

# The Philippine tobacco industry: “the strongest tobacco lobby in Asia”

## Research Methods

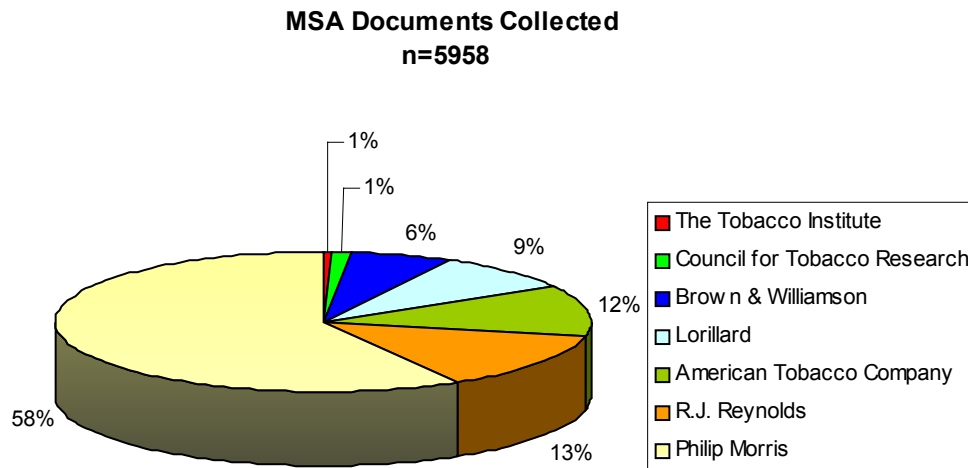
One of the terms of the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) was that the tobacco industry agreed to place in the public domain previously confidential internal documents. The MSA websites served as the main data source for this paper. Preliminary research was conducted between December 2003 and March 2004 using the primary MSA websites: Philip Morris (<http://www.pmdocs.com>), RJ Reynolds (<http://www.rjrtdocs.com>), Lorillard (<http://www.lorillarddocs.com>), The Tobacco Institute (<http://www.tobaccoinstitute.com>), The Council for Tobacco Research (<http://www.ctr-usa.org>), Brown & Williamson (<http://www.bwdocs.com>) and the American Tobacco Company (<http://www.bwdocs.com>)

To facilitate systematic document analysis, initial research focused on collecting as many documents as possible that were relevant to the Philippines and to review the contents of those documents. Initial search words included Philippine geographical terms as well as the names of local tobacco companies, organisations, and national presidents from 1972. Synonymous terms, acronyms, abbreviations and variations of spelling, etc. were taken into consideration. The preliminary research produced an initial set of 5,958 documents (see Figure 1).

**Table 1: Preliminary Philippines Search Terms**

Term/Concept	Explanation
Philippines	Variations of the country name were taken into consideration: Philippine* and Phillippine*
Manila	Variations of spelling were taken into consideration. Manila or Manilla.
Blue Seal	Term used for cigarettes imported or smuggled from the USA.
Fortune Tobacco Company	Domestic manufacturer, license agreement with RJ Reynolds.
La Campana	Domestic manufacturer.
La Suerte Cigar and Cigarette Company	Domestic manufacturer, license agreement with Philip Morris.
PATCo	Philippine Association of Tobacco-Based Cooperatives Inc.
PTI	Philippine Tobacco Institute.
PTRTC	Philippine Tobacco Research and Training Center.
PVTA	Philippine Virginia Tobacco Administration.
Yosi Kadiri	Department of Health antismoking campaign. Slang for “Cigarettes are disgusting” or loathsome cigarette.
Marcos, Ferdinand	Marcos martial law dictatorship, 1972-1986
Aquino, Corazon	Democratically elected, 1986-1992
Ramos, Fidel	Democratically elected, 1992-1998
Estrada, Joseph Ejercito	Democratically elected, 1998-2001
Arroyo, Gloria Macapagal	Democratically elected, 2001-

**Figure 1 Download / preliminary search results**



British American Tobacco (BAT) were not party to the MSA and information about the difficulties of accessing BAT documents is reported elsewhere.<sup>1 2</sup>

### **Preliminary research: reviewing, grading and sorting of documents**

Documents and related metadata collected from the preliminary searches were incorporated into a database for quick retrieval. The results were sorted by date, categorised into broad themes and evaluated according to their degree of importance. An Excel workbook divided into 20 thematic worksheets was maintained to record interpretive information. See figure 2 for variables considered during the analysis process.

