

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

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) across all channels. Online platforms, which are more difficult to oversee than traditional media channels, pose a significant challenge to controlling and curbing tobacco marketing. Vital Strategies' Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) is a real-time digital media monitoring system that tracks tobacco marketing on social media platforms and news sites. This situation report is part of a series that summarizes observed examples of online tobacco marketing in India. TERM does not allege or attempt to identify whether these tobacco marketing instances are in violation of local or international laws. Visit the [TERM](#) website to learn more and to view all reports.

Summary of Findings

How much marketing was observed? A total of 135 tobacco marketing instances were observed between Aug. 16 and Sept. 15, 2022, via 14 social media accounts currently being tracked in the TERM platform.¹ There was more marketing observed for e-cigarette products (60% or 81 posts) than for cigars (40% or 54 posts).²

Who are the key players? Most observed e-cigarette marketing originated from third-party retailer accounts promoting a variety of product brands, including Vapresso (17% of all e-cigarette marketing) and Joyetech (14%); an account associated with the product brand Masking was observed marketing Masking products (17%). Almost all marketing observed for conventional smoking products during this period was for cigars, which included posts from accounts associated with the cigar brands Te Amo (57% of all smoking product marketing) and Puros Don Emiliano (33%).

Where was the marketing? Most marketing was observed on Meta Platforms, specifically Facebook (56%) and Instagram (42%). There was also some e-cigarette marketing observed on Twitter via the account of the pro-e-cigarette group "Pro-Vapeo Mexico" (1%); these posts shared a scientific article supporting e-cigarettes being less harmful. There was approximately two times more marketing observed for e-cigarettes (67%) than for cigars (33%) on Facebook, whereas it was more even on Instagram (49% e-cigarettes; 51% cigars).

What type of marketing was used? Both e-cigarettes and cigars were mostly marketed directly with clear pictures to promote products (88%). Instances of general promotion of the brand or company (6%) and product price promotions (6%) were also observed. Many online retailer accounts provided links to their online stores and offered deliveries nationwide to further entice buyers. Locations and operating schedules of physical retail stores were also shared by third-party retailers.

What messaging was used? During this period, the most observed messaging framing for e-cigarettes was about product features (56%). This included posts promoting technological specifications (e.g., battery life indicators, number of puffs), portability, vivid device colors and fruity e-liquid flavors. Some retailers also marketed their own e-liquids, sometimes with the label "Made in Mexico". Informational message framing was commonly observed for cigars (46%). These posts highlighted sustainable agricultural practices and how cigar production provides artisans and farmers with livelihoods.

¹Please note that fluctuations in the volume of observed marketing may be attributable to the addition of new tobacco marketing accounts discovered by refinements in web searches and expert inputs.

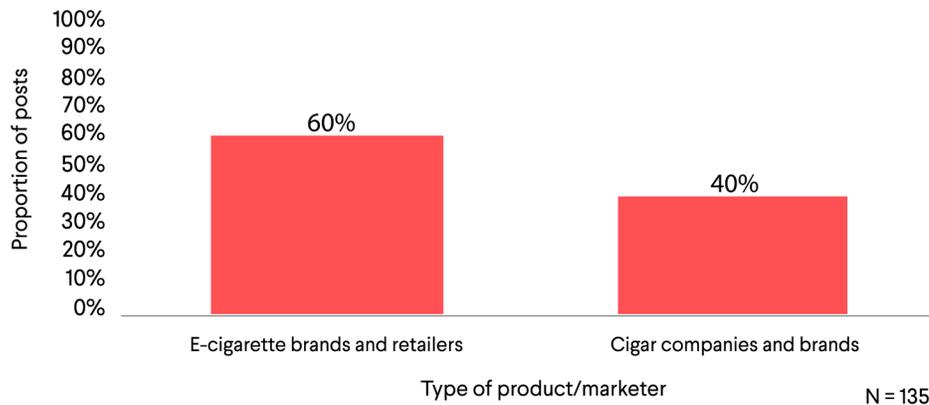
² Most conventional smoking products were cigars, with the exception of one post from a retailer promoting Jungle Spirit loose tobacco.

