

A study on the resistive behavior of  
consumers towards electronic  
cigarette in India.

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for  
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## **Abstract**

**Title:** A study on the resistive behavior of consumers towards electronic cigarette in India.

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Electronic cigarettes are an emerging phenomenon that is becoming increasingly popular with smokers worldwide. Though electronic cigarettes are introduced in Indian market and awareness does exist but the acceptance of electronic cigarettes as compared to conventional tobacco cigarette is low. The research is undertaken to study the resistive behavior of consumers towards electronic cigarette.

The aim of this dissertation is to explore consumers perception towards electronic cigarettes among smokers and to identify the barriers for the resistance of the same. For this qualitative research, the respondents were chosen through referral (snow-balling) method and were interviewed face-to-face. The research findings conclude that, though electronic cigarettes are available in the market, there is a gap in awareness about it among the consumers.

Psychological and social barriers are key the factors influencing their choice at the same time, economics and safety aspects of the product are also affecting. Moreover, the arguments were fueled with uncertainties in the long-term use of electronic cigarettes and their regulations. The conventional tobacco cigarette users have developed an unfavorable perception towards electronic cigarettes based on various reasons and hence tend to resist it. This study gives a deeper understanding of the area of consumer behavior.

**Keywords:** Consumer behavior, resistive behavior, electronic cigarettes, qualitative research, barriers.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Research background

The purpose of this section of the research is to explain the reasons that lead to the development of the idea for this research. The reason for conducting this research is due to the near-death experience of someone dear to the researcher because of excessive and prolonged consumption of conventional tobacco cigarettes leading to lung cancer. The researcher being a marketing student has developed a keen interest in consumer behavior. During the study program, the researcher came across various studies that were carried out to understand, define but failed to give a structure to the phenomenon of consumer behavior. The various statistics that the researcher came across regarding the tobacco consumption and its outcomes especially in India astonished the researcher and developed an urge to try and understand the behavior of a consumer that surpasses the importance of their lives. Also, various studies that the researcher referred talked about electronic cigarettes being a possible smoking cessation equipment that mimics the smoking phenomenon very well and causes lesser health hazards.

Tobacco consumption remains the largest avoidable health risk across the globe. There are approximately 120 million smokers in India. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "India is a home to 12% of the world's smokers, approximately 900,000 people die every year in India due to smoking as of 2009. As of 2015, the number of men smoking tobacco rose to 108 million, an increase of 36%, till 2015. Among adult females, the figure is much lower ranging between 3–5%."

As per the Indian Heart Association (IHA), India accounts for 60% of the world's heart disease burden, despite having less than 20% of the world's population. The IHA has identified a reduction in smoking as a significant target of cardiovascular health prevention efforts.

Also, in the European Union, tobacco consumption is responsible for 700,000 deaths each year. Around 50% of smokers die prematurely, resulting in the loss of an average of 14 years of life among individuals. As per European statistical data, in 2014, 5.9 % of the population over 15 years of age consumed at least 20 cigarettes per day, and around 12.6 % consumed less than 20 (Ec.europa.eu, 2017). In addition, smokers are also more likely to suffer a plethora of adverse health effects because of tobacco use, including cardiovascular and respiratory diseases (Public Health, 2017).

The Public Health, (2017) state that, "The European Union has been working to reduce the use of tobacco through a range of measures, including regulating tobacco products, restricting the advertising of tobacco products, implementing smoke-free environments, and running anti-smoking campaigns." Some of the most recent initiatives include the revised tobacco products directive such as establishing maximum emission levels for tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide from tobacco products, taking into consideration their toxicity or addictiveness.

Eminent bodies like WHO, (2008) are trying their level best to control tobacco smoking. Various new methods are hitting the market to help in smoking cessation such as electronic cigarette, nicotine patches or gums.

Electronic cigarettes are rapidly emerging as a sustainable alternative to conventional tobacco cigarettes. The reason for its sustenance is that it delivers the desired amount of nicotine without adding the side effects that come with traditional smoking like cigar, pipe, or cigarette. Complete abstinence from smoking is unquestionably the best remedy to many health risks such as cancer, hypertension, and cardio vascular diseases. However, that is a huge determination driven task and difficult for most to be achieved. So, most of those who fall under this category, as per a study conducted by Berg et al., (2014) electronic cigarette helps reduction of conventional tobacco cigarette smoking by providing only what people crave for and not the side-effects. The study reveals that through this almost 23.1% of their study sample could also quit

smoking completely. Also, as per an article by Bauld, (2017) in 'The Guardian', the hazards arising to one's health in the long term of vaping electronic cigarettes cannot exceed 5% of the hazards of smoking traditional ones as per the study of the physicians of the royal college. As per CDC data for the year 2014, sales of electronic cigarettes grew considerably during 2012–2013, including about 320% for disposable electronic cigarettes, 72% for starter kits, and 82% for cartridges (Smoking and Tobacco Use, 2017).

An increase in electronic cigarette usage has resulted in an increase in vape shops that sell electronic nicotine delivery products and can mix e-liquids as well (FDA, 2016). As electronic cigarettes have become more popular and more available, the marketing of these devices has proliferated (Wagoner et al., 2014). Between 2011-2012, advertising expenses for electronic cigarette increased from 6.4 million to 18.3 million dollars (King et al., 2014).

In an Indian scenario, as technically speaking, consumption of electronic cigarettes, or vaping as it is commonly referred to as, is not smoking since electronic cigarettes do not contain tobacco, nor is there any form of combustion. It involves heated vapor. Import of electronic cigarette and e-liquid is permitted in India but involves varying permissions. Currently, this product is not a drug as per the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940, and neither does it come under the authority of the tobacco department as it does not contain tobacco.

In the absence of evidence-based public health messaging, advertisements may be promoting beliefs and behaviors that lead to increased use of electronic cigarette (Duke et al., 2014). Although electronic cigarettes are often marketed as a key cessation tool to quit smoking conventional tobacco cigarettes, questions remain regarding their effectiveness in cessation. Some people have reported feeling less urges to smoke a conventional tobacco cigarette, while using electronic cigarettes as

a cessation aid, due to fewer side effects and the dose of nicotine being delivered in a similar fashion as a conventional tobacco cigarette (Palazzolo, 2013).

A key perception that may encourage electronic cigarette use is overall cost, with many believing electronic cigarettes are a cheaper alternative to conventional tobacco cigarettes (Schraufnagel, 2015). Though the initial cost of an electronic cigarette can be higher than a pack of conventional tobacco cigarettes, over time electronic cigarettes may prove to be less expensive.

Across all age cohorts, studies reveal that the awareness and use of electronic cigarettes are increasing (King et al., 2013). awareness is higher in current smokers than in never-smokers or former smokers (King et al., 2013). Marketing of electronic cigarettes toward youth is common. One way that electronic cigarettes are marketed is with the vast number of flavors offered. Many flavors, such as bubble gum, chocolate, mint, and strawberry, tempt the youth to try an electronic cigarette. Refill bottles promote the idea that users can buy many different flavors to try. A top reason for experimentation with electronic cigarettes is flavor (Kong et al., 2014).

The role of resistance comes into play when an innovation may create a high degree of change in the consumers' day to day existence and disrupt their established routine (Ram and Sheth, 1989). Secondly, an innovation might conflict with the consumers' prior belief (Ram and Sheth, 1989). The benefits of electronic cigarettes that are helping many smokers to reduce their smoking consumption and even quit smoking and achieve a healthier living in many parts of the world are evident. Despite these benefits, there is still a level of resistance towards electronic cigarettes among the consumers in India. This resistance can either arise due to lack of knowledge about these electronic system benefits or the emotional factor revolving around the feel or pleasure that electronic cigarettes provide being inadequate compared to the conventional tobacco cigarettes. As per the pilot study conducted for this research, it was understood that majority of the people still prefer smoking conventional tobacco

cigarettes over electronic cigarettes. This study assesses the reasons that keep conventional tobacco cigarette smokers from switching to electronic cigarettes.

## 1.2. Research purpose

This section answers the questions like: What is this research for? Why is it being done? (Thomas, 2013; Mason, 2016). Electronic nicotine delivery systems, modernly known as ENDS are rapidly evolving as a viable alternative to conventional tobacco cigarettes. In 2014, tobacco companies spent more than \$9 billion marketing cigarettes and smokeless tobacco in the United States. This amount translates to nearly \$25 million each day, or about \$1 million every hour (Smoking and Tobacco Use, 2017).

By far the most successful ENDS innovation is the electronic cigarette. Electronic cigarettes are battery operated nicotine delivery systems which enable users to inhale water based vapor containing variable amounts of nicotine or flavoring. This act mimics actual smoking thus giving the user a psychological simulation of smoking. However, there are other designs too. The drawing or the puffing procedure is also termed as Vaping (Caponnetto et al., 2012). The visual, sensory, and psychological feel of conventional tobacco cigarettes are retained in some models to help in migrating from the conventional tobacco cigarettes to the electronics ones without much resistance from the users (Caponnetto et al., 2012). The electronic cigarette has been reported to have helped abstinence from smoking conventional tobacco cigarettes as per a recent internet survey (Etter, 2010).

