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Bringing ‘Light, Life and Happiness’:1 British American Tobacco and music sponsorship in sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

This article aims to provide a review of music sponsorship to market cigarettes in sub-Saharan Africa. Using analysis of previously secret corporate documents from British American Tobacco (BAT) and focusing on two separate case studies of sponsorship in Africa, Nigeria and South Africa, the paper illustrates how tobacco companies have sought to undermine health legislation from 1990 to 2001. Both case studies suggest that music is an important marketing tool in Africa because it can effectively target young consumers; has a universal appeal; transcends barriers to communication imposed by limited literacy and language barriers; has a long-term appeal and can be successful in undermining tobacco control measures. The case studies highlight the limitations of national regulatory efforts and reinforce the significance of the implementation of the WHO’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in Africa, a critical region for the convention’s success.

As the global spread of restrictions on tobacco advertising has accelerated, so the need for transnational tobacco corporations (TTCs) to develop alternative means of promoting cigarettes has become more pressing. Among the panoply of mechanisms employed by TTCs, their extensive reliance on sponsorship has acquired such significance for health that it has been plausibly described as the leading vector for the spread of tobacco-caused disease.² A vast array of entertainments and organisations have received financial backing from tobacco companies,³ reflected in the breadth of the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) recent definition of tobacco sponsorship as ‘any form of contribution to any event,

¹BAT, ‘Strategic development of Benson & Hedges pack advertising research in Nigeria and UAE’, 14 October 1992, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 500155388-462.

²S Chapman, ‘Formula One racing and the end of tobacco sponsorship: half pregnant at 350 kph?’, *Tobacco Control*, 11, 2002, pp 87–88.

activity or individual with the aim, effect or likely effect of promoting a tobacco product or tobacco use either directly or indirectly'.⁴ The tobacco industry's highest profile relationships have been with sports, upon which interest in the health impacts of sponsorship has focused.⁵ Other sponsorships merit further analysis, and their significance may be escalating as sport's association with tobacco is increasingly unacceptable to many ruling bodies⁶ and is circumscribed by advancing legislation.

Investments in popular music offer an attractive alternative sponsorship vehicle for TTCs, and one our examination of industry documents suggests is particularly significant in Africa. Hopes that the continent might avoid a tobacco epidemic on a scale and trajectory comparable to other regions are being jeopardised by the rapid growth of foreign direct investment by TTCs.⁷ Philip Morris International (PMI)⁸ and Gallaher⁹ have both sought to build a substantial presence in South Africa; Imperial Tobacco bought a 75% interest in Tobaccor,¹⁰ sub-Saharan Africa's second largest cigarette manufacturer; and British American Tobacco's (BAT) investment in Nigeria represented the country's largest foreign direct investment (FDI) since its return to civilian rule.¹¹ Since the capacity of TTCs to increase tobacco consumption in developing countries¹² is partly attributable to the 'more aggressive advertising and promotion'¹³ associated with their market entry,¹⁴ there is a clear need to address the dearth of studies of tobacco sponsorship and marketing in Africa.

³TB Cornwall, 'Sponsorship-linked marketing development', *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 4 (4), 1995, pp 13–24; and Cornwall, 'The use of sponsorship-linked marketing by tobacco firms: international public policy issues', *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 31 (2), 1997, pp 238–254.

⁴World Health Organisation, Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

⁵C Bates, 'Tobacco sponsorship of sports', *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 33, 1999, pp 299–300; T Dewhurst & R Sparks, 'Intertextuality, tobacco sponsorship of sports and adolescent male smoking culture: a selective review of tobacco industry documents', *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 27 (4), 2003, pp 372–398; J Carlyle, J Collin, M Muggli & R Hurt, 'British American Tobacco and Formula One', *British Medical Journal*, 329 (7457), 2004, pp 104–106; SG Vaidya, UD Naik & JS Vaidya, 'Effects of sports sponsorship by tobacco companies on children's experimentation with tobacco', *British Medical Journal*, 313, 1996, p 400; M Siegel, 'Counteracting tobacco motor sports sponsorship as a promotional tool: is the tobacco settlement enough?', *American Journal of Public Health*, 91 (7), 2001, pp 1100–1106; A Blum, 'The Marlboro Grand Prix: circumvention of the television ban on tobacco advertising', *New England Journal of Medicine*, 324, 1991, pp 913–917; J Collin, M Muggli, J Carlyle *et al*, 'A race to the death: British American Tobacco and the Chinese Grand Prix', *Lancet*, 364 (25), 2004, pp 1107–1108; A Charlton, D White & S Kelly, 'Boys' smoking and cigarette-brand-sponsored motor racing', *Lancet*, 350, 1997, p 1474; and R MacKenzie, J Collin & K Sriwongcharoen, 'Thailand—lighting up a dark market: British American Tobacco, sports sponsorship and the circumvention of legislation', *Journal of Epidemiological Community Health*, 61, 2007, pp 28–33.

⁶WHO, 'Tobacco free sports: play it clean', World No Tobacco Day 2002, at http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/wntd/2002/en/web_version.pdf, accessed 14 December 2006; and WHO, 'FIFA bags top award—World Cup to be tobacco free', press release, at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/release41/en/>, accessed 14 December 2006.

⁷Y Saloojee, 'Tobacco in Africa: more than a health threat', in: P Boyle, N Gray, J Henningfield, J Seffrin & W Zatonski (eds), *Tobacco and Public Health: Science and Policy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁸Philip Morris International, 'Philip Morris International sets up presence in South Africa', press release, 5 October 2003, at http://www.philipmorrisinternational.com/PMINTL/pages/eng/press/pr_20031005.asp, accessed 7 February 2006.

