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### **Persuasion by association: A Content analysis of cigarette advertisements aimed at the youth market**

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# **Persuasion by Association: A Content Analysis of Cigarette Advertisements Aimed at the Youth Market**

**By**

**Pamela L. Carmichael**

Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Science Degree  
in Communication and Media Technologies

Rochester Institute of Technology

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May 10, 2004

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Persuasion by Association: A Content Analysis of  
Cigarette Advertisements Aimed at the Youth Market

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Pamela L. Carmichael

5/10/2004  
Date

To my family who make possible all that I do.  
With deepest appreciation for your love and support.

### **Abstract**

Past research suggests that manufacturers market cigarettes through advertisements associating cigarettes with qualities and behaviors valued by the target audience. Using content analysis, the present study compares the visual and verbal/textual product associations in cigarette advertisements in youth- (*People* and *Sports Illustrated*) and adult-oriented (*Time* and *Better Homes and Gardens*) magazines. Results show significant differences in product association categories, with ads in youth magazines significantly more likely than those in adult magazines to employ associations related to social gatherings/friendship, romance/eroticism, independence/self-reliance/rebellion, prize giveaways/merchandise, and pleasure/refreshment/flavor/quality. This study adds to the body of knowledge on the content of cigarette advertisements and contributes to the understanding of techniques used in targeting youth with advertisements for a product with proven negative health consequences.

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## **Introduction**

Americans have been smoking cigarettes for nearly 150 years, encouraged by tobacco companies that have proved themselves to be powerful persuaders. Since the earliest days of cigarette production, American cigarette manufacturers have encouraged smoking by depicting it as enjoyable, as a symbol of sophistication and independence, and at times, even as beneficial to health.

In 1998, however, amid growing concern over the negative health effects of smoking and attempts by cigarette makers to target American youth, the attorneys general of 46 states signed a Master Settlement Agreement with the four largest tobacco companies in the United States. Among the terms of the agreement is a provision that prohibits tobacco advertising that targets people younger than 18 years of age (National Association of Attorneys General, 1998). Since that settlement, at least two studies (King and Siegel, 2001; Turner-Bowker and Hamilton, 2000) found that tobacco advertising aimed at young people actually has increased based on advertising expenditures in magazines with high youth readership.

Documenting an increased presence of cigarette advertising in magazines read by young people suggests the potential for increased exposure of young people to cigarette advertisements; however, as Preston (1982) argues, potential or even actual exposure to an ad does not equate with advertising effectiveness or even with awareness of the ad or of the product being advertised. According to him, for an ad to be effective, a consumer must be aware of both the ad and the product being advertised, and the advertiser must establish associations between the product and things the consumer regards as positive.



Preston (1982) argues that “success in obtaining the intended sales response occurs fundamentally because of the value of what the advertiser associates with the product” (p. 5).

Therefore, it seems prudent to go beyond documenting an increased presence of cigarette advertising in magazines aimed at young people to learn more about the content of the ads and the persuasive techniques the advertisers employ in targeting a youth audience. The present study examines the content of cigarette advertisements in youth-oriented magazines and in those magazines with more mature readers to identify the product associations made in the ads and determine differences between them.

### **Research Questions**

- What kinds of visual and verbal/textual product associations do cigarette companies use in their advertisements in youth-oriented magazines and in magazines with a more mature readership?
- How does the frequency of product associations used in cigarette advertisements in youth-oriented magazines differ from the frequency of product associations used in cigarette advertisements in magazines aimed at a more mature audience?

### **Project Rationale**

As a marketing communications professional, I am keenly aware of criticisms aimed at my profession for what some people refer to as “socially irresponsible marketing.” While I do not believe marketing communications itself is inherently good or bad, it is apparent that the tools of the trade can be employed with equal effectiveness in promoting products, services, and ideas that can be beneficial for consumers as well as in

promoting those that can be harmful. This project provides an opportunity for me to investigate how other marketing communications professionals ply our trade to promote cigarettes, a product that has been proven to be harmful.

This study adds to the scholarship on advertising and persuasive communication, helping further scholarly understanding of the elements that comprise persuasive communications targeting youth audiences. While previous studies have investigated the content of cigarette advertisements, few, if any, studies on the content of cigarette advertising have been completed subsequent to the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement. Thus, this study adds to the body of knowledge on the content of cigarette advertisements and provides insight into the content of post-Master Settlement cigarette advertising. The findings from this study may also aid in the development of educational messages or programs designed to assist young people in engaging in critical analysis of advertisements for cigarettes.

This project has important societal implications because it contributes to the understanding of techniques used in targeting young people with advertisements for a product that has proven negative health consequences. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2003a), cigarette smoking is responsible for more than 440,000 deaths each year in the United States, or one in every five deaths. Research has shown that the decision to use tobacco is nearly always made in the teen years, and more than 3 million people in the United States under the age of 18 are cigarette smokers (CDC, 2003b). If current smoking patterns continue, 6.4 million people currently younger than 18 will die prematurely from tobacco-related disease, and the economic burden on

our society will include more than \$75 billion in medical expenditures and another \$80 billion in indirect costs resulting from lost productivity (CDC, 2003a).

### **Literature Review**

A number of researchers have studied the content of cigarette advertising, some focusing on differences in content related to the audience targeted by the advertising, others investigating changes in content over time, and still others exploring the content of advertisements in relation to specific time periods and/or events.

#### ***Content Differences Based on Audience***

Altman, Slater, Albright, and Maccoby (1987) studied the content of cigarette ads in a random sample of magazines with diverse readerships from 1960 to 1985. They examined three broad categories of content: the act of smoking, which included the presence of visible smoke, cigarettes being held or smoked, and cigarettes present in the ad photo (not superimposed); the presence of a low-tar and low-nicotine theme; and the vitality of smoking, which included an adventure/risk appeal, a recreation appeal, and an erotic/romantic appeal. They found the emphasis on the act of smoking in ads declined over the period of the study, while emphasis on “healthy” cigarettes (low tar and low nicotine) increased. They also found an increasing association between smoking and health and vitality, including an increase in images of adventure, risk and recreation as well as erotic/romantic images. Their findings show that from 1960 to 1985, ads in magazines with a youth readership (median reader ages of 24.2 – 28.7) were more likely than ads in other magazines (median reader ages of 32.4 – 43.9) to include images of

adventure, risk or recreation and less likely than ads in other magazines to include erotic images. Altman et al. (1987) note that their findings:

are not unexpected given that advertising an unhealthy product seems almost to require less attention to the inherent characteristics of the product and more to the contrived and ambiguous images (models, setting, mood) associated with it. In short, the tobacco industry has attempted to uncouple their product from health risks by creating a 'healthier' product (lower in tar and nicotine) and de-emphasizing the product itself in favor of the responses evoked by models and settings...It is evident...that the images portrayed in cigarette ads, like the images in many other product ads, are tailored to the implicit and explicit desires of consumers (pp. 103-104).

Krupka, Vener, and Richmond (1990) analyzed the content of tobacco advertisements in 74 magazines aimed at either a male or female audience, with a circulation of 200,000 or greater, published during July and August 1988. They found 13 different types of messages in the 37 men's and 37 women's magazines they examined, with each ad containing one to four different messages, and with messages being differentially stressed based on the gender orientation of the magazine. Their findings are summarized in Table 1. Krupka et al. (1990) did not report which of these differences, if any, were statistically significant.

Basil et al. (1991) also studied the content of cigarette ads to determine how cigarette advertising strategies vary based on the readership of the magazines in which the ads appear. They examined ads in youth, women's, men's, and general-adult magazines

as well as those in magazines aimed at African-Americans. They found women's magazines and those aimed at African-American audiences had the highest percentage of ads focused on cigarettes themselves, while ads in men's and youth magazines more frequently featured models engaged in activities. Romance was the most frequent theme of all ads featuring models, and contrary to the findings of Altman et al. (1987), incidents of male-female horseplay and the use of erotic/romantic contact were highest in youth magazines as well as in those with a primarily African-American readership, while the highest incidence of models portrayed as coy or seductive was in women's magazines. Basil et al. (1991) also found that the race and sex of models in cigarette ads corresponded to the race and sex of the magazine's primary readership.

Pollay, Lee, and Carter-Whitney (1992) compared cigarette ads appearing in *Ebony* and *Life* magazines from 1950 to 1965 to determine differences in the ads based on the ethnicity of the magazine's readers. They found that from 1950 to 1957, more than 90% of those cigarette ads featuring people in *Ebony*, a magazine targeting African-Americans, featured black models and spokespersons. From 1958 to 1965, they found that virtually 100% of those ads featuring people featured black models and spokespersons. By contrast, none of the ads in *Life* magazine from 1958 to 1965 featured black models or spokespersons. Pollay et al. (1992) also found that ads in *Ebony* were nearly five times more likely than ads in *Life* to feature endorsements from professional athletes.

Reid, King, and Kreshel (1994) also studied the content of cigarette ads, as well as those for alcohol, to determine differences based on the ethnicity of the readers of the

magazine in which the ads appeared. They found that ads featuring black models were more likely than those featuring white models to present a femininity theme, while those featuring white models were more likely than those featuring black models to present a masculinity theme. They also found that ads with white models were more likely than ads with black models to feature work portrayals, while those featuring black models were more likely to feature sociability/leisure portrayals.

King and Siegel (1999) examined the content of cigarette advertisements in 36 magazines from 1986 to 1994 to determine whether cigarette brands popular among youths, that is, those brands smoked by more than 2.5% of 10-15-year-old smokers, were more likely than adult cigarette brands to advertise in magazines with high youth (ages 12-17) readership. They found that youth cigarette brands were significantly more likely than adult brands to advertise in magazines as youth readership increased, adult cigarette brands were significantly less likely to advertise in magazines as youth readership increased, and both adult and youth brands were more likely to advertise in magazines as the percentage of young adult readers (ages 18-24) increased.

### ***Content Changes Over Time***

Ringold (1987) studied the content of advertisements for five cigarette brands from 1926 to 1985 to determine the extent to which the ads included information about the health consequences of smoking, the type of health information provided, and how the extent and type of health information varied over time and by brand. She found that from 1926 to 1954, the three most frequently made claims in cigarette ads were those related to health, taste, and cigarette construction. From 1955 to 1969, taste claims were the most

frequently made, followed by cigarette construction, exhortation to buy/slogan, and pleasure claims. From 1970 to 1985, tar and nicotine figures, taste claims, and the Surgeon General's warning were most frequently made (Ringold, 1987).

Pucci and Siegel (1999) studied the content of cigarette advertisements in 36 magazines from 1980 to 1993 to determine the presence of features of sales promotion, including coupons, "retail value-added promotions" such as "buy one, get one free" offers, contests, sweepstakes, catalogs, specialty item distribution, and sponsorship of public entertainment or sporting events. They also examined differences in the extent of promotional advertising for cigarettes in magazines with varying levels of youth readership and differences in promotional advertising in magazines for cigarette brands popular with young people, that is, those brands smoked by at least 2.5% of smokers aged 10-15 years, and brands smoked almost exclusively by adults. They found the proportion of promotional advertising appearing in youth magazines, defined as magazines with a greater than average proportion of youth readers, increased from 7.3% in 1980 to 99.6% in 1987 and 98.1% in 1988, and it remained between 60.8% and 99.7% from 1989 to 1993. Promotional advertising for five youth cigarette brands accounted for 58.7% of promotional advertising in all magazines, but for 82.9% of promotional advertising in youth magazines, while promotional advertising for adult cigarette brands accounted for 41.3% of promotional advertising in all magazines and only 17.1% of promotional advertising in youth magazines. Pucci and Siegel (1999) note that although advertising containing sales promotional features represented only a small proportion of overall magazine advertising for cigarettes, "the disproportionate presence of this form of

advertising in youth magazines may suggest that sales promotional features are included in advertisements intended to appeal to youth readers” (p. 35).

