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Institute for Global Tobacco Control

Technical Report on Tobacco Marketing at the Point-of-Sale in Tbilisi, Georgia

Product Display, Advertising, and Promotion around Primary and Secondary Schools



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Background and Introduction

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease across the globe.¹ Although global estimates of tobacco marketing expenditures are not available, US cigarette manufacturers alone are estimated to have spent over 26 billion US dollars between 2011 and 2013 on advertising and promotion.² Tobacco companies use deceptive and predatory marketing practices to increase consumption of their products, and to make tobacco use appear glamorous or socially acceptable while dismissing the products' adverse health effects.³ Article 13 of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) calls for a comprehensive ban on all forms of TAPS, including the retail display of tobacco products.⁴ Evidence shows that the tobacco industry responds to partial TAPS bans that regulate only certain types of TAPS strategies (such as television or radio) by re-directing their resources to market their brands on unregulated channels such as the point-of-sale (POS).⁵ Numerous longitudinal studies have demonstrated that exposure to tobacco product advertising and promotion increases the likelihood that youth will start to smoke.⁶ The display of tobacco products at the POS has the same effect and influence on behavior as traditional media advertising.⁷ Marketing in retail environments specifically has been shown to increase the likelihood of smoking initiation among youth.⁸ One study found that stores where adolescents frequently shop may contain nearly three times as many marketing materials and shelf space for popular tobacco brands.⁹

Georgia became a party to the FCTC on May 15, 2006. Among Georgia's just over 3.6 million residents,¹⁰ more than 8,500 people are killed by tobacco-caused disease, while more than 10,000 children (15.2% of boys & 2.8% of girls) and more than 826,000 adults continue to use tobacco each day.¹¹ Of students currently using tobacco products, over half buy their cigarettes in a store.¹²

Georgia's current tobacco control laws do not ban direct advertising of tobacco products to the public. Therefore, there is no current ban on point-of-sale advertising and promotion. Similarly, there is no ban on point-of-sale tobacco product display. These aspects of the law do not align with FCTC Article 13 and the FCTC Article 13 Guidelines with respect to point-of-sale product display. However, the law does provide some regulations for advertisements. Advertisements cannot 1) create the impression that tobacco contributes to the improvement of physical and mental health or success in public or sport; 2) discredit abstinence from tobacco; 3) show images of tobacco products being consumed; 4) show images of open tobacco product packaging; nor 5) call for use of tobacco products. All advertisements (except for those on radio and television) must be accompanied by an official Ministry of Health (MOH) warning about the dangers of smoking occupying no less than 10% of the space of the advertisement.¹³

