

# Tobacco Industry Targeting Young People

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<https://tobaccotactics.org>

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# Conflict of interest declaration

I have no financial COI

TCRG does not accept funding from tobacco companies or other commercial organisations whose interests are not aligned with improved public health and ensures each research contract gives us freedom to publish.

TCRG is part of [STOP, a global tobacco industry watchdog](#); and part of the [SPECTRUM \(Shaping Public Health Policies to Reduce Inequalities and Harm\)](#) research consortium.

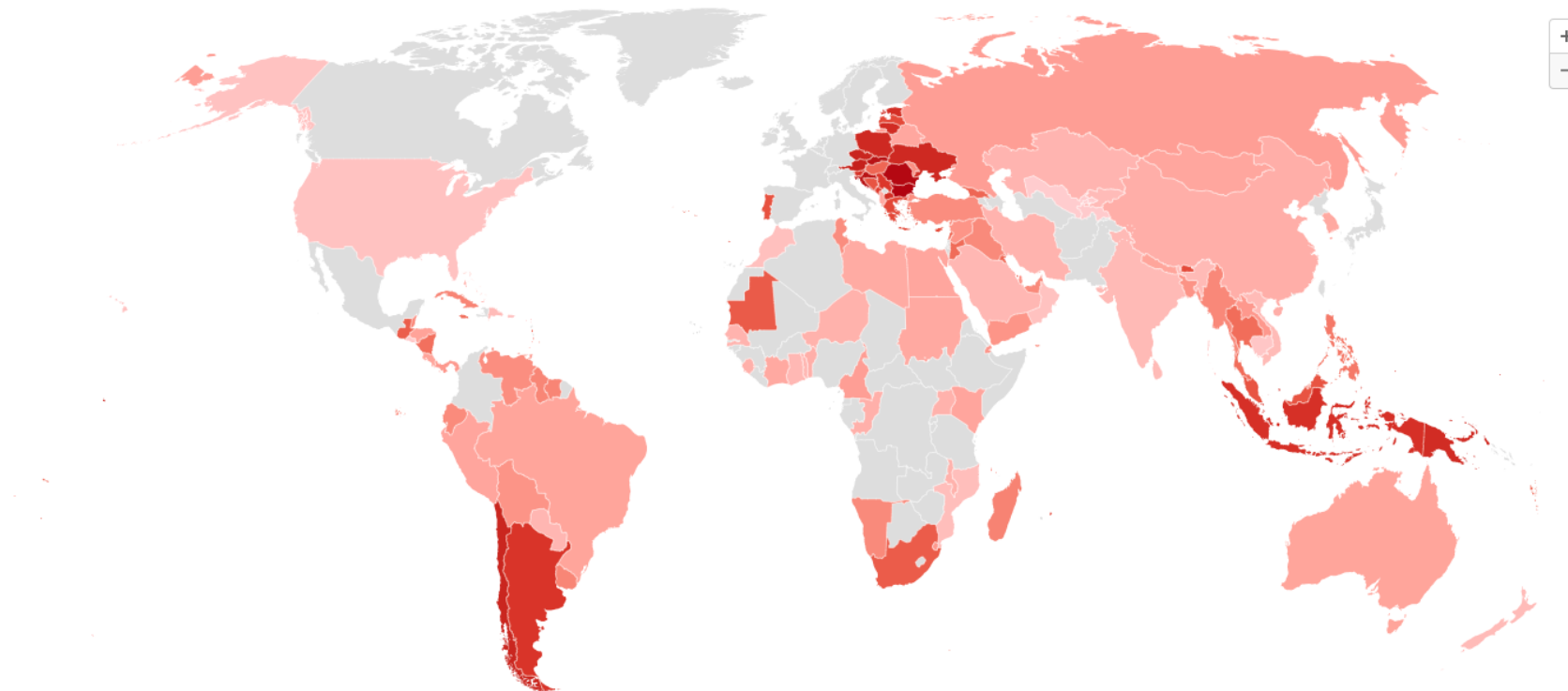
"Younger adult smokers are the only source of replacement smokers... If younger adults turn away from smoking, the industry must decline."

- R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company (USA), 1984 RJR report<sup>1 2</sup>

### Prevalence of cigarette smoking of young teens

Percentage of 13-15-year-olds who are current smokers, most recent survey data

0.5% 32%



Source: GTCR • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#)

THE TOBACCO ATLAS

1: [Secret Tobacco Document Quot](#)

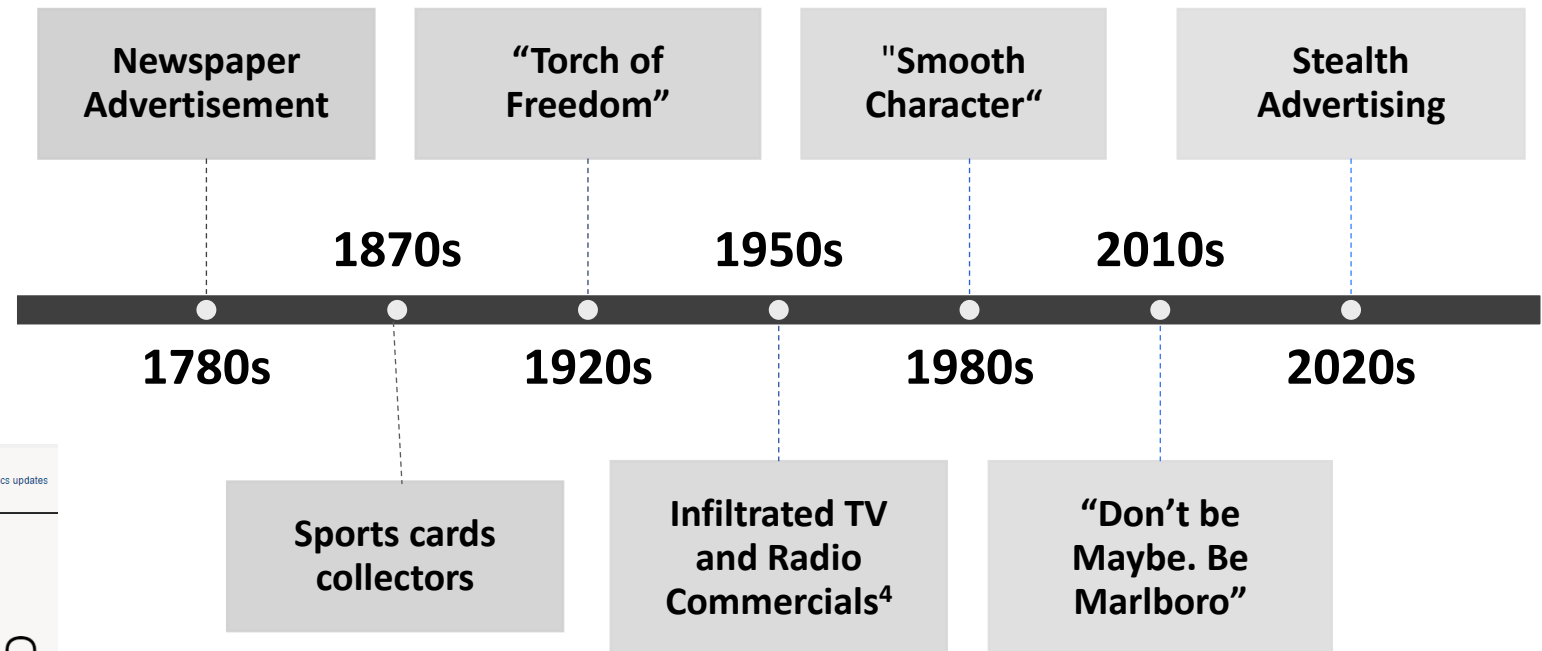
2: [Industry Documents Library](#)