Visual Snapshot

135 instances of tobacco marketing were observed from 14 social media accounts during a one-month period.

There was more marketing observed for e-cigarettes (60%) than for cigars (40%).

Figure 1
Volume of Marketing



Most observed marketing instances for cigars were associated with the product brand Te Amo Cigars (57%), and for e-cigarettes, with the product brands Maskking (17%) and Vapresso (17% via third-party retailers).

Marketing instances associated with the cigar brand Puros Don Emiliano (33%) and the e-cigarette brand Joyetech (14% via third-party retailers), were also popular.

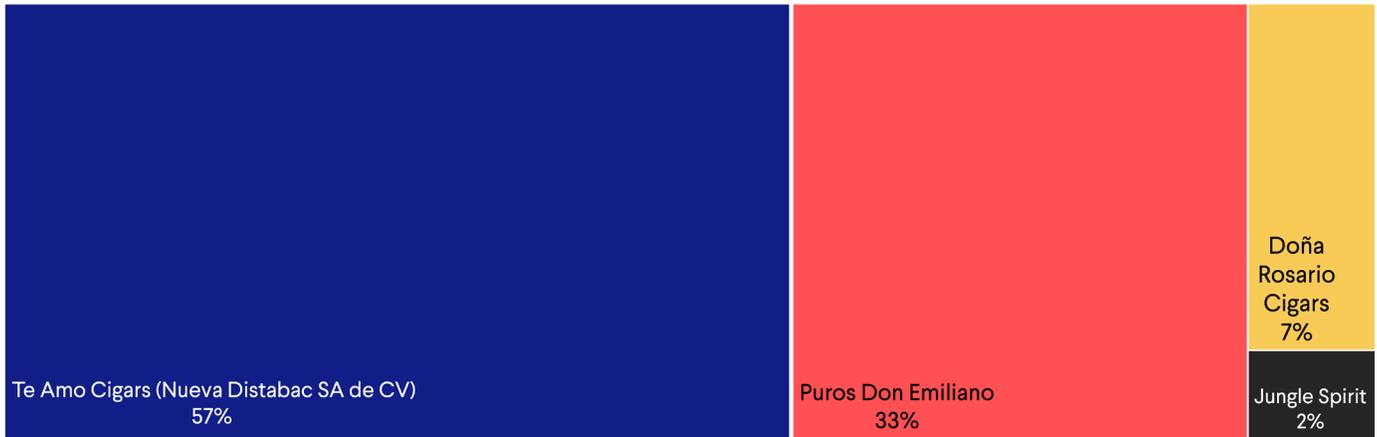
Figure 2a
E-Cigarette Product Brands (and Parent Companies) Marketed



Note: The "other" category includes 14 e-cigarette and e-liquid product brands/retailers- all which individually represent <5% of the total marketing.

n = 81

Figure 2b
Cigar Product Brands (and Parent Companies) Marketed



Note: The tobacco products marketed were primarily cigars, however Jungle Spirit, a loose tobacco that is rolled and smoked, is an exception.

n = 54

Example of e-cigarette and cigar marketing

Vapresso

This post promotes the color of the Vapresso xros product.
Source: ecig depot Instagram account

Te Amo

Te Amo regularly posts images of their cigars with expensive alcohol brands to link smoking cigars with drinking liquor.
Source: teamo.cigars Facebook account

Masking

Masking products are often marketed with images of models using the products. This post promoted the different colors that the product is available in. It uses the hashtag #lifestyle to present them as lifestyle products.
Source: maskinghighmexico Facebook account

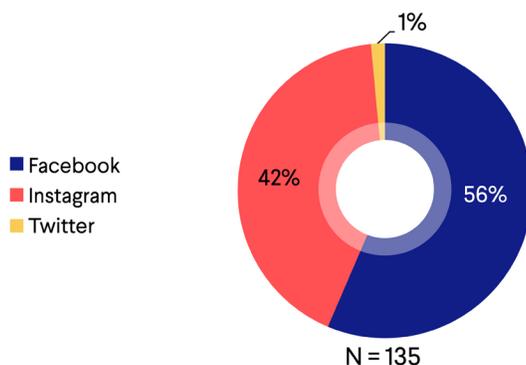
Puros Don Emiliano

Puros Don Emiliano held an hour-long livestream on Instagram to interact with followers.
Source: donemilianomx Instagram account

Most marketing instances were observed on Facebook (56%), followed by Instagram (42%).

