

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 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 Mexico. 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.

Definitions used in this report

Front groups: Groups that advocate for policies that benefit the tobacco industry and push for the use of tobacco products. These groups do not openly declare association or sponsorship by tobacco companies.

Direct marketing: Marketing of tobacco products with clear visuals of the product and/or its use, or the product brand name.

Indirect marketing: Promotion of the tobacco company and/or product and its use through brand extension, surrogate marketing, price discounts and giveaways, and sponsorship of events or activities.

Key Highlights

- In this situation report, we highlight how International Women's Day was used to promote companies that sell tobacco as socially responsible and to frame tobacco use as being part of women's equality. See spotlight on page 2.
- Electronic cigarette retailers shared memes and other youth-targeted messaging that promoted the idea that electronic cigarettes are attractive gadgets, similar to electronic devices like cellphones. See page 8.

Spotlight: Using International Women's Day to appear socially responsible and promote tobacco to women

Several accounts posted content for this year's International Women's Day on March 8. By suggesting that they champion gender equality, these companies that sell tobacco aimed to appear both socially responsible and associate tobacco use with women's freedom. Tobacco marketing that features or is aimed toward women in Mexico has often associated tobacco use among women with "power" and "freedom or emancipation as women."¹ As in many other countries, significantly fewer Mexican women use tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, than men, and they have long been the target of the tobacco industry.^{2,3,4}



This post uses a quote from political theoretician Rosa Luxemburg to back women's equality. The quote says "For a world where we are socially equal, humanly different and totally free," and is superimposed on an image of women being masked by smoke.

Source: Highnessvaping Facebook



This post uses International Women's Day to promote the Santa Clara cigar company. Hashtags include those commonly used to mark the holiday (e.g., #DiaDeLaMujer)

Source: Santa Clara Puros Facebook

¹ Rodríguez-Bolaños R, Caballero M, Ponciano-Rodríguez G, González-Robledo LM, Cartujano-Barrera F, Reynales-Shigematsu LM, et al. Gender-related beliefs and attitudes about tobacco use and smoking cessation in Mexico. *Health Psychol Behav Med*. 9(1):547–66.

² Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in Mexico. Available from: <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-global/latin-america/mexico>

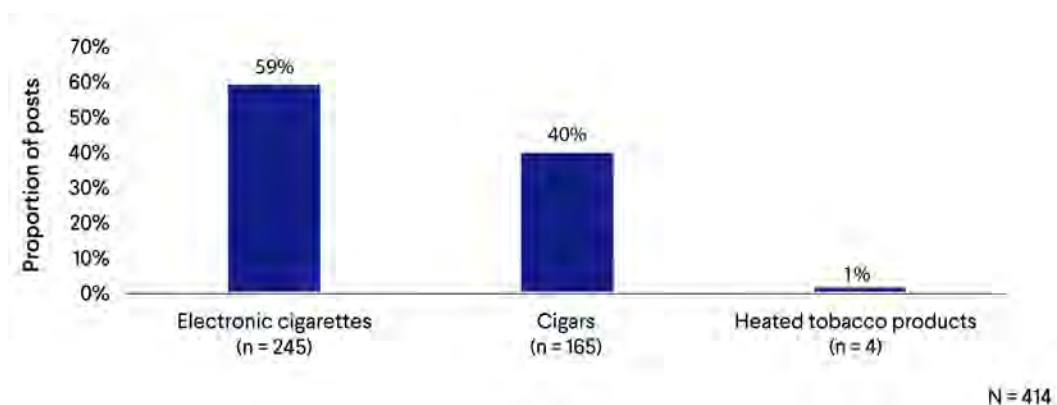
³ Zavala-Arciniega L, Reynales-Shigematsu LM, Lozano P, Rodríguez-Andrade MÁ, Arillo-Santillán E, Thrasher JF. Patterns of awareness and use of electronic cigarettes in Mexico, a middle-income country that bans them: Results from a 2016 national survey. *Preventive Medicine*. 2018 Nov 1;116:211–8.

