



PHILIP MORRIS PRODUCTS S.A.

The Editors
The Financial Times Limited



15 August 2025

By email to: [Redacted]

Cc: [Redacted]

Complaint: Behind the Money - [Why Big Tobacco is buzzing over nicotine pouches](#) – 13 August 2025 – including the accompanying transcript (the “Podcast”)

On behalf of Philip Morris International and its family of companies (“PMI”), I write to submit an urgent complaint regarding the Podcast. PMI is a leading international consumer goods company, and its affiliates own and market the ZYN brand of nicotine pouches referred to throughout the Podcast.

Having been unable to secure redress via direct e-mail and telephone correspondence with Ms. Mari Novik on August 13, we now request that corrective action be taken due to numerous inaccurate statements made. We note from your website that the FT has its own code but that you ‘[abide by the Editors' Code of Practice and are committed to upholding the highest standards of journalism.](#)’ The segment breaches clause 1 of the Editors Code by publishing inaccurate, misleading and distorted information and images about ZYN and PMI.

Specifically, clause 1 of IPSO’s Editor’ Code states (our emphasis):

- i. *The Press must take care not to publish **inaccurate, misleading or distorted information** or images, including headlines not supported by the text.*
- ii. *A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion **must be corrected, promptly** and with due prominence, and — where appropriate — an apology published. In cases involving IPSO, due prominence should be as required by the regulator.*
- iii. ***A fair opportunity to reply to significant inaccuracies should be given, when reasonably called for.***
- iv. *The Press, while free to editorialise and campaign, **must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.***

Philip Morris International’s press office was not contacted before the Podcast was published or allowed to respond to any of the allegations or offered a right to reply to the significant inaccuracies.

The Podcast’s producers appear to have undertaken scant research prior to production and broadcast (apparently visiting New York to get anecdotal comments from the public), and

frequently present inaccurate information as fact. This is irresponsible journalism. Furthermore, as a respected publication with a financial and business focus, the FT was ideally placed to understand the data and wider business context of companies like PMI, which is sorely lacking from the more speculative tone of the Podcast.

Within the Podcast, ZYN and PMI are frequently mentioned (ZYN is mentioned 27 times alone) including:

- “One of the more well-known brands of these nicotine pouches is called ZYN”
- “One of my really good friends in our office actually takes ZYN as a use, like to focus. That’s what he uses it for. Instead of taking Adderall or another ADHD medication, he would take a ZYN.”
- “Despite the mixed reviews on Manhattan’s west side, the trendiness of these nicotine pouches is spelling financial success for big tobacco companies. Just look at how Marlboro maker Philip Morris International is doing”
- “And yeah, in the US, the FDA has sort of taken notice and has been quite slow to approve the marketing of a few different brands of them, although ZYN has sort of gotten the official stamp of approval from them earlier in the year.”

The focus on ZYN and lighter touch given to other brands (none are mentioned more than twice) leads any reasonable listener to draw the incorrect conclusion that all or most of the allegations discussed during the Podcast about nicotine pouches relate to ZYN.

The basic facts are that ZYN, which is the market leader among nicotine pouches in the U.S., is the only nicotine pouch product authorized by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to date, and that none of the critical allegations about youth marketing are practices undertaken by affiliates of PMI. Had the producers spoken to PMI for comment, more balance could have been included in the debate which would have improved accuracy and fairness to PMI (and our brand ZYN) and avoided misleading listeners.

In the interests of time and brevity, we have not commented on each of the false, inaccurate and misleading statements mentioned in the Podcast, but reserve the right to do so.

Context

We have no issue per se with media discussing nicotine pouches generally and PMI has always been open to discussion on topical issues with your reporters, including making our CEO available to Ms. Novik in April for a lengthy interview. We understand legitimate concerns on the need for regulation and to guard against youth access to age restricted products.

PMI supports the appropriate regulation of nicotine pouches, and (for example) this was made clear in our response to the UK consultation on the Tobacco & Vapes Bill which is publicly available. We also agree that those below the legal age should not have access to or use any tobacco or nicotine products and welcome moves to legally apply age of sale restrictions, a measure we already take in our own channels such as our website and event kiosks, and something most responsible retailers like the UK multiple grocery stores already do. In the US, nicotine pouches are already regulated and cannot be sold to those below the age of 21 and authorization is required from the FDA to lawfully place nicotine pouches on the market.

However, the Podcast is fundamentally flawed in its editorial approach to accuracy by frequently using the name ZYN (and to a lesser extent “Philip Morris” (PMI)) to describe the entire category and falsely attributes actions of others to ZYN and PMI. ZYN is a specific brand name; it is not an appropriate shorthand for the entire category, and the repeated use of the ZYN brand gives the false impression that almost everything discussed during the Podcast about nicotine pouches relates to ZYN.

Had the editors chosen to speak broadly about the category and make the statements without any reference to ZYN, that may have been fair and accurate, as there are certainly irresponsible actors at both the producer and retailer levels. However, the failure to separate opinion on the wider category from references to ZYN creates false claims that are now wrongly attributed to responsible actors like PMI and its brand ZYN. These effects are compounded by the fact that PMI was not asked to comment on in advance.

Examples of False (Inaccurate) Statements

Clara Murray - So the kind of innovation that's come about in the past 10 years, people realise that if you take the tobacco out of the pouch and you replace it with synthetic nicotine, this is much less regulated.

Saffeya Ahmed - Got it. And context for our listeners, synthetic nicotine is far less regulated globally than products that use tobacco, like cigarettes.

This is categorically false and is not based on any fact. The development of ZYN originates in highly regulated markets, including Sweden and the US, which rank amongst some of the most tightly regulated markets in the world. The products were developed by Swedish Match, which PMI acquired in 2022.

