

Tobacco sales and promotion in bars, cafes and nightclubs from large cities around the world

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ABSTRACT

Context Little is known about tobacco promotion activities in low and middle-income countries.

Information on tobacco sales, advertisement and promotion in bars, cafes and nightclubs is needed to develop interventions to reduce smoking initiation and relapse, particularly among youths and young adults.

Objective To evaluate cigarette sales and tobacco advertisement and promotion in bars, cafes and nightclubs using a volunteer survey approach in large cities throughout the world.

Methods Between 2007 and 2009, we administered an interview-based survey to 231 bar/cafe/nightclub owners/managers in 24 large cities in Africa, the Americas, Asia and eastern Europe.

Results Cigarette sales and tobacco advertisement and promotions were found in bars/cafes/nightclubs in most cities. Examples of promotions included cigarette giveaways and event sponsorship. Establishments that allowed smoking were more likely to sell cigarettes compared to smoke-free establishments (OR 8.67, 95% CI 3.25 to 23.1). Larger establishments (maximum occupancy ≥ 100 vs < 100 customers) were more likely to have tobacco advertising (OR 4.35, 95% CI 2.04 to 9.24) and to receive promotional items from tobacco companies (OR 3.18, 95% CI 1.41 to 7.17).

Conclusions Cigarette sales and tobacco promotions were common in bars, cafes and nightclubs in the majority of cities. Socialising and hospitality venues must be covered by legislation banning tobacco sales and promotions to limit exposure among populations at high risk of tobacco initiation and relapse from quitting.

BACKGROUND

Advertisement, promotion and sponsorship are major strategies used by the tobacco industry to increase sales and market share. In 1989, the US Surgeon General concluded that tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (1) encourages smoking initiation; (2) increases daily consumption; (3) reduces motivation to quit; (4) encourages former smokers to resume smoking; and (5) contributes to the perception that tobacco is socially acceptable.¹ More recently, studies have continued to find that young adults remain highly vulnerable to marketing influence.^{2–10}

Surveillance of international cigarette sales and promotion activities is an essential component of tobacco control efforts.¹¹ Tobacco promotion, however, is difficult to monitor. Furthermore, most studies investigating tobacco sales and promotion practices in bars, cafes and nightclubs have been conducted in high-income countries,^{2 4 7–10 12–15}

and little is known about these practices in low and middle-income nations. As advertising bans have become more restrictive, the tobacco industry has increased the emphasis on promotion.^{16 17} Placing products in popular socialising venues allows the tobacco industry to link their brands to trendy nightspots and social places and to fun experiences and enjoyable music, thereby establishing credibility and relevance of their products among young adults.^{8 18}

The main objective of this study was to assess tobacco sales, advertising and promotion practices in bars, cafes and nightclubs in different cities around the world using a volunteer survey approach. These data can contribute to the development of national and international strategies to counter the growing popularity of using bar, cafes and nightclubs as a point of tobacco sale, advertisement and promotion.

METHODS

Overview

This study is part of a multi-country study designed to assess a range of tobacco control measures in bars, cafes/tea houses and nightclubs around the world. By design, the study recruited approximately 10 establishments per city in more than 20 countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia and eastern Europe. These cities were located in countries with a wide range of tobacco marketing legislation (table 1). Many had only minimal policies in place. A common protocol, including interviewer-administered questionnaires, was followed to characterise tobacco sales, advertising and promotion practices in each establishment in all cities. The cities were selected based on established collaborations in previous multi-country projects^{19 20} and the presence of a within country study coordinator and study team with experience in tobacco control research. Training of the study coordinators in each city was conducted centrally, in person or online following a training manual, simulated interviews and question-by-question guidelines. Each study coordinator was responsible for the training of the fieldworkers in each country.

