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Institute for Global Tobacco Control

Technical Report on Tobacco Marketing at the Point-of-Sale in Bucharest, Romania

Product Display, Advertising, and Promotion around Primary and Secondary Schools



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Background and Introduction

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease across the globe.¹ Although global estimates of tobacco marketing expenditures are not available, US cigarette manufacturers alone are estimated to have spent over 26 billion US dollars between 2011 and 2013 on advertising and promotion.² Tobacco companies use deceptive and predatory marketing practices to increase consumption of their products, and to make tobacco use appear glamorous or socially acceptable while dismissing the products' adverse health effects.³ Article 13 of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) calls for a comprehensive ban on all forms of TAPS, including the retail display of tobacco products.⁴ Evidence shows that the tobacco industry responds to partial TAPS bans that regulate only certain types of TAPS strategies (such as television or radio) by re-directing their resources to market their brands on unregulated channels such as the point-of-sale (POS).⁵ Numerous longitudinal studies have demonstrated that exposure to tobacco product advertising and promotion increases the likelihood that youth will start to smoke.⁶ The display of tobacco products at the POS has the same effect and influence on behavior as traditional media advertising.⁷ Marketing in retail environments specifically has been shown to increase the likelihood of smoking initiation among youth.⁸ One study found that stores where adolescents frequently shop may contain nearly three times as many marketing materials and shelf space for popular tobacco brands.⁹

Romania became a party to the FCTC on 27 April, 2006.¹⁰ Among Romania's just over 21.5 million residents,¹¹ an estimated 37.4% of adult men, and 16.7% of adult females use tobacco daily,¹² with 18.4% of boys, and 10.4% of girls using tobacco products.¹³ Of students who currently use tobacco products, 71.1% buy cigarettes in a store.¹³

Currently, Romanian law does not prohibit point-of-sale advertising or the display of tobacco products at the point-of-sale. However, the law prohibits the advertising of tobacco products in press and other printed publications and the distribution of tobacco products to those under the age of 18, as well as restricts the sponsorship of events or activities by the tobacco industry.¹⁴ Additionally, outdoor advertising (including billboards) for tobacco products is banned. Romania's laws do not align with the FCTC and the Article 13 Guidelines with respect to point-of-sale product display and advertising.

