

TERM

Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement

Online Marketing of Tobacco Products: India

April 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 tobacco products or their trademark or brand name.

Despite this, tobacco marketing continues to be widespread globally and in India, particularly in online forums that are less regulated.^{i,ii,iii} Vital Strategies launched the Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) in June 2019 to monitor tobacco marketing activities.¹ This situation report is part of a monthly series that summarizes observed examples of online tobacco marketing in India. It covers the period **March 16 to Apr. 15, 2021.**

Highlights of the Month

- ***Tobacco marketing by volume:*** There were 890 cases of tobacco marketing online this month. Of these, 82% were surrogate advertising, 13% were events, promotions and sponsorships and 4% were direct marketing of tobacco products. Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 66% was for smoking products and 34% was for smokeless products. No marketing for e-cigarettes was recorded during this period.
- ***Tobacco marketing by state:*** Overall, 62% of the observed marketing originated in West Bengal, followed by Uttar Pradesh (31%), Rajasthan (3%), Maharashtra (2%), and Karnataka (2%). Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (94%), Maharashtra (4%) and Karnataka (3%). Marketing of smokeless tobacco products originated in Uttar Pradesh (91%) and Rajasthan (9%).
- ***Tobacco marketing by channel:*** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 45% was on Facebook, 32% on Instagram and 13% on Twitter. Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (47%), Instagram (29%) and Twitter (11%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (43%), Instagram (37%), and Twitter (19%).

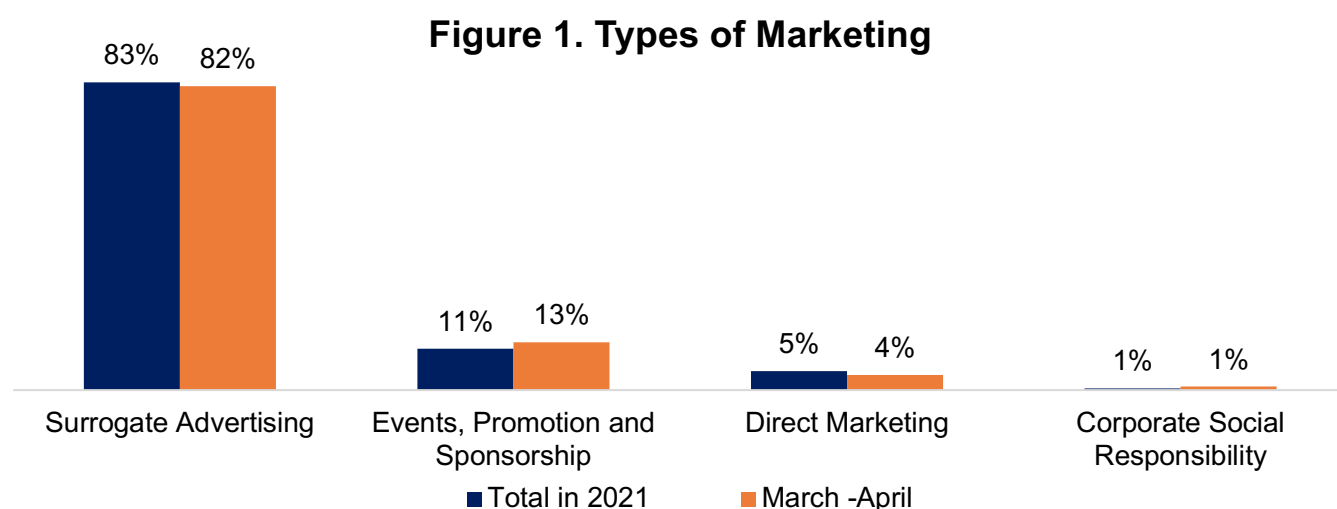
¹ For the avoidance of any doubt, while this Report notes instances of tobacco product marketing, it does not attempt to identify violations, nor does it allege violations, of the aforementioned regulation.

- **Message framing:** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 25% had messages related to recreation² and 41% to community celebration.³ Smoking tobacco products were marketed using messages focused on recreation and community celebration. Smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages focused on community celebration, recreation and conservation.

