

ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF FLAVORED CAPSULE CIGARETTES IN MEXICO: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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BACKGROUND

The marketing strategies of the tobacco industry focus on attracting young people to consume flavored capsule cigarettes by using appealing designs and a variety of flavors to minimize the perception of harm. There are few studies on this topic in low- and middle-income countries, such as Mexico, which is a significant market for these products in Latin America, with a substantial prevalence of consumption among adolescents. This study aims to understand how young people interpret and respond to the marketing of cigarette packs and single cigarettes, particularly those that incorporate flavored capsules.

RESULTS

Adolescents said that capsule cigarettes are prominently displayed and accessible, particularly in stores and through people selling them at schools.

Adolescents were drawn to capsule single cigarette as they found the design, colourful filters, and multiple flavour options appealing.

"Mainly by design because they are innovative... now they have two capsules, and they are of different flavors." (GF Women, susceptible)

Some young people associated certain cigarettes with greater risk or harm, especially those that looked like imitations or had a more traditional design.

"Because it's the typical cigarette you see discarded on the street, it's the worst." (FG Men, not susceptible)

Regular single cigarettes



Single cigarettes flavor capsule

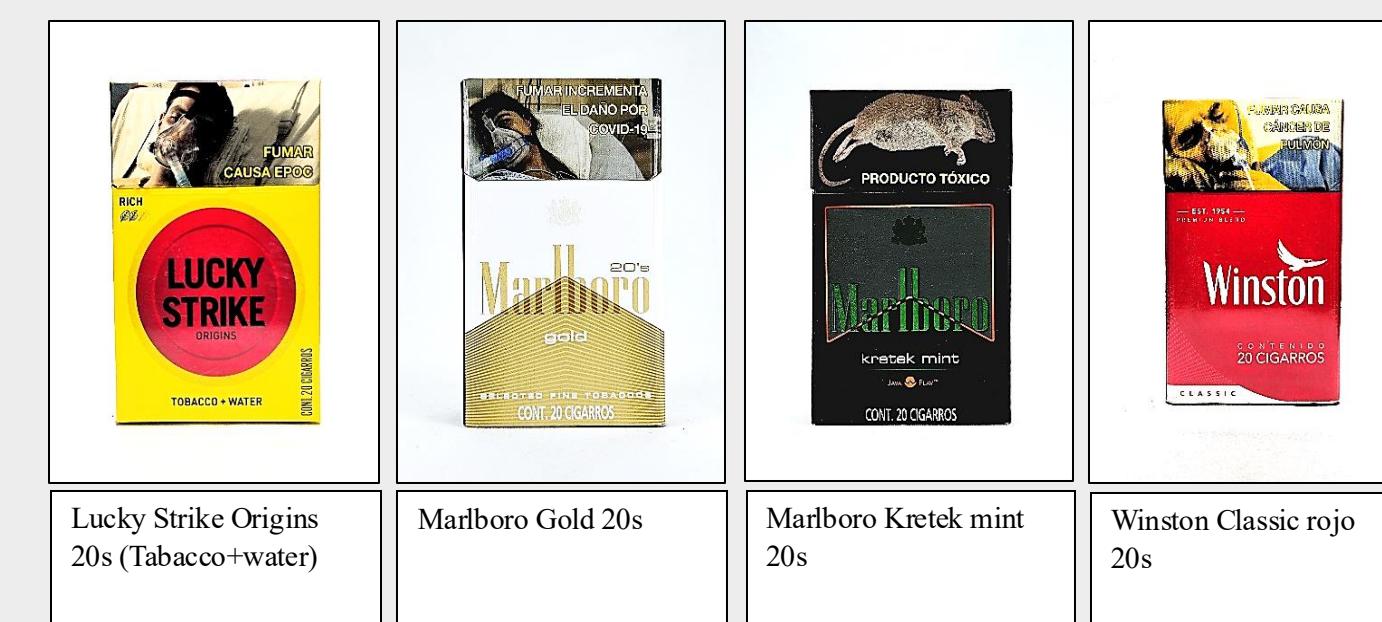


Combustible cigarettes flavor capsule

METHODS

Nine focus groups were conducted between May and June 2024 with 12–17-year-olds (N=70) in four Mexican states: Oaxaca, Mexico City, Jalisco, and Nuevo Léon. Groups were split by gender and smoking susceptibility. Using a semi-structured topic guide, we explored adolescents' knowledge and perceptions of different types of cigarettes. Participants were shown a number of packs and sticks for regular and capsule cigarettes and asked about their perceptions of each of these. Groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, then uploaded to the Nvivo20 software.

