

# TERM

## *Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement*

### Online Marketing of Tobacco Products: India

May 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 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.<sup>i,ii,iii</sup> Vital Strategies launched the Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) in June 2019 to monitor tobacco marketing activities.<sup>1</sup> This situation report is part of a monthly series that summarizes observed examples of online tobacco marketing in India. It covers the period **April 16 to May 15, 2021.**

#### Highlights of the Month

- **Tobacco marketing by volume:** There were 856 cases of tobacco marketing online this month. Of these, 84% were surrogate advertising, 10% were events, promotions and sponsorships, and 5% were direct marketing of tobacco products. Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 62% was for smoking products and 38% was for smokeless products.
- **Tobacco marketing by state:** Overall, 57% of the observed marketing originated in West Bengal, followed by Uttar Pradesh (36%), Maharashtra (3%), Rajasthan (2%), and Karnataka (2%). Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (92%), Maharashtra (5%) and Karnataka (3%). Marketing of smokeless tobacco products originated in Uttar Pradesh (95%) and Rajasthan (5%).
- **Tobacco marketing by channel:** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 47% was on Facebook, 34% on Instagram, and 14% on Twitter. Smoking tobacco products were primarily marketed through Facebook (49%), Instagram (30%) and Twitter (12%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (43%), Instagram (40%), and Twitter (17%).
- **Message framing:** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 26% had messages related to recreation<sup>2</sup> and 32% to community celebration.<sup>3</sup> Smoking tobacco products were marketed using messages

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<sup>1</sup> While this report notes instances of tobacco marketing, it does not attempt to identify nor allege violations of regulations.

<sup>2</sup> Recreation: Messages that involve making people's leisure time more interesting or enjoyable. Examples include: cooking, family time, playing outdoors, movies etc.

<sup>3</sup> Community celebration: Messages that involve activities that people do in their place of worship or with groups. Examples include: religious festivals, community events, sporting events, birthdays etc.

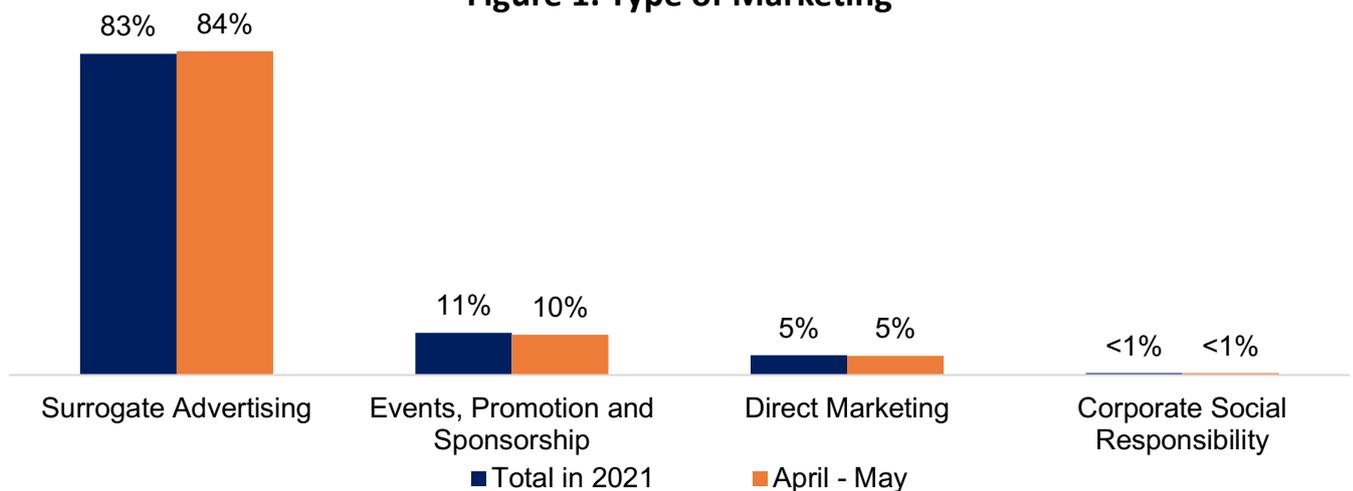
focused on recreation and community celebration. Smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages focused on community celebration, recreation and conservation.