Detailed Insights

Volume of Tobacco Marketing

- A total of 890 tobacco marketing activities were recorded between March 16 and Apr. 15, 2021. The main types of marketing included surrogate marketing, events, promotions and sponsorships and direct marketing. Of the total marketing activities observed, 82% were surrogate marketing, 13% were events, promotions, and sponsorships and 4% were direct marketing.
- Of the total marketing activities observed this month, 66% were for smoking tobacco products and 34% for smokeless tobacco products. There was a slight increase in the marketing of smoking products this month compared to previous months in 2021.



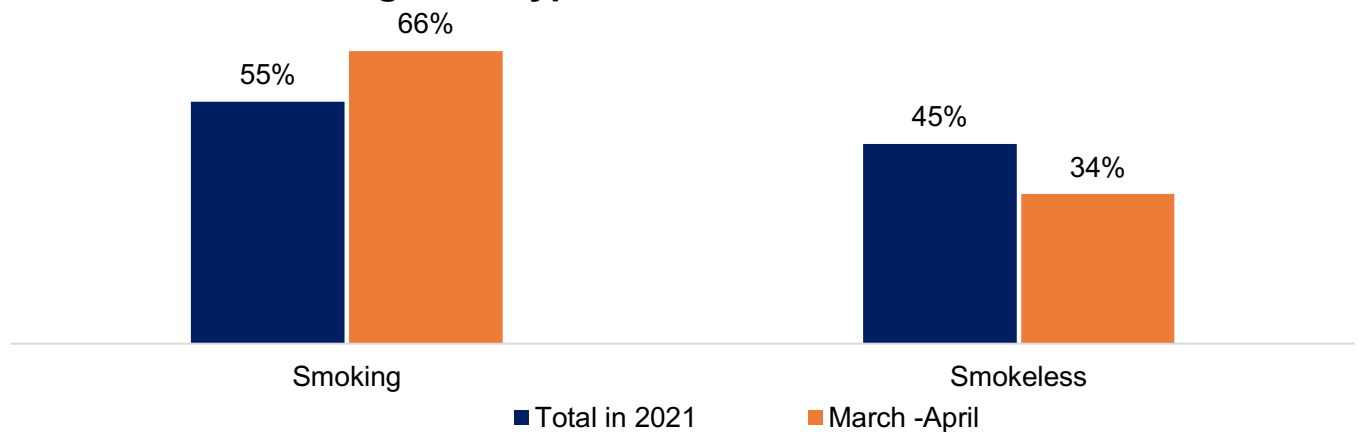
Year to Date (December 16, 2020 to April 15, 2021) (n =3,366)

March 16, 2021 to April 15, 2021 (n = 890)

² Recreation: Messages that involve making people's leisure time more interesting or enjoyable. Examples include: cooking, family time, playing outdoors, movies etc.

³ Community celebration: Messages that involve activities that people do in their place of worship or with groups. Examples: Religious festivals, community events, sporting events, birthdays etc.

