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It's Complicated: Examining Smokers' Relationships With Their Cigarette Brands

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Abstract

Despite increased restrictions and taxes, decreased social acceptability, and widespread awareness of the harms of tobacco use, many in the U.S. continue to smoke cigarettes. Thus, understanding smokers' attitudes and motivations remains an important goal. This study adopts the consumer psychology concept of *brand relationship* to provide a new lens through which to examine smokers' attitudes about their cigarette use. Twelve focus groups ($N = 143$) were conducted with adult cigarette smokers from September to November, 2013. Using a semistructured moderator guide and "top of mind" worksheets, the discussion examined participants' attitudes toward (a) their own cigarette brand and (b) tobacco companies in general. Data were coded and analyzed following principles of thematic analysis. Adult smokers reported positive attitudes toward their cigarette brand, as their brand was strongly associated with the positive experience of smoking (e.g., satisfying craving and relief from withdrawal). In contrast, thinking about tobacco companies in general evoked negative reactions, revealing overwhelmingly negative attitudes toward the industry. Findings reveal a complicated relationship between smokers and their cigarette brand: simultaneously embracing *their* cigarettes and rejecting the industry that makes them. Taken together, these data suggest smokers maintain largely positive brand relationships, diverting negative feelings about smoking toward the tobacco industry. Finally, they highlight the synergy between branding and the subjective smoking experience, whereby positive brand attitudes are reinforced through withdrawal relief. Ultimately, this information could inform a more complete understanding of how smokers interpret and respond to tobacco communications, including marketing from their brand.

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Keywords

brand relationship; attitudes; cigarette smoking; marketing; tobacco

Despite increased restrictions and taxes, decreased social acceptability, and widespread awareness of the harms of tobacco use, many in the U.S. continue to smoke cigarettes, and smoking remains the leading cause of preventable morbidity and mortality in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). Many smokers intend—and even attempt—to quit; for instance, in 2013, approximately two thirds of all adult smokers surveyed reported that they had attempted to quit or did quit in the past year (Lavinghouze et al., 2015). However, attesting to the power of nicotine dependence, most of them will fail (e.g., Borland, Partos, Yong, Cummings, & Hyland, 2012; Messer, Trinidad, Al-Delaimy, & Pierce, 2008), and still others will not try. Thus, understanding the psychology surrounding smoking behavior remains an important public health goal.

Cigarettes are highly effective vehicles for rapid nicotine delivery (Benowitz, Hukkanen, & Jacob, 2009). At the same time, they are also consumer products, subject to extensive marketing and advertising efforts. Accordingly, smokers' behavior related to their cigarettes can be examined both in terms of dependence, and in the context of consumer psychology (Pechmann, Biglan, Grube, & Cody, 2012). Increasingly, consumers' interactions with products are conceptualized using the lens of *brand relationship* (Fournier, 1998); however, this perspective has yet to be applied widely to smokers and their cigarette brands. Examining smokers' cigarette brand relationships provides a novel lens for understanding the attitudes underlying their smoking behavior and the role of marketing and advertising, alone and in concert with the influence of nicotine dependence, in shaping those attitudes.

Product brand is a primary construct for understanding and predicting consumer behavior (Schmitt, 2012). Research suggests that brand loyalty influences consumers' evaluation of products (Philiastides & Ratliff, 2013) and purchasing behavior (Cohen & Houston, 1972). More recently, the field has moved beyond the single dimension of loyalty to conceptualize these consumer–brand interactions in terms of *relationships* (Fournier, 1998). The concept of brand relationship has been influential in the consumer psychology field, providing a framework through which consumer–brand interactions can be understood, including by promoting the application of extant psychological theories—for example, person perception (Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012) and attachment (Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013)—to understand the multifaceted, varied relationships consumers can have with their brands (e.g., Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; Lin & Sung, 2014; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010; Reimann, Castano, Zaichkowsky, & Bechara, 2012; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Conceptualizing consumer–brand interaction in terms of a relationship allows for a richer characterization of the nature and tone of that connection and characterizes the brand as an active participant in the interaction. Accordingly, just like interpersonal relationships, consumer–brand relationships come in different forms. In her seminal piece describing this framework, Fournier (1998) identifies a typology of brand relationships, which range from uniformly positive bonds (e.g., “best friendships”) to more complicated, mixed-valence connections (e.g., “enslavements”). Importantly, the utility of this framework

is the notion that the nature and quality of the relationship has implications for how consumers will behave toward that brand.

