

TERM

Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement

Online Marketing of Tobacco Products: India

February 2021

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 or 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 **Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021**.

Highlights of the Month

- **Tobacco marketing by volume:** There were 725 cases of tobacco marketing online this month. Of these, 84% were cases of surrogate advertising, 9% were events, promotions and sponsorships and 7% were direct marketing of tobacco products. Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 60% was for smoking products and 40% was for smokeless products. No marketing for e-cigarettes was recorded during this period.
- **Tobacco marketing by state:** Overall, 45% of the observed marketing originated in West Bengal, followed by Uttar Pradesh (30%), Rajasthan (20%), Maharashtra (4%), Karnataka (2%) and Haryana (1%). Marketing of smoking tobacco products originated in West Bengal (89%), Maharashtra (7%) and Karnataka (4%). Marketing of smokeless tobacco products originated in Uttar Pradesh (60%) and Rajasthan (40%).
- **Tobacco marketing by channel:** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 48% was on Facebook, 37% on Instagram and 14% on Twitter. Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (58%), Instagram (36%) and Twitter (6%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Instagram (42%), Facebook (40%) and Twitter (18%).
- **Message framing:** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 39% had messages related to *recreation and 29% to *community celebration. Other prominent messages focused on the economy (2%) 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.

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.

*Recreation: Messages that involve making people’s leisure time more interesting or enjoyable. Examples include: cooking, family time, playing outdoors, movies etc.

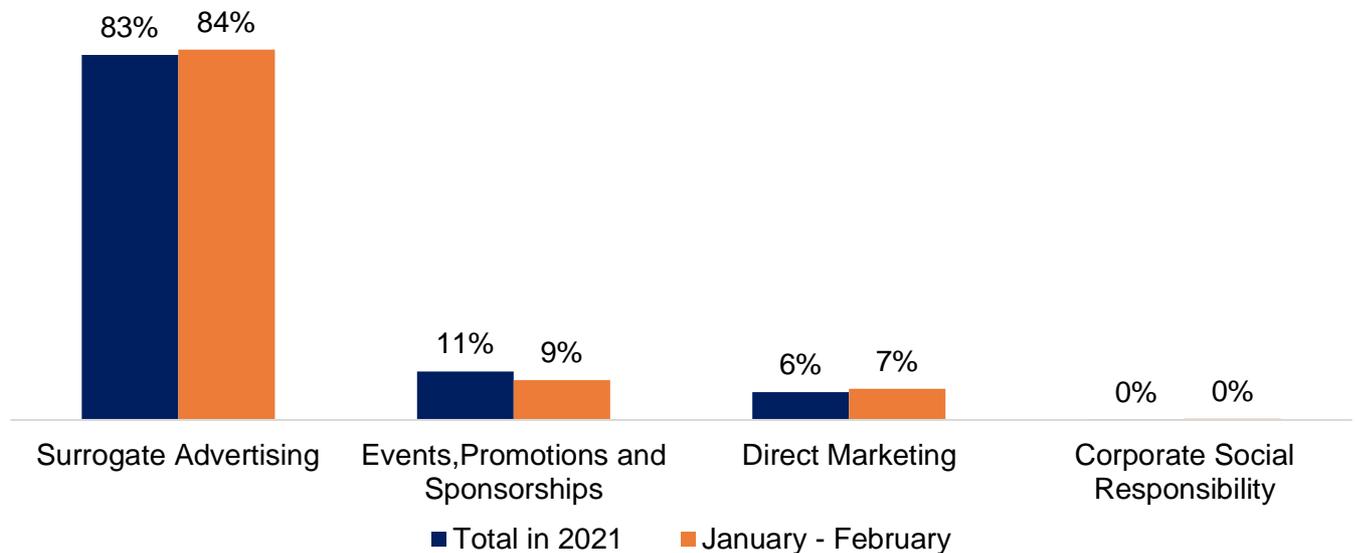
*Community celebration: Messages that involve activities that people do in their place of worship or with groups. Examples: Religious festivals, community events, sporting events, birthdays etc.

Detailed Insights

Volume of Tobacco Marketing

- A total of 725 tobacco marketing activities were recorded between Jan. 16 and Feb. 15, 2021. The main marketing activities included surrogate marketing, events, promotions and sponsorships and direct marketing. Of the total marketing activities observed, 84% were surrogate marketing, 9% were events, promotions, and sponsorships and 7% were direct marketing.
- Of the total marketing activities observed this month, 60% were for smoking tobacco products and 40% for smokeless tobacco products. There was a slight increase in the marketing of smoking products this month compared to previous months in 2021. There were no recorded cases of tobacco marketing by e-cigarette companies.

