

Perceptions of E-cigarette Marketing & Packaging Among Filipino Youth

Background & Methods

In July 2022, the Philippines passed bill RA11900 (the 'Vape Bill'), allowing e-cigarette flavors that were previously banned and lowering the minimum purchase age from 21 to 18 years. Combined picture and text warnings covering 50% of each principal display area are required; however, implementation is inconsistent.

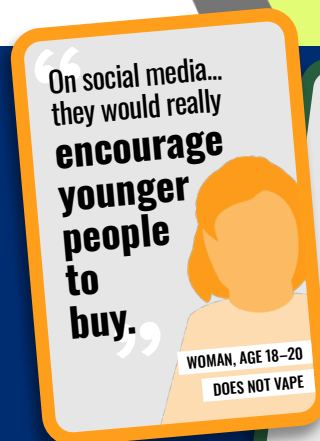
In January 2024, we conducted 24 focus groups¹ involving 171 young participants (ages 13–20) from Metro Manila, Cebu City, and Davao.

First, the youth shared their general thoughts and experiences related to e-cigarettes. Then, they viewed, compared, and discussed the packaging of 10 locally-purchased e-cigarette products, including flavored varieties.



Youth Targeting by E-cigarette Marketing

- Participants believed **youth were the main targets** of e-cigarette marketing
- **Social media** played a key role in promoting e-cigarettes and vape culture



Subjects of discussion
Pictured e-cigarette packs were among those viewed by focus group participants.



Youth Appeals: Coolness, Fashion, and Pop Culture

- Vaping was seen as **trendy** and “cool,” and perceived as a **way to keep up with peers**
- **Social media** and **pop culture**, including **celebrities** and **online influencers**, fueled use of e-cigarettes
- Some youth used or imitated **vape tricks** they had seen on social media, television, or in real life

1. Focus groups were conducted in Tagalog, Cebuano, or Bisaya and stratified by age (13–15, 16–17, 18–20), gender, urban/rural location, and e-cigarette use status (current use vs. non-use). Participants were recruited via household visits.

2. Youth slang for “gangster”

Flavors: Central Role in Youth Use and Appeal

- ▶ Flavors were a **primary attraction** that **drove intention to try** and **continued use**
- ▶ The wide array of flavors increased **curiosity** and **experimentation**
- ▶ Participants generally favored **fruit** and **sweet flavors**, with some preferring **menthol**



Flavors, Packaging, and Perceptions of Harm

- ▶ Flavors could lead to **perceptions of less harm**, including when comparing products
- ▶ Packs **without graphic health warning labels** were viewed as **more visually appealing** and **less harmful**
- ▶ **Specific warnings** depicting health outcomes conveyed **more danger** than nonspecific images, although some who used e-cigarettes regularly reported desensitization over time

Conclusions

Filipino youth viewed e-cigarettes as trendy and appealing, with **flavors** and **targeted marketing** playing a major role.

Flavors and packaging design—especially the **absence of graphic health warning labels**—were associated with lowered perceptions of risk and increased intentions to try e-cigarettes, emphasizing the critical function of warnings in deterring use.

Findings support banning e-cigarette flavors and strictly enforcing restrictions on e-cigarette advertising and promotion to protect Filipino youth.

Raising the minimum purchase age may also help limit access and exposure among youth, who perceive e-cigarettes as appealing and are reached by targeted marketing.



Graphic health warning labels, particularly those depicting specific health outcomes, were associated with increased perceptions of harm and reduced appeal, but require regular updating to avoid desensitization.



The evidence (literally) speaks for itself.

Access dozens more focus group comments demonstrating the need for e-cigarette marketing and packaging policies that protect Filipino youth.