

Social Media Marketing by E-cigarette and Heated Tobacco Product Brands in the Philippines

Background

In the Philippines (under Republic Act No. 11900), the minimum age of purchase for e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products (HTPs) is 18 years and no restrictions are placed on flavors or online sales and ads. However, advertising that uses e-cigarette flavor descriptors that “appeal particularly to minors” (e.g., fruit, candy, desserts) are prohibited.

This study examined marketing strategies used and product characteristics advertised by e-cigarette and HTP brands on social media.

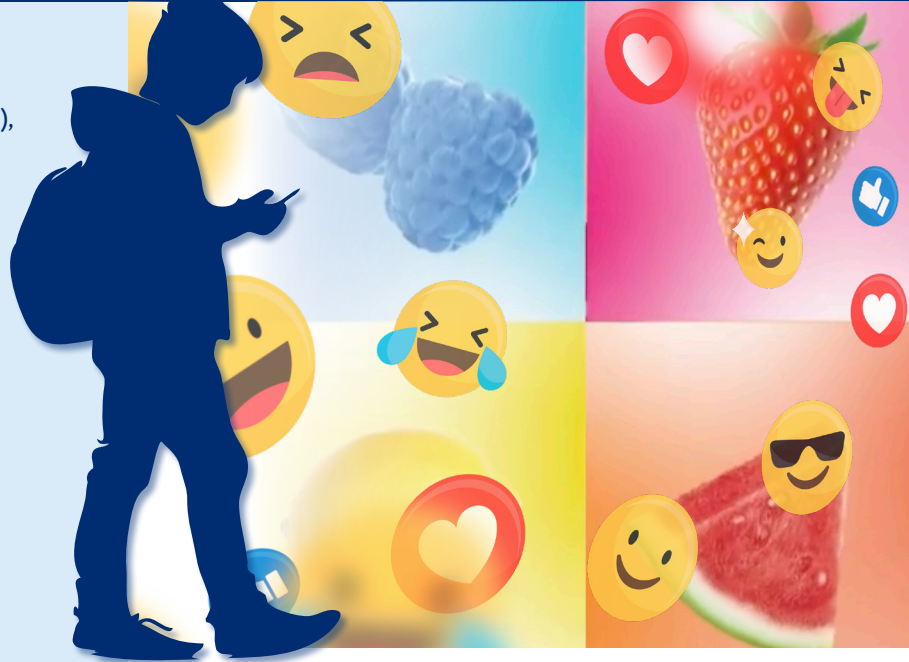
Methods

A list of e-cigarette and HTP brands available in the Philippines was generated through Google search, searches of e-commerce platforms, and visits to local retailers. Active Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube accounts (the most popular social media platforms in the country) belonging to these brands (n=39) were then identified.

Between Aug. 1, 2022 and Jan. 31, 2023, a total of 5,501 publicly-visible posts were found published on these brands’ social channels and a randomly selected sample of 358 posts were coded.

 Instagram 152 All e-cigarette	 Facebook 145 137 e-cigarette 8 HTP
 TikTok 51 All e-cigarette	 YouTube 10 3 e-cigarette 7 HTP

The coding process entailed an assessment of product characteristics advertised in the posts (e.g., product types, flavors) and an exploration of marketing appeals, promotional strategies (e.g., discounts, giveaways), engagement strategies (e.g., tagging), and the presence of health warning labels and age restrictions.



Key Results & Implications

Based on findings from this study (page 2), e-cigarette and HTP companies use social media platforms to directly interact with consumers and increase user engagement.

- ➔ The use of marketing elements that appeal to youth (e.g., emoticons, cartoons, depictions of partying), combined with a lack of age-restriction statements, highlight the need to **further define and expand the definition of youth-appealing marketing tactics and enforce existing policies prohibiting youth-appealing marketing in online advertisements** (e.g., prohibiting cartoons, celebrity endorsements).
- ➔ The marketing of flavored products that appeal to youth, like fruits and sweets, highlights the need for **increased enforcement of existing policies that prohibit the use of youth-appealing flavor descriptors**, including fruit, candy, or dessert flavor descriptors.