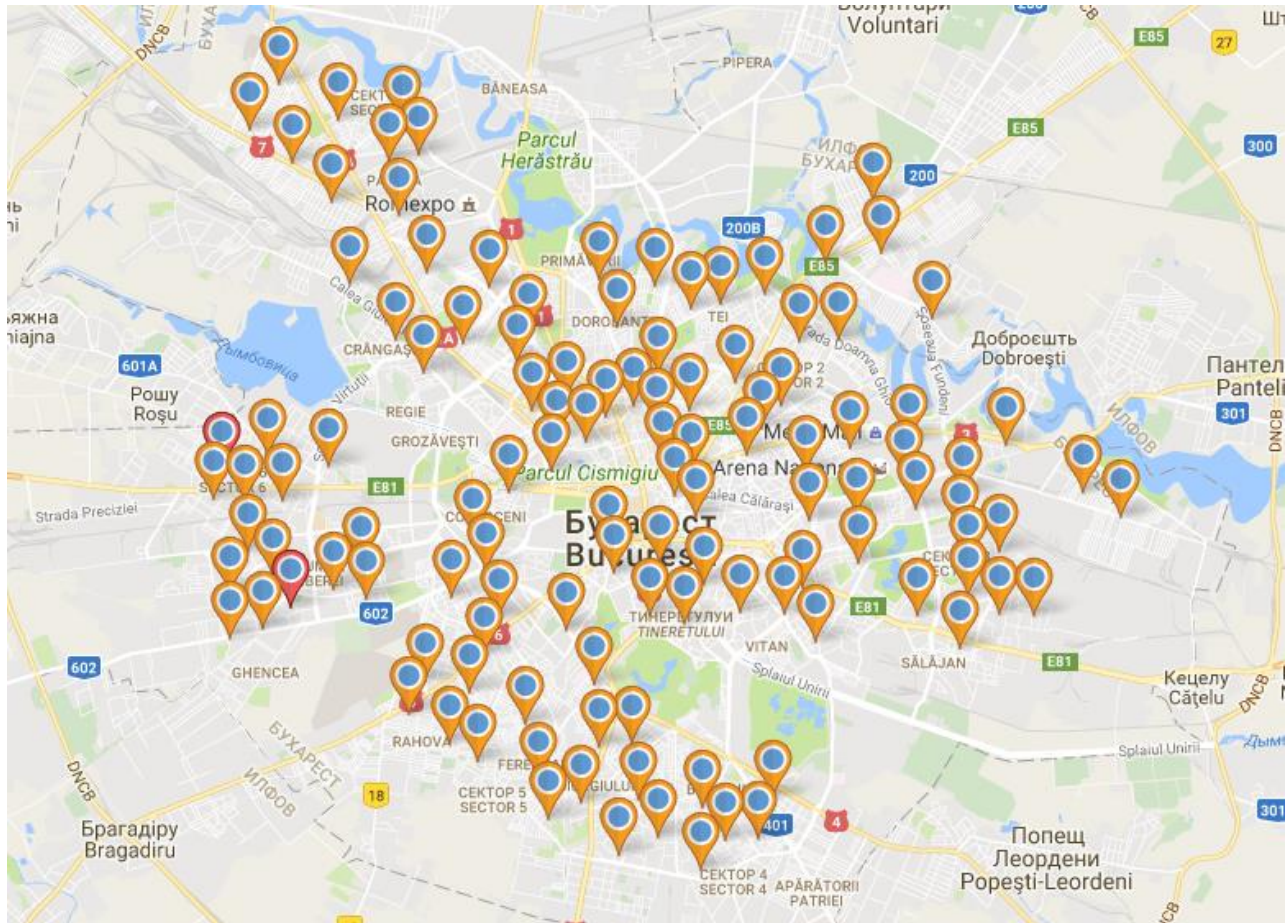
Methods

This report describes a study about tobacco marketing at the point-of-sale in Bucharest, Romania. The work was led by the Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH). IGTC partnered in Bucharest with the Clearpoint Communications Associates (CCA) who provided guidance and context about the sampling framework. IGTC designed the survey instrument and data collection protocol. Study team investigators trained 6 university students to conduct the fieldwork and submit daily reports for review in real-time. The study team was in Bucharest for training and data collection to troubleshoot any logistical or technical issues. Data cleaning, validation, and analysis were carried out by IGTC.

Sampling Approach

This study surveyed tobacco retailers in Bucharest, Romania's capital and largest city with a population of over 1.6 million.¹¹ One hundred and twenty-one schools were selected within the city boundaries, with consideration for the (1) retail density, (2) school density, and (3) ease of accessibility for data collectors traversing the cities via public transportation (Figure 1). Each school was assigned a unique identification code. An online mapping and distance tool was used to define a sampling area radius of 250 meters surrounding each school, ensuring that none of the sampling areas overlapped. The study surveyed a convenience sample of supermarkets, convenience stores, small, independent grocers, kiosks/newsstands, gasoline stations, cafes or bars, mobile street vendors, sidewalk vendors, and tobacco shops within each sampling area that sold tobacco products.

Figure 1. Selected Schools in Bucharest (n=119)



Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was designed to address key components of Romania's tobacco control law that allow or regulate different types of tobacco product placement, promotion, health warnings, and sales restrictions, as well as known trends in POS marketing that may target youth (Figure 2). The survey also asked whether the store was within eyesight of the school and provided fields for data collectors to enter the sampling area code, retailer address, name brands of tobacco products displayed or advertised, and other notes or comments about the retailer.

