Understanding the Danger of Word of Mouth in Creating New Smokers and the Factors that Influence It and Its Prevention

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ABSTRACT

The number of active smokers in Indonesia is rising, especially among teenagers, leading to over 200,000 deaths annually. This concerning trend calls for urgent research. This study examines how word of mouth influences new smokers and explores the effects of products, promotions, and reference groups on smoking attitudes and behaviors. It also investigates their indirect impact on word of mouth. A survey of 593 active smokers was conducted using structured questionnaires, with data analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Results show that products, promotions, and reference groups directly influence smoking attitudes and behaviors and indirectly affect word of mouth. However, the link between smoking attitudes and smoking behavior was not supported. Among the factors, promotions had the strongest impact. These insights suggest that demarketing strategies should be developed to curb smoking behavior effectively.

Keywords: demarketing; product; promotion; reference group; smoking attitude; smoking behavior; WOM

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently facing a significant challenge with the rising number of active smokers, particularly among teenagers. According to the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey conducted by the Ministry of Health, the number of active smokers is estimated to reach 70 million, with 7.4% of them being smokers aged 10 to 18 years (Kemkes, 2024). Each year, more than 200,000 people in Indonesia and over 8 million people worldwide die as a result of smoking (Widikusyanto, 2023). As the number of smokers continues to rise, the associated death toll is expected to increase as well. Therefore, it is imperative for both the government and the community to take responsibility for

reducing smoking-related deaths by curtailing the increase in the number of smokers. One effective strategy to achieve this goal is demarketing.

Several studies have tried to contribute a smoking behavioral demarketing model to help suppress smoking behavior. Several smoking behavioral demarketing models that have quite complete variables include those from Tielung et al. (2021) who tested the 4Ps on smoking intentions. Two other studies, namely Olatunde et al. (2020) and Shiu et al. (2009) tested a more complete model by adding attitude variables. One important variable missing from these three models is the reference group. This variable has been shown to have an important influence on smoking behavior. The study conducted by Widikusyanto (2023b) has indeed seen the importance of direct testing of smoking behavior but has not seen the importance of reference groups to understand more completely and better the factors that determine smoking attitudes and smoking behavior. Furthermore, Widikusyanto et al. (2024) complemented Widikusyanto's (2023b) smoking behavior demarketing model by adding reference groups and smoking attitudes. The results of testing the Widikusyanto et al. (2024) model showed that several constructs such as price and place did not affect smoking behavior. Meanwhile, product, promotion, and reference group influence smoking behavior.

This study aims to complement the smoking behavior demarketing model of Widikusyanto et al. (2024) by adding word of mouth to further understand the dangers of word of mouth that can create new smokers so that it can be one of the causes of the increase in the number of smokers in Indonesia. This study examines the direct influence of product, promotion, and reference group on smoking attitude and smoking behavior, and also examines its indirect influence on word of mouth through smoking attitude and smoking behavior. This study did not include price and place because they were not proven to affect smoking behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Smoking Behavior

Smoking behavior refers to the patterns and practices associated with the use of tobacco products, particularly cigarettes (Alves et al., 2022). There have been many studies on smoking behavior, including research by Fagan et al. (2020) which shows that the consumption of sweet drinks, coffee, and high-energy drinks in Canadian adolescents is associated with smoking behavior and e-cigarette use.

Alves et al. (2022) found that 20.1% of university students in northern Portugal were active smokers, with most starting smoking before the age of 17 and having more favorable attitudes

towards smoking, especially if they had friends who smoked or were exposed to secondhand smoke. Kinouani et al. (2025) found that although 41% of university students had tried e-cigarettes, only 7% became active users, especially among current and former smokers. Kinouani et al. (2025) showed that the transition from smoking to continued vaping among university students was influenced by social and intrinsic factors. J. Zhang et al. (2025) showed that smoking can cause metabolic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and NAFLD.

Smoking Attitude

Smoking attitude is perceptions and beliefs about smoking (Alves et al., 2022). Several studies on smoking attitudes, including research by Li et al. (2014) showed that exposure to advertising and product use influenced their attitudes towards e-cigarettes. Alves et al. (2022) showed that college students' attitudes tended to support smoking, especially among active smokers and those who were frequently exposed to cigarette smoke. Pettigrew et al. (2023) showed that positive attitudes towards e-cigarette use among Australian adolescents were influenced by exposure to friends who used them and their views on addiction.

