



Research Report

MumBubConnect:

A digital approach to supporting breastfeeding

Supported by: the Australian Breastfeeding Association

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Background

In Australia, less than half of Australian infants (48%) receive any breast milk at six months and only 18% were being exclusively breastfed (i.e. receiving only breast milk and no other fluids or solid food) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, 2006). In marketing terms, increasing the number of women who breastfeed their infants up to 6 months of age can have an important impact on the future health of babies.

The project adopts the philosophy that breastfeeding is personal. This means support for breastfeeding mothers requires personal communication, personal messages, personal technologies and personal insights into the minds of new mothers. Our approach is designed to develop a focused, interactive community of interest through online and mobile technologies and leverage the peer groups through a social networking model.

This project trials an SMS campaign combined with a website and Facebook group to provide messages of support tailored to encourage breastfeeding mothers to continue breastfeeding. The brand 'MumBubConnect' has been developed to facilitate this research project.

The funding for this project was provided by the Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund to the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Aims of the MumBubConnect Project

To pilot the use of mobile phone interventions to:

- 1) Identify perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of women towards the use of SMS and social media as a means of social support
- 2) Trial the impact of a SMS breastfeeding support program on emotions felt towards breastfeeding and levels of self-confidence towards breastfeeding.
- 3) Increase the level of women who breastfeed their baby any breastmilk to be above the national average of

Project Phases

There are two research phases to the project, this report contains a summary of the findings for the first phase - focus groups. The aim of the focus groups was to identify mobile phone and internet usage in the target market of breastfeeding mothers, perceptions of the reality of breastfeeding and attitudes towards specific SMS texts aimed at supporting breastfeeding.

Focus Groups Outcomes

Five focus groups were conducted with 29 women in November and December 2009 in two rounds. The women were recruited via child care centres in South East Queensland at Caboolture, Clontarf, Richlands, Birkdale and Ashgrove with the focus groups will be held on site at these centres. A small financial donation was made to the centres as a thank you based on the number of participants. Each woman received a sample bag of appropriate items (approved by the ABA) as a thank you for

participating. The criteria for participating were: Mothers who had a child under the age of 5 and have used any infant feeding methods including breastfeeding or formula feeding.

Focus Group Round 1

The aim of focus group 1: to establish general breastfeeding attitudes and behaviours and mobile phone and internet usage. The summary feedback from the participants is shown below.

Mother's Baby Feeding Experiences

- Theme 1: Breastfeeding is hard to do and it hurts
-“Breastfeeding is hard, and when it hurts you get told you are doing it wrong”
- Theme 2: Breastfeeding feels like it is the only option
- Theme 3: If you can't breastfeed then you have failed
- Theme 4: Midwives do not know what they are talking about
- Theme 5: There needs to be advice for those who bottle feed

Words and phrases to use in social marketing campaigns

- Any campaign needs to admit how hard it is and that it hurts
- If you knew the truth about breastfeeding it would spoil the mystique of motherhood
- It needs to come from a professional or you need to find the information yourself
 - “the internet is your friend, read a lot of blogs”
- You can't be judgemental
 - “I am very pro breastfeeding but it shouldn't come with so much baggage”
- It would be great to see messages like “don't commit suicide” and “the first 6 weeks suck”
- When shown the 2009 Queensland Health campaign “Natural Normal Healthy. 12 months +” the reaction was generally negative with the following terms used:
 - Slogan is dangerous for mental health
 - Offensive
 - Dangerous
 - Guilt
 - Stereotypical
 - Inadequate
 - Disturbing
 - Failure
 - There has to be a clause that there are other options if needed

Women's Relationships that facilitate breastfeeding.

- Family and partner support is essential
- Partner needs to be supportive of whatever choice you make
- Professional help is vital
- Need more face-to-face with professional
- Utilise a variety of other sources – internet, blogs, babies websites
- Australian Breastfeeding Association – few had any contact and most reactions were negative
- Women would like independent advice that helped with feeding issues generally whether they were breast feeding or bottle feeding

Focus Group Round 2

The aim of focus group 2: to test the messages to be used in the SMS intervention.

Mobile Phone experiences

- Use varies depending on age:
 - Younger mothers use the mobile phone as an essential link with their peers, family and friends. They do not set any limits on when the phone could be used or how. This group thought text messages would be an ideal way to send messages about breastfeeding. They send and receive text messages throughout the day.
 - Older mothers – used the phone only for emergencies, it was not their main form of communication but another form enabling them to make contact with family in the event of emergencies. These women did not necessarily want to receive text messages at any time of day and would prefer not to be contacted immediately after the birth. This group preferred to have a personalised message and not a generic text. They do not tend to send a lot of text messages. Most disliked text language

Attitudes towards Social Marketing SMS campaigns

- Overall the response to a text social marketing campaign was positive. Women were receptive to receiving text messages about breastfeeding especially if this was linked to a resource where they could access further information. The older women liked the idea of a website which meant they could control access.
- Text messages should be sent in the morning and not during the early evening or evening. There should be enough lag time for response – that is there should be no expectation of an immediate response.

Opinions of the Messages

- Each of the messages designed were tested with the women and the following changes made:
 - Language was reworked to remove anything that was considered patronising
 - There were positive responses around the difficulties and some of the strategies for managing those
 - Two phone numbers were given for further support – one is the ABA and the other is a Women's Health line aimed to provide non-partisan assistance
 - Changes were made to the name of the program to reflect a more personal less mechanistic approach

Next Phase of the Project

As part of the SMS campaign, we have developed a website that will facilitate women's registration to participate in the research and also provide access to information about breastfeeding. A brand for mumbubconnect has been developed using a creative agency, a Facebook group has been started and content is being uploaded to the website. In September, women will be invited to participate in the project, which will last eight weeks. At the end of the eight week period, women will be asked to complete a survey detailing their current attitudes and behaviours towards breastfeeding.