## Detailed Insights

### Volume of Tobacco Marketing

- A total of 856 tobacco marketing activities were recorded between April 16 and March 15, 2021. The main types of marketing were surrogate marketing, events, promotions and sponsorships, and direct marketing. Of the total marketing activities observed, 84% were surrogate marketing, 10% were events, promotions, and sponsorships, and 5% were direct marketing.
- Of the total marketing activities observed this month, 62% were for smoking tobacco products and 38% for smokeless tobacco products. There was a slight increase in the marketing of smoking products this month compared to previous months in 2021.

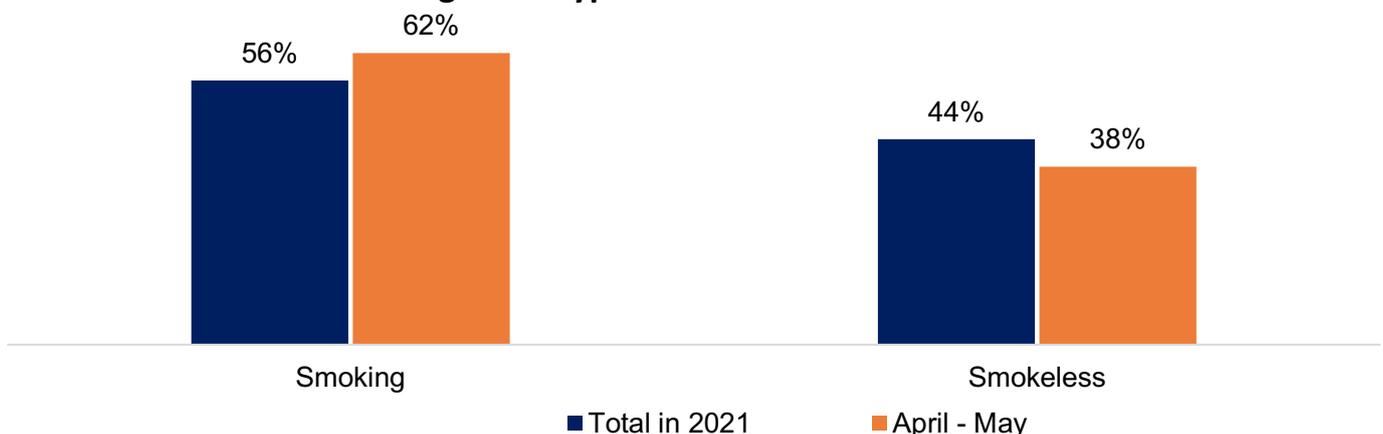
**Figure 1. Type of Marketing**



Year to Date (Dec.16, 2020 to May 15, 2021 ) (n =4,222 )

