

Dude, where's my smokes?

Outcomes of plain packaging legislation of tobacco in Australia

Legislation to remove brands from tobacco packaging was introduced in January 2013 with the intent of removing positive signifiers of glamor and success



Methods

Qualitative study with of two rounds of interviews:

- 3 months before plain packaging occurred and 3 months after.
- 11 smokers aged 18 - 25.
- Transcripts were thematically analyzed.



Principal Findings

Prior to the legislation:

- Participants predicted that plain packaging would have no effect because they had favorite brands and established smoking habits.
- They resented “government interference” but recognized that the legislation was naively well intentioned.

Post legislation

More changes were brought in post-legislation than expected:

- “Very disturbing” images of diseased people on both sides of the packet
- Packaging was noticeably flimsier
- Cigarettes have longer filters and no brand identification.
- Smokers reported an “extra layer of annoyance”.



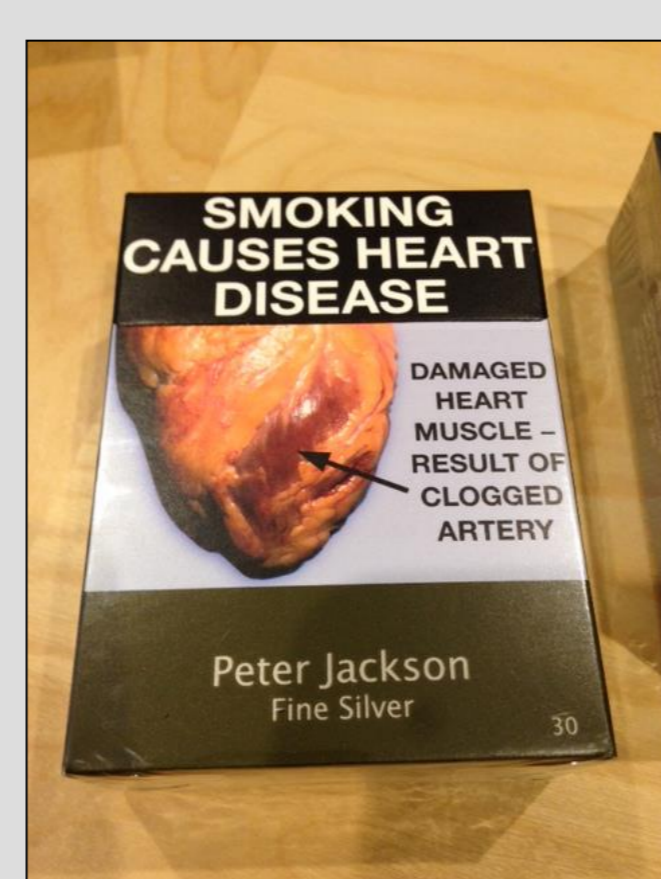
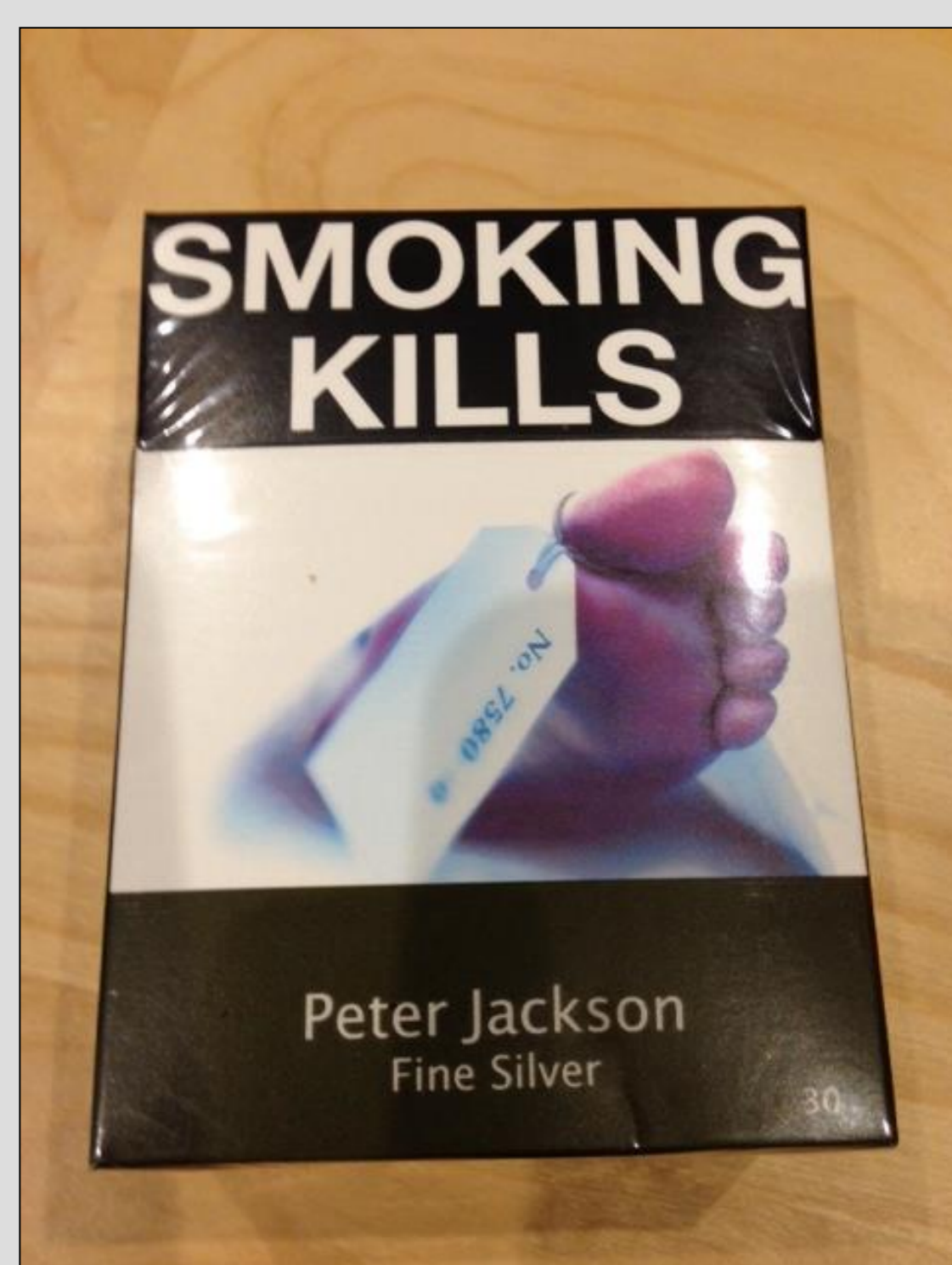
Plain packaging led to:

- No change in smoking habits or brands
- Frequent purchase of the “wrong” brand through retailer error
- Frequent accidental picking up someone else’s tobacco
- When they were sold “wrong” cigarettes participants would still smoke them *even if the cigarettes were too strong*.
- The “wrong” packet was returned ONLY if their brand was the more expensive brand.



Conclusions

- Plain packaging is effective in removing the ‘glamor’ image. This *may* reduce the number of new smokers.
- Smokers were annoyed but resigned about the packaging changes.
- A new industry of attractive cigarette package covers, stickers and cases has emerged
- Price had the greatest influence on whether or not smokers would reduce or quit smoking.
- Australian politicians need not fear adverse political repercussions for bringing in anti-smoking legislation.



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