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REVIEW ARTICLE

TOBACCO ADVERTISING, PROMOTION AND SPONSORSHIP AND ITS EFFECTS ON INDIAN YOUTH: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Tobacco in any form has an injurious impact on health. This paper reviews the existing literature relevant to the specific context of Tobacco Advertizing, Promotion and Sponsorship (TAPS), relation between TAPS and tobacco consumption behavior of youth in India and the gaps in the existing tobacco legislation in India, using online databases and exploring grey literature. Since direct advertisement and promotion of tobacco in any form is legally banned in India since 2004, tobacco industries have adopted unique strategies for TAPS to attract youth, especially. Albeit tobacco manufacturers claim that they do not target youth; studies show that there exists a direct link between the exposure to tobacco marketing practices found appealing by youth and an increase in the likelihood of their tobacco consumption behaviors. Research exploring linkages between TAPS as a whole and the youth tobacco consumption behaviour are missing and needs to be prioritised. The research findings reflect the weak enforcement of Section 5 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act (COTPA), 2003 and calls for an immediate action for the policy makers. Anti-tobacco policies should involve public health education especially targeting youth, making them aware of the myriad ways adopted by tobacco companies to attract them towards tobacco experimentation and use. The tobacco legislation should be enforced stringently ensuring that the tobacco industry would not target youth.

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INTRODUCTION

What does this study add?

Research suggests a direct link between TAPS activities and tobacco use among youth. Earlier studies have focused only on few components of TAPS and their relation with tobacco use among youth whereas the problem is a combination of myriad TAPS strategies. This study was undertaken to address these research gaps. The research findings reflect the weak enforcement of Section 5 of the COTPA, 2003 and calls for an immediate action for the policy makers.

Tobacco use is a serious public health challenge globally. It has taken the dimension of an epidemic resulting in enormous disability, severe societal costs, health care burden and death. Since economy of a country depends on its youth, it is vital to take extreme care of the youth and keep them away from any detrimental agent that can hamper the development of the nation. The degree of destruction brought to bear upon the individual and society surpasses the returns generated by

tobacco production and consumption in terms of revenue and employment. According to the WHO Tobacco Facts, there are more than one billion smokers in the world; low- and middle-income countries account for more than 80% of the world's smokers (WHO, 2013). The problem is more unique in India as there are various other forms of tobacco use such as chewing (Gutkha, Paan Masala, Zarda etc.) beyond smoking as well. The smoked tobacco prevalence has risen to 19% whereas smokeless tobacco prevalence has risen to 9% among youth between the ages of 13 and 15 years in the past decade in India (WHO, 2013). Smoking is the most common way of tobacco consumption among males whereas Zarda and Gutkha are popular among females. Chewing tobacco is more common in rural poor and illiterate communities as compared to the urban areas (Soni and Raut, 2012). Although all forms of tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship is legally banned in India since 2004 (MoHFW, 2003); tobacco manufacturers take support of other indirect techniques such as sponsoring music or sport events, surrogate advertising, print, electronic and outdoor advertisements, sale at Point of Selling (PoS), product display, brand stretching, competitions/contests, attractive packaging and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). These unique strategies are slipping

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through the cracks of the law and are employed in a way which fancy youth towards tobacco experimentation and use (Joshi, 2008). Such activities present tobacco use as the symbol of luxury and power, richness and success, aspiration and amusement; which of course, is a clear way of attracting youth towards tobacco consumption and when televised may amount to the same effect as direct advertising on television. This is especially worrying given that young people are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of tobacco (Gupta and Sharma, 2013). Against this background, this research paper aims to explore various strategies utilized by the tobacco industry for TAPS in India. The relation between TAPS and their impact on the tobacco consumption behavior of youth in India was explored as well. Gaps in the existing Indian legislation in terms of TAPS are identified and recommendations are developed. To our knowledge, this review paper is first of its kind which aims to explore all TAPS strategies taken together in one study, their impact exclusively on the youth tobacco consumption behavior in India and relating International best practices for tobacco control to the Indian context.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The scope of the literature search was determined by the probable applicability of research papers to the specific context of TAPS, relation between TAPS and tobacco consumption behavior of youth in India, Indian legislation for TAPS and International best practices for tobacco control. A visionary search strategy was needed to identify relevant studies over diverse fields, including those neither published in peer-reviewed journals nor addressed in highly recognized online databases in order to gain access to the relevant literature, to maximize support and gain evidence for the proposed study. The literature search was carried out using 12 online databases, academic and organizational papers on the topic under study. Relevant articles were sought by using key words. Lastly, articles pertaining to the study objectives, published in English language periodicals up to October 2013, were included. To discover grey literature (documents published by organizations, rather than academic journal articles or books), Google Scholar was used to sought organizational websites related to tobacco industry in India and International best practices for tobacco control. Information gained through these sources helped designing a part of this report. Citation searches and author searches were carried out on a few included articles as a final check against missing key reports. At the end, all full text articles were read and those considered to have met the proposed criteria were included in this review.

