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# How Big Tobacco Uses F1 to Bypass Dutch Efforts to Protect Citizens, Youth

Case Study

This case study has been updated since its original inclusion in "[Driving Addiction: A Race for Future Generations](#)"

**The Netherlands has tough laws that limit tobacco advertising, but the tobacco industry still finds ways to promote risky products to racing fans there.**

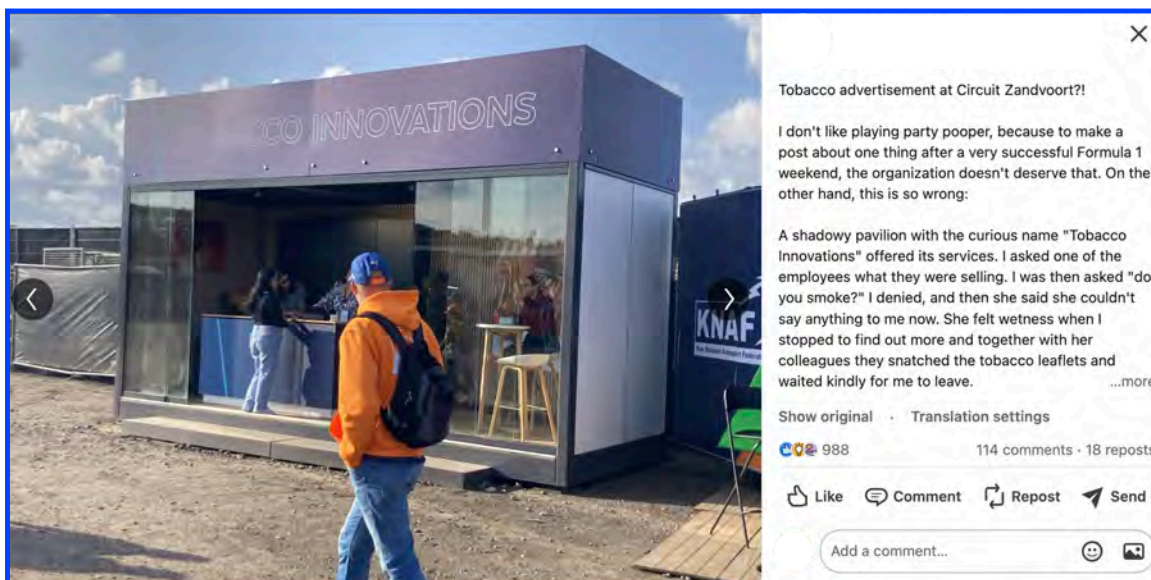
**In 2023, months after Dutch lawmakers announced plans to ban the sale of nicotine pouches, the McLaren cars of two of the world's most popular Formula One drivers took to the Dutch Grand Prix in Zandvoort with ads for Velo, British American Tobacco's addictive nicotine pouch brand.**

In addition to Velo branding on the halo and front wing, the sidepods of the cars featured the anagram, "Love." A tactic first used at the 2022 Dutch Grand Prix, the "Love" branding is comprised of fans' names, gathered as part of a global BAT/McLaren competition targeting fans young and old on social media.

Dutch health organizations filed complaints with their country's advertising authority, with KWF Dutch Cancer Society director Carla van Gils issuing a strongly worded statement: "The tobacco industry is doing everything in its power to keep young people addicted in order to keep this sickening and deadly business going. ... We find it bizarre that it is allowed to advertise a product that is banned."

Following the public outcry, the cars' Velo branding disappeared from the 2024 Dutch Grand Prix. Still, BAT's Vuse and Velo branding appeared on images of the McLaren cars in the official virtual program for the race.

The 2024 Dutch Grand Prix also saw a new development: A doctor and F1 enthusiast attending the race posted images to social media alerting health advocates to a mysterious new [“Tobacco Innovations” kiosk](#), promoting the industry’s products. Representatives staffing the kiosk declined to give the doctor information when he told them he didn’t smoke, so he was unable to learn more about which products they were promoting.



A LinkedIn post from a doctor and F1 enthusiast revealed the presence of a “Tobacco Innovations” kiosk at the 2024 Dutch Grand Prix. PMI officials later acknowledged it was their operation.

Zandvoort city officials denounced the kiosk, while race organizers told newspaper Haarlems Dagblad that [they had to allow it](#) due to contractual obligations with Formula One.

This suggests F1 itself has struck a global deal with Big Tobacco, in addition to the team-specific sponsorships, to profit from helping tobacco companies reach the sport’s fans. Cigarette giant Philip Morris International later acknowledged the stand was its operation, but the company said it sold only “smoke-free tobacco products” and was not in violation of any laws or regulations.

The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority is investigating the matter to determine if the stand violated Dutch advertising laws, [it reportedly said in August 2024](#).

The newspaper De Telegraaf also reported on a “special afternoon with Max’ in the VIP box of tobacco manufacturer Philip Morris,” tapping into the popularity of local hero Max Verstappen, who drives for Red Bull (which is not sponsored by PMI).

It is not clear whether Verstappen visited the box, but tobacco companies use hospitality invitations to forge relationships with influential people, and the news report confirms two former Dutch politicians were PMI’s guests at the race.

In the article, a journalist for De Telegraaf, also PMI’s guest, repeated a tobacco company executive’s comment about the company’s “smoke-free” alternatives in his report, helping PMI’s questionable claims reach a wider audience.

The Dutch Grand Prix shows that even in nations with strong laws to protect public health, F1 helps Big Tobacco engage with people who can help it influence policy, reach fans of all ages and mislead the public about its risky, addictive products.