

Tips From Former Smokers

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**Abstract:**

This paper will take an in-depth look at the national public health campaign *Tips From Former Smokers (Tips)*. This paper will begin with an introduction to health problems associated with smoking and secondhand smoke exposure. Next, this paper will go over the theories used for change/desired outcomes, as well as reasonings for why each theory was chosen. The three theories to be discussed are the Social Network Theory, Stress and Coping theory, and Social Marketing theory. This paper will then cover the campaign's study design, data collection, and sample. Afterward, the methodology of *Tips* will be discussed, followed by measurement and evaluation issues. This paper will then examine the challenges, considerations, and limitations found in the campaign. Finally, this paper will end with concluding thoughts and recommendations/future directions for *Tips*.

**Keywords:**

*Tips From Former Smokers*, *Tips*, smoking, disease, campaign, Social Networking theory, Stress, and Coping Theory, Social Marketing theory, CDC, social media, ad campaign

## Tips From Former Smokers

**Introduction to Health Problem:**

In the United States, smoking tobacco is the leading cause of preventable diseases and deaths. Each year, approximately 48,000 Americans die from smoking cigarettes (CDC, 2019). In addition, over 300 billion dollars is spent a year due to smoking-related illness, about half of that money spent in lost productivity (CDC, 2019). *Tips From Former Smokers* was the first paid national tobacco education campaign launched by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in March of 2012 (CDC, 2019). *Tips* provides real stories from former smokers to exemplify what harm comes from smoking and secondhand smoke exposure. The campaign focuses on multiple health problems associated with smoking and secondhand smoke exposure. Health problems include cancer, Asthma, COPD, heart disease, Buerger's Disease, and more (CDC, 2019). In fact, the majority of these health problems are chronic diseases, meaning they are continual and last longer than three months and up to a lifetime. An example of a chronic disease associated with smoking is cancer. In fact, there are many different types of cancer caused by smoking, the most common being cancers of the lung, mouth, throat, esophagus, and larynx (CDC, 2019). Another example is Asthma, which affects the airways of the lungs, thus making it harder to breathe. An Asthma attack occurs when something irritates or "triggers" the airways (CDC, 2019). Tobacco smoke is one of the most common Asthma triggers (CDC, 2019). Even if someone with Asthma doesn't smoke, an Asthma attack can be triggered by secondhand smoke. As a matter of fact, secondhand smoke can be just as deadly as smoking and contains more than 7,000 chemicals, hundreds of which are toxic (CDC, 2019). The best way to

prevent oneself from such health problems is to never use tobacco products, or quit now if you use these products or smoke.

**Theories used for Change/Desired Outcomes/Why Theories Chosen:**

The three theories analyzed for *Tips* campaign are the Social Network Theory, Stress and Coping theory, and Social Marketing theory. Social Network theory has three main components. The first being people or actors that take actions based on their network environment. The second is a person's position in a network influences his or her behavior. Lastly, the third component is networks have structure, and these properties influence system performance. It is important to understand that there is a dynamic relationship between the micro and macro levels of network analysis (Glanz, K., Rimer, B. K., & Viswanath, K., 2015). The *Tips* campaign acts a bridging player, bringing together smokers who want to quit and people who can help. *Tips* accomplishes this through social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest), call lines, and other various resources (CDC, 2019). People are more likely to adopt a health behavior when they see others equal to them adopting such behaviors, in terms of networks. *Tips* has been successful in forming such a network, which has influenced positive health behavior change of getting smokers to quit smoking. The Social Network theory was chosen for this campaign, because of the dynamic networks created. Stress and Coping theory involves primary and secondary appraisals of daily and chronic stressors a person experiences. Socioeconomic status (SES) has been shown to have a large role in whether or not a person smokes for coping reasons. 21.4% of people who made under \$35,000 smoked and only 7.6% of people who made under \$100,000 smoked. (CDC, 2019). This clearly shows that pro-smoking campaigns are targeted to the poor as a coping mechanism, and a way to release. This is ironic and unfortunate, because

