

Online Marketing of E-Cigarettes and Heated Tobacco Products on Retailer Websites in Vietnam

Background

E-cigarettes and heated tobacco products (HTPs) were unregulated and not legal to import in Vietnam at the time of data collection. These products and their sale are now banned, as of January 2025.

This study examined general website information, such as age restrictions and promotions, and product characteristics, such as type and flavor, on e-cigarette and HTP retailer websites targeting Vietnamese consumers.

Methods

- In April 2023, we identified Vietnamese retailer sites selling e-cigarettes and/or HTPs through Google searches (n=71)
- Similarweb website traffic analysis was referenced to reduce sample down to the most popular sites targeting Vietnamese consumers (n=30)
 - Determined by web domain and content referencing Vietnam (e.g., country drop-down list, language, currency)
- 497 webpages within one click from the homepage were coded and analyzed

Broad e-cigarette and HTP product offerings with **youth-appealing features** such as **cartoons** are widespread on retailer sites in Vietnam



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This work was supported with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies' Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (bloomberg.org).

The work being presented has received funding or other means of support from any of the following sources:

Any of the authors have received funding (including consultancy) from any of the following sources in the past 5 years:

	Tobacco industry	E-cigarette & nicotine product industry	Pharma industry
The work being presented has received funding or other means of support from any of the following sources:	NO	NO	NO
Any of the authors have received funding (including consultancy) from any of the following sources in the past 5 years:	NO	NO	NO

Competing Interests: Dr. Cohen was a paid consultant in litigation against a tobacco company.

Results

Of the 30 sites:

- 43% had a mention of or mechanism of age restriction
- 90% used product-specific promotions (e.g., “buy one, get one”)
- 87% linked to social media
- 73% allowed account creation
- 73% had information on physical store location

Of the 9,262 products across sites:

- 60% had a characterizing flavor descriptor in the product name (most common: fruit, sweets)
- 37% had a concept descriptor denoting the presence of a taste, aroma or sensation
- 141 products resembled other objects (e.g., cartoon figurines, phones)

Conclusion

In view of Vietnam’s current ban on the sale of e-cigarettes and HTPs, findings can inform approaches to implementation, monitoring, and enforcement, to prevent youth exposure to e-cigarette and HTP marketing online.

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