

THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

It is believed that a key barrier to a cigarette company being able to communicate credibly with the public is the public's perception that cigarette companies refuse to acknowledge the primary health risk of cigarettes. If the first step is for a cigarette company to make it clear that it acknowledges the primary health risk, how does it do so in a way that is credible, that lays the foundation for being able to talk to the public about a wide range of smoking related issues, yet 'squares' with the fact that it is, and will continue to be, in the business of selling cigarettes?

As a first exploratory stage, the decision was taken to conduct focus groups that explored responses to:

- a number of positioning statements on risk
- a range of Q & As on risk
- a list of critical responses to the Q & As.

The objective was to obtain insight as to potential approaches that a cigarette company might take in publicly acknowledging the primary health risk:

- their credibility
- what effect the various 'ingredients' in the message might have
- how such an approach might be vulnerable to attack by opponents of the tobacco industry.

The objective was also to try to gauge the effect of such an acknowledgement on the image of the company and on the willingness of people to listen to further messages.

The plan is for the learning from this pilot study to be incorporated into the development of more 'refined' approaches for acknowledging risk, which would be tested across the EU, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

LOCATIONS FOR THE PILOT STUDY

The pilot study was conducted in France, Germany and Italy, as these three countries represent significantly different cultures as well as large and important markets.

The groups took place in Paris, Berlin and Rome between 19th November and 1st December 1998, and were conducted by Totman Stride Planning and Research Limited.

The project was managed and analysed by Chris Stride.

THE SAMPLE

In each country there were three focus groups of 2 hours duration. Each group consisted of around eight respondents.

One group was with opinion-formers (up-market, university educated, regular readers of the quality press). No criteria were set with regard to their smoking, but in Italy and Germany we found a good mix of smokers and non-smokers. In France they were all non-smokers, but around half of them had been smokers in the past. They were recruited to cover a range of ages between 30 and 55.

The other two groups were 'middle market' people, a mix of 'white collar' and skilled 'blue collar'. One of these groups consisted of smokers, the other non-smokers. The smokers were defined as currently smoking at least 10 cigarettes a day, and having been smoking for at least three years. The non-smokers did not currently smoke. Some were ex-smokers, but those that were had not smoked within the last three years. These two groups were recruited to cover a range of ages between 25 and 50.

All groups were mixed gender, half the respondents men and half women.

In some previous projects we had attempted to screen out the more overtly anti-smoking respondents, and in others we had not. Experience suggested that screening has very little impact on the construction of the group, and either way, we normally ended up with a cross section of attitudes ranging from the highly tolerant to the entrenchedly intolerant (intolerant people tend to tick 'liberal' boxes on the recruitment questionnaire, and it is only in course of the discussion that their more 'anti' views emerge). We did not attempt to screen for this project.

The Groups in Summary

Group 1

Opinion Formers
Social Class AB
All to have received university education
All to read the quality press regularly
Mix of smokers and non-smokers
Half men, half women
Age range 30-55

Group 2

Smokers
Social Class C1C2
All to smoke at least 10 cigarettes a day
All to have smoked for at least three years
Half men, half women
Age range 25-50

Group 3

Non-smokers
Social Class C1C2
None to have smoked within the last three years
Half men, half women
Age range 25-50

2072324939

THE FINDINGS

ACKNOWLEDGING RISK – AN OVERVIEW

- While respondents in the three countries approached the acknowledgement of 'risk' from different perspectives, there was broad agreement on:
 - how the public 'position' on risk should be phrased
 - how the 'questions' should be answered.

- It is not the acknowledgement of risk that is particularly interesting
 - everybody already 'knows' that smoking kills

but the fact that a cigarette company is doing so does signal a change in attitude:

- more open / transparent
- more in tune with the times

which is both surprising and welcome.

- People do not see such a change as being altruistic, but as a necessary step in enabling them to continue to sell cigarettes:
 - they are under pressure from government to make such a statement
 - it is to reduce the risk of USA-style legal action (by focusing the responsibility for smoking onto the smoker)
 - as PR to obtain better press.

- It does not necessarily make people feel positive about the industry in an active sense, but it does make the industry seem less secretive:

More:

- responsible
- human
- citizen within the community

Less:

- faceless
- sinister
- cover-up.

