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## **DESIGNING EFFECTIVE ONLINE ADVERTISEMENTS FOR A PREVENTION CAMPAIGN: MISTRUST AND OTHER BARRIERS**

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This paper reports on the preliminary findings of a research project that is investigating the potential for online advertisements to reduce the incidence of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) consumption on the internet. First time or novice offenders often use search engines to look for CSAM, which presents an opportunity to use display advertisements (for a 24-hour sexual harm helpline) on search results to intervene before users view abuse material. This approach—currently being piloted in New Zealand—aims to decrease the number of potential/novice offenders accessing CSAM, and increase the number seeking help and self-referring for treatment. However, achieving these outcomes crucially depends upon the use of effective images and advertisements, and yet limited research has been undertaken on the characteristics of effective media-based interventions in this context. These outcomes also crucially depend on a two-way relationship of trust: on the one hand, the advertiser's trust in primary prevention as a strategy, in the potential of online advertising to encourage behavioral change, and in the users' likelihood of users self-referring contacting the helpline; and on the other hand, the users' trust—or overcoming of mistrust—in both display advertising targeted at them<sup>1</sup> and in the advertisers themselves (when engagement may involve overcoming fears about privacy, surveillance, prosecution, or stigmatization). This paper discusses the pivotal role of trust in informing the development of CSAM prevention display advertisements, arguing that facilitating this two-way relationship of trust is core to the success of a prevention campaign and must be embedded into its design.

To create an effective prevention advertisement in this context requires understanding an onset offender's mindset; what qualities of the image, text, and design are likely to capture their attention and encourage help-seeking; and what barriers may exist to behavioural change and help-seeking, such as the forms of mistrust at play in navigating online spaces and responding to advertisements. The qualitative focus group methodology of this project addresses the need to understand the responses to and perceptions of test advertisements from the closest target audience: participants who have previously been concerned about their own sexually harmful thoughts or behaviour

and taken a leap of faith to seek specialist help. The Berlin Prevention Project Dunkelfeld similarly shaped its successful media campaign through a pilot study in which paedophiles were asked to identify features of a media campaign that they would be likely to respond to.<sup>2</sup> The German prevention network notes that 'Further studies on the efficacy of such interventions are necessary', given that 'practically no comparable data on this exists on an international level' (<https://www.dont-offend.org/story/faq-2.html>). In the present research project in New Zealand, potential advertisements have been underpinned by an examination of the body of literature that seeks to understand the characteristics and motivations of online offenders,<sup>3</sup> as well as literature which seeks to identify the characteristics of effective display advertisements<sup>4</sup> and media-based prevention campaigns.<sup>5</sup> Work in the latter area tends to focus on PSAs rather than static advertisements, while work on effective online advertising (primarily banner ads) emerges from fields such as marketing, and is often not as applicable for public health prevention campaigns. Research on fear appeals highlight the pitfalls of using fear to motivate behaviour change,<sup>6</sup> but there is less research on specific details of content and form in prevention advertising. By producing test images and advertisements, and discussing these in focus groups and interviews, this research is developing an evidence-base for creating prevention advertisements that will be effective in 'nudging' potential offenders away from CSAM and toward seeking therapeutic intervention—shifts that require a significant fostering of trust. How to build trust into an online advertisement has become a key question and a creative challenge within this project. In this paper, I will present the creative and collaborative processes and solutions—including the final advertisement designs—and explore how they account for the centrality of trust.

This research contributes to an approach that centres trust in the user, but how likely are novice offenders to call a helpline or self-refer for preventative therapeutic treatment? And can those working toward prevention trust that online advertising is an effective tool in combatting the growing consumption of CSAM? The stakes are high for the efficacy of early intervention initiatives for a number of reasons, including safeguarding an open internet. This study's approach to prevention is not focused on restriction, filters or monitoring of internet users, but instead, on using the internet's potential to create better pathways for potential offenders to seek help. Without strategic early interventions in CSAM consumption—and the evidence-base to enhance success—a less effective blanket approach could be resorted to in policy responses (such as increased censorship). While targeted online advertising has great potential to reach the target demographic (potential offenders) at a critical moment, the paper will suggest that careful design and a consideration of the delicate two-way need for trust are essential in developing of effective online media-based prevention campaigns.

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