Figure 2. Types of Products Marketed



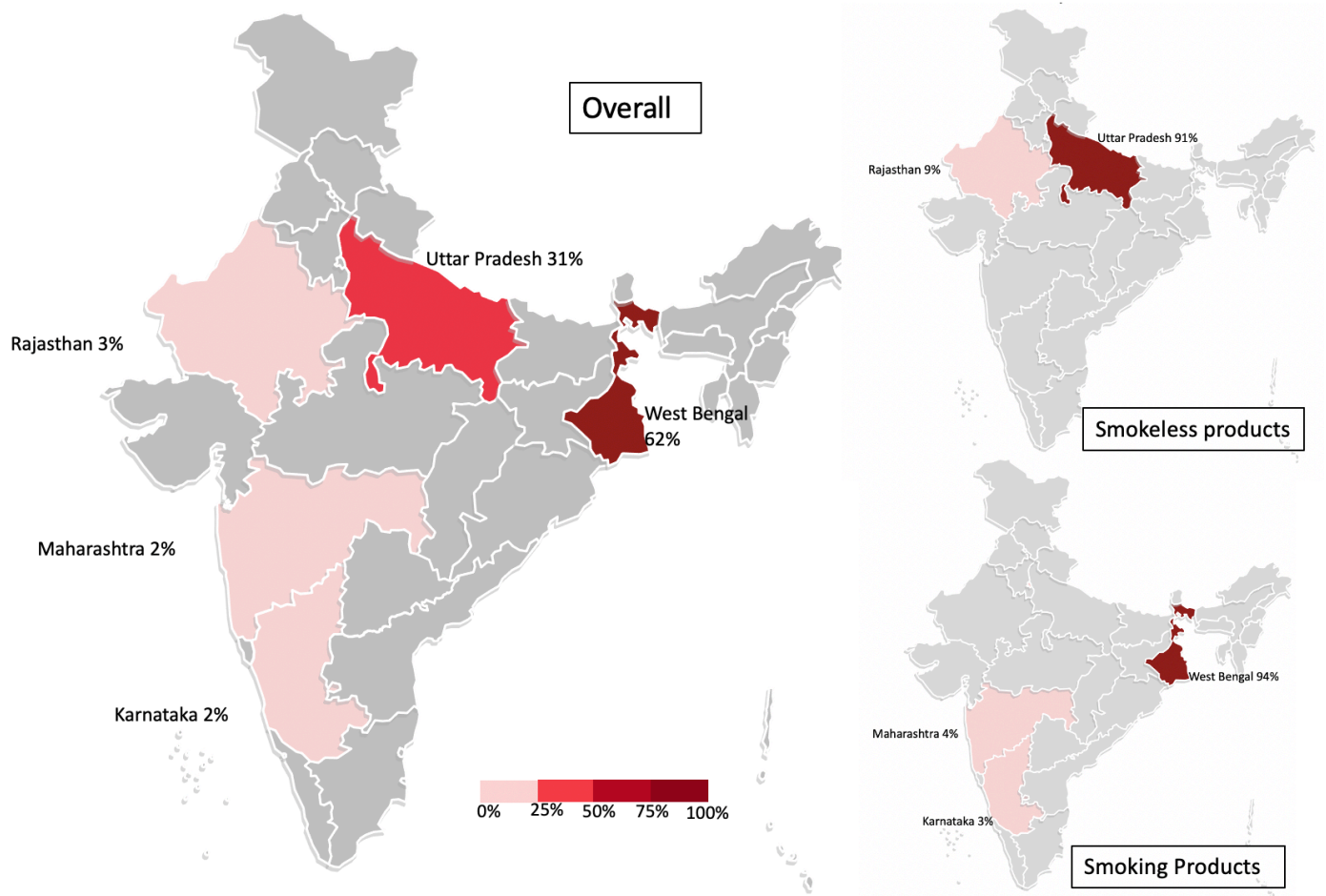
Year to Date (December 16, 2020 to April 15, 2021) (n = 3,366)

March 16, 2020 to April 15, 2020 (n = 890)

Tobacco Marketing by State

- The majority of tobacco marketing observed this month originated in West Bengal (62%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (31%), Rajasthan (3%), Maharashtra (2%) and Karnataka (2%).
- Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (94%) followed by Maharashtra (4%) and Karnataka (3%). Smokeless tobacco products were most often marketed in Uttar Pradesh (91%) and Rajasthan (9%).

Map 1: Origin of Tobacco Marketing by State


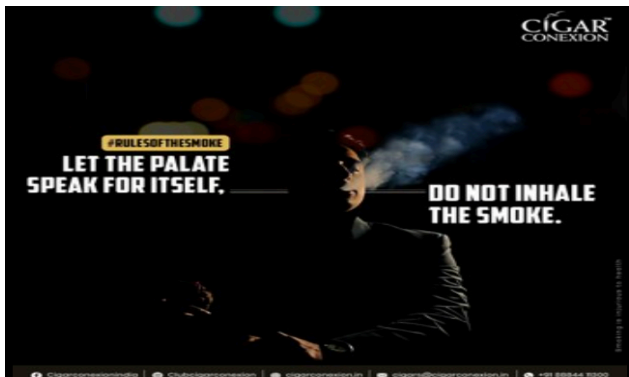
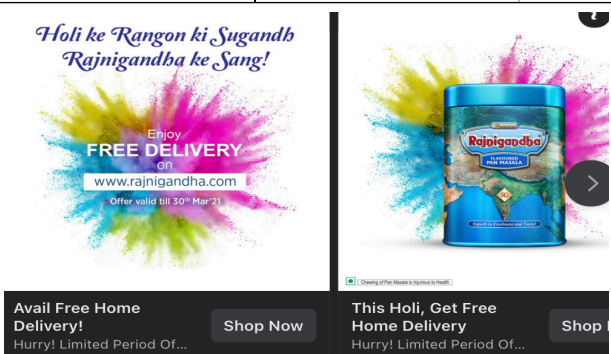



