

Media Campaign and Knowledge on Extra Marital Affairs: Case of *Mpango Wa Kando* Advert in Kenya

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Abstract: This study focused on the *Mpango wa Kando* campaign that has been running in the Kenyan mass media since 2009. For several years since HIV/AIDS was declared a national disaster, many organizations including the government of Kenya have put up a spirited fight against HIV and AIDS through a number of multi-media strategies. One of these strategies has been the *Mpango wa Kando* campaign by Population Service. The specific objectives of the study established the level of knowledge derived from *Mpango wa Kando* adverts by married people and those in stable relationships and, whether people in marriage and those in stable relationships pay attention to the *Mpango wa Kando* adverts in the Kenyan mass media. The key findings of the study were that the *Mpango wa Kando* campaign did not have much impact in changing people's sexual behavior and knowledge on extra marital affairs. The study established that many people feel that the mass media in Kenya are not doing enough to fight HIV AIDS. Many of the respondents and informants felt that *Mpango wa Kando* campaign should offer more practical solutions such as marriage counseling services. The media in Kenya were also challenged to come up with well-researched documentaries that address behavior change issues instead of relying on campaigns from government and nongovernmental organizations alone.

Keywords: *Mpango wa Kando*, HIV and AIDS, media, campaigns.

INTRODUCTION

To have an extra marital affair among married people is a question of principles and while some cultures permit it, many do not [1]. Today, many cultures strongly discourage multiple concurrent sexual partners because it hurts marriages and is one of the leading causes of HIV/AIDS infection. Indeed, research indicates that HIV/AIDS has been spreading rapidly among married people in Kenya more than other groups. According to the 2007 Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey (KAIS), in 10% of monogamous couples and 14% of polygamous unions, at least one partner is HIV positive, while two-thirds of HIV-infected Kenyans are in stable relationships[2].

Unfaithfulness (*Mpango wa Kando*) has been cited as one of the biggest problems in the fight of HIV and AIDS because human behavior has contributed a great deal to the spread of the disease. Apart from having an extra marital affair, many people who get involved in this practice do not use protection when having sex. Many imagine that their partners are faithful while they also have other sexual partners with whom they have unprotected sex. In return, the unfaithful people end up infecting their spouses with whom they also have unprotected sex [2].

Extra-marital relationships (*Mpango wa Kando*) is on the rise particularly in urban centers. Extra marital relationships coupled with unprotected sex are likely to lead to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, broken marriages and the ultimate death of victims leading to orphaned children. Despite numerous anti HIV/AIDS campaigns by the mass media and other organizations, the spread of AIDS is still on the rise, posing serious health, economic and social challenges to the whole nation. Communication plays a critical role in seeking solutions to practices concurrent sexual partners that lead to HIV/AIDS infection. It is necessary to study message appeal among married people and those in stable relationships with regard to the *Mpango wa Kando* campaign to establish whether the mass media have been successful in arresting the problem of concurrent sexual partners.

Knowledge and media campaigns on extra marital affairs

Cultural understanding plays a key role in helping to understand why certain people engage in certain practices in society. Coupled with societal pressures, people may engage in a behavior because it is generally accepted in that society. Philips [1] says that many societies around the world view extramarital affairs as immoral. Worldwide awareness of AIDS and STI's has underlined the seriousness of extramarital

sexual behavior and highlighted the new risks that surround deviations from a monogamous sexual relationship [3].

Fishbein and Ajzen [4] hold the view that communication is integral to a cultural system in that cultural values, beliefs and knowledge are conveyed through symbols and language. In people's endeavor to adopt and understand their environment, communication is significant in their interaction and adaptation to this environment. Mass media, a form of mass communication has been viewed as critical as well as a catalyst in developing countries national effort at transforming these countries to industrialized or developed countries [4]. The authors say that mass media campaigns are widely used to expose high proportions of large populations to messages through routine uses of existing media, such as television, radio and newspapers. Exposure to such messages is, therefore, generally passive. Such campaigns are frequently competing with factors such as pervasive product marketing, powerful social norms, and behaviors driven by addiction or habit [4]. Over the past few decades, media campaigns have been used in an attempt to affect various health behaviors in mass populations. Such campaigns have most notably been aimed at tobacco use, but have also addressed alcohol and illicit drug use, sex-related behaviors, family planning, and many other health-related issues.

