

# TERM

## *Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement*

### Online Marketing of Tobacco Products: India

August 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 in India and worldwide, 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 **July 16 to Aug. 15, 2021.**<sup>2</sup>

#### Highlights of the Month

- ***Tobacco marketing by volume:*** There were 964 cases of tobacco marketing online this month. Of these, 83% were surrogate advertising, 8% were events, promotions and sponsorships, and 6% were direct marketing of tobacco products. Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 68% was for smoking products, 30% was for smokeless products and 2% was for electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) products.
- ***Tobacco marketing by state:***<sup>3</sup> Overall, 63% of the observed marketing originated in West Bengal, followed by Uttar Pradesh (30%), Maharashtra (4%), Karnataka (2%) and Rajasthan (1%). 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 (100%).
- ***Tobacco marketing by channel:*** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 49% was on Facebook, 33% on Instagram and 14% on Twitter. Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (53%), Instagram (29%) and Twitter (13%). Smokeless tobacco products were also marketed through Facebook (43%), Instagram (39%) and Twitter (17%). ENDS products were primarily marketed on Instagram (89%).

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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> Coding was modified to include ENDS products in the scope of marketing that we monitor and report on.

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

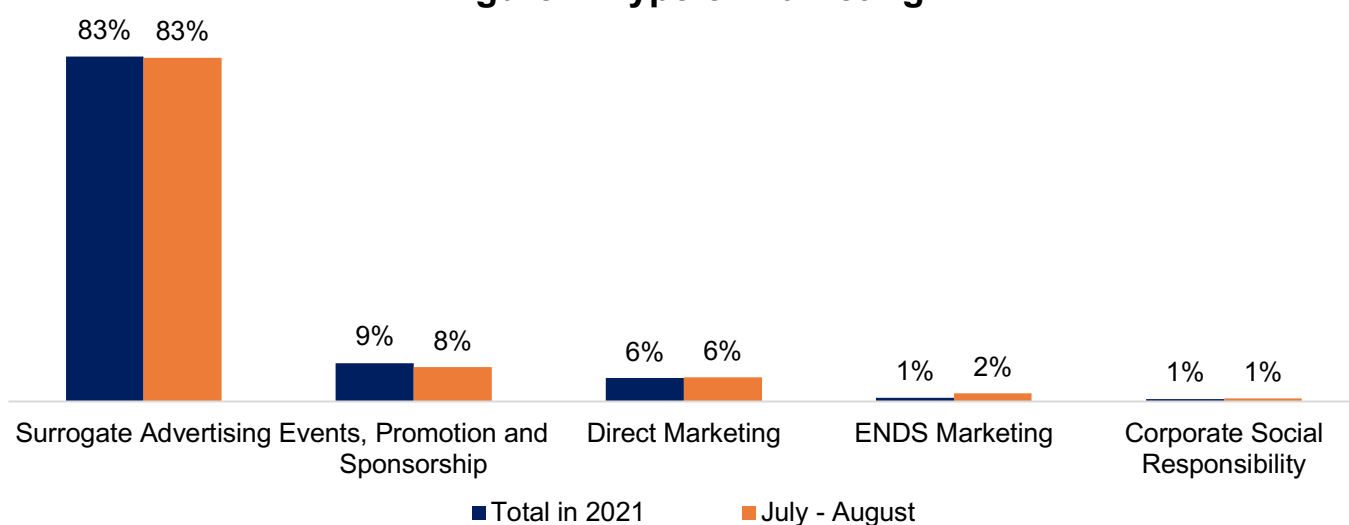
- **Message framing:** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 47% had messages related to lifestyle<sup>4</sup> and 43% to community celebration.<sup>5</sup> Both smoking and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages focused on lifestyle and community celebration. ENDS products were mainly marketed using lifestyle-focused messages.

## Detailed Insights

### Volume of Tobacco Marketing

- A total of 964 tobacco marketing activities were recorded between July 15 and Aug. 16, 2021. The main types of marketing were surrogate marketing, events, promotions and sponsorships, and direct marketing. Of the total marketing activities observed, 83% were surrogate marketing, 8% were events, promotions, and sponsorships, and 6% were direct marketing.
- Of the total marketing activities observed this month, 60% were for smoking tobacco products, 39% for smokeless tobacco products and 2% for ENDS products. There was an increase in the marketing of smoking products this month compared to previous months in 2021, and a slight increase in marketing of ENDS products.

**Figure 1. Type of Marketing**



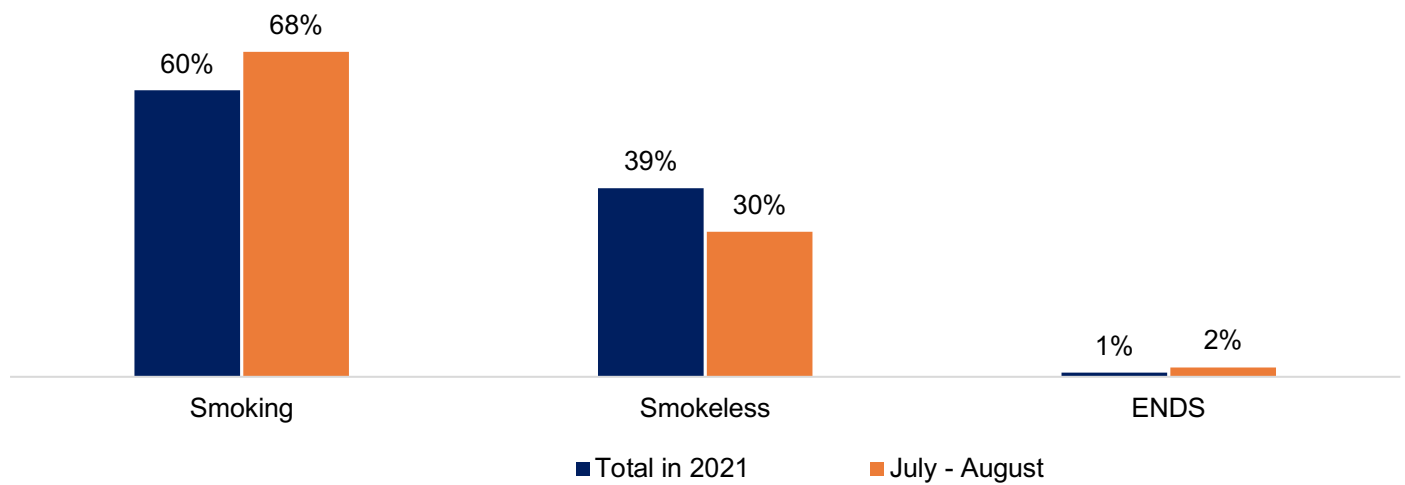
Year to Date (Dec. 16,2020 to Aug. 15, 2021 ) (n =6,761 )

July16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n = 964 )

<sup>4</sup> All marketing messages that were previously coded as recreation 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.

<sup>5</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.

**Figure 2. Type of Product Marketed**



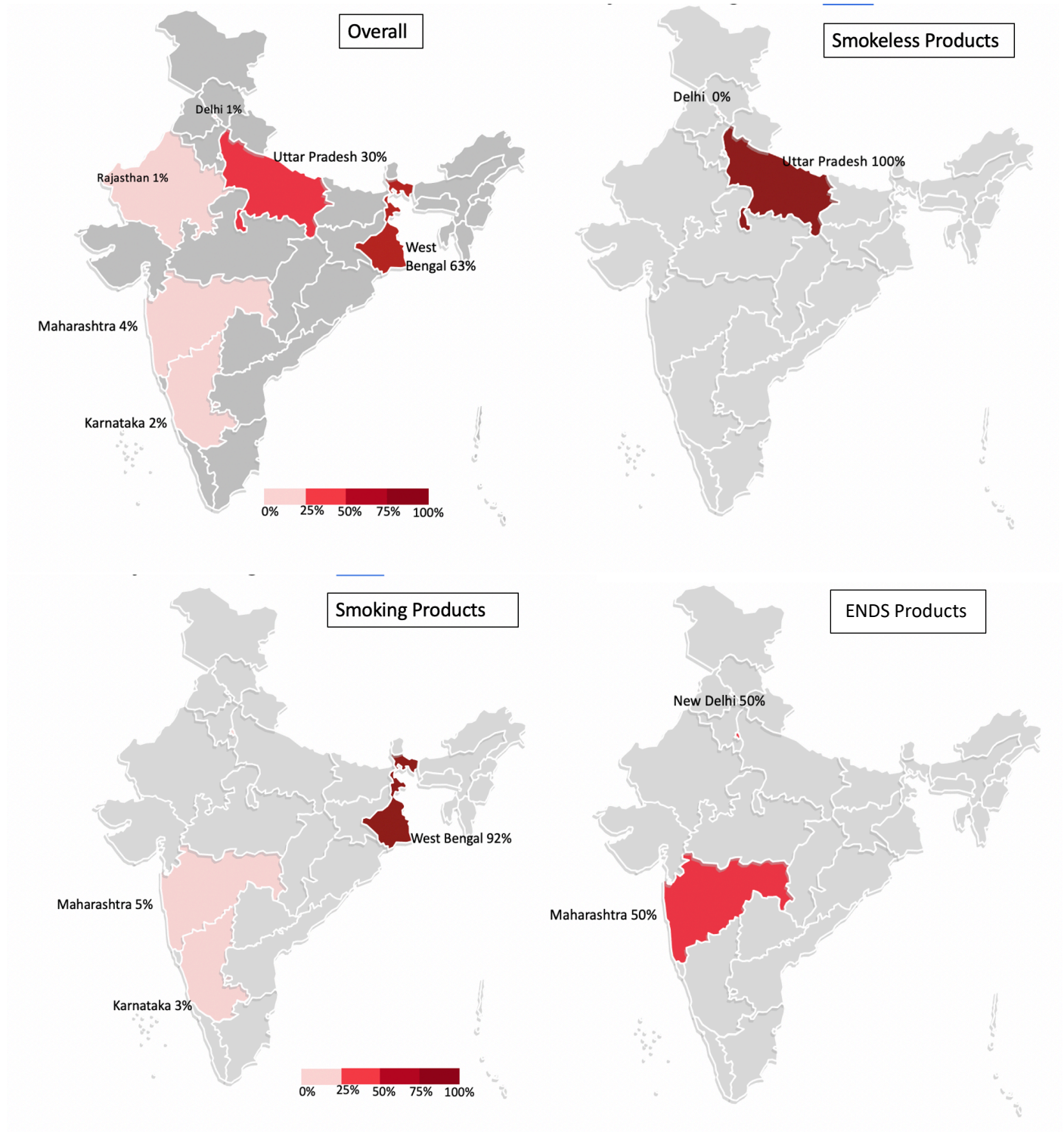
Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to Aug. 15, 2021) (n = 6,761)

July 16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n = 964)

### **Tobacco Marketing by State**

- A majority of tobacco marketing observed this month originated in West Bengal (63%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (30%), Maharashtra (4%) 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 marketed in Uttar Pradesh (100%). ENDS products were marketed in both Maharashtra (50%) and New Delhi (50%).

**Map 1: Origin of Tobacco Marketing by State**







July 16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n = 938)



## Marketing Recorded July 16 to Aug. 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>56 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. Many posts provided details on where to order products.
	
<b>Indirect Marketing (Surrogate marketing and events, promotions and sponsorships)</b>	There were <b>882 instances of indirect advertising</b> observed. Messaging highlighted tobacco features including flavor and packaging. Event, promotion and sponsorship activities were timed with: observances such as Independence Day, World Emoji Day and Friendship Day; national religious festivals such as Eid and Ekadashi; and national and international sporting events. Some messages mentioned national pandemic response efforts and COVID-19 public health measures such as mask-wearing, working from home and vaccinations.
	

