

Standardizing the shape of smokeless tobacco in Bangladesh: Potential impact on warning visibility & harm perceptions

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Background

Packaging features can influence consumer perceptions and tobacco use outcomes.¹⁻⁵



Color



Imagery



Claims



Size



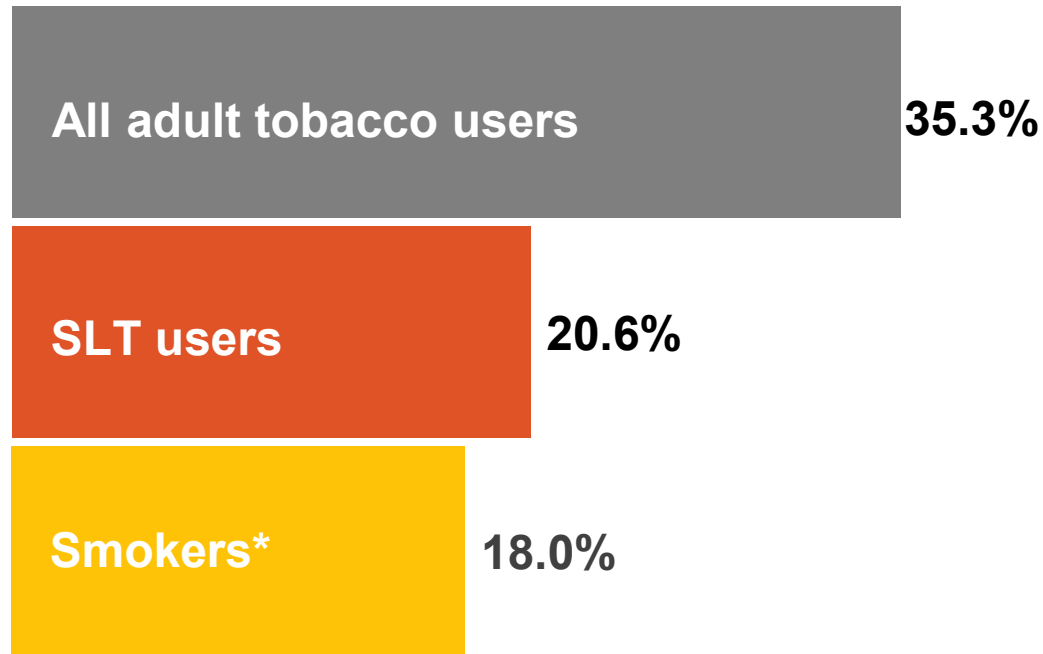
Shape



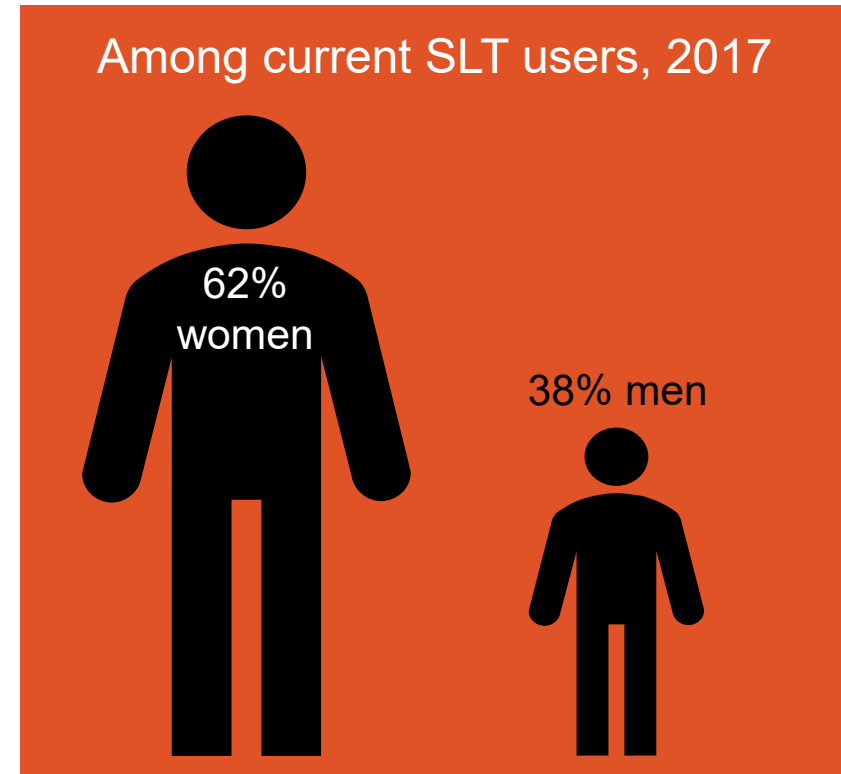
Health warning labels can counter branding and inform product harm perceptions.⁶



In Bangladesh, smokeless tobacco (SLT) use substantial, particularly among women.