The tobacco industry is widely credited for successfully using brand marketing to retain its current customers (National Cancer Institute [NCI], 2008) and to attract new ones (Pierce, Choi, Gilpin, Farkas, & Berry, 1998). Not surprisingly, cigarette smokers report a strong preference for their brand of cigarettes (Eurobarometer, 2012) and tend to exhibit brand loyalty (Davis, 1996; Dawes, 2014; Siegel et al., 1996; cf. Cornelius et al., 2015). Therefore, smokers would be expected to have highly positive relationships with their cigarette brands. Moreover, cigarette smoking involves frequent consumer–brand interaction: each time smokers reach for a cigarette, they interact with their branded cigarette pack. Additionally, these interactions result in relief from nicotine craving (Benowitz, 2009; Skinner, 1971), thereby strengthening the brand relationship through negative reinforcement. As a result, for many smokers, smoking is experienced not only as a chemical dependence on nicotine, but also as a reliance on smoking *their* brand of cigarettes to relieve withdrawal symptoms in the times and places they are accustomed to (Shiffman et al., 2002, 2007).

On the other hand, there are aspects of the relationship between smokers and their cigarettes that might complicate the relationship. For instance, unlike many consumer–brand relationships, the presence of nicotine dependence means this relationship is not voluntary. In addition, public education campaigns targeting tobacco have successfully denormalized smoking. Indeed, most smokers are largely aware of the harms of smoking (Siahpush, McNeill, Hammond, & Fong, 2006) and regret having started (Fong et al., 2004; Slovic, 2001). This discrepancy between smokers' behavioral loyalty to their brand (mediated by the addictiveness of nicotine)—and simultaneous awareness of the negative aspects of smoking—suggests the potential for an unusually complicated consumer–brand relationship.

At the same time, effective antitobacco campaigns have targeted smoking *behavior* (Bright et al., 2013; McAfee, Davis, Alexander, Pechacek, & Bunnell, 2013) or the tobacco industry, in general—rather than specific brands, per se (Farrelly, Davis, Duke, & Messeri, 2009; Farrelly, Davis, Haviland, Messeri, & Heaton, 2005). Thus, it is unknown the extent to which smokers have positive or negative attitudes toward their brand or the tobacco industry—or whether they even make a distinction between the two.

This article presents findings from an inductive qualitative study designed to better understand smokers' brand relationships by examining attitudes toward (a) their own cigarette brand and (b) the tobacco industry, more broadly. Although the concept of brand loyalty has been examined in tobacco research, the concept of brand relationship, and the extent to which it may be a barrier to cessation, have not been examined. Examining smokers' relationships with their cigarette brand enables greater insight into the psychological underpinnings of smokers' attitudes toward their smoking behavior and continued smoking. In particular, understanding the complex relationships smokers have with their cigarette brands is critical to appreciating the multiple influences on their tobacco use behavior, including how they may respond to messages or advertising from or about their brand. Such an understanding would be useful to inform targeted interventions. This paper is the first to examine this unique consumer–brand relationship.

Method

Setting and Participants

Data come from focus groups conducted from September to November 2013. Participants were recruited as part of a broader study examining consumer perceptions about tobacco products, which included focus group and survey data. To ensure representation from a range of smokers, focus groups were segmented by gender and by smoking behavior characteristics, including heaviness of smoking (i.e., smoking frequency and intensity) and interest in quitting. All participants reported current cigarette use (use of cigarettes in the past 30 days).¹ Finally, some focus groups were also segmented by age group: young adults (aged 18 to 24) and adults (aged 30 to 65); the remaining groups were mixed ages. All groups were mixed in terms of race/ethnicity and education levels.

