

Study highlights impact of e-cigarette marketing on young people

November 27 2013



Celebrity endorsements and social media are attracting young people to use e-cigarettes according to a new University of Stirling report.

The University's award winning [social marketing](#) researchers analysed nearly 1000 individual pieces of marketing collected over 13 months.

They found a long list of marketing techniques such as online promotions that use competitions, apps on mobile phones and group discount vouchers for e-cigarettes – all likely to appeal to [young people](#).

"E-cigarettes and other alternative nicotine delivery devices are probably much safer than conventional cigarettes, and so if smokers switch to

them many lives could be saved," said Professor Gerard Hastings OBE, Director of the University's Centre for Tobacco Control Research.

"But the market is looking to make money, not improve public health, and this is creating many dangers. The fact that multinational tobacco companies are moving in on this market is of particular concern - from past experience we know they are deceitful, determined and deeply detrimental to public health.

"E-cigarettes could provide them with the cover they need to regain the powerful position they once had - in which case a Trojan horse will rapidly become a Trojan hearse."

Without clear regulation on how e-cigarettes can be marketed, manufacturers are advertising on TV, billboards, buses, online, in computer games and in magazines as well as using a range of cosmetic touches such as colourful and innovative packaging and flavours such as strawberry, apple and cherry that give their products appeal to young people.

Sponsorship for a range of sports including motor and power boat racing was also highlighted as a prominent promotional strategy used by a number of independent e-cigarette companies.

E-cigarettes are described as being promoted on the way to exclusive events such as Glastonbury, on company websites, specialist shops, concessions and e-lounges where people can buy and 'smoke' e-cigarettes. For young non-smokers and social smokers, e-cigarettes are positioned as socially attractive and part of a rapidly growing trend.

The report also raises serious concerns that the [tobacco industry](#) will use e-cigarettes to gain access to politicians and [public health policy](#) makers, and gaining influence and respectability.

Stirling Impact Fellow Dr Marisa de Andrade, added: "E-cigarette marketing has grown exponentially in the UK over the last 18 months. The tobacco industry's increasing interest in this market and attempts to engage with policy makers and the [public health](#) community are a major concern.

"We need to ensure these 'next generation products' do not usher in the next generation of smokers – an e-cigarette advert recently appeared in an iPad children's game. These are worrying developments and swift action is needed."

A public consultation on e-cigarette marketing is scheduled for 2014 by the Committees of Advertising Practice to decide what level of advertising controls are needed.

This has been welcomed by *Cancer Research UK*, which commissioned the report and is now calling for children to be protected from unregulated marketing of these products.

Alison Cox, Cancer Research UK's head of tobacco policy, said: "Tobacco cigarettes cause one in four cancer deaths. Hundreds of children start smoking every day and we don't want the marketing of e-cigarettes to confuse the message that smoking kills. We aren't opposed to e-cigarettes being marketed to adult smokers – and hope that the marketing effort encourages many smokers to give up.

"There's evidence in the report - particularly on [social media](#) - of e-cigs being promoted as cool and the latest thing and applying all the kinds of marketing ploys that would be used to attract a youth [market](#) including involving pop stars, computer games and one e-cig company even sponsoring a football youth team's strip.

"It's too long to wait until 2016 when [e-cigarettes](#) are due to fall under

medical licensing regulation that might help to address these concerns. The government should move faster."

Stirling's ground-breaking social marketing research into the effects of tobacco, alcohol and food marketing on the health of young people was recognised on Friday with the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education.

Provided by University of Stirling

Citation: Study highlights impact of e-cigarette marketing on young people (2013, November 27) retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-11-highlights-impact-e-cigarette-young-people.html>

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