Reviewer's report

Title: The potential impact of plain packaging of cigarette products among Brazilian young women: an experimental study

Version: 3 Date: 19 March 2012

Reviewer: Olivia Maynard

Reviewer's report:

Overview

The authors present an interesting paper with novel findings examining the effect of cigarette packaging design on brand appeal among young Brazilian women. The primary findings indicate that plain cigarette packaging would reduce the appeal of packages in addition to the perceived taste and smoothness of the cigarettes. However, the manuscript would benefit from considerable rewriting. The manuscript needs to be made more concise and could be rewritten in places to aid ease of interpretation. Below are some questions about the manuscript which need clarification as well as some suggestions to improve the manuscript, these are all considered to be minor essential revisions.

Minor Essential Revisions

Methods, paragraph 4 (page 5). Can the authors give some more details of how ‘daily’, ‘weekly’ and ‘monthly’ smoking status was defined?

Methods, paragraphs 5 & 6 (page 5). Second halves of Brand rating and Smoker image ratings sections are both unclear. Authors should expand and clarify how responses were recoded in the case of Brand ratings and how the summary index was created for the Smoker image ratings.

Analysis, (page 6). Line beginning ‘Linear regression models...’ should be reworded for clarity.

Results, Table 1. This is quite unclear – make it clear that numbers in brackets refers to n in categorical variables (e.g. smoking status), but SD with continuous variables (e.g. age). P values of Chi2 tests should also be reported in a separate column.

Results, Table 2. The names of the cigarette packages should be written out in full above the images of the packages as when printed out it is difficult to distinguish between the different packages. The authors should also include a summary score for the ten packs for each experimental condition in an additional column.

Results, Table 3. The authors should indicate the potential range of scores for clarity (i.e. 1-10). The authors should also include a column of the single smoker image index score.
Results paragraph 4 (page 9) – Smoker image ratings: sentence beginning ‘plain packs received significantly fewer.....’ should read ‘for four of the traits’.

Results, paragraph 8 (page 9). Pack selection task section could be made more concise. i.e. the first few lines repeat that written in the Methods section and are unnecessary. It would also be interesting to report the percentage of smokers and non-smokers who accepted the offer.

Discussion - The authors should make it clear that assertions regarding differences between cigarette packages are based on exploratory analyses. No a priori hypotheses were made regarding the differences between individual varieties of cigarette packages (i.e. differences between flavoured versus non-flavoured, or more ‘overtly feminine’ versus the other packages (which are also ‘marketed toward young women’)). However, much is made of these comparisons in the Discussion; maybe these could be mentioned nearer the end of the paper as secondary findings.

Discussion, paragraph 3, (Page 11) seems vague and it is unclear about how this conclusion was reached. This needs reconsideration.

Discussion, Paragraph 6, (page 11),–An alternative explanation for this ‘floor effect’ is that none of the cigarette packages include a graphic health warning on the front. Given that plain packaging increases attention to health warnings on packages (Munafò et al 2011), if the packages presented to participants were 3D and participants could see the 100% warning on the back, you might find a reduction in ‘a little or lot less health risk than other brands’ for the plain packs as compared with the branded condition.

Discussion, paragraph 6 (page 11) – First line should be reworded to aid interpretation and ‘misperception’ changed to ‘misconception’. In general, the continual use of double negatives throughout the manuscript makes the paper difficult to scan.

There are a couple of minor typographical errors in the manuscript (e.g. thank-you).

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests