

**Tobacco advertising in Maputo, Mozambique:  
how will they keep pressing?**

(Publicidad del tabaco en Maputo, Mozambique: ¿cómo aguantarán la presión?)

*Dear Editor:*

To describe the current condition of tobacco advertising in a developing country with low prevalence of cigarette smoking, we decided to quantify the proportion of billboard and news-

paper advertising devoted to tobacco and to analyze its contents.

Maputo outdoor advertising was surveyed by 3 observers (*in loco* and after visualizing the images recorded in video), both in downtown largest and busier avenues (24th of July, 25th of September, Eduardo Mondlane, Guerra Popular, Julius Nyerere, Karl Marx, Kenneth Kaunda, Mao Tse Tung, Vladimir Lenine) and in the suburbs (Acordos de Lusaka, Angola, Joaquim Chissano, FPLM, Julius Nyerere, Malhangalene, Moçambique, OUA, Vladimir Lenine). The total length of the streets surveyed was approximately 120 kilometres. The main daily (Expresso, Mediafax, Notícias) and weekly (Demos, Domingo, Embondeiro, País, Savana, Zambeze) newspapers published in Maputo were checked to identify advertising items.

In April 2005, we identified 707 billboards (79.9% downtown; 45.0% larger than 1 m<sup>2</sup> as estimated by the observers and 8.4% blank). Only 2 tobacco advertisements were observed (0.3% of the non-blank billboards). Both were large panels, one with the typical image of a group of people smoking, and the other displaying a tobacco plantation (fig. 1). Among the newspapers published in February and March 2005, only job announcements for the tobacco industry were found. No advertisements promoting cigarette smoking were published.

The frequency of tobacco advertising was unexpectedly low. Mozambique signed the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) on 18th June 2003 but to date, it has not been ratified. The treaty has been widely discussed in the Parliament and has received a great deal of public attention. Subtle political pressure on the tobacco industry or a deliberate «non-aggression» policy by the industry may explain the low prevalence of newspaper and billboard tobacco advertising. Though no such quantification was performed in the past, the general impression is that cigarette advertising used to be much more prevalent.

As almost nil tobacco advertisements were present in billboards and newspapers, targeting strategies surely favour other media. In several African developing countries the advertisements «to maintain loyalty and attract new recruits» are increasing, and other non-traditional means are being explored to maintain visibility in public space<sup>1</sup>. In Mozambique there is a low prevalence of cigarette smoking. Slowly growing economic standards make the country a promising market that the industry is surely not neglecting, as so many disclosed documents make probable<sup>2</sup>. Mozambique should ratify FCTC and implement a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising. Until a comprehensive advertising ban is enforced, surveillance of tobacco advertising in newspapers, magazines, billboards,

**Figure 1. Tobacco billboard-advertising in Maputo, Mozambique (April, 2005).**



radio, television, and at points of sale may provide an early warning about advertising trends and the tobacco industry's strategies to promote tobacco consumption.

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