

News analysis

SLOVENIA: NEW BRAND CLAIMS TO BE "NO BRAND"

Earlier this year, advertisements appeared at popular tobacco stands in the capital, Ljubljana, as a new cigarette brand, called No Brand, went on sale. The ads said, "My Brand" and "Be true to yourself, there are already too many others" and apart from being seen at retail outlets, they also appeared in a widely distributed free newspaper, *Dobro Jutro*. The ads were commissioned and the cigarettes produced by a company called Fumus, owned by two Slovenians with existing connections to the tobacco industry. It was immediately apparent that the ads were associated with tobacco products, as they parodied the design of pack health warnings, using black lettering within a black border on a white background.

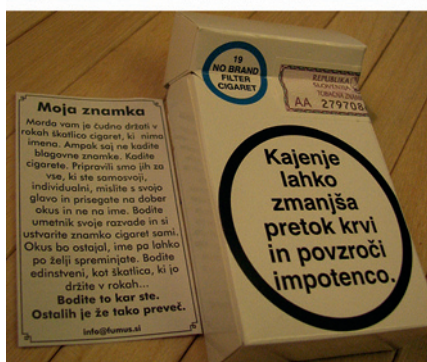
On the website of Fumus (<http://www.fumus.si>), an initial question, "Fumus—Who are we?" leads to two declarations: "I am 18 or over 2" and "I can think for myself". Appropriate responses to each question open the main website, containing statements such as, "We are professionals in the field of tobacco products. We are bold, we despise labelling and branding. Unlike the multinationals we do not impose brands on people by aggressive marketing, as we do not aim to patronise consumers by telling them how they should act and what they should think. We stand by the supreme quality of our products."

Continuing in a way already recognisable as aimed at young people, the text develops the myth of individualism being acquired via a cigarette brand, with statements about there still being "...room for uniqueness. We believe that the people have had enough of others telling them what to be. We believe that each individual has enough creativity to invent his or her own brand." It even claims, "Maybe a new brand every single new day. We believe that honesty and integrity are the most impor-



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Slovenia: a No Brand advertisement on the front of a kiosk in Ljubljana (top) and a pack insert and pack of No Brand cigarettes (below). The pack has the standard Slovenian health warning on the back, with text set within a circle, the same style used in the kiosk advertisement.

tant values, in business as anywhere else. We believe we have created a product that does not need a logo to prove its identity."

The packaging of No Brand—which if course is not no brand, but simply a new brand, is standard and blank, apart from the insert, and features Slovenia's mandatory health warnings, albeit in black circles, not rectangles. The pack insert states, "My Brand—Maybe it is a strange feeling to hold a pack of cigarettes that do not have a name. But you are not smoking a brand anyway. You are smoking cigarettes. We prepared them for all people who are independent, individual, think for themselves and prefer a good taste to a brand name. Be an artist of your (bad) habit and create your own brand."

The pack inserts continue with the assurance that "the taste will stay and the name can be changed as you wish. Be unique as the package you hold in your hands... Be

true to yourself. There are already too many others." German and Italian translations of its text appear on the reverse.

The advertising, packaging and wording used in the Fumus website repeatedly suggest that the new brand is aimed at young people, who want to feel smart and individualistic, not following the masses, who fall for the big brands. No Brand is therefore likely to appeal to young people anxious to establish their own identity, and present themselves as smart and individualistic to their peer group.

Like all cigarette promotions, an additional bonus is the general promotion of smoking. Slovenia has ratified the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), but advertising at the point of sale is still permitted. Unfortunately, it is not certain that this type of advertising will be banned in the near future. In the meantime, therefore, new products can be advertised and brands can be displayed. Legal counsel acting for tobacco control advocates came to the conclusion that the No Brand advertisement would contravene Article 10 of Slovenia's law on the restriction of the use of tobacco products if it could be established that it promoted the general use of tobacco products.