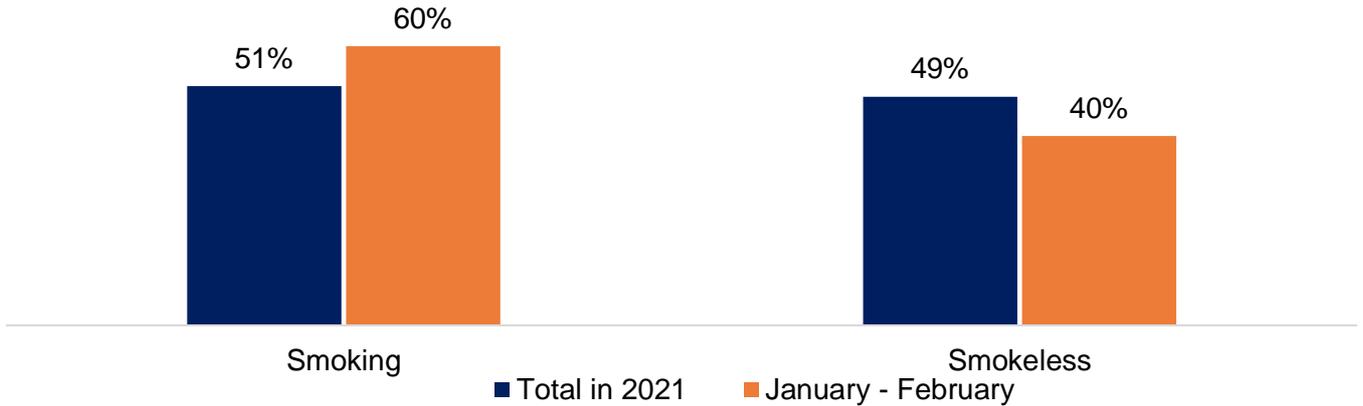
Figure 1. Type of Marketing



Total in 2021 (Dec. 16, 2020 to Feb. 15, 2021) (n = 1571)

Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n = 725)

Figure 2. Type of Product Marketed



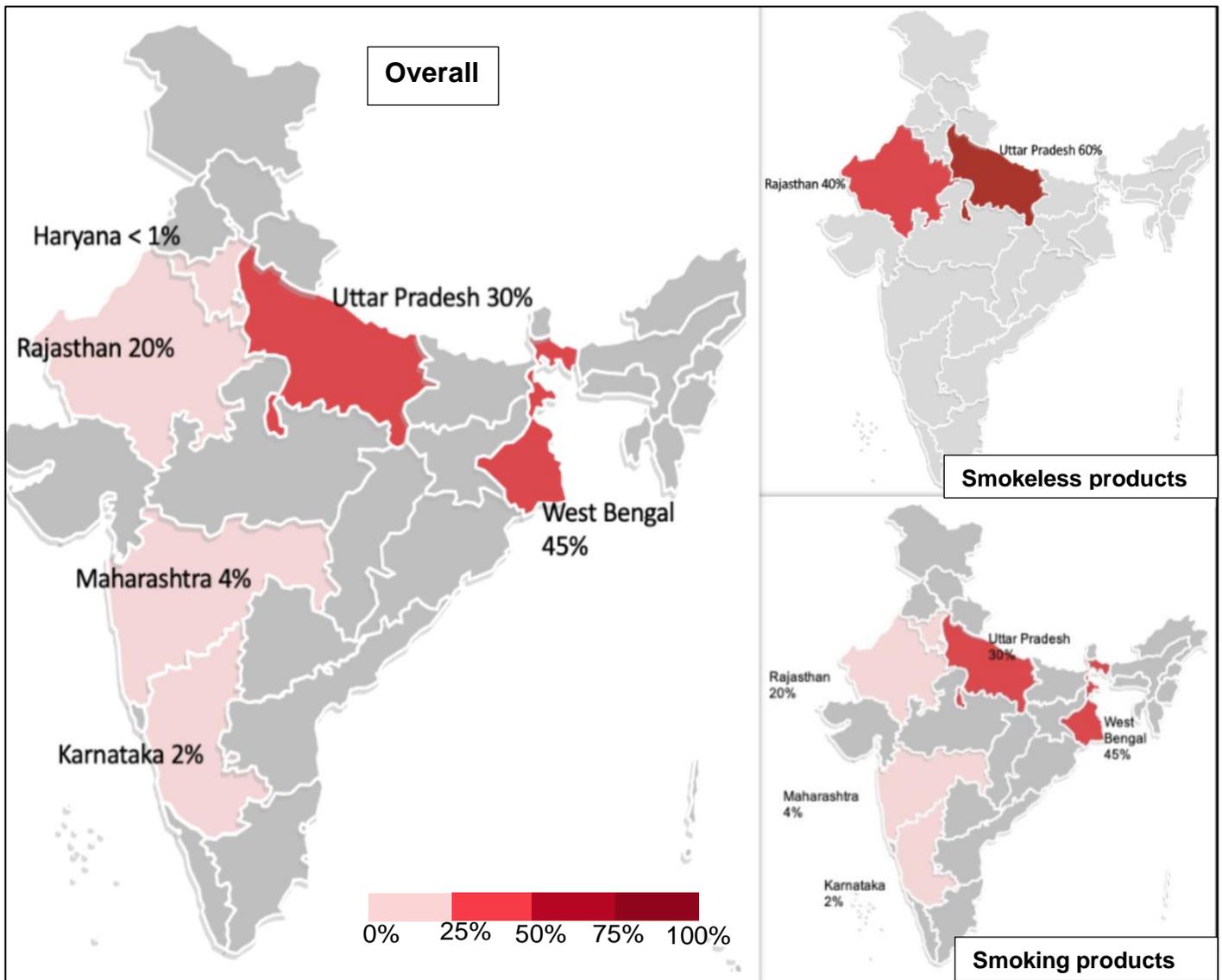
Total in 2021 (Dec. 16, 2020 to Feb. 15, 2021) (n = 1571)

Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n = 725)

Tobacco Marketing by State

- The majority of tobacco marketing observed this month originated in West Bengal (45%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (30%), Rajasthan (20%), Maharashtra (4%) and Karnataka (2%).
- Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (89%) followed by Maharashtra (7%) and Karnataka (4%). Smokeless tobacco products were most often marketed in Uttar Pradesh (60%) and Rajasthan (40%).

Map 1: Origin of Tobacco Marketing by State

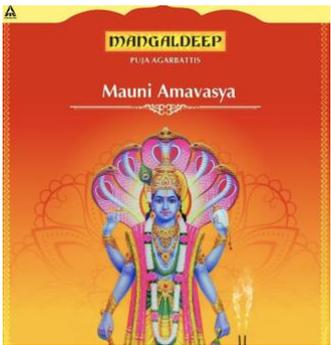


Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n = 725)

Marketing Violations Recorded Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021

Most, if not all, of the tobacco marketing observed this month was in violation of current regulations, as noted below.

Table 1: Type of Marketing Activities Leading to Violations

Marketing Tactics	Summary
<p>Direct Marketing</p>	<p>There were 51 instances of direct advertising recorded during this period. Cigars were directly marketed on social media; primarily via Facebook. Ads depicted the qualities of a well-made cigar and offered aspirational messaging around cigar smoking. Many posts provided details on where to order products.</p>
	
<p>Indirect Marketing (Surrogate marketing and Events, promotions, and sponsorships)</p>	<p>There were 672 instances of indirect advertising observed. Messaging highlighted tobacco features including flavors, appetite and packaging. Event, promotion and sponsorship activities were timed with religious festivals including Mauni Amavasya, Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti and Valentine's Day. During those periods there was increased surrogate advertising of tobacco products. Indirect advertising of surrogate tobacco products occurred across online platforms including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.</p>
	

**Corporate Social
Responsibility
Activities**

There were two observed instances of corporate social responsibility activities conducted by the tobacco company, ITC Limited. Messaging was primarily focused on social initiatives and corporate governance.

