

Political appeals in tobacco marketing: Tucker Carlson unveils Alp nicotine pouch brand on X

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Tucker Carlson is an American conservative political commentator, writer and a former Fox News political talk show host. Currently, he hosts The Tucker Carlson Show, one of the most popular political podcasts in the USA.¹ His influence in digital media is evident in his 15.7 million followers on X; 2.3 million followers on TikTok; and millions of followers on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. Beyond political commentary and interviews, Tucker Carlson is using social media to promote his new brand of nicotine pouches Alp (American Lip Pillow) introduced in the US market in November 2024.²⁻⁴

Tucker Carlson launched Alp in partnership (50/50 joint venture) with Turning Point Brands, which manufactures FRE nicotine pouches.³ Alp is described as a tobacco leaf-free, smoke-free product.^{5 6} It is available in a range of flavours (Chilled Mint, Mountain Wintergreen, Tropical Fruit, etc) and strengths (3 mg, 6 mg and 9 mg) and is sold online on its official website, online marketplaces (vaporbeast.com, dripflavors.com) and via wholesale. The Alppouch.com website features invitations to join an affiliate programme that offers a 10% commission to influencers who promote the brand on social media.⁷

Until recently, Tucker Carlson was a prominent spokesperson for Zyn nicotine pouches.^{4 8 9} In his social media posts and advertisements promoting his new product, Alp, Carlson claims that he decided to enter the tobacco business and no longer supports Zyn due to Zyn manufacturer Philip Morris International's alleged support of the Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris.^{2 4} Promotional messages on Carlson's X account claim that Alp is 'better than anything Kamala Harris-supporting Zyn corporation has ever produced,' compare Zyn pouches to 'disgusting and possibly immoral teabags' and describe them as more appropriate for Taylor Swift concert attendees rather than 'people who don't want to buy products from a company that hates them and their culture'.² The official @Alppouch X account features images of US President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance, the American flag and the newly launched Alp meme coin (**figure 1**).^{10 11}

This messaging exemplifies a growing trend among consumer businesses to blend political cues into product marketing^{12 13} and a larger trend of businesses taking public stances on political issues.¹²⁻¹⁶ Until recently, overt appeals to promote tobacco brands based on political party affiliation have not been widely used. However, nearly 100

years ago, somewhat similar approaches were used to attract new consumers when Great American Tobacco hired young women to smoke their 'torches of freedom' (Lucky Strikes) as they marched down Fifth Avenue in New York protesting women's inequality.¹⁷ As partisan polarisation deepens in the USA, companies see an opportunity to draw in consumers on the basis of strongly held political identities, with the aim to attract new consumers and cultivate loyalty among devoted customers with matching beliefs.^{18 19} Prior research demonstrates that while such politically charged messaging may alienate some existing customers, it can also activate and attract new consumers who strongly identify with the political stance.¹² Such marketing tactics can be effective as they do not always result in equivalent counter-boycotts from (or reduced consumption by) members of opposing political groups.¹²

The recent actions by Alp raise concern as these marketing strategies, coupled with use of social

**WARNING: This product contains nicotine.
Nicotine is an addictive chemical.**



Figure 1 Alp Pouch Promotion by the @AlpPouch account on X. Caption: 'Photo made by the members of the ALP Movement.' Note: Advertisement is publicly available at <https://x.com/alppouch/status/1865131850185711659/photo/1> Retrieved on 10 December 2024.

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media, may introduce new users to nicotine products, particularly among targeted population subgroups, with three-quarters of X users reporting exposure to political content on the platform and Republican users being more likely than Democrats to report using X to keep up with politics.²⁰

The implications of such strategies for tobacco-related health disparities are unknown. Existing approaches to framing health equity and disparities within demographic and socioeconomic categories like race/ethnicity, age and income might be less relevant as companies use political framing to target audiences. Thus, approaches to understanding how tobacco marketing strategies use audience segmentation may need to be extended to account for the role of political identity to more accurately assess implications for disparities in marketing exposure and tobacco use. Future studies should explore whether or to what extent such marketing strategies might help or harm the polarised individuals.

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