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INVITED REVIEW

Global Tobacco Industry

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Main Points

- The tobacco industry's marketing strategies specifically target young people and former smokers prone to relapse, using new products with appealing designs, various flavors, and the impression of being safer.
- The global tobacco industry poses a significant public health threat by introducing new products that may increase tobacco use and associated health problems.
- Governments and health organizations need to intensify tobacco control measures, provide comprehensive smoking cessation support, and strictly monitor the advertising techniques of the industry.

Abstract

The global tobacco industry, with its dynamic product range, poses ongoing health and socio-economic challenges, demanding attention from policymakers, healthcare experts, and the public. This study aimed to explore the history, economic tactics, marketing strategies, and product evolution of the industry to underscore its health impacts and aid informed public health decisions and actions. This review looks at sources from key databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, Cochrane, and ScienceDirect, as well as World Health Organization (WHO) reports, focusing on key terms like "global tobacco industry," "health effects," "marketing strategies," "new tobacco products," "tobacco control policies," and "economic impacts." The tobacco industry, one of the most profitable global sectors, spans cultivation, production, and sale with an intent for profit. Facing reduced smoking rates, the industry has shifted focus to alternatives like Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs) and electronic cigarettes (E-Cigarettes), designed to deliver nicotine through vapor, targeting younger and former smokers. The tobacco industry's economic pursuits conflict with the objectives of tobacco control, especially as they introduce new products that could increase health risks. As the industry aims to expand globally, it's crucial for authorities to strengthen tobacco control, offer cessation support, and oversee practices to protect public health.

Keywords: Global, marketing strategies, new tobacco products, tactics and messages, tobacco industry

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Introduction

Tobacco is one of the most commonly addictive substances in the world and stands as the leading cause of preventable deaths. By the end of the 2000s, the number of tobacco users worldwide approached 1 billion, and by 2023, it has reached 1.3 billion (Ilhan et al., 2016; WHO, 2023a). It results in 8.7 million deaths annually (WHO, 2023b), afflicting tens of millions with preventable diseases such as cancer, heart disease, lung disease, and other chronic illnesses. Reducing tobacco use is critically important in terms of decreasing the burden of non-communicable diseases, which account for 71% of deaths worldwide (WHO, 2023a, 2023b). The tobacco industry stands as one of the world's largest, most profitable sectors, and serves as a major employer globally. Beyond merely producing tobacco products, the industry encompasses a spectrum of businesses involved in the cultivation, production, and sale of tobacco, all of which operate with the primary objective of generating profit. The tobacco industry is also defined as encompassing "tobacco products, wholesale distributors, and tobacco product importers" (WHO, 2023a, 2023b).

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In the 1990s, amid intensifying legal pressures in the United States of America and the World Health Organization's (WHO) escalating commitment to tobacco control, the tobacco industry attempted to strategically position itself as a "solution" to the challenges posed by tobacco consumption (WHO, 2000). A significant endeavor in this direction was Philip Morris' "Project Sunrise" initiated in 1995 (McDaniel et al., 2006). This project aimed at fragmenting the tobacco control community while promoting policies that would minimally impact the industry's interests. The tobacco industry pursued strategies like projecting an image of "social responsibility," but these largely amounted to ineffective public relations campaigns. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) was adopted by the World Health Assembly on May 21 2003 and came into force on February 27 2005, despite the industry's maneuvers (Mamudu et al., 2008). The WHO FCTC, which emphasizes the right of individuals to the highest health standards, has been adopted by 182 Parties, covering over 90% of the global population (WHO, 2012, 2023a). The FCTC seeks to curtail tobacco use and its associated morbidity and mortality. It encompasses significant policy recommendations, including restrictions on tobacco advertising, the incorporation of health warnings on packaging, and measures to elevate the pricing and taxation of tobacco products. This treaty, ratified by numerous countries, epitomizes the global endeavors in tobacco control. With the implementation of the FCTC and the observed global decline in tobacco consumption (notably, the prevalence of adult smoking decreased from 24% in 2007 to 21% in 2015) (Hiilamo & Glantz, 2015; WHO, 2017), tobacco companies might have been prompted to consider alternative products to safeguard their profits and political interests.

The tobacco industry invests heavily in the development of new products, which are nicotine-containing and marketed as less harmful than traditional tobacco products. These products are also promoted as a way to reduce tobacco consumption. However, there is no scientific consensus on whether they are actually less harmful. This marketing strategy ensures that consumers are attracted to these new products. In addition, these new products are strategically marketed to counteract the effects of tobacco control measures. Worryingly, these nicotine-containing new products are targeted at young people and people who have quit smoking (Bialous & Glantz, 2018; Stella & Stanton, 2018).

The global tobacco industry, renowned as one of the world's most lucrative sectors, is persistently associated with a multitude of health and socio-economic challenges, including the introduction of new and potentially harmful products. For policymakers, healthcare professionals, and the general public, grasping its intricate mechanisms, strategies, and implications is paramount. This review offers a comprehensive examination of the global tobacco industry, encompassing its historical trajectory, economic maneuvers, marketing tactics, and the evolution of novel products, all while elucidating the health repercussions. The overarching goal is to shed light on this industry to steer informed public health decisions and initiatives in the future.

Components and History of the Tobacco Industry

The tobacco industry encompasses more than just tobacco companies and tobacco-funded organizations. It includes a range of entities and sectors that operate under the umbrella of the "tobacco industry." This broad definition covers tobacco industry-funded tobacco associations, leaf-buying, and processing entities, retailers' associations, daily and fine retailers engaged in the tobacco trade and industries like advertising that have regulatory associations closely tied with tobacco promotion. Additionally, it encompasses state-owned national or multinational tobacco companies, their subsidiaries, and representatives, as well as distributor bodies, importers, exporters, and duty-free distributors (WHO, 2019a).

With the industrial revolution, cigars appeared at the beginning of the 19th century and cigarettes at the end of the 19th century (Schivelbusch, 2000). While the current Philip Morris International (PMI) was established in 1847 and R.J. Reynolds was established in the USA in 1875, British American Tobacco (BAT) began operations in 1902 with the cooperation of the United States and England (Randall, 1999). Tobacco companies entered the Latin American market in the 1960s, and in 1976 they acquired 12 companies, most of which were state monopolies, and controlled 75% of the Latin American tobacco products market (Cunningham, 1996). With the 1980s, the tendency of transnational companies to spread their production all over the world in search of low production costs and new markets has gradually increased. With the liberalization regulations, tobacco companies entered Asia in the 1980s, Central and Eastern Europe, China, and Vietnam in the 1990s (Cunningham, 1996). From 2015 to 2020, 4 tobacco companies, PMI, BAT, Japan Tobacco International (JTI), and Imperial Brands (IMB), formed a monopoly on a large part of the global cigarette market (Hiscock et al., 2023; Rajani et al., 2023). Some firms, like Swisher International, are primarily significant for smaller tobacco product markets, such as cigars and cigarillos, while others, like Altria (USA), China National Tobacco Company (China), and Indian Tobacco Company Limited (ITC) (India), are geographically restricted (Hiscock et al., 2023). Pyxus (Alliance One) and Universal Corp, the 2 major suppliers of tobacco leaf globally, wield significant influence on the worldwide tobacco market. These companies had become the sole global tobacco leaf suppliers, with a presence in all major tobacco-producing regions. These major companies (Pyxus, Universal Corp, PMI, BAT, JTI, and IMB) together have some decision-making authority and can adapt their operations to local needs (Kedia, 2020). These companies may also be collectively referred to as Transnational Tobacco and Leaf Companies (TTLCs). Each of these TTLCs has numerous subsidiaries (Hiscock et al., 2023). Transnational tobacco and leaf companies (TTLCs) increasingly contract directly with farmers for tobacco leaves (Lencucha et al., 2022). Tobacco control efforts face challenges, especially in countries with significant employment in tobacco farming and production (Gilmore et al., 2015; Mathers et al., 2019; Zatoński et al., 2023). Mapping the supply chains of companies with global reach is recommended to better understand where public health, equity, and environmental policies can be undermined by company activities and where workers and the environment can be exploited to increase profits (Goldstein & Newell, 2019; Hiscock et al., 2023). Mapping can facilitate the development and implementation of measures that protect policies from tobacco industry pressure (Assunta & Dorotheo, 2016). Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have been found to be particularly vulnerable to tobacco industry interference due to a lack of resources and political will (Hebbar et al., 2022).

