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Research Paper

How to Use the Package in the Tobacco Products to Communicate in the Plain Pack Era?

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ABSTRACT

The new plain cigarette pack legislation currently advised to all European Union members impacts on the standardization of the size, shape, colors and lettering of the cigarette pack. So, the package communication faces restrictions in the tobacco industry. To the tobacco companies' marketeers, it is important to understand the impact of this new reality in a more efficient way, so that they communicate with consumers. This paper aims to contribute to the emerging literature on the role of tobacco products packaging, by providing a clearer explanation of what tobacco packaging means in consumer communication. This research intends to understand consumer behavior and explore possible new ways of communication, considering the new communication restrictions. A qualitative methodology was employed, with semi-structured interviews, targeting six Marketing decision makers on the fourth top international companies on tobacco industry. The interviews were transcribed and examined following the principles of the thematic content analysis. In this investigation, it was concluded that the packaging is a factor with a huge impact on consumer choice, particularly in Fast-Moving Consumer *Goods* (*FMCG*) and plays a key role in brand differentiation at the point of sale. Regarding tobacco product packaging, it was proved that plain packs have negative impact on brand value communication and retailers are a key player in the communication with consumers.

Keywords: Tobacco packaging, Brand Communication, Marketing decision-makers.

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*** In memory of our friend Gisela, forever in our hearts. We are grateful for the wonderful person she was, and contribution in this article.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As tobacco consumption is declining, big tobacco companies are increasingly turning their focus in so called "New Generation Products" and how to adapt to the new communication restrictions using the packaging. These restrictions are very sensitive in this market, due to, the fact that packaging is particularly important in homogeneous consumer goods categories, such as cigarettes (Freeman, Chapman and Rimmer, 2008). Academic attention to packaging has been more limited, especially compared to the extensive and systematic study of the other Marketing elements such as advertising and pricing. Academic interest in packaging has become more pronounced over the past decades, however, mirroring the heightened industry focus on packaging.

The Plain Packaging modifications would require the removal of colors, brand imaginary, corporate logos and trademarks, permitting manufacturers to print only the brand name in a standard size, fount and place, in addition to mandatory health warning covering 90% of the back of the package, and in the front it was enlarged from 30% to 75% (Dunlop *et al.*, 2014). Other product information, such as toxics constituents, tax paid scales or package contents are also required by law. (Freeman, Chapman and Rimmer, 2008).

This work has studied the consumer behavior and new forms of communication in the perspective of the decision-makers managers. The literature review on this topic is scarce. This study intends to bridge the knowledge gap by investigating the effects of the plain packaging on the consumer decision purchase and how the consumer behavior is related with packaging marketing communication.

Since the tobacco plain package introduction in some countries, marketeers have a new challenge. How to communicate with consumers without a fundamental toll, the packaging? Tobacco packaging provides an important variable for marketers, which considers the pack a strategic tool for communicate with consumers (Moodie *et al.*, 2014). In addition to that, marketeers have to struggle to the lack of differentiation in the shelf. Therefore, the consumer behavior has changed, due to loss of the emotional elements and the consequent

transformation into functional brands.

The current study extends the literature by investigating the impact of the plain pack on the purchase and consumer behavior and consequently how to adapt the marketing strategies to continue to communicate with the consumer in an effective way. The plain packaging legislation aims to discourage people from starting smoking, to encourage smokers to give up smoking and to discourage relapse (Dunlop *et al.*, 2014). A new era of standardized brown packaging for cigarettes with large graphic health warnings and with only minimal brand identification has becoming (Davies and Bell, 2012)(Dunlop *et al.*, 2014). With the brand logo removal, the aspirational value of the different cigarettes brand will be lost and leave the brand with only a functional value losing the emotional aspect: old fashioned and boring, less cool, less attractive and less friendly (Hoek *et al.*, 2012) By unable to use the display value of the pack and being forced to reduce the promotion appeal of it, the tobacco package would diminish positive perceptions about smoking and reduce its appeal in general (Dunlop *et al.*, 2014)(Greenland, 2016). Other outcome, in the young and middleaged population is a lower perceived quality, dissatisfaction and the increase in belief that brands do not differ in taste (Wakefield *et al.*, 2015). To face the lack of differentiation, tobacco companies incorporated colors names into longer variant descriptors (e.g. "Dunhill Distinct" became "Dunhill Distinct Blue") and mores expressive brand variant names to suggest the sensation of feature previously connoted only by color (e.g., " Pall Mall Blue" became "Pall Mall Rich Blue") (Wakefield *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, since the plain packaging has been implemented the level of innovation increased with "new products with virtually any name" (Greenland, 2016, p.2255).

