

The Digital Direct-to-Consumer Telemedicine Revolution: Consumer Perspectives of Benefits and Pitfalls

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INTRODUCTION

Telehealth as the ‘New Normal’:

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth rapidly became the ‘new normal’.¹ The pandemic acted as a catalyst for policymakers and providers to embrace telehealth as an accepted form of health service delivery and a solution to meet the increased demand for services.²

Changing Consumer Expectations:

Consumers’ expectations of healthcare have shifted. Many are now looking for seamless digital health experiences, similar to the online retail sector; avoiding the hassle and frustrations of wait times and in-person consultations.³

Rise of Direct-to-Consumer Services:

Australia and other countries have seen rapid growth in private direct-to-consumer (DTC) healthcare services, providing virtual care directly to patients and bypassing traditional healthcare pathways.² These services offer services from GP services to targeted treatment (e.g., weight loss).³

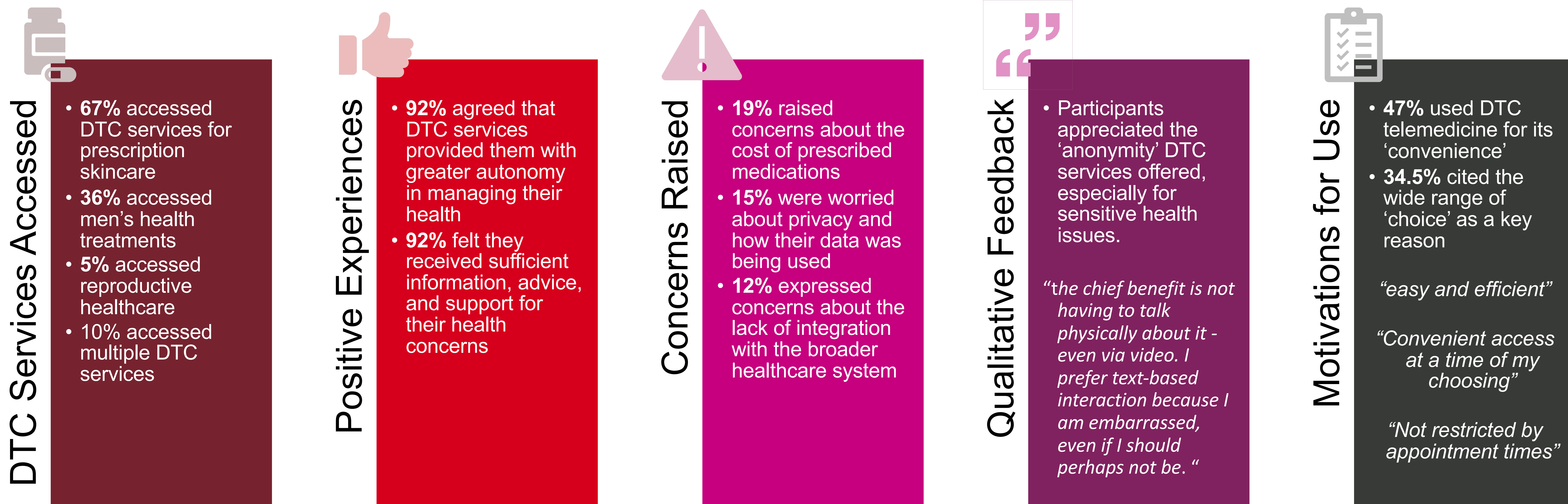
AIM

With limited existing research in this area, this study examines **DTC consumers’ perspectives** on their **use of such services**, including **benefits** and **concerns**

METHODS

- Anonymous online survey conducted November 2023.
- Survey sampled 206 consumers of DTC healthcare services.
- Participants recruited through Australian digital healthcare company that offers multiple DTC brands.
- Survey included quantitative and qualitative questions: Use of DTC services, perceived benefits, issues or concerns with DTC services

RESULTS



CONCLUSION

DTC telemedicine is a fast-growing industry offering significant advantages, including **improved access, convenience, choice** and **anonymity**.

Key concerns from a policy perspective include **cost and effectiveness** of treatments, **lack of follow-up and monitoring**, and **insufficient regulation**.^{4,5}

Many services feature strong digital marketing campaigns and are commercially driven, raising concerns about whether **profits are being prioritised over consumer health**.²

This study provides an initial look at **DTC consumers’ perspectives and experiences**. As the DTC industry continues to grow, there is a need for **long-term research and evaluation**.

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