



AN ANALYSIS OF YOUTH CONSUMPTION PATTERN AS THE TARGET AUDIENCE FOR TOBACCO CONSUMPTION

Janhavi Agrawal

Student ASM School of Commerce, NMIMS

Japleen Kaur Narula

Student ASM School of Commerce, NMIMS

-----ABSTRACT-----

According to WHO, almost 6 million people die every year because of smoking, out of which 28% account for youth, despite increased awareness about the ill-effects of smoking tobacco. In this cut-throat, competitive world, where numerous brands fight for the market share of any commodity, tobacco plays a key role in the sales of such enterprises. Through alternative advertising of this good, companies have been sustaining for decades now. These companies use their budgets by providing discounts on their products rather than going for a promotional campaign. Although the issue faces constant denial, the advertising of this lethal commodity focuses on adolescents the most, who are major targets in the tobacco industry. We intend to shed light on the numerous techniques devised by tobacco manufacturing companies that influence the target markets in ways favourable to them.

KEYWORDS: *Tobacco consumption, marketing, promotions, audience-----*

INTRODUCTION

The influence of their favourite pop-culture artists to adults at home, there is little space left for anti-smoking campaigns to play their part. At the onset of a new life, teenagers are the most vulnerable target if influenced by suitable techniques of promotion, they tend to be highly brand loyal in the future. With the advent of online advertising, appealing to youth is not an arduous task anymore.

Companies devise policies to bring about changes in their logos, taglines and ad campaigns to target the most vulnerable, teenagers. Display advertisements in youth magazines, selection of suitable locations where exposure to the youth has the maximum chance are the most common strategies.

The fact that a single cigarette can be purchased leads to a manifold increase in the consumption of tobacco.

The most important source of information for children is television. Kids grow up watching influential people smoking and drinking alcohol which creates an impression that it is harmless when in fact what they see is of harm to them in reality. The innocence of children leads them and they end up taking their first puff at a young age. Pre-school children who cannot differentiate between reality and fantasy watch such advertisements and this proves to be a threat to every generation. Critics argue that such advertisements should be banned as they harm not only their consumers but also the ones they influence and attract through rigorous promotions.

In a restricted field where there is no complete freedom to market their product, many tobacco companies still remain successful in promoting their product, which remains a myth. Although, they claim that they do not specifically target the youth, yet they attract 73% of high school students and 56% of middle school students, which further continues to be a mystery. The largest single category of marketing and promotional expenditures by far was the discounts paid to the retailers or wholesalers to reduce the cost of the cigarettes to the consumer. Since, the youth smokers are price sensitive, which is indicated by the fact that for a 10% increase in the price of cigarettes the youth consumption decreases by 7%. As far as marketing of a product is concerned, the focus point is how productively companies can make the product relatable to its consumer. Camel cigarettes, an American brand was successful in doing so. The marketing team in order to promote the 75th anniversary came



with Joe, a caricatured camel to promote the cigarettes. This strategy helped, even the children recognize that Joe Camel was associated with cigarettes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At present, the companies try to advertise tobacco mainly cigarettes through movies. Celebrities play a major role in influencing the youth (cancer.ie).

Another way to attract customers is through good packing. An example is leading brand, camel, attracted new customer through re-packing their existing box. Many companies today try to attract youth through creative marketing i.e. they advertise their product through spreading awareness about cigarettes. Through this, they create a two-way dialogue. (B Freeman, S Chapman, 2011).

Companies even try to influence youth by advertising tobacco in a sports event and public event. Example: 1987 NASCAR Stock Race Circuit had an overall 68 million dollars tobacco exposé (ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).

The new target market for the tobacco companies is developing nations like Indonesia because as the country is developing, the population might increase which will lead to increase in the proportion of young adults and eventually lead to higher consumption of cigarettes and tobacco. Since these countries have no smoking ban and restriction, these types of countries are tobacco-friendly countries and better markets for tobacco marketing (UK essays, BAT Marketing Strategy, 2015).

British American Tobacco (BAT) undertook a young adult psychographic study and classified them as “progressive”, “Jurassic” or “conservative” and “spoiled brats”. BAT marketed Lucky Strike to the “progressives” using Hollywood movies as a medium. The tobacco industry also targeted their national brands to the conservatives and linked these brands with “nationalistic values” in advertising campaigns. Philip Morris promoted Marlboro by sponsoring activities directed at young people and they launched the 10 cigarettes packet as a starter vehicle (Braun S et al, 2008).