⁴ STOP. Women and the Tobacco Industry. 8 March, 2021. Available from: <https://exposetobacco.org/wp-content/uploads/Women-and-the-Tobacco-Industry-3.5.21.pdf>

Detailed Insight

How much marketing was observed? Between Dec. 16, 2022 to March 31, 2023, most observed marketing was for electronic cigarettes (n=245, Figure 1), followed by cigars (n=165). There were a few instances of marketing from Philip Morris International's Futuro sin Humo (Smoke-free Future)⁵ initiative promoting IQOS heated tobacco products (n=4).

Figure 1
Volume of Marketing by Product

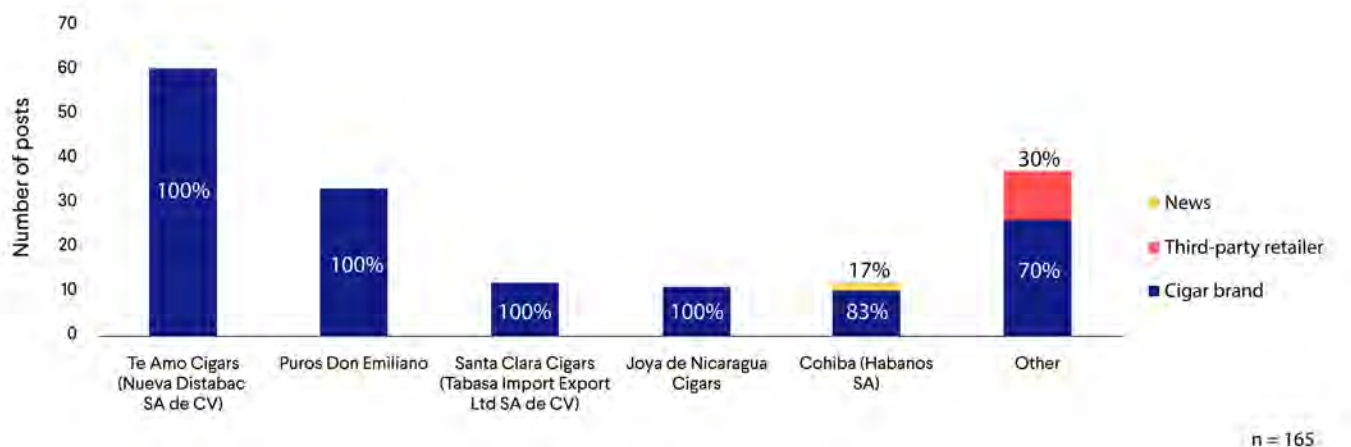


What brands were actively being marketed? The majority of observed marketing for cigars was for the brand Te Amo Cigars (n=64, Figure 2). This was followed by marketing for Puros Don Emiliano (n=43, Figure 2).

The electronic cigarette brands that were marketed most frequently were Maskking (n=28, Figure 2a), by the official Maskking store in Mexico, which functions as a brand because it only promotes Maskking content. This was followed by Vaporesso (n=25), VOOPOO (n=22) and Joyetech (n=17), which were promoted by third-party retailers selling many products.

There was a lot of variety in the electronic cigarettes and e-liquid brands that were marketed (Figure 2a). This category included 25 brands of electronic cigarettes and e-liquids promoted by third-party retailers, as well as marketing in support of electronic cigarette use from the front group Pro-Vapeo México (3%).