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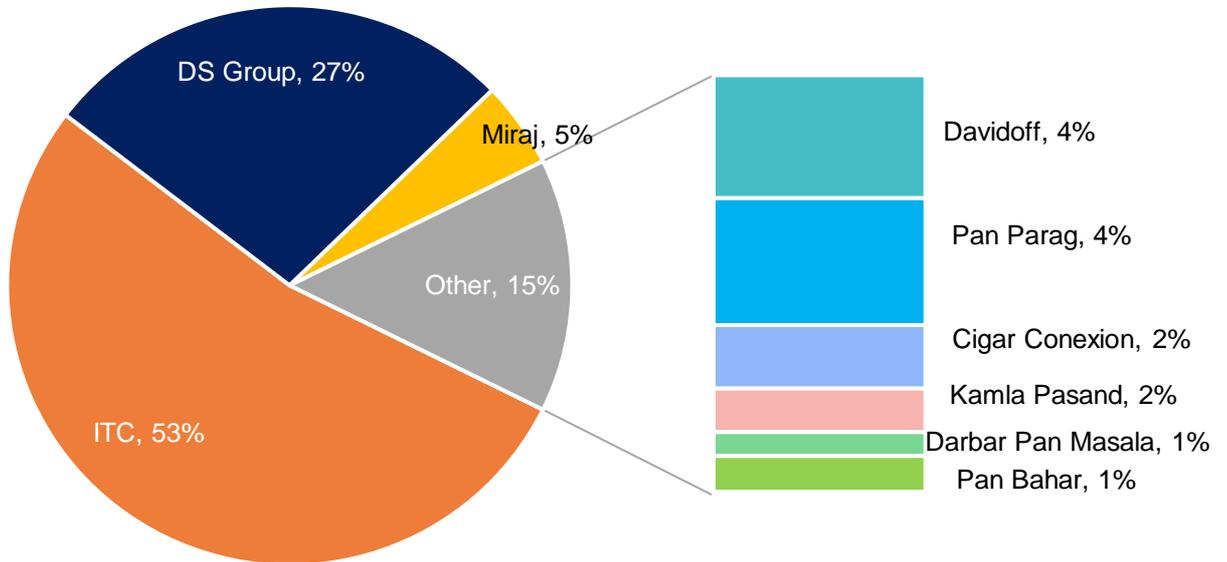
ITC wins the ICSI National Award for Excellence in Corporate Governance

ITC Company Secretary Rajendra Kumar Singhi was named the Governance Professional of the Year for his contribution towards adoption of effective governance processes.

Marketing by Tobacco Companies

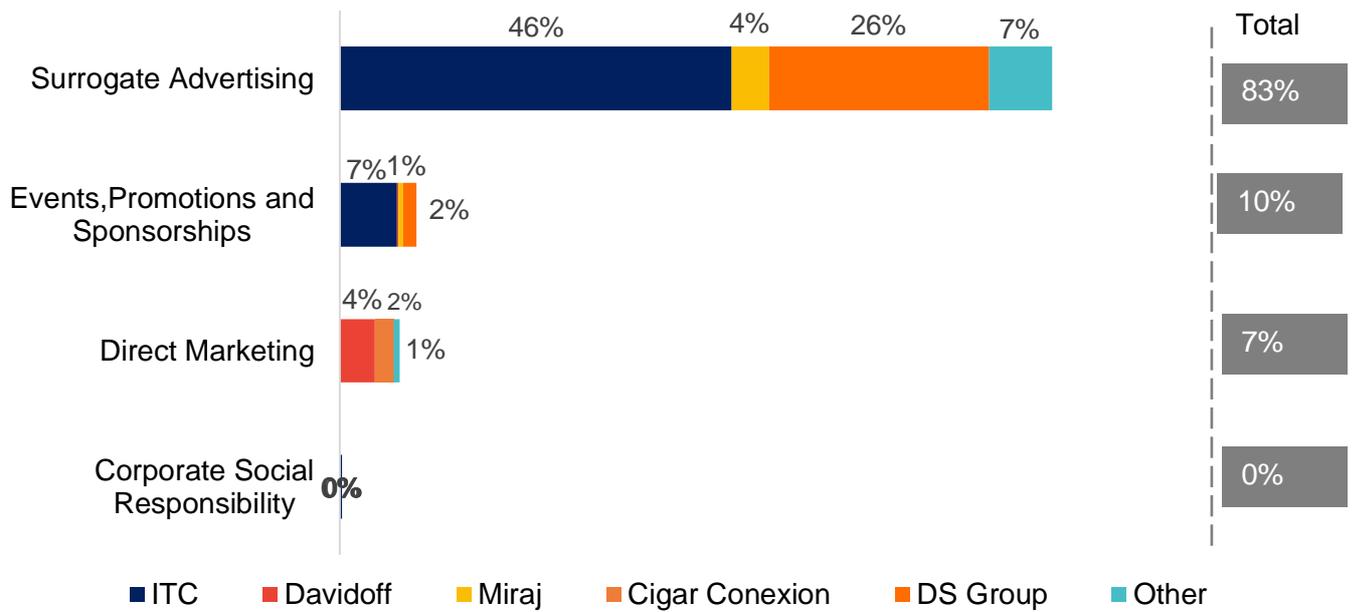
- The majority of marketing observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (53%). Other chief sponsors of tobacco marketing were: Dharampal Satyapal Group (27%), Miraj (5%), Davidoff (4%) and Pan Parag (4%).
- Most of the surrogate advertising observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (46%), while 26% was sponsored by Dharampal Satyapal Group.

