



## **Practical keywords for targeting MSM when advertising online**

BHOC partnered with public health program leaders experienced in purchasing advertisements to gather ideas and best practices for reaching MSM with public health messaging or recruitment to services.

Earlier this year, BHOC and partners compiled [Recommendations for improving effectiveness of online ads to promote sexual health](#), a resource for maximizing cost-effectiveness in producing and purchasing ads online to promote sexual health for men who have sex with men (MSM).

This document, which provides additional information about strategies and practical keywords for advertising on Google and Facebook, is not intended as the be-all end-all of ad buying, but rather a helpful starting point for jurisdictions with limited resources, experience or understanding of targeting priority demographics.

Experienced professionals have used these keywords and retargeting methods, but know that these tips will work differently for everyone. Play around with these suggestions using what's best for your jurisdiction.

If you have suggestions to add to this list or have further questions, contact [tonytaylor@bhocpartners.org](mailto:tonytaylor@bhocpartners.org).

For a more in-depth look at advertising with MSM as a target audience, [view our webinar](#), Campaign Execution – How to use online media in your Ending the HIV Epidemic work.

Here are suggestions of BHOC partners' practical keywords for targeting MSM when advertising online:

### **1. Google keywords**

- ★ Google Keywords are words or phrases that are used to match the ads with the terms people are searching for. Selecting high quality, relevant keywords for an advertising campaign can help reach the desired users at the right time.
- ★ Keywords describe the content on a webpage or web post. When people search for those keyword or phrase in a search engine, that page on the organization’s website should be one of the search results.
- ★ Keywords tell search engines what the page or post is about. Always focus keywords on the user. With Search Engine Optimization (SEO) [the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to a website through organic search engine results], advertisers want people to land on their website when using a certain search term or keyword. Advertisers need to get into the heads of their audience and use the words they’d use when searching.

In general any search campaign should have keywords which align directly with the campaign’s goals/topics. A good way to help ensure that an advertiser’s reach stays predominantly within the MSM audience is to focus primarily on search terms that are more specific for an MSM audience. A good place to start is with Phrase matches for HIV, PrEP, fissure, bottoming.

Some Google Ad campaigns that aren’t specifically targeting MSM have content that definitely speaks to MSM who are looking for HIV information, including: “Butt Health,” “HIV Info,” and “Public Education” (which includes PrEP, U=U, and resources for transmasculine folks). Most popular keywords across these campaigns are:

- |                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ➤ What is a fissure            | ➤ HIV oral              |
| ➤ Buttock pain                 | ➤ How can you get HIV   |
| ➤ Douching for men             | ➤ HIV from oral         |
| ➤ Anal cancer                  | ➤ HIV test              |
| ➤ Water enema                  | ➤ HIV saliva            |
| ➤ Gay bottoming                | ➤ HIV kiss              |
| ➤ Can you get an std from oral | ➤ HIV undetectable      |
| ➤ HIV transmission             | ➤ PrEP                  |
| ➤ How is HIV transmitted       | ➤ Positive undetectable |

One ad purchaser is not specifically targeting MSM on Google, rather individuals seeking info about PrEP and paying for PrEP more broadly. They found that their ‘paying for PrEP’ campaigns did better with more basic PrEP 101 keywords included alongside more specific ‘paying’ or cost-associated keywords. (I.e., People aren’t specifically looking for how to pay for PrEP, but with the 101 keywords they end up finding the cost and payment info useful.) Top 10 keywords in English and Spanish are:

- |                       |                                  |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>EN</b>             | <b>ES</b>                        |
| ➤ PrEP AIDS           | ➤ Pill against HIV               |
| ➤ HIV prevention meds | ➤ Cost of PrEP                   |
| ➤ AIDS Truvada        | ➤ Truvada PrEP                   |
| ➤ AIDS prevention     | ➤ Sexually transmitted infection |

- How to get PrEP for free
- Paying for PrEP
- Truvada without insurance
- Sintomas del VIH
- Píldora
- Pastilla PrEP
- El VIH da síntomas
- Cuales son los síntomas VIH
- Cuales son los síntomas del VIH
- Transmisión del VIH
- Truvada para que es
- Truvada para que sirve
- PrEP gratuito
- Cuanto cuesta la PrEP

