

TERM

Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement

Online Marketing of Tobacco Products: India

June 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 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 **May 16 to June 15, 2021.**²

Highlights of the Month

- ***Tobacco marketing by volume:*** There were 703 cases of tobacco marketing online this month. Of these, 83% were surrogate advertising, 5% were events, promotions and sponsorships, and 7% were direct marketing of tobacco products. Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 62% was for smoking products, 34% was for smokeless products and 4% was for electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) products.
- ***Tobacco marketing by state:*** Overall, 57% of the observed marketing originated in West Bengal, followed by Uttar Pradesh (36%), Maharashtra (3%), Rajasthan (2%), and Karnataka (2%). Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (92%), Maharashtra (5%) and Karnataka (3%). Marketing of smokeless tobacco products originated in Uttar Pradesh (95%) and Rajasthan (5%). For ENDS products, 92% of marketing originated in Maharashtra.
- ***Tobacco marketing by channel:*** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 49% was on Facebook, 38% on Instagram and 12% on Twitter. Smoking tobacco products were primarily marketed through Facebook (57%), Instagram (32%) and Twitter (10%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (42%), Instagram (41%) and Twitter (17%). ENDS products were marketed primarily on Instagram (96%).

¹ While this report notes instances of tobacco marketing, it does not attempt to identify nor allege violations of regulations.

² The coding was modified slightly to enable a better inclusion of ENDS products to the scope of marketing that we monitor and report on.

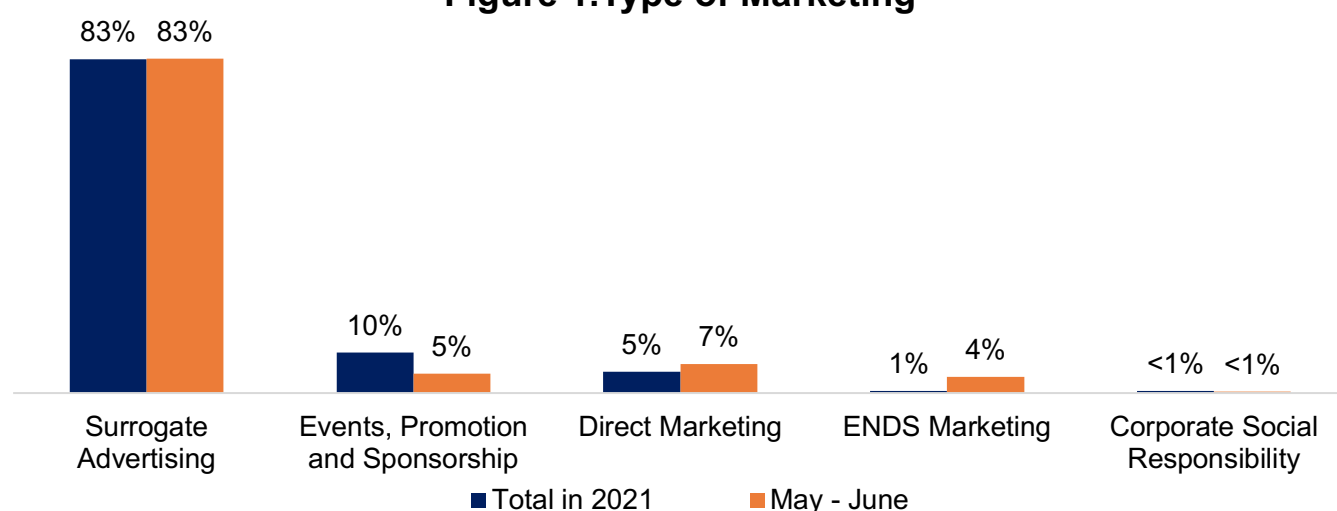
- **Message framing:** Of the total observed tobacco marketing, 62% had messages related to lifestyle³ and 17% to community celebration.⁴ Both smoking and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages focused on lifestyle and community celebration. ENDS products were primarily marketed using lifestyle-focused messages.

Detailed Insights

Volume of Tobacco Marketing

- A total of 703 tobacco marketing activities were recorded between May 16 and June 15, 2021. The main types of marketing were surrogate marketing, events, promotions and sponsorships, and direct marketing. Of the total marketing activities observed, 83% were surrogate marketing, 5% were events, promotions and sponsorships, and 7% were direct marketing.
- Of the total marketing activities observed this month, 62% were for smoking tobacco products, 34% for smokeless tobacco products and 4% for ENDS products. There was a slight increase in the marketing of smoking products this month compared to previous months in 2021.

