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Mind Your "Smoking Manners": The Tobacco Industry Tactics to Normalize Smoking in Japan

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The tobacco industry has adapted its promotional strategies as tobacco-control measures have increased. This paper describes the tobacco industry's strategies on *smoking manners* and illustrates how these interfere with tobacco-control policy in Japan where tobacco control remains weak.

Information on the tobacco industry's promotional strategies in Japan was collected through direct observation, a review of tobacco industry documents and a literature review. The limitation of the study would be a lack of industry documents from Japan as we relied on a database of a U.S. institution to collect internal documents from the tobacco industry. Japan Tobacco began using the manners strategies in the early 1960s. Collaborating with wide range of actors – including local governments and companies – the tobacco industry has promoted *smoking manners* to wider audiences through its advertising and corporate social responsibility activities.

The tobacco industry in Japan has taken advantage of the cultural value placed on manners in Japan to increase the social acceptability of smoking, eventually aiming to diminish public support for smoke-free policies that threatens the industry's business. A stronger enforcement of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is critical to counteracting such strategies.

The tobacco industry's strategies to promote its products often adapt to changes in regulatory frameworks. Indeed, the adoption of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), an international treaty introduced to counter the global tobacco epidemic, has triggered several changes in the tobacco industry's promotional strategies. Although encouraging "*smoking manners*" is an old promotional approach used by the tobacco industry, an analysis of the actions of the industry in updating this approach in Japan can shed light on the current tactics of interference with the proper regulation of tobacco products.

Having signed the WHO FCTC in 2004, Japan is obliged to implement comprehensive tobacco-control measures. One of the key issues of the WHO FCTC is protection from harmful exposure to second-hand smoke (SHS) in public places (1). However, national tobacco-control policies remain weak. No national law in Japan prohibits smoking in public places, while the only national law addressing SHS exposure – the Health Promotion Act – permits the separation of smoking and non-smoking areas, which is contrary to the effective measure of 100% smoke-free environments which is recommended in the implementation guidelines of the WHO FCTC (2,3).

At subnational levels, some jurisdictions in Japan have implemented measures on public smoking. For instance, although mostly for environmental or aesthetic purposes, more than 100 jurisdictions have introduced legislation regulating outdoor smoking (4). However, little progress has been made in terms of efforts to reduce exposure to SHS in indoor public places. Two prefectures, Hyogo and Kanagawa, adopted ordinances in order to "prevent SHS exposure in public places"; however, the legislation applies only to limited types of public places and it allows designated smoking rooms and the separation of smoking and non-smoking areas, which tobacco companies in Japan have been promoting as an alternative to complete bans on smoking (5,6).

Japan is home to the world's third largest transnational tobacco company, Japan Tobacco Inc. (JT). JT was formerly a state monopoly known as the Japan Tobacco and Salt Public Corporation (JTS) which was established in 1949. On privatization of JTS in 1985, the Japan Tobacco Inc. Law was introduced requiring the national government to hold at least one third of JT's entire stock (7). Half of the stock had been government-owned in the name of the Minister of Finance (MOF) until March 2013 when MOF sold off the

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some of the stock; however, MOF still owns one third of the stock as stipulated in the Japan Tobacco Inc. Law and remains a major shareholder of JT (8). JT has been intensively emphasizing *smoking manners* through its advertising and corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns. This paper describes the tobacco industry strategies on *smoking manners* and illustrates how *smoking manners* hamper tobacco-control policy in Japan.

METHODS

We employed three different data collection methods: direct observation, a review of tobacco industry documents, and a literature review. Our first activity was to conduct direct observation of materials using or emphasizing manners, especially *smoking manners*, that are accessible to the public (e.g. advertisements).

Following the direct observation, we analysed documents related to the tobacco industry's *smoking manners* strategies that were obtained from internet-based searches. We searched tobacco industry documents in English through the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library at the University of California, San Francisco [<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu>] and through three tobacco industry web sites in Japanese – the JT web site at <http://www.jti.co.jp>, the Tobacco Institute of Japan (TIOJ) web site at <http://www.tioj.or.jp>, and the web site of the National Federation of Tobacco Retailers Association at <http://www.zenkoku-tabakoya.jp>. The keywords used in the initial searches on the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library were “Japan” and “smoking manners campaign”. Subsequently we conducted follow-up searches with additional keywords that had been identified through the initial searches, including “etiquette”, “Good Smoking”, “Smokin’ Clean”, “courtesy” and “CSR”.