**Corporate Social  
Responsibility  
Activities**

There were **7 observed instances of tobacco companies conducting social responsibility activities**, the majority of which were by ITC Limited. Messaging was primarily focused on social initiatives and corporate governance.

**ITC Sunfeast India 'Move As One' initiative  
launched to support children in Covid times**



**ITC: Leveraging Digital Technologies To  
Deliver Social Initiatives During The  
Pandemic**

While physical interactions got restricted, ITC came out with innovative models of last mile connect for dissemination of information, mobilization of resources and for training and monitoring the field work across CSR projects.

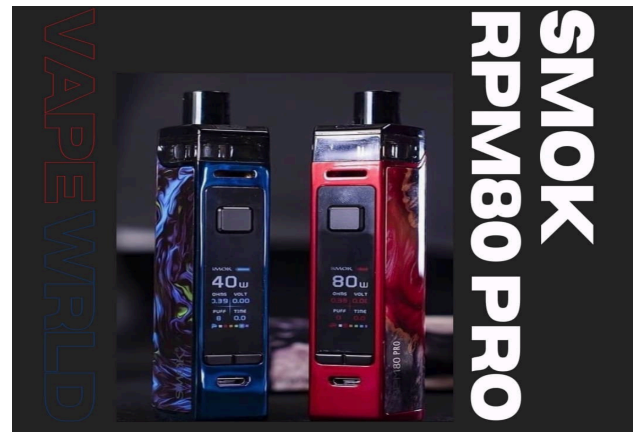
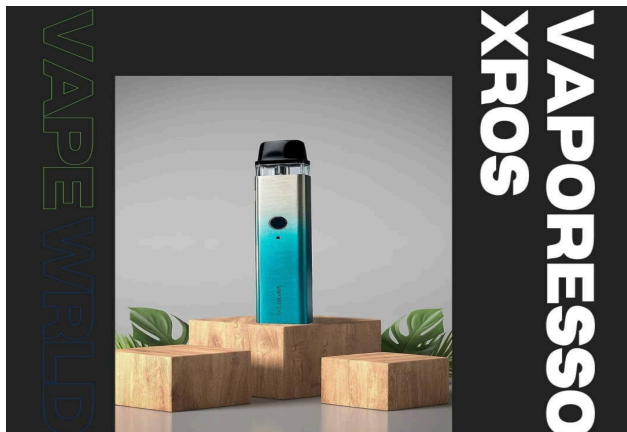


Photo Credit



**ENDS Marketing**

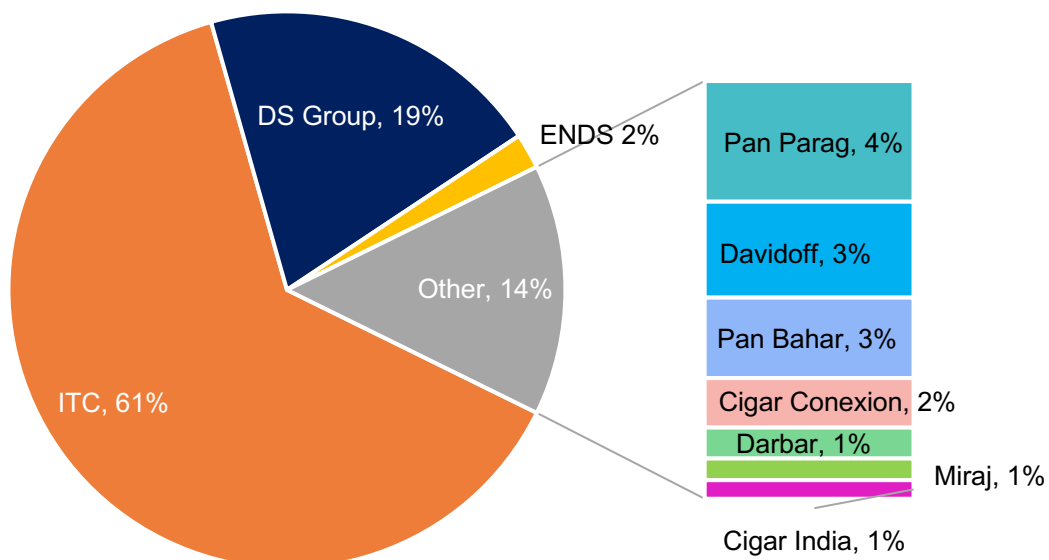
There were **19 instances of ENDS products being marketed**, primarily via Instagram. In many cases, posts included product specifications emphasizing ease of use (e.g., pre-filled, pre-charged) and giving stock updates.



## Marketing by Tobacco Companies

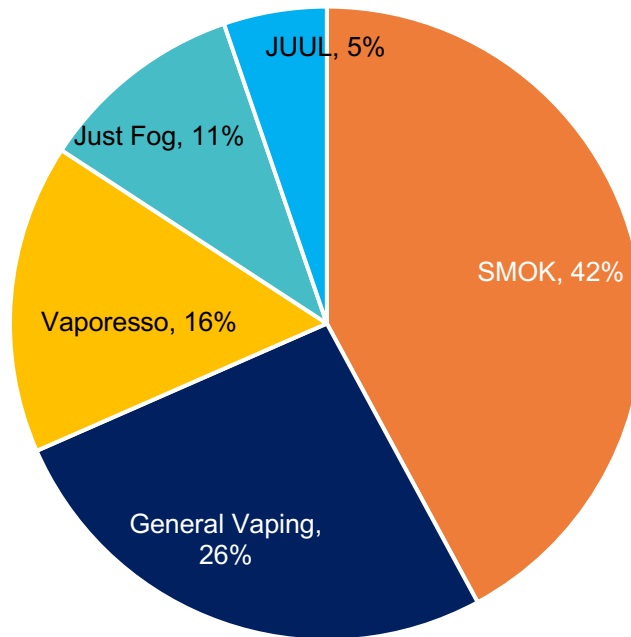
- A majority of marketing observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (61%). Other chief sponsors of tobacco marketing were: Dharampal Satyapal Group (19%), Pan Parag (4%) and Davidoff (3%).
- Most of the surrogate advertising observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (61%), while 19% was sponsored by Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group).
- Most of the marketing of ENDS products observed this month was conducted by SMOK (42%), followed by Vapresso (16%).

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



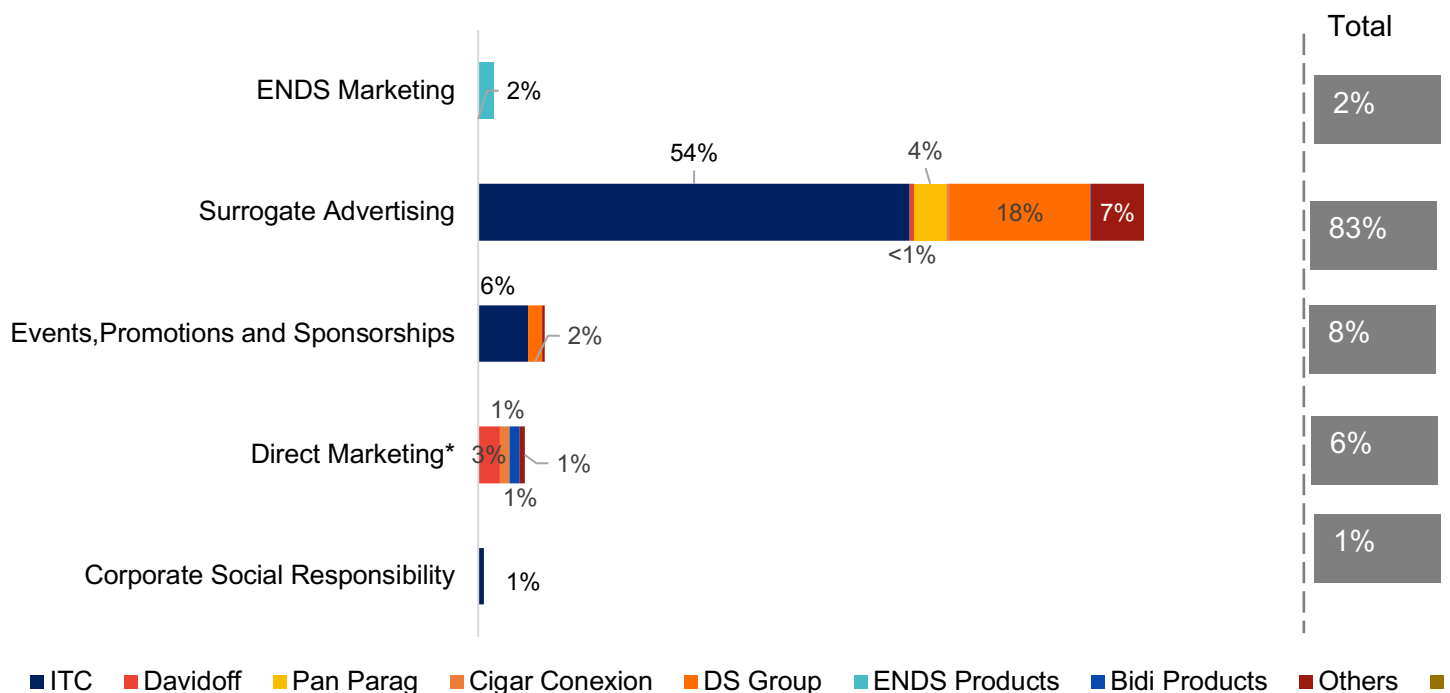
July 16 to Aug.15, 2021 (n=964)

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



July 16 to Aug.15, 2021 (n=19)

**Figure 4. Type of Marketing by Company**



July 16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n = 964)

\*This month we observed 1% instances of Bidi products contributing to direct marketing. The share of each bidi brand was very low and thus clubbed together as Bidi product.

## Public Engagement Activities

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

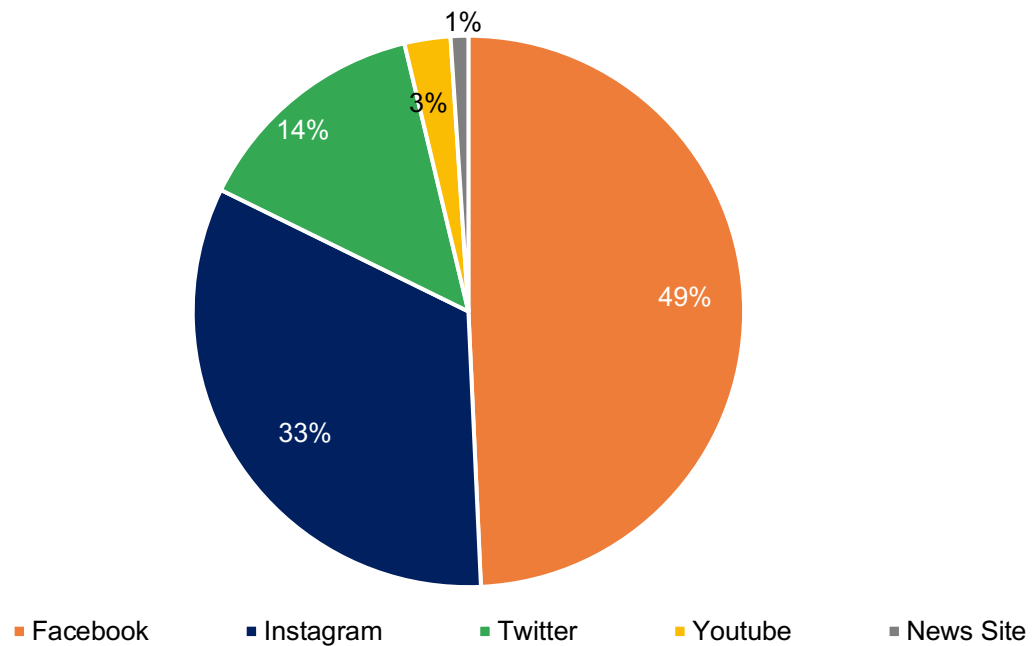
**Table 2. Examples of observed public engagement activities by the tobacco industry.**