A recent article by the Irish Cancer Society, (2014) states that there are approximate of 1,34,000 users of electronic cigarette and that the product is optimum to be also regulated as a medicinal product. This shows that the product and the targeted market seem to mix well enough and the product has a great scope in the market as per Hon, (2005), Caponnetto et al., (2012), and Irish Cancer Society, (2014). Even the Public

Health Services support these claims through their website promoting a detour from dangers of smoking tobacco. The inclination towards nicotine as a long-term alternative to tobacco was recognized by Russell in 1991. He suggested the use of ENDS for the elimination of tobacco use in the future. But current regulations limit the long-term use of medicinal nicotine (Le Houezec, McNeill, and Britton, 2011). Even though evidence also propose electronic cigarettes to be beneficial for diverting from tobacco and hence decrease disorders like Parkinson's disease (Nielsen et al., 2013), depression (McClernon et al., 2006), dementia (Sahakian et al., 1989) and ulcerative colitis (Guslandi, 2001). An important factor in any decision to endorse nicotine administration is addictive potential; therefore, vaper's health is at minimum risk and safe from disease related issues coming from tobacco smoking. A clearer form of nicotine would reduce the additional risk of addiction, as smokers are addicted to nicotine. A long-term substitution to smoking is electronic cigarettes, which has been proven repeatedly by various surveys (Dawkins et al., 2013 and Etter and Bullen, 2011).

An important role for nicotine in electronic cigarettes as an effective smoking substitute is shown by powerless efforts of consumers trying to reduce nicotine use with electronic cigarettes (Farsalinos and Polosa, 2014). Vaping minimizes overdoses or intoxication of nicotine due to its low consumption and hence low absorption (Nides et al., 2014 and Dawkins and Corcoran, 2013). Evidence also suggests that absorption of nicotine is milder and slower in electronic cigarettes (Farsalinos and Polosa, 2014). Thus, due to health benefits of electronic cigarettes over combustible ones i.e. the absence of toxic chemicals that are generated in vast amounts by its combustion. Electronic cigarettes are more efficient nicotine delivery systems as they provide safer and accurate deliveries, thus electronic cigarettes have the potential to replace the traditional ones (Rodu and Godshall, 2006). Though in India, many smokers still prefer smoking the conventional tobacco cigarettes over electronic cigarettes. This resistance to change being hazardous for themselves but still in practice needs to be investigated.

This research is to help marketers in gaining a deeper understanding of the behavior of a consumer which can help reach the consumers with a better form of marketing. Also, this research provides the electronic cigarette brands with a study of the market for them to understand the various aspects that lead to the resistance towards their products by consumers that need alterations and market their product more effectively. Moreover, the indirect purpose of this research is to help the electronic cigarette brands to improve their product and sales with a humanitarian motive of encouraging people to stop smoking and live healthier lives.

### 1.3. Outline of the Thesis

This section explains the structure and planning of this research. For this research, the researcher intends to review as much literature as possible that pertains to the research questions and the most relevant consumer behavior aspects that will increase the researcher's knowledge about the subject and help in analyzing the outcome more effectively. The researcher will then precisely define the research question and sub questions and state the objectives. The researcher utilizes a methodology that is most suitable for answering such a research question and deliver as much quality of the data as possible. To do so effectively the researcher will discuss in depth about the various possible techniques to carry out the research and select the most appropriate technique from the ones discussed to maintain highest possible levels of quality of the research data in the methodology section. Using this technique, the available data shall be analyzed and interpreted to deliver the best possible insights and achieve a conclusion.

## 2. Literature review

The main purpose of conducting a literature review is to identify the different phenomenon by analyzing the different terms of the research question critically. This dissertation attempts to understand the consumer behavior by studying the perception of the consumers towards electronic cigarettes who already smoke conventional tobacco cigarettes. The literature focuses mainly on understanding the consumer behavior phenomenon by understanding the consumer's decision process and the different theories and concepts of the consumer behavior that suits best to the argued phenomenon in this dissertation.

### 2.1. Consumer behavior

The consumer behavior is the phenomenon of interactions between a person's moods, feelings, and emotions pertaining to a purchase decision (Peter and Olson, 1993). The consumer behavior field spans a large area; it studies the processes involved when people choose, buy, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to gratify needs and desires. But these functions may be performed by different people. In addition, consumers may be believed as role players who need several products to help them play their various parts (Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte, 2013).

In simple words, consumer behavior is the attitude of a consumer towards a product or service and the different stages of interaction with the product, its purchase and use laden with different emotions (Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte, 2013). To understand consumer behavior, it is imperative to understand the entire buying decision process of a consumer. The study of consumer behavior can be based on 2 basic concepts of attitude which are irrational buying needs and bounded models of rationality (Howard and Sheth, 1969).



## 2.2. Factors that influence the Consumer Behavior

Various marketing factors influence the consumer behavior such as design, price, promotion, packaging, positioning, and distribution of the product. Marketers need to have a good idea of the consumer behavior. They need to study the various aspects that influence the consumer behavior of their target customers. This information of consumer behavior enables them to take necessary marketing decisions for improvement in the above-mentioned aspects of the product.

Even personal factors such as age, gender, education, and income influence a consumer's behavior. Consumer's needs and abilities change with age. Therefore, age and life cycle stages are important variables to affect buying behavior of the consumers. Life cycle stage presents opportunities for marketers to promote the product based on consumer's need in that stage (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Men and women tend to have different attitudinal and behavioral orientations, based partly on genetic makeup and partly on socialization. Men tend to be more self-expressive whereas females are more communal minded (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Income subdivision is an established practice in a variety of products and services. Income determines the ability of consumer. Low unit price through appropriate packaging is one of the ways to reach out to a large mass of consumers in India (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

Psychological factors such as motives, perception, and mindsets towards the product also affect the behavior of a potential consumer. Consumer behavior varies with different products. There are some consumers who may purchase more of certain products and very less no quantity of other items. For example, teenagers may spend generously on products such as mobile phones and fashionable clothes, but may not spend on academic books or novels. Grown-ups may spend less on clothing but may invest money in savings, insurance schemes, pension schemes (Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol, 2004).

Likewise, situational factors such as physical surroundings at the time of purchase, social surroundings, and time factor affects the consumer behavior too (Kotler and Keller, 2009). The consumer behavior also varies across states, regions, and countries. For example, the behavior of the town side consumers is different from that of the rural ones. Noting the fact that even the rich rural consumers may think twice to spend on luxury items despite having sufficient funds, whereas the urban consumers may even take bank loans to buy luxuries such as cars and household appliances or even mobile phones. It may differ depending on the upbringing, lifestyles, and level of development (Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol, 2004).

Each person has personality characteristics that influence his or her buying behavior. Personality means a set of distinguishing human psychological traits that lead to relatively consistent and enduring responses to environmental stimuli (Howard and Sheth, 1969). Personality can be a useful variable in analyzing consumer brand choices. Consumer behavior constantly undergoes a change over time depending on the nature of products. For example, children prefer colorful and fancy toys, but teenagers prefer trendy gadgets, and as they grow older they prefer sober devices. This change in buying behavior ensues due to several other factors such as an increase in income level, education level and marketing factors (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Different consumers behave differently. The differences in consumer behavior are due to individual factors such as the nature of the consumers, lifestyle, and culture.

Consumption behavior in India is found to be influenced by socioeconomic factors governed by the person's education as well as an occupation (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Social influence is well known as an important strength shaping an individual's consumer behavior. Reference groups may exert influence in several ways: by providing information in confusing situations, by setting normative standards of conduct, and/or by improving an individual's self-image. These influences may occur before purchase, during purchase, and after purchase (Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol, 2004). The buying behavior of the consumers may dictate the standard of

living. The more a person buys the goods and services, the higher is the standard of living. But if a person spends less on goods or services, despite having a decent income, they deprive themselves of a higher standard of living. The consumer behavior sometimes reflects the status of a consumer. The consumers who own luxury cars, watches, and other items are considered belonging to a higher status. The luxury items also give a sense of pride to the owners.

### 2.3. Attitudes

The consumer decision making is often laden with different emotional aspects which researchers are still attempting to understand and evaluate (Maio and Haddock, 2009). These emotions or attitudes depend from person to person and may have their own understanding or attitudes towards different aspects or situations and hence there is no agreed upon definition to this theory as noted by Olson and Zanna, (1993); Maio and Haddock, (2009). Attitudes are often revealing as they possess a positive or negative quality but Schiffman and Kanuk, (2007) argue to consider opinion as a factor of human behavior. According to (Mahmoud, (2013) it is difficult to measure attitude's "abstract construct" which defies most methods which measure attitude based on the assumption of measurability of attitudes using beliefs or opinions (Steluța Uță and Popescu, 2013).

### 2.4. Purchase decision and post-purchase behavior:

This framework though first introduced in 1910 remains a good way to evaluate the customer's buying process till date (Johnston, 2016). The initial stage of the buying process is recognition of need where a person identifies a specific need and wants to satisfy this need immediately. This is often influenced by internal stimuli (customer's own knowledge and emotions) and the external stimuli (the needs which arise due to external forces like other customers, peers, society, physical conditions etc.) (Hawkins, Best, and Coney, 1998). A positive consumer behavior leads to a purchase

decision. A consumer may take the decision of buying a product based on different buying motives. The purchase decision leads to higher demand, and the sales of the marketers increase. Therefore, marketers need to influence consumer behavior to increase their purchases. The next stage after recognizing a need is a need to gain information and knowledge to satisfy the primary need. People often search for information about different products/services from various sources of information such as personal sources, public sources, online sources, etc. (Hawkins, Best, and Coney, 1998). After the consumer gains enough information about a product/ service, its purpose, different varieties, and options the consumer now evaluates the different alternative sources such as brands or types of a product that best suits their preferences. The consumer is most likely to make a purchase decision based on his/her personal emotional and physical needs from the product purchase (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Once the consumer successfully evaluates the different brands and makes a preference towards a brand the consumer is ready to make a purchase intention. It is often influenced by the attitude of others and unexpected situational factors (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

The process of buying behavior does not end with the consumer buying a product. The post purchase behavior of the consumer towards the product is the most important aspect of the process. With the post-purchase evaluation of a product/service arise two possibilities which are either dissonance or satisfaction. If the level of value delivery from a product/ service is less than the customer's expectations it leads to dissonance or dissatisfaction where the consumer might try to overcome the dissonance by either complaining, spreading a word about the brand's incompetence or may simply choose not to use the brand for future purchases. Whereas if the delivery of value of the product/service meets the consumer expectations then the customer is satisfied or can also be delighted if the value exceeds his/her expectation (Gilly and Gelb, 1982).

