

# E-CIGARETTE PACKAGING AND FLAVOUR RESEARCH

8<sup>th</sup> November 2019

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**GAME CHANGERS**



# BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES FOR THIS RESEARCH

## Examining attitudes of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren about e-cigarette packaging and flavouring

- In July 2019, Minister Simon Harris announced that he would seek to introduce legislation banning the sale of e-cigarettes to under 18s, which was to be considered by Government in September 2019.
- At present there are no regulations in Ireland to restrict the sale of sweet, fruity flavours of e-cigarette products.
- The objectives of the research were as follows:
  - To determine whether adolescents report that they would be more likely to try e-cigarettes with fruity flavours than tobacco and menthol flavours.
  - To determine the extent to which the bright, cartoonish packaging of these sweet-flavoured e-liquids appeal to adolescents.
  - To capture youth views on which demographic they believe is being targeted by sweet-flavoured products.

# METHODOLOGY & GROUP STRUCTURE

## Examining attitudes of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren about e-cigarette packaging and flavouring

- Four mini-focus groups, each lasting 40 minutes, were conducted - consisting of friendship pairs/groups. The groups consisted of three - four participants and took place in a Dublin City Centre venue. A breakdown of these groups is found below:

Group No.	School Year	Group Size	Gender	Social Class	Location
1	3rd	4	Male	C1C2	Dublin
2	3rd	4	Female	C1C2	Dublin
3	4th	4	Male	C1C2	Dublin
4	4th	4	Female	C1C2	Dublin

# YOUTH APPEAL

# 1

Understanding what 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren believe appeals to them and how it is conveyed

# CONSUMER CATEGORIES THAT APPEAL TO 3<sup>RD</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> YEAR SCHOOLCHILDREN

Fashion, fast-food and beverage brand were most commonly referenced



PRETTYLITTLETHING.COM



boohoo



# CONSUMER CATEGORIES THAT APPEAL TO 3<sup>RD</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> YEAR SCHOOLCHILDREN

## Mechanisms young people identify that are used to appeal to them

Respondents identified a number of different mechanics that help products to be more appealing to them

### •Appealing design

- Fashion designs that they find appealing. Products or services that people of their age are likely to find desirable. Packaging often contemporary, stylish and/or enticing.

### •Enticing advertising

- A common usage of aspirational locations and individuals such as models / celebrities to help sell the values associated with that particular product or service.
- An emphasis on advertising across many channels including TV, outdoor, in-store and online.

### •Endorsement

- Using celebrities that are popular with younger people to help drive awareness and positive associations.
- Often a reliance on social media content on relevant platforms that young people use.

### •Appealing tastes and flavours

- Within food and beverage, a focus on stronger tastes. Food and drinks higher on sugar, salt and fat.
- Can utilise non-traditional flavour names (e.g. Unicorn, Silver, Punch Monster – creating a language within the brand).

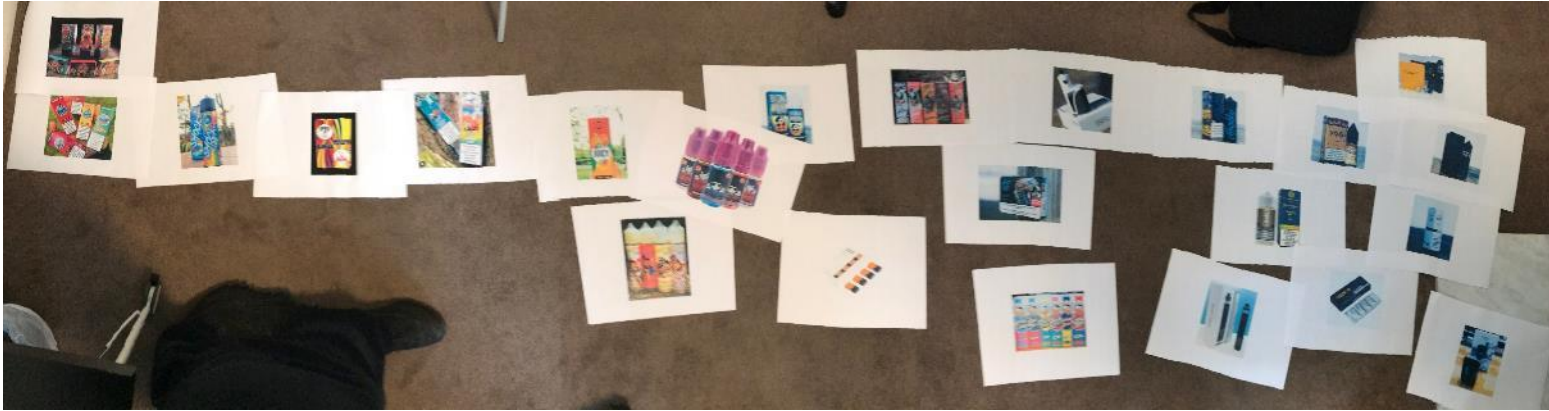
# E-CIGARETTES PACKAGING DESIGN

# 2

Understanding the perspective of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren

# E-CIGARETTES PACKAGING DESIGN

An exercise conducted by the children themselves



*‘It [adult end - right] looks like a choice to smoke or vape, because usually smokers turn to vaping, and this [youth end - left] is to start vaping from nothing’*

- In each group, respondents were provided with imagery of 23 various e-cigarette device and liquid packaging.
- They were then asked to sort the packaging design on a spectrum
  - From ‘likely to appeal to adults’
  - To ‘likely to appeal to people your age’ (14-16 years of age)
- Once this sorting exercise had taken place, a group discussion about their reasons for sorting the packaging in that way and the associations they made with different designs.



# E-CIGARETTES PACKAGING DESIGN

Categories of Packaging Design – Respondents grouped them into three categories.



## Tobacco Cessation Products

Designs that take packaging and colouring cues from tobacco related product such as cigarette boxes.

Typically darker, dull, less enticing packaging. Flavour can vary but the cues in the design drive associations.

*"[It] looks more negative with the bland colours"*



## Medical/Healthcare Products

A design associated with packaging that they would expect from medicines or healthcare products. Clean lines, white packaging and simple designs.

*"Looks like something from the doctors, eye drops."*



## Sweets/Confectionary products

Designs linked directly with sweets available in shops. Bright, vibrant colours with naming protocols that wouldn't look out of place in a sweet shop.

*"That looks like a milkshake or a smoothie."*

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Designs linked directly with sweets available in shops. Bright, vibrant colours with naming protocols that wouldn't look out of place in a sweet shop.

- These packaging designs were linked to smokers/those attempting to quit.
- The cues helped this audience to either retain some features of smoking (without the tobacco) or could be seen as a medical intervention to stop smoking.
- In contrast to the first two categories, these design cues bore no resemblance to cues they associated with tobacco related products. They were perceived to be distinct.

# E-CIGARETTES PACKAGING DESIGN

## Sweet/Confectionary Products

### Sweets/Beverage

A range of different cues linked to products like Skittles and candy sticks. Vibrant colours suggesting strong, sweet flavours.

### School Lunch Boxes

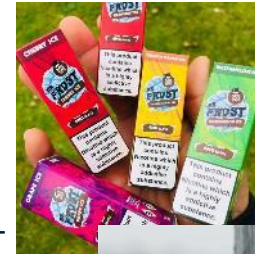
A packaging format that reminded one respondent of something that resembles a school lunch box.

### Cartoons Characters

A range of cartoon associations ranging from links to Disney characters such as Donald Duck to characters from console games.

### Fruit Juices

Packaging reminiscent of fruit and sugary based drinks popular with young people. Aligns the common usage of the term 'juice' to refer to the liquid used in devices.



*"That is so cool, [it] has skittles on it and [it] kind of looks like spray paint on it."*



# E-CIGARETTE FLAVOUR OPTIONS

# 3

Understanding the perspective of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year school children

# E-CIGARETTE FLAVOUR OPTIONS

An exercise conducted by schoolchildren themselves



In each group, respondents were provided with imagery of 35 different e-cigarette flavours available.

- They were then asked to sort the flavours on a spectrum
  - From 'likely to appeal to adults'
  - To 'likely to appeal to people your age' (14-16 years of age)
- Once this sorting exercise had taken place, a group discussion took place concerning their reasons for sorting the flavours in that way, and the associations they made with different flavours.

# E-CIGARETTE FLAVOUR OPTIONS

Categories of Flavours – Respondents grouped flavours into four categories.

## Tobacco

### Tobacco Flavours

Traditional flavours link to smoking of tobacco or other products associated with adults and/or addiction. Flavours included tobacco, menthol, ice tobacco, crème brule, pina colada and coffee.

## Caramel

### Food Flavours

A shift into food related flavour – none having a common link with tobacco. Caramel, cookie, chocolate, latte coffee, mint chocolate and banoffi pie. a broad range of appeal including some youths.

## Strawberry

### Fruits based Flavours

Singular fruit flavours that have a natural basis such as Strawberry, Mango, Water Melon, Forest Fruits and Blueberry.

