User Manual

HOW TO USE ALEX: THE SEXED BOT
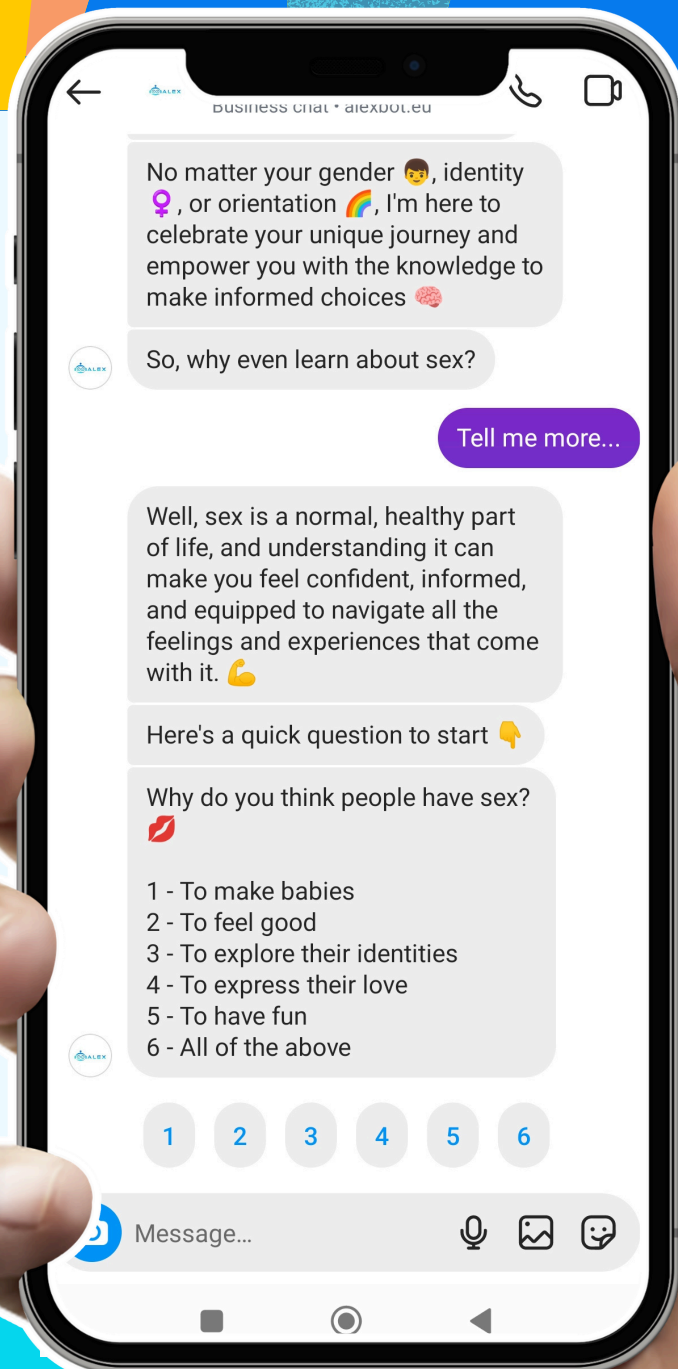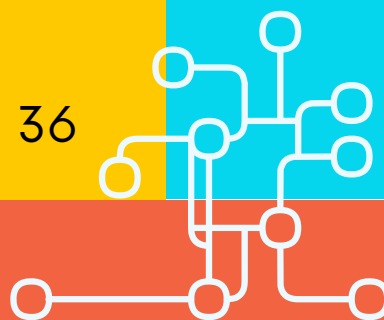
ALEX

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the user manual

The ALEX chatbot user manual is a comprehensive guide, created to help you navigate the chatbot and maximise the benefits of the chatbot's content for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education. The ALEX project partners have carefully developed this manual to ensure that anyone, whether you are a young individual seeking information or a youth worker aiming to facilitate education, can effectively utilise ALEX to its fullest potential. Within this manual, you will discover an array of topics designed to enhance your experience with the ALEX chatbot, supported by additional multimedia content that will facilitate the understanding of this manual.

Beginning with Chapter 1, which you are reading now, you are provided with information about the user manual purpose and using chatbots in SRH education.

In Chapter 2, we delve into accessing ALEX, detailing where to find it, explaining the login or registration process, and ensuring a smooth start to using ALEX. We then guide you through navigating the interface, introducing the main features and functions of ALEX, how to initiate conversations, and providing examples of queries and responses, alongside instructions for using commands and keywords to interact effectively with the chatbot.

Chapter 3 enriches your experience further by exploring ALEX's multimedia content, illustrating how to engage with various media elements to enhance your learning and which multimedia content is available in ALEX.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to troubleshooting and support, offering solutions to common issues and tips for optimal use.

In Chapter 5, we address the critical aspects of credibility and privacy, outlining how to identify credible sources, verify information, and maintain the security of your personal information. Additionally, appendices provide invaluable resources, including external resources for further exploration, and a glossary of key terms and abbreviations used throughout the chatbot, equipping you with the knowledge and tools needed for a comprehensive understanding of SRH education through ALEX.

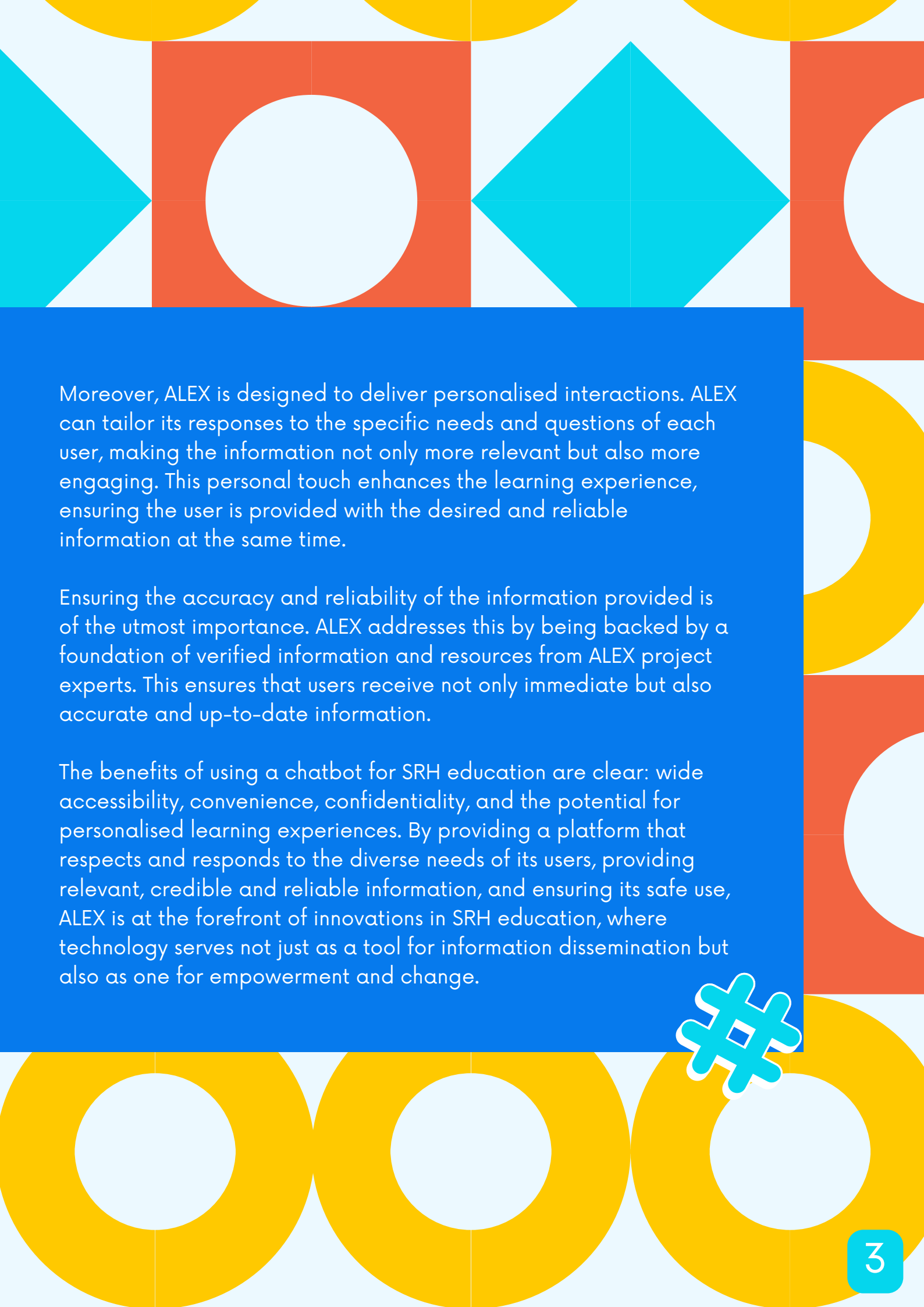## Why use a chatbot for sexual and reproductive health education?

In the rapidly evolving digital age, how we seek and consume information is continuously changing. This shift is particularly significant in the field of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education, where the need for reliable, accessible, and confidential information is more necessary than ever. ALEX, a chatbot designed to meet these needs head-on, is offering a modern solution to SRH education that caters to the preferences and habits of today's youth, providing inclusion for all.

The advantages of using a chatbot like ALEX for SRH education are numerous. Firstly, chatbots are accessible around the clock, providing answers to pressing questions at any time. This level of accessibility is crucial for SRH education, where timely information can make a significant difference in an individual's health and well-being. Additionally, ALEX is available at your fingertips, offering a quick and easy way to access information without the need for appointments or physical visits to health centres.

Perhaps most importantly, chatbots offer a level of confidentiality. For many young people, discussing SRH topics can be intimidating, filled with fear of judgment or embarrassment. ALEX provides a safe, private space where individuals can explore sensitive subjects without fear, promoting an environment of openness and curiosity.

Moreover, ALEX is designed to deliver personalised interactions. ALEX can tailor its responses to the specific needs and questions of each user, making the information not only more relevant but also more engaging. This personal touch enhances the learning experience, ensuring the user is provided with the desired and reliable information at the same time.

Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the information provided is of the utmost importance. ALEX addresses this by being backed by a foundation of verified information and resources from ALEX project experts. This ensures that users receive not only immediate but also accurate and up-to-date information.