The same keywords were used to search for additional information from the Japanese tobacco industry web sites, from peer-reviewed literature retrieved through online database resources (i.e. PubMed, the Japanese bibliographic database *Ichushi*, and Google Scholar), and from grey literature that included government records and media reports obtained through internet searches. We also used a snowballing strategy to locate further documents.

The searches were carried out in both English and Japanese between February and June 2012. Documents and other materials obtained through the searches were scanned and those with adequate information on the tobacco industry's *smoking manners* strategies and related activities were included in the review for this study. Our final analysis integrated information from all three activities.

A potential limitation of the study would be a lack of industry documents from Japan. Although we collected information from the websites of JT, we relied on a database of a U.S. institution to collect internal documents from the tobacco industry.

RESULTS

Development and evolution of the *smoking manners* strategies

As early as the 1960s, JTS (predecessor of JT) launched campaigns to promote *smoking manners*. In the early 1960s, JTS reported that there was an increasing concern about litter, and particularly cigarette butts, in public places. Civil society organizations launched campaigns to clean up the streets on the occasion of the Tokyo Olympic Games (9). JTS's campaigns in this period included the donation of ashtrays to public transport companies and local governments, the distribution of portable ashtrays to the public, and advertisements on television and in the print media, all of which aimed to promote “proper smoking etiquette” among smokers (9).

Beginning in 1974, JTS conducted the *Smokin’ Clean* campaign which aimed to encourage smokers to be considerate towards nonsmokers and to prevent litter and fires (9,10). In addition to the earlier features, the *Smokin’ Clean* campaign included activities such as establishing and maintaining smoking areas in stations in cooperation with Japan National Railways and designating a *Smoking manners month*, beginning in 1983, for an intensive *smoking manners* campaign (9,11). This campaign involved local governments and public and private corporations which helped to disseminate the idea of *smoking manners*. For instance, JTS provided *smoking manners* advertisements for inclusion in local government newspapers while allowing JTS's name to be removed from the advertisements when necessary (9).

In the 1980s, other tobacco companies also began promoting *smoking manners*. When the TIOJ – comprising the three largest tobacco companies of JT, Philip Morris Japan (PMJ) and British American Tobacco Japan – was established in Japan, one of its main activities was the *Better smoking manners* campaign that used television, radio, magazines and transportation to convey its message to the public (12,13). In the same year, the National Federation of Tobacco Retailers of Japan launched the *Smoking Courtesy* campaign targeting adult smokers in Tokyo with the slogan “Happy smoking with good manners” (14,15). This campaign included an attitude survey of smokers and nonsmokers on *smoking manners* and the finding that “cigarette smoking is acceptable as long as smokers are considerate of nonsmokers” was publicised in a wide range of media (15).

Meanwhile, JT continued its own *smoking manners* campaign. In the 1990s, JT began advertising campaigns featuring popular actors and actresses. For instance, a poster published in 1995 features an actor who smokes,

with the message “I love smoking. I don’t litter” (16). In 1998, Japanese tobacco companies introduced a voluntary regulation to stop tobacco brand advertising on television, radio and the internet, though *smoking manners* advertisements were excepted (17).

In 1998, JT began a new series of *smoking manners* advertisements called the *Adult Tobacco Training Course*. Each issue contained 15 lessons on manners in various situations – such as in a bar, on a date and at a beach resort (18). The earlier issues included more lessons related to smoking as compared to the later issues (Table 1) (18). All the advertisements up to 2006 are accompanied by the message “Tobacco is an adult indulgence” (18,19). This advertisement series, initially included in magazines and other print media, currently offers a short video series and is Available at on a special web site launched by JT, in book form and as an application for smartphones (18).

In 1995 PMJ also launched its own *Good Smoking?* campaign that allegedly aimed to “encourage courteous smoking manners while developing a positive corporate image of Philip Morris KK” (20). Like the manners campaigns carried out by JT, the PMJ campaign includes activities such as trash collection on the streets, the distribution of portable ashtrays and booklets on manners, and magazine advertisements (21).

Table I. Example of the lessons of the Adult Tobacco Training Course

Issue 1: Manners at a meeting

1. Ask others if you may smoke.
2. If they give their permission, do not forget to give a nod of acknowledgement.
3. Do not forget an ashtray, of course.
4. Choose a seat on the lee side. Never take an upwind seat.
5. Quickly assess where the smoke will head.
6. Begin naturally once you decide to smoke.
7. Light up with precise timing. (The wrong timing will attract unwelcome attention.)
8. Direct your eyes towards the meeting. Let your mind enjoy the taste of smoking.
9. Never breathe out as if you are sighing.
10. When you are talking, do not let the ash become too long and do not let it drop on the desk or table.
11. Relax of course, but never be careless.
12. Pay attention at all times that you do not pollute the indoor air with the smoke.
13. Generate one idea as you smoke one cigarette.
14. Offer a cigarette to someone who is irritated at running out of cigarettes.
15. Once the meeting is finished, be sure to clean the ashtray before you leave.

This is the first issue, and 100 issues had been published as of June 2012. Translation into English was done by authors. The original version in Japanese is Available at at JT’s special web site Otona Tobacco at <http://www.otonatobacco.com/index.html> (18).

JT’s smoking manners strategies in the 2000s

Beginning in 2004, JT’s *smoking manners* campaigns further expanded under the new slogan “Pay attention and you can change manners”, aiming to promote the coexistence of smokers and nonsmokers (20). The advertisement campaign in print media and on television began employing a new series of messages that illustrated various *smoking manners* scenarios (20). For example, one message states that smoking in a crowd should be refrained from because a cigarette could burn someone’s coat (Figure 1). There are four key themes in the messages: litter is the most common, followed by smoke/burns/fire, then portable ashtrays, and lastly outdoor smoking areas. None of the messages directly requests smokers to take a particular course of action but all encourage readers to think of the implications of the issues, thus leading to the slogan “Pay attention and you can change manners”. Print advertisements using these messages, and graphic images that describe each message, can be observed in a wide range of forms such as advertisements in newspapers, signs on trash bins and in trains, billboards and banners on streets, and free book covers and postcards. Commercials using the same messages were broadcast on television stations nationwide in March 2004 (19).

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In the same year, JT also began the *Pick up litter and you will love your city* initiative. In collaboration with local governments, companies, schools and community organizations, JT organized trash collection activities at community events to pick up litter to clean the streets. Since the beginning of this initiative, more than 1200 events had been organized as of March 2011 (20).



Figure 1.

Examples of smoking manners graphic images: The advertisement campaign carried out by JT in mid-2000s used graphic images that shows scenes mostly involving smoking to suggest audience to be aware of smoking manners. JT's special web site *Tobacco World* has a total of 72 different images available at <http://www.jti.co.jp/sstyle/index.html> (20). Source: JT Tobacco World



Figure 2.

“Manner Station” established by JT in Nanba, Osaka City: JT supported local governments, mostly those implemented ordinances regulating smoking in streets, to establish outdoor smoking areas. In Osaka City which implemented a local ordinance to designate no-street-smoking zones, JT established an outdoor smoking area named “Manner Station” in Nanba, one of the busiest district designated as a no-street-smoking zone (22).

JT's catch-line behind its CSR activities is "Creating a comfortable environment for both smokers and nonsmokers" (22). In addition to the activities mentioned above, JT provides consultancy services for business owners and managers to advise them on the separation of smoking and nonsmoking areas and online tools where restaurant managers can create "Smoking" and "No smoking" signs to put up in their premises (22). In its annual CSR report of 2011, JT concluded that "people who do not smoke are often irritated by tobacco smoke. Cigarette litter spoils the environment, can cause fires, and smoking in a crowd can be dangerous. At all times, smokers should show more courtesy to nonsmokers and to society. We advocate reasonable solutions to accommodate both smokers and nonsmokers" (22).

JT has promoted *smoking manners* not only through its own campaigns but also through local governments. For instance, JT has offered to establish and/or maintain outdoor smoking areas in cooperation with local governments – chiefly those implementing ordinances regulating smoking in streets. In Osaka City, one of the world's 100 largest cities, JT claims to have established an outdoor smoking area in Nanba, a major shopping district, and named the smoking area "Manner Station" (Figure 2). As of March 2011, 943 smoking areas had been established in 212 local jurisdictions (22).