Bangladesh Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2017



There is a wide variety of relatively low-cost SLT products sold in Bangladesh.⁷⁻⁸



Low compliance with required health warning label placement on SLT products.⁹

Option A



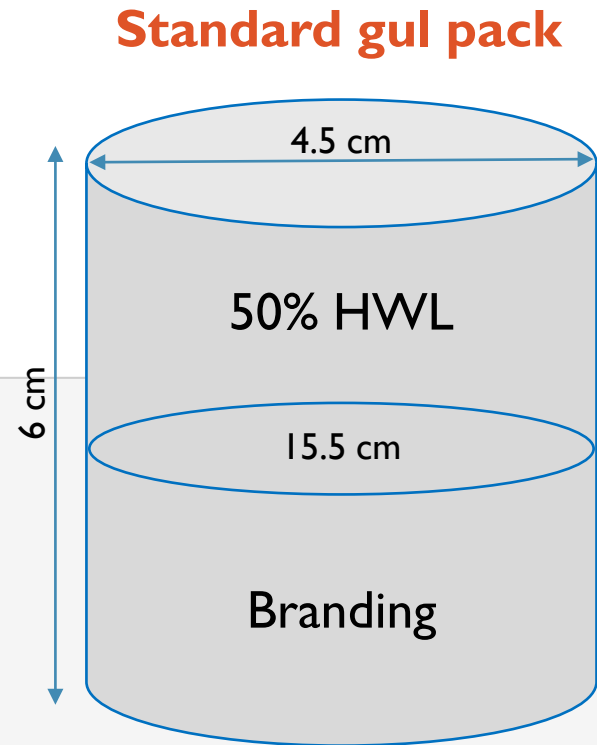
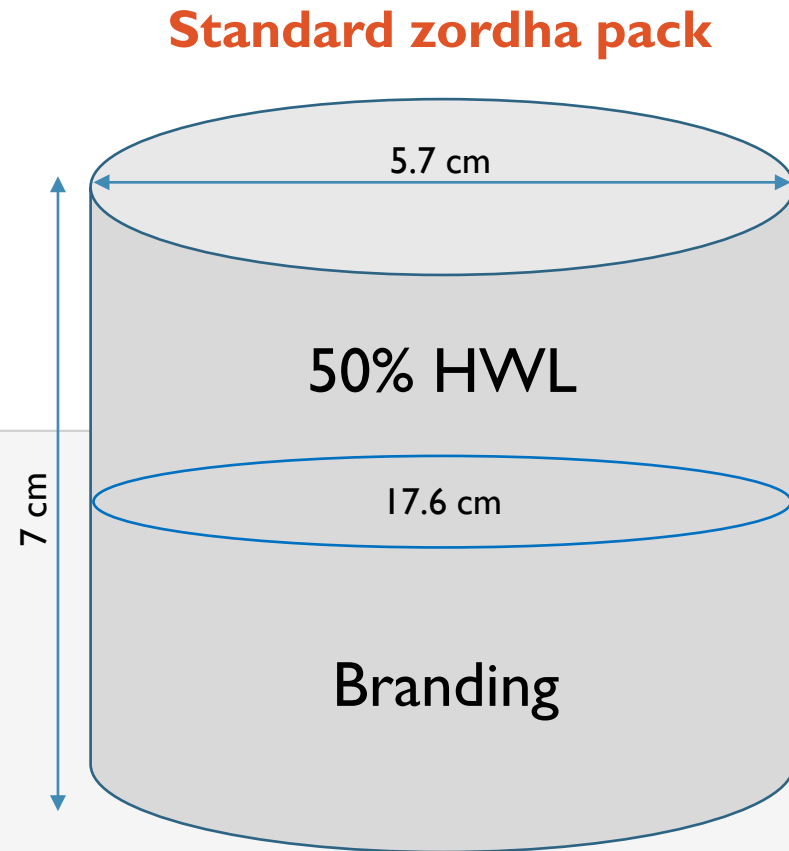
Option B



50% HWL
front & back



Standardizing the size, shape, and material (tin) of SLT is a policy priority in Bangladesh.



Limited data available on how existing SLT product and shape influence appeal and harm perceptions.¹⁰⁻¹²



How do non-users and SLT users describe existing vs. standard SLT packs in terms of:

1.

Attractiveness of pack?

2.

Noticeability of health warning label?

3.

Perceived harm of product use?

Methods



Focus group participants recruited from low-income urban and rural areas in Dhaka, Sylhet, and Khulna.

		Dhaka		Sylhet		Khulna		
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	TOTAL Groups
Non-users (ages 18-35; never tobacco use)	Men	2	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Women	2	1	1	1	1	1	7
Current SLT users (ages 18+; past 30-day use)	Men	2	1	1	1	1	1	7
	Women	2	1	1	1	1	1	7
	TOTAL Groups	8	4	4	4	4	4	28

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Study stimuli used in focus groups purchased and manufactured in Bangladesh.

