

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

Testing of Mock-ups of Health Warning
Messages and Warning Notices on Tobacco
Product Advertisements for Smokeless
Tobacco

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Introduction

Health Canada's Tobacco Control Programme has undertaken the development of new health warning messages for possible display on tobacco product packages, and new warning notice concepts to accompany tobacco product advertisements.

For this study, 10 mock-ups of health warning messages (HWMs), and five English and five French mock-ups of warning notices on ads were developed for smokeless tobacco. Health Canada retained Environics Research Group Limited to test and assess these HWMs and warning notices in focus group research, with regard to their potential in being effective, noticeable, understood, informative, credible and relevant.

Focus groups were conducted with smokeless tobacco users and potential users, with users defined as someone aged 16 or over who has used a smokeless tobacco product in the past 30 days, and potential users defined as current cigarette smokers or users of tobacco products other than cigarettes. A total of 28 focus group sessions were held, including 24 in English in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, consisting of 12 groups with smokeless tobacco users and 12 with potential users. Four focus groups were held in French in Quebec, all with potential users.

The 10 HWMs were divided into two sets of five messages (B and C). Each focus group session reviewed one set of five HWMs (B or C) and the one set of five warning notices (A). The two sets of HWMs were rotated so that each set was tested in 14 of the 28 sessions. As well, the order of presentation of the HWMs and warning notices was systematically rotated from session to session.

The HWMs (B and C) tested are as follows.

SET B	English Headline	French Headline
ST- 3	You're chewing your way to tooth decay	À force de mâcher, vos dents vont se détériorer.
ST-7	This product can cause heart attacks	Ce produit peut causer des crises cardiaques.
ST-8	"I always thought smokeless tobacco was a safe alternative to cigarettes"	«J'ai toujours cru que le tabac sans fumée était un substitut sécuritaire à la

		cigarette.»
ST-13	This product contains cancer-causing chemicals	Ce produit contient des produits chimiques cancérigènes.
ST-14-2	Smokeless doesn't mean harmless: This product is highly addictive	Sans fumée ne signifie pas sans danger : ce produit peut créer une forte dépendance.

SET C	English Headline	French Headline
ST-9	This product causes mouth disease	Ce produit cause des maladies de la bouche.
ST-10	You may not see any smoke, but you see the damage	Il n'y a peut-être pas de fumée, mais les dommages sont bien visibles.
ST-12	This product may be smokeless, but it's not harmless	Ce produit est peut-être sans fumée, mais il n'est pas sans danger.
ST-14-1	Don't get trapped. Smokeless tobacco is addictive	Ne vous laissez pas piéger. Ce produit entraîne une dépendance.
ST-15	This product can cause heart attacks	Ce produit peut provoquer une crise cardiaque.

The warning notices (A) are as follows.

Set A	English Smokeless Notices
Q1	Choose not to chew
H1	Smokeless doesn't mean harmless
Q2	Chewing tobacco spitting your health away
H2	Can cause mouth cancer. There's something to chew on!
H3	Any way you use it, it's still dangerous

Set A	French Smokeless Notices
H4	La chique n'est pas chic, elle est mortelle (Chew is not chic, it's deadly)
H5	Le tabac tue sous toutes ses formes (Whatever the format, tobacco kills)
Q3	Pourquoi cracher sa santé en l'air ? (Why spit away your health?)
Q4	Même sans fumée, vous brûlez votre santé (Even without smoke you are burning)

	your health)
H6	Un aller simple pour le cancer de la bouche (A one-way ticket to mouth cancer)

The focus group testing included written exercises and group discussion. Participants completed a recall exercise with written responses, followed by a structured questionnaire assessing each mock- up and choosing the top two, and finally a group discussion.

