

Technical Report on Tobacco Marketing at the Point-of-Sale in Buenos Aires, Argentina

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 tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (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

The country of Argentina signed the FCTC on September 25, 2003,¹⁰ but ratification has been obstructed by lobbying and interference on the part of the tobacco industry.¹¹ Among Argentina's population of over 41 million people,¹² an estimated 22% of adults and 19% of youth currently smoke tobacco products.¹³ In June of 2011, Argentina issued law number 26.687 on Advertising, Promotion and Consumption of Tobacco Products that placed limits on where tobacco products could be advertised and banned tobacco brand sponsorship of any event or activity; however, the law continued to allow advertising, promotion, and product display at the point-of-sale.¹⁴ Although the decree that followed, Decree 602, regulated some types of promotions and point-of-sale advertising by stipulating the size, style, and number of signs allowed per manufacturer in 2013,¹⁵ neither the law nor the decree regulate tobacco product displays at retail establishments.

Euromonitor reports that kiosks are the primary retailer of cigarettes in Argentina, and sell these products alongside sweets.¹⁶ Tobacco brand sponsorship of events and activities, though banned, is still used as an attempt by the tobacco industry to appear socially acceptable and normative in the eyes of both consumers and prospective consumers.¹⁷ Euromonitor reports that the industry is also continuing to use branded gifts for advertising and promotional purposes,¹⁶ even though they are prohibited under Article 22 of Law 26.687 on Advertising, Promotion and Consumption of Tobacco Products.¹⁴

Methods

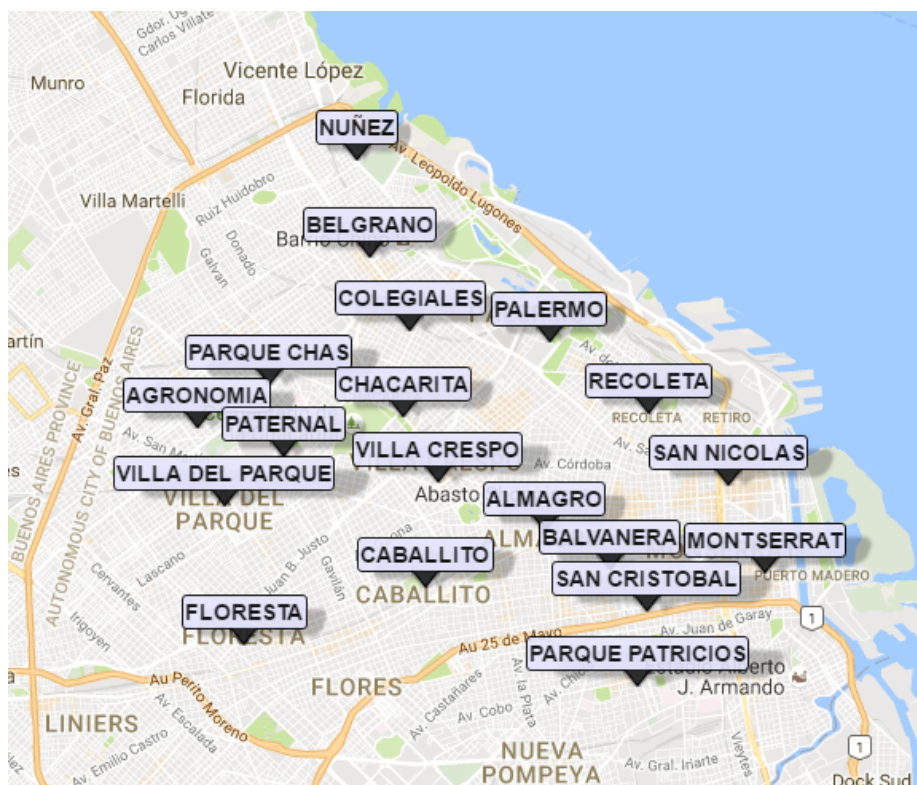
The following report describes a study about tobacco marketing at the point-of-sale in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The work was led by the Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC) at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH). IGTC partnered with the Fundación InterAmericana del Corazón Argentina (FIC), a tobacco control advocacy organization. FIC provided guidance and context about the sampling framework, and IGTC designed the survey instrument and data collection protocol. Investigators from IGTC trained 6 people, a group including students and professionals from various fields. These data collectors conducted the

fieldwork and submitted daily reports for review in real-time. The IGTC study team was in Buenos Aires 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 the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital with a population of 2.8 million people.¹⁹ All 609 primary and secondary schools within the city, as reported by a complete list of educational establishments in the city of Buenos Aires found online,²⁰ were plotted on a map with a 250 meter radius surrounding each. Specific neighborhoods were selected based on (1) retail density, (2) school density; (3) safety, and (4) ease of accessibility for data collectors traversing the city via public transportation. One hundred and three schools from 19 barrios (Figure 1) were selected and given unique identification codes. An online mapping and distance software 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 kiosks within each sampling area that sold tobacco products.