ZYN does not use synthetic nicotineⁱ. Some brands may do so, while others may not, however making a sweeping mischaracterization leads listeners to draw a factually inaccurate conclusion about ZYN.

The tobacco leaf-containing predecessor to nicotine pouches, snus, has been on the market outside the EU for decades. ZYN was first introduced in the US over 10 years ago and is an evolution of snus, without tobacco leaf. The nicotine in ZYN is currently derived from tobacco. Many countries such as the US already regulate nicotine pouches (including those with synthetic nicotine). The UK lags behind, but we welcome appropriate regulation which sets clear standards for the safety and quality of these products, as well as age restrictions.

It is baseless and false to suggest that PMI removed tobacco from ZYN to bypass regulation.

*[Clara Murray] Regulators are very concerned that, in a similar way to vaping, nicotine pouches are gonna really appeal to young people, to teenagers, to people who might not have smoked before, been nicotine users before...And yeah, in the US, the FDA has sort of taken notice and has been quite slow to approve the marketing of a few different brands of them, although ZYN has **sort of** gotten the official stamp of approval from them earlier in the year. [emphasis added]*

This is false. The FDA has had regulatory oversight over tobacco and nicotine products since 2009 and as new categories (such as vapes and nicotine pouches) have developed, these have fallen into the FDA's remit and require authorization to be marketed in the U.S. Furthermore, ZYN has not “sort of gotten the official stamp of approval” from the FDA. ZYN is the only

nicotine pouch [authorized](#) by the FDA to date as “appropriate to protect the public health”. Ms. Murray’s description is wrong. She also alleges, without evidence, that FDA has delayed authorizations owing to potential underage use. With respect to ZYN, the agency concluded after a comprehensive four-year review of available evidence that “youth use of nicotine pouches remains low despite growing sales in recent yearsⁱⁱ.”

More broadly, alleging that FDA reviews have been slowed owing to worries over underage use are baseless. There are many reasons why product reviews have been slow, but to our knowledge the FDA has never publicly said the potential for underage use of pouches has led the agency to delay authorizations. On what basis does Ms. Murray make this conclusion?

[Saffeya Ahmed] *Now, most of the people we spoke to on Manhattan’s west side were young professionals, mostly in their twenties and thirties. Around that age and younger is exactly who these big tobacco companies are targeting with nicotine pouches, not just Philip Morris’s ZYN...*

[Saffeya Ahmed] *But I mean, the reality is that they are targeting the youth market, right?*

This claim is utterly baseless. In the US, the largest ZYN market in the world, the legal age of purchase is 21, as such alleging marketing to those younger than “in their twenties” would be illegal. This claim also belies the real-world profiles of actual ZYN consumers. According to our dataⁱⁱⁱ, eighty-one percent of ZYN consumers in the U.S. are aged 30 and above (44 percent are above age 40). Internationally, 72 percent of ZYN consumers are aged 30 and above (33 percent above age 40).

TikTok clips: “Are the girlies doing Zyn? Are they doing nicotine pouches? OK, so my thoughts on Zyn nicotine pouches and any recommendations on how to... That was the mint flavour, but I’m gonna go ahead and try the Red Bull one instead. You’re actually supposed to put it in your upper lip like this. OK. I’m not gonna lie, I do feel the buzz. This is the Red Bull flavour and it’s...” “[Saffeya Ahmed] What you’re hearing are clips from TikToks where younger people talk about using ZYNs as performance enhancers at the gym, ways to focus...”

ZYN is not advertised or promoted by PMI businesses on TikTok (either through social media influencers or otherwise).

ZYN is not and has never been available in “Red Bull” flavor. As Ms. Novik is the FTs tobacco reporter, this should be common knowledge to her and in her subsequent comment she misses the opportunity to correctly clarify the statements heard in the TikTok clip.

Concluding Remarks

The FT is a news outlet currently broadcasting a false and misleading podcast which damages the goodwill and reputation of ZYN and PMI. It clearly violates the FT’s Editorial Policy for a range of accuracy issues.

The editors of the Podcast could easily have avoided this situation through a general discussion and opinion-based commentary on nicotine pouches, without specifically mentioning ZYN or any other brand, or at least being clear when they were making a factual statement about a specific product.

Given the gravity of the false allegations, we insist that the Podcast is withdrawn by close-of-business August 18 and may be reposted when these issues have been addressed with a suitable corrective statement.

In keeping with PMI's commitment to fostering open and transparent dialogue, we reserve our right to make this correspondence available to the public.

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Yours faithfully,

Corey Henry

**Director, Corporate Communications
Philip Morris International**

ⁱ Synthetic nicotine is not derived from tobacco. Most nicotine products, including medicinal nicotine replacement therapies like patches and gums, have traditionally used nicotine derived from tobacco because it is more cost effective to produce.

ⁱⁱ In authorizing ZYN products marketed in the US, while the FDA requires continued monitoring and vigilance, [it recognized that ZYN met the standard](#) required of "being appropriate to protect public health" as: *"...these nicotine pouch products have the potential to provide a benefit to adults who smoke cigarettes and/or use other smokeless tobacco products that is sufficient to outweigh the risks of the products, including to youth. As part of its evaluation, **the FDA reviewed data regarding youth risk and found that youth use of nicotine pouches remains low despite growing sales in recent years.** For example, the 2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey showed that 1.8% of U.S. middle and high school students reported currently using nicotine pouches."* [emphasis added]

ⁱⁱⁱ Our own data shows that the consumer demographic for ZYN over-indexes to the range of [30-49 year olds with higher income](#) (page 45)