- It makes it easier for people, whether they are anti-smoking or not, to acknowledge that:
 - cigarettes are legal.
 - a substantial proportion of the population smoke (and they should have the freedom of choice to do so)
 - government obtains significant tax revenue

and that the industry is legitimately providing for this market.

- The tobacco industry is respected for being 'on the ball' and effective, and acknowledging risk is seen as a 'smart' move, even if, at first, it seems to be against the industry's own interests.

- The 'corporate position' on risk should be:
 - unequivocal
 - simple.
- It should not overtly exclude non-smokers from risk:
 - people believe passive smoking to be a health hazard (with the old, the young and those with respiratory problems at particular risk)
 - it is unpleasant anyway
 - passive smoking is not a choice.
- The issue of Kids smoking is too complex to be included in the 'corporate position' – it requires further debate and explanation.
- In terms of the Q&As, the overall impression is one of honesty and transparency, in the context of the industry wishing to continue to sell cigarettes:
 - the information is already in the public domain, so they are not giving anything away
 - they are using data to make their own point, but that is legitimate (the opposition do the same)

but there is a frankness and directness in handling the questions that suggests a cultural change in the industry.

- There were three topics on which the response was felt to be less transparent:
 - addiction
 - the response was felt to be evasive
 - Kids
 - the response did not reflect the real world
 - passive smoking:
 - except in France, where the argument was largely convincing, the evidence conflicted so much with peoples' own 'gut feelings' that they rejected the response as specious or a 'con'.

...however, there are learnings from this research as to how these questions might be answered more acceptably.

RESPONDENTS IN THE THREE COUNTRIES APPROACHED THE ISSUE DIFFERENTLY

The extent to which smokers feel at risk

- All the respondents believed smoking to be a risk, and some people will die from smoking.
- At the same time, in all countries there were anecdotes of relatives who smoked heavily and lived to an active old age (which was a source of comfort to the smokers).
- Nevertheless, in France and Germany there was the sense that the risk is real, that smoking will have an effect on your health – smoking is dangerous, you may get off lightly, you may not.
- In Italy this risk is not felt so personally. If you are unlucky, it will damage your health, but most will not be affected. Some people are genetically more vulnerable to the side effects of smoking, and if you are not one of them you are unlikely to suffer any ill-effects.
- In France and Germany smoking was felt to be a significant factor in lung cancer and other respiratory diseases. In Italy people tended to see smoking as just one of many risk factors, such as pollution.
- In the Q&As, the French and Germans were much more accepting of the risk data (for the smokers they were not as bad as they had thought), and found it less surprising that a tobacco company could be so open about it.
- In Italy some smokers found the figures quite alarming, and were surprised that a cigarette company could admit them.

The need for acknowledgement

- In all three countries respondents saw acknowledgement as a sign of a more transparent culture within the tobacco industry, which was seen as positive.
- The French, in particular, felt that such transparency was important.
- The Italians were more surprised by such public acknowledgement of risk, and felt that it might be to the detriment of future sales – it is not the responsibility of the tobacco industry to 'warn' people about the risks of smoking. But, if it is "Mr Marlboro" talking, then there is undoubtedly a good business reason for so doing.
- The Germans were the least interested in acknowledgement – it is the acknowledgement of something that the public already know, and only has real significance if it is followed up by action (to reduce the risk). The validity of the acknowledgement depends on the company that is making it – PM was spontaneously mentioned as a blue chip company that invests heavily in good causes.

The cultural response to 'logic'

- The French were the most open-minded – if the argument made sense (as in passive smoking) and the evidence came from third party sources, then it was accepted, even if it ran counter to current beliefs.
- The Germans and Italians were rejecting of the evidence, however impeccable the source, if it contradicted their own experiences and beliefs.

- In all three countries, there was an acceptance of third party data quoted, on the basis that the tobacco industry could not afford to be caught out in a lie. Quite legitimately though, the data would be selected to support the case.

Kids

- Kids are particularly indulged and protected in Italian culture. An overall statement about protecting Kids from (the enjoyable vice of) smoking was felt to be right and proper in Italy. In Germany and France it was felt to be too moralistic / idealistic, irrelevant without some proposals to limit Kids' access to tobacco.

