

Reasons Why Electronic Cigarettes Should be Legal in Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract

This research states about the “Reasons Why Electronic Cigarettes Should be Legal in Bangkok, Thailand”. The research aims to cover why electronic cigarettes should be legal in Thailand. There are 2 objectives for this research. 1) To know the reasons why electronic cigarettes should be legal in Bangkok. 2) To know the advantages that electronic cigarettes have over normal cigarettes. This research will use “Interviewing” as an instrument for the method to use on 10 people that use Electronic cigarette in Bangkok. However they cannot be spoken off, due to the illegal issues and situation of electronic cigarette in Thailand and Mr. Marit Krunyawat will be interviewed with in-depth questions to further study and benefit this research.

Key words: electronic cigarette, vapers, efficacy, cessation, cross-sectional, adolescents, prevalence

1. Introduction

A few years ago, there had been this NEW product in the ‘cigarette’ world called the “Electronic cigarette.” The electronic cigarette is an electronic device that is able to create a feeling like you’re smoking an ACTUAL cigarette. The device works by heating up liquid that the smoker puts in. Common liquids contains nicotine, propylene glycerol, glycerin, and some flavorings that differ from each type of e-liquid. Research says that it is way safer than normal cigarettes (tobacco smoking). Although, there are always statements like “further research needed” because electronic cigarettes are quite recent. When used by people who haven’t smoked before, it can lead to nicotine addiction. The main toxic chemicals that are found in tobacco smoking are not found in e-cigarettes. Also, there is no risk for bystanders breathing in the smoke from electronic cigarettes. It has very low cancer risks. Smoking electronic cigarettes are not a “gateway through smoking”, but is an option. A healthier and safer option for smokers and the ones around them. Some people use it to find a healthier or safer way for their bodies to “smoke”. Some really want to quit smoking actual cigarettes. Of course, electronic cigarettes are addictive too, but it doesn’t damage your health like normal cigarettes do. However, in Thailand, electronic cigarettes are still illegal, because they fall into the category of “goods that have not been taxed”. This leads to the topic and objectives of this research as to reasons why electronic cigarettes should be legal in Bangkok, Thailand.

This research was done in the city of Bangkok, Thailand. Results of this research study has shown that most Bangkok citizens who own Electronic Cigarettes have the will to quite tobacco smoking. The overall result states that people want to improve their health while being able to smoke. They stated that they have done research before thinking about owning Electronic cigarettes too. And they believe and rely on research abroad.

2. Literature review

Research studies claim that electronic cigarettes are way safer than normal cigarettes. “Smokers that switch from normal cigarettes to smoking electronic cigarettes lower their health risks dramatically” (McDonald, 2017). Why is it that “a product that can help safe lives of a thousand people, who are addicted to smoking”, appears to be illegal in Thailand? Electronic cigarettes are illegal in Thailand because it is a product that falls into the “goods that have not been taxed” Customs Act 27 states that avoiding import duty taxation is tax evasion and against the law. Violating Customs Act 27 is punishable by fines, five years in jail or both. The fines are calculated based on the cost of the products that evaded taxation and they can be steep. The five years in jail is obviously the source of reports of going to jail for vaping. Customs Act 20 gives Thai law enforcement arrest powers without a warrant if you are deemed to be breaking the law. Basically, this provides the legal basis for arresting someone in possession of vapor products. Similar to

“probable cause” in the United States (2017). However, people around the country still use them as a safer option and carry them around not caring about the fact that electronic cigarettes are illegal in Thailand.

In most countries like United States, electronic cigarettes are legal. They believe that it helps save tons of life and benefit people around users a lot as well. Electronic cigarettes in countries like Japan, Hong Kong, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, South Africa, Australia, Canada, Finland, Denmark, and Iran are restricted. Meaning that they do not ban it but they need further research and studies to prove the fact that it is really safe for the people. However, in countries like Thailand, Mexico, Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, Egypt, Singapore, and Taiwan, electronic cigarettes are banned. People or tourists that have them in hand and are caught using them can be put to prison (Payne, 2017). It’s quite ironic because why is “something that can save millions of lives”, being banned or restricted from some countries. Aren’t countries supposed to care about its people the most?

