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Propaganda

Professor Dojs

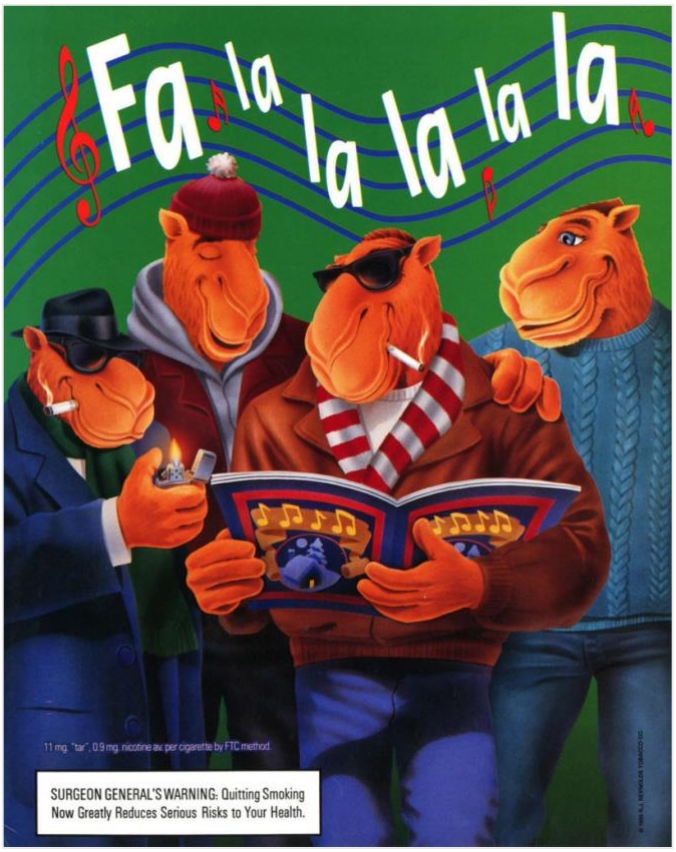
Cigarette Advertisement and its Effects on Children

Advertisements are an important way of letting buyers know your product exists. The practice of marketing is not wrong, but concerns arise depending on what you are advertising and who you are advertising to. Tobacco is a sore subject for many people today. Statistics linking smoking to lung cancer, addiction, and other afflictions, have led to tobacco being viewed very negatively in the eyes of people. With all these concerns, many people also want to ensure that children are not gaining access to these products. This is all to say that today we hardly see any advertisements for cigarettes but just a few decades ago, cartoons, like The Flintstones, were seen lighting the end of a Winston cigarette. What were the effects this had on children? Simply, a lot. There are strong links that point to increased perception of cigarette advertisements to increased usage of cigarettes among adolescents.

A major icon of cigarette advertising that personified the worries people had about advertisings effects on adolescents is that of Joe Camel. Joe Camel was a mascot used in many Camel cigarette advertisements. An anthropomorphized cartoon camel wearing leather jackets and sunglasses, who drove muscle cars and hung around blonde women. He flew jets, went gambling, traveled to Miami, and played in smokey, low light jazz bars. With phrases like “Celebrate the holidays with a pack of Camels” or “I like Joe”, referencing Eisenhower’s “I like Ike” marketing campaign, Camel made movements to instill their mascot in the American mind.

It played off of popular American sports, themes, and historical events to instill itself in the viewer's mind.

Anti-smoking organizations would attack the character for appealing to adolescents. It would bring about public outrage. “In a 1998 retrospective look at the politics of tobacco, a *Washington Post* story noted that ‘public anger at the industry had intensified starting in 1991, when studies revealed that RJR’s advertising cartoon figure, Joe Camel, was almost as recognizable to 6-year-olds as Mickey Mouse.’ A prominent antismoking activist said in 1999, ‘Joe Camel helped change a nation that wanted to believe the industry didn’t market to kids’” (Calfee 175). These kinds of advertisements felt to many like a direct attack on the youth of America. Cartoon animals interacting with adult products, available to see on a commercial break or in the pages of a magazine were too much for people to accept.



The FDA would step in and attack the Joe Camel advertisements; by using industry documents, they would push for the American people and legislators to consider the effects of cigarette advertisements, particularly on the youth. “These FDA activities had two effects. The first was to reinforce the popular view that the Joe Camel character caused young people to smoke. The second was to energize the litigation community, primarily through the release and

condemnation of industry documents" (Calfee 177). The FDA had used specifically used Joe Camel to push for the ban on cigarette advertisements in different mediums.

Cigarette advertisers use many different techniques to make their products known to a potential audience, using similar techniques that propagandists used. By using many different lanes of media, repeated exposure, engaging auxiliary attitudes, and arousing the needs or desires of the viewer, marketers would ensure the sales and use of their tobacco products. Whether intentionally or not, adolescents would be exposed to these advertisements and may have a desire to purchase tobacco products due to these marketing campaigns.

