Daring to dream:

Policy-maker and practitioner views of an 'endgame' solution to tobacco smoking at a country level

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- Participants in focus groups and interviews

Background

- International interest in exploring new 'end game' solutions:
  - Tobacco industry and product regulation
  - Structural changes e.g. to market and regulatory structure
  - Greater focus on supply-side interventions

- Initial work showed end-game ideas were difficult to communicate effectively to the public, media and policy makers

Daring to Dream: Aims

To explore in-depth:

- The understanding and reaction of the public and key stakeholders to radical tobacco control interventions

- To develop and evaluate methods of framing and communicating these approaches
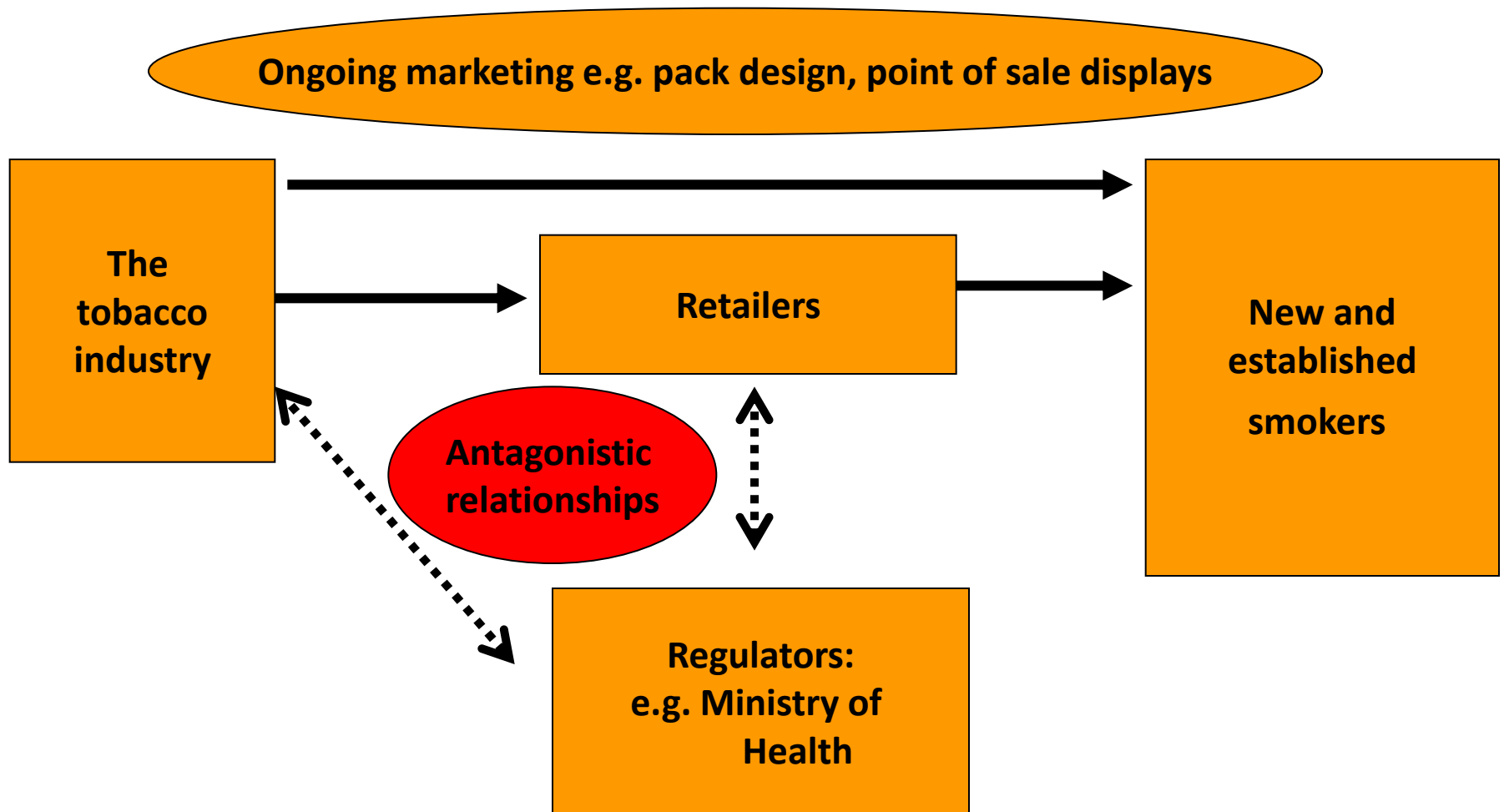
Stages of research

