History of the Swedish snus market

Lars E. Rutqvist, M.D., Ph. D.
Senior Vice President - Scientific Affairs
Swedish Match AB
Main determinant of the switch from cigarettes to snus

Reports linking smoking to lung cancer:
1. Swedish Tobacco Monopoly Scientific Advisory Committee, 1960
2: Royal College of Physicians, 1962
3: US Surgeon General, 1964
Switch from cigarettes to snus

- Grass-roots phenomenon among health-conscious smokers
- Snus viewed as a more ”natural” or ”organic” product than cigarettes. Snus had been part of Swedish culture since more than 200 years
- Snus always marketed as a traditional product under historic brand names
- Snus never marketed as a smoking cessation aid or harm reduction product
- Underlying sense of reasonableness behind government, academia & industry statements & actions
  - Communication based on scientific evidence
  - Snus not equated with smoking
  - Acknowledgement of risk difference between smoking and snus
Snus regulated as a food product

• **1971**: Snus under the jurisdiction of the Swedish Food Act
  – Food-grade ingredients & additives
  – Strict hygienic requirements

• Collaboration between the company and scientists at the Swedish Food Authority led to a re-engineering of the production process and establishment of quality requirements which later became the **GothiaTek** standard
Price of cigarettes vs snus in Sweden 1960-2008

(1 USD = c. 7 SEK)
Role of product development

Advertisment for pouched snus, 1973

Pouched products (a Swedish innovation) was introduced the same year
Communication from government, academia & regulatory authorities

- **1960s-1970s:**
  - Focus on adverse effects on smoking
  - Few reports about health effects of snus

- **1980s-2010:**
  - Public health representatives cautious and characterized snus as a potentially harmful product
  - At the same time they also presented the scientific facts, acknowledged that snus acts as a gateway from smoking, and typically did not equate snus with cigarettes

- **2012:**
  - Clear government position that snus is less hazardous than smoking, and that the current EU ban is disproportionate and ill-advised
  - Wide acceptance of “continuum of risk”
  - No active encouragement of smokers to switch to snus.
Public debate in Sweden

- **1960-1990**: Relatively little media coverage of snus
- **1990-2012**: Increased interest in snus issues related to scientific reports about health effects & EU position on snus
- Between **2000 and 2009** there were 5,000 articles in the Swedish media that addressed snus
- Health effects of snus has been debated in Läkartidningen, the official journal of the Swedish Medical Association
- EU trade restriction on snus are routinely addressed in the political, financial, and mainstream media
- Health impacts of snus vs. smoking is a common topic among friends and family members
Marketing of snus in Sweden 1960-1993

- **1965**: Voluntary industry code for marketing of tobacco products ("moderate", "not startling")
- **1971**: Ban on "inappropriate marketing"
- **1977**: Introduction of warning labels
- **1979**: Further restrictions on marketing
- **1993**: Tobacco Act banning all marketing outside points of sale

Tobacco products have never been advertised in electronic media in Sweden (commercial television started in 1990, and commercial radio in 1993). Therefore, the main channel for marketing of tobacco products to the public (until 1993) was print media.
# Tobacco product advertisements in Swedish print media 1960-1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar year</th>
<th>Total no. of ads for tobacco products</th>
<th>No. of ads for snus/smokeless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960-64</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1 (0.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-69</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>4 (1.3 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-74</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>12 (4.9 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-79</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>22 (5.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-86</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>43 (7.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,661</td>
<td>82 (4.9 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data refer to advertisements developed by the Swedish Tobacco Monopoly (-1967) and Swedish Tobacco AB (1968-86) intended for print media. A total of 2,888 ads are registered in the Tobacco Museum archives during 1960-86 of which 1,661 (58%) were retrieved and classified according to product type. Competing manufacturers in the snus category did not appear on the Swedish market until 1992 whereas import of cigarettes and other smoked products started in 1961. The figures therefore underestimate the number of advertisements for smoked products. Data on frequency of use and reach were unavailable.

**Source:** Archives of the Swedish Tobacco Museum, Stockholm, 2012
"New winds are blowing! Östan! The different type of snus"

Print media advertisement for the snus product "Östan", 1985

Tried by the Swedish Market Court who found it to be inappropriate as it was considered "startling" and not "moderate"
Role of smoking bans?

• **1950s-80s:** No introduction of new smoking bans

• **1993:** First formal smoking bans in public places including bars & restaurants
Other potentially important trends that emerged during the 1960s-early 70s

- Student's movement & war protests
- "Rural rebound" & organic foods
- Physical fitness & healthy lifestyle
  (Swedish TV show "Träna med TV", 1963)
- Ice-hockey
  (Swedish team winning gold medal in Colorado Springs 1962)
Determinants of the Swedish Experience

• Grass roots phenomenon, **facilitated** by:
  – Attitudes/beliefs/knowledge in the population
  – Characteristics of the product (snus), e. g. nicotine delivery profile
  – Truthful communication from government authorities/academia
  – Responsible communication/marketing from industry
  – Pricing differential to cigarettes

• **SE did not happen** because of:
  – Active government endorsement of snus
  – ”Aggressive” marketing or promotion of snus for smoking cessation/harm reduction
  – Introduction of smoking bans
Relevance to the US?

• The most important determinants are the same in the US today as in Sweden during the 1960s-70s
  – Large number of addicted smokers interested in quitting
  – Widespread availability of a product that many smokers might find to be an acceptable substitute

• Some potentially important determinants are present today in the US (but were not in Sweden in the 60s)
  – Extensive public smoking bans
  – Smoking ”de-normalized”

• Some determinants are not present in the US
  – Public acceptance of snus/ST as substitute for cigarettes
  – Truthful communication about ”continuum of risk”
- Thank You -