

Tobacco industry and social public accountability: what, if anything, should be d...

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



Tobacco industry and social/public accountability: What, if anything, should be done by whom? Introduction Tobacco smoking and other forms of tobacco usage has a serious impact on human health and is one of the most hazardous habits. Young individuals including boys and girls would be curious to try out their first cigarette and feel that it would be rather harmless. However, this experience can potentially lead to harmful habits with tobacco which are often very difficult to control. The tobacco industry would try invariable to increase sales and profits through advertisements and assuring the general public that smoking tobacco occasionally would not have any serious impact on health. Many companies are portraying their tobacco products as a usual consumer items, trying to get it on the shelves of supermarkets, spreading incorrect advertisements and information, and trying to cover up data regarding health hazards with the use of tobacco[1].

This menace needs to be curbed immediately. Body The facts and figures of tobacco use are even more agonizing. In developing countries of South-East Asia, one in 10 students indulge in tobacco smoking, and another one-tenth, uses other forms of tobacco smoking such as tobacco chewing, local forms, etc. In females, although the figures are low, they are on a constant rise and do not look very positive. More than fifty percent of the students who study in college are exposed to second-hand or passive smoking. About 80 % of the students feel that smoking should be banned in public places. It is surprising that in spite of such high number of people who actually are against smoking, the government has not taken any action by banning smoking in public places. Even with smokers, there is a positive implication that about 70 % of the student with the habit want to somehow quit it.

However, it is also important to consider the limits of anti-smoking efforts in South-East Asia. About 50 % of the students only actually receive anti-smoking education and are aware of the ill-effects of smoking. The remaining 50 % are still unaware of the ill-effects of smoking and strongly feel that the habit may not do any bad to their health. Out of the smokers, about 50 % of the students have smoked a cigarette or consumed tobacco in other forms before the age of 10 years. It is not that many nations in the South-East Asia do not have laws against tobacco smoking.

A huge number of countries have effective laws banning smoking in public places and the sale of tobacco products. This includes laws that effectively prevent sale of tobacco products to minors. However, in more than 60 % of the cases, the students receive tobacco products against the law. Students in South-East Asia use other type of tobacco products including cherrots, bidis, kaini, kretek, smokeless tobacco, etc. In some countries the use of these local forms of tobacco may be as low as 3.8 % and in some, it may be as high as 24 %.

Usually elders should help guide children against the use of tobacco and cigarette. However, in South-East Asia, it is found that out of every 10 teachers, 3 would be actively using tobacco products. Only about 40 % of the schools in South-East Asia have a policy against tobacco. About 70 % of the school teachers have no access to material on anti-smoking advice, and about 80 % teachers do not have any training or experience in teaching anti-smoking advice.

Studies have shown that out of the 50 million adolescents and young adults in South-East Asia, about 25 % of them begin to smoke at a very young age. Smoking at a young age can be serious in two ways. Firstly, youngsters are not able to understand the ill-effects of smoking and hence would continue with the habit. Secondly, youngsters are more likely to continue with the habit than give it up[2].

The statistics are also not good in developed nations such as Australia and the United States. In Australia, tobacco is sold very frequently to individuals below the age of 18 years. About 23 % of the students between the ages of 12 to 17 years have bought cigarettes by themselves. In individuals between the ages of 12 to 15 years, about 17 % have bought cigarettes by themselves. About 16 % of the individuals between the ages of 12 to 17 years used someone else to buy cigarettes for them (such as a friend, stranger, etc).

Boys were more often likely to buy cigarettes than girls, and girls often used the services of boys to obtain cigarettes. About 80 % of the students who smoked cigarettes felt that it was not a problem to get the services of others to obtain or buy a cigarette. A positive finding regarding the number of smokers in youngsters have found that the number has dropped since 1987, but have stabilized over the last decade[3]. In the US, the tobacco use amongst youngsters is also high. In the year 2004, about 21 % of the college goers used tobacco. Some of the strongest provokers for smoking included actors who smoked and classical tobacco advertisements in the media.