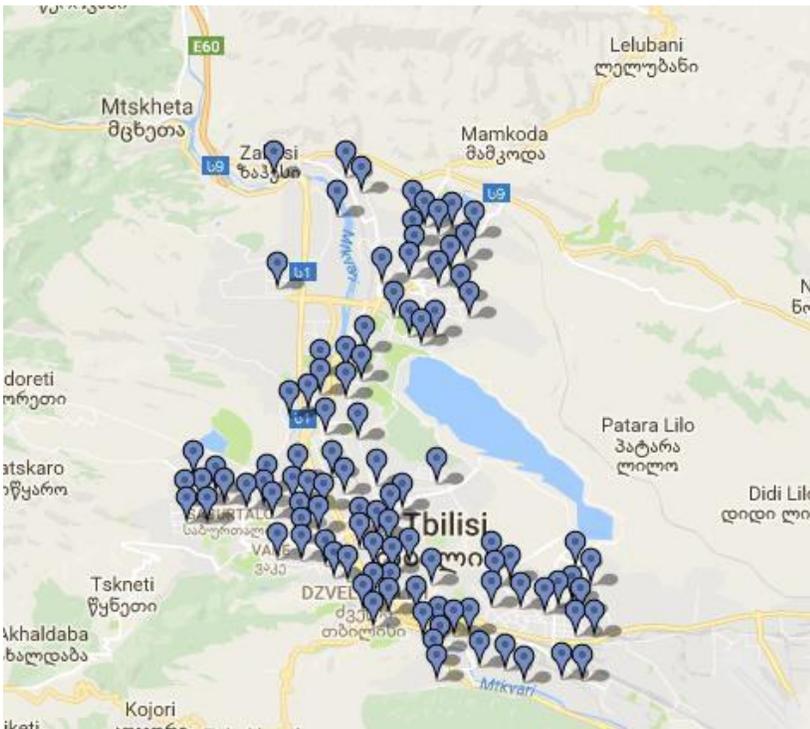
Methods

This report describes a study about tobacco marketing at the point-of-sale in Tbilisi, Georgia. The work was led by the Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH). IGTC partnered with the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Implementation and Monitoring Center in Georgia (FCTC IMCG). IMCG provided guidance and context about the sampling framework, and IGTC designed the survey instrument and data collection protocol. Investigators from IGTC trained 6 university students to conduct the fieldwork and submit daily reports for review in real-time. The study team was in Tbilisi for training and data collection to troubleshoot any logistical or technical issues. Data cleaning, validation, and analysis were carried out by IGTC.

Sampling Approach

This study surveyed tobacco retailers in Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital and largest city with a population of roughly 1.1 million.¹⁴ One hundred and four schools were selected within the city boundaries, with consideration for the (1) retail density, (2) school density, and (3) ease of accessibility for data collectors traversing the cities via public transportation (Figure 1). Each school was assigned a unique identification code. An online mapping and distance tool was used to define a sampling area radius of 250 meters surrounding each school, ensuring that none of the sampling areas overlapped. The study surveyed a convenience sample of supermarkets, convenient stores, small/independent grocery stores, kiosks/newsstands, cafes or bars, mobile street vendors, sidewalk vendors, and tobacco shops within each sampling area that displayed or advertised tobacco products.

Figure 1. Selected Schools in Tbilisi (n=104)



Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was designed to address key components of Georgia’s tobacco control law that allow or regulate different types of tobacco product placement, promotion, health warnings, and sales restrictions, as well as known trends in POS marketing that may target youth (Figure 2). The survey also asked whether the store was within eyesight of the school and provided fields for data collectors to enter the sampling area code, retailer address, name brands of tobacco products displayed or advertised, and other notes or comments about the retailer.

Figure 2. Survey Instrument Content

Unregulated Display and Advertising	Regulated Advertising, Display, and Promotion
<i>Product Placement</i>	<i>Required Signage and Visibility of Health Warnings</i>
Cashier zone	Signage with visible MOH health warning labels
Behind the cashier zone	MOH signage that sales are prohibited to youth under 18 years
Hanging from the ceiling	Non-MOH signage that sales are prohibited to youth under 18 years
Eye level of children	Visible pack warning labels
On a power wall	<i>Prohibited Advertising and Promotion</i>
Near sweets, snacks, or soda	Impression that tobacco products improve lifestyle
On a branded stand or cabinet	Use of medical or educational appeal
Display in change tray	Abstinence is discouraged
<i>Display or Ad Characteristic</i>	Images of tobacco products being used
Signage	Mention of flavors
Mention of flavors and/or vitamins	
Use of lights	
Use of videos	
Use of tobacco branding on tobacco accessories	

