

Media monitoring: advertising for e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products in social media in Germany

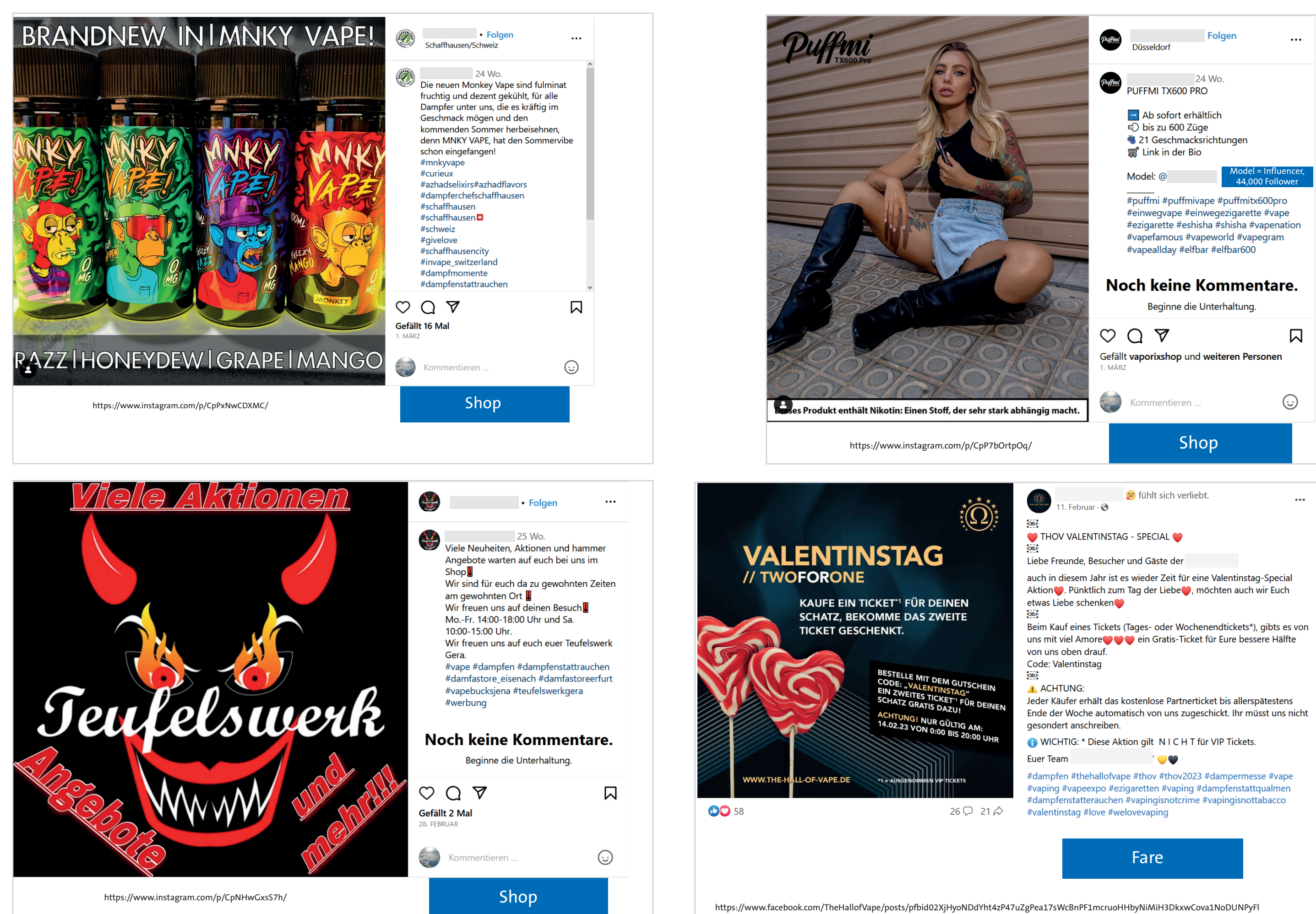
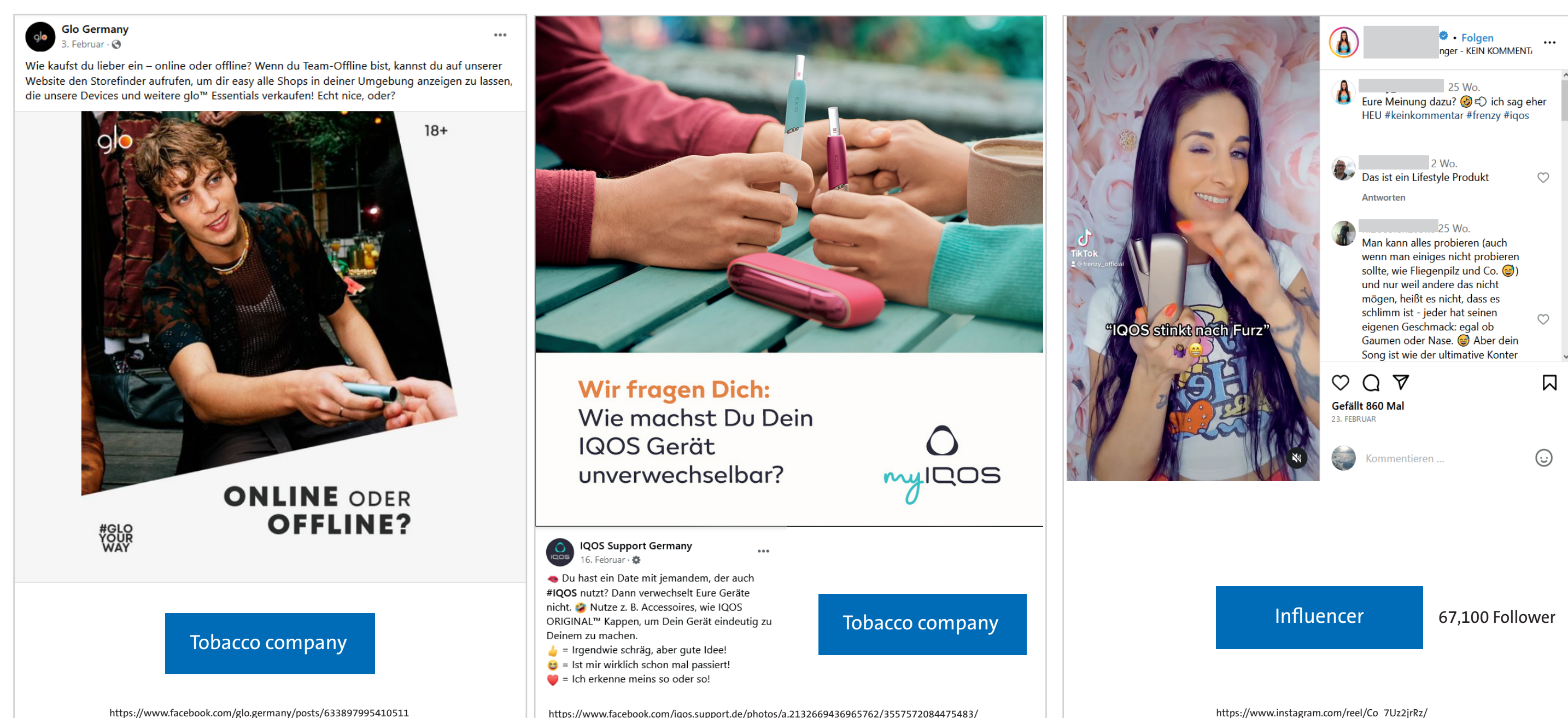
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Background

