
Big Tobacco is exploiting COVID-19 to market its harmful products



Shutterstock

Public health experts have warned that smokers and e-cigarette users face a greater risk for severe illness when confronted with COVID-19.

There is conclusive evidence that smoking increases the risk for respiratory infections, weakens the immune system and is a major cause of chronic health conditions that increase risk for COVID-19, including lung disease, heart disease and diabetes. There is also growing evidence that e-cigarette use harms lung health. Unfortunately, in a dangerous irony, tobacco companies are taking advantage of COVID-19 public health campaigns to promote their products.

Tobacco and e-cigarette companies are engaging in pandemic-themed marketing even as health experts warn that smoking and vaping can increase risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

On social media, Philip Morris International and British American Tobacco – the world’s two largest tobacco companies – are appropriating popular “Stay at Home” hashtags promoted by governments and health authorities to instead market heated cigarette products like Glo and IQOS and e-cigarettes like Vype.

In Spain, British American Tobacco has posted photos advertising Vype e-cigarettes accompanied by the hashtag #FrenaLaCurva (#FlattenTheCurve) and in Italy, Philip Morris has used #DistantiMaVicini (#DistantButClose) to advertise IQOS. The companies have also promoted at-home music series and launched exclusive music videos to promote tobacco products online.

In the United States, e-cigarette makers and vape shops have also turned to social media to promote their products and boost sales during the COVID-19 crisis. Pandemic-related promotions range from free masks with e-cigarette purchases to offering COVID-19 discounts (get 19% off nicotine e-liquids by entering the code COVID-19). E-cigarette makers have also used the pandemic to make unproven and illegal health claims about e-cigarettes. Bidi Vapor claimed on Instagram that “A bidi stick a day keeps the pulmonologist away.”

In Kazakhstan, British American Tobacco provided Glo-branded facemasks to more than a dozen Instagram influencers who posted photos wearing the masks – all with the same caption advertising free Glo masks (#glomask) with the purchase of a Glo device. These and other posts advertising tobacco products were documented in dozens of countries, despite a December 2019 announcement by Instagram and Facebook that the platforms would no longer allow influencers to promote tobacco products online.

Big Tobacco is exploiting COVID-19 to market its harmful products

Published on NCD Alliance (<https://ncdalliance.org>)

Tobacco companies will stop at nothing to sell more products, even if it means capitalizing on a pandemic. Never has it been more important for the public and policymakers to see the tobacco industry for what it is: an industry of death and disease.

You can find more information on the examples gathered by the Global Health Advocacy Incubator [HERE](#) [1].

The NCD Alliance thanks to the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAi), a project of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, for providing this update and permitting us to publish it here.

Post Date: Thursday, 25 June, 2020

Tags: [tobacco](#) [2]

[tobacco control](#) [3]

[marketing](#) [4]

Search Keywords: Tobacco companies, cigarettes, vaping, COVID-19, coronavirus, marketing

Related Link: [Smoking, Vaping & COVID-19: What Are Health Organizations and Experts Saying?](#) [5]

[Coronavirus: big tobacco sees an opportunity in the pandemic](#) [6]

Tag feed: [COVID19](#) [7]

Source URL: <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/big-tobacco-is-exploiting-covid-19-to-market-its-harmful-products>

Links

[1] https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/media/2020/2020_05_covid-marketing

[2] <https://ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/37>

[3] <https://ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/295>

[4] <https://ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/784>

[5] <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0410.pdf>

[6] <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-big-tobacco-sees-an-opportunity-in-the-pandemic-138188>

[7] <https://ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/985>