

# Tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS) strategies implemented by Philip Morris International (PMI) in Colombia

## Case Study: Marlboro Cigarettes at the Estéreo Picnic Festival (EPF), 2022-2024


### Synthesis

PMI is always trying to attract new customers (particularly youth) because its products kill so many of its users. To do so, it has openly skirted regulations against TAPS, and attempted to rebrand its image with tobacco and nicotine products that it alleges are “less harmful”.

One of the tactics Big Tobacco giant PMI uses in Global South countries, like Colombia, is sponsoring music festivals, such as the EPF -one of the most important musical events in Latin America-, which takes place every year in Colombia<sup>1</sup>, despite the fact that Colombian law prohibits all forms of TAPS.

Corporate Accountability and its Campaign for Tobacco Control (Latin America Program) monitored PMI’s TAPS strategies during the 2022-2024 festivals. Our findings raise concerns about the ethics and legality of the corporation’s sponsorship.

### Key facts

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- ▶ Marlboro remains the world's best-selling cigarette brand, and its share of the global market increased from 9.2% to 9.8% in the last decade<sup>2</sup>.
  - ▶ Advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of cigarettes and other tobacco products is prohibited in Colombia.
  - ▶ PMI uses the EPF as a channel to promote its Marlboro brand combustible cigarettes and variants.
  - ▶ There was evidence of the presence of minors at the 2022, 2023, and 2024 EPFs, which has raised concern about the exposure of this vulnerable group (specially protected under the Colombian Constitution) to cigarette advertising and promotion.

1. Source (visit 6/05/24): <<https://bit.ly/3UNmVkt>>.

2. Source (visit 6/05/24): <<http://bit.ly/3WAo7t1>>.

## Main findings

2022



### **EPF 2022 - Direct advertising and promotion of Marlboro cigarettes and variants (i.e Marlboro Vista, different flavors):**

There are stands that exclusively sell Marlboro and its variants between the music stages, while models wearing brand colors circulate around the festival promoting these products.

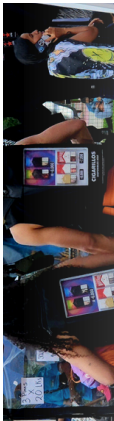
2023



### **EPF 2023 - Direct advertising and promotion of Marlboro, L&M, and variants:**

A shared promotional campaign was carried out between Marlboro and L&M and its variants, although with more prevalence of Marlboro colors. The mobile points and fixed stands continued, but on this occasion, they displayed giant packages, and the models wore a belt displaying cigarette packaging, with a more colorful uniform.

2024

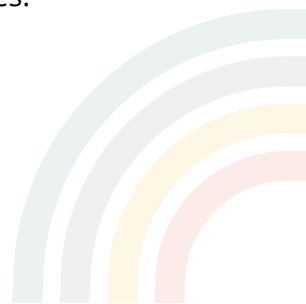


### **EPF 2024 - Advertising and direct promotion of Marlboro in the surroundings of Simón Bolívar Park:**

For the first time, the EPF was held in Simón Bolívar Park, in the heart of Bogotá, Colombia. (Previous events were on the outskirts of the city.) Exclusive campaigns promoting Marlboro and its variants with models dressed by the brand, with belts with packages, suitcases with packages, and notices of availability and price, were positioned at key points and in the access lines. The models declared that they did not sell cigarettes, but only advertised them.

## Conclusions

- *Despite Colombian legislation banning TAPS, PMI uses the EPF to advertise and promote Marlboro cigarettes.*
- *PMI's presence at the EPF reflects the tobacco industry's ongoing efforts to associate its products with popular culture and target the youth market.*
- *PMI's promotion of Marlboro at the youth-oriented festival undermines the corporation's claims that its focus is on switching adult smokers from traditional cigarettes to other tobacco and nicotine products.*
- *PMI continues to market traditional cigarettes in Colombia after its introduction of IQOS-Heets, reaffirming that its main business is still the sale of traditional cigarettes.*



## Recommendations



**The government of Colombia** *should strengthen* enforcement of existing regulations prohibiting TAPS at cultural and public events, including the EPF. Likewise, **governments in the Latin American region** *should integrate* the lessons from this case study and *align and implement* their regulations to the WHO FCTC.



**The government of Colombia and governments in the Latin American region** *should encourage* collaboration between local authorities, civil society, and health experts to monitor and evaluate alignment with tobacco control regulations and take corrective action when necessary.



**The government of Colombia and governments in the Latin American region** *should promote* public awareness of the health risks associated with the consumption of tobacco and nicotine products, and the importance of protecting youth from exposure to tobacco advertising and promotion.



**EPF organizers** *should review* the relationship with its sponsors, *terminate* the relationship with **PMI** as a sponsor of the festival, and *fully observe* the Colombian tobacco control law.



**PMI** *should stop* using its ill-intentioned TAPS strategies and *should respect and observe* the rigorous measures of the WHO FCTC in all countries in which it operates.



To read the full report, visit: [bit.ly/3VnUj8](https://bit.ly/3VnUj8)

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### Disclaimer:

The references in this Executive Summary can be validated by consulting: Arcila, J., Dorado, D., Valdivieso, D. *Tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS) strategies for tobacco products implemented by Philip Morris International (PMI) in Colombia. Case Study: Marlboro Cigarettes at the Estéreo Picnic Festival (EPF), 2022-2024.* Corporate Accountability.

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