Data Collection Protocol

Observations and photos were collected from retailers during normal business hours from July 20-22, 2016. Each data collector received a packet of sampling area maps including the unique school identification code and space to record the addresses of tobacco retailers in that area (Appendix A). Street names and radii boundaries were clearly visible on all sampling area maps and data collectors were instructed to use nearest intersections and landmarks to stay within the confines of the radii boundaries. Data collectors identified points-of-sale within the sampling area by using the maps to follow a spiral-walking pattern, observing all streets within the 250-meter radius. All supermarkets, convenient stores, small/independent grocery stores, kiosks/newsstands, cafes or bars, mobile street vendors, sidewalk vendors, and tobacco shops were selected for observation. The school code, address, school visibility, and store type were still recorded at locations that did not sell tobacco products. Data collectors wrote the address of each tobacco retailer they observed on the corresponding sampling area map. Observational data and photos of tobacco product displays or advertisements were recorded and uploaded to a cloud-based database in real-time within Magpi, a mobile data collection application installed on smartphones. The mobile app was able to capture the date, geographic coordinates, and data collector name for each record uploaded to the dataset. The order of questions and format of response options were designed to facilitate rapid and discrete observation by data collectors. Data collectors also carried paper copies of the survey to use as an alternative to the mobile app in the event of any technical issue. At the end of each day, data collectors reported the address and sampling area code of each retailer they observed by entering information into a spreadsheet hosted on Google Drive. The study team reviewed these reports daily in order to check the uploaded dataset and ensure that the mobile software application was functioning properly.

Training

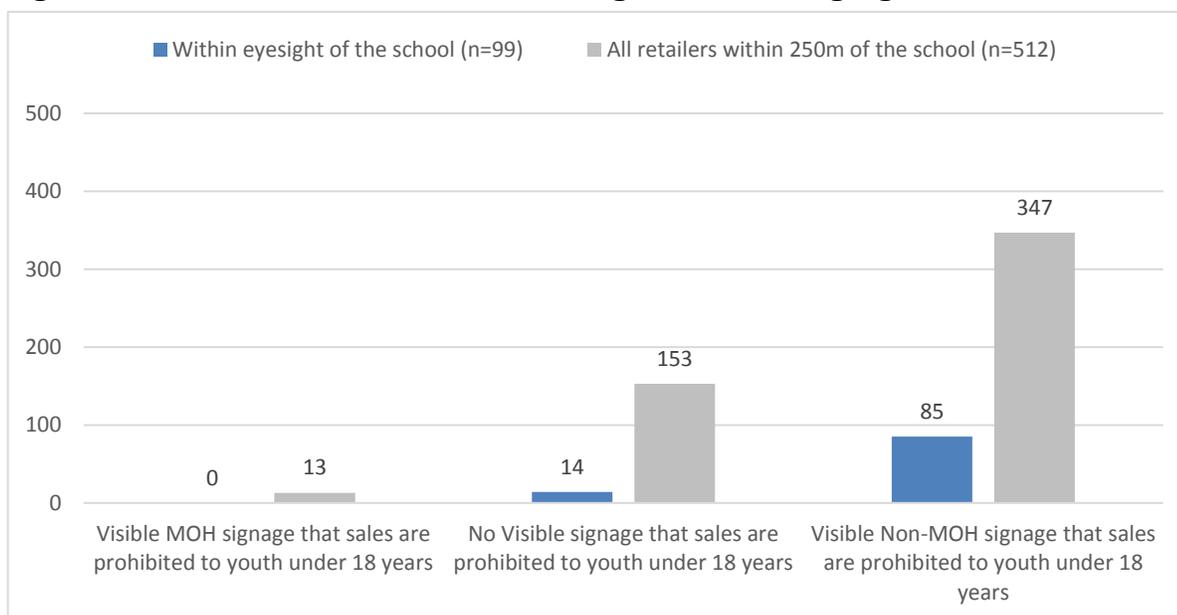
Six university students attended a full day of training on how to implement the study protocol on July 19, 2016 – immediately before the data collection period. The study team explained in detail the purpose of the study, the current tobacco control law, the survey content, key terms and definitions, the Maggi software application, and data collection procedures. Data collectors were instructed to behave as customers in order to discretely observe the retail environment and capture photos. In order to estimate the placement of products at the eye level of children, each data collector used a measuring tape to identify a 1-meter reference point on their body. The data collection team were oriented to the Moldovan tobacco control policies and trained to recognize required health warnings, signage announcing sales restrictions, claims of medical or educational benefit, and claims that tobacco use improves lifestyle. During the training, data collectors participated in a field test of the study protocol to practice using the survey, mobile app, and data collection procedures in nearby retailers.