Existing zordha and gul SLT products sold in Bangladesh



|----- Zordha -----|
Average price ~ Tk 70

|----- Gul -----|
Average price ~ Tk 8

Standard packs



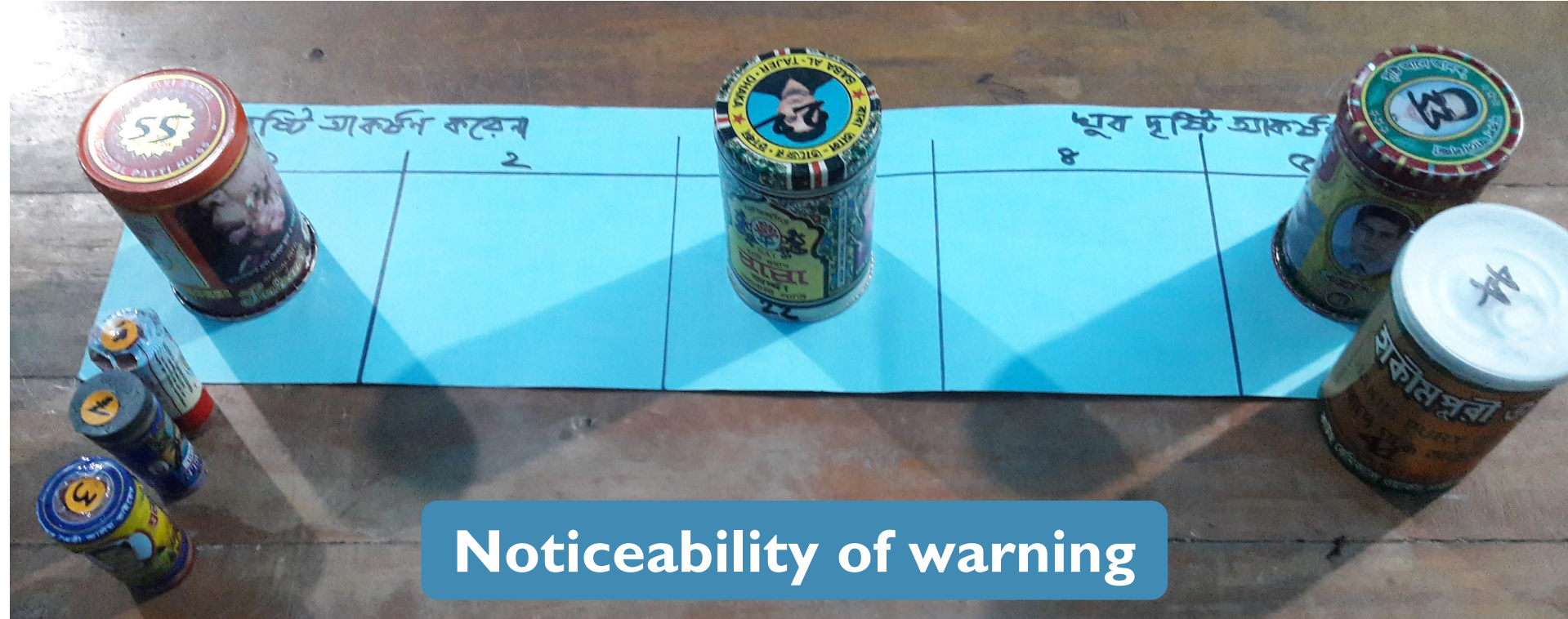
|-- Zordha --|
Tk110 (50g)

|--- Gul ---|
Tk15 (20g)

Groups viewed existing SLT packs and engaged in rating exercises and discussion.



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Groups viewed existing SLT packs and engaged in rating exercises and discussion.



Groups viewed standard SLT packs and compared them to existing packs on different dimensions.



