

**Behavior Change Communication: The Role of Media in Kenya in  
the COVID-19 Era Kabindio Brendah N.<sup>1</sup> & Bulitia Godrick M.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>Maasai Mara University, Kenya

*nashilluh@gmail.com*

**Abstract**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as adopted by United Nations Member States is a blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. The SDGs are broken down and advanced in seventeen (17) broad Goals. The adoption and full implementation of these Goals is envisaged to lead to a realization of, among other achievements, a robust development of the economies of the Member States by the year 2030. Kenya, a Member State, developed the Vision 2030 blueprint to focus her operations in the achievement of the SDGs. This is further being realized through identified development priority areas - the Big Four Agenda- where, specifically, Universal Health Coverage and Food Security and Nutrition are the main drivers of the SDG Goal No. 3 which is to ensure healthy lives and promotion of well-being for all at all ages. However, despite this elaborate strategy, there still remains little to celebrate about as majority of the drivers and enablers of these aspirations have not taken up the task to help in the attainment of the same. Little is known of their engagement and involvement including the media industry which is significant. The 'new normal' brought about by the COVID-19 exposed the role of the media industry. The media in Kenya found itself grappling with how best to communicate health messages, including food and nutrition. Through various channels, the media played an integral role in bringing information to the masses in order to affect change. This is because COVID-19 required a complete change of behavior if populations are to survive the pandemic. The objective of the Study was to establish the place of Behavior Change Communication (BCC) and what systems the media built in responding to the pandemic. Adopting Content Analysis of both primary and secondary data from the mainstream media houses in Kenya and other relevant Government agencies, the Study found out that the media had a critical role to play in its duty of informing, educating and entertaining. Additionally, using the Agenda Setting Theory, the media had an even bigger responsibility of ensuring that the masses get the correct information and re-engineer their thinking to change attitudes towards the pandemic. The Study recommended that media houses should adapt to the changing dynamics in the communication industry as well as invest in human resource that is competent in development communication.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals, COVID-19, Behavior Change Communication, Agenda Setting Theory

