

Rev7 in Singapore

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Apart from making graffiti, feeding the pigeons and forgetting to flush any public toilet, there is one more thing that is punishable in the country of Singapore which we Indians might find weird, and that is chewing gums¹. But as any government in the world, the government of Singapore has its own reasons for the laws they make.

The Chewing Gum Malaise in Singapore

After centuries of struggle, Singapore finally got independence from the hands of foreign rulers. Singapore was a British colony during World War II (1942-1945) and finally proclaimed freedom on 31 August, 1963 and became a part of Malaysia. But after two years, Singapore likewise isolated herself from Malaysia. Slowly, in a few years the establishment of a powerful manufacturing industry began. Being surrounded by sea, Singaporeans were able to develop a fully functional sea route, which brought wealth and prosperity for the country.

These quick changes affected the country in many ways. Sudden economic boom led to

many good things but bad things as well. During the early 1980s, the city workers had a tough time cleaning the city because of chewing gum waste all around. These wastes were found everywhere, on the seat of train, elevators etc. It had to be stopped. (See **Figure 1**)

In 1983 Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew who was considered by many to be Singapore's founding father, was a revolutionary leader who prepared first draft of the suggestion to 'boycott use of Chewing gum'², however it was not passed. This Chewing gum was causing serious maintenance problems in high-rise public housing flats, with vandals disposing of spent gum in mailboxes, inside keyholes and even on lift buttons. Chewing gum left on the ground, stairways and pavements in public areas increased the cost of cleaning and damaged cleaning equipment. Gum stuck on the seats of public buses was also considered a problem. However, Lee thought that a ban would be "too drastic" and did not take action. Chewing gums were found left on the top of the seats, arm rests and even programmed automatic doors².

Chewing gums in public places such as the ones mentioned conveyed financial issues to the metro upkeep staff.

With the acceptance of the Control of Manufacture Act in 1992, Singapore officially banned the manufacturing of chewing gums². Even the import of chewing gums into the country was not allowed. If a shopkeeper had some remaining in stock, he could sell it but no more than that. Even after all this, due to pressure by United States, Singapore allowed the use of medicated dental chewing gums, as this was a medical necessity. But this was to be consumed only on the prescription of a dentist or a doctor².

Even the tourists who visit Singapore can carry a maximum of 2 packs of chewing gum per head². Usage of chewing gum can lead to monetary fine as well as public beating with bamboo sticks.

Underground market for "chewing gums" does not exist in the Singapore. So, some people choose to go to the neighbouring nation just to get some chewing gum. Till date, it is much easier for a 16-year-old in Singapore to go to a prostitute rather than buying a chewing gum.

According to, Section 3, Chapter 272A, Regulation of Import and Export Act, Singapore, the following chewing gums are allowed to be sold in the Singapore market³:

1. Any chewing gum that is registered or deemed to be registered as a therapeutic product under the Health Products Act (Cap. 122D) other than under the classification of a general sale list medicine in the Register of Health Products.
2. Any chewing gum that is registered or deemed to be registered as an oral dental gum under the Health Products Act.
3. Any other chewing gum that is registered as an oral dental gum under the Health Products Act and classified as a prescription-only oral dental gum in the Register of Health Products.

Revolymer, a rapidly growing technology development company had developed a unique portfolio of products and formulations for the FMCG industry. It has its headquarter in United Kingdom. This British company Revolymer wanted to sell its Rev7 Gum in Singapore.

Revolymer: Company Background

Fast Facts about the company⁸

- Start Date: 2005
- Website: www.revolymmer.com
- Market Sector: Polymers
- Location: Bristol
- Investment raised: £43m (Including IPO)
- Number of Employees: 33
-

Revolymmer is into the chemicals business which focuses mainly on improving the performance of everyday consumer products. The company develops partnerships with other companies and works with them to develop ingredients that can help develop home care, personal care, coating, adhesives, medicated chewing gums and much more⁴.

Rev7 is one such product by Revolymmer⁵. Rev7 is a chewing gum containing a special polymer which makes it less sticky. It dissolves in thin air after 24 hours of use and can also be cleaned by conventional methods, especially when it comes in contact with water. It is also soluble in mouth, when chewed for a long time. It was developed by Prof. Terence Cosgrove at the Bristol University, United Kingdom.

