How Advertising Works

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Advertising is a means of promoting a product, brand, or service with the goal of attracting interest, engagement, and sales. Advertising is but one component of marketing, which includes all activities aimed at promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service. Effective marketing utilizes multiple tactics to reach and influence the largest possible audience and, via public relations, to shape opinions in favor of tobacco interests.

Modern advertising is a combination of strategy, creativity, and data-driven decision-making. So-called "scientific advertising" is informed via analysis of demographics, interests, and behaviors of target audience. Psychological studies evaluate the needs and desires of consumers including how they think, feel, and behave. Prior to finalizing a draft advertising campaign theme, response of focus groups to advertising samples are gathered.

At its core, advertising is designed as a means of persuasion. Numerous devices are utilized to achieve the goal of convincing customers to buy the company's product. Aspirational advertising associates the brand with idealized lifestyles, successful and/or attractive individuals, or personal attributes such as self-confidence, individuality, masculinity, femininity, or youth. The iconic Marlboro Man exemplifies aspirational advertising. Few among us are rugged loners on horseback with the freedom to roam at will and to whom usual rules do not apply. The consumer may live in a tiny New York City apartment and work in a small cubicle, but by smoking Marlboro you can aspire to a bit like the cowboy. The same goes for the ultra slim and elegant Virginia Slims models or the cool, fashionable, and hip models in Salem "Doin' it Smooth Campaign." Teenagers aspire to be like the slightly older 20 something models in "Salem Spirit" and Newport's "Alive with Pleasure" campaigns who are fun loving, popular with friends, romantically successful, and exude self-confidence. Often these models are shown engaged in playful activities more typical of teens than young adults.

Consumers buy products not only for what they can do, but also for what they can mean. Products convey meaning, symbolize personal attributes, and inform others about who people are or who they want to be.[1] According to Levy, "modern goods are recognized as essentially psychological things which are symbolic of personal attributes and goals and of social patterns and strivings."[2] Consumers are drawn to products which "Meshes with, adds to, or reinforces the way the consumer thinks about himself." Affinity/identity advertising utilizes images and phrases

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[1] Cohen JB. Playing to Win: Marketing and Public Policy at Odds over Joe Camel. Journal of Public Policy & Marketing. 2000; 19: 155–167.

[2] Levy, S.J. "Symbols for Sale," Harvard Business Review, 1959; 37, 117–24. (https://jonduke.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/symbolsforsale_levy.pdf)

which align with the customers self-image. Cigarette advertisements featuring activities such as sports, games, or hiking; concepts such as freedom or patriotism; or simply models who "look like me" in dress, hair style, or comportment. For some its tattoos and motorcycles while for others is eye makeup and high heels. Sex appeal, especially depicting women smokers as available to men, is common.

Cigarettes advertisements most often depict smoking during recreation, entertainment, and relaxed times. Settings of happiness at the beach, dining in a restaurant, drinking in a bar, enjoying a party, frolicking with the family pet, swinging in a hammock, during holiday celebrations, listening to music, etc. abound.

Advertisers routinely exploit whatever is popular in contemporary culture. In the 1970s and 1980s Virginia Slims echoed themes of the Women's Liberation movement. Today American Spirit Cigarettes describe their cigarettes as "natural and organic" and claim that they flow "from farm to pack." Cigarette advertisers have long sought to tie their product with the popular music featuring images of singers and musicians and sponsoring popular concert series at which free samples are distributed. Throughout much of the 20th century, cigarette advertisements featured endorsements by movie stars, popular singers, sports heroes, and even politicians who were depicted as enthusiastic smokers and immensely satisfied of the company's brand.

Beyond emotional appeal, cigarette marketers engage in "reason why" advertising proffering arguments why their product is merits purchasing. As smokers are worried about the adverse consequences of smoking, cigarette advertisements engage in health reassurance. Featuring vigorous, attractive, active, healthy looking young models sends a potent heath reassurance message. Brands are described as mild, light, super light, and even ultra lights to implant the false notion that they are safe, super safe, or ultra safe. Scenes of nature (snowy mountains, lakes & streams, pastoral landscapes) conjure the notion of fresh air. Slogans containing the words "fresh, fresher, or freshest" do the same. Some brands message that they are modern, advanced, or high tech - implying that their "cigarettes 2.0" are more healthy. Inaccurate claims regarding the supposed effectiveness of filters are frequent. Filters were sometimes chemically treated to turn brown when used to suggest that all the bad stuff was taken out. Claims such as "low tar" were interpreted by consumers as safer. Cigarette advertisements are carefully crafted so as to de-emphasize government mandated warning labels.