Examples	
<p><b>Sunfeast India move for good initiative launched to support children affected by Covid</b></p> <p><i>The initiative was launched in partnership with Procam International, GiveIndia and Fit India Movement</i></p> <p>by exchange4media Staff Updated: Jul 28, 2021 6:39 PM</p>	

## Tobacco Marketing Activity by Channel

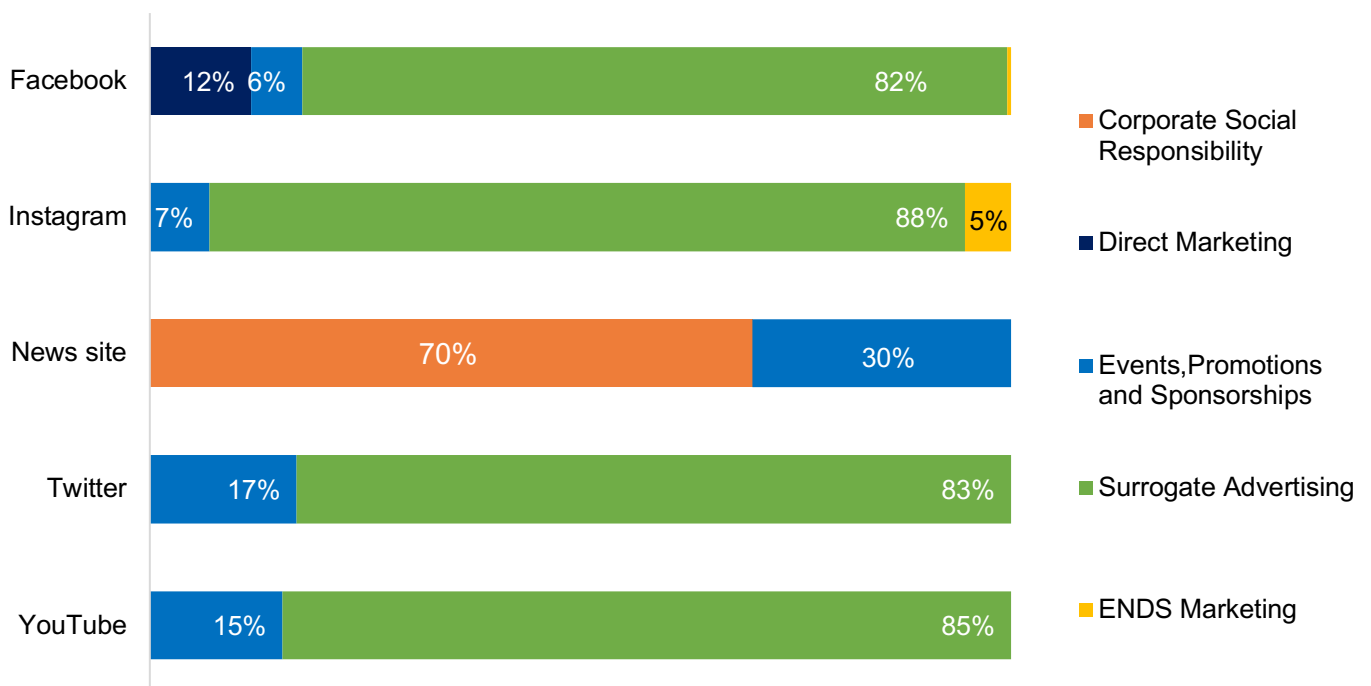
- All observed tobacco marketing (direct and indirect) during this period was conducted on social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Surrogate marketing of tobacco products was conducted through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The news media was the primary source for reports on tobacco industry-sponsored corporate social responsibility initiatives.
- Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (53%), Instagram (29%) and Twitter (13%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (43%), Instagram (39%) and Twitter (17%). ENDS products were primarily marketed via Instagram (89%).

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



July 16 to August 15, 2021 (n=964)