Figure 1.Type of Marketing



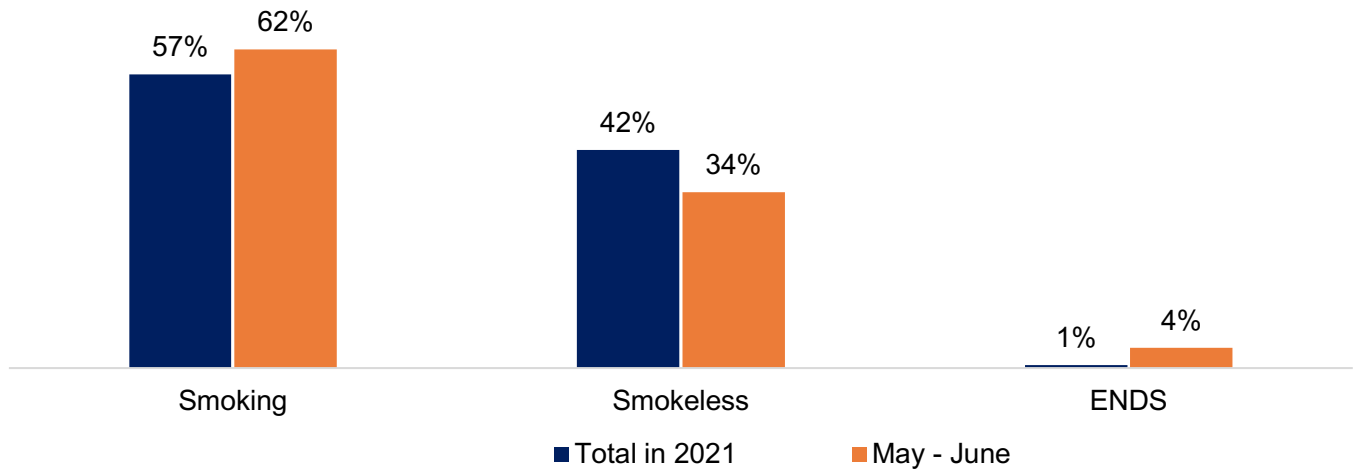
Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to June 15, 2021) (n =4,925)

May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 703)

³ All the instances noted under recreation in the previous reports are now coded as lifestyle. Lifestyle: Messages that involve presenting a tobacco brand or product as aspirational and that are related to recreation i.e., making people's leisure time more interesting or enjoyable. Examples include: cooking, family time, playing outdoors, movies etc.

⁴ Community celebration: Messages that involve activities that people do in their place of worship or with groups. Examples include: religious festivals, community events, sporting events, birthdays etc.

Figure 2. Type of Product Marketed



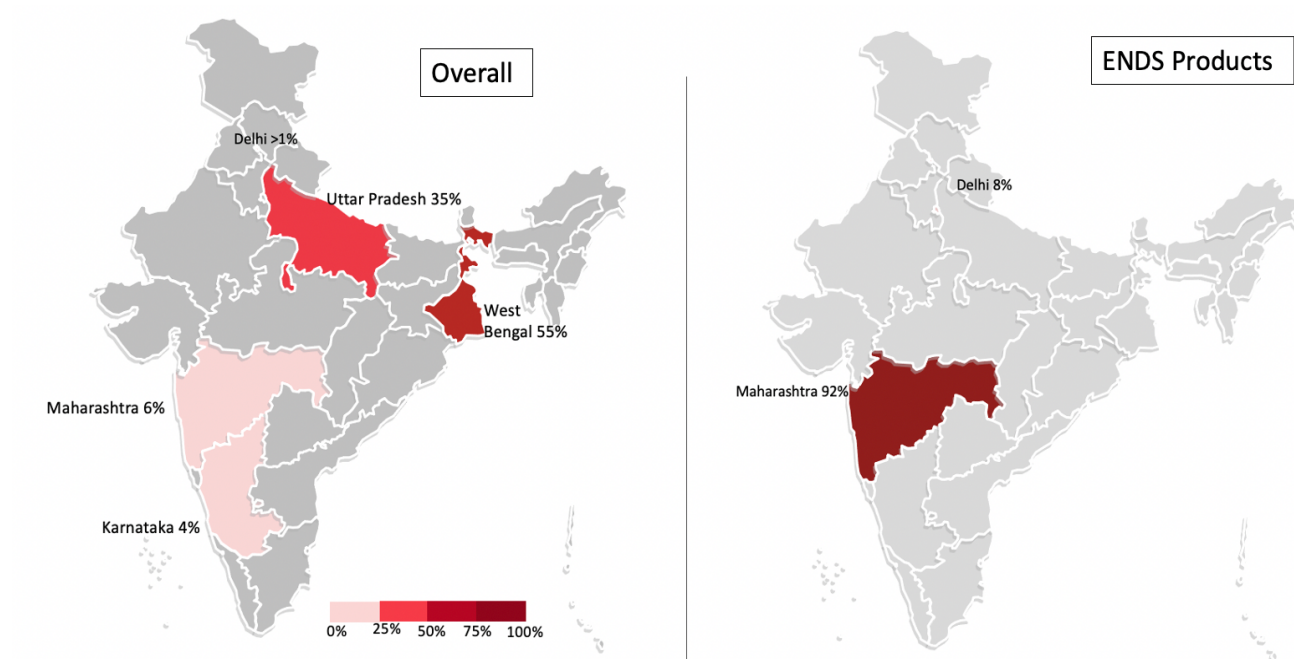
Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to June 15, 2021) (n = 4,925)

