

# Why readers should worry about advertising that's hidden as news

James Kihuria has charged a *Nation* article with disguising advertising as news. The article, published on *Nation.Africa* on December 1, is headlined "Memories of colonial Kenya at Nyahururu resort fancy getaway." Yes, the article appears to have elements of disguised advertising for the Nyahururu Panari Resort.

It highlights the resort's features, amenities and the allure of the location. It does this in an evocative manner that promotes the resort as an ideal getaway. The article is by Eddy Ashioya who normally writes the "Mantalk" column in the *Saturday Nation*. The inclusion in the article of quotes from the resort management detailing its offerings suggests the article aims to attract potential visitors. The details include things like its scenic location, dining options and plans for expansion.

In journalism, accusations of disguised advertising can be contentious. On one hand, storytelling and personal experiences can provide an engaging way to promote a destination. On the other hand, it may mislead readers into thinking they are reading an unbiased piece when it is, in essence, an advertisement. Ethical concerns, such as Kihuria's, arise when transparency is lacking and a reader cannot discern promotional content from journalism. Clear labelling of promotional articles as sponsored content or advertiser's feature can address this issue.

Mr Kihuria suggests the writer might have been a guest of the resort. And based on the content of the article, it is reasonable to conclude this. Or at least he had a close association with it. The detailed descriptions of the resort amenities suggest a level of familiarity that typically comes from being a guest. These include personal experiences and specific mentions of interactions, such as participating in activities like cake mixing with the chefs.

Additionally, the positive portrayal of the resort indicates a possible bias, which is common when a writer has a direct experience with the subject. However, without explicit confirmation from Mr Ashioya whether he was a guest, this remains an inference rather than a certainty. He didn't respond to my queries about this.

Even so, Mr Ashioya could have made the ar-

Disguised advertising manipulates readers' perceptions and emotions



Peter Mwaura | Public Editor's Notebook

article appear "clean" and free of any disguised advertising implications by explicitly stating whether he was a guest. Or whether he received any complimentary services or accommodations from the resort. Such transparency is key in maintaining credibility.

In addition, Mr Ashioya could also have included both positive and negative aspects of the resort. This would have provided a more objective viewpoint and help readers form their own opinions. Furthermore, he could have incorporated quotes or insights from other guests or tourism experts. This would have lent an unbiased perspective to the article.

Mr Ashioya could also have discussed Nyahururu more widely as a destination, including information about other attractions and comparisons with other resorts. What's more, he could have used more neutral language when describing the resort's features and experiences rather than highly promotional or subjective terms. This would have helped create reportorial integrity.

And rather than heavily emphasising the resort's offerings, the article could have concentrated more on the overall travel experience, including the journey and other places visited. By incorporating these elements, the article would have conveyed a more balanced and transparent narrative. This could have reduced the perception of disguised ad-

vertising.

Readers rely on journalism for objective information, which helps them make informed choices. Disguised advertising can mislead readers and impair their ability to evaluate products or services accurately.

Transparency, or how an article is presented, is essential for maintaining trust between NMG and its audiences. When readers discover that content is actually promotional, they may feel deceived, which can erode trust in NMG and its writers. NMG journalism upholds standards that separate news from advertising. Blurring these lines can undermine its integrity as a whole, leading to skepticism about all published content.

Disguised advertising manipulates readers' perceptions and emotions. It leverages their trust in journalistic content to promote products without them being aware of the commercial intent. Moreover, if some content is disguised as editorial while others are clearly labelled as advertising, it creates an uneven playing field. Advertisers who pay for space in a straightforward manner may be at a disadvantage compared to those who manage to get content promoted without disclosure.

The Public Editor is an independent news ombudsman who handles readers' complaints on editorial matters including accuracy and journalistic standards. Email: [publiceditor@ke.nationmedia.com](mailto:publiceditor@ke.nationmedia.com). Call or text 0721989264.

Memories of colonial Kenya at Nyahururu resort fancy getaway

Sunday, December 01, 2024



An aerial shot of Panari Resort Nyahururu on November 24, 2024. Panari Resort in Nyahururu, part of the BVA. Photo: Stella Kipagat Signature Collection.