Local market research firms provided facilities and recruitment for the focus groups, which were conducted in four U.S. cities: Bethesda, Maryland; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Londonberry, New Hampshire; and Jackson, Mississippi. Sites were selected based on relatively high prevalence of tobacco use and an effort to represent diverse regions of the United States. Using convenience sampling, the market research firms recruited study participants from their databases who met the requirements for inclusion in the specific study segments using a screener developed by study investigators. Recruitment aimed for groups of about 8–10 participants. All study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Boards at the Food and Drug Administration and RTI International (the study contractor) and by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

Focus Group Procedures

Upon arrival, participants were rescreened to confirm eligibility and provided informed consent. Experienced moderators conducted the focus groups using a semistructured moderator guide. Participants were asked to discuss their attitudes toward their cigarette brands first, and then the tobacco industry, in general. Specifically, during the focus group discussion, participants were provided “top of mind” (TOM) worksheets and asked to write down a list of 4 to 5 words or phrases that came to mind when they thought about their brand of cigarettes (and separately for the tobacco industry). The TOM exercise is a technique frequently used in market research that, like a projective test, is used to gain insight into participants’ most accessible associations with a target object (e.g., cigarette brand) by soliciting spontaneous responses to it. After allowing a few minutes for the TOM worksheet, the moderator initiated a discussion, asking follow-up questions to encourage participants to elaborate on the words or phrases they had written down. At the end of the focus group discussion, participants turned in their TOM worksheets. Participants received a monetary incentive of \$50 for their participation. Focus groups lasted approximately 1 hour and were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed.

¹Due to aims of the broader study, two groups were conducted with dual users, defined as those who used smokeless tobacco products (e.g., chewing tobacco or moist snuff) and also smoked cigarettes or some other tobacco product. These two groups may have included some individuals who only used smokeless tobacco.

Data Analysis

Focus group data were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Two independent coders read and reviewed the transcripts and the TOM worksheet data to identify patterns. Using these multiple forms of data (i.e., focus group transcripts and TOM worksheet data) enabled coders to organize and triangulate findings into themes that cut across data sources, thereby enhancing the rigor of the qualitative analysis. Detailed notes were taken by independent coders throughout the data analysis process to maintain a record of the coding decisions and organization of themes. A list of emergent codes was developed for attitudes about cigarette brands and attitudes about the tobacco industry. Codes were further broken down into themes to identify patterned responses among study participants surrounding their attitudes toward brands and the tobacco industry. Themes were discussed and refined by coauthors, and the analysis was further informed by the words and phrases participants listed on their TOM worksheets. Finally, words and phrases (both favorable and unfavorable) from the TOM exercise were organized into separate tables by frequency of mentions. Coders worked together to assign sentiment (favorable vs. unfavorable) to words/phrases based on the responses and their context. Both coders engaged in reviewing the other's independent coding and analysis, and any challenges or disagreements were discussed until consensus was reached.

The study findings described below are organized by theme. Participant quotations are included to provide additional context; they are intended to illustrate a belief or attitude held by a representative subset of participants and are not equally representative of each participant segment.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Participants ($N = 143$) were nearly evenly split by gender (45% female). The sample was highly educated, with a majority of participants reporting some college education or a college degree (68%). Most participants reported being non-Hispanic (94%), and the majority identified as White (57%; see Table 1).

Attitudes About Cigarette Brands

Participants listed 79 unique favorable (compared to 41 unfavorable) words/phrases relating to their cigarette brand in their TOM worksheets. When asked what came to mind when thinking about their cigarette brand, participants across all focus groups described their smoking experience—which was overwhelmingly positive (see Table 2). Specifically, when thinking about their cigarette brand, participants described the sensory experience of smoking; for example, the feeling of the product being “smooth” or enjoying “the taste and the flavor.” Participants also talked about the subjective experience of smoking, describing it as “calming,” “relaxing,” and “enjoyable.” Their descriptions sometimes included the situations or places where they enjoyed smoking their cigarette brand, such as at home in the morning, while taking breaks at work, or while consuming alcohol. As an illustration, one participant said, “[Smoking is enjoyable when] you get up in the morning, you know, you're sitting there. You just take a drag and it's kind of like, woosh. The pleasure center.” Another

participant said, “[I enjoy smoking when] there’s a long day at work, just try to do it when we’re dealing with a lot of people, it’s just stress relief.”

