

# Mapping E-cigarette promotion on social media platforms in support of FCTC article 13: A scoping review

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## ABSTRACT

E-cigarette use among youth is escalating globally, fuelled by the pervasive social media marketing that often circumvents the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Article 13 that mandates a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS). This review aimed to systematically map recent evidence on e-cigarette promotion strategies and themes on social media. Following PRISMA-ScR guideline, peer-reviewed articles published in English from 2020 to 2025 were searched through PubMed, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect. Inclusion criteria required e-cigarette and social media promotion related terms in title or abstract. Eligible studies (n=37) underwent thematic synthesis focused on marketing strategies and themes. Instagram was the most studied platform (56.7%, 21/37), followed by TikTok (32.4%, 12/37) and YouTube (21.6%, 8/37). Nearly half (47.6%, 10/21) of geolocated studies examined U.S data, with only 1 study involved Malaysia (4.8%). The predominant methodology was manual coding (78.4%, 29/37), only 16.2% (6/37) studies used machine learning and 5.4% (2/37) employed both methods. Most studies (90.5%, 19/21) identified both direct (discounts or giveaways) and indirect promotion strategies, including youth marketing with young models, flavours or cartoon features (74%, 14/19), influencer marketing (53%, 10/19), viral campaigns (42%, 8/19) such as TikTok challenges, and discreet promotion (21%, 4/19) which uses non-representative hashtags to evade regulations. The most common themes were youth-appealing theme (75%, 12/16) revolving humour, fashion or lifestyle content and informational themes on device customization and perceived health claims of e-cigarette use (56%, 9/16). These findings revealed e-cigarette social media marketing to normalize e-cigarette use while downplaying the risks. The lack of Malaysian data highlights critical surveillance gaps, leaving the country vulnerable to unregulated cross-border promotion.

Keywords: E-Cigarette, Social Media, Marketing Strategy, Theme, TAPS