

Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) Online Marketing of Tobacco Products Mexico Situation Report

Reporting period: September 2021-January 2022

Background

Article 13 of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) recommends banning all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS). Mexico's newly reformed General Law on Tobacco Control went into effect on Feb. 17, 2022. The law aligns with Article 13 by prohibiting any form of direct or indirect TAPS through any type of media.¹ Vital Strategies' Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) is a real-time digital media monitoring system for tobacco marketing activities. This situation report is part of a series that summarizes observed examples of online tobacco marketing in Mexico. Visit the [TERM](#) website to learn more and to view all reports.

Key Takeaways

How much marketing was observed? A total of 498 posts were observed between Sept. 15, 2021 and Jan. 16, 2022, with four times more marketing for e-cigarettes (400 posts)² than for smoking products (95 posts).³ A small volume of marketing was observed for heated tobacco products (1% or 3 posts), including posts promoting synthetic nicotine products.

Who are the key players? We observed the accounts of online e-cigarette stores, including eicg_depot, Kapital Smoke & Vapor and La Vaperia Vape Shop, marketing many imported e-cigarette brands. The cigar brands Te-Amo and A. Turrent, both from the family-owned company Nueva Maticapan de Tabacos S.A. de C.V., were actively marketed through official brand accounts. Philip Morris International's IQOS was the only heated tobacco product brand we observed being actively marketed.

Where were products marketed? More than two-thirds of tobacco marketing was observed on Facebook (68%)⁴, which is the [most popular and actively](#) used platform in Mexico, followed by Instagram (30%).

What marketing tactics were used? Most tobacco products (91%) were marketed directly with clear product images and few attempts to hide the post's intention. This was more often the case for heated tobacco products (100% direct marketing) and smoking products (96% direct marketing) than for e-cigarettes (90%), which were also often marketed through sales promotions coinciding with holidays (11%).

What messaging was used? Since most marketing was explicit in its intent to promote tobacco sales, most messaging touted features like product flavor and taste (71%). Informational posts on how to use products (e-cigarettes) or about the company (cigars) were also popular (10%). E-cigarette posts often used the hashtag #elvapeosalvavida (vaping saves lives) and included claims that they are healthier than cigarettes because they do not produce secondhand smoke and suggesting that they are "[lifesaving smoking cessation tools](#)." Multiple sales promotions and greetings were observed during the following holidays: Independence Day, Día de Muertos, Christmas, New Year and Epiphany (Three Kings Day).

¹ This first situation report provides an overview of online tobacco marketing before the amended tobacco control law went into effect.

² The technical term for e-cigarettes is Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)/Electronic Non-Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENNDS), but we will use "e-cigarettes" for ease of understanding. Reference to e-cigarettes also includes marketing of its components (pods, e-liquids etc.)

³ Smoking products were exclusively cigars; cigarette marketing was not observed.

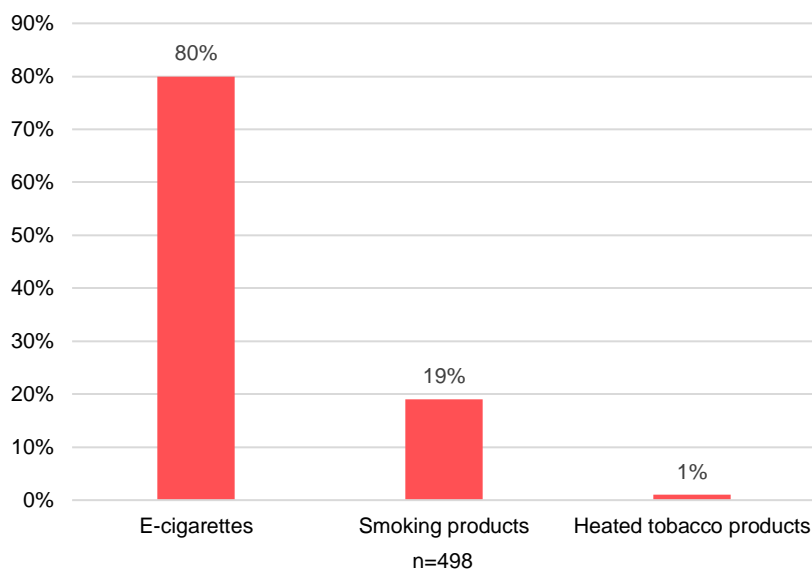
⁴ Our analysis did not capture posts promoting and selling e-cigarettes via Facebook marketplace or WhatsApp, where many sales are known to occur.

