

Debate

Smokeless Products: A Healthier Alternative or Nicotine Candy?

ISSUE: Should tobacco companies promote smokeless tobacco products due to declining cigarette sales?

More and more tobacco companies are losing revenue due to new cigarette laws and regulations. Many companies and bars have banned smoking in their establishments. On top of these bans, several regulations and laws have raised taxes on tobacco products. On their current path, the future for the cigarette industry seems grim. For this reason, tobacco companies are turning to smokeless tobacco products to stimulate growth. The new smokeless products include Lozenges, strips, and snuff. These products contain nicotine and are packaged in bright convenient containers that catch the consumer's eye. With these new products, the problem of secondhand smoke is eliminated.

According to anti-tobacco groups, however, smokeless tobacco products do not really solve the problem at all. They believe that these smokeless products are targeting younger consumers with their bright looks and convenience. Studies have shown that while cigarette sales are diminishing, teenage use of smokeless tobacco is growing. Critics also believe that smokeless products should be regulated because of the health issues they cause. While it may reduce the risk of certain cancers related to cigarette smoke, there is not yet any proof that smokeless tobacco is a healthier alternative. Users are still at risk for oral cancers, gum disease, cavities, and heart disease.

The tobacco industry disagrees. They point to a variety of benefits that smokeless tobacco has over cigarettes. In addition to the elimination of secondhand smoke, Susan Ivey, CEO of Reynolds American, claims that the new smokeless tobacco products are more sustainable due to the products' ability to dissolve. Older dipping products had to be spit out and created waste. The industry also claims these new products provide consumers with more choices. Freedom of choice has been a pivotal issue for both smokers and the entire tobacco industry. With smokeless tobacco products, tobacco users can eliminate the health risk to others from secondhand smoke but still have the choice to do as they please. Even tobacco critics are supporting the sale of smokeless tobacco products if they are safer than cigarettes. The debate concerning the health issues of smokeless tobacco products versus the consumers' right to choose will be a tough issue for stakeholders to resolve.

There are two sides to every issue:

1. Smokeless tobacco products should be heavily regulated and should not be marketed as a healthier alternative to smoking.
 2. Smokeless tobacco products should be encouraged as a way to give tobacco users more options and as a better alternative to cigarettes.
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This material was developed by Natalie Armijo and Jennifer Sawayda under the direction of O.C. Ferrell and Linda Ferrell. It is intended for classroom discussion rather than to illustrate effective or ineffective handling of administrative, ethical, or legal decisions by management. Users of this material are prohibited from claiming this material as their own, emailing it to others, or placing it on the Internet. (2010)

Sources:

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