

Imperial Tobacco Limited/Limitée



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Imperial Tobacco Limited
100 Broad Street
London EC4A 3DF
Telephone: 01-499 7000
Telex: 9500 1000

Dr. S. J. Green
Westminster House
7 Millbank
LONDON SW1P 3JE
England

Dear Jim:

Our Marketing people for many years have been asking us to give them a flavoured Virginia cigarette. Years of effort, involving trials of flavours developed by our own flavour chemist, by flavour houses, and those suggested by P.D.L. have not produced what is wanted.

Interest in a flavoured cigarette has been renewed here, but we no longer have a flavour chemist, so I would like to explore whether some form of assistance could be arranged from your end.

A good part of the problem is to define what is wanted, and then to evaluate the acceptability and potential market for candidate products. Virginia cigarettes here are unflavoured, and the usual reaction to a cigarette of unusual taste is negative. Nevertheless there remains the hope there may be some flavour, other than menthol, and perhaps coumarin, that is compatible with Virginia tobacco, when applied at readily perceptible levels.

The other concept is flavour enhancement, with the purpose of having a low tar cigarette deliver the so-called "taste and flavour" of a high tar cigarette. Some of the commercially available enhancers show promise, but we haven't found what is really wanted. In the meantime we do use a high proportion of what we call "flavour grades" of leaf in our low tar brands. Such leaf has limited availability, is very costly, and falls short of achieving the desired result.

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While flavour chemists are perhaps guided by useful theoretical concepts in the development of specified aromas or tastes, I doubt if such concepts exist for flavouring tobacco. To begin with I don't think there is any logical basis for giving the flavour chemist a specification in other than rather woolly conceptual terms, as I have written above. Your work with burley has yielded some useful knowledge that may be applicable to air cured or blended cigarettes, but that's not our problem.

We have discussed flavour research many times during R & D conferences, but I wonder whether we are really ready to start brewing up flavours for trial, or whether the research should be into the nature of the flavours the chemist should attempt to produce. We do intend to evaluate with consumers a few of our experimental flavours that seemed of interest to internal smoking panels, but I'm not too optimistic.

I suspect that the marketing departments of most companies operating in a Virginia cigarette region have the same kind of flavoured cigarette project as we have here and are equally unsure about how to implement it. We would very much appreciate hearing a reaction to this letter from whatever quarter is appropriate.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

BA

R. M. Gibb

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