Results

Data collectors observed 640 retail outlets within a 250-meter radius of schools. 512 (79%) of retailers sold tobacco within the 98 school sampling areas. Ninety-nine of these retailers were located within eyesight of the school. All 98 school sampling areas contained at least one retailer that sold tobacco products.

Only 13 out of over 500 retailers displayed the required Ministry of Health (MOH) signage indicating that sales are prohibited to youth under 18 years of age. This constitutes a non-compliance rate of 97%. None of the 99 retailers within eyesight of a school displayed this required age restriction sign. 347 tobacco retailers observed had a sign from somewhere other than the MOH posted with the age restrictions for buying tobacco products – of these, 85 were in eyesight of a school. 153 tobacco retailers observed did not have any sign posted with the age restrictions for buying tobacco products – 14 of which were in eyesight of a school (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Age Restriction Signage



Fifty-five percent of tobacco retailers within eyesight of a school displayed tobacco products at the eye level of children, increasing both accessibility and availability. Using lights, branded stands, and power walls were all common strategies to draw attention to tobacco product displays (Figures 4 and 5). Tobacco products were displayed at retailers in all but one of the observed school areas, with a total of 490 observed retailers displaying tobacco products.

Figure 4. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Displays of Tobacco Products

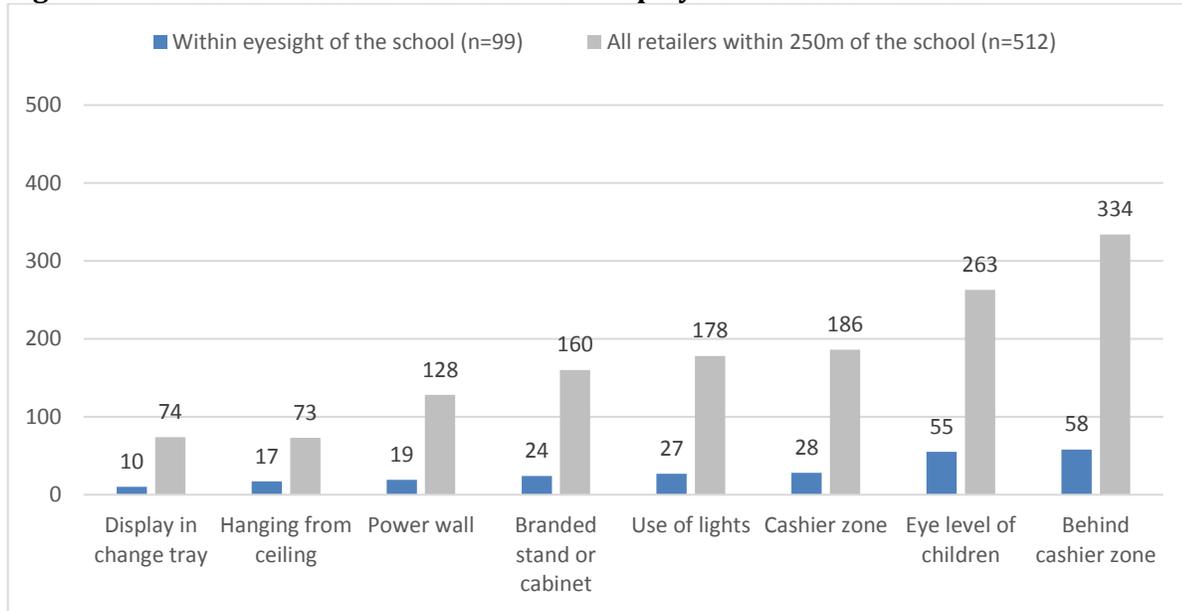


Figure 5. A Power Wall of Tobacco Products with Ministry of Health Signage that Sales are Prohibited to those Under 18 Years