The global tobacco products market experienced growth from $253.3 billion in 2022 to $266.93 billion in 2023. This growth is anticipated to continue, reaching an estimated value of $316.79 billion by 2027 (ResearchandMarkets., 2023). The market offers a diverse range of products such as cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, snuff, chewing tobacco, pipe tobacco, and other smokeless varieties, distributed through various channels including supermarkets, convenience stores, e-commerce platforms, specialty tobacco stores, and more. Notably, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the ensuing economic sanctions have imposed challenges on global markets, causing supply chain disruptions and impacting the tobacco industry. Additionally, the outbreak of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) significantly constrained the tobacco market in 2020, but the market is projected to recover in the coming years. The Asia-Pacific region dominated the market in 2022, followed by North America. Major countries involved in the tobacco market span across continents such as North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific, and include nations like Argentina, China, USA, India, Brazil, UK, France, and more (ResearchandMarkets., 2023).

Tobacco Industry Tactics and Messages

The tobacco industry employs specific tactics, both in traditional cigarettes and new products, to counteract life-saving tobacco control measures. These strategies range from discrediting scientific research, and aggressively lobbying in favor of industry-aligned measures, to spreading misleading information about the economic significance, and positive societal role of the industry (WHO, 2019a). Tobacco companies are increasing their investments in electronic cigarettes and new tobacco products, and making advertising efforts for these products is also one of their significant strategies in many countries.

The tobacco industry has employed strategic packaging and labeling tactics to manipulate consumers' perceptions and safeguard its interests. Over the past decade, the industry has leveraged international trade and investment treaties to challenge plain packaging regulations, delaying legislative actions in some countries. Meanwhile, despite the industry's objections and interventions, global health organizations and governments continue to push for more transparent and health-centered labeling to diminish the health concerns associated with tobacco products (WHO, 2019b).

In examining the tobacco industry's strategies, it is evident that there is a consistent pushback against the bans on advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS). The industry often champions the value of advertising by citing constitutional rights to freedom of speech and commercial speech, suggesting that comprehensive TAPS bans are unnecessary and that self-regulation would be sufficient. However, studies indicate that only partial restrictions can lead to shifts in advertising focus, potentially exposing young and impressionable audiences to the dangers of tobacco. Moreover, the industry's tactics extend beyond mere advertising arguments. Historical documents reveal their attempts to discredit proven science and exaggerate the economic importance of the tobacco sector. This is further complicated by their legal maneuvers, where they have tried to manipulate political and legislative processes and intimidate governments with the threat of litigation. As governments and organizations work towards a smoke-free world, understanding and countering these tactics become crucial (WHO, 2019e).

The tobacco industry aims to deceive the public with "smoke-free" and "safe" messages. The authenticity of these messages is a matter of significant debate. A leaked strategy from PMI in 2014 reveals the company's plan to market new products and cigarettes simultaneously. This strategy involves collaboration with third-party actors like scientists and harm reduction advocates. The company leans towards presenting itself as a "solution provider" and opposes excessive regulations. Tobacco giants are attempting to position themselves as contributors to public health using new products like electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes). However, sustainability reports and public statements shed light on the realities behind the promotion of "smoke-free" products. These products are not entirely safe according to international standards. This exemplifies how the industry can mislead the public (WHO, 2019d). The tobacco industry seeks to influence policy through their "smoke-free" product messages. They strategically fund third-party groups to weaken tobacco control measures and employ deceptive youth marketing tactics. Additionally, the industry's funding of certain scientific studies raises concerns about potential bias in research findings.

A recent evaluation of tobacco industry interference has highlighted differences in how various countries are influenced by the sector. The countries most affected by interference, based on the overall rankings, are Japan, Indonesia, Zambia, and Romania. In stark contrast, nations such as Brunei Darussalam, Uganda, France, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom have demonstrated the least interference, maintaining commendable stances against tobacco industry influences. It's worth noting that Türkiye's position in this assessment is moderately influenced, holding the 17th rank in the global list (Assunta, 2020).

New Tobacco Products: The Rise of Electronic Cigarettes and Heated Tobacco Products in the Last 10 Years

The mitigation of harmful effects from tobacco use can only be achieved by ending its production, sale, and consequently, consumption. International organizations and governments are implementing various legislative measures to curb tobacco use. Meanwhile, the tobacco industry adapts by modifying existing products, such as adding filters to cigarettes, and introducing new ones, claiming they are "harmless" or "less harmful." Additionally, the age-old practice of hookah smoking has been rebranded with innovations like fruit-flavored tobacco, targeting especially the youth (Bilir, 2018). While the harm reduction approach suggests developing products to assist those unable to quit smoking, the only true protection from the harms of tobacco is complete cessation. However, some smokers either choose to continue or struggle to quit. In response, the tobacco industry has introduced "less harmful" alternatives. Instead of forcing a "quit or die" choice on smokers unable to quit, this strategy aims to guide them toward using these purportedly less harmful products (Bilir, 2018; Hatsukami et al., 2004).

Since the 1960s, tobacco companies have created alternatives to support the cigarette market. Historically, products like Premier, Eclipse, Accord, and HeatBar were developed but commercially failed (Jesse et al., 2018; Stella & Stanton, 2018). The recent introduction of heated tobacco products (HTPs) and e-cigarettes could

be a response to declining cigarette consumption and the success of tobacco control measures. The industry's strategy involves positioning itself as a harm-reduction partner and seeking alliances with governments and scientists to promote new products (Noel et al., 2018; Özdemir & Yaman Üzümcü, 2019; Saloojee & Dagli, 2000).

There are 4 main types of nicotine products that don't involve combustion: heated pure nicotine-based products (e.g., e-cigarettes), unheated pure nicotine-based products (e.g., nicotine gum), heated tobacco-based products (e.g., vaporizers), and unheated tobacco-based products (e.g., chewing tobacco) (Peitsch et al., 2018). Major international tobacco companies—including PMI, BAT/RJ Reynolds, Imperial Tobacco, and JTI—have increased their interest and investments in new tobacco products such as electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes)/electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), and HTPs over the past decade (Mathers et al., 2019; WHO, 2019d). Table 1 provides examples of the "transformation" messages conveyed by major tobacco companies and the ENDS/HTP brands they are marketing. In promoting these new devices, tobacco companies claim to offer a "broader range of choices" and assert that ENDS and HTPs are "safer alternatives." They also state that these products will "save" millions of people from traditional, more harmful cigarettes and express support for "harm reduction" initiatives.

Heated Tobacco Products

These devices heat actual tobacco but at lower temperatures than traditional cigarettes. By heating the tobacco instead of burning it, HTPs produce an aerosol that contains nicotine and other chemicals, which is then inhaled by the user (Znyk et al., 2021). As of 2018, major tobacco companies such as PMI, BAT, and JTI have been actively promoting their HTPs globally (Stella & Stanton, 2018). Often referred to as "heat-not-burn" or "smoke-free" tobacco, these products are marketed as safer alternatives to traditional cigarettes. Some promotional materials even suggest that HTPs can aid smokers in quitting. British American Tobacco introduced its "iFuse" product in 2015, followed by "glo" in 2016, expanding its market presence to countries including Romania, Japan, Switzerland, Canada, South Korea, and Russia. In 2016, JTI debuted its "Ploom" and "TECH" products, primarily focusing on the Japanese and Swiss markets. Korea Tobacco & Ginseng Corporation (KT&G Corp.) launched its "Lil" product in South Korea in 2017. Meanwhile, PMI, having released its "IQOS" in 2014, has achieved the most extensive global reach, with distribution spanning from Canada all the way to New Zealand (Stella & Stanton, 2018). In 2018, the tobacco industry rapidly introduced HTPs to the market. Although the sale of HTP is not legally permitted in Türkiye, it is marketed in over 40 countries worldwide (Eke & Yüce, 2022). In 2020, the import of e-cigarettes, HTPs, and any related components, spare parts, and solutions was prohibited by a Presidential Decree in Türkiye. However, online sales and smuggling continue to introduce these products into the country. During travels, passengers are still bringing these products into the country in specified amounts (Eke & Yüce, 2022). Some media reports suggest that HTPs reduce harmful tobacco constituents by 90 – 95% when compared to traditional cigarettes. Studies have found that using I-Quit-Ordinary-Smoking (IQOS) results in the release of toxic formaldehyde cyanohydrin, even without direct tobacco combustion (Auer et al., 2017). While some toxic compounds might be reduced in IQOS compared to regular cigarettes, they aren't completely absent, and their health impact is still under evaluation. The WHO has also stated that it does not endorse the claims made by tobacco companies regarding their products (WHO, 2018).

These companies are trying to influence governments to roll back tobacco control policies or to create exemptions for their

Table 1.
Transformation Messages and Tobacco Industry Brands (WHO, 2019d)

Tobacco Company	Initiative/Campaign	Industry Jargon	Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)	Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs)	Key Markets (ENDS/HTPs)
British American Tobacco	Transforming tobacco, a better tomorrow	Next generation products (NGPs)	Vype	Glo	Poland, United Kingdom, United States/Japan
RJ Reynolds	–	–	Vuse	Eclipse Revo Neocore	–
Imperial Tobacco	European citizens initiative: let's demand smarter vaping regulations	NGPs	Blu Jai Puritane	Pulze	France, Japan, United Kingdom, United States/ Japan
Japan Tobacco International	It's time to rethink tobacco, rethink music	Reduced-risk products (RRPs)	Logic cig-a-like E-lites	Ploom	Japan, United Kingdom, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom
Philip Morris	Smoke-free future, hold my light unsmoke your world, its time mission winnow	RRPs, Harm reduction equation Heat-not-burn products	Nicocig Juul	IQOS	Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States/ Egypt, Japan, Russia

Note: NGPs, next generation products; RRPs, reduced-risk products; ENDS, electronic nicotine delivery systems; HTPs, heated tobacco products.

HTP. The industry's marketing of HTP is making these products more visible and accessible to the public. Governments need to ensure the regulation of HTP to protect public health (Lempert & Glantz, 2018; Stella & Stanton, 2018). Before launching HTPs in a country, tobacco corporations have engaged in high-level governmental discussions to persuade regulators of the purported health benefits of HTPs, contending they should not be subjected to the same restrictions as cigarettes. These companies lobby for distinct taxation, labeling, and marketing regulations for HTPs. However, it is imperative to recognize that HTPs should be treated analogously to other tobacco products, necessitating the same regulatory measures to safeguard public health (González, 2017; Stella & Stanton, 2018).

