

Point-of-Sale Tobacco Advertising, Promotions, and Product Display in Siliguri, India

Background

In India, provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA, 2003) prohibits direct and indirect advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products at the point-of-sale (POS). In addition, COTPA provisions prohibit sale of tobacco products within 100-yard radius of any educational institution.¹ The local government in Siliguri is implementing policies to strengthen enforcement of COTPA through tobacco vendor licensing (Siliguri Municipal Corporation memo No. 29/ SMC/TL/20-21, 2021).

From November-December 2020, this study examined the compliance of tobacco vendors with the tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) law, and the presence of tobacco product display and warning signage at the POS in all 47 wards in Siliguri. The study further assessed if the displayed tobacco products were within the reach of minors.

Key Findings

- ➔ A sample of **608 tobacco vendors** were observed across the 47 wards in Siliguri
- ➔ **Over one-third (36%, n=217) of tobacco vendors observed had some form of tobacco advertising**
- ➔ 33% (n=198) of vendors had direct tobacco advertisement such as posters, leaflets and boards with tobacco brand names
- ➔ **8% (n=48) of vendors had indirect advertisement** in the form of tobacco brand layouts, patterns, colour schemes, and logos
- ➔ **493 vendors had tobacco products on display**, and among this sample, **68% (n=334) placed the tobacco products within reach of minors**
- ➔ **NONE of the tobacco vendors had the required COTPA section 6a signage displayed which prohibits the sale of tobacco products to and by minors**

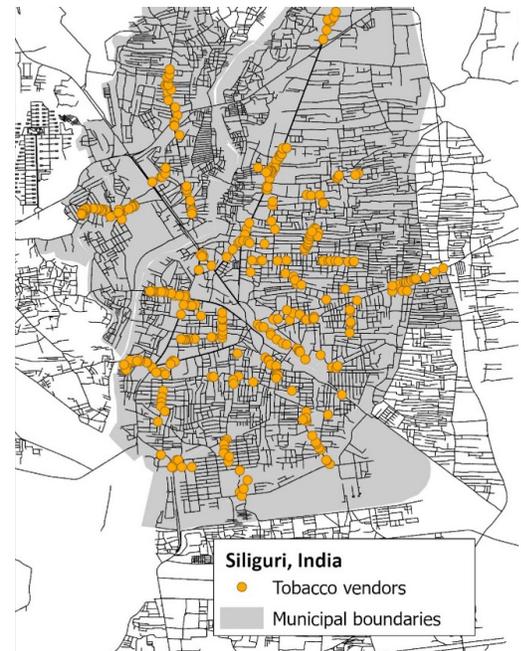


Figure 1: Types of tobacco vendors observed in Siliguri

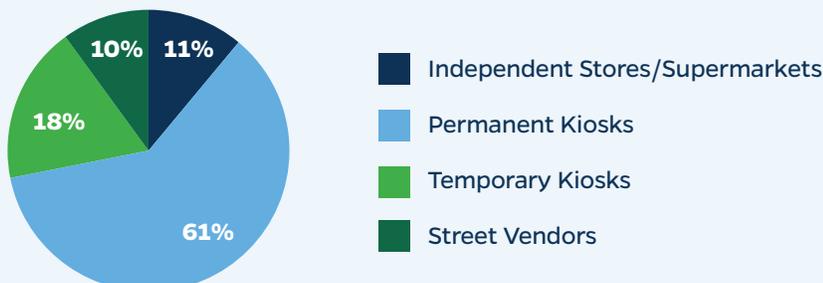


Table 1. Type of advertising visible from outside the point-of-sale, by vendor type

Vendor type	Advertisement of any kind on the outside	Posters/ banners/ stickers/signs	Advertisement board - indirect	Advertisement board - direct	Leaflets/ fliers/ pamphlets
Independent Stores/ Supermarket (n=65)	18%	15%	3%	9%	0%
Permanent Kiosk (n=372)	41%	32%	11%	3%	4%
Temporary Kiosk (n=111)	32%	30%	5%	1%	2%
Street Vendor (n=60)	8%	7%	0%	0%	2%

Discussion

Overall, the compliance of tobacco vendors with the COTPA TAPS provisions at the POS is low, with over one third of the vendors (36%, n=217) displaying direct and/or indirect advertising. Among the different vendor-types, permanent kiosks had the greatest number of advertising violations visible from outside of the POS (41%), followed by temporary kiosks (32%) and the independent stores/supermarkets (18%), as shown in Table 1. The most common form of advertising observed across all wards was direct advertising of tobacco brands through posters, banners, stickers etc. with 27% (n=166) of vendors displaying these advertisements on the outside.

There is considerable need to improve compliance with the tobacco product display and POS advertising and promotion policies in Siliguri. Strategies, including training

enforcement officers and educating vendors on the city's tobacco control policies and any applicable penalties/fines, can strengthen enforcement. Additionally, regular monitoring of tobacco vendors will help ensure that the policies are being complied with in full, and that the tobacco products are not being displayed within the reach of minors.

By implementing the tobacco vendor licensing order, Siliguri could limit the number of tobacco vendors, and thereby increase the overall compliance of tobacco control law in Siliguri. Banning tobacco advertisements and restricting the visibility of and access to tobacco products at the POS are effective strategies for reducing tobacco use and initiation among youth. Global evidence assessing the impact of POS advertising bans have consistently found that such bans are associated with reduced smoking rates.²

Methods

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Institute for Global Tobacco Control, with partners from the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease and MANT Kolkata, conducted an observational study of tobacco vendors to measure the presence of tobacco advertising, promotion, and product display at POS. Further, if tobacco products were displayed within reach of minors, and if the tobacco vendor displayed required health warning signage. Observations were done in each of Siliguri's 47 wards. Trained data collectors first identified appropriate stretches of road that had tobacco vendors; observations were conducted in each ward on 500-1000m of road frontage. Observations and geographic locations of tobacco vendors were recorded using a mobile data collection app. Data collectors measured the presence of both direct advertising (such as tobacco product posters/banners) or indirect advertising (such as the use of tobacco brand color schemes or logos). Observations also measured if 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 measured. Observations are reported as a proportion of vendors observed across the 2020 sample.

¹ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Notification S.O 2814(E), November 28, 2008. Retrieved from <https://www.tobaccocontrollaws.org/files/live/India/India%20-%20.pdf>

² Shang C, Huang J, Cheng KW, Li Q, Chaloupka FJ. (2016). Global evidence on the association between POS advertising bans and youth smoking participation. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 13:306.