Figure 1. Selected Neighborhoods (n=19)



Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was designed to address key components of Argentina's tobacco control law that allowed or regulated 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 brand of tobacco products displayed or advertised, and other notes or comments about the retailer.

Figure 2. Survey Instrument Content

| Product Placement and Characteristics | Advertising Signage and Display Characteristics | Type of Promotion |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Cashier zone | Presence of English words | Loyalty scheme |
| Behind the cashier zone | Use of digital signage | Presence of brand representative |
| On a branded stand or cabinet | Reverse brand stretching on signage | Sponsorship of any event or activity |
| Eye level of children | Use of lights | Brand stretching |
| On a power wall | Use of movement | Imitation tobacco products |
| Near sweets, snacks, or soda | Three dimensional signage | Contests or competitions |
| Hanging from the ceiling | Mention of flavor | Free gifts |
| Near toys | Mention of menthol | Free tobacco products |
| Mention of menthol on packs | | Discounts |
| Mention of flavors on packs | | |
| Signage and Visibility of Health Warnings | | |
| Signage that sales are prohibited to youth under 18 | | |
| Visible warning labels on all tobacco packs | | |
| Visible health warning present on all advertisements and promotions | | |

Data Collection Protocol

Observations and photos were collected from retailers during normal business hours from June 29 – July, 1 2016. Each data collector received a packet of sampling area maps including the unique school identification code and space to record the addresses of retailers in the area (Appendix A). Street names and radii boundaries were clearly visible on all sampling area maps. Data collectors identified kiosks within the sampling area by using the maps to follow a spiral-walking pattern, observing all streets within the 250-meter radius. Data collectors were instructed to use nearest intersections and nearby landmarks to better identify the limit of the sampling radius. Retailers that sold tobacco products prompted a request for detailed observations on tobacco product marketing, while only the address, school identification code, visibility from the school, date of observation, and geolocation were recorded for 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 automatically captured 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 IGTC 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 paid data collectors attended a day and a half of training on how to implement the study protocol on June 28-29, 2016 – immediately before the data collection period. The IGTC study team explained in detail the purpose of the study, the current tobacco control law, the survey content, key terms and definitions, the Mapgi 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 was trained to recognize required health warnings, signage announcing sales restrictions, product displays, advertising, promotions, and brand stretching. 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 kiosks.

Results

Data collectors observed 633 kiosks – 559 of which sold tobacco products. Ninety-six of these tobacco retailers were located within eyesight of a school. Retailers that sold tobacco products were identified within all of the 86 school sampling areas.

Less than 40% of retailers with advertising signage included health warnings, and an even smaller percentage (34%) of retailers within eyesight of a school had these warnings on all advertisements. Thirty-one percent of retailers displayed all cigarette packs with the health warning visible. There were very few tobacco retailers with the age restriction signage posted, at less than 15% of all observed retailers having signs posted. (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Visible Health Warning Labels and Age Restriction Signage