THE KEY CRITERIA FOR A 'CORPORATE POSITION'

- People already know that smoking is a health risk.
Packs already carry messages that bluntly describe the health risk.
...so the information carried by the 'corporate position' is neither new nor interesting.
- What is new and interesting is that the tobacco industry / a cigarette company is acknowledging the risk "on the record".
- If such a statement is to have any significance, then it must:
 - take ownership of the acknowledgement
 - be unequivocal about what that risk is.
- To take ownership, the statement needs to open with the words "we acknowledge that...":
 - it is not pretending to impart new information, it is simply acknowledging:
 - scientific evidence
 - public opinion
 - "acknowledge" is a more appropriate word than "admit":
 - acknowledge implies free will
 - admit implies reluctance and guilt.
- "We **absolutely** acknowledge" is an even more powerful way of taking ownership.

- The most straightforward way to describe the risk is:
 - "Smoking can seriously damage your health":
 - "smoking" is what is risky, not tobacco
 - "can" implies risk rather than a certainty, which most people accept as true
 - "seriously damage" acknowledges the extent of the risk
 - "your health" does not exclude non-smokers.

- Certain phrases are 'fudges' that are interpreted as an attempt to downgrade the risk that the industry is prepared to acknowledge:
 - risk factor – suggesting it's not significant
 - certain human diseases – trying to avoid saying lung cancer
 - health risk – it's a risk, but not really dangerous (particularly in French and Italian)

"Why don't they use the word danger instead of risk? We all take risks when we drive our cars and it is not the same thing."

- While it is legitimate to argue that ETS is not a health risk, it is not appropriate to try to dismiss it in the 'corporate position' because it will invite rejection. Hence the inappropriateness of:
 - "...damage the health of smokers" (because non-smokers are not included)
 - "However, this is not the case for passive smoking..."

- The Kids issue is also too complex to include in the 'corporate position', although (as already noted) some Italian respondents felt that its inclusion demonstrated a responsible stance.

- Phrases like "we want to avoid the impression that we are hiding anything" can seem to be ingenuous or trying too hard:

"What it means is that they are hiding something."

and even when edited to "We don't want to hide anything" (Germany only) it is still protesting too much:

"These days, what can you conceal?"

- To say that consumers are aware of the health risks (position 9) may be true, but to refer to health warnings on the pack is seen as an attempt to pass responsibility entirely to the smoker – this position does not come across as a manufacturer acknowledging the health risk:

"It's wrong Cigarette manufacturers have to share the responsibility along with smokers."

- Positions 10 and 11 did not come across as an acknowledgement of risk, rather as an attempt to obfuscate.

Position 10

- "alleged risk" – attempting to suggest that it is not 'fact'
- linking with other "dietary" or "lifestyle" trying to diminish the seriousness of the risk
- "98 million Europeans have made the informed choice" – bullying with numbers, and passive smokers have made no choice.

Position 12

- the spurious use of data taken out of context is seen as an attempt to deny any risk at all
- was rejected angrily across the sample.

THE RESPONSE TO THE Q & As

- This was presented to respondents as an interview between a journalist and a spokesman from a tobacco company.
- It was significantly more interesting than the 'corporate position' because it was an active demonstration of what transparency could be
...it was a demonstration that the words of the 'corporate position' were genuine, and that there was a cultural change in the way that this tobacco company dealt with its responsibilities.
- The answers did not wholly satisfy or convince the non-smokers, particularly the more anti, nor many of the smokers, but in the context of them coming from a tobacco company, that was clearly defending its right to continue to sell cigarettes, they were about as open or honest as people could reasonably expect.
"They're not going to give up and shut down their factory."
- The French saw the responses as, by and large, open and honest. The Italians saw them as more open and honest than not. The German saw the interview as more a mix of openness and evasion, but nevertheless were quite sanguine about it:
"They don't put everything on the table, but you could not expect them to do so."
- Key to the responses being credible were:
 - answering the question
 - acknowledging bad news
 - giving facts and figures, quoting the sources (WHO and Environmental Protection Agency are credible)
 - acknowledging and respecting other views, even if they are contradictory.

THE RESPONSE TO INDIVIDUAL Q & As

Q1 So what exactly is the risk to smokers, then?

