

# Cigarette advertisements: how they hook kids essay

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## **Cigarette Advertisements: How They Hook Kids**

Tobacco products are dangerous. Unfortunately, cigarette makers still target children through advertisement in order to keep their businesses going by appealing to future smokers. There are several ways cigarette companies use to appeal to children through advertisement, including advertising that depicts smoking as “cool,” sponsorship, and associating smoking with being grown up.

Depicting smoking as being a “cool” thing to do is one method that cigarette companies use to get kids to try and become hooked on cigarettes. The most famous advertising campaign to do this was Camel cigarette’s use of the Joe Camel cartoon character in their advertisements. Although cartoon characters were banned after a settlement agreement with tobacco companies in 1998, the effect of advertising in this manner is clear (“Tobacco Advertising” n. d., para. 9). In 1998, the Children Now Organization’s study “found that twice as many children than adults associated Joe Camel with Camel cigarettes and that these ads were attractive” (Hull 2004, p. 4). Despite the cartoon ban, creating ads that are cute, colorful, and otherwise visually stimulating is not. These ads still attract children’s eyes, leading them to associate the product and the brand with something that is “cool,” convincing them to try it and become hooked.

Sponsorship is another way that cigarette companies appeal to kids through their advertisements. Sponsorship is when a company financially supports an event, team, celebrity, or other thing in exchange for being allowed to place their brand name and advertising material at the event, on the team’s car or clothing, or to have the celebrity’s photo in their advertisements. Although

sponsorship has been banned for most things in the United States, it is still a problem in many other countries; for example, in Taiwan, the RJR Salem company sponsored a music concert by Taiwanese teen idol Hsow-Yu Chang in which “ the only accepted admission. . . was five empty packs of Salem’s cigarettes” (Hull 2004, p. 4). Even though sponsorship of events in the United States has been banned, cigarette advertisers can get around this by sponsoring events that are televised around the world, like they did with a Madonna concert in Hong Kong (Hull 2004, p. 4). Sponsorship is a tactic that works to hook kids on cigarettes because, as the Smoke-Free Canada Organization said, it “ creates an association between an exciting, fun event with the sponsoring company” (Hull 2004, p. 4).

Associating smoking with being grown up is another technique cigarette companies use in their advertisements to hook kids. The cigarette companies try to connect the idea of smoking “ to independence and resisting authority, . . . taking risks, and being cool, things that children crave as they grow up” (Hull 2004, p. 4). While cigarette companies use this method in their advertising to convince kids that smoking is the grown up thing to do, it is also supported by many television shows and movies in which the rebel teens or adults who are also very “ cool” are shown smoking. Because of these impressions of what it means to be grown up and kids’ desire to imitate the actions that signify being adult, it is an easy way for cigarette companies to hook kids on their products.

In spite of the bans and restrictions placed on cigarette company advertisements today, there are still many ways that they can appeal to kids through advertisement to get them hooked on tobacco products. The “ cool”

factor, sponsorship, and sending the message that smoking is a grown up thing to do are still prominent techniques these companies use to get kids to try smoking. Educating kids about how advertisement manipulates consumers, education about the dangers of smoking, and anti-smoking advertising campaigns are the only way to counter the cigarette companies' own advertising campaigns to convince kids that smoking is the cool thing to do.

## References

Hull, Joanna (2004). Playing with Children's Minds: The Psychological Effects of Tobacco Advertisements on Children. *The York Scholar* 1, 1-9.

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