Learn more about e-cigarette and HTP online marketing tactics in the Philippines:



Key Findings (358 total posts)

Product Types Advertised

E-cigarettes

- Open-system (i.e., refillable) (39%, n=140)
- Disposable (20%, n=71)
- Non-refillable, pre-filled pod systems (19%, n=69)

E-cigarette replacement parts (17%, n=62)

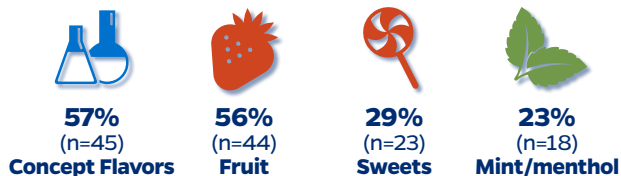
Branded merchandise (12%, n=42)

HTP devices and/or inserts (4%, n=15)

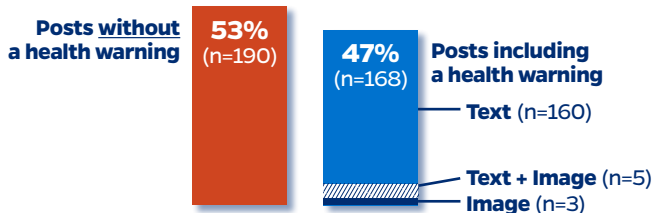
Position of Product Within Post



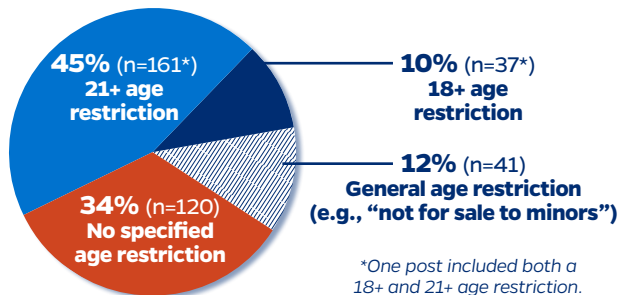
Most Common Flavors (79 total posts)



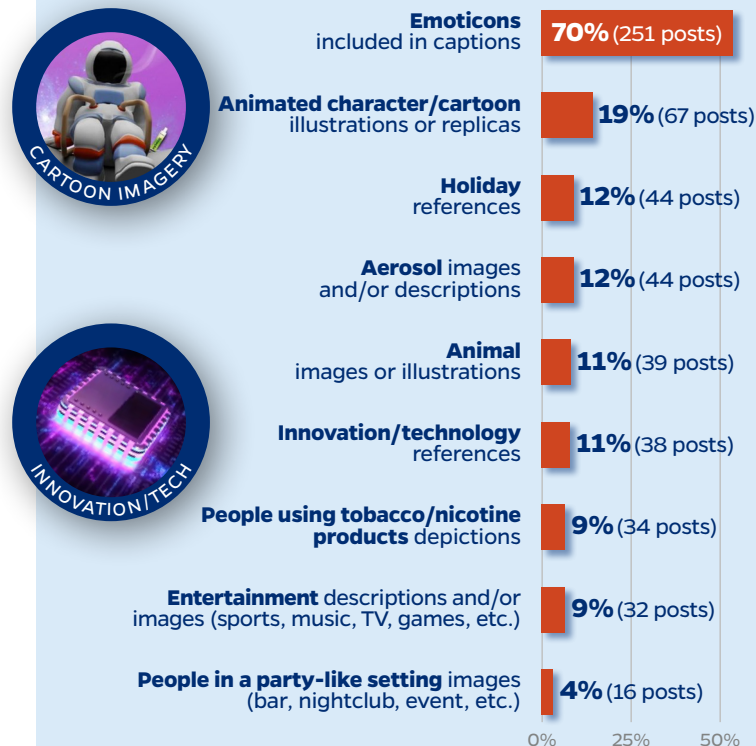
Inclusion of Health Warning



Inclusion of Age Restriction Text



Common Marketing Appeals



Common Promotion & Engagement Strategies