Detailed Insights

E-Cigarettes were the most commonly marketed product on social media.

There was four times more marketing for e-cigarettes than for smoking products.⁵

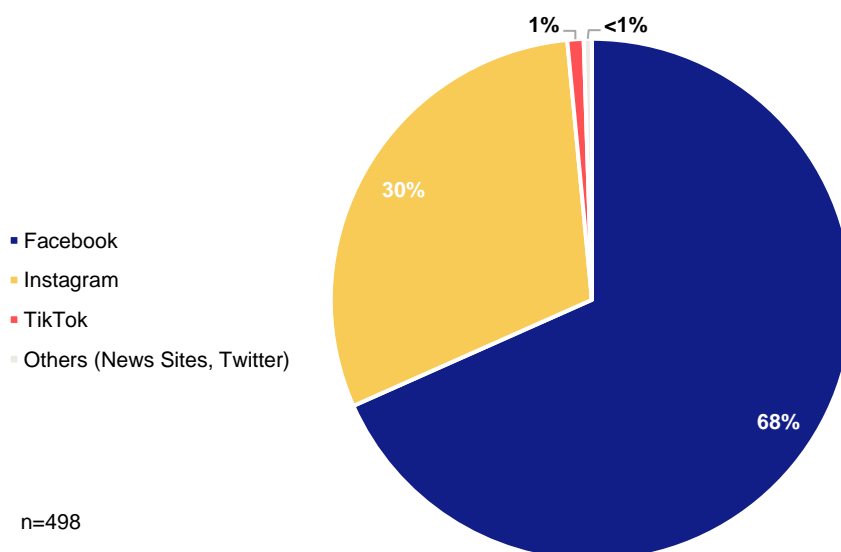
Figure 1. Type of Product Marketed



More than two-thirds of all marketing was observed on Facebook.

Instagram was the second leading source of tobacco marketing.

Figure 2. Marketing by Social Media/Digital Platform

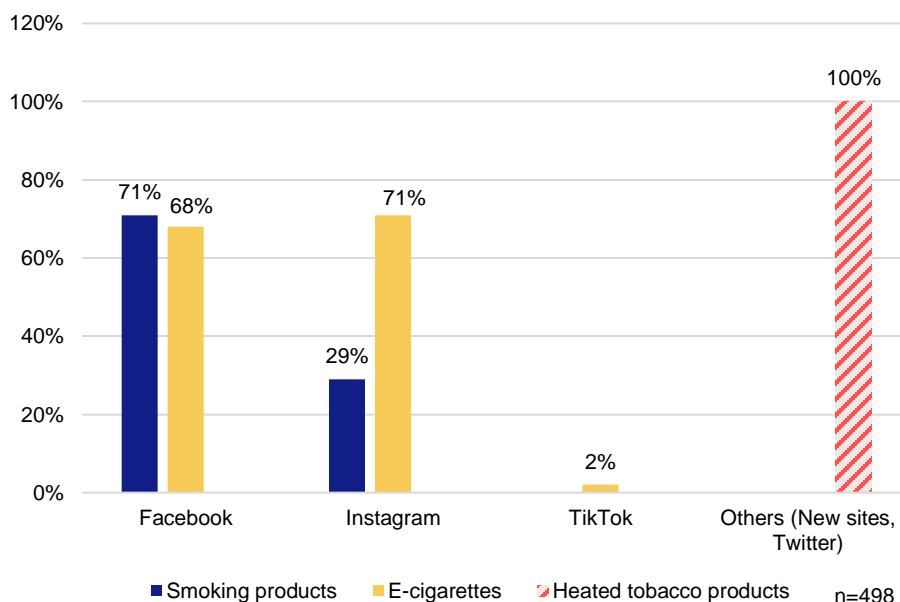


⁵ Smoking products were exclusively cigars; cigarette marketing was not observed.

E-Cigarettes and smoking products were similarly marketed through Facebook and Instagram.

All marketing of heated tobacco products was on news sites and Twitter.

