



## **COI Research Management Summary on Behalf of the Department of Health**

### **Title**

Youth Facing Websites Research. Research conducted by Research Works. (March 2007)

### **COI Reference number:**

280495

### **Audience**

Young adults aged 16-28

### **Background**

In 2006, Research Works conducted research on behalf of COI/Department of Health which explored the general public's health and social care information needs, and in particular, the role of the Internet in delivering these information needs. Department of Health now wished to build on these findings by exploring the health and information needs of two distinct audiences, particularly in terms of Internet delivery.

The core target audience for the '*Know your limits*' alcohol campaign and the '*Condoms: Essential Wear*' sexual health campaign have been broadly defined as people aged 16 – 28 years old. Qualitative research was conducted in order to consult this audience regarding its information needs, and in particular how the Internet might deliver this information.

### **Research Objectives**

The business objective for this research was to provide evidence to inform a decision on whether the websites for these two campaigns could feasibly be incorporated into a potential 'Youth Portal' site. The Youth Portal site would potentially contain information on various topics from government departments.

The overarching research objective was:

- to understand the strengths and weaknesses of hosting information on a potential portal-type website, compared to the current arrangements.

In order to do this, the research aimed to:

- understand current sources of information about alcohol and sexual health
- explore attitudes to the provenance and trustworthiness of information on these topics (including the effect of information from government)
- understand the 'category' in which young people place this kind of information, by understanding:

- the search strategies and behaviour used when looking for information on these topics
- who they expect to provide information on these topics
- what other information they expect to find alongside these topics

Examples of single issue sites (current campaigns sites) and portal-type or multi-issue sites (need2know, directgov, nhsdirect) were used to illustrate to respondents the principles being discussed.

Finally, the research investigated the journey taken by someone who is exposed to other campaign materials and then visits the campaign website, in order to understand:

- what their search behaviour, strategies and views on provenance of the campaign site might be if they had previously seen another element of the campaign, and
- what their views would be on look and feel of the site if they had come to it after having seen another element of the campaign.

Overall, the research intended to gauge the relative importance of having a campaign identity online, for those who have been exposed to other materials. Equally, the research also needed to inform regarding which mechanics might deliver this identity if it is felt to be necessary (i.e. should it come from the URL, look and feel, or other elements).

## Methodology

The research approach was based on a mix of friendship pair depth and friendship triad depth interviews.

The research sample was as follows:

	<b>16 – 19 year olds</b>	<b>20 – 28 year olds</b>
<b>Alcohol 'Know your limits' campaign</b>	4 pair depths (1 hour, 2 respondents)  - Female, ABC1 - Male, ABC1 - Female, C2DE - Male, C2DE	2 triad pair depths (1 hour, 3 respondents)  Male, C1C2 Female, C1C2

All respondents agreed with the attitude statement that *"I regularly go out drinking with the intention of getting drunk."*

All respondents were using the internet regularly - at least weekly or more - for banking, downloading music, games, on-line shopping, e-mails etc...

	<b>16 – 19 year olds</b>	<b>20 – 28 year olds</b>
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<b>Sexual Health (Condoms: Essential Wear campaign)</b>	4 pair depths (1 hour, 2 respondents)  - Female, ABC1 - Male, ABC1 - Female, C2DE - Male, C2DE	2 triad pair depths (1 hour, 3 respondents)  Male, C1C2 Female, C1C2
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All respondents were sexually active

All respondents were using the internet regularly - at least weekly or more - for banking, downloading music, games, on-line shopping, e-mails etc...

**Fieldwork Dates**

March 2007

**Results**

Most young people were generally happy with their own understanding of the pertinent health issues, largely alcohol and sexual health issues – and quite satisfied with the internet as a source of further information when required. The inputs and support provided by peers and parents were also equally important.

