

TERM

Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement

Online Marketing of Tobacco Products: India

July 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, promotions, 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 in India and worldwide, 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 **June 16 to July 15, 2021.**²

Highlights of the Month

- ***Tobacco marketing by volume:*** There were 872 cases of tobacco marketing online this month. Of these, 84% were surrogate advertising, 6% were events, promotions, and sponsorships, and 7% were direct marketing of tobacco products. Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 66% was for smoking products, 32% was for smokeless products and 2% was for electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) products.
- ***Tobacco marketing by state:***³ Overall, 61% of the observed marketing originated in West Bengal, followed by Uttar Pradesh (32%), Maharashtra (4%), Karnataka (2%) and Rajasthan (1%). Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (91%), Maharashtra (5%) and Karnataka (3%). Marketing of smokeless tobacco products originated in Uttar Pradesh (100%).
- ***Tobacco marketing by channel:*** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 50% was on Facebook, 35% on Instagram and 11% on Twitter. Smoking tobacco products were primarily marketed through Facebook (55%), Instagram (32%) and Twitter (7%). Smokeless tobacco products were primarily marketed through Facebook (41%), Instagram (37%) and Twitter (18%). ENDS products were marketed on Instagram (100%).

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

² The coding was modified to add ENDS products to the scope of marketing that we monitor and report on.

³ We do not have location data for ENDS products this month due to a lack of geotags on social media posts.

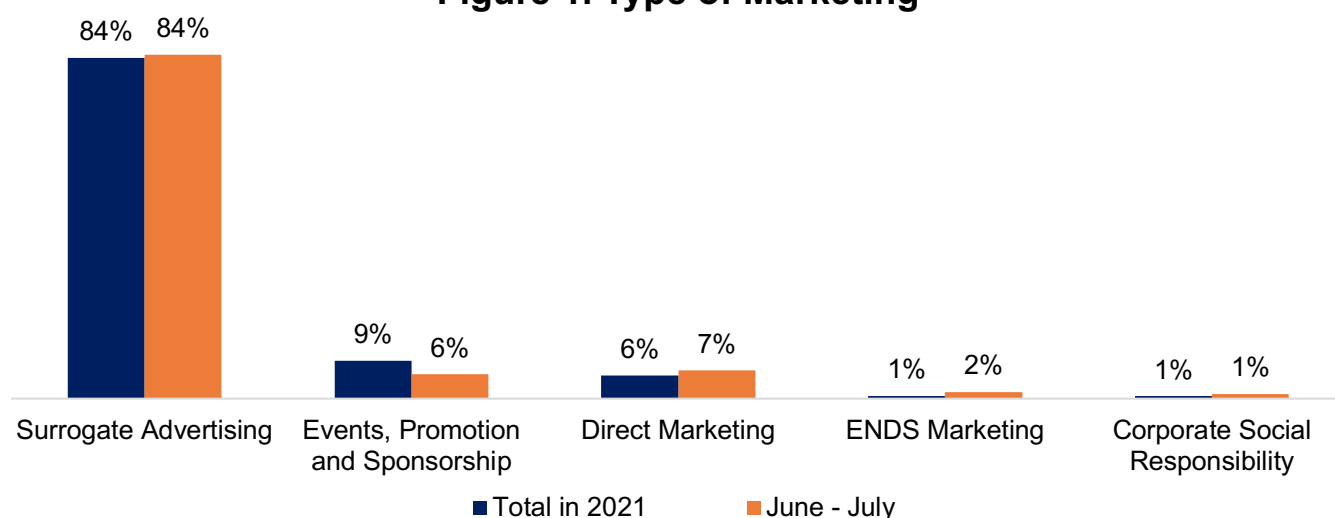
- **Message framing:** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 50% had messages related to lifestyle⁴ and 33% to community celebration.⁵ Both smoking and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages focused on lifestyle and community celebration. ENDS products were mainly marketed using lifestyle-focused messages.

Detailed Insights

Volume of Tobacco Marketing

- A total of 872 tobacco marketing activities were recorded between June 16 and July 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, 6% were events, promotions, and sponsorships, and 7% were direct marketing.
- Of the total marketing activities observed this month, 66% were for smoking tobacco products, 32% for smokeless tobacco products and 2% for ENDS 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



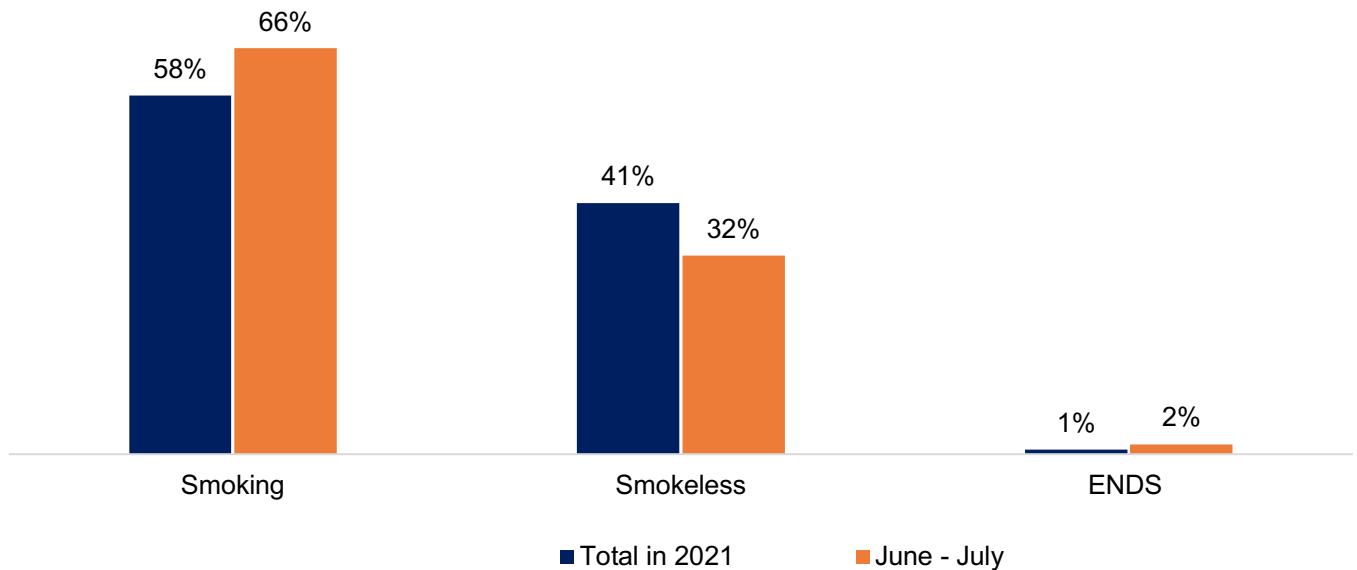
Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to July 15, 2021) (n =5,797)