JT has also been actively involved in local legislation related to street smoking in order to promote *smoking manners*. In Minato City, Tokyo, where JT's headquarters are located, a jurisdictional policy titled *Minato tobacco rules basic policy* was introduced to ask people to observe the following three rules in outdoor public places: "Be considerate to the health of nonsmokers", "Do not smoke in public places other than designated smoking areas" and "Do not cause litter with cigarette butts" (22,23). The tobacco industry, including JT, was requested to establish public smoking rooms in major stations, to cooperate in setting up designated smoking areas on streets, and to carry out awareness campaigns on *smoking manners* to facilitate enforcement of the rules (23). Furthermore, in Chiyoda City, Tokyo, the original slogan proposed for the ordinance on the street smoking ban – "From manners to rules" – was changed to include an additional sentence – "Then to manners" – after JT insisted that smoking in public places is a moral issue and cannot be solved solely by imposing a regulation (Figure 3) (24). In both Minato and Chiyoda, JT has helped the cities in their enforcement activities by establishing and managing designated smoking areas in streets.



Figure 3.

From manners to rules. Then to manners. A signboard with the slogan of the ordinance informs people that smoking in the street is prohibited in Chiyoda City: JT has affected local policy on street smoking. In Chiyoda City, Tokyo, the slogan for the ordinance on the street smoking ban affected by JT's promotion of smoking manners and emphasizes that smoking is a moral issue that requires observance of the manners, not the rules, in the end (24).



Figure 4.

Manners are commonly referenced in public service announcements in Japan: Manners are valued in Japanese culture and often used to suggest people to avoid or encourage certain behaviours in public. Left: *Do not urinate here!! Please cooperate!* – a signboard at a parking lot. Right: *Be kind and offer your seat* – Tokyo Metropolitan Government Transportation Bureau’s campaign against nuisance on public transport.

DISCUSSION

Courtesy is deeply rooted in Japanese culture. As Nitobe says in *Bushido: the Soul of Japan*, “Modesty and complaisance, actuated by respect for others’ feelings, are at the root of politeness, that courtesy and urbanity of manners which has been noticed by every foreign tourist as a marked Japanese trait” (25). Observance of manners holds great significance for the Japanese people for whom avoiding the type of behaviour that causes others to feel uncomfortable is an important matter of courtesy (26). In fact, manners are often mentioned on signboards and posters, urging people to avoid certain behaviours in public, or encouraging them to do others (Figure 4). The tobacco industry in Japan, led by JT, took advantage of the cultural importance of manners when it began to implement its *smoking manners* strategies in the 1960s.

The social acceptability of cigarette smoking has been a long-term concern of the tobacco industry. The industry has attempted to develop programmes and products with special characteristics that aim to increase the social acceptability of smoking. Some of these attempts have been carried out in Japan (26,27). For instance, RJ Reynolds took advantage of the fact that Japanese society values cleanliness and coexistence and shows increasing social concern for the environment to introduce its “clean cigarette” as a more socially acceptable brand (26).

Outside Japan the tobacco industry has promoted *accommodation programmes* in Latin American countries, calling for ineffective measures such as ventilation and separation of smoking and nonsmoking areas in order to maintain the social acceptability of smoking, thus undermining the implementation of effective smoke-free policy (28). As the social acceptability of smoking has declined in recent years, smoke-free policy has begun to spread to more national and subnational jurisdictions (27). Likewise, smoke-free policy is reported to be positively linked to an increase in the social unacceptability of smoking in Mexico and Uruguay (29). *Smoking manners* strategies are alternative attempts by the Japanese tobacco industry to increase the social acceptability of smoking.

The TIOJ introduced self-regulation of tobacco advertisements in the 1980s (13). As of June 2012, this self-regulation included bans on product advertisements in all media except those intended exclusively for adults

and in all public places except tobacco retail stores and smoking areas (13). However, the *smoking manners* advertisements are not covered by self-regulation and continue to appear on television and radio and in print media, which are easily accessible by minors. The industry also uses new media as communication technology advances. Thus the *smoking manners* strategies allow the industry to have access to wide range of media for indirect promotion of tobacco use to the wider public.

