TESTBKK
Using Community-driven Campaigns to Mobilise young MSM for HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) in Bangkok
TestBKK, APCOM’s city-based HIV testing campaign targeting young men who have sex with men (MSM) living in Bangkok, helped the city tackle its fear of HIV testing. The campaign stimulated word of mouth, both online and offline, to encourage young Bangkok-based MSM to test for HIV. The queue of MSM taking HIV test in Bangkok is growing daily, thanks to TestBKK.
It is estimated that HIV prevalence in Bangkok’s MSM population has risen sharply over the past decade, from 17 percent in 2003 to 29 percent in 2011\(^i\), with a strong concentration among the young cohort (18-24 years old). An effective preventive intervention is needed to halt the rise.

Scaling up HIV testing is a critical component of the intervention. However, the fear of stigma and discrimination is often what stops young MSM from taking the test. At the same time, the existence of mobile sexual networking apps has paved an easy way for young MSM to become more sexually active and regularly find new sexual partners. TestBKK is born to close the gap.

TestBKK aims to complement the already existing testing services in Bangkok. The campaign persuades young MSM to go to the existing MSM-friendly clinics to fulfil their needs relating to HIV knowledge and testing, and if applicable, follow up treatment, care and support.

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\(^i\) [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6225a2.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6225a2.htm), Accessed Online, 13 June 2014
The Implementation

**Slogan: SUCK. F*#K. TEST. REPEAT.**
TestBKK’s catchy slogan is simple yet memorable. It highlights the direction of the campaign while certainly stimulates the target audiences’ curiosity.

**Website: www.TestBKK.org**
The campaign website serves as an information gateway to guide young MSM in Bangkok to knowledge relating to HIV testing. It showcases comprehensive contact details of MSM-friendly clinics in the city and information about what to expect when taking a HIV test and how to understand the result, along with knowledge on how to stay HIV negative. The website’s language is easy to understand. The use of technical jargon is kept to a minimum. The interface is easy to navigate.

**Campaign Videos**
Campaign videos are the key ingredient of TestBKK’s pilot phase. Six YouTube videos have been produced. We believe that laughter is the best marketing so we made the videos hilarious – *with humour that truly understands our target audiences.* “Getting gold” before the sex? Mistaken a bottom as a top? The videos covered all awkward things many gay audiences can relate to (and laugh at). The premise of the videos is simple: “there are more awkward things that getting tested.” The expected action point is that the viewers would start the discussion and/or head to the campaign website to learn more about HIV testing and know where they could take the test.

**Geo-Social Apps Ad**
TestBKK collaborates with popular gay dating apps such as Hornet, Grindr and Jack’d to build healthier online communities and aid in the prevention efforts for the Bangkok users. Ad banner and broadcast and pop-up messages showcasing TestBKK’s key messages have graced the screen of the aforementioned apps.

**Facebook page: facebook.com/TestBKK**
To spark the campaign’s virality, dedicated Facebook page were created. The six videos were published gradually on the page to build up the fans’ excitement. The page also curates interesting and fresh gay-themed posts ranging from celebrity issue and party/nightlife topic to local community activity, alongside the campaign’s core messages and activities. Freebies-giveaway contest, endorsed by the campaign’s sponsors, were utilised to engage the fans further.
The Implementation

Outreach at Key Community Events
TestBKK also engages the community beyond the online world. The campaign often hit the party scenes to further amplify its outreach.

- **Thai New Year Festival (Songkran).** Known as the world’s largest water festival, the three-days Songkran celebration in Bangkok is flocked with gay locals and tourists. Community outreach teams of 8 to 10 people visited each of the festival’s gay hotspot, handing out the campaign leaflet along with memorabilia such as condoms, waterproof bags and temporary tattoos. More than 50,000 units of campaign materials were handed out, making it the biggest offline HIV testing awareness campaign that Bangkok’s gay community had seen for many years.

