

EFFECTIVE INTERACTIVE PLATFORMS IN BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE - A CASE STUDY AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SELECETD VILLAGES OF VADODARA

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Abstract: Social media provide highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. They initiate substantial and persistent changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals. Many researches have revealed that rural adolescent girls and women have started using smart phones for various purposes.

Pilot study surfaced the facts that adolescent girls and women living in selected villages of Vadodara city were in need of messages related to foods and nutrition. Thus an attempt to check the effectiveness of WhatsApp application to promote nutritional messages for bringing behavioural change present research project was conducted adolescent girls and women residing in two villages of Vadodara. Message designing and dissemination was done considering the baseline data of their food habits and food frequency behaviours. Both graphical and audio-video messages were developed and weekly 3-4 messages were posted in the group chat. Interesting conversations and discussion took place amongst the members and between the project workers and group workers. The response of group members and findings concluded the high effectiveness and usefulness of WhatsApp application as a tool for development communication.

Key words: WhatsApp Usage, Food habits and Food frequency, Rural adolescent girls and women, message designing

Introduction: Social media and their role in promoting nutritional messages:

Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. Kaplan Andreas M., Haenlein Michael (2010) defined Social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Moreover, these media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities across the world share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. Social media introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities, and individuals.(H. Kietzmann, J.and Kristopher H.,2011) Social media are characterized in many different ways from traditional or industrial media, in terms of their quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. There are many effects that curtail from internet usage.

Thus role of social media like mass media can be understood from its 6 M functions in a society, where it is considered like a mirror to the society which monitors the ongoing social, economic and political process and plays an important role as a mediator in all the issues. Subsequently it motivates the people when required, mobilizes the masses for a positive cause, and lastly acts as a mystifier. And all its above functions are more appropriate in social media context. Nutrition education and Development Communication are now recognized as a primary

form of intervention in national food and nutrition programmes.

A study done on 'Social media and nutrition education: the food hero experience' by Tobey LN and Manore MM revealed that, Social media can be a quick, low-cost, direct way for nutrition educators to broaden the scope of their targeted programs. The authors' viewpoint was that for social media to be effective, strategies for its use should follow "best practices" guidelines. This viewpoint suggests social media best practices based on experience gained from the Food Hero social marketing campaign. Understanding of how nutrition educators can take advantage of social media as a new mechanism for reaching their target audience is needed, including best practices for implementation, management, and evaluation.

(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24220043>)

The researcher had selected adolescent girls and women as participants of the project because they were fond of using WhatsApp application, but there were only few studies, and projects that have been conducted in this area of researcher. The dearth of research and project in the field of using mobile technology to promote need based developmental messages amongst rural adolescent girls and women, encouraged to undertake present research project.

Title: Social Media: An Emerging Tool for Development Communication

Specific objectives

1. To form the group of women residing in selected villages of Vadodara on WhatsApp application.
2. To find out food habits of women living in selected villages of Vadodara.

3. To design messages related to better food habits for various group of people.
4. To disseminate, designed messages related to better food habits for various group of people through WhatsApp application amongst women residing in selected villages of Vadodara.
5. To check the effectiveness of the messages disseminated through WhatsApp application amongst the women residing in selected villages of Vadodara.

Methodology: The present research project was under taken to introduce better food habits amongst rural women residing in selected villages of Vadodara. The following methodological steps were followed.

Planning:

Conducting survey of smart phone usage by women residing in selected villages of Vadodara:

The project worker prepared the questionnaire to collect data related to:

- A. Background information of women and adolescent girls
- B. Usage of Mobile and internet
- C. Usage of smart phone application

Survey results also revealed that adolescent girls and women possess their own mobile having internet data plan and women were using internet for sharing information very few of them were using internet for payment of bills. Moreover preliminary survey shown that, all of the women used WhatsApp application to a great extent. Therefore, WhatsApp was selected as a medium for the present research project to reach out to all the adolescent girls and women at a same time.

Orientation and selection of the members: The selection was done based on three criteria:

1. A member should be residing in the rural area of Vadodara
2. Each member should be using the WhatsApp application on regular basis.
3. Their own willingness to participate in the project

Group formation: At the end of the meeting a group of 8 adolescent girls and 17 women was formed and named as "Gulab Gang". Thus, finally 'Gulab Gang' consisted of 17 women of Vadodara from three villages namely Kalali and Atladra

Survey of food habits and food frequency:

Preliminary survey of 'smart phone usage by adolescent girls and women residing in selected villages of Vadodara' revealed the data related to their usage of smart phone application and its purpose. When asked about the need and expectation of content through WhatsApp, together most of them demanded for knowledge related to nutrition under category of health and general knowledge. Therefore it was decided to carry out project on dissemination of knowledge related to food habits through WhatsApp application. Thus to check their present

food habits a food habit survey was carried out. The results of survey concluded on the need of providing nutrition and food habits related messages amongst rural adolescent girls and women.