# Outline

- History
- Data & Products
- Marketing
- Tactics
- Recommendations



# History of Youth-Targeted Tobacco Marketing



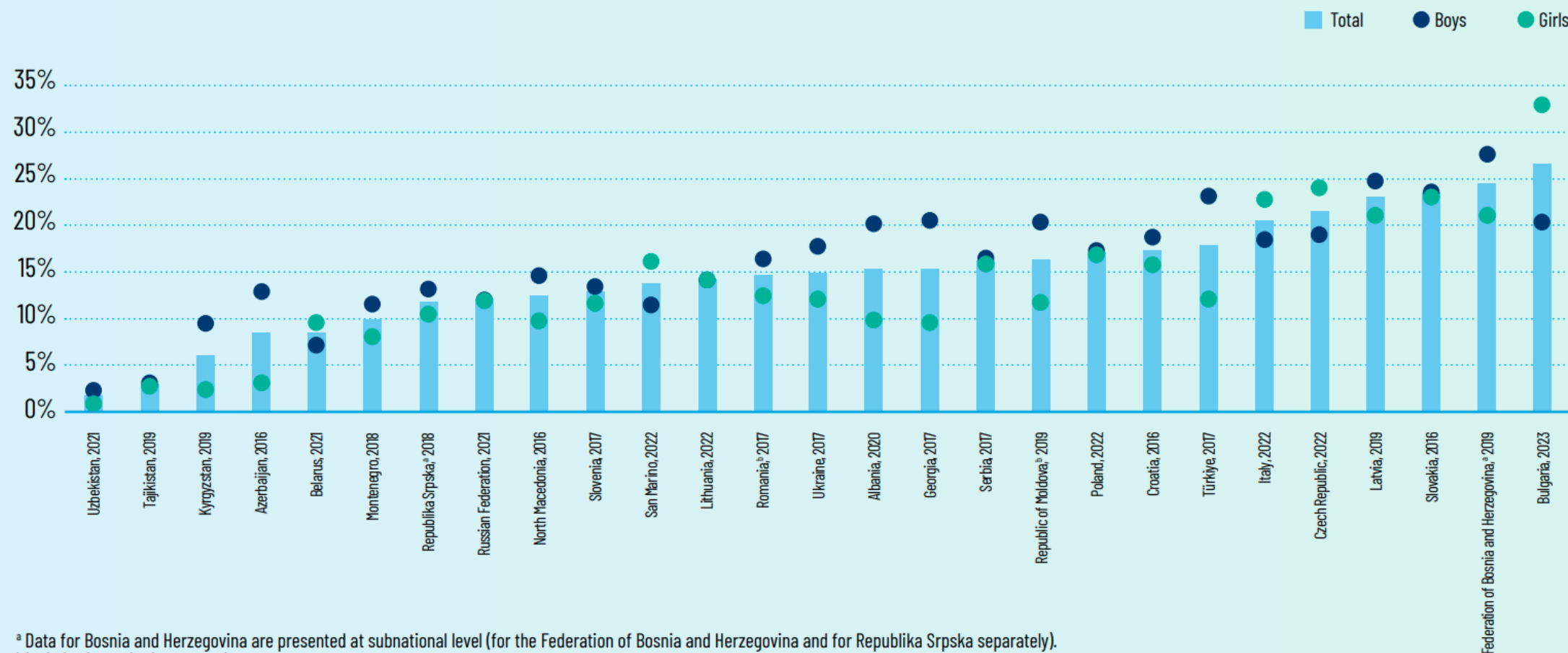


# Data & Products



# Tobacco use among young people (13-15) in WHO European region

**Fig. 3.** Prevalence of current tobacco use among students aged 13–15 years in 27 countries in the WHO European Region, overall and by sex, from the latest available GYTS