R.J. Reynold’s decided to package Uptown cigarettes upside down in both 10 and 20-cigarette packs, believing that the “10’s configuration provides a unique means of addressing price sensitivity while maintaining premium quality brand image/status.” The upside-down packaging reflected RJR’s belief that African American smokers opened cigarettes from the bottom “to keep the filters fresh.” Advertisements featured mentholated cigarettes, fantasy/escape, expensive objects, and nightlife. (Edith D. Balbach et al, 2003)

DISCUSSIONS

In the United States alone, the use of tobacco is the leading cause of disease, disability, and death. About 40 million US adults consume tobacco products and nearly 4.7 million teenagers in schools and colleges use at least one tobacco product. Each day, over 3800 young adults take their first puff of cigarette due to peer pressure and premature exposure. With passive smoking being another reason, second-hand smoking is equally harmful. With half a million people being exposed and 16 million people living with serious illnesses, US spends over \$170 billion on healthcare facilities specifically for smoking-related ailments.

Yet, the promotion of this toxic substance continues without any constraints.

The rosy picture seldom holds true and such is the case in India. While the idea is that the smoking rate of adults in India is at the peak, it recently came to light that 50% of the consumers were students. Research also quotes the average age of children starting to consume tobacco is 14.

More than \$24 million each day is spent merely on the marketing of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco in the U.S. this certainly isn’t the best way to exploit a countries’ human resources.

Besides commercial advertising, such companies also indulge in sponsorship of sports events and public entertainment workshops to highlight their brand identity amongst various categories of consumers who attend these shows for entertainment and end up taking home the idea of smoking in their subconscious mind. It has been found through research that youth associates tobacco brands with sporting events.

On the contrary, where health campaigns are gaining excessive attention, awareness of this product is attracting users. These protests were intended towards decreasing the consumption of tobacco and have largely failed due to the fact that they have done more harm than good. Much stronger intentions to smoke have been observed in youths. Even after such campaigns have ended, generation of new users exceeds the number of people who have quit smoking.

The psychological symbolism of tobacco encompasses the characteristics of being grown up, tough and independent. It is a depiction of one’s pride and confidence. Such notions prevalent in the society create added pressure on the behaviour of the next generation.

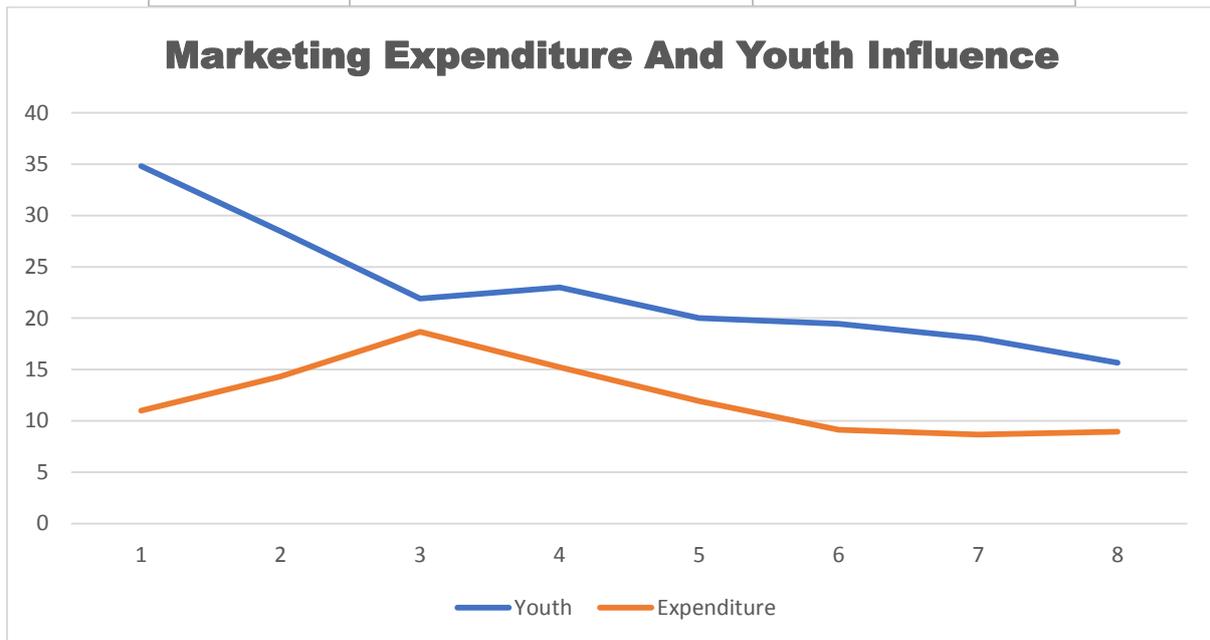
Only 1.6% population of smokers are cherry pickers. The rest tend to be highly brand loyal. Such habits are not inculcated in a day or two. Over periods of regular consumption, aiming at creating addicts, marketing of these packs have been highly structured.



