

The Market for Bidis and Smokeless Tobacco in India: Evidence from Semi-urban and Rural Towns in Five States

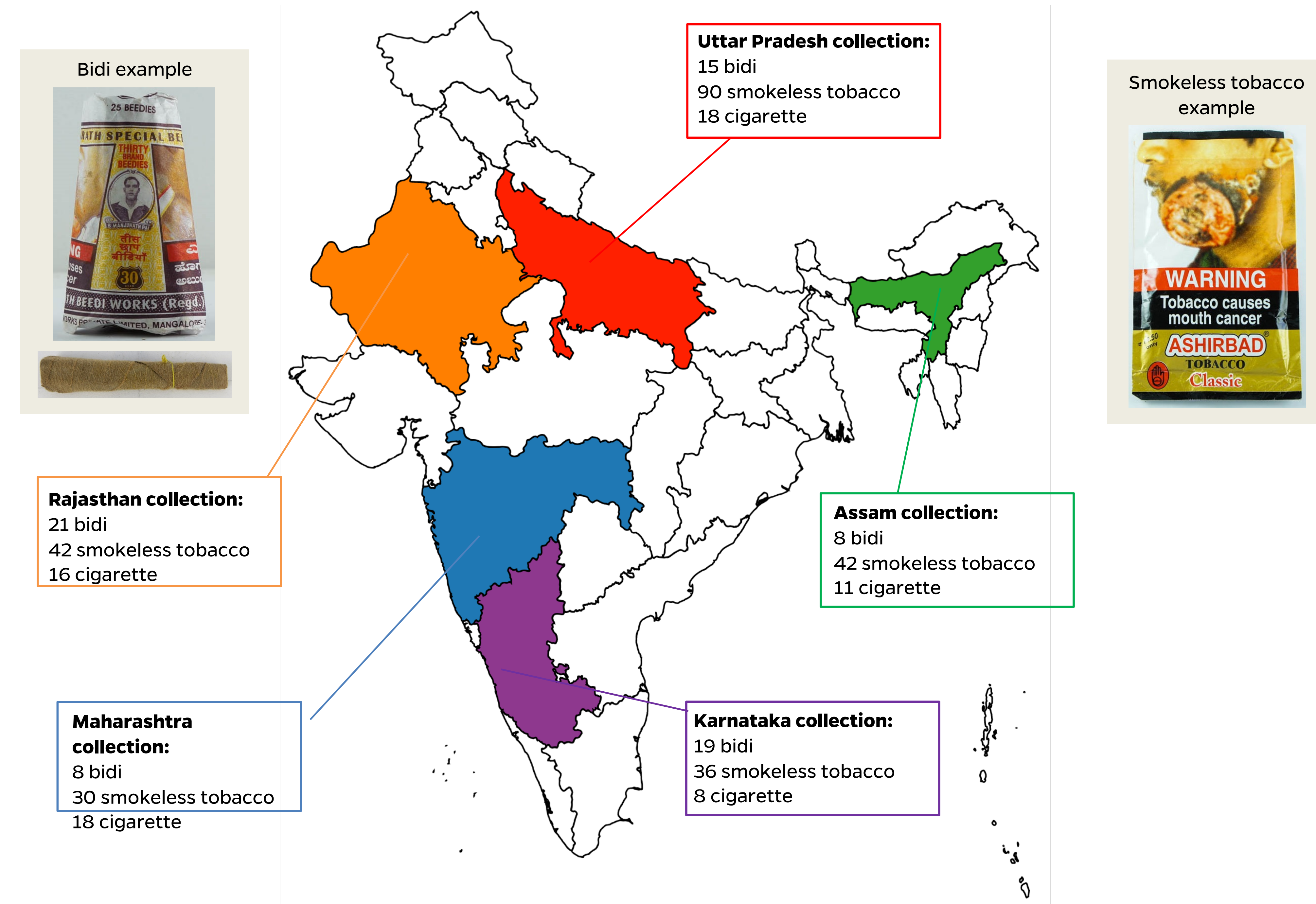
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Background

- Bidis (hand-rolled cigarettes) and smokeless tobacco (SLT) account for 81% of tobacco consumption in India
- Over 70 million Indians use bidis and almost 200 million use SLT products
- Bidis and SLT are particularly popular outside of urban areas and among poorer, less educated consumers
- This study examines the brand variability, price, and presence of an Indian health warning label (HWL) for bidi and SLT packs in semi-urban and rural towns

Methods

- The Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS) project systematically collects unique tobacco packs sold in low- and middle-income countries with high tobacco use
- From October 26 to November 23, 2017, bidis and SLT products were collected in five states (see map), selected based on political significance, geographic diversity and prevalence of bidi and SLT users
- Within each state, five towns were selected:
 - Semi-urban (one): 20,000-50,000 population
 - Rural (four): 5,000-20,000 population
- Across the five states, we collected 71 state-unique bidi and 240 state-unique SLT packages
- State-unique cigarette packs (n=71) collected in the same area are used as a reference group in this study

