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What have we
Learned from people?...

SMOKING - CIGARETTES AND ADVERTISING

INTRODUCTION

"Cigarette smoking is dangerous for your health" is agreed by all. People really believe that a non-smoker has better chances of staying healthy. However, people do smoke and even enjoy it.

Smoking is, in a way, a very strange human activity, a very strange habit. This is one of very few things that people who do it are fully aware of its negative value, are not really happy with it, not really proud of it, do not see much good in it, perhaps even hate it -- but still do it.

According to smokers "smoking is a dirty habit", smoking is "a habit of only very stupid people". The smoking habit is basically a negative habit that in one way or another, mostly indirectly, serves some positive values. Smokers are not able, even when trying hard, to explain the actual act of smoking by any positive terms. The only positive things that are said about smoking have to do with the perceived "benefits" the smoker believes he or she is receiving from it.

THE ONE POSITIVE VALUE THAT IS DIRECTLY
ATTRIBUTED TO THE CIGARETTE ITSELF IS THE
TASTE. EVIDENTLY, SMOKERS DEVELOPED TASTE
FOR A CIGARETTE. SMOKERS LIKE A SPECIFIC
TASTE OF A SPECIFIC BRAND AND DISLIKE (OR
EVEN HATE) THE TASTE OF OTHER CIGARETTES.

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HOWEVER, THE LIKING OR DISLIKING OF
CIGARETTE TASTE IS SOMETHING WHICH CAN
BE DEVELOPED RATHER THAN BEING VIEWED AS
AN ABSOLUTE VALUE.

However, there is a problem with "taste". This cigarette element has been pre-empted by advertising for many brands, and at the present, it is almost impossible to know if the taste smokers talk about is something which they, themselves attribute to a cigarette or just a "play-back" of some advertising messages.

For the smoker, the cigarette itself is perhaps a friend that one might love in spite of the fact that the attributes and qualities of this friend are rather negative, and the benefits received, could be dangerous.

"I know my cigarette will kill me but I can not live without it".

"The cigarette is hot, smelly, staining and harsh. The cigarette causes bad breath, coughs, bad taste in mouth. The cigarette can, and probably will, cause lung problems, throat problems, heart problems, death — but I smoke because I must, because I really want to".

Thus, the smokers have to face the fact that they are illogical, irrational and stupid. People find it hard to go throughout life with such negative presentation and evaluation of self. The saviours are the rationalization and the repression that end up and result in a defense mechanism that, as many of the defense mechanisms we use, has its own "logic", its own rationale.

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operating to cover the gap between "don't" and "I do".

This defense mechanism is basically a repression of the idea that "it's bad". "I just don't want to think about it".

Thus, smokers don't like to be reminded of the fact that they are illogical and irrational. They don't want to be reminded by either direct or indirect manner.

An indirect reminder could be a tension-creating situation, an anxiety-producing atmosphere.

This repression-directed defense mechanism is the basic underlying reason why people explain their reasons for smoking as well as describe the situation when they smoke in terms of relaxation, release of tension, reward, etc.

The implication of this point is while an ad that depicts an exciting, invigorating situation could be interesting to the smoker-viewer, the very thin line separating positive excitement from negative-creating situation should never be crossed.

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Cigarette advertising is a unique and different category of advertising. Most advertising for other products presents real, or at least accepted, benefits, values, attributes, end-results, etc. of the product it "pushes", sells. Cigarette advertising can not do the same. There are not any real, absolute, positive qualities and attributes in a cigarette and no one, even the most devout smokers, could believe any glorification or lies about it.

More than this, the more positive values cigarette advertising is trying to communicate, the less it is believed and the more it is disliked. The more a cigarette ad is disbelieved, the more it "fights" the defense mechanism of the smoker -- the more the smoker feels challenged -- the more the smoker hates it.

Thus, the more effective cigarette advertising is the one that can reduce objections to the brand of cigarette it sells, rather than attempt to communicate a glorified "story" that no one can believe, that no one can identify with.

BELIEVABILITY IN, AND IDENTIFICATION WITH A
CIGARETTE AD CAN BE BETTER ACHIEVED BY THE
SITUATION IT PRESENTS RATHER THAN BY THE COPY
IT FEATURES. THERE IS VERY LITTLE ONE CAN SAY
ABOUT A CIGARETTE THAT COULD BE PERCEIVED AS
POSITIVE, HONEST AND BELIEVABLE. THE GOOD,

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atmosphere.

-- Be Interesting - Present pictures that are interesting by themselves, not necessarily as part of the advertising concept. People are being bombarded with so much advertising that while flipping through a magazine if their mind tells them that they are looking at an advertisement, unless there's something interesting, catchy, attractive, etc., in the picture itself, people will not stop to look at it. It should be clearly understood that magazine or any other print advertising is being viewed and judged by the people, by using television commercials as parameter of judgement. People are used to moving scenes, sounds, music, etc., and a print advertisement, while being stationary in nature, has to attempt to convey interest and attraction.

-- Be Honest - In spite of the fact that "honesty is the best policy", it is not always the case -- try to be honest in your presentation -- don't make promises that you yourself know could never be fulfilled. Start out from the basic assumption that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health -- try to go around it in an elegant manner but don't try to fight it -- it's a losing war.

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their peer group. If they are with friends who smoke, they smoke too. The brands they adopt as "their brands" are also, usually, the same ones that are being smoked by their friends. Almost every young smoker started his "smoking life" by "bumming" cigarettes from friends prior to starting to buy his/her own. It is rather clear that the taste and flavor of a cigarette has very little to do with the process of selection of the brand by the young smoker. People develop taste preference, or at least believe they do, only after a noticeable period of "organized" smoking.

There are basically two categories of cigarettes that appeal to the young starter more than others -- Menthol and Full Flavor cigarettes. The most popular menthol cigarette is Kool followed by Newport and the most popular full flavor cigarette is Marlboro, followed by Winston.

For the young smoker, the cigarette is not yet an integral part of life, of day-to-day life, in spite of the fact that they try to project the image of a regular, run-of-the-mill smoker. For them a cigarette, and the whole smoking process, is part of the illicit pleasure category. This illicit pleasure will lose its illicitness once they grow older and are fully accepted into the adult society. In the young smoker's mind a cigarette

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is the entrance ticket to the hall of the
adult society.

However, it should be noted that the smoking scare -- "Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health", coupled with the fact that today's society is much more permissive and allows many more manifestations of adulthood than in the past, reduced, somewhat, the importance attached to the cigarette as the initiation into the adult world.

If years ago it was a cigarette than beer,
than sex, than after shaving, etc., today
the order is almost reversed -- after
shaving -- sex -- beer -- wine -- "pot" --
a cigarette.

Thus, an attempt to reach young smokers, starters should be based, among others, on the following major parameters:

- Present the cigarette as one of a few initiations into the adult world.

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... your life create a situation taken from the day-to-day life of the young smoker but in an elegant manner have this situation touch on the basic symbols of the growing-up, maturity process.

- To the best of your ability, (considering some legal constraints), relate the cigarette to "pot", wine, beer, sex, etc.
- In a subtle, almost ambiguous manner point out the unique differences of your brand. Indirectly you must give the young smoker a "logical" reason for smoking your brand.

(Many of the young smokers interviewed indicated that Marlboro is too popular ... "everyone smokes Marlboro, that's why I smoke something else".)

- Don't communicate health or health-related points.

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