

Tobacco Marketing Causes Tobacco Use, Especially Among Kids

The tobacco industry loses huge numbers of customers every year because its products kill millions and most of their living users want to quit. In order to recruit “replacement smokers” and keep current tobacco users hooked, they spend tens of billions of dollars globally each year on sophisticated and aggressive marketing campaigns to create the impression that tobacco use is desirable, attractive, and widespread.¹ Their marketing associates smoking and other tobacco use with desirable qualities such as popularity, glamour, and sex appeal.¹ The goals of consumer-oriented tobacco marketing strategies are:

- To recruit new tobacco users to replace those who have quit or died
- To maintain or increase use among current users
- To reduce tobacco users’ desire and willingness to quit
- To encourage former users to start using tobacco again

They also offer huge incentives to retailers to display and advertise their products prominently and discount their prices — all to achieve these same goals.

The industry would not spend these huge amounts on marketing if it did not work. Research also proves conclusively that it does—resulting in millions of early deaths and countless healthcare costs every year.

Tobacco Marketing Attracts New Tobacco Users

Tobacco companies must attract a new generation of tobacco users to replace those who have quit or died. To accomplish this, tobacco companies spend billions on massive marketing campaigns each year to target youth, women, and vulnerable populations in many low- and middle-income countries by exploiting regulatory loopholes. They know that hooking young people today creates lifetime users tomorrow.¹ Tobacco marketing, which includes advertising, promotion and sponsorship, has been shown to be particularly effective at getting youth to start smoking.²

- The 2012 U.S. Surgeon General’s Report concluded that there is a causal relationship between the tobacco industry’s advertising and promotional tactics and the initiation and progression of tobacco use among youth.³
- A 2011 Cochrane review of 19 longitudinal studies involving more than 29,000 youth aged 8 to 18 concluded that tobacco advertising and promotion increases the likelihood that adolescents will start to smoke.⁴
- A 2016 meta-analysis of studies from the United States, Europe, Japan, and New Zealand found that adolescents (ages 11–18) who are more frequently exposed to tobacco advertising and promotion at point-of-sale (POS) have 1.6 times higher odds of having tried smoking and 1.3 times higher odds of being susceptible to smoking than those not frequently exposed.^{5,6}

“The cigarette industry has been artfully maintaining that cigarette advertising has nothing to do with total sales. This is complete and utter nonsense. The industry knows it is nonsense. I am always amused by the suggestion that advertising, a function that has been shown to increase consumption of virtually every other product, somehow miraculously fails to work for tobacco products.”

—Emerson Foote, former CEO of McCann-Erickson, a global advertising agency that has handled millions of dollars in tobacco industry accounts.⁷



Sports sponsorship, Indonesia

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While the tobacco companies have long denied that they targeted youth and claimed that their marketing is targeted only to smokers to affect brand share, their own documents and opinions of experts reveal otherwise. Indeed, a U.S. judge concluded in a major trial “From the 1950s to the present, different defendants, at different times and using different methods, have intentionally marketed to young people under the age of 21 in order to recruit ‘replacement smokers’ to ensure the economic future of the tobacco industry.” —U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kessler Final Opinion, *United States v. Philip Morris* 1999 (Aug 2006)

Tobacco Marketing Maintains or Increases Use among Current Tobacco Users

Tobacco advertising and tobacco imagery also act as cues for current smokers.

- Studies show smokers have increased cravings when presented with smoking-related cues, such as someone smoking or a cigarette pack, or other items associated with smoking. Tobacco advertising contains many of these types of images.^{8,9}
- When the facts on tobacco and cancer and other diseases finally became public, tobacco companies defrauded smokers regarding the benefits of light or low tar cigarettes by marketing the cigarettes as less harmful than regular cigarettes even though they knew this was not true.¹⁰ The switch rather than quit campaigns worked to dissuade millions of smokers from quitting, causing countless deaths and illness among those who continued to smoke because of these campaigns. There is no data to support that switching to low tar/light cigarettes increases the likelihood of quitting, in fact research shows that switching weakens the motivation to quit and only 16.7% of those who switched from regular cigarettes had tried to quit compared to 15.1% among those who exclusively smoked regularly cigarettes.¹¹

Also as found by the U.S. judge noted above:

It is clear, based on their internal research documents, reports, memoranda, and letters, that defendants have known for decades that there is no clear health benefit from smoking low tar/low nicotine cigarettes as opposed to conventional full-flavor cigarettes.

Despite this knowledge, Defendants extensively—and successfully—marketed and promoted their low tar/light cigarettes as less harmful alternatives to full-flavor cigarettes.¹²



Promotion, Argentina



Promotion, Malaysia



Music promotion, Indonesia

Tobacco Marketing Reduces Quit Attempts

Tobacco companies deter quit attempts by developing and marketing products that appear to be less harmful or more socially acceptable.¹³ Increased exposure to tobacco retail marketing induced higher levels of cravings and smoking more cigarettes.¹⁴

- Research among adults indicates that pack displays at the POS stimulate impulse purchases among smokers and those who are trying to quit. A 2010 Australian study found that individuals who describe themselves as trying to quit or having recently quit avoid certain stores where POS displays are particularly prominent, indicating that POS displays undermine the success of smoking cessation attempts.¹⁵
- Greater exposure to tobacco advertising and promotion and increased retail availability of tobacco products contributes to an environment that is challenging for successful cessation.¹⁶

Tobacco Marketing Encourages Former Tobacco Users to Relapse

The majority of smokers who attempt to quit relapse within the first eight days after quitting.¹⁷ Tobacco-related cues, such as tobacco imagery and pictures, induces tobacco cravings and may promote tobacco-seeking behaviors among those attempting to quit.⁹

- Tobacco-related cues may be associated with tobacco-seeking and consumption and the effects of these cues are highly context dependent. Cigarette smokers are repeatedly exposed to smoking-related cues in their environment, and cravings experienced as part of these tobacco-related cues may impact a smoker's risk of relapse.^{9,18}
- Research conducted by the tobacco industry discovered that the majority of “quitters” were young people. As potential “life-long customers,” young adults have been targeted by tobacco companies attempting to encourage former smokers to relapse.¹⁹

Comprehensive Bans on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship Reduce Tobacco Use

A comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) is one of the most effective policy measures to reduce tobacco use.¹ The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the world's first global public health treaty. It establishes a policy framework aimed to reduce the devastating health and economic impacts of tobacco and provides guidelines for implementation of a comprehensive ban of all TAPS.^{20,21} Parties to the WHO FCTC are required to implement and enforce a comprehensive ban on TAPS within five years of ratifying the FCTC.²⁰



Cigarette girls, Indonesia



Cigarette vending machine, Japan



Cigarette disco video, Argentina

Key Takeaways

- The tobacco industry engages in a comprehensive marketing strategy to create the impression that tobacco use is widespread, socially acceptable, and glamorous.
- Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship encourage people, especially youth, to start using tobacco, encourage tobacco users to consume more, decrease motivation to quit, and encourage quitters to relapse.
- A comprehensive ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship reduces tobacco use; partial bans have limited effects on tobacco consumption.
- Parties to the WHO FCTC are required to implement comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorships within five years of ratifying the WHO FCTC as a part of an effective set of tobacco control policies.

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