# Newer Nicotine and Tobacco products

## E-cigarettes



PMI  
Altria  
BAT  
Imperial  
JTI

## Heated Tobacco Products



PMI  
Altria  
BAT  
Imperial  
JTI

## Snus and oral nicotine



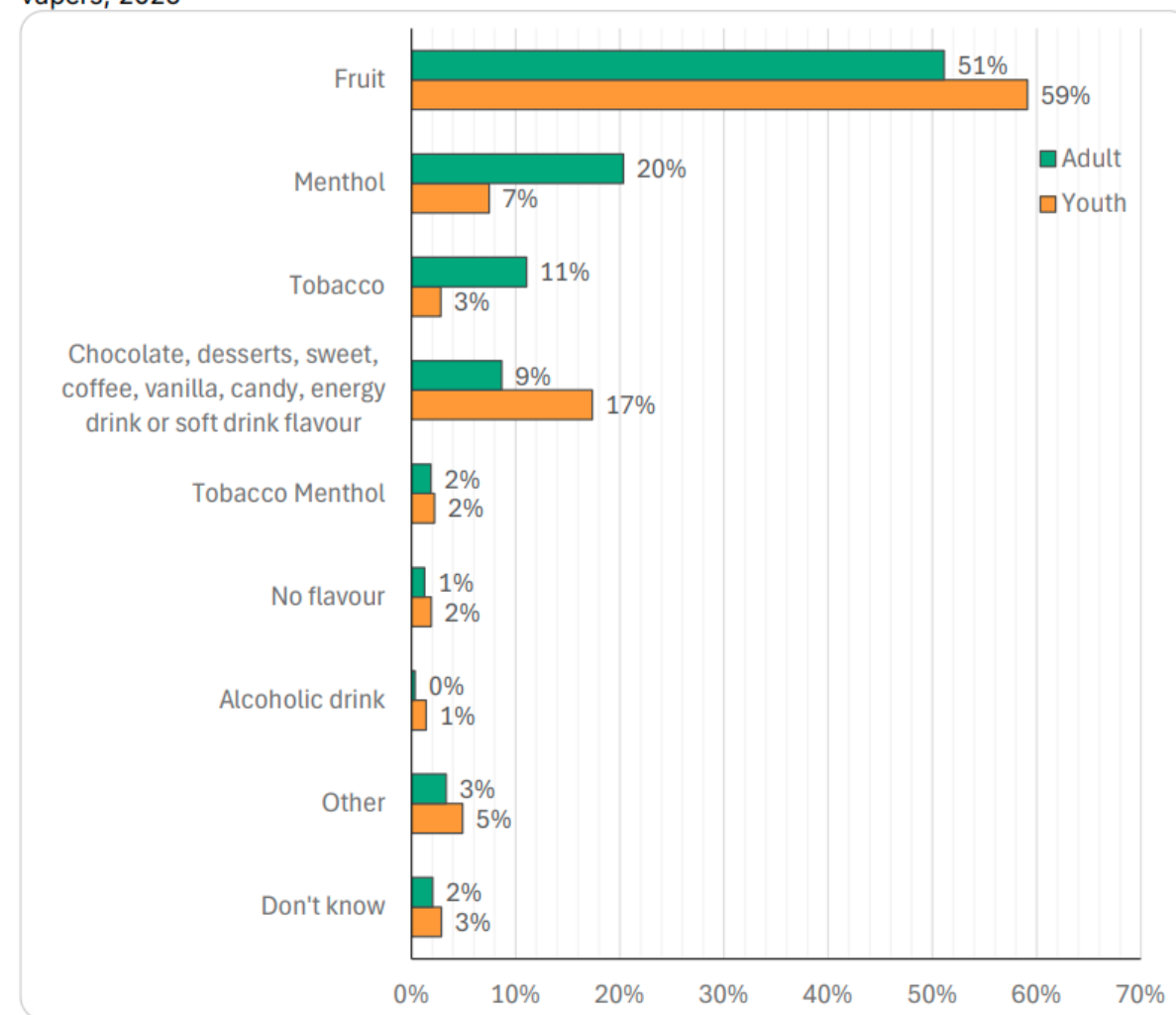
PMI  
Altria  
BAT  
Imperial  
JTI



# Flavours and Menthol



**Figure 19.** Most frequently used vape liquid flavour, current GB youth (aged 11-17) vapers, 2025





ASH Smokefree GB Youth Survey 2025. Unweighted base: 11-17 year old current vapers: 231

# Waterpipe

The five key reasons it is growing in popularity are:






- Flavored tobacco
- Social acceptance in cafés and restaurants
- Promotion via mass and social media
- Lack of policies and regulations specific to waterpipe
- Misconceptions about its safety

**Tobacco Tactics** 

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## Waterpipe

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     Cite





# Slim Cigarettes

- Philip Morris (PM) introduced “**purse packs**” in a sleek and offered promotional strategies for its “**Virginia Slims**” brand whereby consumers could get clothes and accessories in exchange for cigarette purchasing.<sup>1</sup>



# Chemical Additives

- **Nicotine:** The primary addictive substance.
- **Sugars:** can make the smoke less harsh, more tolerable, and can produce sweet caramel flavours.
- **Ammonia:** Increases nicotine absorption and addictiveness and make smoke less harsh.

[New Report Details How Tobacco... | Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#)  
[How Big Tobacco made cigarettes more addictive](#)  
[Sugars and Sweeteners in Tobacco and Nicotine Products: Food and Drug Administration's Regulatory Implications – PMC](#)  
[Options to make cigarettes less appealing and addictive](#)  
[Microsoft Word - SCENIHR\\_Tobacco\\_Additives\\_pre-consultation opinion.doc](#)

## Other chemicals

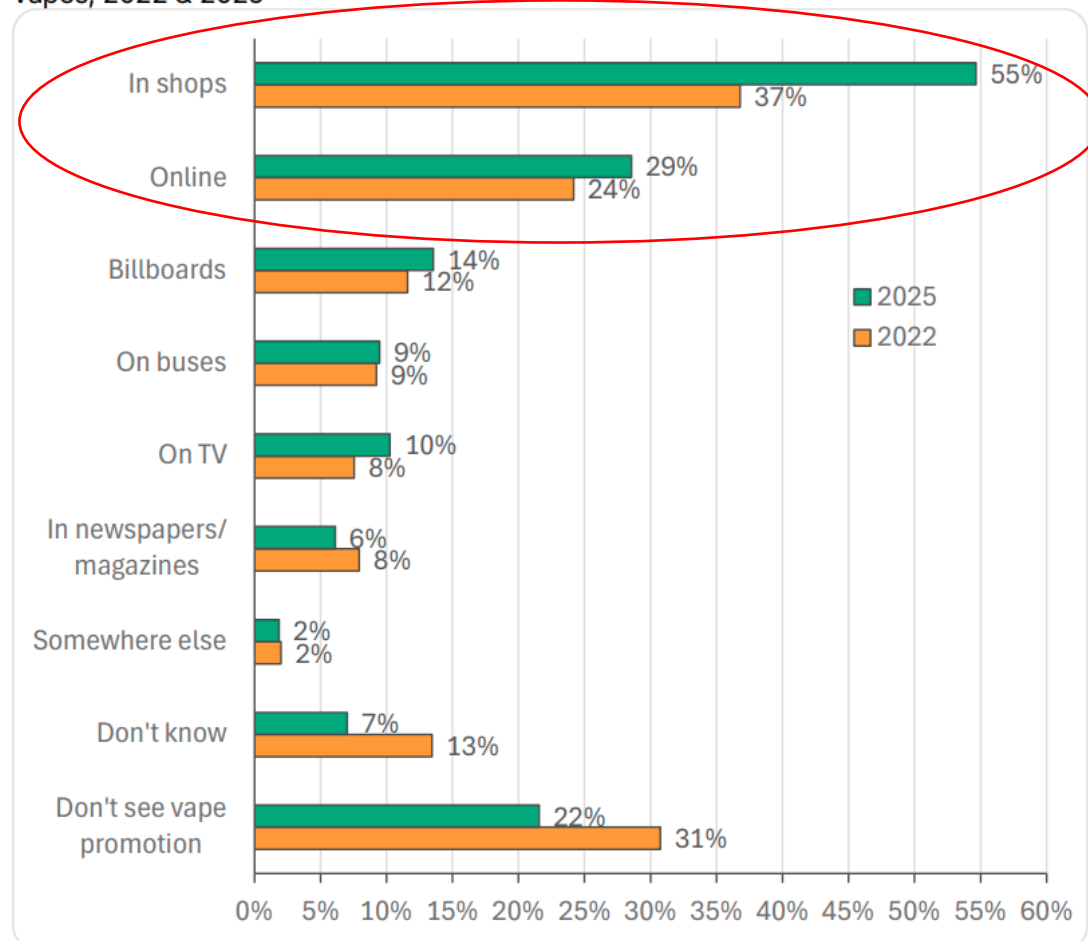
Chemical(s)	Effect
Sugars and humectants	Adding sugars and humectants to cigarettes generates greater levels of harmful substances such as acetaldehyde and acids, which reduce the harshness of tobacco smoke <sup>18 19 20</sup> . Acetaldehyde also enhances nicotine's effects <sup>14</sup> .
Ammonia	In the 1960's, <a href="#">Philip Morris</a> (PM) started using ammonia to increase the available nicotine in cigarette smoke and increase its absorption <sup>21</sup> .  TSNAs are carcinogenic <sup>22 23</sup> . In the 1960's and 1970's, tobacco companies started directly heating tobacco (in flue-curing practices), rather than indirectly heating it, which led to an increase in the levels of TSNAs in tobacco <sup>24</sup> . In 1999, tobacco companies claimed to be transitioning to manufacturing tobacco low in TSNAs. However, in 2010, the levels of TSNAs were similar to levels of a filtered cigarette in the US in 1979 <sup>25</sup> .
Tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs)	In the 1980's, <a href="#">RJ Reynolds</a> started adding levulinic acid to reduce harshness and increase the amount of nicotine delivered to smokers via tobacco smoke. It also produced toxic components <sup>26</sup> and enabled tobacco smoke to be inhaled deeper into the lungs <sup>8</sup> .
Levulinic acid	In response to the US Surgeon General Report of 1964 which reported on the health harms of smoking, <a href="#">PM</a> developed the first 'light' cigarette ("Merit") by adding components including pyrazines, which eased inhalation and nicotine deposition by reducing the harsh and irritating effects of tobacco smoke. These components were later added to "Marlboro Lights" (now "Marlboro Gold") in the 1970s <sup>27</sup> .
Pyrazines	



# Marketing

# Awareness of Promotion

**Figure 23.** Awareness of vape promotion among GB youth (aged 11-17) who are aware of vapes, 2022 & 2025



ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2022 & 2025. Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds aware of vapes  
(2022=1,916, 2025=2,533)

United Kingdom, 2022 - 2025

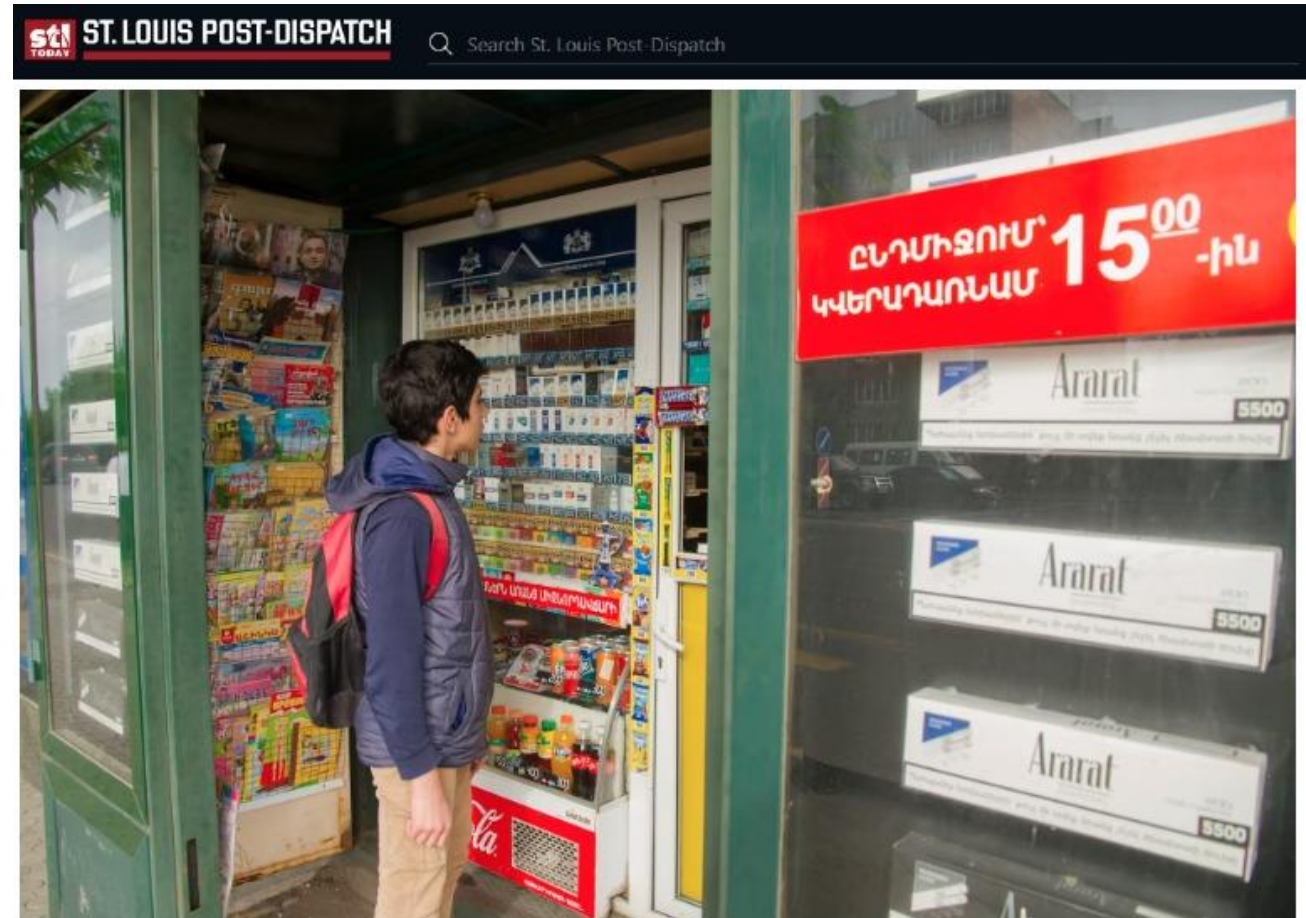


# Point of sale (POS) displays

Spinning a global web: tactics used by Big Tobacco to attract children at tobacco points-of-sale 🌐

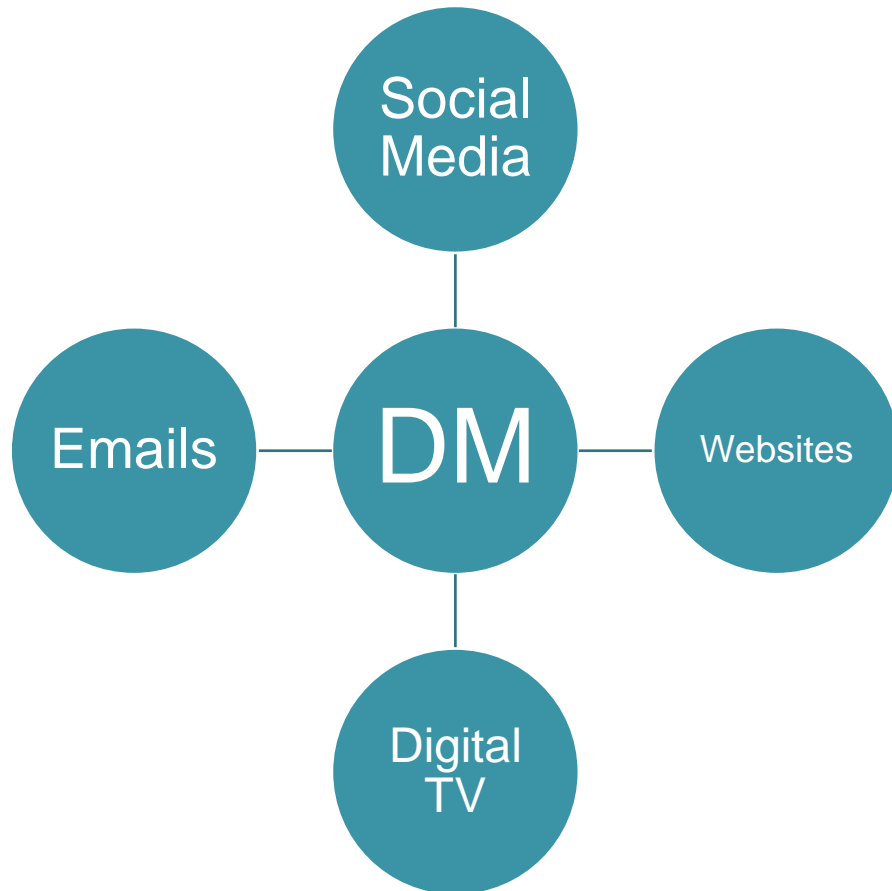
📍 Jennifer L Brown<sup>1</sup>, 📍 Debra Rosen<sup>2</sup>, 📍 Maria G Carmona<sup>3</sup>, Natalia Parra<sup>2</sup>, Mark Hurley<sup>2</sup>, 📍 Joanna E Cohen<sup>1</sup>

