

'Horrible, disgusting and dirty': Adolescents' perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes

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ABSTRACT

Overview: In countries such as Ireland, where comprehensive restrictions around the promotion and advertising of tobacco products exist, cigarette packaging is now the primary advertising tool of the tobacco industry. The introduction of plain packaging cigarettes will result in the removal of all design elements such as colours and logos allowing only the brand name in a standardised typeface and size on a dark brown background. In addition the health warnings will be increased to cover 70% of the surface of the package.

Objectives: To investigate adolescents perceptions of both branded and plain packaging cigarettes and the potential impact of plain packaging on smoking behaviour. In addition, motives for selecting particular brands of cigarettes were examined.

Methods: This was a qualitative study consisting of four focus groups discussions that included 24 adolescents (12 girls and 12 boys) with a mean age of 15.5 years.

Results: Price emerged as the most influential factor when it comes to cigarette brand selection. Consistent with previous research, plain packaging cigarettes were perceived to be considerably less attractive than branded packaging cigarettes. Moreover, the health warnings contained on plain packaging cigarettes were perceived to be much more visible and may have the potential reduce the uptake of smoking among adolescents.

Conclusion: Tobacco control policies which increase the price of tobacco in conjunction with the introduction of plain packaging cigarettes could be a strong policy tool to reduce the appeal and uptake of smoking among adolescents.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The use of tobacco products continues to be the leading cause of global preventable deaths killing approximately six million people worldwide every year (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2011a). According to the WHO (2011a) if the current global trends in tobacco consumption were to continue, by the year 2030 tobacco will kill over eight million people worldwide annually. Furthermore, tobacco use is the biggest single contributory factor to the leading non communicable diseases (NCD's) which account for 63% of global mortality (63 million deaths per year). These diseases include cardiovascular disease (CVD), primary cancers, diabetes and chronic lung disease (WHO, 2011a).

In Ireland, smoking kills almost 5,200 people annually (Department of Health and Children, 2011). In addition, a recent EU study has estimated that the treatment of smoking related diseases costs the Irish state approximately €500 million per year (European Commission, 2012a). Currently according to The National Office of Tobacco Control (2012) 22% of the adult population in Ireland smoke. The uptake of smoking appears largely to be an adolescent phenomenon, with 78% of the Irish population reporting adopting the habit before the age of 18 years of age (National Office of Tobacco Control, 2006). In addition, Irish adolescents begin smoking at an earlier age than any other European country (16.4 years) (European Commission, 2012b). The most recent data collected on the smoking rates among Irish children show that 12% of 10-17 year olds currently smoke (Kelly, Gavin, Molcho, & Nic Gabhainns (2012). Smoking rates among 15-17 year olds have increased by 2.93% since December 2011 and are currently reported to be at 13.3% (Health Service Executive, 2013).

Ireland now enforces a range of comprehensive anti tobacco legislation and is ranked among one of the top countries in the world when it comes to tobacco control policies. Furthermore, in October 2013 the Department of Health launched its new tobacco control policy *Tobacco Free Ireland* which aims to make Ireland smoke free by 2025 (< 5% of the population smoking) (Department of Health, 2013). In an attempt to reduce the current smoking rates in Ireland particularly among children and adolescents, *Tobacco Free Ireland* contains plans to introduce legislation in 2014 which will see the introduction of plain packaging cigarettes.

Plain packaging cigarettes, which can also be referred to as; generic, standardised or homogeneous cigarette packaging, means the prohibition of all forms of branding on tobacco products which includes; logos, colours, trademarks and any forms of imagery. However, the use of a brand name and product is permitted but only in a standard font and colour. All plain

package cigarettes must be of standard size, of which 70% of the surface will consist of graphic health warnings placed on a dark brown background. In addition the use of descriptors such as smooth, mild and will be prohibited (Cunningham, & Kyle, 1995). According to the WHO (2013) plain packaging aims to; reduce the attractiveness of the product, break brand association, make health warnings contained on cigarette packaging more prominent and effective and also seek to reduce the capability to mislead the consumer regarding the true harms of tobacco consumption by the use of descriptors such as, smooth, light and menthol. A systematic review by Moodie, Angus, Stead and Bauld (2013) which examined 17 studies relating to plain packaging cigarettes suggests that plain packaging cigarettes would meet all of the aforementioned aims. As a result, the introduction of plain packaging may be a valuable tool in reducing the uptake of smoking among adolescents. Therefore the overall aim of this study is to investigate adolescents' perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes in an Irish setting.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will discuss the health implications of smoking and factors which may contribute to smoking among adolescents including the influence of; peers, family, personal factors, the media and the marketing of cigarettes. It will also examine the current evidence to support the introduction of plain packaging cigarettes as a potential tool to reduce adolescent smoking rates.

2.2 Health Implications of Smoking

It is now well established that half of all smokers will die from a smoking related disease as a result of their habit (National Office of Tobacco Control, 2013). Extensive evidence also now shows that smoking cigarettes is unambiguously responsible for a plethora of negative health outcomes. A review by Boyle (1997) which included findings from European cancer experts, concluded that such health problems include; cancers of the mouth, oesophagus, larynx, stomach, pancreas, bladder, liver, kidney and leukaemia. Additionally, this review has identified cigarette smoking to be a direct cause of various respiratory diseases, heart disease and stroke. In total, it was stated that cigarette smoking can be attributed to twenty four different causes of death (Boyle, 1997).

In addition to the long-term negative health consequences of smoking, adolescents who smoke may experience several short-term negative health outcomes. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012) adolescent smokers experience early signs of heart disease, have lower physical fitness levels, and increased resting heart rates compared to their non smoking counterparts. Moreover, adolescent smokers produce twice as much chest phlegm, are three times more likely to suffer from breathing problems and have higher rates of mental health problems than non-smoking adolescents (Arday, 1995). Finally, adolescent smoking is also associated with an array of risky health behaviours. Such behaviours include; increased alcohol consumption, driving under the influence of alcohol, being involved in violence, having unprotected sex, and using marijuana and cocaine (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Overall, it appears that there are clear detrimental effects of smoking on health of both adults and young people. However, despite this, adults and in particular adolescents and young people continue to smoke.

2.3 Current Smoking Rates Among Irish Adolescents

In Ireland, the uptake of smoking appears largely to be an adolescent phenomenon, with 78% of the Irish population reporting adopting the habit before the age of 18 years of age (National Office of Tobacco Control, 2006). Irish adolescents begin to smoke at an earlier age of 16.4 years compared to the European average of 17.6 years (European Commission, 2012b). According to Kelly, Gavin, Molcho, & Nic Gabhainns (2012) data collected in the most recent Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey shows that 12% of Irish children aged 10-17 currently smoke. The current smoking rates have declined among children aged 10-17 from 15% in 2006. However, smoking rates in adolescents aged 15-17 year olds have increased by 2.93% since December 2011 (Health Service Executive, 2013). While there appears to be no difference in smoking between males and females, there is however, a difference between socio economic groups in relation to smoking prevalence. The survey showed that children from a lower socio economic group are more likely to smoke.

2.4 Factors Related to Adolescent Smoking

There are many factors which influence adolescent smoking, including; peers (Kobus, 2003), family (Avenevoli & Merikangas, 2003), personal factors such as, weight control (Honjo & Sielgal, 2003), stress management (Tyas & Pederson, 1998), the media (Crawford, 2001) and the marketing of smoking products (Hammond, 2008).

2.4.1. Peer Influence on Adolescent Smoking

A critical review by Kolbus (2003) concluded that peer relationships appear to be a primary factor when it comes to adolescent smoking. Similarly in a more recent study, The Attitudes of Europeans Towards Tobacco (2012) survey (European Commission, 2012), showed that the overwhelming majority (79%) of smokers and ex-smokers in the European Union (EU) report the main factor to influence smoking initiation was peer smoking status. The study also identified that a greater proportion (89%) of Irish smokers and ex-smokers were influenced by peers that smoked when it came to smoking initiation in comparison to their European counterparts.

Charlton & Blair (1989) highlighted the role peers play in smoking initiation among English boys (n=1125) and girls (n=1213) aged 12-13 years. The cross sectional study examined factors such as; peer influence, cigarette brand awareness, and perceived positive values of smoking. The results showed that for boys, the most important predictor of smoking initiation

was having a best friend who smoked. The most significant predictors for initiation for girls were found to be; having a positive view of smoking, and a best friend who smoked.

Similarly, Alexander, Piazza, Mekos, & Valente (2001) found the risk of current smoking among adolescents to be significantly related to peer smoking status. The study explored the effects of popularity, best friend smoking and smoking within peer networks, on the current smoking rates of American high school adolescents. The sample included 2525 adolescents in Grades 7-12 who completed an in school questionnaire and home interviews. The study showed that adolescents' who have a best friend who smoked had a twofold increased risk of being a current smoker. In relation to peer networks, adolescents whose peer network consisted of half or more smokers were twice as likely to smoke, compared to adolescents whose peer network consisted of non-smokers. In addition there was a small, but significant increased risk of current smoking associated with increased popularity and prevalence of school smoking. These findings suggest smoking within the school environment may be an important factor in understanding peer influences on adolescent smoking. However, the study was unable to determine whether variables on smoking risk were as a result of peer influence, or whether adolescents who currently smoke actually selected other peers who smoke based on their smoking status.

2.4.2 Familial Influence on Adolescent Smoking

The influence of parents and family is a well a documented risk factor when it comes to the development of smoking among adolescents (Avenevoli & Merikangas, 2003; Crawford, 2001). In particular, parental smoking appears to be strongly associated with smoking initiation in children and adolescents. Bricker et al., (2007) conducted research in the US to investigate the influence that older siblings and parent smoking status had on smoking initiation and progression from childhood to adolescence. The sample included 5,520 children aged approximately eight years. Bricker and colleagues measured both parents and older siblings smoking status. Subsequently, data on the participants smoking status was collected at four grade intervals over the course of adolescence. The results showed that children whose parents smoked when they were eight years of age were significantly more likely to experiment with smoking in adolescence and also, were more likely to progress from monthly to daily smoking.

To further support the relationship between parental smoking and the risk of smoking initiation during adolescence, Gilman et al., (2009) also found that parental smoking was significantly associated with the initiation of smoking in adolescent offspring. This New England study recruited a sample of 563 adolescents aged 12-17, along with one of their parents. Data collected included a lifetime history of smoking for both parents and adolescents. Consistent with previous research, the results showed that parental smoking is a strong predictor of adolescent smoking initiation. Furthermore, this study showed the likelihood of offspring smoking increased when the duration of parental smoking increased and when more than one parent smoked. This suggests a dose response association between parental smoking and offspring smoking.

2.4.3 Personal Factors and Adolescent Smoking

In addition to the above influences of adolescent smoking, studies show adolescents smoking may also be linked to a variety of personal factors such as weight control, stress management (Honjo & Sielgal, 2003; Tyas & Pederson, 1998; Hastings et al., 2013). Over the past few decades, studies have examined the correlation between smoking and weight concerns among adolescents. Most studies reveal that adolescent smoking is significantly correlated with concerns about weight, however, this association appears to be more common among females. (Wiseman et al., 1998; Tomeo et al., 1999; Haug, Heinberg, Guarda, & Ambrose, 2000). A study by Honjo & Seigal (2003) was conducted in order to examine the relationship between smoking initiation and perceived importance of being slim. The researchers conducted a four year prospective cohort study with a sample of 273 female adolescents aged 12-15 years in the US. The participants of the study were drawn from a baseline sample of 1069 adolescents' age 12-15 years from the Massachusetts Tobacco Survey (1993). Perceived importance of thinness was measured on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 was not at all important and 10 was extremely important. The results showed that the participants who valued slimness most strongly and somewhat strongly were more likely to have become regular smokers.