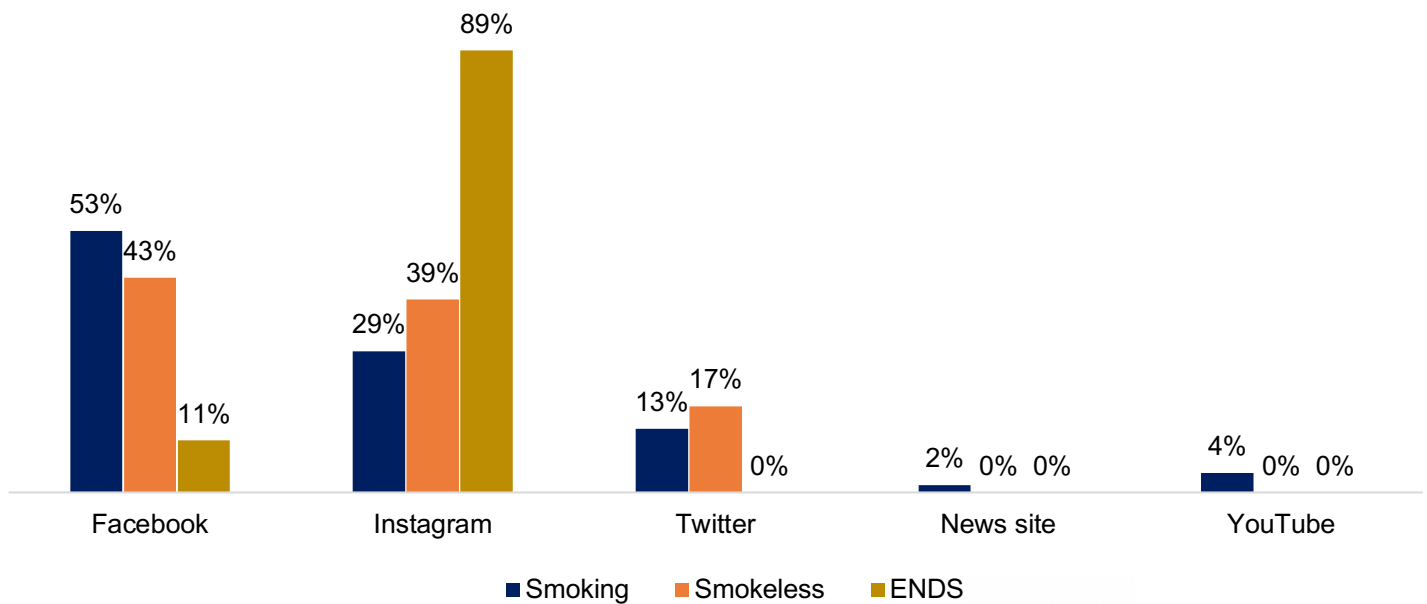
**Figure 5b. Type of Marketing by Platform**



July 16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n=964)



**Figure 5c. Type of Product Marketed by Platform**



Smoking(n = 653)  
Smokeless(n=292)  
ENDS (n = 19)

### 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, the most frequently used terms were related to religion, which included holidays such as Eid and places such as Badrinath temple. Other common terms such as "freshness" and "refreshment," were related to flavor and cooking. See below for the most popular words this month:

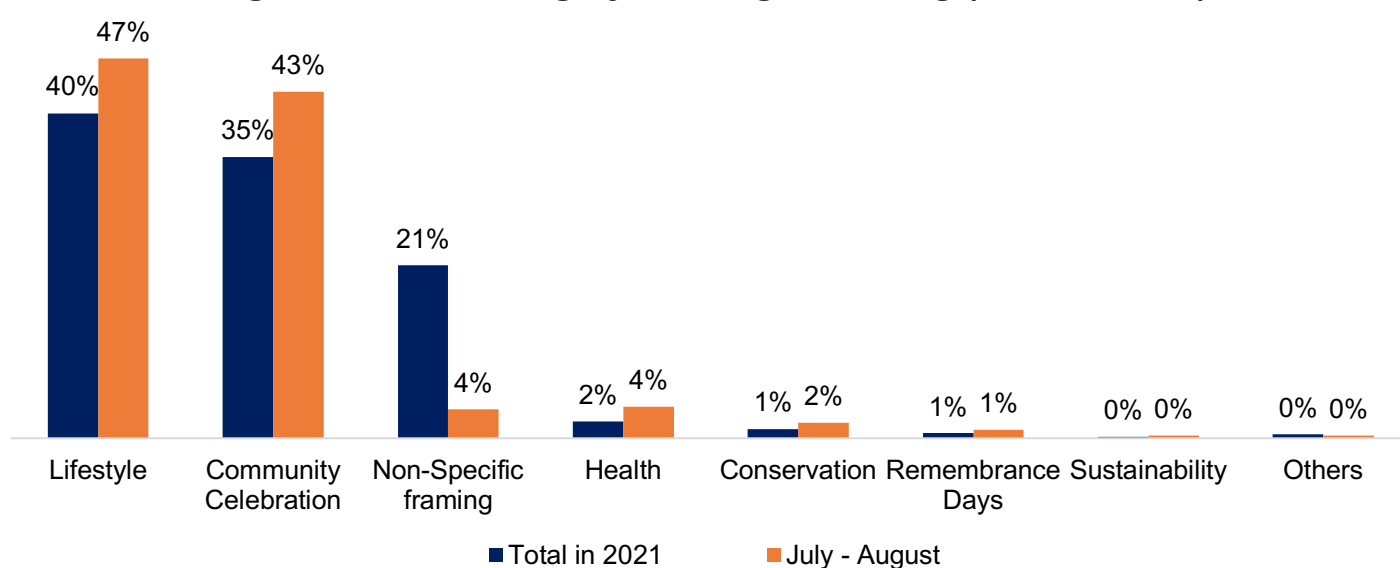


July 16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n = 964)

## Framing of Marketing Messages<sup>6</sup>

- Many tobacco marketing messages were framed with a celebratory tone linked to lifestyle (47%)<sup>7</sup> and community celebration (43%).
- Both smoking tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages related to lifestyle and community celebration. For smoking products, 51% of messages focused on lifestyle and 38% on community celebration. For smokeless tobacco products, 36% of messages focused on lifestyle and 54% on community celebration. For ENDS products, 68% of messages focused on lifestyle.

