TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Use of YouTube for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An ECDC guide to effective use of digial platforms for HIV prevention

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ECDC TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

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An ECDC guide to effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention

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4. YouTube

With over a billion active users[1], YouTube[2] is the second largest search engine in the world, reaching more 18 to 49-year-olds than any cable network in the US. Using YouTube for HIV prevention offers global access to MSM and provides a unique opportunity to reach people who may not be reachable through more traditional social media platforms. This module will look at the opportunities YouTube provides for HIV prevention and explore the following:

- **Getting started**: how to begin setting up a successful YouTube campaign.
- **Creating content**: how to create and optimise content for maximum success.
- **Targeting**: how to effectively target key MSM populations.
- **Budgeting**: what costs are associated with a campaign and how to distribute budget.
- **Reporting**: measuring the success of a campaign and applying this experience to future work.
- **Summary:** a brief checklist to consider before making your campaign live.

4a. Getting started

YouTube is a highly competitive platform with 300 hours of content uploaded every single minute[3] so even with a large established following or a highly engaging video, it can still be difficult to get your content seen. To remedy this, you are advised to take advantage of YouTube's advertising platform. You can find out more here[4].

Once you have familiarised yourself with YouTube and have an understanding of how you want to advertise on the platform, then you can create your first campaign. Before you get started it is important to understand exactly what objective you are trying to achieve. There are three core objectives when it comes to advertising on YouTube and each has a slightly different plan of action.

Video views: unsurprisingly, getting your content seen is one of the key reasons why people use YouTube. Whether you are trying to build awareness around a campaign or help spread a particular message, this is most likely the objective you will be trying to achieve on YouTube.

Clicks: the number of times a user clicks your advert or clicks through to your website. Due to the nature of YouTube as a video streaming service, a lower click-through rate (CTR) can be expected than with other platforms such as Facebook[5] and Twitter[6].

Conversions: the number of times a user takes action on your website by engaging with one of your tools or services. Google Analytics and Google AdWords must be linked and connected to your website in order for conversions to track correctly. You can find out more about this here.[7]

It is vital to determine your core objective before beginning your campaign as it will heavily influence the way you design and measure your campaign. Most YouTube campaigns will optimise for video views and awareness – so consider using an alternative platform if clicks and conversions are your core objectives.

4b. Creating content

On YouTube, video is king, so deciding how best to convey your message through this medium is the key to campaign success. Before creating your content, consider who is going to be watching it, and how your video is going to be displayed. Audiences respond differently to various content types, so it is recommended that alternate videos are created for a wide range of audiences.

Examples of different types of video from the 'It Starts With Me' campaign:

George's Story:[8] George speaks about being HIV positive and how he is playing a part in stopping HIV.

Do I Need An HIV Test:[9] a light hearted video showing how technology can be used for HIV prevention.

It Starts With Me:[10] an animated video about the campaign and how people can get involved.

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/en-GB/statistics.html
[2] https://www.youtube.com/
[3] http://www.statisticbrain.com/youtube-statistics/
[4] https://www.youtube.com/yt/advertise/en-GB/
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[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDjC1DPpWm0
[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sti6MH_ML6U
[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGf372SCQis&t=7s

Before creating your content it is also worth considering how it will be displayed on the platform. There are two ways your adverts can be seen, and they may both influence the type of content you create.

- In-stream adverts: video adverts that play before – or during – a YouTube video of the advertiser's choice. It is worth considering the types of videos your adverts will be displayed on before deciding the type of content you are going to create. These adverts are skippable after just a few seconds, so it is important to either hook your audience's attention early on, or incorporate your key messaging into the first few seconds of the advert. Learn more about in stream adverts here.[11]
- Video discovery: these adverts will appear in search and as recommended videos in the side-bar of selected videos. In order for these videos to be seen, the user will have to actively click on them, so highly clickable content is a must. It is important to think about both the title and thumbnail of these videos to entice people into watching them. Learn more about discovery adverts here.[12]

Creating engaging content

When creating content, ensuring that it is engaging should be your top priority. Before you publish your first video it is worth considering the following:

- Be brief: try to keep your videos short and to the point. Looking at your video analytics can show the watch time of your videos and where your audience are dropping off. Experiment with different video lengths to see what works best for them. The 'It Starts With Me' campaign often creates 10[13], 30[14], and 60[15] second versions of each video.
- Be timely: be reactive and create content related to breaking news and current events. Plan ahead to take advantage of relevant 'tent pole' occasions such as World AIDS Day[16], National HIV Testing Week[17] and Valentine's Day[18].
- Utilise links: even though link clicks may not be your core objective, always give your audience the option to get involved and find out more by including a link to a relevant website. Overlaying video annotations can be beneficial but these are not always compatible with mobile.
- Create quality content: invest the extra time and money into curating and creating high quality material. Higher quality content means higher engagement.
- Create a two-way dialogue: YouTube may be a video search engine but it is also a social media platform. Encourage your audience to share your content and engage in conversation.
- Keep it simple: do not overwhelm your audience with too much information or multiple calls to action. Keep it clear and make it as easy as possible for your audience to engage. For example, the call to action at the end of this video,[19] is clear and to the point.

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[11] https://support.google.com/displayspecs/answer/6055025?hl=en&ref_topic=4588474
[12] https://support.google.com/displayspecs/answer/6227733?hl=en&ref_topic=4588474
[13] https://vimeo.com/190103626
[14] https://vimeo.com/190103629
[15] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfoKvZM2Mto
[16] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ln_8egmzHo0
[17] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivBGi9zY73Q
[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0N-zyML8mZc
[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rhib255EzTM

Case study: It Starts with Me

The 'It Starts With Me'[1] campaign identifies YouTube creators who are incredibly popular among young MSM and invites them to support National HIV Testing Week each year. Inviting them to events and making them feel that they are an important part of the process builds a relationship with them and makes them more inclined to support the campaign. These influencers create video content around the theme of HIV testing and share this with their audiences organically. The 'It Starts With Me' campaign supports this further by promoting these videos as discovery adverts across the platform. The videos have now been viewed over 1 000 000 times since 2014.

4c. Targeting

The success of an advertising campaign on YouTube heavily relies on effective targeting. YouTube offers multiple targeting options including demographic, interest and placement-based targeting.

Demographic-based targeting

Demographic based targeting allows you to target your audience based on gender, age, parental status and household income. YouTube determines this information based on a user's Google account or behaviour inferred from their browser activity. This will not always be 100% accurate so it is important to narrow down your target audience further with other targeting methods.

Interest-based targeting

Sexuality based targeting is not available but it is still possible to target MSM based on their interests. It is also possible to narrow this down further into subgroups of MSM who may be at higher risk. By using the interests, keywords, and topics targeting options you are able to create a clear picture of the people you are trying to reach and tailor individual adverts to them.

Placement-based targeting

The third, and often most successful, method of targeting is placement-based targeting. This option allows you to place your adverts on specific videos and channels. Identifying channels and videos with a large MSM viewership is relatively easy through search. Searching for relevant keywords frequently used by MSM can quickly identify which channels and videos are trending and most popular among MSM. YouTube will prioritise new content so it is important to update this at least once per campaign cycle.

Examples of frequently viewed YouTube videos that are likely to be popular among MSM:

- The Hottest Gay Sex[20] – 49 million views
- How To Have Gay Sex[21] – 7.3 million views
- Gay Guy Shows Lesbian His Penis[22] – 5.1 million views
- Our Best Gay Sex Tips[23] – 2.2 million views
- Gay Guys React To Gay Porn[24] – 1.3 million views
- 10 Reasons Gay Sex is better[25] – 934 000 views
- Gay Couple Tries Sex Toys[26] – 600 000 views
- Reacting To Gay Porn[27] – 5500 000 views.

Examples of popular YouTube channels that are likely to be viewed by MSM:

- Tyler Oakley[28] - World's most popular gay male YouTuber with over 8 000 000 subscribers.
- William Belli[29] - One of YouTube's most successful drag queen channels with over 700 000 subscribers.
- Mark & Ethan[30] - One of YouTube's most successful gay couples with over 600 000 subscribers.
- Tom Daley[31] - LGBT+ sports person with over 350 000 subscribers.

A combination of the above targeting methods will produce the best results, and experimenting with different subgroups is the key to reaching the most at-risk individuals for the lowest price.

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[20] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOYBq_sIHb0
[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGetcv4YVMI&t=1s
[22] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfdJ938EY2U&t=2s
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[29] https://www.youtube.com/user/noextrai
[30] https://www.youtube.com/user/mmabutternut
[31] https://www.youtube.com/user/tvtomdaley

4d. Budgeting and costs

YouTube is a highly competitive platform so it is recommended that you set aside a small budget to get your target audience viewing your content. When determining your budget you should consider:

Overall budget: what is the absolute maximum amount you have to spend on YouTube? Use this to determine your overall budget and use this as your spending benchmark.