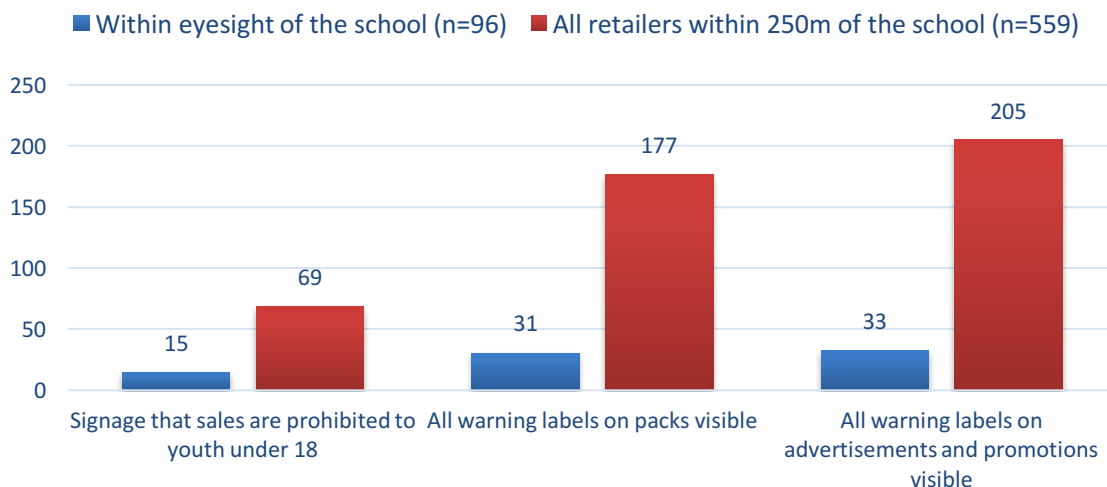


Figure 4. Signage Advertising a Marlboro Contest with a Health Warning Label



Tobacco products were often displayed at the POS, and were most often located in or near the cashier zone, and were frequently illuminated (Figure 5). Many of the observed retailers (22%) displayed packs with mention of flavor and/or menthol, which might be especially appealing to children (Figure 6). Seventy-two percent of tobacco retailers within eyesight of a school displayed tobacco products, meaning that children can see tobacco marketing through product display as soon as they leave school. In a few instances, tobacco products were displayed near toys (Figure 7).

Figure 5. Illuminated Tobacco Product Display and Advertisement at the Point-of-Sale



Figure 6. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Tobacco Product Displays at the Point-of-Sale

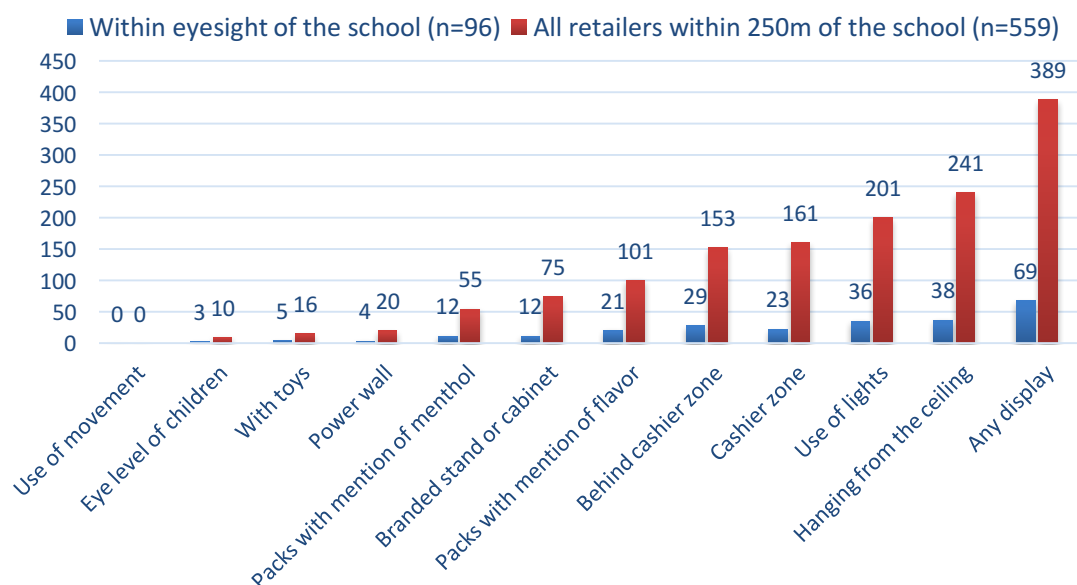


Figure 7. Tobacco Products Displayed Near Toys



At many retailers, sweets, snacks, or soda were displayed in the same location as tobacco products (Figure 8). A total of 265 retailers displayed tobacco products near sweets, snacks, or soda, including almost 50% of tobacco retailers within eyesight of a school, often in the cashier zone

where they are accessible to children. Twenty-seven percent of observed tobacco retailers had tobacco products displayed near sweets in the cashier zone where they are visible and accessible to children. Two percent of retailers displayed tobacco products near sweets at the eye level of children (Figure 9).