The benefits of using a chatbot for SRH education are clear: wide accessibility, convenience, confidentiality, and the potential for personalised learning experiences. By providing a platform that respects and responds to the diverse needs of its users, providing relevant, credible and reliable information, and ensuring its safe use, ALEX is at the forefront of innovations in SRH education, where technology serves not just as a tool for information dissemination but also as one for empowerment and change.

USING ALEX

Accessing the chatbot 🔍

Access to the ALEX chatbot is straightforward and user-friendly, primarily designed to be accessed via the Instagram platform. This approach ensures easy engagement with ALEX from the convenience of your mobile device, offering a seamless and interactive experience tailored to meet your needs for sexual and reproductive health education.

• FINDING ALEX ON INSTAGRAM

To start your interaction with ALEX, you will need to open the Instagram app on your mobile phone. Due to technical limitations, accessing ALEX via Instagram using a web browser is not recommended, as the chat functionality does not perform optimally. Thus, ensure you are using the Instagram mobile app for the best experience. If you do not have it on your mobile phone already, search for it on your device app store (Google Play for Android phone or App Store for iPhone) and download it from the store, the app is free.
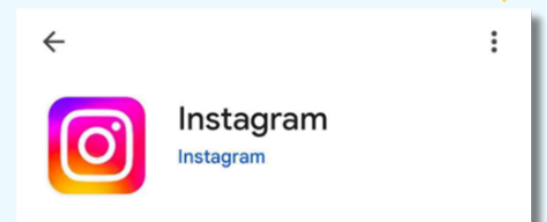

Image 1: Icon of the Instagram app you can find in the Google Play for Android or App Store for iPhone. **Source: Google Play Store**

• LOGIN OR REGISTRATION PROCESS

If you are new to Instagram, you will need to create an account. This process involves downloading the Instagram app (explained in the previous step), followed by a straightforward registration where you provide some basic information (including the date of birth, which is used to enforce the age restrictions - 13 years or older) and create a username and password. If you already have an Instagram account, simply log in with your existing credentials.
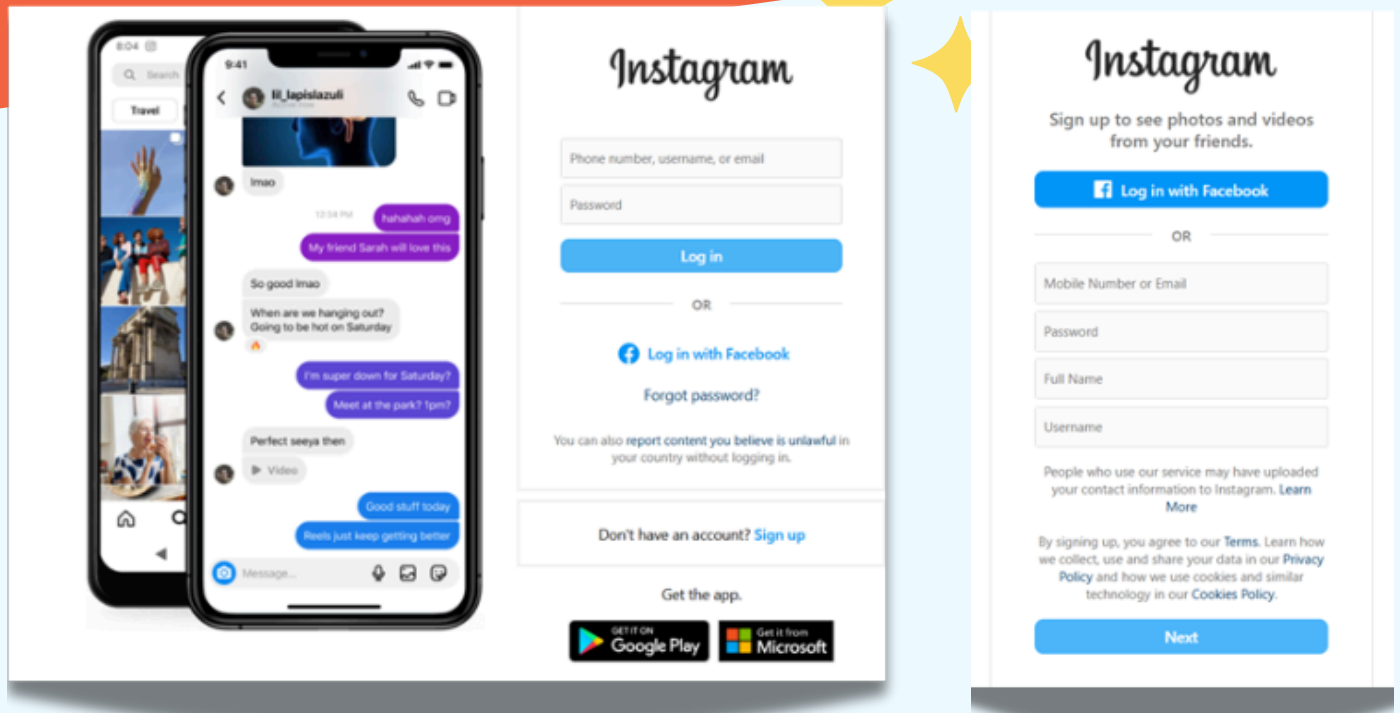
Image 2: After downloading the app you can log into your Instagram account with your credentials (see the middle part of the image above). If you do not have an Instagram account, you need to Sign up and create your personal account (see the left part of the image above). **Source: Instagram app**

Once logged in, search for the ALEX chatbot's Instagram handle in the search bar: alexbot.eu. Alternatively, you can go to the ALEX's website (alexbot.eu) and click on the icon on the Homepage or Materials page to take you to the ALEX chatbot on Instagram.
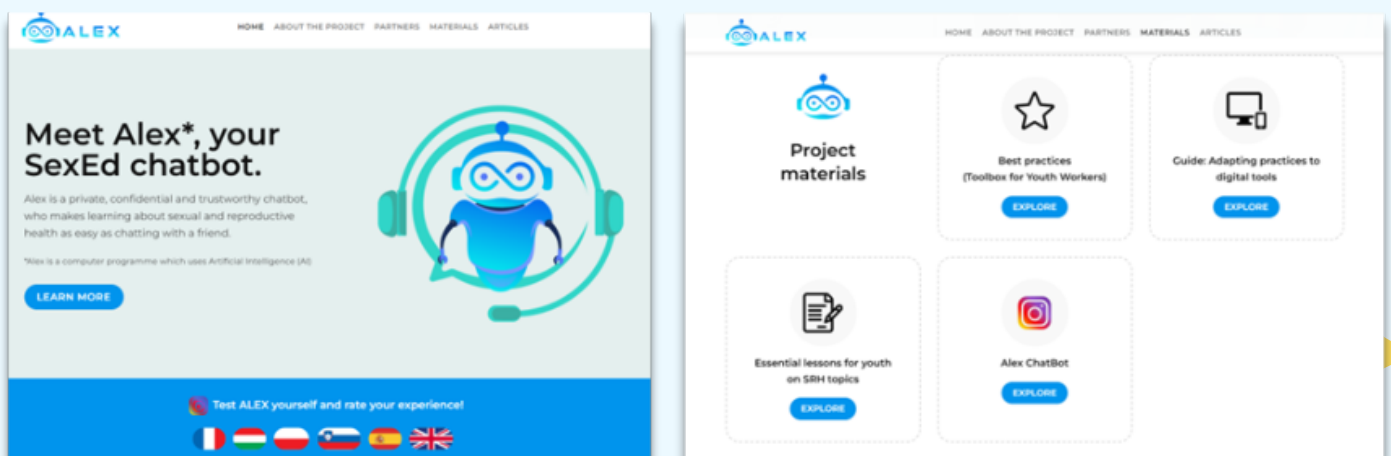

Image 3: Where to find the link to the Alexbot Instagram profile on the website. **Source: www.alexbot.eu**

Upon finding the account, initiate a conversation by sending a direct message:
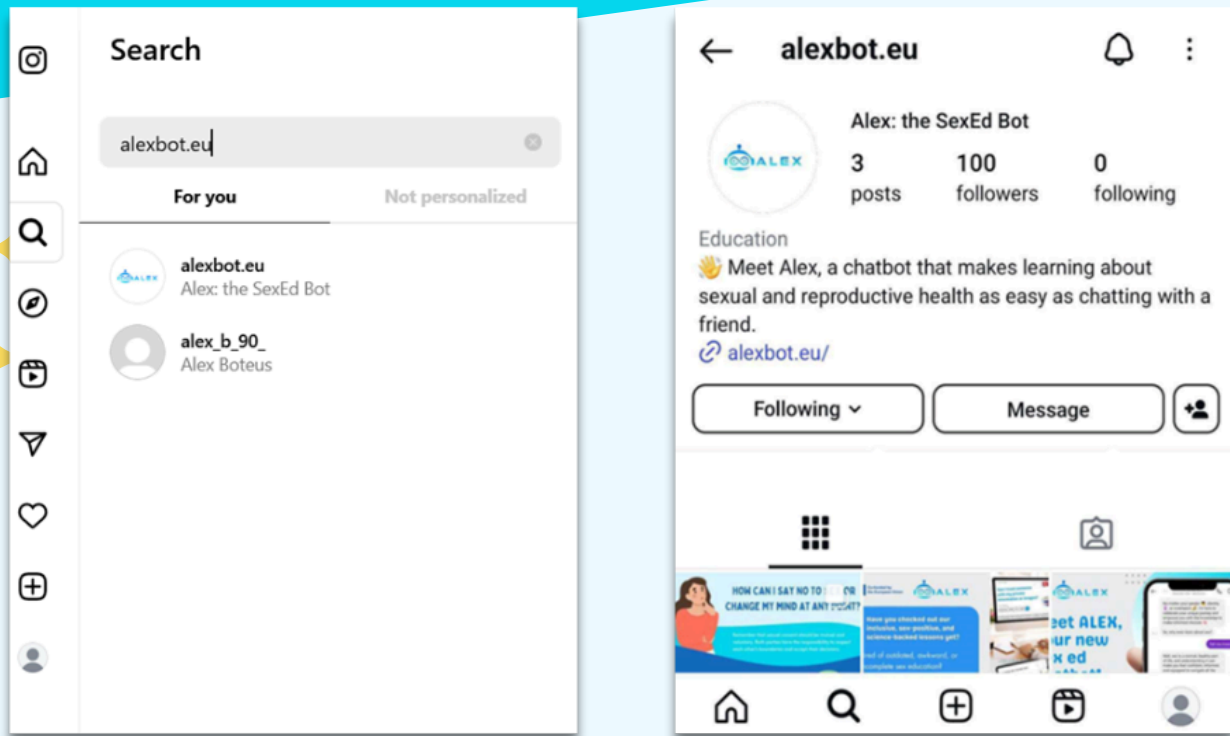
Image 4: Access to the Alexbot profile and messaging on Instagram.
Source: https://www.instagram.com/alexbot.eu/

• REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCESS

Ensure your mobile device is running a compatible version of the Instagram app to avoid any technical glitches. There are no specific age restrictions to access ALEX, but users should adhere to Instagram's age policy for account creation. Instagram users must be at least 13 years old to create an account. In some jurisdictions, the age limit may be higher due to local laws regarding the consent of minors, this should be checked for your country.

• TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON ISSUES

If you encounter issues during the login or registration process, check your internet connection and ensure you are using the latest version of the Instagram app.

For problems related to accessing ALEX, ensure you have correctly entered the chatbot's Instagram handle.

If issues persist, Instagram's help centre offers a wealth of resources and assistance for troubleshooting account-related problems.
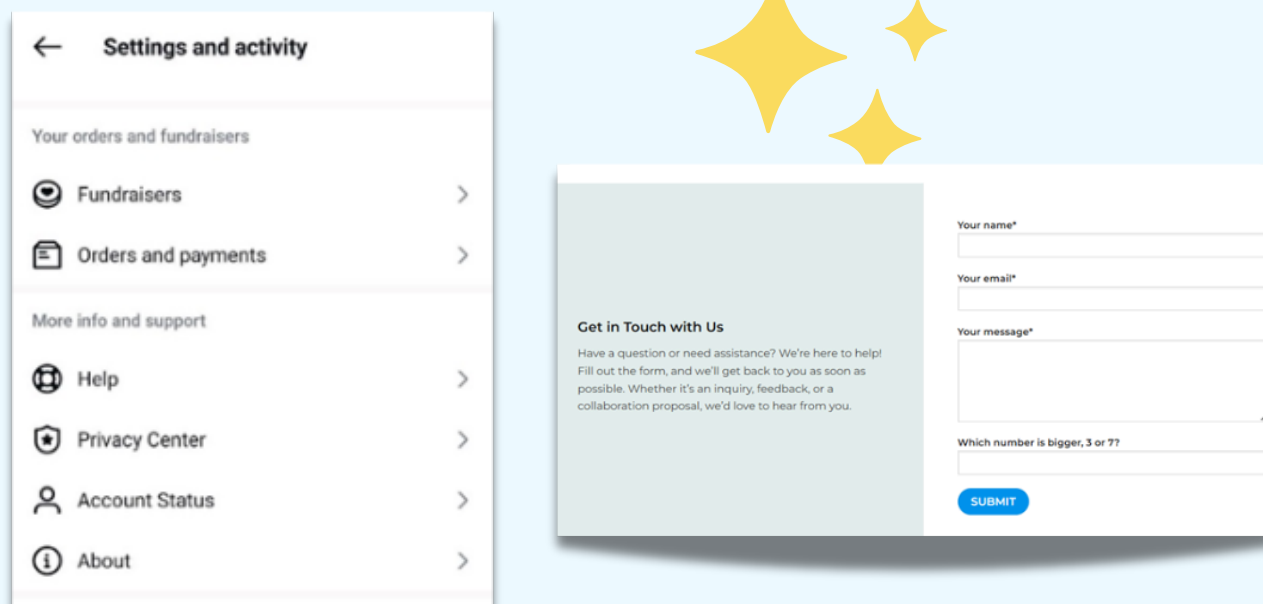

Image 5: Access to the Instagram help centre in the app (on the left part of the image) or contact us through the contact form on our Alex website homepage (the right side of the image).
Sources: https://www.instagram.com/alexbot.eu/ and https://alexbot.eu/

Navigating the interface 🔍

• MAIN FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS

The ALEX chatbot's main feature is to provide SRH information for its user through a simulated human-like conversation. As described below, information is organised in categories that include a list of carefully compiled lessons, available to the user instantly and confidentially. The following sections describe the functioning of the application and how to access the requested information.
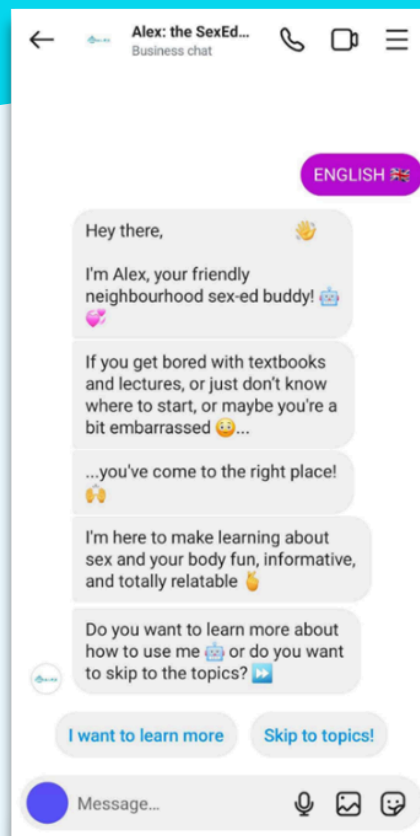
Image 6: Start of the chat with Alex chatbot. **Source: Instagram app**

Informational content – The informational content consists of written material and visual, multimedia content covering a wide range of subjects related to sexual and reproductive health. These materials will be accessible for the user upon selection, based on their responses given at the beginning of the conversation with the chatbot as described in 2.2.2 - Initiating conversations. The chatbot's content is organised in different categories based on the topics that the user can select when starting a conversation, such as: romantic relationships, sexual thoughts and behaviour, sexual orientation and gender, etc. By selecting the category, the user can choose among different lessons related to the topic.
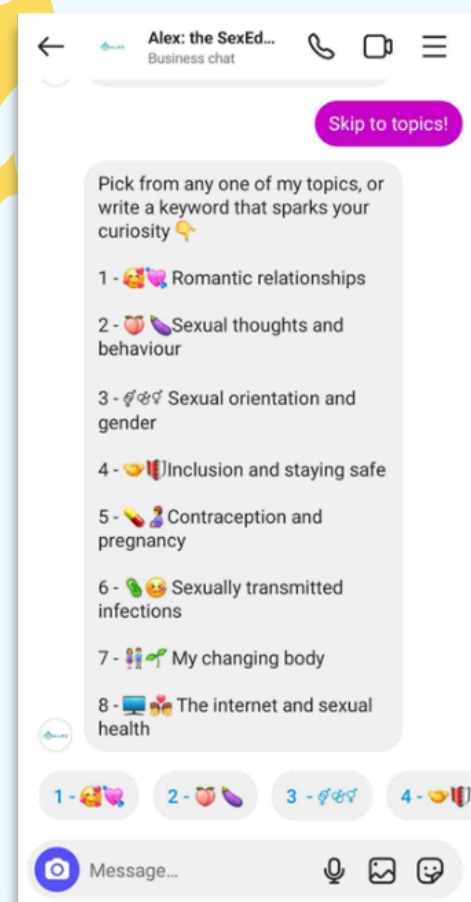

Image 7: Topic selection chatting with Alex chatbot. **Source: Instagram app**

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

1. Am I ready to date?
2. Where can I meet someone to date?
3. Are there any rules in a relationship?
4. How do I know if I'm in love?
5. Am I in a healthy relationship?
6. How can I improve my communication with my partner?
7. What are the signs of an abusive relationship?
8. What do I do if there is cheating in my relationship?
9. What is sexting?
10. How do I break up with someone?
11. How do I get over a breakup?

SEXUAL THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOUR

Understanding sex and its implications

1. Why do people have sex?
2. Is there a right age to have sex?
3. Will having sex change me?
4. How are emotions related to sex?

Physical aspects of sex

1. Is sex supposed to be painful?
2. Can I hurt my vagina from intense sex or masturbation?
3. Why can't I orgasm?
4. How long should sex last?
5. Am I masturbating the right way?

Communication and consent

1. What is concent?
2. How can sex be more enjoyable for me?
3. How can I give my partner pleasure?
4. How can I talk to my parents about sex?
5. How to communicate my sexual history and health status with my partner?

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER

1. What is the difference between gender and biological sex?
2. What are the different types of sexual orientation?
3. What does it mean to be nonbinary?
4. Do LGBT+ people have sex differently than heterosexual people?
5. How do I come out to my family and friends?
6. Can boys like girly things and girls like boyish things?
7. What does it mean to be a feminist?

INCLUSION AND STAYING SAFE

1. What is homophobia?
2. What is transphobia?
3. What does it mean to be sexually groomed?
4. Should I ever feel forced to have sex?
5. How can I recognise sexual harassment?
6. What counts as sexual violence?
7. What can I do if I feel sexually harassed or harmed by someone?
8. Can I trust someone with my private information or images?

CONTRACEPTION AND PREGNANCY

1. Why is it important to use contraception?
2. What are the different forms of birth control and how do I use them?
3. What can I do if birth control is not used correctly?
4. Which sexual acts can or cannot lead to pregnancy?
5. Are there certain days of the month when it's easier to get pregnant?
6. How can I know if I'm pregnant?
7. What is a miscarriage?
8. What is an abortion and why do people have them?

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

1. How do people contract STIs?
2. What are the different types of STIs?
3. How do I know if I have an STI?
4. Do condoms protect against all STIs?
5. Why is it important to have regular doctor visits if I'm sexually active?
6. Should I feel ashamed of having an STI?
7. Are there are vaccines against STIs?
8. What should I do if I or my partner has an STI?

