

Developing and marketing mobile health applications for low-income working adults

Presented at 2024 MAG Scholar Conference on Business, Marketing, and Tourism, Macau SAR, China

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Acknowledgement: This study was supported by the Faculty Research Grant of the School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University (Project number: CFRG 23-24/02).

With the proliferation of mobile technology, mHealth apps have become increasingly prevalent in the health sector, offering low-cost access to information, communication, and health monitoring. They help extend healthcare reach and empower individuals to manage their health (Jiang et al., 2022). However, the adoption and effectiveness of mHealth among low-income groups in developed regions remain understudied, highlighting a need for further research into their usage patterns and service gaps. Low-income working adults aged 25-45 may view health through a lens of productivity and work capacity. Despite potential interest in mHealth, barriers such as cost, digital literacy, and trust can limit health mobile technology usage. For these individuals, desirable health app features include ease of use, multilingual support, cost-saving tools, personalization, and community engagement to enhance health management amidst their financial constraints.

This qualitative study uses thematic analysis rooted in data obtained from semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview guide was developed based on the literature and the research questions. The study involved interviews with 16 low-income adults in Hong Kong public housing, selected based on income and asset criteria ensuring eligibility for public assistance. Recruitment was facilitated by a non-profit organization without financial incentives.

This study reveals key insights into the health management behaviors of interviewees, highlighting five significant themes regarding their physical and mental well-being and the use of mobile health technologies.

Theme 1 indicates that interviewees face various physical and mental health challenges.

Theme 2 suggests that managing health through mobile technology is not a priority for these individuals.

Theme 3 identifies several barriers to the use of mobile health apps. Interviewees noted low visibility of available apps, complexities in downloading them, concerns about personal data privacy, and an unwillingness to pay for app services.

Theme 4 highlights that interviewees rarely use health apps actively, often relying on search engines for health-related information instead.

Theme 5 presents an ideal vision for mobile health apps. Interviewees expressed a desire for apps that provide guidance on healthy diets and exercise, identify health issues based on symptoms, and offer mental health improvement strategies.

In conclusion, this study suggests that health technology developers should enhance promotion and dissemination efforts. Partnerships with marketing firms for targeted communication strategies, assistance with downloading apps, and incentives like shopping coupons could encourage usage. Additionally, the ideal health app should integrate reliable information and support for mental well-being and be tailored to their time constraints, featuring high-quality, organized content for ease of navigation.

References

Jiang, Y., Ding, X., Liu, D., Gui, X., Zhang, W., & Zhang, W. (2022). "Designing intelligent self-checkup based technologies for everyday healthy living", *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, Vol 166. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijhcs.2022.102866