⁹L Urquhart, 'Gallaher plans South Africa growth', *Financial Times*, 3 March 2005, at <http://nancialtimes.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=FT.com/+By+industry++Consumer+industries++Gallaher+plans+South+Africa+growth&expire=&urlID=16997156&fb=Y&url=http://news.ft.com/cms/s/08a65bc6-8b8c-11d9-89e5-00000e2511c8.s01=1.html&partnerID=1744>, accessed 7 February 2006.

¹⁰Imperial Tobacco, 'Acquisition of a 75% interest in Tobaccor SA ("Tobaccor")', press release, 2 April 2001, at <http://www.imperial-tobacco.com/index.asp?pageid=50&sub=2001&newsid=34&filter=pr>, accessed 7 February 2006.

¹¹All-Africa.com, 'Obasanjo commends BAT's \$150m investment', *Daily Trust* (Abuja), 15 May 2003.

¹²F Chaloupka & A Laixuthai, *US Trade Policy and Cigarette Smoking in Asia*, Working Paper No 5543, Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1996; and A Gilmore & M McKee, 'Exploring the impact of foreign direct investment on tobacco consumption in the former Soviet Union', *Tobacco Control*, 14, 2005, pp 13–21.

¹³F Chaloupka & R Nair, 'International issues in the supply of tobacco: recent changes and implications for alcohol', *Addiction*, 95 (suppl 4), 2000, pp 477–489.

¹⁴Chaloupka & A Laixuthai, *US Trade Policy and Cigarette Smoking in Asia*; A Hagihara & Y Takeshita, 'Impact of American cigarette advertising on imported cigarette consumption in Osaka, Japan', *Tobacco Control*, 4, 1995, pp 239–244; and S Sesser, 'Opium war redux', *New Yorker*, 69, 1993, pp 78–89.

Such analyses are particularly important in supporting the development of effective health policy, not least since the undermining of advertising restrictions is central to the strategic value of tobacco sponsorships.¹⁵ Tobacco industry documents represent an invaluable resource for such research, and BAT's dominance in sub-Saharan Africa (with a market share of over 90% in 11 countries¹⁶) makes it the obvious focus of such study. Following an explanation of the broad value of music sponsorship to tobacco companies, this paper examines its specific relevance to Africa by focusing on two key countries for the future of both the continent's tobacco epidemic and TTC profitability. It offers a detailed analysis of BAT's music sponsorship strategy in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, and then examines how music sponsorship was designed to circumvent stringent legislation in South Africa, the region's wealthiest country and a global leader in tobacco control.¹⁷

Methods

The paper is based on analysis of tobacco industry documents made publicly available following litigation in the USA. The provenance of tobacco industry documents,¹⁸ their value to public health research and policy,¹⁹ and the distinctive strengths and access problems associated with BAT documents have been previously described.²⁰ Document research for this paper combined analysis of the two principal locations of BAT documents, incorporating visits to the company's Guildford depository between April 2004 and April 2005, and online searching of the British American Tobacco Documents Archive (www.bat.library.ucsf.edu). In both cases an iterative search strategy was adopted, with very broad search terms (such as 'Nigeria', 'Music', 'West Africa', 'NTC', 'South Africa' and 'sponsorship') gradually being refined via the use of more specific terms (eg 'Golden Tones', 'Benson and Hedges Music' and 'viral marketing') and the names of key individuals. Other document collections (www.legacy.library.ucsf.edu; www.tobaccodocuments.org) were then searched to explore the wider use of music sponsorship across tobacco companies. Of a total of 849 documents reviewed, 126 documents were identified as relevant to music sponsorship by the tobacco industry in Africa. These documents were triangulated and interpretation of data was corroborated between the authors.²¹ Significant sources of secondary data included academic literature on tobacco marketing, advertising and sponsorship, and BAT publications, including annual

¹⁵N Rosenberg & M Siegel, 'Use of corporate sponsorship as a tobacco marketing tool: a review of tobacco industry sponsorship in the USA, 1995–99', *Tobacco Control*, 10, 2001, pp 239–246.

¹⁶A Oluwafemi, 'Regional summary for the African region', in O Shafey, S Dolwick & GE Gunidon, *Tobacco Control Country Profiles*, Atlanta GA: American Cancer Society, 2003.

¹⁷M Malan & R Leaver, 'Political change in South Africa: new tobacco control and public health policies', in J de Beyer & L Bridgen (eds), *Tobacco Control Policy: Strategies, Successes and Setbacks*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003.

¹⁸M Ciresi, R Walburn & T Sutton, 'Decades of deceit: document discovery in the Minnesota tobacco litigation', *William Mitchell Law Review*, 25 (2), 2000, pp 477–566.

¹⁹RE Malone & ED Balbach, 'Tobacco industry documents: treasure trove or quagmire?', *Tobacco Control*, 9, 2000, pp 334–338; and L Bero, 'Implications of the tobacco industry documents for public health and policy', *Annual Review of Public Health*, 24, 2003, pp 267–288.

²⁰J Collin, K Lee & AB Gilmore, 'Unlocking the corporate documents of British American Tobacco: an invaluable global resource needs radically improved access', *Lancet*, 363, 2004, pp 1746–1747; ME Muggli, EM LeGresley & RD Hurt, 'Big tobacco is watching: British American Tobacco's surveillance and information concealment at the Guildford depository', *Lancet*, 363, 2004, pp 1812–1819; and K Lee, AB Gilmore & J Collin, 'Looking inside the tobacco industry: revealing insights from the Guildford Depository', *Addiction*, 99 (4), 2004, p 394.

²¹N Forster, 'The analysis of company documentation', in C Cassell & G Symon (eds), *Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research: A Practical Guide*, London: Sage, 1994, pp 147–166.

reports and social reports, industry journals and international and national press. These sources proved vital for gathering information on regulations, and recent accounts of tobacco industry-sponsored music events in Africa and elsewhere.

