

Exploring the effectiveness of cigarette warning labels: findings from the United States and United Kingdom arms of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey

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Abstract

This paper explores the effectiveness of cigarette warning labels across two countries, one (the UK) with new and stricter legislation where text based labels have been made more prominent and one (the USA) with less stringent regulation, where labels are less visible. Using longitudinal data from the two countries, the research seeks to investigate the impact of the different types of warning labels on the information processing by consumers. This paper assesses the effectiveness of warning labels in terms of: consumer attention, elaboration, contemplation on quitting and behavioural compliance. This study provides a comprehensive examination of these key factors in a fixed causal sequence. Structural equation modelling was used to test this model based on longitudinal panel survey data from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey. Analysis of a sample of 901 US smokers and 1459 UK smokers yielded results in full support of all hypothesised relationships in the model proposed for both countries. Findings suggest that the new European Union policy of more prominent warning labels has a direct effect on influencing behavioural compliance by smokers.

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