

# Cigarette Flavors in 14 Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Are Tobacco Companies Experimenting with how to Circumvent Bans on “Characterizing” Flavors?

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## Background

- Only a handful of countries currently ban flavored cigarettes
- U.S. FDA bans cigarettes with candy, fruit and other “characterizing” flavors, except tobacco and menthol flavors
- Tobacco companies can test and learn from marketing strategies about flavors in countries with low levels of tobacco regulation

## Objective

- Examine the extent of flavor marketing on cigarette packs in low- and middle-income countries
- Identify innovative ways tobacco companies communicate about flavors that may not strictly be covered by bans on characterizing flavors

## Methods

- Cigarette and kretek packs systematically purchased in 14 low- and middle-income countries in 2013: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Vietnam. None of these countries have a flavor ban
- In each country, bought one of every unique pack from sample of vendors in 36 low, middle and high socioeconomic areas of three major cities
- Two coders assessed packs for words and/or imagery on the pack denoting a flavor or taste
- Stata 14 used to conduct descriptive statistics

## Results

- 3,232 packs purchased and coded
  - Of the 234 kreteks: 96% indicated clove flavoring
  - Of 2,998 cigarette packs: 560 (19%) had at least one flavor-related word; 73 (2%) had at least one flavor-related image



226 cigarette packs (8%) had “menthol” flavor stated on the pack

36 cigarette packs (1%) had “mint” flavor stated on the pack



Some packs used terminology suggestive of menthol flavor



102 cigarette packs (3%) indicated a fruit or citrus flavor on the pack

32 cigarette packs (1%) indicated an alcoholic beverage flavor on the pack



77 cigarette packs (3%) indicated an ability for the user to change the stick flavor

Some packs had imagery or words suggestive of a flavor or taste



What do these flavors mean?

Words not normally considered a flavor paired with the word “flavor”



## Conclusions

- Flavors extensively communicated on cigarette packs in these 14 countries
- “Flavor” sometimes paired with words not normally considered a recognizable flavor
- Public health groups and regulators need to be aware of ways tobacco companies may try to circumvent product requirements

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