Vital Strategies

TERM
Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement

Online Marketing of Tobacco Products: India
December 2020

Background:

Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship promotes tobacco consumption and discourages cessation. The World Health Organization's MPOWER technical package on tobacco control and the international treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, recommend banning tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. In India, Section 5 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act prohibits all direct and indirect advertisement of tobacco products, including activity that promotes the use of tobacco products or their trademark or brand name.

Despite this, tobacco marketing continues to be widespread globally and in India, particularly in online forums that are less regulated.[i,ii,iii] Vital Strategies launched the Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) in June 2019 to monitor tobacco marketing activities.[1] This situation report is part of a monthly series that summarizes observed examples of online tobacco marketing in India. It covers the period **Nov. 16 to Dec. 15, 2020.**

Highlights of the Month

- *Tobacco marketing by volume:* There were 764 cases of tobacco marketing online this month. Of these, 81% were surrogate advertising, 13% were events, promotions and sponsorships and 6% were direct marketing of tobacco products. Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 45% was for smoking products and 55% was for smokeless products. No marketing for e-cigarettes was recorded during this period.
- *Tobacco marketing by state:* Overall, 38% of the observed marketing originated in West Bengal, followed by Uttar Pradesh (30%), Rajasthan (25%), Maharashtra (4%) and Karnataka (2%). Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (84%), Maharashtra (10%) and Karnataka (4%). Marketing of smokeless tobacco products originated in Uttar Pradesh (55%) and Rajasthan (45%).
- *Tobacco marketing by channel:* Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 45% was on Facebook, 33% on Instagram and 13% on Twitter. Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (49%), Instagram (28%) and Twitter (8%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (42%), Instagram (38%) and Twitter (18%).

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[1] *For the avoidance of any doubt, while this Report notes instances of tobacco product marketing, it does not attempt to identify violations, nor does it allege violations, of the aforementioned regulation.*

- *Message framing:* Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 48% had messages related to recreation[2] and 23% to community celebration.[3] Other prominent messages focused on health (4%) and remembrance days (1%). Smoking tobacco products were marketed using messages focused on recreation and community celebration. Smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages focused on community celebration, recreation and remembrance days.
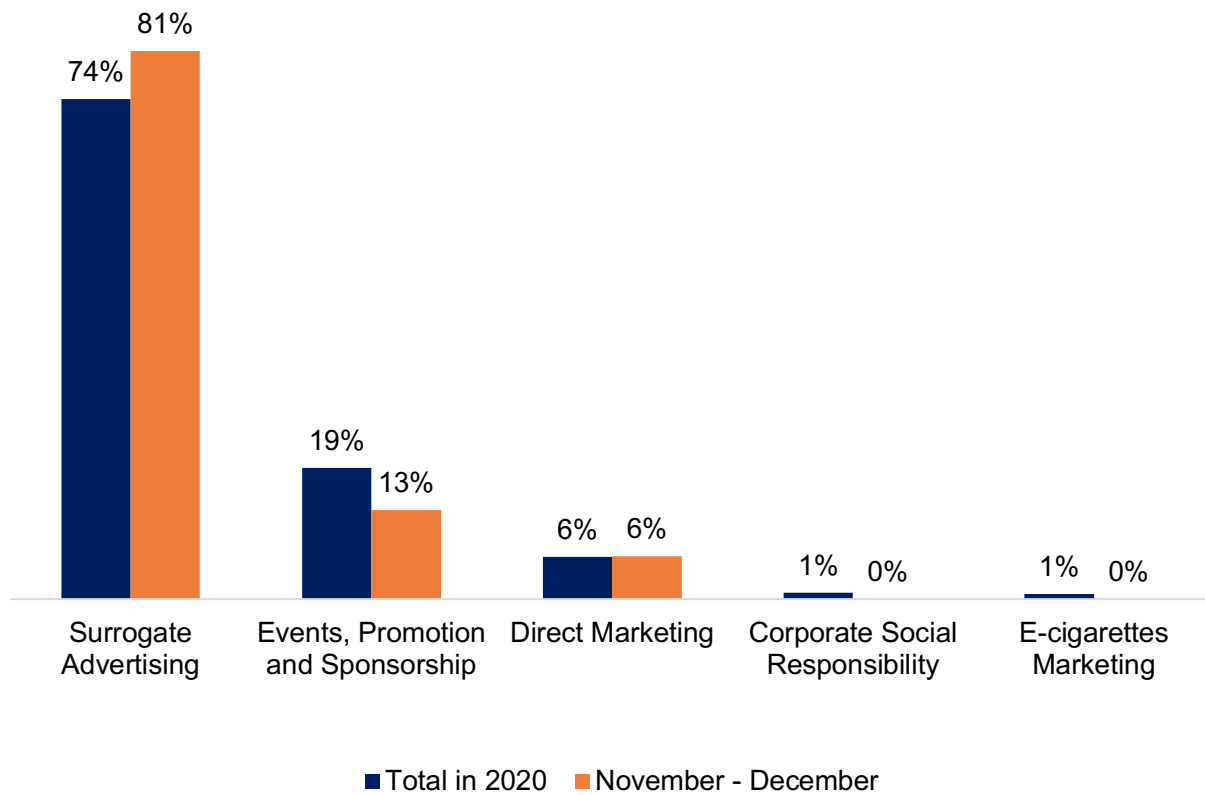
Detailed Insights

