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# **Shhh... Don't wake the activist group with your marketing!**

A qualitative study on activism efforts of non-governmental  
organisations in the tobacco industry

By

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## **Abstract**

**Keywords:** NGOs, Activism, CSR, Micro & Macro Framing, Anti-branding, Tobacco Industry

**Thesis purpose:** The purpose of this study is to comprehensively explore and analyse how a Non Governmental organisation (NGO), in this case A Non Smoking Generation (ANSG), engages in the debate on tobacco brand marketing and what strategies they use to influence public perception and policy.

**Methodology:** A qualitative research approach was employed, utilising an abductive strategy to allow flexibility in theoretical framework adjustments based on empirical findings. The research was conducted through a case study design with document analysis guided by Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA).

**Conclusion:** Findings indicate that ANSG employs explicit criticism, framing techniques and anti-branding strategies to shape perceptions of the tobacco industry and advocate for stricter regulations. The study highlights the significant role of strategic framing in advocacy as well as the NGO's engagement in discussions of brand image, public discourse and marketing ethics.

**Theoretical Contribution:** This study extends marketing theory and social movement research by illustrating how NGO advocacy influences brand perception, challenges unethical marketing and promotes social change. It emphasises the use of framing strategies on organisational outcomes and contributes to the discourse on culture jamming and anti-branding tactics.

**Managerial Implications:** This research elucidates the role of NGOs, exemplified by ANSG, in contesting tobacco marketing and advancing public health concerns. These insights hold significance for policymakers and industry stakeholders, informing the formulation of robust regulations and ethical marketing frameworks. The findings underscore the imperativeness for companies to engage proactively with activists and adhere to ethical marketing standards to mitigate reputational risks and regulatory challenges.



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## List of abbreviations

**ANSG:** A Non Smoking Generation

**NGO:** Non Governmental Organisation

**CSR:** Corporate Social Responsibility

**ECA:** Ethnographic Content Analysis

## **1.0 Introduction**

The first chapter begins by presenting and contextualising the central issue within the targeted research area. It sets the stage by problematising the intended area of study and highlights its significance and outlines previous literature streams. Moreover, this chapter introduces the purpose of this study and the formulated research question. Lastly this chapter provides an outline of the thesis.

## **1.1 Problematization**

Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness – and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe (Roy, 2003).

Sweden's exemption from the European Union's snus ban, obtained upon its entry in 1995, has had a profound impact on the tobacco industry's trajectory (SVT, 2024). In recent years the tobacco industry has witnessed remarkable evolution due to the introduction of the "tobacco free" nicotine products. These products have not only reshaped consumer preferences, but have also broadened its appeal to a wider demographic, particularly among young people and women. The previous traditional masculine boundaries surrounding tobacco and nicotine products have notably faded, as evidenced by the growing and evolving number of female users (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2022a). The emergence and success of nicotine free products such as nicotine pouches can be attributed to the tobacco industry's effective marketing strategies, product design and introduction of tasteful flavours (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2022b).

All the more young people are using snus. The increase is particularly notable among girls and young women. With flavours like 'frosted apple' and 'tropic breeze,' featuring sporty images, popular artists and influencers, the new nicotine pouches are being marketed as a healthy alternative (Expressen, 2022).

Furthermore, the marketing of nicotine pouches as tobacco free and as a fresh supplement compared to traditional snus or cigarettes has contributed to the rising trend of nicotine usage and the glamorization and portrayal of the products as socially acceptable (Hjärt & Lungfonden n.d; SVT, 2021).

The tobacco industry has long been a contentious battleground where public health advocates clash with powerful corporate interests (Brandt, 2012). Marketing practices within this industry are particularly controversial due to their potential to shape public perception, influence consumer behaviours, especially among the youth, and ultimately impact public health. Despite stringent regulations and public awareness campaigns, tobacco companies continue to employ sophisticated marketing strategies to attract new consumers and retain existing ones (Morean, Bold, Davis, Kong, Krishnan-Sarin and Camenga, 2023). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in countering these efforts through activism aimed at influencing public policy and corporate practices (Guay, Doh & Sinclair, 2004). Previous research has extensively explored the role of NGOs in various sectors such as sustainability, human rights and public health. For instance, environmental NGOs (ENGOs) like Greenpeace have significantly influenced global environmental policies by participating in international conventions and shaping environmental discourse (Betsill & Corell, 2001; Rietig, 2016; Hussain, Szabados, Muhammad, Omarli, Murtaza & Molnár, 2023). NGOs in the sustainability sector often serve as watchdogs and hold corporations accountable and push for more transparent and ethical practices (Asogwa, Varua, Humphreys & Datt, 2021). However, the rapidly growing tobacco industry presents new and compelling reasons to focus research on the dynamic between NGOs and this sector. The tobacco industry, known for its substantial economic power and controversial marketing practices, is expanding swiftly with the introduction of new products like nicotine pouches. Given the historical success of NGOs in driving sustainability initiatives and influencing public policies, their strategies in the tobacco sector warrant closer examination. Thus, NGOs like A Non Smoking Generation (ANSG) are central in this context as they employ various advocacy and anti-branding strategies to counteract the tobacco industry's marketing tactics and influence public perception and policy (Matthes, Kumar, Dance, Hird, Carriedo Lutzenkirchen and Gilmore, 2023). These organisations leverage public campaigns, policy advocacy and strategic communication to challenge the narratives promoted by the tobacco

industry. Although, the specific dynamics of how NGOs shape their activism and engage in the debate against tobacco marketing remain underexplored. These strategies are complex and influenced by the dynamic interplay between regulatory frameworks, corporate responses and public perception. While there is extensive research on brand equity, there is less to be found on understanding how advocacy and activism can dissect and shape this by mirroring the strategies of tobacco brands. Previous studies by Daubanes and Rochet (2019) and Guay et al. (2004) have examined the role of NGOs in tobacco control and the effectiveness of their advocacy efforts. However, these studies primarily assess the outcomes of advocacy campaigns rather than the specific tactics used by NGOs to counter tobacco marketing. Thus, there is a theoretical gap in how NGOs engage in the tobacco industry debate and how they communicate.

Furthermore, examining how a successful industry, such as the tobacco industry in terms of profitability and growing popularity, is subject to attack due to initially prosperous marketing strategies that are now being exposed for their inauthenticity and counteracted by regulations offers valuable insights. Thus, this study further presents a dual advantage: it can provide NGOs with insights to enhance their advocacy efforts and strategies, while also offering corporate brands guidance and inspiration to improve ethical marketing practices as well as proactively strengthen brand crisis management.

## **1.2 Research Purpose**

The aim of this study is to comprehensively explore and analyse how NGOs such as A Non Smoking Generation (ANSNG) engage in the debate on tobacco marketing. This research seeks to highlight the specific strategies and techniques ANSG employs to challenge the marketing practices of the tobacco industry. By examining these aspects, the study aims to understand ANSG's role in influencing brand and public perception as well as contributing to the discourse on NGOs in the context of tobacco marketing ethics.

### **1.2.1 Research Question**

How do NGOs engage in the debate on tobacco industry's marketing, and through what strategies do they shape their communication and public perception?

### **1.3 Outline of Thesis**

In order to address the research question, the study begins with a comprehensive description of various literature streams and theories relevant to the research area. Subsequently, the methodology is presented which outlines how the research was designed as well as the data collection methods employed to answer the research question. Chapter 4 delves into the analysis and presentation of empirical material, followed by chapter 5 which discusses the results in relation to previous literature. Finally, the conclusion summarises the key insights found in the research, together with theoretical and practical contributions, managerial implications as well as limitations.



## **2.0 Literature Review**

The following chapter includes the theoretical foundation of our study and the different literature streams that our research is built upon. The thesis will explore and integrate existing research within marketing theory, brand marketing and social movement. This chapter moves into stakeholder theory and CSR before concluding with marketing and stakeholder ethics as well as framing and anti-branding strategies.

### **2.1 Brand Marketing Theory**

Since the early 20th-century, marketing theory has evolved through changes in consumer behaviours, technological revolution and various business environments. Marketing theory, which was initially centred around simple transactions, has evolved into a more nuanced and complex field which involves a large number of strategies targeting, understanding and influencing consumer choices (Keith, 1960). One of the most impactful shifts that emerged in the mid-century was the product-centric to the customer-centric approach. This change led to the realisation of fulfilling the customers' needs and thus bringing business success (Levitt, 1960; Kotler & Keller 2016). In the 1980s, relationship marketing ascended which emphasised long-term customer engagement and loyalty. Theorists such as Leonard Berry (1983) have advocated for maintaining deep, ongoing relationships with customers to reach mutual a level of trust and commitment. This strategy has proven to enhance sustenance and customer retention for brands.

Simultaneously, the importance of branding and brand equity became increasingly central in marketing theory. Brand equity signifies the value a brand adds to a product or service and can create competitive advantage, justify premium pricing and enhance company valuation (Aaker, 1991). Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand such as its name and symbols which can increase or decrease value provided by a product or service. This notion underscores the long-term value of strong brand identity and loyalty which are crucial elements in today's competitive markets. Keller (1993) refined this definition by emphasising consumer perceptions and notes that brand equity arises from consumers' ability to

recognize or recall a brand and their attitudes towards it. Keller (1993) presented the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model to emphasise that the power of a brand resides in the minds of consumers and their experiences with a brand, which shifts the focus towards consumer perceptions. Since these facets can vary globally, maintaining brand equity across cultures and different markets requires strategies that are tailored to local preferences (Zarantonello, Grappi, Formisano & Brakus, 2020).

Moreover, the exploration of consumer behaviour has emerged as another fruitful field of marketing studies, with theorists like Michael Solomon (2004) exploring the psychological processes behind consumer decisions. The understanding of complex interplay between personal, psychological and social factors has enabled marketers to design more effective and targeted marketing strategies that cater to diverse consumer needs and contexts. In addition, offering service, rather than goods, and co-creating value with consumers is stressed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) as critical factors for brands' interaction and relationship with their audience. The authors emphasise the active role of consumers in the marketing process, which today might be even more present and critical for marketers in the realm of social media. Furthermore, understanding a brand's equity involves identifying claims that signify the brand's image i.e. the aspects most likely to be recalled or associated with the brand (Rosenbaum-Elliott, Percy & Pervan, 2018). Measuring brand image involves discerning *image ownership* and asking respondents to link brands with specific claims and benefits. For instance, if a brand is uniquely associated with a specific claim within its category, it can be said to "own" that image, suggesting strong brand equity. Conversely, a claim weakly associated with multiple brands might indicate a fragmented brand image. This concept of image ownership helps marketers and managers to understand brand equity more deeply and demonstrate the power of a unique, category-appropriate claim in defining a brand's position in the market. In figure 1 below, the model of brand image ownership is showcased.



Figure 1. Model of Relative brand image ownership (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2018, p. 181).

Brand image is sculpted by the benefits claimed about a brand, often through marketing messages (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2018). These messages are typically categorised as attributes (e.g., “low in fat”), subjective considerations (e.g., “healthy”) or emotions (e.g., “look great”). These claims present the benefits to the consumer, which are crafted to resonate with the brand’s target audience as well as reflect attributes that the audience value, ideally in a unique manner. For example, a brand perceived as tasting better might advertise this through a claim like “so good you will want to share it” (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2018, p. 180) indicating not just a taste benefit but also suggesting an emotional or relational connection. In summary, brand image and equity are shaped by how effectively a brand’s claimed benefits connect with its target audience’s desires and perceptions. Through strategic marketing communication that highlights these benefits, brands can cultivate a distinctive image and enhance their equity in the consumer’s mind. Additionally, Handelman and Kozinets (2004) argue that brand messages must align with cultural narratives and consumer ideologies to be effective. They emphasise that brands are not isolated entities but are deeply embedded within the cultural fabric of society. Therefore, marketing messages should reflect and engage with the broader cultural and social values to enhance their resonance and impact. Further, they highlight the influence of contemporary social movements on brand perception. Brands that successfully align with the

ideological and cultural values promoted by these movements can enhance their authenticity and strengthen their connection with consumers.

Similar to how individuals possess unique traits that define their personalities, brands can also embody distinct characteristics, traits and behaviours which can allow them to differentiate themselves from other brands and create an identity which can align with their consumers on a more personal level. Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as the set of characteristics associated with a brand, which can be influenced by direct or indirect consumer interactions. Brand personality traits are directly linked to the company through their consumers and their associated attributes, representatives as well as product endorsement. However, brand personality can also be perceived indirectly through advertisements, product design, logos, symbols, price and distribution channels. Moreover, Grohmann (2009) states how consumers tend to project various human personality traits onto brands, which then also includes consumers associations with gender. Through the use of different coloured packaging for similar products, brands and marketers can position themselves and enhance their brand gender and brand personality while also supporting consumers' need for self expression by creating products that align with either masculine or feminine traits. The concept of brand gender is a multifaceted area of study that encompasses perceptions, marketing strategies, consumer behaviour and societal norms related to how brands are categorised and experienced in relation to gender. The process of gendering a product or brand involves assigning it a masculine or feminine image and identity, even though these are brands or products that theoretically could be used by people of any gender (Alreck, 1994). The essential characteristics of the products are suitable for anyone, however the visual design elements, advertisement and promotion of the products are adjusted to incorporate symbols that are stereotypically associated with a specific gender. Alreck (1994) underlines how the selection of words and symbols used to create products with masculine or feminine associations is closely tied to the roles attributed to each gender and is largely influenced by societal expectations. Subsequently, to establish its gendered identity, it must be closely linked with the traditional masculine or feminine gender roles through advertising and promotional efforts which can be linked to Goffman's (1979) observations about gender portrayals in advertising, where women tend to be depicted as submissive and men as confident and authoritative. Historically, until the 1960's societal norms were rigid and clearly defined with

little room for deviation from expected behaviours regarding what could be defined as “manly” or “womanly”. Additionally, in order for brands to adhere to consumers’ response and preferences, brands strategically utilise messaging, imagery and product features to connect with particular gender identities which shape consumer perceptions, preferences and ultimately impacts their purchasing choices (Grohman, 2009).

## **2.2 Femvertising**

In the 1920’s, women marched with cigarettes in their hands - a campaign orchestrated by Edward Bernays, considered the father of PR (Leal, Freire Filho & Rocha, 2016). The campaign was successful in a variety of ways as it challenged societal taboos surrounding women, highlighted the cigarette as a symbol of freedom and independence as well as reshaped cultural perceptions and norms. Furthermore, the campaign is a great example of how consumer behaviour and attitudes can be influenced and lead to increased consumption. Since the Torches of Freedom campaign, other brands and industries have caught on. Levi’s created jeans for women in the 1930’s, a garment that at the time was unacceptable and appropriate for women (Levi Strauss & CO, 2017). In the 1940’s, the automobile industry started seeing potential in women’s growing purchasing power and influence (Walsh, 2011) and a more recent example is the gaming industry in the 1990’s that realised the possibilities of female products (Zaremba, 2012). Yet, a large number of brands do not see this potential. Barletta (2003) criticises the marketing industry and scholars for excluding research about and communication towards women. The author argues that marketers are missing the potential in female consumers and are afraid of undermining the product or service appeal to men. Since Barletta’s book, the marketing concept *femvertising* has emerged (Abitbol and Sternadori, 2016; Drake, 2017; Kapoor and Munjal, 2019). As noted by Åkestam, Rosengren and Dahlén (2017), femvertising is an approach famously known for its aim to up the status and self-identity of women in consumption through strategic advertisements with empowered female messages. These messages have developed over traditional practices in advertisement, which objectified women, and developed the vision of self-confidence, independence and liberation for women. Femvertising campaigns highlight female empowerment and capabilities as well as challenge typical gender stereotypes, although Maclaran (2015) questions whether the relationship between feminism and marketing is one of

exploitation or empowerment. The author deduces that the relation is a repeated interchange of cultural production, only appreciated in retrograde in its historic contextualisation. She notes that femvertising can empower women but also risks commodifying feminism if not well aligned with genuine contributions to society. This further legitimises the criticism of other researchers, such as Varghese and Kumar (2020) and Lima and Casais (2021), that most femvertising campaigns are more a way of exploiting or capitalising on feminism for financial gains rather than changing society. Furthermore, Lima and Casais (2021) found that there is an emotional relationship with gender cause for consumers in marketing, while simultaneously highlighting a critical attitude towards corporate hypocrisy and their ethical purposes. Consumers may mistrust the authenticity of campaigns if not considered as a natural reflection of consumers but rather a false narrative to lure customers and sell more. This lack of authenticity and consumer scepticism echoes Maclaran's (2015) findings as the advocated social and cultural changes for gender roles may be false arguments (Lima & Casais, 2021). Moreover, Hainneville, Guévremont and Robinot (2022) elaborate further that without authentic alignment of brand values and marketing messages, it can be considered as *femwashing*, equivalent to greenwashing. Similarly, Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry and Kemper (2020) define the femvertising authenticity by congruence between brand-stated purpose and its activist marketing messages.

### **2.3 Stakeholder Theory and Corporate Social Responsibility**

The stakeholder theory, initially popularised by Freeman (1984) describes the concept of connections between a company and its customers, suppliers, employees, investors, communities and other relevant parties who hold an interest in the organisation. The stakeholder theory is a foundation for organisational management and business ethics in relation to the use of morals and values when working and managing an organisation. Stakeholder theory focuses on prioritising not only the shareholders of an organisation, but also the stakeholders. Freeman (1984) emphasises the importance of considering the interests of all stakeholders that are or could be affected by a company's actions and less focus on the maximisation of only shareholders value. Stakeholders can be classified into primary and secondary categories. Primary stakeholders include customers, employees, suppliers and shareholders that the firm depends on and who have a direct interest in the organisation. On the other hand, secondary

stakeholders, such as competitors, social media and trade associations, have indirect associations with the organisation and are not essential for the survival of an organisation (Clarkson, 1995). Additionally, Freeman and Dmytriiev (2017) explore the relationship between stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility (CSR) by analysing the connection between the two key concepts in business ethics. Bowen (1953) defines CSR as the responsibilities a company has towards society, where CSR also can be referred to as a management concept which aims to help companies be socially accountable for themselves, their stakeholders and the public. The primary similarity between stakeholder theory and CSR lies in their shared emphasis on integrating societal interests into business practices. Thereby, companies can gain advantages from participating in CSR activities that stakeholders consider important. Thus, stakeholder theory and CSR are intertwined. However, there are distinctions that set them apart, primarily distinguished by how CSR directs attention towards a corporation's obligations to society at large, whereas stakeholder theory highlights the interdependence of stakeholders and the generation of value for all involved parties. CSR encompasses a broad spectrum of company activities aimed at benefiting society as a whole and includes aspects like charity, environmental efforts, volunteering and ethical labour practices (Freeman and Dmytriiev, 2017).

Maignan, Ferrell and Ferrell (2005) explores the concept of interrogating corporate social responsibility into marketing strategies by utilising principles within the stakeholder theory framework, highlighting the significance of aligning CSR initiatives with an organisation's values and norms. Implementing the stakeholder theory framework in organisations can be used as a strategic approach which aims to improve the marketing performance as well as the credibility and reputation of an organisation. Furthermore, Hult, Mena, Ferrell & Ferrell (2011) explore the concept of stakeholder theory in the context of marketing and discuss how different stakeholders influence business relationships and marketing strategies. The stakeholder theory framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how different stakeholders are affected by or affect marketing efforts. Hult et al. (2011) acknowledges six key stakeholders that impact marketing relationships: customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders, regulators and the local community. The authors highlight the importance of stakeholder theory in relation to positive marketing outcomes in terms of both financial success and societal impact.

In the case of the tobacco industry, CSR initiatives face criticism and distrust due to the products being known as dangerous, addictive and the cause of health issues. Palazzo and Richter (2005) underscores that the tobacco industry is known for historically denying the health risks associated with their products and downplaying the lethal effects caused by the usage of tobacco and nicotine products. The past behaviour and the current impact of tobacco and nicotine products on public health raises questions regarding the tobacco industry's social responsibility and the authenticity of their CSR efforts. Moreover, Palazzo and Richter (2005) argues that the tobacco industry can be accused of greenwashing due to transparency issues where companies use CSR as a display in order to improve their image and public perception without addressing the core issues related to tobacco and nicotine products. Greenwashing includes misguidedly eliciting from the growing concern of consumers for sustainability when companies falsely present products or policies as environmentally friendly (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Similarly, from a marketing perspective the advertisements and marketing practices related to tobacco products may raise ethical concerns since it attracts more people to start using (Hirschhorn, 2004). Additionally, tobacco companies use hidden marketing activities to promote their products in subtle ways that might not be obvious to consumers. Palazzo and Richter (2005) stresses that the hidden marketing can be related to product placement in movies or tv shows, where the portrayal of tobacco products in media can influence consumer behaviour while bypassing regulations. Marketing practices and hidden advertising of tobacco and nicotine products can also be used to target specific demographic groups which can enable tobacco companies to reach new and larger consumer audiences. Furthermore, when evaluating the tobacco industry in relation to CSR and stakeholder theory it is important to look beyond the primary stakeholders and also notice other stakeholders such as regulatory bodies, public health organisations, advocacy groups, the general public and their interests regarding public health impacts since the tobacco industry differs from other industries and conflict with ethical and social concerns (Palazzo & Richter, 2005).



### **2.3.1 Marketing and Stakeholder Ethics**

Traditionally, business actions were viewed as moral if they were legal and profitable. However, considering that markets are intended to benefit societal welfare (Williams & Aitken, 2011), businesses must also align with ethical norms. Business ethics examine the moral issues regarding business decisions, pushing farther than mere legality and profitability, while incorporating many subfields such as finance and human resources, each with its own unique considerations (Crane & Matten, 2007). This humanises the issue of the marketing ethics, mainly for the fact that marketing is often criticised for its dishonesty and exploitation, especially against feeble groups in society like children (Jamnik, 2011). Moreover, Hur, Kim and Woo (2014) believe that CSR marketing will both help boost brand reputation and lasting consumer trust, which provides long-term business benefits. Wood, Logsdon, Lewellyn and Davenport (2015) pay attention to some of the ethical dilemmas of doing business within the framework of international markets and make an emphasis that respecting local cultural and ethical standards is imperative. Finally, Ottman (2017) shares light on the issues of sustainability in connection with the integration of environmental concerns into marketing practice and associates it with the movement that results in a positive image for corporations developed by green marketing.

As mentioned earlier, the marketing of tobacco free, yet still closely related to tobacco, products such as nicotine pouches and e-cigarettes have exponentially grown in recent years (Ling, Hrywna, Talbot & Lewis, 2023). Nicotine pouches are small bags that contain the content of nicotine and are placed in between the gum and the lip by the users. In some of the cases, flavours are added, and marketing is as a discreet and socially acceptable “new smoke.” Despite these claims, health experts caution about the risks associated with any form of nicotine consumption. Criticisms were mainly pointed at the possibility of addiction, among other health problems and a recent review by Biener and Hargraves (2015) indicates the worries involved with the long-term consequences of these new nicotine delivery systems. Morean et al. (2023) critically study how the tobacco free nicotine pouches are perceived in terms of risk, susceptibility to usage, consumer awareness and actual use. The research raises important questions about the potential for these products to either introduce new users to nicotine or transition existing tobacco users to less harmful alternatives as the products are marketed as safer

alternatives to traditional tobacco products. A key aspect of this discourse is highlighted in research evaluating the impact of digital and social media campaigns on beliefs about e-cigarettes, which shares commonalities with nicotine pouch marketing. An article by MacMonegle, Bennett, Speer, O'Brien, Pitzer, Jaarsma, Zarndt and Duke (2024) provides insights on how targeted health messaging can influence public beliefs and challenges the promotional strategies used by nicotine product brands. Thus, the authors emphasise the significant role of public health campaigns in shaping consumer attitudes towards new nicotine products. Another study, by Kostygina, Kim, Gebhardt, Tran, Norris, Page, Borowiecki, Rose and Emery (2024), suggests that exposure to promotional content on social media platforms can directly impact consumer behaviour and increase sales of smokeless tobacco products.

### **2.3.2 Reactions to Marketing and Stakeholder Ethics**

In the practice of marketing ethics, various stakeholders have outlined a dynamic and effective set of responses in relation to fighting back against unethical business behaviour. Media serves as a powerful tool in combating unethical practice and advocacy (Elliott-Green, Hyseni, Lloyd-Williams, Bromley & Capewell, 2016). The more freedom the media has in a particular country or market, the more pressure is put on brands to change (El Ghoul, Guedhami, Nash & Patel, 2019). In such a way, investigative journalism mobilises public opinion and, through the exposition of the wrongdoing, compels firms to adapt to better practices. This role of the media as a watchdog emphasises the importance of transparency and accountability and makes it an essential player in promoting ethical marketing. Furthermore, activist groups have affected the shaping of regulations and marketing strategies across various sectors. Matthes et al. (2023) discuss the influence of advocacy on tobacco industry interference. Their study highlights how sustained advocacy efforts can lead to legislative outcomes that restrict tobacco sales and marketing, which demonstrates a link between advocacy and public health improvements. In light of this, Condit and Condit (1992) present the strategic use of incremental erosion by health activists. Incremental erosion is when activists, through a series of small and calculated moves, aim to deconstruct the positions of companies they target and force these companies to constantly defend themselves. This approach strategically corners opponents into having fewer

viable responses over time, while simultaneously creating constraints that limit their opponents' potential reactions.

In "The Rise of NGO Activism", Daubanes and Rochet (2019) examine the increasing power that NGOs wield over the design of corporate practice, specifically in cases of failure derived from industry influence on public regulation. They present how NGOs take upon themselves to oppose or modify the harmful industrial projects by the compromised regulators. As evidenced through instances involving brands such as Nike and Starbucks, the research concludes that NGO activism is a critical response to inadequate public oversight and serves as a counterbalance that ensures more responsible corporate behaviour in the face of potential regulatory capture. It is argued that NGOs not only drive firms towards self-regulation, but also enhance social welfare by holding firms accountable to higher environmental and social standards. Guay et al. (2004) reflect on how NGOs use shareholder activism and socially responsible investment as a tool in the enforcement of corporate social responsibility. In their research it is revealed that these activities often lead to substantial change in corporate governance practice, especially within ethical and strategic considerations. Bob (2005) explores a similar utilisation of media by NGOs, focusing on how these entities use international media to garner support and exert pressure on governments and multinational organisations. His study underscores the strategic use of media to amplify their messages and achieve international activism goals. Expanding on the interaction between corporations and NGOs, Doh and Guay (2006) analyse the impact of CSR initiatives and NGO activism. This is particularly brought out by their research showing how the NGOs are key actors that effectively engage in public policy-making and lobbying aimed at influencing corporate practice. In conclusion, one could argue that NGOs together with the media are effectively acting as watchdogs and a corrective force in the regulatory landscape.

Furthermore, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) investigate consumer activism on the internet, particularly through anti-brand communities. Their study reveals how digital platforms open avenues for consumers to be empowered through organisation and influence which lead companies into changing corporate reputations and practices. This kind of digital consumer activism accentuates the increasing power shifts taking place from traditional corporate-to-consumer relationships to more decentralised and grassroots induced engagements

on digital platforms. These views are further substantiated by Chaudhri and Kaul (2017) who found that the use of social media has profound effects on the effectiveness of NGO campaigns. They argue that social media enhances the capacity of NGOs to challenge and influence corporate policies by providing a wider and effective platform for activism. Hence, NGOs democratise spaces of public discourses and allow advocacy messages to be disseminated quicker and wider. Vu, Blomberg, Seo, Liu, Shayesteh & Do (2021) further this discussion by examining how NGOs use social media to engage public opinion on environmental issues, particularly climate change. The authors highlight how strategic framing on platforms such as Facebook can bring the environmental cause to the frontline and mobilise public support, enhancing the overall effectiveness of these campaigns.

## **2.4 Micro and Macro Framing**

A key topic for NGOs is the role of framing in advocacy and its influence on policy outcomes. Baumgartner and Mahoney (2008) research the nuances of framing by expounding the role individual actors and collective dynamics play in the process of framing. They further outline the dual aspects of framing: both the individual-level strategies used by lobbyists and other influencers as well as the framing that unfolds at the level of policy-making arenas. Their work shows that the two dimensions work hand-in-hand, with the collective framing often stabilising around dominant frames unless it is disrupted by salient events. In addition, De Bruycker (2019) considers the specific effect media attention has on the policy success of advocacy groups. His findings demonstrate that media exposure can serve as a double-edged sword for advocacy efforts. Effective media framing not only is pertinent to a larger public value and narrative, but also consequential in a manner that might strengthen the position of advocacy groups toward achievement of their policy objectives. However, misalignment can lead to diminished influence and missed opportunities, showcasing the critical role of media strategy in advocacy efforts. Moreover, Jensen and Seeberg (2020) explore intricate dynamics of framing used by NGOs to influence policy debates. The authors offer an examination of how these groups strategically navigate both macro-level (broad societal beliefs) and micro-level (specific policy issues) framing to advance their agendas. Combining these two dimensions provides a typology of four framing strategies: exit, acceptance, avoidance and rejection (Jensen & Seeberg, 2020) The first

two strategies, exit and avoidance, signify that the interest groups ignore the macro-frame while holding onto their preferred micro-frame. The latter instead promotes the micro-frame more actively than the former. The rejection strategy employs the macro-frame to argue for the merits of the micro-frame, while it undermines the validity of the macro-frame. Contrastly, the acceptance strategy fully surrenders to the dominant macro-frame without arguing for an alternative micro-frame. Jensen and Seeberg (2020) argue that NGOs are more effective when they align their specific issue frames (micro-framing) with broader, more established societal narratives (macro-framing) and discuss how interest groups select and frame information in ways that put not only their agenda but can be easily placed within the wider media environment. Such framing and manipulation of information is thus necessary to attract the media eye and will eventually influence public opinion and policy decisions taken.

## **2.5 Anti-branding Strategies**

Anti-branding refers to a form of movement and strategy within activism where individuals or groups voice their opposition to brands or industries. The opposition often arises as a response to the critical influence and power that brands withhold in society and is used for advocating for ethical, sustainable and socially responsible practices within consumer and business culture (Awasthi, Sharma & Gulati, 2012). Moreover, anti-branding aims to deconstruct brand identities and uncover unethical marketing strategies, greenwashing, femwashing, social injustice issues and expose manipulative marketing techniques. Anti-branding serves as a strategic communication approach aimed at diminishing the cultural authority of brands within society. This strategy involves critiquing corporations and brands by reinterpreting their brand communications to present a critical perspective, thereby shedding light on societal issues perpetuated or reinforced by brands (Handelman and Kozinets (2004). To evoke reactions, anti-branding often incorporates emotional appeals which aim to evoke feelings of anger, guilt or empathy which can change or alter audience attitude or perception of specific issues (Lasn, 1999).

Within the context of anti-branding, culture jamming emerges as a strategic approach that involves repurposing widely disseminated campaigns, advertisements and associated symbolic

elements utilised by corporations. Culture jamming is a tactic within anti-branding that can be defined as “an organised, social activist effort that aims to counter the bombardment of consumption-oriented messages in the mass media” (Carducci, 2006). This practice entails creatively manipulating these elements and situating them in new contexts to unveil concealed or implicit messages that critique the industry’s or brands practices (Wettergren, 2009). This approach has the possibility to cultivate scepticism towards advertisements and marketing practices which encourages consumers to have a more critical mindset. Moreover, Handelman and Kozinets (2004) demonstrate how culture jamming goes beyond shaping and influencing consumer attitudes, and emphasise that culture jamming can lead to concrete actions such as boycotts and the embracement of more ethical consumption patterns. Culture jamming also includes tactics such as subvertising and adbusting, which involves utilising a brands previous advertisement, aesthetic elements or images to create new, often clever and humorous versions, aimed at satirising or mocking the brand or industry (Harold, 2004). Additionally, Musloff (2017) delves into how irony, sarcasm and metaphors can be utilised to highlight absurdities and contradictions within brands messages and marketing practices which can change people’s perception of a brand. In summary, while anti-branding and culture jamming share similar meanings, they have distinct roles in the broader context of challenging corporate and consumer culture. Anti-branding is considered a movement and a strategy on its own and refers to a broader category of resisting and criticising the influence of brands and marketing practices (Klein, 2000). On the other hand, culture jamming is a tactic employed within the anti-branding framework and focuses on specific creative tactics used as media activism aimed at challenging narratives and brand perceptions (Lasn, 1999).

Another anti-branding approach that NGOs can employ is binary opposition, a strategic technique that contrasts two concepts or groups to effectively shape narratives around an issue or a cause. This concept draws from Levi-Strauss’s (1955) structuralist framework, which views binary oppositions as fundamental cognitive and cultural constructs. This organises audiences’ understanding through pairs of contrasting concepts, which gain meaning when presented in contrast to each other. In relation to anti-branding activism, binary opposition can be used to define messaging, clarify goals and mobilise supporters by presenting a clear narrative of the conflict or injustice between the oppositions. Binary opposition can simplify complex issues

which enables NGOs to effectively communicate their messaging and make it accessible to a wider audience. Additionally, rhetorical strategies play a crucial role within anti-branding since these tactics can enable NGOs to critique and undermine brands' messages and marketing efforts. By employing tactics such as ridiculing brand messages and exposing underlying unethical and manipulative tactics through satire and parody, NGOs can effectively communicate apparent ethical issues to the audience or consumers (Harold, 2004). Moreover, rethorics can also be used through recontextualization of brand messages which aim to reshape the narrative within a critical framework. This can be done through altering positive brand images and messages and replacing them with the negative or unethical aspects connected to the products or brand (Klein, 2000). Rhetorical strategies extend beyond verbal communication and can also encompass visual elements such as symbols and imagery. By utilising visual rhetoric, interest groups can swiftly convey messages and provoke strong audience responses, which in some cases can hold more power than words (Deluca & Peeples, 2002).

## **2.6 Summary of Literature Review**

The evolution of marketing theory is traced from its early 20th-century roots and highlights the shifts from product-centric to customer-centric approaches. Key concepts such as brand equity, defined by Aaker (1991) and further refined by Keller (1993), underscore the importance of strong brand equity in creating competitive advantage. The literature also emphasises relationship marketing, as advocated by theorists like Berry (1983), which focuses on long-term customer engagement and loyalty. Additionally, the concept of brand image involves identifying and utilising claims that signify the brand's image which is known as image ownership. Effective marketing messages, categorised as attributes, subjective considerations or emotions, help sculpt brand image by resonating with the target audience's desires and perceptions as well as enhance brand equity (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2018). Moreover, Handelman and Kozinets (2004) argue that brands must resonate with the broader cultural context to enhance brand authenticity and equity by reflecting the values and beliefs of the target audience. The chapter also highlights that NGOs can influence regulations and marketing strategies across various sectors. Matthes et al. (2023) discuss how sustained advocacy can lead to legislative outcomes restricting tobacco sales and marketing. Condit and Condit (1992) describe the strategic use of incremental erosion by

health activists, where a series of small, calculated moves deconstruct brand positions and force them to defend themselves continuously.

The review presents the principles of CSR and examines how brands navigate these concepts to build trust and loyalty among consumers (Freeman and Dmytriiev, 2017; Maignan et al., 2005). The literature suggests that genuine CSR initiatives beyond superficial claims are crucial for maintaining brand integrity and avoiding accusations of different types of greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Ottman, 2017). The role of NGOs in advocating for ethical marketing practices is a central theme, with de Bakker and den Hond (2008) illustrating how NGO campaigns can lead to increased corporate transparency and more ethical marketing practices. Furthermore, the review explores the pitfalls of femvertising and femwashing, drawing on critical perspectives from Maclaran (2015) and Hainneville et al. (2022). These works stress the importance of authentic alignment between brand messages and corporate actions to avoid backlash from NGOs. Additionally, the role of media freedom in facilitating or hindering these movements is also discussed, with contrasting findings on the effectiveness of media as a watchdog in different markets (Elliott-Green et al., 2016; El Ghoul et al., 2019; De Bruycker, 2019).

Moreover, framing is identified as a critical tactic in NGO activism, with Baumgartner and Mahoney (2008) and Jensen and Seeberg (2020) emphasising its role in shaping public discourse and policy. In addition, the concept of anti-branding and culture jamming is explored through the works of Lasn (1999), Klein (2000) and Harold (2004). These strategies involve disrupting corporate narratives and promoting social change by critiquing and undermining brand messages. Additionally, the chapter analyses various strategies employed to influence public perception and policy. It highlights the use of rhetorical strategies such as irony, parody and recontextualization to challenge corporate narratives and raise awareness (Musloff, 2017). The concept of binary opposition is also discussed and illustrates how complex subjects can be simplified by presenting oppositions in contrast to each other (Levi-Strauss, 1955). Finally, the literature review presents how marketing of tobacco-free, yet related, products such as nicotine pouches and e-cigarettes, has grown exponentially (Ling et al., 2023). These products are marketed as discreet and socially acceptable alternatives to smoking. Studies by Morean et al. (2023) and MacMonegle et al.



(2024) highlight concerns about how these products introduce new users to nicotine and the impact of digital and social media campaigns on consumer beliefs and behaviours.

All of these insights underscore the complexity and significance of the relationship between NGOs, brands and ethical marketing practices. By understanding these dynamics, we can better explore the strategies employed by NGOs that may influence public perception and corporate behaviour, and how NGOs engage in the tobacco industry debate. By aligning advocacy efforts with broader cultural narratives and ethical considerations, these organisations promote transparency and accountability in corporate practices and sets the stage for a deeper exploration in the subsequent chapters. With this theoretical groundwork in place, we now turn to chapter 3. Methodology, where we will detail the research design, data collection methods and analytical approaches employed in this study.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The following section introduces the selected scientific approach and explanation of both data collection and method of analysis. This chapter thoroughly addresses the research design and the steps taken to answer the research question. The research design delineates the case study design and further outlines how document study was used as the method of data collection along with an ethnographic content analysis approach. The chapter concludes with a critical reflection on the methodological choice, the quality of the research as well as ethical considerations.

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

The research philosophical position strongly influences the aim of a study as well as the choice of a suitable research design and is thereby considered a crucial part of methodology. Furthermore, it is important for researchers to grasp the philosophical foundation of their research to understand their roles in research methods and to be able to create the groundwork of the research. The philosophical debate concerns the relationship between theory and data as well as the matters of ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the “philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality” and epistemology is described as “a general set of assumptions about ways of inquiring into the nature of the world” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2021). In relation to these matters, our thesis project is guided through a set of assumptions that leans towards relativism as our ontological stance with the understanding that there is not one single truth, instead there might be influences of many different perspectives on the subject. Moreover, the study’s epistemological approach follows social constructionism which implies that reality is socially constructed and given meaning by people in social interactions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

The study utilises an abductive approach to conduct the aimed research which allows us to be flexible and able to adjust our theoretical framework based on the findings in the empirical material. Hence, the abductive approach grants an ongoing interchange between theoretical and empirical findings which enable us to explore the data thoroughly, which results in a more profound understanding of the research area and question. In addition, the utilisation of an

abductive approach is particularly well-suited for addressing research questions that involve exploring a complex or emerging phenomena. Additionally, this approach can lead to the discovery of new perspectives and empirical insights which can be combined with previous research remarks (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

## **3.2 Qualitative Research Design**

The research design can be considered the methodological blueprint for a specific study, delineating its research principles, methods and techniques across all research stages. It justifies the suitability concerning the study's philosophical foundations, research question and research content (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). In this study, we employed a qualitative research approach. Given the study's objectives and research inquiries the qualitative research methodology contributes to an enhanced and deeper understanding of the subject (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Moreover, the qualitative research method is favourable for producing empirical findings that cannot be collected from statistical data. Specifically, a qualitative document study allows for detailed content analysis of ANSG's materials and provides a rich contextual understanding of their advocacy efforts. This method enables us to dissect the language, imagery and messages used by ANSG to understand the underlying strategies. The approach is particularly useful for exploring themes, meanings and intersections that would be difficult to quantify. Furthermore, qualitative analysis provides a rich contextual understanding of how ANSG's materials fit within the broader socio-political landscape. The method allows for the exploration of the historical, cultural and social contexts that shape and are shaped by ANSG's advocacy efforts. Understanding these contexts is crucial for comprehending their strategies on public discourse and policy.

### **3.2.1 Case Study**

We opted to employ a case study to illuminate ANSG's communication in relation to the tobacco industry. Yin (2018) defines a case study as an empirical method that thoroughly examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context. Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) assert that case studies can be reconciled with both relativist and constructivist epistemologies, despite the

prevalent use of positivist approaches in the field. Proponents of constructionist epistemology often engage in single-case studies and concentrate on one unit of analysis. Conversely, those with a positivist inclination favour multi-case analysis (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) further emphasises that the selection of a case should be related to the theory or theoretical propositions of interests and the single-case can then contribute to determine whether the propositions are correct or whether they might be relevant with more explanations. Thereby, a case study not only facilitates a holistic perspective but also allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific phenomenon and enables a focused exploration of empirical data which is applicable to our research study.

Bryman and Bell (2011) highlight that a case study is particularly suitable when the research questions are designed to investigate how and why certain phenomena occur, such as how NGOs influence public perceptions and brand images through their interpretation and scrutiny of marketing efforts. This consideration underscored the appropriateness of a case study for our thesis, as it allowed for an in-depth examination of a specific case of interest, such as an organisation or industry. Flyvbjerg (2011) underscores that the main strength of case studies lies within its details, depth and variability. Each case can be studied in numerous ways, both quantitative and qualitative and the decision hinges more on the subject of the case rather than the method of choice. Furthermore, Flyvbjerg (2011) challenges the misconception that a single case study is inferior compared to using multiple case studies in research. Occasionally a single case study can prompt questions regarding its generalizability to broader contexts, however, focusing on a single case study enhances the possibilities of an in-depth analysis which can uncover new concepts and variables that might not be uncovered or apparent in a broader study on several cases. Although such studies may not provide comprehensive information for broader categories, they serve as valuable inquiries for generating transferability that can be applied across a larger range of cases. Additionally, a single case study can contribute to knowledge and theory by confirming, developing or expanding existing theories, which can guide future research (Yin, 2018).

Flyvbjerg (2011) argues for a nuanced appreciation of case study research within social science, challenging common misconceptions about its value. Case study research facilitates data

collection from six distinct sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations and physical artefacts (Stake,1995; Yin, 2018). The opportunity to utilise multiple sources of data collection is considered a major strength of case studies. In this thesis, we have chosen to gather our primary data through document analysis, where leveraging the strengths and information within documents provides us with a robust and nuanced exploration of NGOs strategic communication. We therefore opt for a single-case study, specifically focusing on the online reports and campaigns of ANSG which provide a rich and adequate data pool and enable us to comprehensively address our research question.

### **3.2.2 Selection of Industry and Case**

Flyvbjerg (2011) explores the question of case selection and emphasises that the transferability of case studies can be enhanced by the strategic choice of cases. When the goal of a case study is to obtain information regarding a specific phenomena or a problem it is applicable to employ a more typical or extreme case since they usually obtain more information which can clarify deeper causes behind a problem, in contrast to a random case sample or representative case which do not include such rich information. Additionally, Flyvbjerg (2011) underscores the importance of understanding the case study's relation to the environment, which refers to the surrounding context in which a case is situated. The context can include several aspects such as historical background, social dynamics and political factors. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of complexities and connections within the case study and highlights the valuable aspects of emphasising broader contextual factors when interpreting and drawing conclusions from the case study (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Yin, 2018).

To address our research question, we narrowed our study to focus on NGOs, specifically on the activist group ANSG and their engagement in the tobacco industry debate. ANSG embodies the characteristics of a proactive NGO through its sustained efforts to combat tobacco use and its strategic deployment of various advocacy methods. The organisation's focus on youth education, public awareness campaigns and policy influence aligns with the core functions of many public health NGOs and makes it a representative example. This decision was influenced by the need to limit the scope of our data and the industry's rapid expansion, particularly amongst women and

younger consumers (Tobaksfakta, 2022). Within the tobacco industry, the tobacco free nicotine pouches can be considered part of the debate due to how the nicotine is extracted from tobacco, its addictive nature and tobacco companies' ownership (Hjärt & Lungfonden, n.d). Historically, the tobacco industry has been associated with numerous health and ethical controversies, including misleading advertising, targeting vulnerable populations and contributing to widespread health crises. Recent data highlight that young people in particular are increasingly using nicotine pouches (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2022a) which raises significant concerns about the marketing ethics of these products. Furthermore, the environmental toll of tobacco production such as deforestation, water usage and chemical pollution, compels a reevaluation of the industry's practices towards more sustainable and responsible models (Lecours, Almeida, Abdallah & Novotny, 2012). Despite its health and environmental repercussions, the tobacco industry remains a substantial economic force with a turnover of USD 350 billion and profits of USD 35 billion of the six largest tobacco companies (Townsend, 2015).

Additionally, it is enlightening to explore how NGOs like ANSG showcase and re-communicate the tobacco industry's marketing messages and how their communication strategies can influence public opinion and corporate behaviour (de Bakker & den Hond, 2008). In the case of ANSG, their campaigning and advocating are communicated in various ways through different documents and platforms. These factors make both the NGOs as well as the tobacco industry important contexts to explore, particularly for examining the dynamics between corporate practices and social responsibility initiatives driven by NGOs as well as the interplay between activist messaging and brand image management. Focusing solely on this specific activist group and industry allows us to maintain a balance of depth, breadth and quality in our data collection and analysis. For a comprehensive overview, our chosen case is more thoroughly described and presented in the start of chapter four.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### **3.3.1 Document Analysis**

We chose to employ document analysis as our method of data collection. This research approach, situated within the qualitative research paradigm, involves a systematic examination and interpretation of documents both printed and electronic including books, newspaper articles, academic journal articles and institutional reports. Atkinson and Coffey (2011) emphasise the historical lack of interest in document analysis within qualitative research. Throughout history, document analysis has been an underutilised approach where researchers tend to favour interviews and observations, while document analysis instead serves as complementary background material (Silverman, 2004). However, Morgan (2022) accentuates how document analysis is a valuable research approach that enables researchers to analyse available materials in order to comprehend social phenomena, historical events, cultural practices, organisational structures and other complex issues. Through document analysis, researchers can identify patterns, themes and trends that facilitate a more profound insight into the subject being studied (Morgan, 2022). The term “document” encompasses a wide variety of material ranging from textual content to visual elements such as photographs and videos and all of these documents, whether composed of visual material or text, is a source for qualitative analysis. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) stresses that almost anything can be considered a document and the term text can be applied to various phenomena. Similarly, Atkinson and Coffey (1997) refer to documents as “social facts”, which are produced, shared and used in socially organised ways.

Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2011) explore how a text acquires meaning and how the aim of using document analysis is to uncover the interests, cultural practices and general conventions in the text, which construct meaning and hold significance to the reader. Additionally, Bryman and Bell (2011) emphasise the importance of the reader’s interpretation of texts. Depending on if they are active or passive regarding what they see and hear, the results of the interpreted document and text may differ from both other readers and the intended meaning created by the authors or designers of the document. This approach is built upon two key assumptions, initially that the document carries the intended meaning of the creators within them and secondly that the

text gains its significance through its connections to various discourses and texts. Additionally, even though the interpretations of documents may vary, document analysis requires the collected data to be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, store information and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009; Grant, 2022). Conducting a document analysis consists of several steps including the initial data collection in which the researchers collect the relevant material in relation to the research questions. Subsequently the process includes contextualisation, where researchers place the documents in a context in order to grasp their relevance to the research topic. Additionally, the interpretation of the collected material entails skimming, reading and analysing documents to extract meaningful insights, which can empower researchers to draw conclusions from the analysed data. This process can also facilitate the exploration of patterns, themes and relationships within the data (Bowen, 2009). Morgan (2022) elevates how there are several advantages with conducting document analysis and one notable benefit is that document analysis is conducted on pre-existing texts which is beneficial due to the stability, the availability and coverage of data and documents spanning over a long period of time. Moreover, Bowen (2009) enhances how document analysis is an efficient method due to it being cost effective and time efficient. Document analysis provides a significant advantage to researchers because they can utilise readily available documents which streamlines the research process and allows researchers to allocate more time and resources to data interpretation and analysis.

Furthermore, Bowen (2009) emphasises that document analysis can be applicable to case studies which is why we opted to combine these approaches in our qualitative research. Additionally, Morgan (2022) highlights that one of the crucial components of conducting a document analysis is selecting the appropriate documents to analyse. Therefore, our document analysis builds upon organisational reports and online campaigns derived from ANSG as our source of empirical data. Herrman, Meyer and Roehrich (2020) illustrate how organisational reports can function as tools for transparency and stakeholder engagement, all of which are essential aspects of our research study in relation to CSR and marketing strategies. Additionally, Bell and Bryman (2011) underscore how organisational documents offer rich and valuable data in the field of business and management. However, it is important to notice that organisational documents might not reflect a universal perception of a situation, instead they tend to focus on how one particular organisation views the situation they are involved in (Bell & Bryman, 2011). Additionally, Etter,



Ravasi, and Rindova (2018) enhance how organisational reports play a vital role in shaping public perceptions and narratives, which is important considering the tobacco industry's visibility in media and its influence on consumers. Moreover, online campaigns are also interesting to explore in order to understand how NGOs craft their messaging through various communication channels, especially since these online campaigns have the possibility to reach a broader and younger audience (Kingston & Stam, 2013). Analysing both organisational reports and online campaigns can provide a comprehensive view of NGOs' strategic approach to influencing public perceptions and narratives around the tobacco industry's activities.

### **3.3.2 Sampling and Collection of Material**

In order to collect relevant data in the document analysis we implemented a purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is a research method employed to deliberately select particular units for analysis and is commonly utilised in qualitative studies when the criteria for a sample are defined in accordance with specific areas of interest related to the research topic (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). In purposive sampling, people or organisations are selected depending on their relevance to the case or social phenomena. Therefore, the purposive sampling strategy enables us to gather detailed data from sources we identified as relevant for our study and analysis. Additionally, since this study utilises an abductive approach, we iteratively use theory to guide the research and data collection. By purposefully selecting samples that are most likely to provide insightful and relevant information, we can continually refine our theoretical framework based on emerging findings. This dynamic process ensures that we do not prematurely limit our scope and allow us to capture the most pertinent data as well as alter our focus as new insights are gained. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, organisational documents and online campaigns are used as the primary source for data collection in our study and serves as our main empirical material. The documents employed in this document analysis are collected from ANSG and are publicly accessible on the organisation's website. The empirical material chosen for this study encompasses online campaigns and reports published by ANSG from 2019 until today, totalling 9 reports and 8 campaigns. We decided to analyse these 9 reports and 8 campaigns, although there are other campaigns and reports available on ANSG's website. The reasoning behind excluding some of them was their relevance to our research question, as the previous ones mainly discuss cigarettes instead of snus and tobacco free nicotine products.

