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How digital healthcare marketing can be used to curb the spread of HIV in Nigeria

Emmanuel Etim

IMH-Initiative, Nigeria

Statement of the Problem: Nigeria has the second largest HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) epidemic in the world and one of the highest rates of new infections in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many people living with HIV in Nigeria are unaware of their status and Nigeria continues to fall short of providing the recommended number of HIV testing and counseling sites. Furthermore, low levels of access to antiretroviral treatment remains an issue for people living with HIV, meaning that there are still many AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)-related deaths in Nigeria, as well as the punitive laws against homosexuality, with men who have sex with men, facing difficulties accessing HIV services.

Aim: The purpose of this study is to use digital marketing as a medium to create awareness on the prevention and treatment of HIV, as well as engage patients online, in order to provide the necessary information on HIV related issues, whilst maintaining the user's anonymity.

Methodology and Theoretical Orientation: It is a qualitative focus group study, using semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected by the use of purposive sampling. This study is grounded on the healthcare marketing framework.

Findings: The use of digital health marketing is useful in the curbing of the spread of HIV, particularly amongst youthful population in Nigeria, who are amongst the most active users of the internet. Digital healthcare marketing will also be useful to the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, ally, pansexual) community, who previously might not be able to access treatment due to predominant discrimination against their sexuality, which was made worsened by Nigeria's anti-gay legislations.

Conclusion & Recommendation: For digital healthcare marketing to be effective there is need for marketers and health practitioners to ensure a two-way communication with online patients. It is recommended that government should partner with healthcare NGOs and state health authorities in the adoption of digital marketing.

emmanueletimofficial@gmail.com

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