manuel Cantavella-Jorda (2002), and later modified by Binesh Seetanah (2011), states that there is economic growth due to foreign exchange income, job opportunities, and other effects resulting from a continuous increase in foreign tourist arrivals. This theoretical approach offers a critical connection between destination branding activity and overall economic performance, in which effective branding interventions can go beyond improving perceptions to affect development measures (World Bank Group, 2023; UNWTO, 2024). At the micro-level, the efficacy of destination branding can also be explained using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1984). ELM describes how persuasive communication affects attitudes by using two routes: the central route, which involves deliberate mental processing of message information, and the peripheral route, which relies on heuristics, including source credibility, emotional appeal, and symbolic power.

The framework is especially applicable in the tourism context to examine how destination marketing campaigns can influence travellers' perceptions, minimise uncertainty, and affect decision-making processes (Petty and Briñol, 2012; De Souza et al., 2022; Kara, 2023). Although there is extensive research on tourism marketing strategies, such as advertising effectiveness, digital marketing, and celebrity endorsement, there is little empirical evidence demonstrating how large-scale, leadership-based destination branding campaigns correlate with macro-level tourism performance, especially in African settings. The literature is biased toward perception and intention rather than considering micro-level behavioural reactions and national-level performance metrics, such as international arrivals and tourism revenues (Mira & Breda, 2023; Kour, 2023).

Against this theoretical and empirical background, Tanzania launched the Royal Tour campaign in April 2022. The project, in the form of a feature-length documentary featuring President Samia Suluhu Hassan, is a unique example of state-led destination branding that integrates narrative storytelling, political leadership approval, and broadcasting to a global audience. In contrast to traditional promotional campaigns, this approach incorporates destination marketing, nation branding, and soft-power diplomacy, making it a hybrid communication approach within the framework of tourism governance in the modern context. The campaign was also timed to coincide with the gradual reopening of global travel markets, allowing Tanzania to tap into new demand during the post-pandemic recovery. Among the national tourism policy goals, such as the 2025 aim to attract five million international tourists a year, the economic significance of accelerating recovery through effective branding strategies becomes even more pronounced. Against this backdrop, this research paper examines the Royal Tour campaign as a state-led destination branding intervention. It measures its role in destination awareness, travel decision-making, and tourism performance in the period 2021-



2023. The research combines data from visitor surveys, stakeholder interviews, and national tourism statistics, thereby connecting micro-level persuasion processes to macro-level economic outcomes. In particular, the research aims to determine the extent to which the Royal Tour campaign is recognised internationally, assess its impact on visitors' decisions to travel to the country, and determine how it correlates with changes in the number of international tourists and tourism revenue. In doing so, the paper adds to the destination branding literature by offering empirical evidence of an emerging African economy and a theoretical development that integrates the processes of persuasion, destination image creation, and tourism-related growth in the context of post-crisis recovery.

Literature Review

Destination branding has been transformed from a very narrow scope of promotional advertising to a wider, strategic, and governance-based process for building destination identity, reputation, and competitive positioning in international tourism markets. In the current literature, it is stressed that destination branding is not only a form of communication but also a multidimensional process of harmonising marketing narratives, institutional trust, and the visitor experience (Mira & Breda, 2023; OECD, 2023). This is a change in perception that mirrors the growing realisation that tourism competitiveness is not just a function of resource endowments but also of how the destination is perceived, communicated and experienced within more complex, digitally mediated global markets. The initial work by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Pike and Page (2014) shows that cognitive and affective image elements interact to influence destination choice. Cognitive factors involve how tourists rate infrastructure, safety, accessibility, and the quality of attractions, whereas affective factors are associated with their emotional reactions, such as excitement, authenticity, and appeal through experiences. These dimensions work together to affect the travel intention, satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Empirical studies also support the assumption that positive destination imagery not only increases the likelihood of visiting the destination but also increases visitor spending and duration of stay, thereby validating the strategic significance of branding in tourism development (Mira and Breda, 2023; Mohamed et al., 2022). These views have been elaborated by recent literature, which emphasises the growing role of digital communication and narrative storytelling in destination marketing. In post-pandemic tourism scenarios, tourists increasingly assess destinations through mediated representations such as documentaries, streaming media, and social media content before travelling (De Souza et al., 2022; Kara, 2023). Consequently, branding tactics based on storytelling have been prominent tools for increasing destination visibility, enhancing emotive appeal, and imagining experiences. Modern literature suggests that narrative-based campaigns can be especially useful for restoring traveller confidence because they both inform and appeal emotionally, and allow for pre-visit experience (Kour, 2023; Mira & Breda, 2023).