Fishben and Ajzen [4] further argue that, the great promise of mass media campaigns lies in their ability to disseminate well defined behaviorally focused messages, to large audiences, repeatedly, over time, and in an incidental manner. That promise has been inconsistently realized. Campaign messages can fall short and even backfire. Exposure of audiences to the message might not meet expectations hindered by inadequate funding, the increasingly fractured and cluttered media environment, use of inappropriate or poorly researched format (for example boring factual messages or age-inappropriate content), or a combination of these features. Homogeneous messages might not be persuasive to heterogeneous audiences; and campaigns might address behaviors that audiences lack the resources to change.

Kotler and Lee [5] argue that media campaigns can be of short duration or may extend over long periods. They may stand alone or be linked to other organized program components, such as clinical or institutional outreach and easy access to newly available or existing products or services, or may complement policy changes. Multiple methods of dissemination might be used if health campaigns are part of broader social marketing programs.

Mass media campaigns can work through direct and indirect pathways to change the behavior of whole populations or a specific target population.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen [4], many behavior change campaigns aim to directly affect individual recipients by invoking cognitive or emotional responses. Such programs are intended to affect decision-making processes at the individual level. Anticipated outcomes include the removal or lowering of obstacles to change, helping people to adopt healthy or recognize unhealthy social norms, and to associate valued emotions with achieving change. These changes strengthen intentions to alter and increase the likelihood of interpersonal discussion about a particular issue within an individual's social network, which, in combination with individual exposure to messages, might reinforce (or undermine) specific changes in behavior.

Second, since mass media messages reach large audiences, changes in behavior that become norms within an individual's social network might influence that person's decisions without them having been directly exposed to or initially persuaded by the campaign [5]. For example, after viewing televised antismoking campaign messages, several members of a social group might be prompted to form a support group to help them stop smoking. Another individual who has not seen the television campaign could decide to join the support group and change his or her own behavior.

Fishben and Ajzen [4] hold the view that mass media campaigns can prompt public discussion of issues, lead to changes in public policy, resulting in constraints on individuals' behavior, and thereby change. Campaigns designed to maximize scale and operational success but that do not carefully assess outcomes might be expected to make weak claims compared with those that include carefully planned experimental assessments. Large-scale media campaigns, however, have higher population exposure and can exploit the indirect pathways that can increase overall population response to campaigns. Careful experimental designs are used to assess only the direct effects of small-scale campaigns, which might not provide the potential for maximum effectiveness [5]. For example, a campaign discouraging concurrent sexual partners because of its effects might not persuade people to stop having sex, but it might increase public support for the use of protection when having sex, which might have the secondary effect of persuading people to be faithful to one partner.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the qualitative method of data collection through focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews. The qualitative research interview sought to describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects [6]. The focus group discussions enabled the respondents to share experiences through discussions on the *Mpango wa Kando* media campaign. The approach was important in giving participant a voice and to demystify culture by

discussing sex openly. The interaction among participants brought out different perspectives and views. This led to enhanced openness than can be achieved in a formal interview setting.

The target population was married people and those in stable relationships drawn from Shield Assurance Company which is a modern insurance company located along Ngong' Road, 5th Avenue Street, Nairobi. Nairobi served as an ideal setting for the study because all Kenyan populations (ethnically and politically) are fairly represented. This factor minimized the bias that would be naturally associated with a mono-ethnic or a mono-cultural setting.

Mugenda and Mugenda [7] define purposive sampling as a sampling technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of the study. They further state that cases of subjects are, therefore, handpicked because they are informative or because they possess the required characteristics. The researcher handpicked five key informants for in-depth interviews. The informants constituted a magistrate, a marriage counselor, a Christian pastor, a Muslim religious leader (sheikh) and a sociologist. The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to enrich results from the focus group discussions. The following are the variables that were measured in the study: Level of knowledge, attention, attitudes and behavior change on *Mpango wa Kando*.

To keep the session on track while allowing discussants to talk freely and spontaneously, the facilitator used a discussion guide that listed the main topics or themes that were covered in the session. It served as a road map to guide the facilitator in covering the list of topics and kept the discussion on track [8]. The discussion guide was designed into four parts that constituted the thematic areas of investigation drawn from the research variables namely; level of knowledge, attention, attitudes and behavior change. A tape recorder was also used to record the entire discussion. The recorded material was then transcribed before the analysis.

