

CASE STUDY 22 May 19

## TIA: COLLABORATIVE VIRTUAL HEALTHCARE FOR WOMEN

Femtech is booming and now the successful breaking of stigma and taboo is translating to IRL. App turned gynecology clinic, Tia, is encouraging collaboration between consultant and patient, while tapping into women's increased desires for control and understanding of their gynecological health.

Location **United States**

### Featured Experts

**Claire Snyman**

Claire Snyman is an author, blogger and advocate for patient and healthcare collaboration. In her quest for collaboration between patients and healthcare teams, she co-authored a study between patients and neurosurgeons at Johns Hopkins University and was a speaker at TEDxStanleyPark 2018 on the topic of "Your Health is in your Hands".

### Author

**Sophie Robinson**

Sophie Robinson is a Junior Behavioural Analyst at Canvas8. She has a degree in Social Anthropology from the University of Manchester and always tries to deconstruct stereotypes of normality. When not questioning why she's watching a short film or writing a screenplay.

### Highlights & Data

- Tia is helping women understand their menstrual health in a holistic and collaborative way
- Data tracked in the AskTia app guides consultations and visitors to the clinic have full access to their medical information
- With the right education, transparency and responsibility, a preventative approach by healthcare brands could postpone or eliminate the need for professional intervention
- Only **25%** of American women aged 16 to 34 rate their quality of medical care as 'excellent' or 'very good' (*The Commonwealth Fund, 2018*)
- The femtech industry is forecast to reach **\$50 billion** worldwide by 2025 (*Frost & Sullivan, 2018*)
- Some **47%** of Americans believe that consumers can solve the country's healthcare problems (*Harris Poll, 2017*)

### Scope

It's no secret that the American healthcare system is broken. Only a quarter of American women

aged 16-34-years-old rate their quality of medical care as 'excellent' or 'very good', compared to 62% of British women. [1] But app-turned-clinic and wellness center, Tia, hopes to reform the female healthcare experience with convenient, holistic gynecology and primary care under one roof. Opening in March 2019 in New York, the clinic puts women front and center so they can gain a deeper understanding of their bodies. [2]

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Carolyn Witte struggled for years with undiagnosed polycystic ovary syndrome, experiencing all the failings of the public healthcare system, from misdiagnosis to impersonal care. [3] With only 9% of Americans believing that pharmaceutical companies prioritize patients over profit, many have seen the same. [4] Plugging this gap, Witte took a virtual-first approach by launching the chatbot-powered app AskTia in 2016. Originally designed for users to ask health practitioners key questions, a year later Tia established a physical site. Designed end-to-end by women for women, it's a one-stop-shop for gynecology and wellness, providing access to acupuncture, meditation and stress management, in-clinic labs, naturopathy and community events. Patients can also intimately understand the impact of their periods on their wider health – from sex drive and sore boobs to fatigue and anxiety – for an annual membership that costs \$150 or \$15 a month. [2]

The wait time for an appointment with a primary care provider can be 26 days for female New Yorkers, so Americans are seeking healthcare outside of the traditional system. [5] "People are realizing that the healthcare system is incredibly complex and it's really difficult for people to navigate, which isn't helped by increased demand due to an aging population and chronic illness," says author and healthcare consultant Claire Snyman. "Bearing in mind how much women take on in their lives, it's important for seamless healthcare and a shift I'm seeing is healthcare is offering care where people are", she continues. [6] Open from 7am to 9:30pm on weekdays, Tia caters to busy Gen Y and Z women by conveniently fitting around working hours. [2]



