



IF NOT FOR ONLINE TESTING, I WOULD NEVER GET TESTED:

Willingness for online HIV testing among app-using
YMSM in Bangkok

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BACKGROUND

Among YMSM in Bangkok

HIV

Prevalence

31%

Incidence

12%





 **73%**

Never get tested*

*Weiss, Jonas and Guadamuz, 2017

-  The high level of risk-taking behaviors in YMSM
-  Most of YMSM do not even know their status
-  HIV stigmatization among health care providers toward YMSM
-  Barrier to HIV testing in Thailand

Reasons for **Never tested**

- Not knowing where to get tested
- No time to visit testing site
- Complicated process
- Embarrass of the people
- Fear of positive results
- Risk of being stigmatized as promiscuous

Challenges from **HIV testing** in Clinic and hospital

- Wait time is too long
- Too many people
- Health staff not friendly or sensitive
- Risk of encountering someone they know
- Concerns of confidentiality
- Risk of being stigmatized



Other testing modalities, like anonymous self-testing, may be an important alternative in Thai society

OBJECTIVE

This study examined the willingness for **online HIV testing (OHT)** among app-using YMSM in Bangkok, Thailand



METHODOLOGY

Mixed methods

(Qualitative and Quantitative)
among YMSM

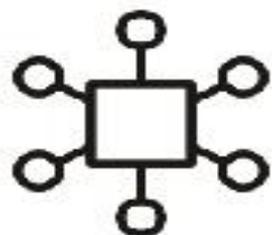
Survey
(n=1,394)