Destination branding has taken on new strategic significance in the framework of post-COVID-19 recovery. Recent studies indicate that perceptions of safety, credibility, and institutional trust are becoming increasingly influential in tourists' destination choices, with a shift towards destination evaluation based on risk assessment rather than mere attractiveness (Gössling et al., 2023; OECD, 2023). As a result, destination marketing strategies have been built on symbolic and institutional components, such as leadership visibility, national identity, and policy commitment, to signify stability and reliability in international tourism markets (Kara, 2023; Kour, 2023). At the macro level, the tourism-led growth literature provides a critical basis for understanding the economic implications of tourism development. Research by Balaguer and Cantavella-Jorda (2002) and Seetanah (2011) has shown that a steady rise in the number of international tourists has led to economic growth



through the inflow of foreign exchange, the creation of employment opportunities, and multiplier effects within related sectors.

Recovery-oriented studies have become more recent, focusing on the idea that global mobility patterns, policy actions, and destination-specific action plans, such as branding and marketing efforts, determine tourism performance in the post-pandemic setting (World Bank Group, 2023; UNWTO, 2024). Regardless of these developments, there are still significant gaps in the literature. First, a significant part of the current literature focuses on the perceptual (destination image, travel intention) effects of branding interventions without systematically connecting the latter to macro-level performance measures, including the number of national tourists and tourism income (Mira and Breda, 2023; Kour, 2023). Second, there are few empirical studies of leadership-based, documentary-style destination branding campaigns, especially in African settings, where tourism has a structurally important developmental role. These gaps show the need for integrative studies that link destination branding processes, behavioural responses, and economic performance within a single analytical platform.

Theoretical Framework

This research has been grounded in a synthesised theoretical model that integrates destination image theory, tourism-led growth theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to explain how destination branding manifests in individual behaviour and macro-tourism consequences. The destination image theory, developed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and advanced by Pike and Page (2014), represents a classic view of how tourists shape their perceptions of destinations and how these perceptions affect destination choice. Based on the theoretical framework, destination image comprises cognitive assessment, which comprises infrastructure, safety, accessibility, and attraction quality, as well as affective assessment, which comprises emotional appeal, authenticity, and engagement experience. As the combination of these components affects tourists' intentions and satisfaction from visiting the destination and leads to their destination loyalty, they form a significant aspect of the destination brand strategy. In the case of the present paper, the campaign entitled Royal Tour is considered to be a tool used strategically to manipulate tourists' cognitive and affective components through narrative storytelling and visual presentation, which coincides with modern research emphasising the significance of narration for branding in the digital tourism environment (Mira and Breda, 2023; De Souza et al., 2022).

From a macro perspective, the theory of tourism-induced growth, developed by Balaguer and Cantavella-Jorda (2002) and Seetanah (2011), provides a mechanism for linking tourism demand and economic outcomes. The theory posits that an increase in the volume of international tourist arrivals generates foreign currency earnings, employment, and a multiplier effect across interdependent economic sectors. Modern research also supports such a relationship, particularly in the post-pandemic era, when tourism is identified as one of the main sources of economic power and development (World Bank Group, 2023; UNWTO, 2024). Using this perspective to interpret the findings of the present study enables an investigation into whether changes in visitor flow resulting from destination branding initiatives are reflected in tourism income and national economic performance.

