

Prevalence and Compliance of Designated Smoking Areas in Hospitality Venues and Transportation: An Observational Study in Dhaka, Bangladesh



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Background

The Smoking and Using of Tobacco Products (Control) Act of 2003 (SUTPA) was amended in 2013 to expanded the list of smoke-free jurisdictions. The relevant rules came in to effect in 2015 and no designated smoking areas (DSA) were allowed in ten types of public places and public transportation. However, the Act allowed DSAs in some public buildings including hospitality venues, and public transportation with the fulfillment of required conditions.¹ This law restricts location of DSAs within venues, establishes internal safety standards and signage requirements, and bans smoking and smoking aids (such as ashtrays) in non-smoking areas. This study assessed prevalence and compliance of DSAs in hospitality venues and trains in Dhaka city, Bangladesh between December 2021-January 2022.

Design Standards

As per the law, DSAs should be physically separated from non-smoking areas and shall not be passed to reach any services of the venue.

- ➔ Single-room restaurants, surrounded by walls on all four sides, shall not have a DSA.
- ➔ In multicompartment trains, DSAs should be located only in the last compartment of the vehicle.

Internal Standards

All DSAs must carry a fire extinguisher, disposal container for tobacco products, and signage adhering to design specifications.

Non-Smoking Area Standards

No smoking aids (i.e. ashtrays) shall be provided in non-smoking areas. Non-smoking areas should display 'No Smoking' and warning signage adhering to design specifications.

Key Findings

Prevalence

The **prevalence** of DSAs in hospitality venues and trains was low. The study surveyed 355 restaurants, 118 hotels, and 53 trains; 8% (n=41) of venues had a DSA.

Figure 1: Overall prevalence of DSAs (n=526)

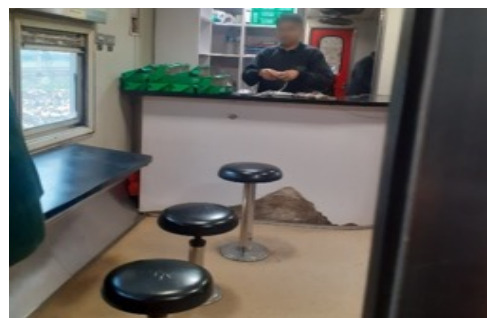
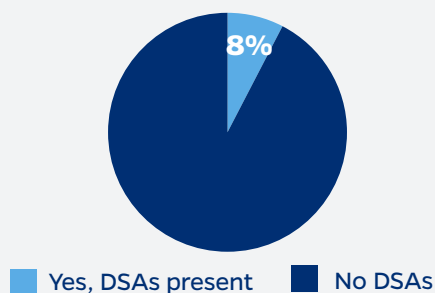
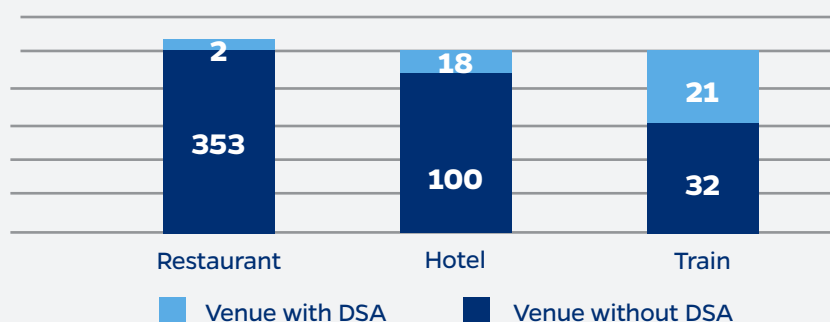


Image 1: Noncompliant DSA in train's dining car where staff prepares food

Figure 2: Count of DSAs by Venue Type



Compliance

Of the 41 DSAs that were assessed for **compliance** with the current tobacco law, none were compliant across all measures. Only 15% (n=6) of all venues with DSAs met the design standards and none of them met the measured internal standards. Among all 526 venues surveyed, none of the 41 DSAs complied with the non-smoking area requirements.

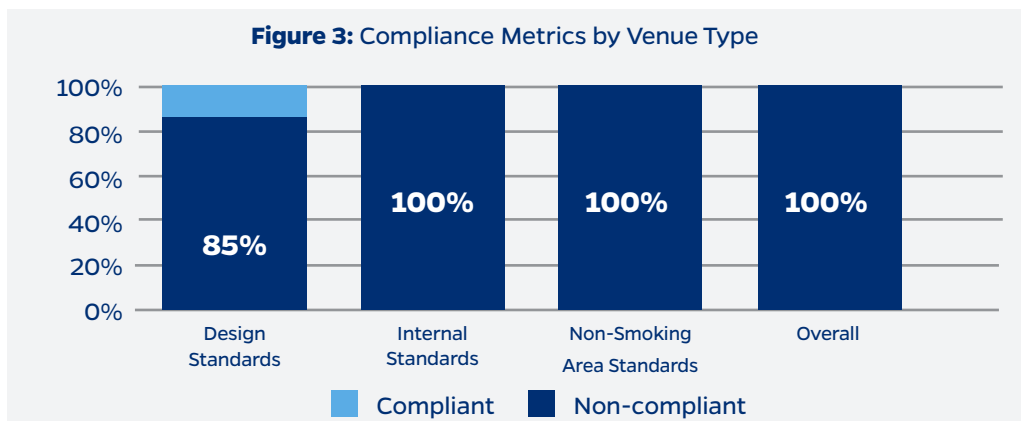


Image 2: Compliant signage displayed inside a restaurant

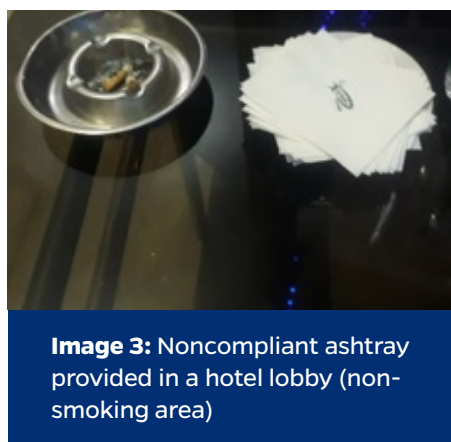


Image 3: Noncompliant ashtray provided in a hotel lobby (non-smoking area)

Conclusions

Findings from the study suggest:

- ➔ DSAs are not very common in hospitality venues and trains in Dhaka
- ➔ Among the venues that had a DSA, the overall compliance with SUTPA and SRO No. 58 specifications that were measured was low
- ➔ Restricting smoking to DSAs does not provide adequate protection from dangerous tobacco smoke

Study Methods

Using the official list of 5,872 restaurants by Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), three restaurants were randomly identified in each ward for a total of 387 restaurants evenly distributed across 129 wards. 32 restaurants were omitted from the final sample due to permanent closures. A stratified list of 172 hotels registered with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism was created and stratified based on star-ratings. After proportionally sampling hotels within each category, 120 hotels were included in the initial sample. A list of 56 trains passing through Dhaka station was obtained from the Bangladesh Railway Agency; all were included in the initial sample. Three trains were eliminated from the final sample due to permanent closure. Seven percent of all venues were eliminated from the initial sample due to permanent business closures. The team successfully contacted and completed the survey for 526 venues. The observers completed a standard checklist on a smartphone to record observational findings.

¹ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, S.R.O No.58-Law/2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.tobaccocontrollaws.org/files/live/Bangladesh/Bangladesh%20-%20TC%20Rules%202015.pdf>