

Understanding the Strategies Underpinning the Marketing of E-Cigarettes: A Content Analysis of Video Advertisements

Authors : Laura Struik, Sarah Dow-Fleisner, Robert Janke

Abstract : Introduction: The use of e-cigarettes, also known as vaping, has risen exponentially among North American youth and young adults (YYA) in recent years and has become a critical public health concern. The marketing strategies used by e-cigarette companies have been associated with the uptick in use among YYA, with video advertisements on TV and other electronic platforms being the most pervasive strategy. It is unknown if or how these advertisements capitalize on the recently documented multi-faceted influences that contribute to the initiation of vaping among this demographic (e.g., stress, anxiety, gender, peers, etc.), which is examined in this study. Methods: This content analysis is phase one of a two-phased research project that aims to inform meaningful approaches to anti-vaping messaging and campaigns. As part of this first phase, a scoping review has been conducted to identify various influences (environmental, cognitive, contextual, social, and emotional) on e-cigarette uptake among YYA. The results of this scoping review will inform the development of a coding framework to analyze the multiple influences present in vaping advertisements, as seen on two popular television channels (Discovery and AMC). In addition, advertisement characteristics will be incorporated into the coding framework (e.g., the number of people present, demographic details, context, and setting, etc.), and analyzed. Findings: Findings will reveal the types of influences being leveraged in vaping advertisements, and identify the underlying messages that may be particularly attractive to YYA. This will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how e-cigarette companies market their products and to whom. The results will also inform the next phase of this research project, which will encompass an analysis of anti-vaping advertisements and how the underpinning strategies align with those of the pro-vaping advertisements. Conclusions: Findings of this study will bring forward important implications for developing effective anti-vaping messages, and assist public health professionals in providing more comprehensive prevention and cessation support as it relates to e-cigarette use. Understanding which marketing strategies e-cigarette companies use is vital to our understanding of how to combat them. Findings will inform recommendations for public health efforts aimed at curbing e-cigarette use among YYA, and ultimately contribute to the health and well-being of YYA.

Keywords : e-cigarettes, youth and young adults, advertisements, public health

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