RESULTS

A. Strategies adopted by tobacco industry for advertisement, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products

Direct advertising

Direct tobacco advertising includes print, electronic and outdoor advertisements (COTPA, 2003). Tobacco companies have ubiquitously used television, radio, newspapers, billboards, hoarding, carry bags, rain shelters and transport facilities (e.g. bus, train, metro, auto etc.) for advertising and promoting their products. Tobacco companies flash noticeable

tobacco advertisements and catchy billboards with attractive images near playgrounds and schools. Magazines and other print material are also full of advertisements glorifying tobacco products, which, of course are of youth interest. The top class cigarette brands such as Four Square and Gold Flake advertise their brands with pictorials symbolizing rich, luxury and westernization. Gold Flake promotes itself through art and music by showing western musical instruments specifically linked to the wealthy and those of modern class, whereas Four Squares' "man with the smooth edge" shows a marginal Indian population, but an epitome for the cultured youth (Tobacco Advertising and Youth, 2008; Bansal and John *et al.*, 2005). Similarly, the Red and White advertisement clearly portrays the message that those who smoke Red and White are unique and different by showing airplanes reaching for the sky or a flag on the mountain summit. This brand has also promoted itself by using message in Hindi - "Hum red and white peene walon ki baat hi kuch aur hai" (people who smoke Red and White belong to a league of their own) (Bansal and John *et al.*, 2005). Another powerful mode of tobacco promotion is advertizing tobacco in movies. Movies being a popular mode of entertainment for youth, is being exploited heavily by the tobacco industry to advertize their products and attract youth. Studies show that tobacco promotion in movies results in the likelihood of early smoking initiation among youth. In an article, famous producer/director, Subhash Ghai quoted that-

"I remember in my young age, I was very influenced by Dev Anand's smoking ... So those fantasies were related to smoking by the leading stars. ... There was a perception that a person who smokes, thinks better, is a better actor, better artist. And that an artist is not creative unless he smokes" (WHO, 2008)

Tobacco companies often utilize women models to add glamour to their brand promotion and advertisements to make it more attractive to the youth. In Godfrey Phillips' Four Square advertisement, a male model is the main lead but he is accompanied by an attractive woman clad in traditional or western attire. But it's interesting to see that in this ad, the face of woman is clearly visible whereas the male model either shows his back or hides his face behind a newspaper. This is a way utilized by the tobacco industry to exploit sexual fantasies of youth and sell their products (Mackay and Amos, 2003).

Surrogate advertizing

Following complete ban on tobacco advertising, tobacco companies have now taken the resort of surrogate advertising for tobacco marketing and promotion. Surrogate advertising involves using non tobacco products by using the same brand name, packaging, logos and labeling as the tobacco products to indirectly advertise tobacco products. Many tobacco companies advertise music CDs, water bottles, soda bottles etc in the same brand name as their tobacco product. These advertisements are present everywhere in Indian media and instances of such advertisements have increased after a majority of Indian states/ union territories banning Gutkha and other smokeless tobacco products under Regulation 2.3.4 of the Food and Safety Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on sales) Regulation, 2011 (MoHFW, 2011). Though law bans surrogate advertising as well, this way of brand promotion is

still being practiced largely in India, for example, “502 Pataka” a popular beedi (local Indian cigarette) brand is now being advertised as 502 Pataka chai (tea).

PoS and Product Display

Tobacco companies in India provide lucrative incentives to retailers of their products for placing tobacco ads and other items promoting tobacco usage. Companies supply vendors with promotional materials, including LCD televisions, giant posters and refurbish their stores to make them more attractive and turn the stores into tobacco advertisements. The use of PoS color combinations matching tobacco products is a powerful advertising and promotion tactic especially to target youth.