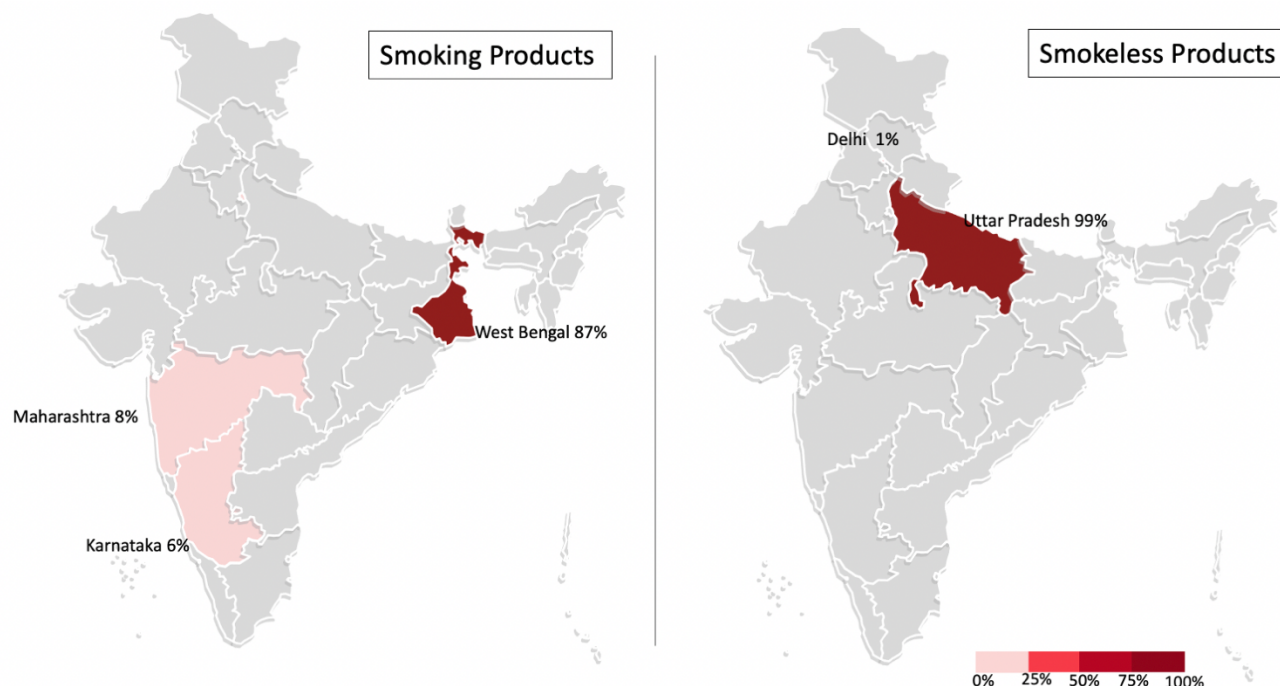
May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 703)

Tobacco Marketing by State

- The majority of tobacco marketing observed this month originated in West Bengal (55%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (35%), Maharashtra (6%) and Karnataka (4%).
- Marketing of smoking tobacco products most often originated in West Bengal (87%), followed by Maharashtra (8%) and Karnataka (6%). Smokeless tobacco products were most often marketed in Uttar Pradesh (99%) and Delhi (1%). ENDS products were mostly marketed in Maharashtra (92%).

Map 1: Origin of Tobacco Marketing by State





May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 681)

Marketing Instances Recorded May 16 to June 15, 2021

Most of the tobacco marketing observed this month was 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 51 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.



**Indirect Marketing
(Surrogate marketing
and events,
promotions and
sponsorships)**

There were **621 instances of indirect advertising** observed. Messaging highlighted tobacco features including flavors and packaging. Event, promotion and sponsorship activities were timed with international observances including World No Tobacco Day, World Environment Day, World Hypertension Day, Global Day of Parents and World Milk Day, among others. Some messages mentioned COVID-19 public health measures such as mask-wearing, working from home and vaccinations, as well as national pandemic response efforts.



**Corporate Social
Responsibility
Activities**

There were **3 observed instances of corporate social responsibility activities** conducted by tobacco companies, the majority of which were by ITC Limited. Messaging was primarily focused on social initiatives and corporate governance.

ITC – Water Stewardship Programme

The Water Stewardship Programme (WSP) from [CSR of ITC Ltd.](#), is designed to sustainably increase agricultural productivity and improve the livelihoods of rural poor in vulnerable rain-fed areas through integrated watershed management. The programme was launched in partnership with Coodu Trust back in August 2015. ITC's paperboards factory in Coimbatore received the Alliance for Water Stewardship platinum-level recognition for this project in 2019.

The objective of the Water Stewardship Programme is to harness locally available natural resources in an optimum manner to achieve the overall goal of sustainable development. These objectives can be realized by conserving, protecting and restoring the ecological balance by developing natural resources and by preventing soil erosion, degradation of topsoil cover, regeneration of natural vegetation, rainwater harvesting and recharging of the groundwater table. The activities for resource development and usage have been planned to promote farming and allied activities to promote local livelihoods while ensuring resource conservation and regeneration.

During the project period, efforts are being taken to conserve soil and moisture of the region through Trench-cum-Bund, Ring Bund, vegetative barriers, erosion control measures, and construction of various water harvesting structures in the project locations. Afforestation is another important component, under which Agro forestry and Agr Horticulture are taken up and developed as block, avenue and bund plantations. Capacity Building of farmers and experiential training through field demonstrations are imparted by experts from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

INDIA NEWS

Private donations pour in as India battles pandemic

The data, reviewed by HT, shows that American companies such as Salesforce, Eli Lilly, Bloom Energy and Thermo Fisher Scientific, Swiss major Roche, UK-based Virustatic Shield Ltd and Canada's PRACSNS are among the list of international donors.

By Saubhadra Chatterji, New Delhi

UPDATED ON MAY 23, 2021 07:21 AM IST

Amazon, Virgin Atlantic, Indian communities in New Zealand, Oman and the UK, a Buddhist order known as Chinese Diligent Buddhists of Master Yunyi and Indian corporate majors such as Reliance Industries, Infosys, Bajaj group, ITC and Tata Group have also extended help in this crisis, according to the government records.

