



BRIEFING 4: Tobacco Industry – Branding and marketing

- The tobacco industry argues marketing does not increase overall demand for tobacco and has no impact on young people's take-up of smoking. Rather, they argue they are competing for market share.¹
- There is strong empirical evidence, along with the tobacco industry's own internal documents that tobacco industry advertising, marketing and promotions recruit new users.²
- Research by the Irish Heart Foundation and Irish Cancer Society shows teenagers have perceptions of tobacco products based on the **glamour** and design of the pack.
- The research also shows that standardised packaging is **rejected** by teenagers.

Tobacco industry branding and marketing

- The tobacco industry often argues that advertising and promotion is used to encourage current smokers to switch brands, rather than to attract new smokers. However, as most brands are owned by the four global tobacco companies most switching would not have a substantial impact on the profits of any one company. As highlighted in the US Surgeon General's 2012 report on tobacco and young people: *'The most plausible justification for advertising expenditures at the levels that have been observed would be to attract new customers to generate a long-term cash flow for the companies (Tye et al. 1987).'*³
- In 2012, the US Surgeon General concluded that: **'The evidence is sufficient to conclude that there is a causal relationship between advertising and promotional efforts of the tobacco companies and the initiation and progression of tobacco use among young people.'**⁴

1 Chapter 5 'The Tobacco Industry's Influences on the Use of Tobacco Among Youth', US Surgeon General (2012) *Preventing Tobacco Use among Youth and Young Adults*. Atlanta, GA: US Dept. Health and Human Services.

2 Ibid.

3 P. 517, US Surgeon General (2012) *Preventing Tobacco Use among Youth and Young Adults*. Atlanta, GA: US Dept. Health and Human Services.

4 P. 602, US Surgeon General (2012) *Preventing Tobacco Use among Youth and Young Adults*. Atlanta, GA: US Dept. Health and Human Services.

Tobacco industry documents

As a result of the Master Settlement Agreement between tobacco companies and US states in the 1990's millions of pages of previous internal tobacco industry documents were made public. Many documents discuss marketing activities.

Before the mid-70's tobacco industry documents tend to refer to 'teenage' market, however later industry documents tend to discuss 'starter smokers' and 'young adult smokers'.⁵ However, as pointed out by Cummings *et al.* (2002) '*merely changing the language used to refer to teenage smokers does not alter the underlying economic reality that requires companies to capture a share of the starter market, most of whom are known to be teenagers, in order to prosper*'.⁶

- *"In the absence of any other Marketing messages, our packaging -- comprised of the trademark, our design, color and information -- is the sole communicator of our brand essence. Put another way -- when you don't have anything else -- our packaging is our Marketing."* [Emphasis added.] **Philip Morris**, May 1994⁷
- Marlboro's imagery *"was in tune with younger adult smokers' enduring want to express their maturity and independence through smoking"*, 1984 **RJ Reynolds** document.⁸
- A 1978 memorandum from a **Lorillard** executive commented on the success of their Newport brand noting that *"the base of our business is the high school student"*.⁹
- *"It is important to know as much as possible about teenage smoking patterns and attitudes. Today's teenager is tomorrow's potential customer, and the overwhelming majority of smokers first begin to smoke while still in their teens."* 1981 **Philip Morris** research report, 'Young smokers: prevalence, trends, implications and related demographic trends'.¹⁰
- *"Throughout all our packaging qualitative research, we continue to validate that women are particularly involved with the aesthetics of packaging ...we sense that women are a primary target for our innovative packaging task, and that more fashionable feminine packaging can enhance the relevance of some of our brands"*. **Philip Morris**, in 1992¹¹

5 See Cummings, K.M. et al. (2002) 'Marketing to America's youth: evidence from corporate documents'. *Tobacco Control*, 11 (Suppl 1), i5-i17 and Centre for Tobacco Control Research (2012) *The packaging of tobacco products*. Funded by Cancer Research UK.

6 P. i13, Cummings, K.M. et al. (2002) 'Marketing to America's youth: evidence from corporate documents'. *Tobacco Control*, 11 (Suppl 1), i5-i17.

