TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Use of Twitter 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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EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR
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Use of Twitter for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

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

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3. Twitter

With 313 million monthly active users,[1] Twitter[2] is the fourth largest social media platform after Facebook,[3] YouTube[4] and Instagram.[5] Both organic[6] and paid content thrive on Twitter and can be used together or independently as part of a successful social media strategy. This module will look at the opportunities Twitter provides for HIV prevention and explore the following:

- **Getting started**: how to begin setting up a successful Twitter 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.

3a. Getting started

Before you begin, you are advised to familiarise yourself with Twitter's interface and adverts manager. Twitter's adverts manager gives exclusive access to certain tools and functionalities which are invaluable for both organic and paid campaigns. You can read more about setting up your Twitter account and using Twitter's adverts manager here.[7]

Once you have familiarised yourself with Twitter's interface, you will need to decide which campaign type will best help you to reach your objective. Twitter offers the following campaign types:

- Website clicks or conversions: designed to push people towards your website and encourage them to take action. The campaign will optimise for link clicks and you will only be charged for each person who visits your website.
- Follower growth: designed to build and grow your audience. If the majority of your campaigns are organic, investing a small amount into building an initial following could be beneficial. You only pay for the followers you gain and can set the parameters for how much you want to pay.
- Awareness: designed to spread awareness and increase knowledge. You pay for every impression[8] but can often reach a higher number of people for a significantly lower price.
- Tweet engagements: designed to increase engagement[9] with your tweets. You only pay for the first engagement a person makes which can be effectively used to encourage people to retweet, reply, or actively engage with your content.
- Video views: designed to increase the number of views on a Twitter video. You pay for every video view. This should only be used for videos uploaded directly to Twitter. Opt for an awareness or tweet engagement campaign instead of YouTube or other third-party video views.

Determining your core objective before beginning your campaign is vital as it will heavily influence the way you design and measure your campaign and the way Twitter distributes and optimises it. If one singular objective is not clear then consider multiple campaigns with their own individual objectives.

3b. Creating content

Unlike other social media platforms, Twitter is much more conversational and runs in real time. This means that establishing yourself through frequent conversational content is crucial. Even though there is a limitation of 140 characters, there are many components that make up a tweet, and deciding how to best use them to spark conversation and action is the key to engaging your audience:

- Text: what is your message and what kind of language should you use to best convey that? Consider using engaging questions or direct calls to action to encourage your audience to engage with your tools and services.[10]
- Link: clickable cards with a clear call to action can be used to make your advert stand out, or you can include a link within the body of a regular tweet for a more conversational feel.

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[1] https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/
[2] https://twitter.com/
[3] https://www.facebook.com/
[4] https://www.youtube.com/
[5] https://www.instagram.com/
[6] Organic content is content that you do not promote via paid advertising.
[7] https://business.twitter.com/en/help/account-setup/account-login-and-setup.html
[8] 'Impressions' on Twitter mean the number of times a user is served a Tweet in their timeline or search results
[9] An engagement is an interaction that a user has with a Tweet. For example, clicking on a link on a Tweet is an engagement.
[10] https://twitter.com/assoAIDES/status/876815779429322753

- Video: videos can be directly uploaded to Twitter and will automatically play in a user's timeline. Alternatively, videos can be embedded from YouTube and other third party websites.
- Hashtag: hashtags enable you to start or join a conversation with other Twitter users and have your tweets appear in search.[11] This can be incredibly effective for capitalising upon trending events, such as National HIV Testing Week or World AIDS Day.
- Image: using an appropriate image can help grab your audience's attention, but not every tweet will require one. Use images often but only where necessary and frequently rotate creatives to keep your campaign looking fresh and compelling (see case study).
- Tags: does your tweet relate to another organisation or individual? Tags (@ with username) can amplify your reach by encouraging influential people and organisations to share and engage with your content.

Creating engaging content

When creating content, ensuring that it is engaging should be your top priority. Before you send out your first post or advert it is worth considering the following:

- Be consistent: consistency in the quality and types of posts you create will help to establish your brand voice and message and give your audience a clear understanding of your intentions and objectives and what to expect from you in future.
- Be brief: even with Twitter's 140 character count limitation, it is still good practise to keep your content as brief and to the point as possible.[12]
- 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, Sexual Health Week, National HIV Testing Week and Valentine's Day.
- Use links: for awareness and engagement posts a link may not always be necessary, but always consider your objectives before posting and use links where applicable. Using a link shortener such as goo.gl[13] or bit.ly[14] to keep your links short and tidy.
- Use engaging images and videos: invest the extra time and money into curating and creating high quality photos and videos. Higher-quality content means higher engagement.
- Create a two way dialogue: social media is designed to encourage conversation. Make sure you are engaging your audience in conversation and responding to their comments. If relevant, including a question in your content is proven to massively increase engagement.
- 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.

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[11] A hashtag is a way to index keywords or topics on Twitter achieved by adding the # symbol before a word or phrase. For example, when sending a Tweet about HIV that you would like others to discover who might be discussing HIV on Twitter, you can add the hashtag #HIV.
[12] https://twitter.com/assoAIDES/status/878611740585598980
[13] https://goo.gl/
[14] https://bitly.com/

Case study: AIDES France

The association AIDES in France amplified the community engagement and success of their Twitter and wider social media presence by using a series of powerful and provocative videos[1] and images of real MSM from the LGBT+ community in France. They furthered the success of these campaigns by translating the content into different languages and making it accessible throughout Europe and the wider world. Their highly sharable content led to them amassing over 170 000 followers as of March 2017.[1]

3c. Targeting

The success of an advertising campaign on Twitter heavily relies on effective targeting. Twitter's targeting approach is unique and, in addition to offering demographic and interest-based targeting, it also offers keyword and behaviour-based targeting.

