

Smoke, Switch, Quit

A corpus-assisted investigation of tobacco industry and health bodies' language around tobacco use

Introduction

Tobacco-product language used by the scientific community and the public do not always overlap.

These gaps in understanding can:

- ▶ Impact the effectiveness of the communication of health risks to the public
- ▶ Provide opportunities for the tobacco industry to:
 - Influence public opinions
 - Obfuscate tobacco product-related harms
 - Interfere in health policy processes

Aims

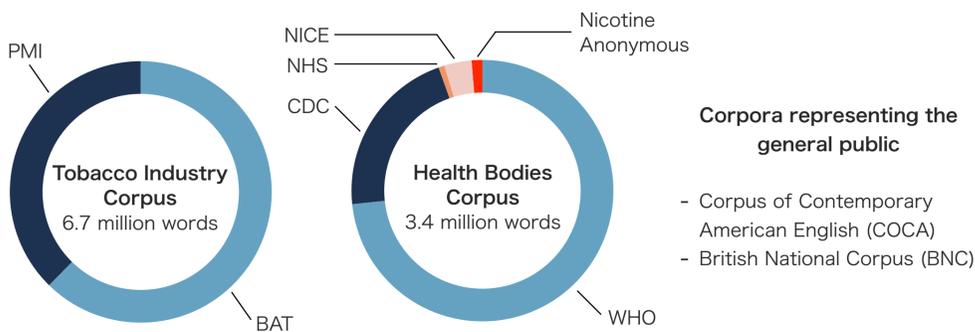
Through corpus-assisted comparative analysis of how the tobacco industry, health bodies and the general public talk about tobacco use, we aim to:

- Bridge gaps in understanding smokers, smoking and cessation behaviours by different groups;
- Facilitate clear communication of the potential health impacts of tobacco products;
- Highlight trends in the development of tobacco-related language over time

Methodology

Data Search query: smok* OR quit* OR cessation OR switch* OR vap* OR experiment* OR relaps* OR "us* NRT*" OR "dual" OR addict*

Time frame: 2003-2023



Analytical tools

- Collocation (by MI3 score, 5 < > 5, freq threshold = 5)
- Concordancing & critical discourse analysis
- Usage fluctuation analysis

Analysis

RQ1: How are smokers represented?

Tobacco industry	Health bodies	General public
<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of personal narratives Emphasise agency and autonomy in smoking behaviours: 'want' (19.3), 'choose' (19.1) Passive role in the decision to switch to newer tobacco products: 'encouraging' (20.8), 'convert' (20.6), 'convince' (19.6) Positioned as beneficiaries of newer, lower-risk products: 'better' (22.0), 'choice' (22.0) 	<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referred to as statistics: 'number' (20.6), 'proportion' (18.8) Frequently collectivised, grouped based on smoking behaviours: Status: 'current' (28.2), Frequency: 'daily' (23.8), Product: 'cigarette' (26.1) Positioned as the receiver of cessation services: 'quit' (25.1), 'cessation' (20.5), 'tips' (20.4), 'help' (19.2) 	<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binary categories outside of academic discourse: 'smokers' vs. 'non-smokers' Negative semantic prosody: 'smokers have zero morals about throwing their cancer sticks on the floor, disgusting!!!' Becoming 'regular' smokers is considered undesirable: 'Many kids do try a cigarette at one time or another but don't go on to become regular smokers.' Associated with newer tobacco products; positive languages around 'e-cigarettes'

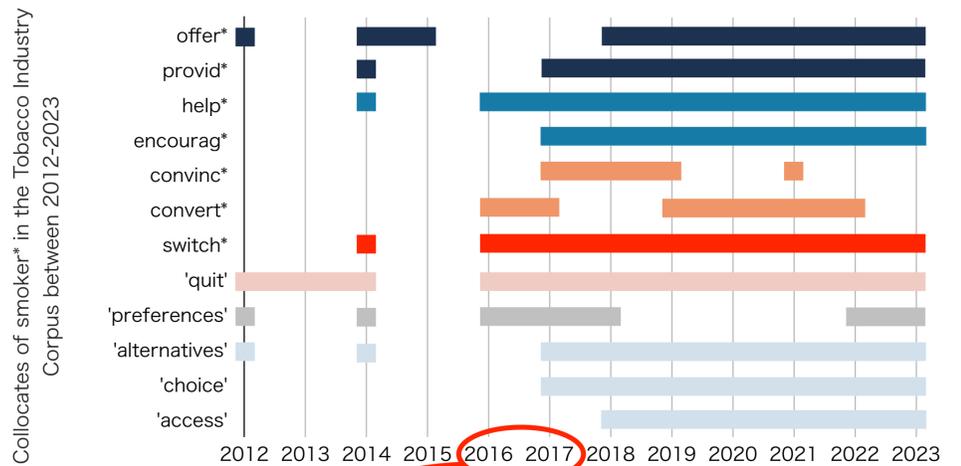
(MI3 score in brackets)

smoker*

RQ2: How is smoking represented?

Tobacco industry	Health bodies	General public
<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associated with switching to newer tobacco products: 'switch' (24.0) Smoking as a continuous behaviour: 'continue', 'continuing', 'starting' Switching as a discreet event: 'completely' (21.0), 'switched' (19.4) Switching as the one option for those 'who would otherwise continue to smoke' 	<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associated with termination: 'stop' (21.4), 'quit' (21.0) Addiction discourses: 'urge' (20.6), 'urges' (17.5) Associated with health and economic costs: 'health' (17.8), 'caused' (20.6), 'costs' (17.6) 	<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associated with 'drinking', 'alcohol', 'drugs', 'diet', 'obesity' Negative semantic prosody in forum texts Glamorised depictions in fictional texts Polarised discourses around smoking bans - right to smoke vs. right to clean air: 'ban', 'bans', 'indoors'

Change across time



- Meaning associations of smoker* shift in tobacco industry's language
- Emergence of discourses around switching smokers to newer products
- Quitting became the best choice, switching became the second best

Conclusion

- There are marked differences between the discourses of the target groups relating to smoking and tobacco use
- Tobacco industry narratives may unfairly emphasise the role of agency in tobacco use; whereas descriptions of smokers by the health bodies forefront them as service users, with impersonal framing
- Positive language shared by the tobacco industry and the general public around newer products highlights common understandings that could be detrimental to long-term public health
- Reductive or antagonising representations of smokers and smoking-related issues can be unhelpful
- Better aligning language around smoking and tobacco use could aid the development not only of more effective person-centred health messaging but also of more effective health policies at a local and international level.

References

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