Volume of Tobacco Marketing

- A total of 764 tobacco marketing activities were recorded between Nov. 16 and Dec. 15, 2020. The main types of marketing included surrogate marketing, events, promotions and sponsorships and direct marketing. Of the total marketing activities observed, 81% were surrogate marketing, 13% were events, promotions, and sponsorships and 6% were direct marketing.
- Of the total marketing activities observed this month, 45% were for smoking tobacco products and 55% for smokeless tobacco products. There were no recorded cases of tobacco marketing by e-cigarette companies.

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[2] Recreation: Messages that involve making people's leisure time more interesting or enjoyable. Examples include: cooking, family time, playing outdoors, movies etc.
[3] Community celebration: Messages that involve activities that people do in their place of worship or with groups. Examples: Religious festivals, community events, sporting events, birthdays etc.
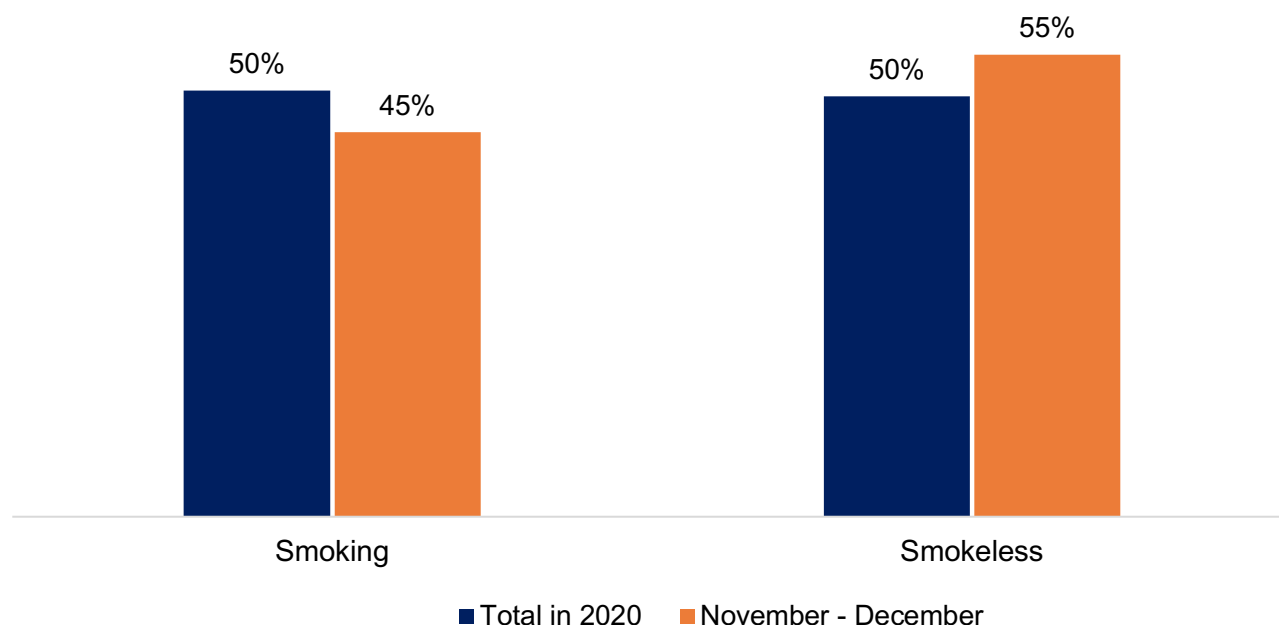
Figure 1.Types of Marketing

Total in 2020 (August 16,2020 to December 15, 2020) (n = 3163)
November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

