

Retailer and Tobacco Industry Response Post-Menthol Tobacco Ban in Alberta and Nova Scotia, Canada

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Background

- Menthol cigarettes are associated with an increased initiation of use, decreased likelihood of quitting smoking and decreased likelihood of staying quit
- Nova Scotia, Canada became the first jurisdiction in the world to implement a ban on the sale of menthol cigarettes in May 2015, and Alberta, Canada implemented a ban in September 2015

Objective

- This study documents the tobacco industry response to the menthol cigarette bans in the Canadian provinces of Nova Scotia and Alberta and describes retailer response to requests for menthol cigarettes post-ban

Methods

- Cigarette packs purchased in two major cities in Alberta pre-ban and post-ban (422 packs) and Nova Scotia post-ban (76 packs) between September and December 2015
- A total of 63 stores visited and retailers asked for menthol and green packs pre-ban, and menthol, menthol-like, green and new packs to the market post-ban
- Cigarette packs coded as “menthol” if they were explicitly labeled menthol and as “menthol replacements” if they maintained the same design and color as menthol packs sold pre-ban

Results

Retailer response

- When retailers asked for menthol cigarettes in Alberta and Nova Scotia post-ban, all stated that menthol cigarettes were no longer sold
- When retailers asked for menthol cigarettes in Alberta post-ban, menthol replacement packs were offered



A retailer in Nova Scotia showed us a list provided by JTI of existing packs on the market to be offered to customers post-ban, such as cigarettes labeled with descriptors “blue” and “smooth taste”

- Retailers in Nova Scotia noted that new tobacco products are typically introduced months later than in other provinces; said they observed customers purchasing cigarettes with cough drops for the purpose of sucking on them while smoking to produce a menthol-like sensation

Industry response

- Tobacco companies were complying with the law—no packs explicitly labeled as “menthol” purchased post-ban
- Menthol replacement packs were purchased in Alberta post-ban

Some retailers in Alberta showed us business-to-business marketing materials that demonstrate the transition from menthol cigarettes to “non-menthol alternative” cigarettes

| Menthol Variants | JTI Alternative 1 | JTI Alternative 2 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Menthol International 120's | Menthol International 120's | Export 'A' Smooth Taste |
| Macdonald Menthol | Export 'A' Ultra Smooth Taste | Macdonald Special Extra Smooth Taste |
| Studio Menthol | Liggett Ducat (LD) Blue | Studio Full Flavour |
| B&H du Luxe Menthol 100's | Export 'A' Ultra Smooth Taste | |
| B&H Menthol 100's | Export 'A' Smooth Taste | |
| B&H Superslims Menthol | Export 'A' Ultra Smooth Taste | Macdonald Special Extra Smooth Taste |
| Number 7 Menthol | Export 'A' Ultra Smooth Taste | |
| Accord Menthol | Macdonald Special Extra Smooth Taste | |
| New Menthol | Macdonald Special Extra Smooth Taste | Macdonald Special Extra Smooth Taste |
| du MAURIER Fresh Blend | Liggett Ducat (LD) Blue | |
| du MAURIER Menthol | Export 'A' Ultra Smooth Taste | Liggett Ducat (LD) Red |
| Pall Mall Menthol | Export 'A' Ultra Smooth Taste | |
| Peter Jackson Menthol | Liggett Ducat (LD) Blue | |
| Vogue DS Perle Verte | Export 'A' Ultra Smooth Taste | Liggett Ducat (LD) Red |
| Vogue Superslims Frisson | Export 'A' Ultra Smooth Taste | |



- For menthol replacements, “menthol” replaced with “green” and 87 percent of packs wrapped in cellophane with phrases “new” and “smooth tasted redesigned without menthol” printed

- Pre-ban, 14 brand families of menthol cigarettes owned by three parent companies (PMI, JTI and BAT) purchased; post-ban, four brand families of menthol replacement cigarettes owned by one brand company (PMI) purchased

Conclusions

- Retailers received materials from tobacco companies highlighting alternative products post-ban
- PMI repackaged their products post-ban to communicate menthol-like taste/flavoring using color and substitution descriptors
- Findings can inform future policies that ban the sale of menthol tobacco products
- Future research should focus on consumer reaction to the ban on menthol cigarettes

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