Similarly, in a study by Cawley, Markowitz and Tauras (2004) it was found that girls who perceive themselves as having a weight problem were significantly more likely to begin smoking. This study was carried out in the US and used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 Cohort (NLSY97). The sample comprised of 9,022 male and female adolescents aged 12-16 years. The first wave of data collection was conducted in 1997.

Follow ups were conducted in 1998, 1999 and 2000. The study also found that female adolescents who embark on diets for weight loss are significantly more likely to initiate smoking compared to those who do not diet. In contrast, the researchers found no relationship between weight control and smoking initiation among males. These results would appear to confirm the findings of the US Department of Health and Human Services (2001) report that smoking as a form of weight control, is predominately a female issue.

In addition, the use of cigarettes among adolescents as a form of stress relief has also been studied. It has been shown by Nichter et al., (1997) that adolescent girls frequently cite smoking as a form of stress relief and relaxation. The researchers used qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine factors which contribute to smoking experimentation and initiation in adolescent girls. The sample of 205 girls (mean age 16 years) was drawn from two schools in Arizona (USA). Overall, the results showed that of the 30% of girls who reported smoking, the most common reason cited was smoking to reduce stress and smoking to relax. Sources of stress included; relationships with peers, family environment and school work.

2.4.4 Media Influence on Adolescent Smoking

In addition to peer and family, the mass media has also been shown to have an effect on adolescent smoking initiation. It has been shown through research that tobacco advertising and smoking in magazines, movies and other media increases positive attitudes and smoking intentions among adolescents (Sargent et al., 2005; Wakefield, Flay, Nichter, & Giovino 2003). Villanti, Boulay & Joun, (2011) conducted a study in the US on peer, parent and media influences on adolescent smoking. Methods used were a self administered survey (The National Youth Tobacco Survey) to students aged 10-17 years of age in 267 schools across fifty states of US. Overall, 22,111 students participated in the study. Results of the study showed that exposure to tobacco advertising is significantly associated with current smoking among adolescents, particularly in the age range of 10-13 years.

In support of the above findings Morgenstern and colleagues (2013) conducted a cross sectional study across six European countries (Germany, Netherlands, Iceland, Poland, Italy and Scotland) to examine the association between exposure to smoking in the movies and adolescent smoking among different sub groups, including socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnicity. A total of 16,551 participants with a mean age of 13.4 years were recruited from 114 state schools in the six countries. Exposure to movie smoking was assessed by asking the

participants' how many times (if ever) they had previously viewed a selection of 'box hit' movies released over a previous five year period some of which contained smoking scenes. The results showed that across all sub groups there was a significant association between ever having smoked and movie smoking exposure. However, it must be acknowledged that this study provides relatively weak evidence when compared to the study below which due to its intervention type design provides stronger evidence to support the role of advertising on smoking.

This study has examined the consequences of a tobacco advertising ban which was undertaken in Brazil by Galduroz, Fonseca, Noto & Carlin (2007). The aim of the study was to compare smoking rates in both primary and secondary schools prior to, and following the tobacco advertising ban (introduced in 2000) which covered all Brazilian media. The study used two identical surveys in order to ensure comparability of results, one from 1997 and the other from 2004. Both surveys were administered among a random sample of primary and secondary school students in ten of the largest cities in Brazil. The study examined lifetime tobacco use and results showed that following the media ban on advertising the rates of lifetime smoking were significantly reduced in all but two cities. Overall, the use of lifetime tobacco since the introduction of the tobacco ban had fallen from 37% in 1997 to 25% in 2004. These results reinforce the notion that tobacco advertising increases tobacco consumption among adolescents.

2.4.5 Marketing and Adolescent Smoking

In the world of marketing it is well acknowledged that, the packaging of consumer products is far more than the mere container they are housed in (Underwood, Klein & Burke, 2001). Rather, the packaging of a product; encourages purchases, adds value, allows for product identification, increases attractiveness and even ensures repeat purchases. For decades, cigarette packaging has been used by the tobacco industry as a vital marketing tool to conjure up a myriad of positive images associated with its product (Freeman, Chapman & Rimmer, 2008). These images are strongly associated with; status, luxury, increased attractiveness, freedom and the ability to link smoking to increased femininity or masculinity (Cunningham & Kyle, 1995; Doxey & Hammond, 2010). Such positive associations are achieved in a number of different ways, through; colour, images and logos (Wakefield, Morley, Horan & Cummings, 2002), font and the design of the package (Moodie & Ford, 2011). According to

Hammond (2008) cigarettes are viewed particularly by adolescents, as a ‘badge commodity’, therefore, allowing the adolescent to portray a certain type of desired self image and personal identity.

A study by Scheffels (2007) was undertaken to explore how young adult smokers construct their identity in terms of cigarette brands and package design. This study was conducted in Norway where the advertising of cigarettes has been prohibited since 1975. The researcher conducted a qualitative study of 21 smokers (11 males and 10 females) with an average age of 18 years. Results from the interviews showed cigarette brands and the design of cigarette packages (such as colour, illustrations and brand image) appear to be an integral part of social identity, status and allows for the portrayal of positive personal attributes. In particular, certain brands such as Marlboro Light and Lucky Strike were described as ‘elegant and feminine’ and associated with a higher social class image. In contrast the original Marlboro in red packaging was associated with masculinity and ruggedness. The findings of this study indicate that branding and packaging are an important part of tobacco advertising even in countries where direct advertising is prohibited. Therefore, policies to reduce advertising through cigarette brand imagery and packaging may be an important strategy to potentially reduce the attractiveness of smoking among young adults and adolescents when it comes to identity formation.

2.5 Current Tobacco Control legislation in Ireland

In November 2005 Ireland became a member of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) (Tobacco Control Laws, 2013). The FCTC is a framework which was established to facilitate an ongoing diplomatic process aimed at tackling the damage caused to global public health via the consumption of tobacco products. As a result, Ireland now enforces a number of comprehensive tobacco control legislation and is now ranked among the top countries in the world in this area (Department of Health, 2013). Current legalisation under the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts (2004, 2007, 2009, & 2013) include; a ban on smoking in the workplace, a ban on the sale of cigarettes in packets of ten, prohibition of in-store display, advertising and promotion of tobacco products, cigarette vending machines restricted to licensed premises only and the introduction of graphic health warnings on cigarette packs (Irish Statute Book, 2013). As discussed previously, in addition to the above legislation Ireland plans to introduce mandatory plain packaging cigarettes in 2014 (Department of Health, 2013).

2.6 The History of Plain Packaging Cigarettes

The concept of plain packaging first emerged in Canada during the late 1980's following the tobacco industries' challenge to proposed Canadian legislation banning the advertising of tobacco. Evidence put forward by the Imperial Tobacco Company revealed that most cigarette consumers failed to distinguish between different brands of cigarettes when blind-tested. Therefore, it is actually the name and package which gives rise to the products characteristics' (Aubin, 1989). Similar claims by an executive for the British American Tobacco industry suggested that one out of two smokers are unable to differentiate between brands concluding that consumer choice was influenced by factors attributed to image rather than taste (Aubin, 1989). As a result, proposals for the introduction of plain packaging cigarettes ensued. However, due to strong opposition and threats of legal action by the tobacco industry, the introduction of plain packaging in Canada was postponed (Quit Victoria & Cancer Council Victoria, 2011).

In 2011 Australia became the first country in the world to introduce mandatory plain packaging cigarettes under the Plain Packaging Act, 2010 (Australian Government, 2012). Since the first of December 2012 all tobacco products sold in Australia are now in the form of plain packaging (Lieberman, 2013). The introduction of plain packaging in Australia has been strongly supported by both the WHO (WHO, 2011b) and The Cancer Council of Australia (Cancer Council Australia, 2011). According to the WHO (2011b) the introduction of plain packaging sets a worldwide standard for the control of tobacco.

2.7 Evidence to Support Plain Packaging Cigarettes

The evidence surrounding the impact of plain packaging cigarettes appears to show that they reduce product appeal, increase the salience and impact of health warnings and help to avoid misleading perceptions of tobacco harm and strength through the removal of descriptors such as 'light' (Moodie, & Ford, 2011). An Australian study by Wakefield, Germain and Durkin (2008) investigated the impact of cigarette packaging on product appeal. The study comprised of 813 participants who took part in an internet survey regarding perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes verses branded packaging cigarettes. Results showed the plain packages cigarettes containing no brand names colours or imagery were rated by the participants as significantly less attractive than branded cigarette packaging. In addition, the participants perceived smokers of unbranded plain packs to be significantly less stylish, less

fashionable in appearance, and as having less social skills than those who smoke branded cigarettes.

In line with the above study, research was conducted by Germain, Wakefeild, and Durkin (2010) which involved an experimental study into the perceptions of Australian adolescents aged 14-17 regarding cigarette packaging, attributes of smokers and taste expectations of cigarettes. The researchers used a web based methodology, which involved exposing the participants to a variety of both branded and plain package cigarettes. Following each exposure, participants were asked to rate the various cigarette packets they had just seen in terms of attractiveness and expectations of taste. In addition the participants were asked questions in relation to the type of person most likely to smoke each variety. Results showed that when branding was removed (colour, logos and imagery), the participants perceived the packs to be; less attractive, had decreased expectations of cigarette taste and rated the typical smokers of the branded packs less favourably.

Similar data was collected by Van Hal et al., (2012) in the first ever Flemish qualitative study among adolescents to examine perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes. The study comprised of eight focus groups, with a total of 55 adolescents aged 15-18 years of age, all of whom were now or had at some previous point been smokers. Materials for the focus group included a variety of branded and plain packaging cigarettes. The participants were asked a series of open ended questions, all of which related to cigarette branding. The researchers found that adolescents are susceptible to cigarette branding. Plain package cigarette were perceived to be less attractive, cheaper and of poorer quality when compared to branded cigarettes. The researchers concluded that the plain packaging of cigarettes is a potentially important health promotional tool in reducing the uptake of smoking among adolescents. The use of focus groups allowed the researchers to gain unique insight into the views of the adolescents.

In addition to potentially reducing the appeal of the product the graphic warnings contained on plain packaging cigarettes may increase the effectiveness of health warnings (Hammond, 2010). Such graphic warnings have been shown to elicit feelings of disgust among adolescents and can even result in lowering future smoking intentions (Pechmann, Zhao, Goldberg, & Reibling, (2003). A more recent study in New Zealand by McCool, Webb, Cameron, and Hoek (2012) explored adolescents' views and reactions to graphic health warnings on plain packaged cigarettes. A sample of 80 (14-16 year olds), adolescents were

used to conduct twelve focus groups. During the focus groups the participants were shown both branded cigarette packages and plain package prototypes, followed by a discussion into the impact of the warnings of both the text and imagery. The results showed that the graphic warnings contained on the plain packs increased the participants' perceptions of the harm caused by smoking.