Fig 3a. Marketing by Tobacco Companies



Jan.16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n=725)

Fig 3b. Marketing Types by Companies



Jan. 16 to February 15, 2021 (n = 725)

Public Engagement Activities

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

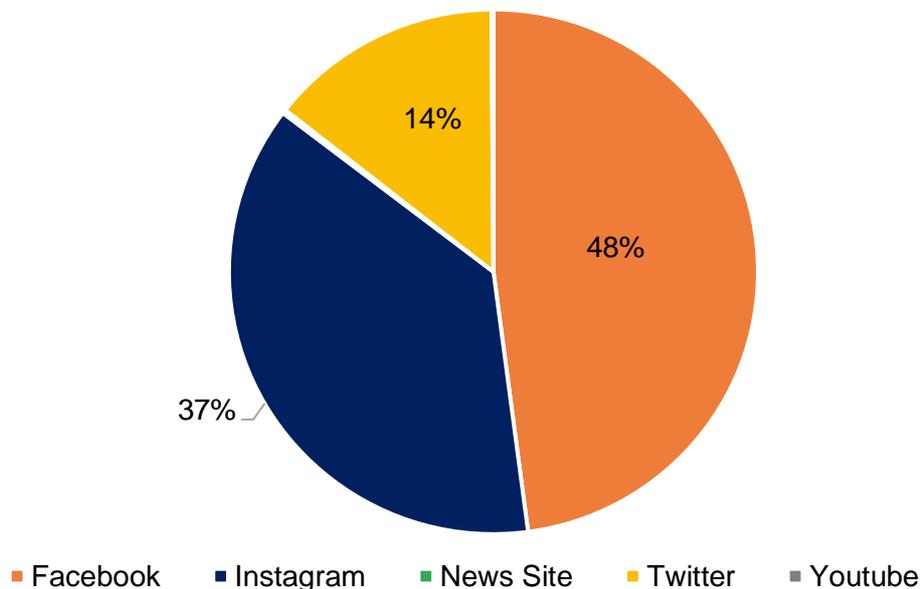
Table 2. Examples of observed public engagement activities by the tobacco industry.

Example
 <p>ITC Limited @ITCCorpCom</p> <p>Comment by Mr Sanjiv Puri, Chairman & MD, ITC Limited on #UnionBudget2021</p> <p><i>“It is a visionary and growth-oriented budget that provides further impetus to build India’s competitiveness as also foster inclusive growth. The enhanced capital expenditure, particularly on infrastructure, will create livelihoods and provide an accelerated thrust to the V-shaped recovery trajectory. The heightened spends on agriculture and rural infrastructure development are aligned to the comprehensive policy interventions aimed at creating competitive agri value chains to raise farm incomes. These augur well for the economy and will spur a virtuous consumption-investment-employment cycle.”</i></p> <p>Comment on the Union Budget 2021 - Sanjiv Puri, Chairman & Managing Director, ITC</p>
<h2 data-bbox="204 1279 1134 1480">ITC wins the ICSI National Award for Excellence in Corporate Governance</h2> <p data-bbox="204 1514 1278 1630">ITC Company Secretary Rajendra Kumar Singhi was named the Governance Professional of the Year for his contribution towards adoption of effective governance processes.</p> <p data-bbox="347 1675 1345 1704">MONEYCONTROL NEWS JANUARY 19, 2021 / 10:50 PM IST</p> 