**8 Focus
Groups** (n=48)



Qualitative Research



Systematic mapping

of all websites and mobile applications where YMSM age 18-24 congregate



8 focus group

discussions (FGDs), with a total of 48 participants

Central | Suburban Bangkok

2 FGDs students

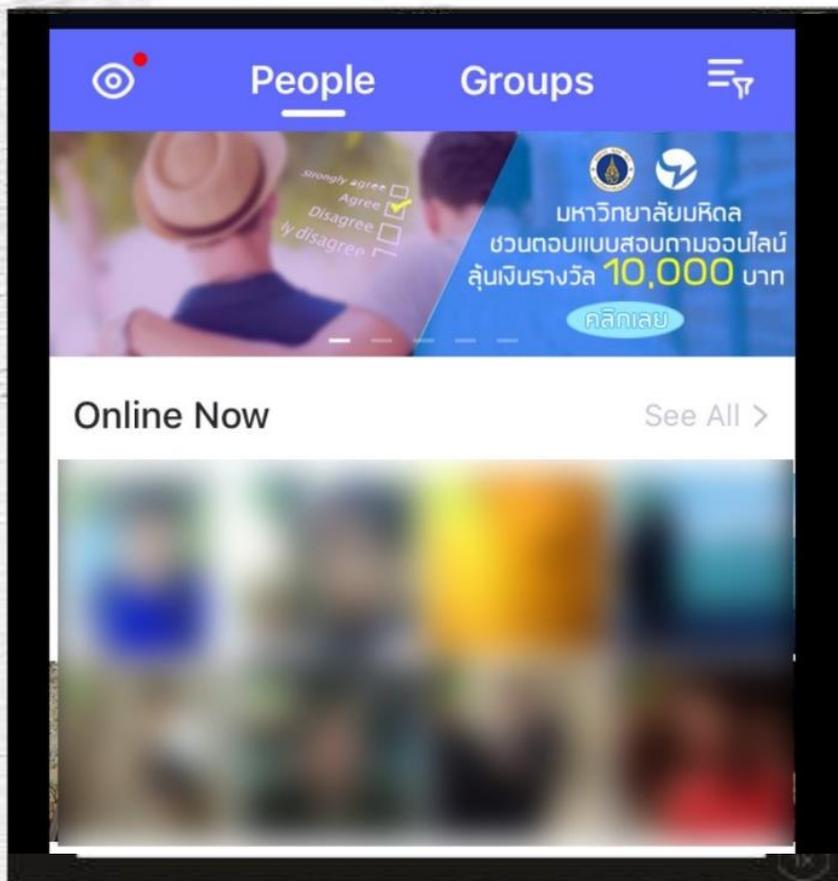
2 FGDs non-students

2 FGDs students

2 FGDs non-students

GAY APPLICATIONS

Recruitment Strategies



Blued



PARTICIPANTS

in quantitative research

8,000
clicks to take
survey

>5,000
Disqualify

>3,000
Age more than 24
or less than 18

>600
Never have Sex

>1,000
Don't stay in BKK

1,200
Not complete

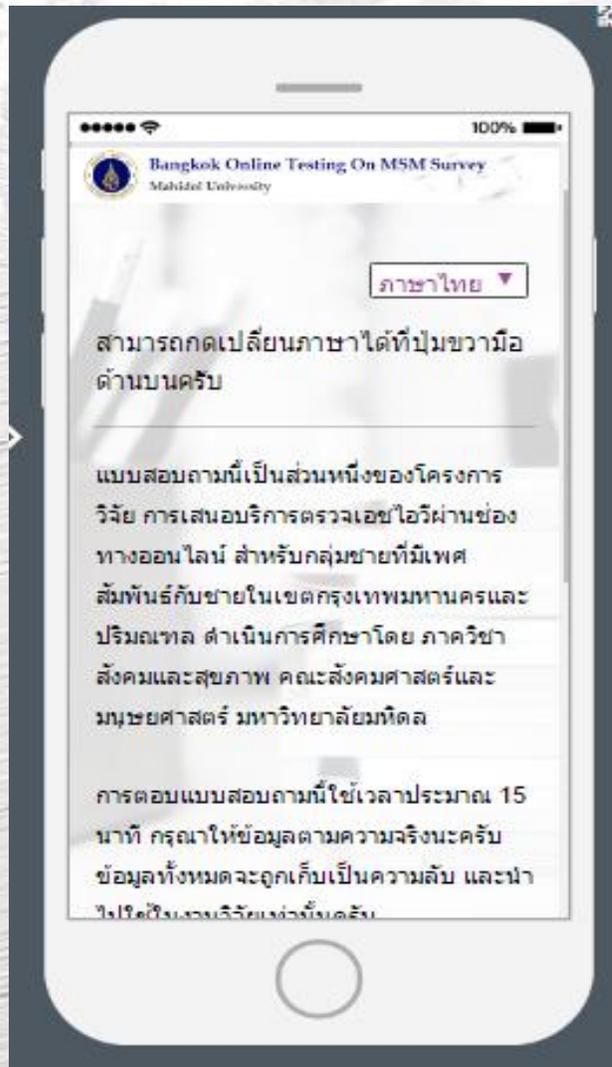
1,394
Finish

— *Final sample* —

70%
From Blued + Hornet

30%
From Facebook

QUESTIONNAIRE EXAMPLE



If you have an opportunity to perform self testing at home with an online nurse, would you be interested?

Yes

No

https://maastrichtuniversity.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ba6Kr89b5INX83P

WHAT IS ONLINE HIV TESTING?



