

Discussions of **Nicotine Pouches** **in the News Media** in Low- and Middle-Income Markets

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Disclosures

- 1. Funding sources for presented work:** Bloomberg Philanthropies' Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (bloomberg.org)
- 2. Industry funding in the last five years:** None
- 3. Off-label medication uses discussed:** None
- 4. Conflicts of Interest (financial or otherwise):** None



Outline

1. Overview of global nicotine pouch market
 - a. Key markets in LMICs
2. Study objectives
3. Methods
 - a. Data collection
 - b. Data analysis
4. Findings
5. Discussion





Background and Objectives

Global Nicotine Pouch Market

- Rapidly growing market
 - 6.8 billion units sold in 2021 (up from 292 million units in 2018)
 - 36.5 billion units expected in 2026
- Regulated in 34 countries (as of July 2022)
 - 10 countries ban (or otherwise prevent sales)
 - 23 regulate synthetic AND tobacco-derived nicotine pouches
 - 15 regulate marketing



Key LMIC Markets

- British American Tobacco (BAT) marketed Lyft in **Kenya** and Velo in **Pakistan** (2019)
- In 2021, BAT identified **Bangladesh** and **Indonesia** as test markets for Velo

“In many emerging markets, **consumers are familiar with other similar oral products.** With no electronic device to buy this is an attractive, affordable product for consumers.”

– Tadeu Marroco, Finance and Transformation Director of BAT



Study Objectives

- Examine how nicotine pouches are discussed in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya, and Pakistan
 - Including the potential role of nicotine pouches in markets with high prevalence of smoking and smokeless tobacco use
- Determine perspectives (e.g., public health, tobacco industry) included in these discussions





Methods

Methods: Data Collection

- News articles obtained by searching **Tobacco Watcher** (tobaccowatcher.org)
 - Free, open-access surveillance platform that compiles and categorizes tobacco-related news
 - Identifies news articles from >550,000 web sources across **147 countries and 19 languages**
 - Analyzes >500,000 social media messages daily
 - Allows Boolean searching

Search Terms

- [country] + “nicotine pouches”
 - [country] + “nicotine bag”
 - [country] + Velo
 - [country] + Lyft
-
- Location filter + “nicotine pouches”
 - Location filter + “nicotine bag”
 - Location filter + Velo
 - Location filter + Lyft



Filter by

[Reset](#)**"nicotine pouches"**[Advanced Search](#)**Subject** ?[See All](#)

Advertising



Age



Bans

**Product**[See All](#)

Bidis



Cigarettes



Cigars

**Location** ?

Central Asia: Pakistan ✕

**Domain** ?[Copy](#)

Type here to start searching...

**Brand** ?

Showing 19

[hide duplicates](#)

Create:



Alert



Analysis

Newest first

**Nicotine Pouches Deceptive & Dangerous, Tobacco Industr...**08/04/2022 [www.thedayspring.com.pk](#)

NEWS DESK ISLAMABAD: "Nicotine Pouches are deceptive and a dangerous product launched by the big tobacco industry to profit at the expense of public health" claimed health activists in a joint press release shared by Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC). The health experts and the child rights organization urged the government to ban nicotine pouches as they are becoming increasingly popular among Pakistani youth due to e... [\[Read more\]](#)

[Smart history](#) >[Share](#)[Feedback](#)

Advertising



Pakistan, Central Asia



English



Cigarettes

Experts Term Nicotine Pouches as a Dangerous and Decep...08/03/2022 [ProPakistaniPK](#)

"Nicotine pouches are deceptive and dangerous and have been launched by the big tobacco industry to profit at the expense of public health" claimed health activists in a joint press release shared by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC). The health experts and the child rights organization urged the government to ban nicotine pouches as they are becoming increasingly popular among Pakistani youth due to elaborate soci... [\[Read more\]](#)

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Uncategorized



Pakistan, Central Asia



English



E-Cigarettes

1

Additional coverage

Methods: Data Collection

- Searched for articles **published on or before August 8, 2022**
- Non-English language articles translated automatically via Google Translate

Include	Exclude
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Published in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya, or Pakistan• Mentioned nicotine pouches, nicotine bags, or specific brand of nicotine pouches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Published outside of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya, or Pakistan• Did not mention nicotine pouches, nicotine bags, or specific brand of nicotine pouches• Not a news article (e.g., academic journal article)• Article not accessible (e.g., broken link, paywall)