Correspondence to Dr Jennifer L Brown, Institute for Global Tobacco Control, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, Maryland, USA; [jlbrown@jhu.edu](mailto:jlbrown@jhu.edu)





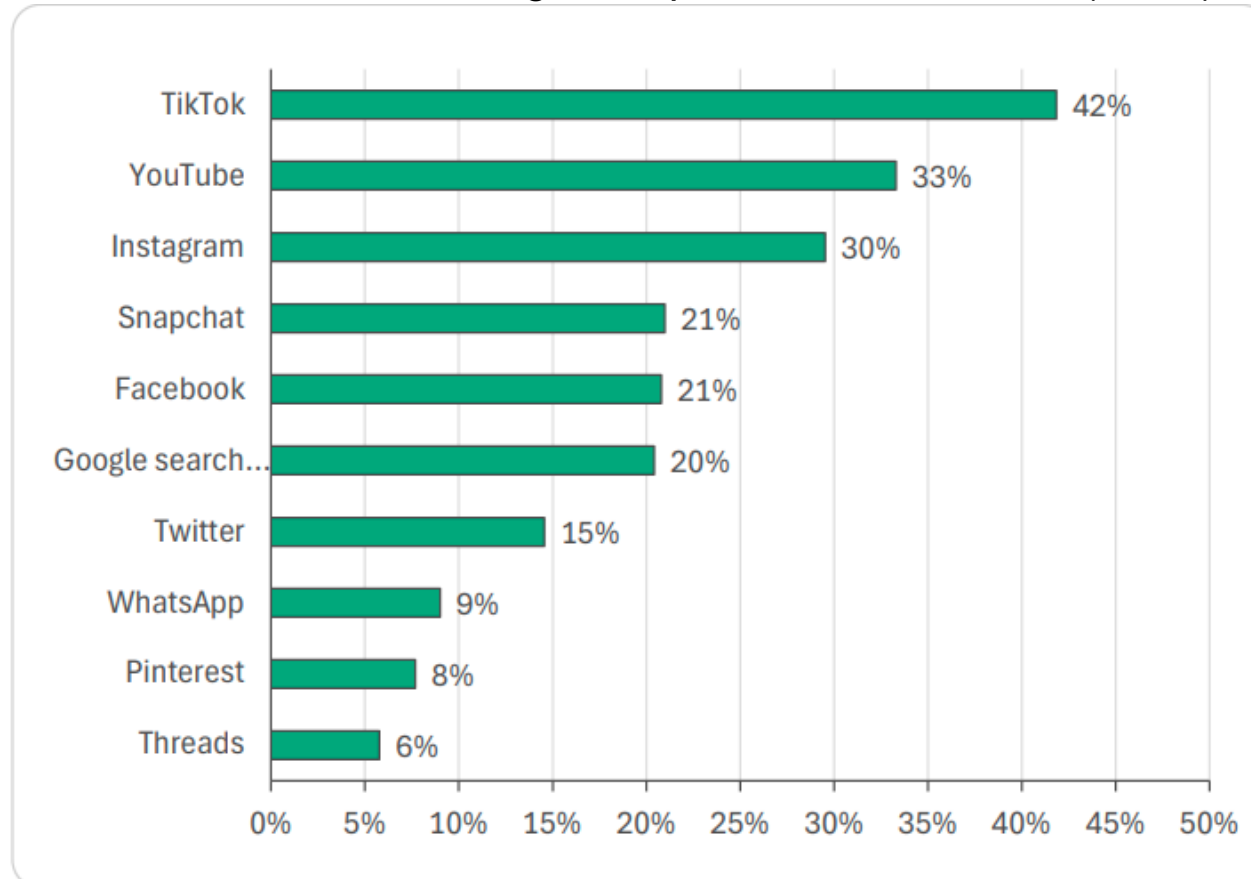
# Digital Marketing (DM)



Country music website, 2008

# DM: Social Media

Location of online e-cigarette promotion seen 2025 (11-17)

