

Exposure to and Appeal of Tobacco Ads and Displays in China: A Qualitative Exploration of Perceptions Among Chinese Youth

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Background

Adolescents are uniquely vulnerable to nicotine addiction, and rates of youth tobacco use in China remain high. Despite current restrictions, Chinese youth remain exposed to tobacco marketing, which may contribute to tobacco initiation.

Methods

- We conducted 20 online focus group discussions with 15- and 16-year-olds in 10 Chinese cities between Dec 2021 and Jan 2022 (n=119).
- Recordings were transcribed in Chinese and translated to English and then thematically coded.

Results

- All groups discussed exposure to tobacco ads/displays in public places and most groups discussed that exposure to online tobacco ads was common, particularly e-cigarette commercial ads and posts made by classmates/friends selling products.
- Most groups identified how eye-catching colors, youthful imagery, product packaging, and price promotions featured in e-cigarette ads/displays attracted attention.
- Color and flavors made cigarettes in ads/displays more appealing.

Chinese youth are **regularly exposed** to tobacco marketing with **youth-appealing features** in public places and online.

"If it says free trial, I will feel more interested. When a new store opens, there is a row of colorful cartridges or cases of e-cigarettes, with the message in big characters saying, 'free trial.'"

-Guilin, girls focus group

"The last time I saw [the ad] was about half a month ago, when I browsed Tik Tok. It was...particularly high-end, very magical, with special effects, very good-looking. I didn't know it was an e-cigarette without looking closely, and finally I found out what it was. They made that video like that 3D blockbuster."

-Kaifeng, girls focus group

"For example, [the youthful] images in the pictures, the bright red and bright purple color tones, and the very young and chic dressing. And like what they have just said, skateboarding. When they are skateboarding, they get a cigarette in their hands, and this look trend[y] or a styl[ish]."

-Beijing, boys focus group



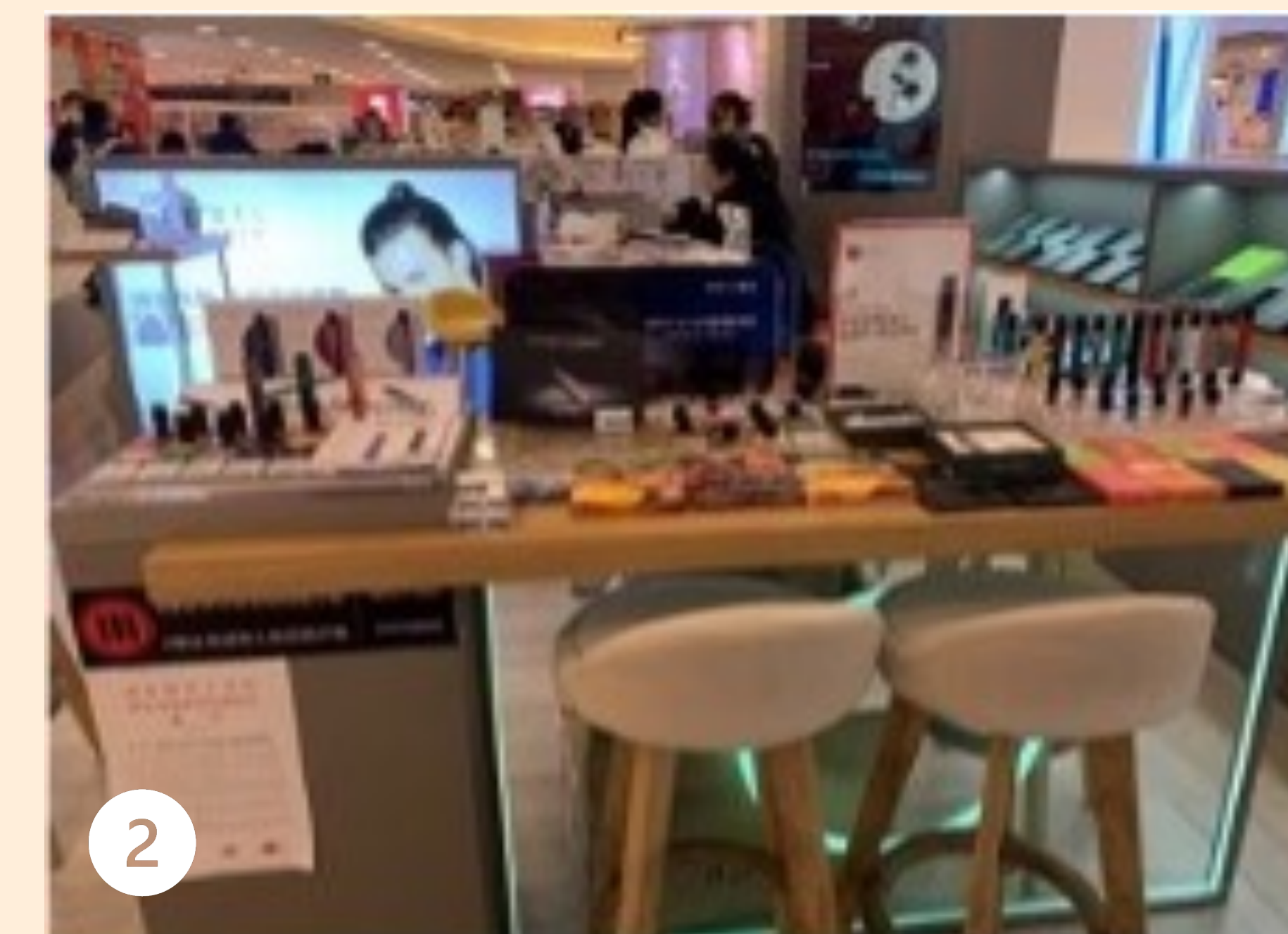
Access additional resources based on findings from this study

globaltobaccocontrol.org

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Examples

1. Cigarette display in Beijing convenience store
2. E-cigarette store inside Beijing mall



Conclusion

The documented relationship between youth exposure to tobacco marketing and increased susceptibility to future use suggests enhanced enforcement of restrictions on tobacco marketing in public places and online are needed to reduce youth exposure in China.

Authors

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