Summary of Findings

The key findings of the research on the English warning notices are:

- Spontaneous recall of warning notices (actual phrases or general meaning) was high among all segments.
- Certain phrases/words from the notices stood out in participants’ memories: *cancer*, *spit* or *spitting*, *chew* or *chewing*, *chew on that*, *something to chew on*, and *dangerous*.
- Notices with the strongest overall recall in the written recall exercise were Q2 and H2.
- In the written evaluation, H2 was highest rated overall on all four dimensions: clarity, motivational impact (motivating them to quit or reduce tobacco use or deterring them from starting) and memorability.
- The top two choices in the written exercise were H2 followed by H1.
- Q1 (*Choose not to chew*) received mixed opinions; some found it catchy, but others thought it was weak. Some appreciated the message of empowerment and recognition of personal choice, but others were reminded of “just say no” anti-drug campaigns, which were felt not to be effective.
- H1 (*Smokeless doesn’t mean harmless*) was well received and viewed as believable and informative, although some felt it lacked impact.
- Q2 (*Chewing tobacco spitting your health away*) was felt to have a powerful impact due to the visual imagery it provoked, and potential users tended to see it as highly effective. Users were less enthusiastic and tended to divert discussion to the mechanics of spitting.
- H2 (*Can cause mouth cancer. There’s something to chew on!*) was seen as believable and memorable and evoked a strong sensory impression. The word *cancer* was seen as powerful although some denounced it as “scare tactics.” Many appreciated the multiple levels of meaning and the tone, which was perceived as ironic or slightly sarcastic.
- H3 (*Any way you use it, it’s still dangerous*) received mixed opinions. Some found it informative and believable, but others found it vague or argued that smokeless tobacco

products really are safer. Most found that the word *dangerous* stood out but that the rest of the notice had limited impact.

- The tone of the messages was seen as important. Participants did not appreciate perceived lecturing or judgemental messages. Many found a touch of humour to be effective and memorable, but others felt warning notices should be serious and discuss the consequences of using smokeless tobacco.
- Suggested approaches for warning notices: list specific serious health consequences; use facts and statistics; appeal to financial costs; appeal to concern for children; stress addictiveness; emphasize “disgusting” aspects of smokeless tobacco use.

The key findings of the research on the French warning notices are:

- In the recall exercise, the vast majority of participants in all groups made at least some mention of the warning notices.
- Certain phrases/words from the notices seemed to stand out: *cancer, tue, la chique, cancer de la bouche, (même) sans fumée, cracher en l’air*, and *un aller simple*.
- Spontaneous recall was similar for four of the notices: H4, H5, Q3 and H6. Q4 appeared to generate less recall.
- In the written evaluation, the warning notices H5 and H6 were rated highly on clarity, believability, motivational impact and memorability. H4 was rated lowest on all four attributes.
- The top two choices in the written exercise were H6 followed by H5.
- H6 (*Un aller simple pour le cancer de la bouche*) was seen as delivering a strong impact due to the “one-way ticket” image and the reference to mouth cancer, which was seen as particularly associated with chewing tobacco.
- H5 (*Le tabac tue sous toutes ses formes*) was seen as powerful, direct and believable, although some noted that it lacked specifics and did not offer new information. Some linked this notice to second-hand smoke as well as (or instead of) chewing tobacco.
- Q3 (*Pourquoi cracher sa santé en l’air ?*) created a strong and for most highly unpleasant visual image of spitting tobacco juice. Some also associated this notice with an image of coughing up phlegm when one has a cold or bronchitis.
- Q4 (*Même sans fumée, vous brûlez votre santé*) was viewed as believable and informative but not particularly memorable. Some thought it might deter smokers from switching to smokeless products.
- H4 (*La chique n’est pas chic, elle est mortelle*) was seen as catchy, memorable and youth-oriented, with a humorous beginning and a stark and pointed conclusion. There were

some language issues: some did not understand the expression *la chique* and others felt *chic* was not culturally appropriate.

- Participants felt that notices should focus on specific negative consequences, and that to be most effective, these should appear to be obviously linked to smokeless tobacco rather than smoking.
- Participants felt that warning notices should focus on “repulsive” aspects of smokeless tobacco use, such as spitting.