65% of retailers displayed tobacco products in the cashier zone with sweets, snacks, or soda, leaving them visible, accessible, and appealing to children (Figure 6). Of particular interest and concern was the presence of tobacco products alongside sweets, snacks, or soda, at the eye level of children, with almost two thirds (322) of all tobacco retailers with displays in this location (Figure 7). Over half of tobacco retailers within eyesight of a school displayed tobacco products with sweets at the eye level of children.

Figure 6. Tobacco Products Displayed with Lights alongside Sweets, Snacks, or Soda

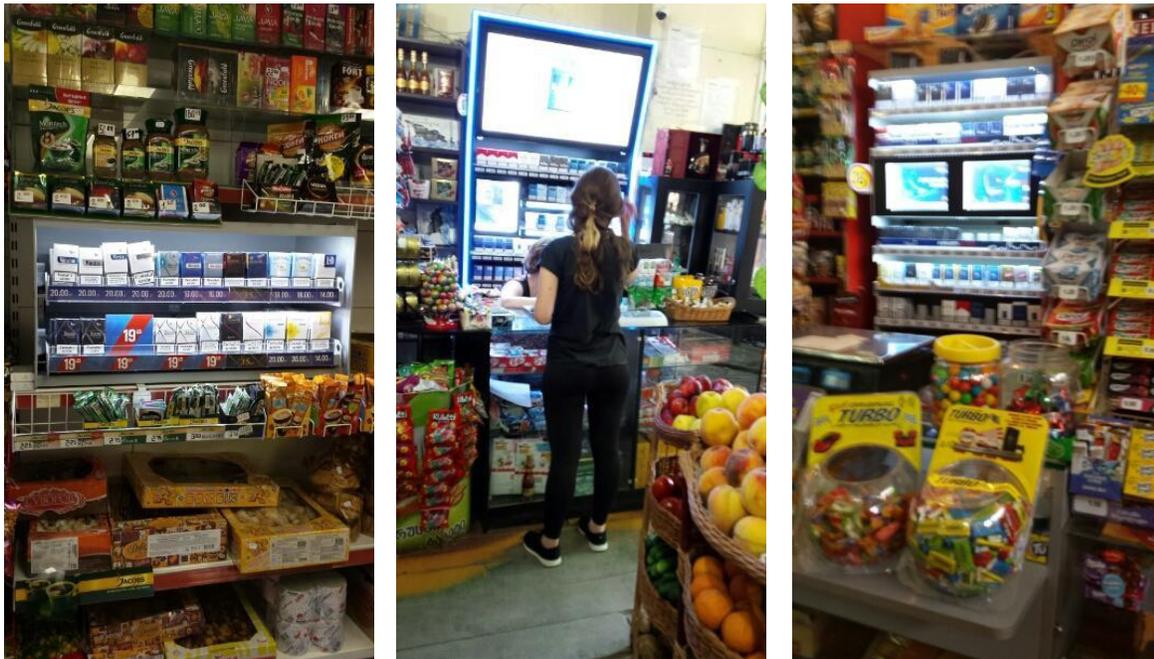


Figure 7. Display of Tobacco Products with Sweets, Snacks, or Soda

	Within Eyesight of the School (n=99)	All Retailers Within 250m of the School (n=512)
In the cashier zone	35	331
Behind the cashier zone	37	168
Hanging from the ceiling	10	17
1 meter or less from the floor	51	322
On a power wall of tobacco	0	2
On a branded stand or cabinet	0	1

Single cigarettes were available at 19 of the observed retailers, and 4 of these were within eyesight of the school, giving children convenient and easy access to very inexpensive tobacco products.

