

Impact of the introduction of standardised packaging on smokers' brand awareness and identification in Australia

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Abstract

Introduction and Aims: The introduction of standardised packaging (SP) in Australia in December 2012 has heightened interest in how image and branding might affect smoking. This paper tests the hypothesis that brand awareness and identification among smokers will decline after the introduction of SP.

Design and Methods: Longitudinal study of three waves of smokers in Australia, conducted between October 2011–February 2012 (pre-SP) (n = 1104), February–May 2013 (post-SP1) (n = 1093) and August–December 2014 (post-SP2) (n = 1090). We explored the extent of changes in two variables, brand awareness (noticing others with the brand of cigarettes you smoke) and brand identification (perceiving something in common among smokers of your brand), and examined change in a number of other measures of brand appeal, brand characteristics and determinants of brand choice.

Results: Brand awareness 'at least sometimes' reduced from 45.3% pre-SP to 26.9% at post-SP2 [odds ratio (OR) 0.35 (0.27–0.45)]. Brand identification also decreased from 18.2% to 12.7% [OR 0.62 (0.42–0.91)]. Significant decline was also found in measures of perceived brand prestige [OR 0.51 (0.39–0.66)] and choice of brand for health reasons [OR 0.45 (0.32–0.63)]. Liking the look of the pack was strongly associated with brand identification, but only post-SP (P = 0.02 for interaction across the three waves).

Discussion and Conclusions: The introduction of SP of tobacco products in Australia has been associated with reductions in brand awareness and identification, and changes in related measures. The findings support the notion that SP has reduced the capacity for smokers to use pack branding to create and communicate a desired identity.

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