April16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

**Figure 2. Type of Product Marketed**



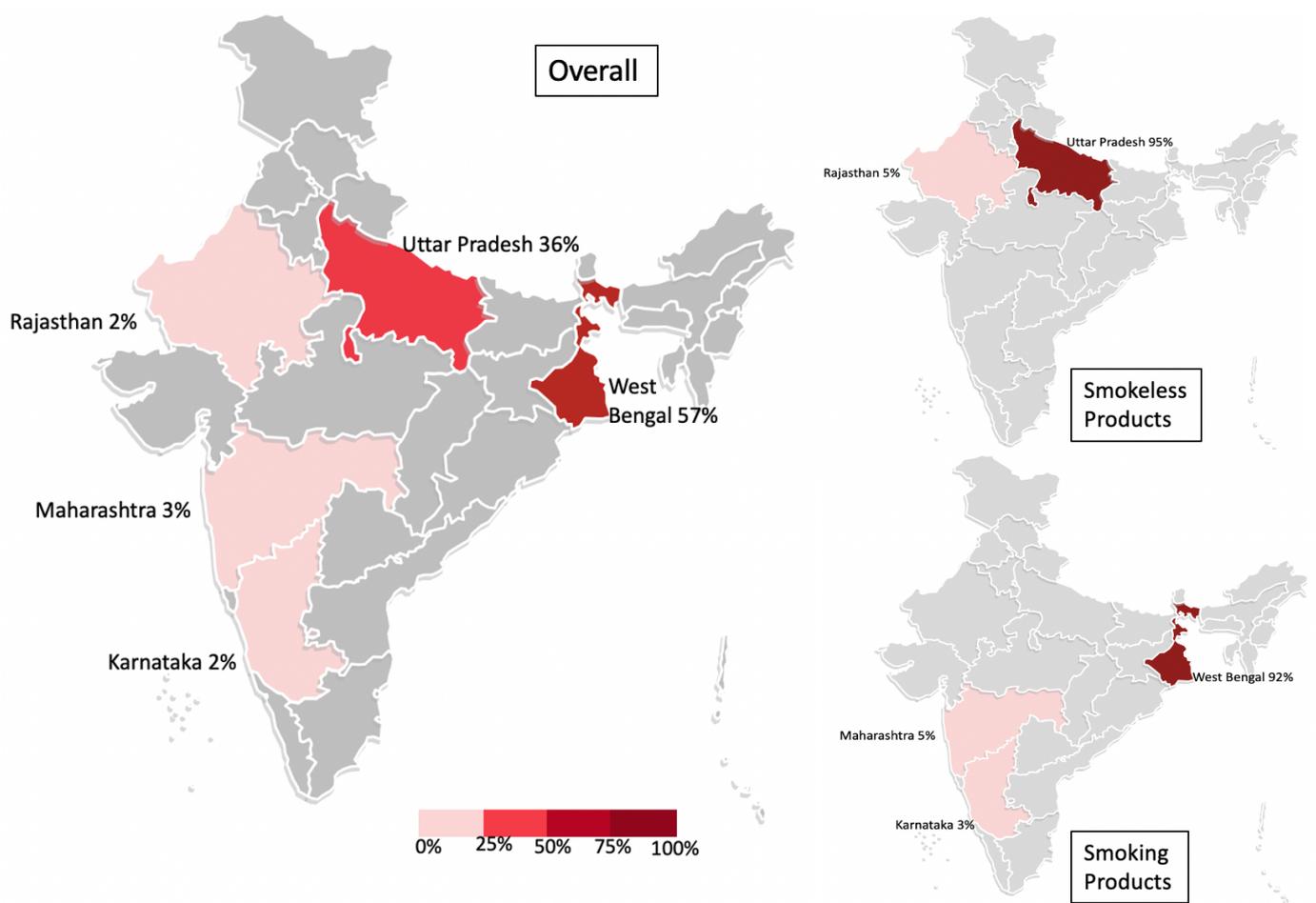
Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to May 15, 2021) (n = 4,222)

April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

## Tobacco Marketing by State

- The majority of tobacco marketing observed this month originated in West Bengal (57%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (36%), Maharashtra (3%), Rajasthan (2%), and Karnataka (2%).
- Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (92%) followed by Maharashtra (5%) and Karnataka (3%). Smokeless tobacco products were most often marketed in Uttar Pradesh (95%) and Rajasthan (5%).

Map 1: Origin of Tobacco Marketing by State



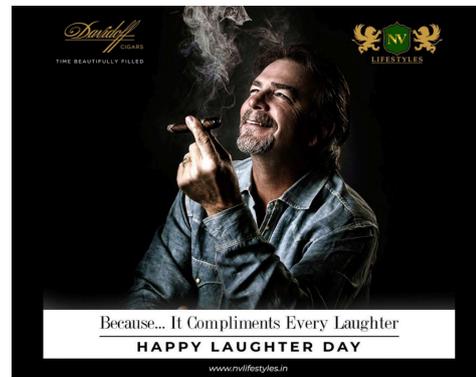
April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

## Marketing Instances Recorded April 16 to May 15, 2021

Most of the tobacco marketing observed this month was indirect marketing, followed by direct marketing and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, as noted below.

