

The Important Role of Reference Group in Smoking Behavior Demarketing Model

Muhammad Johan Widikusyanto ^{1)*}

University Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa

mjohanw@gmail.com

Widya Nur Bhakti Pertiwi ²⁾

University Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa

Arum Wahyuni Purbohastuti ³⁾

University Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa

Solehatin Ika Putri ⁴⁾

University Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa

ABSTRACT

Smoking behavior is one of the main causes of death from dangerous diseases in various countries, including Indonesia, which records more than 200 thousand deaths per year. To reduce cigarette consumption, a demarketing strategy can be applied with the aim of reducing the demand for dangerous products. This study aims to develop a more complete smoking behavior demarketing model, including the variables Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Reference Group, Attitude towards smoking, and Smoking behavior. This study also formulates a demarketing strategy based on the results of testing the model. Several relationships between variables, such as the influence of the marketing mix (4Ps) and reference groups on smoking attitudes and behavior, still lack empirical exploration. Previous studies also tend to stop testing smoking intentions without directly measuring smoking behavior. This study fills the gap by adding reference groups as important variables and directly testing the influence of various variables on smoking behavior.

The questionnaire was distributed to active smokers with a total of 592 smokers. Furthermore, the data collected was analyzed using SEM. The research findings show that product, price, promotion, and reference group influence smoking attitudes and behavior. While the place has no effect. Meanwhile, price influences smoking attitudes, but not smoking behavior. It appears that reference groups have the greatest influence on smoking behavior followed by promotion. Based on these findings, several strategies can be formulated to suppress smoking behavior.

Keywords: demarketing, marketing mix, reference group, smoking attitude, smoking behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Starting from the various negative impacts of smoking behavior ranging from dangerous diseases to death in various countries, the idea of Demarketing for cigarettes was born. Until now, every year more than 200 thousand people in Indonesia and more than 8 million people worldwide die from smoking (Widikusyanto, 2023). The demarketing strategy was initially used to reduce demand and consumption of hazardous products such as alcohol and the like.

Several studies have tried to contribute a smoking behavioral demarketing model to help suppress smoking behavior. Several smoking behavioral demarketing models that have quite complete variables include Tielung et al. (2021) Which tested the 4Ps on smoking intentions. Two other studies, namely Olatunde et al. (2020) and Shiu et al. (2009) tested a more complete model by adding attitude variables.

One important variable missing from these three models is the reference group. This variable has been shown to have an important influence on smoking behavior. In addition, the existing model only stops at smoking intentions. Whereas it is important to understand the influence of various variables on smoking behavior directly. The study conducted by Widikusyanto (2023) has indeed seen the importance of direct testing of smoking behavior, but has not seen the importance of reference groups to understand more completely and better the factors that determine smoking attitudes and smoking behavior.

The purpose of this study is to develop a more complete Demarketing model of smoking behavior consisting of several variables including Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Reference Group, Attitude towards smoking behavior, and Smoking Behavior. Furthermore, a demarketing strategy will be formulated based on the results of testing the model.

Some variable relationships that still have little research or empirical evidence include the influence of the marketing mix (4Ps) on smoking behavior. Only a few studies can be found, including research by Sinaga et al. (2019); Amalia (2018); Fachriza & Moeliono (2017); Pandayu et al. (2017). Most of the research in the marketing field provides benefits for cigarette companies, not to hinder cigarette marketing.

There is even less research on the influence of Reference Groups on smoking behavior. Some of the research includes Nyoko et al. (2024); Utami (2020); Hidayah & Izzaty (2019); Pandayu et al. (2017); Liem (2014). Even less research on the influence of Smokers' Attitudes on Smoking Behavior. Some of these researches include Pranasari et al. (2021); Pandayu et al. (2017); Rochayati & Hidayat (2015). Furthermore, research on the influence of the marketing mix on smokers' attitudes is much less. Some of the researches include Olatunde et al. (2020); Chauhan & Setia (2016); and Shiu et al. (2009). At least one research on the influence of Reference Groups on smokers' attitudes was found, only one study from Yoo et al. (2016).

The urgency of this research is the ongoing high consumption of cigarettes and deaths, around 200 thousand more in Indonesia, and 8 million more in the world per year due to diseases related to smoking behavior. This research is expected to provide a real contribution to Marketing Science, especially Demarketing and help the government and related parties suppress the smoking behavior of the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The marketing mix designed and implemented by manufacturers can influence consumer behavior, especially consumer behavior in consuming cigarettes. The Smoker Environment such as Cigarette Companies is an external stimulus that can encourage the emergence of smoking behavior. Cigarette companies design Marketing Mixes such as Products, Prices, Distribution and Promotion (Kotler & Keller, 2016) to create sales and consumption of cigarettes in their target market. Cigarettes and prices that suit the tastes of the target market and the right distribution and effective promotion will be able to encourage them to buy and consume them. The Marketing Mix is the elements of a company organization that can be controlled by the company in communicating with consumers and will be used to satisfy consumers. Kotler & Keller (2016) formulated a marketing mix consisting of 4Ps, as follows:

- 1) Product, which consists of Physical good features; Quality level; accessories; packaging; warranties; product lines; and branding.
- 2) Place (distribution channels/locations), which consists of channel type; exposure; intermediaries; outlet locations; transportation; storage and managing channels.
- 3) Promotion, consisting of sales people; advertising; sales promotion; publicity, and internet/web strategy.
- 4) Price, consisting of flexibility; price level; terms; differentiation; discounts; and allowances.

In addition to the 4Ps in the marketing mix, reference groups also play an important role in shaping smoking attitudes and behavior. Reference Groups are groups that are considered as a frame of reference for individuals in making their purchasing or consumption decisions (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). Kotler & Armstrong (2018) define a reference group as a direct or indirect point of comparison, or as a reference in shaping a person's attitudes and behavior.

Reference groups can have direct and indirect influences. Reference groups that have direct influence include groups with whom a person interacts directly such as family and close friends. Reference groups that have indirect influence consist of people or groups who do not have direct contact with the consumers they influence, such as celebrities, company leaders, athletes, political figures, or someone who is considered successful.

The process of marketing mix and reference groups influencing smoking attitudes and behavior can be understood using the Kotler and Keller Consumer Behavior model (2016) which describes how consumers behave in meeting their needs. In this model, the consumer purchasing decision-making process goes through five stages (Kotler and Keller, 2016), including Problem recognition, Information search, Alternative evaluation, Purchase decision, and Post-purchase behavior. Consumer purchasing decisions are influenced by consumer psychology and characteristics. While the 4Ps in the marketing mix can be used by marketers to influence Consumer Psychology and characteristics.

Various studies have proven the influence of the 4Ps and reference groups on smoking attitudes and behavior. The Influence of the Marketing Mix (4Ps) on Smoker Attitudes has been proven by Chauhan & Setia (2016); and Shiu et al. (2009), and its influence on Smoking Behavior by Sinaga et al. (2019); Amalia (2018); Fachriza and Moeliono (2017); Pandayu et al. (2017); and Mandey (2013).

Meanwhile, the reference group has been proven to influence the attitude of smokers according to the results of the study by Yoo et al., (2016) and on smoking behavior based on the research results of Utami (2020); Pandayu et al. (2017); Liem (2014). The attitude of smokers has been proven to influence smoking behavior based on the research findings of Pranasari et al. (2021); Pandayu et al. (2017); Rochayati & Hidayat (2015).

Based on the literature review and various studies on smoking behavior that have been explained, the model hypothesis proposed in this study is shown in Figure 1 below.

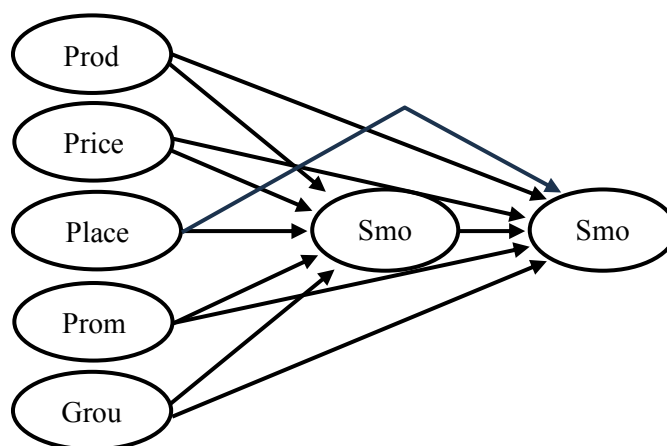


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is quantitative with a causality approach, aiming to test the hypothesis model quantitatively or through statistical analysis. The variables studied include the Marketing Mix (Product, Price,

Distribution, Promotion), reference group, and smoker attitudes, which are measured using seven indicators. This study uses a 7-point Likert scale, with answer options ranging from one to seven.

Smoking behavior is measured using a ratio scale through open-ended questions that include the number of cigarettes consumed per day, duration of smoking, and age of starting smoking. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to active smokers and returned directly. A purposive sampling technique was applied to determine the sample, with the criteria for respondents being individuals who are still actively smoking. The number of samples was set at 600 respondents. From the questionnaires collected, 600 questionnaires were received, but 8 of them could not be used because they were incompletely filled in, so the final sample size was 592 respondents.

The validity and reliability of the instrument were tested using Factor Analysis and Cronbach Alpha. Meanwhile, model analysis was carried out using the structural equation modeling (SEM) method assisted by AMOS software. Hypothesis testing is performed after the model meets the required Goodness-of-Fit criteria. The results of the instrument testing are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Research Instrument Test Results

Constructs	Product	Price	Place	Promotion	Reference Group	Attitude
Factor Loadings	0.775	0.847	0.695	0.761	0.710	0.705
	0.833	0.838	0.845	0.765	0.847	0.779
	0.687	0.809	0.893	0.668	0.536	0.767
Cronbach's Alpha	0.732	0.813	0.795	0.640	0.632	0.638

In Table 1, it can be seen that all Factor Loading scores of the constructs studied are above 0.5, and the Cronbach's alpha value of each construct is above 0.60. Thus, the research instrument is valid and reliable.

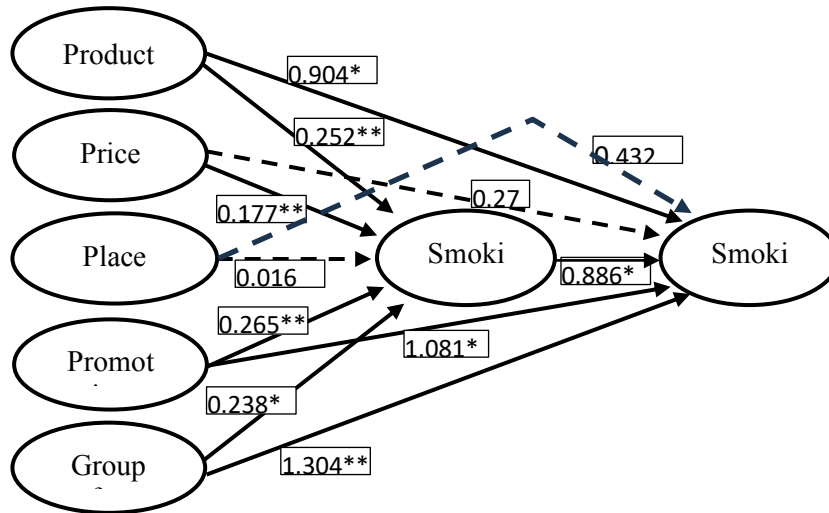
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Structural Model Testing or Hypothesis Testing is carried out after the model meets the required Goodness-Of-Fit value. The results of the Goodness Of Fit Model estimation are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
The Goodness of Fit Index

