

Demarketing Tobacco Products Strategy to Impact Customers for Social Change

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ABSTRACT

This article describes how demarketing is a strategy aimed at reducing the demand for the product and thereby the consumption. This strategy is well suited for harmful products though they may have utility in the economics of liquor, drugs, cigars and tobacco products. Many consume cigarettes and chew gutka, which is a tobacco product either as habit, stress reliever or style. The consumption of tobacco products has negative side effects such as lung cancer and oral diseases. Thus, the aim of this article is to reflect on the demarketing strategy of tobacco products adopted in India and to determine the impact on customers in Mysore, Southern India. Mixed method of research was used. The sample was 50 respondents, chosen with an accidental sampling technique to test differences of opinion between customers and non-customers of tobacco products. The findings indicate that demarketing tobacco products has made an impact along with societal change.

KEYWORDS

Body, Cancerous, Cigarettes, Consumption, Gutka, Health, Impact, India, Mysore, Negative, Society

INTRODUCTION

There are several issues in public administration and welfare that can be tackled with demarketing techniques. So, what is demarketing? Kotler and Levy (1971) first devised the term ‘demarketing’ to describe intentional demand-reducing activities. Thus, in simple terms demarketing refers to ‘marketing aimed at limiting growth’. This is practiced, for example, by governments to conserve natural resources, or by companies unable to serve adequately the needs of all potential customers. It can also include advertising, which urges the public to limit the consumption of a product and also be viewed as strategy for pruning the consumption of unnecessary products in the interests of larger good. Demarketing by government in India is undertaken primarily to modifying socially unacceptable behaviour. The main aim is to discourage consumption of products or service that is against social interest, against ecology or even in the interest of the consumer itself. Some examples where demarketing as a strategy can be very useful in India include:

- Tourism congestion at Goa
- Consumption of alcohol particularly by teenage students
- Discouraging tobacco consumption
- Discouraging energy consumption environmentally hostile products
- Limiting use of private cars and promotion of rapid mass transportation systems

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Sometimes it is necessary to demarket a product. There are two types of demarketing: general demarketing and selective demarketing. General demarketing is used when a firm (or government) wants to demarket to everyone. For instance, the government demarkets cigarettes and alcohol (discouraged goods) and illegal drugs (a banned good).

Tobacco smoking is now well recognized to be harmful to health having carcinogenic effect on human body particularly lungs. Considerable scope exists in demarketing of tobacco products by combination of health care programs, advertising, and pricing of cigarettes. Adopting the health belief model (HBM), which is based on psychological health behaviour change (Janz & Becker, 1984), this study has been undertaken for demarketing of tobacco products and its impact on consumers as the concern was to discourage the tobacco products consumption by individuals. This model suggests that people's beliefs about health problems, perceived benefits of action and barriers to action and self-efficacy explain engagement (or lack of engagement) in health-promoting behavior (Janz & Becker, 1984; Rosenstock, 1974). Thus, a stimulus, or cue to action, must also be present in order to trigger the health-promoting behavior. Amendments to the model were made as late as 1988 to incorporate emerging evidence within the field of psychology about the role of self-efficacy in decision-making and behavior (Karen & Donald, 2010; Karen, Rimer & Viswanath, 2008). With this introduction, this study aims to answer the questions: What are the tobacco products being marketed in India? What are the ethical demarketing strategies used for discouraging the tobacco consumption? What determines the customer perception on tobacco consumption? What are the institutions working for discouraging the tobacco consumption? Exploratory and descriptive research design has been adopted as it is an ideal tool for finding the depth of the research problem. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods the research has been conducted using close-ended questionnaires to analyse the socio-demographic factors. The smokers and non-smokers interviewed were 50 in total, within the age group of 20-40 in the place of Mysore, located in southern region of India. However, it appears that literature on demarketing of tobacco products and its impacts on consumers is rare, as this important topic seems to be overlooked by researchers and authors especially in India. The study has therefore, draw information from previous researchers, government policies, newspapers, International Labour laws, unpublished papers and reports from Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Health Centers. Hence, this research has also included secondary sources and literature from other countries.

The uniqueness in India and entire part of Asia is that chewing tobacco products has traditional and religious connotations. The strategies used to control chewing tobacco products were with oath to deities and giving up consumption of religious ground. Though there are many attempts made to reduce tobacco products consumption, the actual implementation takes time to come into being because of disunity among all players in society. Thus, the aim of this research is to analyze and identify the nuisances of adopting demarketing tobacco products strategy and thereby the impact on customers and social change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kotler and Levy (1971) devised the term 'demarketing' to describe these intentional demand-reducing activities. The goal of this paper is to contribute a fresh perspective to understanding the benefit of demarketing with respect to tobacco products consumption and its impact on consumers and social change in India. The demarketing phenomenon caught the attention of academic researchers in the 1970's. It is intriguing why marketers would intentionally reduce demand. Kotler and Levy (1971) outline several possible reasons. "General demarketing" discourages customers in response to excess demand; "selective demarketing" helps a seller quit undesirable market segments; "ostensible

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