Tobacco companies and music sponsorship

The strategic utility of music sponsorship to tobacco companies rests on its combination of wide-ranging, comparatively durable and less heavily regulated promotional opportunities with a clear capacity to reach key audiences. This rationale is evident in a BAT positioning paper that prioritised ‘new vehicles for “lifestyle” communication capable of long term exploitation’²² in a proposed global advertising campaign for the Benson and Hedges (B&H) brand. Music was recommended as an appropriate communications vehicle on the basis that it was ‘a flexible living and dynamic medium’ that could be tailored to brand strategy by ‘targeting the younger consumers—the key to future growth’. Additional benefits included targeting specific socioeconomic groups and key markets and enabling ‘exploitation across the complete spectrum of marketing/communication opportunities’.²³

A 1991 review of BAT’s international brand sponsorships likewise noted that, alongside its ‘universal appeal’ and youthful imagery, music creates both ‘opportunities for selling the TMD [Trademark diversification] product’ and ‘the environment for merchandising and promotional activities’.²⁴ A comparable logic is evident in the ‘Marlboro Rocks’ campaign launched by PMI in 1993, which recognised music as providing opportunities for bringing the ‘Marlboro brand to life for young adult smokers through the positive and relevant vehicle of music’.²⁵

The multiple genres and fragmented nature of contemporary music greatly facilitates its capacity to reach specified target groups, evident in the diverse music promotions undertaken by TTCs.²⁶ A strategic review for BAT’s ‘555’ brand favoured the use of dance music since ‘it represents the international language of ASU 30 [adult smokers under 30]’.²⁷ BAT negotiated an exclusive worldwide deal with the Ministry of Sound (‘recognized around the globe as the most trendsetting dance music phenomenon’²⁸) which promoted international brands in settings as diverse as the UK, China, Taiwan, Cambodia and South Africa. In the USA, PMI’s Virginia Slims was associated with emerging female artists via the ‘Woman Thing Music Showcase Tour’,²⁹ while RJ Reynolds settled a lawsuit brought by three states alleging that its 2004 ‘KOOL Mix’ campaign used hip hop music to target young African Americans.³⁰

²²BAT, ‘Benson & Hedges music positioning paper’, no date, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 303514092-103.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴BAT, ‘International UK brands IBM sponsorship review—Benson and Hedges and 555’, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 502594953/4956, at <http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/batco/html/10700/10704/index.html>, accessed 7 February 2006.

²⁵Philip Morris, ‘Program recommendation—Marlboro Rocks’, 1994, Bates No: 2041953146/3158, at <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ssb66e00>.

²⁶N Hafez & PM Ling, ‘Finding the Kool Mixx: how Brown & Williamson used music marketing to sell cigarettes’, *Tobacco Control*, 15, 2006, pp 359–366.

²⁷BAT, ‘1998 555 Strategic Review Meeting—Minutes/Agreed Actions’, 30 March 1998, Minnesota Tobacco Documents Depository, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/hrp04a99>.

²⁸BAT, ‘News report—it’s party time’, *Link Magazine*, 1, November 1998, Minnesota Tobacco Document Depository, Bates No: 321247095, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/rao93a99>.

²⁹Philip Morris, ‘Virginia Slims Woman Thing Music’, 1997, at http://tobaccodocuments.org/pollay_ads/Virg14.20.html, accessed 7 February 2006.

In emerging markets music can be exploited to address the TTCs' core strategic need to establish the local desirability of international brands. In Malaysia,³¹ jazz music was seen as capable of demonstrating 'to young adult males that KOOL is the most contemporary and 'hip' international brand, representative of a dynamic piece of American culture',³² while in Hong Kong a PMI-sponsored radio programme played both English and Cantonese language versions of US hit songs as 'an interesting way to cross the cultural barrier'.³³

In addition to these broader attractions for TTCs, music sponsorship has been viewed as highly suitable for marketing cigarettes in Africa.³⁴ In advocating wider use of music as a communication tool in Africa, a BAT document points out the important ability of music to 'transcend the barriers to communication imposed by limited literacy or language difficulties'.³⁵ During 2000 BAT's local sponsorships in Africa included the Rothmans Groove music campaign in Ghana and Nigeria, concerts in South Africa, and jazz promotions in Senegal and Ivory Coast.³⁶ The most significant such campaign, however, has been BAT's attempt to deploy music to revitalise the plummeting fortunes of the Benson & Hedges (B&H) brand in Nigeria since the early 1990s.³⁷ With Africa's largest population and second largest economy, Nigeria represents a key potential market where BAT's expected market growth is based on 'an increased number of young adult potential smokers'.³⁸ We examine how BAT was able to achieve these marketing objectives via the sponsorship of Golden Tones concerts in Nigeria.

Golden Tones: revitalising Benson & Hedges in Nigeria

Having sponsored small regional concert tours by local musicians in the 1980s,³⁹ BAT began its own music production in 1990 via the Benson & Hedges Music label.⁴⁰ In September an album by Mike Okri was backed by an advertising campaign as 'bringing music to your life',⁴¹ with consumer testing identifying Okri as 'a star in the society and he

³⁰RJ Reynolds settles Kool Mixx lawsuit', *Brand Week*, 8 October 2004, at <http://www.tobacco.org/news/178541.html>, accessed 7 February 2006.

³¹M Assunta & S Chapman, 'Industry sponsored youth smoking prevention programme in Malaysia: a case study in duplicity', *Tobacco Control*, 13, 2004, pp 37–42.

³²KHK Needham, 'Kool and Jazz: a proposal on parallel communications', 15 July 1983, Brown & Williamson, Bates No: 670877137/7167, at <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/aof21f00>.