When thinking about their cigarette brand, many participants also discussed the known short- and long-term health effects of cigarette smoking. In some cases, participants described their belief that their cigarette brand was less harmful than other cigarette brands. For example, one participant said, “I feel like I’m doing a little less damage to my body. I always prefer things that are more natural additives and less artificial additives like, you know, benzene.” Other participants, however, described the negative health consequences of smoking; for example, one participant said, “...everything about cigarettes is pretty negative, so I wrote down ‘death,’ ‘sickness,’ ‘cancer,’ and ‘bad breath.’” Some participants felt conflicted about their attitudes toward their cigarettes and the health consequences of cigarette smoking, and at times described the health effects in the context of dependence. For example, one participant said, “Addictive and ill-health effects. But it calms me down.”

Another theme that emerged was access and cost associated with their brand. Regarding accessibility, one participant said, “I put ‘readily available,’ because I tried to switch to an off-brand, because it was a lot cheaper, and found that one I liked and then couldn’t find them anywhere.” Similarly, another participant said, “[My brand] is everywhere. I can always count on going to the store and getting Marlboro Lights.” Participants also mentioned the price of their brand, with mixed sentiment. Some participants described their brand as “cheap,” whereas others noted that they considered their brand to be very expensive. For example, one participant said, “I wrote more ‘expensive,’ because this brand, it just costs more every time.”

Another major theme that emerged in discussing the TOM responses for their cigarette brand was the notion of branding and brand imagery. Specifically, many participants noted that, when they thought about their brand, they thought about symbols—most notably the Marlboro man—that represented their brand. For example, one participant said, “[What comes to mind is] probably the Marlboro man. I thought cowboy, I wrote down cowboy.” Another participant said, “. . . The first thing I think of honestly is the Marlboro man.” These brand images were discussed both positively and negatively by participants. One participant said, “I wrote cowboy killers.”

In addition to brand imagery, many participants described the packaging of their brand as what came to mind in thinking about their brand. More specifically, participants described the color and size of the cigarette packaging and the overall design. For example, one participant said, “I just wrote cool colors, because that’s what got me smoking cigarettes was the colors. . . .” Another participant said, “...its well-designed packaging.”

Attitudes About the Tobacco Industry

Next, participants were asked to switch from thinking about their cigarette brand, in particular, to thinking about tobacco companies, in general. Overall, participants expressed strongly negative attitudes (see Table 3); specifically, participants listed 50 unique unfavorable (compared to 33 favorable/neutral) words/phrases in the TOM worksheets. Across all groups, several themes emerged.

Participants described perceptions of the tobacco industry as deceptive, uncaring, and ill-intentioned, exemplified by use of words like “evil” and “predatory.” As one participant said, “They’ve been lying to us for a hundred years about the dangers of smoking to a degree.” One participant expressed several typical responses: “I wrote down that they’re killers. Big corporations. They got no morals and they lie.” Participants expressed antipathy, describing the character and actions of the industry with phrases like “life takers” and “legal genocide.”

Several people mentioned additives—characterized as “extra chemicals” or “junk”—used by manufacturers. Participants perceived these as unnecessary or superfluous, and cited the use of additives as evidence of tobacco manufacturers’ ill-intentions and deceptiveness. A subtheme emerged related to this attitude, likening tobacco manufacturers to “drug dealers” knowingly peddling an addictive substance. Some described the tobacco industry as “owning” them, because of their addiction.

Participants also cited cigarette advertising as illustrative of their ill-intent and deceit: “They’re predators. There’s no doubt about that. And they are predators and they do false advertising to entice these children to come in and think this is so cool to smoke, and you can do it; it’s not going to hurt you.”

Another theme focused on the profit motives participants associated with the tobacco industry. In particular, they perceived the tobacco industry as “big conglomerates” that had been around forever and were very rich (“billion dollar industries”). Again, these descriptions were characterized by negative attitudes, with the tobacco industry perceived as greedy and “money hungry” and profiting at the expense of its customers. As one participant put it, “They got rich off of poor me.”