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

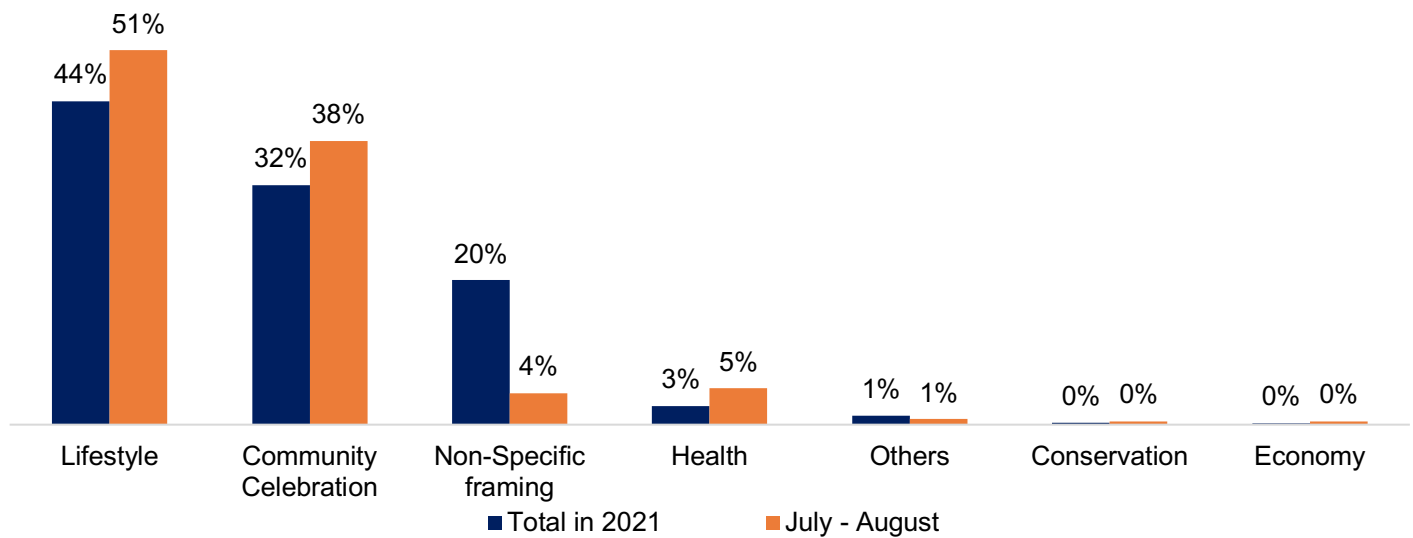


Total in 2021 (Dec. 16, 2020 to Aug. 15, 2021) (n = 6,761)  
July 16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n = 964)

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A for more details on how we determined message framing.

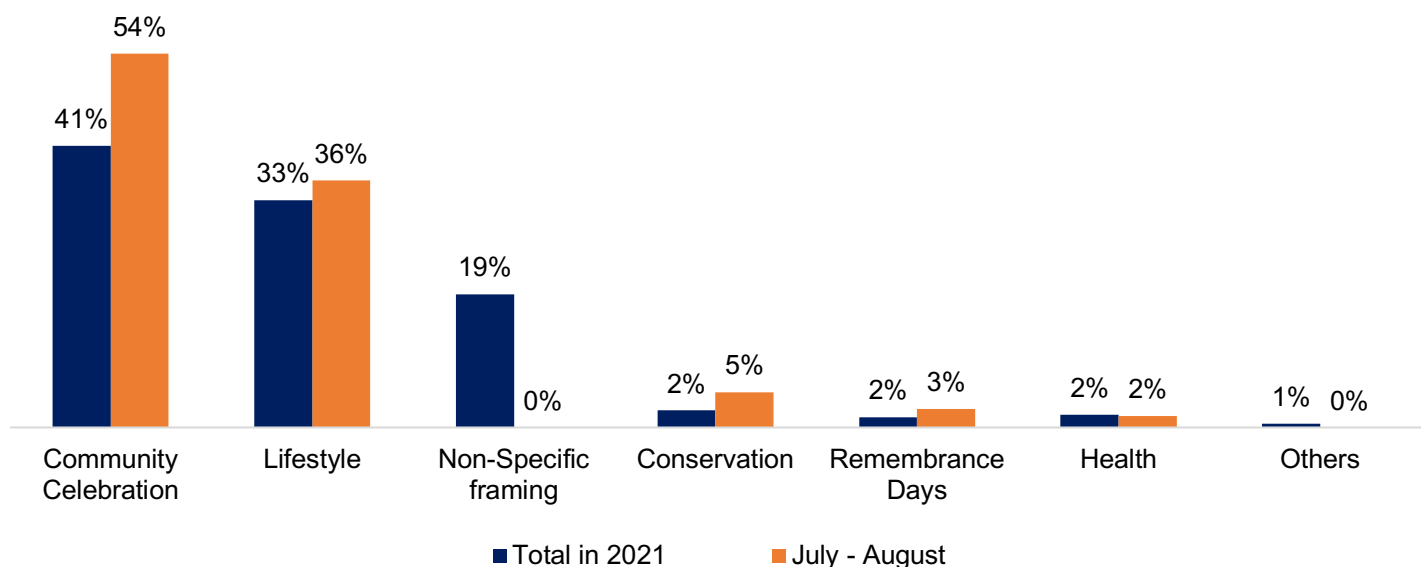
<sup>7</sup> The significant increase in messaging that focuses on lifestyle from July onwards is likely attributable to our introducing ENDS marketing into the scope of the marketing that we monitor and report on.

