



FIGHTING SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE AND OBESITY IN THE 21st CENTURY: WHAT THE FITNESS BUSINESS CAN LEARN FROM THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY

Combatendo o sedentarismo e a obesidade no século 21: o que as empresas de serviços de fitness podem aprender com a indústria do tabaco

Christian Gomes e Souza Munaier

FEA-USP, University of Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil

E-mail: munaier@usp.br

ABSTRACT

This essay sought to analyze the strategies adopted by the tobacco industry to promote itself and reach its target audience and identified that, in essence, communication-related to smoking as a passport to a more intense, adventurous, and sporting life does not belong to what smoking habits bring. These communication strategies best serve the fitness and wellness industry, a true ambassador of these benefits and an essential ally against NCDs in the 21st century. In addition, the worldwide anti-smoking campaign is being observed and based on it, a campaign against sedentary lifestyle and in favor of consumption habits that prevent obesity is proposed. These are contributions both to the literature on social marketing and to corporate and public health management. New research paths are pointed out.

Keywords: Social Marketing; Tobacco Industry; Sedentary lifestyle and Obesity; Fitness Business Services

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COMBATENDO O SEDENTARISMO E A OBESIDADE NO SÉCULO 21: O QUE AS EMPRESAS DE SERVIÇOS DE FITNESS PODEM APRENDER COM A INDÚSTRIA DO TABACO

Fighting sedentary lifestyle and obesity in the 21st century: what the fitness business can learn from the tobacco industry

Christian Gomes e Souza Munaier
FEA-USP, University of Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil
E-mail: munaier@usp.br

RESUMO

Este ensaio buscou analisar as estratégias adotadas pela indústria do tabaco para se promover e atingir seu público-alvo e identificou que, em essência, a comunicação relacionada ao tabagismo como passaporte para uma vida mais intensa, aventureira e esportiva não pertence ao que hábitos de fumar trazem. Essas estratégias de comunicação atendem melhor ao setor de fitness e bem-estar, um verdadeiro embaixador desses benefícios e um aliado essencial contra as DNTs no século 21. Além disso, a campanha mundial antitabagismo está sendo observada e a partir dela se propõe uma campanha contra o sedentarismo e a favor de hábitos de consumo que previnam a obesidade. Estas são contribuições tanto para a literatura sobre marketing social quanto para a gestão corporativa e de saúde pública. Novos caminhos de pesquisa são apontados.

Palavras-chave: Social Marketing; Indústria do Tabaco; Estilo de vida sedentário e obesidade; Serviços de negócios de fitness

INTRODUCTION

Practicing physical activity and having good eating habits are predictors of a healthy lifestyle (Besson et al., 2020; Munaier & Tavares, 2019). The habit of lighting a cigarette and swallowing the smoke is a predictor of non-communicable chronic diseases (NCDs), co-responsible for 3 out of 4 deaths in Brazil and 71% of deaths worldwide in 2016 (Munaier & Tavares, 2019; WHO, 2018). The literature of social marketing has been looking at the role of habits in healthy consumption (Myers et al., 2017).

The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes tobacco consumption's role as one of the leading preventable causes of death worldwide (Malta et al., 2017; WHO, 2017, 2018). Researches show that millions of people died in the 20th century due to tobacco use (Hoek & Robertson, 2015; WHO, 2017). Among the causes of NCDs, sedentary lifestyle and obesity are added to tobacco consumption (Kennedy et al., 2018; Munaier, 2019; Munaier & Tavares, 2019; WHO, 2018). In this case, it is possible to identify the habit of unhealthy eating (Ruiz et al., 2021) the non-habit of physical activity (Gualano & Tinucci, 2011) as co-responsible for this behavior.

The tobacco industry skillfully instigated the smoking habit, and their marketing strategies gave tobacco consumption a feeling of belonging, dominance, sexual appeal, and search for adventure (Sargent et al., 2001). For the harm caused by smoking globally, the WHO and national governments created campaigns against cigarette consumption and its habit, using the same tool previously used in the tobacco industry: communication strategies (WHO, 2017). However, to stimulate the practice of physical activity and for the war against sedentary lifestyle and obesity, actions are still very timid and lack strategies because the sedentary lifestyle rate in Brazil is very high, and new approaches to communication must be made (Brasil, 2017; Munaier, 2019; Munaier & Tavares, 2019).

