

An Entertainment-Education Model for Reaching Young Men with Sexual Health Information through Digital Media

QUT Digital Media Research Centre in partnership with True Relationships and Reproductive Health and University of Technology Sydney



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Executive summary

Background

Access to quality sexual health and relationship education is necessary to foster healthy sexual development among young people, as well as to address public health issues such as the rising rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in Queensland. While many sexual health campaigns have been targeted toward young people, a smaller proportion of these engage young people on the social media platforms they use every day, like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. Young people are spending increasing amounts of time on platforms like these, not only interacting with friends and consuming entertainment, but also seeking information. However, 'official' attempts to create health campaigns in social media environments risk falling flat with their target audience due to a mismatch between the content and tone of the campaign and the cultures of young people's social media use. It is important for public and sexual health organisations to understand how to effectively engage with young people's cultures of use in these spaces in ways that promote sexual health and wellbeing.

In collaboration with True Relationships and Reproductive Health (True, formerly Family Planning Queensland) and University of Technology Sydney (UTS), the research team at QUT Digital Media Research Centre created a Facebook page and YouTube channel based on an app called *7 Funny Guys Talk Sex*. The page and channel featured a series of short comedy videos about sex and relationships, created by True for the project and carefully curated to map onto the criteria for Healthy Sexual Development¹. The research aimed to explore whether and how young men are likely to engage with various aspects of sex and relationships through consuming, sharing and discussing comedy videos on these topics.

Objectives

- Deliver an alternative "entertainment-education" methodology within a health communication project for understanding the impact and utility of a digital health intervention.
- Collect data about both use and non-use of social media in relation to content and discussions about sex – as well as examining audience retention and the movement of content via platform analytics.

¹ See McKee, A., Albury, K., Dunne, M., Grieshaber, S., Hartley, J., Lumby, C., & Mathews, B. (2010). Healthy Sexual Development: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Research. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 22(1), 14–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19317610903393043>

- Overcome barriers to accessing digital sexual and reproductive health information by using comedy to engage young men from a variety of social backgrounds on social media platforms.
- Challenge traditional discourses of sexual health communication for future entertainment-education projects.

Methods

- Phase 1: Focus groups related to the *7 Funny Guys* app
 - 10 face-to-face focus groups were conducted with teenage boys and young men 14-23 years old (the target group), their female peers, and adult stakeholders such as educators and youth workers.
 - The focus groups aimed to evaluate the '*7 Funny Guys Talk Sex*' app and investigate young men's health seeking behaviours and social media use.
- Phase 2: Design and implementation of a social media-based entertainment-education sexual health campaign
 - An online reference group was conducted within Facebook to reflect on and provide feedback during the migration of content from the app to formats and modes of publication suitable for Facebook and YouTube.
 - Qualitative analysis of comments and interactions around the content and within the reference group was undertaken.
 - Sharing of and engagement with the entertainment comment was tracked using methods and metrics native to the platforms (Facebook and YouTube).

Findings

Overall, the findings of the project indicate that young men see comedy-based digital media content as a good way to engage with information about sex and relationships. While this approach is not without risks to organisations, it presents significant opportunities to reach a wide audience with quality sexual health messages.

Future recommendations

1. Further research-led experimentation with curation models of entertainment-education in social media contexts;

2. More research into the role existing, successful social media entertainers (such as popular YouTubers and social media influencers) can play in effective entertainment-education approaches to sexual health and relationship education;
3. More purposeful engagement between sexual health and education campaigns and the existing social networks and communities of young people in social media platforms.

Contents

Executive summary	3
1. Introduction	7
Project objectives	7
Overview of methods	7
Ethics	9
Structure of report	9
2. Understanding young people's digital media cultures in the context of health campaigns	10
Entertainment-education in health	10
3. Phase one: Evaluating the app and exploring young men's digital media use.....	11
The app	11
Attitudes to the app	13
Digital media use among young men	13
4. Phase two: Migrating to social media	14
Reference group	14
Managing risks	15
Developing the content.....	16
Sharing the content.....	19
Findings	23
5. Conclusions and recommendations.....	27
Future recommendations	28
Project outputs as at November 2017	28
References	30
Appendix A: User Guide	33
Appendix B: Social Media Use Guide.....	44

1. Introduction

This project has developed and tested an innovative methodology for using social media entertainment to reach young men with information about healthy sexual development. This project takes an entertainment-education approach, evaluating the use of digitally-distributed comedy videos to reach young men with this information.

The research focused on young, straight-identifying men, who are an underserved group in sexual health interventions (McKee, Walsh & Watson, 2014), contributing to efforts to address increasing rates of STIs among young people in Queensland (Queensland Health, 2016).

Project objectives

The overall objectives of the project were to:

- Deliver an alternative “entertainment-education” methodology within a health communication project for understanding the impact and utility of a digital health intervention.
- Collect data about both use and non-use of social media in relation to content and discussions about sex – as well as examining audience retention and the movement of content via platform analytics.
- Overcome barriers to access digital sexual and reproductive health information by using comedy to engage young men from a variety of social backgrounds on social media platforms.
- Challenge traditional discourses of sexual health communication for future entertainment-education projects.

Overview of methods

Prior to commencement of the project, stand-up comedy videos and associated content like trivia and interviews with comedians were produced for an app called *7 Funny Guys Talk Sex* (*7 Funny Guys* in its shortened version) which was released by True Relationships and Reproductive Health.

The project proceeded in two phases. The first was built around a series of 10 focus groups with 15 teenage boys and young men between age 14-23 (the target group), as well as their female peers (18-23 years, N=5) and adult stakeholders (youth workers, nurse educators,

teachers, N=10). The aim of the focus groups was to discover the range of opinions on the *7 Funny Guys* app among these groups. The discussions also covered young men's existing practices of health information-seeking and social media interactions, and their everyday practices of digital media and entertainment content discovery and sharing.

Building on the insights gained in the first phase, the second phase was structured around the development of a social media campaign for the project, including the establishment of a public *7 Funny Guys* Facebook page and YouTube channel. Some of the young men who participated in the focus groups from the first phase and some new participants (also members of the target group) were invited to join an online reference group (total N=9) to give feedback on the social media content curation, distribution and promotion strategies as they developed. The activity on this page and channel were subsequently tracked using analytics native to the platform.

The project used a range of desk-based, in-person and online research methods:

- Literature and contextual reviews
 - An overview of existing literature on digital methods
 - An overview of existing literature on traditional health communication
 - An overview of existing literature on entertainment-education
 - An overview of health communication and online health campaigns
- Face-to-face focus groups
 - 7 focus groups with teenage boys and young men
 - 2 focus groups with young women
 - 1 focus group with adult stakeholders
 - Thematic analysis of the focus group discussions
- A social media-based campaign
 - An analysis of existing sexual health education social media sites
 - Facilitation of a Facebook-based reference group composed of young men
 - The curation of third-party comedy videos about sex and relationships recommended by the reference group
 - Redevelopment of the digital content to migrate it from the app to social media platforms
 - Monitoring of audience engagement on the *7 Funny Guys* Facebook page and YouTube channel using the analytics native to those platforms
 - Thematic analysis of the Facebook reference group discussions, sharing activity and comments on content.

Ethics

The project received ethical clearance from QUT's University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 1500001123) on Tuesday, 22 December 2015. Participants were fully informed and either gave their consent, or informed consent was obtained from their parents if the participant was under 18 years old. The project also created a risk assessment to address any potential ethical issues that may arise when working with young people on social media sites.

Structure of report

The report first provides an overview of young people's digital media cultures and the challenges and opportunities for sex educators in engaging with young people. It then steps through the two phases of the project before presenting the overall findings. Finally the report presents the conclusions from the study along with recommendations for future research.