Electronic Cigarettes (e-cigarettes)

The invention of the electronic cigarette dates back to the year 1963. Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are battery-operated and heat the nicotine liquid inside to create an aerosol. Users inhale this aerosol into their lungs and exhale it into the environment. E-cigarettes are shaped like a cigarette-sized or slightly longer stick and contain a replaceable cartridge containing nicotine and propylene glycol. Additives such as tobacco, fruit, mint, chocolate, coffee, cola, and so forth are utilized in the cartridge's liquid. It is possible to mimic certain cigarette brands or add other flavors. Propylene glycol creates an odor similar to cigarette smoke. A battery-powered microprocessor lights a red-orange LED light that mimics the burning tip of a real cigarette. During combustion, the heat of around 50 – 60 degrees is generated, which heats the nicotine and provides a cigarette-like smoking experience. Although e-cigarettes are considered "safe" because they do not contain tar, the aerosol contains many harmful compounds, including nicotine and carcinogens (Börekçi et al., 2015; Özdemir & Yaman Üzümcü, 2019). Electronic cigarettes (E-cigarettes) were first launched in China in 2004 as a smoking cessation tool. In 2005 – 2006, exports started from China and spread to different countries. However, quality control of the device was inadequate, and users were found to be able to modify the device for substances such as cannabis (Anna & Prue, 2011; Börekçi et al., 2015). Community-based studies indicate that e-cigarettes are primarily used by ongoing cigarette smokers (dual use), followed by ex-smokers and those who have never smoked (Brown et al., 2014; Owusu et al., 2019; Samantha et al., 2015). Dual use with cigarettes is common, and e-cigarette usage rates are rising three times faster among youth than adults (Owusu et al., 2019). Recently, some youths who've never smoked but tried e-cigarettes continue to use them, becoming nicotine-dependent, highlighting the serious health concerns of e-cigarettes(Boyle et al., 2019; Cullen et al., 2019).

The health effects of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) have become an important research topic in recent years. Unlike conventional cigarettes, e-cigarettes deliver nicotine without combustion, which means that they can reduce exposure to potentially toxic substances. However, it is not possible to say that e-cigarettes are completely risk-free (Gülşen & Uslu, 2020). The e-cigarette aerosol contains harmful substances such as nicotine and volatile organic compounds, which can lead to negative effects, especially on the developing brains of young people. Furthermore, e-cigarette use has been associated with a number of health complications, including acute eosinophilic pneumonia, hypersensitivity pneumonitis, organized pneumonia, diffuse alveolar hemorrhage, multiple reactive pulmonary nodules, subacute bronchiolitis, myocardial infarction, and nicotine poisoning (Börekçi et al., 2015; Gülşen & Uslu, 2020; Hua & Talbot, 2016; Özdemir & Yaman Üzümcü, 2019). There have also been reports of complications from substances directly contained in the devices and injuries to the mouth, teeth, and tongue from device explosions and combustions (Gülşen & Uslu, 2020).

Marketing Strategies of the Tobacco Industry

The tobacco industry has traditionally zeroed in on susceptible groups, and its modern approaches remain consistent. Current nicotine-containing tobacco products, like e-cigarettes and heat-not-burn devices, predominantly target youths and former smokers prone to relapse. The appeal of fresh designs, diverse flavors, and an illusion of "safety" intensify their attraction. Young adults are notably more drawn to tobacco advertisements, likely to possess tobacco promotional items, and frequently visit venues with such promotions. Compared to older adults, they exhibit a heightened vulnerability to tobacco marketing. Overall, the evidence underscores young adults as a particularly sensitive target for tobacco promotion activities (Biener & Albers, 2004; WHO, 2020a). In an attempt to rebrand and appeal to a health-conscious audience, the tobacco industry often advertises certain products as "less harmful" or "reduced risk." These claims, however, can be misleading. While some products may reduce certain risks compared to traditional cigarettes, they are not without their own sets of health concerns. It's crucial for the public to critically assess these claims and rely on scientific research rather than industry-promoted information (Cappella et al., 2015; Hatsukami et al., 2004).

Prominent themes in e-cigarette marketing center around health, lifestyle, and personalization. Terms suggesting a healthier alternative, like "natural," are often employed, hinting at the contents, be it the plastics, e-liquids, or more specifically, the nicotine used (Staal et al., 2018). The attractive packaging, design aesthetics, range of colors, flavors, and tech features of these products seem tailored to pique the interest of younger audiences and novice users. Flavors added to e-liquids often resemble sweet and fruity tastes such as apple or melon, mimicking tobacco or even invoking feelings of energy (like coffee or energy drinks) or relaxation. It's vital for the public to approach these marketing strategies with skepticism, prioritizing scientific research over industry-led narratives.