cigarettes are very costly, have high taxes, and continue to rise in price, yet the poor are the most frequent buyers. It is also known that in low SES areas there tends to be more advertising for cigarettes than in high SES areas. The Stress and Coping theory was chosen, because of its high impact on the lives of current smokers. Some of the ads that *Tips* shows targets people who use smoking as a way to cope with their daily stressors. People who have started smoking, looking for a release, are more likely to have an emotional reaction to the *Tips* campaign and be more motivated to quit. These people start with the primary appraisal where they evaluate the potential harm that may be done to them, and if the stress in their life outweighs this, they may still choose the negative behavior. In secondary appraisal, these individuals evaluate their capacity to alter their situation. This is where the campaign advertisements come in, as a valuable intervention to show people they can change their behavior and are capable of doing so (Kevin, 2017). Social Marketing is defined as “the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society” (Glanz, K., Rimer, B. K., & Viswanath, K., 2015). Social Marketing is rooted in the core of the *Tips* campaign since the overarching goal is to change smokers’ health behavior to quit smoking. *Tips* uses multiple commercial marketing strategies to meet their goal, including video and social media advertisements. Social Marketing was chosen because it embodies everything the *Tips* campaign stands for.

**Study Design/Data Collection/Sample:**

The design of the study/campaign is to build public awareness and educate a wide audience on the effects of smoking and secondhand smoke, to ultimately encourage people to

quit. *Tips* also works to give smokers and professionals resources on what to do and plans on how to quit. These resources and materials are provided for free to make them more accessible to a wider audience, including the high population of low SES people who smoke. Lastly, they focus on the subtopic of secondhand smoke that underlies smoking. Both designs feature real people and real stories. The campaign's primary audience is adult smokers ages 18 to 54. The secondary audience is the family members, health care providers, and religious organizations of the smokers. *Tips From Former Smokers* key messages are as follows: "Smoking causes short term and long term damage to your body that is often irreversible and can cause fatal health issues. For every one person who dies due to smoking or smoking-related illnesses, around 30 people live with a serious smoking-related illness. Lastly, it is not too late to quit, and now is the time" (CDC, 2019). They give a hotline for free help on how to get started on the journey of quitting smoking, 1-800-QUIT-NOW. *Tips* even have different language speaking hotline(s) to give accessibility to smokers who speak a different language. The campaign provides hotlines in Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese. The campaign also offers multilingual resources on TV, radio, billboards, bus stops, and social media. This shows huge growth in diversity and inclusion and results in appealing to a wider audience, which will help a larger number of people quit smoking.

In data collection, the *Tips* campaign used results from the National Health Interview Survey for the collection of the percentage of adults aged under 18 years who reported cigarette use "every day" or "some days", they found that 15.8% males did and 12.2% females in 2017 (Martell, 2002). When calculated by race, American Indians were the highest with 24% and Asian the lowest with 7.1% (Martell, 2002). American Indians have the highest smoking rates of

any race, because they have many religious rituals that involve smoking, and their beliefs and practices are different than the societal norm on smoking. Tobacco sold on tribal land is not taxed, so it is cheaper, which increases American Indians smoking rates, as well as attracts other smokers to buy cigarettes there. It was also beneficial to look at the educational status of adults under 25 years of age. 36.8% of adults with only a GED smoke while only 4.1% of adults with a graduate degree smoke (Martell, 2002). This shows a large disparity between education levels, which can be attributed to accessibility, cost, and surrounding living communities and conditions. When looking at sexual orientation, 13.7% of straight people smoke, while 20.3% of LGBTQ people smoke (Martell, 2002). This relates to the cultural aspect of smoking, which can be an event to participate in at social gatherings. Another important aspect to look at is health insurance coverage. Interestingly enough, 24.5% of people with Medicaid smoke, and 24.7% of uninsured people smoke (Martell, 2002). The close similarity proves that people with less coverage or public insurance are more likely to smoke. Collecting data from a study on the impact of anti-smoking advertisements showed that “seventy-one percent of participants reported that they recalled seeing at least one *Tips* advertisement. Smokers who recalled seeing a *Tips* advertisement were more likely to show increases over baseline in knowledge of health risks” (Huang, 2015). This shows that the ads are prevalent, able to reach both smokers and non-smokers, and have an impact on them.

