

# How do vaping practices evolve? A qualitative analysis

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## Introduction:

Despite on-going controversy over ENDS' risks and benefits, there is general agreement that:

- Smokers who transition fully from smoking to vaping face fewer risks than if they continued smoking.
- People who stop both smoking and vaping will realise the greatest health benefits.

Yet, many smokers who progress to vaping, continue using ENDS despite intending to quit vaping.

We lack an understanding of how new ritualistic ENDS use practices and new identity positions create pleasure that fosters longer-term ENDS use.

## Methods:

We recruited 14 exclusive daily vapers using community advertising and social media platforms; exclusion criteria included using smoked tobacco within the last month. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 50; all currently used third generation devices.

Using in-depth interviews, we probed participants' ENDS initiation and vaping progression, practices and preferences, and future vaping intentions.

Data were analysed by two researchers who used a thematic analysis approach to identify three key themes.

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## Results:

Although participants began vaping to quit smoking, vaping became a hobby they enjoyed.

*"...essentially you weren't smoking anymore, but you could still replicate the joy of smoking you might say." (George)*

Enjoyment came from new ritualistic practices that created social capital.

*"I just like the feeling of like, having something big and hearty that I can kind of identify with. And I can be like: 'That's mine.' ... And everyone can say like: 'That's Hugo's.'" (Hugo)*

Pleasure led some to revise their initial goal of quitting vaping:

*"I'd like to get off the nicotine, but I don't want to give up the vape." (Edwin)*

However, some found balancing pleasure and addiction difficult:

*"...you don't want to feel dependent on something...to some degree, you're still addicted to something, and who wants to be addicted to stuff?" (Fred)*

## Three overall typologies

# 1

### Flavour Mixologists

Some became flavour mixologists who created bespoke taste experiences that gave intense pleasure.

*"I got quite into [vaping] actually... now I pretty much build my own coils, I make my own juices... 'cause there's a real community and there's a lot of people... being quite innovating within it". (George)*

# 2

### Cloud Artists

Others used the large vapour clouds they created to perform 'tricks' that their peers admired.

*"It's like, if you're dancing and you nail a dance move...and everyone's quite proud of you. ...that's the biggest thing about it [cloud tricks] is, actually having the sense of achievement when you do it". (Hugo)*

# 3

### Skilled Techies

Others saw themselves as 'techies' who crafted devices with unique performance attributes. As mavens, they gained status and esteem they had never derived from smoking.

*"once I started learning more and more about them, and trying to maintain them more, and different things, obviously you get more into that techy hobbyist side." (Liam)*

## Conclusions:

Because vaping represented pleasure without guilt and provided hedonic experiences that lacked the stigma of smoking, many participants revised their initial intentions to become smoke-free and vape-free, and saw little reason to quit vaping. Further research is required to examine vaping hedonism and its wider impact on sustaining nicotine dependence.