Consumers’ Perceptions of Preconception Health

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Introduction

- 1 in 33 babies in U.S. are affected by birth defect
- PCH can improve women’s health and prevent birth defects
- Select Panel on PCH (2005) recommended a social marketing campaign
- Audience research is key to a successful campaign
Research Questions

Product
• How do consumers refer to/think about the terms “PCH” and “preconception care”? What other terms could be used to describe PCHHC?

Price
• What are the barriers/challenges to engaging in these behaviors?

Promotion
• What types of messages would be most effective to help women increase their awareness about PCHHC (e.g., reduced rates of birth defects vs. healthy bodies vs. healthy babies)?

Place
• What are consumers’ preferred channels for receiving information about PCHHC?
Methods

- **Study Design**
  - Conducted 10 Focus Groups with consumers in Atlanta in fall 2010
  - Segmented women into 10 different subgroups
  - Used professional recruitment firm

- **Interview guide focused on 4 Ps**
  - Product
  - Price
  - Promotion
  - Placement

- **Analysis**
  - Analyzed data using QSR NVivo 8.0
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Status</th>
<th>Audience Segment</th>
<th>Lower SES</th>
<th>Middle SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planners</td>
<td>Women who have not had a child and want to be pregnant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planners</td>
<td>Women who have had children (a year ago or more) and want to have more children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-planners</td>
<td>Women who do not have any children and do want to have children in the future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-planners</td>
<td>Women who have had children (a year ago or more) and do not planning to have more in the future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interconception</td>
<td>Women who have had a baby in the last year (irrespective of their future pregnancy plans)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 5
Participant Characteristics

- N=65 participants
- 21% had given birth in the last 12 months
- Age:
  - 20% aged 18-24
  - 35% aged 25-34
  - 45% aged 35-44
- Race/ethnicity:
  - 51% White, 42% Black, 1% Latino, 1% American Indian
Key Findings - Product

- Participants had a **general understanding of PCH behaviors and their importance**
  - Limiting alcohol, quitting smoking, and taking prenatal vitamins were most salient, especially for planners
  - **Non-planners questioned** the need to do these behaviors when not preparing for a pregnancy
  - Recommendation for **vaccinations** (Rubella and Influenza) were confusing to some
- **Overall, PCH perceived as a lifestyle** (i.e. being healthy) rather than a set of services
Results – What is Preconception Health?

“Making sure you’re healthy enough and you have all the, I guess, essential vitamins and make sure your blood pressure and everything, that you’re healthy enough to carry a child.”

“Preparing your body for a pregnancy.”

“I’m just looking at it going, if I was to say that to one of my friends, they would just look at me and go ‘Huh?’ Because, I mean, it, it’s just not something that I would use in my everyday vocabulary.”

“People might be like, ‘Oh, that’s not me’. Because really I’ll probably read it and be like, ‘I don’t fall in that group. I’m not looking to get conceived, or pregnant.’”
Key Findings - Price (Motivators)

- **Age** and maturity
- **Social support**: partner, family, friends
- **Access** to a doctor: ability to discuss with a doctor
  - Health insurance
- **Planning**: the desire to be pregnant was the strongest motivator across groups
  - **Motivators for Planners:**
    - Health of the baby and mother
    - Contribution to fertility
    - Being in the pregnancy mindset
  - **Motivators for Non-planners:**
    - Not much motivation overall besides living a generally health lifestyle
Key Findings - Price (Barriers)

- **Addiction** (e.g., cigarettes, alcohol, drugs)
- **Lack of social support:** unsupportive partner or family
  
  “My family wasn’t really a great support system…so you, you have to get your information from somewhere else.”

- **Perceived lack of control over outcomes:**
  - Cause of premature births or birth defects not always clear
  - Healthy women have premature babies, smokers and drug addicts can have a healthy babies

- **Finances:** living a healthy lifestyle is expensive
Promotion – Types of Messages

- **Messages for planners**
  - PCH contributes to a healthy baby
  - Negative behaviors can lead to serious consequences
    - Baby with birth defects (fear appeals)
  - PCH contributes to a healthy mother

- **Different messages needed for non-planners**
  - Overall health, healthy lifestyle
  - Awareness focused: OOPS! campaign: “Oops. Did you know that 50% of women get pregnant later in life when they say that they’re done having children?”
Place – Channels and Venues

- **Discussion with provider** (e.g., routine check-ups)
- **Sexual education curriculum**
- **Points of temptation**
  - *At lunch hour when choosing between a salad and a hamburger:* “And you’re bombarded with bad stuff everywhere so you should be bombarded with this stuff everywhere.”
- **Product placement** for non-planners
  - Pharmacy – birth control pills
  - Tampax boxes
  - Yogurt tabs
  - Backs of beer bottles, fliers at bars,
  - Women’s apparel stores (e.g. Victoria’s Secret)
Discussion

- Used findings to inform the development of a Social Marketing Plan for PCH
- We’ve now taken that plan and created campaign products:
  - video PSAs
  - posters
  - e-cards
  - educational video
  - web banners and more!

- “Show Your Love” Campaign
  - February 14, 2013