1. Reviewing literature and identify credible policy proposals

2. Scoping initial reactions with key stakeholders

3. Developing methods of communicating one structural intervention (Tobacco Free Commission)

4. **Evaluating responses with a range of audiences**
    – Public
    – **Policy-makers and public health practitioners**

5. Refining materials and disseminating results
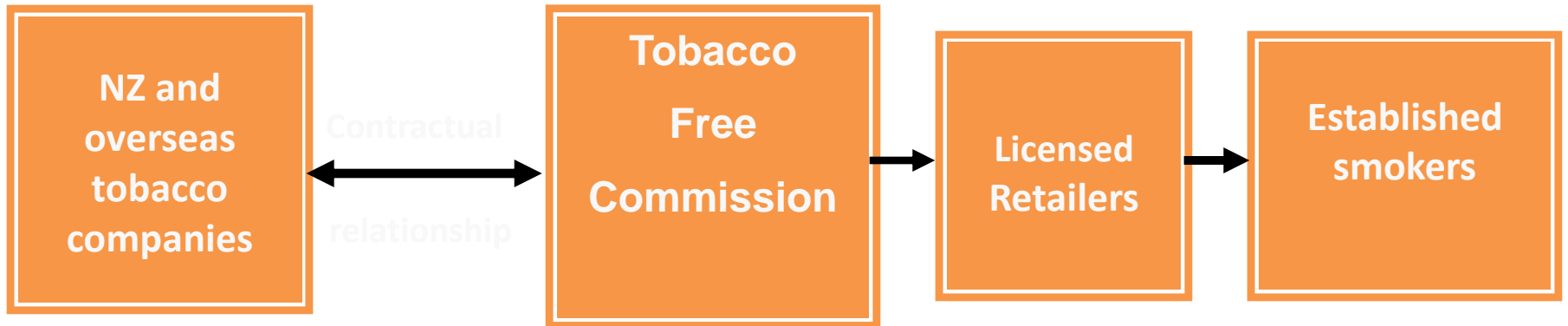
Initial reactions of key stakeholders

- Interviews and focus groups with policy-makers and media

- Reactions to tobacco-free vision and five possible radical interventions to achieve it:

  – The tobacco-free vision widely supported.

  – Most supported increasing the focus on supply-side measures.

  – Participants viewed proposed tobacco control approaches, as interesting or even intriguing.

  – Differing views about the desirability, feasibility and likely effectiveness of each approach. .

Edwards et al. BMC Public Health. 2011; 11:580.

How the Tobacco industry works:

Tobacco Free Commission
(Tobacco Supply Agency)

| NZ and overseas tobacco companies | ← Contractual relationship → | Tobacco Free Commission | → | Licensed Retailers | → | Established smokers |

Borland R. A strategy for controlling the marketing of tobacco products: a regulated market model. *Tob. Control* 2003;12(4):374-82.

Reaction of public to Tobacco Free Commission idea

- Focus groups with smokers and non-smokers, Māori and non-Māori)

- Reactions to tobacco-free vision and Tobacco Free Commission (TFC) as means to achieve it
  - Strong support for the tobacco-free New Zealand vision (including among most smokers)
  - Good understanding of, and mostly positive reactions to, TFC concept
  - Various concerns raised e.g. feasibility of establishment of TFC

Edwards et al. BMC Public Health. 2012; 12:782.

