



Kirby Institute

Social Media as a research tool and the insights it provides on gay, bisexual and other MSM's sexual networks and behaviours

Mohamed A. Hammoud

The Kirby Institute, UNSW, Sydney, Australia

IUSTI Asia Pacific Sexual Health Congress

Auckland, New Zealand

September 2018

Disclosures: The Flux Study is funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project. This study was partly funded by the Gilead Australia Fellowship: Research Grants Program. Funders had no input in the data collection, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of any findings.

Social media as a research tool



Social media

What is social media?

Websites and applications that allow users to create or share content, or participant in social networking

Two broad categories of social media

- Mass social media platforms (e.g., Facebook)
- Specific theme or niche social media platforms (e.g., Grindr)

Social media as a research tool

Why use social media as a research tool?

- As of the second quarter of 2018, Facebook had 2.23 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2018).
- As of the third quarter of 2018, Twitter had 326 million monthly active users (Twitter, 2018)

Social media as a research tool in practice

The Flux Study

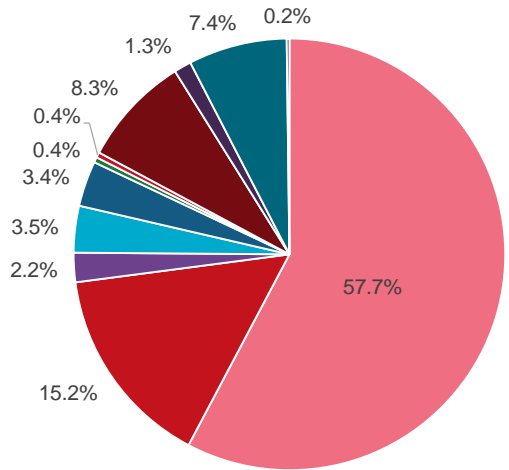
- Following Lives Undergoing Change
- A prospective observational study on licit and illicit drug use among gay and bisexual men (GBM)
- Minimum 1400 GBM

Flux use of social media

- Recruitment
- Tracking networks

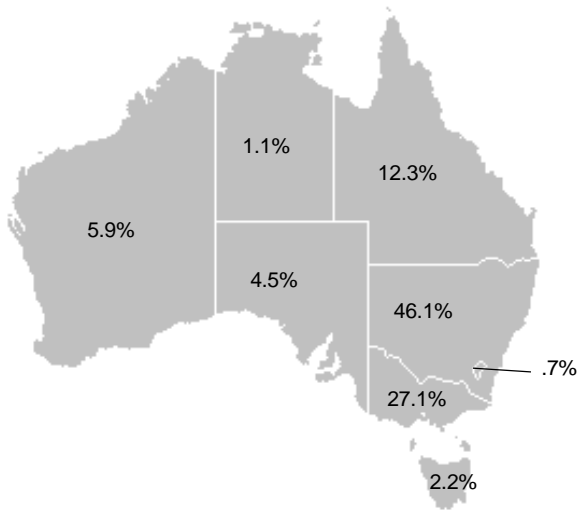
Recruitment source

- Social Media (Facebook)
- Gay cruising/dating site (Squirt / Manhunt, etc)
- Gay organisation (ACON, Positive Life, Queer Screen, etc)
- Friend
- Other
- Work Colleague
- Online forum (Craigslist, etc)
- Phone apps (Jackd, Grindr, etc)
- Community event (Fair Day, Mardi Gras, etc)
- Referred from other studies
- Did not answer



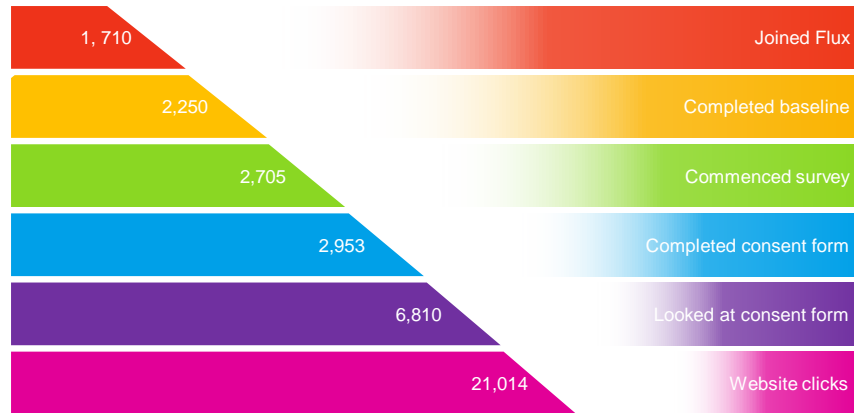
www.flux.org.au
[# FluxStudy](#)
[f /FluxStudy](#)
[t /FluxStudy](#)
flux@kirby.unsw.edu.au