## Bubblegum

### Sweet Flavours

Combination and/or artificial flavours like grape bubblegum, candy crush, cherry ice, extreme drink and cotton candy.

*“It is things people would like in real life, those [youth end] are more childish flavours, like sweets and adults are into the coffee and caramel ones”*

*“The more basic flavours are in the middle, the dull flavours are on the right [adult end] the nice exciting flavours are on the left (youth end).”*

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Combination and/or artificial flavours like grape bubblegum, candy crush, cherry ice, extreme drink and cotton candy.

*“People our age would be less aware of the effects of nicotine, so they will only be looking at the flavours at a first glance.”*

- This audience believed that any flavours that weren't directly linked to tobacco or more adult flavours were likely to appeal to young people.
- Removal of the Sweet and Fruit based flavoured would potentially lead to food flavours such as cookie, caramel, and chocolate appealing to this audience.

# ADVERTISING SALIENCY

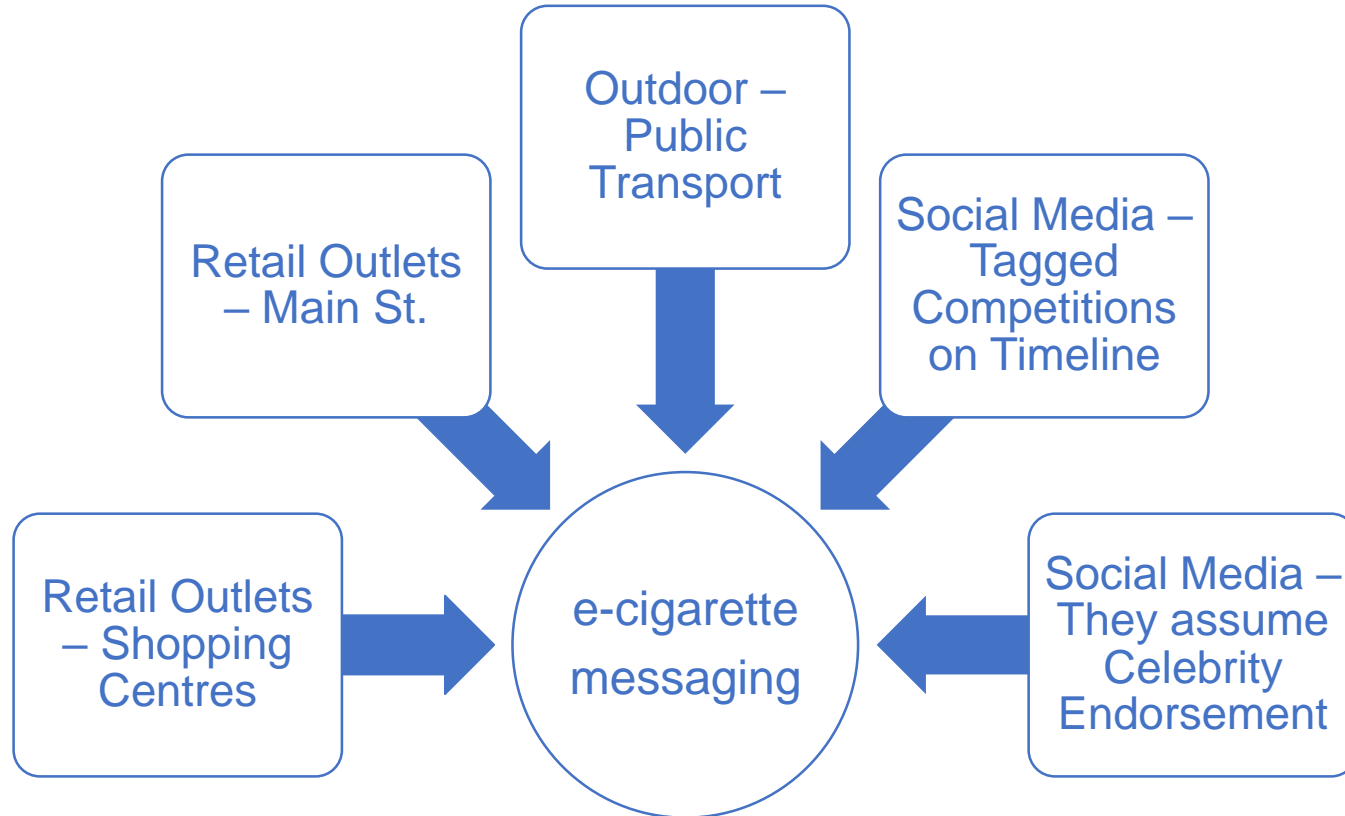
# 4

Where are this audience seeing e-cigarette communications?