In this sense, this essay proposes a look at the successful strategies of the tobacco industry and proposes to be the fitness and wellness market the proper campaigns' "spokesperson" for many made by brands such as Hollywood, Marlboro, and others. These brands, which showed their products as passports for a more active, adventurous, and safe life, used branding strategies and the attributes that awaken consumer's brand loyalty, such as brand personality (Munaier et al., 2021). Brand personality can be defined as a set of human characteristics associated with the brand, in a symbolic or self-expressive function that allows consumers to associate human personality traits with the brand (Fortes et al., 2019) and has a prominent role in the construction of feelings that the consumer nourishes by the brand (Gendall et al., 2011; Munaier et al., 2021).

Thus, this essay seeks to answer two research questions (RQ). RQ 1) Is it possible to point out ways of action of the marketing operator in achieving the decision of the potential consumer for the fitness business by observing marketing strategies found by the tobacco industry to win over its audience? RQ2) Can public campaigns discouraging smoking serves as a way for the public authorities to discourage sedentary lifestyle, consequently stimulating the population to practice physical activity in a regular and oriented way? To reach this article's proposal, the essay is organized as follows: first, the theoretical framework on human needs and sense of belonging, as well as data on tobacco consumption, its communication campaigns. Next, the sedentary lifestyle and obesity data. Then we propose an intertwining between theories and propositions about communication strategies, once used by the tobacco industry as possibilities for fitness business services (FBS). Finally, conclusions, suggestions, and limitations are evidenced.

1 TOBACCO CONSUMPTION AND INDUSTRY STRATEGIES

1.1 Human needs, belonging, and selective distortion

Human needs are organized in the hierarchy of human motivations, and one need is replaced by the next strongest in the hierarchy when it begins to be satisfied (Maslow, 1958, 1970). One of the most pressing concerns of the individual is survival, and smoking is one of the leading causes of death from NCDs (Malta et al., 2017). Nevertheless, despite public and private actions to build awareness of the evils caused by tobacco and efforts to hinder access to cigarettes, either by increasing the product's prices or by restricting public places to smoke, the

smoker is still motivated to consume the product. After all, we must consider the selective distortion, people's tendency to transform the information received into meanings and instruct them in a way that suits their prejudgments (Hoek & Robertson, 2015; Munro et al., 2010).

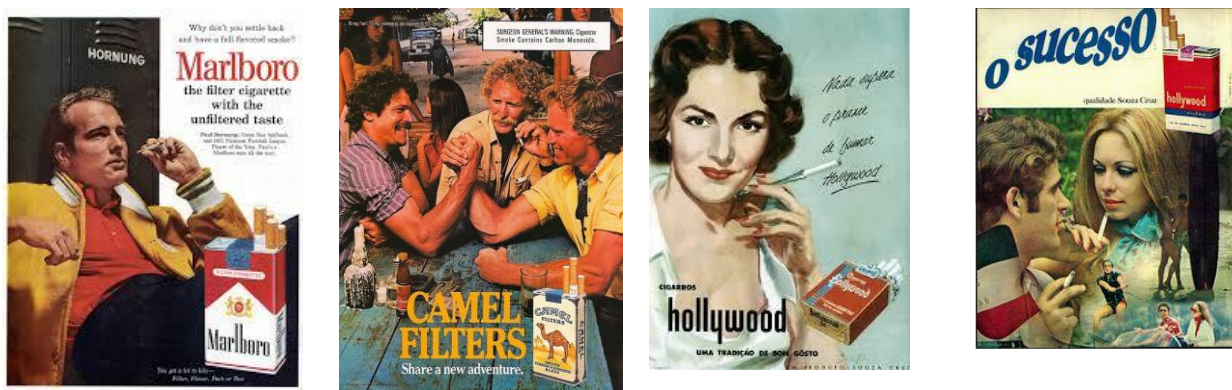
In this sense, even though the smoking habit is ancestral (Alderete et al., 2010), this essay seeks to observe smoking in the modern era, the post-industrialization of the input, and the beginning of sophisticated marketing strategies, and expansion of its consumption on a global scale. The various marketing plans described in tobacco companies' internal documents lead us to consider that smoking is a communicable disease conveyed by economic interests, which use complex strategies – most often unfair (Cavalcante, 2005; Dewhirst & Sparks, 2003). These strategies have succeeded and produced a habit that has been challenging public health managers.

The habit can be considered both an automatic act, operating outside our consciousness, and a behavioral response to specific suggestions in the environment (Verplanken & Faes, 1999). Both the habit of tobacco and the practice of physical activity can be behaviors resulting from advertising stimuli that evoked feelings, motivated attitudes, instigated perceptions, and beliefs, influencing the individual's consumption choices (Gómez-López et al., 2011; Munaier, 2019).

