

"I Join a Funeral Consortium". Adult perceptions and Representations about Cigarette Plain Packaging

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"Eu entro num Consórcio Funerário". Percepções e Representações de Adultos sobre Embalagens Padronizadas de Cigarros
"Me Uno a un Consorcio Funerario". Percepciones y Representaciones sobre los Paquetes de Cigarrillos Neutros

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Smoking persists as a serious public health problem, despite health and legislative advances, that have led to a significant reduction in the prevalence of smokers. Despite that, cigarette packs continues to play an advertising role at points of sale, cultural festivals and on the Internet. This strategy is reflected in the increase of smoking among young people, which requires the implementation of new measures. The standardization of cigarette packs has been adopted internationally, with relevant results. **Objective:** To unravel perceptions and representations of plain cigarette packs among adult smokers and non-smokers in Brazil, and to identify possible effects on experimentation, consumption and smoking cessation. **Method:** Six focus groups were set up in three capitals. Smokers and non-smokers manipulated prototypes of these packs, describing experiences close to real life. The participants also evaluated the colors of the prototypes. Their statements were submitted to content analysis, manually developed by the investigators, identifying perceptions and representations, and pointing out possible repercussions on smoking behavior. **Results:** The participants' perceptions indicated less attractiveness and lower quality of the product, leading to disinterest in purchasing it. Health warnings were perceived as more prominent, making the risks of smoking clearly evident. The results suggest that plain packs discourage experimentation and initiation among young people, with potential stimuli for smoking cessation. **Conclusion:** The standardized packs seem to generate a change in the product meaning, which, by breaking the positive representation of the smoker's personality, transmitted by cigarette brands, directs the smoker's image to a reality close to the diseases associated with smoking.

Key words: tobacco use disorder; tobacco-derived products packing; perception; tobacco-derived products labeling.

RESUMO

Introdução: O tabagismo persiste como grave problema de saúde pública, apesar dos avanços nos campos da saúde e legislativos, que culminaram em redução significativa na prevalência de fumantes. No entanto, a embalagem de cigarros continua exercendo papel publicitário em pontos de venda, festivais culturais e Internet. Essa estratégia reflete no aumento do tabagismo entre jovens, o que exige a implementação de novas medidas. A padronização das embalagens tem sido adotada internacionalmente, com resultados relevantes. **Objetivo:** Desvendar percepções e representações das embalagens padronizadas de cigarros entre adultos fumantes e não fumantes brasileiros, e identificar possíveis efeitos na experimentação, consumo e cessação do tabagismo. **Método:** Foram constituídos seis grupos focais em três capitais. Fumantes e não fumantes manipularam protótipos dessas embalagens, descrevendo experiências próximas da vida real. Os participantes também avaliaram as cores dos protótipos. Seus depoimentos foram submetidos à análise de conteúdo desenvolvida manualmente pelos pesquisadores, identificando percepções e representações, e apontando possíveis repercussões sobre o comportamento de fumar. **Resultados:** As percepções dos participantes apontaram menor atratividade e menor qualidade do produto, levando ao desinteresse em sua compra. As advertências sanitárias foram percebidas como mais proeminentes, tornando os riscos do tabagismo mais evidentes. Os resultados sugerem que essas embalagens desencorajam a experimentação e iniciação entre jovens, com potenciais estímulos à cessação do tabagismo. **Conclusão:** As embalagens padronizadas parecem gerar mudança de significação sobre o produto, que, ao romperem a representação positiva da personalidade do fumante transmitida pelas marcas de cigarros, direcionam sua imagem para uma realidade próxima das enfermidades associadas ao tabagismo.

