

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY 2013

Why ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS)?

Experts say tobacco advertising and promotion increase consumption. In 2009 a comprehensive review of tobacco-related research was released by The National Cancer Institute (US). The monograph was compiled by 23 authors, 63 expert reviewers and took five years to produce. The two main scientific conclusions were:

1. There is a causal relationship between tobacco advertising and promotion and increased tobacco use.
2. Comprehensive bans reduce tobacco consumption but partial bans only lead to greater expenditure in 'non banned' areas, resulting in no net reduction of tobacco use.

The report also found that generally tobacco advertising and promotion exhibits three main themes:

- » Providing satisfaction (taste, freshness)
- » Reducing fears about the dangers of tobacco use (mildness)
- » Creating associations between tobacco and desirable characteristics (social success, sexual attraction, thinness etc).

It is clear that in countries with weak regulation, marketing reaches a very high proportion of people. For example according to the 2011 National Adult Tobacco Survey of Cambodia, 80 percent of respondents had seen tobacco advertising in the past months.

Advertising, promotion and sponsorship normalise tobacco, making it seem like other consumer products. This increases its social acceptability and hampers efforts to educate people about the hazards of tobacco use.

The tobacco industry maintains that the role of advertising and promotion is solely to encourage smokers to switch brands. However, another impact is to increase the desirability of smoking by associating it with characteristics such as independence, glamour and machismo¹.

In countries where partial bans prohibit direct advertising and promotion of tobacco products in traditional media, tobacco companies frequently employ indirect marketing tactics to circumvent the restrictions. Tactics include:

- » sport and music event sponsorship
- » pack designs and displays
- » branded merchandise
- » product placement
- » so-called corporate social responsibility activities
- » new media technology campaigns.

What is TAPS?

"Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship applies to all forms of commercial communication, recommendation or action and all forms of contribution to any event, activity or individual with the aim, effect, or likely effect of promoting a tobacco product or tobacco use either directly or indirectly." (Guidelines for implementation of Article 13 of the FCTC)

In some countries the tobacco industry still uses print and broadcast media, billboards, electronic mail and direct mail, the Internet and packaging to market its products.

Point of sale promotion is particularly powerful, but it remains allowed in most countries.

¹ Bates C, Rowell A. Tobacco explained: the truth about the tobacco industry...in its own words. London: Action on Smoking and Health, 2004. www.who.int/tobacco/media/en/TobaccoExplained.pdf



TAPS in Senegal: at a retail kiosk (left) and on a vehicle (right). Cigarette promotion at point of sale in Indonesia (centre).
 (Senegal photos by Jorge Alday, WLF; Indonesia photo courtesy Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids).

Advertising, promotion and sponsorship bans work

Comprehensive bans on direct and indirect advertising, promotion and sponsorship protect people – particularly youth – from industry marketing tactics and can substantially reduce tobacco consumption.

Comprehensive bans significantly reduce the industry’s ability to market to young people who have not started using tobacco and to adult tobacco users who want to quit.

Comprehensive bans can be achieved by following the international best practice standards outlined in the Guidelines for implementation of Article 13 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

A comprehensive ban on all advertising and promotion reduces tobacco consumption by about 7 percent, independent of other interventions. Some countries have seen consumption drop by as much as 16 percent following an ad ban.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) states:

Article 13

... a comprehensive ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship would reduce the consumption of tobacco products.

Each Party shall ... undertake a comprehensive ban of all tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.