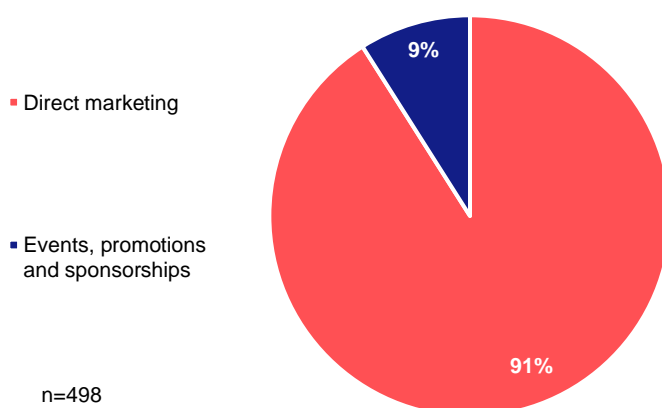
Figure 3. Marketing by Product Type and Social Media/Digital Platform



There was 10 times more direct marketing than events, promotions and sponsorships.

Most marketing directly promoted products to sell them, with clear visuals and links to online stores.

Figure 4. Marketing Tactics (All Products)



Examples:

Direct marketing



A post for a new SMOK product, with a link to an online retailer. Photo from: Ecig.mx Facebook page

Events, promotions and sponsorships

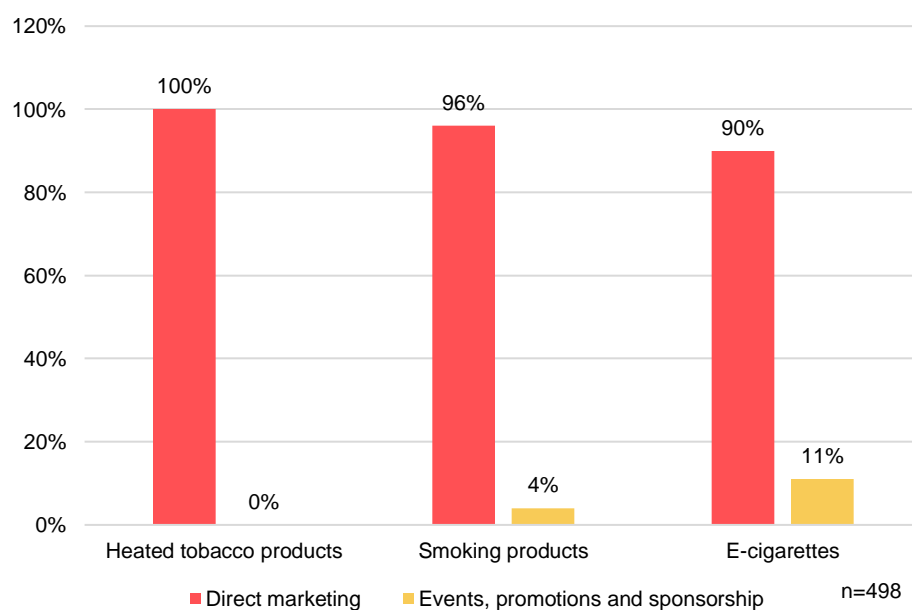


Online tobacco shops announced promotional sales during the Christmas period. Photo from: La Vaperia Vape Shop Facebook page.

For all product types tracked by this study, direct marketing was the most frequently used marketing approach.

There were more events, promotions and sponsorship activities observed for e-cigarettes than for other products.