2. Understanding young people's digital media cultures in the context of health campaigns

Young people engage in social interaction, entertainment and information seeking on the internet. And while we have an idea of the extent of the digitally mediated activities young people undertake, there is not enough known about the types of information about sex and relationships young people are engaging with online (Mitchell et. al, 2014). In their report *Sexual rights and sexual risks among youth online*, Livingstone and Mason found “more information is needed about what types of information about sexual matters youth want and seek online and offline” (2015, p.9).

Humour is important to young people. It not only helps to engage young people with information and health messages, “humour can [also] help the message be more amenable to being passed on, because the sharing does not directly reflect something personal about the sender and receiver except for a shared appreciation of humour” (Evers, Albury, Byron, & Crawford, 2013, p. 268). This is particularly important in the context of communicating sexual health messages as young people are highly aware of their audiences. For these reasons many young people choose to share and engage with content in ways that can't be seen by adults or content producers, like sharing videos in Facebook Messenger in a group chat or using apps like Snapchat. Humour, identity work and the role young people play in constructing their own meanings on social media platforms all need to be accounted for when designing a health intervention online. In this regard, we can take lessons from entertainment-education which has an extensive history of creating public health messages.

Entertainment-education in health

Entertainment-education (E-E) has long been used by health communicators for public health interventions as “a communication strategy to bring about behavioural and social change.” (Singhal & Rogers, 2004, p.5). Traditionally this strategy has been implemented through integrating educational content into entertainment formats – for example, by embedding a storyline about teen pregnancy, alcoholism, drug use, and so on into a soap opera. This has often required the involvement of organisations with enough lobbying power to influence television executives to invest the time and cost needed to produce the content. Digital media

lowers these barriers to content production and delivery, and presents a new platform for entertainment–education. But social media has different cultural logics from traditional broadcast media like television, and so entertainment-education strategies cannot directly be exported from TV to social media. Prior research has noted the difficulties in engaging users with sexual health information online, along with the need to consider “additional aspects beyond more traditional methods of health promotion” (Gold et al., 2012, p. 8). Understanding how young people engage with entertaining content in the context of digital and social media therefore opens up opportunities to develop new models of entertainment-education suited to these contexts.

3. Phase one: Evaluating the app and exploring young men’s digital media use

In order to understand how to most effectively engage young men in sexual health education through social media, it was necessary to first develop an understanding of their current practices of sexual health information seeking and everyday digital media use. In order to explore these issues, the research team conducted seven focus groups composed of teenage boys and young men aged 14-23 (including two groups that included hard-to-reach participants), two composed of young women aged 18-23, and one that involved relevant adult stakeholders including clinicians, youth workers and teachers. The findings from these groups informed the development of the content that was used in the second phase of the research.

The app

The *7 Funny Guys Talk Sex* app was published on iTunes (for iPad only) by True Relationships and Reproductive Health (True), and is still available as at November 2017. It is designed for youth workers who support teenage boys and young men aged 15–20. It includes topics of interest to young men, using comedy, advice, interesting facts, FAQs and discussion questions. Its main purpose is to stimulate conversation and is not intended to be a comprehensive relationships and sexuality education resource. *7 Funny Guys* is designed to be used in a one-to-one or small group setting but it can be used with larger groups.

The app’s home screen features 7 topics, each illustrated by a different comedian. Under each topic is a menu page that links to comedy videos, serious videos, interesting facts and FAQs

about the topic. To navigate between topics, users return to the home screen and choose a new topic. Young men reported that the app was easy to use, as each topic is identically structured, and navigation is linear (the user can either navigate backwards to the home screen, or forward to further detail).



Figure 1. 7 Funny Guys app topics

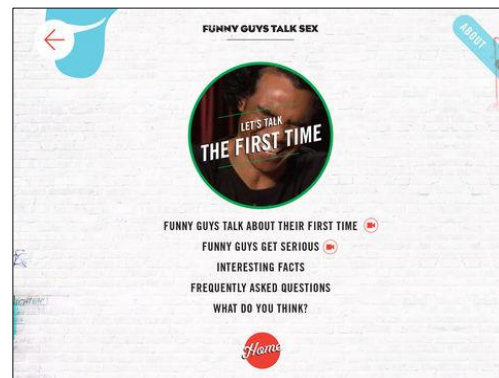


Figure 2. 7 Funny Guys app topic homescreen

There are two video sections under each topic. One is comedy footage on the topic, and the other is called 'Funny Guys Get Serious'. The 'Get Serious' content shows the comedians sitting in small groups of two or three talking either to each other or directly to the camera about the topic. The FAQs page for each topic lists questions like:

- How can I be more attractive or sexy?
- How can I be a better lover?
- Are there foreplay moves I can do that every woman will like?

Each question links to an 'answers' page. For example, the answers to the question 'how can I be more attractive or sexy?' are:

- What someone finds attractive will be very individual and varies a lot.
- While the media promote specific body types as attractive (e.g. tall, thin, big muscles, etc.), people of all shapes and sizes can be attractive.
- If you feel good about yourself, you will be more attractive - most people report finding confidence sexy.
- Smile and be friendly! A nice smile rates very highly in most lists of attractive features.

Attitudes to the app

The teenage boys and young men who engaged with the app expressed positive opinions about the videos and comedy in the app. Along with being “so funny”, participants also found them to be “informative” and “helpful.” They showed particular interest in the topics ‘Good Lovin’ and ‘The First Time’ and mentioned these were the sort of topics lacking in traditional school-based sex education.

“It’s probably better detail here than school”

“You ... don’t talk about [these] topics through school”

The app offers educators a certain degree of control over the content, and enables more scaffolding around the way it is presented in a learning context. However, presenting the information in the context of an app was a problem for the young people we talked to, making them less likely to engage with the content on their own.

“We never ever do it [download apps]. Like, apps are really hard.”

Digital media use among young men

The findings of our in-person focus groups reinforce existing research showing that young people are highly aware of their audiences on social media platforms and manage their sharing and engagement with content accordingly. Some of our participants said they would share the more sensitive content in quasi-private spaces like “in a group chat in Facebook, so it’s more enclosed”. They tag² friends rather than share posts, and create closed group chats on Facebook organised around a shared sense of humour.

Digital inequality also plays a role in young people’s everyday digital media use. While there are significant social and privacy barriers to accessing information about sexual health on a shared computer (for example at a library, school or in the family home), public or shared computers were the main access points to the internet for some of our project’s participants,

² “Tagging” is when a user writes a friend’s name in the comments that creates a hyperlink to that friend’s profile and notifies them that they have been tagged in the post. It is a way of sharing that subverts Facebook’s own features and allows users to only share with specified people.

as they either did not own or had very restricted data allowances on mobile devices. Therefore, their information-use was very bandwidth - and format-conscious - for example, some participants said that they wouldn't watch a data-intensive YouTube video, opting instead for text-based web pages.

A number of participants also indicated that they were conscious of seeking out official or authoritative sources of information about health and sexual health issues; clearly distinguishing between personal, entertainment, and informational uses of the internet and social media.

4. Phase two: Migrating to social media

The second phase of the project took the content from the app and transformed it into short comedy videos suitable for sharing on social media platforms. The two platforms chosen to share the videos were YouTube and Facebook, based on the feedback from the young men in the focus groups about where they thought they would encounter and share these kinds of videos.

Reference group

We also set up a reference group of young men within Facebook to give feedback on the content as it was selected, curated, and shared, in its native format. Nine young men actively participated as members of a secret Facebook group.³ They contributed for the three months the project was active on Facebook and YouTube, and provided feedback on the comedy videos developed from the app footage along with their own reflections and insights into their digital media use. The group also identified the key digital media platforms used by young men, along with the gaps in their formal sexual health education that can be addressed using entertaining social media content.

