

**When Packages Can't Speak:
Possible impacts of plain and generic
packaging of tobacco products**

EXPERT PANEL REPORT

**Prepared at the request of
Health Canada**

March 1995

52171 6346

March 1995


The Honourable Diane Marleau
Minister of Health


Dear Ms. Marleau:

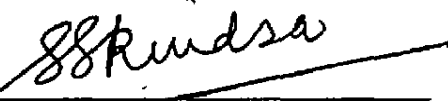
It is our pleasure to present you with the Expert Panel Report, **When Packages Can't Speak: Possible impacts of plain and generic packaging of tobacco products**. We have prepared this Report to the best of our professional abilities and expertise within the budget and time parameters established.

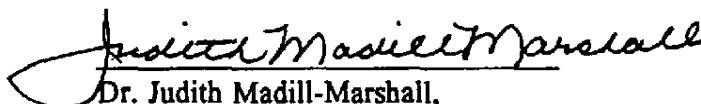
There is no longer any debate on the intrinsic harmfulness of tobacco and smoking. In this spirit, we are confident that our Report will assist you in taking further actions toward evaluating the appropriateness for the Government to develop legislation on plain and generic packaging for tobacco products and thereby reduce consumption.

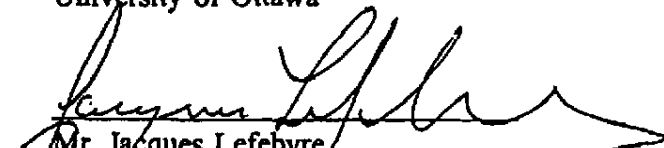
Respectfully submitted,
Panel of Experts and we have signed,



Dr. Marvin E. Goldberg,
Bard Professor of Marketing
Pennsylvania State University

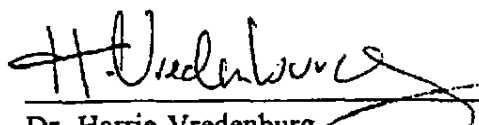

Dr. John Liefeld,
Professor of Consumer Studies
University of Guelph


Dr. Gurprit Kindra,
Professor of Marketing
University of Ottawa


Dr. Judith Madill-Marshall,
Associate Professor of Marketing
Carleton University


Mr. Jacques Lefebvre,
President
Tribu Lintas Inc., Montréal


Ms. Nanistya Martohardjono,
Creative Director
Spencer Francey Peters Inc., Toronto


Dr. Harrie Vredenburg,
Associate Professor of Marketing
and Strategic Management
University of Calgary

6.1 NATIONAL SURVEY OF TEENS: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND SMOKING BEHAVIOURS

6.1.1 Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of the National Survey was to assess the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs held by smoking and non-smoking teenagers, 14–17 years old, regarding smoking, brands, plain and generic packaging, and perceived impact of such packaging on teenagers. To achieve this, a questionnaire was developed, pretested, and administered to a sample of 1,200 teenagers recruited through mall intercept procedures throughout Canada.

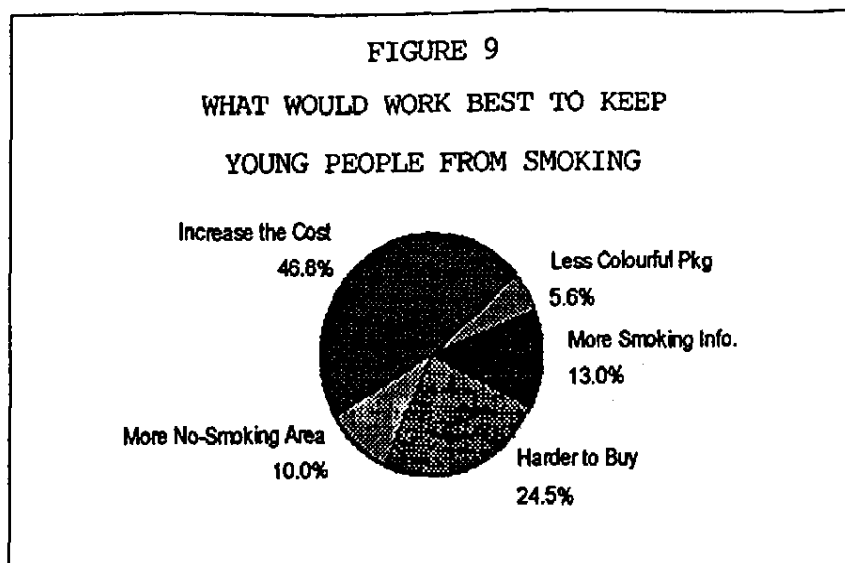
From its expertise in consumer behaviour, the Panel determined that knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and images that consumers hold about products and brands are **intervening variables** that can be used to predict future purchase behaviours. The key contribution of the National Survey of Teens was the measurement of these variables in a national sample of teens which resulted in much-needed baseline data regarding the target groups' knowledge, beliefs, behaviours and stated attitudes about the probable effects of plain and generic packaging on cigarette consumption. Because there has been no previous national comprehensive study on these issues undertaken in Canada, this portion of the Expert Panel's research was built upon earlier qualitative work done on a much smaller scale with small samples of youth. (See, for example, Section 3 of this report; Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto 1994; McCracken 1992.) These advantages of the national survey are important, but potential disadvantages must also be noted—any survey only deals with *reported* perceptions and behaviours.