After the two focus group sessions, data was transcribed. Only the findings that reflected on the topics of discussion that were derived from the objectives were recorded as findings of the study. Key statements, ideas, and attitudes that were expressed for each topic of discussion were listed. The topics of discussion were level of knowledge, attention, attitudes and behavior change related to *Mpango wa Kando* campaign. Data from key interviews were analyzed thematically according to knowledge, attention, attitudes and behavior change related to *Mpango wa Kando* campaign. The findings were transcribed and important points noted as key findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of knowledge on Mpango wa Kando campaign

The objectives of the study were to establish the level of knowledge derived from *Mpango wa Kando* adverts by married people and those in stable relationships and, whether people in marriage and those in stable relationships pay attention to the *Mpango wa Kando* adverts in the Kenyan mass media.. This specifically assessed understanding of what amounted to *Mpango wa Kando*. The discussants were asked whether they had heard of the *Mpango wa Kando* advert and they all said they had heard of it through the mass media and specifically television.

Some had noticed the advert in the supermarkets but they said that it was not as clear as the one aired on television because they were busy attending to the tills. The three mainstream commercial television stations, Citizen, KTN and NTV were mentioned as leading in airing *Mpango wa Kando* adverts. This shows that the choice of television by PSI to communicate the *Mpango wa Kando* campaign has been successful. The participants were asked to define what they understood by *Mpango wa Kando* and most of them defined it as a practice of having an affair outside marriage that leads to a sexual relationship. A 31 year old male discussant said,

The practice is not only limited to married people but even those in stable relationships who have concurrent sexual partners.

The study also established that many people do not want to talk about their sexual life. When asked about the number of people involved in *Mpango wa Kando* in Shield Insurance company, all the participants were shy to talk about it. They said that most of their colleagues take their marriage vows seriously and that it is a personal issue. However, two women in their mid thirties said that they knew one married woman in their organization who was involved in the practice because her husband lives outside the country. Two married men also admitted that they once got involved in extra marital relationships some years back but have stopped because of the extra burden that they experienced besides taking care of their wives and children. The researcher noted that some men were speaking in low tones while nodding their heads in a manner that seemed to agree with the views on the extra burden that comes with extra marital affairs. The singles elicited a heated discussion that seemed to suggest that many of them had more than one sexual partner. They said that because they are not yet married to anyone, they are free to have fun as long as they use protection when engaging in sexual intercourse.

Attention towards Mpango wa Kando adverts

The study investigated whether people pay attention to *Mpango wa Kando* adverts in the media. Many of the participants agreed that they paid attention because they found the advert quite informative. Two women in their forties said that they do not pay attention to the advert because they are in stable

relationships. All participants in the singles group said that they paid attention to *Mpango wa Kando* adverts. A major question put to them was whether they know the name of the lead character in the *Mpango wa Kando* advert. All the single people know him by name as Jimmy Gathu while only four among the married people know him. The rest only described him as a famous media personality. Another pertinent question was about the message contained in the advert. Participants in both groups described the advert as conveying a message about the dangers of having an extra marital affair. They said that the biggest risk that people expose themselves to is HIV and AIDS infection.

The participants described the messages in the advert as being very informative. They said that the advert unearthed a practice that for a long time has been deemed right by many cultures. Six married people were of the view that the advert should be developed into scholarly materials and be entrenched in the education curriculum. They argued that if young children were to be taught on the dangers of having concurrent sexual partners and extra marital affairs from a young age, then it will be possible to have a society that upholds morality. A forty-year-old male discussant quoted the Bible in Proverbs 22:6 (KJV), *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

All the single people argued that despite the campaign message being positive, it did not touch them because they are not yet married. Three single men in the group said that the message in the campaign is very informative and it helps people to avoid having extra-marital affairs when one gets married. A twenty six year old single female discussant said that;

Mpango wa Kando campaign broke the monotony of single people being framed as immoral. PSI did a good job by coming up with a campaign that exposes the married folk easing moral pressure on young people that has been accumulated over the years.

She added that;

Many parents picked on young people through adverts like the 'chill' campaign that has been running in the mass media since 2003 by exposing them as trouble seekers.

