

Using TERM E-Cigarette Marketing Data to Make the Case for Stronger Regulations in Indonesia



Summary

- Governments and their stakeholders need data on how tobacco marketing occurs in their jurisdictions to make the case for the development and enforcement of WHO-recommended tobacco control policies. TERM fills the evidence gaps on the prevalence and nature of digital tobacco marketing by providing real-time systematic data, including for highly promoted products such as e-cigarettes.
- Coalitions are crucial to the advancement of tobacco control policies. Coalitions are made even stronger when partners come to the issue from various angles. TERM offers insights of relevance to governments, the media, academics and advocates, bringing these diverse actors together around a common priority. As this case study demonstrates, developing a coalition of partners to amplify TERM findings can help build momentum for government action to strengthen tobacco control.

About TERM

Vital Strategies' Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) is a real-time digital media monitoring system used to track tobacco marketing on social media applications and other digital platforms. With the support of Radarr, a social and digital analytics company, Vital Strategies collects and analyzes data, which is then presented through regular easy-to-read situation reports and special reports on emerging issues. These reports provide governments, advocates and other key stakeholders with critical data that can be used to inform tobacco control policymaking, particularly laws about tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. TERM is currently operating in India, Indonesia and Mexico.

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The mayor of Bogor, Bima Arya Sugiarto, reads the report, “[Vape Tricks in Indonesia: How E-Cigarette Companies Use Social Media to Hook Youth.](#)” during a meeting in May 2022.

A Lack of Data Can Delay Policy Action

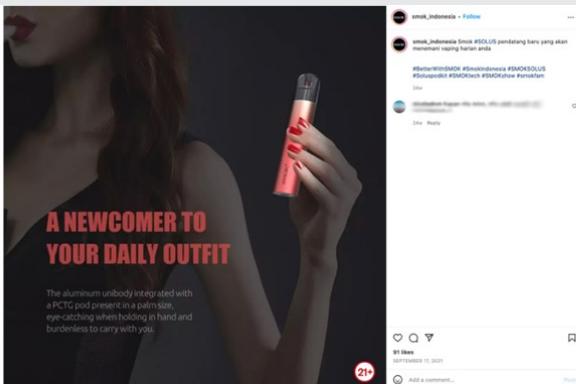
Indonesia is the only country in Southeast Asia that has not signed the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC),¹ a treaty that requires that parties implement evidence-based measures to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. This permissive policy environment, paired with a large population of people who use tobacco—including two-thirds of adult men² and one-third of boys 13-15³—have made Indonesia a desirable target for the e-cigarette industry. In fact, the industry has been steadily growing since 2015 and is projected to soon be Southeast Asia’s largest.⁴ Indonesia also has one of the world’s largest populations of social media users, including many younger users.⁵ In this context, the country’s social media platforms offer prime real estate for e-cigarette brands to aggressively promote and sell their products to young people, despite mounting evidence of the ways in which they harm health.^{6,7,8}

Indonesia’s [Health Law No. 109 \(2012\)](#), which is the law that governs tobacco control, was on the brink of revision in 2018 but instead was sent back to the Ministry of Health for a more comprehensive evidence review. The draft law included provisions that would establish a comprehensive ban on tobacco

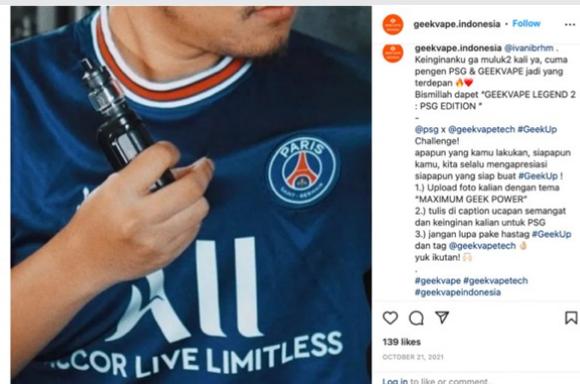
advertising, promotion and sponsorship including on the internet, and tighten restrictions on e-cigarettes. However, since the e-cigarette market in Indonesia is nascent, there is a lack of data on the prevalence of e-cigarette marketing and the industry's marketing tactics.