Recruitment of establishments

A total of 231 establishments with at least one non-smoking employee were recruited between January 2007 (Baltimore, USA) and September 2009 (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia), ranging from six establishments in Kremenchug, Ukraine, to 11 in Baltimore, USA, and Mexico City, Mexico (table 1). In each city, bars, cafes/tea houses or nightclubs were recruited from two to three

Table 1 Establishment characteristics by country*

City	Country	No of establishments	Survey year	Response rate	Median maximum occupancy	Median no of employees	% With dance space	% With live music	% Smoke-free*	% Sell cigarettes	% Advertise tobacco	% Receive promotional items from tobacco co	Country level policies to control tobacco advertisement/promotion/sponsorship†
Americas													
Buenos Aires	Argentina	10	2007	20	180	28	30	80	100	10	10	10	No control
Guatemala City	Guatemala	10	2007	77	250	14	30	80	0	100	80	50	Minimal policies, except restrictions on free distribution
Georgetown	Guyana	9	2009	90	200	10	56	11	11	67	44	56	No control
Mexico City	Mexico	11	2007	69	100	6	45	82	0	80	10	0	Banned from national TV/radio, billboards and free distribution
Lima	Peru	10	2007	22	150	10	70	60	0	90	40	20	Banned from national TV/radio
Baltimore	USA	11	2007	22	110	15	27	27	27	46	27	27	Banned from national TV/radio
Montevideo	Uruguay	10	2007	77	155	7	20	10	100	30	20	20	Most forms banned except point of sale and film
Summary		71		54	150	12	39	51	34	60	33	26	
Eastern Europe													
Yerevan	Armenia	10	2007	17	55	12	20	10	0	100	30	70	Minimal policies, except print media, point of sale and sponsorship
Tbilisi	Georgia	10	2007	59	95	12	50	70	0	100	10	80	Banned from national TV/radio
Bishkek	Kyrgyzstan	10	2009	8	75	18	20	11	0	90	30	50	Minimal policies, except TV/radio, print media, film and point of sale
Warsaw	Poland	10	2007	NA	125	11	40	30	20	60	50	40	Most forms banned, except free cigarettes and discounts
Moscow	Russia	10	2007	71	70	23	60	60	10	90	20	20	Banned from national TV/radio and film
Istanbul	Turkey	7	2009	37	60	9	29	29	0	57	57	29	Most banned, except non-tobacco brands on tobacco products
Kremenchug	Ukraine	6	2009	60	90	23	83	67	0	100	33	67	Banned from national TV/radio, print media and billboards
Summary		63		22	80	13	41	39	5	86	32	51	
Asia													
Dhaka	Bangladesh	7	2009	44	150	26	14	14	0	14	0	0	Most banned, except point of sale, discounts and film
Shanghai	China	10	2008	77	80	8	0	20	10	30	0	0	Banned from TV/radio and print media
Ahmedabad	India	10	2008	25	28	7	0	0	20	30	20	0	Most forms banned, except point of sale
Jakarta	Indonesia	10	2008	43	113	26	67	67	0	90	10	20	Minimal policies, except restrictions on free distribution
Ulaanbaatar	Mongolia	10	2009	71	180	22	70	60	0	100	11	50	Most banned except non-tobacco brands on tobacco products
Manila	Philippines	10	2008	48	90	29	40	40	0	70	10	20	Moderate policies, except point of sale, free distribution and discounts
Bangkok	Thailand	10	2009	91	550	26	70	40	90	90	40	20	All forms banned
Hanoi	Vietnam	10	2008	71	40	2	10	20	0	100	10	0	Most banned except non-tobacco brands on tobacco products
Summary		77		59	100	18	34	33	16	68	13	14	
Africa													
Accra, Tema	Ghana	10	2007	88	150	19	60	30	20	80	33	50	Banned from national TV/radio and print media
Lagos	Nigeria	10	2009	43	50	11	80	56	0	60	40	67	No control
Summary		20		62	100	14	70	42	10	70	37	56	
Overall		212			100	13	39	41	19	69	26	29	

*In Buenos Aires, Argentina, while smoking is allowed in some establishments depending on size and other characteristics, only smoke-free establishments agreed to participate in the study. Uruguay has a comprehensive smoke-free legislation and smoking was not allowed in any establishment. In other countries, some establishments had volunteer smoke-free policies at the time of the study.