Product

The product in this study was a tobacco product in the form of cigarettes. Several studies on smoking attitudes, including research by Nonnemaker et al. (2016) showed that the implementation of a policy prohibiting the display of tobacco products and the use of plain packaging can reduce the desire to smoke and the effort to purchase cigarettes in virtual stores. Plain packaging and advertisements that are only text and black and white are more effective in reducing consumer conversations about tobacco products. DeCicca et al. (2021) showed that despite an almost doubling in the price of premium cigarettes, most consumers remain loyal to their premium brands. Despite strong incentives to switch, about three-quarters of consumers still choose the same brand. Romm et al. (2022) showed that most young e-cigarette users in the US continue to use non-tobacco flavors despite restrictions on the sale of flavored e-cigarettes. Denlinger-Apte et al. (2023) showed that menthol flavors influence menthol smokers' decisions to switch to other tobacco products. Freitas-Lemos et al. (2024) showed that restricting menthol flavors in cigarettes can reduce cigarette demand and increase the use of NRT (Nicotine Replacement Therapy). Yang et al. (2024) found that most users of flavored tobacco and nicotine products would seek illicit products through illegal channels if there was a ban on certain flavors. Y. Sun et al. (2024) found that adding flavors to tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes increased the appeal of the product, but also risked worsening health impacts. Guindon et al. (2024) showed that plain packaging and warnings on cigarette sticks can reduce cigarette purchase intentions.

Promotion

Cigarette companies use promotions to encourage sales of their cigarette products. Starting from the use of advertising, and samples, to SPGs. Several studies on smoking attitudes, including research by Portnoy et al. (2014) found that tobacco product advertising is related to adolescent curiosity about cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco. Exposure to advertising such as point-of-sale advertising, tobacco company communications, and tobacco shows on TV/films can increase this curiosity. Li et al. (2014) showed that exposure to advertising can influence attitudes and use of e-cigarette products, especially among smokers and former smokers. Stroup & Branstetter (2018) showed that exposure to e-cigarette advertising was shown to increase intention to use it in adolescents who had never smoked. This advertisement was more effective in attracting the attention of adolescents who did not smoke compared to encouraging switching from young smokers. Giovenco et al. (2020) showed that cigarette advertising in retailers was related to smoking in individuals with depression, while there was no significant relationship in those without depression. Restrictions on cigarette advertising can help reduce smoking behavior, especially for those with mental disorders such as depression. T. Sun et al. (2023) found that e-cigarette advertising on social media and convenience stores was significantly associated with increased e-cigarette use by adolescents one year after exposure. Gaiha et al. (2024) found that e-cigarette marketing in retail stores influences adolescents' purchasing and usage decisions through strategies such as discounts, flavor samples, and placement near food or candy.

Adolescents acknowledge that this marketing arouses curiosity, reminds them to buy, and normalizes e-cigarette use. Choi et al. (2024) found that the use of cigarette price promotions varied significantly by combinations of social identities, such as race, gender, and age, with certain groups showing significantly higher prevalence. Rachmani et al. (2024) showed that outdoor cigarette advertising plays a role in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward smoking, although its effects were lower in areas where such advertising was absent. Jeong et al. (2024) found that e-cigarette ads with bright colors and models in images attracted adolescents' attention, and reduced perceptions that the product was harmful. Text targeting smokers and claims about “switching” to e-cigarettes may convey the impression that the product is healthier, potentially attracting adolescents. L. Zhang et al. (2024) found that e-cigarette advertising had an indirect long-term effect by reducing perceptions of harm, especially among adolescents with low internalizing problems.

Reference Group

A reference group is a group that is considered a frame of reference for individuals in making their purchasing or consumption decisions (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). Kotler & Armstrong (2018)

define a reference group as a direct or indirect point of comparison or as a reference in forming a person's attitudes and behavior.

Several studies on Reference Groups, including research by Paraje & Valdés (2021) show that parental smoking habits, especially mothers, have a significant negative impact on children's health, with a greater impact on mothers who are less educated or unemployed. Sari et al. (2023) found that maternal grandparents' smoking behavior directly increased the likelihood of their grandchildren smoking, while paternal grandparents had no similar influence. Egger et al. (2024) showed that parental behavior and attitudes toward smoking and vaping greatly influence the attitudes and behavior of their adolescents. Rachmani et al. (2024) showed that peer and parental factors, especially those who smoke, have a major influence on adolescent attitudes toward smoking behavior. Zheng et al. (2024) showed that exposure to e-cigarette content created by friends and celebrities/influencers on social media can increase their susceptibility to e-cigarette use among adolescents who have never used it.