The sorting of documents under broad themes provided insights into the tobacco industry's views and plans and helped to identify the availability of documents on an issue. The preliminary analysis also assisted in identifying terms for further research.

Interpretive information for important documents is available for searching at <http://tobacco.health.usyd.edu.au/site/gateway/docs/search.htm>.

**Figure 2 Preliminary document evaluation process**

<p><b>I. Thesis statement</b> Explain the focus of the material in one sentence or thesis statement. A thesis statement may include the goal(s) or the mission of a document.</p> <p><b>II. Who?</b> Who authored the document and who is the recipient? What companies/organizations are they from? Who is named in the document? Are they industry collaborators or experts in a field of tobacco or health research?</p> <p><b>III. Why?</b> Why was this document written / developed? Is it to lobby? Is it a confidential project? Is it to enlist the help of scientists for the industry's cause? What is the crux of the issue being discussed? Does the industry need to counter hype? Is there a problem to be solved?</p> <p><b>IV. What? Use Pull Quotes</b> Summarise the contents of the document. Pull quotes from the document for evidence.</p> <p><b>V. Target group</b> Is there a target group being observed or studied? For example: Youth, Young Adult Smokers, Employers?</p> <p><b>VI. Time frame</b> If it is a project, what is the time frame of the research project?</p> <p><b>VII. Related Documents</b> Are there other key documents that can be referred to?</p>
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### **Aim focused research**

The preliminary analysis led to “aim-focused” research where specific issues to examine further were identified.

The metadata for documents considered to be of high value were screened for clues to facilitate further research on both the MSA sites and key secondary tobacco industry document collections<sup>†</sup>, including Tobacco Documents Online<sup>‡</sup> (TDO) (<http://tobaccodocuments.org>) and the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library (<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu>). The World Health Organization Western Pacific Regional Office in Manila, Philippines, also supplied hard copies of 450 BAT documents obtained from the Guildford Depository for analysis.

<sup>†</sup> Since the internal documents have been made public, secondary tobacco collections have been established by tobacco control and related agencies to facilitate document research.

<sup>‡</sup> TDO houses a subset of BAT documents as well as the MSA documents.

## Limitations of Research

Three main limitations of research undertaken for this project include:

1. Of the documents released via the MSA only a small proportion were documents created in the Philippines. Those thus located are not assumed to be a complete representation of all Philippine documents.
2. Limited access to British American Tobacco (BAT) Documents. The MSA website provision did not apply to BAT and only a small subset of documents has to date been made available on the Internet by researchers who have requested documents direct from the Guildford Depository and digitized them.<sup>§</sup>
3. Document destruction. Because of large-scale document destruction, the documents available represent an unknown cross section of all documents ever written or circulated within the industry.

Other limitations include:

1. Inherent problems with the metadata. It is impossible to claim that the project has collected all MSA documents pertaining to the Philippines for two reasons: (a) The entire MSA collection is not subject indexed. (b) There are typographical errors, missing data, data mapped to wrong fields, and inconsistencies in the format of names and organizations in the document bibliographic information.
2. Redacted material. There were many documents located where sections of information were withdrawn.
3. Illegibility. A number of documents were illegible due to a poor original copy or problems with reproduction.
4. Privileged documents. A number of documents related to the Philippines are classified as privileged.
5. Limited opportunities for verification of content. The project has not undertaken systematic verification of the data contained in the documents.

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<sup>§</sup> Since submitting the paper for publication, the British American Tobacco Document Archive (BATDA) has been launched (<http://bat.library.ucsf.edu>). This site plans to make available all BAT documents currently housed in the Guildford Depository. The documents will be released in phases, with the first one million documents released in September/October 2004.

## References

- 1 Lee K, Gilmore AB, Collin J. Looking inside the tobacco industry: revealing insights from the Guildford Depository. *Addiction* 2004;**99**:394-97.
- 2 Muggli ME, LeGresley EM, Hurt RD. Big tobacco is watching: British American Tobacco's surveillance and information concealment at the Guildford depository. *The Lancet* 2004;**363**:1812-19.