Addiction is a splendid business model. To avoid miserable withdrawal symptoms, the smoker is compelled to buy cigarettes over and over. Cigarette advertisements assiduously avoid mention of addiction. Instead, they message fulfillment of craving urges using coded terms such as "satisfaction."

Cigarette advertisements are carefully targeted to specific population segments. Because smoking initiation occurs almost exclusively during adolescence, tobacco companies know that their future sales depend upon enticing the next generation of teens to start smoking. Companies falsely claim that the sole target of their advertising is adult smokers who they hope to entice to

switch brands. A vast swath of cigarette advertising is designed to have a differential appeal to youthful audiences. In their campaign planning documents, advertising agencies use the euphemism “young adult smokers” or YAS, while their emphasis on underage “pre-smokers” is manifest. Also, contemporary tobacco advertising heavily exploits youth-frequented social media channels. Other target segments include gender specific advertisements (especially women), targeting races (e.g. Black, Hispanic), religions (e.g. Jewish, Catholic), and sexual orientation (e.g. LGBTQ+).

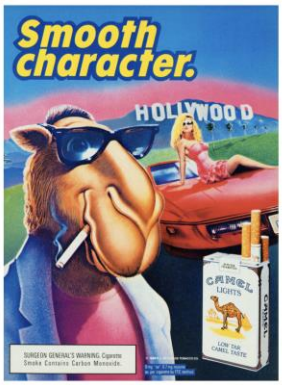
By design, cigarette advertisement is repetitious seeking to reinforce brand identity through repeated exposure. Most campaigns last 6 months to a couple of years at most, but entail a large number of advertising theme iterations. Rarely, highly successful campaigns last much longer. Notable examples are the Philip Morris’s “Marlboro Man” (1954 – date) and Lorillard’s Newport’s youth-targeted “Alive with Pleasure” (1972-2016) campaigns.

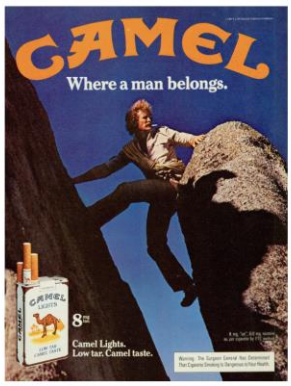
The tobacco industry considers cigarette brands to be segmented based upon characteristics of their smokers. Advertising is configured to appeal to specific segments.

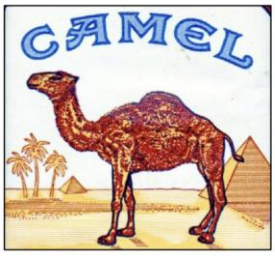
Segment	Brand Examples
Virile	Marlboro, Winston
Cool	Kool, Newport, Salem
Style	Virginia Slims
Moderation	Merit, Vantage
Concerned	Kent, Carlton, Now
Savings	Generic brands

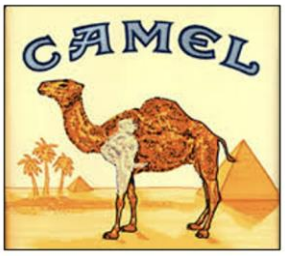
Strategic Research Presentations. "Lifestyles in the Mid-Eighties" And "1983 Segment Description Study" 1983. RJ Reynolds Records. https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/qqcf0100

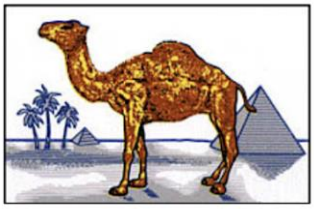
Almost all tobacco advertisements are misleading or deceptive. Subliminal advertising refers to the practice of embedding messages within advertisements that are designed to influence consumer behavior without their conscious awareness. Phallic symbols are common. For example, RJ Reynold’s Joe Camel’s face strongly resembles male genitalia and the rock formation in Camel’s “Where a man belongs” bears an unmistakable resemblance to an erect penis. The iconic camel has two subliminal features, a man with an erect penis and a lion sexually engaged with the camel.