Palavras-chave: tabagismo; embalagem de produtos derivados do tabaco; percepção; rotulagem de produtos derivados do tabaco.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El tabaquismo persiste como un grave problema de salud pública, a pesar de los avances legislativos y en la salud que se han culminado en una importante reducción de la prevalencia de fumadores. Sin embargo, los paquetes de cigarrillos siguen teniendo un papel publicitario en puntos de venta, festivales culturales e Internet. Esta estrategia se refleja en el aumento del tabaquismo entre los jóvenes, lo que obliga a implementar nuevas medidas. La estandarización de los paquetes de cigarrillos ha sido adoptada internacionalmente, con resultados relevantes. **Objetivo:** Descubrir las percepciones y representaciones del empaquetado estandarizado de los cigarrillos entre adultos fumadores y no fumadores en Brasil, e identificar los posibles efectos sobre la experimentación, el consumo y la cesación tabáquica. **Método:** Se crearon seis grupos focales en tres capitales. Fumadores y no fumadores manipularon prototipos de estos paquetes, describiendo experiencias casi reales. Los participantes también evaluaron los colores de los prototipos. Sus declaraciones fueron sometidas a análisis de contenido, desarrollado manualmente por los investigadores, identificando percepciones y representaciones, y señalando posibles repercusiones sobre la conducta tabáquica. **Resultados:** Las percepciones de los participantes indicaron menor atractivo y menor calidad del producto, lo que generó desinterés por comprarlo. Las advertencias sanitarias se perciben como más prominentes, haciendo los riesgos del tabaquismo más evidentes. Los resultados sugieren que estos paquetes desalientan la experimentación y la iniciación entre los jóvenes, con estímulos potenciales para dejar de fumar. **Conclusión:** Los paquetes estandarizados parecen generar un cambio de significado sobre el producto, que, al romper la representación positiva de la personalidad del fumador, transmitida por las marcas de cigarrillos, dirige su imagen a una realidad cercana a las enfermedades asociadas al tabaquismo.

Palabras clave: tabaquismo; envasado de productos derivados del tabaco; percepción; etiquetado de productos derivados del tabaco.

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INTRODUCTION

Smoking persists as a serious public health problem in Brazil responsible for 161 thousand deaths annually, corresponding to 13% of all deaths in the country in one year and 443 deaths daily. In addition, it generates an annual burden of R\$ 125 billion to the economy for health-related treatment costs, care to the family and loss of labor productivity¹.

In the last 30 years, several policies have been adopted to reduce tobacco use, as the definition of minimum prices, tax raise, insertion of health warnings about smoking damages in cigarette packs, tobacco advertising bans in the media and prohibition of smoking in public places². These measures resulted in a significant decline of the national smokers prevalence according to the National Health Survey: from 2008 to 2019 it dropped from 18.2% to 12.6%. Nevertheless, this is equivalent to 26 million smokers subjected to severe and disabling diseases. In addition, the prevalence among young individuals from 18 to 24 years kept stable in 10.6% between 2013 and 2019 reflecting the increase of smoke initiation in lower age-ranges. The National Research of the Student's Health⁴ revealed that the proportion of 16- and 17-years students who smoked cigarettes has risen from 29.1% in 2015 to 32.6% in 2019, with an important growth among girls. These results raised a red flag for public health and suggest that novel public policies need to be adopted.

Within a legislative restraining scenario for the main cigarette advertising media, the tobacco industry redirected its marketing investments to the packs to capture new consumers⁵. Increasingly sophisticated new formats, textures, graphic elements and colors, packs took the central stage of advertising initiatives in Brazil, mainly because of the legal permission to expose cigarette packs in points of sale, as bakeries, convenience stores, newsstands, bars and restaurants⁶. Packs also became exposed in promotion actions in cultural events, tv series and social media⁷.

Several countries followed Australia's initiative to break these marketing strategies in packs and determined that cigarette packs should use color and format patterns as ruled by health regulatory agencies – the so-called plain packaging (PP). Empirical analyzes provide evidences to justify the introduction of PP as effective public health intervention to reduce smoking⁸.

