

# Online Marketing of E-cigarettes and Heated Tobacco Products on Brand Websites in the Philippines

## Background

In July 2022, the Philippines passed bill RA11900 permitting previously banned flavors in e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products (HTPs) and lowering the minimum purchase age from 21 to 18 years.

This study examined online marketing strategies companies use on their brand websites to promote e-cigarettes and HTPs in the Philippines, to help inform policy efforts and reduce harms associated with these products.

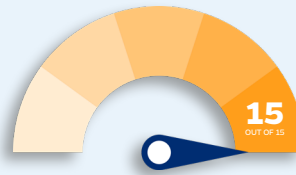
## Methods

12 e-cigarette brand websites (JUUL, JVE, Kardinal Stick, Kokin, Mad Master, NIXX Global, RELX, Snowplus, Spade Vapes, VLADDIN, Yooz, Zalan) and three HTP brand websites (IQOS, MOK, TEO/NEAFS) with a version specifically targeting users in the Philippines (determined by the web domain or country selection option) were identified through Google searches in September 2022.

All pages within two clicks from the homepages across all 15 websites (a total of 632 web pages), were coded and analyzed.

## Findings

E-cigarette devices, cartridges, pods, and e-cigarette liquids were marketed on e-cigarette brand websites. HTP devices and inserts were marketed on HTP brand websites. In total, 12 brand websites offered online sales.

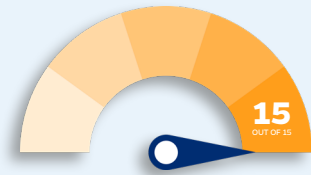


### Flavor Descriptors

Seen in product names across all 15 brand websites, the most prevalent flavor descriptors were **mint/menthol** (n=14), **tobacco** (n=12), **concept descriptors\*** (n=12), and **fruit** (n=11).



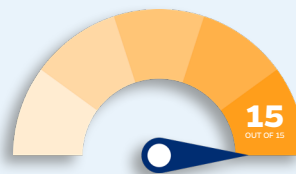
\*Terms that imply some type of flavor/sensation/taste/aroma that might await the consumer, such as "Grape Ice," "Menthol Plus/Xtra," "Papa's Harvest," or "White Freeze"



### Promotion Strategies

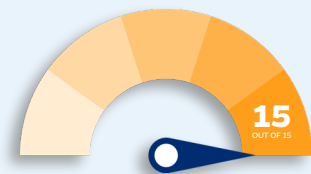
Promotion/engagement strategies such as discounted price, free shipping, or free gifts were offered on all 15 brand websites.

Common engagement strategies included: **embedded links to additional brand/corporate webpages or social media sites** (n=14), **endorsement/testimonials by customers, celebrities, and influencers** (n=8), **pay-to-promote affiliate or ambassador program** (n=7), and **referral discounts** (n=6).



### Marketing Messages

All 15 brand websites contained marketing messages (Figure 1) such as: **claims that the product could help people who smoke quit**, reduce consumption of, or facilitate their transition away from cigarette smoking (n=13), **harm reduction messages** conveying health benefits or reduced harm associated with the product compared to cigarette smoking (n=10), and **depictions of the company as responsible** or capable of self-regulation (n=10).



### Advertising Appeals

Advertising appeals (Figure 2) were commonly communicated through text and images, and were observed on all 15 brand websites.

Top advertising appeals coded through text or images (Figure 2) included: **flavor** (n=14), **innovation** (n=13), **luxury/high-end** (n=13), and **femininity** (n=10).



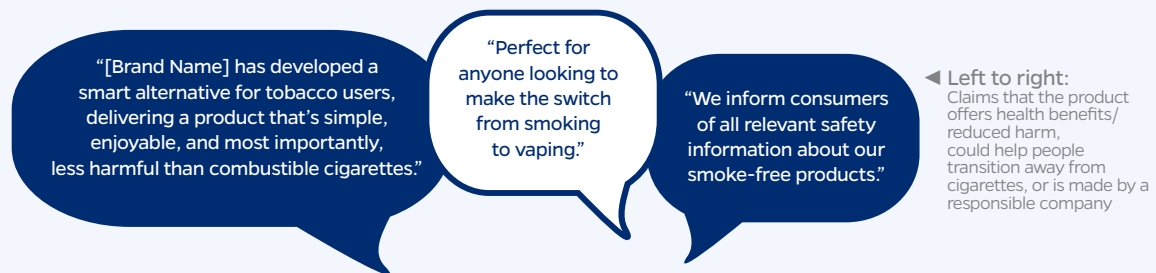
# Conclusions

E-cigarette and HTP brand websites in the Philippines commonly employ marketing strategies directed at youth, including fruit flavors and use of cartoon characters or other pop culture references. Findings of this study support following policy changes to safeguard Filipino youth from tobacco and nicotine harm:

- ➔ Strengthening regulation around digital marketing of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products
- ➔ Implementing stricter flavor bans to prohibit non-tobacco flavored products, including e-cigarette devices, liquids, and other components, and heated tobacco inserts and accessories

## Supplemental Data

**Figure 1: Select Marketing Messages**



**Figure 2: Prevalence of Advertising Appeals on E-cigarette & HTP Brand Websites (n=15)**

