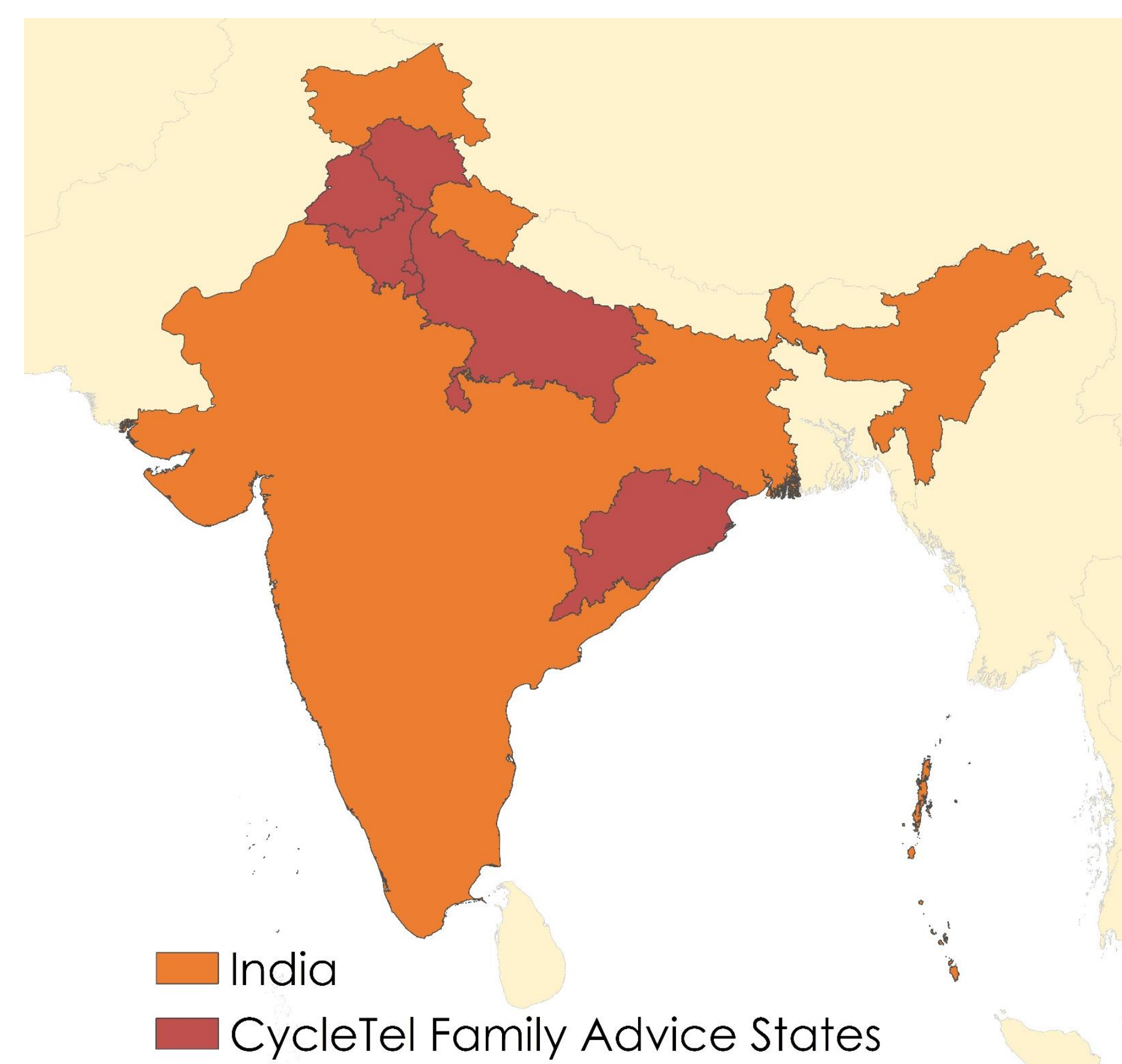


FERTILITY AWARENESS & FAMILY PLANNING VIA SMS IN INDIA

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BACKGROUND & METHODS



Unmet need for family planning is a significant issue in global development. In India, 31 million women report not wanting any more children or wanting to delay the next child, but are not using any method of contraception. A lack of understanding of fertility and pregnancy risk may reduce motivation to use family planning. The Institute for Reproductive Health, with partners in India, developed and implemented a solution via SMS to offer fertility and family planning information, leveraging the rapid expansion of mobile phones in India.