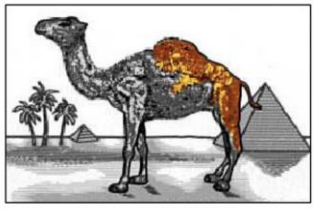








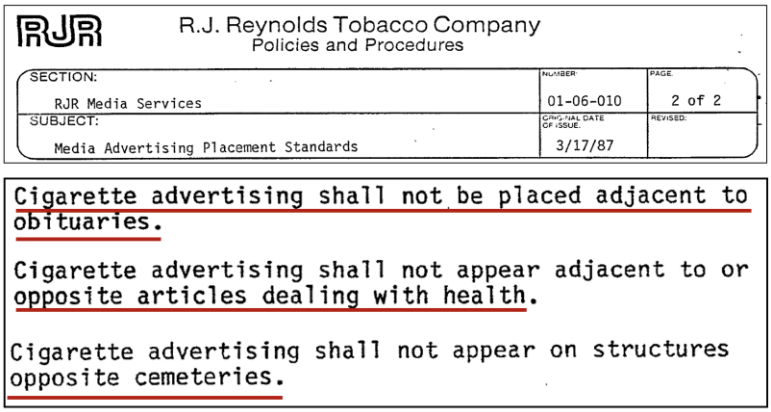




Tobacco companies have long used a wide variety of channels to distribute their advertising. In the 20th century, these focused on print (newspapers, magazines), broadcast (television and radio), billboards, and point-of-sale displays. Constrained by US regulations which constrained broadcast (1971) and billboards (1998), point-of-sale and print advertisements remain but digital advertising now predominates (social media, web, e-mail). In contrast to print and broadcast, which incur sizable costs, distribution of advertising content via branded website, e-mail, and organic social media advertising are essentially free.

For decades, tobacco companies paid movie studios to glorify smoking and sometimes even paid for branded product placement. Today, there is more smoking in movies and on television that in real life. Advertising come in many forms, but most advertisements consist primarily of imagery and text. One genre is the so-called “power wall,” the meticulously crafted displays of packs positioned behind the cash register where they are seen during every purchase.

The tobacco industry limits advertising channels to avoid appearance of material adjacent to their advertisement they view as “antithetical” and/or “incompatible.” For example, cigarettes advertisements could not appear in proximity to obituaries, articles dealing with health, or be posted near cemeteries all during a time period during which the companies vehemently claimed that smoking was not harmful to health.



R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
Policies and Procedures

SECTION:	NUMBER:	PAGE:
RJR Media Services	01-06-010	2 of 2
SUBJECT:	ORIGINAL DATE OF ISSUE:	REVISED:
Media Advertising Placement Standards	3/17/87	

Cigarette advertising shall not be placed adjacent to obituaries.

Cigarette advertising shall not appear adjacent to or opposite articles dealing with health.

Cigarette advertising shall not appear on structures opposite cemeteries.

VICTIM OF LUNG CANCER —

Death Stills Voice Of Singer Nat (King) Cole

HOLLYWOOD (UPI) — Velvet-voiced Nat (King) Cole, who charmed a generation of fans as a recording and nightclub singer, died Monday after a two-month battle against lung cancer.

Cole, 45, entered St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica Dec. 8 and underwent surgery for removal of his left lung three weeks ago. Cobalt and X-ray treatments were administered to shrink the tumor before surgery.

The singer's wife, Maria, had been at the hospital constantly and was at his bedside when he died.

She interrupted her hospital vigil only to spend time with her five children, Carol, Natalie, Nat Kelley, and twins Casey and Timolin and explained that they looked to her "for strength when I get home in the evenings."

Son Of Minister

Nat Cole began life in Alabama as Nathaniel Adams Coles, the son of an impoverished Baptist minister who did a little farming on the side.

Cole, given early musical training by his mother who was a church choir singer, began his entertainment career as a pianist with the "Nat Cole Trio," and became a singer by accident when a drunken patron insisted he sing his favorite tune, "Sweet Lorraine."

That was in 1937 and the instrumentalist group was making a grand total of $75 a week.

Cole then concentrated on singing and his income rose to $10,000 a week. His records have sold more than 50 million copies.

As a Negro he was never very active in civil rights movements but he gave large financial contributions to such causes and he preferred to prove himself in this field by actions rather than words.

