SITUATION REPORT

Online Marketing of Tobacco Product in Indonesia

(March - June 2025)

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' Canary which was earlier known as Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM) is a digital media monitoring and reporting service that tracks tobacco marketing on social media platforms and news sites with the widest circulation in each country.

This situation report is part of a series that summarizes observed examples of online tobacco marketing in Indonesia. Canary does not allege or attempt to identify whether these tobacco marketing instances are in violation of local or international laws. Visit the Canary website to learn more and to view all reports.

Definitions used in this report

- **Non-tobacco products and topics:** Tobacco-linked accounts post event and lifestyle content aimed at broader audiences. These posts often include a tobacco brand name or trademark in the images—rarely with any product placement—to build visibility and recall through association.

- **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 Findings

A total of 5,840 social media content were tracked from March to June 2025, generating an estimated 2.8 billion impressions. Instagram dominated the activity (45%), followed by Twitter/X (22%) and Facebook (21%), reflecting a shift toward visually led and entertainment-driven marketing. Non-tobacco content dominated the stream (63%), followed by electronic cigarettes (25%), driven largely by direct ads from Chinese brands such as ICCPP's Voopoo, Uwell, Relx, LostVape, and Geekvape.

Direct advertising and general PR each made up 21% of posts, showing that companies continue to rely on overt promotion. The larger share came from community and lifestyle content (52%), which allows brands to stay visible through links to badminton, motorsports, concerts, and anime rather than through explicit product pushes.

Message framing followed the same pattern. Entertainment content led the output (52%), driven largely by PT Djarum and its community groups. Product-focused posts (23%) centered on electronic cigarettes, while informational messages (20%) advanced the industry's economic and social arguments during ongoing policy discussions.

Electronic cigarette brands tied their products to Ramadan (the holy month of fasting) and Eid al-Fitr (end of this fasting period) to position "vaping" as part of routine daily life. They used cultural references such as takjil (light snacks or drinks to break the fast), maghrib (time to break the fast), sahoor (pre-dawn meal) and match e-liquid flavors to these moments. They also present new devices as items for a Ramadan "wishlist," linking style and self-presentation to fasting. This framing recasts religious and family-oriented practices as consumption cues and normalizes use in settings where it does not belong. Front groups push a parallel message. They urge smokers to seek a "tar-free" life or use Ramadan as a time to quit smoking by shifting to other nicotine products. The appeal masks the fact that these alternatives remain addictive and keeps users within the same commercial ecosystem.

Tobbaco Industry CSR as Political Strategy

Since January 2025, Canary has documented 1,447 instances of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and public relations (PR) marketing by tobacco companies. The findings reveal how tobacco firms use "whitewashing" promoting an image of responsibility, to shape public opinion, influence policy, and protect their markets, even as their products continue to harm public health worldwide.

Corporate Citizenship as a Vehicle for Policy Influence

Philip Morris International (PMI) and HM Sampoerna have intensified CSR-style campaigns in Indonesia despite stronger marketing restrictions under the revised health law (Government Regulation No. 28/2024). These initiatives are publicly presented as development contributions but operate as indirect marketing and political lobbying. CSR and PR activities position the tobacco industry as a partner in social progress, supporting livelihoods, gender equality, and cultural preservation, while masking the health and economic harm of their products. The intent is to normalize corporate presence in development spaces and to influence policy debates from within.

Constructing a "Smoke-Free" Narrative

PMI's global "smoke-free future" campaign promotes the company as an innovator in health and sustainability. Its factory in Karawang, West Java ships IQOS products to Southeast Asian countries and is critical for regional penetration. The goal is market expansion, not harm reduction. This narrative reframes a commercial growth strategy as a public health solution, misleading policymakers and consumers alike.

The tobacco industry's contribution to Indonesia's economy is minimal. In 2020, tobacco manufacturing contributed only a small share (0.6%) of total employment, while tobacco farming accounts for just a minimal portion (1.6%) of the agricultural workforce.

The Hidden Cost of Tobacco: Billions Lost Each Year

While the industry claims to contribute to economic development, tobacco use costs Indonesia USD 20.1 billion annually in health and productivity losses, mostly from lost productivity due to premature deaths and disease.

Cost-of-Illness Attributable to Smoking

Smoking-Attributable Indirect Cost: Productivity Loss (Million)	+ 18,454
Smoking-Attributable Indirect Cost: Productivity Loss Due To Mortality (Million)	16,477
Smoking-Attributable Indirect Cost: Productivity Loss Due To Morbidity (Million)	1,977
Smoking-Attributable Direct Cost: Health Expenditure (Million)	+ 1,678
Annual Smoking-Attributable Cost-of-Illness (Million)	20,132

$ 16,476,680,000

$ 1,977,070,000

$ 1,678,450,000

Source: Cost Recovery and Revenue Estimator[1] for Indonesia

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[1] CoRRE is designed for the public health community, advocates, and policymakers to assess the economic cost of smoking that can be recovered through reduction in smoking in their countries. In addition, the estimator will help users assess expected revenue gain from raising cigarette tax that can potentially bring forth the decrease in smoking

These costs far exceed the industry's economic contributions through jobs or tax revenue. By promoting CSR and PR narratives, tobacco companies hide the true fiscal and human cost of their products. Each so-called "social initiative" diverts attention from preventable deaths, economic losses, and public health system strain. This evidence highlights a fundamental contradiction: tobacco's economic footprint is overwhelmingly negative. The health system and workforce productivity bear the burden, not the industry.

