



Institute for
Global Tobacco Control

Words Matter:

*How a 'complete ban' on e-cigarette
and HTP product sales is framed
in Vietnamese media coverage*

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- We have no competing interests to disclose

	Tobacco industry	E-cigarette & nicotine product industry	Pharma industry
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Background

Vietnam is considering two options: to **completely ban** or **regulate** the domestic sale and production of ENDS and HTPs



Ministry of Health's position is to **completely ban** the domestic sale and production of ENDS and HTPs under current tobacco control law



Other government agencies advocate for a pilot program, which would **regulate/allow the sale** of ENDS and HTPs for a short period of time and then evaluate its impact



Background

- Tobacco companies are engaged in the debate over ENDS and HTP regulation
 - direct lobbying
 - shaping media discourse around regulation
- Media coverage is an important factor in the policymaking process
 - Media shapes perceptions, as well as political and public support for an issue

How were different news stories framing the issue of the sale and/or manufacture of ENDS or HTPs in Vietnam?

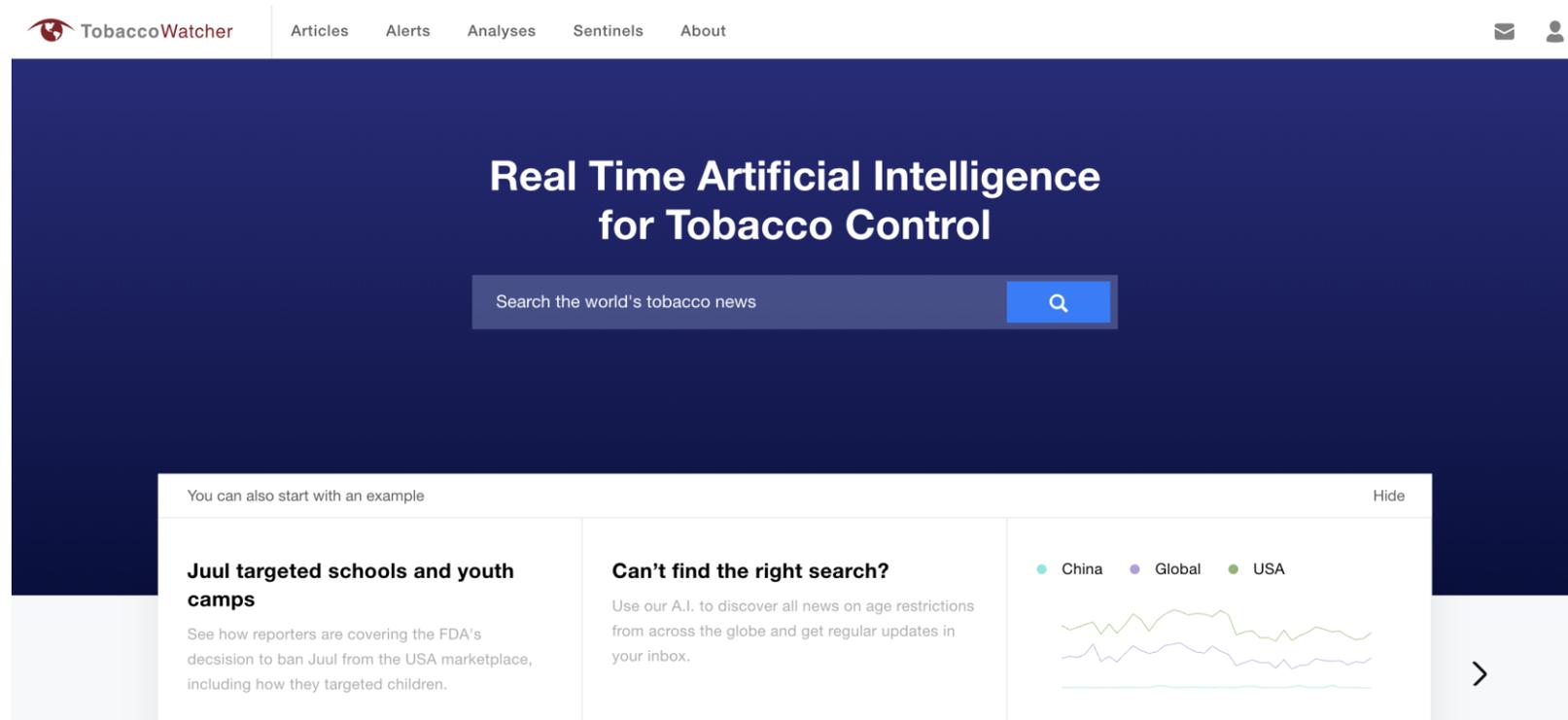




Methods

Methods

We retrieved news stories specific to ENDS and HTPs posted on Vietnamese news outlets from January 2019 to June 2022 using the media monitoring resource Tobacco Watcher:



Methods

Initial sample = **479** news stories

Review news stories for duplication and relevance

Final sample = **278** news stories



Methods

- Coders were trained to identify each **issue frame** present in the unduplicated, relevant news stories

Issue frame = a coherent story with a single point of view or argument position that presented a problem and solution either together (problem + solution) or alone (problem only; solution only)



Methods

For each issue frame, coders identified and coded for the following elements:

Argument position	The tone or point of view within the issue frame	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Support a ban on ENDS and/or HTPs2. Against a ban on ENDS and/or HTPs
Source of the problem	The factor(s) causing the ENDS or HTP problem present in the issue frame	Government; Industry; Retailers; Illicit trade; At-age consumers; Under-age consumers; People who smoke cigarettes; Parents
Solution to the problem	The solution(s) to the ENDS and/or HTP problem present in the issue frame	Ban; Pilot program; Regulation; Education; Advertising; Fines; Age of sale restrictions
Values	The larger social values attached to the reasoning within the issue frame	Accountability of government; Accountability of companies; Right to education; Right to health; Help those addicted; Protect youth; Science-based; Economic growth; Environment

→ A 10% sample was double coded with high reliability.



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Findings

290 issue
frames
presented
across **278**
news stories

- Most stories (95%) contained one issue frame
- 13 new stories contained two issue frames; one in support and one against a ban

