



STOPPING TOBACCO ORGANIZATIONS & PRODUCTS

ADDICTION AT ANY COST

Philip Morris International Uncovered

STOP's report, *Addiction at Any Cost: Philip Morris International Uncovered*, examines tobacco industry documents, sales data and findings from tobacco industry monitoring and shows that Philip Morris International (PMI) is not, in reality, attempting to "create a smoke-free future." Instead, PMI is working to drive up cigarette sales and hook a new generation of users on its next generation products (NGPs). Read the full report for more information about how the company and its Foundation for a Smoke-Free World are deceiving the public.

Philip Morris International: Its Smoke-Free Rhetoric Doesn't Reflect Its Behavior

In 2018, PMI announced that it was giving up cigarettes and creating a "smoke-free future." The company has spent millions on campaigns to convince the public that it is committed to destroying its highly profitable cigarette business and position itself with policy makers as part of the solution to the global tobacco epidemic. However, leaked corporate documents reveal that aligning PMI's so-called "reduced-risk products" with the public health concept of harm reduction is an attempt to expand its business and attract new users. Comparing PMI's public statements about going "smoke-free" to its actual behavior demonstrates that the company is not committed to harm reduction, but rather to profiting from addiction.

Key Messages

PMI's "smoke-free" vision and highly funded PR campaigns are a calculated corporate strategy to renormalize the company so that it can re-exert its declining influence over policy and be perceived as part of the solution to the tobacco epidemic it continues to fuel.

PMI's "smoke-free" claims are illogical, misleading and, if realized, will successfully destroy its business. For the company to survive, it needs to attract new users to both its combustible cigarette and IQOS products.

Though PMI says IQOS is only for existing adult smokers, the company has marketed it in a way that appeals to youth and young adults.

Despite claiming a commitment to harm reduction, PMI continues to maximize sales of combustible cigarettes through aggressive marketing, developing and promoting new cigarette brands, buying existing cigarette businesses, raising legal challenges against effective tobacco control legislation and deliberately undermining global tobacco control efforts.

“Selling products ostensibly targeted only for a rapidly shrinking pool of current smokers is not a sustainable business plan.” – Ruth Malone, Editor of Tobacco Control (2018)

PMI positions IQOS to create a new epidemic

PMI’s survival depends on hooking a new generation on its products. As such, PMI is positioning its heated tobacco product (HTP), IQOS, to attract new and young users, secure a seat at the policy table and improve the company’s image in global forums. Notable examples of how PMI uses IQOS

Figure 1: Selected Instagram posts from self-reported IQOS Brand Ambassadors, including a female who – according to her own posts – turned 22 years old in 2019. Hashtags included #iqosstories, #iqos3 and #iamcreative.



to ensure continued profit from addiction include:

- An initiative in Romania that recruits “IQOS Consultants” as young as 19 years old. The IQOS Consultants, recruited by an initiative called BeLikeMe, work in IQOS retail outlets in shopping malls and promote the product at music festivals, exclusive parties and at events organized by Qreator—a PMI-established initiative that hosts music and fashion events. PMI is aligning its IQOS product with fashion, artists and designers and in doing so is likely reaching a large audience of young nonsmokers. Further, hiring people under 25 years old to promote IQOS is a clear breach of PMI’s own marketing standards.
- Lobbying directly to governments to promote IQOS as a less harmful alternative to smoking and cessation product. In New Zealand, PMI lobbied to members of the Ministry of Health and South Auckland’s Counties Manukau District Health Board in an attempt to give IQOS products to smoking cessation groups for free. In the U.K., PMI used the 70th anniversary of the U.K. National Health Service (NHS) to lobby extensively for IQOS as an alternative to cigarettes. PMI targeted the Health Secretary and other regional NHS Trusts, offering to help NHS staff who smoke to quit or “switch.” PMI offered IQOS to NHS staff for free, though the advance was rejected.
- Inserting itself as a presence at the World Economic Forum in Davos to influence leaders to embrace NGPs. Although it was not invited to the Forum, PMI attempted to gain access to powerful decision-makers by hosting a side event and sponsoring the Forum’s daily newsletter. PMI also used this event to launch a “white paper” reporting the results of a PMI-funded study stating that most smokers want governments to support switching to alternative products and to allow tobacco companies to be a part of the solution to the smoking epidemic.

PMI continues to perpetuate the current tobacco epidemic

Despite claims that it is giving up cigarettes, PMI continues to invest in its cigarette business by marketing to youth, expanding its brand offerings, acquiring new business and challenging evidence-based tobacco control policies. In addition to growing its HTP consumer base beyond just existing adult smokers, here are key examples of how PMI continues to expand its cigarette business, as well:

- Launching a new cigarette brand in Indonesia. In 2018, PMI released its new Philip Morris Bold combustible cigarettes and advertised them on television and billboards. If PMI were truly committed to its “smoke-free” campaign, PMI wouldn’t introduce a new cigarette in a country where male smoker prevalence already sits at an alarming 76.2%, according to World Health Organization.
- Legally challenging legislation in the Philippines that would make Balanga a tobacco-free city. In addition to over a dozen legal challenges in the past decade against proven tobacco control measures (such as graphic health warnings, plain packaging and bans on point of sale advertising and additives and flavors), PMI is fighting to keep a city in the Philippines from becoming smoke-free. If PMI sought to realize the promise of its campaign, it would give the legislation its full support.
- Buying out tobacco companies in Costa Rica. Rather than divesting itself from cigarette business, PMI has instead invested more heavily in the area. In 2018, PMI spent US\$95 million to fully acquire 100% interest in two Costa Rican tobacco companies that it has owned a proportion of since the 1970s.

Figure 2: Billboard advertisement, Indonesia, June 2019 [Source: Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, June 2019]

