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REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF MEDIA AMBASSADORS IN PREVENTING UNHEALTHY CULTURAL BEHAVIOURS

Despite the increasing levels of education, integration, media penetration and globalization, retrogressive cultural practices still persist in certain parts of Kenya. Some of them are highlighted by the media while others equally harmful have escaped the attention of the media. The media as a tool for social change has been used to highlight these retrogressive cultural practices. Media ambassadors are influential or well-known personalities in the society such as celebrities who are engaged or contracted by the media to help bring about social or behavioral change. Therefore, it was important to establish how the use of media ambassadors can make significant change in the society and prevent the propagation of harmful cultural practices. The paper, thus, examined the role of media ambassadors in preventing unhealthy cultural behaviors. The study used the Agenda Setting Theory, Klapper Reinforcement or Limited Effects Theory and Interpretive Theories. The study found that media ambassadors such as celebrities were instrumental in raising the profile of an organization or campaign such as those seeking to promote behavioral change like abandoning retrogressive cultural practices. Media ambassadors were effective in changing peoples views on retrogressive cultural practices. This implies that more involvement of media ambassadors in anti FGM campaigns would improve effective communication of FGM information. However, it also emerged that use of media ambassadors could have both positive and negative effects on campaigns such as when they blacklist a product that they were supporting. The study recommends that media practitioners and social change campaigners to carry out careful planning and testing of campaign content and format with target audiences when seeking to promote cultural changes. There is need for media practitioners and social change campaigners to select the right media ambassadors who are free of controversy to help in their campaign against retrogressive cultural practices.

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