

EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF GRINDR ADVERTISEMENTS ON WEBSITE TRAFFIC AND HIV TESTING AT A REGIONAL SEXUAL HEALTH CLINIC

PACIFIC CLINIC
NEWCASTLE

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Introduction

Increased HIV testing among MSM (men who have sex with men) is a central component of the NSW HIV Strategy. Pacific Clinic is a public sexual health service servicing the Newcastle and Hunter regions of NSW as part of the Hunter New England Local Health District.

Promotion of HIV testing to MSM in regional areas is challenging as there are limited avenues to target MSM specifically. Studies have shown a large proportion of MSM use the social networking app Grindr. In order to promote HIV testing among MSM we implemented an advertising campaign on Grindr targeting MSM in the Newcastle region from December 2014 to December 2015.

Aim

Determine whether a GRINDR based advertising campaign was associated with a change in:

1. Clinic website activity or
2. Telephone calls volume or
3. Clinic appointments by MSM

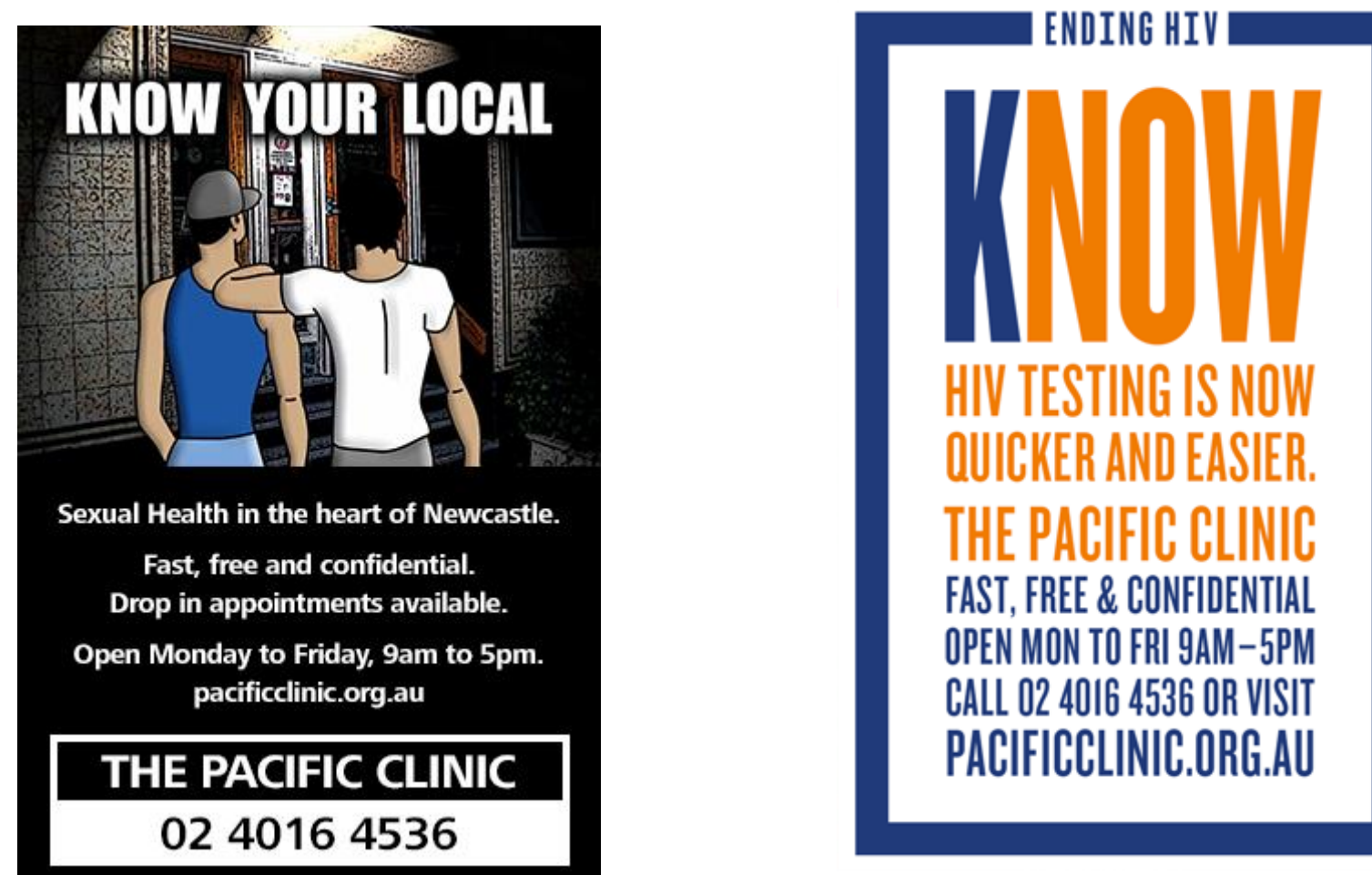
Method

MSM in the Newcastle region were exposed to advertisements promoting Pacific Clinic and directing them to the clinic's website. The advertisements ran in December 2014, February 2015, May/June 2015, August 2015 and November/December 2015, each running for 3 to 6 weeks.

