

The Game-Changer: Free-Broadcasting Privilege Through Mass Media

One of the most important anti-tobacco industry milestones in Turkey came in 2008 with a law that provided the government with 90 minutes of free broadcast time on the hazards of tobacco products, including 30 minutes of primetime.

This law was a turning point in national awareness in the fight against tobacco. A series of tobacco control campaigns created with the assistance of Vital Strategies has resulted in some of the most effective campaigns in Turkey. Vital Strategies provided technical and financial support to develop evidence-based, effective campaigns, and continues to work in Turkey to build capacity on how to develop campaigns with evidence-based methods, including message-testing and evaluations. This work seeks to break resistance against soft messages to more hard-hitting, emotional messages that tell stories that resonate with smokers. But it didn't happen overnight.

- The series of campaigns started with an advertisement called “[Café Burak](#)” supported by Vital Strategies. This campaign tackled a sympathetic issue, the damage passive smoking can cause children, and the scope of a new smoke-free law to protect them. Notification of a new hotline was also introduced.
- Campaigns continued with the adaptation of “[Sponge](#)” and the inclusion of a smoking cessation quit number. Powerful images in these materials cut through smoker’s defenses, resulting in the quit line being overwhelmed with more calls than it could handle, a good problem to have.
- The next campaign was “[Smoking Repentance](#).” This highly-effective campaign, included stories from actual people suffering from lung cancer, throat cancer and COPD, and reverberated through Turkey. The effectiveness of this campaign became apparent in the pre- and post-evaluation. According to the results of the research, conducted among 1,242 people ages 15 to 64, 83% of the target audience remembered the campaign and 27.% of those stated that after seeing the campaign, they decided to get support to quit.
- To encourage better compliance with Turkey’s smoke-free law the campaign “[Smoke](#),” adapted from an Indian campaign, reminded people that smoke-free laws and fines would be enforced.
- Most recently in 2019, Turkey’s first anti-industry campaign “[Their Gain, Our Loss](#)” was launched. This pre-tested campaign was designed to challenge people’s perceptions of the tobacco industry. To our knowledge this is the first campaign run by a government in a low- or middle-income country that speaks out against the powerful



Population

82 million

Smoking Prevalence

44% of men, 19% of women, 23% of boys and 12% of girls currently use tobacco¹.

Tobacco Control Policies

Smoking is banned in all indoor and outdoor premises including public buildings, shopping malls and the entrance of campuses. Turkey passed a plain packaging law on tobacco products in January 2020. Tobacco advertising and promotion is prohibited, except for point-of-sale displays of tobacco products. Sales and marketing of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products are also banned.

Milestone

Turkey was the first country to pass comprehensive tobacco control laws that matched the World Health Organization’s MPOWER policy package.

¹ Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2016



Image still of “Their Gain, Our Loss” campaign commercial.

tobacco industry. This campaign became the most popular public campaign in 2019 and was among the top winners in a prestigious survey competition run by MediaCat that includes big-budget commercials.

With support from Vital Strategies, Turkey’s tobacco control advocates have been able to use the broadcast privilege to significant advantage, providing as much as US\$40 million per year in free broadcast time. A sustainable broadcast mechanism, such as this, is a gold standard for tobacco control policies. Such a mechanism offers a chance to provide population-based tobacco control messaging that can change behaviors, reduce prevalence, delay initiation and build support for policy such as smoke-free laws and tobacco taxes, over time. We hope other countries will follow suit passing similar legislation to safeguard their populations from tobacco harms.

This case study is part of a series highlighting our work with the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use in priority countries.

About Vital Strategies

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. We work with governments and civil society in more than 70 countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle their most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale as rapidly as possible. To find out more, please visit www.vitalstrategies.org or Twitter @VitalStrat.