The femtech industry is forecast to reach \$50 billion worldwide by 2025

Ask Tia | Instagram (2019) ©

## Context

With the femtech industry booming and forecasted to reach \$50 billion worldwide by 2025, the influx in technology specifically catered to women has already made a significant dent in the stigma surrounding menstruation, menopause and sexual health and pleasure. [7] But problems remain. “The female experience is often negated. But it’s important that they can come to the healthcare table with evidence and data so as not to feel patronized. It’s great that there is technology here to empower the patient and allows for open and collaborative discussion,” says Snyman. [6] Given that a quarter of British women who are aged between 16 and 39 don’t understand their menstrual cycle, there’s space for women to gain deeper insights into their biological mechanisms. [8] And Tia goes some way in providing these. But at the Tia clinic, rather than a doctor sat behind a computer screen, tablets are used to easily share the medical information with the patient, making for a more collaborative conversation into gynecological and menstrual health, which is well-suited to the 48% of Americans who want to partner with their doctor to make health-related decisions. [2][9]

At the heart of Tia’s philosophy is “cycle-connected health care” where the menstrual cycle and its emotional and physiological manifestations are taken into consideration. “Women’s health is more than just ‘lady parts,’ and your migraines and your cycle health might just be connected”, reads Tia’s website. [2] Beyond tracking menstrual cycles – such as Clue, Flo and Tia’s app – in using menstrual data collected via an app, information and compassion can be brought into the clinical setting. Given that more than half (51%) of American men surveyed by period solutions company THINX believe that it’s inappropriate for a woman to mention their period in the workplace, it’s no surprise that women are still experiencing period shame – one in three women surveyed say they often feel uncomfortable using the term ‘vagina’, for example. [10] From the art and the feminist literature in the waiting room to the way healthcare experts approach the consultation, Tia’s design buffers any shame by prioritizing comfortability. [2]

“People are dissatisfied with traditional forms of healthcare delivery and we’re seeing a shift towards people providing more patient-centered care. Whether that’s a hospital or the tools that can be used by people outside of these areas,” says Snyman. “Tia taps into the trend of allowing the patient to be involved in their healthcare, allowing them to take ownership and play a part of the healthcare equation.” [6] Patient-centred care means holistically exploring all elements of the healthcare equation. With meditation, stress management classes and community events, Tia also taps into self-care trends and social prescribing, again offering alternatives to traditional healthcare. [2]



People prioritize personalization, economic healthcare and convenience

Ask Tia | Instagram (2019) ©

### Insights and opportunities

“Personalized and customized healthcare looks broader than just your condition today. It asks: what can we give you that will help you support your healthcare long term?”, says Snyman. [6] According to a 2016 Deloitte report, personalization, economically manageable care and convenience are people’s priorities when it comes to health. [11] This partly explains the popularity of subscription health and wellness boxes such as **Forward**. But in offering predictive care – using a period-tracking app to find the most appropriate contraception, for example – the experience becomes proactive rather than reactive. With the right education, transparency and responsibility, a preventative approach by healthcare brands could postpone or even eliminate the need for professional intervention. Considering that some 47% of Americans believe that consumers can solve America’s healthcare problems, the shift towards participatory, personalized and preventative care is only set to increase. [12]

Conversation and communication with health brands and consumers can help to answer wider problems within healthcare. “Conversation is really important because it allows women to have a say with their healthcare team,” explains Snyman. [6] Indeed, communication between delivery app Mrsool and its users similarly help women in Saudi Arabia (many of whom have yet to get a driving license) gain access to everyday essentials and small luxuries. Conversation with brands can humanize a company and empower people, but in the sphere of femtech, it’s the responsibility of brands to provide this menstrual education and help shape the attitudes of a future generation toward health and gender equality. Given that the Trump Administration’s health policy agenda is exempting some employers from contraceptive coverage and limiting access to low-income and minority women, the relationship between healthcare brands and consumers is more important than ever. [13]

AskTia’s app is chatbot powered and there’s the presumption that people feel comfortable using AI-assisted medical diagnosis, proven by the 37% of American respondents in a Canvas8 poll who said they’d happily use chatbots to book appointments and reservations. [14] Wearable tech brand



Ada offers a balance between self-management and accountability that is revolutionizing at home diagnosis. Given that 75% of women are more likely to use digital health services than men, the availability and evolution of femtech products are empowering consumers. [15] Yet only 9% of Americans would be willing to use the digital tech for impartial guidance on personal issues (e.g. health and financial concerns), showing a human touch is still preferred. [14]

asktia.com

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