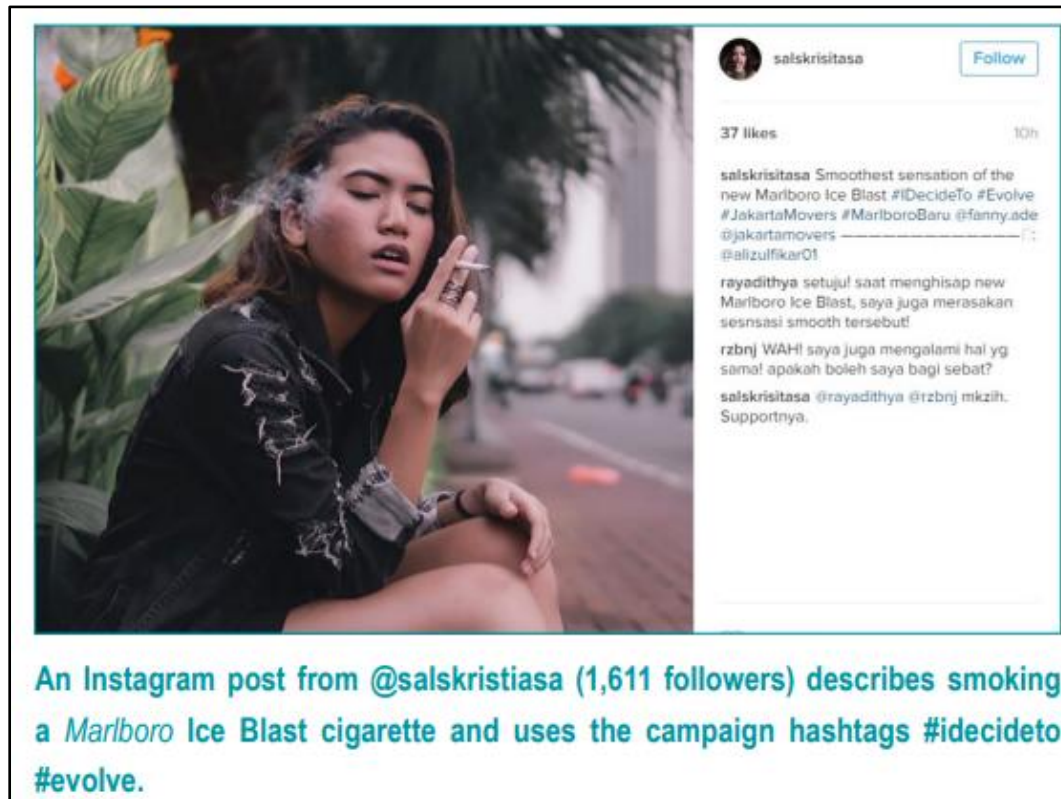


**ASH Smokefree GB Youth Surveys 2025.** Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds aware of vapes who have seen them promoted online (n=734)

United Kingdom, 2025

# DM: Social Media: Influencers

Paid Social Influencer Content “Brand ambassadors” <sup>1</sup>



An Instagram post from @salskristiasa (1,611 followers) describes smoking a *Marlboro Ice Blast* cigarette and uses the campaign hashtags #idecideto #evolve.

PMI



BAT

<sup>1</sup> [Tobacco Industry Targeting Young People - Tobacco Tactics](#)

Image of news item: [Tobacco giant bets £1bn on influencers to boost 'more lung-friendly' sales](#) | [Tobacco industry](#) | [The Guardian](#)

Image of Instagram post: [2018\\_08\\_ftc\\_petition.pdf \(tobaccofreekids.org\)](#)

# DM: Social Media: Contests and Online Promotions

Tobacco and e-cigarette companies are enticing followers to participate in contests by sharing, reposting or creating original content that promotes e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches or tobacco products.<sup>1</sup>

Explicit  
Winston  
brand on  
The Ganz  
Genau  
website



The Ganz Genau website, which carries explicit Winston branding

velo.pakistan Who knew winning an iPhone could be as easy as enjoying VELO? You read it right – all you have to do is buy two cans of VELO and enter the lucky draw. Visit pk.VELO.com Terms & conditions apply\*

#iPhone #Giveaway #VELO #WeirdlyWonderful

**ENJOY VELO TO WIN A FREE iPhone**

**HOW TO WIN?**

1. VISIT PK.VELO.COM & BUY 2 VELO CANS
2. ENTER THE LUCKY DRAW TO WIN

VELO

18+ ONLY. THIS PRODUCT CONTAINS NICOTINE AND IS ADDICTIVE. KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN

BAT (Pakistan)

1: Sponsored: The Tobacco Industry's... | Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (tobaccofreekids.org)

Website Image : Tobacco giant JTI placing... | The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (thebureauinvestigates.com)

Velo image: 2023\_12\_08\_SponsoredByBigTobacco.pdf



# DM: Social Media: Brand Pages

- The major transnational tobacco companies use social media accounts to promote their newer products.<sup>1</sup>
- Brand pages on platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram.<sup>2</sup>
- Study tracked BAT employees actively promoting BAT brands on Facebook by joining and administering groups, and posting photos of events, promotions, and products.<sup>3</sup>

Research paper



British American Tobacco on Facebook: undermining article 13 of the global World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

Becky Freeman, Simon Chapman

Instagram

Log In Sign Up

**vuse.worldwide** ✓

Vuse

545 posts 18.9K followers 104 following

Product/service

Nicoventures Communications (Switzerland) SA

18+ Only. This product contains nicotine and is addictive.



Tomorrowlan...



Check In



Core Medellin



DBC 2024



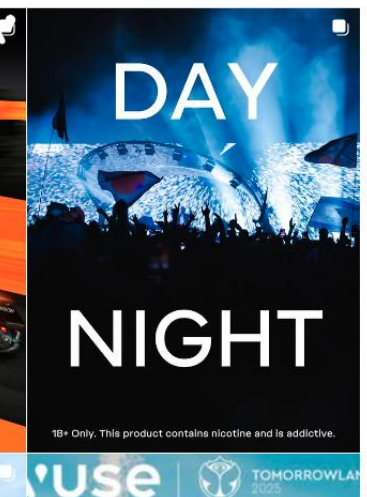
McLaren 202...



ROLLO



Neon Nights ...



1: [Social Media - Tobacco Tactics](#)

2: [New media and tobacco control | Tobacco Control \(bmj.com\)](#)

3: [\(PDF\) British American Tobacco on Facebook: Undermining Article 13 of the global World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Image: <https://www.instagram.com/vuse.worldwide/?hl=en>

# DM: Emails

## Reaching consumers: How the tobacco industry uses email marketing

Betsy Brock <sup>a,\*</sup>, Samantha C. Carlson <sup>a</sup>, Molly Moilanen <sup>b</sup>, Barbara A. Schillo <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota, 2395 University Avenue West, Suite 310, Saint Paul, MN 55114, USA

<sup>b</sup> ClearWay Minnesota<sup>20</sup>, Two Appletree Square, 8011 34th Ave, Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55425, USA

In the USA between 2010 and 2015, 49% of young smokers acknowledged receiving promotional emails from tobacco companies, while 58% said they visited these companies' websites.

Brand	# of emails received (%)	Avg. # of emails per registration	Avg. # of emails per registration per month	Avg. # of unique emails per month
<i>Cigarette brands</i>				
Marlboro	4354 (62.3)	311.0	5.5	11.8
Newport	905 (12.3)	64.6	1.2	1.5
USA Gold	57 (0.8)	57.0	1.2	0.9
Camel	373 (5.3)	28.7	0.6	2.4
American Spirit	4 (0.1)	2.0	0.1	0.1
<i>Smokeless tobacco and snus brands</i>				
Grizzly	98 (1.4)	98.0	2.0	1.6
General Snus	61 (0.9)	61.0	1.8	1.7
Copenhagen	163 (2.3)	40.8	0.7	0.9
Longhorn	23 (0.3)	23.0	0.4	0.3
Skoal	235 (3.4)	18.1	0.3	1.1
Red Man	7 (0.1)	7.0	0.2	0.2
<i>Cigar brands</i>				
Black & Mild	572 (8.2)	44.0	0.8	1.8
Swisher Sweets	12 (0.2)	12.0	0.3	0.3
<i>Electronic cigarette brands</i>				
Blu	40 (0.6)	20.0	2.0	2.8
MarkTen	9 (0.1)	4.5	0.5	0.3
Vuse	12 (0.2)	6.0	0.5	0.6



# Tactics



# POS: Single Sticks & Discounts

- Minimizing health warning exposure
- Undermining quit attempts
- Enhancing profitability
- Decreasing tax impact



In Africa, BAT launched campaigns promoting single cigarette sales with posters displaying offers like **"buy one, get one free"** and **"special price"**.<sup>1,2</sup>