There were numerous benefits to engaging young men via the online group, including the ability to tag participants as a method of inviting them back into the conversation. Facilitators could check-in with quieter members and also alert each member when a specific question was directed at them. Participants could engage at times suited to them regardless of when

³ A Facebook secret group is visible only to current or former members, only current members can see the posts in the group and members must be invited by admins or other members.

the initial post was made. It allowed participants time to reflect and also for young men from across Queensland to be involved – the group had participants from metropolitan and regional centres, ranging from Far North Queensland to the NSW border.

Managing risks

Below is a brief overview of the risks identified and mitigated for the online reference group and release of phase 2 content. In addition to creating this risk assessment, the research team also created a *Social Media Use Guide* (see Appendix B) that was given to participants in the reference group before they joined. The guide included information related to the potential risks of the project along with the steps need to minimise these risks, for example by customising an audience for a post on Facebook.

Table 1. Risk assessment

Risk	Action
Coordinated media campaign against the project	Tracking and monitoring all instances of content sharing; devising response strategies in line with university policy.
Encountering new information about sexual health through peers or the entertainment media provided	The content released has been developed with True Relationships and Reproductive Health which provides evidence-based sexual and reproductive health information. Any new sexual health information encountered may potentially benefit participants.
Emotional response/discomfort to the discussion	Participants notified that they can discontinue at any point. Contact forms also include QUT counselling contacts.
Disagreements or ridiculing behaviour among participants	Facebook group to outline rules of participation. Facilitator to take action if rules are not adhered to.
Researchers and participants may be provided with sensitive information or asked about their own experiences or opinions relating to sexual topics	Researchers will not volunteer personal information in relation to sex and will moderate all conversations. All comments will be anonymised when analysed.
Comments and user profiles screenshotted and posted elsewhere	Participant information sheet will outline this as an issue, therefore, participants will agree not to do this as it will violate the platform privacy rights.
Participants' social media names/usernames and accounts will appear alongside the media they share	Participants will be advised of this issue when sharing information. They will receive a guide

	on how to share information. They can also use a pseudonymous account if they wish.
Some individuals in participants' social media networks may react negatively to the content	If any participants identify content as being a potential issue, they will be advised not to participate or to only use the social media accounts or settings they are comfortable with.
Some groups may react negatively to the content being shared	This is very low risk and any negative reaction will be assessed by the researchers, with a response if necessary.
Covert observation of non-consenting users	The data resulting from researchers reading comments will only ever be analysed and presented in general themes.
Material is shared by participants before launch	Participants will be advised not to share the content until they receive instructions. If this occurs, the participant will be asked not to do so without permission, and if it happens beyond this point they will be asked to leave the group.

Developing the content

In light of the need to manage for these risks and in response to the findings from the previous phase, the comedy videos were taken from the app and reshaped into a format more suited to social media platforms. The research team familiarised themselves (and graded) over 100 pieces of content. The team then decided which videos would form the corpus of digital comedy that would be shared on social media platforms. 56 videos were chosen and mapped to the below framework for Healthy Sexual Development (McKee et al., 2010). The selection of this material was closely aligned with the feedback from the focus groups, and included some material that had not been included in the app.

Table 2. Healthy sexual development: A multidisciplinary framework for research (adapted from McKee et. al, 2010)
Relationship Skills

Healthy sexual development: A multidisciplinary framework for research	
1	Freedom from unwanted activity
2	An understanding of consent and ethical conduct more generally
3	Education about biological aspects of sexual practice
4	An understanding of safety
5	Relationship skills

6	Agency
7	Lifelong learning
8	Resilience
9	Open communication
10	Sexual development should not be aggressive, coercive, or joyless
11	Self-acceptance
12	Awareness and acceptance that sex is pleasurable
13	Understanding of parental and societal values
14	Awareness of public/private boundaries
15	Competence in mediated sexuality

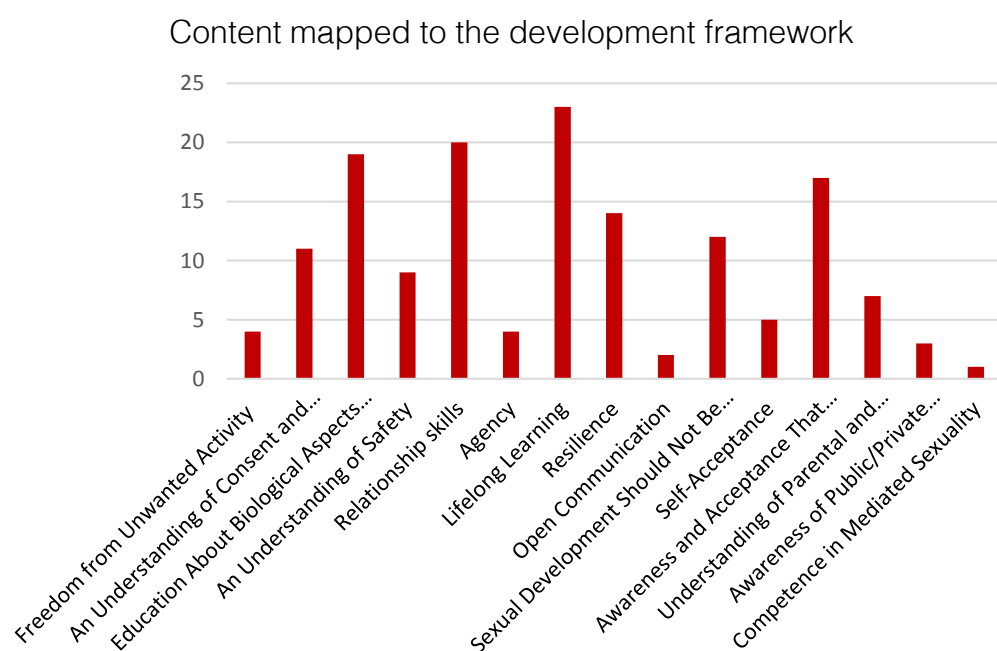


Figure 3. Videos mapped to the development framework

Table 3. Examples of the type of content for each identified area

Framework	Content example
Freedom from unwanted activity	The comedian tells the story of being “hit on” by a gay man. He entertained the thought, but decided it wasn’t for him. He talked about how they “hung out” as friends after he politely rebuffed the approach.
An understanding of consent and ethical conduct more generally	The comedian shares his experience of not wanting to look at a woman’s breasts for fear of being the “creepy guy” so he tells himself (silently in his head, or so he thinks), “Don’t look at her tits” over and over. She then asks him, “Don’t look at whose tits?”
Education about biological aspects of sexual practice	“The reverse of fishing” graphically discusses childbirth from the perspective of the comedian as the soon-to-be father. The video was not selected for inclusion in the app due to its coarse language. However, it was a popular clip amongst our focus group members.
An understanding of safety	The comedian plays on the names of condom brands by saying he doesn’t want his condoms to be called Trojan – which brings to mind something (the horse) from which other things (people) escape – but rather they would be called ‘Alcatraz’ – a prison from which nothing can escape.
Relationship skills	Two comedians are discussing ways to please their partner, when one talks about how wrong he sometimes gets it, like “turning up with a hockey stick to a footy game.”
Agency	The comedians discuss their first time, not feeling pressure, relaxing and having a laugh: “If we weren’t meant to laugh during sex, genitals wouldn’t look so funny.”
Lifelong learning	The series of videos with comedians discussing their “first time”, (being paranoid, anxious, etc.) also reveals that they learn over time how to please a woman and enjoy sex themselves.
Resilience	The comedian relays a personal anecdote about breaking up with his girlfriend as a teenager and his grandfather reassuring him there were “plenty more Weetbix in the packet”.
Open communication	The comedian joked the one thing men don’t do when trying to please a woman is “ask her! She’ll probably tell you.”
Sexual development should not be aggressive, coercive, or joyless	The comedians joke about their first time, relaxing and laughing during sex, and one jokes about his first time as “the longest two minutes.”