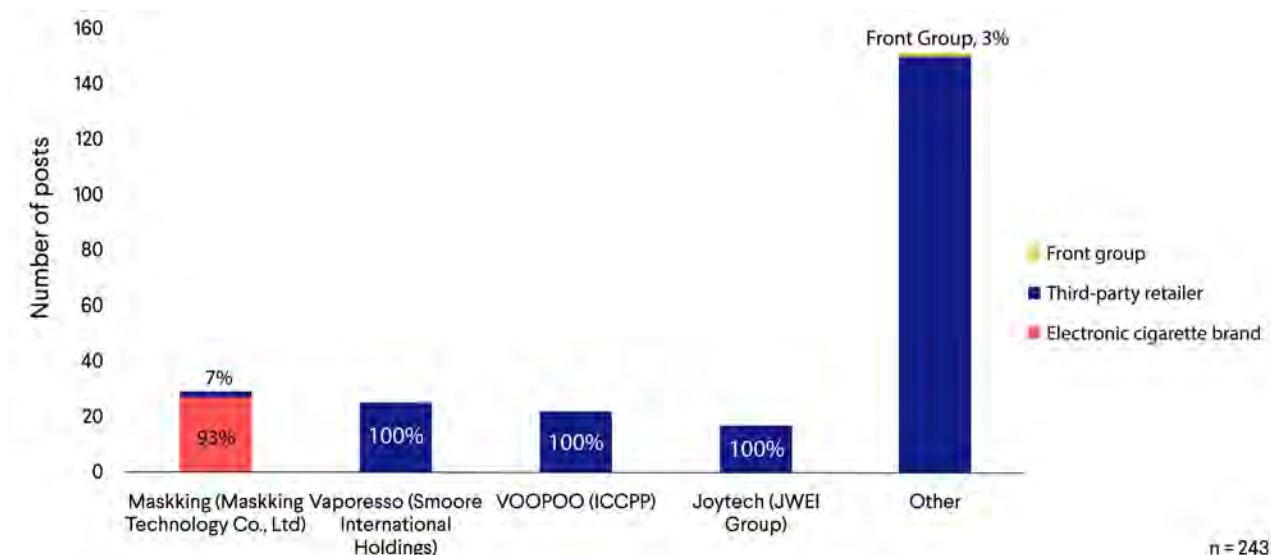
Figure 2
Cigar Brands Being Marketed



Note: The "Other" category is comprised of two cigar brands that each represent <5 instances, as well as 25 marketing instances that contain multiple products or did not have identifiable brands.

⁵ Tobacco Tactics. Futuro Sin Humo. Available from: <https://tobaccotactics.org/article/futuro-sin-humo/>

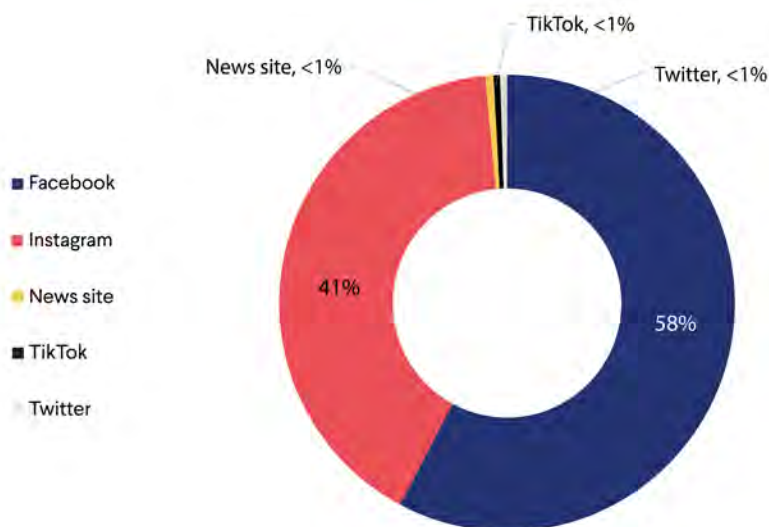
Figure 2a
Electronic Cigarette Brands Being Marketed



Note: The "Other" category is comprised of 25 electronic cigarette and e-liquid brands that each represent <12 marketing instances, as well as 71 marketing instances that contain multiple products or did not have identifiable brands.