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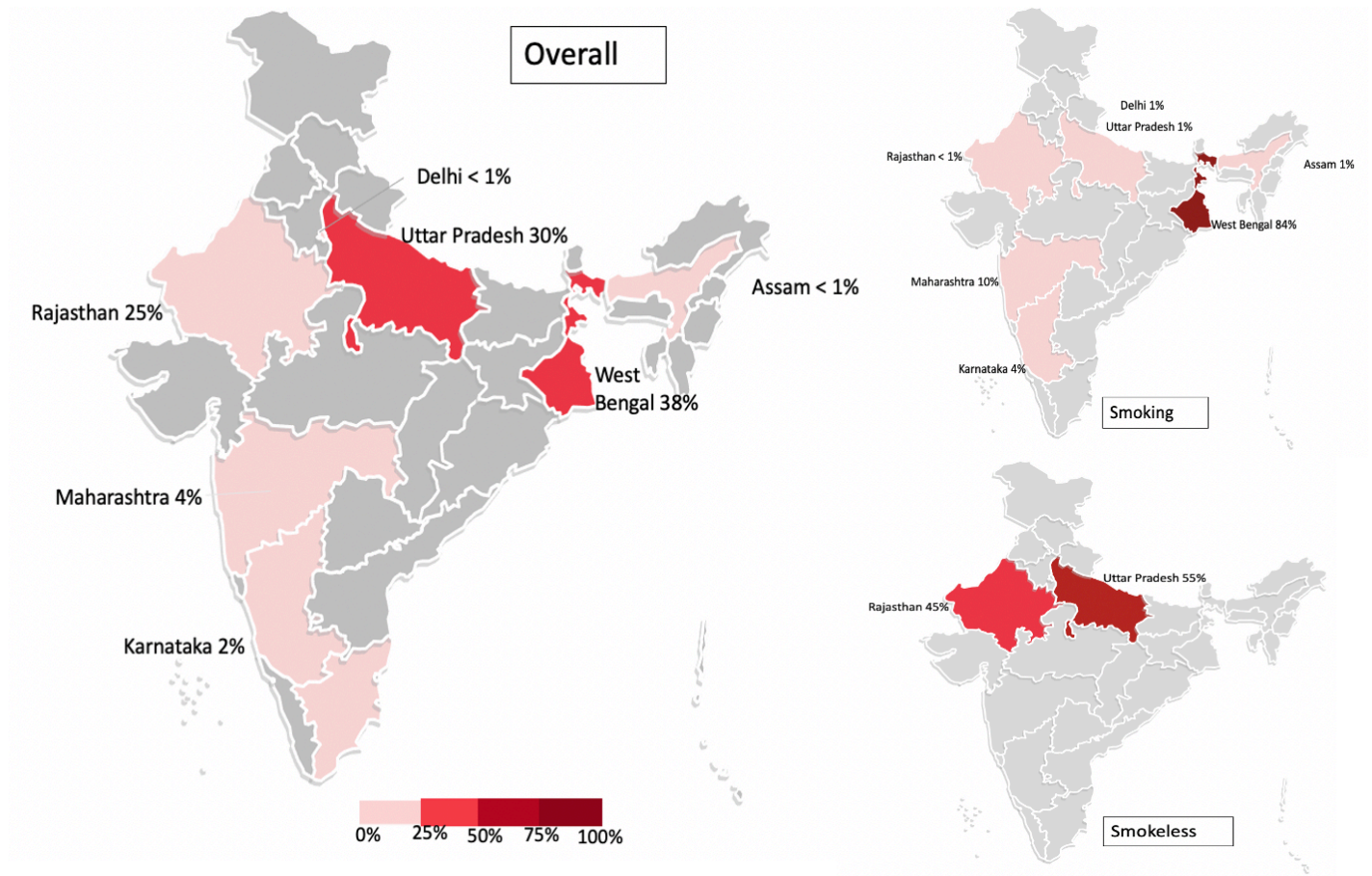# Figure 2. Type of Product Marketed

Total in 2020 (August 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020) (n = 3163)
November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

Tobacco Marketing by State

- The majority of tobacco marketing observed this month originated in West Bengal (38%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (30%), Rajasthan (25%), Maharashtra (4%) and Karnataka (2%).
- Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (84%) followed by Maharashtra (10%) and Karnataka (4%). Smokeless tobacco products were most often marketed in Uttar Pradesh (55%) and Rajasthan (45%).