Self-acceptance	The comedians note everyone develops at different rates and one jokes the way he learned about sex was by living with people who had it.
Awareness and acceptance that sex is pleasurable	In sharing first-time stories, the comedian jokes about his first time “doing it properly” (in the context of talking about the awkwardness of “first-times” and the benefits of intimacy in a relationship to improving the quality of sexual pleasure) .
Understanding of parental and societal values	The comedian tells the story of masturbating and accidentally ejaculating into his own eye. His parents call him downstairs for dinner and then ask why his eye is red. Rather than tell them the truth, he tells them he is stoned.
Awareness of public/private boundaries	The comedians talk to camera about ways to break up, and advise text message isn’t good, although Instagram has possibilities, “Imagine the picture!”
Competence in mediated sexualities	None of the content available to the project mapped strongly onto this criterion.

Sharing the content

Before publishing the content on Facebook and YouTube, we audited similar pages and channels to establish the kinds of information about sex and relationships that were already available on social media (see Appendix A).⁴ We also looked to traditional literature on social media marketing and audience development, developed a content calendar containing a variety of videos (both in format and subject) and established a branded Facebook page and YouTube channel).

⁴ There are channels that deal with sexual health information in an entertaining way (e.g. Iacigreen, Sexplanations, Ask the Feels), however members of our reference group stated they do not engage with this content (either because they’re not looking to learn or it’s not interesting to them).

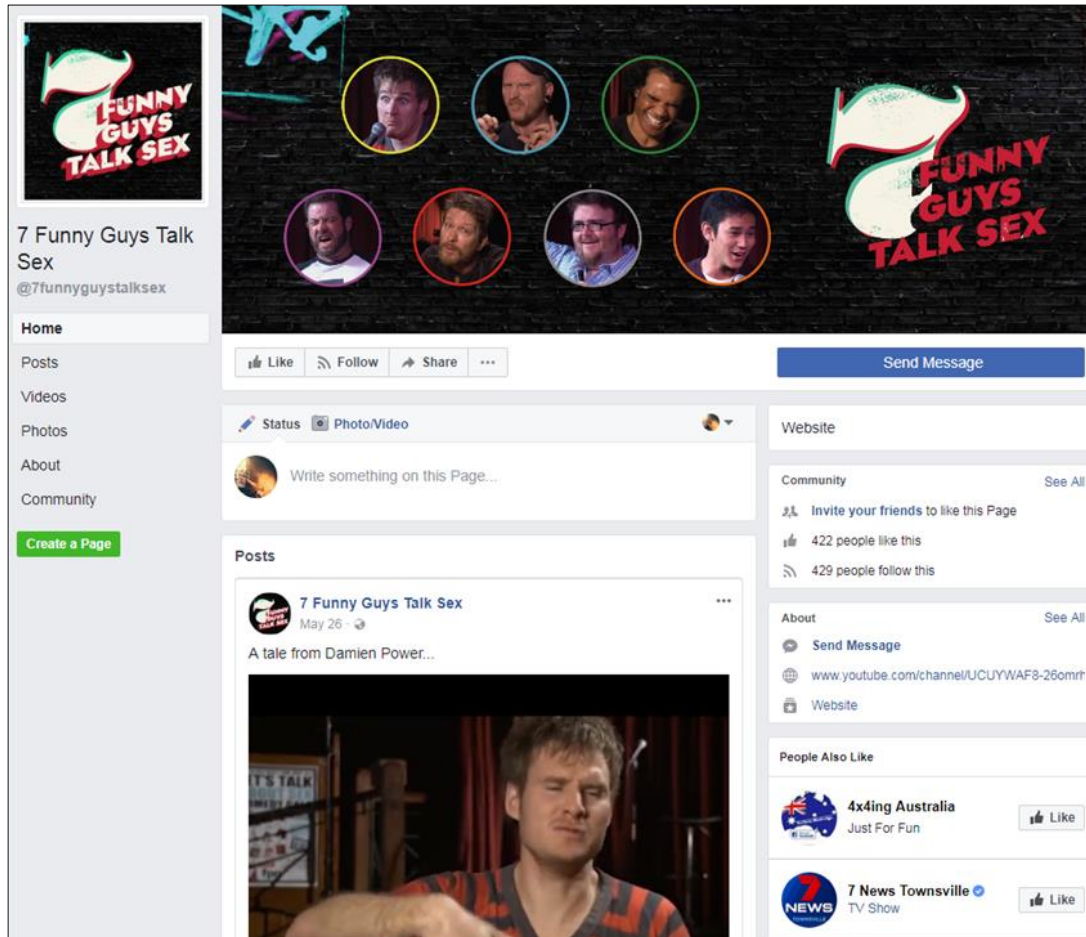


Figure 4. 6 Funny Guys Facebook page

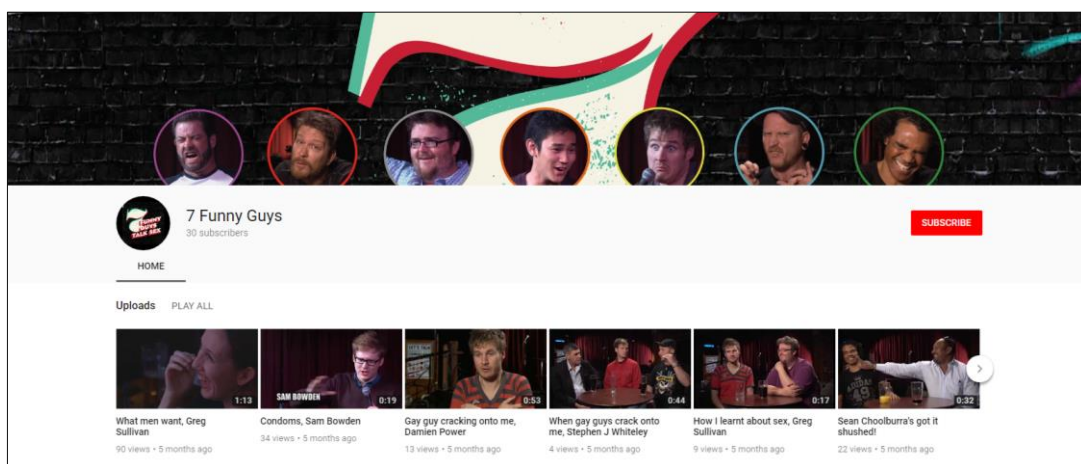


Figure 5. 7 Funny Guys YouTube channel

The Facebook page and YouTube channel started with a small number of “organic” followers (people who followed the page and/or subscribed to the channel because they happened upon the content rather than because it was pushed to them via advertising). However, we needed to grow the audience for the project more quickly, and following from our social media audience development research, we purchased two advertisements (ads) for each platform to promote the content among the target group.

