

POST-CONSUMPTION MARKETING ON LITTERED CIGARETTE BUTTS IN OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS IN CHINA

SIGNIFICANCE

In China, where smoking prevalence is estimated at 300 million+ people, cigarette butts are commonly littered. The littered cigarette butts are often branded with recognizable logos, text, and color, representing a form of post-consumption tobacco advertising. Conducted in fall 2025, this study quantified cigarette butt litter in high-traffic outdoor environments of China to determine what proportion had visible branding elements.

METHODS

- Study observed 80 public spaces in each of six cities (N=480) including Shenyang, Kaifeng, Jinan, Kunming, Chongqing, and Baiyin:
 - 60 school gates/designated waiting areas (40 elementary, 20 middle/high) during end-of-day dismissal
 - 20 transit hub entrances and exits (high-speed railway/train/subway stations and bus stops) during 8 a.m.–5 p.m. on weekdays
- Data collectors trained to:
 - identify/record presence of littered cigarette butts within ~10-meter radius of each space
 - recognize logos/branding content
 - refrain from touching/moving butts
- Descriptive statistics reported



POLICIES AIMED AT REDUCING CIGARETTE SMOKING · LITTER · BRANDING CAN ALSO LIMIT POTENTIAL EXPOSURE TO POST-CONSUMER TOBACCO ADVERTISING

Brands observed among litter included (clockwise from top right) Hademan, Taishan, Yunyan, and Yuxi. When post-consumption tobacco advertising exposure occurs in public, it can be seen by people who don't personally use the products and may contribute to wider social acceptance of tobacco use.



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RESULTS

- 3,256 cigarette butts identified
 - 40% (1,289) contained visible branding elements
- Most frequent tobacco brands observed:
 - Yunyan (n=332)
 - Taishan (n=176)
 - Yuxi (n=83)
- At least one littered cigarette butt containing visible branding elements was recorded at most (71%, n=340) locations, including:
 - 73% of transit hubs (n=87)
 - 70% of schools (n=253)

CONCLUSIONS

Branding elements were visible on littered cigarette butts in high-traffic public spaces, including transportation hubs and schools, in six divergent cities of China. The presence of post-consumption tobacco advertising in these spaces means that people who occupy them—including students—may encounter cigarette brand marketing in everyday environments.

These findings underscore the potential relevance of policy approaches that seek to reduce cigarette use and prevent tobacco litter in outdoor high-traffic public areas, as well as measures that address the visibility of branding on cigarette components, including filters.

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