June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n = 872)

⁴ All the instances noted under recreation in the previous reports are now coded as lifestyle. Lifestyle: Messages that involve presenting a tobacco brand or product as aspirational and that are related to recreation i.e., making people's leisure time more interesting or enjoyable. Examples include: cooking, family time, playing outdoors, movies, etc.

⁵ 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.

Figure 2. Type of Product Marketed



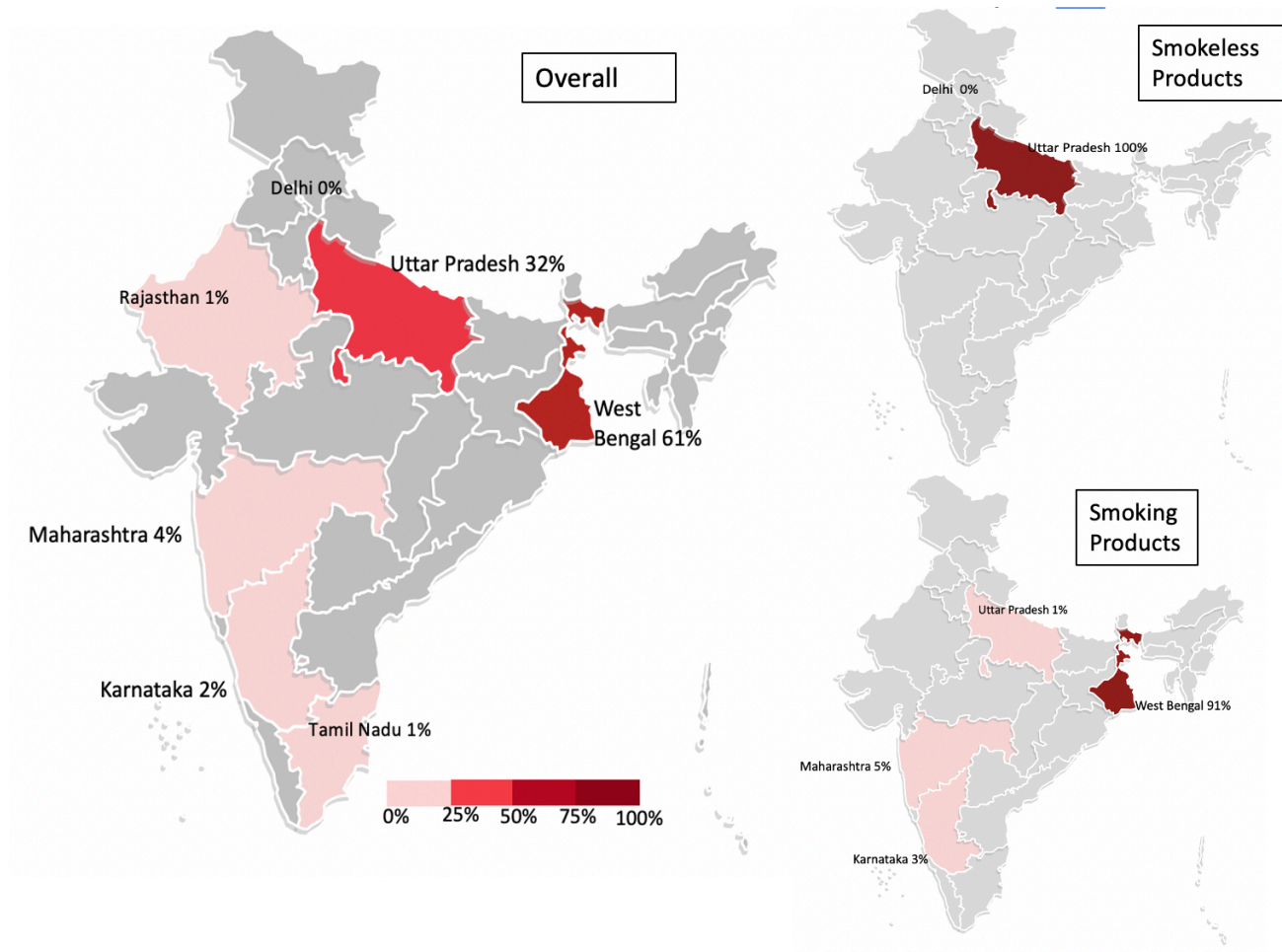
Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to July 15, 2021) (n =5,797)

June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n = 872)

Tobacco Marketing by State

- The majority of tobacco marketing observed this month originated in West Bengal (61%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (32%), Maharashtra (4%) and Karnataka (2%).
- Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (91%), followed by Maharashtra (5%) and Karnataka (3%). Smokeless tobacco products were most often marketed in Uttar Pradesh (100%).