Perceived attractiveness

Noticeability of warning

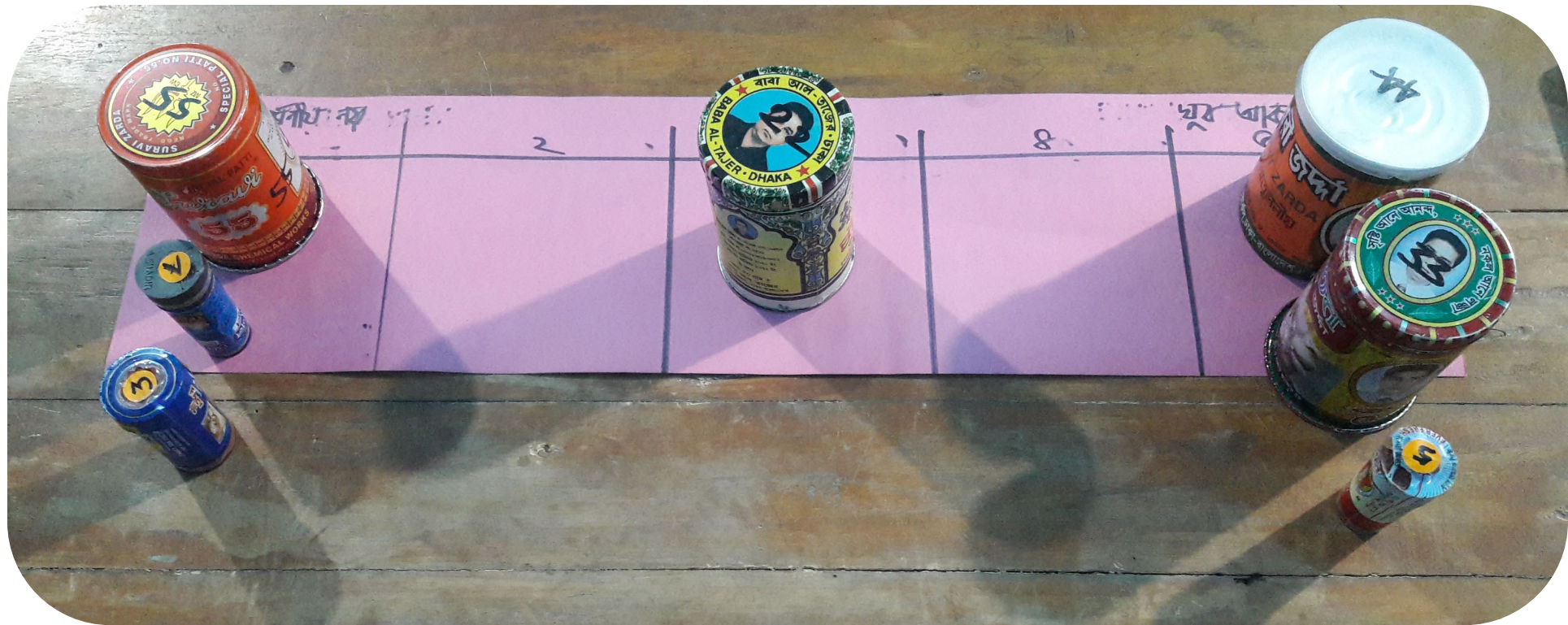
Perceived harmfulness

Tobacco use behaviors



Results

♥ Perceived attractiveness



Across non-user and SLT user groups, appealing **color** was a primary reason for finding existing packs attractive; other factors included **quality descriptions** and 'owner' **images**.



Participant 4: I liked the design [of #55].
Moderator: Why did you like the design?
Participant 5: There is a bangle thing at the bottom which makes it **sit nicely**.
Participant 4: The **color** is of high quality.

SLT users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 2)



Moderator: Why is this container [#5] more attractive to you?
Participant 6: As it is manufactured by Mostafa Bhai.
Moderator: Is Mostafa Bhai known to you?
Participant 6: No, the **photograph** looks good to me. It seems that he is a pious man and he would be a Muslim. Arabic is also written on it hence it would make less problem consuming.

Non-users, Urban Khulna, Women

Highly visible **warning labels** were features that made existing packs **less** attractive across all non-user and SLT user groups.



Participant 4:

The beauty of this container is also looking not that much good. **Injurious issues** are written in most of the places...It doesn't look good to me.

Non-users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group I)



Participants:

We like it because on the container there is a photograph of the **owner**.

Participant 5:

And it is looking really **ugly** because of this **other picture**...of a **lesion**.

SLT Users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group I)

Non-user and SLT user groups discussed **strong** material, **solid** shape, and **large** size as attractive features of existing packs.



Moderator: And why did we put container 5 in 1?

Participant 4: Because among all the containers made of tin, this **one of plastic** is not looking good...

Participant 5: Yes, they did it wrong. It looks of lower quality.

SLT Users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 1)



Participant 7: Well, I placed container 44 in 5.

Moderator: Why?

Participant 7: It is different from the others. It is **covered** well, so it will **not get easily spoiled**.

Non-users, Rural Khulna, Women

Non-user and SLT user groups found the standard packs to be **superior** to existing SLT packs on the market.

Participant 3: This one is **bigger** than the other items and it is very **durable**. The products will be remaining good in this container. **Color**, quality and **picture** of this container are very charming.

Non-users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 1)

Participant 2: It seems **very strong** and the quality is good...It is highly priced at Taka 110.

Moderator: You like this container due to its high price?