³³Philip Morris Asia, 'Marlboro', 1990, Bates No: 2504034844/4875, at <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/wfr19e00>.

³⁴'Marlboro Image Dynamics Study in the Ivory Coast', March 1994, prepared for Philip Morris EEMA Region by Market Insight, Vienna and Yankelovich Partners International, Philip Morris, Bates No: 2501055626/5716, at <http://www.legacy.library.ucsf.edu/cgi/getdoc?tid=jws19e00&fmt=pdf&ref=results>; Notes from meeting between ME Vallon, D Burrows, T Hallett and SV Baker on 'Sponsorship—Music West Africa', 8 July 1987, BAT, Bates No: 301635018, at <http://beta.tobaccodocuments.org/>; and 'Sponsorship: music—West Africa', 7 July 1987, BAT, Bates No: 301635019.

³⁵BAT, 'Golden Tones manual draft 1', 14 December 1994, Bates No: 500273303-500273345, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/jjn70a99>.

³⁶BAT, 2000, Minnesota Tobacco Document Depository, Bates No: 325420287/0316; and B Alkemade, 'Worldwide sponsorship', 30 June 2000, Minnesota Tobacco Document Depository, Bates No: 325003501, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ste51a99>.

³⁷BAT, 'International Brands 1988–1992', no date, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 500030787- 500030832 at 0820, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/bhc41a99>.

³⁸BAT, 'Guidelines 1991–1995 Nigerian Tobacco Co Ltd', Guildford Depository, Bates No: 301535567- 9.

³⁹BAT Marketing, 'Marketing excellence', May 1997, Bates No: 321922642-321922671, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/hcn73a99>.

⁴⁰BAT, 'Benson & Hedges Music CO', Bates No: 301658149/301658160, at http://tdo.roswellpark.org/mayo_clinic/69001119.pdf; and BAT, 'Benson and Hedges Music—Nigeria', 12 May 1989, Bates No: 301042183-301042184, at http://tobaccodocuments.org/guildford_misc/301042183-2184.html.

⁴¹D Burrows, 'B&H music—Nigeria', 23 July 1990, Bates No: 301042147, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/wlt90a99>.

is taking Benson'.⁴² Music sponsorship assumed new significance with the launch of the Golden Tones promotions in Nigeria during Easter 1993.

The Golden Tones programme was perceived within BAT as quite different from previous marketing activities. By contrast with conventional event sponsorships, B&H 'owns the Golden Tones format and the brand is central in all aspects of the activity'.⁴³ As such, BAT did not associate the concerts with any particular type of music or artist but sought 'the services of those musicians identified as relevant to individual markets to "front" and play in our Golden Tones concerts'.⁴⁴

The concerts were seen as 'an important strategy for repositioning and revitalizing the brand' and a way to 'extend the Turn to Gold campaign in Nigeria beyond advertising, increase brand awareness and improve [sic] brand image amongst a key segment of target audience'.⁴⁵ The campaign incorporated less direct marketing methods than those used in other African markets:

In Nigeria, response to advertising amongst target consumers is now relatively sophisticated. Most display the ability and the inclination to play the advertising game and ... the great majority are able to accept brand oriented advertising.⁴⁶

The Golden Tones programme centred on music concerts, although these formed a relatively small part of overall activities, of which the 'greater part consists of activity to exploit the Benson and Hedges ownership of the event'.⁴⁷ The 1996 'Loud in Lagos' concert, which reportedly attracted over 50 000 people, provides an example of how 'Golden Tones affords an excellent opportunity to generate media interest before, during and after concerts'.⁴⁸ Interest before the concerts was generated using 'numerous TV and radio spots plus hand bills and posters posted all over Lagos' and 'town storming', entailing teams touring the city 'in well branded vans, promoting the event and increasing awareness amongst consumers'.⁴⁹ The main event was an all night show featuring top Nigerian musicians and served as an opportunity for distribution of branded merchandise and cigarette samples.⁵⁰ Media attention was plentiful with live broadcast via radio and television and subsequent transmission of 30-minute highlights on national television. Estimated ratings suggested that '1.5 million people watched the live television broadcast while over 4.5 million heard it live on Radio'.⁵¹ Weekly radio and national television programmes were then created to 'extend the life of Golden Tones and keep it alive until the next phase of concert activity'.⁵²

⁴²BAT, 'The cigarette market in Nigeria: qualitative consumer behaviour and brand status study', 25 July 1991, Bates No: 503886992-503887062, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ryp43a99>.

⁴³BAT, 'Golden Tones—review meeting', 14 October 1994, Bates No: 500273186, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/yin70a99>; and Benson and Hedges, 'Benson and Hedges presents Golden Tones', December 1994, BATCo Document for Mayo Clinic, 26 March 2002, Bates No: 303574652-303574671, at http://tobaccodocuments.org/mayo_clinic/21061331.html.

⁴⁴BAT, 'Re: Golden Tones sponsorship', memo, 25 September 1992, Bates No: 500273201, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ejn70a99>; BAT, 'Benson and Hedges: promotional concepts for Golden Tones', no date, Bates No: 500273243-500273256, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/hjn70a99>; Benson and Hedges, 'Benson and Hedges presents Golden Tones', Bates No: 303574652-303574671; and BAT, 'Golden Tones—review meeting', Bates No: 500273186.

⁴⁵Benson and Hedges, 'Benson and Hedges presents Golden Tones'.

⁴⁶BAT, 'Strategic development of Benson & Hedges pack advertising research in Nigeria and UAE', Bates No: 500155388-462.

⁴⁷Benson and Hedges, 'Benson and Hedges presents Golden Tones'.