THE INTERVENTION: CycleTel Family Advice

- Free opt-in SMS service available on Nokia phones
- Available from March-August 2015
- 100,000 subscribers in four languages (Hindi, Punjabi, Oriya, and English)
- Provided educational content on fertility awareness and family planning
- 65 messages delivered over 16 weeks
- Structured in narrative formats with positive role models
- Customized based on age, sex, and marital status

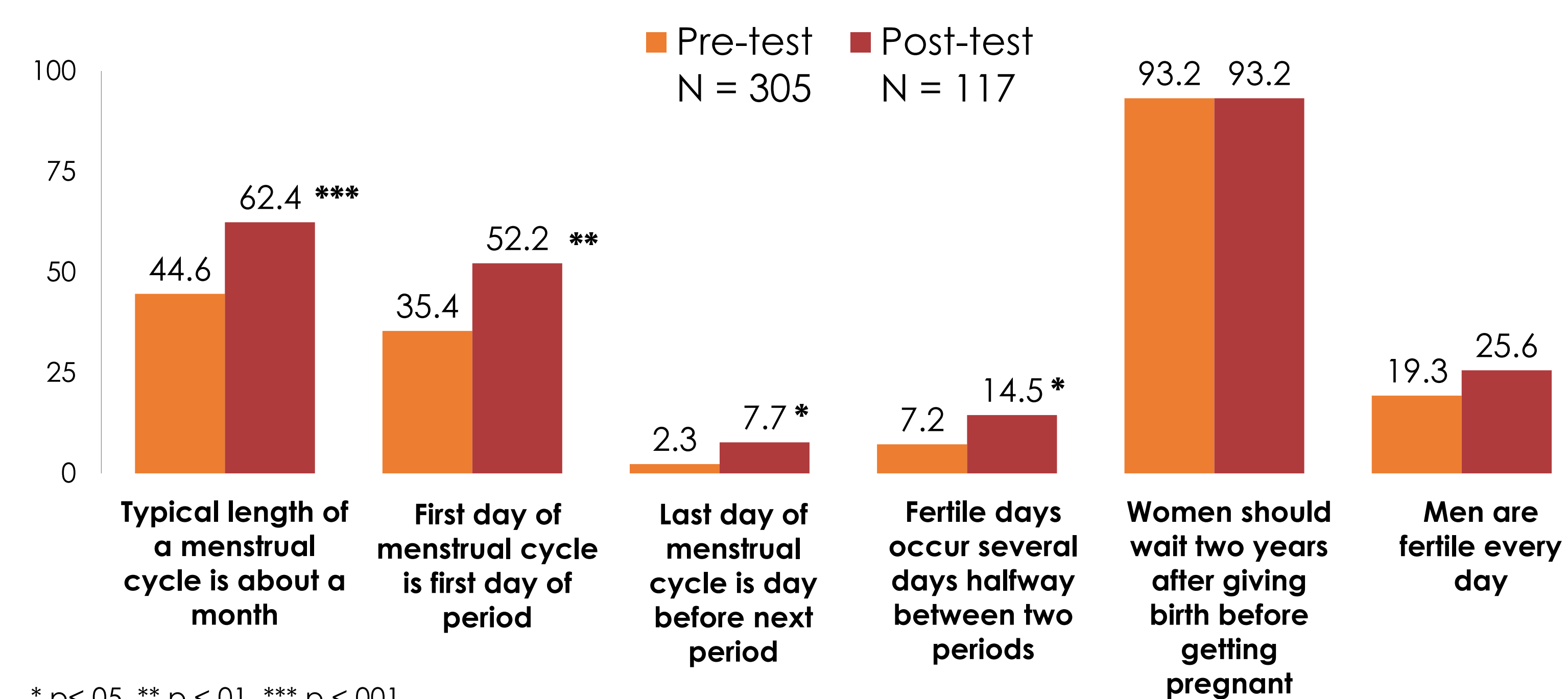
RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- Determine whether CycleTel Family Advice increases fertility awareness knowledge and attitudes, and whether this leads to an uptake of family planning.

