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Background

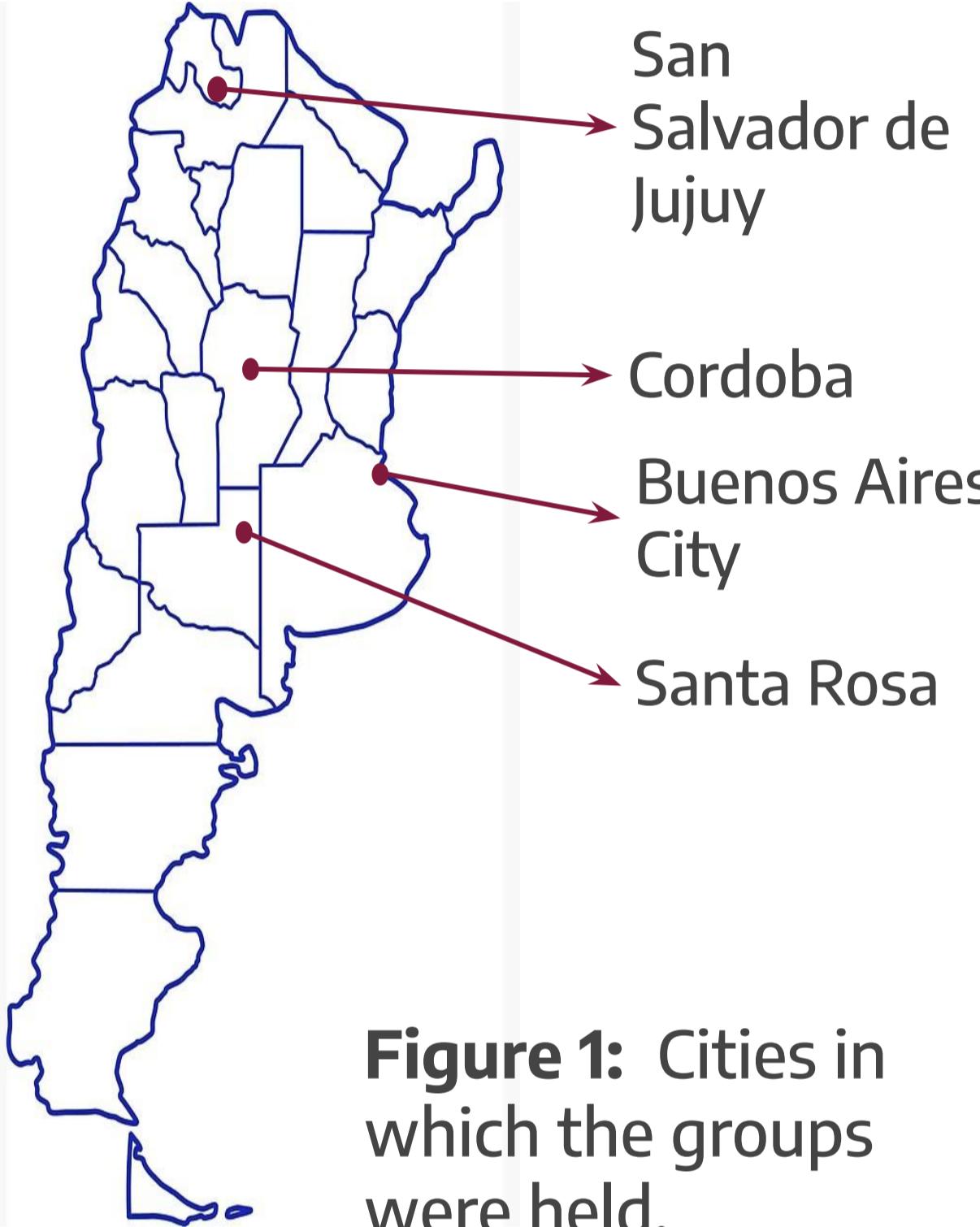
Sales of roll-your-own (RYO) tobacco are increasing in Latin America, with this product widely available in Argentina, and consumed by more than one in ten people who smoke. To our knowledge, no other study has explored adolescent's perceptions of RYO tobacco and accessories.

Objective

Understand adolescent's opinions on RYO tobacco, and explore how pack design can influence their perception of harm and appeal.

Methods

We conducted **8 focus groups** (**n=51**) which lasted from 75 to 120 minutes, in four cities in Argentina:



| City | Group | Age | Gender | Susceptibility | Nº of Participants |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|
| San Salvador de Jujuy | 1 | 13-14 | Femenino | Susceptible | 6 |
| | 2 | 15-17 | Masculino | Susceptible | 5 |
| Quilmes | 3 | 15-17 | Femenino | Non susceptible | 6 |
| | 4 | 13-14 | Masculino | Susceptible | 3 |
| Córdoba | 5 | 13-14 | Femenino | Non susceptible | 8 |
| | 6 | 15-17 | Masculino | Non susceptible | 7 |
| Santa Rosa | 7 | 13-14 | Masculino | Non susceptible | 8 |
| | 8 | 15-17 | Femenino | Susceptible | 8 |

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample

Participants were asked about awareness and perceptions on RYO tobacco. We explored whether they thought there is any differences with manufactured cigarettes, and showed them examples of RYO packs and accessories. They were asked to rank the packs according to their appeal and harm.

Audio recordings were transcribed and then analyzed using a thematic analysis through framework matrices on NVivo 20.

Figure 2: RYO packs and some of the accessories shown to participants



Results

General Knowledge

All groups were aware of the existence of RYO, and some of them could describe the process of rolling a cigarette, and the accessories required. They had seen mainly **older people** smoking, but some recalled having seen people their age as well. A few mentioned having seen it in **social media** and series. Two male groups **associated 'rollies' with marihuana** more than with tobacco.

Comparison with Manufactured Cigarettes

Although half of the groups first expressed they thought **there is no difference**, participants in all groups later commented:

RYO is less harmful:

- less chemicals and additives
- more control over the content

"You feel like you have (...) more control on what you are consuming. Like when you prepare your own food" (M, 15-17, Susceptible)

- people smokes less because it requires more time and effort

RYO is more harmful:

- more pure
- the person rolling may add dangerous substances
- more tobacco can be added
- people smokes more because it is easier to loose track

"They roll a lot and they don't even realize the amount" (M, 15-17, Susceptible)

Perceptions of pack design

RYO packs were not familiar to participants; since they usually see rolled cigarettes, or loose tobacco, but not packs. They found them **more attractive** than manufactured cigarettes.

"I feel more like trying these than the premade ones" (M, 13-14, Susceptible)

Packs with **nature drawings, colours and descriptors** were said to be **more attractive and less harmful** (1, 3, 7, 8), so as **packs resembling 'yerba'**, the herbs used to prepare the national beverage 'mate'.

"[Pack N° 7] looks less harmful because of the colour of innocence. Not the color, the birds... (...) It looks more organic" (M, 15-17, Susceptible)

Packs with more **simple design** (4, 9) were considered **less attractive and more harmful**, and said to be **target to older people**.

Accessories were found **appealing**, and compared to candy (gums, gummies, mints).



Conclusions

Adolescents are familiar with RYO tobacco, with their perceptions about its harmfulness, and appeal influenced by pack design (colour, use of descriptors, flavours, drawings) and social narratives. Some of them have misconceptions about the relative harm of RYO tobacco compared to manufactured cigarettes.

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