1: [Shadow Report Inside pages \(ftcr.org\)](https://www.ftcr.org/shadow-report-inside-pages)

2: [Report-Sale-of-Single-Sticks-in-Africa.pdf \(atca-africa.org\)](https://www.atca-africa.org/report-sale-of-single-sticks-in-africa.pdf)

# Tobacco Packaging

Inside the store



Outside the store





# Sponsorships: Music Festivals & Events

Tobacco and e-cigarette companies host events to promote their brands and increase social media presence through shared content by attendees ”<sup>1</sup>



# Sponsorships: Music concert & Arts

- Since 2002, PMI/PT HM Sampoerna has sponsored SoundrenAline music concert.<sup>1</sup>
- Rolling Stone UK, music and culture magazine, partners with *IQOS* and *ZYN* on a branded “Future of Music” series and live event in 2025.<sup>2</sup>
- JTI maintains corporate membership deals with, London Philharmonic Orchestra, and Royal Academy of Arts.<sup>3</sup>
- JTI has sponsored British Museum for 15 years, ended this September.<sup>4</sup>



1: [Tobacco company in Indonesia skirts regulation, uses music concerts and social media for marketing \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/tobacco-company-in-indonesia-skirts-regulation-uses-music-concerts-and-social-media-for-marketing-20180)

2: [Rolling Stone UK partners with IQOS and ZYN to elevate the Future of Music](https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/rolling-stone-uk-partners-with-iqos-and-zyn-to-elevate-the-future-of-music-1234567890/)

3: [Ditch tobacco sponsors, health experts warn cultural institutions | Arts funding | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jun/11/ditch-tobacco-sponsors-health-experts-warn-cultural-institutions)

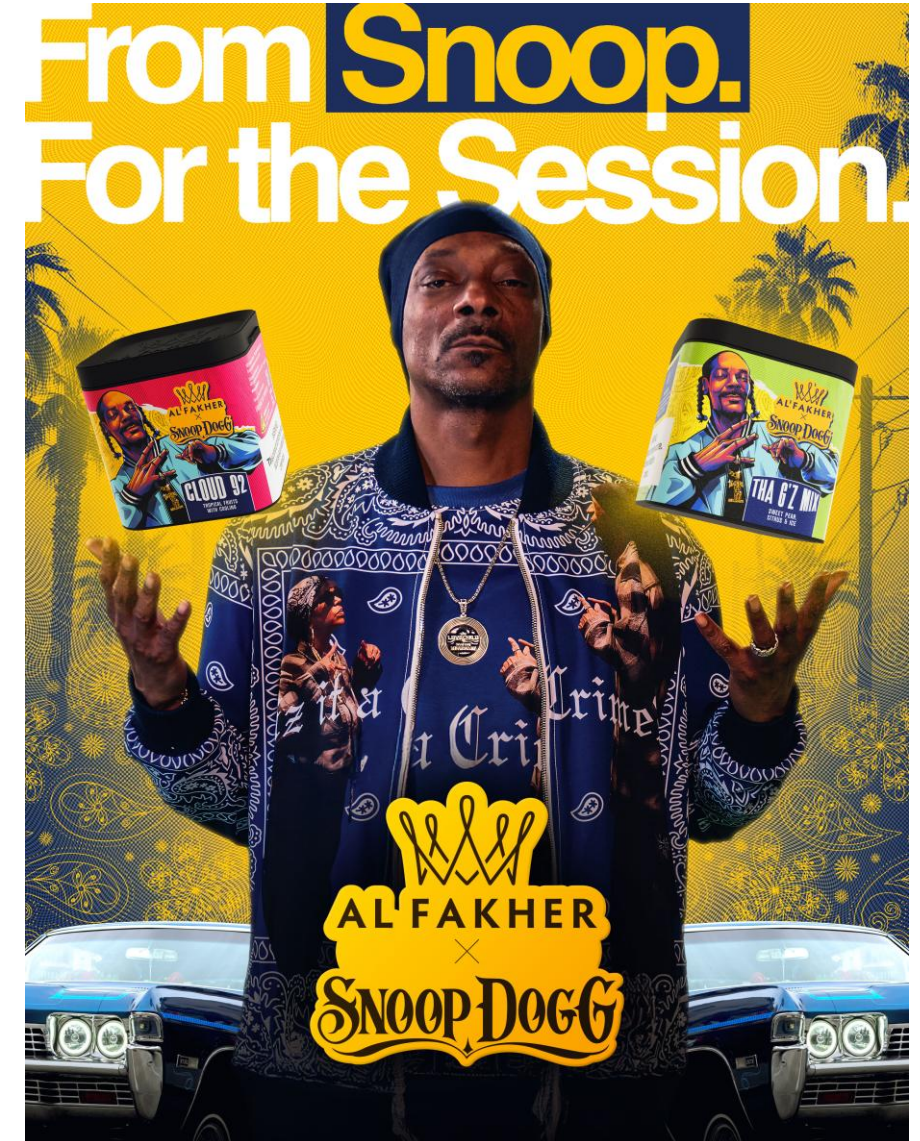
4: [British Museum ends 'deeply troubling' sponsorship from Japanese tobacco firm | British Museum | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/sep/15/british-museum-ends-deeply-troubling-sponsorship-from-japanese-tobacco-firm)



# Collaboration with celebrities

- Al Fakher hookah/waterpipe collaborated with a rap celebrity:

Stuart Brazier, CEO of AIR, the company behind the Al Fakher: “As we evolve into a true lifestyle brand, we’re proud to partner with Snoop, a cultural icon, whose vision and influence align perfectly with our mission. We’re excited to collaborate on the launch of these new flavors and to work together in elevating the profile of hookah culture around the world.”<sup>1</sup>



1: [AIR Announces Transformative Collaboration with Snoop Dogg](#)

# Sponsorships: Football

➤ **50%** of football fans are young people (8-15) <sup>1</sup>

➤ Dunhill commercials on Malaysian TV during FIFA World Cup 2002 by BAT. <sup>2</sup>

➤ **Tobacco pack advertising:** limited-edition World Cup cigarette packs during 2022 FIFA World Cup in Indonesia by Djarum. <sup>3</sup>

➤ **Hospitality and fan area:** BAT's glo heated-tobacco brand was official partner of Casa Azzurri, an initiative of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), despite Italy's tobacco ad ban. <sup>4</sup>

➤ **Football star endorsements:** In 2022, VPZ (had financial linked with PMI) enlisted the services of former Tottenham and Liverpool player to act as the campaign ambassador for its anti-smoking campaign. <sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup>: [ECA FAN OF THE FUTURE paper einzeller Clubs.indd \(ecaeurope.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup>: [News analysis | Tobacco Control](#)

<sup>3</sup>: [Tobacco-Marketing-and-Football-a-Losing-Game.pdf \(vitalstrategies.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup>: [» Europei di calcio: Codacons contro la Nazionale per la pubblicità ai prodotti di tabacco](#)

