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## Adolescents' perceptions of flavoured and capsule cigarette packaging and point-of-sale marketing in Argentina

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### Background

- **Packaging and point-of-sale (POS) marketing** are key promotional tools for tobacco companies, particularly where advertising is restricted [1]. Pack design—its visual and structural features—can influence consumer perceptions [2], suggesting some products are less harmful than others [3, 4].
- In **Argentina**, where **POS marketing is permitted in some provinces and banned in others**, little is known about how adolescents perceive cigarette marketing and packaging.

### Objective

To explore **adolescents' perceptions of POS cigarette marketing** and how **packaging** influences their perceptions of harm and attractiveness.

### Methods

- We conducted **eight focus groups (n=51)** in four Argentine cities (Figure 1), two of which ban retail tobacco marketing and display. Participants were stratified by **gender, age (13–14, 15–17)**, and **smoking susceptibility**.
- Participants were shown **photos of cigarette marketing** (Figure 2) and **packaging** (Figure 3) to prompt discussion, with a focus on flavour capsule cigarettes due to their popularity and youth appeal in Argentina.

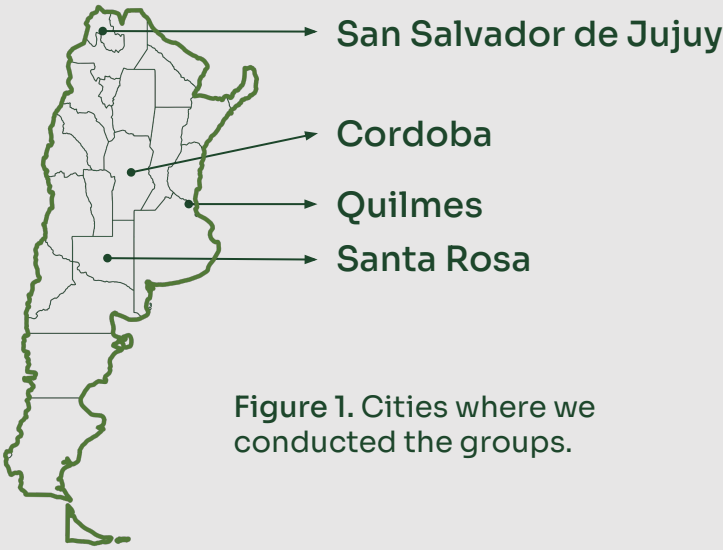


Figure 1. Cities where we conducted the groups.

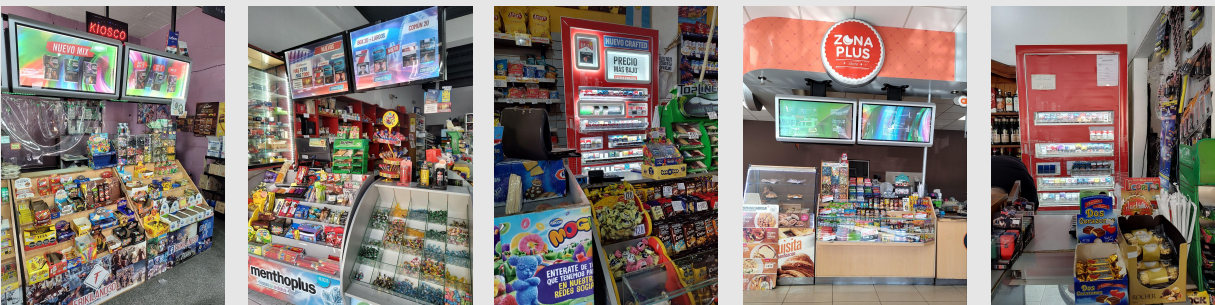


Figure 2. The photos of POS tobacco marketing that we showed to the participants to promote the discussion

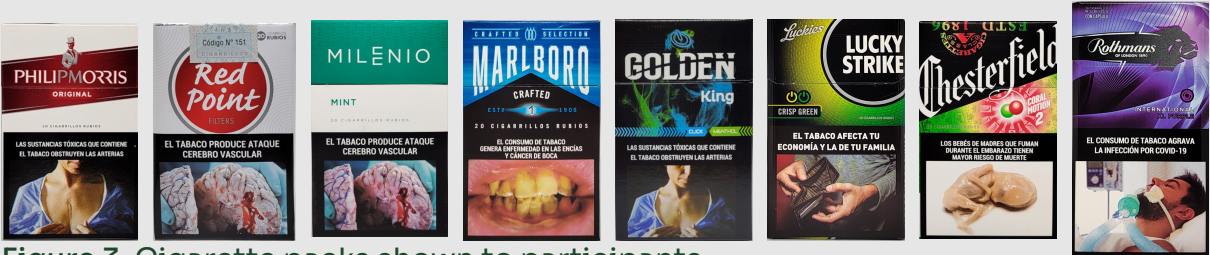


Figure 3. Cigarette packs shown to participants

- We transcribed and anonymised the recordings and conducted a **thematic analysis** following the approach of Braun and Clarke [5], using NVivo v20.

### Results

#### POS marketing

- Participants reported **noticing cigarette marketing and packs at POS**, even where banned.
- When shown images of retail tobacco marketing (Figure 2), they described it as **common**, highlighted salient advert features (e.g. colours and lights).
- They also criticized the proximity to children’s products.

#### Perceived attractiveness

- **Colourful and eye-catching packs**, often capsule cigarettes, were considered **most appealing**, especially those with novel features.
- Packs with red-and-white or plain white packs were among the least attractive.
- **On-pack health warnings** were seen as **contradictory** to the vibrant packaging.



Figure 4. Example of classification by attractiveness

#### Perceived harm

- **Indications of flavours** (through pack colours and descriptors) **influenced harm perceptions**.
- Neutral colours (e.g., white, light green) were associated with reduced harm, while the **most eye-catching and “decorated” packs seemed the most harmful**.

### Conclusions

Adolescents were familiar with cigarette marketing at the POS, even in provinces where it is prohibited. **Pack design** influenced product appeal and harm perceptions. **Health warnings** sparked interest and prompted debate.

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5. Braun V, Clarke V. Thematic analysis: a practical guide. Los Angeles London New Delhi Singapore Washington DC Melbourne: SAGE; 2022. 338 p.