The current study attempts to answer two questions: (RQ1) How does the packaging of regulated products affect the purchase behavior? (RQ2) How does the cigarettes' pack changes, i.e., plain packs, modify consumer behavior? Using the qualitative methodology, we had made six interviews with current or ex decision makers in the tobacco industry. All answers were analyzed following a three steps procedure to ensure reliable classification and interpretation and to minimize the possibility of bias with the inquiry and authenticate researcher interpretation (Spall, 1998). Therefore, the research contributes to the theoretical literature on packaging communication in plain pack era (Underwood and Klein, 2002).

2. BACKGROUND LITERATURE

2.1 Controversial products

The tobacco and the alcohol products are always controversial. In these cases, the marketing communication cannot be conducted through all the channels used by other products.

A controversial product is a "product, services or concepts that for reasons of delicacy, decency, morality or even fear, tend to elicit reactions of delicacy, disgust, offense or outrage when mentioned or openly presented" (Wilson and West, 1981).

Various types of products, both goods and services, have been suggested by past studies as being controversial when advertised, including cigarettes, alcohol, contraceptives, underwear, guns and political messages. Academic research in this area has described these products as unmentionables, socially sensitive's products, indecent products or controversial products (Shyan Fam, Waller and Zafer Erdogan, 2004).

The competition is increasing for most products on the market and marketers need to be innovative. So, how can managers, in the industries of "controversial products", be creative when facing serious legal restrictions?

The already mentioned research that has been done on tobacco products focused on how to prevent the effects of the marketing communication on the consumer decision process.

Society considers tobacco a risk to the public health (Gallopel-Morvan *et al.*, 2013) and stands for legal and ethical restrictions.

As tobacco is considered a controversial product (Shyan Fam, Waller and Zafer Erdogan, 2004) there are some limitations of how marketers can market it (Elliott, Wei and Lenton, 2010). For example, considering that the design of the tobacco pack (Gallopel-Morvan *et al.*, 2013) displays health warnings or tobacco consumer diseases, the marketers struggles on the optimization of the packaging as a powerful communication tool.

Tobacco corporations' reports, claim that plain package would prevent communications with consumers, leading a "loss of brand equity", "lower margins through inability of build brand equity", "reduced ability to complete and make new market entries", and "lower profit" (Barraclough and Gleeson, 2017).

2.2 Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

The definition of IMC, adopted by the American Association of Advertising Agencies, and consequently, one of the most frequently cited by academic and marketing industry professionals is "a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of

communication disciplines – general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations- and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact" (Kliatchko, 2005).

The communication effectiveness is determined by the measure of the desired reaction by the receiver in response to the message (Mihart (Kailani), 2012), and whether he/she understood it clearly.

In a global market, characterized by high dynamism and fierce competition, organizations try to find the most efficient ways to get their word out, so that customers understand the benefits that can be obtained by consumption or use of their products or services (Clow and Baack, 2007).

The IMC concept, which emerged in the last decade of the 20th century, has been constantly evolved from a limited view of coordinating communications tools to a strategic process (Lane Keller, 2001);(Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan and McDonald, 2005). IMC proved to be much more than an alternative to the planning methodologies, supporting the implementation of consumer information technologies, such as CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and loyalty programs (Kitchen and Schultz, 2009). It recognized that increased brand equity reflects the outcome of efficient and effective customer and stakeholder relationships (Luxton, Reid and Mavondo, 2014). If the concept of IMC initially took into account consumers' needs and interests, based on the assumption that integrating communication elements would be a value to both consumers and companies, today is a certainty that consumer is essential in driving the marketplace (Kitchen and Schultz, 2009).