ENDS Marketing

There were **28 instances of the marketing of ENDS products** observed during this period, primarily on Instagram. In many cases, the ads detailed product specifications that emphasized ease of use (e.g., pre-filled, pre-charged) and gave stock updates.



NP vape_paradise_india_

NP vape_paradise_india_ Puff bars and Nasty Fix 🍷🍷🍷

Nicotine Strength: 5%(50MG)

PUFF Bar Disposable Device Specifications and Features:

Disposable Device requires No Maintenance, Charging or Refilling
 Pre-Filled: 1.3mL Salt Nic E-liquid per disposable
 Internal Battery: 280mAh
 Pre-charged, Simply puff on the device to activate
 Pre-filled, No need for messy refills
 Salt Nicotine: 5%, (50MG) Salt Nic inside for an accurate cigarette-style throat hit

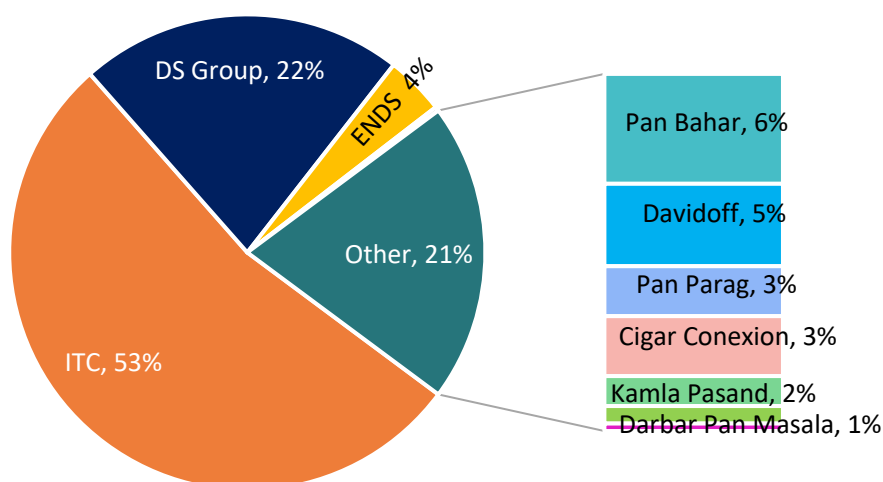


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Marketing by Tobacco Companies

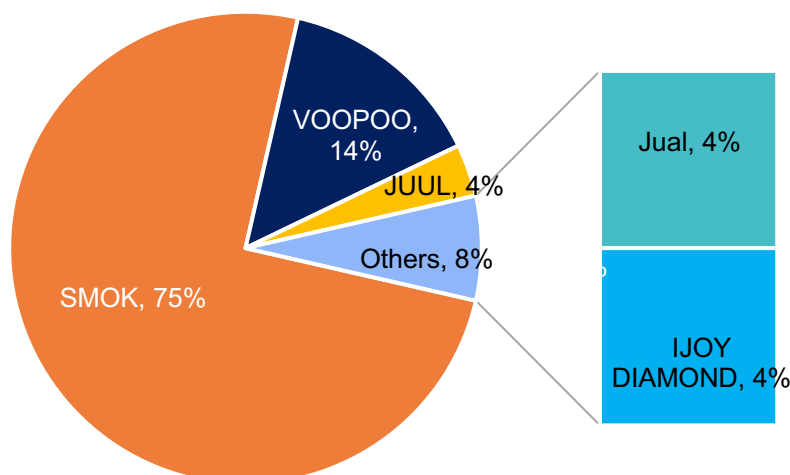
- The majority of marketing observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (53%). Other chief sponsors of tobacco marketing were: Dharampal Satyapal Group (22%), Pan Bahar (6%), and Davidoff (5%).
- Most of the surrogate advertising observed this month was sponsored by ITC Limited (49%), while 21% was sponsored by Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group).
- Most of the marketing of ENDS products observed this month was conducted by SMOK (75%), followed by VOOPOO (14%).