Facebook allows advertisers to target users with their ads according to a range of demographic markers and interest-based criteria, which means that advertisers and health campaigners have a fair degree of control over who sees their ads. The ability to target very specific groups holds promise for health interventions for particular populations; although platform-specific questions of ethics and privacy must be considered also, particularly for sensitive topics (e.g. targeting Facebook users with LGBTIQ-specific health messages based on their apparent interests in LGBTIQ topics). We targeted the ads to groups with the following characteristics on both Facebook and YouTube:

Location	Queensland, Australia
Age	18-23
Gender	Male
Language	English (UK) or English (US)
Interests	Comedy films, Stand-up comedy, TV comedies or Gaming
Interested in	Women

We reached 75% of our intended target audience (males between the ages of 18-24, without specifying sexuality) using videos that had been identified as the funniest by our reference group. The first ad was a short stand-up video with a complete joke and clear link to safe sex practices as it discusses condom use (see ‘An understanding of safety’ in Table 3 above). This ad ran for 14 days on Facebook and reached nearly 70,000 people but had little engagement via likes or shares. On the other hand, the second ad reached over twice as many people over the same time period and had a high degree of engagement (according to the judgement of the research team and reporting from Facebook’s own analytics).⁵ The video referenced the novel, *50 Shades of Grey* and a popular brand of local beer (the comedian jokes he will buy

⁵ Facebook’s Ad Manager assigns a “relevance score” from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) based on how well the target audience responds to the ad. This ad had a relevance score of 9.

his partner 30 cans of Gold – the beer rather than the book) and reached (at the time of writing) 157,305 people. 74,114 (47%) of those reached viewed the video, and of those, nearly 4,500 (6%) reacted to, commented on, or shared the video. Of the 1,632 comments, almost all were Facebook users tagging other friends – indicating that this content had high levels of shareability, and that young people were happy to publicly be seen sharing this content among their peers: a good sign for the viability of the project's content curation strategy and for the target group's engagement with the entertainment-education approach.

Because YouTube is not structured around social networking within the platform (as compared to Facebook), there is no similar simple way to share content onward to other YouTube users (although it is easy to share YouTube videos externally to Facebook, Twitter, via instant messenger, and so on). Advertising was key to encouraging engagement with the content on the channel. Based on the popularity of the “50 Shades” video we created an ad using this video, along with another one on masturbation featuring a comedian who was popular among the reference group and whose jokes were longer and more suited to YouTube. While “50 Shades” didn't replicate its Facebook popularity, the video on masturbation we called “Hands Up?” resulted in over 10,000 views and drove 84% of our viewing traffic.

We could generate quite a lot of useful information from the analytics native to each platform and concluded the following general characteristics about our audience across both Facebook and YouTube:

- Male
- Under 25
- Located in Australia
- Used a mobile device to access content
- iPhone was the most popular device for accessing content
- Was referred to the content within the platform (for example as a YouTube suggested video, or a Facebook sponsored post)

The topics highlighted by our participants in Phase 1 as being of interest to them were again reflected in the viewing statistics of the videos on the YouTube channel, taking into account the advertised videos were classified as ‘masturbation’ and ‘relationships’ :

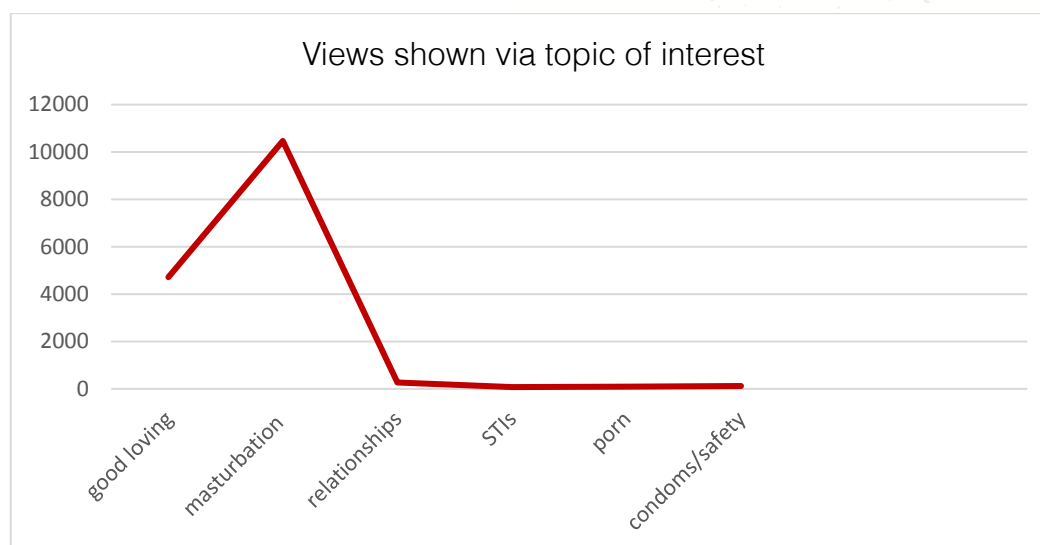


Figure 6. Viewing figures for each video via topic of interest

Findings

The reference group reacted to the videos by liking and commenting on them. Using numbers of reactions as proxy indicators of their entertainment value, the “funniest” video according to the group was a conversation between comedians Sean Choolburra and Desh that we titled “Christmas Baubles.” Sean tells the story of a cat mistaking his newly shaven testicles for shiny Christmas baubles and clawing at them. It is told in a graphic, but self-deprecating way, mirroring the authentic style of delivery that is common to many of the most successful YouTubers and videobloggers. In another popular video, “Blokes don’t talk about sex”, the comedian Stephen highlights and reflects on the awkwardness with which men talk to each other about sex. This focus on ordinary people and their flaws was popular with our target group:

“For as long as I can remember I have always loved hearing comedians tell hilarious personal stories. They can be embellished, but nothing is better than hearing an embarrassing/hilarious story which you can reasonably believe is true.”

The comedians shared stories and stand-up routines based on their own experiences of learning about sex and relationships that both engaged the young men and encouraged them to share the content:

“I shared this one with a group of my mates and they all loved it. The style of humour was spot on and by the sounds they showed a few other friends by themselves.”

In some videos the stand-up comedy was combined with clips of the comedians sitting down discussing related topics. They shared personal anecdotes or advice in response to prompts based on a series of sexual health issues identified by True and its stakeholders. Combining the two into an informative clip that was also entertaining was challenging:

“It feels a little teachy and your demographic will catch on. These youngsters are runnin' about all day with people jammin' information down their throats 'til they're beggin' mumma to buy 'em some Butter Menthols... Ya gotta be sneaky”

“I really enjoyed it all to be honest. If I have any criticism it's that the last 2 or so sitdown segments aren't related to the STI theme. The change from the STI theme doesn't ruin the video or anything overly dramatic like that, but it just doesn't flow as well as the first half of the video. In saying that, I reckon the first half of the video is perfectly linked and balanced between the song and the sitdown portions.”

Combining the two formats successfully when done well, however, was viewed positively by the participants:

“Much easier to understand, without the stand up the viewer has to work out the context on their own”

“Definitely prefer it with the stand-up segment included. Works well together in my opinion”

Balancing information and entertainment is hard to do well. We found this balance difficult to negotiate and noticed that, in the comments and perspectives of the online reference group, there was a marked difference between participants who had been involved in the first group, and who first encountered the comedy in the context of an app that was positioned as an alternative to traditional sex education; and those who were new in the second phase, who were presented with the content as straight-up comedy video content that was therefore positioned as competing with other forms of entertainment available to them via digital and social media.

One of the key differences is that participants who had been part of Phase 1 talked more in terms of *informing* young men, and evaluated the content in a way that balanced education and entertainment:

“I enjoyed it, from previous videos the sit down parts always add a bit more information in a more serious way which I think is important”

“Definitely the condom one, not only is it hilarious but I think the topic is important to discuss”

“I enjoyed it and thought it was definitely funny but I agree with [participant] and [participant] it was far too short to be informative”

We also found that the length of the videos were often too short for the participants to become engaged with the content as pure entertainment:

“Funny, but too short to have any impact”

“I felt like the most recent video about having sex with a model wasn't very funny. I either wanted more

innuendo or a longer joke...”

However, the approach does hold promise:

“First I really think that using comics to promote your message will in the end be much more effective than a fear campaign or skits written by out-of-touch politicians. I also really liked stand-up when I was 15 so I think that's smart but I don't know if that's a common thing among 15 year olds...”