Map 1: Origin of Tobacco Marketing by State*



*This month, none of the social media marketing for ENDS was tagged to a specific geographic location. Therefore, an origin map could not be generated for this period.

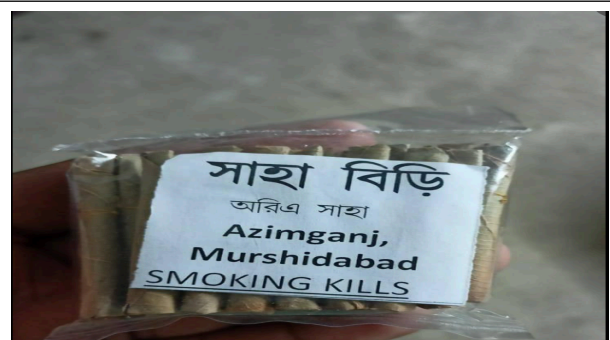
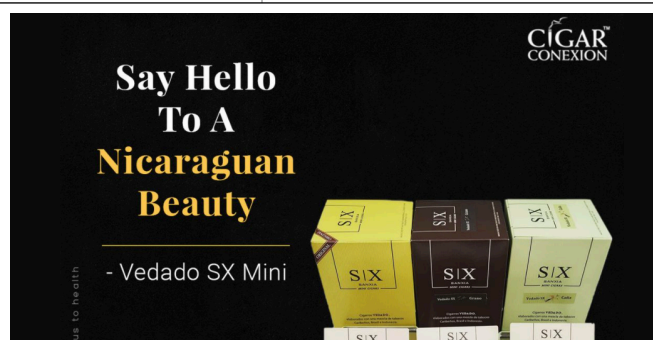
June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n = 851)

Marketing Recorded June 16 to July 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.

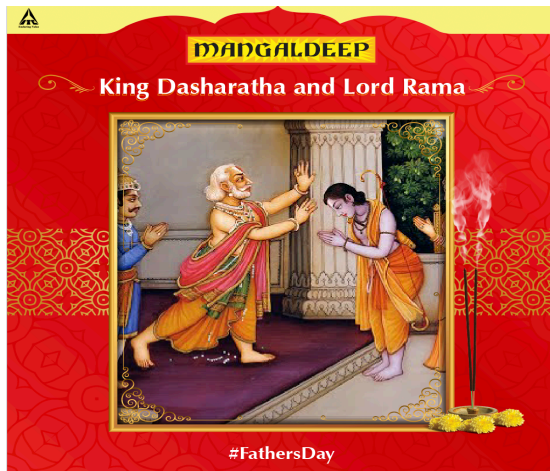
Table 1: Type of Marketing Activities

Marketing Tactics	Summary
Direct Marketing	There were 60 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 **788 instances of indirect advertising** observed. Messaging highlighted tobacco features including flavors and packaging. Event, promotions and sponsorship activities were timed with observances such as World Music Day and Father's Day, international and national sporting events, and national religious festivals such as Ratha Yatra and Ekadashi, among others. Some messages mentioned COVID-19 public health measures such as mask-wearing, working from home and vaccinations, as well as national pandemic response efforts.



**Corporate Social
Responsibility
Activities**

There were **10 observed instances of corporate social responsibility activities** conducted by tobacco companies, the majority of which were by ITC Limited and DS Group. Messaging was primarily focused on social initiatives and corporate governance.

Hyderabad: ITC donates food products worth Rs 5 lakh

A vehicle loaded with the donated stuff, which will be distributed to old age homes, orphanages and the poor, was flagged off by Cyberabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar



By Telangana Today | Published: 16th Jun 2021 11:51 pm

Hyderabad: As part of Covid-19 relief activities, ITC India Ltd on Wednesday handed over food and personal care products worth Rs 5 lakh to the Cyberabad Police.

A vehicle loaded with the donated stuff, which will be distributed to old age homes, orphanages and the poor, was flagged off by Cyberabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar.

[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Economy & Business](#) > [Article](#)

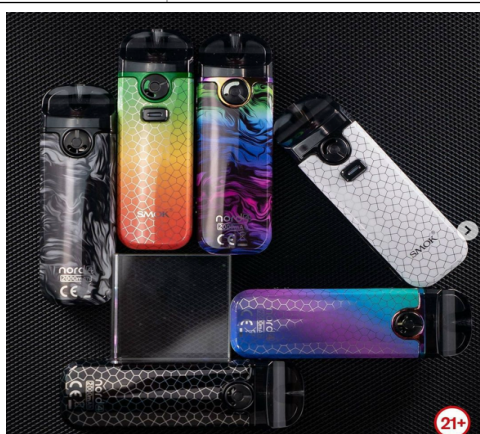
DS enhances skills of the rubber tappers of Tripura for a sustainable livelihood

The DS Group is supporting the Rubber Tapper's training project in Tripura under its CSR initiatives. Unskilled & marginal tribal farmers are trained for scientific ways of tapping and processing rubber plants. A scientific approach to tapping ensures better yield and is less damaging to the plant. This ensures higher incomes for longer periods of time. Farmers are also taught how to prevent plants from getting fungal infection - thereby instilling the idea that a healthier plant that lives longer is better for their income.