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



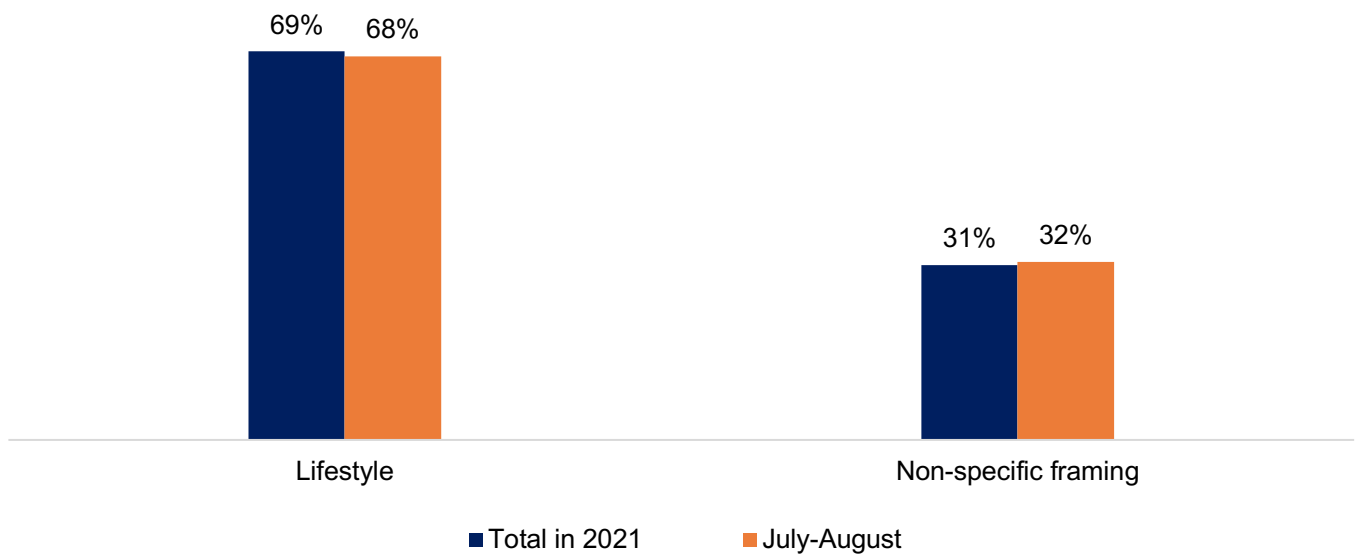
Total in 2021(December 16, 2020 to Aug. 15, 2021) (n =4,039 )  
July16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n = 653)

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



Total in 2021(Dec. 16, 2020 to Aug. 15, 2021) (n = 2,661)  
July16 to Aug. 15, 2021 (n =292)

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



Total in 2021(Dec. 16, 2020 to Aug. 15, 2021) (n =19 )  
July 16 to Aug.15, 2021 (n = 61)

\*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>

TERM 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>



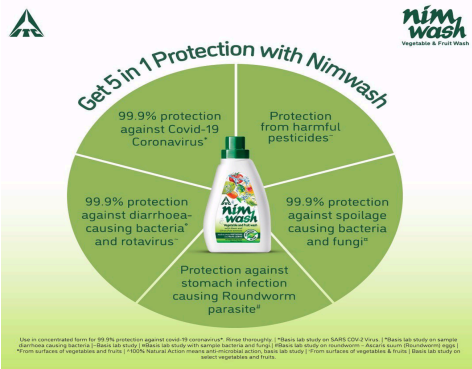
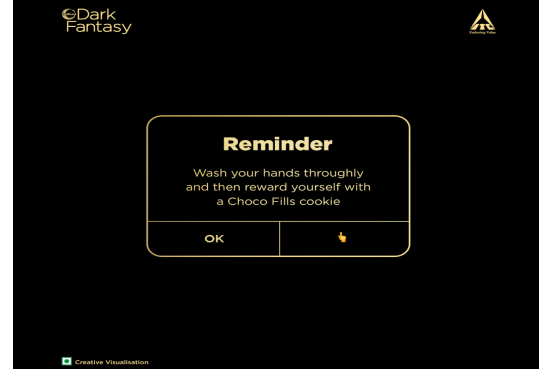


## APPENDIX A



### Message Framing for Marketing Recorded July 16 to Aug. 15, 2021

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

**Table 1: Type of Message Framing**

Message Framing	Summary
<b>Lifestyle</b>	<p>There were <b>449 instances of advertising</b> recorded during this period that used lifestyle-related message framing. Posts that used keywords depicting tobacco products as aspirational, fun or luxurious, were coded as lifestyle.</p> <div> </div>
<b>Community Celebration</b>	<p>There were <b>410 instances of advertising</b> observed during this period that focused on community celebrations. Messaging that mentioned and/or was timed with national and international observances was tagged as community celebration. This month there were mentions of: observances including World Emoji Day and Independence Day; national religious festivals such as Eid and Ekadashi; and national and international sporting events.</p> <div> </div>

<p><b>Health</b></p>	<p>There were <b>37 instances of advertising</b> 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 posts from tobacco companies that advertised surrogate products and mentioned their healthiness, were also coded in this category.</p>
	
<p><b>Conservation</b></p>	<p>There were <b>18 instances of advertising</b> related to conservation. Messaging that highlighted efforts related to environment conservation were coded as conservation. Some posts from tobacco companies that advertised surrogate products as eco-friendly were also coded in this category.</p>
	<p><b>ITC pioneering planet-friendly initiatives in specialised packaging</b></p> <p>By <b>Rahul Kumar</b> 13 Aug 2021</p> <p>Moving to the next horizon, ITC is pioneering a planet-friendly initiative through innovative fibre-based solutions, including moulded fibre technologies for specialised packaging, leveraging its existing proprietary R&amp;D platforms and global collaborations. The business has launched a sustainable packaging portfolio comprising recyclable paperboards, under the 'Filo' and 'Omega' series to substitute single use plastics. This segment offers immense opportunities with the global bio-degradable packaging market estimated to grow to nearly USD 121-billion by 2025.</p> <p>ITC's paperboards, paper and packaging business is a market leader and has made significant progress with recent strategic investments in areas such as pulp import substitution, proactive capacity addition in value-added paperboards as well as in extensive use of industry 4.0 to drive a new paradigm of quality and efficiency.</p>
<p><b>Remembrance days</b></p>	<p>There were <b>10 instances of advertising</b> that used messaging related to remembrance days. Posts that used remembrance or memorial days in their messages were coded in this category.</p>
	

<p><b>Non-specific framing</b></p>	<p>There were <b>34 instances of advertising</b> that did not fall under any of the other categories. This was widely observed for ENDS and Bidi direct marketing during this period. These instances usually only had images of the products being marketed with no mention of brand name or logo on the image and with minimal to no text in the posts.</p>
	

<sup>i</sup>Arora, 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.

<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>