By Eddy Ashioya

What you need to know

• This is a...

# Handling threat of new tick-borne virus

As a researcher in infectious diseases, I have been investigating the possibility of a new tick-borne virus in Kenya. My research, in partnership with the Kenya Medical Research Institute, shows that there is indeed a new virus—we are calling it the Kinna virus. Its discovery calls for renewed commitment to disease surveillance by health authorities, especially in pastoralist communities.

My research revealed that a substantial population in the pastoral community is already exposed to the virus, posing significant public health implications. The potential risks of exposure and consequence need to be further investigated.

The management of zoonotic diseases requires enhanced awareness creation



Hellen Koka | Health

Kenya needs to strengthen its ongoing surveillance of vector and human populations in high-risk ecosystems, to monitor pathogen diversity. Surveillance is a critical component in detecting emerging viruses and monitoring known circulating strains. For

this reason, public health authorities need to know which infections are endemic or have the potential to emerge and cause epidemics or pandemics.

The management of zoonotic diseases requires enhanced awareness creation. This will ensure that affected communities understand the symptoms of infections and strategies for prevention and control. Additionally, local governments should increase access to health services and improve diagnostic capacity in hospitals.

A basic step towards reducing tick-borne diseases is through use of tick killing pesticides. Counties, especially in pastoralist communities, must strive to ensure that treat-

ment is done regularly. Sentinel animal herds can also be used to monitor tick-borne diseases at the community level.

Sharing the findings of the novel Kinna virus with the community and clinicians as well as policymakers is a first critical step in addressing this new disease threat. By disseminating these findings to relevant stakeholders, we hope to influence policies on routine testing of tick-borne diseases in pastoralist communities to establish the burden of disease. In light of this, it is also necessary to develop cost effective detection tools that can be used in resource poor settings.

Ms Koka is a 2021 Mawazo Fellow and researcher at Kemri.

Foster care ... provides these children with safe and temporary homes while exploring long-term solutions



Jane Munuhe & Diane Rop | Family

## Foster families better than institution care

Children deserve a safe, nurturing environment for their holistic growth. Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Child emphasises their right to know and be cared for by their parents.

The Constitution of Kenya recognises the family as essential for social order and childcare responsibilities, primarily with the biological family. The Children Act reinforces these rights and outlines parental duties and alternative care options such as guardianship, foster care and adoption.

In Kenya, many children face separation from their families due to factors such as poverty, hunger, displacement, abuse, neglect and abandonment. In 2024, an estimated 44,070 children in the country were living in care institutions, commonly known as orphanages, despite most of them not being actual orphans.

Research shows young children in institutional care are more likely to suffer from poor health, delayed developmental milestones, anxiety, mental health issues and emotional attachment disorders. Globally, 80 per cent of children in institutional care have at least one living parent who could care for them, and many others family members who could provide care if adequately supported.

The government has been implementing the National Care Reform Strategy 2022-2032, which aims to ensure that all children grow up in safe and nurturing families. The strategy focuses on strengthening families, improving alternative family and community-based care options for children—including adoption, foster care, kinship care, Kafaalah, guardianship and supported independent living—as well as facilitating reintegration into families from institutional care.

Foster care (temporary placement for children with individuals who are not their parents, relatives or guardians) is increasingly being recognised as a vital solution. It provides these children with safe and temporary homes while exploring long-term solutions such as family reunification or adoption. In foster care, children receive individualised attention and emotional support in a family setting, which is crucial for their development. It is also more cost-effective than institutional care, and reduces public spending.

To ensure effective implementation of foster care, however, there must be strong commitment from both State and non-State actors to raise awareness, standardise practices, improve reporting, utilise data for decision-making and support foster care parents. By promoting foster care and integrating it within the child protection system, the government can provide safe, inclusive, and nurturing environments for all children without parental care, enabling them to reach their full potential.

Ms Munuhe is assistant director, Alternative Family Care department. Ms Rop is the alternative family care advisor at Changing the Way We Care.