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# Social Marketing of Nicotine Chewing Gums in India : A Corporate Responsibility

## Abstract

Social Marketing is the selling of healthier behaviours. Social marketers strive to change the unhealthy behaviours of a large percentage of the target audience. Health promotion is an initiative which focuses on empowering the community and building the capacity for health care providers. People take to smoking for many reasons. Later on, they find ways to quit and curb their cravings. Much research has gone into finding ways to help smokers quit, including developing products to address nicotine addiction including chewing gums made up of nicotine, as is being done in the United States of America. So, is the market witnessing a new demand for chewing gums amongst smokers in India? **By adopting a social marketing approach, can the organizations associated with production of chewing gums' as a confectionary item profit and further carve out a separate niche for themselves ? Will it fulfill their social responsibility?** This paper tries to find answers to such questions and also highlights the growth prospects of such chewing gums in India.

## Introduction

**S**ocial marketing is the planning and implementation of programs designed to bring about social change using concepts from commercial marketing. It mainly aims at modifying human behavior for a social cause. It applies a “customer oriented” approach and uses the concepts and tools used by commercial marketers in pursuit of social goals like Anti-Smoking –Campaigns or fund raising for NGOs.

Social marketing activity is basically carried out by government departments agencies, non- profit organizations and non-governmental organizations. Several NGOs like CRY, WWF have managed to create and sustain heart- wrenching campaigns. Several commercial organizations also apply social marketing for their CSR initiatives. No wonder social

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marketers seem to be in great demand and their role in the society is receiving a tremendous impetus. It becomes all the more important in cases where legal or political solutions have not helped the cause and voluntary change on the part of the individual or society is desired.

This paper tries to make an exploratory research to find ways to market nicotine chewing gum as a social good. Organisations can promote selling of nicotine chewing gum as a substitute to the smokers. By applying a social marketing approach, the commercial organizations can enter a separate market niche which can be profitable and socially responsible.

A critical examination of the social impact of marketing is limited in some instances to the issues of legality and ethics. If a campaign is legal, it may or may not be ethical too. However, working for the benefit of the society, definitely enhances the image building process for the organization. A very popular example of ITCs eChoupal can be cited here. Irrespective of what the initials of the company stand for Indian Tobacco Company, The positive impact of eChoupals on its brand building and earning goodwill for itself has been overwhelming. Similar health promotion campaigns can be undertaken by different companies to ride on to the successful brand wagon. Health campaigns typically seek to change behaviors the attitudes and behaviors targeted by social marketers are often fundamental to the people targeted. In our case it is smokers who find it challenging to overcome their addiction and change to a nonsmoking lifestyle. As incomes and educational levels advance, better-off and better educated citizens are found to be concerned with their quality of lives. It is proven that many smokers have felt better in using normal chewing gums as strong stress relievers. The sale of Chewing gums thus is not limited only to kids but also to smokers who use it as a mouth freshener to get rid of the smell after smoking.

### **The Notorious Tobacco**

Tobacco is the second major cause of death in the world today. Nearly 5 million people die due

to tobacco. And this figure will increase to 10 million per year by 2020. Of these, 7 million deaths will occur in the developing countries, mainly China and India. The number of people in the age group of 18 years and younger in the world today is 2.4 billion, which is the largest generation in history. Since most of young people in developing countries are currently non- tobacco users, tobacco industry especially targets them. Everyday about 80,000 to 100,000 young people initiate smoking, most of them in the developing countries. Of 1000 teenagers who smoke today, 500 will eventually die of tobacco related diseases-250 in their middle age and 250 in their old age. Tobacco is the single largest preventable cause of death and disability worldwide. India is the world's second largest producer of tobacco. Every year about 800, 000-900,000 Indians die due to tobacco use. It was estimated in 1999-2001 that 5, 500 adolescents start using tobacco every day in India, joining the 4 million young people, under the age of 15, who already use tobacco regularly. Like other developing countries, the most susceptible time for initiating tobacco use in India is during adolescence and early adulthood, ages 15-24 years. Most tobacco users start using tobacco before the age of 18 years, while some start as young as 10 years. The early age of initiation underscores the urgent need to intervene and protect this vulnerable group from falling prey to this addiction. The risks of tobacco use are highest among those who start early and continue its use for a long period. The role of pediatricians, thus, becomes especially relevant in countering this public health threat. In order to reduce the long-term burden of tobacco related diseases, adoption of successful prevention strategies is the only feasible solution in a low-resource country, such as India.