By studying consumers behavior, marketers and organizations will improve and adapt their marketing strategies, understand how consumers think, feel and select between different alternatives and to communicate in a more effective way to reach the consumer (Mihart (Kailani), 2012). Understanding the consumers and considering them the focus of the business world is essential, as the success of an organization mainly depends on the customers satisfaction and loyalty (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

IMC influences consumer response using the communication process of marketing mix of elements, minimizing the difference between marketing communication message and the perceived one incorporated in price, package, brand or distribution channel (Mihart , Kailani, 2012). With this approach, marketers are encouraged to use multiple communication channels to reach their consumers. Consequently, they play another role as users/buyers of media space, to ensure that their messages are well communicated (Jackson *et al.*, 2014).

The development of this strategy resulted in improved outcomes, such as market position and financial performance, as well as building brand equity that can be used to gain market advantage (Luxton, Reid and Mavondo, 2014).

2.3 Packaging as a form of Brand Communication

Brands communicate functional and symbolic qualities (Thrasher *et al.*, 2016) and packaging has a fundamental function in this role. A well-designed package communicates effectively the brand core values (Timney and Chamberlain, 2017): "brand is so much more than just a mark" (Timney and Chamberlain, 2017). It includes the name, symbol, typography, image or a combination of all or some of these elements to facilitate its identification.

Intangible brand values must be defined, communicated and managed through a touch points network to build a sustainable and long-term relationship with consumers (Timney and Chamberlain, 2017).

We can define packaging as a combination of different variables that are selected by designers to determine the consumers desired congruence level, for example to be able to create a specific sensory effect (Pantin-Sohier, 2009), or a device which communicates and advertises in order to attract and to communicate information about the product and the brand (Urvoy, Sanchez-Poussineau and Le Nan, 2012).

With the increasing number of brands and with the products becoming more and more standardized, it is increasingly difficult for the consumer to identify the brands and the products, making the purchase decision (Pantin-Sohier, 2009). The package is therefore the consumers' first point of contact with the brand (Timney and Chamberlain, 2017). The communication of the brand supporting values to the customer at the point of sales (Timney and Chamberlain, 2017) has become an essential factor to influence the consumers' choice (Pantin-Sohier, 2009)(Underwood and Klein, 2002).

A package design must symbolize and communicate the brand's values and connect with the consumer's heart and mind. (Timney and Chamberlain, 2017).

Packaging, besides promoting consumer choice, has got some other functions as well, such as protection (Kotnowski and Hammond, 2013), preservation, facilitating distribution and sales, information provision, provision of consumer convenience, help for containing prices, promoting hygiene and safety (Simms and Trott, 2010). Product packaging has an increasingly important role as a marketing communication vehicle for brand managers (Underwood and Klein, 2002).

The packaging with its attributes can be used to meet consumers needs, create a huge competitive advantage compared to the other market participants (Kotnowski and Hammond, 2013).

Researchers have proved that good packaging attracts consumers' attention, transfers the desired product information, differentiates and identifies the product (Underwood and Klein, 2002). In the same way, the various elements of the package can influence the consumer decision-making process, and can determine the final consumers' choice, moreover, becoming a sustained competitive advantage (Butkeviciene, Stravinskiene and Rutelione, 2008).

Recently, researchers have concluded that the packages shape implicitly communicates the products health benefits. (van Ooijen *et al.*, 2017).

The first line of thoughts approaches packaging as a set of individual elements, like shapes, colors, sizes and typefaces (Silayoi and Speece, 2004). The second line of thought considers packaging as a bundle of elements that are blended into a holistic design (Becker *et al.*, 2011).

Rettie and Brewer state that 73 percent of purchase decisions are taken in the point of sales(Rettie and Brewer, 2000). With these new consumption tendencies, producers are urged to spend less for traditional advertising and turn their attention to the communication in the purchase place. These tendencies indicate that the significance of product package has increased as a brand communication and differentiation tool because of its easy availability (Butkeviciene, Stravinskiene and Rutelione, 2008), compared to other communication tools. (Underwood and Klein, 2002). For the package to be successful, it should stand out from the shelf and from the array of competing products, attracting consumers' attention. (Liao *et al.*, 2015). Getting attention is still a key factor for the in-store buying process, because attractive packaging attracts attention (Selame and Koukos, 2002). If we examine the connection between packaging and buying, we establish that packaging has developed from a silent salesman to the brand builder (Clement, 2007).

