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Research Papers

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## Exploring Emotional Intelligence of the Sin Industries' Stakeholders with respect to US Market

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### Abstract

*This paper proposes a conceptual framework for understanding the causal factors influencing conflicts that evolve in Gambling industries. The stakeholder emotional intelligence framework assesses two critical factors – emotional intensity and stakeholder power – that influence how an issue gets defined in the general public and ultimately resolved with policymakers over the lifecycle of the issue. Psychophysiological Experience is emotions caused by the internal and external influences interacting with every individual's state of mind. Individuals must equip ability to handle the same in effective and efficient ways with respect to environments and situations, which is termed as Emotional Intelligence.*

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Only by managing their emotions constructively employees' well being is ensured. The management of emotions both intra-personally and inter-personally develops and sustains a better environment within every individual and also to the organizational environment. The framework indicated that emotional intensity and stakeholder power did impact the level of authentic discourse surrounding policy conflicts in each of the highly regulated industries studied. The value of this paper is the confirmation that an industry environment where engagement is transparent and inclusive will tend to advance mutual goals among stakeholders and policymakers.

**Key Words:** Emotional intelligence, Gambling Industry, Stakeholder, Conflict

#### 1. Introduction:

The alcohol, tobacco, firearms and gambling industries have occasionally been labeled by activist groups as "sin industries", presumably due to the potentially negative effects

on society when their products and services are used in abusive ways. The US has a long history of managing the sin industries through aggressive public policy solutions. One of the most extreme attempts to reduce a sin industry's negative impact on society was through the failed national social experiment in 1919 called prohibition. The original intent of prohibition was to stop the supply of alcohol to consumers through outlawing its production. The belief of policymakers at the time was that the halt in production would ultimately eliminate issues created by abusive consumption. Unfortunately, that particular policy solution gave rise to numerous unintended issues, such as the illegal production and sale of alcohol and an increase in organized crime activities. The tobacco industry had a similar policy catharsis in recent years through the national tobacco settlement, after an unknown whistleblower at one of leading tobacco companies revealed the extent of the tobacco industry's knowledge about the addictive

nature of nicotine. America has been evolving public policy solutions to manage the firearms industry since the birth of the country itself. As colonists sought independence through armed confrontations with British soldiers, England instituted a policy that outlawed the ownership of firearms by those not loyal to the Queen. After the colonists secured their independence in the revolutionary war, they guaranteed the right to form a regulated militia in the new US constitution.

## 2. Sin Industry Influences:

The sin industries are treated differently from a public policy standpoint based on the fact that their products and services are routinely used in ways presumably unintended by the manufacturers and suppliers. From a strategic management perspective, the built in bias against the sin industries creates a threatening environment in which to operate. When individuals abuse the products and services marketed by the sin industries, the effects are sometimes felt beyond the individual. Society is threatened by a wide range of potential negative externalities created by the misuse, such as increased costs for health care, or a breakdown of the core family unit, which can ultimately lead to multiple issues for the person or groups affected by the breakdown, as well as expanded costs to society. While it is widely understood that the misuse or abuse of the products and services produced by the sin industries' is a societal problem with serious cascading implications, what is less clear is whether the industries themselves bear the responsibility for that misuse. For example, historically the major companies within the alcohol industry have mass marketed their products to all consumers. Every advertising medium was regularly filled with messages from the various companies in the industry. It was not until recent years that policymakers, in conjunction with industry trade organizations and activist groups, developed a policy alternative that began limiting the types of mediums and advertising messages that the producers could use to promote the consumption of their products. The voluntary guidelines adopted by the industry have generally been viewed as an example of effective implementation of the traditional public policy process. However, recent competitive pressures have weakened industry cohesiveness on the voluntary guidelines and it is not uncommon to see television commercial promoting distilled spirits consumption.