†Source: WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2009: implementing smoke-free environments. Geneva: WHO, 2009.

popular entertainment neighbourhoods—that is, neighbourhoods with a high number of public places where people, especially young adults, spend time or gather socially. Establishments were recruited from popular areas, covering different socioeconomic sectors. In most cities, invitation to participate was made in person by visiting each venue, door-to-door, in the selected neighbourhoods. In Manila, establishments were randomly selected from rosters by public health inspectors. Participation was voluntary and bar owner agreement was required. The median response rate was 59% (Tbilisi, Georgia) and ranged from 8% in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to 91% in Bangkok, Thailand (table 1). The variability in response rates was probably related to cultural differences across countries as well as to the level of concern with the passing of smoking legislation. The project was approved by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Institutional Review Board and by a local ethics committee in each participating country. Informed consent was obtained for all participants.

Data collection

Standardised, interview-based questionnaires were completed by the bar owner or manager. The questionnaires were administered in the local language of the country by trained interviewers during work hours, but before the venues were opened to the public. The bar owners or managers were asked to describe general characteristics of the venue, including maximum legal occupancy, customer and employee demographics, information on dancing space and live music and the establishment smoking policy (smoke-free or smoking allowed).

Owners/managers were asked for information on cigarette sales inside the establishment using the question, 'Are cigarettes sold anywhere inside the bar/cafe/nightclub?' and 'How are cigarettes sold? (vending machines, over the counter, outside

vendors or other).' Information on advertisement was obtained with the question 'Is there tobacco advertising in the bar/cafe/nightclub?' Finally, information on tobacco promotion activities was asked with the question, 'Do you receive free promotional items from tobacco companies?' If affirmative, further qualitative responses were gathered concerning these topics.

Statistical analyses

Data collected in each city was entered and reviewed centrally for completeness and consistency before being merged for data analysis. For descriptive purposes, multivariable logistic regression was used to evaluate the association of cigarette sales, tobacco advertising and tobacco promotion, respectively, with establishment characteristics. Stata version 9.0 (StataCorp) was used for statistical analysis.

RESULTS

Establishment characteristics

Among the 231 bars, cafes and nightclubs included, only 19% were smoke-free (table 1). Data on maximum occupancy and number of employees suggested that establishments recruited in the Americas were larger with fewer employees. Dancing space was more common in African establishments (70%) while live music was more common in the Americas (51%).

Cigarette sales

Cigarettes were sold in bars/cafes/nightclubs in all cities: 86% in establishments recruited in eastern Europe, 70% in Africa, 68% in Asia and 60% in the Americas (table 2). Tobacco was generally sold over the counter (90%), with no differences across regions (data not shown). After adjustment for establishment characteristics, the establishment's smoking policy, as reported by the owner/manager, was strongly related to cigarette sales (OR 8.67)

Table 2 Cigarette sales and tobacco advertisement and promotion by establishment characteristics

