"It Didn’t Fill the Void": Reasons for E-cigarette and Tobacco Dual Use

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Background
Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) likely pose fewer health risks than smoking, yet many smokers adopt ENDS without fully relinquishing smoking. Known as ‘dual use’, this practice is widespread and compromises health benefits ENDS may offer. To date, few studies have explored how dual use practices arise and manifest.

Methods
We conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 ENDS users who reported smoking tobacco and vaping at least once a month. We explored participants’ smoking history, their recent and current smoking, trial, uptake and patterns of ENDS use, and future smoking and vaping intentions. We used a thematic analysis approach to interpret the transcripts.

Results: Four themes explained dual use

Inauthenticity of ENDS
ENDS alleviated nicotine cravings but did not replicate the experience of smoking.
“It gives you something, but not like a cigarette... I know it’s not the real deal”
Perceptions of the “real deal” varied; participants wanted to replicate the nicotine rush, hand-feel, throat-hit, taste, or emotional benefits they associated with smoking cigarettes.
“Trying to make that transition between cigarettes to e-cigarettes, you don’t get that throat-hit. You feel like you’re not really having a proper cigarette”

Managing impositions
Some participants had no intention of quitting smoking but used vaping to offset inconveniences created by tobacco control measures.
“Money was my motivation... There wasn’t the fact that I wanted to quit, it was I didn’t want to spend forty dollars every week on cigarettes”

Adaptive social identities
Dual use reflected attempts to comply with social group norms and manage stigma. Younger, social smokers enjoyed the camaraderie of vaping:
“...vaping is better, I suppose... it’s kind of more social, you just hang around with your friends and vape inside”
Yet vaping had a derogated status among social smokers’ wider networks where smoking was normative:
“(Vaping) was almost embarrassing, for some reason... when I went out to town, I’d smoke a cigarette.”
When around non-smokers, daily smokers vaped to avoid causing discomfort to others and to manage feelings of stigma. Yet in settings where smoking was normative, some smoked in preference to vaping.

Conclusions
Dual use reflects both social and physical cues; it assisted participants to navigate smoking restrictions and allowed them to manage divergent norms. Policies that discourage smoking, particularly excise tax increases on smoked tobacco and smoke-free space restrictions, appear important in prompting ENDS use; future work could assess their role in reducing dual use.

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