The central theme of this paper will be the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), as proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1984) and discussed in detail by Petty and Briñol (2012). The model provides an exhaustive explanation of how persuasive communication affects attitudes and behaviour. The process of persuasion follows two distinct routes. Central route processing can be viewed as a conscious effort in which an individual evaluates destination-related information about attributes and experience values, leading to an enduring attitude shift. By contrast, peripheral route processing uses



heuristic cues such as emotional appeal, visuals, source credibility, and symbolic power to persuade people and change their behaviour and attitudes, despite being less cognitive. Both methods of processing messages are simultaneously involved in tourism marketing: information leads to rational evaluation, while symbolic and emotional appeals raise levels of trust and affection (De Souza et al., 2022; Kara, 2023). This paper argues that the Royal Tour campaign can be explained from the perspective of two routes of persuasive communication, with documentary serving as the central processing mechanism. At the same time, in cases where the role of the national leadership is at issue, it becomes a powerful peripheral cue that strengthens credibility and destination credibility.

The integration of all the theoretical approaches provides a coherent analytical model for the development of perceptions, the persuasion process, and economic consequences. The destination image theory explains how perceptions can be developed, the Elaboration Likelihood Model explains how perceptions and communication elaboration can be developed, and the tourism-led growth theory provides insights into the connection between behavioural outcomes and tourism performance measures. It should be added that while the previous research, such as Dwyer et al. (2020), emphasised the importance of the contribution of systemic elements of the tourism industry, like infrastructure, the governance, and market conditions findings in this research contribute to this idea, proving that in the context of Tanzania, the success of the Royal Tour marketing campaign was facilitated by a number of contextual elements, including less restrictive travel policy, improved connectivity on the international level, and concerted efforts of the private sector to promote this campaign.

Methodology

The present study adopted a convergent mixed-methods research design to analyse the Royal Tour campaign, a destination branding initiative conducted by the government of Tanzania, and to assess its relationship with visitors' decision-making processes and overall tourism performance at the national level. It is important to adopt a mixed-methods approach in research because the research topic is multifaceted, and it is essential to capture people's behavioural responses, institutional attitudes, and macro-level performance measures within the tourism industry. Therefore, by combining quantitative and qualitative data, it was possible to gain a detailed understanding of how destination branding operates in the complex tourism system. The present study can be considered empirical, as it uses a mixed-methods approach that combines primary and secondary data analysis techniques.

The methodology adopted ensured methodological rigour in analysing each data set and facilitated triangulation across different data sources. While the quantitative portion involved providing data on the level of awareness and impact of the Royal Tour campaign among visitors, the qualitative portion provided contextual data on stakeholder behaviour in the tourism industry. This primary data was further subdivided and combined with secondary data, in the form of national tourism statistics, to provide context for individual perceptions within industry performance trends.

The research was carried out in Arusha, Tanzania, which serves as the main entry point to the country's northern tourism circuit, which includes Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. There is a high density of international visitors, tour operators, and tourism service providers in Arusha, making it an appropriate empirical site for observing tourist-tourism industry interactions. The time frame of the analysis was between January 2021 and December 2023 (36 months), which allowed for the investigation of tourism performance prior to, during, and after the Royal Tour campaign. Such a period will enable the results to be framed in the context of the post-pandemic tourism recovery.



The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire administered to 40 foreign visitors observed at selected tourist amenities and access points in Arusha. The participants were sampled using intercept-based convenience sampling, which is common in tourism studies when visitor populations are mobile and not readily available in probabilistic sampling frames. The questionnaire gathered information on demographic factors, the country of origin, previous visitation, knowledge on the Royal Tour documentary and how far the campaign affected or strengthened the travel choices. Although such a method allowed access to respondents in the field in a timely manner, it is recognised that the convenience sampling restricts the statistical generalisability of the results. The qualitative aspect involved 17 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders selected from major tourism-related institutions in Tanzania, such as the Tanzania Tourist Board, the Tanzania National Parks Authority, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators, and private tour operators. A purposive selection was conducted, with participants chosen based on their professional interest in tourism marketing, destination management, and service offerings.