**Table 1: Type of Marketing Activities**

Marketing Tactics	Summary
<b>Direct Marketing</b>	There were <b>43 instances of direct advertising</b> 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. Some ads connected cigar smoking to COVID-19 public health measures, including mask-wearing, working from home and vaccinations. Many posts provided details on where to order products.
<b>Indirect Marketing (Surrogate marketing and events, promotions, and sponsorships)</b>	There were <b>809 instances of indirect advertising</b> observed. Messaging highlighted tobacco features including flavors, and packaging. Event, promotion and sponsorship activities were timed with community celebrations such as the festival of Eid and Mother’s Day. There were also mentions of international observances including World Heritage Day, International Nurses Day, May Day, World Laughter Day, World Press Freedom Day, and World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. Some messages mentioned COVID-19 public health measures such as mask-wearing, working from home and vaccinations; they also referenced national pandemic response efforts.



**Corporate Social Responsibility Activities**

There were **4 observed instances of corporate social responsibility activities** conducted by tobacco companies; the majority of which were by ITC Limited. Messaging was primarily focused on social initiatives and corporate governance.

**Corporates put money where their heart is with CSR initiatives during Covid**

*From expediting oxygen procurement to rolling out vaccines to their employees, here is how companies have been supporting India's fight against Covid*



**ITC Limited** too came out with a citizen welfare initiative to help in the treatment of Covid positive patients and administering vaccines. It has helped in the setting up of a 200-bed medical facility in Kolkata by Medica Superspeciality Hospital for the treatment of COVID-19 positive patients and for administering vaccines.

**The ultimate report on CSR of ITC Limited**

By Kasmin Fernandes - May 4, 2021

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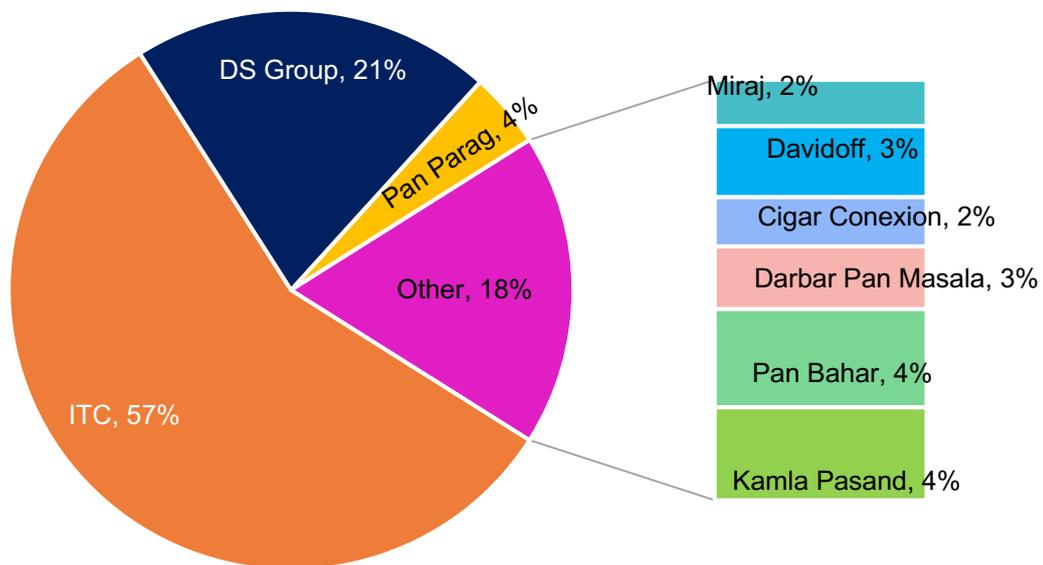