## 2.5. Factors that influence the perception towards electronic cigarettes

2.5.1. Advertisements: The advertising of electronic cigarettes is carried out in a way where the advertisers are only focusing on the emotional and sensory triggers. This may lead to arguments such as; what the electronic cigarettes are doing is what the conventional tobacco cigarette advertisements were doing i.e. glamorizing and boosting the action of smoking cigarettes (Marketline, 2012). The style of advertising the products plays a critical role in influencing the minds of the customers and to induce favorable attitudes towards the products or even alter them.

2.5.2. Advertising attitude modeling: The impact of advertisements on human behaviors and attitude is explained as the predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner during a specific exposure period for a certain advertisement. Thus, it can be argued that advertisements can be the first impression the brand can create on the minds of new potential customers. Thus, advertisements should be designed and executed in a way that has the potential to influence people's attitudes.

2.5.3. Internet: The electronic cigarette as a product is gaining popularity and awareness as many brands sell them online through their personal e-commerce links. This could be a medium to encourage people increasingly towards the electronic cigarettes stating the positive sides of electronic cigarettes over the conventional tobacco cigarettes to spread more awareness. But it is argued by many such as MacGuill, (2013) that the people who want to try them would do so if it is not sold on the internet too. Thus, the major reason for people not willing to switch to electronic cigarettes is a complicated mystery and thus trying to understand that can help marketers and researchers to gain a better understanding of the consumer psychology.

2.5.4. Price: another limiting factor that can influence a consumer for the buying process is the price of a product. Sometimes due to high prices of certain products, many consumers refrain from even searching any details about that product as it is beyond their budget. Such a situation can lead to cost bias and hence awareness regarding an invention gets limited. Very often the financial positioning of the consumers dominates the consumer behavior. India's average per capita income has risen to 103,219 INR (~1435 €) in 2016-17 which comes to ~8601 INR (~120 €) per month (livemint.com, 2017). This positioning is considered comfortable to meet daily necessities but when it comes to luxuries or services it becomes a challenging situation.

2.5.5. Safety: There have been cases where small intensity outbursts have been reported with devices that contain lithium batteries. Incidences like these intimidate the prospects to become customers. The Federal register confirms that the FDA has been concerned about reports of exploding electronic cigarettes, and has provided a draft guidance on the safety requirements that companies will need to follow (Meernik et al., 2016).

2.5.6. Peer influence: Another factor that can influence a person's attitude is the peer influence. The reason this exists is that peers are a source for self-appraisal and appraisal for personal standards (Childers and Rao, 1992). The activity of smoking is highly influenced by the peer pressure that a person lives in i.e. it is guided by the beliefs and behavior of the peers (Sharma et al., 2013). While analyzing teens' behavior, it was that, "because peer groups are voluntary in nature and peers are not directly responsible for monitoring teens' actions, peers may provide an early forum in which teens can try out various aspects of the social self", this will also be true habit formation (Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol, 2004).

It has been noted on several occasions such as drinking, smoking, driving, dating etc. where the self-perception, as well as parental influence, is often surpassed by the beliefs of peers (Hayes et al., 2004). Studies have shown that consumption communication with peers positively affects social motivation for consumption, materialistic values, and the tendency to use peer preferences in evaluating products. In a consumer context, friends may help the consumer evaluate products, brands, and stores in ways that enhance a consumers' sense of belonging, thereby helping them to establish an identity (Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol, 2004).

## 2.6. Consumer Loyalty

Consumers become loyal to a brand which has a meaning for them in relation to a product, service, solution, or experience. A loyalty ladder is a tool for marketing communicators. Consumers can be moved along a scale of loyalty using many integrated marketing communications techniques. Based on their loyalty consumers are further classified as suspect, prospect, customer, client, and advocate. The loyalty ladder begins from a point where the product is ready for the market. Suspects are those who the marketers think may be interested in their product. They can then be targeted specifically; geographically, demographically, or behaviorally. Prospects are the suspects who have responded and/or shown interest in the product, they can be targeted by online or offline sign ups or identifications forms. Once the prospect buys the product for the first time as a trialist, they become customers. The after sales team can conduct feedback sessions and appeal the customer to repeat purchasing their product. They then become regular clients. These clients then project their positive feedbacks in different forms such as word-of-mouth, blogs, social websites, etc. and become brand insistent the product. They are not only the most loyal advocates for the product but are also less sensitive to price hikes. After this point, the brand is difficult to dislodge since it has so much meaning to the consumer. Based on this type, a marketer must take decisions to attract customer on a higher step of the ladder. Every

business must have strategies to move suspects to up the ladder till they become advocates.

## 2.7. Resistance to change

Consumer resistance derives from the Latin term “resistere”, meaning to resist, stand back. From a managerial perspective, consumer resistance refers to a consumer who opposes a certain brand, an organization, or marketing images, norms, and devices that are considered to represent a system of domination (Hennigs and Seegebarth, 2015).

The consumers adopt the change and move with it or show a resistance towards it. The adoption or resistance are known as two ends of the continuum of reaction towards innovation or change. The adoption can also be an outcome of an act to overcome such resistance (Foxall, Goldsmith and Brown, 1998).

Ram and Sheth, (1989) state that an innovation may create a high degree of change in the consumers’ day to day existence and disrupt their established routine. They further state that “an innovation resistance is a resistance offered by a consumer to an innovation, either because it poses potential changes from a satisfactory status quo or because it conflicts with their belief structure.”

Also, as per Ram and Sheth, (1989) the most prevalent problems that new products face is the consumer’s resistance to change. This resistance has many forms, such as comfort, habit, ease of access and sometimes even pseudo-logical reasons can be problematic. The solution to address this problem is to understand the root of the resistance.



## 2.8. Barriers

The barriers to the innovation as explained by Ram and Sheth, (1989) are of two kinds, functional barrier (further categorized as usage, value, and risk barrier) and psychological barrier (further categorized as traditional and image barrier). The most common reason for customer resistance to an innovation could be non-compatibility or **usage** with existing workflows, practices, or habits. Innovations that require a change in customer's routine takes longer duration before gaining customer acceptance. The **value** of the innovation could also be a functional barrier. Unless the innovation offers strong performance to price value compared to offered substitutes, customers resist changing. Uncertainty and potential side effects of an innovation that cannot be anticipated could be a barrier for change. Customers aware of the **risk** of an innovation try to postpone adopting it until they learn more about it. When innovation demands customer to deviate from established **traditional** ideals, it is resisted. Image barrier is a perceptual problem which is caused due to stereotype thinking of the consumer. Here consumer thinks of the product image as well as his perceived **image** in the society after using the product.

When it comes to smoking conventional tobacco cigarettes majority of the smokers are quite aware about the negative aspects of smoking and its potential to kill them but people continue to smoke conventional tobacco cigarettes despite these known facts thus it can be related to various social, emotional, or personal addiction contexts that still hold the smokers to continue smoking tobacco. Electronic cigarettes as studied earlier are argued by many health regulatory bodies and researchers to be less harmful substitutes or cessation to conventional tobacco cigarettes are still not being considered by many people as an alternative to smoking tobacco.

## 2.9. Review Summary

Attitude is a learned outcome that is persistently linked with behavior (Perloff, 2003). It can be the result of influences of external and internal factors as per the discussion of the literature. Attitude once formed is difficult to be changed. According to Maio and Haddock, (2009) decision is always influenced by the attitude. Social pressure plays a vital role in the decision-making process of a consumer. Electronic cigarettes are less harmful as compared to conventional tobacco cigarettes and have the potential to be a successful alternative to conventional tobacco cigarettes. Taking this data of the literature together it is evident that there is a need for further study on consumer behavior and their behavior towards electronic cigarettes to get in-depth knowledge about consumer behavior. This data might also help regularize manufacturing practices, Advertising practices for electronic cigarettes to protect human health. There is a limited amount of study that is undertaken in respect of electronic cigarette consumption. Most of the researchers focus on the growth in popularity of electronic cigarettes or its benefits over conventional tobacco cigarettes. Thus, there is a need to study the behavior of the consumers in association with electronic cigarette consumption and the section of smokers that are still resistant to electronic cigarette.

### 3. Research Question

***Why do people in India resist switching from conventional tobacco cigarettes to electronic cigarettes?***

A research objective is clear, specific statement that identifies what the researcher wishes to accomplish by the research. The objective is the focus of proposed research question (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). Despite so much literature in favor of electronic cigarettes is less harmful than the conventional tobacco cigarettes why do people still resist them even surpassing the importance of their lives; hence, the researcher has decided on the objective of the research as:

***To study the resistive behavior of consumers towards electronic cigarette in India.***

The key objective of the research can further be divided into following sub objectives:

- To know the perception of a consumer towards conventional tobacco cigarette.
- To understand consumer's opinion about electronic cigarette as a replacement for a tobacco cigarette.
- To analyze the possible factors that hinder a consumer from opting for electronic cigarette.