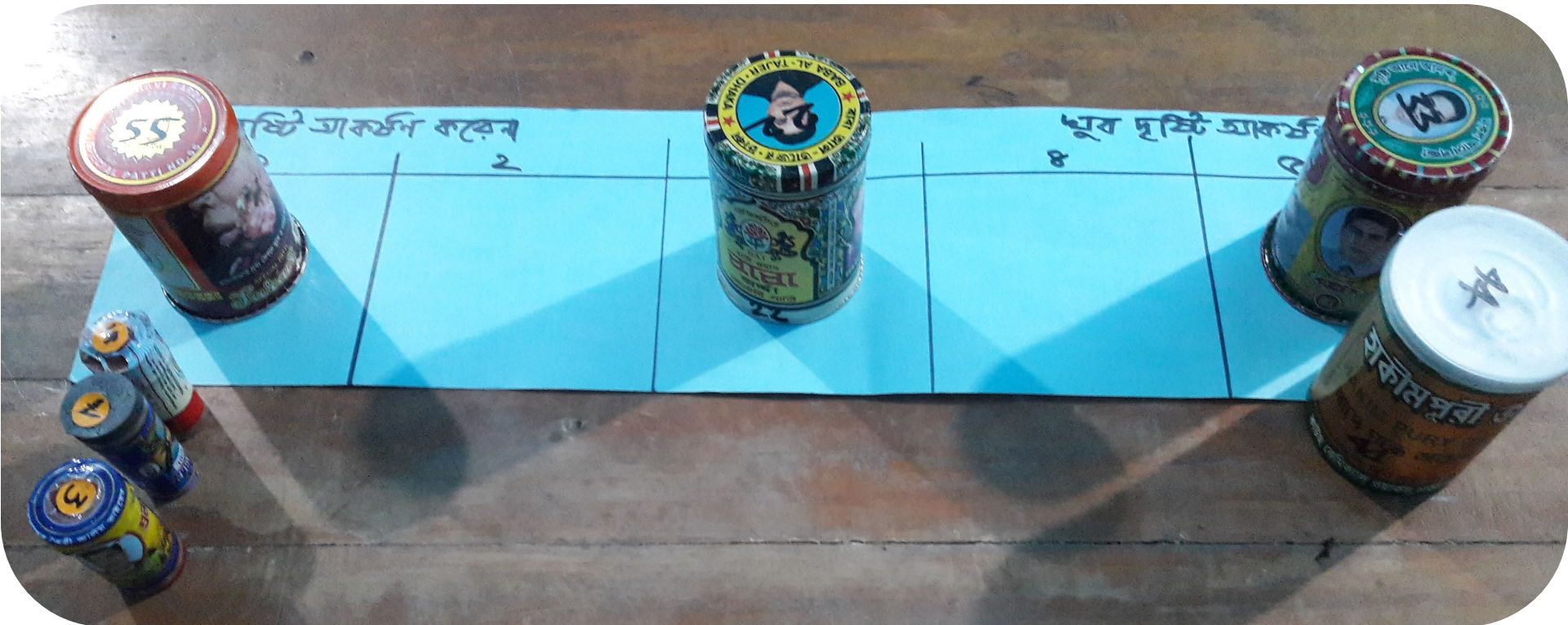
Participant 2: Yes.

SLT Users, Rural Dhaka, Women





Warning Noticeability



Most non-user and SLT user groups discussed that warnings in **dark** or **dull** colors were less visible (intentionally so).



Moderator:

Participant 3:

Anybody want to say any other thing about #22?

This picture is comparatively **faded** away...It is **not getting to the eyes** the way it has been designed. [The] other side of this container is good. But it has been trying to **hide** the warning side."

Non-users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 1)

The combination of clear, **large** warning images placed on **both sides** of the pack were most noticeable to all groups.

Participant 5: The messages [on 33] have occupied **half areas** surrounding the **whole can**. So you will be able to see the warning at first wherever you will look at it.

Non-users, Urban Sylhet, Men

Participant 3: The pictures of these items [44, 55] are big, so it is easy to understand. I'm not understanding the small pictures on the **gul** items.

SLT Users, Rural Khulna, Women



Several non-user groups discussed how **marketing** on the pack competed with the warning for visual attention.



Participant 2:

They provided the warning messages but that is too small to get the eyesight fast. Nothing is clearly understood here. The process of **marketing** of their products is **noticed more**.

There are two pictures in this container. They **could** provide warning messages rather giving **two pictures** here. Although I have been seeing this from the very first time, however it could not be possible to understand if it is harmful without having previous knowledge about this.

Non-users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 1)

All non-user groups discussed how the warning on the standard packs was more **clearly understood** than the warnings on existing packs.

Participant 1:

This picture [on existing pack] is quite small. If anyone wants to buy it, they may not notice the picture. And the picture on this [standard] can is much bigger. The pictures showing the damage are on both sides. If anyone wants to buy it, they will **notice it easily**.

Non-users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 2)



SLT user groups felt similarly but were more critical of the warning image on the **standard gul** pack.

Participant 1: The picture [on standard zordha] caught my eyesight much and the picture is bright enough. In the case of the standard gul container,, the picture is **not as clear**.

SLT Users, Urban Khulna, Men



Moderator: Why did the standard zordha catch your attention more?

Participant 5: When our children get ill, we wish that we had the disease instead of our **children**. Since it is a health issue, it makes us feel bad about the disease.

SLT Users, Rural Khulna, Men



Perceived harmfulness



Most non-user and SLT user groups said **small** or **low-quality** warnings made packs seem (purposefully) less harmful.



Moderator: Why did we put can no. 3 at 3?

Participant 1: We cannot recognize the picture showing damage as it is **blurry** and it is upside down.

Participant 3: The health warning is **small** and not clear. If an old man buys it, he **won't notice** the health warning as we barely can recognize it.

Non-users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 2)

All groups discussed that warning **placement** around the pack increased visibility and harm perception.



Moderator:
seem less

Participant 4:

Moderator:

Participant 4:

And this one, number 22, which you placed in 4, why did it seem less harmful?

Less harmful because there is **just one photo** showing the effects. And it just seems less harmful.

You think it is less harmful?

Yes, because the picture is just on one side.

Non-users, Rural Khulna, Women

Most non-user and SLT user groups discussed that the **warning text** could increase harm perception but was not as essential as imagery.



Participant 7:

I want to keep item 7 in the scoring point 1. It is **written in English** that it is injurious to health. Many people among us will not understand this. I can understand **from the picture**. But it would be good if the messages have been written in Bangla.

Non-users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 1)

Some SLT user groups discussed that current warning images may **not work** on changing harm perceptions.