Campaigns that were in collaboration with other organisations were also excluded as it was unclear whether the strategic communication was the work of ANSG or other NGOs. Moreover, campaigns that were repeated, such as influencer campaigns, were also excluded due to the similarity of strategies used. Since the majority of the selected reports and campaigns are communicated in Swedish, the excerpts and quotes used in the analysis are translated to English. Table 1 summarises the selected documents utilised for the empirical analysis in our study.

Table. 1: Overview of selected documents

Name of document	Organisation	Publication date	Number of pages	Format
<b>Report 1:</b> Det är bara barn som börjar använda tobak - Rapport om ungas attityder till tobak	A Non Smoking Generation	2019	16	Report
<b>Report 2:</b> Hur tobak porträtteras i media - 2019	A Non Smoking Generation	2019	23	Report
<b>Report 3:</b> Tobak i ny förpackning <i>Rapport om ungas attityder till tobak</i>	A Non Smoking Generation	2020	16	Report
<b>Report 4:</b> Hur tobak porträtteras i media 2020 - <i>Medieanalys, A Non Smoking Generation</i>	A Non Smoking Generation	2020	26	Statistical media analysis
<b>Report 5:</b> Hur tobak porträtteras i media 2021 <i>Medieanalys: A Non Smoking Generation</i>	A Non Smoking Generation	2021	26	Statistical media analysis
<b>Report 6:</b> Unga	A Non Smoking Generation	2021	16	Report

behöver en tobaksfri skoltid - Rapport om ungas attityder till tobak				
<b>Report 7:</b> Den nya generationen nikotinister	A Non Smoking Generation	2022a	20	Report
<b>Report 8:</b> Next Generation Nicotine Addicted Customers	A Non Smoking Generation	2023	7	Report
<b>Report 9:</b> När ska barns hälsa prioriteras? <i>Rapport om ungas attityd till tobak</i>	A Non Smoking Generation	2023	18	Report
<b>Campaign 1</b> - 40 års kamp(anj) för alla barns hälsa	A Non Smoking Generation	2019		Influencer campaign
<b>Campaign 2</b> - Film för en tobaksfri skoltid	A Non Smoking Generation	2019		Video
<b>Campaign 3</b> - Film: Den Sista Striden	A Non Smoking Generation	2019		Video
<b>Campaign 4</b> - Reklamkampanj: Nikotinsemlan	A Non Smoking Generation	2020		Videos and images
<b>Campaign 5</b> - Du Bestämmer Självt 2.0	A Non Smoking Generation	2020		Video
<b>Campaign 6</b> - Quit Big Tobacco Sweden	A Non Smoking Generation	2021		Lobbying campaign
<b>Campaign 7</b> - Tillsammans för en helt tobaksfri generation - 2022	A Non Smoking Generation	2022		Influencer campaign

<b>Campaign 8 -</b> Tobaksfria dagen 2023: Vi behöver mat, inte tobak	A Non Smoking Generation	2023		Images
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### 3.4 Data Analysis

To provide a systematic and reflexive approach for analysing the qualitative data, we found Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) to be suitable. The concept of ECA is developed by Altheide (1996) and combines elements of content analysis with ethnographic methods. This qualitative method emphasises the understanding of context and processes by which documents are created, distributed and consumed. ECA incorporates the qualitative aspects of document analysis with the rigorous procedures of content analysis, which traditionally quantifies elements in text data. In contrast to quantitative content analysis, the processes through which the themes are extracted are usually left implicit. Instead, the extracted themes are typically illustrated with brief quotations e.g. (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The method is reflexive and interactive, where the researcher continually adjusts the categories of analysis based on what is found in the documents by using a constant comparative method that allows themes and patterns to emerge organically from the data (Altheide, 1996). To answer our research question, ECA is beneficial for understanding where, why and how a document or set of documents was produced. Moreover, as researchers we were able to engage with the texts, noting our own responses and changes in analytical categories as they developed. In other words, initial codes are developed from a subset of the data, which are then refined and expanded as more data are analysed. Themes were emerging through an iterative process, where the data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously, and findings are integrated into the ongoing analysis. We believe that ECA is particularly suited for analysing documents produced by NGOs as it allows researchers to understand not only the content of communications, but also the processes and cultural contexts that shape these communications. For example, when studying campaigns and reports, ECA can help uncover how these documents attempt to not only interpret the tobacco industry’s marketing messages, but also attempt to influence public opinion, mobilise supporters and communicate with stakeholders. Furthermore, ECA allows a contextual analysis where the researcher can

explore the motivations behind these communications, considering the socio-political context in which the documents were created and distributed.

### **3.4.1 Coding**

The categorisation and coding process entailed extracting valuable data from the documents provided by ANSG. Our work follows Altheides (1987) five steps of ECA. The first process started by constructing the problematization while the initial concepts and themes were derived from the theories discussed in the literature review in chapter 2. Thereafter, we proceeded by reading and observing the material in order to understand the available range and the context in which the material was created, to identify themes, concepts and expressions. Subsequently, throughout the research process, the collected data was analysed by primarily focusing on the recurring themes in the written text and common patterns within the images (Altheide, 1987).

The reports and campaigns collected from ANSG were analysed using coding techniques, where we opted to create themes instead of coding since thematic analysis is synonymous to a code (Bryman & Bell, 2011). We constructed a coding manual (Table 2) to provide a comprehensive overview of our original themes utilised in the analysis. Additionally, the coding manual and coding scheme are colour-coded to indicate which excerpts correspond to the respective code. After establishing themes we delved deeper into the data from ANSG and sought repeating patterns that could be categorised in the existing themes as well as new sub-themes emerging within the original categories. When new sub-themes were uncovered, we conducted further research on these themes in academic databases and included them in the literature review. This iterative approach, characteristic of an abductive research method, allowed us to continuously refine our theoretical framework based on emerging insights. Finally, we integrated our findings into the broader cultural context of NGO activism, as discussed in section 4.0 Analysis. Moreover, chapter 5 includes a thorough deconstruction and contextualization of the data to align it with the theoretical framework and cultural nuances pertinent to NGO activism.

Table 2: Coding Manual

<b>Themes/Categories</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Framing</b>	How the ANSG frame their cause as micro or macro framed
<b>Marketing Strategies/Gender</b>	How marketing strategies and genders are interpreted
<b>CSR</b>	How ANSG portray the tobacco industry's csr practises
<b>Anti-branding</b>	Signs of anti-branding strategies
<b>Other/New</b>	New findings that have not yet been covered in the literature review

### 3.5 Quality of Study

Various concepts can be utilised to measure the quality of a qualitative research study, where the epistemological and ontological stances guide the research and the measures for assessing the quality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Furthermore, Bell and Bryman (2011) underscore that assimilating reliability and validity in qualitative research are commonly used when seeking criteria for assessing the research quality. However, Guba and Lincoln (1989) propose that there is a need to define the terms and methods for evaluating the quality of qualitative research that offer alternatives to reliability and validity. Hence, the authors introduce two other criterias for assessing qualitative studies: trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness is composed of four criterias used for evaluating the quality of a qualitative research study: credibility, aimed at establishing internal validity; transferability, concerned with constructing external validity; dependability, focused on maintaining reliability; and confirmability, aimed at achieving objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Moreover, we addressed credibility by continuously revising our text several times, adapting and comparing different versions of the document as well as exploring and identifying new themes and ideas as the research progressed. In this study,

the document analysis focuses on Swedish reports and campaigns, which is a relatively small sample of the overall research in connection to the tobacco industry. Yet, the case of Sweden offers adequate transferability since the tobacco industry is thriving in this particular market and is starting to rapidly expand around the world. Dependability was established by clearly describing the choice of documents picked for the document analysis (Bell & Bryman, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Confirmability is crucial for determining if researchers have impacted the results by implementing their own values or biases. Ensuring an objective perspective throughout this research could sometimes become challenging due to our interpretations of the selected documents used for the analysis. However, by reviewing and continuously documenting the methodological process, analysis and selection of the empirical material we could reduce potential bias by adapting a reflexive stance towards the collected material (Bell & Bryman, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

When collecting the documents used in the document analysis we assessed the quality by utilising four criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (Bell & Bryman, 2011). Moreover, when evaluating the documents we questioned the document's producer and their authority, the purpose behind creating the document authenticity and genuineness of the material presented, and potential biases or agendas influencing the document's content. Additionally, we evaluated the document's representativeness within its category as well as the clarity and transparency of the document's meaning. Bell and Bryman (2011) highlight how there is a common temptation to assume that documents offer insights into an underlying social reality, suggesting that an organisation's documents represent its actual reality. This perspective views documents as windows into social and organisational realities which overlooks the complexities regarding document creation, interpretation and potential bias. Therefore, it is important to approach document analysis with a critical lens and review multiple sources to gain an accurate view of a situation or phenomena (Ibid).

### **3.6 Methodological Reflections**

In this section we discuss the limitations of our study and reflect upon the selected methods. Employing a case study design together with document analysis provided our research with a

rich amount of data which we could utilise in our empirical analysis. However, content from organisations such as the reports provided and constructed by ANSG might be seen as that specific organisation's perceived reality. It is therefore important to notice that other methods might have provided other insights on the research subject (Bell and Bryman, 2011). Furthermore, this can question the validity of our study since Easterby-Smith et al., (2021) stresses that validity is increased if enough perspectives are included. In our study we opted to focus on several documents and to look on the topic from an organisational perspective instead of e.g a consumer perspective. However, one justification for adopting this research method and specific perspective is that tobacco free nicotine pouches are relatively new products, although they belong to an since long established industry. Due to its recent emergence there is a lack of existing sources on the matter. Currently, the main sources are limited to Swedish reports and media detailing the usage and impact of tobacco free nicotine pouches. These methodological reflections prompt us to consider the breadth of perspectives in our research and the implications of our chosen approach on the study's validity and overall quality.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

When conducting research it is crucial to consider ethical principles to ensure a responsible study. Ethical principles in business research can be broken down into four general areas: whether there is harm to participants; whether there is a lack of informed consent; whether there is an invasion of privacy or whether deception is involved (Bell & Bryman, 2011). Since this research is based on document analysis it is vital to consider the ethical considerations related to this research method. Sixsmith and Murray (2001) underscore that researchers should prioritise obtaining informed consent from individuals, protecting anonymity and privacy, securing data, defining ownership and authorship and maintaining transparency throughout the research process. Therefore by adhering to these practices we as researchers can ensure that our document analysis is conducted in a responsible and ethical way. Morgan (2022) emphasises that using document analysis as the methodological approach reduces ethical concerns in comparison to other qualitative methods, since public records are available for anyone to examine and are often anonymous or presented by an organisation. Furthermore, authors of reports or campaigns are mostly aware that their material will be available for anyone to take part of. This awareness tends



to diminish ethical concerns regarding the use of public documents, however the content can still reflect the author's biases. In terms of ethical decisions in relation to online content, Morgan (2022) stresses that researchers must recognise that content deemed public often demands less confidentiality and privacy protection of its creators. However, researchers need to approach non-public material with caution and consider issues related to anonymity, vulnerability and consent. Moreover, the empirical findings utilised in this study originated from publicly available sources and we are aware that the information and documents derived from ANSG might be updated over time.

## **4.0 Empirical Findings and Analysis**

The following chapter embodies the empirical research as well as presents and analyses the data. The initial part of the chapter consists of the case presentation, thereafter, the analysis is segmented into four parts, each addressing distinct themes derived from examining the empirical material. Lastly, a further elaborated contextual analysis is provided. The empirical material forming the basis of the analysis is obtained from ANSG's reports and campaigns.

### **4.1 Case Presentation**

In 2016 the Swedish tobacco industry introduced the tobacco free white snus (nicotine pouches) on the market, branding it as a supplement to traditional tobacco snus. Shortly after social media platforms, podcasts, TV and radio quickly became inundated with advertisements promising a satisfying nicotine experience without health risks or negative effects such as bad breath or tooth discoloration (A non smoking generation, n.d). Labelling the nicotine pouches as tobacco free made it possible for the tobacco industry to avoid Swedish tobacco laws and regulations regarding tobacco control and marketing. However, it is debated whether it is accurate to label the nicotine pouches as tobacco free since they contain nicotine which is extracted from the tobacco plant (Hjärt & Lungfonden, n.d). In addition, the nicotine pouches have become a billion dollar business and are marketed as a healthy alternative compared to other tobacco products and have also been promoted as a solution for people to stop smoking (Swedish Match, n.d). However, these new products serve as a gateway to nicotine addiction and have resulted in an increased usage among consumers. Similar to other tobacco products, nicotine pouches are addictive since they increase levels of dopamine in the brain's reward circuits which motivates users to keep using it. Repeated exposure to nicotine can alter the brain's sensitivity to dopamine, which means one needs to consume more of the substance to feel the same effects (Tobaksfakta, 2016).

Furthermore, the nicotine pouches were initially promoted through their fun coloured packaging and new flavours, with the companies behind the products using popular influencers to market the products and glamorise the usage while targeting more consumers. During the emergence of

the nicotine pouches they were often offered or handed out as free samples encouraging curious consumers to try them out. It was also common to see brands promote their nicotine pouches at music festivals or at events where young people were in attendance. This strategic market approach aimed to attract and target a new, younger and more diverse generation that traditionally had not used nicotine products. Tobacco free nicotine pouches and the industry's adoption of colourful plastic packaging and sleek design choices, combined with tasteful flavours and fun names, have attracted women towards using the products. As a result this contributed significantly to the growing usage and popularity of tobacco free white nicotine pouches, particularly among women, as evidenced by a public health survey constructed by Folkhälsmyndigheten in Sweden. The survey showcased that the usage of nicotine pouches is most common among young female consumers and nearly one in five women aged 16-29 uses the tobacco free white snus (Folkhälsmyndigheten, 2022a). This illustrates a shift in tobacco use patterns since tobacco snus historically has been predominantly used by men and relatively uncommon among women. Significant gender differences persist in the usage of tobacco products, however, they have decreased as the proportion of women nicotine pouches has nearly tripled over the past decade (Centralförbundet för alkohol- och narkotikaupplysning, 2023). This caused reactions and in early 2020, the Swedish government initiated an inquiry to investigate and establish coherent regulations for tobacco and nicotine products, primarily aimed at safeguarding children and young people from nicotine addiction. As part of the investigation, proposals were made for a new law governing tobacco-free nicotine products, which became effective in 2022. The new law encompasses tobacco free nicotine pouches and other previously unregulated tobacco free nicotine products. It outlines requirements for product composition, mandates for manufacturers to notify and report information to the Public Health Authority, and regulations concerning sales and marketing practices (Folkhälsmyndigheten 2022c).

## **4.2 Marketing Strategies**

The first theme found within the empirical material revolves around marketing strategies. This theme is evident in several of ANSGs reports and campaigns which explore how the tobacco industry presents and promotes nicotine products, as well as the subsequent impact on health, environment and other ethical issues. The NGO emphasises how the tobacco industry's

marketing strategy consists of downplaying the health risks of nicotine products by focusing on the tobacco free aspects, combined with appealing flavours and colourful packaging. Furthermore, ANSG inspects the roots of tobacco related marketing and traces its origins to an era where misleading advertisements were not just permissible but prevalent as illustrated in the excerpt below:

In the 1950s, it was perfectly legal to engage in misleading tobacco advertising. Tobacco was portrayed as something harmless or even healthy, and a significant marker of identity. Unfortunately, today we are back to square one as the tobacco industry is once again allowed to market its new products as something harmless and life-affirming (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022a, p.7).

ANSG highlights how the tobacco industry has been known to use manipulative tactics in their marketing campaigns and target specific demographic groups. In addition to downplaying health risks, their tactics also emphasise social acceptance or popularity and associate nicotine and tobacco products with concepts like beauty or certain lifestyles. ANSG suggest that history is repeating itself and there is an ongoing resurgence of these marketing strategies as influencers and brands market the tobacco free nicotine pouches as something fun and trendy (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023a). Given the tobacco industry's impact on public health, the recent prevalent marketing practices and rising use of nicotine products faced strong opposition. Consequently, restrictions and laws were introduced to hinder the cunningly devised marketing tactics of the tobacco industry. ANSG claims that their advocacy efforts have contributed to the restrictions of tobacco sales and marketing towards young people in Sweden, which in this case, demonstrates how an interest organisation may influence brands and industries. Moreover, the NGO highlights the connection between advocacy and public health improvements, which is showcased in the excerpt below.

In August 2022, after many years of intensive advocacy work, Sweden finally got a new law in place regarding the regulation of new nicotine products. Unfortunately, few of the suggested restrictions such as a marketing ban and a ban of flavors were fully implemented. It is still allowed to market white snus, but only to persons older than 25 (A

Non Smoking Generation, 2023a, p.4).