Reaction of policy-makers and practitioners to Tobacco Free Commission idea

Methods

- Focus groups (FG) with policy-makers, public health physicians, Health Sponsorship Council tobacco control team and other staff (n = 16 total) in 2009

- FG began with 20 minute presentation outlining:

  - Public health problem posed by tobacco in NZ

  - Vision of a tobacco free NZ in which children would be free from exposure to tobacco and smoking prevalence is close to zero

  - New approach to help achieve the tobacco free vision - the Tobacco-Free Commission (TFC)

- Discussion about understanding of and reactions to the tobacco free vision and TFC

Results

Tobacco-free vision received very positively

Variable responses to TFC concept

- Some saw TFC idea as 'innovative', 'interesting' and 'brilliant'
  - Aspects welcomed included: supply-side focus and removal of influence of tobacco industry

- Others less sure about feasibility and justification for the TFC approach

Results (cont)

Points of clarification about how the TFC would work

- Degree of autonomy and how that would be protected – appontments process, accountability and governance

- What powers would the TFC have, in particular in relaton to tax and tobacco regulation. What would be the role of the Ministry of Health?

"...the political environment and the interaction of the agency within the political environment … if you haven't got those things clear from the beginnning it is open to a lot more political manipulation."

Results (cont)

Barriers to introduction and running of TFC

1. Political climate unfavourable

   - Climate of public and political opposition to government intervention,bureaucracy and 'nanny-state' - very powerful in NZ

   - Discourse of individual choice and responsibility very strong

   - Current government party (National) strongly aligned with this discourse

"...currently we are in a background of the so-called nanny state .... People think well, it's tobacco today, tomorrow it's alcohol, fast foods ...you could get an enormous backlash if it now well handled at the outset."

Results (cont)

2. Intense industry (and retailer) opposition anticipated

"I think the other massive barrier is going to be … the industry fight. It's going to take a fairly high level of commitment at a government level to .. push this through, because the opposition is going to be massive."

" … their (retailers) income's going to drop, and you're going to get a huge outcry, and they're going to have government that says 'no way'."

Results (cont)

3. Not palatable or necessary to set up a new bureaucracy

- Current climate of reducing bureaucracy

" People might be a bit … more bloody bureaucracy, greater compliance costs etc."

- Creating new government agency often not seen as the best method or even necessary for a supply-sided a approach

"…if the issue is supply control, you don't necessarily need a commission to do that."

Other issues raised
- Complacency about tobacco and tobacco control
- Ethics of government agency distributing tobacco products

Results (cont)

Ideas for facilitating introduction of TFC

- Political skill and opportunism
- Identify charismatic champion
- Work with retailers not against them

"..that's how the tobacco industry's so successful"

- Work with public and demonstrate public support

Results (cont)