Map 1: Origin of Tobacco Marketing by State

November 16, 2020, to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

Marketing Instances Recorded Nov. 16 to Dec. 15, 2020

Most of the tobacco marketing observed this month were instances of indirect marketing, followed by direct marketing.
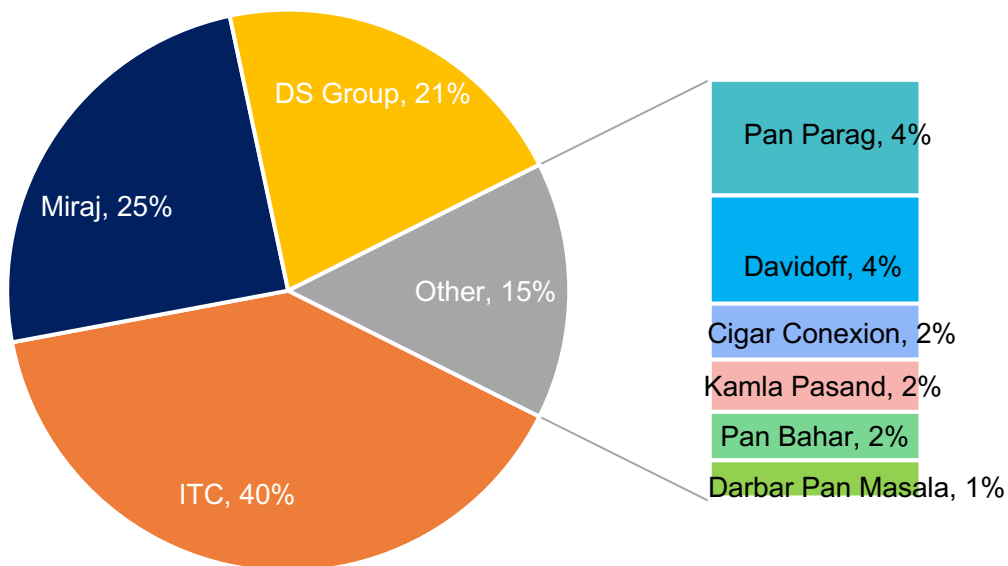
Table 1: Type of Marketing Activities

Marketing Tactics	Summary
Direct Marketing	There were **48 instances of direct advertising** recorded during this period. In many cases, cigars were directly marketed on social media; primarily via Facebook. Ads depicted the qualities of a well-made cigar and offered aspirational messaging on cigar smoking. Many posts provided details on where to order products.

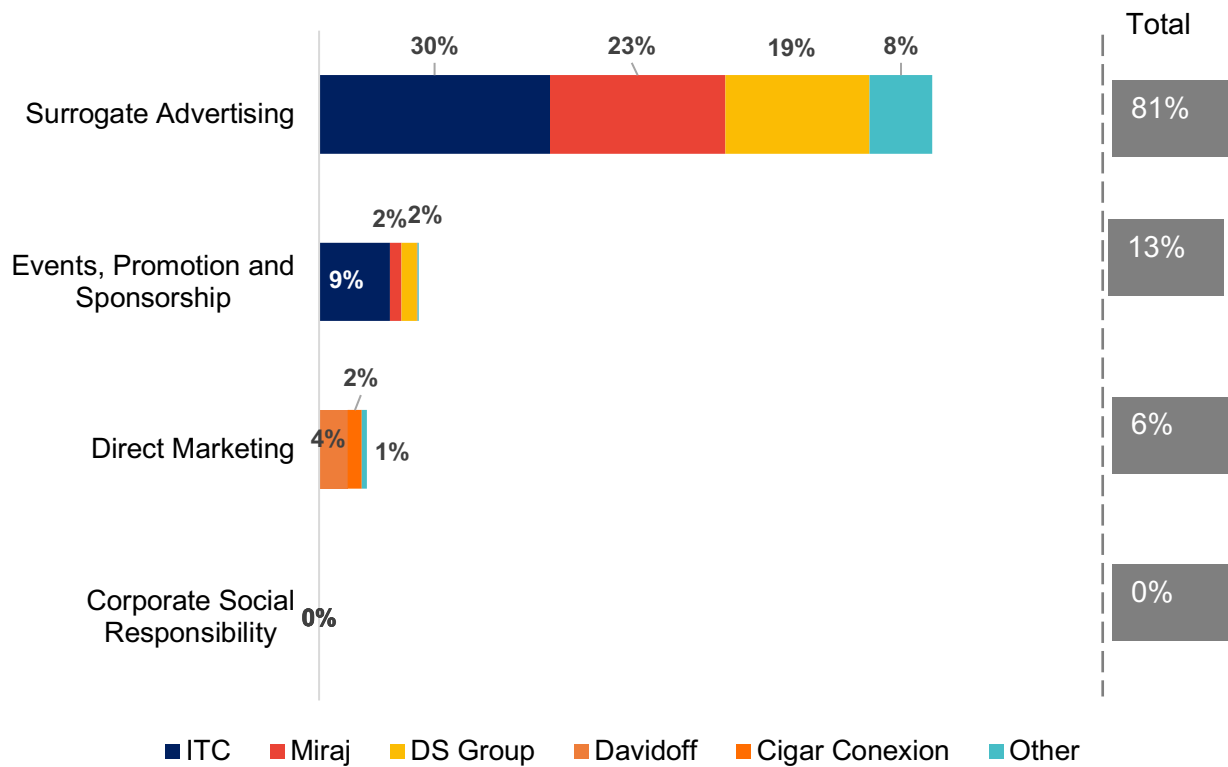|	
Indirect Marketing (Surrogate marketing and Events, promotions, and sponsorships)	There were **716 instances of indirect advertising** observed. Messaging highlighted tobacco features including flavors, appetite and packaging. Event, promotion and sponsorship activities were timed with wedding season and provided offers, discounts and prizes. There were also mentions of community celebrations and festivals including Vishwakarma puja and Diwali.