As noted previously, in 2012 Australia became the first country in the world to introduce the mandatory plain packaging of cigarettes (Australian Government, 2012). Subsequently a study by Wakefield, Hayes, Durkin, & Borland (2013) became the first study to explore the views of users of the newly introduced plain package cigarettes compared to those smoking from branded cigarettes. A total of 536 smokers took part in the telephone survey, of which, 72.3% were smoking from plain packaging cigarettes and 27.7% were still smoking branded cigarettes. The researchers aimed to determine whether those who smoked from the new plain packaging had different smoking perceptions and quitting intentions compared to smokers of branded packaging. The results revealed that compared to branded packaging smokers, plain packaging smokers perceived their cigarettes to be of a poorer quality, less satisfying than the previous year, had significantly more frequent cessation thoughts and were more likely to view quitting as a priority. As this is the first study to explore the impact of plain packaging in a real world setting it gives an insight into actual effects on smokers of plain packaging compared to potential effects on smokers. However, although the researchers adjusted for previous quitting attempts, it may have been possible that smokers who were less likely to quit were more likely to avoid smoking from plain packs.

The introduction of plain packaging will also mean that descriptors such as; smooth, light, and menthol which are currently used to describe some types of branded cigarette will be prohibited. Although 'light' cigarettes are lower in tar, epidemiological and toxicological evidence suggests that there is no significant health benefit when it comes to heart disease, lung cancer and lung disease compared to regular cigarettes (National Cancer Institute, 2001). Research shows that such descriptors can lead smokers to believe that these cigarettes are less harmful to health than cigarettes without descriptors (Shiffman et al., 2001; Etter, Kozlowski & Perneger, 2004). Similarly, a New Zealand study conducted by Wilson et al., (2009) found that adults who smoke cigarettes described as 'light' perceive them to be less harmful than regular cigarettes. Wilson and colleagues surveyed a sample of 1376 adult smokers in order to examine smokers' health related perceptions of the descriptor 'light' on cigarette packaging. The results revealed that 41.8 % of the participants who were smokers of 'light'

cigarettes, believed that they were less harmful to health, 25.4% believed 'light' cigarettes would increase chances of successful cessation and 42.8% were of the belief that smokers of 'light' cigarettes take in less tar. Overall, the majority of those who smoked light cigarettes believed at least one of the previously mentioned statements to be true, compared to 45.0% of smokers of regular cigarettes. Furthermore, more smokers of the 'light' brands reported that they found their cigarettes to be smoother on the chest and throat when inhaled. Interestingly, women and older smokers seemed to be most susceptible to the beliefs about the health benefits of smoking brands of cigarettes described as 'light'.

2.8 Summary and Rationale

The above studies suggest that there are multiple factors which may influence the use of tobacco among adolescents. In particular it would appear that, peers, family, personal factors such as weight concerns and stress relief, the media and finally the marketing of tobacco all play a role in adolescent smoking. Therefore smoking intervention programmes which adopt a multi faceted approach to adolescent smoking may be beneficial. Additionally, the literature above suggests that plain packaging cigarettes have the potential to not only reduce smoking appeal, but also increase the salience and impact of health warnings. However, these findings should be taken in light of certain limitations, which include that most of the plain packaging cigarettes used in the above research were prototypes, hence were not of optimum quality which may have influenced the participants' perceptions of quality and reliability. There is, therefore, a need for further investigation into the role of plain packaging as a health promotional tool to increase smoking cessation and lower the uptake rates particularly among adolescents. Furthermore, as plain packaging cigarettes are expected to be introduced in Ireland early next year, there is a particular a need for further investigation into the role of plain packaging in an Irish context.

2.9 Research Questions

RQ1. What are the factors which influence adolescents to choose a certain cigarette brand/package

RQ2. What are adolescents' perceptions of branded and plain packaging cigarettes

RQ3. What is the impact of the graphic health warnings on plain packaging cigarette on adolescents smoking behaviour

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present the methodology used for this research study under the following headings: Research Design, Study Population and Sampling, Concepts, Data Collection Tools, Data Collection Procedures, Data Analysis and finally, Ethical Considerations.

3.1 Research Design

For the purpose of this research, which is to investigate adolescents' perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes, the most appropriate design is a qualitative study in the form of focus group discussions (FGD's). This type of qualitative research is widely considered to be the most appropriate form of research design when exploring the perceptions, attitudes and the experiences of individuals (Vermeire et al., 2002). Additionally, the use of focus groups is known to facilitate thinking, deliberation and discussion about a topic through interaction in a group setting (Britten, Jones, Murphy, & Stacey, 1995). Moreover, as all the participants are aged under eighteen, the use of FGD's over other qualitative methods such as one to one interviews were chosen in order to provide a safe environment to gather information from this population group (Peterson-Sweeney, 2005). In order to maintain clarity and rigour, it is important to develop and use a systematic topic guide when conducting FGD's (Murphy et al., 1998). Therefore, for this study, a focus group a topic guide was established and administered to four groups of transition year students aged 15-16 years, from two Waterford City schools, with 6-8 participants in each group. The topic guide allowed the researcher to explore the participant's perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes in order to address the specified research questions.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The sample included approximately 24 transition year students aged 15-16 from two secondary schools located in Waterford City in order to conduct four focus groups with 6 participants in each. Two focus groups were conducted in each school, with n=12 males from an all male school, and n-12 females from an all female school. The optimal number of participants in any given FGD's is between six and twelve (Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, (2002); Denscomb, 2010), which ensures a sufficient number of participants in order to gain diversity of information, while limiting the size of the group allows the participants to feel comfortable in sharing their opinions and experiences (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). Both schools were selected for convenience as the researcher has previously

co-delivered sexual health workshops in both schools on work placement. Each FGD lasted approximately 60 minutes. The twelve adolescents from each school were all asked by the researcher to volunteer to participate in the study. Smoking status was not an inclusion/exclusion criteria in this study.

3.3 Concepts

Concepts that were measured included;

- Factors which influence the choice of cigarette brand selection, such as; price, type of packaging, image/desirability and perceptions of quality and taste.
- Effects of packaging on adolescents' perceptions of those who smoke branded cigarettes versus plain packaging cigarettes. Perceptions included level of attraction, how cool each package was and age related associations with different packages attractive/unattractive, cool/uncool/, and young/old.
- Impact and perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes: this relates to adolescents' opinions of plain packaging and if plain packaging impacts on the appeal of the product, smoking intentions, and the visibility of health warnings.
- Perceptions of health warnings on branded cigarettes: this will relate to how visible health warnings are to the adolescents, if health warnings effect their perceptions of smoking with regard to; health implications of smoking and smoking intentions, and finally, what effect do descriptors such as; mild, light and smooth have on the perceptions of the harms of smoking.

In addition a short questionnaire was administered to measure the following variables: age, sex and smoking status (appendix B)

3.4 Data Collection Tools

Data was collected using focus groups with the aid of a topic guide (appendix A) and short questionnaires (appendix B). The questionnaire measured the following variables; gender, age and smoking status. Smoking status was assessed by asking participants how often they smoke cigarettes. The participants were given a variety of six answers, beginning with: I have never smoked in life, and progressing to, I usually smoke a few cigarettes a day (appendix B). A semi-structured interview format guided the FGD while also allowing for new issues to emerge. The topic guide consisted of a number of open ended questions focused around branded cigarette packaging and plain packaging and the specific concepts mentioned above.

In order to facilitate these discussions the topic guide was delivered through a number of interactive strategies such as; walking debates whereby the researcher read a statement and the participants were asked to walk to different areas of the room marked agree, disagree or not sure which was followed up by a discussion, worksheets in which the participants were asked to pick words which best describe the type of person they think would smoke branded and plain packaging cigarettes with options such as cool/uncool and attractive/unattractive and finally, the participants were showed samples of both branded and plain packaging cigarettes followed by a series of open ended questions. Walking debates were used at the start of the FGD in order to set the scene around the topic and also allow the researcher to gain rapport with the participants.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

- Permission was granted by the principals of two Waterford City schools to carry out this study in early January 2013. The researcher visited both schools in person in order to obtain permission and also explain the purpose and content of the study.
- Parental consent was deemed to be unnecessary by both principals. However, in the absence of parental consent full written consent was acquired from both principals in order to gain ethical approval from Waterford Institute of Technology (appendix C).
- Prior to the data collection the researcher arranged a suitable time with both schools in order to explain the study and recruit volunteers for the study.
- All volunteers were asked to sign a written consent form (appendix D).
- On the day of the data collection the researcher reiterated the purpose of the study, ensured confidentiality to all participants and gave the participants the option to drop out at any stage.
- The focus group took place in a quiet room allocated by school staff.
- A short questionnaire was administered prior to commencement of the focus group.
- All focus groups were recorded using two portable audio recording devices. Using two devices significantly reduces the chances of technical failure.
- The independent note taker recorded any relevant non-verbal communication.
- The chairs in the room were cleared to one side, leaving eight chairs arranged in a semi-circle format. This permitted easy movement of chairs during the FGD when necessary (eg. for walking debate).

- The topic guide was followed step by step in order to cover all questions within the time allocated to the researcher and also to ensure some level of consistency between each focus group.
- Once the allocated time elapsed the participants were thanked for their participation by the researcher.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data from the short questionnaire was analysed using the computer package Excel. The data collected from the focus group was transcribed verbatim and subsequently printed. The transcripts were then analysed using Thematic Content Analysis. This process involves the identification, analysis and recording of themes within data in order for data to be organised. (Howitt & Craner, 2005). Predetermined themes such as price, packaging, family/peers, smoking behaviour, attributes of smokers, brand appeal and the perceptions/ impact of health warnings were assigned to the data as the text was read sentence by sentence. Themes in the text were identified by marking sections of text with various coloured highlighter pens. During this process further common themes were identified within the data some of which included availability of cigarettes, strength/taste of cigarettes, appearance of cigarettes, box shape/size. All statements deemed similar received the same theme. The transcript was read and re-read several times to ensure a thorough assessment of the data and that all relevant data was given a theme and sub-theme where applicable. Following the coding process the data was transferred by hand onto several A3 pages which was divided into columns by predetermined themes and any emerging themes. As a result, the data was reduced to a list of all relevant quotes under each theme and subtheme. These themes were arranged into overarching themes where necessary. Finally, the results were presented using a variety of tables and figures which presented an overview of the most common themes which have emerged from the data.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This research obtained full ethical approval from Waterford Institute of Technology prior to commencement of data collection. Each school principal was contacted by the researcher in order to explain the study and gain permission to conduct the FGD. Parental consent was deemed to be unnecessary by both principals. However, in the absence of parental consent full written consent was acquired from both principals in order to gain ethical approval from

Waterford Institute of Technology (appendix C). The researcher visited both schools prior the study in order to explain the study, recruit volunteers and obtain informed written consent from each of the participants (appendix D). All adolescents were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and therefore, were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any stage without question. Participation in the study did not pose any risk to health or well being. No personal information apart from; gender, age and smoking status were recorded. All participants were assured that the information retrieved would be kept strictly confidential and used only for the purpose of this research. Recordings, transcripts and any related material from the FGD's were kept on a portable hard drive and secured with a password, known only to the researcher. All information will be responsibly destroyed once the specified period of time has elapsed in accordance to Waterford Institute of Technologies' research guidelines.