Cigarette sales and tobacco advertisement and promotion by establishment and attendee							
	No	Cigarette sales		Tobacco advertisement		Tobacco promotion	
		%	Adjusted OR‡ (95% CI)	%	Adjusted OR‡ (95% CI)	%	Adjusted OR‡ (95% CI)
Region							
N/S America	71	60	1.00 (ref)	33	1.00 (ref)	26	1.00 (ref)
Europe	63	86	3.23 (1.06 to 9.88)	32	0.94 (0.40 to 2.25)	51	3.76 (1.53 to 9.25)
Asia	67	68	0.94 (0.36 to 2.44)	13	0.28 (0.10 to 0.76)	14	0.34 (0.12 to 1.01)
Africa	20	70	0.57 (0.14 to 2.28)	37	1.03 (0.30 to 3.46)	56	4.51 (1.21 to 16.9)
p Value		0.01		0.02		<0.001	
Maximum occupancy							
≤100	121	69	1.00 (ref)	15	1.00 (ref)	22	1.00 (ref)
>100	110	72	1.59 (0.71 to 3.58)	40	4.35 (2.04 to 9.24)	37	3.18 (1.41 to 7.17)
p Value		0.52		<0.001		0.003	
Dance*							
No	135	62	1.00 (ref)	21	1.00 (ref)	24	1.00 (ref)
Yes	93	82	2.62 (1.09 to 6.30)	35	1.44 (0.70 to 2.98)	42	1.86 (0.88 to 3.91)
p Value		0.001		0.019		0.004	
Live music*							
No	134	61	1.00 (ref)	22	1.00 (ref)	27	1.00 (ref)
Yes	91	83	3.09 (1.32 to 7.20)	34	1.41 (0.69 to 2.86)	38	1.39 (0.66 to 2.96)
p Value		<0.001		0.04		0.06	
Establishment smoking policy							
Smoke-free†	41	32	1.00 (ref)	18	1.00 (ref)	12	1.00 (ref)
Smoking allowed	190	78	8.67 (3.25 to 23.1)	28	2.46 (0.83 to 7.31)	35	2.06 (0.67 to 6.30)
p Value		<0.001		0.16		0.004	

*Information on dance and music was missing in one and three establishments, respectively.

†In Buenos Aires, Argentina, while smoking is allowed in some establishments depending on size and other characteristics, only smoke-free establishments agreed to participate in the study. Uruguay has a comprehensive smoke-free legislation and smoking was not allowed in any establishment. In other countries, some establishments had volunteer smoke-free policies at the time of the study.

‡Adjusted for region, maximum occupancy, dance space, live music, and smoking policy.

p Values are based on χ^2 tests for crude differences across percentages.

(table 2). Dance space (OR 2.62) and live music (OR 3.09) were also associated with cigarettes sales.

Tobacco advertisement and promotion

Tobacco was advertised in bars/cafes/nightclubs in most cities: 37% in establishments recruited in Africa, 33% in the Americas, 32% in eastern Europe and 13% in Asia (table 2). Owners/managers in establishments recruited in eastern Europe (51%) and Africa (56%) were more likely to report receiving promotional items from tobacco companies compared to the Americas (26%) and Asia (14%). Table 3 presents the types of advertising and promotional items self-reported by the owners/managers. After adjustment for establishment characteristics, maximum occupancy was associated with increased tobacco advertisement (OR 4.35) and promotion (OR 3.18) (table 2). Cigarette sales were also associated with tobacco advertisement (OR 32.6, 95% CI 6.00 to 177.1) and promotion (OR 12.4, 95% CI 3.23 to 47.3) in analyses adjusted by other establishment characteristics (data not shown).

DISCUSSION

We found that cigarette sales and tobacco advertisement and promotions were common in bars, cafes and nightclubs in cities around the world. Cigarette giveaways (free cigarettes) were identified in Baltimore (USA), Guatemala City (Guatemala), Kremenchug (Ukraine), Moscow (Russia) and Yerevan (Armenia), indicating that this strategy is widespread. Other examples of promotions included event sponsorships (Ghana, Indonesia, Russia and Ukraine), drink offers or discounts (Ghana and Guatemala), and funding for decorations (Indonesia and Ukraine). For some countries, these findings reflect the absence of strong policies to control tobacco marketing (table 1). For countries that do restrict tobacco advertising and promotion, these findings reflect inadequate enforcement of regulations.

We used a survey system based on volunteer owner/manager participation to identify tobacco industry practices for tobacco sales, advertisement and promotions in places where young adults gather and spend time socially. While this approach does not allow the acquisition of representative estimates, our findings indicate that (1) tobacco was sold, to a greater or lesser extent, in bars, cafes or nightclubs in all cities; (2) tobacco advertisement occurred in most cities; and (3) tobacco promotion activities were identified in most cities except in establishments recruited in Ahmedabad, Dhaka, Hanoi, Mexico City and Shanghai, maybe owing to the limited number of venues recruited and to the convenience sampling method.