## 3. Theoretical foundation:

This research proposes a framework for understanding how emotional intelligence can play an important role in developing effective policy solutions. The theoretical foundations about the policy process, with a particular emphasis on the types of discourse used by the various stakeholders in the problem definition stage of the policy process, are critical to establish this stakeholder emotional intelligence framework. For example, each of the sin industries studied is accountable to institutionalized bureaucracies charged with insuring that the business practices of the companies within those industries are legal. The agency of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Federal Trade Commission spend vast resources overseeing the marketing and other practices of the firms in the sin industries. Each state with legalized gambling has a gambling commission to oversee that industry. This research posits that, when an established bureaucracy is in place such as those set up to regulate the sin industries, it can lead to a policy environment of institutionalized recursive practices that may create barriers to authentic policy discourse, particularly when an issue with negative social implications surfaces. Understanding the nature of the debates around the potential negative externalities created by companies in the sin industries is enhanced by a discussion of the nature of ethics in our society and the pursuit of profit in our free market system. Business entities consider ethics in a variety of ways, particularly during their strategic planning process. Depending on the planning model employed by the organization, ethics considerations are discussed in the context of a review of the company's external environment. The general approach requires a high-level examination of the factors in their environment that poses threats to the organization. After a threat has been identified, specific plans are developed to mitigate the threat. Ethical considerations play a critical role in that examination, particularly in the sin industries. Taken from the individual organization standpoint, creation and evaluation of strategies depend largely on the ethics of society as well as other aspects of social responsibility. Generally speaking, any action plans developed by an organization should be designed to insure profitability and maintain compliance with the letter of the law. An important goal of the strategic planning process is to be proactive. In an ideal world, being proactive about ethical issues in the

business environment requires a heightened sense of the social responsibilities of the organization. That can be problematic in the sin industries where they are frequently placed in a position to have to defend themselves due to their highly charged ethical environment. An example would be the tobacco industry's challenge in dealing with the numerous lawsuits alleging they are responsible for the health care costs associated with the use of their products. The level of ethical controversy over the industry's knowledge of the addictive nature of nicotine, and their subsequent manipulation of the levels in tobacco products to encourage overuse has made it difficult to appear proactive when considering their social responsibilities. While our cultural value paradigms strongly support the concept of the free market and individual liberties, we also live by values consistent with other ethical theories that manifest themselves in our human interaction such as honesty, fairness, charity and respect for the rights of others. The more recent expansion of the view of social responsibilities of business includes others as the foundation for stakeholder theory. The stakeholder model espouses the belief that every group with a stake in an organization or industry has claims that rival the stockholders of a company. Employees, suppliers, business partners, consumers, the local community and society in general have a vested interest in the business enterprise and their activities. Any assessment of the external environment of an organization would include consideration of how their activities affect stakeholders both inside and outside that organization and the industry. Understanding the role of the numerous stakeholders in an industry is an important consideration when conceptualizing the unique policy environment in the sin industries. Because of the highly regulated and ethically charged policy environment in the sin industries, there exists an abundance of stakeholders with vested interests in shaping the outcome of ethical debates. Stakeholders such as regulatory agencies and activist groups can have the effect of raising the profile of a conflict and making the social responsibilities of the respective sin industry a foremost consideration in the discourse that ensues. When public policy issues arise in the sin industries, the conflict between the core ethical values espoused by the numerous stakeholders in the debate frequently plays out in the form of strategically crafted arguments that are based on those values. In the struggle for meaning capture,

our democratic form of government places a premium on each side persuading the other to agree with their point of view. A growing body of policy analysis literature has focused on some of the challenges associated with the problem definition stage in the policy process. Many researchers believe that problem definition may be the single most important factor influencing the policy process. Understanding the factors that aid in the defining of a problem within the policy process is important in tracking how ethical conflicts reach the policymaking agenda and receive a policy response. Cultural values, interest group advocacy, research information, and advice from experts in the field are all important in defining the problem being considered by policymakers. The policy environment of an industry is critical in understanding how power and influence are used by the key stakeholders in attempting to control the public perception of the problem definition in a policy conflict. With regard to the sin industry issues, the values of our society and interest group advocacy play very important roles in defining the problem. An example would be when an industry trade organization like the Tobacco Institute executes a national ad campaign to characterize proposed legislation on cigarette excise taxes as a tax and spend measure against the working class because it would have a detrimental effect on their industry.

