

Rapid Growth of JUUL Hashtags After the Company Ceased Social Media Promotion

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BACKGROUND

- Rates of JUUL use by adolescents surpass that of adults. A study by Truth Initiative found that JUUL frequently posted on its social media channels using hashtags that popularized its brand name. This includes hashtags #juul, #juulvapor, #juulpods, #juulallnight.
- Posts by the company to #juul were colorful and featured youthful models.
- JUUL halted its promotional social media postings on November 13, 2018, as part of its "commitment to youth prevention."
- 5 to 17-year-olds are 16 times more likely to use JUUL than 25 to 35-year-olds.

OBJECTIVE

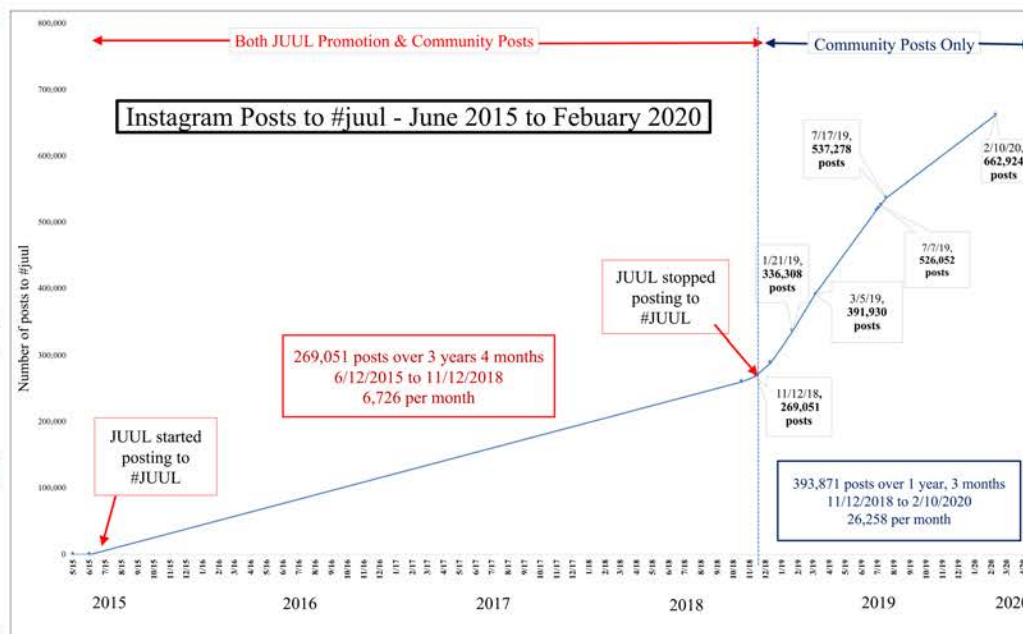
- The purpose of this study was to examine the popularity of #juul and other hashtags containing the JUUL brand name before and after the company ceased promotions on Instagram.

METHODS

- Collection of #juul images from 2015 to early 2020 archived on the Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising (SRITA) database.
- #juul posts collected in July and September 2019 through Keyhole®, a social media monitoring platform.

RESULTS

- 14 months after JUUL stopped posting images to #juul, community posts to the account grew by approximately 394,000 posts (146%).
- Keyhole® showed engagement @ 100x greater than the post count.
- Keyhole® sentiment tracker showed only 10% of posts expressed negative sentiment.



KEYHOLE DATA 2019



TABLE

Table 1: Leading JUUL hashtags before and after JUUL halted its use of social media for marketing purposes. Both #juul and #juulvapor were initiated by the company. JUUL stopped posting to Instagram on Nov. 13, 2018.

Instagram Hashtags	Posts as of February 10, 2020	Posts as of July 7, 2019	Posts as of October 17, 2018	Increase in Number of Posts (% increase)
#juul	662,924	526,052	260,866	402,058 (154%)
#juulpods	75,187	60,122	28,741	46,446 (162%)
#juulnation	60,170	50,428	23,273	36,897 (158%)
#juulvapor	50,671	47,186	33,945	16,726 (49%)
#juullife	16,638	15,111	10,299	6,339 (61%)

DISCUSSION & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The company's initiation of #juul triggered a viral, self-sustaining youth fad.
- Posting to #juul accelerated after the company halted its own posting (11/2018).
- #juul could be eliminated by Instagram due to community harm or by JUUL as #juul contains their brand trademark.

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