The Goodness of Fit Indeks	Cut-off value	Estimation Results
CMIN/DF	< 5.00	2.188
GFI	> 0.90	0.946
AGFI	> 0.90	0.924
CFI	> 0.90	0.929
TLI	> 0.90	0.909
RMSE	< 0.07	0.045

Based on Table 2, the tested model has been fit because the model fit index has been met such as CMIN/DF, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. Furthermore, the influence of the marketing mix and reference group on smoking attitude and smoking behavior is shown in Figure 2 which shows the level of significance based on the probability value.



Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 2. Results of testing the relationship between variables

The SEM estimation results are shown in more detail in Table 3.

Table 3
Results of the SEM estimation

	Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	P	Result
Product	→ Smoking Attitude	0.252	2.895	0.004	Supported
Product	→ Smoking Behavior	0.904	2.237	0.025	Supported
Price	→ Smoking Attitude	0.177	3.683	***	Supported
Price	→ Smoking Behavior	0.271	1.24	0.215	Not Supported
Place	→ Smoking Attitude	0.016	0.294	0.768	Not Supported
Place	→ Smoking Behavior	0.432	1.682	0.093	Not Supported
Promotion	→ Smoking Attitude	0.265	4.268	***	Supported
Promotion	→ Smoking Behavior	1.081	3.701	***	Supported
Group Reference	→ Smoking Attitude	0.238	2.284	0.022	Supported
Group Reference	→ Smoking Behavior	1.304	2.653	0.008	Supported
Smoking Attitude	→ Smoking Behavior	0.886	2.234	0.026	Supported

The analysis results in Table 3 show that all variables have an effect on Smoking attitude and Smoking behavior except Place. While Price only affects smoking attitude but does not affect smoking behavior.

Product Has a Positive Influence on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior.

Strong cigarette brands often carry certain associations, such as trust, social status, or lifestyle aspirations. For example, brands with a "masculine" or "classy" image can attract certain market segments, forming positive attitudes toward the brand. Perceptions of quality such as smooth or not-too-sharp taste can create a satisfying consumption experience. Satisfied customers tend to develop positive attitudes towards the product and strengthen repeat behavior. Attractive design and packaging can provide aesthetic value. Luxurious or futuristic designs are often associated with an exclusive and innovative impression, which can build consumer pride in their choice. Cigarette products with a variety of flavors (eg mint, fruit) can attract young or novice consumers, forming positive attitudes towards the

product because of the new, pleasant experience. Satisfying taste and pleasant consumption experience create positive impressions in the brain (hedonic reinforcement), which unconsciously increase positive attitudes towards cigarettes. In some cultures, certain cigarette brands are considered status symbols. The choice of brands that look "expensive" or "elite" can strengthen the positive attitudes of consumers who want to be socially recognized.

Price Has a Positive Effect on Smoking Attitude and No Effect on Smoking Behavior.

A price that is considered cheap and appropriate creates a high perceived value, which strengthens consumers' positive attitudes. Higher-priced cigarettes are often perceived as being of better quality, thus creating a positive perception. Smokers often feel that they are paying more for a superior product. However, in the case of cigarettes, price tends to have little effect on behavior due to its addictive nature. Addictive products such as cigarettes are inelastic, so price changes do not significantly affect purchasing behavior.

Place Has No Effect on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior.

