

8-City Study: Advertisements, Promotions and Display of Tobacco Products at Points-of-Sale in Pakistan

Background

In 2020, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination issued new regulations that banned tobacco advertising, promotion, sponsorship (TAPS), and tobacco product display at all points-of-sale (POS).¹ The new law also prohibited direct marketing through mail and telephone, retailer incentive programs and brand stretching. This study examined the presence of tobacco advertisements, promotions and product display, and tobacco warning signage at points-of-sale, in November and December 2021, across 8 cities in Pakistan: Gilgit, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Muzaffarabad, Peshawar, and Quetta.

Tobacco Advertisements and Promotions

- ➔ A sample of 1094 tobacco vendors was observed across 8 cities
- ➔ Nearly 21% (n=257) of vendors had a tobacco advertisement on the outside, while 8% (n=90) had them on the inside
 - ➔ Of the vendors that displayed tobacco advertisements, the majority were direct advertisements, meaning board/posters/banners/signs that include brand name (outside of POS: 99%, n=230; inside of POS: 97%, n=87)
 - ➔ Of the direct tobacco advertisements, the most common type observed were posters/stickers (outside of POS: 85%, n=195; inside of POS: 81%, n=71)
- ➔ The most common type of tobacco promotion was price discounts (4%; n=40) such as sales, coupons, limited time offer, and multi pack discounts
- ➔ Only 9% (n=97) of the vendors had a warning sign displayed at the POS; among these, 10% did not comply with the required specifications



Image 1. A vendor displaying a poster advertising cigarettes



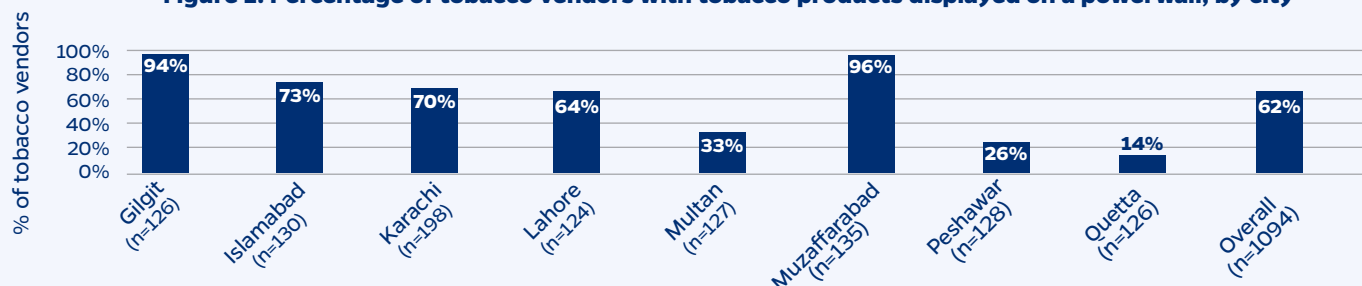
Image 2. A vendor displaying 'special' price discount

Tobacco Product Display

Overall, 87% (n=948) of vendors displayed tobacco products. Of the 948 vendors that had tobacco products on display:

- ➔ 92% (n=874) had the products displayed such that they were accessible to minors
- ➔ 62% (n=588) had them displayed on a powerwall
- ➔ 56% (n=528) had them displayed next to candies/sweets

Figure 1: Percentage of tobacco vendors with tobacco products displayed on a powerwall, by city



Other Tobacco Products

- ➔ Among the other tobacco products including e-cigarettes, ‘Velo’ (nicotine pouches) was the most observed
- ➔ 22% (n=244) of vendors had ‘Velo’ on display, and 13% (n=137) of vendors had ‘Velo’ advertisements posted at the POS



Image 3. A vendor displaying tobacco products on a powerwall



Image 4. Examples of ‘Velo’ product display and advertisements at POS

Conclusions

Findings from the study suggest:

- ➔ Compliance with the new TAPS provisions banning tobacco advertising and promotion at the POS is low
- ➔ Tobacco products are commonly displayed at the POS and are readily accessible to minors
- ➔ Oral nicotine pouches such as ‘Velo’ are being frequently displayed and advertised at the POS

Efforts are required to strengthen enforcement and improve compliance with tobacco product display and point-of-sale advertising and promotion policies in the country. This includes training enforcement officers and educating retail venue owners on the national tobacco control law and any applicable penalties/fines, and regularly monitoring tobacco vendors to ensure compliance.

Study Methods

Based on their socio-economic status, nine neighborhoods were identified within each city, except for Karachi where 15 neighborhoods were identified. Next, we shortlisted two hubs, a major intersection and a school, within each selected neighborhood. After arriving at the pre-determined hub, the data collectors followed a systematic walking protocol to identify a tobacco vendor. Data collectors used smartphones/tablets equipped with the Survey CTO application to record observational findings and geographic locations of tobacco vendors. Data collectors ascertained the presence of both direct advertising (e.g., tobacco product posters/banners) and indirect advertising (e.g., the use of tobacco brand colour schemes or logos); they also assessed whether tobacco products were on display at the POS and if these products were within reach of minors. The presence of required health warning signage was also determined. Data were collected in September-October 2021, and a total of 1094 tobacco vendors were included in the final sample.

¹ Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Notification, S.R.O. 72(I)/2020. Retrieved from: https://www.tobaccocontrollaws.org/files/live/Pakistan/Pakistan%20-%20SRO%2072%28I%29_2020%20-%20national.pdf