

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN ONLINE SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION FOR YOUNG QUEER PEOPLE? – CONSIDERATIONS FROM A QUALITATIVE STUDY WITH QUEER, YOUNG, QUEENSLANDERS

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Background: Online spaces can offer LGBTQIA+ individuals access to safe, affirming health resources and information that are not always readily available in their offline worlds. Despite the utility of online spaces, little is known about what is important in digital health promotion for LGBTQIA+ communities beyond the perspectives of men who have sex with men. This research aims to understand experiences of digital health promotion for young, gender and sexual minority, populations.

Methods: Between 2018-2020, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 young (aged 16-24), gender and/or sexually diverse people across South-East Queensland to explore their sexual health practices and access to healthcare. In 2020-2021, a subsample of 20 participants were re-interviewed. Interviews were conducted by two researchers including LGBTQIA+ community peers. Round one and two interviews were thematically analysed for this paper by a LGBTQIA+ community peer.

Results: Young people accessing sexual health information online described either actively seeking, or passively finding, useful information. Whether an online source was affirming of queer identity was critical to young people. Affirming sources showed direct LGBTQIA+ acknowledgement, discussed shared LGBTQIA+ experiences, and/or were openly accepting of identity diversity. Young people wanted to be reached on familiar, relevant platforms already being used outside of health-related contexts. Online social groups (e.g., Transgender peer groups on Facebook) were often popular as they addressed all of these needs. Some young people reported not using online sources, however, the majority described benefits including accessing safe, affirming spaces providing health information and details on finding supportive health-care providers.

Conclusion: The Internet is an important platform for the promotion of sexual health for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Health information and sources must be affirming of LGBTQIA+ identities and target specific identities on digital platforms relevant to the target audience. Engaging with online social groups may also be useful for sexual health promotion.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. This research was funded by the HIV Foundation Queensland and ViiV Healthcare.