Advertising for tobacco promotes smoking initiation, and advertising for e-cigarettes increases the desire to use these products. Therefore, in the European Union, advertising for tobacco products and e-cigarettes is banned on TV, radio, print, internet and in social media. Social media platforms allow individuals, but also companies, to connect and to interact via text, photos, videos and links. This makes social media valuable platforms for paid advertising, but also via compensated influencers. In social media, it is often difficult to distinguish between paid advertising and user content. Some platforms have voluntary self-regulation for products that are harmful to health, such as tobacco. These regulations are sometimes inadequately implemented. To our knowledge, no data on the extent, forms and content of advertising for e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products in German social media is currently available. This project aims to close this gap.

Methods

A commercial analytic tool (Meltwater) was used to search the social media platforms Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and Tiktok. The search was based on queries containing keywords and hashtags related to heated tobacco products (HTPs) and e-cigarettes. The content was filtered for German language. For heated tobacco products searches from February to May are included in the analysis, for e-cigarettes from February to April. The results were categorized and analysed. Preliminary results are shown.



Results

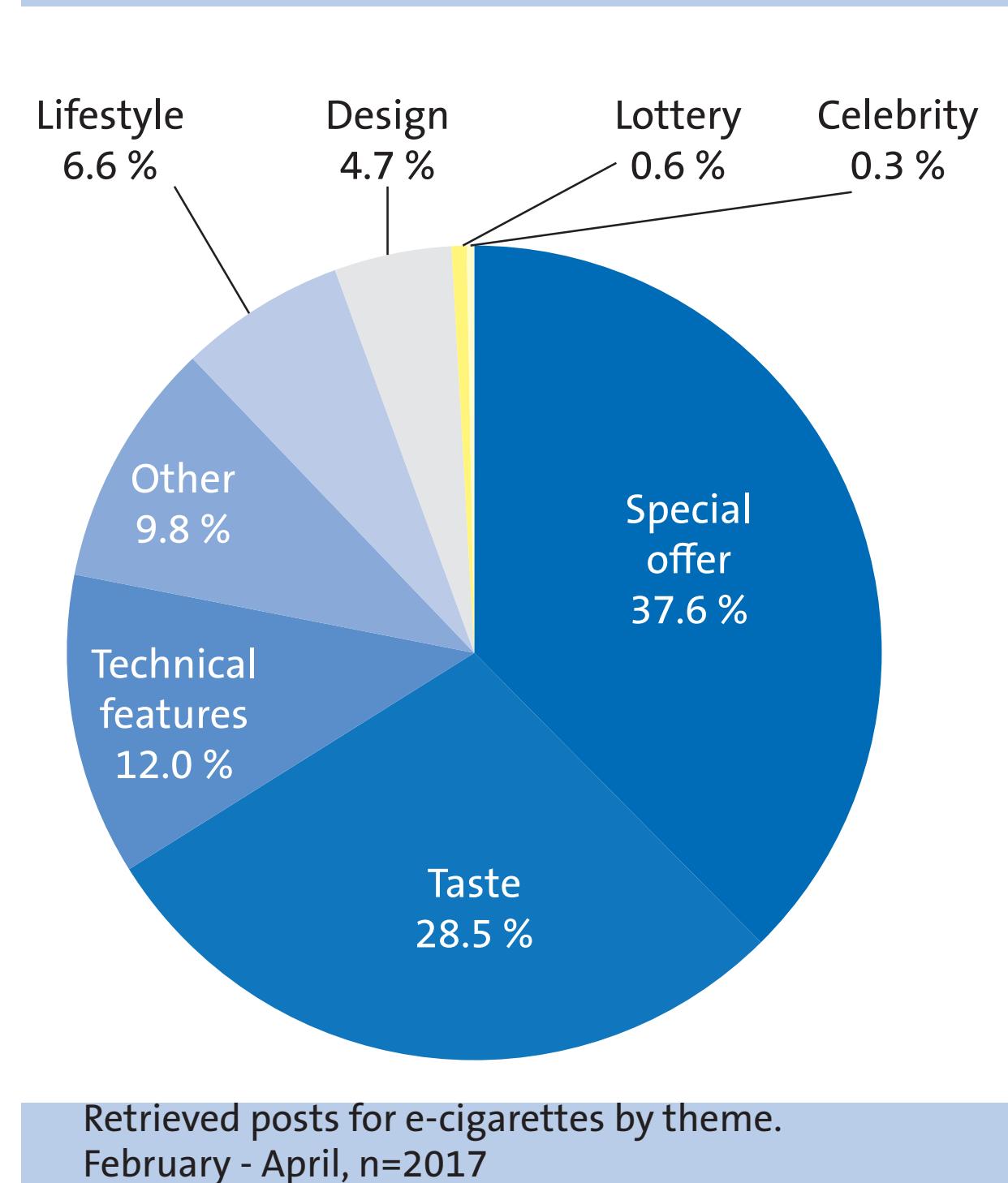
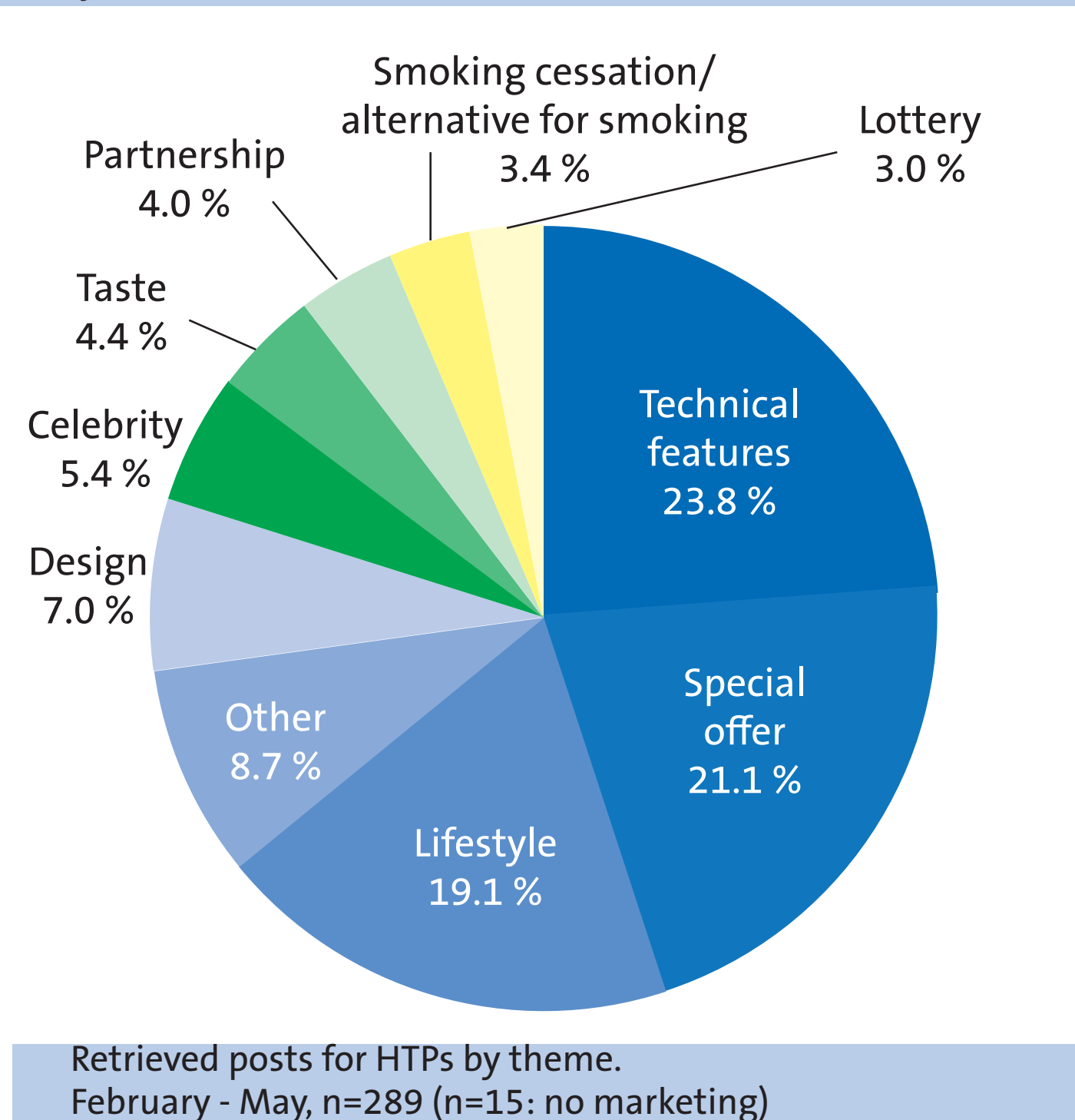
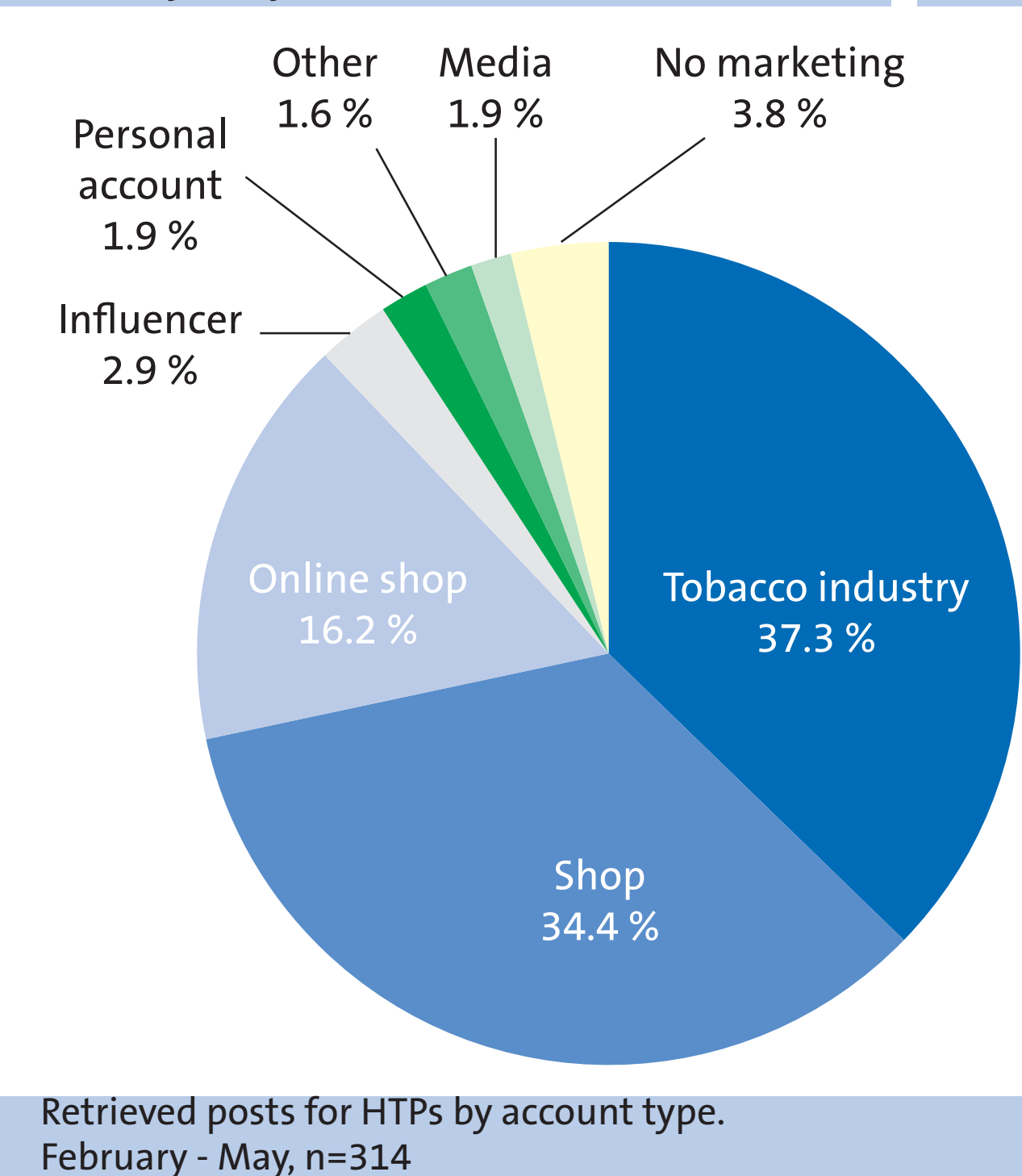
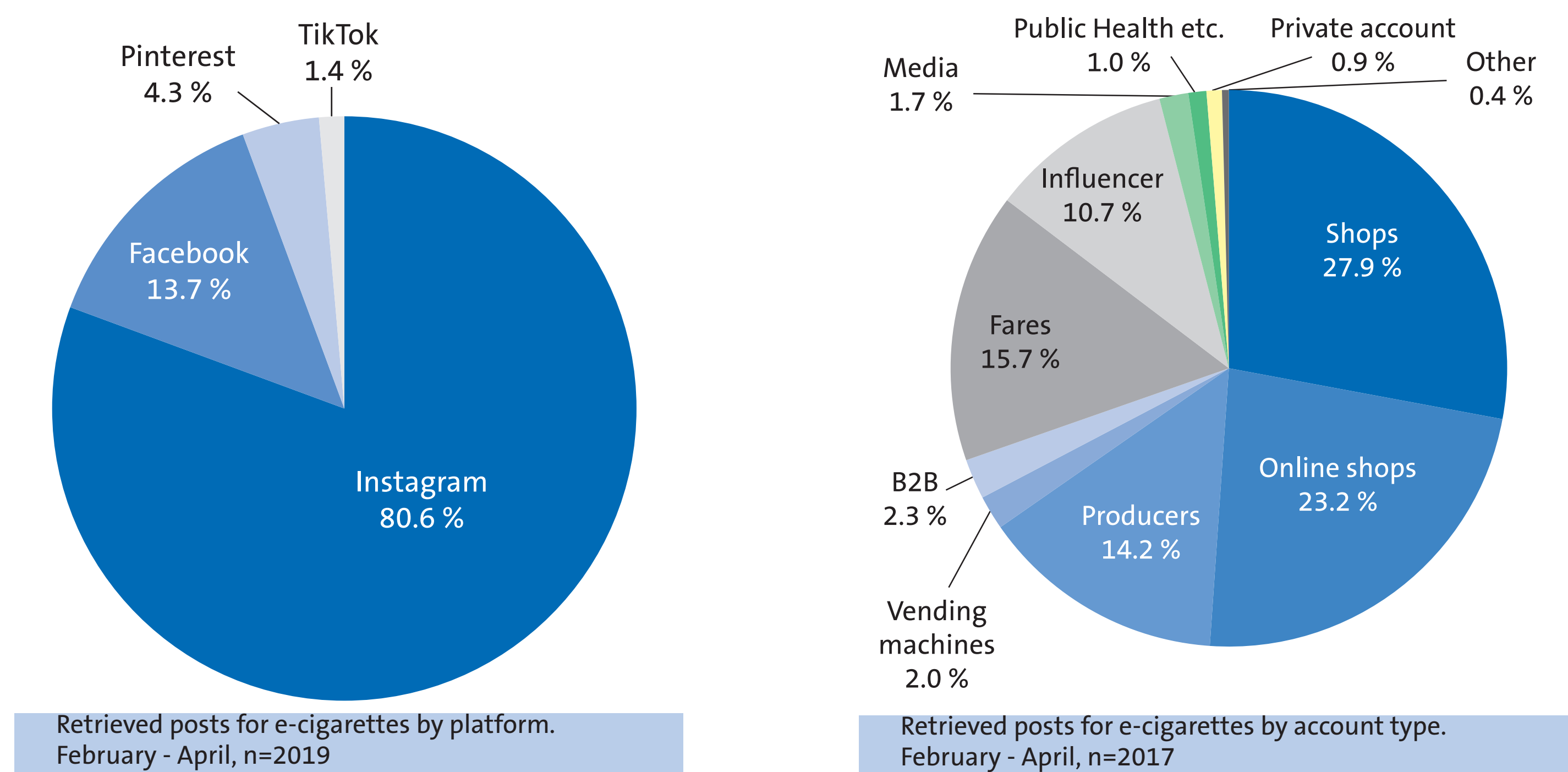
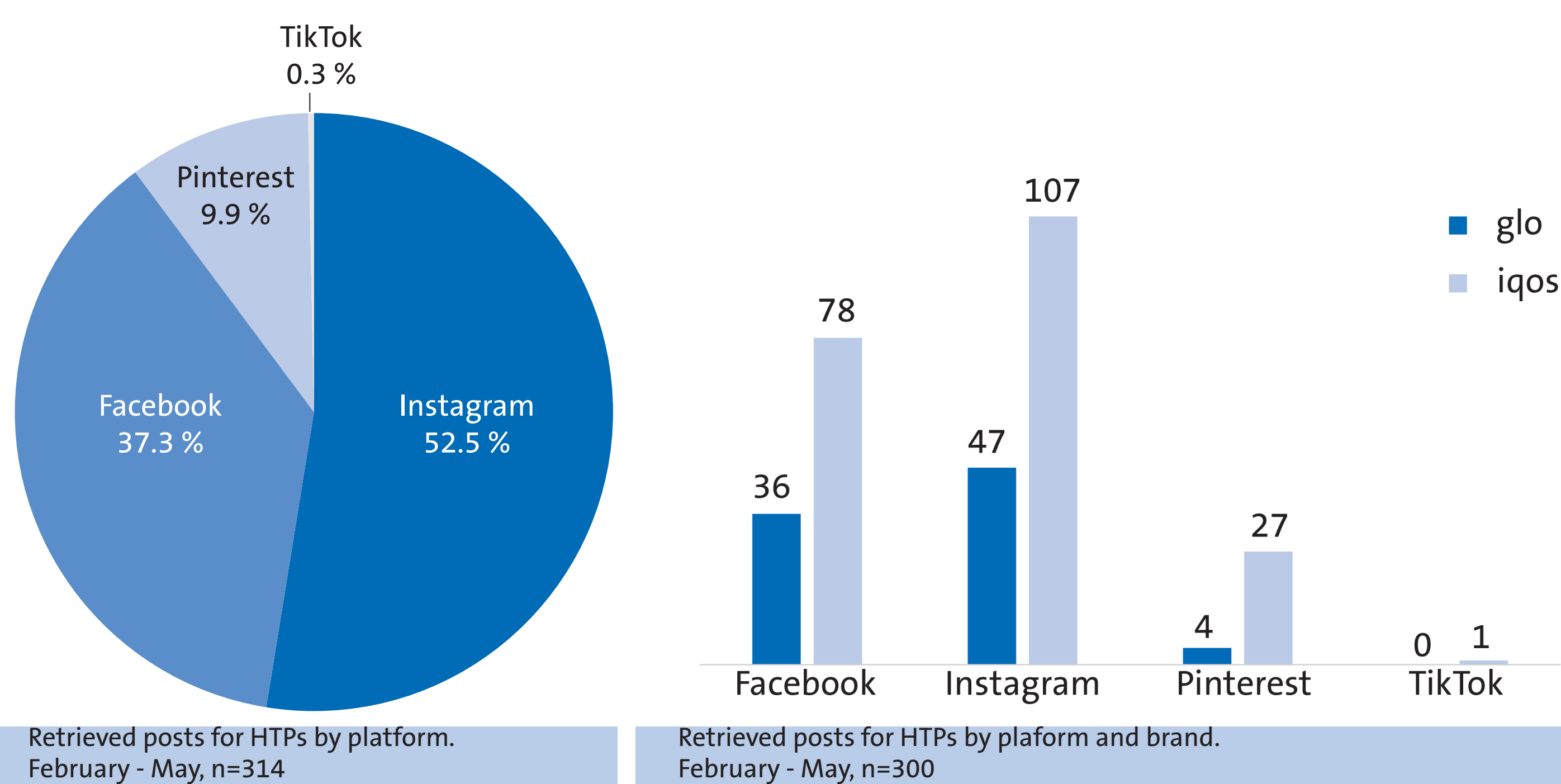
Heated tobacco products