Word of Mouth (WOM)

Word-of-mouth (WOM), is defined as an “oral or written communication process between a sender and receiver to share and acquire informal information (Kim et al., 2024). Smoking behavior has the potential to spread through chats about cigarettes and cigarette brand recommendations among smokers. Several studies on word-of-mouth smoking behavior, including research by Lazard et al. (2016) showed that public conversations about e-cigarettes on Twitter covered a variety of themes, including marketing, policies, personal experiences, and differences between e-cigarettes and traditional tobacco. These findings reveal that social media is an important platform for advocates and users to share knowledge, experiences, and questions about e-cigarette use. Nonnemaker et al. (2016) found that plain packaging and advertisements that only contain text and black and white are more effective in reducing consumer conversations with tobacco products.

Research Model

The research model developed based on several empirical evidences in this study describes the relationship between Product, Promotion, Reference Group, Smoking Attitude, Smoking Behavior, and Word of Mouth. Chauhan & Setia's (2016) research shows that the Marketing Mix (4Ps) has been shown to affect Smoker Attitudes. Meanwhile, the influence of the Marketing Mix on Smoking Behavior has been proven by Sinaga et al. (2019); Amalia (2018); Fachriza & Moeliono (2017); Pandayu et al. (2017). Widikusyanto (2023b) proves that product, price, and cigarette promotion affect smoking behavior. Widikusyanto et al. (2024) prove that product, promotion, and reference group affect smoking attitudes and smoking behavior. Reference groups have been shown

to affect Smoker Attitudes based on Yoo et al.'s study. (2016) and on Smoking Behavior based on Utami's research (2020); Pandayu et al. (2017).

Smokers' attitudes have been shown to influence smoking behavior based on research findings by Widikusyanto et al. (2024); Pranasari et al. (2021); Pandayu et al. (2017); Rochayati & Hidayat (2015). Troiville's (2024) findings prove the influence of Attitude on WOM. Meanwhile, Hameed et al. (2024) and González-Viralta et al. (2023) found that behavior or action influences WOM.

Based on various studies on smoking behavior that have been explained, the hypothesized model in this study is shown in Figure 1 below.

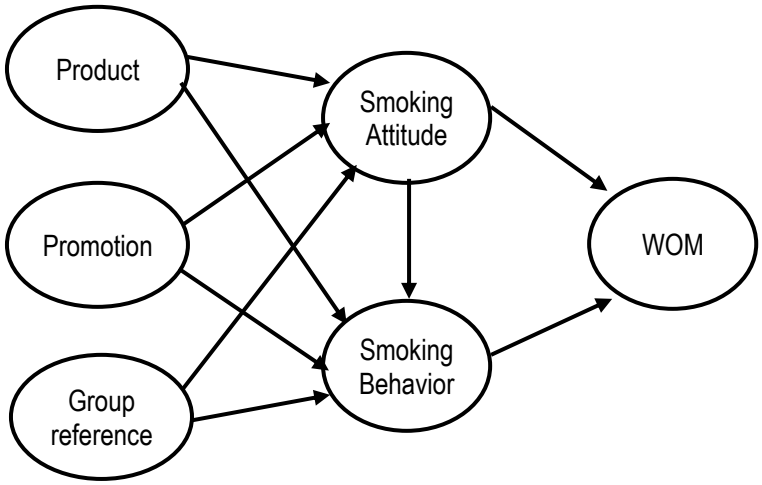

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with a focus on causality, aiming to test the hypothesis model through statistical analysis. The variables examined include Product, Promotion, Reference groups, and Smoking attitudes, all measured using seven indicators. A 7-point Likert scale is utilized, providing answer options that range from one to seven. Smoking behavior is assessed using a ratio scale through open-ended questions, which encompass the number of cigarettes consumed per day, the duration of smoking, and the age when smoking began.

Data collection was carried out via questionnaires distributed to active smokers, who returned them directly. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, with the criteria being individuals who are currently smoking. The sample size was determined to be 600 respondents. Of the questionnaires collected, 600 were returned, though 7 were deemed unusable due to incomplete responses, resulting in a final sample size of 593 respondents.

The validity and reliability of the instrument were evaluated using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha. Model analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) aided by AMOS software. Hypothesis testing occurred once the model met the required Goodness-of-Fit criteria. The results of the instrument testing are presented in Table 1.

