

SEXUAL HEALTH RESEARCH: RECRUITING LARGE NATIONAL ADOLESCENT SAMPLES IN A HIGH-TECH WORLD

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Introduction:

Survey research informs understandings of individual's knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours which impact on population-level sexual health and well-being. Changing socio-cultural factors impact on the recruitment of large national samples. The fast-paced, technologically charged world requires new and innovative recruitment methods to ensure continued success of research, particularly among adolescents.

Methods:

Previous iterations of a national Australian sexual health survey of adolescents highlighted growing difficulty using traditional in-school two-tiered cluster sampling methods. Stakeholder consultation informed the design of a two-phase recruitment strategy aimed at fulfilling a minimum census-driven quota sample. Phase 1 included a suite of paid Facebook advertisements targeting all users identifying as 14-18 years old and living in Australia. Phase 2 would be triggered after exhausting the advertising budget and engage community partners to recruit participants needed to fill remaining quotas. Incentives included entry into a draw for 1 of 20 \$100 gift cards.

Results:

Optimised Facebook advertisements included 9 different ads, 3 which did not mention the incentive. The best performing ad generated 838,441 impressions, 36,417 clicks for a 4.34% click through rate (CTR) ultimately generating 29,227 clicks to the actual survey; the ad did not mention the incentive. Female quotas were achieved quickly while male quotas and remote regions took longer. The Facebook campaign lasted 36 days, substantially exceeded all minimum quotas, closely matched census demographics and yielded a sample of 8,694 at an ad cost of \$1.21 per participant. Phase 2 of recruitment was never implemented.

Conclusion:

Facebook proved to be a highly successful, affordable and efficient means of recruitment of a large national adolescent sample for sexual health research. Used in conjunction with minimum quota sample, great potential exists for using Facebook and similar social media platforms with high market saturation for future sexual health research aimed at collecting large nationally diverse samples.

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