Finally, a few participants in many groups expressed countervailing attitudes that were sympathetic to the industry, perceiving it as a target of government bullying. In particular, these participants noted that the tobacco industry was subject to inordinate government oversight, lawsuits, and taxes, which some characterized as harassment. As one participant said, “They’re just like anything else negative—picked on and taxed—and ridiculed—and bullied.” Often, these sentiments were accompanied by espousals of the role of personal responsibility in the decision to use tobacco; as one participant said, “They’re not selling an illegal product. I understand that it’s bad for you, but people make the choices.”

Discussion

In sum, these findings reveal that smokers’ attitudes toward their cigarette brands are largely positive. For many smokers, thinking about their cigarette brand automatically conjured thoughts about smoking and their enjoyment of smoking, indicating that the satisfaction and withdrawal relief they have come to depend on from smoking is highly associated with their brand of cigarettes. On the other hand, when prompted to think about the tobacco industry, the tone shifted and participants expressed strongly negative attitudes. These contradictory attitudes suggest a paradox for smokers: simultaneously embracing their cigarettes and rejecting the industry that makes them. Taken together, they suggest smokers maintain

largely positive brand relationships—and perhaps they do so by diverting their negative feelings about smoking toward the tobacco industry.

The ambivalence voiced by the smokers in this study highlights that brand relationships are not necessarily entirely positive. Although there has been relatively less research addressing these relationships in the area of consumer psychology, more recently there has been a call to develop the science of negative brand relationships. Fournier and Alvarez (2013) note that negative brand relationships—which include those involved in addictions—are not rare. Moreover, the current findings exemplify the potential for ambivalent brand relationships—that is, stable (i.e., committed) relationships characterized by mixed valence: relationships in which, despite the presence of negative feelings, consumers will nonetheless remain loyal to their brand (see also, Kervyn et al., 2012).

Although apparently contradictory, our findings are not unexpected. The positive brand attitudes held by these focus group participants are consistent with the literature showing smokers' uniquely strong brand loyalty. At the same time, the strong negative attitudes they expressed about the tobacco industry are consistent with a five-country study (that included the United States), where an overwhelming majority of smokers expressed very negative attitudes about the tobacco industry (Hammond, Fong, Zanna, Thrasher, & Borland, 2006). Interestingly, this study found that, whereas negative attitudes toward smoking were associated with abstinence 8 months later, negative attitudes about the tobacco industry were not.

Tobacco educational campaigns have focused on the health risks of smoking and often characterized the tobacco industry as predatory, whereas policy, systems, and environmental approaches to tobacco control have focused on denormalizing tobacco use (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014; NCI, 2005, 2006). The beliefs and attitudes expressed by the smokers in our focus groups suggest the effectiveness of these efforts: Participants acknowledged the health risks of tobacco use described in public health education campaigns, such as CDC's *Tips From Former Smokers* campaign (CDC, 2016; McAfee et al., 2013); and they also expressed very negative attitudes toward the tobacco industry, consistent with the focus of public education campaigns, such as the Truth Initiative's (formerly the Legacy Foundation) *Truth* campaign (Farrelly et al., 2005).

At the same time, these findings demonstrate how effectively brand imagery and operant conditioning converge to create strong brand loyalty among smokers. When asked TOM associations about their brand, participants described the relief from nicotine craving (i.e., negative reinforcement) that strengthens the positive associations they have with their cigarette brand. Moreover, in some cases, participants specifically cited positive brand attributes consistent with how those brands are marketed, such as their perceived health benefits or specific brand imagery. The psychological mechanisms suggested by these findings may have important implications for smokers' attitudes and behavior. First, the ambivalence of attitudes toward brand and industry, respectively, may represent a strategy for resolving the dissonance that many smokers experience as a result of continuing to smoke despite knowing the harms. Bifurcating these attitudes—namely, attributing their strong negative attitudes to the tobacco industry, while preserving their positive brand

relationship—enables smokers to resolve some of this dissonance. These findings also suggest how positive brand relationships may pose a barrier to motivating cessation attempts. For instance, Slovic and Peters (2006) found that positive affect toward a product (in this case, a specific cigarette brand) increases perceptions of its benefits and decreases perceptions of its costs. In this case, the positive feelings that smokers have about their brand may lead them to focus on the positive aspects of smoking, while simultaneously minimizing its health risks. Moreover, in addition to affecting perceptions of risks, smokers' positive affect toward their brands may directly influence their smoking attitudes and behavior. Trafimow and Sheeran (1998) found that, whereas both cognition and affect predicted global attitudes toward smoking for nonsmokers, only affect mattered for smokers.

