

### Key Findings

Among Russian-language websites selling electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), harm reduction and health promotion claims were the most prevalent, though few websites included any kind of health warnings or usage disclaimers. Taste or sensation appeals and tobacco flavored products were observed on all websites. No age restrictions were in place to limit access to the sites.

### Background

This study examined marketing and promotion of e-cigarettes on 17 Russian-language websites in 2015. Fifteen e-cigarette brand websites were identified using data from Euromonitor. In addition, two e-retailers selling multiple e-cigarette brands were identified using a Russian-based search engine. Two independent coders observed one homepage, one store-page and three promotional pages per website, for a total of 85 individual pages observed.

### Results

A variety of products were sold across the websites, including disposable, rechargeable and tank system devices along with liquids, starter kits, and various accessories.

### Age Verification

Age verification to access the site was not present on any of the sample websites. Only two websites mentioned any age restrictions for consumers of the product.

### Health Warnings, Usage Disclaimers and Nicotine Descriptors

A majority of the sample (n=14) did not include any health warnings or usage disclaimers. Among the three websites that did include warnings or disclaimers, the following were observed: descriptions of possible health risks; descriptions of populations that should avoid the product (such as pregnant women), advice to consult a physician before using the product and a disclaimer that health effects have not been tested or approved by a regulatory agency. Nicotine strength descriptors were observed on 11 websites.

#### What is an advertising **claim**?

Information about a product's form or function that is communicated in words or images.

#### What is an advertising **appeal**?

A combination of words and images that create a positive image of the individuals who use certain products to influence purchasing decisions.

Both advertising **claims** and **appeals** are influential in shaping consumers' perceptions of products, their intended uses and the risk and benefits of use.

#### Features Not Observed

- Youth/fun appeals
- Contests or competitions
- Free products
- Games
- Surveys or questionnaires
- Cereal-flavored liquid

### Prevalence of Flavor Descriptors Among Websites (N=17)



Tobacco  
n=17



Berries  
n=16



Mint  
n=15



Fruit  
n=15



Sweets  
n=14



Coffee  
n=14



Spices  
n=9



Alcohol  
n=8

## Definitions of Top Advertising Claims

### Public Convenience



Conveys the ability to use the product anywhere, including smoke-free areas

### Cessation



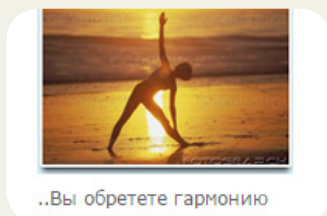
Describes the product as a tool to quit smoking cigarettes

### Cleanliness



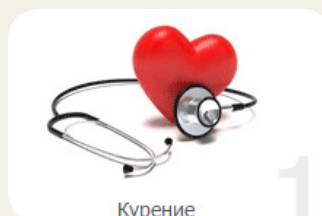
Describes the product as clean, pure or fresh, using cool colors like blue and imagery such as water

### Health Promotion



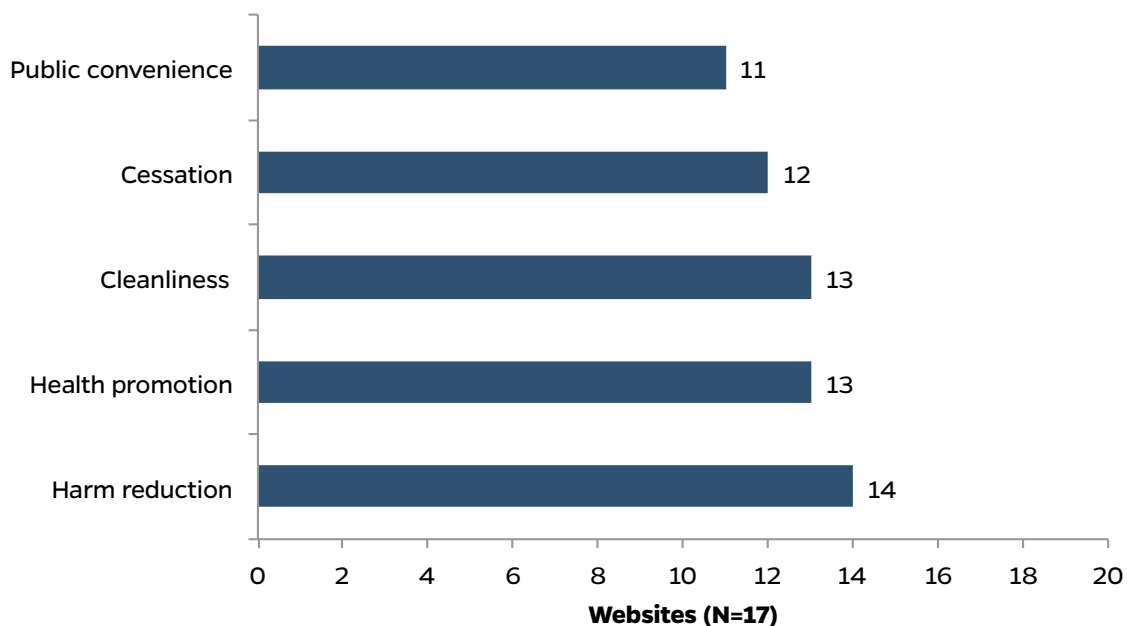
Conveys a health benefit not related to smoking, such as sleep, weight loss, or energy

### Harm Reduction



Conveys a health benefit compared to smoking cigarettes

Figure 1. Prevalence of Top Advertising Claims



## Definitions of Top Advertising Appeals

### US



References American ideals or identity such as historical figures, monuments or symbols

### Foreign



Associates the product with travel by referencing exotic locations, monuments or flags and using words such as “world” or “international”

### Technology



Uses text describing product as advanced or modern and associated imagery

### Status or Luxury



Depicts consumers as cool, trendy or high class, using words such as “premium” and imagery of expensive items

### Taste or Sensation



Describes the product using words such as rich, full, cool, and fresh

**Figure 2. Prevalence of Top Advertising Appeals**