According to the new Swedish law, which came into effect in 2022, the tobacco industry is now prohibited to market its tobacco free nicotine products to young people under the age of 25. Despite that, ANSG underscores that the marketing continues and accentuates the necessity for clear, comprehensive definitions in legislation, coupled with effective communication and increased public understanding of nicotine products. ANSG indicates how the continuous tobacco advertising and tobacco exposure in both stores and in media are significant risk factors, necessitating further regulation to curb the tobacco industry's ability to entice the younger generation. Moreover, ANSG highlights that the marketing strategies employed by the tobacco industry coupled with the introduction of the tobacco free nicotine pouches have, despite the regulations, resulted in the emergence of a new generation of nicotine addicts (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023a, p.3).

#### **4.2.1 Critique of Gendered Messages**

Historically, the tobacco industry primarily targeted men, and its consumer base was predominantly male. However, over time, this dynamic has evolved and the introduction of tobacco free nicotine pouches revolutionised the industry and attracted a growing number of consumers. ANSG highlights how the nicotine pouches gained popularity among young women, which indicated a shift in snus culture and its consumption patterns. The excerpt below showcases the increase in tobacco free nicotine pouch usage among young girls in Sweden:

Forty percent of the students in the second year of high school have used white snus. Forty two percent of the girls had used white snus and thirty seven percent of these girls had never smoked or used any other tobacco before they tried the white snus (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023, p.3).

ANSG asserts that the “tobacco free nicotine pouches have emerged as a gateway to nicotine usage and addiction among young people” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022a, p.4). This assertion stems from the fact that when the nicotine pouches entered the market, there were no regulations governing the marketing of these products, since they were technically classified as

tobacco free. This resulted in a marketing surge, with advertisements depicting the nicotine products as harmless. ANSG implies that the tobacco industry turned the products into fashionable accessories and props which continues the harmful cycle of misinformation and glamorization of the products. Additionally, the NGO expresses that nicotine pouches are often marketed with the use of gendered tactics. Advertisements may use imagery, flavours, colours and packaging designs that appeal to specific gender stereotypes. For instance, some nicotine products may be marketed as more “masculine” with bold flavours and darker coloured packaging, while others, often connected to white snus, are being marketed as more “feminine” with fruity and mild flavours in combination with elegant and/or colourful packaging. ANSG illustrates this in figure 2, where the cigarettes are marked with the words “beautiful” and the nicotine pouch box is labelled with the word “cool”. This illustrates the tobacco industry’s efforts to glamorise nicotine products as accessories and enhance their social appeal.



Figure 2. “The healthy, flavoured and tobacco free” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019b)

While the tobacco and nicotine products are suitable for anyone, the visual design elements, advertisement and promotion of the products are adjusted to incorporate symbols that are stereotypically associated with a specific gender. Thus, ANSG suggests that the tobacco industry’s utilisation of gender-stereotypical colours and flavours is a deliberate effort to target

women and young girls by incorporating feminine traits and imagery in their products and marketing. This marketing tactic highlights the impact of gendered messages and illustrates how consumers' perceptions of brands and products can be influenced by gender associations. Similarly, ANSG indicates how the tobacco industry's use of influencer marketing has attracted a larger number of young female consumers, influenced by the advertising across various channels as well as by the profiles they engage with on social media platforms. In the excerpt below ANSG criticises the tobacco industry's marketing practices and relates it to the increasing usage of tobacco among new generations.

It is clear how the tobacco industry is reaching entirely new target groups who have neither smoked nor used snus before. These new products become a gateway to nicotine addiction and mean that tobacco use among young people is increasing instead of decreasing (A Non Smoking Generation, 2021a).

Additionally, the tobacco free nicotine pouches attract more women compared to traditional tobacco products. ANSG implies that the marketing of the nicotine pouches as a fresh and trendy alternative to cigarettes or other tobacco products, reduces the harmful aspects which broadens the appeal of tobacco free nicotine pouches and makes them more accessible to a wider audience. Furthermore, ANSG denotes that the tobacco industry has long used gender based marketing strategies to appeal to women and promote the use of their products. These strategies aim to both use the tobacco products as a glamorous symbol, accessory and utilising feminism marketing while associating it to social ideals (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023a, p.3).

In addition, the NGO highlights how influencers were often employed to promote the nicotine pouches, which created an allure around the usage of the products since they mainly showcased them as trendy and desirable. When female influencers promote nicotine products it can create a perception of social acceptance among their followers which may normalise nicotine use. ANSG claims that this trend mirrors past marketing strategies where women were seen posing with the cigarettes similarly to how female influencers nowadays showcase the nicotine pouches in their photos, as seen in figure 3 below.



Figure 3. Showcasing how tobacco products are used as accessories and props in social media marketing (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023a, p.4; 2022a, p.7; 2021a, p.23)

ANSG underscores how the tobacco industry strategically leverages social media channels and include female influencers and celebrities to promote their products, where they may be paid to portray the products positively without adequately disclosing potential health risks or conflicts of interest surrounding the products. ANSG implies that the promotion of nicotine pouches through social media aim, for example, to portray tobacco and nicotine use as a notion of female empowerment as well as a symbol for a certain trend and appearance. This parallels the concept of femvertising which aims to elevate the status and self identity of women through strategic advertisements. However, femvertising primarily aims to promote female empowerment and spread positive messages, hence, its association to the tobacco industry may be problematic. Therefore, ANSG questions the tobacco industry's marketing strategies and campaigns regarding if they are really aimed at uplifting women and challenging societal norms, or if they are insincere and deceptive.

Moreover, ANSG criticises the tobacco industry for its unethical practices and accuses it of femwashing due to its misleading marketing strategies that create illusive impressions. The NGO indicates that these tactics can confuse consumers and undermine the dangerous and lethal effects related to tobacco products. ANSG emphasises that there are several reasons why the tobacco industry's marketing tactics can be seen as femwashing instead of femvertising. The tobacco and nicotine brands utilisation of gender based marketing can aim to exploit feminism



and trendy themes in order to sell more products that are harmful hidden behind a facade of empowerment. Furthermore, ANSG indicates that promoting nicotine pouches as a glamorous and trendy product creates misleading messages which do not address the health consequences associated with nicotine addiction or the broad societal impact related to the tobacco industry. Additionally, the way that ANSG presents the tobacco industry's and its brands' primary goal as to sell products, often at the expense of public health and social well-being, indicate a misalignment of values and marketing messages which illustrate a lack of authenticity and disingenuous nature of femwashing within the tobacco industry.

### **4.3 CSR**

Upon analysing the gathered empirical data, a distinct pattern emerged from the reports wherein ANSG portrays the tobacco industry's CSR practises as a disguise to hide their real intentions. The picture that ANSG paints of the tobacco industry thus goes against the concept of CSR which encompasses companies to be socially accountable for themselves, their stakeholders and the public. While CSR aspects focus the tobacco corporation's obligations to society at large, stakeholder theory focuses on creating value for all involved parties, including consumers and NGOs. However, ANSG believes and argues that the tobacco industry uses CSR for wrong purposes and that the industry and its intentions are not in line with what is considered to be ethically sustainable. The gap between the tobacco industry's portrayal of their CSR efforts and its actual impact makes ANSG underscore the need for greater transparency and commitment to ethical business practices in the industry. The NGO implies that the tobacco industry is known for historically denying health risks associated with their products and downplaying the lethal effects caused by tobacco and nicotine products. The past behaviour and the current impact of tobacco and nicotine products on public health give voice to ANSG regarding the tobacco industry's social responsibility and the authenticity of their CSR efforts (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022a, p.15). In the excerpt below, ANSG indicate an example of how the tobacco industry utilises their marketing strategies of nicotine pouches:

Most likely you have heard about the tobacco industry's new products; less harmful, nice flavours, helping smokers to quit. But is this really the truth? Or is it yet another tobacco industry tactic – to create the next generation of nicotine addicted customers (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023a, p.2).

ANSG claims that in connection to ethical aspects and CSR practices which focus on an organisation's responsibility and obligation towards local communities and emphasises on integrating societal interests into business practices, the tobacco industry falls short. The tobacco industry's products are widely recognized as posing health risks to society, making it challenging to justify their ethical standing in an industry that profits from consumers buying products associated with serious health hazards. Furthermore, ANSG emphasises the tobacco industry's impact on environment, social and health associated aspects and focuses on how their marketing goes against these regulations. ANSG aims to illuminate the harmful practices of the tobacco industry and its products by actively disseminating information about the industry's realities (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022a, p.15).

Additionally, ANSG emphasises how young people tend to believe that tobacco free nicotine pouches and other nicotine products such as e-cigarettes have no connection to tobacco, despite the fact that nicotine is derived from the tobacco plant. In relation to this, ANSG stresses that the tobacco industry can be accused of greenwashing due to transparency issues. Brands within the tobacco industry often use CSR initiatives as a facade to enhance their image and public perception without genuinely addressing the fundamental issues associated with tobacco and nicotine products. They indicate that the tobacco industry misleads consumers into thinking nicotine products are harmless while concealing the dangerous health aspects, child labour and destruction of rainforests associated with the industry as illustrated in figure 4 below:

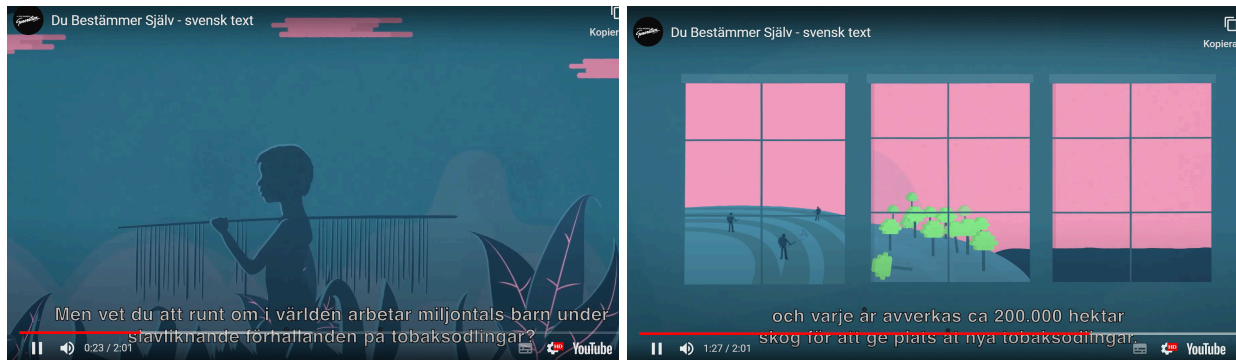


Figure 4. "Are you aware that around the world, millions of children work under slave-like conditions in tobacco fields?" and "Every year, 200,000 hectares of forest are cleared to make way for new tobacco plantations" (A Non Smoking Generation, 2020a).

## 4.4 Micro and Macro Framing

Incorporating a nuanced examination of both micro and macro framing within the advocacy efforts of A Non Smoking Generation, this analysis leverages the empirical data extracted from the 'Framing' rows in the coding scheme. ANSG uses micro and macro framing strategies in its battle against the tobacco industry by aligning the personal experiences with the more general social issues in a bid to call for policy development and change of view of the general public.

### 4.4.1 Micro Framing

The micro framing in the documents focuses on immediate, localised issues that directly affect individuals or specific groups. On this micro level, ANSG focuses on specific and relatable examples that demonstrate the direct effects of tobacco use and the aggressive marketing tactics of the industry. For example, they present tobacco brands' as misleading marketers:

As long as the tobacco industry invents new products to lure the next generation into a lifelong nicotine addiction, we need to work to raise awareness, influence our politicians and motivate children and young people to live a tobacco-free life (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019c, p.3).

This type of framing makes the abstract harm of tobacco concrete, personalises the risks and underscores the manipulative tactics used to target young consumers. Another example is "For

more than five years, the Swedish tobacco industry has had free reign to market its new products to children and young people” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022a, p.3). This micro framing targets the direct impact of tobacco marketing on youth and emphasises the strategic exploitation by the tobacco industry. It highlights the specific ethical concerns of marketing addictive products to minors, illustrating the direct consequences of lax regulatory environments on vulnerable populations. Further, the examples of sentiments from those affected, such as “these findings suggest that young people rarely take up smoking of their own free will, but instead are often motivated by a desire to fit in with the gang or to alleviate their mental health problems” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022a, p.5), further humanises the issue and induce a stronger emotional feel and may increase the level of urgency with the audience.

Moreover, ANSG often uses micro framing to emphasise and argue for their own existence and cause. At times, the heritage of the movement is highlighted, a strategy that corporate brands also use to strengthen brand equity. Sometimes this self-uplifting micro framing is also induced with a great pride and complacent where the NGO is not afraid of giving backhanded nudges towards the industry, actors and politicians. This statement showcases how ANSG uses its historical context and achievements to validate its ongoing relevance and effectiveness, arguing for the continuation of its efforts based on past successes:

In Sweden cigarette smoking has decreased steadily since the early eighties ... The decrease in smoking prevalence is the ultimate proof that tobacco control works. In 1979 the NGO A Non Smoking Generation was founded and started an important knowledge dissemination work to raise awareness about tobacco health risks to prevent youth from starting (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023a, p.1).

In the next excerpt, ANSG emphasises its role in advocating for stronger tobacco laws to protect children and frames their existence as essential in the fight against tobacco companies’ targeting of youth, as well as presents their work as imperative to make political change happen. This personalises the risks and might aim to garner public and policymaker support for more stringent regulations: “As long as there is a tobacco industry that sees our children as its future loyal

customers, we need to continue to work for stronger tobacco laws and children's right to a tobacco free future "(A Non Smoking Generation, 2021c, p.3).

By emphasising these issues, ANSG strengthens their argument for the need for ongoing advocacy and intervention, while positioning themselves as a critical player in public health efforts. This strategic framing not only underlines the direct impact of tobacco, but also reinforces the organisation's pivotal role in combating these challenges. Although not explicitly proven and presented, ANSG also brings forward changes of the Swedish tobacco laws in a way that make the movement seem to be the cause for these. This, together with the highlighted heritage, may present the organisation as more trustworthy and successful. Whether ANSG efforts have led to change of tobacco laws or not are fully evinced, however, their advocacy attempts remain persistent. In Figure 5, from the campaign *The Last Battle*, ANSG present themselves as the anti tobacco teacher for the youth.

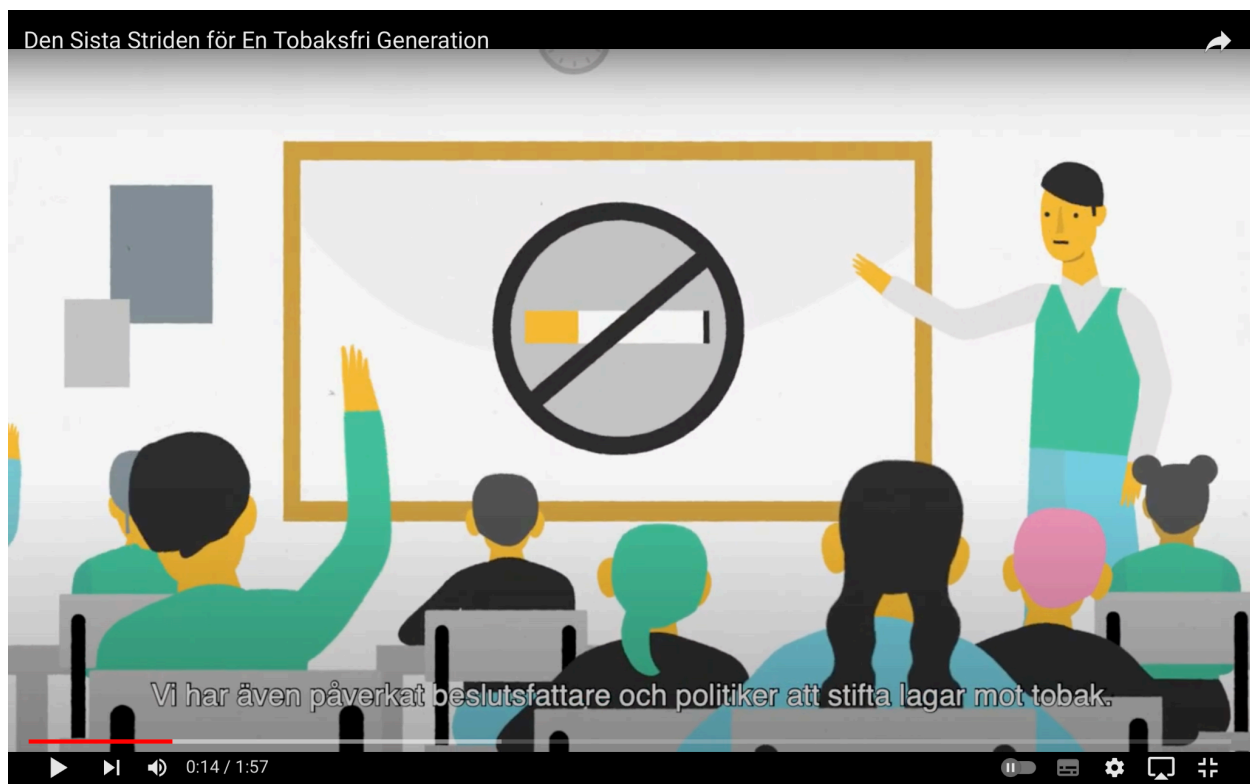


Figure 5. "We have also influenced decision-makers and politicians to legislate tobacco laws" (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019b)

#### 4.4.2 Macro Framing

Conversely, at the macro level, ANSG grounds these micro narratives in the larger global issues, magnifying the importance of the fight against tobacco. This framing addresses more abstract themes that impact larger populations or encompass global issues like the far-reaching implications of tobacco production and consumption with respect to public health, environmental sustainability and ethical labour practices. According to the reports and campaigns, growing tobacco is responsible for significant deforestation, water pollution and child labour. Hence, the situation with tobacco falls into the more general scale of health and human rights in the world. This macro framing extends the conversation beyond individual choice to collective responsibility and advocates for systemic change.