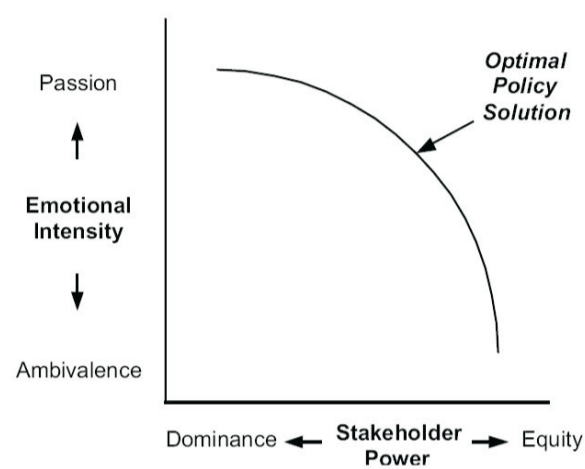
In attempting to understand all the factors that influence the outcome of any policy debate, we have to sift through a seemingly endless stream of stimulus from the world in which we live. In our society, we are constantly bombarded by advertising messages from nearly every electronic medium possible, including the information superhighway of the internet. The multiple communications vehicles available to consumers today leads to a "thinning of reality" that is endemic to the postmodern condition. Regarding policy debates, the result is a largely symbolic, one-way communication from major stakeholders who have the resources to dominate the public perception of the conflict. Hence, there is no opportunity for true dialogic conversation about potentially serious public policy issues. Within industries where flashpoint issues frequently arise, such as the sin industries, the external environment appears to have a deep infrastructure of stakeholders experienced in the type of manipulative communication that detracts from true discourse about an issue. Their experience and resources afford them the means, motive and

opportunity to effectively manage the policy debate, rather than engage in the type of dialogue required to resolve the issue in an objective way. The stakeholders who are well versed in the tactics effective in manipulating the discourse in the postmodern hyper-reality are very likely to accomplish their goals. After the discourse is overtly manipulated, determining the most effective policy solution that considers all aspects of the debate can be elusive. The function of problem definition is to explain and persuade both the public and the critical institutional actors that one particular view is better than another. One of the principle tools used by the competing sides in a conflict is language. Their public and private rhetoric is the most effective way to manage the perception of the problem, control agenda access, and shape the policy response. Unfortunately, policy disputes do not follow a rationalistic objectivist process for determining a perfect resolution to the issue. Instead, the determinants of policy are a clash of strategically crafted arguments where the winning argument represents the truth (Stone, 1988). In the postmodern thinning of reality, the use of strategically crafted arguments are not always designed to move the policy debate toward an equitable, long-term resolution.

#### 4. A Conceptual Frame Work:

The alcohol, tobacco, firearms and gambling industries have numerous factors in their external environment that can combine in unique ways to allow ethical debates to flourish. Understanding how those debates unfold in terms of stakeholder involvement, the development and type of strategically crafted arguments, the breadth and depth of communications of those arguments, and saliency with the public and policymakers may be slightly different in each sin industry based on its external environment. When a particular policy debate in the sin industries unfolds, there is a high likelihood that the strategically crafted arguments used by the stakeholders will have ethical underpinnings. That same policy debate may also include economic arguments because of the value society places on our free market system, which would be used by certain stakeholders in an attempt to win the struggle for meaning capture. In the struggle for meaning capture in a debate, individual stakeholders within a sin industry will develop their strategically crafted arguments based on their own priorities in terms of ethical and economic considerations. Once the strategically crafted arguments are clearly defined, a

communications strategy for deploying them will depend on the level of awareness required to win the debate. The specific tactics for deploying the strategically crafted arguments range from a high profile campaign to persuade public opinion, to a lower profile, legislative lobbying effort to persuade policymakers.



Stakeholder emotional intelligence framework

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persuade policymakers. Because of the assumption among certain sectors in society that the sin industries are ethically suspect, it is important to examine how the industries defend themselves against ethical attacks from those anti-sin industry sectors. The steps described above provide a process scenario for how a sin industry might address a threat in their environment, once a flashpoint or triggering event has occurred. After the flashpoint event, the opportunity to develop and deploy strategically crafted arguments to compete for the most beneficial problem definition is presented by the key stakeholders in the debate. Beyond the process considerations, there is the opportunity to assess each sin industry's external environment through a model that might serve to predict the type of strategically crafted arguments developed, as well as the specific communications tactics employed to win policy debates.

Two factors are important to explore in developing the conceptual framework for assessing each sin industry's external environment. The first is perhaps the most difficult to measure because it involves several seemingly intangible elements. The concept is an assessment of the level of emotional intensity in the public perceptions of the particular sin industry. The range of emotional intensity runs along a continuum from passion to ambivalence. Emotional intensity is a reflection of industry reputation, the nature of the product or service produced by the industry, as well as the level of public awareness and access to those products and services. The second factor to explore is stakeholder power, which can range from dominance to equity. In many policy debates, the level and use of power can influence the problem definition. The level of stakeholder power in the sin industries can be assessed by estimating the number of stakeholders with vested interests in the issues being considered, understanding the resources of each stakeholder, and reviewing the proprietary access each stakeholder has to the institutionalized policymaking bureaucracy that oversees each industry. Within the policy environment, institutional arrangements can be more or less supportive of stakeholder interests, depending on the issues being debated. When the emotional intensity and stakeholder power in a sin industry environment are more clearly understood, a profile begins to emerge around flashpoint events that can affect the strategically crafted argument that will gain the most traction when trying to define a problem and develop an effective

solution to that problem. The assessment below is an attempt to apply the stakeholder emotional intelligence framework to each of the four sin industries being considered.