In terms of seeking information from the internet, it was clear that Google provides the common access point to relevant websites, with most respondents believing that they are connoisseurs of the web and able to differentiate between good and bad sites with relative ease. Favourites folders and PC auto complete software typically offered repeat access to favourite sites – and it was clear that specific URLs are rarely committed to memory.

It seemed that a majority of the respondents happily trusted major brands such as the NHS and the BBC. In fact the NHS and its website NHSDirect was typically seen as the most accurate and trustworthy source of health information. Where health information was being actively sought (and this seemed to be relatively infrequently), most were happiest when dealing with relevant major brands such as the NHS.

The government was also largely trusted in terms of likely accuracy of information, but its motives were consistently questioned and delivery mechanisms were expected to be heavy-handed and old-fashioned.

The Know Your Limits and Condom Essential Wear campaigns were reasonably well recalled from TV advertising, although none of the respondents had been prompted to visit the websites. Reactions to the campaign sites were largely very positive (although Know Your Limits, it was felt, provided more entertainment than information).

Responses to Directgov were uniformly negative, even amongst those who had previously visited the site for information about legal and administrative issues. It was seen as text-heavy, hard to use and (crucially) not aimed at the needs of young people. Crucially, it was not seen as suitable for the presentation of information about sensitive or personal issues.

The idea of a government Youth Portal was broadly rejected, mostly because expectations were that it would be politically-slanted and dull in terms of presentation and usage.

Although the government is largely trusted to produce accurate and relevant information, most assumed that political agendas (related to binge drinking and teenage pregnancy, for example) would colour the presentation of information. Equally, a majority presumed that the site would be very heavy with information and probably quite difficult to use. Ultimately, however, the main problem might be its provenance: *“that’s a really sad idea, a government youth portal. I expect we’ll have Tony Blair showing us how to play the guitar and telling us about what he did when he was young...”*.

### **Responses to Specific Government Websites**

[www.knowyourlimits.gov.uk](http://www.knowyourlimits.gov.uk) was well received by all respondents and typically seen as visually strong, stylish, easy to navigate and intriguing. The site was felt to have a true youth ‘feel’: *“not talking down to me”*. The URL was seen as clunky and unmemorable.

[www.condomessentialwear.co.uk](http://www.condomessentialwear.co.uk) was also well received. Many respondents anticipated that it would have the same look and feel as the ad campaign and were reassured when this was so. No one had visited the site before. All thought it was aimed at ‘people like me’ and was age appropriate. They all liked the fact that it focused specifically on issues related to sexual health only, and several respondents claimed that they were going to go home and look at the web-site in more detail. The subject areas were also of interest. Many were frustrated by the fact that the web-site has the word condom in its URL and is therefore unlikely to be listed in Google if they do a search on STIs.

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.org](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.org) received a consistently positive response, essentially because it belongs to the NHS and most generally trust the brand. However, some of the younger respondents were put off with the image of the old man, and the fact that ‘strokes’ were listed in the health section – leading to sense that this is *“something my mum would use.”* Also many felt that the site requires a lot of effort to use, as you have to enter words into the search box and find the relevant page.

[www.need2know.co.uk](http://www.need2know.co.uk): there was general consensus that this site looked a bit ‘young’, (with ‘nasty’ colours) particularly among the older respondents. The layout was seen as messy and felt to lack impact: *“chaotic – I wouldn’t know where to start to look for information”*. Many were put off by the use of

the term 'teen' and felt that subjects such as 'relationship issues' were just not relevant to them anymore.

[www.directgov.gov.uk](http://www.directgov.gov.uk): the web-site was largely unknown to (and consistently disliked by) virtually all the respondents. It did not appeal in terms of either the breadth of content or the look/feel of the site, which was perceived to be text-heavy and 'bureaucratic'. Respondents, evidently, felt uncomfortable about looking up information on STIs and other sexual health issues on the same web-site they had used to search for car tax! Overall, Directgov was seen as visually unexciting, 'grown-up', text heavy and uninviting – with far too many sub-menus.