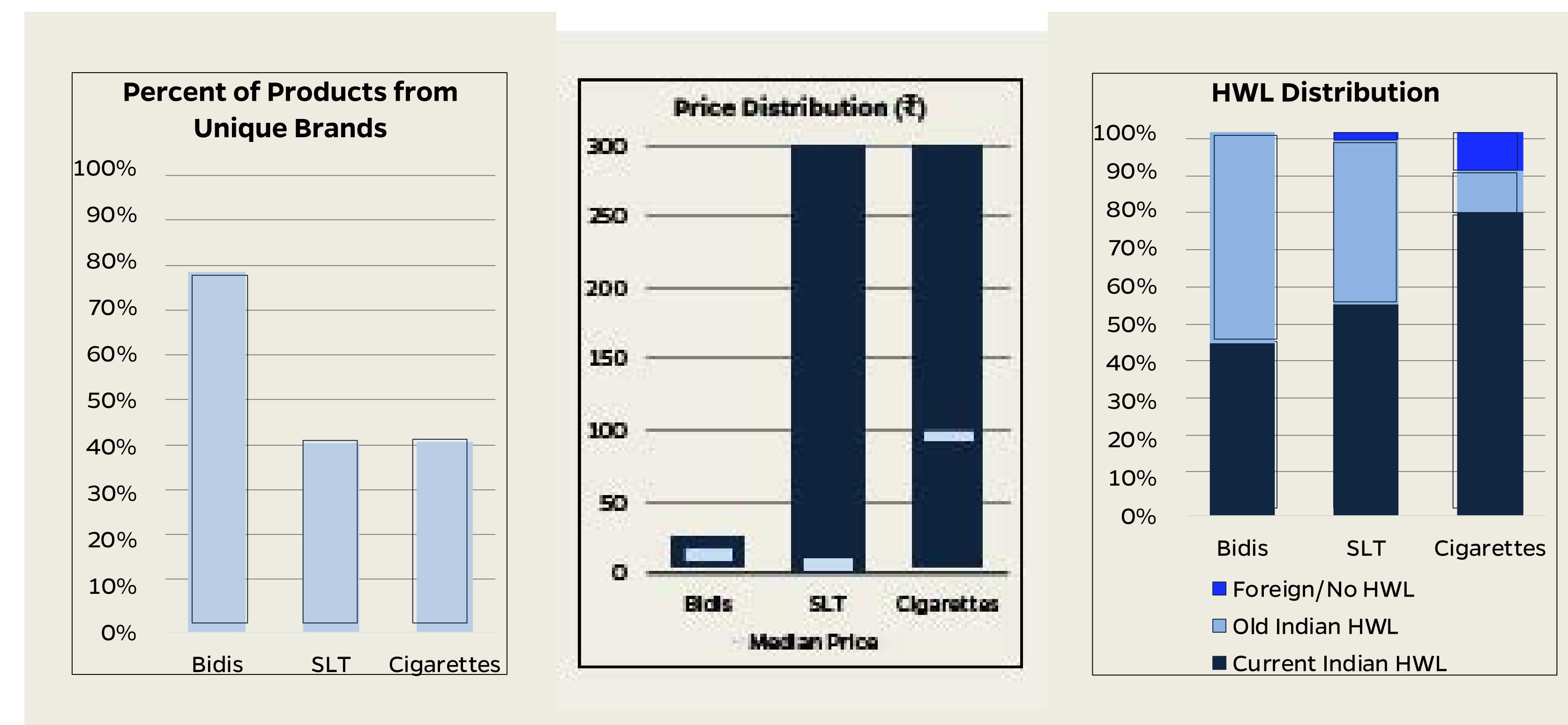


Results

- The bidi collection had a greater percent of unique brands, while SLT products had a greater number:
 - 55 brands accounted for the 71 state-unique bidi packs; three brands (5%) were found in multiple states
 - 97 brands accounted for the 240 state-unique SLT products; 19 brands (20%) were found in multiple states
- The median price for a pack of bidis was 12 rupees (₹) (range: ₹5-₹25). The median price for SLT products was ₹5 (range: ₹1-₹300). During data collection ₹65 \cong 1 USD
- Cigarettes: 29 brands associated with 71 packs, seven brands (24%) were found in multiple states, a median price of ₹95

Conclusions

- The pricing and brand variability of bidis provides the appearance of many small producers
- The price and brand distribution across states of SLT products looked similar to cigarettes
- Very few bidi and SLT products were found without an Indian HWL (regardless of being current (April, 2017 implementation) or compliant)
 - This may be indicative of localized production and distribution



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