ANI | Agartala (Tripura) | Updated: 14-07-2021 18:11 IST | Created: 14-07-2021 18:11 IST

ENDS Marketing

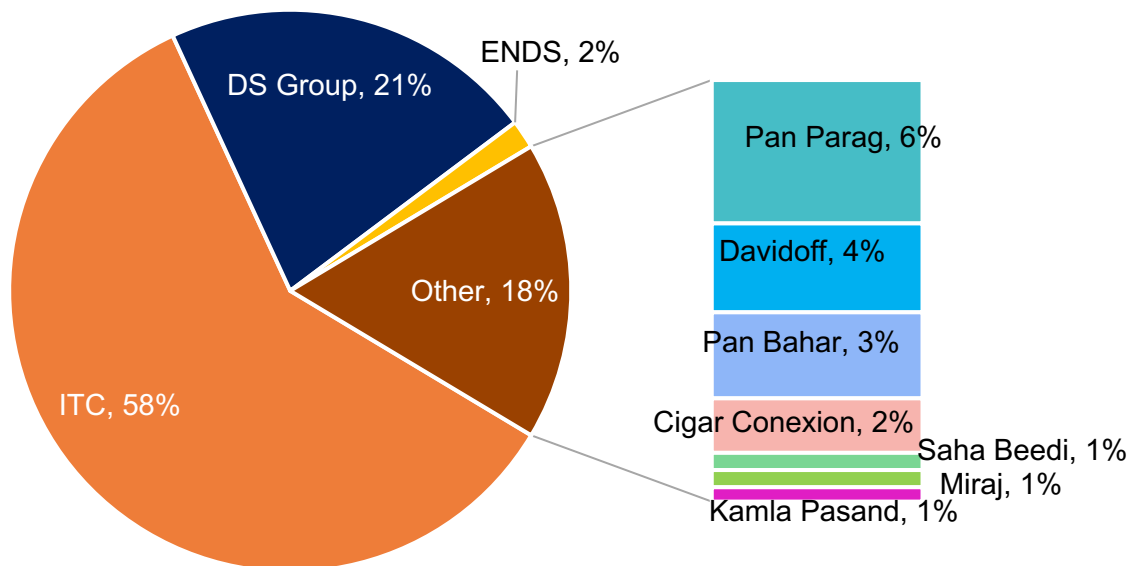
There were **14 instances of the marketing of ENDS products** observed during this period, primarily on Instagram. In many cases, the messages detailed product specifications that emphasized ease of use (e.g., pre-filled, pre-charged) and gave stock updates.



Marketing by Tobacco Companies

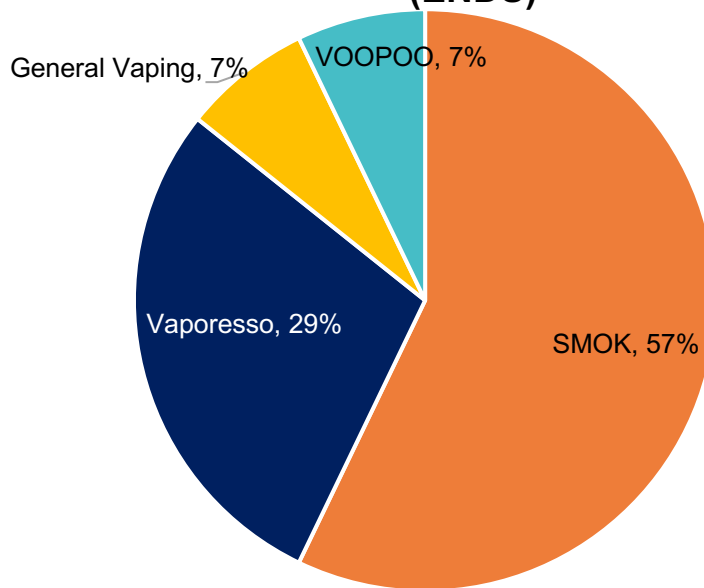
- The majority of marketing observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (58%). Other chief sponsors of tobacco marketing were: Dharampal Satyapal Group (21%), Pan Parag (6%) and Davidoff (4%).
- Most of the surrogate advertising observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (53%), while 19% was sponsored by Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group).
- Most of the marketing of ENDS products observed this month was conducted by SMOK (57%), followed by Vapresso (29%).

Figure 3a : Total Marketing by Tobacco Company (All products)



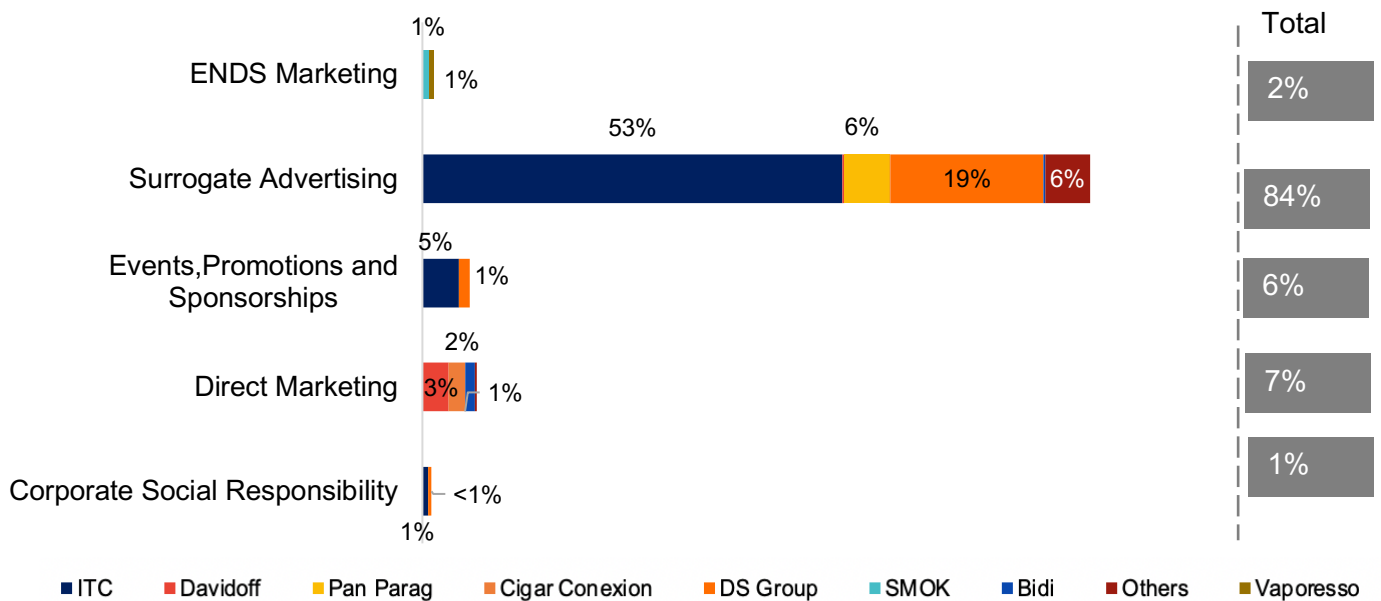
June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n=872)

