

Fact Sheet #6: Young Adults and Advertising

In a recent Federal Trade Commission (FTC) report, it was revealed tobacco companies spent more than 11.4 billion dollars on marketing their products in 2001 alone.¹

What is Happening?

- In the three year span directly following the signing of the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), the marketing expenditures of major US tobacco companies rose 75%.²
- 42% of 18-24 year olds report having seen tobacco advertisements and promotions in retail stores "often."³
- Tobacco industry advertisements account for more than 70% of advertising revenue for alternative weekly newspapers.⁴
- Bar sponsorship is one of the most prevalent ways of marketing to young adults. Brown and Williamson alone spends approximately \$30 million on bar promotions per year.⁵

Why?

Why are young adults so important to the tobacco industry? First, the tobacco industry sees the transition from experimental smoking to an established smoker as a series of stages that occur up to age 25. The industry must market each of these stages individually to retain a smoker, from the very first cigarette to the pack-a-day habit.

Industry marketing also attempts to tie transitional periods in young adult life - joining the military, attending college, entering the workforce, and new social activities like bar outings - to starting and maintaining a smoking habit. This transitional period of young adult life makes young people especially vulnerable to marketing influences.⁶

In addition to being the youngest legal target age group of the tobacco industry, 18-24 year olds are also role models for teens. By displaying young adult smoking as a model of behavior, industry marketing hopes to continue tobacco's cycle of destruction perpetuated on young people.⁷

Countering Tobacco Industry Marketing Efforts

There are efforts you can make locally to counter tobacco industry marketing influence:

- Coordinate a letter-writing campaign to young-adult friendly magazines, newspapers, and other print media asking them to discontinue all tobacco advertising.
- Work with young adults to design a public awareness campaign for placement in young adult-friendly magazines, newspapers, and other print media (i.e. alternative papers).
- Educate young adult writers from young adult-friendly media on the issue of tobacco marketing and encourage them to write on the issue of tobacco industry advertising and marketing tactics, as well as the impact on young adults.

¹ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. *Tobacco Company Marketing to College Students Since the Multistate Settlement Agreement was Signed*. 20 August 2003. <<http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0135.pdf>>

² Ibid.

³ American Legacy Foundation. *Exposure to Pro-tobacco Messages among Teens and Young Adults: Results from Three National Surveys*. November 2003.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ling, Pamela M., MD and Stanton A Glantz PhD. "Why and How the Tobacco Industry Sells Cigarettes to Young Adults: Evidence from Industry Documents." *American Journal on Public Health*. June 2002. Vol 92, No 6.

⁷ Ling, Pamela M., MD and Stanton A. Glantz PhD. "Using Tobacco-Industry Marketing Research to Design More Effective Tobacco-Control Campaigns." *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 12 June 2002. Vol 287, No 22.

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