

AD WATCH

Camel vs cowboy

The Marlboro cowboy is one of the most successful advertising images ever designed. Philip Morris took a poor-selling brand, smoked predominantly by women, and within a few years turned it into the number one brand smoked by men and women in the US. Marlboro was so successful that it lays claim to being the number one consumer product sold in the world.

In the late 1980s, RJR Nabisco took its Camel brand, a poorly selling brand smoked mainly by older men, and gave it a new campaign. Camel used to be the number one cigarette in the US, but its market share had dropped considerably. The new campaign created a hip, rad* and bad cartoon camel which caused a resurgence in Camel sales among American youth. Marlboro, Camel, and Newport are the three brands with the highest advertising budgets in the US and, perhaps not coincidentally, are the three brands most frequently smoked by children.¹

In the last few months a new Camel advertising campaign has emerged. I have seen two variations of this new ad. Both have the cartoon Joe Camel breaking through what appears to be a Marlboro advertisement. One version has a cowboy on horseback with a sunset in the background (figure 1). The other has the cowboy seated with his horse behind him, still backlit with the setting sun (figure 2). Joe has a pack of Camel cigarettes in his hand and a lighted cigarette in his mouth. The text reads, "Great Taste, Never Boring." This looks like a direct assault on the "boring" cowboy by the rad, exciting Camel Joe. Perhaps the sunset implies the cowboy is near the end of his day and Joe is ready to burst through and take over number one from Marlboro.

You will notice that Camel Joe's cigarette actually is producing sidestream smoke. On a review of Camel ads, Joe's cigarette sometimes produces smoke, and sometimes, by miracle, does not, even though it is drawn with a lighted tip. In almost every other brand's ads that have a lighted cigarette, either the smoke is not drawn in the picture or the smoke is air-brushed out in a photograph. The advertising industry knows that even most smokers do not like secondhand smoke. Too bad we can't air brush out secondhand smoke from our restaurants and workplaces.

* rad = radical



Figure 1 Billboard in Lansing, Michigan, USA. The children in the picture were playing in front of the billboard before the photograph was taken.

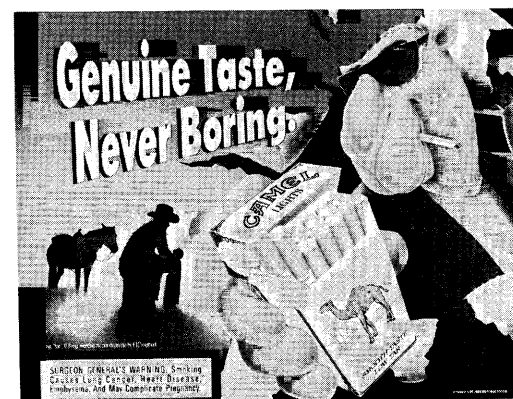


Figure 2 From the 22 September 1994 issue of Rolling Stone magazine.

While many of my colleagues put down Joe Camel as a cartoon obviously intended to entice children, they do not give RJ Reynolds enough credit for its accurate tobacco advertising. For almost 80 years, packs of Camel cigarettes, like this new one, have had a desert scene with a camel and the great pyramid. For 80 years, RJR has used the world's largest tomb to symbolise its cigarettes. An award should be given for their honesty. We can only hope that the tomb is for the Marlboro cowboy.

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¹ US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Changes in the cigarette brand preferences of adolescent smokers - United States, 1989-1993. *MMWR* 1994; 43: 577-81.

Ghoulish promotions

On the 31st of October each year, children in the US celebrate the holiday of Halloween. Dressed in costumes, they go door-to-door in their neighbourhoods requesting a "trick or treat" - which is usually given in the form of candy (sweets), fruit, or money. The character of Halloween is playfully macabre, with images of ghosts, witches, vampires, monsters, haunted houses, and jack-o'-lanterns (hollowed-out pumpkins carved to resemble faces and lit by candles placed inside). The demonic symbolism of Halloween is thought to have originated among the ancient Druids and Celts, who believed that evil spirits visited them on "Allhallows Eve". After the Romans conquered Britain, they added to Halloween features of the Roman harvest festival, some of which survive today as games involving fruit (eg, ducking for apples in a tub of water).

Although adults do partake in Halloween frivolities - decorating their homes, and dressing up for costume parties - the holiday is clearly aimed at, and enjoyed most by, children and adolescents. Thus it should come as no surprise that cigarette makers would build Halloween imagery into their advertising campaigns. And so, Halloween joins Christmas and Thanksgiving^{1,2} on the list of holidays that have been misappropriated to the cause of selling cigarettes.

The first cigarette promotion I remember seeing with a Halloween connection was in 1992. A local sweet shop, Mr Bulky's, was selling candy cigarettes in special Halloween sizes (figure 1). Normally these candy packs contain eight or 10 cigarettes. During Halloween season, small packs of two cigarettes are sold, at a much lower price that makes them affordable for purchase in the quantities needed for distribution to all the neighbourhood children who visit on Halloween night.