From February to May we retrieved 314 relevant posts for HTPs, most of them on Instagram (52.5 %), followed by Facebook (37.3 %) and Pinterest (9.9 %). The majority of posts was made by the tobacco industry (37.3 %), shops (34.4 %) and online shops (16.2 %). About 70 % of the posts from commercial accounts were for iqos, 30 % for glo. 50 % of the posts for iqos and 54 % of the posts for glo were on Instagram. Themes of the posts were technical features (23.8 %), special offers (21.1 %) and lifestyle (19.1 %). Shops often advertised special prices, and advertising made by manufacturers often was on technical features. Often the manufacturers only show the heater without the tobacco stick.

Results

E-cigarettes

From February to April about 2,000 relevant posts were retrieved for e-cigarettes. Of those, 80.6 % were on Instagram, 13.7 % on Facebook, 4.3 % on Pinterest and 1.4 % on Tiktok. 58.1 % of the posts were on e-cigarettes, more than 11.0 % were on liquids. Of the over 100 brands that advertised, the most prominent brands were Elfbar (11.2 %) and Geekvape (4.2 %). Most posts were made by commercial accounts: shops (27.9 %), online shops (23.2 %) and producers (14.2 %); 15.7 % were from fares and 10.7 % from influencers. Most important themes for advertising are special offers (37.6 %), taste (28.5 %) and technical features (12.0 %).



account type	theme	special offers	design	taste	lifestyle	technical features	other	celebrity	lottery	no marketing
personal		4	1	2	1	0	10	0	0	0
media		0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	31
influencer		11	14	54	36	53	44	1	2	0
education/government		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
vending machines		28	0	10	0	0	2	0	0	0
online shops		92	23	277	11	44	19	1	0	0
shops		272	23	138	26	77	27	0	0	0
fares		299	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	0
producers		17	31	87	50	66	25	3	8	0
B2B		31	2	6	6	2	0	0	0	0
other		4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3

Conclusion

Although advertising for e-cigarettes and HTPs in social media is banned in Germany, the project revealed advertising for these products on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and Tiktok. Industry and shops are the main sources of advertising in social media. By using the same motives and themes for advertising on e-cigarettes and HTPs as for tobacco products and by using social media for advertising, the industry addresses a young audience. Stronger regulations for social media and a stronger control of existing regulations are recommended.