7 Cited on Tobaccotactics.org, Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, Mark Hulit, [Marketing Issues Corporate Affairs Conference](#), Philip Morris, Manila, 27 May 1994

8 Burrows D. Younger adult smoker: strategies and opportunities. February 29, 1984. R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. Access date: August 21, 2001. Bates No. 501928462-501929550. URL: <http://www.rjtdocs.com>. Cited in Cummings, K.M. et al. (2002) 'Marketing to America's youth: evidence from corporate documents'. *Tobacco Control*, 11 (Suppl 1), i5-i17.

9 Achey TL. Subject: Product Information. August 30, 1978. Lorillard Tobacco Company, Inc. Access date: August 21, 2001. Bates No. 03537131-03537132. URL: <http://www.lorillarddocs.com/>. Cited in Cummings, K.M. et al. (2002) 'Marketing to America's youth: evidence from corporate documents'. *Tobacco Control*, 11 (Suppl 1), i5-i17.

10 Johnston M., Daniel HG, Levy CJ. 8102 Young smokers - prevalence, trends, implications and related demographic trends. March 31, 1981. Philip Morris Companies, Inc. Access date: August 21, 2001. Bates No. 1000390803-1000390855. URL: <http://www.pmdocs.com>. Cited in Cummings, K.M. et al. (2002) 'Marketing to America's youth: evidence from corporate documents'. *Tobacco Control*, 11 (Suppl 1), i5-i17.

11 Cited on Tobaccotactics.org, from Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, Philip Morris, [Marketing Perceptions](#), 1992

- “Slide [limited edition Benson & Hedges Silver pack] is all about the packaging — instead of the conventional flip-top box, the new Silver Slide pack slides open horizontally. B&H Silver appeals to young adult smokers and research shows they will buy into innovations such as unique packs. The limited-edition nature of the pack will create a talking point and we’ve had a lot of interest from the trade. Marketing restrictions make the pack the ‘hero’, so I expect more innovation around the pack’ [Emphasis added.], **Gallaher** trade communications manager Jeremy Blackburn, 2006¹²

Recent developments in tobacco products and packaging in the Irish market

The tobacco industry continues to innovate with new products and packaging being introduced into the Irish market.

New variants

- Marlboro Gold Touch advertised as ‘a sleeker cigarette designed for the senses’ and ‘comes in a modern, compact box that fits easily into a pocket or handbag’ (Retail News, April 2012).
- John Player’s JPS Black (Original) and JPS Red’s packaging is described as ‘modern with a matt finish, conveying a premium quality offering but at a value price point’. ‘With strong marketing and sales support, John Player are confident this will lead to instant consumer demand for the new JPS range’ (Retail News, November 2013).
- Marlboro Ice Blast ‘A new breakthrough in sales is out there’ (Retail News, July / August 2013).

“The tobacco industry was traditionally a relatively stable industry, but now, innovation has sped up considerably and I see a lot more innovations being introduced in the coming months and years,”

Steven Donaldson, General Manager of **PJ Carroll**, Retail News, July / August 2012.

Limited edition pack

- In April 2012, Benson & Hedges introduced a new range of Limited Edition packs, with five unique designs which ‘will take consumers on a ‘Golden’ journey of discovery’ (Retail News, April 2012).

Slide opening pack

- Benson & Hedges introduced the Silver Slide brand. Described in *Checkout Magazine* (November 2011, p. 92) as offering ‘a new smoking experience for existing adult smokers with its unique slide pack retailing at €8.00’. The Silver Slide packs, which features the image of a speaker, is described as having ‘unique slide pack, while the new Music Edition Packs capture an array of different music genres’ (Retail News, December 2011).

Changes to box shape

- Camel Curve is advertised as ‘a breakthrough in innovative packaging – the world’s first Curve pack’ and ‘From their American blend to their creative pack designs, Camel always challenge convention. Just like their adult consumers, Camel are not afraid to express themselves in new ways’ (Retail News, September 2012).

¹² ‘Still away puffing’. Convenience Store [magazine], 2 June 2006, cited in Moodie, C. and Hastings, G. (2011) ‘Making the Pack the Hero, Tobacco Industry Response to Marketing Restrictions in the UK: Findings from a Long-Term Audit’. *International Journal of Mental Health Addiction*. 9, 24-38.

Click capsules to create flavoured cigarettes

- JTI's Silk Cut Choice described as *'the very first menthol crush proposition'* on the Irish market (Retail News, April 2012).
- PJ Carroll's Vogue Perle Capsule contains a Spearmint flavoured capsule, so when clicked it *'delivers a refreshing burst in comparison to other menthol-flavoured capsule cigarettes'* (Retail News, July / August 2012).