Call to Action: Ban Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Online

To protect public health, Indonesia must close existing gaps in tobacco marketing regulations by explicitly banning all forms of online advertising, promotion, and sponsorship, including corporate social responsibility and general PR campaigns.

HM Sampoerna – MSME Support and Farmer Training
HM Sampoerna uses CSR marketing to position itself as a driver of economic growth and food security, a whitewashing strategy that legitimizes its presence and diverts attention from the health and social harms of its tobacco products.

Source: @InsideSampoerna Twitter

HM Sampoerna promoted programs like cash assistance funded through tobacco excise revenues, presenting itself as supporting livelihoods, particularly women workers in its supply chain, as part of a broader effort to appear socially responsible and sustain public approval for its operations.

Source: @InsideSampoerna Twitter

Philip Morris International (PMI) – USD 330 Million Investment in West Java. PMI promoted its new "smoke-free" factory as proof of innovation and economic progress. In reality, this is a public relations move to make the tobacco industry appear modern and responsible, while its products continue to cause serious health and social harm.

Source: Kontan News

HM Sampoerna highlights gender equality and human capital programs to project a socially responsible image, even as it continues to market products that harm health and undermine social well-being.
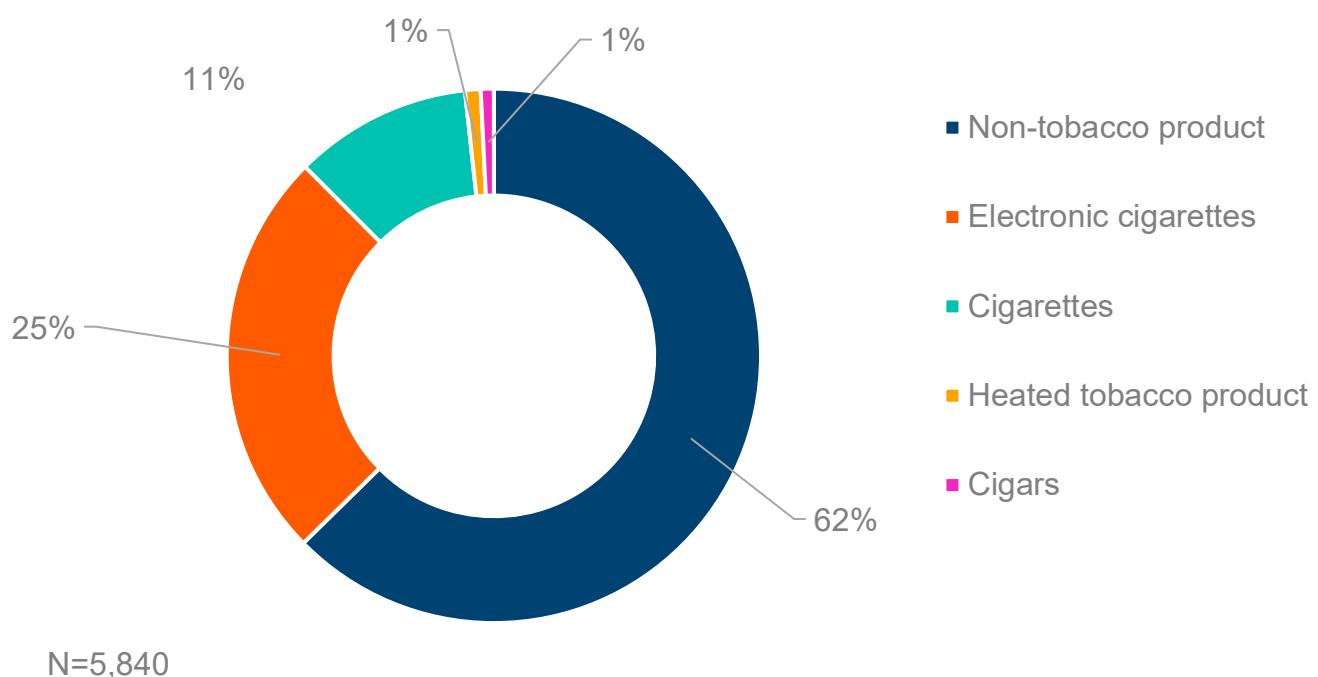
Source: Radar Bromo News

Detailed Insight

Which product categories dominate the marketing landscape? Posts about non-tobacco topics or products from Djarum cigarette brand-associated accounts dominated activity (62%). Using logos and names resembling tobacco products, these pages tap into youth interests like sports, music, and culture to build loyalty and positive associations. Framed as community engagement, this indirect marketing keeps brands visible and familiar despite ad restrictions (Figure 1).