Figure 8. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Tobacco Products Displayed Near Sweets, Snacks or Soda

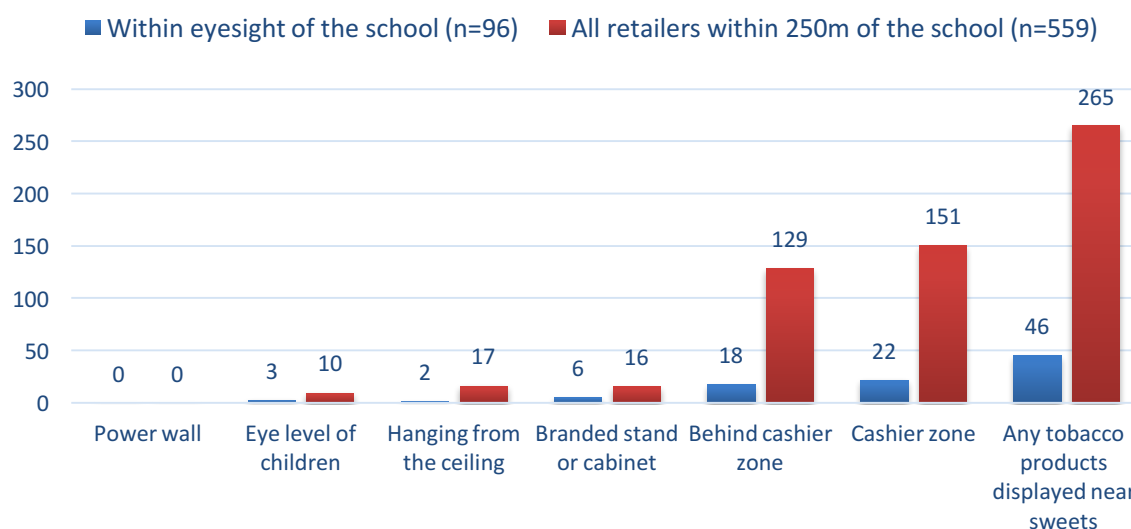


Figure 9. Cigarette Packs Displayed near Sweets at the Eye Level of Children

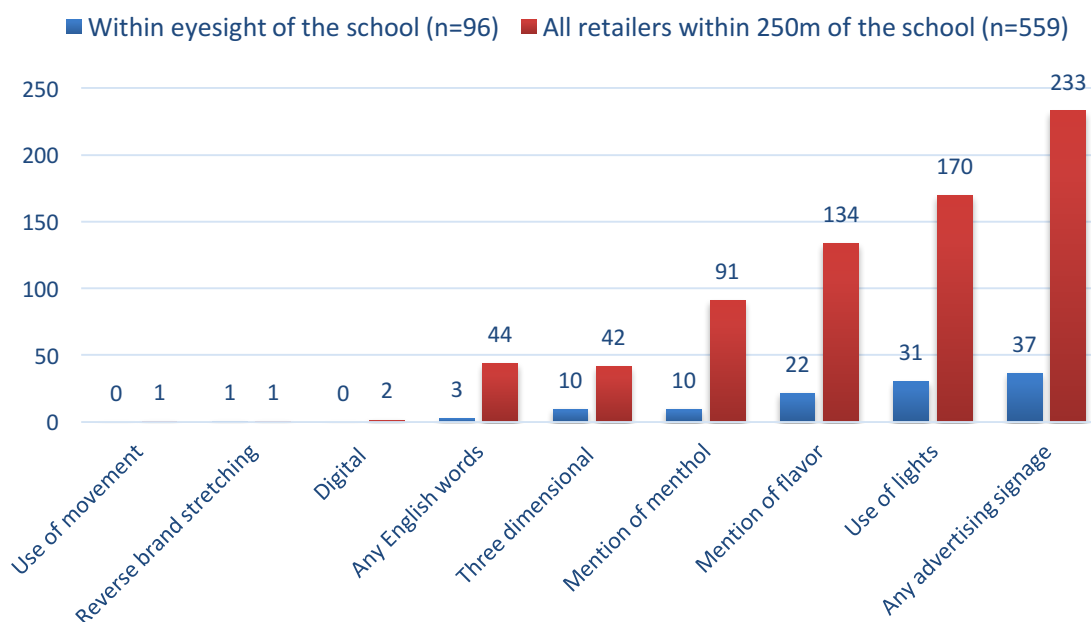


Two hundred thirty-three retailers (42%) had advertising signage for tobacco products, over a third of which were within eyesight of a school. Thirty percent of observed retailers used lights to illuminate their advertisements, making them very visible even from a distance. One hundred and thirty-four retailers (24%) had advertisements for flavored tobacco products and 23% of retailers within eyesight of a school advertised flavored tobacco products (Figures 10 and 11). Menthol was mentioned on signage at 16% of observed retailers. Twenty-five percent of observed retailers had advertisements with mention of menthol and/or flavor. Some retailers (7%) used three-dimensional signage and a similar percentage (8%) used English words on their signage.