A large portion of all tobacco is cultivated in low-income countries. Tobacco-related litter is the most common type of waste on our streets. Nicotine increases the risk of mental illness. The tobacco industry causes massive deforestation (A Non Smoking Generation, 2020d, p.7).

The macro framing used also touches upon the daily life of Swedish citizens and modern society issues that currently might worry the people: “Research shows that all forms of nicotine can cause serious health risks such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022b). This macro framing extends the discussion to the societal level and highlights the extensive public health risks associated with nicotine. By framing the issue within the context of widespread health implications, it appeals to broader public health concerns and advocates for a collective response against nicotine consumption. ANSG further makes sure to incorporate very recent societal discussions like citizens’ economy:

With ongoing inflation and soaring food prices, it is particularly relevant to question the place of tobacco in grocery stores, and in people’s everyday lives. It has to become easier to shop more healthily and sustainably, and one effective way to achieve this is for our politicians to raise taxes and prices on all harmful tobacco products (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023c).

Here, macro framing is applied to connect tobacco sales with broader economic issues such as inflation and profits of grocery brands. This framing strategy not only addresses health concerns but also situates the tobacco debate within larger economic discourses, challenging the allocation of valuable retail space to harmful tobacco products and the ethics as well as responsibility of grocery chains and politicians. ANSG also combine these macro framing techniques, which focuses on the substantial public health and economic impacts of tobacco use, by portraying tobacco use not merely as an individual health concern but as a major public and economic issue:

Tobacco education must be integrated into the rest of the curriculum to raise awareness of all the negative effects of tobacco, both on personal health and the economy, but also on global sustainable development in terms of protecting human rights and our environment (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019c, p.11).

Moreover, the NGO often criticises media outlets rather than praise or invite these actors to work together: “All these positive posts and articles act as hidden advertising for the tobacco industry, helping to divert attention from the negative effects of tobacco on people, the environment and the climate” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2020b) and “Unlike many other industries that are heavily scrutinised when it comes to child labour and climate impact, the media’s scrutiny of the tobacco industry is almost non-existent” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019c, p.11). This macro framing critique highlights the media’s role in glamorising tobacco and potentially influencing youth perceptions. By addressing the portrayal of tobacco in media, ANSG draws attention to the broader cultural and societal impacts of such portrayals and advocates for responsible media practices to prevent the normalisation of tobacco use among the younger population.

#### **4.4.3 Combined Framing**

An instance of combined framing is ANSG’s arguing about flavour bans. For example, ANSG discusses that “we called for a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of advertising and a ban on flavouring nicotine products with candy-like flavours, unless they are classified as medicinal” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023b, p.10) and therefore require being banned. This point illustrates the micro impact in how flavours target individuals, particularly youth, while also addressing the

macro implication which is the need for regulatory reforms to protect public health at a broader level. ANSG also presents educational arguments, which highlights the role of personal education in fostering informed decisions:

Schools need to give them [the children] the tools to see and resist because tobacco companies are constantly finding new strategies. Through product development, design and hidden marketing, they circumvent legislation and entice children to try it (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019d)

Simultaneously, ANSG underscores the importance of public health education as a societal responsibility by linking individual knowledge to broader public health outcomes. In Figure 6, from the campaign *A tobacco free school*, the start of the campaign video demonstrates a school building surrounded by a town where cigarettes impact the surrounding community. In the end of the video, the cigarettes from the school are gone and the town is sunny, colourful and healthy. This message is an example of ANSG’s way of showing how a micro issue (tobacco in schools) affects a larger macro issue (the town and the environment) in a combined manner.

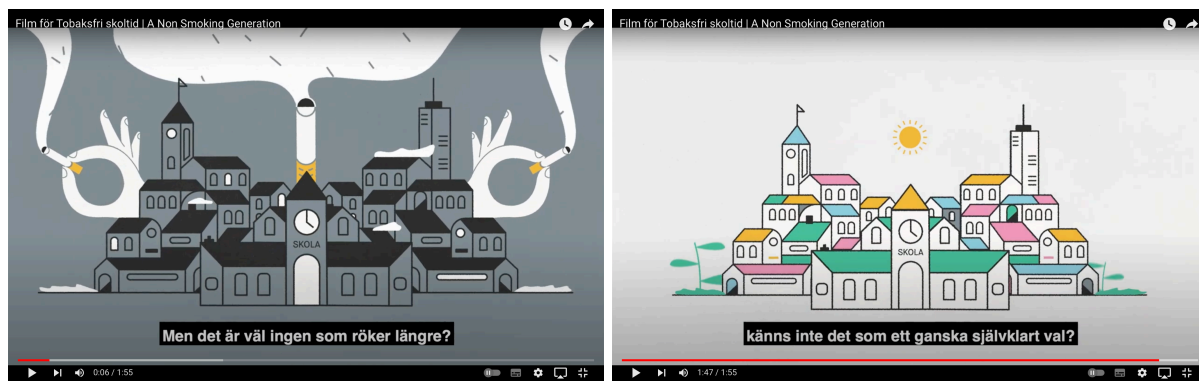


Figure 6. “But no one is smoking anymore?” and “doesn’t that feel like an obvious choice?” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019d)

The use of micro and macro framing, individually or combined, encapsulates the dual framing strategy employed by ANSG. By addressing both specific and broad concerns related to tobacco use, these framing strategies provide a tool for influencing public opinion and policies as well as attacking the claims of tobacco brands.



## 4.5 Anti-branding

The concept of ANSG anti-branding strategies is explored through their utilisation of both culture jamming and binary opposition in their advocacy work. These strategies enable ANSG to effectively dissect and expose the tobacco industry's hidden marketing tactics, encouraging a more critical and engaging exploration, while advocating for policy change in the discourse surrounding tobacco products.

### 4.5.1 Culture Jamming

We are the next generation of free thinkers. Redefine the rules and explore a new way to experience pure nicotine. Extracted from the tobacco fields in Malawi. The leaves are handpicked by child workers, ensuring the production for your next high. The revolution has begun. Our tobacco-free product is leading the way. Destroying the environment one day at a time. Bite the bread. Taste the cream. Feel the nicotine (A Non Smoking Generation, 2020c)

This passage explains how ANSG uses satire to expose the industry's manipulation and advocate for stricter regulation. The *Nikotinsemlan campaign* (A Non Smoking Generation, 2020c) critique the tobacco industry's marketing by introducing a fictional "Nikotinsemla" - a pastry infused with nicotine. It highlights the way new nicotine products are promoted as tobacco free but remain harmful and addictive. By mimicking the industry's marketing tactics, the campaign exposes and challenges these marketing methods. Both visuals and text are parodically mirroring the tactics - a clear example of culture jamming and subvertising to portray the marketing as manipulative and deceptive. For example, by presenting an ordinary pastry as a lifestyle, a characteristic attribute that tobacco brands use in their campaigns, ANSG mockingly highlights how these brands' promises may be unattainable and inauthentic. The mix of mirroring tobacco brand messages such as "we are the next generation of free thinkers" and "taste the cream" with advocacy satire in statements such as "Destroying the environment one day at a time" induce feelings of confusion and catch the attention of the viewer. This mixing of mirroring and advocacy can also be seen in the image advertisements for the campaign. While some images

present people and a trendy lifestyle, others give way to more explicit critique such as syringing an unknown red liquid into a semla. The *Nikotinsemlan* campaign includes both images and videos as well as a full Instagram profile created for the campaign. Nothing about who the creator is of the account is presented on the profile and this may be another example of mirroring the marketing tactics of tobacco brands as the profile and posts seem more anonymous and lacking in transparency. This mirrors a profile that is designed to build a sense of mystery and exclusivity around the product or brand, rather than highlighting the company and individuals behind it. The profile could therefore be powerful in both catching attention of nicotine users and raising awareness around the ethics of tobacco brands' Instagram profiles. The post captions is another mirroring technique of the tobacco brands where statements as "Explore new innovations. Achieve the unachieved" is advertised for a product that does not even exist. In Figure 7, ANSG's *Nikotinsemlan* campaign is presented. In Figure 8, ANSG's montage of tobacco brands' marketing can be seen.

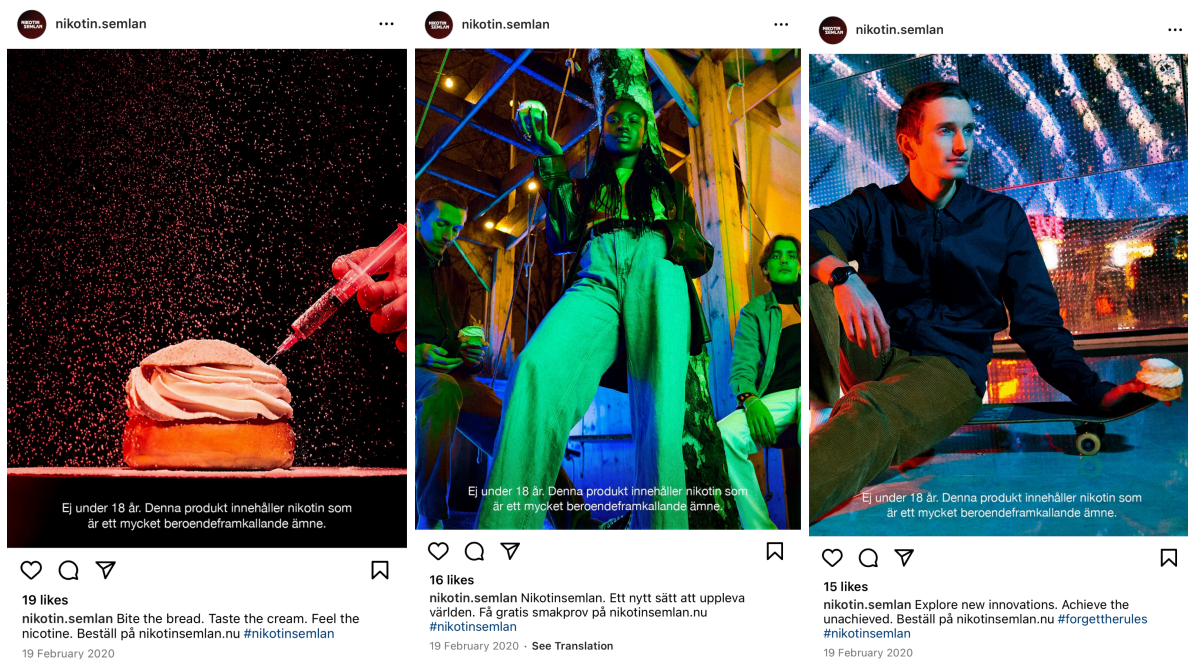


Figure 7. The Nikotinsemlan campaign on Instagram (A Non Smoking Generation, 2020c)



Figure 8. Montage of tobacco brands' marketing (A Non Smoking Generation, 2021a)

A Non Smoking Generation also utilises influencer partnerships to counteract tobacco endorsements by using their own influencers with large youth followings. Instead of promoting tobacco products, as the NGO presents in their media analysis report, (A Non Smoking Generation, 2021a) these influencers spread anti-tobacco messages that directly oppose the glamour often associated with nicotine products on social media. In these campaigns ANSG collaborates with brain researchers, professors, athletes, artists and influencers to support their work. ANSG asserts that:

The organisation again uses the help of famous role models - and their channels with a combined reach of almost six million - to highlight that we are still needed and working for the health of all children and a more sustainable world (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019a)

In other words, this could be considered an anti-branding strategy as ANSG gives the tobacco companies 'a taste of their own medicine' by using influencers, while still promoting their



opposing cause. In Figure 9 ANSG presents how tobacco brands use influencers and in Figure 10 ANSG showcase influencers of their own.

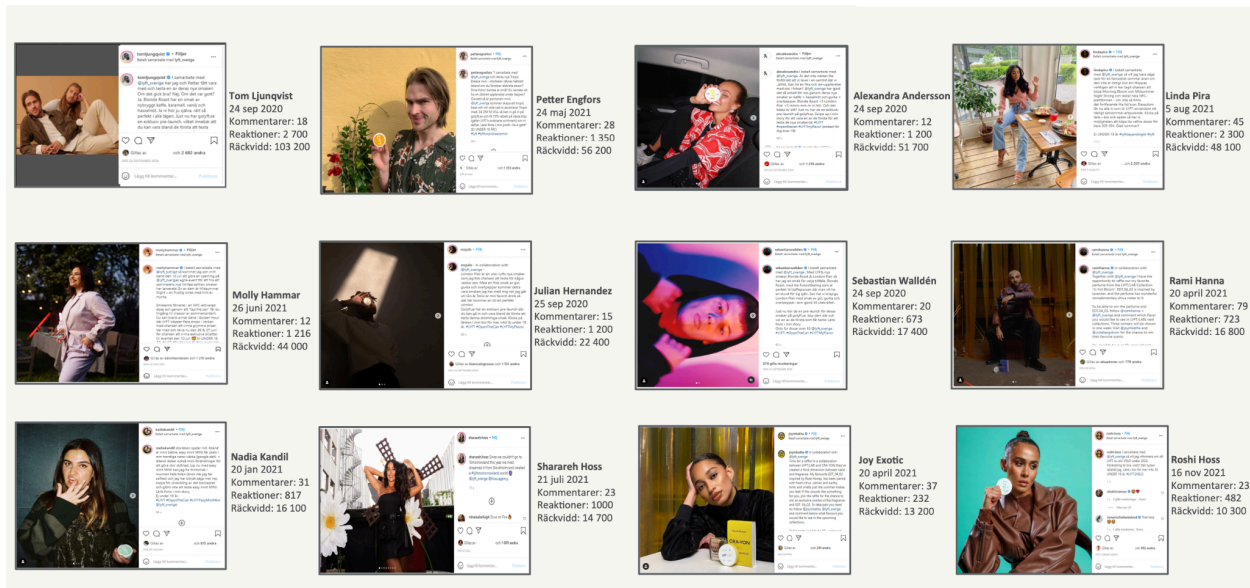


Figure 9. ANSG’s presentation of tobacco industry influencers (A Non Smoking Generation, 2021a)



Figure 10. Influencers of ANSG (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019a)

Furthermore, ANSG uses irony by presenting particular tobacco brand claims within quotation marks like “less harmful” or “tobacco free” to portray these claims as untrue. Moreover, they accuse the brands of using childish appealing flavours:

The tobacco industry launches new ‘tobacco free’ nicotine products marketed openly to children and young people through collaborations with influencers in podcasts and social media. Attractive packaging and candy-like flavors such as raspberry licorice and Hubba Bubba entice children to try them, and addiction develops quickly (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019c, p.6)

A notable campaign showcasing this irony and anti-branding is *Tobacco Free Day 2023: We Need Food, Not Tobacco*, which connects tobacco consumption with broader economic issues such as inflation and food prices. This campaign uses subvertising by questioning the place of tobacco in grocery stores and advocates for healthier, more sustainable shopping practices. It emphasises that “products that kill should not be flavoured, resemble or be classified as food” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023c) and use the Swedish tobacco and nicotine warning label on simple food products. Tobacco and nicotine brands, willingly or unwillingly, are forced by law to include these warning labels on their package and thus these labels can be strongly connected to these brands and industry. One might argue that ANSG uses these labels as a culture jamming technique as they take one strong brand element and change the context in their campaign to critique and provoke. Another sign of culture jamming are the flavours clearly presented, much like the flavours are presented in nicotine pouch advertisements. The campaign is presented in Figure 11, whereas a campaign from the tobacco brand XQS is shown in Figure 12. Both the white warning label and presentation of the flavours in their original form are present in the figures:



Figure 11. The campaign Tobacco Free Day 2023: We Need Food, Not Tobacco (A Non Smoking Generation, 2023c)



Figure 12. Advertisement of XQS (XQS. n.d)

Furthermore, ANSG's *The Last Battle* campaign (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019b) is another example of the culture jamming and anti-branding strategies. This campaign includes historical references and basic rhetoric tactics to criticise the tobacco industry's targeting of youth. The campaign invokes historical battles and struggles to frame the fight against tobacco as a significant and both historical and urgent cause presented with storytelling: "The year was 1979. The story of a non-smoking generation began at a smoky party, at a time when smoking was a natural part of everyday life". This technique creates a narrative that may resonate with the audience's sense of justice and historical progress. By framing the industry's tactics as a relentless battle, the campaign urges the public to join the fight for a tobacco free generation. The NGO states: "and now, we are fighting the final battle". The use of phrases like "the final battle" and "Without regard to the millions of lives that tobacco has already destroyed. Without a thought for you and me. Without a thought for our children and grandchildren" employs emotional appeals as guilt, anger and empathy to mobilise public sentiment against the tobacco industry and portrays the industry as the bad antagonist and ANSG as the soldiers rallying support for anti-tobacco initiatives. In this campaign, there is a clear attempt from ANSG to speak directly to the audience with a direct communication strategy characterised by a personalised and direct address approach: "Visit nonsmoking.eu and see what you can do to help. Together, we can reach the goal of a completely tobacco-free generation" (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019b). This method aims to engage the audience on a personal level and foster a sense of individual connection and involvement. It calls on the audience to participate actively in the fight against tobacco and transform a public health issue into a shared social movement. Moreover, other simple rhetorical tactics can be seen in the visuals like colours for ANSG vs black and white for tobacco brands' influence as well as the rhetorical rule of three: "For a tobacco-free Sweden by 2025. For global sustainable development. For children's rights". In Figure 13, the colours are shown as stripped away by the tobacco industry in the beginning of the video and ends with a colourful community and a call to action.