Electronic cigarettes formed the second-largest category (25%), followed by cigarettes (11%). Few posts about heated tobacco products (1%) and cigars were tracked (1%) (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Total Posts by Type Of Tobacco Products

N=5,840

Base: 5,840 total posts, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

What is the marketing reach by product type? Content about non-tobacco products or topics made up most posts (63%) and generated an estimated 1.1 billion potential impressions. Electronic cigarette content followed (23%), while news content about cigarettes, though fewer (11%), produced the most potential impressions of 1.5 billion. Heated tobacco product and cigar content were observed less (1%) (Figure 2).

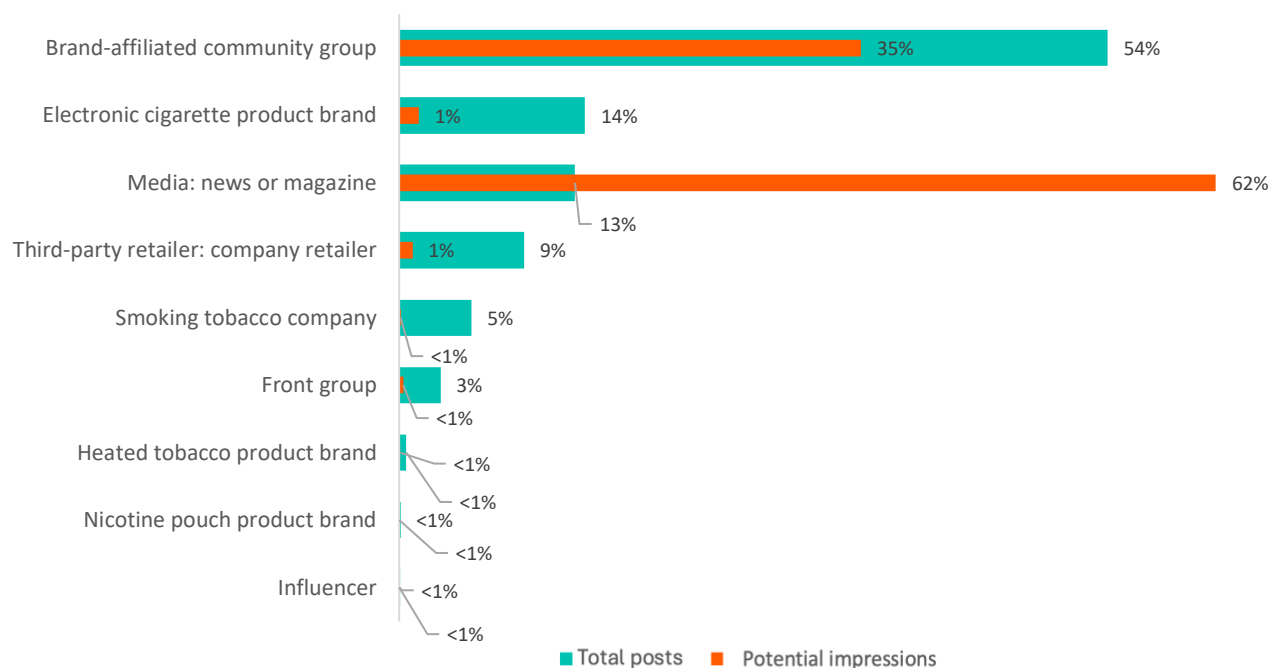**FIGURE 2: TOTAL POSTS AND POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS BY TYPE OF PRODUCT MARKETING: 2.8 BILLION**
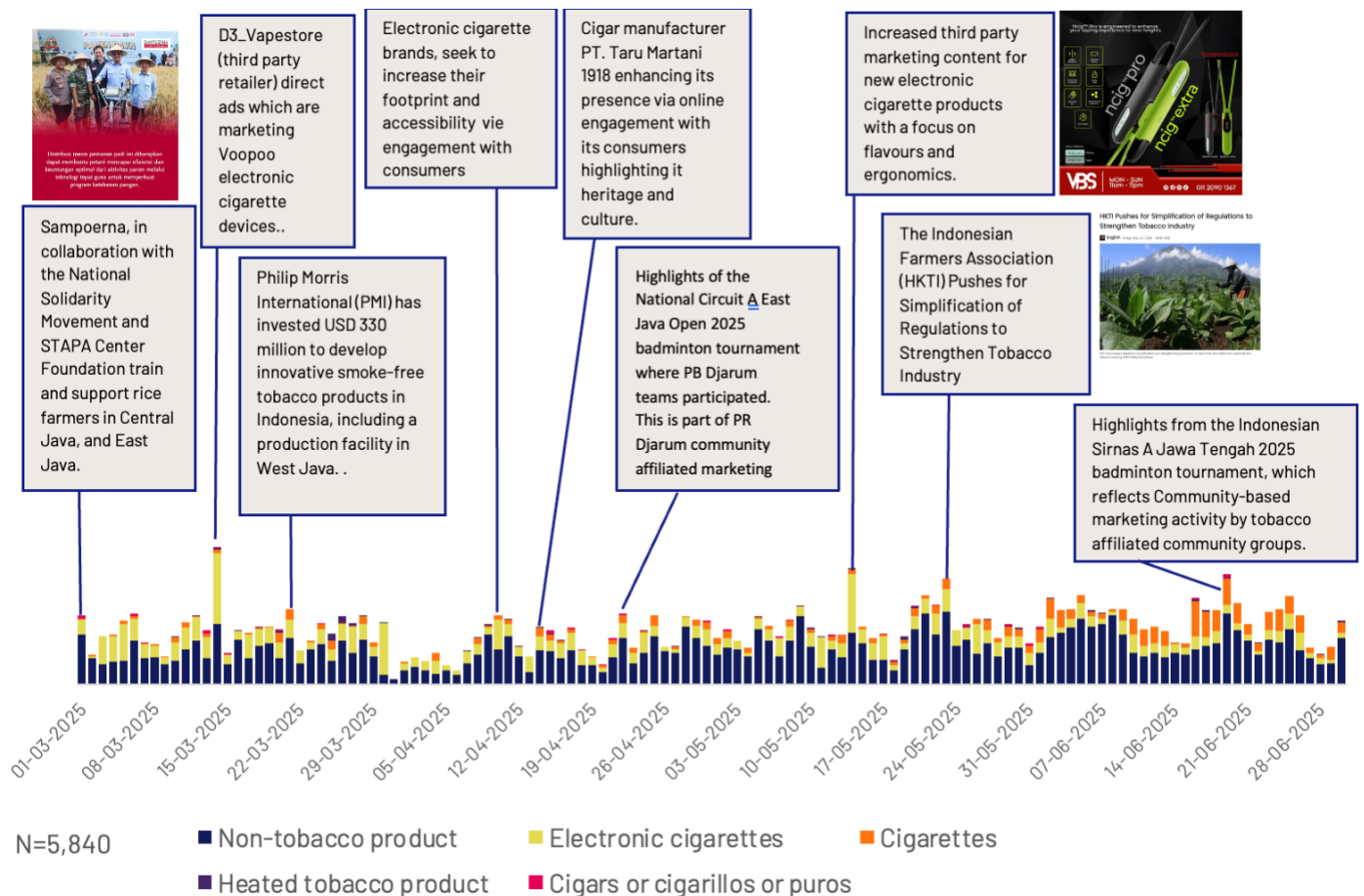