*CSR of ITC shows strong bent towards community and rural development*

### Marketing by Tobacco Companies

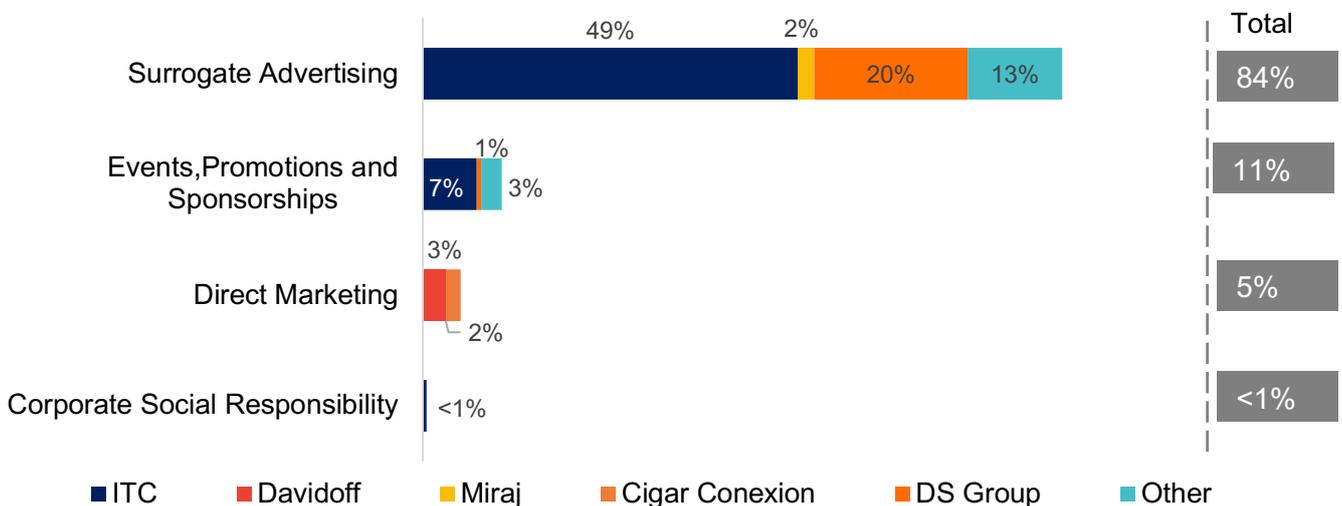
- The majority of marketing observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (57%). Other chief sponsors of tobacco marketing were: Dharampal Satyapal Group (21%), Pan Bahar (4%), Pan Parag (4%), and Kamala Pasand (4%).
- Most of the surrogate advertising observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (49%), while 20% was sponsored by Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group).

**Figure 3a. Total Marketing by Tobacco Company**



April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

**Figure 3b. Type of Marketing by Company**



April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

# Public Engagement Activities

The public engagements, including corporate social responsibility activities, that were observed this month are depicted below.

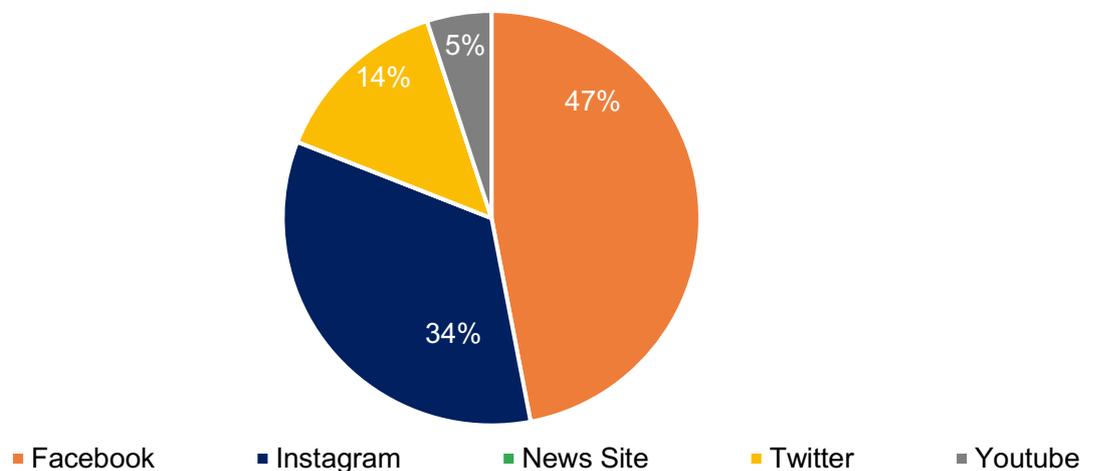
Table 2. Examples of observed public engagement activities by the tobacco industry.