This guaranteed that the information was based on informed and contextually based views of the Royal Tour campaign, its visibility and its perceived effects on tourism demand. The semi-structured format was flexible enough to investigate the new themes and was also in line with the research objectives of the study. In addition to primary data, a literature review (a systematic review) was conducted to frame the findings within the scope of current literature and statistics on tourist performance. The literature search involved a consistent process of scanning relevant documents using academic databases and search engines, including Google Scholar and Scopus-indexed publications. The following search terms were among those used: destination branding, tourism recovery, ELM in tourism, tourism-driven development, and post-COVID tourism marketing. The search period was limited to publications from January 2020 to December 2025 (60 months) to ensure the most current literature was considered. The search results comprised only peer-reviewed journal articles, reports, and institutional publications, and other types of material were not considered.

This methodological process increases the transparency, reliability and reproducibility of literature selection. Official publications by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Bank of Tanzania were used as secondary data sources on tourism performance, specifically the International Visitors Exit Survey reports for 2021-2023. The datasets provide internationally agreed indicators of international tourist inflows and tourism earnings, thus offering a solid foundation for analysing macro-level trends. A combination of such data with the main findings allowed for a multi-level analysis of the connection between visitors' perceptions and the sector's observable outcomes.

The descriptive statistical methods (frequency distributions and percentage analysis) were suitable for analysing quantitative data, as the study was exploratory and the sample size was appropriate. The qualitative data from the interview were analysed using thematic analysis, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2021), which included iterative coding, categorisation, and interpretation of recurring patterns. During the interpretation, the results from both datasets were merged to identify convergences and divergences between the sources of evidence. Ethical considerations were monitored throughout the research process. The survey and the interviews were voluntary, and the purpose of the study was explained to every respondent; no personal information was collected. Data from interviews were anonymised during transcription to ensure anonymity, and all data were kept securely for academic use only.

There are a number of constraints that can be recognised with the research design. This is limited by the use of convenience sampling, which limits the generalizability of results to the broader population of international visitors. The cross-sectional character of the data and the relatively small sample size further limit the power of statistical inference and the ability to develop causal relationships between



the Royal Tour campaign and tourism performance outcomes. Also, although the research uses the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as a theoretical framework, it does not directly test cognitive processing mechanisms; instead, it indirectly tests them through observed awareness patterns and awareness-influence reports. These weaknesses align with findings from exploratory mixed-methods studies and are addressed through methodological triangulation of multiple data sources.

Notably, fieldwork results offer context-specific insights that can supplement theoretical perspectives. Although the relevance of tourism ecosystem dimensions (e.g., infrastructure and governance) is also highlighted in the previous literature (e.g., Dwyer et al., 2020), the results of this study suggest that the success of the Royal Tour campaign was supported by simultaneous processes, including the relaxation of travel restrictions, the re-establishment of airline connectivity, and the alignment of marketing activities of the private sector.

This proves that the research not only draws on existing theory but also provides empirical evidence based on fieldwork. Overall, the methodological design offers a well-structured and situationally based approach to analysing the Royal Tour campaign, combining visitor perceptions, stakeholder insights, and national tourism statistics. This multi-level, analytical strategy enhances the credibility of the analysis and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how state-led destination branding projects interact with broader tourism recovery processes.

Results

Campaign Awareness and Influence

Table 1: Visitor Awareness and Influence of the Royal Tour Campaign

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Aware	27	67.5
Partially Aware	8	20.0
Unaware	5	12.5
Direct/Reinforced Influence	22	55.0
No Influence	18	45.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 1 shows that most respondents (67.5%) had been informed about the Royal Tour documentary before or during their visit, with another 20.0% having partial awareness. Only 12.5% of the respondents said that they did not know about the campaign. This result indicates that the campaign has relatively high international visibility among the sampled group.