### ***Content Differences Related to Events/Specific Periods***

Warner (1985) studied the content of cigarette advertisements in *Time* magazine from 1929 to 1984 to determine changes in content related to specific “periods of intense public consideration of the health consequences of smoking” (p. 117). He defined these periods as 1953-1954, which corresponds to the first major general media coverage of the scientific findings linking smoking and cancer; 1964, the year the first Surgeon General’s report on smoking and health was released; 1967-1970, the period when anti-smoking messages required by the Fairness Doctrine<sup>1</sup> aired on radio and television; and the decade leading up to his study, which he characterized as “the era of the nonsmokers’ rights movement” (p. 117). Presumably, the years surrounding these events or periods were characterized by heightened public consideration of the health effects of smoking, although Warner offers no evidence to support this assumption.

Contrary to the findings of Ringold (1987), Warner (1985) found that prior to 1949, no ads exhibited significant content related to health. However, in 1951, the year following publicity on a major American Cancer Society study, 44% of the ads Warner studied emphasized a health theme. In 1952, only 10% of the ads studied contained health-related content, but in 1953, “the year of the first major public smoking-and-health

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<sup>1</sup> Instituted in 1949, the Fairness Doctrine required radio and television stations to air opposing views on issues of public concern. In 1967, the Federal Communications Commission ordered that under the Fairness Doctrine, television and radio stations must run anti-smoking public service announcements (PSAs). After the 1971 ban on broadcast cigarette advertising, anti-smoking PSAs were no longer required to run. The Fairness Doctrine was repealed in 1987.



‘scare,’” 87% of ads included health-related content (Warner, 1985, p. 122). Warner found advertisements with a health theme occurred more frequently in all of the time periods surrounding major public awareness of smoking and health in his study, except in 1964, the year the first Surgeon General’s Report was published.

King, Reid, Moon, and Ringold (1991) studied changes over time in the visually oriented content of cigarette ads in eight magazines with different audience orientations from 1954 to 1986. They divided the 33-year period into three “event eras”: 1954-1970, the “pre-broadcast ban era”; 1971-1983, the “post-broadcast ban era”; and 1984-1986, the “anti-smoking ideology era.” King et al. (1991) hypothesized that the government-mandated ban on cigarette advertising on television would result in major changes in the visual imagery found in cigarette ads in magazines, as tobacco companies sought to replace the imagery they had used in television advertisements. King et al. (1991) also hypothesized that the presence of human models in ads and the activities with which models were associated would vary based on the magazine’s readership.

Their study found in the pre-broadcast ban era, nearly 68% of the cigarette ads studied featured models engaged in adventure, erotic/romantic, individualistic/solitary, recreation, sociability, or work activities. In the post-ban and anti-smoking ideology eras, 73% and 83% of ads, respectively, featured models engaged in these activities. However, only the portrayal of adventure and work activities increased across all three eras. Contrary to the findings of Altman et al. (1987), King et al. (1991) found the percentage of ads featuring models engaged in erotic/romantic activities declined from a high of 17.9% in the pre-ban era to a low of 8% in the anti-smoking ideology era, and the

percentage of ads portraying sociability and recreation did not change significantly across the three time periods studied.

King et al. (1991) also found the specific activities in which models in ads were engaged varied by magazine audience orientation. Adventure activities appeared most often in cigarette ads in men's magazines (30.1% of ads in older men's magazines and 14.4% of ads in younger men's magazines). Sociability portrayals occurred most often in young women's magazines (20%), and individualistic/solitary portrayals occurred most often in ads in older men's (32.5%) and younger women's (29%) magazines. Models engaged in work-related activities appeared in 32.5% of ads in older men's magazines and in only 7.7% of younger women's magazines. However, contrary to the findings of Altman et al. (1987), King et al. (1991) found no differences by magazine audience orientation for portrayals of recreation or erotic/romantic activities.

This review of the literature reveals that previous studies analyzing the content of cigarette advertisements have found differences in the content of ads based on the audiences targeted, including differences in ads in youth-oriented, gender-specific, and minority-readership magazines. Other studies have found differences in content over time, including differences related to health and promotional messages. Still other studies have found differences in content based on specific events or periods of time. However, no studies analyzing the content of ads placed subsequent to the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement have appeared in the published literature. Thus, the present study extends this body of research by investigating the content of cigarette advertisements in magazines

published subsequent to that agreement, comparing the content of ads in magazines with a high youth readership to the content of ads in magazines with more mature readers.

### **Methods**

Using content analysis, the present study determines the types of visual and verbal/textual product associations found in cigarette advertisements in both youth- and adult-oriented magazines as well as seeking to determine any differences between the frequency of product association presentations based on the audience orientation of the magazines in which the ads appear.

#### ***Magazine Classification***

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 1996) defines youth-oriented magazines as those with either more than 2 million readers under age 18 or those whose readers younger than age 18 constitute more than 15% of the total readership of the magazine. They define adult-oriented magazines as those with fewer than 2 million readers under age 18 or those whose readers younger than age 18 constitute less than 15% of the total readership of the magazine.

Both King and Siegel (2001) and Turner-Bowker and Hamilton (2000) used the FDA definition to classify the magazines they examined in their studies on cigarette advertising expenditures before and after the Master Settlement Agreement. The present study also uses the FDA classification.