A1 The biggest risk factor is for lung cancer. Research has shown that smokers of 10 or less cigarettes a day are around 5 times more likely to get lung cancer than non-smokers, and smokers of 20 a day are around 8 times more likely to get lung cancer than non-smokers. Above 40 cigarettes a day, the figure arises to around 16 times more likely. All these figures are from World Health Authority research documents.

- For a tobacco company to so openly acknowledge the lung cancer risk of smoking was new, radical and surprising.
- It was also welcomed by both non-smokers and smokers. It is a very real demonstration of transparency.
- It is important to quote WHO as the source of data because:
 - it is credible
 - a tobacco company could not afford to be caught misquoting, or quoting out of context, such data.
- It confirmed what non-smokers believed, and they felt it was a real incentive for smokers to give up / not start
- It also confirmed what many smokers believed (though, for some Italian smokers the risk was worse than the had feared)
 - ...the rise of risk in line with the amount smoked made sense (and was what they believed), though many expected a more direct link between the number of cigarettes smoked and likelihood of death.

- The answer could prompt the questions:
 - what does it mean in actual numbers?
 - what about other diseases?
- One key take out from this exchange, for both smokers and non-smokers, was the need / benefit of moderation in smoking.

Q2 So how many smokers will die of lung cancer?

A2 The same research shows that around 1 in every 1,000 smokers of 20 or so a day will die of lung cancer compared with 1 in every 10,000 non-smokers. This falls to about 1 in every 2,000 smokers of 10 cigarettes a day and rises to about 2 in every 1,000 for smokers of around 40 a day.

- A similarly transparent response.
- For smokers, these figures were reassuring. The risk seemed remote enough in the trade off against the pleasure / need of smoking. The risk was less than expected.
- For many non-smokers the risk was reassuringly high.
- For others (the more anti) it was surprisingly low, and they were concerned that it would encourage smokers and they could question the accuracy.
- The fact that the data is WHO is crucial for credibility.

33 Y3 I suspect
from the
Chubb

Q3 So how many people a year die from smoking?

A3 It's very hard to tell. Sometimes it is just plain difficult to say exactly what people have died of and it's often difficult to know exactly how much people smoke. (And even if it's clear that a smoker has died of lung cancer, that's not the same as being certain it was caused by smoking.)* However the latest estimates from the WHO are that 3.5 million people die every year of tobacco related diseases. This is 7% of all annual deaths and the WHO describes tobacco as the single biggest preventable cause of death.

***deleted in some groups**

- This is a complex response.
 - first there is an explanation as to why it is difficult to estimate
 - then there is a figure given by the WHO

which can make it difficult to understand and it can imply that the spokesman is trying to avoid a direct answer.

- It is acceptable to say
 - ...that it is difficult to provide an accurate answer for the reasons given
 - ...nevertheless the WHO do make an estimate.
- 3.5 million sounds a lot – it is important to make it clear that this is worldwide.
- 7% of all annual deaths is difficult to have a 'feel' for
 - ...some think it's high, some low.

- ┐ "The biggest avoidable cause of death" is a strong statement, for smokers and non-smokers alike.
- ┐ But there are certain potential confusions:
 - death is a certainty, so does avoidable death mean avoidable premature death?
 - What does 3.5 million refer to:
 - all deaths related to smoking?
 - premature deaths related to smoking?
 - ...dying in old age from smoking related illness is not the issue because we all have to die of something

NB No Q&A 4 researched

Q5 Well, if you know cigarettes are dangerous, why do you continue to sell them?

A5 Many products are risks to health. Alcohol is a good example. But, like alcohol, tobacco gives people pleasure. We believe that people have the right to decide for themselves how to balance risk and pleasure in their lives, as long as they are aware of the facts.

u This is seen as a very fair answer, particularly in France and Italy:

- smoking is a pleasure (for smokers)
- many pleasures are not good for you
- alcohol is a good parallel
- it is about the right to choose
- *"We don't want a totalitarian society."*
- the proviso about being "aware of the facts" is responsible

u The few criticisms (more from Germany than elsewhere) were to do with.

- what about passive smoking?
 - it is neither a pleasure nor a choice
 - alcohol only affects the consumer, not third parties
- what about addiction?

