

‘Intend to Quit’ Behavior of Smokers

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Introduction

Cigarette smoking is one of the major causes of premature mortality due to cancer and cardiovascular diseases. This habit is an avoidable cause of many public health problems and can save governments’ public health cost to a greater extent. That’s why, we can see severe governmental pressures on cigarette companies for advertising, ban on smoking in public places, making cigarettes costlier by the way of imposing hefty taxes and ‘stop smoking’ and ‘anti tobacco day’ campaigns by civil society organizations. The smoking habit is very common among the college level students. There are many theories that have been suggested for understanding the factors that influence smoking behavior among adolescents, for example Smith and Stutts (1999) found prior beliefs, peer pressure and family smoking were more important variables than advertising and anti smoking information in influencing the adolescents to smoke. Further, they also found that the importances of these variables vary with grade level, gender and ethnicity. Hornik (1989) identified that the individuals with high present orientation has more tendency to smoke than individuals who have future orientation. Andrews et al (2004) examined the impact of antitobacco campaign advertising on the adolescents with prior smoking behavior and found that their antismoking beliefs and intent to smoke were directly affected by the ad campaign attitudes. Using a longitudinal data on smoking behavior of teens for four years in United States, Gilleskie and Strumpf (2005) found that the price increase would have more long run impact than short run impact on becoming ex smokers.

There are many smokers who intend to quit smoking but do not quit (Ho, 1998). If we can understand their behavior, it would be very useful to the public policy makers and anti tobacco campaign advertisers for sharpening their strategic decisions. To facilitate such cause, a research study was planned to understand the smoking behavior among students, their intentions to quit smoking, the nature of their attempts to quit and reasons for failures. This paper presents the methodology of the research, analysis and results and finally implications.

Methodology

A questionnaire was prepared and the survey was carried out during November – December 2006 in Dubai Academic City where students from various universities are present. The sample size for the study was 136 students who have the habit of smoking and the respondents were chosen on convenience sampling method. The questionnaire included aspects on smoking behavior such as average number of cigarettes smoked per day, reasons for starting smoking, reasons for the intention to quit, people trying to make the smokers to quit and attitude on intend to quit (in a four point as well as two point scale), harmful effects of smoking, societal restrictions and anti smoking campaign. The collected data was subjected to hypotheses testing with Chi² test and multiple regression using SPSS 10.0.

Analysis and Results

Chi² Test

The Chi² test was employed to understand the relationship between the attitude on intend to quit which was measured on two point scale (i.e., yes or no) and gender of the smokers, no of cigarettes that they are smoking, reasons for smoking and reasons for intend to quit. The results are presented in table 1. The results of the Chi² test reveal that there is no significant relationship between the gender of the smokers and the attitude on intend to quit. Further, there seems to be no significant relationship between the number of cigarettes smoked and the attitude on intend to

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quit. Similarly, Chi² test result also shows that the relationship between the reasons for smoking and attitude on intend to quit seems to be minimal. Importantly, the intend to quit attitude and the precursors for the intend to quit attitude seems to have significant relationship.

Table 1. Chi Square Test for Intend to Quit (two point scale)

Factors		Intend to Quit		Chi Square
		Yes	No	
Gender	Male	24	86	0.936
	Female	8	18	
No. of Cigarettes	<10	22	69	0.064
	>10	10	35	
Reasons for Smoking	Friends	14	8	6.024
	Wanted to try	71	22	
	Style	6	2	
	Other Reasons	13	0	
Precursors for the intend to quit attitude	Health problems	44	20	10.813*
	Family / Friends advice	22	10	
	Just I wanted	38	2	

* P <0.01

Multiple Regression Analysis

To test the hypotheses such as H1 – Attitude on harmful effects of smoking will lead to the attitude on intend to quit, H2 – Attitude on societal restrictions will lead to the attitude on intend to quit and H3 – attitude on anti smoking advertising campaign; a multiple regression analysis was employed and the results are presented in table 2. The R² of the multiple regression analysis clearly shows that the variations in the dependent variable are explained to a small fraction by the variations in independent variables included in the study. This shows that the attitude on intend to quit is explained many other variables which are not included in the study.

If we see the significance of the individual hypotheses except H1 all other hypotheses (H2 and H3) are non significant. There appears to be significant relationship between attitude on harmful effects and attitude on intend to quit. This shows the attitude on harmful effects is one of the major variables in making the smokers to think on quitting smoking.

Table 2 Results of Hypotheses Testing with Multiple Regression

Hypotheses	Independent Variable	Beta	T Value	Hypotheses Supported
H1	Att_Harm_Eff	0.223	2.63*	Yes
H2	Att_Soc_Res	-0.093	0.28	No
H3	Att_Anti_Smo_Adv	-0.061	0.47	No

Dependent Variable = Intend to Quit; R²=0.060; *P<0.01

Conclusion

In this research, particularly we found that the attitude on harmful effects have significant impact on the attitude on intend to quit. It clearly shows that health consciousness is the main reason for the intention to quit smoking not by societal restrictions and the currently available anti smoking advertising campaigns. To increase the intend to quit attitude and make the smokers to actually quit smoking, it would be advisable to educate on the various harmful affects associated with the smoking like mouth cancer, stomach cancer, heart attack and stroke, straining the blood vessels, amputated limbs, impotency etc. It also shows that the active message like creating fear about the harmful effects could be very effective for the intention to quit rather than passive messages. The government can even make it mandatory for cigarette companies to put graphic cigarette warnings. The full-color, picture-based warnings cover half of the front and back of each package of cigarettes. They include pictures of a diseased mouth, a lung tumor, a brain after a stroke, a damaged heart, and a limp cigarette that warns of impotence. Warnings inside each package offer tips on quitting. This may also influence a greater number of smokers to quit smoking.

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