The challenges of the tobacco epidemic in India are complex; due to great diversity in forms of tobacco used and marked variations in prevalence and patterns of tobacco use. The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS), supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), conducted during the years 2000-2004 in India, is the first

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survey that provides state-wise data on youth (13-15 years), using a standardized methodology. The prevalence figures of ever and current tobacco use varied across states. As per GYTS results, current prevalence of tobacco use, in any form, among school going youth (age 13-15 years) in India is 17.5% (range: 2.7% - 63%). Current smokeless tobacco use was reported by 14.6% (range: 2.0% - 55.6%) and current smokers were 8.3% (range: 2.2% - 34.5%).

### **Chewing Gum with Health Benefits :**

Many individuals chew gum simply because they enjoy it. However, gum chewing is not just fun and refreshing; it can also provide real health benefits. For example, chewing gum can actually help to prevent tooth decay. Health studies have shown that chewing sugarless gum actually stimulates the production of saliva and works to neutralize acids in the mouth. The increased saliva is helpful in washing decay and odor-causing bacteria away. With fewer acids in the mouth, tooth decay can be lessened. By increasing saliva production and removing some of the bacteria in the mouth, chewing gum can also play a major role in getting rid of bad breath. The chewing gum, by including a therapeutically effective amount of calcium glycerophosphate, not only eliminates any carcinogenic (Cancer Causing) effects of the chewing gum itself, but actually improves dental health when chewed before or after a meal containing fermentable carbohydrates.

Saliva also contains minerals such as calcium, phosphate and fluoride- all components of tooth enamel-, which can be used to repair early signs of decay in tooth enamel. In the UK, psychologists at the University of Northumberland found that chewing gum improved memory. In his experiments Andrew Scholey found that people who chewed gum recalled words better than people who did not chew anything at all. He speculated that because chewing increased heart rate, it would increase oxygen supply to the brain, enhancing cognition. Finally, a small study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association this year suggested that chewing

gum after colon surgery helped shorten patients' hospital stays. The researchers said chewing gum might stimulate the same nerves in the body as eating, promoting the release of hormones that activate the gut.

### **Why People Smoke ?**

Observation show, people smoke mainly for two reasons.

1. **Addiction :** Addiction to nicotine in tobacco is the major reason why people continue to smoke. People, who are dependent on nicotine, smoke their first cigarette within 30 minutes of waking up. Deprivation from it creates cravings, irritability, anxiety, depression, restlessness, hunger, poor concentration and sleep disturbances.
2. **As an urge :** One may also have an urge or desire to smoke when one is in a situation where the person is used to smoking.

Certain things may trigger cravings, such as :

- Places where one normally smokes, such as home, work, or the pub
- People who usually smoke with, family or friends; or being alone.
- Habits or routines where one is used to smoking, such as when drinking coffee or Alcohol, talking on the telephone, after meals, or when one wants to relax
- Emotions, such as anger, boredom, being tense or upset; or for some people, when they are happy.

### **Social Marketing of nicotine chewing gums**

Nicotine chewing gum helps smokers quit by providing a source of nicotine apart from smoking. It comes in different strengths (usually 4mg or 2mg of nicotine per piece), which you choose based on how much you smoke. Nicotine gum, like any nicotine replacement therapy, allows you to deal with the physical component of addiction over a longer period of time with less drastic withdrawal symptoms.

The advantages of nicotine gum are that you can take it when you need it (so long as you don't exceed the amount suggested by the directions), so that you can cut down on your nicotine as quickly or as slowly as you want; it is relatively inexpensive; and it provides some oral gratification of its own to replace the cigarettes.

Here a marketing mix is designed to promote the nicotine chewing gum as a social product.

### 1. The Product – The Healthy Social Gum

Various strips of nicotine chewing gums according to the invention were prepared by scientists at the Lungs Cancer institute, at Victoria in USA. There can be different product line and width of chewing gums based on their strengths (2mg, 4mg etc.), different flavours (classic flavour, citrus, mint), various pack sizes having pieces of gum (packs of 12, 15). Nicotine chewing gum can serve like a medicine and one should use it as per doctor's advice. This covers different aspects like product variety, quality, design, features, brand name, sizes and services along with the expiry (warrantee and guarantee) periods. Each 3 grams' strip can have the following composition:

#### By weight

Gum base	25.0
Glucose syrup	18.0%
Sucrose	55.5%
Glycerol	0.8%
Natural flavoring (spearmint oil)	0.7%
Nicotine	14.2 mg per 100g

Source : <http://www.freeonlineportals.com>

Nicotine chewing gums help in quitting. The gum works by replacing some of the nicotine one would normally inhale from cigarettes. It consists of nicotine mixed with chewing gum. Chewing the gum releases nicotine. Using the gum can help to reduce withdrawal symptoms when one quits, such

as cravings, irritability, and anxiety. However, it may not stop these symptoms completely. It is the doctor who advises whether nicotine gum is suitable, though it cannot be sold to people who are less than eighteen years of age.