Table 1Research Instrument Test Results

	Constructs				
	WOM	Product	Promotion	Smoking Attitude	Reference Group
Pd1		0.803			
Pd2		0.824			
Pd3		0.757			
Pr1			0.767		
Pr2			0.770		
Pr3			0.697		
RG1					0.713
RG 2					0.851
RG 3					0.546
SA1				0.618	
SA2				0.832	
SA3				0.710	
W1	0.751				
W2	0.885				
W3	0.862				
Cronbach's Alpha	0.833	0.732	0.755	0.638	0.674

Table 1 shows that all factor loading scores from the studied constructs exceeded 0.5, and each construct had a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.60. Therefore, the research instrument is both valid and reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Description of Respondents

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	567	95.6
Female	26	4.4
Age	**Frequency**	**Percent**
13 – 18	39	6.6
19 – 24	383	64.6
25 – 30	97	16.4
31 – 36	27	4.5
37 – 42	19	3.1
43 – 48	10	1.7
49 – 54	11	2
55 – 60	7	1.1

Table 2 provides an overview of the respondents' demographics, focusing on gender and age. Among the 593 respondents, the majority were male, with 567 individuals (95.6%), compared to only 26 females (4.4%). The largest age group was comprised of respondents aged 19 to 24 years, totaling 383 individuals (64.6%). This suggests that younger individuals are more prone to developing smoking habits. The percentages for the other age categories, such as 25-30 years and 31-36 years, were much smaller. The significant number of smokers in the younger age group (19-24 years) highlights a potential risk for serious health problems in the future. Smoking at a young age can lead to a stronger addiction to nicotine and increase the likelihood of developing smoking-related diseases, such as lung cancer and heart disease.

Table 3. Brand of Cigarette

No.	Brand	Frequency	Percent
1	Sampoerna	212	35.8
2	Gudang Garam	153	25.8
3	Marlboro	53	8.9
4	Djarum	50	8.4
5	Esse	27	4.6
6	Clas mild	26	4.4
7	Magnum	24	4
8	Dji Sam Soe	16	2.7
9	Dunhill	15	2.5
10	L.A	9	1.5
	Others	8	1.4
	Total	593	100

Table 3 presents the cigarette brands most commonly used by respondents. The Sampoerna brand is the leading choice, with 212 respondents (35.8%) selecting it, followed by Gudang Garam with 153 respondents (25.8%). These preferences may reflect strong marketing trends and brand loyalty among smokers in the country. In contrast, international brands like Marlboro and Dunhill have much lower popularity, with only 8.9% and 2.5% respectively. This suggests that, despite their global reputation, international brands struggle to compete with local options in Indonesia. It appears that local consumers tend to prefer brands they know and that are readily available in their market. The popularity of these brands indicates that cigarette manufacturers significantly influence consumer behavior, particularly in capturing the interest of younger individuals. This is concerning, as aggressive marketing targeting the younger generation could promote increased smoking behavior among them.

Structural Model Testing or Hypothesis Testing is carried out after the model meets the required Goodness-Of-Fit value. The results of the Goodness Of Fit Model estimation are shown in Table 4.

Table 4Goodness of Fit estimation results

Goodness of Fit Indeks	Cut-off	Estimation Results
CMIN/DF	< 5	2.093
GFI	> 0,90	0.954
AGFI	> 0,90	0.937
CFI	> 0,90	0.937
TLI	> 0,90	0.921
RMSE	< 0,07	0.043

Based on Table 1, the tested model has been fit because the model fit measurement index has been met such as CMIN/DF, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. Furthermore, the results of the test of the influence of Product, Promotion, and Reference Group on Smoking Attitude, Smoking Behavior, and WOM are shown in detail in Table 5.

Table 5 The result of the SEM estimation

Relationship			Coefficient	*t*-value	P	Result
Product	→	Smoking Attitude	0.168	2.233	0.026	Supported
Product	→	Smoking Behavior	0.809	2.596	0.009	Supported
Promotion	→	Smoking Attitude	0.331	4.912	0.000	Supported
Promotion	→	Smoking Behavior	0.897	3.316	0.000	Supported
Reference Group	→	Smoking Attitude	0.218	2.043	0.041	Supported
Reference Group	→	Smoking Behavior	0.936	2.114	0.034	Supported
Smoking Attitude	→	Smoking Behavior	0.121	0.441	0.659	Not Supported
Smoking Attitude	→	WOM	0.641	7.676	0.000	Supported
Smoking Behavior	→	WOM	0.096	2.563	0.010	Supported