In many ways, advertising uses many different techniques that are also used in propaganda. Cigarette advertising should be considered no differently. In the past, cigarette advertisements appeared in all forms of media, from television to magazines to endorsements, cigarettes advertisers wanted people to see their product at any point possible. There have now been heavy restrictions on tobacco advertisements, particularly concerning broadcasts, but in certain places, advertisements can still be seen or heard, like magazines and some sporting events. From a marketing standpoint, this makes complete sense, the more someone sees your product, the more likely they are to remember your product and perhaps choose your product in the future. Repeatedly showing the product will only help the company to secure future clients.

Cigarette companies also appealed heavily to the aesthetic of smoking. In the controversial case of Joe Camel, he is often seen around cool muscle cars, in a dark room playing jazzy instruments, or wearing a leather jacket while riding a motorcycle. The goal here is to have people associate the product with something else they want, usually wealth, status, or relationships. By also looking at the Marlboro Man, people are shown the image of a roughneck

cowboy, who appealed to the blue-collar, all-American man who wants to live the life of a cowboy who can pull himself up by the bootstraps.

In these advertisements, the purpose of smoking was shown as a break or relieve some stress. In a Winston advertisement from the 1960s, they use the extremely popular figures of Fred and Barney from The Flintstones in which they are depicted taking a break from work and doing their chores. As a form of recreation, they partake in Winston cigarettes. This is all to arouse in the viewer a desire to find relief from their work life through a cigarette.

While this may come as no surprise, the effects these advertisements have on adolescents are much more profound. Children around the age of three are unable to discern the difference between a television program and advertisements, while they can understand the difference between the tv and commercials, around five, young children still struggle with the purpose of advertisements:

> Ninety percent of the younger children could not explain the difference between commercials and programs, even though discriminating the two was relatively easy. Other studies have reported similar findings, noting that children of this age usually describe the difference between commercials and programs using simple perceptual cues, such as “commercials are short”. Thus, as Butter concludes, ‘Young children may know they are watching something different than a program but do not know that the intent of what they are watching is to invite purchase of a product or service. (Macklin 6)

Adolescents who are constantly bombarded with advertisement after advertisement inviting viewers to buy a pack of cigarettes have proven to increase tobacco usage among adolescents. “Tobacco industry advertising continues to reach young people through magazines, point of sale ads, and likely the internet and social media. In 2007-2008 receptivity to cigarette

advertising still increased the probability of smoking by approximately 60.0% over the 4-year period." (Emory 283).

Well-done marketing can lead potential customers to purchase their product. With an easily convinced audience, that being adolescents, marketers can draw in these new customers by bombarding them with promises of being adult-like, fitting in, and gaining status. Specifically with cigarette advertising, adolescents can be brought into the idea these companies are trying to sell. Once they purchase a pack of cigarettes, they now have in their hand a product that will ensure that they continue to purchase and use tobacco products.

There has been much controversy in the past about cigarette companies appealing to children. Joe Camel became an icon on this issue. The cartoon camel, playing pool, in scenic locations, and trying to appeal to a cool, hip audience has been argued by anti-smoking groups to have, either intentionally or not, cast a net upon children which had led to increased tobacco usage among adolescents. "In a more recent study, Fisher and coworkers found that 30 percent of 3-year-olds surveyed were able to match correctly Old Joe, the cartoon camel, with the tobacco brand" (Botvin 214). The argument that anti-smoking organizations held is that because of these highly recognizable advertisements, children would be more likely to obtain or would have a stronger desire to use tobacco in the future. In the same study, they claimed, "Subjects who smoked more than a pack a week had the highest exposure to cigarette advertising, measured in the numbers of cigarette advertisements in the publications that respondents reported reading" (Botvin 221).

Widespread advertisements have been bombarding minds for decades. With constant information being thrown at people every day, the effects should not be overlooked, especially for adolescents. Children should have particular protection against advertisements. When it

comes to products reserved for legal-age adults, children do not know the effects of alcohol, gambling, or tobacco in the same way that someone of age would. Adolescents are being told that these things are fun, bring status, or provide comfort, relief, or joy in one light and inhale. It is undeniable that this constant bombardment has caused increased tobacco usage among adolescents. “Adolescents who reported a high level of exposure to cigarette advertising were between 1.44 and 1.93 times more likely to be smokers than those reporting a low level of exposure. They were 1.5 times more likely to indicate that they intended to smoke in the future” (Botvin 222).

The tobacco industry has fought to keep its products easily seen by the public eye. They have done what they can to keep their products in the hands of the people, aside from the various health concerns their products cause. “Equally important has been the identification of tobacco marketing, especially advertising, as the primary cause of smoking, largely based on the argument that advertising and public relations have the power to deceive even the public health community itself about the dangers of smoking. This remarkable notion formed the basis for lawsuits by health care providers and other entities, as well as the Department of Justice’s lawsuit” (Calfee 178). This had put cigarettes in the hands of a youth who had a desire to use their products. This also led to repeated use and perhaps addiction for many different people who started smoking as children.

Cigarette companies had marketed their product in such a way that before certain legislation, almost anyone, including children, would see their advertisements for their tobacco products. Joe Camel became an icon for the public’s worry about children’s perception of tobacco products. This anthropomorphized camel would become one of the last widely seen cigarette advertisements before intervention by the FDA and legislators would make it much

harder for cigarettes to market their products. These advertisements created characters recognized by 3-year-olds and they led to an increase in tobacco usage among adolescents.

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