

## Chapter 45

# Impact of Facebook Ads for Sexual Health Promotion via an Educational Web App: A Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

*Background: The authors present a case study of a public health campaign, including social media, and aiming at maximizing the use of web app on sexual health. Objective: To analyze the impact of a Facebook fan page, Facebook advertisements, and posters to maximize the number of visits to the educational web app. Methods: The campaign is assessed for 1 year, using data tracked through Facebook statistics and Google Analytics. Results: The site had 3670 visits (10.1 visitors/day, 95%CI 8.7-11.4). During the one-month Facebook Ads campaign, the site received 1263 visits (42.1 visitors/day, 95%CI 37.3-46.9), multiplying by over four the average number of visitors/day. 34.4% of all the participants were recruited during the one-month Facebook ads campaign. Conclusions: Facebook advertisements seem to be a good tool to promote an educational web app on sexual health targeting youth, and to reach a huge number of users rapidly and at a low cost.*

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction**

The World Health Organization has underlined the importance of addressing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Organization 2010). Viral STIs such as HIV and Hepatitis B have a prevalence of about 37 million and 240 million cases worldwide, respectively (Organization 2012). Genital chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis and syphilis represent the main curable STIs in the world, with nearly 500 million new cases in 2008 (Organization 2012). Many of these patients remain contagious for decades, hence, preventive measures are essential.

Computer-based interventions for sexual health promotion represent an excellent resource for education, as they have demonstrated to have a significant effect on users by improving their knowledge, and increasing safety in their sex behaviour (Noar, Black et al. 2009, Bailey, Murray et al. 2012). With over a billion and a half active users worldwide as of September, 2016 (The Statistics Portal 2016), Facebook (FB) might represent a relevant environment for public health promotion (Paton, Bamidis et al. 2011, Gabarron and Fernández-Luque 2012, Neiger, Thackeray et al. 2012, Miron-Shatz, Hansen et al. 2013), including for sexual health promotion (Dunne, McIntosh et al. 2014). The computer-based technologies' effect on health promotion and health education might be even more relevant in developed countries, such as Norway, where a national survey performed in 2011 showed that 100% of youth aged 16-24 used the Internet every day, or almost every day, and that they connected to the Internet mainly for social networking purposes (Statistics Norway 2016).

### **Related Work**

Conversations on sexual health and sexually transmitted infections already take place among online social media users (Gabarron, Serrano et al. 2014), but there are relatively few publications on the use of different social media for sexual health promotion (Bailey, Murray et al. 2010, Gold, Pedrana et al. 2011, Bailey, Murray et al. 2012, Guse, Levine et al. 2012, Dunne, McIntosh et al. 2014, Schnall, Travers et al. 2014, Yonker, Zan et al. 2015, Gabarron and Wynn 2016). Qualitative studies show that social media consumers are open for sexual health education and promotion through these media (Byron, Albury et al. 2013, Nicholas, Bailey et al. 2013, Lim, Vella et al. 2014, Pfeiffer, Kleeb et al. 2014).

In a recent review it was identified fifteen research studies on sexual health promotion using Facebook interventions for targeting youth (Gabarron and Wynn 2016). Most of these studies using Facebook for promoting sexual health among people aged 16-26 distribute general sexual health contents (Hedge and Donald 2011, Bull, Levine et al. 2012, Gold, Pedrana et al. 2012, Mustanski 2013, Nguyen, Gold et al. 2013, Pedrana, Hellard et al. 2013, Anderson and Samplin-Salgado 2014, Friedman, Bozniak et al. 2014, Klingler 2014, Prior, Salmon et al. 2014, Dowshen, Lee et al. 2015, Fuller and Carter 2015), while only three studies focus on a specific sexually transmitted infection, namely chlamydia (Jones, Baldwin et al. 2012, Syred, Naidoo et al. 2014), and human papillomavirus (Patel, Stern et al. 2014).

Four of the studies that used Facebook for promoting sexual health among young people have reported a behaviour change, such as a 25% more condom use (Jones, Baldwin et al. 2012) or a higher tendency to use condoms (Bull, Levine et al. 2012); increases in the knowledge of sexual health (Fuller and Carter 2015), a 128% increase in the number of patients presenting for STIs testing (Friedman, Bozniak et al. 2014), and even a 54% reduction in the number of positive chlamydia cases among 15-17 years-olds

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