## 4. Methodology

As discussed earlier in the introduction section the researcher shall use the best possible technique of research that suits best for the proposed research question. For this, various suitable techniques shall be studied in-depth from which the most appropriate technique shall be chosen. Research methodology is defined as the manner by which knowledge is obtained, hypotheses are generated, theories are defended, and the relationship between theoretical perceptions and practical problems are established (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). There are many procedural frameworks by which a researcher can achieve reliable, valid, and credible conclusions.

### 4.1. Research design

Research design can be better explained by the following figure adapted and simplified by the researcher from the research 'Onion' layers by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2009)

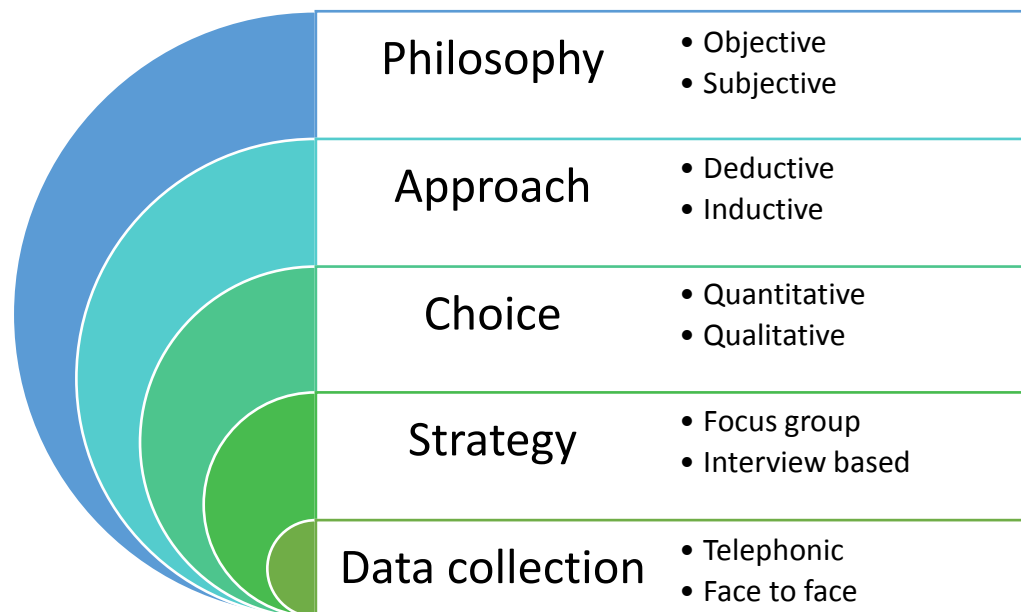


Figure 1: The onion peel model for research design

#### 4.2. Research philosophy

Depending on the researcher's outlook a research philosophy needs to be outlined that dictates the stages of study development (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2012). Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2009) stated that research seldom falls into a single category; also, given the fact that all categories are none better than another. To find a suitable philosophy that mimics the needs and thinking of the research the researcher must scrutinize all the objectives of the study. Types of philosophies that are generally involved in research are:

4.2.1. Objective philosophy supports reality, and reality is independent of any social influences. Objectivity generally means the state of being real; independent of prejudice, interpretation, or imaginations.

4.2.2. Subjective philosophy depends on how people perceive the world which again may depend on time (Hair et al., 2003). This philosophy permits the researcher to gain knowledge from social perception and consumer attitudes. Here, the observer interacts with the subjects being observed. This philosophy can be approached within less time and budget, wherein small samples are interviewed in depth over a period (Holden and Lynch, 2004).

The research philosophy that the researcher chooses to use for this research purpose is **subjective philosophy**, as this study facilitates to explore consumer behavior and their attitude, expectation, or perception towards a product. Due to these conveniences, the researcher shall use this approach to explore the consumer behavior of resistive attitude towards electronic cigarette.

#### 4.3. Research approach

It is essential to map the approach by which a researcher is aiming to collect any information. The second layer of the research onion is the research approach that is divided as deductive approach and inductive approach.

4.3.1. Deductive approach as explained by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2009) involves evolving a theory followed by its factual verification. The thought process flows from generalized views to specific outcome thus forming a hypothesis. This approach first requires a hypothesis, then investigating its facts and then deciphering its outcome which moderately suits subjective exploratory studies.

4.3.2. Inductive approach, on the other hand, is the converse of the deductive, it involves evolving a specific individual observation into general theoretical statements (Hair et al., 2003). According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2012) it is associated with studying the state of the outcomes where the researcher's role is very significant. Hair et al., (2003) feel this approach is about exploring people's view and hence it favors a more flexible research. There is no falsification of any theory instead involves making of one using people's observation.

In the current research topic, the researcher needs to understand people's behavior and their stand towards a choice amongst the available options and in turn, make a theory rather than falsifying any existing theory. Thus, the **inductive approach** is a more suitable option to gather the reliable opinions as per the researcher.

#### 4.4. Research choice

The fundamental question for any research is whether a research needs to be quantitative or qualitative or both. The entire basis of a research is based on the type of research choice. As stated earlier by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2009) that a research seldom falls into a single category; also, given the fact that all categories are none better than another but it depends on the specific requirement and availability or suitability of primary tools for data collection.

4.4.1. Quantitative research refers to a measure of a research parameter (Hair et al., 2003). The data collected by this method needs to be standardized and normalized for every respondent. It is based on objective philosophy and deductive approach using a systematically structured framework, which cannot be the case for this research as it is an exploratory study. This choice is operative when a large statistically consistent population data is available. The answers to questionnaires are generally close-ended and have little room for variation.

4.4.2. Qualitative research refers to a significance of a research parameter (Hair et al., 2003). This method is based on a subjective philosophy and an inductive approach using exploratory tools such as interviews, focus groups, etc. the data collected for this method is not standardized or normalized and can significantly vary with each respondent. This method is used to recognize and polish the research problems (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). A qualitative research is beneficial to explore the emotions, attitude, inspiration, and decisions and documenting psychology of consumers (Hair et al., 2003).

Since this research is based on the attitudes of smokers the researcher needs to conduct in-depth interviews to gain meaningful perceptions of the target population in their own words, thus **qualitative research** is best suited for research choice.

Table 1: Direct comparison for the choice of research.

<b>Quantitative Research</b>	<b>Qualitative Research</b>
• Standardized	✓ Non-standardized
• Objective philosophy	✓ Subjective philosophy
• Deductive approach	✓ Inductive approach
• Close-ended	✓ Open-ended
• Question driven	✓ Answer driven
• Numbers	✓ Words
• Statistical	✓ Interpretative

#### 4.5. Research strategy

A research strategy is dependent on research question and objective of a research in a stipulated time using primary resources (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). It is the most critical parameter for any research study as it dictates the chief path from the research question through the objective and to the final goal of the study.

4.5.1. Focus group strategy is a form of qualitative research consisting of discussions in which a group of people is asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. In such discussions, the participants are permitted to interact with other participants. A fundamental difficulty with this setting is that arguments amongst the participants can often lead to extreme results, some may be outspoken and some respondents may be spectators only. Also, the confidentiality of co-participants cannot be guaranteed.

4.5.2. Interview based strategy gives the researcher a command over the course of the study, enabling the researcher with versatility along with compatibility for the subjective philosophy and inductive approach. According to Hair et al., (2003) this strategy functions on the principle of what, who, when, where, and how which



forms the backbone of an exploratory research. This also facilitates a researcher to reach the goal with a broader approach and in a comparatively shorter span and that too with a minimal cost of data collection. The results obtained in this method cannot be falsified and it allows true interpretation of the data. The results obtained by this method could differ with the population but has a minimal bias of the respondent as the data is based on answers to questions.

Considering the descriptive versatility and consistency of this method, the researcher decides that **interview based strategy** is apt for the research by gaining insights of people who are actual smokers and have a decent knowledge about electronic cigarettes.

#### 4.6. Data collection

Data collection is an important aspect of any type of research study. Inaccurate data collection can impact the results of a study and ultimately lead to invalid results. The data collection methods must observe the ethical principles of research (People.uwec.edu, 2017)

Regardless of the kinds of data involved, data collection in a qualitative study takes a great deal of time. The researcher needs to record any potentially useful data thoroughly, accurately, and systematically, using field notes, sketches, audiotapes, photographs, and other suitable means (People.uwec.edu, 2017). Qualitative data collection can be done with various methods such as:

##### 4.6.1. Telephonic interviews:

Telephone interviews are less time consuming and less expensive and the researcher has ready access to anyone on the planet who has a phone. Disadvantages are that the response rate is not as high as the face-to-face

interview as non-verbal responses such as body language and expressions are missed out during the conversations (People.uwec.edu, 2017).