6.1.2 Methodology

Following are the highlights of the methodology used in conducting the National Survey of Teens component of the Expert Panel research strategy. These highlights are brief and non-technical in orientation; a technical section describing the methodology in detail is available in Appendix D.

Highlights

- The sample consisted of 1,200 respondents aged 14–17 from across Canada who are vulnerable to starting smoking or who are already smoking. Anti-smoking teens were excluded because consumer behaviour research and theory show that strongly negative anti-smoking attitudes make it unlikely that those holding such attitudes are probable candidates for beginning smoking.



6.1.7 Conclusions

In considering all data and information derived from the National Survey of Teens, several conclusions can be drawn. First, three quarters of Canadian youth who are not anti-smokers will smoke at least one puff or more of a tobacco cigarette in the next year. More than half of them currently smoke on average anywhere from 3.4 to 13 cigarettes per day despite the fact that they know and believe cigarettes are harmful (87%). They smoke to fit in with friends and to be cool. Those who now smoke infrequently and irregularly would increase their smoking if they were around smoking friends more often. The top two brands smoked by teenagers are du Maurier and Players. Less committed smokers (infrequent/irregular smokers), choose these brands primarily because their friends smoke them. The influence of friends is still important but less so to more committed smokers' choice of brands. As smokers become more regular/frequent smokers, taste becomes the most mentioned reason for brand choice, followed by "it's the one my friends smoke."

Second, the survey showed that packaging is an important cue in brand identification for Canadian teens. Even teens who are not committed to smoking yet (the vulnerable/naive and experimenters), can identify several brands solely on the basis of package cues only, that is, with no brand name associated with the package. Package design alone, without brand name, provides enough information for almost all teens to recognize the two top teen cigarette brands in the Canadian market. The average teen in the population of interest in this study could recognize almost half of cigarette brands on the basis of package cues only. When asked how cigarette companies get teens to notice their brand, the most common answer is package design.

Third, teenagers in the target population reported mixed views about what they believe would be the impact of plain and generic packaging. Fairly large proportions report that having cigarettes available only in such packaging would: bother them a lot (23.8%); result in fewer teenagers starting smoking (49.3%); result in teenagers smoking less (36.2%); and result in more teenagers stopping smoking (38.2%). Less committed smokers, the vulnerable/naive and experimenters are not bothered as much by the idea of plain and generic packaging and are more likely to believe that it would make a difference in the number of teens who would start, the amount smoked and the number who would stop. While these results suggest that sizeable numbers of teens believe such packaging would make a difference, it must not be forgotten that large proportions of teens said that they would not be bothered very much by such packaging (62.7%), and that it would not change the number who would start smoking (45.5%), the amount smoked (58.8%) or the number who would stop (45.2%). Also, very few respondents (5.6%) believe that making cigarette packages less colourful would be the best way to keep young people from smoking. Most believe that making cigarettes cost more (46.8%) or making it harder for young people to buy cigarettes (24.5%) would work best.

A close examination of these responses suggests that effects will be more marginal than large. This is because: only about 30-40% believe plain and generic packaging would make a difference; and the difference they believe it would make is small in magnitude (i.e., only a few less would start). It must be noted, however, that the vulnerable/naive and smoking experimenters in the study are more likely than frequent/regular smokers to believe that such packaging will have an effect. This finding indicates that such packaging is likely to have more of a deterrent effect on teens in these groups.

