

E-Cigarette Message Testing in Vietnam Guides Policymaking

Collaborative media campaigns help regulate e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products in Vietnam.

A comprehensive communication initiative, designed in close coordination with Vietnam's Ministry of Health and the Vietnam Tobacco Control Fund, shows the power of effective engagement and advocacy to drive policy and highlights the importance of message testing to guide communication strategy development.

Background

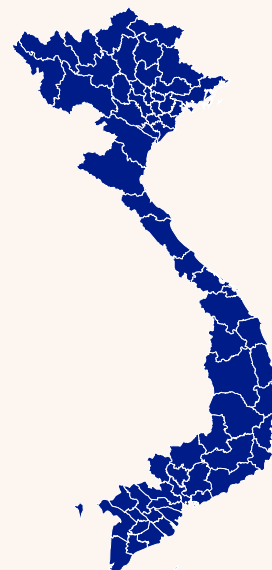
In Vietnam, e-cigarette use increased 18 times since 2019, with a large proportion of those new users aged 15 to 24 years. Vital Strategies adopted an evidence-based approach to developing a strategic communication campaign with the Vietnam Tobacco Control Fund by first seeking to better understand how electronic products were perceived by smokers and nonsmokers across the country. To achieve this, Vital and the fund conducted a message-testing study in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City with 140 people ranging from 18 to 45 years old.

While electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco products are currently not allowed to be imported or circulated in Vietnam, they are still actively advertised and traded via the internet. Recognizing the harms associated with these products, the Ministry of Health is appealing to the government to further restrict their availability to protect young people. Vital undertook an analysis to identify the most effective media channels to reach and engage youth, parents and policymakers about the harms of e-cigarettes, particularly for young people, and the need to further control these addictive products in Vietnam.

“Say No to E-Cigarettes and Heated Tobacco” Campaign

In May 2023, a national campaign, “Say No to E-Cigarettes and Heated Tobacco,” was launched to highlight the harms of e-cigarette and heated tobacco use, especially among youth, and stress the need for stronger regulation. Vital leveraged key findings from the message-testing study to guide the communication strategy and created an emotional [video](#) that was aired on national and local primetime TV across the country. The video was broadcast 60 times per day for two weeks on multiple channels and is estimated to have been seen 47 million times. It was also screened at cinemas and on LED screens in elevators in more than 2,500 office buildings.

In partnership with the Vietnam Public Health Association, the communication campaign also incorporated a social media strategy that built engagement among 5 million people. Campaign videos were shared across TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, as well as through the Smokefree Vietnam fan page [vn0koithuoc](#) and digital channels of the



Population

99,664,011 (UN, June 2023)

Smoking Prevalence

42.3% (Males), 1.7% (Females) (2020)



Youth and prominent health leaders get ready to run at the “Vietnamese Youth Say No to Tobacco and E-Cigarettes” event.

Vietnam Youth Union, to mobilize youth to encourage the Vietnamese government to further restrict electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco products.

This campaign generated media coverage in multiple Vietnamese outlets, including : [Lao Dong](#), [VN Express](#) and [Suckhoe & Doisong](#). A well-attended press conference further amplified the cause, with interviews, news stories and op-eds that ran in national media outlets generating publicity with an advertising value equivalent to US \$200,000 and reaching more than 2.4 million people.

Community Mobilization

The strategic communication campaign also integrated mobilization activities to engage youth and parents, particularly women. After the campaign launch, the Vietnam Youth Union held a high-profile running event in the popular Thong Nhat Park in Hanoi. About 500 youth and several leaders from the Ministry of Health, World Health Organization and the National Assembly

participated, with runners wearing shirts that read “Vietnamese Youth Say No to E-cigarettes.” An ongoing virtual running event will continue to encourage participants across the country to stay active over the next three months. An online pledge calling for youth to not use tobacco or e-cigarettes drew over 205,000 signatures, showcasing signers’ desire to prevent the availability of harmful products to protect the future.

Similarly, the Vietnam Women’s Union amplified the message to its 20 million members across the country’s 63 provinces. The Women’s Union is asking women across the country to actively show their support for the government to further restrict these products in Vietnam.

This case study is part of a series highlighting our work in the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use in priority countries.

About Vital Strategies

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. We work with governments and civil society in more than 73 countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle their most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale as rapidly as possible. To find out more, please visit www.vitalstrategies.org or Twitter @VitalStrat.