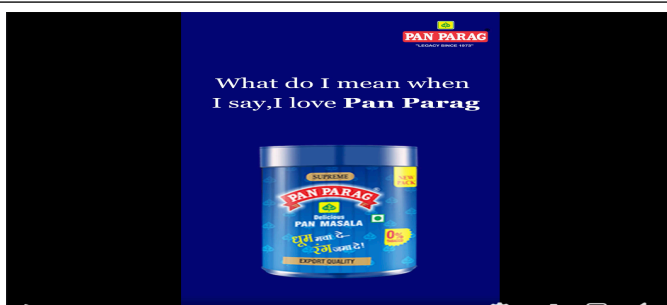


March 16, 2020 to April 15, 2021 (n = 890)

Marketing Instances Recorded March 16 to Apr. 15, 2021

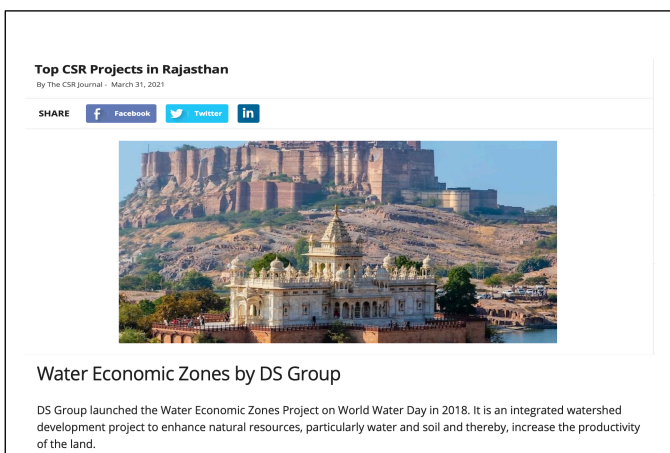
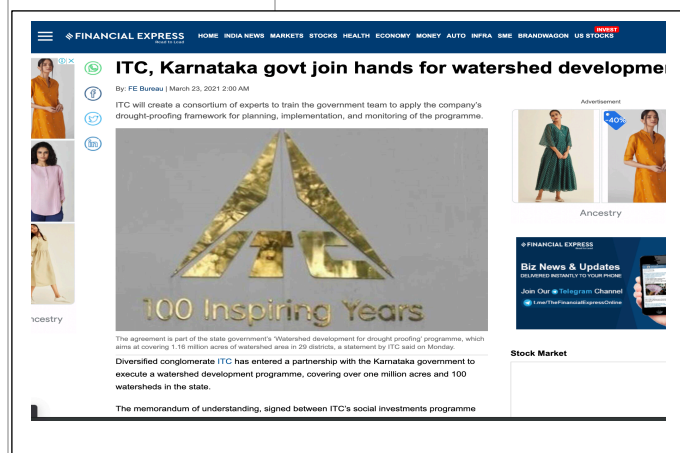
Most of the tobacco marketing observed this month were instances of indirect marketing, followed by direct marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, as noted below.

Table 1: Type of Marketing Activities

Marketing Tactics	Summary
Direct Marketing	There were 36 instances of direct advertising 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.
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Indirect Marketing (Surrogate marketing and Events, promotions, and sponsorships)	There were 846 instances of indirect advertising observed. Messaging highlighted tobacco features including flavors, appetite and packaging. Event, promotion and sponsorship activities were timed with community celebrations such as the festival of Holi, Easter, Valentine's Day and April's Fools Day. There were also mentions of community celebrations, international and national observances including World Health Day, International Day of Happiness, and National Vaccination Day.
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Corporate Social Responsibility Activities

