

PostScript

LETTERS

Letters intended for publication should be a maximum of 500 words, 10 references, and one table or figure, and should be sent to the editor at the address given on the inside front cover. Those responding to articles or correspondence published in the journal should be received within six weeks of publication.

Listening between the lines: what BAT really thinks of its consumers in the developing world

In an audio recording of the "Structured Creativity Conference" held in Hampshire, UK in June 1984, British American Tobacco (BAT) adds context to the written report of marketing and product applications.¹ Employees are taped brainstorming creative ways to push their product in light of future marketing constraints and social pressure towards a smoke-free society. Project proposals included the following: low sidestream smoke cigarettes,² "front end lift" cigarette design to give the smoker more "impact" on the first puffs,³ pleasant smelling sidestream smoke,⁴ and nicotine inhalers—"Forget about smoking... GO FOR A QUICKKEEK. No tar with nic, is what makes the body kick."⁵

One of the most interesting proposals came from Ian Ross from a Finland subsidiary, who later became the head of international brand business at BATCO in the early 1990s. Ross's proposal, the "LDC (less developed countries) Project",⁶ called for individually heat sealed cigarettes designed to lengthen the shelf life of cigarettes in arid climates found in Africa and the Middle East. This rather ingenious idea for stick sales would be sold to tobacco vendors in reels with visible brand imaging, containing 200 cigarettes that could be pulled off along perforations one at a time.

What the 80 or so page written report did not include, the audiocassette captured with clarity. The taped conversations of the BAT conference participants offered rarely obtained loose discourse regarding product design proposals and a derogatory discussion of the people intended for end product use.

Ross relays that he wants to make "stick purchases seem like a consumer benefit" by supplying "factory sealed and factory freshness" every time. As for marketing the heat sealed stick product, Ross states: "... [T]he brand image must be enhanced by the new packaging... if you just say, this is a cheap cigarette for you dirt poor little black farmers... they're not going to go for it."

Ross also discusses the target group—"urban", "male", between 18-30, and "aspiring lower middle" socioeconomic class—and says: "I have not gone into psychographics... I have no idea what the psychographics of the average black farmer is."

Another conference participant ruminates, "We could sell them to the Palestinians if we

made the plastic hard enough that you could rip the end off and put your shells in them..."

This discourse, not found on the written presentation, between the BAT marketing and product development personnel was obviously not meant for public consumption, nor is it new information that the tobacco industry targets the developing world. A patent search in the UK resulted in no individually heat sealed cigarette applications.

What is of great interest to those of us who spend our time searching through page after page of internal tobacco industry documents is the significant difference between what is written and what is said. David Schechter, the former BAT lawyer, recently explained the "mental copy rule" to the US Department of Justice, which assumed that anything one would write could end up being used publicly or legally against the company.⁷ This leads to the obvious question: Are we overlooking important research tools in the form of non-written material?

M E Muggli
R D Hurt

St Paul, Minnesota, USA

Correspondence to: Monique E Muggli, 1345 Osceola Avenue, St Paul, MN 55105, USA; mmuggli@attbi.com

References

- 1 **British American Tobacco.** Audio cassette. "Ian Ross with discussion. Mike Scott with discussion." 92164(0). Acquired by the Mayo Clinic on 13 December 2001.
- 2 **British American Tobacco.** *Structured Creativity Conference Delegate Presentations.* 25-28 June 1984. Bates No. 400993163-3228 at 400993163. Acquired from BAT by Health Canada in May 1999. Accessed August 2002. URL: http://tobaccodocuments.org/guildford_subset
- 3 **British American Tobacco.** *Structured Creativity Conference Delegate Presentations.* 25-28 June 1984. Bates No. 400993163-3228 at 400993189. Acquired from BAT by Health Canada in May 1999. Accessed August 2002. URL: http://tobaccodocuments.org/guildford_subset
- 4 **British American Tobacco.** *Structured Creativity Conference Delegate Presentations.* 25-28 June 1984. Bates No. 400993163-3228 at 400993205. Acquired from BAT by Health Canada in May 1999. Accessed August 2002. URL: http://tobaccodocuments.org/guildford_subset
- 5 **British American Tobacco.** *Structured Creativity Conference Delegate Presentations.* 25-28 June 1984. Bates No. 400993163-3228 at 400993220. Acquired from BAT by Health Canada in May 1999. Accessed August 2002. URL: http://tobaccodocuments.org/guildford_subset
- 6 **British American Tobacco.** *Structured Creativity Conference Delegate Presentations.* 25-28 June 1984. Bates No. 400993163-3228 at 400993238. Acquired from BAT by Province of British Columbia in April 1999. Accessed August 2002. URL: http://tobaccodocuments.org/guildford_subset
- 7 URL: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/08/22/1029114163418.html>

Eclipse: does it live up to its health claims?

We read the recent article by Slade *et al*¹ with great interest and agree that reasonable regulation focused on the development and appropriate evaluation of potential reduced risk cigarettes is warranted. Furthermore, we agree with Slade *et al* that the results of our evaluation indicate that Eclipse may offer potential benefits to smokers. However, we disagree with several of the other conclusions drawn by the authors.

The article challenges the merits of Eclipse and questions the fundamental differences between Eclipse and other cigarettes. It is not possible within the context of this letter either to fully describe the scientific data that has been developed to characterise Eclipse or to address many of the criticisms of Eclipse raised in Slade's article. However, we briefly address pertinent issues below and encourage interested parties to independently evaluate all of the available information.

Slade *et al* have inaccurately represented the claims that RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company (RJRT) has made regarding Eclipse. No cigarette is without risk, including Eclipse. Our advertising for Eclipse states: "The best choice for smokers who worry about their health is to quit. But Eclipse is the next best choice for those who have decided to continue smoking." Our advertising also makes it clear that RJRT does not claim that Eclipse presents less risk of cardiovascular disease or complications with pregnancy.

In the absence of any existing regulatory standard, RJRT assessed Eclipse's risk reduction potential using a four step scientific methodology that included chemical testing and analysis, biological and toxicological testing, human testing, and independent scientific verification. In general, the evaluation strategy utilised was consistent with strategies outlined by the Institute of Medicine Committee that addressed this subject.² RJRT has conducted an extensive comparative evaluation of Eclipse and has presented this research at scientific meetings in the both the USA and internationally. The results of these and other studies may be reviewed on the Eclipse website (www.eclipsescience.com).

In addition, much of this research has been published in the peer reviewed literature. The weight of the evidence from this research clearly shows that, compared to other cigarettes, Eclipse may present smokers with less risk of cancer, chronic bronchitis, and possibly emphysema. An independent panel of scientific experts reviewed the science and reached conclusions consistent with RJRT's claims.³

RJRT's comparative studies were conducted using Kentucky reference cigarettes (K1R5F and K1R4F) and leading low "tar" and ultra low "tar" commercial brand styles. Combined, the cigarettes selected for comparison to Eclipse are representative of the vast majority of cigarettes sold in the US market.^{4,5} By contrast the entire market segment of the very low yielding ultra low "tar" cigarettes used by Slade *et al* as a comparison collectively represent less than 1% of the market. Furthermore, one of the two cigarettes selected as a comparison (Now Box) does not have a measurable US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) "tar" yield.