In the late 1990s, kids of the time ate candies that were an exact replica of cigarettes. The Phantom cigarettes became the trend and soon were the most sold candies. This helped in creating awareness about cigarettes among the smaller age groups.

The ban on all sorts of tobacco promotions would decrease smoking by only 7%. The rest would still continue to smoke at same or perhaps at an increasing rate. This policy can prove to be a good start for the anti-tobacco revolution but its effectiveness is highly doubted.

Year	Youth (%)	Expenditure in Billions
1999	34.81	11
2001	28.46	14.32
2003	21.91	18.67
2005	23	15.24
2007	20	11.94
2009	19.47	9.12
2011	18.07	8.66
2013	15.66	8.95



X AXIS= %YOUTH OF ADOLESCENTS
 EXPENDITURE IN BILLIONS
 Y AXIS= YEARS

The graph clearly gives an indication that although the marketing expenditure of the companies has risen still they aren't able to target the youth. This was gradually realized by the companies in the year 2015, from when onwards they started decreasing their marketing expenses, accepting the fact that this strategy solely won't work as it had reached its saturation point. By observing the negative trend between the marketing expenditure and the rate of youth consuming tobacco, it clearly implies that marketing expenditure is not the primary factor at that point of time which was affecting the tobacco consumption amongst the youth. The techniques were getting monotonous and the companies had to come with something new in order to keep their business going, because if at this point they were not able to influence the youth to smoke, they would be missing on a large chunk of the potential future customers. Now considering which other factors would influence the young to smoke, the first one which hops in is family smoking. This is so because young people try to imitate their



parents. Moreover, the notion that “smoking is an acceptable behaviour”, this is misinterpreted by the children as smoking is a grown-up behaviour, which further motivates them to smoke. Along with this is the fierce peer pressure faced by the students. Economic status, educational level, and family history are crucial aspects that determine the level of such pressure and its consequences. Since the companies were not able to target the potential consumers, they had to come up with more creative ways defying the regulations set up which didn't allow them to market openly. But how creative can you be in selling death? Now the companies were alert enough to find loopholes in the law system and harness the advantage of finding it. They came up social media marketing, which started with China as the first country. Weibo, a Chinese microblogging website, where users are majorly youth and young adults, with 54% of users being under the age of 30 years. The companies started linking the act of smoking to youthful and friendly content. Moreover, this industry is even focusing towards employing youth-oriented themes to make their product market to the target group. This has made the companies efficiently utilize their marketing budget rather than following the old-school ways of promoting their product where their marketing expense was on the high, yet they were not able to target.

CONCLUSION

Competition drives innovation. With new ideas, companies in the tobacco industry have been successful in marketing their products through various means and have abided by the laws related to advertising at the same time. The strategy of targeting the most vulnerable age group of teenagers, these giants have taken over any other industry in terms of creating addiction through habitual consumption. Tobacco is a very growing area in the field of marketing because it poses a lot of challenges for the marketer as well as the company to sell its product by influencing the target group. In an environment of uncertainty where you are not sure whether the strategies will work or not, it forces the marketers to be creative enough to come up with innovative ideas. From an industry point of view, the route to market a tobacco product is just like a horse race filled with hurdles, where these hurdles need to be dodged skillfully, using techniques that will help boost the sales. But at the same point in time, the youth need to understand those tactics targeted towards them and are intentionally made to cause a stimulus so that they initiate smoking. They need to identify and introspect how this step will cause a change in their lifestyle and health.

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