Figure 3a : Total Marketing by Tobacco Company



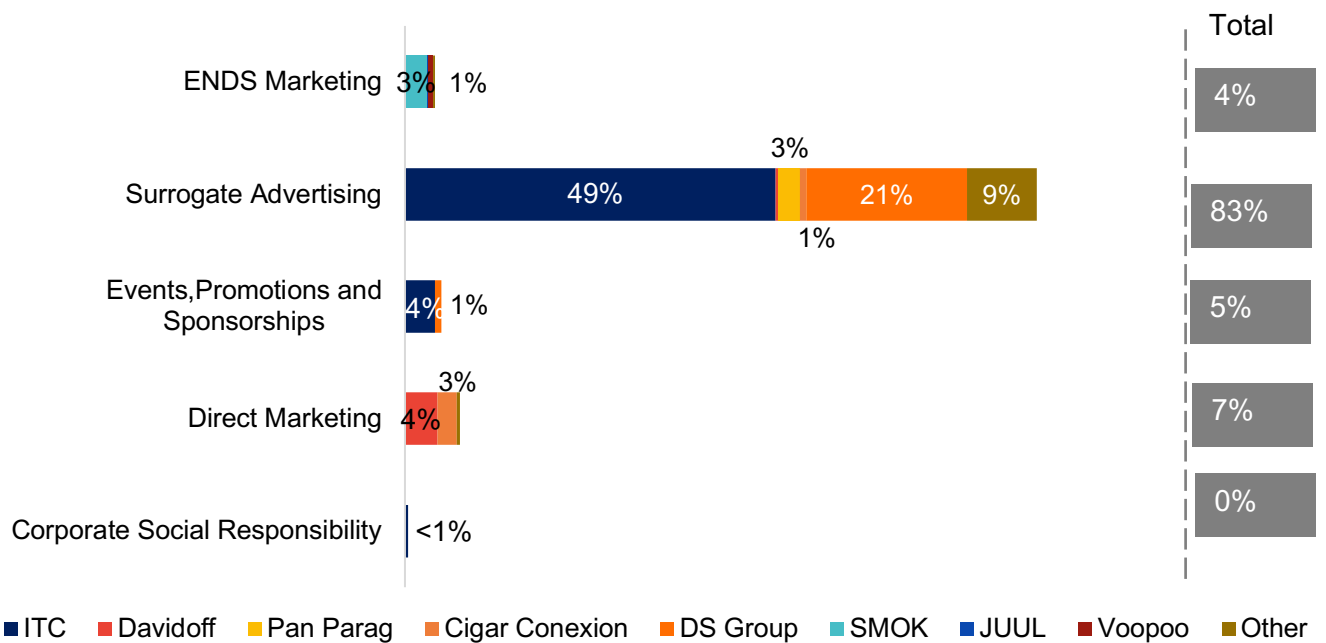
May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 703)

Figure 3b : Total Marketing by Tobacco Company (ENDS)



May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 28)

Figure 4. Type of Marketing by Company


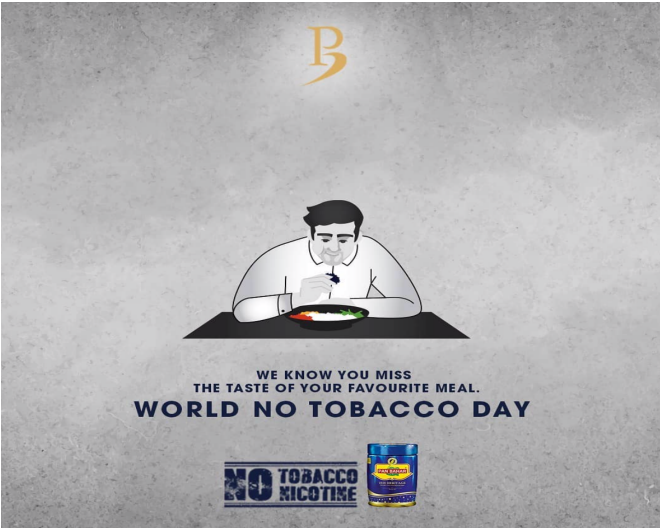


May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 703)

Public Engagement Activities

The public engagements, including corporate social responsibility activities, that were observed this month are depicted below.

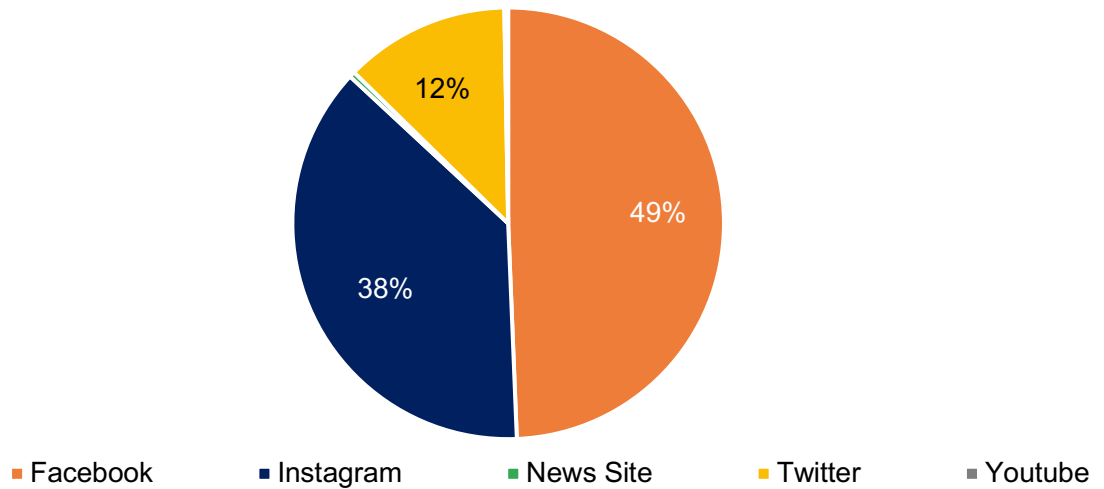
Table 2. Examples of observed public engagement activities by the tobacco industry.