Marketing by Tobacco Companies

- The majority of marketing observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (40%). Other chief sponsors of tobacco marketing were: Miraj (25%), Dharampal Satyapal Group (21%), Davidoff (4%) and Pan Parag (4%).
- Most of the surrogate advertising observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (40%), while 25% was sponsored by Miraj.

Figure 3a. Total Marketing by Company

DS Group, 21%

Miraj, 25%

Other, 15%

ITC, 40%

Pan Parag, 4%

Davidoff, 4%

Cigar Conexion, 2%

Kamla Pasand, 2%

Pan Bahar, 2%

Darbar Pan Masala, 1%

November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

Figure 3b. Type of Marketing by Company

November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

Public Engagement Activities

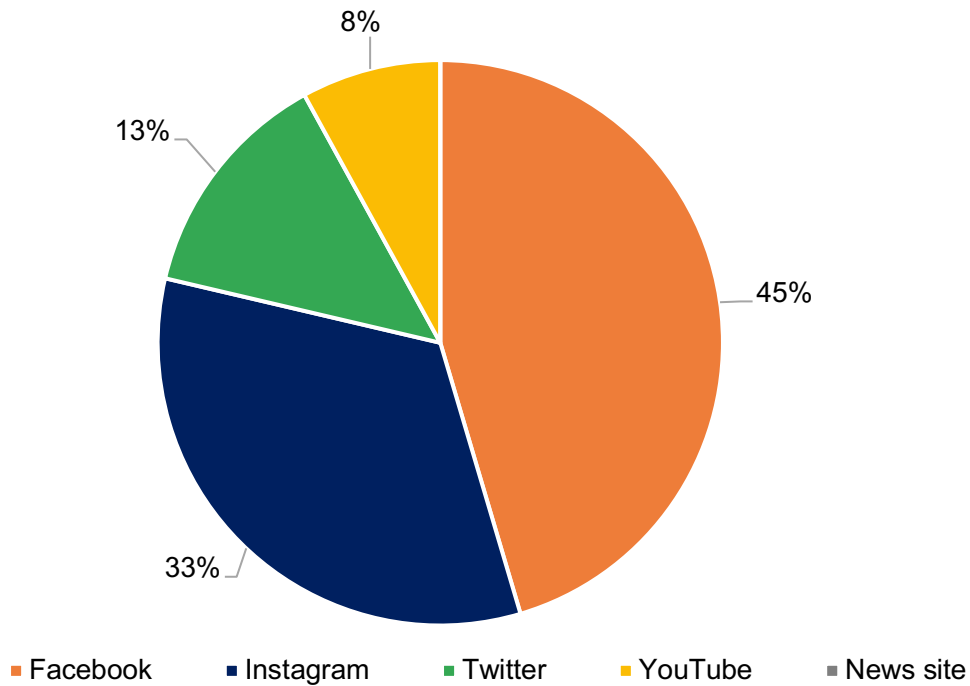The public engagements, including corporate social responsibility activities, observed this month are described below.

Table 2. Examples of observed public engagement activities by the tobacco industry.