The sample used for *Tips* was a large portion of the audience who was exposed to the campaigns advertisements. They looked at varying social and lifestyle factors as discussed more in-depth above. It is important to have a large sample size that is representative of the population at hand. This is crucial because there needs to be enough accurate data so that a generalized

statement could be made about that population without being unfair or biased. The sample must also include a variety of races, ethnicities, ages, gender, sexual orientation, SES status, education level, living conditions, geographical locations, and religious affiliations. The *Tips From Former Smokers* campaign does an effective job of creating an accurate sample. They include a wide range of diverse people in their ads and testimonies. In doing so, making their resources easily accessible to all people, giving people a sense of welcoming and self-efficacy that they can accomplish their goal of quitting smoking. The dependent variables of the campaign are the knowledge of risks associated with smoking, how aware they are of the resources available to them, and their individual quitting attempts and behaviors. The independent variables are exposure to ads and SES (Huang, 2015).

**Methodology:**

The *Tips* campaign uses a variety of methodologies to make an impact on the epidemic of smoking, in the form of a longitudinal cohort study (Neff, 2019). The first method *Tips* uses is fear-based educational ads. These ads began in 2012 to educate people on the harmful effects of tobacco. It uses real people who tell their stories in the form of a short ad. It focuses on people with long term illnesses caused by smoking by also shows people who have been affected by second-hand smoke. They are usually shown on television, but also featured on the radio and social media/the internet. By placing these ads on social media a larger audience may be reached since most people prefer to use their DVR and fast forward through commercials. Although the ads were broadcast on TV in 210 US media markets and local television channels in 67 of these markets (Huang, 2015). Using the internet can also reach younger audiences more effectively. The CDCs main strategy in the campaigns ads is fear and to play on the emotional aspect of the



viewer. Sherry Emery with the Institute for Health Research and Policy at the University of Illinois says “the campaign’s graphic and emotional approach was based on evidence that anti-tobacco ads with negative emotional appeals are associated with higher recall, and are more effective at promoting cessation than humorous or non-emotive ads” (Emery, 2014). They are usually graphic or deeply saddening to watch. This uses a technique called pathos, which evokes emotion from the audience in order to persuade them to change their behavior. In the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, it says “...with greater exposure to emotional or graphic ads having the greatest impact on quit attempts. The impact of the ads was similar across income and education levels, as well as for smokers with varying desires to quit” (Farrelly, 2012).

The campaigns second methodology is the use of education and awareness. *Tips* gives resources to nurses, doctors, and dentist offices to encourage patients to quit smoking, through education. This method is effective because the resources are influential in a patient's life and if health care providers can show patients the risks they are taking, as well as what can happen to them, the patients may be more likely to quit. Education and understanding of the topic can give the audience good levels of self-efficacy and motivation to change their health behavior. This is an important part of the campaign because it is vital for these influential figures to have the correct data and be fully educated on the topic in order to help their patients to the fullest extent. Information can be found on the CDC's website *Tips From Former Smokers*, and lists resources for faith-based organizations, health care providers, organizations serving the military or veterans, organizations serving public housing residents, and public health professionals. Some resources include social media ads/campaigns to post and talking points to use with a current smoker who wants to quit. These are free to download and use making it available to even more

people than listed above. It is beneficial for use in a community to remind people about the risks and effects of smoking.