Google Analytics was used to track traffic to and activity on the website. The volume of telephone calls per day was extracted from the telephone system software and the number of MSM appointments were obtained from the clinic database.

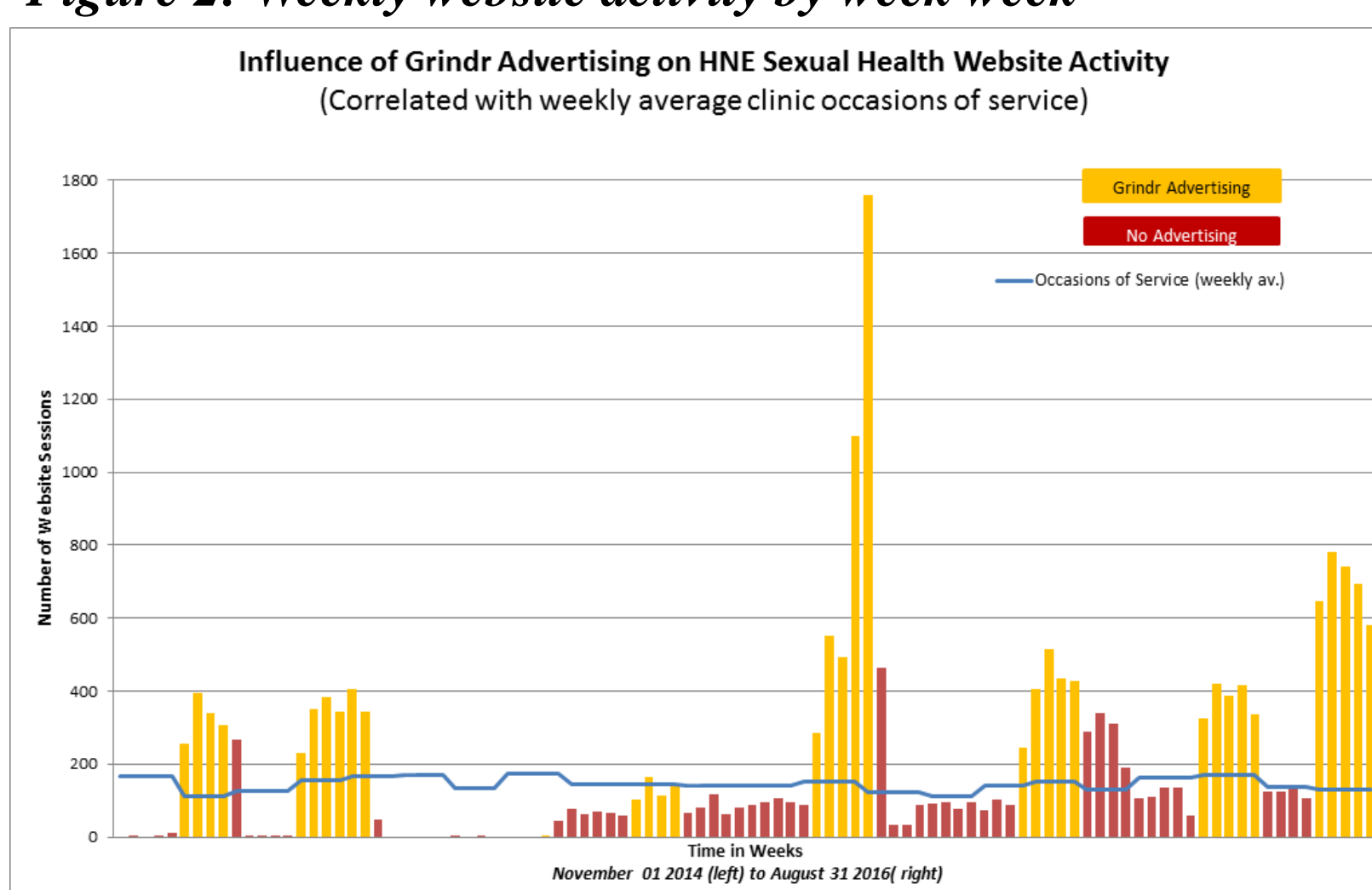
Data for each variable was analysed to compare to advertisement to non-advertisement periods.

Figure 1: Example of advertising material used on GRINDR



Testing is now faster and easier than ever before.