There was also some e-cigarette marketing observed on Twitter via the account of the pro-e-cigarette group “Pro-Vapeo Mexico” (1%). This [review article](#), coauthored by Pro-Vapeo Mexico founder and director, Robert Sussman, discussed experimental flaws of studies on analytical techniques for measuring metals exposure from e-cigarettes, casting doubt on current scientific findings and bolstering the narratives of e-cigarettes being less harmful.

Figure 3
Digital Platforms Used for Marketing

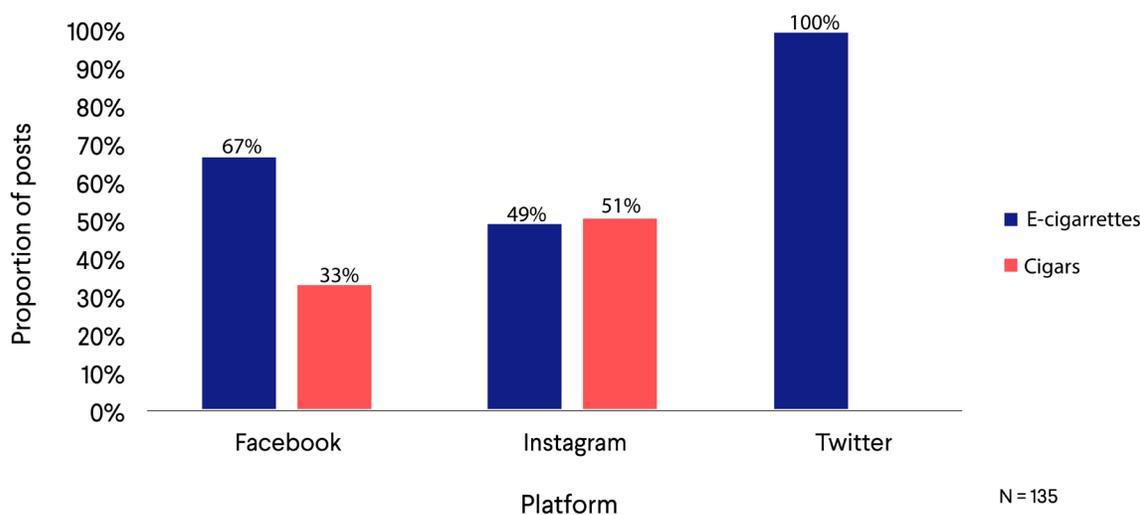


Note: Values add up to 99% due to rounding.

E-cigarettes were marketed across all platforms on which marketing was observed (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

On Facebook, there was approximately two times more marketing observed for e-cigarettes (67%) than for cigars (33%), whereas on Instagram marketing for e-cigarettes (49%) and cigars (51%) was observed almost equally.

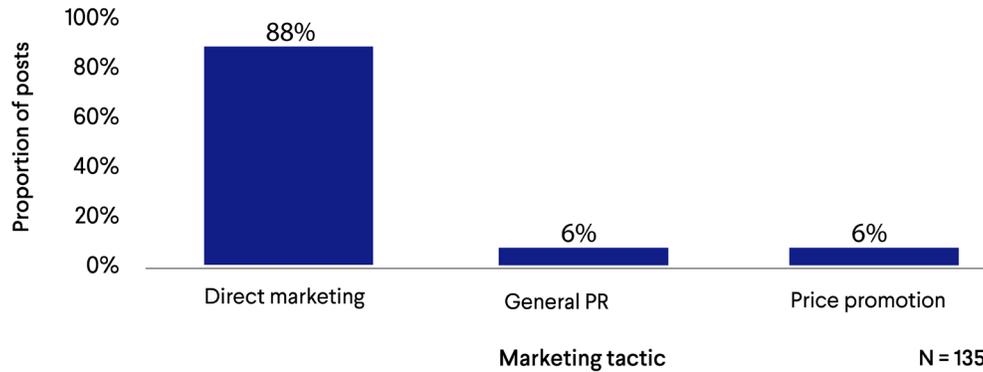
Figure 4
Platforms Used for Marketing by Product Type