Examples	
 <p>BAHAR</p> <p>Every child has a dream to pursue. Give them their rights.</p> <p>WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR</p> <p>NO TOBACCO NICOTINE</p> <p>THE HERITAGE</p>	 <p>B</p> <p>WE KNOW YOU MISS THE TASTE OF YOUR FAVOURITE MEAL.</p> <p>WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY</p> <p>NO TOBACCO NICOTINE</p> <p>BAHAR</p>

Tobacco Marketing Activity by Channel

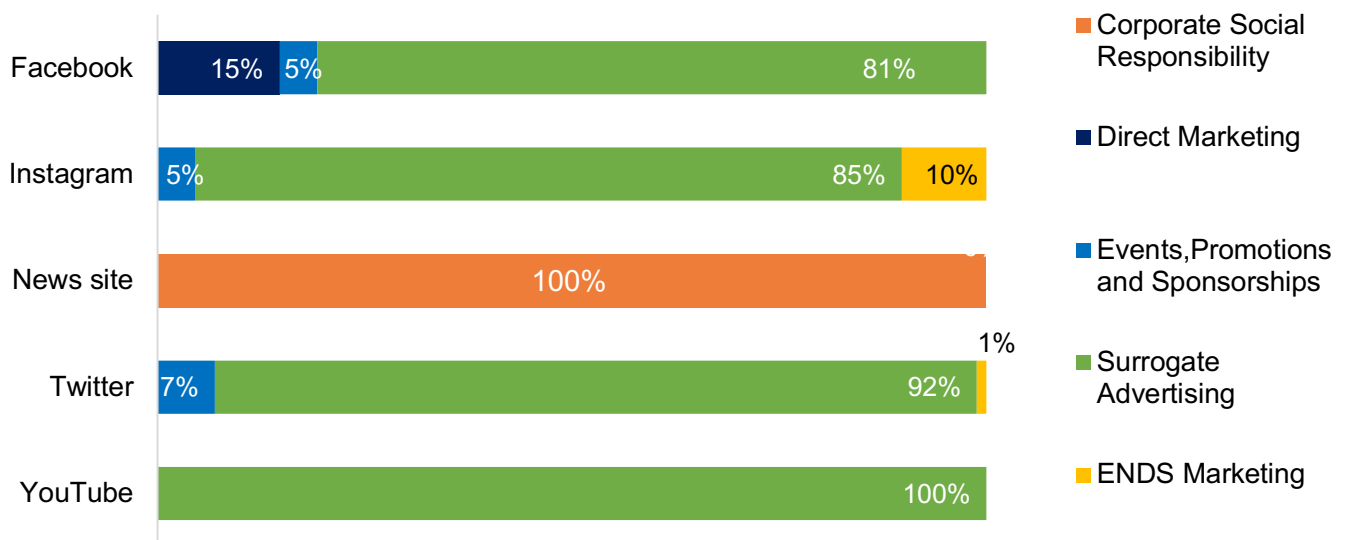
- All observed tobacco marketing (direct and indirect) during this period was conducted on social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Surrogate marketing of tobacco products was conducted through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The news media provided the primary channels for reports on tobacco industry-sponsored corporate social responsibility initiatives.
- Smoking tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (57%), Instagram (32%) and Twitter (10%). Smokeless tobacco products were marketed through Facebook (42%), Instagram (41%) and Twitter (17%). ENDS products were marketed via Instagram (96%) and Twitter (4%).

Figure 5a. Total Marketing by Platform



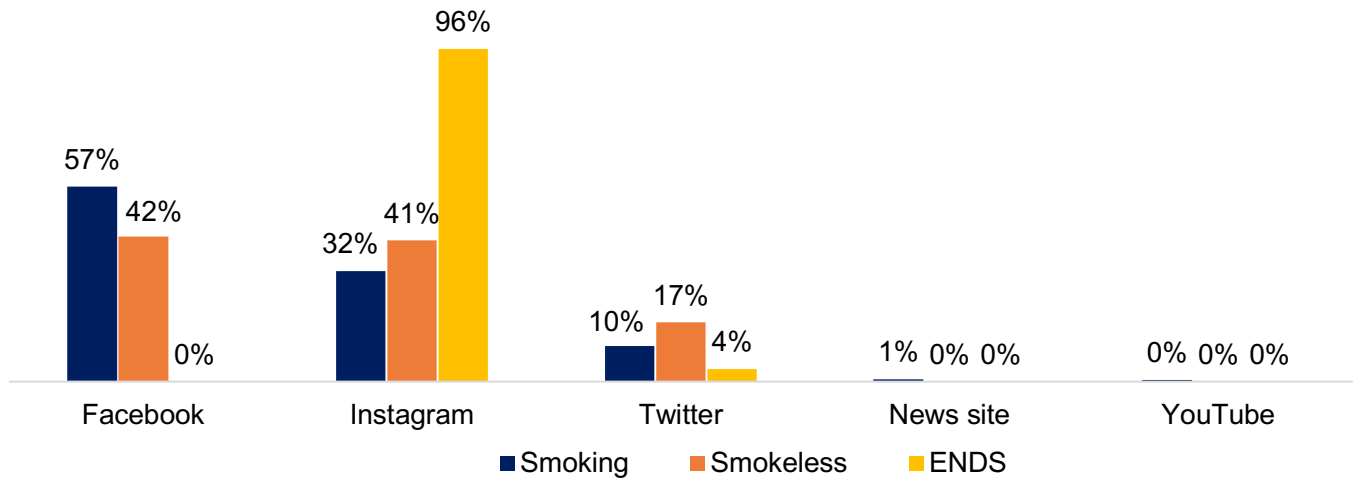
May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 703)

Figure 5b.Type of Marketing by Platform



May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 703)

Figure 5c. Type of Product Marketed by Platform



Smoking(n = 435)
Smokess (n = 324)
ENDS (n = 28)

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. See below for the most popular words this month:

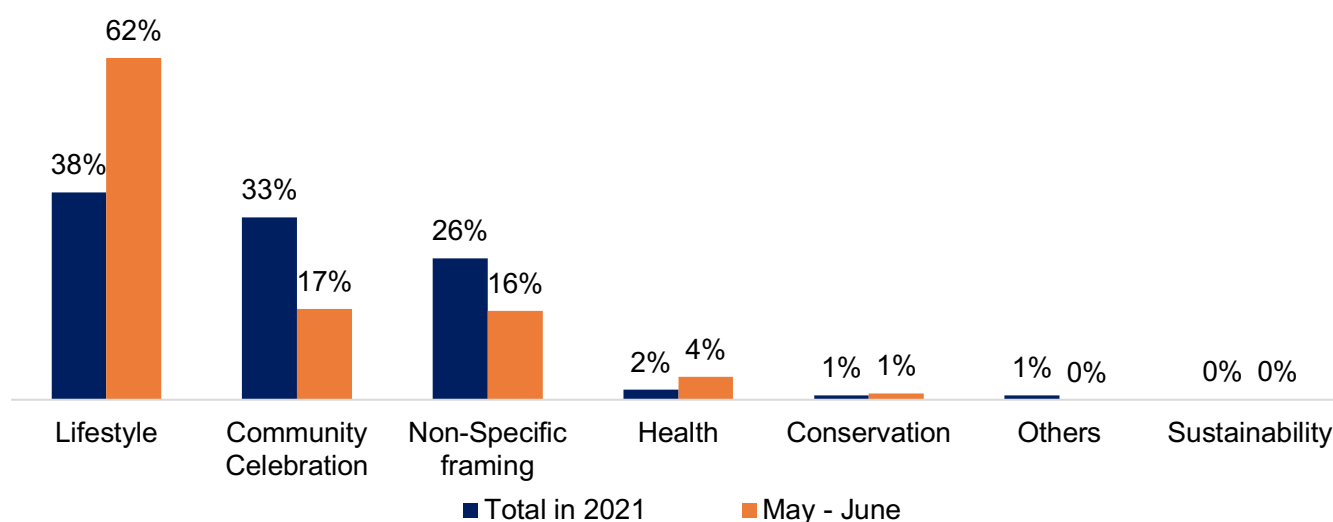


May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 703)

Framing of Marketing Messages

- Many tobacco marketing messages were framed with a celebratory tone linked to lifestyle (62%)⁵ and community celebration (17%).
- Both smoking tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products were marketed using messages about recreation and community celebration. For smoking products, 67% of messages focused on lifestyle and 13% on community celebration. For smokeless tobacco products, 51% of messages focused on lifestyle and 41% on community celebration. For ENDS products, 75% of messages focused on lifestyle.

Figure 6a. Marketing by Message Framing (All Products)

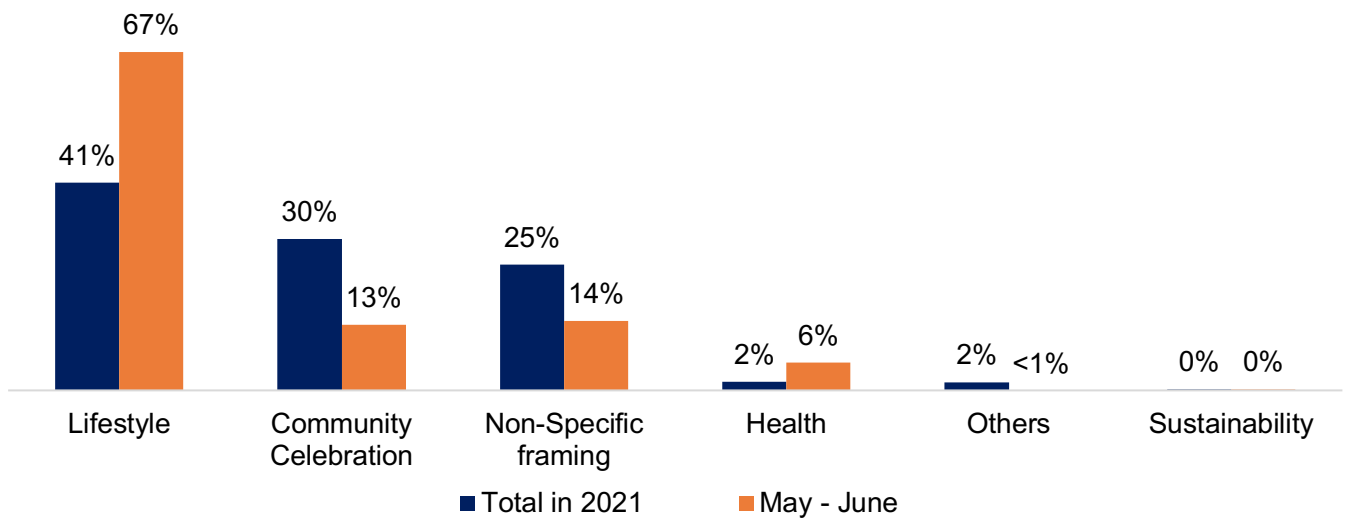


Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to June 15, 2021) (n =4,925)

May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 703)

⁵ The significant increase in messaging that focuses on lifestyle this month is likely attributable to our introducing ENDS products marketing into the scope of the marketing that we monitor and report on.