Examples

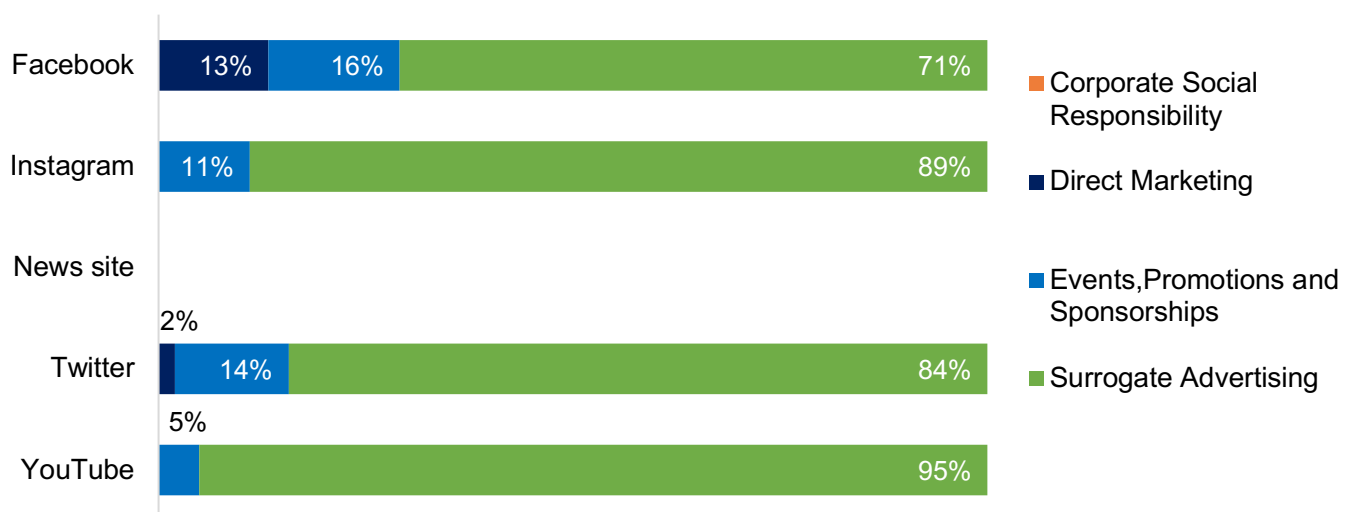

Tobacco Marketing Activity by Channel

- Almost all observed tobacco marketing (direct and indirect) during this period was conducted on social media channels (91%), including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Surrogate marketing of tobacco products was conducted through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The news media provided the primary channels for reports on tobacco industry-sponsored corporate social responsibility initiatives.

- Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (49%), Instagram (28%) and Twitter (8%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (42%), Instagram (38%) and Twitter (18%).
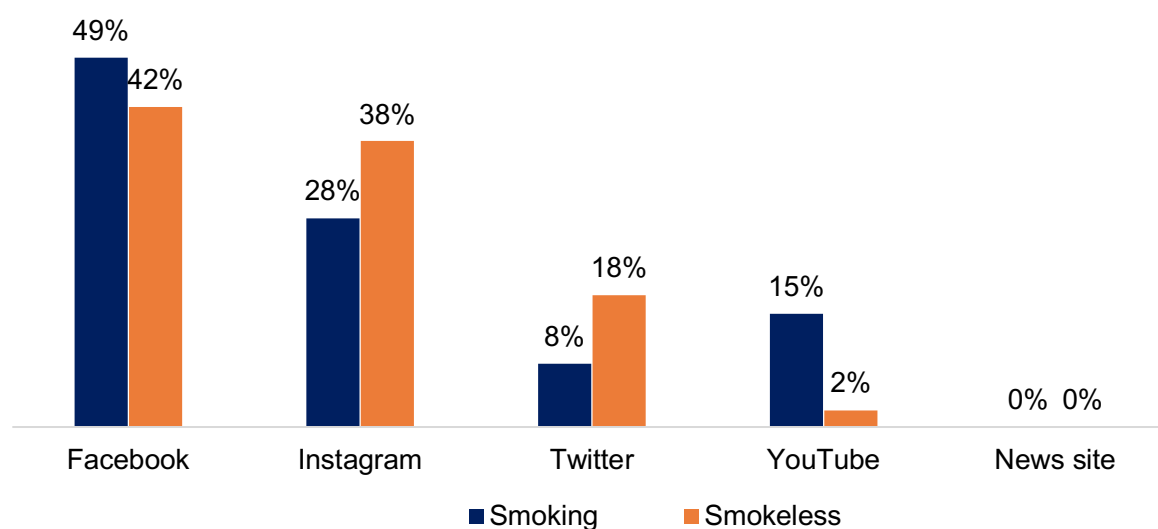
Figure 5a. Total Marketing by Platform

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- News site

November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

Figure 5b. Type of Marketing by Platform

- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Direct Marketing
- Events,Promotions and Sponsorships
- Surrogate Advertising

November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

Figure 5c. Type of Product Marketed by Platform

Smoking(n = 347)
Smokess (n = 417)