A case that has been researched involves a Swiss man. He was arrested and charged with “importation” of electronic cigarettes for vaping publicly in Thailand. He COULD receive any punishment that involves up to 5 years of deportation or imprisonment. And many people ask, “Can vapers do anything to pressure countries like Thailand to change their policies? (McDonald, 2017). Anyone can see how it can and will affect the Thailand’s tourism. How will a person, who’s in the middle of trying to quit smoking normal cigarettes, travel to Thailand without his/her electronic cigarettes? What if they are really addicted to smoking and are really in need of smoking? Will they be able to resist it? Or will they have to go back to smoking tobacco while in Thailand? Isn’t it supposed to be a vacation for them?

Tourists are expected to respect and follow the laws and rules in Thailand strictly and seriously. The Thai government “claims” that electronic cigarettes lure young people into normal smoking. Which is again, ironic, because it helps aid people, not bring people down. Travel agencies are warned about this and should make sure that their clients do not bring electronic cigarettes with them to Thailand. The law was established since 2014 (tourismThailand, 2017)

3. Objectives

1. To know the reasons why electronic cigarettes should be legal in Bangkok.
2. To know the advantage that electronic cigarettes have over normal cigarettes.

4. Research Methods

The research method for this research paper will involve interviews of 10 people (that have electronic cigarettes in their hand or are using it) in Bangkok, and in-depth interviewing Mr. Marit Krunyawat. To summarize the reasons why electronic cigarettes should be legal in Thailand. This method is one of the qualitative research method which helps both the readers and researcher better understand the topic with lots of information. The instrument for recording these interviews was an iPhone recording application.

5. Results and Discussion

10 people that smoking the electronic cigarettes were asked randomly. These were the questions that they were asked:

1. Why did you choose electronic cigarette over normal/tobacco cigarette?
2. Why do you smoke or have an electronic cigarette, even when it’s against the law in Thailand?
3. Why do you think that electronic cigarettes should be legal in Thailand?
4. How long have you been using Electronic Cigarette?
5. How long have you been using Tobacco Cigarette?

1st person: Male / 22 years old / University Student

1. “I researched that it’s safer and it doesn’t affect people around me. I have a girlfriend, we started dating and getting serious. But she really hates when I smoke cigarettes, so this is an alternative option that I chose. It makes her happier and I’m doing fine. So, yeah”.

2. “I started smoking electronic cigarettes about a year ago and it really helps me with my daily life. I don’t really feel tired and I don’t smell bad all the time. I don’t even care if it’s illegal”.

3. "I think that it's the safer way for smokers, it's an option, and it can save many lives".
4. "It's been about a year now since I started using E-Cig".
5. "Before knowing about E-Cigs, I smoked normal cigarettes for around 6 years".

2nd person: Male / 57 years old / Businessman

1. First, I'm a businessman, I want to keep my look and how I smell, when I need to meet my clients or socialize. Second, I'm a grandfather, I want to quit smoking, I'm afraid that it will affect my young nephew".

2. "I know that it's against the law, but I've had it for 2 years now. It makes me feel better when I need to work during the hard hours, but I don't want to use normal cigarettes because I used to have a risk of having lung cancer".

3. "I think that it should be legal because it has been accepted worldwide, like the United States. It helped many lives and it would be a great opportunity for Thailand to start saving lives also".

4. "Like said before, I have been using it for 2 years".

5. "I'm 57 now, and I've used normal cigarettes from the age of 18-55, so that's a long time. I'm starting to develop symptoms like tiredness and lack of energy, that's why I chose to change for the better".

3rd person: Female / 35 years old / Mother of 2 Teenagers

1. "I'm a mother of 2 teenagers, I wouldn't want them to see me smoke cigarettes or smell like cigarettes right? They're teens, one is 17 and the other is 15. They know about electronic cigarettes and they're okay with it. It's another option to keep me healthier."