Tobacco Marketing Activity by Channel

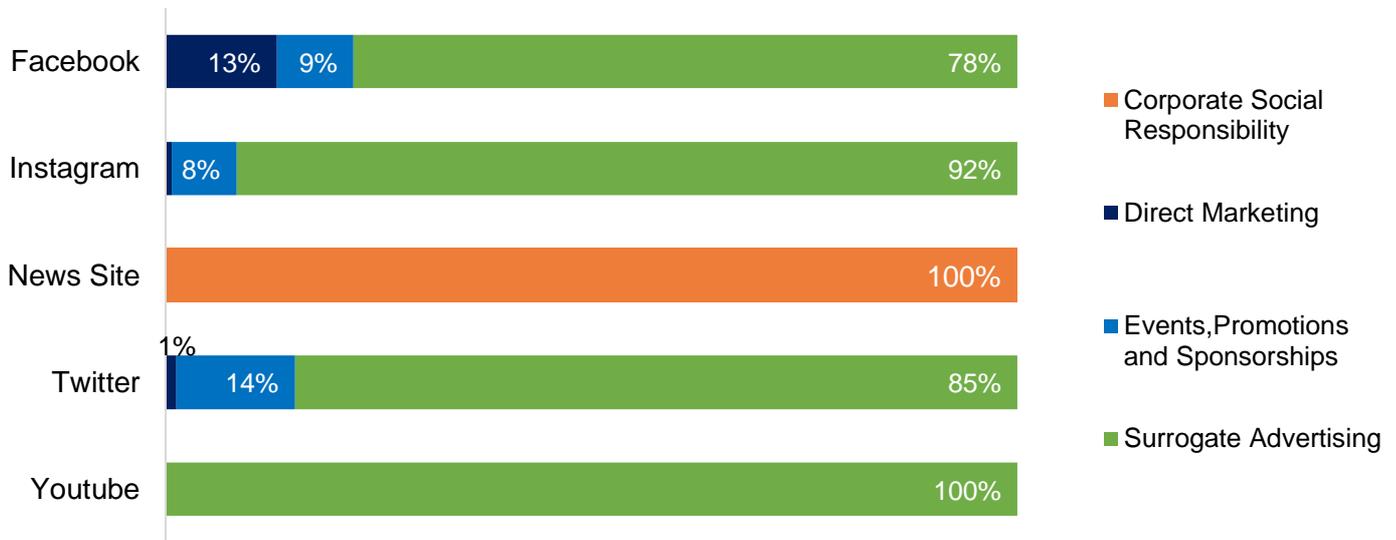
- Almost all observed tobacco marketing (direct and indirect) during this period was conducted on social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (99%). Surrogate marketing of tobacco products was conducted through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The news media provided the primary channels for reports on tobacco industry-sponsored corporate social responsibility initiatives.
- Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (58%), Instagram (36%) and Twitter (6%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Instagram (42%), Facebook (40%) and Twitter (18%).

Figure 5a. Total Marketing by Platform



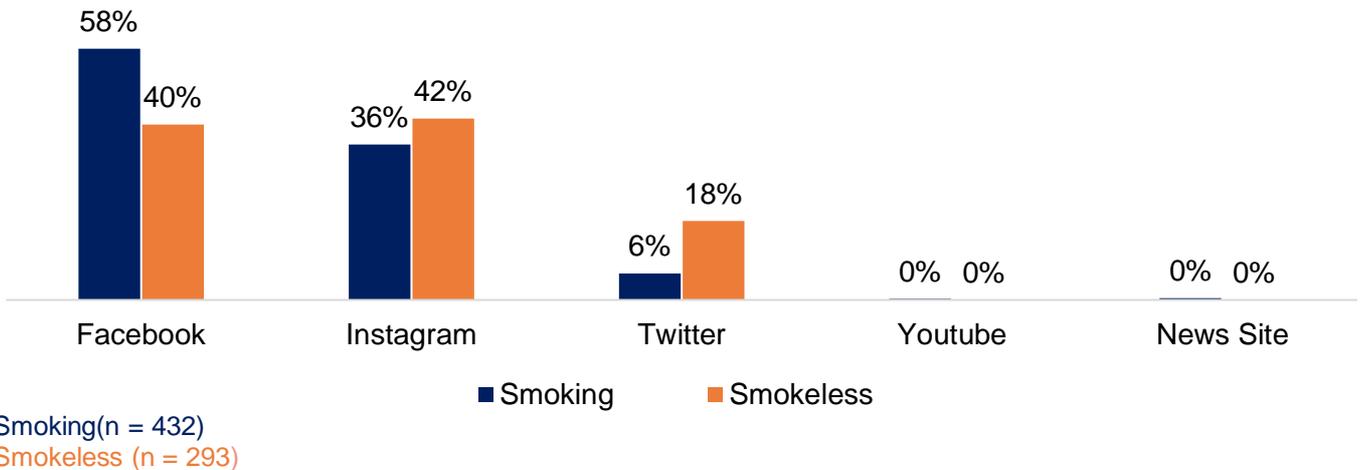
Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n=725)

Figure 5b. Marketing Types by Platform



Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n=725)

