

# 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

Winston Classic	Marlboro Kretek Mint
Faros	Shots Montana

### Single cigarettes flavor capsule

Marlboro Mega Ice Xpress (una cápsula)	Marlboro Mega Ice Xpress (dos cápsulas)
Pall Mall Alaska Dusk (dos cápsulas)	Camel Activa Lush Sounds (dos cápsulas)

## 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 León. 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.

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

Marlboro vista forest fusion 20s (Caja metálica)	Lucky Strike Original 20s (Caja metálica)	Pall Mall Tokyo Midnight 20s (Caja metálica)	Pall Mall Bora Bora 20s (Caja metálica)

### Regular combustible cigarettes

Lucky Strike Origins 20s (Tabacco+water)	Marlboro Gold 20s	Marlboro Kretek mint 20s	Winston Classic rojo 20s

### Combustible cigarettes flavor capsule

Camel Activa Freeze Beats 20s (tres cápsulas)	Marlboro Sol Shuffle 20s (tres cápsulas)	Pall Mall Bora Bora 20s (dos cápsulas)	Pall Mall Alaska 20s (dos cápsulas)

## 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.