“#killstonersloth” [referring to the widely lampooned anti-marijuana campaign by Saatchi & Saatchi commissioned by the NSW government.]

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This project demonstrated that there is strong potential for using entertaining content to engage young people with sexual health information. The project found that teenage boys and young men preferred informative comedy videos about sex and relationships to more traditional models of school-based sex education. Topics like 'Good Lovin' and 'The First Time' were considered valuable sources of information. Young people preferred the *7 Funny Guys Talk Sex* app to traditional sex and relationships education but would prefer the content to be available via social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube. The project also found that social media offer novel opportunities for conducting audience research and deploying health campaigns, particularly with young people. Using Facebook as a platform for both the reference group and the delivery of the health information meant we were able to elicit feedback and reflection from participants on the effectiveness of the content in the form and within the contexts in which it would ultimately be distributed.

We identified a number of risks associated with using an entertainment-education approach on social media, but we believe they are outweighed by the opportunities that this approach presents to sexual health and relationship education organisations, as long as any such campaigns are strongly grounded in a thorough understanding of young people's digital media cultures, which allows for these risks to be mitigated and addressed. The *Social Media Use Guide* (see Appendix B) that was distributed to our participants before they joined the project is an example of a risk mitigation strategy that is grounded in a research-based understanding of how social media actually work and are used by young people.

While the sample size for the Facebook reference group was small (N=9) and so there are limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn, it was apparent that the quality of engagement with the comedy videos differed according to whether the participants had been involved in the first phase (where it was presented as an alternative to traditional school-based sex education) or whether they were new to the second phase (where it was presented as entertainment). A further caveat is that this project had a unique advantage in having access to a library of entertainment content professionally created especially for this project, and mapped onto the framework for healthy sexual development.

Given the prohibitive resource requirements associated with producing large amounts of original entertainment content, we suggest exploring a curation rather than production and publishing model of entertainment-education for sexual health and education organisations interested in following this model. Under the curation model, entertainment content is sourced from existing social media entertainment providers such as YouTube, carefully assessed for suitability against the Healthy Sexual Development framework, and curated via the embedding functions in Facebook, for example. This is just one among a range of future possibilities for exploring the role of social media entertainment in health and education.

Future recommendations

There is scope for further investigation and experimentation with the application of digital entertainment-education models to sexual health and relationship education.

This report recommends:

1. Further research-led experimentation with curation models of entertainment-education in social media contexts;
2. More research into the role existing, successful social media entertainers (such as popular YouTubers and social media influencers) can play in effective entertainment-education approaches to sexual health and relationship education;
3. More purposeful engagement between sexual health and education campaigns and the existing social networks and communities of young people in social media platforms.

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User Guide & Social Media Use Guide

Appendix A: User Guide

This user guide is for individuals and organisations involved with providing sexual health education to young people via the use of entertainment content. It is designed to help practitioners think through the specific risks, challenges and opportunities of engaging with young people on digital and social media platforms. It also focuses on the development of an online reference group for this purpose. The guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the attached report, which will provide additional insight into the opportunities and challenges of running an entertainment-education campaign based around comedy videos and social media.

Is social media right for us?

Before embarking on any sexual health or education campaign that seeks to use social media to engage with young people, it is important to think about what it is you are trying to achieve. Do you want to start a discussion? Do you want to direct young people to health services? If using the entertainment-education approach, is the tone of the content appropriate for your target audience or the topic of your campaign? While engaging young people via social media can seem like an obvious choice given that they spend so much of their time there, for some topics and audiences it may be that other methods are more suitable. For example, you may find using the *7 Funny Guys Talk Sex* app as part of a structured session in a small group a better choice for dealing with a single topic in a focused way.

Using social media does have a number of benefits, however:

- Reaching people regardless of their location
- Engaging young men on the platforms they already use
- Reduced costs associated with the production of content or travel
- Giving young men the time and space to consider and engage with the information

Some things to consider before you start:

- Access to resources
 - Initiating and maintaining a sexual health campaign via digital media takes time and commitment. Is there someone who will have continuing responsibility for the sites?

- The length of your campaign
 - It takes time and resources to build an engaged social media community; but in constrained environments many social media campaigns also need an end date.
- Skills
 - Do you have someone who is comfortable communicating with young people on social media?
 - If developing and curating content, do you have someone with creative digital media production and management skills?

If you do decide that this approach could work for you, this guide will outline the approach using the following steps as a framework:

1. Developing a campaign objective
2. Understanding your audience
3. Auditing current resources
4. Undertaking a risk assessment
5. Engaging a reference group
6. Gathering content
7. Developing a brand
8. Running the campaign
9. Concluding the campaign

Developing a campaign objective

It is important to think about what you are trying to achieve with your health campaign, and how using social media might help improve the outcomes. Do you want to raise awareness of the importance of STI testing or condom use? Or do you want teenagers and young men to engage in an open conversation about healthy sexual development and respectful relationships?

Developing a clear campaign message will help guide the type of content you choose and the tone of your social media posts. Humour is key to engaging young people (particularly teenage boys and young men), so consider this when developing your campaign objective.

Having a goal you can measure using the existing analytics on social media platforms will help to guide your content selection and enable you to adjust your campaign as necessary. You may want to have your message shown to as many people as possible (reach), you may want to send people to your website or for example a Messenger conversation on Facebook (traffic), or you may want to see people liking and sharing your message (engagement). You may want to reach hard to reach groups by specifying certain characteristics of your audience like location (Mount Isa), education (some high school) and how they are accessing your campaign (older devices and operating systems).

While your YouTube Channel or Facebook page may continue to exist indefinitely, your goal needs to be set in light of a realistic time limit for the run of the campaign in order to measure and evaluate the outcomes. Establishing the timeframe will also prompt you to think about what happens when the campaign ends.

Understanding your audience

You will have defined a target audience for your campaign. It's now necessary to think about this audience and how they use social media and engage with entertaining content on digital media platforms. The report attached to this user guide will help you understand how young men in particular use social media, but it may also help you to run your own focus group or interviews and spend some time on social media sites popular with young people. The following are examples of YouTube channels popular with the teenagers and young men who participated in our project:

- [Filthy Frank](#)
- [CrowbCat](#)
- [Vsauce](#)
- [Nardwuar](#)
- [Videogamedunkey](#)
- [MaxMoeFoe](#)

Auditing current resources

7 Funny Guys created its own content, however you may not have the budget or expertise to create your own entertaining content for social media. In this case, you will need to use the curation model discussed in the report. Either way, you will need to do a scan of the current

types of entertainment about sex and relationships that young people are sharing. This will inform either the development of your own content, or the types of existing entertainment you choose to use. Spend time exploring social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Vimeo, and create a list of pages and channels. Is there anything common among the most popular channels or pages? Is some content better suited to an Australian audience?