The reference groups' role is a significant factor in smoking adoption (Cavalcante, 2005; Sargent et al., 2001). The reference groups exert direct or indirect influence on the person's attitudes or behavior (Park & Lessig, 1977). Sargent et al. (2001) recorded the importance of movies at the beginning of tobacco addiction. According to the authors, minors have watched three films per week (150 per year), suggesting that smoking cigarettes is seen in prime-time television and is portrayed in almost all movies. Moreover, that is where the aspiration group exerts its influence. "Teenagers see movie stars smoking in the context of sexuality (Sharon Stone in "Basic Instinct"), dominance (John Travolta in "Broken Arrow"), romance (Charlie Sheen in "The Chase") and teen rebellion (Leonardo DiCaprio in "Romeo and Juliet") and to relieve stress (Winona Ryder in "Interrupted Girl")" (Sargent et al., 2001, p. 1).

Figure 1 brings some of the communication strategies of cigarette brands, where it is possible to see the use of messages about tobacco and sensuality, the strength and dispute of territory (although friendly with smiles on the face), and the conquest of the object of their desire (the loved one and the sports and adventurous life).

Figure 1. Tobacco Industry campaigns. Source: images collected on the Internet



1.2 Anti-tobacco campaigns

While the tobacco industry seeks to draw attention to pleasure, health organizations try to highlight the consequences of this momentary pleasure. According to Reitsma et al. (2017), Brazil achieved the third most significant fall in tobacco consumption, by age, since 1990. Between 1990 and 2015, the daily percentage of smokers in Brazil fell from 29% to 12% among men and 19% to 8% among women, but the country still ranks 8th in the world's ranking of smoking (Reitsma et al. 2017; WHO, 2017). Campaigns have been aired worldwide to reduce nicotine intake by smokers (WHO, 2017). The efforts of the State and health organizations have been to

deconstruct the narrative that the smoker is sensual and popular, socially dominant, and fun has had an effect. Brazil achieved this reduction through a combination of tobacco control policies with advertising restrictions and smoking bans in public places, reaching the highest level of achievement in all measures of the proposed combat program pela WHO (Reitsma et al., 2017).

2 SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE, OBESITY AND THE FITNESS BUSINESS SERVICES (FBS)

2.1 Obesity as a consequence of sedentary lifestyle

Sedentary lifestyle and obesity as a consequence are entirely associated by science (Myers et al., 2017). Obesity and overweight in adults bring as consequences diseases widely documented by science and causing premature death by NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, osteoarthritis, some cancers (colorectal, renal, endometrial esophageal, breast, ovarian, and prostatic), respiratory difficulties such as chronic hypoventilation (Pickwick syndrome) and sleep apnea, male infertility, cholelithiasis, steatosis, gastroesophageal reflux, psychosocial disorders and systemic arterial hypertension (Brasil, 2018; Munaier & Tavares, 2019; WHO, 2018). Wannmacher (2016, p.2) warns that “obese children have breathing difficulties, increased risk of fractures, psychological and early effects indicators of cardiovascular disease and insulin resistance”.

Therefore, it seems correct to postulate that the target audience of the fitness and well-being industry is any person who has the need and/or desire to move their body, avoiding the problems arising from sedentary lifestyle and obesity, in addition to all other benefits of regular physical activity.

2.2 The FBS's role in the fight against sedentary lifestyle

Scholars have demonstrated the prominent FBS's role as an effective solution to combat sedentary lifestyle. Munaier and Tavares (2019) demonstrated the gyms' role in combating obesity and proposed a new indicator for public health management in the fight against sedentary lifestyle and obesity: “number of gyms per 100,000 inhabitants”. Their research points out that, in countries with a ratio of more than 10 gyms per 100,000 inhabitants, the population's penetration rate to physical activity is more than 15%. In these countries, the average life expectancy is more than 80 years old. In times of COVID-19, gyms have also proved to be important allies in raising awareness of the importance of physical activity. Munaier et al. (2021) demonstrated that gym users (vs. non-users) were more aware (vs. less aware) of the negative impact of obesity and sedentary lifestyle on people infected by the Sars-CoV-2. In other words, gyms are important channels of communication and awareness of the harms of sedentary lifestyle.

