

Young Smokers' Perceptions of Health Warning Labels on Cigarette Packs in Mexico City

Lisa P. Lagasse, PhD, MHS



JOHNS HOPKINS

BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

**Institute for Global
Tobacco Control**

Funding Disclosure

No conflicts of interest to report

Funding provided by the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use



Tobacco Use in Mexico



- 16.4% of Mexicans ages 15 years and older are current smokers
 - 25.2% of men and 8.2% of women
- 42.8% of Mexican youth 13-15 years have ever smoked
 - 43.2% of boys and 42% of girls
- 27.5% of never smokers are likely to initiate in the coming year
 - Average age of initiation – 16.5 years

Sources:

Mexico- National 2011 Facts Sheets:

- Global Adult Tobacco Survey
- Global Youth Tobacco Survey



Tobacco Advertising and Promotion

- Use innovative strategies to foster positive attitudes, beliefs, and expectations regarding tobacco use
- Key element in shaping and maintaining brand preferences



Source:
Tobacco Control Monograph 19: The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use



Regulating Tobacco Marketing in Mexico

- Fliers, posters, and point-of-sale marketing/displays permitted
- Partial restrictions on sponsorship and promotions
- Ban on television, radio, and outdoor advertising



Marlboro Kiosk, Argentina (date unknown)



Source: <https://www.tobaccocontrollaws.org/legislation/country/mexico/aps-regulated-forms>



Tobacco Packs as a Promotional Tool

- Packs are an increasingly important advertising platform
- In public view much of the time: at the point of sale, in hands of smokers, in social settings
- Tobacco companies ensure that packaging appeals to specific audiences





Health Warning Labels

- Diminish the appeal of tobacco packaging and use
- increase public awareness about tobacco-related harms
- Promote intentions and attempts to quit among smokers



Health Warning Labels in Mexico



- Pictorial warning label must cover 30% of pack front
 - Rotated every 6 months
- Text warning label must cover 100% of the back and one side of the pack



Tobacco Pack Surveillance System

Surveillance initiative to systematically document the variety of cigarette packages available in 14 low- and middle-income countries with the greatest number of smokers.

Goals of TPackSS:

- 1) Identify pack design features and marketing appeals that might violate country tobacco packaging requirements, and
- 2) Monitor whether required health warnings on tobacco packages are being implemented as intended

<https://globaltobaccocontrol.org/tpackss/>

Contact: tpackss@jhsph.edu



Examining Pack Features

Pack size, type, shape, brand, colors, number of sticks

Imagery and terminology referencing:

- Technology
- Luxury/quality
- National/foreign/United States
- Use of English language
- Flavor
- Sports
- Classic/new/special addition
- Animals
- Environmental, organics, nature
- Less Harm
- Taste/sensation
- Feminine/Masculine



The Pack Appeal Study

1. In what ways do cigarette packs appeal to adolescents and young adults?
2. How do specific pack features affect consumer perceptions of and willingness to try the product?
3. How do pack features affect perceptions of health warning labels?



Pack Appeal Study Methods

Mixed-methods study involving two phases:

1. Focus group discussions (FGD)
2. Survey with embedded experimental procedure



The Pack Appeal Study

1. In what ways do cigarette packs appeal to adolescents and young adults?
2. How do specific pack features affect consumer perceptions of and willingness to try the product?
- 3. How do pack features affect perceptions of health warning labels?**



Pack Appeal Study Methods

Mixed-methods study involving two Phases:

Focus group discussions (FGD)

2. Survey with embedded experimental procedure



FGD Methods

- Series of fifteen FGD's, segregated by gender, smoking status, and socioeconomic status:
 - Ten FGD's – adolescent smokers and non-smokers ages 13-17 years
 - Five FGD's – young adult smokers, ages 18-24 years
- Thematic analysis, focusing on points of agreement and disagreement within and across groups in discussions of visibility and impact of health warning labels



Health Warning Labels

Fail to Stand out Against Rest of the Pack

Pack features detract from pictorial warning labels

First thing I notice are the colors and design of the pack. I don't really notice these [warning] images.

(Adolescent female, mid/high SES)

They don't distract from the rest of the pack because they are very small and hidden. They don't draw attention.

(Adolescent female, low SES)

Pictorial warning labels are too small



Consequences Portrayed by Health Warning Labels are not Relevant

Consequences occur far in the future

I think it's a warning, right? That, if you smoke a lot, that's going to happen to you, but if you don't smoke much, or constantly, it might not, but if you smoke, let's say, a pack or two a day, then that could happen to you.

(Young adult male, low SES)

We haven't been smoking for that long. There are people who started to smoke maybe at the age of fourteen and now they're fifty-five and they haven't given up cigarettes. Something like that happens to them, but for us now, it's not like that.

(Adolescent male, low SES)

Consequences occur only with heavy, daily smoking



Health Warning Labels Change Interactions with the Pack

Accustomed to Health Warning Labels

We are used to seeing these now. It has little effect.
(Young Adult female, low SES)

We made jokes about the [warnings] so we don't take them seriously anymore.
(Young adult female, high SES)

I just tear off the top of the pack to take off that picture.
(Young adult female, high SES)

You can turn over [the pack] so you don't see it [the pictorial warning].
(Young adult female, high SES)

Coping Strategies

Conclusions and Implications

- By diverting attention, attractive pack features may limit the full impact of health warning labels, particularly for younger smokers
- Placement of health warning labels allows smokers to easily avoid exposure to the graphic images
- More prominent pictorial warning labels placed elsewhere on the pack may enhance the visibility and improve effectiveness



Acknowledgements

Co Authors:

Graziele Grilo, MSc

Meghan B Moran, PhD

Katherine Clegg Smith, PhD

Joanna E Cohen, PhD

Acknowledgements:

Luz-Myriam Reynales, PhD

Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública, Mexico

Edmundo Berumen Osuna

Javier Suarez Morales

Berumen y Asociados