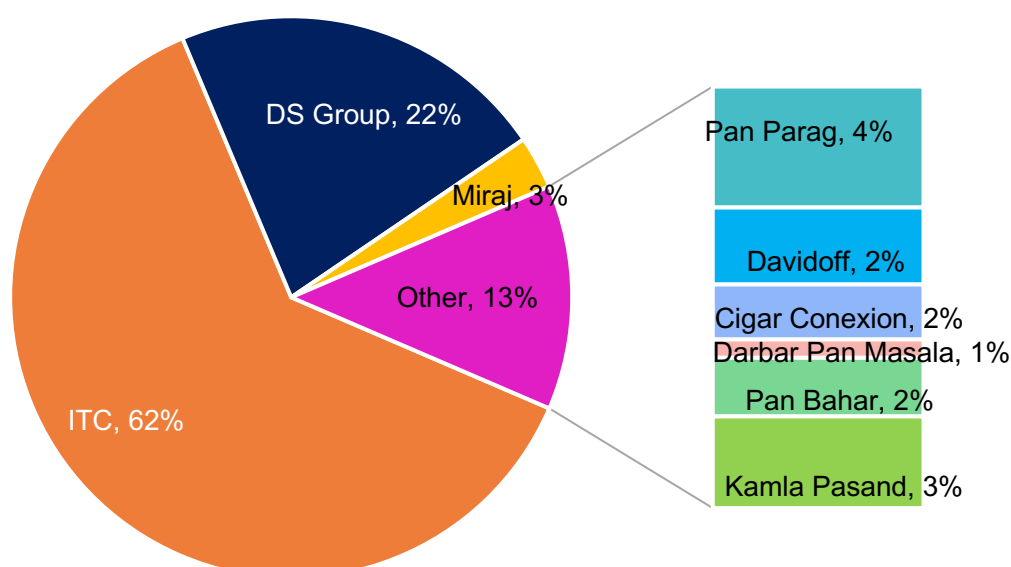
There were **8 observed instances of corporate social responsibility activities** conducted by tobacco companies; the majority of which were by ITC Limited and Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group). Messaging was primarily focused on social initiatives and corporate governance.



Marketing by Tobacco Companies

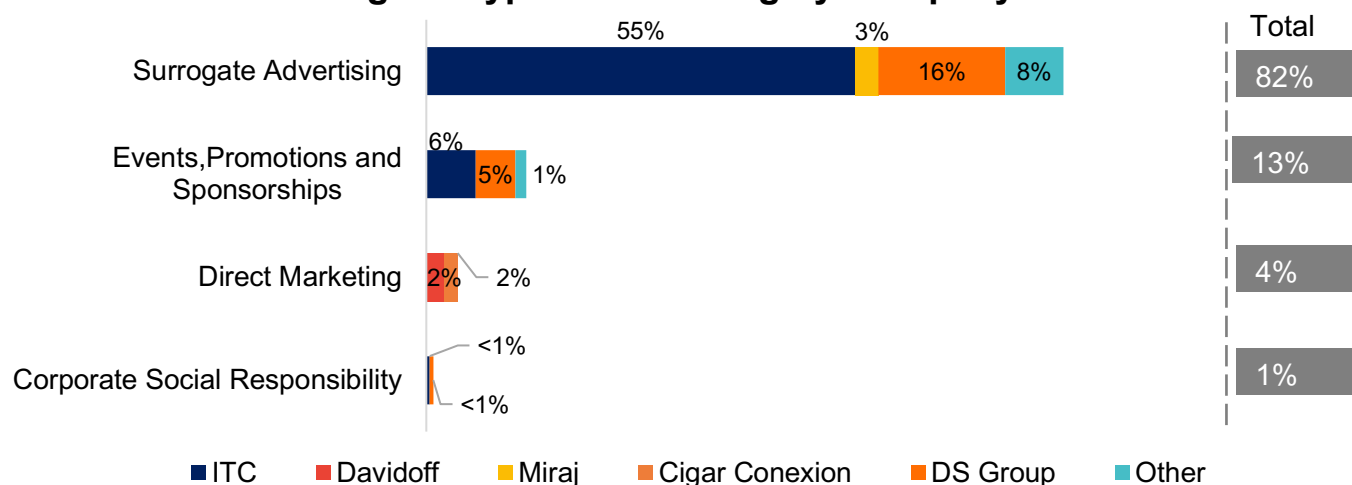
- The majority of marketing observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (62%). Other chief sponsors of tobacco marketing were: Dharampal Satyapal Group (22%), Miraj (3%), Pan Parag (4%) and Kamala Pasand (3%).
- Most of the surrogate advertising observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (55%), while 16% was sponsored by Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group).

Figure 3a. Total Marketing by Tobacco Company



March 16, 2021 to April 15, 2021 (n=890)

Fig 3b. Type of Marketing by Company



March 16, 2021 to April 15, 2021 (n = 890)

Public Engagement Activities

The public engagements, including corporate social responsibility activities, observed this month are described below.

