



TPackSS: Tobacco Pack Surveillance System Cigarette Stick Branding in Mexico City



Background

The government of Mexico banned the sale of single cigarette sticks in 1999. Still, it is commonplace for street vendors to sell single cigarette sticks from open packs, often with the flip-top torn off, effectively removing the front health warning label from the pack. The 2015 Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) in Mexico found that 48.9% of all smokers purchased their last cigarettes as single sticks, with 62% of 15-24 year olds purchasing their last cigarette as a single stick. As increased health warning label sizes decrease branding on the cigarette package, the cigarette stick offers an additional avenue for branding and marketing. The cigarette stick's shape, color, and design have the potential to communicate quality, strength, and attractiveness to smokers. In August 2017, TPackSS collected unique cigarette packs in Mexico City using a systematic protocol. Ninety-eight unique cigarette packs were assessed for stick branding and details.



Results

All packs collected had at least one of the following four elements present on the cigarette stick: brand name, brand logo, color from the pack, and decorative design elements from the pack. Ninety-two percent (n=90) of packs had more than one design element present on a stick. Brand name and/or pictorial depiction of the brand logo was included on sticks from 92% (n=90) of packs. Ninety-three percent (n=91) of packs had sticks that had color from the pack mirrored onto the stick. Seven percent (n=7) of unique packs had sticks that carried decorative design elements (including patterns and imagery) from the outside of the pack through to the stick filter and paper barrel. Fifty percent (n=49) of packs had sticks that displayed a symbol indicating a user could activate a flavor capsule.



Conclusion

Cigarette stick branding allows the tobacco industry expanded space to market to potential smokers in Mexico. The Mexican government should consider restrictions on cigarette stick marketing as well as increasing the size of the health warning label to better communicate the health effects of smoking.



A single cigarette stick display found in Mexico City. Some of the packs displayed have the top torn off, removing the health warning label.



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