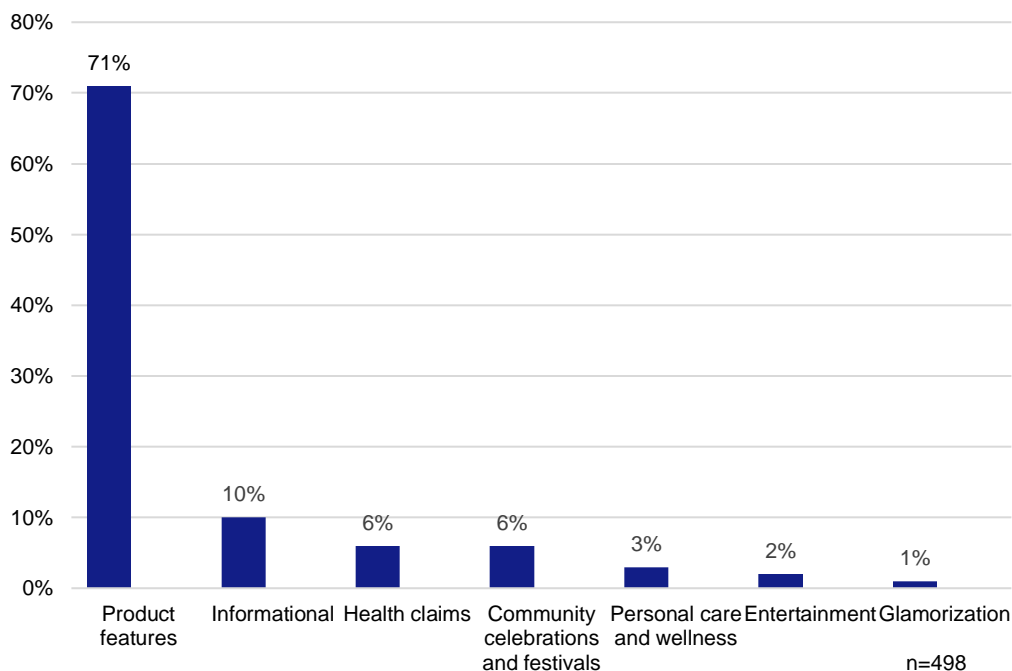
Figure 5. Marketing Tactic by Product Type



Since all products used direct marketing tactics, the messaging explicitly highlighted product features to promote their sales.

Informational posts explaining how to use the product (e-cigarettes) and providing background on the company (cigars) were also common.

Figure 6. Message Framing (All Products)



Examples:

Product features



Posts highlighted product features of disposable e-cigarettes such as available flavors, number of puffs and battery life. Photo from: Kapital Smoke & Vapor Facebook page

Informational

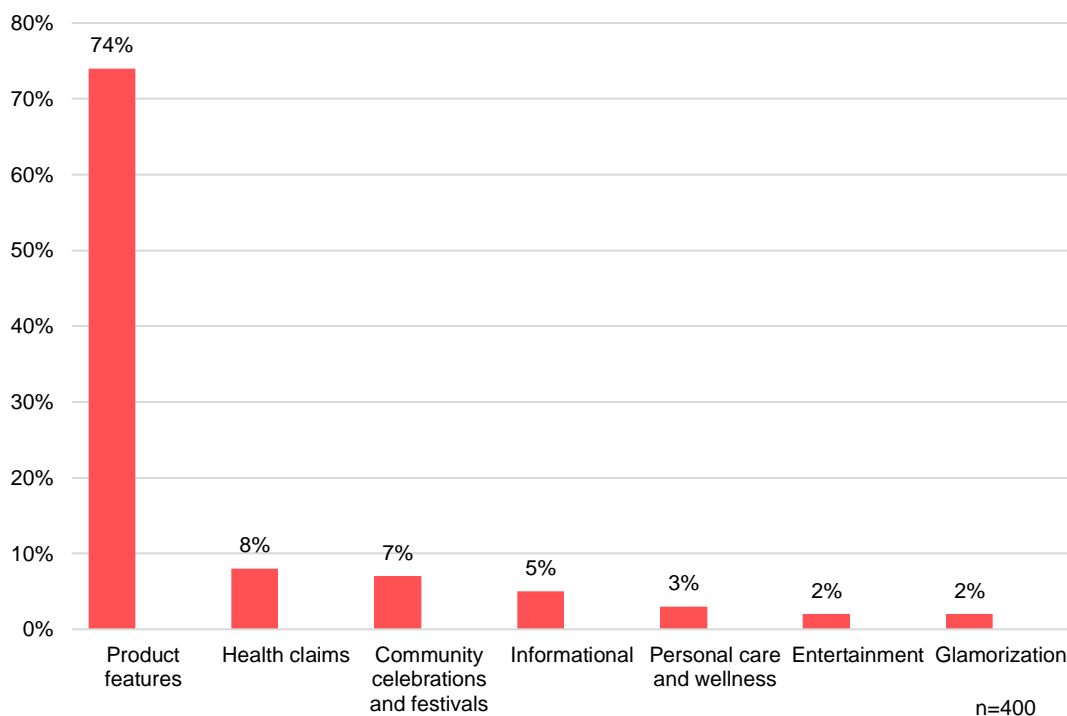


Posts provided background information on the cigar company and promoted cigar rolling as a traditional craft that is part of a proud cultural heritage. Photo from: Te Amo Cigars Facebook page

Most messaging for e-cigarettes focused on product features like flavor, color and technical specifications.