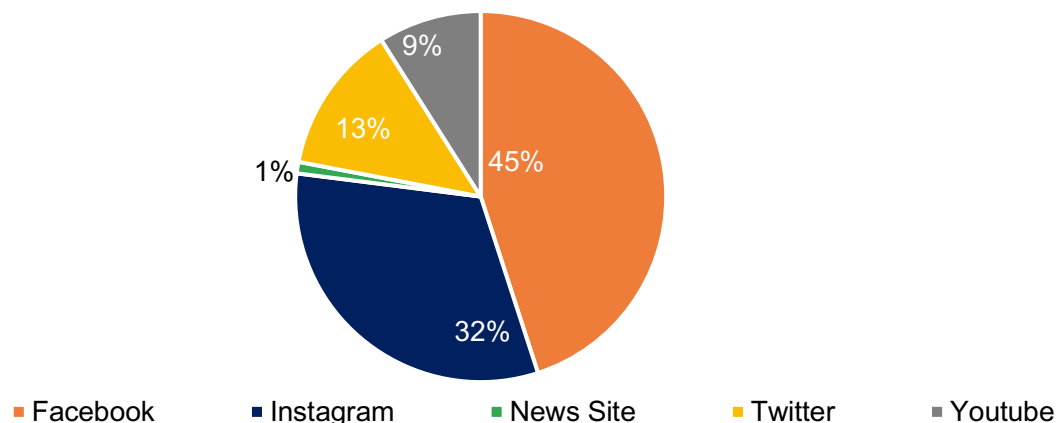
Table 2. Examples of observed public engagement activities by the tobacco industry.

Examples
<p>DS Group's noble water conservation initiatives emphasize on 'Valuing Water', the theme of World Water Day 2021</p> <p>ANI Updated: Mar 22, 2021 16:19 IST</p> <p>New Delhi [India], March 22 (ANI/NewsVoir): The Dharampal Satyapal (DS) Group has restored over 550 water conservation structures across the country that has led to a cumulative storage capacity of more than 33 Lakh Cubic Meter, along with 83,000 cubic meter of soil conservation.</p>
<p>World Water Day 2021: DS Group's CSR Initiatives for Water Conservation</p> <p>By Hency Thacker - March 19, 2021</p> <p>SHARE  Facebook  Twitter  in</p> 

Tobacco Marketing Activity by Channel

- Almost all observed tobacco marketing (direct and indirect) during this period was conducted on social media channels (90%), including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Surrogate marketing of tobacco products was conducted through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The news media provided the primary channels for reports on tobacco industry-sponsored corporate social responsibility initiatives.
- Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (47%), Instagram (29%) and Twitter (11%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Instagram (37%), Facebook (43%) and Twitter (19%).

Figure 5a. Total Marketing by Platform



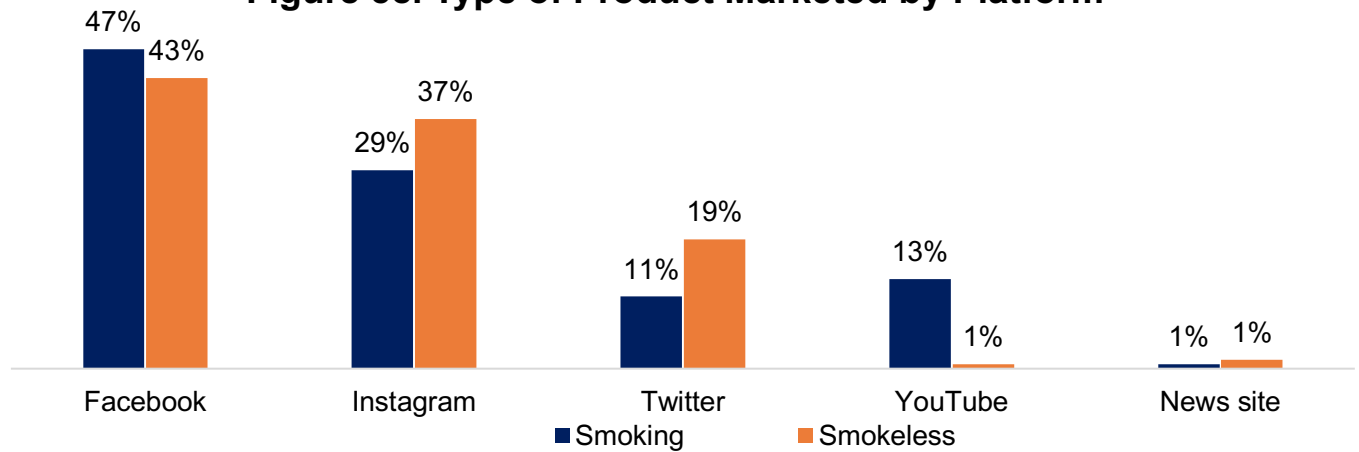
March 16, 2021 to April 15, 2021 (n=890)