Tobacco products in Brazil are strictly ruled and must inform consumers about tobacco harms. In two decades, printed health warnings in cigarette packs progressed from a single and poorly visible phrase to a set of phrases with contrasting colors and striking images portraying the effects of tobacco use, covering the entire back of the

pack⁹. Further to this graphic set, other health messages and the phone number of “*Disque Saúde*” (Dial Health Help) became visible in the pack¹⁰. This regulatory evolution indicates that the country is following the pathway that Scollo et al.¹¹ called as “logic progression”: the PP is a natural and necessary outcome of regulatory packs improvement, an evolution of health warnings and a move to be embraced by the countries which have already stepped up with the main measures of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control¹².

This article attempts to unravel perceptions and social representations about PP and its possible effects on experimentation, use and tobacco cessation in adult smokers and non-smokers living in three capitals of Brazilian different regions. This is the first national study to address adult men and women manipulating prototypes of PP.

METHOD

This qualitative investigation assumed that the contact with PP prototypes would stimulate sensorial and cognitive perceptions, bringing up diverse interpretations and their respective representations immersed in different social and geographical contexts. The sensorial experience was taken as a concept of perception (a biological phenomenon mediated mostly by sensorial organs) that generates an interpretation (a psychosocial phenomenon by which the objects or facts perceived gain sense or meaning)¹³. Minayo¹⁴ indicates that the interaction among the study's participants reveals their perception of the object and the reality, their values and explains the structure of their system of references and symbols, transmitting the representations of a group in a certain social and economic context. In the same direction, Del Rio and Oliveira¹⁵ understand that the representation is an extension of the perception because it introduces it into a system of representative signification whose significant can be the forms of language, the images, the gestures whose meaning encompasses the space, the idea or the sense.

The data were collected through focus groups technique, common in social researches, mainly those which aim to evaluate programs, public ruling and marketing¹⁶. The groups were moderated by a professional of the market research company, Datafolha, and by one team's investigator following a semistructured script with the questions: whether differences were identified among the current cigarette packs and the prototypes; what the prototypes transmitted or communicated; which interests they triggered; if cigarettes would be purchased with this pack and to what purpose; if they believed the prototypes would impact the smokers and non-smokers; and what

colors draw more or less interests. One of the research room walls had a mirror and behind it, two investigators monitored the discussions after the interviewees' consent.

The groups occurred in October 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Recife and Porto Alegre cities, based on the prevalence of smokers of 2016¹⁷, combined with its geographic distribution, the multifaceted cultural and social realities and within the study's budget.

The participants recruitment criteria were: (1) age-range – 18-55 years old adults; individuals older than 55 years were excluded due to potential tobacco-related morbidities that could compromise the perceptions; (2) education – illiterate adults or with incomplete elementary school were excluded because the texts and brands on cigarette packs needed to be read and (3) smoking profile – smokers and non-smokers: individuals who smoked every day and occasional smokers who used to smoke every day in the past were defined as smokers; individuals who did not smoke when the investigation was conducted and those who had never experimented and ex-smokers were defined as non-smokers. This characterization follows the National Health Research³ standard.

The participants were distributed considering their gender and divided in two age-ranges, from 18 to 24 years and from 25 to 55 years. This division aimed to identify perceptions and representations closer to the adolescents since the tobacco industry directs great part of their advertising to young people¹⁸. It was decided to mingle different smoking profiles into the same group, stimulating discussions about different and conflicting life experiences and perspectives, and ideas exchange.

Locally traded cigarette packs and two sets of eight prototypes (16 in all) of PP (Figure 1) were used, following the PP colors standard tested in Australia¹⁹. Letters from A to H were assigned to facilitate the identification during the debates. Each prototype showed one of ten health warning images in force at the time. The prototypes manipulation strategy aimed to emerge experiences close to the real life.

After the end of each group discussions, a card was handed over to each participant, asking them to rank the eight prototypes colors in response to the question: "From 0 to 10, where 0 is the color you like the least and 10 the color you like the most, please score each color below". This exercise was intended to deepen the analysis, identify the consistency and determine the classification of the colors.

