Has PMI Unsmoked the World?

A Progress Report

In April 2019, Philip Morris International (PMI), the world's largest publicly traded tobacco company, launched "the Year of Unsmoke"—a campaign to "unsmoke the world" by getting people to use its electronic products instead of cigarettes. Three years later, has this campaign succeeded? Has PMI come closer to creating a "smoke-free future?" Here's a look at what PMI would need to do to achieve this goal and where it stands.

Progress measures:

Stop Selling Cigarettes

1.9 Trillion Cigarettes

From 2019, when the Unsmoke campaign launched, to 2021, PMI shipped 1.9 trillion cigarettes.

PMI wants to build a new cigarette factory in Egypt. It recently opened new factories in Tanzania and Uzbekistan.

Stop Fighting Proven Health Policies

Blocking Health Warnings

PMI funded a counter-campaign to fight against Switzerland's tobacco advertising ban that would, in part, protect young people.

Stop Expanding Their Cigarette / Nicotine Customer Base

90,000 Young People

Just months after announcing its ambitions to phase out cigarettes, PMI aggressively promoted Marlboro to 90,000 young people at Djakarta Warehouse Project, one of Asia's biggest dance music festivals.

As of 2022, Sampoerna (a PMI company in Indonesia) still advertises cigarettes.

Stop Introducing New Cigarette Products / Brands

Advertising Near Schools

PMI still aggressively markets cigarettes in low- and middle-income countries, including to youth. In 2020, a U.K. news program exposed PMI for advertising cigarettes near schools in Indonesia.

In 2019, Sampoerna (a PMI company in Indonesia) introduced Philip Morris Bold, a new cigarette brand, via billboards and TV ads.

PMI employees have contradicted the Unsmoke campaign's goals. In 2020, PMI's Sub-Saharan Africa Managing Director revealed the company was not ready to stop manufacturing cigarettes because, "ending cigarette sales would automatically create a niche market for competitors and illicit traders…"

Stop Making Cigarettes Addictive

14.5% Increase in Nicotine

The amount of nicotine delivered to smokers via tobacco smoke has increased over time. Between 1999 and 2011, it increased by 14.5%, due to changes made by manufacturers, rather than natural variation.

Traditional cigarettes are engineered to be highly addictive and keep customers hooked through nicotine and using flavors, product design and more.

At the company's Annual General Meeting, PMI's then-CEO told shareholders, "Our combustible tobacco portfolio remains the foundation of our business." PMI has shown no intention of reducing the nicotine content of its combustibles.

Has PMI Unsmoked the World?

Unsmoke Is Still a Joke

The Unsmoke campaign is still a joke. It's run by a company that's attempting to rebrand itself, but that remains a leading driver of the tobacco epidemic. PMI's actions seem to contradict its goal of creating a world free of cigarettes and it still still opposes efforts to help achieve that goal. Unsmoke appears to be a PR campaign boasting empty promises of creating a smoke-free future. Instead, PMI appears to still be dedicated to selling cigarettes and expanding its cigarette business, which could create a whole new generation of smokers and nicotine users.

"Our combustible tobacco portfolio remains the foundation of our business." - André Calantzopoulos, Former CEO of PMI

STOP.

exposetobacco.org