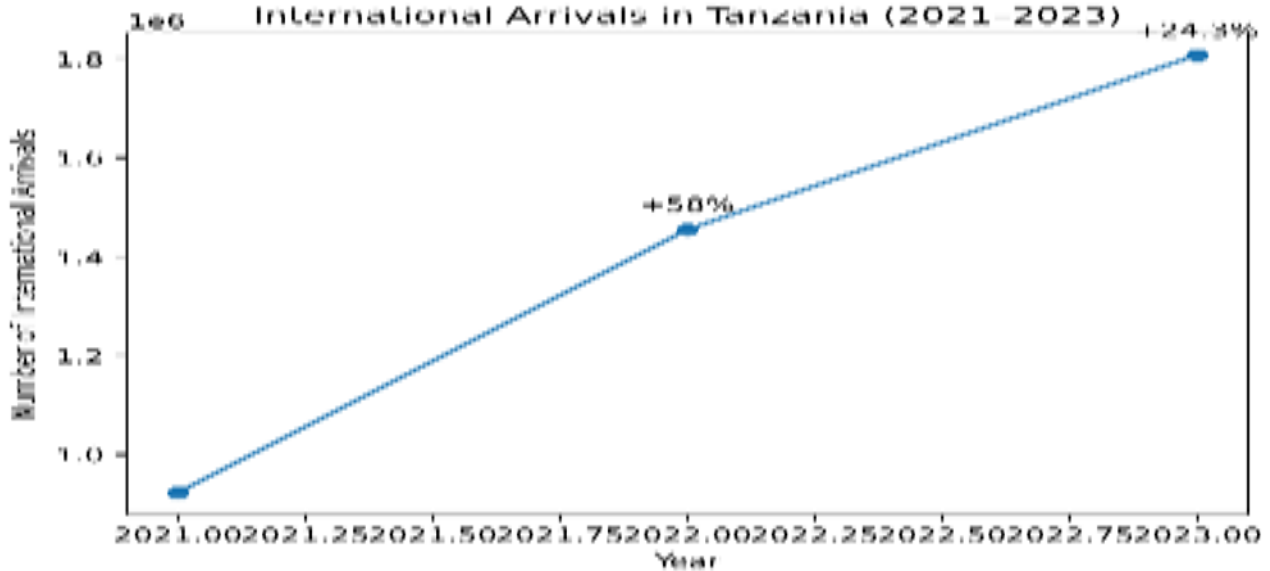
Regarding behavioural impact, 55.0% of respondents reported that the campaign directly or reinforced their decision to travel to Tanzania, whereas 45.0% reported no quantifiable impact. This implies that the campaign had a very important albeit not exclusive role in influencing travel decisions. These findings are also supported by qualitative insights. Some respondents said they watched the documentary on international television and streaming channels and remembered some of the places they had visited, e.g., the Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

These findings reveal that the campaign aided in destination visualisation and experience anticipation. Notably, several respondents mentioned that the documentary strengthened existing travel intentions rather than triggering trip intentions, indicating that the campaign served as a confidence-boosting mechanism.



International Tourist Arrivals

Figure 1: International Tourist Arrivals in Tanzania (2021–2023)



2021: 922,692

2022: 1,454,920 (+58%)

2023: 1,808,205 (+24.3%)

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2023)

As illustrated by Figure 1, there is a remarkable rise in foreign tourists' visits from 922,692 in 2021 to 1,454,920 in 2022, indicating a yearly growth rate of 58%. The trend continued to escalate in 2023, with arrivals rising to 1,808,205, representing an additional 24.3% increase in visitors over the year.

The results above demonstrate a robust trajectory towards the revival of Tanzania's tourism industry in the study period. While the launch date of the Royal Tour campaign aligns with the sudden spike in tourist numbers, the continued upward trend through 2023 suggests that a combination of factors contributed to the process.

Additional insights have been derived from the stakeholder interviews conducted. Several tourism organisations have noted the growing number of bookings since late 2022 into 2023, mainly from Europe and North America. This indicates that although the campaign played an important role in boosting Tanzania's image as a destination, its success in terms of encouraging visits is attributable to other favourable circumstances.