Communication strategies

    Make the case that tobacco control is still a priority

    Articulate the vision

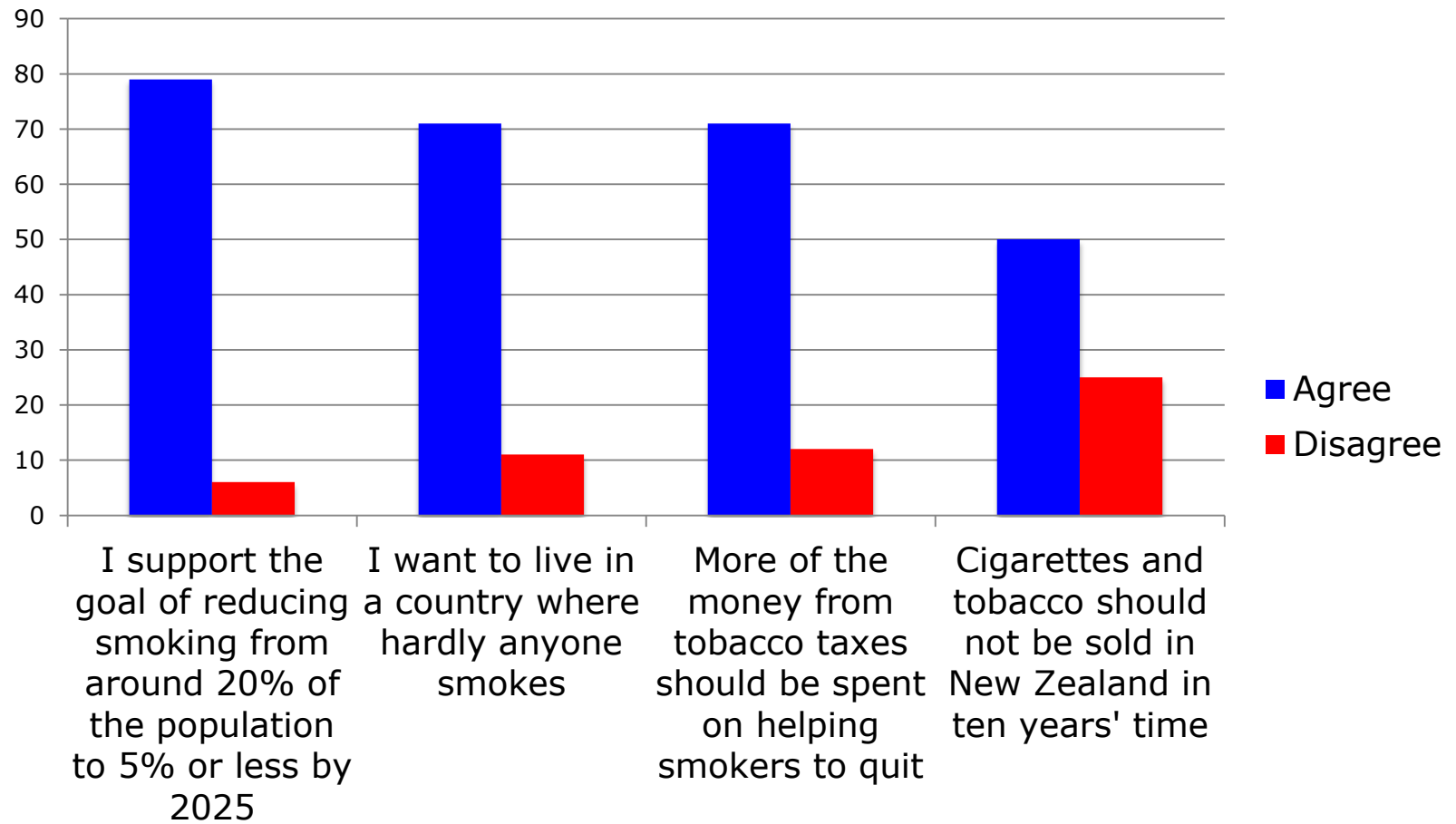   Emphasise = 'world first'

    Use economic arguments

    Simplify the concept for public communication

    Use analogies with similar agencies (PHARMAC)

Comparison with views of public

- Public showed higher level of support for tobacco free vision and TFC
  - Less likely to see problems and barriers
  - More likely to support action
- Policy-makers and practitioners much more likely to see barriers
- Policy-makers and practitioners perceived likelihood of public support as low

Public support for Smokefree 2025

Gendall P et al. Public Support for More Action on Smoking.
NZMJ 2013; 126:1375.

Caveats

- Small sample, qualitative not quantiative findings

- Only one specific endgame strategy explored (TFC)

- Findings may be context (e.g. setting, time period) and strategy specific

- Data collection occurred prior to adoption of Smokefree 2025 goal in NZ

Conclusions

- Policy-makers and public health practitioners were more cautious about a radical endgame strategy for tobacco than the public

- Study provided insights into
  - potential barriers to a radical endgame strategy in the NZ context
  - Ideas, including communication strategies, for how these barriers could be overcome

Further information?

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http://aspire2025.org.nz/

Promoting "tupeka kore" (smokefree in Māori language)