Promotion

Owing to ban on tobacco advertising, tobacco companies are now focusing on brand promotion activities (Dewhirst, 2004). Connecting corporal appeal, promoting a specific age by involving young leaders or achievers, celebrities from the sports world, cinema and other renowned areas, tastefully designed packaging and labeling of tobacco products, placing products in popular socialising venues are some of the indirect advertising techniques the tobacco industry is following to attract youth towards tobacco use and experimentation (Beede and Lawson 1992). Using logos, colors and imagery functions in the same way as advertising does; on-pack branding certainly breaches Article 13 of the FCTC. Gold Flake uses gold and red color scheme whereas Wills Insignia uses a navy blue background with an open pack of cigarettes with the message “where quality touches infinity” in its advertisement (Bansal *et al.*, 2005). These techniques attract new users by a process called symbolic consumption, which involves ‘consumers forming relationships with brands, which they use to structure and create meaning in their lives’ (Aaker, 1997; Vanand Janiszewski, 2001). The Tobacco industry not only uses tobacco products as means of delivering nicotine but also sells class, acceptance, glamour and amusement (Gendall *et al.*, 2012). International studies have shown a positive correlation between on pack branding and increased likelihood of cigarette smoking among youth (Laugesen, 1989; Lee, 1986). Plain packaging has shown to be boring and unattractive to youth while they fancy the branded ones. It is observed that plain packaging of tobacco products is a useful measure for tobacco use cessation among youth (Germain, 2010; Wakefield, 2008). Placing products in popular socializing venues allows the tobacco industry to link their brands to trendy nightspots and social places and to fun experiences and enjoyable music, thereby establishing credibility and relevance of their products among young adults (Shahrir *et al.*, 2013, Stanton *et al.*, 2011, Goold 2003).

Sponsorship

Youth have always been the target of tobacco companies. Sponsorship is one of the strategies in which companies sponsor sport events which have high appeal to youth. In 1995, the India-New Zealand cricket series, was sponsored by Wills (a subsidiary of British America Tobacco Company) and the players wore the uniform with its clearly visible logo and same was displayed at the ground. (Vaidya *et al.*, 1996).

Tobacco brands not only fund sport events but also sponsor events such as concerts, award functions and music festivals which are quite popular among young people. Such events portray tobacco as the symbol of extravagant lifestyle; examples include sponsorship of Tennis tournaments by ‘Gold Flake’, Boat racing by ‘Four Square’, Polo and golf events by ‘Classic’, musical event ‘Spirit of freedom concert’ by ‘Charms’, annual Filmfare awards by ‘Manikchand’ (Gutkha manufacturers), “Red and White” Bravery Awards by GPI (CSR activities) etc. These events manipulate the public’s attitude towards their reputation and send the message that they are looking out for the public’s best interest. These often appeal directly to young people, and when televised, may amount to the same effect as direct advertising on television. This is especially worrying given that young people are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of tobacco (Bansal and John *et al.*, 2005).

B. Impact of TAPS on youth

The marketers are smart enough to catch hold of this pliable corner of the adolescents/ youth and hence cleverly advertise and promote their products in the market through media, internet and/ or sponsoring it via sports or fashion events (Lavack and Toth 2006). Youth across the world is the instant follower of anything latest emerging in the market. The marketers are smart enough to catch hold of this pliable corner of the adolescents/ youth and hence cleverly advertise and promote their products in the market through media, internet and/ or sponsoring it via sports or fashion events. The review of studies conducted in India give the insight of such marketing strategies adopted by tobacco companies and the impact left on youth thereafter. A qualitative study conducted by the Burning Brain Society in the year 2005 with 1126 youngsters aged 11-17 years explored a positive relation between tobacco portrayal in Bollywood movies and an increased likelihood of cigarette smoking. A large proportion of youth admitted being influenced by movies which could be found in their behavior like a desire to hold a cigarette or articles akin a cigarette. It was found that favorable images through mass media created a considerable influence on youngsters and increased their receptivity to tobacco use (Goswami and Kashyap, 2005). Since the advent of COTPA, tobacco companies take the rescue of packet promotion for brand promotion. The brands are putting high efforts and capital on packaging of tobacco products by putting logos, colors, brand names etc. A study conducted in Delhi revealed that about 60% of the study respondents believe that plain packaging can reduce promotional value of the tobacco pack and 80% believe that plain packaging can encourage tobacco consumers to quit (Bogolub, 1990).

