

Searching for success: diversifying digital media strategies increased sexual health campaign reach

Williams C¹; Vaughan M²; Hawk C¹

¹Thorne Harbour Health, ²ACON

Background: In February 2021, Facebook blocked Australian users from sharing or viewing news content, demonstrating its disruptive power. In November 2021, Facebook announced it would remove targeting options relating to sexual orientation. This global change has the potential to impact digital health promotion activities across Australia.

Emen8 is a joint project between ACON and Thorne Harbour Health that delivers a national, digital initiative to increase sexual health literacy, testing and HIV/STI prevention among men who have sex with men (MSM).

Emen8 markets sexual health education content via dating apps, search engines and social media platforms.

Approach: To mitigate the risk of social media disruptions, *Emen8* diversified its digital content marketing strategies to include greater investment in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) beginning May 2021.

SEO is the process of improving the quality and quantity of unpaid traffic to a website from internet searches conducted via search engines such as Google.

Outcomes/Impact: A comparison of two six-month year on year periods — before investing in SEO and afterwards — shows significant performance improvements.

Comparing Period 1 (October 2020-March 2021) to Period 2 (October 2021-March 2022), organic search engine user traffic to the *Emen8.com.au* website increased 84% (n=27,543), corresponding pageviews increased 90% (n=43,568), Google Search impressions increased 80% (n=945,968), and Google Search clicks increased 46% (n=19,362).

Innovation and significance: Digital health promotion can no longer rely on Facebook alone. Greater emphasis must be given to diverse digital content marketing strategies.

By diversifying its strategies, *Emen8* nearly doubled its organic traffic from internet search engines, increasing the project's reach.

Effective SEO gradually increases website traffic in the long-term. This may make it a valuable and cost-effective digital media strategy for health promotion initiatives, particularly when compared to short-term results and rising costs of paid social media advertising.

Disclosure of interest statement:

Emen8 is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health.