The key findings of the research on the health warning messages are:

- Almost all participants spontaneously recalled specific details about at least one health warning message, and usually more than one. In some cases, the visual image was the most clearly recalled part of the health warning message, while in other cases, the headline or some information from the text had a strong impact.
- Health warning messages that presented images of people – and particularly people’s faces in full or in part – were recalled more often and in greater detail. Some participants were particularly affected by such images to the point that this was the major, or only, element that they mentioned.
- Many indicated that the images were a significant element in drawing them into reading the text of the HWMs, and that they would have less impact without the visual component.
- The messages appeared to have a strong initial effect on many. Many potential users said the information was enough to keep them from considering starting to use smokeless tobacco.
- ST-10, ST-12 and ST-13 were evaluated most positively in terms of their ability to catch the attention of the viewer. ST-12 and ST-13 ranked high on clarity, believability, and ability to inform.
- Despite receiving relatively low ratings on three dimensions, ST-8 received the most mentions as a top two choice.
- ST-3 (*You’re chewing your way to tooth decay*) had a strong impact on many, who called the image “gross” and found the text highly informative. Despite the powerful appeal to vanity and pride in appearance, some felt the image was over-used and hence less effective. Francophones were less affected by this message than anglophones.
- ST-7 (*This product can cause heart attacks*) was seen as believable and informative, with an important message, but some thought this kind of graphic was too familiar. Others could not differentiate between the healthy and diseased heart.

- ST-8. (*I always thought smokeless tobacco was a safe alternative to cigarettes.*) was viewed as highly effective and having a very strong impact. The use of a real person made many connect personally with the message, see it as believable, and contemplate a similar consequence for themselves or someone they cared for who uses smokeless tobacco.
- ST-9 (*This product causes mouth disease*) evoked a mixed response. It was seen as powerful and eye-catching by those who perceived the image as depicting a potentially serious health problem, but weak by those who saw the image as showing something trivial such as a canker sore. Most agreed that it provided new and important information.
- ST-10 (*You may not see any smoke, but you see the damage*) provided a strong and disturbing visual impact which many, particularly potential users, felt could be a deterrent. The word *damage* was also seen as conveying a powerful message. Some however found the image too strong and a few questioned its reality.
- ST-12 (*This product may be smokeless, but it's not harmless*) had an emotional impact on participants both through the image and the personal details, which made the message stronger and more personalized.
- ST-13 (*This product contains cancer-causing chemicals*) was seen as powerful, direct factual and informative. The reference to “cancer-causing chemicals” was particularly memorable and meaningful to many.
- ST-14-1 (*Don't get trapped. Smokeless tobacco is addictive*) was considered to be clear, straightforward and realistic, but not particularly strong or powerful. Some appreciated the humour and the image of being “trapped” but felt it was insufficiently “scary.” Some felt the image quality was poor.
- ST-14-2 (*Smokeless doesn't mean harmless: this product is highly addictive*) lacked visual impact and was described as plain and boring despite being informative and believable with an important message.
- ST-15 (*This product can cause heart attacks*) received a mixed response. Some found it powerful, but others thought the graphic was cluttered and confusing. Most saw this as informative but not personalized and lacking in impact.
- Many felt that the messages that showed physical disfigurement, and particularly facial damage, had the strongest impact, because the image of a face creates the sense of being a real person.
- In terms of the physical placement of health warning messages on smokeless tobacco packaging, there were repeated concerns, especially by older participants, about the size of the messages, and especially the text, which they thought could be too small to be clearly visible and legible.

- One suggestion in a number of groups across the country was the idea of creating a series of HWMs to be placed on all tobacco products consisting of the picture of a real person disfigured as the result of disease related to tobacco product consumption, accompanied by the person's name, their medical condition and history of tobacco use.

Other findings and observations:

- While spontaneous mentions in the initial written exercise were low, most participants were able to identify Health Canada as the sponsor of the HWMs and warning notices when prompted, and at least some in each session recalled something about the gosmokefree.ca or the infotobacco.com websites, or the Quitline.
- Both English-speaking and French-speaking participants provided mixed opinions on whether the warning notices or the ads on which they appeared drew first attention, but most agreed that they did look at both when they were shown the concept boards. Some felt that which is seen first would depend on the design of the ad.
- A number of participants, particularly in the western provinces, suggested that they have been over-exposed to warning notices, health warning messages and other tobacco control messages, and a small but vocal group of primarily users but also including potential users, both anglophone and francophone, consistently offered resistance to the warnings and messages.

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