#### ***Magazine Sample Selection***

Four of the six magazines with the highest number of youth readers in the United States, that is, readers ages 12-17, do not accept cigarette advertising; therefore, the

magazines selected for this study are the remaining two publications in the group: *People* and *Sports Illustrated*. These magazines have youth readerships of 3,392,000 and 3,214,000, respectively. The adult-oriented magazines selected for study are *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Time*. Both are among the top 10 magazines with the highest number of adult readers, and both meet the FDA definition of an adult-oriented magazine.<sup>2</sup>

A random sample was drawn from the January 1999 through December 2003 issues of each of the four magazines, using SAS random sampling software. These dates were used to limit the study sample to magazines published subsequent to the Master Settlement Agreement, which was signed in November 1998. *Sports Illustrated*, *People*, and *Time* all are published weekly. Excluding special and extra issues, the total population from which the sample was drawn is 258 issues each of *Sports Illustrated* and *Time* and 256 issues of *People*. To ensure the random sample selected is representative of the entire population with a 95% confidence interval, 155 issues of each of the three magazines were included in the final sample.<sup>3</sup> Because *Better Homes and Gardens* is published monthly, the total population from which the sample was drawn, excluding special issues, is 60 magazines. To ensure the random sample selected is representative of the entire population with a 95% confidence interval, 52 issues of *Better Homes and Gardens* were included in the final sample.<sup>3</sup> All full-page or larger cigarette ads in each of

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<sup>2</sup> Youth and adult readership data was obtained from Mediamark Research, Inc., a leading U.S. supplier of multimedia audience research ([www.mediamark.com](http://www.mediamark.com)).

<sup>3</sup> The sample size required to achieve the desired confidence interval was determined using data from Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

the 517 magazines in the final sample were collected for coding. In total, 640 ads were coded.

### ***Content Coding Procedure and Categories***

Each of the 640 ads in the sample was coded by the author for the following categories: name of the magazine in which it appears, month and year of issue of the magazine, ad size, and cigarette brand advertised. The author also coded the manifest visual and verbal/textual content of each ad to determine the most prominent visual and verbal/textual product associations present. The specific content categories used for coding the visual and verbal/textual product associations were developed by the author after close reading of Altman et al. (1987), Basil et al. (1991), King et al. (1991), Krupka et al. (1990), Pucci and Siegel (1999), and Ringold (1987). The content categories for the most prominent visual product associations coded as well as definitions for each category are shown in Table 2. The content categories for the most prominent verbal/textual product associations coded are shown in Table 3.

It is important to note that while each ad may include more than one visual and verbal/textual product association, only the single most prominent visual product association and the single most prominent verbal/textual product association were coded. The most prominent visual product association is defined as the largest image in the ad or the image that occupies the greatest amount of space in the ad. The most prominent verbal/textual product association is defined as that to which the majority of text in the ad is devoted.

The author coded a random sample of 5% of the ads twice, with a one-week separation between each coding, and intra-coder reliability of 96% on both the visual and verbal/textual product association categories was achieved. As a measure of reliability for the coding instrument, a random sample of 100 ads was coded twice, once by the author and once by a second coder, and inter-coder reliability of 81% on the visual product association categories and 87% on the verbal/textual product association categories was achieved.

## **Results**

Results were analyzed using Minitab statistical software to determine the percentages of ads containing each of the categories of visual product associations (see Table 4) and the percentages of ads containing each of the categories of verbal/textual product associations (see Table 5).

Quantifying the most prominent visual and verbal/textual product associations found in all the ads and grouping these results according to magazine classification, that is, youth- or adult-oriented, answers the first research question: What kinds of visual and verbal/textual product associations do cigarette companies use in their advertisements in youth-oriented magazines and in magazines with a more mature readership?

The most frequent visual product associations made in ads in both youth- and adult-oriented magazines were those related to cigarettes/packaging, which appeared in 24.28% of cigarette ads in youth magazines and 24.60% of cigarette ads in adult-oriented magazines. The next most frequently used visual product associations in cigarette ads in youth-oriented magazines were those related to romance/eroticism (12.36%), social

gatherings/friendship (10.15%), fantasy/surrealism (8.61%), and masculinity (8.17%). By contrast, the next most frequent visual product associations found in cigarette ads in adult-oriented magazines were those related to nature/passive outdoors (12.83%), adventure/active outdoors (12.83%), fantasy/surrealism (12.30%), and femininity/glamour (11.76%).

The most frequent verbal/textual product associations found in ads in both youth- and adult-oriented magazines were those related to pleasure/refreshment/flavor/quality, which appeared in 43.27% of cigarette ads in youth-oriented magazines and 29.41% of ads in adult-oriented magazines. The next most frequent verbal/textual product associations in ads in youth-oriented magazines were those related to good value/economy (13.91%), cigarettes/packaging (9.49%), health/low tar/nicotine/safety (7.28%), and independence/self-reliance/rebellion (6.62%). The next most frequent verbal/textual product associations found in ads in adult-oriented magazines were those related to health/low tar/nicotine/safety (21.39%), good value/economy (16.58%), cigarettes/packaging (11.23%), and prize giveaways/merchandise (2.67%).

Grouping the results according to magazine classification allowed for calculation of differences between the categories of product associations found in ads in each type of magazine. This answers the second research question: How does the frequency of product associations used in cigarette advertisements in youth-oriented magazines differ from the frequency of product associations used in cigarette advertisements in magazines aimed at a more mature audience?

As seen in Table 4, the results of the study show significant differences, based on the audience orientation of the magazines, that is, youth or adult, in 5 of the 18 visual product association categories found in cigarette ads. Ads in youth-oriented magazines were more likely than ads in adult-oriented magazines to feature visual product associations related to social gatherings/friendship, romance/eroticism, independence/self-reliance/rebellion, or prize giveaways/merchandise. Ads in adult-oriented magazines were more likely than ads in youth-oriented magazines to feature visual product associations related to nature/passive outdoors.

As seen in Table 5, the results of the study also show significant differences, based on the audience orientation of the magazines in which the ads appear, in 4 of the 18 verbal/textual product association categories. Ads in youth-oriented magazines were more likely than ads in adult-oriented magazines to feature verbal/textual product associations related to independence/self-reliance/rebellion or pleasure/refreshment/flavor/quality, while ads in adult-oriented magazines were more likely than ads in youth-oriented magazines to feature verbal/textual product associations related to femininity/glamour or health/low tar/nicotine/safety.

### **Discussion**

Using content analysis, the present study determines the types of visual and verbal/textual product associations found in cigarette advertisements in both youth- and adult-oriented magazines as well as differences between the frequencies of product association presentations based on the audience orientation of the magazines in which the ads appear. The results show significant differences in a number of categories of visual



and verbal/textual product associations that cigarette companies employ in their ads in youth- and adult-oriented magazines.

### *Appealing to Teen Values*

The finding that ads in youth-oriented magazines are more likely than those in adult-oriented magazines to employ visual product associations related to social gatherings/friendship, romance/eroticism, and independence/self-reliance/rebellion is consistent with the findings of Feighery, Borzekowski, Schooler, and Flora (1998), who argue that:

tobacco companies use a sophisticated blend of advertising and promotions to effectively communicate the symbolic social value of tobacco use... The tobacco industry's advertising and promotional products are replete with messages and images that reflect the qualities teenagers value, such as popularity, independence, sexiness, and 'coolness.' The marketing approaches imply that these qualities can be achieved by using their tobacco products... Their advertisements may shift young people's attitudes and beliefs to view smoking as a means to acquire the above valued qualities (p. 124).

The view of Feighery et al. (1998) is consistent with that of Wakefield, Flay, Nichter, and Giovino (1998), who argue that "the purpose of tobacco marketing is to associate its product with psychological and social needs that the consumer wants to fulfill" (para. 7), and with Davis (1987), who notes that "themes in cigarette advertising that emphasize youthful vigor, sexual attraction, and independence are likely to be especially appealing to

teenagers and young adults grappling with these issues” (p. 730). Arnett (2001) also argues that:

images of independence, peer acceptance, and sexuality portrayed in the ads may be attractive to adolescents because such images resonate with important developmental issues and with characteristics they may wish to possess. The ads thus exploit their developmental needs and make it easier for them to see smoking as potentially rewarding rather than as a deadly addiction (p. 441).

The present study’s finding that cigarette ads in youth-oriented magazines are more likely than ads in adult-oriented magazines to include product associations related to social gatherings/friendship is consistent with the findings of King et al. (1991), who found sociability portrayals more likely to occur in ads in young women’s magazines than in ads in other magazines. The finding that ads in youth-oriented magazines are more likely to employ visual product associations related to romance/eroticism is consistent with the findings of Basil et al. (1991), but inconsistent with the findings of King et al. (1991), who found no difference by audience orientation for portrayals of erotic/romantic activities in cigarette ads.

### ***Promotional Appeals***

The present study’s finding that ads in youth magazines are more likely than those in adult-oriented magazines to contain visual product associations related to prize giveaways/merchandise is consistent with the findings of Pucci and Siegel (1999), who found a “disproportionate presence” of such promotional advertising in cigarette ads in youth magazines. They note that “not only are young people heavily exposed to cigarette

advertising in magazines, but they are preferentially exposed to a form of advertising that has been shown to correlate strongly with the initiation of smoking” (p. 35).

Pucci and Siegel’s (1999) findings are consistent with those of Feighery et al. (1998), who found that:

the marketing campaigns conducted by tobacco companies are extremely effective in capturing teenagers’ attention and increasing desire for their promotional items...the tobacco industry is successfully using promotions to stimulate movement toward regular use of their products by providing young people with paraphernalia that allows them to take on the identity of a smoker (p. 127).

### ***Targeting Based on Smoking Status***

The results of the present study show that while ads in youth-oriented magazines are more likely to associate cigarettes with pleasure/refreshment/flavor/quality, those in adult-oriented magazines are more likely to associate cigarettes with health/low tar/nicotine/safety. One possible explanation for this is that cigarette companies may target youth who are not yet smokers or committed smokers with messages about the pleasurable aspects of smoking as a means of encouraging them to smoke, while targeting adults who already are smokers with messages about how a particular brand is safer or less harmful than other brands as a means of encouraging them to switch brands. This explanation is consistent with the findings of Basil et al. (1991), who suggest that cigarette companies may employ different approaches based on the likely smoking status of the target audience.

### ***Focusing on the Product***

The most frequently used visual product associations in ads in both youth- and adult-oriented magazines are those related to cigarettes themselves. This finding is consistent with that of Altman et al. (1987), who found that a majority of the cigarette ads they examined featured cigarettes. They also found no difference in the percentage of ads depicting the act of smoking in youth- and adult-oriented magazines. The finding of the present study also is consistent with that of Basil et al. (1991), who found women's magazines and those aimed at African-American audiences had the highest percentage of ads focused on cigarettes themselves. However, they also found that ads in men's and youth magazines more frequently featured models engaged in activities, rather than focusing on cigarettes themselves, a finding inconsistent with the present study.

It is interesting to note that while the most frequent visual product associations appearing in the ads examined by the present study were those related to cigarettes themselves, the most frequently used verbal/textual product associations were those related to pleasure/refreshment/flavor/quality. Thus, while the visual in an ad may have focused on the product itself, the text in the ad focused on the benefits derived from using the product.

### ***Implications***

As King and Siegel (2001) and Turner-Bowker and Hamilton (2000) have suggested, cigarette makers have increased their targeting of youth since the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement, and as the present study suggests, the advertisements cigarette

companies place in magazines are differentially targeting youth by associating cigarettes with qualities and behaviors valued by youth. As noted by Altman et al. (1987):

the tobacco industry has portrayed smoking in advertisements in a misleading manner—as adventuresome, healthy, safe and erotic, images in stark contrast with the voluminous data implicating smoking as a factor in ill health. It is incumbent upon policy makers, health professionals, and health communicators to respond creatively and vigorously to these inappropriate actions (p. 104).

As young people are reading magazines such as *People* and *Sports Illustrated*, the pages of both of which are replete with photographs of, and articles about, sports figures, movie stars, and other people that youth admire, they are exposed to cigarette ads targeting them with messages that are highly salient to them. Given that most smokers begin smoking prior to age 18 (CDC, 2003b), it is critical that, to the extent possible, youth exposure to advertising intended to persuade them to use tobacco be minimized.