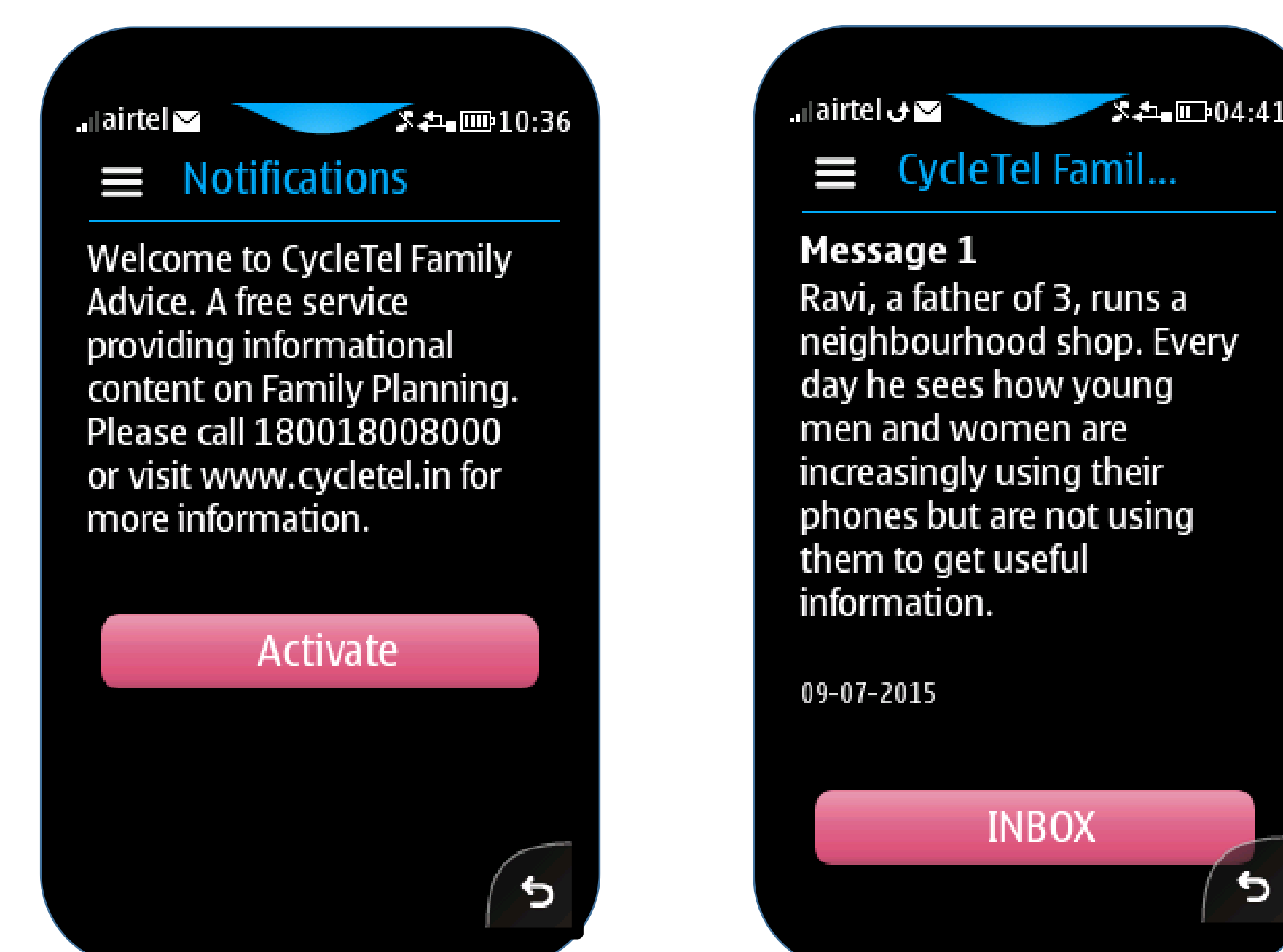
METHODS

- Pre-post study design
- Phone-based quantitative survey
- 305 CycleTel Family Advice users interviewed within a week of service initiation (pre-test), and an independent sample of 117 users interviewed within two weeks after service completion (post-test)

FERTILITY AWARENESS KNOWLEDGE



KEY FINDINGS



- There were **significant increases in fertility awareness knowledge** for several key indicators from the pre-test to the post-test (see figure).
- Higher fertility awareness was associated with higher education (OR 4.5, 95% CI 1.6 to 12.6, p-value <.005), and reading more than 50 of the messages (OR 7.8, 95% CI 1.2 to 48.8, p-value <.05).
- While users surveyed during the post-test were more likely to agree that family planning should be used if one wants to plan or prevent pregnancy, **family planning use remained the same** (see table).
- Users who read more than half of the messages were more likely to have discussed family planning with someone in the previous three months than those who read fewer messages (34 vs. 19%).
- **Satisfaction with CycleTel Family Advice was high** (81%), but only 14% of users surveyed during the post-test read more than half of the messages, and 10% read none.
- **Consent rates for research participation via the phone were low.** Of all users phoned to participate in research, 55.0% were reachable; of these, 21.4% consented to be contacted; only 39% of those completed the interview.

FAMILY PLANNING ATTITUDES & USE

*p<.05

	Pre-Test (n=305)		Post-Test (n=117)	
	True	False	True	False
If I want to plan or prevent pregnancy, I should use family planning*	263 (86%)	42 (14%)	110 (94%)	7 (6%)
I can access a family planning method if I want to plan or prevent a pregnancy	278 (91%)	27 (9%)	113 (97%)	4 (3%)
I have initiated discussion with my partner about family planning in the past 3 months	251 (82%)	54 (18%)	100 (86%)	17 (15%)
I am currently using family planning	111 (36%)	194 (64%)	37 (32%)	80 (68%)

CONCLUSIONS

- ✓ **CycleTel Family Advice increased knowledge of fertility and family planning**, mainly for users who read the messages, **however knowledge of some key concepts still remains low**, particularly knowledge of fertile days (the days during the menstrual cycle when women can get pregnant), and male fertility.
- ✓ **Content on family planning and fertility awareness must be engaging!** The use of a narrative delivered via SMS over several months to disseminate information can be effective for some. However, the low number of messages read indicates a need for more engaging and interactive ways to deliver this information to our target audience.
- ✓ **Consent for research participation via phone for individuals in a mobile intervention is challenging.** Future interventions will explore the possibility of using SMS to obtain permission to contact individuals, receive their informed consent, and ask survey questions.
- ✓ **More studies assessing the link between fertility awareness and family planning uptake are needed.** As one of the first, we found an increase in fertility awareness but not any associated behavior changes (family planning uptake and partner communication) during the short follow-up period of this study.



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