

RETHINKING SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION: LEARNINGS FROM BEST-PRACTICE CONTENT AIMED AT YOUNG PEOPLE

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Background:

Despite the multi-disciplinary nature of health promotion, sexual health promotion remains predominately informed by health research. This has caused health promotion content to be designed to broadcast content to all young people. However, media and communication scholars argue that behaviour change can only happen if health messages and content are tailored to the specific cultures of the targeted audience.

Drawing on media and communications research, this presentation explores how sexual health organisations centre on the cultures of young people during the production of digital sexual health campaigns.

Methods:

This exploratory study involved semi-structured interviews with producers of digital sexual health promotion employed by 12 sexual health organisations in Australia and the United Kingdom. Interviews focused on understanding professional experiences of distributing social media content. Themes were identified using abductive analysis.

Results:

The production of digital content by most of the participating sexual health organisations was driven by health messages which were outlined by the funder.

However, I identified five sexual health organisations that produced content where produced content was primarily informed by the digital and sexual cultures of young people. In these cases, explicit health messaging was a secondary consideration during production, where messages were designed to align with youth cultures (rather than being defined by the funded scope of the project). This content was typically produced by people working in roles within marketing and communications teams, rather than by people who are employed as health promoters.

Interviewees from these organisations reported that they used a variety of strategies to understand the digital and sexual cultures of young people that informed the content that they produced. I conclude by outlining these practical strategies that can be implemented to help organisations produce content that resonates with the cultures of young people.

Conclusion: Producing content that engages with the culture of young people increases the likelihood of young people engaging with content and changing their sexual behaviours. This session will leave attendees with strategies that they can use in the production of health promotion to better understand the cultures of young people.

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