Base: 5,840 total posts and 2.8 billion potential impressions, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

Note: Impressions represent the potential reach of a post - the number of times content may have appeared on users' screens. This metric estimates exposure rather than confirmed attention, as it does not account for whether users actively viewed or engaged with the content. The system automatically calculated this using the number of account followers/subscribers. The system assumes all the followers of those accounts have seen the message.

Which commercial actors drove tobacco marketing? Brand-affiliated community groups drove most activity (54%) and estimated reach of 980 million. Electronic cigarette brands followed (14%), while news accounts, though fewer (13%), generated the widest reach of 1.7 billion (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: Total Posts and Potential Impressions[2] by Account Types: 2.8 Billion

Base: 5,840 total posts and 2.8 billion potential impressions, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

Note: Impressions represent the potential reach of a post - the number of times content may have appeared on users' screens. This metric estimates exposure rather than confirmed attention, as it does not account for whether users actively viewed or engaged with the content.

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[2] Impressions serve as a strategic indicator of visibility and dissemination potential, reflecting how widely a message could have been seen within a digital audience. This is automatically calculated by the Synthesio system using the number of account followers/subscribers. The system assumes all the followers of those accounts have seen the message/post.
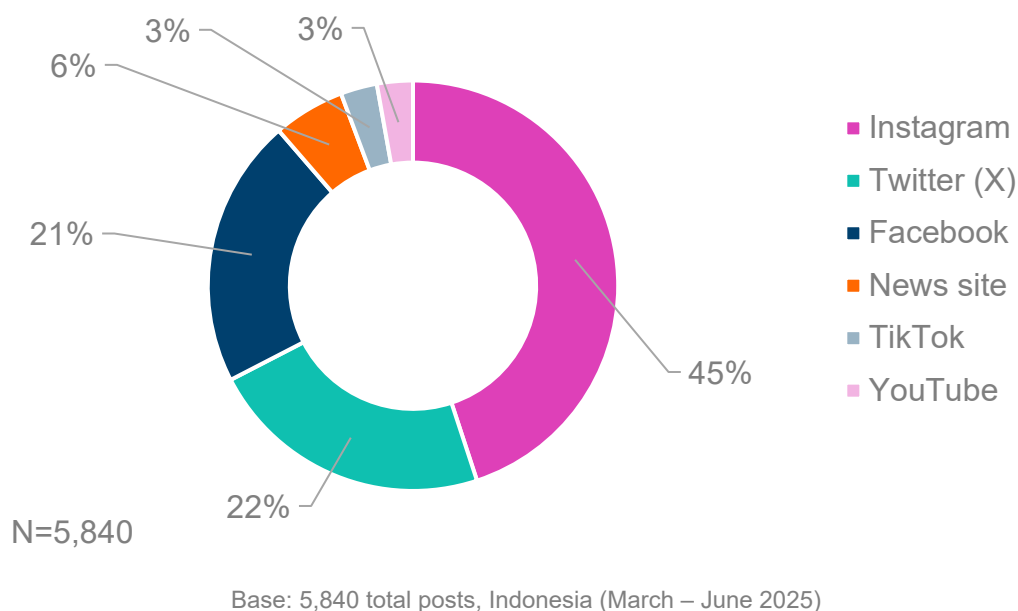
What drove marketing peaks this quarter? Electronic cigarette brands maintained steady online activity, with visible spikes in mid-March and mid-May, largely featuring non-tobacco content to sustain visibility while avoiding direct cigarette promotion. In March, PT HM Sampoerna organized a rice farmer training in Central and East Java with the National Solidarity Movement and Social Transformation and Public Awareness Center Foundation. By May, the Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia (Indonesian Farmers' Association) posts advocating "Simplification of Regulations to Strengthen the Tobacco Industry" surged. Third-party retailers expanded their online presence from March to May, while PT Taru Martani-1918 promoted heritage-focused branding. Between April and June, tobacco companies intensified sports-linked promotions, including PB Djarum's National Circuit A East Java Open 2025 and other badminton tournaments supported by tobacco brands (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: TREND OF DIFFERENT TOBACCO PRODUCT MARKETING

Base: 5,840 total posts, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

Where was the marketing observed? Instagram remained the leading platform (45%), followed by Twitter (X) (22%) and Facebook (21%). News sites contributed (6%), while TikTok and YouTube accounted for smaller proportions of social media content (3% each). From March to May, Instagram led tobacco marketing activity, but by June, Facebook overtook both Instagram and Twitter with the highest proportion of content (Figure 5).
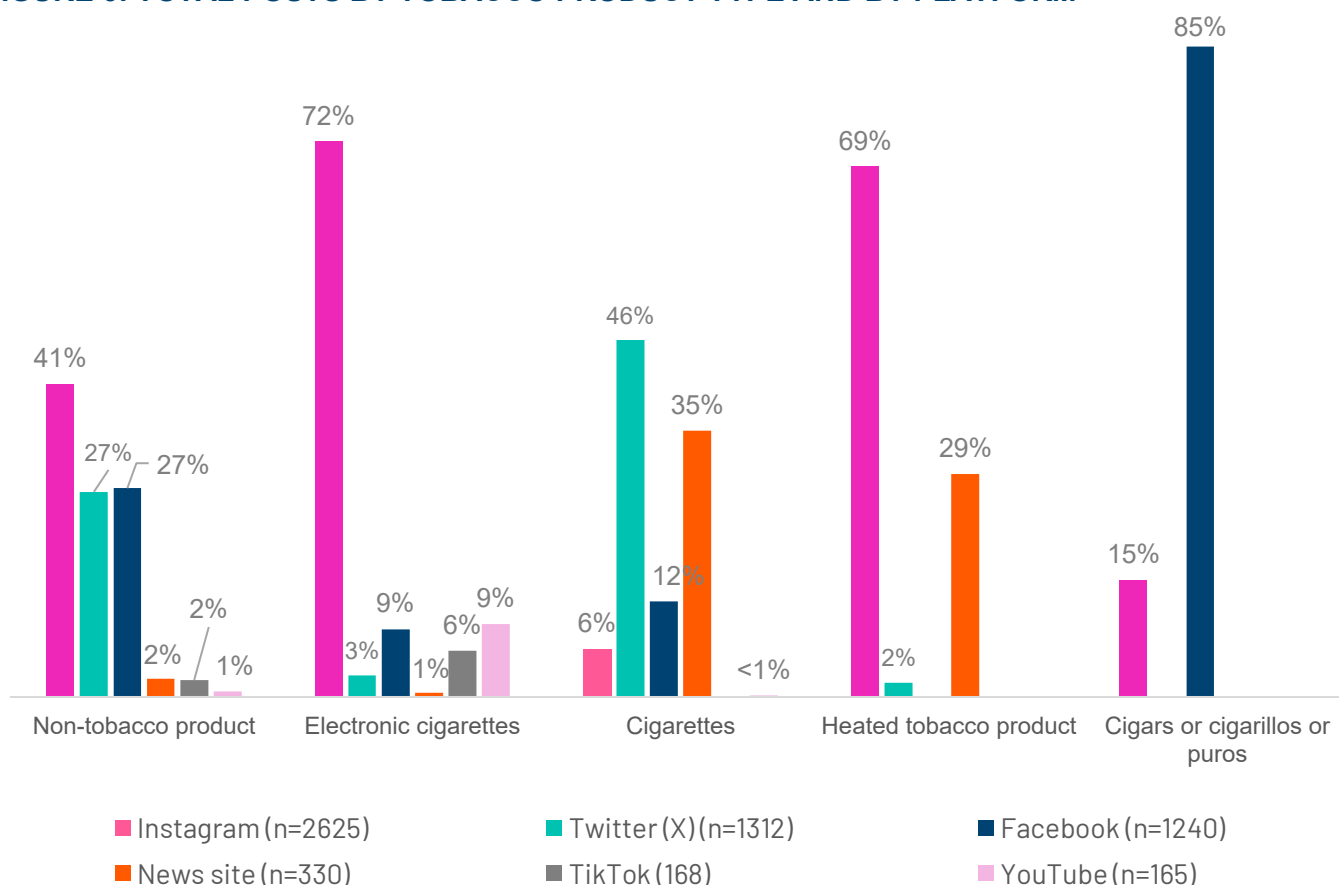
FIGURE 5: Distribution of Posts by Platform

