

Plain Packaging of Tobacco Products

WHO FCTC Recommendations, Evidence & Best Practices



World Health
Organization

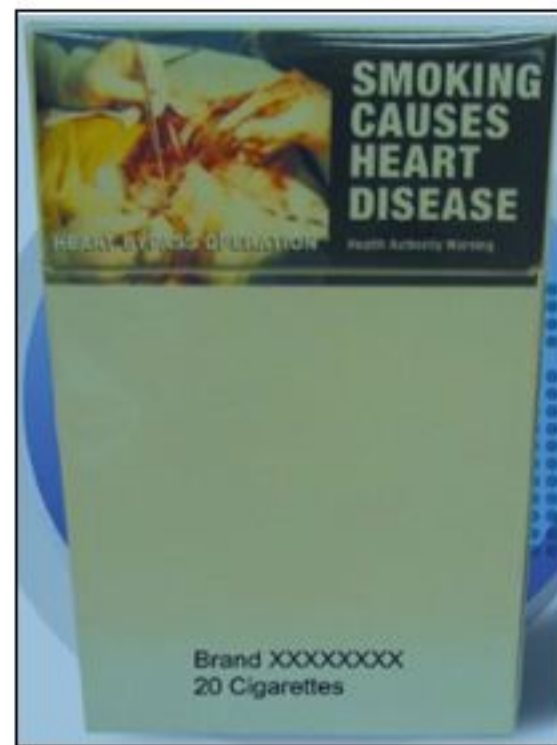


International Union
Against Tuberculosis
and Lung Disease

What is plain packaging?

- Packaging with mandated, standardized appearance: colour, size, shape
- No brand imagery, colours, corporate logos or trademarks would be permitted; brand would be identified only by name in mandated size, font and location
- Health warnings and other mandated information such as toxic constituents and contraband tracking markings would still appear

Some examples (mock-ups; not in circulation)



Sources: Gar Mahood, NSRA, Canada;
School of Public Health, University of Sydney, Australia

WHO FCTC recommendations and requirements for plain packaging

- Article 11 implementation guidelines (packaging and labelling of tobacco products):

Parties should consider adopting measures to restrict or prohibit the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style (plain packaging). This may increase the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings and messages, prevent the package from detracting attention from them and address industry package design techniques that may suggest that some products are less harmful than others.

WHO FCTC recommendations and requirements for plain packaging

- Article 13 implementation guidelines (tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship):

Packaging and product design are important elements of advertising and promotion. Parties should consider adopting plain packaging requirements to eliminate the effects of advertising or promotion on packaging. Packaging, individual cigarettes or other tobacco products should carry no advertising or promotion, including design features that make products attractive.

Why plain packaging?

- Removes the ability of packages to serve as advertising
- Addresses the problems of misleading labelling
- Makes the package less attractive and has the potential to reduce tobacco use

Packaging becomes more important as other advertising is prohibited



Source: Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids Tobacco Industry Ad Gallery
http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/ad_gallery/category/point-of-sale_display/P3/

Novelty packaging also becomes more common



Source: E. Béguinot, 2008

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Addresses the problems of misleading labelling



Images: Mock-up by Heather Selin

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The plainer the pack, the less attractive it is

*The plainest of the plain was most effective
in reducing attractiveness and in conveying
negative characteristics of smokers
of the brand.*

Wakefield et al., *Tobacco Control* 2008

Best combination: plain packaging + large mandated warnings



Front



Back

(example only;
these warnings
from Brazil are
required on only
one face of the
package)

Images: Mock-ups by Heather
Selin using Brazil images from TFI database

Tobacco companies don't like plain packaging

"In our opinion, [after taxation] the other two regulatory environment changes that concern the industry the most are homogenous packaging and below-the-counter sales. Both would significantly restrict the industry's ability to promote their products." Morgan Stanley Research (2007)^[1]

Source: School of Public Health, University of Sydney (Freeman, Chapman, Rimmer)

Arguments against plain packaging

- Legal arguments are most common:
 - violation of trademark law and international trade law (TRIPS, NAFTA)
- But:
 - large health warnings taking up at least 60% of the package (and trademark space) have not been successfully challenged
 - international treaties make exceptions for public health measures

Best practice

- None yet. No jurisdiction currently requires plain packaging of tobacco products, although the Australian government has announced that plain packaging will be required in Australia by 2012
- The United Kingdom Department of Health in 2008 initiated proposals to consider mandated plain packaging as a future tobacco control measure
- Plain packaging is recommended by WHO FCTC Article 11 and Article 13 implementation guidelines
- Where plain packaging is not politically feasible, governments should implement complementary best practices:
 - prohibit printing of emissions quantities on packaging
 - prohibit misleading descriptors and related imagery
 - require picture-based warnings to cover most of the package surface, particularly the principal display surfaces