

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

## Background

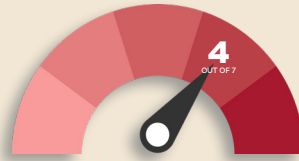
Vietnam does not currently regulate the sale of e-cigarettes or heated tobacco products (HTPs). Vietnam Tobacco Corporation (VINATABA) is the only entity allowed to import e-cigarettes and HTPs but is not currently doing so as of February 2024. This study examined the product characteristics and marketing strategies used on e-cigarette and HTP brand websites targeting Vietnamese consumers.

## Methods

In January 2023, seven websites belonging to six e-cigarette brands (BoldVape, CISOO, HEBAT, MotiPiin, Vapefly & Voopoo) and one HTP brand (HITASTE) targeting Vietnamese consumers (determined by the web domain or country selection option) were identified through Google searches. All pages (n=543) within two clicks from the homepages were coded and analyzed.

## Findings

E-cigarette devices and cartridges/pods were marketed on e-cigarette brand websites. HTP devices were marketed on the HTP brand website. Mechanisms for age-restricted site access were observed on 3 of 7 websites. Advertising appeals, marketing messages such as claims about the brand or the product, and promotion strategies were seen on all seven websites. Flavor descriptors in product names were seen on 4 of 7 brand sites, all of which were e-cigarette sites.

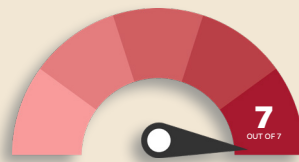


## Flavor Descriptors

Flavor descriptors in product names were seen on 4 of 7 brand sites, all of which were e-cigarette sites. The most prevalent flavor descriptors were concept descriptors\*, fruit, mint/menthol, sweets, coffee/tea, and other non-alcoholic beverages (n=4, 57%).

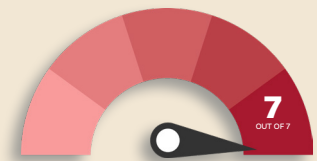


*\*Terms that imply some type of flavor/sensation/taste/aroma that might await the consumer, such as "Summer Hawaiian," or "Ice Polar Bear."*



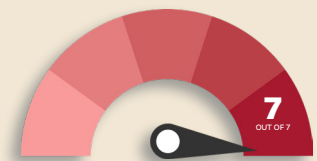
## Marketing Messages

Brand website messages included: depictions of the company as responsible or capable of self-regulation (n=7, 100%), claims of product safety (n=7, 100%), claims that the product could help people who smoke quit, reduce consumption of, or facilitate transition away from cigarette smoking (n=5, 71%), claims of lower health risks for the product compared to cigarettes (n=5, 71%), descriptions of the product as organic/natural (n=5, 71%), and claims of positive social impact resulting from use of the product, such as increasing popularity or social acceptance (n=5, 71%).



## Promotion Strategies

Promotion and engagement strategies were observed on all brand sites. Common engagement strategies included reference to the brand's additional web presence, such as social media accounts (n=6, 86%), and the opportunity to sign up for newsletter/email alerts (n=4, 57%). Other strategies used on three of the seven sites were spaces for customers to post comments, and requests for viewers to post content from the website to their personal social media accounts.



## Advertising Appeals

Advertising appeals were communicated through text and images on all seven brand websites. Top advertising appeals were luxury/high-end (n=7, 100%), fashionable (n=7, 100%), innovation (n=7, 100%), masculinity (n=6, 86%), foreign (n=6, 86%), and flavor (n=6, 86%).



# Conclusions

Despite no importation of e-cigarettes or HTPs by VINATABA, we found evidence of e-cigarette and HTP manufacturers targeting Vietnamese consumers via their brand websites. Perhaps taking advantage of the lack of regulations, these manufacturers employ a variety of advertising appeals on their sites, including those shown to target youth such as fashionable and flavor appeals. A ban on the sale and marketing of e-cigarettes and HTPs would help protect youth from targeted advertising in Vietnam.

## Supplemental Data

**Figure 1: Select Marketing Messages**



**Figure 2: Prevalence of Advertising Appeals on E-cigarette & HTP Brand Websites (n=7)**