New Report Offers Evidence on Digital E-Cigarette Marketing

In 2022, Vital Strategies partnered with the [Indonesian Consumers Association](#) (YLKI) to release a first-of-its kind report investigating the digital e-cigarette marketing situation in Indonesia. The report, "[Vape Tricks in Indonesia: How E-Cigarette Companies Use Social Media to Hook Youth](#)," analyzed six months of TERM data on online e-cigarette marketing, offering an in-depth look at the volume and type of e-cigarette marketing on social media applications and news sites. The report also identified the marketing tactics brands use to reach their target audience. The findings revealed that e-cigarette marketing is prevalent on social media, and that brands are directly marketing to sell products with clear product visuals and links to online stores or information on physical retail shops. E-cigarettes were framed as high-tech daily-use products that are part of a glamorous lifestyle, with marketing that catered to young people.



SMOK products are promoted as being part of a glamorous lifestyle.



GeekVape frequently promotes their sponsorship of the football team Paris Saint-Germain; this post features an influencer with more than 125,000 followers.

The report featured examples of e-cigarette marketing on social media.

Civil Society Engages Stakeholders on Why Action is Urgently Needed

In the two weeks prior to the report's launch, Vital Strategies and other civil society partners, including [YLKI](#) and [SAFEEnet](#), which is a network of digital rights defenders in Southeast Asia, ran a social media campaign to hint at findings and build momentum.

The report was launched on World Consumer Rights Day at a hybrid press event featuring speakers from each partner organization. Building upon the report findings, speakers drew attention to the ways in which the e-cigarette industry promotes their products as a consumer good despite increasing evidence of health harms. They urged that tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, be included in the “addictive substances” category in Indonesia’s consumer law, which is currently being revised. This would then help build the case for further regulation under the Health Law.

YLKI’s youth coalition joined Vital Strategies in live posting the event on Twitter, and Instagram, drawing attention to findings on how young Indonesians were being targeted by e-cigarette marketing. All partners also shared the report findings with their national networks via channels including WhatsApp and Instagram.



Enrico Aditjondro (right), Associate Director of Southeast Asia, Vital Strategies, and Tulus Abadi, Executive Director, Indonesian Consumers Association (YLKI), signing a poster at a press conference Vital held with YLKI and SAFEEnet to launch a new report on e-cigarette marketing in Indonesia.

The report launch generated conversation about e-cigarettes and online e-cigarette marketing through more than 40 media articles that were published, including in top tier media outlets like [Kompas](#). The event is archived on [YouTube](#) and continues to drive engagement.

After the launch, the civil society coalition shared the report directly with the Ministry of Health to help fill the current evidence gap on e-cigarette marketing. The team was then invited by the ministry to present findings from the report. This special report and ongoing TERM situation reports are now being used in the ministry's review of current evidence supporting the case for strengthening the Health Law, including a ban on tobacco advertising, promotions and sponsorship on the internet and tighter regulations on e-cigarettes.

The Coalition Supports Government Action

The Ministry of Health and other policymakers have had digital tobacco marketing on their radar for some time and have been considering approaches, such as the drafting of a joint ministerial decree to regulate e-cigarette marketing on the internet, and the establishment of a government-civil society task force to monitor such marketing. The civil society coalition supported by Vital Strategies has helped add momentum to these efforts. The coalition is expanding to include new stakeholder organizations and advocates and working on getting the report into the hands of other key decision-makers in government at the national and local level. This civil society movement can be expected to continue to generate conversation to make sure that digital e-cigarette marketing—and all digital tobacco marketing—is a priority issue on the policy agenda in Indonesia.

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About TERM

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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.

This case study is part of a series highlighting ways that TERM data can be used to support tobacco control policy advocacy.

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