Chapter 4

Results

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will give a brief description of the participants who took part in this study and also the main themes that emerged from the focus group discussions. In relation to the latter, the two main areas that are covered are the factors which influence the purchase of a particular brand of cigarette and perceptions of branded and plain packaging cigarettes.

4.2 Description of Participants

A total of twenty four participants were recruited for this study. All participants were transition year (TY) students and were recruited from two secondary schools in Waterford city. The sample consisted of twelve boys and twelve girls with a mean age of 15.5 years. In total, four focus group discussions were carried out containing six boys and six girls in each.

Table 1: Description of Participants

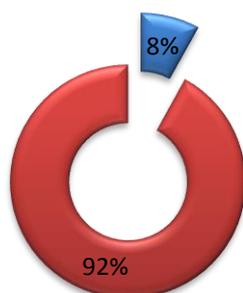
		(N) =24	%
Gender	Boys	12	50
	Girls	12	50
Smoking Status	Smoker	7	29
	Non Smoker	17	71

4.3 Gender Differences in Self-Reported Smoking Status

Figure 1 illustrates that smoking was more prevalent in girls than boys with 50% of girls and only 8% (n=1) of boys indicating that they were current smokers.

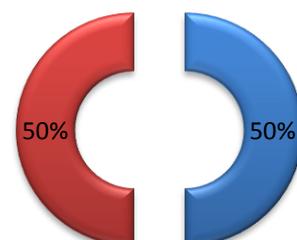
Boys Smoking Status

■ Smoker ■ Non Smoker



Girls smoking status

■ Smoker ■ Non Smoker



4.4 Focus Group Discussion Main Themes

The first section of this chapter relates to the factors which influence the purchase of particular brands of cigarettes. The main influences on smoking identified in the analysis were price, family/peers, packaging, availability, and strength/taste. The second section of this chapter relates to perceptions of plain and branded cigarette packaging where two main thematic areas are presented; participants perceptions of brand image including related subthemes such as smoker image, box shape/size, appearance of cigarettes and brand descriptors and perceptions of health warnings, which included subthemes of text warnings, picture warnings, and their effect on smoking behaviour.

4.5 Factors which Influence the Purchase of Particular Brands of Cigarettes.

Figure 2 below indicates the factors which were deemed important by participants in relation to choosing certain brands of cigarettes to smoke. Factors which were repeatedly mentioned by the participants were; the price of the cigarettes, the influence of family/peers, the influence of the packaging, the availability of the cigarettes and the strength/smell of the cigarettes.

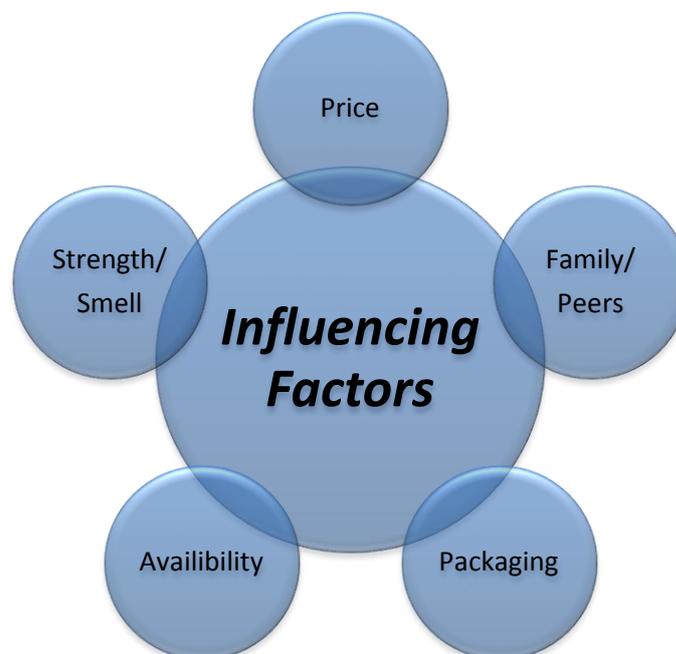


Figure 2: Influencing Factors of Brand Selection

4.5.1 Price:

The majority of the participants repeatedly mentioned price as the main factor which influences young people when it comes to selecting a particular brand of cigarette. In fact, it would appear from the participants perspective that the cheaper the brand the more appealing it is. For example, one girl remarked that *'for young people, for people our age, who go out and buy it for themselves they just go and get the cheapest ones they can.'* This view was also apparent among boys; one boy claimed that young people will opt for the cheapest available cigarettes regardless of the brand: *'they wouldn't care. Whatever's the cheapest like'* Moreover, the price appeared to be so significant that rolling tobacco was often chosen over boxes of pre rolled cigarettes due to its low cost. One girl stated that: *'if you don't have the money to go off and buy them you will just buy tobacco'*. In particular, many of the participants referred to the rolling tobacco brand 'Amber Leaf' claiming that its popularity among young people was directly linked to its low cost.

'If you can't afford fags you will buy Amber Leaf' (Girl)

'I mean every teenager you know smokes Amber Leaf' (Boy)

'Amber Leaf, yeah I always see them on the ground' (Boy)

4.5.2 Family/Peers:

Participants also discussed the influence of their social environment such as family and peers in relation to the choice of cigarette brand. Specifically, both boys and girls in this study reported that young people are more likely to smoke the brands that either their family or peers smoke. The influence of peers appeared to be stronger than that of the family, as more participants reported that peers influence brand selection rather than family. One girl stated that *'I'd say it's more about what their friends are smoking'*, while another girl added that *'if all your friends smoke them, you might too'*.

As indicated above, the influence of family appeared to be weaker than that of peers. Nevertheless, a number of the participants did report that parents and siblings influence brand selection. For instance, some of the participants suggested that if parents or siblings were smoking a particular brand then it must be good. *'If your mother smokes 'em, they're like, oh she smokes them so they must be ok'*.

4.5.3 Packaging:

Participants also discussed cigarette packaging as a factor which may influence the choice of cigarette brand. However, this was only apparent among female participants. Several of the girls commented on the importance of an attractive box when selecting a brand of cigarette, stating that *'I wouldn't smoke 'em if the packaging's horrible'* and *'if the packaging looks nice, people would be like oh yeah!'*. Indeed one girl remarked how a cigarette brand may be selected *'just cause the box is cool'*.

4.5.4 Availability:

In contrast, the availability of cigarettes appeared to be important to boys only. A number of the boys discussed how young people *'don't really care as long as they can get em'* and *'once they have a cigarette like, they don't care'*. Indeed one boy remarked how some young people would *'just smoke anything at all, anything'*.

4.5.5 Strength/Smell:

Finally, although less prominent, the strength and small of cigarettes also emerged as a factor that influences young people when they are choosing a particular brand of cigarette. However, similar to packaging, only the girls in this study reported that smell and strength to influence brand selection. It would appear that different flavoured brands such as a *'mint one'* or those which *'smell of chocolate'* are more appealing than others brands which do not have added flavours. For example, one girl remarked that: *'if they taste and smell horrible, does anyone smoke em'*.

4.6 Perceptions of Cigarette Packaging

This following section outlines the participants perceptions of cigarette packaging. The first thematic area presented is the participants perceptions of brand image including related subthemes such as smoker image, box shape/size, appearance of cigarettes and brand discriptors. The second theme identified was perceptions of health warnings, which included subthemes of text warnings, picture warnings, and their effect on smoking behaviour. The effect on smoking behaviour has been further addressed in relation to uptake, cessation and avoidance behaviours. *Figure 3* provides an overview of the thematic structure identified in relation to perceptions of cigarette packaging.

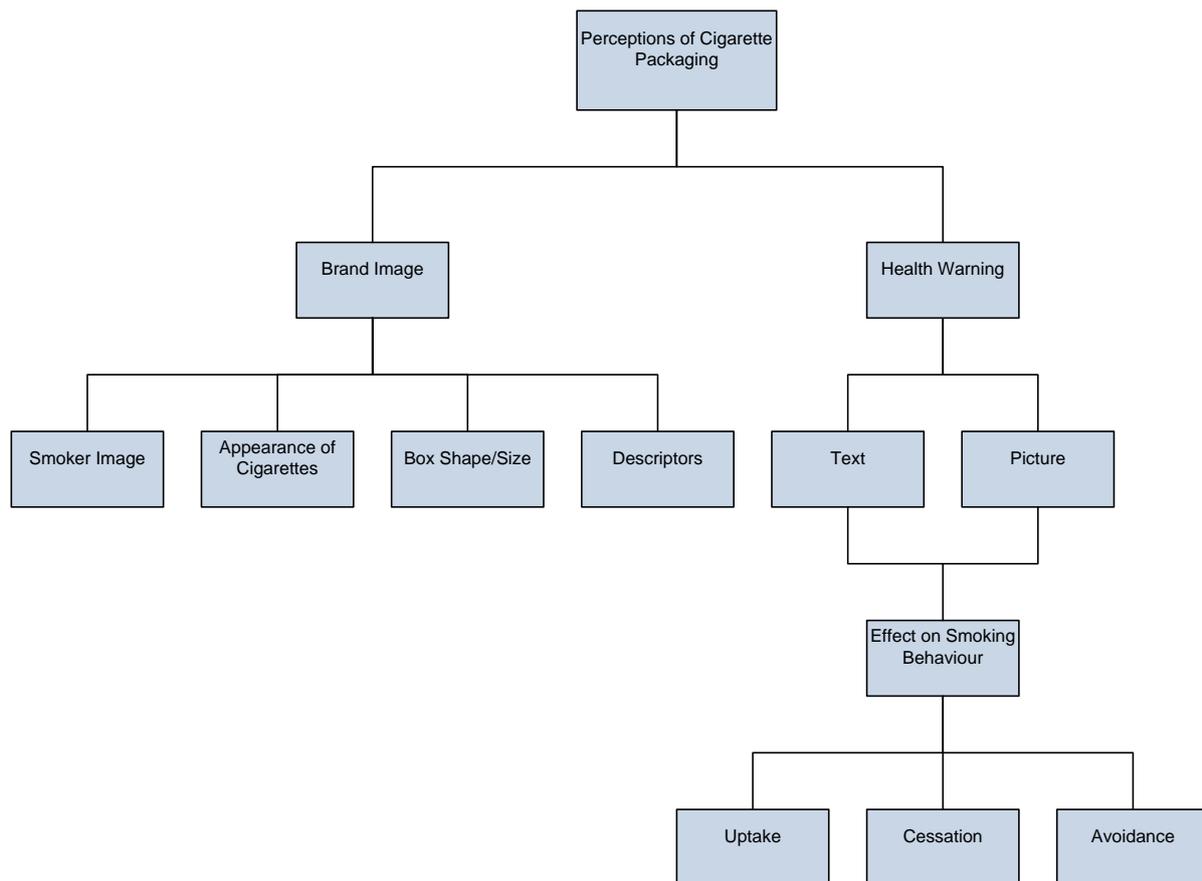


Figure 3. Perceptions of Cigarette Packaging

4.7 Perceptions of Brand Image:

Perceptions of brand image emerged as an overarching theme which has been further divided into four sub themes; perceptions of smoker identity, the cigarette box shape/size, the cigarettes themselves and the cigarette descriptors such as mint/menthol. Overall, the brand image of branded cigarette packaging was perceived to be significantly more appealing than plain packaging cigarettes as illustrated in *Figure 3.1* and *3.2* below.