### Quantity preferred by users

The doctor's advice will be necessary as usage depends on the number of cigarettes a person is consuming. For example, if a person consumes less than 20 cigarettes a day, the doctor may recommend the 2mg of the gum.

### Safety

The gum will be safe, provided it is used correctly. A small number of people may transfer their nicotine addiction from cigarettes to the gum. Though this is not ideal, it is safer than smoking. Nicotine gum does not contain cancer-causing substances, carbon monoxide or other dangerous chemicals found in tobacco. Unlike smoking, nicotine by itself has not been shown to cause cancer or heart disease. It is important to store and dispose of the gum so that children and animals cannot get it, as it can be dangerous for them.

The technological solutions can be of three types in case of cigarette smoking, according to Philip Kotler and Roberto in their book "Social Marketing" which are as follows:

- 1. Product – Modification Technology :** Altering certain features of cigarettes can attenuate the harmful effects of smoking.
- 2. Product-Substitution Technology :** An understanding of the nature of smoking habit also suggests cigarette substitutes including ingestion of nicotine and the use of chewing gums both sweet as well as gums containing gums.
- 3. Product- Innovation Technology :** A confirmed smoker may also hope for some product or procedure such as a morning pill which would reduce or eliminate the dangers of smoking.

### 2. Price- Putting Money Where The Mouth is

The list price, different discounts allowances will definitely have to be considered. The product must be priced according to the pack size and the potency of the chewing gum. The production cost, variable costs and the freight charges must be in tune with the rules and regulations of any other pharmaceutical product. For example, a 2-gram pack size containing say 10 gums should be moderately charged (Rs. 10-12). The question now to be pondered upon is – should the current market players like Wrigley’s, Orbit, Happy Dents focus on producing such a product? Will it help them to create a separate niche for themselves ? Surely, it will help them in executing their responsibility to the society.

### **3. Promotion – Drive of Harmony and Health**

The promotion strategies will be the same as that for a pharmaceutical product. Since, the product is of a chemical nature, cannot be sold to kids and without doctors’ advice, the best way would be to tap the doctors through personal selling agents. Hospitals and various other cancer institutes can serve to different sites for promotional campaigns. Advertisements through various forms of media, highlighting the benefits of the product can be emphasized upon. Advertisements can be issued in the interest of the public with due permissions from the government. The more a social change campaign resembles a commercial product campaign, the more successful it is likely to be.

### **4. Place – Journey From A Confectioner’s Shop to A Chemist’s shop**

Nicotine chewing gums can be bought from pharmacies and chemists, without prescription. It will be safe to sell the product through a pharmacy or a medical shop, to begin with. Free samples can be distributed at hospitals and free check up camps organized from time to time. Free pamphlets and posters should be distributed from various medical centers. Various seminars and conferences should be arranged not only for the doctors but also for the organizations wherein the employees can get to hear about the benefits. This will also provide the necessary stimulus for satisfaction to the internal

customers. The chest specialists can be asked to deliver some special lectures.

### **5. Positioning – Placing The Golden Health Pill**

Nicotine chewing gums can be placed effectively in the minds of consumers who want to give up their smoking habits. Media Exposure is the most common way to get viewed as an effective product. The mass exposure is a publicly accepted system of obtaining information. Written comments from experts on the packaging material and in the media enhance perception. For most pharmaceutical products’ marketers, it is easiest to recount facts about efficacy, side effects, and dosage. But blending facts and feelings is one of the most challenging, creative, and rewarding aspects of product positioning. Sometimes companies must actually position a competitor’s product as a pre-emptive strike. Frequently, competitive intelligence can determine potential weaknesses in the competing product, even before it is launched. Companies must also remember to inoculate the market against negative perceptions of their own products that might be induced by competitive efforts. It isn’t enough to persuade physicians about the benefits. Public Relations are another key consideration in a pharmaceutical product’s positioning strategy. It has the potential to create buzz in the marketplace. Elegant positioning strategies often fail when doctors learn that a prescribed product isn’t on a patient’s managed care formulary. With each passing year, pharmaceutical product positioning begins. Earlier in the development cycle, continues longer, and responds to more market variables than ever before. From the views of key opinion leaders (Kols) in the early development stage, to the ad campaigns that mark an expired patent’s over- the counter debut, products must fit tightly defined niches in complex markets. Strategies in each new phase in the positioning process depend on factors like cost (really, the availability through chemists) similar drugs in a manufacturer’s portfolio, and the self-image of patients, among others. But for everything new in product positioning, some elements remain

