

Minimum Effort, Maximum Impact

Using Photos in Social Media to Share Messages on Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights for Young People in India

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Photos and other visuals are proving to be invaluable tools in social media as it allows information to be shared more quickly and efficiently.

Introduction

With its growth in popularity, social media has become a tool for the nonprofit sector. What started out as a way to reconnect with friends and family has grown into a means for organizations to spread awareness about key issues, mobilize supporters, raise funds and foster online advocacy movements. Recognizing this opportunity India HIV/AIDS Alliance (Alliance India) under our Action Project launched an advocacy campaign over social media to create awareness around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for young people.

Alliance India has a strong social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. As of January 2014, the organisation's page on Facebook has more than 81,000 likes, and 1,000 people follow us on Twitter. On average, our Facebook posts have more than 20,000 views.

With funding from the European Union, the Action Project (2010-13) strengthened and empowered civil society organisations and youth groups to advocate for more responsive policies addressing the SRHR of young people. The project focused on the most marginalised young people—men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender people, drug users, sex workers and those living with HIV. The project was implemented in partnership with MAMTA and SASO in India and by HASAB in Bangladesh. Over its three-year duration, the Action Project contributed to shaping SRHR policies and their implementation in India and Bangladesh by supporting the meaningful participation of young people in relevant processes and programmes.

Methods

A two-pronged approach using photos and blogs was utilised. Relevant photos were selected, supplemented with text providing context and relevant data, and assembled as appropriate into online albums (collection of photos) and profiles (telling a story of an individual). Experience quickly showed that more than written words alone, the images get more attention in the social media world. A sample of five blogs and photos posted on Facebook over a period of six months (January-June 2013) were compared.

Results

Our review found that the photos had approximately 1.5 times higher number of views than blogs. The numbers of likes on photos were 2.5 times more than the blogs. Overall, the photos got 255,037 views, while the blogs had a total of 163,974 views. Similarly, the number of comments on photos was almost double of that of blogs. The photos got 58 comments, while blogs had only 31.

Conclusions

Images are one of the most popular forms of social media news content for a variety of reasons. This form of media is easily consumed, transfers information quickly, requires less time, and can share a great deal of information efficiently. More needs to be learned about how to maximize the impact of social media efforts to increase understanding of SRHR and other development priorities in the broader public, but photos and other visuals are proving to be invaluable tools in these efforts.

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