Figure 5c. Marketing Types by Product



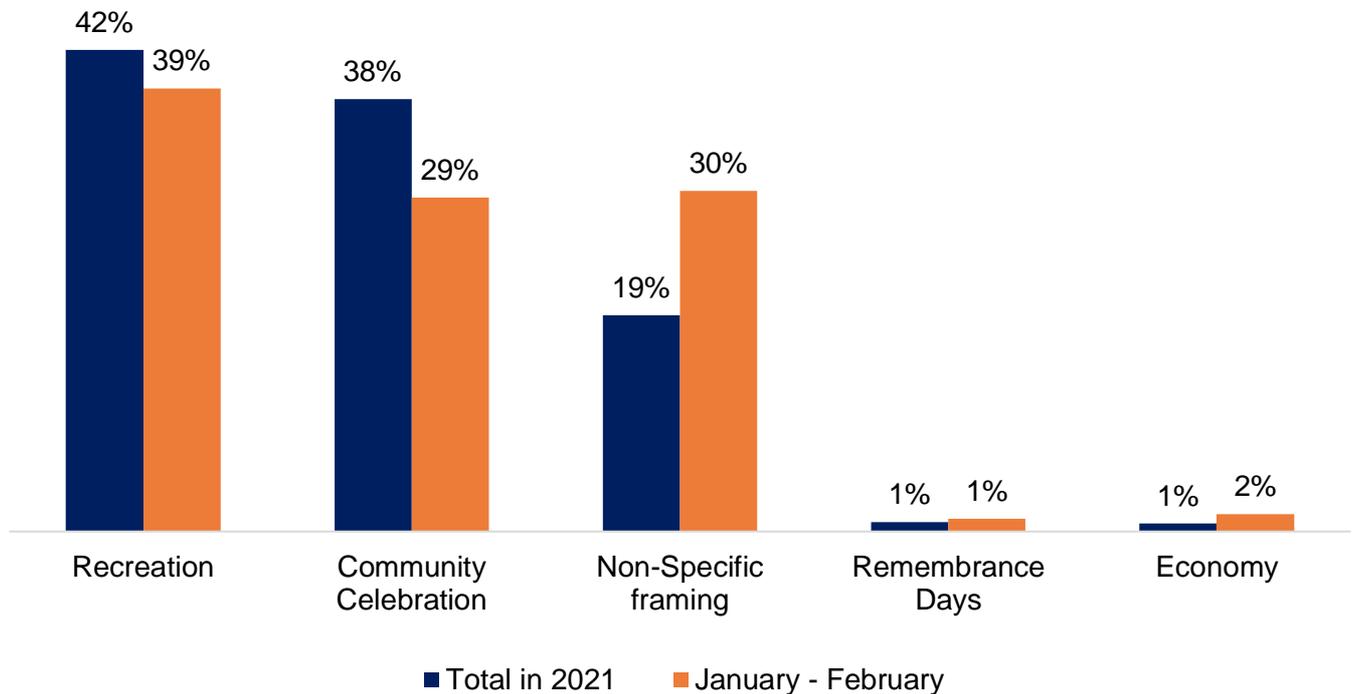
Frequently Used Messages

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 reveals that words related to **community celebrations** appear the most in marketing messages.