The discussions were audiotaped and fully transcribed. The content analysis method was applied to organize the communications through systematic procedures of categorization and interpretation²⁰. The analysis was made manually by the investigators based in scientific literature



Figure 1. Prototypes of plain packaging of cigarettes utilized in the investigation

topics which guided the script construction and considering the emerging significant codifications suggested by the investigators after reading the transcriptions. This group of initial codifications were debated, reorganized, and agreed by the investigators into final categories. The research aimed to answer the question: How adult smokers and non-smokers perceive and represent cigarettes PP? What would be the repercussions of the PP on smoking initiation and cessation?

The study was developed according to INCA's Ethical Review Board and approved through report number 2,313,277 (CAAE (submission for ethical review: 75017617.1.0000.5274) in compliance with Resolution number 466/12 of the National Health Council²¹. All the participants signed the Informed Consent Form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The investigation enrolled 47 participants, 25 men and 22 women distributed in six focus groups, most of them having completed high-school (n= 35) and college (n= 12). The distribution by sex and smokers and non-smokers was balanced in the groups.

Overall, packs are one of the main communication resources between the user and the brand because the direct contact with the target-population functions as a business card: the goal is to arouse emotions, stir the senses and create reactions as satisfaction, well-being, joyfulness and pleasure in using²².

The tobacco industry documents, disclosed from international lawsuits, show how packs physical features (as length and texture) and pictograms (color and graphic elements) are critical to create an identification with the user, a statement of its personality and

lifestyle^{23,24}. Cigarette packs were designed to transmit positive attributes associated with elegance, charm, wealth and success²⁵, representations constructed by a set of advertising strategies sponsored by the tobacco industry²⁶. This subliminal strategy seems to resonate in the participants' unconscious and meanings of the pack currently traded:

If I had a cigarette like this [brand] and a lighter, I see myself at the Outback restaurant [...] wearing a leather jacket. I am the man. If I saw a man doing this, I would say: he knows how to live (18-24 years, Rio de Janeiro).

Vogue, Dunhil nano and L&A are for sophisticated people, the elite (18-24 years, Recife).

Contrary to other packaging thrown away after opened, cigarette pack is kept with the smoker or within its reach during the whole day, constantly handled and visible while in use. It works as a portable advertise permanently displayed²⁷. For McCracken²⁸, advertising is an instrument that transports the meaning of the cultural and historically established world to a product. The meaning instilled in

the product is, on its turn, transferred to the consumer through symbolic or "ritual" actions which affirm, evoke, or revise the symbols and meanings of the cultural order.

The study, therefore, stems from a context where tobacco use and packs are vested with a symbolism and take over meanings and senses socially constructed in an environment permeated by consumption-targeted marketing strategies, resonating on the individuals' collective memory. The prototypes perceptions and representations seem to break these strategies and create new meanings. The results are organized according to categories, resulting from content analysis and age-groups (Table 1).

The participants' narratives brought up immediate perceptions that the removal of graphic elements as many colors and drawings from packs seem to turn PP less attractive and less flashy. The plainness of PP is evident when dark, cold and basic colors are mentioned and references to poor stimulation and arousal of sensations.

The rupture of the attractiveness seems to result in manifestations of disinterest for the pack, possibly affecting the experimentation or continuous use: "I would not buy this cigarette"; "It's not for me" (see Table 1). In

Table 1. Participants' perceptions about plain packaging according to categories and age-groups

Categories of perception	Age-group	Participants' narratives
Disinterest	18-24 years	"The plain has no visual appeal. I make sweet pastries, I know customers are drawn by the visual of a pie, of a sweet. With cigarettes, it must be the same thing". (Recife)
		"Didn't like, most of them are dark, grey, black, it's unappealing". (Porto Alegre)
		"Plain packaging has more cold colors". (Recife)
	25-55 years	"There is nothing here, nothing fancy, quite boring". (Rio de Janeiro)
		"Only three colors. The basic, unappealing". (Porto Alegre)
		"The pack does not stir my feelings. I wouldn't buy this cigarette". (Rio de Janeiro)
		"If the pack changes, it sucks, less appealing". (Recife)
		"No fun, no quality, no appeal. It's not for me". (Recife)
Health warns	18-24 years	"You turn the pack to see what is there because there is nothing at the front". (Recife)
		"Health information draw attention in the light-colored packs". (Recife)
	25-55 years	"Disque Saúde" (Dial Health Help) 136 draws attention". (Recife)
		"Current packs barely show how bad it is. Plain packaging shows what the reality is". (Rio de Janeiro)