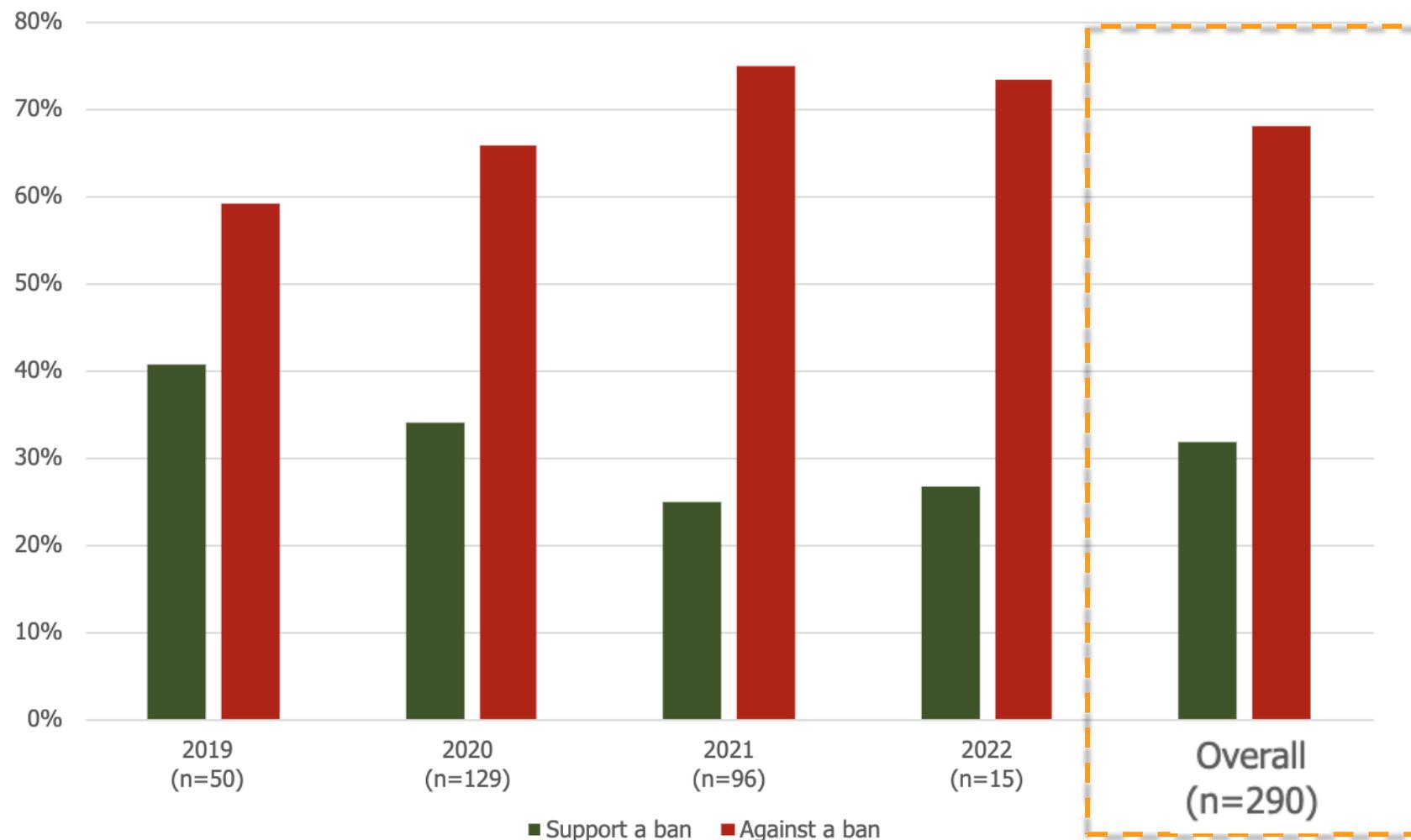


Argument position

Most issue frames across news stories were **against a ban on ENDS and/or HTPs**.

By year, there was a relative increase in the proportion of issues frames that were against a ban over time and a decrease in those in support of a ban.

Proportion of issue frames by argument position



In support of a ban (n=94)

Source of problem	% (n)
Government	31.9 (30)
Industry	74.5 (70)
Retailers	55.3 (52)
Illicit trade	29.8 (28)
At-age consumers	60.6 (57)
Under-age consumers	34.0 (32)
People who smoke cigarettes	3.2 (3)
Parents	0.0 (0)
Solution to problem	
Ban	89.4 (84)
Pilot program	0.0 (0)
Regulation	26.6 (25)
Education	17.0 (16)
Advertising	10.6 (10)
Fines	6.4 (6)
Age of sale restrictions	1.1 (1)

Source of problem

Among the issues frames in **support of a ban**, the most frequent source of the problem was the *industry, under-age consumers, at-age consumers of ENDS and/or HTPs, and retailers.*

Industry

- Industry marketing youth-appealing products:

“To hit the tastes of young people, e-cigarette comes in more than 15,000 different flavors”

-#638, factual news account on danviet.vn Oct 2020

Underage consumers

- Rising rates of use among under-age consumers:

“2.6% of students aged 13-17 now smoke e-cigarettes”

-#200, factual news account on 24h.com.vn Aug 2020

At-age consumers

- Growing popularity of ENDS/HTPs among adults

Retailers

- Availability of ENDS/HTPs through retailers, including e-commerce



Solution to problem

A **ban on the sale and/or manufacturing of ENDS/HTPs** was the most frequently mentioned solution.