Packaging is an important form of marketing communication. It transmits relevant product information, influences consumers perceptions and consumers' choices (Liao *et al.*, 2015).

Package is accepted as one of the most effective marketing communication tools, because: 1) it reaches almost all consumers of current product category; 2) it communicates with consumers at the moment of truth - when the decision of the purchase is accepted; 3) consumers are actively involved in the communication process because they search the

package in order to get proper information (Ampuero and Vila, 2006).

The decisions of the product-mix involve two closely connected parts: functions of the package and components of the package. The package is communicating through its features, through verbal and nonverbal characters. The packages communication message is based in elements such as color, shape, size, images, graphics, material, fragrance, name of the product, brand, country, product information, special offers, instructions of usage, simplicity and ecology of the package, ergonomics, innovativeness (Butkeviciene, Stravinskiene and Rutelione, 2008). The package communication is attributed to the message (Silayoi and Speece, 2004) and "in the future the most successful brands will be the ones who think holistically about packaging as the embodiment of their brands identity" (Timney and Chamberlain, 2017).

Impact of package communication on decision-making process is changing. Three mains factors influence the level of package communication to consumer behavior – time pressure, consumer involvement level and type of choice (Butkeviciene, Stravinskiene and Rutelione, 2008).

In the tobacco decision process, the visual content allows evaluating the product quickly and easily and the package can influence the positioning, purchase process and loyalty to the brand. The consumer evaluates different brands and their technical features in advance. In this case the importance of the package is not so significant. Based on this, we can conclude that, package have a high importance in the FMCG brands/products on the consumer decision and a low importance in the technical brand/products.

However, in the internet era, packaging has a new role in the brand communication platform. New forms of communications have raised. The information exchange between companies and consumers has been improved by online platform (Kudeshia and Kumar, 2017).

2.4 Packaging of tobacco products

Packaging is particularly important in homogeneous consumer goods categories such as cigarettes (Freeman, Chapman and Rimmer, 2008).

Tobacco packaging provides an important means for marketers, that considers the package the medium par excellence to communicate with the consumers (Moodie and Hastings, 2009). The concept of packaging has been an important part of the tobacco industry's marketing efforts. We can see in the evolution of packaging since the 1920's, in terms of size (regular vs. king size), consistency (soft packs vs. hard packs), opening, wealth warnings (Kotnowski and Hammond, 2013). In case of the smokeless tobacco products –

chewing tobacco, moist smokeless tobacco, snus and dry snuff – they used packs like tins, "pucks" or pots manufactured from metal or plastic.

These companies use the entire pack as a communications tool, through pack graphics and descriptor, pack structure (shape, style of opening) and other pack elements, such as the teartape, cellophane, inserts, barcodes and the cigarette itself (Moodie and Hastings, 2009).

With the increasing of tobacco advertising banned throughout the world, the package has become "the most important vehicle for reaching potential and current smokers" (Barraclough and Gleeson, 2017).

2.5 Plain packaging of tobacco products

The plain packaging legislation aims to discourage people from starting smoking or to encourage smokers to give up smoking and to discourage relapse (Dunlop *et al.*, 2014).

Plain cigarettes' packs were first proposed in Canada and New Zealand in the late 1980's (Davies and Bell, 2012). In November 2011, the Australian Parliament passed two amended tobacco plain packaging bills that required tobacco companies to adopt standardized brown packaging for cigarettes with large graphic health warnings and with only minimal brand identification by the 1th of December, 2012 (Davies and Bell, 2012)(Dunlop *et al.*, 2014).

In European Union, the EU Tobacco Products directive grants the authority for each country member to decide the plain pack implementation (Crosbie, Sosa and Glantz, 2018).

