

## Peer Review Report

# Review Report on Feminine appeals on cigarette packs sold in 14 countries

Original Article, Int J Public Health

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### EVALUATION

**Q 1** Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.

#### General comments

This paper addresses trends in the use of visible feminine marketing features on cigarette packs sold in LMIC. It analyses data from two waves (2013 and 2015-17) of systematically collected packs in selected countries. The rationale behind this research is the fact that Big Tobacco industry has previously targeted women in high income countries with similar marketing strategies. Women in some LMIC smoke in a lower proportion than in Europe and the US, and remain as a potential market for the long-term. Authors inform that due to other advertising bans, tobacco packaging itself has become a powerful marketing vehicle for Tobacco Industry so examining features of the packs available at points of sale is a very good method to monitor marketing strategies.

#### Minor comments

Overall the methodology is sound. The coding and fieldwork protocols are part of a wider project (T PackSS), and allow a standardized form of collecting, purchasing, coding and comparing packs. Statistics are simple but suitable for this type of research. Authors do not explain why some countries were not selected for the second wave. One of those is for example Ukraine, was the country with highest proportion of feminine cigarette packs in the first wave, so it would have been interesting to monitor the trend there. Also, it may be useful if authors discuss if excluding Ukraine might have change the general trend.

Authors report that the brand Vogue (BAT) was present in 24 packs in wave 1 and 8 in wave 2; and Glamour (JTI) in 27 and 14 respectively. In the discussion section, they state that “it is possible that the industry only focused on their most successful brands..” Also, they mention plain packaging as the strategy to reduce the potential influence of packs. I believe this point is a good opportunity to mention single presentation requirement as another strategy to address the proliferation of variants (feminine in this case) of a same traditional brand.

(<https://www.tobaccocontrol.org>; Deatley T, Bianco E, Welding K, et al

<https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/tobaccocontrol/early/2017/04/17/tobaccocontrol-2016-053402.full.pdf>)

It would be useful to know if significant tobacco control laws were passed in those countries between waves 1 and 2, so this could also explain results, apart from industry strategies.

**Q 2** Please summarize the main findings of the study.

This study shows that there is a notable number of cigarette packs available in LMIC that contain feminine features, colours, imagery or texts, indicating a marketing strategy. However, there is a significant decrease between 2013 and 2015-17 in “feminine” packs. Authors provide some explanations for this trend, like for the example the use of a more gender-neutral strategy though it is targeted to women, or the use of other features like flavour capsules which are appealing to women.

**Q 3** Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

Limitations are stated and discussed appropriately. The biggest limitation is generalizability to other LMIC or to other cities within those countries, but it is correctly addressed. The fact that Ukraine and other countries were excluded from Wave 2 , may be a limitation too, please see above (Minor coments)

The biggest strength in my opinion is the number of countries included, the number of unique packs obtained and the fact that a local expert was consulted to understand cultural aspects of imagery, texting, etc. Standardized protocols within a wider solid project (TPACKSS) is also part of the strengths.

#### PLEASE COMMENT

**Q 4** Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

Yes

**Q 5** Are the keywords appropriate?

Yes

**Q 6** Is the English language of sufficient quality?

Yes

**Q 7** Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Yes.

**Q 8** Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?)

Yes.

#### QUALITY ASSESSMENT

**Q 9** Originality



**Q 10** Rigor



**Q 11** Significance to the field



**Q 12** Interest to a general audience



**Q 13** Quality of the writing



**Q 14** Overall scientific quality of the study



#### REVISION LEVEL

**Q 15** Please take a decision based on your comments:

Minor revisions.