Figure 2. Survey Instrument Content

<i>Product Placement</i>	<i>Signage and Visibility of Health Warnings</i>
Cashier zone	Signage with clear health warning labels
Behind the cashier zone	Signage that sales are prohibited to youth under 18
Hanging from the ceiling	Visible pack warning labels
Eye level of children	<i>Advertising and promotion</i>
On a power wall	Dimensional packaging
Near sweets, snacks or soda	Mention of flavors (menthol or otherwise)
On a branded stand or cabinet	Free tobacco product
With toys	Discounts
<i>Display or Ad Characteristic</i>	Contest or competition
Signage (digital or otherwise)	Promotional gifts
Use of lights	Imitation tobacco products
Use of videos	Free games or computer games
	Tobacco brand sponsoring of event

Data Collection Protocol

Observations and photos were collected from retailers during normal business hours from July 27-29, 2016. Each data collector received a packet of sampling area maps including the unique school identification code and space to record the addresses of tobacco retailers in that area (Appendix A). Street names and radii boundaries were clearly visible on all sampling area maps, and data collectors were instructed to use nearest intersections and landmarks to stay within the confines of the radii boundaries. Data collectors began identifying points-of-sale within the sampling area by using the maps to follow a spiral-walking pattern, observing all streets within the 250-meter radius. All supermarkets, convenience stores, small, independent grocers, kiosks/newsstands, cafes or bars, and tobacco shops were selected for observation. The school code, address, school visibility, and store type were still recorded at locations that did not sell tobacco products. Data collectors wrote the address of each tobacco retailer they observed on the corresponding sampling area map. Observational data and photos of tobacco product displays or ads were recorded and uploaded to a cloud-based database in real-time within Magpi, a mobile data collection application installed on smartphones. The mobile app was able to capture the date, geographic coordinates, and data collector name for each record uploaded to the dataset. The order of questions and format of response options were designed to facilitate rapid and discrete observation by data collectors. Data collectors also carried paper copies of the survey to use as an alternative to the mobile app in the event of any technical issue. At the end of each day, data collectors reported the address and sampling area code of each retailer they observed by entering information into a spreadsheet hosted on Google Drive. The study team reviewed these reports daily in order to check the uploaded dataset and ensure that the mobile software application was functioning properly.

Training

Six university students attended a full day of training to use the study protocol on July 26, 2016 – immediately before the data collection period. The study team explained in detail the purpose of the study, the current tobacco control law, the survey content, key terms and definitions, the Magpi software application, and data collection procedures. Data collectors were instructed to behave as customers in order to discretely observe the retail environment and capture photos. In order to estimate the placement of products at the eye-level of children, each data collector used a measuring