Plain packaging required the removal of colors, brand imaginary, corporate logos and trademarks allowing manufacturers to print only the brand name in an authorized size, font and place. In addition to required health warning covering 90% of the back of the pack, the warning on the front of the pack enlarged from 30% to 75% (Dunlop *et al.*, 2014), and other legally mandated product information such as toxics constituents, tax paid scales or package contents (Freeman, Chapman and Rimmer, 2008) were only allowed.

Plain packaging that has been introduced in with resulted in a "significant changes in graphics health warnings, including expanded warnings that took up most of the front and all of the back of cigarette packs" (Greenland, 2016, p.2250).

The plain packs reduced misconceptions created by packs colors, stripped away elements of brand identity and exposed them like the antithesis of cool (Hoek *et al.*, 2012). Removing the brand logo, the aspirational value of the different cigarettes brand will be in damage, and leave the brand only with a functional value losing the emotional aspect. As a result of these packaging changes, consumers consider this type of pack, plain packages, as old fashioned and boring, less cool, less attractive and less friendly (Hoek *et al.*, 2012) By unable to use

the display value of the pack and being forced to reduce the promotion appeal of it, the tobacco package would diminish positive perceptions about smoking and reduce its appeal in general (Dunlop *et al.*, 2014)(Greenland, 2016).

Despite of the efforts from tobacco companies to reassure consumers that the tobacco products would remain the same with the altered packaging, a specific trend within the young and middle-aged population emerged, such as lower perceived quality, dissatisfaction and the increase in belief that brands do not differ in taste (Wakefield *et al.*, 2015). By implementing the plain packaging, the following trends have been surfaced: variant names and increasing attention to brand; emphasis on value for money; reassurance of product quality; product innovation; rationalization of less popular packs sizes, and down-trading from higher priced cigarettes to cheaper ones (Greenland, 2016). While plain packaging removed the pack colors associated with different brands and variants and replaced it with a consistent drab brown, it placed no limitation on the naming of brands and continued to permit the use of brand variant names including colors names (Australian Government Department of Health, 2011). In Australia, since plain packaging was implemented, the use of colors in variant names of tobacco products has become much more prevalent (Greenland, 2016). Tobacco companies incorporated colors names into longer variant descriptors (eg. "Dunhill Distinct" became "Dunhill Distinct Blue") and mores expressive brand variant names to suggest the sensation of feature previously connoted only by color (e.g., "Pall Mall Blue" became "Pall Mall Rich Blue") (Wakefield *et al.*, 2015).

When Australia introduced plain packaging, the number of brands declined from 29 to 24, but the "average number of variants supported by the leading 12 brands increased from 107 (8,9 per brand) to116 (9,7 per brand) (Greenland, 2016). A recent literature review concluded that new brands and variants were not inhibited by the introduction of plain packaging in Australia(Greenland, 2016).

With the plain packs' implementation, the brand appeal and the smocking level has decreased, but the new product lunches or brand extensions do not have restrictions(Greenland, 2016). Indeed, since the plain packaging has been implemented the level of innovation increased with "new products with virtually any name" (Greenland, 2016, p.2255).

The aim of these developments is clearly to reinforce the differences but in Australia there is another factor, such as, the pricing (Greenland, 2016)

3. METHODOLOGY

Following the analysis of the above cited literature, some questions arise, that we will attempt to answer at the end of this paper. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How does the packaging of regulated products affect the purchase behavior?

- The package is considered, as a communication tool for marketing. What is your opinion on this subject?
- Witch communication tools is more efficient?
- In general, in which kind of products, the packaging has more influence on purchase consumer's choice?
- The verbal and nonverbal package components are forms of communication. Do you agree? What is the impact on the brand? consumer behavior? What is the order of importance?
- The packaging can be considered a differentiation factor? If yes, can it influence the purchase decision? In what way?

RQ2: How does the cigarettes' pack changes -plain packs - modify consumer behavior?