##### **5.. Emotional Intensity:**

In assessing where each sin industry falls on the emotional intensity continuum, a good starting point is simply looking at the level of public awareness and access to the product or service. Consumer packaged goods such as alcohol and cigarettes are tangible products, available en masse through nearly every supermarket and grocery store in the country. The industries are mature and they have created broad consumer awareness of their products through marketing tactics employed for years designed to create consumer demand. The variety of use occasions for alcohol is very high, and while cigarette use occasions are becoming more restricted, they are still fairly significant. The gambling and firearms industries have less tangible products and services, and while the use of guns has been around for quite some time, neither of the industries would be considered mature as defined from a strategic management perspective. The marketing of guns is targeted, primarily in hunting and outdoors magazines and trade shows. Gambling marketing is also targeted to the specific geographies with casinos, and usually involves local media buys. End user access to the goods and services in the gambling and firearms industries is through a relatively small number of outlets, and the use occasions are restricted through government regulation. A second factor to consider when attempting assess where a sin industry lies on the emotional intensity continuum is the particular industry's existing reputation and public image. The seemingly intangible aspect of reputation is formed to some degree by the perceived level of corporate social responsibility of the industry, as well as the nature of the product or service produced. As described above, the alcohol industry has consistently employed a wide range of marketing tactics over the years. The use of cartoon-like characters in ads has received negative press coverage for appealing to underage users. However, the industry also voluntarily spends millions on promoting responsible drinking, financially supports stakeholder organizations like Mothers against Drunk Drivers, and has made significant efforts to help the environment through recycling programs. Alcohol consumption is often associated with leisure and lifestyle activities such as sports and

recreation. Recent studies have even proven that moderate alcohol use can reduce the risk of some health related problems such as heart disease. With regard to industry reputation, the factors above would indicate that the alcohol industry has a reasonably good reputation.

Assessing the industry reputation for gambling and firearms is more challenging. The gambling industry has a less evolved reputation, but in nearly every state where gambling is legal, the industry is required to spend a large percentage of their revenues to support education. Research on the negative effects of gambling on certain sectors in society is in its nascent stages and has not received the type of media attention that would warrant a high-level of awareness among the public of the potential issues associate with gambling. The firearms industry has a fairly low profile with regard to reputation, primarily because the nature of the marketing for the product is much targeted, as mentioned above. Typical end users are hunters or sport shooters that have to be licensed to use the product. The public awareness of the industry in recent years has been raised over the issue of a citizen's right to carry concealed weapons. In that debate, the stakeholder representing gun producer interests is the National Rifle Association (NRA). However, that flashpoint issue itself has created a good deal of emotional intensity around the firearms industry. The reputation of the cigarette industry is arguably the least impressive. To begin with, the nature of their products is negative because it has been proven that there are multiple health related risks associated with the use of cigarettes. Over the past few years it has been proven in US courts that the industry willfully deceived millions of consumers about the addictive nature of nicotine. The industry had to be forced to disclose health related risks through the courts and various legislative bodies, and is currently operating under the settlement agreement signed with the various state attorneys general.

#### **6. Stakeholder power:**

Assessing the stakeholder power in a sin industry is concerned with developing an understanding of the breadth of stakeholders, their respective resources and access to the policymaking infrastructure in their particular industry. Many of those factors are simply a function of industry evolution. For example, because the alcohol and tobacco industries are more mature in terms of years of existence, product identity and availability, the key organizations representing

industry interests have had years of experience in understanding how the institutionalized policymaking bureaucracies function in each of their respective industries. The resources to support those organizations are extensive due to the size of the companies that provide funding. The result is that the stakeholder power in the alcohol and cigarette industries has historically been dominated by the organizations representing industry interests. Recent flashpoint events in the tobacco industry have changed the stakeholder power profile, as anti-industry stakeholders have organized through the various state attorneys general to neutralize the dominance tobacco industry organizations once had. Stakeholder power in the gambling industry is significantly different than the alcohol and tobacco industries, based on the factors described above. The gambling industry is younger than the alcohol and tobacco industries, with a lower product awareness and availability. While institutionalized policymaking bureaucracies do exist to oversee the industry, due to the stage in the industry lifecycle, most decisions on expansion of the industry are made through public referendums. The effect of the stage in the industry lifecycle and the public nature of the policymaking in the gambling industry is that stakeholder power has not yet evolved to the point where it is dominated by any particular stakeholder interest groups. The firearms industry is also significantly different from the alcohol and tobacco industries from a stakeholder power perspective. While the industry has been in existence for decades, the breadth of stakeholders is more limited due to the nature of the product. Until recently, the industry policymaking infrastructure has been primarily focused on the issue of a citizen's right to carry concealed weapons.