The main purpose of making this gum was that chewing gums were a big problem in UK too. According to an article published in The Daily Telegraph, London, UK annually spent

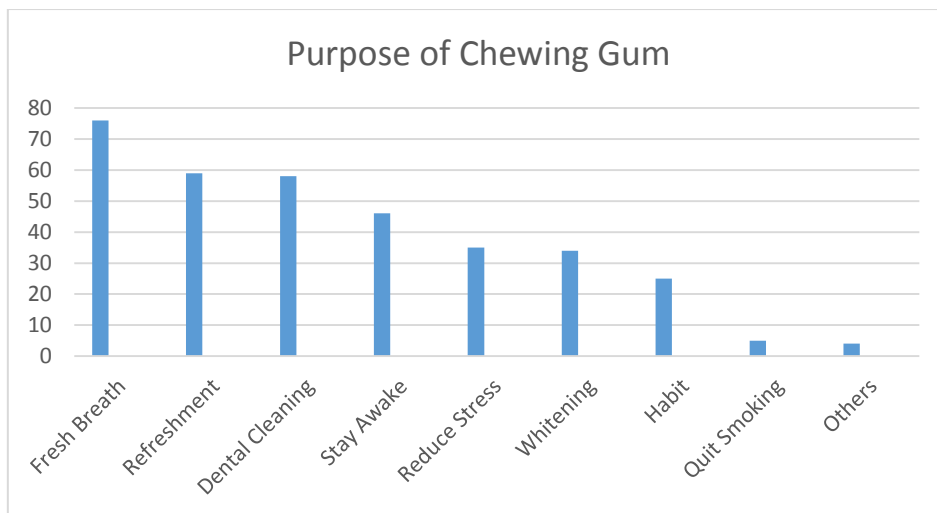
£150 (see **Figure 2**) million on cleaning chewing gum waste before this gum (2008)⁶. Its name is derived from the word 'Revolution' (Rev) and the number of attempts it took to make this gum, which is Seven (7).

It was expected for sure that Rev7 would solve the cleanliness problem in Singapore, like it did in UK. Also the Rev7 gum is a medicated chewing gum, which could be used to solve dental problems.

The company was selling its product in UK and USA only, but now the company is willing to spread its business into the Asian market. The company chose Singapore as its first marketplace. This is going to help the company in many ways but if it fails to enter this market, it will create a bad image for the company, for people will question, "If it is as it says it is, then why it could not enter Singapore market?"

Decision Dilemma

So, the company wants to enter the Asian market and it is starting with Singapore. But the company is facing few problems here for which the company needs to make use of your expertise. Use the chart given as per the survey conducted by DI Marketing⁷ (**Figure 3**) to see what use of chewing gums is for people and devise the strategies.



Here are the problems for which you need to find the solutions to.

Case Review Questions

1. As the marketing manager of Revolymer, explain what benefits will arise in Asian market if it succeeds in Singapore?
2. What can be the Marketing strategies implemented in Singapore.
3. Conduct a SWOC Analysis to present better clarity.

Exhibits

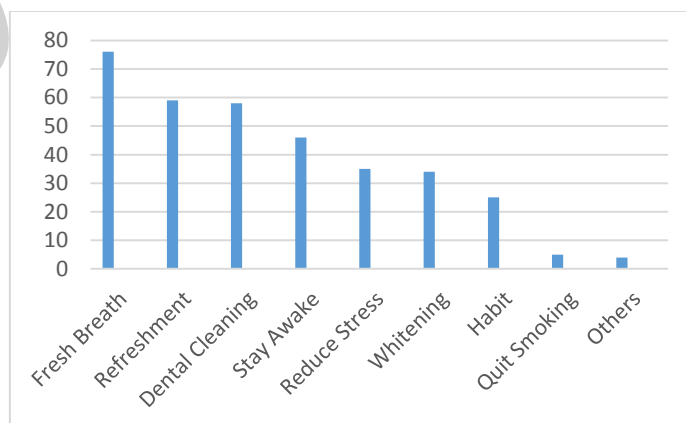
Figure 1: Chewing Gums Stuck on Sidewalk⁹



Figure 2: Cost of a Chewing Gum¹⁰



Figure 3: Purpose of Using Chewing Gum⁷



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