Regular combustible cigarettes



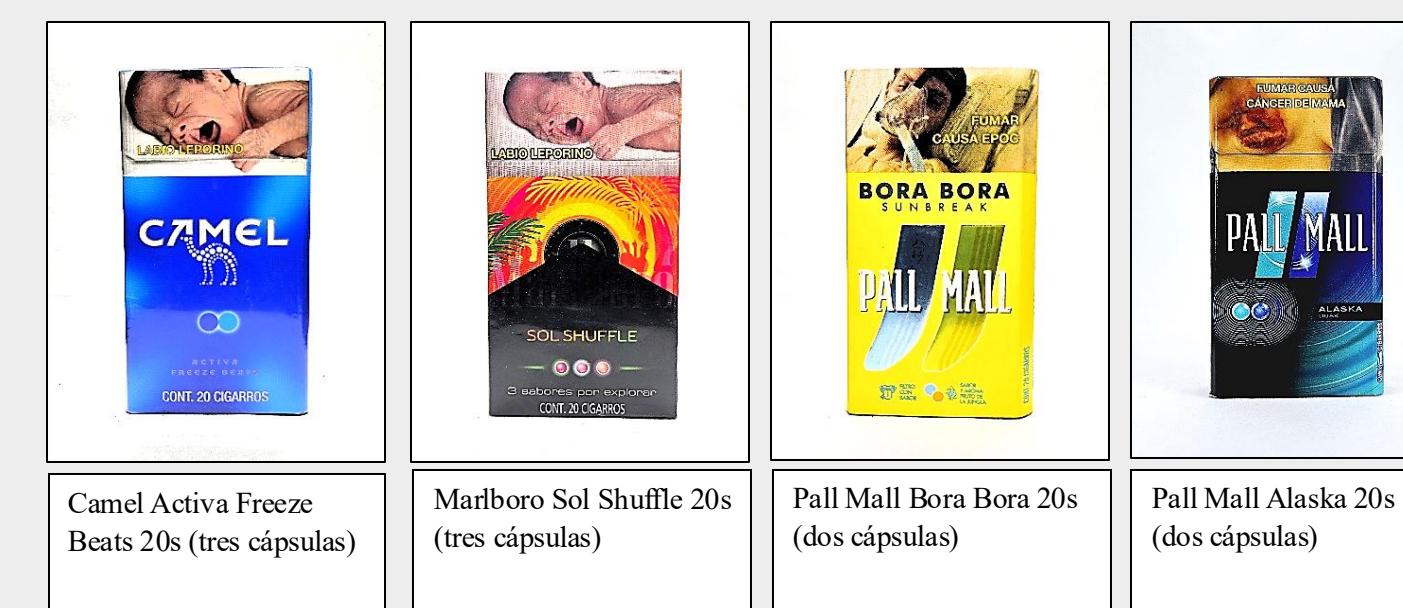
The adolescents were drawn to the design of capsule cigarette packs because of the vibrant colours and creative designs (e.g., metallic packs), and participants generally expressed an interest in themed packs (e.g., beach, parties) as they perceived these trendy and innovative.

"The iridescent effect, I think it is... and the metallic one, I think it gives it a certain exclusivity." (FG Men, susceptible)

Combustible cigarettes flavor capsule



Combustible cigarettes flavor capsule



DISCUSSION

Eye-catching colors and innovative designs increase attractiveness despite health warnings. The popularity of flavored capsule cigarettes among youths underscores the urgency of banning these elements. High accessibility of cigarettes in Mexico highlights the need for stricter regulations on design and marketing.

CONCLUSION

The results suggest that adolescents are attracted to capsule cigarettes because of their perceived accessibility, visual appeal, innovative packaging, and the availability of a wide variety of flavors. These findings highlight the need for increased scrutiny of the marketing of capsule cigarettes, particularly among vulnerable populations such as adolescents.

Conflict of interest disclosure

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Tobacco Industry	E-cigarette & nicotine product industry (excluding pharma)	Pharma Industry
NO	NO	NO
NO	NO	NO

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