Framing of Marketing Messages

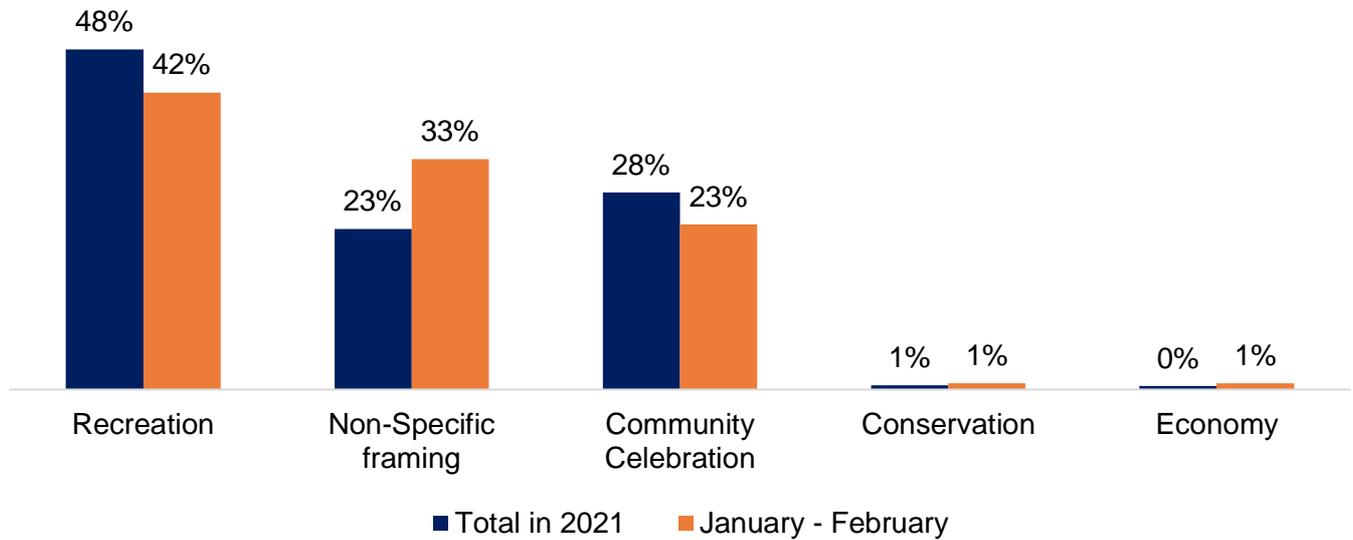
- Many tobacco marketing messages were framed with a celebratory tone linked to recreation (39%). Messages were also connected to festivals and special days (29%) and the economy (2%).
- Both smoking tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages about recreation and community celebration. For smoking products, 42% of messages focused on recreation and 23% on community celebration. For Smokeless tobacco products, 39% focused on community celebration and 31% on recreation.

Figure 6a. Marketing by Type of Message Framing



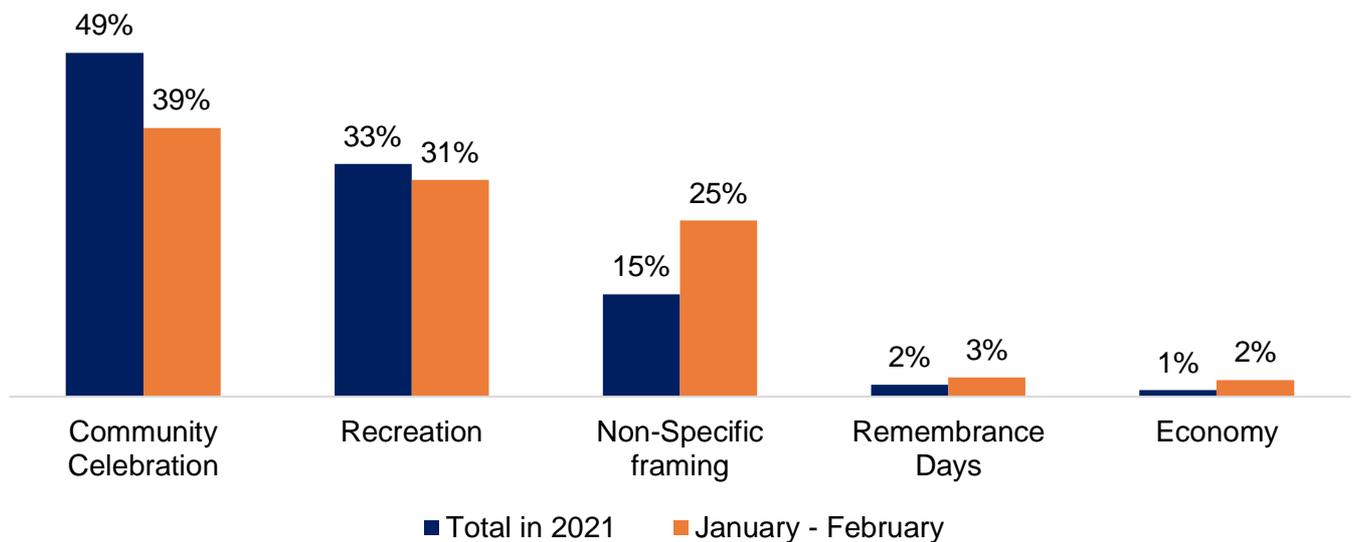
Total in 2021(Dec. 16, 2020 to Feb. 15, 2021) (n = 1571)
Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n = 725)

Figure 6b. Marketing by Type of Message Framing (Smoking)



Total in 2021 (Dec. 16, 2020 to Feb. 15, 2021) (n = 803)
Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n = 432)

Figure 6c. Marketing by Type of Message Framing (Smokeless)



Total in 2021 (Dec. 16, 2020 to Feb. 15, 2021) (n = 768)
Jan. 16 to Feb. 15, 2021 (n = 293)

*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>

ⁱhttps://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>