

Plain packaging reduces the appeal of smoking: study

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While Australia has recently passed legislation to ban logos from cigarette packages and to make plain packaging mandatory, other countries are still considering whether or not to take similar measures. New research published in Biomed Central's open access journal *BMC Public Health* provides a report on the appeal of plain cigarette packs, compared to branded packs, among women in Brazil, and finds that plain packs reduce the appeal of their contents.

[Tobacco use](#) is responsible for 5.4 million deaths every year across the world and is a leading cause of preventable death. Like many other countries, Brazil has prohibited most forms of [tobacco advertising](#), but has not addressed the issue of marketing by [tobacco companies](#) via the cigarette pack itself.

Research suggests that many brands appear to specifically target young women by use of 'feminine' colored packs, fruit flavorings, or by suggestive terms such as 'slim' or 'superslim'. Scientists from Canada, the US, and Brazil collaborated on this online study of 640 young Brazilian women to see if these cigarettes had the same appeal when presented in plain packaging (but still with the brand name and description on them). As a final test, the women were able to choose which they would have preferred as a free gift, one of the plain or branded packs (although there was never any intension for the packs to be sent out).

Dr David Hammond from the University of Waterloo, Canada, who led this study explained, "The women in this study rated branded packs as

more appealing, more stylish and sophisticated than the plain packs. They also thought that cigarettes in branded packs would be better tasting and smoother. Removal of all description from the packs, leaving only the brand, further reduced their appeal. In the pack offer test, participants were three times more likely to choose the branded pack as a free gift."

The results from this study, the first to look at the effect of plain cigarette packaging on smoking in [Latin America](#), backs up research in other countries, which has found that plain packaging makes cigarettes less appealing to young people.

Christine White from the University of Waterloo, Canada, concluded, "Our results suggest that plain packaging and the removal of brand descriptors are likely to reduce the appeal of smoking for youth and young adults. Overall, these findings support the recommendations for plain packaging in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control."

More information: The potential impact of plain packaging of cigarette products among Brazilian young women: an experimental study Christine M White, David Hammond, James F Thrasher and Geoffrey T Fong, *BMC Public Health* (in press)

Provided by BioMed Central

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