- Participant 1: Well, everyone consumes these.
- Participant 2: Even after seeing the warning messages, people do **keep consuming** these.
- Participant 3: Everyone consumes these knowing well about the negative effects.
- Moderator: What if pictures like these are added to the containers? Won't it create any impact at all?
- Participant 5: I have seen these pictures before and know how harmful it is. Still I consume these products.

SLT Users, Urban Sylhet, Men

All groups discussed standard pack warnings increased **concern** about use compared to warnings on existing packs.

- Participant 2: The pictures on both sides of standard gul say that it's very **dangerous**.
- Moderator: It seems harmful for this?
- Participant 2: It's apparent that it's **fatally harmful**.
- Participant 4: The picture will catch your eyes whichever way you turn.
- Participant 1: The containers available in the market are small, as a result, nothing is discernible. Everything is **clearly visible** on this pack.
- SLT Users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 2)*



All non-user groups discussed how the warning on the standard packs would **scare** non-users, but there was more mixed opinion on existing users' behavior.



Participant 1: New consumers **will not buy** this if they see the picture.

Non-users, Rural Dhaka, Men

Participant 4: People may have demand for these packets because they are hard and durable. It also attracts very easily.

Non-users, Rural Khulna, Men

Most SLT user groups felt the combination of a price increase and more visible warnings could **reduce** SLT* consumption among current users.



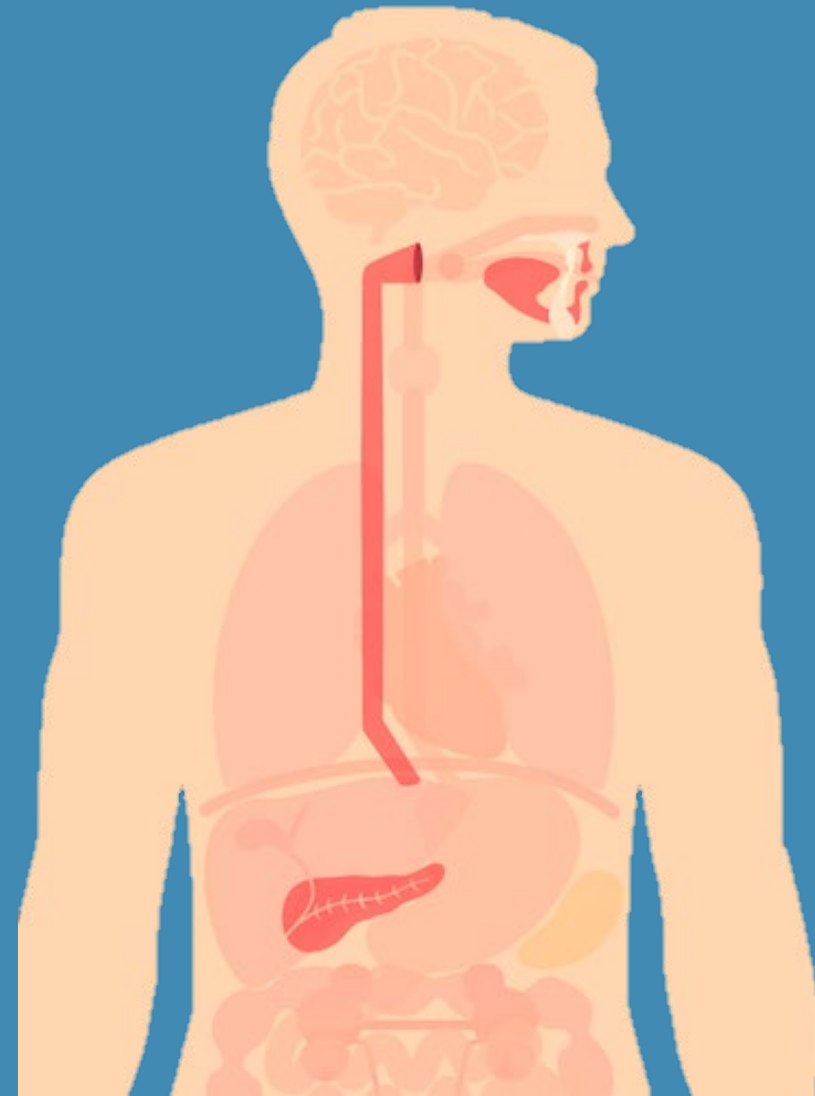
Participant 7: Yes, the price is high and seeing the pictures it seems that it will be harmful for the health then it is better to **give up** rather than consuming this [standard zordha].

SLT Users, Urban Dhaka, Women (Group 1)

Participant 4: But, if it is costly, people will think that it's good [quality] even if it is harmful.

