TPackSS: Tobacco Pack Surveillance System

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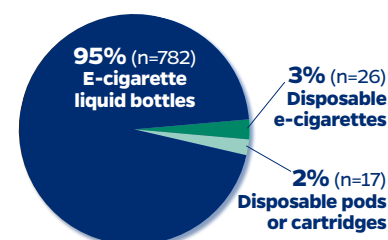## Marketing Appeals on E-cigarette Product Packages

Indonesia 🇮🇩

Background

E-cigarette use is increasing globally, especially among youth. At the time of data collection, Indonesia taxed but did not restrict the sale or marketing of e-cigarettes.

Using the TPackSS systematic protocol, 825 unique e-cigarette products were purchased across three cities in Indonesia (Jakarta, Medan, and Surabaya), during 2022. Reusable e-cigarette devices were not collected.

We systematically assessed and coded marketing appeals on the layer of product packaging visible to the consumer in the retail setting.

825 UNIQUE PRODUCTS:

- **95%** (n=782) E-cigarette liquid bottles
- **3%** (n=26) Disposable e-cigarettes
- **2%** (n=17) Disposable pods or cartridges

Youth Appeals

Over half of the packages (58%, n=476) used youth-specific appeals such as cartoons, animations and memes, fun, cute or cool fonts, or fun brand names.

Some packages also featured unique cut-outs such as bunny ears, shiny decorations, or references to toys or video games. Many included bright, vibrant colors or patterns that reinforced their appeal among youth.

A Displays a reference to building block characters, youth-oriented slang, a fun brand name, a cartoon, and a youth-appealing font

B Displays a cartoon, a fun brand name, and a youth-appealing font

C Displays a youth-appealing font and depictions related to entertainment (8-bit technology and video games)

D Displays a cartoon and references to Indonesian social media influencer Rizky Ritonga

E Displays bunny-ear cut-outs, a fun brand name, and cartoon animals

F Displays a fun brand name, pop culture references (the mobile game "Candy Crush"), a youth-appealing font, and "candy" flavor

G Displays a fun brand name, cartoon, and youth-appealing font

Flavor, Taste, Aroma, and Sensation

792 packages (96%) displayed flavor descriptors. The most common *characterizing flavors* (91%, n=751) were fruits (58%, n=478) and desserts (22%, n=178). 557 packages (68%) displayed flavor imagery and, similar to descriptors, the most common flavor imagery used were fruits (41%, n=340) and desserts (16%, n=129).

178 packages (22%) featured *concept flavors*—descriptors that imply some type of flavor, aroma, taste, or sensation—such as "tropical breeze" or "dark sparkle." Most (72%, n=129) displayed the concept flavor descriptors in combination with a characterizing flavor descriptor, such as "apple dash" or "banana inferno." Some packages (15%, n=126) also featured descriptors implying a refreshing sensation like "cool," "ice," "chill," "frost," or "freeze."

▲ Displays fruit characterizing flavor and "freeze" refreshing concept flavor descriptor

Health Warnings

There are no legal requirements/guidelines for health warnings on e-cigarette products. Nevertheless, most packages (94%, n=773) contained one or more in the form of text, and one or more in the form of an icon/symbol. 32 (4%) had icon-only warnings and 17 (2%) had text-only warnings. The icons/symbols used were not the graphic images identified as best practice for health warning labels (HWLs).

Other Marketing

Most packages (98%, n=804) mentioned nicotine. Nicotine concentration was disclosed on 748 packages (91%), however, the presentation of information was inconsistent between products:

- 90% (n=676) listed nicotine concentration as *mg*
- 17% (n=129) listed it as a percent (%)
- 9% (n=68) listed it in multiple ways
- 1% (n=11) listed it as *mg/mL*

359 packages (44%) specified nicotine type, including salt-based nicotine (37%, n=304), freebase nicotine (7%, n=54), and a hybrid nicotine mixture (one pack).

69 packages (8%) advertised a "smoke-free future," or similar phrasing.

Web presence was commonly highlighted on packages, with 80% (n=656) containing a reference to websites or social media—the most common forms being QR codes (48%, n=399), Instagram handles (36%, n=294), and the company website (18%, n=148).

◄ **EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE**
Access related resources, including a **short video** and **detailed photographs** of the 825 unique products collected.

Conclusions

E-cigarette product packages in Indonesia use marketing appeals that are potentially attractive to youth. Many e-cigarette products on the market come in youth-appealing flavors like fruits or dessert.

While HWLs on product packages were not required by law at the time of data collection, health warnings were widely observed. These warnings lacked standardization and, in some cases, existed only as text or contained imagery inconsistent with HWL graphic image best practices.

Regulation No. 28/2024 on Health, passed in July 2024, mandates that graphic HWLs cover 50% of e-cigarette packaging, beginning July 2026; other provisions of the law require plain packaging and ban non-tobacco flavors.

The findings of this study support policies like these, which would result in the required removal of youth-appealing design elements and a ban on flavors. Timely implementation and consistent enforcement of these provisions will help protect Indonesian youth from the harms of e-cigarette products.