

VOICES THROUGH THE SMOKE – PART 1

The first of a two-part article written for the World No Tobacco Day 2020 bringing you the perspectives of the various role players in the smoking chain. In this article we look at the role of the manufacturer and the government.

Sunday, 31st May 2020 is the World Health Organisation's (WHO) annual No Tobacco Day.

Like many other world day events, media coverage is expected to ramp up on the days leading up to it and thereafter to recede into the background until the following year. Given the seriousness and gravity of the devastating ill effects of tobacco it should never be allowed to slip out of the public spotlight.

Smoking is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death which kills more people every year than all drugs combined, alcohol and vehicle accidents. It has caused 100 million deaths in the 20th century and is expected to result in one billion deaths in the 21st century.

South Africa has an estimated 11 million smokers. Tobacco-related diseases are responsible for 44,000 deaths annually.

The industry's influence is all encompassing and pervasive. Very high stakes are at play that are protected at all costs. Given the nature of the business, various stake holders in the supply chain consistently raise their voices to expound their positions.

We produced this two-part article with a brief summary of the "voice" of the role players and our opinion for your edification.

THE MANUFACTURERS

It is the most successful industry on the planet without parallel. It has not only survived but adapted and thrived over the centuries in the face of whatever obstacles that has been put in its path. It continues to reap unimaginable profits

for its shareholders. Six trillion cigarettes are smoked every year.

Stanford University's historian and author, Robert Proctor says that *"by artfully crafting its physical character and chemistry, industry scientists have managed to create an optimally addictive drug delivery device, one that virtually sells itself."*

The industry doesn't dwell on the harm caused by their products which is downplayed. It distracts you with focus on feel good factors with brilliant image branding and marketing to match. It has described cigarettes as *"Low-tar, mild, light, smooth, soft, etc."* These have been matched with filtration systems described as *"miracle tip filters, 20,000 filter traps, filters made of activated charcoal, selectrate, millicel, cellulose, acetate, micronite, etc"* implying reduction or elimination of cancer-causing agents and other established health risks.

It has stayed one step ahead of every impediment put in its path such as mainstream advertising restrictions and banning of sponsorship of sporting events. New creative techniques are being used that circumvent the laws such as vibrant point of sale material, dealer incentivising of stocking of the range, couponing and direct sales, private events promotions etc.

To gain leverage the industry invests and collaborates on projects with government agencies and farmers. They provide several hundred million rands for training with commitment to buy their tobacco as part of their corporate social responsibility programme.

They utilise the best Public Relations practices to remind the public of their exemplary corporate culture and responsibility, that they pay billions of rand to the government in taxes and ask smokers not to support the illicit trade.

MANUFACTURERS VALUE PROPOSITION:
We respect your constitutional right to make

informed choices about smoking. We have a brand for you. We are responsible corporate citizens and pay billions in tax.

SANHA COMMENT: Professional puffery no matter how you smoke it does not change the harsh truth and tragic results.

THE GOVERNMENT

Government is forthright in correctly stating that smoking is harmful that places a burden on health services and finance. To offset this, governments believe that smokers must fund their habit via direct taxation, commonly known as sin tax. This excise tax raises huge revenues to the tune of R1.2 billion a month.

This raises the spectre described by some as the second addiction where the “*easy money*” of taxation becomes the golden goose and can get channeled elsewhere or lost to corruption.

It promotes greed where the tax levied becomes so high that it attracts the attention of illicit trade. Criminal operators figure out that it would be lucrative and worth the risk to illegally produce

and sell cigarettes at a price slightly higher than the tax value. Currently the tax is about 40% of the retail price i.e. somewhere in the region of R17-00 on a pack of 20 cigarettes.

Taxpayers hold the Government in disdain on the lack of transparency as to exactly how funds collected from smokers are utilised.

GOVERNMENT VALUE PROPOSITION:

Smoking is bad for you. We need money from you for us to tell you that. Our belief is that the more we get, the louder we can speak. The louder we speak means you will smoke less.

SANHA COMMENT: Every nation gets the government it deserves - Joseph de Maistre lawyer, diplomat, writer, and philosopher.

STUB OUT SMOKING TODAY – THE BUTT STOPS WITH YOU

In our concluding article that follows next week we will talk about the smoker, crime and religion

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Any queries pertaining to the above or any other aspect of Halaal may be referred to our offices

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