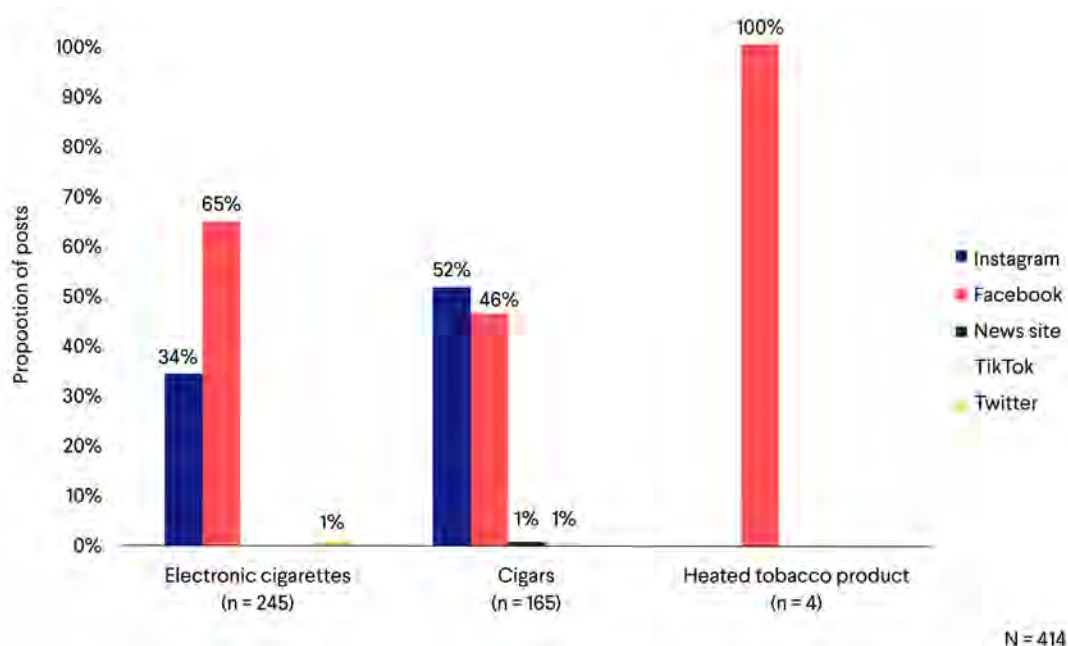
Where were products marketed?⁶ Most marketing was observed on Facebook (58%, Figure 3), followed by Instagram (41%). There was little marketing observed on other platforms, including news sites, TikTok and Twitter (all <1%). Facebook was the predominant platform used to market electronic cigarettes (65%, Figure 3a), followed by Instagram (34%) and Twitter (1%). For cigars, Instagram was the predominant platform (51%, Figure 3a), followed by Facebook (47%), TikTok (1%) and news sites (1%). Marketing for heated tobacco products was exclusively observed on the Futuro sin Humo Mexico Facebook page (100%, Figure 3a).

Figure 3
Platforms Used for Marketing



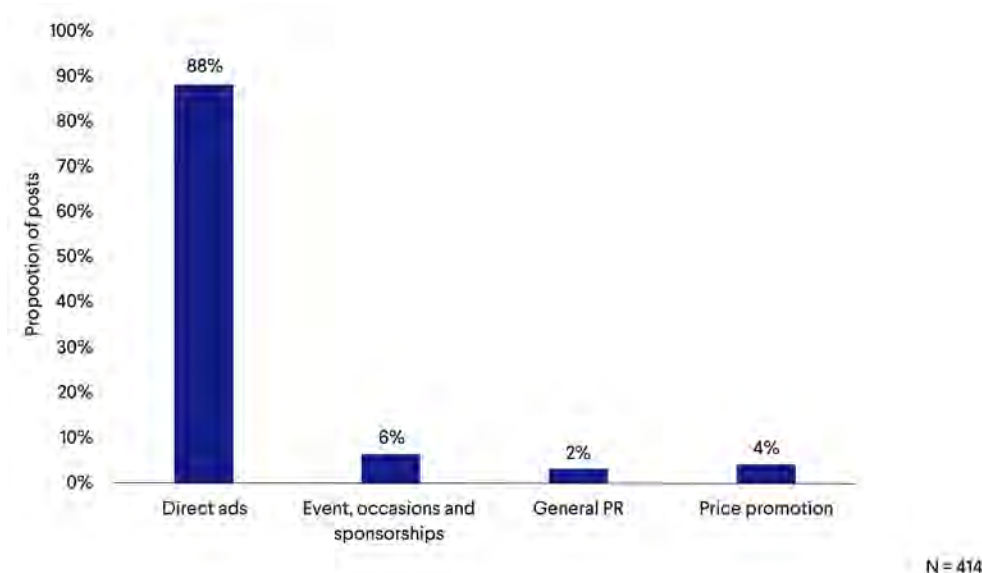
⁶ TERM relies heavily on text-based searches and is not able to capture any content that solely contains images. This may lead to an undercounting of marketing content on heavily visual media such as YouTube or TikTok.