addition, PP seem to damage cigarette quality perception, like the product in a PP was mentioned with poor flavor or low-quality tobacco, negatively affecting the intent-to-buy.

These results are consistent with international findings which showed that PP is seen as less attractive and also perceived to be poorer quality, poor tasting and cheaper than branded equivalents. In addition, PP weakened positive impressions of the smoker identity and personality attributes associated with specific brands²⁹.

In the category “health warnings”, the narratives suggested the prototypes apparently eliminate the competition between the current packs’ graphic features and the health warnings printed on them, directing the smoker attention straight to the warns and putting it in first place for the reader, an outcome corroborated by the literature^{30,31}. The Brazilian health warnings use a rejection approach opposing the positive signification adopted by the industry. Together with public educative campaigns, it contributes to repurpose the smoking cultural meaning while exposing the disease and death outcomes.

A recent study evaluating the national health warnings revealed that some cigarette packs portray yellow colors in the brand’s area, the same color used by the warnings. This industry strategy can reduce the messages impact. The

study recommends the adoption of PP to mitigate this strategy and widen the health communication³².

The category “harmfulness” emphasizes statements that associate PP with death, poison and health effects, and seem to reflect a better understanding of the risk or tobacco-related damages. The elimination of attractive features, redirecting the attention to health warnings, seems to bridge packaging to the reality, undoing connections with the imaginary and making the smoking consequences more evident. Studies suggest that PP has the potential to break these false beliefs about how unharmed cigarette is^{33,34}. In a study with British smokers, when asked about health risks between eight cigarette brands, nearly 75% reported erroneously that the risk was different among them. When the brand colors and images were removed these beliefs disappeared³⁵.

The PP association with medication packages is also significant. Even as the different colors of traditional packs portray the flavor added to the product³⁶, the new PP graphic design with health warnings highlighted drives the participants to representations of controlled medicines, transmitting an opposite semantic to health (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants’ representations about the plain pack according to categories and age groups

Categories of representations	Age group	Participants’ narratives
Negative emotions	18-24 years	“I would not buy this stuff, gives me creeps”. (Recife)
		“These packs are for those who smoke alone at home, it’s hell”. (Recife)
	25-55 years	“It is the underworld, apocalypses, doesn’t pull me in”. (Recife)
		“Dull, somber, gloomy”. (Rio de Janeiro) “Rejection. Nausea”. (Rio de Janeiro)
Harmfulness	18-24 years	“The product seems more health-damaging with the plain packs”. (Recife)
		“I believe this will kill me”. (Rio de Janeiro)
		“It’s what draws more attention to the cigarette harms”. (Rio de Janeiro)
		“Looks like Epocler®. I would feel the same flavor of Epocler®”. (Porto Alegre)
	25-55 years	“If I buy this pack, I would join a funerary consortium too”. (Recife)
		“The design makes it look like a coffin. Nothing attractive”. (Porto Alegre)
		“Looks like a poison box”. (Porto Alegre)
		“It looks like controlled medicine”. (Recife) “If I saw only the name on it, I wouldn’t buy it, thought it was a medicine”. (Porto Alegre)

The participants designed a new smoker profile emerged from this array of less attractive packs (where positive attributes are not depicted) and the product harmfulness representation. The narratives started to represent the PP smoker with negative emotions, describing him as someone sad, depressed, and disinterested, who lives in a “dark underworld”. Its image is closer to the representation of someone affected by a severe physical or psychological disease associated with tobacco use. This new profile will not be admired or emulated by the social group. The speeches showed that plain packs affect the “badge product” concept³⁷: they are no more a live statement in favor of the brand and do not transmit the personality designed through the pack, suggesting the PP smoker would not display the product openly.