All evidence from the various facets of the National Survey of Teens is consistent in that it points to plain and generic packaging having a slight to perhaps moderate effect on smoking uptake among Canadian teens. Since the groups most likely to be affected by such packaging—the vulnerable/naive and experimenters—are the ones going through smoking-uptake decision making, plain and generic packaging should have an effect on smoking uptake and cessation among Canadian teens.

In generalizing from these findings, it is important to remain cognizant of both the **primary advantage** of the National Survey (increased comfort in the "representativeness" of the answers recorded) and a **primary disadvantage** (decreased comfort in the validity of responses where respondents were asked questions of the future, not of the past or present).

52171 6427

APPENDIX C

PRELIMINARY QUALITATIVE STUDY:

SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION

SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION

1. There is high degree of brand awareness among all of these groups. There is a high degree of awareness of the Player's racing promotions. There is some awareness of Benson & Hedges sponsorship of the Fireworks Show. There is no awareness of du Maurier promotions, even though du Maurier is the best known brand because it is the brand most smoked by kids - according to these kids. It's got to be the red package that at some time became a symbol tied to the rebellion and expressions of self which the uptake process involves. No other brand has such a distinctive colour that can be recognized at a distance when kids flash packages in the alleys, behind the mall, and the other places where they surreptitiously smoke.
2. They do not have well-developed images connecting brands with types of people and lifestyles. The best connections are between brands and gender. du Maurier is clearly smoked by the females; for males, it's a mixture of du Maurier or Player's. Age is also connected with brand images, but not as strongly as gender.
3. They see the uptake process as being unaffected by promotion or packaging, as primarily a matter of being seen as a smoker or not. Peer situations, and parental acceptance or rejection, appear more important in the uptake situation. It is also clear that the Prochaska model does not fit the uptake situation. Contemplators in the Prochaska model apply to people contemplating a cessation of an addiction, that is, the stopping of a behaviour - not the starting of one. The stages refer to "solving" or the "cure" of an addiction or dysfunction. It is psychotherapy-based and deals with overcoming a negative behaviour situation (e.g., addition to tobacco, drugs, alcohol, etc.). In the uptake situation individuals are not contemplating cessation of an addiction; rather they are being driven from the outside instead of by a conscious decision to seek pleasure in smoking. It would appear from these focus groups that none of these subjects, even those who admit to smoking, are even in the pre-contemplation stage of the Prochaska model. The children smokers do not yet admit that they have an addiction. And those in the initial stages of uptake are involved in an entirely different process, which McCracken tries to elaborate in very qualitative form.
4. The uptake process has several factors associated with it: peer pressure, expressing individualism, making statements about the self in relation to parents or authority (see McCracken). It is clear that in most first trials there are little package, brand or brand promotion elements. Most kids receive their first cigarette from friends. There is no brand choice - the choice is simply to smoke or not to smoke. Therefore, in the uptake process brand and package are very minor components. This means that changing the package will not have any major effect on the decision(s) to smoke or not to smoke. But when the person reaches the state of buying cigarettes, then brand and package will become more important. This will occur very early in a smoker's career. Maybe as early as after the first cigarette, or maybe not until 50th or 100th cigarette. Often the first

purchases will be "from friends"; so brand and package will not be involved. Its only when the first purchase is from a store that brand and package come into play. At that time the brand will 99% of the time be the brand that the friends smoke.

5. They say plain packaging would not stop kids from starting or stopping - yet there is a universal negative reaction to the plain and ugly packages. Thus while plain and generic packaging will not have major effects, it will be another nail in the coffin of smoking, as over the last decade there have been many different types of nails (anti-smoking bylaws, etc.), and each contributes to the observed decline in the percentage of the population that smoke.
6. Data must be checked regarding the types of colour blindness and the percentage of the population that has each type, because a package that was thought to be yellow was perceived as green by many subjects to the point where one referred to it as green in the discussions. It is critical to avoid advocating a colour that may be misread by too high a proportion of the population because they suffer from one type of colour blindness.
7. Only two brands seen as "kid's" brands: du Maurier (females and males) and Player's (males).