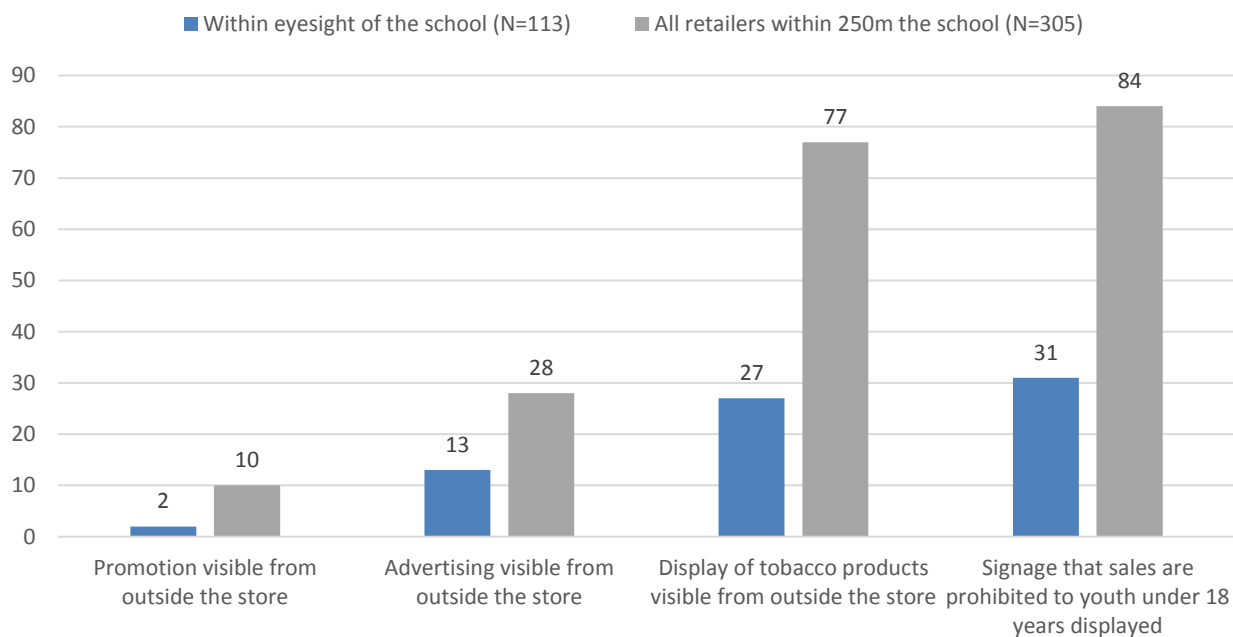
tape to identify a 1-meter reference point on their body. The data collection team were oriented to the Romanian tobacco control policies and trained to recognize related point-of-sale advertising, promotion, and/or sponsorship. During the training, data collectors participated in a field test of the study protocol to practice using the survey, mobile app, and data collection procedures in nearby retailers.

Results

There were a total of 100 school sampling areas observed. Data collectors observed 589 retail outlets within a 250-meter radius of schools – 150 of which were located within eyesight of the school. 419 retailers (71%) observed sold tobacco, of which 113 were within eyesight of the school. Of the 100 school sampling areas, 99 contained at least one retailer that sold tobacco products.

Regarding the display of signage indicating that sales are prohibited to youth under 18 years: of the tobacco retailers observed (305), 145 (35%) displayed signage that sales are prohibited to youth under 18 years. A lower compliance rate (27%) was found for those retailers that sold tobacco within eyesight of the school (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of Retailers with Age Restriction Signage and Product Display, Advertising & Promotion Visible from Outside the Store



Tobacco products were often displayed in or near the cashier zone (Figure 4). The majority (59%) of product displays at point-of-sale were accentuated with the use of lights (Figure 5). Additionally, health warning labels that appear on these products were not visible on just under one quarter of displayed products observed.

