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Background

- Cigarette packaging offers producers a means to attract consumers with alluring designs and communicate by branding the available surfaces
- Studies have found that packaging size and shape foster misperceptions about the harmfulness of cigarettes
- Standardized packaging is one way to eliminate the allure of innovative cigarette packs
- Tobacco companies are increasingly focusing their marketing efforts in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where smoking prevalence is high
- This study examines a variety of pack design features in 14 LMICs

Methods

- The Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS) collects unique cigarette packs sold in LMICs
- In 2013, TPackSS collected 3,240 cigarette packs from 14 LMICs from five of the six WHO regions (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, and Vietnam)
- Packs were assessed by two independent coders for a wide variety of design features, which include pack type, opening style, and pack shape
- The sample (n=2,468) is restricted to packs that displayed a health warning label from the country of purchase

Results

- China and Indonesia had the greatest variety of pack shapes (5) collected including traditional, wide, extra-wide, and lipstick (narrow with traditional depth) pack shapes
- Soft pack prevalence was highest in Thailand (52%) and Brazil (48%)

Right (Left to Right): Brazil graphic health warning label on the back panel of a traditional hard pack, soft pack, wide pack, and lipstick pack



- More than one hard pack opening style was found in ten of the countries (71%)
- Seven opening styles were found in China and Russia: Flip-top, cigar-box, push-pack, slide-pack, and sliding lid pack opening styles were found in both countries



Above (from left): Flip-top opening, flip-bottom opening, and "Sliding Lid Pack"

- Design elements like beveled edges (rounded or flattened) can affect the health warning labels
- Packs with a rounded edge were most prevalent in Turkey (62%), while packs with a flattened edge were often found in India (26%)



Left: An example of a 90 degree edge from India

Right: An example of a flattened edge from the same brand in India

Left: An example of a rounded edge from Turkey

Right: An example of a flattened edge that is narrower at the center of the pack



Above: Opening styles that introduce new surfaces for branding

Conclusions

- The number of cigarette pack design options on the market is quite extensive
- New designs can increase the amount of brandable space on cigarette packaging
- Until there are restrictions, the cigarette consumer is faced with a variety of potentially alluring design features
- Design elements can detract from health warnings



Above: Cigar-box opening style

Above: Flip-top that splits