Finally, the behavioral affective associations model (Kiviniemi, Voss-Humke, & Seifert, 2007) also speaks to the implications of smokers' positive brand attitude for their smoking behavior. In particular, according to that model positive affect about a health-related behavior can play an important role in predicting engagement in that behavior, both in a direct way, as well as indirectly, by mediating the impact of cognitive factors (i.e., health beliefs). Thus, the model suggests another mechanism by which a smoker's positive brand relationship could promote continued smoking.

The role of brand relationship may have implications for the design of cessation and prevention efforts. For instance, these findings suggest that efforts to disrupt this relationship might be particularly effective. Indeed, this strategy may contribute to the effectiveness of a tobacco control strategy known as "plain packaging," which restricts the use of all branding on a cigarette pack, replacing it with a standardized (unappealing) pack color and uniform font (Wakefield, Hayes, Durkin, & Borland, 2013). Because the cigarette pack is the primary venue for brand interaction, such policies stand to disrupt the maintenance (for current smokers) or development (for new initiates) of the type of positive brand relationship evidenced by smokers in the current study.

This study has several limitations. As with any qualitative research, the findings are not intended to be generalizable. Consistent with the study's aim to gain insight into a phenomenon among U.S. smokers, however, the sample was intentionally selected to represent a full range of smoking behavior (i.e., individuals with different cigarette use patterns), increasing our confidence that these findings are reflective of the experience of many who smoke cigarettes. In addition, because the TOM words and phrases were assigned sentiment (favorable vs. unfavorable) by coders—rather than participants themselves—these data were subject to interpretation and potential misclassification. However, this possibility is mitigated by the fact that the discussion allowed participants to provide context for their TOM words and phrases, which in turn informed coders' analysis. Finally, the discussion guide was structured such that brand was always discussed before tobacco companies; thus, it cannot be determined whether or how the order of the topics may have affected the discussion.

Conclusion

These findings highlight challenges to reducing the morbidity and mortality from tobacco use, where sophisticated marketing techniques, facilitated by nicotine dependence, create strong, positive relationships between smokers and their cigarette brand. Although these findings are from a limited number of focus groups, additional research, including robust quantitative studies, would be useful to understand more fully how marketing and brand relationships contribute to the maintenance of tobacco use. Moreover, these findings suggest that brand relationship is a construct that may be important to account for in studies involving smokers. Ultimately, this information could inform a more complete understanding of how smokers interpret and respond to tobacco communications, particularly marketing information from—or about—their brand, including their evaluation of new product lines or interpretation of marketing claims about the ingredients or harmfulness of a product.

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Table 1

Focus Group Participant Characteristics (N = 143)

Characteristic	N	%
Sex		
Female	64	44.8%
Male	79	55.2%
Age		
18–24	20	14.0%
25–34	37	25.9%
35–45	41	28.7%
46–59	35	24.5%
60+	5	3.5%
Ethnicity		
White	82	57.3%
African American	41	28.7%
Asian	8	5.6%
Hispanic	9	6.3%
Other	2	1.4%
Native American	1	.7%
Hispanic		
Yes	9	6.3%
No	134	93.7%
Education		
Less than high school	8	5.6%
High school degree	33	23.1%
Some college	54	37.8%
College degree	43	30.1%
Post graduate degree	5	3.5%
Current smoking status		
Some days	40	28.0%
Every day	103	72.0%
For those who smoke every day, on average, how many cigarettes per day smoked (n = 103)		
Fewer than 10	28	27.2%
10–30	66	64.1%
30+	9	8.7%
For those who smoke some days only, number of days in past 30 that you smoked (n = 37)		
Fewer than 20	29	78.4%
20–30	8	21.6%