Whenever Mpango wa Kando advert is aired, I look at my parents and wonder whether they pay attention or whether the advert communicates anything to them.

The following are summaries of the interviews from key informants:

About the media, the sociologist had this to say,

Their role is limited because they dwell more on entertainment than education. Apart from adverts like Mpango wa Kando, they should come up with talk shows and programs that are interactive and devoted to

issues like extra-marital sex and HIV. These shows should be all inclusive by accommodating experts like sociologists and psychologists who will address this problem. They should also offer support networks for people who want to come out of such habits instead of offering condoms.

The Muslim Sheikh pointed out that the content in *Mpango wa Kando* advert

Is not adequate because the moment the advert pops and there are cheating spouses watching, they just feel guilty and that is the end. In fact, this ad promotes extra marital affairs because the lead character offers a condom to those who are cheating but don't want to contract STIs.

About using *Mpango wa Kando* advert when counseling people, the counselor said that;

It depends on what type of people I am handling. If it not a Christian, I can refer to the advert but for Christians who are well grounded in biblical teachings, I don't because they understand what the ten commandments say in regards to being unfaithful.

She admitted that;

Cases of cheating spouses that I have been handling have not gone down. In fact they have gone up because people seem to be drifting away from the reality of life. The level of exposure to media is on the rise every day through soap operas, movies and other dramas that contravene the social reality of life. Many people enter marriage expecting to have an ideal family on a silver platter. Men stop pursuing their wives as they used to when they were dating while women stop keeping themselves looking nice as they used when they were single. When a woman is constantly pursued they feel important. Married men should not stop buying flowers for their wives or writing text messages to tell their wives how they love them. Women should also not stop looking nice for their men because men are so physical and are attracted by beauty. These are the basics of marriage that make spouses faithful to each other.

She added that;

The media are fuelling AIDS in Kenya because they don't seem to be operating under any form of regulation. They are constantly feeding the masses with dirty messages that pollute their minds and promote the use of condoms meaning that the moral fabric has been done away with.

The Christian pastor said that;

The media have totally failed by airing dirty content and very few adverts and documentaries that speak of the dangers of HIV and AIDS.

The Magistrate pointed out that;

The content in Mpango wa Kando is sufficient in capturing the attention of anyone. In my own house, my

4 year old son always tells me that he wants to watch the advert whenever I want to switch channels as the advert is running. By the fact that the advert comes just before news, one cannot avoid it and in case one is unfaithful to their spouse, they feel as though the advert is talking directly to them.

SUMMARY

Level of knowledge on *Mpango wa Kando* campaign in the mass media

This study established that the mass media have been successful making the *Mpango wa Kando* advert visible to the targeted audience. Discussants in the study admitted that they have heard about the advert through the mass media. It was established that all respondents understood the meaning of *Mpango wa Kando* as having an extra marital affair among married people or other sexual partners apart from the one who is deemed serious among single people. People pay selective attention to what is aired in the mass media and the level of attention goes down when something is aired for a long time. *Mpango wa Kando* advert has been running in the media for the past three years and it is seen as being entertaining although its message is nagging to the audiences.

Attention to Mpango wa Kando adverts

The study found out that majority of the respondents pay detailed attention to the advert. Most of the interviewed participants know the name of the lead character in the advert as Jimmy Gathu. The lead character in this advert acts as a moral agent and a role model to the people that he is addressing. Mr. Gathu is a journalist who works for Royal Media Services and presents a program called the Power Breakfast Show. The study also established that the choice of Jimmy Gathu as the lead character in this advert only appeal to people aged below 40 years. This is because they can relate with the character as a person they have seen in the media since the mid 1990's. Some respondents aged 40 years and above did not seem to be in touch with Jimmy Gathu because they referred to him as a young man. Mrs. Pauline Chola (a marriage counselor) who said that PSI should have another lead character who will appeal to people aged over 45 years shared this view.

CONCLUSION

Simply telling people what they may or may not do can often result in a rebellious desire to do the exact opposite. Education and marketing strategies together characterize a communications intervention whereas marketing and legislative strategies combined are regarded as a policy intervention. Many BCC campaigns that use the media to try to change people's behavior are effective in as far as informing and educating the target audience is concerned.

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