

Impact of Pictorial Warning on Cigarette Packs

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1. Introduction

Written warning message on cigarette packets is not new phenomena in Pakistan. However, these written health warnings had not some encouraging signs as most of the people did never bother to read these messages. Further, the messages became part of the routine and were often ignored by the smokers completely. These new pictorial warnings emphasized harsh health realities of continuing to smoke and would make many more think hard about giving it up.

Now cigarette packets in Pakistan would soon be carrying images of dead bodies, cancerous tumours, rotting teeth, and diseased organs as part of a campaign to show the public, especially young people, the dangers of smoking. This is an attempt to highlight the harmful impact of smoking on physical and mental health of smokers and people around them. Some successful experiences have already been done on tobacco products sold in Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, New Zealand, Singapore, Venezuela, Thailand and Uruguay. Similarly, same has been practiced throughout the European Union.

Tobacco packaging warning messages are health warning messages that appear on cigarettes packets to enhance public's knowledge about the harmfulness and affects of smoking on both smokers and non-smokers. In this way, the government wants to warn smokers into quitting by putting graphic pictures of the damage caused by smoking on cigarette packs. Public needs to be shocked out of their contentment about tobacco. The true face of smoking is disease and death — not the glamour and sophistication the sellers and the tobacco industry try to portray.

In the light of above-said, new pictorial warnings have been developed by an agency namely Adgroup. This study is an attempt to pretest the images and to seek possible reaction of people, both smokers and non-smokers, and their perception on the images.

In order to conduct the study in comprehensive and holistic manner qualitative method is used to collect information and data from public at large. Furthermore, secondary data is collected and analyzed through desk reviews. Due to financial and time constraints, the data collection for this assessment study could not be expanded to cover a large sample of respondents.

However the propose methodology has substantially fulfilled the purpose and achieved set objectives of the study.

2. Objectives of the Study

Following are the major objectives of the study.

- To know public perception on the proposed images, pictorial warning, to be printed on the cigarette packets
- To seek impact and effectiveness of the proposed images highlighting health related issues caused by smoking on the citrates packets

Further, to explore possible social impact of the proposed images and their impacts on families and children.

3. Research Methodology and Geographical Coverage

Qualitative research methodology has been employed to accurately profile level of awareness, impact and effectiveness of the proposed images and overall image campaign of the proposed campaign.

Qualitative research involves in-depth understanding of behavioural patterns and the reasons that govern it. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on reasons behind various aspects of behaviour. It investigates 'why' and 'how' of decision-making, as compared to what, where, and when of quantitative research. Hence, the need is for smaller but focused samples rather than large random samples, from which, qualitative research categorizes data into patterns as the primary basis for organizing and reporting results. For the purpose of this assessment study, data collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) will be critical in analyzing whether or not the messages have been sent across effectively and the effectiveness of the advocacy campaign.

The purpose of conducting Focus Groups Discussion (FGD) is to gain insight into the experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders and public at large. Focus groups are not merely

question-and-answer sessions, but involve interactive discussion within structured agendas, based on topics supplied by the researcher, providing an opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited time. Seven FGDs have been conducted at all selected locations

In total seven FGDs were conducted in district Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Two FGDs were conducted in each Lahore and Rawalpindi whereas three were conducted in Islamabad including one with female group.

	Lahore	Rawalpindi	Islamabad
Male	2	2	2
Female			1
Total	2	2	3

4. Target Group and Participants of the Study

In total 92 people participated in seven Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in three districts namely Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Diverse groups were selected and engaged in the discussion process. The only FGD with women group was held in Islamabad where 9 of the participants were working women while the rest were students.

	Lahore		Rawalpindi		Islamabad	
	No of FGDs	Number of participants	No of FGDs	Number of participants	No of FGDs	Number of participants
Male	2	23	2	29	2	25
Female					1	15
Total	2	23	2	29	3	40

Following are the target groups that have been engaged in data collection process:

- Male and female of age groups 18 plus both smokers and non-smokers
- Male and female of age group 25-40 plus both smokers and non-smokers
- Male and female of age group 40 and above plus both smokers and non-smokers

Age group	Lahore		Rawalpindi		Islamabad			
	Male		Male		Male		Female	
	Smoker	Non-Smoker	Smoker	Non-Smoker	Smoker	Non-Smoker	Smoker	Non-Smoker
18-25	3	2	5	2	5	1	1	1
25-40	8	4	6	5	7	4	5	3
40 and above	3	3	7	4	5	3	3	2
Total	14	9	18	11	17	8	9	6

Focused Group Discussions targeted smokers, non-smokers, youth, public at large and people engage in cigarettes selling business.

In Lahore, a total of 23 males participated in the discussion including 14 smokers and 9 non-smokers. A total of 29 male participated in two discussions held in Rawalpindi. This includes 18 smokers and 11 non-smokers. During FGDs in Islamabad, a total of 40 male and female participated in three discussions. One of them was exclusively conducted with females where 15 women participated in the discussion. Group wise and age-wise detail of the participants of the study is provided in the table above.

