

FACT SHEET 1:

The case for plain packaging



Tobacco packaging as a marketing tool

Tobacco packaging provides a direct channel for the tobacco industry to communicate to customers. In the current regulatory environment where tobacco advertising and promotion are highly restricted, the pack design has become a key promotional tool.

Packaging helps to establish brand identity or brand personality in a competitive market¹. Smokers buy brands with imagery that could best represent their self identity². Removing pack branding will strip away the personal identity and connection a tobacco product has with its consumers. It is an important step in treating tobacco products as the harmful and addictive drugs that they are.



What is plain packaging?

Plain packaging means the removal of anything on the packet that makes the products more appealing. All tobacco products will be packaged into the same size, colour and font - both inside and outside. Any brand logos, trademarks, inserts or any decorative designs will be completely removed³.

Is plain packaging effective?

Research shows plain packaging is an effective strategy to reduce the appeal of cigarettes to smokers and young adults. Four major New Zealand studies investigated the perceptions of brand imagery, graphic warnings and plain packaging among adolescent and young adult smokers (Table 1)^{2 4 5 6 7 8}.

According to the World Health Organization^{4 5}, plain packaging is effective in preventing smoking uptake and relapse as it serves three functions.

- It reduces the appeal of packaging or product;
- It increases the salience and effectiveness of health warnings;
- It takes away the perception of products strength and harm.

FACT SHEET 1: The case for plain packaging

Plain packaging makes tobacco products less appealing to young adults

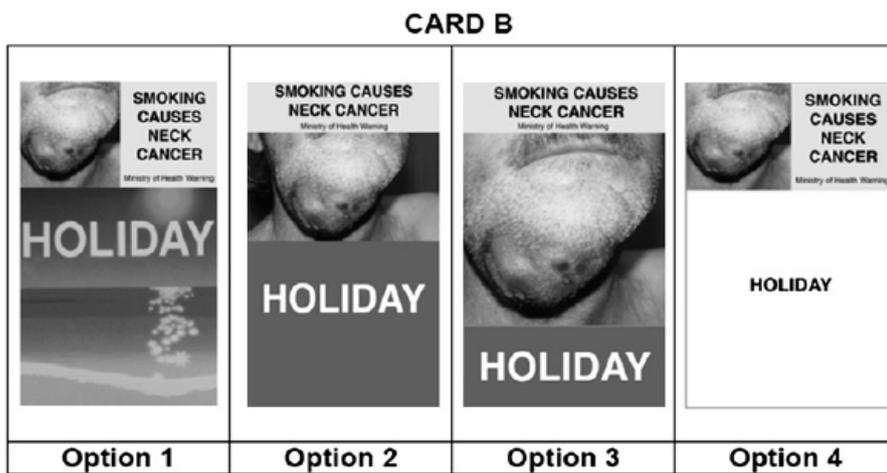
Plain packaging is perceived as less appealing especially among young people and non smokers⁹.

When asked about their perception of tobacco in plain packaging vs. branded packages, plain packaging was thought to be less attractive, poorer quality and poorer tasting, less smooth and cheaper⁹. Plain packaging also weakened the brand association between smokers and the products and created a less desirable smoking identity. Smokers perceived plain packaging as less trendy, less sociable and less mature than the branded packs^{9 14}.

A focus-group study of Year 10 students in New Zealand found participants perceived plain cigarette packs as a 'strong and radical' step towards making smoking 'look budget'⁵. Participants regarded plain packs as 'clear, direct and straight-to-the-point'⁵.

Another New Zealand study⁴ interviewed 292 young adult smokers (age 18-30) on their response to cigarette packet designs varying from plain packs with no graphic warnings to large logos or pictures (Figure 2). The study found that removing brand elements and increasing in graphic health warning size significantly reduced the attractiveness of a cigarette packet⁴. It suggested that branding elements undermined the effect of graphic warnings.