Literature indicates that product marketing plays a significant role in increasing the visibility of e-cigarettes to potential users (Czoli et al., 2016; Wackowski et al., 2016). Factors that might enhance the likelihood of potential users trying e-cigarettes include the absence of health warnings on the product, the presence of various flavors, and either the lack of nicotine content or its presence in minimal amounts. Similar findings have been reported for hookah products (Jawad et al., 2015). Recently, a new marketing opportunity has emerged through social media. Retailers can easily advertise and promote their products to a broad audience via websites like Twitter and Instagram (Allem et al., 2017; Lazard et al., 2016). These marketing aspects, both inherent in the products and featured in advertisements, can lead to rapid increases in product popularity.

Advertising remains a cornerstone of the tobacco industry's modus operandi. Historically, cigarette brands have prominently sponsored sports events, concerts, and even fashion extravaganzas, aiming to weave smoking into the fabric of popular culture. The 1980s marked significant efforts by tobacco companies, such as Philip Morris and RJ Reynolds, in placing their products in movies and on TV. These companies engaged aggressive product placement agencies to promote tobacco in positive contexts in Hollywood. Efforts extended to providing free cigarettes to actors and encouraging professional photographers to capture images of actors smoking (Mekemson & Glantz, 2002).

Despite restrictive regulations in many nations, the industry adeptly exploits loopholes and shifts to platforms like social media. Exposure to tobacco-related content on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube can influence adolescents and young adults, fostering brand awareness, amplifying product allure, and altering susceptibility to tobacco use (Abroms et al., 2023). Research consistently reveals the industry's exploitation of social media to promote tobacco content, and studies link such exposure to tobacco-centric attitudes and behaviors among teens (Donaldson et al., 2022; WHO, 2020a). Recent research has illuminated a concerning trend: a majority of adolescents engage with multiple social media platforms. Those exposed to tobacco content on more than 2 platforms have been found to exhibit a higher likelihood of lifetime e-cigarette use, lifetime usage of other tobacco products, tobacco consumption in the past 30 days, and other tobacco usage in the same timeframe. Moreover, these individuals show an increased predisposition towards tobacco use compared to non-users. Given these insights, it's imperative for regulators to consider introducing legislation to restrict tobacco-related content on social media platforms. Moreover, these platforms might consider implementing safety measures to protect adolescents from such exposure (Donaldson et al., 2022).

Historically, the industry manipulated nicotine content for enhanced addictiveness, marketed flavored cigarettes to appeal to the youth, and sponsored entertainment events for product promotion. In recent times, these tactics have been refashioned with the use of social media influencers, branding that evokes youth-friendly flavors, and by advocating that their products align with a "proportionate level of harm." This underscores the industry's continual adaptability in its marketing endeavors to remain appealing to consumers (WHO, 2019d).

In Southeast Asia, tobacco corporations dominated the market by using social responsibility initiatives to favorably market themselves. These businesses presented tobacco as an opportunity for growth in an effort to dissuade governments from enacting tobacco control laws. However, in the face of resistance, businesses resorted to smuggling and legal action. These businesses are currently concentrating their efforts on Africa and other low-income nations (Amul et al., 2021).