Figure 3a
Platforms Used for Marketing by Product Type



What marketing tactics were used?⁷ Since most content was from cigar brands or electronic cigarette retailers, the most common marketing tactic observed was direct ads that clearly feature product images for sale (88%, Figure 4). This was followed by events, occasions and sponsorships (6%), which included using holidays like Christmas and New Years to promote cigars and electronic cigarettes; there were also posts observed using Valentine’s Day to promote electronic cigarettes and International Women’s Day to promote electronic cigarettes and cigars. Price promotions (4%), were observed largely for cigars for “Debt-Free January” (Enero Sin Cuesta); free shipping was also promoted for La Vaperia Vape Shop products if customers spent a certain amount. Lastly, we observed some general PR for cigar brands and electronic cigarette retailers (2%).

Figure 4
Marketing Tactics Used



⁷ See Appendix Table 1 for definitions of marketing tactics.

Examples

Direct Ads



These posts use Chinese zodiac years to promote cigar products. The account adds graphic warnings to posts, including that smoking increases risks of tuberculosis and can cause breast cancer.

Source: LiebCigars Facebook

Events, occasions and sponsorships



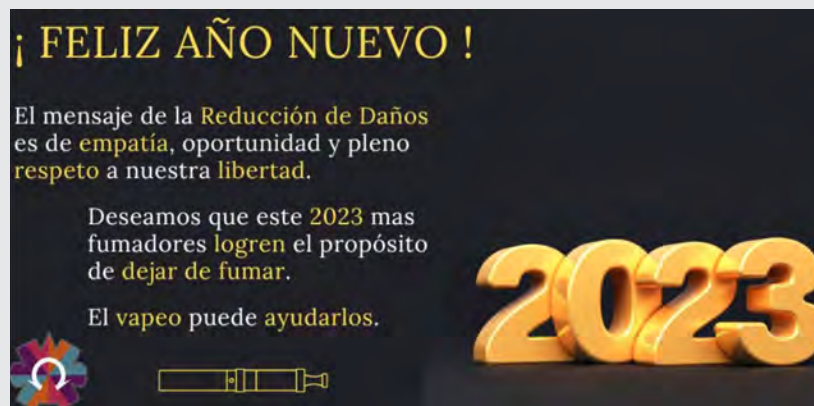
This post encourages the public to join an exclusive event on Facebook Live where they can “discover the artisanal quality of the Santa Clara cigars.” People are also encouraged to buy the cigars as Christmas gifts.

Source: Santa Clara Puros Facebook



The Masking Facebook account uses Valentine's Day to promote its electronic cigarette products.