- **gCircuit Party.** Bangkok is home to gCircuit party. 10,000 to 15,000 gay men from all over Asia flock the three-days dance party. TestBKK’s interactive booth, escorted by sexy male models, at the party venue engaged the partygoers with the much-needed HIV prevention knowledge. Condoms, lubricants and “Safe Sex Boxes” containing large amount of condoms and lubes (designed for groups of men leaving the party for their own private group sex parties) were distributed.

- **FreshUp Men’s Health and Mass HTC event.** The FreshUp event is TestBKK’s way to bust the myth of HIV testing being scary. Taking an approach of incorporating HIV testing as a vital part of general male health elements, the event attracted Bangkok-based MSM to get a free health check-up package covering fitness test, vision check and skin check, alongside the HIV and STI testing. All of this was conducted in a venue decorated with a playful vibe, accompanied with game booths, drag show, photo booths and door prizes.

**Print Ad**
To complement the online strategies, TestBKK placed a number of advertisements in the gay-friendly printed media, including Attitude magazine – Thailand’s largest gay lifestyle magazine with over 120,000 copies in circulation each month.
The Partnership

To initiate and publicise the campaign, TestBKK collaborated with community organisations and both public and private sectors.

Community groups are often seen as the gatekeepers for HIV prevention activities within a given location. Their knowledge and understanding of the local area including popular venues and hotspots frequently visited by young MSM are crucial. The Bangkok community organisations provided vital information on the MSM scene in the city as well as their knowledge to ensure that the campaign’s messages were consistent with that of Thai National Health Strategies and National AIDS Action Plans. They further assisted TestBKK team with organising meetings with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the National AIDS Management Center (NAMC) and the Thai Ministry of Public Health to inform them and gain their support.

TestBKK team later identified ‘Premium Testing Services’ – clinics that were frequently visited by young MSM. The community sees them as being MSM-friendly because they are sensitive to the needs of MSM when providing the pre- and post-test counselling, in addition to being free and confidential. The campaign offered these clinics the opportunity to assess and improve their service levels towards young MSM clients, prior to integrating them as part of the campaign.

To magnify the hype of the campaign, TestBKK partnered with TRASHER, a creative group well-known by the Thai gay community for the production of their monthly 90s dance parties and viral online parody music videos. By utilising endorsement within their social media channels and parties, the reach of the campaign became far wider than if APCOM would have had to rely on advertising and own social media channels and instruments.

TestBKK’s extensive condom distribution was supported through a partnership with One Touch Condoms, one of Thailand’s leading condom manufacturers. One Touch donated over 50,000 condoms and water-based lubricant that were distributed during TestBKK’s events.
The Success
In less than a month after its launch, the campaign website attracted 25,000 page views. Currently, the campaign’s Facebook page has over 3000 likes and the six videos have totaled more than 830,000 views on YouTube and additionally over 100,000 views on Facebook. The videos received national and international media attention from over 60 different news outlets including the Huffington Post, the Gaily Grind and Queerty.

The campaign assessment conducted by research team from Mahidol University found that 20% of study participants were aware of the campaign at the second assessment (4 months after the launch of the campaign), while 33% were aware of the campaign at the third assessment (8 months after the launch). Participants’ recognition of the campaign YouTube clips also significantly increased between the second and third assessment (67% versus 81%).

Among those who recognized the campaign by the third assessment, more than one fourth shared or spoke about the campaign with their peers, and more than one third went to get tested after exposure to the campaign and more than one third brought their friends to get tested after exposure to the campaign. There was a significant increase in participants going to get tested between the second and third assessment (19% vs. 38%). This indicates that TestBKK’s mass media-based and long-run strategy resulted in a positive result on the attitude and behaviour of the target group towards HIV testing.

Looking Forward
TestBKK will roll out another phase in Bangkok throughout 2015 and 2016. New video campaigns packaged in an online web mini-series are in the pipeline. As the funding becomes available, the campaign aims to scale up to other cities in the region. Given their alarming HIV rate, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Manila, Jakarta and Yogyakarta are the potential candidates of the scale up destination. Culturally appropriate and appealing campaign will be developed for each city.

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We are united in our courage to advocate issues that affect the lives of men who have sex with men and transgender people, including HIV, rights, health and well being.