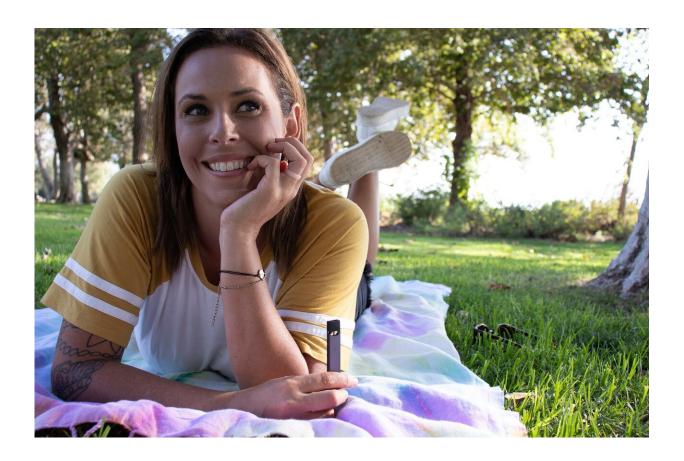


## Proliferation of JUUL-related content on Instagram likely to appeal to the young

July 2 2019



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

There has been a proliferation of JUUL-related content on the photo and video sharing social media service, Instagram, that is likely to appeal to young people, reveals research published online in the journal *Tobacco* 



## Control.

The posts feature product promotion, nicotine and addiction content, and references to youth culture, the analysis shows.

In the US, digital marketing of e-cigarettes on <u>social media</u> is unregulated, leaving the way clear for the vaping industry to aggressively market products like JUUL to <u>young people</u>, who are the heaviest users of social media platforms, say the researchers.

JUUL is a high tech vaping device that resembles a computer flash drive. It comprises a <u>rechargeable battery</u> and detachable pods—nicotine cartridges that come in various flavours.

Amid growing concerns about the increasing popularity of JUUL and other e-cigarette products and their potential to addict a new generation to nicotine, the researchers set out to analyse the amount and characteristics of JUUL-related posts on Instagram.

In all, they retrieved 14,838 relevant posts from 5201 individual users between 1 March and 15 May 2018, including all posts on the official JUUL account before it was deleted in November 2018.

Using a combination of machine learning methods, keyword algorithms, and human coding, primary posts were classified as featuring content related to product promotion; nicotine and addiction; youth culture, including memes, celebrities and music; and lifestyle, including social activities or identities.

A third of the posts (34%) contained overt promotional content that highlighted ways to obtain products at reduced cost, such as freebies and incentivised friend-tagging.



Around one in 10 (11%) of the posts contained information related to nicotine and addiction. These featured memes and hashtags about the positive effects of nicotine and compared nicotine's addictive nature to chocolate cravings or binge-watching Netflix.

Over half the posts (55%) featured youth culture or lifestyle-related (57%) content.

Youth-related <u>content</u> or lifestyle appeals were obvious within promotional posts and nicotine- and addiction-related posts.

"These findings bear a striking resemblance to the tactics used by the traditional tobacco industry to promote smoking as a socially acceptable behaviour and normalise the 'positive aspects of smoking and <u>nicotine</u>'," they write.

JUUL recently closed its official Instagram account, but voluntary action alone might not be enough, say the researchers, given the burgeoning category of JUUL-like e-cigarettes coming to market.

"Strong regulatory action is needed to restrict promotional efforts for ecigarette products, particularly within social media platforms where youth participation is high," they conclude.

**More information:** Characterising JUUL-related posts on Instagram, *Tobacco Control* (2019). DOI: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2018-052824

## Provided by British Medical Journal

Citation: Proliferation of JUUL-related content on Instagram likely to appeal to the young (2019, July 2) retrieved 9 April 2024 from



 $\frac{https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-07-proliferation-juul-related-content-instagram-appeal.html}{}$ 

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.