Advert sets: how many different campaigns are you going to be running and how do you want to distribute your budget among them in order to meet your targets?

Deliverables: what deliverables are you trying to achieve? Whether you are trying to drive conversions or promote engagement and brand awareness, ensure you know your core objectives in advance.

Duration: how long is your campaign going to run for? Is your campaign going to run over an extended period of time or is it intended to produce quick results in a short time frame?

Daily budget: taking into account the budget you have available for each advert set and the duration of the campaign, how much do you have to spend on a daily basis?

Target: how many people do you want to reach/convert? This will allow .you to calculate the maximum amount you want to spend per action achieved – Cost Per Action (CPA).

Table 1. Budget breakdown example

Overall YouTube Budget: EUR 500	
HIV testing video: EUR 400	Condom video: EUR 100
Deliverable: views	Deliverable: views
Duration: 2 weeks	Duration: 5 days
Daily budget: EUR 30~	Daily budget: EUR 20
Target: 300 views per day	Target: 400 views per day
Cost per action: EUR 0.10	Cost per action: EUR 0.05

Once you have established your budget you can then use this to optimise your adverts and make sure they are achieving the goals you have outlined. These should be monitored and adjusted on a daily basis to ensure the best results. It is important to be realistic about your objectives and sometimes it may be necessary to re-evaluate your budget and expectations if your adverts underperform.

4e. Reporting

Reporting is an on-going process when it comes to advertising on YouTube, and although adverts should be optimised and monitored on a daily basis, it is also important to produce more holistic reports to highlight any weaknesses in your strategy.

Some of the elements you should report upon include:

- Impressions: how many times your advert has been displayed to your target audience.
- Views: the number of times a person watched through at least 30 seconds of your video advert, directly clicked on it, or interacted/engaged with it.
- View rate: the percentage of people the advert was displayed to who watched at least 30 seconds of the video or interacted/engaged with it.
- Cost per view (CPV): the average amount you pay each time someone views your video.
- Referrals and conversions: the number of people clicking through to your website and the number of people taking action on site.
- Conversion rate: the percentage of those who visited your website and also took action.

Table 2. **Simple reporting example**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Impressions	500 000 ▲	200 000 ▼	600 000 ▲	700 000 ▲
Views	50 000 ▲	16 000 ▼	30 000 ▲	70 000 ▲
View rate	10% ▲	8% ▼	5% ▼	10% ▲
CPV	EUR 0.10 ▼	EUR 0.05 ▼	EUR 0.08 ▲	EUR 0.08 ▼
Referrals	100 ▲	50 ▼	100 ▲	150 ▲
Conversions	5 ▲	2 ▼	5 ▲	15 ▲
Conversion rate	5% ▲	4% ▼	5% ▲	10% ▲

Q1: All figures are positive and the campaign is performing well.

Q2: A bid adjustment has lowered the cost per view but the campaign is now underperforming. Increasing the budget and optimising your targeting will improve campaign success next quarter.

Q3: The campaign is delivering more impressions but conversions and view rates are dropping. Consider refreshing the campaign content to increase views and conversions next quarter.

Q4: All figures are positive and the campaign is performing well. Consider adjusting the bid and further optimising the targeting and content to further lower the CPV next quarter.

4f. Summary

Before starting your YouTube campaign, you should do the following:

1. Choose your campaign objective and outline your goals.

2. Create at least one engaging video that is optimised and suitable for your target audience.

3. Create at least one target group based on a combination of targeting methods.

4. Allocate a budget and distribution plan and outline achievable realistic targets.

5. Set holistic goals to measure the overall success of your campaign and determine a plan to measure and act upon your on-going progress, successes, and failures.

Once you have completed these tasks you are ready to start your first campaign. The success of any campaign will always rely on a certain degree of trial and error so remember to follow your campaign through every stage and be prepared to optimise and make changes as you go.

Helpful tools

- A guide to getting started with YouTube's adverts manager can be found **here.**[32]
- A guide to linking Google Analytics and Google AdWords can be found **here.**[33]

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[32] https://www.youtube.com/yt/advertise/en-GB/
[33] https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/1704341?hl=en-GB

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