If someone has a positive attitude toward smoking, their decision to smoke is less likely to be influenced by whether cigarettes are easy or hard to get. Cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive. Nicotine dependence can make smoking behavior more related to biological needs than external factors such as product availability. In many societies, social norms play a large role in determining smoking behavior. In communities where smoking is considered normal or accepted, people will find ways to get cigarettes even if access is difficult. Conversely, in communities that have a strong negative stigma against smoking, smoking attitudes and behavior will remain low even if cigarettes are widely available. Peer groups have a significant influence on smoking behavior, especially among adolescents. If the social environment supports smoking, the availability of cigarettes becomes a secondary factor. Cigarettes are inelastic goods, meaning that demand for cigarettes does not change much even if distribution is restricted. People who want to smoke will tend to find ways to get cigarettes, even if it is more difficult. When legal cigarette distribution is restricted, consumers often turn to the black market or informal sources. This suggests that formal distribution barriers are not always effective in changing smoking behavior. Cigarette consumers often have high brand loyalty. This loyalty can reduce their sensitivity to changes in distribution. They may be willing to go to extra effort to get their favorite brands. When cigarettes become harder to find, some individuals may feel compelled to smoke as a form of resistance to the restrictions.

Promotion Has a Positive Influence on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior.

Promotion is an important element of the marketing mix that serves to communicate the value of the product to consumers. In the context of cigarettes, companies often use advertising, event sponsorships, and brand placement strategies to create a certain image. Effective promotion can shape positive perceptions of cigarette products, such as associating them with a desired lifestyle, freedom, or masculinity. In addition, by creating strong emotional associations, promotions help build positive attitudes toward smoking, which then encourages consumer behavior to try or continue smoking. Some key promotional strategies include leveraging emotions, such as self-confidence, rebellion, or social connection, which make the product feel more desirable. Using public figures, celebrities, or trusted figures, creates a psychological connection between the audience and the product. Placing promotions on popular platforms such as social media, movies, or sporting events increases the visibility and exposure of the message, indirectly influencing audiences. Consistent and intense communication through these channels creates a strong influence on attitudes and behaviors toward smoking.

Cigarette promotion exploits a variety of psychological mechanisms that can influence individual attitudes and behaviors. Through promotion, individuals see examples or role models who smoke, which they then

imitate, especially if the role models are perceived as successful or attractive. Promotional messages often associate smoking with positive attributes, such as freedom, a modern lifestyle, or strong social relationships. This creates cognitive associations that promote positive attitudes toward smoking. Promotion can also convey the impression that smoking is a solution to emotional problems, such as stress or boredom, thus influencing behavior. Because cigarettes are also addictive, effective promotion can reinforce psychological addiction by normalizing the habit.

Cigarette promotion not only affects individuals but also operates at a social level. Some of how promotion influences social behavior include promotional campaigns to make smoking seem normal or even aspirational in a particular society. This reduces the negative stigma of smoking and encourages a permissive attitude toward the habit. Promotions that associate smoking with togetherness or group solidarity influence individuals to conform to group norms. By associating smoking with a certain social status, such as being successful or influential, promotions create social pressure to smoke to achieve that image.

Promotions not only shape positive attitudes toward smoking, but they also encourage the conversion of attitudes into behavior. When individuals already have positive perceptions of smoking (such as thinking it is cool or helps with relaxation), they are more likely to try and continue smoking, especially if repeated promotional encouragement reinforces those beliefs. Promotions that successfully create initial pleasurable experiences with smoking also trigger the formation of habits that are more difficult to change.

Reference Groups Have a Positive Influence on Smoking Attitude and Smoking Behavior.

Humans need to feel accepted and recognized by their group. Reference groups, such as peers, family, or social communities, play an important role in shaping an individual's identity. When a reference group has positive attitudes toward smoking, individuals who want to be accepted by the group are likely to adopt similar attitudes as a way of showing affiliation. Individuals learn by observing the behavior of others. If a person sees that smoking is accepted or even rewarded within their group, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward smoking. This is especially true among adolescents, where social pressure from peers is a powerful factor in shaping attitudes and behavior.

Reference groups serve as sources of social norms. Social norms are unwritten rules that dictate what is considered acceptable or expected in a community. In the context of smoking, if a reference group has norms that support smoking, individuals in that group feel that smoking is a natural or even necessary behavior to be part of the group. Peer pressure also plays a significant role, especially in environments where smoking is seen as a symbol of maturity, courage, or solidarity. Individuals who want to avoid social exclusion may feel compelled to smoke, even if they initially have no intentions or attitudes that support the behavior.

