



Marketing Cigarettes to Women

HISTORY OF ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

- Tobacco advertising geared toward women began in the 1920s. By the mid-1930s, cigarette advertisements targeting women were becoming so commonplace that one advertisement for the mentholated Spud brand had the caption “To read the advertisements these days, a fellow’d think the pretty girls do all the smoking.”
- As early as the 1920s, tobacco advertising geared toward women included messages such as “Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet” to establish an association between smoking and slimness. The positioning of Lucky Strike as an aid to weight control led to a greater than 300% increase in sales for this brand in the first year of the advertising campaign.
- Through World War II, Chesterfield advertisements regularly featured glamour photographs of a Chesterfield girl of the month, usually a fashion model or a Hollywood star such as Rita Hayworth, Rosalind Russell, or Betty Grable.
- The number of women aged 18 through 25 years who began smoking increased significantly in the mid-1920s, the same time that the tobacco industry mounted the Chesterfield and Lucky Strike campaigns directed at women. The trend was most striking among women aged 18 through 21. The number of women in this age group who began smoking tripled between 1911 and 1925 and had more than tripled again by 1939.
- In 1968, Philip Morris marketed Virginia Slims cigarettes to women with an advertising strategy showing canny insight into the importance of the emerging women’s movement. The slogan “You’ve come a long way, Baby” later gave way to “It’s a woman thing” in the mid-1990s, and more recently the “Find your voice” campaign featuring women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The underlying message of these campaigns has been that smoking is related to women’s freedom, emancipation, and empowerment.
- Initiation rates among girls aged 14 through 17 years rapidly increased in parallel with the combined sales of the leading women’s-niche brands (Virginia Slims, Silva Thins, and Eve) during this period.
- In 1960, about 10% of all cigarette advertisements appeared in popular women’s magazines, and by 1985, cigarette advertisements increased by 34%.

CURRENT ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

- Women have been extensively targeted in tobacco marketing. Such marketing is dominated by themes of an association between social desirability, independence, and smoking messages conveyed through advertisements featuring slim, attractive, and athletic models. In 1999, expenditures for domestic cigarette advertising and promotion was \$8.24 billion — increasing 22.3% from the \$6.73 billion spent in 1998.
- Advertising is used in part to reduce women’s fear of the health risks from smoking by presenting information on nicotine and tar content or by using positive images (e.g., models engaged in exercise or pictures of white capped mountains against a background of clear blue skies).
- Because cigarette brands developed exclusively for women (e.g., Virginia Slims, Eve, Misty, and Capri) account for only 5% to 10% of the cigarette market, many women are also attracted to brands that appear gender neutral or overtly targeted to males.
- Research has shown that women’s magazines that accept tobacco advertising are significantly less likely to publish articles critical of smoking than are magazines that do not accept such advertising.

SPONSORSHIP/PROMOTIONS

- The tobacco industry has targeted women through innovative promotional campaigns offering discounts on common household items unrelated to tobacco. For example, Philip Morris has offered discounts on turkeys, milk, soft drinks, and laundry detergent with the purchase of tobacco products.
- Cigarette brand clothing and other giveaway accessories have been used to promote cigarette products to women and girls.
 - Virginia Slims offered a yearly engagement calendar and the V-Wear catalog featuring clothing, jewelry, and accessories coordinated with the themes and colors of the print advertising and product packaging.
 - Capri Superslims used point-of-sale displays and value-added gifts featuring items such as mugs and caps bearing the Capri label in colors coordinated with the advertisement and package.
 - Misty Slims offered color-coordinated items in multiple-pack containers, as well as address books, cigarette lighters, T-shirts, and fashion booklets.

GLOBAL ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

- Evidence suggests a pattern of international tobacco advertising that associates smoking with success, similar to that seen in the United States. This development emphasizes the enormous potential of advertising to change social norms.
- As western-styled marketing has increased, campaigns commonly have focused on women. For example, in 1989, the brand Yves Saint Laurent introduced a new elegant package designed to appeal to women in Malaysia and other Asian countries. National tobacco monopolies and companies, such as those in Indonesia and Japan, began to copy this promotional targeting of women.
- One of the most popular media for reaching women – particularly in places where tobacco advertising is banned on television – is women's magazines. Magazines can lend an air of social acceptability or stylish image to smoking. This may be particularly important in countries where smoking rates are low among women and where tobacco companies are attempting to associate smoking with Western values.
- A study of 111 women's magazines in 17 European countries in 1996-1997 found that 55% of the magazines that responded accepted cigarette advertisements, and only 4 had a policy of voluntarily refusing it. Only 31% of the magazines had published an article of one page or more on smoking and health in the previous 12 months. Magazines that accepted tobacco advertisements seem less likely to give coverage to smoking and health issues.
- One of the most common advertisement themes in developed countries is that smoking is both a passport to and a symbol of the independence and success of the modern women.
- Events and activities popular among young people are often sponsored by tobacco companies. Free tickets to films and to pop and rock concerts have been given in exchange for empty cigarette packets in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Popular U.S. female stars have allowed their names to be associated with cigarettes in other countries.
- Many countries have banned tobacco advertising and promotion. In 1998, the European Union adopted a directive to ban most tobacco advertising and sponsorship by July 30, 2006. Other countries have banned direct advertising, and still others have instituted partial restraints. Such bans are often circumvented by tobacco companies through various promotional venues such as the creation of retail stores named after cigarette brands or corporate sponsorship of sporting and other events. Moreover, national bans on tobacco advertisements may be rendered ineffective by tobacco promotion on satellite television, by cable broadcasting, or via the Internet.