2.3 Consumer behavior of regular and targeted physical activity

One of the great challenges of 21st-century society is also a challenge for the fitness and wellness market in Brazil and the world: to unveil what moves (!) the individual to practice physical activity on a regular and oriented way (Gómez-López et al., 2011; Munaier, 2019). Munaier and Serralvo (2019) identified that the value for the consumer of FBS lies in the co-creation of experiences in three dimensions: tangible, of the services themselves, and sense of belonging. Munaier (2019) identified that, in addition to the no satisfaction sprees in consumer experiences as reasons for abandonment, the lack of interest in regular and oriented physical activity might be related to the low interest of sedentary people in allocating their discretionary time to practice physical activity, because they do not consider it pleasurable or fun. Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2018) define that, in consumption, perception is a process by which the individual selects, analyzes, and interprets the information collected by sensory receptors.

2.4 Brazilian FBS in numbers

In an FBS study in 64 countries published by the International Health Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), US\$83.15 billion was traded by the fitness industry in these countries, with US\$2.1 billion sold in Brazil (11st. in the world ranking), the result of the fees paid by the 9.6 million users (4th in the world ranking)

among the 34,509 companies operating in Brazil (2nd in the world ranking) in 2017 (IHRSA, 2018; Munaier & da Costa, 2021). By making a simple math calculation, it reaches the average monthly fee of US\$18.23 per month paid into Brazilian gyms. This amount is approximately 9% of the minimum wage in force in Brazil in 2021. Thus, the regular and oriented physical activity offered by the Brazilian private fitness and *wellness* market is feasible for a restricted portion of the population (Munaier, 2019; Munaier et al., 2021). This analysis does not mean that the most disadvantaged Brazilian population does not need to consume the oriented and regular physical activity practice. It can only be an indicator of why worrying about physical conditioning, and aesthetic issues are not part of the list of concerns of a broad spectrum of the Brazilian population.

3 DISCUSSION

As recorded in the previous chapters, the problems arising from a sedentary lifestyle and obesity affect people of all ages. Moreover, the strategies for conquering these FBS' target audiences can be inspired by the same bases of the tobacco industry's strategies. However, as seen in this sequence, the direct and side effects of the conquest of consumers for the path of physical activity will be diametrically opposed to tobacco. The urban people, separated from food and drink at a click distance, are sedentary and increasingly obese. At the same time, where the challenge lies may lie solutions. Learning from the worldwide effort to understand tobacco consumption, how it is started, its motivators and references/ associations, as well as the entire awareness campaigns about the harms of these products, it is possible to believe that promoting actions to encourage the practice of regular and oriented physical activity can be a way to obtain a less sedentary and obese population.

This manuscript proposes through two RQs, both answered, two ways for marketing operators act, both in the actions of the fitness industry and in the actions for the Public Power, in the conquest of the individual's decision to practice physical activity, starting from trails previously used by the tobacco industry or from campaigns against smoking.

RQ 1: Is it possible to point out ways of action of the marketing operator in achieving the decision of the potential consumer for the fitness business observing marketing strategies found by the tobacco industry to win over its audience?

The tobacco industry has built powerful narratives to associate with its products affiliation, belonging, and self-realization, key elements of Maslow's theory (Maslow, 1958). Some of its iconic brands have taken on personalities such as Marlboro and its cowboy, tying its consumer to the figure of the alpha male. Hollywood to the sporting world or the conqueror. Lucky Strike tied to the slender woman (Dewhirst & Sparks, 2003). Among so many examples, even the cigar became a fundamental ritual piece of the birth of a son.

Operators of marketing can be a powerful component in the construction of the narrative that conquers and the practitioner of physical activity through the teachings arising from the successful campaigns of the tobacco industry, however contradictory it may seem. As a matter of fact, what was contradictory was the tobacco industry taking over assets such as sportsmanship, safety, and aesthetic issues due to its consumption. Thus, this article proposes that the FBS be the legitimate holder of tobacco-usurped communication strategies throughout the 20th century. Furthermore, it holds that there are arguments for each phase of the target consumer's life or step on the scale built with Maslow's predictive. Figure 2 shows the correlation between the motivators of human behavior recommended by Maslow (1958) and physical activity that can respond to their demand.

Figure 2. Correlation between the motivators of human behavior and physical activity