N=5,840

Base: 5,840 total posts, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

Canary!

How did the promotion of different tobacco products vary across social media platforms? Instagram was the leading platform used by most product categories especially for promoting electronic cigarettes (72%) and non-tobacco product promotions (41%) and heated tobacco product content (69%). Twitter (X) and Facebook were also used for non-tobacco product promotions (27% each), while Twitter (X) had a strong focus on cigarette-related content (46%), reflecting its role in sharing news and industry updates. News sites (35%) and Facebook (12%) also featured cigarette content prominently (Figure 6). Most cigar marketing content were observed on Facebook (85%), suggesting targeted marketing toward older or niche audiences. Overall, Instagram served as the main driver of lifestyle and visual promotion, while Twitter and Facebook supported informational and product-specific narratives (Figure 6).

Electronic cigarette marketing was also observed on TikTok (6%) and YouTube (9%). Heated tobacco products were promoted mainly on Instagram accounts (Figure 6).
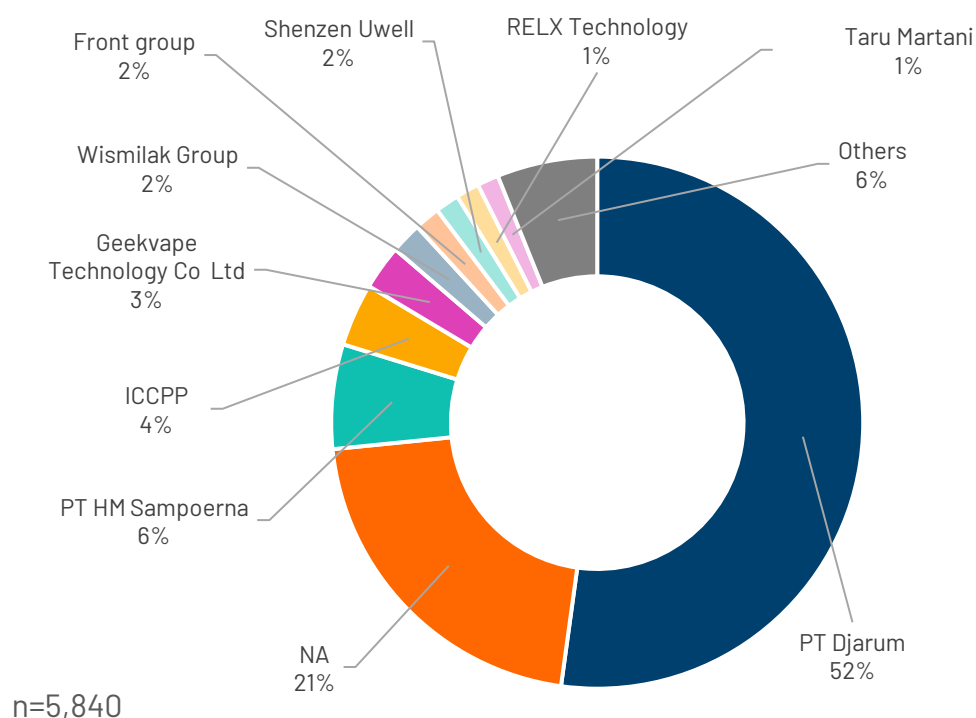
FIGURE 6: TOTAL POSTS BY TOBACCO PRODUCT TYPE AND BY PLATFORM