Figure 5b. Type of Marketing by Platform



March 16, 2021 to April 15, 2021 (n=890)

Figure 5c. Type of Product Marketed by Platform



Smoking(n = 589)

Smokeless (n = 301)

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, words related to **community celebration, especially those with a religious connotation, and recreational activities**, appear the most in marketing messages.

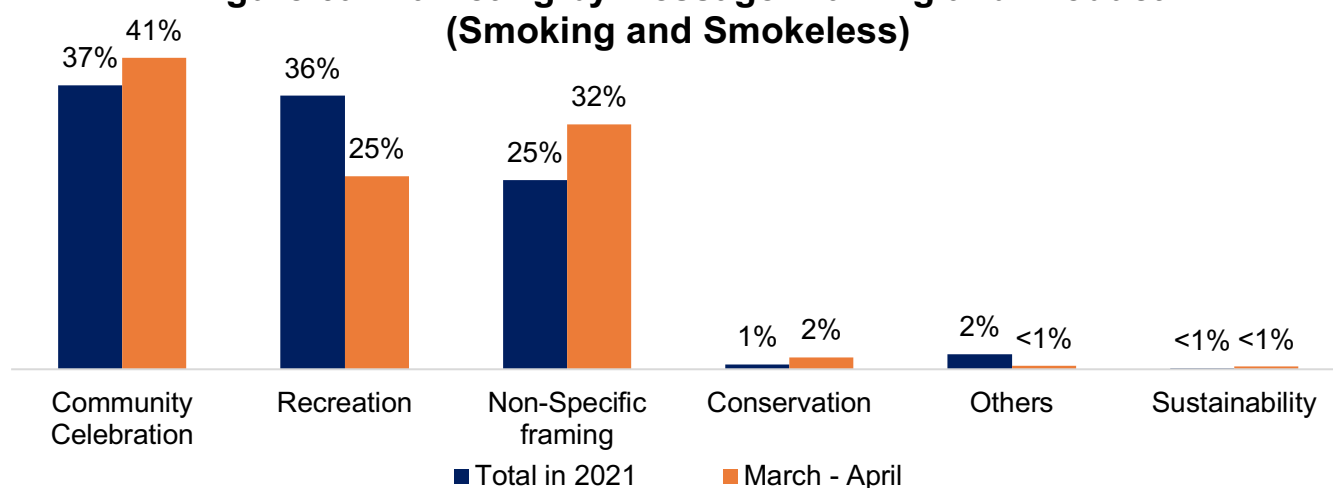


March 16, 2020, to April 15, 2021 (n = 890)

Framing of Marketing Messages

- Many tobacco marketing messages were framed with a celebratory tone linked to community celebration (41%). Messages were also connected to recreation (25%) and conservation (2%).
- Both smoking tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages about recreation and community celebration. For smoking products, 28% of messages focused on recreation and 40% on community celebration. For smokeless tobacco products, 43% focused on community celebration and 20% on recreation.