Monitoring the Tobacco Industry

The monitoring process of the tobacco industry comprises 2 crucial components: surveillance and regulation (WHO, 2020b). In terms of regulation, the WHO assists in setting standards for the content, emissions, packaging, and labeling of tobacco products through its established networks. Two main networks are the WHO Tobacco Product Regulation Study Group (TobReg) and the WHO Tobacco Laboratory Network (TobLabNet) (WHO, 2020b). Tobacco product regulation study group (TobReg) was established in 2003 to provide the WHO with evidence-based and robust recommendations concerning tobacco product regulation. Meanwhile, TobLabNet, a global tobacco testing laboratory network established by the WHO Tobacco-Free Initiative (TFI) in 2005, focuses on advancing the testing of tobacco products based on TobReg's guidance (WHO, 2020b). The WHO's FCTC also contains measures regulating tobacco products and their descriptions and contents, with recent extensions to regulate emerging products like e-cigarettes. Another key aspect of monitoring the tobacco industry is overseeing its actions. World Health Organisation tracks the industry's interference in global tobacco control policies and documents its strategies aimed at weakening these controls (WHO, 2020b). The WHO diligently observes the industry's efforts to undermine tobacco control policies on a global scale and reports on these activities, including campaigns intended to weaken global tobacco control. The tobacco industry has developed various intervention forms to obstruct or weaken potent tobacco control policies, such as manipulating political processes, challenging proven science, and threatening governments with litigation (WHO, 2012). The preamble of the WHO FCTC highlights the need to be vigilant against the industry's attempts to thwart tobacco control efforts. All parties of the WHO FCTC have agreed on ways to halt the interventions of the tobacco industry and have accepted the principles in the guidelines (WHO, 2012). It emphasizes that there's a conflict of interest between the tobacco industry and public health policies. Measures, such as raising awareness about tobacco products, regulating interactions with the industry, and ensuring transparency, are paramount for countering the industry's interventions. Only through these measures can the industry be controlled and success against the tobacco epidemic be achieved.

In response to increasing restrictions on tobacco advertising, the tobacco industry has pivoted toward packaging design as a critical marketing tool (İlhan & Kara, 2021; TobaccoPlayBook, 2016). The packaging, including its graphic elements, colors, size, texture, and additional materials like foil and inner frames, is strategically designed to appeal especially to target demographics like women and youth (Kotnowski & Hammond, 2013; Wakefield et al., 2002). The WHO acknowledges the need for mechanisms addressing the long-term socio-economic impacts of these marketing strategies. Its FCTC provides clarity on the packaging and labeling of tobacco products, emphasizing the prohibition of misleading descriptors and the necessity of prominent health warnings. The FCTC also recommends plain packaging to reduce product appeal, hinder its use as a promotional tool, and enhance the visibility of health warnings (WHO, 2016). Although most smokers are unaware of the full health consequences, pictorial warnings, especially in low and middle-income countries, serve as an effective means of conveying these risks (Siahpush et al., 2006; TobaccoPlayBook, 2016). Australia was the first to respond to WHO's call, adopting plain packaging laws in 2012, with several other countries, including France, the UK, and Ireland, following suit (WHO, 2016). Türkiye, endorsing the FCTC's directive, implemented plain packaging in 2018, marking a significant step in tobacco control (WHO, 2019c).

Conclusion

Effective tobacco control is inherently at odds with the economic interests of the tobacco industry and affiliated entities. The industry is increasingly deploying diverse strategies to amplify its influence and penetrate global markets. The globalization of tobacco marketing, trade, research, and industry influence presents a significant worldwide threat. The primary goal of tobacco control is to prevent diseases and deaths caused by tobacco. Central to this mission is the prevention of tobacco use and facilitating cessation among users (WHO, 2000, 2012, 2023a). The tobacco industry poses a significant threat to public health, especially with its introduction of new products that might escalate tobacco consumption and related health issues. The rapid introduction of new nicotine-containing products into our lives raises significant concerns, particularly in the context of nicotine addiction. These products not only aim to entice the new generation but also to keep existing smokers within the cycle of nicotine dependence. This is a critical issue, as the industry's strategy focuses on maintaining a consistent user base, regardless of the public health implications. The targeting of young people, especially those who have never smoked, and individuals who have successfully quit smoking, represents a worrying trend. It's imperative for governments and health organizations to intensify tobacco control measures, offer comprehensive smoking cessation support, and rigorously monitor the industry's advertising techniques. Through such efforts, we can mitigate the detrimental impacts of tobacco on society.

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