Shah *et al.* (2008) conducted a study to identify the relationship between tobacco advertisements, counter-advertisements and smoking status of youth in India. The study was conducted with a sample of 60,001 students aged 13–15 years in 24 states of India. The study results show that the students watching anti-smoking media messages were less likely to be current smokers, which was true for both boys [OR = 0.89, 95% CI (0.81–0.98)] and girls [OR = 0.79, 95% CI (0.69–0.90)]. On the other hand, students who were exposed to cigarette brand names during sports events and other televised

programs, newspapers or magazines, and being offered free cigarette or cigarette-branded merchandise promotions were significantly more likely to be smokers, with effects ranging from moderate (OR=1.19) to very strong (OR=3.83). Today, indirect surrogate advertising still exists; future research should examine its effect, as it is likely to have the same impact as direct advertising on smoking behavior. Finally, counter-advertising has a protective effect on youth and may function as a cessation aid (Shah *et al.*, 2008). Tobacco advertising, through various media, creates positive product imagery or associations in the minds of young people. Tobacco industry marketing includes varied activities designed to increase the sale of tobacco products. Analysis of a cross sectional survey conducted with a sample of 11642 6th and 8th grades school going students from Delhi and Chennai, India depicted that exposure to tobacco advertisements and receptivity to tobacco marketing were significantly related to increased tobacco use among students. The data from this study added to the evidence that tobacco advertising may target and impact young adolescents. This finding has serious implications for India, which has a 51% population below the age of 25 years. Hence, protecting the youth from the influence of tobacco advertising and promotion becomes an urgent public health concern in India. This association also suggests the need to strengthen policy and program-based interventions in India to reduce the influence of such exposures (Arora *et al.*, 2011). Tobacco companies often seem to direct their advertisement campaigns at adolescents. By sponsoring the sports events these companies try to create public relations amongst the youth. Vaidya *et al.* (1996). Conducted a study with randomly selected 1948 high school students aged 13-16 years. The research was sedimented on India-New Zealand cricket series, which was televised live in India during October-November 1995, was sponsored by tobacco company Wills (a subsidiary of British America Tobacco Company) and the logo was prominently displayed on the outfits of the players and at the ground. Four Square cigarettes, and Manikchand Gutkha, a smokeless tobacco product, were also advertised.

The study indicated that the experimentation with tobacco was significantly higher among those who watched the matches (7.8% v 4.8%, $p = 0.01$). Girls are culturally inhibited from smoking in India, but the rate of smoking Wills among girls who watched the series (2.8%) was the same as for boys (3.4%), $p=0.6$). From the results, it is deduced that such nature of sponsorships in the sports events leads to increased tobacco consumption amongst adolescents (Vaidya *et al.*, 1996). Tobacco industry often associate richness, modernization and fashion with tobacco products to attract youth. A study conducted among 300 college students in Mumbai show that tobacco advertisements and tobacco products endorsed by celebrities influenced their likelihood of tobacco use (among young boys) whereas portrayal of fashionable lifestyle associated with tobacco use influenced tobacco use behavior of young girls. These factors were associated with 40% of the cohort. Another study conducted in Uttar Pradesh (Mainpuri) showed that depiction of high profile lifestyle, attractive attire and rich locations in various media of advertising had a high influence on tobacco use behaviors among children (MoHFW, 2004). The studies clearly represent that tobacco exposure increases the likelihood of smoking amongst youth/adolescents and hence need to be banded to not to cater damage to youth.

C. Role of Indian legislation in tobacco control

Tobacco control is a multi-stakeholder issue; various laws have been formulated by the Indian Government to discourage tobacco use. The ministries analogous to Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, such as the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Trade and Commerce, Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture are playing their parts in the area of tobacco control. India has enacted the COTPA 2003, in light of WHO FCTC having the law clearly stating ban on smoking at public places, portraying of health warnings on tobacco products, ban on sale of tobacco within 100 yards of any educational institute and to the minors and ban on all direct and indirect advertisements except at the PoS (Article 13, FCTC). Various states issued notifications in the light of COTPA 2003. The Tamil Nadu Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine and State Food (Health) Authority and State Government of Maharashtra /Goa issued a notice stating '...no person shall himself or by any person on his behalf, manufacture for sale or store, sell or distribute chewing tobacco, Paan masala or Gutka containing tobacco in any form or any other ingredients injurious to health, under whatever name or description it is sold in the State of Tamil Nadu, in the interest of public health, for a period of five years with effect on and from 19th November 2001'. Andhra Pradesh, from July 2001 has banned the sale of all types of chewing tobacco including Paan masala having tobacco, Zarda, Khaini (MoHFW, 2004). In January, 2013, the Supreme Court of India vacated the stay on PoS advertising of tobacco which was enforced in 2006 by Bombay High Court indicating assurance by the Indian Judicial system for better health of citizens of India through tobacco control. This was followed by instructions issued to Indian States/UTs by the MoHFW regarding strict enforcement of PoS advertising rules to control smoking (Arora and Nazar, 2013).