The conceptual framework suggests that when a flashpoint issue occurs in an industry where the emotional intensity ranges near ambivalence and the stakeholder power tends to be dominant, then the strategically crafted arguments that define the problem typically favors the dominant stakeholders. That is, whether or not the problem is defined as ethical or economic in nature is a function of the strategy the dominant stakeholders believe is best for them in that specific conflict. In the case of the sin industries, the stakeholders that favor the alcohol industry are in the strongest power position based on the criteria described above. When the emotional intensity is near passion and the stakeholder power

measures close to equity, the nature of the strategically crafted arguments, the problem definition, and the ultimate resolution are less certain. The problem definition that gains saliency among the public and policymakers will largely depend on the key stakeholders' ability to craft and communicate effective strategic arguments that capture their respective passion. The recent revelations in the tobacco industry that have created a more equitable stakeholder power profile and increased the level of emotional intensity puts that sin industry in the unenviable position of trying to gain saliency with economically based arguments, when competing stakeholders have effectively defined the problem with ethically based arguments. The current environment in the tobacco industry is volatile given the unique combination of high emotional intensity and the new balance of stakeholder power. As described in the stakeholder emotional intelligence framework above, the firearms industry has a high-level of emotional intensity, but the nature is more issue based rather than product based. The issue of a citizen's right to carry a concealed weapon has created a high-level of emotional intensity. However, the stakeholder power skews toward dominance because of the efforts of the NRA. The strategically crafted arguments developed by the NRA have been ethical in nature based on the Bill of Rights, and have led to a problem definition that favored the firearms industry. The resolution of the problem as defined has led to 37 states permitting citizens to carry concealed weapons. The dominant nature of stakeholder power in the industry is reflected in the fact that those concealed carry laws had all been passed through legislative action until Missourians put the issue to voters in 1999 as a ballot referendum. The legislature in Missouri has since passed a concealed carry law. The gambling industry environment is evolving with regard to factors considered in the stakeholder emotional intelligence framework. The stakeholder power is fairly balanced, as most issues regarding the establishment and expansion of gambling are resolved in public votes. Gaming industry stakeholders have been effective at advancing economically based strategically crafted arguments because they are required to share revenues with the states to support education and other social causes. Potential competing stakeholders representing alternative views to those held by the gaming industry groups have yet to organize and effectively craft and communicate strategic arguments. Additionally, early research

validating some of the potential ethical issues surrounding gambling has yet to have an impact on the emotional intensity of the industry.

#### **7.. Conclusion:**

Developing the conceptual framework for assessing the external environment of each sin industry requires an assessment of the nature of the issues facing each industry. The nature of an issue in the sin industries can be thought of in terms of complexity and lifecycle, which are to some degree dependent variables. That is, the more complex the issue is to resolve, the longer it takes to find an effective solution. Issues in the sin industries are often comprised of a series of flashpoint events that occur over some period of time. The level of emotional intensity and stakeholder power in an industry may change based on the nature of a particular issue being debated. When an issue reaches a balance in stakeholder power, where neither party dominates and there is an attempt to reduce the emotional intensity through authentic discourse between stakeholders, there is the potential for long-term policy solutions. Figure 1 below provides a graphic depiction of this desired state. A combination of other factors should have the collective effect of improving the level of stakeholder emotional intelligence, as well as the resulting policy decisions. From a regulatory perspective, compliance standard for publicly traded firms, but efforts such as Britain's Combined Code offer a best practice approach that should encourage businesses to pursue long-term solutions to issues facing their industries. The Internet provides an unprecedented forum for participation in the discourse on policy decisions, thus balancing to some degree the disproportionate access to policymakers previously enjoyed by think tanks and policy elites. As individual firms begin to embrace a more holistic approach to corporate citizenship, they will seek a balance between their economic, social and ecological objectives. Over time, the result should be better policy decisions for businesses and society.

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