The findings of the present study and of other studies cited here provide support for the need for further oversight of the methods used in marketing cigarettes in order to protect youth from exposure to persuasive messages regarding smoking. While the FDA definition for an adult-oriented magazine allows cigarette makers to place ads in magazines with fewer than 2 million readers under age 18 or in those magazines whose readers younger than age 18 constitute less than 15% of the total readership of the magazine, this still allows for millions of youth readers to be exposed to messages encouraging tobacco use. It is incumbent upon policy makers to prevent this from happening, and until a more stringent public policy is put in place to protect American

youth from tobacco advertising, publishers of magazines with readers younger than age 18 should consider adopting a policy against accepting tobacco advertising.

### Conclusion

The present study uses content analysis to examine the product associations found in cigarette advertising in a random sample of two youth-oriented and two adult-oriented magazines beginning in 1999, the year following the Master Settlement Agreement, through 2003. The most prominent visual and verbal/textual product associations are coded using 18 visual product association categories and 18 verbal/textual product association categories and the data analyzed to determine the types of product associations found in the ads as well as any differences between the frequency of presentation of product associations based on the two different audience orientations of the magazines in the sample.

There are several limitations to this study, including the method employed. By analyzing only the manifest content, the richness of the language and images in the ads is lost, as is the ability to identify and analyze the sub-textual themes in the ads. Thus, any subtle messages an advertisement may attempt to communicate are not examined, and yet, may be equally as important for study as the manifest content analyzed here. In addition, the present study examines only a limited number of magazines—two youth- and two adult-oriented—and these four publications are not representative of all youth- and adult-oriented magazines. A further limitation is that while *People* and *Sports Illustrated* meet the FDA definition for a youth-oriented magazine, these publications both have large numbers of readers over age 18. Thus, it is possible to argue that

advertisements in these publications are aimed at the adult readers and not at those under age 18. The study time period also is limited, as is the medium—magazine advertising is only one form of promotion cigarette companies use to market their products. Finally, the study examines the content of the ads and not the effect the content has on the target audience.

These limitations suggest several avenues for future study, including examining a greater number of magazines as well as comparing the content of ads in various magazines to determine differences based on the proportion of adult versus youth readers of each magazine. Other studies might analyze differences between the content of ads placed prior to the Master Settlement Agreement and ads placed subsequently. Still others could examine the effects of the Master Settlement Agreement on other media and advertising outlets, such as product placement in movies, event sponsorship, and retail point-of-purchase advertising, to determine if cigarette makers turned to different methods to reach youth audiences as a result of the restrictions set by the agreement. Finally, future studies might examine the effectiveness of cigarette advertising in persuading young people to smoke, and whether ads in youth-oriented magazines are more appealing to youth than ads in adult-oriented magazines.

Despite the limitations of the present study, the findings provide insight into the content of post-Master Settlement cigarette advertising as well as contributing to the understanding of techniques used in targeting young people with advertisements for a product that has proven negative health consequences. This study's findings may assist health professionals in developing educational messages or programs designed to assist

young people in engaging in critical analysis of advertisements for cigarettes. As Hawkins and Hane (2001) argue:

media literacy training must begin in the elementary grades if it is to have a significant impact on [the] decision [to smoke]...Such [training] would include raising adolescents' awareness of the manipulative strategies used by cigarette advertisers, rejecting ads' implied association between smoking and positive health and relational outcomes, and depicting the true costs of adolescent smoking (para. 58-59).

The results of the present study also may assist policy makers in developing policies that will protect young people from exposure to advertising for a product with proven negative health consequences. Given the detrimental individual and societal impact of smoking, it is important to examine the advertising and marketing strategies employed by cigarette companies. The present study may encourage further research in this area.



**Table 1 Summary of Findings of Krupka et al. (1990)**

| <b>Message</b>   | <b>Percentage of Ads in Women's Magazines</b> | <b>Percentage of Ads in Men's Magazines</b> |
|--|---|---|
| Good taste, flavor or quality                            | 16.4%   | 24.3%                                       |
| Low tar or nicotine                                      | 13.7%   | 6.6%  |
| Brand users are attractive and have lean silhouettes     | 13.3%   | 0.6%  |
| Associating brand with leisure (relaxation and serenity) | 11.9%   | 10.5%                                       |
| Associating brand with leisure (excitement or thrill)    | 2.8%  | 6.1%  |
| Economical brand   | 3.2%  | 2.2%  |
| Usage of brand is refreshing and pleasurable             | 8.4%  | 6.6%  |
| Brand users are independent and self-reliant             | 7.7%  | 1.1%  |
| Associating brand with traditional masculine activity    | 6.7%  | 25.4%                                       |
| Urging brand users to become involved in prize giveaways | 3.9%  | 8.3%  |
| Free gifts or reduced-price merchandise                  | 1.8%  | 0%  |
| Linking brand with social success                        | 10.2%   | 7.2%  |
| Announcing brand's sponsorship of a sporting event       | 0%  | 1.1%  |

**Table 2 Visual Product Association Categories**

| <b>Visual Product Association Category</b> | <b>Definition</b>   |
|--|---|
| Social Gatherings/<br>Friendship           | Any image depicting friendships, gatherings of friends, social gatherings, celebrations, festive occasions.   |
| Adventure/Active<br>Outdoors               | Any image depicting a thrilling or risky outdoor activity or event, such as hiking, mountain climbing, skiing, skydiving, whitewater rafting, horseback riding.   |
| Nature/Passive Outdoors                    | Any image depicting nature or the passive enjoyment of the outdoors, such as a mountain vista, seascape, a model strolling on a beach, sitting by a lake, or watching a sunset.   |
| Romance/Eroticism                          | Any image depicting love, affection, physical attraction, desire or sexual activity, such as kissing, embracing, models wearing seductive clothing or posed seductively.  |
| Independence/Self-<br>Reliance/Rebellion   | Any image depicting use of the brand as a mark of independence, maturity, individuality, breaking from tradition, such as models depicted as resisting authority or authority figures, exhibiting nonconformity to societal norms in dress or behavior. |
| Masculinity                                | Any image depicting characteristics traditionally or stereotypically associated with males, such as strength, muscularity, brawn, ruggedness, stoicism.   |
| Femininity/Glamour                         | Any image depicting characteristics traditionally or stereotypically associated with females, such as beauty, style, elegance.  |
| Feminism                                   | Any image depicting the feminist movement, equality of the sexes, women's rights, women's dominance over men.   |
| Sports                                     | Any image depicting sports, sporting events or athletic competition, such as football, soccer, baseball, volleyball, car racing.  |
| Career/Work                                | Any image depicting employment situations, jobs, or work environments.  |
| Technology/Future-<br>Oriented             | Any image depicting modern technology, progress, the shape of things to come.   |
| Health/Low<br>Tar/Nicotine/Safety          | Any image depicting health or safety-related themes, such as cigarettes producing less secondhand smoke, special processes to reduce or remove tar or nicotine.   |

