

TOBACCO ADVERTISING, PROMOTION AND SPONSORSHIP

Strategies to Reframe Tobacco Industry Corporate Image

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) promotes the view that “firms should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen.”² Tobacco companies maintain CSR programs in an effort to counter negative attention regarding their deadly business. By donating funds to noble causes, the perception of tobacco companies by the public improves. Tobacco companies, however, are not like other companies. Tobacco is the only consumer product that kills one-half of its users when used as directed.³

Tobacco company internal documents reveal the true goals of industry-sponsored programs. These programs:⁴

- Serve the industry’s political interests by preventing effective tobacco control legislation.
- Marginalize public health advocates.
- Preserve the industry’s access to youth.
- Create allies and preserve influence for the industry among policymaking and regulatory bodies.
- Defuse opposition from parents and educators.
- Bolster industry credibility.

The tobacco industry attempts to improve its public image as a responsible corporation through:

- Philanthropy in areas such as education, research, arts and culture.
- Promotion of youth smoking prevention programs.

Philanthropy

Increasingly, consumers, employees and managers expect companies to go beyond their traditional role of selling their product for a profit. Tobacco companies engage in philanthropic activity, aiming to improve their public image as contributors to the greater societal good. Some companies have even set up philanthropic foundations to fund their efforts.

Tobacco companies and their affiliated foundations support educational activities, even though many children forego education as their parents spend money on tobacco.

- In partnership with the Ministry of commerce, Royal University of Phnom Penh and the United Nations Development Programme, British American Tobacco (BAT) organized a career forum at the National Cultural Centre of Cambodia in 2007.⁵
- The Sampoerna Foundation in Indonesia (funded by Sampoerna Tobacco, a Phillip Morris company), provides scholarships to students, and conducts teacher trainings in classroom management and curriculum development.⁶

“...These tobacco industry programs that seek to contribute to a greater social good urge the question: how can tobacco companies reconcile their main aim, to gain a maximum profit by producing and selling a deadly product, with the goals of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): business norms, based on ethical values and respect for employees, consumers, communities and the environment”

—World Health Organization, 2003¹



Phillip Morris donates to the Red Cross, Philippines



Screenshot of Sampoerna Foundation webpage

Philanthropy (cont.)

Tobacco companies and their affiliates provide funds to combat the health and economic problems directly caused by tobacco use.

- Carlos Slim, currently sits on the board of directors of Phillip Morris International and until November 2007, his company Grupo Carso, held majority shares in CIGATAM, Mexico's largest tobacco company.⁷ The Slim Family Foundation provided the initial \$500 million pledge for the inauguration of the Mexico Instituto Carso de Salud (Carso Health Institute). Among its priorities, the Institute addresses chronic diseases. Tobacco is the leading cause of two of most prevalent chronic diseases the Institute addresses — heart disease and cancer.
- BAT has partnered with Kenyan community members on the Kerio Trade Winds Project, whose primary goal is “develop[ing] tobacco growing activities as an option towards alleviating poverty in line with the government’s poverty alleviation strategy.” Yet, tobacco production and high smoking prevalence cause widespread economic losses for governments and their citizens. In countries with developing economies and high poverty rates, tobacco is making poverty worse. In China for example, excessive medical spending attributable to smoking and consumption spending on cigarettes are estimated to be responsible for impoverishing 30.5 million urban residents and 23.7 million rural residents.⁹



Industry-Sponsored Youth Prevention Programs

Some tobacco companies sponsor and design youth tobacco prevention programs. These types of programs date to the 1980s, when the first such program was launched in the U.S.¹⁰ By 2001, Philip Morris was “actively involved in more than 130 [youth smoking prevention] programs in more than 70 countries.”¹¹

Research demonstrates that industry-sponsored youth prevention programs are ineffective at reducing youth tobacco use, and they may even encourage youth to smoke.^{12,13,14}

- When compared with public health programs, industry-sponsored prevention programs are less appealing and less convincing to youth.¹⁵
- Industry-sponsored programs minimize the health consequences of tobacco use and even promote smoking.^{16,17}

Four types of youth prevention programs have been implemented by the tobacco industry. Each of these programs actually benefits the tobacco industry in a unique way.¹⁸

1. Programs that Target Youth Directly

- Reinforce smoking as an adult choice.
- Undermine existing public health campaigns by inappropriately targeting young teens and publicizing weaker messages on tobacco.
- Marginalize the opposition to make it appear extreme.
- Increase credibility, as tobacco companies partner with educators to roll out their programs.
- Maintain access to youth.

TOP: Mauritius, 2001 Calendar published by British American Tobacco.

Cover of a calendar published by BAT to portray itself as eco-friendly. However, tobacco cultivation requires intensive fertilization and use of pesticides, and the curing process requires construction of special barns and the burning of coal and wood, which can contribute to deforestation.

CENTER: Mauritius, 2002 Calendar published by British American Tobacco.

Calendar produced as part of BAT's corporate responsibility program. The calendar highlights the company's philanthropy, including a libraries program, undergraduate scholarship scheme, and youth smoking prevention program.

BOTTOM: Spain, 2000, Fortuna, Altadis

Magazine ad promoting Fortuna's solidarity fund created in 1999 to give 7% of its profits to human interest projects. The text reads, “Now with Fortuna, you give 7% to an NGO.”