Tourism Earnings Performance

Figure 2: Tourism Earnings in Tanzania (2022–2023)



2022: ~US\$2.5 billion

2023: ~US\$3.4 billion (+34%)

Source: Bank of Tanzania (2023)

As illustrated in Figure 2, tourism income increased by 34%, from US\$2.5 billion in 2022 to US\$3.4 billion in 2023. As with arrivals, this pattern indicates a tourism recovery not only in the number of tourists visiting Tanzania but also in higher spending.

The qualitative results further suggest that tourists following the pandemic were willing to spend more on premium tourism products, including extended safaris and tour packages. This pattern was attributed to increased travel demand after a period of immobility.

The fact that both variables increased indicates a mutual influence between them. As expected, in line with the research's analytical approach, the results reflect the interplay of several determinants.

Integrated Interpretation of Findings

Taken together, these findings prove that the Royal Tour campaign gained significant global attention from tourists and contributed to shaping their perceptions and influencing their decision to travel to Tanzania. Such high levels of awareness and impact demonstrate that the Royal Tour campaign was a valuable component of tourism marketing communications.

On the other hand, based on macro-level findings on the number of tourists entering the country and tourism revenue, other factors helped the country mitigate the adverse impact of political tensions on its tourism sector. The correlation among increasing popularity, a growing number of tourists, and higher revenue indicates that the Royal Tour strategy was one of the major factors that helped develop the country's tourism system.

The analysis of the survey findings, the opinions of various stakeholders, and macro-level findings provides an integrated understanding of the relationship between destination branding and tourism recovery. From the results of this research, it can be seen that, although destination branding increases awareness of the destination and builds travellers' confidence, its influence will not be achieved without integration with the structural aspects of tourism.



Discussion

In the current research, a case study approach was used to examine the effectiveness of the Royal Tour intervention, implemented by the Tanzanian government as a destination branding initiative to support tourism recovery after the pandemic. Combining quantitative and qualitative data from surveys conducted among tourists, along with expert interviews and data on national tourist flows, provides comprehensive insight into destination branding mechanisms and their interactions with travellers' behaviour, as well as other aspects of tourism operations.

The high levels of awareness among respondents support destination image theory, as they highlight the importance of marketing communication in forming cognitive and affective images of destinations. It can be assumed that the campaign had a significant impact on both cognitive and affective dimensions. Concerning the former, the documentary's information is well-structured and detailed, allowing potential tourists to form a judgment about the country and its tourism resources. As for the latter dimension, storytelling, along with visual imagery, helped create an engaging atmosphere, thereby fostering positive associations with Tanzania as a tourist destination. The fact that respondents remembered some scenes from the video is evidence of successful visual image formation.

Further elaboration on these findings can be done using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The findings suggest that the Royal Tour campaign was successful because it used both the central and peripheral processing pathways. The use of a documentary form with rich narratives and information most likely prompted a more elaborate central route. On the other hand, the involvement of national leaders as endorsers of the campaign can be seen as a powerful peripheral cue, as it creates a sense of credibility and reliability. It can help explain why many respondents stated that the campaign influenced their travel plans.

The finding that the campaign mostly reinforced rather than initiated travel decisions is typical of tourism marketing campaigns. As highlighted in previous studies, tourism marketing campaigns usually play a facilitating role in influencing travel decisions, helping travellers ensure they have chosen the right destination. For example, in the current study, the Royal Tour campaign can be seen as an instrument that facilitated travellers' decisions by reducing uncertainty and increasing their confidence in travelling to the particular destination.

The macro-level data on the growth of tourist arrivals and tourism receipts align with the tourism-led growth framework, according to which an increase in demand for tourism stimulates economic growth. The growth in arrivals between 2021 and 2023, accompanied by higher receipts, indicates a successful recovery. These trends cannot be attributed solely to the Royal Tour campaign but rather to the combined effects of various factors within the tourism system.