Frequently Used Messages

A "word cloud" is a visual representation of the most frequently used terms across online platforms. The larger the word in the visual, the more commonly it was used in tobacco marketing messages. This month, words related to **community celebrations and corporate social responsibility activities** appear the most in marketing messages.
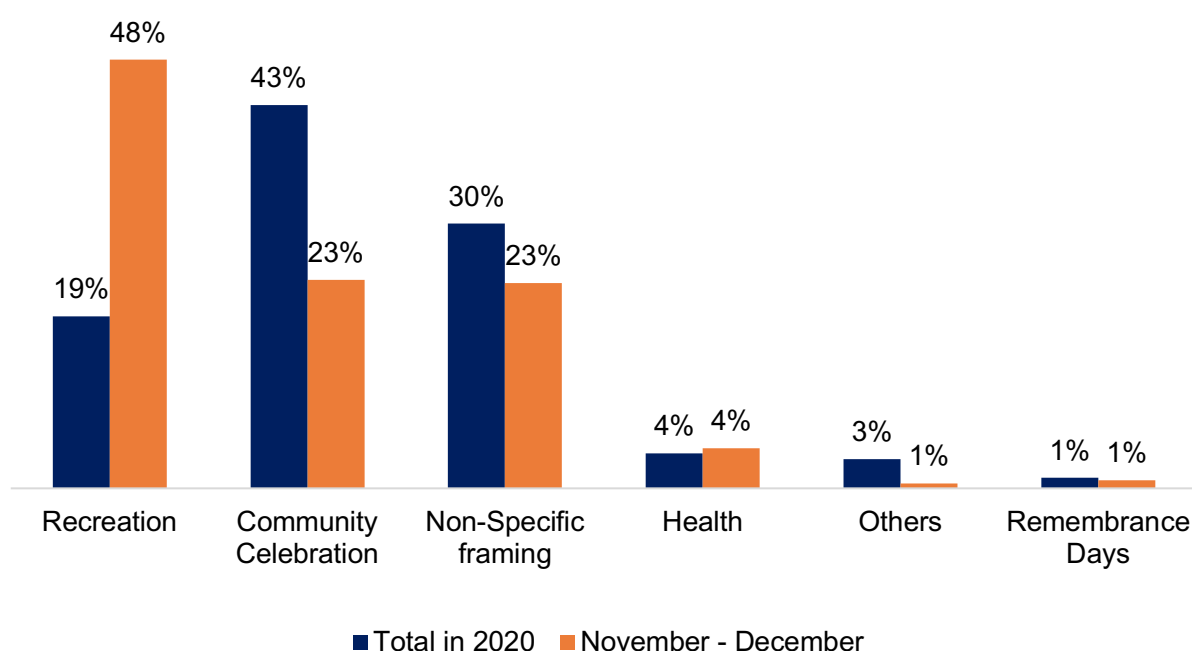
November 16, 2021 to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

Framing of Marketing Messages

- Many tobacco marketing messages were framed with a celebratory tone linked to recreation (48%). Messages were also connected to community celebration (23%) and health (4%).

- Both smoking tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages about recreation and community celebration. For smoking products, 61% of messages focused on recreation and 14% on community celebration. For Smokeless tobacco products, 31% focused on community celebration and 37% on recreation.
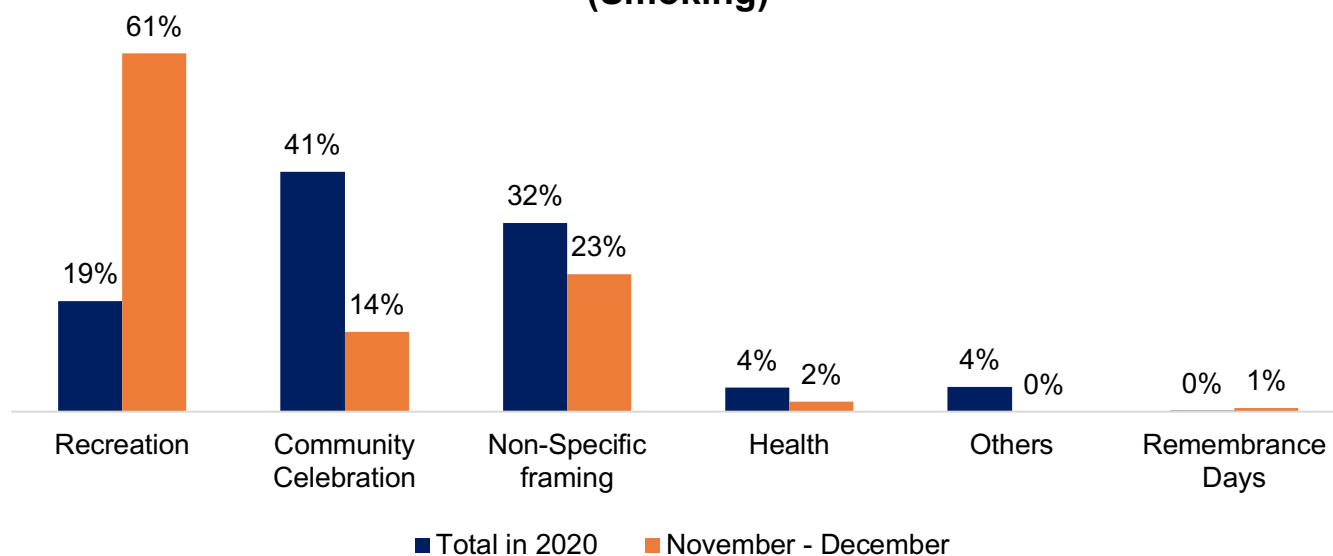
Figure 6a. Marketing by Message Framing and Product (Smoking and Smokeless)