Examples
<p><b>HUL, Marico, ITC, Godrej Consumer say prepared to tackle COVID-19 disruptions</b></p> <p>From setting up smaller warehouses closer to market to building direct-to-consumer models and integrating technology into their distribution and supply chain network - the FMCG majors say their factories are working full time and their supply chain is fully functional</p> <p><b>Ajita Shashidhar   May 1, 2021   Updated 00:43 IST</b></p> 
 <p>Smoking is injurious to health</p> <p>CIGAR CONEXION</p> <p><b>Get Vaccinated Today!</b></p>

## Tobacco Marketing Activity by Channel

- Almost all observed tobacco marketing (direct and indirect) during this period was conducted on social media channels (>99%), 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 (30%) and Twitter (12%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (43%), Instagram (40%), and Twitter (17%).

**Figure 5a. Total Marketing by Platform**



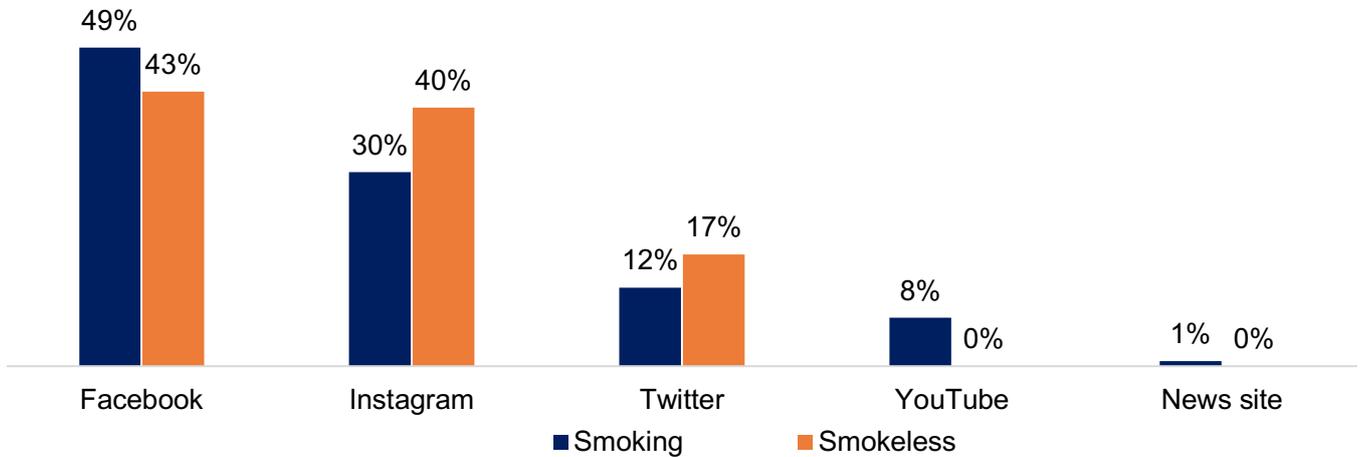
April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

**Figure 5b. Type of Marketing by Platform**



April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

Figure 5c. Type of Product Marketed by Platform



Smoking(n = 532)  
Smokess (n = 324)

### 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 celebration—especially religious holidays, as well as sporting events—and recreational activities**, appear the most in marketing messages.