#### 4.6.2. Face-to-face Interviews:

Despite rising popularity of mobile surveys, face to face interview still remains the favored old-school data collection method. Face-to-face interviews have many distinct advantages such as enabling the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and therefore gain their cooperation. The respondents are unable to provide false demographic information such as age, gender, race, etc. so more accurate screening is obtained which cannot be the case with telephonic ones. Also, it helps in gaining verbal as well as non-verbal responses such as body language and expressions (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). The interviewer without a doubt can obtain the emotional behavior of the respondents. These qualities yield highest response rates in survey research. They also allow the researcher to clarify ambiguous answers and when appropriate, seek follow-up information (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). The interviewer, in this case, has the control over the interview as he can keep the interviewee focused with intermittent probing if the topics go haywire. This type of interview is time-consuming but the quality of data obtained makes it worthwhile.

As the researcher aims to ask ambiguous questions to gain answers to the proposed questions and probe as much as possible to get a deeper insight and there is a scope of observing visual expressions of the respondents, it is best to opt for **Face-to-face interviews**.

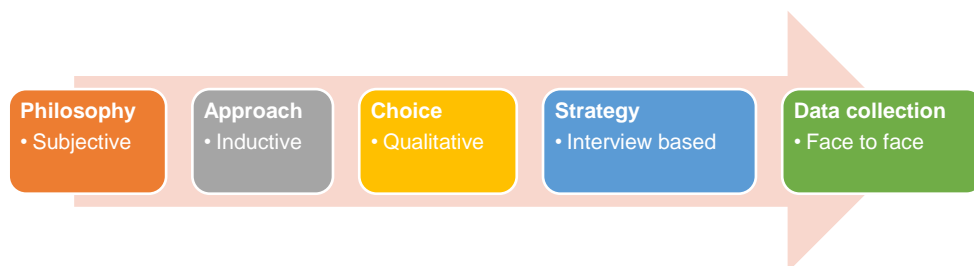


Figure 2: The research design path for data collection

After selecting the research design the researcher shall now outline the blueprint of the process of selected research design or the Modus operandi.

#### 4.7. Modus operandi for data collection

The mode of operation of data collection is based on the following processes. Data collected from selected in-depth interviews conducted on a predetermined study size.

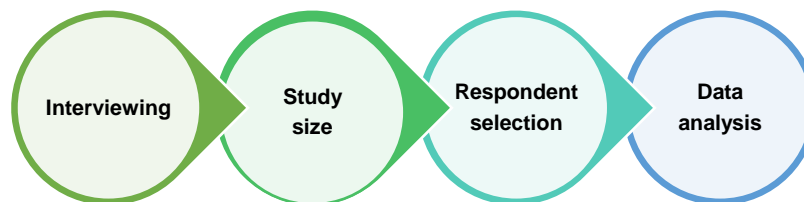


Figure 3: The modus operandi for data collection

##### 4.7.1. Interviewing

Interviewing involves asking questions and getting answers from participants in a study. Based on the questions asked and the expected answers an interview guide can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured.

4.7.1.1. A structured interview is the one when the interviewer asks each respondent the same series of questions, that are created prior to the interview. They have limited set of answers like multiple choice or simple yes, no, true or false etc. There is very negligible room for variations as most of the questions are close-ended. The interviewer is inert and cannot deviate from the questions. This is best used when the topic is well explored and developed and the target is to only gather data and there is no need for interpretation.

4.7.1.2. An unstructured interview does not contain a guide. The most widely used unstructured interview originates from the ethnographic tradition of anthropology. Ethnographers gather data through participant observation and record field notes as they observe from the sidelines and/or as they join in the activities of those they are studying. During this process, the investigator identifies one or more 'key informants' to interview on an ongoing basis and takes jottings or short notes while observing and questioning. The interviewer elicits information about the meaning of observed behaviors, interactions, artifacts, and rituals, with questions emerging over time as the investigator learns about the setting.

4.7.1.3. A semi-structured interview is often the sole data source for a qualitative research project and is usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location outside of everyday events. They are generally organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and respondent. Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either with an individual or in groups. Most commonly they are only conducted once for an individual or group and take between 30 minutes to several hours to complete. The individual in-depth interview allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

While studying the resistive behavior towards electronic cigarettes, it was important to get all related information from the interviewee. There is a high possibility of diverting away from the subject during the interview, which could dilute the quality of information. Considering all these aspects, the researcher has opted for a semi-structured interview.

#### 4.7.2. Study size

Estimating the number of participants in a study required to reach saturation depends on several factors, including the quality of data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained from each of the participant, the number of interviews per participant, use of shadowed data and the qualitative method and study design used (Bazeley, 2013; Morse, 2013).

A population commonly contains too many individuals to study conveniently, so an investigation is often restricted to one or more samples drawn from it. We can conclude that a sample is a reasonable subset of the population. A well-chosen subset will contain most of the information about a population parameter.

For this research purpose, size considered well manageable and exploratory enough to justify the research is a minimum of 10 respondents.

#### 4.7.3. Respondent selection

To maintain the quality of the data the best technique for respondent selection according to the researcher is a conventional technique of referral or “snowball”. It gives the researcher the benefit of logically selecting the specific target respondent and explore the research question in much detail. It relies on referrals from initial subject to generate additional subjects. This method enables the interviewer to select one individual that fits the criteria of the research and that individual recommends or refers another individual that they feel belong to the same criteria. This avoids researcher bias as only the first individual is known to the researcher and rest are strangers.

Since the research topic is to analyze resistant behavior towards electronic cigarette; the interviewees shall be selected based on these criteria:

- They are smokers.
- They have tried electronic cigarette at-least once.
- They discontinued using an electronic cigarette and still smoke conventional ones.

#### 4.7.4. Data analysis

The analysis of data shall be performed using the model formulated by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, (2014) where the journey of the data from the source to result is depicted. The most straightforward type of qualitative analysis is the one that seeks to identify patterns, similarities, contrasts, etc. in a data. It proceeds through a series of well-defined steps such as taking notes, identification of themes, category-building, conceiving a logic chain, creating an analytical framework, and finally display the data (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014).

This type of analysis helps in the general understanding of the nature of the qualitative analysis. This procedure can be applied to a variety of textual, audio, or visual data hence the researcher plans to audio-record the interviews of the respondents.

The interpretation of a data involves materializing larger meanings of what is said. The focus must be set on elements like character, problem, reaction, and resolution. If needed the narration shall be rewritten in proper chronological order. Based on similarities and contrasts the researcher then intends to build a thematic framework, categorize the data, build a logic chain wherever there is a relation between the objective and the findings. Also, significant, and non-overlapping statements of the respondents shall be quoted to have an equal

worth of what they feel during the interview and interpreted in detail. And finally, the data shall be displayed in pictorial, tabular or graphical formats for better perception (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014).

#### 4.8. Ethical considerations

While conducting the research, the researcher shall follow some norms.

Information: The respondents shall be informed in detail about the type and purpose of the research.

Participation: The participants shall be selected only if they wished to voluntarily oblige.

Privacy: The researcher shall maintain the privacy of respondents. The participants' names shall only be disclosed with their consent. The names of those unwilling to disclose their identity shall be named as respondent 'n'.

Recording: The interview shall only be recorded if the respondents are comfortable with it. Detailed notes shall be taken for those who are uncomfortable.

## 5. Limitations

The population from which the respondents were selected (in this case from India), is not well versed with electronic cigarettes, possibly because, the product is not well marketed/ advertised here. Hence, it was difficult finding the respondents.

As in India, very few studies have been done on cigarette smoking and electronic cigarette. It was difficult finding authenticated secondary data on this topic from India, hence global data was adapted to understand the scenario.

The language was also a barrier as people in India speak different languages and the researcher was not well versed with many of them hence the English language was the only solution which is a second spoken language in India.

Since this research is being carried out for dissertation purpose for the researcher to achieve a master's degree at The National College of Ireland the resources and expertise for conducting a qualitative research were limited.



## 6. Result and Findings

The in-depth interviews of the 11 respondents led to findings related to the researcher's objective. In this chapter, the findings are mentioned in detail for the ease of understanding the respondents' view.

### 6.1. Question 1: What is the demographic distribution of smokers?

#### 6.1.1. Result for demographic representation of the respondents

Sex: The respondents selected for this research were all males.

Age group: The respondents selected were of age between 18 to 50 years.

Profession: The respondents were not selected from any particular profession, but the researcher got an opportunity to interact with different professionals in the society such as students, sales professionals, businessmen, scientists, advertisers, etc.

Table 2: Demographic data of the respondents

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Profession</b>
Dr. Mandar Gupte	33	Scientist
Mr. Amol Kakade	31	Marketing manager
Mr. Dharmesh Sampat	39	Advertiser
Mr. Jinang Shah	23	Cloth trader
Mr. Prince Parekh	22	Self employed
Mr. Sunil Vasiya	50	Business man
Mr. Deep Kothari	23	Student
Mr. Nirav Shah	34	Marketing executive
Respondent 9	19	College dropout
Respondent 10	18	Student
Respondent 11	28	Business man

#### 6.1.2. Finding for demographic representation of the respondents

Sex: In Indian scenario, female smokers are very less, and even though they smoke, they don't tend to discuss it may be because of social pressure.

Considering this, researcher opted to interview only male respondents so that he can gain information without any inhibition.

Age: In India, the Legal age for smoking is 18 years. It has been observed that choice and perceptions of a brand or commodity vary as per age of an individual. To get all around information about the research subject, the researcher chose to interact with respondents of different age group. As stated by Kotler and Keller, (2009), consumer wants and abilities change with age. Hence, for this research purpose, the researcher has interacted with individuals from 18 years of age till 50 years of age. This representative number of individuals encompasses possible age differences and so has he observed the differences in opinion regarding consumption of conventional tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes.