MY CHANGING BODY

1. Why do my moods change so frequently and suddenly?
2. Am I too hairy?
3. How should I groom my body hair?
4. Do my male genitalia look normal?
5. Do my female genitalia look normal?
6. How should I clean my genitalia?
7. How should a period be like?
8. How should my genitalia smell?
9. Is it an issue if my breast are different sizes?
10. Is my penis too small to give pleasure?

THE INTERNET AND SEXUAL HEALTH

1. Should I watch pornography to learn about sex?
2. Why don't I look like the popular people on social media?
3. How can people trick me online?
4. Am I being safe when I browse the internet?
5. How do I know if something online is a reliable source of information?
6. Where can I find credible information about sexual health online?

Image 8: List of topics and lesson plans including their structure, retrieved from Alex chatbot.
Source: Instagram app

Materials are collected from authentic sources, integrating external references and bibliography for the sake of a broader understanding of each topic, with a focus on raising awareness, as well as supporting the tool's educational value.

Conversational function – The chatbot provides information through a simulated and pre-defined conversation based on the topic selected by the user, ensuring an interactive experience where questions are being answered within the frame of a modelled dialogue that is controlled by the user initiating it.

Confidentiality – The chatbot as a tool for SRH allows its users to gain information related to sensitive questions privately, although from reliable resources, and at the same time, providing information about options for professional help and support if needed.

Multilingual functioning – The chatbot and its content are available in 6 languages to serve a wider user base. The content is formulated by language standards that meet users' needs and stay within a speech register related to the audience, thus using a tone which is familiar to young users.

Image 9: Choosing languages.
Source: Instagram app

1

The user has to connect on social media platforms (such as Instagram, in this case) to find the chatbot's page. The chatbot can be accessed through the page's messaging function.

2

After clicking on the 'Message' button, the chatbot offers the option to start a conversation.

3

By accepting it, the user will select the language in which they want to chat.

4

The chatbot will share introductory information in the selected language, by, first of all, discussing its purpose and technical requirements. The chatbot offers the categories that can be selected by the user to start the learning process.
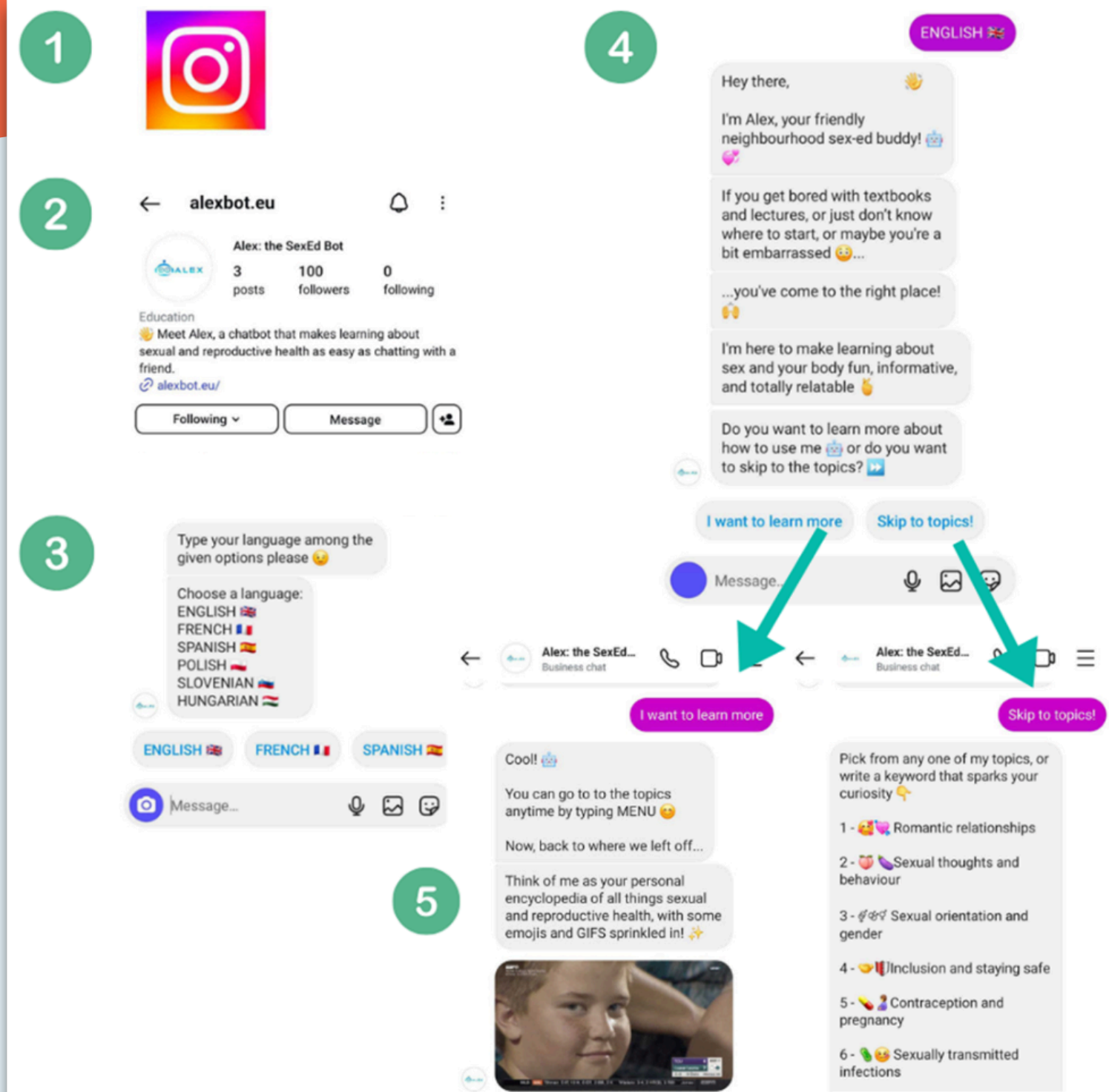
Image 10: Step by step, how to access and use Alex the chatbot.

1. Download the Instagram app.
2. Find the Alexbot profile and send a message.
3. Choose a language.
4. Choose "I want to learn more" if you want to learn, how to chat with Alex.
5. Choose "Skip to topics" if you already know, how the chatbot is working, and you want to start learning.

Source: Instagram app

• EXAMPLES OF QUERIES AND RESPONSES

In the dialogue screen with ALEX, a wide range of predefined questions are available, each addressing topics related to sexual and relational health holistically, containing credible and verified information.

Types of queries:
- quizzes for engagement (with buttons)
- quizzes to improve or test your knowledge (with buttons)
- buttons to pick which part of a lesson interests you most
- buttons to choose among different topics...

These questions, directed to ALEX, aim to provide clear and explicit answers, creating an environment where users feel free to explore intimate and personal subjects. The tone of the dialogue with ALEX is designed to reflect a serious and respectful approach, serving as a reliable guide for addressing issues that might be awkward or challenging to discuss with other reference figures, such as parents or teachers.
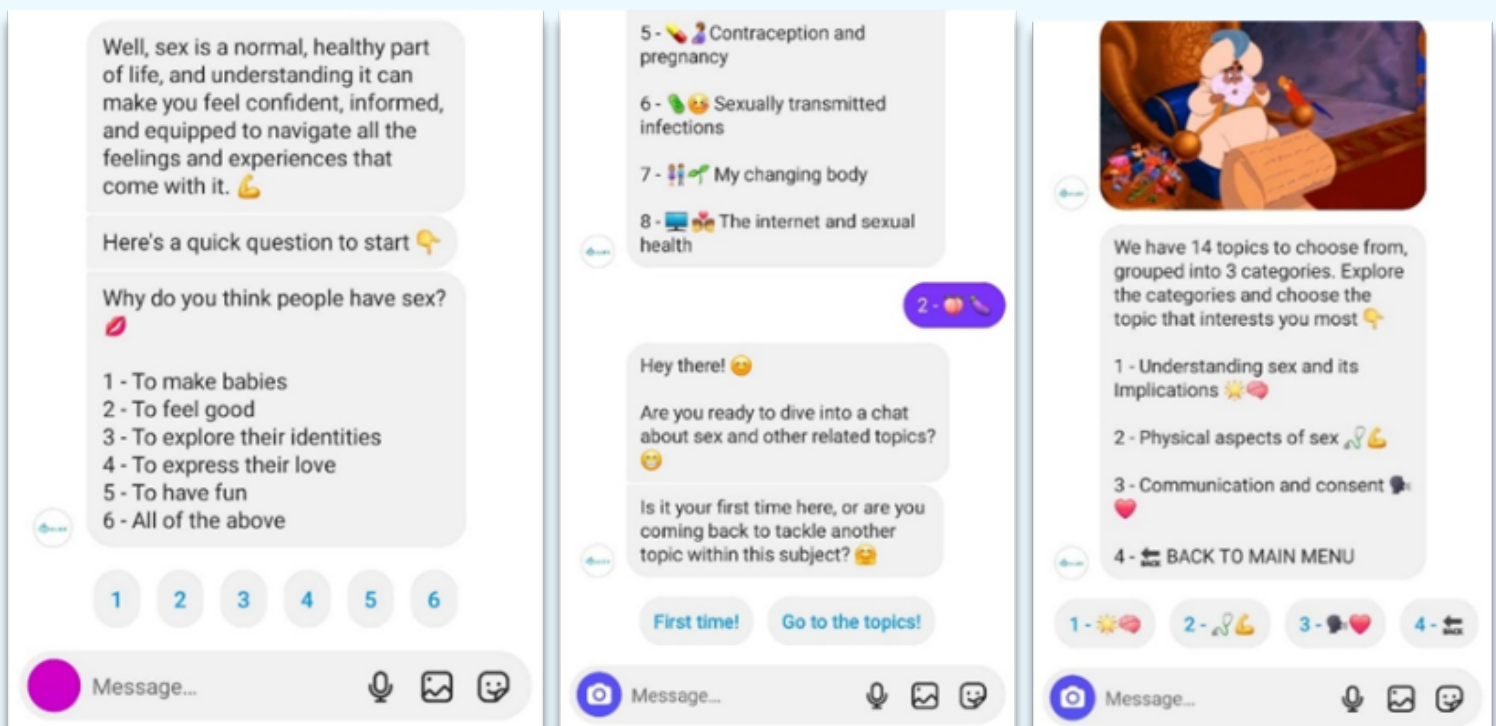