Table 2**Top 20 Words and Phrases Used to Describe Your Cigarette Brand**

Favorable^a	Unfavorable^b
Cleaner tasting/no cotton taste/great taste. . . . (22)	Expensive/\$/expense/more expensive (15)
Smooth/smooth and stronger (22)	Need one/need one now/want to have one/I want one myself/give me one (7)
Calming/calm your nerves/calm me down/calmness (16)	Bad smell/stinky/smell/smoke smell/hate the smell of smoke (6)
Relax/relaxing/relaxation/relaxing after meals/relaxing in the PM (16)	Cancer stick/cancer/can cause cancer (5)
Inexpensive/cheaper/cheap/cheap cigarettes (11)	Addictive/addiction (4)
Stress relief/stress reliever/takes stress away (10)	Negative habit/bad habit/habit (4)
Cool/cool taste/crisp, cool, clean (7)	Health/unhealthy/bad for my health (3)
Flavor/flavorful (6)	Bad breath (2)
Beer/goes well with a beer (5)	Death/dying (2)
Enjoyable/enjoyment/I enjoy smoking (5)	It goes out very often and you have to relight/going out when not being pulled on (2)
Mild (5)	Killer/smoking kills (2)
Break/break time/take a break (4)	Nicotine/nicotine rush (2)
Drinking/goes well with drink (4)	Thinking about smoking one right now/I would like to smoke (2)
Strong/strong flavor/strong enough to get the job done (4)	\$5 something
Good/good quality (3)	Third item on agenda in AM
Light (3)	Baby sitter has spot on her lung
Minty/peppermint (3)	C.O.P.D.
Soothing (3)	Costs too much
Best/best cigs there are (2)	Depressing
Good smokes (2)	Environmental triggers

Note. Number in parentheses indicates the number of participants who wrote the word/phrase on the handout. Responses were coded and combined as appropriate. Minor edits were made to correct for spelling and other errors.

^a A total of 79 unique favorable words/phrases relating to their cigarette brand were identified by study participants; the most frequently endorsed words/phrases are presented above.

^b A total of 41 unique unfavorable words/phrases relating to their cigarette brand were identified by study participants; the most frequently endorsed words/phrases are presented above.

Table 3**Top 20 Words and Phrases Used to Describe Tobacco Companies**

Favorable/Neutral^a	Unfavorable^b
Forever/been around forever/historic/long history in this country (5)	Rich/filthy rich (14)
Lack of advertisements (3)	Money maker/making money/has money/a lot of income (8)
Affordable (2)	Greedy (7)
Carolina/North Carolina (2)	Money (7)
Competitive (2)	Big business/huge (6)
Coupons/incentives (2)	Killers/killing people/killing people over time to get rich (5)
Taxes (2)	Addiction/addictive products (4)
Advertisements	Big money (4)
Assertive	Cancer (4)
Bold	Liars/fact bender/lies about danger of smoking (4)
Freedom	Profits/tremendous profits/large profits (4)
Good promoters and hustlers	Wealthy (4)
Great marketing	Billionaires/billionaire owners/billion dollar industry (3)
Go for it. We need more.	Manipulative (3)
Gonna stick with my brand	Money hungry (3)
I think they are giving what the public wants	That's how they make their money/they are making money off of us/mega rich off poor me (3)
Lower prices	Causing death/mass genocide/life takers (3)
Lucrative	Conglomerates/monopolies (3)
Lung	Drug dealers/worse than drug dealers (3)
Marlboro	Evil/evil business (3)

Note. Number in parentheses indicates the number of participants who wrote the word/phrase on the handout. Responses were coded and combined as appropriate. Minor edits were made to correct for spelling and other errors.

^a A total of 33 unique favorable/neutral words/phrases relating to tobacco companies were identified by study participants; the most frequently endorsed words/phrases are presented above.

^b A total of 50 unique unfavorable words/phrases relating to tobacco companies were identified by study participants the most frequently endorsed words/phrases are presented above.