Profession: Respondents that are selected for this research purpose are from a diverse professional background. The researcher has tried to maintain differences in the professions of respondents, keeping in mind that, different profession demands different mindset and same reflects in habits. Similarly, as profession changes so do the people around an individual. This affects the peer influence factor. For example, for a college dropout boy, his neighborhood could be an influential factor and for an advertisement professional, his creative colleagues' opinion might matter. For a similar kind of consumer product, reactions from both this surrounding will differ. As discussed with an advertising professional, he finds that conventional tobacco cigarettes help him relieve some stress, whereas, for a college dropout, the cigarette is a mean of impression or style statement. The profession also affects the earning of an individual and as we have already discussed in the review of the literature, as per Kotler & Keller 2009, income determines the ability of the consumer. So, depending on the changes in profession and income, need and buying behavior of the respondents also changes.

## 6.2. Question 2: What is the smoking background?

### 6.2.1. Result for smoking background

While analyzing the smoking background of respondents, the researcher observed that most of the respondents have started smoking a cigarette with friends or family. Few of them tried it with excitement or out of curiosity whereas few also thought that it suits their personality and they look “cool”.

When asked about the duration, that they are smoking a cigarette, the responses that researcher got were different. Few of them are smoking since more than 20 years while the newest is 1 year since he has started smoking.

Most of the smokers were having almost 5-6 cigarettes per day. The maximum numbers of cigarettes that one consumes were around 20 cigarettes per day. Least numbers were 2 cigarettes per day.

Most of the respondents have started their first smoke with their colleagues or friends in college or neighborhood whereas one respondent started smoking a cigarette at a business party.

Respondent quotes:

*“I felt it is very cool, I used to look at my friends when they used to smoke and thought that smoking is something different, out of the blues so just to try it”* – Dr. Mandar Gupte (33), Scientist.

*“My friends had a habit of smoking, and they looked like ‘dudes’ with a style, I also felt like since it is stylish and in the movies, also the film stars used to smoke, because of that I felt that if I smoke I’ll look like a hero too”* – Mr. Amol Kakade (31), Marketing manager.

“During my college, I used to visit a snooker parlor and made friends there and most of them are habituated to smoking while playing snooker. During teenage, you get attracted to these things as your friends do it also. At that age, you feel that girls are attracted to these kinds of things also you feel such habits help you to be a part of some group” – Mr. Jinang Shah (23), Cloth market trader.

#### 6.2.2. Finding for smoking background

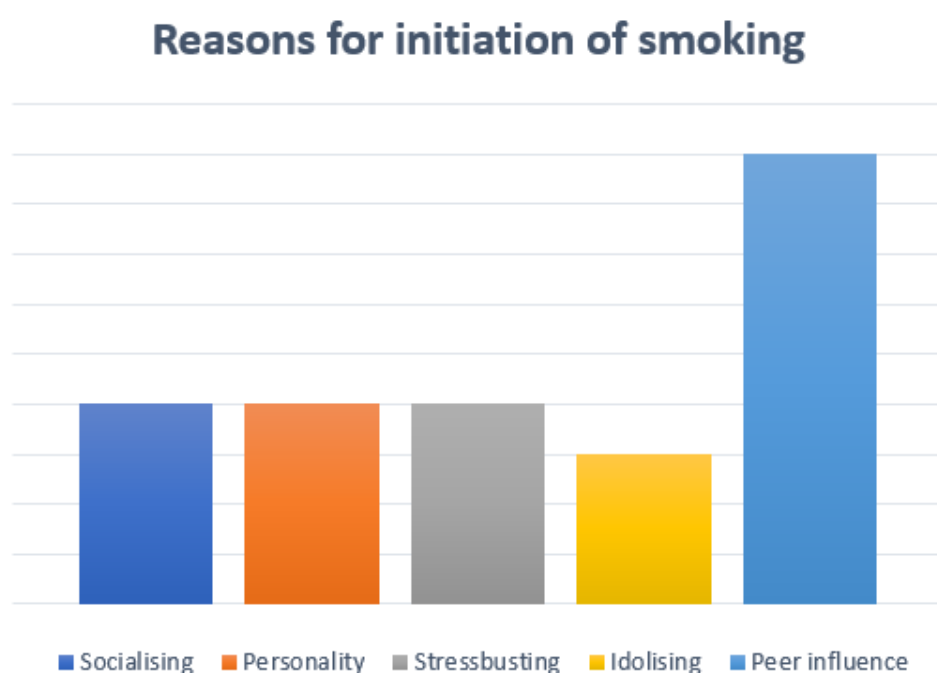


Figure 4: The graph represents the reasons for the initiation of smoking.

It has earlier been discussed in the review of the literature, peer influence is an important factor for a consumer to develop his buying behavior or consumption of products. Amongst the respondents, most of the respondents had their first cigarette with their colleagues or friends, emphasizing the peer influence factor.

While analyzing the reason for starting cigarette smoking, perceived personality was an important reason that the researcher has observed as most of the respondent started with the thought that cigarette smoking will help them look

stylish or “macho”. They felt that it will help them gain attention in the crowd and while smoking, they can be part of the desired group so that they will not feel isolated or dejected from their friends who smoke. Same is the case with the influence of films or their idols. Indian population follows the film stars and makes them their idols, which results in following their onscreen and off-screen habits. Idols can not only be celebrities but family members or peers as well. This is also a reason for some of the respondents to start smoking. As we have already discussed in the review of the literature, reference group and consumer’s personality also affects the consumer’s habits and buying behavior.

The researcher has observed that there is no correlation between the number of years one uses cigarettes and number of units one does per day. A person, who is smoking for 20 years, still smokes only 4 to 5 cigarettes while the respondent who is smoking since last 8 years smokes around 20 cigarettes a day. The researcher has also observed that respondents who are not earning by themselves have restricted usage up to 2-3 units per day; this might be because of the cost factor also.

### 6.3. Question 3: What is the awareness among Indians about electronic cigarettes?

#### 6.3.1. Results for awareness about electronic cigarette

When asked about electronic cigarette, all the respondents were aware of electronic cigarette and they have tried electronic cigarette at-least once in their lifetime. Many respondents knew the device by the name of “Pen Hookah” and faced difficulty to recognize it with the name “e-cigarettes”.

Respondent quotes:

*“E-cigarette? Is it the same as the ones that have batteries and flavors? Oh yes! The pen hookah!!”* – Mr. Deep Kothari (23), Student.

*“Yes, I have tried Pen hookahs! I didn’t know it is also called e-cigarette”* – Dr. Mandar Gupte (33), Scientist.

#### 6.3.2. Finding for awareness about electronic cigarette

All the respondents were aware of electronic cigarette though by different names, and they have used electronic cigarette at least once in a lifetime. As the research topic is to understand resistive behavior towards electronic cigarette. The researcher was sure that smokers who have used electronic cigarette can give a comprehensive opinion about it. This was the reason researcher has strategically selected respondents who are aware of electronic cigarette.

#### 6.4. Question 4: What is the source of knowledge for electronic cigarettes?

##### 6.4.1. Results for source of knowledge about electronic cigarette

Most of the respondents have gained information from their friends or relatives whereas only a few of them have gained information from social media or the internet.

Respondent quotes:

*“We friends were hanging out, one of our friends bought the e-cigarette and said this is something new and I have tried it and liked it so thought you guys might like it too”* – Mr. Jinang Shah (23), Cloth market trader.

*“I never searched for this e-cigarette on the internet or any media, it was once my friend told me that why don’t you quit smoking? And I have an option for you... this is an e-cigarette”* – Mr. Nirav Shah (34), a Marketing executive.

#### 6.4.2. Finding for source of knowledge about electronic cigarette



Figure 5: The graph represents the source for knowledge of electronic cigarette.

As we have discussed earlier in the literature review section, peer influence and internet are two important factors for awareness of a product. Indian population is nowadays using the internet and social media platforms to express themselves and at the same time to gain knowledge. Since the researcher has interviewed mix set of respondents, based on their profession and education, their sources of knowledge differ. As per Hayes et al., (2004), Peer influence is still the most influencing factor in selecting products like a cigarette or having a habit of smoking. This comment holds true in this research also.

#### 6.5. Question 5: What according to Indians are the benefits of electronic cigarettes?

##### 6.5.1. Results for benefits of electronic cigarette

As all the respondents have used electronic cigarettes at least once in their lifetime, the researcher wanted to know whether they are aware of the benefits of an electronic cigarette.

Except for two individuals, all others were aware of some or the other benefit of electronic cigarette. Most of them were aware of the fact that electronic cigarettes do not contain tobacco and they are available in different flavors. Some of them knew the longer life of the product, as it is rechargeable and can be refilled.

## Respondent quotes

*“It was kind of different from what cigarettes are actually... they are I guess less poisonous or less harmful I'd prefer to say than cigarettes”* – Mr. Prince Parekh (22), Self-employed.

*“Electronic cigarettes are Supposedly you can say with inverted commas ‘Supposedly’ safe as per what I have heard.”* – Mr. Dharmesh Sampat (39), Advertiser.