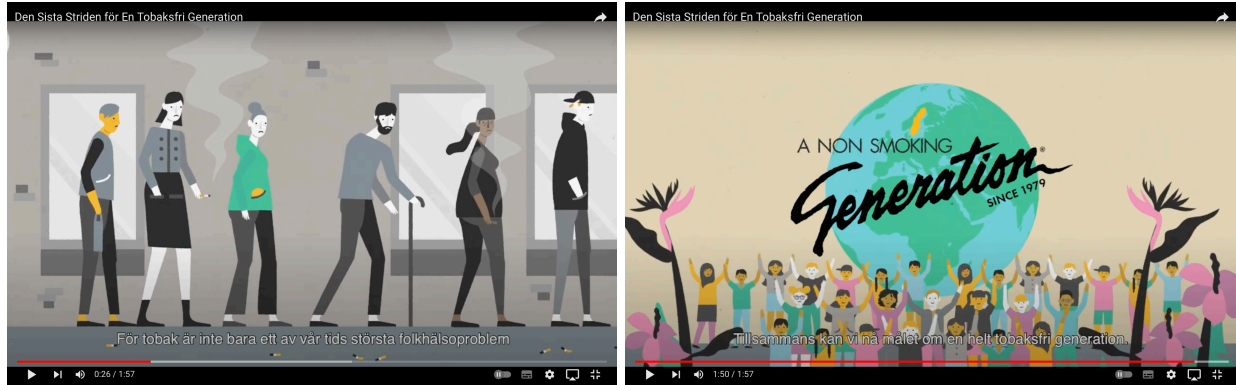


Figure 13. The Last Battle (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019b)

#### 4.5.2 Binary Opposition

Binary opposition is another rhetorical tactic used in ANSG’s documents to highlight conflicting interests and values. The use of binary opposition creates clear dichotomies that emphasise the ethical and moral distinctions between ANSG’s advocacy and the tobacco industry. In the case of ANSG, this tactic is also generally involving rhetorical questions. By highlighting these oppositions, the NGO creates narratives that may encourage the audience to critically evaluate the practices of the tobacco industry and support efforts to protect public health and the environment.

A primary binary opposition evident in ANSG’s campaigns is the juxtaposition of children against the tobacco industry. This opposition underscores the vulnerability and innocence of children in contrast to the seemingly predatory practices of the tobacco industry. Another presented binary opposition is health versus profit. This opposition is central to the anti tobacco advocacy and emphasises the prioritisation of public health over the financial gains of corporate brands. ANSG’s campaigns frequently stress this dichotomy to illustrate the tobacco industry’s disregard for health in pursuit of profit. The rhetorical questions “We just need to ask ourselves what is more important? The health and future of children or the profits of the tobacco industry?” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019c, p.3) and “Big Tobacco needs us, Do we need them?” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2021a) encapsulates this conflict by juxtaposing the protection of children as well as importance of reactive and alert consumers with the greedy and capitalistic portrayal of tobacco brands, thereby questioning the ethics of their business and marketing



practices. In figure 14 ANSG demonstrates how tobacco brands (black hand) literally push in money for advertisements and social media to end up in consumers' phones (pink hand).



Figure 14. Illustration of the tobacco industry's paid marketing (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019d)

Furthermore, the opposition between a tobacco free culture and a normalised tobacco culture is another aspect of ANSG's binary opposition messaging. These campaigns advocate for tobacco free schools and communities, and aim to counteract the normalisation and glamorization of tobacco use. This is evident in the campaign question "So, giving up tobacco is one of the things you can do to contribute to sustainable development and human rights, because you do what you want with your life, right?" (A Non Smoking Generation, 2020a) which challenges the normalisation of nicotine consumption by drawing a parallel to the responsibility and morals of the consumer. This approach highlights the incongruity between societal acceptance of nicotine products and their effects on sustainability, unfair worker conditions and public health. In Figure 15, from *The Last Battle* campaign, ANSG implies how the tobacco industry poisons the environment and leaves the area as a graveyard. The screenshot to the right states: "Without a thought about the millions of lives that tobacco has already destroyed" and thereby connects both

the environmental impact (the colours stripped away) as well as the effect on public health and worker conditions (the statement together with human gravestones). Here, ANSG seems to accuse and present the tobacco industry as murderers of both people and the planet. This strong accusation is another example that makes the binary opposition strategy clear.

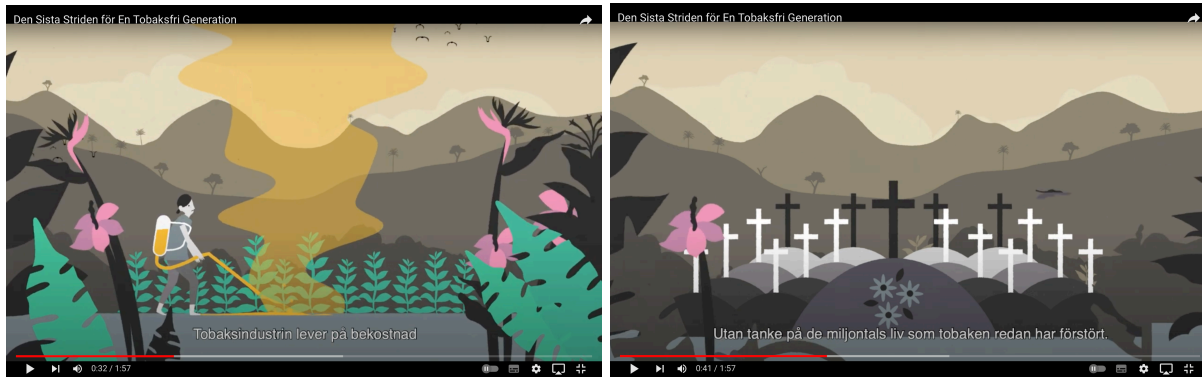


Figure 15. Screenshots from The Last Battle campaign accusing the tobacco industry of ruining lives (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019b)

Moreover, ANSG uses statistics to strengthen their argument and binary opposition further. The statistics are attacking several actors such as the tobacco brands, politicians and the media: “92% of tobacco users start in their teens or earlier and the question is whether our politicians see the value of trying to prevent it?” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2021c, p.8) and “There are major shortcomings in media scrutiny of the tobacco industry, which is allowed to promote its products through effective PR work equivalent to an advertising value of SEK 48 million in the first half of 2020 alone” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2020b). By these statements, the NGO presents themselves as someone to trust since they have done their research and thereby can question other actors. The binary opposition of ANSG as the knowledgeable researcher against politicians and the media, that are usually aiming to be known for these attributes, may benefit ANSG beyond just the ‘us vs them’ or ‘underdog vs industry’ narrative. By presenting themselves as superior in the context of fact-finding and exposing, ANSG may strike the audience as more trustworthy than the media and industry, even though they were the trusted actors to begin with. In such a way, ANSG once again borrows or hijacks attributes and uses them for their own cause.

## 4.6 Summary of Processes and Cultural Contexts

One of the most straightforward ways of understanding the cultural context that ANSG operates in is captured in this excerpt: “No one wants to live in a prohibitionist society, which is perhaps why many politicians hesitate when it comes to banning harmful substances” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022a, p.10). As mentioned in the problematization, Sweden only entered the European Commission with the term of an exemption of selling snus, although it is banned in the rest of the EU countries. Thus, the target group, which is the Swedish society, of ANSG might have vastly different opinions about tobacco where some groups are directly opposed to their cause. One could argue that macro framing is an important strategy for ANSG to counter this matter, since other issues that might be more relevant to objectors are combined with their purpose. While some of these objectors might ignore the health warnings of tobacco products, some might have more care for the environment and thereby agree with ANSG’s debating. Furthermore, children are often in the centre of ANSG’s campaigns and reports. In the reports, adults and especially parents seem to be the target group as the NGO frequently includes a paragraph about how important it is to discuss tobacco use with their children and how “tobacco use is ‘contagious’” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2022a, p.18) among the youth. Moreover, the hearty information given and language used is very straightforward, induced with worry and talk about the youth as victims. These reports are generally not discussed in the media and it is unclear how many parents, or people in general, ANSG actually reach since there is a need for the audience to actively look for the reports on their website. On the other hand, the campaigns seem to be targeted towards both adults and the youth. Here, ANSG brings forward strategies such as humour and attention catching visuals that may work for either or both the target demographics. In addition, the campaigns are not swamped with text and are easier to find online on platforms such as Instagram and Youtube. These do not require the audience to actively look for the information, but can rather show up in their feed of an influencer. This dual approach highlights ANSG’s understanding of the cultural dynamics at play. While the reports are meant to educate and empower parents with detailed information, the campaigns rather aim to capture the attention of a broader audience, including young people, through more accessible and engaging content. On the other hand, it seems like ANSG are putting more effort into the reports rather than social media that could help spread their campaigns to a wider audience more

effectively. This could possibly be the result of the type of organisation (non-governmental and non-profit), the employees of ANSG or limited resources typically faced by non-profit organisations, which often lack the extensive marketing budgets that for-profit entities possess. ANSG may prioritise detailed, comprehensive reports to build credibility and provide in-depth information to stakeholders and policymakers with the goal of influencing policy and maintaining a professional image, rather than achieving a broader social media engagement and likes. It is unclear whether the NGO would have a greater impact with social media awareness campaigns, since these campaigns may speak more directly to the youth, or if their efforts of targeting adults and parents are the most strategic course of action.

Moreover, ANSG uses the cultural context to play with social norms and the acceptance of tobacco use and industry. The most striking example is the *Niktonsemlan* campaign where a tobacco free product, much like the tobacco free nicotine pouch, is presented within a different context. What might be seen as normal for a nicotine pouch becomes obscure when applied to another tobacco free product, thereby enlightening the audience that there is indeed a difference between one tobacco free product and another tobacco free product. Another example of their play of accepted norms that seem bizarre when put in another context is the quote “Many adult environments such as pubs and workplaces are already smoke free. Now it’s time for schools. A completely tobacco free school day - doesn't that seem like a pretty obvious choice?” (A Non Smoking Generation, 2019d). By contextualising the non smoke free school environment within other smoke free adult environments, the thought of smoking allowed in children’s schools may seem absurd. In conclusion, by placing familiar concepts in new contexts, ANSG disrupts conventional thinking and highlights the contradictions in the societal acceptance of tobacco products. This can trigger a deeper public understanding of the issues while also promoting a cultural shift towards stricter tobacco control and healthier societal norms. As consumers of today are becoming more aware and ‘woke’, these strategies may work well since they encourage the audience to question and reconsider messages from corporate brands and the tobacco industry.

In consideration of female marketing, the tobacco industry has had great success since they have managed to target female consumers effectively through the emergence of the tobacco free nicotine pouches and the glamorisation of these products in their marketing. This case thereby sheds light on how strategies that are aimed to empower and attract women may seem like fruitful strategies in brand equity and marketing literature, yet may backfire in a practical context. Additionally, from a cultural perspective, ANSG questions the success of the tobacco industry's marketing tactics, due to the ethical and health related concerns associated with the increased nicotine usage among women. Furthermore, in the cultural context, ANSG sheds light on the discrepancies between societal values and the practices of the tobacco industry. The organisation's portrayal of the tobacco industry's CSR practices as a facade to conceal its true intentions challenges prevailing cultural norms surrounding corporate accountability and ethical business practices. Additionally, ANSG's advocacy as demonstrated through their reports and campaigns consistently call for stricter regulations on tobacco marketing. This resonates with cultural and social demand that prioritise public health initiatives, regulatory interventions and foster greater corporate responsibility and transparency. Hence, ANSG's advocacy efforts can serve as a channel for influencing and navigating the cultural context where public health, accountability and ethical practices are increasingly valued and prioritised.

Concludingly, the examination of these cultural contexts and processes within ANSG's campaigns and reports provides insight into the organisation strategies tailoring to align with societal values and norms. This analysis highlights the importance of considering the cultural environment in which the NGO operates and how they leverage this context to achieve their objectives. The organisation's public campaigns are designed to generate widespread awareness and provoke public discussion. By framing their messages within culturally relevant contexts, such as the protection of youth and the promotion of health, ANSG attempts to provoke emotions and engage the public about the conversation on tobacco control.

## **5.0 Discussion**

This section presents the discussion of our analysis. Our study focuses on the strategies and techniques employed by A Non Smoking Generation (ANSG) in their advocacy against the tobacco industry's marketing. The discussion integrates our empirical findings with theoretical perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of ANSG's strategies and how they engage in the tobacco marketing debate.

### **5.1 Key Insights**

ANSG actively critiques the tobacco industry's CSR initiatives and argues that they often serve as a facade to enhance public perception without addressing the fundamental issues associated with tobacco and nicotine products. A central aspect of ANSG's critique is how the tobacco industry presents nicotine products as safer alternatives and thereby obscures the real implications of nicotine consumption. This marketing strategy allows the industry to promote addictive products under the guise of harm reduction which can lead to misleading the public about the health risks involved. Their accusation aligns with Palazzo and Richter's (2005) analysis, which highlights the deceptive nature of CSR practices that mask underlying harmful impacts. Furthermore, the NGO points out that the tobacco industry has strategically navigated around existing regulations to continue promoting their products. By marketing tobacco free nicotine pouches and other similar products as innovative and safer, the industry bypasses stringent tobacco regulations. This regulatory evasion enables the tobacco brands to introduce new products to the market that attract consumers without adhering to the same restrictions placed on traditional tobacco products. ANSG's campaigns and reports aim to expose the industry's harmful practices such as environmental degradation, child labour and misleading health claims about new nicotine products (Palazzo & Richter, 2005; Bowen, 1953; Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Ottman, 2017).

Moreover, ANSG's strategic approach to critiquing CSR involves a detailed examination of the tobacco industry's practices, which leverage innovative tactics to expose and challenge its unethical marketing and practices. Beyond the more formal, self-produced reports, to counter these misleading CSR efforts ANSG utilises online campaigns to more informally expose the

deceptive tactics of the tobacco industry and make complex issues easier to understand for the general public, particularly a younger audience. ANSG's use of digital platforms for their campaigns embodies digital consumer activism, resonating with Hollenbeck and Zinkhan's (2006) findings. By mobilising supporters online and creating viral content, ANSG exemplifies how NGOs can harness the power of digital media to challenge established corporate narratives and promote social change. This digital activism complements their traditional advocacy efforts and creates a multifaceted approach that is both contemporary and effective in influencing public perception and policy. By repurposing familiar images and messages, ANSG provokes critical thinking and encourages the public to question the true intent behind the tobacco industry's CSR initiatives. While ANSG frequently uses repetitive messages for their cause, these messages are presented in new shapes and contexts, aligning with Condit and Condit's (1992) discussion on incremental erosion. Incremental erosion involves small, calculated moves to deconstruct the positions of target companies and force them to constantly defend themselves. This strategy corners opponents into having fewer viable responses over time and creates constraints that limit their potential reactions. This tactic is especially evident in ANSG's various campaigns by addressing the different kinds of demographics, such as adults and parents, or the youth directly in creative forms.