Image 11: Different types of queries and responses.
 1. On the left side: using buttons to answer the quiz question.
 2. In the middle: using buttons to choose a topic.
 3. On the right side: using buttons to choose subtopics or going back to the main menu - topic list. **Source: Instagram app**

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The goal is to provide informative support that fosters personal growth and self-understanding in contexts related to SRH.
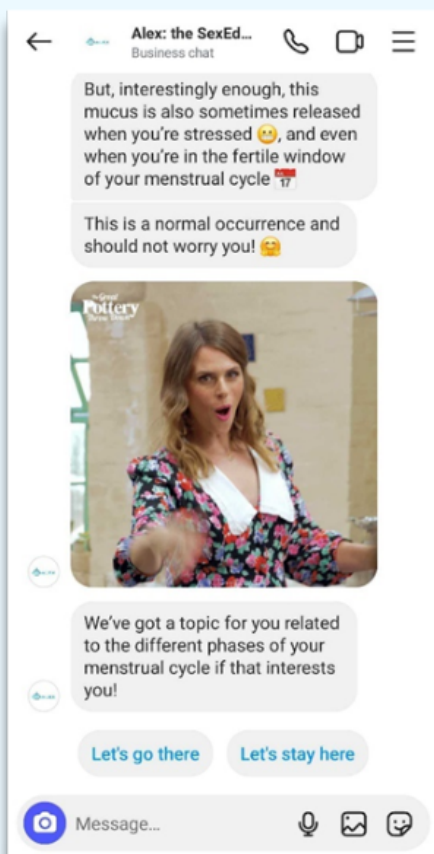
The interaction with ALEX is structured and guided, meaning users will not experience a free-flowing open conversation with the robot, but rather engage in an exchange of information directed by predefined buttons and menus. This approach aims to provide users with a clearer and more directed experience, allowing them to explore topics related to SRH in an organised and controlled manner.

Image 12: Alex is offering you to navigate the topics you want to learn, even in the middle of the lesson plan. You can choose to stay on this topic or going to other one, connected to it. **Source: Instagram app**

Within the dialogue screen, users will find predefined options in the form of buttons or menus, each associated with a specific category or question regarding sexuality. Users can select options that best reflect their curiosities or needs, and the chatbot will respond in a targeted and informative manner based on the choices made.
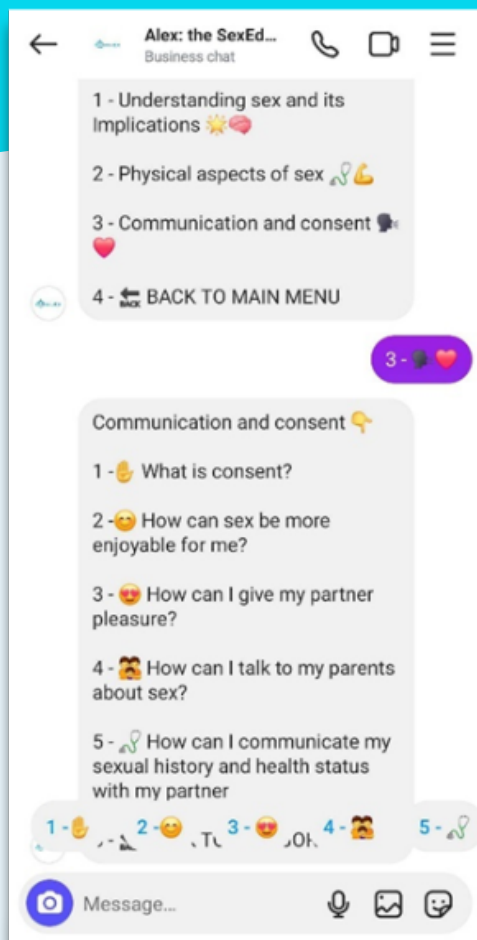
14

Image 13: Choosing topics and subtopics using buttons. **Source: Instagram app**

This guided approach is designed to offer structured support to users, helping them explore a wide range of sensitive topics smoothly without the need for an open-ended conversation, which might leave them confused or overwhelmed on what to discuss. The goal is to create an interactive and informative environment that effectively addresses users' questions.
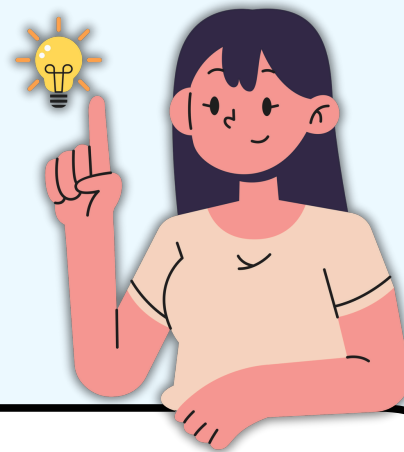
Some commands and keywords that users can type in without clicking on a pre-made prompt are:

-"Help"
-"Menu"
-"Bye"
-"Stop Bot"
-"Restart Bot"
-"Menu"
-"Hello"

-"Romantic Relationships"
-"Sexual thoughts and behaviour"
-"Sexual orientation and gender"
-"Inclusion and staying safe"
-"Contraception and pregnancy"
-"Sexually transmitted infections"
-"My changing body"
-"The internet and sexual health"

"Help"

If you are having trouble or need assistance, use the keyword "Help" to request support. The chatbot will guide you through available options on how to continue or stop your interaction.

"Menu"

If you want to return to the main menu or a previous point during your interaction with the chatbot, simply use the keyword "Menu." This will allow you to navigate more easily among the various available options.

"Bye"

When you are done using the chatbot and want to end the conversation, you can simply type "Bye." The chatbot will close the session appropriately and bid you farewell.

"Stop"

If you want to immediately stop the interaction with the chatbot, you can use the keyword "Stop." This command will instantly terminate the active session.

"Restart"

If you want to go to the start of the chat, on the language selection, you need to write "Reset" or "Restart".

"Hello"

If you want information about the chatbot's purpose and features, you can request an introduction using the keyword "Hello"

"Relationships"

If you're curious about topics related to dating, emotions, and building healthy relationships, use the keyword "Romantic Relationships" to explore guidance and information.

"Sex"

For inquiries regarding sexual desires, behaviors, and the emotional aspects of sexuality, use the keyword "Sexual Thoughts and Behavior" to access relevant resources and advice.

"Orientation/gender"

If you have questions about sexual orientation, gender identity, or related topics, use the keyword "Sexual Orientation and Gender" to find supportive and inclusive information.

"Staying safe"

To learn about inclusivity, consent, boundaries, and strategies for staying safe in relationships and sexual encounters, use the keyword "Inclusion and Staying Safe."

"Contraception"

For information on birth control methods, pregnancy prevention, and reproductive health, use the keyword "Contraception and Pregnancy" to access resources and guidance.

"STI"

If you want to learn about sexually transmitted infections (STIs), their prevention, testing, and treatment, use the keyword "Sexually Transmitted Infections" to find relevant information.

"Puberty"

To explore topics related to puberty, physical changes, body image, and self-esteem, use the keyword "My Changing Body" for resources tailored to understanding and embracing these changes.

"Internet & sex"

For guidance on navigating the internet safely regarding sexual health information, online relationships, and potential risks, use the keyword "The Internet and Sexual Health."

You can also use other keywords that you think are related to the topics you can discuss with ALEX by entering them into the chat box. If ALEX does not recognise the word or does not understand exactly what you want, it will tell you and guide you further. Do not worry, even if ALEX does not recognise the word you wrote, you can continue your conversation with him.
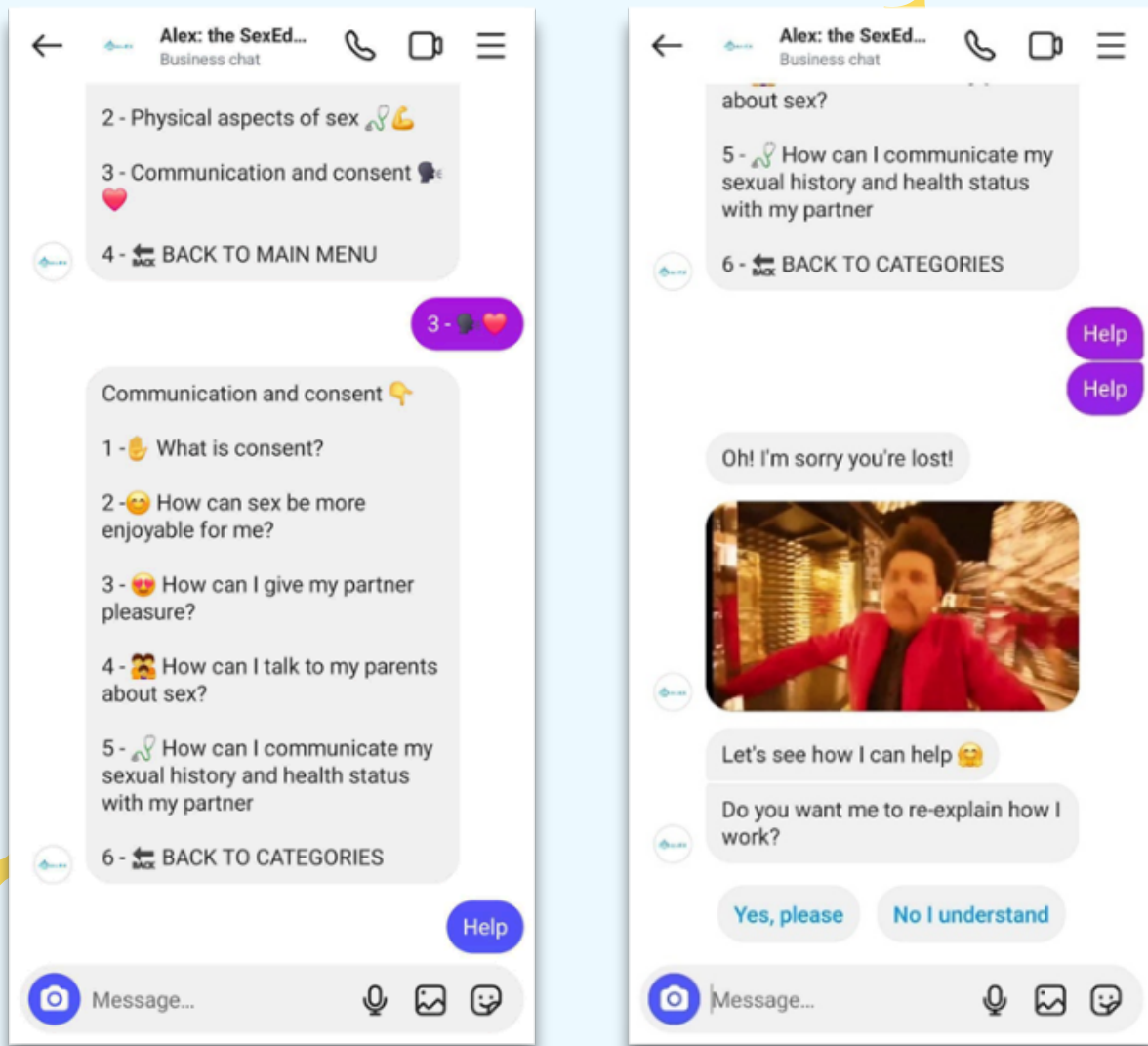
Image 14: Using keywords typing. If Alex offers you buttons and you want to type something, type the word twice if you want Alex will understand you. If Alex offers you an option "Type it freely" you can choose it and type the keyword. If Alex won't understand you, it will let you know with a message, so you can try again using other commands.
 Source: Instagram app