Demographic-based targeting

- Age: your call to action should be relevant to the age group you are targeting. Are some age groups more at risk in the areas you are targeting? Are some age groups more likely to engage with your call to action? Effectively narrowing your age group by relevance will increase the success of your campaign and lower your cost per conversion.
- Gender: Twitter's gender-based targeting is binary and does not allow trans* based targeting. Using interest-based targeting is currently the only way to reach trans* individuals.
- Languages: consider including only those who speak the language your advert is written in.
- Location: only include people in locations that can access your service and consider exclusively targeting areas that are highly populated with MSM or that have the highest prevalence of HIV.

Interest-based targeting

Sexuality-based targeting is not available but it is still possible to target MSM based on their interests or the people they follow. This will never be 100% accurate so some trial and error is always necessary to produce the best possible results. Some examples include targeting celebrities and influencers; adult websites, entertainers and performers; gay media and gay community groups and organisations.

Examples:
@Huffpostqueer – gay media
@ZurichPride – gay community groups
@RuPaul - LGBT+ celebrities.

Keyword and behaviour targeting

It is also possible to target people based on the keywords they use in their tweets or based on their lifestyle patterns and behaviour. Keywords surrounding high-risk activity can be used to pinpoint higher-risk individuals and certain behaviour categories, such as 'nightlife enthusiasts' and 'alcoholic drink buyers' in order to narrow down and target specific subgroups of MSM.

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.

3d. Budgeting and costs

Twitter is a great platform for organic content but setting aside even a small budget will significantly increase your reach. To help you determine your budget you should consider the following:

Overall budget: what is the absolute maximum amount you have to spend on Twitter's advertising platform? Use this to determine your overall budget and 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 Twitter budget: EUR 1 000			
Campaign video: EUR 50	Condom campaign: EUR 250	Condom pack orders: EUR 600	Outbreak awareness: EUR 100
Deliverable: views	Deliverable: engagement	Deliverable: conversions	Deliverable: reach
Duration: five days	Duration: five days	Duration: five days	One day
Daily budget: EUR 10	Daily budget: EUR 50	Daily budget: EUR 120	Daily budget: EUR 100
Target: 100 views per day	Target: 100 people engaged per day	Target: 100 orders per day	Target: 10 000 people reached per day
Cost per action: EUR 0.10	Cost per action: EUR 0.50	Cost per action: EUR 1.20	Cost per action: EUR 0.01

Once you have established your budget you can use this to optimise your adverts and make sure they are achieving your goals. 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.

3e. Reporting

Reporting is an on-going process when it comes to advertising on Twitter, 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:

- Follower growth: creating a hard-core base of followers gives you a captive audience of people who will be much easier to convert. Followers should organically discover your page but recruitment adverts can also be created to attract new followers to your page.
- Reach: getting an idea of the number of people you are reaching gives you a benchmark for measuring the success of your campaign. Comparing this to other marketing methods (other social media, press, outdoor) will help inform the amount of budget you attribute to Twitter.
- Engagement: monitoring the number of people you are engaging with will help determine the success and effectiveness of your content. Spikes in engagement may indicate examples of more relatable content and dips in engagement may indicate content that is underperforming.
- Engagement rate: this is the percentage of people reached that also engaged with your content. A low engagement rate could indicate a problem with your content or your targeting.
- 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 people who visited your website and also took action.

Table 2. Simple reporting example

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Growth	1 000 ▲	2 000 ▲	1 500 ▼	1 200 ▼
Reach	1 000 000 ▲	2 000 000 ▲	800 000 ▼	3 000 000 ▲
Engagement	30 000 ▲	50 000 ▲	25 000 ▼	100 000 ▲
Engagement rate	3% ▲	2.5% ▼	3.13% ▲	3.33% ▲
Referrals	5 000 ▲	10 000 ▲	8 000 ▼	15 000 ▲
Conversions	500 ▲	900 ▲	1 000 ▲	2 000 ▲
Conversion rate	10% ▲	9% ▼	12.5% ▲	13.33% ▲

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

Q2: The massive increase in reach has resulted in lower engagement and conversion rates. Optimising your targeting and content would improve this figure in the next quarter.

Q3: Engagement and conversion rates are up but other elements of the campaign are underperforming. Optimise your targeting and budget to increase your reach in the next quarter.

Q4: The overall campaign is performing well but follower growth is down. Consider allocating some additional budget to recruit new followers and improve these figures in the next quarter.

3f. Summary

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

1. Choose your campaign objective and outline your goals.

2. Create highly engaging content that is 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 exploit your 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 advertising on Twitter can be found here.[15]
- Free tools such as Survey Monkey[16] can be used to pre-test campaign materials before they go live.
- Google's URL Builder,[17] goo.gl[18] and bit.ly[19] can be used to create shortened tracking links.

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[15] https://business.twitter.com/en/help/account-setup/account-login-and-setup.html

[16] https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/

[17] https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/

[18] https://goo.gl/

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