The SEM estimation results presented in Table 5 indicate that Product, Promotion, and Reference Group have an impact on both Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior. However, Smoking Attitude does not influence Smoking Behavior. Both Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior do, however, affect Word of Mouth (WOM). Table 6 illustrates the direct influence of Product, Promotion, and Reference Group on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior. Additionally, the indirect and total influence of these factors on WOM is detailed in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 6 Direct Influence of Product, Promotion, and Reference Group on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior

	Product	Group Reference	Promotion	Smoking Attitude	Smoking Behavior
Smoking Attitude	0.134	0.107	0.356		
Smoking Behavior	0.254	0.180	0.379	0.048	
WOM				0.563	0.214

Table 7 Indirect influence of Product, Promotion, and Reference Group on WOM

	Product	Group Reference	Promotion
WOM	0.132	0.100	0.286

Table 8 The total direct and indirect influence of Product, Promotion, and Reference Group on WOM

	Product	Group Reference	Promotion
Smoking Attitude	0.134	0.107	0.356
Smoking Behavior	0.261	0.185	0.396
WOM	0.132	0.100	0.286

DISCUSSION

The test results show that Product, Promotion, and Reference group affect Smoking attitude and Smoking behavior. These results are in accordance with the findings of Chauhan and Setia (2016), Sinaga et al. (2019); Amalia (2018); Fachriza and Moeliono (2017); Pandayu et al. (2017), Widikusyanto (2023), Widikusyanto et al. 2024, Yoo et al., (2016), Utami (2020); Pandayu et al. (2017). It is also proven that Smoking attitude and Smoking behavior affect WOM. These results are in accordance with the findings of Troiville (2024); Hameed et al. (2024) and González-Viralta et al. (2023). However, the influence of Smoking attitude on Smoking behavior is not supported. This result is not in accordance with the findings of Widikusyanto et al. (2024); Pranasari et al. (2021); Pandayu et al. (2017); and Rochayati and Hidayat (2015).

An interesting finding from this study is that the total influence of Promotion on Smoking attitude, Smoking behavior, and WOM is the largest compared to the influence of Product and Reference group. In addition, it turns out that Smoking attitude has a greater influence on WOM than Smoking behavior. Based on these findings, it can be seen that the attitude of smokers is more

decisive in the occurrence of conversations and recommendations about smoking than the smoking behavior itself. Overall, it can be seen that both Product, Promotion, and Reference group have an indirect influence on WOM through Smoking attitude and Smoking Behavior.

The Influence of Cigarette Products on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior

Cigarette products that are of high quality and have a strong brand image tend to create positive attitudes among consumers. When a product is perceived as premium or high quality, consumers are more likely to view it favorably. In addition to fostering these positive attitudes, cigarette products can also influence smoking behavior, as they may serve as symbols of social identity. When consumers feel a connection to a specific product due to positive experiences, they are more likely to engage in smoking. For instance, a young person who associates a particular cigarette brand with enjoyable experiences at a social event is more inclined to smoke.

The Influence of Promotion on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior

Engaging and creative promotions play a significant role in shaping positive consumer attitudes toward a product. Effective messaging through social media, advertising, or sponsorship can capture consumers' attention and influence their perceptions of smoking. Advertisements featuring celebrities or influencers using a specific cigarette brand can foster a positive attitude by linking the product with a desirable social status. In addition to shaping attitudes, promotions also enhance consumer awareness and interest in trying the product. When consumers become more aware of a product's existence through effective promotions, they are more likely to give it a try. For instance, when a brand offers discounts or provides free samples, individuals may feel motivated to experiment with the product.

The Influence of Reference Groups on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior

Reference groups significantly influence an individual's attitude toward smoking. When people have friends or belong to social groups that smoke or endorse smoking, they are more likely to adopt similar attitudes. For instance, a teenager who observes his friends smoking is likely to develop a positive view of smoking, regardless of what he knows about its dangers. The presence of a strong reference group in one's social environment can increase smoking behavior. Seeing others in a social group smoke makes an individual more likely to imitate that behavior. In situations where smoking is normalized, newcomers A positive smoking attitude can encourage word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. When individuals have favorable feelings towards cigarette products, they are more likely to share their enjoyable experiences with others in everyday conversations, generating positive WOM. Additionally, smoking behavior can also trigger WOM. When individuals actively smoke, they tend to discuss their experiences with others, which often motivates those in

their circle to try the same products. For example, a satisfied smoker is likely to recommend their preferred product to friends, which increases positive word-of-mouth for the brand. Others may feel pressured to try it to be accepted by the group.