Systematic population-based surveillance of tobacco industry practices in bars and nightclubs can be challenging because both a census of establishments and the cooperation of owners are needed. We used a door-to-door technique in different neighbourhoods within each city, with varied participation rates across countries. This method was useful in obtaining information on sales and marketing techniques in various countries from a limited sample of bars, cafes and nightclubs. Data from countries with higher response rates were more likely to have identified relevant sales and promotion practices in the country. Recruitment, however, was difficult in some cities, leading to concern for potential bias. For instance, Baltimore, Bishkek, Buenos Aires, Lima and Yerevan had response rates <25%. While tobacco sales, advertisement and promotion were found in cities with low participation rates, we can expect that tobacco advertisement and promotion are even more common in establishments that declined participation. In Buenos Aires, moreover, only smoke-free establishments agreed to participate and no information is available for establishments where smoking was allowed. In Mexico City, Guatemala City, Istanbul and Lima the study was conducted before the implementation of comprehensive smoke-free legislations in Mexico City (2008),

Table 3 Tobacco advertising and promotional items reported by establishment owners/managers (qualitative responses)

Country (response rate)*	Advertisements (% reported)†	Promotions (% reported)†
Bangkok (91%)	Lighters, flashlights (40%)	Point-of-sale display (20%)
Georgetown (90%)	Ashtrays, lights, pens, branded apparel, signs (44%)	Cigarette dispensers, point-of-sale displays (56%)
Accra, Tema (88%)	Ashtrays, lighters, posters, illuminated signs, glass covers, clock (33%)	Event sponsorship, bottled water (50%)
Shanghai (77%)	None reported (0%)	None reported (0%)
Guatemala City (77%)	Ashtrays, posters, illuminated signs, napkin holder, branded apparel (80%)	Half-price drink offers, free cigarettes, point of sale (50%)
Montevideo (77%)	Signs, clock (20%)	Not specified (20%)
Ulaanbaatar (71%)	VIP room advertisement (11%)	Not specified (50%)
Moscow (71%)	Illuminated signs (20%)	Event sponsorship, free cigarettes (20%)
Hanoi (71%)	Not specified (10%)	None reported (0%)
Mexico City (69%)	Not specified (10%)	None reported (0%)
Kremenchug (60%)	Lighter, branded apparel (33%)	Event sponsorship, free cigarettes, monetary funding (67%)
Tbilisi (59%)	Ashtrays, posters (10%)	Not specified (80%)
Manila (48%)	Ashtrays, lighters, napkin holder, branded apparel (10%)	Cigarette dispenser, point of sale display (70%)
Dhaka (44%)	None reported (0%)	None reported (0%)
Jakarta (43%)	Not specified (10%)	Event sponsorship, point-of-sale display, monetary funding (20%)
Lagos (43%)	Ashtrays, posters, branded apparel (40%)	Point of sale display, event sponsorship, vending machine (67%)
Istanbul (37%)	Ashtrays, lighters, matches, illuminated signs (57%)	Point-of-sale display (29%)
Ahmedabad (25%)	Posters (20%)	None reported (0%)
Lima (22%)	Ashtrays, lighters, illuminated signs, stained glass window (40%)	Not specified (20%)
Baltimore (22%)	Ashtrays, posters, coasters, bar mats (27%)	Free cigarettes (27%)
Buenos Aires (20%)	Magazines (10%)	Not specified (10%)
Yerevan (17%)	Ashtrays, posters (30%)	Free cigarettes (70%)
Bishkek (8%)	Ashtrays, posters, furniture (30%)	Not specified (50%)
Warsaw (NA)	Ashtrays, lighters, matches, illuminated signs, beer mats, pens (50%)	Not specified (40%)

*Countries are listed by response rate in descending order.

†Percentage of owners/managers who answered yes to the questions: "Is there tobacco advertising in the bar/cafe/nightclub?" and "Do you receive free promotional items from tobacco companies?" for advertisement and promotion, respectively.