Figure 3b : Total Marketing by Tobacco Company (ENDS)



June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n=14)

Figure 4. Type of Marketing by Company





June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n = 872)

Public Engagement Activities

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

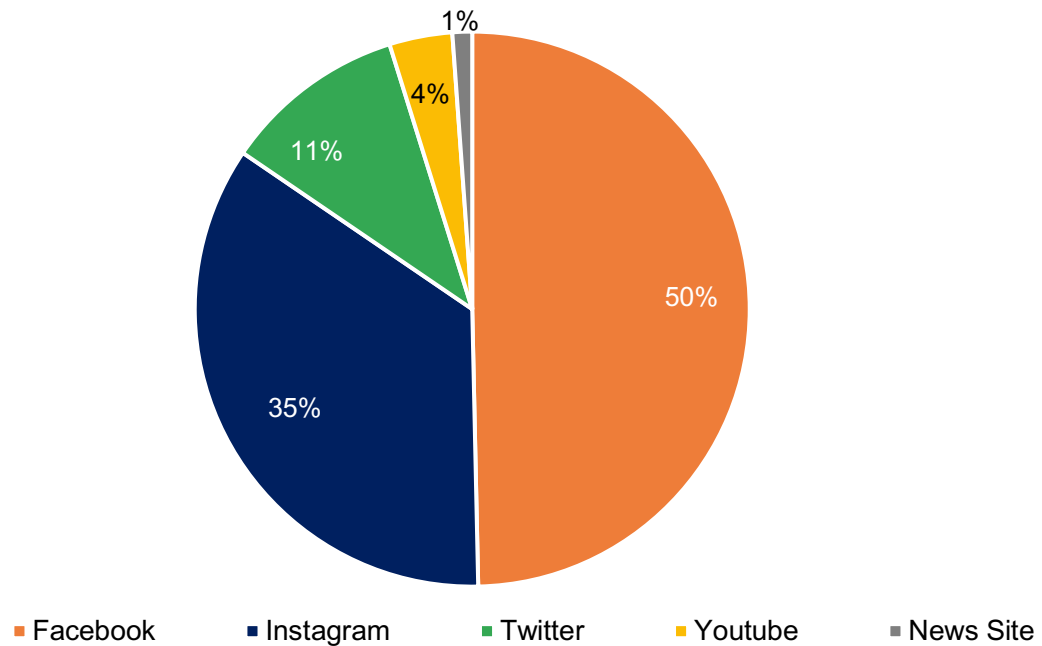
Table 2. Examples of observed public engagement activities by the tobacco industry.

Examples	
	<p>DS Enhances Skills of the Rubber Tappers of Tripura for a Sustainable Livelihood</p> <p>by India CSR Network — 1 month ago in CSR</p>  <p>© indiaca.in</p>

Tobacco Marketing Activity by Channel

- All observed tobacco marketing (direct and indirect) during this period was conducted on social media channels, 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 (55%), Instagram (32%) and Twitter (7%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (41%), Instagram (37%) and Twitter (18%). ENDS products were marketed via Instagram (100%).