⁴⁸BAT Marketing, 'Marketing excellence', Bates No: 321922642-321922671.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*Ibid.*

Targeting young smokers

The Golden Tones promotions incorporated a strong emphasis on youth, aiming to ‘increase the appeal of Benson and Hedges to younger smokers’.⁵³ A draft Golden Tones manual identified ‘music as the medium to achieve this’.⁵⁴ The suitability of music for this role in Nigeria had several dimensions, as it:

- transcends the barriers to communication imposed by limited literacy or language difficulties;
- appeals to the 20–25-year-old urban dweller;
- is dynamic, trend-setting in style and has a universal appeal in an ethnically diverse country and region;
- is capable of creating a mood and allowing consumers to participate directly in an expression of the Benson & Hedges world.⁵⁵

In Golden Tones, it was felt that BAT had created a platform capable of attracting a younger consumer base beyond the passage of anticipated advertising restrictions designed to curb such cigarette marketing goals:

the young adult music platform of the B&H label is exactly the type of image enhancement we need in Nigeria. The potential for music sponsorship activities such as concerts, campus and disco promotions by the TMD B&H label are available to us even when cigarette advertising and promotion are further restricted.
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Anticipating legislation

Following the passage of a decree in 1990 in Nigeria requiring health warnings on advertisements and insertion in cigarette packs,⁵⁷ BAT focused on revitalising B&H within the context of an assumed increase in regulation. A document outlining promotional concepts for Golden Tones notes the intention ‘to use promotional activity to project Golden Tones as a brand, in its own right. So that if restrictions are placed on cigarette brand advertising BAT have a vehicle to overcome this restriction.’⁵⁸ Further evidence of the role that BAT expected Golden Tones to play, despite restrictions on direct advertising, is described in the Golden Tones manual: ‘As traditional communication methods diminish in many markets, Golden Tones becomes an increasingly important element of the Benson & Hedges communication strategy’.⁵⁹

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³Benson and Hedges, ‘Benson and Hedges presents Golden Tones’.

⁵⁴BAT, ‘Golden Tones manual draft 1’, Bates No: 500273303-500273345.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶S Osbourne, ‘Nigeria TMD’, 13 May 1991, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 301750937-0938.

⁵⁷Nigerian Tobacco Industry Ltd, ‘West Africa Public Affairs Review—October & November 1990’, 17 December 1990, British American Tobacco Industries Group, Bates No: 304012311-304012315.

⁵⁸BAT, ‘Benson and Hedges: promotional concepts for Golden Tones’, Bates No: 500273243- 500273256.

⁵⁹BAT, ‘Benson & Hedges Golden Tones—the way forward’, no date, Bates No: 321462728-2738, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/oaq04a99>.

An undated document describing the way forward for the Golden Tones campaign both in Nigeria and internationally again emphasises the value of the flexibility afforded by music. It claimed that the campaign was equally suited to markets that were ‘growing or declining’, ‘dark or non restrictive’, and that its capacity to evolve over time while retaining its appeal among young smokers meant that ‘Music is FUTURE PROOF’.⁶⁰

Regional and international strategic value

The B&H brand was key to BAT’s attempts to target ‘Responsible, Optimistic, Confident and Ambitious Adult Smokers under 30’ (ROCASU30) across Southern and Western Africa.⁶¹ Internal marketing plans for the company strongly emphasise that, for the company’s future growth in the region:

B&H take the lead as the aspirational brand for ASU30 ... we can then more effectively fight off the anticipated efforts of PMI to penetrate the emerging Premium niche market with Marlboro. There is a clear pre-emptive opportunity for B&H as no competitor has a clear pan-African Premium IB [International brand].⁶²

Golden Tones concerts in Nigeria were subsequently replicated in other developing countries. A ‘Benson & Hedges Golden Tones’ promotional video depicts ‘a sense of excitement and build of activity in Nigeria’ in 1993.⁶³ A year later the brand reportedly enjoyed comparable success in Burma and the Caribbean:

Benson & Hedges enjoys a regional strength in the area around Mandalay. This was reinforced by staging 3 concerts in Mandalay in April, 1994 ... it proved possible to emulate the success of Golden Tones Nigeria by adopting a similar format ... Despite an established and relatively sophisticated music industry in the Caribbean, Golden Tones still excited ... interest from young people in the market.⁶⁴

In the declining market of 1994 South Africa, Golden Tones was part of ‘an intensive promotion programme’ that backed the ‘launch of Benson & Hedges in gold, soft cup packaging’.⁶⁵ A successful Golden Tones concert in Papua New Guinea included the exportation of a Nigerian musician (Ras Kimono) to the island, which ‘generated positive PR for the event in both countries and has added a new international dimension to Golden Tones’.⁶⁶ There have also been reports of adaptations of the Golden Tones format in Sri Lanka, Thailand and other markets.⁶⁷ The name of the concert series was changed to Gold

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹BAT, ‘Plan—Southern and West Africa, 1997–1998’, BAT, Minnesota Tobacco Documents Depository, Bates No: 321826247-323.

⁶²BAT, ‘Plan—Southern and West Africa, 1997–1998’.

⁶³D Fell & P Blair, ‘Benson & Hedges Golden Tones’, 4 August 1993, Guildford Depositor, Bates No: 303649543.

⁶⁴BAT, ‘Golden Tones manual draft 1’, Bates No: 500273303-500273345.

⁶⁵BAT, ‘Tobacco Strategy Group Benson and Hedges review to December 1994’, no date, Bates No: 502614088-502614092, at http://tobaccodocuments.org/mayo_clinic/72000747.pdf.

⁶⁶BAT, ‘B&H SF consumer product test, Nigeria, June/July 1997’, 18 February 1998, Bates No: 321867233/321867237, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/lhp53a99>.