Clearly, and in direct contradiction to what is implied in the name, the campaign is trying to establish a new brand while advertising is still permitted, but smoking in general is also being promoted. Smokers will associate the imitation of health warnings with tobacco products due to the design, thus reducing their sensitivity to actual health warnings on the packaging. The effect is the same as in brand stretching, for example with branded T-shirts and in Formula 1 motor racing, where it is evident that no exact cigarette brand logo is needed to associate the image with the product.

It is known that as other marketing restrictions are imposed, the pack becomes increasingly significant as a marketing tool. No Brand also uses positive, graffiti-like associations, in the same way as certain thought-provoking posters popular among young people. This latest marketing ploy should alert the tobacco control community to a new strategy by a tobacco company and it must be countered quickly.

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INDONESIA: WORLD CUP DÉJÀ VU

Gigantic billboards appeared on the streets of the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, in May, showing the "Big Five" (wild animals) of



Indonesia: a roadside billboard in Jakarta advertising the Djarum tobacco company's sponsorship of soccer, during the World Cup season. Photo: Mary Assunta

South Africa playing football, connecting people all over Indonesia to the World Cup. The only problem was, the billboards were advertisements for a local tobacco company, Djarum.

Like many other countries, soccer is Indonesia's No. 1 sport and Gudang Garam, the second largest tobacco company in Indonesia, was sponsoring the telecast of the FIFA World Cup this time round. For the record, FIFA has not accepted tobacco sponsorship since 1988. For the 2002 World Cup, it even signed a memorandum of understanding with the WHO and declared that particular tournament a Tobacco Free World Cup, kicking it off on World No Tobacco Day (31 May). However, when it comes to tobacco sponsorship of telecast of the games at the national level, FIFA tends to take a hands-off stance.

In 2002, despite the World Cup being Tobacco Free, its telecast to Malaysia was sponsored by Dunhill, one of the best known brands of British American Tobacco. Although health advocates mounted an international protest against the tobacco sponsorship and made appeals to FIFA on the grounds that telecast of

a tobacco free World Cup could not be sponsored by a tobacco company, FIFA washed its hands of the issue.

Now, eight years down the track, it is *déjà vu* in Indonesia. FIFA made no effort to tighten conditions on the way its name is being associated with tobacco companies. And as before, when Indonesian and international advocates registered a protest with FIFA, urging it to look into the matter, FIFA made no response.

Indonesia remains among the most serious cases of the small minority countries refusing to ban tobacco advertising. Moreover, it is probably the only country in the world this year where its young and old will have watched the world's biggest soccer event sponsored by a tobacco company. Sadly, most don't even know that such a sponsorship is prohibited in most other countries, including Indonesia's neighbours.

In May, many people around the world were horrified to watch a video clip of two year-old toddler puffing on a cigarette and going through 40 sticks a day. But the horror of the very young smoking in Indonesia is yet to touch the hearts of legislators.

Last year, the National Commission for Child Protection, an Indonesian non-governmental organisation, filed a judicial review in the Constitutional Court to ban tobacco promotion on television. Unfortunately, the government defended its position to allow tobacco companies the right to advertise on television and this position was upheld by the court.

More than 90 per cent of Indonesian children are exposed to television advertisements for tobacco. Although cigarette advertisements are not allowed to be screened before 9.30 pm, tobacco sponsored events such as sports are broadcast in the early evening. According to the Department of Health FDA figures, over 60

per cent of tobacco advertisements violate the restrictions. No action is taken for these violations.

Indonesia is the only country in Asia that has not ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The sooner Indonesia realises the need to protect its people's health, the earlier it can halt the tobacco epidemic which claims more than 200 000 lives every year. But the horror of the very young smoking in Indonesia is yet to touch the hearts of legislators and translate into bans on tobacco advertising and promotions.