Great Sports Fan

In January 1964 he told UPI Hollywood correspondent Vernon Scott he did not make speeches or take part in demonstrations "because I do things differently. Naturally the cause is near and dear to me. I contribute to many of the organizations. But I've always believed actions speak louder than words. I'm not criticizing the marchers. I'm all for them."

He was a great sports fan and friend of many major league baseball players. He used to act as a coach in an annual baseball game involving Hollywood entertainers, sports writers and sportscasters.

He was active in promoting interest in baseball among children and cut a record called "Goodnight Little Leaguer." He assigned a share of the royalties to Little League organizations.

NAT (KING) COLE
Dead Of Cancer At 47

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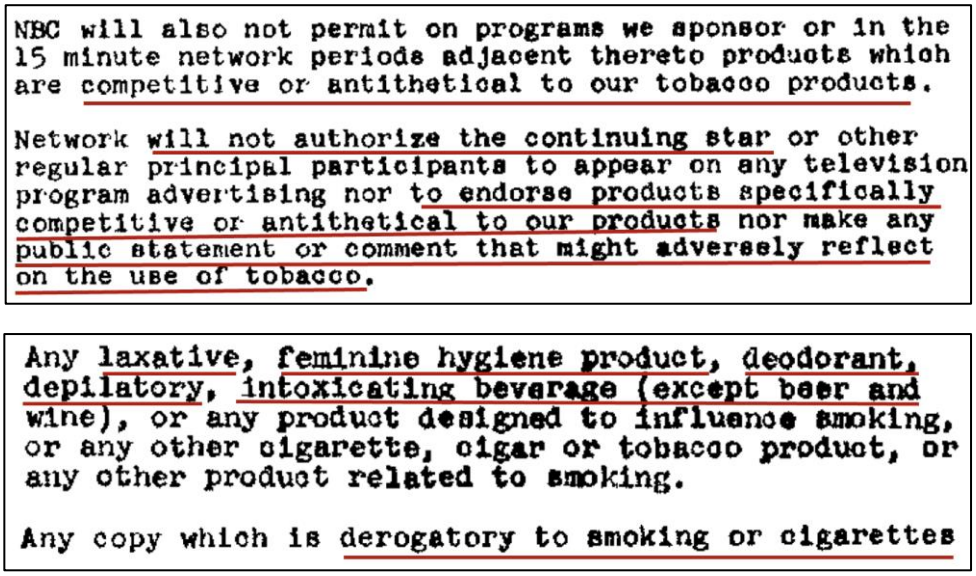
Media Advertising Placement Standards. R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. Policies And Procedures. 1987 March 17. RJ Reynolds Records; https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/kmhf0082

While it may be understandable that cigarette advertisers would not want their messages to be placed adjacent to material derogatory to smoking, it seems peculiar that they also prohibit adjacency of their advertising to those for laxatives, deodorants, depilatories, and (rather inexplicably) "feminine hygiene products." Of concern, magazines and newspapers which accepted tobacco advertisements were compelled to refrain from publishing articles on the adverse health consequences of smoking for fear of losing their tobacco derived revenue.[3]



NBC will also not permit on programs we sponsor or in the 15 minute network periods adjacent thereto products which are competitive or antithetical to our tobacco products.

Network will not authorize the continuing star or other regular principal participants to appear on any television program advertising nor to endorse products specifically competitive or antithetical to our products nor make any public statement or comment that might adversely reflect on the use of tobacco.

Any laxative, feminine hygiene product, deodorant, depilatory, intoxicating beverage (except beer and wine), or any product designed to influence smoking, or any other cigarette, cigar or tobacco product, or any other product related to smoking.

Any copy which is derogatory to smoking or cigarettes

Provisions From Competitive and/or Prohibited Products Included in Contracts For Radio and Television Advertising. 1961. American Tobacco Records. https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/trvd0133

[3] McCandless PM, Yerger VB, Malone RE. Quid pro quo: tobacco companies and the black press. Am J Public Health. 2012 Apr;102(4):739-50. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2011.300180.

