Title
Image examples of marketing claims to accompany “Smoking Revolution”. A Content Analysis of Electronic Cigarette Retail Websites

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/09g206qz

Journal
American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 46(4)

Authors
Grana, Rachel A.
Ling, Pamela M.

Publication Date
2014
Image examples of marketing claims to accompany “Smoking Revolution”
A Content Analysis of Electronic Cigarette Retail Websites

Rachel A. Grana, PhD, MPH, Pamela M. Ling, MD, MPH

From the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, Cardiovascular Research Institute (Grana, Ling), and Division of General Internal Medicine, Department of Medicine (Ling), University of California San Francisco, San Francisco, California

December, 2013

Address correspondence to: Pamela M. Ling, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Medicine, Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, Division of General Internal Medicine, Department of Medicine, University of California San Francisco, 530 Parnassus Ave., Suite 366 San Francisco CA 94143. E-mail: pling@medicine.ucsf.edu.
ABSTRACT (reprinted from the article)

Background: Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) have been increasingly available and marketed in the U.S. since 2007. As patterns of product adoption are frequently driven and reinforced by marketing, it is important to understand the marketing claims encountered by consumers.

Purpose: To describe the main advertising claims made on branded e-cigarette retail websites.

Methods: Websites were retrieved from two major search engines in 2011 using iterative searches with the following terms: electronic cigarette, e-cigarette, e-cig, and personal vaporizer. Fifty-nine websites met inclusion criteria, and 13 marketing claims were coded for main marketing messages in 2012.

Results: Ninety-five percent of the websites made explicit or implicit health-related claims, 64% had a smoking cessation-related claim, 22% featured doctors, and 76% claimed that the product does not produce secondhand smoke. Comparisons to cigarettes included claims that e-cigarettes were cleaner (95%) and cheaper (93%). Eighty-eight percent stated that the product could be smoked anywhere and 71% mentioned using the product to circumvent clean air policies. Candy, fruit, and coffee flavors were offered on most sites. Youthful appeals included images or claims of modernity (73%), increased social status (44%), enhanced social activity (32%), romance (31%), and use by celebrities (22%).

Conclusions: Health claims and smoking cessation messages that are unsupported by current scientific evidence are frequently used to sell e-cigarettes. Implied and overt health claims, the presence of doctors on websites, celebrity endorsements, and the use of characterizing flavors should be prohibited.
Appendix to Table 1:

1. **Health Related Claim**
   
   Definition: Conveys health benefit, reduced harm, and/or no harm to one’s health from using the product (e.g., references to “tar” and other compounds in tobacco that are harmful, “healthier,” or “breathe easier,” pictures of doctors and other health symbols)

smokestik.com
2. **Cessation-related claim.** Conveys the product will help a tobacco smoker to quit smoking (e.g., explicit statements that the products can be used to quit smoking; use the product to cut down, switch completely, and never smoke again).
3. **Ability to smoke anywhere claim.** Refers to ability to use the product anywhere or almost anywhere. Often includes lists of places where tobacco smoking is restricted: offices, planes, bars, and restaurants.
4. **Ability to circumvent smoke-free policies claim.** Indicates that the products may be used to circumvent “smoke-free laws,” “smoke-free rules,” “clean indoor air regulations,” or “smoking bans.”
5. **Products do not expose others to secondhand smoke claim.** Conveys that other people will not be harmed or have negative health consequences from being exposed to the vapor, or that the vapor is “safe.” Includes claims that the vapor is not like secondhand smoke and that products will not bother or annoy non-smokers.

![Image of advertisement](https://example.com/advertisement.png)
6. **Cleaner than tobacco smoking claim.** Depicts the product as cleaner to use than tobacco products (e.g., no ash, won’t stain teeth, fingers, fingernails, or make hair smell).

When the e-fag user inhales on the mouthpiece (the filter end of the electronic cigarette cartridge) a tiny vapouriser is activated. This heats some e-liquid and releases a small amount of vapour from the e-liquid. Then the vapour is inhaled, and this whole process is termed ‘vaping’. According to e-fag users, the hit to the lungs is very similar to that which you get when inhaling a conventional cigarette.

Among the big advantages e-fag smokers gain are that, while conventional smoking is banned in many public places and frowned upon in many private homes, ‘vaping’ is not illegal. The vapour is relatively pleasant, so you won’t be treated like a social leper any more, amongst your non-smoker friends.

As an e-fag user, you can have a clear social conscience. Only a tiny quantity of nicotine is exhaled, as your lungs absorb most of it before it escapes back into the atmosphere surrounding the ‘vaper’. You are not guilty of making others breathe in second-hand smoke. Then you can add this big advantage - that you are not going to make your clothes, your hair, house or car all smoky yellow and stinky. You’ll be feeling positively saintly by now!

Electoniccigarettedirect.co.uk
7. **Cheaper than tobacco products or nicotine replacement therapies claim.** Convey that using the e-cigarette product is cheaper or will save the user money and/or provide a better monetary value than using tobacco or nicotine replacement therapies (e.g., nicotine patch or gum).
8. **Environmentally Friendly claim.** Conveys the product is environmentally friendly, eco-friendly, and/or produces less waste than tobacco products (i.e., cigarette butts). Also images that signify environmental friendliness (e.g., recycling signs, clean earth pictures/graphics, leaves and trees, and lush, green outdoors imagery).
9. **Fire safe alternative to tobacco cigarettes claim.** Indicates the product is safer than tobacco products in terms of fire safety (e.g., “the product cannot light an accidental fire since there is no combustion.” “There is no fire or flame.”)
10. **Increased ability to socialize claim.** Indicates one will have increased friendship, increased ability to spend time with friends, especially nonsmokers, and increased opportunity to party or hang out in bars with friends by using the product. These claims might explicitly state the product is “social.”
11. **Increased social status claim.** Associates the products with higher class, higher standing in society, looking “cool” or like a “trendsetter,” increased social acceptability, and/or that the product will lessen the stigma associated with smoking cigarettes (e.g., “using the product helps me to avoid dirty looks from non-smokers” or “to avoid the stigma of tobacco smoking” or “power smoker”) and luxury imagery like nice gloves or jewelry and wearing suits.
12. **Increased romantic involvement claim.** Depict greater ability to find/keep a romantic partner or engage in romantic/sexual encounters. (e.g., get more dates, increased ability to attract opposite sex, pictures of models in sexy clothing, pictures of close/intimate interactions like kissing, cuddling, and hugging).
13. **Modern, technologically advanced claim.** Messages that describe the products, and using them, as modern and/or technologically advanced (e.g., state-of-the-art, new, hip, cool, revolutionary, modern, sophisticated, advanced, latest, cutting-edge, and futuristic)
Multiple claims:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Vaporking.com</th>
<th>Tobacco Cigarettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Smoke</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Tar</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Ash</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Bad Breath</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Odors or Staining</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 2nd Hand Smoke</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Carbon Monoxide</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free from Smoking Bans</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known Cancerous Agents</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains Nicotine</td>
<td>YES AS LOW AS $10</td>
<td>YES AS HIGH AS $60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per Carton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Cost estimate is based on (10 bottles of eLiquid for 100.00) deal found [here](#)