4.7.1 Perceived brand image of branded cigarettes:

Branded cigarettes were considered by the the participants to be highly appealing with many of the participants describing the packaging as fancy, deadly, eyecatching and associated with images of glamour and coolness, as illustrated in *Figure 3.1* below. For example one girl remarked: *'Oh my god, they look cool'* while another boy discussed how the packaging could *'give the impression that, like, you'd be classy if you got those ones'*. Some packaging was

percieved to be more appealing than others, with one girl saying how *'some of em look a lot more attractive than others, like the...the pink ones.'*



Figure 3.1 Perceptions of brand image associated with branded cigarettes

It was recorded by the note taker, that the female orientated packaging such as the pink coloured 'Vogue' and purple coloured 'Silk Cut' (both are 'super slim' cigarettes) packages generated considerable interest among the girls. For instance some of the girls comments included: *'These are fancy. The Vogue'*, *'they're pretty'* and had *'fancy pictures'*. Many of the girls also appeared visually excited at the packaging and were very keen to handle them. A number of the girls became impatient when it came to waiting for their turn to handle the pink and purple coloured packaging. One girl reacted by saying: *'show me, show me, show me, what are those kind of ones.'*

The boys were clearly able to *'tell which ones are marketed for females'* with one boy linking the brand 'Vogue' to the fashion magazine of the same name when he asked *'Vogue isn't that like a fashion magazine?'* The boys appeared to be particularly drawn to the more masculine orientated packaging such as packaging with either black or silver colours. One

boy remarked how *'definitely the dark catch your eye'*, while another confirmed that *'it would catch your eye like'*.

4.7.2 Perceived brand image of plain packaging cigarettes:

Plain packaging was considered by the participants to be not only unappealing but disgusting, rotten, horrible, and gross as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below. Plain packaging was perceived so negatively that many of the participants were very reluctant to look at the packaging and turned their heads away when they were placed on the table. In particular one boy moved his chair away from the table, saying *'oh my god get that away'*. Similarly, a girl turned away saying *'I can't even look at them, oh my god, unbelievable.'* The view of plain packaging by the majority of the participants can be summed up by comments like;

'Oh my god, Christ, Awww' (Boy)

'Eh. They are horrible' (Boy)

'So unattractive, oh my God' (Girl)

'they are all the same so disgusting' (Girl)

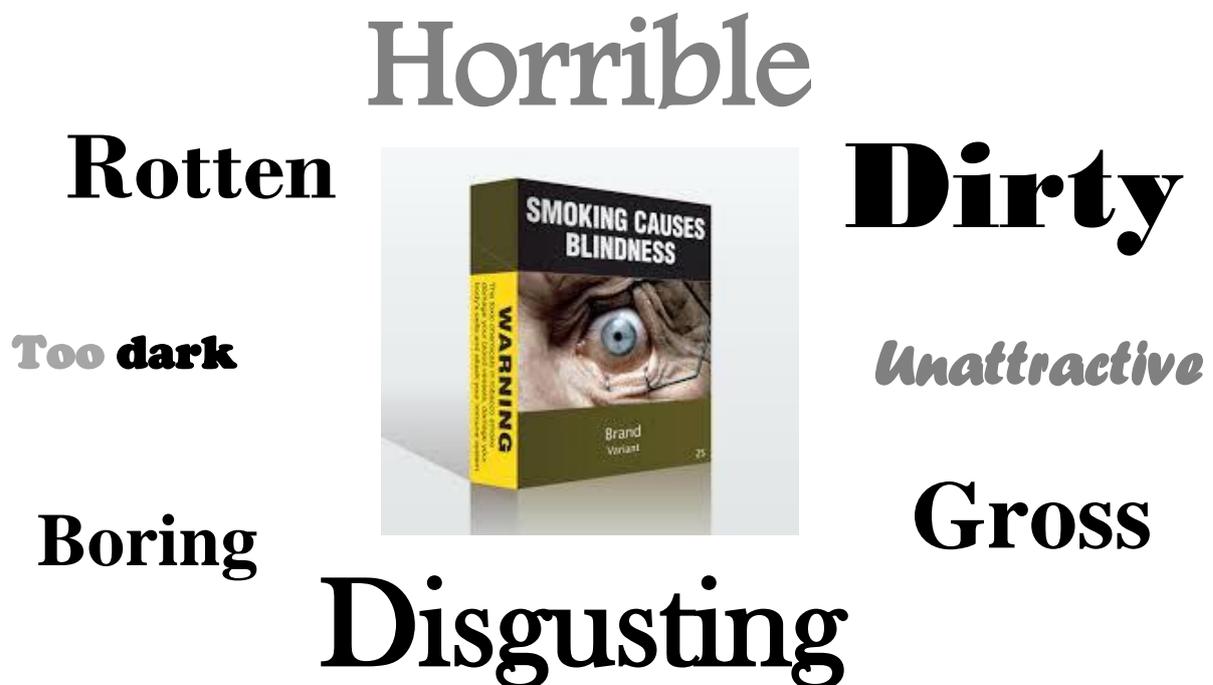


Figure 3.2 Perceptions of brand image associated with Plain Packaging Cigarettes

4.7.3 Perceptions of smoker image associated with branded packaging cigarettes versus plain packaging cigarettes:

Table 2 below shows the difference between perceptions of smoker image associated with plain packaging cigarettes and branded packaging cigarettes. Plain packaging cigarettes appear to project considerably more negative connotations of smoker personality attributes. The most commonly use descriptions for those who would smoke from plain packaging cigarettes included; not cool, old, disgusting, unattractive and addicted. In comparison branded packaging was associated with more favorable personality attributes. The participants reported how different brands had a certain age associations and had a sense of glamour attached to them.

Table 2: Perceptions of Smoker Image

Branded cigarettes	Plain packaging cigarettes
<i>'Glamorous, because it's Vogue'</i> (Girl)	<i>'Someone who is not cool and old'</i> (Girl)
<i>'Those cigarettes, d'you know they are nice and slim, poshie fags, Posh'</i> (Girl)	<i>'Disgusting, em old'</i> (Boy)
<i>'I think the older style ones are more bland, so kind of old'</i> (Boy)	<i>'Unattractive, Disgusting and not cool and parents'</i> (Boy)
<i>'Silk Cut is for, like they are for 20,30,40'</i> (Boy)	<i>'You wouldn't be cool smoking a big plain brand like that'</i> (Boy)
<i>'The pink ones, like little glamorous people, people who think they are glamorous'</i> (Girl)	<i>'And they must be seriously addictive, seriously addictive'</i> (Girl)
<i>'Boring people smoke them, cause they are really boring fags like'</i> (Girl)	<i>'Unattractive, disgusting, not cool'</i> (Boy)

4.7.4 Box shape/size:

In terms of the effect of the shape/size of the cigarette box, some of the participants felt that the branded boxes created a positive brand image, and therefore, increased their appeal. Many of the participants likened the slimmer female orientated boxes to perfume and makeup. One female participant said that *'they look like perfume'* while a boy remarked how two of the boxes looked *'like make up'*. The size of the box was also considered to help with discretion,

one boy remarking that *'this one is handy, like I mean if you were a teenager, you'd be well able to hide them'*. Another boy agreed by saying that the slimmer boxes *'wouldn't show up as much in your pocket'* as they are *'not as bulky.'* Whereas, another boy cited the potential multi-functional use of the box as appealing, saying *'I'd like to keep my money in it'* and also went on to say he would *'appreciate a good box'*.

In contrast, as plain packaging cigarette boxes are required to be of a standard shape/size, the aforementioned details were irrelevant to the participants in terms of the appeal of the product. When participants did comment on the plain packaging box, it was referred to as a *'dirty box'* (Girl) that is *'all brown'* (Boy) and, in the words of another participant *'one which nobody is going to want to carry around'* (Boy).

4.7.5 Appearance of cigarettes:

When discussing the appearance of branded cigarettes the filter tip designs and shape of the cigarettes were considered to enhance their appeal. One girl referred to the design on the filter tips as; *'definitely fancy'* and went on to say *'there's a few dots on them, they're definitely fancy'*. Similarly, another girl demonstrated how the design of filter tips adds to brand appeal saying, *'the ones that are kind of silver, filter thing on em, so yeah they're cool.'* Another girl was impressed by the thinness of the 'super slims' and compared them to a *'perfectly rolled rollie'*.

Similar to the shape/size of the box, cigarettes contained in plain packaging are required to be of a standard size and thickness with no branding permitted on them. Therefore, shape/design on the plain packaging cigarettes was irrelevant to the participants in terms of effect on appeal. None of the participants mentioned the cigarettes contained inside the plain packaging.

4.7.6 Brand descriptors:

When asked what effect cigarette descriptors such as 'mint' or 'menthol' have on young people's perceptions of the strength and harm of cigarettes many of the participants were unsure. For instance, one boy remarked how he *'wouldn't say young people know about the strength of em'*. Of those who expressed an opinion most were of the view that 'mint' or 'menthol' cigarettes are less harmful or weaker in strength.

'The mint might be better for you' (Boy)

'It doesn't cut the throat off you' (Girl)

'The mint ones aren't really strong, it's like mint' (Girl)

'Some people are going to be like they're like menthol or they're, there's the light'
(Girl)

However, one girl commented that, rather than mint cigarettes being weaker in strength, it was actually the flavour that disguised the strength, saying *'the mint ones are actually stronger, you just don't notice cause they're mint'*.

4.8 Perceptions of Health Warnings on Cigarette Packaging

The health warnings on plain packaging cigarettes which contain large graphic picture warnings accompanied by large text warnings (front & back) were perceived to be significantly more visible than the smaller text and picture warnings contained on branded cigarette packaging.

4.8.1 Text warnings:

When asked about the text warnings on branded cigarettes many of the participants said that as they were in the Irish language they were either illegible or so difficult to read that young people would not bother. For instance, one girl remarked *'I can't really read them. No I can't read them, they are in Irish'*, while another boy said, *'no one's gonna read Irish'*. However, the participants did note that *'there's English under em, but you're not going to like read down the whole thing'* and that *'Irish is the first thing you see'* which distracts from both the visibility and the understanding of the text health warnings. One boy recommended that *'they should put English over it because when you read it, straight away and you think, oh that's rubbish'*. Additionally, a number of the participants felt that as the text warnings are in both Irish and English they are simply *'too long for young people'* (Girl) to read. This was a view echoed by a boy who suggested that text warnings are most effective when they are *'short and sweet'*.

