

Full Length Article

# Discouraging cigarette smoking through de-marketing strategies

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## Abstract

Developing countries report high prevalence of smoking habits among youngsters. The transition from school to college is a critical phase where young people are more likely to adopt such unhealthy habits and life-style. It is necessary to understand the factors that lead youngsters to smoking and analyze the relationship of these factors with other socio-economic and demographic variables. The present study is a cross sectional empirical research based on multi-stage sampling process. Data analysis reveals some important relationships among the variables under study which have been suitably utilized in the formulation of de-marketing strategies for vulnerable age groups. These de-marketing strategies are based on the notion that consumption behavior among college students varies significantly which is also evident from factor analysis of data.

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*Keywords:* De-marketing; Factor analysis; Multi-stage sampling; Psychological value

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## 1. Introduction

There are about 1.3 billion smokers in the world, and tobacco and tobacco related products are major contributors towards deaths from chronic diseases worldwide (Inness, Barling, Rogers, & Turner, 2008). In US, cigarette smoking and tobacco exposure account for nearly 20% of all deaths every year (Parrinello et al., 2015). In fact, 18.8% of the people with mobility impairments in US were found to smoke (Borrelli, Busch, & Dunsiger, 2014). Another fact that draws attention is that smoking rate is much higher among people living in poverty (Lee, Cutler, & Burns, 2005; Bourdeau, Brady, & Cronin, 2006). Approximately 80 percent of all smokers live in developing economies. Tobacco and liquor organizations face increasing pressure to lessen smoking and drinking among consumers (Yang, Schaninger, & Laroche, 2013). Governments across the world are trying to discourage cigarette smoking through DE marketing strategies. *DE marketing* is “that aspect of marketing that deals with discouraging customers in general or a certain class of customers in particular on either a temporary or permanent basis,” (Moore, 2005). Most of the ongoing DE marketing campaigns focus on the development of social norms reinforcing the view that smoking is injurious to health, and an undesirable and irresponsible behavior (Kim & Shanahan, 2003). Various governments

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across the world are trying to increase taxes on tobacco products to discourage their consumption (Cebula, Foley, & Houmes, 2014).

India accounts for 16.6 percent of the world's smokers and Indians consume approximately 102 billion cigarettes per year. Research indicates that middle and upper socioeconomic segments of India are primarily consumers of cigarettes. Besides cigarettes, alternative forms of tobacco like biddies, hookahs, chewing or powdered tobacco are prominent in lower socioeconomic segments residing mainly in rural and semi-urban areas. Tobacco use, especially cigarette smoking is a major public health issue in most of the Indian cities. The problem is quite severe in towns and cities where there is a high concentration of educational institutions as students from smaller towns and villages go to these cities for education. Apart from the major metropolitan cities, such cities that attract young students for education include Varanasi, Kanpur, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Noida, Gr. Noida, Rohtak, Nagpur and Pune.

A number of studies from developing countries have reported high prevalence of tobacco use among young adults. A study conducted in Karnataka (India) revealed that 45 per cent students have used tobacco in one way or another. A similar study conducted in Kerala also reported that 20 percent adolescents smoked.

The smoking habit is strongly associated with age. The student community at the 'adolescent and young' age is highly likely to catch the smoking habit. Other variables that play a critical role in young adults developing smoking habits include degree of social tolerance to smoking and social and educational environment of students.

This study is an attempt to understand the factors contributing to the development of smoking habit among college students and analyze their socioeconomic profile for effective designing of de-marketing strategies to discourage smoking habits among them. It is a public health priority to educate this 'vulnerable age group' about the evils and hazards of smoking. The present study is an endeavor to motivate students to reduce tobacco consumption and suggest certain de-marketing strategies to save the student community from the grip of this dangerous epidemic. The study seeks to achieve the following objectives: (1) identify factors that encourage college students to take up smoking; (2) analyze the relationship between smoking and certain demographic and socio-economic variables; and (3) formulate suitable de-marketing strategies to discourage the smoking habit among students.

## 2. Literature review

Governments attempt to address social issues through public policies that advocate one conduct over another. One such social issue is smoking. Consumption of tobacco ought to be of great worry to consumers, governments and societies everywhere, and calls for effective anti-consumption strategies. In recent years, various DE marketing strategies have been applied to discourage tobacco consumption.

Kotler and Levy (1971) recommend that organizations need to specifically demarket their items to manage transitory deficiencies and overabundance requests, and also lessen requests from "undesirable sections". Their emphasis was on how firms pick the ideal marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion) to manage their association with customers. Cullwick (1975) focused on the vital role of the marketing mix elements in demarketing (Lawther, Hastings, & Lowry, 1997). Demarketing intends to decrease demand by discouraging purchasing and utilization of items such as liquor and cigarettes that pose dangers to wellbeing (Comm, 1998). Governments use different demarketing systems and instruments to check smoking, including tobacco publicizing bans (Saffer and Chaloupka, 2000), increase prices (Andrews and Franke, 1991), and smoking bans (Wall, 2005).

Most of the literature on smoking can be divided into two broad categories. While majority of literature focuses on clinical and medical aspects of smoking and its impact on health, few studies talk about the segmentation, target market and marketing aspects of cigarette smokers. However, both these categories lay some emphasis on the demographic and socioeconomic variables also. Little attention has so far been paid to identify the reasons behind smoking and subsequently formulate de-marketing strategies which form the prime focus of this case.

According to W.H.O. estimates, approximately 47% of all men and 12% of all women smoke worldwide. In developing countries, 48% of men and 7% of women smoke. The global youth tobacco survey conducted in 131 countries with a sample size of 7,50,000 students of ages 13–15 years found that approximately 9% students were current smokers while 11% used tobacco products other than cigarettes. It has also been observed that the majority of smokers have a strong desire to quit. However, the addictive nature of tobacco acts as a powerful deterrent to sustained quitting attempts. Statistics show that 78% of smokers try to give up smoking and 83% regret adopting the habit, but only a marginal number (3–5%) manage to abstain for a minimum of 12 months (Hyland et al., 2004).

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