Methods: Data Analysis

Key Themes	Definition
Harm reduction	Explicit references to harm or risk reduction (in the context of nicotine pouches) or discussions of nicotine pouches as “lower” or “reduced” risk.
“Switching” or “alternative”	Discussion of nicotine pouches being used for tobacco cessation, as an “alternative” to other tobacco products, or mentions of “switching” to nicotine pouches [from other tobacco products].
Health concerns	Negative health outcomes attributed to nicotine pouches.
Key populations	Specific populations mentioned in discussions of nicotine pouches (youth, other populations)

- **Article characteristics:** publication date, publishing location, original language, news outlet section (e.g., Business, Health)
- **Quotes:** Tobacco industry employees, public health/medical professionals, other



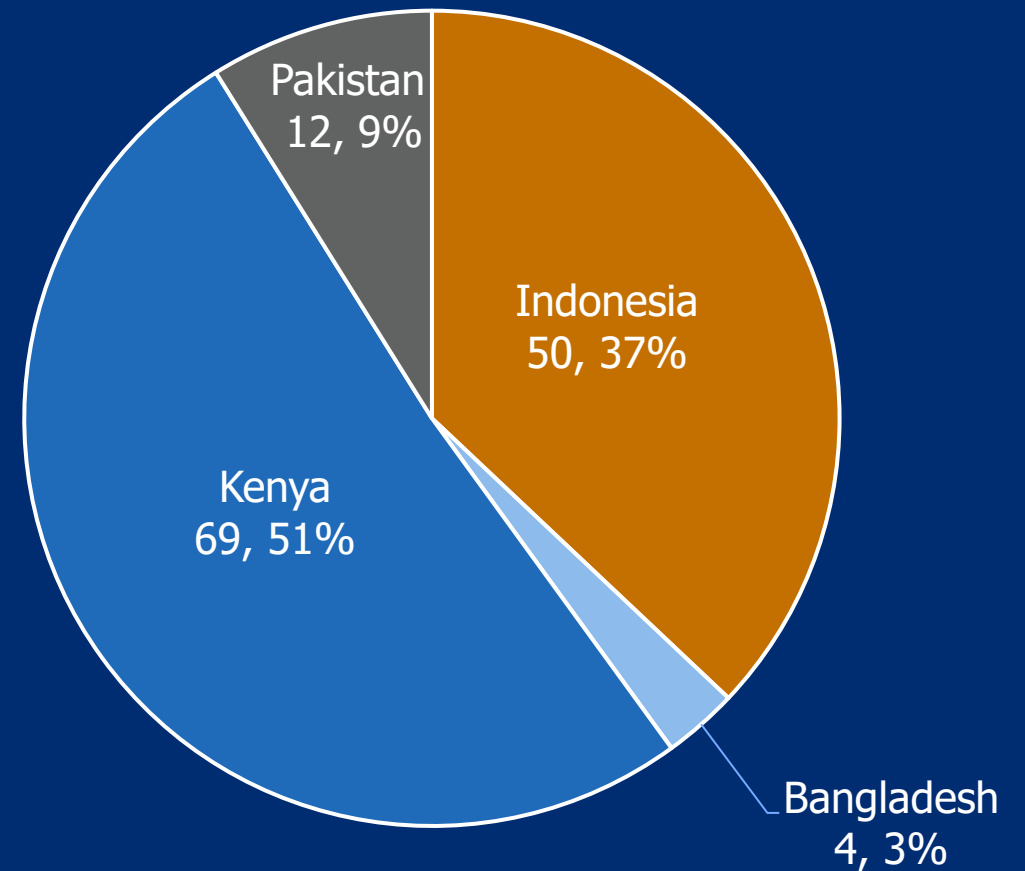


Results

Article Eligibility and Location

- 321 articles from initial search
- 186 articles excluded:
 - 73 ineligible publishing location
 - 58 broken link
 - 53 duplicates
 - 3 behind paywall/subscription
 - 1 journal article
- **135 unique eligible articles**