In contrast when discussing the text health warnings on the plain packaging cigarettes, the common consensus among participants was that the textual warnings were significantly more visible as they were shorter and in English only (the plain packaging used was Australian and therefore in English only). For example, one girl remarked how the warnings were *'very big, yeah and not in Irish'*. Another boy joked that they should be *'put in Irish so people won't*

read that either'. The colour of the text warnings on the plain packaging also helped to add to its visibility with two of the participants remarking that the warnings on the bright yellow back round were particularly effective, with one boy saying *'at least the warnings in bright yellow. You can't miss that.'*

4.8.2 Picture warnings:

When asked about perceptions of picture warnings on branded cigarettes a number of the participants felt that young people often do not take any notice of them. This view can be summed up by the following comment: *'I think they'll just ignore it cause they know everything already, they know the damages'* (Girl). Another girl felt that *'the pictures are really small'* and therefore, *'well nobody even looks at them'*. Additionally, a small number of the participants felt that as the pictures are only on the back of the cigarette package people would *'just turn it around, they don't even notice it. They don't take any heed'* (Boy).

However, some of the picture warnings were considered to be more effective than others. In particular, many of the girls in the groups felt that the pictures featuring a new born baby were especially effective saying *'the child one is much more effective, you know, that would have more advantage'*, with another girl similarly remarking that *'the kid one is much more effective'*. Only one boy commented on the picture warning which showed a newborn baby in an incubator, remarking that: *'this side is all right but then you flip it over and see a dead baby'*.

When asked about perceptions of the picture warnings on the plain packaging, the majority of the participants felt that as the picture warnings cover most of the front and back *'you really can't miss it, the picture and the warning on them'* (Boy), *'really noticeable they are'* (Girl). Therefore, the picture warnings on the plain packaging were perceived to be significantly more visible.

'You're kind of forced to look at em' (Girl)

'It's on both sides' (Boy)

'Yeah you are forced to look at cause they are on the front and back as well' (Girl)

The majority of the participants perceived the picture warnings to be *'disgusting'*, and *'horrible'* to look at, with many of the participants turning their heads away and appearing quite shocked. In addition, some of the participants were so appalled by the plain packaging

that when they were initially placed in front of them they backed away from the table. A number of participants used the phrase *'oh my god'* when looking at the pictures on plain packaging cigarettes. One girl felt so strongly that she said: *'carrying that around in your pocket like you'd puke up into your guts'*. Some pictures were perceived as particularly unappealing, for instance one boy remarked: *'the foot. Ugh. That one in particular, it's nasty'*. Another girl said *'that's just gross'. That's a heart'*. Whereas, one boy found the warning with a baby on it less effective, saying *'it just shows the baby. It won't be, like, as much disturbing....it's kind of boring'*.

4.9 Effect of Plain Packaging Cigarettes on Smoking Behaviour

For the purpose of this study only the perception of the effect on smoking behaviour in relation to plain packaging was examined. Table 4 shows the perceptions of the effect of plain packaging on smoking behaviour.

The general view was that, due to its unattractive packaging and graphic health warnings, plain packaging would discourage young people in the uptake of smoking. However, when it came to the effect on those who were already smokers, no consensus was reached in any of the groups. On the one hand a number of participants were of the opinion that plain packaging would encourage smoking cessation. Others however, felt that as smoking is an addiction, current smokers will continue to smoke regardless of the packaging. In addition, a number of the participants discussed a variety of avoidance strategies such as removing the packaging or replacing the packaging to avoid looking at the plain packaging.

Table 4: Perceptions of the Effect of Plain Packaging Cigarettes on Smoking Behaviour

Smoking Behaviour	Plain Packaging
Uptake	<p><i>‘That might stop em, and because they look the same and they wouldn’t be going on about brands or anything’ (Girl)</i></p> <p><i>‘I think there’ll be less young people that start smoking when they see them boxes’ (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘It’d shock them, you know people who haven’t started (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘But it’s not going to stop smoking, people smoking, it’s pointless (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘It would make a difference, it would stop people who aren’t sure, aren’t sure about it’ (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘They’d look at that and say, and go, right I’m not having, I’m not smoking that’ (Boy)</i></p>
Cessation	<p><i>‘I mean for people that begin, they may actually quit because of those boxes’ (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘It would really turn them off’ (Girl)</i></p> <p><i>‘If you’re dying for a fag, you’re a smoker, box or no box’ (Girl)</i></p> <p><i>‘If they those , because they would actually kind of, maybe quit’ (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘Yeah they should make em like that and I guarantee there’d be a load of people that would stop’ (Girl)</i></p> <p><i>‘People who don’t have any intention to stop smoking aren’t going to stop over a picture’ (Boy)</i></p>
Avoidance	<p><i>‘They’d just take all the fags and put em somewhere else’ (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘They’d throw out the box, put em into something else’ (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘Throw away the packet and then get the cigarettes out of it and get you know these metal things’ (Boy)</i></p> <p><i>‘They’d take the cigarettes out of the box’ (Girl)</i></p>

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate adolescent's perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes. The main areas of investigation were factors which influence an adolescent's choice of cigarette brand, perceptions of branded and plain packaging cigarettes and the influence of plain packaging cigarettes on smoking behaviour. Overall, the findings suggest that price, family/peers, packaging, availability and strength/taste of the cigarettes all influence adolescents when they are selecting a particular brand of cigarette. Plain packaging cigarettes were perceived to be considerably less attractive than branded cigarette. For plain packaging cigarettes, the removal of colours, logos, combined with the standardisation of the shape/size of both the box and the cigarettes themselves not only reduced the appeal of smoking but also dramatically weaken the brand image. In addition, smokers of plain packaging cigarettes were rated less favourably than those who are smokers of branded cigarettes. Finally, the health warnings on plain packaging cigarettes were perceived to be considerably more salient and visible due to their size and graphic nature. As a result, the majority of the participants reported that the introduction of plain packaging cigarettes would reduce the uptake of smoking among adolescents.

5.2 Price as an Influencing Factor in the Choice of Cigarette Brand

This study suggests that the most important motive for both male and female adolescents when choosing a particular brand of cigarette is the price. Cheaper brands of cigarettes are more attractive and popular among adolescents and as a result are favoured above more expensive brands. In particular, price was reported to be such a strong influencing factor, that adolescents will choose rolling tobacco over conventional pre-rolled cigarettes due to its low price. Similarly, a study by Van Hal et al., (2012) confirms that the price of cigarettes is a strong motive for adolescents when choosing a particular brand due to their limited financial means. Moreover, the latest statistics from the European Commission (2012b) show that 75% of Europeans aged 15-24 years consider price to be important when selecting a particular brand of cigarette. However, other studies suggest that price is only a factor for choice of cigarette brand among older adolescents with an age profile similar to the participants in this study as they either purchase their own cigarettes or ask others to do so, on their behalf (Croghan et al., 2003; Foster et al., 2003). Whereas, Katzman, Markowitz, and McGeary (2007) found that as younger experimental smokers usually acquire or borrow their cigarettes

from non-commercial sources such as friends and family. Thus, price appears to be largely irrelevant among younger adolescents choice of cigarette brand. Taken together, these findings suggest that public health policies which increase the price of cigarettes through additional taxes may reduce smoking rates among older adolescents (Hanson, Rees & Sabia, 2013). However, it is important that policy makers are not only aware but also look beyond price increases in relation reducing the uptake of smoking among younger adolescents who often rely on peers and family to obtain cigarettes (Carpenter & Cook, 2008).

5.3 Gender Influencing Factors in the Choice of Cigarette Brands

The current study suggests that girls are more influenced than boys by cigarette packaging when it comes to selecting particular brands. The results show that girls are more likely to choose cigarette brands which have attractive packaging over plainer less attractive packaging. This finding is consistent with previous research which has found girls to be more heavily influenced than boys by the appearance of cigarette packaging. According to Moodie & Ford (2011) adolescent boys appear to be largely uninfluenced by cigarette packaging design, colour or imagery. However, in comparison their study showed female adolescents are heavily influenced by the appearance of cigarette packaging. A number of additional studies have demonstrated the importance in cigarette packaging when it comes to brand appeal for girls (Doxey, & Hammond, 2011; Hammond, Daniel, & White, 2012). Hammond, Daniel & White (2011) suggested that, in particular female orientated cigarette packaging can create positive associations which include; glamour, attractiveness and even slimness and therefore have a strong influence when it comes to choosing a particular brand of cigarette. The current study suggests that, rather than adolescent boys being influenced to choose a particular brand of cigarette for its packaging they are mainly influenced by the availability of cigarettes.

5.4 Perceptions of the Brand Image of Branded Packaging Cigarettes

This study has found that the perceptions of branded packaging cigarettes were overwhelmingly positive and commonly described as glamorous, cool, attractive and eye-catching. The findings of this study suggest that in addition to colours and logos, innovative box designs, cigarette sticks designs and flavour descriptors (mint/menthol) can all help to increase the appeal of cigarettes and therefore establish a positive brand image of the product. On account of this, branded cigarettes may be perceived as highly attractive to adolescents. These findings are consistent with a number of previous studies which examined the effect of

brand imagery on the appeal of cigarette packaging which found that positive brand image associations may increase the appeal of cigarettes (Wakefield, Germain & Durkin, 2008; Scheffels, 2007; Van Hal et al., 2012; Wakefield, Hayes, Durkin & Borland, 2013). Similarly, in the first Irish study commissioned jointly by The Irish Cancer Society and The Irish Heart Foundation (2013) the researchers found that the brand image associated with branded packaging cigarettes due primarily to its attractive packaging, can not only excite and encourage purchase among adolescents but even communicate possible benefits of smoking. Indeed, congruent with the aforementioned studies it is well acknowledged that in the world of marketing the packaging of consumer products represents far more than the mere container they are housed in (Underwood, Klein & Burke, 2001). Rather, the packaging of a product can encourage purchase, add value, allow for product identification, increase attractiveness and even ensure repeat purchases (Meyers & Lubliner, 1998). The packaging of tobacco is no exception, for decades the packaging of cigarettes has been used by the tobacco industry as a vital marketing tool to conjure up a myriad of positive images associated with its product (Freeman, Chapman & Rimmer, 2008).

The results from this study also suggest that features such as the shape and size of the actual cigarette box add to the overall appeal and may strengthen the brand image of the product. In particular the more innovative style of box such as the perfume style box and side opening box appeared to be attractive for both appearance and the potential to help with discretion. This innovative cigarette packaging is becoming increasingly used to attract and promote consumers in countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland where other promotional methods of tobacco are prohibited or severely restricted (Moodie & Hastings, 2010). These findings are consistent with a previous UK study of young adult smokers which has demonstrated that innovative packaging can increase the appeal of the cigarettes particularly among females (Moodie & Ford, 2011). Similar to the results of the current study, the female participants considered the perfume style boxes as a desirable fashion accessory and even perceived them to be less harmful to health due to the packaging. However, no mention of perceived reduced harm due to innovative packaging was discussed in the current study. Although the affect of innovative packaging on smoking behaviour was not measured in the current study, recent research suggests that it not only increases the appeal of cigarettes among adolescents but may also increase their susceptibility to smoke (Ford, McKintosh, Moodie & Richardson, 2013).