Needs Scale	To whom it is intended and modalities	Why is it
Security (Maslow, 1958)	All age groups and all possibilities of activity. Examples: swimming and martial arts	Physical safety is ultimately the essence of physical activity results, as described in the literature review on the physical activity benefits.
Level of affiliation or love (Maslow, 1958)	All age groups and in all modalities. Example: CrossFit (www.crossfit.com), and Les Mills programs (www.lesmills.com)	Make friends and create relationships, be part of a group... The gym can be this environment where human relationships happen and solidify. Belonging is one of the most critical elements in the value co-creation in the FBS usage experience (Munaier & Serralvo, 2019).
Level of esteem: self-esteem, status, recognition, attention, importance, and appreciation (Maslow, 1958).	All age groups and in all modalities. Especially for those seeking treatment against depression. Example: bodybuilding and running groups	The physical activity practice can be an antidote to depression. Physical activity is associated with decreased risk of developing clinical depression. Experimental studies show that aerobic and resistance exercises are effective in treating depression. The effect is of the same magnitude as psychotherapeutic interventions (Fox, 1999).
Level of self-realization: what the individual has the potential to be (Maslow, 1958).	All age groups and in all modalities. Example: functional training and indoor cycling	Practitioners can use physical activity to achieve their best performance within their limitations and genetic predispositions. Furthermore, in deciding to subvert the conventional gym purpose – to offer oriented and regular physical activity practice – and thinking of offering social transformations or social responsibility in the community where it is inserted, the gym can engage employees and clients in community actions and offer them a sense of social contribution.

Source: Prepared by the authors

RQ2: Can public campaigns to discourage smoking serve as a way for the public government to discourage sedentary lifestyle, consequently stimulating the population to practice physical activity in a regular and oriented way?

Despite the need for no similar action between campaigns to encourage physical activity and anti-tobacco campaigns promoted by the government and regulatory agencies – which, in terms of well-being promotion to the population, can be seen as State neglect – it is scarcely credible to say that people do not know of the harm snares arising from sedentary lifestyle and obesity. Countries concerned about the health of their population will have to move (!) to encourage people to practice physical activity regularly, just as they did and do, with hard, in combating the habit of smoking. Munaier and Tavares (2019) statistically supported the importance of gyms as an indicator of public health management and recommended the tax and tax exemption of these companies so that regular and oriented physical activity in a gym was a possibility for the entire population, and not only for a minority with access to these consumptions.

This article proposes that, in addition to financial actions, the incentive for regular physical activity practice should be part of institutional campaigns to combat sedentary lifestyle and obesity, in the someway as campaigns against tobacco: monitor more consistently sedentary lifestyle and applying policies to prevent sedentary behavior, protection of public spaces where people engage in physical activity, offering financial help and psychological support to people against the habit of consuming over-processed foods, warning intensely on

the dangers of obesity and sedentary lifestyle, imposing prohibitions on advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of foods considered harmful to health and increase taxes on them.

CONCLUSION

Fitness companies are part of the solution to combat prosperity-related diseases such as obesity and coronary heart disease (Munaier & Tavares, 2019). With the second largest FBS facilities number globally, Brazil has installed capacity to interfere in the population's life positively. The national health managers need to find the best narratives in creating value for the (non) users. It is possible to conclude that the FBS is a legitimate strategies legacy's "heir" used by the tobacco industry to present itself as solutions to the safety, affiliation or love, esteem, and self-realization needs. As already mentioned, the side effect is diametrically opposed to smoking. Unlike smoking, where minutes of "pleasure" (!) are won by giving up health, the practice of physical activity has primary benefits (which led the consumer to decide for the practice) as well as secondary.

Some clues are listed here. With just one cut on sedentary lifestyle and obesity, there is plenty of material to be worked on to increase the number of participants in the wellness world. Adding other benefits, such as aesthetic, performance, holistic, the universe of possibilities to create motivating impulses of human behavior dramatically increases. Joint actions between the government and the private sector can bring mutual benefits, in a sum of efforts where 1 plus 1 will be equal to 3: a healthier, more active, and long-lasting society. A government action plan is needed, along with what has been put into place to reduce smoking – and with positive effects already pointed here – to reduce sedentary lifestyle and obesity. Failure to observe this need may be considered State neglect in the face of the epidemic already identified and catastrophic consequences.

The contribution to the advancement of social and corporate marketing literature lies in the unique approach of this essay, observing the practices used to attract smokers as validated marketing strategies to attract consumers to regular physical activity practice. As a contribution to public health and business management, it is aimed to contribute by proposing that managers observe risk awareness strategies to reduce tobacco consumption as an alternative to building awareness strategies about the sedentary lifestyle and obesity risks.

Among the limitations, the fact that this essay is the result of the authors' observations raises the need for new perspectives on these topics of such relevant interest, both in the context of public health and business management. A quantitative investigation of predictors of human behavior and the modalities described in Figure 2 can advance the proposal presented here. It is worth emphasizing the importance of multidisciplinary participation for the composition of both strategies and the practice of actions to combat sedentary lifestyles and obesity, both in the public and private spheres, by physicians, psychologists, physical educators, nutritionists, and physiotherapists. It is for a healthier planet that all efforts must be made.

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