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Inter-office Memorandum

Subject: New Project Area Proposal
Title: Smoking Behavior Studies -- A Pathway
to New Product Concepts

Date: September 21, 1971

To: Dr. A. H. Laurene

From: D. H. Piehl

Project Undertaking: To study all aspects of human smoking behavior, providing experimental data where necessary, and develop a comprehensive view of how and why people smoke, why they don't smoke, and identify specific needs that are fulfilled by smoking.

Objective: The ultimate objective is to develop new product concepts that fulfill needs for the non-smoker.

Summary: We normally seek to learn as much as we can about the chemistry and organoleptic properties of tobacco smoke, but little consideration has been given to the nature of our consumer from a research standpoint. Much research has been done on the psychological and physiological aspects of smoking outside of the industry but this information is not effectively used. Very little has been done on the social and psycho-social aspects of smoking. And practically nothing has been done on the physical and anatomical aspects of how a person smokes.

It is clear that people smoke for many more reasons than just pleasure. Smoking is a unique human behavioral function and there are many preconceived notions and biased explanations for its use. We should examine all aspects of this behavior to get a complete and accurate picture from which long range product concepts can be developed.

It is proposed to form a multidisciplinary team of scientists to examine the smoking process and smoker behavior, each from his own special point of view, drawing mainly on existing data. This team might initially consist of one full time RJR scientist familiar with tobacco and smoke, and a Marketing Research person together with part-time consultants. However, to be truly effective this would have to develop into a continuing effort perhaps requiring the need for recruiting specialized scientists or retaining permanent consultants.

The only laboratory research to be done at RJR would be studies of mouth-smoke interactions and the physical mechanism of the smoking process.

As a better picture of how and why people smoke emerges, new ideas of need satisfiers for the non-smoker should also emerge. In this way entirely new product concepts should arise having a sound scientific motivation for their development.

Status:

Impetus for this for proposal was generated from previous puff profile and retention studies but with the exception of oral pH measurements and discussion of possible physiological experiments to be done at IBT, no new research has been initiated.

Memorandum:Background

Our primary product is tobacco smoke and much research effort is devoted to its chemistry and taste, yet behavioral scientists tell us that people do not smoke just for pleasure (1). Americans, they suggest, smoke for many psychological and social reasons, such as to prove that they are virile; to demonstrate their energy, vigor, and potency. In addition they suggest people smoke because cigarettes relieve tension, express sociability, are rewards for effort, are aids to poise, help anticipate stress, etc. Many physicians, physiologists and pharmacologists argue that while the onset of smoking is determined by an interaction of social and psychological factors, its maintenance is due largely to the dependence on the pharmacological effects of nicotine (2). Much medical research is devoted to the study of allegedly hazardous components of smoke and their effect on the body. The social and psycho-social aspects of smoking are just beginning to be investigated in any detail (3).

It is clear that there is a lot more to smoke and smoking than we are generally cognizant of. Some experience has been gained here through the study of puff profile characteristics and lung deposition measurements. However, little effort has been devoted to the physical mechanism of the smoking process itself, especially with regard to interactions in the mouth.

This was not intended to be a rigorous review, but simply to provide an introduction to the proposal.

Proposal

In view of the many factors involved in dealing with cigarette smoking and smoker behavior it seems important if not vital to take all of these factors into consideration in undertaking a viable research effort as part of our opportunity-oriented program.

It is proposed that one RJR scientist be assigned to develop and coordinate a plan to assimilate and evaluate existing knowledge of smoker behavior. This could also include a Marketing Research person. Initially, this might involve retaining specific behavioral science consultants in the areas of psychology, physiology, sociology, etc., in addition to extensive literature review. Eventually it might require the recruiting of new scientists with new disciplines.

Periodic reviews or group discussions would be held in an attempt to establish the type of information that would be necessary for new concept development. Answers to the following questions would be sought:

1. Why do people smoke?
2. Why don't people smoke?
3. What specific needs are fulfilled by smoking?
4. Can these needs be fulfilled by other means? and if so,
5. Can new consumer product concepts be developed utilizing these means?

This type of information would also be valuable in other aspects of tobacco and smoke research. We cannot thoroughly understand our product if we do not understand how and why it is used. Since smoking is a unique human experience we cannot rely on those who do not have a vested interest to explain the reasons for smoking behavior.

Active research should be undertaken to define the physical mechanism of the smoking process. Looking at the human system, particularly the mouth, as a reaction vessel, how does the smoke enter, what happens to it, how long does it stay, and how does it leave? These somewhat elementary aspects of smoking have not been given enough consideration. This work would relate closely to existing experiments on the effect of smoke on oral pH. In fact, it may be necessary before an adequate experimental design can be developed. This work would also relate to possible experiments at IBT to measure physiological response of various tobacco products.

If we take the view that our single biggest product is some form of oral satisfaction as a basic need satisfier than we should know everything there is to know about it and how these needs might be fulfilled in other ways. This may involve subjects or disciplines that are not considered to be within the realm of tobacco research and may require changes in attitude. It is clear that there is a void in our total approach to smoke and smoking. Fulfilling this void could capitalize on our superior marketing expertise with new consumer products.


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Cc: Dr. Murray Senkus
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1. "Cigarettes: Their Role and Function." A study for the Chicago Tribune, Social Research, Inc., Chicago, Ill. (~1955).
2. Russell, M.A.H., Br. Med. Journ. 2 (5751) 330-331 (May 8, 1971).
3. Zagona, S.V., Ed. "Studies and Issues in Smoking Behavior," University of Arizona Press. Tuscon, Arizona, 1967.