In the 1980s, public concern emerged as the adverse health impacts of smoking and exposure to SHS were publicized. For example, Hirayama published the first study reporting the link between lung cancer and exposure to SHS among nonsmokers in 1981, the Ministry of Health and Welfare published its first white paper on smoking and health in 1987 and, in the USA, the Surgeon-General issued a report on SHS in 1986 (30-32). In the 2000s, as the Health Promotion Act and the WHO FCTC came into effect, the ministry set out the need for tobacco-control measures to protect people from tobacco smoke. These significant events regarding tobacco control have coincided with the surge of the tobacco industry's *smoking manners* campaigns. Indeed, JT's most recent campaign was launched a few days after Japan signed the WHO FCTC in 2004 (33). The campaigns are, in fact, intended to influence the public's attitude to smoking. While highlighting that public smoking may be socially negative behaviour, the industry attempts to avert peoples' attention from the health perspective and presents smoking as an issue of manners by suggesting that there exists a code of manners that can solve such behaviour.

However, observance of manners cannot resolve the real problem of public smoking which is the adverse health impact due to exposure to SHS. Davis *et al.* concluded in their study from 1990 that "the common courtesy approach endorsed by the tobacco industry is unlikely, by itself, to eliminate exposure to environmental tobacco smoke" (34).

A factor contributing to the delay in tobacco control in Japan could be that smoking has been approached as an issue of manners rather than of health due to the industry's *smoking manners* strategies. This approach has influenced the definition of tobacco-control policy in Japan. Manners are indeed emphasized in many local ordinances on public smoking in Japan, and some oblige people to comply with manners. For example, some cities use the word "manners" to publicize local ordinances to a wider public audience. Ichikawa City, Chiba, gave a short title *Citizens' manners ordinance* to an ordinance restricting street smoking. Osaka City describes its ordinance on preventing street smoking prevention as "aimed at ensuring a safe, secure and comfortable living environment by improving people's manners and morals relating to street smoking" (35). Furthermore, municipalities in Tokyo launched a joint campaign to improve *smoking manners* in 2004 and JT was one of the partners in this campaign along with public transport companies and business associations (36). Through its *smoking manners* campaign, JT has become a partner in establishing smoking areas to create smokers' havens in many cities enforcing street smoking bans, so that smokers can smoke while observing *smoking manners*.

The tobacco industry in Japan, led by JT, has promoted the idea of *smoking manners* through its campaigns as if this is a solution to the problem of SHS. By taking advantage of the cultural value placed on manners by Japanese society, the *smoking manners* strategies have allowed the tobacco industry to access a wide range of mass media to disseminate a false image of smoking and the industry while indirectly promoting tobacco use and framing public smoking as a non-health issue.

The *smoking manners* strategies have also provided the industry with an opportunity to access local governments in order to establish partnerships with them allegedly to assist in implementing tobacco-related policies. With or without such partnership, several jurisdictions in Japan have introduced policies for regulating smoking in public places, directly referring to or in relation to the idea of *smoking manners* for aesthetic reasons (4). The spread of the industry partnerships and the idea of *smoking manners* among local governments imply that the tobacco industry has indeed had influence over the policy-making process.

The *smoking manners* strategies have been used for several decades and have changed as political views and public concern about tobacco use have changed. These strategies are examples of the tobacco industry's attempts to increase the social acceptability of smoking which is negatively related to tobacco-control policy. In other words, this approach is an example of a cultural adaptation of the tobacco industry tactic of interference in attempts to protect people from harmful exposure to SHS. The industry's use of *smoking manners* strategies has recently extended outside Japan. In Busan, Republic of Korea, JT International launched a campaign using similar *smoking manners* messages on the occasion of the 2011 Busan International Film Festival of which JT was a partner (37).

Stronger enforcement of the WHO FCTC – particularly Article 5.3 in order to protect tobacco-control policies from the tobacco industry and Article 13 to comprehensively prohibit tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship – would allow such strategies to be counteracted. In some countries such as Australia, Brazil and the United Kingdom, the national governments have taken measures to protect tobacco-control policy from the tobacco industry, as requested in Article 5.3. The measures include banning donations from the tobacco

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industry and ensuring the transparency of any interaction between the government and the industry. Such measures to protect public health from tobacco are recommended for implementation in Japan.

DISCLAIMER

The views presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the decisions, policies or views of the World Health Organization. The photographs inserted in this paper were taken by the authors during the direct observation.

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