Industry-Sponsored Youth Prevention Programs (cont.)

2. Programs that Target Parents

- Marginalize the opposition to make it appear extreme.
- Place the blame on parents and society, rather than tobacco company marketing, for youth smoking.
- Increase credibility, as tobacco companies partner with parent groups to roll out their programs.

3. Programs for Retailers to Decrease Youth Access

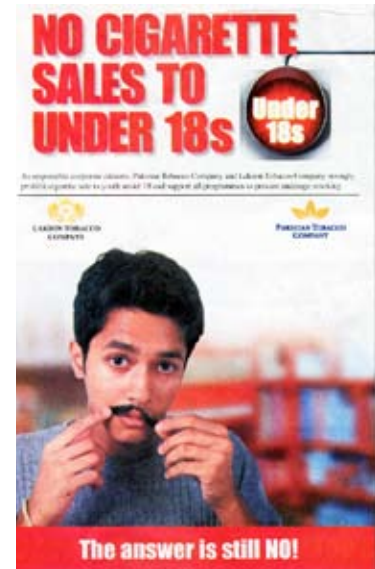
- Imply age is the only reason not to smoke.
- Keep the tobacco industry aware of local legislative activity.
- Marginalize the opposition to make it appear extreme.
- Establish and build alliances with retailers.
- Shift attention away from tobacco industry contribution and responsibility for youth smoking.

4. Direct Funding of Youth Organizations

- Increase credibility by allowing tobacco companies to attain a level of legitimacy.
- Allow tobacco companies to build alliances with reputable youth groups.

Key Messages

- The tobacco industry's corporate social responsibility programs are a strategy to help boost their profits and improve their image.
- The tobacco industry engages in philanthropic activities in areas such as career development, education, chronic disease care and poverty alleviation. These types of activities present an ethical conflict between marketing corporate social responsibility and selling a product that harms or kills when used as intended.
- No tobacco company prevention program has ever produced any evidence that it prevents kids from smoking or helps smokers quit. In fact, evidence from recent studies confirms that these programs are ineffective at best and even work to encourage kids to smoke.
- Several types of youth prevention programs have been implemented by the tobacco industry in an effort to counter negative attention regarding their deadly business. Each of these programs actually benefits the tobacco industry.



Pakistan, 2006, Youth Smoking Prevention Advertisement.

Self-named “responsible corporate citizens,” Pakistan Tobacco Company and Lakson Tobacco Company sponsor this youth smoking prevention campaign in Pakistan.

“...the ultimate means for determining the success of this [youth] program will be: 1) a reduction in legislation introduced and passed restricting or banning our sales and marketing activities; 2) passage of legislation favourable to the industry; and 3) Greater support from business, parent, and teacher groups.”

—J.J. Slavitt, Director of Policy and Planning, Philip Morris¹⁹

To reduce tobacco use, especially among youth, countries should implement a comprehensive ban on all tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

References

- 1 World Health Organization (WHO). Tobacco Industry and Corporate Responsibility...an Inherent Contradiction. Tobacco Free Initiative. 2004; p. 6-7. Available from: http://www.who.int/tobacco/communications/CSR_report.pdf.
- 2 Carroll AB. Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct. *Business & Society*. 1999; 38(3): p. 268-295.
- 3 WHO, 2003, p. 7.
- 4 Landman A., Ling PM., Glantz SA, 2002, p. 917.
- 5 Kin F, Yoon YC, Lian TY, Assunta M, 2008, p. 5.
- 6 Kin F, Yoon YC, Lian TY, Assunta M, 2008, p. 6.
- 7 Chapman S. 2008. Grupo Carso, health philanthropy, and tobacco. *The Lancet*; 371:1243.
- 8 WHO, 2003, p. 5.
- 9 Liu Y, Rao K, Hu T, Sun Q, Mao Z. Cigarette smoking and poverty in China. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2006;63(11):2784-2790.
- 10 Landman A., Ling PM., Glantz SA. Tobacco Industry Youth Smoking Prevention Programs: Protecting the Industry and Hurting Tobacco Control. *American Journal of Public Health*. June 2002; 92; 6: p. 917-30.
- 11 Philip Morris International. Corporate responsibility—youth smoking prevention: Philip Morris International; 2001. Available at: <http://www.pmintl.com>. Accessed December 12, 2001.
- 12 Landman A., Ling PM., Glantz SA, 2002, p. 925.
- 13 DeBon M, Klesges RC. Adolescents' perceptions about smoking prevention strategies: a comparison of the programmes of the American Lung Association and the Tobacco Institute. *Tob Control*. 1996; 5: p. 19–25.
- 14 DiFranza JR, McAfee T. The Tobacco Institute: helping youth say “yes” to tobacco. Editorial. *J Fam Pract*. 1992; 34: p. 694–696.
- 15 Landman A., Ling PM., Glantz SA, 2002, p. 925.
- 16 DiFranza JR, McAfee T, 1992.
- 17 Landman A., Ling PM., Glantz SA, 2002, p. 917.
- 18 Landman A., Ling PM., Glantz SA, 2002, p. 918.
- 19 Kin F, Yoon YC, Lian TY, Assunta M, 2008, p. 3.