SLT Users, Urban Dhaka, Men (Group 2)

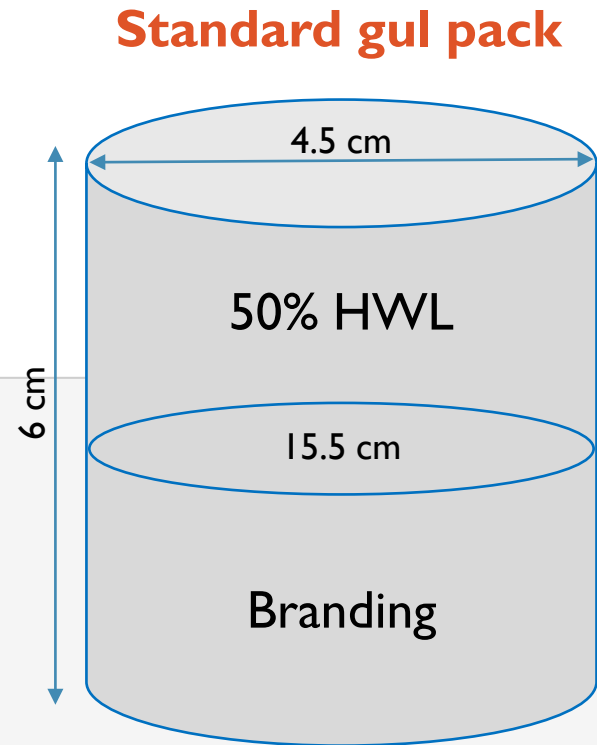
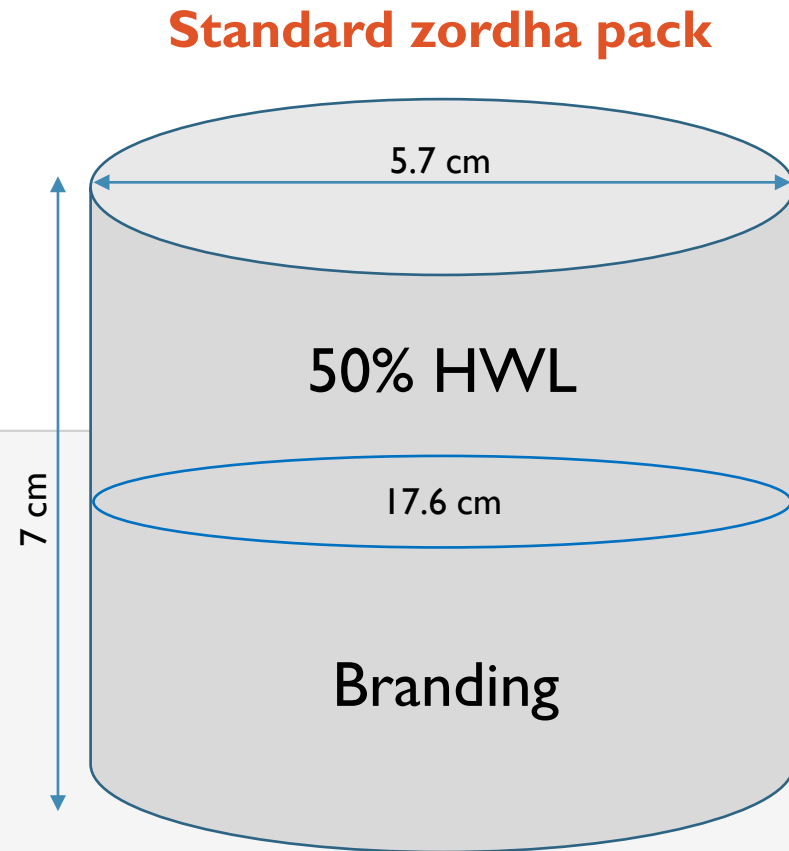
Implications



