In China, e-cigarette and HTP brand websites violate regulatory restrictions. Enhanced monitoring and enforcement of the ban on online sales and flavored products is necessary to prevent online sales and marketing exposure.

Online Marketing of E-Cigarettes and HTPs on Brand Websites in China

**Background**
Effective Oct. 2022, China banned sales of flavored e-cigarettes (e-cigs), sales to minors under 18, and online sales outside of the national e-cigarette transaction platform overseen by China’s State Tobacco Monopoly Administration. In addition, China has not permitted any sales of heated tobacco products (HTPs). We examined online marketing strategies post-implementation of the new restrictions.

**Methods**
- Webpages from 29 e-cig and 3 HTP sites specifically targeting people in China, determined by web domain or country selection, were collected between June and Nov. 2023
- A total of 687 webpages within two clicks of the site homepage were coded and analyzed

**Results**
- One site (HTP brand IQOS) offered online sales
- 81% of websites (23 e-cig, 3 HTP) portrayed their brand as responsible or capable of self-regulation
- 47% of websites (12 e-cig, 3 HTP) used claims of lower health risks, and 41% assured device safety (11 e-cig, 2 HTP)
- Non-tobacco flavors were present on 22% of websites (6 e-cig, 1 HTP)

**Most prevalent flavor descriptors in product names**
- Fruit (6 e-cig, 1 HTP)
- Mint/menthol (5 e-cig, 1 HTP)
- Coffee/tea (3 e-cig, 1 HTP)
- Other non-alcoholic beverages (4 e-cig)

**Most prevalent advertising appeals**
- Claims of innovation (78%, 23 e-cig, 2 HTP)
- Luxury or high status (50%, 3 e-cig, 2 HTP)
- Flavor (44%, 11 e-cig, 3 HTP)

**Related research:**
- Cigarette & E-cigarette Marketing at Points of Sale Near Schools in China

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- Tobacco industry
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