Recruitment, by state



www.flux.org.au
[# FluxStudy](#)
[f /FluxStudy](#)
[t /FluxStudy](#)
flux@kirby.unsw.edu.au

Conversion rate








Recruitment source, by mean age

Source	Mean age (SD)
Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr	27.3 (15.7)
Gay cruising sites	40.3 (13.6)
Gay community organisations	43.0 (12.2)
Friends	33.3 (18.1)
Other (heard of Flux at conference presentations, media release)	35.5 (19.0)
Work colleague	35.8 (19.8)
Non-gay online (Craigslist)	40.8 (19.8)
Phone apps (Grindr, Scruff)	33.2 (14.3)
Community events (Mardi Gras, Fair Day)	28.8 (21.8)
Consent from other studies	41.6 (12.5)

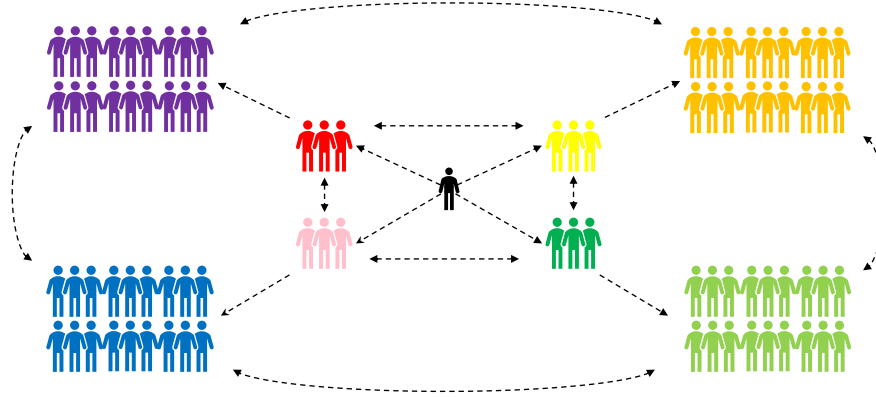
Recruitment source by sexual identity

Source	Gay n=1990 %	Bi n=199 %	Other n=62 %
Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr	59.1	42.9	73.4
Gay cruising sites	11.6	29.3	4.8
Gay community organisations	2.0	0.6	1.6
Friends	3.6	1.7	2.7
Other	3.6	3.8	0.6
Work colleague	0.5	0.0	0.0
Non-gay online (Craigslist)	0.3	0.6	0.0
Phone apps (Grindr, Scruff)	7.3	10.1	9.8
Community events (Mardi Gras, Fair Day)	1.6	0.6	1.6
Consent from other studies	6.9	3.2	1.6

Different ads perform differently, 2018

	Budget Ad set	Last significant edit Ad set	Results	Reach	Impressions ▾	Cost per result
	\$100.00 Daily	31 May 2018, 13:12 152 days ago	3,301 Link Clicks	67,408	142,960	\$0.36 Per link click
	\$100.00 Daily	31 May 2018, 13:12 152 days ago	300 Link Clicks	11,092	13,758	\$0.39 Per link click
	\$100.00 Daily	31 May 2018, 13:12 152 days ago	214 Link Clicks	7,952	10,698	\$0.41 Per link click
	\$100.00 Daily	31 May 2018, 13:12 152 days ago	155 Link Clicks	4,475	7,788	\$0.47 Per link click
	\$100.00 Daily	31 May 2018, 13:12 152 days ago	45 Link Clicks	4,148	5,157	\$0.60 Per link click
		—	4,015 Link Clicks	73,008 People	180,361 Total	\$0.37 Per link click

Tracking networks via social media



Flux vs. Gay community periodic survey - 2018

Source	Flux	Gay community periodic survey
Recruitment dates	May – July	Feb (1 week)
Total recruited	714	2860
Online (\$1500)	714	702 (24.6)
Fair day	-	617 (21.6)
Sexual health clinics	-	270 (9.4)
Sex-on-premises venues	-	176 (6.2)
Gay social venues (bars, clubs)	-	1095 (38.3)
Total cost:	\$1,500	\$16,500.00

Implications for using social media

Social media users

- Not representative of populations (Ruths & Jurgen, 2014)
- Maybe be helpful if research is focused on particularly active social media platforms

Should we be using social media as a research tool?

How you use it depends on:

- What it is you want
- How efficient you need it to be