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UK: PRICE-BASED PROMOTIONS TARGET POOR

Imperial Tobacco, the United Kingdom (UK) market leader, previously established a reputation for ensuring that vast quantities of its brands were available cheaply on the UK market by arranging their export from the UK to places such as Andorra, Moldova and Kaliningrad whence they were then illegally re-imported.

But it seems Imperial has now turned to other means of ensuring its brands are available cheaply on the market. In January 2010, a promotion was spotted in a newsagent's shop in Stevenage, the most deprived borough in Hertfordshire, a county in the South East of England. John Player Special Silver, Menthol and King-size, along with Windsor Blue, Imperial's major ultra-low price brands, were being offered at well below market value. At £4 (US\$6) for one packet and £6 (US\$9) for two, smokers making a dual purchase of John Player Special Silver could make a saving of £1.52 (US\$2.28)



Indonesia: a stand in a shopping mall in Jakarta advertising tobacco company Gudang Garam International's sponsorship of the telecast of World Cup soccer.



South Korea: a special World Cup cigarette brand made by a local company, displayed at a retail outlet in the capital, Seoul.



UK: a display of cut-price cigarettes at a retail outlet in a low income town.

per pack or 34 per cent compared with usual retail price—the typical price in a supermarket was £4.52 (US\$6.80).

Further enquiries revealed that Imperial had launched this promotional campaign in January, specifically targeting other, similar areas of Great Britain: in addition to Stevenage, the same promotion was running in Chatham, Gillingham and Luton, all relatively deprived areas of South East England, as well as in Glasgow, Scotland's largest city and home to many of its lowest income families. The campaign is set to continue throughout 2010.

Little is known about industry pricing strategies in the UK, or in other markets, but price-based marketing is likely to become an increasingly important promotional tool as other marketing avenues are closed. Imperial's latest price list, dated 25 March 2010, shows that all Imperial's cheapest brands are now available in price-marked packs at a discount below the recommended retail price. The small print on the list encourages retailers to obtain these packs, noting their availability "while stocks last." With sales of these discount cigarettes growing, such observations underpin the need to prevent price-based promotions, as well as the industry's use of packaging for promotional purposes.

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GERMANY: WORLD CUP SPECIAL EDITION CIGARETTE PACKS

As the 2010 football World Cup approached, a special edition of West cigarettes went on sale in Germany. It comprised a series of packs, each consisting of a photograph of



Germany: packs of West cigarettes purchased in late May, 2010. Clockwise from top left are packs with the flags of Spain, Italy, England, Brazil and South Africa painted on the cheek of a football supporter. The pack in the middle of the bottom row is the regular West design.

a supporter of a different national World Cup team. Painted on the left cheek of the supporter was the West silver and red stripe logo. Painted on the right cheek was the national flag of the team, such as Brazil, England, Germany, Italy, South Africa, and Spain. Each of the supporters had noticeably white teeth—not what would be typical for a regular smoker.

The special edition packs were themselves highly attractive advertisements for West cigarettes that powerfully illustrated the need for plain packaging. Moreover, the packs showed how the tobacco industry is able to print colour pictures on its packaging to promote its brands, while at the same time opposing government efforts to require picture-based health warnings.

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SWITZERLAND: PM'S U-TURN ON STREET SMOKING

Philip Morris (PM) has recently made an abrupt about-turn in its public position on

Swiss smoke-free regulations. In the past, when it seemed that the spread of smoke-free laws across freedom-loving Switzerland might be stopped, PM used to ridicule them, in effect urging the public to see it as an outrage that smokers would have to leave their workplaces and other public places to smoke in the street. Advertising campaigns in the 1990s included one that appeared in local newspapers in 1995 showing smokers outside an office building, with the rhetorical headline, "What is this policy which throws people out on the pavement?"

