Designing an app for harmful drinking young adults: a user perspective

Centre for Behaviour Change Annual Conference
24TH February 2016
Screening and brief intervention (SBI):
- Questionnaire about drinking
- Advice/information on cutting down alcohol use

Meta-analyses demonstrate that SBI, delivered both face-to-face and electronically (eSBI) by computer is effective in reducing alcohol consumption [1-4].

eSBI can be delivered discreetly and flexibly, at a competitive cost, without reliance on the time of healthcare staff [5, 6].
eSBI is the preferred delivery medium for alcohol SBI in young adults [7].
However...

- Consistent reporting of low engagement rates with online health behaviour change interventions.
  - Only a minority of users revisit an online health intervention more than once [8]
  - High rates of dropout and attrition [9,10]

- Our objectives:
  - To target content and features to young people using a User Centered Design approach
  - In order to maximise engagement rates with the app
1) Active components of alcohol brief interventions:
   - Feedback [12]
   - Change plan [12]

2) A review of user feedback of existing smartphone apps available on iTunes and GooglePlay that support a reduction in alcohol consumption.

3) Focus groups with young adults drinking at harmful levels and residing in South London
Aim of the study

To qualitatively identify through focus groups, the preferences for content, functionality and aesthetics for a smartphone app for young adults who drink harmfully.
Project 2: Methods

- **Participants**
  - Young adults, aged between 18-30 years who lived in South London and scored 16+ on the alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT)

- **Recruitment**
  - Participants were recruited via paid online advertisements through Facebook and Gumtree.

- **Data collection**
  - Participants were asked to download a specific eSBI app and use it over the course of a week.
  - Focus groups explored what users liked and disliked about the app, how they would improve it and which features they would include if they were designing an app themselves.

- **Data analysis**: Thematic analysis organising the data into themes and sub-themes.
Participant characteristics

• 200 people completed the online screening survey; 117 from an advertisement placed on Gumtree, 83 via Facebook.

• 81 (40%) had a self-reported score of 16 or more on the AUDIT, were between 18-30, and, lived in South London.

• 21 participants attended one of four focus groups

• Of the 21 participants, 86% were female, 57% were employed, 33% were students and 10% were unemployed.

• The mean AUDIT score across the participants was 20 (SD=5.0).
Two main themes were identified.

1) ‘Meaningfulness’ theme:
   • Apps need to be tailored to the interests and values of young people.
   • Emphasised need for content and feedback around broader health and wellbeing factors such as exercise, diet and image.
2) ‘Community’ theme:

• Young adults want to be able to engage with other app users, both in groups of friends and with online users for motivation and support.
'Motivation'

'You can make it a bit of a competition with yourself, in your team and then for other teams, like say if you were in a team of friends, you don’t want to let them down and be in last place, so it would encourage you.'

Community

'Sharing and engaging'

'Newsfeed'

'Track other teams progress'

'Support and motivate your team'

'Send messages'

'Supporting each other'

'If you like the idea of like community and stuff because then you don’t feel like you’re alone and you know you can interact with other people, and that’s really good.'

Group Goals

'Work towards goals together'

'Create groups with friends'

'Online forum to select goals'

Online community
Conclusions

• All app components should be developed with the user in-mind, so that the app is meaningful to the target group.

• Broader lifestyle and wellbeing factors, targeted at short-term health and image improvement, were most highly rated as providing motivation for drinking reduction in young people.

• Young adults wanted to be able to draw upon the support of others to help them drink less via digital technologies.
Next steps…

• Make the app content meaningful, relevant and engaging – provide tailored content on broader lifestyle functions associated with alcohol.

• Incorporate a social element.
• Messages from the research team, tailored to users

• Notification of other team members activity including shared goals.

• Reminders of goal achievement and progress

• Reminders on an alcohol free day or hangover free day
References


The research was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care South London at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. The views expressed are those of the authors’ and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health. Colin Drummond is partly funded by the NIHR Biomedical Research Centre for Mental Health at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and King’s College London and partly funded by the NIHR Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care South London at King’s College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.