

Media Monitoring: Advertising for Tobacco and Related Products in Social Media

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Research for a Life without Cancer

Introduction

Social media platforms allow individuals and companies to connect and to create, share and interact with content including text, videos, photos and links. Therefore, social media are often used for marketing which includes promotions via paid digital advertising or via compensated influencers with large networks. Youth and young adults are particularly exposed to the appeal of tobacco use in social media marketing.

The goal of this media monitoring project is to describe and understand how advertising for new tobacco products, such as heated tobacco products (HTPs), and related products is designed in social media.

Methods

A commercial analytics tool (Meltwater) was used to search through the content of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, Pinterest, Youtube, Tiktok, Twitch and forums. For various queries, keywords and hashtags related to new tobacco products, such as HTPs or e-cigarettes were collected from social media and analytics tool search results. Due to the regulations of the platforms and the settings of the tool the amount of searchable content differs between the social media platforms. For the period of February 2023, search results on Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest related to advertising for HTPs and filtered for German language were analyzed.



Fig. 1: Facebook / IQOS Support Germany



Fig.2: Instagram / glo.germany



Fig. 3: Facebook / Glo Germany



Fig. 4: Instagram / glo.germany

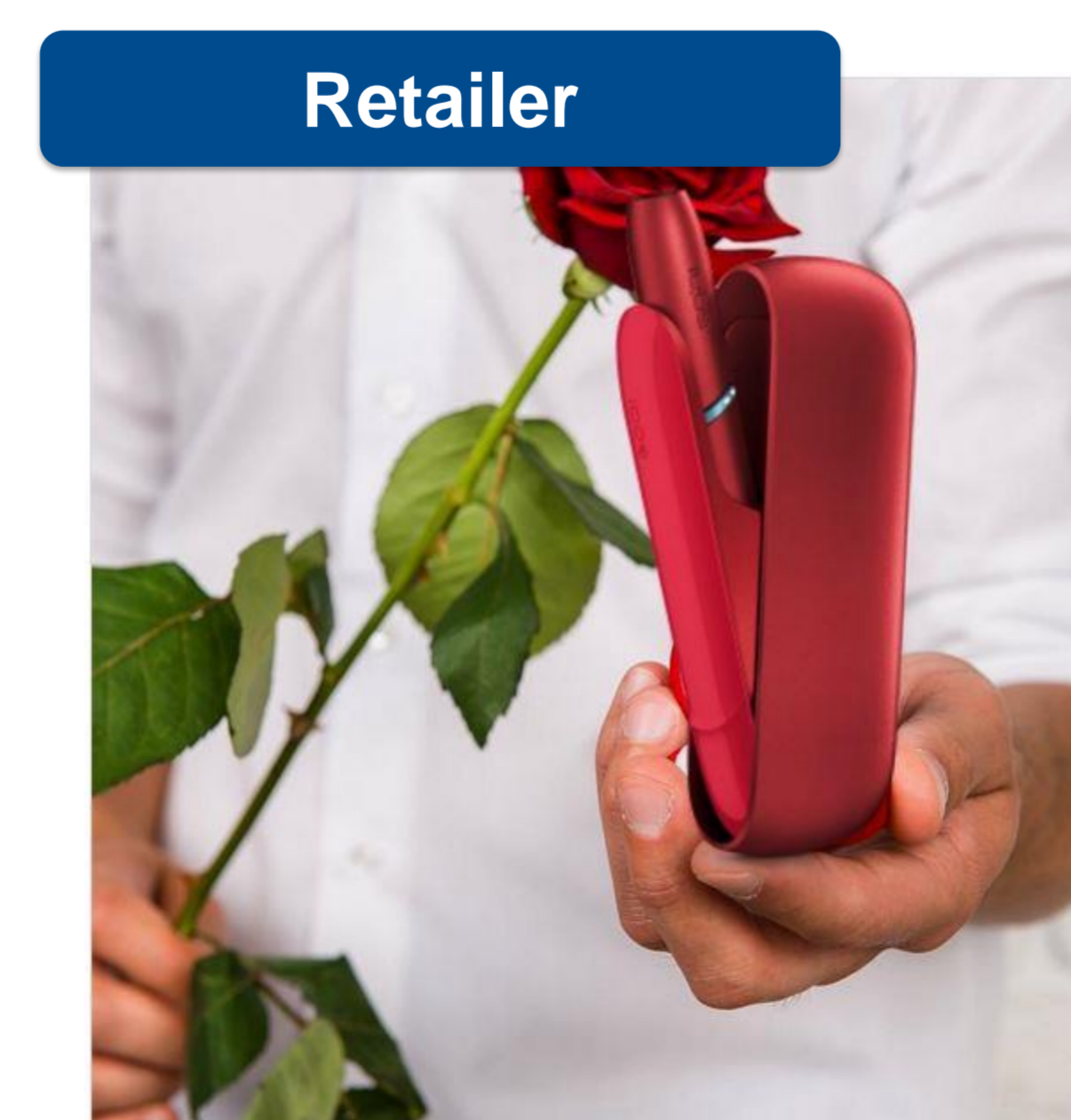


Fig. 5: Instagram / retailer



Fig. 6: Instagram / influencer (celebrity)

Results

72 postings (Instagram: 54, Facebook: 17, Pinterest: 1) were identified that were related to advertising for the two HTPs available in Germany – IQOS by Philip Morris (PM) and glo™ by British American Tobacco (BAT) – and published in German in February 2023. 57 postings mentioned IQOS, 15 postings mentioned glo™. Most postings were from accounts of local retailers (IQOS: 38, glo™: 2) or of the two tobacco companies (IQOS: 10, glo™: 13).

While the manufacturers' postings (Fig. 1–4) were mainly about technical features of the devices, the retailers' postings (Fig. 5) were focused on sales. Both the manufacturers and the retailers used marketing messages such as partnership or youthfulness. In addition, postings by influencers, some of them celebrities, promoting the products were identified (Fig. 6). While most postings depicted the heating devices, only a few postings depicted the tobacco sticks used with the devices.

Conclusion

Instagram and Facebook are used to promote HTPs to a young audience. Effective advertising bans in the EU must be comprehensive, covering all forms of advertising and promotion, including a ban of advertising for the electronic devices used to heat tobacco products.

Literature

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