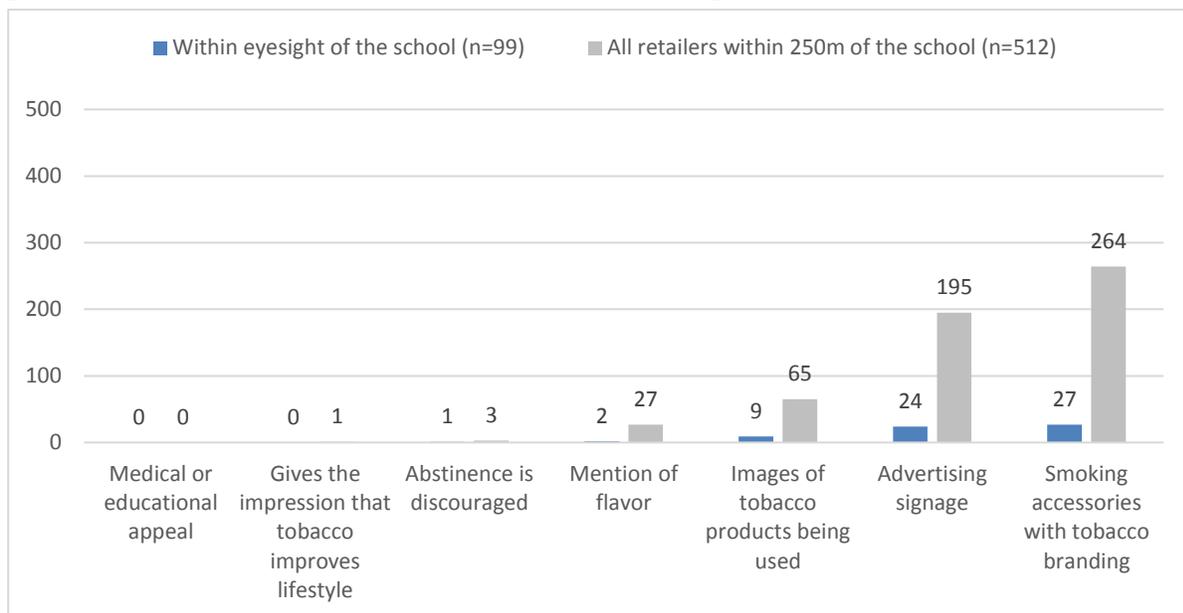
Tobacco advertising was very common. Thirty-eight percent of tobacco retailers had signage advertising tobacco products (Figure 8) and over 50% of tobacco retailers had smoking accessories with tobacco branding. Thirteen percent of retailers had advertisements posted that

contravened the law prohibiting images of tobacco products on advertisements (Figure 9). A total of 434 tobacco retailers had some type of advertising and 94 of the observed school zones had at least one retailer where some type of tobacco advertising was used. Over 40% of tobacco retailers did not have the required MOH warning labels posted on their advertisements, allowing for the promotion of tobacco products without the juxtaposition of the health consequences associated with their use.