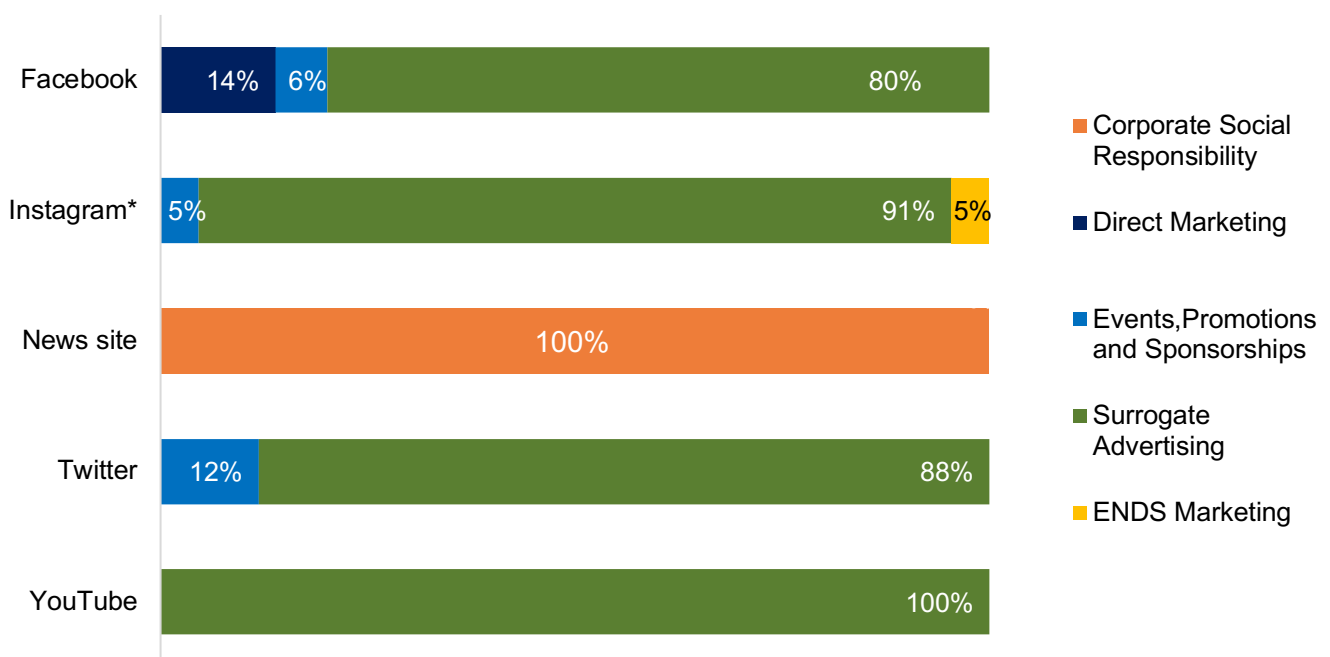
Figure 5a. Total Marketing by Platform*



June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n=872)

*Adds up to 101% due to rounding off

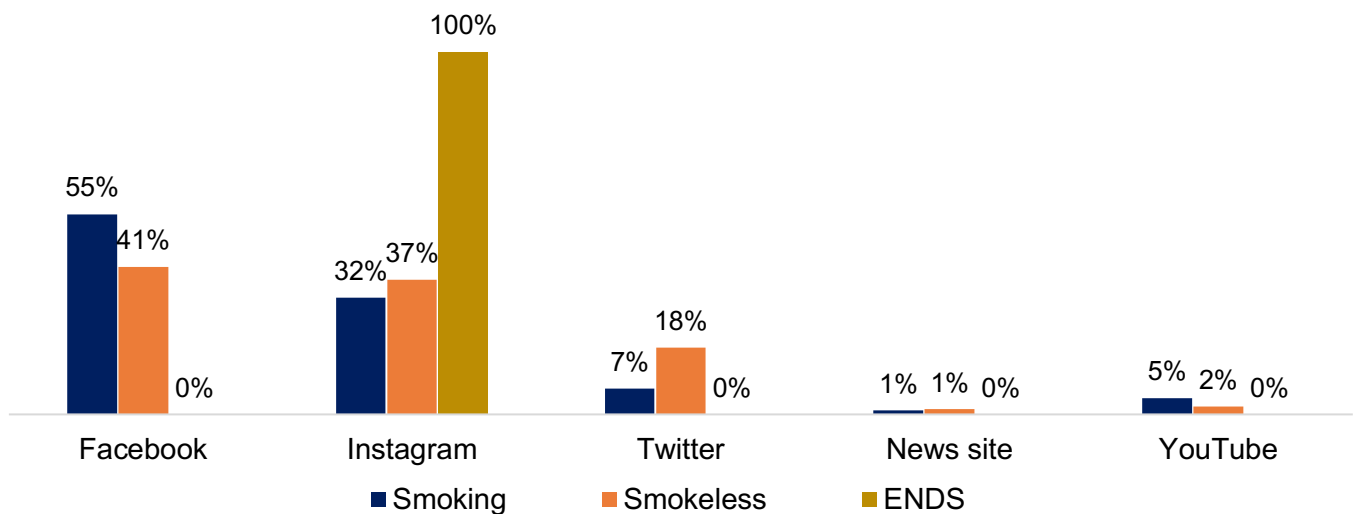
Figure 5b. Type of Marketing by Platform



June 16, 2021 to July 15, 2021 (n=872)

*Adds to 101% due to rounding off

Figure 5c. Type of Product Marketed by Platform



Smoking (n = 575)
Smokess (n = 282)
ENDS (n = 14)

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 terms related to religious days, events such as Father's Day, Ekadashi and Vishnu Puja, and places such as Badrinath temple and Kashi Vishwanath temple, appeared most frequently in tobacco marketing. See below for the most popular words this month:

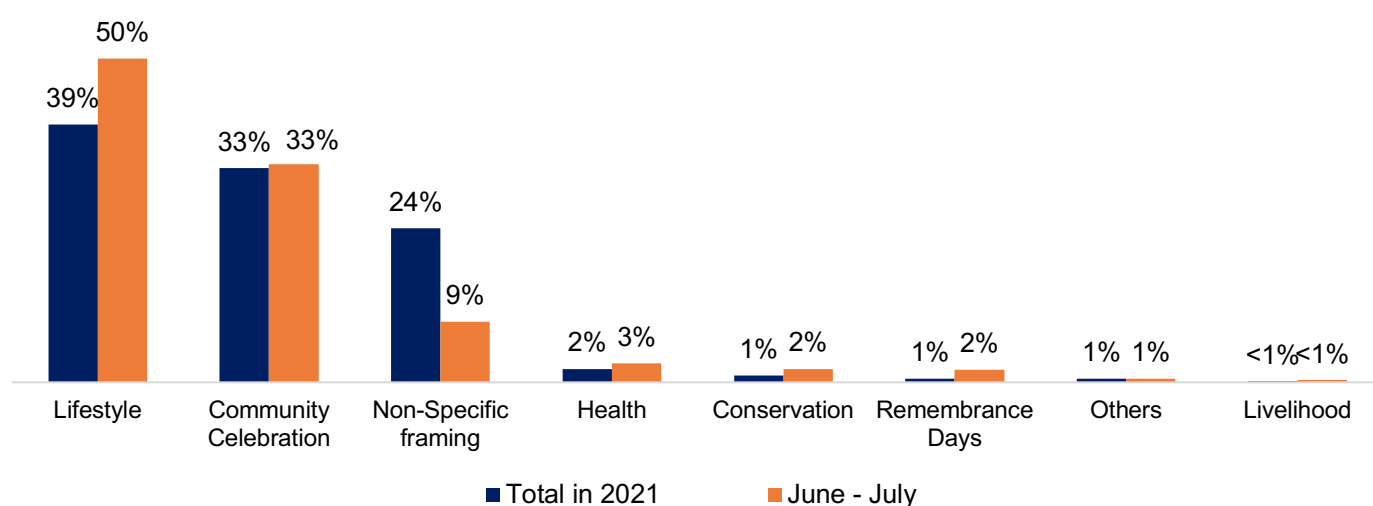


June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n = 872)

Framing of Marketing Messages⁶

- Many tobacco marketing messages were framed with a celebratory tone linked to lifestyle (50%)⁷ and community celebration (33%).
- Both smoking tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages about lifestyle and community celebration. For smoking products, 48% of messages focused on lifestyle and 37% on community celebration. For smokeless tobacco products, 52% of messages focused on lifestyle and 28% on community celebration. For ENDS products, 57% of messages focused on lifestyle.

Figure 6a. Marketing by Message Framing (All Products)



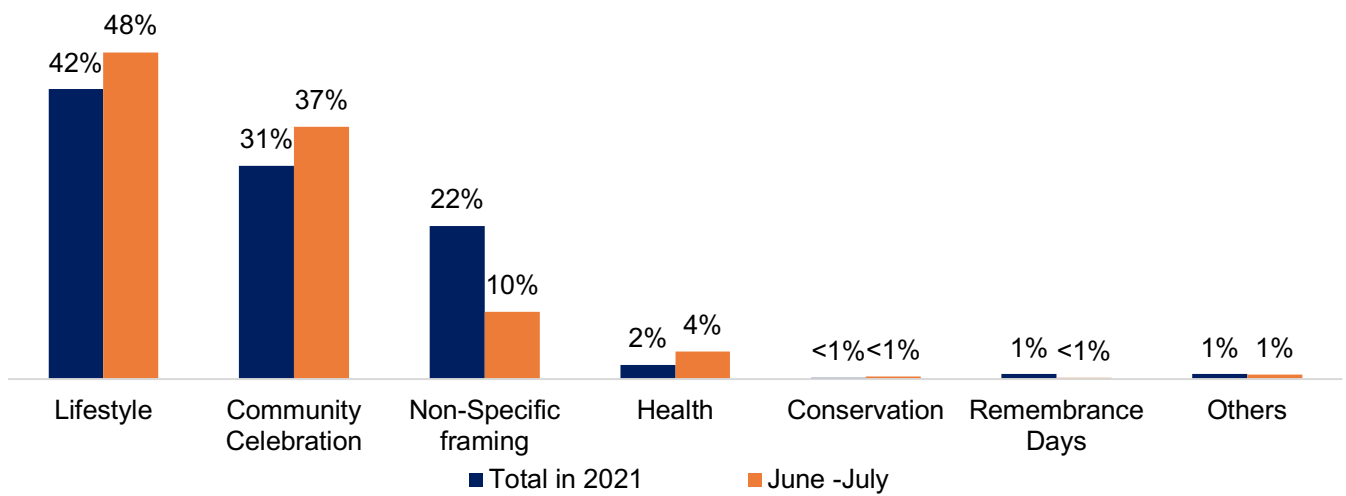
Total in 2021(Dec.16, 2020 to July 15, 2021) (n = 5,797)

June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n = 872)

⁶ See Appendix A for more details on coding for message framing.

⁷ The significant increase in messaging that focuses on lifestyle this month is likely attributable to our introducing ENDS marketing into the scope of the marketing that we monitor and report on.

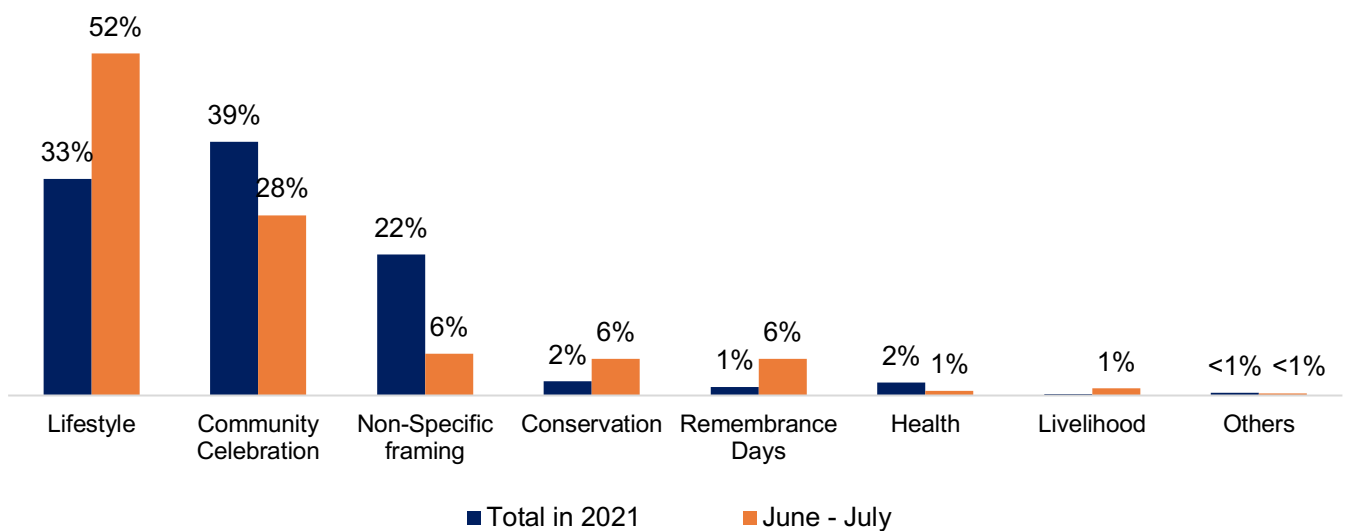
Figure 6b. Marketing by Message Framing(Smoking)