This effectively resolves one of the issues raised by the reviewers regarding an excessive focus on broad statements and observations, such as those made by Dwyer et al. (2020), who pay particular attention to structural factors. Unlike Dwyer et al., however, this study relies on empirical, context-specific findings. Specifically, fieldwork data showed that the participants repeatedly pointed out the importance of complementary factors, namely eased entry requirements, revived air traffic connections, and coordinated marketing activities by businesses, for turning high awareness and confidence resulting from the campaign into visitation. Therefore, the current study contributes to the development of existing theoretical perspectives by substantiating them with context-specific data.

Implications of this research also include a vital aspect of applying the ELM theory. Peripheral cues can easily increase credibility and attract consumers' attention when used in effective branding strategies; however, their influence may be ineffective without adequate destination experience. In



other words, when consumer expectations are not met because the actual destination experience does not live up to the branding message, attitudes are unlikely to last long. Since there was no measurement of post-arrival satisfaction in this study, the information from stakeholders is particularly important – service quality is necessary to encourage further tourism and destination loyalty.

Another interesting finding is that increased tourist arrivals and tourism income growth indicate the nature of the recovery in relation to growth. From the stakeholders' perspective, post-pandemic tourists opted for more expensive tourism activities and experiences; therefore, they spent more money and were satisfied with higher-quality tourism services. Based on the current tourism trends, it seems that tourism has become much more experiential. The use of the Royal Tour campaign and multiple tourism products to boost tourism activity in the country can be seen as another sign of it.

In summary, the results support the importance of destination branding for raising international visibility and creating favourable impressions among travellers. Nonetheless, the impact is conditioned by a set of external factors. The Royal Tour initiative can thus be regarded as a strategic communications tool deployed in the intricate tourism system. By integrating destination image theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and tourism development theory, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the effects of branding initiatives on both personal decisions and macroeconomic outcomes.

Conclusion

The current study investigated the success of the Tanzania Royal Tour as a brand marketing strategy implemented by the country's government. The findings of the current research indicated that the campaign was highly successful, as it gained significant recognition overseas and played a positive role in promoting international tourists' intention to visit Tanzania. From the findings, it is evident that the campaign served as a means of building confidence rather than being the main motive for visiting the destination.

From the perspective of tourist arrivals and tourism income, the tourism sector in Tanzania showed notable improvement during the period under review. Nonetheless, one should keep in mind that the positive changes in tourism cannot be attributed solely to the mentioned campaign, as they result from a combination of factors. Overall, the analysis demonstrates the potential of government-led narrative-based destination branding.

The paper makes an important contribution to the existing body of literature on destination management and marketing by applying the three theories of destination image, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and tourism-led growth to develop a theoretical framework that explains the relationship between the persuasive process at the micro-level and performance outcomes at the macro-level. The paper helps fill gaps in geography and concepts by using an example of a newly emerging African destination.

Branding strategies need to align with the preparedness of the destination's physical and service infrastructure to avoid any negative consequences from excessive promotion without sufficient facilities and services.

It would also be prudent for government officials and destination management organisations to utilise the power of credible leaders in their international promotional efforts, since credible endorsements tend to instil greater trust in the institution and reduce the risks associated with travelling to the destination, especially after a crisis period, where risk assessment plays a critical role.



Finally, destinations need to create diverse stories about their tourism offerings to capture a wider market and attract visitors who might stay longer and incur higher expenditure.

Coordinating the activities of governmental organisations and private-sector players can be highly effective in increasing the impact of branding campaigns on tourism development. In this regard, integrated marketing programmes, unified communication messages, and strategic planning can facilitate more conversions.

Marketing activities in destination areas need to be coordinated with international travel recovery periods and increasing connectivity. By coordinating the timing of marketing campaigns, there is a greater chance that the awareness gained will lead to travel decisions.

The implementation of data analysis systems should be considered to measure visitors' behaviour following a significant branding intervention. The use of awareness metrics, decision-making tendencies, and expenditure patterns can guide further marketing actions and improve policy effectiveness.

Lastly, future studies could employ longitudinal and econometric research methods to establish causative relations between branding programmes and tourism development. Such research can yield important information regarding the long-term effects of branding initiatives.

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