If you write something to ALEX and it does not respond, try entering the same word again. If ALEX offers buttons, it can sometimes happen that it does not detect the word when you enter it, so it is recommended to try typing it twice. If there is still no response, try entering known keywords, such as keyword for help ("help") or to restart ("restart").

Nowadays, multimedia content provides important context to complement different types of information. In the case of ALEX chatbot, multimedia has been tightly integrated into the platform and represents an important pairing to the written content.

The chatbot's multimedia library includes infographics, drawings, GIFs, and emoticons. Their main purpose is to better engage audiences belonging to generation "Z", i.e. brought up in a digital and "picture-based" culture. Moreover, they can make learning more exciting and accessible to all, including people with specific learning difficulties (SLD). A second important reason for using multimedia elements is to enrich the conversation and provide users with a way to visualise the written content.

ALEX'S MULTIMEDIA CONTENT

Multimedia can be an adjunct to the user's response, supporting the verbal text. Multimedia content evokes emotions and makes the conversation more attractive and absorbing. These resources also bolster the credibility of the chatbot, and are an important step in adding personality, uniqueness and visual appeal. Along with the quizzes also present in the chatbot interactions, supporting multimedia is used to increase the interactivity of the content, helping users' knowledge retention and organisation. The role of infographics, which present data, facts or statistics in a way that is more appealing and understandable to a young user, is also important.

Multimedia content can be integrated in the chatbot platform (like gifs) or accessed via link, where the content is stored elsewhere on the internet.

THE USE OF GIFS AND IMAGES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE INTERACTION

Incorporating GIFs and images into chatbot interactions can enhance user engagement and comprehension. Visual elements not only make conversations more dynamic but also help convey tone, emotion, and complex information in a more accessible way. Some other added benefits include:

- enrich the content and ensure clarity of the tone
- answer in a lighthearted and relatable way to make certain daunting or confusing topics more understandable and less "scary"
- show and convey emotion that fits the context of the conversation and target audience
- illustrate the information, making it easier for the audience to remember the content
- provide a kind of incentive, stimulating the audience to interact with the
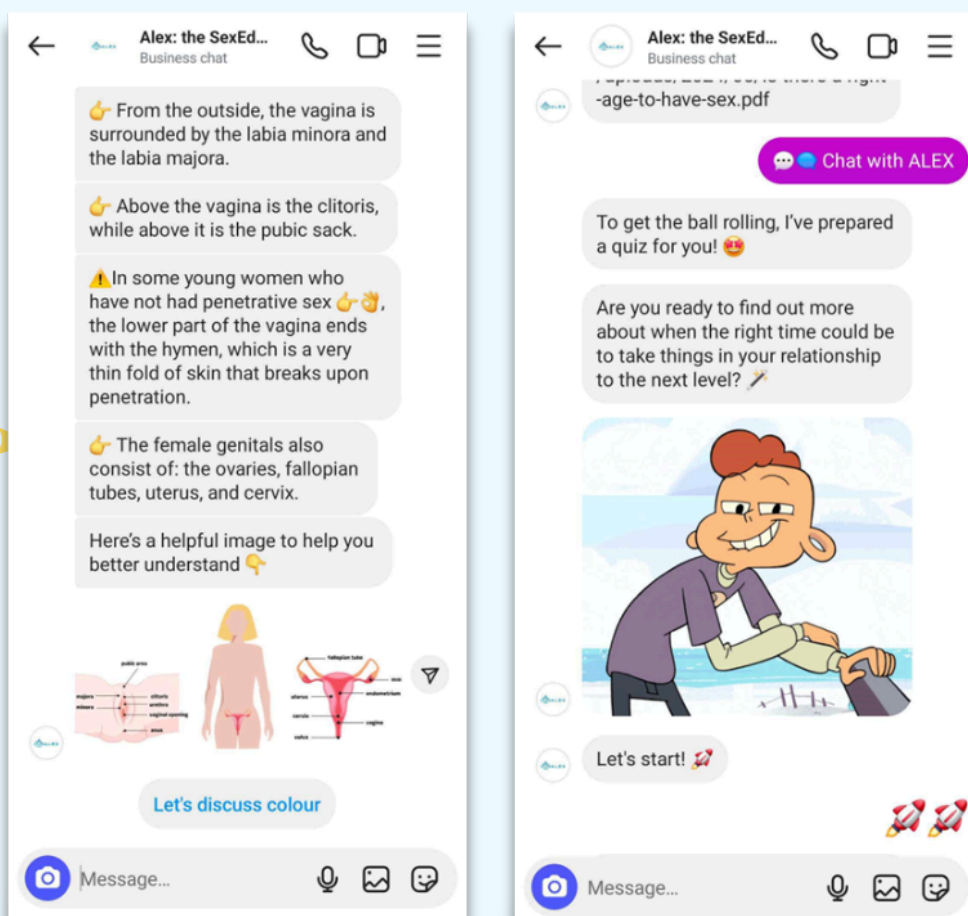- chatbot and motivate them to find answers to their questions

Image 15: Using GIF's and images for clearer and friendlier interaction with chatbot.
Source: Instagram app

THE ROLE OF INFOGRAPHICS IN CHATBOT INTERACTION

Infographics are one of the best forms of presenting knowledge based on key data. They seem to be particularly effective with a younger target group. Their most significant advantages are:

- figures, facts and statistics are shown in a visually-attractive way with the use of graphs and illustrations, prompting visualisation in learning,
- they summarise important content with short and clear text,
- well-structured, showing the link between different content (e.g., by using arrows or referencing prior points),
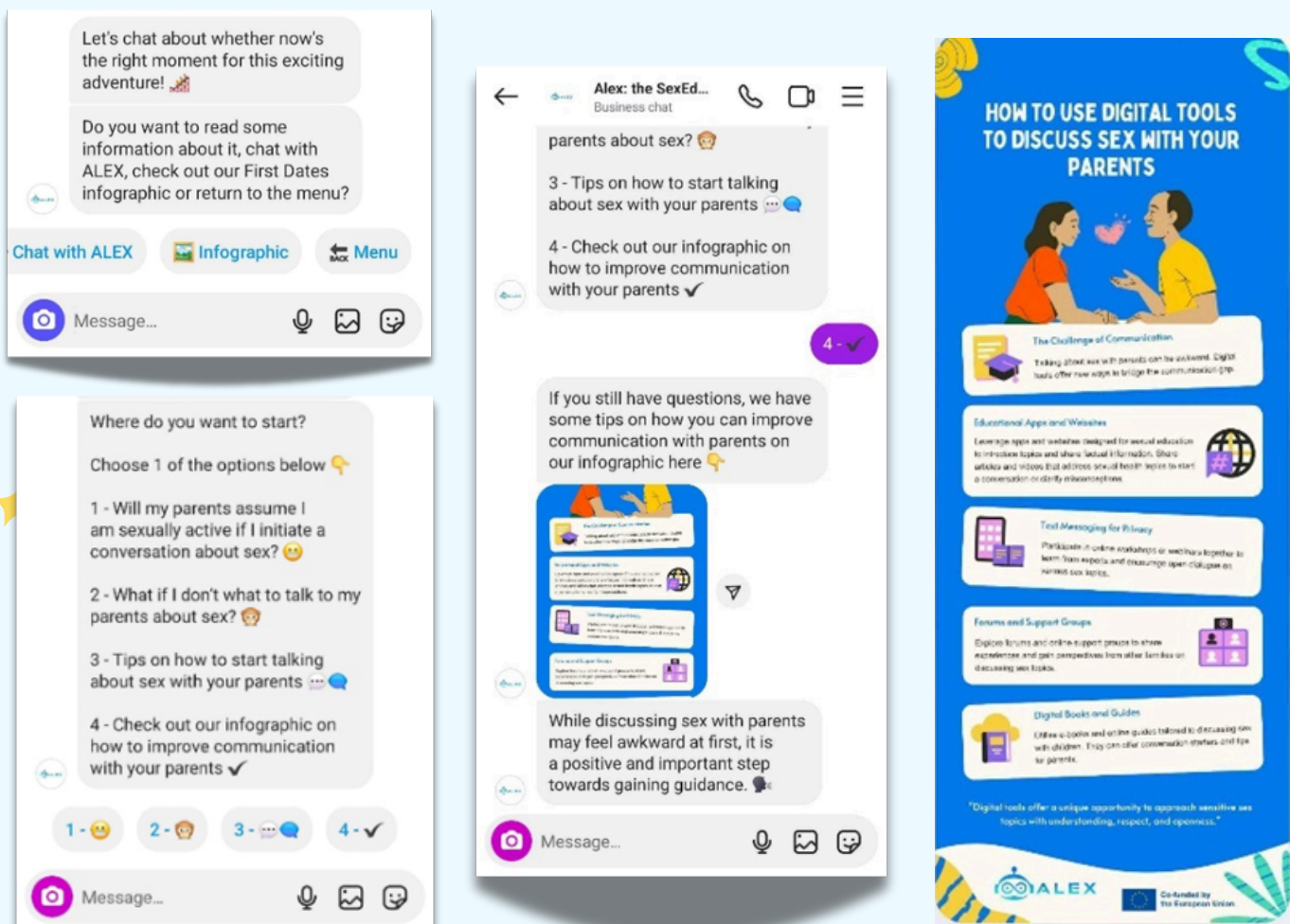- can complement or even clarify content that appears directly in the interaction with the chatbot.