Source: Masking High México Facebook

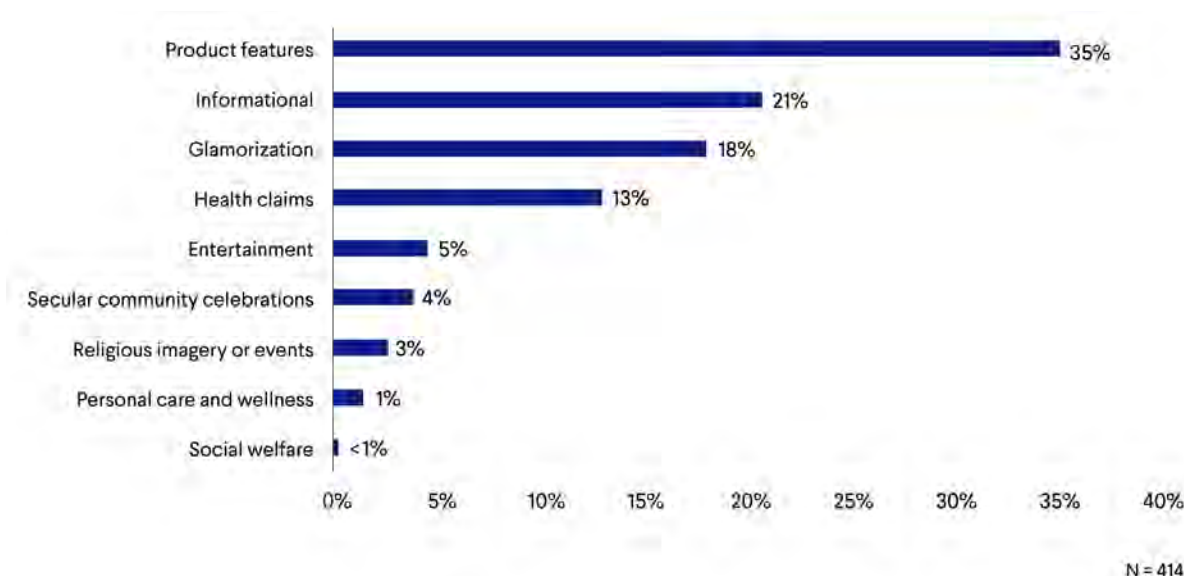


This post from uses the New Year to promote electronic cigarettes as smoking harm reduction tools.

Source: provapeomexico Twitter

What messaging was used?⁸ Overall, marketing messages mostly focused on product features (35%, Figure 5), which for cigars included the size of the cigar and variety available in a sampling box, and for electronic cigarettes included e-liquid flavor, device colors and that they are compact and easy to bring around. This was followed by marketing that provided information on new products or store locations (21%) and that glamorized tobacco products (18%). Messaging that made health claims was also observed for electronic cigarettes (13%).

Figure 5
Message Framing Used



Examples

Health claims



This post suggests you can look cool while protecting your health by using electronic cigarettes.

Source: Highnessvaping Facebook



This post lists the “benefits of nicotine,” including increasing attention and memory and reducing irritability.

Source: Highnessvaping Facebook

⁸ See Appendix Table 1 for definitions of message framing.

Entertainment



This post uses a meme of a kitten to suggest that this is the look of someone who has realized they've run out of e-liquid for their electronic cigarette.

Source: La Vaperia Vape Shop Facebook



This post promotes the idea that electronic cigarettes are gadgets similar to cellphones.

Source: La Vaperia Vape Shop Facebook

Glamorization



This post references the popular film Twilight to promote a sparkly electronic cigarette device.

Source: La Vaperia Vape Shop Facebook

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

Marketing tactic	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.
Events, occasions, sponsorships	Pairs the company/brand or tobacco product with events, occasions, sponsorships and contests (e.g., product sponsorship of sports events, live concerts, holiday greetings).
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).
Price promotions	Promotes the sale or use of tobacco products and new nicotine and tobacco products through price discounting (e.g., 10% off).
Message framing	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.
Informational	Posts that instruct viewers how to use a product. This category also includes posts that provide background information on the company.
Personal care and wellness	Posts that associate products with relaxation or stress management. This category also includes posts that frame products as being used for social bonding, including forming community around use of the product with like-minded peers.
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.
Religious event or imagery	Posts that feature religious imagery, or celebrate religious festivals and events.
Secular community celebrations	Posts that offer celebrations or greetings for non-religious social and sporting events that are celebrated globally or nationally. This category also includes content celebrating achievements or honoring the memory contributions of those who passed away.
Social welfare	Posts that showcase activities sponsored or supported by company/brand that are meant to improve their public image. Any posts associating the company with social welfare schemes, livelihood initiatives, women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, educational scholarships, etc.

