

TOX-bacco: call a spade a spade!

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Abstract

Purpose – *The paper aims to discuss the effects that using the correct terminology can have on smoking and smoking cessation.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The paper examines the language that the industry uses and the language it should be using. It explores the smuggling of cigarettes and the links to money laundering and terrorism.*

Findings – *The language that is used both shapes and reflects social values. Accordingly, inadequate language reflects inadequate involvement to face the challenges – over five million people die from smoking-related diseases each year.*

Originality/value – *The paper highlights the harms of smoking and the harms of using ineffective terminology.*

Keywords *Tobacco, TOX-bacco, Euphemism, Cigarettes*

Paper type *Research paper*

The challenges for fighting the number one cause of preventable morbidity and mortality are numerous. Many effective tools must be associated: increasing access to cessation treatments, providing smoke free environments, counter marketing campaigns, limiting promotion [. . .] We are happy with the health warnings on packaging which effectively raise consciousness. However, we must seriously question our true level of consciousness. Indeed, there is a real clash of discourses between the language we use in and the language we should be using. The language, as the media, both shape and reflect social values (Wakefield *et al.*, 2003). Accordingly, inadequate language reflect inadequate involvement to face the challenges.

TOX-bacco must be used since what is sold on the market is not tobacco but a mixture of additives to obtain "Crack nicotine". Ammonia is used to increase the alkalinity of smoke and increase the amount of nicotine in the free form rather than in the bound form of nicotine salts. Through analysis and reverse engineering of Marlboro cigarettes, competitors came to the conclusion that "ammonia technology" was essentially the "soul" of Marlboro.

Over five million people die each year from TOX-bacco use and the expected figure could be more than eight million by 2030 (www.who.int/tobacco/wntd/2010/gender_tobacco/en/index.html). One out of two people addicted to TOX-bacco died from related diseases but the number of people addicted to TOX-bacco continues to rise: the epidemic spreading as a wildfire in the developing countries while it is only partially controlled in developed countries but France (+2 per cent in tobacco sales during the past five years) (Braillon and Dubois, 2011). Women and the underage (10 per cent of the 13-year-old are daily smokers in France), the most vulnerable, are enrolled earlier and earlier to replace the dead one. Damage occurs even earlier than childhood because addiction to TOX-bacco during pregnancy is the most frequent and serious domestic violence worldwide. Fœtal anoxia, due to carbon monoxide is the first avoidable cause of perinatal morbidity and mortality, even if frequently

Conflict of interests: Dr Braillon, a senior tenured consultant in Pr Dubois' unit was sacked in December 2009 by the Department of Health, against the advice of the National Statutory Committee (Dubois and Braillon, 2010). Professor Dubois chairs the Addiction Committee at the French Academy of Medicine and "Alliance Prévention Alcool", a charity established in June 2010 to federate the organizations that oppose dangerous and inconsistent policies. Professor Dubois is being sued by the French Tobacconists' union (Braillon, 2010).

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denied by many healthcare professionals and researchers in leading journals (Brailion and Bewley, 2010). 58

Enrolment is a reality and the appropriate term. Bernays developed opinion-molding as a technique: “engineering of consent”. Working for the American Tobacco Company he sent young models to the New York City parade having told the press that a group of women’s rights marchers would light “Torches of Freedom”. On his signal, the models lit Lucky Strike cigarettes in front of the photographers. The *New York Times* (1 April 1929) printed: “Group of Girls Puff at Cigarettes as a Gesture of Freedom” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Bernays) Bernays’ achievements for women’s rights have never been acknowledged. 59-66

Would you call Al Capone the CEO of a family run business? Was Kenneth Lay a philanthropist concerned by the retirement of his employees when on 26 September 2001 he told them that the Enron’s accounting practices were “legal and totally appropriate”, that Enron stock was “an incredible bargain”, and that “the third quarter was looking great”? Did he sell \$200 millions in his own Enron stock at the same time to avoid a conflict of interest? 67-72

TOX-bacco dealers also fraudulently undermined and discredited the scientific consensus that passive smoking caused diseases. On 22 September 1999, the US Department of Justice filed a racketeering lawsuit against Philip Morris and others. Judge Kessler found that they had: 73-76

- conspired to minimize, distort and confuse the public about the health hazards of smoking; and 77-78
- publicly denied, while internally acknowledging, that secondhand smoke was harmful to non-smokers, and destroyed documents relevant to litigation. 79-81

The ruling found that the defendants undertook joint efforts to undermine and discredit the scientific consensus that passive smoking causes disease, notably by controlling research findings via paid consultants. The ruling also concluded that defendants still continued to fraudulently deny the health effects of passive smoking. On 22 May 2009, a three-judge panel of the Washington DC US Court of Appeals unanimously upheld the 2006 Lower Court’ ruling. 82-88

Finally, smuggling seriously harms by undermining tax policies, making tax-free cigarettes available to young people and price-sensitive smokers who might otherwise quit. Every year, tens of billions of cigarettes disappear. Are companies and industries involved in clandestine smuggling operations and even money laundering and terrorism? No. Traffickers yes. The accusations came after an extensive investigation by the European Union’s (EU) anti-fraud office (Olaf) which found evidence of shipments of cigarettes from the USA, via the EU to Iraq since the early 1990s. The EU claimed that there was a clear link between the clandestine smuggling operations, money laundering and terrorism. In 2000, the EU filed a civil suit in New York under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act against Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds Nabisco and Japan Tobacco. All ended up in July 2004 with an agreement (memorandum of understanding, an unenforceable, non-binding agreement) between Phillip Morris and the EU. Phillip Morris undertook to pay 1.25 billion dollars to compensate and close the issue of the damage done. It looked like almost pocket change (the figure time for net income being \$10 billion for a revenue of \$61). 89-103

In Hong Kong, executives were convicted of smuggling-related offences. In Canada, many lawsuits were successful and a wholly owned subsidiary of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company pled guilty to charges related to its involvement in smuggling cigarettes from the USA into Canada (http://tobaccofreecenter.org/files/pdfs/en/ILL_facts_en.pdf and www.baselinemag.com/c/a/Projects-Supply-Chain/Philip-Morris-International-Smoke-Screen/) 104-108

Addiction to TOX-bacco is the single most modifiable risk factor against mortality and morbidity. TOX-bacco cessation treatments, cognitive behavioural therapy and medication, are evidence-based and cost effective. 109-112

The first priority on the agenda of every health care professional should be to offer cessation treatments and to lobby for comprehensive governmental policies. Use the proper language! 113-114

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