Total in 2020(August 16, 2020 to December 15, 2021) (n = 3163)
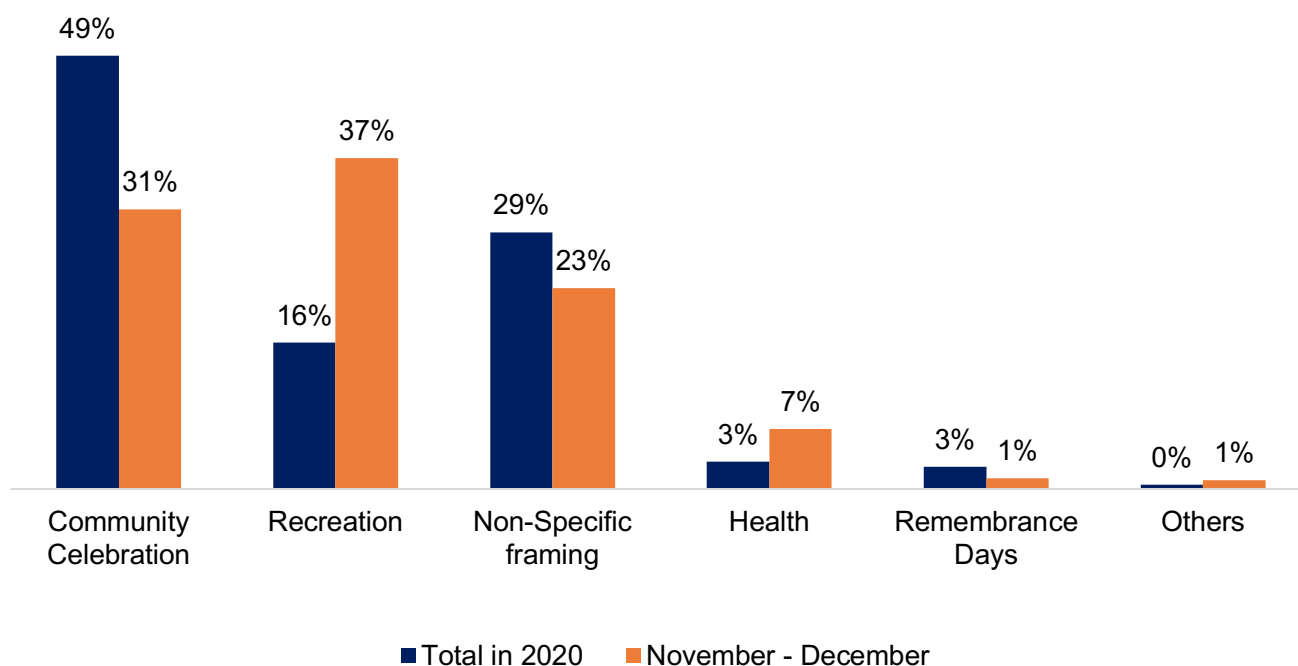November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 764)

Figure 6b. Marketing by Message Framing and Product (Smoking)

Total in 2020(August 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020) (n = 1575)
November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 347)

Figure 6c. Marketing by Message Framing and Product (Smokeless)

Total in 2020(August 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020) (n = 1549)
November 16, 2020 to December 15, 2020 (n = 417)

*Non-specific framing refers to marketing that does not fall under a specific category.

Methods: This report summarizes information gathered through specific keyword searches from all publicly available online news sites, including the online websites of leading media houses such as Times of India and Hindustan Times, among others. Information was also gathered from social and digital platforms, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and forums. The information was then machine coded and systematically human-checked to determine direct and indirect marketing by source. The analysis is currently restricted to content in English and Hindi. Full detailed methodology, including coding, is available upon request.

For more information:

Vital Strategies website: https://www.vitalstrategies.org/

Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/termindia/

Vital Strategies Media Beacon: https://www.mediabeacon.org/#language

Vital Strategies Social Media: https://www.facebook.com/vitalstrategies/ ; https://twitter.com/VitalStrat

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[i] https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/searo/india/health-topic-pdf/tobacco/tobaccocontrol-tobacco-imagery-in-on-demand-ott-india-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=46395209_2

[ii] Ulucanlar S, Fooks GJ, Gilmore AB (2016) The Policy Dystopia Model: An Interpretive Analysis of Tobacco Industry Political Activity. PLOS Medicine 13(9): e1002125.https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002125

[iii] Hillman A.J., Keim, D., Schuler, D. (2004) Corporate political activity: A review and research agenda. Journal of Management, 30(6), pp.837-857. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jm.2004.06.003