One article stated suggested to...

“ban e-cigarettes from the very beginning and do not allow e-cigarettes to be imported”

-#328 editorial opinion on thanhvien.vn, Feb 2021



Against a ban (n=196)

Source of problem	% (n)
Government	25.0 (49)
Industry	48.5 (95)
Retailers	63.3 (124)
Illicit trade	41.3 (81)
At-age consumers	34.8 (74)
Under-age consumers	26.5 (52)
People who smoke cigarettes	1.0 (2)
Parents	1.5 (3)
Solution to problem	
Ban	0.0 (0)
Pilot program	3.1 (6)
Regulation	38.3 (75)
Education	23.5 (46)
Advertising	7.1 (14)
Fines	10.7 (21)
Age of sale restrictions	1.0 (2)

Source of problem

Most articles **against a ban** framed the actions taken by retailers, the tobacco industry, and those engaged in illicit trade as **illegal efforts** to offer products without proper regulation or control, which suitable regulation (but not a complete ban) could provide.

Retailers

“According to the Ministry of Health, the e-cigarettes and heated cigarettes sold recently are mostly brought to Vietnam by hand-carried or smuggled [routes]”

-#576 factual news account on vietnamplus.vn, Oct 2020

Industry

“In fact, the new generation of tobacco products is intended to draw attention, entice youth, and even target non-smokers.”

-#485 factual news account on tapchitaichinh.vn, July 2020

Illicit trade

“These goods are smuggled goods produced by foreign countries, without invoices and document proving the origin. Notably, the owner of the establishment did not register the business but opened his own shop and business illegally.”

-#32 factual news account on tapchicongthuong.vn, July 2021



Solution to problem

Among issue frames **against a ban**, the most common solutions were **regulation** and **education**.

→ Common suggestion argued for a legal framework to control the products, their advertising, and circulation and/or regulation of smuggling and illegal sales.

→ For example, one article states the "*urgent need for a legal framework to control product sales*" and "*help functional agencies have enough tools, sanctions, and strictly punish criminal acts.*"

- #52 columnist opinion article on baomoi.com, Jan 2022



Values

<i>Values</i>	Support ban (n=94) % (n)	Against ban (n=196) % (n)
Accountability of government	98.9 (93)	93.4 (183)
Accountability of companies	0.0 (0)	3.1 (6)
Right to education	29.8 (28)	25.5 (50)
Right to health	95.7 (90)	79.6 (156)
Help those addicted	5.3 (5)	3.6 (7)
Protect youth	72.3 (68)	53.1 (104)
Science-based	35.1 (33)	19.9 (39)
Economic growth	5.3 (5)	5.1 (10)
Environment	8.5 (8)	6.6 (13)

Values

A **similar set of social values** were utilized across issue frames in **support of** and **against** a ban.



Values - Accountability of the government

Support of a ban

Banning products is part of the government's responsibility to protect the public and remove harmful products from the market:

"Many countries continue to ban or restrict the circulation of heated tobacco products."

-#84 factual news account on dantri.com.vn, April 2021

Against a ban

Regulations or a pilot program will provide the government with...

"...sufficient information and an accurate basis to assess the economic and social impacts of legalizing this product line and to assess the level of risk of this product [to] ensure the harmonization of the interests of stakeholders, including the State, consumers, tobacco producers and tobacco farmers."

-#449 columnist opinion article on vtv.vn, Nov 2020



Conclusion

- Results suggest that media coverage of ENDS and/or HTP sale and manufacture in Vietnam are largely framed against a ban on these products.
- Arguments draw upon similar broader, social values which may impact how the public and policymakers perceive the issue of banning ENDS and HTPs.

Stakeholders, including policymakers, can use this information to craft their communication strategies to shape future messaging around a ban on ENDS and HTPs.



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