Reference groups are often used to influence consumer behavior through strategies such as word-of-mouth marketing or advertising that features a particular social group. For example, cigarette brands often associate their products with certain images, such as freedom, masculinity, or a modern lifestyle. If a person's reference group adopts these images, the individual is more likely to have positive attitudes toward smoking and eventually develop smoking behaviors to fit in. Additionally, the social symbolism of smoking within a particular group, such as being considered "cool" or "brave," makes smoking a tool for constructing a social identity. In this case, the reference group serves as a reinforcer of attitudes and behaviors because it provides social validation for those actions.

The influence of reference groups is not only limited to the formation of attitudes toward smoking but also drives the transition from attitudes to behavior. When people see members of their reference group smoking consistently, they may feel that this behavior is an acceptable or even expected way to express their attitudes. This strengthens the positive relationship between smoking attitudes and smoking.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that Group reference and promotion are the main influences on smoking attitudes and behavior. Group reference turns out to play the most dominant role in influencing smoking behavior, indicating that social support or pressure from a person's environment greatly influences their decision to smoke. In addition, Promotion is also the second most important factor after group reference in influencing smoking behavior, indicating that effective communication strategies can encourage individuals to smoke more actively.

Meanwhile, the product has a significant influence on smoking attitudes and behavior, indicating that the attributes or characteristics of cigarette products, such as brand or quality, are important drivers in shaping consumer decisions. On the other hand, price influences attitudes toward smoking, but does not directly influence behavior. This means that a person's perception of the price of cigarettes can influence their views on smoking activities, but is not strong enough to change their actions.

This study found that distribution (place) did not have a significant influence on smoking attitudes or behavior. This shows that the availability of cigarettes, whether easy or difficult to obtain, does not affect how individuals view or carry out smoking habits.

An interesting finding from this study is that although attitudes toward smoking are significantly related to behavior, this relationship is not stronger than the influence of group reference or promotion. This confirms that social and marketing aspects play a greater role than individual factors in encouraging smoking behavior. In addition, the insignificance of distribution as a factor indicates that cigarette consumers, especially those who are already active smokers, tend to find ways to get this product even though accessibility is limited. This phenomenon illustrates that smoking habits are driven more by strong internal and external motivations than distribution barriers.

Recommendations for the Government and All Related Parties

Group Reference has been shown to have the greatest influence on smoking behavior. The government must encourage anti-smoking peer education programs, where teenagers are trained to become anti-smoking ambassadors and provide positive influences to their friends. Increase community-based education campaigns that explain the negative impacts of smoking, both in terms of health and economy, with an approach that is attractive to young people. Educational institutions must instill an anti-smoking culture in schools by forming support groups that provide a safe space for students to talk about social pressures and reject environmental influences that encourage smoking. Parents need to be role models by not smoking in front of their children and creating a smoke-free home environment.

Promotion has been shown to have a significant influence on smoking attitudes and behavior. Therefore, the Government must Ban all forms of cigarette advertising, promotion, and sponsorship, including in mass media, digital media, and sporting events. Increase supervision of hidden advertisements targeting young people, such as the use of social media and influencers to promote a lifestyle related to smoking. Enforce strict rules on eye-catching packaging designs, such as a ban on the use of flashy colors or creative graphics, and replace them with plain packaging that displays larger health warnings. Digital platforms such as social media must tighten policies to block cigarette promotional content, especially those aimed at young age groups. Price influences attitudes towards cigarettes, although it is not significant in changing consumption behavior due to its addictive nature. The government must increase cigarette excise progressively so that the price of cigarettes becomes more expensive, thus encouraging the formation of negative attitudes towards cigarettes. The community and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) must Encourage public advocacy to support the policy of increasing cigarette excise as an important step in tobacco control.

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