Total in 2021(Dec. 16, 2020 to July 15, 2021) (n =3386)

June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n = 576)

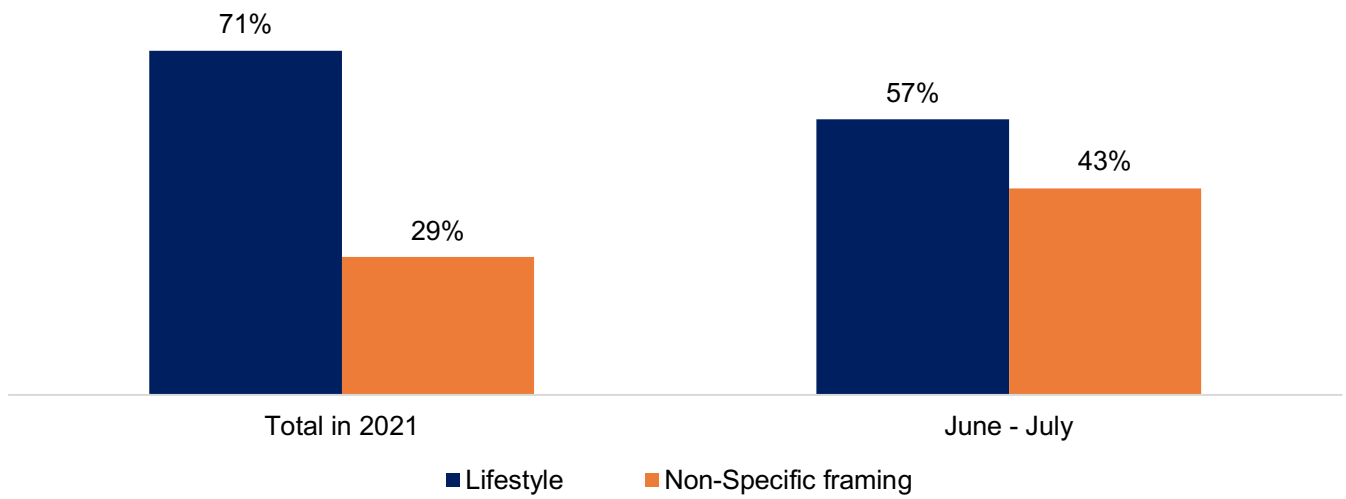
Figure 6c. Marketing by Message Framing(Smokeless)



Total in 2021(Dec. 16, 2020 to July 15, 2021) (n = 2,369)

June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n =282)

Figure 6d. Marketing Instances by Message Framing(ENDS)



Total in 2021(Dec. 16, 2020 to July 15, 2021) (n =42)

June 16 to July 15, 2021 (n = 14)

*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:

TERM website: <https://www.term.community>

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

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

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





Vital Strategies social media: <https://www.facebook.com/vitalstrategies/>; <https://twitter.com/VitalStrat>

APPENDIX A

Message Framing for Marketing Recorded June 16 to July 15, 2021

Most of the tobacco marketing observed this month used messages related to lifestyle, followed by community celebration, as noted below.

Table 1: Type of Message Framing

Message Framing	Summary
Lifestyle	<p>There were 432 instances of advertising recorded during this period that used lifestyle-related message framing. Posts that used related keywords to depict tobacco products as aspirational, fun or luxurious, were coded under lifestyle.</p> <div>   </div>
Community Celebration	<p>There were 291 instances of advertising observed that focused on community celebrations. Messaging that mentioned and was timed with national and international observances was tagged as community celebration. This month there were mentions of World Music Day and Father's Day, international and national sporting events, and national religious festivals such as Ratha Yatra and Ekadashi, among others.</p> <div>   </div>

Health

There were **25 instances of advertising** that used health-related messages. Posts that used keywords highlighting corporate social responsibility initiatives related to public health, or topics related to COVID-19, were coded under health. Some messages that used advertising of surrogate products and mentioned their healthiness, were also coded under health.



Conservation

There were **18 instances of advertising** framed on conservation. Messaging that highlighted efforts related to environment conservation were coded as conservation. Some messages that used advertising of surrogate products and marketed them as eco-friendly were also coded under conservation.



Remembrance days

There were **17 instances of advertising** that used messaging related to remembrance days. Posts that used remembrance or memorial days in their messages were coded under this category.



Non-specific framing

There were **81 instances of advertising** that did not fall under any of the other categories of message framing and were categorised as non-specific message framing. This was widely observed for ENDS marketing during this period.



ⁱArora, M., Nazar, G. P., Chugh, A., Rawal, T., Shrivastava, S., Sinha, P., ... & Glantz, S. (2021). Tobacco imagery in on-demand streaming content popular among adolescents and young adults in India: implications for global tobacco control. *Tobacco control*, 30(1), 42-48.

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>