Article Publishing Location



Article Section, Language, and Year

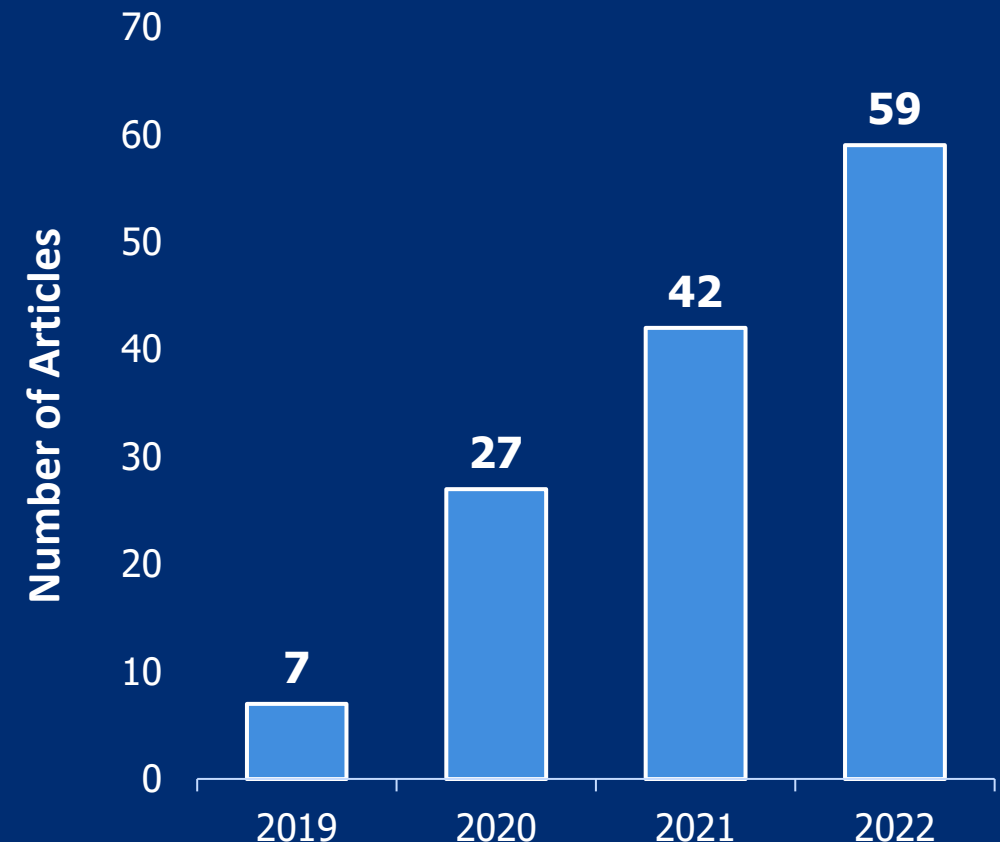
- **Section:**

- Business, Finance, Industry, Markets: 44 (33%)
- Health: 15 (11%)
- Lifestyle: 9 (7%)
- Other: 13 (10%)
- Unspecific/Unclear: 54 (40%)

- **Language:**

- English: 82 (61%)
- Bahasa Indonesia: 50 (37%)
- Bangla: 2 (1%)
- Urdu: 1 (1%)

Article Publication Year



Key Themes: Harm Reduction, “Switching”

Theme (n, %)	Example
Harm Reduction (n=97, 72%)	“Leading the charge by investing in and manufacturing such new categories of potentially reduced risk products such as VELO is admirable.” – <i>Centreline Magazine</i> (“Pakistan” section), Pakistan, March 10, 2022
<u>“Switching” or “alternative”</u> (n=82, 61%)	<u>“Introduction of oral nicotine pouches made me to reduce smoking, then when they were banned, I found myself even smoking more than before.”</u> – <i>The Standard</i> (section unclear), Kenya, May 31, 2021

“Tobacco harm reduction products, such as e-cigarettes and tobacco-free nicotine pouches, are quickly proving to be the most effective and safest alternatives for smokers who want to switch from traditional cigarettes...They are an innovative option for thousands of smokers previously confronted with the ‘quit or die’ scenario...”