2. "Well, to be honest, I only use electronic cigarette in my car or at home, because I know that it's illegal, but it helped me cope with my smoking addiction".

3. "It should be legal! You know, young women are addicted to smoking cigarettes too. Some of them don't even know the safer option, because Thailand gave out little information and it's illegal. Who would dare to do something against the law? Especially when it's controlled by the military?"

4. "I have used E-Cigs for 3 years now".

5. "Well, I started smoking normal cigarettes when I was 16 due to peer pressure until the age of 32".

4th person: Female / 20 years old / University Student

1. "I really want to quit smoking, I know it's not good for the health, and electronic cigarettes is a safer way to do so."

2. "Even when it's against the law, it's helping me with my smoking addiction, so I don't really care, as long as I know how to hide."

3. "It should be legal in Thailand. I think most people are scared to use or have it because it's illegal."

4. "It's been around half a year since I started using E-Cigs".

5. "You are not going to state my name in the research right? So I'd say I've been addicted to normal cigarettes since 13-19 years old".

5th person: Female / 24 years old / Office Employee

1. "I don't want my co-workers to think that I am addicted to cigarettes because of the way I smell, so I decided that it may be a better way to use it as an alternative option."

2. "Um, I used to smoke when I'm stressed from work, but now I vape. I'm scared of the law, but it helps me so much, I wish it was legal."

3. "Of course! I think that it should be legal, you know how many lives it can save? And it doesn't affect others than don't smoke too."

4. "I have owned this E-Cig for 2 years or so".

5. "When I was 18-21, I was very addicted to normal cigarettes".

6th person: Male / 21 years old / University Student

1. "I chose it instead of a normal cigarette because it makes exercise better, the food tastes better, and it smells nicer."
2. "Because it doesn't affect people around me and it's safer for my health. It doesn't harm others. I know that it's illegal but it's not that bad. It's not a product that can harm someone else. It's just something that most people don't really understand and there is not research in our country yet."
3. "I think it should be legal because normal cigarettes affect people around me a lot. Sometimes to death. Affects me and people around me. If it was legal, it will reduce the percentage of deaths. Electronic cigarettes are quite expensive and it will be out of reach from children than normal cigarettes."
4. "It's been a year or so".
5. "I have smoked normal cigarette only for about 2 years, but my girlfriend is allergic to the cigarette smoke, and to be closer to her and make her feel better about me, I chose E-Cig".

7th person: Male / 26 years old / Waiter

1. "I chose it over normal cigarettes because it makes my impression better, my breath doesn't stink and it doesn't make my mouth dark or my teeth yellow."
2. "I know that it's illegal, and I hide every time I vape. But it has a lot more advantages so I choose to hide than stop and go back to smoking normal cigarettes."
3. "It should definitely be legal, because I feel bad for the people that are trying hard to quit smoking as using this is an alternative choice. They shouldn't be hiding for these kinds of things."
4. "I used E-Cig for around 2 years now".
5. "I have been addicted to normal cigarettes from 17-24 years old".

8th person: Male / 46 years old / Father of Teenage Son

1. "I used to be very addicted to smoking cigarettes. My son is in his young teenage years and I don't want him to get the feeling that I smell bad."
2. "I don't care that it's illegal, I just want to be close to my son, like I want to play with him or talk to him. I don't want to like, be smelling bad because he used to say that my breathe stinks."
3. "I don't know, but for me it should be legal. Many people don't quite get how it helps others deal with the process of quitting cigarettes."
4. "I started when I was around 43 years old, so around 3 years now".
5. "Oh, I was addicted to normal cigarettes for a long time, maybe around 24 years".