Furthermore, the results of this study have found that the cigarette sticks of branded cigarettes due to logos, colour, size and decorative designs may further increase the appeal of the product, and therefore possibly strengthen the brand image of the cigarettes. These results are consistent to past studies (Borland & Savvas, 2012; Ford, Moodie, McKintosh & Hastings, 2013) which demonstrate that cigarette sticks which are slimmer, have white filter tips and include decorative designs are perceived as more attractive than regular cigarette sticks of a standard size with brown filter tips and no decorative designs. In contrast to the current study, Ford, Moodie, McKintosh & Hastings (2013) found that cigarette stick designs which were slimmer were perceived as less harmful than standard size cigarettes. Yet this was not found to be the perception of any of the participants in the current study.

However, the results of this study did suggest that flavoured cigarettes such as mint or menthol may have the potential to mislead the consumer as to the strength and harm of the cigarettes while at the same time increase the appeal of cigarettes due to their enhanced flavour. This may be particularly relevant in the adolescent population given that a recent study suggests that cigarettes of the menthol variety are heavily consumed by adolescents (Giovino et al., 2013). These results appear to be consistent with past studies which suggest that flavoured cigarettes increase the appeal of cigarettes and therefore increases brand positive brand image (Manning, Kelly & Cornello, 2009; Hersey, Nonnemaker, Homs, 2010). All of which would appear to support the current plans by European Parliament to prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes by the year 2016 (European Commission, 2014).

5.5 Perceptions of the Brand Image of Plain Packaging Cigarettes

In contrast to branded cigarettes, plain packaging cigarettes which have 70% of their surface covered in graphic health warnings were universally perceived by the participants to be considerably less attractive than branded cigarettes. The most common words used to describe plain packaging included; horrible and disgusting. In addition, the brand image of plain packaging was found to be drastically weakened due to the removal of logos, colours and standardisation of size/shape of the box and the removal of design features on the cigarette stick themselves. These findings are similar to a recent systematic review by Moodie, Angus, Stead & Baud (2013) which reviewed a total of 17 studies in a variety of sub populations which suggested that plain packaging reduces the appeal of cigarettes and smoking.

Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that cigarette packaging may have the ability to portray a certain type of smoker image on to the smoker. Perceptions of a typical smoker of plain packaging cigarettes were far less favourable than the typical smoker of branded cigarettes. These findings appear to be consistent with previous research which suggests that smokers of plain packaging are perceived by adolescents as significantly less attractive, less sociable and even less mature than smokers of branded cigarette packaging (Wakefield, Germain, Durkin, 2008; Germain, Wakefield & Durkin, 2010). Adolescents is a transitional phase of life during which much of an individual's identity is formed (Gullotta & Adams, 2005) and on account of this, Scheffels (2007) suggests that different cigarette brands are associated with certain personality traits which enable adolescents to form their social identity and status in the world and feel part of a group or a member of a community. For this reason the introduction of plain packaging may help to break the positive smoker image association which appears to currently exist with branded cigarettes.

However, it must be acknowledged that previous studies have examined plain packaging cigarettes with and without the graphic warnings. Thus, allowing them to identify with more certainty as to whether it is actually the removal of branding or the increases graphic warnings which effect perceived smoker image, whereas this current study did not. Therefore, it not possible to say whether it is the removal of the branding or the inclusion of a 70% coverage of graphic health warnings that have the most effect on the perceptions of smoker image.

5.6 Perceptions of the Health Warnings Contained on Branded Cigarette Packaging

The results of this study have found that both the picture and text health warnings on branded cigarettes were perceived to be considerably less noticeable than the picture and text health warnings on plain packaging cigarette. Picture warnings on branded packaging cigarettes are positioned on the back of the package and are considerably smaller in size and therefore were perceived as less visible and. These findings would appear to be consistent with past studies which have demonstrated that when pictorial health warnings are increased from 30% to 80% of the pack face and placed on a plain brown background (similar the plain packaging used in the current study) the appeal of the product is reduced and the impact and salience of the health warnings is increased (Germain, Wakefield & Durkin, 2010).

In addition, this study has shown that text warnings on branded packaging cigarettes which appear in the Irish language above the English language were perceived to be less visible and

effective than the text warnings contained on the plain packaging cigarettes in this study. The majority of the participants found the Irish version of the warnings to be either illegible or distracting as they appear in the Irish language above the English version, which due to translation can be up to twice as long. These findings may be explained by the latest census figures show that Irish is the first language for only 3% of the population and over 30% of children aged 10-19 cannot speak or read the Irish language (Central Statistics Office, 2012). Although, these findings are not consistent with any other research known to date, this may be due to the lack of Irish research conducted in the area of plain packaging cigarettes. Alternatively, it may be as a result of most other countries displaying text warnings on cigarette packaging in the language that is most spoken or considered first language among the general population (Tobacco Labelling Resource Centre, 2012).

However, previous research does show that prominent, informative and clear textual health warnings combined with large graphic pictorial warnings are most effective in communicating the dangers of smoking to both smokers and non-smokers (Hammond, 2011). On account of this, it may be useful to further investigate the impact of Irish text health warnings on cigarette packaging not only in the adolescent population but also in the wider population. It must be noted that as the plain packaging used in this study was imported from Australia, therefore the text warnings were in English only. On account of this, it may explain why the participants found the text warnings on the plain packaging to be it more visible and easier to read.

5.7 Perceptions of the Health Warnings Contained on Plain Packaging Cigarettes

The results from this study reveal that the large graphic pictorial health warnings on plain packaging cigarettes were overwhelmingly perceived as negative and appeared to have a 'shock value' consistent a with previous studies (Irish Cancer Society & Irish Heart Foundation, 2013; McCool, Webb, Cameron, Hoke, 2012). During this study, plain packaging cigarettes were frequently described as 'disgusting' and 'horrible' and 'gross' and as a result were perceived to be extremely unattractive and therefore, undesirable. These findings add to a growing body of evidence which suggest that plain packaging cigarettes with large graphic health warnings reduce the appeal of the packaging and increase the salience and impact of the health warnings (Penchmann, Zhao, Goldberg & Reibling, 2003; Hammond, 2010; Van Hal et al., 2012).

In respect to the pictorial health warnings some of the images appeared to have more of an impact than others. In particular, a number of the girls in this study found the images which depict the dangers of smoking on children and babies to be particularly emotive. These findings add to previous research by O'Hegarty et al., (2006) which found that young women were significantly more likely than young men to rate pictorial warnings featuring babies the most effective compared to a selection of other pictorial warnings. A similar result was demonstrated in among adolescents where again girls were more likely to be affected by images of how smoking affects children compared to boys (Irish Cancer Society & Irish Heart Foundation, 2013). In addition, a number of previous studies suggest that adolescents are particularly impacted by pictorial health warning which depict the negative aesthetic effects of smoking such as rotting teeth, premature ageing (Zaidi et al., 2011; Sabbane, Lowery, Chebat, 2009; Devlin, Anderson, Hastings & MacFadyen 2005). Furthermore, research would also suggest that images which show older smokers are unlikely to resonate with adolescents as they find it hard to imagine themselves as ever getting old (Irish Cancer Society & Irish Heart Foundation, 2013). However, the current study did not show that the adolescents were particularly affected by externally visible health consequences. This may be due to the limited number of plain packaging available of which only one of the packaging depicted the negative aesthetic effects of smoking.

Additionally, it must be noted that a number of previous studies on the effects of plain packaging cigarettes acknowledge the use of prototype plain packaging or computer generated images of plain packaging due to the unavailability of genuine plain packaging cigarettes and as they were of a reduced quality may have influenced perceptions of the packaging (Van Hal et al., 2012, McCool, Webb, Cameron, Hoke, 2012; Scheffels, & Lund, 2013; Hammond, Daniel & White, 2012). In contrast, the current study used a selection of genuine plain packaging cigarettes currently available in Australia which may help to increase the validity of its results.

5.8 Effect of Plain Packaging Cigarettes on Smoking Behaviour

This study suggests that as plain packaging due to its unattractive packaging and large graphic warnings may help to discourage young people from the uptake of smoking. These results support the most recent research on plain packaging cigarettes which indicates the strong potential that plain packaging may influence the smoking behaviours of adolescents in terms of uptake, cessation and quitting intentions (Irish Cancer Society, Irish Heart

Foundation, 2013; Ford, McKintosh, Moodie, Richardson & Hastings, 2013). However, this current study suggests that when it comes to smoking cessation the results were mixed. This study showed that, young people are aware that smoking is an addiction, and therefore, they were of the opinion that the introduction of plain packaging cigarettes may not be sufficient to result in cessation among young people who currently smoke. These results are in line with the first study in a real life setting in Australia since the introduction of plain packaging cigarettes which suggests that, although plain packaging may increase thoughts of smoking cessation among smokers, it is not yet confirmed if these thoughts can be translated into actions (Wakefield, Hayes, Durkin, & Borland, 2013). Additionally, the current study suggests that adolescent smokers may adopt avoidance behaviour such as removing or replacing the plain packaging rather than cessation behaviour in order to combat the negative impact of the unattractive plain packaging. Similar results have been demonstrated in the first Irish study on adolescents' perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes published last year in which the adolescents claimed they would purchase personalised tins/boxes to carry their cigarettes in (Irish Cancer Society, Irish Heart Foundation, 2013). Therefore, it may be important to examine the use of such avoidance strategies in order to observe if such measures are temporary or if ongoing policy modification is required (Guillaumier, Bonevski, Paul, Durkin & D'Ests, 2014).

5.9 Conclusion

This research has set out to determine the possible factors which can influence adolescents to choose one brand of cigarette over another. In addition, it has investigated adolescents' perceptions of branded and plain packaging cigarettes and its potential effect on smoking behaviour. The findings suggest that the most important motive in brand selection for adolescents is the price of the cigarettes. These results suggest that adolescents, due to financial constraints will seek to buy the cheapest cigarettes available and even choose rolling tobacco over regular pre-rolled tobacco due to the lower price. However, it would also appear that for girls, attractive packaging can influence choice. Whereas for boys, the availability of cigarettes appears to be more important than the packaging itself when it comes to brand selection. These findings add to the growing body of evidence which shows similar results to the current study (Irish Cancer Society, Irish Heart Foundation, 2013; Van Hal et al., 2012; Hammond, Daniel, & White, 2012). In exploring adolescents perceptions of branded and plain packaging cigarettes the study has found that branded packaging cigarettes are in

general perceived as attractive and frequently described as glamorous and cool. As a result, branded cigarettes appear to have a strong positive brand image which may increase the appeal of smoking among adolescents. In contrast, plain packaging was overwhelming perceived as unattractive and undesirable and by comparison was predominately described as horrible and disgusting due to its large graphic health warnings and lack of branding features. The most obvious findings to emerge from this study is that branded packaging cigarettes are generally attractive to adolescents and their health warnings may have a reduced impact due to the small picture warnings and Irish text warnings. Equally important is the possible potential of plain packaging cigarettes to considerably reduce the appeal of cigarettes, increase the salience and impact of the health warnings. Taken together, the findings of this study suggest that the introduction of plain packaging cigarettes may have to potential to reduce the uptake of smoking among adolescents.