Execution

Designing of message on selected topics: For the present research project following broad areas were finalized

1. Food pyramid and importance of various food groups
2. Special Nutritional requirements during various stages of life
3. Healthy juice for total wellness
4. Nutritious recipes
5. Healthy Cooking tips

In total 30 messages were developed under the media strategy consisting of digital-posters and videoed demonstrations.

Dissemination of message through whatsapp:

Weekly 3-4 messages were sent to the 'Gulab Gang' group through WhatsApp. Their feedback and response were noted and answered through the same platform, many a times group members asked questions through personal chat on WhatsApp, which were also provided replies as per their question.

Results And Evaluation:Usefulness of WhatsApp application under the project.

Results revealed that, majority of the adolescent girls and women members (70.59%) reported that WhatsApp provided platform to share and get information/text and video easily to the great extent. Very high majority of adolescent girls and women (82.35%) said that they had a feeling of being with a group members, to the great extent and so they development feeling of togetherness and could stay connected with each other's little more than half of them (52.94% and 58.82 %) reacted to the great extent that WhatsApp provides platform for discussion and to share information quickly respectively. Little less than half of them (41.18%) reported that they could solve their personal questions through personal chat to the great extent

Messages sent through WhatsApp related to better food habits: Very high majority (94.12%) of group members reported that the messages were useful and understandable to great extent also some member of them (82.35%) found messages interesting and motivating to great extent.

Majority (64.71%) revealed that message were relevant to them great extent. Almost half of them (47.06%) reported that messages were complete to great extent, high majority (94.12%) became aware of various food group and majority of them (70.59%) reported increase in their awareness level regarding benefits of pulses. Similarly increase in awareness level regarding nutritious recipe and benefits of milk

and milk products was reported by majority of members(64%) and (58%) respectively. Importantly it was found that majority members(70%) had adopted changes in their cooking practices after receiving messages under project through WhatsApp application. Majority of them reported that messages were logically organized finely delivered and feasible to some extent.

Changes observed / adopted by them: Frequency and Percentage distribution of adolescent girls and women according to the changes observed /adopted by them after receiving messages through WhatsApp in their awareness level / practices revealed that they have started taking fruits and nuts knowing the benefits of them in their daily diet. Change in practice was also reported by fifty eight percent of members regarding usage of herbs and spices.

A good change was also reported by little less than half of adolescent girls and women members regarding usage of vegetables and milk and milk products after getting knowledge under the project whereas many of them have also tried out nutritious recipes provided through WhatsApp application during the research project, they found them interesting and tasty as well.

Response related to research project worker: All of them together reacted that the project worker was co - operative and understanding to great extent while deciding and disseminating of the content under the project also they found her a knowledgeable person and a source of information to the great extent. Similarly their needs and requirements of various content regarding better food habits was considered and language used was very was easily understandable to the great extent by members.

Problems Faced: Few of the members (11.76 %) reported problems related to poor network while receiving the messages through WhatsApp.

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Sometimes, members were posting and forwarding other messages and information, which sometimes, diverted the discussion. Sometimes due to poor network connectivity in rural area, project worker faced problems in reaching out to all members at the same time.

Outcome and Sustainability of the WhatsApp media: A group was formed on WhatsApp platform, where information and recipes were shared and woman members adopted certain changes in their food habits, they started questioning about various foods and nutritious special like rich vegetables sources of vitamin B 12 and folic acids. This is a very significant outcome of the project. As the selected topic of food habit was of their own interest, even though after the project worker completed with the dissemination of messages related to the selected topic, group members have still continued with their discussion and sharing of related information. Majority of them are still having curiosity to know more about foods and nutrition for which they are still in contact with the project worker. Therefore it can be said that the group members are interested to continue with the "Gulab gang" group.

Conclusion: Present WhatsApp based intervention project proves that the nutrition education as a mechanism for interaction, ensures the active involvement of those who could and should take part in decision making, and in motivating and providing users with easy access to nutrition-related information, resources, and service. The social media can serve at best if utilised strategically while mobilising people towards dissemination of knowledge, adoption of better practices and contributing for the planned social change leading to better development. Thus the present attempt is supporting the diffusion of innovation approach of development communication.

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