

# Social media adverts impact vaping behaviors among young people, study shows

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Viewing e-cigarette advertisements and content on social media—often endorsed by celebrities and social media influencers—is fueling the popularity of vaping among young users, according to a study from researchers at the University of York.

The work is [published](#) in the journal *PLOS Global Public Health*.

In their [review](#), which included 11 research studies looking at social media networks such as Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram, the researchers found evidence that commonly used marketing strategies for e-cigarettes resulted in more users and more intentions to use the products among [young people](#).

They also found these strategies resulted in more young people starting to vape and increased how much vaping took place overall.

Some of these [marketing strategies](#) included celebrity and social media influencer sponsorship, and a focus on the appeal of e-liquids, including flavors and nicotine levels, were observed.

Lead author of the study, Luana Chacon Santos from the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, said, "It's becoming clear that the normalization of e-cigarettes among young people could lead to a repeat of the harmful pattern we saw in the old tobacco industry. Social media platforms have become a strong marketplace for the sale of e-cigarettes, and stricter laws to tackle this area are needed urgently."

The researchers looked at studies analyzing the effects of social media promotion of e-cigarettes on individuals over the age of 10 years old from English-speaking countries.

Most of the studies included in the review were conducted in the United States, where there has been a rise in vaping research, possibly linked to a 2019 outbreak of hospitalizations and deaths from lung injury associated with [e-cigarette](#) use, or vaping.

Dr. Su Golder, Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, said, "In a scoping review, it's common to see

several different substories emerging—but it was notable that all of our studies said the same thing. Seeing this type of promotion does affect young people; as a result, they are more likely to experiment with, start or even increase vaping habits. While it's tempting to say more research is needed, we've already got a very clear indication here of what is happening, and action is needed sooner rather than later."

The UK Government has recently announced it will bring in measures to ban disposable vapes, as well as the ways they are marketed to children in shops. However, these do not include targeting social media campaigns.

Santos added, "Any measures to reduce underage access should include restricting these products online on social media."

**More information:** L. Chacon et al, The commercial promotion of electronic cigarettes on social media and its influence on positive perceptions of vaping and vaping behaviours in Anglophone countries: A scoping review, *PLOS Global Public Health* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pgph.0002736](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0002736)

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