9th person: Male / 53 years old / Taxi Driver

1. "Well, I'm a taxi driver, so passengers complain all the time about the smell in my car. Some people really don't like the smell of cigarettes, that's why I chose to use electronic cigarettes because it smells better and sometimes doesn't smell at all. The smell doesn't stick on my body."
2. "Actually, I try to hide it every day. But there's a lot more benefits than disadvantages."
3. "It should be legal in a way that won't harm children."
4. "I had it for 2 years now".
5. "I was addicted to normal cigarettes for 30 years".

10th person: Female / 38 years old / Manager

1. "I need to keep my good impression, clients sometimes complain about the smell of cigarettes on my body or hair. Honestly, I wouldn't want to be seen as a manager who is addicted to smoking cigarettes"
2. "I don't want to go back to being addicted to smoking cigarettes, I don't care about the laws."
3. "It should be legal, I'm tired of hiding and I think others that vape are tired of hiding from something that shouldn't be against the laws too."
4. "Had it since 37, so about a year now".
5. "Was using normal cigarette frequently for about 21 years".

Mr. Marit Krunyawat was asked in-depth and with more questions dealing with laws and regulations in Thailand.

1. How do you feel after smoking electronic cigarettes for some time?

“After trying and using electronic cigarettes for some time, I found that I can exercise more regularly without getting tired. Also food tastes A LOT better. I doesn’t mean that we have to smoke normal cigarettes and electronic cigarettes at the same time. You can smoke electronic cigarettes as an only option, and you’re totally fine. I give you maximum of only 5 days, you would not want to come back to normal cigarettes again. I tried coming back to smoke normal cigarettes for 1-2 times, and it feels terrible. It feels like I want to vomit. After using electronic cigarettes for some time, I did not have any thoughts of wanting to go back and smoke normal cigarettes.”

2. Is electronic cigarette safer than normal cigarette?

“Of course! It’s like a special device that comes in place of the chemical called “Nicotine”. “Nicotine Oral Inhaler” is used to help cigarette addiction in terms of medical use, it’s the same as an electronic cigarette. But the electronic cigarette also helps with the smoking habits in a user because smokers are usually addicted to two things, one, the nicotine, two, blowing out smoke. I have some stacks of research papers for you to read over here about research done on electronic cigarettes, from around the world. For example, this is from ash UK. They support the use of electronic cigarettes because it’s 95% safer than normal cigarettes.

3. What do you think about electronic cigarettes being illegal in Thailand?

“I have written a lot of reports and official documents on electronic devices, and send them to many ministries in Thailand. I have wrote and pleaded to the Ministry of Public Health in Thailand to release information on these stacks of research papers, to let people know the truth of electronic cigarettes. Not only stating the fact that electronic cigarettes are dangerous. I’m not saying that electronic cigarettes are the BEST and is 100% safe, but I’m stating that it is WAY safer than the normal cigarettes and can save more lives. Here, another example, the National Cancer Institute of UK. States clearly that electronic cigarettes help cope with the normal cigarette addictions, and stop the addiction. And this is the report on chemicals that we inhale. But I want to ask the government about how much research do you need to be able to accept the fact that it’s safer than normal cigarettes? All of these are REAL research papers from around the world. How can you say that there has not been any research on electronic cigarettes? That’s why I think that Thailand should open up and further their thoughts about this. It should be legal because it can save more lives? Do you know how many lives are dying, as we speak, by the cause of cancer? And smoking being the MAIN factor? Just think of all the lives we could save if electronic cigarettes were legal.”

4. If you say you want electronic cigarettes to be legal, what about the nicotine addiction that will affect vapers?

“Let me tell you this, vapers aren’t like smokers. Smokers need cigarettes all the time. I mean you’ll need to at least finish one cigarette in order to move on with your lives. But with vaping, you can just vape 1-2 times and that’s enough. That’s how vapers use electronic cigarettes. Also, when you vape for too long or it’s too much nicotine for the body, the body knows and vapers know when to stop.