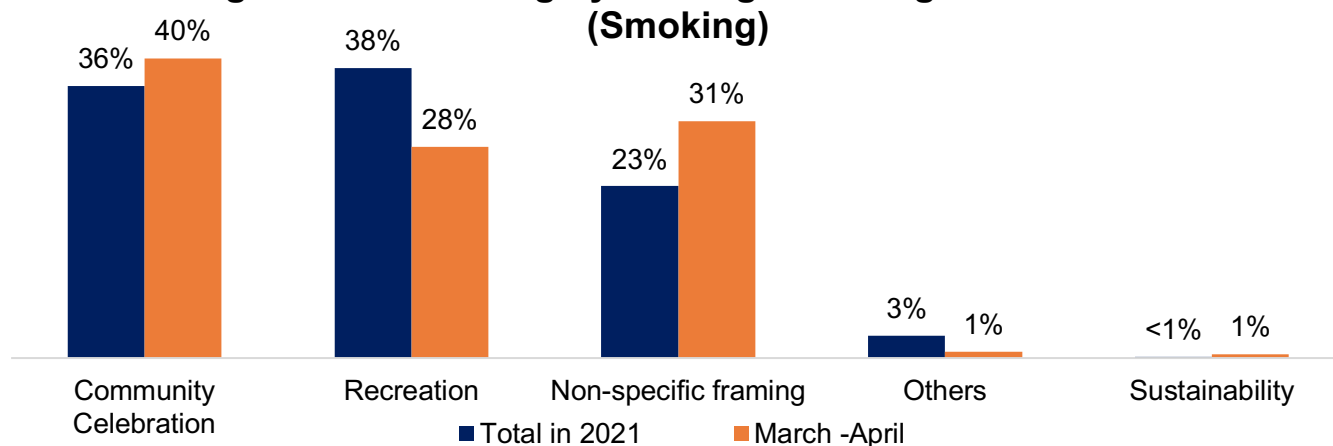
Figure 6a. Marketing by Message Framing and Product (Smoking and Smokeless)



Total in 2021(December 16, 2020 to April 15, 2021) (n = 3366)

March 16, 2021 to April 15, 2021 (n = 890)

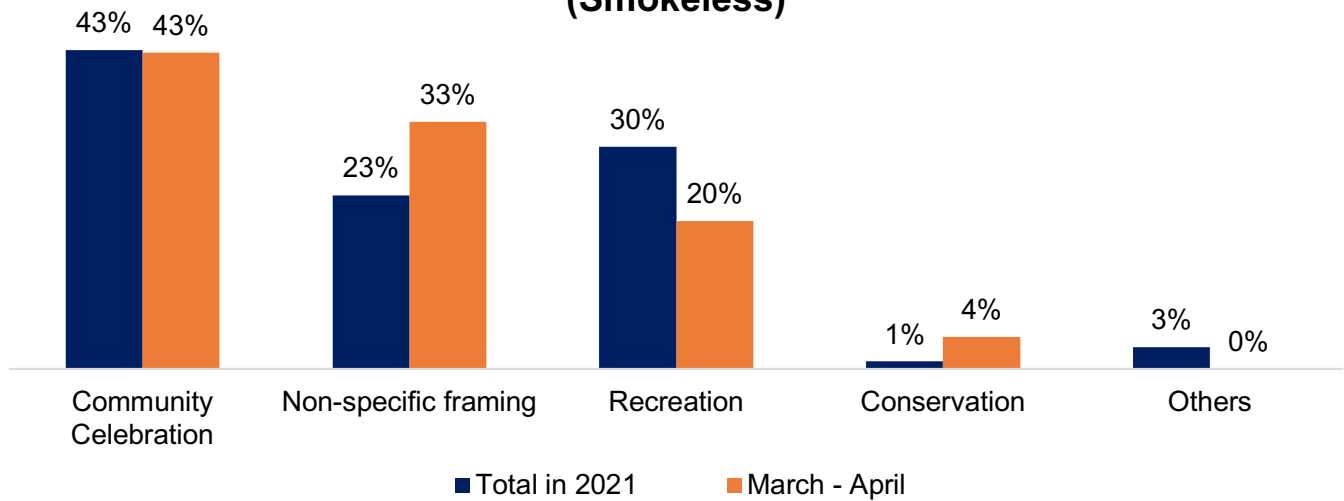
Figure 6b. Marketing by Message Framing and Product (Smoking)



Total in 2021(December 16, 2020 to April 15, 2021) (n = 1843)

March 16, 2021 to April 15, 2021 (n = 589)

Figure 6c. Marketing by Message Framing and Product (Smokeless)



Total in 2021(December 16, 2020 to April 15, 2021) (n = 1523)

March 16, 2021 to April 15, 2021 (n = 301)

*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:

Vital Strategies website: <https://www.vitalstrategies.org/>

Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/termindia/>

Vital Strategies Media Beacon: <https://www.mediabeacon.org/#language>

Vital Strategies Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/vitalstrategies/> ; <https://twitter.com/VitalStrat>

ⁱhttps://www.who.int/docs/default-source/searo/india/health-topic-pdf/tobacco/tobaccocontrol-tobacco-imagery-in-on-demand-ott-india-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=46395209_2

ⁱⁱ 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>

ⁱⁱⁱ 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>