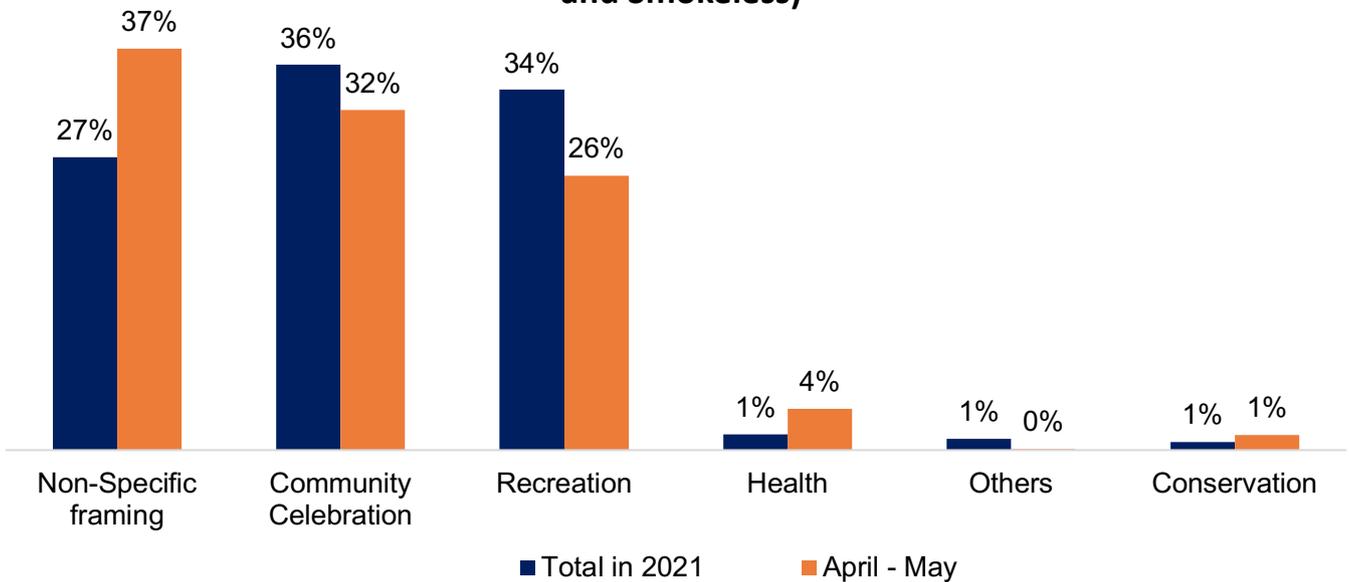


April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

### Framing of Marketing Messages

- Many tobacco marketing messages were framed with a celebratory tone linked to community celebration (32%). Messages were also connected to recreation (26%) and health (4%).
- Both smoking tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages about recreation and community celebration. For smoking products, 31% of messages focused on recreation and 24% on community celebration. For smokeless tobacco products, 44% focused on community celebration and 17% on recreation.

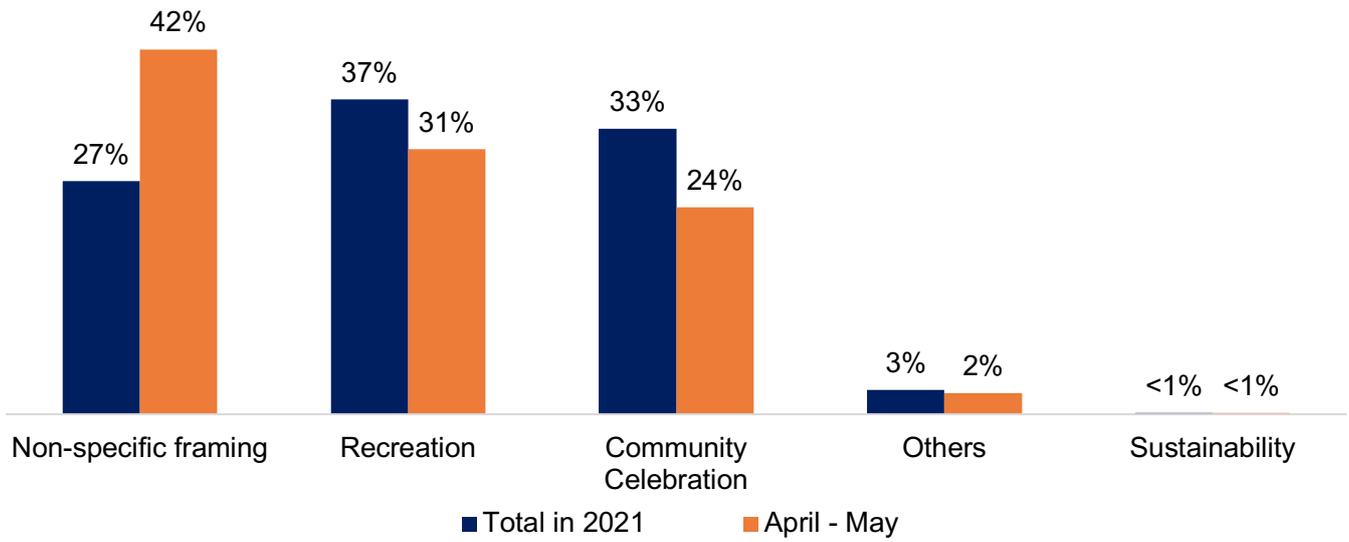
**Figure 6a. Total Marketing by Message Framing and Product (Smoking and Smokeless)**