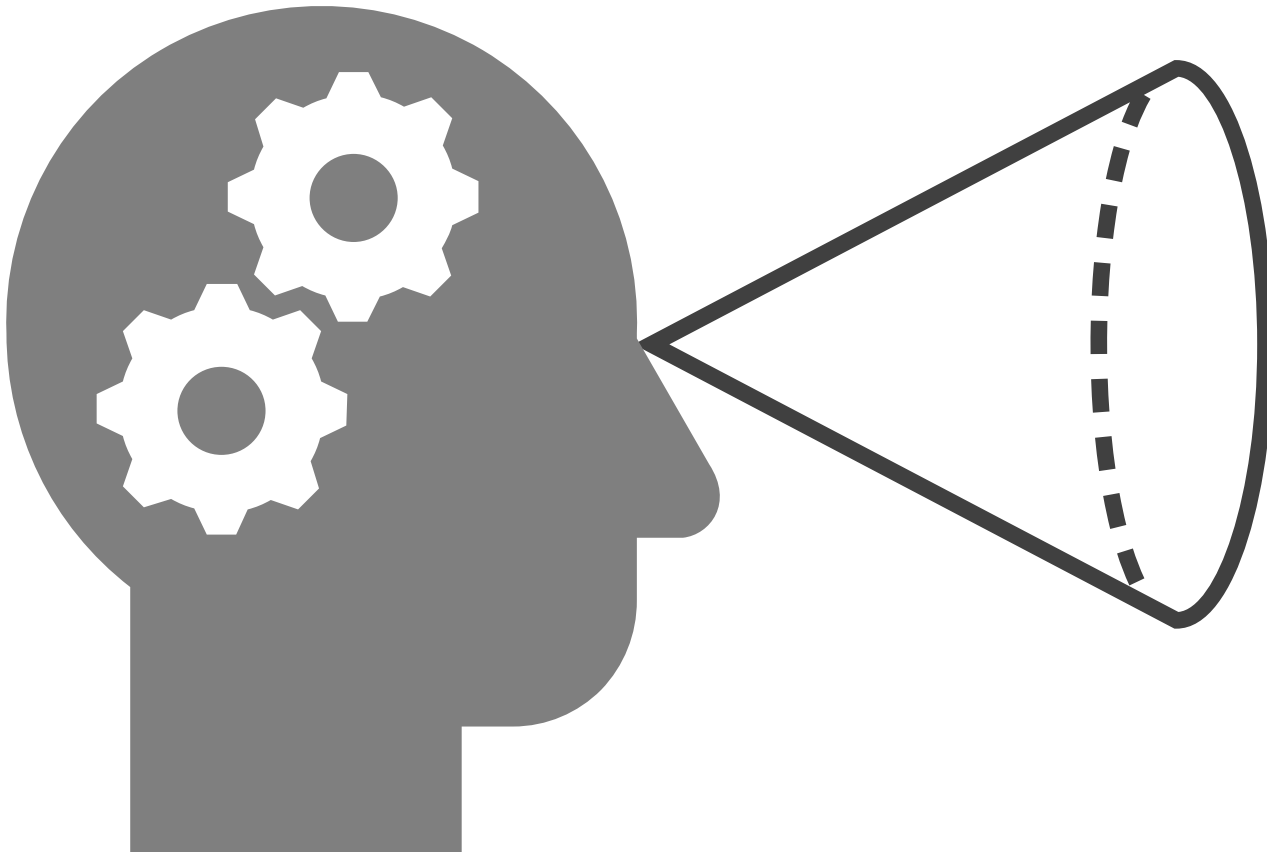
Existing packs range in attractiveness but consistently lower in warning **noticeability**.



Standardized packs increase **noticeability** of warnings if applied as required.



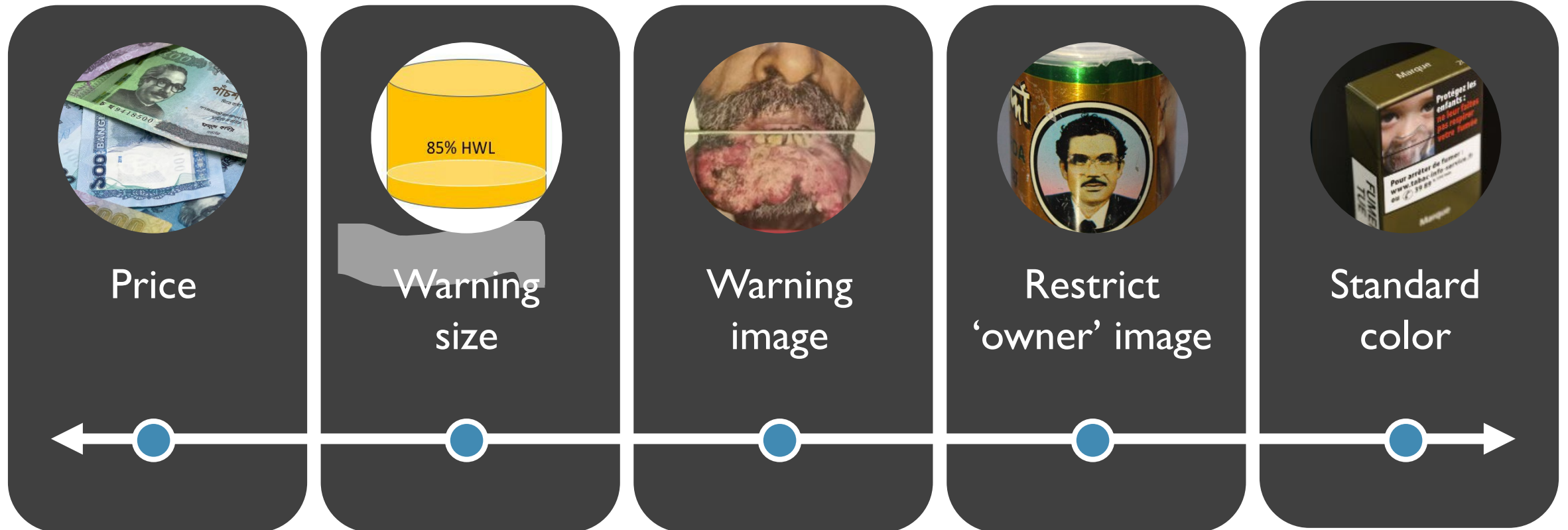
Prominence of warnings on standard packs raises **harm** perception and may **influence behavior**.



Features of the **standard pack** are features that may increase product appeal.



Complementary policies may be needed to decrease appeal and increase harm perceptions.



Study design limitations include...

1	Only included participants who could read/write Bangla
2	Only three regions of Bangladesh represented
3	Examined perceptions of zordha and gul; no other SLT product tested
4	Tested one standard shape requirement for zordha and gul, respectively
5	Data were collected in Bangla, analysis conducted in English

Study findings can inform **recommendations** and additional supportive policy measures.



Thank you!

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