⁶⁷R Hammond, ‘Tobacco advertising and promotion: the need for a coordinated global response’, paper presented at the WHO international conference on ‘Global Tobacco Control Law: Towards a WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control’, New Delhi, 7–9 January 2000; and A White, ‘A worldwide tour of outrageous PM & BAT behaviour’, Global Partnerships for Tobacco Control, 2001, at <http://www.essentialaction.org/tobacco/qofm/0101a.html>.

and Tones in some markets. Other markets included competitions among school children as part of the concert promotion.⁶⁸

Golden Tones acquired further regional strategic significance with the advent of increased cable and satellite television access in many parts of Africa. A July 1998 memo regarding industry-sponsored events described ‘very visible B&H branding’ and inquired about ‘legislation relating to showing tobacco sponsored events of this nature on satellite television’ in the region.⁶⁹ A response noted that there were no restrictions in South Africa, Namibia, Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria, and claimed that ‘it is not possible to restrict events being broadcast on satellite TV’.⁷⁰

Assessing the impact of Golden Tones in Nigeria

In Nigeria music is Golden Tones and Golden Tones is Benson & Hedges.⁷¹

The Golden Tones promotions sought to ‘form the standard for all new sponsorship initiatives,⁷² and were regarded as well suited to a Nigerian context. Marketing executive Patrick Mulligan described the campaign as ‘potentially the most effective promotional activity ever conducted in Nigeria’.⁷³

In 1994 the brand’s achievement of share and volume growth in Nigeria for the first time in six years was attributable to the introduction of Golden Tones.⁷⁴ Readers of the leading magazine in Nigeria, *Fame*, voted Golden Tones the best concert series for two years in a row, reflecting the media and PR benefit of music sponsorship.⁷⁵

BAT’s in-house analysis of the impact of these concerts and their associated marketing exercises noted that ‘B&H is the only major cigarette brand associated with the sponsorship of music concerts in Nigeria’.⁷⁶ The brand’s image became viewed as ‘slightly less masculine, younger, higher quality, more modern, more formal, more international, slightly milder, more prestigious, more contemporary and more serious’.⁷⁷ Additional in-house evaluations suggested improved spontaneous awareness of the brand, increasing from 65% in 1993 to 73% in 1994, while awareness of tobacco company sponsorship of such events doubled.⁷⁸

⁶⁸Hammond, ‘Tobacco advertising and promotion’; and White, ‘A worldwide tour of outrageous PM & BAT behaviour’.

⁶⁹S Cleverly, untitled memo, 10 July 1998, BAT, Bates No: 321462739, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/qmo93a99>.

⁷⁰M Faridi, ‘Re: Benson & Hedges Golden Tones’, memo responding to Simon Cleverly, 15 July 1998, Bates No: 321462726, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/omo93a99>.

⁷¹BATCo Marketing Department, *Marketing Excellence*, 4, October, 1995, Bates No: 500042569/500042586, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/gln04a99>.

⁷²BAT, ‘Benson and Hedges status report as at 30th November 1992’, 21 December 1992, Bates No: 502554121-502554125, at http://tobaccodocuments.org/mayo_clinic/69601168.html.

⁷³‘Golden Tones hits Nigeria and the UK’, *BAT Bulletin*, June 1993, Bates No: 201823083-4, at <http://guilda.library.ucsf.edu/gf/fetch/qwo20a99.pdf>.

⁷⁴BAT, Note to Mr BD Bramley, 7 March 1994, Bates No: 502608668-50260875, at http://tobaccodocuments.org/mayo_clinic/68000170.pdf.

⁷⁵BAT, Benson & Hedges Golden Tones video (transcript or manual), 1993, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 303574648-75.

⁷⁶BAT, ‘Benson & Hedges Golden Tones—Nigeria research precis’, 1993, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 303649512-41.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Benson and Hedges, ‘Benson and Hedges presents Golden Tones’, Bates No: 303574652-303574671.

The concerts attracted a fairly young audience with one-third aged under 24 years and over 80% under 35 years.⁷⁹ Furthermore, 90% of attendees had received free samples of B&H cigarettes and 90% then purchased the brand in the next three months.⁸⁰ Merchandising was used to provide a lasting reminder of the Golden Tones event.⁸¹

In 1999 sample cigarettes were reportedly distributed at a 'Wild and Wicked' concert,⁸² while Benson & Hedges sponsored a 'Gold and Tones' roadshow in Nigeria in 2001.⁸³ BAT concerts remain prominent within Nigeria and still garner media attention.⁸⁴ In 2005 B&H hosted a series of roadshows across Nigeria featuring disc jockeys and various performance artistes as part of its B&H Standard Hallmark campaign.⁸⁵ These roadshows have enjoyed favourable press coverage in Nigeria and abroad.⁸⁶

Perhaps the clearest endorsement of the strategic success of the Golden Tones programme is contained within the 1999 brand guidelines for Benson & Hedges. Noting that 'Golden Tones, when properly exploited, increases the brand's appeal among ASU 30', the guidelines offer a strong endorsement for the future use of music in international marketing:

The association of the brand with music through Benson & Hedges Golden Tones has been a key driver for ASU 30 share and success of the overall communication mix in Africa Export. Music will, therefore, remain the main promotional vehicle for the brand. Markets in Africa and the Indian Sub continent should look into new, innovative ways of making music work to drive ASU 30 share on a regional basis.
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The Golden Tones campaign provided a powerful, adaptable and durable promotional vehicle, viewed as capable of effectively marketing BAT products after the implementation of further legislative restrictions. The Nigerian campaign was subsequently developed to market tobacco both regionally and globally. Internal documents also illustrate how, in 1999 in South Africa, the company employed a viral marketing strategy to re-launch the Lucky Strike brand in order to circumvent rigorous tobacco control legislation.

