Exchanging cigarettes is a common practice in China, often observed during special events including festivals and weddings. Cigarette packs in China have been marketed and branded for wedding ceremonies. We examined Chinese cigarette packs for wedding terminology and imagery.

Methods

- In February 2017, cigarette packs were collected from Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Kunming, and Chengdu using a systematic protocol designed to capture unique packs.
- Cigarette packs were coded by two independent coders for text and imagery of traditional Chinese wedding symbols.
- The coded lexical appeals in reference to weddings included “double happiness”, “dragon and phoenix”, “wedding”, “marriage”, and other traditional Chinese wishes for a happy marriage.
- Imagery of the double happiness symbol, the dragon and phoenix, and other cultural and traditional images including Mandarin ducks and brides and grooms were also coded.

Results

739 unique cigarette packs were collected. Sixty-eight (9.2%) had either lexical or imagery appeals for weddings.

- 66 packs (8.9%) contained any mention of lexical wedding appeals
  - 56 packs (7.6%) contained a reference to “double happiness”
  - 12 packs (1.6%) referenced the phrase “dragon and phoenix”
  - 12 packs (1.6%) referenced other Chinese wedding terminology (e.g., “on your wedding night”)
- 67 (9.1%) displayed any imagery for wedding appeals
  - 56 packs (7.6%) contained imagery for “double happiness”
  - 15 packs (2.0%) had dragon and phoenix imagery
  - 6 packs (0.8%) displayed other wedding imagery (e.g., bride and groom, mandarin duck)

Conclusions

China’s tobacco industry takes full advantage of the gifting and sharing culture, marketing specific packs for events such as weddings. With only a 35% text health warning label that often has colors and designs that are integrated with the rest of the pack, manufacturers have much pack real estate to make them attractive for gifting. Requiring graphic health warning images may make Chinese cigarette packs less desirable for gifting.

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