

ASHES, Vol. 20(13) - Advertising for the youth: How specific advertisement features influence e-cigarette appeal

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While younger Americans report using cigarettes at lower rates than previous generations, nearly six percent of all middle and high school students in the U.S. report [e-cigarette use](#). The reasons for the shift from smoking to vaping are unclear but likely relate to new [marketing and advertising](#) practices that target youth. It is important to evaluate the effects of these ads so decisionmakers can better address the risks for youth e-cigarette use. This week, ASHES reviews a [study by Julia Chen-Sankey and colleagues](#) that explored how different e-cigarette advertisement features influence product appeal among young adults.

What was the research question?

How do common features of e-cigarette advertisements influence product appeal among young adults?

What did the researchers do?

The research team recruited 1,993 non-tobacco-using¹ young adults (aged 18-29) for a survey. This survey featured 12 print e-cigarette advertisements (e.g., advertisements from magazines) that included common marketing features (e.g., showing people, promoting discounts, nicotine content warnings). Participants [clicked on areas of the screen](#) that drew their attention, which indicated that participants *noticed* the feature in that area. Participants also indicated their perceptions of each ad/e-cigarette. The research team then explored the associations between noticing specific features and product appeal using [generalized estimating equation](#) models.

What did they find?

Several advertising features influenced e-cigarette product appeal. For example, participants who noticed claims of positive experiences, discount information, and certain flavors in the ad were more likely to report that the product was

appealing. Nicotine warnings, on the other hand, reduced the likelihood that a product would have appeal (see Figure).

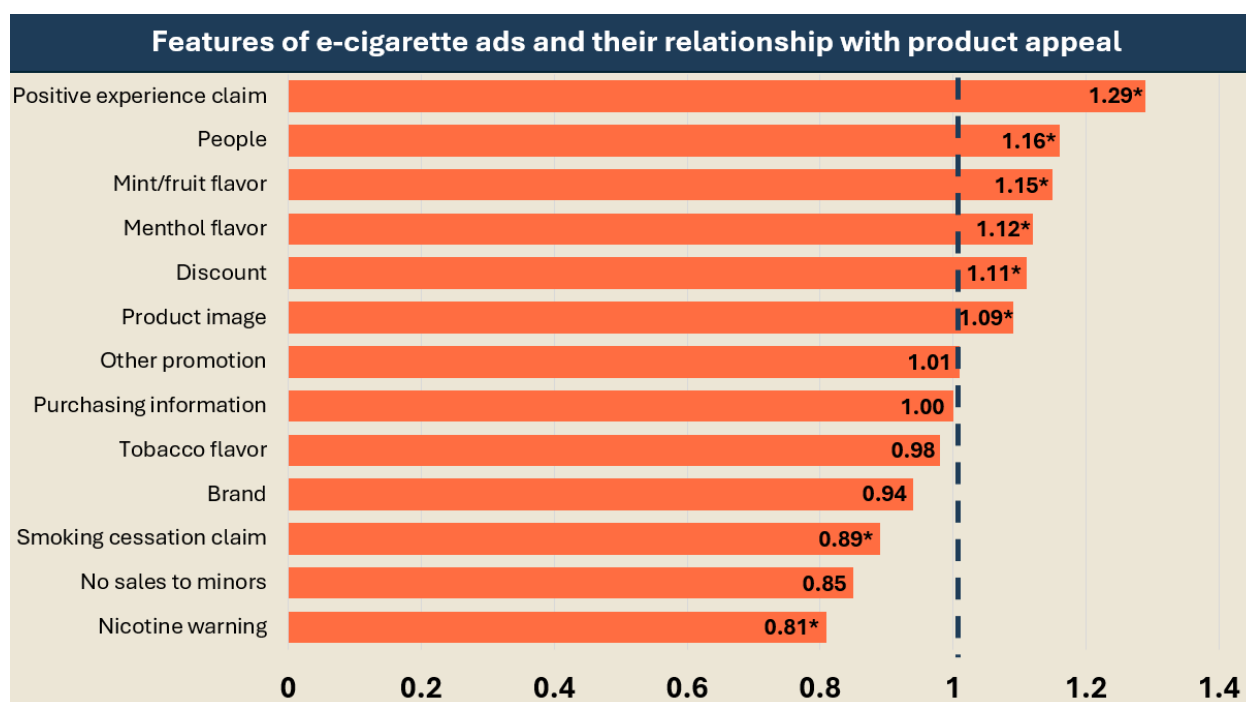


Figure. Displays the adjusted odds ratios for the effect of selected e-cigarette ad features on product appeal. For example, participants who saw advertisements that promoted mint/fruit flavors had 1.15 times greater odds of finding the product appealing. *indicates that the relationship was [statistically significant](#). Click image to enlarge.

Why do these findings matter?

These findings can inform decisions about how to regulate tobacco advertising because they highlight specific features that drive product appeal. Policymakers may seek to discourage these types of promotions in the future. This study also showed that nicotine warnings decreased interest in using e-cigarettes, providing support for legislation that [requires these warnings](#).

Every study has limitations. What are the limitations in this study?

Though no participants actively used tobacco, some had previously done so. It is possible that these past experiences influenced participants' perceptions of advertisements. Additionally, the study only focused on a few select features and did not account for other factors that may have influenced product appeal such as color and other visual cues.

For more information:

Individuals who want to quit smoking may benefit from visiting the [CDC webpage](#)

on how to quit. Teens who want to formulate a quit plan can find guidance through smokefree.gov. Additional resources can be found at the BASIS [Addiction Resources](#) page.

—John Slabczynski

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1. The research team specified this inclusion criteria to reduce bias towards specific products and more accurately assess the effects of advertisements on product curiosity and use interest.