Total in 2021(Dec.16, 2020 to May 15, 2021) (n = 4,222)

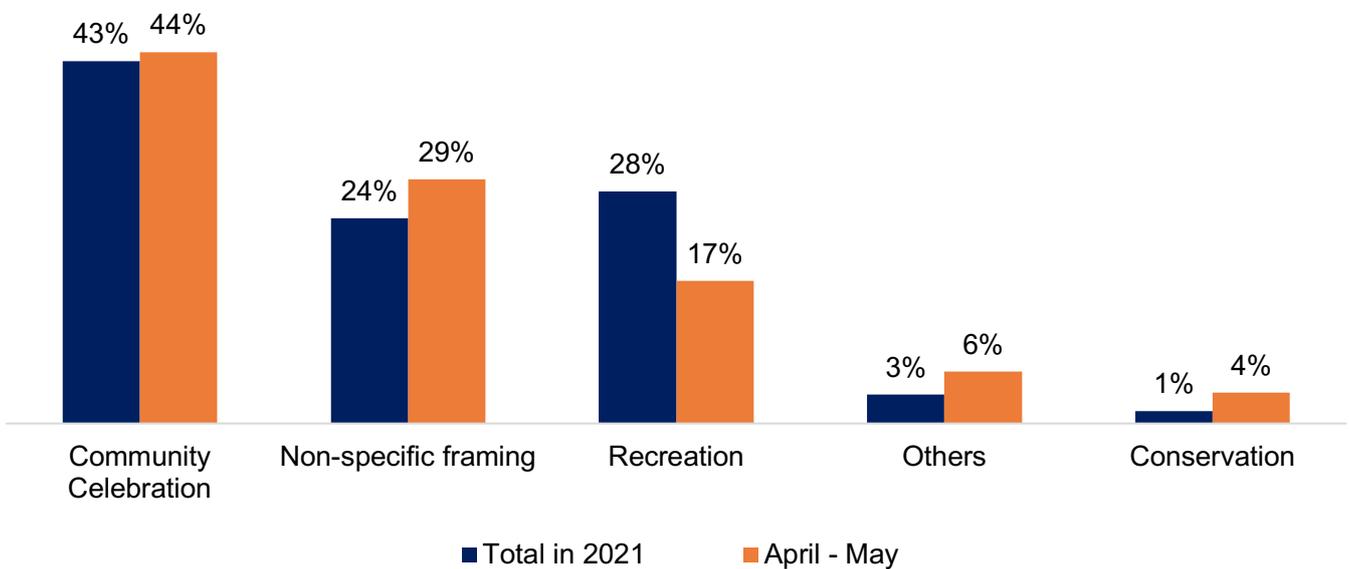
April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 856)

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



Total in 2021(Dec. 16, 2020 to May 15, 2021) (n = 2,375)  
April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 532)

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



Total in 2021(Dec. 16, 2020 to May 15, 2021) (n = 1,847)  
April 16 to May 15, 2021 (n = 324)

\*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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<sup>i</sup>[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](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)

<sup>ii</sup> 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>

<sup>iii</sup> 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>