Now, when most French speaking cantons—the mini-states that make up the federation of Switzerland—have become smoke-free, a PM ad for its Marlboro Gold cigarettes, shows smokers outside, certainly, but this time they appear to be having more fun than ever and the ad proclaims, "Outside is in!" Far from being persecuted refugees, they are members of a fashionable "in-group." Not only does PM appear resigned to smoke-free places being here to stay, but its marketing people are clearly trying to position smokers as



Switzerland: a Philip Morris ad from 1995 campaigning against smoke-free workplaces.



Switzerland: an ad for Philip Morris's Marlboro Gold cigarettes, portraying smokers who have to smoke outside as an "in-group".

a fun group to belong to, a classic promotional ploy used by every tobacco company to attract and maintain the youngest sector of its customer base.

BANGLADESH: WOMEN FEATURE IN NEW CIGARETTE ADS

For the first time, women seem to be the target of cigarette advertisements in Bangladesh. In the past, women in most countries, especially low income countries, had a sort of cultural protection from diseases caused by tobacco. True, this came about from factors other than those dictated by health concerns, even if they did lead to women living longer than men. Cultural taboos and lack of control over domestic budgets no doubt had many disadvantages, but meant that women were slower to take up tobacco use and hence to succumb to tobacco-induced diseases. When taboos have faded and



Bangladesh: two of the latest cigarette advertisements that health advocates are convinced are trying to make smoking socially acceptable for women.

economic dependence on men has eased, and when women's disposable income has risen, they have tended to smoke like men; and later, to die like men. Such transitions have been accelerated by massive pressures from tobacco companies which know that once the barriers are down, the market can be more or less doubled.

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world. Low levels of household income, female spending power and cultural and religious strictures have all contributed to smoking remaining a problem largely restricted to men. Until fairly recently, many public health workers would have found it hard to believe that the situation was likely to alter, or that tobacco companies would dare to actively and openly encourage the change.

Just as in neighbouring India, early ads encouraging women to smoke showed a woman standing by her man—her husband, of course—while he smoked. Sometimes one of the woman's hands was so near the hand in which her husband held his cigarette that at a glance it looked as though she might be the one who was smoking. Similarly, in Bangladesh, the first crop of ads that health advocates are convinced are trying to encourage women to smoke contain similar ambiguities.

They do not show women actually smoking—yet; but they tend to include both a man and a woman in an atmosphere that suggests, if not intimacy, then a companionship that is at least partly lifted by attraction between the sexes. In most, a cigarette pack makes clear what is being associated with the image.

In one recent example, however, an ad for Marise, a cigarette made by a local tobacco company, no pack is actually shown. Instead, a tempting promotion is described by extensive copy printed beside the image. A handsome man explains to the beautiful woman seated before him at a desk that if she collects empty packets of Marise, they can be redeemed for special prizes. The exact prize depends on the number of packs collected, but all are kitchen gadgets that most Bangladeshi women would love to own.

The ambiguity here, of course, is that the woman might not be collecting her own cigarette packs, but the empty ones discarded by her husband—or so the tobacco company would probably claim (and if kitchen gadgets are top of her wish list, perhaps she would not mind cleaning out his ashtrays while she is collecting his packs). Nevertheless, health professionals have little doubt that ads like this are deliberately trying to portray smoking as an integral part of normal family life, and hence start recruiting women to smoking. Close parallels can be seen with ads used in the early days of recruiting women to smoking in the USA and other industrialised countries.

Fears about such a softening-up of women before a big recruitment drive are compounded by romantic scenes shown in other brand promotions. In one for Castle Full Flavour cigarettes, made by a local company disinvested by the government in the 1970s, a young couple of affluent appearance and dressed in casual western clothes sit atop a car looking ahead to a day of travel, as the sun rises behind them from behind soft hills at the far side of a lake. The two words, "Adventure begins", set above a pack of Castle, comprise the only copy in the ad. They may be all too predictive.

For women who are encouraged to join their men as smokers, the adventure may ultimately lead them to places they will wish they had never seen. And only a few will be able to afford the high technology treatments that might offer some hope of ameliorating life-threatening conditions caused by their completely avoidable addiction.

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