Cigarette advertising is very big business. In 2022, the five largest cigarette manufacturers spent $22 million per day, $8.01 billion per year, on advertising and promotional activities.[4] Cigarette advertising is highly sophisticated with companies engaging the very best graphic designers, copywriters, psychologists, sociologists, survey experts, and statisticians that money can buy. In terms of return on investment, this expenditure is clearly worth it. In 2018, the world's six largest cigarette manufacturers made profits (before income taxes) of more than $55 billion.[5] In 2024, Altria (maker of Marlboro in the US) had an impressive net profit margin, defined as percentage of revenue that a company retains as income after the deduction of expenses, of 47%.[6]

Selected adverting agencies engaged by leading US cigarette brands.

Advertising Agency	U.S. Cigarette Brand
Leo Burnett	Marlboro, Parliament, Virginia Slims, Alpine, Philip Morris
William Esty	Camel, Winston, Salem
Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample	Winston
Lord & Thomas (Albert Lasker)	Lucky strikes
J Walter Thompson	Chesterfield, Lark, Old Gold, L&M, Camel
BBDO	Tareyton
Saatchi	Silk Cut
N.W. Ayer	Early Camel
McCann-Erickson	Joe Camel
Ogilvy & Mather	Kool, Kent, Real
Ted Bates	Kool, Viceroy
Ally & Gargano	Newport
Wells, Rich, Greene	Benson & Hedges
Leber Katz	Vantage, More, Now
De Garmo	True

[4] Cigarette Report for 2022. Washington, DC: Federal Trade Commission (https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/2022-Cigarette-Report.pdf)

[5] Branston JR. Industry profits continue to drive the tobacco epidemic: A new endgame for tobacco control? Tob Prev Cessat. 2021 Jun 10;7:45.

[6] Altria Profit Margin Trend 2009-2025. https://www.macrotrends.net/stocks/charts/MO/altria/profit-margins

Advertising agencies engaged by leading US cigarette brands in 1992.

TOP 50 US ADVERTISING AGENCIES

& AGENCIES WITH CIGARETTE ACCOUNTS

1	LEO BURNETT CO.
2	SAATCHI & SAATCHI ADV. WORLDWIDE
3	GREY ADVERTISING
4	J. WALTER THOMPSON CO.
5	FOOTE, CONE & BELDING COMMUNICATIONS
6	OGILVY & MATHER WORLDWIDE
7	MC CANN-ERICKSON WORLDWIDE
8	YOUNG & RUBICAM
9	BBDO WORLDWIDE
10	D'ARCY MASIUS BENTON & BOWLES
11	DDB NEEDHAM WORLDWIDE
12	BACKER SPIELVOGEL BATES WORLDWIDE
13	BOZELL INC.
14	LINTAS: WORLDWIDE
15	CAMPBELL-MITHUN-ESTY
16	KETCHUM COMMUNICATIONS
17	WELLS RICH GREENE BDDP
18	DELLA FEMINA, MC NAMEE
19	CHIAT/DAY/MOJO ADVERTISING
20	N W AYER
21	ROSS ROY GROUP
22	TELEPHONE MARKETING PROGRAMS
23	TRACY-LOCKE
24	HILL, HOLLIDAY, CONNORS, COSMOPULOS
25	DIMAC DIRECT
26	EARLE PALMER BROWN COS.
27	ADMARKETING INC.
28	HAL RINEY & PARTNERS
29	LOWE & PARTNERS
30	TBWA ADVERTISING
31	LINTAS: MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS
32	JORDAN, MC GRATH, CASE & TAYLOR
33	MC CAFFREY & MC CALL
34	W. B. DONER & CO.
35	OGILVY & MATHER DIRECT
36	FERGUSON COMMUNICATIONS GROUP
37	WUNDERMAN WORLDWIDE
38	ALLY & GARGANO
39	LAURENCE, CHARLES, FREE & LAWSON
40	TATHAM/RSCG
41	AMMIRATI & PURIS
42	LOIS/USA
43	RAPP COLLINS MARCOA
44	AVRETT, FREE & GINSBERG, INC.
45	FCB DIRECT
46	MEDICUS INTERCON INTERNATIONAL
47	SUDLER & HENNESSEY
48	NELSON COMMUNICATIONS
49	TEAM ONE ADVERTISING
50	MESSNER VETERE BERGER CAREY SCHMETTERER
74	BLOOM FCA INC
114	LONG, HAYMES & CARR, INC.
181	TRONE ADVERTISING, INC.

Top 50 Us Advertising Agencies Top 50 US Advertising Agencies & Agencies With Cigarette Accounts. 1992 September 02. Philip Morris Records; https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/rgmg0125