⁷⁹BAT, 'Golden Tones Sponsorship Research Summary Report', August 1993, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 500126418-84.

⁸⁰BAT, Golden Tones Sponsorship Survey—Presentation of Main Findings', June 1993, Guildford Depository, Bates No: 5001260036-83.

⁸¹BAT, Benson & Hedges Golden Tones video (transcript or manual), Bates No: 303574648-75.

⁸²U Shehu, 'Benson and Hedges—"Wild and Wicked in Nigeria"', *This Day* (Lagos), 2 January 2000, p 7.

⁸³T Okoli, 'Gold and Tones launches P-Squared's last nite', *This Day* (Lagos), 25 July 2003, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200307250218.html>.

⁸⁴T Okoli, '2002 review: music—the rhythm of 2002', *This Day*, 20 December 2002, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200212200470.html>.

⁸⁵A Ajayi, 'From Benson & Hedges, more than just smoking', *This Day*, 3 December 2004, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200412060146.html>.

⁸⁶Benson & Hedges hallmark theme night for PH', *This Day*, 2 December 2004, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200412030030.html>; O Cornel-Best, 'Premium brand thrills music lovers at Yuletide', *Sun* (London), 19 November 2004, at <http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/showtime/2004/nov/19/showtime-nov-19-002.htm>, accessed 9 December 2004; O Amadi, 'SHOWTIME: Beenie man guaranteed, LIVE in Lagos', *Vanguard*, 20 November 2004, at <http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/features/fe120112004.html> accessed 9 December 2004.

⁸⁷Benson & Hedges, Brand Guidelines, 1999 The Gold Standard, July 1998, BAT, Bates No: 325334803- 325334844, at <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/zbx23a99>.

Viral marketing of Lucky Strike in South Africa

The continent's most impressive tobacco control legislation came into effect in South Africa in April 2001, with prohibitions on advertising and sponsorship that required substantial adaptation in corporate marketing strategy. Music was well established as a core element in marketing BAT brands, including via John Player Special jazz sponsorship,⁸⁸ the Benson & Hedges Ministry of Sound Gold Tour,⁸⁹ Peter Stuyvesant Music Spectaculars and the Dunhill Symphony of Fire.⁹⁰ In anticipating this legislation the need for promotions that could be sustained in a highly restricted environment gave music a critical role in the re-launch of Lucky Strike from November 1999.

In a national campaign promoted as representing best practice within the BAT corporate group, the Bates/141 advertising agency developed a strategy based on principles of viral marketing (referred to elsewhere as 'buzz' or 'guerrilla' marketing)⁹¹ 'in which the consumer is the media and it relies upon the first contact made, passing on their knowledge or interest to their circle of contacts'.⁹² Named 'Incognito', the campaign was designed to circumvent legislation, incorporating:

remarkably little reliance on mainstream communication tools—an intentional plan as it was known from the outset that the market would go dark soon after launching and that all communication needed to be able to live on beyond the ban.⁹³

While driven by advancing regulation, this strategy also reflected an assessment that target consumers in the 18–24 sector were 'immune to standard media',⁹⁴ and was later described as well-suited 'to young consumers who are desensitised to brand advertising and are extremely cynical about it'.⁹⁵

The campaign relied on building close relationships with potential consumers via the recruitment of 'Brand Amplifiers'.⁹⁶ In contrast to traditional sampling—'hit and run promotions' using 'pretty girls in tight "T" shirts handing out cigarettes'—amplifiers would be recruited from among focus consumers and should become 'the personification of the specific brand'.⁹⁷ For Lucky Strike amplifiers were chosen 'for their fit with the prime prospect' and were 'encouraged to "live" the brand lifestyle', charged with building relationships with owners and staff of key promotional venues as well as with targeted consumers. Amplifiers were provided with 'VW bugs with subtle branding' to drive and with 'data capture cards to collect consumer information'.⁹⁸

⁸⁸T Nieuwoudt, 'JPS jazz sponsorship', 15 November 1993, BAT, Bates No: 700841980-1997, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/zmh61a99>.

⁸⁹BAT, 'Benson & Hedges Ministry of Sound Gold Tour SA', no date, Bates No: 321389959-9991, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/uwz04a99>.

⁹⁰BAT South Africa seeks constructive dialogue with government on tobacco issues', press release, 30 November 2000, Bates No: 325124519-4520, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ray44a99>.

⁹¹SM Carter, 'Going below the line: creating transportable brands for Australia's dark market', *Tobacco Control*, 12 (suppl III), 2003, pp 87–94.

⁹²'South Africa—best practice', 2000, BAT, Bates No: 325422570-97, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/wfr70a99>.

⁹³'South Africa—best practice', Bates No: 325422570-97.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵E Terazono, 'Sociable smoking', *Financial Times*, online edition, 26 January 2004, at <http://search.ft.com/s03/search/article.html?id=040126005310>.

⁹⁶'South Africa—best practice'.

⁹⁷'The Amplifier Program', 2 November 2000, BAT, Bates No: 325006682-6714, at <http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ngv07a99>.