## 2. Successful Facebook affinity groups

- ★ Facebook Affinity is about how often an individual interacts with a brand on Facebook and the types of posts they interact with. This could be with likes or other emotion selections, shares, comments, video views, clicks, and even things like “dwell time” which is how long someone looks at a post that they otherwise did not interact with.
- ★ Affinity groups are terms that unite people with shared characteristics like ethnic backgrounds, social interests, gender, sexual orientation, age, hobbies, and more. Facebook assigns people to affinity groups based on their behaviors unless users upload a list and create their own affinity group. Advertising to people who “like” or engage with affinity groups increases the chances that the advertisement will reach the intended audience.
- Typically target by gender (“Male”), age (if applicable for the study recruiting) and location (again, if applicable), and then in “Detailed Targeting” specified include people who match at least one of the following: LGBT community or LGBT culture or LGBT social movements.” When one Bay Area based ad purchaser increased their audience outside of SF/Bay Area, however, this backfired a bit and resulted in hundreds of negative comments on their ads; mainly because Facebook doesn’t show how someone’s profile would indicate they are interested in “LGBT community,” per se, so people don’t understand why they are seeing an ad if they are not MSM.
- For a campaign targeting trans MSM, targeted by “Male,” and then further targeted by saying the audience members *must* like specific organizations (such as National Trans Center for Equality, Trans Law Center, etc).
- Interest keywords are specified to include people who match at least one of: Homosexuality, Capital Pride (Washington, D.C.), Queer as Folk (2000 TV series), Orange Is the New Black, Kehlani, Courtney Act, It Gets Better Project, Rainbow flag (LGBT movement), LGBT tourism, Johnny Weir, Rita Ora, Freedom to Marry, Ariana Grande, Fashion week, Jack’d, Leather subculture, National Coming Out Day, Gay pride, Scruff, Pride, Choreography, Dance Academy, Carly Rae Jepsen, Andrew Christian, Falcon Entertainment, Lady Gaga, Pride parade, Grindr, Out (magazine), RuPaul's Drag Race, Golden Globe Award, LGBT history, Logo TV, Willam Belli, Genderqueer, Queer Eye, Fashion blog, Tom Daley, Harvey Milk, Fashion design, Broadway theatre, LGBT culture, Davey Wavey, Frank Ocean, AussieBum, LGBT community, Gay News, New York Fashion Week, Musical theatre, Gay–straight alliance, RuPaul, Ball culture, Figure skating, Chicago Pride Parade, Manila Luzon, Gay bar,

International Mr. Leather, Pink News, Gay-Straight Alliances, Hedwig and the Angry Inch (musical), Same-sex marriage, Rihanna, Troye Sivan, C-IN2, Queerty, LGBT social movements, Beyoncé, Same-sex relationship, World of Wonder (production company), Runway (fashion), Sharon Needles, Shangela Laquifa Wadley, Steven Universe, Tyler Oakley, Kinky Boots (musical), Jinkx Monsoon, BuzzFeed LGBT, Adore Delano, Bianca Del Rio, Met Gala (Note: Pop culture interests adjust over time.)

- Specific targeting by location

### 3. Behavioral actions used for retargeting

- Retargeting campaigns on Twitter/Facebook based on people having visited a specific page or website using tracking pixels.
- Some examples of behavioral targeting include:
  - Location /Geotargeting - a user's location is a reflection of their local presence/behavior
  - Remarketing - site traffic reflects a user's browsing behavior
  - Social Targeting - social likes / follows / engagement with specific social entities are reflected in the targeting available via social channels - these are all powerful behaviors to leverage for targeting
  - Email marketing - if a user has opted in for a newsletter with an organization (and the advertiser has the right to use their data for marketing purposes), that organization can leverage this contact information to target users across various platforms. For example, if the organization has a list of 50,000 people who have subscribed to tips about safe sex - one could upload that list to Facebook (name, email, phone number, etc.) and the data is encrypted/hashed (so it is unrecognizable/usable for anyone at Facebook) but the system finds a percentage of users and they can be served media directly if there is a match.

### 4. Approval challenges from platforms based on keywords

- Facebook will sometimes stop running an ad if there's too much text. (Facebook has decided that images with [less than 20% text perform better](#).) More recently, with the second phase of a study where an ad purchaser was recruiting YBMSM for qualitative interviews about PrEP, they've run into issues with Facebook denying ads because of sexuality. Facebook has seriously tightened up rules about level of sexuality OK in ads. The purchaser's ad was denied because of somewhat suggestive pictures on their website landing page. (Problems with this started in Oct 2019.)
- Mobile health van ads were all about free testing HIV/STI - no keyword issues. Phase II ads say "PrEP" and "Get Paid" and the description says "Paid Research Study" - no issues.
- A big challenge with approvals one purchaser had recently has been any ad copy that includes mention of an incentive, i.e. "you can earn \$xxx for participating in this study."

These generally get approved by Facebook after appeal, but are later disapproved again. No issues with Twitter so far.

- Ads have been flagged or rejected for multiple reasons most likely to do with the fact that campaign messaging includes terms around sex (i.e. sexual health). As mentioned previously, a lot of the keyword-specific flags are about birth control or prescriptions. When appealing the flags, about 50% get approved, but the pharma restrictions never really get lifted.
- For one jurisdiction, a fair number of keywords on Google Ads automatically get restricted to certain regions/placements because Google says they are related to “birth control” or “prescriptions” (although in reviewing current keywords, those restrictions are no longer visible). Twitter hasn’t run any of their sexual health-focused campaigns in over a year. Facebook ran one of their anal health campaigns, but then denied it a second time. But recently Facebook ran their Trans MSM health campaign, even though Twitter denied it.
- Many HIV/Prevention campaigns with Google are incorrectly flagged “birth control” or “prescriptions” from the review teams. Sometimes ad purchasers can get around these issues simply by resubmitting creative or relaunching campaigns. Other times, the creative needs to be changed altogether based on feedback from the review teams. More promiscuous creative can be effective, but can also be flagged as “adult” content across various platforms.