Published in final edited form as:

Tob Control. 2017 March ; 26(2): 239–240. doi:10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2015-052870.

Tobacco point-of-sale advertising in downtown Buenos Aires, Argentina and compliance with the new tobacco advertising restrictions

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BACKGROUND

Despite increased awareness of the health threat posed by tobacco use, Latin America continues to experience high smoking rates. Argentina is no exception, where an estimated 22.1% of adults were smokers in 2012.¹ Prior to 2011, few limitations were placed on the advertisement of tobacco products in Argentina, and any restrictions were largely selfimposed by the tobacco companies.²

On 14 June 2011, Argentina enacted the ‘National Law of Tobacco Control: Law 26.687’. This law provides 42 articles that address tobacco advertising, packaging, product composition, sale/distribution, secondhand smoke, and preventive education. Notably, it largely prohibits all forms of tobacco advertisements except for those indoors at the point of

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Contributors DJM was involved in the design of the study, participated in the data collection and analysis, and wrote the manuscript. He approved the final version to be published and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work. RM was involved in the design of the study, served as an advisor in the data analysis, and revised the manuscript. He approved the final version to be published and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work. IS was involved in the design of the study, participated in the data collection and analysis, and revised the manuscript. He approved the final version to be published and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work. JT was involved in the design of the study, served as an advisor in the data analysis, and revised the manuscript. He approved the final version to be published and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work. EJP-S was involved in the design of the study, served as an advisor in the data analysis, and revised the manuscript. He approved the final version to be published and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Competing interests None declared.

Provenance and peer review Commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

sale (PoS) (table 1).³ Unfortunately it is unclear how many convenience stores are compliant with its provisions.

METHODS

To investigate the compliance with the new restrictions, we surveyed all convenience stores (n=137) found in an 8 by 7 block area of Buenos Aires from July to August of 2014. This area was selected due to its exceptionally high concentration of schools as determined using an inventory of schools produced by the municipal government.⁴⁵ The borders were drawn arbitrarily to form a ~1.19 km² area that includes the University of Buenos Aires Hospital. The checklist used in this study assesses characteristics of tobacco PoS advertising and is identical to that used in previous studies.⁶⁷ The percentage of missing data for each variable ranged from 0% to 16%, and an available case-analysis was used to analyse the results.

RESULTS

A total of 137 convenience stores were surveyed. A majority (79.7%) of stores had interior advertisements displayed at the PoS. With regard to compliance with the 2011 law, only 35.2% of stores had clearly visible 'no sale to minors' signs and 93.9% of stores denied the sale of individual cigarettes, which had previously been permitted. None of the stores had outdoor cigarette advertisements, although 52.3% had interior advertisements that were clearly visible from the outside. In 97.8% of stores, the required health warning was visible next to the interior advertisements. In total, 37.7% of stores surveyed were fully compliant with all aspects of the new reform law outlined in table 1.

DISCUSSION

This study found a high prevalence of PoS advertising in convenience stores located in a downtown neighbourhood of Buenos Aires. When compared to a 2009 study⁶ prior to the passing of the new law, similar rates of PoS advertising (interior and exterior) were observed (78% vs 79.7%). In 2009, more stores had exterior advertisements (10% vs 0%), while the prevalence of interior ads visible from the outside remained similar (61% vs 52.3%). Lastly, there has not been improvement in the number of stores with 'no sales to minors' signage (57% vs 35.2%). As such, while the 2011 law represented an admirable effort to change the face of tobacco advertising in Argentina, we conclude that many convenience stores are not fully compliant with its provisions and that tobacco PoS advertising practices have not changed substantially since 2009.

Despite its limitations, this study accomplished its intended purpose in providing an initial characterisation of PoS advertising in Buenos Aires in the wake of the 2011 reforms. Other studies suggest that our results are not simply reflective of the situation in Buenos Aires alone, but also mirror trends throughout Latin America.⁶⁸ Our study suggests that simply passing such laws appears insufficient to obtain widespread compliance on the part of vendors, and that further efforts are likely required going forward.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

Acknowledgments

Funding This work was supported by the University of California San Francisco ‘Resource Allocation Program for Trainees’. This research received did not receive any additional support from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

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Table 1

Compliance with Tobacco Advertising Legislation in 137 convenience stores, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2014

Variables*	Stores n (%)
Point of sale advertising characteristics	
Convenience stores with interior advertisements (n=133)	106 (79.7)
Interior advertisements that are visible from outside (n=130)	68 (52.3)
Compliance with the National Tobacco Control Law	
No sale to minors sign visible (n=122)	43 (35.2)
No sales of individual cigarettes (n=115)	108 (93.9)
No outdoor cigarette advertisements (n=137)	137 (100)
% of stores with pictorial health warning on all advertisements (n=134)	131 (97.8)
% of stores compliant with all aspects of new law (n=106)	40 (37.7)

* In parentheses is the total number of observations for a particular variable. Due to constraints in the data collection process, full surveys were not able to be completed for certain stores. As a result, an available case analysis was used in order to maximize sample size for the different variables.