**Measurement and Evaluation Issues:**

The CDC began measuring the outcomes of *Tips* the first year the campaign was launched (2019). The 2012 results estimated that approximately 17,000 premature deaths were averted from smoking (CDC, 2019). Since then, between the years of 2012 and 2015 over 9 million smokers have attempted to quit smoking and roughly half a million have quit smoking for good (CDC, 2019). *Tips* still continues today and most recently in 2018, 206,253 calls made to 1-800-QUIT-NOW were attributed to the campaign (CDC, 2019). According to CDC research, “smokers who have seen *Tips* ads report greater intentions to quit within the next 30 days and next six months” (2019). There is no doubt the campaign has made a significant difference in helping people quit smoking. However, in looking at the different measurable outcomes, one has to wonder if improvements can be made. For instance, some statistics produced by the CDC, like the number of smokers who have quit smoking for good, are estimated guesses. Calculating these types of measurements is difficult and getting a precise answer near impossible. It is important to keep in mind *Tips* may be reaching more of their intended audience than realized. Overall, the campaign has been successful in doing what they originally set out to do. When the CDC was first conducting research for *Tips*, they reached out to current, adult smokers to ask their opinions of what would influence them to quit. Using this knowledge, they were able to create advertisements effective in reaching their target audience. In fact, when evaluating *Tips*, most of the campaign’s success seems to come from their advertisements, which tell former smokers stories. These advertisements use graphic images to evoke an emotional response in regards to

the dangers of smoking and tobacco usage and are highly effective in persuading smokers to quit. However, such advertisements may be too graphic for children to watch, and while the CDC has taken steps to prevent children from watching, some children may still be exposed, which is a concern for parents. In addition, issues may arise when evaluating how many more videos will be produced by the campaign, and if the CDC can continue to come up with new content that keeps the targeted audience engaged.

**Challenges/Considerations/Limitations:**

As with any longitudinal cohort study, there will be challenges and considerations. Some challenges for the *Tips From Former Smokers* campaign is that it is not adequate for third world countries. The lack of accessibility (internet) causes limitations for reaching certain individuals, whose behavior may vary. In addition, there can be special outlier cases that do not fit the generalized conclusion of the campaign. Monetary value and cost-benefit analysis are larger deciding factors as to whether or not a campaign is effective. According to the campaign for tobacco free kids “with total campaign costs of about \$48 million, *Tips* spent approximately \$480 per smoker who quit, \$2,819 per premature death prevented, and \$393 per year of life saved” (Tobacco Free Kids, 2017). This data clearly shows *Tips* campaign to be cost-effective and has more benefits than risks. Xu from the Office on Smoking and Health says “the campaign is considered a public health “best buy” because the \$393 per year of life saved is far below the \$50,000 that is an accepted benchmark for cost-effective public health programs” (Xu, 2014). Showing that when compared to other public health initiatives on smoking *Tips* is the most effective in reducing smoking, as well as financial spending.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the *Tips From Former Smokers* campaign has proven to change many lives. The fear-based techniques of the commercials are useful in provoking change. With the larger social media presence, people have been able to express their gratitude by sharing their stories of how the campaign has helped them. Showing real-life testimonials impacts smokers who are thinking about quitting because they can see it actually works and can be accomplished. *Tips* gives individuals a high level of self-efficacy in seeing other people, just like them, who were able to quit and live a better life. The graphic nature of the advertisements increases the use of hotlines, website visits, and discontinuation of smoking. This campaign works because it shows real-life consequences of smoking. By showing the effects of secondhand smoke and what that can do physically and emotionally to the families of the smokers into the consequences of their actions, they come to a realization of the severity and will be more likely to find the motivation to quit. Overall, the *Tips* campaign is extremely effective. It has prevented many deaths related to smoking and has contributed to a drastic decrease in the number of people who are addicted to smoking.

**Recommendations/Future Directions:**

*Tips* campaign has come a long way from its start in 2012, and while it has been proven effective time and again, there is always room for improvement. The future recommendations for *Tips* would be to remain competitive. In recent years, there has been a large push for anti-smoking campaigns. While the campaigns have similar goals, each is unique and possesses different ideas on what anti-smoking means. In order for *Tips* to stay competitive, they must keep updated on new information regarding the negative effects of smoking, as well as trending social media sites, which helps to get *Tips* message across to their targeted audience. A possible future

direction for the campaign would be to expand and begin educating individuals on E-cigarette usage. E-cigarette usage is a popular trend in today's society. The CDC, the creator of the *Tips* campaign, may be interested in researching the harmful effects of E-cigarettes. In addition, the CDC could incorporate this topic into *Tips*, reaching an even larger audience. Thus furthering the number of people who quit smoking, whilst giving the campaign a competitive edge that can allow them to remain successful.

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