The use of other forms of tobacco such as pipe-smoking has reduced. The use and access to tobacco have not changed over the last few years in the US amongst youngsters. However, there has been greater use of tobacco following online advertisements and lesser influence from popular actors who tend to use tobacco in movies. In middle school goers, the use of tobacco is in about 9.1 % of the student population whereas in high school goes it is about 28%, and the most common form of tobacco use has been cigarettes followed by cigars, smokeless tobacco, pipes, bidis, etc. Boys have reduced smoking and use of pipe during 2002 to 2004. Asians in the US have decreased use of tobacco in various forms, whereas in Hispanics there is an increased use of bidis and cigars.

In the Black populations, the use pipes have reduced[4]. Many governments throughout the world feel that the access to tobacco products for young people needs to effectively be stopped to ensure that there is a decrease in habits. This merely does not mean imposing sanctions against tobacco companies, sale of tobacco and a ban on tobacco advertisements, but also more greatly creating awareness and educating various sections of the society about the ill-effects of tobacco smoking. One of the proposed legislations would be the complete ban on smoking to individuals below the age of 18 years. Any vending machine or automated device that sells tobacco products to youngsters below the age of 18 years also needs to be stopped.

Any company that indulges in giving free samples to youngsters on a trial basis should also be stopped and punished. Some students would be

purchasing tobacco products using mail services, online shopping and home delivery services. The sale of tobacco through such means should also be banned. Tobacco advertisements and billboards located close to educational institutions need to be removed.

There could also be a complete ban on smoking in all public places and sporting events. Billboards that exist close to school and colleges need to be effectively removed. As far as possible the use of color in tobacco advertisements needs to be reduced.

This would prevent tobacco smoking advertisements to look attractive. As far as possible, the use of black and white texts only has been suggested. Effectively tobacco advertisements and sponsorships should be banned, and only use of the companies name for practical purposes should be encouraged. It is also strongly proposed that a tobacco brand should not be used for other products as it may create confusion and suggest a wrong message to the public[5].

Legislation should be enforced to lower the access for tobacco products. There is a need to modify the legislation in order to ensure that compliance against smoking remains to be high. The ban on the sponsorship and advertisements by tobacco manufacturers is strongly based on the recommendations of the Constitution. Any tobacco advertisement that is being placed should contain a statutory warning written in the same style and font size as the original brand name or company name. Efforts should be made to ban the advertisement of smoking on the internet within the

next five year duration. Legislation should be formalized and implemented, along with greater creation of awareness. Any international event that uses sponsorship of tobacco companies should be prohibited. Illegal use and procurement of tobacco products by youngsters should be considered seriously and action should be taken against them in the form of fine/imprisonment.

The rules meant to prevent smoking should be implemented uniformly to ensure that there are no loopholes which could be of benefit to the students. Young people are often concerned about financial issues, and often imposing high taxes on cigarette sale can act as a deterrent and reduce the rates of smoking. When the tobacco policy is being framed, every effort should be made to ensure that the money profited is used for the sake of healthcare to meet the needs of people suffering from the ill-effects of smoking[6]. One of the strong ways of reducing sales of tobacco would be enforcement of local laws and blocking the retailer from making illegal sales to individuals under the age of 18 years.

Merely providing them education and information is usually not sufficient. Frequently, education and awareness, coupled with strong legislations can effectively help reduce sales to college students[7]. Conclusion Overall, efforts should be made to reduce the sale of tobacco to youngsters and in this manner reduce the access.

Legislative requirements along with strong strategies seem to be effective. It is also important to educate and create awareness in the youngsters about

the ill-effects of tobacco smoking. Some communities and colleges may have higher levels of compliance owing to differences in populations and enforcement of anti-tobacco legislations. As far as possible, there should be a uniform implementation of any measure against tobacco use. Youths also need to be strongly counseled about tobacco use. Tobacco companies should be pursued not to have advertisements for tobacco smoking, but instead address the treatment needs of those who have been suffering from tobacco related illnesses[8]. Tobacco companies should also be made to pay for education of children about smoking. Work Cited CDC.

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