

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF SUBLIMINAL PERCEPTION OF ANTI-CIGARETTE CAMPAIGNS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIGARETTE INDUSTRY

M.M.L.C. Gunathilake

*Department of Management Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya,
Sri Lanka
lahirupera@gmail.com*

Following an amendment to the “*Mahinda Chinthanaya: Towards a new Sri Lanka*” in 2006, smoking in public places and advertising on cigarettes and alcohol in any kind of media were prohibited in Sri Lanka. The objective of this move was to decrease the number of smokers, and the consumption of alcohol. Yet, six years after the implementation of “*MathataThitha*”, the tobacco industry is still one of growing industries in Sri Lanka. In comparison with the results of the spot surveys in December 2011 and December 2012 that have been conducted by the Research and Evaluation Programme, Alcohol and Drug Information Centre, tobacco consumption shows an increase of 6.7% in comparison with the previous years. Hence, one can question the effectiveness of the anti-cigarette campaigns. Occasionally, the cigarette industry may enjoy certain advantages despite the repercussions portrayed in anti-cigarette advertisements. In this background, the study aimed to examine the impact of Subliminal Perception of Anti- Cigarette campaign on the development of the cigarette industry in Sri Lanka. At the outset of this research, secondary data were gathered for initial reference and in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the problem. Later, the data for the study were gathered through interviews based on a structured questionnaire with smokers of cigarettes from 200 respondents in Colombo, Kurunegala and Kandy districts. The data were analyzed through Cross Tabulations and Pearson Chi-Square tests. The former analysis revealed that constant repetition or reverberation of very insignificant stimuli such as the word “Cigarette” in an Anti- Cigarette Advertisement has an incremental effect. Thus, use of such words in Anti- Cigarette Advertisements is likely to have a positive impact on cigarette consumption. The latter analysis revealed that the number of times the word “Cigarette” is repeated, font size, font face and the colour of the word “Cigarette” have a positive effect on the creation of subliminal perception. These findings suggest that the organizations which act against the cigarette industry should be tactical enough, when they plan their Anti- Cigarette campaigns. Otherwise, the advertisements appear to stimulate the rebellious and the curious nature of the target group, making them more interested in smoking. Therefore, it is recommended that anti-cigarette advertisements may include pictorial warnings rather than just words, and more sophisticated appeals need to appear on such advertisements.