Guatemala (2009), Turkey (2009) and Peru (2010), respectively, although legislation concerning sales and promotion has remained unchanged since the conduction of the study. The relatively small number of locations per city and the voluntary nature of participation probably prevented identification of all relevant forms of tobacco advertisement and promotional activities. In future research, the use of a more randomised approach to recruitment and a larger sample size per city would be preferable. Our volunteer-based approach, however, is a feasible alternative when systematic surveillance is difficult and resources are limited.²¹

In addition to providing data on tobacco sales, advertisement and promotion, this study identified factors that suggest some strategies used by the tobacco industry in selecting venues for promotion and advertisement. The size of the establishment, measured in maximum allowed occupancy was related to tobacco advertising and promotion. Dancing and live music were associated with cigarette sales, and before adjustment for maximum occupancy and other characteristics, they were also associated with tobacco advertising and promotion. Despite our small within-city sample size and varied response rates, the data support that tobacco sales and promotion were particularly common in eastern European countries. In Africa ≥50% of the establishments recruited in Ghana and Nigeria reported receiving promotion activities and items from tobacco companies, probably reflecting aggressive and widespread tobacco marketing in Africa. Clearly, more research is needed in these regions.

Tobacco companies have increased their marketing expenditures and changed patterns of spending over the last decades. In the USA, for instance, the marketing expenditures allocated to promotion increased from 18% in 1997 to 99% in 2003.¹⁷ This shift partly reflects restrictions placed on tobacco advertising. With sponsorship control growing tighter, the industry is now focusing on point-of-sale strategies, package design, trademark diversification and giveaway cigarettes.^{6, 8, 10, 13–15} Point-of-purchase promotion—in areas of retail and in socialising venues, such as bars, cafes and nightclubs—remains one of the main tools available to tobacco companies for endorsing their products.¹⁴ In our study, free cigarettes—offered by young women in most cases—were reported in multiple countries in different regions of the world, confirming that tobacco promotion and advertising in socialising venues are ubiquitous and global.

Global marketing and sponsorship facilitate the spread of the tobacco epidemic through a variety of complex factors.³ The WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) mandates participating nations to undertake a comprehensive ban on all tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship in accordance with their constitutional principles, including direct and indirect incentives that encourage the purchase of tobacco products by the public.²² With the exceptions of Argentina, Armenia, Guyana, Indonesia, Russia and the USA, all countries in our study had ratified the FCTC at the time of the survey. Many of these countries are now approaching their fifth year of implementation and are thus required to implement comprehensive tobacco marketing bans, including advertisement and promotion in bars and nightclubs.

In conclusion, bars, cafes and nightclubs remain major outlets for tobacco companies to sell, market and promote their products in many countries around the world. This study suggests that stronger regulations that specifically cover those establishments are needed. In the meantime, it is crucial to continue monitoring tobacco industry sales and marketing activities, especially in venues where smoking can be associated with socialising and enjoyable activities and that are frequented by

What this paper adds

- This study evaluated the presence of tobacco sales, advertising and promotion in bars, cafes and nightclubs from the Americas, eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.
- Cigarette sales and tobacco advertising and promotions were common in bars, cafes and nightclubs in the majority of cities.
- Socialising and hospitality venues must be covered by legislation banning tobacco sales and promotions to protect populations at high risk of tobacco initiation and relapse.

youths and young adults. Independent observation and follow-up of media ads and tobacco industry documents should be used in addition to owner/manager surveys. Comprehensive bans of tobacco promotion and tobacco sales in social venues, as stipulated by the FCTC, are urgently needed to reduce smoking initiation and increase tobacco cessation in the population.

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Competing interests None.

Ethics approval The project was approved by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Institutional Review Board and by a local ethics committee in each participating country.

Contributors AN-A, JMS and PNB had the idea for the study. SS, AN-A and HW directed the fieldwork. The FAMRI Bar Study Investigators directed the fieldwork within their country. EAT prepared the study database. SS and AN-A analysed the data and drafted the manuscript. All authors participated in the interpretation of the results and contributed to the writing of the manuscript.

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