

Case study: How Play Safe utilised peer-led creative to effectively engage young people in STI prevention messages through social marketing

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Background/Purpose:

Play Safe is NSW Health's leading sexual health prevention program for young people aged 15–29. It provides clinically accurate, relevant, and engaging information about STIs and HIV. Through its website, Play Safe offers a range of interactive tools and comprehensive resources that promote safe sex practices. Each year, a paid digital campaign targets young people who are less likely to engage with traditional sexual health messaging. The campaign aims to increase STI knowledge, encourage regular testing and condom use, and reduce stigma. Historically, Play Safe has relied on text-based creative for its campaign, due to limited availability of affordable stock imagery that resonates with Australian audiences.

Approach:

Play Safe partnered with communications students from The University of Technology Sydney to develop original, peer-based campaign creative assets, designed to engage users and drive traffic to the Play Safe website. The assets include short-form videos including vox-pop interviews filmed on campus and user-generated greenscreen videos which feel authentic and relatable. Many of the assets use softer, engagement-first messaging like "What gives you the ick?" rather than direct calls to action such as "Use condoms." This approach is expected to boost engagement and minimise disengagement from audiences not interested in sexual health content. The campaign will launch in June on TikTok and Snapchat.

Outcomes/Impact:

By collaborating with members of the target audience, the campaign content feels relevant and authentic. It also provides professional development opportunities to students under the guidance of industry experts. A detailed report incorporating platform, website and behavioural metrics and insights will be developed to assess the campaign's impact, compared to previous campaigns.

Innovation and Significance:

Partnering with and involving the target audience in creating and starring in campaign content enhances its relevance and authenticity, increasing engagement. This approach is adaptable and can be implemented across different audiences and settings.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None.