DISCUSSION

Since the time India agreed to follow the WHO FCTC and adopted COTPA, any form of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (except at the PoS) is legally banned in India (WHO FCTC, 2004 and COPTA, 2003). Following ban, tobacco industry has found unique ways for their brand promotion. Strategies adopted by tobacco companies include direct tobacco advertising in print, electronic and outdoor media. Advertising at the PoS using color combinations as that of tobacco products, advertising tobacco products on music CDs, water bottles, soda bottles etc in the same brand name as their tobacco products, brand promotion by endorsing tobacco products through famous celebrities and sports person, using attractive packaging and labeling techniques, sponsorship in concerts, award functions, music festivals and sports events are some of the powerful strategies exploited heavily by the tobacco industry in India. It is observed that these mindful strategies portray tobacco as a symbol of luxury, power, fashion, amusement, achievement and sexual fantasy. Albeit tobacco manufacturers claim that they do not target youth; studies show that there exists a direct link between the exposure to tobacco marketing practices found appealing by youth and an increase in the likelihood of their tobacco consumption behaviors.

Favorable images through mass media create a considerable influence on youngsters and increased their receptivity to

tobacco use. Behavioral changes such as a desire to hold a cigarette or articles akin a cigarette are found in a large proportion of youth being influenced by movies portraying tobacco use (Goswami and Kashyap, 2005). Youth exposed to cigarette brand names during sports events and other televised programs, newspapers or magazines, and being offered free cigarette or cigarette-branded merchandise promotions are significantly more likely to be smokers (Shah *et al.*, 2008). Since the advent of COTPA, tobacco companies take the rescue of packet promotion for brand promotion. The brands are putting high efforts and capital on packaging of tobacco products by putting logos, colors, brand names etc. Studies show that plain packaging can reduce promotional value of the tobacco pack and can encourage tobacco consumers to quit (Bogolub, 1990). These findings have serious implications for India, which has a 51% population below the age of 25 years. Hence, protecting the youth from the influence of tobacco advertising and promotion becomes an urgent public health concern in India. The review also suggests the need to strengthen policy and program-based interventions in India to reduce the influence of such exposures (Arora *et al.*, 2011). Today, indirect surrogate advertising still exists; future research should examine its effect, as it is likely to have the same impact as direct advertising on smoking behavior. Finally, counter-advertising has a protective effect on youth and may function as a cessation aid (Shah *et al.*, 2008). The research findings reflect a clear breach of the Article 13 of the FCTC, weak enforcement of Section 5 of the COTPA, 2003 and calls for an immediate action for the policy makers. The National Program for Tobacco Control (NPTC) launched by the Indian Government should work closely through inter-sectoral coordination between different ministries. Well equipped laboratories manned with experienced scientists should be established for testing tobacco products. This is essential to keep a tab on all types of tobacco products. International organizations should fund more program and initiatives for tobacco control. There is a need to have in depth research to frame and design more strong policies and programs to reduce tobacco consumption.

The policy makers should identify different sections of society with high tobacco consumption and as per that area specific strategies and interventions should be decided. They should also study the tobacco production patterns, environmental factors and cost factors for designing any strategy. The evaluation of any intervention is also essential to assess the impact and this can be done by timely evaluations and impact assessments. All the national and international bodies should conduct awareness workshops in rural and urban areas to sensitize communities about harmful effects of tobacco. They should mobilize volunteers to create awareness among masses through group meetings, house to house visits, skits, plays, posters etc. These groups should be given financial help to implement such interventions. The society should come forward in tobacco control by adopting good practices and behavior esp. in front of youngsters and adolescents. The parents should not smoke in front of children, any display or promotion of tobacco product should be reported, police should be informed if any shopkeeper is found selling tobacco products to adolescents. A comprehensive tobacco control strategy together with collective action from all parts of the society and stringent law enforcement by the Government is vital to curb the tobacco epidemic and save youth in India.

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