<sup>5</sup>: [VPZ and Razor Ruddock Call for a Complete Ban on Smoking | VPZ | Vape E-Liquids, Kits and Coils](#)



# F1 Sponsorships

US\$40 millions <sup>1</sup>

- BAT & PMI both sponsored McLaren and Ferrari

36% of Formula One <sup>2</sup>

- Viewers are below 25 years old

F1 Kids docuseries

- Featured BAT brands on McLaren cars

Netflix's series "Drive to survive" <sup>1</sup>

- Attracted millions of young viewers worldwide, exposing them to BAT and PMI's corporate brands logos



<sup>1</sup>: [Race-For-Future-Generations.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup>: [Microsoft Word - Fact Sheet V01 clean.docx \(ggtc.world\)](#)



# Marketing Nicotine Products as Stylish

- Bright, colourful ads with young, fashion-forward models present nicotine products as style accessories.<sup>1</sup>
- Gendered framing: women shown as glamorous or rebellious, men as confident and strong.<sup>2</sup>
- Youth focus: visuals mirror school-age teen trends and the “cool” and trendy look of playful models.<sup>1</sup>
- JUUL’s (Altria) 2015 launch used a colourful and energetic campaign featuring young men and women smiling and dancing to position their products as trendy and fashionable.<sup>1</sup>



Blu (Imperial Brands)

JUUL

1: [How e-cigarette companies market products as stylish](#)

2: [Gender, smoking and tobacco reduction and cessation: a scoping review](#) | International Journal for Equity in Health | Full Text

# Sponsorships: Fashions and Beauty

- PMI's "Hello Beauty" campaign: Fashion brand collaboration with women holding IQOS devices matching their lipstick colors.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2017, Philip Morris Italia partnered with Vogue Talent on IQOS Master Style campaign to invite top young (over-18) designers to create innovative IQOS accessories.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2025 in Milan, PMI uncovered the new IQOS device, created in collaboration with Italian design brand Seletti.<sup>3</sup>

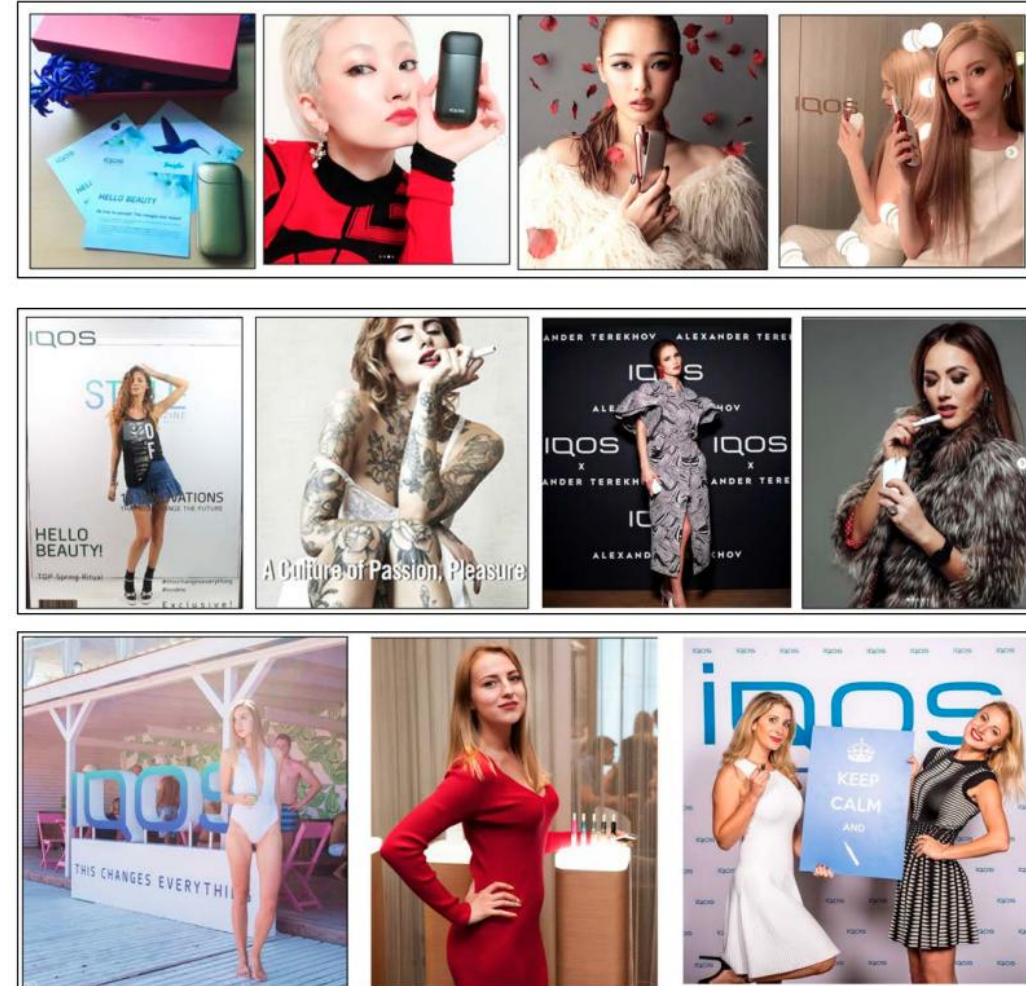
## Global Marketing of IQOS

### The Philip Morris Campaign to Popularize "Heat Not Burn" Tobacco

(Release 1: February 21, 2020)

Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising  
Stanford University School of Medicine

Attractive models in IQOS advertisements.



1: [tobacco-img.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/21231822/IQOS\\_Paper\\_2-21-2020F.pdf](https://tobacco-img.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/21231822/IQOS_Paper_2-21-2020F.pdf)

2: [IQOS Master Style: a call by Vogue Talents \(archive.org\)](https://www.vogue.com/archive/2017/summer/qos-master-style)

3: [Media - Press Details | PMI - Philip Morris International](#)





# Recommendations



# Recommendations

- Fully implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its guidelines and protocols.
  - Adopt domestic and cross-border marketing bans on all tobacco and nicotine products and enforce existing ones.
  - Strengthen legal frameworks to ensure these bans are comprehensive and enforceable across all media and channels.
  - Require social media platforms to adopt and proactively enforce policies that comprehensively prohibit tobacco and nicotine advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (including influencer and user-generated content).
- Prohibit flavours across all tobacco and nicotine products
- Require standardised (plain) packaging with large pictorial health warnings.
- Banning tobacco retail outlets in or within a minimum distance from specific facilities, such as educational facilities, social venues, sport facilities, and events.
- Adopt child and youth centric approach that puts children's best interests first and protects them from the harms associated with nicotine consumption in all its forms

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## Analysis

### How e-cigarettes compromise children's human rights

*BMJ* 2025 ; 391 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2025-085850> (Published 12 November 2025)Cite this as: *BMJ* 2025;391:e085850

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Our **TobaccoTactics** website offers rigorously-sourced profiles of the key players, organisations, allies and techniques of the tobacco industry.

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