Figure 4. Number of Retailers with Tobacco Product Displays

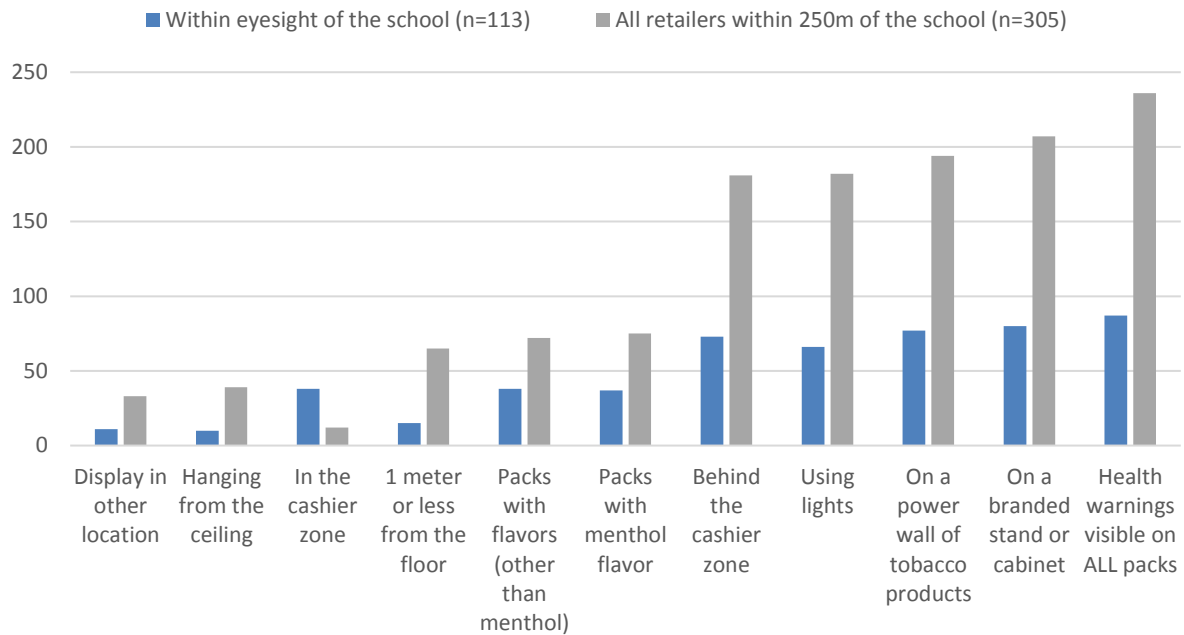


Figure 5. Tobacco Products Accentuated with the Use of Lights



Of particular interest and concern was the presence of tobacco products near sweets, snacks, or soda: over half (62%) of all tobacco retailers were observed displaying their tobacco products alongside sweets, snacks, or soda (Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6. Tobacco Products Displayed with Sweets, Snacks, or Soda

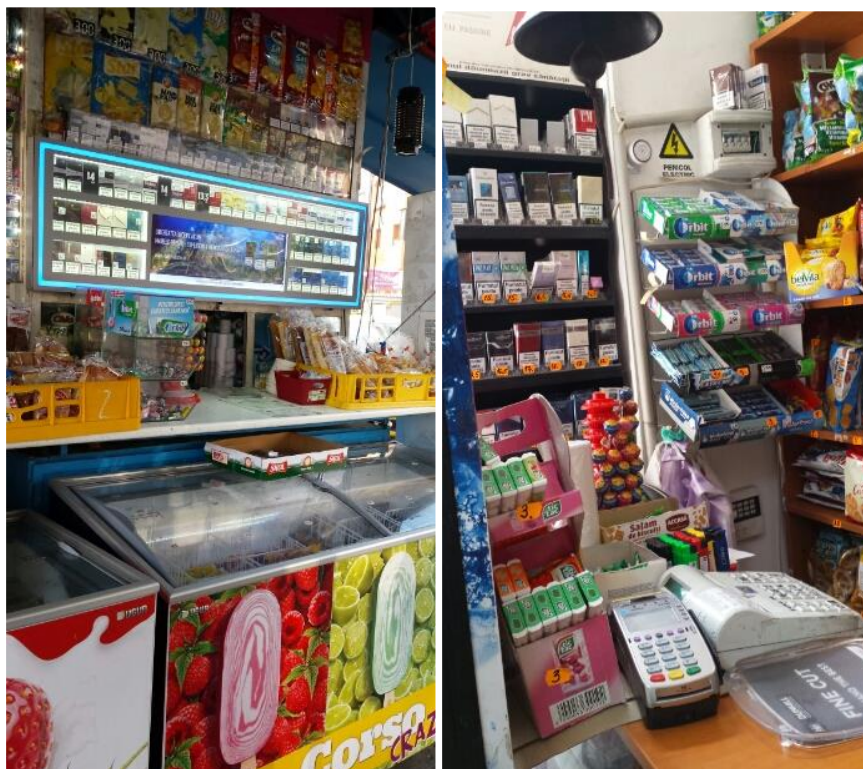
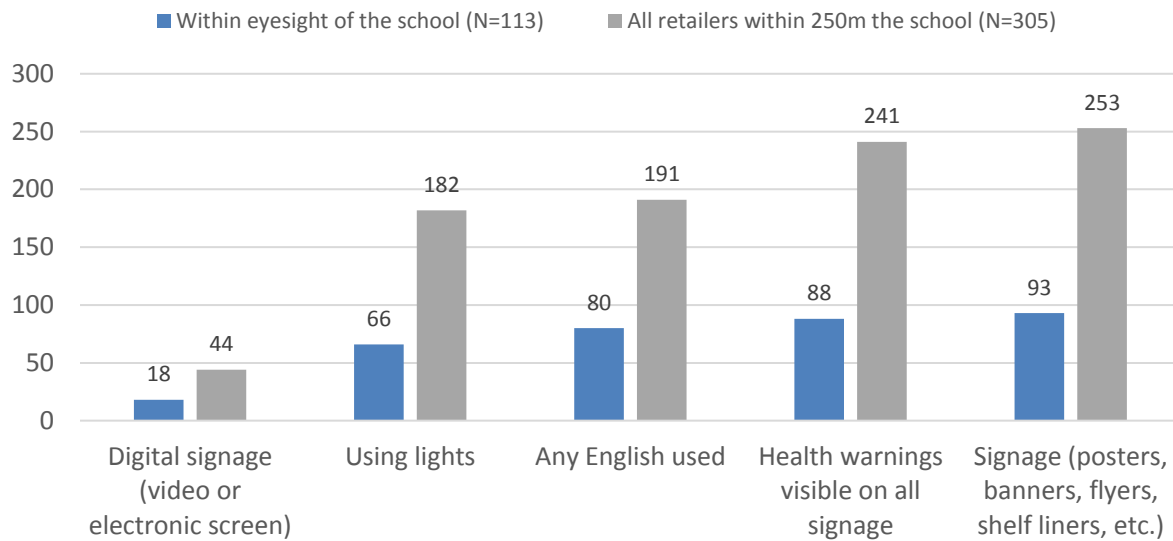


