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

Ramamurthi D, Louis-Ferdinand NG, & Jackler RK
Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising (SRITA)
Stanford University School of Medicine

**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, #juulpaper, #juulpods, #juulnight.
- 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 304,000 posts (146%).
- Keyhole® showed engagement @ 100x greater than the post count.
- Keyhole® sentiment tracker showed only 10% of posts expressed negative sentiment.

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

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** There are no relevant conflicts of interest to disclose.