Figure 8. A Backlit Marlboro Advertisement above a Power Wall with Lights



Figure 9. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Advertising

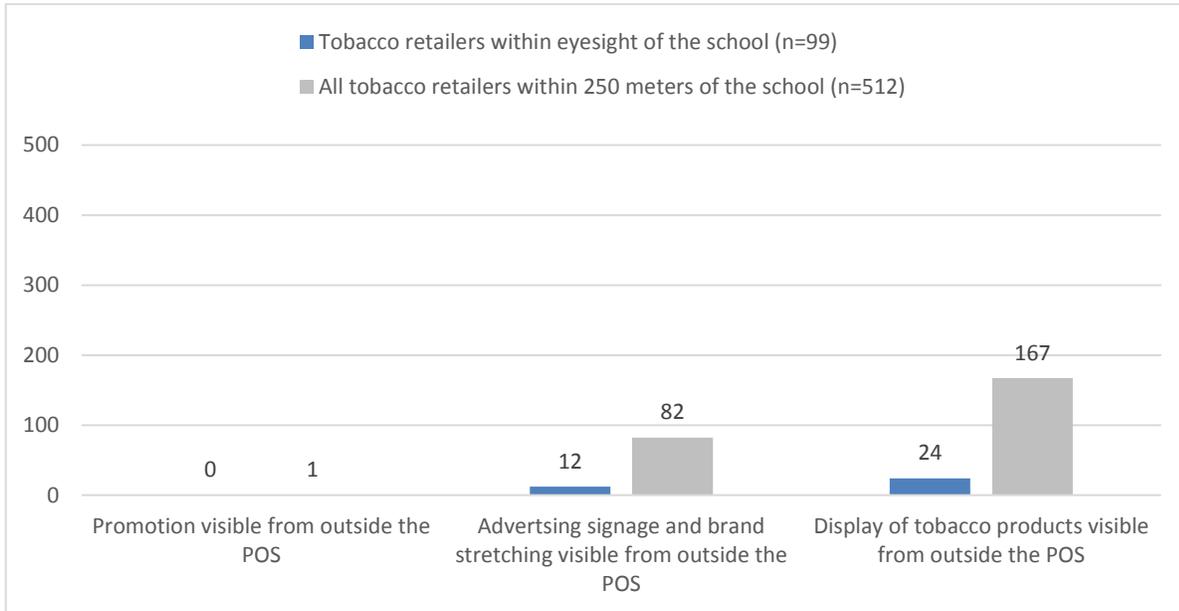


Of importance are the various aspects of marketing (product display, advertising, and promotional activities) visible from outside of retailers, as these are more likely to be noticed by children as they pass by the outlets. The display of tobacco products was the most visible form of marketing, being visible from outside one-third of all tobacco retailers observed (Figures 10 and 11). Advertising signage was visible from outside 82 tobacco retailers. Over a third of observed tobacco retailers had some type of marketing that was visible from outside the POS.

Figure 10. Cigarette Displays Visible from Outside a Kiosk



Figure 11. Number of Tobacco Retailers with Marketing Visible from Outside the Point-of-Sale



Winston and Marlboro were the most frequently displayed brands of tobacco products at the point-of-sale at observed retail outlets, followed by Kent & Parliament (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Tobacco Brands Displayed at the Point-of-Sale

Brands displayed at the POS	# of retailers
Winston	476
Marlboro	424
Kent	395
Parliament	367
Camel	364

Discussion

This study identified numerous examples of retail outlets that display or advertise tobacco in close proximity to schools and thus are easily accessible by students. The vast majority of all retailers observed sold tobacco, with almost all of these stores failing to display the official MOH age restriction signage, thus contravening the current tobacco control legislation. Tobacco products were often displayed in or near the cashier zone where they were very visible to all customers, including children. Of particular interest and concern was 1) the presence of tobacco products alongside sweets, snacks, or soda, and 2) tobacco product displays at the eye-level of children. Additionally, the marketing of tobacco products, either through product display, advertising, or promotional activities, were visible from outside of a noteworthy portion of observed retailers, thus making the presence of tobacco products more noticeable to children as passersby.

Limitations

This study is limited by the convenience sample of schools and the retail locations surrounding them. The results are not representative of all types of tobacco retailers or generalizable to other areas of Georgia.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that harmful tobacco products are displayed and advertised in areas that are visible and accessible to minors. Although the Georgia tobacco control law seeks to “create favorable conditions for public health protection,” and “to establish a perfect system of providing information to tobacco consumers about the harms of tobacco smoke,” the law fails to accomplish these goals. Health warning labels were often not present on advertisements, and the majority of retailers failed to post signage regarding age restrictions on the sale of tobacco products. A complete ban of tobacco product display, advertising, and promotion in retail locations would comply with FTC recommendations and more effectively achieve the goal of protecting the public from the harms of tobacco use.