Many posts also made health claims—promoting e-cigarettes as healthier than cigarettes.

Figure 7. Message Framing (E-cigarettes)

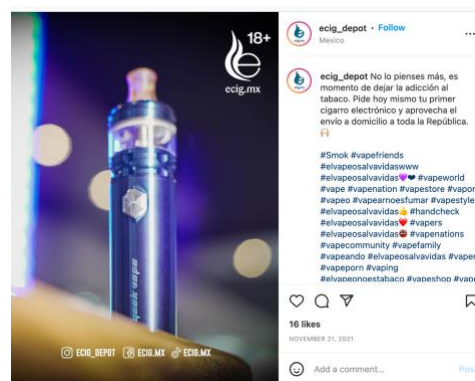


Examples:

Product features



Health Claims

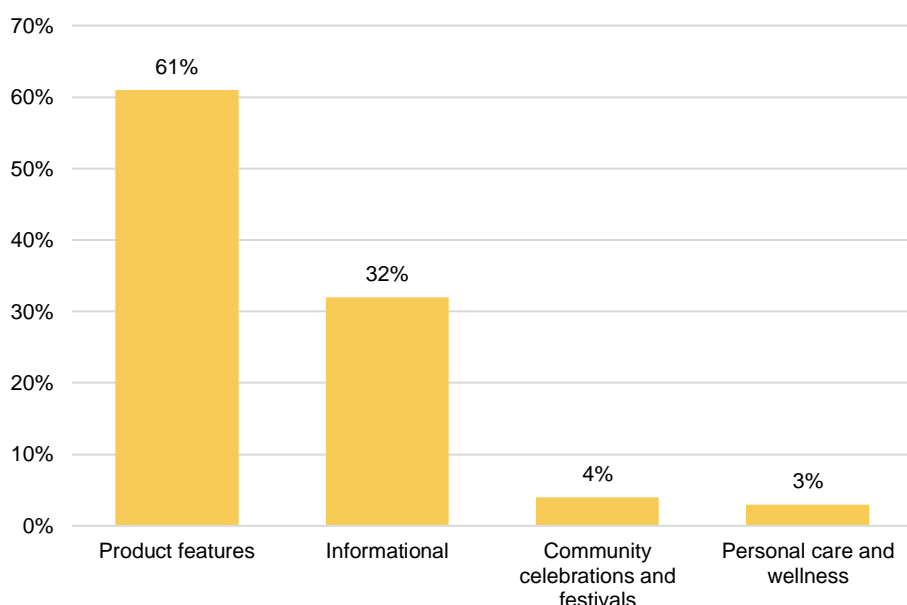


*Posts highlighted product features including flavors and aerodynamic designs that produce thick, abundant vapor.
Photo from: Kapital Smoke & Vapor Instagram page*

*This post encourages people to use cigarettes to stop their tobacco addiction and to take advantage of nationwide shipping. The hashtags used include #vapeosalsalvavidas.
Photo from: ecig_depot store Instagram page*

Most messaging for cigars highlighted product features such as leaf blend flavor.
The second most used messaging offered information about the history of the company and its tobacco farming practices.

Figure 8. Message Framing (Smoking Products)



n=95

Examples:

Product features



Informational



Posts highlighted the craftsmanship behind cigar products. Photo from: Te Amo Cigars Instagram page

Posts provided background information on the founders of the brand Te Amo Cigars. Photo from: Te Amo Cigars Instagram page

Acknowledgements

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Methods

This report summarizes information gathered from publicly available posts and online media articles using Boolean keyword-based queries. Under the supervision of Vital Strategies, Radarr, a social and digital analytics company, conducted the digital data monitoring of marketing of tobacco products. The collected information was reviewed by trained media analysts and coded systematically. The analysis is currently restricted to content in English and Spanish. Data restrictions and privacy laws followed by social media platforms may lead to undercounting of marketing activity. A full detailed methodology, including the codebook, is available upon request.

For more information:

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