ภาพประกอบเพื่อใช้ในการศึกษา

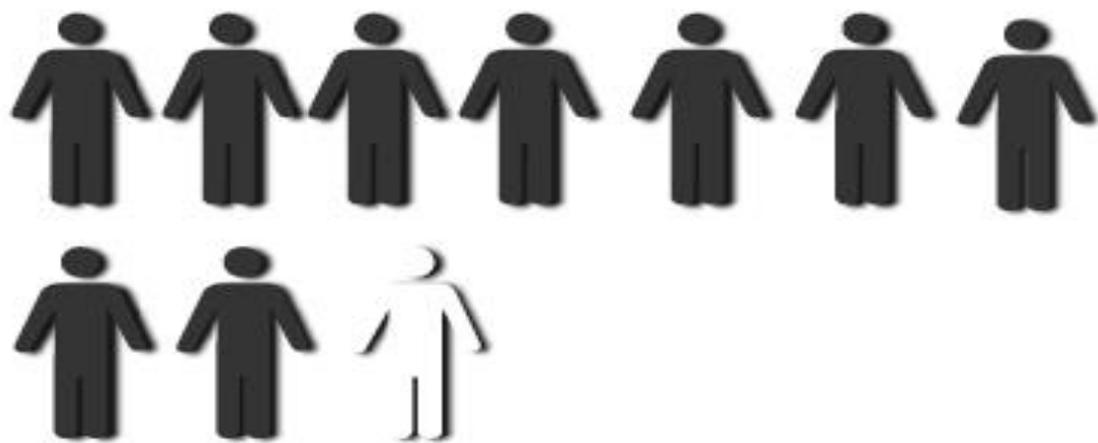




RESULTS

87% 1,217 from 1,394

of participants were willing
to test online



QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Characteristics	Interested N=1217 (87.3%)	Non-interested N=177 (12.7%)	p-value
Age (years)			0.452
18-19	269 (22.1%)	46 (26.0%)	
20-22	565 (46.4%)	75 (42.4%)	
23-24	383 (31.5%)	56 (31.6%)	
Currently studying	839 (68.9%)	126 (71.2%)	0.545
Never tested for HIV	596 (46.7%)	68 (38.4%)	0.038
Self-perceived risk			0.012
High risk	104 (8.6%)	14 (7.9%)	
Medium risk	283 (23.2%)	40 (22.6%)	
Low risk	587 (48.2%)	69 (39.0%)	
Not at risk	43 (20.0%)	54 (30.5%)	

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Characteristics	Interested N=1217 (87.3%)	Non-interested N=177 (12.7%)	p-value
Number of male casual partners in the last 1 year			0.020
None	356 (29.2%)	68 (38.4%)	
1 partners	124 (10.2%)	22 (12.4%)	
2-3 partners	315 (25.9%)	31 (17.5%)	
4 partners or more	422 (34.7%)	56 (31.7%)	
Used condoms during anal intercourse in the last 3 months			0.170
Never	112 (12.9%)	16 (13.8%)	
Sometimes	300 (34.6%)	30 (25.9%)	
Always	456 (52.5%)	70 (60.3%)	
Having anal or vagina sex in the last 3 months	856 (70.4%)	106 (59.9%)	0.005

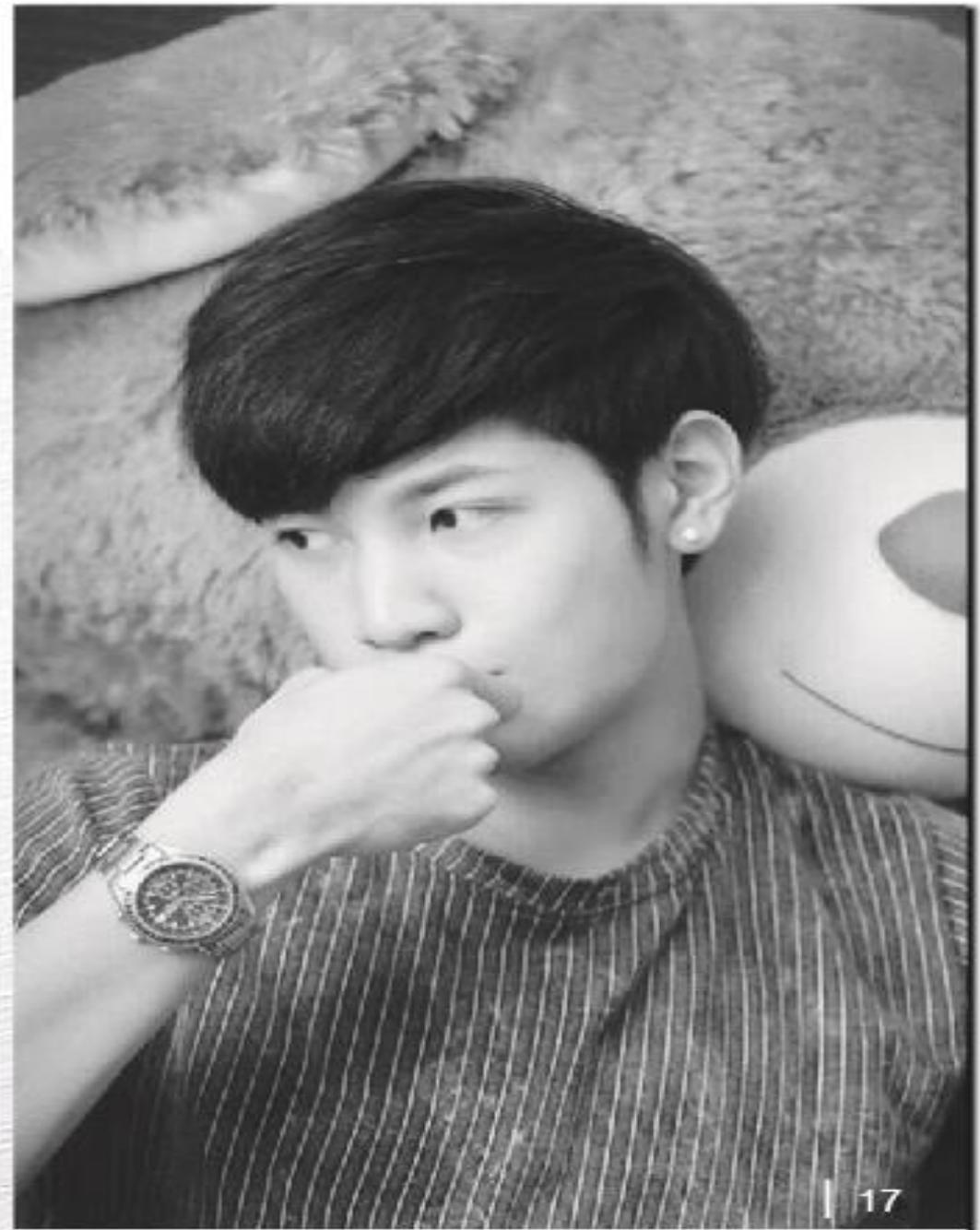
QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Characteristics	Interested N=1217 (87.3%)	Non-interested N=177(12.7%)	p-value
Participated in group sex activities	322 (26.5%)	45 (25.4%)	0.770
Given, received gifts or opportunities for sex exchange	316 (26.0%)	45 (25.4%)	0.878
Seek partners online			0.007
Never	228 (18.8%)	51 (28.8%)	
Sometimes	660 (54.2%)	84 (47.5%)	
Often	329 (27.0%)	42 (23.7%)	
Used drugs before or during anal intercourse			0.201
Never	1154 (94.8%)	168 (94.9%)	
Sometimes	56 (4.6%)	6 (3.4%)	
Often	7 (0.6%)	3 (1.7%)	