Slimmer packs with fashion-influenced designs

- The Vogue Perle is described as coming from the *'House of Vogue'* *'with elegant features designed in Paris and is slightly smaller than normal cigarette packs'* (Retail News, December 2011).
- Silk Cut Studio's *'new compact format'* is described as *'the obvious choice for the modern urban adult smoker'* (Retail News, November 2012).

Tactile box

- John Player Gold: *'The pack is unmistakably a 'smoother' brand with its white tones, clean lines and sophisticated look. It also provides a tactile element with the texture adding another element so important to a brand of today, while building upon the strong heritage and success of the John Player brand'* (Retail News, December 2011).

Innovations in roll-your-own (RYO)

- Camel Blue RYO *'from JTI Ireland has joined the rolling revolution'*. *'Camel, with its indie style and innovative nature'* comes in a *'crush proof box'* (Retail News, November 2013).

Irish teenagers' reactions to tobacco packaging¹³

In 2013, the Irish Heart Foundation and the Irish Cancer Society commissioned research on the impact of tobacco branding and standardised packaging on young people. Focus groups were held with 15 and 16 year olds.

When shown current tobacco packs for the Irish market, the teenagers said that appealing cigarette packaging encourages them to choose one brand over another, while branding that they class as 'unattractive' is instantly rejected.



- *'I really like the purple Silk Cuts, they are really pretty. I like the size of the box and the design on the front'* (Female)
- *'I'd be much more tempted to buy a box of John Player because they look so good. The box just looks lethal, especially the blue one'* (Male)
- *'It's all the skinny ones, any girls would like them, especially the name Vogue'* (Female)
- *'It's not even just the cigarettes it's the packaging. It's all the swirls on the pack, the colours, they look fashionable, you kind of want them sitting on the table to be able to say 'yeah they're mine'* (Female)
- *'The skinny shape of the cigarettes is more womanly, they kind of remind you of Audrey Hepburn'* (Female)
- *'The Marlboro box is just slick looking. It's the colour and the box looks sharp'* (Male)

¹³ Ignite Research for the Irish Heart Foundation and Irish Cancer Society (2013) 'The Impact of tobacco branding and standardised packaging on young people'.

Tobacco industry analysts' reaction to standardised packaging

With tobacco advertising bans in place in many countries of the world, the tobacco pack has become the key mode to advertise tobacco products.

Given the importance of tobacco packaging, it is no wonder that tobacco industry analysts and observers have highlighted how significant standardised packaging will be for the tobacco industry.¹⁴

- *"Plain Packaging Spells Disaster"* **Tobacco Journal International**, Feb/March 2011¹⁵
- Plain packaging is the *"biggest regulatory threat to the industry, as packaging is the most important way tobacco companies have to communicate with the consumer and differentiate their products"*. **Investment bank, Citigroup**, April 2010¹⁶
- *"There is no doubt that the power of the brand, upon which much of the success of any major fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is based, would be severely damaged without the colours and the design recognised by millions of consumers."* **Tobacco Journal International**, Feb/March 2011¹⁷
- *"The phasing in of the display ban and government consultations on plain packaging are a huge blow to the tobacco industry given the critical role of great pack design and PoS [Point of Sale] in influencing consumer decision making."* **David Timothy, senior account director at brand consultancy, Anthem Worldwide**, March 2012¹⁸

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14 Excerpts from TobaccoTactics.org (project of the Tobacco Control Research Group, University of Bath), http://tobaccotactics.org/index.php/Good_Quotes_on_Plain_Packaging#cite_note-3

15 'Tobacco Journal International is the leading international trade publication for executives in the world of tobacco'. http://www.tobaccojournal.com/About_us.64.0.html, see William McEwen, "From Riches to Rags?" *Tobacco Journal International*, Feb/March 2011, p85,

16 Peter Smith & Pan Kwan Yuk, *"Australia plans cigarette packet branding ban"*, *The Financial Times*, 29 April 2010, accessed March 2012

17 Don Hedley, "Ten points to watch for 2011", *Tobacco Journal International*, Feb/March 2011

18 David Timothy, *The rituals of smoking*, Letter to *the Grocer*, 10 March 2012