In 2005, Japan Tobacco Incorporated (JTI) applied to trademark the term “LSS Less Smoke Smell”, a phrase printed on some JTI cigarette packs to describe products designed to have the appearance of reduced negative qualities of cigarette smoke including secondhand smoke.

LSS cigarettes are no safer than regular cigarettes. LSS products were introduced during a time of rising public knowledge of SHS health effects and demand for smoke-free spaces.

LSS cigarettes have been sold in high-income countries like Japan and Canada for over 10 years. It is unclear to what extent LSS cigarettes have been marketed in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), or if manufacturers other than JTI have used similar terms or phrases.

The Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS) systemically collects tobacco packs available in 14 low- and middle-income countries with high tobacco use including: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and Viet Nam.

Between 2013-2017, TPackSS collected and coded over 4,000 packs for marketing appeals including lexical content related to smoke smell.

The current study reports the tobacco manufacturers that included claims on packs that suggest reduced odor, and from which countries these packs were purchased.

The world’s largest tobacco companies are using terms “LSS”, and “Less Smoke Smell” as well as terms like “Less Smell”, “Odor reduction technology”, and “Smoke Smell Down” on packs in LMICs. The marketing tactic of less smoke smell is likely salient to consumers in jurisdictions, like Russia, that have recently implemented smoke-free environments. Terms like LSS should be considered when jurisdictions regulate misleading terms on tobacco products. Future research should study how terms like LSS impact consumer perceptions of product harm.

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