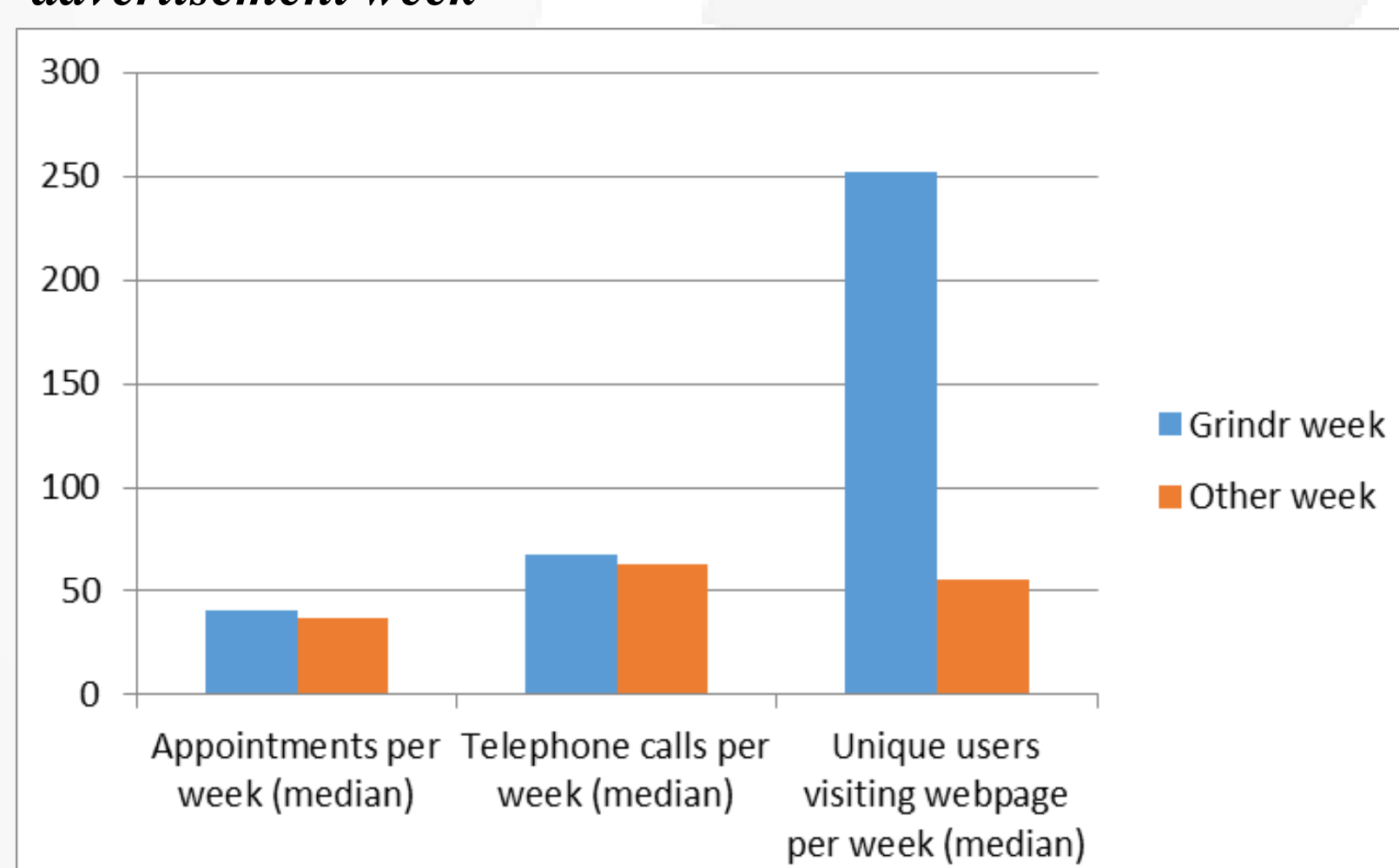
Figure 2: Weekly website activity by week week



Results

There was a significant increase in the number of users visiting the website in advertising weeks compared to non-advertisement weeks, median weekly users 252 and 56 respectively, $p < 0.001$). This increased traffic did not translate into additional telephone calls to the clinic (median calls per week 67.5 and 63 respectively, $p = 0.94$) nor increased appointments by MSM (median weekly number of appointments 41 and 37 respectively, $p = 0.37$).

Figure 3: Number of MSM clinic appointments, telephone call volume and website users by Grindr advertisement week



Discussion

GRINDR advertising significantly increased traffic to the Pacific Clinic web page however this had little immediate impact on measures of clinical activity among the target population. We demonstrated GRINDR advertising is an effective way to reach MSM with health promotion messages in our regional setting.

Researchers in the Northern Territory of Australia have demonstrated GRINDR advertising to increase testing among MSM¹ and other researchers have successfully used GRINDR to distribute HIV tests². Zou and Fan found that MSM using social networking applications to find partners are more likely to have tested for HIV than other MSM³.

In order to better translate our successful GRINDR promotion into increase HIV testing we have restructured our website to improve usability and linked advertising generated traffic directly to our appointment booking page.

Conclusion

Grindr advertisements increased traffic to our regional sexual health clinic website but did not transpire into clinic appointments and HIV testing. Pacific Clinic will look at ways to increase the proportion of website views that lead to HIV testing events.

References

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