Electronic cigarettes are an emerging phenomenon that is becoming increasingly popular with smokers worldwide. Awareness and use of electronic cigarettes have increased dramatically. As the popularity increases it is important to explore more about the characteristics, attitudes and beliefs of smokers.

The aim of this dissertation is to explore attitudes towards electronic cigarettes among smokers and to identify through primary research the linkage between attitudes and behavior. Considering an increase in demand and explosion of electronic cigarettes in the European market in the past four years, this study results will help electronic cigarette companies know more about their consumers and the study will also contribute to the research knowledge as this study will be one of the first studies that explores attitude of smokers towards electronic cigarettes.

The primary research was conducted using qualitative design through the use of focus groups. Two focus groups were conducted with electronic cigarette smokers and tobacco cigarette smokers. The findings of the study were analyzed and discussed with regards to objectives, sub-objectives and relevant literature. The findings revealed gaps in knowledge about the awareness, safety and efficacy of electronic cigarettes. Moreover the arguments were fueled with uncertainties regarding the long term use of electronic cigarettes and their regulations. Overall the users of electronic cigarettes displayed an extremely positive attitude. On the contrary the tobacco cigarette users had a mixed attitude of both positive and negative towards electronic cigarettes. Furthermore it was noted that there was a lack in long term proven studies for electronic cigarettes which was causing debates and big doubts about the product which resulted in a negative attitude in the minority.

Finally implications for further research include the attitudes of non-smokers and researching the topic with the use of questionnaires, observational studies and case studies is a recommendation for future research.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This research identified the external and internal factors affecting attitude of the consumers towards the product. (Preloaf, 2003) noted that attitude is a learned process which are strongly linked to behavior. Attitude is formed as a result of learning process, as a result of the influence of external and internal factors like social media, friends, family and experiences or through the use of a product. Once formed it is hard to be influenced and harder to be changed. This is made use of by big companies in selling their products through advertising, and social media.

The literature review also defined attitudes and behavior and identified a linkage between these two variables. The literature also discussed the impact of cost and health benefits of electronic cigarettes which were the reasons smokers used electronic cigarettes. Overview of the electronic cigarette industry showed stupendous growth in the market place for these products. The age groups that were more likely using electronic cigarettes were between 25-55 is shown in the graph below. (Emily Krol, 2013) Mint report consisting of heavy tobacco smokers who are determined in using electronic cigarettes for its benefits over tobacco cigarettes.

### METHODOLOGY

**Research approach**
- Inductive approach

**Research philosophy**
- Interpretivism and subjectivism

**Research design**
- Methods

**Research methods used in this study are tabulated below.**

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The sample group one consisted of candidates who smoke electronic cigarettes between the age range of 27-55 with a male predilection and participants smoking electronic cigarettes for a period of six months and more. The second group consisted of candidates who smoke tobacco cigarettes between 25-50. All the participants have been smoking tobacco cigarettes for the past three years or more. Both the studies took place in Dublin business school lecture hall on 19th July and 1st August. The study used the focus group script as the guidelines for the questions which is mentioned in the appendix 2.

### RESULTS

**Data was analysed using Miles and Huberman (2002)**

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**Conclusion drawing and verification**

The results were divided in themes. Overall the results showed that users of electronic cigarettes had a positive attitude towards electronic cigarettes from experiencing their benefits over tobacco cigarettes. On the other hand the tobacco smokers had a mixed attitude towards electronic cigarettes, and a minority had a negative attitude towards electronic cigarettes due to lack of research in the long term use safety and efficacy.

### DISCUSSION

In the discussion part of the dissertation the results of the qualitative data are taken into consideration dividing them into seven themes and discussed in accordance with the objectives and sub-objectives.

It was found that the key factors which were responsible for smoker’s knowledge, awareness and use of electronic cigarettes were internet, friends and advertising. These factors coincided with the factors that influenced attitude towards electronic cigarettes discussed in the secondary research in a study conducted by Lotstock and Tahan (2014.). Overall the findings indicate that older age group of smokers who are currently smoking electronic cigarettes have a more positive attitude and an increased level of awareness towards electronic cigarettes. However with the tobacco smokers electronic cigarettes do not appeal the same due to lack of knowledge and awareness. On the other hand the users of electronic cigarettes consider it as a boom in all aspects to tobacco and claim this product can change the future of tobacco cigarettes. Furthermore cost was a factor to have influenced attitudes but considering the regulations should come into play by increasing the product cost then it will put chronic smokers on a quandary.

### CONCLUSION

In sum this research indicates that social media, advertising, peers influence are not sole determining factors that influence attitude towards electronic cigarettes users experience, beliefs, benefits, regulation, awareness, knowledge and technicalities, cost and reasoning are also equally important factors when considering attitude towards electronic cigarettes. Finally it was found that there is a mixed attitude towards electronic cigarette in terms of their health benefits, cost, and regulations and as a replacement for tobacco cigarettes. Positive attitude prevails among long term users of electronic cigarette. However among occasional users and indoor smokers much of uncertainties dwells. And as for others who are not satisfied with the current product because they are too niche have a mixed attitude towards electronic cigarettes.

### REFERENCES


Marketline (2012) ‘Electronic Cigarettes This emerging market could be the savior of the tobacco industry’ (Accessed: 8 July 2014)