Following are some examples of entertainment and comedy content drawn from some of the more popular social media sites with content about sex and relationships, which map onto the framework for Healthy Sexual Development:

Examples of resources mapped to the framework for healthy sexual development

Freedom from unwanted activity

[Kevin Hart: Pineapples](#)

An Understanding of consent and ethical conduct more generally

[The Pencilsword: No I in Sex](#)

[Tea and Consent \(British clean\)](#)

[The One Way You Should Be Having Sex](#)

Education about biological aspects of sexual practice

[14 Sex Facts You Won't Believe Are True](#)

An understanding of safety

[Luke Warm Sex: The STI House](#)

Relationship skills

[Rowan Atkinson: Elementary Dating](#)

[Straight Men, Step Your Game Up](#)

Agency

[Flight of the Conchords: “Business Time”](#)

Lifelong learning

[17 Things You Didn’t Learn In Sex Ed](#)

[Russell Howard: Most Embarrassing Sexual Encounter](#)

Resilience

[Awkward Sex Stories](#)

Open Communication

[How To Talk To Girls](#)

Sexual development should not be ‘aggressive, coercive, or joyless’

[Big Mouth on Netflix: “The Head Push”](#)

Self-acceptance

[Russell Howard: The Most Embarrassing Thing That's Happened To Me In Front Of A Girl](#)

Awareness and acceptance that sex is pleasurable

[CollegeHumour](#)

Understanding of parental and societal values

[Josh Wolf – The Sex Talk](#)

Awareness of public/private boundaries

[Don’t Send Unsolicited Dick Pics](#)

Competence in Mediated Sexuality

[Couples Sext For The First Time](#)

Risk assessment

Once you have defined your campaign objective, identified audiences and selected or created content, it is important to consider the specific risks and challenges of running a sexual health or education campaign on social media. The following example is based on the risk assessment we used on the *7 Funny Guys* project. Your campaign may be subject to some of these risks, but may involve others. Some risks may be unlikely to occur, but it is still important to take the time to identify and consider how you will mitigate all possible risks. The combination of comedy and social media in the context of sexual health and education is new, and so will require experimentation, learning and adjustments along the way.

The risk assessment should be a living document that can be added to and altered as necessary throughout the life of your campaign.

Risk	Action
Coordinated media campaign against the project	Tracking and monitoring all instances of content sharing; devising response strategies in line with organisation policy.
Encountering new information about sexual health through peers or the entertainment media provided	The content released will be mapped to McKee et al.'s (2010) framework for healthy sexual development and approved for use by sexual health educators. Any new sexual health information encountered may potentially benefit participants.
Emotional response/discomfort to the discussion	Participants notified that they can discontinue at any point. Contact forms also include counselling contacts.
Disagreements or ridiculing behaviour among participants	Facebook group to outline rules of participation. Facilitator to take action if rules are not adhered to.
Employees and participants may be provided with sensitive information or asked about their own experiences or opinions relating to sexual topics	Employees will not volunteer personal information in relation to sex and will moderate all conversations. No comments will be reported outside the group.
Comments and user profiles screenshotted and posted elsewhere	Participant information sheet will outline this as an issue, therefore, participants will agree not to do this as it will violate the platform privacy rights.
Participants' social media names/usernames and accounts will appear alongside the media they share	Participants will be advised of this issue when sharing information. They will receive a guide (see Appendix B) on how to share

	information. They can also use a pseudonymous account if they wish.
Some individuals in participants' social media networks may react negatively to the content	If any participants identify content as being a potential issue, they will be advised not to participate or to only use the social media accounts or settings they are comfortable with.
Some groups may react negatively to the content being shared	This is very low risk and any negative reaction will be assessed by employees, with a response if necessary.
Material is shared by participants before launch	Participants will be advised not to share the content until they receive instructions. If this occurs, the participant will be asked not to do so without permission, and if it happens beyond this point they will be asked to leave the group.

Engaging a social media reference group

Facilitating a small group of people from your target population may help inform your campaign and the type of content you share on social media. Remember to refer to the risk assessment above and make sure your participants give their informed consent to being part of the reference group. It's also a good idea to inform your participants up front about the length of time they will be asked to commit to, along with any incentives they may receive for participating. The Social Media Use Guide (Appendix B) may be useful here.

1. Invite participants to be part of the reference group and provide them with any information they need to ensure they give informed consent to be part of the group.
 - We found Google Forms worked well for both providing the information and the mechanism to indicate consent. You will need to get as many details as possible from your participants at this stage to save on email communication further down the line.
2. Send group invitations to people who have provided consent to participate.
 - Make sure the page has already been populated with some content and a welcome message for the group. Just like a traditional face-to-face focus group, you need to make participants feel part of the group and set the tone for sharing and engaging.

3. Make regular contact with your participants – but this is a fine line. If you are engaging your reference group for a long time (over a month) then don't spam them, however it may be acceptable to post more regularly if participants are only around for a week or so.
4. Check in with quiet participants. Using a platform like Facebook will give you the ability to tag members in comments or prompts, and invite them back into the conversation.
5. Reflect on your findings in posts to the group. If you have noticed trends in the engagement on your campaign, or have further questions about something you have picked up, mention it to the group.
 - The reference group are active participants in the campaign, make sure they know their contributions are valuable.
6. Make sure you let the group know when the campaign is over, or when their participation is no longer needed.

You may decide to keep the group open to feedback results, so make sure you communicate to the group when their active participation is over.

Gathering content

You may have come across some suitable content when doing your audit, and you can now trial this content with your reference group. Based on their feedback, or any other parameters you have, begin to gather the content you want to actually use in your campaign. At this stage it is helpful to have a social media content calendar to schedule the development, publication and tracking of engagement with the content. The calendar is a working document and will help you plan out your campaign. Include the content you will be using along with any copy, images or links for the related post and with the date you will be sharing the content.

Developing a brand

Think about whether or not you will need to start a new, branded online presence for your campaign. For example, will you need to set up a separate Facebook page or group, or will you use your organisation's existing social media channels? If you choose to use existing channels (which provide ready-made access to a network of people) you will need to consider

if the tone is right for your campaign, and how you will manage the content for your campaign among other organisational posts (again, this is where a social media content calendar comes in handy). If on the other hand you will be starting new channels, then you need to consider how these will be branded – will it be a variation of your existing brand? Or will you develop a new brand for the campaign itself, aimed specifically at your target audience? If you have your reference group up and running, this is something they will be able to give you feedback on.

Think about brand not just in terms of a logo, but in terms of the campaign's mission and 'personality', or tone of voice. If you have a marketing or communications staff member, they will probably have a leading role to play in this process. Developing a separate brand apart from your existing organisation will ensure your campaign is separate and easily measurable (as well as potentially more organically engaging), but you will have to work much harder to establish your audience.

Here are some tips from Facebook:

[Creating an account](#)
[Customising your profile and settings](#)
[Privacy](#)
[Page insights](#)
[Facebook groups](#)
[Facebook advertising](#)

And here some tips from YouTube:

[Getting started on YouTube](#)
[Create videos and manage your channel](#)
[Your YouTube account](#)
[Advertising on YouTube](#)

Running the campaign

Now that you have a brand, content and a reference group, you are ready to run the campaign. Over the course of the campaign there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Ensure content is published frequently and at regular intervals.
- Buy advertising. For a few hundred dollars you can easily target your audience and increase the reach of your messages significantly.
 - Schedule regular ads throughout the campaign to grow your audience and increase engagement in your campaign.
 - The advertising and campaign management features on each platform will also provide detailed analytics about your ad campaign and you can try different approaches each time that are automated by the platform. For example you may wish to either increase video views or channel subscribers, increase traffic, or increase likes and shares.
 - Keep in mind your campaign objective and tailor your ads to suit your campaign goals.
- Use the resources provided by the platforms you are working on. Facebook has a good guide to developing an audience [here](#), and YouTube has information on being discovered [here](#).
- Invite comments and interaction from your audience.
- Respond promptly to comments.
- Ensure that someone has responsibility for monitoring social media accounts (even on weekends).
- Take regular screenshots of the analytics dashboards provided by each social media platform you use, as well as exporting the underlying audience metrics data where that facility is available.
- Consider what these analytics tell you and then adjust your campaign accordingly. Perhaps you need to make your content mobile friendly, include more memes, or encourage people to 'tag a mate.' Some common metrics represented in platform analytics include:
 - What devices are used by the audience
 - When they are online
 - What type of post gets the most engagement
 - Where followers are located
- Check in regularly with your reference group.
- Make sure you are abiding by the terms of service of the platform you are using.