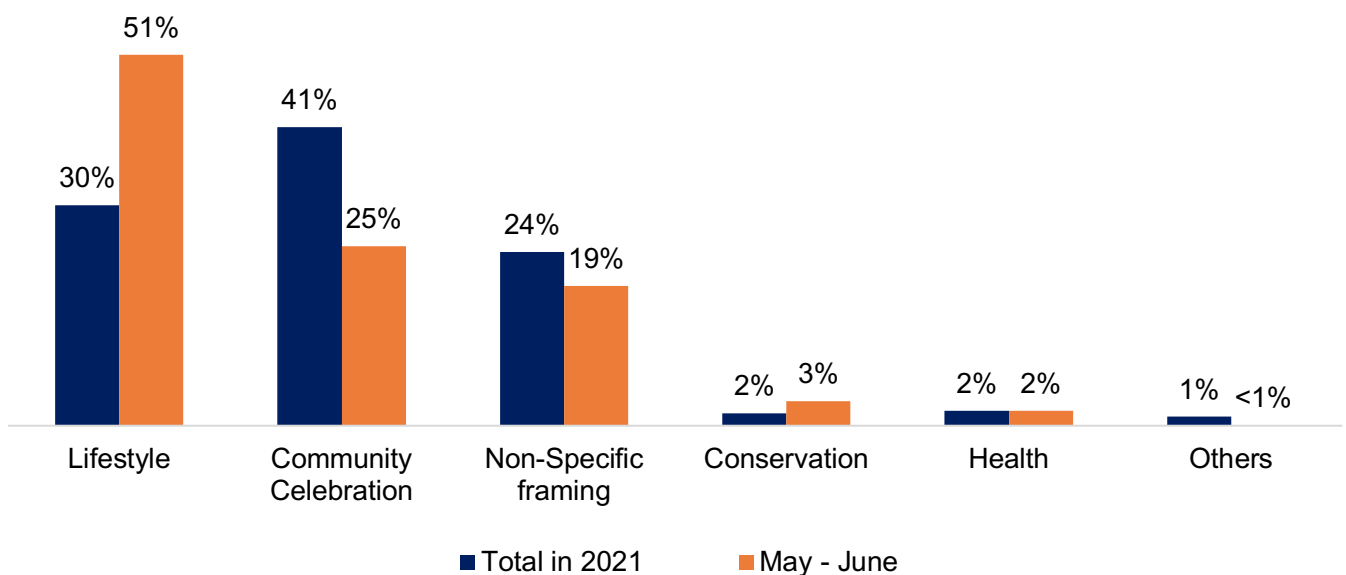
Figure 6b. Marketing by Message Framing (Smoking)



Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to June 15, 2021) (n =2,810)

May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 435)

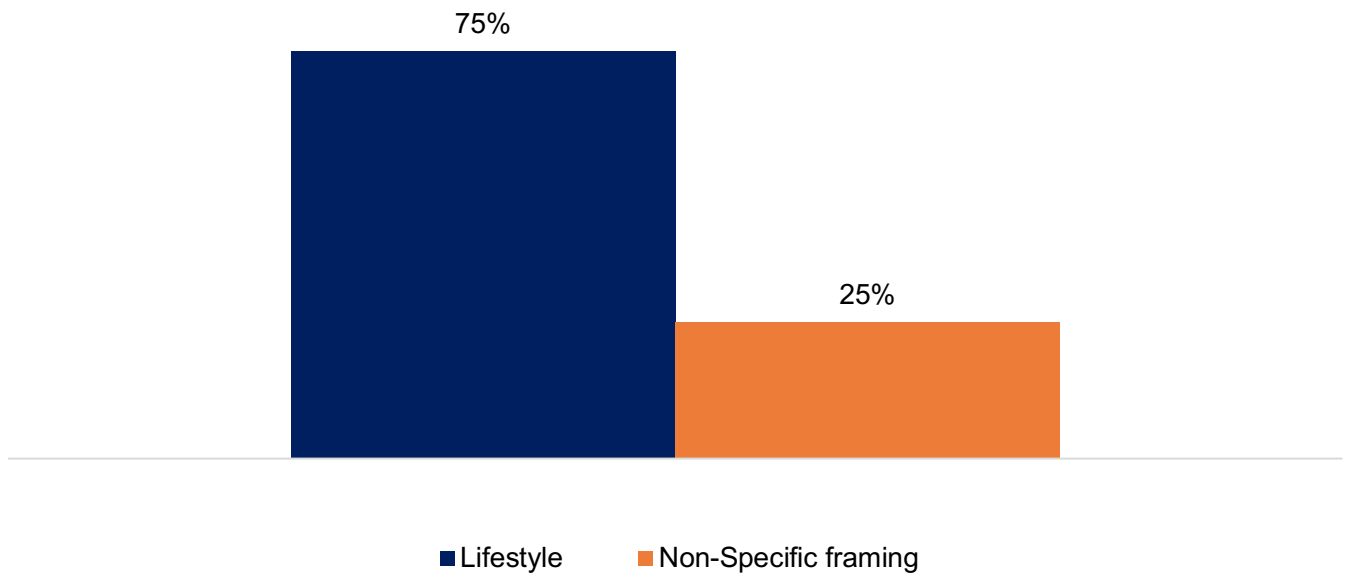
Figure 6c. Marketing by Message Framing (Smokeless)



Year to Date (Dec. 16, 2020 to June 15, 2021) (n = 2,087)

May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n =240)

Figure 6d. Marketing by Message Framing (ENDS)



May 16 to June 15, 2021 (n = 28)

*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:

TERM website: <https://www.term.community>

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>