

The Effectiveness of Graphic Health Warnings

Funded by Australian Department of Health



Social Marketing @ Griffith examined the effectiveness of Graphic Health Warnings (GHWs) on tobacco packaging in Australia. As per the Competition and Consumer (Tobacco) Information Standard 2011, these warnings are vital to Australia's comprehensive tobacco control measures. The research project investigated how consumer attention towards GHWs influenced message recall and intentions to quit smoking.

Using the 14 GHWs that were currently in the market as visual stimuli, non-probability intercept sampling was conducted, eye-tracking and post-surveys were collected from 419 respondents across three Australian cities.

The associations identified between attention, recall, emotional responses, and health risk perceptions emphasised the need for ensuring that visual stimuli messages were optimised to improve attention and outcomes delivered by messages. This, in turn, could aid in preventing smoking initiation and further encouraging cessation. While existing GHWs capture consumer attention effectively, opportunities remain to enhance their efficacy in eliciting health risk responses, behavioural intention, and cessation.

This project underscores the value of eye-tracking methodology as a method that can be applied to gain a deeper understanding of consumer responses to messages. It highlights the potential for eye-tracking to be used in evaluations to yield novel insights.

Key findings included:

- In Australia, the most attention-grabbing elements on tobacco packaging are the front graphic and the Quitline message.
- While people don't often remember the details of these warnings, focusing on these two elements improves recall.
- Emotional reactions to these warnings seem to reduce attention to other areas like branding and back graphics.
- Smokers who perceive a higher health risk are more inclined to quit and pay less attention to warnings on the side and back of the package.
- Additionally, the longer a smoker looks at the side warning panel, the less believable they find the health warnings to be.



[Click here](#) to read the scientific paper.