Base: 5,840 total posts, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

Who are the key players? PT Djarum accounted for the largest share of posts by tobacco companies (52%) followed by PT HM Sampoerna (6%). ICCPP appeared occasionally (4%) followed by Geekvape Technology Co Ltd (3%). The remaining companies (Wismilak Group, Shenzen Uwell, RELX Technology, and Taru Martani) each contributed marginally (Figure 7). Electronic cigarette and e-liquid products accounted for additional content (21%) with unverified manufacturer data (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: TOTAL POSTS BY TOBACCO COMPANY

Base: 5,840 total posts, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

Note: Others include Shenzhen Rincoe Technology, PMI, Upods, GAP VAPE Technology, Shenzhen IVPS Technology Corporation Ltd, Oxva Indonesia, PT Gudang Garam, Craving Vapor, Lost Vape, BAT, Bentoel Group, Gudang Garam, and Firstunion Group – an electronic cigarette manufacturer based in Shenzhen, China with a local presence in Indonesia.
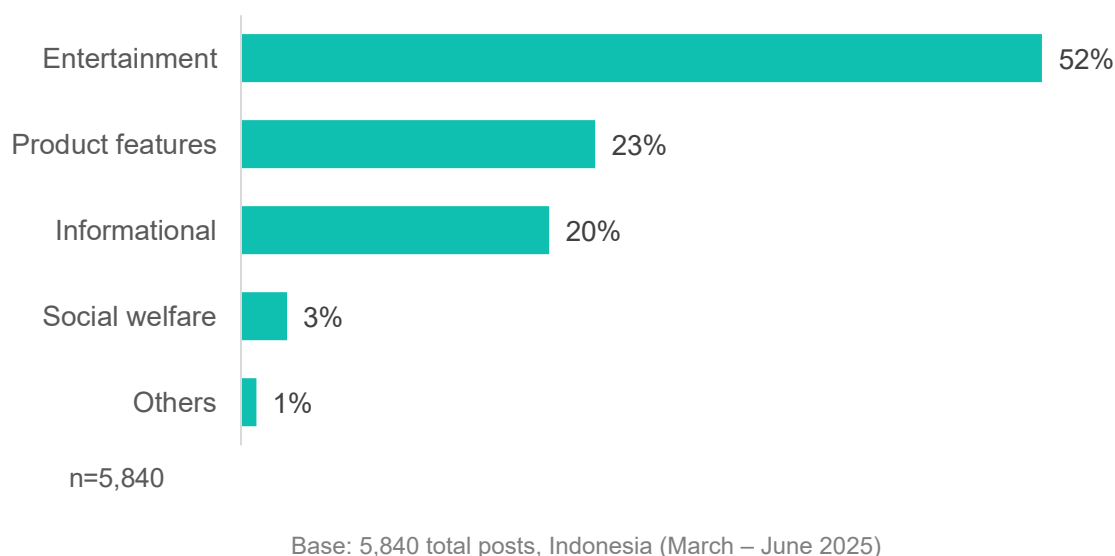
What marketing tactics were used?[3] Community-based marketing dominated activity (52%), followed by general PR (21%) and direct ads (21%). Corporate social responsibility initiatives (3%) and price promotions (3%) appeared occasionally, while events, promotions and sponsorships were rarely used (1%). The strong focus on community-based content shows how the industry normalizes tobacco within social and lifestyle spaces (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8: TOTAL POSTS BY MARKETING TACTICS

n=5,840

Base: 5,840 total posts, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

What messaging was used?[3] Entertainment-focused content dominated tobacco marketing posts (52%), followed by product features (23%), informational messaging (20%), and social welfare themes (3%) (Figure 9). Sports and music events were the most common hooks, while some posts highlighted industry pushback against Government Regulation (PP) No. 28 of 2024—a new law strengthening tobacco control through bans on advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. Corporate social responsibility press releases were also used to maintain a positive public image (Figure 9).

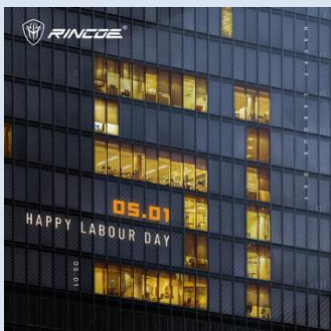**FIGURE 9: TOTAL POSTS BY MESSAGE FRAMING USED IN MARKETING**

n=5,840

Base: 5,840 total posts, Indonesia (March – June 2025)

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[3] See Appendix Table 1 for definitions of marketing tactics and message framing.

