



BRITISH-AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY LIMITED

J.R.  
24 AUG 1993

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CC: L.G. Hacking  
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FROM: R.P. Ferris

DATE: 24 August 1993

SUBJECT: Habit, Practice and the Smoking Moment

To T. Hig

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BACKGROUND

Psychological studies of smoking reject the notion of the habit being an addiction. If it were, then smoking would follow an invariant 20 minute cycle (the metabolic life cycle of nicotine in the body) and smokers would follow a smoking career of switching to ever increasing delivery level brands accompanied by progressively increasing daily consumption. Observational studies show that smokers in fact show idiosyncratic patterns of consumption (smoking at work and not at home or vice versa, refraining from smoking for reasons of religious observance, etc.). Additionally, smokers appear to fall into different motivational classes based on their use of the cigarette as a mood state or performance accompaniment (stress regulation, concentration and relaxation accompaniment smokers for example).

The practice of smoking also shows different patterns in the sense that smokers will differ in the hierarchy of importance which they attach to various elements of the smoking experience (low tar smokers, for example, consider visual and tactile aspects of the experience relatively more important than full flavour smokers do and are consequentially more sensitive to physical product quality).

In this context the explicit use of sensory aspects of the product (i.e. flavour, mellowness, richness, etc.) as an advertising 'benefit' may be useful but not wholly to the point for the following reasons:

1. Tobacco flavour is not attractive per se, most reliable indicators of preference have more to do with the absence of negatives (irritancy, etc.) than the presence of distinctive flavour as such. If this were not so we should expect to see tobacco flavour successfully appearing in other categories (i.e. drinks, confectionery, snacks, etc.).
2. Within similar blend and delivery brands the tobacco product is actually very homogeneous. Mapping studies show that consumers do not reliably differentiate brands from single blend/delivery segments.

Where the explicit sensory benefit claim does become important is when it is used as a rationalising 'hook' linking the claim to a less tangible but actually more powerful motivator - the smoking situation and accompanying mood state. In this aspect nicotine is an 'invisible'

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reinforcer. It is colourless, odourless and flavourless but its presence in the brain stimulates production of endorphins, dopamine and noradrenaline which will enhance arousal control and mood state. Because nicotine is such a powerful reinforcer, other stimuli closely associated with its presence will 'borrow' its motivating properties. This includes flavour but significantly will also encompass the appetitive rituals surrounding the habit (opening, lighting, handling, blowing smoke, tapping ash, etc.) and the mood tone associated with smoking.

The take out from this is that the repertoire of benefits which can be meaningfully attached to smoking in advertising is potentially much richer and more sophisticated than simple product/sensory rationale allows for.

**KEY POINT** we should map out this broader vision of smoking 'ecology' and seek means of capitalising on this understanding in order to reflect more relevant benefit themes in communications with smokers.

Limited precedent for this approach can be seen in tobacco advertising (Hamlet cigars and the consoling moment, Marlboro and the post-achievement reward). The same use of behavioural benefits linked to specific situations is at its most obvious in the Omega watch 'significant moments' campaign portraying the product at distinct moments of success and tension reduction.

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

In collaboration with SE555 IBG a qualitative study will be conducted, initially in the UK, with the objective of achieving an improved understanding of smoking habit and practise including an emphasis on 'significant moments'.

The premise of 'significant moments' is based on two observations:

1. In retrospective most smokers are able to recall specific peak experiences which were accompanied by smoking a cigarette (e.g. passing exams, surviving a confrontation, completing a voyage, etc.)
2. Although the average consumer might smoke a pack of cigarettes per day, he/she will typically report that as few as 2 or 3 sticks were actually associated with heightened awareness and conscious enjoyment (e.g. first/last of the day, after lunch, after a significant work accomplishment).

The research will examine such perceptions by day, week and long term memory, attempting to produce a provisional classification of associative smoking benefits, based on situation and mood state. The rationale for subsequent action will be to convert such observation into motifs which smokers can empathise with in advertising (the best current example in BAT advertising is the JPGL campaign depicting smoking following successful team negotiation of a challenging situation).

The research will commence in early September. Discussion groups will be convened in locations with observation facilities and it is recommended that Brand Managers should attend at least one of the sessions. A schedule of dates/timings/locations will be produced shortly to assist organisation of an observer's rota.



**R.P. FERRIS**

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