Q6 But isn't tobacco addictive, so that the idea of a balanced choice between risk and pleasure is just nonsense?

Q6a If tobacco is addictive, it's addictive in the same sense as chocolate and alcohol. People always find it difficult to give up something they like, but that doesn't make them addicts or mean they can't give up. After all, more than 40 million people in the United States alone have given up smoking in the last ten years without help and millions of others do so each year.

Q6b Tobacco is certainly habit forming and in that sense you can describe it as addictive. But tobacco is certainly not addictive in the same sense as heroin, for example. It's more like chocolate or coffee.

Q6c (Germany) Addiction is a very emotive word and seems to mean different things to different people. Anything that gives pleasure to people is often difficult to give up. What is certainly true is that many smokers do find it very difficult to give up. This does not make them addicts or mean they can never give up. After all, 40 million people in the US have given up in the last 10 years alone.

- Addiction is a very difficult issue to address, and all these responses were felt to be evasive.
- Addiction is the issue that undermines the concept of choice – addicts have no choice.
- Smokers are very willing to admit addiction, because it excuses the fact that they do not give up a habit that society regards as anti-social.
- Whereas people who drink alcohol are not assumed to be alcoholics (only a minority are), the image of the smoker is that of the chain-smoking addict:
 - only a minority of smokers are perceived to be 'pleasure only' smokers
 - only a minority of cigarettes in a day are perceived to be 'pleasure' smokes.

- People believe nicotine to be an addictive drug.
- All this combines to make people, smokers and non-smokers alike, to believe strongly that smoking is addictive.
- The positive elements in these answers are:
 - "addiction is a very emotive word"
 - "means different things to different people"
 - "tobacco is habit forming"
 - "anything that gives pleasure is difficult to give up"
 - "doesn't mean they can't give up"
 - "not addictive in the same sense as heroin."
- What does not work is the attempt to describe the smoking habit solely as a psychological dependence – people 'know' that nicotine causes a physical dependence (it is a drug) ...but not everybody is physically dependent.
- It is wholly inappropriate to compare cigarettes to chocolate ...people do not even feel it is the equivalent to alcohol.
- The fact that 40 million Americans have given up is not relevant ...American society is different and its attitudes to smoking are different.
- Tonally, the revised 'answer' researched in the German groups was felt to be reasonably appropriate, other than the reference to 40 million Americans.

Q7 What about Kids?

A7 Kids shouldn't smoke, just as they should not drink or have underage sex. Any choice that involves real risks should wait until they are old enough to weigh the balance properly and are less in danger of making choices on the basis of peer pressure or perceived glamour.

- People agree that Kids should not smoke, but this response is inappropriate because:
 - it is simply offering a moral observation
 - it does not reflect reality – kids do smoke and will continue to smoke
 - it does not offer any positive action.
- The response needs to address Kids' access to tobacco, not as a 'solution', but as a responsible action on the part of the industry to limit the opportunity for Kids to smoke.
"It should be more about what the industry is doing to prevent Kids."
- Reference to underage sex is inappropriate:
"An American wrote that!"

and undermines the credibility of the spokesman.
- In Germany, the credibility of a 'Kids should not smoke' message is damaged by the massive presence of vending machines.

Q8 So why do you target Kids?

A8 We don't and we work hard to make sure it stays that way. In the past, some of the industry did things which appealed to Kids as well as to adults. This shouldn't have happened then and doesn't happen now.

□ What works is:

- it is straightforward
- it is unequivocal
- it acknowledges past sins.

□ People also do not feel that cigarette advertising has much direct impact on Kids.

□ But, they also feel that much promotion of cigarettes, while not directly aimed at Kids, is attractive to them:

- the macho image of Marlboro
- Formula 1 sponsorship

and Kids want to be adult, and smoking is part of being adult.

Q9 You've talked about lung cancer. What about other diseases?

A9 It's true that research shows that smoking increases the risk of other diseases, but not to the same extent as lung cancer. For example, a 20 a day smoker is 2 times more likely to die of heart disease than a smoker. This means that 3 out of 1,000 people who smoke 20 a day will die of heart disease compared with 1.5 in every 1,000 non-smokers.

- As with the response on lung cancer, such frank admittance of the risks is a demonstration of transparency.
- The risk was reassuringly low for the smokers.
- It did raise the question of what about other diseases?
- A potential confusion is over whether these figures represent premature death
if only 1.5 out of 1,000 people die of heart disease, what else do they die of?

Q10 OK. So you've finally come clean and admitted that smoking kills smokers. How about admitting that tobacco also kills non-smokers?

A10 What we know about smoking and the health risk to smokers is based on research. And it does show real risk. It's true that there is also a lot of research on passive smoking, too, and in fact the results of the biggest ever research exercise for Europe were published last month. This showed no meaningful increase in the risk of lung cancer for non-smokers exposed to cigarette smoke. This result is in line with the majority of all research results on passive smoking and health. All we can really say right now is that the science simply does not point to a concrete danger to non-smokers from tobacco smoke.

- This runs counter to peoples' beliefs. They believe that:
 - research reports have been published that demonstrate a real risk from passive smoking
 - why would there be bans on smoking in public places if the risk was not real?
 - they 'know' that smoking during pregnancy will harm the baby in the womb
 - they 'know' that smoking harms people with respiratory problems (eg asthma)
 - they 'know' that young children and sick people should not be exposed to tobacco smoke.
- In France and Italy some people even talked of passive smoking being more dangerous than smoking itself.
- "This result is in line with the majority of all research results on passive smoking and health" is not credible because people believe that everything they have heard, hitherto, says the opposite.

- To get off first base, to get people to even consider that a major new study demonstrates no meaningful risk, requires that the source is named
...it needs to be an entirely independent and reputable body, with no connections whatsoever with the tobacco industry.
- Even the word 'meaningful' can be interpreted as a fudge.

Q11 Isn't that all just rubbish and the manipulation of science for your own ends? Smoke is smoke. If it kills smokers, why should it be different for non-smokers who breathe it?

A11 Well, apparently smoke isn't just smoke. What smokers inhale is actually quite different from what non-smokers might inhale. For one thing, the smoke breathed in by non-smokers is 100,000 times more dilute than the smoke inhaled by smokers and, for another, it contains many fewer substances...around 50 compared with thousands inhaled by smokers. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency of the US Government has calculated that in an entire year a typical non-smoker inhales less tar than a smoker does in smoking one cigarette. (But of course, the fact that there's no meaningful risk to non-smokers doesn't mean that second-hand smoke isn't unpleasant or that they should have to put up with it unreasonably.)*

***Germany only**

- This begins to make people understand why the smoke that a non-smoker inhales is entirely different from that which a smoker inhales:
 - it makes sense
 - therefore it could be that 'passive smoke' is a lot less dangerous than 'active smoke'
 - it underlines how nonsensical it is to say that passive smoking is even more dangerous.
- In France it made sense and was accepted.
- In Italy the argument was broadly accepted, but non-smokers felt that it gave smokers permission to smoke in their presence without worrying, and it did not take account of the fact that passive smoking is unpleasant:
"It may be true, but it is not relevant. I have been with ten colleagues who smoke, and I smoked with them."
"I still feel sick."
(which is why the additional sentence was added for the German groups)

- In Germany, the acknowledgement of the unpleasantness of passive smoking, and the need for smokers to be respectful, was received positively
 - ...by not dismissing the unpleasantness of ETS, people are more willing to listen to arguments that it is not dangerous
 - ...by exhorting smokers to behave respectfully, people do not see the denial of health risk as giving smokers carte blanche to smoke as they please.
- The arguments about the difference between 'active' and 'passive' smoke were also accepted.
- But many, especially the non-smokers, could not be convinced by it:
 - "It makes sense, what they say, but I don't believe it."*
 - "If I sit in a pub for five hours I have a sore throat."*
- Therefore they would try to pick holes in the logic:
 - "There maybe fewer substances in passive smoke, but just one of them can be fatal."*
 - "There's no such thing as a typical non-smoker. Some people get exposed to a lot of smoke, some to a little. If you get exposed to a lot of smoke it is dangerous."*

Q12 Why are you saying all this stuff now after years of silence or denial?

A12 It's clear to us that if we want to be able to continue to sell our products to adults who want to buy them, we're going to have to avoid the mistakes we have made in the past. This means we must talk openly and frankly about the risks of tobacco. After all tobacco gives pleasure to people and we do believe that people have the right to decide for themselves how to balance risk and pleasure in their lives, as long as they know the facts.

(Germany only)

- This was a very positive round up to the interview, because it enables all the other answers to be put into context:
 - acknowledgement that cigarette companies were not open in the past
 - acceptance that companies need to be open from now on, if they are to be able to continue to sell cigarettes
 - it is the company's intention to continue to sell cigarettes
 - people do smoke, want to smoke and it is their right to be able to choose to do so.
- It enabled people to respond to the totality of the Q & As in a realistic manner:
 - "All in all, correct and honest. They are still protecting their interests. So they were open in many of their answers, yet tried to gloss over certain things."*
 - "Excellent. A well briefed and professional response."*

2072324967

DOES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISK, IN THIS WAY, GIVE THE COMPANY PERMISSION TO TALK TO CONSUMERS ABOUT OTHER SMOKING RELATED ISSUES?

- Yes.
- The 'corporate position' and the way the spokesman responded to the questions in the interview indicates a cultural change in the industry (or, at least, this company). It is actively pursuing a policy of transparency.
- Because it is being transparent, it also reasonable that it should be able to communicate with the public on a range of smoking issues, provided that what it has to say is:
 - interesting
 - relevant
 - contributing positively to the debate.

"Of course they can talk If what they say is interesting, we will listen "
- People are also very clear that a cigarette company, in doing so, will be acting entirely on the basis of its own interests:
 - this is legitimate
 - the interests of the company are not necessarily at odds with the interests of the consumer.
- Importantly, consumers in these three countries do not feel overwhelmed or threatened by big business ...they do not need protection from it.

THE IMPACT OF THE CRITICAL RESPONSES

- The 'critical responses', presented to respondents as a sample of responses to the interview from anti-smoking groups, gave respondents permission to return to the prejudices they held at the beginning of the discussion.
- Nevertheless, a change had taken place in attitudes
 - ...while emotionally they might agree with the sentiments expressed in the critical responses, much of what had been said in the interview made sense, and it had been put across in a rational and reasoned way
 - ...whereas the critical responses were actually quite extreme
- If the industry were to adopt this transparent approach, there is the possibility that it will undermine the credibility of some of the more hysterical anti-smoking messages, and/or oblige the antis to adopt a similarly 'measured' tone

Looking at the critical responses individually....

All this admission of risk is too little, too late. Instead of lying and dodging the issue for years, the tobacco companies should have come clean years ago before millions more people got hooked. They are only saying now what everyone has known for years to avoid even worse legal trouble.

- Overall, people felt that this was fair comment:
 - the industry should have acknowledged risk years ago
 - what drives this new approach is the need to head off the legal problems that are already occurring in the States.

By finally admitting that tobacco is dangerous for smokers, tobacco companies are trying to avoid the issue of passive smoking. Tobacco smoke kills non-smokers too and they haven't made a choice to smoke.

- This is also fair comment
- The tobacco companies are trying to deny that passive smoking is harmful.

All this is a smokescreen. The hard fact is that every year millions of people die needlessly because they smoke. The tobacco companies do nothing to stop this and actively try to recruit new, young smokers.

- Much of this is felt to be true.
- But, while companies do try to attract new smokers, it is a bit extreme to suggest that they are actively targeting young (ie Kids) people:
 - Kids smoke because their peers do, not because of advertising or other promotional activities.

The risk of smoking is much, much greater than for any other product. Almost all lung cancer cases are caused by smoking. The fact is that the tobacco companies sell a product that, when used as directed, will kill you.

- People believe that smoking is a particularly risky activity.
- They also believe that smoking is the major cause of lung cancer.
- But, to say that it will kill you is nonsense.

All this choice stuff is nonsense. Tobacco kills you and it is addictive. Once you start you are hooked.

- "Choice" is somewhat disingenuous, because smoking is addictive and smokers do not have an absolutely free choice over their smoking, but:
 - "tobacco kills you" is too extreme – only some will die from smoking
 - "once you start you're hooked" is not true – addiction only develops later and not everybody becomes addicted.

Why are they saying this now after lying about it for years? It must be that they're about to be found out about something even worse than we thought.

- This is extreme and silly
- It is not a reasonable response to the relatively frank interview.