Image 16: infographics are embedded in the Alex conversation itself.
Source: Instagram app

THE CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF QUIZZES

Quizzes are a common multimedia format that young people encounter, both in formal and informal education. They may also come across them in their leisure time, for example in magazines they read, brochures, and in the form of board games. In the case of ALEX, quizzes have been used to:

- verify users' knowledge,
- actively engage users in the chatbot interaction,
- help clarify information about SRH issues,
- activate learning processes by "playing" and having fun,
- reassure users are not worried about possible gaps in their knowledge, and dispel misconceptions.

Based on these multitude of reasons, multimedia content resonates well with chatbot target audiences, and is an integral part of the ALEX experience, to not only engage those interested in SRH topics but also to help them confront and strengthen their digital and media literacy.
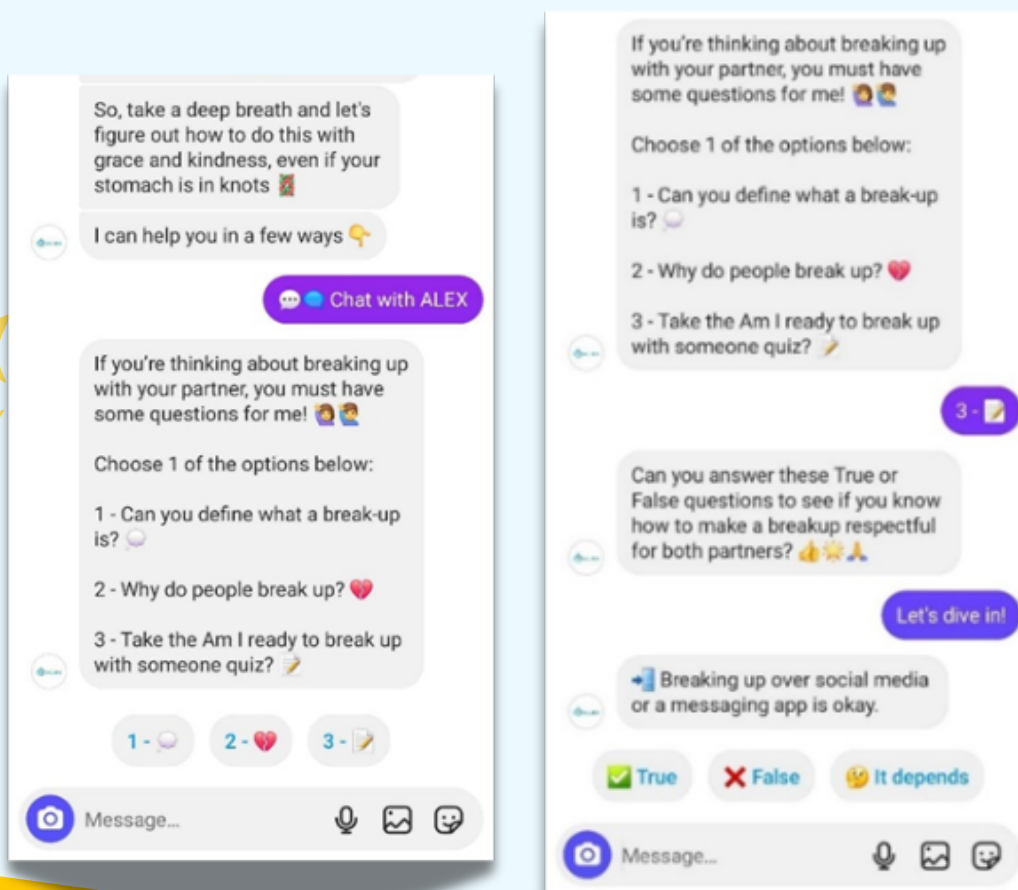

Image 17: Quizzes interaction for enhanced user engagement.
Source: Instagram app

TROUBLESHOOTING AND SUPPORT

This chapter is dedicated to the most frequently asked questions by users and the answers to these questions. We will focus here on troubleshooting technical issues that may arise and supporting users in using ALEX.

FAQ 🔍

Is it safe to ask a chatbot about sexual & reproductive health?

How can ALEX understand me?

Yes, ALEX is designed to provide safe and reliable information on sexual and reproductive health. The chatbot is built on verified sources and reviewed by experts to ensure the accuracy of its content.

To interact with ALEX, you need to follow its structured format. You can either select predefined buttons or type keywords related to the available topics. Unlike AI chatbots like ChatGPT, ALEX will not understand free-text questions beyond its database.

Why can't I speak with ALEX freely? Why doesn't it understand everything I ask?

ALEX is a rule-based chatbot, meaning it operates within a predefined knowledge base. This ensures that all responses are accurate and verified by experts. If it relied on open-ended internet searches, it could provide incorrect or misleading information.

·What kind of topics can I chat with ALEX about?

You can chat with ALEX about a variety of topics, including:

- Romantic relationships,
- Sexual thoughts and behaviors,
- Sexual orientation and gender identity,
- Inclusion and staying safe,
- Contraception and pregnancy,
- Sexually transmitted infections,
- Puberty and body changes,
- Internet safety in relation to sexual health.

Check the list on page 9.

·What if I'm interested in reading an actual text about the information ALEX provides?

ALEX provides a link to all of its resources in PDF format as standalone texts for users that would rather read on their own time instead of chatting. In addition, all texts are found separately on the ALEX website alexbot.eu under "Materials" in the form of 70+ SRH lessons.

·Can I trust the information ALEX gives me?

ALEX provides credible and up-to-date SRH information sourced from expert-reviewed materials, including data from reputable health organizations like WHO.

·Will ALEX keep my information private?

Yes, ALEX prioritises user privacy. As per the criteria on its hosting platform Chatfuel, the chatbot does not store personal information beyond what is necessary for functionality. The chatbot follows GDPR regulations and ensures all interactions remain confidential.

·How accurate is ALEX compared to talking to a real doctor?

While ALEX provides well-researched and expert-reviewed information, it does not replace professional medical advice. For specific health concerns, it is always best to consult a healthcare provider.

·Is it okay to ask ALEX about things I'm too embarrassed to ask someone in person?

Absolutely! ALEX is designed to be a judgment-free, private space where users can explore sensitive topics comfortably.

·Can ALEX answer my questions at any time, or are there specific hours?

ALEX is available 24/7, allowing users to access information whenever they need it.

·Can I offer suggestions on how to make ALEX better?

Yes! User feedback is encouraged to improve the chatbot's functionality and content. You can provide suggestions by visiting our project website: alexbot.eu

ALEX   HOME   ABOUT THE PROJECT   PARTNERS   MATERIALS   ARTICLES

Get in Touch with Us

Have a question or need assistance? We're here to help! Fill out the form, and we'll get back to you as soon as possible. Whether it's an inquiry, feedback, or a collaboration proposal, we'd love to hear from you.

Your name*

Your email*

Your message*

Which number is bigger, 3 or 7?

SUBMIT
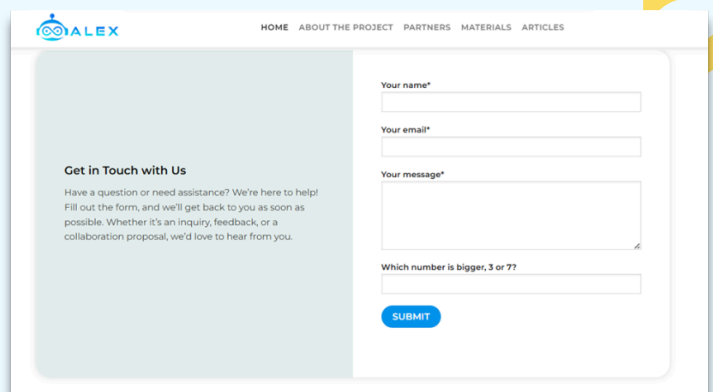
Image 18: Contact form on the Alex project website.
Source: https://alexbot.eu/

Use clear and specific keywords

Instead of typing long sentences, use keywords or select from the chatbot's menu options to receive the most relevant answers. Use buttons in the chat when they are offered to you.

Tips for optimal use

To get the most out of your experience with ALEX, follow these tips to navigate the chatbot effectively and access accurate, helpful information.

Follow the chatbot's structured format

ALEX is a rule-based chatbot, meaning it only understands predefined queries. Avoid free-text questions, as the chatbot will not recognise them.

Check multimedia resources

ALEX includes GIFs, infographics, and quizzes to make learning more engaging and accessible.

Keep interactions private

ALEX promotes confidentiality, but users should still avoid sharing sensitive personal information within the chatbot.

Verify information on trusted sources

While ALEX provides expert-reviewed content, it's always a good idea to cross-check health-related details with official sources like WHO or your own doctor before making decisions on your wellbeing.

ALEX cannot replace professional medical advice or talking to a trusted adult!

Remember that you are not talking to a human being, you are conversing with artificial intelligence. While it provides expert-reviewed information, it cannot provide personalised guidance tailored to your specific needs, such as what you would get in conversation with a medical professional or someone you trust.

Interact with quizzes and lessons

Engage with the chatbot's interactive elements to reinforce your understanding of sexual and reproductive health topics.

Following these tips will help you navigate ALEX smoothly and make the most of its educational resources!

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CREDIBILITY AND PRIVACY

Identifying credible sources and verifying information

In today's digital landscape, where information is abundant and easily accessible, the challenge often lies in distinguishing credible sources, especially concerning topics as critical as sexual and reproductive health. Misinformation in this field can lead to harmful consequences, especially for younger and more impressionable users, making it imperative to seek out and identify trustworthy information. According to the European Commission's guidelines on artificial intelligence in education[1], ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information in educational tools is critical to fostering informed decision-making and promoting health literacy.

• CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING CREDIBILITY

When seeking information, particularly in the health domain, certain criteria must be considered to ascertain the credibility of the source:

EXPERTISE

Reliable sources are typically backed by recognised expertise, which is made evident through professional qualifications or affiliations with reputable institutions. For instance, content created by healthcare professionals or published by recognised health organizations generally holds greater credibility.

[1] Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (European Commission), Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data in Teaching and Learning for Educators.

🔍 OBJECTIVITY

As underscored in UNESCO's guidance on AI in education[2], information must be presented objectively, without bias influenced by commercial interests or ideological views. Objective sources provide factual information supported by evidence, clearly distinguishing between expert opinion and evidence-based fact.

📅 BEING UP-TO-DATE

Health advice is continually evolving with advancements in medical research. Credible sources regularly update their content to reflect new health standards and scientific discoveries, providing the most current information available.

📋 ACCURACY

Accurate information should be corroborated by scientific evidence and should reference primary sources or verified data, adhering to the principles of the scientific method.

• VERIFYING INFORMATION FOR ALEX

To ensure the credibility of ALEX's information, several measures have been used during the selection and writing of the content:

➤ **Selective sourcing: Following the European Commission's recommendations[3], ALEX utilises information from sources that demonstrate a commitment to ethical standards and transparency, such as academic journals and government health websites.**

➤ **Cross-referencing: Information is verified against multiple trusted sources to ensure its accuracy and relevance. This method helps in identifying and correcting any discrepancies in our content.**

➤ **Regular reviews: ALEX's content database is thoroughly and continuously reviewed and updated to align with the latest research and best practices in the field.**

[2] UNESCO, Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research.
[3] Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (European Commission), Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data in Teaching and Learning for Educators.

ALEX relies on a curated list of reputable health websites and utilises media literacy guidelines to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, to both deliver credible content but also strengthen users' media literacy skills for identifying misinformation. Some of the most prominent health websites we have used for our sources are the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), articles in academic journals and leading psychology and mental health websites. These sources have been instrumental in providing up-to-date and globally recognised health information that forms the backbone of the content used in ALEX.

Chatbot's privacy policies 🔍

The ALEX chatbot uses the Chatfuel platform to uphold standards of data privacy and protection to ensure the confidentiality and security of user information. When discussing sexual and reproductive health, privacy is not just a preference but a necessity. Ensuring privacy fosters a safe environment for users to seek and receive information without fear of judgment or exposure. As highlighted by the European Commission's guidelines on the use of AI [4], respecting privacy and ensuring data protection are crucial to maintaining the trust and safety of users in educational contexts.

• DATA HANDLING POLICIES ON CHATFUEL

Chatfuel, the platform hosting ALEX, implements several key policies regarding data handling that align with international standards, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), emphasising transparency, security, and accountability:

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[4] Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (European Commission).

- **Data collection:** ALEX collects only essential data required to optimise user interaction and enhance the chatbot's functionality. This includes data inputted by the users during their interactions with the chatbot, such as queries about health topics and feedback on the information provided.

- **Usage**: Collected data is primarily used to process user queries and improve the chatbot's accuracy in delivering relevant and personalised health information. The use of data is confined strictly within the operational scope of the chatbot without any external commercial use.

  - **Access**: Access to personal data is restricted to project personnel responsible for chatbot maintenance and improvement, ensuring that all access is compliant with privacy regulations and necessary for the system's functionality.

  - **Storage period**: Personal data is stored only for the duration necessary to fulfil the intended purposes, after which it is securely deleted. This period is kept to the minimum required to maintain the effectiveness and responsiveness of the chatbot.

• USER RIGHTS UNDER CHATFUEL'S PRIVACY POLICY

Chatfuel's framework empowers users with specific rights concerning their personal data [5], reinforcing the commitment to user privacy:

☑ **Right to access**: Users have the right to access their personal data processed by the chatbot to review and verify the lawfulness of the processing.

☑ **Right to correction**: Users can request corrections to their personal data if they believe it is inaccurate or incomplete.

☑ **Right to deletion:** Users have the right to request the deletion of their personal data when it is no longer necessary for the purposes for which it was collected, or when withdrawing consent on which the processing is based.

☑ **Right to information**: Users are provided with transparent information about how their data is collected, used, and protected. This information is readily accessible on the chatbot platform and detailed in Chatfuel's privacy policy documentation.

[5] Chatfuel, "CHATFUEL Terms of Use."

Keeping personal information secure

When users share personal health information online, they face several risks:

- **Unauthorised access and data breaches**: Unauthorised access can occur through hacking or insufficient security measures, which can expose or misuse sensitive information.
- **Social stigma and cyberbullying**: Due to the private nature of sexual and reproductive health, exposure of personal information can expose users to social stigma or cyberbullying, opening them up to psychological distress and social isolation.

Therefore, to mitigate the risks associated with online interactions, here are some best practices users should adhere to:

- **Strong passwords**: Create strong, unique passwords for accounts to prevent unauthorised access. The use of password managers (such as Google Chrome's service) can help manage and generate complex passwords.
- **Two-factor authentication (2FA)**: Where available, enabling 2FA adds an additional layer of security, as it requires not only a password but also a second factor, such as a code sent to a mobile device, to access accounts.
- **Recognising and avoiding scams**: Users should be vigilant about phishing and other scams that target personal information on social media and emails.
- **Regular software updates**: Keeping software, like the social media you use, up-to-date is vital as updates often include patches for security vulnerabilities that could be exploited by hackers.

ALEX incorporates several specific security features to ensure the protection of user data:

DATA ENCRYPTION

All data transmitted between users and the chatbot is encrypted to prevent interception by unauthorised parties. Encryption transforms readable data into a secure format that can only be read or processed after decryption, ensuring data confidentiality and integrity.

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIVACY LAWS

ALEX is designed to comply with GDPR and other privacy laws, which mandate strict data security protocols and grant users' rights over their personal information. This compliance not only protects the chatbot from legal repercussions but also assures users of its commitment to their privacy.

In the event of a privacy breach involving sensitive information, the team behind ALEX can provide users with direct access to support services. These services offer guidance on how to manage and mitigate the consequences of data exposure. For more information, contact us at the project website: alexbot.eu.

CONCLUSION

The ALEX chatbot has been designed as an innovative and essential tool for delivering accessible, holistic, and reliable sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information. This manual serves as a guide to help users navigate ALEX effectively and maximise its potential as an educational resource. The chatbot was created with the core objective of empowering young people with accurate knowledge, enabling them to make informed decisions about their health and well-being in a safe, judgment-free, and interactive digital environment.

• EMPOWERING OUR USERS THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

In a world where misinformation is prevalent, ALEX stands out as a trusted digital companion that assists users in receiving credible, science-backed SRH information. The chatbot's design prioritises privacy, accessibility, and engagement, making it a unique and valuable resource for young individuals who may struggle to connect with traditional sources of SRH education. By using clear, easy-to-understand language and presenting information in a way that aligns with users' preferences, ALEX encourages self-exploration and learning at one's own pace.

• A RECAP OF ALEX'S KEY FEATURES

To ensure a smooth and effective user experience, this manual has provided detailed guidance on ALEX's core functionalities. Below is a summary of the chatbot's main features:

INTERACTIVE AND MULTIMEDIA GUIDANCE

ALEX incorporates quizzes, infographics, GIFs, and visuals to engage users and enhance their understanding of key SRH topics.

RELIABLE AND EXPERT-REVIEWED CONTENT

All SRH lessons and responses are backed by reputable sources, including WHO, CDC, and academic publications.

PERSONALISED ADVICE

The chatbot provides tailored responses based on user-selected topics, ensuring that individuals receive information relevant to their specific needs.

USER-FRIENDLY NAVIGATION

Through structured conversations, predefined buttons, and keyword-based commands, ALEX ensures a seamless experience for all users.

CONFIDENTIALITY

ALEX offers a safe and private space where users can ask sensitive questions without fear of judgment.

24/7 AVAILABILITY

Unlike traditional education settings or health consultations, ALEX is accessible at any time, allowing users to find information whenever they need it.

KEY FEATURES

MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT

With content available in multiple languages, ALEX ensures inclusivity for a diverse global audience.
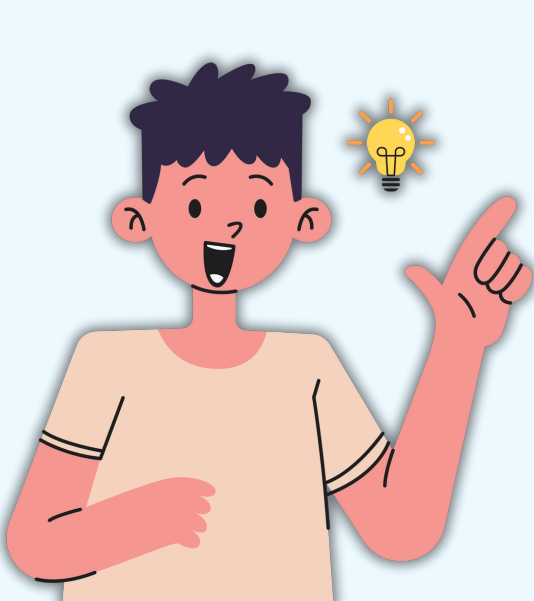
COMMITMENT TO DIGITAL LITERACY AND WELL-BEING

Beyond providing SRH education, ALEX fosters digital literacy by encouraging users to critically evaluate online information and practice safe digital behaviours. The chatbot integrates guidance on identifying credible sources, ensuring online privacy, and recognising misinformation, equipping young users with essential skills for navigating digital spaces responsibly.

The development of ALEX reflects a commitment to inclusivity, innovation, and youth empowerment. By blending education with technology, the chatbot not only delivers SRH information but also promotes open, stigma-free discussions about sensitive topics. Whether used by young individuals seeking answers or educators facilitating SRH discussions, ALEX can serve as a trusted, supportive tool that champions informed decision-making and holistic well-being.

As technology continues to shape the way we access knowledge, ALEX represents a step forward in digital SRH education, ensuring that every young person has access to the resources they need to navigate their sexual and reproductive health with confidence and clarity.

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