Further, ANSG claims that the tobacco industry employs gendered marketing strategies to attract new users, particularly young women. ANSG's reports and campaigns highlight how the industry's use of gender-stereotypical and packaging designs targets women and young girls, aligning with Alreck (1994) and Grohmann (2009) who explain how products are often crafted to cater to gender-specific characteristics through visual design elements and marketing. In addition, the NGO attacks the tobacco industry's use of influencers and celebrities on social media to promote their products that aim to make nicotine use appear socially acceptable and desirable among young people. ANSG indicates that this strategy has been particularly effective in reaching young women, who are influenced by the portrayal of nicotine products as fashionable and empowering (Barletta, 2003). ANSG's critique is supported by Grohmann (2009) who discusses how gender-specific marketing and messaging can effectively target and influence consumer behaviour. Additionally, ANSG's arguments echoes Varghese and Kumar (2020), Hainneville et al. (2022) and Lima and Casais (2021), who shed light on the

commodification of feminist ideals within marketing campaigns and underscores a broader societal concern regarding the exploitation of feminist values for commercial gains rather than fostering genuine social change. ANSG emphasises that while the tobacco industry has had success in their marketing towards women, they question the ethical implications of their gendered targeting. This aligns with Maclaran's (2015) inquiry into whether the relationship between feminism and marketing is one of exploitation or empowerment.

Additionally, ANSG employs both micro and macro framing strategies to influence public perception and policy. At the micro level, ANSG focuses on specific, relatable examples that illustrate the direct effects of tobacco use and marketing on individuals and young people in particular. This approach personalises the risks and underscores the manipulative tactics used by the tobacco industry to target vulnerable populations (Jamnik, 2011). For example, ANSG highlights how the tobacco industry markets new products and misleads consumers about the health risks. By using specific examples of aggressive marketing, ANSG humanises the issue and aims to evoke a stronger emotional response from the audience while increasing the urgency of their advocacy (Lasn, 1999). Conversely, macro framing is used to connect these individual, personal narratives to larger global issues such as public issues, environmental sustainability and ethical labour practices. This broader framing extends the conversation beyond individual choices to collective responsibility and advocate for systemic change. Furthermore, ANSG critiques the media's portrayal of tobacco, which they argue glamorises tobacco and influences youth perceptions. Instead of portraying the media solely as antagonistic, ANSG could benefit from fostering positive media relationships to enhance policy influence (Bob, 2005; De Bruycker, 2019). In addition, the NGO presents some arguments as combined micro and macro framed. In discussing the place of tobacco in grocery stores, ANSG ties individual economic pressures to larger economic and ethical issues. They point out that with ongoing inflation and rising food prices, it is relevant to question why harmful tobacco products occupy valuable retail space. This micro framing addresses the immediate economic choices facing consumers and aligns with cultural narratives and consumer ideologies, which is something that Kozinets and Handelman (2004) presents as effective to enhance advocacy impact. At the same time, macro framing links these choices to broader economic policies and the responsibility of grocery chains and politicians, advocating for higher taxes and prices on tobacco products to encourage



healthier consumer behaviour. The strategic use of both micro and macro framing allows ANSG to address the issue of tobacco use from multiple angles and audiences with various attitudes. By presenting specific examples alongside broader societal implications, ANSG mobilises support for their cause and pressures policymakers to enact comprehensive reforms. This dual framing strategy not only highlights the immediate harms of tobacco use but also situates these harms within a wider context of global health and sustainability, making a stronger case for action since it situates more individual, personal arguments with broader, established societal narratives supported by the theoretical frameworks of Baumgartner and Mahoney (2008) and Jensen and Seeberg (2020) who emphasise the strategic use of framing to influence policy and public perception at both individual and societal levels.

Furthermore, ANSG employs culture jamming and anti-branding strategies to challenge and expose the deceptive marketing practices of the tobacco industry. These tactics are designed to disrupt the mainstream messages promoted by tobacco companies and to raise awareness about the true implications of tobacco use. Culture jamming involves the subversion of corporate advertising and media to reveal the manipulative tactics used by these industries. ANSG uses this approach to critique and satirise tobacco advertisements, often by creating parodies that mimic the style and tone of the original ads but with altered messages that highlight the harmful effects of tobacco products. This technique is aligned with the concept of culture jamming as described by Handelman and Kozinets (2004) who define it as a social activist effort aimed at countering consumption-oriented messages in the mass media. A notable example is ANSG's *Nikotinsemlan* campaign, which introduced a fictional nicotine-infused pastry to mock the way new nicotine products are marketed as tobacco free yet remain harmful and addictive. By presenting an ordinary pastry as a lifestyle product, ANSG parodies the marketing tactics of tobacco brands, highlighting the absurdity and danger of such promotions while mockingly highlighting how these brand attributes may be unattainable and inauthentic (Handelman & Kozinets, 2004; Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2018). Furthermore, ANSG's campaigns often utilise irony and satire (Musloff, 2017) to present tobacco brand claims within quotation marks, such as "less harmful" or "tobacco free", which portray these claims as deceptive. For example, the campaign *Tobacco Free Day 2023: We Need Food, Not Tobacco* questions the place of tobacco in grocery stores and advocates for healthier, more sustainable shopping practices. This campaign uses subvertising by

questioning the classification of tobacco products as food and emphasises that products that kill should not be flavoured to resemble food. The campaign also uses white warning labels that are strongly connected to these brands with a strong and high image ownership (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2018). One might argue that the NGO uses these labels as a culture jamming technique as they take one strong brand element and change the context in their campaign to mock, critique and provoke (Harold, 2004; Wettergren, 2009).

The hijacking of such a strong and high image ownership creates a powerful counteract that might not be seen in images with lower and weaker ownership. In other words, brands and industries that usually utilise this image ownership to strengthen their brand equity and brand position may be wise to also consider the higher impact these images can have when attacked or culture jammed and what damage it can cause when put in another context. Furthermore, ANSG uses basic rhetorical tactics to reach the audience. *The Last Battle* campaign uses historical references and emotional appeals to frame the fight against tobacco as an urgent and significant cause. It portrays the tobacco industry as the antagonist and ANSG as the defender of children's rights, urging public support for a tobacco free generation by addressing and asking the viewers for help. The campaign uses direct communication strategies to engage the audience personally, which can foster a sense of individual involvement in the movement. Moreover, ANSG frequently employs binary oppositions, such as children's health versus tobacco industry profits, to highlight the ethical conflicts in their advocacy. These contrasts are often complemented by visual rhetoric to convey their messages and provoke stronger audience responses, as this can sometimes simplify and illustrate their messages more powerfully than words (Deluca & Peebles, 2002). By juxtaposing these values, ANSG encourages the audience to critically evaluate the practices of the tobacco industry, their own responsibility as consumers and support public health efforts. The emphasising of consumers as active may create a sense of higher individual responsibility and more successfully urge the audience to be more critical and take action (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Wettergren, 2009). Statistics are used to further emphasise the need for action by pointing out the high rate of youth tobacco initiation and the lack of media scrutiny on the industry's PR efforts. This data can strengthen ANSG's arguments and highlights the urgency of their cause.

The interconnectedness of culture jamming, micro and macro framing, critique of gender-specific marketing strategies and CSR forms a cohesive strategy that amplifies ANSG's efforts in engaging in the debate on tobacco brand marketing and influencing public perception and policy. By combining these approaches, ANSG creates a multifaceted critique of the tobacco industry that highlights the immediate effects of tobacco use on individuals and frames these issues within broader societal and ethical contexts (Baumgartner & Mahoney, 2008; Jensen & Seeberg, 2020; Palazzo & Richter, 2005). This combination of approaches ensures that the message resonates on multiple levels, increasing its potential impact, further this aligns with Matthes et al (2023) who underscores that persistent advocacy efforts have the potential to culminate in legislative actions that limit tobacco sales and marketing. Additionally, ANSG's critique of the tobacco industry's CSR initiatives ties into their broader framing strategy. By exposing the discrepancies between the industry's public image and its actual practices, ANSG underscores the need for genuine corporate accountability and systemic change. This holistic approach not only addresses the symptoms of tobacco use but also targets the root causes, advocating for comprehensive regulatory reforms and ethical marketing practices (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017; Bowen, 1953). By reframing tobacco marketing tactics within broader societal concerns, such as the ethical implications of targeting minors and women, ANSG strengthens its advocacy for stricter marketing regulations (Jamnik, 2011; Goffman, 1979; Grohmann, 2009). Moreover, the use of public figures and influencers in ANSG's campaigns mirrors the tobacco industry's tactics but serves to promote healthier lifestyles and regulatory changes. This strategic use of media and public personas amplifies their message and leverages the same platforms that the industry uses but for opposing purposes. This approach not only broadens ANSG's reach but also demonstrates how social media can be a useful tool for both perpetuating and challenging harmful practices (Chaudhri & Kaul, 2017). In summary, ANSG's strategic integration of culture jamming, framing techniques and targeted critiques of gendered marketing and CSR initiatives illustrates their multifaceted engagement in the debate on tobacco brand marketing. By adopting these interconnected strategies, the NGO can effectively raise awareness and influence public perception, contributing to the ongoing discourse on tobacco marketing ethics.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

To conclude, this study explored how A Non Smoking Generation (ANSG) engages in the tobacco marketing debate and employs micro and macro framing strategies to influence public perception and policy. ANSG's use of reports and campaigns challenges tobacco marketing practices and advocates for stricter regulations. The research highlights the significant role of strategic framing in advocacy and the potential impact of activist organisations on brand image, public discourse and policy.

### **6.1 Research Aim and Objectives**

This study sought to understand the specific strategies and techniques ANSG employs to challenge the marketing practices of the tobacco industry. By examining these aspects, the research aimed to highlight ANSG's role in influencing public and brand perception as well as contributing to the discourse on activist organisation efforts and marketing. Consequently, our research question was formulated as follows:

How do NGOs engage in the debate on tobacco industry's marketing, and through what strategies do they shape their communication and public perception?

To answer the research question, we employed a qualitative research approach that was conducted through a document analysis. This method allowed us to gather comprehensive data relevant to our research question. The integrative approach to analysing our findings enabled us to make connections between all the collected data, thus developing a robust understanding of ANSG's strategies in addressing tobacco marketing practices. Interpreting the data and identifying patterns within and between the observations allowed us to fully explore our research question.

Our findings suggest that ANSG employs a combination of explicit criticism, micro and macro framing as well as anti-branding strategies to influence perceptions of tobacco brands and advocate for stricter tobacco regulations. However, the connection between these strategies and the broader policy-making environment is still evolving. This study contributed to filling a

theoretical gap by providing insights into how activist organisations interact with profitable and growing brands that are accused of unethical marketing practices, specifically tobacco brands. Previous literature on the topic was limited, particularly regarding the practical application of these strategies by specific activist groups. Our research, based on a detailed analysis of ANSG's reports and campaigns, has contributed to the theoretical understanding of how advocacy and activism can shape perceptions of brands, public discourse and policy in the tobacco industry. By showcasing the practical application of explicit criticism, strategic framing and anti-branding, this study provides a nuanced view of the dynamic interactions between activist organisations and corporate entities, which highlights the evolving nature of advocacy in contemporary marketing contexts.

## **6.2 Theoretical Contributions**

This study provides several theoretical contributions by extending existing research on marketing theory, brand equity, NGO activism and strategic communication. By analysing the strategies employed by ANSG to challenge the tobacco industry, this research sheds light on the intricate dynamics between NGOs and corporate marketing practices. This research contributes to brand equity theory by demonstrating how activist organisations like ANSG engage in shaping consumer perceptions of brand value. By exposing unethical marketing practices, the NGO seeks to reconstruct the narrative around tobacco brands and associate them with negative social and health impacts. This approach underscores the fluid and constructed nature of brand equity, which can be shaped and reshaped by various stakeholders, including NGOs, and expands on traditional views that focus primarily on positive brand associations (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993).

Furthermore, this study echoes the critical perspectives of Delmas and Burbano, (2011), Ottman, (2017) and Hainneville et al. (2022) on the potential pitfalls of femwashing and greenwashing, which emphasises the need for authentic alignment between brand messages and corporate actions to avoid being attacked by and providing leverage to NGOs. Our analysis of ANSG's efforts highlight the socially constructed nature of CSR and the role of NGOs in deconstructing and challenging these narratives. The findings also expand on Hult et al. (2011) who acknowledged six key stakeholders that impact marketing relationships. However, our study identified how advocacy groups might work as a seventh key stakeholder since their efforts can

have a consequential impact on organisations performance outcome. Moreover, the dynamics between activist groups and corporate entities is demonstrated through ANSG's engagement which may have pressured the Swedish legal system to enforce new regulations regarding nicotine products. Thus, this study also challenges Clarkson's (1995) conclusion which indicated that secondary stakeholders such as advocacy groups are not essential for an organisation's survival and instead supports the claim of Guay et al. (2004) stating how shareholder activism can lead to substantial change in corporate governance practice.

Additionally, this research supports Baumgartner and Mahoney's (2008) as well as Jensen and Seeberg (2020) emphasis on the role of framing in social movements and NGO activism. By detailing ANSG's use of micro and macro framing strategies to influence public discourse and policy, this study highlights the utilisation of these tactics in shaping public perception and driving policy changes. Moreover, the study demonstrates how ANSG's use of binary opposition, such as contrasting ethical public health concerns with the profit-driven motives of the tobacco industry, pressures brands toward increased transparency and more ethical marketing practices while at the same time present their advocacy as more graspable and relatable to a wider audience (Levi-Strauss, 1955).

Finally, the study aligns with the arguments of Klein (2000) and Harold (2004) on culture jamming and anti-branding by illustrating how ANSG's tactics disrupt corporate narratives and promote social change. This aligns with Lasn's (1999) discussion on culture jamming as a form of media activism as reflected in ANSG's strategic framing and public engagement efforts. Our study highlights how these tactics shape the constructed nature of brand meanings and the power of NGOs to deconstruct and reconstruct these meanings. In addition, this study highlights the strong and high image ownership (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2018), as a possible opposite in a NGO activism context. The strength of a high and strong image in an industry and brand equity context may be a weakness for brands when attacked by NGOs as this image can be hijacked and used as a powerful tool for reconstructing brand claims and attributes.

### **6.3 Managerial Implications**

The findings of our research have several practical implications for understanding the role of NGOs in shaping public perception and policy regarding tobacco marketing. The study revealed that ANSG employs a range of strategies to challenge the tobacco industry's marketing practices and emphasise the ethical concerns and public health risks associated with nicotine products. These findings are useful for policymakers, public health advocates and other stakeholders in the tobacco control or other debatable industries. By highlighting the specific strategies used by the NGO, this research can inform the development of more effective advocacy campaigns and public policies aimed at regulating tobacco marketing. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of framing strategies in advocacy work and provides insights into how organisations can effectively communicate their messages to diverse audiences. For managers and executives within the tobacco industry, this research offers a critical perspective on how their marketing practices are perceived and challenged by activist organisations. Understanding these dynamics can help companies anticipate and respond to advocacy efforts more effectively, potentially leading to more ethical and socially responsible marketing strategies. This knowledge may also serve as a tool in brand crisis management when attacked by advocacy groups. Moreover, it highlights the importance of proactively engaging with these groups to understand their concerns and address them before they escalate into larger public relations issues and lead to restrictions enforced against brands' marketing management. For companies beyond the tobacco industry, the findings offer valuable lessons on the potential impact of activist campaigns and the necessity of aligning corporate actions with ethical standards to avoid similar scrutiny. By recognizing the power of activist organisations in shaping public discourse and policy, businesses can develop more robust CSR initiatives that genuinely reflect their commitment to ethical practices. Additionally, while targeting and designing products towards women can be an effective marketing strategy, this research highlights the potential ethical pitfalls associated with such practices. Marketing campaigns that exploit gender-specific appeals may face significant backlash from advocacy groups which can damage the brand's reputation and lead to calls for stricter regulations. Companies must therefore ensure that their marketing strategies towards women are not only effective but also ethically sound to avoid adverse consequences.

## **6.4 Limitations and Future Research**

Although this study provided valuable insights into the strategies employed by ANSG in their advocacy efforts, there are several limitations. The data collection was based on publicly available documents from ANSG, which may not capture the full scope of their activities and impact. Additionally, the study is based on documents from a specific time period, which may not capture the evolution of ANSG's strategies or the tobacco industry's responses over time. Changes in the regulatory environment, public opinion and industry practices may affect the relevance and applicability of the findings. Moreover, the reliance on ANSG's self-reported data may introduce bias, as the organisation may selectively highlight successful initiatives and downplay less effective efforts.

Future research could expand on this study by including multiple NGOs and comparing their strategies across different contexts and industries. Such comparative analyses could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how advocacy efforts influence public perception, brand images and policies. Furthermore, future studies could incorporate other data collection methods, such as interviews with key stakeholders, to gain deeper insights into the motivations and impacts of advocacy work. Employing mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative data could further enhance the width and depth of the findings.

Additionally, the implications of a strong and high versus weak and low brand image ownership could be explored in a context of NGO advocacy to conclude whether brands need to consider this generally positive aspect as a more troubling aspect when hijacked. Future research could also examine the role of digital and social media in amplifying the reach and impact of NGO advocacy to explore how online campaigns complement traditional advocacy methods. Finally, there is also room for further research on the long-term effects of advocacy campaigns on policy and industry practices. As the regulatory environment and public attitudes toward tobacco products continue to evolve, ongoing research is needed to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of advocacy strategies over time.



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