Examples of Marketing Tactics

Direct Ads	Product features
The post features a cappuccino-flavored RELX e-liquid placed beside a coffee cup. By emphasizing novelty and flavor variety, such marketing can attract younger audiences and increase interest in trying or purchasing electronic cigarette products. **Source:** @relxstoreid Instagram	The image features a promotional post from DCDC (Djarum Coklat Dot Com) titled "Shoutout Chart." It showcases multiple musical acts in a collage format, set against an eye-catching bright yellow background with headphone graphics. This highlights DCDC's tactic in promoting local music and youth culture, using entertainment and lifestyle content to maintain brand visibility and engagement without directly promoting PT Djarum tobacco products. **Source:** @dcdc.official Instagram

Examples of Message Framing

Secular community celebrations	Informational	Social Welfare
Brands often use calendar events to express solidarity with consumers. In this case, the Rincoe brand marked May 1, Labor Day, as part of its strategy to maintain visibility and strengthen emotional connection with its audience. **Source:** @rincoe.indonesia Instagram	Representatives from the Federation of Cigarette, Tobacco, Food and Beverage Workers Unions expressed opposition to the government's plan to introduce standardized or unbranded cigarette packaging. The coverage illustrates how industry-linked labor groups are mobilized to resist stronger tobacco control measures aimed at reducing product appeal and protecting public health. **Source:** Rakyat Merdeka news site	This article highlighted Bentoel Group's messaging that emphasizes youth protection, a common industry strategy to project responsibility and counter calls for stronger tobacco control measures, despite the broader health impacts of its products. **Source:** moms money.kontan news site

Examples of Message Framing

Entertainment	Product features	Religious event or imagery	Environment eco-awareness
Posts focus on sports, music, and lifestyle content shared by tobacco-affiliated communities, particularly those linked to companies such as PT Djarum. This strategy uses shared interests, especially the national popularity of badminton, to build a sense of community and loyalty around the brand while subtly reinforcing positive associations with tobacco companies. **Source:** PB Djarum Facebook	The post highlights new RELX electronic cigarette designs presented in bright, eye-catching colors that appear intended to attract younger audiences and increase interest in the product segment. **Source:** @relx Instagram	Marketing that aligns with significant religious events such as Eid al-Fitr helps normalize and integrate tobacco products into everyday life. **Source:** @upods_id Instagram	PT HM Sampoerna presents itself as an environmentally responsible company by promoting support for eco-friendly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Such messaging aligns the brand with sustainability and local production, framing tobacco-linked activities within positive social and environmental narratives. **Source:** @insidesampoerna Instagram

What were the most frequently used hashtags? Social media hashtags were frequently used in tobacco marketing across all platforms in Indonesia. The word clouds below are a visual representation of the hashtags that were used most frequently in tobacco marketing observed across all social media platforms. The larger the word in the visual, the more commonly it appeared in tobacco marketing messages.

Prominent hashtags such as #badminton, #pbddjarum, #badmintonindonesia, and #teruskansemangatjuara highlight how companies, particularly PT Djarum, align their brands with athletic excellence and national pride. Related tags like #tournament, #athlete, and #indonesiaopen2025 reinforce this sports association, while smaller terms such as #music, #superlive, and #boldriders indicate cross-promotion through entertainment and lifestyle themes. This pattern shows how tobacco-linked brands use sports and cultural events to normalize tobacco use while sustaining visibility and positive public image.

FIGURE 10: TOP HASHTAGS USED BY TOBACCO RELATED ACCOUNTS

Base: Top 50 hashtags with highest frequency within the total posts, Indonesia (Mar – June 2025)

Appendix

TABLE 1. DEFINITIONS FOR MARKETING TACTICS AND MESSAGE FRAMING IDENTIFIED

MARKETING TACTIC	Type of marketing strategy used, which captures the intention of marketing (to sell products, create brand endearment/loyalty, etc.)
Brand extension	A separate brand of non-tobacco items that are produced by tobacco companies/conglomerates. The products may use the trademark logo or the name of the parent tobacco company. These products do not show any features that indicate association with any tobacco products.
Community-based marketing	Promotes the sale or use of tobacco products indirectly by creating brand connection to a specific community or subculture. (e.g. Photography enthusiasts, electronic music lovers).
Corporate social responsibility	Pairs the company/brand or product with socially responsible activities (e.g., water conservation projects, financing vaccination drives).
Direct ads	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.
Environment eco-awareness	Any post that addresses climate change, conservation, sustainable development goals, or encouraging people to support environmental causes.
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 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.

Methods

Canary, formerly known the Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (TERM), is a digital media monitoring and reporting system that is AI-supported and human expertise-driven. It tracks tobacco marketing on social media platforms and news sites. The primary purpose of Canary is to identify instances of tobacco marketing, a known public health risk. Canary 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. Content is in English, Hindi, Indonesian and Spanish.

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, and a combination of RSS feeds, custom scrappers, and 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 platform does not track targeted paid ads, peer-to-peer marketing, or marketing in private accounts or groups. Data restrictions and privacy laws followed by social media platforms may lead to undercounting of marketing activity. Read our full methodology here.

Disclaimer

About Canary

Canary is a real-time media monitoring and reporting service that harnesses AI tools alongside expert analysis to identify emerging threats in the marketing of dangerous substances.

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.

Join the movement

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