Figure 10. Advertisements for Flavored Cigarettes at the Point-of-Sale

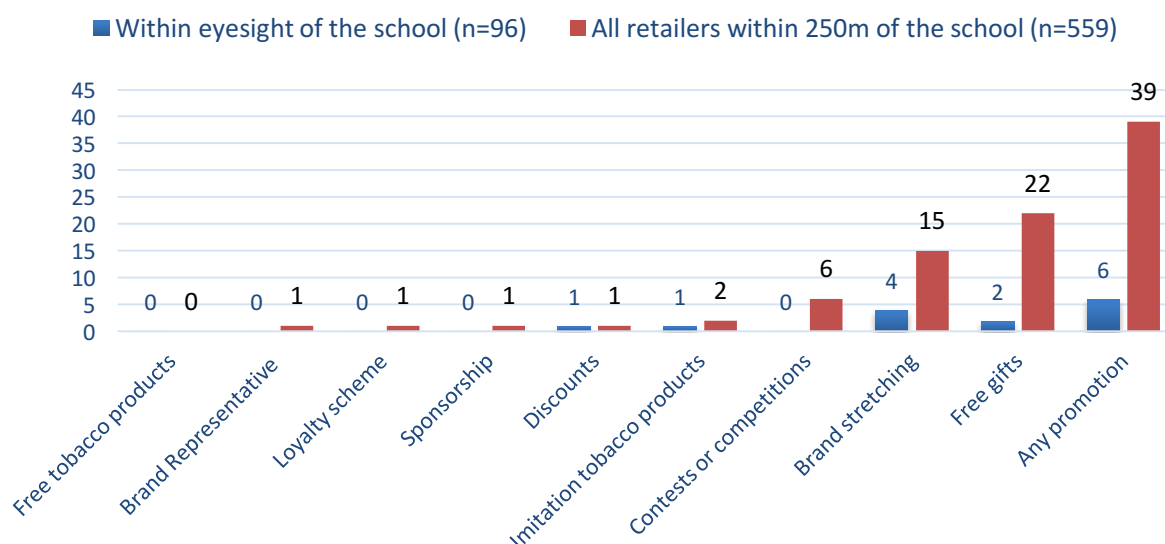


Figure 11. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Advertising Signage



Promotional activity was observed somewhat less frequently than display of tobacco products and advertising signage. Use of free gifts and brand stretching were the two most frequently employed tactics to promote tobacco products. Free gifts were used to promote tobacco products at 22 retailers, and brand stretching was used at 15 retailers. Seven percent of observed retailers used at least one type of promotion (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Promotion of Tobacco Products



Philip Morris was the most frequently displayed brand of tobacco products in kiosks, followed by Lucky Strike, Pall Mall, Viceroy, and Marlboro (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Tobacco Brands Displayed at the Point-of-Sale

| Brands Displayed at the POS | # of Retailers |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Phillip Morris | 274 |
| Lucky Strike | 273 |
| Pall Mall | 200 |
| Viceroy | 200 |
| Marlboro | 167 |
| Camel | 111 |
| Virginia Slim | 52 |
| Chesterfield | 50 |

Four hundred twenty-three of 559 retailers (75%) had some kind of marketing that was visible from outside the POS. This was likely due to the frequent use of illuminated displays and advertising, which increased the visibility of these marketing tactics (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Illuminated Tobacco Product Displays Visible from the Sidewalk outside the Point-of-Sale



Discussion

This study identified numerous examples of kiosks that sell, display, and advertise tobacco in close proximity to schools and thus are easily accessible by students. Many stores did not properly display the graphic warning labels on product packaging, exposing children to packaging without the appropriate health warning. Many advertisements also lacked health warning labels, allowing the tobacco industry to promote their product without the juxtaposition of major health consequences. Sweets, snacks, and soda were often in close proximity to tobacco products, increasing the chances that they will attract the attention of children. Likewise, use of illuminated displays and advertising signage makes tobacco marketing very visible, and when coupled with mention of flavor or menthol, very appealing to children.

