

Levels and correlates of awareness of tobacco promotional activities among adult smokers in Malaysia and Thailand: findings from the International Tobacco Control Southeast Asia (ITCSEA) Survey

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Abstract

Aim: To examine the impact of tobacco advertising policy on adult smokers' awareness of tobacco promotion in two developing countries—Malaysia and Thailand.

Methods: Data from 2004 Malaysian and 2000 Thai adult smokers who participated in the baseline wave of the International Tobacco Control Southeast Asia survey (ITCSEA). Respondents were asked in a face-to-face interview conducted between January and March 2005 to indicate their levels of awareness of tobacco advertising and promotional activities in the last six months.

Results: Unprompted awareness of any tobacco marketing activities was very low in Thailand (20%) but significantly higher in Malaysia (53%; OR=5.6, 95% CI: 3.5 to 8.9, $p<0.001$). When prompted about specific locations, Thai adult smokers reported very low recall of tobacco advertising where it was banned, being highest around point of sale, particularly street vendors (7.5%). In contrast, Malaysian adult smokers reported significantly higher levels of awareness of tobacco advertising in all locations (range=17.7% noticing in disco lounges to 59.3% on posters) including where they are nationally banned (for example, billboards).

Conclusions: These findings demonstrate that comprehensive tobacco advertising legislation when well implemented can lead to dramatic decline in awareness of tobacco promotion, thus supporting strong implementation of Article 13 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

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