Design Features and Marketing Appeals of Cigarette Packs in Mexico

Graziele Grilo, MSc; Lisa Lagasse, PhD; Kevin Welding, PhD; Luz Myriam Reynales, PhD; Katherine Smith, PhD; Joanna Cohen, PhD

Background

- Restrictions on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS) have increased the importance of cigarette packs as a marketing tool.
- Cigarette packs build brand identity to maintain smokers’ loyalty and attract new users.
- Assessing pack features and marketing appeals can shed light on techniques tobacco companies use to target consumers.

Methods

- The Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS) systematically collects unique cigarette packs sold in low- and middle-income countries with the greatest number of smokers.
- In 2013, 134 unique packs were purchased from selected vendors from 12 low-, middle, and high-socioeconomic areas in three cities: Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Merida.
- Two packs did not have Mexican health warning labels and were excluded from our sample (N=132).
- Packs were double-coded for marketing appeals and design features.

Results

Brand Variant

- Almost 50% of the sample was comprised of Camel (26), Pall Mall (20) and Marlboro (19) packs.

Flavor

- Flavor was communicate through: (1) specific terminology (e.g. "black freeze") on 17% of the packs; (2) illustrations of flavor capsules, such as power buttons (13%) and balls (8%).
- 20% of the packs displayed flavor capsule technology on the stick (e.g. click and roll, activate freshness).

Number of Sticks per Pack

- 30% of packs stated having fewer than 20 sticks (26% were 14/sticks per pack).

Marketing Appeals

- 44% of the packs presented "classic" images, such as established years and crests, seals, and coat of arms; and 33% used different terms to communicate "classic".
- Luxury and quality terminology was found on 41% of the packs.
- 34% of the packs had mentions of the USA, including specific states and cities.
- 75% of the packs had English text on the front (not including brand name/crest/logo).

Conclusion

- The analysis indicates a focus on the following features and appeals: terminology and imagery communicating "classic", luxury and quality; mentions of the USA, its cities and states; use of English on the front of the pack; reduced number of sticks per pack; and flavor capsule technology.

Acknowledgements: This work was supported with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (bloomberg.org). Data collection was supported by Maria Guadalupe Flores.

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