Slide 1

Get’em when they’re young, keep’em when they’re old: Menthol’s role in initiating and sustaining tobacco use

Stacey J. Anderson, PhD
Dept. of Social and Behavioral Sciences
University of California, San Francisco
stacey.anderson@ucsf.edu

140th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association
October 27-31, 2012
San Francisco, CA

Slide 2

Presenter Disclosures

Stacey J. Anderson, PhD

(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose

Slide 3

Research Questions

1. Are/were menthol cigarettes marketed with health reassurance messages?
2. How do smokers tend to view menthol cigarettes?
3. What are the perceived sensory and taste rewards of menthol?
4. Do menthol’s perceived sensory and taste rewards relate to cessation?
5. Do menthol’s perceived sensory and taste rewards relate to initiation?
Slide 7

1. Messages: Health Reassurance

The following are the two obstacles to overcome:

A. The_Kool_tagline _will move into the health_reassurance segment so

that 15% of Kool purchases will be in the perceived product

of menthol

B. The_Kool_tagline

Slide 8

2. Consumer Perceptions of Menthol

There were indications that the menthol smokers subconsciously

perceived menthol cigarette as being healthier. There was

an association of a "health image" associated with menthol, related

to its cooling of the tobacco taste, and the association with

medicinal, analgesic, and sore throat.

Stimulus analysis considered that tobacco health statements

It is interesting to note that several consumers began making

menthol cigarettes as they had tried their regular

brands too bitter. The consumer believed that "menthol

cigarettes are better for you."


slide 9

2. Consumer Perceptions of Menthol

Although the previous results is a big part why menthol is larger

than the PM and PM brands, the only type existing from claimed

activity.

PMF (6.5%) 

Not approved 77% (6.5%)

null hypothesis I started smoking Kools when

I had a cold. It still good so I

buy on smoking them.

Source: NCI public health study.
2. Consumer Perceptions of Menthol

Most of all, menthol cigarettes are characterized internally with:
- Rich, smooth smoke with "mild" flavor and aroma
- Taste is perceived as "cigarette-like" flavor and aroma
- "Rip" to achieve true "cigarette-like" flavor and aroma

Because of its cool, refreshing sensation, menthol cigarettes are perceived as having a mild, refreshing effect on the throat. The aroma is "cigarette-like," and the flavor is "cigarette-like" as well, providing a smooth, cool, and refreshing smoking experience.

3. Sensation and Taste

Menthol smokers want to smoke a "refreshing" cigarette.
- They tend to define refreshment primarily as coolness due to smoothness/balance.
- They smoke menthol cigarettes primarily to avoid negative sensations that occur with unsweetened brands, i.e., harshness, dryness, and irritability.
- Cessation is not a major benefit in itself but a means to achieve the benefits they want — reduced harshness/bitterness, fresh, clean taste, and aftertaste.

3a. Initiation

1. First-time smoker reaction is generally negative
   - Foreign taste
   - Harsh/bitter
   - Adoption requires slow acclimation
2. Initial negatives can be alleviated with a low level of menthol
   - Reduced harshness/bitterness
   - Takes edge off flavor
   - Previous taste experience
   - Traditional and maintains integrity
3a. Initiation

3b. Cessation
3b. Cessation

At a deeper level of consciousness, there seems little doubt that
smoking methode functions also as a guilt-reducing mechanism.
Hence it somewhat alters the total smoking experience, providing
its own kind of "High", as it were. It manages to some small
measure to subtly disguise the act.

Some smokers go further, evoking medicinal properties in the
metabolism.

The appeal to mental health, of course, is introduced in this genre by pure
propinquity - accidentally to happen that someone who actually gave
me a mental break. And generally this is to the belief that, by and
large, nicotine is somewhat less addictive or even less harmful than
regular cigarettes.

...as opposed to converting to non-smokers.

---

Slide 18

---

3b. Cessation

Nicotine cravings may be characterized from quitting, or at least least in the
smoker's mind, by either of the two main opposites: nicotine rejections.
A few nicotine cravings may be seen... (Note: the
treatment of nicotine is for the most part, not
merely to reduce nicotine craving... [citation].)

Hence, smokers may be characterized from quitting, or at least least in the
smoker's mind, by either of the two main opposites: nicotine rejections.
A few nicotine cravings may be seen... (Note: the
treatment of nicotine is for the most part, not
merely to reduce nicotine craving... [citation].)
Slide 19

3b. Cessation

- Salem and Newport: menthol to lower risk of offending others with odor/smoke

**Concerns About Smoking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salem</th>
<th>Newport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>Newport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Potential example of success among "menthol" brands may be Rollins

- Menthol smokers may prefer certain brands to avoid social concern about smoking

- Menthol may support tobacco's positioning as a trend with a solution to social concerns.

Slide 20

3b. Cessation

Mental smokers are slightly less inclined than non-menthol smokers to feel uncomfortable about smoking around others.

Slide 21

**Discussion**

1. Menthol cigarettes were originally marketed on a health platform, and health messages successfully convinced consumers that menthol cigarettes were "better for" them than non-menthol cigarettes.

2. Menthol smokers perceive pleasant minty or medicinal-like tastes, and soothing, cooling anesthetic sensations with menthol cigarettes. These perceptions encourage initiation and discourage quitting in menthol smokers.
Menthol's flavor, sensation, and perceived reduced risk and social acceptability attract young initiates, and de-motivate quitting in smokers who may otherwise quit.

Making cigarettes more attractive to new smokers and less desirable to quit among established smokers contributes to the incidence of tobacco-related diseases and to the public health burden.