Cigars and e-cigarettes were mostly promoted directly with clear product pictures (88%).³

On Facebook, there was approximately two times more marketing observed for e-cigarettes (67%) than for cigars (33%), whereas on Instagram marketing for e-cigarettes (49%) and cigars (51%) was observed almost equally.

Figure 5
Marketing Tactics Used



Direct marketing

This post promotes e-liquids. The retailer also sells their own e-liquid brand with the label, "Made in Mexico."

Source: lavaperiamx Facebook

General PR

This posts shares information about the retailer's new store in Bosque Real.

Source: Kapital Smoke & Vapor Facebook

Price Promotion

This retailer sells their own e-liquid brand and offers a nationwide 15% automatic discount on national products. They encourage customers to pay in installments through the fintech platform, Aplazo.

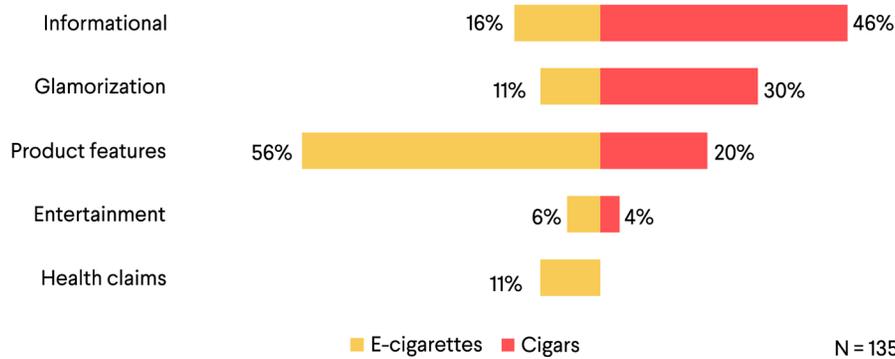
Source: vaporalamexicanamx Facebook

³ See Appendix Table 1 for definitions of the marketing tactics categories.

Messaging highlighting product features was popular for e-cigarettes (56%) and to a lesser degree, for cigars (20%). The main selling points for e-cigarettes were device design and technical capabilities and for cigars they were flavor and quality. ⁴

Messaging providing information about the company and its practices (cigars, 46%) and how to use products (e-cigarettes, 16%), was also popular.