### 6.5.2. Finding for benefits of electronic cigarette

#### Benefits of electronic cigarettes

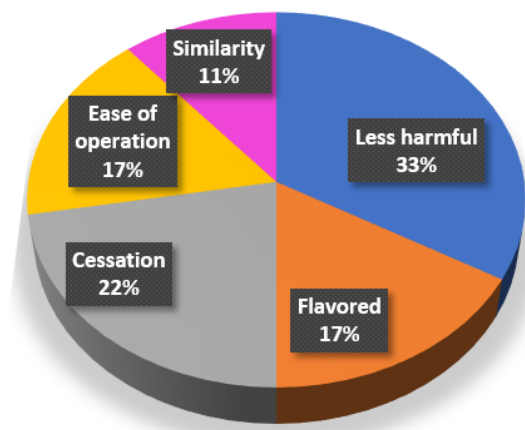


Figure 6: The pie represents the benefits of electronic cigarettes.

For a meticulous feedback from the consumer about the product, it is necessary that a consumer should know the product well. Knowing the product does not only mean to know the immediate benefits of the product but to know the long-term benefits and economics too. While interviewing the respondents, the researcher observed that none of the respondents were fully aware of the entire benefits of electronic cigarettes. Most of them knew the perceived benefit of the product, but very few of them were aware of the economic benefits of the product.

Apart from no tobacco, choice of flavors and rechargeable batteries, none of the respondents were aware of health benefits of electronic cigarette. Four



respondents were aware that this can be used for smoking cessation. Not having adequate knowledge about the product might also lead to dissatisfaction about the product or it might affect repeat purchase decisions. For example, considering the Indian market, which is heavily influenced by cost factor, if the consumers were aware of the economics of electronic cigarette, the researcher is sure that few of them would have opted for repeat usage of electronic cigarette.

6.6. Question 6: What according to Indians are the drawbacks of electronic cigarettes?

6.6.1. Results for drawbacks of electronic cigarettes

As the researcher has interviewed the consumers who have tried electronic cigarette but are not continuing with it, they could be a good critic of the electronic cigarette vis-à-vis conventional tobacco cigarettes.

The most common comment that researcher observed was about the taste of electronic cigarette and after usage feel of the same. Most of them told that electronic cigarette misses this feel factor in terms of taste as well as product handling. Cost is the second most important factor which has restricted repeat use of electronic cigarette.

This cost involves the cost of the product, tank refilling, maintenance of the product etc. Safety of the product was also a noted concern as most of the respondents were not aware of the safety aspects of electronic cigarette; they had a fear of blasting of the battery. Few of the respondents reported that apart from the flavor taste, electronic cigarette portrays a childish look or personality.

Most of the respondents were also not comfortable with the design and manifestation of the product. Few of them have also commented on the poor availability of the product or flavors.

## Respondent quotes

*“First of all, it's plastic, ok and you know what you won't believe I have not changed my cigarette brand since past 25 years, and you will not believe I use the same match stick brand also, ship matchstick is one brand in India, .... That's my style when having a smoke since a match stick is not there while light an e-cigarette what is the fun?”* – Mr. Sunil Vasiya (50), Businessman.

*“Drawbacks obviously it is costlier than cigarettes, like if you buy on Amazon they sell that e-cigarettes for starting range of 2000-2500 bucks which is very costly and whereas one cigarette pack cost you 150-200 ....and after purchasing you have to buy flavors and maintain that but in cigarettes you have to just light it and throw away “.* – Mr. Deep Kothari (23), Student.

*“Ya, this thing happened with one of my friend, actually I was there only.... at his apartment, he had kept an e-cigarette on charging, I don't know what after that there was a sound of a minor blast, so we checked out and it was the e-cigarette, so I stopped using e-cigarettes after that incident.... there are batteries inside and you cannot rely that it will be safe for you”* – Mr. Prince Parekh (22), Self-employed.

### 6.6.2. Finding for drawbacks of electronic cigarette

## Problems with electronic cigarettes

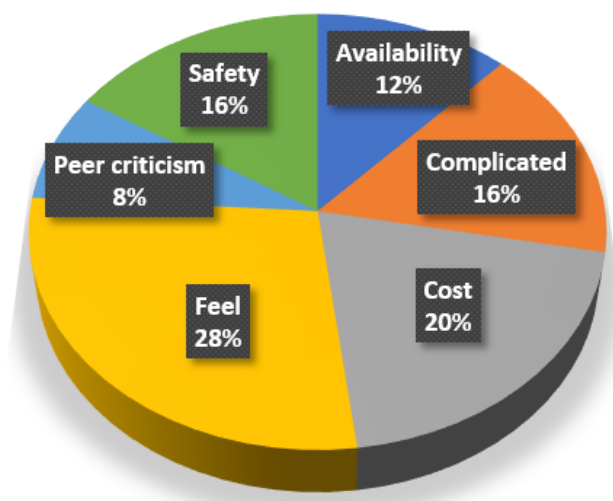


Figure 7: The pie represents the drawbacks of electronic cigarettes.

Considering consumer's stand about a product, it is necessary to understand consumer buying behavior. As discussed earlier in literature review section, post-purchase evaluation of a product/service gives rise to two possibilities which are either dissonance or satisfaction. If the level of delivered value from a product/service is less than the customer's expectations, it leads to dissonance or dissatisfaction. In case of electronic cigarettes, the product seems to be not matching with the consumer's expectations in terms of taste and feel after usage. As noted by Olson and Zanna, (1993) the decisions of a consumer are often laden with different emotional aspects. The researcher found that the electronic cigarettes are failing to satisfy these emotional aspects.

As discussed in the barriers for resistance, value barrier plays an important role too. Unless the innovation offers strong performance to price value compared to offered substitutes, customers resist to change, if the consumer is not getting the desired value or satisfaction out of the money he is investing, there are very few chances that he will opt for a repeat purchase of the product. In India, an electronic cigarette costs approximately 5000 INR (~70 €) for the starting unit. Though the product is available from 500 INR (~7 €), a better-quality product is costly. In India where the average per month income as per livemint.com, (2017) is just ~8600 INR (~120 €) a month; and if the customer is not satisfied with the product of such high value, he will not opt for this kind of products.

As we have discussed in risk barriers, uncertainty and potential side effects of an innovation that cannot be anticipated could be a barrier for change. This implies for the safety aspect also, if the consumer is having a doubt about the safety of the product, it is very unlikely that he will use that product repeatedly.

As the researcher stated earlier, electronic cigarettes are not well marketed in India as of now, because of which product availability is also a concern. If the

product availability is a concern, or the consumer doesn't get it easily, there are chances that the consumer will look out for an alternative option. If the product is not easily available, the consumer might choose not to use the product.

6.7. Question 7: What kind of cigarette do Indians prefer more?

6.7.1. Results for preference: electronic cigarette vs conventional tobacco cigarette

The researcher wanted to know that, in the current scenario, if given a choice to the respondents to select between the electronic cigarette and conventional tobacco cigarette, what would their choice be? In this case, all the respondents have selected conventional tobacco cigarettes.

Respondent quotes

*"I would prefer my regular cigarette only, mainly because e-cigarette cannot give me the style, the kick, the taste and that MANLY feeling. I will be thrown out from my friend circle."* –

Respondent 11 (28), Businessman.

6.7.2. Finding for preference: electronic cigarette vs conventional tobacco cigarette

This scenario was well expected because the researcher has selected the respondents on the criteria that they are no longer using an electronic cigarette. Smokers, who have tried an electronic cigarette, are not satisfied with the results because of which they have opted for conventional tobacco cigarettes.

6.8. Question 8: What feature would people like to change in existing models?

6.8.1. Results for features to change in electronic cigarette

Considering the positive attributes and drawbacks of electronic cigarette, the researcher asked the respondents whether they would suggest some changes for electronic cigarettes.

Two of the respondents were not comfortable suggesting any changes with current product whereas rest of them have suggested cosmetic changes in the product in terms of look and feel of the product. As we have seen earlier also, the safety of the product was a concern, respondents have suggested implementing changes that will ensure safety for the user. For price concern, affordable pricing will be a welcome change according to some respondents.

Respondent quotes

*“It does not have a filter in it, I mean sometimes if the atomizer goes over-charged or something and you puff a little slower than you should then probably you get those liquids into your mouth as well, and may be that is why I had that lingering taste in my mouth.... So they should add a filter like how you have the cigarette butts”* – Mr. Dharmesh Sampat (39), Advertiser.

6.8.2. Finding for features to change in electronic cigarette

For consumer loyalty, a marketer should understand and try to fulfill customer demands and expectations. As observed earlier, respondents were not satisfied with the taste of product or feel of the product; they have suggested similar changes in the product.

Changing the look of the product will be of immense importance as most of them are concerned about look and feel of the product. In most of the cases, cigarette

smoking is initially considered as a style statement which further becomes a habit, hence the look and the feel of a product will be considered while making a purchase decision. As a safe product is easily accepted, the safety concerns about the product should be addressed, and if the product is safe in its current style, same should be communicated to consumers. It has been addressed earlier also that awareness of the product is very less among the consumers.

Kotler and Keller, (2009), states that for a consumer, purchase decisions are based on how consumers perceive prices and what they consider to be the current actual price. This thing applies true for current research also as most of the respondents have suggested on revised pricing for the product. If the consumers are not finding the product as value for money, they opt to resist it.

6.9. Question 9: Would Indians give electronic cigarettes a second chance if rectified?

6.9.1. Results for acceptance of electronic cigarette if rectified

As respondents have suggested some changes in current electronic cigarettes, the researcher has asked their preference if they would opt for an electronic cigarette after changes. Two of the respondents were reluctant to opt for electronic cigarette whereas few of the respondents were in a dilemma, they intend to opt for it only after experiencing the changes. Rests of the respondents were ready to switch from conventional tobacco cigarette to electronic cigarette.