Key Terms and Definitions

Advertising signage: branded print or digital/electronic media such as posters, banners, flyers, or shelf liners that are intended to promote awareness and favorable opinions of a tobacco brand or product

Brand stretching: the presence of non-tobacco items that carry a tobacco brand name

Cashier zone: directly on top of, in front of, or to the side of the counter or cash register where consumers make a purchase

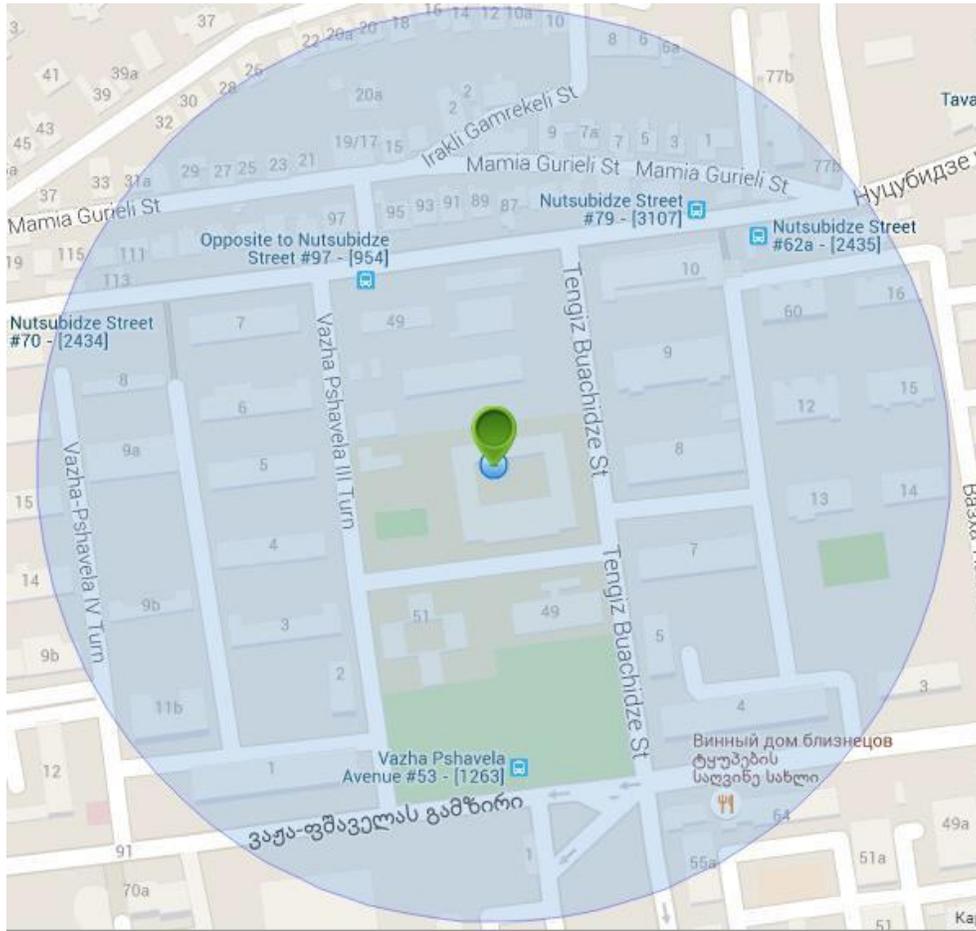
Eye level of children: placement of products 1 meter or less from the ground

Power wall: an excessive display of tobacco products showing multiple packs on multiple shelves

Product display: physical packs of tobacco products that are visible to potential consumers

Appendix A. School Sampling Area Map

203, Public school №199,49 Vazha Pshavela Avenue, Tbilisi



Please record the address of each store you observe. If needed, continue lettering and addresses on next page.

A.	F.
B.	G.
C.	H.
D.	I.
E.	J.

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