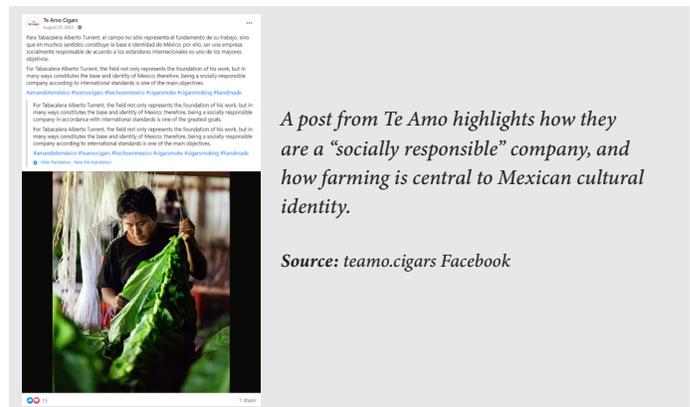
Figure 6
Message Framing in Marketing



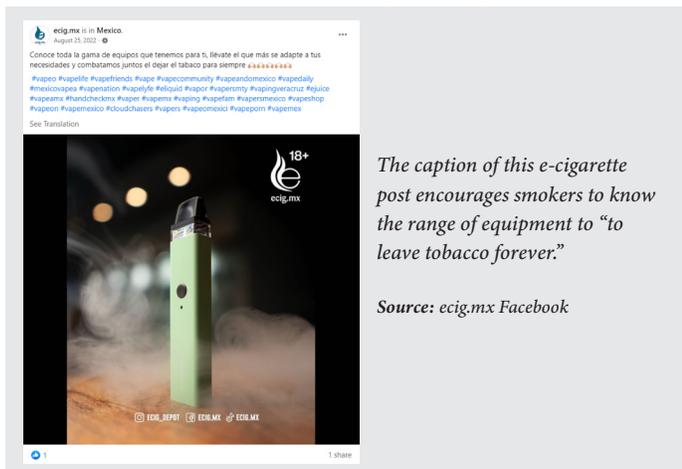
Product features framing of e-cigarettes



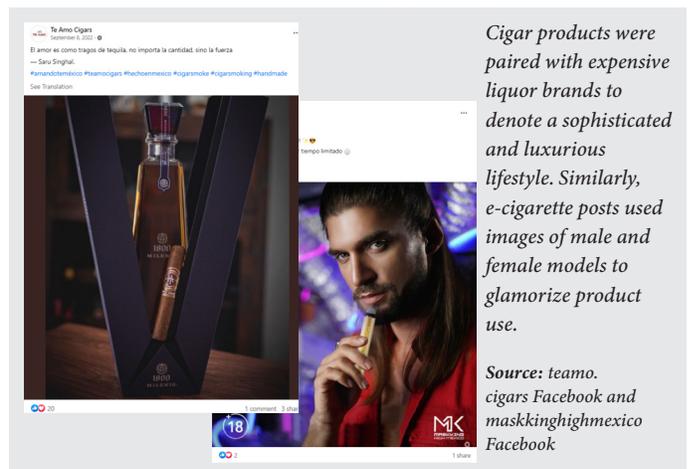
Informational framing of cigars



Health claims framing of e-cigarettes



Glamorization of both types of products



⁴ See Appendix Table 1 for definitions of the marketing tactics categories.

The frequently used hashtags during this period directly promoted e-cigarette and cigar products and their use.

The word cloud below is a visual representation of the hashtags that were used most frequently in marketing observed across all social media platforms. The larger the word in the visual, the more commonly it appeared in tobacco marketing messages. See Table 1 for a description of the commonly used hashtags.

Figure 7. Frequently Used Hashtags

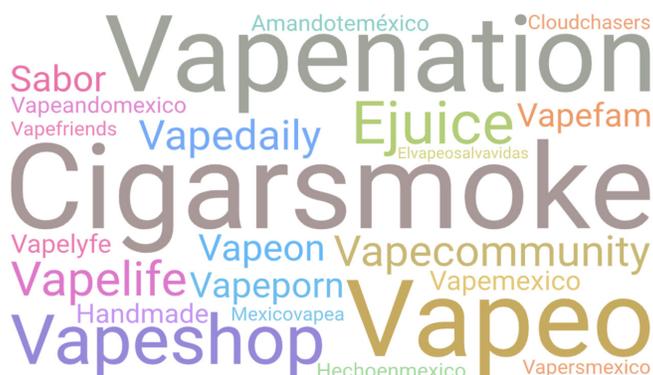


Table 1. Details on the frequently used hashtags and the themes they represent

Social media account/hashtags	Description
#Cigarsmoke #Sabor #Handmade	These hashtags promote cigar product features such as flavor and quality.
#Vapecommunity #Vapefam #Vapefriends #Vapenation #Vapersmexico/#Vapemexico/#Mexicovapea #Cloudchasers	These hashtags promote the idea that e-cigarette users belong to a larger community of people that use products, and that using e-cigarettes is “belonging.”
#Vapeporn	#vapeporn is the showing off of images of customized e-cigarettes so that others may appreciate it.
#Vapedaily #Vapelife/#Vapelyfe #Vapeo #Vapeon	These hashtags promote e-cigarette use as a daily habit.
#Ejuice	This hashtag is used to refer to e-liquid flavors.
#Elvapeosalvavidas	This hashtag is commonly used in e-cigarette posts to encourage switching from smoking tobacco to e-cigarettes.