- Make sure you are following your own organisation's social media policy.
- Have fun – although you are running a health or education campaign, you are sharing entertaining content in a space where young people participate in pleasurable and sociable activities. Engage with them in the same spirit.

Concluding the campaign

As your campaign draws to a close you will need to think about what will happen to the channels you have created and/or the content you have used. Will you allow the channels and pages to remain live? Will they accept comments or guest posts? Will someone have responsibility to monitor activity and moderate discussion if necessary? Or will you close the pages down and redeploy the content elsewhere? These choices will be largely dependent on the results of the campaign. You may choose for example, to “unpublish” your Facebook page or make your YouTube channel invisible if you can no longer manage it. On the other hand, you may choose to continue the page as part of your organisation's activities.

The use of entertainment content within social media platforms provides an innovative model for engaging young people with sexual health information. While challenging, it generates many new opportunities for effectively engaging young people in healthy sexual development through access to information, debates, and the experiences of others.

Appendix B: Social Media Use Guide

This guide is suitable for distribution to participants in an online reference group. You can alter this to suit your group and its participants, but make sure you include all the information that addresses the risks (identified in your own risk assessment) to ensure the safety of your participants. This version of the guide is customised for use with a secret Facebook group.

Group name

Thank you for your participation in [[our campaign]]. Your involvement will inform the decisions we make around the branding, content and distribution of the comedy through social media. Ultimately we hope this research improves how we share sexual health information with young people. Plus we hope you are entertained and maybe even learn something along the way.

This guide is to be used and read in conjunction with the Information for Participants and Consent Form. You should have already read these forms and consented before joining our Facebook group.

A few things to keep in mind:

- This group is secret, for more information about groups and privacy settings on Facebook see [here](#).
- We may use comments you make in the secret group in our research publications, however we will never use your name or any other identifiable information.
- Your contributions to the discussion will be mainly used to inform the development of content, the way it shared and the branding and tone of the content.
- You will be invited to share or like comedy videos that contain sexual humour on a variety of platforms like Instagram and YouTube (not just on Facebook). Think about your audiences and networks across all these platforms and how they will react before you post.

Timeline

We will first invite you to feedback on our existing content that we are developing into social media posts.

We will then invite you to share and like the content among your own social networks and across social media platforms as you see fit.

We will then be inviting you to feedback on your experiences of sharing the content. All steps will overlap as we will be releasing content periodically through the three months of the research project.

User accounts

You have been invited to join using a Facebook account provided to us. This account does not have to be in your name and may be a pseudonymous account.

If you think you may be more comfortable sharing information from a pseudonymous account, please do so, however remember that new accounts will not have the same access to your existing social networks.

Adding members

You have the ability to add members to the group, however please do not do this without the consent of the researchers. Any people who are added without having signed a consent form will be removed from the group. We advise the following process to add new members to the group:

1. Message the person you want to add to the group and let them know about the project.
2. Researchers will contact the person with further information and consent forms.
3. Upon receipt of the email indicating consent, researchers will add the person to the secret group.

Participation

- We hope you will comment on all posts, however we realise that as life changes you may come and go from the group over the period of the research.

- When replying to other participants please tag them in the post so that they receive notification.
- Participants should not post irrelevant content to the group. However, please feel free to remix the content we post and post this or any other RELEVANT material to the group.
- Please respect other users.
- We encourage you to use a range of media in your responses. Use text, emoji, gifs, links, memes, etc.
- If you are ever in any doubt about anything, message the facilitators of the group.
- Bring friends! Please feel free to message your friends who you think would like to be involved.

Adding content

You are more than welcome to add other rich media content to [Secret Facebook Group Name] (like short videos, memes, gifs) that may be of interest to the group and researchers. We welcome discussion around any humorous content that conveys sexual health information. However please bear in mind:

- The relevance to the group
- The frequency of additional media posts (no spam, please!)

Consider your networks

- Are you friends with your great Aunt on Facebook?
- Do you only interact with colleagues on Twitter?
- We all use different platforms for different things, and part of this research is to understand *how* young people use social media platforms to share comedy and information about sex.
- Think about the reactions you may get to a post before you choose to share. Perhaps what you share on Instagram is different to what you share on Facebook.

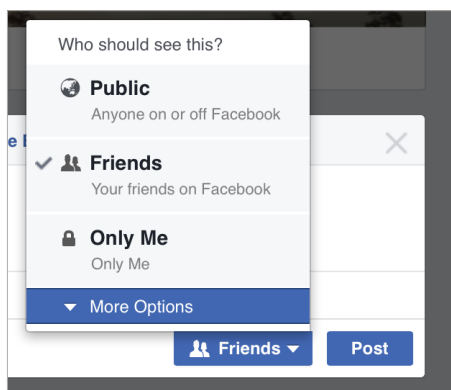
Filtering your audience

On Facebook you can choose to share a post with different groups of people.

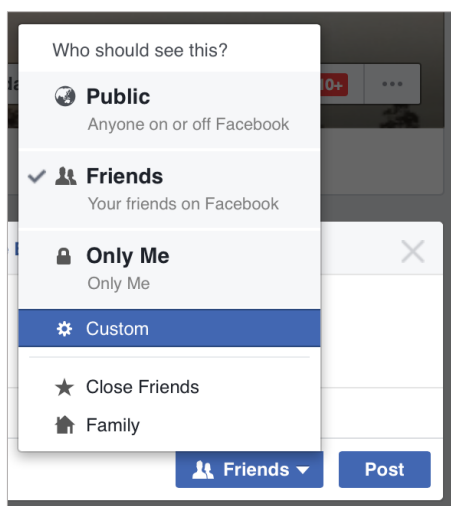
Perhaps you think it's something only your close friends would like to see, or it will be great for everyone except your family. Or perhaps you think all your friends and a few of your cousins would like to see it. Or maybe even just a few of your mates.

To filter the audience for your post, visit this [link](#) or follow these steps:

1. In the **Friends** (or Public for example) dropdown at the bottom of the highlighted status update box choose **More Options**.



2. In the expanded list choose **Custom**.



-
-
3. In the pop up box that appears, you can choose who you do and don't want to share with. This can be groups of people, or even individual friends.

Custom privacy

+ Share with

These people or lists:

Friends of tagged: ☒

Anyone tagged will be able to see this post.

- Don't share with

These people or lists:

Anyone you include here or have on your restricted list won't be able to see this post unless you tag them. We don't let people know when you choose not to share something with them.

-
-
-
4. After you have chosen your audience, click **Save Changes**.

Sharing on other platforms

Although this group is on Facebook, and we anticipate you will share a lot of content on Facebook, we are also interested in how the information moves around other platforms.

If you are sharing on other platforms please use the following hashtag when posting the content. Don't worry about remembering this though, as we will remind you when we invite you to share or like the information.

You can choose to add any other hashtags or comments you wish, and if you feel it is appropriate you can also tag friends. We may suggest other hashtags, but feel free to add to the post what YOU feel works, and what you would normally do when sharing similar content.

Also remember that unless your account is private on sites like Twitter and Instagram, anyone can access your post.

Reporting back

If you ever have anything to share with the researchers, please feel free to post it to the group. We welcome any and all feedback at every stage of the project.

Negative reactions

Hopefully everyone in your network finds the posts funny and insightful, but in case they don't, we have a few tips and tricks to manage any negative reactions:

- Ignore the comment. It may get lost among the other discussion
- If you feel it's necessary, reply respectfully.
- If you feel it's inappropriate or offensive you can hide or delete the comment. For instructions on how to moderate comments and block users on different sites follow the links below:
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Instagram](#)
 - [YouTube](#)
- If it all kicks off and you're not comfortable with the comments, just delete the post.
- If you need support, contact a member of the research team.

Terms of use

At all times you are bound by the terms of use of the platforms you are sharing content on.