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Not willing to test online

- ✚ Fear of needles/ pain
- ✚ Don't have the skills to properly use needle, think this option is for health professionals only
- ✚ Concerns about people who test positive can lead to stress, depression, and thoughts of suicide
- ✚ Fear of being walked in during the online test
- ✚ Want to take test by themselves, don't want nurse/ counselor together during time of online testing



“If the test is positive then he will need support from the nurse. What if he cannot take it and commit suicide?”

FGD YMSM (student)

“I’m terrified of **needles.**
I cannot take the test
by myself what
if I don’t stop bleeding”

FGD YMSM (Non-student)

“I am afraid to be walked
in on by my friends because
I do not live alone. They also ask a
lot of questions. I am
too embarrassed to talk about the test”

FGD YMSM (student)



QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Willing to test online

- Thailand should have as many options as possible for everyone to easily and confidently acquire an HIV test
- Online HIV testing can help them confidently get tested without time limitation, concern about privacy and discrimination
- Very fast because the timeframe of testing no longer than 1 hour
- Desire to choose this option because it's very easy, private and convenient

“Going to the clinic should **not be the only option.**

I have been at the testing clinic and saw someone I know
and so decided to go home without testing”

FGD YMSM (Non-student)

“I would love
friendly nurses
who make me
feel comfortable
during the test”

FGD YMSM (Student)

“I will even pay money to do
online testing, I think this option

**it's very easy, fast
and very private”**

FGD YMSM (Non-student)

DISCUSSIONS

Online HIV testing is very consistent with **youth lifestyle**

This option is appropriate with young in **Generation Z/ or Gen ME**

HIV stigma is very high in Thai society

Online HIV testing is also appropriate for Thai society because there is heightened HIV stigma and a **“culture of gossip”** among health care providers and YMSM*

*Samoh, N., Boonmongkon, P., Ojanen, T. T., Samakkeekarom, R., Jonas, K. J., & Guadamuz, T. E. (2018). 'It's an ordinary matter': perceptions of cyberbullying in Thai youth culture. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1-16.



In this study it is seen that people who are interested in getting tested are people **who have never been tested for HIV, sexually active, have many sexual partners and seek partners online**

Online HIV testing option is therefore very appropriate for people **who have high risk** due to the fact this group entails a very high stigma (Social stigma and internal stigma)



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 🚫 Having multiple options for YMSM, who are clearly at very high risk for HIV, is critical if we want to reach the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets
- 🚫 Online HIV testing should be made more widely available to help increase testing among highrisk populations
- 🚫 These contexts may be similar to neighboring ASEAN member countries
- 🚫 Other STI's (like Syphilis, Hepatitis B) should be accessible online as well

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS





THANK YOU