5. What do you think about the future of “laws on electronic cigarettes” in Thailand?

“I think that in order to further anything, it should be legal first. Then you can restrict whatever. Same as restriction with the normal cigarettes. But not just BAN it. You can restrict the age, you can restrict the chemicals that should or should not be in the electronic liquid (liquid that is used in vaping or smoking electronic cigarettes). My bros and I think that it’s safer. But if it’s safer, why is it illegal? On the other hand, normal cigarettes are more dangerous, but they’re legal. The Ministry of Public Health in Thailand always mention that normal cigarettes are dangerous, smoking kills, and all that, but why are they still legal? In my perspective, I look at the people who don’t smoke anything, as well. People around us will not get affected with electronic cigarettes at all. Unlike normal cigarettes. People around us don’t have to get second-hand smoke. This is a great opportunity to make people around us healthier and safer. It’s not like I only have a perspective for people who smoke, I care about the people around us as well.

6. Last question, that everyone all worries about. How about the young children or teens, who are curious about this new product? They may think that they've tried normal cigarettes, they want to try this one too.

"I'll say this, my crew and I are trying to fight for electronic cigarettes to be legal, for the SAKE OF SMOKERS, not trying support people or children that want to TRY something new. You're afraid that kids will be curious and try this? Make it legal! So we can restrict and control it. Like normal cigarettes, it says only 20+ age can smoke, that is what we want for electronic cigarettes as well, if they were legal. In fact, electronic cigarettes will be easier to restrict because it's expensive. People who want to use it, are people who REALLY want to quit smoking. It is illegal now, meaning that anyone of any age can get it and have it in their hands. The price of a starter kit starts at around 2,000 baht. Kids can still reach that kind of money. Because it's illegal. For example, if it's legal, and is taxed, the price will go way up, because it's taxed, that way kids cannot reach them. There will be a gap between electronic cigarettes and kids."

5. Discussion

In this research study, I have used samplings from Bangkok, Thailand, to be the sample groups for this research method. The researcher chose Bangkok because it is a modern and crowded city. It will be easier for the researcher to use Bangkok as a field to find results for this research topic. In fact, it is the number one city in Thailand that people use or own Electronic Cigarettes. They have a lot of knowledge about international findings and research on electronic cigarettes.

From this research study, the researcher has known that all the findings from people chose electronic cigarettes because they want to quit normal smoking for the sake of their own health and people around them. Also, from the Literature Review section, research from developed countries, such as America, has shown that electronic cigarettes are safer to the individual's health and people around them.

6. Conclusion

To conclude this research study, electronic cigarettes are an option for people who really want to quit smoking and want a healthier life. However, it's illegal in a lot of countries and in Thailand. Some groups are trying to fight for the rights of electronic cigarettes, but there aren't enough voices to fight against the government. 10 out of 10 people say that it should be legal and say that the reason they choose this path is because they really want to quit smoking cigarettes and don't want their habits to affect other people. Mr. Marit Krunyawat was quite furious about the fact that Thailand and the government hasn't opened up to this subject yet. He said he would continue fighting for himself and others. It's just because there is no official and enough research about the pros and cons because it is something quite recent. There is not much study.

To sum up this research study by samplings in Bangkok, it is 100% sure that Electronic Cigarettes are a better option than normal cigarettes. The results of each participants were very similar. They were all previous tobacco addicts and wanted to quit smoking due to their health. But because it is not easy for a person to quit smoking immediately, electronic cigarettes are a safer way for them. Also, international research shows that electronic cigarettes are safer than normal cigarettes, but the Thai government does not believe those research because the researches are very recent. However, it should be trusted because the research come from developed countries, for example, The United States of America.

7. Acknowledgments

This research is a part of IPO302 Research Methodology at Rangsit International College and first of all, the researcher would like to thank Ajarn Kathy Terdpaopong for helping with this research, also giving lots of advice on this research. Next, the researcher would like to thank the 10 anonymous people for helping answer different questions related to this research topic. The researcher would also like to thank Mr. Marit Krunyawat for spending time for an in-depth interview related to the research topic. It's done perfectly and the researcher would like to thank all their friends for helping him too.

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