Figure 2: Show-card stimulus⁴



Plain packaging increases the saliency of health warnings

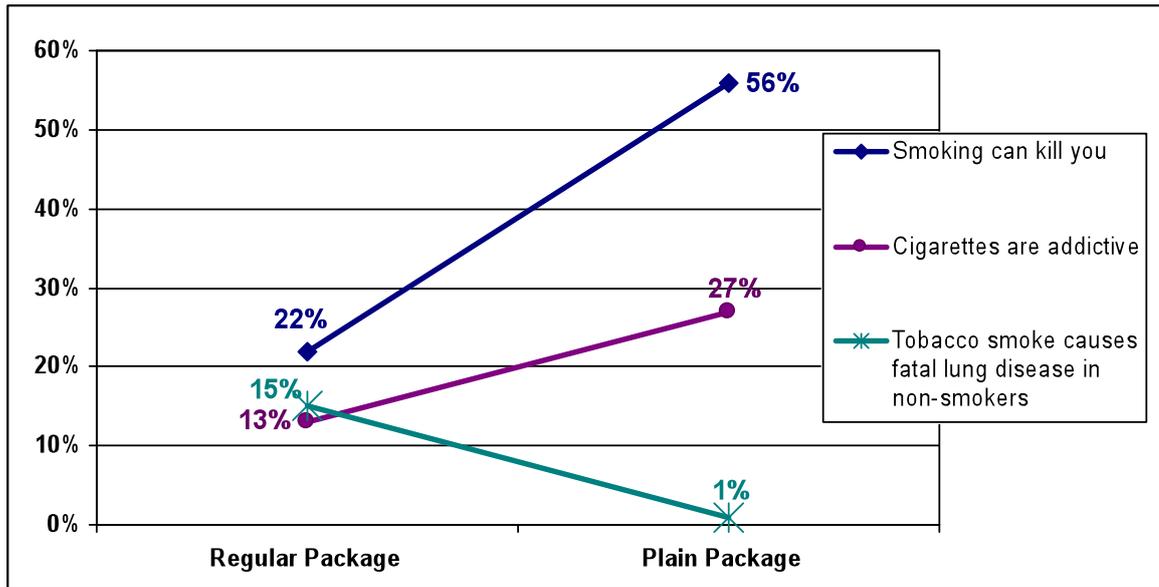
Plain packaging will increase the saliency of health warnings as well as the perceived seriousness and believability^{9 4}.

The New Zealand study also found that participants preferred a complete plain pack to a plain pack with a graphic warning that covered at least 50 per cent of the packet⁴. More participants indicated they would engage in quitting-related behaviour after viewing the plain pack with a large graphic warning.

These results are consistent with previous studies including a Canadian study that surveyed teens that smoke or were likely to smoke. Teens exposed to plain packaging had a higher recall of health warnings than those exposed to regular packaging¹⁵. (Figure 3).

FACT SHEET 1: The case for plain packaging

Figure 3: Percentage of subjects who currently recalled health warnings¹⁵



Smoking-related attitudes, beliefs, intentions and behaviour

Plain packaging is associated with more negative feelings about smoking. Young adult smokers felt plain packaging would lower feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction and increase feelings of embarrassment and shame⁹.

Young adult smokers and nonsmokers interviewed in a qualitative study in New Zealand agreed that plain packaging took away the personal elements that connects tobacco products with consumers².

Other studies also showed plain packaging would reduce smoking uptake especially among young people and increase intentions to quit among smokers⁹.

FACT SHEET 1: The case for plain packaging

NOTES

1. Hammond D. FCTC Article 11: Tobacco packaging and labelling: a review of evidence: University of Waterloo with the support of the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases, 2007.
2. Hoek J, Gendall P, Gifford H, Pirikahu G, McCool J, Pene G, et al. Tobacco Branding, Plain Packaging, Pictorial Warnings, and Symbolic Consumption. *Qualitative Health Research* 2012;22(5):630-639.
3. ASH Australia. Tobacco Facts: Plain packaging of tobacco products, 2010.
4. Hoek J, Wong C, Gendall P, Louviere J, K C. Effects of dissuasive packaging on young adult smokers. *Tobacco Control* 2011;20(3):183-188.
5. McCool J, Webb L, Cameron LD, Hoek J. Graphic warnings labels on plain cigarette packs: Will they make a difference to adolescents? *Social Science & Medicine* 2012;74(2012):1269-1273.
6. Gendall P, Hoek J, Thomson G, Edwards R, Pene G, Gifford H, et al. Young adults' interpretations of tobacco brands: Implications for Tobacco Control. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research Advance* 2011;2011Oct(10):911-18.
7. Tobacco branding and plain packaging: the new frontier in tobacco control? American Marketing Association 20th Anniversary Marketing and Public Policy Conference; 2009 May 28-30; Washington DC.
8. World Health Organization. Guidelines for implementation of Article 11 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (Packaging and labelling of tobacco products), 2008.
9. Moodie C, Stead M, Bauld L, McNeill A. Plain Tobacco Packaging: A Systematic Review. In: Consortium PHR, editor, 2011.
10. Carter SM. The Australian cigarette brand as product, person, and symbol. *Tobacco Control* 2003;12(Suppl III):iii79-iii86.
11. Pollay RW. More than meets the eye: on the importance of retail tobacco merchandising. *Tobacco Control* 2007;16:270-274.
12. TVNZ. Packet helps smokers hide graphic warnings. New Zealand: TVNZ, 2011.
13. Pollay RW, Dewhirst T. The dark side of marketing seemingly "Light" cigarettes: successful images and failed fact. *Tobacco Control* 2002;11 (Suppl 1)(i18-i31).
14. Wakefield M, Germain D, Durkin SJ. How does increasingly plainer cigarette packaging influence adult smokers' perceptions about brand image? An experimental study. *Tobacco Control* 2008;17:416-421.
15. Goldberg ME, Liefeld J, Madill J, H V. The effect of plain packaging on response to health warnings. *American Journal of public health* 1999;89(9):1434-5.