- What is your opinion about the innovations that have occurred over time in terms of packaging?
- And about its implementation? And about the results?
- In what ranking of importance, you place the package on purchase decision? (Others if not the 1st)
- What are the parallelisms between tobacco products packaging and other regulated products (e.g.: pharmaceutical and beverages)?
- How the introductions of new health warnings may affect consumer behavior? Size + health warning shocking photos? On purchase decision? Considering the legislation changes planned for the package, namely the plain packs/standard packs, how will it be possible to communicate with the consumer? (brand values, positioning, pricing, etc.).
- How the industry can adapt to this new reality?
- New technologies could be considered a solution? The augmented reality can be considered a solution?
- Considering packaging as a tool for brand communication and considering changes in legislation that have occurred and are ongoing, how you consider the importance of

communication of brand values? Which instruments can be used?

3.1 Case Context and Sampling

The methodology used was qualitative methodology (Bardin, 2011) (Malhotra, 2019) (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014)., using the methods of semi-structured interviews (e.g. Interview Questions) which is the most common method in the qualitative research (Tracy, 2013). With this interview's method, we "explore the experiences of participants and the meanings they attribute to them. Researchers encourage participants to talk about issues pertinent to the research question by asking open-ended questions, usually in one-to-one interviews (Tong A, Sainsbury P and Craig J, 2018). Six current or ex-decision-makers in tobacco industry have been interviewed: Former Brand Manager at Phillip Morris, Portugal; Former Brand Manager at Phillip Morris, Portugal; Former Brand Manager at Phillip Morris, Spain; Marketing Manager at Japan Tobacco International; Head of Marketing Strategy at British American Tobacco; Market Director at British American Tobacco. By choosing this methodology it is intended to address the issues previously approached through the collection of relevant data as well as to understand the perspectives and opinions of the participants about the impact of plain packaging.

3.2 Data Collection

As mentioned above, six semi-structured interviews were performed with current and former marketing decision makers. All participants have/had responsibilities regarding decisions that for, influenced by the regulation restrictions of tobacco products packaging. The semistructured interviews focused on the two main topics related to the research questions, namely the purchase and consumer behavior. The questions where open – ended questions in order to ascertain that the participants have all the liberty to answer with their own words (Patton, 2015) Each interview lasted in average, 50 minutes and took place in private so that interviewees could talk freely and without interruptions. All interviews audio-recorded, transcribed and main quotes translated to English by the first author.

3.3 Data analysis

The six interviewees' answers where analyzed by a thematic content analysis with NVIVO software. All of the answers where analized following a three steps procedure to ensure reliable classification and interpretation:

1st step: Data preparation to ascertain that all transcript was included in the analysis.

2nd step: Comprised data coding. An initial set of hierarchical categories was undertaken. After that, new subordinate categories were added and refined.

3rd step: Data examination and interpretation. This step has the outcome of the final recoding and some refinements.

This three steps approach has the goal to minimize the possibility of bias with the inquiry and authenticate researcher interpretation (Spall, 1998).

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Out of these interviews some relevant points were highlighted: (1) package is a communication tool (most efficient tool, influence on the consumer decision, impact verbal vs no-verbal communication, the evolution of tobacco pack); (2) pack as a differentiator factor; (3) package impacts the purchase decision process (product types, ranking), package impact after changes in tobacco law (consumer behavior, consumer communication, new technology) and brand values communication.

RQ1: How does the packaging of regulated products affect the purchase behavior?

As mentioned in the literature review, controversial products are "product, services or concepts that for reasons of delicacy, decency, morality or even fear, tend to elicit reactions of delicacy, disgust, offense or outrage when mentioned or openly presented" (Wilson and West, 1981).

On table 1 is present the categorization for research question 1.

Table 1 - Categorization- RQ1

Category	Sub-category	Sub-subcategory	Sources	References	Rate
Packaging impact in purchase decision process			5	55	17,59%
	Product Types	Tobacco Product	3	9	3,46%
		Alcohol	4	8	3,26%
		Pharmaceutical Products	3	4	1,89%

Source: Self-elaboration NVivo

55 references were made to packaging impact in purchase decision process with a 17,59%

coverage rate, of the interviews contents in this issue, which puts this issue with a relatively high importance degree. When we analyze the coverage rate of the types of products – tobacco (3.46%), alcohol (3.26%), pharmaceutical (1.89%) - we conclude that the pack has more influence on tobacco products and alcohol than in pharmaceuticals.