as important now as they were decades ago. Then and now, positioning has more to do with consumers attitudes toward a product than with the product itself.

## **6. Packaging-Sticking The Gum In High Spirits**

In the past, most of the pharmaceutical products were packed in glass bottles. With the time & continuous research in plastic material certain products have switched over to plastics by considering the fact of price criteria & suitability of packing contents. But presently, modern technologies and hi-tech research in quality assurance in certain plastic raw materials having food & drug approved grades are used in specific pharmaceutical products. Packaging for pharmaceutical products can be either internal (integral) or external. External packaging is that which surrounds the pharmaceutical product, such as a blister pack, while integral packaging is that which part of the actual drug delivery is, for example, tablet coating. One of the key challenges is to develop new materials that will meet industry's need for increased functionality (added value) and decreasing production costs (down-gauging, more efficient processes), while at the same time rising to the challenge of increasing environmental and health legislation for packaging products.

### **Buying Health Socially- Blowing out the Smoke**

Understanding social marketing comprises of the nature and role of social campaigns to change public behavior. This marketing approach to social change must include researching, analyzing the social marketing environment-mapping it, analyzing the behavior of target adopters and the diffusion of social products. The social marketing programs must be developed that include the designing of the social product, making the social product available, defining the distribution channels, managing the costs of adoption, promoting through mass, selective and personal communication which will trigger target adopters' actions and manage the service delivery to the target adopters' satisfaction that can also be mobilized through influence groups.

Managing social marketing not only includes developing the social marketing plan, organizing and implementing social marketing programs, controlling but also evaluating such marketing programs to study people most successful at resisting urges to smoke and thereby developing new range of strategies to help them.

### **Challenges**

Habitual smokers are aware of health problems associated with smoking but still many continue to smoke. In most cases, they want to quit but are unable to do so. A UK study in 2004 found that more than two thirds (70%) of smokers wanted to stop smoking. The main reason was concerns over health, followed by the cost of cigarettes. However, the success rate among attempted quitters is very low. Twenty percent of those undergoing treatment for cessation remain non-smokers after a year. Only 3% of those succeed in quitting using willpower alone.

As described above, the addictive properties of nicotine, and the effects of withdrawal, are major barriers to cessation. Other factors are (1)the age and socioeconomic status of the smoker (the young and poor are less likely to quit); (2)whether the smoker lives with other smokers; (3) the benefits that smoker believe they are getting from smoking e.g. pleasure, relief from boredom or stress, social confidence.

There are several interventions to help smokers who want to quit, involving behavioral (counseling) and pharmacological (medical) approaches. Behavioral interventions for smoking cessation, including cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing, are very much effective. The Indian Parliament had passed the cigarettes and other tobacco products bill 2003 in April 2003 and it became an Act on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2003. Rules were formulated in 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004 and are being vigorously implemented throughout India since then. It is hoped that tobacco use would reduce. There are several areas in health sector where Indo-US Collaboration is progressing ahead while there is need to move in some other directions also. It is a thought provoking

idea that such products can as tried and tested in the Indian Markets, through the different kinds of exchange healthcare programs and different health summits.

**Conclusion :**

Chewing gum which is a substitute for tobacco smoke is a great invention that will provide a level of nicotine retention in the blood and saliva very similar in intensity and duration to that due to cigarette smoking, without accompanying problems with respect to unpleasant taste, poor chewing characteristics and undesirable side-effects. In fact, it has been established by medical experts that assimilation of nicotine from a source other than tobacco can be of considerable help to a smoker who wishes to give up smoking. In the light of recent regulatory act where the censor board has strictly refrained the actors from using any form of tobacco product in films, which greatly influence our mindsets, this chewing gum can serve to be a boon to the society. It will empower the organizations in building up their good will.

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