# SALIENCY OF E-CIGARETTE MARKETING COMMUNICATION

A vast number of interest converge on the content produced by a radio station



*“On Instagram you can see people doing tricks with vapes... blowing rings and all sorts... there are verified people on Instagram, who are considered famous just from doing vape tricks”*

Several different channels were mentioned regarding where they see any products or messaging in relation to e-cigarettes.

Whilst no online advertising was noted, they did reference other forms of content such as competitions being tagged or posts by celebrities, widely assumed to be endorsements.

# VIEWS ON E-CIGARETTES

# 5

Responses to specific statements about e-cigarettes...

# VIEWS ON E-CIGARETTES

## Response to statements about e-cigarettes

People my age would be interested in trying an e-cigarette with sweet or fruity flavours rather than a tobacco-flavoured e-cigarette.

Universal agreement that this is likely to be the case.

Where tobacco flavoured products are not expected to be a pleasant taste, sweet and fruity flavoured were not expected to have the same problem.

Tobacco flavours provided a potential alternative to existing smokers. Sweet/fruity flavours could potentially appeal to young people who have never smoked.

Fewer people my age would use e-cigarettes if fruity, sweet, minty or desert flavours weren't available

Universal agreement that fewer younger people would trial or use e-cigarettes if these flavours weren't available. Again, there was little sense that traditional flavours would be as appealing as sweeter/fruitier flavours.

The only circumstances where 14-16 year old might continue to use e-cigarettes in the absence of these flavours was where they were already smoking and were looking to stop smoking tobacco.

*"I walk through the clouds behind people and I can smell the sweet smells and the smells of different fruits."*

# VIEWS ON E-CIGARETTES

## Response to statements about e-cigarettes

E-cigarette companies say that they design their packaging and advertising for adults only.

None of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years schoolchildren believed this to be the case. They felt that these organisations might say that is what they are doing but that the packaging and flavours suggests otherwise.

They believed that many of the packaging designs and characters were highly likely to appeal to children more than they would with adults.

E-cigarette companies say that sweet flavours like Candy Floss and Bubblegum are designed for adults only and are not intended to appeal to children.

No respondent believed that these sweet flavours were designed for adults only. They believed that these flavours were strongly associated with snacks, treats and sweets that appeal to young people of all ages – not just 14-16 year olds. Regardless of the stated intention of e-cigarette companies, they believe that these flavours were more likely to appeal to young people than adults.

*“I have never come across an adult that would like to have candyfloss.”*

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

# 5

Summarising beliefs about the appeal of e-cigarettes to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## E-cigarette Packaging

- Respondents highlighted the packaging designs that they believed were likely to appeal to people their age.
- They believed that some of the packaging designs were utilising cues from tobacco products (colours, packaging shape and flavours). These were expected to appeal to those who smoked/those looking to quit.
- Other packaging also appeared to leverage cues from medical/healthcare packaging. These were expected to appeal to those looking to quit smoking.
- The final series of packaging designs appeared to leverage cues associated with confectionary, sweets, energy drinks and cartoons. They expected that these designs were likely to appeal to people their age – 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students in school.

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## E-cigarette Flavouring

- Respondents highlighted flavours that they associated with existing tobacco products. It was expected that these flavour would appeal to current smokers or those looking to quit smoking.
  - These flavours offered the option of obtaining the taste and flavour that they can currently obtain from tobacco product.
- The other three categories of flavours (Food, Fruits & Sweets) had no such links to tobacco products.
  - As a consequence, they saw less of a link to tobacco products and the idea of smoking cessation.
- They believed these three categories were likely to appeal their age group as they were flavours often found in foods and beverages that appeal to them – product high in salt, sugar and fat. In the case of the sweets flavours, they made the strong link between confectionary that appeals to young people and these flavours.

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## Statements about e-cigarettes

- People my age would be interested in trying an e-cigarette with sweet or fruity flavours rather than a tobacco-flavoured e-cigarette.
  - All 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren in the groups agreed with this statement.
- Fewer people my age would use e-cigarettes if fruity, sweet, minty or desert flavours weren't available
  - All 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren in the groups agreed with this statement.
- E-cigarette companies say that they design their packaging and advertising for adults only.
  - None of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren in the groups believed this statement.
- E-cigarette companies say that sweet flavours like Candy Floss and Bubblegum are designed for adults only and are not intended to appeal to children.
  - None of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year schoolchildren in the groups believed this statement.



**THANK  
YOU**

**GAME CHANGERS**