The tobacco and the alcohol products are all considered to be controversial products, and therefore they have restricted possibilities to be marketed. In these cases, the marketing communication cannot be conducted through all the channels usually used by the products with no restrictions.

Packaging is particularly important in homogeneous consumer goods categories, such as cigarettes. Tobacco packaging provides an important means for marketers, which considers the pack the medium par excellence for communicate with consumers.

It was mentioned that in products with relative low unit price and with impulse driven consumption pack have a major influence on consumer choice. Managing packaging in this kind of products is critical because the pack will make you feel that unplanned desire to get it when you're doing (or shopping) any other thing.

Throughout the various interviews it was noted that aside from the regulation per se (in terms of pack configuration and messages), tobacco gets closer to industries of low unit price and small product size, mostly driven by impulse purchases, like alcohol, soft drinks, candy (adults), etc. They need to convince their consumers, that product will deliver the brand promise in very little space. So, the label design becomes critical and is studied to the millimeter, for example, font types and size, color combinations, reading order, etc. All these industries use state of the art methodologies, as neuro-marketing tools, to assess pack design and to make sure they make the best use of a small recipient that needs to stand out in a much-cluttered shop space in a world where consumers are looking less and less to their environment and more to their smart phones. But as was point out with plain pack all of this point will be lost making the pack less attractive and with minor impact in the purchase decision by the consumers

Some of the interviewed consider that with the health warnings, and the plain packs, the concerns with label image had increased. These concerns are extended to the differentiation in the shelf, that is lost by the pack homogeneity. On cigarette packs, consumers try to find details in a tiny space that make a difference that you can already find for example in the bottles, either by textures, symbol, color, design, a signing an author of that label.

It was referred that in comparation with pharmaceutical products, that like tobacco products

have a very restricted communication, packaging has much less importance. A drug is a kind of product that is essentially purchased by prescription, and in consequence they become functional brands without any brand emotion in background. Even when the consumer self-medication, takes into account the active element that can eradicate the disease. So, we can say that the packaging in pharmaceutical products serve to protect the product and inform the consumer the product composition.

In summary, the regulated products purchase takes into account the emotional element in the case of FMCG products, such as tobacco and alcohol and in case the purchase of drugs the consumers takes into account the functional characteristics of the product and the pack have to transmit these factors to consumers.

RQ2: How does the cigarettes pack changings -plain packs - modify consumer behavior?

Like was said the plain packaging legislation aims to discourage people from taking up smoking, encourage smokers to give up smoking and discourage relapse.

On table 2 is present the categorization for research question 2.

Table 2 - Categorization- RQ2

Category	Sub-category	Sources	References	Rate
Packaging impact on tobacco products after law changes		5	34	16,02%
	Consumer Behaviour	5	9	2,62%
	Consumer Communication	5	17	8,12%
	New tecnology	4	4	4,47%

Source: Self-elaboration- NVivo

The interviewees made 34 references to packaging impact on tobacco products after law changes with a 16,02% coverage rate, of the interviews contents, which puts this issue with a relatively high importance degree. When we analyze the coverage rate of three variables – consumer behavior (2.62%), consumer communication (8.12%), new technology (4.47%) - we can conclude that the pack change in tobacco products is the item that will have the most

impact on communication with the consumer. It was mentioned that with Plain Packaging colors, brand imaginary, corporate logos and trademarks, will be removed, only be allowed to print the brand name in a mandated size, fount and place. In addition, 90% of the back pack and 70% of the front pack will be covered by health warning. Toxics constituents, tax paid scales or package contents must be in the pack too

Throughout the various interviews it was noted that the introduction of shocking pictures on tobacco product packaging doesn't affect sensibly to brand competition, as they all apply the same regulated designs. It also doesn't affect significantly the category's size, at least in the short term. After a couple of days, the consumer regards that information as "wall paper" and discounts its presence.

It comes out consistently throughout most interviews that in a marketing point of view we can tell that the plain pack just erodes all the brands, avoids competition and has a profound impact in consumer behavior. In the immediate, consumer behavior, will not have a big change, consumer continue with the same brand without changing their consumption patterns. But in long-term changing the behavior will be visible, due to the loss of the symbolization and communication of the brands values and the connection with the consumers heart and mind.