| <b>Visual Product Association Category</b> | <b>Definition</b>   |
|--|---|
| Fantasy/Surrealism                         | Any image depicting that which is unreal or illusionary, characterized by fantastic or incongruous effects, images containing unnatural juxtapositions or combinations. |
| Good Value/Economy                         | Any image depicting the brand as economical, as a good value, as less expensive than other brands, as slower burning or longer lasting.                                 |
| Cigarettes/Packaging                       | Any image depicting cigarettes, cigarette features, components or packaging (other than health/safety-related).   |
| Prize Giveaways/Merchandise                | Any image depicting prizes, merchandise or branded merchandise, such as hats, T-shirts, mugs.   |
| Other                                      | Product associations not matching any of the above categories.  |
| No Visual Product Association/No Image     | An ad containing all text and no images.  |

**Table 3 Verbal/Textual Product Association Categories**

| <b>Verbal/Textual Product Association Category</b> | <b>Definition</b>   |
|--|---|
| Social Gatherings/Friendship                       | Any text describing or referring to social gatherings of people, celebrations or festive occasions; finding or maintaining friendships with others; being liked and/or viewed positively by others. |
| Adventure/Active Outdoors                          | Any text describing or referring to a thrilling or risky outdoor activity or event such as hiking, mountain climbing, skiing, skydiving, horseback riding.  |
| Nature/Passive Outdoors                            | Any text describing or referring to nature or the passive enjoyment of the outdoors.  |
| Romance/Eroticism                                  | Any text describing or referring to love, affection, physical attraction, desire or sexual activity.  |
| Independence/Self-Reliance/Rebellion               | Any text describing or referring to use of the brand as a mark of independence, maturity, individuality, breaking from tradition.   |
| Masculinity  | Any text describing or referring to characteristics traditionally or stereotypically associated with males, such as strength, muscularity, ruggedness, stoicism.                                    |
| Femininity/Glamour                                 | Any text describing or referring to characteristics traditionally or stereotypically associated with females, such as beauty, style, elegance.  |
| Feminism   | Any text describing or referring to the feminist movement, equality of the sexes, women's rights, women's dominance over men.   |
| Sports   | Any text describing or referring to sports and athletic competition, such as football, soccer, baseball, volleyball, car racing.  |
| Career/Work  | Any text describing or referring to employment situations, jobs, work environments, specific professions or professional success.   |
| Technology/Future-Oriented                         | Any text describing or referring to modern technology, progress, the shape of things to come.   |

| Verbal/Textual<br>Product<br>Association Category | Definition   |
|---|--|
| Health/Low<br>Tar/Nicotine/Safety                 | Any text describing or referring to a low or lower tar and/or nicotine content, a filter or other component making the brand safer or less likely to cause illness or disease, a cigarette producing less secondhand smoke or odor, being less likely to possess negative attributes associated with cigarettes and smoking. |
| Pleasure/Refreshment/<br>Flavor/Quality           | Any text describing or referring to pleasure, joy, or refreshment derived from the brand; the brand's flavor, smoothness or quality.   |
| Good Value/Economy                                | Any text describing or referring to the brand as economical, as a good value, discounted pricing, less expensive than other brands, slower burning/longer lasting.   |
| Cigarettes/Packaging                              | Any text describing or referring to cigarettes, the brand, packaging, cigarette features, components (other than health/safety or flavor/quality related).   |
| Prize<br>Giveaways/Merchandise                    | Any text describing or referring to sweepstakes; contests; prizes; merchandise; free, reduced-price, or branded merchandise.   |
| Other   | Product associations not matching any of the above categories.   |
| No Text   | Any ad containing only an image or images and no text other than a brand name and Surgeon General's warning.   |

**Table 4 Study Results: Visual Product Associations**

| <b>Visual Product Association Category</b> | <b>Percentage of Ads in Adult-Oriented Magazines</b> | <b>Percentage of Ads in Youth-Oriented Magazines</b> | <b>P Value</b> |
|--|--|--|----------------|
| Social Gatherings/Friendship               | 5.35   | 10.15  | .027           |
| Adventure/Active Outdoors                  | 12.83  | 7.95   | .076           |
| Nature/Passive Outdoors                    | 13.37  | 7.06   | .023           |
| Romance/Eroticism                          | 2.67   | 12.36  | < .001         |
| Independence/Self-Reliance/Rebellion       | 0  | 2.43   | .039*          |
| Masculinity                                | 9.09   | 8.17   | .708           |
| Femininity/Glamour                         | 11.76  | 7.28   | .091           |
| Feminism                                   | 1.07   | 3.31   | .174*          |
| Sports                                     | 0  | 1.10   | .329*          |
| Career/Work                                | 1.07   | 1.32   | 1.0*           |
| Technology/Future-Oriented                 | 0  | .22  | 1.0*           |
| Health/Low Tar/Nicotine/Safety             | 3.21   | 1.10   | .127           |
| Fantasy/Surrealism                         | 12.30  | 8.61   | .178           |
| Good Value/Economy                         | .53  | 1.32   | .680*          |
| Cigarettes/Packaging                       | 24.60  | 24.28  | .933           |
| Prize Giveaways/Merchandise                | 0  | 2.65   | .023*          |
| Other                                      | 1.60   | .66  | .365*          |
| No Visual Product Association/No Image     | 1.60   | 0  | .292*          |

Note: Differences between product associations in ads in youth- and adult-oriented magazines were tested for significance using Minitab's Test for Two Proportions. In cases where samples were small, the more conservative Fisher's Exact Test (as indicated by \*) was performed to determine significance.