Table 3 presents what the participants said about the possible repercussions of PP on smokers and non-smokers behaviors.

A core research question is whether PP would have effect on the experimentation by non-smokers. The results suggest PP would impact young adults particularly,

including the occasional smoker in parties or nightclubs who wouldn't be curious enough to try for the first time. All focal groups shared this same opinion.

Regardless of many narratives indicating that PP provoke negative feelings, the participants are divided about the repercussions on the smokers' behavior. Part of the participants declared that smokers would reduce or quit because they would be disinterested for the packs, added by the perception of health harms.

Others participants indicated that the prototypes wouldn't affect the smokers behavior, suggesting that nicotine-dependence – the necessity of psychological, physical and behavioral satisfactions – and the search for flavor and pleasure would invariably lead them to continue smoking. Since the first contact with the cigarette encouraged by marketing strategies or pressure of the social group, nicotine takes over the command, seizing the young adult by the chemical and psychological dependence, making him a dependent adult who usually becomes loyal to the brand as he ages³⁸. This experimentation-use-dependence process moves into

Table 3. Repercussions of plain packs on smokers and non-smokers behaviors, per participants age-range

Age range	Repercussion on non-smokers' behaviors	Repercussions on smokers' behaviors
18-24 years	<p>“The non-smoker wouldn't want to find out”. (Rio de Janeiro)</p> <p>“It will be like Derby®, that classic stuff, the young adult don't want to smoke”. (Porto Alegre)</p> <p>“It doesn't encourage anyone to smoke. Many smokers do it to show the cigarette”. (Recife)</p> <p>“When drinking, the young adult smokes to show it off. But with this pack, this is not going to happen”. (Porto Alegre)</p>	<p>“Only somebody who needs smoking will buy this cigarette”. (Recife)</p> <p>“The smoker wouldn't quit. Who smokes because of the flavor, doesn't quit”. (Porto Alegre)</p> <p>“I will buy because I need it, but the pack is ugly”. (Rio de Janeiro)</p> <p>“Among smokers, a few will quit, some will not”. (Porto Alegre)</p> <p>“If the pack was like this, the number of smokers would drop”. (Rio de Janeiro)</p>
25-55 years	<p>“It is not to capture new smokers”. (Recife)</p> <p>“The beginner will not try, it will be embarrassing”. (Rio de Janeiro)</p> <p>“Young adults are competitive, like to show that his stuff is better than anyone's else. These packs would not be accepted, because anyone would have the same stuff, this is boring”. (Porto Alegre)</p> <p>“It can strike the guy who smokes only in a party or nightclub. The product will sell less”. (Rio de Janeiro)</p> <p>“It doesn't attract the non-smoker” (Recife)</p>	<p>“The smoker will never quit, regardless of this PP model”. (Rio de Janeiro)</p> <p>“For the smoker, what matters is what is inside the pack.” (Porto Alegre)</p> <p>“I will keep smoking, no matter the package. I like the flavor”. (Rio de Janeiro)</p> <p>“It will not impact the smoker”. (Recife).</p> <p>“I should reduce the use. If all packs were white, it would be dull. It is not the cigarette you want to smoke. I would not show the pack”. (Porto Alegre)</p>

adulthood, making cigarette a permanent presence, and the smoker's preferences and personality go down to a second place. This can explain why some interviewees understand that the smoker loyal to the brand leads him to want the cigarette due to the flavor or his addiction, and not the pack itself.