Figure 7. Display of Tobacco Products near Sweets, Snacks, or Soda by Location

	Retailer within eyesight of school (n=113)	Retailer not within eyesight of school (n=305)	All retailers (n=419)
In the cashier zone	69	163	232
Behind the cashier zone	29	103	132
Hanging from the ceiling	1	0	1
Eye level of children	11	36	47
On a power wall of tobacco products	10	13	23
On a branded stand or cabinet	7	9	16
Any of the above	75	183	258

As stated above, the current law in Romania allows for direct advertising at the point-of-sale and other locations within the retail environment. So it was expected that a high number of advertising signage would be observed. Signage, in one form or another was observed at 85% (n=357) of observed stores (Figure 8). Of note was the use of lights to accentuate signage (observed at 59% of retail outlets), and the use of English words as part of the advertisement (observed at 65% of retail outlets). Of concern was the lack of health warnings visible on signage, absent on 21% of all signage observed.

Figure 8. Advertising Signage at Point-of-Sale



Of further concern was the presence of other products with tobacco branding at tobacco retailers (12%).

Promotional activities were observed at just over a quarter of all tobacco retail outlets observed, with 'contests or competitions' making up 92% of all observed promotional activities (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Promotional Activities at Point-of-Sale



Kent and L&M were the most frequently displayed brands of tobacco products at the point-of-sale at observed retail outlets, followed by Marlboro and Pall Mall (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Tobacco Brands Displayed at the Point-of-Sale

Brands Displayed at the POS	# of Retailers
Kent	395
L&M	393
Pall Mall	372
Marlboro	351
Winchester	182

Discussion

This study identified numerous examples of retail outlets that display and/or advertise tobacco in close proximity to schools and thus are easily accessible by students. When displaying these products, many did not properly display the graphic warning labels on product packaging, contravening Romania’s current law, thus allowing the tobacco industry to utilize their product packaging as a form of advertising when displayed to the public. Additionally, the majority of these displays were accentuated by the use of lights, attracting the attention of potential customers, particular youth.

Around half of all tobacco retailers observed near schools displayed tobacco products at the point-of-sale alongside products that appeal to children, such as candy and soda. Also, of concern was that only 35% of observed stores displayed signage that sales are prohibited to youth under 18 years, contravening current laws.

As expected, advertisement signage was observed at the vast majority of observed stores. Again, as with the product displays, lights were used to accentuate advertisements. Disturbingly, mandatory health warnings were only visible on under a fifth of all signage observed. The inclusion of health warnings on all advertisement signage is part of Romanian law.

Limitations

This study used a convenience sample of schools in two large cities. Therefore, the results may not be representative of all types of tobacco retailers or generalizable to all areas of Romania.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that harmful products are displayed and advertised in areas that are visible and accessible to minors. Additionally, non-compliance with regards to the display of health warnings on advertisement signage, as well as the display of signage indicating that sales of tobacco products are prohibited to youth under 18 years directly counteracts the purpose of current Romanian tobacco control laws put in place, in part to protect youth from the harms of tobacco use. A complete ban of tobacco product display, advertising, and promotion in retail locations would comply with FCTC recommendations and more effectively protect the public, and more particularly youth from tobacco products.

Key Terms and Definitions

Advertising signage: branded print or digital/electronic media such as posters, banners, flyers, or shelf liners that are intended to promote awareness and favorable opinions of a tobacco brand or product

Brand stretching: the presence of non-tobacco items that carry a tobacco brand name

Cashier zone: directly on top of, in front of, or to the side of the counter or cash register where consumers make a purchase

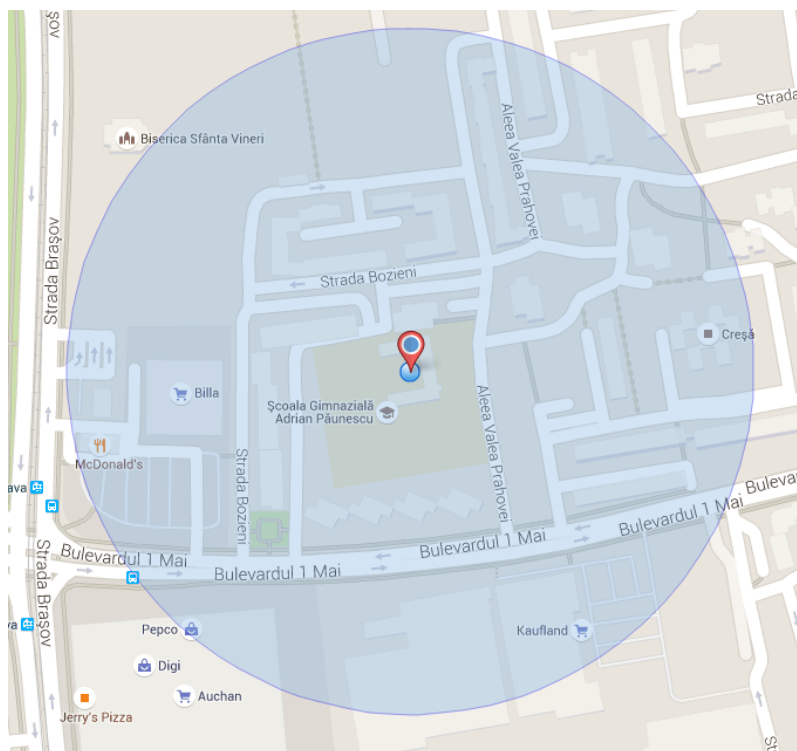
Eye level of children: placement of products 1 meter or less from the ground

Power wall: an excessive display of tobacco products showing multiple packs on multiple shelves

Product display: physical packs of tobacco products that are visible to potential consumers

Appendix A. School Sampling Area Map

219, Școala Gimnazială "Adrian Păunescu", Aleea Valea Prahovei Nr. 1, Bucharest, Romania



Please record the address of each store you observe. If needed, continue lettering and addresses on next page.

A.	F.
B.	G.
C.	H.
D.	I.
E.	J.

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