Online Marketing of E-cigarettes and Heated Tobacco Products on Brand Websites in the Philippines

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• Competing interests: Dr. Cohen is a paid consultant in litigation against a tobacco company

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<th>Tobacco industry</th>
<th>E-cigarette &amp; nicotine product industry</th>
<th>Pharma industry</th>
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<td>The work being presented has received funding or other means of support from any of the following sources:</td>
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Background

• July 2022 – Philippines passed bill RA11900
  o Permit previously banned e-cigarette (e-cig) and heated tobacco products (HTP) flavors
  o Minimum age of purchase lowered from 21 years to 18 years old

Image credit: https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what-we-do/us/flavored-tobacco-products
Objectives

• Describe product features and marketing strategies on e-cig and HTP brand websites in the Philippines

• Discuss policy recommendations for e-cig and HTP regulations
Methods

• In September 2022, Google searches were used to identify 12 e-cig and 3 HTP brand websites specifically targeting people in the Philippines:
  - **E-cig:** JUUL, JVE, Kardinal Stick, Kokin, Mad Master, NIXX Global, RELX, Snowplus, Spade Vapes, VLADDIN, Yooz, Zalan
  - **HTP:** IQOS, MOK, TEO/NEAFS

• 632 webpages within 2 clicks away from the homepage were coded and analyzed
Findings

• 13 brand websites (10 e-cig & 3 HTP) had an age gate
• E-cig devices, cartridges, pods, and e-cigarette liquids were marketed on e-cig brand websites
• HTP devices and inserts were marketed on HTP brand websites
• 12 brand websites (10 e-cig & 2 HTP) offered online sales
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept Descriptor</th>
<th>E-cigarette brand websites</th>
<th>HTP brand websites</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mint/menthol</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Concept descriptor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other beverages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweets</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee/tea</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Promotion/Engagement Strategies

Promotion/engagement strategies were found on all 15 brand websites.

Common engagement strategies included:

- Social media links (n=13)
- Endorsement/testimonials by customers, celebrities, influencers (n=8)
- Pay-to-promote affiliate or ambassador program (n=7)
- Referral discounts (n=6)
Marketing Messages

- Common marketing messages included **claims of smoking cessation assistance** (n=13), **lower health risks than cigarettes** (n=10), and **depictions of the company as responsible or self-regulating** (n=10).

- "We inform consumers of all relevant safety information about our smoke-free products."
- "Perfect for anyone looking to make the switch from smoking to vaping."
- "[Brand Name] has developed a smart alternative for tobacco users, delivering a product that’s simple, enjoyable, and most importantly, less harmful than combustible cigarettes."
Advertising Appeals

**Flavor** (n=14)  

**Innovation** (n=13)  

**Luxury/high-end** (n=13)

- Other appeals: Asian appeal, vapor/cloud, recreation/fun, masculinity, femininity, cigarette-like satisfaction, cartoon/animation, fashionable
Advertising Appeals
Conclusions

• E-cig and HTP brand websites in the Philippines commonly employ youth-targeted marketing strategies

• Findings support policy changes to safeguard Filipino youth from tobacco and nicotine harm:
  
  o Strengthened regulation around digital marketing of e-cig and HTP
  
  o Increased minimum purchase age
  
  o Stricter flavor bans
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Access the study: