

SPIT TOBACCO SPONSORSHIP OF RODEOS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

For the Tobacco-Free Events Project
of the Public Health Institute

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Introduction

Public Media Center has produced this literature review in partial fulfillment of the research portion of the Public Engagement Campaign for Countering Tobacco Industry Marketing to Young Adults at and around Rodeos. The campaign is sponsored by the Tobacco-Free Events Project of the Public Health Trust, a project of the Public Health Institute.

Tobacco companies are increasing the marketing of spit tobacco as an alternative — indeed a safer alternative — to smoking that can be “enjoyed” where smoking is prohibited. Even the use of the term “smokeless” tobacco is intended to imply a safe product. To make use of spit tobacco even less conspicuous and “improve social acceptability,”¹ US Smokeless Tobacco Company (USST) introduced new “spitless” tobacco called Revel in August 2001. As regulations tighten on the marketing and advertising of tobacco, the industry is constantly seeking new ways to reach and enlist customers. Two major marketing venues are rodeos and bars. This paper, though not an exhaustive report on all aspects of spit tobacco marketing or efforts to control it, will examine several questions needed to develop a campaign to reduce or ban tobacco sponsorship of rodeos and related bar night promotions. Sources were found through an extensive Web search or provided by the Tobacco-Free Events Project of the Public Health Institute. The questions examined herein include the health effects of spit tobacco, the demographics of its use, the prevalence and effectiveness of rodeos and bar night promotions, the details of USST’s rodeo sponsorship, and a brief look at relevant aspects of California’s tobacco control efforts.

Who uses spit tobacco?

Since 1970, spit tobacco has gone from being used primarily by older men to being used mostly by young men and boys: 14.8 percent of all boys in high school and 1.9 percent of girls use it.² Recently, declines in use have been noted. In California in 2001, the 30-day prevalence of smokeless tobacco use among adult males was 2.1 percent. Among 12-17 year old males, it was 0.9 percent.³ According to USST, 5 million adults use spit tobacco.⁴ Both sexes began using spit tobacco between the ages of 16 and 18 with friends playing a major role in encouraging its use. About 25 percent of users indicated they used the product to help them stop smoking.⁵

Health effects

Spit tobacco causes cancer. It contains 28 known carcinogens, including nitrosamines, benzo[a]pyrene, formaldehyde, 30 metals, and polonium-210, a radioactive compound. Spit tobacco users are at least 4-6 times more likely than nonusers to develop cancer of the oral cavity or pharynx and up to 50 times more likely to develop cancer of the gums and lining of the cheeks.⁶ Constant exposure to tobacco juice can also cause cancer of the esophagus, larynx, stomach and pancreas. All these diseases can occur within 5 years of regular use — far sooner than the potential for serious harm from smoking. Hardly a safer alternative, spit tobacco puts people at greater risk for significant health impacts at a far earlier age than smoking. In addition to cancer, spit tobacco can constrict blood vessels, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attack. The cardiovascular effects also reduce athletic performance and endurance levels.

Sixty to seventy-eight percent of spit tobacco users have oral lesions or white patches on the cheeks, gums and/or tongue caused by leukoplakia, a mouth disease that can lead to oral cancer.⁷ At a minimum, spit tobacco use causes tooth discoloration and decay, gum disease and chronic bad breath.

Spit tobacco is highly addictive; users potentially get an even higher daily dose of nicotine than smokers. According to the National Cancer Institute, the amount of nicotine absorbed is 2-3 times that delivered by cigarettes. Dipping or chewing 8-10 times daily is equivalent to smoking 30-40 cigarettes. Though the nicotine is absorbed more slowly, more is absorbed per dose.⁸ Studies by the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health found that 75 percent of young daily users showed symptoms of nicotine addiction. Ninety percent of those that tried to quit showed withdrawal symptoms. Further evidence of addiction lies in cessation studies that report lower success rates among spit tobacco users than among smokers.⁹

There is strong evidence the tobacco companies manipulate nicotine dosages to facilitate addiction.¹⁰ According to a study by the American Health Foundation for the State of Massachusetts, the levels of tobacco specific nitrosamines (TSNAs) in U.S. oral snuff brands were considerably higher than in comparable Swedish Match brands. This suggests that it is possible for spit tobacco companies to control and lower TSNA levels. This same study found TSNA levels in the two leading brands, Copenhagen and Skoal, increased significantly when placed on a shelf at room temperature over a six-month period. The TSNA levels increased 20 percent in Skoal and 137 percent in Copenhagen whereas no significant changes were observed in Swedish match brands.¹¹

Marketing

With the advertising constraints imposed by the Master Settlement Agreements, bar promotions and event sponsorship have become increasingly important marketing outlets for tobacco companies. USST's goal is to "reach out to the 40 to 50 million adult cigarette smokers, many of whom are looking for alternative forms of tobacco satisfaction."¹² Through various marketing means, including sampling at adult-only booths, USST's "ultimate objective is to build awareness of the smokeless tobacco category, increase social acceptability of its products, and improve the ease of use for adult consumers entering the category."¹³

As discussed in detail below, the effects of event sponsorship and bar nights are greater and more insidious than just selling tobacco. They are used to gain access to communities and build good will and even dependence on the industry.

Bar nights

As adult-only venues, bars are particularly appealing to tobacco companies because they can promote their products freely, immune to public criticism that they are marketing to underage youth. In addition, the companies can target specific users by choosing bars that attract particular age ranges, ethnic groups or similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

Even in California bars where smoking is prohibited, bar nights provide excellent opportunities to distribute samples. They help create and reinforce brand imagery and, by offering "incentives" or promotional items, users are turned into "walking billboards."¹⁴

Perhaps of greatest value to the industry is the efficacy of bar promotions in generating mailing lists needed for the database marketing that has become so popular with the tobacco companies. Contests, raffles and surveys are the most commonly used namegathering tools. The mailing lists — critical to their long-term marketing schemes — allow the company to keep in touch with smokers, conduct telephone surveys and develop smoker profiles. The companies send smokers free samples, corporate magazines and branded merchandise catalogues.¹⁵

Bars offer an ideal social environment to use opinion leaders to influence smoking and brand decisions. According to a Benson & Hedges document, "tobacco bar promotions reinforce the social aspects of smoking by bringing together good times, 'classic smoking situations' and their brand of cigarettes."¹⁶ "Bars' association with the tobacco industry should be portrayed as negative exploitation of social and cultural institutions. Rather than stressing resistance skills to counter peer pressure, public health educators should seek to identify social leaders and encourage them to promote and defend smoke-free lifestyles."¹⁷

Rodeos

Over the last decade, event sponsorship has become a powerful marketing tool for tobacco companies.¹⁸ More recently, the industry has been moving to sponsoring

larger events and particularly those broadcast on television as a way to evade the television advertising ban.¹⁹

Tobacco company sponsorship of rodeos began in the early 1970s. It was not until the mid-1980s that US Tobacco Company (UST) entered into an exclusive arrangement with the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) and Professional Bull Riders, Inc. (PBR). In 2001, UST changed its name to US Smokeless Tobacco Company (USST), becoming a subsidiary of UST.²⁰ USST sponsors two-thirds of all California rodeos.²¹

Signed in November 1998, the Smokeless Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement²² limits each company's "brand-name sponsorship" (e.g., Copenhagen or Skoal) to one annually, but it can be part of a "series" or "tour." There are no limitations on the number of individual events included.



According to the USST ProRodeo website,²³ starting in 2000, USST used its brand-name sponsorship for the Copenhagen Cup. In 2002, the company changed the name to USSTC Cup so it could use its single brand-name sponsorship for another event. The support not only benefits the rodeo committees, but also "rodeo contestants, stock contractors, contract personnel and even the fans."

USST contributed \$1.2 million to the ProRodeo Tour in 2000, including \$600,000 in prize money and \$340,000 in bonuses at the Copenhagen Cup Finals in Las Vegas and Mesquite, Texas. The USST ProRodeo Championship Awards Program provides bonuses to the top six program participants in the each event. In addition, stock contractors receive bonuses for the top animals in several events. Finally, to get at the younger market, USST sponsors a Scholarship Awards Program: \$4 million in scholarships went to the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association.

The Smokeless Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement allows a tobacco company to sponsor as many events as it chooses using the corporate name (e.g., US Smokeless Tobacco Company) as opposed to a brand name (e.g., Copenhagen). So by changing the name from US Tobacco Company to US Smokeless Tobacco Company, the company can widely and effectively promote smokeless tobacco simply by means of corporate



sponsorship using the new name. For example, rodeo rings are plastered with USST signs, the stalls from which the cowboys emerge also sport USST stickers and the

cowboys themselves wear very visible USST logo patches. All put “smokeless tobacco” in big bright letters for the audience to see over and over.

The sponsorship affords USST the opportunity to have adults-only promotional booths at rodeos that provide all the benefits of bar nights as described above, including attracting new users.²⁴ “Cowboys” offer visitors samples, instructions on how to dip and opportunities to sign up to win prizes, thus gathering names and information for continuing promotion. Often these tents are quite elaborate with mechanical bulls to increase attendance and create an even more appealing “forbidden fruit” to children and adolescents unable to enter.

In addition to providing all the benefits of bar nights, rodeo sponsorship gives USST image enhancement.” The event increases awareness and positive association with the brand and the company. As the devoted fans become more aware of them, the brand acquires “transfer imagery” from the sport, i.e the positive “inherent imagery of the event is projected or transferred to the brand.”²⁵ These appreciative feelings are reinforced by the appearance of print stories about rodeo sponsors that portray USST in a positive light.²⁶ Tobacco control experts refer to this as a “halo effect” — “connect the product with something fun and enjoyable, and some of that positive image will rub off on the product. This is especially important for a product like tobacco, which — in the opinion of the public health officials worldwide — offers no benefits to the user. Sponsorship of community events helps tobacco companies hide behind a ‘good neighbor ’ image.” But, it “is actually a marketing tool intended to circumvent federal and state laws, current and proposed, about marketing their company and products.”²⁷

Finally, health advocates oppose tobacco sponsorships because they help the industry break into tightly knit communities and gain access to key decision makers. Perhaps most insidious in this regard, the sponsorships can silence potential critics who feel dependent on the industry’s support of the community events and, therefore, reluctant to speak out.²⁸

Tobacco control

California's tobacco control efforts have been facilitated in part by the public's skepticism regarding tobacco industry practices. In 1998, more than 75 percent of adults thought tobacco companies are generally dishonest in the information they disseminate to the public about their products, that they try to get youth to start smoking by using advertising attractive to them, and that they increase nicotine content to addict people. The public — 50 percent of the adult population — also thinks tobacco advertising and marketing in the community is a serious problem.²⁹ The 1997 California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) reports that Californians — both smokers and nonsmokers alike — overwhelmingly oppose the presence of tobacco advertising at community events. Seventy-four percent of nonsmoking Californians agree that tobacco advertising should be banned at sports and athletic events.³⁰ Surely, public support for restrictions on tobacco ads and marketing will help create fertile ground for restricting tobacco sponsorship of rodeos.

According to the Tobacco Education and Research Oversight Committee, "California's strategy is to create a social milieu and legal climate in which tobacco use is regarded as unacceptable."³¹ Key successful strategies relevant to the rodeo campaign include:

- aggressively exposing tobacco industry deception and influence;
- employing an anti-tobacco media campaign that has a broad, general market focus that directly confronts the tobacco industry and its surrogates;
- emphasizing the negative aspects of tobacco use for everyone — adults and youth alike; and
- closely coordinating a media campaign with community-based activities, and responding quickly to changing industry strategies with new media messages.³²

Analysis

Growing legal and social restrictions on smoking and broad acceptance of the danger of secondhand smoke have created marketing opportunities for USST. “Every time a new smoking-restriction regulation passes, the potential size of our market increases,” said Murray S. Kessler, president of UST’s smokeless tobacco unit.³³ USST actively pursues smokers inconvenienced by smoking restrictions with their slogans, “Take a pouch instead of a puff” and “Anytime. Anywhere.” The company seeks to have smokers add spit tobacco to their repertoire for those times users need a nicotine fix, but cannot smoke.³⁴

With USST increasing its efforts to market spit tobacco, the time is clearly ripe for a campaign to counter them in locales they value, rodeos and the many rural and urban areas that host them. One of the many challenges facing anti-spit campaigns as compared to anti-smoking efforts is the former is deemed a “victimless” bad habit with only the user making a choice about his or her own health. This point will come into play should the campaign seek tobacco-free stands at rodeos.

Rodeos and bar nights provide USST with significant marketing opportunities for their products, both to build brand loyalty and recruit new users. By being perceived as critical to these community events, they also create a sense of dependence on and loyalty to the company. Since rodeos are family events, portraying the tobacco sponsorship as contrary to the values of the community and families could help drive a wedge between the rodeo committees and the industry. By rejecting this socially irresponsible sponsor and showing concern for the health of the community, committees should be able to attract others who do not wish to be associated with the tobacco industry.³⁵ Should the campaign succeed in ejecting spit tobacco sponsorship, there is a chance cigarette companies could attempt to fill the void. However, demonizing “victimless” spit tobacco as contrary to family and community values should serve to inoculate rodeo committees against accepting smoking money in light of all the work that has been done to make smoking socially unacceptable.

NOTES

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⁵ NIDA Notes, "Women and Smokeless Tobacco Use," Vol. 16, No. 1, March, 2001.

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⁸ National Cancer Institute, "Cancer Facts," http://cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/3_63.htm, 10/23/98.

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¹² U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company Website, <http://www.ustobacco.com/content.cfm?id=47>.

¹³ U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company Website, <http://www.ustobacco.com/content.cfm?id=47>.

¹⁴ Katz, S.K.; Lavack, A.M., "Tobacco related bar promotions: insights from tobacco industry documents," *Tobacco Control* 2002; 1 (Suppl 1): i92-i101.

¹⁵ Katz, S.K.; Lavack, A.M., "Tobacco related bar promotions: insights from tobacco industry documents," *Tobacco Control* 2002; 1 (Suppl 1): i92-i101.

¹⁶ Market Behavior Ltd. Strategic Development of Benson & Hedges Pac Advertising in Nigeria and UAE. British American Tobacco Company. October 14, 1992. Access date: November 1, 2001. Bates No. 500155388-5450. URL: <http://my.tobaccodocuments.org/view.cfm?docid=SNAPPM&Showlimages=yes>. Quoted on p. 2052425108. Referenced in Katz, S.K.; Lavack, A.M., "Tobacco related bar promotions: insights from tobacco industry documents," *Tobacco Control* 2002; 1 (Suppl 1): i96.

¹⁷ Sepe, Edward; Ling, Pamela M.; Glantz, Stanton A., "Smooth Moves: Bar and Nightclub Tobacco Promotions that Target Young Adults," *American Journal of Public Health*, March 2002, Vol 92, No 3, p. 4188.

¹⁸ Independent Evaluation Consortium, Interim Report. Independent Evaluation of the California Tobacco Control Prevention and Education Program: Wave 2 Data, 1998; Wave 1 and Wave 2 Data Comparisons, 1996-1998, Rockville: Maryland: The Gallup Organization, 1998.

¹⁹ California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, Project SMART Money, "Talking Points."

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²¹ California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, Project SMART Money, "Talking Points," December 1998.

²² Smokeless Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, <http://caag.state.ca.us/tobacco/ssa.htm>.

²³ U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company ProRodeo, <http://www.prorodeo.com/Sport/6.2.ustobacco.html>.

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²⁸ California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, Project SMART Money, "Talking Points," December 1998.

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APPENDIX 1

Definitions

There are two types of smokeless tobacco — snuff and chewing tobacco.

Snuff: finely ground tobacco packaged as dry, moist, or in sachets (tea bag-like pouches). The user places a pinch or dip between the lip and gum.

Chewing tobacco: available in loose leaf, plug, or twist forms. The user places a wad of tobacco between the cheek and gum. Smokeless tobacco is also called “spit” or “spitting” tobacco because people spit out the tobacco juices and saliva that build up in the mouth.

APPENDIX 2

Posters

All posters found at <http://www.quit tobacco.com/posters/poster.htm>. Included here for your information.

If you chew tobacco and want to quit, ask us, we can help!




Chewing tobacco can lead to tooth loss, oral cancer, leukoplakia, tooth discoloration, gum recession, stomach cancer and a host of other health problems.

Don't Chew Tobacco!



Presented and publicly endorsed by
MINT SNUFF
All Mint Chew
"The Healthy Alternative"
1-800-EAT-MINT™

NAME YOUR POISON



Beat the Smokeless Habit.
Call 1-800-4-CANCER



Take a Close Look at
What the Tobacco
Industry Won't
Show You.

Beat the Smokeless Habit. Call 1-800-4-CANCER

Question: What does chewing or spitting tobacco do for a ballpark?



Answer: And get Lungs.

Glory Days Gory Days

"Spit tobacco is dangerous, addictive and . . . IT'S REALLY GROSS!"



So, Just Play The Game!

Spit Snuff
With Natural
Tobacco Flavors