It was mentioned that with the plain packs the brand identity and brand values communication with their consumers will be quite difficult because nonverbal marketing communication fall away and only verbal communication resists. There are no colors, icons, sensations there is only brand reference with the same font, color and size. Consumers no longer receive brands messages through packaging and consequently the brand loses relevance, making the choice of the consumer only based on existing brand values in their memories and/or in the product price.

It was concluded by the interviewees that the introduction of plain packs in tobacco market has created a void in brand values communication, differentiation and finished the brand imagery in the minds of consumers. We also can conclude that by introducing plain packaging, only the price would remain as a differentiating factor. Brands not being able to differentiate at all its commercial product proposition goes into a very dangerous territory, due to is a risk of aspirational values loss, quality perceived and consequently loss of differentiation and transformation of emotional brands in functional brands/products.

This market change has created a major challenge for all marketing decision-makers in the tobacco companies: how to communicate with consumers effectively while at the same time

complying with the legislation and marketing standards, industry self-regulation.

During the interviews were given some solutions to reduce the impact of this legislation, including the use of today's consumers to communicate with each other the brand aspirational values through word of mouth (Tribal Marketing) or/and the industry can work via the trade to communicate to consumers what they are selling. The retailer will need to know the proposition and should be willing to explain adult smokers those characteristics. Was also indicated as a solution, the utilization of verbal communication on the package to create differentiation. The brand should be much more specific in its smoke proposal through verbal communication: Pall Mall Blue vs Pall Mall Rich Blue.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The main purpose of this study was to understand how plan packaging era affect purchase and consumer behavior and how brands will communicate with consumers using the packaging.

The findings of this study have potential managerial importance in guiding communications strategies using the packaging. We concluded that the new plain pack era had a negative impact on brand value communication and have a profound impact on consumer behavior. It has changed how consumer evaluates a particular brand in terms of quality and brand values identity. We also concluded that with plain packs, the brands are not being able to differentiate each other at all their commercial product proposition. This represent a perceived risk of loose aspirational values, quality perceived and consequently impact on more standardization among tobacco brands. Consequently, to go through the transformation of emotional brands into functional brands. In terms of managerial implications, we find that one way to ensure the efficient and effective integrated marketing communication of tobacco brands is to promote the communication process between consumers themselves through worth-of-mouth, and to strengthen the relationships between consumers and retailers at the point of sales. Retailers should be able to explain the features of the tobacco products for their customers.

Meanwhile, before the tobacco legislation modification and application among all countries, tobacco brands must be aware of the social-media potentialities to communicate with consumers and increase the worth-of-mouth in the communications process, as a relevant role in providing information about brands and intensifying the interaction with the consumers.

This investigation has reported the perspective of six decision makers in the tobacco industry. In general, the findings suggest further investigation propositions that may guide future studies, namely:

P1: *Plain pack diminish the impact of the pack in the purchase decision*

Our findings are consistent with literature stating that pack communicates effectively the brand core values (Timney and Chamberlain, 2017) and is differentiation tool in point of sale (Butkeviciene, Stravinskiene and Rutelione, 2008)With plain pack, brands will lose differentiation is the shelf, so future research might study how consumer differentiate the brands at the point of sale.

P2: *Plain pack will turn tobacco brands in functional brands*

The present study suggest that tobacco brands will lose all aspirational values. They will lose their soul and the differentiation will be made only by price. Future studies may measure the impact of the differentiation by price in consuming trends

P3: *Tribal Marketing can be a strategy to diminish the plain pack impact on consumer behavior*

This research suggests that *Tribal Marketing* can reduce the loss of brand awareness and the consequent consumer behavior modification. In future, investigators can look to how *Tribal Marketing* can improve brands awareness in the plain pack era.

In summary, this research expands the academia and managerial understanding of plain pack impact on purchase and consumer behavior, so future work might use the consumer point of view to test all of these findings.

Despite being exploratory this research also offers a few practical contributions for tobacco industry marketers. The *Tribal Marketing* must be present in Marketing strategies to reduce the negative impact of plain pack in tobacco brands awareness.

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