Methods

This report summarizes information gathered by an artificial intelligence-driven monitoring tool from publicly available posts on social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok, and from online media articles collected via LexisNexis. Instances of tobacco marketing are identified using keyword-based queries and through the regular monitoring of social media accounts that were identified purposively via input from tobacco control experts, market research data and keyword searches. Data coding is first conducted automatically and is then reviewed by Vital Strategies researchers using a theory-driven codebook.

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. [Read our full methodology here.](#)

Appendix Table 1. Definitions for marketing tactics and message framing identified

<i>Marketing tactic</i>	Type of marketing strategy used, which captures the intention of the marketing (to sell products, create brand endearment/loyalty, etc.)
Direct marketing	Promotes the sale or use of tobacco products in a straightforward manner; shows images of the product.
Price promotions	Encourages people to buy or use product products through price discounts and reductions; this may include product bundling or offering “free” gifts with the purchase of products.
General profile raising	Intended to raise the profile of the brand/company but does not fall into any of the other categories (e.g., brand/company wishing a happy new year or Christmas).
<i>Message framing</i>	Underlying theme around which the whole message of the post is built.
Entertainment	Posts that promote the product as being entertaining and fun. This category also includes posts that use entertainment-related content including memes, funny videos or jokes.
Glamorization	Posts that associate use of products as aspirational, luxurious or part of an ideal, fashionable lifestyle.
Health claims	Posts that present the product as healthier than other products or as being less harmful than conventional tobacco products.
Instructional	Posts that instruct viewers how to use a product. This category also includes posts that provide background information on the company.
Product features	Posts that primarily emphasize the available choices of product flavors and design including device colors, as well as technical specifications of the product. Posts without any text descriptions or keywords that only display the product are also included in this category.

Appendix Table 2. List of accounts observed from August-September 2022

Account names	Platform	Type of product	Type of account	Marketing instances	URL
teamo.cigars	Facebook	Cigars	Product brand	15	https://www.facebook.com/teamo.cigars/
ecig.depot	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	15	https://www.facebook.com/ecig.depot/
maskkinghighmexico	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Product brand	13	https://www.facebook.com/maskkinghighmexico
lavaperiamx	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	13	https://www.facebook.com/lavaperiamx
donemilianomx	Facebook	Cigars	Product brand	6	https://www.facebook.com/donemilianomx
vaporalamexicanamx	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	5	https://www.facebook.com/vaporalamexicanamx
kapitalsmokeandvapor	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	5	https://www.facebook.com/kapitalsmokeandvapor
DonaRosarioCigars	Facebook	Cigars	Product brand	4	https://www.facebook.com/DonaRosarioCigars
ecig.depot	Instagram	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	23	https://www.instagram.com/ecig_depot/
teamo_cigars	Instagram	Cigars	Product brand	16	https://www.instagram.com/teamo_cigars/
donemilianomx	Instagram	Cigars	Product brand	12	https://www.instagram.com/donemilianomx/
kapitalsmokeandvapor	Instagram	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	5	https://www.instagram.com/kapitalsmokeandvapor/
centralsmokeandvape	Instagram	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	1	https://www.instagram.com/centralsmokeandvape/
provapeomexico	Twitter	E-cigarettes	Front-group	2	https://twitter.com/provapeomexico

Other TERM reports: Mexico

Situation reports: September 2021-January 2022 - [English](#) [Spanish](#)

Issue briefs:

Protecting Youth From Online E-Cigarette Marketing: Findings From a New Study in India, Indonesia and Mexico - [English](#)

Findings from a TERM Content Analysis of E-Cigarette Marketing on Social Media – Mexico – [English](#) [Spanish](#)

For more information:

Contact: term@vitalstrategies.org
TERM website: www.termcommunity.org