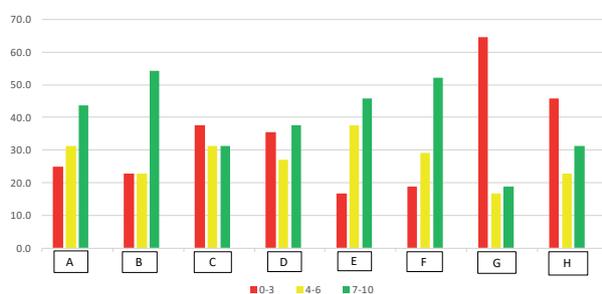
These findings are corroborated by a review of the evidences³⁹, which presented important effects of PP on the behavior of smokers and non-smokers, young or adults as: raised perception of the health risks reducing false beliefs; are perceived as less attractive and appealing, especially for young adults; can make non-smokers less propense to try a cigarette; and can promote tobacco cessation.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PROTOTYPES ACCORDING TO THE COLORS

The scores attributed by the participants were grouped in ranges: 0 to 3, “did not like”; 4 to 6, “neutral colors” or “almost disliked” and 7 to 10, “liked” or “liked a lot”. Graph 1 shows these results.

The colors lime-green (G) – named by participants as mustard and yellow – and white (H) were characterized as the colors they most “did not like”, hinting that these colors can be later considered in the PP: “The white looks like medicine” and “These colors express agony. Yellow made me sick” (adults of 18-24 years from Recife).

The colors classified as they “liked most” were dark-grey (B – called as “graphite”), caramel (F – called “gold”) and cream (E – “nude”). For instance, the 18-24 years old interviewees from Porto Alegre affirmed: “Graphite is fancy” and “The golden box is cute. Depending on the brand, it would be cool”.



Graph 1. Classification of the prototypes in scores from 0 to 10

CONCLUSION

The results suggest the PP graphic characteristics generate disinterest and negative emotions, and raise the understanding about the product harms, potentialized by health warnings prominence. While the tobacco industry historically uses packs as an advertising vehicle and benefits from the “badge product” effect in the current

packs, PP seem to break the brand visual identity and positive attributes currently communicated, re-signifying the product. This effect would result from the absence of attractive graphic elements (as various colors, drawings and symbols) and because the smoking risks become more evident in the PP.

Considering this set composed by unappealing pack, the association with high health risk and pulling away the positive illusory images, PP would impact mainly non-smokers young adults, discouraging the experimentation and those who smoke occasionally in parties and events.

In adulthood, the smoker struggles with nicotine-dependence already established and, according to the interviewee's opinion, he would hardly change their behavior due to PP. On the other hand, some participants believe that PP would be able to encourage smoke cessation while breaking the smoker identification with the pack, associating his image with negative emotions as apathy, depression and rejection. With less positive representations and health warnings more visible, the PP would be less publicly displayed by the smoker, and it could impact its use as instrument of acceptance by the peers and contribute to the *de-normalization* of tobacco in the society.

In addition, the health warnings could have a more effective informative role if they were more evident, expanding the smoker awareness about tobacco-related damages and encouraging to seek help at “*Disque Saúde*” printed on the pack.

These conflicting projections suggest that additional studies should investigate which other health information and warns could be included in the PP to encourage more dependent smokers to look for help to quit smoking and move towards a health protective consensus.

The limitations of the study are the absence of minors, illiterates (a substantial portion of the population) and the exclusion of low-income individuals, usually a significant number of smokers. In addition, it was not possible to identify and analyze separately the narratives of smokers and non-smokers because only the audio of the groups was recorded. New studies investigating these issues should be conducted to broaden national scientific evidences.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Felipe Lacerda Mendes and Cristina de Abreu Perez contributed substantially to the study design, development, analysis and data interpretation, writing and review. Letícia Casado contributed substantially to the study design, development and data review. Mariana Coutinho Marques de Pinho contributed substantially to the development and data review. Marismary Horsth

de Seta contributed substantially to the data analysis and interpretation, writing and review. All the authors approved the final version to be published.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

As executive editor of INCA’s *Revista Brasileira de Cancerologia* the author Letícia Casado declares potential conflict of interests. The other authors have no conflict of interests.

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