5.10 Limitations

Despite its encouraging results, this study has a number of limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the qualitative nature of the current study in conjunction with its small sample size means that the findings may not be a true representation of perceptions in the wider adolescent population. In addition, the study population was made up of boy and girls within a school setting and therefore, did not seek to separate the sample into smokers and non-smokers given that the legal age to purchase cigarettes in Ireland is 18 years. As a result, the study was unable to differentiate between the perceptions of smokers and non-smokers. Moreover, the school setting may have lead to a degree of social desirability bias. Hence, the social desirability response may have been to provide more negative ratings of plain packaging cigarettes. Furthermore, as plain packaging cigarettes are not yet available on the Irish market the results are not necessarily be reflective of a real life setting. Rather, they are based on the perceptions of possible future behaviours as opposed to current behaviours. It is also noteworthy that as the plain packaging originated from Australia it may have affected the study in three ways. Firstly, the text warnings were in English only (as previously noted) and therefore, may have influenced the participant's perceptions of them. Secondly, with a limit of five samples of plain packaging cigarettes the study was unable to compare like with like in terms of branded versus plain packaging cigarettes. Therefore, the brands of branded cigarettes did not have the equivalent brands of plain packaging cigarettes to compare to. Finally, as it was the participants first time to see plain packaging cigarettes it may have

added to the ‘shock value’ of the graphic picture warnings. Thus, may have increased the participants’ negative responses to the graphic health warnings. Indeed, previous research suggests that such graphic warnings may lead to a degree of desensitisation over time and therefore, weaken their effect (Veer & Rank, 2012; Institute of Tobacco Control, 2013).

5.11 Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed above, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Higher cigarette taxes in order to discourage the purchase of cigarettes among adolescents
- Future quantitative research in an Irish context in order to explore the effects of plain packaging cigarettes in a real life setting, across a variety of sub populations and smoking status
- Investigation into the effectiveness of Irish language health warning text
- Additional research into the optimum rotation of the graphic health warnings contained on the plain packaging cigarettes in order to reduce message apathy
- Possible targeting of the most popular brands within a sub population with subject specific graphic health warnings
- Cessation programmes targeted specifically at adolescents

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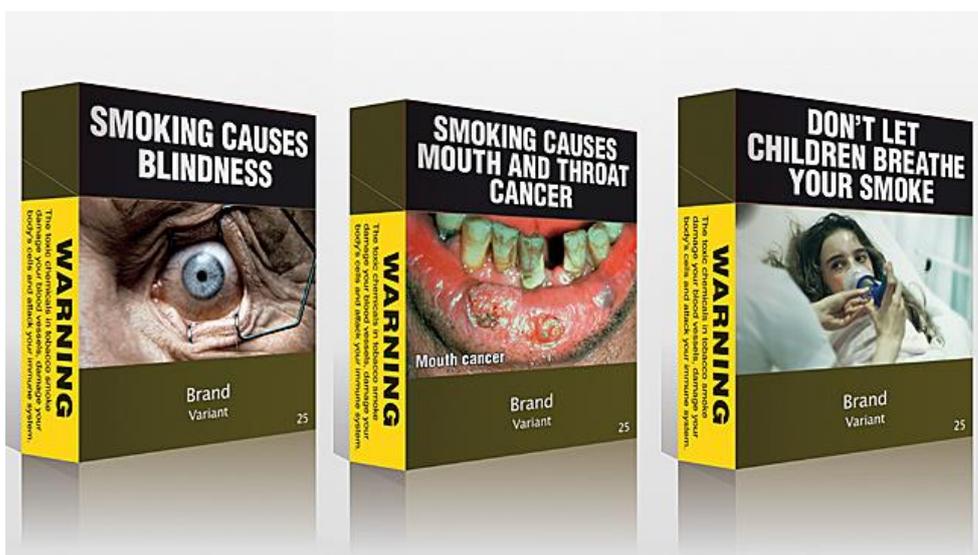
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Appendices

Appendix A

Focus group discussion schedule

An investigation into adolescents' perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes.



Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Guidelines

This focus group discussion will examine adolescents' perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes. It will be done through a series of interactive discussions around cigarettes packaging which will include; the use of walking debates and the completion of worksheets. The focus group will last approximately 60 minutes.

Ice breaker

Name game:

Participants are asked to say their first name and the first thing they would buy if they won the lottery.

(2 minutes)

Ground Rules

I have drawn up a few ground rules to make sure the group runs smoothly. Normally we would have decided on the ground rules together but unfortunately we don't have time today.

- Respect other members in the group. This means; listening to others, no laughing or mocking others.
- Participate. I would ask you to be honest in your answers and not to be afraid to ask questions to either me or any of the other group members.
- Mobile phones on silent.

Is there is anything you would like to this list before we start?

(2 minutes)

Walking debate

I am going to divide the centre of the room into 3 stations (agree, disagree and not sure). I will read out a statement and give you a minute or two to think about my statement and then I would like you to move to one of the stations.

I will then ask you to explain your decision briefly. There are no right or wrong answers. You are free to change your mind at any stage and move to a different station.

(2 minutes)



“Wearing clothes or shoes with brands names like Adidas, Nike, & Converse is important to young people”

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Follow up questions

- Can you tell me a bit more about why you think that?
- Why is image important to young people?

(3 minutes)



“For young people who smoke, cigarette brands like Marlboro, SilkCut, & Benson&Hedges are important”

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Follow up Questions

- Can you tell me a bit more about why you think that?

(6 minutes)



“For young people price is the most important thing when choosing a particular brand of cigarette”

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Follow up Questions

- Can you tell me a bit more about why you think that?
- What other things do you think might matter to young people when they choose a particular brand of cigarette?
- Do think the packaging might be important? Why?
- Why do you think some brands are more popular than others?
- If friends or family smoke a particular brand do you think that might have an influence on the brand of cigarette a young person smokes?

(10 minutes)

End of walking debate

Perceived attributes of the smokers of branded cigarettes

Participants are asked to complete a worksheet in groups of three on their perceived attributes of smokers. When completed, the participants will be asked to discuss their choices.

“In your opinion someone who smokes these cigarette brands is more likely to be” Please circle words below (Hammond et al., 2011)



Cool	Not cool
Old	Young
Unattractive	Attractive
Boring	Fun
Disgusting	Glamorous
Other; _____	

Follow up questions

Can you tell me a bit more about your answers?

(7 minutes)

Participants are asked to sit down into circular format to continue the focus group.

Perceived attributes of the smokers of plain packaging cigarettes

Participants are asked to complete a worksheet in groups of three on their perceived attributes of smokers. When completed, the participants will be asked to discuss their choices.

“In your opinion someone who smokes these cigarette brands is more likely to be” Please circle words below (Hammond et al., 2011)



- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| Cool | Not cool |
| Old | Young |
| Unattractive | Attractive |
| Boring | Fun |
| Disgusting | Glamorous |
| Other; _____ | |
| _____ | |

Follow up questions

Can you tell me a bit more about your answers?

(7 minutes)

Participants are then shown a variety of branded cigarettes. They are passed around the group and the participants are told they are free to open the packs and take a look inside.

Questions

Perceptions of branded cigarettes and health warnings

- What do you think about these cigarette packages? (such as; colour, logos, shape of box & cigarette)
- What effect do things like colours, logos, different sized cigarettes and box have on young people who smoke or might be thinking about smoking?
- What do you think words like “smooth & menthol” mean on cigarette packaging?
- What did you think of the health warnings on the packaging? How noticeable are they?
- How seriously do you think young people take these health warnings?

(10 minutes)

Participants are then shown a variety of plain packaging cigarettes. The researcher explains this is the new form of packaging due to be introduced in Ireland next year. Again they are passed around the group and told they are free to open the packs and take a look inside.

Questions

Perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes and health warnings

- What do you think about these cigarette packages? (such as; colour & logos)
- What do you think of the health warnings on the packaging? How noticeable are they?
- Do you think young people would take these health warnings seriously?
- What affect do think this packaging might have on young people who smoke or might be thinking about smoking?

(10 minutes)

We have come to the end of time today, is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion today?

(1 minutes)

Thank you for talking for me today.

Appendix B
Questionnaire

Characteristics of participants

Are you male or female? (please tick)

Male **Female**

Age: _____

How often do you smoke cigarettes? (please tick)

I have never smoked a cigarette in my life

I have tried one or two cigarettes in my life

I usually smoke a few cigarettes a month

I usually smoke most days

Appendix C

Focus group consent form

Permission for 12 transition year (T/Y) students attending your school in to participate in a research study.

You are asked to carefully read this information before you give your consent to allow the students in your school to participate in this research study.

Research study title: An investigation into adolescents' perceptions of plain packaging cigarettes.

Purpose of the research

The aim of this study is to explore adolescents' perceptions of the proposed introduction of plain packaging cigarettes. It will attempt to gain a deeper understanding into the effect of cigarette packaging and its influence on smoking perceptions and behavioural intentions among the participants.

Plain packaging cigarettes involves a ban on the use of logos, colour, brand images or any promotional information on all cigarette packs. Plain packaging cigarettes will also contain graphic warning health labels which will cover 75% of the package. This new cigarette packaging is due to come into force in Ireland by the end of 2014. The aim of the new plain packaging cigarettes is to reduce smoking rates in Ireland.

What is involved in the research?

The study will be carried out by Brefini Dunphy a fourth year Health Promotion student currently studying at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) as part of her final year Dissertation. The research will involve two focus group discussions with 6 students per group. The students will be shown a variety of cigarette packaging, including the proposed new plain packaging cigarettes and will be asked to answer some questions including their opinions of cigarette packaging. The discussion will be recorded on an audio recorder and at a later stage, transcribed in order to be analysed. Each focus group will last approximately 60min.

Risks and benefits of being part in the research

There will be no risk or harm to any student as a result of this study. The possible benefits of this study include an increased knowledge around the effect of cigarette packaging on smoking perceptions and behavioural intentions among adolescents.

Taking part is completely voluntary.

All students are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without question or penalty. Your decision about whether or not the students in school to participate in this study will in

no way affect current or future relationships with WIT or any other organisations involved in the study.

Confidentiality

All the responses of the students involved are confidential. The records of this study will be kept by the researcher on a secure locked laptop. The only other people to see the transcripts will be the researchers supervisor and possibly and outside examiner.

If you should have any questions

Any questions can be answered by contacting the WIT researcher responsible for the study by email at: brefinid73@hotmail.com or by telephone or text at 086-3139733. My supervisor at WIT is Dr. Aoife Lane and can be contacted at: ALANE@wit.ie

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and allowing your students to participate in this research.

Statement of consent

I the principal of this school have read the above information. By signing below I agree to give my consent for my students to participate in this study. I have received any answers to my questions regarding this study.

Your signature: _____ Date: _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least two years following the study and subsequently shredded.

Waterford Institute of Technology

Appendix D

Participant consent form

My name is Brefini Dunphy. I am a 4th year Health Promotion student at W.I.T. As part of my final year I am required to carry out a study about a health topic of my choice. I am here today to ask you to take part in this study.

- **This study is being carried out to find out what you think of a variety of cigarette packaging**
- **You are being asked to take part in a one hour open discussion with a group of five of your classmates about different kinds of cigarette packaging**
- **You do not have to take part in this study if you do not wish to and you are free to leave at any time**
- **The discussion will be recorded on a digital voice recorder**
- **Your name and identity will not be disclosed to anyone outside this room and I will destroy all recordings once my study is finished**

I have read and understand all of the above and I agree to take part in this study

Please sign your name here: X _____