The Effect of Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior on Word of Mouth (WOM)

Smoking attitudes can significantly influence word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. When individuals have a positive attitude towards cigarette products, they are more likely to share their favorable experiences about these products in everyday conversations, which creates positive WOM.

In addition to smoking attitudes, smoking behavior can also trigger WOM. Individuals who actively smoke are often inclined to share their personal experiences with others. This sharing of direct experiences acts as a motivator for others to try the same products. For example, a satisfied smoker may tell their friends about their positive experience with a particular brand, encouraging them to try it as well. This, in turn, increases positive WOM for the brand.

Demarketing Strategy

Demarketing strategies aimed at decreasing positive attitudes toward smoking behavior can be proposed to reduce or eliminate smoking in society.

Changing Perceptions about Cigarette Products

1) Reducing the Attractiveness of Product Image: The government can implement plain packaging regulations for cigarettes to eliminate brand imagery and the premium perception of the product. This approach can decrease the product's appeal to consumers. 2) Additive Content Restrictions: The government can reduce or prohibit the use of certain additives that enhance the flavor or smoking experience, making the product less appealing to consumers.

Promotion Control

1) Advertising and Sponsorship Ban: The government should expand the ban on cigarette advertising and promotion across all media, including social media. It should also prohibit the use of celebrities or influencers who endorse cigarette products. 2) Creative Anti-Smoking Campaigns: Implement counter-marketing strategies through advertising campaigns that emphasize the negative impacts of smoking on health, the economy, and the environment. Emotional or visual content can be particularly effective in influencing public attitudes. 3) Use of Negative Testimonials: Incorporate personal stories from former smokers or individuals affected by smoking-related diseases into health promotion campaigns. This approach can help create a negative perception of cigarettes as harmful products.

Reference Group Interventions

1) Changing Social Norms: Implement educational campaigns aimed at social environments, such as families, friends, and communities, to shift the perception of smoking from "cool" to "dangerous."

2) Encouraging Positive Peer Pressure: Engage community leaders and influential groups to motivate individuals to quit smoking. 3) School Intervention Programs: Introduce anti-smoking education programs in schools that involve students in group discussions, creative projects, and simulations highlighting the dangers of smoking.

Limiting Positive Word of Mouth (WOM) about Smoking

1) Counter-Narrative Word of Mouth (WOM) Campaign: This campaign aims to launch counter-narratives that address the negative impacts of smoking. The goal is to replace positive word of mouth about smoking with discussions highlighting its dangers. 2) Use of Social Media: The strategy includes monitoring online conversations regarding smoking and using social media platforms to spread educational information about the risks associated with smoking.

With this approach, the government can gradually diminish the appeal of smoking within the community and foster an environment that encourages a reduction in smoking behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that product characteristics, promotional activities, and reference group significantly influence smoking attitudes and behavior. Furthermore, both smoking attitude and behavior have been shown to impact word of mouth (WOM) related to smoking. A key finding of the research is that promotional efforts exert the greatest influence on smoking attitude, behavior, and WOM, more so than product features or reference groups. Notably, smoking attitudes have a stronger impact on WOM than smoking behavior, indicating that how smokers feel about smoking plays a more crucial role in generating recommendations or discussions about cigarettes. However, it is important to note that this study revealed smoking attitudes do not always have a direct effect on smoking behavior, which contrasts with some previous research findings.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further investigation is encouraged to deeply explore the mechanisms through which smoking attitude influences smoking behavior, particularly concerning factors that might moderate or mediate this relationship. A more focused analysis is also needed on how promotional activities affect different age groups and demographics, given that promotion is identified as the most significant factor. Additionally, studies should examine the role of social and environmental norms in greater depth, including the effects of educational interventions aimed at changing smoking attitudes and behavior.

Recommendations for Government and Stakeholders

The government should adopt a demarketing strategy to diminish the allure of cigarettes. This may include measures such as implementing plain packaging, banning advertising and

promotions, and conducting public education campaigns featuring anti-smoking messages and testimonials from victims. Moreover, interventions that target social norms—such as involving community leaders, developing school programs, and providing counter-narratives on social media—can help alter positive perceptions and reduce WOM about cigarettes. These strategies are expected to effectively curb smoking behaviors within the community.

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