– *Africa Business Communities* (Health Industry section), Kenya, January 12, 2020



Key Themes: Harm Reduction, “Switching”

- **Harm reduction** (n=97, 72%)
 - Includes 25 articles (18%) that refute claims of harm reduction

“Industry-driven “harm reduction” strategies... are meant to drive the interest of the industry to make profits through the sale of alternative products (including nicotine pouches and e-cigarettes) in the wake of tightening regulation on tobacco products...Rather than call for “harm reduction”, we should be arguing for “harm elimination...”****

- *The Star* (“Big Read” section), Kenya, April 15, 2020



Key Themes: Health Concerns

Health concerns discussed in 46 articles (34%)

Health Concern	Examples
Addiction (n=31, 23%)	"The nicotine pouches condemn hundreds of children and youth to a lifetime addiction . They are also a <u>gateway to other drugs such as bhang and heroine</u> ." – <i>The Star</i> ("News" section), Kenya, May 19, 2022
<u>Leads to use of more harmful substances</u> (n=10, 7%)	"...[nicotine pouches] may also appeal to teenagers, who will live with the effects of nicotine addiction... This, he said, will particularly <u>lead young people to take up more harmful forms of nicotine or tobacco consumption</u> ." – <i>The Star</i> ("News" section), Kenya, July 30, 2019

"Traders are giving advertisements for enhancing sale of velo nicotine pouches...' the government should immediately intervene, as such products were **as harmful as cigarettes**."
– *BOL News* ("Economic Pulse" section), Pakistan, March 20, 2022



Key Themes: Key Populations

Population	Example
People Who Smoke, Adults Who Smoke, Adults Who Use Nicotine (n=61, 45%)	<p>“Then, provisions regarding marketing procedures, supervision, and easy access to information for the public, especially adult smokers, also need to be regulated. That way, neither <u>children</u> nor non-smokers can access this product. Only adult smokers and adult nicotine users are entitled to use it.”</p> <p>– <i>Liputan 6</i> (“Economy” section), Indonesia, April 1, 2022</p>
<u>Youth</u> (n=40, 30%)	<p>“The influx of oral nicotine such as Lyft and Velo is permeating the Kenyan market illegally <u>making it easily accessible and affordable to the public including school-going children.</u>”</p> <p>– <i>Business Daily Africa</i> (“Market News” section), Kenya, August 1, 2022</p>



Article Quotes

	Example Quote
Public Health or Medical Professional (n=61, 45%)	"The sad reality is that nicotine pouches are right in our houses. Our girls and boys are using the products because they think it's cool. We are working to strengthen tobacco products testing." – Ann Kendagor, Acting Head of the Tobacco Control Division at the Health Ministry, Kenya
Harm Reduction or Pro-Vaping Group Representative (n=42, 31%)	"So, adult smokers have the right to get access and accurate information about alternative tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, and nicotine bags , which have a lower risk than cigarettes." – Ariyo Bimmo, Chairman of the TAR Free Indonesia Coalition (KABAR)
Tobacco Industry Employee (n=25, 19%)	" VELO is the first smokeless nicotine product in Indonesia which was launched in September 2020 and so far its performance has been very good...We believe a balanced regulatory environment that supports us will greatly contribute to state revenues" – Steve Pore, President Director of PT Bentoel Internasional Investama Tbk





Discussion

Summary of Findings

- Increasing number of news articles on nicotine pouches in key LMIC markets
- Polarization regarding perceived harms and/or benefits of nicotine pouches:
 - Nicotine pouches as harm reduction product and alternative to smoking for adults who smoke
 - Nicotine pouches as an addictive, dangerous product that targets youth
- No discussion of nicotine pouches as alternative to smokeless tobacco – only for cigarettes/smoking



Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

- First study to assess discussion of nicotine pouches specifically in LMICs
- Tobacco Watcher includes non-English language articles
- Able to assess diverse perspectives (outside of tobacco control) through analysis of news media

Limitations

- Small sample size does not allow statistical analyses to compare articles from different countries
- Print-only media not captured
- Study did not assess reach of articles
- Mistranslations possible



Implications

- Evidence needed to understand potential role of nicotine pouches in cessation, dual use, and initiation of tobacco and nicotine products
- Short- and long-term impacts of nicotine pouches not well-studied
 - Some health harms and benefits of nicotine pouches not backed by evidence
 - Evidence needed on health impacts of nicotine pouches
 - Corrective information about harms of nicotine and non-combustible products needed





tobaccowatcher.org

Thank you!

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