HEALTHY FOOD PROMOTION WITH AN APP?

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Numerous health programs have tried to make people implement their diet to improve their health. These programs, mainly education and information-oriented, nevertheless sought to fight the epidemic of obesity and its potential outcomes on health disorders.

OBJECTIVES
We question how connected devices could provide a more effective method to promote healthy food. They can be used in a social marketing perspective to mix virtual entertainment and real commitment to a behavioural change, such as a healthier diet for a better life.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Whereas the literature on healthy-diet programs based on the use of connected device(s) include numerous surveys, our review showed a low use of theoretical frameworks in previous studies. Furthermore nearly all studies reported a decrease in program usage throughout the intervention period. As a conclusion, behavioural changes have been observed in a certain amount of studies but small and on short periods, conclusions remaining rather unclear. Indeed, most studies concentrated on extrinsic factors and hardly took into account intrinsic factors such as participants’ motivations and barriers to engaging themselves in a long term healthy diet program. Following a transformative agenda (Mick et al 2012), we intend to consider our target as experts on their needs and wants towards a healthier diet and the potential help of connected devices.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA
We conducted a qualitative research in Parisian region (France) with 4 focus-groups (27 participants) to explore the motivations and barriers which strengthen or threaten the effectiveness of a digital device targeting a healthier diet for overweight persons. We targeted both men and women having tried to lose weight in the 5 last years; the sample diversity ensures the representation of other important criteria, such as educational level and the familiarity with connected devices.

During the focus-groups, we used a probing approach (Mattelmäki 2008) for co-exploring which device and which design could better help the participants to lose weight in a long term, considering them as collaborative stakeholders. We also investigated their motivations, their former experiences in diet to lose weight and their expectations towards several digital devices: 2 apps (one more positive-oriented, one more self-quantification oriented), Fitbit and Hapifork.

RESULTS
Data analysis is still on progress using softwares (NVivo 11 and Alceste) for a text-analysis and a content analysis. The preliminary results tend to highlight motivation as the major factor compared to the type of devices used (website, app or connected devices such as Fitbit or Hapifork) and the type of messages. They suggest that self-determination (Ryan and Deci

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2000) is a major factor to participants’ motivations and compliance to digital tailored prompt messages. Clearly, a friendly app is their favorite tool. They consider it as their best ally to follow a diet program.

CONCLUSION
Final results are pending and will be reported at the time of the conference. Our first results point out that the issue of how maintaining motivation in a long term is crucial, which could be obtained by gamification mechanisms. Eventually, all the participants point out the need for being nudged, not judged.