

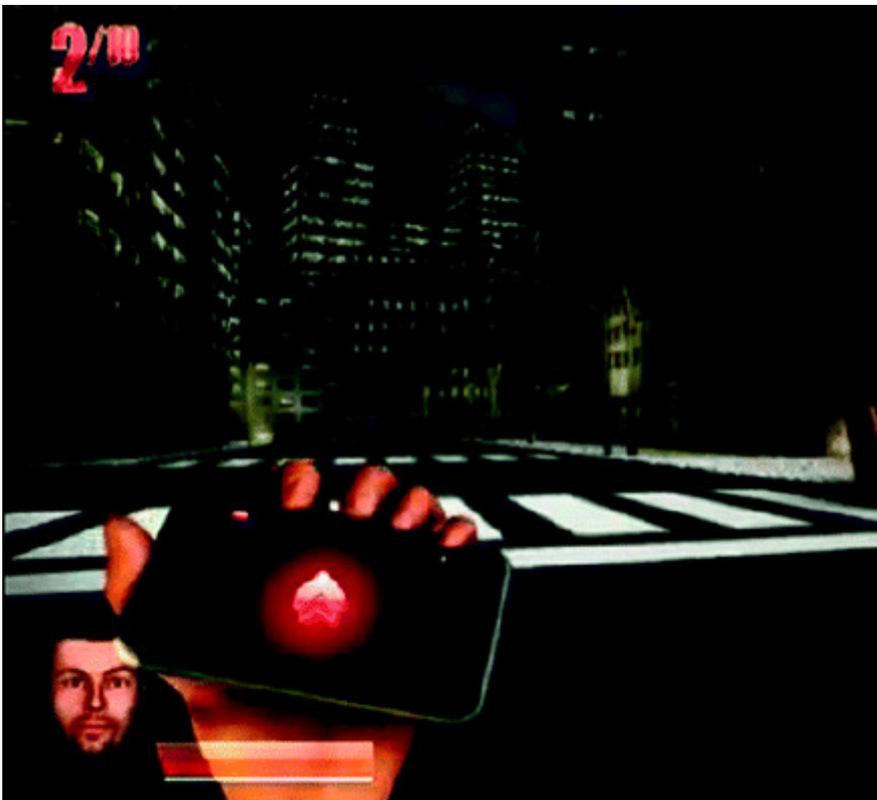
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Brazil: Marlboro interactive games promotion

Health advocates in Brazil have been disturbed to find that games machines may have been promoting a cigarette brand to young people. A film clip on the website YouTube alerted health officials to a new gaming machine apparently promoting Marlboro cigarettes on the type of machines that are now commonly taken by young promotion agents into clubs, bars and other locations frequented by young people. In a game called Night Runner, players evidently had to try to catch a moving Marlboro logo on screen to win a variety of prizes, including invitations to closed parties, and apparently also tokens, though no details of these have yet emerged. It seems that the machines may also be able to gather information for sending email messages to players at a later date; if these were to promote cigarettes, they would be against the law, as would any attempt to get children to use the machines.

The gaming machines are supplied by a company called Pixellabs, which specialises in helping its clients to promote their products and services using a wide range of new media. A recent marketing industry news report noted that Philip Morris (PM) was using interactive platforms developed by Pixellabs to publicise Marlboro.

The Aliança de Controle do Tabagismo (ACT Br)—the Brazilian alliance for tobacco control—has filed a complaint with the consumer's rights office of São Paulo, asking it to investigate PM for alleged breach of several sections of Brazil's tobacco control law. Whatever the outcome, it is clear that for all the protestations of the multinational tobacco companies that they have changed, there is clearly a long way to go before they are successfully prevented from undertaking all activities that link tobacco with anything attractive to young people.



Brazil: a scene from an interactive game featuring Marlboro cigarettes' distinctive logo.