5. Findings and Recommendations

Following are the findings and the recommendations of the study.

5.1 Overall Impact of the Pictorial Warning

1. Most of the non-smokers supported measures that educate people about the health risks of smoking but some terms these pictures not just to educate but to shock and force people to give up a product which has not been banned by the government.
2. Most of the participants said that the pictures would have a very positive impact on the people who smoke. This would help in increase in the quitting rate among the smokers. Further, this would have a great impact on the beginners.
3. Responding to a question of quitting the smoking, participants who used to smoke said that the images were motivating and this could coerce smokers to limit and quit smoking. However, such cases would not be more than 8-10 percent.
4. There have been suggestions from the participating groups that the picture sizes on the packets shall be larger and more visible as a motivating factor for smokers to quit and non-smokers to avoid smoking.
5. Some of the participants say that the images would be useless and have minimum impact on smokers as it is hard to motivate seasoned / long-term smokers but it can certainly scare off those who have just begun to smoke.
6. Some were of the opinion that this will encourage more and more people to buy imported cigarettes packets which do not possess any pictorial warning.
7. Most of the participants, who do not smoke, are of the opinion that the proposed images would definitely motivate and impact on the new smokers as they expect a reduction of about 25% of new smokers especially amongst youth.

5.2 Impact of the Existing Message

1. Some participants especially non-smokers said that the written messages were vague, inexplicit and incomplete about the harm of smoking. Further, the written warnings were printed in smaller characters, and the use of colors made the warning less distinguished and attractive for the users. New pictorial images in comparison with the written warning messages are more explicit and effective equally for both smokers and non-smokers.
2. Though there have been warning messages on cigarette packets 'that smoking kills', for instance, for long in the country, but its effects are diminishing.
3. Participants suggested that along with using graphic images to get the same message across, "smoking kills", there shall be messages like people who smoke die younger, could have more dramatic and encouraging effects.

5.3 Social Impact of Pictorial Warning

1. Responding to a question, most of the smokers both men and women said that they will feel share embarrassment while carrying packets with images in the public. Hence, causing significant social discomfort and humiliation. This might enhance the use of cigarette cases to carry cigarettes. Further, regular smokers would switch to such imported cigarettes, which do not carry such images.
2. In response to a question, most of the smokers, both male and female, said that they would not take cigarette packets, with pictorial warnings, at home especially in front of children and their family. Carrying such packets at home in front of children may not only cause humiliation but could also trigger family pressure to quit smoking. Furthermore, children would definitely take a bad impression of the smoking after seeing such scary pictures on the cigarette packets.
3. One of the interesting comments made by the participants, especially male, was that they would not ask their children to bring cigarettes from the market due to the pictorial warning on the packets.

4. Female smokers said that they already bear some family pressure regarding smoking. These pictorial warnings would bring more pressure from the family members especially from their children. Further, it would bring more embarrassment on smoking publically.

5.4 Effectiveness of Layout, Design and Proposed Pictures

1. The pictures are expected to be more effective than text, and study suggested that pictorial warnings should be changed periodically with other relevant pictures to maintain their effectiveness and not letting smokers to take it as a routine matter. In this way more and more issues related to the smoking could be highlighted on tobacco packets.
2. It seems that people have limited knowledge on the range of diseases caused by smoking and people have not experienced such impact of smoking. However, there are some kinds of diseases which are more familiar and commonly known by the participants. To illustrate the health risks of smoking, there is need to increase the number of images and bringing more relevant images, though the proposed images are effective enough.
3. Some of other suggested images are of throat cancer, rotting teeth, damaged lungs, open heart surgery, lungs cancer, heart failure, blood pressure and impact on new born baby shall be included as the two proposed pictures have not been experienced by either smokers or non-smokers participants. There are chances that none of the participants would have visited hospitals or have seen any of the patients suffering from the diseases highlighted through the proposed pictures. Further, it is suggested that, pictorial warnings shall be accompanied with a written health warning on the back of packets.
4. First picture having lip cancer would have more impression than the second picture with neck cancer. Most of the groups' participants prioritized the first picture over the second one.
5. As far as the proposed pictures are concerned, it is suggested that both the pictures shall be on one packet; one on the front and other on the back side.

6. To maximize the impact of the proposed images, these images shall also be displayed in large size at the sellers' shops and at public spaces. Further, these images shall be replaced with the new ones periodically.

5.5 Impact on Youth Groups

1. Most of the participants, especially young male and female, suggested that pictures of youth having diseases caused by smoking shall also be highlighted on the cigarette packets.
2. The participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) also suggested that pictorial warning messages shall be followed by a series of campaign to consistently motivate regular smokers and youth to avoid smoking.
3. It is also suggested that the government shall forcefully impose existing legislation on underage cigarette buyers, which will help reducing the number of new smokers. Further, sellers of such products to the underage youth shall be prosecuted according to the law.