Respondent quotes

*“No, no, no, Sorry, because I’ll tell you if I leave cigarette aside, I will not want to part away from ship matchsticks, no, it is also an integral part of my life, so if use e-cigarette and if by mistake out of habit I light the e-cigarette I am gone! boom! It is a habit of 25 years”* – Mr. Sunil Vasiya (50), Businessman.

### 6.9.2. Finding for acceptance of electronic cigarette if rectified

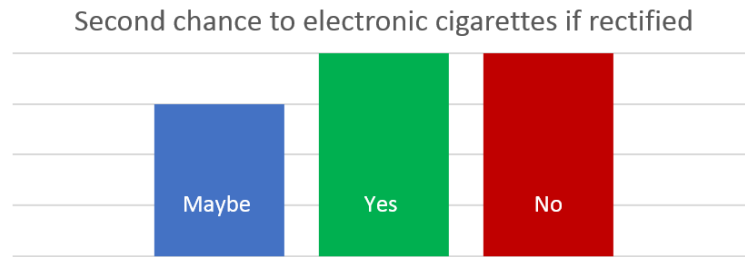


Figure 8: The graph represents if people are willing to give electronic cigarettes a second chance.

Researcher aimed to know the reasons for resistance to electronic cigarette. As stated by Kotler & Keller, (2009), few measures can be taken to avoid consumer non-compliance; these include that the company must distinguish the causes of customer attrition and identify those that can be managed better and most importantly listening to the customer.

Few respondents were reluctant to change even after changes made in an electronic cigarette, as per Peck et al., (2012), this type of consumers are persistent consumers, who by any means do not want a brand or product shift. For this kind of customers, various measures need to be applied to attract them towards new product. Few respondents have commented that they might think of change, as per loyalty ladder discussed in the review of the literature, they can be known as a trialist. These kinds of customers are comparatively easy to attract towards our product if the product is developed as per their need or requirement. If trialist like the product, he can become a repeat purchaser or a client.

Few of the respondents have also said that they will go ahead with an electronic cigarette in future if the suggested changes are implemented. These respondents can also be categorized as trialists, but they are easier to convert into clients than the ones who are in a dilemma.

## 7. Discussion

Kotler and Keller (2009) state that consumer wants and abilities change with age. This research which was conducted with individuals ranging from 18-50 years of age supports the theory as the researcher has observed different opinions regarding traditional tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes. The profession and income have also shown an impact on the mindset of an individual for consumption of traditional tobacco cigarettes at the same time the opinion about electronic cigarette also changes.

Peer influence plays an important role in consumer's buying behavior as well as habit formation. Most of the respondents began smoking with friends or colleagues. How an individual perceives his personality to be; alters his decision and habits. This is true in case of smoking also as most of the respondents in this research idolize some or the other, a family member, peer, or a film star.

As the research was to analyze resistive behavior the respondents were aware of electronic cigarettes but were familiar with different names. The findings in this research support a comment by Hayes et al., (2004) that peer influence is the most influencing factor in selecting products like cigarettes or having a habit of smoking. As the researcher has observed the source of information for an electronic cigarette was mostly peer baring somewhere the source was the internet.

Awareness of a product comes as two sides of a coin: advantages and disadvantages. Respondents were aware of quite some advantages about electronic cigarette such as no tobacco, choice of flavors, and help in smoking cessation. But in this case, the respondents were not aware of economic benefits, ease of operation, and safety benefits of electronic cigarette. For a product to be accepted by mass, they should be aware of the tangible benefits of the product such as cost and cosmetics of the product and intangible benefits such as comfort and feel of the product.



As per researcher's finding, the electronic cigarette has been incapable as of date to communicate these benefits owing to poor marketing. The attributes or factors related to the product which does not meet consumer's expectations become a disadvantage for the product. While discussing the disadvantage of the product, the researcher found that there are various expectations of a consumer which the electronic cigarette fails to meet. The first and most important feature that the consumers are not comfortable with is the after usage feel of the product.

As stated by Olson and Zanna, (1993) the decisions of a consumer are often laden with different emotional aspects. Most of the respondents were not getting emotional connect with the product, as some felt it childish and some were concerned peer criticism.

As per Indian consumer's expectations, electronic cigarettes cost them more than expected, as a traditional tobacco cigarette costs them 100-150 INR (~2 €) per pack, whereas a decent electronic cigarette would cost them 5000 INR (~70 €). This cost difference affects the consumer's preferences as observed in the interviews. The respondents didn't find electronic cigarettes as value for money product. In lieu with mentioned advantages and disadvantages, all the respondents chose traditional tobacco cigarette over electronic cigarettes.

When the respondents were asked for suggestions for the improvement the top most suggestion was to change the look and feel of the product, implementing adequate safety measure while usage and making the product affordable for masses. While concluding the interview when asked the respondent if they will opt for electronic cigarettes if the said changes are implemented few of them showed reluctance owing to their loyalty to traditional tobacco cigarettes while, rest of the respondents fell in trialist category of the consumer as described by Kotler and Keller, (2009).

As a final point from the above thesis, it can be stated that the following sub-objectives of the study are achieved with the respective findings of this research.

- To know the perception of a consumer towards conventional tobacco cigarette – **Feel, stress busting, socializing, personality, cost effective, and disposable.**
- To understand consumer's opinion about electronic cigarette as a replacement for tobacco cigarette – **Advantages like it's less harmful, flavored, helps in smoking cessation, etc.**
- To analyze the possible factors that hinder a consumer from opting for electronic cigarette – **Disadvantages such as complicated, expensive, artificial, unsafe, and unavailable.**

This leads to the main objective ***“To study the resistive behavior of consumers towards electronic cigarette in India”***. The resistive behavior of consumers is grounded on many aspects, such as their reason for selection of a product, their reason for resistance to an equivalent or better product, their analysis of the advantages or disadvantages of an innovation, their reasoning for their beliefs, and the socioeconomic psychology. The fact that an innovation may change their routine and disrupt their habit also hinders a consumer to adopt it. Such emotions can even surpass many significant health aspects too.

## 8. Conclusion

The researcher has initiated this project to understand the resistive behavior of the smokers towards electronic cigarettes. He has interviewed respondents who have tried electronic cigarettes at least once in their lifetime but they chose traditional tobacco cigarettes for repetitive usage. While analyzing the resistive behavior towards electronic cigarettes the researcher came across 5 major reasons such as psychological, sociological, economic, safety and convenience.

Many of the respondents were not comfortable with the feel, post-usage stimulus of the product. Habituation to traditional tobacco cigarette was also a **psychological** barrier for migration to electronic cigarettes. The researcher is convinced that for a habit of smoking, peer influence is a critical factor. As most of the respondents were concerned about the peer critics while opting for the habit and migrating to a new product. Idolism also plays an important role in such cases. The respondents were also anxious about their perceived **sociological** personality. The cost factor is of utmost importance when income and expenditure are accounted. A product like electronic cigarette comes with a high price tag and a higher maintenance liability. A consumer generally looks for products that are value for money but in this case, they fail to understand the eventual **economic** benefit of the product.

A consumer's acceptance towards a product increases when he or she is convinced that the product is **safe** for handling and will not cause operational hazards. Unfortunately, in case of electronic cigarettes, most of the respondents were skeptical about the components of the instrument. Usage **convenience** leads to compliance. The convenience, in this case, is the availability of the product and cartridges (refills or flavors), simplicity, and ease of operation. If the product availability is a concern, or the consumer doesn't get it easily, there are chances that the consumer will look out for an alternative.

The above mentioned 5 reasons psychological, sociological, economic, safety and convenience consequently concur the answer to the main research question of the thesis

– *Why do people in India resist switching from conventional tobacco cigarettes to electronic cigarettes?*



Figure 9: The image represents the reasons for resistance towards electronic cigarettes.

Considering, all these factors, an innovative product like the electronic cigarette, will require some time to gain acceptance in the consumer's mind provided proper marketing and awareness measures are implemented. Product awareness could be a crucial factor for compliance of this kind of innovations or products. Improvement in terms of the above aspects can significantly boost the acceptance of electronic cigarettes.

## **9. Further Scope**

In India, the electronic cigarette is not well marketed; a manufacturer or organization can take an initiative to promote these kinds of product.

Benefits of electronic cigarette over traditional tobacco cigarette are not yet well established here. Creating awareness about this will help electronic cigarette manufacturers to gain market.

In a cost driven market like India, cost benefit analysis of electronic cigarettes should be conveyed to consumers to increase the usage/ consumption of electronic cigarette.

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# Annexure A

## Interview guide

- a) Demographic data
  - i. Gender, age, and profession
  
- b) Smoking background
  - i. How long have you been smoking?
  - ii. How often do you smoke and how many cigarettes a day?
  - iii. How did you start smoking cigarettes?
  
- c) View about electronic cigarettes
  - i. What do you know about electronic cigarette, and was your source?
  - ii. What do you know about the benefits/downsides of electronic cigarettes?
  - iii. How was your experience?
  
- d) Conventional tobacco cigarettes vs electronic cigarettes
  - i. How do you see electronic cigarettes compared to conventional ones?
  - ii. What stops you from using electronic cigarettes? Why don't you continue using them?
  - iii. What are the reasons that the conventional ones win over electronic cigarettes in your opinion?
  
- e) If given a chance what features, benefits would you like to add/ subtract from an electronic cigarette?
  
- f) If the changes made would you consider switching to electronic cigarettes from conventional tobacco cigarette?