Appendix Table 2. List of accounts observed from Dec. 16-March 31, 2023

Account names	Platform	Type of product	Type of account	Marketing instances	URL
ecig.depot	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	46	https://www.facebook.com/720882044675543/posts/6040879342675760/
lavaperiamx	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	42	https://www.facebook.com/508379521305827/posts/600516958758749
maskinghighmexico	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Electronic cigarette product brand	27	https://www.facebook.com/545989490864927/posts/618744270256115
kapitalsmokeandvapor	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	22	https://www.facebook.com/513320660794435/posts/664115335714966
donemilianomx	Facebook	Cigars	Smoking product brand	19	https://www.facebook.com/498934705572000/posts/617995286999274
teamo.cigars	Facebook	Cigars	Smoking product brand	17	https://www.facebook.com/410848688973657/posts/5872623449462793/
purossantaclara	Facebook	Cigars	Smoking product brand	17	https://www.facebook.com/534624195354620/posts/551174417032931
VapersCafeMTY	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	15	https://www.facebook.com/559502872873537/posts/930397004770893?substory_index=930397004770893
LiebCigars	Facebook	Cigars	Smoking product brand	11	https://www.facebook.com/597240602405678/posts/619160356880369
DonaRosarioCigars	Facebook	Cigars	Smoking product brand	6	https://www.facebook.com/486384316826010/posts/607532288044545
Joyacigars*	Facebook	Cigars	Smoking product brand	5	https://www.facebook.com/508506614702662/posts/528563166030340
vaporalamexicanamx	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	5	https://www.facebook.com/321638506635113/posts/616103710521923
Future Sin Humo Mexico (113846230790919)	Facebook	Heated tobacco products	Front group	4	https://www.facebook.com/300436018941222/posts/488247790160043
centralsmokeandvape	Facebook	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	2	https://www.facebook.com/486384316826010/posts/590114196453021

habanos_oficial	Facebook	Cigars	Smoking product brand	1	https://www.facebook.com/321638506635113/posts/653296403469320
ecig_depot	Instagram	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	49	https://www.instagram.com/p/CnM3BUMOfpx/
teamo_cigars	Instagram	Cigars	Smoking product brand	46	https://www.instagram.com/reel/CnXFRS1KBBk/
donemilianomx	Instagram	Cigars	Smoking product brand	23	https://www.instagram.com/p/Co2vITyuEU1/
kapitalsmokeandvapor	Instagram	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	22	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cm73qzEMqpd/
VapersCafeMTY	Instagram	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	11	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqLnpNou8p9/
habanos_oficial	Instagram	Cigars	Smoking product brand	9	https://www.instagram.com/p/CpIsmrGouiO/
Joyacigars*	Instagram	Cigars	Smoking product brand	7	https://www.instagram.com/p/CpNqQCajR54/
centralsmokeandvape	Instagram	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	1	https://www.instagram.com/p/CouxlrQOWwJ/
maskkinghighmexico	Instagram	E-cigarettes	Electronic cigarette product brand	1	https://www.facebook.com/545989490864927/posts/635277981936077
donemilianomx	TikTok	Cigars	Smoking product brand	1	https://www.tiktok.com/@donemilianomx/video/7185018772493749510
#amandoteméxico	TikTok	Cigars	Smoking product brand	1	https://www.tiktok.com/@teamocigars/video/7184840988685241606
provapeomexico	Twitter	E-cigarettes	Front group	1	http://twitter.com/provapeomexico/statuses/1609319208415805445
HighnessVaping	Twitter	E-cigarettes	Third-party retailer	1	http://twitter.com/HighnessVaping/statuses/1632765442128240640
Publimetro	News site	Cigars	News	2	https://www.publimetro.com.mx/noticias/2023/02/27/empresa-de-puros-cubanos-vende-mas-pero-gana-menos-dolares/

*Joya de Nicaragua Cigars is distributed by Lieb International SA de CV

Methods

The Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) is a digital media monitoring system that offers rapid, qualitative insights into online tobacco marketing. The primary purpose of TERM is to identify instances of tobacco marketing, a known public health risk. TERM does not allege or attempt to identify whether these tobacco marketing instances are in violation of local or international laws.

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 articles on news sites. Instances of tobacco marketing on social media 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. News articles are identified by tracking the top 20 newspapers based on circulation in English and the commonly spoken language in each country through their social media accounts, RSS feeds and Google Alerts and via LexisNexis if behind a paywall. 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.](#)

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About the Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement

Vital Strategies' Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) is a digital media monitoring system that tracks tobacco marketing online on social media platforms and news sites. TERM is currently operating in India, Indonesia and Mexico.

About Vital Strategies

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by equitable and effective public health systems. We partner with governments, communities and organizations to reimagine public health, and the result is millions of people living longer, healthier lives. Our goal is to build a future where better health is supported across all facets of our lives, in our families, communities, in our environment and our governments.

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