The candy cigarettes sold at Mr Bulky's are made in Slovenia "exclusively" for World Candies, Inc (Brooklyn, New York). One

variety is made of a hard, crunchy, sugary material. Red dye #3 is used to simulate the burning end of the cigarette. Another variety is made of chewing gum; these are wrapped in paper coloured to resemble tobacco cigarettes (white along most of its length but brown at the "filter" end). Some of the packs have a "tax stamp" showing a child with a cigarette in his or her hand (figure 2).

Candy cigarettes are *not* made by cigarette manufacturers. However, the cigarette industry is, in effect, a co-conspirator in marketing them because they have made little effort through the years to curtail the copyright infringement practiced by confectionery companies. The candy products typically use brand names, logos, and packaging that are identical or nearly identical to those of real cigarettes.³⁻⁶ Figure 1 shows the striking similarity between Mr Bulky's Halloween cigarettes and tobacco cigarette brands made by three different companies: American Brands (Lucky Strike, Pall Mall); Brown and Williamson (Kool, Viceroy); and the Liggett Group (L&M). The resemblance of candy cigarettes to tobacco cigarettes is probably one reason why candy smokes may encourage smoking initiation among youth.⁷

In the 1993 Halloween season, Lorillard Tobacco Company participated in a more direct way in the holiday spirit. It advertised Newport cigarettes on billboards, showing two young models with jack-o'-lanterns on their heads (figure 3). For this year's Halloween, the same pumpkin heads were brought back in magazine advertisements, including one which appeared in the youth-oriented *Rolling Stone* (figure 4). Also this year, the Halloween-sized candy cigarettes reappeared at Mr Bulky's, this time as part of a "kiddie mix" - "A mixture of kids' favorites. Great for trick or treat" (figure 5).

The most surprising aspect of all this is that we have not seen more of it. Perhaps this is



Figure 2 The "tax stamp" on some of the candy cigarettes shown in figure 1.



Figure 1 Candy cigarettes (with their tobacco counterparts on the left) sold during Halloween season in 1992 at Mr Bulky's candy store in Okemos, Michigan, USA.



Figure 3 A billboard advertisement for Newport cigarettes during the 1993 Halloween season in Lansing, Michigan, USA.



Figure 4 More Halloween fun in this two-page Newport ad from the 20 October 1994 issue of Rolling Stone magazine.



Figure 5 Candy cigarettes were included in a Halloween "kiddie mix" at Mr Bulky's in 1994.

because beer manufacturers, which have shown little restraint in associating beer drinking with Halloween, have taken a lot of heat for it.

One week before this year's Halloween, a broad-based coalition of children's, health, religious, and alcohol prevention advocates launched a "Hands Off Halloween" campaign, designed to pressure beer manufacturers to stop using Halloween images that appeal to children.⁸ Andrew McGuire, executive director of the Trauma Foundation in San Fran-

cisco, California, noted that beer companies have positioned Halloween as a drinking holiday in store displays and in billboard, print, and broadcast advertising. Their eye-catching promotions have included jack-o'-lanterns, black cats, spider webs, face masks, and familiar costumed characters. Brightly coloured helium balloons and temporary tattoos have also been used. The president of the Beer Institute rejected the appeal for restraint, claiming that "Brewer advertising and promotions during October are meant for only one audience – adults of drinking age".⁸

In 1990 health advocates aimed a similar attack at the beer industry. "This year the alcohol industry is serving up new treats and tricks," noted then Surgeon General Antonia Novello at a press conference.⁹ A spokesperson for the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence said, "The alcoholic beverage industry has made every effort to turn Halloween into a drinking holiday through promotions that substitute beer chugging for apple bobbing."⁹

And what was the industry's response back then? A spokesperson for the Miller Brewing Company, a division of Philip Morris, claimed that "Halloween is an adult holiday".⁹ Halloween parties are probably an annual event at Philip Morris. Devil's costumes must be quite popular there, complete with forked tongue.

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- 1 Bassett T. Who are the turkeys? *Tobacco Control* 1993; 2: 161.
- 2 Tye JB. Willy the Penguin and Joe Camel duke it out for the youth market. *Tobacco Control* 1992; 1: 132-3.
- 3 Blum A. Candy cigarettes. *N Engl J Med* 1980; 302: 972.
- 4 Blum A. Sweet talking the kids. *Med J Aust* 1983; 1: 235-6.
- 5 Anonymous. School bans "cigarettes" after parents' complaints. *Med J Aust* 1983; 1: 248.
- 6 Fischer PM, Richards JW. Which one isn't candy? *World Smoking and Health* 1990; 15(1): back cover.
- 7 Klein J, Forehand B, Oliveri J, et al. *Pediatrics* 1992; 89: 27-31.
- 8 Press release. *Beer industry is recklessly exploiting images that appeal to kids, leaders say in launching "Hands Off Halloween" campaign.* San Francisco, California: The Trauma Foundation, 24 October 1994.
- 9 Foltz K. Brewers are criticized for use of Halloween. *New York Times*, 30 October 1990: D21.