Limitations

This study uses a strategic selection of neighborhoods, and a convenience sample of schools and the retail locations surrounding them. Therefore, the results may not be representative of all types of tobacco retailers or generalizable to all areas of Argentina.

Conclusions

Partial bans of tobacco product marketing allow the industry to exploit deficiencies or loopholes in the law by redirecting their resources to mediums that are not regulated – thereby violating the Argentine tobacco control law’s aim to “protect against the effects of tobacco addiction,” by regulating tobacco advertising and promotion “for purposes of prevention and assistance to the public.”¹⁵ Despite the law’s admittance that “advertising increases tobacco consumption, and adolescents and young adults can be especially vulnerable to advertising about tobacco,”¹⁵ the law does not effectively regulate tobacco marketing at the point-of-sale. Product display and advertising signage is still used frequently and is very noticeable to children walking by. Prior research has demonstrated that exposure to advertising increases the likelihood that children will start smoking,⁶ and the law, as it is currently implemented and enforced, is not effectively shielding children from this potential harm. This study demonstrates that harmful tobacco products and advertisements are in areas that are visible and accessible to minors. A complete and enforced ban of tobacco product display, advertising, and promotion in retail locations would comply with FCTC recommendations and more effectively achieve the goal of protecting the public from the harms of 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

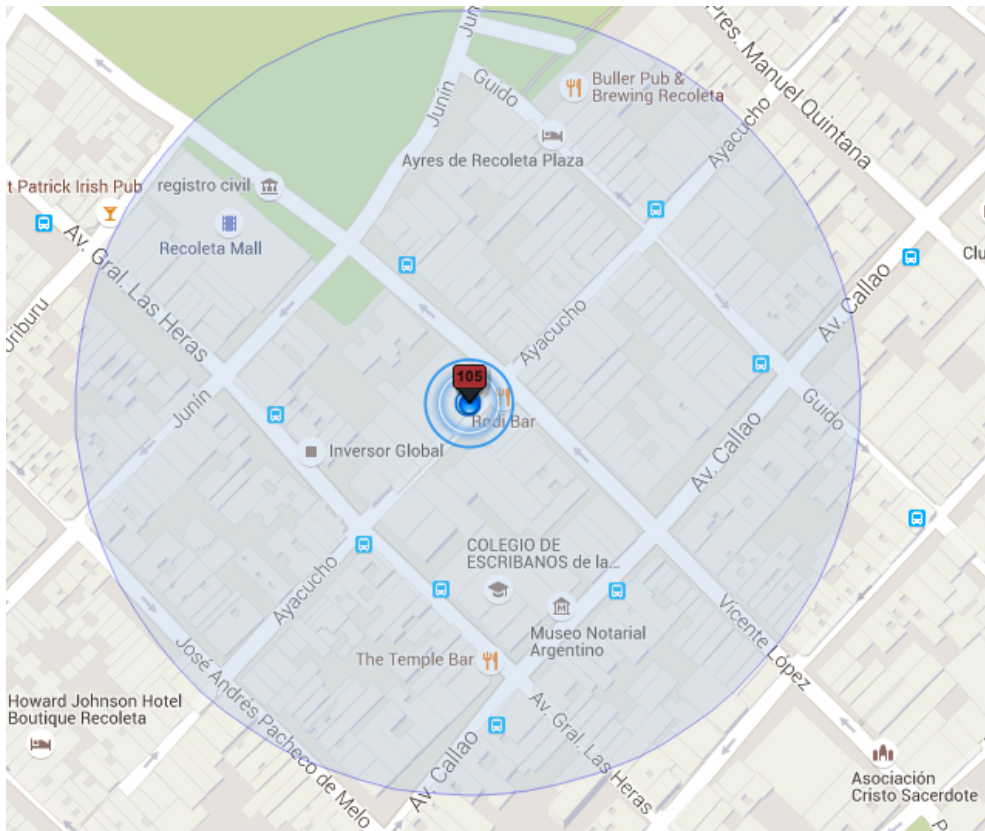
Product display: physical packs of tobacco products that are visible to potential consumers

Reverse brand stretching: non-tobacco branding on tobacco products, advertisements, or promotions

Sponsorship: contributing to any event or activity (sporting events, concerts, etc.) to promoting a tobacco product

Appendix A

105, Esc. Primaria Común Nº 01 Juan José Castelli, Ayacucho 1680



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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