**Table 5 Study Results: Verbal/Textual Product Associations**

| <b>Verbal/Textual Product Association Category</b> | <b>Percentage of Cigarette Ads in Adult-Oriented Magazines</b> | <b>Percentage of Cigarette Ads in Youth-Oriented Magazines</b> | <b>P Value</b> |
|--|--|--|----------------|
| Social Gatherings/Friendship                       | 0  | 1.77   | .113*          |
| Adventure/Active Outdoors                          | 0  | 0  | N/A            |
| Nature/Passive Outdoors                            | .53  | .22  | .499*          |
| Romance/Eroticism                                  | 0  | 0  | N/A            |
| Independence/Self-Reliance/Rebellion               | 2.14   | 6.62   | .020*          |
| Masculinity  | 0  | 1  | 1.0*           |
| Femininity/Glamour                                 | 2.67   | .44  | .025*          |
| Feminism   | 2.67   | 4.86   | .160           |
| Sports   | 0  | .88  | .327*          |
| Career/Work  | 0  | 0  | N/A            |
| Technology/Future-Oriented                         | 0  | 0  | N/A            |
| Health/Low Tar/Nicotine/Safety                     | 21.39  | 7.28   | < .001         |
| Pleasure/Refreshment/Flavor/Quality                | 29.41  | 43.27  | .001           |
| Good Value/Economy                                 | 16.58  | 13.91  | .399           |
| Cigarettes/Packaging                               | 11.23  | 9.49   | .518           |
| Prize Giveaways/Merchandise                        | 2.67   | 3.31   | .660           |
| Other  | 0  | .22  | 1.0*           |
| No Text  | 10.70  | 7.51   | .216           |

Note: Differences between product associations in ads in youth- and adult-oriented magazines were tested for significance using Minitab's Test for Two Proportions. In cases where samples were small, the more conservative Fisher's Exact Test (as indicated by \*) was performed to determine significance.

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## Appendix A

### Content Code Book

#### Magazine Name

- 1 = *People*
- 2 = *Sports Illustrated*
- 3 = *Better Homes and Gardens*
- 4 = *Time*

#### Year of Issue

- 1 = 1999
- 2 = 2000
- 3 = 2001
- 4 = 2002
- 5 = 2003

#### Month of Issue

- |              |            |               |
|--------------|------------|---------------|
| 1 = January  | 5 = May    | 9 = September |
| 2 = February | 6 = June   | 10 = October  |
| 3 = March    | 7 = July   | 11 = November |
| 4 = April    | 8 = August | 12 = December |

#### Ad Size

- 1 = Full Page
- 2 = Two-Page Spread
- 3 = Other

### Cigarette Brand

- |                     |                 |                     |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1 = Basic           | 7 = Kool        | 13 = Quest          |
| 2 = Benson & Hedges | 8 = Marlboro    | 14 = Salem          |
| 3 = Camel           | 9 = Merit       | 15 = Virginia Slims |
| 4 = Capri           | 10 = Misty      | 16 = Winston        |
| 5 = Carlton         | 11 = Newport    | 17 = Other          |
| 6 = Doral           | 12 = Parliament |                     |

### Most Prominent Visual Product Association

- 1 = Social Gatherings/Friendship
- 2 = Adventure/Active Outdoors
- 3 = Nature/Passive Outdoors
- 4 = Romance/Eroticism
- 5 = Independence/Self-Reliance/Rebellion
- 6 = Masculinity
- 7 = Femininity/Glamour
- 8 = Feminism
- 9 = Sports
- 10 = Career/Work
- 11 = Technology/Future-Oriented
- 12 = Health/Low Tar/Nicotine/Safety
- 13 = Fantasy/Surrealism
- 14 = Good Value/Economy
- 15 = Cigarettes/Packaging
- 16 = Prize Giveaways/Merchandise
- 17 = Other Product Association
- 18 = No Visual Product Association/No image

### Most Prominent Verbal/Textual Product Association

- 1 = Social Gatherings/Friendship
- 2 = Adventure/Active Outdoors
- 3 = Nature/Passive Outdoors
- 4 = Romance/Eroticism
- 5 = Independence/Self-Reliance/Rebellion
- 6 = Masculinity
- 7 = Femininity/Glamour
- 8 = Feminism

- 9 = Sports
- 10 = Career/Work
- 11 = Technology/Future-Oriented
- 12 = Health/Low Tar/Nicotine/Safety
- 13 = Pleasure/Refreshment/Flavor/Quality
- 14 = Good Value/Economy
- 15 = Cigarettes/Packaging
- 16 = Prize Giveaways/Merchandise
- 17 = Other Product Association
- 18 = No Text

### About the Author

Pamela Carmichael was born March 17, 1964 in Bradford, Pennsylvania. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies from the State University of New York at Brockport, where she was a member of the Alpha Chi Honor Society. While studying for her Master of Science degree in Communication and Media Technologies at Rochester Institute of Technology, she was inducted into the Lambda Pi Eta Communication Honor Society.

Ms. Carmichael is a Marketing Communications Specialist at Rochester Institute of Technology's National Technical Institute for the Deaf, where she serves as editor of *FOCUS* magazine. Prior to holding this position, she was an account executive at advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi, where she worked with clients such as ABC Television/*Good Morning America*, DuPont Agricultural Products, and Prudential Insurance.

Ms. Carmichael is co-author of *How Do I Interview Someone Who Can't Hear Me?*, an essay in the 2002 edition of Gerry Crispin and Mark Mehler's *CareerXRoads: The Directory to Job, Resume, and Career Management Sites on the Web*.