The re-launch of Lucky Strike was based on a total of 12 comparatively small events across South Africa's three key cities, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Personal invitations were given by amplifiers to targeted consumers in a manner that withheld overt information about both the nature of the event and the brand behind it, seeking to 'reward discovery, reward interest'. Intrigue was generated via unbranded posters and the deliberate leaking of rumours to selected individuals, with numbers at the events 'restricted in order to maintain the increased desirability of "being there"'. The events culminated in performances by internationally famous musicians popular with young South Africans but who had not yet 'become so large on the world scale that they were too expensive'.⁹⁹ The DJ Paul Oakenfold, described as usually playing to huge club audiences around the world, performed in a Cape Town venue that held only 400 people, the band Violent Femmes played in an abandoned warehouse, while an audience of 900 were surprised by a performance by Bush, 'a cult band in South Africa'.¹⁰⁰

The strategy was based on the belief that effectively targeting small numbers of 'trend setters' among the young could result in broader gains in the wider population. With amplifiers serving as 'trend co-ordinators', substantial gains could be made since 'the mainstream ASU30 follows the trend setters and this is where volume sales are effected'.¹⁰¹ The Incognito campaign appears to have successfully demonstrated the commercial potential of such an approach. Although only 8600 people attended the events, a website containing sound bytes, music and images received '1 000 000 hits in the space of one month', with visitors downloading 'up to 3 gigs of files per hour' and most of the downloaded material being forwarded to friends:

By being very selective about who actually goes to the events, you can create far greater consumer influence[e] than simply by having a large number of people at an event.¹⁰²

The use of amplifiers was seen as enhancing both the desirability of an event and subsequent word of mouth, with publicity being 'spread by the most powerful media of all—friends and peers'.¹⁰³

Discussion

Music is a powerful medium by which tobacco companies target youth in Nigeria, South Africa and internationally, one which poses substantial challenges to the effective development of regulation across national and global levels. It is worth noting that the Incognito campaign was conducted contemporaneously with the development of the cross-industry International Tobacco Products Marketing Standards, a core element of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns adopted by BAT and other tobacco companies, which such signatories acknowledge 'should be observed in both their letter and

⁹⁸ 'South Africa—best practice'.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ 'The Amplifier Program', Bates No: 325006682-6714.

¹⁰² 'South Africa—best practice'.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

their intent'.¹⁰⁴ The standards' professed commitment not to link celebrities with advertising does not fit well with the use of renowned musicians in the South Africa campaign, while the pledge that smoking will not be promoted as enhancing 'popularity, professional success, or sexual success' is hard to reconcile with the role of brand amplifiers described above. Such juxtapositions reaffirm the general inadequacy of industry selfregulation for tobacco control and highlight the cynicism and insufficiency of current CSR initiatives within the tobacco industry.¹⁰⁵

To strengthen the development of national regulation, the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) provides a unique global and regional framework.¹⁰⁶ Africa is crucial to the success of the FCTC, being the only region in the world where the development of a tobacco epidemic can be prevented. Given both the recent escalating investments by tobacco companies in the continent and the rising consumption of tobacco, especially among the youth,¹⁰⁷ the urgent ratification and full implementation of the FCTC is essential in all African countries.¹⁰⁸

While both Nigeria and South Africa ratified the treaty in 2005,¹⁰⁹ it is important to note that the FCTC is still in its infancy and lacks clear enforcement mechanisms.¹¹⁰ At the first Conference of the Parties in February 2006 working groups were created to begin the development of two protocols, legally binding instruments to tackle illicit trade in tobacco and cross-border advertising. The documents discussed above illustrate the scale of the challenge confronting those drafting these protocols, with music sponsorship demonstrating a capacity to undermine even world-leading legislation such as that adopted in South Africa. The tobacco industry's consistent ability to adapt its promotional strategies to undermine the intent of health legislation suggests that regulations should be framed so as to explicitly identify what is permitted rather than that which is precluded.¹¹¹ The significant achievements of the FCTC process to date have been hugely dependent on the political leadership collectively provided by African states,¹¹² a commitment that will need to be sustained if the global potential of the FCTC is to be realised and the acceleration of Africa's tobacco epidemic prevented.

¹⁰⁴BAT *et al*, *International Tobacco Products Marketing Standards*, 11 September 2001, at [http://www.bat.com/oneweb/sites/uk_3mnfen.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DO52ADRK/\\$FILE/medMD539DKY.pdf?openelement](http://www.bat.com/oneweb/sites/uk_3mnfen.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DO52ADRK/$FILE/medMD539DKY.pdf?openelement), accessed 19 September 2006.

¹⁰⁵J Collin & A Gilmore, 'Corporate (anti)social (ir)responsibility: transnational tobacco companies and the attempted subversion of global health policy', *Global Social Policy*, 2 (3), 2002, pp 354–360; N Hirschhorn, 'Corporate social responsibility and the tobacco industry: hope or hype?', *Tobacco Control*, 13, 2004, pp 447–453; and Bert Action on Smoking and Health, Christian Aid & Friends of the Earth, *BAT in its Own Words*, April 2005, at http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/504bat/bat_report.pdf, accessed 14 December 2006.

¹⁰⁶Framework Convention for Tobacco Control, entry into force 27 February 2005, at http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/WHO_FCTC_english.pdf, accessed 31 October 2006.

¹⁰⁷Oluwafemi, 'Regional summary for the African region'.

¹⁰⁸S Nsimba & S Sussman, 'Tobacco advertisements and promotion industry on smoking in Tanzania: a review of negative public health implications for current and future generations', *Tobacco Induced Diseases*, 3 (2), 2006, pp 41–43.

¹⁰⁹<http://www.fctc.org/treaty/currentsigns.php>, accessed 6 November 2006.

¹¹⁰R Roemer, A Taylor & J Lariviere, 'Origins of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control', *American Journal of Public Health*, 95 (6), 2005, pp 936–938.

¹¹¹E LeGresley, M Muggli & R Hurt, 'Movie moguls: British American Tobacco's covert strategy to promote cigarettes in Eastern Europe', *European Journal of Public Health*, 16 (5), 2006, pp 505–508.

¹¹²J Collin, K Lee & K Bissell, 'Negotiating the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: the politics of global health governance', in R Wilkinson (ed), *The Global Governance Reader*, London: Routledge, 2005.

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